



# Blight Busters

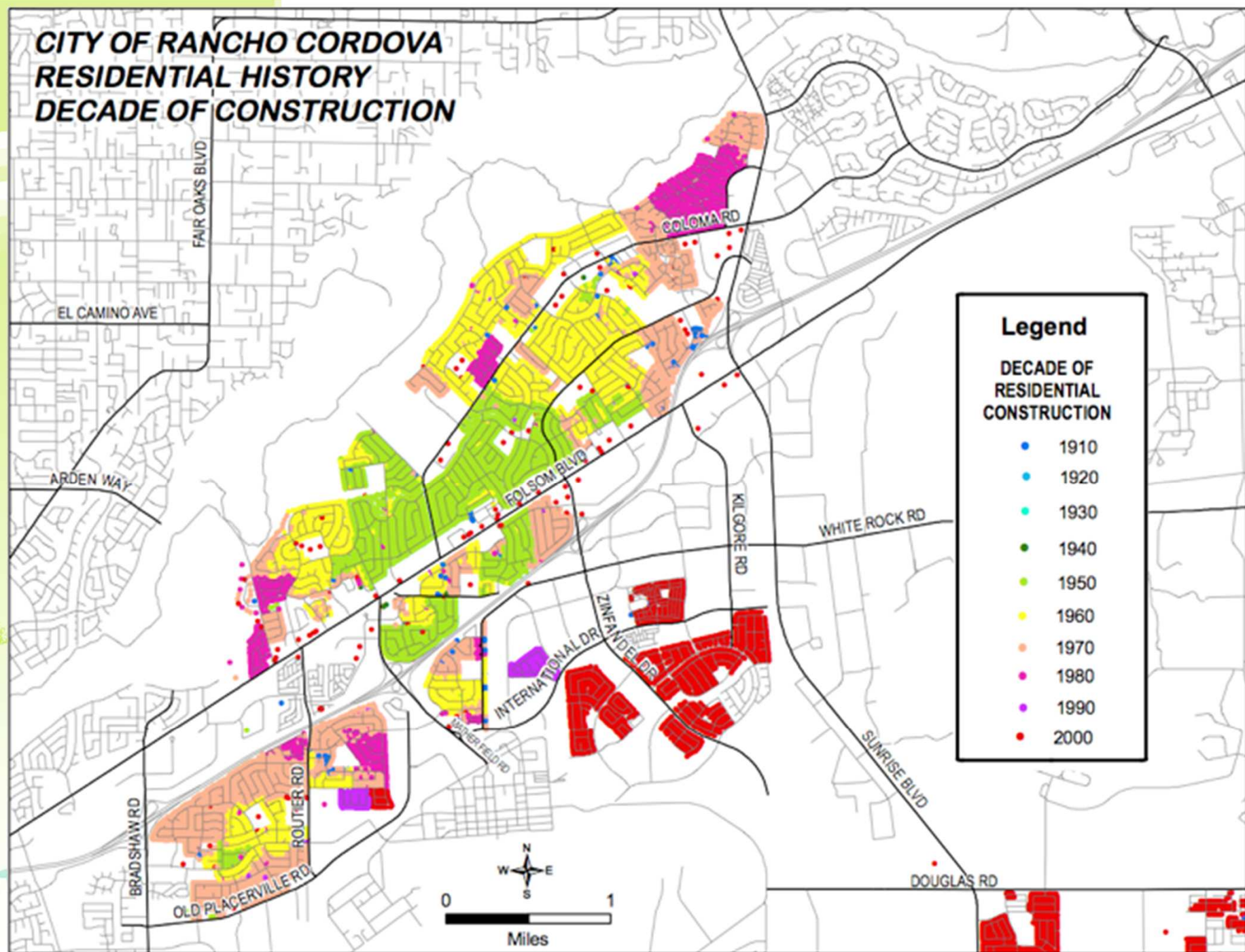
A First Step Program for Cleaning Up  
the New City of Rancho Cordova

# Are we alone in this?

- Across the nation, post-WWII suburbs dominated by single family homes aren't aging well.
- From 1980's on, 33% of suburbs have seen income declines greater than the central cities they surround.
- Particularly the case in older suburban communities where large swaths of inexpensive single family homes were developed in a short period of time.



# CITY OF RANCHO CORDOVA RESIDENTIAL HISTORY DECADE OF CONSTRUCTION



# Background

- **City of Rancho Cordova incorporated on July 1st, 2003**
- A developing community since the 1950's, Rancho Cordova existed as an unincorporated but urbanized area in Sacramento County
- Early years marked by great success - Mather Air Force Base, Aerojet as major employers
- Middle years marked by decline - culminating in the closure of Mather Air Force Base in 1992
- Late years have included renewal as a major jobs center and leading growth area in the region, All America City
- *Those middle years, under the jurisdiction of a County that thought it could “do all those municipal things” spurred the incorporation of our 50+ year old community*



# An Example of the Problem...



# Why Growing Strong Neighborhoods?

- Pro-Actively Address some Long-Standing Problems
  - blighted and poorly maintained property
  - junk and rubbish
  - abandoned vehicles
- Improve our Community
  - Raise the quality of life
  - Raise property values
  - Improve businesses climate
- *Through education, enforcement, and investment in the city's neighborhoods, residents realize the image of the incorporation they envisioned, enhance their expectations of their community, and begin transforming their neighborhoods into safer, cleaner environments.*

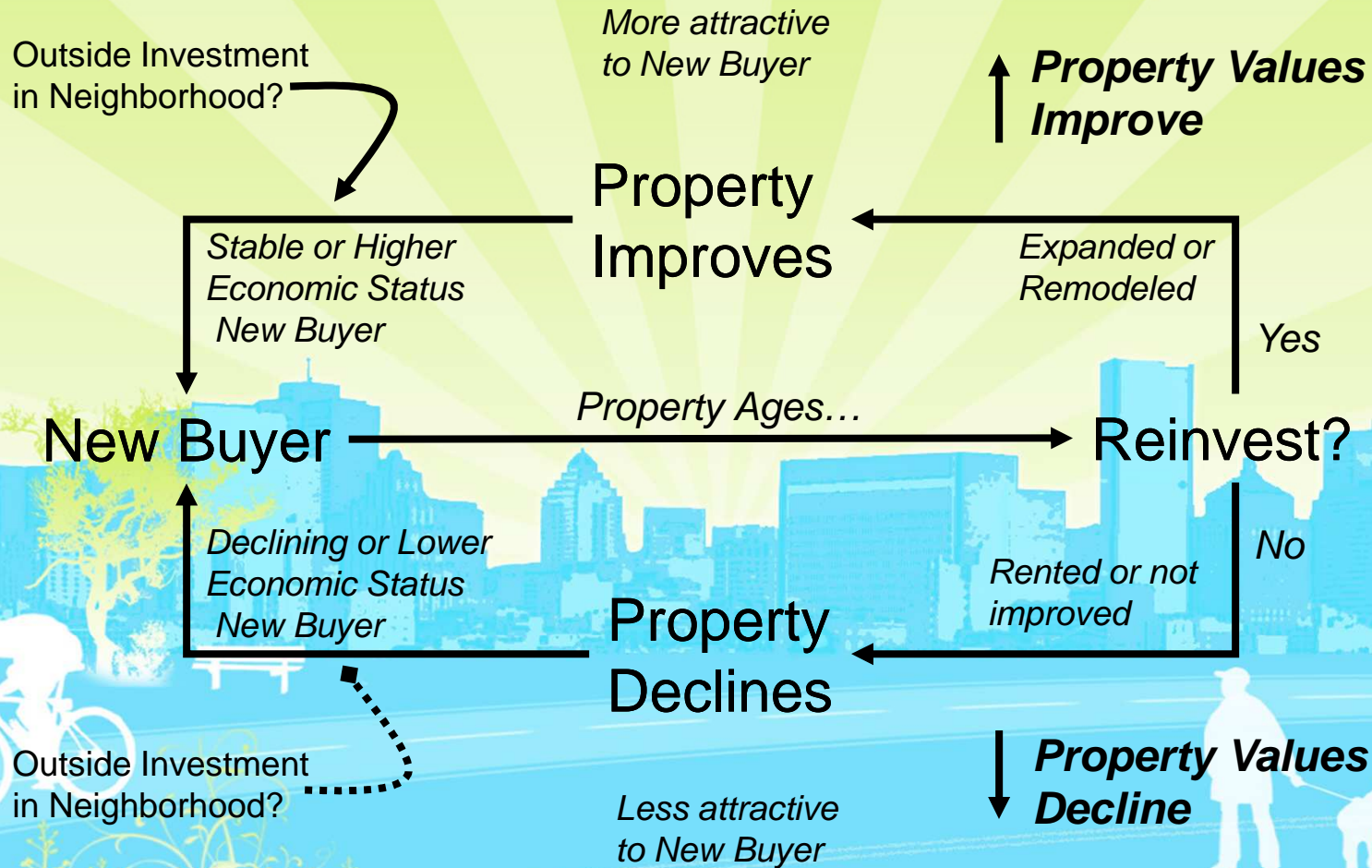


# Why Suburbs Decline

- **Homeowners have real *Options*:**
  1. Reinvest in their home
    - if neighbors do the same, may recover the investment
    - if neighbors don't, lose investment
  2. Stay but don't reinvest
    - hope the neighborhood improves as your property declines
  3. Leave the community - move to newer suburb
    - sell to lower income buyer
    - rent to lower income buyer (worst impact)



# Property Values Cycle in Aging Neighborhoods



Even local landlords can be a challenge...



# Bottom Line?

- Housing markets are dynamic and fickle
- As housing ages it deteriorates - but it lasts
- Housing requires significant reinvestment to maintain its value
- As suburbs hit the generation mark, with declining school enrollment, declining incomes, and declining population -- they can spiral downward rapidly unless “buyers” can balance the characteristics of the “sellers” in income, employment, demographics, etc.



# Blight Busters

- *“Cleaning up Dodge”*
- A first step in our Growing Strong Neighborhoods Program
- Proactive sweep of entire city
  - over two years 500 homes & businesses per event
- Coordinated actions using a large multi-department, multi-agency multidisciplinary team
- *Goal - help residents identify and correct problems of blight and nuisance that impact property values and safety*



# Blight Busters Team

- Code Enforcement
- Police Department (POP, traffic, etc.)
- Housing
- Building Inspection
- Fire Department
- Economic Development
- Animal Control
- Sheriff's Department Volunteers
- Neighborhood Services Volunteers
- CERT
- Neighborhood Watch / Weed & Seed



# Role of Education

- Key to the Success of Blight Busters
  - Mailer before event
  - Door hangers day of event
  - Materials in Spanish and Russian
  - Communications strategy that focused on being **friendly but firm**
- *Result - Most changes occurred without City Staff involvement, before and after the event in each neighborhood*



# Organization of Event

- Each department utilizes its own best practices
- Fire Department acts as Command Center
- Briefings/coordination before and after
- Communications tree established during event to maintain safety
- Sharing of data before, during and after
- Individuals from different departments usually act in pairs



# Value Proposition

- Residents see active and personable city presence in their neighborhood
- City staff seeks to help and educate rather than cite and punish - residents are educated about standards
- Use of local church and other non-profit resources for hardship cases
- Identified very well-maintained properties and gave owners recognition for their efforts



# Building Organizational Capacity

- Barriers to success weren't found internally but rather were external
  - Due to media attention, residents and the region had to change their perception of Rancho Cordova and city government
- Working relationships were strengthened within City Hall and with partner agencies leading to more seamless government





- **More Results:**

- Improved community image (internal and external)
- Increased citizen participation and knowledge
- Decreased blight and nuisances
- Real application of Broken Windows Theory
- Very little pushback - kudos/complaint ratio 10:1
- Reduced caseload with less overhead costs

# Next Steps-

- Establish Measures of Success & Indicators
  - Assemble Historical Data
  - Measure our current Neighborhood Health
- Plan for Growing Strong Neighborhood's next steps, program changes and updates
  - Public outreach, focus on crime prevention & citizen sensors for reporting
  - Reposition enforcement assets for "Top 100" push as opposed to neighborhood sweeps
  - Evaluate other ideas vs. measures, ROI, etc.





- Questions?
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