

White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) Accomplishments in Chester, PA

“One of the most inspiring privileges of being granted SC2 status in the city of Chester, is the kinetic energy of self-governing in conjunction with capacity building and overarching sustainability plans.”

-Chester Mayor John Linder

The Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative (SC2) supports President Obama’s agenda to make historic investments to build ladders of opportunity for those working hard to make it to the middle class and to partner with communities that were hardest-hit by the recent recession. Under SC2, seven locations, **including Chester, PA** receive intensive technical assistance from federal inter-agency Community Solutions Teams that work alongside the mayor in City Hall to support the community’s vision for economic development.

SC2 has worked in **Chester** to increase coordination around comprehensive city and regional planning and enhance the City’s capacity to address its priorities of criminal justice, economic and workforce development, health and human services, information technology, municipal operations, and sustainable communities. Key SC2 accomplishments in **Chester** include:

- Supported the First Lady’s *Let’s Move* Initiative by **helping to facilitate an investment for the City’s first grocery store in more than a decade** led by Philabundance - a Philadelphia-based food-bank providing low-cost, nutritious food to underserved residents. The \$4.5 million project broke ground in late September 2012 and **Fare and Square supermarket-style food bank opened in September 2013 – making in the first new grocery store in the city of Chester in more than a decade**. Financing from two Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) – the Nonprofit Finance Fund and The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) – was critical to helping the project move forward.¹
- Mobilized policy experts and resources to **fund the demolition of the Chester Arms Hotel** – a long abandoned building in close proximity to City Hall to clear space for redevelopment of the downtown business corridor. In addition, the SC2 team **coordinated no-cost urban planning services for Chester from the Temple University Center for Sustainable Communities** to help the city plan for future development.
- The SC2 team provided technical support to the city when it applied for a Transportation; Community and System Preservation grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The City **awarded \$1 million to support planning, land use, and green building assessment activities** for development of the transportation center and the historic central business district.
- **Assisted the City in obtaining equipment and vehicles** through the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Excess Personal Property Program. The SC2 team also facilitated the **donation of 42 laptop computers to Chester high schools** from GSA surplus inventory.

➤ ¹ TRF was recently awarded a Treasury Department CDFI Fund Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) Financial Assistance (FA) grant, a CDFI Program FA grant and a New Markets Tax Credit allocation.