Neighborhoods, USA’s (NUSA) 40th Annual Conference on Neighborhoods Concerns, hosted in the City of Houston, proved that things truly are bigger in Texas. With overall turnout exceeding 800 attendees, including more than 115 youth participants, the conference was NUSA’s largest in 7 years and the host city provided great hospitality.

Surrounded by gleaming office towers and turn-of-the-century historic buildings, downtown Houston provided a backdrop of great excitement for participants. The historic Julia Ideson Library building, which is adjacent to the iconic art-deco City Hall building, provided the perfect location for the Mayor’s Reception on Thursday, May 21. “Cities have to be able to see into the future, but also embrace the past. NUSA is a place to get ideas, refresh and recharge,” said Houston Mayor Annise Parker, who was a recipient of NUSA’s “Who’s Who in America’s Neighborhoods” award in 2014.

NUSA 2015 attendees had a wide array of great workshops and 16 Neighborhood Pride Tours to see how Houstonians put their “passion into action” every day. Additionally, participants were wowed by great keynote speakers like Neighborhood Centers Inc. President Angela Blanchard and Windsor Village UMC Pastor Kirbyjon Caldwell, who were inspiring and shared their efforts to create better futures in their communities.

“You have to have a vision. Where there is no vision, the people perish. Without the right people, the vision will perish,” Caldwell said.

“Everything that brings us closer makes us stronger. The answer to every problem is community. You are all you’ve got and you are enough,” Blanchard said. “The measure of a good neighborhood is not who’s there, but who’s welcome.”

To commemorate NUSA’s 40th anniversary, conferees took the theme of “passion into action” to heart and donated more than 1000 books to the library of Neighborhood Centers, Inc. for under-served children. The generous donations and gifts not only will make a difference to youth served by Neighborhood Centers, but also made a lasting impact on Blanchard.
**2015 NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

### Multi Neighborhood Partnerships

**GRAND PRIZE - NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE YEAR** (featured on page 1)

**1st Place Project:** Wedge Garden (Raleigh, North Carolina)

Located on the Alexander Family YMCA property in Raleigh, Wedge Garden has transformed a neighborhood and a city from the inside out. By using the Asset Based Community Development model, a group of dedicated gardeners have grown the Garden into a learning center to connect and motivate students and families from diverse backgrounds through organic gardening, environmental stewardship and nutrition education.

**Picture:** Tige Watts, Neighborhoods, USA President, presents Dan Bagley and Shamsa Visone with the 1st place award in Multi Neighborhood Projects

**2nd Place Project:** Near West Collaborative - Abandoned Mural Masterpiece (Indianapolis, Indiana)

The Abandoned Mural Masterpiece project utilized the gifts and raw talent of artists to enhance the appearance of boarded up abandoned properties. Through the efforts of this project, city laws have been established to allow the transformation of blighted properties throughout the community.

**3rd Place Project:** Lake Worth Centennial Celebration (Fort Worth, Texas)

Four communities surrounding a community feature and treasure set out on a yearlong project created to fulfill the motto, “Honor the Past and Protect the Future.” Throughout the year, events were designed to foster multi neighborhood partnerships, improve community engagement, and increase stakeholder participation.

### Physical Revitalization/Beautification - Single Neighborhood

**1st Place Project:** Westbury Civic Club Community Garden (Houston, Texas)

The Westbury Civic Club began facilitating green projects in support of neighborhood revitalization. These efforts culminated with the creation of a community garden. Threatened with destruction due to development, the neighborhood banded together to save the garden, with activities such as a fund raising and public awareness campaign, garden tours and more. With support from the community and elected officials, an innovative solution was developed, thus saving this valuable community asset.

**Picture:** Tige Watts, Neighborhoods, USA President, presents Cindy Chapman and Becky Edmondson with the 1st place award for Physical Revitalization

**2nd Place Project:** Recycled Water Irrigation for Forrest Creek (Round Rock, Texas)

The Forest Creek Homeowner’s Association reduced their use of potable water for the community’s greenbelt and park by over 90%, saving $25,000 and 15 million gallons of potable water per year through a cooperative project between the HOA and the city, connecting the city’s reclaimed water outlet and the community irrigation system.

**3rd Place Project:** Denver Park Neighborhood Association (Memphis, Tennessee)

The Denver Park Neighborhood Association, in collaboration with the Memphis Police Department Community Outreach Program (COP) and other agencies, worked to reduce crime and blight in their community through various community improvement projects and programs such as Unity in the Community Day, Denver Park Block Party, and Denver Park Trick a Trunk.

**Finalist Project:** Shores of Wellington Lake Shores Park (Garland, Texas)

The Shores of Wellington Homeowner’s Association developed and implemented a project that provided homeowners with pedestrian lake access while maintaining the privacy of nearby homeowners and the natural habitat of the area. Features include sustainable landscaping, erosion control, and seating areas for residents to pause and contemplate the view.

### Social Revitalization/Neighborliness - Single Neighborhood

**1st Place Project:** Old Spanish Trail/South Union Revitalization (Houston, Texas)

A neighborhood alliance of residents, community agencies, educators, and many others came together to create various revitalization initiatives such as Strollin’ and Rollin’ (which is a new twist on hike and bike trails), Hartsfield Elementary School park improvements, and the CSIROOD (Helping Our Own Development) initiative. Through their efforts they were able to build relationships, engage residents and gain buy-in, and improve the overall quality of life.

**Picture:** Tige Watts, Neighborhoods, USA President, presents Gwendolyn Fedrick and Breanna Cotton with the 1st place award for Social Revitalization/Neighborliness - Single Neighborhood

**2nd Place Project:** Sunset Avenue Architectural Tour (Pasadena, California)

After the community’s decade-long effort to revitalize and restore peace to their crime-compromised neighborhood, the Sunset Avenue Neighborhood Association achieved a tenuous victory, allowing residents to offer the premiere tour of their area’s historical homes.
2015 NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE YEAR AWARDS cont’d

Social Revitalization/Neighborliness - Single Neighborhood Cont’d

3rd Place Project: Meredith Gardens Chili Cook-Off & Bocce Ball Tournament (Huntington Beach, California)

Faced with losing their neighborhood park, baseball fields, and green space, the Meredith Gardens Homeowner’s Association banded together to create the “Save LeBard Park- Bocce Ball Tournament and Chili Cook-Off.” A day of fun proved to be a great fundraiser, social event, and catalyst for bringing people together to save their beloved park.

Finalist: Eastwood Neighborhood Preservation Project (Birmingham, Alabama)

Working to preserve their local environment, reduce crime, improve their quality of life, preserve their neighborhood identity and local voting rights, the Eastwood Neighborhood Association implemented various activities and projects, such as: a neighborhood cleanup, water sampling for contamination, the purchase of neighborhood ID signs, and implementation of neighborhood traffic management improvements.

2015 BEST NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAM AWARDS

Physical Revitalization/Beautification

1st Place Project: Adopt-A-Neighbor (Fort Lauderdale, Florida)

Fort Lauderdale’s Adopt-A-Neighbor initiative pairs caring volunteers with homeowners to build community by enhancing properties and beautifying neighborhoods throughout the city. The program was developed to help low-income, elderly or disabled homeowners bring their properties into compliance. City employees help identify program participants and then match them with a local volunteer organization, who in turn work directly with the neighbor to address code concerns and beautify properties.

Pictured: Tige Watts, Neighborhoods, USA President, presents Jorg Hruschka, Ingrid Gottlieb and Hal Barnes with their 1st place award for Best Neighborhood Program - Physical Revitalization/Beautification Category.

2nd Place Project: Tool Lending Center & Neighborhood Cleanup Program (Round Rock, Texas)

The City of Round Rock’s Neighborhood Cleanup Program is a full service program that features a tool lending center filled with 276 tools for residents and volunteers to check-out at no cost for neighborhood cleanup days. Utilizing neighborhood association leadership, the program connects hundreds of church volunteers with residents within the neighborhoods who have a genuine need.

3rd Place Project: Into the Streets Community Mural Project (Birmingham, Alabama)

Led by the Birmingham Museum of Art, this program included multiple community groups working together to create a series of mural panels, than not only physically revitalized a community center and park through art, but also allowed for a social transformation of community.

Finalist Project: Do It Yourself Garland (Garland, Texas)

Do It Yourself Garland is a program that provides guidance and support to homeowners seeking to complete home improvement projects. The program is led by the Idea Book Series, a set of user friendly publications highlighting home improvement activities for all homeowners, regardless of their level of expertise.

Social Revitalization/Neighborliness

1st Place Project: iLead-Your Interactive Training Program (Orlando, Florida)

iLead was created as a comprehensive interactive leadership training program for neighborhood volunteers. Through a series of webinars, workshops, guides and videos available online 24/7, this program offers training on a variety of topics ranging from board operations to cultivating new leadership.

Pictured: Tige Watts, Neighborhoods, USA President, presents Cindy Light and Michele Brennan with their 1st place award for Best Neighborhood Program - Social Revitalization/Neighborliness Category.

2nd Place Project: ACCESS Columbia (Columbia, South Carolina)

ACCESS Columbia, held in April 2014, was a free one day conference focused on financial literacy. Workshops, for both adults and children, ranged from budgeting to fair housing. Also included as part of the conference was an information fair with local bank and other relevant vendors.

3rd Place Project: Palm Center’s Farmers’ Market (Houston, Texas)

The Palm Center’s Farmers’ Market was implemented to combat the food desert the community existed in, by helping to counter the plethora of fast food restaurants and unhealthy dining options in their community. The sale of fresh produce and goods, along with classes and workshops, are designed to improve the availability and accessibility to fresher, healthier fare.

Finalist Project: Block Party Trailer Program (Arvada, Colorado)

The Block Party Trailer Program was initiated to provide an easy way for neighbors to gather and get to know each other. The program features a trailer, stocked with block party supplies, that can be checked out for events.
### Social Revitalization/Neighborliness

**Finalist Project:** Mariposa District - Denver Housing Authority (Denver, Colorado)

The Mariposa District was designed to revitalize 270 public housing units/homes from an area of concentrated poverty into a vibrant, mixed income community. Meetings were held monthly to discuss the needs of the community, and then held as needed during the implementation phase of the redevelopment. Based on surveys and input, the following objectives were identified: increase physical activity, improve pedestrian and bike opportunities along with safety, increase healthy eating habits, provide better access to health care, and reduce crime.

**Finalist Project:** Hopkins Family Practice- Eau Claire Cooperative Health Centers (Columbia, South Carolina)

The goal of the Hopkins Family Practice was to improve access to medical care by providing a medical home for the 13,717 residents of the Hopkins Community. The facility offers a full range of adult, pediatric, obstetrics and gynecology, and behavioral health services. Opening in 2014, the facility serves over 2,400 patients in the rural Hopkins community in South Carolina, with 58% of those patients of low to moderate income levels.

**Finalist Project:** Ready Shelby (Memphis, Tennessee)

The Ready Shelby program is a collaborative public educational and outreach initiative of eight municipalities and Shelby County designed to prepare Senior Facility and Hi Rise tenants for emergencies and disasters. Realizing that some residents had transportation and mobility issues, a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)-To-Go training program was developed.

### 2015 NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER AWARDS

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