

**Building the Community Health of Maryvale Village:
A Roadmap for FireStar Investment**

*FireStar Fund Community Scan
City of Phoenix Council District 5
Maryvale Fight Back Neighborhood*

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A Collaboration Among:

**ASU Partnership for Community Development
City of Phoenix Fire Department
Stardust Foundation
United Phoenix Fire Fighters Association
Valley of the Sun United Way**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In 2005, the FireStar Fund was established as a collaborative venture between the Valley of the Sun United Way, Stardust Foundation, United Phoenix Fire Fighters Association, City of Phoenix Fire Department, City of Phoenix Mayor's Office and other community partners. This fund committed \$150,000 over the course of a two-year period to "improve the lives of people and communities in the Phoenix-metro region, who are in social and economic distress." This fresh approach to community building would utilize the volunteer resources of the United Phoenix Fire Fighters Association and their connections with other organizations and resources within the Phoenix metropolitan area to conduct revitalization efforts in a specific community. Destined to be a model for future FireStar Fund projects, the first year was dedicated to community building efforts within the City of Phoenix's Maryvale Village.

A FireStar Planning Committee was organized in June 2005 to provide oversight of the FireStar investment within Maryvale Village. The Partnership for Community Development (PCD) of Arizona State University's West campus was commissioned to conduct the assessment, partner with the FireStar Committee to develop goals for the investment, and create an action plan in conjunction with the FireStar Fund partners. The process focused on the broad question: *How might the resources of the FireStar fund best be invested to help the Maryvale Village neighborhood?*

Methods

Working with the FireStar Planning Committee, the PCD implemented eight methodologies to produce a neighborhood assessment and action plan. These included:

- Socio-demographic/economic analyses
- Review of prior assessment and planning efforts
- Key informant interviews
- Neighborhood focus groups/visioning sessions
- Community asset mapping
- Analysis of FireStar Committee Neighborhood Stability Factors
- Review of national literature on community development
- FireStar Planning Committee action planning

Results

Maryvale residents cherish many aspects of their neighborhood – its history, and its human service organizations, its businesses, and its schools. They carry a vision for the future of their neighborhood, which might be succinctly summarized

FireStar Fund Community Scan
ASU's Partnership for Community Development

as: “to have a safe and secure neighborhood where all individuals and families can flourish economically, culturally, and educationally to improve their quality of life.”

At the same time, there are clear challenges that keep this community from reaching its ideal. Residents would like to see their community come together to address issues surrounding community pride, public safety, education, leadership, and inadequate programming for youth and seniors.

After analyzing the community’s assets and identifying the challenges facing this neighborhood, the FireStar Planning Committee, guided by the community’s vision, produced an action plan. Three areas of priority investment were identified:

- **Housing Quality and Safety** (e.g., beautification, safety improvements, and homeowner education).
- **Safe Neighborhoods** (e.g., capital improvements, neighborhood education, and recognition for neighborhood improvements).
- **Enhancing Neighborhood Cohesion and Strong Social Support Systems** (e.g., youth development programs, leadership development programs, senior programs and human services programs).

Within each priority area, specific intervention strategies were identified. Moreover, specific community partners and lead individuals were identified to champion plan implementation.

Conclusion

The FireStar Fund stands as a significant partner in helping Maryvale residents reach their vision and their potential. While the particular insights from this assessment are rich and varied, four fundamental themes have emerged:

- Healthy communities are built by empowering the residents and organizations *within* the community – not by outside organizations doing something *for* the community.
- Effective community development is accomplished by long term investments in structural change – not by short-term investments in cleaning up community “problems”.
- Significant investments in the community’s youth will result in improved life quality for all generations.
- Effective community development happens when many sectors work together in partnership.

By focusing on these themes, FireStar investments will powerfully affect positive change within Maryvale Village. With the vision of FireStar clearly defined, and anchored in the dreams of the community, the impact will be profound. Done

well, these investments could serve as a national model of excellence for affecting community change. The residents of all communities will be the ultimate beneficiaries.