

Executive Summary

ES-05 Executive Summary - 24 CFR 91.200(c), 91.220(b)

1. Introduction

The City of Allentown, Pennsylvania, has prepared a Five-Year Consolidated Plan to identify housing and community development needs and to develop specific goals and objectives to address those needs over a five-year period. This Five-Year Consolidated Plan for the City covers the period of July 1, 2015, until June 30, 2020. The Consolidated Plan allows the City to continue to receive federal housing and community development funds as a direct Entitlement from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In order to continue to receive these funds for Fiscal Year 2015, the City of Allentown must submit its Five-Year Consolidated Plan and FY 2015 Annual Action Plan to HUD by May 15, 2015. The 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan stipulates that the City's Department of Community and Economic Development will administer the community development programs for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Emergency Solutions Grant(ESG), the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), and HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Programs. (The HOPWA program provides social services and rental assistance for persons with HIV and AIDs. The City of Allentown entered into an agreement with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to administer its HOPWA program).

The FY 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan describes to HUD how the City of Allentown intends to use federal and non-federal resources to meet community needs. The funds are intended to provide low- and moderate-income households with viable communities by addressing one of HUD's three objectives:

- Provide decent housing
- Create a suitable living environment
- Create economic opportunities

Eligible activities include community facilities and improvements, roads and infrastructure, housing rehabilitation and preservation, development activities, public services, economic development, planning, and administration.

Program outcomes are designed to show how each activity benefits the community or people served. All activities must provide one of the following benefits:

- Improved Availability/Accessibility
- Improved Affordability
- Improved Sustainability

Community Development Block Grant funds to address the needs outlined in this Plan are anticipated to be approximately \$2,135,396 for each of the next five years. HOME funds are estimated to be \$665,519 each year, and ESG funds are estimated to be \$190,484.

2. Summary of the objectives and outcomes identified in the Plan Needs Assessment Overview

Housing Needs:

- To maintain and improve the condition of the housing stock to meet or exceed current code standards with a priority placed in units in the Center City Initiative Area (CCI)
- To make available affordable homeownership, within the existing housing stock
- To support the provision of decent, safe, and affordable rental housing within the City and on a regional basis
- To participate in a regional effort to make available a full array of permanent housing opportunities for special needs populations, to contribute to meeting the shelter and service needs of homeless residents of the City and to assist residents of the City in imminent danger of becoming homeless

Homeless Needs:

- To support prevention strategies that address the root causes of chronic homelessness through the provision of tenant education; rental assistance; job/vocational training; employment services
- To support intervention strategies that include the closure of homeless camps, when possible, and addressing the gaps and barriers in the service delivery system
- To support infrastructure strategies that include advocating for services, programs, and policies at the local, state, and national levels that enable chronically-homeless persons to live as independently as possible

Community Development Needs:

- Revitalizing Allentown's economy through vocational/educational training of City residents, small business loans, and promotion of new activities in the downtown
- Upgrading infrastructure in downtown Allentown through the rehabilitation of public infrastructure including streets, sidewalks, parks and other facilities, to attract businesses and residents
- Improve neighborhoods by rehabilitating the existing housing stock and creating homeownership and rental housing opportunities

Non-Homeless Special Needs:

Elderly and Frail:

- Continue to support activities that provide affordable housing for elderly and frail elderly residents
- Continue to support activities that provide the elderly and frail elderly with benefits counseling, care coordination, transportation, and other services

Mental Illness:

- Continue to offer support and assistance to local agencies that provide supportive services and outreach programs to individuals with mental illness
- Increase the supply of transitional and permanent supportive housing facilities for persons with mental illness and mental disabilities

Disabled:

- Continue to support activities that serve persons with disabilities

Drug and Alcohol Addiction:

- Continue to offer support to local agencies that provide outreach programs to individuals with drug and alcohol problems
- Increase the supply of transitional and permanent supportive housing for individuals with drug and alcohol addiction

HIV/AIDS:

- Continue to support efforts that provide affordable housing to people living with HIV/AIDS
- Continue to support organizations that provide supportive services to people living with HIV/AIDS

3. Evaluation of past performance

The City of Allentown prepared a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) for FY2013 (July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014). This CAPER was the fourth year of the five-year period and reported the FY2013 accomplishments of Allentown's CDBG, HOME and ESG Programs.

The City has consistently met the timeliness goals set by HUD at 1.5 times the City's allocation. This goal is expected to be met for the FY 2014 program year.

In FY2013 the CDBG funds were spent on a variety of activities in the following categories, including Housing Rehabilitation, Public Infrastructure and Public Facilities, Acquisition of Substandard Properties, Code Enforcement, Commercial Rehabilitation, Demolition, Direct Homeownership Assistance, Planning and Administration, and Public Services.

The HOME funds were expended on the following eligible activities, including Administration, CHDO Set-Aside, and Housing Rehabilitation.

The ESG grant of was expended on the following eligible activities, including, Administration, Emergency Shelter assistance and Homeless Prevention.

4. Summary of citizen participation process and consultation process

The goals and strategies for the FY 2015-2019 Five Year Consolidated Plan and the 2015 Annual Action Plan were developed in conjunction with a coordinated public and stakeholder outreach process. Citizen participation in the development of the Consolidated Plan and Action Plan was encouraged through participation in the Focus Group meetings, the online community survey, public hearings and review of the Plan during the display period. Citizens were made aware of the process and opportunity to comment on the plan through newspaper advertisements, public hearings, surveys, and focus group meetings.

Applications for funding were sought from members of the community. Mailings were made to agencies throughout the community, not just those who received funding in the past. Outreach was provided through communication with service organizations that serve low income residents in the areas where funds would be spent including the targeted Center City Initiative Area, minority and non-English speaking persons, and residents of assisted housing.

The first week of January 2015, the City of Allentown Department of Community and Economic Development sent a letter announcing the 2015 Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan Program and schedule to interested agencies and individuals and placed an advertisement in *The Morning Call* newspaper, announcing the 2015 program and availability of funds. This advertisement also announced the public hearings.

On January 27, 2015 public hearings were held at 10:00 am and 5:30 pm. The hearings were held in City Council Chambers, City Hall, 435 Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA. A copy of the sign –in sheets and notices are included in the Citizen Participation Appendices.

Applications for funds were accepted on February 6, 2015. During the week of February 23 to February 27, 2015, Proposal Review Week was held. A panel of four City staff reviewed over 40 applications for funding and during proposal review week. All agencies applying for funds met with the panelists to explain their proposals and answer questions. These meetings were open to the public, although no additional persons attended.

A summary of the draft Action Plan was posted on the City's website on April 6, 2015. In addition, an advertisement was published in *The Morning Call* (on April 4, 2015) advising the public that the plan was available for review at the City's Department of Community and Economic Development, City Hall, 435 Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA.

5. Summary of public comments

A summary of public comments and consultation is included in the PR-10 Consultation and PR-15 Citizen Participation sections of this plan.

6. Summary of comments or views not accepted and the reasons for not accepting them

All of the comments or views were accepted by the City of Allentown.

7. Summary

The City of Allentown strived to prepare a 2015 -2019 Consolidated Plan that outlined the development of a viable urban community by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, expanded economic opportunities principally for low and moderate-income persons, and programs that will address the needs of homeless and near homeless persons.

The City of Allentown's Citizen Participation outreach was designed to encourage broad participation from the City's residents, including non-English speaking persons. An approved Citizen Participation Plan was used to gather public comments through public meetings and the consultation process provided additional input. Information gathered from the public, and data provided by HUD was used to identify goals and the activities of this Consolidated Plan.