

To: CDBG Commission Members  
From: Brenda K. Konkel (individual community member)  
Re: Input on 2014 Annual Action Plan  
Date: October 2, 2013

I am uncertain if I will be able to attend the CDBG meeting this evening because there are several other housing related meetings scheduled at the same time. (TIF Committee is making recommendations about affordable housing, Human Services Board and the county board are discussing "plan B" because there will be no permanent, comprehensive day center or warming center this winter for the third year in a row.) Here are my comments on the 2014 Annual Action Plan.

**PUBLIC INPUT (page 9)**

Your public input plan is not working, you are not getting any input into the annual plans. Looking at the report I found only 6 comments on two occasions in the last 3 years.

2011 - April 1 - 5 comments, September 16th, no comments, no further comments on the 30 day comment period

2012 - No comments on March 3, Sept 8 or the 30 day comment period.

2013 - March 1 and September 6th, no comments, Only I commented on October 4th

Additionally, I have been a member of the Homeless Services Consortium for years and I am not aware of any recent attempts during this time to discuss the 2014 plan. At the last meeting, I was the only one to mention it, and no one elaborated or commented or asked questions about what it was or why it is important. I believe there needs to be an educational effort around the plan.

I believe that more proactive education about what this plan is, why it is important and when to comment is necessary. Simply putting a document on a website, in the newspaper and at the library won't get the word out about and encourage participation. Showing up to meetings, but not mentioning the plan or seeking input about it isn't broadening public participation. I don't believe any actual outreach happens in any of the meetings mentioned. I believe the commission should re-evaluate the plan, get a report from staff about the current efforts and significantly overhaul the section about broadening public participation. In the past, many years ago, a staff member would show up to the Affordable Housing Roundtable and explain what the report was and why the comments were available, that hasn't happened in years. As a recipient of these funds, but not a member of the neighborhood center directors group or Third Sector Housing, I often find that communications from the CDBG office are lacking.

There should also be a summary of the plan or condensed questions that can be asked of the community that doesn't require them reading a 69 page document to provide feedback. It's a daunting task. Simply finding the 2014 Draft report was also a challenge for me, it was not attached to the legistar file for the meeting until 2 days before the public hearing.

**DANE CO CONTINUUM OF CARE AND HOMELESS SERVICES CONSORTIUM (page 9)**

Are they not the same thing? What is the difference?

**REPEAT MY COMMENTS FROM LAST YEAR (page 11)**

I provided comments last year, but there was no response to them. I would like to reiterate those comments once again.

- We need to keep a focus on providing adequate funds for rental housing due to the high need in the community for affordable rental housing
- Consider greater opportunities for public participation including the Homeless Consortium
- Consider broadening the anti-poverty strategy
- The city's current low vacancy rate and changes to state law are barriers to finding affordable housing
- Consider strong interventions when hospitals discharge people directly to the streets.

### **ANTI-POVERTY PLAN (page 35-36)**

This plan still seems woefully inadequate. Our poverty rate continues to increase to over 18% and there seems to be little to no discussion of the issue or new strategies employed to tackle this problem. With the new health care laws, changes to the food stamp program and other efforts by the state and federal governments, it seems that a more comprehensive, detailed local plan is necessary to address the poverty issue. We tend to talk around the issue, but have not created a comprehensive plan that can be implemented in our community.

### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS DUE TO NEW INFORMATION AND CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES**

#### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING GOALS (page 37)**

- The Annual Affordable Housing Goals and action plan should reflect the work done in the Impediments to Fair Housing Study and the actions recommended there should be included in this section.
- The Public Housing Strategy should include efforts supported by HUD and the 100,000 Homes campaign to include homelessness as a preference and expand that to prioritizing chronically homeless individuals using the vulnerability index.
- The report should reflect the new information that most of the public housing waiting lists have been closed.
- The report should reflect, when talking about the Section 8 program, that the waiting lists have been closed for years.
- The Anti-poverty Strategy should reflect the city's new efforts to include Equity Impact Statements about local legislation.
- The Anti-poverty strategy should include the comments in the Impediments to Fair Housing study about building affordable housing in low-income neighborhoods instead of spreading it out throughout the city.

#### **HOMELESS PREVENTION ELEMENTS (page 42)**

- I believe the city has not taken steps to create a specific action plan to eliminate chronic homelessness. The SRO project is a huge, positive step, but we have lost homeless outreach workers over the past year and their strategy is clearly not working. I recently review the HMIS data for several chronically homeless individuals in the community and the only services they appear to have received in the past few years are some shelter nights and bus tickets. There is no indication of any services that would help them get off the streets in any meaningful manner.
- The Homeless Services Commission need to update their goals to include HUD's focus on reducing chronic homelessness.
- While I appreciate the comment about reviewing small claims court data and HMIS data to determine if people who are facing eviction end up homeless, there appears to be a flaw in that strategy because it does not accommodate for the efforts to educate people being evicted (through a postcard) and the mediation services that are provided or the legal services provided by Legal Action of Wisconsin. As the Executive Director of the agency that provides the eviction prevention services at small claims court, I was not aware of these efforts and would appreciate being able to provide input on that process. I believe a meeting with Legal Action of Wisconsin and Tenant Resource Center staff should be set up to

discuss strategies to make this determination. I also believe the data to be reviewed is interviewing those using shelter and asking them why they ended up in shelter and if they faced any evictions in the past few years. I believe that data is already collected. Additionally, a review of CCAP data would also show a more extensive eviction history record and history of problems with eviction.

- I believe that efforts to create a comprehensive daytime resource center should be mentioned here. It would be good to see in writing the City of Madison's intentions about supporting a comprehensive day resource center in the future. This issue has been a political football tossed between the city and county and it is unclear if the city is willing to support this effort in any manner.

#### **NONHOMELESS SPECIAL NEEDS (page 40)**

- My experience is that the current county system to deal with people with AODA issues is inadequate. None of the activities listed in this section help this special population and I believe that should be re-examined.

#### **AGENCY DESCRIPTIONS (pages 56 - 65)**

- I am unclear about the purpose of this list, but there appears to be several agencies or groups missing: Shine 608, Operation Welcome Home, Madison Catholic Multi-cultural Center, Occupy Madison, Stone Soup Squad, Food Not Bombs, Feeding the State St. Family, Project Babies and likely others are all left off the list while other similar programs have been included.

- Madison Homelessness Initiative does not provide shower services.

- First United Methodist Church has significantly cut back on their services to the homeless, no longer providing showers or allowing the homeless to participate in their food pantry, they require an address to use the food pantry.

- The Madison Central Library has significantly expanded what they are offering for the homeless and homeless services and that should be noted in the list.

- Updates should probably be made to indicate the new youth shelter by Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin.

- Updates should probably be to reflect Madison Urban Ministry's efforts to create a medical shelter.

I hope I will be able to join you this evening to further elaborate, but if not, please accept these comments as input on the 2014 Action Plan.