

From: [Pat Gaddis](#)
To: [Cdbg](#)
Subject: Grant Money For Home Owners
Date: Thursday, November 14, 2013 11:09:26 AM

The city has grant money for home owners to update their homes, but you make it very hard to qualify for it. It would be very helpful if the grant monies were more and easily available for low to moderate income home owners.

To: Community Development Block Grant Commission
From: Brenda K. Konkel
Re: 5 year plan input
Date: November 14, 2013

I had planned on making it to the meeting but it didn't quite work out. I am in Wisconsin Dells for the Balance of State Continuum of Care Annual Meeting (Thursday and Friday) and driving back for a board meeting at 6:00 on Thursday, but I had to plan a staff meeting at 5:00 and it couldn't be avoided, so it won't work out to testify in person. I apologize for my written comments being late and quickly written while multi-tasking. Additionally, I probably couldn't give this feedback in 3 minutes or less anyways.

First of all, I very much appreciate that Lynnette Rhodes and Julie Spears came to the Homeless Services Consortium to get input from the group. The form was minimal and the contact brief, but at least there was some contact and notification of the meeting this evening. It is a good start. I also very much appreciate the survey via Survey Monkey. I feel both of these things are vast improvements for the process.

Below is my personal (affordable housing and homeless advocate) and professional (Tenant Resource Center Executive Director for 18 years) feedback tailored to the two notices that I received.

MEETING NOTICE

1. Were the CDBG Office and CDBG Committee effective in working with community groups to achieve the adopted goals of the 2010-2014 Five Year Consolidated Plan? How can the CDBG Office and CDBG Committee improve their effectiveness?

TRC ED:

1. Without a summary of what the goals were and what was achieved in the past 5 years, I am unable to comment intelligently about if the CDBG staff or commission were effective in their efforts. I would like to see such a report to see what progress was made and I would like to see an assessment of why the goals were not met in areas where they were not.

2. Even though I have been the Executive Director of a CDBG funded agency for 18 years, it is not always clear when and how to give input for the 5 year and 1 year plans. I believe there is more need for on-going and regular education about the importance, use and content of these documents. It also has to be easier for people to give meaningful input. For instance, it is difficult to respond to these questions about the goals of the consolidated plan without an easily accessible summary of the goals. Reading and commenting on a 80 page plan that was not linked to the meeting announcement or the request from staff is unrealistic to expect from most busy Executive Directors, especially with only 6 - 9 days notice of the meeting. Additionally, the document I found on line that comes up first on google is still marked "draft".

3. We also need more on-going discussion around community needs and priorities. As a community, we often advocate for funding for our own agencies, but there is no collective community planning that is done consciously outside of the funding process. In fact, there is no time in which non-profit leaders gather to discuss the issues we are facing in the community, identify and prioritize needs of those we serve and develop plans to address them. While there are specialized groups such as 3rd Sector or the Shelter Providers group, there is no cross discussion. The Homeless Services Consortium does not attempt to address larger policy issues. For agencies that don't fit into these groups, there is little to no community involvement on a regular basis. I believe our community would benefit from regularly coming together, identifying needs and brainstorming solutions with a broad cross section of non-profits that are working on the ground in the community. I don't believe this will happen unless the CDBG staff or commissioners assist in facilitating this discussion.

Advocate:

1. Advocates have less familiarity with this plan than those involved and funded by the CDBG office. The need to make this process more transparent and easy to engage in is even more critical. Community members often have

strong opinions and expertise about what is needed in their community, but no outlet to provide this information to decision makers. Merely providing 3 minutes at a meeting in the Municipal Building is not typically a method of input that many will engage in. The survey monkey is good, the reaching out to the Homeless Services Commission and presumably other groups is good. However, I do think that there needs to be a longer period of time to comment and more education about the process so people can give more meaningful input. I am also concerned that the survey monkey presumes that we continue with the same groups of major funding categories which I understand are set locally. I would like to see a larger discussion about the priorities for the larger categories of funding and a full discussion of what the various other opportunities might be.

2. I personally believe that the Homeless Services Consortium needs to be more proactive and collaborative. We come together to share information, minimally, but we do not collaborate or problem solve the many issues that we have in our community. We do not plan together to figure out how to address the growing needs and changing programs. When issues are raised, they are often not addressed in a meaningful way.

2. Within the context of the 2015-19 Five-Year Plan and the 2015-2016 Goals and Objectives, where should the CDBG Committee place its priorities for new funding? Which community needs? Which neighborhoods would best be served by revitalization activities?

TRC ED:

1. I think we need to address the issues raised in the Impediments to Fair Housing Analysis that was done. It will take our community a significant amount of time to build our way out of the Rental Housing and Affordable Housing deficit that we have created as a community. I also think that special attention needs to be given to not building additional affordable housing in low-income neighborhoods, but it should be spread throughout the community. Additionally, something has to be done to address the screening criteria for CDA and other affordable housing projects. Many people desperately in need of this housing have difficulties getting accepted if they make it through the long waiting lists. We need a true Housing First program that people with little or no income can afford, including those on W-2 and other government subsidies.

2. I think we need to focus on HUD's priorities of addressing the needs of chronically homeless individuals in our community. I have not seen any movement in our community towards these priorities while other communities have embraced the goals and have joined the 100,000 Homes campaigns and made significant progress towards housing the chronically homeless, even in communities with low vacancy rates.

3. The three changes to tenant/landlord law have caused a great deal of confusion for tenants and landlords alike. Staff at non-profit agencies that work with tenants, city staff and the community at large needs a significant amount of education around these changes. I strongly believe that these laws and our vacancy rates are leading to many people losing their housing through non-renewals (often have living there for long periods of time) and preventing many people from obtaining housing due to the removal of local protections that used to exist (minimum income, arrest and conviction record etc). However, I also believe that a better understanding of these laws would lead to preventing people losing their housing and security deposits that are critical dollars for our low-income population but the Tenant Resource Center cannot educate the whole community with the small amount of funding we receive.

4. I appreciate the Neighborhood Resource Team and neighborhood based services that are available and that works for many agencies, however, for agencies that serve the entire city, county or even state, it is very difficult to find the resources to participate in neighborhood based services and we need to find a way to incorporate these services at the neighborhood level in a manageable and sustainable way.

Advocate:

New funding should be prioritized for filling gaps in the current system. In no particular order I see the following challenges:

1. Affordable Housing is clearly the highest need, however, it will take us years, if not decades to build us out of this problem and I am uncertain that this community has the political will to put the necessary funds into solving that problem. We currently have no plan to get us out of this problem. Meanwhile, without a sufficient supply of rental housing and affordable rental housing, other needs have emerged.

a. Affordable rental housing for those without income needs to be the highest priority. This housing needs to have sufficient services assist people in getting income. It has to be a true housing first program, where evictions are extremely rare, screening criteria are appropriate and services to address needs of the clients are provided. It is essential that the proposed SROs that are built to assist the chronically homeless are adequately funded to operate with the necessary services. Concentrating services in this building may mean that we need to relocate some services or combine services such as the day resource center so limited staff available can concentrate their services.

b. The Community Development Authority needs to be pushed to make chronically homeless people a priority in their housing. They need to be supported in providing services for those who would be housed with this priority.

c. We need to fully fund the vouchers that are authorized by HUD. We could have 200 more Section 8 vouchers out on the streets if we temporarily funded them until HUD picks up the funding. They base their funding on prior years expenses and a short term investment of funds would lead to 200 more affordable housing units in the future. Along with funding the vouchers, we need to assist people in educating landlords about the fact that they cannot discriminate against voucher holders (that law was not eliminated with the recent law changes) and accommodate the additional time it is taking to find housing.

d. Affordable rental housing needs to be defined better in the multiple city programs throughout the city departments. Often the programs call housing affordable at 80% or 60% AMI, however, the real need is for those at 40% or 30% AMI or less. We need to refocus our programs to address these needs in the community. People at 80% or 60% AMI have many more resources to address their housing needs.

2. While we wait to build our way out of the rental and affordable housing crisis, we need to focus on eviction prevention and keeping people in the housing they currently have, to prevent homelessness. I agree with HUD that we may need to re-examine how we prevent homelessness, what the criteria we use is for eviction prevention dollars and how we distribute those dollars. I would like to be involved in any discussions that we have about that as both an advocate and an Executive Director of an agency that provides mediation services as well as eviction prevention dollars, however, I don't know where that discussion is taking place.

3. We need to build more shelter beds and services for those using the homeless shelter. Since we do not have enough rental housing, affordable housing or eviction prevention dollars and programs, we cannot continue to deny that we need more shelter beds.

a. Single men. It takes much longer than 60 days to find housing, and that is how many days per year men can stay in shelter. Most waiting lists are 4 - 6 months at minimum and several are longer than one year. 60 days in shelter is not adequate to meet the needs of our homeless men. Fortunately, men do not get turned away. However they do not have case managers that work with them to assist in finding housing. I think this is a serious flaw. There are current around 450 chronically homeless men in our community and I believe this needs to be addressed in meaningful way or it will not change. Shelter rules and policies also need to not work to the detriment of those who are working.

b. Single women. There are only 30 beds for single women and single women can and will get turned away, even if they have days left in shelter. There is a lottery system that they participate in when the shelters are full and it is very difficult to plan where to sleep once it is dark at night and it is particularly an unsafe situation for single women alone on the street at night. They need more shelter beds to meet the needs of the community and they need to examine if their 30 - 60 day limit is realistic.

c. Families. There is no emergency shelter for families. There are often 40 - 60 or more families on the WAITING LIST to get into emergency shelter. The Warming House turns families and children away on a regular basis. Homeless families on the waiting list to get into emergency shelter can often get into the Warming shelter only 2 or 3 times a week and they are on the street/in hotels/with friends and family the rest of the evenings. Of course, families staying with friends or family members often jeopardize the housed family's housing. They have a 90-day annual limit and 180-day life time limit. Finally, they only prioritize new born infants up to 4 months old. For many, the thought of a young child on the street is unacceptable and as a result, child protective services is getting

involved with more homeless families and children have been taken away from their parents due to their homelessness. I believe there needs to be a preference for families that have been contacted by CPS.

4. When people run out of time in shelters, we need to figure out how to meet basic needs such as lockers/storage, showers, restrooms, laundry, transportation etc. in a realistic and meaningful manner. Between getting meals and meeting these basic needs, there is very little time left over to find a job or housing. It is exhausting just getting basic needs met. Additionally, community organizations are currently aware of 41 different encampments where homeless people are living throughout the Madison area. There are volunteers that regularly visit these encampments and help meet basic needs like sleeping bags and blankets, boots, medical supplies, food, propane, etc. etc. etc. These volunteer efforts have so far been sustainable, but there needs to be a more systematic system in place and more outreach workers available to help meet the needs of the people living outside of shelter.

5. We need to make a permanent comprehensive daytime resource center happen this year. It has been three years where there was a last minute scramble to deal with the issue of homeless persons having no space to be during the day during the coldest days of the year. The resource center would solve many of the issues listed above, plus building relationships with people is the key to helping people move out of homelessness.

6. I think we need to examine the possibility of having a wet shelter for those who are alcoholics. Studies show that when done well, alcohol consumption goes down 8% every three months and 40% over a two year period. For some in our community, this would be tremendous progress and it would substantially decrease costs to our community through detox, hospitals and other emergency services.

7. We need to support efforts to establish a medical shelter. There are simply too many stories of people being discharged from hospitals without appropriate after care plans. Additionally, the shelters are often not equipped to deal with last minute needs of those who show up after hours.

8. There is a tremendous unmet need in the community for mental health and alcohol and drug treatment programs. I think better coordination with those systems with housing and homeless services are critical to moving forward for much of the population and we need to forge better relationships in these areas.

9. Jobs. I have helped write resumes and apply for jobs with several of our homeless community members. We also work with W-2 and DVR programs at the Tenant Resource Center. There is a huge need for very basic skills to be taught to people who want to work, but are not going to get hired in this employment market. Continuing to apply for jobs which they are not going to get is demoralizing and many give up as a result.

10. Transportation. We need to explore what it would take to have a free bus pass for the homeless, much like there is for disabled veterans.

3. Are there specific opportunities or concerns emerging in the next several years that you feel the City should be addressing through its community and neighborhood development program?

TRC ED: See above. I don't see the rental housing or affordable housing crisis getting better any time soon. As you know, the projects require large amounts of money and take time. We need a long term strategy to address this problem and CDBG staff and committee members need to be included in those discussions. The Impediments to Fair Housing report is great, but there needs to be a realistic and meaningful implementation plan.

Advocate: See above.

1. I believe our community is not equipped to address the issues outlined above and will not provide the resources to do so, in the meantime, we need to look at city sanctioned encampments and solutions such as tiny houses.

2. I believe that we need to rewrite the requirements for using the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to make sure that it is being used short term to the biggest advantage for the community. We also need to find ways to fund the Trust Fund, which must remain a Trust Fund.

3. I believe that there has to be an examination of city policies to figure out how affordable housing and homeless services can face less obstacles and be encouraged instead of discouraged. I am hopeful that this may be somewhat addressed through equity impact statements, but I believe the staff and commission will have to be strong advocates to make it happen.

STAFF REQUEST FOR INPUT

- What is the need for affordable housing for low-to-moderate income households in our community? What kind of units do we need to produce to meet the need?

TRC ED: The highest need we see are for people at 30 - 40% of AMI or below. WHEDA "affordable housing" is not attainable for many of the people that we see. Waiting lists at the various programs and their strict screening criteria make it extremely difficult for many to obtain housing in these programs.

Advocate: The highest need is for the 450 chronically homeless men and 95 chronically homeless women in our community. Housing First, with services, realistic screen processes and a plan to prevent evictions from the program.

- How do we balance our priorities for promoting homeownership with that of providing rental housing?

TRC ED: Given the impediments to fair housing report, I think the priorities are clear.

Advocate: Ditto.

- How do we balance the needs of existing neighborhood centers with that of high need areas who want to have a neighborhood center built and supported?

TRC ED: No educated opinion.

Advocate: The needs are high, the resources are few. Neighborhood centers that serve meals and provide basic needs for community members are greatly valued.

- Are their innovative partnerships that can be suggested to address the needs for neighborhood centers in new areas?

TRC ED: No educated opinion.

Advocate: Ditto.

- How do we balance the needs of homeless people between providing resources for shelter and assisting permanent affordable housing?

TRC ED: We need to plan for what it would take to provide adequate affordable and rental housing in our community. We need to agree on what the need is, how we could meet that need and how long it would take if we had the resources necessary. We would then need to assess what resources would be realistically available. We need to move forward in a parallel track to meet the needs of both. Increases in homelessness cannot be ignored while we take 20 years to fix the current deficit in housing and so it must be balanced, but more information is needed.

Advocate: Ditto. The community does not seem inclined to build additional shelter space because they fear people will come here because of our services. I find that to be highly unlikely as there are better homeless services in many other areas in the midwest. In the meantime, if we do not have more shelter, we need to re-examine policies about a third party complaint system, the number of days people are allowed to be in shelter, the cold and inclement weather policies, the permanent ban policies and many more. Funders need to be involved in these discussions to create community standards of what we find acceptable.

- How do we balance the need for creating jobs and business development with the need for assisting small start up businesses?

TRC ED: No opinion.

Advocate: Job training and job readiness is the primary need. If we spend money on "job creation" there needs to be a way to measure success of these programs and a way to follow up on if those jobs were actually created as anticipated.

CONCLUSION

In closing, thanks for asking! Sorry I was unable to be there in person this evening. The needs in the community are great and I think we need to have a better understanding of those needs through data and facilitated community conversations. We need to brainstorm together and create a true plan to address poverty in our community in a holistic and thoughtful manner.