

2014 ANNUAL CONSOLIDATED ACTION PLAN COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

**FOR HOUSING AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Community Development Block Grant
HOME Investment Partnership
Emergency Solutions Grant**



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2014 ANNUAL CONSOLIDATED ACTION PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Akron, Ohio has prepared an Annual Plan for 2014 that includes the budget for the 2014 federal Community Development Block Grant program, the HOME Partnership Program and the Emergency Solutions Grant Program. This Consolidated Action Plan addresses the housing needs of low-income families, homeless families and others with special needs that require supportive services. The plan includes a one-year budget for applying available resources to meet identified needs.

The City of Akron anticipates committing \$5,925,000 in total program funding including \$4,500,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds; \$1,000,000 in HOME funds and \$425,000 in Emergency Solutions Grant funds. Of these funds, approximately \$100,000 is program income.

The proposed plan includes the following initiatives: Neighborhood Revitalization and Sustainability Areas; Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration Grant Program (LDG); Minor (Emergency) Home Repair (city-wide); Non-Profit Community Housing Projects; UNDC New Construction; Neighborhood Partnership Program; Paint program; Waiver Demolition Program; Emergency and Transitional Shelter Housing (city-wide); Neighborhood Business Districts Program; Community Services Programs (supporting Education, the Arts, Security, Health and Fair Housing), Community Gardening Program, Community and Job Development Activities and General Administration.

At least 70% of the Community Development funds are required to be used for activities that principally benefit low-income persons. All HOME funds and ESG funds will be used for activities that benefit low-income persons.

Consolidated Strategy and Plan

Each year the City drafts an Action Plan that budgets funding for the upcoming fiscal year based on priorities that are established in a five-year Consolidated Plan. The 2014 Action Plan is the fifth and final year of the five-year strategy for 2010 to 2014.

The Five Year Consolidated Plan and Strategy for 2010-2014 combines three federal Department of Housing and Urban Development Programs: Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG). The National Affordable Housing Act requires that, for certain Federal Housing and Urban Development programs, the City of Akron must have an approved Consolidated Strategy and Plan. A copy of the five-year strategy is available in the office of the Department of Planning and Urban Development, City of Akron.

Goal of the Strategy and Plan

The goal of the Consolidated Strategy and Plan is to provide a five-year strategy and annual numerical goals to serve as a working guide for the use of federal resources to address local housing, quality of living and economic needs. A strategic plan sets forth goals, objectives and performance benchmarks for measuring progress and establishes a framework for measuring progress and establishes a framework for measuring progress.

Statutory Program Purpose

The Consolidated Strategy and Plan must satisfy the minimum Congressional statutory requirements for Akron's three federal community planning and development formula programs: Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnership and Emergency Solutions Grant. Each of these programs must primarily benefit low and very low income persons. In addition, there are three goals for the CDBG program. The first is the elimination of slum and blight. The programs are to provide decent housing, including programs aimed at assisting persons to obtain affordable housing; retain decent, safe and sanitary affordable housing; and increase the availability of this housing. The second goal of the program is to provide a suitable living environment. The third major statutory goal is to expand economic opportunity.

Consolidated Strategy for 2010-2014

The City of Akron set forth the priority activities to be followed in the five-year strategy as follows:

Priority based on household need:

1. Low Income Owner Household
2. Low Income Renter Household
3. Homeless Families and Individuals
4. Non-Homeless Special Needs Persons

Priority based on activity:

1. Neighborhood Rehabilitation, Owner-occupied Housing
2. New Housing Construction
3. Acquisition and removal of blighted properties.
4. Rental Housing Rehabilitation or Construction
5. Support Facilities and Public Services
6. Homeless Persons, Individuals and Families Assistance

The Consolidated Strategy includes a narrative describing the housing needs of low income families, homeless families and others with special needs that require supportive services. The five-year strategy also identifies obstacles to meeting identified needs, target goals for the number of households assisted, and target dates for completion. The Consolidated Annual Plan includes a one-year budget for applying available resources to the needs identified.

Coordinating and Managing the Process

The City of Akron Department of Planning and Urban Development (DPUD) is the lead agency in the coordination and management of the process and preparation of the Plan. The City will lead and coordinate the consolidated planning, submission and implementation process. The City will continue to be involved in activities over the coming year which enhance coordination between public and non-profit housing providers and private and public health and service agencies.

The City of Akron DPUD has HUD-certified staff trained in HOME Regulations for policy, procedures and monitoring. These individuals are responsible for ensuring HOME funded projects are necessary, prudent and meet HUD defined criteria.

Consolidated Plan/Citizen Participation

Each year the City of Akron convenes a meeting of interested citizens, community organizers, low-income neighborhood residents and others including affordable housing advocates, providers, social service agencies, homeless housing advocates, lending institutions and the Public Housing Authority to allow citizens an opportunity to present their views on community needs. The 2014 Annual Plan represents the final year of the five-year strategy.

The following schedule refers to the 2013 Plan (tentative):

Public hearing on Housing and Community Development Needs (minutes attached)	August 22, 2013
Publish Akron's Consolidated Annual Plan in newspaper(s); Begin 30-day public comment period	September, 2013
Publish notice on Planning Commission Meeting	September, 2013
Planning Commission Public Hearing on Consolidated Plan	September 20, 2013
Akron City Council reviews	October, 2013
Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Meeting	October, 2013

End 30-day public comment period	October, 2013
Submission of Annual Plan to HUD	November 15, 2013
Emergency Shelter Grant Request for Proposals Due	December, 2013
Program year begins	January 1, 2014

Information will be disseminated utilizing mailing lists, neighborhood based groups, block clubs, City Council newsletters and various print media outlets. Presentations are being made to ward meetings and community gatherings.

Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice

In March 2012, the City of Akron hired a consultant (The Housing Research and Advocacy Center with offices in Cleveland) to prepare a new Analysis to Impediments of Fair Housing Choice in Akron, Ohio. The analysis was completed in November, 2012. In addition, the City of Akron Fair Housing Task Force continues to meet every October to review the Identification to Impediments to Fair Housing and Action Plan Matrix and update the matrix as necessary.

Action Plan

The City continues to support the rehabilitation of existing housing in specific areas through the Neighborhood Revitalization Area program and the Neighborhood Sustainability Area program. The City also purchases and removes deteriorated homes in these areas to eliminate blight. The City offers assistance to low-income homeowners or tenants through the City's Minor Home Repair Program and Lead Abatement Programs. The City is now combining rehabilitation assistance with Lead Abatement Assistance in order to maximize productivity and address more items in need of repair in selected homes. Emphasis is also placed on rebuilding neighborhoods with pockets of new housing combined with rehabilitation assistance for properties that do not need to be removed, new streets, new curbs, new sidewalks and new street trees where necessary.

Akron will afford property owners in targeted areas the opportunity to make an investment in each property to improve its outward appearance and make sure that its major systems - heating, electrical and plumbing - are in good working order. The City will invest up to \$15,000 in each property that is rehabilitated in the Revitalization and Sustainability Areas and the Lead Abatement areas.

1. Neighborhood Revitalization Areas

In the oldest parts of Akron, the city will support and revitalize existing neighborhoods by removing dilapidated housing, facilitating new housing construction, upgrading the public infrastructure and rehabilitating the existing housing. New construction will occur by for-profit and non-profit builders with the assistance of the City.

2. Sustainability Areas

Sustainability Areas are targeted to relatively compact areas of between 75 and 100 structures that are considered "tipping point" areas - neighborhoods that are relatively stable but could decline without intervention. These areas can benefit from grants and loans for housing rehabilitation combined with infrastructure improvements to stabilize the selected neighborhoods.

3. Program Continuation

The City will continue to fund a number of programs that have proven their value over the years:

- I. **Non-profit housing development** - the City will provide subsidies to non-profit development corporations for the development of new housing or the acquisition, rehabilitation and sale of existing housing.
- II. **Waiver demolition** - the City will demolish a house or garage free of charge at the request of the owner. The owner retains ownership of the lot.
- III. **Minor Home Repair** - Small-scale assistance (\$4,000) to low-income homeowners or the elderly on a fixed income to correct an emergency problem.

4. Lead Hazard Reduction/Rehabilitation

Within the central part of the City, Akron combines housing rehabilitation assistance with lead paint abatement activity. Low-income homeowners with children six years old and under who are at risk for lead poisoning are eligible for this assistance. Rental property owners with tenants with children also qualify for assistance.

The Goals and Objectives of the City of Akron Lead Demonstration Grant Program are as follows:

- 1.) The elimination and/or control of all identified lead hazards in 285 housing units involving low to very low income families with children under 6 years old;
- 2.) Using matching funds:

- a. conduct the recruitment and training of minority and low income lead contractors and workers;
 - b. conduct outreach programs;
 - c. implement programs which will effectively increase the number of children screened for lead;
- 3.) Implement loan programs involving First Merit Bank of Akron to assist homeowners with repairs;
 - 4.) Develop a comprehensive fair housing training initiative by conducting workshops and training seminars to housing providers, both public and private, civic and community-based organizations, as well as elected and appointed City and County officials;
 - 5.) Provide lead training and awareness.

Neighborhood Stabilization Program (to address foreclosures and generate economic development).

The purposes of this Act are -

- (1) to establish a loan and grant program administered by HUD to help jurisdictions purchase and rehabilitate owner-vacated, foreclosed homes with the goal of stabilizing and occupying them as soon as possible, either through resale or rental to qualified families;
- (2) to distribute funds to areas with the highest areas of need;
- (3) to provide incentives for jurisdictions to use the funds to stabilize as many properties as possible; and
- (4) to provide housing for low- and moderate-income families, especially those that have lost homes to foreclosure

The City of Akron has committed approximately \$115 million in its initial allocation of NSP funding. The City has received an additional \$2.7 million in NSP3 funding that is being utilized in a similar fashion. Activities include:

- Acquisition
- Rehabilitation
- Demolition
- New construction
- Financial mechanisms

The City will market and sell rehabilitated homes and continue to reutilize the funds for subsequent purchase/rehab/demos, etc.

Healthy Homes Program

Akron received \$1.56 million in October 2011 to undertake preventative measures to address home safety hazards. An average of \$4,000 in grant funding is being used to address safety hazards in qualifying households. Items to be addressed include faulty roofs, indoor allergens, lead paint, mold, shower grab-bars, etc. The Program will be administered by the Akron Department of Planning and Urban Development. This program will continue through the end of 2014.

Homeless Prevention Elements

The City of Akron anticipates a 2014 Emergency Solutions Grant entitlement of \$425,000. The City of Akron will issue a request for proposals in November, 2013 to homeless service providers. Funding priorities are given to homeless shelters requesting rehabilitation assistance. Funds are also available to agencies for operating and essential services. Priority is given to agencies not receiving Continuum of Care Supportive Housing Program funds.

The three specific objectives in the City's Homeless Strategic Plan are to:

- a. address the need for renovation and rehabilitation of emergency and transitional shelters;
- b. address the need for furnishings, equipment, utilities, maintenance, insurance, operating costs for homeless emergency shelters and transitional shelters;
- c. provide essential services including medical, education, food counseling, training, etc. for homeless shelters.

The City's 2013 Action Plan follows the strategies outlined above in the allocation of funding to shelter facilities. The City's first priority is the rehabilitation of emergency and transitional facilities. The City is committed to assuring that the community's facilities for the homeless provide decent, safe and sanitary residence. Because of the transient nature of shelter operations, these facilities incur significant wear and tear. It is important that the physical condition of these facilities remains high to provide good living conditions for the residents and to maintain a standard of quality acceptable to surrounding properties and the community.

The City's second funding priority is for operating costs of shelter activities with an emphasis on the purchase of furniture and equipment. Again, the City is concerned with maintaining a quality living environment for residents and to respond to the inevitable wear and tear on facilities. Normal facility operating costs are also eligible for funding.

The City's third funding priority is for essential services, especially those that assist shelter residents to secure permanent housing. Other eligible activities will be considered for funding if they link residents with needed services or programs.

Obstacles to overcome are a lack of funding to provide adequate staffing and the oversight necessary to assure that individuals can be constantly monitored and steered through a system that will provide the support systems necessary to provide job training, employment, affordable housing, alcohol and drug dependence treatment, child care, etc. to stave off conditions that will lead to a recurrence of homelessness.

The City will review ESGP program requirements and outline the City's funding goals as stated in the application. The City will solicit proposals from all interested parties, allowing approximately 45 days returning proposals with the proposal deadline near the middle of December 2013.

The City follows several policies in its review of ESGP proposals:

- a) The City will provide assistance to a wide variety of shelters, recognizing the variety of service needs.
- b) Priority will be given to emergency and transitional facilities.
- c) Rehabilitation of structures and the purchase of furniture and equipment will be emphasized.
- d) Existing shelters that provide an essential service will receive priority over the funding of new shelters.
- e) New activities receiving funding will assist in securing transitional and permanent housing for residents.
- f) The City will consider ESGP financial support of new residential developments only if the most recent preceding development by that organization has been outside of the City and is of similar or greater size than that proposed for development within the City. This policy will apply to all organizations developing residential options for the homeless or special needs populations. (For further explanation of this section, please refer to: City of Akron Consolidated Strategy and Plan for Housing and Community Development Programs FY 2010-2014).

The City of Akron is the lead entity for the Continuum of Care Planning process. The City of Akron and surrounding communities receive approximately \$3,000,000 annually through the SuperNOFA Continuum of Care process. These funds are primarily used for permanent supportive housing for the disabled, transitional housing and supportive services.

Eliminating chronic homelessness is nearly impossible, but the City is working in the Summit County Continuum of Care to identify the causes of chronic homelessness and assist individuals to overcome the hardships that are causing recurrent episodes of homelessness. The goal of ending chronic homelessness in five years is ambitious and several approaches are necessary. The Akron / Summit County Continuum of Care network will focus on the following key elements to reduce homelessness:

- Establish/develop resources within our community to fund homeless prevention;
- Strengthen homeless prevention programs within the community;
- Expands outreach services to the homeless by creating teams to specifically target subpopulations;
- Improving coordination and access to services;
- Expand availability of affordable housing within the community;
- Improve access to affordable housing for homeless persons;
- Work with the needs of special subpopulations;
- Evaluate role of faith-based organizations;
- Improve job placement linkages;
- Create new permanent supportive housing beds in Akron and Summit County.

The primary obstacles to overcome are the inherently complicated nature of the problem, the coordination necessary between all parties in order to assure the proper delivery of individuals through the system and the lack of funds, manpower and time to devote to each client in order to assure that every individual will end up in affordable housing that will remain viable over an extended period of time.

The Akron / Summit County / Barberton community has a Continuum of Care in place to address the immediate needs of families and individuals at risk of becoming homeless. In 2014, agencies will provide short-term rental assistance, assistance in paying utility bills and food assistance. Legal services are available to those at risk of eviction or foreclosure. These resources are limited and are quickly depleted due to heavy demand, but the community has a strong network of organizations that work closely to maximize assistance available to clients.

As in previous years, the Akron / Barberton / Summit County Continuum of Care will sponsor Project Homeless Connect in Spring 2014. Project Homeless Connect is a one-stop shop model for delivering services to people experiencing homelessness. The Project allows for an immediacy of care rather than a referral. Over 1000 individuals attend the annual event. Akron is partnering with service providers, hospitals, businesses and housing providers to bring multiple resources to one location where people can come and find services they need.

OTHER PROGRAMS THAT WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IN 2014:

Neighborhood Business Districts: Provide matching grants and loans to businesses for exterior improvements.

Akron Business Incentives: Opportunity purchases, job creation, business studies and marketing activities to encourage businesses to remain or relocate within the City.

Neighborhood Partnership Program: Provides matching grants to assist community organizations in their implementation of neighborhood-based programs.

Community Gardening Program: Funds the improvement of vacant city lots with vegetable gardens.

CDBG /HOME/ESG Budget

	<u>2014</u>		
	TOTAL	CDBG	HOME
<u>Clearance, Land Assembly and Housing Development</u>			
CHDO/ CDC Housing	500	0	500
Acq/Reloc/Clear	300	300	0
Demolition	500	500	0
UNDC	<u>150</u>	<u>150</u>	<u>0</u>
	1450	950	500
<u>Neighborhood Revitaization and Sustainability</u>			
	600	400	200
<u>Public Improvements</u>			
	275	275	0
<u>Community and Job Development</u>			
Business Incentives	75	75	0
Neighborhood Business Districts	<u>150</u>	<u>150</u>	<u>0</u>
	225	225	0
<u>Other Housing</u>			
Emergency and Transitional *	445	20	0
Homeless Prevention	100	0	100
Minor Home Repair	300	300	0
Disability Modifications	25	25	0
Paint Program (GWCBC)	<u>25</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	895	370	100
<u>Public Services</u>			
Community Services	300	300	0
Community Gardens	60	60	0
Fair Housing	90	90	0
Neighborhood Partnership Program	<u>65</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	515	515	0
<u>Program Implementation</u>			
	1770	1650	120
<u>General Administration</u>			
	<u>200</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>80</u>
	1970	1770	200
Consolidated Plan Total	5930	4505	1000

* \$425,000 ESGP