



3-5 Year Strategic Plan

This document includes Narrative Responses to specific questions that grantees of the Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnership, Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS and Emergency Shelter Grants Programs must respond to in order to be compliant with the Consolidated Planning Regulations.

GRANTEE: City of Beloit
CON PLAN PERIOD: 2015 to 2019

Substantial Amendment 1 Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSA)

Introduction

The City is amending the 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan in order to include two Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSA). The City has drafted a detailed NRSA Plan which outlines practical actions steps for a coordinated response to addressing various concerns in the community of Beloit, specifically related to deteriorating properties, vacant and abandoned housing, an increasing number of rental properties, high rates of poverty and unemployment, and an increase in violent crimes. This NRSA Plan is to be incorporated as an amendment to the Consolidated Plan.

The scope of the attached Plan examines trends throughout the City of Beloit, but will focus on the Hackett and Merrill neighborhoods, which are census tract 16, block groups 1-4 and census tract 18, block groups 1-4 respectively. The economic indicators described in the Plan illustrate a wide gap in economic prosperity in the two census tracts compared to the City as a whole. Numerous other factors related to deteriorating housing stock, higher crime rates, and lack of availability to job training and economic resources have negatively affected economic prospects of residents in both census tracts.

Purpose

This plan provides specific action steps towards overall economic empowerment and improved housing opportunities in the two census tracts, with the ultimate goal of establishing safe, healthy, and stable neighborhoods and ensuring all Beloit residents have meaningful opportunities for economic stability and growth.

In addition, the development of NRSA allows the City to have greater flexibility in CDBG funding towards carrying out the strategies in order to meet this goal. The City will be seeking regulatory relief in the following categories:

- Public Service Cap Exemption: The City plans to provide additional Public Service programming that directly benefits the low-moderate income individuals in the two NRSA areas to economically empower the overall community. Public Services carried out under a HUD-approved NRSA are not subject to the

15% public service cap when carried out by certain organizations. This will allow the City provide more funding to subrecipients that carry-out public service activities to individuals in the NRSAs.

- Aggregation of Housing Units: The City plans to use the aggregation of housing units for its housing rehabilitation program activities in order to expand these opportunities to higher income individuals within the NRSA neighborhoods. The City’s CDBG funded housing rehabilitation activities are currently limited to low-moderate income households only. However, housing units assisted in an approved NRSA allows the City to provide CDBG funded rehabilitation to higher income households as long as at least 51% of households assisted are of low-moderate income.

Resources

The table required by SP-35 Anticipated Resources - 91.215(a)(4), 91.220(c)(1,2), under “Uses of Funds” will have “NRSA” added. The City will be amending its 2017 Annual Action Plan to reprogram approximately \$360,000 in prior year unspent CDBG funding to fund 2017-2018 NRSA activities and Code Enforcement.

IDIS Information

The information provided below corresponds with fields requested in HUD’s Integrated Disbursement & Information System (IDIS) regarding NRSAs:

1. Identify the neighborhood boundaries for this target area.

The City of Beloit is proposing two Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas, which are listed below.

Census tract 16, block groups 1-4: Commonly referred to as the Hackett Neighborhood, this NRSA is located directly west of the Rock River and downtown. It is bound by Shirland Avenue to the south, McKinley Avenue to the west, Portland Avenue to the north, and Fifth Street and the Rock River to the east.

Census tract 18, block groups 1-4: Commonly referred to as the Merrill neighborhood, this NRSA is located north of downtown and east of the Rock River. It is bound by White Avenue, Park Avenue, and Woodward Avenue to the south, the Rock River to the east, Bayliss Avenue to the north, and Sherman Avenue and Prairie Avenue to the east.

2. Include specific housing and commercial characteristics of this target area.

Census Tract 16 – Hackett Neighborhood: The predominant land use in this NRSA is residential, although a few commercial uses are scattered along St. Lawrence Avenue, Bluff Street, and Park Avenue. Institutional or community service uses include three city parks, Hackett Elementary School, Grinnell Senior Center, and the Beloit Historical Society. The Bluff Street Historic District, a district on the National Registered of Historic Places, is part of the Hackett Neighborhood and is home to many beautiful Queen-Anne and Dutch-Revival houses.

Census Tract 18 – Merrill Neighborhood: This NRSA has a larger mix of land uses including manufacturing, commercial, and residential. Commercial uses are primarily concentrated along Park Avenue, while the manufacturing companies of Fairbanks Morse and ABC Supply are located between Park Avenue and the Rock River. Institutional and community uses include Riverside Community Park, the Merrill Community Center, and the Beloit Public Library.

3. How did your consultation and citizen participation process help you to identify this neighborhood as a target area?

Community members, business owners, and residents began contacting City officials with concerns regarding crime, property deterioration, and lack of resources for residents in need.

Mapping: The City mapped incidents of crimes against people, crimes against property, vacant and abandoned housing, code violations, income, residential property values, and other demographic information in order to identify patterns and determine whether there were concentrations. Although many of the incidents were spread city-wide, some clustering of these activities was evident in Census Tracts 16 and 18.

Community Input: The City used a number of efforts to obtain community input in order to identify needs of Beloit residents, Hackett and Merrill neighborhoods, businesses, and other community stakeholders. These efforts included individual interviews, stakeholder meetings, community listening sessions, neighborhood tours, and an online survey. The City also consulted with a variety of local public services agencies, community organizations, business leaders, and other City Departments.

4. Identify the needs in this target area.

The needs of the community fell into three general categories: Neighborhood deterioration and instability, lack of resources for residents to succeed, especially for youth, and a general feeling of insecurity. Accordingly, the Plan contains objectives grouped by strategies towards revitalizing neighborhoods, empowering residents, and improving public safety. More detail regarding the needs are provided in the attached Plan.

5. What are the opportunities for improvement in this target area?

Neighborhood Revitalization:

- Improve the quality of the housing stock.
- Reduce the number of vacant and abandoned properties.
- Increase the percentage of long-term residents in the neighborhoods.

Resident Empowerment:

- Increase programming for job training and life skills education.
- Create additional programming for youth, and facilitate coordination between local agencies that provide services to youth.

- Increase the involvement of residents in their neighborhoods.
- Connect residents to financial and supportive resources they need to be successful.

Public Safety:

- Implement Community Policing strategies.
- Enhance statistical data analysis in order to assist with crime analysis, goals, and strategic development.
- Improve transparency and communication regarding crime and prevalence of crime.

6. Are there barriers to improvement in this target area?

- The age of the housing stock in both census tracts are older than all other housing stock within the city, which tends to be less marketable, contributes to deterioration in physical condition, and lowers market values.
- Low market value attracts out-of-town landlords who are less likely to maintain or invest in their properties and neighborhoods, and provide substandard rental options. Low market value also decreases equity for owner-occupants and landlords, which decreases the amount owners can reinvest in their properties.
- Disinvestment by lending institutions is stifling opportunities for new homeownership, contributing to low rates of owner-occupancy, and increasing rates of abandoned and “zombie” properties.
- Limited funding available for organizations to staff enough experienced resource navigators and case managers to provide stable long-term guidance to residents seeking to improve their socioeconomic stability.
- Emotional trauma created by neighborhood crime and generational poverty create more obstacles in achieving economic stability, familial stability, by increasing mental and physical health issues.
- Limited funding available to assist low-moderate income residents with costs for technical education/training to take advantage of local employment opportunities .
- Limited public transportation available for accessing financial and educational resources which are often located in Janesville, and employees who work second or third shift hours. Limited transportation is also a major obstacle for youth to access structured youth programs.