2021 ANNUAL CONSOLIDATED ACTION PLAN

FOR HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Dan Horrigan, Mayor
City of Akron, Ohio

Jason Segedy, Director
Department of Planning and Urban Development
www.akronohio.gov
The City of Akron, Ohio is preparing an Annual Plan for 2021 that includes the budget for the 2021 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. This budget was prepared independent of additional funds that the City is receiving to directly address needs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The City of Akron will commit approximately $8,109,326 in total program funding including $6,112,442 in Community Development Block Grant funds; $1,472,143 in HOME funds and $524,741 in Emergency Solutions Grant funds.

The proposed plan includes the following initiatives: Housing Development, Neighborhood Revitalization and Sustainability Grants and Loans; projects supporting Lead Abatement; Non-profit Community Housing Projects; New Home Construction; Opportunity Property Acquisitions; Waiver Demolition Program; Emergency and Rapid Re-Housing; Great Streets Akron Program and Business Incentive Program; support of Community Development Organizations; Fair Housing; Community Garden Program 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. In 2020, the City prepared a new five-year strategy for 2020 to 2024. The 2021 Action Plan is the second year of the five-year strategy.

The Five Year Consolidated Plan and Strategy for 2020-2024 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 Integrated Development, 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.

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 second goal of the program is to provide a suitable living environment. 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 third major statutory goal is to expand economic opportunity.

Consolidated Strategy for 2020-2024

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

Activities:

1. Neighborhood Rehabilitation, Owner-occupied Housing
2. Rental Housing Rehabilitation or Construction
3. Homeless Persons, Individuals and Families Assistance
4. Public Services
5. Public Facilities and Public Improvements
6. New Housing Construction
7. Acquisition and removal of blighted properties
8. Economic Development opportunities
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 Annual Action 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.

**Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice**

The City of Akron Fair Housing Task Force has prepared an Impediments to Fair Housing Matrix that is updated annually.

**Action Plan**

The City will support the rehabilitation of existing housing in specific areas. The City also assists in the removal of deteriorated homes and commercial structures 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 existing homes, 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 can invest up to $15,000 in each property that is rehabilitated.

1. **Neighborhood Rehabilitation Areas**

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

2. **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.

3. **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 300 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 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 City of Akron has committed approximately $14 million in NSP funding for new home construction. The City is marketing and selling rehabilitated homes and continues to reutilize the funds for subsequent purchase/rehab/demos, etc.

Homeless Prevention Elements

The City of Akron will receive a 2021 Emergency Solutions Grant entitlement of approximately $524,741. The City of Akron issued a request for proposals in October, 2020 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 2021 Action Plan will follow 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 reviews ESGP program requirements and outlines the City's funding goals as stated in the application. The City solicits proposals from all interested parties, allowing approximately 45 days to return proposals with the proposal deadline in mid-December.

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 is given to emergency and transitional facilities.

c) Rehabilitation of structures and the purchase of furniture and equipment is emphasized.

d) Existing shelters that provide an essential service 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.

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.

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;
• Expand outreach services to the homeless by creating teams to specifically target subpopulations;
• Improve 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 2021, 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.

OTHER PROGRAMS THAT WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IN 2021:

Great Streets Program: Provide matching grants and loans to businesses for exterior improvements. Recommend changes to streetscape layouts and streetscape amenities (lighting, benches, landscaping, etc.) to promote storefront development and walkability.

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

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