

**City of Rockford**  
**Community Development Department**

**PUBLIC HEARING**  
**CONCERNING**

**Fourth Year of**  
**Five Year Consolidated Plan**

**Thursday, August 23, 2007 – 6:00 PM**  
**Patriot's Gateway Community Center**  
**615 South 5th Street**

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**MINUTES**

**I. Welcome**

Dwayne Collins introduced himself and welcomed everyone. He explained that this public hearing is regarding the 2008 Community Development Formula Programs that are Federally funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The programs include the Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnership Program and the Emergency Shelter Grant. He explained that the purpose of the meeting is to report to the community what has been done so far this year and to receive input as to what is needed for next year.

**II. Self-Introductions**

Dwayne Collins introduced other staff members including Vicki Manson, Rob Lamb and Lucia Rinedollar.

**III. Neighborhood Development**

- Dwayne Collins explained the CDBG slide including:
  - ≡ Primary objective is to provide decent housing and a suitable living environment for persons with low to moderate income.
  - ≡ The proposed New 2008 Funding amount is \$2,172,896 assuming the same level of funding as received for 2007.
  - ≡ Eligible uses as listed on the hand-outs.
- Dwayne Collins explained the HOME slide including:
  - ≡ Proposed New 2008 Funding amount is \$941,080 plus \$18,017 for ADDI assuming the same level of funding as received for 2007.
  - ≡ Grants are to implement local housing strategies designed to increase home ownership for persons with low to moderate incomes.

- Dwayne Collins explained the ESG slide including:
  - Proposed New 2008 Funding amount is \$93,652 assuming the same level of funding as received for 2007.
  - The purpose of the ESG Grant is to improve or add emergency shelters for the homeless.
  - Funds also can be used to assist with the operating costs of the shelters.
  - The program is also intended to restrict the increase of homelessness.
  - Eligible uses as indicated on the hand-outs.
  
- Vicki Manson explained the Rehabilitation Programs slide including:
  - Vicki explained that to be eligible for the rehabilitation program the property must be located within one of the focus areas.
  - 18 units were projected to be completed and as of 8/17/07, 9 have been completed, 6 are under construction and bids are being finalized for 7 projects.
  - The investor/owner program was discontinued for 2007. There were 7 activities funded in 2006 that are being completed in 2007 providing 12 units, at least 51% of these must be rented to persons with low to moderate incomes. The rehabilitation of 2 of those units is complete. The other 10 are under construction.
  - An application was submitted for an \$80,000 grant from IHDA to assist homeowners in the Gilbert Avenue area.
  - Originally budgeted an artist district program targeted to the Jackson Oaks TIF. Funds would leverage other funds to develop a loan pool to assist with redevelopment of housing in the area. Other partners would include local lenders, the Swedish American Foundation, and Riverfront Development Group. This program may be adjusted due to the recent flood.
  - Due to the recent flood a Substantial Change will need to be processed and will be a part of a future public hearing.
  - A portion of the Weed and Seed budget has been used for rehabilitation of 1810 W. State Street to be used for Weed and Seed administration and as a Neighborhood Resource Center. The balance of the budgeted money may be rolled into a new program called the Healthy Neighborhoods Program which has been presented to City Council but has not received final approval yet. The recent flood may also impact this program.

Question (Joe Owen) – Will someone from the Community Development Department be active on the steering committee for the Healthy Neighborhoods Program?

Answer (Vicki Manson) – Yes, it is important that someone from our department is involved.

- Other (non CDBG) programs administered through Community Development include the Water Hook-Up program and assistance provided to Winnebago County for their Rehabilitation Program.
  
- Vicki Manson explained the 2006 Labor Day Flood Program slide including:
  - The CDBG budget was amended to provide \$250,000 for the 2006 Labor Day Flood Program being administered by the Human Services Department.
  
- Vicki Manson explained the Code Enforcement slide including:
  - CDBG funds 2.5 Code Enforcement persons. To date approximately 2500 issues have been addressed as a result of this funding.
  
- Vicki Manson explained the Homebuyer Assistance slides including:
  - ADDI Program – usually provides up to 6% of purchase of the home, 8 households have been assisted, 10 additional households have been approved and 15 others are being interviewed.

- ≡ Emerson Subdivision – construction of 6 homes are in process, 4 home-buyers have been approved. Out of the total 41 homes in Phase II, 20 will be provided with downpayment assistance through HOME.
  - ≡ Hope 6 – 90 homes have been constructed, 27 have been sold, 11 recently completed homes will be sold, and 52 have been leased. An additional 14 homes are under construction bringing the total to 104 homes. Infrastructure improvements including sidewalks and curbs have been completed. Demolition of Champion Park is underway.
  - ≡ HOME funds are being used for downpayment assistance for 10 of the Hope 6 homes. To date 2 homes have been sold, 2 households have been approved and 4 additional households are being interviewed to determine eligibility.
  - ≡ REACH Illinois Employee Assistance Program provides assistance to City and County employees purchasing homes within 1 mile of downtown or in TIF districts.
- Vicki Manson explained the Assistance to CHDO's slide including:
  - ≡ Received 5 proposals for the budgeted amount of \$37,554 for operating costs. We are allowed to use 5% of the HOME budget for this. Agreements will be executed within 30 days.
  - ≡ No new Homebuyer and Rental Projects but several projects are anticipated.
  - ≡ Downpayment assistance will be provided for 4 homes constructed by CCS/Youthbuild Rockford (prior year funding).
  - ≡ Development agreements have been executed for the construction of 2 new homes.
  - ≡ Development agreements are anticipated by year's end for 4 additional homes.
  - ≡ CCS/Lincolnwood Estates assisted using HOME and TIF funds. 10 of 18 homes were assisted with HOME funds.
- Vicki Manson explained the Get The Lead Out Match and Service Related Programs slide including:
  - ≡ Get The Lead Out Match Program provides a 10% match to the Human Services Department for lead removal projects.
  - ≡ Service Related Programs:
    - Healthy Neighborhoods Program has been submitted to City Council but may be affected by flood funding. Priority would be given to applications from neighborhoods in focus areas or TIF Districts. This program would take applications throughout the year.

Question (Catherine Owen) – Could the Healthy Neighborhood Program be used for a Community Center? With the demolition of Jane Adams, the current location will be gone.

Answer (Vicki Manson) – It would be able to help provide a service at a community center that addresses a specific need in the neighborhood.

- RAMP has provided 3 of the 12 ramps anticipated in 2007.
- RAAHC has provided counseling services to 121 persons.

Question (Catherine Owen) – Are the ramps 100% funded? Many of the residents in Rockford Housing Authority homes are in wheelchairs. Can they apply for this and how would it be done?

Answer (Dwayne Collins) – It can be done for rentals with the owner's permission. Applications are processed directly through RAMP.

- Vicki Manson explained the Acquisition, Relocation and Disposition slide including:
  - ≡ Acquisition, Relocation and Disposition – 2 properties have been acquired and 14 are in process.
  - ≡ Demolition and Site Improvements – to date, 16 properties have been demolished. This activity has been limited due to the HUD restriction of 70% of funding must be directed to low/moderate income activities.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- Rob Lamb explained the Financial Assistance to For-Profit Businesses slide including:
  - The funds budgeted for the Small Business Loan Program were transferred to assist the 2006 Labor Day Flood victims.
  - The City's non-CDBG Small Business Revolving Loan Program was transferred to Rockford Local Development Corporation to administer.
  - West State Street Commercial Node – to provide commercially zoned land to new and relocated businesses in the West State Street Corridor, 3 properties were acquired with 2006 funds and were demolished using 2007 funds
  - Commercial Shopstead – provides commercial rental space for small and startup businesses that provide jobs and services in CDBG neighborhoods. To date, two of the three remaining units have been contracted for lease. Priority is being given to businesses that may be relocated due to the reconstruction project.
  
- Rob Lamb explained the Low & Moderate Income Job Creation/Expansion slides including:
  - Provides financial assistance for commercial and industrial development in CDBG areas and/or LMI job creation.
  - One project has been funded (Elk's Club) in which 30 jobs will be created. 16 of the jobs will be for LMI jobs.
  - Vision Financial was approved for assistance from the 2006 CDBG funds. To date, they have created 52 jobs, 26 of which are occupied by LMI City residents and 13 are from CDBG neighborhoods.
  - Public Improvement Assistance – one project has been assisted in 2007. Zion Development will be upgrading infrastructure to make the neighborhood more visually attractive.
  - Microenterprise Investment Match – provide assistance for very small and startup businesses. The funds budgeted for this program were transferred to assist the 2006 Labor Day Flood victims.
  - Self-Employment Training Program (SET) – training program operated by Rock Valley College. It was estimated that 50 people would be assisted. The first class assisted 10 LMI persons.
  
- Rob Lamb explained the Other (Non-Federally Funded) Community Development Activities slides including:
  - Other funding sources used include TIF, Enterprise Zone and Sales Tax Rebates.
  - Renovation of 303 N. Main St. (Supply Core, Watt Publishing, Workforce Investment Board)
  - Created 7 new Tax Increment Financing Districts
  - Marketing the City's development opportunities
  - Garrison School TIF Project
  - New Dollar Store at 3030 11<sup>th</sup> St.
  - Storefront Façade work at 211 E. State St. (Chocolat by Daniel)
  - Creation of River Edge Redevelopment Zone
  - Thatcher Blake River Walk Project (River Oaks Condominiums)
  - Industrial growth (Anderson Packaging, UPS and Lowe's Distribution Center) – they have nearly 1100 employees from CDBG neighborhoods and anticipate hiring approximately 190 more over the next three years.

Question (Joe Owen) - Can we be provided an update/timeline on the Kishwaukee / IL251 widening project? They have acquired and boarded up houses which gives people a bad impression of the neighborhood.

Answer (Rob Lamb) - There are actually two separate projects. One is the bridge replacement which is where the acquisitions have taken place. It is a city project that could not be moved forward until the sales tax referendum was passed. It is starting to move forward now. The widening of Kishwaukee (IL251) south of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a state project that is starting to move forward now even though the state does not have a new capital budget. The city is working with ComEd on moving utilities that are in the way. The timeline would need to come from the Public Works Department.

Comment (Joe Owen) – The Orchid Neighborhood group has formulated a strategic neighborhood action plan and part of the redevelopment is dependent on this project moving forward.

#### **IV. SCHEDULE FOR CONTINUATION OF THE PROCESS**

- Dwayne Collins explained the remaining process for the 2008 application.

#### **V. COMMENTS**

Question (Catherine Owen) - How does this process inter-twine with the Task Force for the College/Seminary area?

Answer (Vicki Manson) – It could potentially fund the project. What needs to happen is the project needs to be formulated including the other funding sources. Then CDBG could possibly be used to assist with the “gap” financing.

Question (Kerry Knodle) – The Hope 6 Task Force report is about done and then will need to be approved. Will items such as demolitions and acquisitions automatically be looked at by staff members to be included in the 2008 Action Plan?

Answer (Vicki Manson) – Yes.

Question (Catherine Owen) – My major concern is obtaining a community center in the area and what funds could be used for assistance.

Answer (Vicki Manson) – Now is a good time to bring these concerns up.

Question (Kerry Knodle) – Is the City trying to tap into the new market tax credit program?

Answer (Rob Lamb) – We assisted RLDC with an application but I don't think it was successful. We are working with a firm that has access to a certain level of tax credits. We will not be a recipient but will continue working with others that are trying to be recipients or have access and are putting projects together.

Question (Kerry Knodle) – Are there any plans for South Main between Morgan Street and Tapco, to remove some of the blight? There are bombed out buildings that have been sitting for years and high weeds, etc. I keep hoping, year after year, that something will be done.

Answer (Rob Lamb) – A lot of that area is tied up in the state project to rebuild South Main. The City has made an agreement to tear down one building but it won't be done until there is an agreed upon plan for South Main.

Comment (Kerry Knodle) – The building just north of the railroad depot is a health and safety issue with broken out windows, rodents.

Response (Rob Lamb) – The area is not being overlooked. We have talked to the railroad about the bridge. There have been multiple plans developed but in many cases it comes down to funding. Sometimes it involves taking people to court and can take years to process. We are also trying to provide positive incentives to get things done. Once the state approves a capital budget it should help get some projects moving forward again.

Question (Joe Owen) – Is there a person from the City of Rockford that is coordinating all of the projects?

Answer (Vicki Manson) – It depends on the nature of the project. The Public Works staff or the Community Development staff usually works on the projects.

Comment (Joe Owen) – It seems that with so many projects with such diversified funding sources, there should be a few staff members keeping an eye on them to keep them moving.

Comment (Rob Lamb) – There are staff members working on the projects but sometimes their hands are tied also due to funding.

- Dwayne Collins explained the timeline for our application process, thanked everyone for coming and the meeting was adjourned.