

**City of Great Falls
Community Development Block Grant
City Commission Policies
January 5, 2010**

1. City Commission will determine the allocation of all CDBG projects.
2. The City Commission will conduct a Community Needs public hearing to allow citizens (especially low/moderate income persons) and city staff the opportunity to express their opinion as to the needs of the community that should be addressed with block grant funding.
3. The City Commission will determine priorities and allocate funding percentages to priority categories following the Community Needs public hearing.
4. The Community Development Department will make recommendations to the City Commission for any grant proposal applications not reviewed by the Community Development Council.
5. The Community Development Council will review and make funding recommendations for grant proposal applications, as directed by the City Commission.
6. The Community Development Council will review, prioritize, and make funding recommendations to the City Commission for all public service grant applications based on solicitation for proposals in an amount to be approximately 15% of the grant entitlement amount. The minimum grant request will be for \$5,000.
7. The City Commission will not fund proposals from agencies/departments whose last fiscal year or older CDBG funded projects will not be 75% complete by March 31st of the current year, unless a special public purpose exists for waiving the policy.
8. Private non-profit agencies will not be funded for staff salaries, benefits, office consumables, and rent payments for agency office space or utility costs.
9. City Commission will fund activities to further fair housing as a part of block grant administration.

10. Projects that leverage and/or match the CDBG funds will be given priority consideration for funding.
11. Handicap accessible projects that serve the largest number of the public will be given priority consideration for funding.

City of Great Falls Community Development Block Grant
2010/2011 Funding Priorities

We are expecting the annual CDBG budget to be \$978,000, a conservative 5% above the 2009/2010 allocation of \$931,312. HUD funding has been signed into law as part of the Omnibus bill. The budget amount will not be announced until after HUD calculates the amount for each entitlement city.

<u>10/11 CDBG Priorities</u>	<u>Funding Percentage</u>	<u>10/11 Funding Amount</u>
Public Facility Improvements/ Handicap Accessibility (Includes Infrastructure, Park Facilities, Public Building Rehab)	33%	\$321,752
Affordable Housing (Housing for low/moderate income Families: Rehab Services, New Construction, Rehabilitation including Historic Preservation)	27%	\$263,948
Economic Development (Resulting in Job Creation for low/moderate income persons)	5%	\$50,000
Public Service Activities (maximum) (Benefiting low/moderate income persons)	15%	\$146,700
Administration (maximum) (Includes CDBG Grant Administration, Environmental review, City Housing RLF, Fair Housing)	20%	\$195,600
Total Allocation	100%	\$978,000

Community Needs Public Meeting
City Commission Meeting
December 15, 2009

A public meeting was held as part of the regular City Commission meeting on December 15, 2009, at 7 p.m. in the Commission Chambers at the Civic Center. The meeting was held to provide an opportunity for citizens to advise the City Commission on the needs of low income people in the community and how CDBG and HOME grant funds could be used to address those issues and eliminate community needs. The following listing is a summary of the comments involving current community needs which were expressed in the meeting.

Sheila Rice, NeighborWorks Great Falls

Ms. Rice described a housing planning process that has been going on for the past two years. In September 2007 a citywide meeting was held with 42 participants. This meeting resulted in the development of a housing planning group which subsequently undertook a series of steps to identify the housing and community development needs in Great Falls and Cascade County. Surveys were distributed to public agencies. Comprehensive surveys were sent to 8,000 randomly selected households in the county; 1,500 were returned, making the results statistically valid. Surveys were also sent to 1,400 clients served by various social service agencies; 600 were returned. In addition, a homeless survey was conducted. After the results of the surveys were available, small focus groups were formed to discuss the identified needs. Subsequent to these informational gathering activities the groups have been working on developing a comprehensive housing and community development plan and anticipate it will be completed within the next few months. This plan will be presented to the city and county commissions and will be incorporated into the Consolidated Plan.

Ms. Rice emphasized the need for affordable housing. She noted the housing cost problem in Great Falls is a wage problem, as well. She thanked the City Commission for their past support for providing affordable housing. She described several projects currently being undertaken by NWGF, including the development of resident-owned manufactured housing communities. This involves people living in manufactured homes in one setting (previously called trailer parks) forming a coop to purchase the land where their homes are already placed. This population is vulnerable as they own their houses but not the land and they can be forced to move.

Kim Theil-Schaaf, Great Falls Development Authority

Ms. Theil-Schaaf spoke of two community needs that are of concern to the Development Authority. The first involved the \$50,000 CDBG allocation made last year for an economic development project for job creation to benefit low income people. The Development Authority was the successful applicant and used the funding to start a new revolving loan fund. The \$50,000 was loaned to a local business and created several new jobs for low to moderate income people. The Development Authority recently had a number of applicants who would be eligible for the loan funds to create jobs that would benefit low income people. The Development Authority anticipates applying for additional funds and requested the City Commission provide another \$50,000 allocation for the economic development revolving loan fund. Secondly, Ms. Theil-Schaaf described a change in one of the Development Authority's funding sources and how it is adversely affecting their ability to pursue economic development activities. The State of Montana Department of Commerce operates a Small Cities CDBG economic development fund

which typically funds economic development projects to extend infrastructure to specific business that will create or retain jobs benefitting low to moderate income people. These funds are typically awarded for up to \$400,000. Cascade County previously was eligible to apply for these funds but an administrative rule change now prohibits it. The Development Authority is working on two projects which would have previously qualified for these funds—creating a shovel-ready heavy industrial site and assisting MSM with relocation to allow retention of jobs. The Development Authority asked the City Commission to consider using a portion of the CDBG allocation to fund a portion of the infrastructure economic development projects which were previously funded through the Montana Department of Commerce. This funding is needed as it allows leverage to other public and private funding. However, the Development Authority recognizes CDBG funding is limited and is not advocating for allocation of the entire \$400,000 CDBG funds available to economic development projects in any one funding year, but rather consider an option such as having the funds available over the course of several years.

Shannon Marra, Children’s Museum of Montana

Ms. Marra related the Children’s Museum intends to apply for \$5,000 in CDBG funds for scholarships and 28,500 for building renovations. She noted the museum satisfies the City’s community development needs by helping to serve low to moderate income families on a daily basis.

Kris Kleinschmidt, Accessible Space, Inc.

Ms. Kleinschmidt reported she has worked with the disabled population for over 30 years. Currently she comes into contact on a daily basis with seniors and physically disabled people who desperately need affordable, accessible housing. There is a definite need for more such housing in Great Falls. ASI currently has 50 people on the waiting list for Southwinds Estates (includes full-time personal care attendant services), 20 people on the waiting list for Meadowlark Apartments and 25 people on the waiting list for the Portage (senior housing). She noted there are over 90 people waiting for affordable, accessible housing in Great Falls.

Kevin Hager, Great Falls Housing Authority

Mr. Hager shared his perspective regarding affordable quality housing in Great Falls. The Housing Authority has 483 families on the Section 8 housing choice voucher and public housing waiting lists. Section 8 clients who have subsidy voucher and trying to rent in the private market are finding it very difficult to find quality housing. In some cases, Section 8 voucher holders are currently public housing residents who are looking for places to rent in the private market. These people are turning their vouchers back in after 60 days rather than getting extensions because they cannot find anything of comparable quality to rent in the private market. A housing Authority board member is the principal at a local school and he relates they are starting to see an increasing number of children and their families who are becoming homeless. Another board member has a spouse who is also an educator and described the situation of a student who is staying at the Rescue Mission and arranging transportation to school. Mr. Hager asked the City Commission to look favorably toward CDBG and HOME grant applicants that would provide new quality affordable housing for low income citizens. He thanked the City Commission for their previous support to provide quality affordable housing in Great Falls and advised them on the status of HOME funds previously awarded to the Housing Authority.

**City of Great Falls, Montana
Citizen Participation Plan
for the
Consolidated Plan or the Annual Action Plan
January 2010**

PURPOSE OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPING THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN:

A key component in creating the HUD required Consolidated Plan is citizen participation in all steps of the planning development process. To ensure citizens in Great Falls have the opportunity to take part in creating the Consolidated or the Annual Action Plan, the City of Great Falls has developed and commits to follow these elements of the Citizen Participation Plan.

THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN:

PARTICIPATION: The City of Great Falls will provide for, and encourage, citizen participation emphasizing the involvement of low, very low, and poverty income residents in areas where housing and community development funds may be spent. The City of Great Falls will also inform and offer opportunities for comment to residents of low, very low and poverty income neighborhoods. The City of Great Falls will encourage the participation of the Great Falls Housing Authority and public and assisted housing residents of the Great Falls Housing Authority, and of Opportunities, Inc., and their assisted housing residents in Great Falls. The City will provide Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan development information to the Great Falls Housing Authority that will be available at the public hearing required for the Public Housing Agency Plan.

The City of Great Falls will make reasonable efforts to consult with other public, private, and non-profit agencies that provide housing, health services, and social services (including those focusing on services to children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities - including physical, mental and developmental disabilities as well as other persons in need of services). When preparing the portion of the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan concerning lead-based paint hazards, the City of Great Falls will consult with the City/County Health Department in order to examine data identifying the addresses of housing units with children as containing lead. The City of Great Falls will encourage input and solicit information from each of the nine neighborhood councils, notify of all of the public hearings and the Consolidated Plan or the Annual Action Plan development process, and solicit comments.

The City Commission appoints ten citizens who reside within Great Falls to a voluntary advisory board that reviews public service and public facility projects submitted for CDBG funding. This advisory board, the Community Development Council, recommends project funding to the City Commission under the public service and public facility portions of the CDBG funding. The encouragement of lower income, minority, and disabled citizens or their representatives to apply for Community Development

Council positions occurs annually; through advance notice of board openings and application information with have adequate time to apply.

ACCESS TO MEETINGS: The City of Great Falls will afford adequate, timely notification of meetings so all citizens can attend the public hearings. This will include, as appropriate, legal notices, advertisements, press releases, public service announcements, letters or other means of notifying interested parties. The City of Great Falls will also provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities to all public hearings, and local meetings. Reasonable accommodations include but are not limited to holding meetings in handicapped accessible buildings, providing for sign language interpreters, and language interpreters, etc. when requested.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION: The City of Great Falls will provide citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the Consolidated Plan or annual Action Plan and all of its components and the City's planned use of financial assistance received under the relevant federal programs during the next year. The public will have the opportunity to receive information, review and submit comments on any proposed submission including the Consolidated Plan adoption by the City of Great Falls City Commissioners and any Plan amendments and its performance reports. The required 30-day comment period on any proposed submission, adoption of the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan submission, and any plan amendments is available as occurring. Information will also be available on the range of programs, the amount of assistance the City expects to receive, the amount of funds available and the estimated amount proposed to benefit low, very low and poverty income residents. These groups will also have access to the City's plans to minimize displacement of residents and businesses and assist those displaced because of these activities. Information and public records will be available during regular business hours in the City Community Development Department. Special arrangements are available to accommodate access to information for persons with disabilities.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: The City of Great Falls will provide appropriate technical assistance to all groups that request assistance in developing proposals for financial assistance under any of the programs covered by the Consolidated Plan.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: To obtain citizens views the City holds at least two public hearings conducted at a minimum of two different stages of the program. The City of Great Falls program year begins July 1 and ends June 30. These public hearings will address and respond to proposals and comments on:

1. Housing and community development needs
2. Development of proposed activities
3. Review of proposed uses for funds
4. Review of program performance

The City of Great Falls attempts to provide public meetings conveniently timed for people who might or will benefit from program funds, accessible to people with disabilities and adequately publicized with sufficient information about the subject of the hearing to permit informed comment. The public hearings occur on a weekday evening

in the Civic Center Building, which is centrally located, easily accessible with adequate parking, and handicap accessible.

Throughout the year, citizens may attend the City Commission meetings and public hearings to provide input as to the distribution of federal funds into the City. There will be two public hearings conducted by the City Commission annually. The first public hearing will give citizens the opportunity to comment and provide input on the following:

- Any housing and non-housing community development needs that they have identified and wish addressed
- How funding proposals may meet community development needs in Great Falls
- Performance of the City in administering and distributing federal funds
- Every five years, or anytime the Citizen Participation Plan has substantial revisions or re-written, citizens may comment on the adoption of the Citizens Participation Plan. Prior to adopting the plan, the City distributes the plan for review and comment for a full 15 days.

The second public hearing will offer the opportunity for the citizens to comment on the following:

- Adoption of the Consolidated or Annual Action Plan
- Use of federal funds
- Performance of the administration and implementation of funded projects

TIMELY RESPONSE: The City of Great Falls will consider any comments or views of citizens, agencies, units of general local government, or other interested parties concerning the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan, any amendments to the Plan and all performance reports. The Community Development Department will address any complaints with written responses to written complaints within 15 working days, where practical. Depending on the nature of the complaint, staff may refer the issue to the City Manager or the City Commission if the response from staff is unsatisfactory to the complainant. As appropriate, an attachment of summary of comments and responses to complaints to the final submission of the Consolidated Plan, the Consolidated Plan Amendments, or the Annual Performance Report will take place.

NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING RESIDENTS: In the event that a significant number of non-English speaking residents can reasonably be expected to participate, the City will provide accommodations for non-English speaking residents in the case of public hearings, if such accommodations are available.

SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENTS: Substantial changes in the City's planned or actual activities will require an amendment to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan. The following criterion determines substantial change and governs Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan amendments:

1. If a new project that has not previously received funding, is being created with unprogrammed funds, or created from financial changes from other funded projects.

2. If there is a change in the project site location, or the project affects an area, an amendment will be required if the project location changes to a different census tract.
3. If there is a change in project purpose or beneficiaries, such as a project eliminates or reduces by over 50% the proposed impact on the original beneficiaries, and/or if less than 51% of the beneficiaries are determined to be low, very low, or poverty income an amendment will be required. The CDBG administrator will determine on a case-by-case basis if an Amendment is required when the beneficiaries change from one targeted group to another.
4. If the project changes in scope the activity from the original proposal.
5. If a project budget increases by twice the total allocation and the increase exceeds 10% of the City's total current Block Grant allocation.

The City will advertise a notice in the *Great Falls Tribune* and make available any amendments to the Consolidated Plan for citizen comment for a 30-day period.

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT

The Annual Performance Report is available to all citizens at the Public Library and the City Community Development Office through a notice in the daily newspaper notifying the public of the availability of this report for review and comment for a minimum of 15 days. Any comments received regarding the Annual Performance Report are considered and a summary of all comments is attached to the performance report.

SOLICITATION OF CITIZEN COMMENTS ON THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN:

Prior to its adoption and approval by the Great Falls City Commission, the City of Great Falls will publish a legal notice in the *Great Falls Tribune* and *Consumer's Press*. The notices of the plan and/or any amendments to this plan are available for a 15-day comment listing the sites that a citizen may obtain a copy of the plan. The plan and any amendments to this plan are available to citizens at the Great Falls Public Library, the Great Falls city web page (www.greatfallsmt.net) and the City Community Development Office in the Civic Center.

SOLICITATION OF CITIZEN COMMENTS IN PREPARING THE CONSOLIDATED OR THE ANNUAL ACTION PLAN:

1. The City of Great Falls will contact local agencies, the housing authority, the local neighborhood revitalization agency, and the neighborhood councils to obtain information and comments to make citizens aware of the Consolidated or Annual Action Plan process.
2. The proposed Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan is available to all citizens at the Public Library, the City Community Development Office, the City's web page (www.greatfallsmt.net). To inform the citizens of the proposed Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan, a notice published in the daily newspaper, the free weekly publication, and distributed to various

agencies describes the availability of this plan and the 30-day period to receive public comment.

3. City Commission will conduct two public hearings requesting input from the citizens and representatives of low, very low and poverty level people as to the needs of the community, including but not limited to housing, community development, infrastructure, economic development and homeless assistance. A second public hearing conducted to receive citizen comments on the proposed Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan occurs after completion of the Plan.

The City will provide a reasonable number of free copies of the Consolidated Plan or Annual action Plan to citizens and groups upon request.