



Roxann Wedegartner
Mayor

City of
GREENFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

**COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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Minutes of CDBG PUBLIC HEARING
December 4, 2023 5:00 PM
City Hall Meeting Room, 14 Court Square, and on Zoom

Anna Oltman (Community Development Administrator) opened the public hearing at 5:03 pm with the following people in attendance:

Amy Cahillane (Community and Economic Development Director)
Chuck Green
Nancy Hazard
Susan Worgaftik
Louise Amyot
John Garrett
Eddie Heinemann
Keith Barnicle
Pamela Goodwin
Carl Woodruff
Mia Kortebein
Dorothy McIver
Amy Clarke
Peg Hall
Ginny Desorgher
Morgan Holland
Robert Williford
Doug Selwyn
Carol Letson
Ella Condon

Anna Oltman explained that the purpose of the meeting is to receive public comment on the City's Community Development Strategy ahead of the FY2024 application. The strategy will lay out the big picture development priorities for the City and is a requirement of Greenfield's Mini Entitlement CDBG proposal. The City expects to receive \$925,000 in FY2024 CDBG funds with a period of performance from 7/1/2024 to 12/31/2025. A second public hearing to present the projects selected for the proposal will be held in February 2024 ahead of a March 2024

submission deadline. Anna explained that CDBG funding must meet the CDBG national objectives. Anna presented the issues covered in the draft Community Development Strategy for comment:

1. Housing

Nancy Hazard asked what kinds of housing projects are possible with CDBG?

Anna explained that CDBG funding typically cannot be used for constructing new housing units. Greenfield primarily uses it for housing rehabilitation.

John Garrett asked how Greenfield's housing rehab program works.

Anna explained that individual homeowners have to be income-qualified by the city, and then rehab work is paid for with CDBG funds as a 0% deferred payment loan. The City has a part-time housing rehab specialist. Projects are capped at \$40,000; more expensive projects require a waiver from the state.

Amy Clarke asked if there was a distinction between permanent housing and sheltering for CDBG funds.

Anna noted that shelter guests are not typically considered to be tenants, and CDBG funding can go towards building public facilities like homeless shelters. For example, the City is providing \$200,000 in the FY2022-23 grant towards soft costs related to the Wells Street Shelter expansion.

Ginny Desorgher asked whether CDBG funding has been used for down payment assistance in the past. Anna said that Greenfield has run a first-time homebuyer program with down payment assistance using CDBG in the past.

Doug Selwyn asked about other kinds of support for housing-insecure people. Anna explained that CDBG can be used for Public Social Services projects, where agencies receive CDBG funds to provide direct services to beneficiaries, such as the Center for Self-Reliance food pantry.

Edie Heinemann asked about energy efficiency retrofitting as part of the housing rehab program. Anna noted that CDBG housing rehab is primarily used for correcting code violations. Amy Cahillane explained that the city is considering a partnership with Community Action that could connect beneficiaries with support for energy efficiency improvements as well. Carl Woodruff asked whether minimum energy efficiency code requirements could be addressed with CDBG housing rehab, and Anna said most likely but she would follow up with the program requirements to confirm.

Susan Worgaftik asked whether CDBG could be combined with the AGO Receivership process. Anna and Amy said yes, but that it would be a small piece of the funding compared to what the receivership process could provide.

Dorothy McIver noted that an increasing concern for housing in Greenfield is accessibility of existing housing. Is there a list of projects in the pipeline?

Anna explained that CEDD keeps a waitlist, since there is not currently housing rehab funding, and in the past projects have been selected based on eligibility, feasibility, and the order of applications (with some emergency cases).

Pamela Goodwin asked about the Hope St lot, which is currently used for the temporary fire station, as a potential site of housing.

Anna said that MHP is currently conducting a feasibility study to explore housing possibilities at the lot. It is a city-owned lot that could potentially be developed as housing. Susan Worgaftik asked whether CDBG funding could allow the city to retain the temporary structures currently used by the fire department as emergency shelter or housing next winter. Anna confirmed this could be an allowable expense depending on exactly what the funds were used for.

Peg Hall expressed support for CDBG housing projects and in particular efforts to help homeowners stay in their homes. Carl Woodruff expressed support for CDBG funding for housing, noting that CDBG is one of the few funding sources that can assist with smaller, one- and two-family homes.

John Garrett asked how housing rehab or AGO receivership properties are identified and whether the city maintains an inventory of blighted properties. The building inspector keeps a list of extreme cases. How is blight defined? Anna said blight is understood as degraded or dilapidated to the point of being a public health or safety issue.

Doug Selwyn expressed support for CDBG housing and accessibility activities, and suggested efforts go towards outreach to make sure marginalized residents know about available resources.

Chuck Green noted that the housing unit gap in Greenfield includes market-rate units, and that the shortage in units is making housing unaffordable for everyone including low- and moderate-income people. Chuck suggested a program to encourage new housing development and housing rehab through small incentives like waiving permitting fees, and to more efficiently support new housing construction at the city level. Could CDBG be used to expand the staff capacity at the city level?

John Garrett asked whether CPA funding can be combined with CDBG funding in projects, which Anna confirmed that it can.

Several other participants noted their support for CDBG-funded housing projects.

Anna summarized the remaining topics covered in the draft Community Development Strategy:

2. Water, Sewer, and Drainage Infrastructure

Anna explained that city water mains, particularly in the downtown, are old and in need of replacement. DPW has pointed to design and engineering of water main replacements as a way CDBG funding can help move replacements along.

3. Addressing Slum & Blight Conditions

The city has a state-designated slum and blight area in the central commercial district. Past CDBG projects related to this included the 2023 Downtown Revitalization Plan.

4. Local Economic Revitalization

5. Food security

Anna noted that Greenfield CDBG funding had consistently supported the Center for Self-Reliance food pantry on Main St.

6. Elder Services

CDBG social services funding has also supported the LifePath meals program at the Senior Center.

Additional Comments:

Ginny Desorgher stated that water, sewer, and drainage infrastructure issues are important and are also related to the housing issue. Addressing these problems will help people stay in their homes.

Carl Woodruff said that, while recognizing that there are not enough CDBG funds to address every eligible housing rehab project, the barrier to residents accessing them should never be that they don't know about the program. What is the process for selecting housing rehab cases?

Anna said that the process, which is approved by the state, is primarily first come first served with some flexibility for emergencies. More systematic outreach and integration with social services is a very good idea. Amy Cahillane explained that this was part of the impetus for trying to partner with Community Action.

Ella Condon asked whether renters can access housing rehab support through CDBG. Anna confirmed that rental units can be rehabbed through the program but the owner has to agree to keep the units income-restricted for a 15-year period, meaning they have to rent to tenants at or below a certain income level and can't charge more than fair market rents determined by HUD.

Susan Worgaftik pointed out that if inspections were made routine every time a rental unit becomes vacant, it could help identify housing rehab cases proactively.

Carl Woodruff expressed that equity in the allocation of CDBG funds for housing rehab should be a priority, and staff time spent on that should be supported with CDBG if necessary.

Mia Kortebein suggested that when residents apply for housing rehab funds but cannot be supported in a given budget, that the city follows up with them to ensure that they are connected to other services or future support. Engage those people as part of the community, not just as an individual who did or did not receive a service.

Anna closed the public hearing at 6:22 pm.

