

Chapter 2: Consolidated Plan Process

What is the Consolidated Plan?

The Consolidated Plan is a comprehensive planning document that identifies a jurisdiction's overall needs for affordable housing, homeless programs and non-housing community development activities. It includes a five year strategy that establishes priorities for meeting those needs and identifies available resources to address the needs.

Title 24 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 – Consolidated Submissions for Community Planning and Development Programs specifies that jurisdictions must prepare and adopt a Consolidated Plan in order to be eligible to apply for direct federal assistance under certain programs such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. The purpose of the Consolidated Plan process is to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunities principally for extremely low, very low, and low income persons.

The Consolidated Plan uses 2000 Census data and other available data (surveys, focus groups, State data, Housing Authority data, etc.) as well as information from the City's various departments and Capital Improvement Program to identify needs. Public input during the Consolidated Plan process was also a major consideration in identifying community needs. The Department of Community Development held and participated in several meetings to gather public comments. Two public hearings were held. The Plan identifies community needs and the relevant resources required to address those needs.

Every five years the federal government requires that the Consolidated Plan be updated. During the intervening years, a one-year action plan must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for approval along with any substantial changes to the Consolidated Plan. The Consolidated Plan establishes the City of Jonesboro's five-year strategy for the use of CDBG funds during the period beginning January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2011.

Summary of the Consolidated Plan Process and Lead Agency:

The City of Jonesboro's Department of Community Development is responsible for the development and implementation of the Consolidated Plan. Various City Departments and local agencies assisted in the collection of the needs data for preparation of the Consolidated Plan, allowing for meaningful comparisons to be made in evaluating conditions within our City. This process allowed for significant cost savings in the collection of the housing market and homeless needs data for preparation of the Consolidated Plan. The City of Jonesboro intends to utilize the existing City institutional structure. This structure will be enhanced with the ongoing use of public and private entities currently providing services to the public.

Citizen Participation Process:

The City of Jonesboro followed its Citizen Participation Plan in developing the Consolidated Plan. It is the goal of the City to encourage and facilitate participation of residents in the formulation of priorities, strategies and funding allocations for the Consolidated Plan. The Consolidated Plan process emphasizes the involvement of extremely low, very low, and low income persons (especially those living in low and moderate income neighborhoods and diverse populations) including people who do not speak English and persons with disabilities.

The preparation of the 2007-2011 Consolidated Plan builds upon the public participation and input provided in developing the City's 2002 Consolidated Plan Priority Needs Summaries as approved by the City Council which sets

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forth a five year plan citing Housing and Community Development Needs. The Consolidated Plan focuses on those goals that will benefit lower income households and identifies which goals are anticipated to be carried out using federal CDBG funds allocated to the City.

Public input was obtained from several resources; two public hearings were held, and the City participated in service provider meetings. Refer to the Consultation and Coordination with Other Agencies section for further details regarding phone surveys, focus groups, public housing questionnaires, etc. In addition:

- The City participated in the Community Needs Assessment Hearing held on January 22, 2007 by the Helping Organizations Prepare for Expansion Project (H.O.P.E.). The meeting was held in the City Council Chambers at the Huntington Building, which is disability accessible. An extensive amount of outreach and input was collected during this meeting (see Community Input Regarding Needs.)
- A Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting was held May 1, 2007 in order for the public and the committee to provide input on the Draft Consolidated Plan regarding community needs and identify which of the funding requests would best address community needs.
- A public hearing was held on May 31, 2007 at Allen Park Community Center to solicit and obtain public input.
- A thirty-day public review period of the Draft Consolidated Plan was provided from June 10 – July 17, 2007. The Draft Consolidated Plan was posted on the City's web site. Hard copies of the document were made available free of charge and could be obtained at the Department of Community Development. A notice was placed in the Jonesboro Sun which announced the availability of the Draft Plan for citizens' review.
- A second public hearing was held on June 26, 2007 to obtain any final public comments on the Consolidated Plan at Parker Park Community Center.
- City Council approval was obtained on July 17, 2007.

In an effort to broaden the public participation process for development of the Consolidated Plan, the City encouraged broad involvement in the Consolidated Plan process and held meetings in locations other than City Council Chambers in order to facilitate participation. Efforts were also made to reach persons with disabilities by utilizing agencies that serve persons with disabilities.

Beginning with Fiscal Year 2008, the City of Jonesboro is considering implementing a two-year budget cycle for public service programs. Under the two-year budget cycle, programs that receive CDBG funding for Fiscal Year 2008 will also receive conditional funding (based on satisfactory performance during Fiscal Year 2008) for funding in Fiscal Year 2009. All programs with satisfactory performance will receive a proportional share of the available budget in Fiscal Year 2009. Capital projects will continue to be funded on an annual basis in order for the City to maintain flexibility to fund projects when they are ready to utilize the funds, which is necessary in order to comply with CDBG Program expenditure requirements.

Consultation and Coordination with Other Agencies:

As part of the development process for the Consolidated Plan, the staff of CDBG and the Jonesboro Urban Renewal and Housing Authority (JURHA) met a number of times to discuss data resources and to coordinate requests for information from both public and private agencies. Housing providers and social service agencies were also contacted and asked to provide data and other information for use in developing the Consolidated Plan and were asked for input regarding the Draft Consolidated Plan.

The City of Jonesboro uses several methods to coordinate the Consolidated Plan process and the delivery of programs and services with our local agencies. One such method is the City's participation in quarterly meetings with local social service representatives through JURHA. These meetings are intended to share information about housing issues, coordinate funding decisions for local programs operated by nonprofit organizations, and explore current service opportunities.

The City has a Continuum of Care, which is now in the process of reorganizing, that coordinates a regional approach in identifying and addressing homeless needs. The Continuum of Care is described in more detail under the Homeless Needs section.

The City collaborates with local agencies concerning their various grant proposals, new services, public participation, and various other technical assistance as needed.

In addition to consultations with various community-based organizations, housing, and public service providers, the City's community development office collaborated with many City departments, such as the Mayor's Office, Information Systems, 911, Code Enforcement, Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, and the Jonesboro Economical Transportation System (JETS).

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) provided direct assistance in the preparation of the Consolidated Plan, making them another invaluable resource.

The City of Jonesboro's Community Development Department strives to make the best of the city's resources, while also aiming to improve the quality of life for its low income residents. The City utilized four reports: *Arkansas State University's Dr. Patrick Stewart and Dr. William McLean's 2006 Quality of Life Survey*, the *Jonesboro Urban Renewal and Housing Authority's Needs Assessment*, the *H.O.P.E (Helping Organizations Prepare for Expansion) Project's Needs and Assets Assessment*, and the *Crowley's Ridge Development Council's Quarterly Reports* as tools to help the city determine appropriate allocation of resources and help create plans for action. In addition, Dr. David England provided the homeless count data.

Drs. Stewart and McLean conducted a telephone survey in which participants were asked various questions about the city of Jonesboro, gauging their opinions on important public issues such as safety and traffic. Their results form the 2006 and 2007 Quality of Life (QoL) Survey used here to illustrate Jonesboro citizens' opinions about various needs in the city. The 2006 Survey included 320 respondents, while the 2007 Survey had 389 participants.

The Jonesboro Urban Renewal and Housing Authority (JURHA) asks all potential recipients of services to complete a short questionnaire in which they mark all needs for which they are applying. Collectively, these 226 surveys from 2006 and 36 from 2007 form the JURHA Needs Assessment.

The H.O.P.E Project is another significant source of information that aims to identify the needs of Jonesboro's low income residents by conducting interviews and focus groups. The H.O.P.E Project's Needs and Assets Assessment is based on this information.

Also invaluable, the East Arkansas Area Agency on Aging (EAAAA) is a private, non-profit organization which plans, coordinates, and delivers services to the elderly population in East Arkansas. EAAAA findings have helped in forming need assessment for the elderly.

Finally, the Crowley's Ridge Development Council is a Community Action Agency which provides various services to recipients. Their quarterly report and plan serves as an illustration of the many services already in place to address the needs of Jonesboro residents.

The City of Jonesboro held a number of meetings and public hearings (as described under the Citizen Participation heading) in order to obtain public input regarding community needs for the development of the Draft Consolidated Plan. Citizens were also encouraged to submit written comments at any time during the 30-day review period on the Draft Consolidated Plan.

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