

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

City of Grand Junction, Colorado 2001 Five-Year Consolidated Plan and 2001 Action Plan

Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)

Introduction

In 1996 the federal government established Grand Junction as a community entitled to receive Community Development Block Grant Funds. The City has prepared a new Consolidated Plan for the 2001 Program Year since the 1996 Five-Year Consolidated Plan is expiring at the end of August 2001. Applications for CDBG funds are made available in March with an April deadline for each Program Year.

Community Profile

Centrally located between Denver and Salt Lake City, Grand Junction is the largest city on the Western Slope of Colorado and serves as the County Seat for Mesa County. The City's population has grown nearly 45 percent in the last decade to approximately 44,000. The surrounding Grand Valley has about 95,000 residents, and Mesa County's population is approximately 118,000.

Since suffering through an economic slump in the mid-1980s, Grand Junction's population and economic indicators now exceed the highest levels of the boom period of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Grand Junction continues to expand its role as the regional trade, services, finance, education, transportation, and health care hub for Western Colorado and Eastern Utah.

While the area's economy has demonstrated strong growth, housing market appreciation far exceeds wage increases. Housing costs have increased an average of 8.5 percent per year for rentals, and 8.7 percent per year for sale units. Wages, meanwhile, have increased approximately 4.4 percent annually over the same period. These trends are expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

Consolidated Plan Process

The City adopted a Citizen Participation Plan in 1996 to describe citizen involvement in the Consolidated Plan. The Community Development Department of the City of Grand

Junction, as lead agency for the development of the Consolidated Plan (Plan), has invited extensive citizen involvement in Plan creation. The findings and needs identified by those who serve and work with the very low- to moderate-income populations are the basis of the Plan's development. Public and private entities, private citizens, the Consolidated Plan Advisory Committee, and citizen review all contributed to the successful preparation of this document.

Housing Needs

Population growth in Grand Junction has significantly exceeded growth in the number of affordable housing units. Waiting lists for the limited number of existing assisted housing units are a year or more. As a consequence of these and other conditions, the need for over 6,300 additional assisted housing units is critical.

In Grand Junction, housing costs have increased as much as 207 percent while wages have increased only 46.3 percent in the last ten years to an average of \$22,355 in 2000. Over half of all workers in Mesa County are employed in the Retail and Service sectors, historically among the lowest paying jobs in Mesa County.

One of the most disturbing indicators of need is the estimated poverty level in Grand Junction, which grew from 29.3 percent of the total population in 1993 to 45.4 percent in 1997 (the most recent figures available). Due to low area wages, it is estimated that 44 percent of all renters are unable to afford the Fair Market Rent of a modest two-bedroom apartment and 58 percent are unable to afford a three-bedroom unit. Over 23 percent of the local workforce is considered "low-income" or "in poverty" while working 40 hours per week.

Based upon Poverty Levels and Low Income Guidelines, 7,830 households in Grand Junction live cannot afford to pay market rate rent and need assisted housing. The current inventory of assisted housing units meets only 15 percent of the need.

Homeless Needs

Homelessness presents a growing challenge to Grand Junction. The combination of low local wages and rising housing costs is making a growing percentage of the general population vulnerable to loss of housing, and making it much more difficult for the homeless to work their way off of the streets. In addition, the high percentage of individuals and families without health insurance benefits makes many households vulnerable to housing loss in the event of an expensive major illness.

Local data collection about the homeless has been primarily anecdotal and informal, as there has not until recently been a coordinated community effort to build local demographic statistics. Although it is very difficult to accurately determine the number of homeless, a point-in-time survey conducted in March 2001 indicates that there are approximately 500 homeless persons in Grand Junction.

A series of planning sessions were conducted to identify needs and develop action plans and a Continuum of Care to address this challenge. The highest priority homeless needs identified through this process are for an emergency shelter, transitional housing, case management, and housing placement for individuals and families.

The Continuum of Care Plan, to be completed in the summer of 2001 by a coalition of community homeless service providers, is intended to provide a continuous network of housing and service support for persons working to permanently leave the streets.

Special Needs Housing

Due to the fact that Grand Junction is the largest community on the Colorado Western Slope and Eastern Utah, medical and other special needs services are provided here that are not available in smaller communities. As a consequence, the percentage of the special needs population in Grand Junction is higher than surrounding communities at approximately 12 percent of the total population. The ability of persons with chronic mental illness, physical and developmental disabilities, and HIV / AIDS to compete in the housing market for appropriate housing at an affordable price is limited in many cases by their lack of income and also by their need for special housing accommodations. Based upon local estimates, a total of 1,073 additional assisted housing units are needed to meet the existing housing need for this sub-population.

Anti-Poverty Strategy

The Anti-Poverty Strategy is an effort to reduce the number of people earning low- to moderate-income wages and at risk of homelessness. This Strategy, described in Chapter 5 of this Consolidated Plan, describes community activities to:

- Increase local pay rates;
- Increase the employability of recipients of public benefits;
- Attract higher paying employers to Grand Junction;
- Increase access to employment through expansion of the service area and hours of operation of the public transportation system and through the availability of responsible affordable childcare;
- Foster increased household stability through educational programs, drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, and services to persons with special needs;
- Support efforts to reduce the possibility of catastrophic expense through the provision of essential healthcare to the uninsured and the availability of effective public transportation to reduce the dependence of low-income persons on private automobiles and their associated costs.

Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan summarizes the community's work plan for addressing the needs discussed above. The Plan integrates economic, physical, environmental, community and human development activities in Grand Junction in a comprehensive and coordinated manner so that agencies, groups, and all citizens can work together to improve the quality of life of its residents. For each Priority and Category of need, specific Objectives and Strategies have been identified which define how the community will respond over the next five years.

The four Consolidated Plan Priorities for Allocation of CDBG funds are as follows:

Need for Non-Housing Community Development Infrastructure

Historically, the City of Grand Junction has determined its role to be the provision of basic citizen services such as public works and utilities, police and fire protection, parks and recreation, general planning, code enforcement, and local economic development. The City has defined numerous non-housing community development needs, including streets and public facilities remodel and repair, improvements in City infrastructure, and maintenance and development of city parks. Recognizing that the cost of meeting these objectives exceeds the amount of CDBG funds allocated to Grand Junction by HUD, several of these needs are budgeted in the City's Capital Improvement Plan.

Need for Affordable Housing

Priority Need Category: Increase the Inventory of Affordable Housing Units

- Objective 1 Increase the number of affordable rental housing units
- Objective 2 Increase the number and type of home ownership opportunities available to low- to moderate-income homebuyers
- Objective 3 Remove or reduce substandard housing units
- Objective 4 Preserve existing stock of affordable housing units

Needs of the Homeless

Priority Need Category: Prevent and Reduce Homelessness

- Objective 1 Provide shelter for homeless adults
- Objective 2 Provide shelter for homeless families
- Objective 3 Increase the number of transitional housing units with support services for homeless individuals and families
- Objective 4 Improve homeless prevention activities

Needs of Special-Needs Populations and Other Human Service Needs

Priority Need Category: Other Special Needs

- Objective 1 Increase the capacity of existing medical and dental facilities
- Objective 2 Increase the number of group homes that can accommodate individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities

Priority Need Category: Youth

- Objective 1 Increase the quality of affordable childcare for children of the working poor and people entering the workforce
- Objective 2 Increase the availability of drug and alcohol counseling
- Objective 3 Promote healthy recreational activities

Though the competition for CDBG funds has continually increased since program inception, the City has made an effort to balance disbursement of these funds between the various needs of the community. It is the City's goal to continue the balanced use of CDBG funds between the four priority community concerns through the term of this Consolidated Plan.

One Year Action Plan for 2001 Program Year

The purpose of the One-Year Action Plan is to identify One-Year Strategies for each of the Objectives set in the 2001 Five-Year Consolidated Plan. The One-Year Strategies are accomplished by utilizing a variety of resources, including the annual allocation of CDBG funds. On May 16, 2001 the Grand Junction City Council approved 2001 CDBG funding requests totaling \$504,000 for the following six projects. See Chapter 6 for a full discussion of the One-Year Action Plan.

1. Energy Office Affordable Housing Acquisition and Preservation Project (Project 91) – (\$200,000) This project is to acquire 91 affordable units and preserve them as permanent affordable rental housing. The original Section 8 contract expired in 1999 and these units have been at risk of becoming market rate units ever since. The Energy Office will use City CDBG funds for a portion of the acquisition costs and to leverage \$800,000 in State grant funds.
2. Grand Valley Catholic Outreach Transitional Housing Services (\$10,000) - This Housing and Training Program will serve 15 individuals and 2 families who are homeless for a period of 12 to 24 months. Through a caseworker, participants will be linked to all resources in the community to aid them in making a successful transition to permanent housing.
3. Habitat For Humanity Infrastructure for Camelot Garden Subdivision (\$39,000) – CDBG funds will be used for fencing and landscaping the 1.6 acre 11 lot Camelot Gardens Subdivision owned by Habitat For Humanity.

4. Marillac Clinic (\$200,000) – Dental Clinic Expansion / Relocation at 2333 North 6th Street. The funding will assist in the relocation and expansion of Marillac’s Dental Clinic, locate all of Marillac’s medical services at one site, and allow more than twice as many people to be served.
5. Mesa Youth Services, Inc., Partners (\$15,000) – Funds will be used for parking lot and landscaping construction for Partners Activity Center at their new proposed location at 12th Street and Colorado Avenue.
6. Mesa Developmental Services (\$40,000) – New Construction of Accessible Group Home at 1444 North 23rd Street. CDBG funding will be used to construct a Barrier Free Lift System (a ceiling mounted motorized track system for mobility of patients) and an Arjo Tub (a hydrosonic bathtub used for therapeutic values) for the severely developmentally disabled.

2001 PROGRAM TOTAL \$504,000