

**Economic & Community Development Department
CDBG Policy Committee Public Hearing on the
Five-Year Consolidated Plan for 2025-2029**

Tuesday, January 21, 2025 at 5pm
Meeting Room 3-1 (Room 310 Main) on the 3rd floor of
City Hall, 111 N. Main Street, Bristol, CT

ATTENDEES: Chairman Howard Schmelder, Commissioner Louise Provenzano

ABSENT: Commissioner Tom Hick

STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Dawn Leger, Grants Administrator; Justin Malley, ECD Executive Director

ADDITIONAL

ATTENDEES: LaQuita Kearney-Gonzales, ECD Board Member

I. Call to Order and Introduction of Committee Members

Chairman Schmelder called the hearing to order at 5:00pm.

Good evening. My name is Howard Schmelder, and I am the Chairman of the Policy Committee for the Economic and Community Development Department of the City of Bristol. Will the other commissioners and staff please introduce themselves?

LaQuita Kearney-Gonzales – ECD Board Member

Louise Provenzano – Committee Commissioner

Howard Schmelder – Committee Chair

Dr. Dawn Leger – Grants Administrator, City of Bristol

Justin Malley – ECD Executive Director

Welcome to the first Public Hearing to discuss Bristol's Five-Year Consolidated Plan for CDBG that begins later this year and runs to 2029.

The city is in the process of updating its Five-Year Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development. The plan will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the regulations and requirements contained in the Code of Federal Regulations 24 CFR Part 91.

To start, the city conducted a survey that was intended to gather information and opinions about the City's housing and community development needs. Information received from this survey will be combined with comments from Public Hearings, community workshops, and other sources to update the City's Consolidated Plan. The Policy Committee will then make recommendations to the full Board for strategies to guide the Five-Year period from 2025-2029.

Without further ado, I'm going to hand this over to Dawn Leger to make a short presentation about the results from the community needs survey.

Dr. Leger provided background regarding the survey information. She personally visited the Boards of the various CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) recipients from past years. During those visits, Dr. Leger made a presentation about what CDBG is, what it funds, how the process works, and the need for the 5-Year Consolidated Plan. Surveys were provided for the communities these organizations serve to provide their input towards the goals of the 5-Year plan.

The surveys were completed in 2023 by 264 individuals (95% Bristol Residents)

Key data from the survey responses:

Question 1

- Ranked issues of importance
 - 1. Inflation/Cost of Living (62.5%)
 - 2. Crime/Safety outside the home (55.3%)
 - 3. Affordable Housing (46.6%)
 - 4. Homelessness (37.5%)
 - 5. Childcare/Educational Opportunity (26.9%)
 - 6. Healthcare (17.4%)
 - 7. Workforce Development/Job Training (15.5%)
 - 8. Environment/Global Warming/Climate Change (14.4%)

Inflation and Crime aren't immediate concerns that the CDBG program can assist with, however the Committee agreed that gaining more information about city's crime data would be useful as it may relate to areas that the program can assist with.

Question 2

- Which of the following would you support with additional city or state funding?
 - 1. Mental Health Programs (59.9%)
 - 2. Assistance for Elderly Residents (59.8%)
 - 3. Youth Programs (48.1%)
 - 4. Education (45%)
 - 5. Vocational Education/Training (42%)
 - 6. Programs for Disabled Individuals (41.3%)
 - 7. Supportive Housing Programs (40.1%)
 - 8. Rehab Programs for Drug/Alcohol Addictions (38.6%)

Many of these concerns are intertwined, and the role of this program is to address and help fill service gaps. Homelessness among the elderly is a key concern as they're a growing part of the unhoused population as they're priced out of their existing rentals.

Question 3

- Residential Rehabilitation Program
 - The City should expand this program (50.7%), keep it the same (37.8%), or reduce its funding (12.5%).
 - Have you or a member of your family taken advantage of this program?
 - Yes (7.2%)
 - No (92.8%)

Most of the people who responded hadn't taken advantage of the program and replied to keep the program in place. The Residential Rehabilitation program improves the owner-occupied housing stock in the city. As of January 1, 2025 the program

has transitioned from a grant program to a no interest loan program which will help the program become more self-sustaining.

Question 4

- How do you think the City should respond to issues related to affordable housing and homelessness?
 - 1. Build workforce or affordable housing (55.7%)
 - 2. Continue providing residential rehab grants (42.4%)
 - 3. Support development of housing for adults over 55 (34%)
 - 4. Encourage developers of market-rate housing (29.2%)
 - 5. Build more low-income housing (26%)

Current and planned projects are supporting these concerns for housing and the continuation of the Residential Rehabilitation program.

Existing CDBG Program Goals with a change for 2025-2029:

Proposed Goals for 2025-2029

- 1) Support access to decent, safe, and affordable housing for Bristol residents, by
 - a. Funding the Housing Rehabilitation Program for low/moderate income single and multi-family homeowners for code enforcement upgrades and essential home improvements such as boilers/furnaces, window and roof replacements, that also increase energy efficiency and may help eliminate blight and improve safety; and increasing the health and safety of families with lead testing and abatement when needed.
 - b. Supporting organizations that provide housing and supportive programs for homeless individuals and families, at-risk youth, and people with special needs.
- 2) Support public service programs that advance community needs and focus on youth, the elderly, and special needs populations, by
 - a. Encouraging health and wellness initiatives such as health services, food distribution, and access to recovery and mental health services.
 - b. Supporting the expansion of services for neglected, abused children and improved access to physical and mental health facilities for children and youth at-risk, especially those with special needs.
- 3) Support economic development initiatives that include job training, workforce development, and ESL/GED programs.
- 4) Support infrastructure and facility improvements, blight reduction, and community revitalization activities, especially in the Opportunity Zone and low/mod income areas of the City.

Item #3 on this list above was previously Item #4. The Committee agreed to this change to update the priority of the economic development initiatives. Infrastructure and facility improvements haven't been approved due to the lack of funding as well as the one-year timeframe requirement for project completion.

Discussion of previous facility improvement projects followed. Yearly HUD funding amounts have also decreased year to year. Each year's funding amount is announced mid- to late-spring. Previous funding reporting to HUD has received high marks as the City of Bristol awards grants to programs that meet the Proposed Goals. Requests usually come in at three to four times the amount of the provided HUD funding.

The Committee fully supported the list of Proposed Goals for 2025-2029 as presented.

II. Public comment on the Draft CDBG Five-Year Consolidated Plan for 2025-2029

There was no public comment.

III. Adjournment

The hearing was closed at 5:38pm