



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: May 6, 2014

Prepared By/Phone Number: Christy Moffett / 854-3460

Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head: Sherri E. Fleming, County Executive of Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service

Commissioners Court Sponsor: Judge Samuel T. Biscoe

AGENDA LANGUAGE:

Consider and take appropriate action on the following items related to the Program Year 2014-2018 Consolidated Plan and Program Year 2014 Action Plan for the Community Development Block Grant funds available from HUD:

- A. Receive an update on the Program Year 2014-2018 Consolidated Plan;
- B. Request approval of the Strategic Direction for Program Years 2014- 2018; and
- C. Request approval of the project evaluation criteria for Program Year 2014.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS:

Under the provisions of Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (42 USC 5301), the Federal government through the U.S Department of Housing sponsors a program that provides Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to cities and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and by expanding economic opportunities for low and moderate income persons. Since 2006, Travis County has received CDBG funds from HUD on an annual basis.

Consolidated Plans are required for all CDBG grantees and are completed every 3, 5 or 6 years (based on the County's interest.) They include data on community needs and strategic program goals. The County is currently working under a three year Consolidated Plan spanning from program years 2011-2013. The next Consolidated Plan will span 5 years, taking effect on October 1, 2014 and ending September 30, 2018

- A. Starting in 2012, HUD required all jurisdictions to draft and submit Consolidated Plans using an automated tool called the eCon Planning Suite. This is the first cycle for Travis County to use the tool. The Consolidated Plan created using the eCon Planning Suite will be organized differently than the past Consolidated Plans. As with any new tool, glitches and problems occur. While HUD has worked to fix several problems, significant errors remain. Please refer to the issues and opportunities section for a more detailed list of anticipated problems and solutions with the upcoming Consolidated Plan.

To date, staff has drafted the Needs Assessment and Market Analysis sections of the Consolidated Plan using data collected from a variety of sources including the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, specialized HUD data sets, and the results of outreach to service providers and Travis County residents.

In June, staff will present the proposed projects for PY14 for approval by the Court and the Public Comment draft of the Consolidated Plan for approval. The final draft of the ConPlan will be provided in August after the end of the 30 day public comment period. For a calendar of milestones related to the completion of the Con Plan, please refer to Attachment A.

- B.** As a part of the Consolidated Plan, a strategic plan must be created which considers community needs in the following categories: Infrastructure, Housing, Community Services, Public Buildings & Facilities, Populations with Specialized Needs, and Business & Jobs. Each of these categories is evaluated as a high, medium or low priority and these rankings help guide the program goals over the five year Consolidated Planning period. Categories ranked as high indicate areas of certain investment over the next five years, while categories ranked medium indicate areas of possible investment. Categories ranked as low priorities indicate areas the County will not likely spend CDBG funding during the next five years.
- C.** Each year HUD requires grantees to develop an Action Plan specifying the activities to be undertaken with CDBG funds. For the program year 2014, which spans October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015, Travis County is expected to receive an estimated \$ 997,664 in CDBG funds. Travis County must determine how the funds will be allocated. The CDBG program accepts project proposals for the next program year from the public, Travis County departments, and social service agencies. Each year, the Department requests the Court approve the criteria that will be used to evaluate the proposed projects.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A.** Receive update on PY 2014-2018 Consolidated Plan progress.
- B.** Staff recommendations of rankings are based on the results of public outreach and the analysis prepared for the Needs Assessment and Market Analysis of the Consolidated Plan. These rankings are the same as were approved three years ago as the current data and public engagement continue to support them. Please see Attachment B for more information on the data used to support the recommended rankings.

Staff recommends approval of the following proposed Priority Rankings:

Prioritization of Categories for the PY 2014 – 2018 Consolidated Plan	
Category	Priority
Infrastructure	High
Housing	High
Community Services	High
Populations with Specialized Needs / Services	Medium
Public Facilities	Medium
Business & Jobs	Medium

- D. Staff recommends the approval of the attached Project Selection Criteria to evaluate the proposed CDBG projects for the program year 2014 Action Plan. Please see Attachment C for the proposed evaluation criteria. The Project Selection Criteria includes the following factors: addressing a high priority goal of the strategic plan, feasibility of project, impact or persons benefiting from the project, benefit to low/moderate income persons and leverage of funds.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

- A. Moving forward with the development of a CDBG Action Plan and 5 year Consolidated Plan indicates that the County has a continued interest in applying for CDBG funds over the next 5 years. Additionally, the County will be undergoing the Urban County Renewal process this year, during which other jurisdictions within Travis County are invited to participate in the Travis County CDBG program. Undertaking this process also indicates an ongoing interest in pursuing CDBG funding.

The eConPlan suite is presenting a series of issues as staff move through the tool, some of which are:

1. HUD auto populated CHAS data for disproportionate need do not tie to each other and are not comparable to other sets of CHAS data making analysis difficult. CHAS data is a special data set that HUD creates using Census data and cross tabulations that look at the housing market in conjunction with income, race/ethnicity and disability, among others;
2. Some HUD auto populated data tables have zeroes or errors that cannot be corrected. While staff can provide alternate data sources, the incorrect data tables must remain, which will be confusing to the public reviewing the document;
3. When printing, not all of the tables or materials print, meaning that what is in the eConPlan tool is not accurately reflected in the printed

- public comment document. Furthermore some of the labels for data tables reverse in the printed document making the table incorrect; and
4. Mapping tool is unwieldy to use, often taking long periods of time to create a map.

Solutions to the issues are as follows:

1. CDBG Staff will not use any maps from the eConPlan mapping tool. It is not required;
2. Staff outreached to HUD for technical assistance in February and had a conference call on 2/24/14 with HUD staff in Washington DC to troubleshoot issues. To date, the issue with the CHAS data disproportionate tables has not been resolved;
3. Staff are making notes about the nature of any auto-populated data inaccuracies, using alternate sources, when available, and/or referencing the last ConPlan when we know the data trend will have stayed the same or worsened;
4. Staff will try to format and fix as much as possible prior to publishing for public comment, however, time will be limited and staff will not guarantee that all issues will be resolved. Staff have notified HUD of this and HUD has not provided a requirement to fix any flaws that occur between what exists in the tool and what prints from the tool; and
5. Staff will publish a supplement that replicates the detail of the PY11-13 ConPlan. This document will better inform the community of the conditions that exist in the unincorporated areas and provide more up to date data than what is currently available in HUD's tool.

B. The recommendations for strategic priorities allow the County to continue to address the issues that the data and the public identify as the highest needs.

C. Approving selection criteria gives staff the direction necessary to bring forward recommendations for funding for the next program year. The criteria recommended are the same criteria used in previous years.

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

None.

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:

None.

Attachment A
**Calendar for the Development of the CDBG PY14-PY18 ConPlan
 & PY14 Action Plan**



At Commissioners Court



Key Dates

APR	Turn in back-up for May 6 agenda item	29
MAY	Approval of Strategic Direction & Project Selection Criteria	6
	Turn in back-up for June 3rd agenda item	27
JUN	Approve dates and advertisements for public hearings; Presentation of Projects	3
	Turn in back up for June 10 th agenda item	3
	Advertise the Week of June 9	9
	Approve projects	10
	Turn in back-up for June 17 th agenda item	17
	Approve of Public Comment Draft by TCCC	24
	Public Comment period begins	27
	Turn in back-up for July 1 st agenda item	24
JUL	Public Hearing at TCCC	1
	Turn in back-up for July 8 th agenda item	1
	Public Hearing at TCCC	8
	Public Comment Period Ends	28
	Turn in back-up for August 5 th agenda item	29
AUG	Approve final PY14-PY18 Con Plan and PY11 Action Plan at TCCC	5
	Con Plan and Action Plan due to HUD	15

Attachment B
Travis County's Community Development Block Grant Program
Summary of Recommendations for Strategic Priorities for PY2014-18

Strategic Area: Housing

Recommendation Priority: High

Public Engagement Ranking:

Residents: 3rd

Social Service Agencies: 1st

Data Summary:

- Rapid population growth in the Austin area has resulted in an imbalance between supply and demand in the housing market, the most recent data shows a historically low housing inventory.
- Housing prices and rents have been steadily increasing in Travis County, while median incomes have not increased at the same rate.
- Cost burden (paying more than 30% of income towards housing costs) is the most prevalent housing problem facing Travis County residents.



Owner-occupied housing:

- In 2013 the Austin MSA had the highest average home price of any MSA in Texas.
- In February 2014, Austin area home prices hit an all-time high according to a report released by the Austin Realtors Board, with a median price of \$230, 530.
- Residents of the unincorporated areas indicate that the most urgent need related to housing is repairs for owner occupied housing.

Renter-occupied housing:

- In 2013, the Austin area had the highest Fair Market Rent for apartments with one or more bedrooms, and the second highest Fair Market Rent for efficiency apartments of any MSA in Texas.
- Housing in the unincorporated area is primarily comprised of single family structures; there is a scarcity of affordable rental units.

Homelessness:

- The 2014 Annual Homelessness Count provided a point-in-time snapshot of the Austin area homeless population, at a total of 1,987 homeless individuals.

Rationale for High Priority Ranking:

Housing costs have become increasingly expensive in Travis County over the last several years, and there is a scarcity of housing affordable to low-income households. This trend is likely to continue over at least the next year. Housing was ranked as the highest need among service providers and the third highest need by residents during the public input process.

Strategic Area: Infrastructure

Recommendation Priority: High

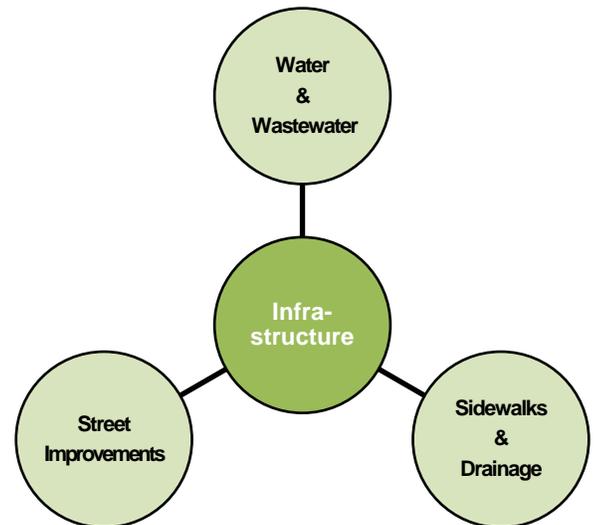
Public Engagement Ranking:

Residents: 1st

Social Service Agencies: 5th

Data Summary:

- Residents of the unincorporated areas have indicated a need for water/wastewater systems and roads.
- In particular, residents in economically disenfranchised areas lack access to running water and are without infrastructure or funding to access the area water utility.
- Request for water and wastewater over the last five years totals an estimated \$28 million.
- Requests for street improvements over the last five years total an estimated \$18 million.
- Drainage improvements often are associated with other street improvement work.
- Bike paths and sidewalks as an added benefit can provide more livable, sustainable neighborhoods.



Water/Wastewater:

- Precincts 1, 3, and 4, in particular, have a high need for water/wastewater improvements. And we recently received a request for wastewater improvements in Precinct 2.
- Many residents of unincorporated areas rely on septic systems, many of which are in need of repair or replacement, which can be very costly. When multiple failures of septic systems occur within a subdivision, it can be more cost-effective to connect to a wastewater treatment plant.

Roads:

- There are approximately 400 miles of roadway in unincorporated areas that are not on the County maintained system. Unmaintained roads may make it difficult for property owners, school buses, mail service providers, and emergency service providers to have all-weather access to properties.
- Neighborhoods may apply to the County's Substandard Road Program for funds; however, the only option for low and moderate income neighborhoods may be through the CDBG program.

Flood drainage:

- Due to recent severe flood events, significant flood drainage improvements and/or repairs are needed, especially in the E/SE parts of the county. Of six damaged facilities, four are used by and/or benefit primarily low-to-moderate income households. Estimates for these repairs are over \$1.5 million.

Rationale for High Priority Ranking:

Since the inception of the CDBG program, infrastructure has been at the forefront of the program. It is the project type that caused communities to organize and request funds, and still remains the most requested project by neighborhoods. Over the last three years, almost \$1 million of CDBG funds has been invested in improving substandard roads.

Strategic Area: Community Services

Recommendation Priority: High

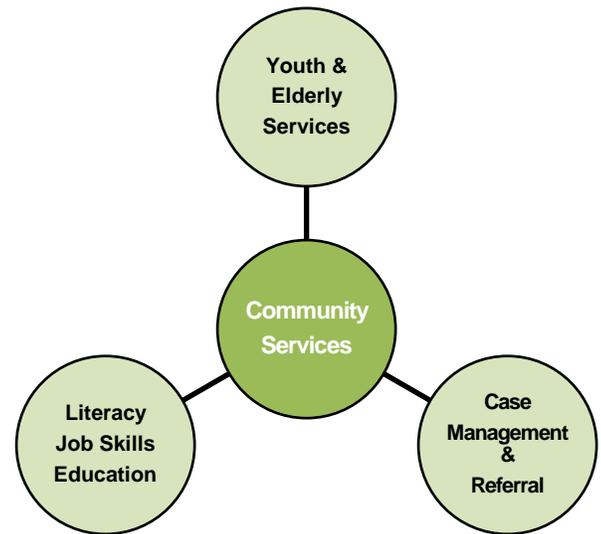
Public Engagement Ranking:

Residents: 2nd

Social Service Agencies: 2nd

Data Summary:

- Of the current social service contract investments made by the Department, approximately 5% of the services are being provided to persons living in the unincorporated areas, and another 25% to residents in areas that are mixed incorporated and unincorporated.
- Approximately 18% of the total county population lives in the unincorporated areas of the county; therefore, it appears these areas are underserved with respect to social services.
- Services need to expand outside the city limits in order to more adequately serve the needs of the residents in these areas.



Youth:

- Travis County is home to over 180,000 school-age children between the ages of 5 and 17. The poverty rate among children is higher than the overall poverty rate for all residents of Travis County.
- Recent data shows that most students in low income areas of Travis County were not served by afterschool programs although:
 - Research shows that afterschool and other youth programs have positive impacts on student behavior and performance, and
 - A 2011 survey of high school students points to a greater risk for poor outcomes among Texas students, compared to youth nationally, due to greater risky behaviors that threaten the health and safety of youth.

Elderly:

- In 2012, there were 85,458 adults aged 65 and older living in Travis County, comprising 7.8% of the population. By 2020, that figure is expected to rise to 10.4% of the county population, and with it the need for services.

Rationale for High Priority Ranking:

Since the inception of the CDBG program, access to social services has been an issue, in particular due to transportation barriers. Service provider and resident input point to this as a key impediment in the unincorporated areas. Over the last three years, over \$377,000 of CDBG funds has been invested in improving access to case management, fair housing and tenant's rights counseling and other needed services.

Strategic Area: Public Facilities and Buildings

Recommendation Priority: Medium

Public Engagement Ranking:

Residents: 6th

Social Service Agencies: 6th

Data Summary:

- Residents, primarily from E/SE and W/SW Travis County, have requested the following types of public facilities: neighborhood parks (including playgrounds and walking trails), recreational centers, community centers, health facilities, and childcare centers. Often times, the discussion around public facilities also centers on access to community services, which residents rank as a more pressing need.
- Whereas some of these types of public facilities, in particular, parks and community centers, are available in the unincorporated areas, even these public facilities may not be accessible to residents without, or with limited, access to personal or public transportation.



Parks:

- Eastern Travis County currently has less park acreage than western parts of the county, and the need for additional recreational areas in the eastern parts of the county is likely to increase.
- As development continues to push into eastern Travis County, agricultural and rural land is increasingly converted to developed land.
- Additionally, the demographics of the eastern part of the county include higher concentrations of low income households who may rely on public facilities for recreational activities.
- Finally, as the population of the county grows, it is likely that existing facilities will have to support increased usage. Taken together, these factors may indicate the need for expanded recreation areas or activities in eastern Travis County.

Community Centers:

- Community centers are important to the unincorporated community as they provide centralized locations—five outside of the urban core—for residents to access social services and community meeting rooms. However, as the population continues to be pushed further out in the unincorporated area, even these public facilities may not be accessible to residents with limited transportation options.

Rationale for Medium Priority Ranking:

While public interest for these types of facilities is high it is often in conjunction with expanded community services. Access to funding from other sources is better suited to address this type of capital expansion. CDBG staff recommends providing advocacy and communication about the interests expressed by the public during the public comment periods rather than prioritizing funding during this strategic planning period.

Strategic Area: Populations with Special Needs/Services Recommendation

Priority: Medium

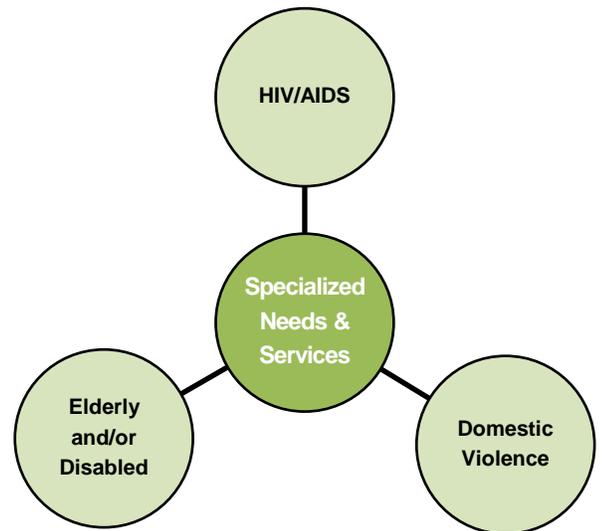
Public Engagement Ranking:

Residents: 4th

Social Service Agencies: 3rd

Data Summary:

- Approximately 5% of clients receiving services for the elderly, persons with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, or persons living with HIV/AIDS were from the unincorporated areas of the county. Another 24% live in areas that are a mix of incorporated and unincorporated. Currently, there is no housing in the unincorporated areas that is specifically for disabled persons.
- Elderly renter households are more likely to have a housing problem than either owner-occupied households or non-elderly households.



Elderly &/or Persons with Disabilities:

- In 2012, about 8% of the Travis County population consisted of adults aged 65 and older, and close to a quarter of individuals aged 65 to 74 and over half of individuals 75 and older had a disability. Since the elderly population is expected to rise and the rate of disability is known to increase with age, the needs for services for the elderly and disabled is expected to grow as well.

Victims of Domestic Violence:

- Children who are abused or neglected also are more likely to have a higher tolerance for and use of violence in relationships and enter into violent relationships as teens and adults or abuse their own children.
- Currently, there are no beds or housing available specifically for victims of domestic violence in the unincorporated areas of Travis County.

Persons Living with HIV/AIDS:

- HIV/AIDS may have the additional challenge of choosing between dedicating money to basic living expenses such as housing or to medical care.
- There is only one organization in the Austin area that provides HIV/AIDS specific housing. The same organization provides assistance to clients at three sites in the unincorporated areas; however, there is no dedicated HIV/AIDS housing in the unincorporated areas.

Rationale for Medium Priority Ranking:

Data indicates that elderly and disabled households, in particular, are in need of more directed services. Due to the high demand for services in the unincorporated areas, whether the person is considered part of a special population or not, specific program targeting only to a particular population is not a best practice. Through sub recipient contracts, staff will direct sub recipients to develop specific marketing strategies to ensure inclusion and access for these populations to the more generalist program funding as they relate to housing and community services.

Strategic Area: Business and Jobs

Recommendation Priority: Medium

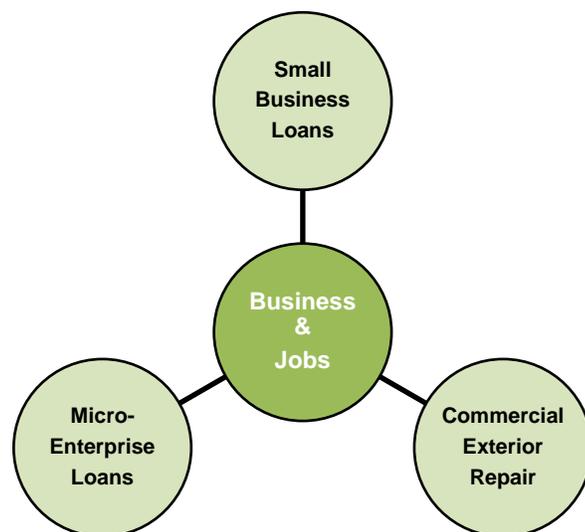
Public Engagement Ranking:

Residents: 5th

Social Service Agencies: 4th

Data Summary:

- According to the Texas Workforce Commission, in 2013, there was an increase in the number of jobs in every major industry in Texas.
- And as of December 2013, the unemployment rate for Travis County (4.5%) has consistently remained lower than the state (5.6%) and national (6.5%) rates.
- Approximately 7% of the services related to workforce development reach the residents of the unincorporated areas of the county, and another 30% reach residents in areas that are a mix of incorporated and unincorporated. This shows that residents throughout the unincorporated areas are in need of improved access to workforce development and jobs.
- Programs and services within this issue area provide employment and training services to help individuals improve workplace skills, obtain employment, succeed in the workplace, and help employers secure a skilled workforce.



Correlation between Education & Earning Potential

- Current minimum wage in Texas is \$7.25 per hour. According to the Center for Public Policy Priorities, a single adult with employer-sponsored health insurance and no children must earn \$10.81 per hour, almost one-and-a-half times the minimum wage, to live in the Austin-Round Rock MSA without relying on public assistance. For a two-parent, two-child household without employer-sponsored health insurance, the required wage increases up to \$31.51 per hour, more than four times the minimum wage.
- Data continues to show that there is a powerful correlation between educational attainment and earnings.
- This, coupled with the fact that the greatest job growth in Travis County has been for high-skilled workers, highlights the need for both short-term and long-term training, as well as efforts to increase enrollment in postsecondary education.

Rationale for Medium Priority Ranking:

Having job centers disbursed throughout the County is preferable to reduce traffic and promote sustainable living. The development of job centers has not paced with the sprawl and growth of the unincorporated areas. Due to the high cost and economic development tools needed to attract businesses to particular locations, it may be preferable that CDBG focuses on linking clients from the community services projects and housing projects to current workforce programs.

Attachment C

Program Year 2014 Proposed Evaluation Criteria for Project

Travis County CDBG staff will first review all submitted proposals and project ideas for eligibility and consistency with the CDBG national objectives. Eligible projects will then be ranked according to following evaluation criteria:

1. **Addresses a high priority goal of the Strategic Plan:** Projects addressing one of the three high priority categories identified in the strategic (consolidated) plan will receive more favorable review.
2. **Feasibility of project:** Projects that have the ability to be implemented and completed within 12 months will receive more favorable review. Project may be broken up into manageable 12-18 month phases for those that are more costly or slower moving.
3. **Impacts a significant number of households:** Project scope and the number of persons benefiting will be considered to determine the level of project impact.
4. **Benefit to low/moderate-income persons:** Projects that benefit low- and moderate-income households will receive a more favorable review.
5. **Leverages/matches with funding from another source:** Projects that utilize other funds (federal, state, local, private) and public/private joint efforts will receive more favorable review.

After reviewing and ranking all the proposals benefiting unincorporated areas, the CDBG staff will make funding recommendations to the Travis County Commissioners Court. The Commissioners Court makes the final selection of CDBG funded projects and will provide a 30 day public comment period to receive comment on the proposed uses of funding prior to submission to HUD as well as hold two public hearings.