



City of New Bedford

Office of Housing and Community Development

Patrick J. Sullivan, Director

Mission

The City of New Bedford's Office of Housing and Community Development engages residents, non-profit organizations, developers and the general public in articulating the City's needs and priorities for expanding the stock of safe, decent and affordable housing, stimulating economic development, supporting programs and services for community development and revitalizing neighborhoods; in so doing it administers strategies that effectively utilize federal funding resources helping low and moderate income residents achieve their vision of a healthy and viable community.

Staff

The Office of Housing and Community Development [OHCD] is comprised of two divisions that encompass housing activities and community and economic development activities, all of which are integral to neighborhood revitalization activities for the City of New Bedford. Patrick Sullivan, Director of the OHCD, oversees both of these divisions.

Funding

The OHCD receives federal funding on behalf of the City of New Bedford through the HOME Investment Partnership Program [HOME], the Community Development Block Grant [CDBG] program, the Emergency Shelter Grant program [ESG] and competitive funding for the Supportive Housing Program [SHP] from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD].

Broad Initiatives

Housing

From individual projects to large-scale development, housing programs administered by the OHCD are funded by an annual entitlement of roughly \$1.3 million from the HOME program geared toward housing low and moderate-income populations. To this end, the OHCD offers several housing programs using HOME and some CDBG dollars that provide **funding for owner-occupied and investor-owned residential properties** in the City of New Bedford. These programs are geared toward providing funds to benefit low and moderate-income individuals and families in the City of New Bedford by securing and/or improving their housing throughout the City. Through these programs the OHCD assists a broad swath of project types and sizes ranging from the installation of wheelchair ramp for several thousand dollars that allows an elderly person to remain in his or her house, to multi-million dollar projects such as the Carriage House at Acushnet Heights, Lawton's Corner, the Casey-Miller Apartments and the Union Street Lofts that leverage significant public and private resources in producing multi-unit affordable apartment complexes.

In addition to the six programs funded through these federal sources, the OHCD also administers **state programs** on behalf of the Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund [MHP], the Department of Housing and Community Development [DHCD] and MassHousing.



Housing Programs provide first time homebuyers with downpayment, closing costs, rehabilitation funds to bring properties up to code or to ensure accessibility and gap financing all of which make both new homeownership or continued homeownership a reality for low and moderate income individuals and families.

The CDBG Program has provided millions of dollars for infrastructure improvements throughout the City and has provided thousands of New Bedford residents with community-based programs serving youth, elderly, those with special needs, those experiencing or threatened with homelessness and others within the low and moderate income population.



So that first time homebuyers are better prepared to assume ownership of their new properties, the OHCD is also a State Certified agency offering **First Time Homebuyer Seminars** that provide important counseling information throughout the year equipping individuals and families for sustainable homeownership.

Certified Community Development Housing Organizations or "**CHDOs**" also receive assistance through the HOME program administered by the OHCD. In New Bedford, three CHDO's [PACE-Youthbuild, Community Action for Better Housing or "CABH" and Community Economic Development Council or the "CEDC"] have received funding to create affordable housing for low and moderate-income persons.

While New Bedford receives HOME funding as an entitlement community, the OHCD, in concert with the City's Continuum of Care, competitively applies for and administers Supportive Housing Programs on behalf of the City each year. These programs provide transitional housing, permanent housing and supportive services for **homeless individuals and families** throughout New Bedford and include eight active residential programs whose funding approximates \$1.4 million annually.

Community Development

The OHCD receives an annual entitlement of just over \$3.5 million dollars from the federal CDBG Program and in turn, reallocates these dollars to private non-profits, community-based organizations, city departments and private for-profit corporations for activities that principally benefit low and moderate-income areas or low and moderate-income persons. The City of New Bedford's CDBG program is designed to expand opportunities for low and moderate-income citizens through these programs, thereby improving the quality of life and building community.

With CDBG funding the OHCD has overseen countless **public facility projects** throughout the City including the development of Custom House Square, the renovation of the Hillman Street Gym and an addition onto the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center. CDBG has also funded **infrastructure improvements** in the City providing necessary dollars for the improvement of roads and sidewalks in eligible census tracts and has provided funding for some of the **housing programs** offered through the OHCD. Similarly, the OHCD has awarded funding to a diverse mixture of non-profits providing **public services** like senior citizen programming, basketball leagues for inner-city youth, clinical counseling and substance abuse services to eligible residents in the community.

In addition to these initiatives, CDBG funding is used for **economic development** purposes, providing funds for a revolving loan pool through the New Bedford Economic Development Council, technical assistance to businesses and individuals through local business associations and the Community Development Action Council and storefront improvements through a reimbursement program administered by the OHCD, directly.

Separate from CDBG funding is the smaller Emergency Shelter Grant [ESG] approximating \$130,000 annually. This money is also a federal entitlement that provides limited assistance to non-profits for **emergency shelters and emergency services** for those who are homeless and those who are on the brink of homelessness, providing resources to them while strengthening community.

Neighborhood Revitalization

New Bedford is a city of neighborhoods, each with its own character, parks and housing options. From a single-family home on the beach to a historic triple-decker to an artists' studio in the urban downtown, there are diverse housing alternatives within the over 41,000 housing units throughout the City.

In keeping with its mission to increase the City's stock of safe, decent, affordable housing, the OHCD has instituted a comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy. The goal of this strategy is to remove blight and significantly improve the quality of life in some of New Bedford's most deteriorated neighborhoods. To this end, the Office of Housing and Community Development has identified five Target Areas in which to concentrate its improvement initiatives and provide incentives for reinvestment: the North End, Acushnet Heights, South Central, South End and Cove Street. Of these areas, Acushnet Heights received a formal five-year designation from HUD in 2000 as a **Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area** [NRSA]. A renewal of the plan developed in creating that NRSA, along with a new NRSA that combines the South Central, South End and Cove Street neighborhoods, is slated for publication in 2006.

In each of these areas, a number of projects are underway that will significantly improve conditions for their residents. Several housing initiatives as well as infrastructure improvements to streets, sidewalks, parks, and commercial facades have been completed or are in progress.

Planning

The OHCD undertakes two significant planning functions through its ongoing work with entitlement funding, first through its Action Plan Process and secondly through its work with, or in anticipation of, specific neighborhood projects.

In the first instance the OHCD seeks to develop its **annual CDBG/ESG/HOME budget**. It does so by first developing an annual citizen participation process during which public notices, flyers and advertisements educate the public and invite them to a number of different public forums during which community needs are discussed and priorities identified. This input is analyzed and reviewed in concert with proposals for funding submitted to the OHCD to undertake work consistent with community needs and goals. This annual process compliments a larger planning process conducted once every five years during which the City's Consolidated Plan is drafted and overarching needs and priorities are analyzed and strategies developed. All appropriations awarded reflect the strategic objectives articulated in both the Consolidated Plan and the annual action plan.

The second significant planning function undertaken by the OHCD revolves around its work in specific projects, particularly related to improving and stabilizing neighborhoods. Ranging from a Receivership Program to the careful design and development of a neighborhood playground, the OHCD employs the critical tools of inventory, assessment, and analysis as it seeks to devise careful, effective results for the community it serves.

Regardless of the planning efforts it undertakes, the OHCD works diligently in providing direct public assistance and education so as to empower all interested persons/organizations in their hope of either securing funding for projects funded through the CDBG program or working with programs to that they may more completely serve the needs of the low and moderate income population.



The OHCD maintains a website through the City's web page that provides public notices and public information including statistical data, published reports and, when being conducted, links to public surveys used in planning future projects.



The OHCD has used CDBG funding to markedly improve neighborhood tot lots, playgrounds and playfields including the multi-year total renovation of Clasky Common in Acushnet Heights.

Parks and Playgrounds

Although parks and playgrounds technically fall within community development initiatives and are funded through the CDBG program, the OHCD's successes in restoring and rehabbing City resources are worthy of particular note.

As part of its strategy in determining what facilities in eligible census tracts were in greatest need, the OHCD first conducted an **Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey** in 2003 that fully inventoried each of the parks and playgrounds in eligible census tracts. From this inventory, and in conjunction with established needs and priorities articulated by the community, over time multiple parks were identified—and continue to be identified—for rehab work. When such identification is made and a budget set, stakeholders in the surrounding neighborhood are identified and immediately engaged in the design process. These discussions pave the way for public hearings in the community with opportunities for discussion and brainstorming as to the **residents' vision** for a renovated playground or park.

The OHCD has enjoyed tremendous success in following this model, apparent in a variety of facilities including the Ruth Street Tot Lot that converted an abandoned lot that was home to drug dealing into a neighborhood asset for children, the Magnett Park restoration that included new basketball courts, a refurbished tot lot and updated park amenities, Clasky Common's total rehab of active and passive amenities and the most recent project at the Gomes School Playground slated for construction in 2006.

Whether its providing technical assistance to a new business, helping a senior citizen remain in her home by improving its accessibility, serving the tremendous needs of the homeless or ensuring that neighborhood parks and playgrounds are safe and joyful places for our children, the OHCD will continue vigorously working to develop innovative and practical solutions that stabilize our neighborhoods and strengthen our community.



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