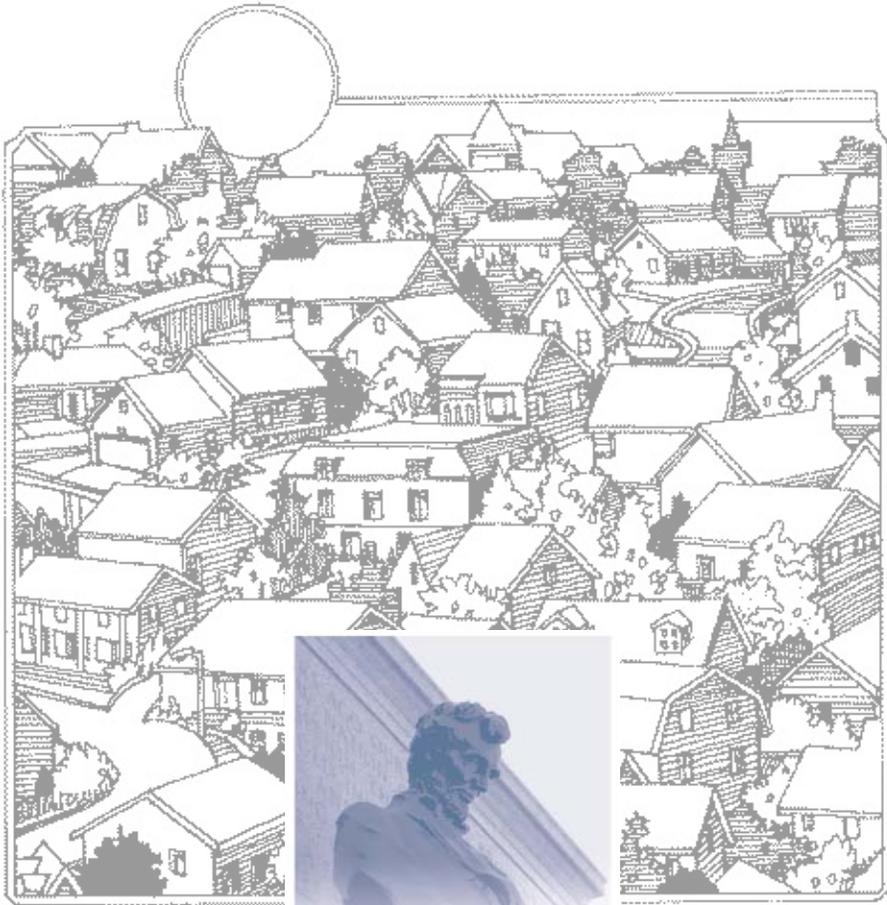


City of Lincoln, Nebraska  
Urban Development Department  
**Citizen Participation Plan**



**CITY OF LINCOLN**  
**NEBRASKA**  
MAYOR CHRIS BEUTLER  
[lincoln.ne.gov](http://lincoln.ne.gov)

## **Citizen Participation Plan**

City of Lincoln, Urban Development Department  
Mayor Chris Beutler  
(402) 441-7606, [urbandev@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:urbandev@lincoln.ne.gov)  
[www.lincoln.ne.gov](http://www.lincoln.ne.gov), keyword: urban

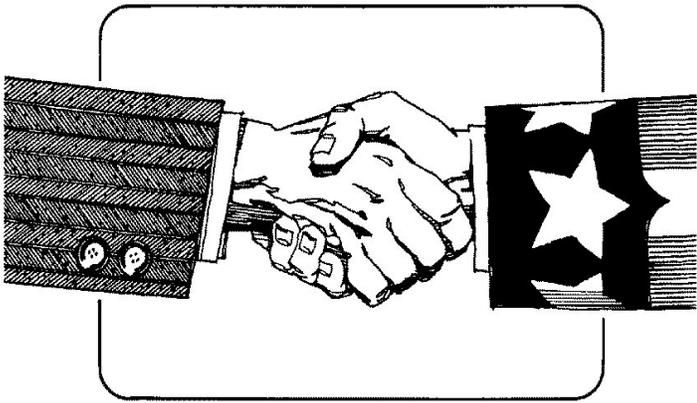
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Revised July 2007

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Revised July 2010

Revised September 2011



## Introduction

The City of Lincoln is required by law to have a **Citizen Participation Plan** that details how the public can be involved in the “*Consolidated Plan*” process and implementation. Lincoln’s *Consolidated Plan* details how the City uses funds received from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD).

As a HUD entitlement city, Lincoln receives an annual allocation of funds under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME). These allocations vary from year to year as Congress establishes the Federal budget. Since 1975, when Lincoln received its first CDBG allocation, over \$80 million has come to Lincoln under these and other HUD programs. For more information about each of these and other related federal programs, see page 9.

You can use the information in this **Citizen Participation Guide** to become involved in the community process that shapes the local use of these Federal funds for some of the City’s most important endeavors:

- ▶ revitalizing older neighborhoods,
- ▶ improving and maintaining an aging housing stock,
- ▶ providing homeownership opportunities,
- ▶ providing meaningful economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents,
- ▶ providing human services to those in need, and
- ▶ moving homeless persons and families to independence and self-sufficiency.

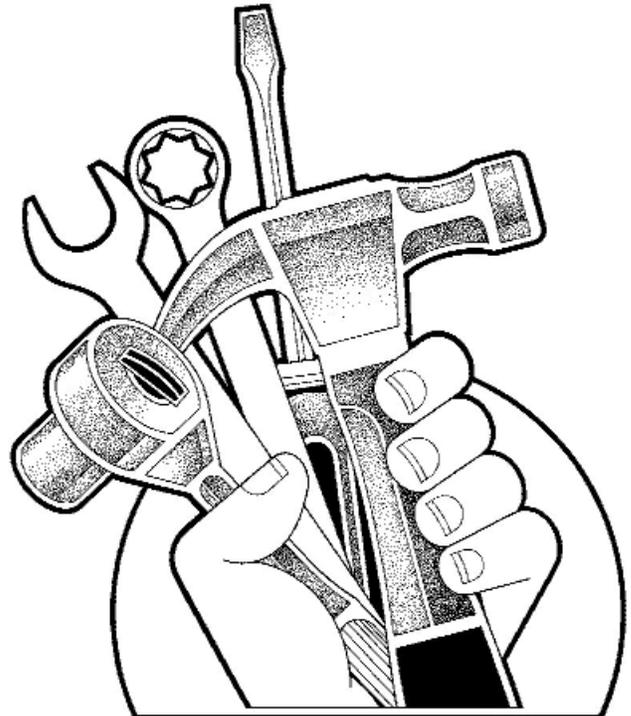
## The Consolidated Plan

To receive CDBG and HOME funds, the City of Lincoln must prepare a *Consolidated Plan* that outlines Lincoln’s housing, homeless, and community development needs. The *Consolidated Plan* also identifies resources, priorities, goals, and proposed HUD-funded activities. Lincoln’s *Consolidated Plan* includes:

- ▶ *Three- to Five-Year Strategic Plan*;
- ▶ *Annual One-Year Action Plans*;
- ▶ *Substantial Amendments to the Action Plans or the Strategic Plan*; and
- ▶ *Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports (CAPER’s)*.

The *Consolidated Plan* isn’t static -- done once and set in stone. It is an on-going process with opportunities to adjust, tweek, modify, and grow with each year.

Because CDBG and HOME funds are targeted by law to primarily benefit lower-income people, this *Citizen Participation Plan* encourages genuine involvement by lower-income people and neighborhoods. That includes involvement at all stages of the *Consolidated Plan* process: identifying needs, setting priorities among the needs, deciding how much money should be allocated to each need, suggesting types of programs to meet needs, and overseeing how programs are carried out.



## The Process

There are several stages, or steps, in the *Consolidated Plan* process:

1. Identification of housing and community development needs.
2. Preparation of a draft plan for the use of funds for the upcoming year. This is called the proposed Annual Action Plan. In years when a new *Strategic Plan* is needed, a draft of that will also be prepared.
3. Formal approval by elected officials of a final Annual Action Plan (and *Strategic Plan* when it's being re-done.)
4. Occasionally, during the year, it might be necessary to change the use of the money already budgeted in an *Annual Action Plan*, or to change the priorities established in a *Three- to Five-Year Strategic Plan*. In that case, a formal Substantial Amendment will be proposed, considered, and acted upon. For more details about how Substantial Amendments are done, see page 11.
5. After a program year is complete, a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) must be drafted for public review and comment, and then sent to HUD.

In Lincoln, the program year is the same as the City's fiscal year (FY) and runs from September 1 through August 31. For example, FY 2015 would be September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2016.

## Urban Development Department

The City of Lincoln's Urban Development Department is responsible for administration of CDBG and HOME programs at the local level. In addition, the Urban Development Department carries out other activities:

- ▶ As the City's designated redevelopment authority, the department coordinates other redevelopment activities funded with City, State, and Federal funds.
- ▶ As operator of the One Stop Career Center, the department administers the federally-funded local Workforce Investment Program.

The Urban Development Department main office is located in the County-City Building at 555 S. 10th Street, Suite 205, Lincoln, Nebraska, 68508.

## Citizen Participation

All Lincoln residents are encouraged to participate in the development of all parts of the *Consolidated Plan*. This includes those who can benefit most from housing and community development activities:

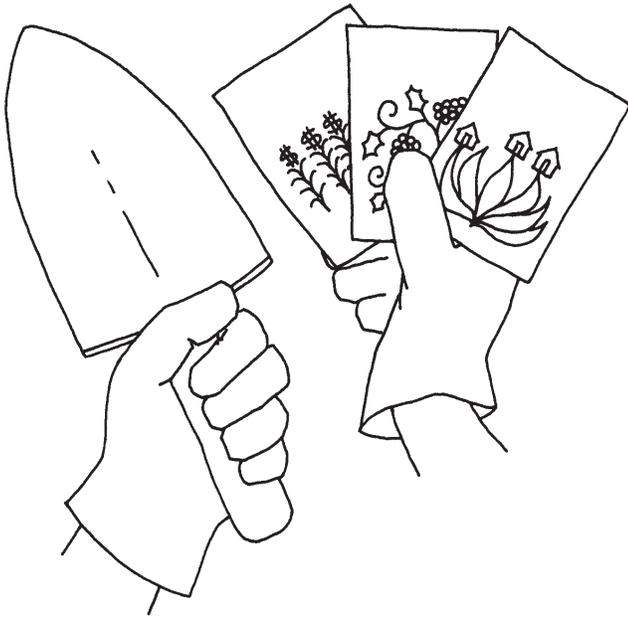


- ▶ Low- and moderate-income residents,
- ▶ Minorities,
- ▶ Non-English speaking persons,
- ▶ Persons with disabilities,
- ▶ Residents of public and assisted housing developments,
- ▶ Recipients of tenant-based assistance, and
- ▶ Low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas.

Lincoln residents can participate in the *Consolidated Plan* process in a variety of ways: through their neighborhood, community, and business organizations, online surveys, and an open house.

**Neighborhood organizations** are integral to the community development process. As the voice of their respective neighborhoods, it is their role to provide information concerning neighborhood needs and to make suggestions for activities to meet those needs. Neighborhood organizations can and have worked with Urban Development Department staff to prepare and/or implement projects. Neighborhood organizations voice their concerns at public hearings, at the monthly meeting of Mayor's Neighborhood Roundtable, and at special meetings called to review and provide input on projects. For more information about Lincoln's neighborhood organizations and the Mayor's Neighborhood Roundtable, see [www.lincoln.ne.gov](http://www.lincoln.ne.gov), keyword: *neighborhood*.

**Other community organizations** are encouraged to participate in the community development process -- especially those serving the needs of low- and moderate-income people, the disabled, female heads of households, minorities or the elderly. These organizations include community cen-



ters, nonprofit housing providers and social service agencies. A few specific examples are: the Indian Center, the Lincoln Housing Authority, the League of Human Dignity, Community Action Partnership (formerly Lincoln Action Program), the Homeless Coalition, Habitat for Humanity, and NeighborWorks® Lincoln.

**Business organizations** can also provide valuable input into the community development process, especially those representing businesses in low- and moderate-income areas of the City. Examples include: the North 27th Street Business and Civic Association, the Downtown Lincoln Association, the University Place Business Association, and the South Street Business and Civic Association.

**Public hearings and open houses** are held expressly for direct public participation and offer another opportunity for citizens to voice their concerns or ideas on the City's community development program. Public hearings and open houses are publicized at least five days in advance in the *Lincoln Journal Star*, in the legal notices section.

Public hearings and open houses are held in convenient locations that are accessible to persons with disabilities. Upon request, interpreters will be provided for non-English speaking or deaf persons.

In addition to a public hearing, there is a **public comment period** -- 15 to 30 days depending on the subject matter of the hearing. (See the timeline on page 8.) Comments can be submitted orally at public hearings and open houses. Written comments can be submitted during the public comment period to the Urban Development Department. All comments are reviewed and included in the final document presented to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

When a *Three- to Five-Year Strategic Plan* is being developed, additional citizen participation will be sought. This may include an ad hoc advisory committee and/or surveys.

## Informing the Public

**Publications:** The Urban Development Department publishes the *Consolidated Plan* for citizen review and comment. Each part of the *Consolidated Plan* is available to the public. A "notice of availability" is published in the legal notices section of the *Lincoln Journal Star*. Residents are advised that the document is available:

- ▶ On the Urban Development Department Web page: [www.lincoln.ne.gov](http://www.lincoln.ne.gov), keyword: *urban*; and
- ▶ At the Urban Development Department, 555 S. 10th Street, Suite 205, Lincoln, NE 68508.

**Meetings:** Notices of public hearings and open houses -- containing date, time, place, and purpose -- are posted at least five days in advance through:

- ▶ Publication in the *Lincoln Journal Star* legal notices section and
- ▶ Posting on the City of Lincoln Website government calendar: [www.lincoln.ne.gov](http://www.lincoln.ne.gov), keyword: *calendar*.

## Displacement Information

Activities undertaken with funds included in the *Consolidated Plan* try to avoid displacing residents. However, should displacement occur, persons displaced will receive additional information, including a booklet entitled *Relocation Assistance*. This booklet outlines their rights and contains general information about relocation services and benefits offered by the City. It is also available on the Urban Development Web page: [www.lincoln.ne.gov](http://www.lincoln.ne.gov), keyword: *relocation*.

If displacement occurs as a result of any *Consolidated Plan* activities, the federal **Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970**, as amended, will be followed.

## Access to Records

The Urban Development Department has prepared numerous documents that identify community development needs and facilitate the administration of the programs. These documents are available for review upon request.

No single document fully describes the CDBG and HOME programs. Federal regulations often change, with new requirements added and old ones deleted. Updated rules are regularly issued by HUD and numerous guidebooks are also produced by HUD to more fully describe various aspects of the programs.

Citizens are encouraged to use whatever materials best meet their needs. Below is a list of some of the materials available, both locally and nationally.

**Local Information:** This information is available at the Urban Development Department, with accommodations for visually impaired and non-English speaking persons upon request.

- ▶ *Housing Rehabilitation and Homeownership Program Guidelines.* This material lists and defines the programs and requirements for assistance to homeowners and first-time homebuyers.
- ▶ *Neighborhood Target Area and Focus Area Action Plans.* These plans identify strategies to address needs in small sub-neighborhood target areas.
- ▶ *Lincoln Affordable Housing Needs Assessment.* This analysis of Lincoln's affordable housing market examines the supply and need for affordable housing based on demographic, economic, and geographic conditions.
- ▶ *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing.* This is a summary of the obstacles to fair housing in Lincoln.

**Federal Information:** This information is available on the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Website ([www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)) and at the Urban Development Department.

- ▶ *"Common Rule" (24 CFR Part 85).* This is technically called the "Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State, Local, and Federally Recognized Indian Tribal Governments." It contains the guidelines that Lincoln must follow in allocating funds to subrecipients.
- ▶ *Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations (24 CFR).* This section of the Federal Code covers all HUD programs. The guidelines for the different programs and other important requirements can be found in the following parts of 24 CFR:
  - ▷ 24 CFR Part 570 - CDBG;



- ▷ 24 CFR 92 - HOME;
- ▷ 24 CFR 910 - Consolidated Planning Requirements;
- ▷ 24 CFR 58 - HUD Environmental Responsibilities.

- ▶ *Federal Register.* The *Federal Register* is published daily, Monday through Friday (except on official holidays) and contains the public regulations and legal notices issued by Federal agencies. These include Presidential proclamations and Executive Orders, Federal agency documents having general applicability and legal effect, documents required to be published by an Act of Congress, and other Federal agency documents of public interest. Applicable portions are listed by federal department, so CDBG information would appear under Housing and Urban Development.

## Technical Assistance

The Urban Development Department provides technical assistance to low-income, very low-income, and poverty level individuals or organizations in developing proposals for funding under any programs included in the *Three- to Five-Year Strategic Plan*. Staff also provides technical assistance to grant recipients to ensure compliance with federal rules and regulations.

## Complaints

During the course of the year, the Urban Development Department accepts citizen complaints regarding the approved Community Development Programs and/or the community development process.

Although verbal complaints are accepted, only written complaints receive a written response. Complaints are investigated and responses to written complaints are made within 15 working days after a complaint is received. Copies of complaints and any action taken are submitted to City officials and are filed in the Urban Development Department's records. These are also included in the *Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)* to the HUD.

Please send complaints to:

**David Landis, Director**  
**Urban Development Dept.**  
**555 S. 10th Street, Suite 205**  
**Lincoln, NE 68508**  
**(402) 441-7126**

If you are not satisfied with the response, you may contact:

**U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development**  
**Omaha Field Office**  
**Edward Zorinsky Federal Building, Suite 329**  
**1616 Capitol Avenue**  
**Omaha, NE 68102-4908**  
**Phone: (402) 492-3100**  
**Fax: (402) 492-3150**  
**TTY: (402) 492-3183**

## Contact Information

Contact the Urban Development Department with any questions or comments, or for more information.

Urban Development Department  
555 S. 10th Street, Suite 205  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
(402) 441-7606  
Email: [urbandev@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:urbandev@lincoln.ne.gov)  
Website: [www.lincoln.ne.gov](http://www.lincoln.ne.gov), keyword: *urban*

## More About Substantial Amendments...

**Substantial Amendments** to Lincoln's *Strategic Plan* and/or *Annual Action Plans* may be made from time to time. For a proposed change to be an amendment, at least one of these circumstances must be present:

- ▶ A change in the use of CDBG or HOME funds from one eligible activity to another.
- ▶ The addition of a new activity.
- ▶ The elimination of an activity.
- ▶ A change that exceeds either 10% of the annual grant amount of any funding component or a minimum of \$7,500.

- ▶ A substantial change in the purpose, scope, location, and/or beneficiaries of an activity.

Public hearings are held on amendments to the *Consolidated Plan*. Notices are published in the *Lincoln Journal Star* legal notices section at least five days prior to public hearings and informational meetings. All meeting times and places are formally announced using local media and the Internet. There is a 30 day public comment period on any amendments.

## More About the Process and Timeline in Lincoln...

In Lincoln, the program year (or fiscal year) runs from September 1 through August 1, which matches the City's regular budget cycle. Because the program years don't coincide with calendar years, the **current program year**, **past program year**, and **future program year** terminology can get confusing. It may be helpful to have an example: if the current program year is FY 2012 (September 2012 to August 2013), the past program year is FY 2011 (September 2011 to August 2012), and the future program year is FY 2013 (September 2013 to August 2014).

Here is a month by month timeline of the local *Consolidated Plan* process:

### September

- ♦ The current program year begins (September 1) along with implementation of the activities identified in the current year's *Action Plan*.
- ♦ Prepare the past program year's *Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)*.

### November

- ♦ Announce the availability of the past year's *CAPER* to the public and begin the 15-day public comment period.
- ♦ Hold a public hearing on the past program year's *CAPER*.

- ♦ Public comment period (15 day) on the past program year's *CAPER* ends.
- ♦ Submit past program year's *CAPER* to HUD.

**February**

- ♦ Begin discussion/development of the future program year's *Action Plan*.

**March**

- ♦ Develop preliminary funding allocations and strategies for the future program year's *Action Plan*.

**April**

- ♦ Finalize recommendations for future program year's *Action Plan*.

**May**

- ♦ Announce the availability of the future program year's draft *Action Plan* and begin the 30-day public comment period.

**June**

- ♦ Public comment period (30 day) on future program year's *Action Plan* ends.
- ♦ Approval of future program year's *Action Plan* by City Council at a previously announced public hearing.
- ♦ Prepare an Environmental Review of the future program year's *Action Plan*.

**July**

- ♦ Submit the future program year's *Action Plan*, "Application for Federal Assistance," and "Certifications" to HUD.
- ♦ Preliminary approval of future program year's *Action Plan* by HUD.

**August**

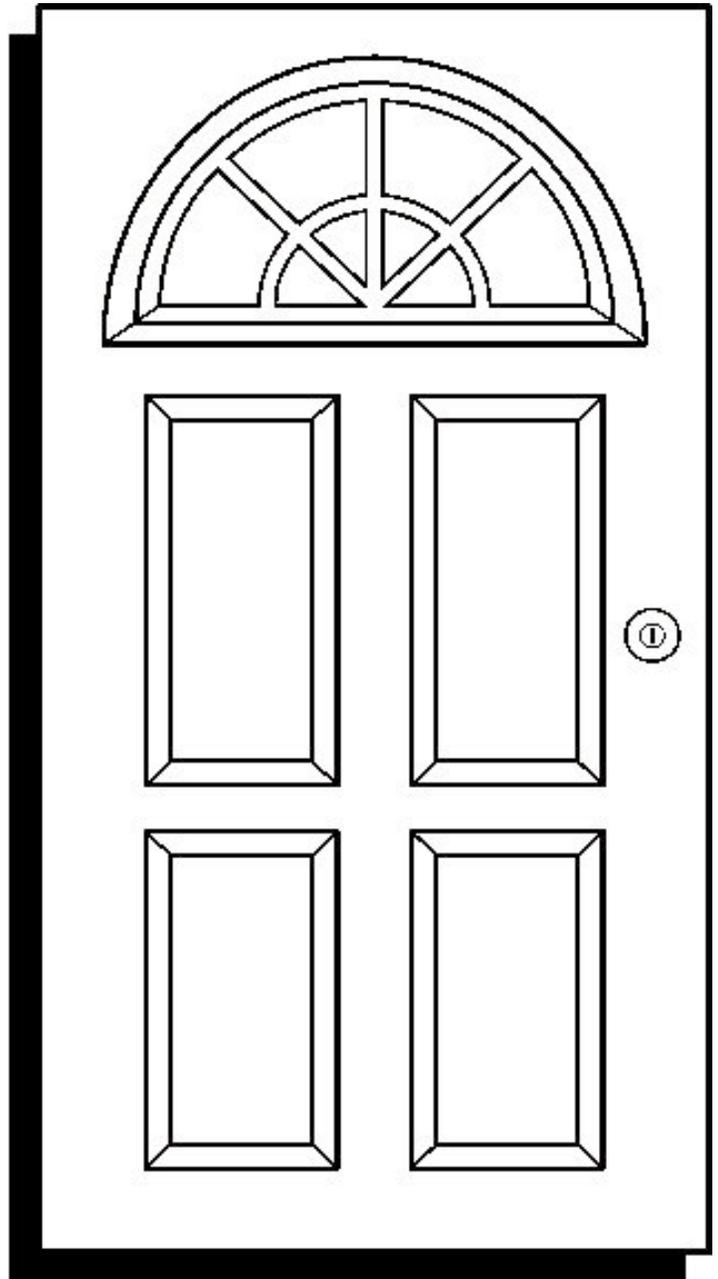
- ♦ Publish "Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) and/or "Notice of Intent to Request Release of Funds".
- ♦ Begin 15-day local public comment period on the FONSI and/or Notice of Intent to Request Release of Funds, plus an additional 15 day period for comments sent directly to HUD.
- ♦ Submit "Request for Release of Funds" to HUD.
- ♦ Release of Funds and Funding Agreement from HUD.

**Once Every Three to Five Years**

When a *Three- to Five-Year Strategic Plan* is being prepared, more activities will be scheduled. Some of them will happen at the same time and place as the normally scheduled meetings already listed. Additional opportunities for public involvement will be well-publicized.

**The Consolidated Plan includes:**

- *Three- to Five-Year Strategic Plan*;
- *Annual One-Year Action Plans*;
- *Any Substantial Amendments to the Action Plans or the Strategic Plan*; and
- *Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports (CAPER's)*.



## More About CDBG...

Authorized under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, the **Community Development Block Grant Program** (CDBG) has a stated goal of ". . . *developing viable urban communities, by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and expanded economic opportunities.*"

Currently, this program provides the largest formula grant to the City of Lincoln. Over the years, these funds have been used in many ways, including:

- ▶ Rehabilitation of owner-occupied and rental housing;
- ▶ Homeownership assistance;
- ▶ Public improvements (sidewalks, street paving, storm sewers, alley graveling, tree planting, etc.);
- ▶ Assistance to neighborhood organizations;
- ▶ Assistance to businesses to expand or retain jobs;
- ▶ Rehabilitation of commercial buildings; and
- ▶ Assistance to non-profit organizations to provide human services.

According to regulations, to be eligible for CDBG funding, an activity must meet one of the following three national objectives:

CDBG regulations can be found in Part 570 of Title 24 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*

- ▶ Provide a benefit to low- and moderate-income persons,
- ▶ Aid in the prevention or elimination of slums and blight, or
- ▶ Meet community development needs having a particular urgency because existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community.

Communities must certify that at least 70% of the CDBG expenditures are used on activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons.

### Who Can Receive CDBG Funds?

Lincoln, as a recipient of CDBG funds, can award and disburse funds to non-profit organizations, Section 301(d) Small Business Investment Companies, and local community development corporations. Individuals may also receive CDBG grants and/or loans through City-run programs, such as its housing rehabilitation loan programs, and through neighborhood-based nonprofit organizations.

## More About HOME...

The **HOME Investment Partnerships Program** (HOME), authorized under the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990, was created ". . . *to provide decent affordable housing to lower-income households, expand the capacity of nonprofit housing providers, strengthen the ability of state and local governments to provide housing, and leverage private-sector participation in affordable housing.*"

Lincoln was designated as a **Participating Jurisdiction** (PJ) and received its first allocation of HOME funds in 1992. Some of the activities funded under Lincoln's HOME Program include the construction of new rental units, rehabilitation of owner-occupied housing, financial assistance to first-time homebuyers, and security deposit assistance to homeless families.

Rules for the HOME Program are in Part 92 of Title 24 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*

Among other requirements, a PJ must allocate at least 15% of its annual HOME allocation to activities carried out by Community Housing Development Organizations or CHDOs. CHDOs are private, nonprofit organizations that meet a series of qualifications prescribed in the HOME regulations. Several organizations in Lincoln have been or are designated CHDO's. Often, an organization will work to qualify as a CHDO in order to accomplish a specific project.

## About CDBG-R and HPRP...

From 2009 through 2012, the Urban Development Department is administering two programs funded through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA): the **Community Development Block Grant - Recovery Program (CDBG-R)** and the **Homelessness Prevention and Rapid-Rehousing Program (HPRP)**. Total funding was \$474,644 and \$726,148, respectively.

Nationally, these short-term funds are being used for activities that create jobs, restore economic growth, and help those in the greatest need as a result of economic downturn. Part of the goal of

ARRA funds is that, by being spent quickly, they would strengthen the economy.

Locally, CDBG-R funds are being used to complete activities and projects that could have been completed using "regular" CDBG funds -- if enough funding had been available.

Local HPRP funds are focused on housing stabilization, providing temporary assistance to households who would otherwise be homeless and helping rapidly "re-house" persons who are homeless.

## About ADDI...

From 2004 - 2007, federal American Dream Downpayment Initiative (ADDI) funds were used to assist low-income first-time homebuyers in purchasing single-family homes. Teamed with HOME funding, ADDI funds were used for downpayments,

closing costs, and rehabilitation carried out in conjunction with home purchases being assisted by HOME. Starting in 2004 and ending in 2008, Lincoln received a total of \$323,000 in ADDI funding.

## About ESG...

Between 1995 and 2004, Lincoln received over \$689,000 in direct, federal **Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG)** allocations. However, the ESG Program is now administered state-wide by the State of Nebraska Health and Human Services Department (HHS). Lincoln agencies apply to HHS for ESG funds.

The ESG program is one of many programs created by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Act of 1987, federal legislation enacted specifically to assist homeless persons. Locally, ESG dollars have been and are used for operating costs of local shelters and homeless programs, homeless prevention activities (payment of rent and utilities arrearages for persons facing eviction), and homeless client services.

Lincoln agencies also receive funds through the State of Nebraska's **Homeless Shelter Assistance Trust Fund (HSATF)**. The Urban Development Department has been given the responsibility of recommending allocations of HSATF monies to Lincoln providers.

HSATF was created by the Nebraska legislature in 1992 to provide additional funding for homeless services in the State. Since fiscal year 1999, \$1.747 million in HSATF monies have been allocated to Lincoln homeless service providers.

The Urban Development Department continues to provide staff for the Homeless Coalition, Lincoln's Continuum of Care entity.