



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Pennsylvania State Office
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MAY 12 2003

FOR HUD MAIL ONLY:

The Honorable Paul Thibault
Chairman, Lancaster County Board of Commissioners
50 North Duke Street
P.O. Box 83480
Lancaster, PA 17608

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Dear Mr. Thibault:

SUBJECT: Consolidated Annual Assessment
Lancaster County
January 1, 2002 through December 31, 2002

The provisions of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, and the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990, require the annual submission of performance reports by grant recipients receiving Federal assistance through programs covered under these Acts. Additionally, these Acts require that a determination be made by the Secretary that the grant recipient is in compliance with the statutes and has the continuing capacity to implement and administer the programs for which assistance is received.

Section 91.525 of the Consolidated Plan regulations requires this Department to evaluate and report to the public on a community's overall progress in the management of its program funds; compliance with the Consolidated Plan; the accuracy of performance reports; and the extent to which progress has been achieved toward the statutory goals identified in 91.1. This letter serves to apprise you of our assessment of Lancaster County's overall progress.

In making our evaluation, we relied primarily upon the Consolidated Annual Performance (CAPER) submitted by the County. For Fiscal Year 2002, this report summarized the County's accomplishments of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, the HOME Program, the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) Program, and the data comparable to or the same as what was contained in the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) APR. In addition, we considered technical assistance, communications, and the County's handling of citizen comments and/or complaints, as well as our recently concluded on-site monitoring of the County's Community Development Block Grant, HOME, and Emergency Shelter Grant Programs. We are pleased to note that there were no findings as a result of our evaluation.

We congratulate the County on its many accomplishments, during this past year, toward the achievement of Departmental Goals and local objectives. Based upon our analysis of the Consolidated Report and other relevant data, we were able to make the following determinations:

1. Program funds are being used in accordance with the requirements of the Consolidated regulations and the applicable regulations governing the CDBG, ESG, and the HOME Programs;
2. A comparison between financial data in LOCCS and the information in the Consolidated Plan Report evidences that the report is accurate and that funds are being properly managed; and,
3. Relative to the Community Development Block Grant program, the County has consistently exceeded the Primary Objective of 70% funding for activities directed towards low/moderate income persons or households. Since the inception of the program, the County again has expended 100% of its allocated CDBG funds on these type activities.

We note that the County has carried out activities, which address the highest priorities established in the Strategic Plan section of its 2000 Consolidated Plan; and has made progress toward achieving the goals of providing decent housing, assisting the homeless, and creating a suitable living environment. Also, efforts have been taken to create business opportunities and jobs.

Decent Affordable Housing

The County continues to take aggressive steps to stimulate the production of affordable housing units. During the 2002 Program Year, these efforts resulted in the construction of 184 rental units and the rehabilitation of 26 owner occupied units. In addition to the 184 rental units, another project is nearing completion, which will add 48 more rental units to the inventory. Also, the assistance provided through the first time homebuyers program enabled 26 lower income families to purchase a home; and the County's Energy Conservation program provided assistance to 90 low-income families.

Homeless Assistance

The Consolidated Annual Progress Report indicates and our on-site review confirmed that one hundred percent (100%) of the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) funds allocated each year are contracted within a 12-month period. The ESG assistance and the funds received by the entities that comprise the County's Continuum of Care provided emergency shelter to 2,427 clients and transitional housing to 411 households.

The success in addressing the needs of the homeless is due in part to the implementation of the newly created "regional" Continuum of Care Plan for the Homeless. This Plan, which incorporates the needs of the homeless in the City of Lancaster and Lancaster County, indicates the gaps in services to the homeless; identifies the provider network and delineates strategies for the various homeless sub population categories. The council that developed the Plan is comprised of representatives from the coalition of social service agencies, which work with the City and County to provide housing and social services to the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless.

Creating A Suitable Living Environment

The County provided low and moderate-income residents essential human services through CDBG and ESG funds provided to 16 non-profit agencies throughout Lancaster County. The services provided include day care, employment training, legal services, health care, as well as recreational, and educational programs. In Program Year 2002, over 5,225 persons were helped. The County is congratulated on the development and implementation of the human services delivery system known as System Reform. The System Reform process seeks to foster increased cooperation among service providers to establish a system that is easily accessible, prevention oriented, and results based. One of the goals of the new approach is the creation of a single application to be used for all human service funding available to social service agencies operating in the County. The process has reduced the paperwork and staff time formerly required by applicants to request funding from the County's CDBG and Human Service Development Fund (HSDF) programs. As a result agencies have additional time to accumulate data on the results achieved by the funding provided, in the prior year, especially for the CDBG program.

Economic Development

Economic development efforts are targeted to small businesses and micro enterprises. Through the Assets, Base and Community First Fund programs, the County provided business-training opportunities to 93 low and moderate-income persons.

The accomplishments noted above reflect the County's comprehensive approach to community development, as well as an effective and efficient use of limited resources.

We ask that you review our assessment of your performance and provide any comments that you may have within 35 days of the date of this letter. Upon receipt, we will evaluate your comments and make any revisions that are deemed appropriate. If you do not have any comments relative to the above, we request that you formally notify us of that fact within the 35-day timeframe. Where no comments are received within the designated timeframe, our initial letter will serve as our final assessment of Lancaster County's performance for this program year. To facilitate and expedite citizen access to our performance letter, we request that you apprise the general public and interested citizen's

organizations and non-profit entities of its availability. If, for any reason, the County chooses not to do so, please be advised that our Office is obligated to make the letter available to the public. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

We will continue to work with you and members of your staff to accomplish our mutual goals as well as local objectives. If there is any support you require, in this regard, our Office is ready and available to provide technical assistance and guidance. Should you wish to meet or if you have any questions about the content of this letter, please contact, Mr. James J. Keegan, Community Planning and Development Representative, at (215) 656-0626, extension 3212. This Office may also be reached via text telephone (TTY) at (215) 656-3452.

Sincerely,

Milton R. Pratt, Jr.

Milton R. Pratt, Jr.
Regional Director

cc:

Mr. Randy Patterson ✓