

## **Part One**

### **INTRODUCTION**

## PART ONE - INTRODUCTION

The Consolidated Plan is the document that the City of East Chicago submits to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as an application for funding for two HUD grant programs; Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME). The purpose of the Consolidated Plan is twofold:

- To identify the city's housing and community development goals, needs, priorities, and strategies;
- To identify ways to allocate funds for housing and community development activities to meet the stated needs.

The Consolidated Plan will establish priorities and objectives for the next five years. These priorities will direct future investments of HUD resources in the city. The Plan also acts as a guide to allocate future resources for housing and community development

A key element of the Consolidated Plan is its emphasis on citizen participation and the collaborative nature of the process. Through this process, the City of East Chicago will determine its housing and community development needs, develop strategies for addressing those needs, and will undertake specific actions consistent with those strategies. The process also will lend itself to developing and establishing a unified, coordinated vision for the community development activities of the City.

### 1.0 Background

The preparation of the 2004 Consolidated Plan is based on a process that builds upon previous planning and community development efforts in the city of East Chicago. The background documents reviewed and relied upon most heavily for this purpose includes the following:

*City of East Chicago Comprehensive Land Use Plan:* The City of East Chicago Comprehensive Plan was prepared almost a decade ago. Several sections of the plan have become outmoded as a result of the changes in the land uses, redevelopment efforts, demolition and other activities. Nonetheless the Plan remains the only valid document in the City from which land use decisions are made. Several neighborhood and special districts' updates have been made in recent years. The City uses these updates to guide decisions in the affected areas. The city plans to update its land use plan in the near future to address many land use issues which have become a concern in the near future.

*City of East Chicago Hope VI Plan:* This document was prepared to obtain a grant from HUD for revitalization of a neighborhood in the Harbor area. The Plan proposes construction of 234 units of new single family homes and replacement rental housing in four different phases of revitalization. The plan also has retail and commercial components. These elements will be constructed in conjunction with the housing development.

*Analysis of Impediment to Fair Housing:* The Analysis of Impediments Report was commissioned

by the city for the East Chicago Redevelopment Department. The Study was prepared in a process which included interviews, focus group discussions, and data analysis. The results of this study were published in a document in April of 2004. The report contains several findings related to fair housing issues in the City. It also makes several recommendations. These recommendations relate to code enforcement, image of the City, quality of housing, and information/communications with the citizens.

Indiana Harbor Action Plan: The City of East Chicago prepared this plan in response to continued declining conditions in the neighborhoods and the opportunity which the area offers for redevelopment. The plan assessed existing land uses, social and economic conditions, urban design features, and transportation resources. The plan proposed three different redevelopment alternatives and an implementation action plan. The Harbor Action Plan was completed in November of 2002.

Calumet Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan: The plan prepared by the City last year to address many redevelopment opportunities in this neighborhood. The redevelopment plan assessed the neighborhood conditions and conducted several neighborhood meetings to get input. The plan proposed several recommendations for redevelopment of the area. These include land acquisition, demolition, infrastructure improvement and beautification. The primary objective of the plan is to revitalize the Calumet Neighborhood.

Carey/Drummond Street Redevelopment Plan: This plan set an area bound by the Carey/Drummond streets, Michigan Avenue and Columbus Drive as a redevelopment district for the purpose of major intervention in the neighborhood for revitalization. The plan proposes acquisition of 82 parcels of land as well as other improvements. The acquired properties will be used to encourage revitalization of the area.

## **2.0 Vision Statement**

The 2004 Consolidated Plan relies upon the efforts of many individuals, organizations, and citizens in development of a cohesive strategy to revitalize the city. The Vision for the next five years is thus a compilation of these efforts and anticipated to be inclusive in its focus.

For the last three decades the city has seen major challenges to its foundation as a diverse community with good neighborhoods, stable population and flourishing business environment. This tradition in recent decades has changed to a climate of severe disinvestment, unemployment and distress. The efforts of the city have been to change this trend. The City has been relatively successful in recent years as a result of the efforts put forth by the city administration, the citizens, and the community leaders. These efforts have given a sense of optimism to the community.

The Vision for 2004 Consolidated Plan is to build a community where people can live and work in the community and choose corner neighborhood stores for their shopping, and drive a short distance to work. To achieve this vision, the Consolidated Plan proposes several goals. These goals are developed in consultation with other agencies, analysis of the needs, and most of all the expressions of the citizens presented during two public meetings. The East Chicago's Vision for Consolidated Plan for the next five years includes:

- A diverse community with the strong belief that partnership on all matters will enhance the community's long term well being;
- A safe community where children can walk to school and with all conveniences for shopping, worship and recreation;
- A vital community with emphasis on aligning the educational and training needs with future employment opportunities;
- An attractive community, with distinct neighborhoods where everybody knows their neighbor;
- A proud community where heritage and cultural history plays a strong role in its quality of life and aesthetics;
- A caring community where its most important resource is its people. A community where the most vulnerable are not forgotten but supported and cared for.

The Department will carry out this vision using a series of broad strategies and goals. These strategies are further detailed in Plan. They consist of the following:

***Goals:***

1. Expand homeownership opportunities.
2. Encourage development of a variety of housing types and mixes.
3. Preserve and improve affordable rental housing opportunities in the City.
4. Improve physical environment to encourage reinvestment.
5. Provide opportunity for the citizens to work in the community.
6. Enhance infrastructure and community facilities in the city.
7. Strengthen and expand City's continuum of care for persons who are homeless.
8. Enhance capacity of local organizations for housing and community development.
9. Foster community and economic redevelopment of the City.
10. Improve the overall quality of life of the City.
11. Enhance community services targeted to meet the needs of families, children and people with special needs.
12. Promote integration of the citizens with disability to live in the community.
13. Expand employment opportunities and training for low and moderate income individuals.
14. Expand the sense of security in the community.

### **3.0 Summary of Consolidated Plan Development Process**

The Department of Redevelopment oversees the city's CDBG and HOME grants. It is the entity that ultimately implements the objectives of the plan. The East Chicago Redevelopment Commission has the oversight responsibility for the Department. The Commission makes recommendations to

the City Council for its official actions. The Human Relations Commission has the full responsibility for administration of fair housing issues in the City. The Planning Department has the responsibility of coordinating all development projects in the city. The department also is responsible for long term planning in the City. Other agencies have the responsibility to implement several other elements of the plan. The City has relied on the input from these organizations to formulate and develop this plan.

The plan development process consisted of four different steps. The first three related to information gathering and public participation. The last step involved data analysis and assessment.

As the first step in the plan development process, the City conducted one on one interviews with key organizations and agencies who are involved in areas which effect housing and community development. The purpose of these interviews was primarily to obtain information and perspectives on issues and needs of the community from these organizations' point of view.

In these interviews the key organizations were given an opportunity to discuss their needs, identify issues, state their concerns, and provide input as to how the City should prioritize its HUD's resources for the next five years. The interviewed organizations involved in economic development included the Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, East Chicago Urban Enterprise Association, and the Empowerment Zone. The housing related organizations that were contacted included, the East Chicago Housing Authority, Haven House, neighborhood based organizations, and others. In the social service area the City discussed plans with several groups and entities concerned with the community services and the needs of the special populations. Comments gathered from all these agencies were used to identify issues and needs for consideration in the Consolidated Plan.

The second step in the plan development process was two public and community meetings. These meetings were widely publicized locally in order to encourage maximum participation by the citizens. Notices were posted in the local newspaper as well as the major community activity centers and churches to invite citizens. The City also provided rewards to citizens who participated in the meetings. The reward for attending was a chance to win a television.

All meetings were held in the Riley Center. This center is very accessible and can also be reached by local bus. In these meetings the citizens were given a briefing about the plan development process, eligible activities, and then were asked to submit comments.

The community input gathering was also extended to major stakeholders in the community; agencies involved in local community redevelopment and social services. The city held a community meeting with this group in a focus group session. The focus group participants discussed four community issues: 1) Housing needs; 2) Economic development; 3) Social and public services; and 4) Public facilities and infrastructure issues. At the end of each group discussion, citizens were given an opportunity to review all issues and comment as desired. The needs identified from the focus group were tabulated and taken into consideration in development of the plan.

The third step to get community input was distribution of a survey questionnaire to citizens and civic organizations. In this effort the city widely distributed the questionnaires to households to get input from all citizens. The questionnaires requested information on housing, homeless needs,

community development issues, public services concerns and a host of other related issues. The results were tabulated and reviewed to identify priority issues.

The last step in the process to develop the 2004 Consolidated Plan was the review of different documents available through the City as well as analysis of the 2000 Census information. The Arsh Group, the City's Consultant for the plan, reviewed available information, obtained from different agencies, and organizations involved in housing, community development, and social services, to assure a comprehensive approach to the development of the plan.

The one on one interview with key community stakeholders, results of the survey, public comments received during the course of community meetings, the review of the other agencies plans and programs, and an assessment of needs based on census and other analytical data, all collectively contributed to the identification of issues and development of a vision statement for the plan. They also established a set of goals and objectives which has guided the development of the 2004 Consolidated Plan.

The first meeting was held on March 8, 2004 at the Riley Center. The purpose of this meeting was to get community input about the programs, needs and priorities. More than 20 people attended this meeting. The City held the second public meeting on April 8, 2004. The citizens, interested entities and agencies, were afforded an opportunity to comment on the plan for a period of thirty days. The city also offered another opportunity for citizen to see the final plan on May 10. This meeting was held in Riley Center and more than 10 people attended this meeting.

The Redevelopment Department distributed its 2004 CDBG subrecipient application packet on March 8, 2004. The City informed availability of funds and requested submission of proposals from all interested agencies, service providers, and prior community development sub-recipients. As a result of these efforts, the City received twenty two proposals for funding. The City reviewed all proposals with full considerations given to those proposals which reflected the needs and priorities that emerged during the preparation of the Consolidated Plan and the leveraging impact of the proposals. The City selected 16 proposals for its first year funding. These proposals are included in the Action Plan for the first year of this Consolidated Plan.