



City of Alameda • California

April 3, 2014

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: Social Service Human Relations Board recommendations regarding the proposed FY14-15 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) public service funding levels and programs

The Social Service Human Relations Board (SSHRB) advises the City Council regarding social service and human relations needs in Alameda. In 1997, the Council asked the SSHRB to participate in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) process by reviewing and commenting on the public service needs and funding recommendations. This letter represents our input for the awarding of FY14-15 Community Development Block Grant public service funds. **We should note up front that we strongly disagree with staff recommendations for funding, and encourage the City Council to reject those recommendations and allocate funds in a way that better reflects the safety net needs of the community.**

On December 4, 2013, as part of the CDBG Public Hearing Process, SSHRB heard a staff presentation and received input from service providers. We noted with dismay that the available funds - never sufficient to address all of the needs of the lower income residents of our city – are being further decreased. At the meeting we also heard from organizations discussing potential gaps in services to seniors. Providers presented evidence of a critical unmet need for case management, legal, and other services for low income seniors at risk of becoming homeless.

As a part of the January 7, 2014 City Council public hearing, SSHRB submitted a letter with recommendations on the FY13-14 priority needs for public services. The letter was based on data gathered through the needs assessment and from testimony given by providers and clients. SSHRB recommended only one area of need: **“preserving and strengthening Alameda’s Safety Net. We recommend that funding be directed to services for families and individuals (including seniors) who are vulnerable and in crisis, through programs that provide food, shelter, case management services, personal safety services, and homeless prevention services such as short-term rental and utility assistance. In addition, we recommend that demographic priority be given to the residents with the greatest need and fewest resources.”** Our letter to the Council also went on to say that given current funding available, housing counseling, among other activities, was not a priority need.

Following the RFP process, City staff ranked and selected proposals for funding. Deviating from the practice of previous years, they excluded members of SSHRB from participating in an objective ranking of the proposals.

Eight agencies applied for funding, and staff selected seven of the agencies for funding. All eight agencies proposed services that are important to the community, but not all proposals addressed the safety need priority as identified by SSHRB. Two of the proposals – for 211 and Echo Housing – were submitted for services that historically have been funded by the City out of non-public service funds; (one of them, the 211 program was originally funded out of General Fund) however at staff's discretion they were included in the public service pool this year. This was done to fulfill a HUD mandate and/or expectation that the City must fund these programs. However that mandate does not, and historically has not meant that they must be funded out of public service funds that should be used to serve community needs. While both of the selected programs provide a useful service, neither program addresses the limited safety net priority identified by the SSHRB. Despite this and other weaknesses in the proposals, both of these programs were selected for funding by staff.

Several agencies submitted proposals that addressed the emerging need of services for seniors, including one proposal to provide services for an increasing number of Alameda seniors who are becoming homeless. Despite evidence that this was a legitimate and immediate community identified need, and that it clearly addressed the priorities laid out by SSHRB, staff chose not to fund this proposal. In reviewing the system used for scoring applications, SSHRB has raised concerns that there were flaws in the way scoring was applied among programs that influenced the selection process.

At our meeting of February 19th, we provided staff with alternate recommendations, asking that they fund the service for homeless seniors, and partially fund the 211 and ECHO housing programs out of CDBG and identify other sources of funding to make up the \$25,000 shortfall. Staff reviewed the recommendations and came back with revised allocations to a special meeting of the SSHRB held on April 1st. The revised staff allocations ignored the recommendations of SSHRB and continued to deny funding for homeless and at-risk seniors. At the meeting staff did assure members of SSHRB that they recognized the need for services for homeless and at-risk seniors and were diligently seeking out alternate sources of funds for the 211 and ECHO housing services in the hopes that by the time the City Council considers the allocations, all programs can be appropriately funded.

We are also hopeful that staff is successful and supported in their efforts to identify additional funding. However in the event that staff is not successful in identifying alternate funding, and in the interest of meeting the most critical safety net needs of the most vulnerable members of our community, **we ask that you reject the staff recommended allocations and approve the SSHRB allocation for CDBG funding:**

	SSHRB recommended allocations	Staff recommended allocations
Alameda Family Services	\$ 25,711	\$ -
Building Futures Homeless Prevention	\$ 38,000	\$ 38,200
ECHO	\$ 17,173	\$ 31,050
Eden I&R (211)	\$ 12,174	\$ 19,150
Food Bank	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Family Violence Law Center	\$ 15,600	\$ 15,893
Legal Aid for Seniors	\$ 11,000	\$ 14,765
Midway Shelter	\$ 66,400	\$ 67,000
TOTAL	\$ 191,058	\$ 191,058

Sincerely,



Doug Biggs, President
Social Service Human Relations Board

cc: Social Service Human Relations Board