



City of Alameda * California

December 10, 2014

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Doug Biggs, President
Social Service Human Relations Board

Subject: Social Service Human Relations Board Recommendations
Regarding the Public Services FY 15-16 CDBG Action Plan, and
Housing and Community Development Needs

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 annual needs process, culminating in the CDBG Needs Hearing at the January 20th, 2015 City Council meeting.

Last year, CDBG funds were insufficient to meet even the most critical safety net. At least one highly valuable program – providing case managers for homeless seniors, was denied funding. We are grateful that the City was ultimately able to fund portions of that program through other funding sources, but that just goes to demonstrate that the continued erosion of CDBG funding has shredded the safety net of services in Alameda. This year we will see further cuts in funds allocated to competitive grants for public services. We will be saying no to services that could save lives.

At our November 20th, 2014 meeting, we heard a staff presentation on the CDBG process, received input from multiple service providers and reviewed the comments we provided to the Council in 2013. The input provided by the service providers informed us about what is working well in Alameda, and where potential service gaps may exist.

Alameda continues to lead the way in utilizing CDBG funds for homeless prevention and rapid-rehousing. By keeping families off of the streets to begin with, we are significantly reducing the social service cost to our community. CDBG funds also enabled the community to develop a unique and effective response to domestic violence.

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Honorable Mayor and
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A collaboration of service providers and local businesses implemented an awareness campaign that placed flyers in “safe” locations, such as restrooms of local bars and restaurants, where victims could access information without suspicion. The campaign saw results in increased calls to domestic violence hotlines.

As part of the needs assessment process, SSHRB also conducted a point in time homeless count in Alameda. We have identified that a small population of chronically homeless individuals is living in Alameda. We will be bringing a report on our assessment to the Council in the New Year. While we can and will make recommendations towards actions that could be taken to assist those individuals to becoming housed, the lack of availability of even a minimum amount of funding means that those action steps likely cannot be taken in the near future

Because funding continues to be severely restricted, we are continuing to recommend only one area of need: **preserving Alameda’s “Safety Net.” In past years we have also called for strengthening the safety net, but in this funding environment we can only hope to hold on to what we have.** 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.

We realize that needs in the areas of youth services, job training, health, wellness, transportation, and economic development remain, yet current funding is not sufficient to meet any but the most critical safety net needs of the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug Biggs', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Doug Biggs, President
Social Service Human Relations Board