

CR-05 - Goals and Outcomes

Progress the jurisdiction has made in carrying out its strategic plan and its action plan. 91.520(a)

This could be an overview that includes major initiatives and highlights that were proposed and executed throughout the program year.

During the course of Program Year 2019, Somerset County made considerable progress toward completing the priorities established in the five-year Consolidated Housing and Community Development plan. The County, the Community Development Office, and its Subgrantees have used CDBG and HOME funds, along with other County resources, to improve housing stock, create housing opportunities, improve neighborhoods and neighborhood services, and create economic opportunities for lower and moderate-income residents.

Included within this broad goal are the following: assist homeless persons to obtain affordable housing; retain existing affordable housing stock; increase the availability of permanent housing - rental and otherwise - available to low and moderate income persons; and increase supportive housing that includes structural features and services to enable persons with special needs to maintain a favorable quality of life.

Comparison of the proposed versus actual outcomes for each outcome measure submitted with the consolidated plan and explain, if applicable, why progress was not made toward meeting goals and objectives. 91.520(g)

Categories, priority levels, funding sources and amounts, outcomes/objectives, goal outcome indicators, units of measure, targets, actual outcomes/outputs, and percentage completed for each of the grantee's program year goals.

Goal	Category	Source / Amount	Indicator	Unit of Measure	Expected – Strategic Plan	Actual – Strategic Plan	Percent Complete	Expected – Program Year	Actual – Program Year	Percent Complete
Administrative Costs	Admin costs	CDBG: \$ / HOME: \$	Other	Other	4	4	100.00%	4	4	100.00%

Assist persons at risk of becoming homeless	Affordable Housing	CDBG: \$	Public Facility or Infrastructure Activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Persons Assisted	0	10				
Assist persons at risk of becoming homeless	Affordable Housing	CDBG: \$	Public service activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Persons Assisted	293	537	183.28%	41	91	221.95%
Assist persons at risk of becoming homeless	Affordable Housing	CDBG: \$	Public service activities for Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Households Assisted	0	0				
Assist persons at risk of becoming homeless	Affordable Housing	CDBG: \$	Homeless Person Overnight Shelter	Persons Assisted	0	0		0	0	
Education/training for low-income persons	Education	CDBG: \$	Public service activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Persons Assisted	595	186	31.26%	50	41	82.00%
Improve accessibility/living standard for disabled	Non-Homeless Special Needs	CDBG: \$	Public Facility or Infrastructure Activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Persons Assisted	0	20		0	0	

Improve accessibility/living standard for disabled	Non-Homeless Special Needs	CDBG: \$	Public Facility or Infrastructure Activities for Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Households Assisted	60	78	130.00%	38	28	73.68%
Improvements at public facilities	Public facilities	CDBG: \$	Public Facility or Infrastructure Activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Persons Assisted	21000	33112	157.68%	5787	16565	286.25%
Improvements at public facilities	Public facilities	CDBG: \$	Homeless Person Overnight Shelter	Persons Assisted	0	25		0	25	
Improvements at public facilities	Public facilities	CDBG: \$	Overnight/Emergency Shelter/Transitional Housing Beds added	Beds	0	0		0	0	
Maintain/expand supply of affordable housing	Affordable Housing	HOME: \$	Public Facility or Infrastructure Activities for Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Households Assisted	0	0				
Maintain/expand supply of affordable housing	Affordable Housing	HOME: \$	Rental units constructed	Household Housing Unit	0	2		176	0	0.00%
Maintain/expand supply of affordable housing	Affordable Housing	HOME: \$	Rental units rehabilitated	Household Housing Unit	5	0	0.00%			

Maintain/expand supply of affordable housing	Affordable Housing	HOME: \$	Homeowner Housing Added	Household Housing Unit	20	20	100.00%	2	1	50.00%
Maintain/expand supply of affordable housing	Affordable Housing	HOME: \$	Direct Financial Assistance to Homebuyers	Households Assisted	50	31	62.00%			
Maintain/expand supply of affordable housing	Affordable Housing	HOME: \$	Housing for Homeless added	Household Housing Unit	0	0		15	0	0.00%
Public improvements in LMAs	Public improvements	CDBG: \$	Public Facility or Infrastructure Activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Persons Assisted	55635	22065	39.66%	14677	5680	38.70%

Table 1 - Accomplishments – Program Year & Strategic Plan to Date

Assess how the jurisdiction’s use of funds, particularly CDBG, addresses the priorities and specific objectives identified in the plan, giving special attention to the highest priority activities identified.

The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) documents the accomplishments of the Somerset County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Programs during Program Year (PY) 2019. The report contains performance information for the fifth year of the five-year Somerset County Consolidated Plan for 2015 - 2019. The programs addressed in this report represent critical resources that support local efforts to address community development, affordable housing, and homeless assistance needs in Somerset County. Somerset County has made considerable progress toward the priorities established in the five-year Consolidated Housing and Community Development plan. The County, the CD Office, and its Subgrantees have used CDBG and HOME funds, along with other County resources, to improve housing stock, create housing opportunities, improve neighborhoods and neighborhood services, and create economic opportunities for lower and moderate-income residents.

During the course of the 2019 Program year - September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2020 - CDBG funding assisted a number of important projects in the County. Improvements to benefit low/moderate income residents of Somerset County were achieved with the successful completion of various projects:

Street Improvement Projects in North Plainfield, Raritan and Somerville.

Improvements to increase accessibility: ADA upgrades at the Arc of Somerset's group home in Hillsborough and Delta Community Support's group home in Bound Brook.

Improvements to public facilities: exterior improvements and the installation of a generator at IHN's Sunrise House group home in Bridgewater; interior and exterior improvements to Visions & Pathways' Passages Group Home in Bridgewater; the installation of generators at three (3) Midland Adult Services group homes in Branchburg; and interior improvements to create a sterile environment at Zufall Health Center in Somerville.

Several CDBG-funded public service programs were completed during Program Year 2019:

- Community Hope continued to operate its Hope for Veterans Employment Training Program, which provided 2,600 hours of job coaching and assisted 42 veterans with developing employment skills and pursuing competitive employment.

- Midland Adult Services provided a yoga class for 28 developmentally disabled adults as part of their Explores Day Habilitation program.
- The Jewish Community Center provided a services program for 22 adults (21 years and older) with special needs. The program provided meaningful, structured programming that promotes a feeling of independence and value by teaching necessary life/job skills.

There were also several other Public Services projects that were underway when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the temporary closing of many programs. It is expected that all of these projects will be complete and finish their drawdowns by early 2021.

CR-10 - Racial and Ethnic composition of families assisted

Describe the families assisted (including the racial and ethnic status of families assisted).

91.520(a)

	CDBG	HOME
White	4,327	21
Black or African American	456	5
Asian	159	1
American Indian or American Native	27	0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	15	0
Total	4,984	27
Hispanic	3,689	8
Not Hispanic	1,295	19

Table 2 – Table of assistance to racial and ethnic populations by source of funds

Narrative

During Program Year 2019, Somerset County assisted thousands of residents through the CDBG and HOME programs. The majority of the residents were helped by street improvements in several municipalities, including Somerville, North Plainfield, and Raritan. The remainder of the residents saw benefits from various public facilities projects, including: a library improvement project in Manville; ADA renovations at a group home for disabled residents operated by Delta Community Supports; ADA renovations at a group home for disabled residents operated by the Arc of Somerset; improvements to a transitional house for homeless families operated by Interfaith Hospitality Network; interior improvements at Zufall Health Center; improvements to supportive housing for homeless youth operated by Visions & Pathways; and the installation of emergency generators at three group homes operated by Midland Adult Services.

In addition, public services projects took place at Community Hope, Midland Adult Services and the Jewish Community Center.

The HOME program provided funding for one (1) new home built by Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity. In addition, HOME funding was used to start construction on an eighty (80) unit complex for low-income residents in Montgomery. It is expected that this project will be completed and have residents by early 2021.

CR-15 - Resources and Investments 91.520(a)

Identify the resources made available

Source of Funds	Source	Resources Made Available	Amount Expended During Program Year
CDBG	public - federal	1,210,491	1,086,282
HOME	public - federal	543,798	178,777

Table 3 - Resources Made Available

Narrative

Identify the geographic distribution and location of investments

Target Area	Planned Percentage of Allocation	Actual Percentage of Allocation	Narrative Description
Countywide	100	100	

Table 4 – Identify the geographic distribution and location of investments

Narrative

While CDBG and HOME funds were spent at locations throughout the County, a significant amount of those funds were concentrated in the County's Low/Mod Service Areas (LMA). In Somerset County - which uses uncapped data with the exception criteria - census tracts where at least 44.87% of the residents are of low or moderate income are considered Low/Mod Service Areas. (Note: This percentage changed mid-way through the Program Year. During the first half of the year, the baseline was 45.02%. As such, the County's LMA data sets for both percentages are included as attachments to this document.) In general, these areas are concentrated in the County's older suburbs and include block groups in the boroughs of Bound Brook, Bridgewater, Hillsborough, Manville, North Plainfield, Raritan, Somerville, and South Bound Brook.

Leveraging

Explain how federal funds leveraged additional resources (private, state and local funds), including a description of how matching requirements were satisfied, as well as how any publicly owned land or property located within the jurisdiction that were used to address the needs identified in the plan.

In response to the decrease in housing and community development funding, the CD Office encourages its HOME and CDBG Subgrantees to seek other funding for use in conjunction with CDBG and HOME funds. Examples of supplementary funding include: Federal Home Loan Bank funds, municipal donations of land and other in-kind services, property tax abatement, capacity-building grants from private, philanthropic organizations, and the use of McKinney-Vento funds in conjunction with HOME Investment Partnership Program funds. Public and private resources are consistently used to address needs. The County has consistently met - and often far exceeded - its Match obligations.

Fiscal Year Summary – HOME Match	
1. Excess match from prior Federal fiscal year	17,015,690
2. Match contributed during current Federal fiscal year	1,300,000
3. Total match available for current Federal fiscal year (Line 1 plus Line 2)	18,315,690
4. Match liability for current Federal fiscal year	39,546
5. Excess match carried over to next Federal fiscal year (Line 3 minus Line 4)	18,276,144

Table 5 – Fiscal Year Summary - HOME Match Report

Match Contribution for the Federal Fiscal Year								
Project No. or Other ID	Date of Contribution	Cash (non-Federal sources)	Foregone Taxes, Fees, Charges	Appraised Land/Real Property	Required Infrastructure	Site Preparation, Construction Materials, Donated labor	Bond Financing	Total Match
Apartments at Montgomery Crossing - IDIS #1796	03/14/2019	1,300,000	0	0	0	0	0	1,300,000

Table 6 – Match Contribution for the Federal Fiscal Year

HOME MBE/WBE report

Program Income – Enter the program amounts for the reporting period				
Balance on hand at beginning of reporting period \$	Amount received during reporting period \$	Total amount expended during reporting period \$	Amount expended for TBRA \$	Balance on hand at end of reporting period \$
0	0	0	0	0

Table 7 – Program Income

Minority Business Enterprises and Women Business Enterprises – Indicate the number and dollar value of contracts for HOME projects completed during the reporting period						
	Total	Minority Business Enterprises				White Non-Hispanic
		Alaskan Native or American Indian	Asian or Pacific Islander	Black Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	
Contracts						
Dollar Amount	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sub-Contracts						
Number	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dollar Amount	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	Women Business Enterprises	Male			
Contracts						
Dollar Amount	0	0	0			
Number	0	0	0			
Sub-Contracts						
Number	0	0	0			
Dollar Amount	0	0	0			

Table 8 - Minority Business and Women Business Enterprises

Minority Owners of Rental Property – Indicate the number of HOME assisted rental property owners and the total amount of HOME funds in these rental properties assisted						
	Total	Minority Property Owners				White Non-Hispanic
		Alaskan Native or American Indian	Asian or Pacific Islander	Black Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	
Number	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dollar Amount	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 9 – Minority Owners of Rental Property

Relocation and Real Property Acquisition – Indicate the number of persons displaced, the cost of relocation payments, the number of parcels acquired, and the cost of acquisition

Parcels Acquired		0	0			
Businesses Displaced		0	0			
Nonprofit Organizations Displaced		0	0			
Households Temporarily Relocated, not Displaced		0	0			
Households Displaced	Total	Minority Property Enterprises				White Non-Hispanic
		Alaskan Native or American Indian	Asian or Pacific Islander	Black Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	
Number	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cost	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 10 – Relocation and Real Property Acquisition

CR-20 - Affordable Housing 91.520(b)

Evaluation of the jurisdiction's progress in providing affordable housing, including the number and types of families served, the number of extremely low-income, low-income, moderate-income, and middle-income persons served.

	One-Year Goal	Actual
Number of Homeless households to be provided affordable housing units	10	25
Number of Non-Homeless households to be provided affordable housing units	10	5
Number of Special-Needs households to be provided affordable housing units	29	28
Total	49	58

Table 11 – Number of Households

	One-Year Goal	Actual
Number of households supported through Rental Assistance	11	12
Number of households supported through The Production of New Units	6	2
Number of households supported through Rehab of Existing Units	14	15
Number of households supported through Acquisition of Existing Units	0	0
Total	31	29

Table 12 – Number of Households Supported

Discuss the difference between goals and outcomes and problems encountered in meeting these goals.

Somerset County has made considerable progress toward the priorities established in the five-year Consolidated Housing and Community Development plan. The County, the CD Office, and its Subgrantees have used CDBG and HOME funds, along with other County resources, to improve housing stock, create housing opportunities, improve neighborhoods and neighborhood services, and create economic opportunities for lower and moderate-income residents.

Included within this broad goal are the following: assist homeless persons to obtain affordable housing; retain existing affordable housing stock; increase the availability of permanent housing - rental and otherwise - available to low and moderate income persons; and increase supportive housing that includes structural features and services to enable persons with special needs to maintain a favorable quality of life.

Even though the County’s Ten Year Plan to End Chronic and Other Homelessness has expired, the Community Development staff has continued to follow the guidelines and plan that was set by it. This plan contains multiple action steps to improve the collection and dissemination of data on homeless persons, increases the level of coordination among providers of housing and services, encourages the development of permanent housing for homeless individuals and families, and enhances the knowledge and use of mainstream resources. The CD Office is the responsible entity for coordination and implementation of many of these action steps, which will improve the continuum of care system for homeless individuals and families accessing services within the County.

One of the problems the County faces when it comes to housing - in emergency, temporary, or permanent housing - is the lack of available space and housing stock. Much of the County has been "built out" or is preserved as open space. This limitation, along with the relatively high cost of buying existing stock, has made meeting the County's annual goals difficult at times. In addition, there are only a few providers with the financial resources to build and/or buy housing. The amount of funding that the County receives each year is not enough to provide the funds necessary for a single project, much less numerous ones. This fact forces providers to find a large amount of funding from other sources, an effort that is becoming increasingly difficult in today's atmosphere of declining funds across the board.

Discuss how these outcomes will impact future annual action plans.

The County will continue to encourage providers to expand the stock of housing for members of the community who are most in need. By dividing up funding among several organizations, the County feels that this provides the best opportunity for organizations to meet this goal. The providers have found that receiving County funding often plays an important role in soliciting outside funds for a project. In addition, since projects are required to have in place the majority of the funding prior to the application for County funding, the success rate for these projects is high.

The County is confident that through these efforts the housing stock for homeless and low-income persons will increase in the coming years.

Include the number of extremely low-income, low-income, and moderate-income persons served by each activity where information on income by family size is required to determine the eligibility of the activity.

Number of Households Served	CDBG Actual	HOME Actual
Extremely Low-income	5,824	0
Low-income	5,002	0

Moderate-income	4,885	2
Total	15,711	2

Table 13 – Number of Households Served

Narrative Information

CR-25 - Homeless and Other Special Needs 91.220(d, e); 91.320(d, e); 91.520(c)

Evaluate the jurisdiction's progress in meeting its specific objectives for reducing and ending homelessness through:

Reaching out to homeless persons (especially unsheltered persons) and assessing their individual needs

Somerset County reaches out to homeless persons in a number of different ways. Several of the CDBG and HOME grants - including grants to Alternatives, Community Hope, Interfaith Hospitality Network, Safe+Sound Somerset, and Visions & Pathways - directly address the needs of the County's homeless population by providing housing and services to those in need.

In addition, in January 2020 the County was the lead entity in the annual Point in Time Survey of both the sheltered and unsheltered homeless. The survey was done by counties and municipalities on the same day throughout New Jersey, as coordinated by Monarch Housing. The results of the "street" count of the homeless provide baseline data as to the nature and extent of the homeless population in the jurisdiction. The County also used the Survey as an opportunity to distribute donations of food and clothing to the homeless and near-homeless.

For nearly a decade - in large part due to the success of the January event and the needs of the County's homeless and near-homeless population - the County has held a second donation/distribution event later in the year. However, this past year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this event was not held.

Addressing the emergency shelter and transitional housing needs of homeless persons

In an effort to meet the "worst-case" housing needs (defined as homelessness or imminent homelessness), the following measures are in place:

County administrators/decision-makers and the non-profit community are in agreement that the best strategy to help prevent homelessness for individuals and families with children who are at imminent risk of being homeless, is to intercede with the provision of financial or other assistance to avert the impending cause for homelessness. At the same time, the County believes firmly that while various forms of emergency assistance are often necessary, they are not to replace the need for one to take action to improve one's circumstances and to move toward self-sufficiency. To that end, within Somerset County there is an array of services, such as: mortgage payments, rental payments, security payments and/or utility payments which are available through the Somerset County Board of Social Services, Catholic Charities, Municipal Welfare System, Alternatives, Food Bank Network of Somerset County, SHIP, Safe + Sound, Department of Community Affairs, Homelessness Prevention Program, and the Homelessness Trust Fund. In addition, the faith community provides a number of resources to prevent homelessness. Emergency Support Services include the provision of food, clothing, transportation, child care as needed to assist families in securing other essential services, medically

necessary prescription drugs, and medical care to alleviate life threatening and public health conditions.

In the event that these measures are not sufficient to prevent homelessness, the County Board of Social Services is committed to providing temporary housing to any person who needs emergency shelter. In addition, there are a number of county service providers who will also temporarily house people in the event that all of the emergency shelter beds are taken.

Helping low-income individuals and families avoid becoming homeless, especially extremely low-income individuals and families and those who are: likely to become homeless after being discharged from publicly funded institutions and systems of care (such as health care facilities, mental health facilities, foster care and other youth facilities, and corrections programs and institutions); and, receiving assistance from public or private agencies that address housing, health, social services, employment, education, or youth needs

Somerset County continues to make major strides in addressing the needs of homeless persons through the Continuum of Care process and by undertaking the action steps to address the County's Ten Year Plan to End Chronic and Other Homelessness. Even though the Ten Year Plan has expired, the Community Development staff has continued to follow the guidelines and plan that was set by it. The Plan has been the tool to evaluate the scope of homelessness in Somerset County and measure efforts to systematically reduce homelessness through new initiatives and better use of existing resources. This document was originally prepared by the CEAS Committee – now the Continuum of Care (CoC) Committee – with input from Community Development, the Department of Human Services, the Board of Social Services, and various social service agencies including special needs housing providers, basic needs providers, and other social service professionals. In addition, the CoC Committee regularly discusses the issue of homelessness at its meetings and continuously strives to find solutions to this ongoing issue.

During Program Year 2019, County government and service providers undertook many actions to help low-income individuals and families avoid becoming homeless. These actions included:

- Continued provision of outreach services to those at risk of homelessness, as well as those who are already homeless, by staff of the Visions & Pathways StreetSmart Program, Project Outreach, Richard Hall Mental Health Center, and Samaritan Homeless Interim Program (SHIP).
- Continued provision of transitional housing as well as supportive and case management services by Alternatives, Center for Great Expectations, Community Hope, Crawford House/Daytop Village, Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN), Safe + Sound, Visions & Pathways, and Volunteers of America.
- Continuation of the Homelessness Trust Fund Rental Assistance Program which provides funds that may be used toward housing and/or services to help low-income individuals and families maintain housing.

- Financial assistance from County agencies and service organizations, including the County Board of Social Services, Catholic Charities, and faith-based churches, to be used to pay for rent and utilities, in an effort to keep individuals and families housed.
- Financial assistance through Round 1 CDBG-CV funding. The County's Emergency Rental Relief Program provided payment of arrears and rent for 3 months or \$3,000 (whichever was less) for households with a documented COVID-19-related loss of income.

Helping homeless persons (especially chronically homeless individuals and families, families with children, veterans and their families, and unaccompanied youth) make the transition to permanent housing and independent living, including shortening the period of time that individuals and families experience homelessness, facilitating access for homeless individuals and families to affordable housing units, and preventing individuals and families who were recently homeless from becoming homeless again

During Program Year 2019, County government and service providers undertook many actions that will help homeless persons make the transition to permanent housing and independent living. These actions included:

- Continued provision of temporary emergency support including emergency rental assistance, emergency utility payments, emergency hotel and motel vouchers, and other basic needs. Other forms of assistance to prevent homelessness include:
 - Legal representation at Landlord/Tenant Court to assist low-income tenants who must appear in court because they face eviction; service is provided by Legal Services of Northwest Jersey.
 - Emergency support through the NJ Homeless Prevention Program, currently administered by NORWESCAP.
 - Provision of free housing counseling, financial literacy, and tenant education programs through the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC).
 - Provision of follow-up case management to clients.

CR-30 - Public Housing 91.220(h); 91.320(j)

Actions taken to address the needs of public housing

The local Housing Authority is located in Franklin Township, which is a municipality that has its own CDBG Program. Due to this fact, the County is unable to provide assistance through the CDBG Program. However, the County's Annual Action Plan – with its strong emphasis on empowerment through housing counseling, education and outreach – certainly includes activities that will encourage public housing residents to participate in homeownership. County staff has taken - and will continue to take - the following actions:

- a. Offering to make presentations related to homeownership, the ADDI Program and other forms of housing-related assistance;
- b. To the greatest extent possible, ensuring that public housing residents are made aware of educational opportunities provided by the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC) and other organizations;
- c. Providing literature related to homeownership, the ADDI Program, and other forms of housing-related assistance;
- d. Encouraging HOME Subgrantees to include PHA residents in their outreach and affirmative marketing.

Actions taken to encourage public housing residents to become more involved in management and participate in homeownership

As stated above, the County engages in activities to reach out to public housing residents and to encourage homeownership. These include, but are not limited to:

- a. Offering to make presentations related to homeownership, the ADDI Program and other forms of housing-related assistance;
- b. To the greatest extent possible, ensuring that public housing residents are made aware of educational opportunities provided by the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC) and other organizations;
- c. Providing literature related to homeownership, the ADDI Program, and other forms of housing-related assistance;
- d. Encouraging HOME Subgrantees to include PHA residents in their outreach and affirmative marketing.

Actions taken to provide assistance to troubled PHAs

The Public Housing Authority in Franklin Township is financially stable and in no need of assistance.

CR-35 - Other Actions 91.220(j)-(k); 91.320(i)-(j)

Actions taken to remove or ameliorate the negative effects of public policies that serve as barriers to affordable housing such as land use controls, tax policies affecting land, zoning ordinances, building codes, fees and charges, growth limitations, and policies affecting the return on residential investment. 91.220 (j); 91.320 (i)

Two of the primary barriers that have had a negative impact on affordable housing are cost and, in some towns, restrictions on minimum lot sizes for homes. This latter requirement, especially, limits the affordability of this land to low-/moderate-income individuals and families, as well as the ability of organizations to purchase the property for either new construction or rehabilitation of an existing structure into a group home. New Jersey (and, consequently, Somerset County) has laws in place that encourage - and even require - the creation of affordable housing. However, due to the high cost of construction in the area, even housing that is designated as "affordable" is often out of reach to low-income individuals and families. In addition to the challenges of creating affordable housing in one of the most expensive markets in the state, it is also difficult to provide support services because of the extremely high cost of living which affects the cost of salaries, supplies, and space.

Actions taken to address obstacles to meeting underserved needs. 91.220(k); 91.320(j)

The strategic plan section of the 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan lists a number of obstacles to meeting the needs of the underserved. In the housing, homeless, and special needs areas the following were included: the unavailability of Section 8 vouchers to assist low income tenants; insufficient funding resources for housing programs; reduction in the region's housing market; inflationary cost trends in construction; and community resistance. With respect to non-housing community development needs, the principal impediments identified were inadequate funding levels and resistance to increasing property taxes to provide projects and services in identified areas of need. The County has made significant progress in certain areas including:

- Continued use of HOME and CDBG funding for the provision and maintenance of supportive housing for the County's special needs populations.
- Continued solicitation of agencies that provide services in areas of underserved needs.
- Project Homeless Connect (PHC), an event to deliver services to the homeless and near-homeless and to distribute donations, has held simultaneously with the Homeless Point-In-Time Count. This year's PHC was a much more limited event, but still distributed donations to those in need.
- Creation and implementation of a County Homelessness Trust Fund, which - at any given time - assists over a dozen individuals and families with paying their rent and financial counseling, and has helped dozens of individuals and families in the years during which it has been active.

Actions taken to reduce lead-based paint hazards. 91.220(k); 91.320(j)

Federal Regulation 24 CFR Part 25 requires CDBG and HOME-assisted housing units constructed prior to 1978 to be tested for the presence and condition of lead. While there is no specific funding available for lead-based paint abatement, for many years Somerset County addressed lead-based paint hazards in accordance with the applicable regulations through its HOME and CDBG-funded Housing Rehabilitation programs, which have since been put on hold. However, a number of municipalities within the county continue to have their own housing rehabilitation programs and the Community Development Office refers residents to those programs. The appropriate disclosure, investigation, and response actions are performed ensuring occupant safety and compliance with the regulations.

The Community Development Office continues to be committed to addressing lead-based paint in all housing rehabilitation programs, as well as purchases of existing properties. All properties that undergo rehabilitation, or are bought by non-profits or private homebuyers, must be certified as lead-based paint-free. If lead paint hazards are indicated, the rehabilitation is completed using either interim controls or abatement in compliance with HUD regulations.

Actions taken to reduce the number of poverty-level families. 91.220(k); 91.320(j)

The following actions were undertaken to reduce the number of persons in poverty who live in the County:

- **Homelessness Trust Fund Rental Assistance Program** – The Community Development Office has been administering this program for nearly a decade. This successful program provides funds to help people remain in their homes and keep them from becoming homeless or displaced. The Program also provides financial counseling and resume assistance.
- **Social Service programs** - Through the Non-Profit Purchase of Service process, the County provides direct support for social service programs that will positively impact persons living in poverty within the County. These programs include but are not limited to: counseling services; child care subsidies; temporary housing assistance; adult protective services; and income maintenance. The programs are designed to reduce the number of persons in poverty who live in the County.
- **Office on Aging** - The County Office on Aging provides counseling, nutrition programs, health care support, transportation, and housing rehabilitation to elderly residents of the County.
- **Social Services** - The Somerset County Board of Social Services and the Somerset County Department of Human Services provide financial assistance and referral services to appropriate County and State agencies for individuals and families in need.
- **Work First New Jersey (WFNJ)** - The County Board of Social Services, through a subcontract with the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, manages the WFNJ Program. Board staff provides

case management, skill assessment, job development and job readiness training to recipients of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) funding. The subsequent transition from public assistance to gainful employment produces a positive impact on the County's overall effort to reduce the number of families in poverty.

- **Employment and Training Programs**- The County does not have a division of Employment and Training, but does have a public/private partnership between the County's Department of Human Services and the Greater Raritan Workforce Investment Board (WIB). WIB's mission is to meet the labor force needs of local businesses through its One-Stop Career Center; to use the Workforce Investment System's services in an effort to improve the quality of life for the employers, employees and residents in both Hunterdon and Somerset Counties; and to increase the skills and earnings of the "graduates" of the Workforce Investment System. Employment and training services are also provided by a number of quasi-governmental entities within the County. For example, the Somerset County Technical Institute offers programs in office administration, commercial art, allied health/practical nursing, and technologies to high school graduates. The County Board of Social Services provides a wide variety of employment and training programs. Jewish Family Services runs an employment counseling program, which includes interview coaching, resume critique and preparation, job search techniques, and individual counseling. Through provision of services directed toward job placement and advancement, these programs and services contribute to a reduction in the number of persons in poverty living in the County.

- **Vocational and Technical School** - Somerset County Vocational and Technical Schools provide shop programs for full and part-time students, an alternate high school program, Adult Continuing Education Programs, and a training program for at-risk youth.

- **Raritan Valley Community College** - RVCC offers a variety of career training programs and professional development courses, including: automotive technology, cosmetology, HVAC repair, and advanced manufacturing.

Actions taken to develop institutional structure. 91.220(k); 91.320(j)

The Community Development Office has, over the years, worked to create a structure through which the various public and private agencies work together and communicate ideas and plans to help the underserved populations in the County. The CD Office and the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC) make presentations on Fair Housing to the public and community organizations, and have conducted outreach efforts to local churches and civic groups. CD Staff have participated in community events focusing on topics such as homeownership, County-funded Rental Assistance Programs, and other matters pertinent to housing and community development. In addition, the County will continue its aggressive effort to cultivate and increase capacity among its affordable housing developers through outreach and technical assistance. CD Staff continue to work with non-profit housing agencies around Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) Certification, innovative approaches to all phases of housing that are part of the County's Continuum of Care, and alternative financing

mechanisms.

Actions taken to enhance coordination between public and private housing and social service agencies. 91.220(k); 91.320(j)

The County has continued to contract with the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC) and Legal Services of Northwest Jersey (LSNJ) to provide fair housing counseling and legal representation to low and moderate income residents of the County who are the victims of housing discrimination. Moreover, the County provides support to CJHRC as the agency provides training and educational opportunities during Fair Housing Month and throughout the year. Some of these workshops include: Rental Realities; Credit when Credit is Due; Step-by-Step; Spanish Step-by-Step; First Home Club; First Time Homebuyer's Expo and Seminar; Pre- and Post-Purchase Counseling; Delinquency and Foreclosure Counseling; and Reverse Mortgage Counseling.

The Community Development Office also organizes, and is the lead agency for, the Continuum of Care (CoC) Committee meetings. These bi-monthly meetings are well-attended (averaging over 30 people per meeting) by a good cross-section of public and private agencies who operate throughout the County. Agencies that regularly send attendees include: Arc of Somerset, CJHRC, United Way, ADTI/Alternatives, HMIS, the VA, Community Hope, Soldier On, the Somerset County Board of Social Services, Somerset County Human Services Department, Jewish Family Services, Visions & Pathways, Zufall Health Center, HomeSharing, Volunteers of America, and Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN).

The CD Office continues to communicate with other agencies (for example: CJHRC) to identify and address impediments to Fair Housing. The Fair Housing Brochure is disseminated to local banks, realtors, non-profit and municipal organizations, county divisions, and CD subgrantees for display and distribution.

Identify actions taken to overcome the effects of any impediments identified in the jurisdictions analysis of impediments to fair housing choice. 91.520(a)

The Analysis of Impediments revealed the following impediments to fair housing choice in Somerset County:

- A. Violations of fair housing law do occur, particularly in rental markets. The violations are primarily related to disability and source of income.
- B. Institutionalized housing discrimination continues to occur and there is a need for greater education.
- C. Need for greater awareness of the services and programs offered by the County.
- D. Given the patterns of racial/ethnic concentration that exist in the Somerset section of Franklin Township, Bound Brook and North Plainfield, it could be that certain groups have limited housing

choices, but it is not clear whether that is the result of housing discrimination or a personal decision.

To address the impediments to fair housing choice identified in this report, the County will take several steps to affirmatively further fair housing. Implementation of the following recommendations will strengthen the County's interest in fair housing activities and alleviate remaining impediments to fair housing choice:

A. Violations of fair housing law

- Continue to retain the services of the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC) for the provision of fair housing counseling and referrals for legal representation when there are legitimate discrimination issues.
- Consider, and perhaps implement, paired testing, though this may be cost-prohibitive.
- Expand on-going housing education programs for housing providers, consumers, and local government officials about fair housing laws, rights, and responsibilities. These workshops should occur at varying times throughout the year and should specifically relate to persons with disabilities and families with children.

B. Institutionalized housing discrimination

- Expand on-going housing education programs for local government officials about fair housing laws, rights, and responsibilities.

C. Awareness of/access to services

- The County will also continue the practice of educating the public about the Fair Housing Act by disseminating program literature at County events.
- Continue to require CDBG and HOME subgrantees to display Fair Housing literature and information.
- Fair Housing information will continue to be made available via the County website and will be offered in the monthly Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders newsletter.
- County staff will also make sure that CJHRC continues its practice of distributing Fair Housing literature at all of its educational events and to all clients who receive services.
- Expand on-going housing education programs for County residents about fair housing laws, rights, and responsibilities. These workshops should occur at varying times throughout the year and, if possible, in other languages. Unfortunately, the on-going COVID-19 pandemic has limited these events since March 2020.

D. Racial/Ethnic concentration

- Community Development staff will work with the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center to do outreach and, ideally, provide education to African-American and Latino households.
- Expand on-going housing education programs for County residents about fair housing laws, rights, and responsibilities, with special attention to the concerns of minority groups. These workshops should be scheduled with consideration to work schedules and family obligations. Unfortunately, the on-going COVID-19 pandemic has limited these events since March 2020.

CR-40 - Monitoring 91.220 and 91.230

Describe the standards and procedures used to monitor activities carried out in furtherance of the plan and used to ensure long-term compliance with requirements of the programs involved, including minority business outreach and the comprehensive planning requirements

Somerset County regularly monitors HOME and CDBG recipients based on HUD regulations regarding the frequency of such visits. These on-site monitoring visits show that Subgrantees are generally compliant with CDBG and HOME income-eligibility, record-keeping, and other requirements, and CD staff maintain good relationships and communicate frequently with all Subgrantees. Staff also provides valuable feedback and training to subgrantees, as well as guidance in correcting any deficiencies.

The County encourages all subgrantees who are required to place bids for projects to reach out to minority and women-owned businesses. Data regarding ownership is collected from contractors and is regularly submitted as part of the reporting requirements for the MBE Report.

With regard to the HOME program specifically, Somerset County has regularly placed in the top 3 in the State in the HOME Program Snapshot reports, and has ranked 1st a number of times. According to data from the two most recent HOME Program Snapshot reports (for the periods ending June 30 and September 30, 2019), the County's HOME program ranked #1 out of 27 participating jurisdictions in the State and is in the 99th percentile nationally. In addition, these Snapshot reports show that the County ranked:

- #1 in the state for the percentage of funds committed and in the 100th percentile nationally
- #1 in the state for the percentage of funds disbursed and in the 99th percentile nationally
- #1 in the state in low-income benefit for both the percentage of renters who earn 0-30% of the area median income and 0-50% of the AMI.

Citizen Participation Plan 91.105(d); 91.115(d)

Describe the efforts to provide citizens with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on performance reports.

The County has a thorough Citizen Participation Plan, adopted in April 1995, which meets all of the requirements outlined in 24 CFR 91.105. It is the intent of this plan to provide for and encourage citizens

to participate in the development of the annual Action Plan, the Consolidated Plan, any substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan, and the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER). Participation is encouraged by low and moderate income persons, particularly those in areas where CDBG and HOME funds are expected to be used. All citizens, including minorities as well as persons with disabilities, are encouraged to participate in the process of developing the plan, as well as the County's annual performance evaluation report. Citizen participation by members of these specific groups, as well as the general public, will be provided for and encouraged by the following means:

- Distribution of programmatic information and literature whenever appropriate and applicable
- Public meetings and/or hearings - including virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic - regarding activities related to the Action Plan, Consolidated Plan and Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report
- Public notices and advertisements in local newspapers, including those for non-English speakers; and
- Public notices and advertisements on the County website, which has an automatic translate button to provide the notices in many different languages.

CR-45 - CDBG 91.520(c)

Specify the nature of, and reasons for, any changes in the jurisdiction's program objectives and indications of how the jurisdiction would change its programs as a result of its experiences.

Based on a self-assessment, as well as feedback from Subgrantees and performance standards endorsed by HUD, it is not necessary to make major changes to the program at this time. There were no changes in general program objectives during Program Year 2019, although - midway through the Program Year - the County was forced to pivot, in order to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, the County was able to seamlessly incorporate the new funding (CDBG-CV) with the ongoing PY2019 projects, while maintaining a high-level of service to both the original PY2019 subgrantees and the residents we assisted with the CV funding.

Moving forward, as we receive additional CV funding, we anticipate more projects that will prevent, prepare for or respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, we are unsure how this funding - and the pandemic - will impact our "normal" projects, since our RFP for PY2020 will not be released until January of 2021 (this is our standard timeframe).

Does this Jurisdiction have any open Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI) grants?

No

[BEDI grantees] Describe accomplishments and program outcomes during the last year.

CR-50 - HOME 91.520(d)

Include the results of on-site inspections of affordable rental housing assisted under the program to determine compliance with housing codes and other applicable regulations

Please list those projects that should have been inspected on-site this program year based upon the schedule in §92.504(d). Indicate which of these were inspected and a summary of issues that were detected during the inspection. For those that were not inspected, please indicate the reason and how you will remedy the situation.

The Community Development Office makes regular monitoring visits of HOME-funded projects, as required by - and based on the schedule in - Section 92.504. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated vulnerabilities of the residents in HOME-funded buildings, CD staff conducted the Program Year 2019 monitoring visits as "off-site/desk" monitorings of the properties listed below. These monitorings found that subgrantees were generally compliant with HOME income-eligibility, recordkeeping, and other requirements. Physical, on-site monitoring visits will take place when they can be done so safely.

- Arc of Somerset - Old Stirling Group Home - Old Stirling Road, Warren
- Center for Great Expectations - Transitional Housing - Dellwood Lane (Building 1), Franklin Township
- Center for Great Expectations - Transitional Housing - Dellwood Lane (Building 2), Franklin Township
- Cerebral Palsy of North Jersey - Permanent Supportive Housing Group Home - Sterling Road, Warren
- Community Hope - Supportive Housing - Huff Avenue, Manville
- Community Hope - Supportive Housing - S. Main Street, Manville
- Cooperative Housing Corporation - Permanent Housing - Lindbergh Avenue, Warren
- Midland Adult Services - Permanent Supportive Housing Group Home - Robbins Road, Branchburg
- New Jersey Institute for Disabilities - Permanent Supportive Housing Group Home - Stony Brook Road, Bridgewater
- Ridge Oak - Ridge Oak II - East Oak Street, Basking Ridge
- Somerset Hills YMCA - Bethel Ridge Group Home - Mt. Airy Road, Bernards
- Trading Post Realty - Permanent Housing - Craig Place, North Plainfield
- Trading Post Realty - Permanent Housing - Greenbrook Road, North Plainfield
- Visions & Pathways - Transitional Housing - 3rd Avenue, Bridgewater
- Visions & Pathways - Whitney House Transitional Housing - Whitney Court, Bridgewater
- Valley Brook Village - Supportive Housing - Knollcroft Road, Lyons

**Provide an assessment of the jurisdiction's affirmative marketing actions for HOME units.
92.351(b)**

The County markets the HOME Program to County non-profit and for-profit organizations via email, by

posting notices on the County webpage, by making presentations at public meetings, and by reaching out to agencies that might be eligible to apply for HOME funds. In addition, the County makes available a printed brochure summarizing the major provisions of current state and federal fair housing laws. All HOME-related press releases, advertisements and brochures include the Equal Housing Opportunity statement. HOME Subgrantees are mandated to market programs in a way that informs the public, owners and potential tenants about fair housing laws. Moreover, HOME Subgrantees are required to use community organizations, churches, fair housing groups, and housing counseling agencies to publicize the availability of HOME-assisted units to attract eligible persons from all socioeconomic and demographic groups. Subgrantees must also display fair housing posters.

The Community Development Office reaches out to minority and women-owned businesses by ensuring that all bids are posted on the County website and by notifying interested parties when there are bidding opportunities. Subgrantees are also strongly encouraged to reach out to minority and women-owned businesses and are required to publicly post all bidding opportunities.

Refer to IDIS reports to describe the amount and use of program income for projects, including the number of projects and owner and tenant characteristics

Somerset County receipted no HOME Program Income during the 2019 Program Year. The County does not have any projects that provide a regular source of Program Income.

Describe other actions taken to foster and maintain affordable housing. 91.220(k) (STATES ONLY: Including the coordination of LIHTC with the development of affordable housing). 91.320(j)

In order to foster and maintain affordable housing, the Community Development Office has undertaken an intense public awareness campaign that includes, but is not limited to: outreach and technical assistance to potential affordable housing developers; encouragement of linkages and partnerships among agencies that have similar and/or complementary services; solicitation of CHDOs; and strict enforcement of HOME Program Affordability periods and on-site inspections. In addition, the County continues to educate community members about the cross-segment of County residents who are eligible for affordable housing.

The HOME Investment Partnerships Program is one of the primary funding sources for affordable housing development throughout the County. During Program Year 2019, program funds were used to fund a number of affordable housing initiatives, including the construction of new housing built by Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity, and the start of construction an 80-unit low-income apartment building in Montgomery. This building will have at least five (5) units set aside for homeless families and individuals.

In addition, HOME funds were provided to support first-time homebuyers through a program that is administered by the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center (CJHRC). Potential homeowners who complete a homebuyer education course can receive these funds if they are income eligible, meet all other criteria, and are purchasing within Somerset County. Homebuyers who complete the First Home Club program and meet all criteria are also eligible for a matching cash grant (currently \$4 to \$1 saved) for down payment and closing costs. This program assisted a half-dozen clients during the Program Year and has provided grants to over 80 clients during the dozen years since its inception.