

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 2021, 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.

In addition, faced with the public health threat from the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the County has utilized CDBG-CV funds to prepare, prevent and respond to the novel coronavirus. These funds have been used to:

- provide emergency rental relief to dozens of County residents whose income was impacted by the pandemic
- provide food and personal care items, largely through existing or newly-created food banks, to at-need County residents
- provide services, including distribution of health information, to residents
- provide tenant advocacy services to residents as the eviction moratoriums have expired

Significant funds have also been dedicated to projects that will help improve the safety of residents using public facilities. Examples of these projects include:

- health and safety improvements at public libraries in Bound Brook, Manville and Somerville
- health and safety improvements at senior centers in Bridgewater and Green Brook
- health and safety improvements at several public facilities in North Plainfield.

These improvements - such as touchless sinks and toilets, barriers around computers, and improved air ventilation systems - are mainly at facilities that are disproportionately used by the most vulnerable members of the community and will help prevent the spread of the virus and keep residents safer.

During Program Year 2021, the County was also approved for HOME American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) funds. These funds will be used for a number of projects, including several large construction projects - which, in total, will house over 100 low-income people - and a group home project for low-income individuals who are aging out of foster care.

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	Non-Housing Community Development Administrative 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	0		50	55	110.00%

Assist persons at risk of becoming homeless	Affordable Housing	CDBG: \$	Public service activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Persons Assisted	925	380	41.08%	194	225	115.98%
Education/training for low-income persons	Education	CDBG: \$	Public service activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Persons Assisted	2260	570	25.22%	40	62	155.00%
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	117		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	125	211	168.80%	27	26	96.30%
Improve accessibility/living standard for disabled	Non-Homeless Special Needs	CDBG: \$	Homeowner Housing Rehabilitated	Household Housing Unit	0	4		4	4	100.00%

Improvements at public facilities	Non-Housing Community Development	CDBG: \$	Public Facility or Infrastructure Activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Persons Assisted	5000	62	1.24%	50	55	110.00%
Maintain/expand supply of affordable housing	Affordable Housing	HOME: \$	Public Facility or Infrastructure Activities for Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Households Assisted	45	0	0.00%			
Maintain/expand supply of affordable housing	Affordable Housing	HOME: \$	Rental units constructed	Household Housing Unit	40	0	0.00%	4	0	0.00%
Maintain/expand supply of affordable housing	Affordable Housing	HOME: \$	Rental units rehabilitated	Household Housing Unit	0	4		8	26	325.00%
Maintain/expand supply of affordable housing	Affordable Housing	HOME: \$	Direct Financial Assistance to Homebuyers	Households Assisted	20	10	50.00%	2	2	100.00%
Public improvements in LMAs	Non-Housing Community Development Public Improvements	CDBG: \$	Public Facility or Infrastructure Activities other than Low/Moderate Income Housing Benefit	Persons Assisted	82230	15812	19.23%	8821	3901	44.22%

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 2021. The report contains performance information for the second year of the five-year Somerset County Consolidated Plan for 2020 - 2024. 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. The 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, CDBG-CV, 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 2021 Program Year, CDBG funding assisted a number of 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, Somerville and South Bound Brook.

Improvements to increase accessibility: Improvements to group homes run by Alternatives, Delta Community Supports, Visions & Pathways, and Arc of Somerset.

Improvements to public facilities: the installation of a generator at Alternatives' group home in Hillsborough; and roofing improvements to Our

House's group home in Bernards and the Martin Luther King Youth Center in Bridgewater.

Several CDBG-funded public service programs were also completed:

- The Arc of Somerset provided 4 children with scholarships for school and aftercare at the Jerry Davis Center for Children & Families.
- Middle Earth provided 62 youth with life skills, education, and college readiness training through the Youth College Readiness Program.
- Visions & Pathways assisted 159 runaway, homeless and at-risk youth through the Street Smart Program.

While several other Public Service and Facilities projects were delayed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, most of these projects have already resumed and are expected to be complete before the end of the 2022 Program Year.

The County used HOME funds to continue construction on two 50-unit affordable housing complexes in Branchburg, which are expected to be completed early in the 2022 Program Year; and to help Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity to purchase property for new construction and to complete construction on a Habitat house.

In addition, the County received HOME-ARP funds which have begun to be spent on several projects around the County, including large-scale projects in Warren, Branchburg and Hillsborough.

The County used CDBG-CV funds for the following projects:

- Food security and wellness programs in Bernards, Hillsborough, Montgomery, Raritan and South Bound Brook
- Legal Services of Northwest Jersey assisted 45 clients through their Tenant Advocacy Program
- Emergency Rental Relief for 168 families impacted by the ongoing pandemic

Several public facilities projects are either underway or will be shortly. These projects will help improve the safety and welfare of residents through the installation of touchless sinks and toilets, touchless doors, and improved air ventilation systems.

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	3,094	9
Black or African American	1,163	4
Asian	189	4
American Indian or American Native	4	0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0
Total	4,450	17
Hispanic	1,140	5
Not Hispanic	3,310	12

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

Narrative

During Program Year 2021, Somerset County assisted thousands of residents through the CDBG, CDBG-CV and HOME programs. The majority of the residents were helped by street improvements in North Plainfield, Somerville and South Bound Brook. The remainder of the residents saw benefits from various public facilities projects, including: improvements at group homes managed by Alternatives, Arc of Somerset, Delta Community Supports and Visions & Pathways; roofing improvements at Our House's group home in Basking Ridge; installation of an emergency generator at Alternatives' group home in Hillsborough; and the replacement of the roof and gutter at the Martin Luther King Youth Center in Bridgewater.

In addition, public services projects took place at the Arc of Somerset, Middle Earth, and Visions & Pathways, along with an Emergency Rental Relief program and a Tenant Advocacy Program funded through CDBG-CV funds.

The HOME program provided funding for one (1) new home built by Raritan Valley Habitat for Humanity and construction is nearly complete on two 50-unit affordable housing complexes in Branchburg, with completion expected during the first part of the 2022 Program Year. In addition, HOME-ARP funds were received and disbursed to several projects, including affordable housing buildings in Branchburg, Hillsborough, and Warren.

In addition, faced with the public health threat from the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the County has utilized CDBG-CV funds to prepare, prevent and respond to the novel coronavirus. These funds have been used to:

- provide emergency rental relief to dozens of County residents whose income was impacted by the pandemic
- provide food and personal care items, largely through existing or newly-created food banks, to at-need County residents
- provide services, including distribution of health information, to residents
- provide health services, including COVID-19 vaccinations, to low-income residents
- provide tenant advocacy services to residents as the eviction moratoriums have expired

Significant funds have also been dedicated to projects that will help improve the safety of residents using public facilities. Examples of these projects include:

- health and safety improvements at public libraries in Bound Brook, Manville and Somerville
- health and safety improvements at senior centers in Bridgewater and Green Brook
- health and safety improvements at several public facilities in North Plainfield.

These improvements - such as touchless sinks and toilets, barriers around computers, and improved air ventilation systems - are mainly at facilities that are disproportionately used by the most vulnerable members of the community and will help prevent the spread of the virus and keep residents safer.

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	1,117,922	1,214,890
HOME	public - federal	724,790	269,611

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, CDBG-CV 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. In general, these areas are concentrated in the County's older suburbs and include block groups in the boroughs of Bedminster, 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 high cost of purchasing land and/or a building in the area, and the increase in construction costs, 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	18,408,594
2. Match contributed during current Federal fiscal year	918,751
3. Total match available for current Federal fiscal year (Line 1 plus Line 2)	19,327,345
4. Match liability for current Federal fiscal year	83,157
5. Excess match carried over to next Federal fiscal year (Line 3 minus Line 4)	19,244,188

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
Pirhl - Apartments at Montgomery Crossing - IDIS #1796	01/27/2021	918,751	0	0	0	0	0	918,751

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 begin-ning 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	5	4
Number of Non-Homeless households to be provided affordable housing units	5	2
Number of Special-Needs households to be provided affordable housing units	15	26
Total	25	32

Table 11 – Number of Households

	One-Year Goal	Actual
Number of households supported through Rental Assistance	20	168
Number of households supported through The Production of New Units	7	5
Number of households supported through Rehab of Existing Units	8	18
Number of households supported through Acquisition of Existing Units	0	0
Total	35	191

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 with obtaining 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.

The County was able to provide a large number of residents with rental assistance during the last year due to an influx of CDBG-CV funds. The County also screened dozens of applicants for the State Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) Emergency Housing Voucher program, forwarding many of them on to the DCA. While those numbers are not included in the above statistics, the County played an integral role in the process.

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	925	4
Low-income	1,123	1
Moderate-income	725	0
Total	2,773	5

Table 13 – Number of Households Served

Narrative Information

Over the last couple of years, the County has received proposals from several larger companies that specialize in building affordable housing. Some of these projects - such as the Montgomery Crossing units in Montgomery - have already been completed. Others - including a large, multi-building development in Branchburg - should be completed and leased-up in the coming year. The County's Continuum of Care Committee has worked with these builders to ensure that at least 5 units in each project are set aside for homeless members of the community. As these projects are leased-up, the County's housing stock for low-income and homeless members of the community will increase.

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, HOME of Somerset County (formerly 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. Agencies such as Alternatives and Volunteers of America also receive funding through the Continuum of Care grant. This funding helps provide housing and services for homeless individuals and families. Next year's Continuum of Care application includes projects by two new applicants: Safe+Sound Somerset and HABcore.

In addition, in January 2022 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. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the County was unable to do a thorough in-person count and relied on data collected by agencies such as Visions & Pathways, Alternatives, Richard Hall Mental Health Center, and the County Board of Social Services.

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 donation/distribution event later in the year. However, this past year, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this event was not held. It is hoped that this event will resume in the coming year.

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 2021, 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, HOME of Somerset County (formerly Interfaith Hospitality Network), 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, Central Jersey Housing Resource Center, 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 initially provided payment of arrears and rent for 3 months or \$3,000 - increasing this amount, under guidance from HUD, to 6 months or \$6,000 - for households with a documented COVID-19-related loss of income.
- Processing of Emergency Housing Vouchers - provided through the NJ State DCA and CDBG-CV Round 2 - for low-income and at-risk residents.

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 2021, 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. This has been especially important as the eviction moratoriums expired, prices have risen, and rents have risen dramatically.
- 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 previously, 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 2020-2024 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.
- Use of HOME-ARP funding to help reduce homelessness and increase housing stability.
- 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 typically been held simultaneously with the Homeless Point-In-Time Count (PITC). Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this year's PITC was a "paper count" and no PHC was held. However, it is hoped that, as the pandemic winds down, the upcoming PITC - and PHC - will be once again held in person.

- 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.
- Use of CDBG-CV funds to provide emergency rental assistance to residents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Allocation of CDBG-CV funds to municipalities and non-profits to improve health conditions and provide needed services - including food - to residents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 discontinued. 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 over 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 (LSNWJ) 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 - which have continued virtually during the ongoing pandemic - are well-attended (averaging over 30 people per meeting) by a good cross-section of public and private agencies that operate throughout the County. Agencies that regularly send attendees include: Arc of Somerset, CJHRC, Middle Earth, Easter Seals, United Way, ADTI/Alternatives, the VA, Community Hope, Pioneer Family Success Center, NORWESCAP, Soldier On, the Somerset County Board of Social Services, Somerset County Human Services Department, Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center, Visions & Pathways, Zufall Health Center, Safe+Sound Somerset, Volunteers of America, and HOME of Somerset County (formerly Interfaith Hospitality Network).

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 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, several steps will be taken 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 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 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 is available on its own page on the County's website and is offered in the

monthly Somerset County Board of County Commissioners newsletter.

- Ensure 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.

D. Racial/Ethnic concentration

- Community Development staff will work with CJHRC 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 will be scheduled with consideration to work schedules and family obligations.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, many workshops, seminars and other events have been held virtually. These virtual events have been beneficial to the public and can often be held at times that are better for working individuals and families.

Through the County's contract with CJHRC, approximately \$3,000 was spent on the previously listed actions. CJHRC also does a lot of work at no cost to the County, which keeps costs low. In addition, the County's in-house printing department does all of the document printing, enabling the County to maintain a high level of visibility and outreach to the community at a low cost.

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 monitoring reports 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, when the HOME Program Snapshots were released quarterly by HUD, Somerset County regularly placed in the top 3 in the State, and was ranked 1st a number of times. According to data from the last two 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 was in the 99th percentile nationally. Based on these reports, and the County's consistency in its ranking, it is anticipated that the County continues to be a top performer in the State.

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 (CAPER)
- 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 2021, although the County continues to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the associated impact it has had on the community. The pandemic caused delays in many of the PY2019, PY2020 and PY2021 projects, especially those involving construction. However, the County has been able to seamlessly incorporate CDBG-CV funding with the ongoing PY2021 projects, while maintaining a high-level of service to both the original PY2021 subgrantees and the residents and subgrantees assisted with the CV funding.

Moving forward, we will continue to administer and spend CV funding on construction projects, as well as service-related projects. In addition, as municipalities and agencies are resuming their activities, we anticipate that our "standard" projects will continue to progress toward completion.

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 initially conducted some of the Program Year 2021 monitoring visits as "off-site/desk" monitorings of the properties listed below, with "on site" monitorings as follow-ups. These monitorings found that subgrantees were generally compliant with HOME income-eligibility, recordkeeping, and other requirements. Based on guidance from HUD, physical, on-site monitoring visits for all properties have resumed.

- ADTI - Franklin Consumer Home - Cedar Grove Lane, Somerset
- ADTI - Von Steuben - Von Steuben Lane, South Bound Brook
- Arc of Somerset - Old Stirling Home - Old Stirling Road, Warren
- Pirhl - Montgomery Crossing - Hartwick Drive, Montgomery
- Ridge Oak - Ridge Oak II - East Oak Street, Basking Ridge
- Valley Brook Village - Supportive Housing - Knollcroft Road, Lyons
- Visions & Pathways - Village House - Stanford Drive, Bridgewater

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 2021 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 2021, 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 majority of construction on two 50-unit low-income buildings in Branchburg, which will have units set aside for homeless families and individuals. In addition, the County received and approved HOME-ARP funds for a number of projects that will add more units for low-/moderate-income residents.

CR-58 – Section 3

Identify the number of individuals assisted and the types of assistance provided

Total Labor Hours	CDBG	HOME	ESG	HOPWA	HTF
Total Number of Activities	0	0	0	0	0
Total Labor Hours					
Total Section 3 Worker Hours					
Total Targeted Section 3 Worker Hours					

Table 14 – Total Labor Hours

Qualitative Efforts - Number of Activities by Program	CDBG	HOME	ESG	HOPWA	HTF
Outreach efforts to generate job applicants who are Public Housing Targeted Workers					
Outreach efforts to generate job applicants who are Other Funding Targeted Workers.					
Direct, on-the job training (including apprenticeships).					
Indirect training such as arranging for, contracting for, or paying tuition for, off-site training.					
Technical assistance to help Section 3 workers compete for jobs (e.g., resume assistance, coaching).					
Outreach efforts to identify and secure bids from Section 3 business concerns.					
Technical assistance to help Section 3 business concerns understand and bid on contracts.					
Division of contracts into smaller jobs to facilitate participation by Section 3 business concerns.					
Provided or connected residents with assistance in seeking employment including: drafting resumes,preparing for interviews, finding job opportunities, connecting residents to job placement services.					
Held one or more job fairs.					
Provided or connected residents with supportive services that can provide direct services or referrals.					
Provided or connected residents with supportive services that provide one or more of the following: work readiness health screenings, interview clothing, uniforms, test fees, transportation.					
Assisted residents with finding child care.					
Assisted residents to apply for, or attend community college or a four year educational institution.					
Assisted residents to apply for, or attend vocational/technical training.					
Assisted residents to obtain financial literacy training and/or coaching.					
Bonding assistance, guaranties, or other efforts to support viable bids from Section 3 business concerns.					
Provided or connected residents with training on computer use or online technologies.					
Promoting the use of a business registry designed to create opportunities for disadvantaged and small businesses.					
Outreach, engagement, or referrals with the state one-stop system, as designed in Section 121(e)(2) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.					

Other.					
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Table 15 – Qualitative Efforts - Number of Activities by Program

Narrative

The County did not have any projects that qualified under Section 3.