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Councilperson Celeste Friend



South Utica - Third Ward

cfriend@cityofutica.com

315-725-5987

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How Utica Works: CDBG Funding

The Mayor introduced his budget to The Board of Estimate & Apportionment on Tuesday, February 7th. This marks the beginning of the City's budget season, and the Common Council will be busy studying the budget for the next several weeks. It is the responsibility of the Mayor to develop a budget, but then the Common Council must pass it, either as is, or after it has amended it by Ordinance. Budget season is a good time to explain another important funding stream that flows into the City - CDBG funding. So, here goes.

(If you want to learn more about the entire Budget process, [you can learn more by reading last year's Newsletter on the subject by clicking here.](#))

First, of all, in addition to the regular City budget, the City benefits from a number of "Supplemental Appropriations". This simply refers to extra monies that flow into the City in the form of grants from the State, as well as from the Federal government, or from any number of private or public agencies. (For instance, we recently benefited from a grant from the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, known as DASNY, to add automatic pay stations to our parking garages.) These Supplemental Appropriations are separate from the regular budget because they vary and therefore should not be counted on as a regular part of our Budget.

One large and reliable form of Supplemental Appropriations are CDBG funds.

These come from the Department of Housing and Urban Development - HUD. CDBG stands for Community Development Block Grants. These are "block" grants meaning that they are not directed at a specific kind of project the way that "categorical" grants are. Block grants are intended to be used for a wide variety of urban development projects. CDBG dates from 1974 when President Ford recognized that the Federal government could not be as effective in distributing federal funds as local government could be. So, "block" grants were created in order to give local governments more discretion in how to best respond to local needs.

This is important: the general purpose of the CDBG is to help redress problems of poverty and urban blight. From their own website: "The CDBG Program supports community development activities to build stronger and more resilient communities. Activities may address needs such as infrastructure, economic development projects, public facilities installation, community centers, housing rehabilitation, public services, clearance/acquisition, microenterprise assistance, code enforcement, homeowner assistance, etc."

Who is eligible for CDBG funds depends on general statistics of poverty and urban blight. First of all, Utica as a whole is an "entitlement community", which means that we don't have to compete for the funds with other cities.) But which part of the City is eligible for projects using CDBG funds changes every ten years, in response to Census data about household income. So the where we can spend CDBG money changes every ten years. But in general, in Utica, neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty are eligible for CDBG projects, and more affluent neighborhoods are not. So, Cornhill and West Utica can receive funds from CDBG, whereas most of South Utica and all of North Utica is not eligible. Again, this is because the very point of CDBG funds is to alleviate and redress poverty and urban blight.

In Utica, the Mayor has the sole discretion as to how to best distribute CDBG funds. These funds traditionally have supported a wide variety of projects in the City. Although too numerous to describe in complete detail, here are **some examples** of how CDBG funds have been spent in the last five years:

2017-2018:

\$205,000 for complete reconstruction of sidewalks around Hotel Utica

\$33,000 Utica Safe Schools

\$33,000 Utica College Young Scholars Program

\$70,000 UPD Surveillance Cameras

\$193,068 for Rehabilitation of 1900 Bleeker Street

2018-2019:

\$500,000 for paving of streets within CDBG Target Area
\$26,000 for North Utica Senior Center
\$50,000 Lead Hazard Abatement Program
\$120,000 Facade Program on Genesee St

2019-2020:

\$65,000 for sidewalk installation and repair
\$109,000 for demolition of City-owned properties
\$95,000 Community Policing
\$35,000 for equipment for Compassion Coalitions' Bargain Grocer
\$254,125 repayment of loan for Hotel Utica

2020-2021:

\$800,000 for paving of streets within CDBG Target Area
\$250,735 - Brownfield Remediation for Economic Development - (this was to allow for the construction of "Live It Downtown" complex on Oriskany Blvd)
\$25,000 Uptown Theater historical reconstruction
\$40,000 Utica College Young Scholars Program

2021-2022:

\$976,975 for paving of streets within CDBG Target Area
\$323,300 Proctor Park sidewalks
\$50,000 United Way of the Valley & Greater Utica
\$125,000 demolition of City-owned properties

2022-2023:

\$220,000 for paving of streets within CDBG Target Area
\$400,000 for making curb ramps ADA compliant City-wide
\$50,000 for Abraham House
\$45,000 creation of youth "Green Teams" to work in Parks
\$300,000 for exterior rehabilitation of single family homes



Photo: an illustration of a hand holding a pen signing a petition on a clipboard

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