



Fourth Program Year CAPER

GENERAL

In Fiscal Year 2013/2014, the City of Casper received \$255,443 in Community Development Block Grant funds (CDBG) from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The City reprogrammed \$42,165 of the previous year's CDBG funds and received \$8,996.91 in program income. The program income figure differed from the 2013-2014 Annual Action Plan projection of \$12,000 because housing rehab loans were paid off, as well as one Economic Revitalization Revolving Loan. The total amount of CDBG funds available to the City for FY 2013/2014 was \$306,604.91. The following is a synopsis of accomplishments achieved using CDBG funds:

- 221 elderly and disabled persons in the community received Casper Area Transportation Coalition (CATC) tickets for transportation to medical, educational, recreational, and employment destinations.
- 6,920 tickets were provided to the Community Action Partnership to distribute to homeless and low-income persons for CATC transportation to medical facilities or social service agencies in the community.
- The fixed route transit system, a primary community amenity provided 165,734 rides on The Bus and 52,202 rides were provided by the Casper Area Transportation Coalition (CATC) dial-a-ride service.
- The City completed work on 7 houses that began in fiscal year 2013 through the Mission Serve program. The program completed the 7 low-moderate income for homeowners in the rehabilitation of their homes.
- Three (3) homeowners had emergency repairs performed on their homes to address issues that posed an immediate threat to the health and safety of the residents.
- Management of LifeSteps Campus, a 6.5 acre, multi-building social service campus, continued through the Community Action Partnership of Natrona County under a three (3) year contract.
- Four (4) Commercial Façade Grants were awarded to businesses in the Old Yellowstone District (OYD) and downtown Casper.

The City leveraged CDBG funds with additional resources from other sources to make some of the viable projects a reality.

General Questions

The Consolidated Planning process facilitated community-wide planning efforts for the expenditure of City of Casper Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Community meetings of local service providers, educators, health care professionals, childcare operators, economic development professionals, and City of Casper Housing and Community Development staff developed six (6) visions and supporting goals for the use of CDBG funds over the five-year period. The visions are:

- to promote, support and encourage quality childcare
- to promote and support affordable housing development efforts and preserve existing housing stock
- to promote and support programs for persons and families that are homeless
- to promote and support economic development efforts
- to promote and support programs that benefit children and youth
- to promote and support programs that assist special needs populations
- to promote and support community transit systems
- to address illegal drug issues in the community

The following report reflects outcomes and objectives achieved according to the Performance Measurements System implemented by HUD. In addition, each of the activities had to support the visions for the five year plan. It would be unusual to achieve a goal in a single fiscal year. In order to achieve the visions, most activities are multi-year in concept and implementation. The following is a description of program activities carried out, outcomes achieved, funds allocated and funds expended.

SUITABLE LIVING ENVIRONMENT

This section of the report focuses on activities that provide a suitable living environment for low-moderate income persons. The outcome of the CDBG funded activities created accessibility for the purpose of creating a suitable living environment.

Casper Area Transportation Coalition



The City's MPO Staff oversees transit operations. Here, Pam Jones and Andrew Nelson stand beside a bus stop shelter

On April 18, 2005 the City celebrated one of the greatest successes of a Five Year Consolidated Plan process -- the initiation of a community-wide fixed-route transit system called The Bus. Prior to The Bus system, elderly, disabled and low-income persons without personal transportation only had access to the dial-a-ride system, known as the Casper Area Transportation Coalition (CATC). The need for service outgrew the program's capacity. CATC required 24 hours notice for transportation requests. On days when CATC reached its capacity, riders would have to be placed on a waiting list, wait an additional day, take a costly cab ride, or rely upon friends or family to provide needed transportation.

In October of 2014, CATC celebrated its millionth rider on The Bus. With the system being in operation not quite ten years, this is quite an accomplishment for the program which continues to increase in ridership annually.

Many of CATC's passengers did not need the "door-to-door" service. A fixed route system would meet their transportation needs. A community task group was formed, and after two years of intensive planning, The Bus became operational. Initially, The Bus operated four routes. Each route was carefully planned to provide transit services to those areas most frequented by the target population – low-moderate income persons. The routes go to major shopping, employment and medical centers in the community. As retail and residential areas expanded the City's boundaries on the west side, The Bus extended its service area to cover the western areas of Casper. Then, in July 2009, it expanded service again to include the Towns of Mills, Evansville and Bar Nunn. The buses link at a transfer station located on South Beech Street and East Collins Drive. In the fall of 2011, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds also constructed a new transfer station with shelters and streetscaping. In 2014

City of Casper

the stop at Taco Bell was removed. Some minor route revisions are planned to take place in FY2015.

CDBG funds provide ridership tickets for low-moderate income persons who need assistance to afford transportation services. Two Hundred Twenty One (221) persons applied for, and received assistance, with tickets for either the dial-a-ride or The Bus. For a break-out of these persons by race, family size and composition, and income level, please see Exhibit (TBD) in the Appendix. In Fiscal Year 2013, The Bus provided 165,734 rides as compared to 154,922 rides in Fiscal Year 2012. The increased ridership is due to several factors: higher acceptance by the community; expanded routes; expanded access to more services; and, high personal transportation costs. The dial-a-ride system with 52,202 rides saw a significant decrease over the previous year's ridership of 53,638 rides, a difference of 1,436. This is primarily due to increased ridership on The Bus system, which had an increase of 10,812.

CDBG funds have become an integral part of the funding of CATC/The Bus. This year's funding was \$28,500 for ridership tickets. The City of Casper, the towns of Mills, Evansville and Bar Nunn contribute funds towards operational and needed matching funds for purchases of additional buses to operate the expanded routes.

Outcome: Persons without personal transportation have access to affordable transportation to get to jobs, medical appointments, shopping and social events.

Funds Allocated: \$ 28,500
Funds Expended: \$ 28,500

Total Beneficiaries

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Projected	1,330	1330	375		
Actual	1,270	1410	221		
Difference	(60)	80	(154)		

LifeSteps Campus



The City owns LifeSteps Campus, a 6.5 acre tract of land on East 12th Street. The land and buildings of the former Wyoming Children’s Home were returned by the State of Wyoming to the City in the mid 1990’s. The purpose of the campus is to provide space for nonprofit organizations that provide supportive services to persons who may be homeless, transitional housing programs, and housing for populations that may be hard to house in neighborhoods. Although there is some vacant space, the City Council directed that the space be held for tenants that fit the campus mission to

support social services. Community Action Partnership of Natrona County (CAP) assumed management responsibilities in October of 2011.

The current tenants and services on campus are:

Bldg	Agency	Service Provided
A	Vacant	
B	Wyoming Housing Network	HOME funded Housing – permanent
C	Casper Housing Authority CAP will take-over 9/1/14	Housing vouchers and public housing – to vacate 8/31/2014. New tenant TBA.
D	Vacant	New tenant/program TBA.
E	Casper College	Adult Basic Ed/GED
E	Early Head Start	Early Child Education
E	Transitional Housing - CAP	Transitional Housing for families
E	12th Street Clinic	Healthcare For the Homeless
F	Transitional Housing - CAP	Transitional Housing for families
H	CAP will take-over 9/1/14	Public Housing

CDBG funds were not allocated or expended on the Life Steps Campus this fiscal year. Oversight of the campus continued and planning was done for upcoming projects needing funding for Program Year 2014.

Outcome: Keeping the rents low for the nonprofit organizations that use the Campus allows the agencies to use more of their budget funds for direct service provision. CDBG funds make it possible to do necessary capital improvements that improve the living environment of the Campus for everyone who uses it.

Funds Allocated: \$0
Funds Expended: \$0

Total Beneficiaries

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Projected	500	30	0		
Actual	1,236	20	0		
Difference	736	(10)	0		

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DECENT HOUSING

Housing Rehabilitation Assistance Program

Typically, the most affordable housing in Casper is located in the central core of town. Most of these houses are over fifty (50) years old. These neighborhoods are occupied by low-moderate income persons. Due to age, major housing systems are failing. The City had to cut its owner occupied rehabilitation program because of lower CDBG allocations. However, the City had retained its Emergency Repair Program and its World Changers/Mission Serve program. The Emergency Rehabilitation Program has funds set aside to help low-moderate income homeowners to obtain repairs – repairs that if not done, pose an immediate threat to the health and safety of the occupants. Priority is given to persons who live on fixed incomes, are elderly or disabled and/or live in Census Tracts 200 and 300.

The World Changers/Mission Serve program used CDBG funds to finish projects that had been started in the 2012-2013 program year. Funds were used to purchase the materials and construction assistance to a group of volunteer youth that perform exterior rehabilitation activities on the homes of low-moderate income homeowners. Mission Serve is a faith-based organization that stepped in to do work after World Changers was taken over by LifeWay Christian Resources and their area of service no longer included Casper. The City provided materials for exterior rehabilitation, selected homeowners, and supervised the construction activities. Mission Serve provided the volunteer labor to do the rehabilitation work. This year, the City and Mission Serve completed the seven (7) projects that had been started the year prior. One (1) additional home was disqualified due to ineligible ownership of the property. The volunteers give of their time and labor to replace/repair roofs, windows, doors, repaint houses, clean yards, construct ramps for accessibility, and fix fences. This work is typically done in one week. When they leave, the worst looking house in the neighborhood is now the best looking house. Due to a reduction in the number of volunteers this year, there was a notable reduction in the number of homes that could be rehabilitated. Therefore, the City did not pursue a matching grant through the Community Pride and Revitalization (CPR) funds from the Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA).

This year, the projects completed by Mission Serve volunteers and volunteer City staff were: painted six (6) homes, installed exterior doors and/or storm doors on four (4) homes, replaced windows on five (5) homes, installed siding on one (1) home, as well as tearing out and rebuilding three (3) fences, repaired one (1) roof and installed one (1) new roof and gutter system and removed dead bushes.



A Mission Serve home completed



A Mission Serve home in progress

The 2012-2013 Annual Action Plan projected that five (5) homes would be benefitted through the Emergency Repair Activity. Only three (3) eligible applications were received by the City. Repairs included an emergency electrical repair for the residents in Building D at LifeSteps Campus, roof repair, and sewer pipe replacement.

The operation of the Housing Rehabilitation Assistance Program also requires the professional assistance of a general contractor who assesses the needs of the housing units, recommends rehabilitation activities, writes project bids, conducts walkthroughs, and oversees project construction. The contractor is paid an hourly fee on an “as needed basis”.

Outcome: Neighborhoods have been improved. Low-moderate income homeowners facing emergency repairs without any financial resources were able to get the repairs accomplished quickly and with little financial strain in the monthly budget.

Funds Allocated: \$ 15,000.00
Funds Expended: \$ 10,985.51

Total Beneficiaries

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Projected	35	17	13		
Actual	28	12	10		
Difference	(7)	(5)	(3)		

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



City Core Revitalization Activities

**Urban Renewal Manager, Josh Bake,
stands in the Old Yellowstone District**

The City of Casper utilizes the City Core Revitalization funds from CDBG to assist in the redevelopment and revitalization of the downtown core of Casper. The funds go towards both the downtown itself and the Old Yellowstone District (OYD). The Urban Renewal Division of the City of Casper is primarily responsible for redeveloping the OYD.

In 2001, the City established the Casper Urban Renewal Agency (CURA) to address the area known as the West Central Corridor (now the OYD). At the time, plans were underway to redevelop the Platte River Commons on the site of the former Amoco refinery. The corridor between the downtown Central Business District (CBD) and the Platte River Commons became a critical link in the City's community development program. Therefore, the City Council established a designated Urban Renewal Area that includes the CBD.

CDBG funds have been critical to redevelopment efforts in the OYD and downtown city core. The Urban Renewal Manager works with the public and private sectors to facilitate planning, program oversight and growth for the district. The Urban Renewal Division has brought attention to this downtown district, and it will continue to build momentum. Success builds on success and projects are already building on one another. The Urban Renewal Manager works directly with developers to create functional and flourishing properties. The City of Casper will continue to provide financial assistance through direct investment into infrastructure and through the facilitation of loan programs to developers and business owners.

In the 2013-2014 Annual Action Plan, CDBG funds were projected to be used for four (4) major activities. However, due to the issues identified in the Fall 2013 Monitoring Report, staff elected to only pursue one (1) activity. That activity is reported below. The funding allocation [\$50,996] for the other 3 activities was reprogrammed into the 2014-2015 Annual Action Plan.

1. To continue to stimulate building façade upgrades to commercial properties via the Façade Matching Grant program. This program was approved by the City Council in May 2011 and has been a catalyst in physically improving the appearance of the low-moderate income area, and removing blight.

- i. Four (4) façade grants were awarded with a CDBG investment of \$31,470.00, and private match of \$51,604.75.

Matching Façade Grant Program

Photos of 2013/2014 project:



Artist's Choice Gallery (before)



Artist's Choice Gallery (after)

Outcome: The City-Core revitalization project will be a multi-year project providing small facade matching grants to rehabilitate building exteriors. An attractive facade will entice consumers to come inside, look around and hopefully spend money. The continuity of the look of the neighborhood is also conducive to its overall identity. A successful facade grant will may encourage additional employment opportunities by increasing the appeal and success of the business. The National Objective is to aid in the prevention or elimination of slum and blight.

Funds Allocated: \$ 90,996.00
Funds Expended: \$ 31,470.00

Total Beneficiaries

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Projected	33	8	16		
Actual	27	12	4		
Difference	(6)	4	(12)*		

*Difference due to reprogramming funds from the other three (3) activities.



H&CD Technician, Joy Clark

Other Allowable Costs

Administration:

Administration funds were used to pay for staff salary and benefits, and general operations of the Housing and Community Development Division to oversee the progress of the use of Community Development Block Grant funds.

The position of Community Development Technician is paid 100% out of CDBG. The Community Development Technician processes all of the applicants for the Mission Serve and Emergency Repair programs, oversees housing initiatives throughout the City; facilitates maintenance and repair requests at LifeSteps campus, interfaces with the MPO division and CATC staff, and provides all program administration oversight.

<u>Funds Allocated:</u>	\$ 73,165.00
<u>Funds Expended:</u>	\$ 55,760.69

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing

The State of Wyoming does not have a fair housing office. A statewide fair office was opened in Casper in 2003; however, due to funding and management issues the office closed in 2006. The City of Casper does not receive sufficient funding to operate a fair housing program. Anyone with fair housing issues is referred to HUD's Wyoming Field Office.

Renters need to be educated to recognize and report all types of discrimination for all of the protected classes. During housing shortages, renters are even more hesitant to make any derogatory reports as they fear losing their housing and finding a new housing situation is difficult. Most renters are not aware of fair housing laws and, unless the landlord has federal funding tied into the rental unit the landlord does not know about fair housing issues either. In the past decade, perhaps there have only been only a handful of contacts from renters to the Housing and Community Development (H&CD) office. Most calls are related to landlord/tenant issues such as housing conditions, refund of deposits, and lack of maintenance. Outreach and educational efforts to tenants and landlords, through the City's Code Enforcement Division, provides both parties with knowledge of fair housing issues. The H&CD office will incorporate such a strategy in its new analysis of impediments.

HUD reviewed the City's administration of the CDBG program in 2011. HUD stated that it was concerned that the City had not updated the Analysis of Impediments (AI) for several

years. The City contracted this project out to a consultant, and the report was completed in August 2012. The Region 8 Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity reviewed the AI and provided feedback to the City in December 2013. The City has been addressing the weaknesses identified by that review. Procedures were immediately put into place with the City's housing partners to record the beneficiary data, housing stock prices and unit sizes, and community impact to fair housing. A formal response is being drafted to HUD- Office of FHEO. The AI relied on Census data, and the City recognizes that accurate racial and national origin data is limited. The City is planning to administer a survey, in partnership with its housing and social service agencies, to gather more specific information/primary data. This data will also be a component of the City's Public Participation process to ensure equitable representation. The collection of data will conform to HUD's Title VI recordkeeping regulations.

Other Actions

The City of Casper does not receive enough funding in its Community Development Block Grant to have any great impact on reducing the number of poverty level families. The City can, however, help increase the capacity of those agencies that support these families in providing better transportation, child care, services for elderly and disabled persons, and housing rehabilitation.

Leveraging Resources

CDBG funds are used to leverage additional funds to complete major projects.

- The City of Casper and its vendor, CATC, leveraged additional funds from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for the operational costs associated with the dial-a-ride system and the fixed route bus system. Because CDBG funds provide ridership tickets, CATC used CDBG funds for the 20% match required by FTA.
- In the case of the World Changers/Mission Serve project, volunteers provided labor.
- The Matching Façade Grant program matches 50% of the total amount of the rehabilitation project up to \$10,000.00 requiring the balance to be paid by the business owner.
- The City of Casper also provides additional financial support for efforts such as the redevelopment of the Old Yellowstone District, the Weed and Seed program, code enforcement, and law enforcement. The community as a whole is a giving community inasmuch as its local foundations and United Way of Natrona County provide additional funding to social service agencies. Without the support of the local foundations, United Way and private donors, low-moderate income persons, especially those with great needs, would not have access to the many services to assist with transportation, senior care, child care and recreation.

Managing the Process

The City of Casper takes its responsibility of administering its CDBG entitlement very seriously. The community relies on the City to ensure all funds allocated and spent meet community needs, based upon public input. Steps are taken to assure equal consideration of all requests with prudent stewardship guiding all funding decisions.

CDBG funds were used exclusively to meet one of the three national objectives, and the City complied with the overall benefit certification. Sixty One and one-half percent (61.5%) of CDBG funds benefited low-moderate income persons. In FY 13/14, CDBG funds benefited low-moderate income homeowners, victims of domestic violence, youth at risk, persons and families who are homeless, elderly persons, disabled persons, low-moderate income persons without personal transportation and low-moderate income neighborhoods.

Citizen Participation

The City of Casper provided copies of the draft of the Consolidated Annual Plan Evaluation Report to the public by placing copies of the plan at the Community Action Partnership of Natrona County, Wyoming Community Development Authority (the state housing finance agency), local HUD field office, the public library, the Casper Housing Authority, the Housing and Community Development office, and on the City of Casper website at www.casperwy.gov. A fifteen (15) day comment period which will be advertised in the Casper Star Tribune legal ads will be August 25 through September 8, 2014. Finally, City Council will hold a public hearing to solicit comments from the public at its September 16, 2014 meeting. Any comments received at the public hearing will be included in the Final CAPER report submitted to HUD.

Institutional Structure

The City of Casper works with a number of agencies, both public and nonprofit in nature, to deliver community development and housing services to citizens of Casper. Because the City receives such a small allocation of CDBG funds, typically economic development activities have not been funded. However, the past eight years, the City has made CDBG funds available to prepare and facilitate economic development in Census Tracts 200 and 300, where over 20% of the total population lives in poverty. Higher paying jobs are the best ammunition in the fight against poverty. An organized economic development effort is our best chance to create livable wage positions. Business recruitment for other areas of the City is handled by the Casper Area Economic Development Agency (CAEDA). CAEDA receives Optional One Cent Sales Tax revenue for its operating budget. There is an Economic Development Joint Powers Board that administers all funds for CAEDA. The board consists of two City council members, two county commissioners, and an at-large representative.

The City participates in the local regional homeless collaborative and the Community Development Technician is an active member not only on the collaborative, but also on the local Continuum of Care.

Monitoring

The City of Casper monitors the efforts and expenditures of all of its projects. The City is the recipient of all of the CDBG funds allocated other than the Casper Area Transportation Coalition (CATC) that receives funds to purchase bus and dial-a-ride tickets for low-moderate income persons. CATC provides annual reports on persons served and monitors the expenditures to ensure that funds are spent for the activities approved in the Annual Action Plan. Each year the Housing and Community Development Division is included in the City's single audit process.

Self Evaluation

The community is on the "right track" in terms of developing Casper as a viable community by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities for its low-moderate income citizens, and all citizens in general.

The City is preserving existing housing stock for its low-moderate income homeowners through its Emergency Repair and Housing Rehabilitation programs. The City is compliant with the Lead Safe Housing Regulation so its youngest citizens can be protected from the hazards of lead based paint. Casper is not a large metropolitan area; however it does face some problems of larger cities. Housing costs continue to rise; however, not everyone's wages are keeping up with the economic growth. Very low income citizens are struggling to meet the basic needs of life.

This past year, the City has made great progress in terms of meeting its goals of the Five Year Consolidated Plan. The following is a list of accomplishments:

- 221 elderly and disabled persons in the community received Casper Area Transportation Coalition (CATC) tickets for transportation to medical, educational, recreational, and employment destinations.
- 6,920 tickets were provided to the Community Action Partnership to distribute to homeless and low-income persons for CATC transportation to medical facilities or social service agencies in the community.
- The fixed route transit system, a primary community amenity provided 165,734 rides on The Bus and 52,202 rides were provided by the Casper Area Transportation Coalition (CATC) dial-a-ride service.
- The City completed its 453 house through the Mission Serve, formerly World Changers, program. The program assisted 6 low-moderate income homeowners in the rehabilitation of their homes.
- Three (3) homeowners had emergency repairs performed on their homes to address issues that posed an immediate threat to the health and safety of the residents.
- Management of LifeSteps Campus, a 6.5 acre, multi-building social service campus, continued through the Community Action Partnership of Natrona County under a three (3) year contract.
- Four (4) Commercial Façade Grants were awarded to businesses in the Old Yellowstone District (OYD) and downtown Casper.

Organizations provide a wide range of services to meet the needs of the homeless, persons

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with addictions, mental health, education, job training, and employment. These agencies seek funding from a wide range of sources to provide critical services. The elderly, disabled, victims of domestic violence, children at risk, daycare facilities, HIV/AIDS, and youth programs are all recipients of the same kind of support from the community. All programs are designed to enable people to live with dignity and independence.

The City works to provide a suitable living environment for all its citizens. Its public safety protection agencies all work in a concerted effort to preserve the health and safety of the community. The quality of life in the City of Casper and its surrounding area is especially important to its residents. The community as a whole coordinates to ensure that the cherished lifestyle of citizens is maintained. Casper is a community where neighbors take care of each other.

The community also treasures its rich history and steps have been, and are being taken to preserve that history. Buildings of significant historical value are being preserved for future generations. The National Historical Trails Center provides a living history of the significance of the six (6) historical trails that cross the Casper area and the role this region played in the development of our country.

Over the past few years, the area north of I-25, also known as the North Casper area, has undergone significant changes and improvement. This area was the initial site of the City when it was first founded in 1889, and many of Casper's first homes were built in this area. However, because of the natural division of the City by the railroad, and later the interstate highway, the area deteriorated. Through patient code enforcement, the building of neighborhood pride, the infusion of CDBG dollars into housing rehabilitation, and the relocation and subsequent renovation of fourteen (14) HOPE III homes, this part of Casper is no longer an eyesore. Many of the small modest homes are well kept, the streets and alleys are clean, and people who live in North Casper are proud to be from that part of town. However, there are still some pockets of decay to work on.

As the City reviews its visions and goals for the Five Year Consolidated Plan, the City has made great strides in addressing its community development issues. Many of the projects are multi-year projects so progress, not results, will be reported in future reports. The Bus continues to be a primary mode of transportation for persons who do not have their own private transportation. The Bus moves people to employment, medical appointments, shopping and social events and now service has expanded into neighboring communities. Despite the economic downturn, commercial development continues. As construction progresses, the City has new schools, two new hospitals, a new wing on the existing hospital, three (3) new academic buildings at Casper College, a new business incubator, several new restaurants, another multi-screen, movie theater is under construction, and a downtown conference center/hotel campus is in the planning stages. Work continues on several projects in the Old Yellowstone District. New affordable housing units will be constructed in the downtown area. Needed repairs at LifeSteps Campus are continuing so the campus may be a viable option for persons who are difficult to house in traditional neighborhoods, and may provide a central place to deliver and receive services. In summary, the City of Casper is on target with its visions and goals.

Lead-based Paint

The City of Casper is in full compliance with the Lead Safe Housing Regulation. When rehabilitation involves the disturbance of lead based paint, only contractors who have been trained in Safe Work Practices are allowed to bid on the project. The City will not do projects where the costs will exceed \$25,000. The City does not have the resources available to undertake projects of this scope and still comply with the regulations.

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HOUSING

Housing Needs

Casper continues to experience an economic boom. The boom brought jobs and people to Casper. Housing construction rates have climbed to numbers not seen since the early 1980's. However, the housing stock constructed is not affordable to low-moderate income persons. The prices of existing homes skyrocketed to more than double their value at the beginning of the decade. Housing prices have dropped, but not enough to bring additional housing stock to the affordable range for low-moderate income households. New construction of housing in adjacent communities of Bar Nunn and Evansville are more affordable. The lots are sold quickly and new neighborhoods are under construction in both of these towns, however, Evansville has reached its boundaries in new home development areas. Obviously, lower priced homes in the City sell quickly; however, many of the existing higher priced houses sit on the market for over 100 days before selling. If a potential homeowner is going to invest more than \$250,000 in a house, the customer wants new construction with modern amenities.

For low-moderate income households anticipating homeownership, the cost of housing is unaffordable to them. Occasionally housing stock priced under \$200,000 comes onto the market. If the condition is good to excellent, time on the real estate market is short. Qualified buyers are poised to make immediate offers. Casper's greatest inventory of affordable housing is located in low-moderate income neighborhoods. Over 89% of Casper's existing housing stock was constructed prior to 1980. Casper, as a "boom or bust" community experiences bursts in housing construction during its boom times – to provide housing for its work force. Due to age, many of the homes constructed during the last boom have failing major systems.

For many years, Casper did not have any additional multi-family housing units constructed for market renters or renters earning at or below 60% of Area Median Income. Through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program administered by the Wyoming Community Development Authority (WCDA), over 700 units of affordable housing have been created for qualified households. The City participates in the LIHTC program with developers by providing Letters of Consistency as the project applies to the City's Consolidated Plan. Thirty-six (36) new units will begin construction this fall, and another seventy-six (76) units will apply to WCDA for funding in January 2015. In all cases, these housing affordable housing units are located in mid-upper income neighborhoods, with easy access to public transportation and schools. For a community poised for growth, the units are filled as quickly as they are ready for occupancy.

The City of Casper initiated a Housing Coalition group of stakeholders last year and the group meets quarterly to discuss needs and plans for emergency shelters, transitional housing, and market affordable housing. The attendees represented are the Casper Housing Authority, Wyoming Housing Network, Rescue Mission, Salvation Army, United Way, Habitat for Humanity, and Community Action Partnership. The Coalition combines resources and information to generate plans for housing initiatives. The Housing First development became a reality because of this group, as did the emergency shelter at Life Steps campus last winter.

Specific Housing Objectives

As a part of its emergency repair program, the City makes funds available to low-moderate income homeowners that have become disabled. Emergency repair funds are used to construct a ramp for accessibility to a home by a person with disabilities. There are not a sufficient amount of CDBG funds available to make any further accommodations inside a home of a person with disabilities. Referrals for this type of assistance must come from the Wyoming Independent Living Rehabilitation (WILR), a nonprofit organization that works closely with persons with disabilities.

The City does not receive any HOME funds, so no accomplishments can be reported regarding providing affordable housing that meets Section 215 requirements.

On LifeSteps Campus there are eight (8) apartments set aside as affordable rentals. The City contracted the Wyoming Housing Network to manage the eight units.

Public Housing Strategy

The Casper Housing Authority (CHA) operates 75 units of public housing for persons who earn at or below 50% of area median income and is authorized 498 Section 8 Housing Vouchers. Even with the increase in rent payment capacity, the Housing Authority still has a long waiting list of people seeking housing. The CHA is not designated as a “troubled housing authority” by HUD.

Barriers to Affordable Housing

Barriers to affordable housing in Casper continue to pose serious issues such as the high costs of purchasing raw land and constructing the necessary infrastructure. The old game of supply versus demand means increases in construction materials, labor costs and infrastructure. There has been a slow down in the construction of the larger homes. Fewer developers are building “spec homes.” The sudden drop in oil prices has slowed the oil and gas production significantly. Exploration of coalbed methane gas has slowed down. However, now there is a lot of potential oil play in southeastern Wyoming and the development of the Niobrara Shale. The oilfield also extends into the Casper area. So, as this oil exploration activity picks up pace, it is expected that Casper will also have some positive economic impact. Oil and gas production has always been the driving force for employment in Wyoming and in Casper. According to the State of Wyoming, Oil and Gas Commission, 3.65 supporting jobs are created for each oil and gas job created. The industry is very closely linked to the economy of Casper and as that industry goes, so does Casper. Wind energy development is also contributing to job creation. A wind farm is being planned for an area just north of Casper. If the plan comes to fruition, Casper will see more positive economic impact. True to its history, the fulcrum of Casper’s economy maintains a close balance of jobs created and jobs lost.

HOME/ American Dream Down Payment Initiative (ADDI)

This program is no longer funded by HUD.

HOMELESS

Homeless Needs

The actual number of homeless persons in Casper is unknown. Casper has one emergency shelter (Central Wyoming Rescue Mission) and one transitional housing program for families (Community Action Partnership of Natrona County). Seton House provides transitional housing for women with children. The Central Wyoming Rescue Mission also operates a faith based transitional housing program for women with children and one for single men. The Self Help Center has emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence and a transitional housing program for their target population. Last winter, an emergency shelter was set up at LifeSteps Campus from January through March to handle overflow of the homeless residents with several of the City's housing agencies working together to provide support for the shelter. Still, these agencies have waiting lists. It is not known how many families are living doubled up with friends or family. The Natrona County School District works with homeless youth (some of which are served through the above programs). Other than the Youth Crisis Center, there is no emergency shelter for homeless youth. It is reported that many of them live with friends and "couch surf." Like many other communities, somewhat rural in nature, the number of homeless persons is a fluid number. Wyoming's winters are not conducive to persons migrating into town without a place to stay.

Each January the City participates in the regional homeless collaborative "Point-in-Time" count of homeless persons. The count is supervised by the Transitional Housing manager for the Community Action Partnership of Natrona County (CAP). A committee of local service providers and the Police Department organize into special teams. Training of participating agencies, identifying key personnel at each agency and having ONE person to field questions for the entire day adds to the accuracy of the count. Through their collaborative information, doors of motels and hotels frequented by homeless persons are knocked on. Shelter providers conduct a count of residents. Some teams go to places such as the library and locations along the river where homeless persons often camp.

Through the statewide Continuum of Care (CoC), Casper is a part of a regional continuum. Wyoming Rural Development Council, a division of the Wyoming Business Council provides the administrative portion of the CoC. Staff there is responsible for writing the CoC grant as well as administering the Homeless Information Management System (HMIS). In Casper, there are two projects that receive renewal funding in the CoC, the transitional housing program for families on LifeSteps Campus and transitional housing for victims of domestic violence through the Self Help Center.

The United Way of Natrona County, local private foundations and private donations provide the remainder of funding for nonprofit organizations who offer services for persons/families who are homeless. The United Way of Natrona County raises over \$1 million dollars that are disbursed to about 26 member nonprofit organizations during the plan year. The McMurry Foundation, the Tate Foundation, the Wyoming Community Foundation are key

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players who provide matching funds for other grant requests. The total amount of private donations is unknown.

Homeless prevention activities are carried out by Interfaith of Natrona County. In the past, Interfaith has been funded with CDBG funds; however, due to other community priorities established by City Council, it no longer receives CDBG funds. City Council allocates funds to the Community Action Partnership of Natrona County (CAP), the same agency that administers the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) and Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) programs. Interfaith is a program funded by both CSBG and ESG funds.

There is no discharge coordination policy or any planned activities in Casper to develop such a policy. This will be included in the 10 year plan to end chronic homelessness.

Some initial planning steps have been taken this past year to develop a 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness. To date, some research has been done attempting to identify Casper's chronically homeless. A review of persons that have been incarcerated at the Natrona County Jail in the past three (3) years reveals that there are twelve (12) persons that report they are homeless and have had over 170 stays at the jail. The next step is to determine if these same individuals have also used services at the hospital and/or other homeless service providers. Client confidentiality is a major barrier to secure this information.

Casper Housing Authority began a Housing First program at LifeSteps Campus in February 2014 providing housing for ten (10) tenants in Building C and four (4) tenants in Building H. Building H includes a lift and has one disabled resident staying in that location. The City paid for the repairs and updates on these two buildings.

Seton House has added eight (8) new transitional housing units to its campus. They now have housing for thirty-six (36) families. Seton House continues to have a large waiting list – Some months it is more than forty.

The Self-Help Center provides transitional housing for victims of domestic violence through its "Turning Point" program. The center moved its transitional housing from LifeSteps Campus to a former bed and breakfast near Natrona County High School. The move did result in a loss of four (4) rooms and ten (10) beds. The Self-Help Center also operates a separate emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence.

The Community Action Partnership of Natrona County (CAPNC) operates a transitional housing program for families in Buildings E and F of LifeSteps Campus. The program's operations were switched from the Casper Housing Authority to CAPNC about five (5) years ago. This program also has a waiting list of families seeking assistance. By re-purposing some vacant space, the City facilitated the program's growth to its original capacity of ten (10) families. The program is funded by Continuum of Care (CoC) monies.

Medical care is provided to persons who are homeless or have been homeless in the past twelve months. The 12th Street Clinic is located in Building E at LifeSteps Campus. CDBG funds were used to match other funding sources to assist the Community Action Partnership with its rehabilitation efforts in the clinic area that was expanded two years ago.

Interfaith of Natrona County provides homeless assistance services to intact families. The agency provides rental deposits and rent or mortgage assistance to families that are in danger of losing their housing. The organization also assist persons with obtaining prescriptions, birth certificates, and personal care items.

Key players in the service delivery system for homeless persons are the Central Wyoming Rescue Mission, Seton House, Interfaith, the Community Action Partnership of Natrona County, Self Help Center, and the Casper Housing Authority. However, one cannot forget services provided by other key agencies in the community. The Salvation Army, Joshua's Food Bank, Holy Cross Food Bank, St. Vincent's Thrift Shop, the First Methodist Thrift Shop, Casper College Adult Basic Education, Even Start, and Early Head Start also provided needed services such as food, clothing, training, and child care.

Specific Homeless Prevention Elements

Keeping a family in their own home is the best prevention method of homelessness. Interfaith of Natrona County, Inc. (Interfaith) provides rental, mortgage and rent deposit assistance to low-moderate income persons. The City Council awarded additional funds to the Community Action Partnership of Natrona County for assisting persons needing temporary shelter during some cold weather in January and February 2014. All of the funds were used quickly.

Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG)

This program is administered by Brenda Lyttle with the Department of Family Services (DFS).

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Development

One hundred percent (100%) of persons who received benefits of CDBG funds were below 80% of area median income, or considered as low-moderate income. Although the City will support affordable housing programs, the City did not construct any specific housing units.

The Consolidated Plan is developed through a community process and none of its components are the result of willful inaction. An activity such as the development of the fixed route transit system is an excellent example of the power of the Five Year Plan. In that manner, the problem was identified by the community, determined as a major need, resources were explored, a needs assessment was completed, and a plan was implemented to bring buses to the streets of Casper and to provide transportation to persons who do not have personal transportation. All of the sub-recipients had to identify how CDBG funds would leverage additional funds to make a project a reality.

When an entity requested a certificate of consistency with the Five Year Consolidated Plan, the entity was provided with a copy of the plan and submitted a completed application for a certificate of consistency. The Five Year Consolidated Plan is then reviewed by staff to ensure that the proposed activity meets one of the visions of the Consolidated Plan. The Community Development Director issues the Certificate.

All CDBG funds were used to meet at least ONE national objective. The City will not fund any projects that do not meet at least one national objective, is an ineligible activity, or does not support at least the continued achievement of meeting at least one of the City's visions.

The City does not receive a sufficient amount of funds to proceed with any project that requires displacement or relocation. The City did not acquire, rehabilitate or demolish any property that was occupied and therefore no action utilizing the Uniform Relocation Act or Section 104 (d) of the 1974 Community Development Act, as amended, was required.

The majority of the projects funded with CDBG funds had to benefit low-moderate income persons, whether the persons were included in a Low/Mod Limited-Clientele activity or not. The City funded the Casper Area Transportation Coalition where the recipients were presumed limited clientele and incomes were not verified.

Program income was earned and entered into the Integrated Disbursement Information System (IDIS). Program income comes from owner occupied rehabilitation loans and interest from economic revitalization revolving loans that have been paid back to the City. The owner occupied rehabilitation loans were disbursed some years ago, and are being paid back on a regular basis. The owner occupied loans for the regular rehabilitation activities have a stipulation for the homeowner when the loans are granted. If the homeowner changes the title in any manner, including refinancing, the loan must be paid back to the City.

Earned program income is used to pay immediate CDBG expenditures, and the CDBG funds that go unspent are directed towards the availability of funds for the following year and/or to address an immediate community need. No program income was received as the result of any sales of properties or any float funded activity. In addition, there were no prior period adjustments made.

The City does not own any property that it has purchased with CDBG funds, nor does City have any lump sum agreements.

Child care was noted as one of the most important community issues to be addressed over the next five years. It is difficult for parents working non-traditional hours, to find reliable and affordable childcare. The Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS) lists 132 licensed child care facilities in Casper. Only a few facilities offer services for parents that may work mid-night or early morning shifts.

The quality of child care is administered by the State Department of Work Force Services. Educational grants are available to individuals who choose to obtain further education in childhood development. Certification programs as well as two year and four year degrees are available through the University of Wyoming and the community colleges. The grants available are \$1,000 per semester financial assistance for a credit bearing course, whether the course will lead to a college degree or a certification. Continuing education helps professionals keep abreast of changes in the field and hones skills. To encourage continuing education, the Department of Work Force Services also provides \$1,000 per year for continuing education. The only way to achieve quality care is through education.

The Child Development Center of Natrona County provides early childhood development screenings, physical, occupational and speech therapy to any child that has a disability. The increased need for their services meant increasing physical space for classroom training and therapy services. The program provides early childhood screening for all children under the age of five. In addition, they also are required to provide therapy services (occupational, speech and physical), at no cost, to affected children.

The City has not been directly involved in any activities that may address child care services. On a statewide basis, the Wyoming Children's Action Alliance, located in Cheyenne, led the legislative effort that increased capacity and quality of child care in Wyoming.

Antipoverty Strategy

Unfortunately, the City of Casper does not receive enough funding in its Community Development Block Grant to make a significant impact in reducing poverty in this community. However, the City can assist the agencies that work with those living in poverty to improve their quality of life with better services. Improvements in transportation, childcare, services for the elderly and disabled, rehabilitation of homes, development of collaborative efforts to maximize program dollars, and planning future growth and development, are all ways that the City can fight poverty and strengthen our community.

NON-HOMELESS SPECIAL NEEDS

Non-homeless Special Needs

No actions were taken by the City to address special needs of persons that are not homeless but require supportive housing.

Specific HOPWA Objectives

The City does not administer any HOPWA funds.

OTHER NARRATIVE

The City is well aware of budget discussions on the Congressional level. Over the past decade, CDBG funding levels have diminished from a high allocation of \$561,000 to \$255,443 in Federal Fiscal Year 2013. Even with the reduction of resources, Casper continues to work to provide for decent housing, economic opportunities and suitable living environments for its low-moderate income citizens.

The City asks that HUD review some of the administrative requirements it places on entitlement communities and free its small staff resources to initiate programs and projects that will further benefit its low-moderate income citizens.