

Politics + Policy

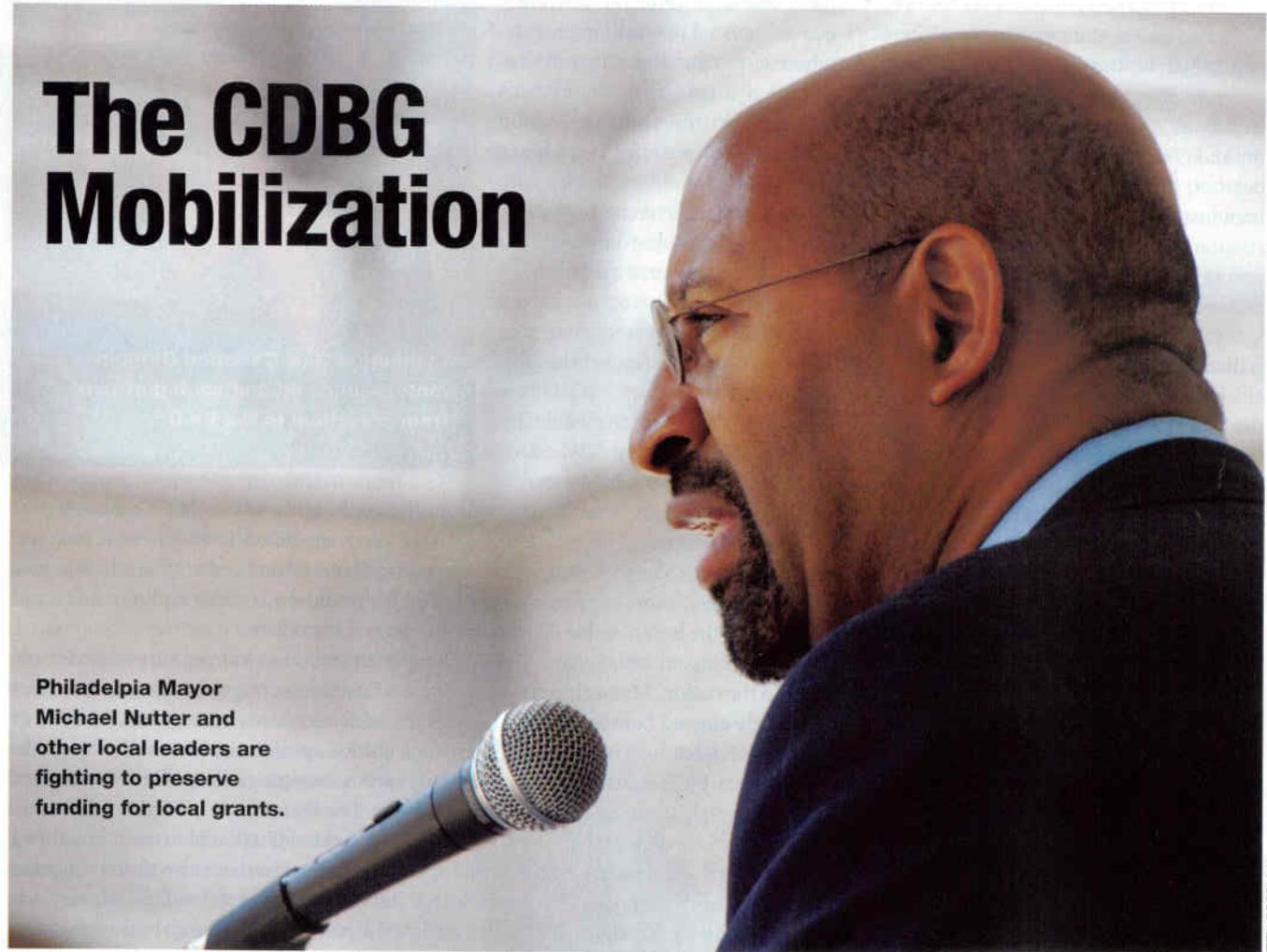
A look at the people, events and ideas that shape state and local government.

OBSERVER

By Zach Patton

The CDBG Mobilization

Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter and other local leaders are fighting to preserve funding for local grants.



KEITH GOODMAN

Local leaders from across the country are angrily and aggressively pushing back against proposed cuts in Congress—cuts that would gut large portions of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. For many organizations, including the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) and the National Association of Counties (NACo), the current fight to preserve funding for CDBG represents the biggest mobilization effort in memory.

“When you have this level of assault on the future of metro areas all across the country, mayors are responding, county officials are responding and legislators are responding,” says Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, the second vice president of the USCM, who has also called the proposed cuts “outrageous” and

“un-American.” “I think everyone understands the seriousness of the current situation,” he says. “This is a fight worth fighting.”

Mayors and county leaders were already concerned when President Obama’s budget proposal included a 7.5 percent reduction in funds for the 36-year-old grant program, which last year provided \$4 billion to local governments to help pay for infrastructure improvements, anti-poverty initiatives and other community improvement programs. But local leaders became even more incensed when House Republicans announced a plan to slash the program by 62.5 percent for the current fiscal year, taking the grants program to its lowest level of funding since 1988.

It’s not the first time CDBG has been on the chopping block. President George W. Bush reduced funding for the grants

during his time in office, and in 2005 he proposed moving CDBG from the Housing and Urban Development Department to the Commerce Department, and replacing the block grants with more targeted economic development funds.

But what's especially troubling about the latest proposed cuts, local leaders say, is that no one in Congress has explained or justified the drastic reductions. "What's different about this is that these cuts are irrational," says USCM Executive Director and CEO Tom Cochran. "There have been no hearings. You've got Congressmen just slashing away without any discussion as to [whether there is] anything wrong with the programs. We haven't had a chance to make our case to Congress."

Making matters worse, Cochran says, is that the cuts would come at a time when cities and counties are still reeling from the recent economic downturn. "Now is the worst time ever to cut CDBG because of the economic situation cities are facing and the jobless recovery," he says. "If you're looking at the worst economic situation we've had since the Great Depression, what would you do? You damn sure wouldn't cut out a major program that deals with jobs and job production."

The current proposal is perhaps even more stinging to local leaders because it comes under a president who pledged on the campaign trail to increase funding for CDBG. The president has threatened to veto the Republican budget bill, but the White House hasn't been very publicly involved in fighting the cuts on Capitol Hill, says Cochran. "We've been urging the administration to get involved and be strong. A lot of the senators that we've talked to have told us they could really use more involvement from the White House."

Mostly, local leaders say, the cuts represent an unfair and outsize assault on a single federal program. "I'm willing to take a hit," says Glen Whitley, a judge in Tarrant County, Texas, and the president of NACo. "But to only cut domestic programs and leave the 500-pound gorilla [of foreign and military spending] alone just doesn't make sense." **G**

Streamlining Education

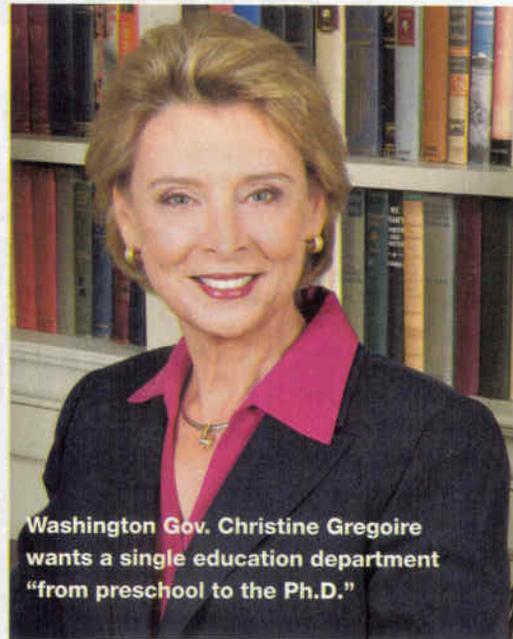
It's not exactly controversial to say that most state education systems could use some major repairs—if not a complete overhaul. One such reform is currently being discussed in Washington state, where Gov. Christine Gregoire has proposed a plan that would radically rebuild the entire education structure in her state. The idea is attractively simple: a single state Education Department to handle everything from pre-kindergarten programs to post-graduate studies.

"Today in our state, we do not have an education system," Gregoire said when she announced the proposed shift in January. "We have a collection of agencies that deal with the subject of education." Washington currently has eight education agencies and 14 major strategic plans, according to the governor's office. Gregoire's proposal would create a cabinet-level education secretary, appointed by the governor, atop one seamless agency. The governor says that bringing all of the state's education efforts under one umbrella—"from the preschool to the Ph.D."—would save money and resources, and help ensure the best possible education experience for students.

Such a reorganization would give Washington the most centralized education department in the nation. Massachusetts has a single education secretary, but the state also has separately elected boards for each level of the education system. Legislators in North Dakota are debating a bill that would create a unified system similar to the proposal in Washington, but because the idea represents such a sweeping change from the current model, the plan attracted immediate controversy. The State Board of Higher Education and a public school administrators' group have vowed to fight it, which would require a constitutional amendment. And in Washington, teacher unions have also raised concerns about Gregoire's proposal. The voter-elected state schools superintendent, whose position would have been eliminated, railed against the plan as a power grab by the governor. (Gregoire has since said she's no longer seeking to eliminate the superintendent position.)

Still, ideas like the ones in Washington and North Dakota are inherently sensible, says Jack Jennings, president and CEO of the Center on Education Policy, a national advocacy group for public education. "The vision is the right vision," he says. "But it's difficult to achieve, largely because elementary and secondary education is a completely different kind of creature from post-secondary." Even within higher education, Jennings says, it would be difficult to consolidate management of the "enormous variety" of institutions, from two-year community colleges to multi-campus research universities, not to mention for-profit proprietary schools like the University of Phoenix.

"It's a good idea," he says, "but an education secretary would be dealing with vast structures that have developed independently for a hundred years—structures that are resistant to being blended in with other groups." He predicts that the Washington plan will get watered down to the point that the secretary will play merely a coordinating role for different education levels. "Still," he says, "it would be a step forward." **G**



Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire wants a single education department "from preschool to the Ph.D."

WIKIPEDIA

WHAT HAS **CDBG** DONE FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION?



Provided Metro Washington with **\$82 million** in CDBG funds in FY 2010

Supported building of a medical facility for **9,000** Prince George's County residents

Trained **935** people in Arlington County from 2006-2010

SUMMARY SHEETS OF SUCCESSFUL CDBG PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

Arlington County
District of Columbia
Fairfax County
Gaithersburg
Loudoun County
Montgomery County
Prince George's County
Prince William County

THE ROLE OF CDBG IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
April 25, 2011

CDBG FUNDING BROUGHT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO ARLINGTON COUNTY

COMPUTER TRAINING

CDBG funds support a computer training center where low and moderate income persons learn basic through advanced Microsoft computer programs, as well as advanced hardware training (A+ certification). Students improve and/or acquire employment skills, advance in their current positions and increase their income.

This was the case with Mrs. Greene, a senior citizen and long time resident of Arlington. Mrs. Greene had been training as an administrative assistant in a National Council on Aging (NCOA) program. She enrolled in the Arlington Employment Center's Basic Computer course which helped enhance her computer skills. After graduating from the Basic and Advanced Computer classes, she was promoted to Program Monitor, where she will supervise and monitor staff.

Ms. Greene has doubled her income and her family situation has improved significantly. C D B G contributes \$49,000 which is more than half the cost of the program.



CULINARY TRAINING

The Arlington Employment Center launched a culinary arts training program to provide job skills to individuals who were either homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless, graduating the first class of 11 students in 2009. The Culinary Arts Program was a collaborative effort involving nonprofits, public agencies such as the Virginia Cooperative Extension Services, several County departments, as well as DC Central Kitchen. Several of the students faced barriers to employment and asserted that with this program and the help of case managers, they are very hopeful about having a second chance in life.

The 10 week curriculum includes fundamental kitchen operations, safe food handling, essential cooking methods, and high volume food production. In addition students also attended sessions on life skills and financial management to enable behavioral changes that will help them become successful. Each of the 11 clients graduated from the program and eight had employment offers by the end of the year. CDBG funding of \$85,000 was leveraged with funds from the U.S. Department of Labor to accomplish this successful program.



THE ROLE OF CDBG IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

WHAT DOES CDBG DO FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION?

CDBG MEANS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ARLINGTON

For more than 37 years, the Community Development Block Grant has made a significant difference in Arlington County. This flexible program, awarded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), has developed affordable housing, encouraged small business development, prepared low and moderate income residents for employment, and delivered a wide range of human services. CDBG funds have often “filled the gap” in local programs serving low and moderate income persons and neighborhoods.

Arlington typically spends more than 15% of its \$1.8 million annual grant for economic development activities. Working through nonprofit partners and a County agency, micro-enterprises receive start-up and expansion loans and technical assistance; low income residents receive various types of career counseling and employment training.

ARLINGTON'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM 2006 THROUGH 2010

- **935** Persons completed employment training and received employment services
- **588** Persons completed computer training, improving their options for employment
- **55** Businesses received technical assistance
- **65** Micro loans were made to new and expanding businesses

CDBG FUNDING BROUGHT GREEN, AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

THE CHALLENGE

Wheeler Terrace Apartments was a 112-unit, seven building garden apartment complex, located on Valley Avenue, SE that was poorly maintained, unattractive, and a source of crime and drug activity in the community. The project was the last unrenovated apartment project in its neighborhood which is located adjacent to the Wheeler Creek Estates HOPE VI project and the just renovated Overlook Apartments (former Parkside Terrace Apartments). The apartment complex had an open out of view alley behind it that created unsafe out of view crime scene conditions and poor storm run-off conditions that contributed to flooding conditions in building basements. The apartment complex was a project-based Section 8 housing voucher property with its contract about to expire in 2009.

The Wheeler Terrace Association (WTA), the tenant association, was offered a Tenant First Right to Purchase (TOPA) by the former owners of the property. WTA assigned their TOPA rights to Community Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC) with a goal to preserve their affordable Section 8 rents and to completely renovate the apartment complex. The WTA and CPDC formed the development/sponsor entity, Wheeler Terrace Development LP (WTDLP), for purposes of acquiring and redeveloping the complex.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Upon acquisition of the property from the former owners by WTDLP, CPDC made a series of security and site maintenance repairs required by HUD in order to transfer the existing project-based Section 8 contract to WTDLP. The extensive renovation scope of work had as one of its primary goals to make this renovation the first District of Columbia Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Level certified affordable housing project. It met the LEED certification goal. The project also had to meet, as a condition of its DHCD funding, Green Communities environmental standards for affordable housing.

The scope of work included:

- Complete renovation of the existing 113 apartments;
- Addition of 3 new apartments;
- New environmentally green storm water management systems;
- 60 off-street secure parking spaces in the former alley (now closed); and
- Green community opportunity center that includes a computer lab and provides workshops on green education.

THE ROLE OF CDBG IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

PROJECT FUNDING

Total Development Cost of \$33,395,447 consisting of:

- \$4,480,137 DHCD CDBG loan
- \$5,769,883 DHCD HPTF loan
- \$8,200,000 Housing Finance Agency Bonds
- \$12,673,143 4% LIHTC equity
- \$400,000 Federal Home Loan Bank Grant
- \$600,000 Quadrangle investment
- \$450,325 Healthy Homes Grant
- \$75,000 Enterprise Grant
- \$746,959 Deferred Developer's fee



FINISHED PRODUCT

Construction Type:	Seven three-story garden apartment buildings
Number of Units:	116 affordable units
Date Reopened:	June 2010
Income Requirements:	Residents households must earn less than 50 percent of the area median income.
Residential Profile:	Tenants earning less than 30 percent of the area median income occupy 113 units. Tenants earning less than the 50 percent of the area median income occupy the remaining three units.

OTHER INFORMATION

Green Eco-friendly Features:

- Roof System — new energy efficient white reflective roof that results in less solar heat gain
- Exterior Thermal Envelop — extra insulation added to the exterior masonry walls to increase insulation value and new insulating window units with Low-E glazing and high insulating value
- Ground Source Heat Pump — heating and air conditioning system uses an energy efficient ground source heat pump which has underground wells to preheat a glycol solution using the ground's ambient temperature of about 57 degrees Fahrenheit
- Storm Water Management — an underground sand filter system that catches, filters and diverts storm water to the adjacent public sewer
- Indoor Air Quality — tempered outdoor air is circulated into the buildings' central corridors and then under undercut entrance doors into each apartment
- Low- flow plumbing fixtures
- Low volatile organic compounds in paints, adhesives, sealants, carpets, composite wood, and insulation used
- Energy Star appliances and lighting fixtures used
- An urban garden built on site that will allow resident youth and adults to grow nutritious foods

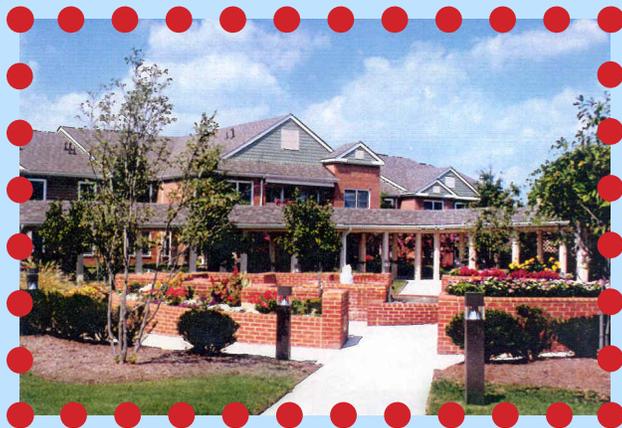
CDBG FUNDING BROUGHT AFFORDABLE SENIOR HOUSING TO FAIRFAX COUNTY

Glens at Little River

LITTLE RIVER GLEN

Little River Glen is a 120-unit active senior adult community that includes an onsite Senior Center. Little River Glen is affordable to seniors earning 80% of the Area Median Income and below.

Community amenities include its convenient location near two shopping centers, restaurants, movie theaters and other professional services; easy access to FASTRAN and Metro bus stops and nearby local hospitals and a regional library. Weekly FASTRAN trips are provided for grocery shopping and other regularly scheduled shopping.



OLLEY GLEN

Olley Glen is a 90-unit active senior community also located on the Glens of Little River campus in the Braddock District of Fairfax County that celebrated its grand opening on April 2. Already home to more than 40 seniors, Olley Glen provides seniors of low and moderate income an affordable place to call home.

Amenities at Olley Glen include: a beautifully landscaped courtyard, washer and dryer in each unit, and universal design features throughout the property to enable aging in place. There are also six fully accessible units located in the community. Recreation options at Olley Glen include gardening, a horseshoe pit and shuffleboard; residents also enjoy easy access to the county's senior center located on-site at the adjacent Little River Glen.



THE ROLE OF CDBG IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

CDBG FUNDING

Little River Glen

Under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009, the county was awarded \$1.6 million in federal Community Development Block Grant - Recovery (CDBG-R) funds. These funds were available to address capital needs that had previously been deferred due to lack of adequate funding. The FCRHA applied CDBG-R funds to address much needed capital improvements at five of its properties, including with Little River Glen. The work at Little River Glen included the complete replacement of siding that had reached the end of its service life.

Olley Glen

Total project cost was \$20.4 million and funding was provided by a variety of funding sources including Low Income Housing Tax Credits, Fairfax County's Housing Trust Fund and Penny for Affordable Housing Fund, and federal HOME and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. Approximately, \$650,000 of CDBG funding used was to support the development of Olley Glen.



Olley Glen

CDBG FUNDING BROUGHT A NEW, GREEN YOUTH CENTER TO GAITHERSBURG

OLDE TOWNE YOUTH CENTER

The 6,500 square Olde Towne Youth Center provides fun and educational after school and weekend activities to middle and high school students, and features a state-of-the-art audio and video studio.

It is Gaithersburg's first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum Certified municipal building. It is also the first youth center in the country and the fourth building in Maryland to achieve this certification, the highest level possible.

Some of its many environmentally-friendly building techniques include:

- A vegetated roof
- Photovoltaic panels
- A geothermal heating and cooling system
- Insulation made of soy beans
- Floors made of recycled tires
- Cabinetry made of wheatboard

Activities for Youth Include:

- A computer lab
- Homework help
- Volunteer service projects
- Audio and video recording
- Arts and crafts
- Exercise and nutrition programs
- Fozzball
- Billiards
- Play Station and Xbox
- Outdoor basketball court



THE ROLE OF CDBG IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

PROJECT FUNDING

Cost to Build: \$3.75 million

Funding Sources:

- CDBG Funds - \$2,000,000
- State of Maryland - \$700,000
- City of Gaithersburg - \$1,050,000

AWARDS

June 2010: the Youth Center in Olde Towne attained Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum certification.

January 27, 2011: the Maryland Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) presented the “New Construction — Exemplary Local Green Facility” Award in the Sustainable Buildings category. The nomination was submitted by Maginniss + del Ninno Architects.

February 17, 2011: the building, with Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing systems designed by local Consulting Engineer, Gipe Associates, Inc., received the highest honor presented by the American Council of Engineering Companies of Maryland (ACEC-MD), the 2011 Grand Award.



CDBG FUNDING BROUGHT EMERGENCY & ELDERLY SHELTER TO LOUDOUN COUNTY

EMERGENCY HOMELESS SHELTER

The Opportunity: Loudoun County is one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. During 2007 we learned that the expanding landfill would leave our three family shelters on Woods Road (24 beds) with unsafe/unsanitary conditions and potentially contaminated water by 2010. The population growth increased demand for more family and single men's and ladies' beds. Rented space for a cold weather shelter was expensive, and inconveniently located in a rural setting. A temporary leased day-time drop in shelter was serving 400 visits a month. Long term permanent solutions were needed for multiple homeless needs. The 8,500 sf Emergency Homeless Shelter addition to our existing Transitional Housing Facility satisfied four homeless needs; providing better location, better service, safer facility, and better case management to clients.

The Challenge: We faced four homeless issues: 1) Unsafe conditions resulting from expansion of the county's only landfill placed imminent danger to all three of our family shelters (which were located directly across the street from the landfill on rural Woods Road). The properties had previously had poor septic perc, now there were potential groundwater contamination issues from the encroaching landfill. 2) Our record population growth also increased demand for a permanent men's shelter; the faith-based men's shelter was closed in 2006, single homeless men were forced to live in cars, woods, and tents. Most were employed but found it difficult to keep a job without a place to stay. A single-men's shelter was needed. 3) Due to a shortage of single women's beds and no male beds, a Cold Weather Shelter (CWS) was temporarily opened in a rented building to prevent hypothermia and illness. The rented space was a short-term solution at a very inconvenient (rural) location. Transportation to and from was expensive. 4) A temporary leased day-time drop-in shelter was serving 400 visits a month. Long term permanent solutions were needed.

LOW-INCOME ELDERLY HOUSING

The Opportunity: The 2000 Census revealed that within 10 miles of Middleburg, VA there were over 50 elderly households with incomes less than \$10,000 per year paying more than half their income for housing. Twelve of the households didn't have plumbing! When the Levis Hill House building site became available the opportunity to look at designing, from scratch, a facility to meet elderly needs came to the forefront. Working with Federal, State and local Governments together with community stakeholders, groundbreaking occurred in August 2007.

The Challenge: When established in 1981, Windy Hill Foundation was the only non-profit 501(c)(3) organization in western Loudoun County providing affordable housing. The Foundation was committed to assisting residents achieve increased financial independence, education and sustaining careers. Windy Hill has always served elderly residents, however as the population aged, they found that only 2 of their existing 47 units were fully accessible. Most of the remaining units were suitable for working individuals and families. The challenge was seeing the vision for much-needed affordable senior housing to reality. There were setbacks. The most significant challenge came in 2006 when VHDA required space design efficiencies to increase the ratio of living space to maintain eligibility for the low-interest loans and tax credits which would fund the bulk of the project. Windy Hill (and its partners) persevered, and with the help of the CDBG Program, the project was redesigned to meet VHDA standards.

THE ROLE OF CDBG IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

CDBG FUNDING

Emergency Homeless Shelter

Total cost for the project was \$2.4million of which CDBG provided \$250K for construction and \$44.6K for installation of the solar system.

Low-Income Elderly Housing

The Vision began in 2005 with a CDBG grant for architectural and design work coupled by a grant from the Mellon Trust Foundation. 2006 saw the project move forward with continued CDBG support to finish project drawings and specifications in time to apply for VHDA Low Income Housing Tax Credits. Once the VHDA documents were submitted, it became apparent that a final tweak to the plans would be required to satisfy the VHDA formula for space design efficiency, which was complicated by the long narrow site and topographical changes. 2007 saw the final infusion of CDBG funds to improve the design to benefit from VHDA credits. Total cost of the multi-year project was \$5.2million of which CDBG provided only \$317,800 over three years.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Emergency Homeless Shelter

The design team consisted of public input sessions via the CDBG process, the Planning Department, the Department of Construction and Waste Management, the Department of Family Services, plus the input of the then current program operators (Volunteers of America and the Salvation Army). Consistent with the CDBG goal to provide and maintain affordable housing and prevent homelessness, the design team had several objectives: 1) To design, construct and operate a new Emergency Homeless Shelter which serves families, couples and single individuals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 2) To provide holistic/intensive case management services to end the cycle of homelessness. 3) To utilize state of the art energy and maintenance efficiencies to achieve long-term savings. The efficiencies would be 'designed-in' vs 'added-on.' 4) To site the facility in a more central location to reduce transportation outlays shuttling clients from downtown services to rural facilities. 5) To increase capacity to serve at least 75 additional clients yearly.

The critical elements of the process were grounded in creative community planning that embraced community input via the CDBG process, a program and budget process with an expedited lead-time, a Board of Supervisors faced with competing demands for services and a shortage of funds, and the absolute need for innovation to find a solution that served the ever increasing needs of the growing community; and did so with no additional operating costs over the long term.

The objectives were met collaboratively. All were forced to look outside the box to find the best fit for not one challenge, but for four. The goals to provide better program delivery, a more convenient location, and long-term efficiencies all lent themselves to co-location of facilities. The existing Transitional Housing facility was on a 3+ acre underutilized site with room for expansion in a convenient location on the public bus routes.

The new Emergency Homeless Shelter (EHS) facility provides 24 beds for families plus an additional 8 beds expansion for a total of 32 family beds; plus it provides 14 permanent beds for single men. It provides a 33% increase in available family beds, and a 100% increase in beds for single men. The design process was completed in 2007, construction during 2008, move-in during fall 2009.

Low-Income Elderly Housing

An experienced non-profit (like Windy Hill) was needed to work thru the system to respond to roadblocks that might have killed the project of a less-experienced visionary. The VHDA ruling that required significant space redesign temporarily set the project back. CDBG was committed to the project and infused an additional \$72.8K to bring the redesign of the multi-million dollar project to reality. Ribbon cutting was September 21, 2008. In just a year Levis Hill House was built and fully occupied by low-income elderly. The project was completed on budget, and two months ahead of schedule.

CDBG FUNDING BROUGHT A PEDESTRIAN ARTS ALLEY TO MONTGOMERY COUNTY

THE OPPORTUNITY

Arts Alley @ Blair Mill began as a 400 foot long by 22 foot wide asphalt service alley in the Silver Spring Central Business District just north of the District of Columbia approximately one half mile east of the Silver Spring Metro Station. The alley once served a complex of one and two story brick factory buildings. Over the past ten years, the property owner converted the factory space into a commercial arts and photography center, bringing design and arts related tenants and clients into the area.

The Arts Alley project is the first phase of a multi-phased pedestrian linkages program designed to provide a pathway system through the old industrial area of South Silver Spring.

THE CHALLENGE

The existing alley was an uninviting, unsafe, and poorly-lit asphalt service driveway that functioned as the back door to several new businesses that the owner had attracted, including a coffee roasting factory/café and a new ethnic restaurant. The project had the design goal of creating an active, lively urban space that improves the overall experience for pedestrians moving through the newly emerging South Silver Spring Arts District. The project had additional goals of transforming the back doors of the alley buildings into front doors, and introducing multi-functional vertical elements along the horizontal path to create rhythm, screen undesirable views of utilitarian functions, and provide visual interest with public art. Other goals included safety enhancements through new and upgraded lighting, and integration of the architecture, alleyscape, and landscape components into a cohesive design.



THE ROLE OF CDBG IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

PROJECT FUNDING

Public investment for all links \$5.2M (CDBG); Private land investment; Privately funded streetscape and plazas adjacent to redevelopment projects

FINISHED PRODUCT

The alley was divided into specific functional spaces that provide for activity, dining, and performance events while allowing necessary building functions to take place at the north end of the alley. The pivot point of the alley serves as the central gathering space within the alley. The tall brick smokestack provides a focal point from outside the alley, and the second floor terraces on the west side afford views down into the space.

An important component of this pedestrian pathway was the inclusion of public art. A local artist was solicited with the assistance of the Public Art Trust to help drive home the arts theme. Visitors to the alley from Georgia Avenue are drawn into the space by an eye-catching display of primary-colored glass panels in rectangular shapes delicately extending from stainless steel frames wrapped in mesh of varying densities. The beautiful, bold, colored panels add vibrancy and identity to the alley. In-ground up lighting allows these pieces to be as beautiful at night as they are during the day. Two carefully scaled stainless steel tower and trellis structures define the inner “active” dining area within the space. These towers mimic the entry artwork with their brightly colored panels and stainless steel mesh.

The unusual paving pattern of the ground plane was inspired by the works of the Dutch Neo-Plasticist Painter Piet Mondrian. The brightly colored red, yellow, and blue pavers were arranged in strict rectangular patterns that identify to pedestrians the door and window openings in the buildings, accentuate the artwork, and provide a striking contrast to the monochromatic tones of the brick building facades.

Smaller versions of the tower structures serve to enclose trash and recycling receptacles and to screen views of the unsightly utility service connections. The alley is bathed in light at night by a series of stylish aluminum fixtures gently floating above the alley, suspended on cables. More intimate lighting is provided by matching wall mounted fixtures strategically placed at doorways and windows. Pedestrians are welcomed to sit down and enjoy an outdoor lunch in black metal benches equipped with extra wide armrests. The benches and trash receptacles were carefully selected to echo the strict geometry of the Mondrian theme.

Landscape materials were carefully selected and placed to create visual relief from the prevalence of masonry, brick, and metal surfaces in the alley. Urban tolerant evergreen shrubs provide a backdrop to seating areas and ADA compliant ramps, while green screens allow vines to give the old tired brick facades new life. Modified trash receptacles explode with color provided by spring flowering bulbs and annuals.

The Arts Alley is the center piece for the South Silver Spring Pedestrian Linkages which has supported the creation of over 2080 housing units in South Silver Spring which represents over \$200,000,000 housing investment since 2004. The links include Arts Alley; Bottleworks Lane connecting the retail area near Arts Alley to the public parking garage; privately funded links between the garage condominiums on Newell Street; Kennett Street streetscape; privately funded streetscape adjacent to Discovery Communications; and privately funded plaza and linkage at the Silverton Condominiums where the link joins Arts Alley.



CDBG FUNDING BROUGHT AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO MONTGOMERY COUNTY

THE OPPORTUNITY

The Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) Plus Program is an innovative effort to tap an ownership, affordable housing program to provide stable, permanent housing for chronically homeless, special needs individuals in market rate and mixed income housing environments.

Montgomery County's "inclusionary zoning" program requires 12.5 - 15 percent of the dwellings in every new subdivision containing 20 or more units to be affordable to moderate-income households, but a developer is allowed to sell an MPDU at market rate to a higher income purchaser if no income eligible purchaser can be found. Occasionally, MPDU purchasers cannot be found for smaller efficiencies and one-bedroom units. This was the case at the Ashmore at Germantown, a 400 unit garden-style condominium community near Germantown's rapidly developing, walkable town center. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program provided acquisition funding to Coalition Homes for 13, one-bedroom units at the Ashmore. CDBG funds have also been used for acquisition of three additional MPDU Plus units in the county.

THE CHALLENGE

It is difficult to secure permanent, affordable housing for formerly homeless, very low-income individuals with mental illness or other special needs who are ready for independent living fully integrated into the community.

PROJECT FUNDING

Acquisition funding for a total of 16 units at the Ashmore was provided from CDBG (13 units) and the County's local housing trust fund (3 units). Funding was also received through a HUD Section 811 special needs housing grant (10 units), as well as state funding through the Maryland Affordable Housing Trust. On the operating side, Adventist HealthCare, the Meyer Foundation and the Trawick Foundation are among the organizations provided funding for case management services.

THE FINISHED PRODUCT

To date, 44 MPDU Plus units have been acquired by Coalition Homes in support of the County's Housing First model for addressing homelessness. Sixteen of these units have been acquired using \$1.7 million in CDBG funds. CDBG dollars are enabling the County to preserve affordable housing resources and meet a critical housing need.

THE ROLE OF CDBG IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

CDBG FUNDING BROUGHT ACCESSIBLE HOUSING TO PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

ACCESSIBLE GREENBELT

Funding

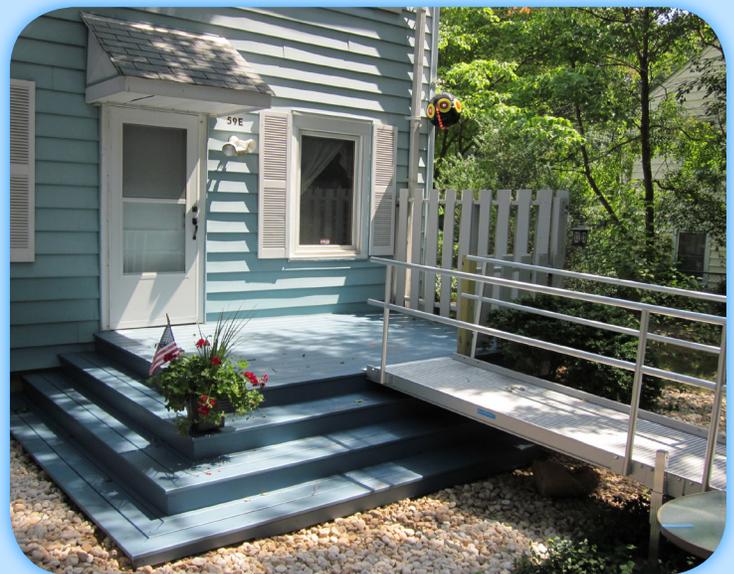
\$90,000 Community Development Block Grant funding; leveraged dollar for dollar

Beneficiaries

36 low and moderate income residents

Project Description

The Greenbelt Assistance in Living (GAIL) Program was established to provide services to senior and disabled residents. One of the primary focus of the program is to enable residents to remain in their homes as long as possible. A key need that has been identified is home modifications. Often frail seniors or disabled residents, particularly those with limited incomes and resources, are forced to leave their homes, because they cannot afford these needed improvements. The Accessible Greenbelt Program provides handicapped accessibility modifications to enable seniors to remain in their homes as long as possible. Modifications include the installation of ramps, railings, chair lifts, posts, bathroom modifications, and widening of doorways.



THE ROLE OF CDBG IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

CDBG FUNDING BROUGHT HOUSING & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY TO PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

HOUSING INITIATIVE PARTNERSHIP

Funding

\$80,000 Community Development Block Grant funding; leveraged dollar for dollar

Beneficiaries

98 first-time homeowners & low-to-moderate income homeowners

Project Description

The Housing Initiative Partnership (HIP) Services, Inc. is an innovative nonprofit that creates housing and economic opportunities for persons of low and moderate income. They also provide homeownership counseling to low and moderate income persons interested in becoming first-time homeowners, default counseling services to homeowners in danger of losing their homes to foreclosure, and reverse mortgage counseling to the elderly so that their home investment can benefit them. For this program year HIP acquired four (4) vacant and/or abandoned housing units and rehabbed them for resale. All four housing units have been successfully rehabbed and one (1) house has been sold to an income eligible first-time homebuyer. HIP was also an advocate for providing foreclosure counseling to 97 persons in threat of losing their homes and was able to prevent foreclosure for all 97 persons. These homeowners are now able to remain in their homes thanks to HIP's foreclosure counseling assistance.



THE ROLE OF CDBG IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

CDBG FUNDING BROUGHT SIGNIFICANT RENOVATION TO A PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY FAMILY HOME

THE OPPORTUNITY

To provide rehabilitation assistance to an elderly family in desperate need of disability adaptations to make their home a more accessible and comfortable place to live.

THE CHALLENGE

The owners of the property included an Alzheimer's patient and his paraplegic sister who is confined to a hospital bed and a wheelchair. The small home was built in the 1950's and the door opening to the one tiny bathroom was too narrow for wheelchair access and use. Consequently, family members were needed to carry the wheelchair bound woman in and out of the bathroom for bathing.



THE ROLE OF CDBG IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

PROJECT FUNDING

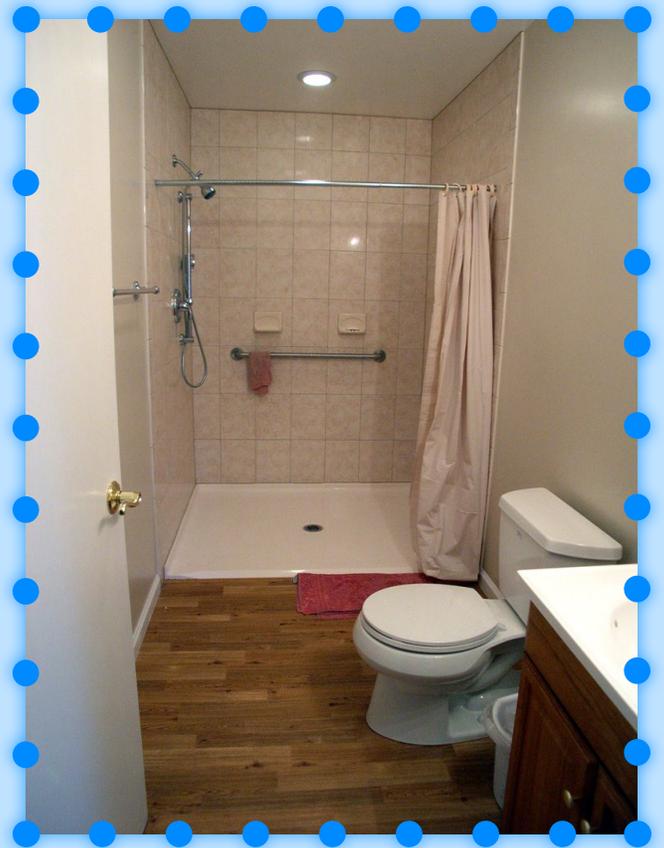
\$59,561 in CDBG funds

FINISHED PRODUCT

In addition to making significant improvements to the exterior, kitchen, and electrical systems of the home, the main focus of the project was to expand the bathroom to make it possible for all residents of the home to have full access to the bathroom. After gutting the entire bathroom and expanding into an adjacent closet there was ample space to install a large roll-in shower. After the door opening was enlarged the bathroom became fully functional for all members of the home.



Before



After

**R24-2011
May 11, 2011**

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
777 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20002-4290**

**PROPOSED RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
BLOCK GRANTS PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, COG's Housing Director's Advisory Committee (HDAC) hosted a regional forum on April 25th with local government officials, housing and community development leaders, and HUD headquarters staff to address the ongoing significance of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to metropolitan Washington.

WHEREAS, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program seeks to ensure decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses; and

WHEREAS, national CDBG funding has been reduced from \$4.406 billion in FY2001 to \$3.99 billion in FY2010 with plans for additional cuts in FY 2011 and 2012; and

WHEREAS, Congress is considering eliminating up to 60 percent of CDBG's budget which would greatly impact the nation's and region's community development industry and projects; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 100 representatives from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, the United Way – National Capital Area, Freddie Mac, COG's member government housing and human service agencies and several local nonprofit organizations resolved to partner and create grassroots advocacy campaigns to retain CDBG funding and continue serving our region's vulnerable residents.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS THAT:**

1. COG supports the work and advocacy of its regional CDBG funded partners in their common quest to bring attention to the program's success, positive regional impact and consequences should funding be reduced and/or cut.
2. COG recommends the active participation of its local elected officials and housing and planning staff in serving as champions for the region's CDBG allocations and projects.