

CONSOLIDATED PLAN

For Fiscal Years 2005-2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**City of Decatur, Alabama
Community Development Department
February 14, 2005**

The Five Year Consolidated Plan is prepared by the Community Development Department of the City of Decatur, Alabama. This Executive Summary outlines the priority areas for the use of Community Development Block Grant dollars that will come into the City for the next five years. The priority areas outlined are in support of the three goal areas of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Michelle Gilliam Jordan, AICP, Director
Community Development Department
City of Decatur
February 14, 2005

CONSOLIDATED PLAN (2005-2010)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The building blocks of any community are its neighborhoods. Strong neighborhoods are formed with citizens who are partners in shaping their living environment. The Community Development Department of the City of Decatur is about the business of community building. The Department acknowledges that viable and sustainable neighborhoods begin with the people. Therefore, the implementation of a formal and continual strategy for engaging citizens in the process of community building is a critical step in the community development process. This process is re-evaluated and restructured every five years when the Consolidated Plan is prepared.

The preparation of a Consolidated Plan is a requirement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the City of Decatur to receive funds under the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG). The Consolidated Plan is designed to be a collaborative process where by the community establishes a unified vision for community development. The process of developing and implementing this plan affords, as denoted by HUD, “local jurisdictions the opportunity to shape the various housing and community development programs into effective, coordinated neighborhood and community development strategies.”

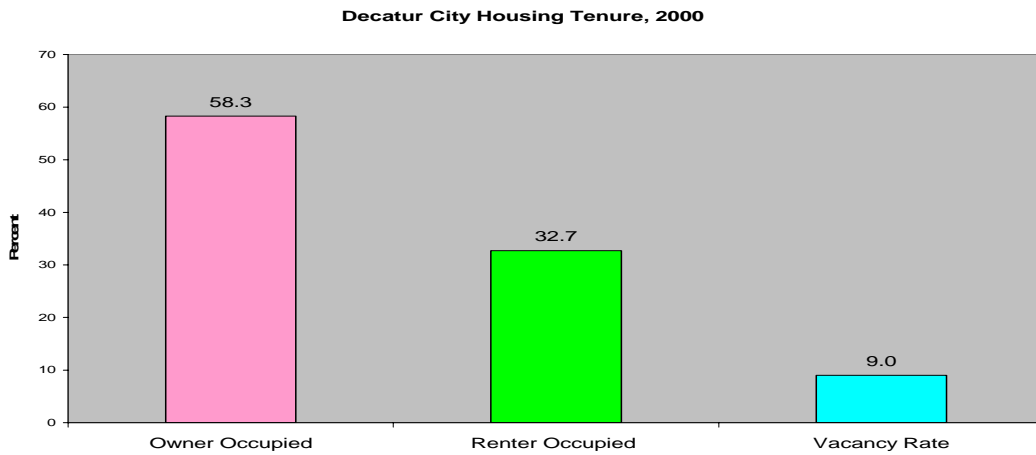
The purpose of the Consolidated Plan is to be fulfilled through the pursuance of the three statutory program goals established by HUD. The primary aim for these program goals is to develop viable communities by providing *decent housing, a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities* primarily for low and moderate-income persons.

The process for preparing the consolidated plan began with an introspective look at the City of Decatur. In preparing the plan, the process was inclusive and holistic. Inclusive in that all segments of the community were afforded the opportunity to provide input through community meetings, focus groups and an on-line survey. The planning process was holistic because the needs of the community as a whole were identified. Understanding where we are and noting what current problems, challenges and opportunities exist was the first step. Questions that guided this reflective exercise were: What critical challenges face this community? What needs exist and how big is the gap? Whose voices are not being heard? What is the dimension or size of each problem and how does it compare to other problems? How might we collaboratively move to address these problems?

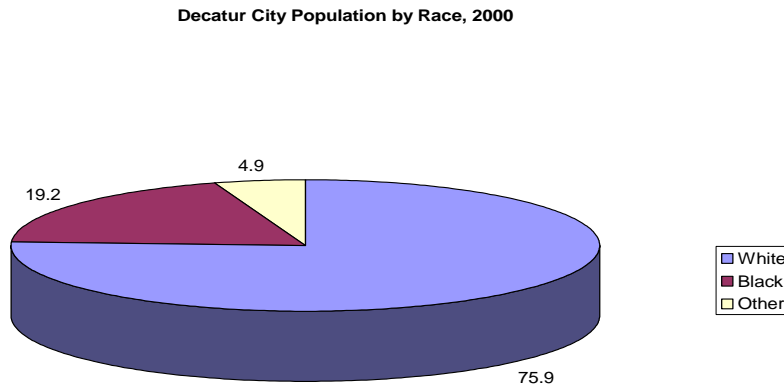
The CDBG dollars that the City received over the past five years averaged at \$500,000.00 annually. These funds have been a major source of revenue for addressing the housing needs of many low to moderate income families and the community improvements needs within the CDBG target areas in the city of Decatur. In past years, CDBG funds have supported infrastructure improvements, recreational projects, housing programs, and public service activities principally for low to moderate income persons in the City.

Profile of Decatur:

The diversity of the city creates both opportunities challenges. As a whole, this river city has enjoyed steady grown and economic expansion. Between 1990 and 2000, the population increased by 10.6%. The 2000 Census reported 53,929 people, 21,824 households, and 14,753 families within the city. Of the 21,824 households, 31.8% have children under the age of 18 living with them. Housing tenure as measured by the number of housing units which are owner occupied, as compared to renter and vacant housing is showed below. Owner occupied housing units, a good indicator of a community's economic viability, approached 60% as reported in the 2000 census and graphically depicted below.



The racial makeup of the city is 75.9% White 19.2% Black or African American; 4.9% of the population is comprised of Hispanic and other racial groups.



In line with the State and Nation, the average household size is 2.43 and the average family size is 2.99. The median age of the population is 36 years; A quarter of the population (25.4%) is under the age of 18. At the other end of the age cohort spectrum 13.1% of the City's residents are 65 years of age or older.

The Community Development Block Grant Program: The CDBG Program has the principal aim of improving the quality of life for low to moderate income persons and the communities where they reside. The City, overall, has a strong economy. The median family income of \$47,574.00 is above the State's. However, there are pockets of poverty as denoted by 11.9% of families in Decatur living below the poverty line. Selected profile statistics of the city indicate that:

- ◆ The City maintained a steady rate of growth for more than five decades;
- ◆ The growth rate has been on par with that of the State of Alabama and the U.S
- ◆ Population projections indicate that the city's population is aging rapidly, with the 65 and over age cohorts showing the greatest increase;
- ◆ There has been a negative growth rate in the 30-39 age cohorts (child bearing years) and a corresponding negative growth rate in the 0-9 age cohorts
- ◆ Population projections for geographic areas of the City (made by the Department of Planning) show that the northeast section is forecasted to grow rapidly; the northwest and southeast (geographic sections that have CDBG target areas) are forecasted for the lowest growth rates, 11% and 18% respectively.
- ◆ The average size of households in the city in 2000 was 2.25;
- ◆ The City experienced an increase in its ethnic population; with the non-white population increasing from 16% in 1980 to 24.5% by 2000.

When compared to the State of Alabama and the Nation as a whole, there are some key indicators of need in the City of Decatur as reflected in of the variables denoted below.

CHARACTERISTICS FOR DECATUR, ALABAMA, AND U.S. (2000)

Characteristics	Decatur	Alabama	US
Total Population	53,929	4,447,100	281,421,906
Total Households	21,824	1,737,080	105,480,101
Single-Person Households/ Percent Of All Households	6,302 28.9%	453,898 26.1%	27,230,075 25.8%
Female Householder (no husband present)	2,919 13.4%	246,466 14.2%	12,900,103 12.2%
Female Householder with children under 18 years	1,806 8.3%	141,057 8.1%	7,561,874 7.2%
Persons Age 60 and Over/Percent of All Persons Age 25 and Over	9,365 26.4%	769,880 26.7%	45,797,200 25.2%

As shown, the City has higher than national averages for female headed households, households with children, and persons over 65 years of age. These indicators geographically cluster to denote the target population for CDBG funds.

The City of Decatur operates the Community Development Block Grant Program through the Department of Community Development. The Department of Community Development has identified three CDBG Target Areas in the City. They are Goodyear area (census tract 1, block group 1 and 5); Northwest Community (census tract 6 block groups 1 and 2 and Tract 7 block group 1); and Southwest Area (census tract 4 block group 3). In 2001 the Northwest Decatur areas was approved by HUD to be designated as a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area. This designation was sought due to the increasing gap between the City's social economic status and this community. Housing vacancy rates approach 20%, the percent of persons below poverty is 15% percentage points higher than the City's and the number of person whose income is 50% below the median is 15% higher than the City's. Overall, the social economic status of this area has some marked differences in income, owner occupied housing and educational attainment. As noted by the City Planning Department in the City of Decatur's 2010 Comprehensive Plan (p. 79) this area also represents Decatur's largest concentration of substandard Housing.

The axiom of this Consolidated Plan is based on the ideal of community building through informed decision making, cooperative efforts, and strategic actions that support the leveraging of dollars and positive outcomes for the residents of Decatur. The elements of this plan aim toward:

- ◆ Supporting families in their efforts to become homeownership and partners in the process of building and sustaining community
- ◆ Enhancing social capital in communities such that self sufficiency become the hallmark of change within distress communities;
- ◆ Collaborating and encouraging human capacity building efforts of non-profits and others who work throughout the community; and
- ◆ Encouraging economic development that creates new opportunities and avenues for upward mobility of low and moderate income residents in Decatur.

Priorities of the Consolidated Plan

The priorities of the Consolidated Plan emerged from a synthesis of focus groups, community meetings, grassroots contacts, and social and economic variables that offer insight and direction for how and where the CDBG funds should be utilized. The guiding principle is to leverage these dollars in such a way that residential livability becomes the hallmark of achievement undergrided by residents realizing a higher level of self sufficiency, economic empowerment and engagement in the future direction of their communities.

As required by HUD these priority areas outlined are given the designation of High Priority, Medium Priority, or Low Priority. The needs identified during the community meetings, the focus groups, and from the surveys returns were placed under the four areas of Housing, Public Service, Neighborhood/Economic Development and Citizen Participation.

Housing

Priority 1: **Promote homeownership**

Priority Level: *High Priority*

Goal: Increase homeownership within low to moderate income neighborhoods by 10 % annually.

Strategy: Emphasize the thrust of the HOME (Home Ownership Made Easy) Program in those areas of the City with less than 50% homeowner occupancy.

Priority 2: **Support efforts that engender neighborhood identity and sense of place**

Priority Level *Medium Priority*

Goal: Infill vacant lots within target areas with quality affordable housing which will increase neighborhood pride and stimulate private investments

Strategy: Work with local non-profits such as the North West Decatur Community Development Corporation to develop quality affordable housing for new homeowners.

Social Services

Priority 1: ***Basis needs of low and moderat income residents met***

Priority Level: *High Priority*

Goal Structured systems and services in place which afford access to food, shelter, healthcare and other basis needs for Decatur's low and moderate income residents

Strategy: Target CDBG public service allocations to community based organizations which most efficiently and effectively impact these needs of low and moderate income residents.

Priority 2: Low and moderate income youth

Priority Level: *High Priority*

Goal: Youth have access to mentors and services that will provide guidance for successful transition into adulthood and preparatory tools for successful living.

Strategy: Target CDBG public service allocations to organizations/agencies which most effectively and efficiently impact these needs of low and moderate income youth in the community.

Priority 3: Low and moderate income families

Priority Level: *High Priority*

Goal Support networks in place to support and sustain healthy families.

Strategy: Target CDBG public service allocations to community based organizations which most effectively and efficiently improve the status of low and moderate income families

Priority 4: Seniors and other special needs groups

Priority Level: *High Priority*

Goal Senior citizens and other special needs groups have support available to support a good quality of life.

Strategy: Target CDBG public service allocations to community based organizations which most effectively and efficiently impact the lives of senior citizens and special needs groups

Neighborhood/ Economic Development

Priority 1: Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area

Priority Level: *High Priority*

Goal: The transient nature and decline of investment within the NSRA is reversed; the overall number of homeowners is increased and community institutions become stronger.

Strategy: Encourage and support programs that will lead to concrete and definitive actions and investments culminating in better housing, economic development and an overall better quality of life.

Priority 2: Target Areas Investments

Priority Level *Medium Priority*

Goal 3: Essential goods and services are accessible to residents, particularly in low and moderate income areas

Strategy: Encourage partnerships with established investors for business ventures that will facilitate economic growth.

Priority 3: Public Facilities Investment

Priority Level: *High Priority*

Goal: Invest in infrastructure that will improve the residential livability and quality of life in target area.

Strategy: Support the acquisition, construction and/or improvement to both structures and infrastructures in target areas

Citizen Participation

Priority 1: Informed and engaged public

Priority Level: High Priority

Goal: Citizen input and participation is goal setting and path taking actions

Strategy: Conduct a minimum of one community meeting in all four (4) target areas

Priority 2: Community Based Organizations

Priority Level: High Priority

Goal: Needs of target communities identified through cooperative efforts with neighborhood organizations

Strategy: Solicit feedback on community needs through groups and residents during meeting and other venues (e.g. web surveys)

Organization of the Plan

The Five Year Consolidated Plan takes a wide lens approach to assess how various sources of revenue that may come into the city should be used. Although it is to set the programmatic thrust for the use of CDBG funds, it also offers directives to other community partners in the community building process. The Consolidated Plan includes:

- ◆ A community profile that provide social and economic indicators on the residents of Decatur;
- ◆ An assessment of the housing, homeless, and other community development needs;
- ◆ A discussion and comparison of the three target communities and identification of emerging areas of distress;
- ◆ Identification of impediments to fair housing and proposed actions to alleviate these impediments; and
- ◆ An annual plan for FY 2005 CDBG funds.