

Section III: Five-Year Strategic Plan

Summary of Long Term Strategy

The City of Sandusky's Consolidated Plan Five-Year Strategy has evolved from the information gathered and presented in Section II: Population and Income Characteristics of Sandusky, Overview of the Sandusky Housing Market, and Community and Economic Development Analysis and Needs. The selected strategies are further shaped by the availability of housing and social services already existent in the community. As a result of the City's previous housing and community development planning efforts, particularly in the last ten years, the City has developed solid public-private-citizen partnerships and collaborative efforts. These efforts have reduced duplication of services and expanded housing and community development options within the community. The City and its provider-partners are still challenged to bridge the gap between available resources and the level of need within the community. Increasingly, lack of economic opportunities for citizens impacts the affordability and quality of housing, and as a result creates social problems and contributes to other community development needs. Strategies for the next five years will prioritize improving housing safety and quality, promoting homeownership, reversing the City's population decline, and new initiatives in economic and workforce development, leveraging new sources of funding that will effectively allow the City to redevelop significant properties and create new jobs. These strategies will focus on elevating all household incomes so that low/moderate income populations in particular will attain economic security, a reasonable standard of living and a safety net during transitional periods.

Priority Analysis and Strategy Development

The following concerns were considered in establishing goals for housing and community development assistance and selecting priorities for the use of federal, state, and private funds and resources:

1. Which households or individuals experience the most severe or widespread housing problems? Which households have been least able to access adequate and affordable housing?
2. What activities most appropriately and efficiently address the underlying causes of housing issues?
3. What activities are most feasible to increase the livability of the City's neighborhoods? How can citizens become more empowered to exercise more control of their neighborhoods and become more active in City government and decision-making?
4. Are there geographic areas of the City that require targeted attention to housing or other quality of life issues?
5. How can the City accurately quantify costs and benefits of investments in infrastructure and public services and use this data in the overall capital investments plan?

Priority Strategy Summary

Based on the above factors and the needs assessments presented in Section I, the City of Sandusky's Five – Year strategy for 2004-2009 consists of a set of high and medium level priorities. Because the level of need is so great, medium level priorities will only be addressed if additional funding becomes available. This section lists the highest-level priorities first and then presents a set of Goals and Objectives and Rationale for each Priority Strategy. This first Five-Year Plan for the City concentrates on the following highest-level priorities:

Housing Priorities:

Priority Strategy H-1: *Improve existing housing stock; reduce the numbers of substandard units; provide incentives to property owners and developers; implement stronger code enforcement through the new Rental Housing Code; selectively demolish dilapidated blighting structures; reduce lead based paint hazards.*

Priority Strategy H-2: *Increase homeownership rates; assist homeowners to maintain their status as successful homeowners and assist renters in transitioning to homeownership with down payment assistance and counseling*

Priority Strategy H-3: *Reduce the risk of homelessness; increase emergency assistance to reduce evictions and utility shut-offs that contribute to homelessness and under-housing. Provide for emergency and accessibility repairs for owners.*

Priority Strategy H-4: *Engage city residents and neighborhoods; develop new leadership for faltering neighborhood associations and empower them with greater self-determination. Support EMHA's effort to build resident councils.*

Priority Strategy H-5: *New construction; partner with not-for-profit agencies to construct new housing for homeownership and special needs renters.*

Community and Economic Development Priorities:

Priority Strategy D-1: *Increase access to parks and bike paths; improve all facilities in neighborhood parks; promote pedestrian connectivity between parks and recreational opportunities.*

Priority Strategy D-2: *Increase parking in denser older neighborhoods and promote smoother, safer traffic flow.*

Priority Strategy D-3: *Complete infrastructure improvements in neighborhoods; complete separation of storm and sanitary sewers; continue street resurfacing and complete construction of accessible sidewalk ramps.*

Priority Strategy D-4: *Strengthen and expand the transportation system.*

Priority Strategy D-5: *Continue to build and facilitate partnerships with the local business community and educational institutions to address workforce development needs.*

Priority Strategy D-6: *Redevelop vacant commercial and industrial buildings; leverage new grant programs to produce incentives for private developers to redevelop properties for new mixed use projects in the downtown and Bay front Corridor; reduce impediments to industrial expansions created by conflicts with transportation right-of-ways; stimulate development of a new industrial park setting.*

Priority Strategy D-7: *Construct public restroom in parks. Provide comfort stations for basic sanitation to increase use of parks by individuals and for community festivals.*

Priority Strategy D-8: *Promote growth of entrepreneurship and new businesses.*

Priority Strategy D-9: *Promote revitalization of the Downtown. Promote façade improvements, lease up of vacant buildings with multi-use tenants.*

Priorities, Goals and Objectives

The following describes the Goals and Objectives of the above listed Priority Strategies. Priority Objectives are numbered according to the far left column seen on Table 2C, *Summary of Specific Housing/Community Development Objectives*. This numbering is also carried through to HUD Table 3's found in each year's One Year Action Plan.

Priority Strategy H-1: *Improve existing housing stock; reduce the numbers of substandard units; provide incentives to property owners and developers; implement stronger code enforcement through the new Rental Housing Code; selectively demolish dilapidated blighting structures; reduce lead based paint hazards.*

Rationale: Due to the predominant problem of inadequate incomes for most households in the City the affordability of housing is accomplished at the expense of housing quality and deferred maintenance. Though the City has a long-term vision of improving its economy, the housing needs of many households are immediate. Though this integrated strategy, the City hopes to reverse the decline in quality of the housing stock, especially that available to low to moderate-income households.

H-1.1 Priority Objective: Owner Rehabilitation

Goal: To improve condition of existing housing stock by providing housing rehabilitation assistance to current homeowners.

Objectives:

1. Rehabilitate owner occupied housing units using CDBG funds. Coordinate with lenders and the Community Action Organization (CAO) Weatherization programs to leverage funds.
2. Provide home repairs for homeowners to address urgent needs or accessibility modifications using CDBG funds.
3. Incorporate elimination of lead based paint hazards into rehabilitation and home repair projects.

H-1.2 Priority Objective: Renter Rehabilitation

Goal: To improve the condition of existing housing stock by providing housing rehabilitation assistance to landlords.

Objectives:

1. Rehabilitate rental units using CDBG funds to leverage property owner funds. Coordinate with lenders and the Community Action Organization (CAO) Weatherization programs to leverage funds.
2. Support Erie Metropolitan Housing in providing landlords incentive to improve properties and participate in the tenant based Section 8 program.
3. Incorporate elimination of lead based paint hazards into the rehabilitation projects.
4. Provide incentives to support the City's new Rental Housing Code.

H-1.3 Priority Objective: Support Modernization of Not-for-Profit Owned Rental Properties

Goal: Improve livability of housing for seniors.

Objectives:

1. Assist not-for-profits in accessing modernization funds.
2. Improve marketability of not-for-profit owned units

H-1.4 Priority Objective: Selective Demolition

Goal: Improve neighborhood appearance and livability, preserving market value of neighborhoods.

Objectives:

1. Eliminate blighting influences on neighborhoods

2. Reduce population loss.
3. Eliminate safety hazards presented by unsafe structures.
4. Make properties available for land banking and redevelopment.

Priority Strategy H-2: *Increase homeownership rates; assist current homeowners in maintaining their status as successful homeowners and assist renters in transitioning to homeownership; increase capacity for success of current homeowners.*

Rationale: The City has an exceptionally high ratio of rental units to owner units. Assisting renters to overcome barriers to homeownership will help to reverse this ratio to a healthier balance of homeowners. This will promote greater community involvement and pride, and reduce the City's population loss. Increasing the available housing supply will provide more options for housing desirable to potential homebuyers within the City limits.

H-2.1 Priority Objective: Homebuyers Assistance (DPA)

Goal: Continue down-payment assistance programs to transform renters into homeowners.

Objectives:

1. Partner with Bay Area Neighborhood Community Development Corporation (BANDC) for homebuyer counseling and credit repair.
2. Provide down-payment funds to enable renters to purchase homes within Sandusky.
3. Increase the rate of homeownership and citizen investment in the neighborhood.
4. Provide households with greater access to wealth building through the building of equity in a home.

Goal: Provide housing rehabilitation to first time homebuyers.

Objectives:

1. Overcome housing quality issues in lower priced homes for first time homebuyers.
2. Improve quality of neighborhood housing.
3. Reduce initial expenses of homeownership for first time homebuyers, thus enhancing success as homeowners.

H-2.2 Priority Objective: Household Education

Goal: Provide financial education, budget assistance, and skills training to current homeowners and homebuyers.

Objectives: (H 2.2 continued)

1. Increasing current and future owners' abilities to successfully organize finances and home maintenance to ensure retention of their housing.
2. Reduce foreclosures.
3. Enhance neighborhood and household stability.
4. Enhance compliance with housing codes.

Priority Strategy H-3: *Reduce the risk of homelessness; increase emergency assistance to reduce evictions and utility shut-offs that contribute to homelessness and under-housing.*

Rationale: The City has a small population of chronically homeless, but much greater issues with temporary bouts of homelessness. Utility rates are quite high for the incomes available and both tenants and owners develop arrearages in seasons of extreme weather. The shutting off of utilities can force them to be evicted, resort to unsafe alternatives, like candles and space heaters, or to seek nourishment outside the home if they cannot cook or store food. There are private not-for-profit programs available to assist with these emergency needs, but the funds are inadequate for the need. The City intends to utilize CDBG to augment this emergency assistance system through partnership with the existing network of providers.

H-3.1 Priority Objective: Emergency Utility Assistance Payments

Goal: Increase funds available to prevent utility shut-offs.

Objectives:

1. Provide a safety net for households facing high utility bills that they cannot pay.
2. Reduce the risk of homelessness.
3. Reduce the risk of serious health or safety hazards for households that try to compensate for lack of utilities.
4. Reduce client load on feeding programs.

H-3.2 Priority Objective: Emergency Home Repair

Goal: Address immediate and urgent needed repairs.

Objectives:

1. Provide a safety net for households facing high repair bills
2. Provide for accessibility repairs

Priority Strategy H-4: *Engage city residents and neighborhoods; develop new leadership for faltering neighborhood associations and empower them with greater self-determination. Support EMHA's effort to build resident council.*

Rationale: The City once had a functioning network of Neighborhood Associations to provide input into all aspects of local government activity. Some of the neighborhoods, through population loss, and decreasing homeownership have lost this connectivity to civic involvement. This reduces citizens' feeling of control over and connection to their community. The City Planning Division will explore ways to re-activate defunct neighborhood associations. This will be accomplished not through direct application of CDBG funds, but through the encouragement of citizens to become active in the planning of other CDBG funded projects, such as infrastructure and park improvements, at the neighborhood level.

H-4.1 Priority Objective: Re-establish Inactive Neighborhood Associations

Goal: Re-energize community building at the grassroots level.

Objectives:

1. Increase citizen participation in civic affairs.
2. Community building
3. Enhancing neighborhood pride
4. Reducing opportunities for crime

Goal: Promote the development of future civic leadership.

Objectives:

1. Promote leadership skills development
2. Foster mind-set of wanting to stay in community and help to improve it
3. Reduce population loss

Priority Strategy H-5: *New construction; partner with not-for-profit agencies to construct new housing for homeownership and special needs renters. Encourage new market rate housing development and redevelopment of brownfield buildings for housing.*

Rationale: There is a lack of modern housing available for LMI homeowners and permanent housing for special needs adults within the City limits. Vacant lots and brownfield buildings present an excellent opportunity to construct new units that will be attractive to buyers and contribute to neighborhood character.

H-5.1 Priority Objective: Provide Incentives for Not-for-Profits to Construct New Housing

Goal: Increase homeownership within Sandusky.

Objectives:

1. Provide the option of new construction housing for homebuyers.
2. Provide good quality units for LMI household purchase through homebuyer programs.
3. Replace demolished units.

Goal: Support the increased capacity of not-for-profits to function as housing developers.

Objectives:

1. Strengthen ability to construct affordable housing.
2. Achieve Community Housing Development Organization (CHODO) status.
3. Expand the number of agencies and thus activities, the City can partner with.

H-5.2 Goal: Make land-banked land available at reduced cost as an incentive to developers of new infill housing.

Objectives:

1. Increase housing supply and options for homebuyers.
2. Improve neighborhood income mix.
3. Increase City's desirability as a place to live, and halt population loss.

H-5.3 Goal: Encourage construction of new market rate and affordable condominiums in redeveloped buildings in the downtown and Bay Front Corridor.

Objectives:

1. Provide incentives for developers to create new housing by leveraging new state grant programs.
2. Increase housing supply and options for homebuyers.
3. Enhance City's image and desirability as a place to live and work.

H-5.4 Goal: Partner with not-for profit organizations to build additional permanent housing for special needs adults; provide infrastructure to projects.

Objectives:

1. Provide more permanent supportive housing for disabled adults and families.
2. Use City and CDBG funds to construct infrastructure serving undeveloped sites.

Community and Economic Development Priorities:

Priority Strategy D-1: *Improve facilities in neighborhood parks; promote pedestrian connectivity between parks and recreational opportunities; increase access to parks and bike paths. Explore need for a community center and related programming; including any needed construction/renovation financing, feasibility for long term operations funding and potential partner organizations.*

Rationale: Through other funding the City has begun development of an extensive bike path that will provide recreation for its citizens as well as provide a tourism related activity along the waterfront. Through the use of CDBG funds, the City can develop additional access points and linkages that will make this resource more convenient and relevant to its low to moderate income neighborhoods as well. To complete the parks system, the City will develop small neighborhood parks in four neighborhoods where such facilities are lacking. This will increase the livability of the neighborhoods, promote more healthful habits and reduce transportation barriers to park use.

D-1.1 Priority Objective: Improve Facilities in Neighborhood Parks

Goal: Provide neighborhood scale outdoor recreation and relaxation throughout the City.

Objectives:

1. Ensure all neighborhoods are equally served with open space.
2. Enhance the attractiveness and image of all neighborhoods.
3. Promote casual opportunities for neighbors to interact.

D-1.2 Priority Objective: Increase Connections to the Bike Path

Goal: Provide all citizens equal access to a major City recreational amenity.

Objectives:

1. Promote the desirability of all neighborhoods
2. Promote alternative transportation mode
3. Promote the desirability of the City as a place to live

D-1.3 Priority Objective: Explore need for a community center and related programming; including any needed construction/renovation financing, feasibility for long term operations funding and potential partner organizations.

Goal: To address community concerns for additional recreational programming.

Objectives:

1. To study and document the need for a facility and programming.
2. To study the feasibility and potential funding sources for creating and operating a facility if found to be appropriate.
3. To implement a plan that will efficiently address needs within City limitations.
4. Avoid unnecessary duplication of services or facilities.

Priority Strategy D-2: *Increase parking in denser older neighborhoods and promote smoother, safer traffic flow.*

Rationale: The City's older neighborhoods were built at a time when most persons utilized mass transit, or lived close to their schools and workplaces. Therefore, garages, driveways and other places to store automobiles when not in use were not common. In addition, some older larger homes were "duplexed" creating multiple apartments where once only one household lived. Today's residents must use on street parking for their vehicles. The narrow streets do not have the capacity for parking and the normal traffic speeds, creating conflicts and hazards. In order to increase the livability of neighborhoods and promote safer traffic flow, the City intends to utilize CDBG and other funds to create off-street parking in the neighborhoods.

D-2.1 Priority Objective: Provide Off-Street Parking Opportunities

Goal: Correct traffic hazards created by inadequate availability of parking in neighborhoods build prior to ubiquitous use of the automobile.

Objectives:

1. Smoother, safer traffic flow in neighborhoods
2. Enhance neighborhood image
3. Provide more convenient parking for residents
4. Promote the desirability of the City as a place to live

Priority Strategy D-3: *Complete infrastructure improvements in neighborhoods; complete separation of storm and sanitary sewers; continue street resurfacing and complete construction of accessible sidewalk ramps.*

Rationale: The City has developed capital improvements schedules to address its need to separate combined sewers, adequately maintain streets in the neighborhoods and to comply with ADA requirements for accessibility. The City will utilize CDBG funds to carry out these activities in low to moderate-income neighborhoods.

D-3.1 Priority Objective: Complete Separation of Storm and Sanitary Sewers

D-3.1.1 Goal: Reduce combined sewer overflows after heavy rains.

Objectives:

1. Reduce health risks.
2. Improve neighborhood livability
3. Extend capacity-life of sewer treatment plant as storm water loads are eliminated.

D-3.1.2 Goal: Continue street resurfacing program in neighborhoods.

Objectives:

1. Improve neighborhood livability
2. Improve neighborhood image
3. Promote traffic safety

D-3.1.3 Goal: Complete construction of accessible sidewalk ramps.

Objectives:

1. Achieve full compliance with ADA
2. Improve access for citizens with mobility disabilities.
3. Improve neighborhood livability

Priority Strategy D-4: *Strengthen and expand the transportation system.*

Rationale: The City operates a small transit system, which currently provides “on demand” service. More capacity and more hours of operation would reduce waiting times for service, and expand access to the system. The operation of regular fixed routes will be explored as a way to increase access to employers and other regularly used destinations. This system is vital for the disabled and elderly who are unable to drive. It can be useful to those low-income persons who cannot afford upkeep on an automobile. The City operates the system with dedicated Transit grant funds.

D-4 Priority Objective: Identify Matching Funds to Expand Sandusky Transit System

Goal: Increase capacity of current service, expand hours, and eventually accommodate some fixed route service. Use special transit funds.

Objectives:

1. Provide more convenient access to transit service
2. Encourage reduction in automotive traffic
3. Make all parts of the City equally accessible to those who cannot drive

Priority Strategy D-5: *Continue to build and facilitate partnerships with the local business community and educational institutions to address workforce development needs.*

Rationale: Changes in technology and the economy itself now require workers to develop more specialized skills, and frequently to learn more or new skills. The City is watching closely a concern expressed by many businesses that younger workers do not seem to be developing office etiquette and responsible work habits. These qualities are as important to a business’s success as technical skills and productivity. Sandusky is fortunate to have educational institutions and a business community that have already formed partnerships to address the workforce development needs of the area businesses.

The City does not feel called upon to commit additional resources toward this effort at this time. However, it believes that it is necessary to advocate for this process and be a willing facilitator or participant if new opportunities require it.

D-5 Priority Objective: Support Existing Partnerships

Goal: Facilitate the workings of existing partnerships as needed.

Objectives:

1. Allow the existing partnerships to operate unimpeded.
2. Facilitate expansion into responsible work ethic skills (as opposed to technical skills)
3. Conserve City economic development resources

Priority Strategy D-6: *Redevelop vacant commercial and industrial buildings; leverage new grant programs to produce incentives for private developers to redevelop properties for new mixed use projects in the downtown and Bay Front Corridor; reduce impediments to industrial expansion created by transportation right-of- ways; stimulate development of a new industrial park setting.*

Rationale: Economic development is the activity that provides the best opportunity for the City to raise the incomes of its residents and stabilize its future. The City has adopted an integrated economic development strategy that promotes redevelopment of aging business centers and promotes development of new, modern industrial space. Sandusky once had a thriving industrial port and many factories and warehouses were built on the waterfront. As these buildings have fallen into disuse, they present a redevelopment opportunity for both housing and commercial endeavors. This is valuable space for a city that is nearly landlocked. Because of their previous uses and ages, many of these buildings are believed to harbor environmentally hazardous materials, which would have to be assessed and remediated in accordance with EPA, permit procedures prior to reuse. These are expensive activities that often create a disincentive to redevelopment of the properties. The State of Ohio has new grant funding (Clean Ohio) available for use in assessing hazards and for remediation. The City plans to utilize CDBG funds to match and leverage these grant funds. Thereby, it can offset start up costs and reduce risk to a prospective developer, stimulating the renovation and reuse of these structures. This is a key component to continued revitalization of the downtown and the waterfront.

The City's current industrial park is almost fully occupied and in order to provide appropriate space for attracting new businesses or room for expanded businesses it plans to set aside and develop a second industrial park in a favorable area. Some existing industries that contemplate expansion on their current sites are somewhat limited by the physical layout of their business in relation to roads and railroads. The City will explore creative solutions to these barriers to promote job creation.

D-6.1 Priority Objective: Obtain Brownfield Remediation Grants

Goal: Utilize CDBG as matching funds to leverage grants available for Phase I & II Environmental Property Assessments.

Objectives:

1. Conduct these assessments in pre-development phase to reduce risk to developers
2. Revitalize the downtown and Bay Front Corridor
3. Increase available housing options
4. Promote tourism and heritage related economic activity

D-6.2 Priority Objective: Reduce Impediments to Industrial Expansion

Goal: Find creative solutions to impediments to operations and expansions created by transportation facilities.

Objectives:

1. Address a major impediment to business expansion
2. Job creation and retention through expansion of existing businesses

D-6.3 Priority Objective: Complete a Second Industrial Park

Goal: Provide additional high quality space for business location.

Objectives:

1. Job creation and retention
2. Avoid “running out” of locations for new or expanded businesses

Priority Strategy D-7: *Construct public restroom in parks. Provide comfort stations for basic sanitation to increase use of parks by individuals and for community festivals.*

Rationale: The lack of restrooms in city parks limits the length of time that visitors can make use of the facilities. There have been efforts to promote the city and its downtown through planning of community festivals that make use of park space, often involving food and beverage vending. Portable facilities that are brought in are distasteful to the general public so the lack of clean, accessible restrooms is a deterrent to the success of the events.

D-7 Priority Objective: Construct Accessible Restrooms in Parks

Goal: To improve the recreational experience in the parks.

Objectives:

1. Expand use of the parks as a neighborhood amenity.
2. Increase the success of festivals and events.
3. Improve the city's image to visitors.

Priority Strategy D-8: *Promote growth of entrepreneurship and new businesses.*

Rationale: It is estimated that more than 80% of the country's new jobs are now created in smaller businesses. Entrepreneurship provides a route out of joblessness or under-employment for some individuals and they then become the next generation of job creators within the city. A new business that grows up within the community, having ties to the community, is more likely to remain and grow within the community. Its leadership and employees are more likely to contribute to civic leadership and local benevolent efforts.

D-8 Priority Objective: Promote Establishment & Growth of New Businesses

Goal: Increase the number of "home-grown" businesses in Sandusky.

Objectives:

1. Create more jobs.
2. Create a new pool of owners and managers within the community.
3. Direct economic development efforts toward the most promising segment of the future economy.

Priority Strategy D-9: *Promote revitalization of the Downtown. Promote façade improvements, lease up of vacant buildings with multi-use tenants.*

Rationale: The downtown remains the heart of the community but suffers from a lack of businesses and building occupants. Because the city is landlocked it must maximize the use and economic return from all available space, redeveloping when necessary. The downtown is located near the waterfront, which should serve as a natural attraction for tourism related activity.

D-9.1 Priority Objective: Increase the number of businesses in the downtown.

Goal: Increase the economic activity in the downtown.

Objectives:

1. Achieve a critical mass of successful businesses that will serve to attract others based upon proven success.
2. Create new jobs.

D-9.2 Priority Objective: Renovate historic buildings in the downtown.

Goal: Improve economic activity in the downtown.

Objectives:

1. Improve the city's image and attractiveness.
2. Enhance historic component to tourism.
3. Re-define the city's sense of "place".