



Mission Statement: "To provide our neighborhoods with better housing, public spaces, and economic opportunities through strategies based on real community input, every day."

CITIZEN GUIDE: THE 2017 ACTION PLAN

How is the 2017 Action Plan Funded?

The annual Niagara Falls Community Development (CD) Action Plan is funded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and divided into the following federal programs:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
2017 Estimate: \$2,304,029
- Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME)
2017 Estimate: 356,799
- Emergency Solutions Grant Program (ESG)
2017 Estimate: 201,874
- **Total 2017 Estimate: \$2,862,702**

What Makes It a "Plan"?

Our community development strategy starts with public input. The CD team, through its Citizen Participation Process, develops an annual Action Plan that lists and prioritizes local housing and non-housing community development needs. This yearly Action Plan is guided by our Five Year Strategic Plan, also built through community meetings, that details measurable goals for community development that have been submitted to HUD. The 2017 Action Plan is the third year of the 2015-2019 Five Year Strategic Plan, which focused on the following issue areas (the Five Year Strategic Plan, and past action plans, can be reviewed at www.nf-cd.org):

- Street, Sidewalk, & Green Space Improvements
- Crime Prevention Services
- Youth Programs & Facilities
- Workforce Development
- Housing Rehabilitation
- Targeted Blight Clearance
- Public Facility Improvements
- Storefront/Local Business Investment

Each year, we host public meetings and take individual comments to gather community input as we write our draft action plan. We use your input to direct the programs and projects that we will fund for the year. The draft action plan is then presented to the public and made open and available for public comment.

Again, we take your input and rework the action plan to fit the community's needs. The action plan is then submitted to City Council for approval and before being sent to HUD for final approval and disbursement of funds.

The 2017 Action Plan: To Date

In late 2016, our team hosted eight neighborhood meetings to gather community input:

Tues., Nov. 1st, 6:00 p.m.	:	LaSalle Public Library, 8728 Buffalo Avenue
Wed., Nov. 2nd, 6:00 p.m.	:	City Hall Council Chambers, 745 Main Street
Thurs., Nov. 3rd, 6:00 p.m.	:	Maple Ave. School, Rm #5, 952 Maple Avenue
Wed., Nov. 9th, 12:00 p.m.	:	NACC, Niagara Room, 1201 Pine Avenue
Wed., Nov. 9th, 6:00 p.m.	:	Doris Jones Family Resource Bldg., 3001 – 9th Street
Thurs., Nov. 10th, 12:00 p.m.	:	John Duke Center, 1201 Hyde Park Boulevard
Tues., Nov. 15th, 9:00 a.m.	:	Neighborhood Housing Services, 479 – 16th Street
Wed., Nov. 16th, 1:00 p.m.	:	LaSalle Senior Facility, 9501 Colvin Boulevard, Building B

Our team also released an online and paper citizen survey to learn more about our residents' priorities and offered community organizations the opportunity to submit competitive applications for CDBG, HOME and ESG eligible projects, due December 16, 2016. We then compiled all of the citizen responses, consulted with the Five Year Strategic Plan and evaluated the competitive applications. All 2017 Action Plan Proposals underwent a staff review that took into account the eligibility of the proposal under HUD guidelines, the community's need for the proposed project, the applicant's history and capacity for delivering on their proposal, the applicant's written narrative, expected outcomes, and proposed budget. The proposals that best addressed these criteria moved on to be included in the 2017 draft Action Plan.

The 2017 Action Plan: Next Steps

The DRAFT 2017 Action Plan Budget is released for public review on January 25, 2017, available at the following locations:

Online at www.nf-cd.org

Paper copy at The Carnegie Building – 1022 Main Street

Paper copy at The Niagara Falls Public Library – Main Branch, 1425 Main Street

Paper copy at The Niagara Falls Public Library – Lasalle Branch, 8728 Buffalo Avenue

We will also host a full public hearing on the DRAFT 2017 Action Plan to present a detailed summary of our program of projects, with an opportunity to ask questions or make comment:

2017 DRAFT Action Plan Public Hearing

Thursday, February 2, 2017 – 6 pm

Niagara Falls City Hall Council Chambers

745 Main Street

A 30 day public comment period will begin at that point and run from February 2 to March 6, 2017. During that period, citizens are encouraged to submit questions and comments to CD by:

Emailing: 2017ActionPlan@niagarafallsny.gov

Mailing to: Niagara Falls Community Development Dept.
PO Box 69 - Niagara Falls, New York 14302

or

Hand Deliver to: The Carnegie Building
1022 Main Street

We will also be hosting “Pizza with the Plan” to discuss the 2017 DRAFT Action Plan in a more informal setting:

Pizza with the Plan

Tuesday, February 7, 2017 – 6 pm

The Carnegie Building

1022 Main Street

Once the 30 public comment period is complete, the 2017 DRAFT Action Plan will be presented to the Niagara Falls City Council for review and vote by April 2017. Upon City Council approval, the final application will be submitted to HUD. It is important to note that this action plan is in draft form, based on applicant response and public input. This is NOT the final 2017 budget. The City of Niagara Falls Community Development Action Plan must be approved by HUD to become final. The draft budget, and individual project allocations, are subject to change by the City of Niagara Falls draft budget review process and/or HUD based on project eligibility and available annual funding. Actual federal release of funding is expected by Fall 2017.

The 2017 DRAFT Action Plan: Highlights

Summary

\$906,799	Housing Renovation Investment
\$202,500	First Time Home Buyer Assistance
\$485,966	Youth Programming and Youth/Family Facility Upgrades
\$360,000	Public Park Improvements
\$201,874	Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing
\$2,862,702	HUD Investment
\$2,134,179	Leveraged Funds
\$4,996,881	Total Leveraged 2017 DRAFT Action Plan

The DRAFT 2017 Action Plan includes both important specific projects/programs as well as significant advancements to our overall CD approach. Below, please find summaries of two new features of this year’s DRAFT plan.

Participatory Budgeting – City Park Improvements (CDBG)

City park improvements have been a central piece of recent CD Action Plans as a result of annual public input and the extensive outreach completed for the 2012 City of Niagara Falls Parks Master Plan. In the 2017 DRAFT Action Plan, we are going one step further and using participatory budgeting (PB) to plan our next CD funded park improvements. Participatory budgeting is a different way to manage public money and to engage people in government. It is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. It enables taxpayers to work with government to make the budget decisions that affect their lives. Though each experience is different, most follow a similar basic process: residents brainstorm spending ideas, volunteer budget delegates develop proposals based on these ideas, residents vote on proposals, and the government implements the top projects. Essentially, every/any resident gets equal access to decision making, which levels the playing field. When people spend months discussing project ideas, they end up prioritizing projects that address the greatest community needs. While CD has always relied on public participation to make decisions, the input has been advisory in nature. PB makes public input, in the form of budget development and voting, the primary decision maker.

In Spring 2017, CD will convene public meetings to review Niagara Falls Parks Master Plan recommended park improvement projects and discuss citizen priorities and corresponding budget items. Once the planning and budgeting process concludes, the final proposals will be put on a ballot for a community vote, thus ranking the proposals by community priority. The highest ranked projects will receive CDBG funds.

Niagara Falls Housing Collaborative (CDBG/HOME)

Traditionally, HUD-funded renovations in the City of Niagara Falls have been geographically divided into target areas administered by CD, Center City Neighborhood Development Corp. (Center City), Highland Community Revitalization Committee, Inc. (HCRC) and Niagara Falls Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. (NHS). The 2017 DRAFT Action Plan proposes one city-wide target area, managed by a Niagara Falls Housing Consortium of Center City and NHS, in partnership with HCRC, and overseen by CD. All Niagara Falls residents would have access to the same closing cost and housing renovation programs and same guidelines, regardless of address. This is a departure from past years, when programs offered were specific to the target area's guidelines. We believe that one city-wide target area is more equitable. This concept has been discussed with the Center City, NHS and HCRC over the past year, as a collaborative effort to promote and manage our programs as efficiently as possible. This change will not impact any of these organization's board autonomy, staff or missions. Over time, this approach will reduce overhead costs, make it easier for residents to access housing renovation and closing cost grant assistance, and modernize our overall approach to neighborhood revitalization.