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## **SYNOPSIS OF FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS AND PUBLIC HEARING JULY 14, 2014**

As part of the public participation process for the development of the City's 2014-2019 Consolidated Plan, the City convened two focus groups and held a Public Hearing on July 14, 2014, to obtain information on the needs of low- and moderate-income residents of Newburgh. The focus group meetings were held at the Our House homeless facility, and at the Youth Empowerment Center. The Public Hearing was part of the July 14 City Council Meeting, held in the City Council Chambers at 83 Broadway. The Hearing was publicized in the newspaper and on the City's website.

A summary of the discussions of session follow. A copy of the presentation and copies of the advertisements and sign-in sheets follow the synopses.

### **FOCUS GROUP 7/14/14 2:30 PM HOMELESS PERSONS AT THE OUR HOUSE FACILITY**

This meeting was attended by eighteen persons.

The participants began by describing a number of areas in which the current homeless system does not adequately meet the needs of homeless persons. The most important need was for a residence where homeless persons could not only spend the night, but receive assistance and support with medications, job search and training during the day, rather than being sent out to the streets for the day. The group felt that many homeless persons have skills and work experience, and want to work. However, they need to be matched to jobs that use this experience or skill set and which also match their ability to work. That is, some people cannot work a full eight-hour day because of medical conditions for example.

Members of the group pointed out that they are willing to put in "sweat equity" to develop the programs and facilities necessary to create the programs and environment they desire. They pointed out that they are currently working to renovate a house to support a number of homeless persons, but they need assistance to acquire materials.

Participants noted that landlords rent out sub-standard space to homeless persons, but do not keep the units up. Further, if homeless persons are able to find and afford such a unit there is no provision for assistance or supervision and security is also a concern. Additional subsidized

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and supervised housing is necessary as the current supply of such housing has a long waiting list.

Participants pointed out that there are support mechanisms in place, but that there are also significant gaps, and that some programs are harsh or unhelpful toward the homeless.

The group also noted that the lack of public transportation makes it very difficult to get to job interviews, training or assistance programs and to jobs if one can find one.

### FOCUS GROUP 7/14/14 4:00 PM MEMBERS OF THE LATINO COMMUNITY

This meeting was attended by six persons.

The most important point raised by the group was that the Latino community needs to become more involved in CDBG program activities. The community should be better informed and more active in program formulation and execution. The participants felt that the conventional means of spreading information did not address the reality of how information was disseminated in the Latino community. Much information is passed along through the social network as opposed to reading notices in the newspaper or even seeing things on the Internet. Distributing flyers and posting notices at places where people shop are much better ways of getting the word out about an event or program. One of the participants described how he tries to increase interest in CDBG programs by printing out and distributing application forms and other materials.

The social groups do much work on an informal basis to meet specific needs and there are no formally organized 501(c)3 entities in the Latino community which could apply for CDBG funding. It was recommended that the City prepare a brief overview in Spanish of the CDBG programs, their focus or purpose, and the deadlines for application for distribution and for posting on the City website. It was also suggested that City officials come to selected events in the community to talk about the program and how it could affect the community.

Asked to identify the things that could most assist the Latino community, the group suggested business assistance programs such as façade improvements and business loans. The group felt that there might be a sufficient number of entrepreneurs to start a Mercado. The use of small retail areas or booths in a larger building could serve as a means to promote and support entrepreneurs. More and better education and outreach about homeownership programs were also felt to be needed. Even if there are no Latino groups to apply for funds, it was noted that residents of a neighborhood or block could bring some issues, such as street repair or sidewalk repair to the attention of City officials and CDBG funds be used to meet those needs.

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## PUBLIC HEARING 7/14/14 7:00 PM

The hearing was attended by approximately 30 persons.

Ernest Swiger, the consultant gave a presentation on the Consolidated Plan and the Plan development process. The public input process was outlined and it was noted that the public would have 30 days to review and comment upon the draft Plan. After this presentation, the floor was opened for comments and suggestions. Four people spoke, noting that the City should choose programs that will benefit the entire City, that infrastructure should be a priority, and that the City should not use CDBG funds to pay off loans from other programs. One person asked for a description of the CDBG program and that was given. It was recommended that if persons had other ideas or suggestions, they should contact the CDBG program administrator, Ms. Kain, whose office telephone number and e-mail address were provided.