

July 15, 2014

Edward F. Lavallee  
City Manager  
City of Venice  
401 West Venice Avenue  
Venice, FL 34285

Dear Mr. Lavallee:

The Cities of North Port and Venice have entered into an Interlocal Agreement with Sarasota County to receive and allocate CDBG funds on behalf of these cities. The Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) is tasked with the responsibility of administering CDBG programs on behalf of the County.

Jurisdictions receiving Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are required to prepare and submit a five year Consolidated Plan to HUD for their review and approval. This plan identifies community development needs, the resources available to meet the needs and prioritizes how those resources will be used to meet the identified needs.

To insure that CDBG funds are distributed throughout Sarasota County, a committee consisting of staff from the county as well as the cities of North Port, Sarasota and Venice was assigned responsibility for developing the Consolidated Plan. Numerous meetings were held throughout the county during the development of the plan to obtain public input.

One of the identified needs was the lack of a shelter for homeless families in south Sarasota County. The plan included \$800,000 in CDBG funds to develop a shelter to serve south Sarasota County residents in the 2014 – 2015 fiscal year. On July 9, the Sarasota County Commission formally requested HUD's approval to allocate the \$800,000 in 2014 – 2015 CDBG funds to the south Sarasota County shelter.

While these funds will not be available until at least October 1, 2014, staff has begun working to identify the best use for these funds so that we can begin addressing this issue as quickly as possible. Staff has met with the Gulf Coast Community Foundation who has been working with nonprofit organizations, community leaders, faith based groups and homeless providers to develop a comprehensive approach to addressing homelessness in south Sarasota County. What has resulted is a plan containing the following components:



- The North Port Family Service Center will serve as an intake portal for the North Port area.
  - The 24/7 portal will be remodeled to serve as an emergency shelter for up to two families for up to seven days.
  - The cost of remodeling is estimated at \$120,000 and is proposed to be paid equally by Gulf Coast Community Foundation and Sarasota County. County staff proposes to use a portion of the community housing fund (escheated lots fund) for this purpose.
  - Master case management for families will begin at the portal and will be provided by Catholic Charities.
- An agency, not yet identified, will purchase, own and remodel up to five homes within walking distance of the North Port Family Service Center for use as supportive housing beyond the stay at the intake portal.
  - In supportive housing, families will receive a wide variety of treatment and wrap-around services, as established by the assessment administered by the master case managers. Some families may be able to enter supportive housing immediately if space is available and their case management assessment indicates they are ready.
  - Families would be expected to stay for two to six weeks.
  - The cost to purchase and remodel these homes is estimated at approximately \$100,000 each, and a portion of the CDBG funding of \$800,000 would be used for this purpose.
- Family Promise of South Sarasota County will purchase, own and remodel a building in the Venice/South Venice Area to serve as their day resource center, consistent with the national model requirements.
  - Family Promise of South Sarasota County has formed a Board of Directors and is being established as an affiliate of the national organization, Family Promise. The national model is based on the commitment of local churches to host up to four families at the same time for a 13-week period, with the families moving between the churches during the program.
  - During this time, the families live in and rotate among the host churches while receiving services that are individualized to meet the needs of the family and provided through the coordination of professional staff.
  - In order to meet the needs of the family, each affiliate must identify a family day resource center. The day resource center provides professional office space; classrooms for education/job training/financial management, computer access for job searching, childcare, shower facilities, washer and dryer, and serves as the location for school bus pick up/drop off location for school-age children in the program.
  - Due to utilizing existing church infrastructure for overnight accommodations, a limited number of families can participate at one time. They will serve 25 to 30 families annually, specifically in south Sarasota County.
  - Currently, Family Promise of Sarasota operates in North County and is also a local non-profit which utilizes the same national model. Family Promise of Sarasota assists 25 to 30 families per year in north County, and has an 80% success rate after completion of their 13 week program.
- Family Promise of South Sarasota County is currently located at 600 Sawgrass Bridge Road in Venice and is currently awaiting approval of its 501(c)(3) status from the Internal

Revenue Service. Gulf Coast Community Foundation is providing facilitated leadership and acting on their behalf as a fiscal agent until the application is approved.

- Following stays at the intake portal and associated housing, families would move to long-term supportive or stable rental housing where they would still have access to wrap-around services for up to 12 to 18 months.
- Hotel vouchers will be available when emergency shelter is not available or supportive housing is full. Assistance with rent and utility deposits will also be available to move stable families to rental housing.
- Catholic Charities has made application to the County to fund program staff for the family intake portal in North Port in the amount of \$56,896. The application is currently being considered by the Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC). The Family Promise model will not require new staff to be supported by Sarasota County, as their funding model is through churches and private donations.

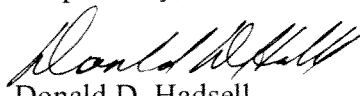
While it is understood that this concept will not result in the construction of a single homeless facility, it better accomplishes the commission's desire to have facilities in both North Port and Venice. It has the further advantage of leveraging funds and utilizing other agencies to solve this community need and is an improvement on the original concept of having one large homeless complex that would serve all of south Sarasota County.

Prior to moving forward with this plan, OHCD, Sarasota County and Gulf Coast Community Foundation staff would like to make sure that the Venice City Commission is aware of the plan and is supportive of the concept. We would like to have the opportunity to discuss this plan with your Commission in July.

Based on feedback from your City Commission, the plan to address homelessness in south Sarasota County will be revised and presented to the Sarasota County Commission for their approval on October 7, 2014. Included will be the approval of agreements with the agencies that will assist with the implementation of the plan.

We look forward to meeting with your commission in July and receiving their feedback on this important project.

Respectfully,



Donald D. Hadsell,  
Director