

City of Rockford 2014 CAPER

CDBG

Several programs were streamlined or adjusted in 2014, such as the demolition program, Focus Area Rehabilitation, and IHDA Acquisition/Rehab, all which are previously described. Continuous improvements will be made throughout the next annual plan period as need arises.

In 2014, the City continued to work diligently towards its specified strategies and effective implementation. The decreased amount of CDBG funding to complete projects, lower education attainment of area residents, and lack of required job skills continue to be barriers in the community to economic development. It is especially a barrier to attracting corporations with an employee base requiring college level degrees and paying higher wage salaries.

Also in 2014, the technical assistance provided on Section 108 loans will encourage our use in 2015. The City of Rockford plans to apply for the maximum Section 108 funds available. These funds will be used to attract, retain, redevelop, and construct new large developments that will benefit the Rockford area and assist the City with attracting developers and leveraging of funds.

In addition, the Rockford Public Schools District has implemented a Manufacturing program for its students. The 10 week program is in partnership with a large local manufacturer and college to prepare students for jobs as computer numerical control, or CNC operators. The classes also prepare the students for a National Institute of Metalworking Skills (NIMS) certification. In addition, the students are eligible to enter a two-year, associate degree track at Rock Valley College in Manufacturing and Engineering Technology, or a certificate degree track to earn additional NIMS certifications. This program is a perfect example of the type of collaboration strategies planned for our community.

To address the lack of job skills and graduation rates, the Rockford School District is starting a new program to help nontraditional learners graduate from high school. The Innovative Learning Center offers rigorous, standards-based curriculum that is aligned to Common Core and Illinois Learning Standards. The new program also includes social skills curriculum and post-secondary preparation, and is customized to meet the specific needs of the district and its students.

Brownfields Economic Development Initiative Grants

The City of Rockford does not have any open Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI) grants in 2014.