

Advancing Sustainability through the Gary Community Development Department

Impact on Sustainability

- Community Development Departments are well positioned to address the social aspects of sustainability including public health and safety, community support structures, and social equity that are intertwined with economic and environmental factors.
- The services provided by Gary Community Development to repair residential housing help maintain the stability of neighborhoods and extend the life of residential buildings, which is good for homeowners and the environment.
- The Gary Community Development Department has an established platform for educating residents on home improvement topics, which could be seamlessly expanded to include energy efficiency and healthy homes initiatives.
- Gary Community Development directly works to enable self-sufficiency and resilience among the city's most vulnerable populations. Programs like home repair grants help low-income residents to maintain their homes and senior residents stay in their homes longer. The Department's participation in the COC Network helps ensure basic needs like housing security are met for those that need assistance.

Current Supportive Practices

- First Time Home Buyer Down Payment Assistance Program. This program makes forgivable loans available to low- to moderate-income individuals and families to offset the costs of purchasing a single-family home in Gary.
- Community Development Block Grant Home Improvement Grants. Three types of home rehabilitation grants are offered through the Department that cover roof, plumbing, HVAC, and electrical repairs for low-income or senior residents in target neighborhoods.

Standout Projects

- Dollar Home Program (through HUD). This program allowed for the sale of a collection of vacant homes for one dollar under the conditions that the purchaser met minimum income requirements, rehabbed the home within one year, and lived in the home for five years.

Mayor's Sustainability Metrics

- Value of home repair grants awarded annually used for energy efficiency or hazardous material abatement.
- Number of residents served annually by energy efficiency and health homes programs.
- Number of energy efficiency and health homes workshops or outreach events conducted.

Departmental Overview

- The Gary Community Development Department manages programs that are primarily focused on improving housing quality and security in the city. The Department leads neighborhood stabilization programs, administers housing improvement assistant grants, and participates in a regional Continuum of Care (COC) Network, which provides an integrated support-system for those who are or are at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Priority Recommendations

Short-term • Achievable in 1-2 years

- Work with EA/GU and the Gary Health Department to develop a system for monitoring and responding to cases of elevated lead levels in children. Currently, cases are recorded and patient treatment is administered, but there is not a standard procedure for assessing and treating the source of exposure. An optimized system for addressing exposures to persistent environmental toxins will help prevent future exposures from known contaminated sites as well as build the city's knowledge of polluted site locations.
- Incorporate an energy efficiency and healthy homes components into existing residential repair/maintenance programs. Partnerships already exist between potential program service providers and the city through Green Urbanism's Clean Energy and Eco-Community Demonstration Initiative.
- Maintain an up-to-date calendar of home buyer workshops, home improvement bid deadlines, and other department-organized public events on the Community Development website.

Longer-term • Undertake after increasing effectiveness of current programs

- Publish the results of the Neighborhood Development Survey and the outcomes of expanded programming for transparency and so that they can inform a sustainability plan.
- Build the capacity of community development corporations. Help them host energy efficiency and healthy homes workshops for all residents, regardless of income.

Resources

- **Other Departments/Divisions:** Gary Department of Health, Environmental Affairs & Green Urbanism, Building Department, Workforce Development Branch of the Gary Economic Development Corporation.
- City of Gary Partners at NIPSCO - for home weatherization and energy efficiency programs
- Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority
 - Electronic Resources*
 - [HUD's Healthy Homes Program and Outreach Materials](#)
 - [Urban Efficiency, LLC](#)