

## CITY OF CHELSEA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, CDBG FY 14

The Community Development Strategy for the City of Chelsea is summarized below. It encompasses many planning documents utilized in the City to determine various needs and funding priorities. The following list includes a brief description of each document.

1. **The Community Development Plan:** This plan, submitted and approved by the Massachusetts DHCD in June of 2004, includes a vision for housing and economic development in the City.
2. **The 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP):** Since the end of receivership in 1995, Chelsea has had a CIP, a document which identifies long-term improvements to the City's infrastructure and facilities. It is a five year plan, updated annually.
3. **The Chelsea Open Space and Recreation Plan, updated in 2010:** This was completed over a 12-month period through discussions by the Open Space Working Committee. This plan is a seven year action agenda that prioritizes improvements in open space, park rehabilitation, policies and programs and allows the City to be eligible for open space funds through 2016.
4. **The Addison-Orange Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (2009):** This plan was funded by the DHCD Gateway Plus Action Grant. It is a comprehensive analysis of existing conditions; housing, infrastructure, and open space needs; and potential for change as a neighborhood stabilization effort.
5. **The North Suburban HOME Consortium (NSC) Five-Year Strategic Plan and One-Year Action Plan** to promote affordable housing: Chelsea is a member of the NSC HOME Consortium and participates in developing and approving the plans that must be submitted to HUD.
6. **The Everett Avenue Urban Revitalization and Development Plan:** This plan, originally approved by DHCD in 1998 and modified in 2001 and 2008, advanced the Everett Avenue Urban Revitalization Project. The plan developed to create an urban renewal district on Everett Avenue promotes the conversion of the City's aging, heavy industrial scrap base into higher and better uses.
7. **The Crescent Avenue/Upper Broadway Zoning Study (2005):** The study evaluated and proposed zoning changes in an area bounded by Broadway, Eastern Avenue, and the commuter rail tracks.
8. **The Mystic Mall and Parkway Shopping Center Study (2005):** This was initiated to look at the existing and potential development in and around the Mystic Mall and Parkway Plaza with significant redevelopment opportunities.
9. **The CAPIC Community Action Plan:** This is a plan that is developed by CAPIC, the City's non-profit anti-poverty agency.
10. **Gerrish Avenue/Bellingham Street Neighborhood Action Plan (2007):** This is a comprehensive neighborhood plan for the area from Gerrish Avenue to Grove Street that was designated as a slum and blight area in 2004 and will remain designated until 2014.
11. **North Bellingham Hill Revitalization Plan (2009):** This plan, developed by the Chelsea Neighborhood Developers with the City's input, involved a series of charrettes with over 100 residents and stakeholders to establish redevelopment priorities and develop an implementation timeline for the north side of Bellingham Hill.
12. **The Hyams Foundation City Needs Assessment:** The Hyams Foundation formed a committee of local stake holders, community advocates and social service providers to create a comprehensive needs assessment. This organization supports efforts that enhance civic engagement, increase access to affordable housing, and promote the long-term success of low-income teens.
13. **The Chelsea Housing Authority Consolidated Annual Plan:** This plan is developed by the Chelsea Housing Authority prioritizing capital needs assessments for their housing units as well as priorities for selecting housing authority tenants and managing their Section 8 tenants.
14. **Massachusetts General Hospital 2012 Community Health Needs Assessment & Strategic Planning Report:** This study involved several community meetings and individual surveys including collecting data on health issues affecting neighborhood residents.
15. **Public Safety Plan developed by the City Manager, Police Chief and City Council:** The City has developed plans to address public safety and quality of life issues and promote support and expansion

of law enforcement initiatives as well as non-policing measures. In 2013, a 10-Point Action Plan for public safety was proposed. An earlier plan was created in 2004 - the 14 Point Plan for Public Safety.

- 16. The CSX ROW Multi-Use Path Feasibility/Conceptual Design Study (2011):** This plan promotes the vision for bicycle, pedestrian, and green space connections in Chelsea and focused on a transit oriented multi-use path on an unused right-of-way in the City.
- 17. The annual State of the City Address:** The City Manager creates this address annually and presents it to the City Council. This is a summary of Chelsea's accomplishments for the past year, but also a forecast into the future that includes goals and strategies for all of City government for the next year.
- 18. Broadway Corridor Action Plan (2014):** This planning study was initiated in 2013 with the goal to provide recommendations for positive change in the Bellingham Square (downtown Chelsea) target area, including support for expanded housing opportunities for low-income families and individuals.
- 19. Silver Line Gateway Studies – Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT) (2013):** Mass DOT studied three alternatives for the Chelsea portion of the proposed new Silver Line route serving downtown Chelsea. A shared-use path along sections of the former CSX right-of-way under Gateway Cities Parks Program will create a linear trail from the Chelsea River waterfront to downtown Chelsea serving as both a transportation alternative and recreational facility.
- 20. EPA Region 1: Green Infrastructure Partnership with the City of Chelsea: Technical Support Document to Assist the City to Further Encourage and Promote the Use of Green Infrastructure (2012):** This study promotes green infrastructure practices designed to reduce impacts of stormwater runoff.
- 21. Chelsea Vision Plan: 2012 Sasaki Intern Charrette:** This study promotes reconnections of the City through the revitalization of the Downtown and Broadway and pedestrian connections through open spaces.

The following goals and objectives are summarized versions of the City of Chelsea's Community Development Strategy in order of priority.

**Development of Blighted Areas Into Residential Opportunities/Provide Complementary/Planned Activities That Stabilize Adjacent Neighborhoods:** The City aims to emphasize conversion of its older, heavy industrial base into higher and better uses that broaden the sectors of the City. This includes changing underutilized industrial areas to mixed use communities; turning blighted or abandoned sections of the City into residential; enhancing the vitality and attractiveness of the downtown Chelsea, with support of small business and retail uses downtown by increasing pedestrian activity through a comprehensive area improvement strategy; and in some cases, bringing in and/or keeping businesses in the City. The focus is also on:

- Encouraging residential development as a priority use in these areas with an emphasis on mixed use development.
- Providing increased density bonuses and other zoning relief as well as additional municipal support to developments that include some residential development.
- Creating zoning overlays and planning districts where appropriate that incorporate elements of 40R, Transit Oriented Development and the Gateway tax credit program for market rate housing.
- Developing a comprehensive strategy for traffic, transportation, street and infrastructure improvements that supports new development in these areas.
- Continue to spearhead neighborhood planning processes around the areas that this development is going to occur so that it enhances existing residential areas as much as possible.
- Continue to monitor existing housing conditions in the target neighborhoods. Rates of foreclosure have been very high.
- Aggressively pursuing a mixture of federal, state and private funds to catalyze the development of these areas.

- Promoting healthy downtown and neighborhood retail districts to improve the availability of service and appearance of districts, including the adoption of design guidelines and design for storefront signage and streetscape improvements.
- Encourage new mixed use projects on Broadway serving residents in the surrounding neighborhoods and beyond. Focus on retail and community services on the ground floor with either new housing or office use above.

**Enhanced Quality of Life and Safety for all Residents:** The quality of life for all residents of Chelsea is adversely affected by crime and the sense that public safety is being compromised throughout the community. Low and moderate income residents in Chelsea's neighborhoods are much more likely to suffer from the negative effects of crime and the accompanying increase in gang activity. This has become a growing problem in the community. Despite significant efforts to increase safety in some of the City's lowest income neighborhoods, and successful results, such as a 25% drop in major crime between 2012 and 2013, public safety remains a quality of life priority in the community. Although there are some after school programs and activities, there are not enough activities in the community for everyone who needs them. Violence and gang activity have trickled down into the middle schools at an alarming rate. Older teenagers and young adults are also having difficulty finding work. Families are struggling economically. The current economic climate has led to a significant increase in unemployment; and there is a lack of job training programs/skill building opportunities that are needed for much of the City's low and moderate income population to become economically self-sufficient. Another factor that has been cited at these community meetings includes a lack of neighborhood connections. At this point, a majority of Chelsea's residents have lived here for less than ten years. Many are new immigrants from other, very diverse countries. There is a sense that neighbors no longer talk to each other and this creates some of the unease around safety throughout the City. Neighborhoods have also become more unstable when the foreclosure crisis moved from being a sub-prime lending issue to an economic issue. When people cannot afford their home mortgages they are leaving their homes abandoned and it took months for lending entities to step in and manage buildings. Chelsea witnessed a period with some of the highest foreclosure rates in the state. This led to disinvestment, abandonment and activity of slum landlords. There is an increase in problem properties that are being poorly managed, not maintained or even abandoned altogether. These are magnets for illegal activity in the community. There is now a new focus on dealing with these problem properties throughout the City in a multi-pronged strategy that includes legal enforcement, community development, and code enforcement. Another area affecting Chelsea residents' quality of life, as presented in the survey findings of the MGH Center for Community Health Improvement, is drug and alcohol abuse and addiction in the community, in particular in downtown area. Working in partnership with the City and key community organizations, CCHI and the Chelsea HealthCare Center have created a strong Community Leadership Team to focus on the strategic initiative of reducing substance abuse and its consequences. In an effort to decrease crime, address substance abuse, and enhance public safety/resident quality of life, the City intends to support the following activities:

- Expand the work of the Chelsea Police Anti-gang unit coordinating the exchange of information between the gang unit and other community development activities.
- Develop and enhance programs with the City and local community-based organizations to combat the substance abuse problem, and identify resources available in the area for people struggling with addiction.
- Supporting residents in their efforts to develop crime watches and other activities that discourage crime and encourage a sense of neighborhood connection. Specifically supporting neighborhood circle programs, like the program at the Neighborhood Developers.
- Working in partnership with local community organizations providing options to populations that need increased economic opportunity including citizenship programs and job training, specifically support ROCA in its job training program –the Transitional Employment Program.
- Expanding the number of places for residents and youth to acquire Basic English language proficiency.

- Provide support and access to Chelsea City Hall for the Centro Latino Citizenship for New Americans Program.
- Increasing the number of places to send school aged children regularly for supervised activities after school hours. Emphasize the neglected middle school and high school population for these programs, with an academic focus.
- Try to focus on the increase in boarded up and abandoned property, ensuring that it does not become a haven for illegal activity and places for youth to congregate.
- Continue the multi-pronged approach to preventing domestic violence, as well as intervening when it occurs – providing families with support to stop the cycle.
- Continue to support the Chelsea Summer Jobs Program helping the Chelsea Collaborative to obtain funding from a variety of sources including the City, the State, the private sector and foundations.
- Continue to fund a foreclosure prevention program through Chelsea Restoration Corporation to stop as many foreclosures as possible.
- Continue to promote the 10-point public safety plan.
- Continue to assist non-profit groups buy problem property for re-use as rental and or homeownership housing. Focus on properties that that are identified by a task force made up of law enforcement, the targeted code enforcement program and community development staff.

**Enhancing and Upgrading the Infrastructure of the City:** The infrastructure of the City includes community facilities (including bus shelters), streets, sidewalks, lighting, drains and other municipal systems, as well as the housing stock in neighborhoods and the façade of the buildings in the downtown and business areas. Chelsea employs various methods for assessing the conditions of its infrastructure, including the five year Capital Improvement Plan; information correlated from the Inspectional Services Department and the U.S. Census on the condition of the housing stock and Problem Properties; and the Department of Public Works and the Inspectional Services Department on street and sidewalk trash, graffiti and other public nuisance issues. Based on these assessments, it is the goal of the City to continue to improve Chelsea’s general appearance. It is also a goal of the City to upgrade infrastructure. This includes street and sidewalk improvements as well as maintenance, increased trash removal and street cleaning, the constant use of the sidewalk MadVac as well as push brooms, the targeting of serious problem properties for renovation, the encouragement of general home improvements, and business façade (including storefront and sign) improvements. Funding resources have decreased over the past several years for infrastructure projects, as State and local budgets have become leaner. Priorities in the Capital Plan have had to be carefully determined. Triage that targets only the most pressing needs has had to be implemented and the number of projects has decreased. Activities to be undertaken that encourage these goals include:

- Reconstruction/improvements of City streets and sidewalks, funded by CDBG, Bond funds, and other sources of funds.
- Implement Capital Improvement Plan projects, particularly in CDBG target areas. Priorities have included Washington Avenue/Cary Square, Maverick Street, Watts Street, Bellingham and Orange Street, Highland Street, Congress Avenue, and surface enhancements on Broadway.
- Implement the larger projects in the City’s Capital Improvement Plan, includes Everett Avenue and lower Broadway as well as work around the Chelsea Residential Overlook Project. Funding is varied for this work but includes City funds, state funds, MassWorks Infrastructure Program funds, and private developer contributions.
- Increase emphasis and education on trash removal, illegal dumping and street cleaning. Implement and evaluate a graffiti removal initiative, a neighborhood sidewalk cleaning effort, and adequate lighting to complement Keep Chelsea Beautiful efforts. Implement and evaluate a residential parking program as an enforcement tool. This is primarily funded from City operating funds and is ongoing.
- Prepare a bicycle/pedestrian plan for the City that establishes pedestrian improvement plans (particularly under the bridges to Route 1 and the Tobin Bridge) and promotes safe and efficient

walking and travel routes for bicyclists and pedestrians sharing public roads with vehicles (e.g., cars, trucks, delivery vehicles, and buses).

- Improvements to hardscaped public areas in the downtown, particularly Chelsea Square and Bellingham Square and creating gateways with welcoming signs into the City.

**Improving and Increasing Open Space and Recreational Opportunities:** Open space and recreation are not merely ends in themselves – they are means to an end. The goal of this community is to implement an open space and recreation plan that meets the challenges, takes advantage of the opportunities, and thus helps the people of Chelsea make a reality of its vision of a stable, economically sound and socially healthy and diverse city. This plan needs to provide opportunities for all its citizens to enjoy high quality open space and recreational activities. There are three specific goals: 1) Provide active and passive recreational and fitness opportunities suited to Chelsea’s urban population. To meet the goal, the City will give top priority to the rehabilitation and maintenance of existing park, playgrounds and indoor recreation facilities. Provide a full range of recreational opportunities appropriate to citywide and neighborhood recreation needs and age groups; provide each neighborhood with an adequate range of appropriately located parks, playgrounds and recreation facilities, and design facilities to serve the disabled by removing barriers that prevent access to and use of existing parks. 2) Take advantage of Chelsea’s environmental, historic, and scenic resources and 3) Integrate the open space system into the city fabric – Open space should help tie City neighborhoods together, provide buffers against incompatible uses and add value to surrounding properties. Over the next three to five years, as new development is planned and occurs on underutilized parcels in the City, areas of open space for passive and recreational activities need to be included. This is extremely important for areas with specific access to the waterfront or Chelsea Creek, and in parts of the cities that are the densest but have the least to offer in recreational activities. Activities include:

- Re-develop and new development of parks and open space resources funded by CDBG and other sources of funds.
- Implement Capital Improvement Plan and other open space projects, particularly in CDBG target areas. Priorities have included construction of Ruiz Park, creation of a new park on Washington Avenue; the enhancement and improvement of conditions at two existing parks, Bellingham Hill and Bosson Park, Washington Park, and Voke Park to name a few.
- Explore open space connections to the City’s Waterfront at the Chelsea Street Bridge and also as a part of a joint planning effort with Revere. This includes the regional planning efforts to map walking routes to the Mystic River and/or walking routes to Everett.
- Implementation of the Chelsea Greenway, with \$3 million in funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, on the Chelsea portion of the Urban Ring that was an unused rail line in the Boxworks neighborhood. This includes connecting walking trails and bike paths and other initiatives to promote use of the Greenway.
- Continue to support the expansion of the Community Schools program to utilize our new school facilities and keep them open to City residents for as long as possible.
- Complete a new capital assessment of existing parks in the City to determine what needs to be upgraded in the next ten years.
- Continue to identify open space opportunities with some emphasis on active recreational space.

**Develop Affordable Housing to Create Neighborhood Stability and Preserve Existing Housing Stock especially Affordable Units and Owner-Occupied buildings:** Chelsea has made the creation of affordable housing a priority of its Community Development Strategy. This priority has become even more important in a difficult economy affecting the most vulnerable residents of Chelsea. The North Suburban HOME Consortium Consolidated Plan included a stakeholders meeting to identify housing needs in Chelsea. This meeting included input from most community groups in the City. As is evident from various reports and the NSC Consolidated Plan, the need for affordable housing in Chelsea is significant. A majority of renters in the community are at risk of homelessness, and even for families at the higher end of the low/moderate income

spectrum, housing is expensive. Most families and individuals living in Chelsea cannot afford to buy and many cannot even afford to rent. Doubling up and overcrowding is significant, especially in Shurtleff/Bellingham and Addison/Orange. It was estimated by code enforcement staff that the streets of Grove, Marlboro and Library have illegal units or rooming houses in over 50% of the housing stock. This has been verified by the City's code enforcement efforts in this neighborhood where numerous illegal rooming houses and basement apartments have been uncovered. Many very low-income people and families live in sub-standard housing as well. In the Targeted Code Enforcement Program, ISD issued over 1,200 tickets in 2012 for sub-standard housing. Several goals and objectives have been developed from these reports and initiatives that include: 1. Increase the number of affordable housing units in Chelsea; 2. Preserve existing housing stock (especially affordable units) and work to ensure safety and code compliance for all housing units; 3. Enhance communication and information outreach regarding housing needs and opportunities; and 4. Provide a range of housing opportunities to address a wider spectrum of options and a progressive transition for a variety of financial profiles and life stages. In addition, the City continues to monitor foreclosures and propose initiatives as part of its goals and objectives to address foreclosure problems in Chelsea, where possible, or to purchase these properties for affordable housing if necessary.

To meet its affordable housing goals, the City will promote the following housing activities:

- Support affordability that meets the needs of families and individuals with a range of incomes, with a specific emphasis on housing prices and rents that are targeted to current Chelsea residents. This housing also needs vary in size and type so that families as well as single people have more options.
- Continue to fund housing development from the North Suburban HOME Consortium (NSC) as well as supporting developers who aggressively pursue other funding sources from the state, as much as possible considering current funding constraints.
- Continue the Problem Property program by providing targeted code enforcement in our most vulnerable areas, aggressively pursue landlords who poorly manage their properties, servicing agents who have foreclosed on property and do not manage it, and owners of vacant, boarded up buildings.
- Add a more extensive geographically targeted code enforcement program in the Addison/Orange and Shurtleff/Bellingham neighborhoods. The City proposes additional ISD staff and a new program to increase compliance with inspection ordinances for tenant units.
- Continue to fund the Chelsea Restoration Corporation First Time Homebuyer Program and Soft Second Program for low and moderate-income buyers.
- Support the Foreclosure Prevention Program developed by Chelsea Restoration Corporation.
- Provide funding and support to programs that will help existing property owners, especially in buildings occupied by lower income residents, to rehabilitate, de-lead, and improve their properties so that they may be brought up to code and positively impact the quality of life of owners, tenants and the surrounding neighborhood.

The Community Development Strategy for the City of Chelsea is extremely consistent with the Commonwealth's development goals as set forth in smart growth policies and programs. The City has always focused on these principles as a way to encourage sustainable development. Most of the activities that focus on development and are included in this strategy involve the first and most encompassing principle – Redevelop First. Most also give priority to investments that will deliver living wage jobs, transit access, housing, open space and community-serving enterprises.

Within these broad priorities and this ambitious agenda, specific measurable activities have priority for the next several years in Chelsea. The City intends to address its priorities in the next 3 to 5 years through a variety of community development activities and through a combination of local, state, and federal funding. This also includes general continuing and ongoing priorities.

**List of Projects/Activities by Level of Priority:**

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Financing/timetable</b>
High	Decrease the number of problem properties that are not being managed or being poorly managed in Chelsea	Through CDBG (2013 and beyond), HOME and other housing subsidy sources
High	Construction of affordable housing	State/Private and other resources
High	Increase efforts to upgrade existing housing stock and rehabilitate housing to bring it up to code	State/Private and other resources
High	Construction of second phase of One North of Boston (242 units of housing) formerly Crescent Court	Private, start construction 2014
High	Redevelopment of sites in and infrastructure improvements at Everett Avenue Gateway Center	Private, start construction 2014; MassWorks and other sources
High	Complete roadway and sidewalk reconstruction projects in the City	CDBG, bond money 2013
High	Continue public safety activity and anti-crime work with residents	City funding and state grants, ongoing
High	Increase Economic Opportunities for Chelsea residents through a variety of programs including ESOL, job training and education	CDBG funding private funding and some City funds, ongoing
High	Increase retention rates at Chelsea High School	CDBG, private, Chelsea Public Schools
Medium	Implement downtown improvement programs such as storefront façade and sign program	CDBG, private and other funding sources
Medium	Increase general recreational activities for Chelsea residents	Ongoing, Private and Chelsea funds
Medium	Increase homeownership in Chelsea	Ongoing, ongoing Home funds, bank private funds
Medium	Continue foreclosure counseling	HUD, HOME funds ongoing
Medium	Renovate public parks and open spaces (Bosson Park, Ruiz Park, Bellingham Hill Park, Voke Park)	PARC money 2013 to 2015, CDBG
Medium	Construction of affordable units and mixed housing at Gerrish Avenue	Private, gateway tax credits, LIHTC, Spring 2013
Medium	Fix and repair streets and sidewalks in residential neighborhoods	CDBG, Chapter 90, ongoing
Medium	Reconstruct Lower Broadway	Design underway; sources of funding to be determined
Low	Reconstruct Beacham Street	Unknown source of funding