

City to receive \$1 million to combat homelessness

By James Mayse
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The city of Owensboro is receiving \$1 million in federal stimulus funds, to be used addressing and preventing homelessness.

City Community Development Director Abby Shelton discussed the funds Wednesday while giving a presentation about revitalization of the city's northwest side to the Owensboro Rotary Club.

The \$1.007 million comes from the American Rescue Plan Act passed by Congress earlier this year. The \$1 million is separate from the \$13.324 million the city is receiving in ARPA funds for other uses.

The \$1 million is an additional allocation in HOME Investment Partnership Program Grants, through the federal Housing and Urban Development department.

The HUD website says: "The American Rescue Plan ... provides \$5 billion to assist individuals or households who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, and other vulnerable populations, by providing housing, rental assistance, supportive services, and non-congregate shelter, to reduce homelessness and increase housing stability across the country."



Abby Shelton

Shelton said after Wednesday's meeting that city officials do not have clear details yet on how the money can be used.

"We don't have much more guidance," Shelton said.

General categories include production or prevention of affordable housing, tenant-based rental assistance, supportive services, such as homelessness prevention and counseling, and the development of "non-congregant shelter."

The city has until September 2030 to expend the \$1 million, Shelton said.

Officials who work on issues of homelessness have not yet discussed how the funds potentially could be used.

“We haven’t honed in, because we haven’t gotten the (federal) guidance yet,” Shelton said.

Shelton’s presentation to the Rotary Club focused on efforts to improve residences and commercial properties in the neighborhoods in the Northwest Neighborhood Revitalization Area. The Northwest NRSA is between Ewing Road and Walnut Street and from Fifth Street to the river.

The city has HOME grants, Community Development Block Grants and Community Catalyst Funds allocated by city commissioners for projects in the area. The majority of the funds will be allocated to help low- to middle-income families in the area, Shelton said.

Grants are available for people in the Northwest NRSA for rehabilitation of building exteriors, down payment assistance, building new homes, downspout removal and landscaping.

Shelton said the officials estimate a total \$44.350 million combined investment of public and private dollars by 2025.

“Everyone in the Northwest NRSA qualifies” for some grant dollars for project, although the amount they receive is based on their incomes.

So far, the city has received 37 applications for rehabilitation of rental homes from Northwest NRSA landlords, 13 applications from owners of existing homes who want to do rehabilitation projects, and applications for homebuyer assistance grants and new construction. The grants require matching funds, to the total public-private investment from the applications would be \$793,000, Shelton said.

People can apply through the city’s website at owensboro.org.

With landlords “the word spread like wildfire” about the grants, Shelton said, adding that efforts are being made to alert homeowners about the programs.

“I don’t think there’s a lack of awareness with people interested in (renovating) their homes,” Shelton said.

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