

VII. INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

91.215 (i)

- Explain the institutional structure through which the jurisdiction will carry out its consolidated plan, including private industry, non-profit organizations, and public institutions.
- Assess the strengths and gaps in the delivery system.
- Assess the strengths and gaps in the delivery system for public housing, including a description of the organizational relationship between the jurisdiction and the public housing agency, including the appointing authority for the commissioners or board of housing agency; relationship regarding hiring, contracting and procurement; provision of services funded by the jurisdiction; review by the jurisdiction of proposed capital improvements as well as proposed development, demolition or disposition of public housing developments.

91.215(l)

The consolidated plan must provide a concise summary of the jurisdiction's activities to enhance coordination between public and assisted housing providers and private and governmental health, mental health, and service agencies. . . . With respect to the public entities involved, the plan must describe the means of cooperation and coordination among the state and any units of general local government in the metropolitan area in the implementation of its consolidated plan.

Role of Municipal Public Institutions

The housing and community development mission of the City of Burlington is carried out by two municipal corporations (the Burlington Housing Authority and the Burlington Community Development Corporation), several municipal departments, a restricted revenue account established by the City Council (the Burlington Housing Trust Fund), and a municipal board (the Housing Board of Review).

Burlington Community Development Corporation (BCDC): BCDC was established in 1982 to centralize various important policy initiatives launched by the City in the fields of business development, job training, and housing development. The Board of Directors of the corporation are all members of the City's Board of Finance.

Burlington Housing Authority (BHA): The activities of BHA are overseen by a five-member commission appointed by the Mayor.

Burlington Electric Department (BED): BED, a municipally-owned public power system, provides energy to over 16,000 Burlington residents and over 3,600 commercial customers. BED works to provide affordable energy to residential and commercial consumers.

Burlington Telecom: This city department operates a fiber network for city departments, the Burlington School District, city businesses and city residents. By the end of 2008, this fiber optic infrastructure will be available to every home and business in the City.

Church Street Marketplace: This city department manages, promotes and maintains the four block pedestrian mall on Church Street, a special assessment district where

merchants located on the Marketplace pay for additional services.

City Arts: This city department supports economic and cultural development in the City, including the operation of the downtown Firehouse Center for the Visual Arts and helping artists to locate studio/living and performance space.

City Attorney's Office: All legal services related to housing and community development are provided by the City's Attorney's Office. In addition, the City Attorney's Office provides staff support to the Housing Board of Review and serves as the prosecutor to enforce all city ordinances.

Code Enforcement Office: The Code Enforcement Office, created from a reorganized and expanded Minimum Housing Inspection Division, is responsible for coordinating the administration of public health and safety codes in Burlington, especially municipal housing codes that are incorporated in the city's ordinances. Code Enforcement also administers codes associated with housing conditions – including various fire, environmental, health and zoning regulations – and the city's graffiti ordinance.

Community & Economic Development Office (CEDO): Established in 1983, CEDO is organized into three divisions: Economic Development, Community Development and Housing.

The mission of the Housing Division, as defined by the City Council, is “to develop, coordinate, and administer a comprehensive program to address the City’s housing needs.” The Housing Division supports the preservation and production efforts of a local network of nonprofit housing organizations through funding for program delivery and technical assistance in identifying project sites and project packaging. CEDO also administers the Housing Initiatives Program (which receives CDBG and HOME funding) and the Housing Trust Fund. CEDO monitors contract compliance for a number of federally funded housing projects and assists Planning & Zoning in enforcing ordinances such as Inclusionary Zoning, Housing Preservation and Replacement and Impact Fee Waivers. In concert with the City Attorney’s Office, CEDO administers the Condominium Conversion ordinance. CEDO also works with the Code Enforcement Office and the Department of Public Works on housing issues.

CEDO’s Economic Development Division provides general financial and technical assistance to small and large businesses, with targeted assistance to employers providing livable wage jobs and to businesses playing a key role to downtown vitality and in the South End; helps to develop affordable space for small and micro businesses; runs a revolving loan fund providing gap financing to small and micro businesses; and helps to redevelop the waterfront and vacant / abandoned property.

CEDO’s Community Development Division oversees the AmeriCorps*VISTA program, which provides literacy services to children and supports the capacity of local nonprofits to meet community needs; Neighborhood Services, which supports the Neighborhood Planning Assemblies, Burlington Neighborhood Project and neighborhood associations; and the Community Justice Center, which helps Burlington citizens learn about conflict resolution and develop the skills to resolve disputes, applying restorative justice principles (outside or in partnership with the traditional criminal and civil court process), and supports transition into the community for incarcerated offenders.

CEDO is responsible for administration of the city's CDBG and HOME programs, including comprehensive planning, financial management, grant administration and environmental reviews. CEDO also provides funding support (through the City's CDBG program) and technical assistance to a number of the city's nonprofit service delivery organizations.

Department of Parks & Recreation: The Department of Parks & Recreation develops and rehabilitates recreational space; creates attractive greenspaces along city streets; manages the Burlington harbor; plans and coordinates community gardens; and runs recreational programs serving low- and moderate-income residents in the city.

Department of Planning & Zoning: The Department of Planning & Zoning is the municipal agency which has the principal responsibility for regulating new development in Burlington. Planning & Zoning plays a key role with respect to housing in (1) preserving existing affordable housing through the City's Housing Replacement Ordinance and (2) promoting the production of new affordable housing through the city's Inclusionary Zoning and mini-Act 250 ordinances, and through density bonuses for elderly housing (allowing the development of larger projects such as the Heineberg Senior Housing project), zoning amendments for special needs populations, impact fee waivers and parking waivers for affordable housing (especially in the Central Business District and other high-density neighborhoods).

Department of Public Works (DPW): DPW is responsible for the public infrastructure (streets, sidewalks, water and sewage) in the City. DPW operates the City's parking lots and the City's wastewater facilities, and administers the Vacant Building ordinance. DPW also does transportation planning for the city (including bicycle and pedestrian planning).

Fletcher Free Library: The city's public library offers a variety of literacy activities for both adults and children, including English as a Second Language, and operates a public access computer center.

Housing Trust Fund: The Housing Trust Fund was established in 1989 by municipal ordinance. The revenues for this restricted account come from a dedicated property tax and impact fees. Funds may only be used for grants or loans to nonprofit organizations or projects that promote perpetually affordable housing. Disbursements are approved by a committee composed of CEDO's Director, a member of the City Council, and an appointee of the Mayor.

Housing Board of Review: A security deposit ordinance was enacted in 1986 to regulate the collection and return of renters' security deposits. The Housing Board of Review, appointed by the City Council, adjudicates landlord-tenant disputes under this ordinance. The Housing Board of Review also functions as a "court of appeals" for minimum housing code violations.

Police Department: The Burlington Police Department has a very active community policing strategy which has demonstrably reduced crime levels in lower-income Old North End neighborhoods. The Police Department works with the Community & Economic Development Office on the Community Support Program (which uses mediation or other alternative dispute resolution practices to deescalate conflicts before a crime is committed) and the Community Justice Center (alternative / restorative justice programs).

Role of State and Regional Public Institutions

The City of Burlington relies on several state agencies in carrying out its housing mission. The most important of these historically have been the Vermont Housing Finance Agency, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, and the Department of Housing and Community Affairs. These institutions are described briefly below; full descriptions are available in the State of Vermont's Consolidated Plan.

Agency of Commerce & Community Development: This state agency contain two departments which play a key role in housing and community development:

Department of Housing & Community Affairs (DHCA): DHCA is responsible for community development, housing and local and regional planning. It administers the Vermont Community Development Program, the Vermont Downtown Program and sections of the Mobile Home Park Law, and oversees the state Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME). The Historic Preservation Division reviews state and federally funded projects and administers the federal Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credit program and the State Historic Preservation Grants.

Department of Economic Development: This department works with state, regional, local, public and private partners to create quality jobs, encourage competitive businesses and ensure a healthy and sustainable economy.

Agency of Human Services (AHS): AHS helps to address the needs of lower income households, the homeless and special needs populations through the state through the Department for Children and Families – which includes the Office of Economic Opportunity (administering the Emergency Community Services Homeless Grant, the Emergency Shelter Grant Program, FEMA, Community Services Block Grants, and Weatherization), the Office of Child Support, the Child Development Division (which administers state-licensed child care services), the Family Services Division (the state child abuse agency), and the Economic Services Division (the TANF agency in Vermont); the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living; the Department of Health; the Department of Mental Health; the Office of Vermont Health Access; the State Refugee Coordinator; the Department of Corrections; and the Office of Crime Victim Services.

Agency of Transportation (VTRANS): VTRANS supports community development projects through the Transportation Enhancement Program and the Surface Transportation Program.

Department of Labor (DOL): The state DOL merges the former Departments of Labor and Industry and Employment and Training into a single umbrella for employment security, employment-related services, labor market information, safety and training for Vermont workers and employers, workers compensation, and wage and hour requirements. Among other things, DOL administers job search and job placement services; specialized programs for people with barriers to employment; veterans' employment services; tax credits provide incentives for hiring individuals with barriers to employment; and on-the-job and classroom skills training for eligible youth and adults.

Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA): VEDA administers manages a wide range of low-cost business lending programs.

Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB): VHCB is an independent, state-supported funding agency which provides grants, loans and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations, municipalities and state agencies for the development of perpetually affordable housing and for the conservation of important agricultural land, recreational land, natural areas and historic properties in Vermont. VHCB also administers federal funds through different housing and conservation programs, including the HOME and Lead Paint Hazard Reduction Programs.

Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA): VHFA finances and promotes affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income Vermonters, funded principally through the sale of tax-exempt and taxable bonds. VHFA operates a homeownership program offering mortgage financing programs with the cooperation of banks, mortgage companies and credit unions throughout Vermont. VHFA assists nonprofit and private developers to construct and rehabilitate affordable rental housing through other financing opportunities, including the Low Income Housing Tax Credit.

Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA): In addition to state institutions, the Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) plays an important role in the City's housing and community development efforts. CCTA was founded in 1973 by the Vermont Legislature and provides transit services in seven communities in Chittenden County. CCTA is a full service public transportation provider, offering services including fixed route bus service; parking lot, supermarket and school shuttles, a county-wide ridesharing program; transportation for Medicaid recipients; and contracted paratransit service for people who cannot use the bus. CCTA is governed by a ten member Board of Commissioners with two Commissioners each representing Burlington, Essex, Shelburne, South Burlington and Winooski – member municipalities which provide local subsidies to the agency through property tax revenues.

Role of Federal Public Institutions

Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS): CNCS supports the City of Burlington's AmeriCorps*VISTA program through the placement of A*VISTA members at area non-profit agencies that work on anti-poverty initiatives throughout the city.

Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration (EDA): EDA has provided funding for major community development projects in the city, including the Lakeview (Filene's) parking garage.

Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD): HUD administers the CDBG and HOME programs nationally. HUD also provides technical assistance and training, collects and disseminates housing and community development information, and monitors the City's performance. HUD administers a number of additional programs from which City residents benefit, including the Emergency Shelter Block Grant and McKinney Act Homeless programs (which help to fund Continuum of Care providers); Section 8 Certificates and Vouchers; and Special Purpose grants (which have assisted a number of major projects such as the McClure MultiGenerational Center, ECHO at the Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, Flynn Theatre improvements, the Firehouse Center for the Visual Arts, and City Market).

Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP): OJP has provided funding for the creation of restorative and alternative justice programs in the City. Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) support the Community Justice Center and the Burlington Police Department.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): EPA has provided funding for several initiatives which have been important to the City's economic and community development objectives, including the Brownfields Pilot Program, which helps the City to redevelop vacant industrial land, and the Sustainable Development Challenge grant program, which allowed the City to develop a 30-year vision through the Legacy Project.

Small Business Administration (SBA): The SBA offers loan guarantees and other programs for small businesses. It also partners with Vermont colleges and universities on the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which provides management assistance for small businesses, promotes and develops small businesses and offers business counseling, and sponsors the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), a network of experienced businesspeople providing small business owners with advice on business planning and management.

Role of Local Nonprofit Organizations

Since 1983, the City of Burlington has dedicated a large portion of its housing and community development resources to establishing and supporting a network of nonprofit organizations to act as the City's partner in producing and preserving affordable housing

and protecting the City's most vulnerable residents. This nonprofit infrastructure functions as the principal housing and social services delivery system through which the City moves towards its goals for affordable housing and for alleviating and reducing poverty. Several nonprofit organizations also play an important role in the City's economic development mission. The organizations described below represent some of the City's nonprofit partners; others have been discussed throughout the Consolidated Plan.

Cathedral Square, Inc.: Cathedral Square is a nonprofit developer and manager of rental housing for the elderly and persons with disabilities. Its two largest housing projects in Burlington are 3 Cathedral Square and Heineberg Senior Housing. Cathedral Square also developed and manages a 16-unit apartment building for people with chronic mental illness and is also a partner in McAuley Square, a 74-unit complex serving elders, single mothers attending college and parenting teens.

Champlain Housing Trust (CHT): CHT is a nonprofit membership organization which provides access to affordable housing for low and moderate income households and promotes neighborhood revitalization. CHT develops, owns and/or operates a range of housing options and community facilities, including shared equity homeownership, community homes for persons with special needs, a shelter, transitional housing, limited equity cooperatives, and affordable rentals. The NeighborWorks Homeownership Center is a program of the Champlain Housing Trust dedicated to expanding homeownership opportunities to residents of the Champlain Valley. The services of the Homeownership Center, which are open to all residents of the Champlain Valley, include homebuyer education, credit and budgeting counseling and financial assistance. The Homeownership Center is one of two federal housing counseling agencies in the city. Customers who are income eligible and mortgage ready may be eligible for financial assistance to help with down payment and closing costs.

Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity / Chittenden Community Action (CVOEO/CCA): CVOEO/CCA is one of five community action agencies serving low-income residents in Vermont. It provides information, referral and advocacy services through Vermont Tenants, Inc., and fair housing services through the Fair Housing Project. CVOEO/CCA also operates a Weatherization program for low-income households, an emergency heat program, the Housing Assistance Program, the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf, the Head Start program and a Micro Business Development Program.

Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS): COTS is the nonprofit sponsor of three emergency shelters (the Waystation and two Family Shelters), a program for families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless (Families in Transition), and a multi-service drop-in shelter for the homeless (the Daystation). COTS owns 40 units of permanent SRO housing (the Wilson Hotel and St. John's Hall), which are managed by the Burlington Housing Authority.

Howard Center: The Howard Center provides community-based and residential programs serving the mentally ill and developmental disabled, as well as substance abuse and child and family care programs. Howard owns several group homes for people with mental illness and developmental disabilities.

Northgate Housing, Inc.: Northgate Housing, Inc. is the tenant-controlled owner of 336 units of rental housing, constructed in the late 1960's under the HUD 221(d)(3) program and rehabilitated in 1989 with public and private funds.

Spectrum Youth and Family Services: Spectrum operates a shelter and an SRO for homeless youth, and offers a range of services including food, clothing, case management, and support in long range living options.

United Way: The United Way of Chittenden County works in partnership with businesses, schools, government, non-profit agencies, religious organizations, volunteers and donors to meet human care needs. United Way raises and distributes charitable contributions through a citizen review process, encourages collaborative approaches to community problem-solving, fosters volunteerism and provides training in nonprofit and volunteer management. United Way also operates the 2-1-1 information and referral service, available online and through a 24-hour call center. In addition to serving residents, 2-1-1 is a valuable source of information on community needs.

Vermont Legal Aid / Volunteer Lawyers Project / Legal Services Law Line: Legal Aid provides no-cost legal services in civil matters to low-income people in danger of losing their housing through lack of income, loss of income or unjustified eviction. Legal Services Law Line provides quick advice, brief services and community education to low income Vermonters. The Volunteer Lawyers Project recruits and coordinates private lawyers who volunteer their services to low-income people of need of legal assistance.

Role of Statewide Nonprofit Organizations

Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity: Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity is a nonprofit organization that constructs or renovates decent affordable houses in partnership with families who currently live in unfit, indecent, inhuman conditions and have no possibility of obtaining a home through any conventional means. They are able to make homeownership affordable to very low-income families by using a combination of volunteer labor, donated materials and government grants for land or infrastructure.

Housing Vermont: Housing Vermont is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization founded in May 1988 for the purpose of producing permanently affordable housing for Vermonters through partnerships with nonprofit groups and the private sector. The agency raises private equity by selling federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits.

Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL): VCIL is a statewide nonprofit managed and staffed by persons with diverse disabilities, providing support with solving problems related to housing, legal and civil rights, living with a disability, adaptive equipment, attendant care, transportation, employment, community support education, community accessibility, recreation, communication and benefit programs through peer advocacy counselors.

Vermont Community Loan Fund (VCLF): VCLF is a nonprofit financial intermediary providing access to capital for affordable housing, community facilities and small businesses.

Opportunities Credit Union: A statewide Community Development Financial Institution and Community Development Corporation, Opportunities offers retail banking services, consumer loans, mortgages and small business loans and serves as the bank for thousands of low-income Burlington residents. Opportunities is one of two federal housing counseling agencies in the city.

Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC): VEIC promotes and implements energy efficiency programs for low-income households, municipalities and businesses.

Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center (VMEC): VMEC helps small and medium size manufacturers improve their operations, modernize processes, increase productivity, introduce new technologies, reduce costs and become more competitive.

Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program (VRRP): VRRP provides a variety of federally, state and privately funded services to eligible refugees, including reception and placement services, case management, employment services, ESOL (English as an Other Language) and citizenship programs

Role of Faith-Based Organizations

A number of local faith-based organizations assist in meeting the emergency needs of homeless and low-income residents through meal programs and assistance with clothing, shelter, utilities and other basic needs. These organizations and/or their affiliated programs also help to develop housing and transportation opportunities. These organizations include Cathedral Square Corporation, Lutheran Social Services of New England, Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army, the Burlington Ecumenical Action Ministry, the Joint Urban Ministry Project, Mercy Connections, and the Burlington Emergency Shelter.

Role of the Private Sector

The roles that private industry can and does play in helping the city to meet its affordable housing goals include:

Services for nonprofit housing developers: None of the nonprofit housing organizations supported by the City have their own construction companies, architects, engineers or lawyers. Private industry provides these skills and services on a fee-for-service basis to implement housing projects, with the facilitation of nonprofit developers.

Developing inclusionary units: Private developers of residential projects are required to produce affordable units under the city's Inclusionary Zoning ordinance.

Local attorneys: Private attorneys provide pro bono legal services to low-income tenants who are converting their building to co-op ownership or purchasing shares in an existing cooperative.

The private sector supports and/or complements the City's community development efforts in a number of ways:

Local Lenders: Burlington's banks have responded to a changing market and changing obligations under the federal Community Reinvestment Act by finding a number of innovative ways of support new housing models, new housing organizations and new approaches to affordable housing production. Local lenders also support neighborhood revitalization and small business development, financial education and free tax preparation services for low-income taxpayers.

Business Community: The Burlington business community has been actively represented on most community advisory committees. They have provided resources and opportunities for residents to improve their quality of life.

Coordination of Services

Coordination and integration of housing and community development services in the city and the region is achieved through a variety of vehicles, including:

CASH Coalition of Chittenden County: The members of the CASH Coalition assist low- and moderate-income Chittenden County residents to achieve their financial goals through free tax assistance, financial education, Individual Development Accounts and other asset-building opportunities. The Coalition includes banks, credit unions, government agencies and private non-profits.

Chittenden County Continuum of Care Alliance: Continuum of Care services for the homeless are delivered through a consortium of nonprofit organizations in the greater Burlington metropolitan area, with the Committee on Temporary Shelter serving as the coordinating entity. The Continuum Alliance meets monthly and coordinates services for families, youth and single adults who are homeless; works collaboratively to ensure comprehensive and quality services and to obtain and allocate resources; and advocates for the homeless.

Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO): The CCMPO is a planning organization that directs the allocation of federal transportation funds, provides planning oversight and grants in Chittenden County. The CCMPO has professional staff and a technical advisory committee, and is guided by a 17-member board with a representative from each of the 17 cities and towns in the county.

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission: The Regional Planning Commission develops and administers the Regional Plan and certifies that new development is consistent with that Plan in the Act 250 process.

Building Bright Futures of Chittenden County: Building Bright Futures is the host of the regional Early Childhood Council and its committees, which work to make sure that quality programs and supports are available to meet the needs of all families, their young children and the people who care for them.

"Housing Gang:" The Community & Economic Development Office convenes a monthly meeting of nonprofit housing developers and advocates to share information, discuss city policies and ensure the efficient use of public resources.

Partnership for Economic Well-Being: The Partnership for Economic Well-Being brings the national United Way financial stability initiative into the community and incorporates the work of United Way with local employers on efforts to hire and retain low-income workers.

Refugee Service Providers Network (RSPNet): The State Refugee Coordinator from the Vermont Agency of Human Services coordinates a monthly meeting of the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program and other agencies providing services to refugees in the local area.

Strengths and Gaps

There is, overall, good coordination and little duplication of services locally – in part because both Vermont and Burlington are small communities. The local nonprofit infrastructure is diverse and the local public housing authority has the capacity to acquire, rehabilitate, construct and manage an expanding supply of perpetually affordable housing.

There is, however, always room for improvement in eliminating “silos,” in ensuring “no wrong door” access to services, and in better outreach and communication to residents and among providers. In addition, the service delivery structure is weakened by the year-to-year unpredictability of operational funding and uncertain state and federal funding; needs and demand that exceed available resources; funding which is regionally disproportionate, i.e., some communities bear a disproportionate burden or fail to contribute resources proportionate to services provided; differing levels of management and development experience from agency to agency; and private sector partners who are not always well-informed on low-income and poverty issues.