



## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

*Grants Management Division*

### **m e m o r a n d u m**

**TO:** Bruce Walden, Chief Administrative Officer

**FROM:** Elizabeth Tyler, AICP, City Planner/Director

**DATE:** May 19, 2005

**SUBJECT:** Neighborhood Services (Code Enforcement) Position Request

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### **Description**

At the budget review session on May 16, 2005, Councilmembers requested that staff review the potential for adding a one-half time code enforcement position within Community Development Services, utilizing any unallocated staff expenses and/or unprogrammed funds from Community Development Block Grants. Such a position could be seeded for FY 05-06 in this manner, with possible user fees to fund the position in the future.

### **Issues**

The request arose from increasing concerns about neighborhood appearance and code enforcement throughout the community. Some of these concerns were viewed during the bus tour on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

### **Discussion**

Interim Grants Manager, Erin Bullok, has reviewed the existing and proposed budget for CDBG and HOME and suggests that the unprogrammed \$35,000 that was removed from the activity entitled "Code Enforcement" in the Annual Action Plan remain as unprogrammed for possible use in property acquisition and affordable housing development. As an alternative, it is recommended that partial funding for the proposed position be financed by redirecting funds that are already allocated and eligible for program delivery under HUD rules, with no reduction of services or impact on our administrative allocation.

Under this approach up to \$16,900 in grant funds could be allocated toward this salary and considered program delivery. An additional \$5,000 could be allocated from the Community Development Intern position (general funds). The total combined funds of

\$21,900 would be sufficient for a half-time position with funding equitable to similar positions in the City (e.g., Nuisance Inspector at Public Works).

This model will allow the City to add an additional staff person immediately, and then to potentially increase the general fund budget next year and convert it to a full-time position, possibly with the assistance of user fees. Alternatively, the position can continue to be partially funded under CDBG/HOME as a part of a new program in Neighborhood Wellness.

## **Background**

The created position could fit within a new program for Community Development to be entitled Neighborhood Wellness. Such an initiative is supported by the recently adopted Urbana Comprehensive Plan and Consolidated Plan. It can be generally described as follows:

### **Neighborhood Wellness Program**

**Goal:** To maintain and improve the quality of life for Urbana citizens by promoting and enforcing zoning, building and health and safety codes, providing support and technical assistance to neighborhood and community groups, and overseeing programs that benefit Urbana neighborhoods.

#### **Components:**

##### ***Neighborhood Services Specialist***

- New CD staff member
- Start part-time in FY05-06 and be expanded to full-time in FY06-07.
- Main responsibilities:
  - o Follow up on tenant/ building safety complaints, identify code violations and ensure timely correction (approximately 50-67% of staff time)
  - o Perform unit inspections required of existing programs (approximately 7% of staff time)
  - o Identify and resolve zoning violations (approximately 1-9% of staff time)
  - o Act as project manager for existing rehab program, allowing the expansion of this program (approximately 24-29% of staff time)
- Sources of funding
  - o General Funds: Planning \$5,000
  - o Program Delivery Funds (CDBG, HOME): up to \$16,900 available
- Cost of position: 0.5 FTE with benefits, approximately \$21,000
- Future Responsibilities for the position could include the following:
  - o Serve as the division Davis Bacon monitor
  - o Oversee “Problem Properties” activities

- Provide additional support for Neighborhood Organizations
- Coordinate neighborhood activities to promote neighborhood pride and improvement (e.g., neighborhood clean-up, neighborhood nights, neighborhood garden contest, etc.).

### ***Clearance of Slum and Blighted Conditions***

This activity, previously approved as part of the Annual Action Plan, would now fall under the Neighborhood Wellness Program. The investigation of zoning and building safety violations commonly identifies issues that may be resolved under this activity. This is a program that could eventually expand to include other goals to promote neighborhood wellness, such as community education, public safety and economic development activities.

### **Options**

1. The Urbana City Council can incorporate the above described position into the 05-06 budget, as described herein.
2. The Urbana City Council can incorporate the above described position into 05-06 budget, with specified changes or modifications.
3. The Urbana City Council can decide not to incorporate this position into the 05-06 budget.

### **Fiscal Impacts**

This proposal is designed such that the funds required are already allocated to CD programs and salaries. Initiating this program will require some minor reallocation of funds within the CD department, but will not require significant changes to the City budget.

The Neighborhood Services Specialist would involve a total cost of approximately \$21,000 for a part-time position with benefits. Funds for the position for 05-06 could be derived from unused program income in the CDBG/HOME funds in the amount of up to \$16,900 plus a reallocation of \$5,000 from the CD Intern line item.

Future funding of this position, beyond 05-06, and/or an increase from 50% time to a higher amount, would require additional budgeting effort in the future. Possible future funds could be derived from user fees and/or increased program activity for neighborhood wellness in our target areas.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Council adopt the proposal contained herein for the 05-06 Budget. The position can be re-evaluated in the future in terms of its effectiveness,

percent time, and what the appropriate funding sources may be. Urbana has large areas of older housing and rental housing that are in need of increased inspection and wellness activities to maintain the viability of our neighborhoods. Adding skilled staff that can help to address these concerns will help promote many important goals of the City in preserving our neighborhoods.

Memorandum Prepared By:

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Erin Bullok  
Interim Manager  
Grants Management Division