U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Philadelphia Office
The Wanamaker Building
100 Penn Square East
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107-3380

FEB 12 2016

The Honorable Thomas Muller
County Executive
Lehigh County Government Center
17 S. 7th Street
Allentown, PA 18101

Dear Mr. Muller:

SUBJECT: Annual Community Assessment
Lehigh County
October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015

The provisions of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, and the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990, require the annual submission of performance reports by grant recipients receiving federal assistance through programs covered under these Acts. Additionally, these Acts require that a determination be made by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that the grant recipient is in compliance with the statutes and has the continuing capacity to implement and administer the programs for which assistance is received.

The Consolidated Plan regulations at 24 CFR 91.525 require this Department to evaluate and report to the public on a community's overall progress in the management of its program funds, compliance with the Consolidated Plan, the accuracy of performance reports, and the extent to which progress has been achieved toward the statutory goals identified in Section 91.1. This letter serves to apprise you of our assessment of Lehigh County's overall progress.

In making our evaluation, we relied primarily upon Lehigh County's submission of the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) for Fiscal Year 2014. This report summarized accomplishments made with funds provided from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). This letter is a summary of our review of Lehigh County's performance.

As you know, under the update to the Part 91 Consolidated Planning regulations that came into effect March 13, 2006, all Annual Action Plans and CAPERs are required to include performance measures as part of their annual reporting. The Office of Management and Budget has deemed this information necessary to validate the continued funding of HUD programs. The County provided performance measures as required by this guidance.

The HUD timeliness requirement is that a community may have no more than 1.5 times their most recent annual grant remaining in the line of credit 60 days prior to the end of their program year. When the 60-day timeliness test was conducted on August 2, 2015, it was calculated that Lehigh County had a balance in its line of credit of 1.22 times its annual grant. Please note that this did not include any program income that the County may have in its accounts. Thus, this figure may actually be higher.

During the 2014 program year, Lehigh County expended 89.39 percent of its CDBG funds for activities benefiting low/moderate income persons, which meets the primary objective of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. In addition, the County obligated 10.56 percent of its funds on public service activities, which meets the 15 percent regulatory cap. Lehigh County obligated 19.56 percent of its funds on planning and administration, meeting the 20 percent regulatory cap.

The County included in its CAPER their role in affirmatively furthering fair housing and identifying impediments and action to overcome the impediments to fair housing choice. The County Housing Rehabilitation Program and homebuyer activities were carried out in a manner to provide opportunities for persons of all protected classes. The County has participated in the Regional Analysis of Impediments through a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant by HUD, which will allow for the implementation of the Five-Year Strategic Plan and the larger regional plan. In FY 2014, CDBG assistance was provided to North Penn Legal Services for continued fair housing counseling and education to low-income residents facing discrimination in housing.

The Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) has reviewed the FY 2014 CAPER and has the following comments and recommendations:

- In 2014, the County provided a copy of its public notice dated December 10, 2015. The notice announced the review and comment period as part of its citizen participation plan. The County did not include information for individuals who are Limited English Proficient (LEP) and individuals who are disabled in its public notice. FHEO recommends the County increase opportunities for the disabled by taking the appropriate steps to ensure effective communication with members of the public, to include telecommunication devices for deaf persons, or equally effective communication systems. Additionally, FHEO recommends the County provide access to services and programs for persons with LEP. It is further recommended the County implement strategies to create meaningful access to LEP persons and comply with Title VI regulations. The County is reminded that the Equal Housing Opportunity logo should be reflected in all public notices.

- In its FY 2014 CAPER, the County documents actions taken to address the seven impediments to fair housing choice identified in the joint Regional Analysis of Impediments conducted in collaboration with Northhampton County. FHEO commends the County for providing details in its CAPER of its efforts to affirmatively further fair housing.

- FHEO commends the County for its education and outreach efforts through participation by the Community and Economic Development staff in various trainings that included fair housing, fair housing accessibility and Section 3. Two of the trainings were hosted by North Penn Legal Services and Housing Equality Center of PA, a recipient of the Fair Housing Initiative Program (FHIP) funds and a partner with FHEO.

Please note that FHEO is available to provide technical assistance regarding affirmatively furthering fair housing upon your request. Should you have any questions or require technical assistance regarding fair housing, please feel free to contact Laura McAllister, Equal Opportunity Specialist, at (215) 861-7631 or laura.mcallister@hud.gov.

The County addresses lead hazards through its housing rehabilitation program. Where evidence of lead based paint hazards is found, the surfaces are removed or the material is encapsulated to prevent exposure.

We congratulate you on the many accomplishments during this program year. Based on our review, we have concluded that the County has the capacity to carry out its programs and has met its reporting requirements.

We ask that you review our assessment of your performance and provide any comments that you may have within 35 days of the date of this letter. Upon receipt, we will evaluate your comments and make any revisions that are deemed appropriate. If you do not have any comments, we request that you formally notify us of that fact within the 35-day timeframe. Where no comments are received within the designated timeframe, our initial letter will serve as our final assessment of the County's performance for this program year. To facilitate and expedite citizen access to our performance letter, we request that you inform the general public and interested citizens' organizations and non-profit entities of its availability. If, for any reason, the County chooses not to do so, please be advised that our office is obligated to make the letter available to the public. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and members of your staff to accomplish Departmental goals and mutual objectives to develop viable urban communities. We would also be pleased to provide you with any information on resources that may be available to your community. If you need assistance, or if you have any questions concerning the content of this letter, please contact Mr. Nadab O. Bynum, Community Planning and Development Director, at (215) 861-7652, or Ms. Ileana Colón, Senior Community Planning and Development Representative, at (215) 861-7656, or, via e-mail, at Ileana.Colon@hud.gov. This office may be reached via text telephone (TTY), by dialing (800) 877-8339.

Sincerely,

Jane C. W. Vincent

Jane C. W. Vincent
Regional Administrator

cc:
Mr. Frank Kane
Ms. Laurie Moyer