

Cover Sheet – Non-Social Service Activity

AGENCY NAME: Town of Amherst
AGENCY ADDRESS: Town Hall, 4 Boltwood Ave, Amherst, MA 01002
AGENCY PHONE NO: 413-259-3322 CONTACT PERSON: Nathaniel Malloy
CONTACT PERSON EMAIL: malloyn@amherstma.gov
2015 CDBG FUNDING REQUEST: \$50,000.00

1. Project Name

Update the Town's ADA Transition Plan (including Self Evaluation Surveys)

2. Project Description (1-2 sentences)

This project involves hiring a consultant to update the Town's ADA Transition Plan by completing an assessment and survey of all departments, facilities and programs (including the schools) to determine physical and programmatic barriers, and making recommendations how to overcome those barriers.

3. Project Location (Street address)

Town Hall, 4 Boltwood Walk, Amherst, MA 01002

4. Budget Request

\$50,000.00

5. Type of Activity (check one):

- Rehabilitation
- Acquisition
- Demolition/clearance
- Infrastructure
- Public Facility
- Architectural Barrier Removal
- Other – please explain—**Planning Activity**

6. National Objective:

Total number of beneficiaries (individuals served): approximately 5,000

Total Low/Mod beneficiaries (individuals served): approximately 5,000 (US CENSUS)

Please submit responses to the following questions:

Project Name: Update the Town's ADA Transition Plan (including Self Evaluation Surveys)

Project Location: Town Hall, 4 Boltwood Walk, Amherst, MA 01002

Census Block Group: Not applicable to a Planning Activity

A. National Objective Description

As a Planning Activity it meets a National Objective because the intended outcome of the plan will be barrier removal in public facilities. This categorically meets the National Objective requirements. HUD presumes that the elderly and (severely) disabled adults and other groups to be majority low and moderate income. This is a special project directed to the removal of material and architectural barriers which restrict the mobility and accessibility of elderly or handicapped person to publicly owned facilities.

B. Demonstrate Consistency with Community Development Strategy

The Community Development Strategy states that making public facilities fully accessible is a high priority for the community, and specifically states that "Integral to the accessibility of public facilities, including the schools, is updating the Town's 2006 ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan." This is ranked as the third highest project in the strategy.

C. Demonstrate Consistency with Sustainable Development Principles

The project meets the Sustainable Development Principles by 1) advancing equity. Barrier free public facilities will make Amherst a more inclusive community and provide equal opportunities for its citizens to use government buildings and programs.

D. Demonstrate Consistency with Target Area requirements

Not applicable to a Planning Activity

E. Agency Information

The Town offers high level government services, quality education, support for open space and agriculture, promotion of economic development, and respect for its history. Town government has been in existence for decades, with numerous departments and citizen boards and committees all working toward common goals that benefit its citizens and the community. Currently, Amherst has professional staff in all of its departments, in particular its Accounting, Conservation, Planning, Facilities and Public Works Departments who commonly work with consultants and contractors to manage and develop such projects as feasibility studies and assessments, development of engineering specifications, and construction projects ranging from public infrastructure to affordable housing. Town staff is competent with procurement regulations, balancing budgets, and efficiently managing contracts so that deliverables are received on time. The Director of Facilities and Planning Department Staff will work closely with the contractors to oversee the project. This is the same staff who:

- Managed energy-efficient upgrades at the local schools
- Supervised \$250,000 HVAC and roof upgrades to the childcare center
- Manages \$300,000 rehabilitation of the North Amherst School.

F. Project Budget Information

The budget was estimated by Town staff in consultation with the Disability Access Advisory Committee and staff from Stavros Center for Independent Living.

The estimated cost to complete a thorough update of the ADA Transition Plan including self-evaluation surveys is \$50,000.00

G. Project Description

The current ADA Transition Plan needs to be updated to reflect current conditions of public facilities, provide an assessment (physical and programmatic) of the local schools, and provide recommendations—timeline, funding source and responsibility entity—how to remove the identified barriers. The hired consultant will complete these steps in a timely manner and will develop a Transition Plan that can be effectively used for the next 10-15 years. The consultant will work with each department to review its physical and programmatic components and will assess every public building. This assessment and review will be formalized with self-evaluation surveys. These surveys will form the basis for the recommendations.

H. Project Need

The number of individuals in Amherst with disabilities has steadily increased, and so too has the number of individuals using public programs and facilities. The current plan was written over 20 years ago and was updated in 2005/06 by Town staff. The update has helped the plan stay relevant, however, it needs a major update that includes the local schools and completes a uniform survey for all departments. This was not done in 2005/06 as each department completed their own assessment without using the same self-evaluation survey form. The schools were also not included in the update and by law they are required to conduct an evaluation and develop a transition plan that outlines how the school will eliminate any form of discrimination. This will be done in the proposed update.

Town policy and the actions of the town departments embody a commitment to ensuring equal access to town facilities for people with disabilities. Amherst's capital spending reflects an ongoing investment of town funds to ensure that access. To reinforce this commitment, the Joint Capital Planning Committee (JCPC), which reviews requests for capital plan funding and makes recommendations to the Town Manager, recently incorporated the Transition Plan as an explicit evaluation criteria. JCPC deals with capital requests for items that have a useful life of five years or more and a cost of at least \$5,000. The departmental capital project request worksheet now includes a checkbox for "fulfillment of ADA-related objectives" as one of the evaluation criteria for funding to be considered by the JCPC.

An updated Transition Plan is critically important as the Town continues to make itself barrier free.

I. Community Involvement and Support

Updating the Transition Plan would involve public forums, community meetings, and

possibly a survey to help residents explain and identify barriers that they encounter in the community. The Town, working with the consultant, would encourage public participation throughout the update process, so that the final plan will be approved by residents and staff alike.

The Disability Access Advisory Committee has voted unanimously to support this request as they see an increased need for an updated, accurate plan to help guide policies and actions of the Town. The committee would help with public engagement and support the consultant during the update process.

J. Project Feasibility

Town staff, working with the Disability Access Advisory Committee, would oversee the procurement and contracting of a consultant to complete the update to the Transition Plan. The process of procurement and completing the update would take approximately 9 months, depending on the time it takes to complete the self-evaluation surveys with each department and the schools. There is no permitting or other review required to complete this planning activity.

K. Project Impact

In the coming years the Town will need an accurate Transition Plan to help guide public policy and projects, as well as private development that is occurring in the centers. The population of the community is aging and the 2010 US Census estimates that there could be up to 5,000 individuals with mobility impairments living in Amherst. This number can be expected to increase and does not include the number of individuals with other disabilities.

An updated Transition Plan would be used the Town to help ensure that capital requests would (in part) be prioritized by whether it removes a barrier identified in the plan. The Department of Public Works would use the plan to determine which sidewalks and crosswalks would be repaired. The Maintenance and Facilities Department would incorporate the plan into projects at public buildings.

Ultimately, an updated plan would result in the removal of barriers to program and facilities in Amherst that are currently not accessible to all residents.