

The City of Woonsocket

HOME American Rescue Plan Allocation Plan

HOME-ARP Allocation Plan Template

Guidance

- *To receive its HOME-ARP allocation, a PJ must:*
 - *Engage in consultation with at least the required organizations;*
 - *Provide for public participation including a 15-day public comment period and one public hearing, at a minimum; and,*
 - *Develop a plan that meets the requirements in the HOME-ARP Notice.*
- *To submit: a PJ must upload a Microsoft Word or PDF version of the plan in IDIS as an attachment next to the “HOME-ARP allocation plan” option on either the AD-26 screen (for PJs whose FY 2021 annual action plan is a Year 2-5 annual action plan) or the AD-25 screen (for PJs whose FY 2021 annual action plan is a Year 1 annual action plan that is part of the 2021 consolidated plan).*
- *PJs must also submit an SF-424, SF-424B, and SF-424D, and the following certifications as an attachment on either the AD-26 or AD-25 screen, as applicable:*
 - *Affirmatively Further Fair Housing;*
 - *Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act and Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan;*
 - *Anti-Lobbying;*
 - *Authority of Jurisdiction;*
 - *Section 3; and,*
 - *HOME-ARP specific certification.*

Participating Jurisdiction: City of Woonsocket, RI

Date: 5/6/2023

Consultation

Before developing its plan, a PJ must consult with the CoC(s) serving the jurisdiction’s geographic area, homeless and domestic violence service providers, veterans’ groups, public housing agencies (PHAs), public agencies that address the needs of the qualifying populations, and public or private organizations that address fair housing, civil rights, and the needs of persons with disabilities, at a minimum. State PJs are not required to consult with every PHA or CoC within the state’s boundaries; however, local PJs must consult with all PHAs (including statewide or regional PHAs) and CoCs serving the jurisdiction.

Summarize the consultation process:

Several agencies that serve Woonsocket residents were consulted during the development of the City’s HOME-ARP Allocation Plan. Woonsocket has a documented history of collaboration and communication with community organizations which provide services to the four qualifying populations. Many of the organizations and stakeholders consulted are communicated with on an annual basis for the annual action plan. Of the organizations consulted, many serve one or more of the four qualifying populations.

Staff from the Division of Housing and Community Development conducted consultations remotely due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. Remote consultations took place via email, phone, and Zoom between April and March 2023. Organizations that were unable to meet virtually were visited in-person by staff. During the consultation process, stakeholders and non-profit organizations were provided with a brief overview of the HOME-ARP program, eligible activities, and four qualifying populations. Questions were posed to the organizations that covered the needs of the four qualifying populations in Woonsocket, trends in demand over the past several years, and service area.

The City of Woonsocket attends regular meetings with the Rhode Island Continuum of Care to discuss the Coordinated Entry System, funding requests, and ensure coordination between State and local programs. The CoC was consulted, and the most pressing needs of the homeless community were discussed. Additionally, organizations such as homeless service providers, domestic violence service providers, Woonsocket Public Housing Authority, civil rights and fair housing organizations, and organizations that address the needs of persons with disabilities were consulted.

The details on the organizations consulted and feedback received are detailed in the table below.

List the organizations consulted, and summarize the feedback received from these entities.

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Method of Consultation	Feedback	Qualifying Populations Served
Continuum of Care	Continuum of Care	Phone	The most urgent needs for the qualifying populations were discussed.	Homeless (QP1) At risk of Homelessness (QP2) Other Families Requiring Services or Housing Assistance to Prevent Homelessness At Greatest Risk of Housing Instability (QP4)
NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley	Affordable Housing Developer	Phone	Through ongoing discussions with NWBRV, the primary needs for qualifying populations is the development of additional permanent supportive housing.	Homeless (QP1) At risk of Homelessness (QP2) Other Families Requiring Services or Housing Assistance to Prevent Homelessness At Greatest Risk of Housing Instability (QP4)
RI Housing	Public Agency	Phone	Discussions with members of RI Housing team resulted in additional information supporting the need for an increase in the total production of housing, inclusive of affordable rental housing throughout the state.	Homeless (QP1) At risk of Homelessness (QP2) Other Families Requiring Fleeing, or Attempting to Flee, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or Human Trafficking (QP3) Services or Housing Assistance to Prevent Homelessness At Greatest Risk of Housing Instability (QP4)

HousingWorks RI	Housing Policy / Advocacy	Phone	Research provided by HousingWorks RI, detailed in its Housing Fact Book 2022, shows that 50% of all renters in the City of Woonsocket are cost burdened. There is a significant need for more affordable housing in the City.	N/A Affordable Housing Advocacy organization
Community Care Alliance	Homeless Provider	Phone / Email	Discussed overall housing and service needs of the qualifying populations in the city.	Homeless (QP1) At risk of Homelessness (QP2) Other Families Requiring Services or Housing Assistance to Prevent Homelessness At Greatest Risk of Housing Instability (QP4)
Sojourner House	Domestic Violence Agency	Phone / Email	Added additional information about the needs for housing and services for victims of domestic violence.	Fleeing, or Attempting to Flee, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or Human Trafficking (QP3)
Habitat for Humanity	Affordable Housing Non-Profit	Phone	Discussed housing needs in the city of Woonsocket, including the need for additional affordable housing.	Homeless (QP1) At risk of Homelessness (QP2)
RI Coalition to End Homelessness	Policy / Advocacy HMIS System	Zoom	Assisted in the compilation of homelessness data.	Homeless At risk of Homelessness Other Families Requiring Services or Housing Assistance to Prevent Homelessness At Greatest Risk of Housing Instability

Thundermist / Health Equity Zone	Managed Care Organization	Phone / Email	Discussed overall medical and behavioral health needs of the qualifying populations in the city.	Homeless At risk of Homelessness Other Families Requiring Fleeing, or Attempting to Flee, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or Human Trafficking Services or Housing Assistance to Prevent Homelessness At Greatest Risk of Housing Instability
United Veterans Council of Woonsocket	Veterans Group	Phone	Discussed overall housing and service needs of veterans in the city.	Veterans
Woonsocket Housing Authority	Public Housing Agency	Phone / Email	Discussed strategies of providing housing choice vouchers to qualifying populations and waiting list for public housing. Increased opportunity for qualifying populations to access additional affordable housing units was seen as critical.	Homeless At risk of Homelessness Other Families Requiring Fleeing, or Attempting to Flee, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or Human Trafficking Services or Housing Assistance to Prevent Homelessness At Greatest Risk of Housing Instability
Ocean State Center for Independent Living	Disability Services / Private Non-Profit	Phone / Email	Discussed the need to enhance their presence in underserved areas such as Woonsocket. Spoke about pressing community	Services or Housing Assistance to Prevent Homelessness

			development needs for people with disabilities such as the need for more accessible housing and homeless shelters. Discussed trends in client needs over the last few years.	
Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (Fair Housing Organization)	Public Agency	In Person	Discussed the process of civil rights and fair housing claims (how to report a charge, how determination is made, pushing charges to court, how long the process can take, etc.).	Homeless At risk of Homelessness Other Families Requiring Fleeing, or Attempting to Flee, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or Human Trafficking Services or Housing Assistance to Prevent Homelessness At Greatest Risk of Housing Instability

Public Participation

PJs must provide for and encourage citizen participation in the development of the HOME-ARP allocation plan. Before submission of the plan, PJs must provide residents with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on the proposed HOME-ARP allocation plan of no less than 15 calendar days. The PJ must follow its adopted requirements for “reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment” for plan amendments in its current citizen participation plan. In addition, PJs must hold at least one public hearing during the development of the HOME-ARP allocation plan and prior to submission.

For the purposes of HOME-ARP, PJs are required to make the following information available to the public:

- *The amount of HOME-ARP the PJ will receive,*
- *The range of activities the PJ may undertake.*

Describe the public participation process, including information about and the dates of the public comment period and public hearing(s) held during the development of the plan:

The Department of Planning and Development implemented a broad-based community engagement approach to encouraging participation by citizens and other stakeholders. Citizen participation efforts included the following.

The public was given two opportunities to comment on the HOME ARP Allocation Plan and the activities that are being submitted to the Department of Housing & Urban Development.

The first Public Notice and the proposed Allocation Plan was uploaded to the City’s website on January 9, 2023. Public Notice was advertised in the Woonsocket Call on January 14, 2023.

- ***Date of First Public Notice: January 14, 2023***
- ***First Public Comment Period: January 9, 2023 – January 30, 2023***

There were no public comments received.

A second Public Notice was advertised in the Woonsocket Call on February 6, 2023, for the Public Hearing that occurred on Wednesday, February 8, 2023.

- ***Date of Second Public Notice: February 6, 2023***
- ***Second Public Comment Period: February 4, 2023 – February 20, 2023***
- ***Date(s) of public hearing: February 8, 2023***

During the public hearing there were two questions:

- Question 1 – Seeking confirmation that the 6 units being created (from slideshow, page 6) would be from the \$1.3M figure noted on page 5 of the slideshow.
- Question 2 – Asked for the anticipated timeframe for release of NOFA and RFP.

It's important to note that on all public notices, accommodation for individuals with disabilities and translation services are available per request. No such requests were received but all Zoom meetings are recorded, and automatically generated subtitles are available.

Describe any efforts to broaden public participation:

Efforts were made to promote and encourage citizen participation in the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan preparation process. In order to improve communication efforts, consultations and public meetings were held virtually. Many residents in the City of Woonsocket face transportation barriers and many service providers were working remotely during this time. Documents were made available for review by the public through the City's website and two public notices were printed in the local newspaper. Following the Public Meeting the Zoom meeting was posted to the City of Woonsocket's YouTube page and a link was available on the City's website.

Information about the City's assistance for individuals with disabilities and translation assistance was provided in both Public Notices. No such services were requested, but the meeting was recorded with automatically generated subtitles.

A PJ must consider any comments or views of residents received in writing, or orally at a public hearing, when preparing the HOME-ARP allocation plan.

Summarize the comments and recommendations received through the public participation process:

During the public hearing there were two questions posed by an individual. The questions and answers are listed below.

Question 1 – Seeking confirmation that the 6 units being created (from slideshow, page 6) would be from the \$1.3M figure noted on page 5 of the slideshow.

Answer: That is correct.

Question 2 – Asked for the anticipated timeframe for release of NOFA and RFP.

Answer: The RFP will be developed and issues no later than September 30, 2023. The RFP will be available on the City's website.

There were no other written comments received during either public comment period.

Summarize any comments or recommendations not accepted and state the reasons why:

All comments received were accepted.

Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis

PJs must evaluate the size and demographic composition of qualifying populations within its boundaries and assess the unmet needs of those populations. In addition, a PJ must identify any gaps within its current shelter and housing inventory as well as the service delivery system. A PJ should use current data, including point in time count, housing inventory count, or other data available through CoCs, and consultations with service providers to quantify the individuals and

families in the qualifying populations and their need for additional housing, shelter, or services. The PJ may use the optional tables provided below and/or attach additional data tables to this template.

Describe the size and demographic composition of qualifying populations within the PJ's boundaries:

1. Homelessness as defined in 24 CFR 91.5

Homelessness as defined in 24 CFR 91.5, is a local, statewide, and national issue of great concern. Due to the transient nature of the homeless population, it is difficult to discuss homelessness from the context of the City of Woonsocket alone. In total there were 269 homeless adults and 69 homeless children living in Woonsocket in 2023, according to the RI Coalition to End Homelessness.

The City of Woonsocket has three shelter programs operated by local non-profits totaling 91 beds. Harvest Community Church operates a 25-bed shelter for men and Community Care Alliance operates a 50-bed shelter for women and children. Community Care Alliance also operates the only warming center in the City with a maximum capacity of 16. With over 300 people experiencing homelessness in Woonsocket, there is a need for more shelter beds. There are a total of 66 households sheltered in the City of Woonsocket, 9 containing children, 4 without children, and 20 individuals in a medical facility or other institution.

There are approximately 4-5 homeless encampments throughout the City of Woonsocket with an average of 3-5 people per establishment. Many of the encampments are along the Blackstone River in the Downtown area which is close to public transportation, Community Care Alliance, and New Beginnings Food Pantry.

Recent data from the RI Coalition to End Homelessness shows there are a total of 150 unsheltered homeless households in the City of Woonsocket. There are 25 unsheltered households with children comprising 36 adults and 50 children; another 15 unsheltered households without children, with 30 adults; and another 110 unsheltered single adults.

According to the 2023 RI Kids Count Fact Book, in the 2021-2022 school year there were 153 Woonsocket children who were identified as homeless by Woonsocket Public Schools, representing 2.7% of the total Woonsocket Public School enrollment, and 10.5% of the total number of children represented as homeless statewide.

The majority of the homeless adults in Woonsocket are White, with 187 individuals comprising 69.5% of the total homeless adults in the City. The next largest group is Black / African American, representing 48 homeless adults (18%), followed by 25 (9%) multi-racial adults. Regarding gender, 167 (62%) of the homeless adults in Woonsocket are male and 101 (38%) are female.

From an equity standpoint, Black or African American adults, and multi-racial adults experience homelessness at a disproportionate rate. Based on the analysis available from the RI Coalition for

the Homeless, Black or African Americans represent approximately 7.8% of the total population in Woonsocket but make up almost 18% of the homeless adult population in Woonsocket. Multi-racial individuals represent approximately 3% of the total population, but account for over 9% of the homeless adults in Woonsocket.

2. Individuals and Families at Risk of Homelessness 24 CFR 91.5

In addition to all the people currently experiencing homelessness, there are a large number of people who are at-risk of homelessness. According to the 2016-2020 CHAS data, In Woonsocket, 4,020 households have an income less than 30% HAMFI, 92% of which are renters, all of which are at-risk of homelessness according to 24 CFR 91.5.

According to HousingWorks RI 2023 Annual Factbook 6,406 households in Woonsocket are cost-burdened, 47% of which are renters. Individuals who spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs is at-risk of homelessness. Rising utility costs, taxes, and rents across the nation have increased the number of households that are cost burdened. The annual income needed to afford the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Woonsocket is \$56,102. The annual income needed to purchase a home at the median sales price of \$325,000 is \$101,366, the median household income is \$48,822.

According to the RIHousing Evictions Dashboard, populated with data from the Rhode Island Supreme Court, there have been over 1,600 eviction cases filed in the City of Woonsocket which is over 15% of renter households in Woonsocket. In the State of Rhode Island over 75% of judgements were monetary and possession, 23% were possession only. According to the Household Pulse Survey, 22.7% of Rhode Island households were unable to pay their energy bill.

Another concern that may be an indicator a risk of homelessness is the number of housing units that do not have complete plumbing or kitchen facilities. The table below shows that there are 52 occupied Woonsocket housing units that lack complete plumbing facilities, and 110 units that lack complete kitchen facilities. These households also need housing units that have complete plumbing and kitchen facilities. It can be estimated that the lowest income households are living in these housing units.

	Total #	Percentage
Occupied housing units	16,515	100.0%
Lacking complete plumbing facilities	52	0.3%
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	110	0.7%
No telephone service available	267	1.6%

Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates (DP04)

According to the data above, there are approximately 13,040 (30%) Woonsocket residents that are at risk of homelessness. This figure includes households that are at or below 30% AMI, housing cost-burdened, and living in units that lack complete kitchen or plumbing facilities.

3. Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence or human trafficking

In calendar year 2020, there were 9,269 individual victims of domestic violence that received help in the state of Rhode Island; 333 adults and children stayed in shelters/safe homes, and 127 adults and children lived in transitional housing. Between 2016-2022 Woonsocket had the most felony domestic violence cases per capita.

Sojourner House operates multiple programs in Woonsocket including a confidential shelter, a transitional housing program, a permanent supportive housing program, and a rapid re-housing program for families that have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, and/or human trafficking. Their housing and shelter locations are confidential, but they also have a public office in downtown Woonsocket that is open to the public, and clients can schedule appointments to meet with staff for advocacy appointments, referrals, to receive emotional support, and to access clinical counseling services.

In 2023, Sojourner House reported that 2,966 bed nights were provided at their Safe House in Woonsocket. Over 20 survivors participated in the Rapid Rehousing Program and Permanent Supportive Housing Program respectively.

In conversations with the Executive Director of Sojourner House, the demand for services and housing for victims of domestic and sexual violence in Woonsocket is significant. Data from the Domestic Violence Training and Monitoring Unit of the Rhode Island Judiciary shows there were 505 domestic violence complaints issued for 2020 (the most recent data available). A recent analysis of data by the WPRI news organization “shows Woonsocket had the most felony cases per capita between 2016 and the second half of 2022, followed by Pawtucket, West Warwick, Central Falls and Providence.”¹ According to the Domestic Violence Homicides in Rhode Island, 2016-2020 Report by the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Woonsocket has the highest rate of Domestic Violence homicides in the state. “The per 100,000 rate of domestic violence homicides ranged from 2.12 per 100,000 in East Providence to 9.25 per 100,000 in Woonsocket.”²

4. Other Populations

a. Other families requiring services or housing assistance to prevent homelessness as defined in 24 CFR 91.5

A clear indication of the number of renters in the state that are housing insecure is the demand for emergency rental assistance. As of December 1, 2022, RIHousing had approved \$274.7 million in rent and utility assistance for 42,071 households.³ Among these households, over 71% had an AMI of 30% or less and 2,619 were homeless. Woonsocket was the third highest municipality based on funding approvals with 3,827 approved applications totaling \$22,679,023.

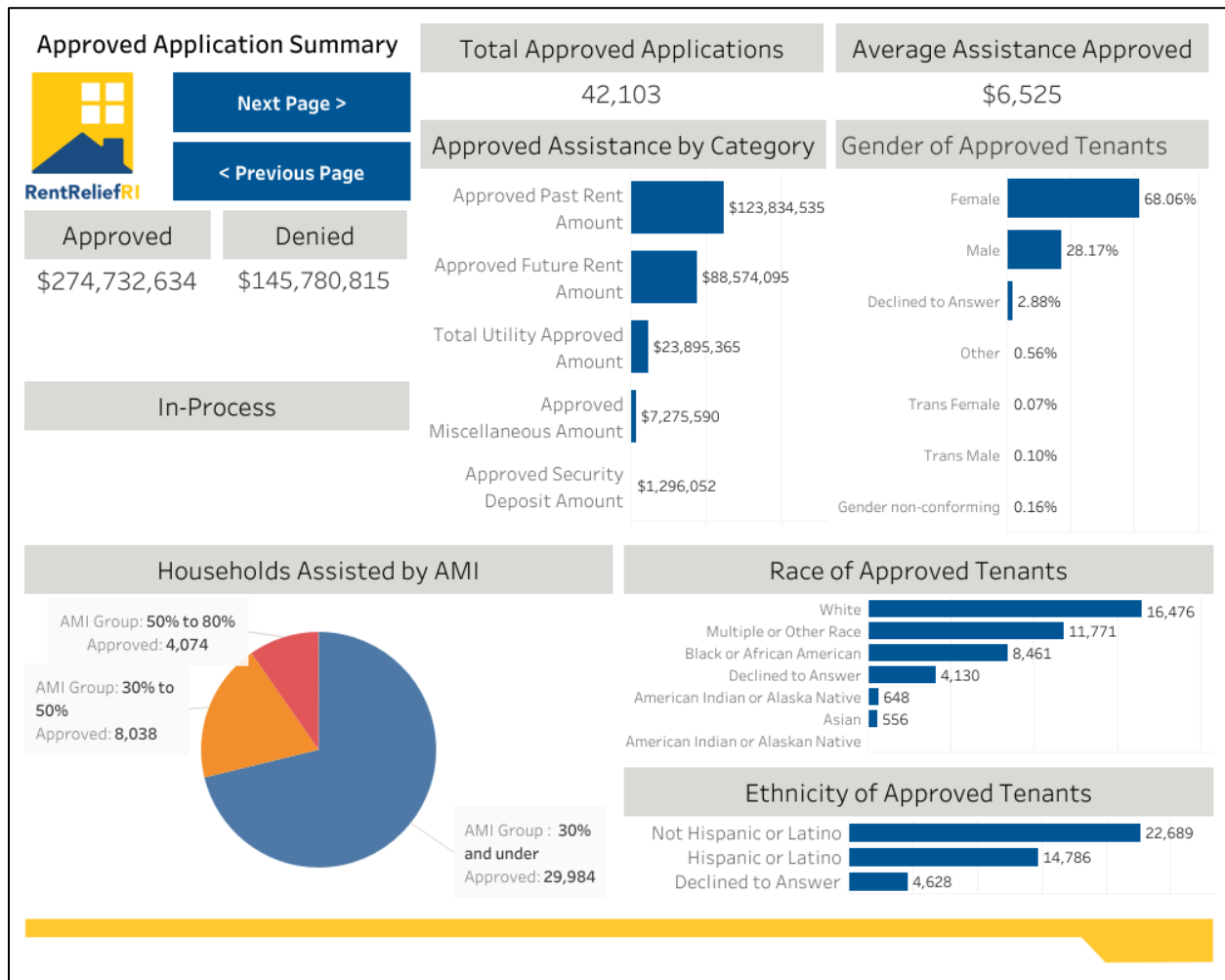
Community Care Alliance and Sojourner House both administer funding through their rapid rehousing program in the City of Woonsocket. Households that qualify for funding are able to

¹ [Domestic violence is most common felony in RI, data shows | WPRI.com](https://www.wpri.com/news/local/domestic-violence-is-most-common-felony-in-ri-data-shows/)

² https://lmt5f.p3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/RI-DV-HOMICIDE-RPT_FINAL.pdf

³ <https://www.rihousing.com/rent-relief-ri-dashboard/>

receive permanent housing, allowing them to quickly exit homelessness. (insert data from CCA and SOJO about rapid rehousing)



b. Those at greatest risk of housing instability or in unstable housing situations

Reviewing the 2015-2019 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) again shows that there are 2,005 households at or below 30% AMI that are spending more than 50% of their income on housing. This represents approximately 5,000 Woonsocket residents (assuming approximately 2.5 individuals per household).

Income by Cost Burden (Owners and Renters)	Cost burden > 30%	Cost burden > 50%	Total
Household Income <= 30% HAMFI	2,610	2,005	4,150
Household Income >30% to <=50% HAMFI	2,000	665	2,860
Household Income >50% to <=80% HAMFI	1,080	140	3,235

Household Income >80% to <=100% HAMFI	270	15	1,590
Household Income >100% HAMFI	185	10	4,825
Total	6,145	2,835	16,665

Source: 2015-2019 CHAS

There are 7,010 households that have annual income less than or equal to 50% of the area median income. Unfortunately, it is not possible to disaggregate the data any further.

Income Distribution Overview	Owner	Renter	Total
Household Income <= 30% HAMFI	395	3,755	4,150
Household Income >30% to <=50% HAMFI	640	2,220	2,860
Household Income >50% to <=80% HAMFI	1,050	2,185	3,235
Household Income >80% to <=100% HAMFI	750	840	1,590
Household Income >100% HAMFI	3,220	1,605	4,825
Total	6,060	10,605	16,665

Source: 2015-2019 CHAS

Doubling up is a potential early signal for individuals and families that may be at risk of homelessness. Overcrowded housing units of more than one person per room represent 552 occupied housing units in Woonsocket (3.4%). However, the 108 housing units that have 1.51 or more persons per room are most concerning. It is likely that these individuals do not have the sufficient income to comfortably afford housing and are likely earning less than 30% of the area median income.

	Total #	Percentage
Occupied housing units	16,515	100.0%
1.00 or less	15,963	96.7%
1.01 to 1.50	444	2.7%
1.51 or more	108	0.7%

Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates (DP04)

Additionally, based on data from the RI Coalition to End Homelessness, there are 133 households, comprised of 168 adults and 95 children in Woonsocket identified as “couch surfing.” While technically housed, this is a significant risk of future unsheltered homelessness.

OPTIONAL Homeless Needs Inventory and Gap Analysis Table

Homeless												
	Current Inventory					Homeless Population				Gap Analysis		
	Family		Adults Only		Vets	Family HH (at least 1 child)	Adult HH (w/o child)	Vets	Victims of DV	Family		Adults Only
	# of Beds	# of Units	# of Beds	# of Units	# of Beds					# of Beds	# of Units	# of Beds
Emergency Shelter	426	144	738	706	0							

Transitional Housing	170	73	104	97	94								
Permanent Supportive Housing	540	152	803	765	277								
Other Permanent Housing						135	705	30	187				
Sheltered Homeless						156	520	85	182				
Unsheltered Homeless						41	291	6	115				
Current Gap										591	197	840	811

Suggested Data Sources: 1. Point in Time Count (PIT); 2. Continuum of Care Housing Inventory Count (HIC); 3. Consultation

OPTIONAL Non-Homeless Needs Inventory and Gap Analysis Table

Non-Homeless			
	Current Inventory	Level of Need	Gap Analysis
	# of Units	# of Households	# of Households
Total Rental Units	160,997		
Rental Units Affordable to HH at 30% AMI (At-Risk of Homelessness)	25,241		
Rental Units Affordable to HH at 50% AMI (Other Populations)	61,683		
0%-30% AMI Renter HH w/ 1 or more severe housing problems (At-Risk of Homelessness)		31,960	
30%-50% AMI Renter HH w/ 1 or more severe housing problems (Other Populations)		21,440	
Current Gap			6,719

Suggested Data Sources: 1. American Community Survey (ACS); 2. Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)

Describe the unmet housing and service needs of qualifying populations, including but not limited to:

- ***Sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations;***
- ***Those currently housed populations at risk of homelessness;***
- ***Other families requiring services or housing assistance or to prevent homelessness; and,***
- ***Those at greatest risk of housing instability or in unstable housing situations:***

The most critical unmet need for qualifying populations is the production of high-quality affordable housing, including permanent supportive rental housing for individuals with higher-level service needs above and beyond just affordable housing. Based on the above analysis, there is an immediate need for approximately 3,500 new affordable housing units. The table below summarizes the need based on qualifying populations. It should be noted that there may be some duplication among these categories (i.e., some households could be counted in multiple categories). But for analysis, the below table summarizes the urgent need for affordable housing development in the City of Woonsocket.

For the homeless population, most of these vulnerable individuals experiencing street and shelter homelessness have been homeless for at least 4 months and often for up to 1 year or more. Research has taught us that the longer an individual remains homeless the more ill they become, requiring greater support.

Population	# of Households	# Adults	# Children
Sheltered Homeless	66	73	18
Unsheltered Homeless	150	176	50
Domestic Violence	500	500	750
Couch Surfing	133	168	95
30% AMI Cost Burdened	2,610		
Lacking Complete Plumbing and Kitchen Facilities	162		

The network of services in Woonsocket is established to connect homeless persons with mainstream services, such as Medicaid and Social Security benefits, to maximize the amount of assistance households can access. Utilizing coordinated entry, service providers match clients with appropriate services to increase access to health and social service programs that they qualify for. These efforts are paired with services provided throughout the larger region to create a system of wrap-around services to help households in as many ways as possible. The City partners closely with Community Care Alliance, Thundermist, and NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley to provide services to meet the needs of the various qualifying populations.

Woonsocket identified the following needs for each qualifying population based on the feedback obtained through the consultation process for the HOME-ARP Allocation plan

Sheltered and unsheltered homeless population needs

- Survival items
- Basic Needs Assistance
- Food
- Access to behavioral health treatment
- Access to medical treatment
- Harm reduction supplies
- Hygiene Products
- Need for more permanent supportive housing

Those currently housed populations at risk of homelessness

- Rental Assistance
- Case Management
- Financial Literacy
- Workforce development and training
- Food
- Basic Needs Assistance
- Utility Assistance
- More affordable housing options

Those fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence or human trafficking

- Trauma-informed clinical counseling services
- Access to shelter system
- Access to behavioral health treatment
- Housing services
- RRH Programs for families who have experienced abuse
- Immediate connection to available affordable housing units
- Need for more permanent supportive housing

Other families requiring services or housing assistance or to prevent homelessness

- Rental Assistance
- Food
- Basic needs assistance
- Workforce development and training
- Affordable Childcare
- Utility Assistance
- More affordable housing options

Those at greatest risk of housing instability or in unstable housing situations (cost burdened, overcrowded, doubled up, etc.)

- Rental Assistance
- Housing services
- Food
- Basic needs assistance
- Utility Assistance
- More affordable housing options

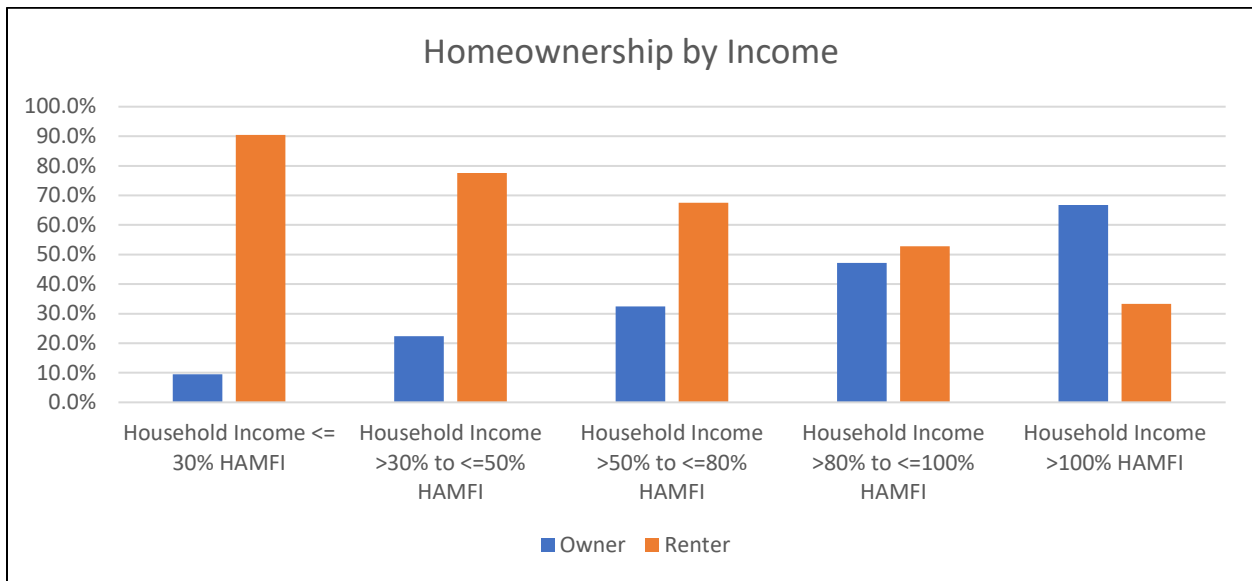
For victims of domestic violence, there is a need for greater access to more permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing options for families who have experienced abuse, so individuals can be re-located into their own apartment quickly. It is equally a great need for increased

supportive services, which should include trauma-informed clinical counseling services, assistance with obtaining basic needs, providing 24/7 emotional support (through a hotline and also through in-person meetings), rental assistance (so clients who are safely housed can continue to stay in safe location), bilingual support (especially in Spanish/English), and LGBTQ+ cultural competency, and LGBTQ+ specific programming (e.g. we offer LGBTQ+ specific support groups and housing programs), to name a few important needs.

Many of the qualifying populations require the same types of services, although there are some distinct differences. The various types of services that are required for the homeless population include emergency shelters for men, women, families, and couples; facilities for the homeless that provide for many of their basic needs including showers, laundry, meals, clothing, transportation, toiletries, and other daily essentials; workforce development and vocational job training; health care and mental health treatment and counseling; substance abuse recovery; relocation and placement services; and case management and planning services for ending a household's homeless status.

For most other qualifying populations, homeless, at risk of homeless, or other persons at great risk of homelessness, the service needs are related to case management and housing counseling. However, rental assistance and additional affordable housing units are the common themes among all qualifying populations. Rental assistance needs are incredibly high because there are not enough affordable housing options in the City of Woonsocket, despite it having a higher-than-average percentage of deed restricted affordable housing. The dramatic increase in housing costs over the past several years has placed an incredible burden on all Woonsocket residents. Those with the lowest income struggle the most with the increase in housing costs.

There is a strong correlation between low-income status and cost burden. The lower a household's income, the more likely they are to be cost burdened. The higher one's income, the more likely they are to own a home in Woonsocket.

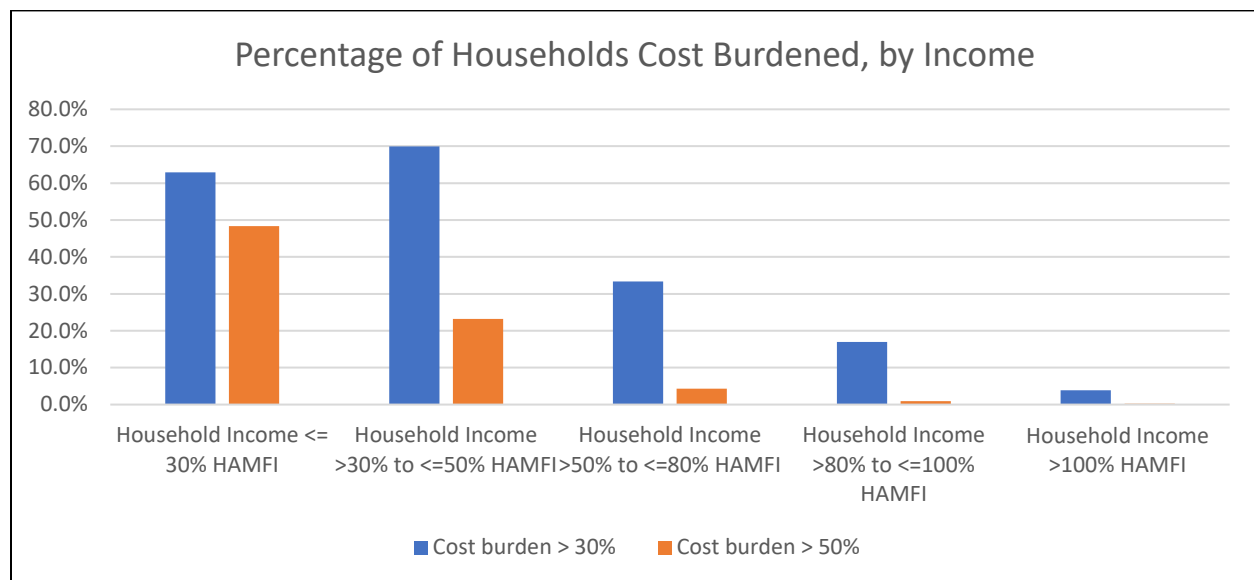


Income by Cost Burden (Owners and Renters)	Cost burden > 30%	Cost burden > 50%	Total	% Cost Burdened
Household Income <= 30% HAMFI	2,610	2,005	4,150	62.9%
Household Income >30% to <=50% HAMFI	2,000	665	2,860	69.9%
Household Income >50% to <=80% HAMFI	1,080	140	3,235	33.4%
Household Income >80% to <=100% HAMFI	270	15	1,590	17.0%
Household Income >100% HAMFI	185	10	4,825	0.04%
Total	6,145	2,835	16,665	36.9%

Source: 2015-2019 CHAS

Approximately 37% of Woonsocket households are Cost Burdened, and 17% of Woonsocket households are Severely Cost Burdened. However, lower-income households are substantially more likely to be cost burdened than higher-income households.

Nearly 63% of households earning up to 30% of the Area Median Income are Cost Burdened, while 48% are Severely Cost Burdened. Among those earning between 30% and 50% AMI, 70% of households are Cost Burdened and 23% are Severely Cost Burdened.



These 6,145 Cost Burdened Households are at-risk of homelessness based on HUD's definition; however, the 2,835 Severely Cost Burdened Households are of highest concern, particularly those earning less than 50% of the area median income.

The community-based organizations that care for individuals are also understaffed and struggling to meet the growing demands of the homeless population. Since the beginning of the pandemic Woonsocket has seen a more than 100% increase in unsheltered homelessness. Congregate shelters that, while not ideal, provided an opportunity to support many individuals in a safe space, have had to reduce their capacity. Concurrently, direct service professionals have been difficult to recruit and retain. This environment has put enormous pressure on existing staff and left many vulnerable Rhode Islanders unserved or underserved.

Nearly 90% of housing choice voucher (HCV) holders rent from a “mom and pop” landlord. Because of the escalating real estate market in the state, many of these small property owners, some of whom are nearing retirement, are increasingly selling their investment properties in this seller’s market. When this happens, tenants are frequently told that they must leave and thus, may abandon their apartments in fear of being displaced by new owners. This has contributed to both an increase in homelessness, as well as a reduction in available rental units. Further, service providers are often called in to provide support and housing assistance with already diminished staffing capacity.

With respect to homelessness for individuals with disabilities, there is currently extremely limited access for the disabled on all levels, starting with physical access, communication access for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (ASL interpreter or virtual relay services or other assistive communication devices, etc.), at homeless shelters. Home care services are another area of great concern currently. Individuals can get funding authorized for numerous services in their home however, they then cannot find staff to provide the services & end up trying to patchwork services together as best they can or are forced stay in a nursing home or other facility due to this issue.

All these conditions point to the critical shortage of housing affordable to low-income households, particularly extremely low-income households and those with special needs. Families and individuals experiencing homelessness also require assistance finding and maintaining affordable housing including wrap-around supportive services. Finally, resources are needed to address temporary financial hardships experienced by these households to divert them from homeless.

All the data points to the need to greatly increase the availability of affordable housing units. There are other supportive service concerns, however, the primary issue is the availability of affordable housing units for the City’s residents. Supplementing this increase in affordable housing units with additional supportive services based on qualifying population is also important, although a lesser priority.

Identify and consider the current resources available to assist qualifying populations, including congregate and non-congregate shelter units, supportive services, TBRA, and affordable and permanent supportive rental housing:

In the Woonsocket area, the following shelters and services are available to qualifying populations:

Sheltered and unsheltered homeless population needs

- Family Shelter (operated by Community Care Alliance)
- Emergency Shelters (operated by Community Care Alliance and Harvest)
- Dignity Bus
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Affordable Housing units (depending on availability)
- Subsidized Housing units (depending on availability)

- Behavioral Health Treatment (CCA, THC, Discovery House, CODAC, Private Practices, etc.)
- Medical Treatment (THC, Dr. Yearwood, etc.)

Those currently housed populations at risk of homelessness

- Diversion Services (provided by Crossroads)
- Rapid Rehousing (operated by CCA when funding is available)
- Affordable Housing units (depending on availability)
- Subsidized Housing units (depending on availability)
- Behavioral Health Treatment (CCA, THC, Discovery House, CODAC, Private Practices, etc.)
- Medical Treatment (THC, Dr. Yearwood, etc.)

Those fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence or human trafficking

- Domestic Violence Shelter (operated by Sojourner House)
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Affordable Housing units (depending on availability)
- Subsidized Housing units (depending on availability)

Other families requiring services or housing assistance or to prevent homelessness

- Diversion Services (provided by Crossroads)
- Behavioral Health Treatment (CCA, THC, Discovery House, CODAC, Private Practices, etc.)
- Medical Treatment (THC, Dr. Yearwood, etc.)

Those at greatest risk of housing instability or in unstable housing situations (cost burdened, overcrowded, doubled up, etc.)

- Diversion Services (provided by Crossroads)
- Affordable Housing units (depending on availability)
- Subsidized Housing units (depending on availability)
- Behavioral Health Treatment (CCA, THC, Discovery House, CODAC, Private Practices, etc.)
- Medical Treatment (THC, Dr. Yearwood, etc.)

Taking a Housing First approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life in critical. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues. Additionally, Housing First is based on the understanding that client choice is valuable in housing selection and supportive service participation, and that exercising that choice is likely to make a client more successful in remaining housed and improving their life.

If HOME-ARP services are not available due to limited funding, HOME-ARP qualifying populations will be referred to existing community programs.

Identify any gaps within the current shelter and housing inventory as well as the service delivery system:

As illustrated above, the gap between available shelter and housing compared with the need is deep and growing. In July of 2023 there were 1,121 shelter beds in total in the State of Rhode Island, but the January 2023 PIT Count identified 1,809 persons experiencing homelessness.

In Woonsocket, there is a sizable and growing population of individuals who are currently living unsheltered. In CCA's various shelter programs in the city (winter shelter, hotel/motel voucher program and family shelter) there are over 120 individuals who are residing in emergency shelter. Based on data from the RI Coalition for the Homeless, another 150 households are unsheltered and living in places not meant for habitation, comprising 176 adults and 50 children.

Shelter stays are longer than average because there are not sufficient affordable housing options for these individuals to move into. According to the Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness there were 726 persons on the shelter queue in October of 2023. The average time on the shelter queue waiting for shelter referral is 14 days. The waitlist for Section 8 is in the thousands while Woonsocket Housing Authority has a wait time of anywhere between three months to five years. The cost of private housing has increased exponentially since COVID-19 with the annual income needed to afford an average 2-bedroom in Woonsocket \$7,280 over the median household income.

In Woonsocket, there are 10,245 households that are below the 80% AMI, but only 3,049 long term affordable homes. Investors are expected to bring over 400 units to Woonsocket over the next five years, but none are designated as affordable.

Case workers and clinicians encourage eligible households to apply for housing and vouchers upon being admitted to the program and throughout their stay. The average wait time for a Housing Choice Voucher is 1.5 years and people may wait for over 7 years. The gap between available shelter and housing, compared to the need, is deep and is continuing to grow.

The sustainable model of Medicaid reimbursement for housing support is well underway in Rhode Island, but the capacity of non-traditional service providers to utilize the resource is a challenge. Furthermore, once a provider is eligible to bill Medicaid, or offer housing and other supportive services, hiring and staff retention has become a significant challenge during the pandemic.

Despite the state increasing the bed count through winter shelters and hotel voucher programs, the waitlist for a shelter bed still remains long. Like many other states, hiring and staff retention has become a significant challenge throughout the pandemic. This affects our supportive service delivery system as many of our programs remain short staffed, leaving clients without adequate services such as caseworkers, therapists, and clinicians. A few years ago, Community Care Alliance transitioned its permanent supportive housing to other local agencies because the reimbursement rate was so inadequate, they could no longer sustain this program.

Sojourner House operates a 24-hour hotline that receives multiple requests for shelter and/or housing daily. The shelter they operate in Woonsocket is at capacity every day, which means that unserved clients often are in unsafe situations for extended periods of time until a shelter bed or apartment becomes available. Similarly, Sojourner House receives many more requests for counseling services than they are able to provide.

In sum, based on the information gathered through consultation and public input, the City believes increasing the amount of affordable housing units and the primary need for the community. Additionally, funds will be allocated to support the delivery of supportive services to qualifying populations. Existing service providers face chronic staff turnover leading to high caseloads and depletion of funding for programs such as rapid rehousing, TBRA, and hotel vouchers. With increased funding for supportive services, people that are experiencing homelessness or that are at-risk will have the tools to not only obtain permanent housing but retain that housing.

Identify the characteristics of housing associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness if the PJ will include such conditions in its definition of “other populations” as established in the HOME-ARP Notice:

The City of Woonsocket will include the following definitions of other populations.

- At Greatest Risk of Housing Instability:
 - (i) Has annual income that is less than or equal to 30% of the area median income, as determined by HUD and is experiencing severe cost burden (i.e., is paying more than 50% of monthly household income toward housing costs);
 - (ii) has annual income that is less than or equal to 50% of the area median income, as determined by HUD, AND meets one of the following conditions from paragraph (iii) of the “At risk of homelessness” definition established at 24 CFR 91.5:
 - (A) Has moved because of economic reasons two or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for homelessness prevention assistance;
 - (B) Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship;
 - (C) Has been notified in writing that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance;
 - (D) Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost of the hotel or motel stay is not paid by charitable organizations or by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals;
 - (E) Lives in a single-room occupancy or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than two persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than 1.5 persons reside per room, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau;

- (F) Is exiting a publicly funded institution, or system of care (such as a health-care facility, a mental health facility, foster care or other youth facility, or correction program or institution); or
- (G) Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness, as identified in the recipient's approved consolidated plan

Identify priority needs for qualifying populations:

Ideally, a system should exist that is nimble and responsive enough to stop homelessness before an at-risk household becomes homeless. There are very few resources available for diversion and current efforts are supported by a private foundation grant and a small state investment.

Ultimately, the qualifying populations require affordable housing and effective support services delivered at the right time, with the appropriate intensity. In Rhode Island, the state has deployed rental assistance and funds for security deposits, moving expenses, landlord incentives, utility assistance and furniture, all matched with emergency funds to provide case management support. The key missing links now for most qualifying populations are: (1) available permanent housing opportunities for very low- and extremely low-income families and individuals to call home and, (2) enough well-trained direct service provider staff to sustainably support the growing needs of these qualifying population individuals and households.

Specifically, there is a critical need for additional housing units that accept rental assistance vouchers or are priced affordably for very and extremely low-income households AND the services to accompany them. Most formerly homeless households require very little support long-term, but some require long-term on-going support. The evidence base suggests a system that is equipped to provide the right intensity of services at the right time. These services can be as simple as teaching someone how to pay their rent and complete housing recertifications, to more complicated support such as coordinating urgent behavioral healthcare.

Explain how the level of need and gaps in its shelter and housing inventory and service delivery systems based on the data presented in the plan were determined:

Information was collected from Woonsocket area providers of housing and services for homeless individuals and families and other qualifying populations. Based on the analysis of the available data, the city was able to estimate the current level of acute need in comparison to the existing inventory currently available.

Lastly, the American Community Survey and the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy were used to assess the number of cost burdened households and the gap between the number of households earning less than 50% AMI and the number of housing units available and affordable to them.

HOME-ARP Activities

Describe the method for soliciting applications for funding and/or selecting developers, service providers, subrecipients and/or contractors and whether the PJ will administer eligible activities directly:

The City of Woonsocket will solicit projects and activities from nonprofit service providers to support the development of affordable rental housing and the provision of supportive services. In the City of Woonsocket there are only two organizations that have expressed interest in HOME-ARP funding and only two affordable housing development organizations. The City of Woonsocket has been in contact with the organizations that have expressed interest and has discussed potential projects and funding needs.

To be considered eligible for Program funds, the city will require that recipients, at a minimum meet the following criteria:

- Make acceptable assurances to the city that it will comply with the requirements of the HOME-ARP Program during the entire period that begins upon selection of the recipient to receive HOME-ARP funds and ending upon the conclusion of all HOME-ARP Program funded activities.
- Demonstrate the ability and financial capacity to undertake, comply, and manage the eligible activity.
- Demonstrate its familiarity with the requirements of other Federal, State, or local housing programs that may be used in conjunction with HOME-ARP Program funds to ensure compliance with all applicable requirements and regulations of such programs
- Have demonstrated experience and capacity to conduct HOME-ARP Program eligible activities as evidenced by its ability to own, construct, or rehabilitate, and manage and operate an affordable multifamily rental housing development.

If any portion of the PJ's HOME-ARP administrative funds were provided to a subrecipient or contractor prior to HUD's acceptance of the HOME-ARP allocation plan because the subrecipient or contractor is responsible for the administration of the PJ's entire HOME-ARP grant, identify the subrecipient or contractor and describe its role and responsibilities in administering all of the PJ's HOME-ARP program:

N/A. The City of Woonsocket will administer the HOME-ARP program directly.

PJs must indicate the amount of HOME-ARP funding that is planned for each eligible HOME-ARP activity type and demonstrate that any planned funding for nonprofit organization operating assistance, nonprofit capacity building, and administrative costs is within HOME-ARP limits.

The following table may be used to meet this requirement.

	Funding Amount	Percent of Grant	Statutory Limit
Supportive Services	\$150,000.00		

Acquisition and Development of Non-Congregate Shelters			
Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)	1,086,451.40		
Development of Affordable Rental Housing	\$300,000.00		
Non-Profit Operating			
Non-Profit Capacity Building			
Administration and Planning	\$163,494.60	10%	15%
Total HOME ARP Allocation	\$1,634,946.00		

Additional narrative, if applicable:

N/A

Describe how the characteristics of the shelter and housing inventory, service delivery system, and the needs identified in the gap analysis provided a rationale for the plan to fund eligible activities:

The description of the needs detailed above and the discussions with agencies with the experience and expertise serving qualifying populations clearly show that the highest priority needs are: (1) increasing the supply of housing available and affordable to our most vulnerable populations; and (2) expanding supportive services, particularly related to individuals and families that are homeless, at risk of homelessness, and are victims of domestic violence to help vulnerable populations access housing and remain stably housed. Supportive services such as employment assistance and job training, legal services, life skills training, substance abuse treatment services, and mental health services are important to preventing homelessness and maintaining permanent housing.

HOME-ARP Production Housing Goals

Estimate the number of affordable rental housing units for qualifying populations that the PJ will produce or support with its HOME-ARP allocation:

The City of Woonsocket estimates 4 affordable housing units will be supported from the recommended allocation above. This estimate is based on the funding request provided by affordable housing provider Sojourner House and review by the Construction Supervisor.

Describe the specific affordable rental housing production goal that the PJ hopes to achieve and describe how it will address the PJ's priority needs:

The City of Woonsocket estimates 6 new affordable housing rental units will be created from the recommended allocation above. These units will be available to assist with housing all individuals and families identified as one or more of the qualifying populations described above.

The priority needs of the qualifying populations will be addressed through the support of affordable housing, TBRA, and supportive services. Those three activities were identified as the priority needs of the qualifying populations.

Preferences

Identify whether the PJ intends to give preference to one or more qualifying populations or a subpopulation within one or more qualifying populations for any eligible activity or project:

- *Preferences cannot violate any applicable fair housing, civil rights, and nondiscrimination requirements, including but not limited to those requirements listed in 24 CFR 5.105(a).*
- *PJs are not required to describe specific projects to which the preferences will apply.*

The City of Woonsocket intends to give preference to QP 3 which are “individuals or families fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence or human trafficking.” Sojourner House is a Rhode Island non-profit which serves QP3 exclusively. As an affordable housing provider in the City of Woonsocket, they are expected to receive HOME-ARP funding. The remainder of the HOME-ARP funding will not be used in any activities or projects that intends to give preference to one or more qualifying population.

If a preference was identified, explain how the use of a preference or method of prioritization will address the unmet need or gap in benefits and services received by individuals and families in the qualifying population or category of qualifying population, consistent with the PJ’s needs assessment and gap analysis:

Woonsocket was identified as having the most felony domestic violence cases per capita from 2016-2022. During the same period, Woonsocket had the second highest number of domestic violence murders in the State of Rhode Island following Providence with five. In 2023, Sojourner House served over 200 victims of abuse in Woonsocket.

Sojourner House recently purchased a 4-unit property in Woonsocket for women and children that are victims of domestic violence. Currently, the building needs repairs and cannot be occupied. HOME-ARP funding would allow four units to become available for domestic violence victims in Woonsocket.

If a preference was identified, describe how the PJ will use HOME-ARP funds to address the unmet needs or gaps in benefits and services of the other qualifying populations that are not included in the preference:

The City of Woonsocket intends to utilize the remainder of HOME-ARP funding to serve all qualifying populations. There are organizations in Woonsocket who successfully run TBRA programs as well as provide supportive services such as education services, employment assistance and job training, legal services, mental health services, and substance abuse treatment

services. Providing these organizations with additional funding will allow all of the qualifying populations to obtain permanent housing and access supportive services.

TBRA allows individuals and families to be housed into private rental units in the City of Woonsocket. The Woonsocket Housing Authority stated that the waitlist for public housing is in the thousands and the wait-time for a unit can be anywhere from 3-8 years. For some people, public housing may not be an option due to criminal history and TBRA is an alternative option for them.

Post-COVID many service providers in Woonsocket saw a decrease in funding but an increase in case load. Additional funding for supportive services will allow providers to increase number of staff available to clients and reduce the caseload of existing staff.

TBRA and supportive services address the unmet needs in benefits and services of all the qualifying populations.

HOME-ARP Refinancing Guidelines

If the PJ intends to use HOME-ARP funds to refinance existing debt secured by multifamily rental housing that is being rehabilitated with HOME-ARP funds, the PJ must state its HOME-ARP refinancing guidelines in accordance with 24 CFR 92.206(b). The guidelines must describe the conditions under which the PJ will refinance existing debt for a HOME-ARP rental project, including:

- ***Establish a minimum level of rehabilitation per unit or a required ratio between rehabilitation and refinancing to demonstrate that rehabilitation of HOME-ARP rental housing is the primary eligible activity***
- ***Require a review of management practices to demonstrate that disinvestment in the property has not occurred; that the long-term needs of the project can be met; and that the feasibility of serving qualified populations for the minimum compliance period can be demonstrated.***
- ***State whether the new investment is being made to maintain current affordable units, create additional affordable units, or both.***
- ***Specify the required compliance period, whether it is the minimum 15 years or longer.***
- ***State that HOME-ARP funds cannot be used to refinance multifamily loans made or insured by any federal program, including CDBG.***
- ***Other requirements in the PJ's guidelines, if applicable:***

The City of Woonsocket does not intend to use HOME-ARP funds to refinance existing debt.

Appendix

Summary Notes from Consultation Process

Sheltered and unsheltered homeless population needs

- Survival items
- Basic Needs Assistance
- Food
- Access to behavioral health treatment
- Access to medical treatment
- Harm reduction supplies
- Hygiene Products
- Need for more permanent supportive housing

Those currently housed populations at risk of homelessness

- Rental Assistance
- Case Management
- Financial Literacy
- Workforce development and training
- Food
- Basic Needs Assistance
- Utility Assistance
- More affordable housing options

Those fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence or human trafficking

- Trauma-informed clinical counseling services
- Access to shelter system
- Access to behavioral health treatment
- Housing services
- RRH Programs for families who have experienced abuse
- Immediate connection to available affordable housing units
- Need for more permanent supportive housing

Other families requiring services or housing assistance or to prevent homelessness

- Tenant Based Rental Assistance
- Food
- Basic needs assistance
- Workforce development and training
- Affordable Childcare
- Utility Assistance
- More affordable housing options

Those at greatest risk of housing instability or in unstable housing situations (cost burdened, overcrowded, doubled up, etc.)

- Rental Assistance
- Housing services
- Food
- Basic needs assistance
- Utility Assistance
- More affordable housing options

For victims of domestic violence, there is a need for greater access to more permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing options for families who have experienced abuse, so individuals can be re-located into their own apartment quickly. It is equally a great need for increased

supportive services, which should include trauma-informed clinical counseling services, assistance with obtaining basic needs, providing 24/7 emotional support (through a hotline and also through in-person meetings), rental assistance (so clients who are safely housed can continue to stay in safe location), bilingual support (especially in Spanish/English), and LGBTQ+ cultural competency, and LGBTQ+ specific programming (e.g. we offer LGBTQ+ specific support groups and housing programs), to name a few important needs.