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Council approves plan for community enhancement grant money

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By Lena Price, Staff Writer

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The Lewisville City Council accepted the final proposal regarding how funds from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program will be distributed at a meeting Monday.

The CDBG program is offered through the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. It provides communities with flexible funding for neighborhood enhancement projects. This year, Lewisville received a CDBG allocation of \$635, 106.

Out of the total funding, the plan calls for \$350,000 to finance Lewisville's First-time Homebuyer Assistance Program and Housing Rehabilitation Program. The homebuyer assistance program would provide about 13 moderate to low income families buying their first home in Lewisville with money for down payment and closing costs. Five low income families would be able to undertake major home repairs through the housing rehabilitation program.

Most of the remaining money will be used to fund several social service organizations, including Christian Community Action and the Children's Advocacy Center.

The proposal passed with a vote of 3-1. Councilman John Gorena voted against it, and Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Greg Tierney was not present at the meeting.

Councilman Lathan Watts voted in favor of the CDBG proposal.

"I am a huge proponent of the federal government staying out of citizen's daily lives as much as possible," Watts said. "But this program is a program that we need to take advantage of."

Gorena said he voted against the plan because of the \$350,000 to be used for housing rehabilitation and the first-time homebuyer program. He said instead of using the money to help private individuals, it should be used for public works projects that everyone will benefit from.

"I have a principle against tax money being used to fund private transactions," Gorena said. "I think the money from this grant could be better spent on infrastructure, like repairing sidewalks and sewer systems."

Before the vote, the council opened the floor for a public hearing about the final draft of the plan. Lewisville resident Rita Williams was the only person who spoke during the

hearing, and she opposed the plan because she disagreed with the funding of private homes.

A draft of the proposal was put up for a vote at a council meeting last month, and the plan was accepted unanimously. The Housing and Urban development department requires the document to be available to the public for a period of 30 days before a final vote.

The council did not receive any feedback on the plan during the 30-day period, and no changes were made to it.

Gorena voted in favor of the plan at the June 21 council meeting, but said he changed his mind after having time to review the details of the proposal that were not initially available.

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