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Council approves CDBG projects

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Local nonprofits will now receive funding from the city through the Community Development Block Grant.

During Monday night's meeting, city council members approved agreements to allow payments to local nonprofits through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. City council members approved the 2011-12 budget for the CDBG in the amount of \$717,942 in June. The CDBG received an entitlement grant of \$537,942, almost \$100,000 less than last year, from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Council members voted 3-1 in favor; Councilman John Gorena voted against the item.

"Basically, it comes down to should the tax payers be spending \$35,000 to build someone a patio? The parameters are very wide with how we use this money," Gorena said. "The money should go to projects we need in low income areas. If we're not using the CDBG funds for that, it has to come out of the general fund."

The CDBG program provides annual grants from HUD on a formula basis to entitled cities and counties. The primary objective of the CDBG program is to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low-and moderate-income people. The CDBG committee acts as advisors to the city council in matters relating to HUD block grants.

The CDBG's budget is divided into two categories: Category I, which is CDBG housing and community development; Category II, which is CDBG social service projects and a third category of administration. The CDBG allotted \$107,586 for administration, \$250,690 for Category II and \$529,666 for Category I. In order to help with budget cuts, the committee cut every program by 10 percent, then scored applications and ranked them.

The Category I budget includes \$14,248 for Day Stay for Adults to install a patio cover, up to \$173,918 for Christian Community Action (CCA) to address communication, space, security, client privacy at intake and efficient energy usage at its Family Assistance Center; up to \$56,500 for CCA to make improvements to a training room at its 121 ReSale Store; \$100,000 to continue the First-time Homebuyer Assistance program and \$185,000 to continue the Housing Rehabilitation program. Donna Barron, assistant city manager, said the patio cover for Day Stay for Adults is a state requirement.

The Category II budget includes funding for 14 social service agencies -- all of which received funding last year except Camp Summit and New Hope Learning Center's YOTO Program. Camp Summit has received funding in the past, while New Hope Learning Center is a new agency to receive funding. The CDBG is also helping to fund the Denton County Friends of the Family, the Children's Advocacy Center and the Salvation Army, among other organizations.

This year, the committee has continued funding for all agencies funded the previous year with funding cuts to several agencies. New agencies receiving funding include New Hope Learning Center and Camp Summit, who did not apply for funding last program year. The First-time Homebuyer Assistance

Program and the Housing Rehabilitation projects are continued.

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