

County Communities Seek Federal Funds From HUD For Housing, Other Public Improvement Projects

BY JIM REAGEN
CANTON — About nine local governments in St. Lawrence County are seeking about \$5 million in assistance from the federal government to improve housing and local facilities in their communities.

Through a private and public partnership between banks, local governments and the federal government, the projects would total about \$8 million.

The localities are applying for funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

St. Lawrence County Planning Department Director Mary Burns Verlaque says not all of the localities

will actually receive funds from HUD because of the stiff competition from localities across the state.

"Our experience shows that about one in 10 will actually receive any money," she said.

Localities that win out in the competition for money will be using the funds to improve local housing, expand water and sewer systems, and provide other local facility improvements they could not otherwise afford.

For example, St. Lawrence County plans to apply for \$750,000 in funds to rehabilitate housing in rural areas. Those local funds will be combined with other funds from the federal weatherization program and low interest loans from local banks to assist

low and moderate income families improve their homes.

Mrs. Verlaque said the private sector funds from local banks will be used when the improvements will mean the person receiving assistance can reap a monetary advantage from the program.

Apartment Renovations

For example, in some cases, Mrs. Verlaque says, county residents are living in large houses that could be converted into two apartments. The person whose house would be converted would agree to accept a loan and pay it back through part of the rental income they would receive from converting their house.

In some cases, where the owner can expect a large return from energy

savings when the house is insulated, the owner would agree to pay back a portion based on his energy savings, Mrs. Verlaque said.

That kind of private participation means more local housing can be rehabilitated with the limited amount of funds available, she said. "The local banks are interested in improving housing in the county."

Several localities are using the county planning office to help them apply for the federal grants.

Applications Detailed

Russell is applying for \$442,600 for

housing rehabilitation funds. Louisville officials are submitting a \$499,000 grant application to build sewer lines to hook up to Massena's sewer system.

The Village of Madrid is applying for \$493,500 to pay for a water system, wells, and water lines. That project will cost \$1,245,500, but the additional funds will be paid through Farmers Home Administration funds and a local bond issue.

The City of Ogdensburg, which is using its own staff to apply for a Com-

prehensive Block Grant, is asking for \$750,000 from HUD. Those funds will be used with \$1,551,000 from UDAG funds and other funds to rehabilitate homes, demolish vacant and deteriorated housing, replace the Lake Street bridge, improve lighting, improve sewer, parks and roads, and other projects.

The villages of Canton, Gouverneur, Norwood and Heuvelton have hired consulting firms to assist them in obtaining funds.

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