

**CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL  
PERFORMANCE & EVALUATION REPORT  
SUMMARY  
FOR  
CITIZENS**



**PROGRAM YEAR 2021**

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF BERKS  
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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has consolidated the planning, application and reporting provisions for four HUD programs. The programs are: the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investments Partnerships (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA). HUD has taken this action in order to eliminate repetitious and overlapping requirements that have proven burdensome to local governments that administer these programs. The Consolidated Plan replaces several documents related to the above programs which were previously submitted separately to HUD.

The Consolidated Plan regulations require each jurisdiction with an approved consolidated plan to annually review and report, in a form prescribed by HUD, on the progress it has made in carrying out its strategic plan and action plan. This document represents the 3<sup>rd</sup> report submitted by the County of Berks for its Consolidated Plan for FFY2019-2023. The programs and time periods covered by this document are:

CDBG Program.....	1/1/2021 - 12/31/2021
HOME Program.....	1/1/2021 - 12/31/2021
ESG Program .....	1/1/2021 - 12/31/2021

The format of this Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) follows the County’s Consolidated Plan and other narrative required by HUD. In this manner, the reader will more easily be able to relate the County’s progress in implementing the Consolidated Plan with the actions it undertook during 2021.

From the CDBG Program, the County expended \$2,137,606. From the ESG Program, the County expended \$170,046. From the HOME Program, the County expended \$631,387.

During 2021, the County continued its emphasis on comprehensive community revitalization by allocating funds to the Berks County Redevelopment Authority for redevelopment area activities. The Redevelopment Authority continued implementing the goals of the Downtown Redevelopment Area in Sinking Spring, the Penn Avenue Redevelopment Area in West Reading, and the Armorcast Redevelopment Area in Birdsboro. At the direction of the County, the Redevelopment Authority continued to provide funding for major improvements at the Reading Area Community College.

During 2021, the County’s activities directly benefitted 807 persons comprised of 610 White, 194 Black or African-American, 2 American Natives, and 1 Asian. Of the total persons, 293 were Hispanic. The activities indirectly benefitted approximately 4,100 persons.

## **ASSESSMENT OF FIVE-YEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

This Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) marks Berks County's completion of its 2021 program year for expenditures of federal, state, and local funds. This report is an assessment of the County's one-year goals and objectives and accomplishments within the framework of the 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan. Various sections of this report will address the County's actions and activities undertaken to address pertinent Strategic Plan objectives and areas of high priority that were identified in the Consolidated Plan so that overall performance in meeting the goals can be assessed. The County did not hinder the plan's implementation by any action or any willful inaction.

The Consolidated Plan for housing and community development directs the overall allocation of various resources within the community and defines the goals and strategies for improving the local community. The plan, which is developed for each successive five-year period, benefits from the collaborative efforts of citizens, elected officials, public/private agencies, and nonprofit organizations. This process identifies priority community needs which then become the basis for the five-year plan. During each successive year of the Consolidated Plan, an Annual Action Plan is prepared to facilitate implementation of identified housing needs, capital improvements, and public services. The CAPER documents each year's achievements. The following federal entitlement grants were utilized:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG)
- Home Investment Partnerships (HOME)

In an effort to prioritize needs and efficiently allocate resources, the County used survey results, group meetings, citizen input, and statistical data to determine community development needs. The Consolidated Plan identified the following priority needs for the County:

- Capital Improvements (CIPs): Infrastructure, including water/sewer improvements; street, road, and sidewalk improvements; flood/drainage improvements; and public facilities such as community facilities, senior centers, homeless centers, neighborhood centers, parks and recreation facilities, parking facilities, non-residential historic preservation, etc.
- Economic Development: Assistance to for-profits, technical assistance, micro-enterprise assistance, rehabilitation of publicly or privately owned commercial or industrial, commercial or industrial infrastructure development, and other commercial or industrial improvements.

- Homeless Needs: emergency, transitional and permanent housing, job training, case management, substance abuse treatment, mental health care, chronic substance abuse, rapid re-housing, and homelessness prevention.
- Affordable Housing: Assistance for extremely low-income, low-income, and moderate-income families and individuals; and assistance for persons with special needs.

### **AFFIRMATIVELY FURTHERING FAIR HOUSING**

Berks County prepared and adopted an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing covering 2019-2023. The strategies recommended to ameliorate the potential impediments to fair housing choice in Berks County are based on the conclusions developed from the research and interviews conducted for the Analysis. While the COVID-19 Pandemic delayed the implementation of many of the fair housing actions outlined in the Analysis, the following actions were undertaken during 2021:

1. Promote fair housing awareness through the media, seminars, and training to provide educational opportunities for all persons to learn more about their rights under the Fair Housing Act and Americans with Disabilities Act.
2. Make available and distribute literature and informational material concerning fair housing issues, an individual's housing rights, and landlord responsibilities to affirmatively further fair housing.
3. Continue to support and encourage plans from both private developers.
4. Continue to support and provide financing for the rehabilitation of the existing housing stock to become decent, safe, and sound housing that will remain affordable to low/moderate income households.
5. Work with national and state organizations to increase the funding for housing.
6. Encourage and support non-profit housing agencies to apply for funding from federal, state, and foundation resources to promote and develop affordable housing projects.
7. Strengthen partnerships and develop incentive programs that will enhance the County's business base, expand its tax base, and create a more sustainable economy.
8. Continue to have the Berks County Planning Commission review new or amendments to zoning ordinances for provisions that would restrict fair housing choice.

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

During the past year, Berks County continued to focus on leveraging state, local and federal resources to create and maintain affordable housing in order to assist extremely low, very low, and low-income persons and households with their housing needs. Similarly, the County continued to explore funding resources and to forge partnerships with private developers, community-based organizations, and other governmental entities to expand housing opportunities for its lower income residents.

Continuing the trend from previous years, the Berks County Redevelopment Authority and its nonprofit continued to seek opportunities to create additional affordable housing. The Berks

County Redevelopment Authority purchased one deteriorated property in Reading was rehabilitated into an emergency shelter for intact homeless families. Funds from the County's local Affordable Housing Program will be used for the activity. The Authority's nonprofit completed and sold 1 new house to a low/moderate income family. The Redevelopment Authority provided HOME Program funds to Berks Housing Opportunities for the rehabilitation of a single-family home which was sold to a low/moderate income family upon completion.

## **HOMELESS**

From the ESG Program, the County provided several grants to non-profit organizations who provide emergency shelters. The projects funded by Berks County's ESG Program are an integral part of the projects and programs outlined in the Strategy to End Homelessness of the Berks Coalition to End Homelessness. In 2021, 792 persons were directly assisted with ESG Program funds.

## **SELF-EVALUATION**

The County intends to continue funding programs and activities which are County-wide in scope, meet an identified community development need, improve the housing stock of the County, revitalize the County's communities, and implement the County's Comprehensive Plan. Finally, the County will allocate sufficient funds to insure the proper planning and administration of its CDBG Program. Any activity funded by the County's CDBG Program shall be consistent with the goals and objectives of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The County is committed to reinvesting in its established municipalities to remain a vital community and to remain competitive in the region, state and nation for economic prosperity and quality of life. The CDBG, HOME and ESG federal funding sources, collectively with state and local resources, continue to be critical in helping the County assist its low/moderate income residents.

The greatest obstacle to addressing underserved community development and housing needs is the continuing lack of adequate funds at the federal, state, and local level. The County continues searching for additional funding to address underserved needs.

Affordable housing is a priority in the Consolidated Plan. The County, during the reporting period, expended \$597,8446 to provide affordable housing opportunities. These funds leveraged private lender funding for homeownership programs and were used to finance the purchase and rehabilitation of single-family houses, homelessness prevention, and rapid re-housing. Through these actions, the County has been able to address a key barrier to affordable housing - the difficulty of low/moderate income first-time home buyers to purchase quality housing at an affordable price.

Economic opportunities for business and low/moderate income persons continue to be developed through the Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program. The Berks County Industrial Development Authority's industrial park located at the Reading Regional Airport continues to proceed on schedule. Jobs continue to be created as part of the revitalization of the Colebrookdale Railroad.

The County of Berks continues to be timely in its grant disbursements. Expenditures for the CDBG Program were within the requirements. The percent of CDBG Program expenditures benefitting low/moderate income persons was 99.92% for 2021.

The County has exceeded its projections for housing and community development accomplishments during 2021. The County continues to make progress toward its priority goals established in the Consolidated Plan and to address the needs of its citizens. The County developed a sound Plan and does not have any indication that the objectives of the Plan need to be amended.

The County of Berks and the Redevelopment Authority of the County entered into a restated Services Agreement dated October 6, 2016, pursuant to which the County of Berks engaged the Authority to, among other things, administer federal, state, and local grants received by the County of Berks for programs related to housing and community development within the County of Berks.