

HHS Master Plan Advisory Committee Community Services Study Group

Community Services Overarching Goal: *Building a Healthy Community and Protecting Civil Rights*

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The Community Services Study Group – composed of four members of the full Housing and Human Services Master Plan Advisory Committee – met on June 29, July 27 and August 18 to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the Community Services Division. In its examination, the study group considered Divisional efforts in each of the strategy areas of involvement identified earlier in the master planning process:

- *Direct Service Delivery.* Services are provided by the Office of Human Rights (OHR) through enforcement of Boulder’s Human Rights Ordinance. The Human Relations Commission (HRC) serves as a quasi-judicial body on appeal of OHR findings. The study group affirms the work done by OHR and the HRC in this area.
- *Funds Allocation.* The Division allocates over \$2 million in support of community services through the Human Services Fund and the Cultural Celebrations Fund. The study group affirms the purposes of these funds and suggests minor adjustments to the themes governing the priority areas for funding, as well as the funding priorities themselves. Boulder’s level of commitment is vital to the success of human services for its residents and serves as both a leverage for additional funding by other public and private entities and as a leadership role for other municipalities in the county.
- *Community Catalyst.* Boulder’s non-profit human services infrastructure and services system is influenced through the themes and priority areas of the Human Services Fund. In the broader context, social policy is developed through the work of the HRC, as defined in the Boulder Revised Code. The study group suggests minor adjustments to the themes of the Human Services Fund and affirms the role played by the Human Relations Commission in the development of social policy. The Department could play a greater role in community and regional planning of services and policies that could contribute to a healthy community.

In the work of the Division, these functions are addressed through civil rights enforcement, the Human Services Fund and the development of social policy.

Civil Rights Enforcement

Unequal access and enforcement of U.S. Constitutional rights brought about a civil rights movement in the 1960s that resulted in federal civil rights legislation guaranteeing individuals freedom from discrimination. Unfortunately, even by the early 1970s, the backlog of cases filed under state and federal anti-discrimination laws caused cases of discrimination brought against employers, landlords and business owners to be delayed for periods of months – or even years – before resolution could be achieved. To ensure that Boulder residents could enjoy their rights in a timely manner, in 1972 City Council adopted the Boulder Human Rights Ordinance (HRO), which affords residents *local* protection against discrimination in the areas of employment, housing and public accommodation (access to goods and services offered by private business to the general public).

For 15 years, the Boulder HRO was successful in enforcing state and federal anti-discrimination laws through a speedier process that was more responsive to resolving differences than state and federal systems could be. In 1987, however, Boulder citizens voted to expand the local anti-discrimination law to include an additional class of residents who were experiencing discrimination: the gay community. With the passage of this ballot initiative, Boulder civil rights law moved into new territory, expanding the rights afforded by state and federal law to an additional “protected class.”

This expansion of protection against discrimination was challenged in the courts, but was ultimately upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1996. Since that date, Boulder City Council has further amended the HRO to expand protected classes to gender identity and genetic characteristics.

In the 17 years since the addition of sexual orientation as a protected class, Boulder has been recognized as a national leader in its Human Rights Ordinance and acceptance of diversity. The study group affirms and commends Boulder’s leadership in this area.

Today, the OHR handles approximately 300 inquiries of discrimination annually, nearly half of which are employment related, 40% housing related and the remainder associated with public accommodation. Not surprisingly, there is a growing percentage of cases involving discrimination on the basis of national origin.

The study group sees no need for an expansion or retraction of covered classes. If such needs are identified in the future, the process for amending the HRO should occur through the existing structure involving City Council and the Human Relations Commission.

Human Services Fund

The Human Services Fund (HSF) was created as the result of a shared vision of caring and building a healthy community. In 1992 Boulder voters approved a ballot initiative earmarking 40% of a .15% sales tax for human services, adding approximately \$1 million to an existing \$1 million committed from the City's General Fund. Since the 1994 Council approval of an allocations master plan, the HSF allocates over \$2 million annually to community agencies serving Boulder residents.

During the past decade these funds have served to enhance a comprehensive and coordinated human services network. At its core, this network serves as a safety net of basic services ensuring physical and mental health care, emergency shelter and transitional housing and programming to assist Boulder residents achieve self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Additionally, however, Boulder's human services funding has promoted a system of prevention and early intervention programming designed to preclude more costly treatment services before problems become acute. The need for such services is not limited to lower income populations; rather, it cuts across all economic strata.

The study group believes that city government has a responsibility in ensuring a quality environment that promotes a livable, working community for all its residents. Boulder's significant investment in human services has played a leadership role for other cities in the county and has had a huge return in leveraging funds from other sources, creating a "culture of caring" throughout the greater community.

Seven themes underlie the Human Services Fund and guide five priority areas of funding.

Themes of the Human Services Fund

The major themes of the Human Services Fund – that is, the philosophy underpinning the purpose, content and delivery of supported services – are vital to success for the blend of services supporting the overarching goal of the Fund: building a healthy community. These themes were sound at the establishment of the HSF in 1994, are appropriate today and provide a vision for the coming decade. The themes are:

- Promotion of Healthy, Nurturing Families: Pre-Natal through Adolescence;
- Balance among Prevention, Intervention and Treatment Strategies;
- Provision of Home, School and Community Based Services;
- Comprehensive, Intensive and Flexible Services;
- Respect for Diversity;
- Spirit of Unity, Affiliation and Community Engagement; and
- Independent and Self-Reliant Community Members.

The study group affirms the basic premises of the themes and has made some minor enhancements to reflect the changing local environment and national trends. The themes unite to promote the culture of caring necessary to build and maintain a healthy community.

Promotion of Healthy, Nurturing Families: Pre-Natal through Adolescence

Families, both traditional and non-traditional, are the basic structure which society invests with the responsibility of nurturing and socializing its members. They serve as the link between the individual and society, providing each family member with basic needs such as food and shelter, as well as emotional support, primary social values and a sense of continuity and belonging. Maintaining the family as the central organizing structure in society is critical to individual health and productivity as well as social stability.

The composition of contemporary families is changing. In addition to traditional two-parent families, society is increasingly made up of alternative family models, including single-parent, step- and blended-families, and gay and lesbian families. Some alternative models have been brought about by choice, others because of major social and economic pressures, including a rising divorce rate, declining income of young families and significant mobility which separates extended families and reduces natural support networks. These and other factors have caused some fragmentation in the family and increased the importance of the community acting as an extended family. It is the responsibility of the full community to assist in the healthy development of children and youth by creating nurturing environments for them. A shared commitment among families, schools, religious and social organizations, and the community at large to promote positive opportunities and outcomes for young people is essential to building strong families and a healthy community.

Among other factors, economic and social pressures have contributed to rising rates of family violence and abuse, both physical and emotional. Increasingly, family bonds are strained and broken by violent, destructive behavior. Abusive acts destroy the family as a safe, nurturing place and pose a major threat to the stability of the community. Moreover, children raised in dysfunctional and violent homes are at risk for a variety of negative outcomes, including academic failure, behavioral problems and repetition, as adults, of the violence they experienced as children. The negative consequences of abuse are often long lasting, producing physical, emotional and cognitive delays from the trauma of witnessing or experiencing violence. Left unattended, the frequency and severity of family violence may outweigh any positive efforts to build safe, nurturing environments for young people.

An aging population causes the emergence of new needs – not only for an increasingly older and frailer group living much longer than in the past, but also for their children, themselves entering their elder years, who must take on added responsibilities of caring for their aging parents.

Prevention and early intervention efforts which build upon family strengths have proven effective tools to improve family functioning. Key components of these efforts include creating partnerships with families, shared decision-making, community and neighborhood-based support services, emphasis on the whole family unit and using family strengths to develop strong parenting skills early in the lives of children. Relying upon elders and other extended family members whose knowledge and experience can be a source of support for families is another way to build upon family strengths.

Success in building family capacity also depends upon providing services and support from pre-birth through adolescence, especially for families at risk of family violence and other negative

outcomes, though it should also be emphasized that needs are not limited to lower income families. In particular, efforts to change cultural beliefs around violence are needed. Access to information about child and youth development – including pre-natal issues, physical and behavioral stages, transitions from childhood to adolescence and the many issues which emerge in the teen years, as well as opportunities to build skills in these areas – are essential to healthy family development.

Too often, parenting skills are viewed as necessary only during the first years of life. Successful parenting continues through adolescence, and recognition of child development norms and expectations are vitally important throughout a child's school years, particularly at points of transition from elementary to middle school, and from middle school to high school. By developing and supporting such services, the community at large shares the responsibility to create nurturing, healthy environments for children and youth.

Human services programming which reflects these characteristics has the potential to prevent problems before they begin and reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes. Prevention and early intervention strategies that build partnerships with parents and encourage community responsibility for creating nurturing settings hold great promise for reducing the severity and longevity of problem behavior, as well as future treatment costs. By accepting a variety of family structures and promoting the development of healthy families of all types, a significant portion of the City's human service efforts is targeted for maximum effect early in the lives of children and youth.

Balance among Prevention, Intervention and Treatment Strategies

Using funds provided by the City over the past decade, Boulder's current human services system has served this community well by offering integrated services and striving to address needs and gaps. Boulder's investment of human services dollars has assisted in the development and maintenance of a system which is as strong, extensive and comprehensive as few cities' of similar size. Through funding provided by the Human Services Fund, Boulder's network of services has moved beyond a system overbalanced toward treatment services.

Typically, core or basic services provided by a non-profit system fall into a category of *treatment services*: those which provide primary physical and mental health services, crisis and transitional shelter and emergency services, such as the provision of food. This group of services is vitally important in any community as, together, they provide a "safety net" meeting primary, immediate needs of residents and address existing problems.

To be successful in creating a change for the better and reducing the need for treatment services, however, a human services network needs to consist of strategies to address potential social problems as well as existing conditions.

Prevention is generally viewed as taking advance measures against possible problems, with the goal of preventing them altogether or reducing the frequency of their occurrence. Providing immunizations to children to avoid diseases is often cited as the classic prevention effort.

Intervention is generally defined as any systematic attempt to modify or reverse the course of development of problem behavior from its established or predicted path. Intervention efforts may

be direct, such as providing support to an adolescent presenting symptoms of abuse, or simply an assessment and referral to appropriate services upon identification of a problem.

Effective capacity building for families requires prevention and early intervention programming. Preventing problem behavior or minimizing its impact reduces future trauma and treatment costs. The resulting savings is not only financial; the value of preventing future emotional and psychological damage is inestimable. Expansion of prevention and early intervention programs is critical to increasing positive outcomes for children while reducing the heavy demand for treatment.

In practice it is often difficult to draw sharp distinctions among prevention, intervention and treatment efforts, as the best programs may contain elements of each strategy. Initial requests for treatment may conclude with preventive measures and vice versa. Boulder's human service programs often reflect all three strategies.

Provision of Home, School and Community Based Services

To be effective, human services should be offered in multiple locations which are convenient, central, and accessible for individuals and families. A variety of service choices are necessary to accommodate differing schedules, locations, values and needs. Ideally, family services – especially those directed to infants, young children and the elderly – should be available in the home to serve culturally or physically isolated families and individuals. Schools offer a prime setting to serve children and youth, connecting families with the school and an array of services. Moreover, working through schools allows access to the full population of K-12 students and an opportunity to identify needs for referral and treatment. Services should be offered in other community settings for those children, youth and families who are more comfortable receiving services outside the school.

Creating service delivery alternatives can increase the number of people served while improving response to the services delivered. Accessibility is essential to meet the needs of a diverse community. Whenever possible, services should be linked to established community resources, thereby building upon the existing service network.

Comprehensive, Intensive and Flexible Services

Continuing reductions in funding at the state and national level – coupled with more recent downturns in the economy that have resulted in a diminished level of private giving – have brought about a reduced and increasingly fragmented human services system in many communities. In contrast, Boulder's human services investment has contributed to the delivery of services adequate to meet the multiple needs of individuals, families and populations with separate needs by supporting services and delivery systems that are comprehensive, intensive and flexible.

- *Comprehensive* services are based upon a “holistic” approach, addressing the needs of the whole individual within the context of his/her family and community. Such services may focus on multiple needs by responding to immediate concerns while seeking solutions to more chronic problems.

- *Intensive* services respond to the severity and longevity of problems by offering in-depth, long term strategies aimed at the “root” of the problem. Continuity of service, follow-up to ensure a need has been met and specialized outreach to hard to serve individuals and families are also part of intensive service delivery.
- *Flexible* services are required to overcome bureaucratic barriers and tailor services to specific client needs.

Respect for Diversity

Boulder is a mosaic of people of differing ages, physical and mental abilities as well as cultural, religious, ethnic, racial heritages and sexual orientations. All have a contribution to make to the community. The Respect for Diversity theme underscores the community’s commitment to respect, support and value each member of the community and to seek elimination of all forms of discrimination. Providing culturally competent, language accessible services which respect and address the varying differences and needs among individuals and groups is a necessity in any community, and perhaps especially in one whose demographics are changing.

A Spirit of Unity, Affiliation and Community Engagement

A strong sense of belonging tends to bond people and create the kind of affiliations that enrich and strengthen community life. When people feel connected to a community, they participate and share in it through service and commitment to each other and the community at large. In giving back to the community, each member builds a stronger link to it and thereby helps to strengthen the whole.

Communities that are effective at creating a strong sense of belonging among their members have generally emphasized united, collaborative efforts among all segments of the community to promote civic engagement.

Resilient, unified communities have also valued and nurtured the differing groups and sub-communities which constitute the whole. Enhancing each group’s ability to contribute to and fully participate in community life builds a stronger community for everyone. Enlisting all parts of the community to work together to create a sense of belonging and investment in the city can be especially important in welcoming and furthering a sense of community for Boulder’s immigrant population. Partnerships among neighborhoods, schools, social organizations, businesses, the faith community and other groups are necessary to create this environment.

Independent and Self-Reliant Community Members

A primary goal of human services is to develop each individual’s ability to be as self-reliant and independent as possible. This goal recognizes a continuum of self-reliance defined by one’s age and place in the life cycle as well as by individual characteristics. Self-reliance does not mean complete self-sufficiency; rather, services should be provided with the goal of reducing dependencies and building individual capacity within a supportive community. Building such capacity means empowering people by involving them as partners in decision-making, developing their problem-solving skills and respecting their personal values and choices.

Nurturing individual capabilities builds competencies and fosters self-esteem, thereby enhancing each person's ability to lead a productive life and contribute to the community. The whole community is enriched when each of its members is able to maximize his or her potential and play a positive role in community life.

Priority Areas of the Human Services Fund

The 1994 Human Services Master Plan, as amended, identifies seven Priority Areas for funding. Five of these seven are allocated through the Human Services Fund:

- Early Childhood;
- Child Care and Preschools;
- School Age;
- Domestic Violence and Child Abuse; and
- Critical Infrastructure.

The two remaining Priority Areas are allocated by the Human Relations Commission (human relations and diversity education) and the Youth Opportunity Advisory Board (youth mentoring programs, administered by the Children, Youth and Families Division).

Over the course of the summer 2004, the Community Services Study Group assessed the appropriateness for the coming decade of the existing HSF Priority Areas administered by the Division of Community Services and arrived at the following proposed modifications, based on knowledge of community needs, demographic and social trends for the future, and experience gained from ten funding cycles under the current Priority Areas.

The study group recognizes that the City of Boulder and the Human Services Fund cannot shoulder the responsibility for problems and social concerns whose solutions are more national in scope and need both systemic change and vastly greater financial commitment at the federal and state levels. Issue areas discussed by the study group with this in mind include:

- *Employment.* While the study group realizes that employment and the financial resources it brings are basic to the access of all goods and services and the success of building self-reliant community members, employment issues are, at their foundation, a function of the national and local economy and not appropriate for the work of this Department (though other City offices are involved in creating a successful business environment). Additionally, training issues surrounding the unemployed and underemployed are a mandate of the state and county systems established for this purpose. This is not to say, however, that programs funded by the HSF may not touch upon related services (see discussion of "self-sufficiency" under the Critical Infrastructure Priority Area, below).
- *Health Care.* Health insurance and access to health care are dual aspects of a continuing national crisis whose solutions are to be found only at the federal and state levels through comprehensive Medicare and Medicaid redesign or the development of national health insurance covering all US residents. The City shares a responsibility with the county and private giving to help those ignored by the current system to gain access to care, but local

funds are limited and the City cannot afford to place too great a percentage of its resources shoring up a system whose shortcomings and deficiencies are national.

- *Mental Health.* Due to ever more stringent requirements within Medicaid, lower-income people's access to needed mental health services has been drastically diminished over the past decade, with only a bleaker outlook presented for future years. As with physical health, the City shares a responsibility to help those ignored by the current system to gain access to services, but local funds are limited and the City cannot afford to place too great a percentage of its resources in an area where other levels of government have primary responsibility.
- *Alcohol and Substance Abuse.* Though primary responsibility for alcohol and substance abuse treatment programs lies with county government, the study group feels that it is appropriate for the City to continue funding which may indirectly assist in this area; e.g., through the Counseling Center and the Mental Health Center. In a non-funding role, the City could play a larger role in assisting with the design, coordination and implementation of community-wide alcohol and substance abuse prevention programs, especially those targeting youth.

Following is a listing of the proposed revisions to the Priority Areas of the Human Services Fund and the Human Relations Commission. The percent listed after each brief Priority Area description represents the proposed level of funding. As is currently the practice, the study group believes these should serve as general *targets* to determine relative funding among the Areas, not as final amounts to which allocations must strictly adhere. The Human Services Fund Technical Review Committee should continue to have discretion in determining exact allocations for each Area it recommends to Council for funding.

Early Childhood. *Targeted prevention and early intervention programs focused on parenting, prenatal and infant care and child development. (11%)*

Research clearly establishes that the early years in life play a crucial role in shaping a person's lifelong mental, emotional and physical abilities. Programs in this Priority Area should assist families in meeting the developmental needs of their children to lay the foundation for children's ability to become self-reliant as adults. The City will support prevention and early intervention services that provide intensive home and community based services, including:

- Childbirth and parenting classes; home visits; individual family service plans; and related transportation;
- Services for children from birth to kindergarten, including: preventive health care; child development screening; home visits; referral services; and related transportation;
- Parent support, including: self-help groups; nutrition counseling; parent education; child development consultation; and related transportation; and

- Outreach to families with children ages zero to five to provide information, assessment and referral for a variety of family support services, including parenting, child development, health and wellness, individual and family counseling, and adult education.

Services under this Priority Area should target (but need not be limited to) high risk populations such as low income families, racial and ethnic minority populations, pregnant adolescents, substance abusers and/or families with other risk factors. Programs linked with pre-schools for the provision of these services are not encouraged in this Priority Area (see Child Care and Preschools).

Child Care and Preschools. *Affordable, accessible, high quality child care, nurturing programs and pre-school programs. (18%)*

Addressing child care financing, cost, quality, availability and accessibility is paramount to ensuring the safety, health, and educational and social success of children. Before- and after-school child care services are eligible for funding in this Priority Area, as well as programs for infants, toddlers and pre-school age children. Preschool programs that place a special emphasis on “readiness to learn” through enhanced support services for preschool age children and their families are encouraged.

Funding in this Priority Area is intended to increase the number of child care slots available to Boulder residents through creative efforts that increase parent choice. Programs offering an integrated approach creating healthy environments for young children through collaboration among the primary influences in their lives – families, child care providers, neighborhood schools and support services – are especially encouraged.

Programs supported may include:

- Increasing the capacity of child care providers to offer sliding fee scales, vouchers or other types of subsidies to accommodate low income families’ child care needs and increase parent choice;
- Increasing the quantity and quality of licensed home care providers. Allowable services include training and support services;
- Partnerships among providers to expand service and capacity;
- Increasing the number of child care providers who care for populations currently underserved in Boulder due to language or cultural differences, emotional or physical problems;
- Increasing the availability of child care during unusual working hours (e.g., night shifts or weekends);
- Increasing the availability of crisis or emergency child care; and

- Collaborative efforts between neighborhood child care centers/homes and kindergartens to assess “readiness to learn” of the young child and to work with families to locate specialized services to meet identified physical, emotional and developmental needs of the young child.

School Age. *Programs that increase the likelihood of academic success and well-being for school age children and youth (K-12). (14%)*

Collaborative efforts among schools, service providers and other relevant entities to provide an array of culturally competent services for families and their children, including school-based or school-linked services will be supported by this Priority Area, including:

- Assessment and referral – methodologies and systems for assessing specific and ongoing needs of children and their families, including assessment tools and implementation of new referral protocols or programs leading to the earliest possible intervention;
- Intervention – strategies that detail observable, measurable change based on comprehensive assessment and activities, practices or services which prevent an observed problem from continuing;
- Counseling Services – targeted to families and their children to address situational problems as well as long term issues;
- Relevant life-skills training – such as conflict resolution and pre-parenting skills;
- Tutoring or academic assistance programs, especially those targeting underachieving populations or at-risk children.
- Parenting classes for those with school age children, especially those emphasizing developmental changes during “transition years,” i.e., from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school.
- General family support services – programs that present opportunities for intervention in family crises, as well as measurable support to families participating in a continuum of preventive or treatment services. Programs should emphasize regular, continuous contact with children and their families through face-to-face, personalized attention.

Domestic Violence and Child Abuse. *Services for children, youth and families who are at risk for or are experiencing family violence, sexual abuse, neglect and other problems. (5%)*

This Priority Area supports victims of family violence, abuse and neglect and promotes prevention and early intervention services which will act to reduce the incidence of family conflict that becomes violent. The City will support programs that address the following needs:

- *Pre-crisis support services* targeted to individuals and families most at risk for violence, abuse and/or neglect. Such services may include anger management and conflict resolution

programs as well as education and support networks to shift attitudes and behaviors while reducing the risk of family violence.

- *Intensive, long-term therapy for victims of violence, abuse and/or neglect* that address the significant and prolonged impact of such violence and break the cycle of violence which often occurs when victims commit the very acts of violence they have experienced. Proposals with individualized therapy directed to self-esteem development, promotion of healthy interpersonal relationships, and depression and suicide prevention are encouraged.

Collaborative, integrative efforts are encouraged, including:

- Services to reduce the trauma and sense of revictimization for victims (especially children) involved with the criminal justice system;
- Individualized support services for non-offending parents and other family members;
- Specialized training which educates and sensitizes service providers, including institutional and private practice counselors, to the signs and symptoms of family violence, neglect and abuse, and provides strategies to address the immediate problem as well as the underlying situation;
- Community-wide and/or targeted efforts to educate people about the causes and consequences of family violence, sexual assault and neglect, as well as preventive measures and appropriate responses which may be taken;
- Treatment programs targeted to individual offenders or groups of offenders; and
- An integrated, comprehensive and coordinated information, referral and follow-up system for available family violence, sexual assault and neglect services.

Critical Infrastructure. *Critical human services infrastructure that serves as a “safety net” for Boulder residents. (50%)*

Funding in this Priority Area supports Boulder’s critical human services infrastructure, including programs that increase the likelihood of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. The City will support programs addressing the following areas:

- *Health care* – Community-wide and/or targeted efforts providing primary health care, dental services, pregnancy prevention services or gynecological care for low income, chronically disabled or otherwise underserved city residents;
- *Mental health services* – programs that meet emergency psychiatric and mental health needs for adults with serious mental health disorders and mental illnesses; provide treatment for emotionally disturbed and mentally ill children and adolescents; and provide early

intervention counseling for families and individuals whose mental health needs are not as acute, but prevent people from coping with circumstances and life situations.

- *Crisis and transitional shelter* – programs that develop integrated advocacy and referral strategies for residents in need and the provision of emergency and/or transitional shelter (including those who are homeless or victims of domestic violence);
- *Self-sufficiency* – programs that provide residents with the skills necessary for achieving self-reliance, self-sufficiency and successful integration into the community; e.g., services promoting independence for disabled residents, English acquisition for immigrant populations, and jobs brokering for the homeless;
- *Legal services* – programs providing low-income Boulder residents with legal advice or representation in civil matters; and
- *Emergency services* – programs that provide emergency services to individuals and families in need, as well as programs that demonstrate collaboration and ensure early assessment.

Human Relations, Diversity Education, and Community Engagement. *Human relations and diversity programs – particularly those focusing on educational efforts – and programs that promote civic engagement in the community. (2%)*

Funding in this Priority Area supports all activities of the Boulder Human Relations Commission (HRC) and is not part of the Human Services Fund allocations process. In addition to general operational costs, the HRC makes grants to community-based organizations and agencies in support of cultural events through a competitive RFP process. These events must be open to the entire community. Additionally, the HRC may allocate funding for special projects of the Commission or may make special grants to community agencies in support of a particular issue or one-time event.

Coordination with Other Department Funding Mechanisms

Beyond consideration of the Priority Areas of the Human Services Fund, the issue was raised concerning the development of Priority Areas for each of the funding mechanisms administered by the Department, consolidated into one “plan.” Thus, the HHS Master Plan could have a section for allocations to the community that presents a unified set of Priority Areas governing:

- CHAP/HOME housing funds;
- Community Development Block Grant housing funding;
- Community Development Block Grant public service funding;
- Diversity Education and Community Engagement funding;
- Human Services Fund; and the
- Youth Opportunities Fund.

Such consolidation could combine elements of the purposes of the various Funds to provide a more comprehensive look at – and plan for – the integrated goals and objectives of the entire community allocations system administered by the Department. The study group concurred that this warrants further discussion by the full Committee at a later date.

Social Policy Development

The Boulder Human Relations Commission (HRC) is a five-member board appointed by City Council for staggered, five-year terms. In addition to serving as the quasi-judicial body in resolving complaints under the Human Rights Ordinance, the HRC is also charged with developing social policy recommendations to City Council and the City Manager.

Title 2 of the Boulder Revised Code provides the HRC with the functions to “foster mutual respect and understanding and to create an atmosphere conducive to the promotion of amicable relations of all members of the city’s community, [and] to serve as a vehicle through which citizens can convey their suggestions on city policies with respect to social problems...” In practice, the HRC serves as a bellweather for City Council on trends, issues and community concerns regarding social policy and social justice. Involvement of the HRC may come “from the community up” – as in the recent cases involving opposition to the federal Marriage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution – or “from City Council, down” – as with the “living wage” for Boulder employees.