

## SECOND-ROUND OCRA LETTERS OF INTEREST DUE

The Town of Van Buren had a fire station that was quickly outgrowing its usefulness. The all-volunteer Fire & Rescue Department was housed in an old building with fire trucks stacked three-deep in a two-bay station. There was limited space to put on gear and the building's foundation was experiencing distress.

There was also a lack of storage, sufficient training area and no drive-thru – making it difficult for trucks to back in.

The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) came to the rescue, awarding the Town a \$400,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The Public Facilities Program grant enabled the Town to pay for more than half of the new 5,000-square foot facility.

"If it wasn't for OCRA, we would not be able to do projects like this," said Michelle Sexton, Town clerk/treasurer.

The new \$687,000 fire station held a ribbon-cutting last November.

"The building was old and we just out-grew it," said Donnie Plummer, Van Buren's fire chief. "We were lucky to get the grant."

"It's a dream come true. I thought it would be years before we'd get new digs."

### Public Facilities Program One of Five CDBGs Available

The Public Facilities Program (PFP) is one of five grants administered by OCRA, with funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Grants are available for community facilities that enhance the lives of residents. Facilities include fire stations, libraries, museums, community centers and performance spaces that open doors to knowledge, ideas, culture and enjoyment. Historic preservation projects are also eligible for PFP funds.

The goals of the PFP program, which focuses on a long-term community development, is to improve facilities, generate jobs and spur economic revitalization.

Eligible projects, which should be a part of the community's overall strategy, also include:

- ADA accessibility;
- Community, learning, healthcare, senior and daycare centers;
- Dams/levees;
- Parks and recreation;
- Special needs buildings.

F&V helped Van Buren apply for and receive OCRA funds for the fire station.



"It really depends on the project, but OCRA grants are very, very competitive," Sexton said. "We're lucky to have a really good grant writer and she was able to show that we were in dire need of a new fire station."

Van Buren also received OCRA grants through its Blight Clearance Program (BCP) and Wastewater/Drinking Water Program (WDWP). Blight Clearance grants help communities remove unsightly and dangerous buildings to make the area more desirable to investors or new residents. Eligible projects include deteriorated or abandoned downtown buildings and vacant and unusable industrial sites.

The WDW program helps communities struggling with inadequate water supplies or failing wastewater treatment plants. Eligible projects include many aspects of wastewater improvements and drinking water system improvements.

Van Buren received \$195,000 last year for the demolition of three connecting parcels of blighted and abandoned downtown commercial buildings. The project included demolition of structures and site restoration including sidewalks, curbs and seeding, and asbestos abatement. In 2000, Van Buren received a grant for a water plant.

OCRA also offers grants for Stormwater Improvements and Main Street Revitalization.

The Stormwater Improvements Program (SIP) helps communities that suffer from flooded property and sewer backups due to inadequate stormwater management. The program:

- Reduces flooding;
- Cuts stormwater treatment and energy costs;
- Protect rivers, lakes, and vital landscape.

The Main Street Revitalization Program (MSRP) aids rural residents in their endeavors to create successful, sustainable communities and improve local quality of life. Eligible projects, which must be a part of the Main Street group's overall strategy, include:

- Streetscape;
- Façade Renovations;
- Downtown Infrastructure Rehabilitation.

### Communities Need to Act Quickly on Project Plans

OCRA recently announced Round 1 of Community Development Block Grant funding, awarding nearly \$11 million to 23 rural Hoosier communities. Round 2 Letters of Interest (LOI) are due Friday, July 7 by 4 p.m. Final project applications are due Sept. 1.

If you need help writing your Letters of Interest or brainstorming about projects that may be OCRA-eligible, contact Troy Stahl at [tstahl@fveng.com](mailto:tstahl@fveng.com) or at 317.843.0022.

*In this Issue:*  
**Second-round OCRA Letters of Interest Due**

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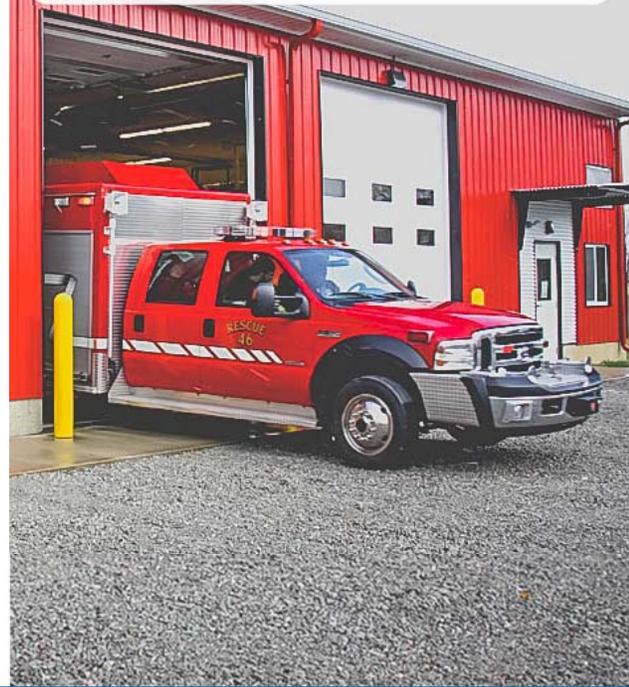
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*Michelle Sexton, Clerk / Treasurer  
Town of Van Buren*



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