

Bush's Budget Leaves Less Room For Service

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Evanston could lose more than \$1 million each year in federal grants for community development if President Bush's proposed budget is passed.

The Community Development Block Grant funds public services and improvements such as alley paving, housing improvement, legal services, job programs and graffiti removal. Evanston's grant was about \$2.7 million last year.

CDBG funding, which makes up about 3 percent of Evanston's budget, could be cut in half if Bush's budget is approved, said Sally Lufkin, Evanston's CDBG administrator. Bush's proposed federal budget combines the CDBG program with 17 other programs funded with \$3.7 billion. Last year, CDBG alone received \$4.7 billion.

"It's going to have a significant impact on Evanston," Lufkin said. "(The city) would have to choose to not fund or defer some of its projects."

The city would have to raise property taxes 4.3 percent to recover the loss, said Bill Stafford, Evanston's finance director.

Evanston is one of about 1,000 communities nationwide guaranteed grant money, Lufkin said. Generally, cities of more than 50,000 receive grants. The grant amount depends on variables such as the number of lower income residents and the quality of housing stock.

The Youth Job Center of Evanston has received CDBG funding for the last 20 years. The grant makes up \$72,000 of the organization's \$600,000 budget this year. The center might not need to cut services if it lost half its CDBG money, said James Sibley, director of the center. But it would be difficult to replace it, he added.

Other organizations might not be so lucky, Lufkin said. The grants are a way for Evanston to show its support for local not-for-profit agencies, she said. The public support makes it easier for them to get funding elsewhere.

"Some of those grants (from other organizations) could fall by the wayside," Lufkin said.

Evanston cannot spend more than 15 percent of CDBG money on public service or reallocate CDBG money to those services if overall funding is cut.

The cuts in Bush's budget, released earlier this month, seek to reduce the federal government's record deficit. Programs that duplicate other services have not met goals or are not essential could be cut, Bush said.

"Spending discipline requires difficult choices," Bush said earlier this month. "Every government program was created with good intentions, but not all are matching good intentions with good results."

Democrats, including U.S. Rep. Jan **Schakowsky** (D-Evanston), have promised to fight Bush's cuts. Schakowsky does not support CDBG cuts, said Nadeam Elshami, Schakowsky's press secretary.

The Associated Press contributed this story.