



# **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program**

## **Citizen Participation Plan**

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) sets forth the City of Norwalk's policies and procedures for citizen participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program planning process. The CPP complies with the regulations located at 24 Code of Federal Register (CFR) 91.105 Citizen Participation Plan, local governments. The CPP applies to the 5-Year Consolidated Plan, including the Strategic Plan and each Annual Action Plan; substantial amendments to the 5-Year Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan(s); and the Consolidated Plan Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

The policies and procedures set forth in this Citizen Participation Plan should be interpreted as the City's good faith effort to meet the requirements of 24 CFR 91.105(a)-(k). The City may choose, from time to time, to exceed the standards and requirements of 24 CFR 91.105(a)-(k). When the City so chooses, this action shall not be interpreted as an amendment to the CPP, but rather as an effort by the City to go beyond the minimum requirements.

## **B. ENCOURAGEMENT OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

The CPP provides for and encourages the participation of all residents and interested organizations in the development of the 5-Year Consolidated Plan, substantial amendments to the 5-Year Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s), and performance reports. Specifically, the CPP encourages participation from:

- Low- and moderate-income persons, particularly those living in slum/blight areas and in areas where CDBG and HOME funds are proposed to be used.
- Residents of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods as defined in the Consolidated Plan.
- Minorities.
- Non-English-speaking persons.
- Persons with disabilities.
- Residents of affordable housing developments (i.e., financially assisted housing) and the Public Housing Authority.
- Low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas.
- Local and regional institutions, the Continuum of Care and other organizations (including businesses, developers, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community-based and faith-based organizations).

The City has and will continue to consider additional ways that encourages public input.

## **C. CITIZEN COMMENTS ON THE ORIGINAL CPP**

The City will provide ample and reasonable opportunity to citizens and interested groups to comment on the original CPP. The public will also be provided reasonable

opportunity to review and comment on substantial amendments to the CPP (See Section N). The City will make the CPP public and make the plan accessible to persons with disabilities or non-English speaking individuals, upon request.

#### **D. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN**

Before the City adopts a Consolidated Plan, it will:

- Make available to citizens, public agencies, and interested parties' information that states the amount of CDBG and HOME funds the City expects to receive.
- Describe the range of activities that may be undertaken with CDBG and HOME funds.
- Estimate the amount that will benefit persons of low- and moderate-income.

The methods that the City will use to make this information available will include, but not be limited, to:

- Press releases.
- Website announcements.
- Direct mailings/applications to social services agencies, nonprofits, and public entities.
- Working with the Senior Citizen Center.
- Working with the Social Services Commission.
- Other appropriate methods.

#### **E. DISPLACEMENT POLICIES**

The City will comply with all federal regulations governing residential anti-displacement and relocation assistance as they pertain to the CDBG and HOME programs. It is the City's policy to avoid, to the greatest extent feasible, the involuntary displacement of any persons, property, or businesses as a result of a federally funded CDBG or HOME activity such as acquisition, demolition or rehabilitation.

The City will take all reasonable steps to minimize involuntary displacement by approving and designing activities in such a way that displacement is avoided whenever possible. In extraordinary circumstances where no feasible alternatives to displacement are available if the City's community development objectives are to be met, the City will (or will require others to) properly notice and inform residents or tenants of their rights and potential eligibility for relocation benefits.

When there is no alternative to displacement, relocation benefits will be provided to all eligible persons in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (URA), as amended and the requirements of 24 CFR 570.606(b) and 24 CFR 570.606(c) governing the Residential Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan under Section 104(d) of the HUD Act.

## **F. PUBLICATION POLICIES**

The City will publish the Proposed Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan(s) in a manner that affords citizens, public agencies and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to examine its contents and submit comments. The following publication policies will apply:

- A Notice of Availability will be published in one or more newspapers of general circulation that serve the City of Norwalk. This Notice of Availability is intended to inform the public that the proposed Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s) is available for review and comment for a period not less than 30-days. The Notice of Availability will identify the locations where copies of the proposed Consolidated Plan/Action(s) may be obtained for review and comment.
- A Notice of Availability will be posted and made available for public viewing at City Hall, located at 12700 Norwalk Boulevard, Norwalk.
- A Notice of Availability will be provided in language most accessible for persons of limited English proficiencies. At which time, Spanish has been identified as the common language for persons of limited English proficiencies and is consistent with demographic data.

Concurrently, a summary of the Proposed Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s) will be published in one or more newspapers of general circulation that service the City of Norwalk. The Notice of Availability and Summary may be published in the same legal advertisement.

The summary will describe the contents and purpose of the Consolidated Plan/Action Plans, the Plan's priorities, the expected amount of CDBG and HOME funds, the proposed activities, and a list of the locations where the Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s) can be examined. At a minimum, these locations will include:

- Norwalk Regional Library – 12350 Imperial Highway, Norwalk
- Social Services Center – 11929 Alondra Boulevard, Norwalk
- Community Development Department – 12700 Norwalk Boulevard, Room 12

The City will provide a reasonable number of free copies of the proposed Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s) to citizens and groups that request it in a timely manner.

## **G. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

The City will conduct a minimum of two (2) public hearings on the Consolidated Plan and the one-year Action Plans. One public hearing will be conducted during the development of the proposed Consolidated Plan and/or one-year Action Plan. The purpose of this public hearing will be to provide a forum for citizens and interested

organizations to express their views on the City's housing community development needs, priorities, proposed activities, and program performance.

For these public hearings, the City's Social Services Commission and Staff will be responsible for reviewing and providing recommendations for public service agency funding. However, City Council will be responsible for holding and conducting the first public hearing. Additionally, the City Council will review recommendations from the Social Services Commission and/or provide new funding recommendations to fund public service agencies.

The second public hearing will be conducted to consider the proposed Consolidated Plan and/or one-year Action Plan, written comments on the Plan(s), and oral comments on the Plan(s). This public hearing also has the purpose of authorizing the Community Development Department to transmit the Consolidated Plan and/or one-year Action Plan to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The public hearings (and any public meetings on the Consolidated Plan/Action Plan) will be held at the locations and times that are convenient to the public, especially those persons affected by program resources. The public hearings and meetings will be held at locations equipped to accommodate persons with physical disabilities.

The first public hearing will be held in the evening hours at a City facility, accessible to the public. The second public hearing will be held in the evening hours at the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 12700 Norwalk Boulevard, Norwalk.

During the conduct of public hearings and meetings, translation services will be provided to non-English speaking persons upon advance request. Citizens and other organizations are urged to contact the City at least five (5) working days prior to a public hearing if they will need translation services, handicapped services, or other special assistance.

A public notice announcing a public hearing on the Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s) will be placed as a legal advertisement in a newspaper of general circulation servicing the City of Norwalk a minimum of 15 days prior to any public hearing. The public notice will also be posted at City Hall and other public offices throughout the City. The City Council public hearing on the proposed Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s) will be held after the 30-day citizen review and comment period has ended. To provide fair notice to Norwalk residents, the City will publish the public notice on the Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s) in Spanish.

#### **H. CITIZEN COMMENTS ON THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN/ACTION PLAN(S)**

The City shall provide a period of not less than 30 days to allow interested parties an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s). Staff will summarize the written comments and prepare responses for consideration by the City Council at the public hearing(s). Written comments should be addressed to the

Community Development Department, City of Norwalk, 12700 Norwalk Boulevard, Room 12, Norwalk.

Verbal comments received at public hearings also will be considered by the City Council.

All written and verbal comments and responses will be summarized and included as an attachment to the Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s).

## **I. SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENTS**

After adoption of the Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s), changes may be needed to the Plan(s). Minor changes may be made internally with the approval of the Director of Community Development. However, substantial amendments require citizen participation.

A substantial amendment is defined as:

- A change in the allocation priorities.
- Carrying out an activity, which has not been previously described in the Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s).
- A change to the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity.
- A change (increase or decrease) in the amount allocated to an eligible activity by 20%, except for planning and administration. The planning and administration budget may fluctuate due to program income. Because program income is difficult to project, the planning and administration fund will be adjusted up or down to ensure the regulatory cap is not exceeded.

Citizens will be provided with a reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on substantial amendments. Information about all substantial amendments will be published in a newspaper of general circulation and will provide for a 30-day review period. The City will consider any comments received in writing, or orally at public hearings, if any, regarding substantial amendments. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons, therefore, shall be attached to the substantial amendment of the Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s). No substantial amendment will be implemented prior to 30-day public comment period.

Upon City Council approval of the substantial amendment, the City will make the approved amendment public and will notify HUD. A copy of each substantial amendment will be sent to HUD by the end of the program year. The official representative of the City authorized to take such action will sign letters transmitting copies of the substantial amendments.

## **J. PERFORMANCE REPORTS**

The City annually reviews and reports, in a form prescribed by HUD, on the progress it has made in carrying out its Strategic Plan and Action Plan. The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) includes a description of the resources made available, the investment of available resources, the geographic distribution and location of investments, the families and persons assisted (including the racial and ethnic status of persons assisted), actions taken to affirmatively further fair housing, and other actions indicated in the Strategic Plan and Action Plan.

To encourage citizen participation, the City will carry out the following policies and procedures:

- A Notice of Availability will be published in one or more newspapers of general circulation that serve the City of Norwalk. This Notice of Availability is intended to inform the public that the draft Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) is available for review and comment for a period no less than 15-days. The Notice of Availability will identify the locations where copies of the proposed CAPER may be obtained for review and comment.

As noted, the draft CAPER will be available for public review for a minimum of 15 days. In addition, a reasonable number of free copies of the CAPER will be made available to citizens and groups upon request. The City will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing during the 15-day review and comment period.

A summary of these comments or views shall be attached to the final CAPER. The City will submit the final CAPER to HUD pursuant to HUD regulations. The final CAPER shall be submitted to HUD following the 15-day review and comment period and the time needed to respond to citizen comments.

## **K. ACCESS TO RECORDS**

The City will ensure timely and reasonable access to information and records to citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties related to:

- The development of the Consolidated Plan/Action Plan(s).
- CDBG/HOME program expenditures for the past five years.

Information to be made available includes the following items: adopted Consolidated Plan, adopted Action Plan(s), substantial amendments, performance reports, meeting and public hearing minutes and public comments.

Requests for information and records must be made in writing to the City Clerk's Office at 12700 Norwalk Boulevard, Room 10. Staff will make every possible attempt to respond to such requests within fifteen (15) business days, or as soon as possible

thereafter. Upon request, these items will also be made available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities.

#### **L. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Upon request, the City will provide technical assistance to groups, especially those representing low- and moderate-income persons, to develop funding requests for CDBG and HOME eligible activities. Technical Assistance will be provided as follows:

Answer, in writing, all written questions and answer verbally all verbal inquiries received from citizens or representative groups asking questions on how to write or submit eligible project proposals.

Meet with groups or individuals as requested, to assist in identifying specific needs and to assist in preparing project proposal applications.

#### **M. COMPLAINTS**

The City will respond within fifteen (15) business days (when practicable) to all written complaints received regarding the Consolidated Plan, Consolidated Plan activities, Action Plan(s), substantial amendments, and/or annual performance reports.

The City will accept written complaints provided they specify: the description of the objection, supporting facts and data and provide name, address, telephone number, and a date of complaint.

#### **N. CHANGES TO THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN**

Proposed amendments to the CPP will be made available to the public for a 30-day review and comment period prior to being presented to the City Council in a public meeting. Changes will become effective immediately upon adoption by the City Council.