

City of Fort Walton Beach



Citizen Participation Plan for the Community Development Block Grant Program

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Introduction

Pursuant to Section 104(a)(3) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, this Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) is hereby adopted to ensure that the citizens of Fort Walton Beach, FL, particularly persons of low and moderate income residing in slum and blight areas and in areas in which Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are proposed to be used, are provided the opportunity and encouraged to participate in the planning and implementation of CDBG funded activities.

The City of Fort Walton Beach's (City) intent for its CDBG program is to meet the identified needs of low- and moderate-income residents and to provide a more desirable living environment for all residents within the City. Due to limited resources, it is impossible for the City to identify all the needs of our residents and/or fund all the programs / activities necessary to meet those needs. Therefore, the City must rely on a coordinated effort among private citizens, social service providers and other governmental agencies to assist in addressing the needs of the residents of the City. To encourage citizen participation, in the identification of community needs and appropriate measures to address them, the City has adopted the following Citizen Participation Plan.

Citizen Participation Plan

The City is required to adopt and follow a CPP that sets forth the policies and procedures for, and encourages citizen participation and consultation in the development, revision, implementation and amendment of the Consolidated Plan (ConPlan), the Annual Action Plans (AAP), and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

Encouragement of Participation and Consultation

The CPP is designed to encourage participation of all residents and stakeholders:

- Low- and moderate-income persons;
- Public/assisted housing residents, including their resident boards/councils/corporations;
- Minorities, non-English speakers, as well as persons with disabilities;
- Residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods;
- Residents of designated revitalization and/or slum/blighted areas;
- Residents of areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used;
- Local and regional institutions, Continuums of Care, Businesses and developers, and
- Public, Private and nonprofit organizations, including philanthropic community-based and faith-based organizations.

Definitions

For purposes of the CDBG program, the following definitions will apply:

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): A grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This grant allots money to cities and counties for housing rehabilitation, affordable housing assistance, community services, and community development activities (including community facilities and economic development).

Annual Action Plan (AAP): An Annual Action Plan is prepared during each year of the 5-year Consolidated Plan and specifies the amount of funding the City members anticipate receiving from HUD and describes the activities to be undertaken with those funds to address needs and priorities outlined in the Consolidated Plan.

Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH): Assessment required by HUD under the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule. The AFH is an analysis of fair housing data, issues, and contributing factors in a local government jurisdiction and/or region and identification of fair housing goals and priorities for the jurisdiction and/or region. Local governments will strive to include local public housing agencies in the preparation of the AFH.

Consolidated Plan (ConPlan): The Consolidated Plan is a five-year planning document for the CDBG programs as required by 24 CFR Part 91. The Consolidated Plan must contain a housing and community development needs assessment, a five-year strategic plan to address the needs identified, and a one-year annual action plan to identify specific activities and planned use of CDBG funds.

Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER): The CAPER is an annual report summarizing the progress in implementing the Consolidated Plan.

Median Family Income (MFI): HUD surveys major metropolitan areas annually to develop an index of median family income by household size.

Low- and Moderate-Income Households (LMI): Low and moderate income means family or household annual income less than the Section 8 Low Income Limit, generally 80 percent of the area median income, as established by HUD.

Low- and Moderate-Income Neighborhood: Generally defined as a census tract(s) or block group(s) in which a minimum of fifty-one percent (51%) of the residents have an income not exceeding eighty percent (80%) of the area median family income.

Slum and Blighted Area: An area that meets the definition of a slum, blighted, deteriorated or deteriorating area under State or local law, typically identified as Redevelopment Project Areas, or where a substantial number of deteriorating or dilapidated buildings or improvements are present throughout the area.

Program Year: The Program Year utilized by the City is October 1 through September 30.

Public Hearings/Meetings: Public hearings/meetings will be held to obtain views and respond to proposals/comments of all citizens, public agencies, potential/actual beneficiaries and other interested parties. Together, the hearings/meetings must address the public's feedback on housing and community development needs, development of proposed activities and review of program performance. A minimum of two public hearings/meetings at different stages of the program year will be held. Public hearings/meetings will be held for proposed documents including the CPP, ConPlan, AAP, the CAPER and any substantial amendments or revisions to these documents. Notice of the time, date, locations, and purpose of the meetings will be publicized in a newspaper of general circulation.

Consultation

When preparing the ConPlan, the City will meet with **other** public and private agencies to consult in the preparation of these documents. These meetings will include agencies that provide:

- Public and assisted housing;
- Health services;
- Social services (including those focusing on services to children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS and their families, and homeless persons);
- Community-based and regionally based organizations that represent protected class members;
- Organizations that enforce fair housing laws;
- Other local and regional institutions;
- Broadband internet service providers and organizations engaged in narrowing the digital divide; and
- Agencies whose primary responsibilities include the management of flood prone areas, public land/water resources, and emergency management agencies.

Citizens Advisory Committee

The Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) shall consist of five members. The committee shall designate one of its members to be chairperson and vice-chairperson for each calendar year. Members shall be residents of the City and 3 members shall represent low/mod income, minority property owners. The Members shall be responsible for recruiting and appointing members for **a term of 4 (four) years**. Members shall be appointed by a majority vote of the members present.

The CAC shall be advisory to the CDBG staff. The CAC will:

- Provide input on the needs of low- and moderate-income residents in the City.
- Provide input on the City housing and community development needs.
- Establish priorities relating to these needs.
- Review proposals to allocate the CDBG funds and make recommendations to the City Council.
- Revise, as necessary, the CPP to provide for and encourage public participation in the CDBG process.

Consolidated Planning Process

5-Year Planning Process

Every 5 years, the City will develop a new ConPlan. It is a five-year strategic plan prepared as required by 24 CFR Part 91 in order to continue to receive entitlement funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It is the planning document that identifies needs and goals for community planning and development programs, and housing programs, during the designated five-year period. The plan is submitted to HUD on or before August 15 prior to the start of the first year of the new five-year period. It allows the City to apply for funding under the CDBG program.

The City will hold at least one **public** hearing before developing the ConPlan to:

- Provide citizens, public agencies and interested parties with a forum for input on housing and community development needs and priorities as part of the preparation of the ConPlan;
- Discuss the amount of funding the City anticipates receiving from HUD for CDBG program that will benefit persons of low and moderate income;
- Examine the range of activities that may be implemented;

- Give assurances of plans to minimize displacement of persons, assist any persons displaced, and specify the types and levels of assistance the City will make available (or require others to make available) to persons displaced, (even if no displacement is expected to occur);
- Advise when and how the City will make this information available.

When developing the ConPlan, the City will provide opportunity for citizen input on needs and priorities by such means as focus group sessions, a public survey at community locations and/or via a website, and/or a request for input and comments on the City's website, participation in community meetings, and by other means as feasible and appropriate.

Prior to adopting the ConPlan, the City will make available to citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties' information which includes the amount of assistance the City expects to receive (including grant funds) and the range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low and moderate income.

 **Public Review and Comments:** A notice of not less than thirty (30) day public review and comments period for the draft ConPlan document will be published in a newspaper of general circulation. The notice will also provide information on locations where copies of the entire proposed ConPlan report may be examined by the public.

Annual Planning Process

 An AAP is prepared for each year of the five-year Consolidated Plan, and it specifies the amount of funding the City anticipates receiving from HUD, and related program income, under the CDBG program. It describes the activities/projects to be undertaken to address the needs and priorities identified in the ConPlan. An AAP is submitted to HUD on or before August 15 of each year and serves as the annual application for funding for the grant year that begins October 1st and ends September 30th.

The annual planning process will largely follow the process established for the ConPlan, and it will include an initial public input, issuance of the Request for Applications/Notice of Funding Availability, selection of projects and activities to be funded in order to meet goals and objectives of the 5-year plan, drafting of the document, establishment of the public comment period, making the document available for review and comments, and public hearings.

 **Public Review and Comments:** A notice of not less than thirty (30) day public review and comments period for the draft AAP document will be published in a newspaper of general circulation. The notice will also provide information on locations where copies of the entire proposed AAP report may be examined by the public.

Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)

On an annual basis, the City will review and report on the progress it has made in carrying out its five-year ConPlan and AAP. The CAPER is an annual report that provides details on the City's performance in the administration of funding provided under the CDBG program during the previous grant year and tracks progress made towards five-year goals established in the ConPlan. It describes how funds were actually used and the extent to which funds benefitted low and moderate-income persons. The CAPER is submitted within 90 days of the end of the grant year (by December 30th), and it is the basis for an evaluation of annual accomplishments and progress towards goals established in the ConPlan.

The CAPER document includes a description of the resources made available, utilization of available resources, geographic distribution and location of funded projects, households and persons assisted (including racial and ethnic status of persons assisted), actions taken to affirmatively further fair housing, and other actions indicated in the five-year ConPlan and the AAP. As required, the CAPER will be submitted to HUD within ninety (90) days after the close of the City's program year.

Public Review and Comments: A notice of not less than fifteen (15) day public review and comments period for the draft CAPER document will be published in a newspaper of general circulation. The notice will also provide information on locations where copies of the entire proposed CAPER report may be examined by the public.

Amendments to Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan

Substantial Amendments

Every amendment to the ConPlan and/or AAP must be defined as either a substantial or a minor amendment, based on the criteria listed below.

Substantial amendments to the ConPlan must conform to 24 CFR 91.505. The City will consider the following changes to be substantial amendments to the ConPlan/AAP, and subject to the CPP process, in accordance with its CPP and 24 CFR 91.505. A substantial change is defined as one of the following occurrences:

- A change that adds a new priority;
- A change that adds a new activity;
- A change that cancels an activity that involves more than 50% of the activity's fiscal year's funding allocation;
- A change in the scope of an activity as it relates to beneficiaries, basic eligibility or changes in purpose/stated objectives of an activity.

For a substantial amendment to the Five-Year ConPlan or AAP, a public notice shall be advertised which identifies the proposed substantial amendment and provide at least a 30-day comment period prior to the City Council meeting at which the substantial amendment will be considered.

Minor Amendments

Any revision not deemed to be a "substantial amendment" may be considered a minor amendment.

The City will consider the following changes to be minor amendments to the ConPlan and the AAP, and subject to the CCP, in accordance with its Citizen Participation Plan and 24 CFR 91.505. A minor amendment is defined as:

- A change that cancels an activity that involves less than 50% of the fiscal year's funding allocation.

Minor amendments will not require public notices or submission to the City Council; however, these amendments must be submitted through IDIS and reviewed by HUD prior to completion of the CAPER. Minor amendments should first be incorporated into the Consolidated Plan and, subsequently, into the Annual Action Plan.

Public Notices, Comment Periods, and Hearings

The public will be notified of the availability of documents and the opportunity to comment on the ConPlan, AAP, CAPER, and substantial amendments process as described in this section.

Public Notices

Upon publication of the CPP, the ConPlan, APP, the CAPER and any substantial amendments or revisions to these documents, a public notice with a summary of the proposed document will be published in a newspaper of general circulation. The summary will describe the contents and purpose of the document, the duration of the public comment period, and a list of the locations where the entire document may be examined. Comments for each proposed document will be accepted according to the timeframes described further in this document (Table 1).

Summary of Notice, Comment and Hearing Timeliness

Document	Public Notice	Public Comment Period	Public Hearing
Citizen Participation Plan	Upon publication, will contain the summary of contents, purpose, duration of public comment period, list of locations where document is available	30 Calendar Days prior to the Public Hearing/Meeting	In conjunction with public hearing for Consolidated Plan, publish notice online/in newspaper of general circulation
CPP Amendments	Upon publication, will contain the summary of contents, purpose, duration of public comment period, list of locations where document is available	30 Calendar Days prior to the Public Hearing/Meeting	Prior to implementing the substantial amendment, may be held in conjunction with public hearings for the Annual Action Plan. Publish notice online/in newspaper of general circulation
Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan	Upon publication, will contain the summary of contents, purpose, duration of public comment period, and a list of locations where document is available. Will also include the amount of assistance, expected, range of activities undertaken, estimated amount that will benefit low/mod residents.	30 Calendar Days prior to the Public Hearing/Meeting	During the planning process to receive comments on the housing and community development needs identified at community meetings During the development of proposed activities Publish notice online/in newspaper of general circulation
Plan Amendments	Upon publication, will contain the summary of contents, purpose, duration of public comment period, list of locations where	30 Calendar Days prior to the Public Hearing/Meeting	Prior to implementing the substantial amendment, may be held in conjunction with public hearings for the Annual Action Plan. Publish notice online/in

	document is available		newspaper of general circulation
CAPER	Upon publication, will contain the summary of contents, purpose, duration of public comment period, list of locations where document is available	15 Calendar Days prior to the Public Hearing/Meeting	Prior to submission to HUD. Publish notice online/in newspaper of general circulation

Table 1

Technical Assistance

The City will provide technical assistance to groups representative of persons of low and moderate income that request assistance in developing CDBG proposals for funding assistance under any of the programs covered by the consolidated plan. The level and type of assistance appropriate will be determined by the City based on its ability to provide or arrange for such assistance, the cost of providing such assistance and other relevant factors. Assistance will be provided in a reasonable and timely manner during normal office hours or after hours upon appointment.

Public Information and Records

The adopted CPP, ConPlan, AAP, CAPER, and substantial amendments will be available at the Growth Management Department located in the City Hall annex at 105 Miracle Strip Parkway SW, Fort Walton Beach, FL during regular office hours. All proposed and final plans will be available free upon request. All information of the preceding 5 years related to the CDBG program, will be made available through a public information request submitted to the city clerk located at City Hall, 107 Miracle Strip Parkway SW, Fort Walton Beach, FL. Special communication aids can be made available to persons upon request. The City shall provide reasonable and timely access to such requests.

Disaster/Emergency events

There have been situations that occur where the City experiences a natural disaster or emergency. Examples of these include major hurricanes and the 2020 COVID-19 virus pandemic. In these situations, either the Okaloosa County Health Department, the City of Fort Walton Beach Mayor, the Governor of the State of Florida, and/or the President of the United States declared that emergency conditions existed. These events are not predictable as to when they will occur or what will be their impact on City residents, businesses, and/or the community resources. Events that qualify as a type of disaster or emergency would not constitute a substantial change, and thereby waive requirements for formal adoption of an amendment to the associated City's Citizen Participation Plan.

In the event of a local, state, or federal disaster or emergency declaration, the City may fund new activities and/or the reprogram funds, including canceling activities, to meet needs resulting from said disaster or emergency. Therefore, the City may utilize CDBG funds to meet these needs with a five (5) day public notice and comment period instead of a thirty (30) day public comment period, which is otherwise required for substantial amendments.

Virtual public meetings and hearings may be used to fulfill applicable public hearing requirements instead of in-person. Real-time responses and accommodations for persons with disabilities and/or limited English proficiency will be made available to the extent practicable.

Citizen Grievance Process

Complaints of CPP, ConPlan, AAP, CAPER, and substantial amendments

All complaints shall be provided in writing. A written response shall be provided within fifteen (15) working days from the date of receipt of the complaint.

Complaints of substandard workmanship and complaints of discrimination in housing and or HUD assisted contracts:

The city shall enforce nondiscrimination practices in program policy, procedure or performance and to assure quality workmanship.

The initial effort to resolve such complaints shall be the responsibility of the Growth Management Department Director.

The Director shall collect pertinent information necessary to assess the validity of the complaint and after meeting with the complainant, he/she shall render an administrative decision regarding the complaint. The decision shall be rendered in writing within fifteen (15) days of the date of the receipt of the written complaint. b) If this fails to resolve the complaint or related issues, the complainant may file an appeal to the City Manager. The determination by the city manager will be the final decision at the local level.

Either party may seek judicial remedy or appeal the decision to HUD, Jacksonville Office at the following address:

US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Jacksonville Office
Charles E. Bennett Federal Building
400 W. Bay Street, Suite 1015
Jacksonville, FL 32202
Phone: (904) 232-2627