

City of Portland, Maine Citizen Participation Plan



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CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

Citizen Participation (91.200 (b))

The City of Portland has had an adopted Citizen Participation Plan since the inception of the Community Development Block Grant Program in 1975. This plan is required and in compliance with federal regulations for the Consolidation of Community Planning and Development Programs of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 24 CFR Part 91.

The purpose of the Citizen Participation Plan is to ensure that the City undertakes an effective public process that encourages input and participation from all citizens, non-profit organizations and other interested parties. The Citizen Participation Plan also ensures that residents have access to meetings, information and public hearings on the Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan, the Annual Action Plans, and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports. Staff has an open door policy to provide technical and other assistance, upon request.

The Citizen Participation Plan encourages the participation, involvement and input of all Portland residents, particularly low-income persons, targeted for activities funded by the Community Development Block Grant and other HUD programs. In order to encourage this participation, public housing residents, racial and ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities, the City will implement or continue to utilize the following elements of its Citizen Participation Plan.

a. CDBG Priority Task Force

The CDBG Priority Task Force is a Council appointed Task Force consisting of Portland residents with a broad range of expertise. It provides advice to the City Manager on the Housing and Community Development needs and priorities of the City, specifically the social, economic, housing, and neighborhood revitalization needs and their relative priorities within the community. The Task Force is appointed for the purpose of recommending priorities to the City Council. All meetings of the Task Force are noticed and open to the public. A new Task Force is appointed every three to five years. Task Force membership lasts the duration of the priority setting process for that year, approximately six months to one year.

b. CDBG Annual Allocation Committee

The CDBG Annual Allocation Committee is a Council appointed Committee also comprised of residents with various backgrounds. This Committee is responsible for reviewing and scoring Community Development applications and making funding recommendations to the City Manager and the City Council each year. All Committee meetings are open to the public. Dates, agendas, backup materials, and minutes are posted to the City of Portland's website and updated regularly during the months the Committee meets, December through February. The CDBG Allocation Committee is a standing Committee where members serve three year terms. The City advertises one to two times per year (in the local newspaper and the web site, etc.) for persons interested in being on this important Committee. A diverse group of residents from local and regional institutions and other organizations including businesses, developers, residents, and community and faith-based organizations have been, or are currently appointed to the Committee.

c. CDBG Neighborhood Meetings and District Meetings

CDBG meetings are held annually in the City's low-moderate income eligible neighborhoods (neighborhoods by Census Tract Block Groups that are populated over 51% by persons or

families below 80% of the Area Median Income) with a presentation describing the CDBG program, Citizen Participation Plan, eligible activities and funded projects that had been completed in these neighborhoods. These public meetings are provided specifically for the residents of each eligible neighborhood. A discussion follows focusing on potential projects or project types for each neighborhood. In addition, the City of Portland may conduct District meetings to gather feedback from its citizens. Housing and Community Development issues may be discussed at these meetings as well. Advertisement and outreach for these meetings are provided by press releases, mailings, ads in local newspapers, email list-serves from neighborhood organizations public housing residents, and interested citizens.

d. City of Portland Website and Social Networking Sites

The City of Portland's website provides up to date information on the Community Development Block Grant and HOME Program. The CDBG application, process, dates and additional information is listed and updated regularly on the website. The current Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports, and Annual Action Plans are available on the web site all year.

In order to reach a broader and younger audience, the City of Portland may also utilize internet social networking sites to provide important information on the funding resources available to the residents of Portland.

e. Island and Neighborhood Service Administrator

The City of Portland's Island and Neighborhood Services Administrator is a resource that the residents and neighborhood organizations can contact regarding information about CDBG or other City needs. This position operates as a conduit between residents or neighborhood organizations and the appropriate City Department. Information is also shared with the City Councilors so they are aware of the concerns of their constituents. The transmission of information occurs through phone calls, emails, and during monthly meetings with neighborhood organizations throughout the City and especially in the eligible neighborhoods, where neighborhood organizations are very active and engaged in City processes. This position also serves as the program's fair hearing officer.

f. Public Hearing

In addition to the public hearings at the CDBG neighborhood meetings and District meetings, the City holds a minimum of two public hearings each year to obtain citizen input and comments on the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan. These hearings are typically held in March or April, prior to the City Council's adoption of the both the Consolidated Plan and for the Annual Action Plan. The City notifies the general public of the time and dates of the hearing by placing a legal advertisement in the local daily paper prior to the date of the hearing. The notice contains at a minimum the amount of assistance the City expects to receive (including grant funds and program income); the range of activities that may be undertaken; the estimated amount of funding that will benefit persons of low- and moderate-income; and the City's plans to minimize displacement of persons and to assist any persons displaced,; and when and how the City will make this information available. The City also notifies public agencies, organizations and other stakeholders through email or mail 7-10 days prior to the hearing. Information is also always posted on the City of Portland's website. Additional meetings are also held throughout the year with the City Council and the Housing and Community Development Committee to discuss ongoing issues or annual updates to Portland's CDBG program.

g. Continuing Outreach

The City of Portland is dedicated to engaging all members of the community regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin or citizenship status, age, disability, or veteran's status. The City provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities or those seeking translation services upon request.

Prior to adoption of the Five Year Consolidated Plan, the City will make available to citizens, public agencies and other interested parties a summary of the plan published in a local newspaper and the web site that contains information regarding the purpose and process for developing the Plan, the anticipated funding to be received and the range of activities that are eligible and planned to be undertaken, and the locations where copies of the Plan are available. The City will always provide free a reasonable amount of free hard copies of the Plan to anyone who requests one.

The City will use many of the same mechanisms described in the previous section to provide access to this information. The City will also take the following steps to provide access to information on the Plan:

1. Publish a summary of the proposed Consolidated Plan in the local newspaper, for a 30-day public comment period, 30days for each Annual Action Plan.
2. Make the proposed Consolidated Plan, Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report, and Annual Action Plans available for review on the City of Portland's website and at City Hall in the Housing and Community Development Office, Room 312.
3. Conduct a 30-day public comment period to receive comments from citizens, public organizations, other interested parties and stakeholders. The 30-day comment period will be advertised in the Portland newspaper prior to its commencement. Translation services for non-English speaking persons will be made available as requested. A 30 -day public comment period will be held for each subsequent Annual Action Plan and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report.
4. Citizens, public agencies and other interested parties will also have access to records relating to the City's Consolidated Plan, proposed activities and the use of funding over the previous five years. Records are available at the Housing and Neighborhood Service, Room 312 City Hall, 389 Congress Street. Translation services for non-English speaking persons will be made available as requested. It is the City's policy to provide any and all reasonable accommodations for its disabled or non-English speaking citizens to access any materials, presentations, or locations relative to City programs. The City is fully prepared to provide translation services for the Plan and all programs subject to this Plan. For example, last year at the request of a citizen we had the housing rehab program translated into Cantonese. Reasonable accommodations also include a format accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request (e.g., providing oral, Braille, electronic, or large print copies for the visually impaired; and delivering copies to the homebound.

h. Technical Assistance

The City's Department of Planning and Urban Development (HCD Division) offers technical assistance to any organization, agency or individual serving or interested in serving low income neighborhoods and persons for the purpose of developing proposals to request funding under Housing and Community Development programs and activities. The Housing and Community Development Program Manager spends a considerable amount of time

providing Technical Assistance to applicants and currently funded programs. Technical assistance is available upon request from the Department at City Hall, Room 312, 389 Congress Street, or by calling 874-8731.

i. Comments and Complaints

The City considers all comments, whether received in writing or orally, during the development of the Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan and related Annual Action Plans and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports. A summary of the comments received in the preparation of the Plan, will be attached to the final Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, amendment to the Plan or Performance Report.

The City responds to all complaints regarding the Consolidated Plan, or activities implemented under the Plan, in writing within 15 working days of receiving said complaints where feasible. Responses are substantive, where appropriate. If a complainant remains unsatisfied, staff brings the complaint to the City Manager for review and resolution. If warranted, the City Manager may refer the complaint to the City Council for review and resolution. All comments and complaints should be directed either in writing or orally to the City's Housing and Community Development Program Manager (207)874-8731, City Hall, Room 312, 389 Congress Street, Portland, ME 04101 or the Director of Housing and Community Development (207)874-8711, City Hall, Room 312, 389 Congress Street, Portland, ME 04101.

j. Amendments to the Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan

Due to changes in local needs during the program year, amendments and revisions to the Consolidated Plan may be necessary. Some of them may be substantial amendments that significantly alter the priorities of the 5-year strategy and the activities within the Annual Plan. Most will be minor in nature, requiring only insignificant shifting of funds from one account to another in order to complete an approved activity. This may include the reprogramming of contingency or surplus funds. The following criteria will govern how the City implements substantial amendments and funding revisions.

A) Minor amendments. Unless a change qualifies as a substantial amendment (see below) the City Manager or his/her designee will amend the City's approved plan whenever one of the following decisions is made:

(1) To make a change in its allocation priorities or a change in the method of distribution of funds;

(2) To carry out an activity, using funds from any program covered by the consolidated plan (including program income), not previously described in the action plan; or

(3) To change the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity.

Each amendment must be authorized by the City Manager or his designee, and submitted to HUD. All amendments will also be made public by posting on the City of Portland's website, and made available during business hours in the Department of Planning and Urban Development (Division of Housing and Community Development) City Hall, Room 312. Additionally, members of the public may request a copy of any proposed substantial amendment via email request to the City's CDBG Program Manager. The amendment may be implemented immediately after submitting it to HUD and making it public.

B) Substantial amendment. A substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan is defined by the City as a transfer of funds between two or more

approved Plan activities that is greater than 50% of that year's annual allocation of ESG program funds, 10% of that year's annual allocation of HOME program funds, and 5% of that year's annual allocation of the CDBG program funds.

Substantial amendments to the Plan will be presented to the Portland City Council for its review and approval. This meeting will be advertised as a City Council action; open to the public; provide opportunity for public comment in writing or orally on the proposed substantial amendment. The public will be notified of all substantial amendments by an advertisement of the proposed amendment in a local newspaper, and posting on the City's web site. The advertising of the substantial amendment will begin a thirty (30) day citizen review and comment period. The City will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing or orally during the comment period. The City Manager will submit to HUD a letter authorizing the amendment after the thirty-day comment period and City Council approval, and will implement the amendment at that time.

C) Funding revisions are defined as minor programmatic or budgeting changes necessary to fund new activities or secure adequate funding to complete approved activities. For this purpose, a "new activity" is defined as a project or projects not originally submitted for funding during that year's CDBG program application process. Funding revisions will be addressed in the following ways.

- a. Any new activities proposed to be funded in an amount less than the substantial amendment thresholds stated above, with either reprogrammed contingency, unallocated funds, additional funds allocated by HUD, or with monies from another account will require approval from the City Manager.
- b. Any fund transfer from one approved activity to another in an amount less than the substantial amendment thresholds stated above, but in an amount that increases the underfunded activity *in excess of* 25% of the original allocation shall be approved by the Director of Planning and Urban Development.
- c. Any fund transfer from one approved activity to another in an amount less than the substantial amendment thresholds stated above, but in an amount that increases the underfunded activity *less than* 25% of the original allocation shall be approved by the Department's Housing and Community Development Director.