# Citizen Participation (91.200 (b))

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. 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 the following elements of its Citizen Participation Plan.

1. CDBG Priority Task Force

The CDBG Priority Task Force is a Council appointed Task Force consisiting of Portland citizens 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 purpose of setting priorities.

1. CDBG Annual Allocation Committee

The CDBG Annual Allocation Committee is Council appointed and is comprised of a broad range of citizens with various backgrounds. This Committee is responsible for reviewing 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. These meetings are also listed in the local weekly newspapers and several monthly papers published by Neighborhood Organizations. The CDBG Allocation Committee is a standing committee where members serve three year terms.

 Annual CDBG Neighborhood Meetings and District Meetings

CDBG meetings are held in the City’s eligible neighborhoods with a presentation describing the CDBG program, eligible activities and funded projects that had been completed in their neighborhood. A discussion follows focusing on potential projects or project types for each neighborhood. In addition, the City of Portland may conduct district meeting(s) to gather feedback from its citizens. Housing and Community Development issues are sometimes 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 and interested citizens. Below is the 2009 Neighborhood Meeting Schedule:

 October 7, 2009 CDBG Meeting - State of Maine Room City Hall/District 1

October 13, 2009 CDBG Meeting - West School/District 3

October 15, 2009 CDBG Meeting - Parkside Community Center/District 2

 November 5, 2009 - Reiche Community Center/District 2

 November 10, 2009 - East End Community School/District 1

 November 12, 2009 - Deering High School/District 3

 November 17, 2009 - Riverton Community School/District 5

 November 19, 2009 - Presumpscot School/District 4

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 on the website.

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

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Island and Neighborhood Service Administrator *NEW*

The City of Portland’s Island and Neighborhood Services Administrator is another resource that the residents and neighborhood organizations can contact to gain information. This position operates as a conduit for which information flows 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.

##### Public Hearings

In addition to the 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, 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 City also notifies public agencies, organizations and other stakeholders through email or mail 7-10 days prior to the hearing. Information is also posted on the City of Portland’s website. A summary of citizen comments and responses are included in Appendix **B.**

***Efforts to Broaden Participation- new***

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.

***Access to Information***

Prior to adoption of the Five Year Consolidated Plan, the City will make available to citizens, public agencies and other interested parties 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.

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 daily newspaper, for a 30-day public comment period, 15-days for each Annual Action Plan.
2. Make the proposed Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans available for review on the City of Portland’s website and at City Hall in the Housing and Neighborhood Services 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 15-day public comment period will be held for each subsequent Annual Action Plan.
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. Translation services for non-English speaking persons will be made available as requested. Records are available at the Housing and Neighborhood Service, Room 312 City Hall, 389 Congress Street.

***Technical Assistance***

The City’s Housing and Neighborhood Services 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. Technical assistance is available upon request from Housing and Neighborhood Services staff in Room 312 City Hall, 389 Congress Street, or by calling 874-8731.

***Comments and Complaints***

The City will consider 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 reports. A summary of the comments received in the preparation of the plan, and in the case of those comments not incorporated into the Plan the reason why, will be attached to the final Consolidated Plan, amendment to the Plan or performance report.

The City will respond 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 will be substantive, where appropriate. If a complainant remains unsatisfied the Housing and Neighborhood Services staff will bring 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.

***Amendments to the Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan***

TJ to Edit…

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

The City will amend its approved plan whenever it makes one of the following decisions:

(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 Division of Housing and Neighborhood Services Room 312 Portland City Hall. Additionally, members of the public may request a copy of any proposed substantial amendment via email request to AVP@portlandmaine.gov. The amendment may be implemented immediately after submitting it to HUD and making it public.

A substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan is defined by the City as a transfer 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 CDBG Allocation Committee for CDBG and ESG funds, the City Council Housing Committee for HOME funds, and the Portland City Council for their review and approval for all substantial amendments. All of these meetings will be open to the public and advertised as their normal procedure for each Committee or City Council. The City Council will hold a public hearing on the proposed substantial amendment prior to its review and approval. The public will also be notified by advertising 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.

**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” shall be defined as a project or projects that was not originally submitted for funding during that year’s CDBG program application process. Any proposed funding revision that substantially alters the location or beneficiaries of previously approved activities will require the approval of the City Manager regardless of which of the three categories below it is subject to. 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. Prior to approval by the City Manager, the CDBG Allocation Committee will review the request and provide a recommendation to the City Manager. In all such funding revisions the City Manager’s decision shall be final.

1. 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 under funded 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 under funded activity *less than* 25% of the original allocation shall be approved by the Director of Housing and Neighborhood Services.

***Adoption of the Citizen Participation Plan***

The Citizen Participation Plan will be adopted as part pf the City’s Consolidated Five Year Housing and Community Development Plan, thereby going through the same process of local review and public comment, ending with a 30 day public comment period and the City Council approval.

Amendments and changes to the Citizen Participation Plan will be addressed in the annual updated of the Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan.