



Revised Citizen Participation Plan

**City of Hattiesburg, Mississippi
Department of Urban Development
Community Development Division
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I. INTRODUCTION

As an entitlement community, City of Hattiesburg is eligible to receive Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships program (HOME) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These funds are used to administer housing and community development grants and programs within the City. The goals of the CDBG and HOME Investment Partnerships programs are to develop viable urban communities through the provision of decent housing and economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents. Federal law requires the City to develop a detailed Citizen/Resident Participation Plan to describe the City's policies and procedures for public involvement in the use of CDBG and HOME funds. This Plan supersedes all other Citizen Participation Plans, which may have been adopted by the City of Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Each Consolidated Plan must contain a strategy for citizen participation in the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and Assessment of the Fair Housing process. This document outlines the City of Hattiesburg's revised plan for soliciting and receiving input during preparation five-year Consolidated Plan (CP), individual yearly Annual Action Plans (AAP), the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER), and the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) during the applicable program years.

The Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) for the City of Hattiesburg was drafted in accordance with Sections 91.100 and 91.105 of HUD's Consolidated Plan regulations. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development published a Final Rule at 24 CFR Part 5 regarding a grantee's obligation to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing. The new rule sets forth a meaningful and transparent process to identifying and understanding local and regional fair housing issues and to set goals for improving fair housing choice and access to opportunity. Under the new rule, the citizen participation plan requirements at 24 CFR 91.105 for local governments have been revised to accommodate the new AFH. The analysis undertaken pursuant to §5.154 requires consultation and community participation in the analysis of fair housing priorities and goals. Overall, the AFFH rule has revised the citizen participation process at 24 CFR 91.105(a)(1) and (a)(2)(i) through (iii). Paragraph 91.105(a)(4) is added and paragraphs §91.105(b), (c), (l), (f) through (U) and (1) and are revised to reflect additional citizen participation requirements for local governments. The City of Hattiesburg's Citizen Participation Plan is amended to incorporate said requirements.

The primary goal of this Citizen/Resident Participation Plan is to provide all citizens/residents of the community with adequate opportunity to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the City's HUD Programs. The Plan sets forth policies and procedures for citizen/resident participation, which are designed to maximize the opportunity for citizen/resident participation in the community development process. Special emphasis has been placed on encouraging participation by persons of low- and moderate incomes, residents of blighted neighborhoods, and residents of areas where community development funds are utilized. Additionally, emphasis shall be placed on obtaining participation from public housing authorities, residents of public housing, non-English speaking persons, minorities, and persons with disabilities.

The Citizen/Resident Participation Plan provides for and encourages citizens/residents to participate in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of the City's Housing and Community Development plans and programs. The Citizen/Resident Participation Plan focuses on public involvement in the process of developing the City's Housing and Community Development Consolidated Plan (Consolidated Plan), Annual Action Plan, and a review of the Consolidated Annual Performance, Evaluation Report (CAPER) and Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH). Substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan go before citizens/residents for evaluation and comments prior to City Council approval.

Stakeholder Involvement

The Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the Assessment of Fair Housing processes will offer multiple opportunities for citizen participation. During the development of the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan, the City will consult with public and private agencies that provide assisted housing, health and social services in order to ensure the interests and needs of all groups are being adequately addressed. Consultation will occur through citizen participation opportunities, not limited to community meetings and interviews conducted with organizations, including those that provide services to special needs populations, and the incorporation of data and reported produced by such organizations.

Under the consulting process per §91.100(a)(1)(5), the City of Hattiesburg shall consult with other public and private agencies that provide assisted housing, health services and social services, including those focusing on services to children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, person with HIV/AIDS and their families, and homeless persons. In addition to the public – including those often underrepresented in public processes – the City of Hattiesburg will consult with community-based and regionally-based organizations that represent protected class members and organizations that enforce fair housing law, including fair housing enforcement agencies; fair housing assistance programs, nonprofit agencies that receive funding under Fair Housing Initiative programs; and other public and private fair housing agencies when preparing both the AFH and the Consolidated Plan. This may include but not limited to participants in fair housing organizations.

Public Housing Authorities

The intent of consultation will help provide a better basis for the certification by the authorized officials that the PHA Plan is consistent with the Consolidated Plan and the City's description of its strategy for affirmatively furthering fair housing. Under §91.100(c)(1), the City of Hattiesburg shall consult with public housing authorities (PHAs) operating in the jurisdiction. This consultation will continue to consider public housing needs, planned program and activities under the Consolidated Plan. Participation with PHAs operating in the jurisdiction on the AFH, will include consulting on strategies for affirmatively furthering fair housing in the Consolidated Plan. The City of Hattiesburg will continue to obtain PHA input on addressing fair housing issues in the public housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs.

Citizens/Residents are encouraged to participate in all phases of the City's HUD Programs and will be provided full access to program information. However, final responsibility and authority

for the development and implementation of the programs will lie with the City of Hattiesburg City Council.

Citizen Comments on Citizens/Resident Participation Plan and Amendments

Public comment on the development or amendment to the Citizen/Resident Participation Plan is provided in the following manner:

- a) Notification of the revision or amendment to the Citizen/Resident Participation Plan shall be published in the local newspaper thirty days prior to City Council consideration of the adoption of revisions or amendments;
- b) A public hearing for comments on the Citizen/Resident Participation Plan will be held a minimum of fourteen (14) days prior to City Council consideration of the adoption of revisions or amendments;
- c) The City will make the Citizen/Resident Participation Plan available to persons with disabilities and/or non-English speaking persons in an accessible format upon request; and
- d) The Citizen/Resident Participation Plan will be published on the City's website.

DEFINITIONS

Community Development Block Grant

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is a formula grant provided annually to the City to administer, subject to federal appropriations. It is used for a variety of housing and community development programs and activities with the objective of providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons in the City.

HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)

HOME program is a formula grant provided annually to the City to administer, subject to federal appropriations, by HUD. HOME funds are utilized to carry out activities that expand the supply of decent affordable housing to low- and moderate-income households, expand the capacity of non-profit housing providers, strengthen the ability of State and Local government to provide housing, and leverage private sector participation in the provision of decent affordable housing.

Housing and Community Development Consolidated Plan

Every five years, staff of the Urban Development Department – Community Development Division, with assistance and input City residents, develops a new Housing and Community Development Consolidated Plan (Consolidated Plan). The Consolidated Plan identifies community needs and formulates a Five-Year strategic plan with objectives, implementation strategies, and outcomes that address the needs for housing, community and economic development, and human service needs of residents within the City.

Annual Action Plan

The Consolidated Plan guides the development of an Annual Action Plan. The Annual Action Plan outlines the City's funding priorities and sets goals during the program year for assisting citizens of Hattiesburg in obtaining clean, safe, and affordable living conditions. The plan outlines the City's efforts towards reducing homelessness, and lists community and economic development projects targeted for funding. The City works with advisory boards, social service agencies, non-profits, and interest groups to develop the Annual Action Plan.

Before the Consolidated and Annual Action Plans are adopted, the City makes public the amount of funds available (including program income), the range of activities that can be undertaken with each grant, the estimated amount of funds that will benefit low- and moderate-income persons, the City's plans to minimize displacement, and when and how the City will make this information available to the public.

Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)

Performance measurements are designed to monitor all applications and to determine the impacts of the City's housing and community development programs and activities. The City has established a vigorous performance measurement system to review the outcomes of all programs funded with HUD dollars. The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) documents accomplishments of CDBG and HOME program investments in the City. The CAPER presents information to assist citizens in the evaluation of the City's performance in meeting goals of the Annual Action Plan and subsequently the Consolidated Plan.

II. FEDERAL CITIZEN/RESIDENT PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

A grantee must develop and follow a detailed plan that provides for and encourages citizen/resident participation. This integral process emphasizes participation by persons of low- or moderate- income, particularly residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhood, slum or blighted areas, and areas in which the grantee proposes to use CDBG and HOME funds. The plan must provide citizens/residents with the following: reasonable and timely access to local meetings; an opportunity to review proposed activities and program performance; provide for timely written answers to written complaints and grievances; and identify how the needs of non-English speaking residents will be met in the case of public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate.

Annual program application submitted to HUD must:

1. Give maximum feasible priority to programs that will principally benefit low – and moderate –income families or aid in the prevention of slum and blighted conditions.
2. Have provided citizens/residents with information as to the amount of funds expected to be annually available (including the annual program income that is expected to be received during the program year, together with any program income received during the preceding program year that has not yet been allocated to a project during the development of the annual program.)

3. Set out costs and other resources to be used, as well as a description of the targeted areas (if there are any).
4. Contain proper provisions for community involvement in the review and preparation of the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan.

The City of Hattiesburg desires that citizen/resident groups play an active advisory role in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development programs. In order for citizens/residents to better understand this advisory role, and participate in the process, the following clarifications are provided:

Advisory Role in Planning: During the information gathering process for the five-year Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plan, other program activities, all public comment periods, and public hearings, citizens/residents are encouraged to submit views, project proposals, and priorities in an effort to advise the Urban Development Department Programs and the City Council so that the City can plan activities for the upcoming program Year(s). Citizens may submit their views and priorities throughout the year by calling or visiting the: Community Development Division, 200 Forrest Street, Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39401, 601-554-10066 or writing the Community Development Manager at P. O. Box 1898, Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39401-1898.

Advisory Role in Implementing the Projects: Citizens/Resident will be encouraged to visit project sites and locations and to submit their views, either positive or negative, as to how well the projects are being carried out. Citizens/Resident with suggestions as to how projects might better be implemented are encouraged to call, visit, or submit a written letter to the Department at any time during the year.

Encouraging Public Participation

Citizen/Resident Participation Plan requirements are designed to encourage participation by low- and moderate-income persons, particularly those living in low- and moderate- income areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used. Local and regional institutions and organizations, including businesses, non-profits, neighborhood associations, and faith based groups are encouraged to take part in the process of developing and implementing the City's housing and community development plans and programs.

Low- and moderate-income individuals, minorities, non-English speakers, and residents of public and assisted housing benefiting from CDBG and HOME programs will be notified and encouraged to participate through community newspapers, neighborhood group meetings, minority publications, and through attending various community meetings.

The City will consider all comments received in writing or given orally at public hearings during the preparation of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, the CAPER and the Assessment of Fair Housing.

The Role of Low Income Persons

Citizen/Resident Participation Plan requirements are aimed at developing viable urban communities through the provision of decent housing and the implementation of mechanisms that enhance community development. This includes assisting low- and moderate-income persons to find suitable living environments, decent housing, and sustained living wage jobs.

A variety of local service agencies and private groups are involved in recommending and implementing specific funding strategies that address affordable housing, homelessness, and community development activities in the City. In order to grasp the true needs of low income residents, representatives of social services agencies and the low- and moderate-income individuals they serve are encouraged to take part at all stages of the process including:

- Identifying needs
- Setting priorities and goals
- Funding allocation
- Recommending strategies and programs that best serve the needs of individuals receiving assistance from CDBG and HOME funded activities.

Eligible Activities

Over a 1, 2, or 3-year period, as selected by the grantee, not less than 70 percent (70%) of CDBG funds must be used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons. In addition, each activity must meet one of the following national objectives for the program: benefit low- and moderate-income persons; prevention or elimination of slums or blight; or address community development needs having a particular urgency because existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community for which other funding is not available.

III. STAGES OF THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

1. Assessment and identification of housing and community development needs.
2. The draft Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan and the draft Assessment of Fair Housing.
3. Formal approval by the City Council of the Consolidated Plan and/or final Annual Action Plan.
4. Substantial and Minor amendments necessary to change the use of funds already budgeted in an Annual Action Plan or established in the Consolidated Plan.
5. Performance Reviews in the CAPER.

1 Prior to the adoption of a draft Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plan and the AFH Plan, the City will make available to interested parties the draft Consolidated Plan/Action Plan and Executive Summary for a comment period of no less than 30 days. The availability of the draft Consolidated Plan will be advertised on the City's website and in local newspapers, as applicable in the jurisdiction. The Consolidated Plan contains the City's funding priorities and goals during the five-year planning period. The Action Plan will contain the amount of assistance the City anticipates to receive from the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development, and the activities and funding plan proposed for the program year. Plan will be available for review at the City's Urban Development Department during the full public comment period. Citizens/Resident will be given reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information, and records relating to the proposed use of community development funds. Copies of all reports and materials relevant to a Hattiesburg City Council meeting will be available on the Thursday before the Monday meeting at the Urban Development Department, 200 Forrest Street. Information can also be found on the City's website at <http://www.cityofhattiesburg.com>.

2. Under §91.105(i), technical assistance will be provided to groups and agencies representing low- and moderate-income persons when requesting assistance in developing project/funding proposals. Typical entities requesting technical assistance may include neighborhood associations, city advisory boards and commissions, interest groups, non-profit agencies, and citizens/residents. Such groups will be responsible for the actual writing and submission of proposals.

3. At least two public hearings will be held every year to obtain citizen/resident views and to respond to proposals at different stages of the programs administered by the Community Development Division, specifically: the development of the Consolidated Plan, the solicitation of program/project proposals for the Annual Action Plan; and the annual hearing on the prior year's CAPER.

4. The meeting place of public hearings or public meetings shall be suitable to accommodate persons with disabilities.

5. Written answers to complaints and grievances will be provided within 15 working days. Complaints and grievances may be addressed to the Community Development Division, 200 Forrest Street, Hattiesburg, MS 39401

6. Efforts will be made to meet the needs of those likely to benefit from housing and urban development programs including persons with special needs, the homeless, minorities, and non-English speaking residents by providing opportunities for participation in plan development and in public hearings. Alternative forms of the documents including translated versions will be provided upon request. Staff will need a 48 hour advance notice to provide for those who can reasonably be expected to attend and participate in such activities.

7. Consultation efforts will be made with social service agencies, State of Mississippi departments specifically concerned with lead based paint hazards and non-housing activities, adjacent local government entities, and local housing authorities.

8. A variety of methods, including the City's internet site, shall be used to facilitate the review and evaluation of proposed housing and urban development policies, programs, and projects.

DEPARTMENT of URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Each year citizens/residents and interested agencies will be notified of the funding level of assistance expected in the upcoming year; initial information may be based on local estimates. Citizens/Residents and interested entities will also be informed of the amount of funding expected to benefit low- and moderate- income persons.

Except as outlined in Amendments, the types of activities funded each year will be determined through the process outlined in this Citizen/Resident Participation Plan. Programs and activities administered by the Urban Development Department will be aligned directly to the needs and goals identified in the Consolidated Plan.

PUBLIC NOTICE

City of Hattiesburg will provide advance notice once any of the following documents are available for public comment.

1. Consolidated Plan
2. Annual Action Plan
3. Proposed Amendments
4. Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report.

Notice will be published in a newspaper of general circulation to advise citizens/residents of the hearings and deliberations scheduled. Information of the date, time and place of these hearing will be made available through these advertisements and other publications. Efforts will be made to advertise in media that serves non-English speaking households in the community.

Prior to final adoption of the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan, a 30-day comment period will be required to receive written comments. A brief summary of the plan will be published in the Hattiesburg American and, if feasible, in media that serves non-English speaking persons. The notice will also provide information about the location where complete copies of the plan may be reviewed.

IV. CITY OF HATTIESBURG NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

A primary vehicle for the citizen/resident participation element of the City's Community Development Programs will be the City's neighborhood associations. These associations are officially recognized by the Planning Commission and City Council.

VI. CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION REPORT (CAPER)

Citizens/Resident and citizen/resident groups will be requested to assess and comment on the performance of programs, projects, and services funded through the Urban Development Department. A 15-day comment period is required prior to City Council approval of the CAPER.

VII. RESPONSE TO SUBMISSION OF VIEWS AND PROPOSALS

The City will respond to all complaints or grievances submitted. Project proposals shall be responded to and addressed at the public hearing for the program year. Testimony received at a public hearing, if properly addressed, will not require a written response.

VIII. COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

When complaints are addressed to the City regarding the Community Development Programs, every effort will be made to respond in writing within fifteen (15) working days of receipt of such complaint. Complaints should be addressed to: Urban Development Department, 200 Forrest St. Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39401, 601-554-1006 and City Council at P.O. Box 1898, Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39403-1898.

IX. AVAILABILITY OF PROGRAM RECORDS AND INFORMATION

The Consolidated Plan and other documents, including citizens/residents comments related to the Final Plan and relevant to covered programs, will be made available for public review at the written notice of an amendment to projects acted on by the City Council shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation to provide a period of not less than 30 days to receive comments on the amendment prior to implementation.

These documents include but are not limited to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Citizen Participation Plan, Annual Performance Report, Affirmatively Furthering Housing Plan and minutes of public meetings Copies will be available on the City's website.

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

1. Substantial Amendments

A substantial amendment to the Annual Action Plan means an amendment that includes:

- a. Changes in approved federal funding sources.
- b. Proposals that change land use to one that requires a special or conditional use permit or is likely to result in a 50% change in capacity or amount of service provided.
- c. There is a change in the priority needs served by the original proposal.
- d. The cost of completing the project or conducting a program exceeds the original approved budget by 50% or more.

Substantial amendments require a public hearing and City Council approval. City staff shall review all substantial amendments. Written notices of City Council consideration of substantial amendments shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation to provide a period of not less than thirty days to receive comments on the substantial amendment before implementation.

2. Minor Amendments

Any change to a project contained in the Annual Action Plan that does not meet the conditions for a substantial amendment.

The Urban Development Director or designee is granted authority to decide minor amendments to the Annual Action Plan. This is the final local determination unless acted upon by City Council.

Written notice of an amendment to projects acted on by the City Council shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation to provide a period of not less than 30 days to receive comments on the amendment prior to implementation.

V. AMENDMENTS

All substantial amendments must be acted on by the Hattiesburg City Council.

CONSOLIDATED PLAN

1. Substantial Amendment

A substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan means an amendment that changes the intent of the plan by modifying adopted priority needs and implementation strategies. Substantial amendments require a public hearing and City Council approval. City staff shall review substantial amendments. City staff may provide recommendations to the City Council. Written notices of City Council consideration of substantial amendment shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation to provide a period of not less than thirty days to receive comments on the substantial amendment before implementation.

2. Minor Amendment

- a. Amendments that change the text of the Consolidated Plan to correct errors, or changes to text, which will not modify the intent of the plan by changing adopted priority needs, and implementation strategies; or
- b. Any amendment that does not qualify as a substantial amendment as defined above.
- c. The Urban Development Director or designee is granted authority to decide minor amendments to the Consolidated Plan. Notwithstanding this authority, the Federal and State Programs Director or designee may refer a minor amendment for action. The decision of the Urban Development Director is the final local determination unless acted upon by City Council.