

City of Chicopee

Citizen Participation Plan

The City of Chicopee receives funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME). For the CDBG program, the City is a direct HUD grantee; for the HOME program, the City is a member of the Consortium including the Cities of Holyoke and Westfield. As a HOME Consortium member, the City of Chicopee will seek to coordinate our efforts to the maximum extent feasible with our Consortia partners.

The federal CDBG and HOME programs, which are administered by the Community Development Department, provide grants to the City of Chicopee to maintain or develop viable communities through the provision of decent housing, creation of a suitable living environment and expanded economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons.

As a recipient of these program funds, HUD requires the City of Chicopee to produce the following documents:

- Consolidated Plan – a five-year plan that documents Chicopee’s housing and community development needs, outlines strategies to address those needs, and identifies proposed program accomplishments;
- Annual Action Plan – an annual plan that describes specific CDBG and HOME funded projects that will be undertaken over the course of the upcoming fiscal year;
- Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) – a year-end annual performance report that evaluates the use of federal funds during the prior year; and
- An Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) - an assessment tool that includes an assessment of data provided by HUD to assist the City in identifying fair housing issues and related factors in the City and the region. The data is designed to assist in the formulating subsequent housing and community development planning processes.

Chicopee’s Citizen Participation Plan aims to involve citizens in all aspects of the development of the Consolidated Plan, the Action Plan, any amendments to those plans, the CAPER, and the AFH. At a minimum, during the development of the Consolidated Plan and the AFH, the city will consult with the following:

- key organizations providing housing, health and social services including those focused on services to children, elderly, persons with disabilities, person with HIV/AIDs and their families, and homeless persons;
- community-based agencies and networks that represent protected classes;
- Organizations that enforce fair housing laws and those receiving funds from HUD’s Fair Housing Initiative Program(s);
- Units of local government and regional government agencies;
- Local Agencies with metropolitan-wide planning and transportation responsibilities;
- Local and Regional Housing Authorities;
- Residents of public and assisted housing developments;

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- Residents of areas designated as revitalization areas and of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods;
- Regional Continuum of Care;
- Community and Faith-based organizations;
- Private Sector entities including private businesses and For-profit developers, local and regional Chambers of Commerce; and
- Philanthropic organizations.

The consultations shall include a discussion of existing community needs and priorities, of the AFH data and recommendations, of the goals and activities consistent with Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing, and of efforts to coordinate community and housing goals with the AFH.

The City will conduct public hearings that provide opportunities for community input for all interested residents. If warranted by a language assessment, the City will make language assistance available to ensure participation by non-English and limited English proficiency residents. Alternative means of soliciting input are to be continuously evaluated and implemented.

The City of Chicopee will hold at least two public annual hearings at different times of year. Information about the time, location, and subject of each hearing will be provided to citizens at least two weeks in advance.

REASONABLE NOTICE AND AVAILABILITY

The City of Chicopee provides citizens with reasonable notice of the opportunity to comment on the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, CAPER, the AFH, and any Substantial Amendments to the Plans. The City of Chicopee notifies groups serving low- and moderate income residents of public hearings and forums, post notices in public, highly-trafficked locations, and publishes hearings notifications in publication of newspapers of general circulation, and on the City website.

At a minimum, copies of the Planning document will be available at City Hall, Office of Community Development, the Central Library, and the Valley Opportunity Council, the Community Action Agency. The documents will be posted on the City's website and free copies will be available upon request to residents and organizations.

INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED

A. The following information will made available to the public:

- the amount of assistance the City expects to receive;
- the range of activities to be undertaken;
- method by which funds will be distributed;
- schedule for the development of the Consolidated Plan;
- the amount of assistance that will benefit low, very low, and extremely low income persons;

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- the efforts taken to fully coordinate activities with the AFH Assessment and recommendations and
- plans to minimize the displacement of persons and the assistance to be provided any persons displaced.

B. The proposed Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and any amendment, and the AFH shall not be submitted to HUD prior to the expiration of a 30-day comment period following notification. The CAPER shall be submitted to HUD prior to the expiration of a 15-day comment period.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH, PUBLIC HEARINGS AND MEETINGS

The City continued its community outreach process in order to increase resident and organization input.

- A.** A Citizen Participation mailing list is maintained by CDD. The list includes interested individuals and organizations affected by CDD programs covered in the Consolidated Plan. Any person or organization may be added to the list by written request to the CDD or the Office of the Mayor. Notices of public hearings will be mailed, faxed or emailed to persons on the Citizen Participation list. Notices of other meetings and other information will be mailed as deemed relevant by the CDD.
- B.** Neighborhood meetings, focus groups and surveys include methodology undertaken to encourage involvement in the setting of priorities and the development of the Consolidated Plan and each Annual Action Plan.
- C.** The CDD conducts public hearings to obtain citizen views. At least one hearing shall occur during each of the review periods: one for comments on the DRAFT Annual Plan and another for the CAPER.

The hearings shall collectively address the following subjects:

- housing and community development needs;
- development of the proposed Activities, strategies and actions;
- the consistency of the AFH with the proposed activities; and
- program performance.

D. Notices

1. Public Hearings: In order to give adequate notice of public hearings, the CDD will publish a notice or a news story prior to each public hearing in a newspaper of general circulation. The notice contains the date, time, place and purpose of the hearings.
2. Time and Location: The time and location of all public hearings and community meetings will be chosen with accessibility to the handicapped and to the lower income community in mind.

COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

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- A.** Oral or written comments from residents and organizations shall be considered in preparing the Final Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plan, any amendment to the Plans, the AFH and the CAPER. A summary of the comments and the disposition thereof will be included with the applicable document when submitted to HUD.
- B.** Written complaints concerning the Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action plan, Amendment to the Plans, the AFH, and the CAPER shall be responded to in writing by the CDD within fifteen (15) working days whenever practical.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN AND/OR ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

- A.** An amendment to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, or Assessment of Fair Housing will be required in order to:
 - 1.** Carry out an activity with funds covered by the Plan that was not previously described in the Action Plan, or
 - 2.** Substantial change in an activity described in the Action Plan:
 - a.** An increase/decrease in funds to an activity that is deemed significant.
 - b.** A change in the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity if such change is deemed to constitute a new activity not previously listed in the Action Plan.
 - c.** A change in the method of distributing funds if the alternate method is not provided for in the Citizen Participation Plan.
 - 3.** Any substantial change in demographics, patterns of integration, concentration of poverty, and disparity of housing or economic opportunities.
- B.** An amendment to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, or AFH requires:
 - 1.** Public notice of the availability of the amendment by publishing a summary in local newspapers and holding a public hearing.
 - 2.** A thirty (30) day comment period to afford citizens the opportunity to comment.
 - 3.** CDD consideration of all comments.
 - 4.** CDD must summarize the comments and the disposition thereof and submit the amendment and summary to HUD prior to implementing amendment.

ACCESS TO RECORDS

The CDD shall provide interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the jurisdiction's Consolidated Plan and use of assistance under programs covered by the Plan during the previous three (3) years. Access to other records will be made consistent with applicable local, state and federal disclosure policies. Document will also be available on the City's website for the entire review period.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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The CDD will provide technical assistance to group representatives of lower income persons and low income neighborhood interests. Such assistance shall include:

- responding to questions about program requirements;
- explaining the process by which assistance is distributed; and
- identifying parts of a funding application/proposal that need improvement

ANTI-DISPLACEMENT AND RELOCATION

It is the policy of the City of Chicopee to consider whether displacement will occur as a result of federally-assisted projects and to take steps to mitigate the impact of the displacement, if any. Steps include: considering whether displacement will occur during feasibility determinations; identifying potential relocation workload and resources early; assuring, whenever possible, that residential occupants of buildings rehabilitated are offered an opportunity to return; planning rehabilitation projects to include "staging" to eliminate temporary displacement; following notification procedures so that families do not leave because they are not informed about planned projects or their rights

When a project does require relocation, in order to ensure the timely issuance of notices to displaced households, etc., staff of the Community Development Department will ensure that all notices are sent in compliance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (URA).

Temporary relocation often occurs as the result of lead abatement and other rehabilitation activities in renter- and owner-occupied units. The City of Chicopee will consider requests for temporary relocation assistance.

Meeting Agenda

The purpose is to gather information on

- ◆ Housing and Community Development Needs
- ◆ Community Strategies and Goals
- ◆ Investment Priorities
- ◆ **Community Development Citizens Participation Plan**