

Citizen Participation Plan

Community Development Block Grant Program



The Town of Chapel Hill

The January 5, 1995 Consolidated Submission for Community Planning and Development Program Regulations require the Town of Chapel Hill to utilize a Citizen Participation Plan that establishes the policies and procedures for citizen participation.

Citizen participation is an essential component in the preparation and development of the Community Development (CD) Program. This Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) sets forth a process to keep citizens informed and to allow for citizen input at all stages of the program, including development of the Consolidated Plan, program implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

A. STANDARDS OF PARTICIPATION

The Town shall provide for a citizen participation process at the community-wide level. This process must:

- Be conducted in open;
- Provide the opportunity for lower-income persons, minority groups, the elderly, persons with disabilities, the residents of the CD area(s) of concentration, the business community, and civic groups to participate in the development of the CD Program;
- Include reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of participation by citizens or citizen organizations throughout all stages of the program;
- Provide citizens with adequate information;
- Encourage citizens, particularly those living in slum/blighted areas and where CD funds will be used, and all minorities to submit their views and proposals and to participate in the Consolidated Plan and amendment process, and to provide comments on the performance reports; and
- Provide substantial representation of lower-income persons and minority groups on any community-wide or neighborhood advisory committee that may be established.

The following process addresses these performance standards:

B. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN

Citizens have been and will continue to be involved in the development of the Consolidated Plan. Prior to adoption of the Consolidated Plan, the Town will make available a proposed plan in a manner that

affords citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to examine its contents and to submit comments. The Town staff will also consult with affordable housing providers and advocates; and the staff will provide the organizations with information about the Consolidated Plan activities related to its development so the information can be shared. The following information will be included in the proposed plan:

- The amount of assistance the Town expects to receive including grant funds and program income;
- The range of activities that may be undertaken including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low- and moderate-income;
- The Town's plans to minimize displacement of persons and to assist any persons displaced, specifying the types and levels of assistance the jurisdiction will make available or require others to make available to persons displaced;
- How the Town will make this information available.

Prior to submission of the Consolidated Plan, a period of not less than thirty (30) days will be provided for citizens to comment on the proposed plan. The proposed plan will include the contents and purpose of the Consolidated Plan and a list of locations where copies are available. Copies of the proposed plan will be made available on the Town's website, and the staff will provide free copies to citizens and groups. Copies can be obtained at the Chapel Hill Town Hall, located at 405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Chapel Hill. Citizens will be directed to submit their comments to the Town staff. All comments received will be summarized and for those not accepted, the reason why will be provided.

C. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN

The Citizen Participation process is applicable to program amendments as required in section 91.105 of the Consolidated Submission for Community Planning Development Program Grant Regulations. The Consolidated Plan will be substantially amended whenever an activity previously described will not be carried out; or when an activity will be carried out that was not described in the action plan; or to substantially change the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity. An activity will be substantially changed when: (1) there is a change in the use of CD funds from one activity to another; (2) the activity location is changed to a location that is outside of the previously stated community; and (3) the beneficiaries change from one type to another (i.e. low-moderate households to low-moderate jobs).

Prior to a substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan, citizens will be given reasonable notice of and an opportunity to comment on such proposed change and reuse of funds. Public notice will indicate the specific aforementioned criteria or reason for the amendment to the Consolidated Plan.

The Town shall hold a public hearing to receive citizen comments on a substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan. Public notice will provide the public with a description of any changes adopted. All citizen comments submitted in writing or orally will be considered. A summary of all comments or views, and for those not accepted the reasons why they were not accepted, shall be attached to the substantial amendment of the Consolidated Plan. A period of no less than thirty (30) days will be provided for citizens to comment before the amendment is implemented.

D. PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Citizens will be given the opportunity to comment on all performance reports that the Town submits to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Reasonable notice of submission of

reports will be published on the Town's website. The Town shall provide a period, not less than fifteen (15) days, to receive comments on the performance report that is to be submitted to HUD, prior to its submission.

Any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally during the preparation of the performance report will be attached to the report and for those not accepted the reasons why will be provided.

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Town will hold at least two (2) public hearings during the development of the Consolidated Plan. The pre-submission hearing will be held at the initial stage of the development of the Consolidated Plan to obtain community views on housing and community development needs throughout the Town and to develop proposed activities for the program year. A second public hearing will be held to obtain community input and review the specified planned CD activities and to review program performance.

Any comments or views of citizens received in writing or orally at the public hearings will be considered in preparing the final Consolidated Plan. A summary of these comments or views, and for those not accepted the reasons why, shall be attached to the Consolidated Plan.

Notice of public hearings will be advertised on the Town's website. All public hearings will be held in the Council Chamber of Town Hall, located at 405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Chapel Hill. This room is centrally located and is accessible to citizens with disabilities. Town Hall was designed to meet the North Carolina Building Code requirements for persons with disabilities. The meetings will be held at times convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries.

F. AVAILABILITY TO THE PUBLIC

The Town shall provide full public access to program information and will make good faith efforts to keep citizens informed, consistent with the rights of personal privacy and obligations of confidentiality.

The major means of assuring that adequate information is received by citizens are as follows:

1. The staff maintains contact information for housing and community development organizations and advocates that may be interested in receiving CD program materials. These organizations and advocates are notified of all public hearing dates and other information pertaining to the CD Program.
2. Town staff has made available on the Town's website documents containing CD materials, including mailings and promotional materials, key program documents, copies of federal CD regulations, explanations of program requirements, copies of the Citizen Participation Plan, substantial amendments, the adopted Consolidated Plan, and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). Town staff will provide access to records relating to the Consolidated Plan and the use of CD funds during the preceding five years.
3. At public hearings, Town staff will present and explain relevant CD background information and answer questions. The staff compiles concerns and questions brought forward in these meetings that warrant further response. These responses are reviewed by the staff and/or appropriate advisory board(s).

4. The Town shall provide a period, not less than thirty (30) days, to receive comments from citizens or units of general local government on the Consolidated Plan and substantial amendments. The Town shall provide a period of not less than fifteen (15) days for performance reports submitted to HUD, prior to its submission.

G. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Resources must be made available to provide technical assistance to the following groups: 1) citizen organizations, so that they may adequately participate in planning, implementing, and assessing the program; and 2) groups of low- and moderate-income persons and groups of residents which request assistance in developing proposals and statements of views. Assistance may be made available to citizens who are organizing and operating neighborhood and project area organizations.

Resources presently available:

1. Staff can assist citizen groups in interpreting the federal CD regulations and local timetables; in advising groups concerning the procedures to be followed; and in providing relevant background documents and available data.
2. Staff provides technical assistance to the recipients of CD grants and other local funding resources.
3. Other non-profit organizations operating in the community may also provide technical assistance from time to time.

H. COMPLAINTS

It is the policy of the Town of Chapel Hill to provide a just procedure for the acknowledgement, presentation, consideration, investigation, and disposition of complaints received concerning the Community Development Block Grant program.

Definition

A complaint is a claim concerning any action on the part of a Town Department, contract agency, or contract firm involved in carrying out the CD program. The complaint can be based upon any event or condition which effects the circumstances under which a citizen lives, allegedly caused by misinterpretation, unfair application, violation of contract, or lack of established policy pertaining to program implementation and which the citizen feels infringes upon the health, safety, welfare, or right to due process for himself/herself, his/her family, property, or personal possessions.

Procedure

When a person directly affected by the CD program has a complaint, the following successive steps are to be taken. The number of days indicated for each step should be considered the maximum number of number of working days unless otherwise provided; every effort should be made to expedite the process.

Upon request by a citizen, assistance by the staff may be in the form of explanation of the procedure, preparation of the complaint, identification of resources, and other information. These activities can occur in any of the steps listed below.

Step 1 – A citizen with a complaint may first present his/her complaint verbally to the Town, contract agency, or contract firm that is the subject of the complaint. (This step is not a prerequisite for making a written complaint as set forth in Step 2.)

Step 2 – If the response that the citizen receives in Step 1 is not satisfactory or if the citizen initially wishes to submit a written complaint, Step 2 procedures shall be followed. The citizen may also present his/her complaint in writing to the Town, contract agency or contract firm that is the subject of the complaint. The Town shall investigate the complaint further and shall respond to the citizen with a written evaluation within fifteen (15) working days when practicable.

Step 3 – If Step 2 does not resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the citizen, the citizen can request that the Assistant Town Manager evaluate the complaint. The staff will assess the nature of the complaint and report to the Deputy or Assistant Town Manager. The Deputy or Assistant Town Manager shall then review the written documentation of the complaint and develop a response.

At any time, a citizen may make an oral or written petition to the Town Council describing the nature of the complaint.

I. MULTILINGUAL OPPORTUNITIES

If a significant number of residents in the CD areas speak and read a primary language other than English, multilingual opportunities must be provided at public hearings, and major notices and documents will be provided in the primary language.

J. DISABILITIES

The Town Council Chambers is audio-equipped for the hearing impaired, and this availability of service is always indicated on Town Council agendas, as well as in public notices for public hearings. The public notice also states that Deaf and Hearing-impaired individuals needing interpreter services should provide the Town Manager's Office five (5) days prior notice by voice and TDD. The TTY (Teletypewriter) Device and the TDD (Telecommunication) Device are available for use in the Town of Chapel Hill Communications and Public Affairs Office, which is the primary communications system for all Town Departments. The Town's TDD number is 968-2728/TDD and will be on correspondence to all citizens.

K. Amended Policies and Procedures

The Town has the ability to temporarily amend the policies and procedures outlined in this plan, when given authorization by HUD. When an authorization to amend is given, the Town will follow the rules and procedures outlined in that HUD authorization.

Adopted by Planning Board on 4/10/78

Revised 9/18/78

Revised 5/01/79

Revised 4/15/80

Revised 3/15/89

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11/28/95

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