

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

Revised on May 26, 2020 to:

- Include virtual hearings as an allowed method for citizen participation when necessary for public health reasons;
- Provide a 5-day notice/comment period for proposed amendments necessary to expedite and facilitate the use of funds to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.
- Make minor edits that do not change current citizen participation policies. Please be advised that if virtual hearings are used, real-time responses and accommodations for persons with disabilities and/or with limited English proficiency will be made available to the greatest extent possible;
- Include provisions relative to the Consolidated Planning process and participation waivers made available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act;
- Include provisions relative to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and other applicable U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funding made available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act;

The City of Wichita Falls is an Entitlement Recipient of Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG) under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended and funding under the HOME Investment Partnership Act, Title II of the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990. The City of Wichita Falls' Citizen Participation Plan was prepared in accordance with section 104 (a) 3 of the Housing and Community Act of 1974 and has been amended as required for the Consolidated Plan in accordance to CFR Part 91, section 105.

The Citizen Participation Plan encourages participation by very low and low-income persons, particularly those living in areas where CDBG and HOME funds

are proposed to be used. In addition, it encourages the participation of all its citizens, including minorities and non-English speaking persons, as well as persons with mobility, visual or hearing impairments. It encourages the participation of residents receiving housing assistance or living in public or assisted housing developments, in the process of developing and implementing the consolidated plan, along with other low income residents of targeted areas in which the developments are located.

#### **I. Participation of residents in low and moderate income neighborhoods**

The City will encourage citizens to participate in the development of the Consolidated Plan, any amendments to the plan, and the performance report through the following methods:

The principle mechanism for achieving citizen involvement in the development, administration and evaluation of Community Development Block Grant and HOME Activities will be through the Neighborhood Resources Division of the Community Development Department. All aspects of citizen's participation will be conducted in an open manner, with freedom of access for all interested person and at handicapped accessible locations. The Mayor, City Council, and City Administrators may appoint an advisory committee to assist in receiving public input from the community. All advisory committee meetings, public forums and public hearings will be posted on the official bulletin board of the City and / or published in the *Wichita Falls Times Record News*.

#### **2. Function**

The Neighborhood Resources Division will perform the following functions:

- a. To solicit comments from persons within the community and persons residing in CDBG eligible census tracts relating to

the needs of their neighborhoods and performance of the CDBG and HOME programs.

- b. To provide information to persons within the community and persons residing in CDBG eligible census tracts concerning public hearings, public forums or meetings, proposed CDBG and HOME activities, performance evaluations, etc.
  - c. Conduct or assist with public hearings and public forums to obtain citizen input at all stages of the Community Development Block Grant and HOME Programs planning processes. The Department and any appointed Advisory Committee will review all public comments, recommendations and proposals concerning the development of needs, proposed activities, program amendments and program performance and submit its recommendations to the City Council.
  - d. Conduct Advisory Committee meetings as required.
- I. It is the policy of the City of Wichita Falls to give citizens timely notice of local meetings and reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information, performance reports, and records relating to the City's proposed and actual use of Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnership, and Emergency Shelter Grant funds.

## **Procedures**

- A. Official notice of public meetings and public hearings will be posted at least 72 hours in advance with the City Clerk of the City of Wichita Falls, Wichita Falls City Hall, Wichita Falls, Texas 76301

B. Notice of public hearings will be published in the Wichita Falls Times Record News prior to hearing dates.

C. A statement of program objectives, proposed use of funds, and other information regarding the proposed Consolidated Plan will be published in the Wichita Falls Times Record News prior to the public hearing.

D. Information that may be reviewed includes, but is not limited to:

i. Amount of grant funding and program income anticipated in the coming year.

ii. Range of activities that may be undertaken.

iii. Estimated amount of grant funding and program income proposed to be used for activities that will benefit low and moderate-income persons.

iv. Any proposed activities likely to result in displacement and the City of Wichita Falls' plan for minimizing displacement.

II. It is the policy of the City of Wichita Falls to take reasonable steps to provide technical assistance to groups representing persons of low and moderate-income that request assistance in developing proposals.

## **Procedures**

Groups representing persons of low and moderate income who are interested in receiving technical assistance may write or call the City of Wichita Falls, Department of Community Development, Neighborhood

Resources Division, 1300 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Wichita Falls, Texas 76301,  
Telephone Contact: 940-761-7448.

- A. An assessment of the type and extent of technical assistance needed by the representative group will be made by City staff upon request and in a timely manner.
  - B. The City will make a good faith effort to see that reasonable requests for technical assistance are responded to in a timely manner.
- III. It is the policy of the City of Wichita Falls to hold public hearings and public forums for the purpose of obtaining the views of citizens and responding to proposals and questions.

### **Procedures**

- A. A Public Input Forum to obtain the views of citizens on community development and housing needs may be held by the City of Wichita Falls Neighborhood Resources Division in a public facility accessible to the broader public. It is anticipated that hosting a public forum at a community facility will enhance citizen participation.
- B. A minimum of one advertised Public Hearing to obtain the views of citizens on community development and housing needs will be held by the Wichita Falls City Council during the 30 day public comment period and advertised publication of the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan for public comment. This public hearing will be held in the Wichita Falls City Hall, City Council Chambers. This site

is equally accessible to all sections of the city and is the normal place for public hearings.

- C. Other public meetings may be held as necessary.
  - D. The public input forum and/or public hearing will address community development and housing needs, development of proposed activities, and review of program performance.
  - E. Any additional public hearings will be held in the Wichita Falls City Hall, City Council Chambers.
  - F. Reasonable accommodation for the physically challenged will be provided at public hearing sites. At least 72 hours (three complete business days) advance notice is required.
  - G. Comments received during the public comment period and at public hearings will be incorporated into the Consolidated Plan.
- IV. It is the policy of the City of Wichita Falls to take reasonable steps to assist non-English speaking residents to be able to understand and participate in discussions that take place at public hearings and public forums, when a significant number of non-English speaking residents can reasonably be expected to attend.

## **Procedures**

- A. Anyone anticipating that the effectiveness of the public hearing will be significantly reduced because of English language limitations should contact the City of Wichita Falls, Department of Community Development as far in advance of the public hearing as possible.

- B. At least 72 hours (three complete business days) advance notice is required.
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- V. It is the policy of the City of Wichita Falls to provide citizens with reasonable advance notice of and opportunity to comment on proposed activities not previously included in the Consolidated Plan and any proposed deletion or other substantial change to the activities.

## **Procedures**

- A. If the proposed Consolidated Plan is approved and it subsequently becomes necessary to substantially change the program content, a formal amendment process will be followed.
  - i. An additional public hearing will be held.
  - ii. Reasonable advance notice of the date, time, and place of the public hearing will be made available to the public.
  - iii. The nature of the proposed change(s) will be described in sufficient detail to allow citizens to determine if they are affected and desire to comment on the proposed change.
  
- B. "Substantial Change" is defined by the City of Wichita Falls to be:
  - i. A proposed new activity which cannot reasonably be construed to have been included within the programmatic intent of the adopted plan or in the commitment of funds to a specific project; or
  - ii. An activity that was identified in the adopted plan, but which subsequently is proposed to be deleted; or

- iii. An activity that is proposed to be altered in terms of its purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries to such an extent that it can no longer reasonably be construed as the activity reviewed by the public and approved by the Wichita Falls City Council.
  - C. The criteria to be used in determining if an activity is “substantially changed” shall be based upon one or more of the above definitions and upon any Wichita Falls City Council action to modify/amend the Consolidated Plan proposed activities.
  - D. City staff shall proactively monitor each funded project for compliance with its respective performance criteria and provide periodic progress reports as needed to the City Council and/or City administrators.
  - E. Any activity that is judged to be at risk of substantially changing from its originally intended purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries will be reviewed in a public hearing forum prior to a decision by the City Council as to whether the performance objectives of the project shall be amended.
- VI. It is the policy of the City of Wichita Falls to take reasonable steps to address concerns expressed by citizens and to respond to any formal complaints or grievances in a timely manner.

## **Procedures**

- A. Citizens are urged to bring any concerns they may have regarding the Consolidated Plan to the attention of the City of Wichita Falls, Neighborhood Resources Division by calling 940-761-7448. It is

anticipated that most concerns can be quickly and successfully addressed through direct conversation.

- B. Unresolved issues, complaints, or grievances may be formally submitted to the following address:

City of Wichita Falls  
Department of Community Development,  
Neighborhood Resources Division  
1300 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Wichita Falls, Texas 76301  
Attention: Consolidated Plan Comment

- C. In order for the City to be able to respond effectively, any formal complaint or grievance must be in writing and follow the procedures shown below:

- i. It must be legible – typed correspondence is strongly urged.
- ii. It must be signed, dated, and indicate if the correspondent is representing his/her personal concerns or those of a larger group, in which case, the name and description of the group must be stated.
- iii. It must clearly identify the specific complaint or grievance and should state what corrective action is being sought.

- D. The City will provide timely written answers to written complaints and grievances. The time required to respond may vary depending upon the nature and complexity of the specific complaint. Where

practicable, written answers will be provided within 15 working days of the receipt of the written complaint.

- VII. It is the policy of the City of Wichita Falls to encourage citizen participation, particularly by low and moderate-income persons who reside in the areas for which grant funding is proposed to be used.

### **Procedures**

- A. Reasonable notice will be given to the general public at appropriate times as the details of the proposed use of grant funding is identified.
- B. After specific proposals for projects funded under CDBG regulations' area benefit definition are received and evaluated, and authorization is given by the City Council for the City Manager to implement the final funding decision, additional citizen participation procedures may be implemented depending upon the nature and scope of the proposed project. The specifics of these procedures may vary from project-to-project in order to respond to unique circumstances. The general process will be as follows:
  - i. Identify the geographic boundaries of the area most likely to be affected by the proposal and the principal organizations known to represent or otherwise be affiliated with the low and moderate-income residents.
  - ii. Proactively communicate the purpose of and means by which grant funding will to be used.

- iii. Provide reasonable opportunities for low and moderate-income residents to ask questions and receive answers regarding how they might be affected by the proposed use of grant funding.

### **3. Publications**

#### **1. Five-Year Consolidated Plan**

A summary of the proposed five-year consolidated plan will be placed in the *Wichita Falls Times Record News* and will allow at least thirty (30) days for persons to comment. The summary will describe the contents and purpose of the Consolidated Plan and include a list of the locations where copies of the entire plan may be examined.

#### **2. One-Year Action Plan**

A notification will be placed in the *Wichita Falls Times Record News* to inform citizens of the availability of the one-year action plan to afford citizens a reasonable opportunity to examine their contents. At least thirty (30) days will be allowed to receive citizen comments.

#### **3. Substantial Amendments**

A notification will be placed in the *Wichita Falls Times Record News* to inform citizens of the availability of any substantial amendments to the one-year action plan or the five-year consolidated plan, as these documents are developed, to afford citizens a reasonable opportunity to examine their contents. At least thirty (30) days will be allowed to receive citizen comments.

#### **4. Consolidated Performance Report**

A notification will be placed in the *Wichita Falls Times Record News* to inform citizens of the availability of the Consolidated Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) to afford citizens a reasonable opportunity to examine the contents. At least fifteen (15) days will be allowed to receive citizen comments.

## **II. Access to Public Information**

### **A. Public access to information and records regarding the CDBG and other Grant Programs.**

The City will provide for full and timely disclosure of its program records and information for the preceding five years consistent with applicable state and local laws regarding personal privacy and obligations of confidentiality.

Documents relevant to the program shall be made available for review at the City's Neighborhood Resources Division located at 1300 7<sup>th</sup> Street, during normal working hours for citizens' review upon either written or oral request. Such documents include 1) Mailing and promotional material; 2) Records of public hearings; 3) Key documents, including all prior applications, letters of approval, grant agreements, the Citizens Participation Plan, performance reports, evaluation reports, Consolidated Plan, other reports required by HUD, and the proposed and approved application for the current year; 4) Copies of the regulations and issuance's governing the program; and, 5) Documents regarding other important program requirements, such as contracting procedures, environmental policies, fair housing and other equal opportunity requirements, and relocation provisions

## **B. Availability of Consolidated Plan**

Copies of the consolidated plan will be available at the City of Wichita Falls Library (main branch), and the City of Wichita Falls Neighborhood Resources Division.

## **III. Technical Assistance**

The City of Wichita Falls Community Development Department, Neighborhood Resources Division will provide for and encourage the submission of views and proposals regarding the Community Development Block Grant and HOME Programs by citizens, particularly low and moderate-income persons and residents of low-income neighborhoods. The City will provide technical assistance to groups representative of persons of very low and low income that request such assistance in developing proposals for funds under any of the eligible activities covered by the Consolidated Plan. The level and type of assistance will be determined at the time of the request. The City will provide a timely written response to all written proposals submitted explaining any action recommended or taken by the City on the proposals.

The Community Development Department, Neighborhood Resources Division will provide technical assistance to any appointed advisory board or committee to familiarize them with overall program aspects; particularly the process for determining community needs, program planning, citizen input and program assessment.

## **IV. Anti-Displacement**

The City of Wichita Falls intends to minimize displacement of persons in the implementation of CDBG and HOME activities. If displacement becomes

necessary in order to accomplish program objectives, persons displaced will be assisted according to the HUD Handbook 1378, Tenant Assistance, Relocation and Real Property Acquisition, including any amendments and 24 CFR part 92.353, displacement, relocation and acquisition regulations.

## **V. Complaints and Grievances**

Citizen complaints or grievances may be submitted in writing and mailed to the Neighborhood Resources Division, 1300 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Wichita Falls, TX 76301 or may be hand delivered. A written response will be provided within fifteen (15) working days where practicable to all written complaints and grievances received by the Community Development Department.

## **VI. Amendments**

The City of Wichita Falls will amend its consolidated plan whenever one of the following decisions is made:

1. To make a substantial change in its allocation of priorities or a substantial change in the method of distribution of funds;
- 2.
3. 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;
  
3. To substantially change the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity.

Public comments for amendments to the consolidated plan will follow the procedures outlined above in the section concerning public hearings.

A “Substantial Change” is defined by the City of Wichita Falls to be:

1. A proposed new activity which cannot reasonably be construed to have been included within the programmatic intent of the adopted application or in the commitment of funds to a specific project; or
2. An activity that was identified in the adopted application, but which subsequently is proposed to be deleted; or
3. An activity that is proposed to be altered in terms of its purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries to such an extent that it can no longer reasonably be construed as the activity reviewed by the public and approved by the Wichita Falls City Council.