

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
CONSOLIDATED PLAN



APRIL 2013

Donald L. Plusquellic, Mayor

City of Akron, Ohio

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The City of Akron is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to have a detailed Citizen Participation Plan which contains the City's policies and procedures for public involvement in the Consolidated Plan process and the use of CDBG, HOME and ESG money. This Citizen Participation Plan is available to the public.

ENCOURAGING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This Citizen Participation Plan provides for and encourages public participation, emphasizing involvement by low and moderate-income neighborhoods, residents of public and assisted housing, and by other low-income residents of neighborhood strategy areas in which public and assisted housing is located. The City of Akron will take whatever actions are appropriate to encourage participation of minorities, and people who do not speak English, and also people with disabilities.

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

This department represents the City staff responsible for planning, implementing and assessing the federal grant dollars received by the City from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The role of the Department of Planning and Urban Development is to advise City Administration and City Council on matters related to the federal grant programs and to provide technical assistance and informational support to all other components of the Citizen Participation structures. The Department of Planning and Urban Development acts as a solicitor of citizen input and is responsible for ensuring compliance with the rules and regulations governing the federal grant programs administered on behalf of the City.

THE ROLE OF CITIZENS

The primary purpose of the programs covered by this Citizen Participation Plan is to improve communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment and growing economic opportunities. All activities are principally for low- and moderate-income people.

Because the amount of federal CDBG, HOME and ESG money that Akron receives each year is primarily based upon the severity of both poverty and substandard housing conditions in Akron, it is necessary that public participation genuinely involves low-income residents who experience these conditions. Genuine involvement by low-income people, particularly residents of predominately low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, must take place at all stages of the process, including identifying and

prioritizing needs as well as suggesting the types of programs needed to meet high priorities. A neighborhood is defined as a “predominately low- and moderate-income neighborhood” when, at a minimum, 51% of the residents of the neighborhood have incomes that do not exceed 80% of the area median income as provided by the federal government.

ACCESS TO MEETINGS

Public hearings will be held to address housing needs and the Consolidated Plan. Hearings will be advertised in the Akron Beacon Journal and The Reporter newspaper at least ten days prior, and letters of invitation to the hearings will be sent to citizens, organizations and the media. Public hearings held before Akron Planning Commission will also be advertised in the Akron Beacon Journal and The Reporter newspaper prior to the meeting.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Public and non-profit housing agencies, residents of low, very low and poverty income neighborhoods, social service agencies and other interested community groups, including those most affected (and those interested in minimizing displacement or assisting those displaced) will be notified of the availability of copies of the draft Consolidated Plan for review and may submit comments pertaining to the Consolidated Plan documents. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is recommending the availability of CDs to interested citizens/organizations. Additionally, copies of Consolidated Plan documents will be made available through the City office at the following address or website, and at the public library.

City of Akron
Department of Planning and Urban Development
161 S. High Street, Suite 201
Akron, Ohio 44308
Tel: 330-375-2090
Fax: 330-375-2649
Email: planning@akronohio.gov
Website: www.akronohio.gov/planning

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance will be made available by the City for citizen organizations and neighborhood groups representing low, very low and poverty income persons requesting such aid. This assistance will include copies of the Consolidated Plan regulations, maps, selected census data and technical briefings as may be necessary.

The City of Akron is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities are able to fully participate in public programs, services and activities. Anyone who is in

need of an accommodation from any City department is invited to contact Billy Soule, Assistant to the Mayor for Community Relations, 166 S. High Street, Room 503, Akron, Ohio 44308, (voice) (330) 375-2189 at least seven (7) days in advance. If you require TDD phone service call Ohio Relay at (800) 750-0750 and they will assist in contacting the Mayor's Office at (330) 375-2345.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

The City will hold a minimum of two official public hearings for Consolidated Plan development. The two hearings will include the Department of Planning and Urban Development Needs Meeting and the City Planning Commission public hearing, which will be held thirty days prior to the submission of the Consolidated Plan.

The Needs Meeting will be held to obtain views of citizens, public agencies and other interested parties regarding housing and community development needs and a review of program performance. The City, in addition, holds meetings to respond to proposals and comments at all stages of the Consolidated Plan submission process.

The second public meeting to be held before Akron City Planning Commission will be to review the use of funds for the Consolidated Plan. There will also be a public hearing by Akron City Council. The timing of the public hearings will be responsive to those people benefitting from program funds, accessible to people with disabilities and publicized in the Akron Beacon Journal and The Reporter newspaper.

The City of Akron will make every reasonable effort to provide for and accommodate the needs of the handicapped for all public hearings. Interpreters and appropriate written materials will be provided at public hearings for group(s) of non-English speaking persons affected or benefitting from program funds.

The proposed consolidated submission will be published in the Akron Beacon Journal and The Reporter. The City will consider any comments or views of citizens. The City, where practical, will respond within fifteen working days with written answers to written complaints or grievances arising during the Consolidated Plan development progress. Comments initiated through the needs meeting, public hearings or through publication received by the City will be attached to the final submission of the Consolidated Plan. If any substantial changes arise in the proposed use of funds, citizens will be afforded reasonable notice of and opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment via public hearing(s) and publication.

IMPLEMENTATION

The following citizen participation process will be followed:

1. Public notices will advertise the public comment period for the draft Consolidated Plan, public hearing(s) and completion of the Plan. These notices will be published in the newspaper of general circulation, including the minority paper of

general circulation. Public notice on public hearings will also be published in the paper of general circulation, at least ten (10) days prior to meetings. Planning Commission Hearings are advertised two weeks prior. Public notice on public hearings will also be made available to news media, including newspaper, radio and television. Written invitations to public hearings will be sent to all key community groups and organizations.

2. Copies of the Consolidated Plan documents will be available for public review and comment for thirty (30) days. Copies of these documents will be made available through the City office or website at www.akronohio.gov/planning and the public library. Copies will be provided to community organizations, social service agencies and neighborhood groups upon request.
3. Public hearing(s) will be held during the planning stages of the proposed Consolidated Plan. Meetings may also be held in neighborhoods targeted for assistance. A public hearing on the proposed draft Plan will be held before Akron City Planning Commission. A meeting utilizing citizens, public agencies and other interested parties will be held to identify housing and community development needs. The City's goal is to acknowledge or respond to the comments within fifteen (15) working days. These summarized comments, as well as the individual written comments, will be attached to the Department of Planning and Urban Development Consolidated Plan and placed in the citizen comment files.

AMENDMENTS

1. The City will amend the approved plan when there is a change in allocation priorities, to carry out an activity using funds from any program covered by the Consolidated Plan not previously described in the Action Plan, or to change the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity. The City will notify the public through the local newspaper that a change has been made and will notify HUD.
2. Public hearings will be held when there are substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan. A substantial amendment includes, but is not limited to, a change in purpose, additional activities involving 10% or more of the federal entitlement.

Substantial Amendments

When there is a substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan, the same citizen participation procedures will be followed as for the annual Consolidated Plan.

Substantial change means changes made in terms of purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries. Any substantial change in the programs must be approved by City

Council at a public hearing. It will then be submitted to HUD for informational purposes. The public hearing will be at a time and place that is conducive for the inclusion of all persons who would be affected by the change. In addition, any substantial change will be published in a newspaper of general circulation and citizens will be given 30 days to comment on the change(s). The following changes are considered substantial amendments:

- The other amendment requires prior HUD approval.
- The amount involved in the proposed amendment exceeds 50% of the total project cost.
- The proposed amendment adds an activity not described in the Consolidated Plan.

Public Notice and Public Hearing for Substantial Amendments

There must be reasonable notice of a proposed Substantial Amendment so that citizens will have an opportunity to review it and comment. Notice will be made according to the procedures described earlier in this Citizen Participation Plan with the addition of the following procedures specifically for Substantial Amendments:

- A detailed written description of the proposed Substantial Amendment will be made available to the public within three working days of the request and copies will be available at the locations indicated earlier in this Citizen Participation Plan and on the City website at www.akronohio.gov/planning.
- The public hearing on the Substantial Amendment will take place after the public has had 30 days to review and comment on the proposed Substantial Amendment.
- In preparing a final Substantial Amendment, careful consideration will be given to all comments and views expressed by the public, whether given as verbal testimony at the public hearing or submitted in writing during the review and comment period. The final Substantial Amendment will include all comments and explain why any comments were not accepted.

Substantial Amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan

Substantial amendments to this Citizen Participation Plan can be made only after the public has been notified of the City's intent to modify it and after the public has been given 30 days, from the date of publication, to review and comment on the proposed substantial changes to it.

Nonsubstantial Amendments

Any proposed amendment to the approved Consolidated Plan that does not meet the above definition of a substantial change will be subject to the following procedures:

- Any change that comes about as a result of a disaster declared by either the Mayor or the Governor shall be included and notice of the change will be given to the public. However, in this case, the 30-day comment period is not applicable.

Complaint Procedure

All complaints related to any phase of the programs covered under the Consolidated Plan should be delivered or mailed to the Department of Planning and Urban Development at the City of Akron, 161 S. High Street, Suite 201, Akron, Ohio 44308. All complaints will be given consideration and answered in writing within 15 days of their receipt by the Department of Planning and Urban Development office.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The City of Akron will continue to be involved in coordinating participation among low, very low and poverty income residents, public and non-profit housing providers and private and public health and social service agencies. The following is a summary of recent and/or ongoing community involvement activities.

PROJECT AREA HOUSING COMMITTEES

Within each Community Development Neighborhood Improvement Area and Neighborhood Housing Petition Area, citizens are and will continue to be facilitated in forming project area housing committees to encourage citizen involvement in the program within their area. Functions include assisting in the preparation of the renewal plans (CD Neighborhood Improvement Areas); act as a means of disseminating information; provide a forum for citizens to discuss concerns, problems and suggestions; and act as a mechanism with which to evaluate and monitor the programs. Crime/Block Watch Committees are formed with citizens in the project areas as an effort to involve citizens in reducing criminal activity within the areas.

AKRON METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY

The City of Akron holds quarterly meetings with the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA) to discuss issues of mutual concern and to update progress on housing programs or new developments.

HOUSING PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Emphasis is placed on affordable housing for low income persons and constituents of Network member agencies.

HOUSING FOR THE HOMELESS

The Emergency Assistance Task Force and Continuum of Care meet to review issues relating to homelessness. Further, this Task Force will be consulted in preparing a homeless plan for Continuum of Care. The City has a Request for Proposal process in place for the Emergency Solutions Grant Program. Emergency shelter agencies are encouraged to submit proposals. The City meets with agencies to discuss the application process and describe the City's funding goals as stated in the application. Agencies are given thirty (30) days to submit an application and the City strives to review within a forty-five (45) day period.

PLANNING COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Planning Commission and City Council provide public forums for citizens, citizens' committees, public agencies and other interested parties to comment on program elements and proposed use of funds of long-range housing strategies (i.e., CHAS, Consolidated Plan), renewal plans and other planning documents.

The City will hold two official public hearings for the Consolidated formulation. The meetings will consist of the Consolidated Plan Needs meeting to discuss housing and community development needs and program performance and the City Planning Commission hearing to review use of funds. The meetings will be held to solicit the views of low, very low and poverty income citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties.

THE VARIOUS STAGES OF THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN PROCESS

The policies and procedures in this Citizen Participation Plan relate to several stages of action mentioned in law or regulation. In general, these stages of events include:

- Identification of housing and community development needs
- Preparation of the draft use of funds for the upcoming year, known as the proposed Annual Action Plan; or the development of the new five-year Consolidated Plan
- Formal approval by City Council of a final Annual Action Plan; or new five-year Consolidated Plan
- Occasional necessary change to the use of budgeted funds in an Annual Action Plan; or change to the priorities established in the five-year Consolidated Plan. If the necessary change meets the substantial change definition, a formal Substantial Change Amendment will be published for citizen input and acted upon by City Council
- Annual Performance Report to HUD at program year completion drafted for public review and comment

PUBLICATION OF THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

This Citizen Participation Plan is available on the City of Akron Department of Planning and Urban Development web page at www.akronohio.gov. To obtain a printed copy of the plan, citizens can call, write or send an e-mail to:

City of Akron
Department of Planning and Urban Development
161 S. High Street, Suite 201
Akron, Ohio 44308
Tel: 330-375-2090
Fax: 330-375-2649
Email: planning@akronohio.gov
Website: www.akronohio.gov/planning

THE STAGES IN THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROCESS

In order to encourage public involvement, at least one public hearing to determine the specific needs and priorities identified by low- and moderate-income people will be held in a location outside of city hall. Information is gathered by and communicated through representatives of the community, including recipients and providers of services.

Public hearings about needs will be completed before a draft of the Annual Budget is published for comment. The federal budget is included in the City's general

budget process and citizens informed of opportunities for input. Identified needs will be considered by the City and addressed in the draft Annual Action Plan.

THE PROPOSED ANNUAL ACTION PLAN AND/OR FIVE-YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN

The law that provides the federal block grant funding calls for improved accountability of jurisdictions to the public. In that spirit, and in compliance with the terms of the law, Akron will use the following procedures:

1. General Information

At the beginning of this stage, Akron will provide the public with an estimate of the amount of CDBG, HOME and ESG funds it expects to receive in the upcoming year along with a description of the range of types of activities that can be funded with these resources. In addition, the public will be given an estimate, by type of activity, of the amount of these funds which will benefit low- and moderate-income people.

2. Availability of the Proposed Annual Action Plan

The proposed Annual Action Plan will be made available to the public at least 30 days prior to the approval of the final Action Plan by City Council so that citizens will have a reasonable opportunity to examine it and to submit comments. A limited number of copies of the proposed Annual Action Plan will be made available to the public upon request and at the locations specified above or on the web at www.akronohio.gov/planning.

3. Public Hearing and Further Action

In preparing the final Annual Action Plan, careful consideration will be given to all comments and views expressed by the public, whether given as verbal testimony at the public hearing or submitted in writing during the review and comment period. The final Annual Action Plan will include all comments and explain why any comments were not accepted.

THE "FINAL" ANNUAL ACTION PLAN AND/OR FIVE-YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN

A limited number of copies of the final Annual Action Plan will be made available to the public within three working days of request. In addition, copies will be available at the locations specified above or on the web at www.akronohio.gov/planning.