Hidalgo County
Urban County Program

Citizen Participation Plan

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CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

The County of Hidalgo Urban County Program is required by 24 CFR 91.105 to have a detailed Citizen Participation Plan which contains the County's policies and procedures for public involvement in the Consolidated Plan Strategy (CPS) process; when preparing an assessment of fair housing (AFH), and the use of **Community Development Block Grants** (CDBG), **HOME**, and **Emergency Shelter Grants** (ESG) funds. This Citizen Participation Plan must be available to the public.

This Plan covers the four County Precincts, and eighteen non-entitlement cities which comprise the Hidalgo County Urban Program, and **supersedes all previous plans.** (Addresses and telephone numbers for the Consortium Cities and Precincts and central administration are listed as an attachment to this Plan.)

Encouraging Public Participation

The law requires that the Citizen Participation Plan both provide for and encourage public participation, in the development of the AFH, any revisions to the AFH, the consolidated plan, any substantial amendments to the consolidated plan or annual action plan and the annual performance report.

The following are encouraged to participate in the development of documents aforementioned:

Low and moderate income people — especially those living in low and moderate income neighborhoods, particularly those persons living in areas designated as a revitalization area or in a slum and blighted area where CDBG or HOME funds are proposed to be used.

Minorities, people who do not speak English, homeless individuals and families, and people with disabilities (including nursing homes and other institutions for persons with disabilities) are encouraged. Summaries of basic information about CDBG, HOME and ESG, the Consolidated Planning process; and AFH are to be made available in English and Spanish (when requested).

Local and regional institutions, Continuums of Care, and other organizations (including businesses, developers, non-profit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community-based and faith-based organizations.

Local public housing agencies and residents of public housing (including any resident advisory boards, resident councils, and resident management corporations).

The Role of Low Income People

The law declares that 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 principally for low and moderate income people.

The amount of federal fund the County receives each year is mostly based upon the severity of both poverty and substandard housing conditions in the County therefore, it is necessary that public participation genuinely involve low income residents who experience these conditions. Participation by low income people is strongly encouraged at all stages of the process.

The Stages of the Consolidated Plan Process

The general stages include:

1. Identification of housing and community development needs.
2. Preparation of a "draft" use-of-funds-document for the upcoming year, called the proposed Annual Action Plan. Periodically there will be the development of a proposed Consolidated Plan or the development or revision of the Assessment of Fair Housing, and any amendments.
3. Formal approval by elected officials of a final Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Plan.
4. On occasion during the year, it might be necessary to change the use of the money already budgeted in an Annual Action Plan, or to change the priorities established in the Consolidated Plan. In that case, a formal Substantial Amendment will be proposed, considered and acted upon.
5. After a program year is complete, an Annual Performance Report must be drafted for public review and comment followed by submittal to HUD.

The Program Year

The Program Year chosen by the County of Hidalgo is July 1 through June 30.

PUBLIC NOTICE

There shall be 30 day advanced public notice, published in English and Spanish, for the development and any revisions to the AFH; Proposed Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Plan, any proposed Substantial Amendment to the Action Plan or Consolidated Plan, and the Annual Performance Report.

In addition, there shall be 30 day advanced public notice of all public hearings and all public meetings or County Commissioners' Court meetings relating to the funds or planning process covered by this Citizen Participation Plan.

Forms of Public Notice

1. Public notices will be published in one or more newspapers of general circulation, including Spanish-language newspaper(s), and will be posted at the City Hall, Precinct offices, public libraries and Urban County administrative offices, as applicable.

Public notices will be display advertisements in a non-legal section of the newspaper. Advertisements for bid may be placed in the legal sections of the newspaper, which is where prospective bidders are accustomed to finding such notices.

2. Ads and notices may also be placed in: The Mission Progress-Times, the Delta News, the Delta Chronicle, the Mercedes Enterprise, or the Mid-Valley or Upper-Valley Town Crier, and other local newspapers as appropriate and approved in advance by Urban County Program.

3. Notice will be sent to any person or organization requesting a copy or who are on a mailing list.

4. Notice may be posted neighborhood organizations, public housing resident groups, radio and television media, and other persons or groups as deemed appropriate by the Urban County Program.

5. Copies of each document will be available on the Hidalgo County Urban County Program's webpage.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The County will provide citizens/residents, public agencies, and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to the documents relating to the Consolidated Plan, and the use of assistance under the programs covered by the Plan for the preceding five years, as well as related to the AFH and its revisions.

For non English speaking citizens/residents, reasonable steps to provide language assistance to ensure meaningful access will be provided. Those speaking Spanish will be assisted by staff, board members, and officials whom are proficient in the Spanish language.

Persons requiring materials in a language other than English should contact the Urban County Program at (956) 787-8127, 427, E. Duranta, Suite 107, Alamo, TX 78516.

Standard Documents

Standard Documents include:

The proposed and final Annual Action Plans

The proposed and final Consolidated Plan

Proposed and final Substantial Amendments to either an Annual Action Plan or the Consolidated Plan

Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Reports (CAPER)

Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH)

Amendments or revisions to the AFH

The Citizen Participation Plan

Availability of Standard Documents

These materials will be available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, or to persons, who do not speak English, upon requested.

Places Where Standard Documents Are Available

Standard Documents will be available at the Urban County Office, 427 E. Duranta Ave., Suite 107 Alamo, Texas 78516.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public Hearings are required by law in order to obtain the public's views and to provide the public with the City's responses to public questions and proposals.

The law requires Public Hearings at all stages of the process, including at least one public hearing on Community Needs (Needs Assessment) and one public hearing to review Proposed Use of Funds.

Access to Public Hearings

Public Hearings will be held only after there has been Adequate Notice as described in the Public Notice part of this Citizen Participation Plan.

Public Hearings will be held **at or after 6 p.m.** whenever possible, a time convenient to most people who might benefit from the use of the funds.

Public Hearings should be held at places convenient and not intimidating to most people who might benefit from the use of the funds. Public Hearings may be held at the Commissioners' Court, at the Precinct offices, at the City Halls of the Consortium Cities, and at Community Centers, public housing authorities, libraries and schools, and other appropriate locations.

Public Hearings and Populations with Unique Needs

All Public Hearings will be held at locations accessible to people with disabilities. Provisions will be made for people with disabilities when requests are made at least three working days prior to a meeting. Translators will be provided for people who do not speak English, also upon three working days notice. These services shall be provided at no charge to the public.

The Conduct of Public Hearings

When possible, Public Hearings shall be conducted in the presence of the City Council or City Commission of the City, or the Commissioner of the Precinct. ***The Public Hearing concerning final adoption of the Annual Plan and/or 5 Year Action Plan shall be conducted, whenever possible, in the presence of the Hidalgo County Commissioners' Court.***

THE STAGES IN THE PROCESS

Identifying Needs

Because the housing and community development needs of low and moderate income people are so great and so diverse, priorities must be set. This is the basic reason the Consolidated Plan exists.

The laws and regulations require at least one Public Hearing each year to obtain residents' opinions about needs and what priorities those needs have.

Public Hearings about needs will be completed 30 days before a draft Annual Action Plan/Consolidated Plan is published for comment, so that the needs identified can be considered by the County and addressed in the draft Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Plan.

Assessment of Fair Housing

At the start of the public participation process, HUD provided data and any other supplemental information will be made available to its citizens/residents, public agencies, and other interested parties. The HUD-provided data available to the public by cross-referencing to the data on HUD's Web site and when applicable on the Hidalgo County Urban County Program's website.

The Proposed Annual Action Plan (and/or Five-Year Strategy)

The law providing the funds covered by this Citizen Participation Plan calls for improved accountability of jurisdictions to the public. In that spirit and in compliance with the terms of the law. The County of Hidalgo will use the following procedures:

At the beginning of the this stage, the County 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 the types of activities that can be funded with these resources. Each city and precinct in the Urban County Consortium will provide the public with similar information concerning their allotment for the upcoming year. The public will also be given an estimate of the amount of these funds which will be used in ways that will benefit low and moderate income people.

The plans of the County to minimize the extent to which low and moderate income people will have to leave their homes as a result of these federal dollars (called "displacement") will also be available at this time. This "anti-displacement plan" will also describe how the

County will compensate people who are actually displaced as a result of the use of these funds, specifying the type and amount of compensation.

The following steps represent the process:

1. Development of the Assessment of Fair Housing
    a. Publish & Post notice.
    b. There shall be a 30 day comment period before final approval by the County Commissioner's Court.
    c. There shall be a public hearing before the County Commissioner's Court during the 30 day comment period.
    d. Send to HUD for final approval.
2. Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan
    a. Publish & Post Notice of Funding Availability.
    b. A public hearing about the proposed Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan will be conducted by the City Commission at least 30 days before final approval allowing for additional comments.
    c. There shall be a public hearing before the County Commissioner's Court during the comment period before final approval by the City Commission.
    d. Send to HUD for final approval.
3. Substantial Amendments
    a. Publish & Post notice.
    b. There shall be a 30 day comment period.
    c. There shall be a public hearing before the County Commissioner's Court during the comment period followed by a public hearing before the City Commission.
    d. Send to HUD for final approval.
4. Consolidated Annual Performance & Evaluation Report (CAPER).
    a. Publish & Post notice.
    b. Hold public hearing
    c. There shall be a 15 day comment period.
    d. Submit to HUD for approval.

Technical Assistance

County staff and the staff of the cities and precincts in the Urban County will work with organizations and individuals representative of low and moderate income people who are interested in submitting a proposal to obtain funding for an activity. All potential applicants for funding are encouraged to contact County or City staff for technical assistance before submitting a proposal.

Availability of a Proposed Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Plan, CAPER and AFH

The County will notify the public that a Proposed Annual Action Plan/Consolidated Plan is available. The means of "Notice" described earlier will be used.

The date that a **Proposed** Consolidated Plan is available to the public will be at least 30 days prior to the date a **Final** Consolidated Plan is approved by the County Commissioners'

Court so that low and moderate income people will have a reasonable opportunity to examine it and to submit comments.

Copies of the Proposed Annual Action Plan (and/or Five-Year Strategy) will be made available to the public for free and without delay at the locations specified in the section "Public Access to Information." This requirement may be satisfied by distributing summaries of the Annual Action Plan (and/or five Year Strategy), along with information as to where complete copies could be located.

So that low and moderate income people can determine the degree to which they might be affected, they will be provided, upon request, complete copies of the Proposed Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Plan and AFH (and/or Five-Year Strategy), containing all HUD-required sections, the HUD-required Priorities Table, and a written description of all proposed uses of CDBG, HOME, and ESG funds. At a minimum, this description shall include the type of activity, its location, and the amount of federal money to be allocated to it.

This requirement may be satisfied by distributing summaries of the Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Plan, and AFH, along with information as to where complete copies may be reviewed.

Public Hearing and Further Action

A Public Hearing about the Proposed Action Plan/Consolidated Plan will be held no sooner than 30 days after the Plan is first made available to the public. Additionally, this Hearing will be held so that officials may consider the comments from the public before final approval of the Action Plan or Consolidated Plan.

In preparing the Final Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Plan or AFH careful consideration will be given to all comments and views expressed by the public, either verbally or in writing. The Action Plan, Consolidated Plan and AFH will have a section which presents all comments received, and explains why any comments were not accepted.

THE FINAL ANNUAL ACTION PLAN/CONSOLIDATED PLAN, AFH AND CAPER

Copies of the Final Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Plan, AFH and CAPER or a summary of it will be made available to the public for free upon written request and within three (3) days of a request.

AMENDMENTS TO THE ANNUAL ACTION PLAN/CONSOLIDATED PLAN AND AFH

The Final Annual Action Plan/Consolidated Plan will be amended at any time there is a:

a) change in one of the Priorities presented;
b) creation or deletion of an activity;
c) change in the purpose, location, scope, or beneficiaries of an activity; and
d) a material change in the AFH HUD provided data which effect established priorities and goals. The public will be given 30 days to comment on any revision/amendment to the AFH before submission to HUD for approval

Public notification requirements will be followed for substantial amendments to the Annual Action Plan/Consolidated Plan and AFH.

Substantial Amendments

The following will be considered "Substantial" Amendments:

1. A change in the use of CDBG money from one activity to another of $300,000.00 or more.
2. A change in the use of HOME, or ESG money from one activity to another of $300,000.00 or more.
3. Addition of an activity not originally included in the annual Work Plan of a city or precinct.
4. Elimination of an activity originally included in the annual Work Plan of a city or precinct.
5. A change in the purpose of an activity (such as changing a construction project from residential to commercial).
6. A significant change in the location of an activity.
7. A decrease of 20% or more in the number of low and moderate income beneficiaries.

Public Notice and Public Hearing Requirements for Substantial Amendments

There must be reasonable notice of a proposed Substantial Amendment so that residents will have an opportunity to review it and comment on it. 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.

1. There will be a 30 day advance notice of and availability of a proposed Substantial Amendment before there is a Public Hearing about it.
2. A detailed written description of the proposed Substantial Amendment will be made available to the public at no cost within three working days of a request.
3. Copies will also be available at the locations indicated earlier in this document.
4. A Public Hearing must be held before the governing body of the entity requesting the Amendment.
5. The Final Substantial Amendment will have a section that presents all comments received, both verbally and in writing, and explains why any comments were not accepted.

E. THE CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT (CAPER)

Each year, the County must send into HUD a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) within 90 days of the close of the program year. In general, the Consolidated Annual Performance Annual Performance Evaluation Report must describe how funds were actually used and the extent to which these funds were used for activities to benefit low and moderate income people.

Public Notice and Public Hearing for Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report

There must be reasonable notice that an Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report is available so that residents will have an opportunity to review it and comment on it. Notice will be made according to the procedures described earlier in this Plan, with the following additional procedures specifically for the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report.

1. There will be 15 days[1] advance notice of the availability of an Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report before there is a Public Hearing about it.
2. A complete copy of the CAPER will be made available to the public at no cost within three working days of a request. Copies and/or summaries will be available at the locations indicated earlier in this Citizen Participation Plan.
3. There will be a public hearing regarding the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report.
4. ***The Public Hearing will be held, when possible, before the County Commissioners' Court.***
5. In preparing the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report for submission to HUD, 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. The Report sent to HUD will have a section that presents all comments and explains why any comments were not accepted.

Contents of the Annual Performance Report

The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) presented to the public will contain at least as much detail as was required by HUD for CDBG Grantee Performance Reports. The Annual Performance Report will have an accounting for each activity during the year for which the CAPER is applicable. Details presented may include but not be limited to:

1. Name of Activity.
2. A description of the activity in enough detail for the public to have a clear understanding of it.
3. The national objectives to be met.
4. Accomplishments, using numerical values when possible.
5. Overall beneficiaries

[1] March 3, 2010- Commissioners' Court approved an amendment to the Citizen Participation Plan to allow the following change: Public Hearing advance Notice Requirement from 30 days to 15 days for CAPER. Item was recommended for approval by the Urban County Development Advisory Council on May 15, 2009.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Written complaints from the public will receive a meaningful written reply within 15 working days. Copies of the complaints and answers will be forwarded to HUD.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

The only exceptions to the Citizen Participation Plan shall be those situations arising out of unforeseen circumstances, emergencies, or acts of God, or other circumstances which, in the opinion of an Urban County City or Precinct, require immediate attention in order to alleviate or prevent serious damages or threat to human life or property. The opinion of the City or Precinct must be ratified by the County Judge of the County of Hidalgo, or his designated representative, in order to be effective.

During these emergency situations, the provisions of the Citizen Participation Plan shall be suspended, and the City or Precinct may respond to the situation at hand within the parameters set out by local emergency management regulations and procedures

CHANGING THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

This Citizen Participation Plan can be changed only after the public has been notified of an intent to modify it, and only after the public has had a reasonable chance to review and comment on proposed substantial changes to it.

THE URBAN COUNTY CITIES

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Asst City Mgr: Steve Pena
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CITY OF LA VILLA
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CITY OF MERCEDES
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CITY OF PALMHURST
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CITY OF PALMVIEW
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CITY OF SAN JUAN
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CITY OF SULLIVAN CITY
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CITY OF WESLACO
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THE HIDALGO COUNTY PRECINCTS

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