

**WILLIAMSON COUNTY
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN**

Regarding the Use of Grant Funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

This Citizen Participation Plan was prepared in accordance with Section 104(a) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended. The 24 CFR 91.105 federal regulations outline the “citizen participation” requirements.

The plan is to be used to address citizen participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. Currently, Williamson County does not receive an entitlement grant under the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program, the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) Program, or the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Program. However, if the County should receive funds from these programs in the future, the programs will be included under this Citizen Participation Plan.

The Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) sets forth the County’s policies and procedures for citizen participation in the development of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Substantial Amendments to these plans, the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) and the Citizen Participation Plan itself. This Citizen Participation Plan also includes policies and procedures for citizen participation in the development of Williamson County’s Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) and any subsequent amendments to the AFH.

Certification of Compliance

The County is certifying to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that the County is following an approved Citizen Participation Plan, which:

- provides for and encourages citizen participation with particular emphasis on participation by persons who are residents of slum and blighted areas, by residents in low and moderate income neighborhoods, or targeted revitalization areas as defined by the County;
- provides for and encourages citizen participation of residents of public and assisted housing developments, as well as provides information to the public housing authorities with jurisdiction in Williamson County, about Consolidated Plan activities related to its developments;
- provides for and encourages citizen participation of persons with disabilities as well as provides documents in a format accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request;
- provides for and encourages citizen participation of all Williamson County citizens, including minorities and non-English speaking persons, and identifies how the needs of non-English speaking residents will be met in the case of public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate;

- provides citizens with reasonable and timely notification and access to local meetings, information, and records relating to the County's proposed and actual use of federal Community Development Block Grant funds;
- provides for technical assistance to groups/organizations representative of persons of low and moderate income that request such assistance in developing proposals with the level and type of assistance to be determined by the County;
- provides for public hearings to obtain citizen views; to respond to proposals and questions at all stages of the community development program, including at least the development of needs; and the review of proposed activities, and review of program annual performance. This will also include the development and evaluation of the Williamson County Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) and any subsequent amendments to the AFH. The hearings shall be held after adequate notice, at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries, and with accommodations for the disabled; and,
- provides for a timely written response to written complaints and grievances where applicable.

Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan

The Consolidated Plan serve as the five-year planning framework for funding under the CDBG, HOME, ESG, and HOPWA Programs. The County will make available to citizens, public agencies and interested parties information that includes:

- The estimated amount of assistance the jurisdiction expects to receive, including grant funds and program income; and
- The range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low- and moderate- income.

The Annual Action Plan serves as the framework to HUD under the CDBG, HOME, ESG, and HOPWA Programs. The annual Action Plan states the amount of assistance the County expects to receive (including grant funds and program income) from each of the federal programs and includes a description of the activities and related funding allocations that the County will undertake to address the needs and priorities established in the Consolidated Plan.

The Williamson County CDBG Office will, at a minimum, convene two (2) public needs hearings conducted during the development of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan to obtain citizens' views and to respond to proposals and questions. The first public hearing will be held during the development of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan before the proposed Plan is published for comment. The second public hearing will be held during the 30-day public comment period and prior to submission to HUD.

First Public Hearing

The County will hold the first Public Hearing to obtain citizen views on community development and housing needs and to provide citizens important program information as part of the planning process for the coming program year. At the public hearing the following information will be made available:

- The anticipated amount of the entitlement grant, program income, and other funds expected to be available during the program year;
- The range of activities that may be undertaken with CDBG funds;
- The estimated amount of those funds to be used for activities that will benefit low and moderate income persons;
- A description of CDBG activities likely to result in displacement, plans for minimizing such displacement, and the type and level of assistance that will be made available to persons displaced; and,
- The process to be followed in determining the use of CDBG funds, including the schedule of meetings at which the County's CDBG Office will recommend projects for funding, and when the County Court will adopt the Plan.

Second Public Hearing

Once drafted and before the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan is adopted, the document(s) will be made available to interested parties for a public comment period of no less than 30 days. A public meeting will be conducted during the 30-day comment period to gather comments on the proposed plan. A summary of these comments or views shall be attached to the final Consolidated Plan.

Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)

The CAPER describes the accomplishments achieved with federal funds during the previous year, including how funds were actually used and the extent to which these funds were used for activities that benefited low and moderate income residents. The fiscal year for expenditure of HUD funds begins October 1 and ends September 30 of the following year. This report will be submitted to HUD within 90 days of the close of the program year.

Before the Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER) is submitted to HUD, it will be made available to interested parties for a comment period of no less than 15 days. Citizens will be notified of the CAPER's availability through notification in a newspaper of general circulation. The notification will be published on or before the day the CAPER comment period begins. Comments received from individuals and/or groups will be considered in the final document. A summary of the written comments and a summary of those not accepted and the reasons therefore will be included in the final CAPER.

Substantial Amendment Process

Williamson County will consider the following criteria as constituting a substantial change to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan thereby requiring an amendment:

- An activity and/or strategic priority added to or deleted from the Consolidated Plan and/ Annual Action Plan;
- A change in the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity previously described;
- A fifty (50) percent change in federal funding where the project is \$25,000 or less, or
- A twenty-five (25) percent change in federal funding where the project is more than \$25,000.

In the event of an amendment to the Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan, the proposed amended Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan will be made available to interested parties for a comment period of no less than 30 days. Citizens will be notified of the amendment through newspaper notification in a newspaper of general circulation. The notification will be published on or before the day the amendment comment period begins.

In the event of an amendment to the Citizen Participation Plan, the proposed amended Citizen Participation Plan will be made available to interested parties for a comment period of no less than 30 days. Citizens will be notified of the amendment through newspaper notification in a newspaper of general circulation. The notification will be published on or before the day the amendment comment period begins.

Citizens may register complaints regarding any aspect of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program by telephoning the County CDBG Office at (512) 943-3757 or by writing to the Williams County CDBG Office at 710 Main Street, Georgetown, TX 78626. All complaints received will be addressed within fifteen (15) working days.

Citizens wishing to object to HUD approval of the final Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan may send written objections to the HUD Area Office located at H.F. Garcia Federal Bldg/U.S. Courthouse 615 E. Houston Street, Suite 347 San Antonio, TX 78205. Objections should be made within thirty (30) days after Williamson County has submitted the plan to HUD. Objections made and submitted to HUD must be based on the following reasons:

- The applicant's description of needs and objectives is plainly inconsistent with available facts and data;
- The activities to be undertaken are plainly inappropriate to meeting the needs and objectives identified by the applicant;
- The application does not comply with the requirements of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program or other applicable laws; and/or
- The application proposed activities which are otherwise ineligible under the program regulations.

Objections should include both an identification of requirements not met and available facts and data.

Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH)

The Assessment of Fair Housing is a planning document prepared in accordance with HUD regulations at 24 CFR 91.105 and 24 CFR 5.150 through 5.166. This plan includes an analysis of fair housing data,

assesses fair housing issues and contributing factors, and identifies Williamson County's fair housing priorities and goals for affirmatively furthering fair housing.

The process for development of the AFH and the process for citizen participation for the AFH are the same as the processes for development and citizen participation for the Consolidated Plan, Action Plan, and their Substantial Amendments with regard to public hearings, public comment periods, and public notices, with the additional requirement that HUD-required data and other local data and information that the County intends to use in preparing its AFH will be made available to the public as soon as possible.

The Assessment of Fair Housing must be submitted to HUD at least 270 days prior to the beginning of the program year for which a new Consolidated Plan is due.

Revisions to Assessment of Fair Housing

The County shall amend and revise its approved Assessment of Fair Housing whenever one of the following situations occurs:

1. A material change occurs. A material change is a change in circumstances in Williamson County that affects the information on which the AFH is based, to the extent that the AFH analysis, its priorities and goals, and the fair housing contributing factors, no longer reflect actual circumstances. Examples of a material change may include:

- Significant demographic changes;
- New significant contributing factors in the jurisdiction that create, perpetuate, contribute to, or increase restrictions on fair housing choice or access to opportunity;
- Presidentially-declared disasters within the jurisdiction that are of such a nature as to significantly affect the County's efforts to affirmatively further fair housing;
- Civil rights findings, determinations, settlements (including Voluntary Compliance Agreements), or court orders.

2. Upon HUD's written notification specifying that a material change has occurred.

Whenever a Revision to the Assessment of Fair Housing is proposed, it will be available for public comment for a period of thirty (30) days before Commissioners Court approval, as applicable. A Revision to the Assessment of Fair Housing will not be implemented until the conclusion of the 30-day public comment period. A summary of all comments or views received during the comment period, will be attached to the Revision upon submission to HUD.

Citizen Access to Information

The Williamson County CDBG Office will provide full public access to program information and will make adequate information available to citizens. Program records are available for citizen review, upon written request to the Williamson County CDBG Office. Such documents include the following:

- Records of Public Hearings/Meetings

- All key public documents, including prior applications, letters of approval, grant agreements, the Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan, Citizen Participation Plan, CAPER, AFH and other documents and reports required by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Copies of the regulations and issuances governing the program(s)
- Documents regarding other aspects of the program such as contracting requirements, environmental procedures, fair housing and other equal opportunity requirements and relocation policies.

Williamson County will publish a Notice of Needs Assessment Hearing in a newspaper of general circulation, including the schedule of Public Needs Hearings and other meetings that may be sponsored by the County. Also, notices will be published announcing the availability for public view and comments of such documentation relating to the Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER), the Citizen Participation Plan, the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan, all amendments to the Plan and use of CDBG funds and the Williamson County AFH document.

In addition, Williamson County will make available during published comment periods all public information related to the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan, CAPER, Citizen Participation Plan and AFH during regular working hours at the following locations, which are conveniently located for persons affected by the program as well as being accessible to the handicapped.

- Williamson County Court House, 710 Main Street, Georgetown, TX
- Georgetown Housing Authority, 210 West 18th Street, Georgetown, TX 78626
- Hutto City Hall, 401 West Front Street, Hutto, TX 78634
- Jarrell City Hall, 1633 County Road 305, Jarrell, TX 76537
- Granger City Hall, 214 East Davilla Street, Granger, TX 76530
- Granger Housing Authority, 500 North Commerce Street, Apt. 28, Granger, TX 76530
- Coupland City Hall, 104 South Main Street, Thrall, TX 76578
- Taylor City Hall, 400 Porter Street, Taylor, TX 76574
- Taylor Housing Authority, 309 Avery Drive, Taylor, TX 76574
- Cedar Park City Hall, 600 North Bell Boulevard, Cedar Park, TX 78613
- Georgetown City Hall, 113 East 8th Street, Georgetown, TX 78626
- Leander City Hall, 200 West Willis Street, Leander, TX 78646
- Liberty Hill City Hall, 2801 Ranch Road 1869, Liberty Hill, TX 78642
- Weir City Hall, 2205 South Main Street, Weir, TX 78674

Williamson County also offers, to all non-speaking English persons and upon written request, translated versions of all public documents and public hearing notices. Non-English speaking persons who desire translated public documents or public notices should formally request these items from the Williamson County CDBG Office during normal business hours.

Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities and for non-English speaking populations will be made upon request and as appropriate. Call 512-943-3757 or write to the address below to request information, documents, records or accommodations.

Williamson County CDBG Office
710 Main Street, Ste 101
Georgetown TX 78626

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance may be requested in writing by appropriate neighborhood organizations, county-wide advisory groups, project area organizations, groups of low and moderate income persons and/or groups of residents of blighted neighborhoods/communities. This assistance may be requested for the purposes of adequately participating in planning, implementing and assessing the program; developing proposals; or in carrying out CDBG Program activities. The level and type of necessary assistance will be determined by Williamson County. If necessary, assistance will be provided by specialists selected by the County.

All written correspondence requesting technical assistance should be addressed to the Williamson County CDBG Office, 710 Main Street, Georgetown, TX 78626. All requests should specify the name of the group or organization as well as a contact person, the nature of technical assistance requested, immediate problems and the reason for the request.

Use of Alternate Projects

Williamson County will use Alternate Projects in the Annual Action Plans. If a funded project has cost savings, slows down or discovers a barrier to being completed, an alternate project from the current Annual Action Plan may be selected to continue the timely spending of grant funds. Consideration of any project that was not identified as an alternate will go through the approved substantial amendment process.

Alternate Projects contain the same level of information that funded projects contain in the Annual Action Plan to ensure appropriate review by the public. Project descriptions also include the maximum dollar amount the Commissioners Court will consider if funding becomes available. Approval by the Williamson County Commissioners Court will be necessary to replace a funded project with an alternate or to fund an alternate with cost savings from a completed project regardless of whether or not:

- The increase or decrease exceeds 50% change in federal funding where the project is \$25,000 or less, or
- The increase or decrease exceeds 25% change in federal funding where the project is more than \$25,000.

These actions will not require a substantial amendment since the alternate projects will have gone through a public review process.

Consideration of any project that was not identified as an alternate will go through the approved substantial amendment process.

Section 108 Loans

Applications for assistance filed by Williamson County for Section 108 loan guarantee assistance authorized under HUD regulation 24 CFR Part 570, Subpart M, are subject to all provisions set forth within this Citizen Participation Plan. Such applications for Section 108 loan guarantee may be included as part of the process for obtaining CDBG Entitlement funds, or may be undertaken separately anytime during the program year. The required public hearing to inform citizens of program requirements will be carried out by the Williamson County CDBG Office.