



City of Pharr, Hidalgo County

Citizen Participation Plan

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

CITY OF PHARR

HIDALGO COUNTY, TEXAS

INTRODUCTION

The City of Pharr, Hidalgo County, Texas is required by law (24 CFR Part 91.105) to have a detailed Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) which contains the City'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 Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnerships (HOME), Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) and Housing Opportunities for Persons with Aids (HOPWA) money. This Citizen Participation Plan must be available to the public.

ENCOURAGING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The law requires that our 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, the consolidated annual performance and evaluation report and when applying for Section 108 Loan Guarantee Assistance.

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

Low and moderate income people, especially those living in predominately 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 funds are proposed to be used.

Minorities, people who do not speak English, homeless individuals and families, and people with disabilities is encouraged. Citizens are encouraged to participate Summaries of basic information about CDBG and 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, nonprofit 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 CDBG funds that are awarded o the City of Pharr each year is mostly based upon the severity of both poverty and substandard housing conditions in Pharr. Therefore, it is necessary that public participation genuinely involve low income residents who experience these conditions. Participation by low income people is strongly encouraged and must take place at all stages of the process.

STAGES

In general, the stages or events include:

Identification of housing and community development needs. Preparation of a draft use of funds for the upcoming year, called the proposed Annual Action Plan. Sometimes there might also be the development of a proposed Consolidated Plan or the development of the Assessment of Fair Housing, and any amendments. Formal approval by elected officials of a final Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Plan.

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. After a "program year" is complete, an Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report must be drafted for public review and comment, and then submitted to HUD.

THE PROGRAM YEAR

The "program year" chosen by Pharr is October 1 through September 30.

PUBLIC NOTICE

There shall be a 30 day advance public notice published in English & 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, Section 108 Loan Guarantee Applications; and a 15 day advanced public noticed for the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report to give the public adequate notice.

Public notice provisions under this Citizen Participation Plan may include exception to the aforementioned requirements during periods of Federal, State and/or County Emergency Declarations due to unforeseen circumstances, emergencies, or acts of GOD or other circumstances that may require immediate attention in order to alleviate or prevent serious damages or threat to human life or property. This plan may establish exceptions which allow expedited procedures to draft, propose or amend consolidated plans.

Expedited procedures must include notice and reasonable opportunity to comment of no less than 5 days. The 5 day period that can run concurrently for comments on the action plan amendment and amended citizen participation plans. In person public hears are not required. Grantees may meet the public hearing requirements with virtual or via telephone conference public hearings if the nature of the emergency includes national/local health authorities recommend or impose requirements to:

Implement social distancing to limit public gatherings as a public health response; implement virtual meetings or teleconference hearings providing reasonable notification and access for citizens in accordance to federal/state law, and/or grantees certification; and the opportunity for timely responses from local officials to all citizen questions and issues as well as public access to all questions and responses.

FORMS OF PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notices will be published in a paper of general circulation such as the Advance News newspaper. However, in order to reach the majority of the City's population, specifically the low to moderate income population, the City may also advertise in The Monitor newspaper.

Notices will be sent to any person or organization requesting to be on a mailing list.

Notice may also be sent to neighborhood organizations, public housing authority, developments, radio and television media, and other persons or groups as deemed appropriated by the Community Development Department.

Notice may be posted on the internet through social media and on the City's web page at www.pharr-tx.gov

Notice may be posting at public libraries, government offices, and public places.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The City will provide citizens/residents, public agencies, and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to the documents relating to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, revisions to the AFH, Section 108 Loan Guarantee applications and Consolidated Annual Performance & Evaluation Report.

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 who are proficient in the Spanish language.

Persons requiring materials in a language other than English should contact the Grants Management & Community Development Staff at (956) 402-4190, 118 S. Cage Boulevard, Pharr, TX 78577.

Standard documents include:

The proposed and final Annual Action Plan.

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) or revisions

Amendments or revisions to the AFH

The Citizen Participation Plan

AVAILABILITY OF STANDARD DOCUMENTS

In the spirit of encouraging public participation, copies of standard documents will be made available for office review. Summaries of standard documents will be provided to the public at no cost but must follow the City of Pharr's Public Information Request Policy. These materials will be made available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities and to persons who do not speak English, whenever requested.

PLACES WHERE STANDARD DOCUMENTS ARE AVAILABLE

Standard documents will be available at the office of the Grants Management & Community Development Staff at (956) 402-4190, 118 S. Cage Boulevard, Pharr, TX 78577.

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.

Whenever possible, public hearings will be held at or after 5:30 p.m., a time convenient to most people who might benefit from the use of funds.

Public hearings will be held at places accessible, convenient and not intimidating to most people who might benefit from the use of funds. Locations may include the public library, City Hall Commissioner Room, Public Housing Authority locations.

Public Hearings and Populations with Unique Needs

All Public Hearings will be held at locations accessible to people with disabilities, and provisions will be made for people with disabilities when requests are made at least three (3) working days prior to a meeting.

Translators will be provided for people who do not speak English when requests are made at least three (3) working days prior to a meeting. These services shall be provided at no charge to the public.

The Conduct of Public Hearings

To ensure that public hearings are meaningful to citizens/residents, each citizen/resident choosing to speak will be allowed one minute and a half (1.5) minutes to make a verbal presentation.

STAGES IN THE PROCESS

Identifying Needs

Housing and community development needs of low and moderate income people are so great and so diverse therefore, priorities must be set in order to decide which needs should get more attention and more resources than other needs. This is the basic reason the Consolidated Plan exists.

The laws and regulations require at least one (1) public hearing each year to obtain residents' opinions about needs, and what priority those needs have. If time permits, public hearings will be held in different neighborhoods to determine the specific needs and priorities identified by low and moderate income people. At a minimum, two (2) public hearing will be held in order to allow citizens to actively participate in the community development process (Annual Action Plan and the CAPER).

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 City and addressed in the draft Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Plan.

Assessment of Fair Housing

At, or as soon as feasible after 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.

The "Proposed" Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Plan

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, Pharr will use the following procedures.

At the beginning of this stage, the City of Pharr will provide the public with an estimate of the amount of CDBG, HOME, ESG, and HOPWA 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. Also, the public will be given an estimate of the amount of these funds that will be used in ways that will benefit low and moderate income people.

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

Development of the Assessment of Fair Housing

- Publish & Post notice.
- There shall be a 30 day comment period before final approval by the City Commission.
- There shall be a public hearing before the Community Development Council during the 30 day comment period.
- Send to HUD for final approval.

Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan

- Publish & Post Notice of Funding Availability.
- 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.
- There shall be a public hearing before the Community Development Council during the comment period before final approval by the City Commission.
- Send to HUD for final approval.

Substantial Amendments

- Publish & Post notice.
- There shall be a 30 day comment period.
- There shall be a public hearing before the Community Development Council during the comment period followed by a public hearing before the City Commission.
- Send to HUD for final approval.

Consolidated Annual Performance & Evaluation Report (CAPER).

- Publish & Post notice.
- Hold public hearing
- There shall be a 15 day comment period.
- Submit to HUD for approval.

Technical Assistance

City staff will work with organizations and individuals representative of low and moderate income people who are interested in submitting an application to obtain funding for an activity. All potential applicants for funding are encouraged to contact City staff for technical assistance before completing an application/proposal for funding.

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

Copies of the proposed Annual Action Plan/ Consolidated Plan will be made available to the public free of charge and without delay. In addition, copies will be available for viewing at the locations specified above in the section, "Public Access to Information."

So that low and moderate income people can determine the degree to which they might be affected, they will be provided with a summary of the Proposed Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Plan, and AFH at least 30 days

prior to the date of final approval of the Annual Plan/Consolidated Plan by the Pharr City Commission. Information available will consist of: HUD-required sections, the HUD-required Priorities Table, and a written description of all proposed uses of CDBG, HOME, ESG, AND HOPWA funds; and AFH HUD provided data. At a minimum, description shall include the type of activity, location and the amount of federal money to be allocated.

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 Annual Action Plan/Consolidated Plan will be conducted by the Mayor and City Commission at least 30 days before the Plan becomes final thereby allowing for further public comments.

In preparing a final Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Plan, or AFH, a 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/Consolidated Plan, and AFH will have a section that presents all comments 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 summary of it will be made available to the public at no cost within ten (10) written days of the request through the City's Public Information Request Portal. A copy will be available for viewing at the locations indicated earlier in "Public Access to Information."

"Amendments" to the Annual Action Plan (and/or the Consolidated Plan)

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

A change in one of the Priorities presented on the HUD-required Priority Table;
creation or deletion of activity;

A change in the purpose, location, scope, or beneficiaries of an activity (described more fully later).

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:

A change in the use of CDBG money from one activity to another of \$100,000.00 or more.

The addition of an activity not originally described in the Annual Action Plan.

Elimination of an activity originally included in the Annual Action Plan

A change in the purpose of an activity (such as changing a construction project from residential to commercial).

A significant change in the location of an activity.

A decrease of 20% or more in the number of low and moderate income beneficiaries.

"Public Notice and Public Hearing for Substantial Amendments"

There must be reasonable notice of a proposed Substantial Amendment so that residents will have an opportunity to review and comment on it. Notice will be made according to the procedures described earlier in the 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 at no cost within three (3) working days of a request for same. Copies will also be available at the locations indicated earlier in this Citizen Participation Plan under "Public Access to Information."

There will be a public hearing before the Community Development Council regarding the proposed Substantial Amendment, followed by a public hearing before the City Commission. The public hearing before the City Commission will not take place until such time that the public has had 30 days to review 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 have a section that presents all comments and explains why any comments were not accepted.

The amendment will be forwarded to HUD upon final approval by the City Commission.

The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report

Every year, the City of Pharr must prepare a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report within 90 days of the close of the program year (CAPER). In general, the CAPER 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 & 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 Citizen Participation Plan, with the addition of the following procedures specifically for Annual Performance Report:

A period of no less than fifteen (15) days, to receive comments on the Annual Performance Report will be provided to the public.

A summary of the Consolidated Annual Performance & Evaluation Report will be made available to the public at no cost within ten (10) written days of the request through the City's Public Information Request Portal. A copy will be available for viewing at the locations indicated earlier in this Citizen Participation Plan.

There will be a public hearing regarding the Consolidated Annual Performance & Evaluation Report.

In preparing a CAPER 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 CAPER sent to HUD will have a section that presents all comments and explains why any comments were not accepted.

Contents of the Annual Performance & Evaluation Report

The CAPER presented to the public will have an accounting for each activity during the program year for

which the report is applicable. The City will report accomplishments, goals, and expenditures in a format required by HUD.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Written complaints from the public will receive a meaningful, written reply within fifteen (15) working days. Copies of the complaints and responses will be forwarded to HUD.

CHANGING THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

This Citizen Participation Plan can be changed only after the public has been notified of the intent to modify it, and only after the public has had 15 days to review and comment on proposed amendments.

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Pharr has created a Community Development Council in the spirit of the law, which calls for increased accountability to the public, as well as the encouragement of active participation by low and moderate income people.

The CDC is an eleven (11) member body that contributes to public participation by helping to: identify housing and community development needs; establish priorities relating to those needs; propose activities and projects to address high-priority needs; and, suggest the amount of federal, state, and local monies to be allocated to those activities.

Pharr has formulated a plan for achieving maximum participation from its citizens.

The City has been divided into four (4) quadrants. Each quadrant will be represented by two (2) CDC members and a member-at-large. The term of office for each CDC member shall correspond with that of the respective Mayor, or City Commissioner who made the appointment.

The CDC will select one (1) member to serve as the Community Development Council Chairman. A quorum will be a majority of appointed members.

All CDC public hearings are open to the public and are advertised as described above in the "Public Notice" section of this Citizen Participation Plan. The CDC, as an advisory board, will recommend eligible projects to the Mayor and City Commission on the allocation of all CDBG, HOME, ESG, and HOPWA funds, including "program income" associated with these, monies left unspent and unobligated from the previous program year, and any additional (not previously anticipated) federal fund allotments. In no event shall CDBG, HOME, ESG, or HOPWA funds be allocated without review by the CDC as the forum to obtain citizen participation. Final approval shall rest solely with the City Commission and/or HUD.