

## **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN**

The major purpose of the Citizen Participation Plan presented herein is to provide citizens and City official alike with knowledge of the process by which citizens may become involved in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the Consolidated Plan. The provisions of the plan apply to all ongoing activities at the time of plan adoption as well as all future Community Development activities. The plan will remain in effect until all activities are completed or a new plan is adopted.

Nothing in the Citizen Participation Plan should be constructed as restricting the authority of the City in the development or execution of the CDBG program, or its responsibility to do so.

### **GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN**

1. **Community Needs** – The major need of Port Arthur’s neighborhoods that have been affected by blight and deterioration are public facility improvements and housing rehabilitation. Public facilities in need of improvements in these neighborhoods are streets, water and sewer lines, lighting, parks, and recreational facilities. Housing preservation and rehabilitation activities needed include code enforcement, demolition and clearance of dilapidated structures, and rehabilitation grants and/or loans to assist families who otherwise could not find funds to repair their properties.

In general, neighborhoods that have percentage of substandard housing are also those neighborhoods with higher percentages of minority residents and low and moderate-income households. These are the neighborhoods designated as “CDBG eligible”.

2. **Housing Needs** – There is a need to expand housing opportunities for low and moderate-income households. In addition to improving housing options for low and moderated income households through rehabilitation grants, loans and HOME assistance, there exists a need for the elimination of condition which are detrimental to health, safety and welfare through code enforcement, demolitions, emergency rehabilitation assistance, and related activities. The City of Port Arthur’s Tenant Relocation Program disallows the displacement of tenants in the provision of housing assistance. Copies of the Tenant Relocation Program guidelines shall be attached to all applications for housing assistance.
3. **Community Development Short and Long Term Objectives** – The overall objective of the Consolidated Plan for the City of Port Arthur, Texas is the development of viable urban community by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities, principally for person of low and moderate-incomes.

In order to attain the overall objective of the Consolidated Plan, the following objectives are herein set forth:

- A. Elimination of slums and blight and the prevention of blighting influences which adversely affect the welfare of community, principally persons of low and moderate income.

- B. Elimination of conditions which are detrimental to health, safety and public welfare, through code enforcement, demolition, residential rehabilitation assistance, and related activities.
- C. Conservation and expansion of the City's housing stock in order to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for all persons, but principally those of low and moderate-income.
- D. Expansion and improvement of the quantity and quality of community services, principally for persons of low and moderate-income, which are essential for sound community development and for the development of a viable urban community.
- E. A more rational utilization of land and other natural resources within CDBG eligible areas.
- F. The restoration and preservation of properties of special value for historic, architectural, or esthetic reasons.
- G. The alleviation of physical and economic distress through the stimulation of private investment and community revitalization.

### **STANDARDS OF PARTICIPATION**

The following standards will apply to the Port Arthur Citizen Participation Plan:

1. All aspects of citizen participation will be conducted in an open manner, with access for all interested person.
2. There will be involvement of low and moderate-income persons, members of minority groups, residents or areas where a significant amount of activity is proposed or ongoing, the elderly, the handicapped, the business community, and civic groups who are concerned about the program.
3. The City will make reasonable efforts to ensure that citizens or citizen organizations are continually involved throughout all stages of the Consolidated Plan.
4. Citizen will be provided adequate and timely information, to enable them to be meaningfully involved in important decisions at various stages of the Consolidated Planning Process.
5. All citizens, especially low and moderate-income persons and residents of blighted neighborhoods, will be encouraged to submit their views and proposals concerning the Consolidated Plan.
6. The City will encourage and solicit citizen participation, at the community-wide level as well as the neighborhood level, especially in area where significant Community Development activity is proposed or ongoing.

### **SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION**

Citizens will be involved in all stages of the Consolidated Plan process. Citizens will specifically participate in the following areas:

1. Planning activities including Community Development Objectives, Projected Use of Funds, and any related amendments or changes to the above.

2. Program implementation, at a minimum, citizen will participate in an advisory role to Council and City Staff in policy decisions regarding program implementation through contribution of their comments and submissions of specific proposals. Self-help activities and program operations conducted by neighborhood organizations will be encouraged as well.
3. Assessment of performance-citizens and citizens organizations will be given an opportunity to assess and submit comments on all aspects on all aspects of the City's Consolidated Plan performance including the performance of the City's grantees and contractors. They also will be requested to assess whether objectives of the program have been achieved through the activities and projects carried out. Comments from citizens and the City's responses to them must be included in the City's annual Performance Report.

### **PROCESS OF PARTICIPATION**

1. Port Arthur Residents: Port Arthur citizens, especially those of low and moderate-income, may be a part of the citizen participation process. Any interested person may come to any public hearing and may submit views and proposals for consideration by the City Council and the City's Grants Management staff. Two public hearings are scheduled during the planning phase of the program year, and will be conducted by the Grants Management staff. Notices for these meetings will be published in The Port Arthur News.
2. Neighborhood Associations/Organizations: The CDBG staff will meet with representatives of local organizations at any convenient time to discuss their proposals and advise them concerning CD procedural matters and to accept their comments concerning the Consolidated Plan.

In order to notify local groups about the availability of funds, notices will run in the local newspaper during the planning phase of the program year. Also, organizations with previous histories as CDBG subrecipients will be notified by letter as to the availability of funds.

3. CDBG Advisory Committee: The CDBG Advisory Committee is comprised of the Port Arthur City Council. This Committee reviews and approves all CDBG proposals from interested persons and organizations.
4. City Council: The City Council is the final decision-making authority for the Consolidated Plan. The Council is advised by the City Manager and staff persons concerning the Consolidated Plan. All City Council meetings are open to the public.

### **PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION OF VIEWS AND PROPOSALS BY CITIZENS**

All citizens in Port Arthur are encouraged to submit to the City, views and proposals concerning the Consolidated Plan. Views and proposals may be submitted as follows:

1. Directly to the City at public hearings on the Consolidated Plan.
2. To recognized neighborhood association committees.
3. At any meeting that is scheduled by the City prior to formal public hearings.

These views and proposals will be reviewed and considered by the City and reasonable effort will be made to provide responses within fifteen (15) working days. Written responses will be provided for

written proposals and will state the reasons for action taken on the proposal by the City. Whenever possible, responses will be provided prior to the final hearing on the Consolidated Plan. The submission of views and proposals with regard to planning for the next fiscal year, performance during the previous year and the summary of the Consolidated Plan will be solicited 30 days prior to final submission. Proposals concerning day to day program implementation will be accepted anytime within this planning period.

Submission of views and proposals will be encouraged through public notices and through public service announcements concerning the Consolidated Plan. All information distributed about the Consolidated Plan will include a byline requesting submission of views and proposals by citizens. The information will be made available to low and moderate income persons, minorities, non English speaking residents and residents of blighted areas through open meetings, special notices, newspaper publicity, and public hearings. Citizen views or proposals pertinent to performance will be included in the annual Performance Report. A period of 15 days prior to submission has been provided for citizen comment.

### **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Citizens who have complaints about the Consolidated Plan should register their complaint directly to the City CDBG staff either during working hours or at open meetings and public hearings. Complaints should be in written form if at all possible. The City will make every reasonable effort to provide written responses to all complaints within (15) working days.

### **CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS TO CONSOLIDATED PLAN SUBMITTED TO HUD**

Anyone wishing to object to approval of the Port Arthur Consolidated Plan may do so through the HUD Regional Office in Fort Worth as the following address:

Director  
Community Planning and Development  
Houston Field Office  
1301 Fannin Street – Suite 2200  
(713)718-3115  
(713)718-3247 (fax)

HUD will only consider objectives made on the following grounds:

1. The City's description of needs and objectives is plainly inconsistent with available facts and data
2. The activities to be undertaken are plainly inappropriate to meet the needs and objectives identified by the City.
3. The Consolidated Plan does not comply with the requirements of the Consolidated Plan regulations or other applicable law
4. The Consolidated Plan proposes activities which are otherwise ineligible under the Consolidated Plan

Such objections should include which requirements were not met and the data and facts which the objectors rely on.

HUD will consider objections submitted at any time, but objections should be submitted 30 days of the publications of the notice stating Port Arthur has submitted its Consolidated Plan.

### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM CITY STAFF**

City staff will also provide information and advice of referrals to groups of low and moderate-income persons and other civic groups of residents who request assistance in developing proposals and statements of views if possible.

Neighborhood organizations will be responsible for maintaining their own schedule of meetings and activities. City staff will refer neighborhood groups to appropriate public or private entities if the group is interested in assistance in organizing an associations or carry out activities.

### **DESCRIPTION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Citizens in Port Arthur will be provided with full access to Consolidated Plan information, and publicity in the local newspaper will be readily accessible. Specific information to be made available to citizens is outlines in the following paragraphs:

As soon as CDBG staff begins planning for the upcoming funding year, citizens will be provided with the following information through notices published in the Port Arthur News and available at the office of Grants Management Division:

1. The amount of funds available for all activities.
2. Eligible activities that may be undertaken.
3. Processes for preparing the Consolidated Plan and schedule of meetings.
4. The role of citizens as described in the Citizen Participation Plan.
5. Summary of any other requirements

The CDBG staff will keep on file, at their main office, copies of the following key documents for citizens to review.

1. All mailing and promotional materials pertaining to the Consolidated Plan.
2. Records of hearings pertaining to Consolidated Plan.
3. Prior applications, letters of approval, grant agreements, prior Community Development Citizen Participation Plan, performance reports, evaluation report, other HUD required report, (e.g. the Environmental Review Record) and proposed and final statements of the current year.
4. Copies of regulations and issuance governing the program.
5. Documents regarding other program requirements, such as contracting procedures, environmental policies, fair housing and other equal opportunity requirements and relocations provisions.
6. Status reports of all activities.
7. Other pertinent information

When the Consolidated Plan is submitted to HUD, the City will publish a notice in a newspaper of general circulation (Port Arthur News) stating that the Consolidated Plan has been submitted and is available to interested parties upon request and also describing the requirements on citizen objections to the Consolidated Plan.

The CDBG staff will make copies of the Consolidated Plan and Annual Performance Report available at various locations for persons affected by the program and including locations, which are accessible to the handicapped. Probable locations will include, but not limited to City Hall, the public library, or any other location that is convenient to persons affected by the Consolidated Plan.

### **PUBLIC HEARING REQUIREMENTS**

Public Hearings will be held throughout the various stages of the Consolidated Plan under various formats. For example, any item that requires City Council approval will be discussed at a public hearing or open City council meeting. All meetings concerning the Consolidated Plan will be open for public participation and comments. All public hearings held by the City concerning the Consolidated Plan must meet the following guidelines:

1. The City will hold a minimum of two official public hearings by the City staff prior to submission of the Consolidated Plan. To accomplish the following:
  - A. To obtain views and proposals of citizens at the initial stage of development on Community Development and housing needs and priorities and to obtain comments on the City's Consolidated Plan performance.
  - B. To obtain views of citizens on the proposed statement prior to submission of the Consolidated Plan to HUD. A period of no less than 30 days will be provided prior to submission.
2. Notice for public hearings will be published 10 days prior to each public hearing in The Port Arthur News. The Notice must indicate the date, time, place, and procedure of hearing and topics to be considered.

### **AMENDMENTS OF THE CITY'S CONSOLIDATED PLAN**

The City will amend its Consolidated Plan under the following circumstances:

1. When it decides not to carry out an activity previously described in the Consolidated Plan.
2. When it decides to carry out an activity not previously described.
3. It "substantially changes" the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity. The City has further defined "substantial change" to include changes in funding or more than 15% for any previously approved activity. Citizens will be provided not less than 30 days to provide comments on the substantial amendment before implementation.