



CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

City of Norwalk, CT Community Development Block Grant Program

Approved May 10, 2016

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I. Overview

As an entitlement community, the City of Norwalk receives federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds annually from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and as such, is required to adopt and follow a Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) which establishes the City’s policies and procedures for citizen participation. Title 24 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 91.105 establishes the components of the citizen participation plan.

The following acronyms and abbreviations are used in this document:

AAP – Annual Action Plan

AFH – Assessment of Fair Housing

CAPER – Consolidated Annual Performance & Evaluation Report

CPP – Citizen Participation Plan

ConPlan – Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development

HUD – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

NOFA – Notice of Funding Availability

II. Lead Agency

The City of Norwalk contracted with the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency (Agency) to serve as the Lead Agency for the administration of the City’s CDBG entitlement funds. The Agency is responsible for informing citizens about the planning process, facilitating meetings, preparing the Annual Action Plan and the Five Year Consolidated Plan, preparing substantial amendments, developing the CAPER, applying for guaranteed loans and providing opportunities for public participation.

III. Citizen Participation

a. Encouragement of Citizen Participation in CDBG Planning & Activities

All residents, including low- and moderate-income persons, persons living in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, minority populations, persons with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, homeless persons and residents of public and assisted housing developments, including resident advisory boards, resident councils, and resident management corporations, are encouraged to participate in the development of the consolidated plan (ConPlan), the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), the annual action plan (AAP), the performance report (CAPER), any guaranteed loan application and any substantial amendment.

Additionally, local and regional institutions, the Continuum of Care and other organizations (including businesses, developers, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community-based and faith-based organizations) are encouraged to participate in the process of developing and implementing the consolidated plan and Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH).

All meetings are open to the public with efforts made to be scheduled at times and locations convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries with

accommodations for persons with disabilities and assistance available for persons with limited-English proficiency.

b. Jurisdictional Responsibility

The Citizen Participation Plan recognizes the Norwalk Common Council, as the elected governing body for the City of Norwalk, as ultimately responsible for the development and implementation of the CDBG program.

Citizen participation requirements do not restrict the responsibility or authority of the City of Norwalk for the development and execution of its CDBG program.

c. Access to Records

The Agency will provide citizens, public agencies and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records, including HUD-provided data and other supplemental information, relating to the consolidated plan, the Assessment of Fair Housing and the allocation of funding through the CDBG program.

Program documents are available online on the Agency's page of the City of Norwalk's website (<http://www.norwalkct.org/index.aspx?nid=652>) or by contacting the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, City Hall, room 202, Norwalk, CT 06851 or (203) 854-7810 x46778.

During public comment periods, drafted program documents are available at the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency in City Hall, 125 East Avenue, room 202; the Norwalk Public Library at 1 Belden Avenue; the South Norwalk Branch Library at 10 Washington Street; the Norwalk Housing Authority's administrative offices at 24 ½ Monroe Street; and the South Norwalk Community Center at 98 South Main Street as well as on the Agency's page on the City of Norwalk's website: <http://norwalkct.org/index.aspx?NID=652>.

d. Limited English Proficiency & Disabled Residents Accommodation

All public hearings and focus groups are held in facilities which are accessible to people with disabilities.

Oral language assistance for public hearings and focus groups may be obtained by contacting the Agency at least 48 business hours prior to the event. Program documents may be translated upon request by contacting the Agency.

Contact information for the Agency is as follows: Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, City Hall, room 202, Norwalk, CT 06851 or (203) 854-7810 x46778.

e. Public Notification

Unless otherwise stated in the CPP, public notice will be made through an advertisement in *The Hour* newspaper, the City's website, the Agency's Facebook

page and the Agency’s LinkedIn group and email notice to those expressing an interest in the CDBG program. Public notice will be made twice within two weeks of the availability of a document or schedule date of a public hearing.

Public notice of documents available for review will include direction for accessing and commenting on the drafted document and the means by which language assistance may be obtained. If an activity reviewed in the drafted document will result in displacement, the notice will provide information on how to access the displacement plan.

Public notice of public hearings will include the subject, time and location of the hearing and the means by which language assistance may be obtained.

f. Public Hearings

Public hearings occur no earlier than 5:00 PM in order to maximize opportunities for citizen participation. Hearings are held in handicap accessible rooms in City Hall. Oral language assistance may be obtained by contacting the Agency at least 48 business hours prior to the hearing. Minutes are taken during public hearings and are incorporated into the appropriate document when submitted to HUD.

Public hearings and meetings rescheduled due to weather-related events will be held at the following meeting of the Planning Committee of the Common Council. Notice will be made via the City’s website and Agency’s Facebook page.

At least two public hearings will be held at different stages of the CDBG program to obtain citizens’ views and to respond to proposals and questions. At minimum, such hearings will be conducted during the planning process (AAP development) and the review period (CAPER development).

IV. Criteria & Procedures for Public Hearings & Public Comment Periods

a. Summary of Comment Period and Public Hearing Requirements

<u>Document</u>	<u>Comment Period</u>	<u>Public Hearing</u>
ConPlan	30-days	At least two
AFH	30-days	None
NOFA	None	None
AAP	30-days	One
CAPER	15-days	One
Guaranteed Loan Application	30-days	At least one
CPP Amendment	15-days	None
Substantial Amendment	30-days	One
Legal Notice	2x within 2 weeks	2x within 2 weeks

b. 5-Year Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development (ConPlan)

Public Notice: Notice of the ConPlan comment period and public hearings will be made according to the “Public Notification” section of the CPP.

Comment Period: The drafted ConPlan detailing the amount of anticipated funding and the estimated amount to benefit persons of low- and moderate-income, and the range of activities that may be undertaken will be available for a 30-day public comment period according to the “Access to Records” section of the CPP.

Public Hearing: There will be at least two public hearings during the development of the ConPlan, one prior to publishing the draft document (to identify the needs of the City) and one upon publishing (to receive feedback on the proposed activities and expenditure of funds).

Public Comments: Comments will be received and considered according to the “Response to Citizen Participation & Concerns” section of the CPP.

Adoption Policy: The Planning Committee of the Common Council will review the proposed ConPlan and commentary and forward the document to the Common Council for approval. Upon approval by the Common Council, the ConPlan will be submitted to HUD for approval/adoption.

c. Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH)

Public Notice: Notice of the AFH comment period will be made according to the “Public Notification” section of the CPP. The Public Hearing must occur before the proposed consolidated plan is published for comment.

Comment Period: The drafted AFH will be available for a 30-day public comment period according to the “Access to Records” section of the CPP.

Public Hearing: An AFH does not require a public hearing.

Public Comments: Comments will be received and considered according to the “Response to Citizen Participation & Concerns” section of the CPP.

Adoption Policy: The Planning Committee of the Common Council will review the proposed AFH and commentary and forward the document to the Common Council for approval. Upon approval by the Common Council, the AFH will be submitted to HUD for approval/adoption.

d. Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

Public Notice: The availability of a NOFA for any program or project using CDBG funds will be made according to the “Public Notification” section of the CPP.

Comment Period: A NOFA does not require a comment period.

Public Hearing: A NOFA does not require a public hearing.

Public Comments: Comments will be received and considered according to the “Response to Citizen Participation & Concerns” section of the CPP.

Adoption Policy: A NOFA is not a document intended for adoption.

e. Annual Action Plan (AAP)

Public Notice: Notice of the AAP’s comment period and public hearing will be made according to the “Public Notification” section of the CPP.

Comment Period: The drafted AAP detailing the amount of anticipated funding and the estimated amount to benefit persons of low- and moderate-income, and the range of activities that may be undertaken will be available for a 30-day public comment period according to the “Access to Records” section of the CPP.

Public Hearing: A public hearing will be held during the comment period in order to receive feedback on housing and community development needs and the proposed activities and expenditure of funds.

Public Comments: Comments will be received and considered according to the “Response to Citizen Participation & Concerns” section of the CPP.

Adoption Policy: The Planning Committee of the Common Council will review the proposed AAP and commentary and forward the document to the Common Council for approval. Upon

approval by the Common Council, the AAP will be submitted to HUD for approval/adoption.

f. Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Review (CAPER)

- Public Notice:** Notice of the CAPER's comment period and public hearing will be made according to the "Public Notification" section of the CPP.
- Comment Period:** The drafted CAPER will be available for a 15-day public comment period according to the "Access to Records" section of the CPP.
- Public Hearing:** A public hearing will be held during the comment period in order to review the CDBG program's performance.
- Public Comments:** Comments will be received and considered according to the "Response to Citizen Participation & Concerns" section of the CPP.
- Adoption Policy:** The Planning Committee of the Common Council will review the proposed CAPER and commentary and forward the document to the Common Council for approval. Upon approval by the Common Council, the CAPER will be submitted to HUD for approval/adoption.

g. Guaranteed Loan Application

- Public Notice:** Notice of the Guaranteed Loan Application's comment period and public hearing will be made according to the "Public Notification" section of the CPP.
- Comment Period:** The Guaranteed Loan Application will be available for a 30-day public comment period according to the "Access to Records" section of the CPP.
- Public Hearing:** At least one public hearing will be held prior to submitting a Guaranteed Loan Application to obtain the views of citizens on the proposed activity.
- Public Comments:** Comments will be received and considered according to the "Response to Citizen Participation & Concerns" section of the CPP.
- Adoption Policy:** The Planning Committee of the Common Council will review the proposed Guaranteed Loan Application and commentary and forward the document to the Common

Council for approval. Upon approval by the Common Council, the Guaranteed Loan Application will be submitted to HUD for approval.

h. Citizen Participation Plan Amendment

Public Notice: Notice of a proposed amendment to the CPP will be made according to the “Public Notification” section of the CPP.

Comment Period: A proposed amendment to the CPP will be available for a 15-day comment period according to the “Access to Records” section of the CPP.

Public Hearing: An amendment to the CPP does not require a public hearing.

Public Comments: Comments will be received and considered according to the “Response to Citizen Participation & Concerns” section of the CPP.

Adoption Policy: The Planning Committee of the Common Council will review the proposed amendment and commentary and forward the document to the Common Council for approval. Upon approval by the Common Council, the amendment will be adopted into policy.

i. Substantial Amendment

The City of Norwalk defines a Substantial Amendment as follows:

- A change in which the total grant award for an entitlement program increases or decreases by more than 15% during the program year.
- To carry out an activity that was not previously identified in the plan.
- A change in purpose, scope, location and beneficiaries from one eligible activity to another by more than 15% of total funds previously authorized.

The following activities do not constitute a Substantial Amendment:

- Updates to ConPlan data including, but not limited to, census data, income limits and fair market rents.
- Change in location of implementing an approved activity so long as the purpose, scope and intended beneficiaries remain constant.
- Transfer of entitlement funds amongst program years’ budget lines for synonymous activities.

Public Notice: Notice of a Substantial Amendment to the ConPlan, AAP or CAPER will be made according to the “Public Notification” section of the CPP.

- Comment Period:** A drafted Substantial Amendment will be available for a 30-day public comment period according to the “Access to Records” section of the CPP.
- Public Hearing:** A public hearing will be held during the comment period.
- Public Comments:** Comments will be received and considered according to the “Response to Citizen Participation & Concerns” section of the CPP.
- Adoption Policy:** The Planning Committee of the Common Council will review the proposed Substantial Amendment and commentary and forward the document to the Common Council for approval. Upon approval by the Common Council, the Substantial Amendment will be submitted to HUD for approval/adoption.

V. Technical Assistance

The Agency will provide technical assistance to organizations representing low- and moderate-income persons requesting such assistance to develop an application for CDBG funding. Technical assistance will not constitute a guarantee of funding.

VI. Program Year Schedule

The City of Norwalk’s CDBG program year runs July 1 through June 30. Specific dates are included in the NOFA and may be obtained by contacting the Agency. An outline of an anticipated program year schedule follows.

July	Start of program year
August	15-day comment period for CAPER
August	Public hearing regarding program performance (CAPER)
September 30	CAPER submitted to HUD
September/October	Public hearing on ConPlan development (every five years)
November/December	NOFA and CDBG applications made available
December/January	Applications due
January/February	Public meeting to present projects proposed for funding
February/March	Planning Committee recommends projects for funding
March/April	30-day comment period for AAP and every five years, the ConPlan
April	Public hearing on AAP and every five years, the ConPlan
May	Common Council approval on AAP
May 15	AAP submitted to HUD

VII. Minimizing Displacement

Projects and activities funded through the CDBG program will be planned in order to minimize the displacement of low/moderate income residents. In the event displacement occurs, the City will offer relocation assistance to eligible low/moderate income persons who are displaced as a result of acquiring, rehabilitating or demolishing real property assisted with entitlement funds. The City will provide proper notice to impacted persons for vacating property and provide assistance consistent with the provisions of the Federal Uniform Relocation Act and its regulations at 49 CFR Part 24 and Section 104(d) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 and the City's Residential Antidisplacement and Relocation Assistance Plan (RARAP). The RARAP specifies the types and levels of assistance to be made available and states when and how the City will make this information available.

VIII. Response to Citizen Participation & Concerns

The Agency strives to maintain an open door policy with respect to citizen input, comments and complaints throughout the program year. The Agency will provide a substantive written response to every written citizen complaint within 15 working days of its receipt. Written comments shall be addressed to:

Norwalk Redevelopment Agency
City Hall, room 202
125 East Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06851

The Agency will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally at a public hearing, when preparing documents for submission to HUD. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore, will be attached to the final documents submitted to HUD.