

# **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN – for Multnomah County, City of Portland and City of Gresham (Consortium)**

## **I. Overview**

This Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) is a framework and process for public involvement. The goal is to involve all interested local citizens in the development and implementation of the housing and community development programs of all the jurisdictions in the Consortium: Multnomah County, the City of Gresham and the City of Portland. The CPP focuses on public involvement in the Consolidated Plan process because the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans, when approved by the County Commission and the City Councils of the Cities of Portland and Gresham, govern the allocation of federal US Department of Housing & Urban Development funds.

The CPP anticipates that each jurisdiction in the Consortium will have jurisdiction-specific processes for local issues and for selection of CDBG/HOME projects. This Plan describes what the three jurisdictions will do to encourage public participation in the development and amendment, if any, of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans, and in the review of their accomplishments. This Plan recognizes that citizen participation is an integral component of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan effort. The Consortium will take appropriate actions to encourage the participation of all of its citizens, especially:

- Low and moderate-income persons, particularly those living in areas where CDBG/HOME funds are proposed to be used,
- Residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods,
- Racial minorities,
- Non-English-speaking persons,
- Persons with disabilities, and
- Residents of public and assisted housing developments.

The CPP offers numerous opportunities for citizens to contribute information, ideas, and opinions about ways to improve our neighborhoods, promote housing affordability, and enhance the delivery of public services to local residents.

The provisions of the CPP fulfill statutory and regulatory requirements for citizen participation specified in the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Rules for the Consolidated Plan, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program, and the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program.

This Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) was approved in 2016 as part of the Consortium's Consolidated Plan. Since March 2020, the United States has been under a state of national emergency due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Consequently, to ensure the safety of the Consortium public while balancing citizen participation that is integral to the plan process, the current CPP has been amended to include a section on citizen participation during this COVID-19 public health emergency and also a section to cover similar potential emergency situations that may make providing longer public noticing and comment period difficult and may also pose challenges to holding in-person public hearings and meetings.

## **II. Public Hearings and Meetings**

The Consortium will conduct at least two public hearings each year to obtain citizens' views and to respond to comments and questions. The hearings will take place at different stages of the consolidated planning process and together address:

- Housing and community development needs,
- The proposed use of program funds, and
- Program performance during the past year.

At least one hearing will be held in the fall to review Consortium needs and one in the spring to review projects that may be funded for the following fiscal year. Members of the Consortium may elect to hold additional public hearings or meetings as needed. Members of the Consortium may hold their meetings jointly or individually, as best meets the needs of each community.

Every effort will be made to ensure that public hearings are inclusive. Hearings will be held at convenient times and locations, preferably in the evening or on week-ends, and in places where people most affected by proposed activities can attend. The Consortium will utilize public hearing facilities that are accessible to persons with mobility impairments. If reasonable notice, of at least 3 days, is given before a hearing date, the Consortium will provide appropriate materials, equipment, and interpreting services to facilitate the participation of non-English speaking persons and persons with visual and/or hearing impairments. Depending on available resources and staffing, the Consortium may exceed these basic requirements, including skyping capability.

The jurisdictions may hold additional public meetings/hearings as deemed necessary throughout the entire Consolidated Plan planning process.

All public hearings and public meetings associated with the Consolidated Planning process will conform to the Oregon Open Meetings Law.

## **III. Publication of the Proposed Consolidated Plan and Related Action Plans and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)**

The Consortium will publish its proposed Consolidated Plan, subsequent Action Plans and annual performance report in a manner that affords citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to examine its contents and submit comments. The jurisdictions will provide a reasonable number of free copies of plans and reports to citizens, community-based partnering organizations and groups requesting it.

Once approved by HUD, all plans and reports will be available online and on the jurisdiction's websites and in hard copy in the jurisdiction's offices. Additionally, interested parties may contact the jurisdiction for an electronic copy of the plans and reports. Jurisdictions may also provide copies of plans and reports at libraries and other public places.

#### **IV. Public Comments on the Proposed Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plans, Substantial Amendments to plans and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)**

The Consortium will receive comments from citizens on its proposed Plans, Substantial Amendments to Plans and annual performance for a period not less than 30 days prior to submission of the plan to HUD. All comments or views of citizens received in writing, via mail or email, or orally at public hearings, will be considered in preparing the final Consolidated Plan. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons, therefore, shall be attached to the final Plans.

#### **V. Public Notice**

Notice of public hearings, meetings and other events will be published in at least one general circulation newspaper and on the jurisdiction's website at least 14 days prior to the event. Publication may also occur in culturally specific newspapers, on-site at various locations in the jurisdictions, via Facebook or Twitter. The notice will include the locations of plans and reports for review.

Notice will also be published, as indicated above, announcing the 30-day comment period for the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Substantial Amendments to the Plans and the CAPER.

#### **VI. Public Outreach**

An informed citizenry is critical to effective and responsive housing and community development programs. Efforts to educate residents and empower their participation are an ongoing element of the consolidated planning process.

Public outreach and consultation will occur with all interested parties and those required by the Consolidated Plan. HUD required outreach and consultation includes: public and private agencies that provide assisted housing, health services, fair housing services for children, veterans, youth, elderly, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families, the Continuum of Care (CoC) and other agencies that provide homeless assistance and homelessness prevention services. Outreach may occur via focus groups, surveys, face-to-face meetings with non-profit partners, neighborhood associations, public school PTAs in low-income areas, and those in predominately low-income neighborhoods.

## **VII. Amendments to the Consolidated Plan and Action Plan**

The Consortium will amend its Consolidated Plan when any of the following events occur:

**Minor Amendment** – A Minor Amendment shall occur when the budget for a funded activity is adjusted by less than 25%. Minor Amendments will be discussed in the CAPER for that reporting year.

**Substantial Amendment** – Changes to the Consolidated Plan shall be considered Substantial when:

- The budget for the funded activity is adjusted by more than 25% or over \$750,000,
- The jurisdictions change allocation priorities or methods of distributing HUD entitlement funds;
- Jurisdictions utilize entitlement funds (including program income) to carry out an activity not previously described in the Action Plan; or
- Changes to the Consolidated Plan involve the purpose, scope, location, eligibility or type of beneficiaries of an activity.

Substantial Amendments require similar Public Notice and Public Comment as described earlier in the CPP.

## **VIII. Citizen Participation during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

On March 13, 2020 the President of the United States declared a national emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 27, 2020 the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President. The CARES Act allocated additional funding to entitlement jurisdictions to alleviate the impacts of the pandemic, provided additional flexibility to grantees and authorized HUD to grant waivers and alternative requirements in response to the pandemic.

The Citizen Participation process will be amended as follows during this pandemic period to ensure that the Consortium can efficiently and effectively utilize funding in a timely manner to serve the emerging needs of the people and businesses who have been deeply impacted by COVID-19 while adhering to social distancing guidelines.

### **Public Hearings and Meetings**

The Consortium will conduct at least two public hearings even during this pandemic period to obtain citizens' views and to respond to comments and questions. The hearings will take place at different stages of the consolidated planning process and together address:

- Housing and community development needs
- The proposed use of special/regular entitlement funds, and
- Program performance during the past year.

At least one hearing will be held in the fall to review Consortium needs and one in the spring to review projects that may be funded for the following fiscal year. Members of the Consortium may elect to hold additional public hearings or meetings as needed. Members of the Consortium may hold their meetings jointly or individually, as best meets the needs of each community.

Every effort will be made to ensure that public hearings are inclusive. Hearings can be held remotely at convenient times, preferably in the evening or on weekends and citizens will be able to access hearings via computer or phone. If reasonable notice of at least 3 days is given before a hearing date, the Consortium will provide appropriate materials, equipment, and interpreting services to facilitate the participation of non-English speaking persons and persons with visual and/or hearing impairments. Depending on available resources, staffing, and the state of Pandemic emergency at the time of public hearings, the Consortium may exceed these basic requirements.

### **Public Comment**

The Consortium will receive comments from citizens on its proposed Plan and Substantial Amendments to Plans for a period not less than 5 days prior to submission of the plan to HUD. All comments or views of citizens received in writing, via mail or email, or orally at public hearings, will be considered in preparing the final Consolidated Plan. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore, shall be attached to the final Plans.

### **Public Notice**

Notice of public hearings, meetings and other events will be published in at least one general circulation newspaper and on the jurisdiction's website that gives reasonable notice and opportunity for public comments. Publication may also occur in culturally

specific newspapers, on-site at various locations in the jurisdictions, via Facebook or Twitter. The notice will include the locations of plans and reports for review.

The published notice will announce the 5 day comment period for the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and Substantial Amendments to the Plans.

### **Future Waivers**

Due to the fluid and constantly evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, HUD may continue to issue waivers as circumstances change. In the event that future waivers are issued by HUD, the jurisdictions will adhere to the public hearing, public comment periods and public notice requirements for the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Substantial Amendments to the Plans and CAPER specified by HUD in any forthcoming waivers throughout the duration of the pandemic.

### **Access to Records & Availability of Plans during the Pandemic Period**

Given social distancing guidelines and other restrictions, it may be difficult to respond to requests for hard copies of the plan documents. While documents will be available for review and comments on the Consortium member websites, every effort will be made to mail hard copies via regular mail in response to requests of this nature.

## **IX. Technical Assistance**

Groups or individuals interested in obtaining technical assistance to develop project proposals or apply for funding assistance through HUD entitlement programs covered by the Consolidated Plan may contact the staff of the Consortium's jurisdictions. Such assistance may be of particular use to neighborhood improvement organizations, non-profit service providers, and for-profit and non-profit housing development groups that serve or represent persons of low and moderate-income. Consortium members may conduct workshops offering basic program information and materials to potential project sponsors, and staff from offices are available to provide in-depth guidance and assistance to applicants and program participants on an on-going basis.

## **X. Displacement**

Displacement of persons by activities or projects funded through HUD entitlement programs is discouraged by all members of the Consortium. All written materials regarding funding programs, all workshops for potential applicants, and all application materials include information on anti-displacement policies and caution applicants to discuss any activities that may entail displacement with the local jurisdiction staff in advance of submitting funding proposals. In the event that displacement is unavoidable, full benefits and assistance will be provided according to appropriate provisions of Uniform Relocation Act regulations.

## **XI. Access to Records**

To the extent allowed by law, interested citizens and organizations shall be afforded reasonable and timely access to records covering the preparation of the Consolidated Plan and Action Plan, project evaluation and selection and annual performance reports. In addition, materials on entitlement programs covered by the Consolidated Plan, including activities undertaken in the previous five years, will be made available to any member of the public who requests information from the City of Portland, City of Gresham or Multnomah County. A complete file of citizen comments will also be available for review by interested parties.

After receiving notice of HUD's approval of the Consolidated Plan, Action Plan and annual performance reports, members of the Consortium will post final versions on their websites.

## **XII. Citizen Complaints**

All materials relating to the Consolidated Plan and Action Plan, and to specific programs governed by the plan shall include the names and telephone numbers of appropriate persons designated as lead contacts. Inquiries, complaints, or grievances raised by members of the public will be addressed immediately, with every effort made to satisfactorily resolve issues prior to their becoming the subject of a formal complaint. Any written complaint or grievance will be investigated promptly and reviewed by the appropriate program manager or department head. A written response will be made to the complainant within at least fifteen (15) working days, where practicable. Public review materials and performance reports will include data, as appropriate under confidentiality regulations, on any written complaints received and how each was resolved.

## **XIII. Amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan**

The Consortium will provide citizens with a reasonable opportunity to comment on any substantial amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan.

## **XIV. Contingency Plan in the Event of an Emergency or Disaster**

In the event of an emergency or disaster that presents a serious and immediate threat to the health and welfare of our citizens, the noticing requirements and public comment period for plans or amendments may be reduced to 5 calendar days, or as allowed by state and federal guidelines as specific to the emergency and/or disaster on hand. The consortium reserves the ability to utilize any other federal waivers issued regarding public participation in the event of an emergency or disaster. Any reprogramming of funds in the event of such an emergency will require review by the Multnomah County Board and the respective City Council Members of the City of Gresham and Portland. Documents may not be available for review in-person but will otherwise be made available online.

## **XV. Availability of the Citizen Participation Plan**

Copies of the Citizen Participation Plan may be obtained by contacting the Portland Housing Bureau.

### **Contact Information:**

#### **PORTLAND HOUSING BUREAU**

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#### **GRESHAM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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#### **MULTNOMAH COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES**

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