



WASHTENAW URBAN COUNTY CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

Introduction

The Citizen Participation Plan provides a framework for ensuring residents of the Washtenaw Urban County have an opportunity to provide meaningful input on planning issues related to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) programs. The Citizen Participation Plan describes the policies and procedures for involving the general public during the preparation of Five-Year Consolidated Plans, Annual Action Plans, Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports (CAPER) and Substantial Amendments.

The Urban County Executive Committee is the governing body for CDBG, HOME and ESG programs and meets on a monthly basis. These meeting dates and locations are published on the Washtenaw County website, posted in County facilities, and provided to all participating jurisdictions to invite and encourage public participation regarding the use and management of program funds.

Community Outreach Procedures

The following processes will be utilized to ensure maximum community outreach:

- *Contact community leaders and stakeholders* throughout the Urban County, particularly in low- to moderate-income areas, E.g. through a general public e-mail distribution list of interested parties. Those community leaders may include: neighborhood advocates, religious leaders, civic leaders, block captains, neighborhood organizations, community reinvestment officers, school officials, and local small business owners.
- The Urban County Executive Committee representatives will *participate in community forums and meetings* pertaining to the issue of decent, safe and/or affordable housing.
- The Urban County Executive Committee will *hold public hearings to gather citizen input* on:
 - Housing and community development needs to be addressed in the Five-Year Consolidated Plans and Annual Action Plans (Needs Assessment)
 - Draft Five-year Consolidated Plans and Annual Action Plans
 - Draft Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports
- *Ensure public hearings are conveniently timed and located* to provide access for all communities, including minorities and persons with disabilities, especially for those who might or will benefit from program funds.

A note will be included in all Notice of Public Hearings that assistance will be provided to citizens with special needs, given a notice of seven (7) days. Further, the County will utilize interpreter services for a variety of non-English speakers, should those services be required to assist a resident attending the hearings.

- **Ensure adequate and timely notification of Public Hearings* to maximize community attendance by:
 - Publishing the Notice of Public Hearing in the publication of the highest circulation, including online notice, at least two (2) weeks prior to the hearing.
 - Posting an announcement of the hearing on the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) webpage.
 - E-mailing the Notice of Public Hearing to the Urban County Executive Committee representatives, local public service agencies and faith-based organizations through a general public e-mail distribution list of interested parties to be maintained by OCED.

- **Provide a Public Comment Period of no less than 30 days* to review and submit comments on:
 - Draft Consolidated Plans
 - Draft Annual Action Plan
 - Draft Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Reports
 - Proposed/Draft Substantial Amendments
 - Proposed/ Draft amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan

As appropriate, comments and suggestions will be incorporated into the associated document. Community input submitted in writing will receive response from the Urban County Executive Committee within 15 working days.

- *During a national and/or local emergency or disaster situation, including but not limited to the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic, alternate citizen participation requirements will allow for:
 - Reasonable notice and opportunity to comment (I.e. can be less than 2 weeks' notice);
 - Shortened public comment period that (I.e. no less than 5 days);
 - Virtual hearings, IF they provide (1) reasonable notification and access for citizens in accordance with the Washtenaw Urban County's grant certifications, (2) timely responses from local officials to all citizen questions and issues, and (3) public access to all questions and responses.

Publication of Consolidated Plans, Action Plans, and Performance Reports

The Urban County Executive Committee will make draft copies of Consolidated Plans, Action Plans and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports available for public review during the comment period. These draft documents will also be posted on the Washtenaw County OCED website.

Complaints

The Urban County Executive Committee staff will provide a timely (10-15 working days) and responsive written reply to every written community complaint regarding the consolidated plans, action plans the CDBG Program, the HOME Program, ESG Program, plan amendments, and performance reports.

Public Information about Programs and Services

The Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development will provide interested communities and community groups with information about eligible programs and activities, given due regard to privacy and confidentiality. The Office of Community and Economic Development staff to the Urban County will also maintain an email listserv with names and email addresses of interested persons/groups/communities/organizations and will use this "Urban County Interested Parties" listserv to distribute information. Anyone can subscribe to this listserv by entering their name and email address on the Washtenaw Urban County webpage at www.washtenaw.org/urbancounty. Scroll to the bottom of the page to find the prompt: *Sign up to receive updates about Urban County meetings, projects, and more.*



Retention of Records

The following records will be maintained for the duration of the current Consolidated Plan period and will be available to the public at the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development:

- Records of public hearings;
- Mailings and other promotional materials;
- Efforts made to involve communities in the development of grant applications/proposals for any Request for Proposals or other competitive grant-making processes (E.g. annual Affordable Housing RFP, annual Funding Review Team process for ESG awards, Community Based Development Organization RFP)
- Copies of Grantee Consolidated Plans, Action Plans, Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports, Substantial Amendments and Citizen Participation Plan;
- Copies of applications, letters of approval, grant agreements, progress reports, regulations and other pertinent documents.

Technical Assistance

Office of Community and Economic Development staff will provide technical assistance to groups representative of low-income persons that request such assistance in developing proposals for funding assistance under the Consolidated Plan.

Amendments/ Modifications

A substantial amendment is defined as the addition of a new program or activity that has not been funded in the previous three program years or any change that is greater than 20% of the fiscal year entitlement for the relevant grant program (I.e. CDBG, HOME, or ESG). If the amendment arises as an urgent community need due to emergency or disaster situations, E.g. to incorporate CARES Act funding to prevent, prepare for, and respond to Coronavirus/COVID-19, alternate citizen participation requirements may be utilized as needed, specifically:

- Notice and reasonable opportunity to comment of no less than 5 days.
- If an amendment to the Citizen Participation Plan is needed, the 5-day period can run concurrently for comments on the action plan/consolidated plan amendment and the amended citizen participation plan.
- In-person public hearings are not required; public hearing requirements can be satisfied with virtual public meetings (e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, other online platforms) if:
 1. National/local health authorities recommend social distancing and limiting public gatherings for public health reasons; and
 2. Virtual hearings provide reasonable notification and access for citizens in accordance with the Washtenaw Urban County's grant certifications, timely responses from local officials to all citizen questions and issues, and public access to all questions and responses.

Relocation/Displacement

The Urban County Executive Committee is committed to minimizing the displacement of persons receiving assistance from the CDBG, HOME, or ESG programs. While no displacement is expected as a result of proposed activities, the Urban County Executive Committee is prepared to provide for reasonable benefits to any person involuntarily and permanently displaced as a result of the use of HOME or CDBG funds to acquire or substantially rehabilitate residential and nonresidential property in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Act.

Approved by the Urban County Executive Committee: 7/1/2020 (*anticipated*)