Citizen Participation

To assure citizen participation in the design and implementation of the City's allocation of CDBG and HOME funds, the Planning and Community Development Department actively seeks input from the citizens of Great Falls and a wide variety of community sources. Citizen participation is an important aspect of the CDBG and HOME funding process as it establishes the needs of the community and identifies barriers to obtaining needed services. The City has a close working relationship with the Great Falls Housing Authority, Neighborworks Great Falls, and other housing providers. Many social service agencies, non-profit agencies, and youth organizations are also consulted to assure citizen participation is obtained in a comprehensive, methodical manner. Information is also directly sought from the nine Neighborhood Councils and the local Continuum of Care for Homelessness group. Additionally, input is sought from individual low income citizens themselves.

The City of Great Falls has implemented a Citizen Participation Plan which provides for and encourages citizen participation, emphasizing the involvement of low-income and very low-income residents. Citizens are provided adequate, timely notification of public meetings and the availability of the proposed Annual Action Plan and Annual Performance Report for review.

A public hearing is held to collect information regarding community needs prior to the City allocating where CDBG and HOME funds will be distributed. A second public hearing is held to obtain comments from citizens on the planned use of housing and community development funds. This hearing is held also to give the community an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed use of funding and on the performance of the CDBG and HOME grant programs in administration, distribution, and implementation of federal funds. All public hearings are held in a centrally located, handicap accessible building with reasonable accommodation provided for persons with disabilities.

Public service announcements about the public hearings are initiated well in advance of the scheduled events and paid advertisements are published in the Great Falls Tribune and Consumers Press. Additionally, notices are posted on the City's internet web site.

To encourage citizen participation, the Proposed Consolidated Plan, Proposed Action Plan and Proposed Annual Performance Report are made available for review and comment at several convenient public locations, including the Great Falls Public Library and the City Planning and Community Development Department office.

Letters of CDBG and HOME funding availability and grant application information are sent to human service agencies, housing providers, landlord associations, banks, and anyone who previously applied for or inquired about the CDBG and HOME programs. Notice of CDBG and HOME funding availability is also published numerous times in the Great Falls Tribune and Consumers Press.

In addition to actively seeking citizen participation, the Community Development Council, a 10 member volunteer advisory board, is appointed by the City Commission to make funding recommendations regarding CDBG funding. The City Commission makes the final decision on all grant funding for the program year.

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