

Citizen Participation Plan

**City of Great Falls, Montana
Citizen Participation Plan
for the
Consolidated Plan and
Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report
January 2013**

Purpose of Citizen Participation in developing the Consolidated Plan and Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER):

The City of Great Falls (City) must develop a Consolidated Plan to be eligible to receive Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) federal grant funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. A key component in creating the Consolidated Plan is citizen participation in all steps of the planning development process. Additionally, citizen participation is an integral component of the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) which is also required by HUD to receive federal grant funds. To ensure citizens in Great Falls have the opportunity to take part in creating the Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plan and the CAPER, the City has developed and commits to implement the following elements of the Citizen Participation Plan.

Citizen Participation Plan:

Participation: The City will provide for, and encourage, citizen participation emphasizing the involvement of low to moderate income residents in areas where housing and community development funds may be spent. The City will also inform and offer opportunities for comment to residents of low to moderate income neighborhoods. The City will encourage the participation of the Great Falls Housing Authority public and assisted housing residents and Opportunities, Inc., assisted housing residents in Great Falls.

The City will make reasonable efforts to consult with other public, private and non-profit agencies that provide housing, health service, and social services. In particular, agencies to be consulted will be those that focus on services to children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities (including physical, mental and developmental disabilities), as well as other persons in need of services. In addition, low income residents who are female heads of households are encouraged to participate. The City will encourage input and solicit information from each of the nine Neighborhood Councils and will notify the Councils about public hearings, the Consolidated Plan or the Annual Action Plan development process and solicit comments.

When preparing the portion of the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan regarding lead-based paint hazards, the City will consult with the City and Great Falls Housing Authority certified lead-based paint risk assessors to define what specific activities will be undertaken to mitigate and abate lead-based paint in housing units subsidized to be affordable for low to moderate income households. Activities required for lead-based paint hazards will also be addressed in non-profit facilities which receive CDBG grant funds as sub-recipients of the City where children spend the amount of time which meets the minimum threshold criteria.

The City Commission appoints ten citizens who reside within the city limits of Great Falls to a voluntary advisory board that reviews applications submitted for CDBG funding. This advisory board, the Community Development Council (CDC), recommends project funding to the City Commission under all categories of the CDBG funding except for administration. CDC members serve staggered three year terms with approximately three seats open each year. Lower income, minority, and disabled citizens or their representatives will be encouraged to apply for a position on the CDC. Advance notice of CDC openings will be undertaken. Information about CDC openings will be distributed through notifications on the City internet site, newspaper articles and display ads published in the Great Falls Tribune (the only local daily newspaper) at least three weeks before the CDC application is due to the City

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manager's office. Solicitation for members is made at the annual CDBG application workshop, as well as throughout the year by City staff.

Access to Meetings: The City will provide adequate, timely notification of meetings so all citizens can attend public hearings. This will include publishing at least two display advertisements not less than six days apart in the Great Falls Tribune, press releases, public service announcements, notifications on the City internet site and emailing directly to all individuals, agencies and government departments which have expressed an interest in or have received CDBG or HOME grant funds in previous years. Notices will be emailed a second time to all agencies serving minorities and individuals with disabilities requesting they encourage their clients to participate. The City will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities to all public hearings and meetings. Reasonable accommodations include but are not limited to holding meetings in handicapped accessible buildings and providing for language interpreters, when requested.

Access to Information: The City will provide citizens, public agencies and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and all of its components and the City's planned use of financial assistance received under the relevant federal programs during the upcoming year. The public will have the opportunity to receive information, review and submit comments on any proposed submission, including the Consolidated Plan adoption by the City Commissioners and any plan amendments. Information on the required 30 day comment period on any proposed submission, adoption of the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan submission and any plan amendments will be available. Information will also be available on the range of programs, the amount of assistance the City expects to receive, the amount of funds available and the estimated amount proposed to benefit low to moderate income residents. These groups will have access to the City's plans to minimize displacement of residents and businesses and assist those displaced because of these activities. The City will also provide citizens, public agencies and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to all processes associated with the CAPER.

Information and public records will be available during regular business hours in the City Planning & Community Development Department. Special arrangements will be available to accommodate access to information for persons with disabilities.

The final version of the current Consolidated Plan and current Annual Action Plan will be available on the City website on an ongoing basis.

Technical Assistance: The City will provide appropriate technical assistance to all groups that request assistance in developing proposals for financial assistance under any of the programs covered by the Consolidated Plan. An annual application workshop will be held at least six weeks prior to the application deadline to provide applicants as a group with information on how to complete application forms.

Public Hearings: The City will hold two public hearings to obtain citizens opinions. The City program year begins July 1 and ends June 30. Public hearings will address and respond to proposals and comments on:

1. Housing and community development needs
2. Development of proposed activities
3. Review of proposed uses for funding
4. Review of program performance

The City will hold public hearings that are conveniently timed for people who are likely to benefit from program funds, accessible to people with disabilities and adequately publicized with sufficient information about the subject of the hearing to encourage informed comment. The public hearings will occur on a weekday evening in the Civic Center which is centrally located, easily accessible with adequate parking and handicap accessible.

Throughout the year, citizens may attend City Commission meetings and public hearings to provide input as to the distribution of federal funds into the City. There will be two public hearings conducted by the City Commission annually. The first public hearing will give citizens the opportunity to comment and provide input on the following:

- Any housing and non-housing community development needs they have identified
- How funding proposals may meet community development needs in Great Falls
- Performance of the City in administering and distributing federal funds
- Citizens may comment on the adoption of the Citizens Participation Plan every five years or any time the Citizen

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Participation Plan has substantial revisions or has been re-written. Prior to adopting the Citizen Participation Plan, the City will distribute the plan for review and comment for a 15 day period.

The second public hearing will offer the opportunity for the citizens to comment on the following:

- Adoption of the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan
- Use of federal funds
- Performance of the administration and implementation of funded projects

Timely Response: The City will consider any comments or views of citizens, agencies, units of general local government or other interested parties concerning the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan, any amendments to these plans and the CAPER. The Planning & Community Development Department will address any complaints with written responses to written complaints within 15 working days, where practical. Depending on the nature of the complaint, staff may refer the issue to the City Manager or the City Commission if the response from staff is unsatisfactory to the complainant. As appropriate, an attachment of summary of comments and responses to complaints to the final submission of the Consolidated Plan, Consolidated Plan amendments, Annual Action Plan and the CAPER will occur.

Non-English Speaking Residents: In the event that a significant number of non-English speaking residents can reasonably be expected to participate, the City will provide accommodations for non-English speaking residents at public hearings, if such accommodations are available.

Substantial Amendments: Substantial changes in the City's planned or actual activities will require an amendment to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan. The following criterion determines substantial change and governs Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan amendments:

1. If a new project that has not previously received funding is being created with unprogrammed funds or created from financial changes from other funded projects.
2. If there is a change in the project site location or the project affects an area, an amendment will be required if the project location changes to a different census tract.
3. If there is a change in project purpose or beneficiaries, such as a project eliminates or reduces by over 50% the proposed impact on the original beneficiaries, and/or if less than 51% of the beneficiaries are determined to have low to moderate incomes, an amendment will be required. The CDBG administrator will determine on a case-by-case basis if an amendment is required when the beneficiaries change from one targeted group to another.
4. If the project changes in scope of activity from the original proposal.
5. If a project budget increases by twice the total allocation and the increase exceeds 10% of the City's total current CDBG allocation.

The City will advertise a notice in the Great Falls Tribune and have notifications on the City internet site and make available any amendments to the Consolidated Plan for citizen comment for a 30 day period.

Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report: The Proposed CAPER will be available to all citizens for review and comment on the City internet site and at the Great Falls Public Library and the City Planning & Community Development Department for a 15 day comment period. Notice of availability of the report is accomplished through two display advertisements in the Great Falls Tribune appearing at least six days apart, notification on the City internet site and a direct email to all individuals on the CDBG distribution list . All comments received regarding the CAPER will be considered and a summary of all comments will be attached to the report. The final version of the current CAPER will be available on the City website on an ongoing basis.

Solicitation of Citizen Comments on the Citizen Participation Plan:

Prior to its adoption and approval by the City Commission, the City will publish two display advertisements not less than six days apart in the Great Falls Tribune and Consumer's Press (local free weekly publication). Notices of the Citizen Participation Plan and/or any amendments to this plan will be available for a 15 day comment period and will designate the sites where a citizen may obtain a copy of the plan. These sites will include the City internet site, the Great Falls Public Library and the City Planning & Community Development Department.

Solicitation of Citizen Comments in preparing the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan:

1. The City will contact local affordable housing and public service agencies, the Great Falls Housing Authority and the Neighborhood Councils to obtain information and comments to make citizens aware of the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan process.
2. The proposed Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan will be available to all citizens on the City internet site and at the Great Falls Public Library and the City Planning & Community Development Department. Citizens will be informed about the availability of the proposed Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan by notifications on the City website, publishing display advertisements in the Great Falls Tribune and the Consumers Press and emailing notices to a wide variety of public service agencies. Notices will be emailed a second time to all agencies serving minorities and individuals with disabilities requesting they encourage their clients to participate. Notification will describe the availability of the plan and the 30 day period to receive public comment.
3. The City Commission will conduct two public hearings requesting input from citizens and representatives of low to moderate income level people as to the needs of the community, including but not limited to housing, community development, infrastructure, economic development and homeless assistance. A second public hearing will be conducted to receive citizen comments on the proposed Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan.

The City will provide a reasonable number of free copies of the Consolidated Plan or Annual action Plan to citizens and groups upon request.

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