

City of Columbia
Community Development Department
Citizen Participation Plan
Amended (5/15/15)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires the City of Columbia to develop a Consolidated Plan affecting all of its community planning and development and housing programs. The three programs affected by the consolidated plan are: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA).

The benefit of having a Consolidated Plan ensures a collaborative and comprehensive process to establish a unified vision for community development actions. The citizens of Columbia are encouraged to participate in the development of the Consolidated and Annual Actions Plans. To ensure that citizens are involved in an advisory role in (1) planning, (2) implementations, and (3) assessment of Consolidated Plan Programs, the U.S. Department of HUD requires a written plan to show how citizens will be involved in the three areas cited.

Community involvement in the Consolidated Plan Programs shall include, but is not limited to, public notices in the local newspapers, website postings, social media, the public hearings process and the Citizens Advisory Committee for Community Development (CAC). The composition of the CAC shall include persons from each city council district, various neighborhoods and target project areas.

The City of Columbia's Citizen Participation Plan is designed to provide maximize citizen participation in an open forum with access for all interested persons to provide input for all Consolidated Plan Program activities, including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnership (HOME), Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA), and Section 108 loan guarantees.

I. PURPOSE AND GOALS

The overall purpose of the Citizen Participation Plan is to provide for and encourage citizens to participate in an advisory role in planning, implementing, and assessing the programs of City of Columbia Community Development (CD).

The goals of the plan are to:

- A. Encourage citizens, particularly low and moderate income residents and residents of low and moderate income neighborhoods, to participate in the major planning and implementation efforts of CD, including the

development of the five-year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, substantial amendments to Consolidated/Action Plan, and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

- B. Provide information on community needs that can be addressed by CD.
- C. Provide community support and participation in various projects sponsored by CD.
- D. Identifies how the needs of non-English speaking residents will be met where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate.

II. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The Citizens Advisory Committee for Community Development will meet at the beginning of each Community Development program year to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the Citizen Participation Plan, which will remain in effect until it is superseded by a new or revised plan.

A. Open Participation

1. Planning and implementation of programs at CD will be conducted in an open manner with freedom of access for all interested persons.
2. In the case of target area improvement projects, such as streets or parks, target area residents may be involved in the development and review of policy decisions regarding the design and implementation of such projects.
3. Citizens may be involved in the development of programs offered by CD, including recommending program policies and funding allocations, preparation of the five-year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, substantial amendments to Consolidated/Action Plan, CAPER, and Citizen Participation Plan.
4. Citizens may also participate in suggesting program improvements, and in the marketing and evaluation of CD programs

B. Levels of Participation

There are two levels of participation in CD's citizen participation process: individual citizens, neighborhoods and city participation, this structure maximize the opportunities citizens have to participate in CD Programs. At each level, various forms of information distribution, community outreach, and public hearings/meetings occur to plan and implement the program.

1. *Individual Citizen Level*

Citizens have an opportunity to register comments and/or complaints by email, social media, letter, telephone, or in person. A summary of comments, and a summary of any comment not accepted and the reason therefore, will be attached to the applicable document upon submission to HUD. CD staff will respond to all citizen comments within fifteen (15) working days of their receipt.

2. *Neighborhood Level*

a) Within the City there are target neighborhoods which are the focus of CD activities. These neighborhoods are those census tracts and block groups in which over 50% of the households have low/moderate incomes.

b) Public meetings and other means of outreach will be used to ensure participation by neighborhoods in the planning and implementation of projects that impact those neighborhoods. These types of meetings will be widely advertised in accordance with the Citizen Participation Plan and substantial efforts will be made to notify neighborhood residents of meetings

III. CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The City Council has appointed a Citizen's Advisory Committee for Community Development consisting of seven (7) members, one member appointed by each City Council member and Mayor, who participates in an advisory role in planning, implementing and assessing the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnerships (HOME), and Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS Programs (HOPWA).

The Committee was formally established by City Council through the adoption of a resolution on August 6, 1975, which outlined the Committee's responsibilities. Both the original Resolution and its Amendments have been included in this Citizen Participation (CP) Plan.

The Resolution's Amendment provides an opportunity for various neighborhood organizations to be represented on the CAC. Neighborhoods that meet the criteria of predominantly low- and moderate-income shall be placed on rotating list for CAC neighborhood organization appointments:

- At least 51% of the neighborhood organization's membership must qualify as very low (30-50% of the area median income) to low income (50-80% of the area median income).

- The organization must have evidence of its existence for one (1) year, including but not limited to such things as bylaws, elections, regular scheduled meetings, minutes and attendance sign-in sheets.
- The group must have official elections, which are duly advertised among the membership, and certified to be conducted with a quorum of the membership voting.
- The organization must provide the boundaries of the area represented on a legible map.
- A current roster of officers and an official membership roster must be submitted to the Community Development (CD) staff within one month after each election.

Any organization may be placed on the list of recognized neighborhood groups by providing the above information to the CD staff. Forms for groups requesting recognition are available by contacting the Community Development Department.

When new CAC members are appointed, they are provided a manual consisting of the application, federal regulations, the CP Plan and other applicable materials to inform them on the overall program. The CD staff shall provide new member orientation to review this material.

City Council has given the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) for Community Development the authority to carry out the following functions:

- Conduct a public hearing on the performance of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnership (HOME) Program, and Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) Program, to aid in planning for the next activity year.
- Hold citywide neighborhood hearings on a yearly basis, to receive input from citizens on how Community Development funds shall be spent.
- Make CAC meetings and progress reports available to the general public. Citizens and citizen organizations are encouraged to provide input on a continual basis in all areas of Community Development. Advertise public notice to allow citizens and community organizations an opportunity to assess activities and submit comments on all aspects of the Consolidated Plan Programs. Notices will be published in local newspapers of general circulation, posted on the City's website, and through social media.

IV. ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

The CAC for Community Development will assess the Annual Community Development Program, and review and measure performance based on the projects' objectives.

Performance hearing(s) shall be held by the CAC on behalf of City Council prior to the start of planning for the next program year. The purpose of the hearing is to review progress and performance of the CD Program. Citizens and citizen organizations are given the opportunity to assess and submit comments on all aspects of the Community Development's, CDBG, HOME, and HOPWA Programs. This includes assessing performance of projects and activities to determine if objectives have been achieved. The hearing is held up to three (3) months before or after the program year begins and is advertised in a newspaper of general circulation up to ten (10) days prior to the date of the hearing.

City staff and the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) will use citizen input in planning for the next activity year. Copies of the comments received and summary of action taken will be distributed to the CAC and maintained on file in the Community Development Department for neighborhood organizations and the general public to review.

Citizens are encouraged to participate in the development of the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). All comments submitted by citizens, along with the City's responses and a summary of any action taken will be included in the CAPER. A period of not less than 15 days is established to receive comments on performance reports before the report is submitted to HUD. This report is submitted 60 days after the end of the reporting year.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS

In compliance with Federal requirements, a minimum of two (2) public hearings on the Consolidated Plan at two different stages of the program year will be held to inform the citizens of eligible areas, eligible projects, and to solicit suggestions for projects to be funded in future years. Public hearings will address housing and community development needs; development of proposed activities and review of program performance. Public hearings will be held at a time and locations convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries. Notice of the public hearings will be published in The State newspaper or local paper of general circulation, on the City of Columbia's official website and/or social media sites at least two weeks in advance of the hearing. The notice will include a description of the proposed funding programs and the projected funding levels. At least one of these public hearings will provide an opportunity for the public to give comments on the Consolidated or Action Plan. The locations will be selected to provide access for physically challenged persons.

VI. APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT

Along with developing the Consolidated Plan, an Annual Statement of Community Development Objectives and Projected Uses of Funds including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnership (HOME), and Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) Program applications are submitted to HUD.

Comments and input for the Consolidated Plan will be solicited through advertisements placed in local newspaper, written and/or on-line survey forms, community forums, social media and at public hearings. Comments will be accepted for one (1) month after the notice appears in print.

Low and moderate-income persons, particularly those living in slum and blighted areas, residents of public and assisted housing, neighborhood organizations and agencies serving community development-eligible areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used, will be encouraged to participate and submit comments. Their input will be solicited through neighborhood meetings, the newspaper, special mailings, city website announcements, social media and planning hearings. Comments received in writing, or orally at public hearings, will be summarized and attached to the final Consolidated Plan.

No less than thirty (30) days prior to the adoption of a consolidated plan, information will be made available to citizens, public agencies, and other interested community stakeholders that include the amount of assistance expected to be received and the range of activities that may be undertaken, including the amount that will benefit persons of very low- and low-moderate income as well as plans to minimize displacement of persons and assistance to any persons displaced. The City of Columbia also encourages minorities, non-English speaking persons, and disabled citizens to participate and respond to the Citizen Participation Plan.

Input for the Annual Action Plan shall be solicited from neighborhood residents of areas designated within that program year. Designated neighborhoods may vary by inclusion or deletion, from those areas specified in the five (5) year plan. A Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) process is utilized to solicit eligible projects and activities on an annual basis. CD staff and the CAC manage the NOFA process and makes recommendation for funding. Neighborhood meetings/forums are held prior to the CAC's recommendation for funding to City Council for the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan. CD staff will work with the residents in these designated neighborhoods coordinating activities and soliciting input on a continual basis.

A summary or draft of the proposed Consolidated Plan will be advertised in a local newspaper of general circulation and on the City's website, as well as copies of the plan will be available in Community Development, various city offices and on the City's website. The summary or draft will include the purpose,

funding amounts and description of proposed projects and activities that address the priority needs and goals of the Consolidated Plan.

The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) is submitted annually to HUD and shall contain annual housing goals as directed toward housing needs. The five-year Consolidated Plan is updated annually including Housing Market Analysis, Homeless Needs Assessment, Strategies, Implementation and Certifications.

A copy of the Consolidated Plan may be obtained free of charge online at [www.columbiasc.net/Community Development](http://www.columbiasc.net/CommunityDevelopment), via email at CoCCommDevCompliance@ColumbiaSC.gov, at the Community Development Department office at 1225 Lady Street, between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, or requested in writing at: Community Development Department, P.O. Box 147, Columbia, South Carolina 29217.

VII. CRITERIA FOR AMENDMENT TO CONSOLIDATED PLAN/DEFINITION OF SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENT

1. In accordance with 24 CFR 91.505, amendments to the plan Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan shall include:
 - a. Making changes in allocation priorities or change in method of distribution of funds;
 - b. Carrying out an activity, using funds from any program covered by the Consolidated Plan, including program income, not previously described in the action plan; or
 - c. Changing the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity.
2. A substantial amendment to the Consolidated or Annual Action Plan is an increase or decrease of over 50% of the budgeted funding amount or a change in the general activity or national objective of an activity.
3. There will be a 30-day period to receive comments on a substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan or the Annual Action Plan prior to the amendment being implemented. The notice of the 30-day comment period will be issued as a legal notice of the activity printed in The State newspaper or local newspaper with general circulation, on the City of Columbia's website and/or through social media. All comments and views of citizens received in writing or via the Internet will be considered in preparation of the Substantial Amendment. 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 Substantial Amendment of the consolidated plan.

VIII. CITIZEN OBJECTION TO THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Any written complaints concerning the Community Development operations, CDBG, HOME, or HOPWA Programs will be referred to the appropriate administrator of the activity for response. A written response will be made within 15 working days upon receipt of complaint. A copy of the written complaint and response will be maintained by the Community Development Department, 1225 Lady Street, P.O. Box 147, Columbia, South Carolina, 29217, (803) 545-3373.

Persons objecting to approval of an application for the CDBG, HOME, or HOPWA Programs, the CP Plan, environmental assessments, Consolidated Plan, or its annual performance report, CD program or performance, may present their written objection to or should make objection known to the U.S. HUD area office:

**Columbia Area Office
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Community Planning and Development Division
1835-45 Assembly Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201**

IX. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance will be available to all individuals, groups or organizations concerning planning, implementation and assessment of the community development program as well as with the development of proposals for the Consolidated Plan Program funding. A workshop on all federal regulations pertaining to the operation of the Community Development Program is provided for the CAC and is open to the general public.

X. PUBLICITY AND ADVERTISEMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

In accordance with federal regulations, public advertisement for all community development activities will be published in the non-legal section of *The State* newspaper or local newspaper with general circulation, on the City's official website, through social media, and/or posted in conspicuous locations that may be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed activity.

A. Social Media Description

CD will use social media to disseminate information and encourage dialog within the social media universe. CD will use our social media presence to increase citizen participation, but can inform the consultation process as well.

Social media offers many advantages, including low implementation costs and rapidly expanding public use. The demographic of social media users, particularly younger persons, may be underserved by traditional media sources as they move away from television and print news.

Social media also provides grantees with a flexible, real-time tool for two-way communication with the public. Social media strategies typically involve a two-step approach:

- Posting citizen participation related information on a new or existing public agency social media account.
- Highlighting events and achievements by the CD department. (I.E Instagram page to highlight buildings built with CDBG funds and a Twitter feed to update people with upcoming events.)
- Creating a CD email address to address citizen complaints and concerns

B. Application to the Consolidated Plan

Social media is a quickly growing form of communication that grantees can employ as part of a strategy of innovative media outreach to both generate interest in the Consolidated Plan and involve all of their target populations and demographics in outreach and citizen participation opportunities by reaching residents who may not otherwise be aware of the Consolidated Plan process.

C. Target Audience/Usage

The target audience for this activity is media savvy residents who are familiar with social media and use it on a regular basis

X. AVAILABILITY TO THE PUBLIC AND ACCESS TO RECORDS

The Citizen Participation Plan, the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plans, and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports (CAPERS) are available to the public. All plans and reports may be obtained free of charge online at [www.columbiasc.net/Community Development](http://www.columbiasc.net/Community%20Development), picked up at the Community Development Department office at 1225 Lady Street between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, requested via email at CoCCommDevCompliance@ColumbiaSC.gov, or in writing at: Community Development Department, P.O. Box 147, Columbia, South Carolina 29217.

This plan provides for full and timely disclosure of program records and information consistent with applicable State and local laws regarding personal privacy and obligations of confidentiality. Documents relevant to the program shall be made available at the offices of Community Development Department, 1225 Lady Street, during normal working hours for citizen review upon a written public records request. Such documents include the following:

1. All mailings and promotional material
2. Records of hearings

3. All key documents, including all prior applications, letters of approval, grant agreements, the Citizen Participation Plan, CAPERs, other reports required by HUD, and the proposed and approved application for the current year
4. Copies of the regulations and issuances governing the program
5. Documents regarding other important program requirements, such as contracting procedures, environmental policies, fair housing and other equal opportunity requirements, and relocation provisions

XI. PROVISIONS FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING RESIDENTS

Columbia's non-English speaking population is less than 10% (2010 Census). The City will endeavor to facilitate the translation of all program information to these residents, upon request. Translators will be present at those public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can reasonably be expected to participate.

XII. PROVISIONS FOR PERSON WITH DISABILITIES

The City of Columbia is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Persons with mobility, visual or hearing impairments requiring special accommodations, will be directed to contact the Community Development Department. Reasonable modifications and equal access to communications will be provided upon request. For assistance please call 803-545-3373 or dial 7-1-1 TDD, or by email at comdev@columbiasc.net.

Upon advance notification, appropriate provisions will be made to accommodate persons with disabilities. Any and all reports such as the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plans, CAPERS and substantial amendments can be made available upon request regardless of the disability.