

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

CITY OF PORT ST. LUCIE
CDBG PROGRAM

Community Services Department

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I. INTRODUCTION

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are provided to the City of Port St. Lucie by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for neighborhood improvements and services. These activities must benefit low and moderate income persons, eliminate slums and blighted conditions, or meet urgent community needs. Citizen involvement is actively sought as part of the CDBG program, and is always an integral part of the decision process. Efforts are made to increase City residents awareness of events transpiring within neighborhoods and the different communities. To meet this end, the City of Port St. Lucie has formulated a Citizen Participation Plan as a procedure for public involvement in the planning process.

II. FEDERAL MANDATE

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, with 24 CFR 570.301 and 24 CFR 91.105, establishes the following requirements for the City to meet in preparing its annual statement of community development objectives and projected use of funds. These requirements shall serve to permit public examination of the City's statement of objectives and use of funds, enhance public accountability for these grant funds, and facilitate coordination of activities at different levels of government.

Accordingly, the City shall:

1. Furnish citizens information concerning:
 - a. The amount of funds available for proposed community development and housing activities;
 - b. The range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount proposed for activities that will benefit low and moderate income persons; and
 - c. The plans of the City for minimizing displacement of persons resulting from activities funded under the CDBG program and its plans to assist those persons actually displaced(attached to this plan);
2. Publish a proposed statement of objectives and use of funds in such a manner to afford affected citizens an opportunity

to examine its content and to submit comments on the proposed statement and on the City's community development performance. In general, two weeks notice will be considered sufficient published notice.

3. Hold two or more public hearing per year to obtain the views of citizens on community development and housing needs;
4. Provide citizens with reasonable access to records regarding the past use of the City's CDBG funds;
5. Provide citizens with reasonable notice of and opportunity to comment on any substantial change proposed to be made in the use of funds from one activity to another;
6. Consider such citizen comments and views, and if deemed appropriate by the City, modify its proposed statement before being finalized; and
7. Make its final statement of objectives and use of funds available to the public. Any final statement may be amended from time to time in accordance with these same procedures.

Any participation activities outlined herein meet and exceed these federal mandates in keeping with the City's desire to have its Community Development program responsible to the needs of its residents.

III. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION

During the process of developing the annual statement of community development objectives, and allocating the available funds to specific activities to carry out these objectives, formal citizens involvement opportunities will be available. Public comment will be solicited at a series of public meetings, as well as in response to the City publication of its proposed objectives and use of funds.

Public Hearings

Public hearings will be conducted by the City Council. The hearings will be held after publication of the proposed statement of objectives and use of funds. The final hearing before the City Council shall enable any affected party the opportunity to discuss community needs, objectives and proposed use of funds, and insure

that the opportunity to comment on the proposed statement is afforded. This meeting will be held during the public hearing portion of a regularly scheduled City Council meeting. The City will make every effort to provide an interpreter if the City is notified in a timely manner that a substantial number of non-English speaking citizens are expected to participate in a public hearing; also, all reasonable accommodation will be made for deaf interpreter services if requested.

All public hearings will be advertised prior to the meeting in a local newspaper, and will state the date, time, and location; in general the information will be published at least two weeks before the hearing.

IV. ADEQUATE INFORMATION

The Community Services Department will provide full disclosures and public access to CDBG program information. At the beginning of the planning process for each program year, the following information will be published in a local newspaper of general circulation:

1. The total amount of Community Development Block grant funds available for the new program year.
2. The range of activities that may be undertaken, the types of activities previously done and types of eligible activities.
3. The process for development and final approval of projects or activities.
4. All public hearings regarding the CDBG Program.

Access To Information

Upon finalization by the City Council of the statement of objectives and activities to be funded, the City shall print this statement and make it available to all interested parties. The final statement shall be mailed to all persons requesting a copy from the Community Services Department at no cost to the citizen. The location where this final statement will be available will be:

Community Services Department
Room 221 - Second Floor, City Hall
121 SW Port St. Lucie Blvd.
Port St. Lucie, FL 34984

The Community Services Department will provide full and timely disclosure of its program records and information consistent with applicable State law. Available documents include:

1. All mailings and promotional information.
2. Minutes of all meetings and public hearings.
3. All key documents, including previous annual applications, letters of approval, grant agreements, citizen participation plan, annual performance reports, HUD project reports, project proposals, environmental review records, and others.
4. Copies of all relevant HUD regulations.
5. Project and activity files.

The Community Services Department will accept citizen responses, requests and/or complaints any time throughout the year, and will respond to written complaints and/or grievances, in writing, within fifteen (15) working days where practicable.

I. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND RELEASE OF FUNDS NOTICES

The City conducts an environmental assessment on all activities funded under the CD grant prior to releasing these federal dollars and beginning the actual improvements. This environmental assessment is done to determine if there would be any significant negative impacts on the local environment that would result if the project is implemented. This review also is designed to assess each project's compliance with all applicable federal environmental laws.

The final step in this environmental review process is the publication of a legal notice stating the City's determination of the impact each project will have. This determination can either be a finding of no significant impact, (in which case, funds may be requested to be released from HUD), or a finding of significant impact, (in which case a full Environmental Impact Statement must

be prepared). If the latter case is found, the Environmental Impact Statement must be completed prior to taking any further action on the project.

After one of these two findings has been made and all additional requirements have been fulfilled, the local Community Services Department requests release of funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. An advertisement to this effect will be placed in the legal section of a newspaper of general circulation stating a fifteen (15) day waiting period for public review and comments.

During the waiting period, HUD will accept an objection to its approval of the release of funds and acceptance of the certification only if it is on one of the following basis: (a) That the certification was not in fact executed by the chief executive officer or other officer of applicant approved by HUD; or (b) that applicant's environmental review record for the project indicates omission of a required decision, finding, or step applicable to the project in the environmental review process. Objections must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the required procedure (24 CFR Part 58), and may be addressed to HUD at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Atlanta Area Office, 645 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, Georgia, 30323. Objections to the release of funds on basis other than those stated above will not be considered by HUD. These two notices, finding of no significant impact and request for release of funds, will be run together whenever possible.

VII. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND GRANTEE REPORTS

The City prepares and publishes annual final statement reports on the progress of CDBG assisted activities in accordance with federal regulations. The Grantee report shall be done by the end of November each year, and is made available to all interested persons prior to submission to HUD. The Action Plan will be made available for public review in the Community Services Department and City Clerk's Office from 8:00-5:00 Monday through Friday. The Action Plan is due to HUD by August 15. This plan is reviewed during its inception by two separate public hearings to formulate the actions that will be included in the plan. Citizens will be notified that these reports are available for review by means of advertisements in the nonlegal section of a local newspaper, and Public comment will be received by the Community Services Department.

These performance reports provide information on the program's progress for all funded activities, status of fund expenditures, number of persons benefiting, the housing assistance provided, and relationship to the City objectives. Citizen comments are solicited by the City and HUD on this report for a period of at least 15 days.

VIII. GRANT AMENDMENTS

The level of citizens' participation activities will vary with the scope of the grant amendment. If the amendment involves a budget change exceeding thirty (30) percent of the annual program budget, and changes funding from one eligible activity to another that has not been previously selected by the City Council, the City shall conduct a public hearing on the amendment and publish the proposed amendment in a local newspaper. The City will allow thirty (30) days for comment before the amendment is implemented.

For any other amendments not mentioned in the above guidelines, the City Council may take final action upon request or delegate authorization to the City Manager to amend the CDBG grant budget.

IX. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The City's Community Services Department staff provides support for all activities. Technical assistance related to participation in the CDBG program is available to any interested party during every step of the process. Staff is ready to explain the block grant program in more detail, review project eligibility, and provide information on activities funded in the present or past years. This assistance is available during normal working hours of 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, at the Community Services Department, second floor, City Hall. Staff can be reached by phone at 407-871-5264 during these hours.

X. CITIZEN'S COMPLAINTS

Citizens who wish to register a complaint about any CDBG program activities may do so by writing the Community Services Department at the following address:

Community Services Department
Second Floor, City Hall
121 SW Port St. Lucie Blvd.

Port St. Lucie, FL 34984
772-871-5264

Every effort will be made to provide written responses to complaints within (15) days. If the information requested cannot be provided by this office, or if the City's response is not adequate, citizens may contact the HUD area office at the address below:

Department of Housing and Urban Development
301 W. Bay Street
Jacksonville, FL 33202
904-232-1202

**PLAN TO MINIMIZE DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS AS A RESULT OF
CDBG ACTIVITIES**

The City of Port St. Lucie Grant Management Office, has developed policies and programs to minimize the displacement of families and individuals as a result of Community Development activities.

The Grant Management Office will make every effort to minimize the displacement of families, individuals and businesses where Community Development activities occur. Before anyone is displaced, appropriate inspections of the property must be made by the Port St. Lucie Building Department. Displacement will occur only if the severity of housing conditions warrant such action or when the property in question is part of a planned sequence of general redevelopment activities.

Also, prior to any displacement, clean, safe and affordable housing must be made available to the potential displacees. Such housing may be either in the public or private sectors.

Families and individuals who are displaced due to Community Development activities may be eligible for relocation assistance. A homeowner who is displaced due to demolition of his/her substandard home may be eligible to receive assistance to rebuild or relocate to other clean, safe and affordable housing.

The Grant Management Office will provide relocation assistance to qualified displaced tenants.

RESIDENTIAL ANTIDISPLACEMENT AND RELOCATION ASSISTANCE PLAN

Pursuant to Section 104(d) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as Amended, The City of Port St. Lucie will replace all occupied and vacant occupiable low/moderate-income dwelling units demolished or converted to a use other than as low/moderate income-housing as a direct result of activities assisted with funds provided under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, as described in 24 CFR 570.606(b)(1).

All replacement housing will be provided within three years of the

commencement of the demolition or rehabilitation relating to conversion. Before obligating or expending funds that will directly result in such demolition or conversion, The City of Port St. Lucie will make public and submit to the HUD Field Office the following information in writing:

1. A description of the proposed assisted activity;
2. The general location on a map and approximate number of units by size (number of bedrooms) that will be demolished or converted to a use other than as low/moderate-income dwelling units as a direct result of the assisted activity;
3. A time schedule for the commencement and completion of the demolition or conversion;
4. The general location on a map and approximate number of dwelling units by size (number of bedrooms) that will be provided as replacement dwelling units;
5. The source of funding and a time schedule for the provision of replacement dwelling units; and
6. The basis for concluding that each replacement dwelling unit will remain a low/moderate-income dwelling unit for at least 10 years from the date of initial occupancy.

Port St. Lucie will provide relocation assistance, as described in Section 570.606(b)(2), to each low/moderate-income household displaced by the demolition of housing or by the conversion of a low/moderate-income dwelling to another use as a direct result of assisted activities.

Consistent with the goals and objectives of activities assisted under the Act, Port St. Lucie will take the following steps to minimize the displacement of persons from their homes;

1. Proposed projects will be carefully reviewed and analyzed to explore other alternatives which may prevent the displacement of households.
2. If displacement is unavoidable, a personal interview will be conducted with each potential displacee prior to the assisted activity taking place, to determine relocation needs and explain the relocation payments and other assistance for

which they may be eligible, related eligibility requirements of the program and the procedure for obtaining such payment and assistance.

3. Each person to be displaced from the project will be provided current information on the availability of purchase prices and rental costs of comparable replacement dwellings and locations as the case may be. Every effort will be made to locate alternative safe, decent, and sanitary housing within the same neighborhood which they reside, if the household desires. If not, in a neighborhood of their selection. All potential alternative housing will be inspected to assure that it meets applicable standards.
4. Staff will assure that at least one comparable replacement dwelling is available to all persons to be displaced prior to requiring persons to move.
5. All persons to be displaced will be advised of state and federal housing programs and their rights under the Federal Fair Housing Law.