



CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

**Adopted by the Battle Creek City Commission
on June 2, 2020**

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City of Battle Creek's Citizen Participation Plan

General

The objective of the City of Battle Creek's Citizen Participation Plan is to encourage citizen involvement in the development of the City's Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and performance reports. The Citizen Participation Plan also includes provisions defining substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and changes to the Citizen Participation Plan and fostering citizens input on such amendments. Although the participation of low and moderate income residents is particularly encouraged, the City's Citizen Participation Plan is intended to facilitate the participation of all Battle Creek residents including minorities, non-English speaking persons, persons residing in blighted areas, and persons with mobility, visual or hearing impairments. The Citizen Participation Plan outlines how this input will be encouraged throughout the process.

The City of Battle Creek intends to foster the participation of public and assisted housing residents as well as recipients of tenant-based rental assistance in the development and implementation of the Consolidated/Annual Plan. Low and moderate income residents of areas where CDBG, HOME, or other development assistance is to be targeted will be involved in the process of preparing and carrying out the Consolidated/Annual Plan.

Possible vehicles for this level of participation may include public hearings, neighborhood meetings, Consolidated Planning Workshop meetings, Neighborhood Planning Council meetings, in-home meetings, direct mail solicitation, presence at public events, surveys, online meetings, and any other means determined to be effective. Information will also be provided to the Battle Creek Housing Commission on Consolidated Plan activities which might impact its developments so this information can be made available at the Housing Commission's annual public hearing on the Public Housing Agency Plan.

In an effort to promote the use of plain language in this document, the following outline has been created. The policies and procedures in this Citizen Participation Plan relate to several stages of action mentioned in law or regulation. In general, these stages or events include:

1. Identification of housing and community development needs.
2. Preparation of a draft use of funds for the upcoming program year called the proposed Annual Action Plan. Sometimes there might also be the development of a proposed new Five-Year Strategic Plan.
3. Formal approval by the Battle Creek City Commission of the final Annual Action Plan and/or the Five-Year Strategic Plan.
4. On occasion during the program year, it might be necessary to change the use of the money already budgeted in an Annual Action Plan, or to change the activities funded with these monies. In that case, a formal Substantial Amendment will be proposed, considered and acted upon.
5. After a program year is complete, a performance report must be drafted for public review and comment, and then sent to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Community Development Advisory Council and Neighborhood Planning Councils

Community Development Advisory Council: One of the many ways the City of Battle Creek encourages citizen participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) process is through the Community Development Advisory Council (CDAC). The primary responsibility of the CDAC is to assist the Battle Creek City Commission in developing strategic priorities for the Five Year Consolidated and Annual Action plans. These strategic priorities help determine how CDBG funds are allocated to address community needs.

When funds are made available to outside agencies, either in the form of Public Service grants (up to 15%) or non-city programming of remaining CDBG funds, proposals will be scored against the strategic priorities using criteria developed by local content experts (may include city staff) and approved for use by a majority vote of the CDAC. The CDAC reviews the scoring of proposed non-city CDBG grant projects and makes scoring recommendations consistent with the objectives of the federal government (i.e., decent housing, suitable living environment, and expanding economic opportunities), the priorities identified in the City's current Consolidated Plan, as amended, and with other locally adopted priorities, as applicable.

Based on the scoring of the projects, recommendations will then be made by the CDAC and the City Administration to the City Commission regarding activities to be funded and funding levels.

The CDAC membership will consist of 9 to 15 members and one "ex-officio" staff member who will not have voting privileges. CDAC representation will be as follows:

Up to Five (5) Neighborhood Planning Council (NPC) members

(No more than one from each active NPC. NPC's with a CDBG Revitalization Area within their boundaries will be given the opportunity to recommend an appointment first. If they do not, recommendations will be solicited from other NPC's, starting with NPC's that have low/moderate income areas within their borders. If any of the NPC slots remain unfilled, they can be filled by an "at-large" appointment, or by the City Commission appointment of someone from within that NPC area.)

Seven (7) at-large members

(At least three (3) at-large members must be Low/Moderate income persons or residents of low/moderate income areas. Additional at-large members may be representatives from philanthropic or nonprofit agencies that serve Low/Moderate income persons or low/moderate income areas. Nonprofit representatives will be from organizations that will not seek CDBG funding.)

Up to three (3) City Commissioners

First consideration for these appointments will be representatives of Wards with low/moderate income concentrations.)

One (1) "ex-officio", nonvoting City staff member.

Appointments to the CDAC will be made by the City Commission, with recommendations from the City Manager. Appointment of CDAC members will be for three-year, staggered terms.

All CDAC meetings are open to the public and are subject to the Michigan Open Meetings Act, Public Act 267 of 1976, as amended (MCL Section 15.261 *et seq.*). The structure of the CDAC may change periodically based upon changes in federal focus or other community needs and priorities.

The CDAC only convenes during years where funds for public service or non-city CDBG grants are made available.

Neighborhood Planning Councils: Another avenue for citizen participation in the consolidated planning process is the Neighborhood Planning Councils. The City of Battle Creek is divided into 8 neighborhoods, each of which has its own NPC. Councils are comprised of between 15 and 35 members, who are nominated by sitting council members and appointed by the City Commission. Members serve three year terms and must be a person having a demonstrable or substantial interest within the defined boundaries of the Council Area.

As advisory bodies to the City Commission, it is a function of NPC's to assist in the development of neighborhood development plans, which may include submitting recommendations regarding policy, assessing neighborhood needs, appointing a representative to the CDAC, reviewing program plans, monitoring Community Development programs, and recommending development and improvements within the council neighborhood boundaries. Final decisions with respect to such recommendations are made by the Battle Creek City Commission.

NPC's may review and update public input that has been gathered for the creation of the five-year Consolidated Plan as well as any subsequent public input that has a bearing on their neighborhood. These updates may take the form of an updated needs assessment, a list of recommendations, and/or a neighborhood plan. The updates will be provided to the CDAC, and the City Commission as well as included in the Annual Action Plan.

Access to Information and Records

As a part of the Consolidated Planning process, the City of Battle Creek will make available to citizens, public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other interested parties the following information:

- The total amount of assistance the City expects to receive (including grant funds and program income);
- The types of activities which may be undertaken with these funds;
- The estimated amount of funding which will be committed to activities benefitting low and moderate income persons; and
- The City's plans to minimize displacement of persons along with its plans to provide assistance to any persons who will be displaced including a description of the types and levels of assistance to be made available.

All relevant documents and records (e.g., Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Citizen Participation Plan, any Plan amendments, and performance report) are available during normal business hours in the Community Development Department, 10 N. Division Street, Room 117, Battle Creek, MI. This office is handicapped accessible. These documents are also

available on the City's website at www.battlecreekmi.gov. These documents and associated records are available to all citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties and provide useful information on the Consolidated Planning process as well as Battle Creek's use of funds over the past five years. A reasonable number of copies of these relevant documents will be provided to the public free of charge and within two working days of the request.

In addition, an executive summary of the Consolidated Plan is available on the Internet at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's home page (<http://www.hud.gov/>). The executive summary is located in the "Cities, Neighborhoods and Communities" section of this home page.

Public Hearings

The City of Battle Creek will hold at least four public hearings during each program year in order to obtain citizens' views, respond to proposals, address questions, and provide important program information.

One of the public hearings will be held in the Fall of each program year. The purpose of this hearing is to garner citizen input on the City of Battle Creek's annual performance report of CDBG and HOME activities.

A public hearing will also be held in the Winter of each program year. The purpose of this hearing is to solicit citizen input on Battle Creek's housing and community development needs and to provide suggestions to the City on activities to be undertaken. This public hearing will be held after the Consolidated Planning Workshop meetings have been completed, but prior to and outside of the formal 30 day comment period on the Consolidated/Annual Plan. This hearing will serve to solidify the input gathered and priorities agreed upon during the Consolidated Planning Workshop meetings.

Another public hearing will be held in the spring to obtain citizen comments on and to review the proposed activities and budget. The Proposed Budget and Projected Use of Funds will be presented during this public hearing.

Lastly, a public hearing will be held in March/April of each program year to receive citizen comments on the proposed Consolidated/Annual Plan. The public hearings for the budget and the proposed Consolidated/Annual Plan may be combined.

Together, these four public hearings and the various Consolidated Planning Workshop meetings will address housing and community development needs, development of proposed activities, and a review of program performance.

Notice of Public Hearings

At a minimum, notice of any public hearing on the Consolidated/Annual Plan, Citizen Participation Plan, substantial amendments to the Consolidated/Annual Plan or Citizen Participation Plan, and performance report will be published in a prominent newspaper advertisement and will appear not less than 14 days prior to any public hearing. This advertisement will clearly state the purpose of

the hearing, provide pertinent background information, provide the time of the hearing, and the location of the hearing. In addition, efforts will be made, that may include letters, press releases, public service announcements, and postings to notify sub-recipients and sub-agents, other service providers, religious organizations located in low and moderate income areas, the local media, target neighborhood residents, and residents of public and other assisted housing of upcoming public hearings. Also, written notice of upcoming public hearings will be mailed to any person or organization that contacts the Community Development Department requesting to be added to a mailing list.

All public hearings will be held in the City Commission Chambers, City Hall, Room 301, 10 North Division Street, Battle Creek, MI, during a regularly scheduled City Commission meeting. City Commission meetings are held on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. City Hall is centrally located for all potential and actual beneficiaries of these federal funds. The City of Battle Creek will provide necessary and reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials being considered in the meeting with seven (7) days notice to the City of Battle Creek. Individuals requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the City of Battle Creek by writing or calling the following: City of Battle Creek, Office of the City Clerk, 10 N. Division Street, Room 111, Battle Creek, MI, 49014, (269) 966-3348.

Consolidated Planning Workshop Meetings

During the years when the City prepares its five-year Consolidated Plan, it will conduct several Consolidated Planning Workshop meetings. The primary purpose of these meetings will be to gather information on the housing and community development needs of Battle Creek. These meetings help set the funding priorities for the five year plan, set the parameters for the Request for Proposals for agency grant applications (when applicable), guide advisory groups and the City Commission in the allocation process, and ultimately inspire the proposed activities to be funded with the federal funds.

These Consolidated Planning Workshop meetings will be held at a variety of times and places to enable the City to reach every potential and actual beneficiary of these federal funds. At a minimum, Consolidated Planning Workshop meetings will be held in the identified low and moderate income neighborhoods. In addition, other Consolidated Planning Workshop meetings may be held with agency personnel, public housing residents, disabled persons, non-English speaking persons, and other groups as needed.

Efforts will be made to hold these meetings in community centers, churches, schools, or any other setting that will be welcoming and comfortable for the anticipated attendees. Efforts will also be made to vary the meeting times from morning, afternoon, and evening hours to accommodate all interested persons.

Notice of Consolidated Planning Workshop Meetings

The City of Battle Creek will develop a “master list” of all Consolidated Planning Workshop meetings and will publicize the meetings through a variety of methods to reach the targeted populations. The methods may include, newspaper articles, radio announcements, AccessVision spots, flyers, announcements at public meetings/events, posting at public places (such as, grocery stores, salons, City Hall, churches, etc.), direct mailings, inserts in water bills, and other means

determined to be effective. Whenever possible, notice of the meetings will be at least 14 days prior to the meeting. Every effort will be made to ensure residents of the areas affected by these federal funds will be informed of the process and of any opportunities to participate in the process.

Publishing the Consolidated/Annual Plan

A summary of the Consolidated/Annual Action Plan will be published in the local newspaper at the beginning of the 30 day comment period. The summary will provide a clear description of the contents and purpose of the Plan along with other relevant background information which will be helpful in understanding the objectives of the Plan. The summary will also describe the locations where the complete Plan may be reviewed. Upon request, the City will prepare at no charge a reasonable number of copies of the Plan to citizens or groups within two business days.

Period for Citizen Comment

A formal comment period of 30 days will be provided for all Consolidated Plans, Annual Action Plans or substantial amendments to the Consolidated/Annual Plan or Citizen Participation Plan. A formal 15 day comment period will be provided for the annual performance report. In all cases, a summary of the Plan, performance report, or substantial amendment will be published at the outset of the formal comment period. This summary will clearly delineate the period during which comments are to be accepted, as well as the procedure for making comments.

Written comments received during the comment period along with oral comments made during public hearings will be considered. A summary of such comments made by citizens, public agencies, and any other interested parties will be attached to the relevant Plan, substantial amendment, or performance report. In cases where it is not possible to incorporate the comment within the Plan or substantial amendment, the comment will be included in the summary of comments along with an explanation of why it was not possible to incorporate the comment.

Substantial Amendments

A substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan is defined as either of the following:

1. A change in allocation between existing approved activities in excess of 10% of the annual program budget for all activities; or
2. The addition of an activity not included in the approved program. This does not include budget amendments which re-program funds between program years provided the 10% threshold is not crossed and the re-programming involves previously approved activities.

In the event of a substantial amendment to the Consolidated/Annual Plan or changes to the Citizen Participation Plan, public hearings will be held in the same manner as the Consolidated/Annual Plan process provided that only one hearing will be held in connection with a proposed substantial amendment or group of amendments.

Other Consultations

In addition to the public hearings, Consolidated Planning Workshop meetings, and formal comment procedures contained in this Plan, the City will maintain a system of regular consultations with a broad spectrum of citizens and organizations. This process will include Neighborhood Planning Councils (with particular emphasis on those councils representing predominantly low and moderate income neighborhoods); other public agencies (including the Battle Creek Housing Commission); sub-recipients/sub-agents; other service providers; elected and appointed officials; various advocacy groups; economic development organizations; civic organizations; and private interests such as lenders and realtors. These consultations are designed to ensure a continuous exchange of information and views on Battle Creek's housing and community development needs along with an assessment of the City's response to these needs.

Special Rules for COVID-19 Response

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) (Public Law 116-136) made available \$5 billion in supplemental Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for grants to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus (CDBG-CV grants). Additionally, the CARES Act provided CDBG grantees with flexibilities that made it easier to use CDBG-CV grants and fiscal years 2019 and 2020 CDBG Grants for coronavirus response and authorizes HUD to grant waivers and alternative requirements.

Pursuant to the provisions of the CARES Act, the City of Battle Creek may use an expedited citizen participation and public hearing process for drafting, proposing, and amending its consolidated plans. This expedited process applies to the use of CDBG-CV funds, amendments to the 2019-20 Annual Action Plan, and the drafting and submission of its 2020 Five Year Consolidated Plan.

Expedited procedures must include notice and reasonable opportunity to comment of no less than five (5) days. The five day period can run concurrently for comments on the action plan amendment and the amended citizen participation plan.

In person hearings are not required. The City of Battle Creek may meet public hearing requirements with virtual public hearings 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 City's certifications, timely responses from local officials to all citizen questions and issues, and public access to all questions and responses.

The CARES Act eliminates the 15 percent cap on the amount of grant funds that can be used for public service activities for CDBG-CV and fiscal year 2019 and 2020 CDBG Grants. The City waives the requirement to convene the CDAC related to the use of these funds for public service activities or the funding of non-city administered activities.

Anti-Displacement Policy

The City of Battle Creek has a policy of avoiding, to the extent feasible, the involuntary permanent displacement of persons as a result of Federally-assisted projects. No displacement is anticipated to result from current or projected community development or housing activities to be undertaken by the City. In the event conditions occur which trigger displacement as defined by applicable Federal regulations, the City will provide all advisory services and financial assistance in accordance with the Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 and Section 104(d) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987, as amended. The City will take steps to ensure its sub-recipients or sub-agents are aware of the necessity of avoiding displacement and that

they are also aware of their responsibilities should displacement occur in connection with any of the activities they administer.

Technical Assistance

The City will respond to all reasonable requests for technical assistance or information from applicants for funding, citizen organizations, non-profits, or other potential program beneficiaries. Organizations representing the interests of low and moderate income persons may receive assistance in developing proposals for funding through any of the programs covered by the Consolidated Plan by contacting the City's Community Development Department. The City will provide current or potential sub-recipients or sub-agents information on current and anticipated funding levels, selection criteria, and performance standards.

Complaints

All written complaints in reference to programs included in the Consolidated/Annual Plan will receive a written response from the City's Community Development Department. This response will occur within 15 days of receipt of the complaint. Copies of all written complaints and responses will be maintained in the City's files. Verbal complaints will receive action considered to be appropriate by the City. A written record of such complaints will be created at the discretion of the City. Written complaints may be addressed to: City of Battle Creek, Community Development Department, 10 N. Division Street, Room 117, Battle Creek, MI 49014.