

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

City of Warren Department of Community Development
418 Main Avenue SW, Warren Ohio 44481



INTRODUCTION

Public participation is a fundamental element of any successful housing and community development practice. In order to assemble useful and action-oriented plans that address the needs and goals of local businesses, civic organizations and residents, the Community Development Department has developed an open consultation program that includes direct and representative citizen input on an annual basis.

It is the intent of the City of Warren and the Community Development Department to encourage and facilitate the participation of Warren residents in the formulation of priorities, strategies, and funding allocations in the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan, substantial amendments to and performance reviews for the following programs funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Development (HUD):

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME)

The City of Warren and its Community Development Department are committed to maintaining and implementing this Citizen Participation Plan.

PARTICIPATION

This plan identifies strategies to obtain participation from those persons directly affected by the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan, to provide accurate information and timely notification of Community Development activities, to provide assistance to all citizens in accessing programs, to involve citizens during all stages of the planning process, and to respond to specific needs and complaints of citizens on an individual basis. The Community Development Department will take whatever actions are necessary to encourage the participation of all citizens, including minorities and non-English speaking persons, those persons with disabilities, and public and assisted housing residents.

DEFINITIONS

Annual Action Plan: this document updates the Consolidated Plan on an annual basis and allocates one year's funding (entitlement and program income) to specific projects and activities within the CDBG and HOME programs.

Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan: this document is submitted to HUD and serves as the planning document for the jurisdiction, as well as the application for funding for the CDBG and HOME programs. The document is developed in accordance with 24 CFR Part 91 and sets forth the priorities and strategies of all Community Development programs for a five-year planning period.

Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER): this document reports progress made in carrying out the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan. The Community Development Department prepares the report on an annual basis, in accordance with 24 CFR Part 91.

Public Hearing: a public meeting that has been publicly noticed in a local newspaper of general circulation, or notice in a fashion which otherwise follows local procedures for formal noticing of public hearings. Public hearings are required prior to the adoption of the Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plan, substantial amendments to any plan, and prior to the submission of the CAPER.

Substantial Amendment: an amendment to the Consolidated or Annual Action Plan which involves carrying out an activity not previously described, or a change in purpose, scope, location, or beneficiary of an activity.

PUBLIC NOTICE: ACTION AND CONSOLIDATED PLANS, SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENTS

Comments and suggestions from the public are welcome at all times. In order to facilitate public interaction, the Community Development Department will conduct at least two public meetings at different stages of the program year; one held prior to the adoption of the Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plan, and when making substantial amendments to either plan.

The Community Development Department will notify the public of all hearings by publishing notice in at least one paper of general circulation at least two weeks prior to the first public hearing. All public hearings will be held in a time and location convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries and with accommodations for those persons with disabilities. The notice will:

- Describe the activity and amount of available funds;
- State where and how further information may be obtained;
- State time and date of the public hearing(s);
- Allow at least 30 days for comments prior to adoption of the plan or implementation of the substantial amendment; and
- State how the public may submit comments.

All comments received in writing or at public hearings will be considered when preparing the final Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, or substantial amendment. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons theretofore, will be attached to the document. Written comments will receive a written response within 15 working days, where practicable.

The Community Development Department will be permitted to call for public hearings within a 24-hour published notice concerning program amendments and special grant considerations.

PUBLIC NOTICE: CAPER

At least one public hearing will be held prior to the submission of the CAPER. The Community Development Department will notify the public by publishing a notice in at least one paper of general circulation at least two weeks prior to the hearing. The notice will:

- Describe the activity and amount of available funds;
- State where and how further information may be obtained;
- State time and date of the public hearing(s);
- Allow at least 15 days for comments prior to submission of report to HUD; and
- State how the public may submit comments.

All comments received in writing or at public hearings will be considered when preparing the final CAPER. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons theretofore, will be attached to the document. Written comments will receive a written response within 15 working days, where practicable.

The Community Development Department will be permitted to call for public hearings within a 24-hour published notice concerning program amendments and special grant considerations.

NOTIFICATION TO INTERESTED PARTIES

Citizen participation will be conducted in an open manner for all interested persons, and the Community Development Department will endeavor to notify all interested parties of scheduled public hearings. A list of those persons and community groups interested in receiving such notices will be maintained by the department.

The Community Development Department will encourage the participation of low- and moderate-income individuals, minority groups, residents of significantly involved areas, elderly and handicapped residents, the business community, and civic groups who express an interest in the program. Representation by members of these groups will be established on all community-wide citizen advisory committees and neighborhood advisory committees. Involved citizens will be provided with adequate and timely information, so to enable them to be involved at various stages of the program(s).

ACCESS TO RECORDS AND SERVICES

Access to records: the Community Development Department will provide access to public records related to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and CAPER, and the jurisdiction's use of assistance under the programs covered by these plans during the preceding five years through written or verbal request. The department may charge a fee for copies to recover the cost of materials and operations. Appointments will be required to view departmental records, and in most cases, staff member(s) are required to be present during inspection of those records.

Access to program information: public access will be provided to all program information kept by the department, including: the total amount of CDBG and HOME funds available to the City; the range of activities undertaken with these funds, and those activities previously funded within the community; processes to be followed in the completion and approval of local applications, as well as the notification of meetings and hearings; the role of citizens in the program(s); and other important program requirements.

Program implementation: residents fulfill an active role in implementing all programs administered through the Community Development Department. A community-wide Citizen Review Committee of 15 appointed members functions on a year-round basis, guiding the decision-making process for Community Development programs, and includes attendance at public meetings and the review of program proposals for submission to City Council.

Translation and interpretation services: if non-English speaking or hearing-impaired residents request assistance to participate in a public hearing, the Community Development Department will retain assistance to allow those residents to participate. Assistance will consist of the engagement of appropriate interpreter services. However, if such assistance presents an undue financial or administrative burden, the department will consider assistance mandatory only in those instances where significant numbers of non-English speaking or hearing-impaired residents are expected to be in attendance.

Technical assistance: to facilitate citizen participation, technical assistance will be an integral part of all Community Development programs. The department will utilize various types of technical assistance, incorporating personal contact, community meetings, written material and news media attention. Provision of assistance will be determined based upon the following: staff availability, the relationship of the request to priorities adopted in the Consolidated Plan, and other available resources. At minimum, the department will advise community members on all technical questions, such as determining the eligibility of a request.

Grievances: all complaints will be answered in a timely and responsive manner. Any person who believes himself or herself aggrieved may submit a formal complaint in writing to:

Community Development Department
418 Main Avenue SW, Suite 201
Warren, Ohio 44481

If requested, the Community Development Department will assist the resident in the preparation of the written formal complaint; this complaint will then be submitted to the Community Development Director. If the Director is unable to resolve this complaint, the complainant may then request a hearing with the City Safety-Service Director.

CITIZENS REVIEW COMMITTEE

All funding is determined by citizen-solicited projects that are then reviewed by a Citizens Review Committee. A selection process was designed to ensure a broad base of citizen participation with a particular emphasis on the representation of low- to moderate-income individuals. The Citizens Review Committee is selected as follows:

Mayor of Warren: six appointments	6	VOTING MEMBERS
City Council CD Committee and two appointments each	9	VOTING MEMBERS
CD Director and program staff (non-voting members)	0	VOTING MEMBERS
	15	VOTING MEMBERS

The Citizens Review Committee recommends to City Council a priority list of all projects reviewed for funding through the CDBG and HOME programs. Council then adopts those recommendations, customarily without modification. This process affords every citizen an opportunity to participate in the allocation of program budgets, and has kept the program current and directly responsive to community needs.