

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

For

Community Development, Housing, Homelessness and Special Needs

City of Springfield, Massachusetts

May 2020

Table of Contents

Statement of Citizen Participation Policy	Page 4
Lead Agency and Administering Agencies	Page 5
Development of the Consolidated Plan	Page 5
Citizen Participation Procedures	Page 5
Public Notification of Hearings and Technical Assistance	Page 7
Criteria for an Amendment	Page 8
Definition of Substantial Amendment	Page 8
Anti-Displacement Plan	Page 9
Complaints	Page 9

The City of Springfield receives four different grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The grants are the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA). The basic goal of these grants are to provide decent housing create suitable living environments and expand economic opportunities for all residents in the community.

Due to the Major Disaster Declaration FEMA-4496-DR-MA for the COVID-19 Pandemic the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) (Public Law 116-136) has also made available supplemental funding, flexibilities, and waivers. HUD has allocated supplemental HOPWA, ESG, and CDBG funding in response to COVID-19. The supplemental awards are to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus. The CARES Act also provides grantees with flexibilities for 2019 and 2020 Grant Amendments for coronavirus response. The flexibilities allowed for this funding are outlined in the Citizen Participation Procedures section of this document.

Every five years, the City prepares a five-year consolidated community development plan that outlines Springfield program funding priorities for CDBG, HOME, ESG and HOPWA. On a yearly basis, the department reevaluates the five-year plan, makes modifications as needed, and develops a one-year action plan to address specific priorities identified in the community development plan. At the completion of the fiscal year, Springfield outlines its accomplishments from the prior year in an annual performance report.

As part of the Consolidated Plan Process, the City of Springfield is responsible for Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing and completing an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (AI). The AI will outline strategies the City will take to overcome historic patterns of segregation, combat housing discrimination and foster inclusive communities.

Pursuant to the citizen participation requirements of 24 CFR Section 91.105, the City of Springfield's Development Services Division sets forth the following Citizen Participation Plan as it relates to the consolidated planning process for housing and community development programs funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Citizen Participation Plan presents the City's plan for providing and encouraging all citizens, particularly low- and moderate- income citizens, to participate in the development and adoption of five components of the consolidated planning process:

- 1.) The Citizen Participation Plan
- 2.) The Five-Year Consolidated Plan
- 3.) The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing
- 4.) The Annual Action Plan
- 5.) The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)

The approved Citizen Participation Plan will be kept on file by the OCD, and online at: <http://www3.springfield-ma.gov/planning/index.php?id=deptcd>. The plan shall be effective until it is amended or otherwise replaced.

Statement of Citizen Participation Policy

Understanding the importance of citizen input, it is the City of Springfield's goal to encourage citizen participation in the development of its five-year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans, particularly from those citizens most affected by Community Development Programs. This Citizen Participation Plan establishes the policies and procedures that the City of Springfield will follow to ensure that participation is as inclusive as possible.

The City of Springfield intends that its Community Development Program have the support of the largest possible number of people in the community. Emphasis is placed on opportunities for participation by low/moderate income persons and the organizations and agencies that serve low/moderate income persons through the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA).

The City will implement the Plan that is designed to encourage citizens to participate in the development of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Performance Report (CAPER), and all substantial amendments. As described within this section, the City will encourage the input of low- and moderate-income residents by (1) outreach to the public through mailings, (2) conducting a series of public hearings at various stages of the planning process, (3) creating a system to accept and respond to written comments from the citizens.

The City encourages participation by low and moderate-income persons, particularly those living in slum and blight areas and in areas where CPD funds are proposed to be used, and by residents of predominantly low and moderate-income neighborhoods. The City will also take appropriate actions to encourage the participation of all its citizens, including minorities and non-English speaking persons, as well as persons with disabilities.

HUD defines low and moderate-income persons or households as those whose gross annual income is less than 80% of the area median income. HUD publishes those income limits annually. For the current annual income limits, citizens may contact OCD.

The plan will encourage comment and participation by minority and non-English speakers, and, when feasible, translation services will be available upon request by contacting the OCD, cbuono@springfieldcityhall.com. The Citizen Participation Plan shall be provided in a format accessible to persons with disabilities upon request. Such formats may include, but are not limited to providing oral, Braille, electronic or large print versions of the plan to those visually impaired and delivering copies to those who are homebound.

The City encourages the participation of local and regional institutions, the Continuum of Care and other organizations (including businesses, developers, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community-based and faith-based organizations) in the process of developing, amending, and implementing the Consolidated Plan. The City encourages, in consultation and cooperation with public housing agencies, the participation of residents of any public and assisted housing developments located within the City, in the process of developing and implementing the Consolidated Plan, along with other low-income residents of targeted Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSAs) in which the developments are located.

Lead Agency and Administering Agencies

The Development Services Division is the lead agency responsible for administering the programs covered by the Consolidated Plan, and the Annual Action Plan or any other HUD related documents. This Division is made up of the following departments: Office of Community Development (OCD), Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED), Office of Housing, Code Enforcement and Neighborhood Services.

The Division administers funds provided to other City Departments to carry out the plan, which include Parks and Recreation, Public Works, Elder Affairs, and Health and Human Services. The Division also administers grant funding to various agencies and nonprofit organizations to carry out the plan.

The OCD and the Office of Housing are the lead department responsible for the Consolidated Planning process and the administration of the CDBG, HOME, ESG and HOPWA. All of these funds are collectively known as Community Planning and Development (CPD) funds.

Development of the Consolidated Plan

Before the City adopts a Consolidated plan, the City will make available to citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties, information that includes, but not limited to:

- The amount of assistance the City expects to receive in its annual allocation, other grant funds, and program income
- The range of activities that are proposed to be undertaken
- The estimated amount of funds that will benefit persons of low- and moderate- income
- Plans to minimize displacement of persons, and to assist any persons who are displaced, including specifying the types and levels of assistance the City will make available to persons displaced even if the City expects no displacement to occur.

Summary of the Consolidated Plan Development Process

- Data Collection, Outreach, and Consultation
- Con Plan Draft process
- Public Review
- Staff editing plan; finalizing document for HUD

- Submission of plan to HUD for review and acceptance

Citizen Participation Procedures

Due to the Major Disaster Declaration FEMA-4496-DR-MA for the COVID-19 Pandemic all Public Hearings and availability of Plans will be virtual and on-line when necessary.

Public Hearings

In accordance with the regulations, the minimum annual number of public hearings at which citizens may express their views concerning the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan Documents shall be two (2) public hearings. These public hearings shall occur during the public input period and the DRAFT review and comment period.

One (1) public hearing shall be held for citizens to express their views concerning the yearly accomplishments detailed in the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report.

Additional public hearings and comment periods will be held when substantial amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, or Annual Action Plan become necessary as described later in this document. The City, at its discretion, may conduct additional outreach, public meetings or public hearings as necessary to foster citizen access and engagement.

Verbal and Written Comments

The draft Citizen Participation Plan shall be made available for public review for a 30-day period prior to the adoption of the plan, and may be done concurrently with the public review and comment process for the Five-Year Consolidated Plan.

The City's Draft Consolidated Plan, Draft Annual Action Plan and any substantial amendments will be made available for public review and comment for thirty (30) days prior to submission to HUD.

The Performance Report, CAPER, will be made available for public review and comment for fifteen (15) days prior to submission to HUD. All of these documents will be available for review at multiple locations, including the Office of Community Development's website, to increase the likelihood of citizen participation. Those locations are as follows:

- Office of Community Development, 1600 East Columbus Avenue;
- Office of Housing, 1600 East Columbus Avenue;
- Office of Planning and Economic Development, 70 Tapley Street;
- Office of Neighborhood Services, 70 Tapley Street
- City's website <http://www3.springfield-ma.gov/planning/index.php?id=deptcd>

Written comments will be accepted by OCD during the public review period by emailing cbuono@springfieldcityhall.com or mailing comments to OCD 1600 East Columbus Avenue Springfield, MA 01103.

A summary of all written comments and those received during the public hearing as well as the City's responses will be attached to the any of the documents prior to submission to HUD.

To address the needs of residents with disabilities and language barriers, the City publishes materials in English and makes them available in Spanish if requested, holds meeting in accessible buildings and will utilize a translator for its Spanish residents during the public hearings. Upon request, within a reasonable timeframe, the draft and approved plans will be made available in a manner accessible to other non-English speakers, or those with disabilities.

[The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act \(CARES Act\) \(Public Law 116-136\)](#)
Substantial Amendments to Action Plans 2019 and 2020 in response to COVID-19:

The substantial amendments will be published as follows:

- Publication on the City's website at www.springfield-ma.gov/planning/index.php?id=community-development
- Notice of publication on the City's social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter.
- A comment period for the required five days
- A virtual Facebook live hearing during the five-day comment period at <https://www.facebook.com/CityofSpringfieldMA>. The public throughout the duration of the hearing can submit comments at the Facebook site. Spanish-speaking staff will be present and available for translation at the hearing. Accommodations for disabilities will be provided upon request.
- Additional submission of comments will be allowed as follows:
 - Written comments mailed to the Office of Community Development, 1600 East Columbus Avenue, Springfield, MA 01103
 - Via email to cbuono@springfieldcityhall.com

By telephone contacting 311, the City of Springfield's main source of government information and non-emergency services, or the Office of Community Development at (413) 787-6082.

Public Notification of Hearings and Technical Assistance

To ensure that the City provides for maximum citizen participation, the City will always provide sufficient information to permit informed comment, and conduct hearings at times and locations convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries. In order to accomplish a robust citizen participation process, the City will:

1. Notify, via direct mail, an extensive mailing list of all organizations and interested parties of the purpose, date, time and place of hearings, and inviting them to attend. Organizations are encouraged to invite persons that they serve.
2. Notify, via direct mail, an extensive mailing list of organizations and interested parties notifying them of the period of review for the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plans, any substantial amendments and Performance Reports. The mailing will include a listing of locations where these documents will be made available for review.
3. Utilize the City of Springfield Office of Communications within the Mayor's Office to post notices on the Cities website, Facebook and Twitter Accounts. The notices will include the dates of public hearings, periods of review, summaries of information, etc.
4. A notice, in English and Spanish, will be placed in the local newspaper for DRAFT review and comment period meetings.
5. Hearings will be conducted within CDBG target areas; where the majority of the funds are proposed, especially in the designated NRSA neighborhoods.
6. The City will also increase its efforts to maintain communication with directors of programs to notify them of pertinent dates and presenting them with information.
7. The documents, mailings and notices will be posted on the City of Springfield's Office of Community Development's website <http://www3.springfield-ma.gov/planning/index.php?id=deptcd>
8. All documents will be made available to the public at no charge in English. Upon request, when feasible, and within a reasonable timeframe, the draft and approved plan will be made available in a manner accessible to other non-English speakers, or those with disabilities.

The City of Springfield will provide technical assistance to any organizations who have received funding through our programs and those that request such assistance in developing proposals for funding under any programs covered by the Consolidated Plan, either upon their request, or the City of Springfield may request it. The level and type of technical assistance shall be determined by the City. During the RFP process, technical assistance is not provided; however, the subrecipient can put any questions regarding the RFP in writing and they will be answered and put on the website. The OCD will not provide any information that will give one applicant an advantage over another.

Criteria for an Amendment

The City shall amend its approved Consolidated Plan whenever it makes one of the following decisions:

- To make a change in its allocation priorities or a change in the method of distribution of funds;
- To carry out an activity, using funds from any program covered by the Consolidated Plan (including program income), not previously described in the Annual Action Plan; or
- To change the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity

Once the final Consolidated Plan has been submitted by the City of Springfield for HUD's approval, significant changes, or "Substantial Amendments" to the accepted Plan will require citizen notification and comment.

Definition of Substantial Amendment

The criteria defining a Substantial Amendment will include:

- Activities, which will require new goals/objectives for the current fiscal year;
- An activity that will require a funding change that exceeds 50% of the approved allocation for that activity.

If any one of these actions occurs within the fiscal year of the Approved Plan, Community Development officials will seek public comment for the proposed change. A notice published in English and Spanish will be placed in the local newspaper summarizing the significant change. The City of Springfield will make available at the aforementioned locations information describing the details of the change to the Consolidated Plan or Current Action Plan. Public input will be solicited for a period of 30-days and reviewed at the conclusion of that time. The proposed change accompanied by a summary of the public comments and any comments not accepted and the reasons therefore will be attached to the Substantial Amendment and submitted to HUD as described below.

All other changes to the Consolidated Plan documents that do not meet the criteria for a Substantial Amendment defined above will be reviewed and approved by City staff and will not be subject to public comments. These changes will be fully documented and must be signed by the official representative of the jurisdiction authorized to take such action.

The City may submit a copy of each non-substantial amendment to HUD as it occurs, or at the end of the program year. The official representative of the jurisdiction authorized to take such action must sign letters transmitting copies of amendments.

Anti-Displacement Plan

The City is sensitive to displacement and the effects resulting therefrom. Therefore, prior to commencement of a project funded through the City that either potentially, or most certainly, displaces a person or persons, top City officials will consider the overall public benefit(s) of the project and discuss potential alternatives to determine whether the project should move forward. Authorization will be given only when there is significant public benefit that outweighs the displacement. In the event that displacement will occur, the City will provide the necessary assistance to affected persons to minimize the trauma of displacement. Assistance would include moving expenses, rental assistance, assistance with identifying other housing, etc. The actual type and level of assistance will be made on a case-by-case basis, but will be sufficient to ease the transition for the displaced persons. All assistance shall comply with applicable sections of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (URA).

Complaints

A complaint regarding the Consolidated Planning process, Consolidated Plan amendments, and applicable programs must be submitted in writing. A written response will be made to written complaints within 15 working days, acknowledging the letter and identifying a plan of action, if necessary.

The City will accept written complaints provided they specify:

- The description of the objection, and supporting facts and data; and
- Provide name, address, telephone number of the person submitting the complaint, and a date of complaint.

All written complaints shall be submitted to cbuono@springfieldcityhall.com

APPROVED:

Domenic J. Sarno
Mayor

Date Signed: _____