

CITY OF AMARILLO

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

GUIDE FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION



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CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

The CDBG, HOME and ESG programs involved in the Consolidated Plan are intended to help improve the living environment of low and very low income neighborhoods and those experiencing slum and blight. The ultimate goals are to "extend and strengthen partnerships among all levels of government, for profit and non-profit organizations to enable them to provide decent housing, establish and maintain a suitable living environment, and expand economic opportunities" for citizens of Amarillo, especially those with low and very low incomes. To best do this, it is important to know what the individuals affected by the CDBG, HOME and ESG activities think about the programs. Ideas and suggestions from citizens are important and worthwhile, and without them the programs will be less than successful. Citizen involvement is a partnership between the City of Amarillo and the residents of the neighborhoods involved in the programs. In addition, this collaborative effort extends to the private sector and non-profit organizations who have resources and programs to achieve the consolidated planning strategies. It is the responsibility of the City to provide open access and opportunities for participation so that any citizen or group of citizens may express themselves about the consolidated planning process. Importantly, it is the responsibility of citizens to participate and to become involved. Otherwise any citizen participation process is ineffective.

Within the federal guidelines, the activities to be undertaken are ultimately determined by the Amarillo City Commission. To make wise decisions about how to use federal money, the City Commission needs timely and adequate information from Amarillo citizens about local concerns, problems and needs. It is the policy of the Amarillo City Commission to encourage maximum citizen participation as a means to improve the responsiveness of the CDBG, HOME, and ESG programs to community needs.

This Community Development Guide for Citizen Participation is adopted to help citizens understand how and when to most effectively contribute to the consolidated planning process. There are three fundamental stages in the process in which citizens may contribute to discussion, priority settings, and decision making. These stages are planning and development, implementation, and assessment.

The citizen participation process has the following basic goals:

1. Encourage citizens to participate in local government.
2. Provide citizens, especially those of low and very low income, opportunities to actively collaborate in the planning, development and assessment of the consolidated planning process.
3. Ensure all aspects of the consolidated planning process are conducted in an open manner.
4. Provide City officials with information regarding citizens' perceptions and priorities.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The City Commission established the Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) in 1975. The CDAC composed of eleven (11) citizens, is responsible for overseeing the CDBG, HOME and ESG programs. The City Commission appoints two citizens from each of four (4)

geographic areas, plus two members selected at large but residing in the identified Community Development Target Area. A chairperson is selected at large. The members and chairperson serve staggered two year terms which begin the first of January. The geographic areas from which members are selected are identified on Map A. Efforts are made to appoint citizens who will be representative of the persons most affected by CDBG, HOME and ESG activities.

The CDAC meets, in regular session, the second week of each month when necessary at the Downtown Library, 413 E. 4th Street, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The Downtown Library is accessible to persons with disabilities. Notices of the monthly meetings are posted a minimum of 72 hours prior to the meeting. Notices are placed in the front window of City Hall and posted on the City's website.

If an individual, group or organization has a particular request or concern to bring before the CDAC, a written request for time on the agenda should be submitted to the Community Development Department Administrator no later than three weeks (15 working days) before the scheduled meeting. Citizens are encouraged to appear before the CDAC to discuss a concern or request. The recommendations developed by the CDAC regarding the CDBG, HOME, and ESG programs are submitted to the City Commission for final approval. Citizens interested in items submitted to the City Commission are encouraged to attend the meetings and express their views and comments.

The roles and responsibilities of the CDAC are as follows:

1. The CDAC acts in an advisory role to the City Commission on policy decisions relating to the consolidated planning process for the CDBG, HOME and ESG programs.
2. The CDAC coordinates citizen participation.
3. The CDAC reviews and makes recommendations to the City Commission on allocations of CDBG, HOME and ESG funding.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Planning and development is the phase in which involvement by citizens is most crucial and effective. Citizens may directly contribute to the development of the CDBG, HOME and ESG programs. Expressions of citizens' priorities are often the deciding influence when statistics and technical evaluation identify several strategies and program alternatives.

The planning process for developing the five year Consolidated Plan is coordinated by the Community Development Department. The five year plan promotes the concept that planning and programming can be accomplished through a unified and comprehensive framework which opens partnership opportunities for collaboration and collective problem-solving. Consensus building is critical in establishing workable priorities and strategies which must be implemented by a variety of public and private resources. Successful implementation of strategies will occur only if there is broad based support and a sense of involvement on the part of all of the participants.

During the consultation phase of the Consolidated Plan, a series of working groups will be established to address primary elements of the Plan. Composition of the working groups will be targeted toward a variety of organizations, individuals as consumers or participants, community and business leaders, private investors, and neighborhood residents. The working groups participants will be invited to

contribute to the development of their area of experience or expertise. At the same time, boarder participation will be encouraged from the general population by advertising the date of meetings and the purpose of the working group. The Community Development Department will provide staff support to the working groups. Members of the CDAC will assist in facilitating the meetings. At a minimum the working groups will focus on the following areas of study:

- Homelessness
- Special needs populations, such as youth, the elderly, frail elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with mental illness or retardation, persons living with AIDS, and persons suffering from substance abuse
- Renters and landlords
- Homeowners and homebuyers
- Anti-poverty strategies
- Neighborhood and development services

In addition to working groups, citizens will be involved in the planning process through a series of surveys and questionnaires. Random telephone surveys may be used to help establish an overall community consensus for community development needs and priorities. Such random surveys help to eliminate bias which may result from open community meetings in which special interest groups may lobby for special programs.

The needs of homeless persons and special populations will be assessed through questionnaires targeted at service providers and consumers. Annually, a "point-in-time" survey will be made at all of the homeless shelter populations. A special effort will be made to gather information regarding the numbers of unsheltered homeless persons and their special needs. The City participates as an active member of the Amarillo Coalition for the Homeless which consists of over 45 service providers as well as homeless individuals. The Coalition will be invited to consult on the needs, the development of strategies and the implementation effective programs designed to transition homeless individuals and families to self-sufficiency.

The results of the data collection, working group consensus, and surveys will be assimilated into a proposed Consolidated Plan and presented for public comment and review. The CDAC will conduct at least one public meeting to allow citizens the opportunity to comment on the entire plan. At this public meeting, recommendations for strategies and priorities will be established. These five year strategies and priorities will be the basis for decisions made to fund projects each year.

Annually, the City of Amarillo prepares an Annual Action Plan (AAP) which identifies how CDBG, HOME, and ESG funds will be allocated to projects. The development of the annual plan generally coincides with the preparation of the City's Budget. The annual planning process generally begins in the winter and is concluded by mid July. The Consolidated Plan or the AAP must be submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development by mid August of each year.

The CDAC has the initial responsibility for developing the annual program. Within funding limitations, the CDAC must decide which activities will best meet the priority strategies and contribute to the revitalization of Amarillo's declining neighborhoods. Development of the AAP is discussed at community meetings. The number of the meetings to be held is determined each year and advertised as part of the development process. The meetings are held either at neighborhood centers or at the Downtown Library

which is centrally located to neighborhoods in which concentrations of CDBG, HOME and ESG activities are being carried on or may be proposed. All meetings are held in buildings accessible to persons with disabilities.

Taking into consideration the information and recommendations from the working groups, surveys and project requests, the CDAC conducts a Public Hearing to recommend adoption of the Consolidated Plan and/or the AAP. This hearing is the culmination the planning process. A Notice of Public Hearing is posted at City Hall and in City's website 72 hours prior to the hearing. Following the action by the CDAC, the proposed Consolidated Plan and AAP are made available for a public comment period. Copies are placed at the Reference Desks at the Amarillo Public Libraries and in the Community Development office, Room 104 of City Hall for review by interested citizens. Documents will be available on the Internet through the City's web page at www.amarillo.gov.

At the conclusion of the public comment period, the Consolidated Plan and/or AAP is considered in a final Public Hearing conducted by the Amarillo City Commission. The purpose of the public hearing is to consider the recommendations adopted by the CDAC and all comments received during the comment period. Citizens are given a final opportunity to comment on the Consolidated Plan and/or AAP including those activities or projects not recommended for funding.

IMPLEMENTATION

It is difficult to develop a mechanism for direct citizen involvement in the implementation of the CDBG, HOME and ESG programs. The majority of projects funded are of the type which do not lend themselves to citizen involvement. Projects such as street and park improvements and construction projects have predetermined implementation steps that are not affected by citizen involvement. Although the level of participation in the implementation phase cannot be as direct as in the planning phase, efforts are made to provide the opportunity for citizen input in as many programs as possible.

The major vehicle for participation during the implementation phase is through the CDAC. During CDAC meetings, the status of certain activities may be reviewed. Any individual, group or organization which desires to comment on the implementation of an activity may do so at the CDAC meeting. By following the City of Amarillo boards and commissions instructions and request to speak whenever feasible, the residents of neighborhoods affected by a project will be consulted in the project's implementation. Activities which might be subject to citizen involvement are the location of a community center or day care center; areas needing special code enforcement activities; or the development of eligibility requirements for a new program.

Special outreach and marketing will be used to maximize the participation of Amarillo's residents in the CDBG, HOME and ESG funded projects. The availability of such programs as housing rehabilitation assistance, transitional housing for homeless persons, and public service projects, such as subsidized child care, will be advertised and targeted to lower income neighborhoods. These outreach efforts will result in successful and timely implementation of projects.

ASSESSMENT

The final phase of citizen participation is the assessment of performance. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation procedures are established to ensure projects meet national goals and are effectively addressing the Consolidated Plan priority strategies. In assessing the effect a project has on neighborhood conditions, comments from neighborhood residents are an important contribution. Citizens are encouraged to attend CDAC meetings and express their ideas or concerns about activities. The CDAC is charged with monitoring the funded activities to help ensure appropriate and timely performance. Those

residents who attend the CDAC meetings to discuss project performance provide the CDAC representatives with valuable information. If at any time a project is not achieving the stated goals and strategies, the CDAC has the prerogative to recommend program changes.

Annually, the City reports performance to HUD. The reporting process is an extensive evaluation of the status of approved projects and the accomplishments towards meeting priority strategies of the consolidated plan. A Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) is submitted by December 30th of each year. Prior to submission, this report will be available for a 15 day public comment. Copies of the report will be placed at the Reference Desks at the Amarillo Public Libraries and in the Community Development office. A notice of availability will be published in the Amarillo Globe News. A copy will be available on the web page at www.amarillo.gov/?page_id=119.

At the conclusion of the 15 day comment period the annual report will be discussed in a public hearing before the CDAC. The public hearing will be conducted in the evening beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Downtown Library. The purpose of the public hearing is to give citizens the opportunity to comment on the performance or effectiveness of the CDBG, HOME or ESG programs. A summary of comments submitted in writing or made at the public hearing will be included with the submission of the report to HUD.

SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES

Occasionally, amendments or changes may be needed to the Consolidated Plan. The City will give citizens the opportunity to participate in the planning and development of any substantial change in five (5) year strategies or priorities and annual projects. The CDAC will be responsible for soliciting views and comments from affected or interested persons before developing a recommendation regarding the proposed change.

The City has adopted a local criteria for what will constitute a substantial change to the Consolidated Plan and to the AAP. The changes described below will be subject to the citizen participation process as described in this guide:

1. A decision to change the amount of funding over \$25,000 for an existing project;
2. Any change in priority strategies which may affect the activities to be funded from CDBG, HOME, or ESG funds;
3. Any new activity proposed for CDBG, HOME, or ESG funding;
4. Any revision in an approved activity which results in a change from one eligible activity to another, or a change in the location, scope or beneficiaries of the activity.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Before individuals, groups, organizations or agencies can become involved in any phase of the consolidated planning process adequate information must be made available. It is the responsibility of the City to inform citizens of program requirements, goals and strategies, and major events related to the consolidated planning process, the CDBG, HOME and ESG programs. The Community Development Department is primarily responsible for this public information. All information regarding program requirements, project files and other records related to Amarillo's use of assistance under the programs are available in the office of the Community Development. The federal regulations establish a five (5) year minimum requirement for information retention. Any person wishing to inspect or review any of this information should visit the Community Development office. Confidential information related to

beneficiaries receiving CDBG, HOME or ESG assistance is subject to the protections afforded under the Privacy Act.

The residents of Amarillo are informed of all meetings and hearings held on any phase of the consolidated plan process. Every effort is made to reach people who may be most affected by ongoing or proposed projects to encourage their involvement in the decision-making process. The agendas are posted out front at City Hall and posted on the City's website 72 hours prior to meeting.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The goal of involving citizens in the many phases of the consolidated planning process must be supported by providing citizens with adequate knowledge and information about the CDBG, HOME and ESG programs. Without technical assistance, citizens may not be adequately prepared to participate in or benefit from the programs.

Appropriate assistance is provided by the Community Development Department to enable citizens, organizations, or groups of low and very low income persons to participate in the planning, implementation and assessment of the CDBG, HOME and ESG programs. The Community Development staff provides assistance in developing proposals, identifying needs, collecting data, or estimating project costs. Technical assistance may also involve developing strategies for specific proposals or determining priorities. Technical assistance is available on an individual basis upon request or may be provided through workshops held periodically during the year. At a minimum, the Community Development Department provides the following information:

- A. Amount of CDBG, HOME and ESG funds expected to be available for projects.
- B. Range of activities which may be funded.
- C. Kind and location of activities previously approved.
- D. Consolidated planning process and schedule.
- E. Role of citizens.
- F. Summary of other program requirements.

TRANSLATION SERVICES

The Community Development Department encourages participation from all Amarillo residents. To reach the maximum number of people, special efforts may be necessary to provide translation services to non-English speaking citizens attending public meetings. The hearing-impaired resident may also need special translation assistance.

Public hearing notices instruct those persons who need translation services to contact the Community Development Department. Upon request, translators for non-English speaking and/or hearing-impaired persons will be provided. The Community Development Department has a standing contract with the Panhandle Council for the Deaf to provide translators with a minimum 24 hour notice. The Community Development staff provides translation services for Spanish speaking persons who contact the office.

Those residents who wish to attend the monthly CDAC meetings or Community Planning meetings may also request translator services by giving the Community Development office at least two business days notice. Copies of the Consolidated Plan and other documents will be made available in large print or on DVD upon request.

COMPLAINTS

Complaints or concerns regarding the CDBG, HOME or ESG programs should primarily be directed to

the Community Development Department Administrator. However, nothing precludes a person from expressing a concern or complaint to the Assistant City Manager, the City Manager, the Amarillo City Commission, or the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Citizens may file an oral or written complaint with the City of Amarillo. The Community Development staff will record an oral complaint on special citizen complaint forms to be retained in the official files. The staff will note the name and address of complainant, the nature of the concern, the initial response given, any follow-up response, and if appropriate, any referral of the complaint to other departments or agencies. The Community Development Department will respond to written complaints within 30 days of receipt. The complaint and response will be documented in the Community Development Department citizen comments files and reported to Department of Housing and Urban Development as part of the annual reporting process.

Major concerns or problems are best expressed in writing. This helps prevent any misinterpretation of the concern or the facts. Therefore, citizens are urged to address their concerns in writing to:

Community Development Department Administrator
City of Amarillo
P.O. Box 1971
Amarillo, TX 79105-1971

Telephone: (806) 378-3023
Fax: (806) 378-9389
email: james.allen@amarillo.gov

Complaints may be directed to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Department of Housing and Urban Development, Region VI
801 Cherry Street, Unit #45, Suite 2500
Fort Worth, TX 76102

Telephone: (817) 978-9000
Fax: (817) 978-9289
Fax Contact: (817) 978-9252
TTY Number: (817) 978-9273

email: swpublicinformationofficer@hud.gov.

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