

CITY OF NEW BEDFORD CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

Adopted April, 2010

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of the New Bedford Community Development Citizen Participation Plan is to provide a written description of the process by which the citizens of New Bedford, especially those living in low and moderate-income neighborhoods will be encouraged to participate and provide input in the development of the consolidated submission for Community Planning and Development program funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for which the City of New Bedford is currently entitled.

The City of New Bedford receives three entitlement grants from the Federal Government to help address the City's housing, economic, and community development needs. The three grant programs are described below:

- 1. Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG):** Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (PL 93-383) created the CDBG program. It was re-authorized in 1990 as part of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act. The primary objective of the CDBG program is to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and by expanding economic development opportunities for persons of low and moderate income.
- 2. HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME):** HOME was introduced in the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 and provides funding for housing rehabilitation, new housing construction, acquisition of affordable housing, and tenant-based rental assistance.
- 3. Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG):** The ESG program is part of the homeless programs created by the McKinney Act. ESG has four primary objectives: (1) to improve the quality of existing emergency shelters for the homeless; (2) to provide additional emergency shelters; (3) to help meet the cost of operating emergency shelters; and (4) to provide certain essential social services to homeless individuals. The program is also intended to help reduce the number of people at risk of becoming homeless.

The Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) is designated by the City of New Bedford as the single point of contact with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and lead agency for the grant administration of the CDBG, HOME, and ESG programs.

PLANNING ACTIVITIES SUBJECT TO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

ACTIVITY 1: FIVE-YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN. The City of New Bedford's Consolidated Plan is developed through a collaborative process whereby the community establishes a unified vision for New Bedford's community development actions. Citizen participation is a critical part of the Consolidated Plan, including developing and amending the plan as well as reporting on program performance. Consultations, public hearings, citizen surveys and opportunities to provide written comment are all a part of the strategy to obtain citizen input. The city will make special efforts to solicit the views of citizens who reside in the designated CDBG-priority neighborhoods of New Bedford, and to encourage the participation of all citizens including minorities, the non-English speaking population, and persons with disabilities. The steps for public participation in the five-year Consolidated Plan follow:

a. Consultations with Other Community Institutions. In developing the Consolidated Plan, the City will consult with other public and private agencies, both for-profit and non-profits that either provide or have direct impact on the broad range of housing, economic, health, and social services needed by New Bedford residents. Consultations may take place through meetings, task forces or committees, or other means with which to coordinate information and facilitate communication. The purpose of these meetings is to gather information and data on the community and economic development needs of the community. The city will seek specific input to identify the needs of homeless persons, persons with HIV/AIDS and their families, persons with disabilities and other special needs.

b. Citizen Surveys. City staff shall conduct surveys of New Bedford residents in order to gather additional information on community priorities.

c. Initial Public Hearings. There will be a minimum of two public hearings at the beginning stages of the development of the Consolidated Plan, to gather information on community needs from citizens. These meetings will include special outreach to include organizations working with low-income populations. An additional hearing will be held before City Council. The first hearing will be held at the beginning of the development process for the Annual Action Plan, and will be conducted early in the calendar year, at approximately the time HUD announces the annual entitlement amount for the CDBG, HOME, and ESG programs to the City. The goal of this hearing will be to review the City's most recent CAPER report and obtain views from citizens on housing and community development needs and activities, including priorities for non-housing community development needs. The citizen input during this meeting will directly shape the needs and priorities to be addressed by the spending plan in the Consolidated Annual Action Plan for the program year beginning July 1st of that year. The second hearing will be held when the Draft Annual Action Plan has been completed and has been advertised as available for the required 30-day public review and comment period.

All public hearings will be advertised by publication prior to the hearing date in a newspaper of general circulation throughout the area(s) eligible to receive funds under the programs advertised. The first notice must be published no later than two weeks prior to the hearing date. All public hearing notices will also be posted on the City of New Bedford's website (www.newbedford-ma.gov). The City will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing or orally at a public hearing. Each hearing will be held in the evening at

facilities that are handicapped accessible. All locations will be convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries, and will accommodate persons with disabilities.) Each public hearing notice must include the availability of an interpreter if a significant number of non-English speaking or hearing-impaired persons are expected to participate at the hearing. Public hearing notices will be translated into Spanish, and Portuguese. It will be the responsibility of the residents to notify the City at least four days in advance of the hearing if interpreter services are needed. Each public hearing notice will indicate this policy and provide a telephone number to contact the City. In the course of developing their recommendation for a spending plan for the Annual Action Plan, the OHCD may hold a series of additional public meetings to both provide information on the solicitation of proposals and the review of all proposals for consideration for funding.

d. Written Comments. Based on public input and quantitative analysis, OHCD staff will prepare a draft Consolidated Plan, which also includes proposed allocation of first-year funding. A period of 30 calendar days will be provided to receive written comments on the draft Consolidated Plan. The public may review the draft plan at the City main library, specified neighborhood branch libraries, OHCD offices, City Hall, and on the City's website. Notification of availability of the draft will appear in a local newspaper of general circulation as well as newspapers that target minority or special needs populations.

e. Final Action on the Consolidated Plan. All written or oral testimony provided will be considered in preparing the final Consolidated Plan. A summary of testimony received and the City's reasons for accepting or not accepting the comments must be included in the final document. The City will consider these comments, before taking final action on the Consolidated Plan. When approved by Council, the Consolidated Plan will be posted in the City Clerk's office, Main library, and the OHCD. The Mayor will submit to HUD, a letter authorizing the Plan.

ACTIVITY 2: ONE-YEAR ACTION PLAN. Each year the City must submit an annual Action Plan to HUD, reporting on how that year's funding allocation for the four HUD entitlement grants will be used to achieve the goals outlined in the five-year Consolidated Plan.

a. OHCD staff will gather input from citizens and consultations to prepare the draft Action Plan. There shall be two public hearings to receive citizen input on the city's performance report for the preceding year and proposed Action Plan and an additional public hearing before City Council on the proposed Action Plan, including funding allocations. The hearings provide the public's perspective on New Bedford's housing and community and economic development needs.

b. OHCD staff will gather community input and statistical data to prepare the draft Action Plan. A draft Action Plan will be available for 30 days for public comment after reasonable notice to the public is given.

c. The City will consider these comments, before taking final action on the Consolidated Plan. When approved by Council, the Action Plan will be posted in the City Clerk's office, Main library, and the OHCD. The Mayor will submit to HUD, a letter authorizing the Plan.

ACTIVITY 3: SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENTS TO CONSOLIDATE/ACTION

PLAN. Recognizing that changes during the year may be necessary to the Consolidated Plan and Action Plan after approval, the Citizen Participation Plan allows for “substantial amendments” to plans. These “substantial amendments” apply only to changes in CDBG funding allocations. Changes in funding allocation for other HUD grant programs received by the City of New Bedford -- HOME, and ESG are not required to secure public review and comment.

The CPP defines a substantial amendment as:

(i) A substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan or annual Action Plan is defined by the City as a transfer between two or more Plan activities that is greater than 50% of the ESG program funds, 30% of the HOME program funds, and 25% of the CDBG program funds.

- a. The City will draft the amendment and publish a brief summary of the proposed substantial amendment(s) by advertising the amendment in the local newspaper. and identify where the amendment(s) may be viewed
- b. The advertisement will begin a 30-day written citizen review and public comment period
- c. During the 30-day comment period, the City will consider and comments or reviews of citizens received in writing or orally during the comment period.
- d. Upon approval by the City, the substantial amendment and comments will be posted in the City Clerk’s office, Main library, and the OHCD. The Mayor will submit to HUD, a letter authorizing the amendment.

ACTIVITY 4. CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION REPORT (CAPER). At the end of each program year, as required by HUD, a Comprehensive Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) must be submitted to HUD by September 30th. The CAPER gives an actual account of activities, which occurred during the previous program year, and how the City maintained and expended funds, which were outlined in the annual Action Plan for that program year. The CAPER preparation and submittal process includes:

- a. OHCD staff prepares the draft CAPER.
- b. After reasonable notice is provided in the local newspaper and City's website, the CAPER is available for 15 days for written public comment.
- c. The final CAPER and public comments will then be submitted to HUD.
- d. The CAPER and public comments will be presented at one of the initial public hearings on the proposed Action Plan for the subsequent fiscal year.

ACTIVITY 5 - AMENDMENTS TO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN. In the event that changes to this Citizen Participation Plan are necessary, the OHCD staff shall draft them.

- a. After reasonable notice, these will be available to the public for 15 days for written comment.

b. The OHCD shall each hold a public hearing to receive oral public comments on the proposed change.

c. Upon approval by Council, the substantial amendment will be posted in the official City Council minutes and available on-line and in the City Clerk's office.

E. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

a. **Public Hearings.** Public hearings before the, the City Council, and other appropriate community organizations will be advertised in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the notification section below. The purpose of public hearings will be to allow citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties the opportunity to provide input on New Bedford's primary housing and community development needs. Public hearings will be held in locations accessible to low- and moderate- income residents and people with disabilities. Translation for non-English speaking residents and/or those who are hearing impaired will be provided upon request.

b. **Public Meetings.** Public meetings of the OHCD overseeing HUD programs provide opportunities for citizen participation and comment on a continuous basis. Meetings are held in locations accessible to persons with disabilities. Spanish translation and translation for individuals with hearing impairments are provided as necessary.

c. **Notification.** Advance notice of any public hearing, will be provided to the public on the City's web page: <http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/> through advertisements in local newspapers for general circulation and for minorities as well as City press releases. The newspaper of general circulation is the *New Bedford Standard Times*.

d. **Document Access.** Copies of all planning documents, including the Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Action Plan, and annual performance report, will be available to the public upon request. Citizens will have the opportunity to review and comment on these documents in draft form prior to final adoption by the City Council. These documents will be made available at public libraries, City Hall, public housing authorities, and on the City's web page <http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/>. Upon request, these documents will be provided in a form accessible to persons with disabilities. Citizens, groups, and other interested organizations may obtain copies of the written reports by calling OHCD at (508) 979-1500 or (508) 974-3102 (TDD).

e. **Technical Assistance.** The City can provide technical assistance upon request and to the extent resources are available to groups or individuals that need assistance in preparing funding proposals, provided that the level of technical assistance does not constitute a violation of federal or city rules or regulations. These groups or individuals must represent CDBG-target neighborhoods or other low-income areas. The provision of technical assistance does not involve re-assignment of City staff to the proposed project or group, or the use of City equipment, nor does technical assistance guarantee an award of funds.

F. CITIZENS' COMPLAINTS

Written complaints may be directed to the City with regard to any HUD program or activity. A timely, written, and substantive response to the complainant will be prepared with 15 working days of receipt of the complaint by the appropriate department. If a response cannot

be prepared within the 15-day period, the complainant will be notified of the approximate date a response will be provided. Written complaints must clearly state the complainant's name, address, and zip code. A daytime telephone number should also be included in the event further information or clarification is needed. Complaints should be addressed as follows:

For CDBG, ESG or HOME programs, correspondence should be addressed to:

Mr. Patrick J. Sullivan, Director
Office of Housing and Community Development
City of New Bedford
608 Pleasant Street
New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740

If the response is not sufficient, an appeal may be directed to the Mayor, and a written response will be provided within 30 days. An appeal should be addressed as follows:

City of New Bedford Office of the Mayor
City of New Bedford
133 William Street
New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740

G. CITY OF NEW BEDFORD RESIDENTIAL ANTI-DISPLACEMENT AND RELOCATION ASSISTANCE PLAN

It is the policy of the City of New Bedford to make all reasonable efforts to ensure that activities undertaken with CDBG and HOME Program funds will not cause unnecessary displacement or relocation. The City will continue to administer the CDBG and HOME Programs in such a manner that careful consideration is given during the planning phase to avoiding displacement. Displacement of any nature shall be reserved as a last resort action necessitated only when no other alternative is available and when the activity is determined necessary in order to carry out a specific goal or objective that is of benefit to the public.

If the displacement is precipitated by activities that require the acquisition (either in whole or in part) or rehabilitation of real property directly by the City of New Bedford or an agent, all appropriate benefits as required by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 and amendments, or the Residential Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan under Section 104(d) shall be provided to the displaced person or persons. These actions will adhere to the City's Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan.