

**CITIZENS PARTICIPATION PLAN
FOR THE CONSOLIDATED STRATEGY AND PLAN
FOR THE CITY OF GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI
Amended by City Council July 7, 2020**

I. INTRODUCTION

The City of Gulfport, Mississippi has adopted the following Citizen Participation Plan to meet the requirements of Section 508 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and 24 CFR 91.105, Citizen Participation Plan; Local Governments. This plan provides for and encourages citizens to participate in the development of the Consolidated Strategy and Plan, and substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan and the performance report.

Finally, this plan replaces and supersedes the Citizen Participation Plan adopted by the City Council of the City of Gulfport in 1985 and amended in 1997, November 29, 2005 and August 8, 2017, and any other Citizens Participation Plans heretofore adopted by the City of Gulfport.

The Consolidated Strategy and Plan combines the planning, application, and reporting requirements for the following programs:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Home Investment Partnerships (HOME)
- Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOWPA)
- Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG)

It is important to note that Gulfport is an “entitlement” city under the terms of the Community Development Block Grant Program and HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) as “Lead-Agency” for the Home Consortium, which consists of a partnership between the City of Gulfport, City of Biloxi and Harrison County. Gulfport is not a “formula entitlement” city under the terms of the ESG and HOPWA formula programs and, therefore, does not receive annual allocations of funding for these programs. The City and/or other agencies must apply for ESG and HOWPA funding on a competitive basis. They must compete for funding with agencies throughout the State of Mississippi.

II. PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES

As part of the citizen participation requirements and to maximize citizen interactions, the City of Gulfport shall:

- Provide citizens with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information and records relating to Community Development Block Grant Programs, Home Investment Partnership Programs, and other federal, state and local programs;
- Provide public hearings to obtain views and respond to proposals of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report and community development programs. These hearings will consist of the development of needs, review proposed activities and review of performance;
- Provide for and encourage citizen participation with particular emphasis on participation by persons of low and moderate income, residents of blighted areas and residents of areas in which funds are proposed;
- Provide technical assistance to groups representative of persons of low and moderate income, blighted areas and areas in which funds are proposed;
- Provide a formal written procedure which will accommodate a timely response to written complaints and grievances;
- Identify how the needs of non-English speaking residents will be met in the case of public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate;

III. GENERAL PROCEDURES

The City of Gulfport, through implementation of the Citizen's Participation Plan will:

- A. Make available to the citizens and public agencies information concerning the amount of assistance the City of Gulfport expects to receive and the range of investment of other uses of the assistance the City of Gulfport may undertake.
- B. Make available the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report to the public by publishing a notice of the strategy in the Sun Herald and by providing copies of the entire strategy to City Hall, the Office of Community Development, the library, municipal offices and other appropriate public agencies and interested individuals as feasible.

- C. Conduct at least two public meetings to obtain views of citizens, public agencies and other interested parties in the community.
 - 1. Hearings held on the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report may be combined with other public hearings required by the CDBG and HOME Programs, provided that the subjects are treated separately.
 - 2. Notices informing citizens of any public hearing will be posted in the Sun Herald seven (7) days prior to the scheduled date, posted in the City buildings and publicized through local organizations and/or social media (City of Gulfport Website, notices on City Council, as publicized media, as feasible. Public hearings will be held at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries.
- D. Provide citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties with reasonable access to records regarding assistance the City of Gulfport may have received during the proceeding five (5) years.
- E. Consider any comments or views of citizens. A summary of these comments or views must be attached to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report.
 - 1. The length of time provided for citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties to examine the contents and comment on the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan will be for a period of thirty (30) days.
 - 1(a). Per 24 CFR 91.105(a)(4) and 91.115(a)(4) HUD may waive the 30 day requirement for citizen participation review comment period from 30-days to 14-calendar days, under specific emergency situations. Only HUD has the authority to extend this waiver, and not on an individual basis.
 - 2. The length of time provided for citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties to examine the contents and comment on the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report will be for a period of fifteen (15) days.
- F. Upon request, the Community Development Office will make available the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report to citizens or public agencies with disabilities.

- G. Ensure that the official Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report or any amendments thereto, is available to the public for review upon request.

IV. SCHEDULING AND PROVIDING NOTICES OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

Adequate notice must be given for all public hearings. The public hearings shall be scheduled early in the planning process to ensure adequate public participation, and allow sufficient time for citizen input.

- A. The City of Gulfport shall publish in the Sun Herald, a minimum of seven (7) days prior to the date of the public hearing, stipulating the location, time, and purpose of the public hearing. The location of the public hearing shall be convenient to potential and/or actual beneficiaries. All notices will state that accommodations will be made for handicapped and/or non-English speaking persons providing that a three-day notice is received by the Gulfport Community Development Office before the date of the meeting.
- B. Citizens, with particular emphasis on persons of low and moderate income, residents of slum and blighted areas, shall be encouraged to submit their views and proposals regarding community and housing needs. Through public notice, citizens will be made aware of where they may submit their views and proposals should they be unable to attend the public hearing.
- C. Minutes of all public hearings and an attendance roster must be kept and available for public inspection.

V. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

When requested, the City of Gulfport, through its, Community Development Office, shall provide technical assistance to groups representative of persons of low to moderate income, blighted areas and areas in which funds are proposed. Technical Assistance will be provided to develop proposals for funding assistance under any program accounted for in the Consolidated Plan. Providing technical assistance does not guarantee funding.

VI. AMENDMENTS

The City of Gulfport shall involve citizens in substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan or the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report. Substantial changes shall include,

but not limited to changes of stated purposes, scope, location, beneficiaries and/or exceed forty percent (40%) of annual grant.

- A. Citizen participation shall be accomplished by means of published notices to obtain citizens views prior to the submission of a substantial amendment.
- B. The procedures in scheduling and providing notice of public hearing shall conform to Part IV herein. Unless, approved by HUD as related to disaster assistance, scheduling, comment period and notice of public hearing may be reduced to provide immediate assistance.
- C. Community Development Block Grant and Home Program amendments, which substantially alter a project from that approved in the original application, shall not be submitted to HUD until a public hearing has taken place in accordance with the procedures outlined within the Citizens Participation Plan. All interested citizens, particularly the low and moderate income, elderly, handicapped, and residents of the proposed project area, shall be made aware and have the opportunity to comment on proposed amendments and/or submit alternative measures.
- D. Minutes of the hearing will be submitted with the request for amendment.

VII. COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

The City of Gulfport shall maintain a written citizen complaint procedure. All written citizen complaints relative to the implementation of any HUD program will merit careful and prompt consideration and will be handled according to the procedures set forth herein;

- A. Any individual who wishes to object to any aspect of the CDBG, HOME or any other federal program administered by the Community Development Department may file an official complaint to the Community Development Coordinator/

Complaints will be mailed to:

Community Development Office
Department of Urban Development
City of Gulfport
P. O. Box 59
Gulfport, MS 39502
(228) 868-5736

- B. The Coordinator will forward the complaint, with his/her comments, to the Urban Development Director and Mayor of the City of Gulfport within five (5) working days of the date on which the complaint was recorded.
- C. All good faith attempts will be made to satisfactorily resolve the complaints at the local level.
- D. A written response from the Mayor of the City of Gulfport, or his/her designated representative, to the complaint will be made within fifteen (15) working days from the date of the written complaint.
- E. The complainant shall be aware that if he/she is not satisfied with the response, a written complaint may be filed with the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 100 West Capital Street, Jackson, MS 39269-1096.
- F. Persons wishing to object to the approval of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and/or Grantee Performance Report or substantial amendments thereto, may make such objection known to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 100 West Capital Street, Jackson, MS 39269-1096.

VIII DISASTER RESPONSE

Disaster response and waivers to Citizen Participation and eligible activities, including the reallocating of existing funds and special funding provisions are unique to the specific disaster, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, health pandemics, acts of war, etc. Specific addendums for each related disaster as allowed or waived by the specific Grant or funding source, will be approved by City Council, and citizen participation process will follow the disaster related waivers.

IX RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

The Gulfport Community Development Office shall be the designated official responsible for keeping citizens' comments and complaint file. The Mayor is the overall responsible official for the Citizen Participation Plan for the City of Gulfport.