

City of Rock Hill Citizen Participation Plan

Community Development Block Grant Program

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The City of Rock Hill has designed this community-wide Citizen Participation Plan to provide for and encourage citizen participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The CDBG program for entitlement communities allocates annual grants to larger cities and urban counties to develop viable communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and opportunities to expand economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. CDBG funds are used for local community development activities such as affordable housing, anti-poverty programs, and infrastructure development. This Citizen Participation Plan is an essential element of the City of Rock Hill's community development process and has been developed to comply with the regulations and requirements of the CDBG program (24 CFR Part 91.105) as administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This Plan supersedes all other Citizen Participation Plans which may have been adopted by the City Council.

The primary goal of the Citizen Participation Plan is to provide all citizens of the community with adequate opportunity to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the City of Rock Hill's CDBG program. The Plan sets forth policies and procedures for citizen participation, which are designed to maximize the opportunity for citizen participation in the community development process. Special emphasis has been placed on encouraging participation by persons with low to moderate incomes, residents of public and assisted housing developments, residents of blighted neighborhoods, and residents of areas where community development funds are utilized.

Citizens are encouraged to participate in all phases of the CDBG program and will be provided full access to program information. However, final responsibility and authority for the development and implementation of the CDBG program will lie with the City Council.

SECTION 2: SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION

The City of Rock Hill will make reasonable efforts to provide for and encourage citizens to participate in the community development process including the development of and revisions to the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (AI), the Consolidated Plan (ConPlan), the Annual Action Plan (AAP), and the Consolidated and Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER). The City of Rock Hill will make every effort to involve citizens in all phases of the development, implementation and assessment of the CDBG program undertaken by the City of Rock Hill including, but not limited to, the following phases:

- a. Identification and assessment of housing and community development needs; determination of CDBG projects; and the development of CDBG applications;

- b. Changes and/or amendments to approved CDBG projects; and
- c. Assessment of CDBG program performance.

All phases of the community development process will be conducted in an open manner and citizens of the City of Rock Hill will be given access and a reasonable opportunity to comment on program information during each phase of any CDBG program outlined herein.

SECTION 3: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION CONTACT INFORMATION

The City of Rock Hill's Grants Division will serve as the contact for all matters concerning citizen participation activities. The Grants Division shall be responsible for overseeing citizen participation throughout the community development process and the implementation of all citizen participation activities and functions, except those which may be specifically delegated to other parties by this Plan.

The specific duties and responsibilities of the Grants Division regarding citizen participation shall include, but are not necessarily limited to, disseminating information concerning proposed projects and the status of current project activities; organizing public hearings for citizen feedback; receiving written comments; serving as a vehicle by which ideas, comments, and proposals from local residents may be transmitted to local officials and/or program staff; and monitoring the citizen participation process and proposing such amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan as may be necessary.

For questions regarding citizen participation in the community development process, contact the Grants Division's CDBG Administrator at nicole.cauthen@cityofrockhill.com or (803) 326-3837.

SECTION 4: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The staff of the City of Rock Hill shall provide technical assistance to individual citizens and citizen groups, especially those groups representative of persons of low or moderate income, as may be required to adequately provide for citizen participation in the planning, implementation and assessment of the CDBG program. Such technical assistance is intended to increase citizen participation in the community development process and to foster public understanding of CDBG program requirements.

Technical assistance shall be provided upon request and may include, but not necessarily be limited to: interpreting the CDBG program and its rules, regulations, procedures and/or requirements; providing information and/or materials concerning the CDBG program; and assisting low and moderate income citizens, and residents of blighted neighborhoods to develop statements of views, identify their needs, and develop activities and proposals for projects which, when implemented, will resolve those needs.

Technical assistance may be obtained by contacting the Grants Division's CDBG Administrator at nicole.cauthen@cityofrockhill.com or (803) 326-3837.

SECTION 5: PUBLIC HEARINGS

Citizen participation in the community development process will be conducted on a community-wide basis and will actively involve the views and proposals of all citizens, especially low and moderate income persons and residents of areas where CDBG activities are proposed or on-going.

Public hearings will be held during all phases of the community development process to allow citizens to voice opinions and offer proposals concerning the development and performance of CDBG programs. The City will make information regarding CDBG available for public comment for a period of no less than 30 days, unless the City is operating under special emergency procedures. During special circumstances, under guidance by HUD, a waiver to shorten the public comment period to 5 days may be utilized. Any questions that citizens may have will be answered and suggestions, comments, and/or proposals received.

5.1 Public Hearing Times and Locations

All public hearings will be held at times and locations, which will be accessible to all citizens, especially low and moderate income persons and residents of public and assisted housing developments, blighted neighborhoods and CDBG project areas. Public hearings will be scheduled for convenient times and may be held at any site, which in the opinion of the City of Rock Hill, provides adequate access for citizen participation.

Hearings will normally be held at Rock Hill City Hall, 155 Johnston Street, Rock Hill, SC 29730. This site is centrally located and generally accessible for all citizens. This building is also accessible to persons with disabilities. Hearings may, however, at the option of the City of Rock Hill be held at an alternate location to be specified in the public hearing notice(s). In addition, hearings may be held in an alternative format when the City of Rock Hill is operating under emergency procedures as a result of a public health or other crisis which prohibits social gathering. When such a situation arises, virtual hearings will be held in compliance with a temporary emergency ordinance put into place by City Council that still allows for full public participation.

These public hearing parameters apply to each type of public hearing described below.

5.2 Application Public Hearing

At least one public hearing will be held during any CDBG Program Year prior to the submission of an application for CDBG assistance. The primary purpose of the public hearing shall be to assess community needs and problems in an effort to determine the most critical needs to be addressed by the CDBG program; and also to present for public comment and review the program activities which have been selected by the City of Rock Hill to resolve the identified needs. The objective of citizen participation at this stage is to provide meaningful, community-

wide citizen input into the decision-making process and the consideration of priorities and options associated with the development and submission of a CDBG application.

5.3 Amendment Public Hearings

Occasionally, there is a need for amendments to the Annual Action and Consolidated Plans. Some amendments will be considered substantial while others will be considered minor amendments. Changes in the allocation or distribution of funds when the dollar amount is 30% or less of the City's total annual allocation are considered minor amendments. Amendments that involve moving 5% or less of the total allocation will require the approval of the City Manager and notification of City Council and HUD. Amendments that involve moving more than 5% and up to 30% of the City's total allocation will require CDBG staff to present the amendment for approval by City Council and notify HUD upon approval.

A proposed amendment is considered substantial when a proposed action or change may create a significant community impact. A substantial amendment requires citizen participation and includes the following:

- a. Changes in the allocation or distribution of funds when the dollar amount exceeds 30% of the City's total annual allocation; or
- b. Addition of new activities not previously described in the action plan; or
- c. Deletion of previously approved projects or activities; or
- d. Changes to the original purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity to the extent that it no longer serves the target population described in the original plan.

To ensure adequate opportunity for citizen participation regarding amendments to the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans, the City of Rock Hill will make the substantial amendment available for public comment for a period of no less than 30 days and shall hold a public hearing on all substantial amendments which require the approval of City Council and HUD. During special circumstances, under guidance by HUD, a waiver to shorten the public comment period to 5 days may be utilized.

5.4 Assessment of Performance Public Hearing

Citizens of the City of Rock Hill will be provided with the opportunity to comment on the performance of local officials, the City of Rock Hill staff, consultants, engineers, and contractors, and the actual use of CDBG funds during the implementation of the CDBG program. On-going community assessment of the effectiveness of the community development process is considered essential to the success of the CDBG program.

At the conclusion of each CDBG program year, a public hearing will be held to review program activities and to assess program performance. This hearing shall be held not less than fifteen (15) days prior to the submission of the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER). This hearing will be used to ensure community-wide participation in the evaluation of

the CDBG program and any comments or views of citizens received at the public hearing will be considered in the preparation of the performance report. A summary of these comments or views shall be attached to the performance report.

5.5 Additional Hearings

Other public hearings may be held as deemed necessary by the City of Rock Hill in order to inform citizens of community development project(s) and activities, and to solicit citizen comments. All additional hearings shall comply with the requirements set forth in this Plan.

5.6 Limited English Proficiency Residents

The City of Rock Hill will undertake reasonable actions to facilitate the participation of persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Such actions may include the provision of an interpreter and/or the provision of materials in the appropriate language or format for persons with LEP.

5.7 Public Hearing Notice

Notice of public hearings will be published in a local newspaper at least fifteen (15) days prior to the date of each hearing. The City of Rock Hill may waive hearing notice requirements in cases where unusual circumstances justify alternative means of notifying the general public. In such situations, shorter notice may be given, and public notices posted in public places may be used in place of a notice published in the newspaper. Each notice of a hearing shall include the time, date, place, and sufficient information about the subject of the hearing to permit informed comment from citizens.

5.8 Accessibility to Low and Moderate Income Persons

The public hearing procedures outlined herein are designed to promote participation by low and moderate income citizens, as well as residents of blighted neighborhoods and CDBG project areas in any public hearing(s). The City of Rock Hill may take additional steps to further promote participation by such groups, or target program information to these persons should it feel that such persons may otherwise be excluded or should additional action be deemed necessary. Activities to promote additional participation may include but are not limited to: partnership with the Housing Authority of Rock Hill, posting of notices in blighted neighborhoods and in places frequented by low and moderate income persons, and holding public hearings in low and moderate income neighborhoods or areas of existing or proposed CDBG project activities.

5.9 Accessibility to Persons with Disabilities

The locations of all public hearings as described herein shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities. The City of Rock Hill shall provide a sign language interpreter whenever the CDBG Administrator is notified in advance that one or more deaf persons will be in attendance. The City of Rock Hill shall provide a qualified reader whenever the CDBG Administrator is notified in advance that one or more visually impaired persons will be in attendance. Additionally, the City of Rock Hill shall provide reasonable accommodations whenever the CDBG Administrator is

notified in advance that one or more persons with mobility or developmental disabilities will be in attendance.

SECTION 6: PROGRAM INFORMATION

Citizens will be provided full access to CDBG program information during all phases of a CDBG project in a manner that affords residents, public agencies, and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to examine the content and to submit comments. The City of Rock Hill shall make reasonable efforts to include, but not be limited to, publishing a summary of proposed plans in a local newspaper and making copies of the documents available on the City of Rock Hill's website to assure that CDBG program information is available to all citizens, especially those of low and moderate incomes and those residing in blighted neighborhoods and/or CDBG project areas.

To facilitate citizen access to CDBG program information, the Grants Division will keep all documents related to a CDBG program on file in Rock Hill City Hall. In addition to making CDBG program information available to citizens for review thirty (30) days prior to submittal to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, information from the project files shall be made available upon written request. CDBG program information and materials, concerning specific CDBG projects will be available and distributed to the public at regularly scheduled public hearings as outlined in this Plan. Furthermore, information concerning any CDBG project will be available at regularly scheduled council meetings where the program is discussed.

Materials to be made available shall include, but are not necessarily limited to: the Citizen Participation Plan; the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (AI); the Consolidated Plan; records of public hearings; prior CDBG program applications; letters of approval; grant agreements; environmental review records; financial and procurement records; project design and construction specifications; labor standards materials; and performance and evaluation reports. Upon request, the above materials will be made accessible to persons with Limited English Proficiency and persons with disabilities.

In no case shall the City of Rock Hill disclose any information concerning the financial status of any program participant(s) which may be required to document program eligibility or benefit. Furthermore, the City of Rock Hill shall not disclose any information which may, in the opinion of the City Manager, be deemed of a confidential nature.

In order to ensure all requests for CDBG program information are addressed in a reasonable and timely manner, submit all requests in writing to:

Grants Division
City of Rock Hill
PO Box 11706
Rock Hill, South Carolina 29731-1706

SECTION 7: PROCEDURES FOR COMMENTS, OBJECTIONS, AND COMPLAINTS

The public hearings scheduled, as described in this Citizen Participation Plan, are designed to facilitate public participation in all phases of the community development process. Citizens are encouraged to submit their views and proposals on all aspects of a community development program at the public hearings. However, to ensure that citizens are given the opportunity to assess and comment on all aspects of the community development program on a continuous basis, citizens may, at any time, submit written comments, objections, or complaints to the City of Rock Hill's Grants Division. Every effort shall be made to provide written responses to citizen proposals or complaints within fifteen (15) working days of the receipt of such comments or complaints where practical.

All comments and complaints submitted to the City of Rock Hill shall be addressed in writing to:

Grants Division
City of Rock Hill
PO Box 11706
Rock Hill, South Carolina 29731-1706

Records of all comments, objections and/or complaints by citizens concerning the City of Rock Hill's CDBG program and subsequent action taken in response to those comments shall be maintained on file at the City of Rock Hill and shall be made available for public inspection upon request.

SECTION 8: AMENDMENTS TO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

It shall be the policy of the City of Rock Hill to periodically review and discuss the effectiveness of this Citizen Participation Plan in allowing citizen participation in the community development process and in helping to meet the community development needs and goals identified by the citizens of the City of Rock Hill. To this end, the effectiveness of the Plan will be discussed at public hearings held in conjunction with the community development program as discussed herein, and potential amendments to the Plan will be reviewed at this time. Amendments to the Plan will be made as necessary. All amendments shall be approved by the City Council and shall be incorporated into this Plan. The Citizen Participation Plan will be made available to the public and upon request will be made accessible to persons with disabilities.

SECTION 9: AUTHORITY

No portion of this Citizen Participation Plan shall be construed to restrict the responsibility and authority of the elected officials of the City of Rock Hill in the development, implementation and execution of any Community Development Block Grant program.

APPROVED this, the 8th day of June, 2020.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Paul Matyas", is written over a horizontal line.

Chief Elected Official