

INTRODUCTION

The 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan is a collaborative process through which the community identifies its housing, homeless and community development needs; and establishes a vision, goals and strategies for achieving these needs. The plan also pinpoints how the money received from *the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)* will be utilized over the upcoming program year—taking into account the regulations governing these programs—to meet locally recognized needs.

The City of Mansfield is required by law to have a detailed Citizen Participation Plan that contains the City's policies and procedures for public involvement in the *Consolidated Plan process*, and the use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) and any other community development need monies granted to the City by HUD. The Citizen Participation Plan must be available to the public.

Citizen participation is a vital part of the *Consolidated Plan* process. Citizens, non-profit organizations and other interested parties must be afforded adequate opportunity to participate in the planning process. This includes:

- Access to meetings
- Access to information
- Technical assistance as required
- Public hearings to identify housing, community development needs and a review of proposed expenditures of funds, and
- Timely response to complaints and grievances.

The following describes the guiding principles for citizen participation by the *City of Mansfield* in the implementation of the *HUD Consolidated Plan*.

The Citizen Participation Plan required updates during the 2020 Program Year, to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions, as well as utilize waivers provided by HUD for the CDBG and HOME programs. Updates to the plan will be highlighted below. These changes will be in effect until further notice.

Encouraging Public Participation

The law requires that our *Citizen Participation Plan* both provide for and encourage public involvement, emphasize involvement by low to moderate-income people—especially those living in low to moderate-income neighborhoods. Also, the *U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)* anticipates that the City of Mansfield will take actions that are appropriate to encourage participation by minorities, non-English speaking individuals, and people with disabilities.

Copies of this *Citizen Participation Plan*, as well as summaries of basic information about CDBG and HOME, and the *Consolidated Planning* process may be made available in the languages of

residents who comprise a significant portion of the low to moderate income population. Currently, the City of Mansfield has materials in English only. Residents needing resources in other languages are welcomed to contact City staff.

The Purpose of Participation

The primary purpose of the programs covered by this *Citizen Participation Plan* is to improve communities by providing:

- Decent Housing
- Suitable living environment
- Economic growth opportunities

Because of the amount of federal *CDBG* and *HOME* program monies the City of Mansfield receives each year is mostly based upon the severity of both *poverty* and *substandard housing conditions* in Mansfield; it is necessary that low to moderate-income residents who experience these conditions get involved with the planning process. Genuine involvement by these residents must take place at all stages of the process, including:

- Identifying needs
- Setting priorities among these needs, suggesting how much money should be allocated to each high-priority need, and suggesting the types of programs to meet high-priority needs
- Overseeing the way in which programs are carried out

The Various Stages of the Consolidation Plan Process

The policies and procedures in the *Citizen Participation Plan* relate to several stages of actions mentioned in law or regulation. In general, these stages or events include:

- Identification of housing and community development needs
- Preparation of a draft usage of funds for the upcoming year called the proposed "*Annual Action Plan*" or the development of a proposed new "*Consolidated Plan*"
- Formal approval by elected officials of a final "*Annual Action Plan*" or "*Consolidated Plan*"
- On occasion during the year, it might be essential to change the use of the money already budgeted in an "*Annual Action Plan*", or to change the priorities established in the "*Consolidated Plan*". In that case, a formal "*Substantial Amendment*" will be proposed, considered and acted upon.
- After a program year is complete, the "*Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)*" must be drafted for public review, commented and then sent to HUD

The Programmed Year

The Program year selected by the City of Mansfield is July 1st through June 31st.

Mansfield Citizen Participation Activities

The City of Mansfield Citizen Participation activities will include:

- Community Outreach
- Public Hearings
- Access to Information
- Technical Assistance
- Timely response to Complaints and Grievances

Community Outreach

In order to assure that all citizens have the opportunity to participate in the planning process, the City of Mansfield will conduct a community outreach on the development of the strategic plan. The purposes for the outreach will be to:

- Obtain views of citizens, public agencies and other interested parties.
- When applicable, announce the availability of technical assistance and funds.
- Respond to proposals and comments at all stages of the Consolidated Plan submission process, including:
 - Identifying housing and community development needs
 - Reviewing proposed uses of funds
 - Reviewing program performance

Public Meetings for the Annual Action Plan process will be held via zoom, and broadcast on the City of Mansfield's Facebook page. Links to these meetings will be available on the City of Mansfield's website.

Public Hearings

The City of Mansfield will host two (2) public hearings each year. Typically, one of these hearings may consist of either: 1) a meeting to announce the availability of technical assistance and funding for current program year; 2) a meeting to review program performance; or 3) one of the city council meetings, where legislation regarding either the strategic plan or the annual action plan is read and/or considered for approval. Also, each year, a public hearing will be held once the draft plan is complete, to solicit comments on the strategies and proposed use of funds. Public hearings will be conveniently timed and located for people who will benefit from program funds, and will be accessible to persons with special needs.

Public Hearings will be held via zoom, and broadcast on the City of Mansfield's Facebook page.

Access to Information

Citizens, public agencies and other interested parties, including those most affected will have the opportunity to receive information, review and submit comments on any proposed submission concerning any of the following documents:

- The proposed and final *"Annual Action plans"*
- The proposed and final *"Consolidated Plan"*
- Proposed and final Substantial Amendments to either an *"Annual Action Plan"* or the *"Consolidated Plan"*
- Annual Performance Reports
- The Citizen Participation Plan
- Analysis of Impediments / Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing

Interested parties may access these documents at no cost through the internet, at the *Community Development* section of the City of Mansfield's website: www.ci.mansfield.oh.us or by contacting staff. The city will make every attempt to provide these materials in a form that is accessible to persons with disabilities and individuals that are Non-English speaking, when requested.

Involved citizens will be provided a 15 day period to comment on the City's CAPER, prior to HUD submittal around September 15th of each year depending on HUD's requirements.

Comment Periods will be reduced to 5 days as allowed by HUD. The 2019 CAPER will be submitted to HUD on or about March 31,2021, as allowable through HUD waivers.

Technical Assistance

City staff will work with organizations and individual representatives of low to moderate-income people who are interested in submitting a proposal to obtain funding for an activity. All potential applicants for funding are encouraged to contact city staff for technical assistance. Additionally, city staff will work with individuals and organizations receiving *"Consolidated Plan"* monies to ensure that funds are being spent for their intended purpose and within the rules and regulations of the federal government.

Timely Response to Complaints and Grievance

City staff will provide timely, written response to written complaints and grievances within the fifteen (15) day period of receipt, where practical.

Substantial Amendments

Prior to the submission of any substantial change in the proposed use of funds, citizens will have thirty (30) day notice of, and the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment using the citizen participation methods outlined in this plan and/or other methods that result in effective notice and commenting.

Comment Periods will be reduced to 5 days as allowed by HUD.

A substantial amendment to the *Consolidated Plan* is when one of the following decisions is to be made:

- A change in the use of *CDBG* and *HOME*, money from one project* to another, and a change to increase or decrease funding or cost of a project by more than 20% of the funds that were originally allocated for that project. (This does not include projects that are completed under budget by more than 20%. The unspent balance may go to new activities, but citizens will need opportunity to comment.)
- The elimination of a project originally described in the *Consolidated or Annual Action Plan*.
- The addition of a project not originally described in the *Consolidated or Annual Action Plan*.
- A change in the purpose of a project, such as a change in the type of activity or its ultimate objective- for example, a change in a construction project from housing to commercial.
- A meaningful change in the location of a project.

(*The term "project" refers to a budget line item—often called a "program"—as delineated in the yearly action plan.)

For more information regarding the *2019-2023 Consolidated Plan* or to submit your comments, please contact Adrian Ackerman at aackerman@ci.mansfield.oh.us or call 419-755-9795, or write to City of Mansfield, Department of Community Development, 30 North Diamond St. Mansfield, Ohio 44902 or visit the City's website at: www.ci.mansfield.oh.us.