

Attached is the Monroe County Community Development Division's draft Public Participation Policy. The 30 day public comment period runs from July 1, 2015 – July 31, 2015.

Anyone interested in commenting on the Plan, or anyone with questions is encouraged to contact the Division via e-mail at mcplanning@monroecounty.gov or phone at 585-753-2000.

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MONROE COUNTY, NEW YORK CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

The Community Development Division (the Division) of the Monroe County Department of Planning and Development has designed this community-wide Citizen Participation Plan to provide for and encourage citizen participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. This Plan is an essential element of the Division's policy for present and future community development efforts and has been developed to comply with the regulations and requirements of the CDBG program and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Monroe County's Consolidated and Annual Action Plan.

The primary goal of this 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 Monroe County'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 of low and moderate incomes, and residents of areas where community development funds are utilized.

Citizens are encouraged to participate in all phases of the CDBG program(s) and will be provided full access to program information. However, final responsibility and authority for the development and implementation of CDBG program(s) will lie with the Division, as required by Monroe County.

SECTION 2. SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION

The Division will make reasonable efforts to provide for citizen participation during the community development process and throughout the planning, implementation and assessment of all CDBG programs undertaken by Monroe County. Division personnel will make every effort to involve citizens in all phases of the development of community development programs.

SECTION 3. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION CONTACT PERSON

The Community Development Manager will serve as the Citizen Participation Coordinator for all matters concerning CDBG citizen participation activities. The Citizen Participation Coordinator 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 Citizen Participation Coordinator shall include, but not necessarily be limited to: disseminating information concerning proposed projects and the status of current project activities; coordinating various

groups which may be participating in the community development process; 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.

The Citizen Participation Coordinator may be contacted at (585-753-2000) during regular business hours. All questions concerning citizen participation in the community development process should be addressed to the Citizen Participation Coordinator.

SECTION 4. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Division staff 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 CDBG program(s).

Such technical assistance is intended to increase citizen participation in the community development decision-making process and to ensure that such participation is meaningful. Technical assistance shall also be utilized to foster public understanding of CDBG program requirements.

Technical assistance shall be provided on 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 to develop statements of views, identify their needs, and to develop activities and proposals for projects which, when implemented, will resolve those needs.

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 to allow citizens to voice opinions and offer proposals concerning the development and performance of CDBG programs. Any questions that citizens may have concerning a program will be answered and their comments, suggestions, and/or proposals will be received. Citizens may also express comments and views concerning the community development process or any specific CDBG project to the governing body at any regularly scheduled meeting.

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 persons of low and moderate incomes, and CDBG project areas.

Public hearings will be scheduled for convenient times as determined by the Division. Public hearings may be held at any site, which, in the opinion of the Division, provides adequate access for citizen participation.

Hearings will normally be held at a site that is centrally located and generally accessible to all citizens and accessible to persons with disabilities. Hearings may, however, at the option of Division, be held at an alternate location to be specified in the public hearing notice(s).

5.2 Application and Award Public Hearings

A public hearing will be held during the initial stage of program development to discuss items regarding community development and housing needs, the CDBG program, and the application process. The objective of citizen participation at this stage is to provide meaningful, community-wide citizen input into the decision-making process during the assessment of community needs and the consideration of priorities and options associated with the development and submission of a CDBG application. Division staff will also entertain proposals and comments from citizens concerning community development activities at this hearing.

Citizens will be provided with information concerning the CDBG program at this public hearing. Such information shall include, but not necessarily be limited to: the goals and objectives of the CDBG program; the total estimated amount of CDBG funds available; the role of citizens in program planning, implementation, and assessment; the range of activities which may be undertaken; the process to be followed in developing a CDBG application; the application timetable(s); the schedule of meetings and hearings; and activities previously funded in Monroe County through the CDBG program.

A second public hearing will be held to inform citizens of the actual grant awards from HUD, proposed project activities to be included in the CDBG application(s) and to solicit comments from citizens concerning these activities.

Citizens attending this hearing will be provided with information concerning the CDBG project(s) proposed including, but not necessarily limited to: the project application(s) to be submitted and the applicable CDBG fund; specific project activities to be included; the location of the project activities; the approximate cost estimate for the proposed activities; the estimate of local match required; the impact of the project on low and moderate income persons; and, the approximate application submittal date.

5.3 Amendment Public Hearings

The Division will assure the opportunity for citizen participation during the implementation of any CDBG program(s) when significant and substantial programmatic changes to the project are under consideration.

To ensure adequate opportunity for citizen participation during CDBG programs, the Division shall hold a public hearing on all formal amendments, which require HUD approval. For “local” amendments (as defined by HUD) and changes for which HUD approval is not required, input from citizens concerning changes or amendments will be received at meetings where such changes or amendments are considered. When required, the Division will obtain Legislative approval.

5.4 Assessment of Performance Public Hearings

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

5.5 Additional Hearings

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

5.6 Limited English Proficiency Residents

Division staff will undertake all reasonable actions necessary to allow such persons to participate in the community development process. Such actions may include the provision of an interpreter and/or the provision of materials in the appropriate language or format for persons with Limited English Proficiency.

5.7 Public Hearing Notice

Notice of public hearings will be published in a local newspaper at least seven (7) days prior to the hearing date. The Division 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. Notice may also be given via e-mail to local governments and agencies and individuals who have either participated in or expressed interest in the CDBG program. Each notice of a hearing shall include the time, date, place, and topics and procedures to be discussed.

Notices for public hearings may be run or posted, separately or together, as may be deemed necessary by the Division.

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, and CDBG project areas in any public hearing(s). Division staff may take additional steps to further promote participation by such groups, or to target program information to these persons should officials feel that such persons may otherwise be excluded or should additional action be deemed necessary.

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 Division shall provide a sign language interpreter whenever the Citizen Participation Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more deaf persons will be in attendance. The Division shall provide a qualified reader whenever the Citizen Participation Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more visually impaired persons will be in attendance. Additionally, The Division shall provide reasonable accommodations whenever the Citizen Participation Coordinator 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. Department staff shall make reasonable effort to assure that CDBG program information is available to all citizens, especially those of low and moderate incomes or Limited English Proficiency neighborhoods and/or CDBG project areas.

To facilitate citizen access to CDBG program information, the Citizen Participation Coordinator will keep all documents related to a CDBG program on file in the Division. Information from the project files shall be made available for examination and duplication, on request, during regular business hours.

Materials to be made available shall include, but are not necessarily limited to: the Citizen Participation Plan; records of public hearing; mailings and promotional materials; prior CDBG program applications; letters of approval; grant agreements; the environmental review record; financial and procurement records; project design and construction specifications; labor standards materials; performance and evaluation reports; other reports required by HUD; proposed and approved CDBG program application(s) for the current year or project; written comments or complaints received concerning the community development program, and written responses from the

Division; and, copies of the applicable Federal and State rules, regulations, policies, requirements and procedures governing the CDBG program.

In no case shall there be disclosure of any information concerning the financial status of any program participant(s) which may be required to document program eligibility or benefit. Furthermore, there will be no disclosure of any information which may, in the opinion of the Citizen Participation Coordinator or the County Attorney, be deemed of a confidential nature.

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 or complaints to the Citizen Participation Coordinator.

Any citizen or citizen's group desiring to comment or object to any phase of the planning, development or approval of the application for CDBG funds, or to the implementation of any CDBG program, should submit such comments or objections in writing to the Citizen Participation Coordinator.

Local officials shall make every effort to provide written responses to citizen proposals or complaints within fifteen (15) working days of the receipt of such comments or complaints where practicable.

This clause does not preclude a citizen from exercising any of his or her rights under the law.

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

SECTION 8. AMENDMENTS

The Division may, from time to time, modify the provisions outlined herein through amendment to this Citizen Participation Plan. It shall be the policy of the Division 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 Monroe County. 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.

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