

NASSAU COUNTY
OFFICE OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
FOR THE HUD CONSOLIDATED STRATEGY AND PLAN

December 1994
Revised June 1995
Revised March 2005
Revised May 2010
Revised June 2015

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Nassau County Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) is the overall administrative agent for the Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), and the Emergency Solutions (ESG) Grants Program, which are all funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These programs are intended to support the goals of providing decent housing, providing a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities for low and moderate income people.

Starting in 1995, HUD is requesting grantees, such as Nassau County, to consolidate the submission requirements for all of the above formula grant programs in order to promote coordinated neighborhood and community development strategies to revitalize communities. The requirements of the Consolidated Plan submission also create the opportunity for citizen participation to occur in a comprehensive context. As required by 24 CFR Part 91, in the development of its Consolidated Strategy and Plan, the Nassau County Office of Housing and Community Development will follow a detailed Citizen Participation Plan.

The Citizen Participation Plan was made available for citizen comment during the Consolidated Plan comment period. All comments received regarding the Citizen Participation Plan will be summarized and included in the final Consolidated Plan submitted to HUD.

II. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Citizen Participation Plan incorporates the following major provisions:

- A. Provides for and encourages citizen participation, with particular emphasis on participation by persons of low and moderate income who are residents of slum and blighted areas and of areas in which Federal housing and community development funds are proposed to be used;
- B. Provides citizens with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information, and records relating to the amount of funds available to Nassau County, and Nassau County's proposed use of funds;
- C. Provides for technical assistance to groups representative of persons of low and moderate income that request such assistance in developing proposals with the level and type of assistance to be determined by the Nassau County OHCD;
- D. Provides for public hearings to obtain citizen views and to respond to proposals and questions at all stages of the community development program, including at least the development of needs, the review of proposed activities, and review of program performance, which hearings shall be held after adequate notice, at times and

- locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries, and with accommodation for the handicapped;
- E. Provides for a timely-written answer to written comments, complaints and grievances, within 20 working days where practicable; and
 - F. Identifies 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. PLAN ELEMENTS

A. Participation

To encourage citizen participation, the Nassau County OHCD will hold two public hearings. The first public hearing will be a needs hearing to provide information about the consolidated planning process, the funding anticipated to be received by Nassau, and past performance. A summary of fair housing issues and affordable housing needs would also be discussed. Attendees will be encouraged to provide testimony regarding housing and community development needs. A second public hearing will be held to present the proposed strategy and use of funds. As with the first hearing, attendees will be encouraged to comment and provide input on the consolidated strategy and plan and the County's fair and affordable housing programs. The OHCD will distribute information to agencies, organizations and groups that are involved with housing and community development, encouraging them to participate. The OHCD will also encourage participation by public housing residents through contact with public housing management and/or public housing tenants associations.

Announcement of the Draft Consolidated Plan will be published in *Newsday*, a newspaper of general circulation, as well as on the OHCD website, providing for a 30 day comment period. The Draft Consolidated Plan will be made available at Nassau County Office of Housing and Community Development and on the OHCD website for review by Consortium Communities, County and local agencies and the not-for-profit sector. Reasonable opportunity to comment on substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan will be provided. Substantial amendments will be defined as changes in use of funding from one eligible activity to another; and addition or deletion of an established Consolidated Plan strategy. Substantial changes shall not include: transfers of a modest amount of funds from an existing line to another existing project line without material changes to either project in terms of beneficiaries or locations; or transfers of left-over funds from a completed project to an existing project without material change in terms of beneficiaries or locations. Notices will be published in *Newsday* providing for a 30 day comment period.

HOME and Emergency Solutions Grants activities will be selected based on an annual competitive funding round. Projects will be selected based upon the capacity

of the organization to carry out the activity; the extent the project benefits low income persons; matching contributions available; market and financial feasibility; and site and design factors. Other rating factors and weighting criteria will be outlined in a Notice of Funding Availability published at the start of the Annual Plan coordination process or when such funding might become available.

The County's overall approach toward selecting Community Development projects is to permit each Consortium community to define its own needs, delineate its own target improvement area, and to develop programs to meet the target area needs, within the context of an overall Countywide approach for the entire Consolidated Plan.

As an additional method of encouraging citizen participation, the 8 larger consortium members, which include the towns of Hempstead, Oyster Bay and North Hempstead, the cities of Long Beach and Glen Cove, and the villages of Hempstead, Freeport, and Rockville Centre, will hold public hearings where citizens are provided information concerning the CDBG program and are given the opportunity to comment and express their views on the program.

In addition, the OHCD distributes information to agencies, organizations and groups that are involved with housing and community development encouraging them to participate.

B. Consolidated Plan Coordination

To further coordinate County efforts on the Consolidated Plan, a team will be established, including representatives from the Long Island Coalition for the Homeless (Continuum of Care), Nassau County Planning Department, and various County health and human services departments, as well as representatives from public housing authorities. These representatives will provide input to County Staff and consultants in the preparation of the Consolidated Plan and will help coordinate information gathering.

C. Access to Meetings and Information

The Nassau County Office of Housing and Community Development will provide reasonable and timely access to meetings, information, and records relating to the Consolidated Plan. All notices for public hearings will be published at least 10 days prior to the date of the hearing in order to provide a reasonable notice period. Where feasible, 14 days notice will be provided, however HUD does not establish a required notice period. Notices will be published in the Nassau County Newsday, a publication of general circulation and Nassau County's official newspaper. Said notice will be placed in a prominent section of the newspaper.

As part of the citizen participation process, the larger consortium member communities will conduct public hearings regarding their individual CD programs.

Public notices will be published by each community at least 10 days prior to hearings; notices will be published in local newspapers or newspaper of general circulation, and copies of the notices will be posted at City/Village/Town Halls, community development offices, libraries, post offices, local schools, places of worship, community centers, and/or other public gathering places, as appropriate.

Public hearings conducted by the County will provide the public with more detailed information on CDBG, HOME and Emergency Solutions Grants Programs including: the amount of funds available, types of eligible and ineligible activities, proposed programs/projects, and the percentage and dollar amount of the programs' estimated benefit to low and moderate income persons.

Records relating to the County's use of funds will be available to the public in the form of the Consolidated Plan, Grantee Performance Report (GPR), and other documents submitted to HUD upon grant close-outs. As previously indicated, the Nassau County OHCD will publish announce that the proposed funding allocations are available for review at OHCD in *Newsday*, a newspaper of general circulation and on the OHCD website. The Draft Consolidated Plan will be made available at Nassau County Office of Housing and Community Development for review, so that citizens are afforded sufficient opportunity to review and provide comments on the document. Citizens will be provided a period of not less than 30 days to review the document and make comments. A summary of comments and responses will be incorporated into the Consolidated Plan document.

Nassau County OHCD will also publish summaries of substantial amendments to the Plan, and performance reports, in *Newsday*. A 30 day comment period will be provided for substantial amendments, and a 15 day comment period will be provided for performance reports. Should a citizen or interested party seek information on other program records not covered by the above, the Nassau County OHCD Director will determine whether the request is appropriate in accordance with County policy and/or the Freedom of Information Act. Information and records will be available for inspection at the Nassau County OHCD, or at the local City Hall, Village Hall, Town Hall, or CD Office, Monday through Friday, during normal work hours.

D. Technical Assistance

The Nassau County OHCD will be responsible for providing technical assistance in developing proposals to groups representative of low and moderate income persons. In providing such assistance, the Nassau County OHCD Director will consider the scope of the group's proposal; the need for the project; the proposed beneficiaries; the group's past experience and background; and the group's ability to undertake the activity. Technical assistance may take the following forms, depending on the project scope and its impact on the community or identified need:

- application or proposal development
- concept and/or site planning

- environmental assessment
- financial analysis
- meetings with community and business groups
- seed money for architectural or engineering feasibility reports
- management coordination, including compliance with federal contracting procedures and other related regulations.

E. Public Hearings

Prior to the submission of the Nassau County Consolidated Plan, two public hearings will be held by the Nassau County OHCD, and one by each of the larger consortium members. The purpose of the hearings will be to obtain views of citizens, public agencies and other interested parties, and to respond to proposals and comments at all stages of the consolidated submission process by identifying housing and community development needs, reviewing the proposed use of funds, and reviewing program performance.

Public hearings will be held at convenient times and locations. The locations will be accessible to actual or proposed beneficiaries, including the elderly and handicapped. Program amendments will also be subject to the public hearing process; this aspect will be undertaken by the OHCD.

F. Grievances/Comments

The Nassau County OHCD Director will be responsible for responding to all written comments and grievances. Every effort will be made by the Director to respond in writing within 20 working days from the date of receipt of the written complaint or comment. In cases where additional information is required in order to properly respond to the complaint or comment, this will be documented in writing to the complainant or commenter, and a full response provided at a stated later date.

In the event that a grievance or dispute cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the Nassau County OHCD, a copy of all correspondence regarding the grievance shall be forwarded to the New York Area Office of HUD for further guidance and resolution.

G. Needs of Non-English Speaking Residents

In cases of public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate, efforts will be made by the Nassau County OHCD to distribute public hearing material in the needed language. Said material would cover a description of HUD's Consolidated Plan process, a list of the types of eligible and ineligible CDBG, HOME and ESG activities, the amount of funds available to the County, the County's past accomplishments, and the proposed programs of the community or the County overall, depending on the circumstances.

H. Displacement

It is the policy of the County of Nassau in formulating and carrying out its Community Development Block Grant and HOME Programs to include projects which will minimize, to the greatest extent feasible, the direct, permanent, involuntary displacement of households. Projects which are deemed beneficial but which may cause such displacement may be included in the program only if it has been demonstrated that such displacement is necessary and vital to the project and efforts have been taken to reduce the number of households required to be displaced. Further, it is the policy of the Nassau Urban County Community Development Program to include such projects which may cause displacement only when it has been clearly demonstrated that the goals and anticipated accomplishments of the project clearly outweigh the adverse effects of displacement imposed upon households who must relocate.

It is the policy of the Nassau Urban County Community Development Program to provide relocation assistance to all households permanently displaced by the acquisition of real property as required and in compliance with HUD regulations implementing the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-646), and Section 104(d) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended.

Further, it is the policy of the Nassau County Office of Housing and Community Development to provide relocation assistance to all low and moderate income households who are directly, involuntarily, and permanently displaced by, or for, the assisted activities of code enforcement, demolition or rehabilitation; or, who are displaced by the acquisition of real property which is excluded from HUD regulations implementing Public Law 91-646. This assistance will be provided expressly for the purpose of mitigating the adverse effects to low and moderate income households who must be displaced in order to carry out an approved project. This assistance will include the following:

- a. The provision of housing counseling and referrals to comparable housing as necessary prior to displacement;
- b. The issuance of priority status for the Housing Choice Voucher Program for households income qualified and relocating within the jurisdiction of Nassau County; and
- c. The provision of relocation benefits and moving expense payments for each household displaced.