

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

September 26, 2019



Citizen Participation Plan

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON ~ 910 Cleveland Avenue ~ Mount Vernon, WA 98273

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

The City of Mount Vernon receives an annual entitlement of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for housing and community development activities that primarily assist low-income and moderate-income persons. In accordance with HUD regulations (24 CFR 91.105), the City is required to have and follow a detailed Citizen Participation Plan that sets forth policies and procedures for engaging the public in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the City's CDBG programs, including:

- Citizen Participation Plan
- Assessment of Fair Housing
- Consolidated Plan
- Annual Action Plan
- Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report
- Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program

This Citizen Participation Plan emphasizes involvement by low and moderate-income persons, especially those living in low and moderate-income neighborhoods. The City will take whatever actions are appropriate to encourage the participation of all citizens, including minorities and persons with limited English speaking proficiency, persons with disabilities, and residents of public and assisted housing. This Citizen Participation Plan is available to the public.

B. Definitions:

Annual Action Plan (AAP): This document details yearly approved funding allocations to specific eligible projects and activities. It is submitted to HUD 45 days prior to the start of the City's program year, which begins on July 1, and is developed in accordance with federal regulations (24 CFR 91).

Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH): This document refers to an analysis performed in accordance with requirements for consultation and community participation that includes a review of fair housing data, an assessment of fair housing issues and contributing factors, and an identification of fair housing priorities and goals. The AFH is conducted in compliance with a HUD-developed assessment tool, and is conducted every five years and prior to the development of the Consolidated Plan. The AFH replaces the previously required Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI).

Citizen Participation Plan: This plan is prepared to facilitate and encourage public participation and involvement in the Consolidated Plan process (including the AFH) and the City's CDBG program, especially by low- and moderate-income persons. The plan identifies the public participation requirements as identified by federal regulations (24 CFR 91).

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR): The CFR is the general and permanent rules and regulations published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the US Government.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program: This is a federal grant program administered by HUD. The program allocates money to eligible cities and counties throughout the United States, primarily to assist low- and moderate-income households and neighborhoods. The grant program may be used for such activities as housing rehabilitation, affordable housing assistance, community services, and community development activities such as construction or rehabilitation of community facilities and economic development.

Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER): This document reports on the City's annual achievements relative to the goals in the Consolidated Plan and the activities in the Annual Plan. The report is prepared annually by the City in accordance with federal regulations (24 CFR Part 91), and is submitted to HUD within 90 days of program year end.

Consolidated Plan: This is a five-year planning document that establishes the City's priorities and strategies for use of HUD-administered funding. The Consolidated Plan identifies housing, economic, and community development needs and prioritizes funding to meet those needs. It is developed in accordance with federal regulations (24 CFR Part 91) and is submitted to HUD 45 days prior to the start of the City's program year.

Consolidated Plan Documents: These include the Consolidated Plan, the Assessment of Fair Housing, the Annual Action Plan, the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report, and any Substantial Amendments thereto.

Continuum of Care: This means the group organized to carry out the responsibilities required under 24 CFR 578 and that is composed of representatives of organizations, including nonprofit homeless providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless veterans, and homeless and formerly homeless persons to the extent these groups are represented within the geographic area and are available to participate.

Low- and Moderate-Income Persons: These are individuals within households earning less than 80 percent of the area median income. They are broken down into the following income designations:

- **Extremely Low-Income:** Individuals within households with incomes less than 30 percent of the area median family income, adjusted for household size.

- **Low-Income:** Individuals within households with incomes between 31 and 50 percent of the area median family income, adjusted for household size.
- **Moderate-Income:** Individuals within households with incomes between 51 and 80 percent of the area median family income, adjusted for household size.

Low- and Moderate-Income Neighborhood: In general, this is defined as a census tract or block group where a minimum of 51 percent of the residents have low or moderate incomes. In certain jurisdictions that do not have an adequate number of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods under this definition, the definition may be expanded to include the twenty-five percent of the jurisdiction’s census tracts or block groups with the highest percentage of residents with low or moderate incomes.

Program Year: The "program year" chosen by the City of Mount Vernon is July 1 through June 30 of each year.

Public Hearing: This is a public meeting that has been publicly noticed in a local newspaper of general circulation, or noticed in a fashion which otherwise follows local procedures for formal noticing of public hearings. Public hearings are required prior to the adoption of the AFH, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and substantial amendments to any of the Consolidated Plan documents.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): This is the federal agency which administers and provides guidance for the Consolidated Plan Process and use of certain federal funds, including CDBG.

C. Lead Agency: The Office of the Mayor of the City of Mount Vernon is the lead agency for the administration of the CDBG Program.

D. Effective Date: Subsequent to the initial public comment period, it shall be effective until the City amends or replaces it.

II. CONSOLIDATED PLANNING PROCESS

The primary purpose of the programs covered by this Citizen Participation Plan is to improve communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and/or economic opportunities, principally for low and moderate-income people. CDBG is a flexible program that provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community needs. The City is responsible for developing its own priorities and programs within HUD guidelines through the Consolidated Planning process. To develop and implement an effective program, the City actively engages residents, local and regional agencies, the Continuum of Care, businesses, developers, nonprofit institutions, philanthropic organizations, and community-based and faith-based organizations at each stage of the process, including:

- Identification of housing and community development needs;

- Development of a Five-Year Consolidated Plan that establishes the City’s needs, program goals, and funding priorities;
- Preparation of an Annual Plan that outlines the proposed use of each year’s allocation;
- Preparation of a Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) that provides an account of expenditures and program accomplishments;
- Development of an Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH);
- Consideration of substantial amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Plan, CAPER, and AFH; and
- Providing for public comment and hearings for proposed plans.

III. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

A. Citizen Participation Plan

The Citizen Participation Plan is designed to facilitate and encourage public participation in the Consolidated Plan process, including the development of the AFH. In particular, the Citizen Participation Plan seeks to encourage the involvement of low- and moderate-income persons. The City of Mount Vernon will use the following procedures for the adoption and any subsequent changes to its Citizen Participation Plan:

- Public notice in the Skagit Valley Herald newspaper in English and Spanish as well as notice on the City’s website in advance of, or concurrent with, the start of a 15-day public comment period;
- During the 15-day public review and comment period, the document will be available for review at the following locations:
 - Mount Vernon City Hall
 - Mount Vernon City Library
 - Online at the City of Mount Vernon website www.mountvernonwa.gov
- Following the 15-day public review and comment period, the Citizen Participation Plan will be in effect. Any change in the public participation process as outlined in this document will require an amendment to the Citizen Participation Plan. Any amendments will follow the same steps as noted in this section.

B. Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH)

The Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) is a planning document prepared in accordance with HUD regulations 24 CFR 91.105 and 24 CFR 5.150 through 5.156. The AFH includes an analysis of fair housing data, assesses fair housing issues and contributing factors, and identifies the City’s fair housing priorities and goals for affirmatively furthering fair housing. The City will follow the process and procedures described below in the development of its AFH.

1. HUD-approved Data for Public Review

As soon as practicable, the City will make available to the public the HUD-approved data and other supplemental information that the City plans to incorporate into its AFH. The City will make this data available no later than sixty (60) calendar days after the initiation of the AFH document.

2. Stakeholder Consultation and Citizen Outreach

In the development of the AFH, the City will consult with other public and private agencies including, but not limited to, the following:

- Local public housing authorities
- Other assisted housing providers
- Social service providers including those focusing on services to minorities, families with children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS and their families, homeless persons, and other protected classes
- Community-based and regionally-based organizations that represent protected class members and organizations that enforce fair housing laws
- Regional government agencies involved in metropolitan-wide planning and transportation responsibilities

A variety of mechanisms may be utilized to solicit input from these entities. These include telephone or personal interviews, mail surveys, internet-based feedback and surveys, focus groups, and/or consultation workshops.

3. Public Hearing

To obtain the views of the general public on AFH-related data and affirmatively furthering fair housing in the City’s housing and community development programs, the City will conduct at least one public hearing before the draft AFH is published for comment.

4. Public Display and Comment Period

The draft AFH will be placed on display for a period of no less than thirty (30) calendar days to encourage public review and comment. The public notice shall include a brief summary of the content and purpose of the draft AFH, the dates of the public display and comment period, the locations where copies of the proposed document can be examined, how comments will be accepted, when the document will be considered for action by the City Council, and the anticipated submission date to HUD. The draft AFH will be made available at the public library, public housing authority, and on the City website (www.mountvernonwa.gov). In addition, upon request, the document will be provided in a form accessible to persons with disabilities.

5. Comments Received on the Draft AFH

The City Project Development Manager in the Mayor’s Office or his/her designee will accept all public comments during the 30-day public display and comment period (see IX, pg. 11). The City will consider any public comments or views received in writing, or orally at the public hearings, in preparing the final AFH. A

summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons why, will be attached to the final AFH for submission to HUD.

6. Submission to HUD

All written or oral testimony provided will be considered in preparing the final AFH. The AFH will be submitted to HUD 270 days before the Consolidated Plan is due. The City's first AFH is due October 4, 2022.

C. Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan

The Consolidated Plan is a five-year plan that identifies the needs of low- and moderate-income persons and areas of the City and sets forth a five-year strategy to address those needs. The Action Plan identifies the specific needs to be addressed each year based on the priorities established in the Consolidated Plan's five-year strategy.

Community input is essential to determining housing and community development needs and priorities. The following steps outline the opportunities for public involvement in the CP and AAP:

- Publicly notice and conduct a **public hearing to solicit input on needs and priorities** during preparation of the draft CP and/or AAP. Notice of the hearing will be published in English and Spanish in the Skagit Valley Herald newspaper and on the City's website at least 15 days in advance of the meeting.
- Publicly notice and conduct a **30-day review and comment period** for the draft CP and/or AAP. The Project Development Manager in the Mayor's Office or his/her designee will accept written comments during the 30-day public review and comment period (see IX, pg. 11). During this period a complete draft of the CP and/or AAP will be made available to the public at the following locations:
 - Mount Vernon City Hall
 - Mount Vernon City Library
 - Online at the City of Mount Vernon website www.mountvernonwa.gov
- Conduct a **public hearing** before the Mount Vernon City Council prior to the adoption of the CP and/or AAP. Notice of the public hearing will be published in English and Spanish in the Skagit Valley Herald newspaper and on the City's website at least 15 days in advance of the meeting. Notice of a public hearing may be combined with notice of a 30-day public review and comment period when both apply to the same document.
- In preparing the final CP and/or AAP documents, careful consideration will be given to all comments and views expressed by the public, whether given as verbal testimony at the public hearing or submitted in writing during the review and comment period. The final documents will each have a section that present all comments, in addition to explanations why any comments were not accepted (if applicable).

Submission to HUD

The CP/AAP will be submitted to HUD at least 45 days before the start of the program year, which begins July 1.

D. Amendments to AFH, CP and AAP

The City shall follow the following procedure to amend its AFH, CP or AAP, as needed.

There are two (2) types of amendments that may occur: minor amendments and substantial amendments.

The City of Mount Vernon defines a **Substantial Amendment** as:

- a proposed use of CDBG funds not previously identified/approved in the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan; or
- a change in the allocation priorities or in the method of distribution of funds; or
- a change in the use of funds from one eligible activity to another that exceeds ten percent (10%) of the total current CDBG grant allocation; or
- making a change to the previously adopted AFH as a result of a material change in circumstances affecting the information on which the AFH was based to the extent that the analysis, the fair housing contributing factors, or the priorities and goals of the AFH no longer reflect actual circumstances (for instance, a significant change that impacts the City's ability to carry out the AFH, such as new significant contributing factors, civil rights findings, a substantial change in demographics used, a Presidentially declared disaster, etc.); or resulting from a written notification provided by HUD identifying a material change that HUD believes warrants revisions to the AFH.

All other changes to the method of distribution or investment strategy that do not meet the criteria defined above will be considered **minor amendments**. Any minor amendments will be made administratively and will be incorporated into the City's CAPER at the end of the program year. Minor amendments maintain the integrity of the plan and do not include any substantial change in policy or in funding priorities while still maintaining flexibility in meeting the goals and objectives.

Public Review and Comment Period for proposed Substantial Amendment: The public will be notified of a proposed Substantial Amendment and will have an opportunity to review it and comment on it. The City will use the following procedures for the adoption of any Substantial Amendments to Consolidated Plan documents:

- A 30-day public review and comment period for the draft Substantial Amendment.
 - Public notice of the review and comment period will be published in English and Spanish in the Skagit Valley Herald newspaper as well as on

the City’s website in advance of, or concurrent with, the start of a 30-day public comment period. The notice will list the locations where the document(s) will be available for review.

- During the 30-day review and comment period, a draft of the Substantial Amendment will be available at Mount Vernon City Hall, Mount Vernon City Library, and online at the City website www.mountvernonwa.gov
- A public hearing before the City Council prior to adoption of the Substantial Amendment.
 - Notice of the public hearing will be published in English and Spanish in the Skagit Valley Herald newspaper and on the City’s website at least 7 days in advance of the meeting. Notice of a public hearing may be combined with notice of a 30-day public review and comment period when both apply to the same document.

In preparing the final Substantial Amendment documents, careful consideration will be given to all comments and views expressed by the public, whether given as verbal testimony at the public hearing or submitted in writing during the review and comment period. The final documents will each have a section that presents all comments, plus explanations why any comments were not accepted (if applicable).

E. Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)

Every year, the City of Mount Vernon must submit to HUD a Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER). The CAPER analyzes progress towards the goals established in the Consolidated Plan and implemented through the Annual Action Plan. The report also provides information on the performance of funded projects in relationship to HUD and local program objectives. The following steps outline the opportunities for public involvement in the CAPER:

Public Notice and Comment Period: A notice of the public comment period for the draft CAPER is advertised in English and Spanish in the Skagit Valley Herald newspaper and on the City’s website in advance of, or concurrent with, the start of a 15-day public comment period.

Public Review: During the 15-day public comment period, the document will be available for review at Mount Vernon City Hall, Mount Vernon City Library, and online at the City website www.mountvernonwa.gov.

Public Comments: During the 15-day public comment period, written comments must be directed to the Project Development Manager in the Mayor’s Office (see IX, pg. 11). The City will consider any comments or views of City residents received in in preparing the final CAPER. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons why, will be attached to the final CAPER for submission to HUD.

Submission to HUD: The CAPER is submitted annually to HUD within 90 days of the close of the program year. The City of Mount Vernon program year runs from July 1 – June 30 every year.

IV. PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

As required by law, the City will provide the public with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the data or content of the Consolidated Plan, as well as the proposed, actual, and past use of funds covered by this Citizen Participation Plan. The City will also provide reasonable public access to records about any uses of these funds during the previous five years.

Also, as required by law, the City will provide the public with reasonable and timely access to local meetings relating to the proposed or actual use of funds (such as City Council meetings).

The City publishes notices of public meetings, public review and comment periods, and public hearings in English and Spanish in the Skagit Valley Herald, a newspaper of general circulation, to encourage involvement by all of its residents, particularly low- and moderate-income residents, residents of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, minorities, non-English speaking persons, and persons with disabilities who may benefit from the use of HUD-funded activities. Notices shall also be posted on the City of Mount Vernon website accessible at www.mountvernonwa.gov

V. PROCEDURES FOR COMPLAINTS OR GRIEVANCES

Complaints, inquiries, and grievances shall be submitted in writing to the Project Development Manager in the Mayor’s Office (see IX, pg. 11). A written response shall be provided to the complaining or aggrieved party within 15 working days of the date of receipt of the written complaint or grievance.

VI. ACCOMMODATION OF PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The City complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and will make accommodations for persons with special needs. Public hearings regarding the Consolidated Plan documents will be held at a location accessible to people with disabilities. Additional provisions will be made for people with disabilities when requests are made at least 5 working days prior to a hearing. Public notices will include information on how to contact the City to request accommodation. Translators will also be provided for people who do not speak English when requests are made at least 5 working days prior to a hearing.

VII. DISPLACEMENT

If, as a result of a program activity, any residential displacement and relocation must occur, the City ensures that it will develop an Anti-Displacement and Relocation Plan in connection with that project in accordance with federal regulations. Specifically, the City will comply with the anti-displacement and relocation requirements of the Uniform Relocation Act and the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, and implementing regulations of 24 CFR Part 42.

VIII. GENERAL CDBG TIMELINE

July	Beginning of CDBG Program Year
August	Draft annual CAPER
September	Publish public notice of 15-day comment period for Draft CAPER
On or before Sept 28	Submit Final CAPER to HUD
December/January	Publish 15-day notice of public hearing on needs and priorities
December/January	Public hearing on needs and priorities
February	Draft AAP
March	Publish public notice of 30-day comment period for Draft AAP
April	Public hearing on draft AAP; Approval of AAP by City Council
On or before May 15	Submit AAP to HUD

IX. CITY POINT OF CONTACT

All communication regarding the CPP, AFH, CP, AAP, CAPER, comments, complaints, reasonable accommodation for disabled persons, translation services, or other elements shall be directed to:

City of Mount Vernon Mayor's Office
Attn: Project Development Manager
910 Cleveland Avenue
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Phone: (360) 336-6211
Email: mvmayor@mountvernonwa.gov