

TOWNSHIP OF WOODBRIDGE, NEW
JERSEY

**Community Development Block Grant
Citizen Participation Plan**



December 2018
Revised April 2020

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SUMMARY

As an Entitlement Grantee in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, Woodbridge is required to set forth its policies and procedures for citizen participation in the process of developing *and* implementing the **5-Year CDBG Consolidated Plan** and all its integral components; such as annual action plans, annual performance evaluation reports and any amendments. In addition, citizens may participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of the specific activities described within the **Consolidated Plan** and funded through the CDBG Program.



Woodbridge encourages participation by low- and moderate-income persons, specifically those living in areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used.

Woodbridge further encourages the participation of residents of public and assisted housing in the process of developing and implementing the **Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans**. Woodbridge provides information to the Housing Authority about any activities related to the Authority's housing developments and surrounding communities. The Housing Authority is expected to share this information with participants in its own required planning process.

Woodbridge provides citizens with a reasonable opportunity to comment on *this* Citizen Participation Plan (including any substantial amendments to this Plan). The Citizen Participation Plan is a public document. It will be made accessible to those persons with disabilities and/or non-English speaking persons upon request.

A. Purpose

The Citizen Participation Plan is designed to serve the following specific purposes:

- 1) To present in a logical sequence the various components of the **Consolidated Plan**.
- 2) To identify the responsible departments or agencies of the Township government that administer the various activities relating to the **Consolidated Plan**.
- 3) To clarify the opportunities that citizens, community organizations and neighborhood groups and others have to work with municipal officials in developing each component of the **Consolidated Plan** and the activities within.

- 4) To indicate the alternate courses of action the CDBG Program regulations make available to citizens, organizations and local government.

Any questions or comments on substantive issues or the adequacy of the Citizen Participation Plan should be referred to Marta Darden, ACIP, PP, Director of the Department of Planning and Development, Township of Woodbridge, One Main Street, Woodbridge, NJ 07095, (732) 602-6004. Email: marta.lefsky@twp.woodbridge.nj.us

DEVELOPMENT STAGE

B. Developmental Mechanisms

To *develop* the **Consolidated Plan** (once every five years) and each subsequent **Annual Action Plan** (one each year for five years), Woodbridge makes information available to and also collects information *from*:

- 1) Citizens, Citizen Organizations, Community Groups, Neighborhood Organizations
- 2) Local governments
- 3) Public Agencies
- 4) Other interested parties

Information will be compiled for reference and made available; including:

- 1) Amount of assistance Woodbridge expects to receive with regard to:
 - a) grant funds
 - b) program income
- 2) Range of activities that *may* be undertaken
 - a) including estimated amount that will specifically benefit persons of low- and moderate-income
- 3) *Plans to minimize displacement of persons
- 4) *Plans to assist any persons displaced
 - a) Types of assistance
 - b) Levels of assistance

*Even if Woodbridge expects no displacement to occur

This information is presented by Woodbridge Township staff at various public hearings and informal meeting events or forums. Citizens may also review this information directly by appointment at the Department of Planning and Development, One Main Street, Woodbridge, NJ 07095, (732) 602-6004.

Email: marta.lefsky@twp.woodbridge.nj.us Additionally, information is available through the Woodbridge website, www.twp.woodbridge.nj.us

Adequate advance notice is given to participants (including sufficient information about the event subject matter) in order to allow for informed comment, proposals or recommendations. An event is advertised through the minimum of one of the following method(s) (depending on event type) at least two weeks prior to event:

- 1) Non-legal section of those newspapers with general circulation within the Township – a Notice of Hearing (for Public Hearings)
- 2) Local Access (television)
- 3) Letters to individual citizens, groups, etc.
- 4) Township Website
- 5) Other ways

All events are held at times and locations convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries. All public hearings will be held in the Municipal Building, One Main Street, or other suitable location to allow greater participation. Hearings will be held at various times, including the evening, to allow for greater participation.

In accordance with the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), in emergency circumstances, in-person public hearings are not required. The grantee will make a good faith effort to provide an opportunity for the public to participate using whatever means are available, including electronic communications and virtual meetings. Grantees may meet public hearing requirements with virtual public hearings if: 1) national/local health authorities recommend social distancing and limiting public gatherings for public health reasons; and 2) virtual hearings provide reasonable notification and access for citizens in accordance with the grantee's certifications, timely responses from local officials to all citizen questions and issues, and public access to all questions and responses.

Persons who are elderly or handicapped or who would otherwise be unable to attend may receive transportation to these hearings if such transportation can be arranged. Such persons should contact the Department of Planning and Development, Township of Woodbridge, One Main Street, Woodbridge, NJ 07095, (732) 602-6004. Email: marta.lefsky@twp.woodbridge.nj.us. The Department of Planning and Development will be responsible for arranging transportation and notifying individuals of the availability of thereof. Such request should be made at least two (2) working days prior to a public hearing date.

Persons, other than those addressed above, who have disabilities, will receive assistance to participate based on a case-by-case evaluation to ensure the format provided is accessible to them.

When a reasonable amount of non-English speaking citizens are expected to participate, their needs are met by providing an appropriate translator if such an arrangement can be made.

Type of Event:

- 1) Initial Public Hearing (held prior to publishing proposed Consolidated Plan and/or **Annual Action Plan**) – to obtain the views of citizens on:
 - a) housing
 - b) community development needs
 1. priority non-housing community development needs
- 2) Meetings
 - a) citizens have reasonable and timely access to local meetings
- 3) Forums
 - a) held for specific topics and audience (e.g., housing)

Information gathered from the above events are considered and incorporated when the Township prepares the **Consolidated Plan** and/or associated **Annual Action Plan(s)**.

C. Availability Mechanisms

In order to receive further public participation, Woodbridge makes available a draft of the proposed Consolidated Plan and/or associated *Annual Action Plan* so that the following may have a reasonable opportunity to examine its contents and submit comments:

- 1) Citizens, Citizen Organizations, Community Groups, Neighborhood Organizations
- 2) Local governments
- 3) Public Agencies
- 4) Other interested parties

A *summary* of the proposed Consolidated Plan and/or associated **Annual Action Plan** and notice of a second public hearing is published in the non-legal section of newspapers with general circulation within the Township as well as on the Township website. This will be completed at least two weeks prior to the public hearing.

The summary includes:

- 1) Content of **Consolidated Plan** (and/or **Annual Action Plan**)
- 2) Purpose of **Consolidated Plan** (and/or **Annual Action Plan**)
- 3) List of locations where entire proposed Consolidated Plan (and/or **Annual Action Plan**) is available
 - a) a reasonable amount of *free* copies will be made available

Copies of the *entire* proposed Consolidated Plan (and/or **Annual Action Plan**) are available at:

- 1) Municipal Building

2) Township web-site, www.twp.woodbridge.nj.us

Citizens will have sufficient time to review documents in order to make informed comments. Citizens will have **30 days** to make comments about the proposed **Consolidated Plan** and/or **Annual Action Plan**. Comments can be made by:

- 1) Attending 2nd Public Hearing
 - a) In writing
 - b) Verbally
- 2) Contacting the Department of Planning and Development
 - a) In writing, via mail or e-mail
 - b) Verbally by phone



All comments and views will be considered in preparing the *final* **Consolidated Plan** and/or **Annual Action Plan**. A summary of all comments will be made part of the *final* **Consolidated Plan** and/or **Annual Action Plan**. The final **Plan** will also include a summary of comments not accepted and reasons therefor.

IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

D. Amendment(s) to the Consolidated Plan or an Annual Action Plan

In the event the Township elects:

- 1) Not to complete an activity contained in the **Consolidated Plan or an Annual Action Plan**;
- 2) To complete an activity other than those described in the **Plan**;
- 3) To make substantial changes in priorities or distribution of funds; or
- 4) To change the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity;

It will afford affected citizens the opportunity to comment on any substantial change. The following criteria will be used to determine what change in the Township's planned or actual activities constitute a "substantial amendment":

- 1) A national goal changes (under which a project activity was proposed and approved);
- 2) The cost of a proposed activity increases by one half (50%) or more when the activity is actually undertaken;
- 3) The physical location of an activity is changed;
 - a) When a specific location was defined and approved

- b) When more than one half (50%) of the locations change under an activity with multiple locations
- 4) The class of beneficiaries changes by more than one half (50%)
- 5) Changes in the use of CDBG funds from one eligible activity to another when the amount of funds being re-allocated is more than one half (50%) of the originally allocated amount.

Citizens will be provided with reasonable notice and opportunity to comment on proposed amendments. This will be accomplished through notification of a public hearing in the non-legal section of with general circulation within the Township and notification on the Township newspapers website. These notices will be published at least two weeks prior to the hearing. However, in accordance with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), in emergency circumstances, expedited procedures must include at least (5) five days notice prior to the hearing and reasonable opportunity to comment of no less than (5) five days. The 5-day period can run concurrently for comments on the action plan amendment and amended citizen participation plans. This authority is in effect through the end of the 2020 program year.

Citizens will have not less than **30 days (or 5 days in accordance with the CARES Act)** to make comments about the proposed amendment(s) prior to any amendment implementation:

- 1) By attending the Public Hearing
 - a) In writing
 - b) Verbally
- 2) Contacting the Department of Planning and Development
 - a) In writing, including via mail or e-mail
 - c) Verbally by phone

A summary of these comments as well as a summary of any comments not accepted and reasons thereof shall be attached to the **Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan** and Amendment(s). The amendment(s) will then be submitted to The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Formal Township approval of all final plans and any amendments will occur during a public Township meeting. Notice of such meeting will be published at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

E. Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reporting (CAPER)

Woodbridge is required to make public annually the CAPER, a written summary and evaluation of accomplishments and performance based on the goals and activities described in the **Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans**. This will be done through making the CAPER available for review by the public. Citizens will be provided with reasonable notice and opportunity to comment on the CAPER. Reasonable notice will be provided through advertisement of the availability of the CAPER in newspapers of general circulation within the Township as well as on the Township website. This notice will be published at least two weeks prior to the availability of the CAPER for review by the public Comments can be made by:

- 1) Contacting the Department of Planning and Development
 - a) In writing, including via mail or e-mail

d) Verbally by phone

There is a *not less than 15 day* period to receive comments on any CAPER prior to submission to HUD. A summary of these comments shall be attached to the final CAPER.

F. Availability of Documents

The following are available to the public upon completion:

- 1) Adopted, final **Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans**
- 2) Substantial Amendments, if any
- 3) Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports

These are available at:

- 1) Department of Planning and Development
- 2) Township website
- 3) Other designated locations

The materials may be available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities. Contact the Department of Planning and Development at 732-602-6004.

G. Technical Assistance

The Department of Planning and Development is available to provide technical assistance to any group that represents persons of low- and moderate-income in developing proposals for funding assistance under any of the programs covered by the **Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans**. Such assistance does not guarantee funding approval.

In addition, staff is available to answer questions concerning the procedures for the development and implementation of the **Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans**.

H. Complaints

The following procedures are followed when handling a complaint from a citizen or organization relating to the **Consolidated Plan** (and/or any Annual Action Plans, amendments, and CAPERs):

- 1) Timely, substantive written response to every written citizen complaint within 15 business days of its receipt, including:
 - a) Township's position on the matter
 - b) Any proposed action

- 2) Responses are prepared by the Department of Planning and Development.

If the Township's response does not resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant, he or she may request a meeting within two (2) weeks of receiving the response. This meeting shall be held within fifteen (15) business days of receipt of this meeting request. Following such meeting, the Township shall notify the complainant of its proposed resolution within fifteen (15) business days of the date of the meeting. If the complainant is not satisfied with this response; he or she may follow the procedure described below:

Citizens or organizations who have followed the procedure described above to resolve complaints may choose to file an official objection with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Newark Field Office, One Newark Center, Newark, NJ 07102. Persons may choose to file a complaint directly to HUD and not follow a local complaint procedure. Following the local complaint procedure is not a prerequisite for filing an objection with HUD. However, citizens are encouraged to bring complaints first to the local level for resolution, since HUD procedures require that Woodbridge respond to any complaint filed. Therefore, the best opportunity for immediate resolution to the problems remains at the Township level.

Complaints should be directed to the Department of Planning and Development, One Main Street, Woodbridge, NJ 07095. The complaint should contain the following information:

- 1) Name and signature of the complainant, or if an organization, the name and signature of the officer of the organization, responsible for the correspondence.
- 2) Address to which the Township's response should be mailed or e-mailed.
- 3) Telephone number and/or e-mail address where the complainant or an individual knowledgeable about the substance of the complaint may be reached during business hours.
- 4) Nature of the complaint, including any relevant information or documentation.
- 5) Recommendation concerning how the complainant desires to have the matter resolved.

I. Conclusion

Woodbridge will follow the above outlined Citizen Participation Plan. The requirements under this Citizen Participation Plan do not restrict the responsibility or authority of Woodbridge for the execution of the **Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plans**.