

TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN

# CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT  
PROGRAM

DRAFT  
5/11/2020

## Introduction

The following plan outlines the citizen participation process for the Franklin Township Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awards grants to entitlement communities to carry out a wide range of community development activities directed toward revitalizing neighborhoods, economic development, and providing improved community facilities and services. The Township must develop a Consolidated Plan through a collaborative process whereby the needs and objectives of the Township's low and moderate income population are outlined and activities funded to meet those needs. According to the program regulations, citizens, non-profit organizations and other interested parties must be afforded adequate opportunity to review and comment on the original citizen participation plan, the consolidated plan, substantial amendments to these plans, and the annual performance report.

The Township has joined the County in a consortium for the HOME program. As the lead agency for the HOME Program the County has developed and implemented a countywide plan that includes Township participation.

## Participation

The following actions will be taken by the Township to encourage participation of low- and moderate income residents in the planning process:

1. Notices about the Community Development Program (including applications for funds) will be sent to organizations within the Township that are concerned with housing and community development activities for low and moderate income persons. Any organization can be added to the mailing list. Program information will be periodically mailed to those who wish to be notified. Notification can also be by electronic mail. At a minimum, notices concerning the following will be sent:
  - Public hearings
  - Application schedule
  - Applications
  - Draft consolidated plan and Action Plan
  - Plan amendments
  - Performance reports
  
2. Notices will be sent to the following newspapers: The **Courier News, Desi Talk-Asian-Indian newspaper, and Latinos Unidos de Nueva Jersey- Hispanic newspaper** and will be published before public hearings as prescribed by federal regulations.
  
3. Information about the program and news updates is posted on the Township web site:

<http://www.franklintwpnj.org>.

4. Technical assistance will be provided by the Township staff or contractor responsible for preparing the program documents for submission to any organization requesting such assistance.
5. Special efforts will be made for outreach and consultation with the following:
  - public housing agencies
  - affordable housing organizations
  - surrounding communities
  - community based organizations
  - minorities
  - non-English speaking persons
  - persons with mobility, visual or hearing impairments.
6. Public hearings will be held at a time and place convenient for the public to attend. Public hearings will be scheduled in the evening as part of the Council work sessions in order to provide maximum participation by residents.
7. At least one community meeting will be held during the year for the census tracts with the highest concentration of low and moderate income families to receive their direct input on the program and services offered by the program.
8. Virtual Hearings and meetings will be conducted if and when required due to social distancing requirements and national or local health emergencies.

### **Access to Information**

Public records will be available at the office of the Township Clerk in accordance with the procedures under the New Jersey Open Public Records Act. The contact information is as follows:

Location: Office of the Township Clerk,  
Franklin Township Municipal Building  
475 DeMott Lane  
Somerset, NJ 08873

### **Anti-displacement**

The Township must minimize displacement of persons and assist any persons displaced by a CDBG activity. If this is the case, the Township must provide a Relocation Assistance Plan that specifies the type and level of assistance that will be made available to persons displaced. The Township will comply with requirements of the Uniform Relocation Act (URA) which are triggered by projects that may involve acquisition, rehabilitation or demolition. Under this Act, the Township is responsible to provide relocation assistance to persons (families, individuals, businesses, non-profit organizations and farms) that are displaced as a direct result of acquisition, rehabilitation, demolition or conversion by a CDBG- assisted project. All property occupants will be issued certain notices on a timely basis.

### **Publishing the Plan**

The Township will publish a summary of its proposed consolidated plan so that citizens have sufficient opportunity to review it and provide comments. The plan summary will be published in May with a 30 day review period before submission to HUD. Copies of the plan will be made available to the public. A copy will also be on file at the Franklin Township Public Library and the Township Clerk's office. The Township must consider the views of citizens, public agencies and other interested parties in preparing its final consolidated submission.

### **Public Hearings**

A minimum of two public hearings per year will be held to obtain citizens' views and to respond to proposals and questions. The hearings will be held at two different stages of the program year: in the beginning and when a draft strategic plan is available. The first hearing will be held by the Township Mayor and Council and address housing and community development needs, development of proposed activities and review of program performance. Hearings will be advertised through mailings, posted on the Township's website, on Council meeting agendas and advertised as a display ad in the official town newspaper a minimum of 14 days before the hearing is held. Notices will also be posted at the Municipal Building and the Franklin Township Library. Mailings will contain notices and requests that recipients post the notice in a public place.

The second public hearing will be held during the 30 day comment period and after the draft plan has been posted for public comment. The hearing will be held in the neighborhood where the majority of the low and moderate income residents reside in a facility that is accessible to the disabled such as a one of the community grade schools such as Pine Grove or Hillside Elementary school pending the completion on the new Neighborhood Youth Center to be located on Lewis Street. The hearing will be held during evening hours to maximize participation.

### **Virtual Hearings**

The Township is authorized to conduct virtual hearings in lieu of a public meeting where persons may gather due to a health emergency if national or local health authorities recommend social distancing and limiting public gatherings for public health reasons and virtual hearings provide reasonable access for citizens and notification to citizens. The process, in accordance with the grantee's certification provide timely responses from local official to all citizen questions and issues public access to all responses.

Under the conditions of the current health emergency caused by COVID-19 a waiver is granted by the US department of Housing and Urban Development through the end of 2020 to utilize virtual hearings in lieu of public hearings and to utilize an expedited hearing process with 5 days' notice to amend the Annual Action Plan and Citizen Participation Plan.

### **Amendments**

The following are considered substantial amendments to the Township's Plan:

- Change in activity that changes the purpose or beneficiaries from the original approved activity.
- A new activity not previously listed and described in the Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan.
- A change in the amount of funds is being transferred between approved program activities within the grant year that exceeds \$25,000.

Amendments to the plan will be published as a public notice and posted on the Township's web site. The Township will wait thirty days from the posting of the change before the amendment takes affect and official notice sent to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). All written and oral comments received at public hearings or submitted to the Grants Coordinator must be addressed, A summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons shall be submitted with the substantial amendment to US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

### **Performance Reports**

The Township must submit an annual performance report to HUD called the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). The CAPER consists of narrative and financial components. This report must include the following:

- Assessment of three-to five years goals and objectives
- Progress in affirmatively furthering fair housing and affordable housing
- Progress in leveraging additional resources
- Citizens comments
- Relationship of the use of CDBG funds to priorities, needs, goals and specific objectives identified in the Consolidated plan

- Changes in program objectives
- Efforts to carry out planned activities in Action Plan
- Economic development activities
- Program income
- Rehabilitation activities

Franklin Township will provide citizens with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on the performance reports. A notice will be published in the newspaper as well as on the website at least fifteen days before the report is submitted to HUD. Copies of the report will be available at the Grant Coordinator's office and the library. Comments or views of citizens received in writing or orally at public hearings must be considered. A summary of the comments must be submitted along with the performance report to HUD. The Township's performance report will be due 90 days after the close of the program year - by November 30. The program year begins September 1 and ends August 31.

### **Complaints**

Every written citizen complaint will be addressed within 15 days, where practicable. The Council will have a summary of the complaint and actions taken to address the complaint. Submission of the consolidated plan and the performance report will include written complaints and a statement as to corrective actions taken to address these complaints.