Citizen Participation Plan

Introduction

The participation of Fort Bend County citizens, stakeholders, and professionals is crucial to the community planning process. Even after adopting a plan, avenues must be made available for necessary changes or additions. Fort Bend County residents will be encouraged to participate throughout all stages of planning, reviewing, and executing community development activities.

The Citizen Participation Plan emphasizes the involvement of low-to-moderate-income (LMI) residents (defined as households earning less than 80% of the area median income), individuals with low English proficiency (LEP), minority groups, as well as persons with mobility, visual, or hearing impairments, as well as citizen stakeholders in general. The Plan outlines how the public can access wide-ranging information, receive technical assistance, comment on critical issues, and receive timely responses to questions.

Procedures

The Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) has been prepared and implemented pursuant to federal regulations (U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Regulations 24 CFR Part 91.105) and Fort Bend County's desire to encourage and support public participation in the development of the documents related to the consolidated planning process.

The purpose of the CPP is to establish a viable means by which residents of Fort Bend County (the County), public agencies, and other interested parties can actively participate in the development of documents related to the consolidated planning process including

- The Consolidated Plan
- The Annual Action Plan
- The Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) and its revisions
- Amendments to Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan(s)
- The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)
- Amendments to the CPP

The actions described in the CPP relate to the planning and expenditure of funds provided to the County by the HUD Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD). CPD entitlement funds received by the County include the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program, HOME-ARP and other grants, as may be added by law.

Encouragement of Citizen Participation

The County strives to encourage and facilitate the participation of its residents in the development of priorities, strategies, and funding allocations related to the consolidated planning process. The County will emphasize the involvement of low- and moderate-income persons,

especially those living in slum and blighted areas, areas designated as a revitalization area, areas where the funds are proposed to be used, and low- and moderate-income neighborhoods where 51% of the residents are at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI).

The County encourages the participation of local and regional institutions, the Continuum of Care, and other organizations (including businesses, developers, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community/faith-based organizations) in the process of developing and implementing the documents related to the consolidated planning process. Also, the County will encourage participation from broadband internet service providers, organizations engaged in narrowing the digital divide, agencies who manage flood prone areas, public land or water resources, and emergency management agencies.

To encourage citizen participation that emphasizes the involvement of low- and moderate income residents, the County will continue to work with public housing authorities, neighborhood groups, and other organizations representing the County's low- and moderate-income areas and residents.

The CPP ensures that all parties, including residents, non-profit organizations, and other interested organizations, are afforded adequate opportunity to review and comment on plans, programs, activities, and reports covering the County's federally funded housing and community development programs. This includes minority populations, people with limited English proficiency, and persons with disabilities.

The County may alter some requirements listed in this CPP based on waivers or suspensions provided by HUD, typically in response to disasters or other emergencies. For example, the County may shorten a public comment period of a consolidated planning document to more quickly respond to a disaster or emergency with HUD approval.

Consolidated Plan

Consolidated Plan details how the County plans to invest its resources to meet the County's ongoing affordable housing, community development, economic development, and public service needs over the next five years.

Fort Bend County Community Development Department (CDD) will develop a new Consolidated Plan every 5 years, as required by 24 CFR Part 91, to continue to receive HUD entitlement funds (i.e., Community Development Block Grant [CDBG], HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), HOME-ARP and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG). The Consolidated Plan identifies needs and goals for community planning and development programs, and housing programs during the designated five-year period.

The Consolidated Plan is a strategic plan and is developed using a collaborative community engagement process that results in a shared strategic vision for how resources are allocated to meet needs.

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The County will hold at least two community meetings while developing the Consolidated Plan to:

- Provide all County residents with an adequate opportunity to participate in an advisory role in assessing community needs and concerns.
- Plan for use of public funding under the Consolidated Plan.
- Develop short-term and long-term goals for community investment, build resiliency, and expand access to opportunity.
- Provide citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties with a forum for input on housing and community development needs and priorities as part of the preparation of the Plan.
- Discuss the amount of funding the County anticipates receiving for HUD entitlement programs, related program income, and the estimated amount of funding under these programs that will benefit LMI households.
- Examine the range of activities that may be implemented per the Plan.

Meeting notices will be published on CDD's website and emailed to interested parties using CDD's interested stakeholder email contact list. The County may also use social media, such as NextDoor, Facebook, and X, to inform the public of meeting times and locations. Meeting locations will be chosen per Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the regulations outlined in 24 CFR Part 8, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the regulations laid out in 28 CFR Parts 35 and 36 (as applicable). In addition to meetings, CDD will conduct a countywide Housing and Community Needs Survey to inform the development of goals and objectives for the Plan.

We will specifically target outreach regarding public engagement opportunities to persons living in areas designated by the County as revitalization areas, slum or blighted areas, or areas where entitlement funds are proposed for use. Residents of predominantly minority neighborhoods, LMI neighborhoods (i.e., an area where at least 51 percent of the residents are LMI), public and assisted housing residents, LEP populations, and persons with disabilities will also be highlighted in outreach efforts.

Once the public participation process for the County's Consolidated Plan has begun, the CCD will make HUD-provided data and any other supplemental information the jurisdiction plans to incorporate into the Plan available to residents, public agencies, and other interested parties. The County may make the HUD-provided data available to the public by cross-referencing it with the data available on HUD's website.

Under 24 CFR 91.105(a)(2), local governments must consult with a variety of public and private agencies and groups when preparing their Consolidated Plans. The County will consult with local and regional institutions, the Continuum of Care, and other organizations (including businesses, developers, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community-

based and faith-based organizations) to develop and implement the Plan. The Plan will document a list of consulted groups and stakeholder organizations.

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Method of Consultation	Feedback
Continuum of Care	Community Coalition		

Draft Document and Public Comments

The County will ensure that citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties have a reasonable opportunity to examine the draft Plan's contents and to submit comments during the public comment period. CDD will post a Public Notice summarizing anticipated funding, proposed activities, identified community needs, and funding priorities in English on its website and in one or more newspapers of general circulation in the county. Public Notices will adhere to the County's LEP Plan and to 24 CFR 91.105 (a)(4). Per 24 CFR 91.105(b)(2), the Public Notice must contain the following information:

- Amount of funds the County is expected to receive
- Proposed activities that will be undertaken
- Estimated funding amount that will benefit LMI residents
- Reference to the County's current Anti-Displacement policy
- Date the public comment period begins
- Date the public comment period closes
- Method(s) for submitting oral or written comments
- Date, location, and time of the public hearing, which may be held in-person or virtually
- Method for requesting a reasonable accommodation to participate in the public hearing
- A location, in-person and/or online, where the public may review a copy of the complete draft plan.

Availability for Review

A copy of the draft Consolidated Plan will be available for a review period of at least 30 days on the CCD website, and—to the extent possible—at public places and other locations throughout the county such as CDD office. The County will make a reasonable number of copies of the Plan available, free of charge, to citizens and groups that request it. The Plan will also be available on the CDD website at Consolidated and Annual Action Plans | Fort Bend County.

CDD will include a summary of public comments and its responses within the Plan, along with a summary of comments either accepted or rejected and the County's rationale, as required by 24 CFR 91.105(c)(3).

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The County will also allow the public to provide additional comments at a Fort Bend County Commissioners Court hearing where the Plan will be presented. CDD will consider any comments or views received in writing or orally at the public hearings while preparing the final Consolidated Plan.

Annual Action Plan

The Annual Action Plan outlines the community's needs, budget priorities, local and federal resources, and proposed activities for the upcoming year. Public hearings and draft documents are necessities in the citizen participation process.

a. Public Hearings

Public hearings will be held at key stages of the consolidated planning process to obtain public input and response regarding community needs, proposed use of funds, proposed strategies and actions for affirmatively furthering fair housing consistent with the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), and program performance.

Pursuant to HUD regulations, the County will conduct a minimum of two (2) public hearings held at different planning stages within the program year prior to submission of the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan to allow for resident participation in the development process. At least one (1) of these hearings will be held during the development of the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan, before the proposed plan is published for comment.

b. Draft Plan(s)

Before the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan is adopted by the County Commissioner's Court and submitted to HUD (i.e., mid-May), the County will make the plan(s) available to citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties for review and will also establish the means to submit comments. Information made accessible to the public will include the amount of grant funds the County expects to receive (including program income), the range of activities to be undertaken, and the anticipated number of low- and moderate-income persons to benefit from funded activities.

The County will publish its Draft Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan for no less than thirty (30) days so that all affected residents will have sufficient opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan(s). A summary describing the contents and purpose of the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan will be published in one or more newspapers of general

circulation. As feasible, the summary will be available in English, Spanish, and other languages.

The notice will detail locations where the entire draft plan(s) will be made available for review. Locations may include

- Fort Bend County-Community Development Department – 301 Jackson Street, Richmond, Texas 77469
- Fort Bend County's Community Development Department Website – Consolidated and Annual Action Plans | Fort Bend County

A reasonable number of free copies will be available at the Fort Bend County, Community Development Department (301 Jackson Street, Richmond, TX), upon request.

The County will consider any comments or views of residents of the community received in writing, or orally at the public hearings, in preparing the final Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons why, shall be attached to the final Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan.

1. Amendments to the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan are divided into two categories: Substantial Amendments and Minor Amendments.
    a. **Substantial Amendments**

Occasionally, it may be necessary for the County to process a Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan or an Annual Action Plan to allow for new activities, modification of existing activities, or other program changes.

Substantial Amendments are subject to the citizen participation process and require formal action by the County's Commissioners Court and submission to HUD by the end of the program year. Unless waived, the County announces Substantial Amendments to the public by publishing a public notice in one or more newspapers of general circulation for a period of thirty (30) days in order to provide the opportunity for the public to review and comment on the proposed Substantial Amendments (15 days for HOME-ARP). The notice will be available in English and may also be available in Spanish and other languages, as feasible. The County will consider all written or oral comments or views received from the public concerning proposed substantial amendments in accordance with 24 CFR 91.105(c)(3). A summary of these comments and views, including comments or views not accepted and the reason why, shall be attached to the substantial amendment.

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When using funds from any program covered by the consolidated plan process, the following criteria will be used by the County for determining what constitutes a Substantial Amendment to its approved Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan.

1. Adding a new activity not previously described in the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan
2. Deleting an activity previously described in the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan
3. Changing the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity or previously described in the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan
4. Changing allocation priorities or changing the method of the distribution of funds
5. Changing an activity total dollar amount allocated or budgeted by more than 25 percent from the amount previously described in an Annual Action Plan or its most recent Substantial Amendment

b. Minor Amendments

Minor Amendments (Administrative Transfers) represent any action that changes an activity budget in an Annual Action Plan by less than twenty-five percent (25%). These require the signature of the County's Community Development Director, or designated representative, but do not require public notice or Commissioner's Court approval.

3. Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH)

The AFH is an analysis of local fair housing landscape and sets locally determined fair housing priorities and goals. The AFH contains

- An analysis of fair housing data
- An assessment of fair housing issues which are local conditions that restrict fair housing choice or access to opportunity
- An assessment of the contributing factors that create, contribute to perpetuate, or increase the severity of one or more fair housing issues
- An identification of fair housing priorities and goals

The AFH is conducted and submitted to HUD using the HUD designated Assessment Tool and replaces the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice beginning in program year 2020.

a. Data and Information

As soon as feasible after the start of the public participation process, the County will make the HUD-provided data and other information used in the development of the AFH available to residents, public agencies, and other interested parties. A summary of data and information that is planned to be incorporated into the AFH, or links to the data and information, will be available through the County's website.

b. Public Hearing

At least one public hearing will be held to obtain the views of residents on AFH-related data and affirmatively furthering fair housing in the County's housing and community development programs. This public hearing will be held before the Draft AFH is published for comment.

c. Draft AFH

Before the AFH is submitted to HUD, the County will make a Draft AFH available to citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties for review and will also establish the means to submit comments.

The County will publish its Draft AFH for no less than thirty (30) days to provide residents with sufficient opportunity to review and comment on the Draft AFH. A summary describing the contents and purpose of the AFH will be published in one or more newspapers of general circulation. The summary will be available in English and may also be available in Spanish and other languages, as feasible.

The notice will detail locations where the entire Draft AFH will be made available for review. Locations will include

- Community Development Department – 301 Jackson Street, Richmond, Texas
- Fort Bend County's Community Development Department Website – Consolidated and Annual Action Plans | Fort Bend County

A reasonable number of free copies will be available at the Community Development Department (301 Jackson Street, Richmond, TX), upon request.

The County will consider any comments or views of residents of the community 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, shall be attached to the final AFH.

d. Revisions to AFH

A HUD accepted AFH must be revised and submitted to HUD for review when

1. A material change occurs. A material change is one that both a) impacts the circumstances in the County which may include natural disasters, significant demographic changes, new significant contributing factors, and civil rights findings and b) causes alterations to the AFH's analyses, contributing factors, priorities, and/or goals.
2. The County receives a written notification from HUD specifying a material change.

4. Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER)

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The County is required to submit a CAPER for its CPD programs to HUD no later than 90 days from the end of a program year. The CAPER describes how funds were spent and the extent to which these funds were used for activities that benefitted low- and moderate-income people.

To allow the public to comment on the performance report, the County will publish notice in one or more newspapers of general circulation that its Draft CAPER is available for review. The notice will be available in English and may also be available in Spanish and other languages, as feasible. The notice will detail locations where the entire Draft CAPER will be made available for review. Locations will include

- Community Development Department – 301 Jackson Street, Richmond, Texas
- Fort Bend County's Community Development Department Website – Consolidated and Annual Action Plans | Fort Bend County

The public will have at least fifteen (15) days to comment on the Draft CAPER. All comments and views received during the comment period will be considered and shall be included in the performance report.

6. Citizen Participation Plan (CPP)

When changes to the CPP are necessary, the County will publish notice in one or more newspapers of general circulation that the amended CPP is available to review so that the public will have sufficient opportunity to review and comment on the updates. There will be a thirty (30) day public comment period prior to the adoption of the amended CPP. This reasonable notice, opportunity to comment, and comment period will be followed unless subject to HUD waivers or suspensions.

Upon request, the CPP can be made available in a format accessible to persons with disabilities.

A. Meetings and Public Hearings Schedule

The County's program/fiscal year begins September 1 and ends August 31.

October/November – First Public Hearing on Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan is held during plan development (performance review and citizens express their needs regarding priority housing and non-housing community development needs and affirmatively furthering fair housing).

March – Draft Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan is made available to the public for a review period of no less than thirty (30).

March/April – Second Public Hearing on Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan is held (citizens express agreement or concern(s) on draft plan(s) and proposed use of funds).

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April/May – Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan is submitted to HUD.

September – Draft CAPER is made available to the public, a fifteen (15) day review period is held, and the CAPER is submitted to HUD.

E. General Requirements

1. Public Hearings and Public Meetings

During the consolidated planning process, the County may hold both public hearings and public meetings. The location of the public hearings are intended to be convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries and will be held at a central location in the county or in a neighborhood close in proximity to low- and moderate-income residents.

Public hearings and public meetings are held at times and in locations accessible to persons with disabilities, consistent with accessibility and reasonable accommodation requirements. Interpretation for persons with limited English proficiency or persons with hearing impairments will be provided, upon request. The County may also provide interpreters, without request, if a public hearing is held where a significant number of non-English speaking residents are expected to participate. Additional accommodations may be made upon advance request.

Public hearings shall be held after a minimum of a fourteen (14) day notice in at least one newspaper of general circulation. Notices will be available in English and may also be available in Spanish and other languages, as feasible.

Public hearings and public meeting notices are readily accessible to the general public at least three (3) days (72 hours) prior to the meeting date, in accordance to the Texas Open Meetings Act.

In certain circumstances, including health and safety concerns related to public gatherings, the County may utilize virtual public hearings and meetings to meet HUD requirements.

3. Technical Assistance

The County will provide technical assistance, as requested, to groups representing low- and moderate-income persons that are developing proposals for entitlement funded housing and community development activities in the County. This technical assistance will be offered any time proposals for the use of entitlement funding are requested.

4. Access to Records

The County will provide the public with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to documents related to the consolidated planning process, as well as the proposed, actual, and past use of funds covered by the CPP.

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The public will be provided reasonable access to information, subject to local, state, and federal public information laws and laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality. Confidential documents will be set apart from public information, and any requestors of this information will be promptly informed. The public will have access to records for at least five years from the publication date of the requested document.

5. Availability to the Public

Copies of documents related to the consolidated planning process, as described below, will be available to the public

- Adopted Citizen Participation Plan
- Final Consolidated Plans
- Final Annual Action Plans
- Final Substantial Amendments to an Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Plan
- HUD-accepted Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) and its revisions
- Final Consolidated Annual Performance Reports (CAPER)
- Copies of these documents will be available for review at the following locations
- Community Development Department – 301 Jackson Street, Richmond, Texas
- Fort Bend County's Community Development Department Website – Consolidated and Annual Action Plans | Fort Bend County

Additional single copies of these documents may be obtained from the Community Development Department at no charge. These documents will also be available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request at 281-341-4410.

All documents related to the consolidated planning process will be placed on file in the Community Development Department located at 301 Jackson Street, Richmond, Texas 77469.

5. Language Assistance

Based on HUD guidance, the County assesses language needs through a four factor analysis in its Language Assistance Plan. Vital documents and notices related to the consolidated planning process will be available in English and may also be available in Spanish and other languages, as feasible.

6. Anti-Displacement and Relocation

The County's consolidated planning activities are designed to eliminate or minimize displacement of residents. Program guidelines and limitations are structured so that permanent displacement is unlikely.

Tenants in occupied rental properties are made aware of their rights with respect to displacement and relocation. Property owners are made aware of their rights and responsibilities. Property owners must assume the financial responsibility for the relocation of their tenants.

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If displacement will occur due to any planned actions, the County will comply with the requirements of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, as described in 49 CFR Part 24. If displacement should occur because the dwelling is deemed uninhabitable, it is the County's policy to provide advisory service and, if applicable, make relocation payments in accordance with local, state, and federal law.

F. Citizens' Complaints

Written complaints from the public related to the County's CPP, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plans, Substantial Amendments, CAPERs, AFH, or AFH revisions will receive careful consideration and will be answered in writing, or other effective method of communication, within fifteen (15) business days, where practicable.

Written complaints should be sent to

> Fort Bend County
> Community Development Department
> 301 Jackson, Street, Suite 602
> Richmond, Texas 77469

G. Section 108 Loan Program

It should be noted that the process for amending the Section 108 grant application differs considerably from that used for the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and Section 108 programs. First, in accordance with Item 8 of the executed grant agreement between the County and HUD, the agreement can only be amended with prior written permission of HUD. Second, federal regulations require that a public hearing be held when amending the Section 108 grant application. For any program amended, verbal and written citizen comments will be summarized and submitted to HUD along with the County's response to each. Section 108 applications and funding are subject to all CPP requirements applicable to the consolidated planning process where they are the same and as specifically required under 24 CFR §570.704.