

City of Texarkana, Texas Citizen Participation Plan

(DRAFT)



CITY OF TEXARKANA, TEXAS
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

(DRAFT)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
Section 1. INTRODUCTION	4
Section 2. SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION	4
Section 3. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION	5
Section 4. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	5
Section 5. PUBLIC HEARINGS	6
Section 6. PROGRAM INFORMATION	9
Section 7. PROCEDURES FOR COMMENTS, OBJECTIONS AND COMPLAINTS	10
Section 8. AMENDMENTS	11
Section 9. AUTHORITY	11

Community Development Block Grant Program - CDBG

The CDBG program is a flexible program that provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs. The CDBG program provides annual grants on a formula basis to units of local government and states.

The CDBG program works to ensure decent, affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses. CDBG is an important tool for helping local governments tackle serious challenges facing their communities. The CDBG program has made a difference in the lives of millions of people and their communities across the nation.

The annual CDBG appropriation is allocated between States and local jurisdictions called "non-entitlement" and "entitlement" communities respectively. Entitlement communities are comprised of central cities of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs); metropolitan cities with populations of at least 50,000; and qualified urban counties with a population of 200,000 or more (excluding the populations of entitlement cities). States distribute CDBG funds to non-entitlement localities not qualified as entitlement communities.

HUD determines the amount of each grant by using a formula comprised of several measures of community need, including the extent of poverty, population, housing overcrowding, age of housing, and population growth lag in relationship to other metropolitan areas.

Citizen Participation

A grantee must develop and follow a detailed plan that provides for and encourages citizen participation. This integral process emphasizes participation by persons of low or moderate income, particularly residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, slum or blighted areas, and areas in which the grantee proposes to use CDBG funds. The plan must provide citizens with the following: reasonable and timely access to local meetings; an opportunity to review proposed activities and program performance; provide for timely written answers to written complaints and grievances; and identify 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.

Eligible Activities

Over a 1, 2, or 3-year period, as selected by the grantee, not less than 70 percent of CDBG funds must be used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons. In addition, each activity must meet one of the following national objectives for the program: benefit low- and moderate-income persons, prevention or elimination of slums or blight, or address community development needs having a particular urgency because existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community for which other funding is not available.

**CITY OF TEXARKANA, TEXAS
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The City of Texarkana Texas desires that citizens and citizen groups play an active advisory role in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development programs. In order for citizens to better understand this advisory role, and participate in the process, the following clarifications are provided:

Advisory Role in Planning: During the information gathering process for the five-year Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plan, other program activities, all public comment periods, and City Council public hearings, citizens are encouraged to submit views, project proposals, and priorities in an effort to advise the Department and the City Council so that the City can plan activities for the upcoming program year(s). Citizens may submit their views and priorities throughout the year by calling or visiting the: Planning and Community Development Department, 220 Texas Boulevard, Texarkana, Texas, 75501, 903-798-3900, or writing the Department at P.O. Box 1967, Texarkana, Texas, 75504-1967, or on the internet at <http://www.ci.texarkana.tx.us/>

Advisory Role in Implementing the Projects: Citizens are encouraged to visit project sites and locations and to submit their views, either positive or negative, as to how well the projects are being carried out. Citizens with suggestions as to how projects might better be implemented are encouraged to call, visit, or submit a written letter to the Department at any time during the year.

Citizens may have access to all CDBG information for five years. The Citizens' Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports are the most important documents pertaining to the CDBG program. Records and documents relevant to the CDBG programs will be made available at the Planning and Community Development Department, 220 Texas Boulevard, Texarkana, Texas, 75501, between the hours of 8-12 and 1-5, Monday-Friday, for citizen review upon request. Copies of requested documents are available at a cost of \$.25 per sheet. Plans are also available for viewing and downloading on the City's website <http://www.ci.texarkana.tx.us/>.

The following documents are made available to the public for review: (1) all mailings and promotional material; (2) records of public hearings; (3) key program documents; (4) program applications; (5) funding applications; (6) letters of approval; (7) grant agreements; (8) Citizens' Participation Plan; (9) Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports; (10) five-year Consolidated Plan; (11) Annual Action Plan; (12) monitoring reports; (13) other reports required by HUD; (14) copies of the regulations and bulletins governing the program; (15) documents pertaining to: a) contracting procedures, b) environmental policies, c) fair housing and equal opportunity requirements, and d) relocation provisions.

The City may publish in the Texarkana daily newspaper, on the City's website and post in public places a public notice prior to public hearings indicating dates, times, places, and procedures of each meeting or public hearings and topics to be discussed. All public hearing sites are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities who may need assistance to participate, observe, or comment are encouraged to contact the Department of Planning and Community Development at (903) 798-3900 for assistance at least 24 hours prior to the meeting date.

All aspects of the CDBG program are conducted in an open manner with freedom of access for all interested persons. Citizens with questions, comments, proposals, or complaints concerning the program, are encouraged to contact the Department of Planning and Community Development at (903) 798-3900. Written comments should be mailed to the Department of Planning and Community Development, City of Texarkana, Texas, P.O. Box 1967, Texarkana, Texas 75504-1967. Comments may also be provided on the City's website at <http://www.ci.texarkana.tx.us/>.

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

The City of Texarkana, Texas has designed this community-wide Citizens' Participation Plan to provide for and encourage citizen participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. This Plan is an essential element of the City's present and future community development process and has been developed to comply with the regulations and requirements of the CDBG program as administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This Plan supersedes all other Citizen Participation Plans, which may have been adopted by the City of Texarkana, Texas.

The primary goal of this Plan is to provide all citizens of the community with adequate opportunity to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the City's CDBG program(s). The Plan sets forth policies and procedures for citizen participation, which are designed to maximize the opportunity for citizen participation in the community development process. Special emphasis has been placed on encouraging participation by persons of low and moderate incomes, residents of blighted neighborhoods, and residents of areas where community development funds are utilized. Additionally, emphasis shall be placed on obtaining participation from public housing authorities, residents of public housing, non-English speaking persons, minorities, and persons with disabilities.

Citizens are encouraged to participate in all phases of the CDBG program(s) and will be provided full access to program information. However, final responsibility and authority for the development and implementation of CDBG program(s) will lie with the City of Texarkana, Texas City Council.

1.1 Citizen Comment on Citizens' Participation Plan and Amendments

Public comment on the development or amendment to the Citizens' Participation Plan is provided in the following manner:

- a) The Citizens' Participation Plan draft will be made available for citizen comment for thirty days prior to the adoption of revisions or amendments;
- b) The thirty-day comment period will be published prior to the opening of the period;
- c) A public hearing for comments on Citizens' Participation Plan will be held a minimum of fourteen (14) days prior to City Council consideration of the adoption of revisions or amendments;
- d) The City will make the Citizens' Participation Plan available to persons with disabilities or non-English speaking in an accessible format upon request; and
- e) The Citizens' Participation Plan will be published on the City's website.

SECTION 2. SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION

The City will make reasonable efforts to provide for citizen participation during the community development process and throughout the planning, implementation and assessment of all CDBG program(s) undertaken by the City. Local officials will make every effort to involve citizens in all phases of the development, implementation and assessment of community development programs including, but not limited to, the following phases:

- a. identification and assessment of housing and community development needs;
- b. determination of CDBG project(s) and documentation; and the development of CDBG application(s);
- c. changes and/or amendments to approved CDBG projects; and,
- d. assessment of CDBG program performance.

All phases of the community development process will be conducted by local officials in an open manner. Citizens of Texarkana, Texas are encouraged to participate at all levels and will be given access to program information during each phase of any CDBG program as outlined herein.

SECTION 3. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The Department of Planning and Community Development (Department) is responsible for the development, publication, and implementation of citizen participation in the CDBG program.

The Department will disseminate information concerning proposed projects and the status of current project activities; coordinate various groups participating in the community development process; receive written comments; serve as a vehicle by which ideas, comments, and proposals from local residents may be transmitted to local officials and/or program staff; and, monitor the citizen participation process and proposing such amendments to the Citizens' Participation Plan as may be necessary.

The Department staff may be contacted at Texarkana, Texas City Hall 220 Texas Blvd Texarkana, Texas 75501, or 903-798-3900 during regular business hours. All questions concerning citizen participation in the community development process should be addressed to the Planning and Community Development Department. The Department may also be contacted on the internet at <http://www.ci.texarkana.tx.us/>.

SECTION 4. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

City staff will provide technical assistance to individual citizens and citizen groups, especially those groups representative of persons of low or moderate income, as may be required to adequately provide for citizen participation in the planning, implementation and assessment of CDBG program(s).

Such technical assistance is intended to increase citizen participation in the community development decision-making process and to ensure that such participation is meaningful. Technical assistance shall also be utilized to foster public understanding of CDBG program requirements.

Technical assistance will be provided on request and may include, but not necessarily be limited to: interpreting the CDBG program and its rules, regulations, procedures and/or requirements; providing information and/or materials concerning the CDBG program; and, assisting low and moderate income citizens, and residents of blighted neighborhoods to develop statements of

views, identify their needs, and to develop activities and proposals for projects which, when implemented, will resolve those needs.

Technical assistance may be obtained by contacting the Department.

SECTION 5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Citizen participation in the community development process will be conducted on a community-wide basis and will actively involve the views and proposals of all citizens, especially low and moderate-income persons and residents of areas where CDBG activities are proposed or ongoing.

Public hearings will be held during all phases of the community development process, as outlined herein, to allow citizens to voice opinions and offer proposals concerning the development and performance of CDBG programs. Local officials will respond to questions and proposals from citizens at each public hearing. Any questions that citizens may have concerning a program will be answered and their comments, suggestions, and/or proposals will be received. Citizens may also express comments and views concerning the community development process or any specific CDBG project to the governing body at any regularly scheduled meeting.

5.1 Public Hearing Times and Locations

All public hearings will be held at times and locations which will be accessible to all citizens, especially persons of low and moderate incomes, and residents of blighted neighborhoods and CDBG project areas.

Public hearings will be scheduled for convenient times as determined by the City. Public hearings may be held at any site which, in the opinion of the City, provides adequate access for citizen participation.

Hearings will normally be held at the Texarkana, Texas City Hall located at 220 Texas Boulevard. This site is centrally located and generally accessible to all citizens. This building is also accessible to persons with disabilities. Hearings may, however, at the option of the City, be held at an alternate location to be specified in the public hearing notice(s).

5.2 Annual Action Plan Public Hearing

At least one public hearing shall be held during any CDBG program fiscal year prior to the submission of an Annual Action Plan to the U.S. Department of HUD for CDBG assistance. The primary purpose of the public hearing shall be to assess community needs and problems in an effort to determine the most critical needs to be addressed by the CDBG program; and also, to present for public comment and review the program activities, which have been selected by the City to resolve the identified needs.

These public hearings will be held during the initial stage of program development to discuss items regarding community development and housing needs, the CDBG program, and the application process. The objective of citizen participation at this stage is to provide meaningful,

community-wide citizen input into the decision-making process during the assessment of community needs and the consideration of priorities and options associated with the development and submission of a CDBG application. Local officials will also entertain proposals and comments from citizens concerning community development activities at this hearing.

This hearing will normally serve to discuss and review the information appropriate for all applications submitted by the City during any fiscal year. Substantial changes in community development or housing needs in the community as determined by local officials may necessitate another hearing to fulfill the role of the first public hearing prior to the submission of other CDBG applications late in the fiscal year.

Citizens will be provided with information concerning the CDBG program at this public hearing. Such information shall include, but not necessarily be limited to: the goals and objectives of the CDBG program; the total amount of CDBG funds available; the role of citizens in program planning, implementation, and assessment; the range of activities which may be undertaken; the schedule of meetings and hearings; activities previously funded in the City through the CDBG program; and, an identification of projects which could result in the relocation of area residences or businesses; and the actions that would be undertaken if such relocation were necessary.

5.3 Amendment Public Hearings

The City will assure the opportunity for citizen participation during the implementation of any CDBG program(s) when changes to the project are under consideration by the City. Citizen participation shall be obtained and considered in any amendments to a CDBG program which involves changes in program beneficiaries, changes in the location of approved activities, addition to or deletion of project activities, and major budget shifts between approved activities as defined in Section 6.1 Amendments to the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans.

To ensure adequate opportunity for citizen participation during CDBG programs, the City shall hold a public hearing on all substantial amendments which require HUD approval.

5.4 Assessment of Performance Public Hearings

Citizens of the City will be provided with the opportunity to comment on the performance of local officials, the City staff, consultants, engineers, and contractors, and the actual use of CDBG funds during the implementation of a CDBG program. Citizens will also be requested to assess the performance of the City in resolving identified community development and housing needs, and in achieving its community development goals and objectives. Ongoing community assessment of the effectiveness of the community development process is considered essential to the success of the CDBG program.

The City will prepare a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) after the end of each program year indicating the City's progress toward carrying out the Strategic Plan of the five-year Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan for that program year, as amended if applicable, and as approved by Council and submitted to HUD. The CAPER shall include an assessment of goals and objectives and a description of the resources available, the

investment of available resources, the geographic distribution and location of investments, the families and persons assisted, actions taken to affirmatively further fair housing, and other actions relevant to the program year. The report will also include the City's progress made in meeting its specific objective of providing affordable housing.

The Department will provide public notice and comment opportunity on all CAPERs. Public notice of the availability of the CAPER and the date and location of the public hearing will be published in the newspaper and posted in public places. A 15-day comment period will be provided. After the public hearing and City Council approval of the CAPER, the City will submit the CAPER to HUD for review and approval. All public comments received will be summarized and be attached to the CAPER when submitted to HUD.

5.5 Additional Hearings

Other public hearings may be held as deemed necessary by the Texarkana City Council in order to inform citizens of community development project(s) and activities, and to solicit citizen opinions and comments. All additional hearings shall comply with the requirements set forth in this Plan.

5.6 Non-English-Speaking Residents

According to the latest U.S. Census of Population, there is a small population of non-English speaking residents in the City of Texarkana, Texas. However, should a significant number of non-English speaking citizens desire to participate in public hearings, local officials will undertake all reasonable actions necessary to allow such persons to participate in the community development process. Such actions may include the provision of an interpreter for non-English speaking persons and/or the provision of information regarding the CDBG program in a format that such persons can comprehend.

5.7 Public Hearing Notice

Notice of public hearings will be published in a local newspaper at least three (3) days prior to the hearing date. The City may waive hearing notice requirements in cases where unusual circumstances justify alternative means of notifying the general public. In such situations, shorter notice may be given, and public notices posted in public places may be used in place of a notice published in the newspaper. Each notice of a hearing shall include the time, date, place, topics and procedures to be discussed. Notices for public hearings may be run or posted, separately or together, as may be deemed necessary by the Mayor of the City of Texarkana, Texas.

5.8 Accessibility to Low and Moderate-Income Persons

The public hearing procedures outlined herein are designed to promote participation by low and moderate-income citizens, as well as residents of blighted neighborhoods and CDBG project areas in any public hearing(s). Local officials may take additional steps to further promote participation by such groups, or to target program information to these persons should officials feel that such persons may otherwise be excluded, or should additional action be deemed

necessary. Activities to promote additional participation may include: posting of notices in blighted neighborhoods and in places frequented by low and moderate income persons and holding public hearings in low and moderate-income neighborhoods or areas of existing or proposed CDBG project activities.

5.9 Accessibility to Persons with Disabilities

The locations of all public hearings as described herein shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities. Also, the City shall provide a sign language interpreter whenever the Department is notified in advance that one or more hearing impaired persons will be in attendance.

SECTION 6. PROGRAM INFORMATION

Citizens will be provided full access to CDBG program information during all phases of a CDBG project. Local officials of the City shall make reasonable effort to assure that CDBG program information is available to all citizens, especially those of low and moderate incomes and those residing in blighted neighborhoods and/or CDBG project areas.

To facilitate citizen access to CDBG program information, the City will keep all documents related to a CDBG program on file in Department of Planning and Community Development. Information from the project files shall be made available for examination on request during regular business hours. CDBG program information and materials concerning specific CDBG projects will be available to the public at the regularly scheduled public hearings as outlined in this Plan. Furthermore, information concerning any CDBG project will be available at regularly scheduled council meetings where the program is discussed.

Materials to be made available shall include, but are not necessarily limited to: the Citizens' Participation Plan; records of public hearing; mailings and promotional materials; prior CDBG program applications; letters of approval; grant agreements; the environmental review record; financial and procurement records; project design and construction specifications; labor standards materials; performance and evaluation reports; other reports required by HUD; proposed and approved CDBG program application(s) for the current year or project; written comments or complaints received concerning the community development program, and written responses from the City; and, copies of the applicable Federal and State rules, regulations, policies, requirements and procedures governing the CDBG program.

In no case shall the City disclose any information concerning the financial status of any program participant(s), which may be required to document program eligibility or benefit.

6.1 Amendments to the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans

Reallocations of more than \$50,000 in CDBG funds will be submitted to the Council for approval by resolution. Any change of more than \$50,000 in the CDBG budget allocations for a particular grant year will constitute a "substantial amendment" to the CDBG Program. Changes less than \$50,000 constitute a "local amendment" and will not require HUD approval or a City Council resolution. Pursuant to these definitions, a substantial amendment will be submitted to the City Council for approval and an amended application to HUD in the following situations:

- a) When it proposes to use more than \$50,000 of the entitlement amount to undertake one or more new activities;
- b) When the City proposes to alter the stated purpose or class of beneficiaries of previously proposed activities whose cost exceeds \$50,000 of the entitlement amount approved for the affected program year;

All substantial amendments will be presented to the City Council for public hearing and approval by resolution. Public notice summarizing the substantial amendment, inviting public comment, and stating the date and location of the public hearing shall be published in the local newspaper and posted in public places a minimum of three (3) days before the hearing. A 30-day comment period will follow the public notice of the substantial amendment. Bilingual assistance will be provided at the meeting if requested in advance.

Following the public hearing, comment period, and approval by City Council, the substantial amendment will be submitted to HUD. When the City proposes to undertake activities, which are not consistent with the statement of objectives included in the Consolidated Plan, it will submit an amended summary to HUD at the same time the proposed amendment is submitted.

SECTION 7. PROCEDURES FOR COMMENTS, OBJECTIONS AND COMPLAINTS

The public hearings scheduled, as described in this Citizens' Participation Plan, are designed to facilitate public participation in all phases of the community development process. Citizens are encouraged to submit their views and proposals on all aspects of a community development program at the public hearings. However, to ensure that citizens are given the opportunity to assess and comment on all aspects of the community development program on a continuous basis, citizens may, at any time, submit written comments or complaints to the City.

Any citizen or citizen's group desiring to comment or object to any phase of the planning, development or approval of the application for CDBG funds, or to the implementation of any CDBG program, should submit such comments or objections in writing to the Mayor of the City of Texarkana, Texas. Should, after a reasonable period, a party believe that his/her comment or complaint has not been properly addressed or considered by the Mayor, then the aggrieved may appeal his/her case to the City Council.

Local officials shall make every effort to provide written responses to citizen proposals or complaints within twenty (20) working days of the receipt of such comments or complaints where practicable. Should the City Council be unable to sufficiently resolve an objection or complaint, it may be forwarded by the aggrieved party to the U.S. Department of HUD.

Citizens may, at any time, contact HUD directly to register comments, objections or complaints concerning the City's CDBG application(s) and/or program(s). Citizens are encouraged, however, to attempt to resolve any complaints at the local level as outlined above prior to contacting HUD.

All comments or complaints submitted to HUD shall be addressed in writing to:

US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Ft. Worth Regional Office, Region VI
Office of Community Planning and Development
801 Cherry Street, Unit 45, Suite 2500
Fort Worth, Texas 76113-2905

Records of all comments, objections and/or complaints by citizens concerning the City's CDBG program and subsequent action taken in response to those comments shall be maintained on file at Department of Planning and Community Development, Texarkana, Texas City Hall 220 Texas Boulevard and shall be made available for public inspection upon request.

SECTION 8. CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION PLAN AMENDMENTS

The City may, from time to time, modify the provisions outlined herein through amendment to this Plan. It shall be the policy of the City to periodically review and discuss the effectiveness of this Plan in allowing citizen participation in the community development process, and in helping to meet the community development needs and goals identified by the citizens of the City. To this end, the effectiveness of the Plan will be discussed at public hearings held in conjunction with the community development program as discussed herein, and potential amendments to the Plan will be reviewed at this time.

Amendments to the Plan will be made as necessary and approved by resolution of the Texarkana City Council and shall be incorporated into this Plan.

SECTION 9. AUTHORITY

No portion of the Citizen's Participation Plan shall be construed to restrict the responsibility and authority of the elected officials of the City in the development, implementation, and execution of any Community Development Block Grant program or activity.