

MOUNT VERNON, NEW YORK
DRAFT 2020 CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN



MOUNT VERNON URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY

**CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, NEW YORK
2020 CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN**

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CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, NEW YORK CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

The Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Agency (Agency) administers the CDBG and HOME programs on behalf of the City.

The Agency serves as the lead agency for the development of the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan and administers a variety of Federal, State, and locally funded programs designed to improve the physical, social and economic life of the City of Mount Vernon. In addition, the Agency initiates specific development projects to address particular economic and housing needs.

The purpose of the Citizen Participation Plan, required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is to adopt policies and procedures for public engagement as a prelude to the allocation and expenditures of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME). The policies outlined in this plan build on extensive community engagement and public processes already in practice by the City of Mount Vernon.

HUD requires several planning documents be developed by grantees to aide in the process of identifying affordable housing and community development priority needs, and to assist with establishing goals and strategies to address those needs. The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Plan (AI Plan) identifies local housing issues and sets goals for improving fair housing choice and access to opportunity. The Consolidated Plan is designed to analyze housing and community development market conditions, which form the basis for data-driven, place-based investment decisions. The planning process serves as the framework for a community-wide dialogue to identify priorities that align with anticipated financial resources. The Consolidated Plan is carried out through Annual Action Plans, which provide a summary of actions, projects, and specific federal and non-federal resources that will be used each year to address the priority needs and goals identified by the Consolidated Plan. The City reports annually on accomplishments and progress toward the Consolidated Plan and AI goals in the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

To be most effective, citizen participation and consultation must be an ongoing process. To that end, this Citizen Participation Plan outlines opportunities for citizen engagement at all stages of the funding process including the development and any revisions of the AI Plan, the Consolidated Plan and any substantial amendments, Annual Action Plans, and performance reporting done through the CAPER.

PROMOTING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Citizen Participation plan serves as a guide for how the City of Mount Vernon will involve citizens in the process of developing the Five-Year Strategic Plan (Consolidated Plan) and Annual Action Plans. As a requirement for receiving these entitlement grants, Title I of the National Affordable Housing Act mandates that jurisdictions prepare:

- A five-year Consolidated Plan (Five-Year Plan or Con Plan) and Consolidated Annual Action Plans (Annual Plans) that identify local community development needs and set forth a funding strategy to address those needs.
- A Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) that assesses the jurisdiction’s annual achievements relative to the goals described in the Consolidated Plan.

The Consolidated Plans and Performance Report must address both affordable housing and non-housing related community development needs.

This Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) describes the City of Mount Vernon’s process to facilitate and engage citizens to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the Consolidated Plan and its associated Performance Report for the federally funded entitlement programs. This plan is designed to promote citizen participation, especially those living in low and moderate-income neighborhoods. The City of Mount Vernon encourages participation by minorities, non-English speaking persons, and people with mobility, visual, or hearing impairments. The City of Mount Vernon also encourages the participation of residents of public and assisted housing developments and recipients of tenant-based assistance in the process of developing and implementing the consolidated plan, along with other low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas in which the developments are located.

Copies of the Citizen Participation Plan, as well as the Consolidated Planning process and Action Plan process are available on the Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Agency website and will be made available, upon request to the Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Agency in a format to be understood by persons with visual impairments and by non-English speaking persons.

Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Agency
 1 Roosevelt Square
 Mount Vernon, NY 10550
 (914) 669-7230
<http://cmvny.com/cdbg>

The calendar below is an outline for the different types of public participation activities for HUD funded activities and when they occur. At a minimum, the City will hold 2 public hearings per program year. This calendar is for illustrative purposes only. The dates of any activity listed are subject to change.

January 1	Beginning of program year
January/February	Staff drafts year-end HUD report (CAPER)
March	CAPER comment period (15 days) CAPER due to HUD by March 31
November	Community Consultations Public Hearing #1: Public Input Hearing (2 week notice)
November	Call for Proposals
December	Proposals Due
January	Proposal Review

February	Award Recommendations Staff drafts Action Plan
March	Public Hearing #2: Action Plan Public Hearing (2 week notice) Action Plan Public Comment Period (30 days) Action Plan Approved by City Commission
June	Action Plan Submission to HUD
December 31	End of program year

OBJECTIVES OF THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

The CPP establishes standards to promote citizen participation in the development of the Five-Year Plan, the Annual Plans, amendments to the Plans, and the CAPER. The CPP is designed to encourage participation by low- and moderate-income persons, including those living in blighted areas.

The objectives of the CPP are:

1. To form a citizen participation structure that adheres to the provisions of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Code of Final Regulations for the Consolidated Plan (24 CFR Part 91, et seq., dated January 5, 1995) and subsequent revisions.
2. To provide all residents of the City, especially those specified in 24 CFR Part 91 Sec. (a) who include minorities and non-English speaking persons, as well as persons with disabilities, and who live in areas where federal funds are being used or proposed to be used, with the opportunity to:
 - a) Attend public hearings
 - b) Define local needs
 - c) Review and evaluate the Consolidated Plan and related reports
 - d) Recommend the use of the federal entitlement funds.
3. To provide adequate citizen and local and regional institution involvement in all phases of planning for the use of federal funds, including the:
 - a. Identification of housing and community development needs
 - b. Review and approval of the Consolidated Five-Year Strategic Plan and Annual Action Plans, including the proposed use of federal entitlement funds
 - c. Review and approval of substantial amendments to the Consolidated Five-Year Strategic Plan or Annual Action Plan
 - d. Review of the City's progress in achieving the goals set out in the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans, through the CAPER.

II. The Five-Year Strategic Plan and Annual Action Plan 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 increasing economic development opportunities, principally for low and moderate-income people. The City of Mount Vernon encourages participation of all citizens in the Five-Year Strategic Consolidated Plan process and Annual Action Plan process.

- Five-Year Strategic Consolidated Plan - a five-year plan that documents the City of Mount Vernon's housing and community development needs, outlines strategies to address those needs, and identifies proposed program accomplishments.
- Annual Action Plan - an annual plan that describes specific CDBG funded projects that will be undertaken over the course of the upcoming fiscal year.
- Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) - an annual report that evaluates the use of CDBG funds.

Stages of the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan Process:

1. Identification of housing and community development needs through current Census data, the City of Mount Vernon's Comprehensive Plan, and completed neighborhood plans.

The Citizen Participation Plan, Annual Action Plans, and amendments (if applicable) will be made available to the public for review at the following locations:

- Mount Vernon Library
- Office of the Clerk of the Council
- Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Agency, 2nd floor reception area
- City Website: www.cmvny.com and MVURA Website: www.cmvny.com/cdbg

These locations are accessible to persons with physical disabilities; however, if a disability would further limit a person's ability to review the plan at one of the listed locations, upon request, the City will attempt to make a reasonable accommodation and make the plan (or amendment) available in an appropriate format.

The City will consider all comments received from residents, public agencies, and other interested parties as it prepares the final Consolidated Plan (and annual updates). A summary of public comments will be included with the final submission. The summary of public comments will include a synopsis of the City's response to written public comments, and an explanation of public comments not accepted, including the reasons why these comments were not accepted.

2. The City Council and the MVURA Board formally approves the final Annual Action Plan and Five Year Consolidated Plan. Once approval has been received from the City Council and the MVURA Board, the Consolidated or Annual Action Plan is submitted to HUD for review and approval.

3. The implementation of the programs outlined in the Annual Action Plan follows the City of Mount Vernon's Program Year.
4. The MVURA reviews and evaluates funded programs and agencies, including onsite monitoring visits, throughout the year.
5. On occasion it may be necessary to change the use of the funding budgeted in an Annual Action Plan, or to change the priorities established in the Consolidated Plan. In that case, a formal substantial amendment will be proposed by the City then reviewed and acted upon by the City. A description of a substantial amendment and necessary procedures is outlined further in the Citizen Participation Plan.

PERFORMANCE REPORTS

6. Each year a performance report is submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development by the City of Mount Vernon. The City shall invite and encourage all citizens and stakeholder organizations to assess and submit comments on all aspects of performance in meeting Consolidated Plan goals and objectives. The City will provide notice in local newspapers on the opportunity to comment on the performance report for a period of not less than 15 calendar days prior to its submission to HUD. All comments received in writing orally will be considered in preparing the final Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). A summary of all comments or views shall be submitted as part of the report to HUD.

III. GENERAL CITIZEN PARTICIPATION POLICIES

AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT AND APPROVED DOCUMENTS

The draft and final versions of the Five-Year Plan, Annual Plans, CAPER, and all related amendments will be made available online at: www.cmvny.com/cdbg. Hard copies of the documents will be available by contacting the Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Agency, 1 Roosevelt Square, 2nd Floor, Mount Vernon, NY, or by calling 914-699-7230.

The draft Five-Year Plan, draft Annual Plans, and draft substantial amendments will be made available for public review and comment for a minimum of 30 days prior to their final adoption by the City. The draft CAPER and amendments to the CPP will be available for public review and comment for a minimum of 15 days prior to its final adoption by the City.

Residents, public agencies, and other interested parties will be provided access to adopted Plans, amendments, and CAPERs which describe the City's use of assistance under the CDBG, and HOME programs for the prior five years.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

The following guidelines apply to public hearings for all of the City of Mount Vernon's federally funded entitlement programs:

- a) The City of Mount Vernon will hold a minimum of *two (2)* hearings for the Five-Year Plan and the Annual Plan and one *(1)* hearing for the CAPER, substantial amendments, and amendments to the CPP.
- b) All public hearings will be held at accessible locations in Mount Vernon. The City will provide assistance to disabled persons upon request, with at least five (5) business days' prior notification.
- c) Hearings will be held during the evening hours when feasible.
- d) Interpretation services for persons with limited English proficiency or for hearing impaired individuals will be provided if notification is provided at least three (5) business days prior to the meeting for the need of such services.

IV. GENERAL POLICY ON NOTICES OF HEARINGS AND REVIEW PERIODS—FIVE-YEAR PLAN, ANNUAL PLAN, CAPER, SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENTS & AMENDMENTS TO THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

The City will provide residents, public agencies and other interested parties with notice of their opportunity to comment on the CPP, Five-Year Plan, Annual Plan, CAPER, and Substantial Amendments to these documents using e-mail, or in person at public hearings.

Public Notice: To ensure that all citizens, including minorities, persons with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, residents of public housing, and lower-income residents including those living in revitalization areas, are able to participate in the process:

- a) The City will provide notices of meetings and/or hearings on the Five-Year Plan, Annual Plan, CAPER, and substantial amendments via alternative distribution services such as e-mail, website, and newspaper postings. Notices will be in English and Spanish.
- b) The public notices will advise interested residents of the availability of relevant draft documents for public review and will include a summary of the document, its contents, and purpose. The notices will describe how to obtain a copy of the document for review.
- c) Notices will be distributed and published in newspapers at least *fourteen (14)* days before public hearings and will include information regarding how to request accommodation and services available for persons with disabilities who wish to attend the public hearings.
- d) Newspaper postings of the notices for the Five-Year Plan, Annual Action Plan, CAPER, substantial amendments and amendments to the CPP will be provided in local newspapers for one day, including Spanish language newspapers. Publication in more than one

newspaper meets HUD's requirement for at least two notices on different days.

- e) Notices will be posted on the Urban Renewal Agency website at: www.cmvny.com/cdbg.
- f) Notices of the availability of draft documents and the 30-day review periods for the Five-Year Plan, Annual Plan, and substantial amendments and the 15-day review period for the CAPER and CPP amendments will be distributed, published and posted on the Urban Renewal Agency website as above.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The draft Five-Year Plan and Annual Plan will be developed based on the following guidelines:

- g) The City will solicit input from Mount Vernon residents, nonprofits, service providers, housing advocates, public agencies, and others interested in housing, homeless and community development issues during the Five-Year Plan and Annual Plan development process.
- h) A public review period of not less than *thirty (30)* days will be provided for each Five-Year Plan, Annual Plan, and substantial amendment to enable the public to provide comments prior to final adoption by the City.
- i) The City will consider comments and views expressed by residents and other interested parties either in writing or orally at public meetings regarding the Five-Year Plan, Annual Plan, or substantial amendment before final adoption by the City Council and the URA Board. The City will provide, as an attachment to the final Five-Year Plan, Annual Plan, or substantial amendment submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), all written communications received and a summary of each oral comment, the City's subsequent action, and the reasons for non-action if none was taken. This information will also be made available to the public as part of the final document.

The City is receptive to suggestions for ways to improve its processes for notifying the public of hearing, the availability of draft documents, and the process for obtaining public input.

V. SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENTS TO CONSOLIDATED PLAN OR ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

The Final Annual Action Plan will be amended anytime there is:

- A change in one of the Priorities presented on the HUD required Priority Table
- A change in the purpose, location, scope, or recipients of an activity. The public will be notified whenever there is an amendment as per the Public Notice section of this Citizen Participation Plan

Substantial Amendments

The following will be considered substantial amendments:

- A change in the use of CDBG funds from one category activity to another category activity such that there is a 25% increase or decrease in the amount of funding allocated to the activity.
- A change in the scope of an activity, such that there is a 25% increase or decrease in the amount of money allocated to the activity.
- The elimination of an activity described in the Annual Action Plan.
- The addition of an activity not described in the Annual Action Plan.
- A change in the purpose of an activity, such as a change in the type of activity or its objective.
- A change in the location or audience of an activity.

Public Notice and Hearing for Substantial Amendments

There must be reasonable notice of a proposed Substantial Amendment so that residents will have an opportunity to review it and comment on it. Notice will be made according to the procedures described earlier in this Citizen Participation Plan, with the addition of the following specifically for Substantial Amendments:

- Citizens will be provided with reasonable notice of any Substantial Amendment to the Annual Action Plan; a 30-day comment period will begin.
- A detailed written description of the proposed Substantial Amendment will be made available to the public at no cost within five working days of a request. Also, copies will be available at the locations indicated earlier in this Citizen Participation Plan.
- There will be a public hearing regarding the proposed Substantial Amendment conducted by the City of Mount Vernon's Urban Renewal Agency.
- 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, shall be incorporated into the Final Substantial Amendment.

VI. MINOR AMENDMENTS TO CONSOLIDATED PLAN OR ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

A Minor Amendment shall occur when the budget, scope or capacity of a funded activity is adjusted by less than 25%. Any minor amendments to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Plan shall occur through an administrative process. Approval of the minor amendment is at the discretion of the Urban Renewal Agency Executive Director, or their designee, and involves a determination that each of the following criteria have been met:

1. The proposed change is not Substantial;
2. The proposed change is consistent with the intent of the original scope of work;
3. The proposed budget change is reasonable; and
4. Adequate funds are available to finance the proposed amendment, without causing a substantial change to other activities, projects or programs.

VII. DISASTER RESPONSE EXEMPT FROM SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENT PROCESS

Criteria for which a change would not constitute a substantial change, and thereby waive requirements for formal adoption of an amendment to the associated Consolidated Plan/Action Plan or Section 108 Guaranteed Loan Application, including events that qualify as a type of disaster. For example, the City could redirect existing funds and/or programs in a local urgent need response. Likewise, in the event of a state and/or federal designated disaster in Mount Vernon, the City could apply for CDBG-Disaster Recovery grants.

In general, to ensure disaster recovery grants are awarded in a timely manner, provisions of 42 U.S.C. 5304(a)(2) and (3), 42 U.S.C.12707, 24CFR570.486, 91.105(b) and (c), and 91.115(b) and(c), with respect to citizen participation requirements, are waived via Federal Register Notice: (<https://www.hudexchange.infor/cdbg-dr/cdbg-dr-laws-regulations-and-federal-register-notices/>)

1. HUD criteria used to qualify local “urgent needs” e.g., events of “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” found at 24 CFR 570.483(d);
2. Federal Emergency Management Agency criteria used to determine eligibility for assistance after “the emergency or major disaster event” can be found at 44 CFR 206.221-223;
3. The City will notify HUD Five (5) days before implementing changes or amendments to the Consolidated Plan and/or Action Plan, but is not required to undertake public comment; and
4. The City will make reasonable efforts to provide opportunity for comment about changes using the criteria documented in the “Waiver Process” section below.

VIII. WAIVER PROCESS

Upon determination of good cause, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has the authority to waive certain regulatory provisions of the CDBG and HOME programs subject to statutory limitations.

Examples of good cause for such waivers:

- Presidential disaster declarations under Title IV of the Stafford Act represent one example of good cause for such waivers.
- The City of Mount Vernon may seek a waiver to its citizen participation process, in emergency situations when expedited assistance offered through Consolidated Plan/Action Plan covered programs is deemed necessary by the Mayor.
- HUD issues notices to waive deadlines for submission and reduction of public comment periods.

Following HUD issuance of waiver notices or approval of a waiver request, the City reserves the right to amend the Citizen Participation Plan comment period as follows:

1. A reduction in the public comment period for Consolidated Plan/Action Plan/Substantial Amendments from 30 calendar days to seven calendar days, and
2. A reduction in the public comment period from 30 calendar days to seven calendar days in the event of a local “urgent need” emergency or state/federally declared disaster; and

3. Flexibility in determining what constitutes reasonable notice and opportunity to comment.

IX. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE CAPER

Every year, The City of Mount Vernon must submit to HUD a CAPER, also known as an annual performance report, within 90 days of the close of the program year.

Notice will be made according to the procedures described earlier in this Citizen Participation Plan, with the addition of the following procedures specifically for the development of the CAPER:

- The City will establish a public review period of not less than *fifteen (15)* days to allow for public comments prior to final adoption.
- The City will consider comments and views expressed by residents and other interested parties either in writing or orally at public hearings regarding the performance reports prior to action by the City/Agency. The City will provide as an attachment to the final performance report submitted to HUD, all written communications received and a summary of each oral comment, the City subsequent action, and the reason for non-action if none was taken. This information will be made available to the public as part of the final document.
- A complete copy of the CAPER will be made available to the public at no cost within five working days of a request.
- Copies will be available at the locations indicated earlier in this Citizen Participation Plan under Public Notice

X. AMENDMENTS TO THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

The CPP will be posted at: www.cmvny.com/cdbg. Copies will also be available for pick-up, upon written or oral request, at the Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Agency, 1 Roosevelt Square, Mount Vernon, NY 10550, on the 2nd Floor.

Any change to the Citizen Participation Plan shall be subject to the following guidelines:

- a) Notice will be made according to the procedures described earlier in this Citizen Participation Plan, with the addition of the following regarding amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan:
- b) The Urban Renewal Agency shall establish a public review period of not less than *fifteen (15) days* to receive public comments prior to final adoption of the CPP by the City Council.
- c) The City will consider comments and views expressed by residents and other interested parties either in writing or orally at public hearings regarding the CPP prior to City action.

XI. DISPLACEMENT POLICY

As part of the CPP, the City must maintain a displacement policy. Displacement refers to the involuntary relocation of individuals from their residence due to housing development and rehabilitation paid for with federal funds. The City will continue to use existing federal and State relocation guidelines, as applicable, to minimize displacement and to alleviate the problems caused by displacement. The federal government has specific requirements dictating the amount of benefits

and assistance that must be provided to lower-income persons and households relocated from their homes because of displacement. Depending on the funding source, displaced persons may be offered one or more of the following:

- a rent subsidy for another unit.
- a cash payment to be used for rent or a down payment on the purchase of a dwelling unit.
- moving and related expenses.

The City's rehabilitation programs may also deal with relocation issues when they provide minor additions to existing dwellings in to address overcrowding. Any temporary relocation costs shall be included in the rehabilitation loan package offered to clients.

XII. AVAILABILITY OF AND ACCESS TO RECORDS

Information on the City's Consolidated Plans, including records or documents related to the CPP, the current Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plans, CAPER, and program regulations will be available for citizen review during normal working hours at the Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Agency, 1 Roosevelt Square, Mount Vernon, NY 10550, on the 2nd Floor, upon written or oral request. If the City is unable to provide immediate access to the documents requested, the City will make every effort to provide the documents and reports within ten (10) days from the receipt of the request.

These documents are also posted on the Urban Renewal Agency's website at: www.cmvny.com/cdbg

XIII. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

The City will hold community development workshops to provide an opportunity to answer questions from groups representing persons of low-and moderate-income that relate to the development of funding proposals for any program covered by the Consolidated Plan in accordance with grant procedures. This may include, but is not limited to, providing information regarding how to fill out applications, other potential funding sources, and referrals to appropriate agencies within and outside the City of Mount Vernon. "Community Development workshops" as used here, does not include the provision of funds to groups requesting such assistance.

XIV. COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Complaints from members of the public regarding the Consolidated Plan or related amendments and performance reports may be submitted to the Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Agency at 1 Roosevelt Square, Mount Vernon, NY 10550. The complaints will be referred to the appropriate City staff for disposition. The City will provide substantive, written responses to all complaints within a reasonable period. Each federal program also has a separate appeals process for grant applicants.

APPENDIX A – SAMPLE PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

APPENDIX B – SAMPLE AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

APPENDIX C – SAMPLE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN TIMELINE