

CITY OF AUBURN CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020-2024

Amended August 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

The City of Auburn received an “entitlement” designation for Community Development Block Grant funds in 1974. These funds are used for a number of loan programs to promote housing and economic development. Funds are also used for public facilities and infrastructure, and for social services. In 2001, Auburn and Lewiston formed a consortium with Auburn as the lead agency to receive HOME Investment Partnerships Program funds. The consortium was formed to meet the funding threshold for HOME funds.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires recipients of its grant funds to prepare formal plans as a condition of receiving federal funds. These plans are intended to encourage communities to allocate federal resources to address local needs and market conditions.

The City has developed a Consolidated Plan (ConPlan) which is a fact-based analysis of local housing needs that reflects the incidence and severity of housing problems among different segments of the population. The ConPlan articulates priorities for addressing the needs that have been documented and defines strategies and activities linked to these priorities. Community representatives and housing practitioners will have opportunities to help shape the development of priorities and strategies. The process is intended to assist with coordination among relevant agencies in both planning and implementation. The City works closely with Auburn Housing Authority (AHA) on housing matters.

Section 104(a) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 requires that the City of Auburn follow a Citizen Participation Plan. In order to comply with HUD regulations, the Community Development Department has prepared the following plan which outlines the process through which citizens will be informed of and involved in the Community Development Program. The Community Development Program involves funding of both the Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program.

The Citizen’s Participation Plan is an effort to create a collaborative process whereby citizens assist in developing a vision for community development housing actions. The City Council will consider both public comments and recommendations of the Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC) in making decisions to allocate Community Development and HOME resources.

To affirmatively encourage citizen participation, the following plan elements shall be implemented in the execution of the Community Development Program.

2. GOAL

The goal of the Citizen Participation Plan is to provide Auburn citizens with an opportunity to participate in various processes of the Community Development Program. Citizen participation shall be conducted in an open manner with appropriate and timely dissemination of information pertinent to all plans and programs. The emphasis of this Citizen Participation Plan to involve persons who are most likely to be affected by and utilize the Community Development Program, especially persons of low income, persons with special needs, and persons living in target areas.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Citizen Participation Plan are to:

Encourage citizen participation with emphasis on participation by persons who are of low income, special needs, and persons who live in or own property in a target area;

- Provide citizens with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information, and records relating to the City's proposed and actual use of funds;
- Provide technical assistance to groups or representative of persons of low income that request such assistance in developing proposals with the level and type of assistance to be determined by the City;
- Obtain citizen views and answer questions at all stages of the Community Development process including development of needs, review of proposed activities and review of program performance;
- Provide for a timely written answer to complaints and grievances; and
- Provide for meeting the needs of non-English speaking residents and persons with special needs for accessibility or communication assistance at public meetings where a significant number of people are expected to participate.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A. NOTICES OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings are held to obtain views of citizens and public agencies with respect to the Community Development Program. Meeting notices will be published on the City's website.

At least 30 days before adoption by the City Council, a summary of the proposed Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan will be published on the City's web site to give citizens an opportunity to review and comment on the plan. The summary will describe the general contents of the Consolidated Plan. The public notice will indicate the location where copies can be examined or how to find it on the web site.

At least 15 days before submission a public notice will be placed in a local newspaper announcing the availability of the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). The CAPER provides a review of program progress and performance of the Community Development Block Grant Program.

B. AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

Documents will be available at the Community Development Department for perusal in an effort to provide readily accessible information to citizens. Historical records will be available for the previous five-year period. Documents that will be available are:

- Residential Anti-displacement;
- Relocation Assistance Plan and Affordable Rent Policy;
- Urban Conditions Study;
- Citizen Participation Plan;
- Community Development Block Grant Regulations;
- Environmental Review Records;
- Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report;
- Guidelines of various programs funded with Community Development and HOME Investment Partnerships Program funds; and
- Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans.

C. CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Citizen's Advisory Committee is to assist in developing the Consolidated Plan and to monitor progress on achieving the goals and objectives of the plan. The committee will be made of a minimum of 11 Auburn residents, with a quorum being a majority of those currently appointed. The Committee will meet on a regular basis to track progress in accomplishing the goals of the Consolidated Plan. Community Development staff shall solicit members who will be representative of the following categories:

- At least one person of minority race or ethnic background;
- 3 representatives of community organizations, one of which represents the interests of homeless persons;
- A City Councilor;
- 4 persons from target areas including residents, landlords and small business owners. There will be a minimum of 1 each from the Downtown, Union Street and New Auburn Target Areas; and
- 2 representatives with a background in Real Estate or Finance.

The City Councilor member shall be appointed by the Council and their term shall coincide with their term in office. The other committee members shall be appointed by the Mayor and their term shall be three years, terms start on July 1st. The CAC membership shall elect a person amongst them to act as liaison with Community Development staff and to serve as spokesperson for the CAC to the City Council.

1) CAC Meetings:

a) Consolidated Plan

The CAC will be involved in assisting with development of the 5-year Consolidated Plan by considering needs and resources, and prioritizing goals and objectives.

b) Annual Action Plan

In the subsequent four years, the CAC will review the annual Consolidated Annual Action Plan for conformance with the Consolidated Plan.

c) Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)

At the end of each program year, a performance report will be prepared. The CAC will meet after completion of the CAPER to consider progress in meeting the stated goals and objectives of the Consolidated Plan. The CAC will also review program performance, effectiveness, and evaluation.

d) The CAC may determine that other meetings are necessary to promote the goals of the Consolidated Plan. Establishing extra meetings will require a majority vote of the CAC.

2) Consolidated Plan Considerations:

During the study process, the CAC will consider data on housing needs and comments from focus groups to establish priorities. The CAC will consider the needs of extremely low-income, low-income, moderate-income, and middle income families; renters and owners; persons who are elderly, disabled, persons with HIV/AIDS and their families; single persons, large families, public housing residents, families on the public housing or section 8 tenant-based waiting list, and homeless; consider specific problems such as cost-burden, severe cost-burden, substandard housing and overcrowding.

D. OTHER PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Community Development staff shall solicit input from citizens who may be affected by Community Development projects to give them an opportunity to express their views concerning problems, suggestions and alternatives to the proposed projects. A public notice will announce the availability of City documents and may include:

- amount of Community Development Block Grant funding to be received;
- eligible activities;
- general program requirements;
- previous years' use of funds;
- projected use of funds;
- time schedule for submitting the Consolidated Plan;
- amount of funds that will benefit very low, low, and low-moderate income persons; and plans to minimize displacement of persons and to assist persons.

E. CITY WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING

The City of Auburn's website will provide up-to-date information on the Community Development and HOME Investment Partnerships Programs. Meeting notices, the draft and adopted Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plans, Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports, various adopted guidelines and policies, and the Citizen Participation Plan will be available.

In order to reach a broader more diverse audience, during the 5-year planning process the Community Development Department will also utilize an internet social networking site to provide important information on the Consolidated Plan and funding resources.

F. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings shall be held by the City Council and shall serve as additional forums for citizens to convey their views on community development and housing needs, and to respond to proposed budget. At least 10 days prior to public hearings, a notice shall be placed in the newspaper announcing the public hearing. These public hearings will be conducted in the evenings and participation via zoom will be available. Recordings of these Public Hearings will be posted online for additional viewing accommodations. The City Council will consider comments or views of citizens received in writing or orally at the public hearing. Public hearing will be held at Auburn Hall, a location that accommodates persons with disabilities. Public hearing shall be held as follows:

- 1) Consolidated Plan** - A public hearing will be held prior to adoption of the Consolidated Plan. A draft Consolidated Plan will be available to the public 30 days prior to adoption. Copies will be available free of charge.
- 2) Consolidated Annual Action Plan** - A public hearing will be held prior to adoption of each Consolidated Annual Action Plan. A draft Annual Action Plan will be available 30 days prior to adoption. Copies will be available free of charge.
- 3) Amendments** - A public hearing will be held prior to adoption of any substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans. A substantial program amendment description will be available 30 days prior to adoption. Copies will be available free of charge.
- 4) Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report** - A public hearing will be held prior to submission of the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report. The report will be available 15 days prior to submission. Copies will be available free of charge.

G. CONSIDERATION OF COMMENTS

A summary of comments will be attached to the appropriate document and submitted to the City Council before an action is taken. The City Council shall consider comments of the CAC or others

prior to final adoption of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, or Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report.

H. RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS/COMMENTS

A staff member of the Community Development Department will respond to citizen comments or proposals. For every written proposal or comment, there will be a written response with reasons stated for whatever action the City has taken on the proposal. Oral proposals will receive oral responses, though they may be in writing.

5. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. ACCOMMODATIONS

Arrangements will be made for non-English-speaking persons and persons with special needs for mobility, hearing and visual impairments, or the homebound. Please contact the Community Development Department in advance so that arrangements can be made to provide adequate communication assistance. Access to these accommodations can be attained by contacting the Community Development Office ahead of time at (207) 333-6601 or emailing CDBG@auburnmaine.gov.

B. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Staff will provide direct assistance to low-income persons or their representative when forming proposals for Community Development activities. The level and type of assistance will be determined by Community Development staff and may not necessarily include the provision of funds to any person, group, or agency.

Staff will provide direct assistance to low income persons in their effort to progress through the various program processes. For the Rehabilitation Program, assistance will include preparing a loan application, submitting financial information, providing advice for soliciting bids, or upon request securing bids for a property owner, comparing and evaluating bids for conformance to required work, assisting to schedule rehabilitation work, managing the escrow account, performing inspections to ensure quality work, acting as liaison between the contractor and property owner for complaints and resolving a variety of other problems. For the homebuyer programs, assistance will include preparing a loan application, submitting financial information, providing pre-qualification for housing affordability, credit counseling, and guiding the home purchase.

Staff will provide counseling to tenants who are in jeopardy of being displaced because of a federally funded project and provide relocation assistance to those who are being displaced. Tenants will be assisted when required to file relocation claim forms and to secure comparable housing that is decent, safe and sanitary.

Staff will make a credit counseling referral to low-income households to assist them becoming homeowners.

6. COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

Citizens who have objections or complaints about the Community Development or HOME Programs may submit a written complaint to:

Community Development Department
City of Auburn
60 Court Street
Auburn, ME 04210

The complaint should include the date, name, address, telephone number of the complainant, convenient hour to reach that person by telephone, nature of the complaint and location. The complaint may also be given orally. The person initiating the complaint will schedule a meeting with the Community Development Manager and a formal complaint will be formulated from the interview that will be signed by the complainant.

There will be a written response, within 15 days of receipt, to the complainant. The response will indicate the ultimate disposition of the complaint.

7. AMENDMENTS TO CONSOLIDATED PLAN

Auburn will amend its Consolidated Plan in the following ways: whenever it makes one of the following decisions:

a) Minor Amendment

A minor amendment will be approved by the City Manager. These include:

- Program Guideline updates
- Policy Changes
- Budget changes under 20% of planned projects

b) Substantial Amendment

A substantial amendment must be authorized by the City Council and submitted to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A public notice of the change will be published 30 days before adoption of an amendment by the City Council. An additional public hearing for a program amendment will be held in advance of a City Council vote.

A substantial amendment includes:

- to change a goal, priority, or activity of the Consolidated Plan;
- to carry out an activity using funds from any program covered by the Consolidated Plan (including program income) not previously covered in the Consolidated Annual Action Plan; or
- to change the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity included in the Consolidated Annual Action Plan.
- Change that exceeds 10% of the amount of annual Community Development or HOME Program budget