

CHAPTER 21

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

- Section 21.1 General
- Section 21.2 Public hearings
- Section 21.3 Consideration of objection to application
- Section 21.4 Bilingual
- Section 21.5 Technical assistance
- Section 21.6 Timely access and adequate information
- Section 21.7 Citizen complaint procedure

Section 21.1 General

The town adopts the following Citizen Participation Plan to meet the citizen participation requirements of Section 508 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended. The town is committed through adoption of this plan to full and total involvement of all residents of the town in the composition, implementation and assessment of its Louisiana Community Development Block Grant (LCDBG) Program. Attempts will be made to reach all citizens, with particular emphasis on participation by persons of low and moderate income, residents of slum and blighted areas and of areas in which funds are proposed to be used. A copy of this plan will be made available to the public upon request.

As part of the citizen participation requirements and to maximize citizen interaction, the town shall:

(1) Provide citizens with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information and records relating to the state's proposed method of distribution, as required by the secretary, and relating to the actual use of funds under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended.

(2) Provide for public hearings to obtain views and respond to proposals and questions at all stages of the community development program. These hearings will consist of the development of needs, the review of proposed activities, and review of program performance. These hearings will be held after adequate notice of a minimum of five calendar days at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries with accommodations for the handicapped and non-English speaking persons.

(3) Provide for an encourage citizen participation with particular emphasis on participation by persons of low and moderate income who are residents of slum and blighted areas and of areas in which funds are proposed to be used.

(4) Provide for technical assistance to groups representative of person of low and moderate

income that request such assistance in developing proposals.

(5) Provide for a formal written procedure which will accommodate a timely written response, within fifteen (15) days where practicable, to written complaints and grievances.

(6) Identify how the needs of non-English speaking and handicapped residents will be met in the case of public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking or handicapped residents can be reasonably expected to attend.

Section 21.2 Public hearings

A. Notices informing citizens of any public hearings will appear in the official journal of the town a minimum of five (5) calendar days prior to the hearing. In addition, notices will also be posted on the town hall door and the hearing will be publicized through local community organizations, i.e., churches, clubs, etc., and/or dissemination of leaflets in the target area. Hearings will be held at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries with accommodation for individuals with handicaps and non-English speaking persons. Whenever possible these hearings will be held within or near the target areas, at times affording participation by the most affected residents.

B. Application:

(1) First public hearing

The first public hearing will be held approximately fifteen (15) calendar days prior to the deadline for submission of the LCDBG application for the current funding cycle. The Citizen Participation Plan will be available at the hearing. The public notice will state that the following will be discussed at the hearing:

- (a) The amount of funds available for proposed community development.
- (b) The range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount proposed to be used for activities that will benefit persons of low and moderate income.
- (c) The plans of the town for minimizing displacement of persons as a result of activities assisted with such funds and the benefits to be provided by the town to persons actually displaced.
- (d) The town's prior performance of LCDBG programs funded by the state.

In addition, the notice shall state that all citizens, particularly low and moderate income residents of slum and blighted areas, are encouraged to submit their views and proposals regarding community development and housing needs. Those citizens unable to attend this hearing may submit their views and proposals to:

Town of Livonia
Post Office Box 307
Livonia, Louisiana 70755

The notice will also state that accommodations will be made for handicapped and non-English speaking individuals provided a five (5) day notice is received by the town.

(2) Second public hearing

The second public hearing will be held at least of seven (7) calendar days prior to the deadline for submittal of the application to LCDBG. A public notice shall appear in the official journal informing the citizens of the following:

- (a) Proposed submittal date of the application.
- (b) Proposed objectives.
- (c) Proposed activities.
- (d) Location of proposed activities.
- (e) Dollar amount of proposed activities.
- (f) Location and hours available for application review.

In addition, the notice shall state (1) the time and place for the second public hearing in accordance with the procedures outlined within this Citizen Participation Plan to receive comments and discuss the proposed application; (2) all citizens, particularly those affected by the proposed project, are encouraged to attend; and (3) those citizens unable to attend may submit their written views and proposals to:

Town of Livonia
Post Office Box 307
Livonia, Louisiana 70755

This notice will also state that accommodations will be made for handicapped and non-English speaking persons providing a five (5) day notice is received by the town.

Negative comments received will be forwarded immediately to the state Division of Administration or the application will be withdrawn if necessary.

C. Amendments. Program amendments, which substantially alter the LCDBG project from that approved in the original application, shall not be submitted to the state without holding one (1) public hearing in accordance with the procedures outlined within this Citizen Participation Plan. Minutes of the hearing will be submitted with the request from the amendment. All interested citizens, particularly the low and moderate income, elderly,

handicapped, and residents of the project area, shall be made aware and have the opportunity to comment on proposed amendments and/or submit alternative measures.

D. Grantee performance The town will hold one (1) performance hearing to solicit the public's opinion of the effectiveness of the LCDBG Program. The manner of notification will be the same as previously described for all public hearings. Notification will be made in the official journal approximately fifteen (15) calendar days prior to the anticipated submittal of close-out documents to the state, and will indicate the date, time, and place of the performance hearing, and invite comments and opinions on the LCDBG activities implemented under the LCDBG Program being closed out. The notice will also state that accommodations will be made for handicapped and non-English speaking persons provided a five (5) day notice is received by the town.

This notice shall invite all interested parties, particularly those low to moderate income residents in the target area to attend.

The hearing will be held no sooner than five (5) calendar days from the publication date of said notice.

Section 32.3 Consideration of objection to application

A. Persons wishing to object to approval of an application by the state may make such objection known to:

Office of Community Development
Division of Administration
Post Office Box 94095
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9095

B. The state will consider objections made only on the following grounds:

(1) The application description of needs and objectives is plainly inconsistent with available facts and data.

(2) The activities to be undertaken are plainly inappropriate to meeting the needs and objectives identified by the applicant.

(3) The application does not comply with the requirements set forth in the Final Statement or other applicable laws.

C. Such objections should include both an identification of the requirements not met and, in the case of objections relative to (1) above, the complainant must supply the data upon which he relied upon to support his objection.

Section 21.4 Bilingual

Whenever a significant number of persons and/or residents of blighted neighborhoods communicate with a primary language than English attend public hearings, the town will provide an interpreter for dissemination of information to them providing the town is given sufficient notification of five (5) days.

Section 21.5 Technical assistance

Technical assistance may be provided directly by the town to any citizen, particularly to low and moderate income persons, residents of blighted neighborhoods and minorities, who request assistance in the development of proposals and statement of views concerning the LCDBG Program. The local officials, administrator and engineer will conduct informational meetings with the residents of the low to moderate income areas if a written request is received by the town with at least one week notification. The persons who conduct the technical assistance meetings will disseminate information on the program and answer all pertinent questions.

Section 21.6 Timely access and adequate information

The town shall provide timely disclosure of records, information and documents related to the LCDBG program activities. Documents will be made available for copying upon request at the town hall, Monday thru Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Such documents may include the following:

- (1) All meetings and promotional materials.
- (2) Records of hearings and meetings.
- (3) All key documents, including prior applications, letters, grant agreements, citizen participation plans, and proposed applications.
- (4) Copies of the regulations (final statements) concerning the program.
- (5) Documents regarding other important requirements, such as Procurement Procedures, Fair Housing, Equal Employment Opportunity, Uniform Act, Labor Provisions and Environmental Procedures.

Section 21.7 Citizen complaint procedure

- A. It is the policy of the town to review all complaints received by the town.
- B. The following procedures will be followed on all complaints received by the town.
 - (1) The complainant shall notify the mayor of the complaint. The initial complaint may be expressed orally or by written correspondence.
 - (2) The mayor will notify the complainant of his findings or that of his designated

representative in writing or by telephone within ten (10) working days.

(3) If the complainant is aggrieved with the decision, he must notify the mayor in writing that he desires to be afforded a hearing by the council. The complainant will be placed on the next regularly scheduled council meeting agenda. The mayor will notify the complainant in writing of the date of the hearing.

(4) The complainant must bring all relevant data, witnesses, etc. to the hearing. The council, at the hearing, will review the complaint and forward within thirty (30) days a certified copy of the minutes of the meeting at which the hearing was conducted and a decision was rendered. If a decision is not reached at the hearing, the council will inform complainant of an appropriate date to expect a response. Within ten (10) working days of reaching a decision, the complainant will be notified in writing of the decision.

Complaints concerning the general administration of the LCDBG Program may be submitted in writing directly to the:

Division of Administration
Office of Community Development
Post Office Box 94095
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9095

C. All citizen complaints relative to Fair Housing/Equal Opportunity violations alleging discrimination shall be forwarded for disposition to the:

Department of Housing and Urban Development
Regional Office
Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Division
Post Office Box 2905
Fort Worth, Texas 76113-2905

The complainant will be notified in writing within ten (10) days that, due to the nature of the complaint, it has been forwarded to HUD for resolution.

or

Complainant may contact the HUD FH/EO Division directly at the Toll Free Telephone # 1-800-669-9777 or TDD # 1-800-927-9275.

D. The clerk will maintain a file for the purpose of keeping reports of complaints.

E. This policy does not invalidate nor supersede the personnel or other policies of the town which are currently adopted, but is intended to service as a guide for complaints.