

Lawrence Massachusetts



Citizen Participation Plan

For the

Consolidated Plan

City Fiscal Year 2021-2025

HUD Program Year 2020-2024

City of Lawrence
Community Development Department
Citizen Participation Plan

Introduction and Overview

The City of Lawrence implements Housing and Community Development programs funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These programs include the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG). The CDBG program has national objectives of decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunities. The Lawrence Community Development Department has a strong record of accomplishment at revitalizing neighborhoods and meeting the needs of low- and moderate- income people.

Every five years, the City prepares the Consolidated Plan (Con Plan). The Con Plan has two principal elements: the Strategic Plan and the Annual Action Plan. The Strategic Plan examines the community's need and projects certain goals and objectives to implement with HUD funding over a five year period. The Annual Action Plan distills these goals to specific projects and programs for the upcoming program year. These Plans may be amended from time to time. The City also submits a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) to HUD after each program year, to report on activities undertaken in the previous 12 months.

This Citizen Participation Plan provides information on how residents, institutions, businesses and community organizations may participate in the development of the City's Con Plan, Annual Action Plan, CAPER and any amendments to the Con Plan or Action Plan.

Copies of the Citizen Participation Plan are available from the Office of Planning & Development at 12 Methuen Street Lawrence, MA 01840 or on the City website www.cityoflawrence.com.

Lawrence has a rich history of citizen participation and neighborhood organizing aimed at determining the direction of city services and government funding. The City has adopted a philosophy of increasing citizen participation and citizen engagement. The City also collaborates with a number of public and non-profit agencies offering services in Lawrence. These public and non-profit agencies work to represent the needs of their clients and are governed by boards of directors, providing two important links to the community.

Community Development Advisory Board, Lawrence City Council

The Lawrence Community Development Advisory Board (the CDAB) has been in existence for well over 10 years. The CDAB is the primary mechanism for ongoing citizen participation of the Lawrence Community Development Program. The Board advises the Office of Planning & Development. The CDAB reviews and makes recommendation on all activities related to Community Development funding before their final presentation to the Mayor and submission to HUD. The CDAB is composed of up to 9 diverse members appointed by the Mayor, representing the City Council, neighborhoods, economic development interests and persons with disabilities. The Lawrence City Council also reviews and approves the annual budget before submission to HUD.

Development of the Consolidated Plan

Lawrence hired a consultant in October 2019 to assist the community and the City in formulating the Con Plan. In addition to working on other elements of the plan, the consultant will reach out to the community in a series of consultations over a several month period. The Office of Planning & Development staff will work closely with the consultant, insuring that representative agencies and non-profits are considered. City boards will also be consulted.

These consultations and meetings have been complemented by public hearings. There have been four public hearings. The first two were held at the Lawrence Public Library. This location is central to the City and is handicapped accessible. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the next two meetings were virtual meetings broadcast on Facebook live and YouTube. Participants were allowed to participate in the meeting or call in to the meeting.

The meetings each reviewed the purpose of the Community Development program and received input from the general public. Presenters at the meeting also reviewed possible priorities for the next five years.

The City will also offer the opportunity for input to neighboring communities and the Regional Planning Council.

Proposals were invited from non-profits for CDBG Public Service and Public Facilities funding.

Based on public hearings, consultations and staff input, a draft Consolidated Plan (including the Strategic Plan and the Annual Action Plan – see below) will be made available to the public on about August 24, 2020. After the 5 day comment period has expired, the City's Office of Planning & Development staff and the consultant will review and consider all comments and views made regarding the proposed Con Plan. All comments and views will become a matter of record.

The Con Plan will then be submitted to HUD on or about August 20, 2020. The Con Plan will also be posted on the City of Lawrence's web site.

Development of the Action Plan

Examples of eligible projects to be included in the Action Plan are listed below. Public Hearings for the Action Plan coincided with the hearings for the Con Plan. The public announcement for those meeting included the following information:

- The amount of assistance the City expect to receive in the upcoming community development program
- The range of eligible activities
- The amount of assistance that will benefit persons of low and moderate income and
- The plans to minimize displacement of persons and to assist any person displaced.

One was held in December 20019 and the second in January 2020. These two were held at the Lawrence Public Library. This location is central to the City and is handicapped accessible.

Proposals were invited from non-profits for CDBG funding.

Eligible Activities

Among the activities eligible for financial assistance under the CDBG Program are:

1. Acquisition by purchase, lease, donation, or otherwise, of real property for eligible public purposes
2. Disposition of real property acquired with CDBG funds or its retention for public purposes
3. Acquisition, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or installation of public facilities and improvements (except buildings or portions of buildings used predominantly for the general conduct of government) carried out by the City or other public or private non-profit entities
4. Clearance, demolition, and removal of buildings and improvements
5. Public services, including, but not limited to, those concerned with employment, crime prevention, child care, health, drug abuse, education, fair housing counseling, energy conservation, welfare, or recreational needs
6. Interim assistance when immediate action is necessary to arrest deterioration and when permanent improvements will be carried out as soon as practicable and alleviate emergency conditions threatening the public health and safety
7. Payment of the cost of completing an urban renewal project funded under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949, as amended

8. Relocation payments and other assistance for permanently or temporarily displaced individuals, families, businesses, non-profit organizations, and farm operations where required by federal regulations or otherwise determined appropriate
9. Payment to housing owners for losses of rental income incurred in holding, for temporary periods, housing units to be utilized for the relocation of individuals and families displaced by program activities
10. Special projects directed to remove materials and architectural barriers which restrict the mobility and accessibility of elderly or handicapped persons
11. Acquisition, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or installation of distribution lines and facilities of privately-owned utilities
12. Rehabilitation of privately-owned buildings and improvements for residential purposes, low-income public housing and other publicly-owned residential buildings and improvements otherwise eligible for assistance, and manufactured housing that is part of the permanent housing stock

Substantial Amendments

The Con Plan or the Action Plan can be amended, in accordance with federal regulation (24 CFR 91.505) when the Community Development Department staff makes one of the following decisions:

1. To substantially change the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of the selected programs.
2. To change or add a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area.
3. When a change in allocation is greater than 20% for the CDBG, ESG or HOME Programs.
or when directed to do so by U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD).

Public Comment Period

The City of Lawrence will offer a public comment period of not less than thirty (30) days for any Substantial Amendment to the Annual Action Plan. At any time there is a nationally declared disaster or pandemic, such as COVID-19, and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) grants waiver to the Citizen Participation Plan, the comment period shall be not less than five (5) days.

The City will advertise the availability of the Substantial Amendment in the legal notices in the Eagle Tribune newspaper no later than the first day of the public comment period and on the City website (www.cityoflawrence.com). At any time there is a nationally declared disaster or pandemic, such as COVID-19, and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) grants waiver to the

Citizen Participation Plan, the advertisements and public notices may be solely on the City website (www.cityoflawrence.com).

Public Hearings

Additional Public Hearings may be held if a Substantial Amendment is needed. Comments received in writing to the Community Development Director or at the Public Hearing will be considered and included in the Plan. At any time there is a nationally declared disaster or pandemic, such as COVID-19, and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) grants waiver to the Citizen Participation Plan, in person public hearings will not be held. Virtual public hearings are acceptable.

Performance Report

The City publishes the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). The CAPER is made available to the public for comments for a period of no less than fifteen (15) days prior to being submitted to HUD. At any time there is a nationally declared disaster or pandemic, such as COVID-19, and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) grants waiver to the CAPER, the comment period shall be not less than five (5) days. Copies of the CAPER are available at the Office of Planning & Development, the Lawrence Public Library, the City Clerk's Office, and on the City website www.cityoflawrence.com.

Collaboration

There are four types of groups that the consultant and the staff will be collaborating with for the development of the Con Plan and the Action Plan.

- City Departments. There are a number of city departments which work on the planning and implementation of the CD projects and programs. The Office of Planning and Development is responsible for the Consolidated Plan, which includes elements on housing and economics. It is important that the Con Plan has close coordination with these efforts and documents.
- Non-profit entities. A number of non-profit agencies implement programs in Lawrence that reach neighborhoods and people who are the focus of community development programs. For instance, a number of agencies serve the homeless in Lawrence.
- Other city boards. Lawrence has a number of appointed boards which plan for and serve the needs of neighborhoods and persons who are the focus of the community development program.
- Public entities. The plans and activities of the Lawrence Housing Authority will be an important consideration in formulating the Con Plan, in particular. Other public entities, including state agencies, may also be considered.

Neighborhood Participation

Lawrence is a city of neighborhoods, many dating back over 100 years. There are now numerous citizen driven organizations from Lawrence's neighborhoods addressing such

issues as activities for neighborhood beautification, safety, economic development, making government services and officials more accessible and accountable and providing a voice for specific ethnic groups and geographic areas.

Performance Measures

A performance measure is a planning and implementation feature that sets concrete goals and objective for a program. It is anticipated that the Con Plan will include two levels of performance measures. First, there will be performance measures set for the overall Community Development program. These measures will allow community development staff and HUD to assess the ongoing program.

In a similar fashion, performance measures will be adopted for organizations participating in the program.

Technical Assistance

The City of Lawrence is committed to provide technical assistance to any group seeking information or input to the community development process.

Public Access

The public meetings will be held with sufficient notice to the general public. All public hearings will be held at a location and time that is both handicap accessible and convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries. Translation assistance for non-English speaking persons and interpreter assistance for the hearing impaired will be provided if requested at least 48 hours prior to the hearing.

Notices for the public hearing will be published in the non-legal section of the Eagle Tribune newspaper and a local Spanish newspaper.

Displacement Plan and Assistance

For the Action Plan year 2021, the City of Lawrence does not intend to fund projects that may cause the displacement of families, individuals or business concerns. However, involuntary displacement of families and individuals may take place on a temporary, limited basis due to the regular activities of the housing rehabilitation and/or lead hazard reduction program. Buildings and other structures considered as unsafe or unfit for human habitation will be posted as such and any occupants relocated in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Uniform Relocation Act.

Contacts

The Office of Planning & Development staff can be reached at 978-620-3510. The contact person on the staff with the responsibility for the Con Plan and the Action Plan is the Community Development Director.

Comments and Complaints

Lawrence's Office of Planning & Development staff will accept any comments or views of citizens in writing or orally at the public hearing, in preparing the final Con Plan,

amendment of the plan or performance reports. A summary of all comments or views received will be attached to the final Con Plan, amendment of the Plan or performance report for which those comments or views apply.

The Office of Planning & Development staff will respond in writing to all comments and views received within five (5) working days (where applicable) of receipt of said comments or views.