

CITY OF VALDOSTA

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) regulations, as found in 24 CFR 91.100-91.115, requires all grantees to certify that they are following a Citizen Participation Plan. To comply with this requirement the City of Valdosta through its Neighborhood Development Division has prepared a Citizen Participation Plan which takes into account the elements outlined in the legislation.

I. ENCOURAGE PROGRAM PARTICIPATION BY LOW AND MODERATE INCOME PERSONS THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION.

The City of Valdosta through its Neighborhood Development Division has taken actions to provide for and encourage increased participation in its CDBG Program. Some of these actions include:

- The formation of a Citizen Advisory Committee consisting of seven members. Five of the members shall be appointed by the City Council. The two remaining appointments shall be made by the Neighborhood Action Sub-committee from the sub-committee membership. All appointees shall serve four-year terms. All appointees must reside within the City of Valdosta. The Neighborhood Development Division will work with the seventeen defined neighborhoods within the designated revitalization areas (DRA) to establish the Neighborhood Action Sub-committee to work with staff to provide input to the Citizen Advisory Committee in the development of the Consolidated Plan, any amendments and the annual performance report.
- The City will conduct conferences to apprise the public of funding availability and offer technical assistance to agencies, groups and individuals in completing the required applications for any particular program.
- Proposed statements are written and prepared in a manner so as to afford low and moderate income persons or other affected persons the opportunity to examine their contents and a contact person is always identified so that any questions can be answered.
- Citizens are informed through newspaper articles, public notices, public hearings, the city's website and social media sites, and the city's public access channel concerning the CDBG objectives, changes in the use of funds, availability of the Action Plan and other pertinent information as it relates to the CDBG Program.
- All citizen comments are reviewed and incorporated in the Action Plan, as applicable.
- The City analyzes the impact certain programs (especially housing) have had in the low and moderate income neighborhoods through public comments and surveys completed at public hearings.

- Meet with agencies, non-profit organizations and neighborhood organizations and groups to inform them about project eligibility, program planning, project selection, and funding and project implementation processes.
- The City will conduct annual training for its low and moderate income citizens regarding governmental operations, and citizen access to city staff and programs.

The City of Valdosta will have an open door policy concerning the CDBG Program. The City has as its overall goals the elimination of substandard housing and the improvement of the quality of life of its citizenry; especially those considered low income.

II. REASONABLE AND TIMELY ACCESS TO LOCAL MEETINGS

The City of Valdosta will provide its citizens with reasonable and timely access to all Public Hearings and local public meetings. Information and records relating to the CDBG Program are made available to the public for review and comment in accordance with the requirements of Federal and State laws and regulations.

Notices of Public Hearings are placed in the local newspaper, one widely publicized paper in the South Georgia area; The Valdosta Daily Times. The advertisements are headed as Public Notices in bold black type in the sections of the newspaper most likely to be read by the majority of the citizens (especially those who are potential beneficiaries of the CDBG Program).

Descriptive information concerning the CDBG Program, Proposed Statement of Objectives and Uses of Funds and Final Statements, Grantee Performance reports and other information such as descriptions of the housing and non-housing Neighborhood Development programs are placed in the reception area of the office of Neighborhood Development and also made available to the Neighborhood Action Committee. The City will continue its efforts to make local meetings and information accessible to the general public. The Public Information Office will work with the Neighborhood Development Division to maximize use of all area media outlets.

III. PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CITIZENS

The City of Valdosta through the Neighborhood Development Division staff will continue to provide technical assistance to the citizens of Valdosta who request such assistance in developing project proposals or other information which relates to the CDBG Program. There is a ND staff person available for neighborhood meetings and other activities carried out throughout the city to answer questions concerning the CDBG Program. The ND staff is available to discuss project proposals with non-profits concerning compliance requirements, project eligibility, etc.

IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS

The City of Valdosta will continue to hold Public Hearings to obtain citizens' comments and concerns and to respond to questions at all stages of program planning and implementation. All activities proposed for funding with CDBG funds will be carefully reviewed and appropriate recommendations

will be made to the Mayor and City Council. Notices of Public Hearings will be published in the Valdosta Daily Times at least fourteen days prior to the hearings. The hearings will be held at locations and times convenient for those persons who are likely to benefit from the locations and times convenient for those persons who are likely to benefit from the program(s). The Public Hearing will be held at sites that are handicap accessible and have adequate parking. All Public Hearings will be properly documented to include the following:

- List of attendees
- Public comments
- Proposed objective and projects
- Description of actual use of previous year funds

Written minutes of the public hearing will be placed on file in the Neighborhood Development Division and will be available for public review.

V. NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY/COMPLIANT REVIEW PROCESS

It is the policy of the City of Valdosta to provide equal opportunity for services to all citizens without regard to race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, or handicap or disability. No person shall, on the basis of race, religion, sex, color, age, national origin, etc., be excluded from, or be denied the benefit of any program or activity administered by the City of Valdosta CDBG Program.

Persons who feel that they have been discriminated against by a program or project funded under the Community Development Block Grant Program may file a complaint, in writing to:

DIRECTOR
NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
300 N. LEE STREET
ROOM 200
VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31603

The complaint must contain the following information:

1. Name and address of the person filing the complaint
2. Description of the act(s) considered to be in violation
3. Other available information which will assist in the investigation of the complaint

Such complaints should be filed within sixty (60) days of the alleged discriminatory act. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Director within fifteen (15) working days will issue a written response as to the disposition of the complaint. The response will include information concerning the right of appeal should the complainant disagree in whole or in part with the response to the complaint or if the response is delayed more than fifteen (15) working days. The appeal may be made in writing to:

CITY MANAGER
CITY OF VALDOSTA
P.O. BOX 1125
VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31603

The City Manager not later than thirty (30) days will issue a written response as to the disposition of the complaint. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response by the City Manager, they may appeal the disposition of the complaint to:

DIRECTOR
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
40 MARIETTA STREET, 15TH FLOOR
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303

The identity of the complainant shall be kept confidential, except to the extent necessary to carry out or conduct investigations, hearings, or judicial proceedings arising out of the complaint.

VI. PROVISION FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING RESIDENTS

The number of non-English speaking residents in the City of Valdosta is not so large as to present a significant problem during Public Hearings or meetings. However, there should be no problem arranging for a college or high school foreign language instructor to be present at Public Hearings, if an interpreter is requested. Also, the Neighborhood Development Division will provide for opportunities for conversational Spanish classes for departmental staff.

VII. CONCLUSION

The City of Valdosta will continue to make every possible effort to comply with all Community Development Block Grant requirements and will provide for and encourage increased citizens' participation in its CDBG Program.

For further information concerning the City of Valdosta's CDBG Program Citizens' Participation Plan, contact:

DIRECTOR
NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
300 N. LEE STREET
ROOM 200
VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31603
(229) 259-3571

APPROVED

DIRECTOR

DATE

CITY MANAGER

DATE

MAYOR

DATE