

## **Citizen Participation 91.220(b)**

The City of Passaic Department of Community Development's process for encouraging citizen participation in administering the federal and state grant programs utilizes the follows actions:

In order to encourage citizen participation from the community, the Department of Community Development provides many opportunities for public input. In preparing the Consolidated Plans and the One-Year Action Plans, the Department of Community Development has followed a Citizen Participation Plan that meets federal regulatory requirements. The Citizen Participation Plan specifies the policies and procedures for citizen participation be clearly defined. Citizen participation and input is solicited during the planning process and anytime a substantial change, constituting more than 25% of the grant funds, is made to any given program year's plan. Additionally, to the foundation of citizen participation, the Department of Community Development initiated added efforts to provide for citizen participation through the following:

- Access to meetings
- Access to information
- Public hearings to identify housing and community development needs.
- Review of proposed uses of funding
- Notifications posted at the City Hall entrance; as well as within the Department of Community Development
- Notices published in two local newspapers: *North Jersey Herald News* and *El Especial*, a Spanish-written newspaper.

This process provides for and encourages citizen participation in the development of both the Five-Year Consolidated and One Year Action Plans; creating "substantial amendments" to either Plan, and, in preparing performance reports.

### **Encouraging Public Participation**

The law requires that our Citizen Participation Plan both provide for and encourage public participation; emphasizing involvement by low- and moderate-income people – especially those living in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. In addition, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) expects the city of Passaic to take whatever actions are appropriate to encourage participation of minorities, people who do not speak English as well as people with disabilities.

Copies of the Citizen Participation Plan, as well as summaries of basic information about Community Development Block Grant.

Throughout the planning process, the Department of Community Development is committed to broadening public participation in the development of the consolidated plan through the following:

- For the most part by advertising and holding multiple public hearings to solicit input on housing and community development needs.
- Making a draft of the Strategic Plan available for public review and comment for thirty days.
- Holding a public hearing to receive public comment on the draft.
- The Department of Community Development has a Spanish speaking liaison available to communicate with the Spanish speaking population.

The Department of Community Development also promotes its planning activities and services at various community meetings as well as housing and health fairs.

The Department of Community Development also consulted with public and private agencies that provide assisted housing, health services, and social services. These agencies have representatives at one or more of the public hearings and/or received mailings at various stages of plan development. This serves as the main citizen participation resource for the community development program.

The Department of Community Development also has integrated efforts to broaden outreach and participation of various groups into the operations of the CDBG and HOME programs as follows:

- The Department operates a website at <http://www.cityofpassaic.com/Departments-CommunityDevelopment.html> to report on and special programs and issues.
- The Department advertises in the community newspapers.
- The Department participates in a broad coalition of business, resident, institutional, and public groups that helps coordinate and promote revitalization activities.
- The Department regularly consults with community and business groups to better understand emerging community needs and effective strategies.
- The Department frequently meets with service providers in the community.
- The Department meets with a broad range of organizations that serve under represented populations.

**Receiving and Processing Comments:** Citizens are encouraged to submit all comments in a timely manner

- Via e-mail
- Personal contacts
- Phone contact
- At or during public meetings and hearings.

Once the comments are received all responses to questions, comments and inquires are required to be addressed in a timely manner. A summary of public comments and responses will be included in a separate Appendices section of the plans. In addition, if no comments are received this will also be clearly stated in the same Appendices section of the plans.