

Attachment A

City of Visalia
Citizen Participation Plan

April 2010

For Submission to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development



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**City of Visalia
Citizen Participation Plan**

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A. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires entitlement communities under the federal Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, to develop a citizen participation plan. This Citizen Participation Plan describes how the City of Visalia (hereafter “the City”) will involve residents in the planning, implementation and assessment of how Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) funds will be used. It includes the City’s policies and procedures for public participation in the Consolidated Plan (ConPlan) process.

The ConPlan is a five-year plan required by HUD that outlines how the City intends to meet identified local housing and community development (HCD) needs over the five-year period. It is a plan and a process for defining and carrying out a unified vision for housing, homelessness, special populations and community economic development needs. The main components of the ConPlan include an HCD needs assessment; a housing market analysis; an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice; a strategy that reflects general goals (priorities) and performance outcome measurements for allocating HUD funds to address the HCD needs; a list of specific objectives for each priority (including proposed accomplishments); and an annual action plan (one-year funding) describing how federal and local resources will be used to address the needs and objectives identified in the ConPlan.

The City’s ConPlan identifies unmet priorities in the community that generally deal with a suitable living environment, affordable housing, economic opportunities and homelessness. All future requests for HUD funding beginning in 2010 must be identified by the ConPlan as a need and be part of the strategic objectives for each goal/priority in order to be considered for funding from HUD. This includes requests from outside agencies that are directly applying to HUD for funding of their activities.

The ConPlan planning and approval process can be broken down into the following stages:

- Needs assessment
- Plan development
- Approval
- Amendments
- Performance review

This citizen participation process generally includes a series of well-publicized annual public hearings and community/neighborhood meetings to review the ConPlan, the Annual Action Plan and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). All meetings and hearings are publicized in accordance with applicable HUD, state and local regulations. Public notices for environmental procedures and project-related policies are also part of the citizen participation process.

In addition to hosting community meetings and public hearings, the City is hosting a series of stakeholder focus groups, distributing community needs assessment surveys and establishing a 2010–2015 ConPlan presence online.

B. BACKGROUND

In 2006, HUD and its Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) division encouraged and in some cases required entitlement communities to implement strategies that further promote residents to participate in community building through the five-year ConPlan planning process. The CPD's underlying principles include the following:

- Community building begins with job creation, employment and the creation of safe, decent and affordable housing.
- The planning and execution of community development initiatives must be bottom up and community-driven.
- Complex problems require coordinated, comprehensive and sustainable solutions.
- Government must be streamlined to be more efficient and effective.
- Citizen participation in federal, state and local government can be increased through communication and better access to information.

This Citizen Participation Plan is in compliance with these federal principles.

C. OVERVIEW

GOAL: To generate significant public participation in the consolidated planning process, including any amendments to the ConPlan, the Annual Action Plan and the CAPER. Input will be sought particularly from low- and moderate-income persons and groups residing within various areas of the City where program funds will be used.

Objective A: All persons shall have the opportunity to take part in the consolidated planning process and any amendments to the ConPlan, the Annual Action Plan and the CAPER.

Policies:

- 1) Two public input meetings will be conducted during the development of the ConPlan. At those meetings, members of the public will be asked to identify community needs and priorities prior to the drafting of the ConPlan.
- 2) Upon completion of the draft ConPlan, the plan will be available for public review and comment for 30 days. Copies of said plan shall be made available to the public at City Hall East (315 E. Acequia Ave.), City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.), the Visalia Branch Library (200 W. Oak Ave.) and two community centers—Anthony Community Center (345 N. Jacob St.) and Visalia Senior Center (310 N. Locust St.).

- 3) Two public input meetings will be conducted in those years when a ConPlan is being prepared to hear public testimony regarding the draft ConPlan document.
- 4) Upon completion of the draft Annual Action Plan, the plan shall be made available for public review and comment for 30 days. Copies of said plan shall be made available to the public at City Hall East (315 E. Acequia Ave.), City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.), the Visalia Branch Library (200 W. Oak Ave.) and two community centers—Anthony Community Center (345 N. Jacob St.) and Visalia Senior Center (310 N. Locust St.).
- 5) Upon any amendments to the ConPlan, the amendments shall be made available for public review and comment for 30 days. Copies of said amendments shall be made available to the public at City Hall East (315 E. Acequia Ave.), City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.), the Visalia Branch Library (200 W. Oak Ave.) and two community centers—Anthony Community Center (345 N. Jacob St.) and Visalia Senior Center (310 N. Locust St.).
- 6) Upon completion of the CAPER, the report will be available for public review and comment for 15 days. Copies of said report shall be made available to the public at City Hall East (315 E. Acequia Ave.), City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.), the Visalia Branch Library (200 W. Oak Ave.) and two community centers—Anthony Community Center (345 N. Jacob St.) and Visalia Senior Center (310 N. Locust St.).
- 7) Two separate public hearings at different times in each program year shall be conducted by the City to obtain community views and to respond to proposals and questions. The first public hearing will be held in the spring to discuss community needs and the proposed uses of funds for the upcoming program year. The second public hearing will be held in the fall to assess how funds were spent during the previous program year.
- 8) All public hearings and meetings shall be conducted in the evening hours, shall be held at convenient locations that accommodate persons with disabilities and shall be easily accessible by public transit.
- 9) The City shall provide interpreters for non-English-speaking persons and/or the hearing impaired when such requests are made at least five working days prior to the hearing.

Objective B: Adequate information shall be provided to all interested persons and groups upon request.

Policies:

- 1) Prior to adoption of the ConPlan, the City shall make available to all interested persons and groups the amount of assistance that the City estimates it will receive from the CDBG and HOME programs, including the amount that will benefit

persons with very low and low income. In addition, the City shall identify the range of activities that must be undertaken with these funds, plans to minimize the displacement of persons and plans to assist displaced persons, if applicable.

- 2) The City shall provide all interested persons and groups with reasonable and timely access to all information relating to the City's proposed ConPlan and the City's use of assistance under the relevant programs during the previous five years.

Objective C: The City shall provide adequate advance public notice of all associated meetings and hearings.

Policies:

- 1) The City shall provide adequate advance notice of all public hearings and meetings to all interested persons and groups. Sufficient information shall be published about the subject of the hearing or meeting to permit public input. Such notice might take the form of content in the *Visalia Times-Delta* and *El Sol del Valle de San Joaquin* newspapers and/or individual letters, notices or flyers mailed to interested persons and groups.

Objective D: The City shall furnish technical assistance to all interested persons and groups requesting such assistance.

Policies:

- 1) The City shall provide technical assistance, particularly to groups or individuals representing persons with very low or low income. Said assistance shall be used to develop funding proposals for assistance under any of the formula programs covered by the ConPlan. The City shall determine the necessary level and degree of assistance. Such technical assistance might include the following:
 - Assisting with forms/applications
 - Explaining the process for submitting proposals
 - Explaining federal and local requirements
 - Providing comments and advice on the telephone or in meetings
 - Reviewing and commenting on draft proposals

Objective E: All comments and complaints submitted by interested persons or groups shall be adequately considered and addressed.

Policies:

- 1) The City shall consider any comments or complaints from interested persons or groups received in writing or orally at public hearings or meetings in preparing the ConPlan, any amendments to the plan, the Annual Action Plan or the CAPER.

- 2) A summary of public comments or complaints and a summary of any comments or complaints not accepted and the reasons thereto shall be attached to the respective final ConPlan, any amendments to the plan, the Annual Action Plan or the CAPER.
- 3) The City shall provide a substantive written response to every comment or complaint received within 15 working days when possible.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Citizen Participation Plan and Amendments

The Citizen Participation Plan is designed to facilitate and encourage residents to participate in the ConPlan process. In particular, the Citizen Participation Plan seeks to encourage the involvement of low- and moderate-income persons.

The City will use the following process to adopt and make any subsequent changes to its Citizen Participation Plan:

- The City will place public notice in the *Visalia Times-Delta* and *El Sol del Valle de San Joaquin* newspapers, on the City's Web site (www.ci.visalia.ca.us) and at City Hall East (315 E. Acequia Ave.), City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.), the Visalia Branch Library (200 W. Oak Ave.) and two community centers—Anthony Community Center (345 N. Jacob St.) and Visalia Senior Center (310 N. Locust St.)—in advance of a 30-day public review and comment period.
- Residents have 30 days to review the Citizen Participation Plan from the date of the notice.
- During the 30-day public review and comment period, the document will be available for review at City Hall East (315 E. Acequia Ave.), City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.), the Visalia Branch Library (200 W. Oak Ave.) and two community centers—Anthony Community Center (345 N. Jacob St.) and Visalia Senior Center (310 N. Locust St.). Copies of the document will be available to the public.
- Residents may file comments in writing at City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.) during the 30-day period from the date of the notice.
- The City Council will adopt the Citizen Participation Plan.

Any change in the public participation process as outlined in this document will require an amendment to the Citizen Participation Plan.

2. Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan

The steps outlined below provide opportunities for public involvement in the ConPlan and the Annual Action Plan:

To identify the needs of low- and moderate-income persons in different areas of the City, priorities will be established based on housing and community development needs. To solicit community input, which is essential to determining these needs and priorities, the following actions will occur:

- The City will consult with local public agencies that assist low- and moderate-income persons and areas, including City staff, state and federal agencies, neighboring local governments and regional agencies.
- The City will consult with private agencies, including local nonprofit service providers and advocates such as the local public housing agency, health agencies, homeless service providers, nonprofit housing developers and social service agencies (including those focusing on services to children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, persons with substance abuse problems, etc.).
- The City will place public notices in the *Visalia Times-Delta* and *El Sol del Valle de San Joaquin* newspapers, on the City's Web site (www.ci.visalia.ca.us) and at City Hall East (315 E. Acequia Ave.), City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.), the Visalia Branch Library (200 W. Oak Ave.) and two community centers—Anthony Community Center (345 N. Jacob St.) and Visalia Senior Center (310 N. Locust St.)—30 days in advance of a meeting. The notice will include the amount of funds available, the range of activities that could be undertaken and the amount that would benefit low- to moderate-income persons.
- A public hearing will be held before the City Council to solicit input on needs and priorities for the ConPlan and the Annual Action Plan.
- Residents have 30 days to review the draft ConPlan and/or the draft Annual Action Plan from the date of the notice.
- Residents may file comments at City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.) during a 30-day period from the date of the notice.
- A public hearing will be held before the City Council to receive comments and approve the ConPlan and the Annual Action Plan.
- The City Council will adopt the ConPlan and/or the Annual Action Plan.
- In preparing the final ConPlan and/or Annual Action Plan, careful consideration will be given to all comments and views expressed by the public, whether given as verbal testimony at the public hearing or submitted in writing during the review and comment period. The final documents will have a section that includes all comments, plus explanations as to why any comments were not accepted.

3. Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan

Amendments to the ConPlan or the Annual Action Plan will be necessary whenever one of the following is proposed:

- To make a substantial change in the allocation priorities or a substantial change in the method of distribution of funds. A substantial change would affect 75 percent of the respective document.
- To carry out an activity using funds from any program not covered by the ConPlan (including program income) not previously described in the ConPlan.
- To substantially change the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity.

The following procedures apply to amendments:

- The City will place public notices in the *Visalia Times-Delta* and *El Sol del Valle de San Joaquin* newspapers, on the City's Web site (www.ci.visalia.ca.us) and at City Hall East (315 E. Acequia Ave.), City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.), the Visalia Branch Library (200 W. Oak Ave.) and two community centers—Anthony Community Center (345 N. Jacob St.) and Visalia Senior Center (310 N. Locust St.)—in advance of a 30-day public review and comment period.
- Residents have 30 days to review the proposed amendment from the date of the notice.
- During the 30-day public review and comment period, the document will be available for review at the City's Housing and Economic Development Department office. Copies of the document will be available to the public.
- Residents may file comments at City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.) during the 30-day period from the date of the notice.
- The City Council will adopt the amendment.
- In preparing a final amendment, careful consideration will be given to all comments and views expressed by the public, whether given as verbal testimony at the public hearing or submitted in writing during the review and comment period. The final amendment will have a section that includes all comments, plus explanations as to why any comments were not accepted.

4. Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER)

Every year, the City must submit to HUD a Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER). In general, the CAPER must describe how funds were actually used and the extent to which these funds were used for activities that benefited low- and moderate-income people. The following steps outline the opportunities for public involvement in the CAPER:

- The City will place public notices in the *Visalia Times-Delta* and *El Sol del Valle de San Joaquin* newspapers, on the City’s Web site (www.ci.visalia.ca.us) and at City Hall East (315 E. Acequia Ave.), City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.), the Visalia Branch Library (200 W. Oak Ave.) and two community centers—Anthony Community Center (345 N. Jacob St.) and Visalia Senior Center (310 N. Locust St.)—in advance of a 30-day public review and comment period.
- Residents have 15 days to review the CAPER from the date of the notice.
- During the 15-day public review and comment period, the document will be available for review at the City’s Housing and Economic Development Department office. Copies of the document will be available to the public.
- Residents may file comments at City Hall North (425 E. Oak Ave.) during the 15-day period from the date of the notice.
- The City Council will adopt the CAPER.
- In preparing the CAPER, careful consideration will be given to all comments and views expressed by the public, whether given as verbal testimony at the public hearing or submitted in writing during the review and comment period. The final report will have a section that includes all comments, plus explanations as to why any comments were not accepted.

E. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

DOCUMENT	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	REQUIRED TIME FOR PUBLIC REVIEW	REQUIRED APPROVAL	DEADLINE
Citizen Participation Plan	Public Hearing 10-Day Notice	30-Day Public Review March/April	City Council	N/A
ConPlan and/or Annual Action Plan	Public Hearing 10-Day Notice	30-Day Public Review March/April	City Council	Submit to HUD April 29
Substantial Amendments	No Public Hearing	30-Day Public Review	City Council	Submit to HUD
CAPER	N/A	15-Day Public Review By Sept. 10	City Council	Submit to HUD Sept. 30

F. GLOSSARY

Annual Action Plan: An annual plan relative to CDBG and HOME funds.

Citizen Participation Plan: A plan to involve residents in the planning, implementation and assessment of how the CDBG and HOME funds will be used.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): A HUD program that provides communities with resources to address a wide range of community development needs.

Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER): An annual assessment relative to the CDBG and HOME funds received.

Consolidated Plan (ConPlan): A five-year strategic plan required by HUD that outlines a unified vision for addressing housing, homelessness, special populations and community economic development needs.

Entitlement Community: A city with a population of 50,000, a central city of a metropolitan area or a county with a population of at least 200,000 that receives CDBG funds directly from HUD.

HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME): A federal block grant designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households.

Low- and Moderate-Income Households: Households earning less than 80 percent of the area median family income. They are broken down into the following income designations:

- **Very Low Income:** Households with incomes 30 percent or less of the area median family income, adjusted for household size.
- **Low Income:** Households with incomes from 31 percent to 50 percent of the area median family income, adjusted for household size.
- **Moderate Income:** Households with incomes from 51 percent to 80 percent of the area median family income, adjusted for household size.

Low- and Moderate-Income Neighborhood: Generally, a census tract(s) or block group(s) where a minimum of 51 percent of the residents are low- or moderate-income households.

Median Family Income (MFI): An index of median family income by household size determined annually by HUD surveys of major metropolitan areas.

Participating Jurisdiction: A local or state government that has been designated by HUD to receive funding under the HOME program.

Program Year: An annual period from July 1 through June 30 for which the accounting of the CDBG and HOME funds occurs.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): A cabinet-level federal agency with a mission to increase homeownership, support community development and increase access to affordable housing free from discrimination.