

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM  
CITY OF NORWICH,CONNECTICUT**



*CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN*

## What is CDBG?

CDBG stands for *Community Development Block Grant*. These funds are distributed and administered by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. These annual block grants were authorized under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The Community Development Program has the stated goal of “*developing viable urban communities, by providing decent housing and suitable living environment and expanded economic opportunities.*” This improvement in quality of life for low and moderate-income people can be achieved in a variety of ways. Below are (only) some of the ways the City of Norwich has used CDBG funds to improve the lives of Norwich residents:

- **Housing Services**
  - Low-Income Housing Improvements
  - Single Family Owner Occupancy
  - Rental Housing (Investor Financed)
  - Down-payment Assistance
- **Social Services**
  - Homeless Assistance
  - English as a Second Language Education
  - Childcare Assistance
  - Food Pantry Services
  - Job Training and Education
  - Rental Assistance (Homeless Prevention)
- **Economic Revitalization/Blight Elimination**
  - Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup
  - Rehabilitation or Demolition of Blighted Buildings
  - Acquisition of land for Economic Development or Community Use
- **Energy Efficiency**
  - Public Buildings and Low-Income Housing population served is at least 51% low or moderate income

## Who can receive CDBG?

The majority of CDBG funds are given to non-profit organizations or City agencies that administer projects and programs for the benefit of Norwich’s residents. These projects and programs must have beneficiaries at least 51% of whom are low and moderate income. Low and moderate-income individuals can receive direct benefits through CDBG funded programs such as the Property Rehabilitation Program or the Childcare Assistance Program. Individuals traditionally do not apply directly for individual grants from CDBG, but rather apply to CDBG funded programs targeted to a certain purpose or groups of people.

## Who is low and moderate income?

HUD defines what guidelines define a low or moderate income individual or family on an annual basis using the median income for the particular geographic area. These income guidelines do not change dramatically from year to year, but are rather adjusted a small amount annually to keep pace with the rate of inflation. HUD defines median income as up to 80% of the area’s median income for any given family size. This is the upper end of eligibility. All people below and up to that point are deemed low or moderate-income.

## Requirements for citizen participation

The City of Norwich is required by law to have a Citizen Participation Plan that details how the public can be involved in the Consolidated Plan process and implementation. Norwich’s Consolidated Plan details how the City uses funds received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

As a HUD entitlement City, Norwich receives an annual allocation of funds under the Community Development Block grant (CDBG) program. This allocation varies annually as Congress establishes the annual budget. The regulations (24 CFR 91.105) do not specify the formal structure for citizen participation but state that citizens shall be involved in the prioritizing and planning of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) activities. The structure of citizen participation adopted by Norwich is a model that is similar to other CDBG entitlement communities and is a process designed to maximize the effectiveness of the work of the Office of Community Development.

In an effort to permit public examination and to enhance public accountability, the City of Norwich will make the following information available to citizens, public agencies and other interested parties upon request: (1) the amount of funds expected to be available for proposed Community Development activities, (2) the range of eligible activities that may be undertaken with such funds, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low and moderate-income, and (3) the geographic areas which meet Community Development eligibility criteria.

## **Administration participants**

### **Office of Community Development**

The City's Office of Community Development serves as the Lead Agency for administration of the Community Development Block Grant Program. The Office of Community Development is located at 23 Union Street, Norwich, CT.

### **Community Development Advisory committee**

The Community Development Advisory Committee is a seven-person committee whose members are appointed by the Norwich City Council. The Community Development Advisory Committee holds public hearings where community stakeholders testify about the community needs in Norwich. These hearings are posted in the City Clerk's Office and in the Norwich Bulletin. The committee is charged with making a recommendation to the City Council of grant allocations, approving the preliminary allocation of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, and also receives reports from the Norwich City Council and the Office of Community Development to formulate funding requests that are in-line with the 5-year Consolidated Plan of the Community Development block grant program in Norwich.

The Committee meets as needed when no funding allocations are under consideration. All CDAC meetings are open to the public.

A list of committee members is available from the City Manager's Office at (860) 823-3750 or the Office of Community Development at (860) 823-3770.

### **Norwich city Council**

The City Council is a seven-person body of elected officials that includes the Mayor of the City of Norwich. City Council members are elected at large and serve for 2-year terms. For a list of current Norwich City Council members and their contact information, please go to

<http://www.norwichct.org/content/43/41/default.aspx>

## **PROCESS**

To encourage ample citizen participation in the CDBG program, the following steps will be taken during the development of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan:

## FIVE YEAR CONSOLIDATED PLAN process

As part of 24 CFR Part 91, the City of Norwich is required to develop an annual Action Plan that details the projects to be undertaken with CDBG funds for the upcoming year. The following steps must be taken with the development of the *Five Year Consolidated Plan*.

1. Five workshops will be held with local social service agencies, local government agencies, non-profit and for-profit service providers, schools and assisted housing providers and city staff to receive input and information regarding the City of Norwich's needs for the upcoming five-year period. These workshops will be held in the year preceding publication of the Five Year Consolidated Plan.

The Office of Community Development will circulate surveys to the aforementioned groups and their agents regarding the needs for:

- Blight elimination
- Affordable housing
- Brownfield redevelopment,
- Energy efficiency upgrades
- Economic development and
- Social service needs of vulnerable populations including families with children, homeless and at-risk for homelessness, the elderly and low-income and working poor people.
- Individuals who require auxiliary aids or special assistance at public hearings should make requests at least 48 hours in advance to the City of Norwich at 823-3746.

2. The Office of Community Development, in consultation with the Community Development Advisory Committee will draft a *Five Year Consolidated Plan* containing a summary of the Community Development needs of Norwich, and a generalized plan of treating those needs over the upcoming five year period, with special emphasis on the aforementioned categories.
3. Upon Completion, a summary of the *Five Year Consolidated Plan* will be published in the local newspaper. The summary will describe the contents and purpose of the plan, community development priorities, and will include a list of the locations where copies of the entire proposed plan may be examined. Copies will be available at the Norwich Public Library, and at the Community Development office, 23 Union Street, Norwich.
4. A citizens' comment period will last for at least 30 days after the publication of the consolidated plan summary.
5. The Citizen Participation Plan will be evaluated every five years by City Council and will be resubmitted as part of the *Five Year Consolidated Plan*.

## ANNUAL ACTION PLAN PROCESS

As part of 24 CFR Part 91, the City of Norwich is required to develop an annual Action Plan that details the projects to be undertaken with CDBG funds for the upcoming year. The following steps must be taken with the development of the *Annual Action Plan*.

1. A Request For Proposals will be published in the local newspaper in January for applicants eligible to apply for CDBG funds. Funding applications will be made available to the public

at the Office of Community Development and on the Community Development page on the City website; [www.norwichct.org](http://www.norwichct.org). Staff will review the applications received by the application deadline in March for compliance and eligibility. Categories may be limited if the CDAC chooses to focus funds on activities identified as great needs

2. The CDAC will hold a workshop with members of the Norwich City Council at a time to be determined between the RFP publication and the due date
3. The CDAC will hold at least two meetings open to the public after the applications are due but prior to deliberations. At least one public hearing will be in the evening and at least one public hearing will be in the afternoon. These two general public meetings will be held at Norwich City Hall or in public place that is accessible to all residents and all applicants will be notified of the hearings by the Office of Community Development.
  - (a) An additional public hearing will take place at the meeting of the Norwich City Council prior to the date the City Council is scheduled to vote on expenditures for the Annual Action Plan (Action Plan). Notice for all public hearings will be published a minimum of 14 days in advance.
  - (b) The City will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally at the public hearing(s), in preparing the final consolidated plan. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore, shall be attached to the final Action plan.
4. After the public hearing and discussion, City Council will adopt a Resolution approving the Action Plan.
5. The Office of Community Development will provide technical assistance to groups representing persons of low-and moderate-income that request such assistance in writing applications in response to the City's Annual Request for Proposals.
6. The Office of Community Development will prepare a draft of the Annual Action Plan. The draft will be made available for a 30-day citizen comment period prior to implementation. The availability of the draft Plan will be published in the *Norwich Bulletin* at the beginning of the comment period. A summary of any comments received at the public hearing and during the comment period will be attached to the Action Plan.

## **SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENT PROCESS**

When an amendment is substantial, the amendment process shall include a published Request for Proposals, approval by the CDAC, a published 30-day comment period on the CDAC's recommendations before implementation by the Norwich City Council. An amendment will be considered to be "substantial" under the following circumstances:

1. The addition of a new project to the current Annual Action Plan
2. A project under the current Action Plan is allocated additional funds AND these additional funds exceed the greater of either 10% of the annual grant for the project or \$10,000
3. Changes in use of CDBG from one eligible activity to another that will cause a change in end-use or outcome

## Non-Substantial AMENDMENT PROCESS

When a non-substantial amendment is needed, the amendment process shall include approval by the CDAC. An amendment will be considered to be “non-substantial” under the following circumstances:

1. Any change to the allocation priorities or a change in the method of distributing of funds
2. A project under the current Action Plan is allocated additional funds AND these additional funds do not exceed the greater of either 10% of the annual grant for the project or \$10,000
3. A change in the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity

## CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION REPORT (CAPER)

The Office of Community Development will write a consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER). This document must be submitted to HUD no later than 90 days after the end of the Program Year it reports on. The CAPER is a summary of the achievements, performance and challenges experienced by the Office of Community Development in the Program Year that terminates 90 days before the CAPER’s filing.

The program year for Norwich ends August 31. The CAPER is therefore due to HUD by November 29. The CAPER must be completed in the first week of November in order to accommodate a 15-day citizen comment period, which is required before its submission.

A public notice shall be published in the local newspaper to describe the contents and purpose of the performance report, to provide for a citizen comment period of at least 15 days.

## TIMELINE

<b>Aug 31<sup>st</sup></b>	Program Year (A) ends
<b>Sept 1<sup>st</sup></b>	Program Year (B) begins
<b>Nov 29<sup>th</sup></b>	Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) for Program Year (A) due
<b>Jan.</b>	Publish RFP (Block Advertisement) for Applications for Program Year (C)
<b>End of March</b>	Deadline for submission of PY (C) applications
<b>April</b>	CDAC organizational meeting
<b>Mid-April</b>	CDAC Public Hearing #1 with applicants
<b>Mid-April</b>	CDAC Public Hearing #2 with applicants
<b>End of April</b>	CDAC deliberations
<b>Mid-May</b>	Prepare Draft Annual Action Plan for PY (C)
<b>Mid-May</b>	Ad - Notice of Availability for Public Comment - Proposed

<b>Early June</b>	Annual Action Plan PY (C) - start of 30 day comment period 1 <sup>st</sup> Council Meeting in June - Public Hearing on proposed Annual Action Plan, PY (C)
<b>Mid-June</b>	End of 30 day comment period
<b>End of June</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Council Meeting in June - Council to vote on Annual Action Plan, PY (C) and authorizes City Manager to submit to HUD Notification of funding decisions to applicants
<b>Mid-July</b>	City submits final Annual Action Plan, PY (C) to HUD (45 days prior to start of program year)
<b>End of July</b>	Preparation of Environmental Reviews, PY (C)
<b>End of July</b>	City publishes Notice of Request for Release of Funds (15 day comment period)
<b>August 15<sup>th</sup></b>	City forwards Request of Release of Funds to HUD
<b>Aug 31<sup>st</sup></b>	Program Year (B) ends
<b>Sept 1<sup>st</sup></b>	Program Year (C) begins

## **RELOCATION**

The City of Norwich will conduct all of its Community Development activities to minimize the displacement of persons. In the unlikely event that any person is displaced by Community Development activities, the City of Norwich will provide reasonable relocation assistance when required to do so by law.