

## **CITY OF BRISTOL CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN**

Bristol has always endeavored to allow the greatest possible public participation in developing its Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), and has followed similar procedures when it has had the occasion to reprogram CDBG funds. If at all possible, reprogramming is scheduled to coincide with the annual program development process to gain the widest possible public participation.

The City has been fortunate in maintaining a good working relationship with newspapers having a wide circulation in town, The Hartford Courant, The Bristol Press, and the Bristol Observer. Good year-round coverage of the Bristol Development Authority (BDA) activities is provided, especially during the time the agency solicits public input for its annual CDBG program. The news and feature stories are in addition to the advertisements published in local newspapers and posted to the City's website ([www.ci.bristol.ct.us](http://www.ci.bristol.ct.us)).

Specifically addressing the requirements of Section 91.105 for a Citizen Participation Plan, the City offers the following:

### **(1) Encouragement of citizen participation.**

The public and applicants for CDBG funding are urged to attend and speak at all meetings. When appropriate and feasible, neighborhood meetings have been and can be arranged. Efforts are made to consult with very low and low-income residents, including tenants of public housing, homeless individuals, local non-profits, public service agencies, and municipal agencies to discuss needs and strategies.

Bristol commences its public participation plan with the simultaneous solicitation of proposals by direct mail and public advertising. Two display ads are run in local newspapers and posted to the City's website ([www.ci.bristol.ct.us](http://www.ci.bristol.ct.us)) requesting proposals, listing eligible activities, offering assistance in formulating a proposal, and announcing the dates of Public Hearings. The mailing includes a proposal package and offers the assistance of the BDA in developing a proposal. The mailing list includes past applicants and recipients, local community agencies, social service agencies, homeless shelters, city departments, public housing tenant councils, and any interested persons or parties who during the prior year have expressed interest.

Public meetings are generally held in the Council Chambers of City Hall (a handicapped accessible building) in the evening. Following long-standing local procedure and the State of Connecticut laws, these hearings and meetings are scheduled in advance, posted; open to the public and minutes prepared and available to any interested party. The meetings receive advance publicity and are covered by the local media.

### **(2) Information to be provided.**

The Consolidated Annual Plan process takes approximately six months to complete and provides ample time and opportunity for participation and comment. The first Public Hearing is held in January or February to receive proposals and citizen comments; and to discuss needs and strategies. After the first Public Hearing there is a public meeting of the Policy Committee of the BDA. The Policy Committee is

responsible for the preparation of a proposed use of funds and oversight of CDBG allocations. The BDA generally receives requests for at least twice the amount of funds available and the Policy Committee gives very serious consideration to the comments heard at the hearings in developing the annual proposed use of funds.

When the Policy Committee has established the Proposed Use of Funds, the City holds another Public Hearing in March. Again, this hearing is advertised twice and the ads list the programs and dollar amounts, request public comment and invite public participation at the hearing. The Proposed Use of Funds is also referred to the Planning Commission for comment. The 30-day comment period begins after advertisement of the Proposed Use of Funds, continuing up to its approval by the Bristol Development Authority Board.

The Policy Committee considers the Planning Commission and the public comments in their Proposed Use of Funds. The Policy Committee's final recommendations are then presented to the full Bristol Development Authority Board in public meeting (late March or April) for approval and/or modification. The Proposed Use of Funds is made available to the Bristol Housing Authority, Jerome Avenue, Bristol; Public Library; and City Hall offices. The BDA forwards its recommendations to the City Council for its approval and recommendation to the Board of Finance at the public meeting in April or May. The annual action plan is placed on the city website indicating it is not final until HUD approval.

Once HUD approval has been received, the Board of Finance, at public meeting, appropriates the funds.

Each and every meeting is public, covered and reported on by the local news media, and preserved in minutes available to the public. Comments and modifications are possible at any time prior to submission to HUD.

**(3) Access to records.**

The Bristol Development Authority will make available, at its office at City Hall, access to information and records relating to its Consolidated Plan and any programs assisted with CDBG funds to any interested citizens.

**(4) Technical assistance.**

Technical assistance has always been and will be offered at whatever level of needs of the applicant. When funds are not sufficient or a program is not eligible, the BDA office makes every effort to refer an applicant to another source of funds.

**(5) Public Hearings.**

The Bristol Development Authority will hold Public Hearings to obtain citizens views. See Items (1) and (2) above. In addition, the City annually publishes an ad and invites comments on the use of funds for the past program year.

If there is a need for an interpreter, the City will make every effort to secure interpreters.

**(6) Comments and complaints.**

The Bristol Development Authority will consider any comments of citizens regarding the Consolidated Plan. A summary of any comments, including those not accepted and the reasons therefore, will be attached to the Consolidated Plan. The BDA has always responded to written (and oral) complaints and will continue to do so.

**(7) Criteria for amendment to plan.**

HUD regulations require an amendment to a Consolidated Plan when the jurisdiction makes one of the following decisions.

- i. to make a change in its allocation priorities or a change in the method of distribution of funds;
- ii. to carry out an activity, using funds from any program covered by the consolidated plan (including program income), not previously described in the action plan; or
- iii. to change the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity.

Within this range of amendments, there are amendments which are defined as Substantial Amendments. For purposes of the Bristol Consolidated Plan process, a Substantial Amendment shall be defined as one wherein the change in the distribution of funds for a revised or new activity exceeds 10 percent of the annual entitlement under the CDBG program.

For such Substantial Amendments, the BDA shall prepare a report on the nature of the amendment which shall be made available by public notice for 30-day public comment period. The amendment shall be approved by the Bristol Development Authority board and referred to the Bristol City Council for approval. Substantial Amendments shall be submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) within 15 days of local approval.

For those amendments not defined as Substantial, the Bristol Development Authority shall approve such amendments at a regularly scheduled meeting and make the amendments public. All amendments approved during a program year shall be submitted to HUD with the submission of the consolidated plan for the next program year.

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