

# WESTMETRO HOME CONSORTIUM CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

## Revised March 2009

The City of Newton, the lead entity for the WestMetro HOME Consortium, annually receives HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) funds from U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD), which it administers on behalf of the WestMetro HOME Consortium member communities. The purpose of the HOME Program is to provide funds for a wide range of activities that create affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income people. As a recipient of these formula grant funds, the HOME Consortium is required to produce the following documents:

- Consolidated Plan – a five-year plan that documents each community’s housing needs, outlines strategies to address those needs, and identifies proposed program accomplishments
- Annual Action Plan – an annual plan that describes specific HOME-funded projects that will be undertaken over the course of the upcoming fiscal year
- Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) – an annual report that evaluates the use of HOME funds

This Citizen Participation Plan has been developed to provide citizens and other interested parties with opportunities to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the HOME program and to review and comment on each of the documents listed above.

Citizen participation ranges from conducting needs assessments and strategic planning to project selection, development, implementation and evaluation. The Citizen Participation Plan outlines the City’s responsibility for providing opportunities for active citizen participation. The goals of the Citizen Participation Plan are to:

- Encourage citizen participation by all residents of the Consortium-member communities, emphasizing the involvement of low- and moderate-income residents, people with disabilities, minorities and residents of assisted housing;
- Inform citizens of the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan, including funds available from the HOME program and eligible activities under the program;
- Give all citizens an opportunity to identify and respond to priority needs;
- Give all citizens an opportunity to identify and respond to priority proposed projects and the use of funds; and
- Give all citizens an opportunity to review and comment on program performance.

This is the overall Citizen Participation Plan for the WestMetro HOME Consortium. Member communities must meet the minimum requirements set forth herein. However, members are free to add opportunities for citizen participation beyond those required here.

Please note that the Consortium’s Consolidated Plan and subsequent Annual Action Plans will cover *only* housing planning and HOME programming for the Consortium member communities. The plans will also include Newton’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) programs, as well as planning and programming for other programs. The other Consortium members will develop separate *non-housing plans*, as

appropriate, and these will be submitted to HUD with the Consortium Plan, but will be separate documents.

## **1. Process for Citizen Participation**

Participation by citizens, agencies and other interested parties in the process of developing the Consortium's Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER will be encouraged by both the Consortium and by individual member communities. All meetings and draft public documents will receive the broadest possible circulation and notice to encourage participation, especially by residents in the lowest income brackets, by minorities and non-English speaking persons, as well as persons with mobility, visual or hearing impairments. Each member will work with its local public housing authority to encourage the participation of public and assisted housing residents.

Reasonable accommodations will be made for people with disabilities upon request. Language interpreters will be provided for non-English speaking participants upon advance request.

## **2. Public Hearings**

Public participation will be provided at the following public hearings to be held by the Consortium before the Newton Planning and Development Board at Newton City Hall in an accessible location. Hearings may be combined; however, no less than two public hearings will be conducted during the program year.

- Proposed Citizen Participation Plan Public Hearing
- Proposed Housing Needs Public Hearing
- Proposed Housing Strategies Public Hearing
- Proposed Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan Public Hearing
- Annual performance public hearing for the proposed CAPER

In addition to the public hearings listed above, member communities will also conduct public hearings in their own community whenever a substantial change is proposed to the use of HOME Program funds from that which was listed in the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan. Member communities shall give notice of the proposed change to the City of Newton, which will submit the required notification to HUD once the hearing has been held and the change has been approved.

A substantial change is defined, in accordance with 24 CFR 91.505(a), as:

- A substantial change in allocation priorities (any change greater than 25 percent in an individual project budget) or a substantial change in the method of distribution of funds;
- An activity (including those funded exclusively with program income) not previously covered by the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan; or a
- Substantial change in the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity.

In addition to public hearings for a substantial change, additional hearings may be held by Consortium member communities to solicit input on proposed Plans.

Citizens and other interested parties may present oral comments at the time of the hearing and/or submit written comments for 30 days after the public hearing for the proposed

Consolidated Plan and any substantial amendments, and for 15 days after public hearings for the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, Annual Action Plan, CAPER and any substantial changes. The Consortium will consider the views of all citizens, organizations and agencies, and other interested groups in preparing the final Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER.

### **3. Notice of Meetings**

Public notices for public hearings for the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER will be advertised in the following newspapers at least ten days prior to each hearing.

#### **Newspaper**

- Newton TAB
- Bedford Minuteman
- Belmont Citizen Herald
- Brookline TAB
- Framingham TAB
- Lexington Minuteman
- Lincoln Journal
- Natick Bulletin
- Needham Times
- Sudbury Town Crier
- Waltham News Tribune
- Watertown TAB & Press

Notices for the proposed Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER will include a notification of the availability of the document. Public notices for substantial changes will be advertised in the affected community's newspaper by the affected community at least ten days prior to the hearing.

Additionally, at a minimum, meeting notices for public hearings for the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER will be e-mailed or mailed to Planning and Development Board members and posted on the Public Notice Board and broadcast on the television monitor, both on the first floor of Newton City Hall. Notice will also be provided on the front page of the City of Newton's website in the City Calendar and listed in the Newton Planning and Development Department's weekly "Friday Report" which is e-mailed or mailed to more than 200 City officials, agency/organization representatives and residents. Notices will also be posted at the main library and branch libraries. Consortium member communities may supplement these outreach efforts.

### **4. Availability of the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER**

Notice of the availability of the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER will be published in the newspapers listed above at least ten days prior to the public hearing. The notice will summarize the purpose of these proposed documents and will include a list of locations where copies of the documents may be examined. At a minimum, copies of the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER will be available in the Newton Housing and Community Development Office and on the

Housing and on the Community Development Division's section of the Newton Planning and Development Department's web page, located at <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/planning/whatsnew.html>.

## 5. Access to Information

In addition to opportunities to make oral comments at public hearings before the Newton Planning and Development Board, any citizen, organization, agency or other interested party may submit written requests for information and submit written comments regarding the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER, and amendments to each, including the proposed use of funds and the benefit to low- and moderate-income residents. Copies of documents will be made available in other languages and/or in other formats (i.e. larger print) upon request. Documents from prior years will also be available upon request for at least the preceding five years.

Additionally, plans to minimize displacement and assist those displaced as a result of the activities in the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan are attached to this document.

## 6. Comments

Citizens, organizations, agencies and other interested parties are encouraged to submit their comments on the proposed Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER. All comment periods will begin the day of the public hearing held by the Newton Planning and Development Board. Minimum comment periods are listed below:

TYPE OF PUBLIC HEARING	COMMENT PERIOD
Consolidated Plan	30 calendar days
Annual Action Plan	15 calendar days
CAPER	15 calendar days
Substantial Changes	30 calendar days

The City of Newton, on behalf of the Consortium and working with member communities, will consider all comments in preparing its final Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan and CAPER for submission to HUD, and will include a summary of all comments received and the actions taken to address each comment.

Comments may be submitted via mail, e-mail or fax to:

Kathleen Cahill, Community Development Senior Planner  
Newton Housing and Community Development Program  
Planning and Development Department  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459  
E-mail: [kcahill@newtonma.gov](mailto:kcahill@newtonma.gov), fax: 617-796-1142

## **7. Timely Response**

The City of Newton, on behalf of the Consortium and working with member communities, will respond in writing within 15 days to any written comments, questions or complaints received regarding the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, CAPER or the HOME Program in general.

## **8. Technical Assistance**

Upon request, Consortium staff will provide technical assistance to groups representing low- and moderate-income persons to develop funding requests for HOME-eligible activities.

## **9. Use of the Citizen Participation Plan**

The City of Newton and the HOME Consortium member communities will be required to adhere to this Citizen Participation Plan, once adopted, as the official mechanism for obtaining citizen input into the Consolidated Plan process and during the administration of the HOME Program covered by this Plan.

## **10. Jurisdiction Responsibility**

The requirements for citizen participation shall not restrict the responsibility or authority of the City of Newton or the HOME Consortium member communities for the development and execution of the Consolidated Plan for the WestMetro HOME Consortium.

## **WESTMETRO HOME CONSORTIUM ANTI-DISPLACEMENT AND RELOCATION PLAN**

### **Permanent Relocation**

It is the policy of the City of Newton Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) programs and the WestMetro HOME Consortium to take all reasonable steps to minimize displacement as a result of CDBG- and HOME-assisted projects, including:

- Considering whether displacement will occur during feasibility determinations
- Identifying potential relocation workload and resources early
- Assuring, whenever possible, that residential occupants of buildings rehabilitated are offered an opportunity to return
- Planning rehabilitation projects to include “staging” where this would eliminate temporary displacement
- Following notification procedures carefully so that families do not leave because they are not informed about planned projects or their rights

When a project does require relocation, in order to ensure the timely issuance of information notices to displaced households, etc., staff of the City of Newton Housing and Community Development Division or of the WestMetro HOME Consortium member communities will ensure that all notices are sent in compliance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (URA).

### **Temporary Relocation**

Temporary relocation often occurs as the result of lead abatement and other rehabilitation activities in renter- and owner-occupied units. Although the City of Newton Housing and Community Development Division is not required to, in most cases it pays for the temporary relocation of displaced renters and/or homeowners whose residences are being rehabilitated.