



SONOMA COUNTY
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

April 2005

Purpose of the Citizen Participation Plan

Pursuant to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations set forth in 24 CFR Part 91, jurisdictions receiving housing and community development funds under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) and Federal Emergency Shelter Grants (FESG) programs must prepare a Consolidated Plan. The purpose of the Consolidated Plan is to state, in one document, the jurisdiction's plan to pursue the CDBG, HOME and FESG programs' goals of developing viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities principally for low- and moderate-income persons.

Jurisdictions receiving housing and community development funds under the CDBG, HOME and FESG programs are further required to adopt and follow a Citizen Participation Plan. The purpose of the Citizen Participation Plan is to provide a written policy and procedure document that describes the actions to be taken to provide for, and to encourage, citizen participation in the development of the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans, any substantial amendments to an adopted Consolidated Plan, and the annual performance report. This April 2005 Citizen Participation Plan amends Sonoma County's May 2000 Citizen Participation Plan to more fully describe the actions that the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (Commission) will take to encourage the participation of all residents.

Access to Meetings, Information, Records

To ensure that citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties have the opportunity to review and comment, the public will be provided with reasonable and timely access to meetings, information and records relating to proposed activities, the proposed use of housing and community development funds, and the County's use of CDBG, HOME and FESG assistance during the preceding 5-year period. The Community Development Committee, appointed by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors as their advisory body regarding community development activities, meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 3:30 p.m. The meetings are held at the Community Development Commission office, 1440 Guerneville Road, Santa Rosa, CA. All members of the public are invited to attend the Committee's monthly meetings to listen to and comment on any of the agenda items of business. In addition, the Committee's regular agenda includes a time for the public to make comments on any other community development issues that are not on the meeting agenda. All hearings and other public meetings are noticed as described below and are conducted in accordance with the Brown Act.

Technical Assistance

The Commission will provide technical assistance to any persons or groups interested in developing CDBG, HOME or FESG funding proposals, including groups representative of low- and moderate-income persons. Such assistance will include at least one annual applicant workshop where Commission staff will provide information and assistance on funding applications. Additional technical assistance will be available by individual appointments with Commission staff.

Public Notices

Citizens are encouraged to participate in the development of the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans, any substantial amendments to an adopted Consolidated Plan, and the annual performance report. Special efforts will be made to encourage participation by persons of low- and moderate-income who are: (1) residents of slum and blighted areas, (2) residents of areas in which community development funds are proposed to be used, (3) residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, (4) residents of any designated neighborhood revitalization areas, (5) minorities, (6) non-English speaking persons, and (7) persons with mobility, visual or hearing impairments. Also, in consultation with the Sonoma County Housing Authority (SCHA), the Commission will encourage the participation of residents of assisted

housing. Furthermore, the Commission will provide information to the SCHA about consolidated plan activities related to assisted housing in the SCHA's area of operation so that the SCHA can make this information available at the annual public hearing required for the Public Housing Agency Plan.

In an attempt to reach the low- and moderate-income citizens listed above, the Commission will distribute flyers announcing (1) public hearings and other public meetings related to the consolidated planning process, (2) funding availability and applicant workshops, (3) publication of the draft Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans, (4) proposed substantial amendments to an adopted Consolidated Plan (as defined further below), and (5) publication of the draft annual performance report. The flyers will be distributed in the neighborhoods where funds may be spent and in other low- and moderate-income areas of Sonoma County. The flyers will be distributed to community-based organizations throughout the County that serve low- and moderate-income persons and will be posted in the lobby of the SCHA. The flyers will be printed in both English and Spanish.

Notices of (1) public hearings and other public meetings related to the consolidated planning process, (2) funding availability and applicant workshops, (3) availability of the draft Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans, (4) proposed substantial amendments to an adopted Consolidated Plan, and (5) availability of the draft annual performance report will also be published in *The Press Democrat* and posted on the Commission's office door, as well as on the CDC's official website.

Notices of (1) funding availability and applicant workshops and (2) the schedule of public hearings and other public meetings related to the consolidated planning process will be mailed directly to interested parties who request to be included on a mailing list maintained for this purpose.

Each public hearing will be noticed at least two weeks prior to the public hearing date. Notices will include the time, date and location of the hearing, as well as summary information about the matter to be discussed. A contact name and telephone number will be included in the notice for interested parties who have questions or requests for special accommodations prior to the hearing.

Information on the amount of CDBG, HOME and FESG funding available and the range of activities that may be undertaken will be published in *The Press Democrat* prior to the technical assistance workshop(s) for interested applicants. An estimate of funding to be used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons will be provided at the annual public hearings, held by the Sonoma County Community Development Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee, and will be included in the annual Consolidated Plan Summary.

Publication of Draft Documents

The annual Consolidated Plan Summary will be published in *The Press Democrat* and on the Commission's official website. This Summary will describe the contents and purpose of the Plan and will include a description of the proposed activities in sufficient detail, including location, to allow citizens to determine the degree to which they may be affected. Notices of any proposed substantial amendments to an adopted Consolidated Plan and of the draft annual performance report will also be published in *The Press Democrat* and on the Commission's official website. All notices will list the locations where a full copy of the draft documents will be available for review. At a minimum, these locations will include the Sonoma County Community Development Commission, the Board of Supervisors' office, and the Main Branch of the Sonoma County Library. The draft documents will also be available for download from the Commission's official website. The County will also make free copies of the draft documents available to citizens who do not have internet access, upon request.

Public Hearings and Public Meetings

The Commission will hold at least three public hearings annually, during different stages of the community development planning process to obtain citizens' views and to respond to proposals and questions. One hearing will be scheduled to review housing and community development needs, proposed policies and procedures, and past program performance. At least two public hearings will be scheduled to consider the annual Consolidated Plan submission. These hearings will be held before the draft Consolidated Plan is published for a 30-day comment period.

Public hearings and meetings will be scheduled at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries and with accommodation for persons with disabilities. The hearings will be held at the Sonoma County Community Development Commission office or at the Board of Supervisors' chambers, both of which are located in the most heavily populated, central part of

Sonoma County. These offices are easily reached by car, bus, bicycle or on foot. The hearing rooms are wheelchair accessible. Public meetings may be held at the Commission office or at the Board of Supervisors chambers, or may be held in other locations throughout the County as may be considered convenient to interested parties. In all cases, selected locations will be wheelchair accessible. Special accommodations for persons with visual or hearing impairments will be made upon request.

In cases where a significant number of non-English speaking residents are expected to attend a public hearing or meeting, the Commission will supply an interpreter. Several Commission staff members are fluent in Spanish and will provide Spanish translations. If other non-English speaking residents are expected, the Commission will seek interpreters from appropriate service organizations assisting such persons.

Public Comments

The views of citizens, public agencies and other interested parties will be considered before the County submits the annual Consolidated Plan, any substantial amendments to an adopted Consolidated Plan and the annual performance report to HUD. Public comments may be presented orally at public hearings and meetings, or may be submitted in writing to the Commission. Following publication of the draft Consolidated Plan and any substantial amendments to an adopted Consolidated Plan, citizens will be given at least 30 days in which to submit written comments. Following publication of the draft annual performance report, citizens will be given at least 15 days in which to submit written comments. A summary of all oral comments and full copies of all written comments received, including comments not accepted and the reasons therefore, will be attached to the Consolidated Plan, the substantial amendment and the performance report, as applicable. At a public meeting following the 30-day comment period for the Consolidated Plan or any substantial amendment, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors will review and consider all written and oral comments received prior to approval of the Plan or amendment. The Board may elect to modify the Consolidated Plan prior to adoption and submission to HUD.

Availability of Final Documents

The adopted Consolidated Plan, approved substantial amendments and the annual performance report will be made available to the public on the Commission's official website. Free copies of

the documents will be provided to interested citizens who do not have internet access, upon request. The documents will also be made available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request. Citizens may request a copy of the documents by calling the Sonoma County Community Development Commission office or through the “Contact Us” link on the Commission’s official website.

Substantial Amendments

A substantial amendment of the Consolidated Plan is defined as:

- 1) A change in use of CDBG, HOME or FESG funds from one eligible activity to another; or
- 2) A change in location where CDBG, HOME or FESG funds will be used for the same eligible activity; or
- 3) A change in the amount of CDBG, HOME or FESG funds allocated to an eligible activity if the change exceeds 10% of the amount of CDBG, HOME or FESG funds previously allocated to that activity as evidenced by the activity’s designation as either a “funded” or a “contingency” project in an approved and adopted Consolidated Plan Action Plan.

Displacement

The Sonoma County Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan, amended October, 2002, details the County’s plans for minimizing displacement of persons as a result of CDBG, HOME and FESG assisted activities. It provides a guideline for assistance to persons who are displaced as a result of such activities. Copies of the Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan are available for download from the Commission’s official website and will be made available to citizens at the annual public hearings held by the Community Development Committee and Technical Advisory Committee.

Response to Complaints

The Commission will provide a timely, substantive written answer to every written citizen complaint relating to the Consolidated Plan, substantial amendments to the Plan and the performance report, where practicable, within 15 working days.

Public Review of the Citizen Participation Plan

This Citizen Participation Plan was made available for public review and comment prior to adoption, in accordance with the Consolidated Plan public notice, public hearing and public comment procedures described herein. Any substantial amendments to this Citizen Participation Plan will be made available for public review and comment through the same process prior to adoption. This Citizen Participation Plan will be available for download on the Commission's official website. Copies will also be made available to those that do not have internet access at no charge and will be made available in a format accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request. Interested citizens should call or e-mail the Community Development Commission to request a copy of this Plan.