

Appendix B. Citizen Participation Plan

I. Purpose

As a recipient of US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds, the Richland County Community Development Department is required to formally outline and document measures to promote the active participation of Richland County residents in the planning process. Citizen participation includes actively encouraging citizens, particularly the low and moderate income population, to participate in the planning process for the five-year Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan (Consolidated Plan), the Annual Action Plans, the submission of substantial amendments and the development of the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER), as well as individual neighborhood plans. These measures are summarized in the Community Development Citizen Participation Plan and conducted as required by HUD 24 CFR Part 91, Subpart B.

The Richland County Community Development Department coordinates the planning and administration of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships funds for the unincorporated areas of Richland County. As an entitlement jurisdiction, the County's Community Development Department administers and shapes programs and services that address the needs and benefit low to moderate income households. In order to meet local capacity, the Community Development Department frequently partners with non-profits, Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs), Community-Based Development Organizations (CBDOs), Community Development Corporations (CDC), contractors, lenders, and charities. The Community Development Department seeks to connect employment, housing, education, and training resources into a coordinated network to support the redevelopment and revitalization of Richland County's low to moderate income neighborhoods.

II. Access to Information and Records

Richland County's Citizen Participation Plan is available for public review on the County's web site at www.richlandonline.com. The Plan is also available at the offices of the Richland County Community Development Department at 2020 Hampton Street, Suite 3063, Columbia, South Carolina 29204. Community Development Department hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, with the exception of designated holidays. Copies of the Plan can also be requested by mail or phone. Residents can call 803-576-2230 or mail a written request to the Community Development Department address. The Community Development Department also has available copies of the Consolidated Plan which may be purchased for \$10. The Community Development Department also makes available the Annual Action Plan and CAPER Report that may be obtained at no charge.

Information and records open to the public are located in the Community Development Department, 2020 Hampton Street, Suite 3063, Columbia, South Carolina 29204. Confidential materials, such as those materials that include a citizen's personal identity information, are not available for public review.

III. Public Hearing Notices

All notices of public hearings will be published in *The State* newspaper (*Metro* section or *Neighbors* section) at least seven (7) days prior to the public hearing. In addition, notices may be published in other local newspapers. Notices will also be posted electronically on the Richland County website at www.richlandonline.com.

Additional notices will be provided through neighborhood-based forums to include: community centers; contact with local civic leaders; and posting of notices in commercial establishments, neighborhood businesses, churches and post offices.

All public meetings will be held at times and in locations convenient to residents, particularly those who are potential or actual beneficiaries. Meetings will not be held before 5:30 p.m. on weekdays. Meetings will not be scheduled on Sundays. Persons requiring special accommodations must notify the Community Development Department at least two (2) business days prior the public hearing in order to give the County staff adequate time to provide the needed accommodations.

IV. Needs Assessment Public Hearing

Prior to the development of the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan, the community development and housing needs will be assessed in detail, particularly those of low and moderate income residents. The assessment process will be conducted through a Community Development Needs Assessment Public Hearing. The Richland County Community Development Department may hold up to eleven (11) public hearings (one in each district) and no less than two (2) needs assessment public hearings as part of the planning process for the five-year Consolidated Plan. At least one needs assessment public hearing will be held annually to address the changing needs for the Annual Action Plan. Ongoing citizen participation is encouraged to determine community needs and priorities. Comments and suggestions will be considered at Needs Assessment Public Hearings.

The Needs Assessment Public Hearing will address the amount of available funding for CDBG, HOME and any other related federal or state funding. The hearing will also address the range of activities that may be undertaken with such funds, particularly in relation to identified community needs.

V. Public Comment Period

A public comment period is required prior to submitting the five-year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, the CAPER and any substantial change to the Consolidated Plan or

the Annual Action Plan. A public hearing will be held to review and to solicit public comments on the contents. The public will have 30 days after the public hearing to provide written comments to the Community Development Department regarding the 5-year Consolidated Plan. The public will have 15 days after the public hearing to provide written comments to the Department regarding the Annual Action Plan, the CAPER, and any substantial change to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan. The public hearing will be held consistent with guidelines contained in this document. The County will respond to all written correspondence received.

VI. Amendments/Changes

Prior to making any substantial change to the Consolidated Plan (including the Annual Action Plan), Richland County will hold at least one public hearing to inform citizens, particularly those who might be affected by the proposed change, and to solicit public comment. Examples of a substantial change would be a 50% decrease in the number of proposed beneficiaries, any increase or decrease of more than 50% in the budget, and/or any addition or deletion of proposed activities.

VII. Program Performance

Richland County will conduct one public hearing annually to review program performance and accomplishments for the CAPER. This public hearing will address and outline the various activities that have been accomplished or are underway.

VIII. Technical Assistance

Richland County will provide technical assistance to individuals and representatives of groups of low and moderate income persons who request such assistance. Technical assistance may include information on housing, demographics, and explanation of the Community Development programs and services. Community Development staff members work closely with neighborhood associations to foster community pride and empowerment. The County routinely issues Request for Proposals (RFP) for services that support its community development goals and programs.

IX. Grievances

Complaints and grievances are handled in a timely and professional manner. All complaints are reviewed by the Community Development Director and the County Administrator. Written grievances should be addressed to the Richland County Community Development Department, 2020 Hampton Street, Suite 3063, Columbia, South Carolina 29204. Written responses to complaints regarding the Community Development program and other general grievances will be made within fifteen (15) days after receipt of the complaint. A response to the complaint will be prepared by the County Administrator. Persons who wish to appeal the County Administrator's response may do so in writing to the US Department of Housing and Urban

Development, Community Planning and Development Division, 1845 Assembly Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29204.

X. Non-English Speaking Population

The Richland County Community Development Department will accommodate the needs of non-English speaking residents. Census figures for Richland County indicate that less than 10% of the County population is non-English speaking and there are no significant concentrations of non-English speaking residents within the County as determined by the most currently available Census data. If 10% or more of the potential or actual beneficiaries of a Community Development project are determined to be non-English speaking, provisions will be made at the appropriate public hearings for translation of comments and documents into the native language of the majority of the non-English speaking residents affected.

XI. Anti-Displacement

It is the policy of Richland County to make all reasonable efforts to ensure that activities undertaken with CDBG and HOME program funds will not cause unnecessary displacement of residents. The County will continue to administer the CDBG and HOME Programs in such a manner that careful consideration is given during the planning phase to avoid displacement. Displacement of any nature shall be reserved as a last resort action necessitated only when no other alternative is available and when the activity is determined necessary in order to carry out a specific goal or objective that is of public benefit.

If the displacement is precipitated by activities that require the acquisition (either in whole or in part) or rehabilitation of real property directly by Richland County or its agent, all appropriate benefits will be assigned as required by the *Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies' Act of 1970* and amendments. The *Uniform Act* or the *Residential Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan* under *Section 104(d)* shall be provided to the displaced person or persons. Information about these programs will be provided to all residents who may potentially be displaced in the form of informational brochures on these programs and explained in detail by the County's Community Development staff.