

Citizen Participation and Consultation Process in the Assessment of Fair Housing

The purpose of the Citizen Participation Plan developed for the Assessment of Fair Housing is to make the process of investing in the City of Rochester's community as inclusive as possible. It is the desire of the City of Rochester, in partnership with the Rochester Housing Authority (RHA), to have goals and activities undertaken with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and other funds to affirmatively further fair housing objectives and reflect the needs and desires of the people of the City of Rochester.

This process is an ongoing activity and includes formal and informal outreach to various communities within the City. The City and RHA works actively to communicate with its citizens, neighborhood coalitions, City departments, law enforcement, nonprofit agencies, and local business interests. The Community Development Division provides technical and other assistance to citizens, public agencies, and any interested parties in the development of projects or activities addressing fair housing issues in Rochester. The Community Development Division also will respond to fair housing-related complaints received within fifteen (15) days of receipt.

Copies and summaries of the Consolidated Plan for the City of Rochester and Annual Action Plans are available in the Office of Economic & Community Department and on the Community Development Division web page, located at <http://www.rochesternh.net/community-development-division>. Copies and summaries of Rochester Housing Authority's Consolidated Plan are available at the Rochester Housing Authority's main office. These documents are also via electronic attachments upon request. Comments and feedback are welcome throughout the Assessment of Fair Housing planning and drafting periods, in addition to the formal public comments period.

As part of the Assessment of Fair Housing planning and drafting processes, the City and RHA make efforts to bring the developing plan concepts to the community via community gatherings and forums; this includes public service networking groups, neighborhood coalition meetings, and presentations to community groups and associations. Creative utilization of technology will involve postings to the Office of Economic & Community Development's social media accounts (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), an online fair housing survey, and other related methods. In addition, outreach targeting particularly vulnerable communities will involve activities such as distribution of materials to English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes held within the City, presentations given and feedback gathered at meetings held specifically for public housing residents, and ensuring the online survey provides the opportunity for the participant to provide important demographic information.

The Citizen Participation and Consultation Process in the Assessment of Fair Housing includes the following:

Public Hearing (First): Public is gathered at a formal public hearing, prior to the drafting of the Assessment of Fair Housing; this meeting is intended to solicit the public's feedback on current CDBG projects and performance, perceived needs for future projects, and general opinions and concerns regarding community development in the City of Rochester.

This meeting is held in an accessible location for people with physical disabilities; accommodations for people with visual or hearing impairments are available upon request. The hearing is advertised in one or more local newspapers within ten to fourteen days of the hearing. Public notice also is provided at strategic sites of public interest, including the public library, community center, public housing bulletin boards, and City Hall.

Notice is provided via electronic means, as well; including but not limited to email announcements to community stakeholders (e.g., currently-funded non-profits and community business associations), postings to the Community Development Division's website, and postings to the Office of Economic & Community Development's social media accounts (e.g., Facebook and Twitter).

Following the hearing, minutes will be available on the City of Rochester's website, and interested parties can view the hearing in its entirety on the local government cable channel, as well as online.

Public Hearing (Second): The draft Assessment of Fair Housing is subject to a public hearing. This meeting is held in a location accessible to people with physical disabilities; accommodations for people with visual or hearing impairments are available upon request.

Notification of this public hearing, and draft plan availability, are published in one or more local newspapers within ten to fourteen days of the public hearing. Public notice is provided at strategic sites of public interest, including the public library, community center, public housing bulletin boards, and City Hall. Notice also is provided via electronic means; including but not limited to email announcements to community stakeholders (e.g., currently-funded non-profits and community business associations), postings to the Economic & Community Development Office's website, and postings to the Economic & Community Development Office's social media accounts (e.g., Facebook and Twitter). Interested parties can view the hearing in its entirety on the local government cable channel as well as online.

Public Comment: Comments are accepted throughout the Assessment of Fair Housing preparation process via in-person meetings, postal mail, telephone, and electronic means of communication; however, a formal thirty (30) day public comments period will also be announced via publishing in one or more general newspapers of local circulation. Comments received are summarized and included in the Assessment of Fair Housing. The Community Development Division and Rochester Housing Authority will respond to concerns and directives through appropriate goal-setting and fair housing activities or will refer concerns and directives to the proper City department for follow-up. These comments also will be forwarded to HUD as part of the completed Assessment of Fair Housing.

Substantial Amendments: The Assessment of Fair Housing may be amended if substantial changes in planned or actual activities must occur due to new information about the make-up, needs, or growth of the City of Rochester's communities. Creation of new goals triggers review by the City of Rochester's Community Development Committee and the Rochester Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners. The Community Development Committee and the Board of Commissioners evaluate changes to the Assessment of Fair Housing, and their recommendations are forwarded to the City Council for further input as needed. Amendments to the Assessment of Fair Housing that in no way fall under the general priorities described herein are subject to the public participation process, outlined above, as well as to full City Council and Board of Commissioners approval.