

CITIZENS PARTICIPATION PLAN
for the

CITY OF VINELAND

CONSOLIDATED PLAN

Revised: June 2020

PURPOSE OF THE REVISION OF THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
FOR THE CITY OF VINELAND

June 2020

The City of Vineland proposes to amend its existing Citizen Participation Plan (as revised April 1984) which sets forth the City's policies and procedures for citizen participation in the planning and implementation of its Consolidated Plan, any amendments thereto, and the Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER). This update of Vineland's Citizen Participation Plan complies with current HUD Consolidated Plan Regulations regarding Citizen Participation and Consultation.

Copies of the Citizen Participation Plan are available for public inspection at the City Clerk's Office.

1. INTRODUCTION

Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, Public Law 93-383, as amended through the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing & Urban Development, and Independent Agency's Appropriations Act, 2001, Public Law 106-377, October 27, 2000, provides a program for Federal financial assistance in the form of annual community development block grants. These funds are to be used in connection with the carrying out of the City's Consolidated Plan. The program includes the activities to be undertaken to meet the City's community development needs and objectives identified in its Consolidated Plan, together with the estimated costs and general location of such activities; it includes resources other than Federal block grants which are expected to be made available toward meeting its identified needs and objectives and takes into account appropriate environmental factors.

In preparing the Consolidated Plan and any amendments and reallocations of funds, citizen participation is required by Section 91.105 of the Federal Regulations governing Community Development Block Grant, 24 CFR 91.

With the inception of its Community Development Block Grant Program of 1975, the City of Vineland adopted a Citizen Participation Plan mandated by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. During the ensuing years, a number of revisions were mandated by amendments to the Act and changing HUD regulations.

This Revision to Vineland's Citizen Participation Plan incorporates the latest amendments of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as well as current HUD regulations. This Plan shall remain in effect until all activities assisted by Block Grant funds are completed or until it is superseded by a new revised Citizen Participation Plan.

2. ENCOURAGEMENT OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

This Plan encourages Vineland's citizens, businesses, social and service organizations, as well as other interested parties, to participate in the development of the Consolidated Plan, substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan, and the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER). In accordance with 570 CFR 411(m), the City of Vineland certifies

that “citizens likely to be affected by the project regardless of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, familial status, or handicap, particularly low- and moderate-income persons” will be provided an opportunity to comment on its Consolidated Plans, amendments and performance reports.

The City shall encourage, in consultation with the Vineland Housing Authority, the participation of residents of public and assisted housing developments, along with other low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas in which activities are located or proposed, in the process of developing and implementing the Consolidated Plan.

Each fiscal year the City will advise its citizens likely to be affected by its community development and housing activities with adequate information concerning the amount of funds the City expects to be available for community development and housing activities, the range of activities that may be undertaken and other pertinent and important program requirements such as Davis-Bacon Fair Labor Standards, environmental policies, equal opportunity requirements, and relocation provisions. This information will be made available in the form of printed handout material which will be given out as early as practicable in the fiscal year for which the program and budget is being formulated. Copies of the material will be available at the initial public meetings with the citizens, at the office of the City Clerk, and at the City’s Community Development Office. A copy will also be available to the news media.

Copies of certain printed material will be made in Spanish for dissemination to the City’s Hispanic population in the City’s Community Development Office.

3. ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The City has established, through the Office of the Mayor, an Advisory Committee representing a cross-section of the community to develop program priorities and recommendations for the use of Community Development and HOME Funds. Every effort is made to include representation by residents of low and moderate-income neighborhoods and areas where CDBG and HOME funds are proposed to be used, as well as minority and non-English speaking persons and persons with disabilities. Membership in the Advisory Committee is subject to appointment

by the Mayor on an annual basis. New membership is recruited from time to time in order to provide the maximum opportunity for citizen input and diversity of interests and ideas into the development of the City's Consolidated Plan and Community Development Application. Every effort is also made to maintain a reasonable level of continuity in the membership to promote confidence and a better understanding of the direction that the City has taken in years prior in relation to recommendations to be submitted for Community Planning for the current year. To assist the members of the appointed Advisory Committee, the Mayor has relied on the technical expertise of such City representatives as the Business Administrator, Comptroller, Purchasing Agent, Planner, Engineer, Superintendent of Recreation, City Clerk, Housing Authority Director, City Consultant, Legal, Health, and Licenses and Inspections Departments. This technical Advisory Committee has and continues to be available to respond to specific questions relative to a particular course of action and to provide guidance on the use of funds through provision of cost estimates of construction as well as planning and zoning considerations. Such City representatives as the Engineering Division and the Recreation Division have also provided recommendations for expenditures of the funds at different times for consideration by the Advisory Committee. Representation on the Technical Committee from the City's Housing Authority has also served to promote a better understanding of the many assistance programs which are available, as well as providing an understanding of the demands and needs for assisted housing which remain to be satisfied in the City.

The Advisory Committee is most active during the planning stages for preparation of the City's current year application for Community Development Block Grant and HOME Funds. The Committee is also able to participate in the performance hearings prior to the start of planning for entitlement funding. In addition, representation from the Advisory Committee is available to monitor Community Development activities through the course of the year, and to assist the City in addressing any problems, complaints, or criticisms which may emanate during the program year.

Procedurally, the Advisory Committee is reappointed by the Mayor prior to the initiation of Planning and Performance Hearings. Once formulated, the Advisory Committee will meet for an initial orientation session prior to the formal public hearings which are scheduled annually for citizen participation and citizen input. Citizen Advisory Committee members are urged to attend

each of the public hearings so as to better understand the public sentiment and be able to better weigh potential projects in the final selection stages. The Citizen Advisory Committee Meetings will be held immediately following the public hearings so as to discuss in greater detail with the full membership the considerations received. In addition, written comments will be reviewed and considered. After all public hearings and written comments have been received, the Advisory Committee will then meet to prepare a report of recommendations to the Mayor and City Council for consideration and approval as part of the City's current year application for Block Grant funding. It is important to note the impact which the representation from the Advisory Committee has had on the members of City Council and the Mayor. This has been a very beneficial service to the City and the City has continually endorsed the use of the Advisory Committee as a technique to taking a more responsible approach to the use of the Block Grant Program and to implementing Program Activities which are responsive to the needs of the people.

Once the written report of the Advisory Committee is submitted to the Mayor and Council, and has been discussed and reviewed at a Council work session, City Council will then determine which projects should be submitted in the current Block Grant Application. A final public hearing is then held on the draft of the application which will contain those proposals submitted by the Advisory Committee and informally determined to be acceptable by the members of the City Council and the Mayor.

During the course of preparation of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and annual updates for the City of Vineland as well as the Vineland-Millville-Bridgeton-Fairfield HOME Consortium, other members of the community are invited to join with the Advisory Committee to offer input as part of an overall assessment of housing, community revitalization, and economic development needs that exist in the Consortium area. This Consolidated Planning Committee, which includes representation from public and private agencies that provide housing, health services and social services, assists the City and the Consortium in examining the goals and objectives set forth in the Plan and, as necessary and appropriate, considering updates to the Plan to reflect current conditions and performance.

4. CITIZEN COMMENT ON THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN AND AMENDMENTS

The City of Vineland will provide citizens with a reasonable opportunity to comment on substantial amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan. To facilitate this opportunity, the Citizen Participation Plan will be made public. Copies of the Citizen Participation Plan will be available at the Office of the City Clerk.

5. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN

Before the City of Vineland adopts its annual Consolidated Plan, the municipality will make available to citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties, information that includes the amount of assistance the City expects to receive (including grant funds and program income) and the range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low- and moderate-income. The Plan also will set forth the City's plans to minimize displacement of persons and to assist any persons displaced, specifying the types and level of assistance that the City will make available (or require others to make available) to persons displaced, even if the municipality expects no displacement to occur. The City will state when and how this information will be made available.

The City of Vineland will publish the proposed Consolidated Plan in a manner that affords citizens, public agencies and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to examine its contents and to submit their comments. The City will publish a summary of the proposed Consolidated Plan in the Daily Journal. In addition, copies of the proposed Consolidated Plan will be made available at the office of the City Clerk and the Vineland City Library. The summary will describe the contents and purpose of a Consolidated Plan and will include a list of locations where a copy of the entire proposed Consolidated Plan may be examined. Copies of the Plan will be available to citizens and groups that request it at the office of the Vineland City Clerk.

The City of Vineland will conduct public hearings during the development and implementation of the Consolidated Plan. The scheduled hearings will be described in Section 8 of this Plan. The City will provide a period, not less than 30 days, to receive comments from citizens on the Consolidated Plan. Views and comments of citizens received in writing or orally,

at the public hearings, in preparing the final Consolidated Plan will be considered by the municipality. The summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefor, shall be attached to the final Consolidated Plan.

The City will provide timely response to all proposals and comments submitted by the public. Whenever practical, the City will respond within fifteen (15) working days of receipt of the comments for proposals and, whenever practicable, responses will be made prior to the final hearing on the Consolidated Plan.

6. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN

If the City intends to amend the Consolidated Plan, it shall abide by the following procedures:

a) Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan shall require a minimum of two public hearings to solicit views and comments of interested citizens. The format of the Notice of Public Hearings shall follow the procedures outlined in Section 8 of this Plan. In addition, the City will make the proposed revisions available for public inspection and comment at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting of City Council at which such substantial amendment is implemented. Notice of Council's intent to take action shall be published in the Daily Journal, in block outline in the non-legal section of the newspaper, at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting. At the meeting, citizens will be given an opportunity to comment on the substantial amendment before it is considered by City Council. Views and comments of citizens received in writing or orally, at the public hearings, will be considered by the City in preparing the substantial amendment of the Consolidated Plan. The summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefor, shall be attached to the substantial amendment of the Consolidated Plan.

Substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan are defined as follows:

1. If the City proposes to use more than ten percent (10%) of the entitlement amount approved for the affected program year to undertake one or more new activities;

2. If the City proposes to alter the stated purpose, location or class of beneficiaries of previously approved activities where the cost exceeds ten percent (10%) of the entitlement amount approved for the affected program year;
3. If the City proposes to move funds from one or more activities to one or more activities where the cumulative effect exceeds ten percent (10%) of the entitlement amount approved for the affected program year;
4. If the City proposes a change in its allocation priorities or a change in the method of distribution of funds;
5. If the City proposes to reduce any goals for housing assistance;
6. If the City approves any housing assistance application which constitutes a major variation from the one year goals;
7. If there is a significant change in or new data is available regarding the conditions of the housing stock or needs of low and moderate-income persons.

b) Any other revision or amendment to the Consolidated Plan not mentioned above is considered a Minor Amendment or Revision. Citizen participation in the development of minor revisions shall be governed by the following:

The City will make proposed minor amendments and revisions available for review by the public in the Office of the City Clerk. The public will have an opportunity to comment on revisions to the Consolidated Plan at least five (5) days prior to the meeting of Council at which such revisions will be considered. At the meeting of Council, citizens will be given an opportunity to express their views on the revisions prior to Council taking action. Notice of proposed revision shall be published in the Daily Journal at least five (5) days prior to the meeting of Council.

c) In accordance with the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), in emergency circumstances, in-person public hearings are not required. The grantee will make a good faith effort to provide an opportunity for the public to participate using whatever means are available, including electronic communications and virtual meetings. Grantees may meet public hearing requirements with virtual public hearings if: 1) national/local health authorities recommend social distancing and limiting public gatherings for public health reasons; and 2) virtual hearings provide reasonable notification and access for citizens in accordance with

the grantee's certifications, timely responses from local officials to all citizen questions and issues, and public access to all questions and responses.

Citizens will be provided with reasonable notice and opportunity to comment on proposed amendments. This will be accomplished through notification of a public hearing in the non-legal section of with general circulation within the City and notification on the City newspapers website. These notices will be published *at least ten days* prior to the hearing. However, in accordance with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), in emergency circumstances, expedited procedures must include at least (5) five days of notice prior to the hearing and reasonable opportunity to comment of no less than (5) five days. The 5-day period can run concurrently for comments on the action plan amendment and amended citizen participation plans. This authority is in effect through the end of the 2020 program year.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORTS

The City of Vineland shall prepare a Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) on its Consolidated Plan. The municipality will provide citizens with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on the CAPER. The Notice will be published in the Daily Journal, in block outline in the non-legal section of the newspaper, providing a period of not less than fifteen (15) days within which the City will receive comments on the CAPER before its submission to HUD. Furthermore, the content of its most recent CAPER will be considered at at least one public hearing conducted prior to the submission of the CAPER to HUD. Citizens, public agencies and other interested parties will be given the opportunity to assess and submit comments on the CAPER. Views and comments of citizens received in writing or orally, at the public hearing(s), will be considered by the City in preparing the performance report. A summary of these comments or views shall be attached to the CAPER.

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Each year, the City of Vineland will conduct a total of four (4) public hearings during the planning and implementation of its Consolidated Plan. All public hearings shall be held in the City Hall which is centrally located. It will be held on two advertised dates. On each date, one

hearing shall be held between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.; the second shall be held after 6:30 p.m. Daytime hearings will be held to accommodate residents who work in the evening and those, particularly the elderly, who are reluctant to leave their homes at night. The evening meetings will accommodate the majority of the public.

At least five (5) days prior to each hearing, a notice shall be placed in the non-legal section of the 'Daily Journal'. This notice will give the date, time, place and topics to be considered at the hearing. Notices will be published in both English and Spanish.

The hearings are designed to obtain citizens' views and to respond to proposals and questions. Together, the hearings must address housing and community development needs, development of proposed activities, and review of program performance. To obtain the views of citizens on housing and community development needs, including priority non-housing community development needs, the Plan will provide that at least one of these hearings is held before the proposed Consolidated Plan is published for comment.

9. MEETINGS

The City of Vineland will provide citizens reasonable and timely access to local meetings, relative to the Consolidated Plan, any substantial and minor amendments and the CAPER performance report. Notice of said meetings will be published the number of days stipulated in this Citizen Participation Plan for the specified purpose prior to the meeting in the non-legal section of the 'Daily Journal'.

9. AVAILABILITY TO THE PUBLIC

The City will provide that the Consolidated Plan as adopted, substantial and minor amendments and the CAPER will be available to the public, including the availability of materials in a form accessible to persons with disabilities upon request. These documents will be made available at the Office of the City Clerk and/or the Office of Community Development during normal working hours for citizen review upon request (written or oral).

10. ACCESS TO RECORDS

The municipality will provide citizens, public agencies and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the City's Consolidated Plan and the City's use of assistance under the programs covered by this part during the preceding five (5) years. This information will be provided, upon request, by the Office of the City Clerk and/or the Community Development Office and/or the Office of the Business Administrator.

11. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance by the Office of Community Development, other City staff, and/or third party contractors to the City (if any) will be available to citizens to enable them to adequately participate in planning, implementing and assessing any of the programs covered by the Consolidated Plan. Such assistance will also be available to groups representatives of persons of low- and moderate-income in developing proposals for funding assistance under any of the programs covered by the Consolidated Plan, with the level and type of assistance determined by the City. Such assistance will be made available upon request by interested citizens or organizations to the City's Community Development Office. In addition, the City will make

available for interested parties handout materials dealing with technical program requirements to assure understanding.

12. COMPLAINTS

The City of Vineland will respond to written complaints from citizens and other interested parties related to the Consolidated Plan, amendments and CAPER. The City will provide a timely, substantive written response to every written citizen complaint within fifteen (15) working days, where practicable.

13. BI-LINGUAL REQUIREMENTS

A substantial number of beneficiaries of Vineland's Community Development Block Grant and HOME Programs are Spanish-speaking persons. For these Hispanic residents whose primary language is Spanish, all notices of public hearings will be produced in Spanish. When requested, the City of Vineland will permit bi-lingual presentations at its required public hearings.

14. CONSORTIUM

The City of Vineland participates in the Vineland/Millville/Bridgeton/Fairfield Consortium. Provisions of this Citizen Participation Plan for the City of Vineland Consolidated Plan apply also to Vineland's participation in the above-referenced Consortium.