



Written Q & A Responses re: Draft Consolidated Plan Documents for May 9-15, 2020

Questions are listed in the order they were received.

Question: “Can HUD funds be allocated to support neighborhood centered/directed charrette planning/plans for each of the business corridors identified in the City's Plan? This could help to develop business corridors consistent with neighborhood needs and desires as well as enhance partnership with City and developers.”

Answer: Planning is an eligible expense for CDBG dollars but it subject to a cap; no more than 20% of CDBG dollars may be used for Planning and Administration, combined, in any given year. The City of Rochester Planning Office, whose staff costs are supported by CDBG, is willing to assist and lend expertise to neighborhood driven planning efforts.

Question: “Our neighborhood [the Upper Mt. Hope Neighborhood Association] has census track block groups that show Median Household Incomes of \$23,282 and \$31,337 for our residents. During the last Consolidated Plan comment period we asked for a relatively small amount of funds to help support/rebrand our neighborhood by funding the creation of a web site framework that the neighborhood can run and add content to. At what point will we know when and what \$ amount of funds might be available to proceed?”

Answer: A list of all the projects proposed to receive HUD funding during the 2020-2021 program year can be found in the [Draft 2020-2021 Annual Action Plan](#) starting on Page 14. Funding to support the creation of a website framework for the Upper Mt. Hope Neighbors Association is not included in the Draft 2020-2021 Annual Action Plan.

Question: “Our neighborhood [the Upper Mt. Hope Neighborhood Association] has lost its business association organization and the City has yet to provide (requested date) a part time Street Liaison to help rebuild it. This year the City has also withdrawn support which had been facilitating the Mt Hope Task Force (MHTF), - a monthly roundtable that would bring together the various stakeholders to work out issues within the neighborhood – and there is a big one that we need to tackle in our part of the City: to update our 30yr old master plan to the point it can be accepted by City Council. During the last Consolidated Plan comment cycle, we requested a part-time Street Liaison to facilitate the MHTF on an ongoing basis. At what point will we know the Plan’s commitment for a qualified person to do such and when/how should we proceed to get it to happen.”

Answer: The proposed projects for the 2020-2021 program year are found in the [Draft 2020-2021 Annual Action Plan](#) starting on Page 14. The Street Liaison Program is included, with \$80,000 in CDBG funding, which will support 4 organizations providing support to neighborhood businesses and business associations along 21 corridor segments across the city. The City recognizes that there is a need for support along additional business corridors, and is collecting data to inform selection of additional corridor segments and exploring private sources of funding that could help support expansion of the program to cover them, including Mt. Hope.

Question: “What is the process by which stakeholders in our section of the City [the area served by the Upper Mt. Hope Neighborhood Association] can update their 30yr old ‘Strong Study’ & Strategic Plan so that it can then be acceptable to City Council and incorporated into the 2034 Comprehensive Plan? Funding to assist the Mt Hope Task Force’s development of accepted deliverables was requested during the comment period in February 2020.”

Answer: The City of Rochester Planning Office is willing to assist and lend expertise to neighborhood driven planning processes.

Question: “Home-ownership within our neighborhood [the Upper Mt. Hope Neighborhood] has, over the last 30 years, dropped from about 95% to under 40% yet the zoning code states that the area should be predominantly owner-occupied. The home ownership incentive/Purchase Assistance program funded by HUD is structured in such a way that it will continually need funds to function as an incentive. We would like to discuss tweaking how the program works to make it more effective on a longer-term basis. What would the process be to have neighborhood come together to discuss and effect change to how the program works?”

Answer: City of Rochester Zoning does not map owner occupancy. It is not clear what the questioner thinks the issues are with the City’s Homebuyer programs. Summaries with information about the City’s Homebuyer Services programs can be found on the [City’s Housing webpage](#). If the questioner would like to request a meeting to discuss recommendations to update the City’s Homebuyer Services programs, they could contact the City’s Manager of Housing, Carol Wheeler at Carol.Wheeler@CityofRochester.Gov or (585) 428-6152.

Question: “What is the process by which we can see line-item expenditure of HUD funds by Census Tract Block Group – so neighborhoods know how funds are really being spent – by project and separated by the cost to plan, administer, and funds that are most directly going to beneficiaries? What are the yearly project expenditures by Census Tract? How is that broken down by plan development and organizing/overseeing the project overhead, versus non-overhead non-consulting funds used for the project deliverables? What proportion of total City HUD funds awarded is each City Census Tract?”

Answer: The City measures and tracks HUD-funded projects and funding in accordance with HUD regulations. All projects, expenditures, and locations that are supported in a given year are reported annually through the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). Copies of past year CAPERs are available on the [City’s webpage for past Consolidated Planning documents](#).

Question: “By what process can neighborhood groups representing residents sit down to discuss and develop new projects that they want included in an upcoming Consolidated Plan year?”

Answer: HUD-funded projects are identified and funding levels are determined annually through the development of the Annual Action Plan. This typically takes place in the winter/spring, alongside the timeframe when the City’s funding allocation is published by HUD. As part of the Annual Action Plan development, there is always at least one public meeting and two public hearings, and the draft Annual Action Plan has a 30-Day Public Display and Comment period before going to City Council for formal action. Neighborhood groups are an important stakeholder in that public participation process. The Neighborhood Service Centers Director’s Office maintains list of neighborhood group leaders that will receive notice of public meetings, hearings, public display of draft documents, and opportunities to comment or provide other input. For more information, please see the [Draft Amended Citizen Participation Plan](#).

Question: “How does the City determine/design [& who within the City designs] the projects described in the Plan tables? How/When do new projects get defined/created? How can neighborhood groups drive that?”

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“The City encourages local and regional organizations and agencies – particularly those that assist low- and moderate-income persons or serve low-mod areas (defined as areas where at least 51% or more of the residents have incomes less than 80% of the area median income) – including, but not limited to, City staff, State and federal agencies, neighboring local governments, regional agencies like the Rochester Housing Authority (RHA) and the Continuum of Care (CoC), non-profit housing and legal services agencies, affordable housing developers, social service providers (including those focusing on services to children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, and persons with substance use), homeless services and prevention providers, community-based and neighborhood organizations, businesses, philanthropic organizations, faith-based organizations, and others to participate in the Consolidated Planning process.”

In addition input from residents, neighborhood groups, and other stakeholder groups or other members of the public, the City relies on the City’s Housing Policy, the City’s Comprehensive Plan, [Rochester 2034](#), and the goals and priorities of the Mayor and Administration to inform development of the Consolidated Plan. For more information, please see the [Draft Amended Citizen Participation Plan](#).

Question: “Can the project/program designs get tweaked between years or during the 5-year plans?”

Answer: The 5-Year Consolidated Plan (Con Plan) includes a needs assessment and a strategic plan that identifies overarching needs and goals. Pursuant to the Con Plan Strategic Plan’s Priority Needs and Goals, the City prepares an Annual Action Plan each year that identifies projects, funding levels, and funding sources for its HUD-funded projects. If/when the City proposes to significantly change the description or activities of a project in an adopted Annual Action Plan, or when it proposes to change the funding level for any project by more than 25%, that is considered a “substantial Action Plan amendment.” Substantial Action Plan amendments must be approved by City Council and require a 30-Day Public Display and Comment period, as well as a public hearing before City Council takes formal action. For more information, please see the [Draft Amended Citizen Participation Plan](#).

Question: “The Goals/projects/programs in the 2019 Plan all list the Target Area as City-wide. What assurance is there that when a neighborhood requests a project/program that meets a fund’s criteria, that they will be able to get the funds for that project/program in the next HUD plan cycle? Let’s say the Neighborhood Association’s requests total under \$25k for the year. What about another higher \$ figure? Who decides how funds are allocated to the various census tracts?”

Answer: HUD-funded projects are identified and funding levels are determined annually through the development of the Annual Action Plan. This typically takes place in the winter/spring, alongside the timeframe when the City’s funding allocation is published by HUD. As part of the Annual Action Plan development, there is always at least one public meeting and two public hearings, and the draft Annual Action Plan has a 30-Day Public Display and Comment period before going to City Council for formal action. Neighborhood groups are an

important stakeholder in that public participation process. The Draft Amended Citizen Participation Plan states that:

“The City encourages local and regional organizations and agencies – particularly those that assist low- and moderate-income persons or serve low-mod areas (defined as areas where at least 51% or more of the residents have incomes less than 80% of the area median income) – including, but not limited to, City staff, State and federal agencies, neighboring local governments, regional agencies like the Rochester Housing Authority (RHA) and the Continuum of Care (CoC), non-profit housing and legal services agencies, affordable housing developers, social service providers (including those focusing on services to children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, and persons with substance use), homeless services and prevention providers, community-based and neighborhood organizations, businesses, philanthropic organizations, faith-based organizations, and others to participate in the Consolidated Planning process.”

In addition to input from residents, neighborhood groups, and other stakeholder groups or other members of the public, the City relies on the City’s Housing Policy, the City’s Comprehensive Plan, [Rochester 2034](#), and the goals and priorities of the Mayor and Administration to inform development of the Consolidated Plan. For more information, please see the [Draft Amended Citizen Participation Plan](#).

HUD dollars may only be used to serve low-moderate areas (defined as areas where at least 51% or more of the residents have incomes less than 80% of the area median income), persons, households, businesses, jobs, etc. A map of Census Tract Block Groups that meet the HUD definition of “low-mod” and are considered eligible areas to spend HUD dollars can be found on the project webpage, [here](#).

Question: “The consolidated plan does not have a past or present estimate cost sheet by project and city zip code. Can the city of Rochester provide that information?”

Answer: The City measures and tracks HUD-funded projects and funding in accordance with HUD regulations. All projects, expenditures, and locations that are supported in a given year are reported annually through the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). Copies of past year CAPERs are available on the [City’s webpage for past Consolidated Planning documents](#).

Question: “How much of CDBG funds are spent on City planning and Planners Salaries?”

Answer: The 2020-2021 Annual Action Plan Commits \$249,000 of CDBG for Planning Staff, which is 2.6% of the CDBG funds that are programmed for the 2020-2021 program year (\$9,709,064).

Question: “Can you provide public attendance sheets for community engagement?”

Answer: Attendance sheets from public engagement meetings are scanned and will be included in the public engagement summary in the final Consolidated Plan, which will be available on the [project webpage](#).

Question: “It’s a disappointment to PLEX Neighborhood Association that 100K was spent on the City’s 2034 plan covering City employee salaries and third party contractors for community outreach/engagement but pictures of crowds and attendance sheet show poor engagement. How will the City of Rochester do a better job at including neighborhoods in planning ideas/ designs/ strategies?”

Answer: City Planning Office staff received input from nearly four thousand community members over a two-year community engagement process that was used to inform development of the City’s new Comprehensive Plan, [Rochester 2034](#). This included sit down meetings with over 50 neighborhood groups, including PLEX, and more than 100 stakeholder agencies and organizations; pop-out outreach at community events, the Rochester Public Market, libraries, R-Centers, Settlement Houses, Rochester Housing Authority communities, and other community-based venues; and a community survey that was available in English and Spanish, as well as online or paper copy.

Question: “Your 2034 plan is pushing density by changing zoning requirements, supporting more housing and less traffic with cars. Can you explain how and where the data supports this Ideal of people living closer together?”

Answer: [Rochester 2034](#) was adopted unanimously by City Council in November 2019 with broad community support and is the guiding document for the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan.

Question: “Can the city of Rochester create a CDBG community taskforce with some members picked by the community and others picked by mayors team to make sure funds are spent appropriately?”

Answer: Public participation is an important component of developing the Consolidated Plan and each Annual Action Plan. The City encourages and values the input of a diverse range of interests, including residents; neighborhood organizations; local and regional organizations, agencies, and service providers (particularly those that assist low-moderate income persons or serve low-mod areas); affordable housing developers; businesses; philanthropic organizations; faith-based organizations; community-based organizations; and others. To review the City’s proposed process for engaging the community and soliciting input, please see the [Draft Amended Citizen Participation Plan](#).

In addition to input from residents and the diverse stakeholder groups and interests listed above, the City relies on the City’s Housing Policy, the City’s Comprehensive Plan, [Rochester 2034](#), and the goals and priorities of the Mayor and Administration to inform development of the Consolidated Plan.

To ensure that funds are spend in accordance with HUD guidance and regulations, the City is audited by HUD on a regular basis.