

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

for the Community Development Block Grant Program

## **CITY OF COLUMBUS**

April 20, 2024

# City of Columbus Citizen Participation Plan

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

The City of Columbus receives an annual entitlement of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for housing and community development activities that primarily assist low-income and moderate income persons. In accordance with HUD regulations (24 CFR 91.105), the city is required to have and follow a detailed Citizen Participation Plan that sets forth policies and procedures for engaging the public in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the city's CDBG and related HUD programs, including efforts to affirmatively further fair housing.

This Citizen Participation Plan emphasizes involvement by low and moderate-income persons, especially those living in low and moderate-income neighborhoods. The city will take whatever actions are appropriate to encourage the participation of all citizens, including minorities and persons with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, and residents of public and assisted housing.

This Citizen Participation Plan is available to the public.

#### A. Definitions

**Annual Action Plan:** This document details yearly approved funding allocations to specific eligible projects and activities. It is submitted to HUD 45 days prior to the start of the city's fiscal year and is developed in accordance with federal regulations (24 CFR 91).

Assessment of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI) or Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH): This document refers to an analysis performed in accordance with requirements for consultation and community participation that includes a review of fair housing data, an assessment of fair housing issues and contributing factors, and an identification of fair housing priorities and goals. The AI/AFH is conducted in compliance with HUD's AFH guidance and structure, and is conducted every five years and prior to or in conjunction with the development of the Consolidated Plan. The AFH will eventually replace the required Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI).

**Citizen Participation Plan:** This plan is prepared to facilitate and encourage public participation and involvement in the Consolidated Plan process (including the Al/AFH) and the city's CDBG program, especially by low- and moderate-income persons. The plan identifies the public participation requirements as identified by federal regulations (24 CFR 91).

**Code of Federal Regulations (CFR):** The CFR is the general and permanent rules and regulations published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the US Government.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program: This is a federal grant program administered by HUD. The program allocates money to eligible cities and counties throughout the United States, primarily to assist low- and moderate-income households and neighborhoods. The grant program may be used for such activities as housing rehabilitation, affordable housing assistance, community services, and community development activities such as construction or rehabilitation of community facilities and economic development.

Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER): This document reports on the city's annual achievements relative to the goals in the Consolidated Plan and the activities in the Annual Plan. The report is prepared annually by the city in accordance with

federal regulations (24 CFR Part 91) and is submitted to HUD within 90 days of the program year end.

**Consolidated Plan:** This is a five-year planning document that establishes the city's priorities and strategies for use of HUD-administered funding. The Consolidated Plan identifies housing, economic, and community development needs and prioritizes funding to meet those needs. It is developed in accordance with federal regulations (24 CFR Part 91) and is submitted to HUD 45 days prior to the start of the city's fiscal year.

**Consolidated Plan Documents:** These include the Consolidated Plan, the Assessment of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice/Assessment of Fair Housing, the Annual Action Plan, the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report, and any Substantial Amendments thereto.

Continuum of Care: This means the group organized to carry out the responsibilities required under 24 CFR 578. This group is composed of representatives of organizations, including nonprofit homeless providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless veterans, and homeless and formerly homeless persons to the extent these groups are represented within the geographic area and are available to participate. Note the City of Columbus is included in the Region 11 Continuum of Care.

**Low- and Moderate-Income Persons:** These are individuals within families earning less than 80 percent of the area median income. They are broken down into the following income designations:

- **Extremely Low-Income:** Individuals within families with incomes less than 30 percent of the area median family income, adjusted for household size.
- **Low-Income:** Individuals within families with incomes between 31 and 50 percent of the area median family income, adjusted for household size.
- **Moderate-Income:** Individuals within families with incomes between 51 and 80 percent of the area median family income, adjusted for household size.

**Low- and Moderate-Income Neighborhood:** In general, this is defined as a census tract or block group where a minimum of 51 percent of the residents have low or moderate incomes. In certain jurisdictions that do not have an adequate number of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods under this definition, the definition may be expanded to include the twenty-five percent of the jurisdiction's census tracts or block groups with the highest percentage of residents with low or moderate incomes.

**Program Year:** The "program year" chosen by the City of Columbus is September 1<sup>st</sup> through August 31<sup>st</sup>, which is different from the city's fiscal year.

**Public Hearing:** This is a public meeting that has been publicly noticed in a local newspaper of general circulation, or noticed in a fashion which otherwise follows local procedures for formal noticing of public hearings. Public hearings are required prior to the adoption of the AFH/AI, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, CAPER, and substantial amendments to any of the Consolidated Plan documents. A public hearing does not have to be carried out in conjunction with an official city council meeting.

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** This is the federal agency which administers and provides guidance for the Consolidated Plan Process and use of certain federal funds, including CDBG.

#### **B. Consolidated Planning Process**

The primary purpose of the programs covered by this Citizen Participation Plan is to improve communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and/or economic opportunities, principally for low and moderate-income people.

CDBG is a flexible program that provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community needs. The city is responsible for developing its own priorities and programs within HUD guidelines through the Consolidated Planning process. To develop and implement an effective program, the city actively engages residents, local and regional agencies, the Continuum of Care, businesses, developers, nonprofit institutions, philanthropic organizations, and community based and faith-based organizations at each stage of the process, including:

- Identification of housing and community development needs;
- Development of a Five-Year Consolidated Plan that establishes the city's needs, program goals, and funding priorities;
- Preparation of an Annual Plan that outlines the proposed use of each year's allocation;
- Preparation of a Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) that provides an account of expenditures and program accomplishments;
- Development of an Assessment of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI) or Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH);
- Consideration of substantial amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan, Consolidated Plan, Annual Plan, CAPER, and Al/AFH; and
- Providing for public comment and hearings for proposed plans.

#### II. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

#### A. Citizen Participation Plan

The Citizen Participation Plan is designed to facilitate and encourage public participation in the Consolidated Plan process, including the development of the Al/AFH. In particular, the Citizen Participation Plan seeks to encourage the involvement of low- and moderate-income persons.

Columbus will use the following procedures for the adoption and any subsequent changes to its Citizen Participation Plan:

- Public notice in Columbus' *The Republic* newspaper as well as notice on the city's website in advance of, or concurrent with, the start of a 30-day public comment period;
- During a 30-day public review and comment period, the document will be available for review at the following locations:
  - Columbus City Hall Community Development Department Office
  - Columbus City Hall Clerk-Treasurer's Office
  - Bartholomew County Public Library
  - Mill Race Center
  - Online at the Columbus Community Development Department website (www.columbus.in.gov/community-development/cdbg-information)

 Following the 30-day public review and comment period and closing of the public hearing, the Citizen Participation Plan will be adopted if approved by a majority vote of the Columbus Board of Works and Public Safety.

Any change in the public participation process as outlined in this document will require an amendment to the Citizen Participation Plan. Any amendments will follow the same steps as noted in this section.

## B. Assessment of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice/Assessment of Fair Housing, Consolidated Plan, and Annual Action Plan

The Assessment of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice or the Assessment of Fair Housing is an analysis of fair housing issues in the city which results in goals the city sets forth to achieve over its coming planning cycle. The Consolidated Plan is a five-year plan that identifies the needs of low- and moderate-income persons and areas of the city and sets forth a five-year strategy to address those needs. The Action Plan identifies the specific needs to be addressed each year based on the priorities established in the Consolidated Plan's five-year strategy. The following steps outline the opportunities for public involvement in the Al/AFH, Consolidated Plan, and Annual Action Plan:

#### 1. Preparation

Community input is essential to determining fair housing challenges and goals, as well as housing and community development needs and priorities. In order to solicit community input, the city will:

- Gather and analyze historical and existing data on topics such as community demographics, housing conditions, and fair housing issues, and make this data publicly available for the benefit of residents, public agencies, and other interested parties.
- Consult with:
  - Public and private agencies that provide assisted housing, health services, and social and fair housing services (including those focusing on services to children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS and their families, homeless persons) during preparation of the Consolidated Plan.
  - The Continuum(s) of Care that serve(s) the Community Development Department's geographic area;
  - Public and private agencies that address housing, health, social service, victim services, employment, or education needs of low-income individuals and families; homeless individuals and families, including homeless veterans; youth; and/or other persons with special needs;
  - Publicly funded institutions and systems of care that may discharge persons into homelessness (such as health-care facilities, mental health facilities, foster care and other youth facilities, and corrections programs and institutions)
  - Business and civic leaders.
  - Public Housing Authority, the jurisdiction shall consult with the local public housing agency (PHA) concerning consideration of public housing needs and planned programs and activities.

- When preparing the Assessment of Fair Housing, consult with community-based and regionally-based organizations that represent protected class members, organizations that enforce fair housing laws (such as the Columbus Human Rights Commission), fair housing organizations and other nonprofits and other public or private housing service agencies.
- Publicly notice and conduct a public hearing to solicit input on needs and priorities.
- Publicly notice a 30-day review and comment period during which a complete draft of the Al/AFH, Consolidated Plan, and/or Annual Action Plan will be made available to the public.

#### 2. Adoption

As noted above, the city will provide several opportunities for public involvement in the Al/AFH, Consolidated Plan, and Annual Action Plan process prior to adoption. These include:

- One or more Community Forums on the topic of fair housing issues during the preparation of the Al/AFH, and one or more Community Forums on community needs and priorities during preparation of the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan.
  - Notice of any public meeting will be published in Columbus' The Republic in accordance with Indiana Code and on the city's website in advance of the meeting.
- A 30-day public review and comment period for the draft Al/AFH, draft Consolidated Plan, and/or draft Annual Action Plan.
  - A public notice of the review and comment period will be published in Columbus' The Republic as well as on the city's website in advance of, or concurrent with, the start of a 30-day public comment period. The notice will list the locations where the document(s) will be available for review. During the 30-day review and comment period, drafts of the Al/AFH, Consolidated Plan, and/or Annual Action Plan will be available at the following locations in Columbus:
    - Columbus City Hall Community Development Department Office
    - Columbus City Hall Clerk-Treasurer's Office
    - Bartholomew County Public Library
    - Mill Race Center
    - Online at the Columbus Community Development Department website (www.columbus.in.gov/community-development/cdbg-information)
- A public hearing will be held at a time and location to encourage citizens' attendance during the development and prior to adoption of the Al/AFH, Consolidated Plan, and/or Annual Action Plan.
  - Notice of the public hearing will be published in Columbus' *The Republic* in accordance with the Indiana Code and on the city's website at least 10 days in advance of the meeting. Notice of a public hearing may be combined with notice of a 30-day public review and comment period when both apply to the same document.
- Following the end of the 30-day review and comment period and the closing of the public hearing, the Al/AFH, Consolidated Plan, and/or Annual Action Plan will be adopted if approved by majority vote of the Columbus Board of Works and Public Safety.

In preparing the final Consolidated Plan documents, careful consideration will be given to all comments and views expressed by the public, whether given as verbal testimony at the public

hearing or submitted in writing during the review and comment period. The final documents will each have a section that presents all comments, plus explanations why any comments were not accepted (if applicable).

#### 3. Amendments

The AFH, Consolidated Plan, and/or Annual Action Plan will be amended anytime there is a change in one of the priorities as included in the Consolidated Plan; a change in the use of money to an activity not mentioned in the Annual Action Plan; or a change in the purpose, location, scope, or beneficiaries of an activity.

There are two types of amendments:

- A "Minor Amendment" pertains to the Annual Action Plan and involves carrying out an activity or program previously described in the existing Annual Action Plan but includes a change in funding. The city's Community Development Department may administratively amend, up to the substantial amendment thresholds, the existing budget for activities or programs to efficiently expend funds (including program income) related to previously disclosed activities or programs in accordance with the intent of the funds identified in the previously undertaken citizen participation process. In addition, an existing activity or program can be cancelled administratively if no funds were expended, and said funds can then be reallocated to an existing Annual Action Plan activity, program, or applicable contingency fund to be allocated to one or more future activities or programs at a future date. A Minor Amendment does not require additional citizen participation.
- A "Substantial Amendment" involves one or more of the following actions:
  - Funding of an activity or program not previously described in the Annual Action Plan.
  - o Changing the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity.
  - o Modifying the priorities described in the Consolidated Plan.
  - Increasing or reducing the amount allocated to an activity by more than 25 percent, with the exception of activities that are cancelled without expenditure of funds.
  - Making a change to the previously adopted Al/AFH as a result of a material change in circumstances affecting the information on which the Al/AFH was based to the extent that the analysis, the fair housing contributing factors, or the priorities and goals of the Al/AFH no longer reflect actual circumstances; or resulting from a written notification provided by HUD identifying a material change that HUD believes warrants revisions to the Al/AFH.

The public will be notified of a proposed Substantial Amendment and will have an opportunity to review it and comment on it. The city will use the following procedures for the adoption of any Substantial Amendments to Consolidated Plan documents:

- A 30-day public review and comment period for the draft Substantial Amendment.
  - A public notice of the review and comment period will be published in Columbus' The Republic as well as on the city's website in advance of, or concurrent with, the start of a 30-day public comment period. The notice will list the locations where the document(s) will be available for review.

- During the 30-day review and comment period, a draft of the Substantial Amendment will be available at the following locations in Columbus:
  - Columbus City Hall Community Development Department Office
  - Columbus City Hall Clerk-Treasurer's Office
  - Bartholomew County Public Library
  - Mill Race Center
  - Online at the Columbus city website (www.columbus.in.gov)
- A public hearing held at a time and location to encourage citizens' attendance prior to adoption of the Substantial Amendment.
  - Notice of the public hearing will be published in Columbus' *The Republic* and on the city's website in accordance with the Indiana Code in advance of the meeting. Notice of a public hearing may be combined with notice of a 30-day public review and comment period when both apply to the same document.
- Following the end of the 30-day review and comment period and the closing of the public hearing, the Substantial Amendment will be adopted if approved by majority vote of the Columbus Board of Works and Public Safety.

In preparing the final Substantial Amendment documents, careful consideration will be given to all comments and views expressed by the public, whether given as verbal testimony at the public hearing or submitted in writing during the review and comment period. The final documents will each have a section that presents all comments, plus explanations why any comments were not accepted (if applicable).

#### C. Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report

Every year, the City of Columbus must submit to HUD a Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) within 90 days of the close of the program year. In general the CAPER must describe how funds were actually used and the extent to which these funds were used for activities that benefited low- and moderate-income people. The following steps outline the opportunities for public involvement in the CAPER:

- Public notice in Columbus' The Republic Columbus' The Republic newspaper as well as notice on the city's website in advance of, or concurrent with, the start of a 15-day public comment period;
- During a 15-day public review and comment period, the document will be available for review at the following locations:
  - Columbus City Hall Community Development Department Office
  - Columbus City Hall Clerk-Treasurer's Office
  - Bartholomew County Public Library
  - Mill Race Center
  - Online at the Columbus Community Development Department website (www.columbus.in.gov/community-development/cdbg-information)
- Public hearing held at a time and location to encourage citizens' attendance; and
- Notice of the public hearing will be published in Columbus' The Republic and on the City's website in accordance with the Indiana Code in advance of the meeting. Notice

- of a public hearing may be combined with notice of a 15-day public review and comment period when both apply to the same document.
- Following the end of the 15-day review and comment period and the closing of the public hearing, the CAPER will be adopted if approved by a majority vote of the Columbus Board of Public Works and Safety.

Careful consideration will be given to all written comments submitted by the public. These comments will be addressed in the CAPER.

ANNUAL SCHEDULE					
Activity	Date	Notice (if applicable)	Comment Period (if applicable)		
Begin Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) process					
Public Hearing Notice- Evaluation Report (CAPER)	November 1	10 calendar days			
CAPER available for review/Public Comment	November 1		15 calendar days		
CAPER submitted to HUD	On or before November 30				
Community Forum (Consultation) for Con. Plan or AI/AFH	January-May	10 calendar days if applicable for public hearing notices			
Community CDBG Application – in preparation of Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Plan, if applicable	April - May	30 calendar days			
Public Hearing Scheduled	April - May	10 calendar days			
Draft Annual Action Plan/Con. Plan Complete	June				
Community Comment Period	June - July		30 calendar days		
Plan Submitted to HUD	On or before July 15		45 calendar day		
CDBG Fiscal Year Begins	September 1				
CDBG Fiscal Year Ends	August 31				
Substantial Amendment to Annual Plan/Consolidated Plan	As needed-follow same process as Annual Plan/Consolidated Plan				
Substantial Amendment Public Hearing Scheduled	As needed	10 calendar days			
Plan Amendment - Community Comment Period	From publication date		30 calendar days		

Plan Amendment Submitted	After end of comment	
to HUD	period	

#### III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings are required by law in order to obtain the public's views, and to provide the public with the city's responses to public questions and proposals. The law requires public hearings at various stages of the process, including assisting in determining community needs, reviewing proposed uses of funds, and assessing how funds were spent during the previous program year.

Public hearings will be held only after there has been adequate notice in accordance with Indiana Code requirements and described in this Citizen Participation Plan, including an advertisement in Columbus' The Republic, the newspaper of general circulation. Public hearings will usually be held at a time convenient to most residents, especially those who might benefit from the use of funds. If the public hearing contains a virtual component, for additional access, the notices will include instructions for said virtual component.

Public hearings may be held at the City Hall Conference Room 3, City Council chambers, the Mill Race Center, or the Bartholomew County Public Library, all of which are accessible by bus. Other locations may be considered for public hearings in the event that it is deemed in the best interest of the community, such as when a specific location might serve a target population. Public hearings may be held at any of these locations; however, the final approval and adoption of any Consolidated Plan document and/or Substantial Amendment will be conducted at City Hall. All public hearing locations will be accessible to people with disabilities, and provisions will be made for people with disabilities when requests are made at least 7 calendar days prior to a hearing. Translators will also be provided for people of limited English proficiency when requests are made at least 7 calendar days prior to a hearing.

#### IV. PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

As required by law, the city will provide the public with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the data or content of the Consolidated Plan, as well as the proposed, actual, and past use of funds covered by this Citizen Participation Plan. The city will also provide reasonable public access to records about any uses of these funds during the previous five years.

Also, as required by law, the city will provide the public with reasonable and timely access to local meetings relating to the proposed or actual use of funds (such as Columbus Board of Works and Public Safety meetings and/or other city committee and commission meetings).

The city publishes notices of public meetings, public review and comment periods, and public hearings in Columbus' *The Republic*, a newspaper of general circulation, to encourage involvement by all of its residents, particularly low- and moderate- income residents, residents of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, minorities, persons of limited English proficiency, and persons with disabilities who may benefit from the use of HUD-funded activities. Opportunities for public participation may also be publicized through direct notification (e.g., mail, email, or flyers) of groups or individuals who have expressed an interest or whom the city identifies as having a greater potential interest, such as disabled persons, minorities, seniors, or youth.

#### A. Availability of Consolidated Plan Documents

In the spirit of encouraging public participation, a reasonable number of copies of Consolidated Plan documents will be provided to the public at no cost and within one week of a request. These materials will be available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, when requested.

#### **B.** Location of Documents

Copies of draft Consolidated Plan documents will be available at the following locations in Columbus during their respective review periods:

- Columbus City Hall Community Development Department (123 Washington Street; Phone: 812-376-2520)
- Columbus City Hall Clerk-Treasurer's Office (123 Washington Street; Phone: 812-376-2510)
- Bartholomew County Public Library (536 5th Street; Phone: 812-379-1255)
- Mill Race Center (900 Lindsey Street; Phone: 812-376-9241)
- Online at the Columbus Community Development Department website (www.columbus.in.gov/community-development/cdbg-information)

In the event of an address or location change for any of these entities, the city may administratively update this Citizen Participation Plan to reflect the new address or location.

Copies of final Consolidated Plan documents will be available at Columbus City Hall and on the city's website for a minimum of five years from the time of adoption.

#### V. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

City and Administrative Resources association staff will work with organizations and individuals' representative of low- and moderate-income people who are interested in submitting a proposal to obtain funding for an activity. All potential applicants for funding are encouraged to contact city staff for technical assistance before completing a proposal form.

Specifically, the city will provide up to 20 hours per year of technical assistance to organizations that represent low- and moderate-income residents. This technical assistance may include:

- Publishing instructions on how to fill out forms/applications;
- Conducting workshops to explain: (1) the process for submitting proposals and (2) federal and local requirements;
- Providing comments and advice via phone, email, or in-person meetings; and
- · Reviewing and commenting on draft proposals.

The city will also provide ongoing assistance to CDBG-funded agencies as needed to help them maintain their eligibility for full funding. The city may provide additional (beyond 20 hours) technical assistance if, in the opinion of the City Community Development Department Programs Coordinator, time is available.

#### VI. COMMENT AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

It is the city's policy to provide reasonable opportunity (i.e., 15-30 days) for interested parties to examine the contents of Consolidated Plan documents, including the Al/AFH, and submit written comments or complaints prior to finalization. The details for providing public comment or complaint on a specific document will be included in the public notice. City staff provides a meaningful, written reply to all comments and complaints within 15 days, when practicable. A summary of comments with city responses is included with the final Consolidated Plan document.

Complaints which cannot be resolved by the city may be addressed by the appropriate state or federal agency.

Written comments or complaints may be addressed to:

City of Columbus 123 Washington Street Columbus, IN 47201

Attn: Community Development Department

#### VII. LIMITED ENGLISH PROFIENCY (LEP)

According to the census data, an estimated 5.8% of Columbus households are non-English speaking. The Department of Community Development shall accommodate the needs of this population through the use of interpreters, if necessary. Special arrangements will be made to communicate with these persons if they desire to participate in a public hearing or public meeting. Information on assistance for those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) will be included in public notices, hearings, and solicitations for public input. You may contact Robin Hilber, Director of Community Development via email at rhilber@columbus.in.gov or mail at City of Columbus, attn.: Robin Hilber, 123 Washington Street, Columbus, IN 47201

#### VIII. ACCOMMODATION OF PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The city complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and will make accommodations for persons with special needs. Public hearings regarding the Consolidated Plan documents will generally be held at the City Hall Conference Room 3, City Hall Council Chambers, Mill Race Center, and/or the Bartholomew County Public Library, all of which are accessible to people with disabilities. Additional provisions will be made for people with disabilities when requests are made at least 7 calendar days prior to a hearing. Public notices will include information on how to contact the City's Community Development Department to request accommodation. Translators will also be provided for people who do not speak English when requests are made at least 7 calendar days prior to a hearing.

#### IX. DISPLACEMENT

If, as a result of a program activity, any residential displacement and relocation must occur, the city ensures that it will develop an Anti-Displacement and Relocation Plan in connection with that project in accordance with federal regulations. Specifically, the city will comply with the anti-displacement and relocation requirements of the Uniform Relocation Act and the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, and the implementing regulations of 24 CFR Part 42.

THE COLUMBUS, INDIANA CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN IS ADOPTED BY THE CITY OF COLUMBUS, INDIANA by and through the Board of Works and Public Safety thisday of, 2024.							
Attested: Luann Welmer, Clerk							