



# City of Gainesville

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

The City of Gainesville's Citizen Participation Plan has been prepared in accordance with U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Regulations at 24 CFR Part 91 on Community Planning and Development Programs Consolidation published February 6, 1995 and amended February 9, 2006. This plan updates the Citizen Participation Plan approved by the Gainesville City Commission in 1988.

Prior to 1981, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program required a formal citizen participation process. Grantees, such as the City of Gainesville, had to adopt and follow a written Citizen Participation Plan that met the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) requirements. In 1981, the requirement for a Citizen Participation Plan was dropped, although many Grantees continued to use Citizen Advisory Committees and other elements that were previously a part of the HUD requirements.

### PURPOSE

Section 508 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 reinstated the requirement of having written citizen participation plan. The purpose of this plan is, therefore, to meet HUD's requirements and to spell out the elements of the City's Citizen Participation Plan and to encourage citizen input, particularly for the City's low-to-moderate income persons. The City of Gainesville's Citizen Participation Plan serves as the foundation for developing stronger citizen relationships in the City. The City supports and encourages full participation of citizens, community groups, and other interested agencies in both the development and evaluation of programs and activities covered in the development and implementation of the Consolidated and Annual Action Plans, CAPER, and neighborhood plans.

The Citizen Participation Plan is organized to include the following elements:

- 1.) Introduction
- 2.) Purpose
- 3.) Citizen Participation Advisory Committee Structure
- 4.) Public Participation
- 5.) Access to Information
- 6.) Technical Assistance
- 7.) Grievance and Complaint Procedure
- 8.) Special Needs: Non-English speaking residents
- 9.) Anti-Displacement

## *CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE*

Increasing citizen and community involvement is an important component of gaining a better understanding of the needs in the city and developing appropriate strategies to address those needs.

This is evidenced by the creation of a Citizen's Advisory Committee in 1974. This Citizen's Advisory Committee is devoted to activities related to the CDBG, HOME, SHIP and Section 108 programs. The City of Gainesville is committed to a meaningful citizen participation process. It is the intent of this Citizen Participation Plan, therefore, to continue to use the Citizen Advisory Committee for Community Development.

The creation of the Citizen Advisory Committee for Community Development (CACCD) was to be used as a primary vehicle for citizen input for the City's Federal and State-funded programs. The primary responsibility of the City Commission appointed CACCD is to make recommendations to the Commission on the annual distribution of the CDBG and HOME project funds based upon the objectives stated in the Consolidated Plan. The Committee establishes program guidelines which assist them in recommending funding priority of housing, community development, and homes activities.

The CACCD is a critical component of the public participation process. The CACCD is a resident advisory committee that works closely with the Housing and Community Development Division of the City of Gainesville. The Advisory committee reviews and evaluates all housing development and public services applications; perform site visits to the agencies, hear presentations from each applicant; then, make recommendation to the City Commission for final approval. The CACCD consists of 15 committee members.

## *PUBLIC PARTICIPATION*

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

All residents, particularly those low and moderate income residents of neighborhoods targeted for the use of CDBG, HOME, SHIP, or Section 108 funds, will be afforded opportunities to participate in discussions on these programs. Residents have the opportunity to make comments by (1) communicating directly with City staff; (2) attending meetings of the CACCD; and (3) attending meetings of the City Commission when CDBG-related items are being considered. In all cases, residents are encouraged to comment either in person, including by telephone, or in writing.

Citizen comments to the City staff and CACCD members are received during regular office hours of the City by calling (352) 334-5026, or writing the Department of Neighborhood Improvement, Housing & Community Development Division, City of Gainesville, P.O. Box 490, Gainesville, FL 32602. Likewise, comments to the City Commission are addressed to the City Commission by calling (352) 334-5015, or writing to the City Commission, City of Gainesville, P.O. Box 490, Gainesville, FL 32602.

All meetings of the CACCD and City Commission are open to the public in compliance with the Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Law. Each group sets its own agenda and rules for addressing the group, and allows for public discussion.

CACCD members serving in an additional role of hearing citizen comments through personal contact with friends and neighbors. Depending on their involvement or representation in other community groups, they may also serve in a formal or informal liaison role with these groups.

## **NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES**

Residents are notified of City Commission and CACCD meetings and Public Hearings in the following manner:

- Posting in the Clerk of the Commission's Weekly Notice of Meetings;
- City of Gainesville Bi-Weekly newsletter; and
- Posting in the "Government Memo" and/or "Public Meetings," which are regular features of the Gainesville Sun.

In addition, when the CACCD holds its meetings in targeted neighborhoods (usually once each quarter), an one or a combination of means are used to publicize the meetings including display ads in the Gainesville Sun and minority newspapers, public service announcements on radio or television, and posters or handbills. Notifications of the availability of federal funds may be made in a like manner.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS / MEETINGS**

Local government units applying for federal funds must comply with citizen participation regulations outlined at 24 CFR 570.486. Prior to submitting their application for federal funds, the local government applicant must provide sufficient opportunity for affected citizens to gain an understanding of the proposed project activities and the amount of CDBG funds being sought. A minimum of one public hearing is required, but communities are encouraged to engage citizens at the onset of the project's planning process. Applicants must give adequate notice of public hearings and must provide citizens with a timely written response to any complaints or grievances. Documentation of the public hearing must be submitted with their application for federal funds. The purpose of the Public Hearings is to:

- Receive comments from citizens, public agencies, community members and other interested parties
- Respond to proposals and comments at all stages of the consolidated submission process
- Identify housing and community development needs
- Review proposed use of funds
- Review program amendments
- Review program performance

The City of Gainesville will have one or more Public Hearings each year to obtain citizen's input, information on the neighborhoods, amendments, and funding proposals. The hearings are held in buildings accessible to all persons. These Public Hearings are also held at times and locations convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries of each federally funded program.

During the regularly scheduled CACCD meeting, there will be one or more Public Hearings to hear and review proposals for funding amendments, new funding proposals, submission to HUD of: the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER), the Annual Action Plan, and any new applications for federal funds. These meetings will address the needs of the community, particularly for persons of low and moderate income. Note: Citizens are notified of the availability to review and comment on all the above-mentioned documents before submitting to HUD. Any proposed amendment is published and available for public comment over a 30-day comment period. The only a shorter period is set is through the authorization of HUD.

Notice of all the CACCD meetings will be published at least seven (7) days in advance. Every effort will be made to hold these meetings at location which are convenient to residents of proposed target neighborhoods and accessible to the handicapped. The Committee meets at least once a month, except in July and August when meetings are held on an as-needed basis. Once each quarter the CACCD also meets in a target neighborhood as part of an outreach effort to get citizen feedback and see firsthand the activities being funded through CDBG, HOME, SHIP, and other sources as the City obtain funding.

The City of Gainesville provides adequate notice of all Public Hearings and meetings through the media and direct mailings. To give adequate notice of Public Hearings, the City of Gainesville Housing & Community Development Division (HCD) has notices detailing the purpose of the hearings published in the regional newspaper at least 10 days in advance. Information about all Public Hearings can also be accessed by calling (352) 334-5026.

## *ACCESS TO INFORMATION*

Full access to HCD Program information, documents, and schedule of meeting times and publication dates is provide to the public. Program records and information, consistent with state and local laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality, are available for citizen review at the office of the Housing & Community Development Division located at 306 N. E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Thomas Center "B", 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Room 201, Gainesville, Florida. The Office may be reached by telephone at (352) 334-5026, or by fax at (352) 334-3166 during normal business hours of 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

Key documents of the Housing & Community Development Division (HCD) are placed on file for public inspection in the offices of HCD and the Alachua County Library. All documents which are reviewed by the City Commission are also on file in the offices of the Clerk of the Commission. Key documents includes, but are not limited to:

- Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan

- Consolidated Annual Performance & Evaluation Report (CAPER)
- Any and all Amendments to the Annual Action Plan
- Any and all applications for funding such as:
  - Request of Funds for the CDBG Program
  - Request of Funds for the HOME Program
  - Request of Funds for the CDBG-R Program
  - Request of Funds for the HPRP Program
  - Request of Funds for the NSP Program
  - Request of Funds for the Section 108 Program
  - Request of Funds for the SHIP Program
  - Request of Funds for the Housing Counseling Program

Other information and records relating to the City's use of various Federal and State Program funds may be reviewed by the public in the offices of HCD in compliance with the Florida Public Records Law and applicable HUD regulations.

### *TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE*

Upon request, the City's HCD Division will provide technical assistance to groups representing the needs of low and moderate income persons for the purpose of developing proposals and appearing before the CACCD. Technical assistance for developing proposals will be limited to guidance in completing any applications for funding, providing information on deadlines and project eligibility, and providing technical assistance concerning HUD regulations. An annual workshop is offered to potential applicants requesting federal funds describing the programs applications process and the various program offered and the HUD Regulatory requirements related to the various programs.

Staff members will not prepare applications, nor appear as advocated for or against specific project proposals.

### *GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES*

The City of Gainesville will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally at public hearings. A summary of all comments or views, as well as how they were addressed in the relevant document will be included in the final Consolidated Plan, amendments to the Plan, or performance reports.

The City of Gainesville will make very reasonable effort to issue a written response to every written complaint or grievance within 15 working days of receipt. When this is not possible, the City shall, within 15 working days of receipt, issue a letter indicating the status of the complaint review and the approximate anticipated date of a complete response.

Citizens who wish to lodge a complaint, may appeal to the City Manager by writing to: City Manager, City of Gainesville, FL P.O. Box 490, Gainesville, FL 32602.

The City Manager will make a determination on the appeal and respond in writing within fifteen (15) working days from the receipt of such complaint/appeal.

### *SPECIAL NEEDS: NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING RESIDENTS*

In its past experience with the HCD Division, the City has not encountered significant numbers of non-English speaking residents at public meetings or hearings. However, in the event it comes to the City's attention that a significant number of non-English speaking residents might reasonably be expected to participate in a meeting of the CACCD, the City will employ the services of an interpreter to assist in translating the meeting for the benefit of the non-English speaking residents. Also, printed notices of such meetings will be prepared in the language of the non-English speaking residents.

### *ANTI-DISPLACEMENT*

It is the policy of the City of Gainesville to make all reasonable efforts to ensure that activities undertaken with CDBG, HOME, SHIP, CDBG-R, HPRP, Section 108 Program funds will not cause unnecessary displacement. The City will continue to administer these 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 benefit to the public.

If displacement is precipitated by activities that require the acquisition (whole or in part) or rehabilitation of real property directly by the City of Gainesville, all appropriate benefits 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 persons or persons. Information about these programs will be provided to all persons who may potentially be displaced in the form of informational brochures on these programs and explained in detail by the City's Relocation staff.

These policies are more specifically outlined in the City's HCD Division Displacement Relocation Policy which details the Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan. This document is available for public review in the HUD Office, Thomas Center "B", 306 N. E. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Room 201, from 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday.