



Citizen Participation Plan

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Adopted September 21, 2017



City of Gainesville, Florida
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
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1. Introduction

In accordance with 24 CFR Section 91.105, the City of Gainesville Housing and Community Development (HCD) Division has prepared a Citizen Participation Plan to provide for and encourage citizen participation in the process of preparing and implementing plans related to programs funded by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Citizen Participation Plan provides a guide for citizens and organizations to participate in an advisory role in assisting with the development of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), and in the review of the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER). The Plan sets forth policies and procedures for citizen participation, which are designed to maximize the opportunity for engagement in the community development process. Special emphasis has been placed on encouraging participation by persons of low and moderate incomes, residents of blighted neighborhoods, residents of areas where community development funds are utilized, and by residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods identified by the City of Gainesville.

The Consolidated Plan establishes the City of Gainesville's long-range strategy and five-year investment plan for community development, housing, and homeless services. The Plan allocates federal resources from the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME). The AFH is an analysis of fair housing data, housing issues and contributing factors to housing discrimination, which limit housing opportunity and choice. The AFH identifies goals and priorities to address these issues and encourages collaboration with other entities (public housing authorities, participating jurisdictions, in the area). The CAPER is a summary of progress toward achievement of the goals and objectives of the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action plan.

Citizens are encouraged to participate in all phases of the CDBG and HOME programs and will be provided full access to program information. However, final responsibility and authority for the development and implementation of the CDBG and HOME programs, and related plans, will lie with the City of Gainesville.

2. Purpose

Section 508 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 reinstated the requirement for a written citizen participation plan. The purpose of this plan is to meet HUD's requirements and to spell out the elements of the City's Citizen Participation Plan to encourage citizen input, particularly for the City's program-eligible populations.

The City of Gainesville's Citizen Participation Plan serves as the foundation for developing stronger citizen relationships with 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 preparation and implementation of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Assessment of Fair Housing, Substantial Amendments, Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER), and other HUD-related plans.

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

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Purpose
- 3) Citizen Participation Contact
- 4) Citizen Advisory Committee Structure
- 5) Public Participation Process
- 6) Access to Information
- 7) Technical Assistance
- 8) Comment, Grievance, and Complaint Procedure
- 9) Accessibility to Low and Moderate Income Persons
- 10) Special Needs
- 11) Anti-Displacement
- 12) Use of the Citizen Participation Plan

3. Citizen Participation Contact

The Neighborhood Planning Coordinator is designated as the Citizen Participation Coordinator and will serve as the contact person for all matters concerning citizen participation activities. This person shall be responsible for overseeing citizen participation throughout the community development process and the implementation of all citizen participation activities and functions, except those which may be specifically delegated to other parties by this Plan.

The specific duties and responsibilities of the Citizen Participation Coordinator shall include, but not necessarily be limited to: disseminating information concerning proposed projects and the status of current project activities; coordinating various groups which may be participating in the community development process; receiving written comments; serving as a vehicle by which ideas, comments, and proposals from local residents may be transmitted to local officials and/or program staff; and, monitoring the citizen participation process and proposing such amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan as may be necessary.

The Citizen Participation Coordinator may be contacted at (352) 393-8565 during regular business hours. All questions concerning citizen participation in the community development process should be addressed to the Citizen Participation Coordinator.

4. Citizen 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. The Citizen's Advisory Committee for Community Development (CACCD) consists of up to 15 members, and is devoted to activities related to the CDBG, HOME, and SHIP programs. The CACCD is used as a primary vehicle for citizen input for the City's federally and state-funded programs. The City of Gainesville is committed to a meaningful citizen participation process, and therefore, to the continued use of the CACCD.

The primary responsibility of the City Commission-appointed CACCD is to make recommendations to the City Commission on the annual distribution of the CDBG and HOME project funds based upon the objectives stated in the Consolidated Plan. The City Commission and the CACCD establish program guidelines that assist the CACCD in recommending funding priorities for housing and community development activities.

The CACCD is a critical component of the public participation process. The CACCD is a resident advisory committee that works with the HCD Division of the City of Gainesville. The Advisory committee reviews and evaluates all housing development and public services applications; performs site visits to the agencies, hears presentations from each applicant; then, makes recommendation to the City Commission for final approval.

5. Public Participation Process

The public participation process is designed to engage residents affected by decisions, investments and challenges related to housing and community development; and other persons interested in the development of the Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plan, the Assessment of Fair Housing, and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report.

Public Hearings/Meetings

Local governments applying for federal funds must comply with citizen participation regulations outlined in 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 federal funds being sought.

The number of public hearings required depends on the type of plan, amendment process or performance report considered, but communities are generally encouraged to engage citizens at the onset of the project's planning process.

The purposes of the public hearings and meetings/workshops are to:

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

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The table below summarizes the public hearing, meeting/workshop, notification, comment period, and submittal requirements by type of plan, amendment process or performance report considered:

TYPE OF SUBMITTAL:	Consolidated Plan (including Year 1 Annual Action Plan)	Annual Action Plan	Assessment of Fair Housing	Substantial Amendments	Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)
<i>Description</i>	Once every five (5) years, the City of Gainesville must develop a Consolidated Plan that identifies goals and strategies for providing affordable and decent housing, a safe and suitable living environment and adequate economic opportunities for program-eligible populations. The Consolidated Plan includes the Year 1 Annual Action Plan.	Each program year, the City of Gainesville must develop an Annual Action Plan that identifies sources of funding and projects to be completed during the program year to implement the Consolidated Plan. The Year 1 Annual Action Plan is included in the Consolidated Plan process. The remaining Year 2 thru Year 5 Annual Action Plans are developed subsequently.	Once every five (5) years, the City of Gainesville must develop an Assessment of Fair Housing to identify fair housing issues and related contributing factors in the jurisdiction and region. The AFH must set goals to overcome fair housing issues and contributing factors identified and those goals must inform subsequent housing and community development planning processes.	A substantial change in the proposed use of program funds requires that amendments to the Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan be submitted to HUD. Amendments to the AFH are required when there is a material change that impacts the circumstances in the City which may include natural disasters, significant demographic changes, new significant contributing factors, and civil rights findings and/or causes alterations to the AFH's analyses, contributing factors, priorities, and/or goals.	Each program year, the City will issue a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) showing how the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan were implemented. The CAPER includes a description of the resources available and investment of those resources in terms of geographic distribution and populations assisted.
<i>Public Hearings</i>	Minimum of two (2) public hearings to encourage citizen participation, the first to be held early in the planning process and the second to be held at the conclusion of the 30-day comment period.	Minimum of one (1) public hearing at the conclusion of a 30-day public comment period.	Minimum of one (1) public hearing during the development of the AFH.	Consolidated Plan/AFH Amendments: Same as for the Consolidated Plan Action Plan Amendments: Same as for the Annual Action Plan.	Minimum of one (1) public hearing at the conclusion of a 15-day public comment period.
<i>Public Meetings/ Workshops</i>	Minimum of two (2) public meetings/workshops with neighborhoods and/or stakeholder groups, to be held early in the planning process	At the discretion of the City Commission and/or CACCD to encourage citizen participation.	Same as for the Consolidated Plan	Consolidated Plan/AFH Amendments: Same as for the Consolidated Plan Action Plan Amendments: Same as for the Annual Action Plan.	Public meetings are not required by HUD regulation for the preparation of the CAPER. The City, at its discretion, may decide to hold a public meeting in addition to the one (1) required public hearing.

TYPE OF SUBMITTAL:	Consolidated Plan (including Year 1 Annual Action Plan)	Annual Action Plan	Assessment of Fair Housing	Substantial Amendments	Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)
<i>Published Notice of Plan Availability for Review/ Comment</i>	Minimum of one (1) notice of plan availability for public review and comment, including a summary of the plans and locations and hours of availability; published in a newspaper of general circulation and any smaller publications serving program-eligible populations; and published at the start of the 30-day comment period.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Minimum of one (1) notice of CAPER availability for public review and comment; including a summary of the CAPER; locations and hours of availability; published in a newspaper of general circulation and any smaller publications serving program-eligible populations; and published at the start of the 15-day comment period.
<i>Comment Period</i>	The City will make a draft of the plans available for a 30-day comment period. Copies of the draft plans will be made available for review at the Clerk of the Commission's office, HCD Division offices and public libraries serving program-eligible populations. The plans will also be posted to the City's website and a reasonable number of additional copies will be provided to citizens upon request.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	The City will make a draft of the CAPER available for a 15-day public comment period. Copies of the Draft CAPER will be made available for review at the Clerk of the Commission's office, HCD Division offices and public libraries serving program-eligible populations. The CAPER will also be posted to the City's website and a reasonable number of copies will be provided to citizens upon request.
<i>Submission of the Plan</i>	Submitted to HUD no later than 45 days prior to the start of the program year, including all HUD-required forms and certifications.	Same as for Consolidated Plan.	After the first AFH, subsequent AFHs will be due 195 calendar days before the start of the program year for which the Consolidated Plan program participant's next strategic plan is due.	Consolidated Plan/Action Plan Substantial amendments may be submitted up to six (6) times per program year.	Submitted to HUD by December 30th or within 90 days of the close of the program year. The City of Gainesville's program year begins on October 1st and ends on September 30th.

Public hearings and meetings/workshops will be held in buildings accessible to all persons, and at times and locations convenient to stakeholders and potential beneficiaries of each federally funded program. These public hearings and meetings/workshops will address the needs of the community, particularly those of program-eligible populations.

Public hearings, meetings and/or workshops are held during the regularly scheduled CACCD meetings to hear and review proposals for funding amendments, new funding proposals, and submission to HUD of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, CAPER, and other plans and reports, as applicable. The CACCD meets at least once a month, except in July and August when meetings are held on an as-needed basis. Additionally, the CACCD meetings provide an opportunity to receive citizen feedback regarding activities being funded through CDBG, HOME, and other sources, as applicable.

Public Comment

All residents, particularly those low and moderate income residents of neighborhoods targeted for the use of CDBG, HOME, 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 the Citizen Participation Coordinator or; (2) attending meetings of the CACCD; and (3) attending meetings of the City Commission when such items are being considered. Any citizen or citizen's group desiring to comment or object to any phase of the planning, development or approval of the application for CDBG or HOME funds, or to the implementation of any CDBG or HOME program, should submit such comments or objections either in person, by telephone, or in writing.

Citizen comments 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, Station 22, Gainesville, FL 32627-0490. 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, Station 19, Gainesville, FL 32627-0490.

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 serve 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

The City of Gainesville will give adequate notice of public hearings and meetings/workshops related to federal programs. As required by HUD, documentation of these notices must be submitted with the respective application for federal funds. To reach the broadest audience possible, the City places meeting notices in various media outlets and in a variety of languages, when applicable.

Residents are notified of City Commission and CACCD public hearings and meetings/workshops in the following manner:

- Clerk of the Commission’s Weekly Notice of Meetings;
- City of Gainesville Bi-Weekly newsletter;
- City of Gainesville website (www.cityofgainesville.org); and
- Gainesville Sun (newspaper of general circulation)

In addition, when public meetings/workshops are held in targeted neighborhoods, any one or a combination of means may be used to publicize the events, including: display ads in the Gainesville Sun and minority newspapers; distribution of flyers or handouts; and announcements on the radio, television or the City’s website (www.cityofgainesville.org). Notifications of the availability of federal funds may be made in a like manner.

Notice of all regularly scheduled CACCD meetings will be published at least seven (7) days in advance. Every effort will be made to hold these meetings at locations that are convenient to residents of targeted neighborhoods and accessible to the disabled.

Notice of all public hearings will be published in a newspaper of general circulation at least 10 days in advance of the event. Notice of public meetings/workshops will be published in a like manner.

Information about public hearings and meetings/workshops can also be accessed by calling the HCD Division at (352) 334-5026.

6. Access to Information

Full access to HCD Division program information, documents, and schedules of meeting times and publication dates will be provided 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 HCD Division located at 306 N. E. 6th Avenue, Thomas Center “B”, 2nd Floor, Room 245, Gainesville, Florida. The HCD Division office may be reached by telephone at (352) 334-5026 or by fax at (352) 334-3166 during normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Information is also available on the City’s website (www.cityofgainesville.org).

Key documents of the HCD Division are placed on file for public inspection in its offices and at 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 include, but are not limited to:

- The Consolidated Plan;
- The Annual Action Plan;
- The Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH);
- The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER); and
- Other HUD Reports, as applicable.

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 the HCD Division in compliance with the Florida Public Records Law and applicable HUD regulations.

7. Technical Assistance

Upon request, the City's HCD Division will provide technical assistance to groups representing the needs of program-eligible populations, especially those groups representative of persons of low or moderate income, as may be required to adequately provide for citizen participation in the planning, implementation and assessment of the CDBG, HOME, and other federally funded programs.

Such technical assistance is intended to increase citizen participation in the community development decision making process and to ensure that such participation is meaningful. Technical assistance shall also be utilized to foster public understanding of federal program requirements.

Technical assistance shall be provided on request and may include, but not necessarily be limited to: interpreting the CDBG and HOME program rules, regulations, procedures and/or requirements; providing information and/or materials concerning the CDBG or HOME programs; and, assisting low and moderate income citizens, and residents of blighted neighborhoods to develop statements of views, identify their needs, and to develop activities and proposals for projects which, when implemented, will resolve those needs.

Technical assistance for developing proposals will be limited to general guidance in completing applications for funding, providing information on deadlines and project eligibility, and providing technical assistance concerning HUD regulations. City staff members will neither prepare applications, nor appear as advocates for or against specific project proposals.

8. Comment, Grievance, and Complaint Procedure

The City of Gainesville will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally, at public hearings and meetings/workshops. 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, Annual Action Plan, Assessment of Fair Housing, substantial amendments to the plans, or performance reports.

The City of Gainesville will provide citizens with timely responses to grievances or complaints. Citizens may submit a written grievance or complaint to the City Manager at City of Gainesville, P.O. Box 490, Station 6, Gainesville, FL 32627-0490. The City will make reasonable effort to issue a written response to every written grievance or complaint 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 response and approximate anticipated date of a final determination.

9. Accessibility to Low and Moderate Income Persons

The public participation process outlined herein is designed to promote participation by low and moderate income citizens, as well as residents of blighted neighborhoods and CDBG or HOME project areas. The City may take additional steps to further promote participation by such groups, or to target program information to these persons should officials feel that such persons may otherwise be excluded or should additional action be deemed necessary. Activities to promote additional participation may include the following:

- posting notices in areas where the income of more than 50% of the residents is less than 80% of the Gainesville Area Median Income (adjusted for family size);
- posting notices at agencies that assist low and moderate income persons; and
- conducting public hearings in low and moderate income neighborhoods or areas of existing or proposed CDBG or HOME project activities.

10. Special Needs

Persons with special needs who require assistance to participate in public hearings or meetings/workshops are requested to notify the City's Office of Equal Opportunity at (352) 334-5051 (voice) or (352) 334-2069 (TDD), at least two business days in advance of the event. TTY users can call 711. The Office of Equal Opportunity will inform the Citizen Participation Coordinator.

The City will consult with local disability advocacy groups to identify the most effective ways to reach persons with different types of disabilities, and if willing, use their communication networks to provide notice of upcoming events of interest to the disability community. The locations of all public hearings as described herein shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities. The City shall provide a sign language interpreter whenever the Citizen Participation Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more deaf persons will be in attendance. The City shall provide reasonable accommodations whenever the Citizen Participation Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more hearing or visually impaired persons will be in attendance at a meeting or workshop. Additionally, the City shall provide reasonable accommodations whenever the Citizen Participation Coordinator is provided reasonable advance notification that one or more persons with mobility or developmental disabilities will be in attendance.

The City will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate non-English speaking citizens expected to participate in a public hearing or meeting/workshop of the CACCD or City Commission. Upon reasonable notice of need, the City will take the following actions:

- print notices of such meetings in the language of the non-English speaking citizens; and
- employ the services of an interpreter to assist in translating the event for the benefit of the non-English speaking citizens.

11. Anti-Displacement

It is the policy of the City of Gainesville to make all reasonable efforts to ensure that activities undertaken with federal or state 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, the City will provide all appropriate benefits, as required by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended. The "Uniform Act" or the Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan under Section 104(d) shall be provided to the displaced person 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 detailed explanations by City staff.

These policies are more specifically outlined in the City's Displacement Relocation Policy which details the Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan. This document is available for public review at the office of the HCD Division located at 306 N. E. 6th Avenue, Thomas Center "B", 2nd Floor, Room 245, Gainesville, Florida.

12. Use of the Citizen Participation Plan

The City of Gainesville will use this Citizen Participation Plan when preparing and implementing plans related to programs funded by HUD.

If there are changes because of legislative authority or HUD causes changes in rules, regulations or guidelines which impact its federal programs, such changes will supersede the provisions contained in this Citizen Participation Plan.

In addition to the HCD Division office address and phone numbers referenced herein, inquiries and comments regarding federal programs may also be directed to HUD's Community Planning and Development Division located at the Charles Bennett Federal Building, 400 W. Bay Street, Suite 1015, Jacksonville, FL 32202, or by calling (904) 232-2627.