



GAINESVILLE

CITY OF GAINESVILLE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

APPLICABILITY AND ADOPTION

The City of Gainesville (Grantee) is required to adopt a Citizen Participation Plan that sets forth the policy and procedures towards the development or revisions of the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report for citizen participation.

The plan contains the required elements listed in the regulations 24 CFR 91.105 as is applicable to the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report.

STANDARDS

1. Citizen participation will be approached on a community-wide and a neighborhood level.
2. The City will consider any comments and views received and, if deemed appropriate, modify plans and programs accordingly.
3. Citizen participation requirements will not be construed to restrict the authority of the City to develop plans, programs, and activities to be accomplished with federal funds.
4. All aspects of citizen participation shall be conducted in an open manner with freedom of access for all interested persons.
5. There shall be involvement of low- and moderate-income persons, members of minority groups, residents of Neighborhood Strategy (Community Development) Areas and other areas where a significant amount of activity is proposed or ongoing, the elderly, the handicapped, and others who are concerned about the program.
6. Citizens shall be provided adequate and timely information so they can be meaningfully involved at various stages of the program.
7. Submission of views, comments and proposals by citizens is encouraged and solicited.

ENCOURAGEMENT OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The City of Gainesville will provide its citizens with an adequate opportunity to participate in the planning and development of its Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report. It will also encourage participation from both public and private organizations, in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the use of funds under the Community Development Block (CDBG) program.

Particular emphasis is placed on participation by the residents of areas where funds are proposed to be spent, and other low- and moderate- income or blighted areas. Participation and input is encouraged by local and regional institutions, Continuums of Care, and other organizations (including businesses, developers, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community-based and faith-based organizations), will be solicited via newspaper, social media, internet, word of mouth, and direct contact by telephone, email and/or mail.

Commencing with Consolidated Plans submitted after January 1, 2018, such consultations shall include broadband internet service providers, organizations engaged in narrowing the digital divide, agencies whose primary responsibilities include the management of flood prone areas, public land or water resources, and emergency management agencies, will be employed to enlighten citizens of the benefits of active citizen involvement in the development of the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report.

The grantee shall encourage, in conjunction with consultation with public housing agencies, the participation of residents of public and assisted housing developments (including any resident advisory boards, resident councils, and resident management corporations) in the process of developing and implementing the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report, along with other low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas in which the developments are located. The grantee shall make an effort to provide information to the PHA about the AFH, AFFH strategy, and Plan activities related to its developments and surrounding communities so that the PHA can make this information available at the annual public hearing(s) required for the PHA Plan.

The grantee will explore alternative public involvement techniques and quantitative ways to measure efforts that encourage citizen participation in a shared vision for change in communities and neighborhoods, and the review of program performance; e.g., use of focus groups and the Internet.

A process to be followed in drawing up and approving the plan and the schedule of meetings and hearings will be available to individuals and organizations interested in the development of the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report.

The Community Development Department will serve as the City's liaison with interested individuals and groups concerned with the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report. Educational programs for specific project areas, for all target areas, and for city residents in general will be conducted as necessary. This may be accomplished by special publications offering more information or sources of assistance.

ACCESS TO RECORDS, LOCAL MEETINGS, AND INFORMATION

Before adopting a proposed Plan, the City of Gainesville will publish a summary of the proposed Plan in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the city, describing the contents and purpose of the Plan. This summary shall include the total amount of entitlement funds to be made available for the Plan, and the range of activities that may be undertaken with these funds and the kinds of activities previously funded in the community. The type of activities ineligible will be provided as necessary.

The summary will also include a list of the locations where copies of the entire proposed Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report might be examined.

Copies of the proposed Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report will be available to be examined in the public libraries in the city and in the office of the Community Development Department. A reasonable number of free copies of the proposed plan will be provided to citizens and groups that request it.

Citizens will be given reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information, and records relating to the proposed use of Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report. Specifically, the City will notify the public at least ten (10) days in advance of the public meetings regarding the proposed use of funds.

All-important program documents; including copies of previous CDBG and other applications, letters of approval, performance reports, evaluation reports, program regulations, explanations of program requirements; planning studies and reports, and newsletters regarding the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report will be available for public examination at the office of the Community Development Department during normal business hours.

The public may inquire by telephone at 770-531-6570 or come to the Department office located at 311 Henry Ward Way. Documents will be sent to citizens upon written request. Source documents will be available for public examination at the Department office during normal business hours. Upon request, the Citizen Participation Plan will be put into a format accessible to person with disabilities.

PROVISION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CITIZENS

Technical assistance within the capability of the Community Development Department will be provided to groups representing persons of low and moderate income if such assistance is requested. Further, individuals will be assisted as far as is practical in developing their views, proposals, or the resolution of problems. The Department will also assist community groups and governmental agencies with planning and implementing activities to assist the elderly, handicapped, abused children or other needy persons and with activities to provide decent housing for the elderly and low-income persons.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings will be held to obtain citizen views and to respond to proposals and questions at all stages of the Community Development program. Public hearings will begin prior to development of the AAP and continue through the implementation phase of the program year. Hearings either will be formal meetings held at a specific time and date or be more flexible and run for a four- or five-day period for normal work hours and accommodate groups or individuals on a walk-in or appointment basis. There will be a minimum of two public hearings each year, to be conducted during at least two different program phases during the program year. During the development of the Consolidated Plan, at least one public hearing must be held before the proposed plan is published for public comment.

Hearings will be at facilities that are designed to accommodate the handicapped and that are convenient and accessible to low- and moderate-income persons. Notices of hearings, environmental reviews, final statements, proposed fund use and other items as required will be published in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the City, as well as any known local minority newspaper. Notices of hearings or other items published will inform the public of the time, date, location, purpose, method of response, or other pertinent information.

COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Comments from citizens concerning the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report are welcome at any time. There will be a period of at least 30 days to receive comments from citizens on the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report each year before completion of the final Plan Statement. Any comments or views received orally or in writing from citizens will be considered in preparing the final Plan Statement. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons; therefore, shall be attached to the final Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report. Complaints involving any aspect of the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report should be directed to:

Community Development Department
Housing & Special Projects Division
311 Henry Ward Way, SE
P. O. Box 2496
Gainesville, Georgia 30503-2496
Telephone: (770) 531-6570

The complaint will receive expedient and comprehensive attention. Written answers will be provided within fifteen (15) working days. Complaints not resolved by the Department will be referred to the City Manager, the CDBG Committee, or the Mayor and City Council in that order. If requested, citizens will be provided the address and/or telephone number of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Atlanta Area Office.

PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Citizens will have the opportunity to comment on the annual CAPER performance report before it is submitted to HUD. Notice of the availability of the draft performance report will be provided in a newspaper of general circulation, along with the location at which the report may be examined. Citizens will have at least fifteen (15) days in which to examine the report and provide comments on it before it is submitted to HUD. The City of Gainesville will consider any comments or views of citizens received orally at public hearings or in writing regarding the performance report. A summary of these comments or views will be attached to the final performance report.

PLAN AMENDMENTS

Substantial amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan, Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), Consolidated Plan or Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and the CAPER performance report require public notice and participation. A substantial amendment is defined as a major change in an approved strategy. It involves a change to the five-year strategy, which may be caused by a decision to undertake programs or activities inconsistent with that strategy. For example, shifting in spending of funds from Housing to Public Facilities within the City's CDBG program would require a plan amendment.

Citizens will have the opportunity to comment on substantial amendments to the Plan before they are officially adopted. Notice of the availability of substantial amendments will be provided in a newspaper of general circulation, along with the location at which the amendments may be examined. Citizens will have at least thirty (30) days in which to examine the amendments and provide comments before they are officially adopted.

The City of Gainesville will consider any comments or views of citizens received orally at public hearings or in writing regarding the amendments. A summary of these comments or views will be attached to the amendments.

Budget transfers within accounts of the same project budget are not considered substantial and do not require public notice. Budget transfers of less than 20 percent of the current year's CDBG budget from one project budget or project code to another project budget or project code are not considered substantial and do not require public notice.

LANGUAGES

The City of Gainesville has a moderate amount of households requiring services be provided in a language other than English. Upon request or as necessary, the City will make arrangements for documents to be provided in another language or for translators to assist with communication.

Expedited Procedures

The City of Gainesville has established expedited procedures to draft, propose, or amend its HUD Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans to accommodate special CDBG allocation, including the CDBG-CV funds authorized by the CARES Act of 2020 in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19). More specifically, the following procedures will be imposed during the time of the special circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic, for which the special allocation is being awarded for the specified grants and program years:

- A five-day public comment period for citizens to review and comment on the proposed plans and activities. The plans will be posted in full on the City of Gainesville website and in summary form on the City's social media platforms.
- A virtual public hearing will be held and will meet the public hearing requirements if:
 1. National/local health authorities recommend social distancing and limiting public gatherings for public health reasons.
 2. Virtual hearings provide reasonable notification and access for citizens in accordance with Gainesville's certifications, timely responses from local officials to all citizen questions and issues and public access to all questions and responses.