

Tallahassee Citizen Participation Plan

The City of Tallahassee's goal for citizen participation is to encourage diverse members of the community to review and comment on needs analyses and plans affecting the use of federal, state and local housing assistance grant funds. Tallahassee encourages citizen participation in various forms, and values participation by persons of low- or moderate-income, particularly residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. The plan went into effect October 1, 2010 for the 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan.

Citizen Advisory Committee

Tallahassee has a meeting of the Community Improvement Advisory Council (CIAC) when developing its Consolidated Plan and each Annual Action Plan, the funding plans for the use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership, State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP), Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) and Tallahassee Affordable Housing Trust funds. The CIAC reviews the needs analyses, the proposed activities, and the program performance reports. The CIAC also votes on the approval of the Consolidated Plan and the Annual Action Plan prior to approval by the City Commission. The CIAC consists of volunteer citizens who are housing specialists; economic development specialists; human services specialists and residents of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, blighted areas, and areas in which Tallahassee will likely use housing assistance funds and CDBG funds. In addition, the CIAC was designated as the Citizen Advisory Task Force in 2009 for the purpose of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

Public Hearings

Public hearings are held to obtain citizen views and to respond to proposals and questions at all stages of the planning process, including the identification of needs, the review of proposed activities and anticipated grant amounts, and review of program performance. In accordance with the federal regulations for citizen participation, a minimum of two forums are conducted each year to allow full public participation in development and review of the City's use of federal funds. One meeting is conducted after the publication of the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER), which reports on the accomplishments of the previous fiscal year. The timing of this meeting allows the public to examine recent accomplishments and make comments on priorities for future activities, providing City staff with an indication of needs and activities that should receive emphasis in the development of the next Annual Action Plan. The second forum is held after the proposed plan is published for public comment. This public hearing is held during a regular City Commission meeting, providing citizens an opportunity to present comments to the City's highest level of authority. In the past, both individuals and agencies have presented their requests for new activities as well as for increased priority for existing activities at the public meetings.

Five-Year Consolidated Plan

In accordance with 24 CFR 91.105, the City will include the Tallahassee Housing Authority in all Consolidated Plan activities, meetings and public hearings. The City maintains an "interested parties" email list that includes the lead agency of the Continuum of Care, other non-profit agencies that provide services to low- and moderate-income citizens as well as other interested parties. In addition to publishing the notices for public hearings and comment periods for the Consolidated Plan, the City sends an email notice to those on the interested parties list. Another opportunity for public comment on the Consolidated Plan occurs at the City Commission meeting at which the Consolidated Plan is presented for approval. As stated below, the comment period for the Consolidated Plan is not less than 30 days. All public comments will be considered and a summary of these comments will be included in the final Consolidated Plan. Also, any comments not accepted will be included along with the reasons therefor.

Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan

The Citizen Participation Plan relative to the development of the Consolidated Plan shall be effective in the event that a substantial amendment is needed to the Consolidated Plan. A substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan will be required in the event a new activity is added or in the event of changes in the use of CDBG funds from one eligible activity to another [24 CFR.105(c)(1)].

General Availability and Technical Assistance

City staff is available to meet with neighborhood, faith-based, and special interest groups to provide technical assistance about the types of activities that can be funded and the regulations associated with federal, state, and local funding sources. Participation in a variety of workgroups also enables staff to assess local priorities and the means to address them in the planning process. This provides opportunities for cooperation, collaboration, and leveraging of City funds. Partnerships with local organizations have resulted in housing developments, volunteer labor for emergency repair projects, and fundraising for homeless prevention activities. Some of the work groups the City participates in are: the Tallahassee Housing Authority Program Coordinating Committee, the Mayor's Task Force to end Chronic Homelessness, the United Way Community Human Service Partnership group, the Homeless Coalition Network, the Renaissance Neighborhood Partnership, the Whole Child Network, Front Porch Florida Initiative, and Elder Ready Community Workgroup.

Meeting Advertisement and Comment Period

Seven to ten days notice for meetings and workshops associated with the development of the Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Plan has proven to be the most productive lead-time, and all public meetings are advertised accordingly. Public hearings are advertised in display ads in the Tallahassee Democrat newspaper, in notices placed on the City's Cable Television Channel WCOT, and on the City's website, Talgov.com. Advertisements include the detailed budget of proposed activities as well as a summary of information. News releases disseminated by the City's Communications Office generate public interest stories in the local news media.

The location of information to be discussed at public hearings is published in all advertisements. Most information can be obtained on the City's website, or at the Housing Division Offices in the Renaissance Building, a centrally located City building where many residents pay their monthly utility bill. At the Housing Division Offices, citizens have access to information and records related to Tallahassee's proposed and actual use of funds. The City advertises a 30-day comment period for the Consolidated Plan and at least a 14-day comment period for the Annual Action Plan. The comment period for the CAPER is a minimum of 15 days. Citizens are welcome to call the City or send comments by mail and email. Citizens may request printed materials.

Special Needs Requirements

All public meetings are held in ADA-accessible buildings and all advertising of these meetings provides the opportunity to request special accommodations for particular disabilities or interpretation needs. In the case of public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate, an interpreter will be present.

Citizen Complaints and Grievances

Any complaints received by the Housing Division will be answered promptly (most on the same business day) with a phone call by staff. Staff shall ask the citizen to explain the nature of the problem, provide sufficient details of the problem, and perhaps provide a proposed solution. Following the contact by phone, staff and the Housing Division Administrator will review the grievance and gather additional information including, but not

limited to, performing on-site inspections as needed. Staff will follow-up on written grievances with a written response, sent within 10 days following contact with the citizen, summarizing the conversation by phone and any additional response. If the citizen cannot be reached by telephone within a 3-day period of attempting one call per day, staff will send a written response.

If communicating with Housing Division staff and the Housing Division Administrator cannot satisfy the complaint, the citizen will be encouraged to contact the Department of Economic and Community Development deputy director or department director. If the grievance continues, the citizen may contact the City Manager or a City Commissioner.

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