

# **St. Johns County Citizen Participation Plan**

## **Background**

The St. Johns County Housing and Community Development Department has prepared a Citizen Participation Plan (CPP), in accordance with 24 CFR Section 91.105, to explain the opportunity all citizens have to participate in the process of preparing the Consolidated / Action Annual Plan, any substantial amendment to the Consolidated / Annual Action Plan, and the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) for CDBG activities.

## **Introduction**

St. Johns County is seeking citizen participation and involvement in the planning, implementation, and assessment of its housing and community development programs funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. These programs are intended to develop viable urban communities with decent housing and a suitable living environment, and to expand economic opportunities, especially for low and moderate income persons. The County has entered into a cooperation agreement with the city of St. Augustine Beach to administer the CDBG program. This Citizen Participation Plan is prepared and implemented in accordance with the guidance provided in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Regulations 24 CFR Part 91.105.

The primary goal of this Citizen Participation Plan is to provide the opportunity for citizens of St. Johns County to participate in all phases of the CDBG program; with an emphasis on participation by persons of low and moderate income, residents of blighted areas, low and moderate income neighborhoods, and those areas in which funds are utilized. Low and moderate income neighborhoods are those that have a majority of residents earning less than 120% of the Area Median Income in St. Johns County. The Citizen Participation Plan establishes policies for public participation in this community development process and supersedes all other Citizen Participation Plans which may have been adopted by the St Johns County Board of County Commissioners.

St. Johns County values and encourages participation and input from its citizens and community groups affected by, or involved with any housing and community development projects. The final responsibility for the development and implementation of CDBG programs lies with the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners.

## **Scope of Participation**

St. Johns County will make reasonable efforts to encourage and facilitate citizen participation during the planning process, including identifying the needs of the community, setting the priorities, and making funding recommendations. The County encourages citizen participation in the implementation and assessment of all CDBG programs, including any changes or amendments.

As part of this plan and to maximize citizen interaction, the County will:

- Provide citizens, local and regional institutions, the Continuum of Care, and other organizations (businesses, developers, non-profits, philanthropic, and community and faith-based) with reasonable and timely access to local hearings, information, and records
- Hold two public hearings to obtain views and respond to proposals and questions at key stages of the community development process. These hearings will consist of the development of needs / proposed activities and review of program performance. These hearings will be held at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries with reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Formal notice will be published in St. Augustine Record at least fourteen (14) calendar days prior to public hearings.
- Welcome and encourage citizen participation with particular emphasis on participation by persons of low and moderate income who are residents of slum and blighted areas, other targeted revitalization areas, and of areas in which funds are proposed to be used
- Make arrangements to have an interpreter present for any non-English speaking, deaf or hard of hearing individuals or organizations that submit a written request to the Housing and Community Development Department, Attention: Housing Program Specialist, 200 San Sebastian View, Suite 2300, St. Augustine, FL 32084, or via email to [housing@sjcfl.us](mailto:housing@sjcfl.us) a minimum of four (4) days prior to these public hearings.

## **Technical Assistance**

The County will gladly provide technical assistance to individuals and groups representative of persons of low and moderate income that request such assistance. The technical assistance includes developing potential proposals for funding and information regarding the CDBG program, such as rules, regulations and eligible activities thereby allowing citizens to effectively participate in the planning, implementation, and assessment of CDBG process. Technical assistance may be requested by contacting the Housing and Community Development Department at 904-827-6890, during regular business hours or by email at [housing@sjcfl.us](mailto:housing@sjcfl.us).

## **Reasonable and Timely Access**

St. Johns County will provide its citizens with reasonable and timely access to public hearings regarding the Consolidated Plan, related Annual Action Plans, and the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) and any amendments thereto. Prior to the County's adoption of the Consolidated/Action Plan, the County shall make available to citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties information including the amount of assistance the County expects to receive and the range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low- and moderate-income. The public will be provided with reasonable access to records, subject to all local, state and federal laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality, during the public comment periods. A copy of the Citizen Participation Plan will be posted on the St Johns County website at the Housing and Community Services page.

## **Consolidated Plan**

At least one public hearing will be held as part of the Consolidated Plan development to:

- Inform citizens as to the anticipated amount of CDBG funding, possible program activities, the cost and location of proposed activities, and the impact on low to moderate income persons
- Provide citizens with a forum for input on housing and community development needs and priorities as part of the preparation of the Plan
- Discuss the range of activities that may be implemented
- Discuss the Citizen Participation Plan and its goal of providing citizen participation in the community development process
- Discuss the plans for minimizing the displacement of persons as a result of housing and community development activities (even if no displacement is expected to occur) in keeping with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act

Prior to this public hearing, the proposed Consolidated / Annual Action Plan will be published on the St. Johns County website for a thirty day review and comment period, to provide citizens an opportunity to review the Plan and submit input on the Plan. The County will also make a reasonable number of hard copies available upon request to the Housing and Community Development Department. In addition, the County will publish a summary of the Plan along with the notice of Public Hearing in the St. Augustine Record. The Consolidated / Annual Action Plan will be made available in a format accessible to persons with disabilities, upon written request.

The County will consider any comments or views received in writing, or orally at public hearings, in finalizing the Consolidated Plan.

### **Public Hearings**

Notice of public hearings will be published in the St. Augustine Record at least fourteen (14) days prior to the hearing date. Each notice of a hearing shall include the time, date, place, and procedures to be discussed. Notices will encourage all citizens to participate and give their input on the proposed plans.

At least two (2) public hearings will be held annually to obtain citizen input and to respond to questions regarding program activities.

An initial public hearing will be held during the development phase of the Consolidated Plan. A second hearing will be held near the end of the fifteen (15) day public review period of the CAPER. The County will hold an additional public hearing every five (5) years, as part of the Consolidated Plan development.

### **Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan**

St. Johns County will consider the following changes to be substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan, and the Annual Action Plan, and will be subject to the citizen participation process, in accordance with this Citizen Participation Plan:

- Addition of a new activity or project not previously described in the Consolidated or Action Plan
- Deletion of an activity or project previously described in the Consolidated or Action Plan
- Change in the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity or project previously described in the Consolidated or Action Plan
- Change in the use of CDBG funds from one eligible activity or project to another previously described in the Consolidated or Action Plan by more than fifty percent (50%)
- Change in an activity or project (previously described in the Consolidated or Action Plan) by more than fifty percent (50%)

The County will publish a notice in the St. Augustine Record, the availability of the proposed substantial amendment for a thirty day review and comment period. The public notice will encourage citizens to participate and submit their input on the proposed amendment. The County will consider any comments received in writing, or orally at public hearings, in preparing the final substantial amendment and before any amendments are implemented.

## **Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER)**

On an annual basis, St. Johns County will review and report in a HUD mandated format, on the progress it has made in the execution of the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan for the CDBG Program. The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) includes a description of resources made available, how the resources were utilized, geographic distribution and location of funded projects, demographic information of households and persons assisted, as well as any other actions indicated in the Consolidated Plan and Action Plan. HUD requires that the report be submitted no later than ninety (90) days after the close of the County's program year.

### **Availability of the CAPER - Public Notice**

In an effort to ensure the public is aware of the availability of the CAPER, St Johns County will publish a notice in the St Augustine Record and will establish a fifteen (15) calendar day public review and comment period. The notice will also encourage any interested parties to participate and to provide comment and input on the CAPER as well as indicate locations where copies of the entire proposed CAPER report may be examined by the public. Upon request, the County will also provide a reasonable amount of free copies of the proposed CAPER report to interested groups and citizens.

### **Publication and Public Hearing for the CAPER**

St Johns County will conduct a public hearing to provide an opportunity for citizens to comment or ask questions regarding the CAPER. This hearing will occur after the fifteen (15) calendar day public review and comment period mentioned above. Notice of this hearing will be published at least fourteen (14) days in advance of the hearing in the St. Augustine Record. St Johns County will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing in preparing the annual CAPER report. A summary of the comments or views will be attached to the annual CAPER report. Written public comments should be mailed or emailed to:

Health and Human Services Center  
Housing and Community Development Department  
Attn: Housing Program Specialist  
200 San Sebastian View, Suite 2300  
St. Augustine, FL 32084

OR

housing@sjcfl.us

## **Availability to the Public**

The County will provide access to the adopted Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, any Substantial Amendments, and Performance Reports to the public by publishing them on the Housing and Community Services Department of the St Johns County website. These materials will be made available in a format accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request. Additionally, copies of the approved plans and reports will be available for review at:

Health and Human Services Center  
Housing and Community Development Department  
200 San Sebastian View, Suite 2300  
St. Augustine, FL 32084

Board of County Commissioners Office  
500 San Sebastian View  
St. Augustine, FL 32084

## **Complaints and Grievance**

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 funds, or to the implementation of the CDBG program, should submit comments or objections in writing to: Housing and Community Development Department, Attention: Housing Program Specialist, 200 San Sebastian View, Suite 2300, St. Augustine, FL 32084. The County shall make every effort to provide written responses to citizen complaints and grievances within fifteen (15) working days of the receipt of such complaints, where practicable.

## **Provisions for Non- English Speaking, Deaf or Hard of Hearing, or other disabled Residents**

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for any non-English speaking, deaf or hard of hearing individuals, or organizations that make a written request a minimum of four (4) days prior to any public hearings to the Housing and Community Development Department, Attention: Housing Program Specialist, 200 San Sebastian View, Suite 2300, St. Augustine, FL 32084.

## **Anti-Displacement**

St. Johns County will seek to minimize displacement of persons affected by any housing and community development activities and will assist any persons displaced as a result. The Consolidated Plan will include a section including detailed Anti-Displacement Plans.