



## **City of Tuscaloosa**

Office of Federal Programs

### **Citizen Participation Plan**

Last Amended Date: October 14, 1994

Re-Amended: April 23, 2013

## City of Tuscaloosa Citizen Participation Program

The City of Tuscaloosa encourages and welcomes the involvement of its citizens in making decisions about the development of their neighborhoods and community at large. The goal of the City's Citizen Participation Plan is to provide all residents of Tuscaloosa with the opportunity to participate in planning, implementing, and assessing the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnerships (HOME), Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) programs.

The City's first Citizen Participation Plan was written in 1974 to formalize procedures for the involvement of city residents in the CDBG Program. The Plans has since been revised several times, as circumstances and regulations have changed.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is now in the process of consolidating the planning and application aspects of the CDBG, HOME, HMIS, and ESG programs and the requirements for the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy. The new submission is called the Consolidated Plan. Since it is an entitlement city under the CDBG, HOME, HMIS, and ESG programs, the City of Tuscaloosa has now revised the Citizen Participation Plan to address the requirements for the Consolidated Plan as well as Annual Action Plans.

The following plan outlines the procedures that will be followed to afford the opportunity for participation for all citizens, especially those of very low and low-income, in the CDBG, HOME, HMIS, and ESG Programs.

## Consultation

The City of Tuscaloosa recognizes that the involvement of those with expertise in certain areas of community development and neighborhood residents of low-income areas is crucial to identifying and prioritizing needs and developing a plan of action. The following entities and persons will be consulted during the preparation of the City's Consolidated Plan.

- (1) The City will consult with other public and private agencies that provide assisted housing, health services, and social services. Those agencies include, but are not limited to, the Tuscaloosa Housing Authority, Community Services Programs of West Alabama, Inc., the Tuscaloosa County Park and Recreation Authority, Turning Point, Inc., the Salvation Army, FOCUS on Senior Citizens of Tuscaloosa County, Inc., and Temporary Emergency Services, Inc.
- (2) When preparing the portion of the plan concerning lead-based paint hazards, the City will consult the Tuscaloosa County Health Department.
- (3) The City will consult with representatives of the City of Northport and Tuscaloosa County concerning non-housing community development issues which also affect those jurisdictions.
- (4) Representatives from the City's Transportation, Water and Sewer, Police, Fire, Inspection and Engineering Departments will be consulted concerning community development needs in their individual areas of expertise.
- (5) The Tuscaloosa Housing Authority (THA) will be consulted concerning public housing needs. The City will provide information to THA about housing and community development plan activities so that THA can make this information available at its annual public hearing required under the Comprehensive Grant Program.
- (6) Residents of low-income neighborhoods and public housing complexes will be consulted concerning development of their neighborhoods. Meetings will be held at neighborhood-based community facilities that are convenient to those residents.

## **Public Hearings**

The following public hearings will be held to allow city residents, especially those of very low and low-income, to participate in the development of the Consolidated Plan. All public hearings will be advertised in the Tuscaloosa News at least thirty days in advance of the scheduled hearing date. The hearings will be held in the City Council Chamber of City Hall, which is accessible to persons with disabilities.

- (1) During the development of the Consolidated Plan, two public hearings will be held to allow citizens to identify housing and community development needs and to propose projects and programs for funding. One hearing will be held during regular working hours and the other hearing will be held after 5:00 p.m. In subsequent years, for the development of the One-Year Action Plan component of the Consolidated Plan, two public hearings will be held for the same purposes. At each of these hearings, citizens will be provided with information concerning the City's performance in the CDBG, HOME, HMIS, and ESG Programs, the range of eligible activities, and the estimated amount of funds available for programs and projects undertaken.
- (2) A public hearing will be held prior to the submission of the City's Grantee Performance Report for the Consolidated Plan to inform citizens concerning progress during the past program year and to solicit their concerns.

## **Provisions for Non-English Speaking Residents**

According to 2010 U.S. Census data, approximately 3% of the City's population is of Spanish or Latino origin and 1.8% is of Asian origin. However, this does not mean that all of those persons do not speak English. In past years, the City has never been requested to provide and interpreter or written information in another language for persons who do not speak English. In Tuscaloosa, there is scant likelihood that non-English speaking persons would participate in a public

hearing. If such a case does arise, the City will make every possible effort to provide a language interpreter.

### **Encouraging Public Participation**

It is the intent of the City of Tuscaloosa to encourage and facilitate the participation of residents in the formulation of priorities, strategies, and funding allocations related to the Consolidated Plan Process, emphasizing involvement by low and moderate income persons, especially those living in low and moderate income neighborhoods, public and assisted housing. The City also encourages the participation of minority populations, including people who do not speak English and persons with disabilities.

### **Information to be Provided to the Public and Access to Records**

- (1) Before adopting its Consolidated Plan, the City will publish a summary of the proposed plan in the Tuscaloosa News. The City will also inform the public in the published summary that complete copies of the Consolidated Plan are available for review at the City's Office of Federal Programs, the Tuscaloosa Public Library, and the Weaver Branch of the Tuscaloosa Public Library.
- (2) Program documents that will be available for public inspection include the following: all grant agreements, records of hearings, letters of grant approval, prior year and current year applications, "Final Statements of Community Development Objectives and Projected Use of CDBG Funds," One-Year Action Plans, the Consolidated Plan, the Citizen Participation Plan, project activity files, Grantee Performance Reports, evaluation and monitoring letters from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, copies of program regulations and issuances, and documents regarding other program requirements, such as contracting procedures, fair housing and equal opportunity provisions, acquisition and relocation requirements and environmental policies.
- (3) Upon request the City of Tuscaloosa will make available the Final Consolidated Plan as adopted, any substantial amendments, and any

associated performance reports in a form accessible to persons with disabilities.

### **Technical Assistance**

The City of Tuscaloosa will provide technical assistance to individuals and groups, especially persons of very low and low-income status, through the following methods:

- (1) The staff of the City's Office of Federal Programs will work with citizens who need assistance in articulating their ideas and in developing proposals for CDBG, HOME, HMIS, and ESG activities.
- (2) Copies of program regulations and other pertinent information will be provided to persons and groups at no cost.

### **Comments and Complaints**

- (1) The City will encourage all citizens, especially those of very low and low-income, to submit oral or written comments at neighborhood meetings and public hearings. Persons will be requested to comment on the Consolidated Plan, substantial amendments to the plan, the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER), and annual performance reports within 30 days from when the material was initially made publicly available. Persons will be requested to comment on the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER), within 15 days from when the material was initially made publicly available.
- (2) Citizens who wish to object to any phase of planning, development or approval of the Consolidated Plan, or amendments to the plan will be asked to contact the City's Office of Federal Programs. The Office of Federal Programs staff will inform the Mayor and City Council of the complaint. All complainants will receive a written response within 15 working days of filing the same.

If the objection cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the Birmingham Area Office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development will be requested to resolve the issue. Persons will be informed that they can contact the Birmingham Area Office directly.

- (3) A summary of any comments of objections will be attached to the final Consolidation Plan, any substantial amendments to the plan, and/or the performance reports.

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

The following criteria will be deemed to constitute a substantial change and will require an amendment to the Consolidated Plan and/or a One-Year Action Plan:

- (1) Allocation priorities or the method of the distribution of funds are “significantly” different from those identified in the Consolidated Plan/One Year Action Plan, “significantly” being defined as:
  - a. An increase or decrease of \$10,000 or more in the total Grant Amount for a specific program year.
  - b. An amount less than \$10,000 will require approval through local City Council resolution.
- (2) An activity not previously identified in a One-Year Action Plan of the Consolidated Plan will be carried out.
- (3) An activity described in a One-Year Action plan will not be undertaken.
- (4) The purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity identified in a One-Year Action Plan will be substantially changed.
- (5) A significant monetary change in funding for an activity identified in a One-Year Action Plan will occur, based on the following:
  - a. For activities with a project budget of \$50,000 or less, an increase or decrease of 50% in the project budget.
  - b. For activities with a project budget of more than \$50,000, an increase or decrease of 25% or more in the project budget.

### **HUD’s Definition of Very-Low, Low, and Moderate Income**

- (a.) *Very Low Income*: Households whose incomes do not exceed 50 percent of the median area income for the area, as determined by HUD, with adjustments for smaller and larger families and for areas with unusually high or low incomes or where needed because of facility, college, or other training facility; prevailing levels of construction costs; or fair market rents.
- (b.) *Low Income*: A household whose income does not exceed 80 percent of the median income for the area, as determined by HUD, with adjustments for smaller or larger families. HUD may establish income ceilings higher or lower than 80 percent of the median for the area median on the basis of HUD's findings that such variations are necessary because of prevailing levels of construction costs or fair market rents, or unusually high or low family incomes.
- (c.) *Moderate Income*: Households whose incomes are between 81 percent and 95 percent of the median income for the area, as determined by HUD, with adjustments for smaller or larger families. HUD may establish income ceilings higher or lower than 95 percent of the median for the area on the basis of HUD's findings that such variations are necessary because of prevailing levels of construction costs, fair market rents, or unusually high or low family incomes

