

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
of the
CITY OF TUSCALOOSA
DISASTER RECOVERY

- I. Statement of Purpose: This Citizen Participation Plan of the City of Tuscaloosa (COT) seeks to provide for and encourage the participation of citizens in the development of the Disaster Recovery Action Plan, any substantial amendments to the Action Plan, and any other associated performance reports. The Plan also provides for the participation of citizens in the development of local applications for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and throughout the implementation of funded CDBG projects. COT aims to encourage participation by low and moderate income persons, residents of low and moderate income areas as determined by the State, the homeless, persons with disabilities, persons living with AIDS, and representative organizations of these groups. This Citizen Participation Plan has been designed to meet the requirements of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended.

- II. Effective Date: This Citizen Participation Plan will become effective May 22, 2012.

- III. Disaster Recovery Action Plan: During the development of the Action Plan, COT shall:
 - A. Make available to citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties information that includes the amount of assistance that COT expects to receive from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program and the range of activities that may be undertaken using these funds, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low and moderate income; and the plans to minimize displacement of persons and to assist any persons displaced. This information will be made available before the adoption of the Action Plan.

 - B. Publish the proposed Action Plan in a manner that affords citizens, units of general local governments, public agencies, and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to examine its contents and to submit comments. This information will be summarized and published in one or more newspapers of general circulation across the state. The summary will include a description of the contents and purposes of the proposed Action Plan and a list of the locations where copies of the entire proposed Action Plan may be observed.

 - C. Make available free of charge to interested citizens and groups copies of the proposed and final Action Plan. Copies will be available from various offices at the COT. Copies of the proposed plan will also be available for review at various branch library systems listed in the published summary and on the City of Tuscaloosa's homepage.

 - D. Hold at least two public hearings on housing and community development needs before the Action Plan is published for comment.

- 1) The COT shall give ample advance notice of the hearing to citizens by: publishing notices in newspapers of general circulation across the state which includes information on the purpose, time, and location of the hearing; informing the council members of each district; posting notice of the hearing at the main library branch; and providing other notice as determined by COT.
- 2) COT shall hold the hearings at a time and location suitable to potential and actual beneficiaries and with accommodations for persons with disabilities. COT shall hold these hearings at a minimum of three locations around the City to provide opportune access to residents living in the recovery and/or affected area. COT shall select a time and date for holding the hearing at each location which will attempt to maximize the participation of interested citizens.
- 3) In the case where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate, COT will provide a qualified interpreter at the public hearing to accommodate the needs of these residents.

- E. COT will receive comments on the proposed Action Plan from citizens and units of general local government for a period of not less than seven (7) days.
- F. Consider any comments or views of citizens and local officials received in writing or orally at the public hearings when preparing the final Action Plan. A summary of these comments or views and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and reasons therefore shall be attached to the final Action Plan.

IV. Substantial Amendments to the Action Plan: When considering substantial amendments to the Action Plan, COT shall:

- A. Amend the Action Plan if any one of the following actions are proposed:
 1. A change in the City’s allocation priorities or changes in the method of distribution of funds covered by the Action Plan.
 2. Implementation of an activity using funds from any program covered by the Action Plan (including program income) not previously described
 3. A change in the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of a program funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.

Any one of the proceedings listed in Section IV (A) (1-3) shall constitute a “substantial amendment “to the Action Plan.

- B. Provide citizens and local officials with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on substantial amendments to the Action Plan. Reasonable notice must include a summary of the proposed change and its potential effect on households of low and moderate income. The summary must be published in newspaper of general circulation across the city and include an opportunity for written comment by interested citizens and groups for a period of not less than seven (7) days before the amendment

is implemented. The published summary must indicate that written comments must be submitted by a specified date to COT.

- C. Consider any comments or views of citizens and local officials received in writing or orally at public hearings, if held, in preparing the substantial amendment of the Action Plan. COT shall attach to the substantial amendment to the Action Plan a summary of comments or views accepted and a summary of comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore.

- V. Availability of the Action Plan and Related Documents to the Public: COT shall make available to the public free of charge and upon request the final Action Plan as adopted any substantial amendments, and any associated reports. Copies of the final Action Plan will also be available for review at the local public libraries. Upon request COT will also make available the final Action Plan as adopted, any substantial amendments, and any associated reports in a form accessible to persons with disabilities.

- VI. Access to Records Associated with the Action Plan: COT will provide reasonable and timely access to information relating to the Action Plan and the City's use of assistance under the Community Development Block Grant Program during the preceding five years.

- VII. Complaints Associated with the Action Plan and Related Documents: COT will provide a timely, substantive written response within fifteen (15) working days to every citizen complaint related to the Action Plan, substantive amendments and associated reports.

- VIII. Synopsis: The City of Tuscaloosa has followed four basic criteria in the development of the Citizen Participation Program:
 - i. It is the right of the people affected by the public program to have access to and influence on the process by which decisions about their living are made.
 - ii. The best intentioned officials and technicians are often, but their training, experiences, and life styles, unfamiliar with or intensive to the problems and aspirations of residents. Therefore, resident ideas and priorities can result in more relevant, sensitive and effective plans and programs.
 - iii. The process of participation makes it possible for those citizens formerly outside the system to learn how it functions and how to make it function in their interests.
 - iv. Local government must develop new relationships with responsiveness to people throughout the community if it is to effectively meet the community's needs.

- IX. Public Review of Citizen Participation Plan: COT had undertaken steps which ensure that community involvement is a vital part of local government. COT will make the Citizen Participation Plan public and will provide citizens and local officials a reasonable opportunity to comment for a period of not less than seven (7) days on the original Citizen Participation Plan and on any substantial amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan.

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