

# Seminole County Citizen Participation Plan

Approved by the Seminole County Board of County Commissioners on July 28, 2015, amended on December 13, 2016, and subsequently amended May 12, 2020.

The Seminole County Citizen Participation Plan outlines ways in which the citizens of Seminole County can participate in its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP 1 & 3), and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Programs. Its purpose is to encourage and solicit public participation in the planning process, as well as to meet the requirements of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Any persons who require assistance in reading or understanding this Plan or any other documents described herein due to disability or difficulty with the language, will be provided assistance sufficient to enable them to understand its purpose and provisions.

## **CONSULTATION AND ENCOURAGED PARTICIPATION**

When preparing the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action plan, or while developing the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), consultation is made with public and private agencies that provide housing, health services, and social services, including those focusing on services to children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS and their families, and homeless persons. Community-based and regionally-based organizations that represent protected class members and organizations that enforce fair housing laws will also be consulted, as well as regional government agencies and adjacent local governments, to include metropolitan-wide planning and transportation agencies.

In order to prepare strategies and proposed actions to affirmatively further fair housing, consultation will be made with the Seminole County Housing Authority and any other public housing authority operating within our jurisdiction in the development of the Consolidated Plan and the Assessment of Fair Housing.

In addition to participation by citizens, involvement by the Continuum of Care, businesses, developers, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community-based and faith-based organizations is encouraged in the development of the Consolidated Plan and the Assessment of Fair Housing.

## **1. AVAILABILITY OF PLANS, DOCUMENTS**

The Seminole County Citizen Participation Plan, past and current Consolidated Plans and amendments thereto, Annual Action Plans, past and current Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reports (CAPERs), and the Assessment of Fair Housing, once complete, are available for public review at any time. Copies of these documents may be obtained through the Community Development Office, Reflections Office Plaza, and 534 West Lake Mary Boulevard, Sanford, FL 32773 during normal business hours which are Monday through Friday from 8AM-5PM. At the time the Citizen Participation Plan, any Consolidated Plan, any Action Plan, any CAPER, or Assessment of Fair Housing is initially proposed, the public will be informed of its availability through a summary notice in the Orlando Sentinel newspaper, as a display ad in the Seminole section of the newspaper, and on the County's website (Community Services and/or Community Development page) to include the location where copies of the requested document can be obtained. A reasonable number of free copies will be made available. Upon request, the document(s) will be made available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities. This process

will be repeated at any point where any listed document is updated or this process is required by Federal or State law.

## 2. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There shall be at least two public hearings per year to obtain citizens', public agencies', and other interested parties' views. Any comments or views of citizens received in writing or orally at the public hearings will be considered in preparing the Consolidated Plan, Action Plan, CAPER, or Assessment of Fair Housing. Together, the hearings must address the public's views on housing and community development needs, development of proposed activities and review of program performance. One public hearing will be held before the proposed Consolidated Plan, Action Plan, or Assessment of Fair Housing is published for public comment and the second public hearing shall be held to obtain public comment on the CAPER. All notices of public hearings will be published in the Orlando Sentinel newspaper at least 7-14 days prior to the public hearing as a display ad in the Seminole Section of the newspaper. Language will be included in the notification that persons with disabilities whom need assistance to participate in the proceedings should contact the Human Resources Department ADA Coordinator 48 hours in advance of the meeting, the appropriate contact information will be included.

## 3. SPECIAL NOTIFICATION

In addition to notices in newspapers, Seminole County will notify persons of proposed Community Development activities and projects in unincorporated County designated "impact areas" (target areas) through neighborhood-based methods. The target areas are considered low- and moderate-income neighborhoods and traditionally have a higher minority concentration. These methods may include direct contact with local neighborhood leaders; posting and/or distribution of notices. Similarly, notification will be provided to the Seminole County Housing Authority in order to encourage the participation of their residents.

## 4. ACCESSIBILITY

Unless otherwise noted, all public meetings concerning the HOME, CDBG, NSP 1 & 3, and ESG programs will be held at the Seminole County Board of County Commissioners Chambers at 1101 E. First Street, Sanford, FL 32771. Meetings will be held between 6:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on weekdays. At a minimum, staff will attempt to hold public meetings associated with the 5-Year Consolidated Plan in target areas. Meeting locations will be accessible to persons with disabilities. The meeting announcement will indicate how to request additional modifications for the special needs of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities whom need assistance to participate in the proceedings should contact the Human Resources Department ADA Coordinator 48 hours in advance of the meeting, the appropriate contact information will be included in the published notice.

## 5. INFORMATION TO/FROM PUBLIC

Prior to the development of the Annual Action Plans, Seminole County will make public to its citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties, information that includes the amount of assistance that the County expects to receive (including grant funds and anticipated program income), the range of activities that will be undertaken, including the estimated amount of funding that will benefit persons of low- and moderate income). The participation of citizens will be encouraged as part of the determination of the community's needs. The public's written comments and oral suggestions at the public hearing will be considered as part of the development of the Community Development Needs Assessment.

## 6. COMMENTS/CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED PLANS AND ASSESSMENT OF FAIR HOUSING

Prior to approval of each 5-Year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Substantial Amendments to the Annual Action Plan, and Assessment of Fair Housing by the Board of County Commissioners, a thirty day (30) public comment period will be held to solicit public comment for the proposed drafts. Written comments should be made to the Seminole County Community

Development Office, 534 West Lake Mary Blvd, Sanford, Florida 32773. All comments will be considered and a summary of all comments received will be appended to the Plan(s) and Assessment submitted to HUD.

Prior to submission of the CAPER to HUD, a minimum 15-day public comment period will be held to solicit public comment for the performance report. Written comments should be made to the Seminole County Community Development Office, 534 West Lake Mary Boulevard, Sanford, Florida 32773. All comments will be considered and a summary of all comments received will be appended to the Report.

In accordance with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES).

CARES ACT substantial amendments related to special funding in response to COVID-19, have a minimum 5-day public comment period. The public will also have reasonable notice regarding the public comment period. Seminole County applied and received the necessary HUD waivers for this expedited comment period, to ensure funds can reach communities as quickly as possible during this unprecedented crisis. A summary of the proposed amendments will be published in the Orlando Sentinel and documents posted on the County Website. Comments will be received by email or standard mail to accommodate social distancing requirements.

## 7. TRANSLATION TO OTHER LANGUAGES

Federal regulations governing the CDBG, HOME, NSP 1 & 3, and ESG programs require that the Citizen Participation Plan to address the needs of non-English-speaking residents. If ten percent or more of the potential or actual beneficiaries of a HOME, CDBG, NSP 1 & 3, or ESG program project are determined to be non-English-speaking, provisions will be made at the appropriate public hearings for translation of comments and documents into the native language of the majority of the non-English-speaking residents affected.

## 8. WRITTEN COMMENTS

Written comments or complaints concerning Seminole County's Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, any Substantial Amendments, CAPER, and the Assessment of Fair Housing will be responded to in writing within fifteen (15) working days. All comments will be considered and a summary of those comments or views will be appended to the respective document. Written comments should be made to the Seminole County Community Development Office, 534 West Lake Mary Boulevard, Sanford, Florida 32773.

## 9. PROGRAM CHANGES

The County will use the following criteria for determining what changes in the County's planned or actual activities constitute a Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan or any One-Year Action Plan. An amendment is required whenever it makes one of the following decisions:

1. To make a change in its allocation priorities or a change in the method of distribution of funds;
2. To carry out an activity using funds from any program covered by the Consolidated Plan (including program income), not previously described in the Action Plan;
3. To substantially change the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of an activity. The following criteria are to be used for determining whether an amendment would constitute a Substantial Amendment:
  - a) Purpose – Whenever a change in the primary function of an activity requires that it be classified under a different eligible activity. (Note: This does not include a project that is generally unchanged, but is reclassified due to a reinterpretation of HUD regulations or definitions).
  - b) Scope – If the service area, budget, or beneficiaries is changed so that 50% or more of the intended beneficiaries are no longer able to benefit from the activity. This does

not include a budgetary change in a Direct Benefit or other activity where a service or other benefit is available as long as funds are available.

- c) Location – If the location of an activity is changed so that 50% or more of the intended beneficiaries are no longer able to benefit from the project.
- d) Beneficiaries – If the activity's location or eligible recipients are changed so that 50% or more of the intended beneficiaries are no longer able to benefit from the activity. This does not include a budgetary change in a Direct Benefit or other activity where a service or other benefit is available as long as funds are available.

Citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties will be provided with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on all Substantial Amendments. The County will advertise in the Orlando Sentinel and on its own web site and will provide no less than 30 days to receive comments on any amendment before the amendment is implemented. A summary of any comments, including the reasons for those not accepted, will be appended to the amendment.

#### 10. AVAILABILITY OF PROGRAM RECORDS

Citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties of Seminole County will be provided with reasonable access to records concerning any activity undertaken with CDBG, HOME, NSP 1 & 3, or ESG Program funds. Any such request for access to records should be made in writing to Seminole County Community Development Office, The telephone number is 407 665-2300 and the TTY number is 407-665-6511. Seminole County may charge reasonable fees for the duplication and provision of materials. Confidential information normally protected under state and federal freedom of information laws will not be available for public review.

#### 11. PLANS TO MINIMIZE DISPLACEMENT

The County will make every effort to minimize displacement of households and businesses, and has prepared an Anti-displacement and Relocation Plan to address the actions it will take to do so. That Plan is under separate cover, and is incorporated herein by reference.

#### 12. ASSISTANCE TO GROUPS

Technical assistance is available to groups representative of persons of low and moderate income that request assistance in developing proposals for funding assistance under any of the programs covered by the Consolidated Plan, or for assistance to comment on the Assessment of Fair Housing.

#### 13. DEFINITIONS

Predominately low- and moderate-income neighborhoods: A geographical location that consists of a minimum of 51% of the households in the area being at or below 80% of the area median income.

#### 14. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN COMMENT PERIOD

The comment period for this proposed amendment to the Seminole County Citizen Participation Plan will be for 30 days beginning November 10, 2016 and ending on December 9, 2016. A draft copy of the proposed amendment was advertised in the local section of the Orlando Sentinel, and online via the Seminole County Community Development web page.

