

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 91-100

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Saint Johns County, Florida, intends to apply for a Community Development Block Grant under the provisions as set forth in Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as revised; and

WHEREAS, the legislative body of Saint Johns County, Florida, recognizes that citizen participation in the process of planning, development, implementation and assessment of Community Development Block Grants is a necessary and desirable goal; therefore

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED, that this legislative body of Saint Johns County, Florida, hereby adopts the attached Citizen Participation Plan.

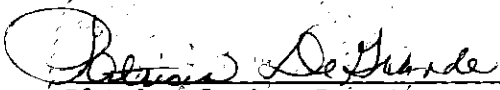
ADOPTED THIS 25 day of June, 1991 by the Board of County Commissioners of Saint Johns County,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

SAINT JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY:   
Donald Herold, Chairman

ATTEST:

  
Deputy Clerk of the Court

## **SAINT JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA**

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM**

#### **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN**

In keeping with the provisions of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 as amended, 24 CFR 570.431 and DCA Rule 9B-25, Saint Johns County, Florida hereby establishes a Citizen Participation Plan.

#### **OVERALL GOAL**

The purpose of this plan is to provide the citizens of Saint Johns County with an adequate opportunity for meaningful involvement on a continuing basis and for participation in the planning, development, implementation, and assessment of Saint Johns County's Community Development Block Grant Program.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- A. To increase interchange of information between CDBG staff and the local citizenry concerning community development and related concerns.
- B. To heighten public awareness as to the purpose and function of the CDBG program and the types of assistance available, especially among low/moderate income residents of CDBG target areas.
- C. To increase community participation in program planning and implementation and thereby create local support for CDBG goals.
- D. To allow affected or potentially affected citizens to directly assist in shaping and guiding the program's impact upon their neighborhood as well as the community at large.

#### **CONSISTENCY**

This Citizen Participation Plan is consistent with the requirements of Section 508 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 which amends Section 104(a) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, 24 CFR 570.4312 and DCA Rule 9B-25. This Plan supersedes all other Citizen Participation Plans utilized by Saint Johns County, Florida. This Plan sets forth the procedures for Citizen Participation that shall be utilized during each stage of the Community Development Block Grant process and upon its adoption by the Board of Commissioners of Saint Johns County shall remain in effect until otherwise amended.

## **ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE**

Citizens of Saint Johns County will be provided opportunities to comment on the implementation of the County's CDBG program and to assess the performance of the County in meeting its community development goals and objectives. Continual community assessment of the effectiveness of the program is considered essential to the success of a CDBG program. In order to ensure this involvement, the County will utilize the following approaches:

- A. The Citizen Advisory Task Force, established in accordance with this Plan, will function as the focal point of the evaluation and assessment process. This group will continually provide the County and its staff with feedback on the effectiveness of the program and suggest changes, if applicable.
- B. The public hearing process will be used to ensure communitywide participation in the evaluation of the program.
- C. Written comments on the program will be received at any time during the life of the program. All written comments will be presented to the Citizen Advisory Task Force for their review and responses by the appropriate party within fifteen (15) working days.

## **CITIZEN COMMENT TO DCA**

Persons may comment to DCA at any time concerning Saint Johns County's failure to comply with the citizen participation requirements as set forth in this Plan.

## **OVERVIEW**

Citizen participation is a vital element in the preparation of a method by which community involvement will be solicited and maintained throughout the entire Community Development Block Grant process. Saint Johns County, Florida shall strive to ensure such participation by utilizing the public hearing process and by appointing a Citizens Advisory Task Force.

It shall be the policy of Saint Johns County that the effectiveness of citizen participation in the planning, development, implementation, and assessment of the Community Development Block Grant process be analyzed during the public hearings and other called meetings and amendments to this Plan made when necessary.

## **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

Since the purpose of this Plan is to provide the citizens of Saint Johns County, Florida with an adequate opportunity for meaningful involvement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the County's Community Development Block Grant process, it shall be the County's policy to solicit, and respond in a timely manner to, the views and proposals of all citizens, particularly low and moderate income persons, members of minority groups, and residents of blighted areas where the potential exists for the undertaking of CDBG eligible activities.

Upon adoption of this Plan, the following technical requirements shall govern this process:

### **A. Public Hearings**

To ensure adequate notice of public hearings, a notice shall be printed in the non-legal section of the Saint Augustine Record no less than five (5) and no more than fourteen (14) days prior to each public hearing held at any stage of the Community Development Block Grant process.

When deemed appropriate, the County may also post notices of such hearings in not less than three public places. The posting of notices may supplement publication of public hearing notices, or in the case of jurisdictions where no newspaper of general readership is published within the boundaries of the jurisdiction, may replace publication as required notice. A news article located in a conspicuous place in the newspaper may be considered as sufficient printed notice to fulfill this requirement. The County may also utilize additional means (personal contact, radio, etc.) to the maximum extent possible to reach target groups identified above when this is necessary. Public hearings will be held in a location determined by the County to provide the greatest access for citizen participation.

Because of the size of the County, and the centrality of the County Courthouse to the population center, this requirement will generally be satisfied by holding the hearings at Saint Johns County Administrative Building. However, when feasible, during the implementation and assessment of the Community

Development Block Grant program, public hearings may be held within the target area where said CDBG activities are being undertaken.

Saint Johns County has no known concentration of non-English speaking residents; however the services of a translator will be obtained in the event a significant number of residents of a target area do not speak English and request such services.

#### **B. Citizens Advisory Task Force**

The County shall establish a Citizens Advisory Task Force for all CDBG projects other than economic development projects, which shall consist of thirteen (13) members appointed by the Board of Commissioners in a manner which will ensure substantial representation of low and moderate income persons and minorities. Task Force members shall serve staggered four (4) year terms.

The Citizens Advisory Task Force shall serve as a focal point or liaison between the County and its constituents in regard to CDBG project development and implementation. The Task Force shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- (1) Disseminate information concerning eligible activities, proposed projects, and the status of current projects.
- (2) Coordinate various groups which choose to participate in the implementation of community development activities.
- (3) Review written comments assessing the implementation of the CDBG program.
- (4) Serve as the Grievance Task Force to which aggrieved persons may appeal the decision of the Program Administrator.
- (5) Serve as a vehicle by which ideas from local residents concerning existing programs may be transmitted to local officials and/or program personnel.
- (6) Monitor the overall implementation of the CDBG program and review program status with administrative personnel on a quarterly basis or more frequently if deemed necessary.
- (7) Monitor the citizen participation process and propose such amendments as may be necessary to this Citizen Participation Plan.

The Citizen Advisory Task Force shall be a tool through which program progress can be analyzed and proposed amendments discussed, if applicable.

#### **C. Access To Records**

Saint Johns County shall maintain a complete project file on its Community Development Block Grant program(s) which shall be available for public inspection during regular office hours in the County Grant Coordinator's office. This file shall include but not be limited to the following:

- (1) Citizen Participation Plan
- (2) Community Development Plan
- (3) Community Development Block Grant Application
- (4) Program Amendments
- (5) Environmental Review Record
- (6) Financial Status
- (7) Fair Housing Ordinance
- (8) Equal Opportunity Requirements
- (9) Policies and Procedures Governing Beneficiary Eligibility
- (10) Performance Assessment Report
- (11) Written Comments and County's Response

Generally, the project file is available for review by any citizen or group; however, in no case will disclosure be made of any program participant's financial status.

#### **D. Technical Assistance**

The program staff shall provide technical assistance to citizens committees and groups and interested persons in the citizen participation process. This technical assistance shall focus on increasing public access to participation in the Community Development Block Grant decision making process through the Citizens Advisory Task Force, and ensuring that this participation is meaningful. Technical assistance will also be utilized to foster an understanding of program requirements; i.e., equal opportunity, relocation, environmental policies, beneficiary eligibility, etc.

#### **E. Grievance**

All grievances regarding individual decisions made as a part of the implementation of the Community Development Block Grant program shall be submitted, in writing to the Program Administrator. If a person or party feels that his/her complaint has not been sufficiently addressed by the Program Administrator's response, an appeal may be made to the Citizens Advisory Task Force.

If a response satisfactory to the aggrieved is not issued by the Task Force, an appeal may be made to the Board of Commissioners. At any point, the aggrieved may register a complaint with the Florida Department of Community Affairs, 2740 Centerview Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32399. All complaints registered at the local level shall have a response from the Administrator, Task Force, or Board of Commissioners within fifteen (15) working days of the lodging of said complaint. A file of all grievances and responses shall be maintained and available for public inspection. In the event the aggrieved has exhausted all appeals without a decision satisfactory to himself/herself, he/she may pursue other legal channels in an attempt to achieve satisfaction.

**F. Amendment**

The amendment of this Plan shall follow all citizen participation requirements delineated in the section Post Approval Requirements and applicable technical provisions. Such amendments shall require adoption by the County Council prior to becoming effective.

**G. Authority**

No part of this Citizen Participation Plan shall be construed to restrict the responsibility and authority of the elected officials of Saint Johns County, Florida, in the development and implementation of any Community Development Block Grant program. Rather it is a vehicle through which the elected officials of Saint Johns County can assure citizen input prior to their decision making process.

## **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN EACH STAGE OF THE CDBG PROGRAM**

### **APPLICATION STAGE**

The objective of citizen participation at this stage is to provide meaningful communitywide citizen input into the decision making process during the consideration of priorities and of options associated with the development and submission of the application. The following requirements will be met during the application stage and certified to in the body of the application:

- A. Review of the Citizen Participation Plan.**
- B. Presentation of the County's Community Development Plan.**

Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as revised, has as its primary objective, the development of viable urban communities by providing decent housing, suitable living environment, and expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low and moderate incomes. Consistent with these objectives, Saint Johns County will develop a Community Development Plan that identifies the community development and housing needs and specifies both short and long term community development objectives to meet the established needs.

- C. Public Hearings.**

A minimum of two (2) public hearings will be held during this stage. The purpose of the first public hearing is to assess community needs and problems in an effort to determine the most pressing needs of the community and to solicit citizen input as to the ranking of said needs. The purpose of the second hearing is to present for public comment and review the program of activities that the County has selected for the application as best suited to meet these needs. The County may determine that more than two (2) public hearings during the application stage are desirable and thus hold extra hearings. All such hearings shall be governed by the requirements as set forth herein. The following information will be presented to the public at each public hearing during this stage:

- (1) The range of activities that may be undertaken with CDBG funds, the kinds of activities previously funded; if any, and the progress made with respect to those activities.
- (2) An overview of the CDBG program to include analysis of DCA rating process and discussion of applicable grant ceilings.



- (3) Discussion of the competitive nature of the CDBG process and the likelihood that more applications will be submitted to DCA than can be funded.
- (4) The process to be followed in soliciting and responding to the views and proposals of citizens in a timely manner.
- (5) Discussion of the role of the Citizen Advisory Task Force.

#### **NOTICE OF SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION**

Saint Johns County shall, at the time of submission to DCA, publish a notice in the Milton Press Gazette stating that the application has been submitted to DCA for funding consideration and is available for review by interested parties at the County Courthouse. The Notice of Submission shall also describe conditions whereby citizens may submit objections to approval of the application to DCA, as described in 24 CFR 570.431 (c) (ii).

#### **POST APPROVAL STAGE**

The County shall assure continuing citizen participation throughout the life of the Community Development Block Grant program, particularly when considering amendments to the program and during closeout of each CDBG program. The County shall conduct at least one (1) public hearing, in accordance with the requirements of such hearings, during the grant closeout process and prior to the submission of Grant Closeout Documentation to DCA.

The involvement of citizens in the amendment process is felt to be essential. To ensure adequate citizen participation during the conduct of the program, the following requirements for amendments will be met:

- A. A minimum of one (1) public hearing will be held prior to the submission of any amendment requiring formal approval by DCA according to the provisions of this Plan.
- B. Citizens will be involved in amendments not requiring formal DCA approval, budget revisions, and local changes in the CDBG program. Such changes will be presented for review to the Citizen Advisory Task Force in a meeting of such Task Force which shall be open to the public.
- C. The County shall attempt to involve citizens residing in the target area(s) affected by any amendment or revision in the development of such amendment or revision. This shall be accomplished through the dissemination of information on such program changes to the affected residents.