

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

I. Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this plan is to set forth the policies and procedures for citizen participation in the development of the County's Consolidated Plan, any substantial amendments to the plan, and performance reports.

The Consolidated Plan is an amalgamation of formerly separate federal grant applications, and includes a one-year application detailing specific projects funded by these grants and a five year long range planning document. Federal grants covered under the Consolidated Plan include the Community Development Block Grant, the HOME Investment Partnership Program, the Emergency Solutions Grant, and the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS grant. Information on the individual grants can be found in Section XIV of this plan.

The Citizen Participation Plan is intended to provide an effective means of involvement in all phases of the Pinellas County Consolidated Plan Process (including Citizen Participation Plan, Five-Year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, including any necessary amendments, and the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)) by an informed citizenry, with an emphasis on participation by low- and moderate-income persons, particularly those residents of slum and blighted areas and of areas in which formula grant funds are proposed to be used and by residents of predominately low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. In order to accomplish this purpose, the goals of the Citizen Participation Plan are to:

1. Provide opportunities for citizens to express their views and proposals concerning needs in the community, and to establish priorities concerning these needs.
2. Provide opportunities for citizens to take part in policy formation regarding the Consolidated Plan.
3. Ensure that citizens are provided with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, public hearings, information and records relating to the Consolidated Plan including the range of activities that may be undertaken, the amount of anticipated funds and proposed and actual use of funds.
4. Provide for technical assistance to groups representative of persons of low- and moderate-income that request such assistance in developing proposals.
5. Provide opportunities for citizens to review and comment on proposed Formula Grant Program activities and use of funds.
6. Ensure that citizens have questions and complaints answered in a timely and responsive manner.

7. Ensure that the needs of non-English speaking residents will be met in the case of public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate.
8. Provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities wishing to participate in the community development planning process.

II. Policies

1. Utilize existing partnerships and organizations in the community (in addition to the public hearing process and public notices in newspapers) to encourage participation, including participation by minorities, non-English speaking persons and persons with disabilities, identifying housing needs and needs of the homeless and special populations, and in the development of the Consolidated Plan. Examples of organizations that may be used to assist in this process include, but are not limited to, the Homeless Leadership Board, the Juvenile Welfare Board, the Health and Human Services Leadership Board, the Administrative Forum, the United Way of the Suncoast, the Office of Human Rights, the Housing Finance Authority, the Contractors and Builders Association, and the HomeBuyer's Club and other human service agencies serving residents of the County.
2. Create and/or support neighborhood-based citizen advisory committees in areas targeted for comprehensive revitalization activities under federal grant programs. These committees will advise on needs and activities relative to their community.
3. Provide Housing Authorities within the jurisdiction with information about Consolidated Plan activities related to the Authorities' developments and surrounding communities so that the housing agency can make this information available at the annual public hearing required under the Comprehensive Grant program.

III. Citizen Comment on the Citizen Participation Plan and Amendments

In order to encourage participation by low- and moderate-income persons, particularly those living in slum and blighted areas and in areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used, and by residents of predominantly low- and moderate- income neighborhoods, Pinellas County will provide public notice of the proposed citizen participation plan and amendments prior to adoption, and allow a 30-day period for public comments. The notice will provide sufficient information about the plan and/or amendment to permit informed comment. The notice will include the location for viewing the plan, indicate the dates of the comment period and provide a means for transmitting comments to the Planning Department. The notice will be published in a newspaper of general circulation in legible print and in a section of the paper other than the legal section. Additionally, the County may publish the notice in a minority newspaper, post on the County's website or electronic bulletin board, and disseminate information to existing partners and/or neighborhood committees.

Upon request, the citizen participation plan will be provided in a format to accommodate persons with disabilities (e.g., oral, Braille, electronic, or large print copies for the visually impaired; and/or delivering copies to the homebound.)

IV. Development of the Consolidated Plan

In order to encourage participation in developing and implementing the Consolidated Plan, prior to adoption of the Consolidated Plan, the following information will be made available to all citizens including residents of public and assisted housing, low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas, public agencies including public housing authorities, and other interested parties in the manner and at the time specified:

First Public Hearing: A public hearing will be held during the planning process and prior to the time the proposed Consolidated Plan is published for comment.

1. The purpose of the hearing will be to obtain the views of citizens on housing and community development needs, including priority nonhousing community development needs, to review program performance for the preceding program year, and, if requested, to provide technical assistance on the development of potential activities.
2. A public notice will be published in a newspaper of general circulation at least 15 days prior to the public hearing. The notice will provide a reasonable explanation of the subject of the hearing, date, time and place and will provide contacts for accommodating persons with disabilities. The notice will be published in legible print and in a section of the paper other than the legal section. Additional notices may be provided through the government access channel, agency newsletters and special notices to interested agencies, groups and persons.
3. In order to ensure that times and locations of public hearings are convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries, the public hearing will be held in the evening at a central location in the county with accommodation for persons with physical disabilities. Upon request with adequate notice, provisions will be made for the special needs of non-English speaking persons, as well as for the visually and hearing impaired. Provisions may include attendance by a County employee who is bilingual in Spanish and English, attendance by signor or other interpreter and meeting materials available in large print or Braille formats. Evening meetings will begin no earlier than 6:00 p.m. and will typically be held in a County conference room located in the downtown Clearwater campus.

Notice of Funding Availability: Upon notification by HUD of the amount of funding to be received for the upcoming program year, the following information will be published in a newspaper of general circulation, in legible print and in a section of the paper other than the legal section:

1. Amount of assistance the jurisdiction expects to receive (including grant funds and program income) and the range of activities that may be undertaken with the funds available. If applicable, requests for proposals from interested agencies will also be included with this notification.
2. Additional notices may be provided through the government access channel, coalition newsletters and mailings and special notices to interested agencies, groups and persons.

Availability to the Public: After the development of a proposed Consolidated Plan, including a preliminary recommendation of projects, activities and programs for the upcoming fiscal year, the following will be published in a newspaper of general circulation, in legible print and in a section of the paper other than the legal section:

1. A summary of the proposed Consolidated Plan; the estimated amount of grant funds that will benefit persons of low- and moderate-income; a statement that the jurisdiction's plan to minimize displacement of persons and to assist any persons displaced is available for viewing with the Consolidated Plan; and the provision of a public comment period.
2. The summary will describe the contents and purpose of the Consolidated Plan and will include a list of the locations where copies of the entire proposed Plan may be examined. At a minimum, display locations will be provided in North, central and South Pinellas County.
3. A reasonable number of free copies of the Plan and displacement information will be provided to citizens and groups that request it.
4. A period of 30 days after the published notice will be provided for comments.

Second Public Hearing: After the comment period, a public hearing will be held on the Consolidated Plan and proposed activities by the Board of County Commissioners.

1. The purpose of the hearing is to provide an opportunity for public comment on the Plan and proposed activities to the Board of County Commissioners prior to approval for submittal to HUD.
2. A public notice will be published in a newspaper of general circulation at least 15 days prior to the public hearing. The notice will provide a reasonable explanation of the subject of the hearing, date, time and place and will provide contacts for accommodating persons with disabilities. The notice will be published in legible print and in a section of the paper other than the legal section.
3. The hearing will be held in the Board of County Commissioners Assembly Room in the Pinellas County Courthouse, or such other place as the Board is meeting at the time of

the hearing. Upon request, provisions will be made for the special needs of disabled and non-English speaking persons, as well as for the visually and hearing impaired.

Comments on the Plan: All comments and views of citizens received in writing, or orally at the public hearings, will be considered in preparing the final Consolidated Plan. A summary of these comments or views and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore, shall be attached to the final Consolidated Plan.

V. Substantial Amendments

The following criteria constitute a substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan.

1. The use of funds changes from one eligible activity to another. Movement of funds from cancelled activities to eligible alternate activities, or funding alternate activities with excess program income are not considered amendments.
2. A decision is made to make a change in the allocation priorities or a change in the method of distribution of funds.
3. A decision is made 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.
4. A decision is made not to carry out an activity described in the Action Plan. This does not include activities which must be dropped due to circumstances beyond the control of Pinellas County, e.g., a subgrantee elects not to do an activity; the activity fails because a property owner refuses to sell; etc. In this instance, funds may be reprogrammed to an alternate activity without amending the Action Plan. However, reallocation of funds to a new activity not previously described in the Action Plan will be a substantial amendment.
5. The purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity are substantially changed. An activity will be considered substantially changed when any one of the following criteria apply:
 - a. The activity will no longer principally benefit the targeted population as identified in the Action Plan (e.g., senior citizens in certain areas, low- and moderate-income homeowners, homeless men, residents of x neighborhood instead of y neighborhood, pregnant teenagers).
 - b. The activity will no longer address the low- and moderate-income need identified in the Action Plan (e.g., shelter for homeless, center for senior citizens, housing for low- and moderate-income households, training as daycare providers) or the activity ceases to address the elimination of slums and blight as identified in the Action Plan.

- c. The activity location of an area-benefiting activity changes so that the completed activity will principally serve beneficiaries other than those originally intended.
- d. The scope of the activity has increased to the point where its completion with project funds would result in the inability to carry out another approved activity, or would necessitate reducing the scope of another activity to a point where it would not accomplish its intended purpose.

Pinellas County's process for implementing and providing notice to citizens to comment on substantial amendments is as follows:

1. Publish a notice in a newspaper of general circulation giving the proposed change the County is considering, and the availability of any materials on the change. The notice will provide sufficient information about the amendment to permit informed comment. The notice will be published in legible print and in a section of the paper other than the legal section. A 30-day comment period will follow the notice of proposed amendment.
2. The County may make other notifications of the proposed substantial amendment as deemed appropriate. Additional notice may include publishing notices in a minority newspaper, posting on the County's website or electronic bulletin board, and disseminating information to existing partners and/or neighborhood committees.
3. At the end of the 30-day comment period, the County will consider all comments received in writing, or orally, prior to preparing the final proposed substantial amendment. A summary of these comments or views, and a summary of any comment or views not accepted and the reasons therefore, shall be attached to the substantial amendment transmitted to HUD before the amendment is implemented.
4. Place the proposed change on the Pinellas Board of County Commissioner's agenda for consideration.
5. When adopted, distribute description of the change, including summaries as described in paragraph 3 above, to affected cities, agencies or entities and to all persons or agencies that sent written comments. Also, the County will send a news release to local media.
6. Send a description of the changes to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, including the summaries described in paragraph 3 above.

VI. Performance Reports

Pinellas County will advertise the availability of performance reports for viewing by the general public in a newspaper of general circulation. The notice will provide sufficient information about the performance report to permit informed comment. The notice will be published in legible print and in a section of the paper other than the legal section. A 15-day

comment period will follow this advertisement. Pinellas County will consider any comments or citizen views received in writing or orally. A summary of these comments will be attached to the performance report. Additional notices may be provided through the government access channel or on the County's website.

VII. Meetings

Pinellas County will provide reasonable and timely notice of all meetings so that all interested parties may have a chance to attend. Minimum notice shall be 15-days prior to the meetings,

VIII. Availability to the Public

Pinellas County will make available for public inspection the adopted Consolidated Plan, substantial amendments to said plan, and the performance report described in Sections IV, V and VI above. These documents will be available on the County website and in the Community Development and Planning Division office. These documents will, upon request, be made available in formats which are accessible to persons with disabilities (e.g., oral, Braille, electronic, or large print copies for the visually impaired; and/or delivering copies to the homebound.)

IX. Access to Records

All records and information relating to the Consolidated Plan and the use of funds under that plan will be available for public inspection for a period of not less than five years. This information is available for viewing at the Community Development and Planning Division of the Pinellas County Planning Department at the address below during regular working hours, Monday through Friday excluding County holidays:

Pinellas County Planning Department
Community Development and Planning Division
440 Court Street, 2nd Floor
Clearwater, FL 33756
Telephone: 727- 464-8210
FAX: 727-464-8254

Since older records may be in storage, a two day waiting period may be necessary while the information is retrieved. In all cases, persons wishing to view records or documents must set up an appointment at least 24 hours in advance with Pinellas County Planning Development so that the requested information may be gathered together. A reasonable number of copies will be made available without charge to the person requesting documents. Numerous copies are available for a nominal fee in accordance with State law.

X. Technical Assistance

Technical assistance will be provided to groups' representative of persons of low- and moderate-income that request such assistance. This assistance may take, but is not limited to the following forms:

1. Staff participation in committee meetings, including coordination of target area committees.
2. Workshops for agencies proposing projects.
3. One-on-one technical assistance provided in person, over the phone, by email, at public meeting, or at scheduled and advertised public hearings. The level and type of assistance will be determined as needed on a case-by-case basis.
4. Assisting with the establishment of neighborhood planning committees.

Pinellas County may provide other types of technical assistance as deemed appropriate.

XI. Complaints

Any person wishing to make a formal complaint concerning any aspect of the Consolidated Plan including amendments to the Plan and performance reports, may do so in person, by letter or by telephone to the address/phone numbers given in Section IX above. Persons wishing to make a complaint in person should call for an appointment; appointments will be made to occur within a reasonable amount of time from the request. A substantive written response will be made to every written citizen complaint within 15 working days of receipt, where practicable.

XII. Use of the Plan

Pinellas County will follow this Citizen Participation Plan in the development of the Consolidated Plan, any substantial amendments to the consolidated plan, and the performance report.

XIII. Jurisdiction Responsibility

The requirements for citizen participation do not restrict the responsibility or authority of Pinellas County for the development and execution of its Consolidated Plan.

XIV. Definitions

Action Plan — A plan which describes the projects and activities the jurisdiction will undertake during the next year with formula grants. The Action Plan will be made available to the public for comments.

Applicant/Grantee — The government body which applies for funding under the formula grant and is responsible for complying with all regulations governing the program. In Pinellas County the applicant is the Board of County Commissioners. The applicant becomes the grantee when funding is received.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) — A federally funded grant program established for the purpose of developing viable communities, including decent housing, a suitable living environment, and economic opportunity for persons of low- and moderate-income. The grant also provides funds for the elimination of slums and blight.

Community Housing Development Organizations — Known as CHDO's, these private, nonprofit, tax exempt, neighborhood based housing development companies, provide affordable housing to low- and moderate-income people. Under HUD guidelines, a participating jurisdiction must spend at least 15% of its HOME allocation on housing developed, sponsored, or owned by an organization that fits the definition of CHDO.

Consolidated Plan — The document that is submitted annually to HUD that serves as the planning documents of the jurisdiction and an application for funding under any of the Community Planning and Development formula grant programs (CDBG, ESG, HOME or HOPWA).

Consolidated Plan Process — The Consolidated Plan process is the means to meet the application requirements for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) including ADDI, Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) formula programs. This process replaces prior planning and application requirements with a single document, and satisfies the submission requirements of the four formula programs for local jurisdiction.

Emergency Shelter — Any facility with overnight sleeping accommodations, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless.

Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) — A federally funded grant program, formerly the Emergency Shelter Grant, established for the purpose of engaging homeless individuals and families living on the street; improving the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families; helping operate these shelters; providing essential services to shelter residents, rapidly re-housing homeless individuals and families, and preventing families/individuals from becoming homeless.

Formula Grant Funds — As used in this document, this refers to federal grant programs under which Pinellas County receives funding as an entitlement, i.e., CDBG, HOME, and ESG.

HOME Investment Partnership Program — A federally funded grant program established for the purpose of expanding the supply of decent, safe affordable housing for persons of low-

and moderate-income and expanding the capacity of Community Housing Development Organizations to increase housing opportunities.

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Grant — A federally funded grant program which provides for transitional and permanent housing for persons with AIDS.

Participating Jurisdictions — Participating jurisdictions (PJ's) are states and local governments that are entitled to receive federal formula grant funds. This includes consortia that are designated by HUD to directly administer the HOME Program.

Pinellas County Consortium — The Pinellas County Consortium consists of Pinellas County acting in its capacity as an Urban County and the City of Largo. Pinellas County serves as the lead agency for the consortium.

Predominately Low- and Moderate-Income Neighborhood — Generally defined as a primarily residential area comprised of census tracts and/or census tract block group(s) in which a least fifty-one percent (51%) of the residents have an income not exceeding eighty percent (80) of the Area Median Income (AMI).

Special Groups — Groups currently presumed by the U S Department of Housing and Urban Development to meet the low- and moderate-income criteria. They include abused children, elderly persons, battered spouses, homeless persons, severely disabled persons, illiterate persons, and persons living with AIDS. Other special groups may also be designated in the Consolidated Plan.

Targeted Areas — Specific areas designated, i.e. “targeted,” for substantial long term improvements to be produced within a reasonable length of time. A definite boundary is established for the area and a schedule of improvements planned and identified. The targeted area will benefit from a program of capital improvements, housing rehabilitation and public facilities. Services may also be provided if appropriate to the needs of the area.

U S Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) — The federal department which administers the CDBG, HOME, HOPWA and ESG programs.

Urban Counties — Those counties within a metropolitan area which have a population of at least 200,000 persons in their unincorporated areas, and counties with less than 200,000 persons in their unincorporated areas but which have entered into Cooperation Agreements with cities whose populations are sufficient to bring the combined city and county population to at least 200,000 persons. Pinellas County qualifies as an urban county based on a population of over 200,000 in unincorporated areas, but still maintains Cooperation Agreements with municipalities within the County. Urban counties are entitlement communities under the CDBG program.

XV. Cooperating Cities

Town of Belleair
901 Ponce De Leon Boulevard
Belleair, FL 33756

City of Belleair Beach
444 Causeway Boulevard
Belleair Beach, FL 33786

City of Belleair Bluffs
2747 Sunset Boulevard
Belleair Bluffs, FL 33770

City of Dunedin
Post Office Box 1348
Dunedin, FL 34697 1348

City of Gulfport
2401 53rd Street South
Gulfport, FL 33707

City of Indian Rocks Beach
1507 Bay Palm Boulevard
Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785

Town of Indian Shores
19305 Gulf Boulevard
Indian Shores, FL 33785

Town of Kenneth City
6000 54th Avenue North
Kenneth City, FL 33709

City of Madeira Beach
300 Municipal Drive
Madeira Beach, FL 33708

Town of North Redington Beach
190 173rd Avenue
North Redington, FL 33708

City of Oldsmar
100 State Street West
Oldsmar, FL 34677

City of Pinellas Park
5141 78th Avenue
Pinellas Park, FL 33781

Town of Redington Beach
105 164th Avenue
Redington Beach, FL 33708

Town of Redington Shores
17425 Gulf Boulevard
Redington Shores, FL 33708

City of Safety Harbor
750 Main Street
Safety Harbor, FL 34695

City of St. Pete Beach
155 Corey Avenue
St. Pete Beach, FL 33706

City of Seminole
7464 Ridge Road
Seminole, FL 33772

City of South Pasadena
7047 Sunset Drive
South Pasadena, FL 33707

City of Tarpon Springs
324 E Pine Street
Tarpon Springs, FL 34689

City of Treasure Island
120 108th Avenue
Treasure Island, FL 33706