

Citizen Participation Plan



Wake County Department of
Housing Affordability and Community Revitalization

May 4, 2020

STATUTORY OVERVIEW

Wake County's Department of Housing Affordability & Community Revitalization (Wake County Housing) is open and accountable to the public. All business is completed in line with the State of North Carolina's Open Meeting Law (G.S. 143-318.10/Article 33 C, as amended in 1994) and generally requires that all meetings of government be open to the public except under specific circumstances. Furthermore, as a recipient of federal funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Wake County Housing is subject to federal guidelines directing those funds.

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (as amended) and the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1986 (as amended) gives local governments the authority to develop and manage the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs in accordance with related laws and regulations. Citizen participation in the planning, implementation and assessment of County actions is vital to ensuring Wake County Housing policies and actions are effective and will meet the needs of Wake County residents.

The Citizen Participation Plan will outline how the requirements in section 104 (a)(3) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 will be carried out. Wake County recognizes the use of federal funds and aid in the prevention of slum and blight as one of its highest priorities. CDBG funds will be used to meet other needs having particular urgency to protect the health and the welfare of the community. Revised in May 2020, this plan shall remain in effect unless superseded by a new plan.

THE GOAL OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The primary goal of this Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) is to provide all citizens of our community with adequate opportunities to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the County's CDBG, HOME, ESG, and HOPWA programs.

Citizen participation is a critical part of the Annual Action Plan, Consolidated Plan and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reporting (CAPER) process. It is the County's desire to encourage all residents, especially those living in low - and moderate - income neighborhoods and public and/or assisted housing to participate in its planning process. We encourage non-profit organizations, other government agencies, and interested parties to participate in the planning process as well.

Citizens are encouraged to participate in all phases of the CDBG, HOME, ESG & HOPWA programs and will be provided full access to program information. However, Wake County will have final responsibility and authority for the development and implementation of the programs.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION POLICY

It is the policy of Wake County Housing that residents will have ongoing access to CDBG, HOME, ESG & HOPWA program information and timely notification of program activities and identification of projects which could result in the displacement of area residences or businesses, and the actions that would be undertaken if such displacement were necessary.

Wake County Housing will provide opportunities for residents to access this information regarding CDBG, HOME, ESG & HOPWA programs through:

- News publications and web notices containing the times, location, and dates of public hearings regarding the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Analysis of Impediments (AI), Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), and the Consolidated Annual Performance & Evaluation Report (CAPER).
- Public hearings to discuss housing and community development needs, activities for which funding is proposed, and program performance.
- Posting of request for proposals
- www.wakegov.com/housing/Pages/locations.aspx

OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

****For HUD Entitlement funding FY 2019-2020, FY 2020-2021, and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act or CARES Act, a 5-day notice/comment period will be provided for citizen input, as allowed under a HUD waivers:**

- ***Availability of Waivers of Community Planning and Development (CPD) Grant Program and Consolidated Plan Requirements to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 and Mitigate Economic Impacts Caused by COVID-19 as of March 31, 2020.***
- ***CARES Act Flexibilities for CDBG Funds Used to Support Coronavirus Response and Plan Amendment Waiver as of April 9, 2020.***

This includes any new activities proposed. Wake County will satisfy the public notice requirement by posting the public notice on its website and in English- and Spanish-language news publications. A virtual public hearing will satisfy the public hearing requirement, if applicable.

Public Meetings

Wake County Housing conducts public meetings during the year for the purpose of providing information on community development programs to county residents and to received comments from citizens regarding program activities. The number of public meetings conducted during the year depends in part on the needs of County residents and the nature of the proposed activities. At a minimum, public meetings are conducted for the following purposes:

- To obtain citizens views on community development needs, prior to developing funding priorities.
- To receive citizen's comments on proposed activities, prior to final funding decisions being made.

Public meetings may be conducted at locations other than the County Board of Commissioners meeting or Wake County Housing, to make them more convenient to resident and may be held in the evening to encourage greater public attendance.

Public Hearings

Public hearings are held in accordance with the Wake County's policy and procedures and HUD regulations. Public hearings may be scheduled during the afternoon or evening session of regular County Board of Commissioners meetings. Regular Board meetings are held in the Wake County Justice Center, 301 S. McDowell St., Raleigh, Room 2700, on the first and third Mondays of the month (unless changed for holidays or other reasons). The first meeting of each month begins at 5 p.m., to enable more citizens who work a traditional schedule the opportunity to participate. A public comment period for citizens wishing to address the Board will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. The second meeting of each month begins at 2 p.m., with public comment from 2:30–3 p.m. More information is available at www.wakegov.com/commissioners/Pages/schedule.aspx

Participation Accessibility

Accessibility of public information is a key factor in the ability of citizens to contribute to the public programs. Wake County Housing will provide information for public review regarding its activities at the County regional centers, municipal town halls, homeless service centers in the County, and Wake County Housing, 336 Fayetteville Street, Suite 440, Raleigh, NC 27602, during normal Wake County business hours (8:30am – 5:15pm). Detailed information on these locations can be found at www.wakegov.com/humanservices/locations/Pages/default.aspx, www.wakegov.com/housing/Pages/locations.aspx, and your local town's website. Questions and comments may also be addressed there. Access to all documents is open except where prohibited by law. Accommodations for the visually, or hearing impaired, as well as non-English speaking citizens, are available upon request. Information requested from Wake County Housing shall be provided within 72 hours of request.

Request for information or explanations regarding the Annual Action Plan, Analysis of Impediments, Consolidated Plan, CAPER or other HUD funded proposals or programs from affected residents of blighted neighborhoods who speak and read a primary language other than English shall be accommodated. When necessary, summaries shall be translated and/or interpreter services will be made available at public meetings and hearings.

Publication of Notices

Notice of public hearings shall be published in the local English and Spanish speaking news publications no less than 14 calendar days prior to the hearing. The notice will state the following as applicable:

- A. Programming requirements, contents and purpose
- B. The amount of funds received by the County (including program income)
- C. The estimated amount that will benefit low/moderate income resident
- D. Plans to minimize resident displacement
- E. Plans to assist displaced persons, according to type and level of assistance
- F. What projects may or may not be undertaken
- G. Announcement of the date, time, and place of public hearing; and
- H. Other program information as required.

ACTIVITIES & PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Consolidated Plan & One Year Action Plan

The Consolidated Plan is the County's five-year comprehensive plan addressing housing, homelessness, and recommendations for eliminating homelessness, increasing homeownership, and non-housing community development needs. The Consolidated Plan recommends creative approaches to housing, economic wellness, and quality of life – HUD's national objectives.

Steps to developing the Consolidated Plan:

1. Two public hearings are held. The first meeting happens to gather understanding of community needs and the second meeting will show the public a draft of the proposed actions and budget based on public input and analysis of data.
2. Wake County Housing conducts community needs assessment with the residents. Notices are placed to comply with Opportunities to Participate and Publication of Notices.
3. Consultations are facilitated with existing and potential partners to identify strategies to address needs identified by residents.
4. The proposed activities and budget are presented to Affordable Housing Committee for review.
5. A draft of the Consolidated Plan will be made available thirty (30) days for review at the following locations:
 - A. Wake County Housing Affordability & Community Revitalization (Wake County Housing),
 - a. Physical Address: 336 Fayetteville Street, Suite 440, Raleigh, NC 27602
 - b. Mailing Address: P.O. Box 550, Raleigh, NC 27602
 - B. County Regional Centers
 - C. Municipal Town Halls
 - D. Homeless Service Centers
 - E. Wake County Housing locations - www.wakegov.com/housing/Pages/locations.aspx
 - F. Wake County Human Services locations - www.wakegov.com/humanservices/locations/Pages/default.aspx
 - G. Emailed to citizens upon request
 - H. Made available online: www.wakegov.com/housing/Pages/plansdocs.aspx

The 30-day comment period gives the residents opportunity to submit comments via email to the contact listed on public comment notice or in writing to Wake County Housing's address listed above. The comments from the meeting minutes are summarized in the final document along with the sign-in sheets. All written comments are included.

Annual Action Plan (Years 2 – 5)

The Annual Action Plan is a one-year strategy for accomplishing the Consolidated Plan. Although the Action Plan mirrors the Consolidated Plan, it is flexible to adapt to community changes and needs. The Affordable Housing Committee and County Board review and evaluate the proposed activities and budget in the Annual Action Plan before adoption. A draft of the Annual Action Plan is made available for review at the following locations:

- A. Wake County Housing Affordability & Community Revitalization (Wake County Housing),
 - a. Physical Address: 336 Fayetteville Street, Suite 440, Raleigh, NC 27602
 - b. Mailing Address: P.O. Box 550, Raleigh, NC 27602
- B. County Regional Centers
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- E. Wake County Housing locations - www.wakegov.com/housing/Pages/locations.aspx
- F. Wake County Human Services locations - www.wakegov.com/humanservices/locations/Pages/default.aspx
- G. Emailed to citizens upon request
- H. Made available online: www.wakegov.com/housing/Pages/plansdocs.aspx

Similar to the Consolidated Plan, there is a 30 day or more comment period. Citizens are encouraged to submit comments via email to the contact listed on public comment notice or in writing to Wake County Housing’s address listed above. A public hearing is also held prior to submission of the Plan to HUD.

Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER)

The Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) is an evolution tool or report card. This document is a progress report on how the County has administered its CDBG, HOME, ESG, and HOPWA allocations. The CAPER compares the program year’s accomplishments to the proposed activities stated in the Annual Action Plan. The plan highlights Wake County Housing’s accomplishments as well as conducts self-evaluation of our internal programs and service delivery. It is also a critical part of the planning process.

The CAPER draft is published 15 days or more before final submittal to HUD’s Greensboro (NC) office. There is a 15-day comment period. A draft of the CAPER is made available for review at the following locations:

- A. Wake County Housing Affordability & Community Revitalization (Wake County Housing),
 - a. Physical Address: 336 Fayetteville Street, Suite 440, Raleigh, NC 27602
 - b. Mailing Address: P.O. Box 550, Raleigh, NC 27602
- B. County Regional Centers
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Written responses to all questions and comments, including complaints and grievances and/or proposals submitted in the citizen's participation process will be provided no more than 15-working days, unless there are unusual and extraordinary circumstances.

Analysis of Impediments (AI)

The Analysis of Impediments is a review of impediments to fair housing choice in the public and private sector. Impediments to fair housing choice are any actions, omissions, or decisions taken because of or have the effect of restricting housing choices or the availability of housing choices on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin which restrict housing choices or the availability of housing choices

The AI involves a review of laws and regulations and assesses how they affect the location, availability, and access to housing and various housing unit sizes. It also assesses conditions affecting fair housing choice for all protected classes.

The purpose of the AI is broad. It covers the full array of public and private policies, practices, and procedures affecting housing choice. The AI:

- Serves as the substantive, logical basis for planning for fair housing
- Provides essential and detailed information to policy makers, administrative staff, housing providers, lenders, and fair housing advocates
- Assists in building public support for fair housing efforts both within a State or Entitlement jurisdiction's boundaries and beyond.

The AI focuses on comparisons of previous AI results in which significant changes in trends will be highlighted, such as changes in access disparities to community assets. The AI for Wake County will include analysis of Wake County, Raleigh, Cary, the Wake County Housing Authority, and the Raleigh Housing Authority.

The Steps to completing the Analysis of Impediments include:

1. Public meetings and stakeholder workshops facilitated with existing and potential partners as well as the general public to identify barriers to fair housing in the private and public sectors.
2. Assessment and analysis of existing conditions, reports, and data detailing fair housing issues in the County
3. Communication of conclusions and recommendations to policy makers, County staff, community organizations, and the general public in a final document describing current trends and conditions in Raleigh, Cary, Wake County outside those jurisdictions, and Wake County as a whole.
4. A draft of the AI document will be made available thirty (30) days for review at the following locations:
 - A. Wake County Housing Affordability & Community Revitalization (Wake County Housing),
 - a. Physical Address: 336 Fayetteville Street, Suite 440, Raleigh, NC 27602
 - b. Mailing Address: P.O. Box 550, Raleigh, NC 27602
 - B. County Regional Centers
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 - E. Wake County Housing locations - www.wakegov.com/housing/Pages/locations.aspx
 - F. Wake County Human Services locations - www.wakegov.com/humanservices/locations/Pages/default.aspx
 - G. Emailed to citizens upon request
 - H. Made available online: www.wakegov.com/housing/Pages/plansdocs.aspx

Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH)

The Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) is an analysis of fair housing issues and factors in the County. It will set goals to achieve over a 5-year planning period. The AFH process will begin with inclusive community participation and provide goals to increase fair housing choice and equal access to opportunity for all community members. The County will use the fair housing goals and priorities established in its AFH to inform the investments and other decisions made in County planning processes.

At the beginning of the AFH development process, the County shall make available HUD provided data and other supplemental documentation the County plans to reference in the development of the assessment.

The Steps to completing the Assessment of Fair Housing include:

1. Consultations are facilitated with existing and potential partners as well as the general public to identify current barriers to affordable housing in the community.
2. Analysis of issues and factors contributing to barriers to fair housing in the County.
3. The proposed Assessment is presented to the Affordable Housing Committee for review.
4. A draft of the AFH will be made available thirty (30) days for review at the following locations:
 - A. Wake County Housing Affordability & Community Revitalization (Wake County Housing),
 - a. Physical Address: 336 Fayetteville Street, Suite 440, Raleigh, NC 27602
 - b. Mailing Address: P.O. Box 550, Raleigh, NC 27602
 - B. County Regional Centers
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 - G. Emailed to citizens upon request
 - H. Made available online: www.wakegov.com/housing/Pages/plansdocs.aspx
5. Completion and submission of the AFH Assessment to HUD for review

AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS

A. Criteria for determining when a Substantial Amendment is needed:

1. A Substantial Amendment is required in order to make substantial change to the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of an activity.
2. "Substantial change" is defined by Wake County as any budgetary change(s) exceeding 20% of that Fiscal Year budget, including all resources (e.g. new grant, program income, fund balance, etc.) listed in the Consolidated Plan for that year.
3. Amendments not meeting the above definition are considered minor amendments are processed administratively. These types of amendments typically include clerical corrections, updates to income or program limits, and other minor changes that do not have a significant impact on the overall plan.

B. Criteria for AFH/AI Revisions

1. A revision to the AFH/AI will occur if the County experiences a material change. A material change is a change in circumstances in the jurisdiction that affects the information on which the AFH/AI is based to the extent that the analysis, the fair housing contributing factors, or the priorities and goals of the AFH/AI no longer reflect actual circumstances. Examples include disaster declarations, significant demographic changes or civil rights findings related to a class covered by the AFH/AI.

C. Citizen Participation and Input into Substantial Amendments and Revisions

1. Notice of Amendment

A notice will be published in the local English and Spanish speaking news publications to announce the adoption and implementation of the amended Consolidated Plan. Citizens will have ten (10) days to respond to the amended Consolidated Plan.

2. Public display of Information

The document that is amended, whether the Consolidated Plan, Action Plan, Analysis of Impediments, or Assessment of Fair Housing will be on display in the following locations:

- A. Wake County Housing Affordability & Community Revitalization (Wake County Housing),
 - a. Physical Address: 336 Fayetteville Street, Suite 440, Raleigh, NC 27602
 - b. Mailing Address: P.O. Box 550, Raleigh, NC 27602
- B. County Regional Centers
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- G. Emailed to citizens upon request
- H. Made available online: www.wakegov.com/housing/Pages/plansdocs.aspx

3. Responding to Citizen Input

Following receipt of citizens' written comments, citizen input will be considered, and changes will be made to the plans noted in the Activities and Performance Report Section of proposed amendment. The County will respond in writing within 15 days after the receipt of the response.

4. Submission to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Amendments and revisions will be submitted to HUD (by mail, email, or through the Integrated Disbursements and Information System, along with a transmittal letter signed by Wake County Housing Director or their designee.

Disaster/Emergency events that may require expedited substantial amendments

It may be necessary to expedite substantial amendments to the Consolidated Plan in the event of a declared disaster or emergency. There are three types of disasters/emergency events that may necessitate an expedited substantial amendment including (1) Man-Made-disasters, (2) Natural disasters, and (3) Terrorism. Man-made disasters can include chemical spills, mass rioting, power outages, dam failure, plant explosions, etc. Natural disasters can include earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, wild fires, flooding and public health issues such as wide-spread disease such as the recent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Terrorism events include bomb threats, biochemical attacks like the spread of anthrax, or cyber-attacks like hacking, phishing, and virus distribution, etc.

These expedited substantial amendments may include funding new activities and/or the reprogramming of funds including canceling activities to meet needs resulting from a declared disaster or emergency. Therefore, the Wake County Department of Housing Affordability and Community Development (HACR) may utilize CDBG, HOME, HOPWA, or ESG funds to meet these needs with a 5-day public comment period instead of a 10-day public comment period, which is otherwise required for substantial amendments.

****For HUD Entitlement funding FY 2019-2020, FY 2020-2021, and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act or CARES Act, a 5-day notice/comment period will be provided for citizen input, as allowed under a HUD waivers:**

- ***Availability of Waivers of Community Planning and Development (CPD) Grant Program and Consolidated Plan Requirements to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 and Mitigate Economic Impacts Caused by COVID-19 as of March 31, 2020.***
- ***CARES Act Flexibilities for CDBG Funds Used to Support Coronavirus Response and Plan Amendment Waiver as of April 9, 2020.***

This includes any new activities proposed. Wake County will satisfy the public notice requirement by posting the public notice on its website and in English- and Spanish-language news publications. A virtual public hearing will satisfy the public hearing requirement, if applicable.

Special ESG funding under the CARES Act referred to as ESG-CV to address the COVID-19 pandemic do not apply to citizen participation requirements that would otherwise apply to ESG funds; however, the County will publish how the ESG-CV funding has or will be used on the HACR website at www.wakegov.com/housing.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information on the Citizen Participation Plan, please contact:

Wake County Housing Affordability & Community Revitalization

- Physical Address: 336 Fayetteville Street, Suite 440, Raleigh, NC 27602
- Mailing Address: P.O. Box 550, Raleigh, NC 27602

Main Office Line: (919) 856-5425

Or refer to:

- G.S. 143-318 is generally intended to govern meetings of public (read: elected) bodies and establishes exceptions to those meeting guidelines. The statute also outlines reasonable notice for meetings and meeting times that allow public participation to the fullest extent possible. Wake County Department of Housing Affordability & Community Revitalization, as a governmental body, will follow the guidance of the statute as appropriate. A copy of the statute will be on file with the Citizen Participation Plan for reference.
- CFR 24 91.105 – Federal Code of Regulations related to required public participation related to HUD entitlement funding.