

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

Southwestern NC HOME Consortium

Established February 2022

Introduction

As an established Consortium of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Home Investment Partnerships Program, the Southwestern Commission is required to have and actively implement a Citizen Participation Plan on behalf of Haywood County, the participating jurisdiction.

The plan describes how the Consortium will seek involvement and input from citizens in its programs using Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) funds. Input from people likely to be impacted by program activities is essential to the development of an effective program. The Southwestern NC HOME Consortium seeks to exceed the minimum federal requirements and make citizen participation a reality in all stages of the process of developing, writing, and implementing the 5-year Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan. The HOME program provides affordable housing options and opportunities to low-to-moderate income residents of Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain, Clay, Cherokee, and Graham counties, the area covered by the Southwestern NC HOME Consortium (the Consortium).

Regulatory Requirements: Five-year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan

HUD's minimum requirements for citizen participation are set out in the regulations for HOME Consortia in 24 CFR Part 91.401.

The focus for participation is the planning and reporting cycle for the Consolidated Plan for the HOME program. The planning process is in two parts: a Five-year Consolidated Plan which identifies and prioritizes the region's housing and community development needs and develops long-term objectives and strategies for addressing them, and an Annual Action Plan which proposes specific activities to receive HOME assistance during the coming year. The Annual Action Plan is embedded within the five-year Consolidated Plan, which also includes an Assessment of Fair Housing/Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing. The Consortium is also required to prepare a Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) which details accomplishments during the past fiscal year and relates them to the Consolidated Plan objectives.

Participation in developing plans, implementing projects, and evaluating accomplishments are encouraged through a variety of media and services, such as:

- Public hearings
- Online surveys
- Accommodations for persons with disabilities and non-English speaking persons
- Formal public comment periods
- Publication of plans and reports
- Paid newspaper advertisements
- Posting to the Southwestern Commission website (<https://regiona.org/southwestern-nc-home-consortium/>)

- Open meetings of the Southwestern NC HOME Consortium Board

The Consortium strives to encourage participation by low- and moderate-income persons, particularly those persons living within the Consortium jurisdiction.

Public Hearings

Haywood County will hold a minimum of one public hearing for citizen participation annually when the Annual Action Plan is due. Additional public meetings may be held in the years where the Five-Year Consolidated Plan is submitted, which includes the Annual Action Plan for that year.

Public hearings will be held at regularly scheduled meetings of the Haywood County Board of Commissioners, generally held on the first and third Monday of the month at 9:00 am and 5:30 pm, respectively. Additional details about the Board of Commissioners meetings can be found on the Haywood County webpage: <https://www.haywoodcountync.gov/>.

Citizen comments made at public hearings are given due consideration, summarized, and included in the Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan.

Formal Public Comment Periods and Publications of Plans and Reports

The Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans, or substantial amendments to them, are available in draft form for public comment at least 30 days before they are due to be approved by the Haywood County Board of Commissioners. The draft will be publicly noticed on the Southwestern Commission webpage (link above) and a printed copy is available upon request from the Southwestern Commission staff. The CAPER is made available for comment at least 15 days before submittal to HUD. The draft CAPER will be posted on the Southwestern Commission website as well as available by request.

Citizen written comments made during these periods are taken into consideration and may be reproduced or referenced in the Consolidated Plan.

Southwestern NC HOME Consortium Board of Directors

The Southwestern NC HOME Consortium Board of Directors consists of representatives from 19 units of government from the 6 county Consortium area of Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain, Clay, Cherokee, and Graham counties. The Consortium's Board of Directors, appointed by the member governments, sets policy and oversees the management of the HOME program. One of its primary functions is to make recommendations to the Haywood County Board of Commissioners for the annual allocation of HOME funds in the Annual Action Plan.

The Board of Directors will meet several times a year. All meetings are open to the public. Meeting materials are emailed before each meeting to the Consortium Board and will be available on the Southwestern Commission web page (link above).

Public Access to Records

In accordance with North Carolina state law, the Consortium's housing and community development records are open to the public. Exceptions are records that contain personal identifying information and most financial information about individuals who are assisted through the programs. Requests to access records other than published plans and reports should be made through email and should be sufficiently

precise to enable staff to identify the specific records that are needed. Please submit your request to LeNay Shular, Senior Project Manager at lenay@regiona.org.

Complaints and Grievances

Written or oral complaints or grievances concerning the Consolidated Planning process and HOME programs should be addressed to the Southwestern Commission Community and Economic Development Department, attention LeNay Shular. The department will make every effort to respond within 10 working days. Written responses will be mailed within 15 working days of receiving a written complaint or grievance. Should the complainant not be satisfied, the complainant may arrange a meeting with the Director of the Community and Economic Development Department to discuss the matter. Any citizen may contact, or address City or County elected officials at their regularly scheduled meetings during the allotted public comment period.

Process for Participation in the Five-Year Consolidated Plan

The Consolidated Plan, or Con Plan, first developed in 2021, is revised every five years, although it may be amended in the interim. It identifies and prioritizes housing needs in the area covered by the Consortium and develops long-term objectives and strategies for addressing them.

Before the adoption of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan or the Annual Action Plan, the Southwestern Commission staff will make available to citizens, public agencies, interested parties, and to the larger public information about the plan.

In order to maximize citizen participation in this important planning process, there will be public hearings as well as a formal public comment period. During the planning process, there will be several public meetings, surveys, social media campaigns, press releases, and updates to the Consortium webpage.

The aim will be to have a draft Five-Year Consolidated Plan largely completed by March of the calendar year before it is due to be submitted (usually May/June of the corresponding year) so that its priorities and objectives can be reflected in the evaluation of funding requests for the coming year.

The draft Five-Year Consolidated Plan will be reviewed by the Consortium Board of Directors, published for citizen comment, along with the Action Plan for the coming year, and discussed in public hearings, before being approved by the Haywood County Board of Commissioners and being submitted to HUD.

Amendment of the 5-Year Consolidated Plan/Annual Action Plan

Minor and technical amendments to consolidated plans may be made without seeking citizen participation; however, the following are considered substantial amendments:

- a) Addition of a new activity of priority
- b) Cancellation of activity or deletion of a priority
- c) A change in the nature of an activity, its location, or its target population, such that different persons will be impacted by it
- d) A change of more than 50% in the amount of funds allocated to an activity.

The Haywood County Board of Commissioners must approve all substantial amendments. Notice of the proposed amendment and public hearing will be advertised at the discretion of the Haywood County

Board of Commissioners and the precedent in place from previous hearings. Public comments received before and during the public hearing are considered by the Board of Commissioners before approving or denying the amendment.

Contingency Operations during a declared local, state, and/or national emergency:

In the event of a local, state, and/or national declaration of emergency or any similar crisis or safety declaration, the public participation process will remain a hybrid of online submission of comments and public hearings. The public hearing process will be at the discretion of the Haywood County Board of Commissioners and the County Manager.

Appendix A- Definitions/Acronyms

Annual Action Plan: The document that describes the needs, resources, priorities, and proposed activities to be undertaken over a one-year period with respect to HUD programs, including HOME as a part of the 5 Year Consolidated Plan.

Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (AI): a comprehensive review of impediments to fair housing choice in the public and private section within a particular jurisdiction.

Five-Year Consolidated Plan: Also referred to as the Consolidated Plan, is a document that serves as the planning document (comprehensive housing affordability strategic and community development plan) of the jurisdiction and an application for funding under any of the Community Planning and Development formula grant programs, which is prepared in accordance with the process prescribed in 24 CFR Part 91. The plan describes needs, resources, priorities, and proposed activities to be undertaken over a five-year period with respect to HUD programs.

Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER): The document that provides HUD with the necessary information to assess each grantee’s ability to carry out its programs in compliance with applicable regulations and requirements and describes the grantee’s program achievements to its citizens. The CAPER is submitted to HUD annually at the conclusion of the program year.

Participating Jurisdiction (PJ): A locality or state that receives HOME Funds. Haywood County in partnership with Jackson, Macon, Swain, Clay, Cherokee and Graham counties and most of the municipalities within are the representative governments in which the Southwestern NC HOME funds are awarded and administered.

Substantial Amendment: An amendment of revision for the Five-Year Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan and is one which includes the addition of a new activity or priority; a change in the nature of an activity, its location, or its target population such that different citizens will be impacted by it; or a change in more than 50% of the funds allocated.

Appendix B- Key Partners

The Southwestern NC HOME Consortium shall maintain a list of local and area organizations representing the following:

- For-profit and non-profit developers
- Neighborhood associations
- Community development organizations

- Transportation department and planners
- Workforce and economic development agencies
- Chambers of Commerce
- Departments of Planning, Police, Fire, Public Works, Code Enforcement, Economic Development, and Recreation
- Foundations
- Key institutional employers (including hospitals, universities, community colleges, etc.)
- Non-profit organizations representing populations for which AFH, AI, and Consolidated Plan regulations require special emphasis:
 - Low-and moderate-income persons
 - Non-English-speaking persons
 - Persons with disabilities
 - Public housing residents
 - Special needs populations