**a. NEED**

**i. Efforts to Identify and Remove Barriers to Affordable Housing**

The City of Brunswick is located on the Georgia coast midway between Savannah, Ga. and Jacksonville, Fla. The historic city of 14,774 was founded in 1737 and is today the county seat of Glynn County. The city has seen little growth in recent years, and the population has remained at approx. 15,000 for 30 years. During World War II the city became prosperous, when 200 Liberty ships were built at Brunswick’s deepwater port, and a Naval Airbase was established near the City to patrol the south Atlantic coast for German submarines. A peacetime economy led to loss of jobs, and the city never returned to its level of wartime prosperity. The city returned to an economy closely tied to the timber industry, the Port of Brunswick and a newly developing tourist industry and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. Today, Brunswick is the 6th poorest city in Georgia, with 34.8% of residents living below the poverty line. Furthermore, the Brunswick Metropolitan area (pop. 114,450) is the 12th poorest Metro area in the United States, with a poverty rate of 20.8%.

#  In 2017 the city began a strategic planning process for redevelopment with technical assistance from the University of Georgia Renaissance Strategic Visioning and Planning Process (RSVP). A report by RSVP clearly defined one of the City’s greatest challenges, which remains to this day.

*“The sheer number of vacant, derelict, and ill-maintained properties in the city emerged as a top issue during discussions with community members. Particularly in Downtown Brunswick’s surrounding residential neighborhoods and along the Norwich corridor, the many vacant and blighted properties discourage activity, invite crime, and send a negative message to residents, visitors, and potential investors. Many residents and urban pioneers who have rehabilitated properties in these areas complained about the inconsistency of the city’s code enforcement. … These residents prioritized more consistent and stringent enforcement of the city’s existing codes, pushing redevelopment through a land bank authority, and punishing absentee landlords and owners who refuse to maintain their properties.”*

Since 2018, a collaboration of local businesses, nonprofits and foundations *n*amed *Forward Brunswick* are working with the city under the leadership of Mayor Cosby Johnson, to revitalize Brunswick’s downtown. Results are apparent: new galleries, shops and restaurants have opened, as well as a boutique hotel. Marketing websites encourage visitors and investors to visit downtown, inner Brunswick. Though many residential neighborhoods remain blighted, there is a new push for infrastructure repair and housing rehabilitation. The city has recognized that diverse, affordable neighborhoods are vital to the entire City’s economic health and historic character.

Brunswick’s efforts to address the need for affordable housing in the city include the following:

From 2000 to 2022, Brunswick cooperated with regional private developers to build eight new affordable apartment and townhouse communities, for a total of 340 units of housing. The communities were funded by a variety of federal and state low-income housing subsidies including Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) in exchange for restrictions on rent for a number of years, usually 15. The rent restrictions on most of these properties will have ended by 2040. There is no more open land available within city limits for large scale development of affordable housing communities. Outside the city, development has shifted to market-rate housing.

This year Brunswick updated its Comprehensive Plan and created a separate Affordable Housing Plan. This plan recommends infill development of existing or newly cleared vacant lots, repurposing vacant buildings, and rehabilitation of existing housing as the best opportunity to preserve and add affordable housing to meet inner city and area demands. The City has funded an implementation program to rehabilitate 200 homes over the next 5 years and a total of 1,000 homes over the next 20 years. The City has committed $2.5 Million to launch the Brunswick Housing and Rehabilitation Program. The City is currently applying for additional grants and support from the HUD, the State of Georgia, and the business community.

 Housing in Brunswick was primarily built before 1970. More than 60% of Brunswick housing units – primarily modest single-family homes built in a regional style -- need rehabilitation and are located in City communities that are in a state of decline. The City and Glynn County recently established the Brunswick-Glynn Land Bank, which will aggressively acquire tax delinquent properties in the City. Currently, the Land Bank is surveying neighborhoods and creating an updated list of vacant, abandoned and/or tax delinquent housing. The purpose of the Land Bank is to take control of dilapidated and blighted properties, either through purchase or foreclosure, among other methods. Once properties are under Land Bank ownership, they will be resold at low rates to assist revitalization efforts. Revenue from the transactions will also be put towards revitalization projects.

The Brunswick Housing Authority (BHA) manages 589 public housing units and 46 managed private units across the city and provides housing vouchers to 386 eligible families. There is an eight-year waiting list of 1400 families/individuals for BHA housing assistance, and applications are no longer being accepted.

With an annual budget of $415,000, Brunswick’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), located in the Department of Neighborhood and Community services, works to preserve affordable housing and remove blight in city neighborhoods. Since 2020, CDBG has renovated 19 homes and demolished 10 blighted properties. The goal for 2023 is to renovate and preserve 11 units of affordable housing and demolish four buildings that contribute to slums and blight.

A severe barrier to the development of affordable housing in Brunswick is stormwater and tidal flooding. Brunswick is the lowest lying city in the state of Georgia, with a subtropical climate and surrounded by rivers and marshes. It is vulnerable to climate change, sea level rise, hurricanes and tropical storms. The city receives 50 inches of rain and nearly 90 million gallons of rainwater every year. Lower-income neighborhoods are among the most flood-prone in Brunswick. Because of this, rents are low, and they attract low-income families. To address the issue of stormwater management, the city established a Stormwater Utility in 2020 that assesses a user fee on every developed property in the city.

To guide the utility in a comprehensive overhaul of its stormwater outfall and collection systems, an initial five-year master plan for stormwater abatement and flood control was prepared, adopted, and funded by a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). The Master Plan called for an initial 15 projects totaling $18,400,000. So far, the city has committed nearly $12 million funding to implement the program, leaving a shortfall of $6,400,000.

Initially, the priority projects addressed the outfall stormwater systems discharging into creeks and marsh areas which surround the city. Each discharge point will be equipped with a device to prevent rising tides and storm surges from backflowing into the city’s neighborhoods. The City's Department of Public Works is also beginning to address collection systems in neighborhoods flowing to the outfalls as funds become available.

Brunswick has recently completed updating its Zoning Ordinance and Building Codes. These codes do not place any barriers which would prohibit or hinder the development of new affordable housing or rehabilitation of older substandard housing. Additionally, the ordinance now allows the construction of auxiliary structures in residential areas which may be used for housing. Tiny homes are now permitted in cluster developments and mixed use (commercial/residential) housing is encouraged in the city’s central core. In 2024, two tiny home developments operated by local nonprofits will provide housing for 90 homeless veterans.

 Neighborhood Planning Assemblies (NPAs) encourage residents to become actively engaged in their local government. NPAs are organized and democratic forums that allow residents to learn about and discuss issues that affect them, while also providing structured feedback and recommendations to City staff and elected officials. NPAs utilize steering committees to assist in advancing various interests that shape and raise attention to community issues, needs, programs, and projects. Example committees include:

**ii. Acute Need for Affordable Housing**

The supply of affordable housing units is at extreme lows in Georgia in the wake of the pandemic, leading to higher rental cost burden. Across the state, the number of units deemed affordable with rents below $600 dropped significantly by about 67,000 residences between 2019 and 2021, according to 2023 report from the *Joint Center of Housing Studies for Harvard University*. In Brunswick, the median household income is $29,362 so a monthly rent of $734 would be considered affordable. Market rate rents for apartments in Brunswick and outside the city are $1,250 for a one-bedroom apartment and $1,550 for a two bedroom.

According to CHAS data, neither Glynn County nor Brunswick is a Priority Geography. The Median Income of Glynn County, where Brunswick is located, is $61,984. But calculations are inflated by the Median Household Income (MHI) of St Simon’s Island, a wealthy retirement and resort barrier island located seven miles from Brunswick across the Torras Causeway. According to Census Figures, the population of St Simons is 94.6% white with a Median Household Income (MHI) of $94,663. The MHI of Brunswick Ga is $29,362. The city population is 69.4% Black and 6.3% Hispanic. Brunswick residents are heavily employed in service industry jobs on St Simons Island and Sea Island, a gated resort community. These jobs pay from $7.40 to $15.00/hour or from $15,392 to $31,200.

 Socio-economic and housing data gathered and analyzed for Brunswick’s recently completed Affordable Housing Plan show an acute demand for affordable housing. The gap between income available for housing (30% of HMI) and Brunswick market housing costs is as much as $10,000 per year for many of the city’s households.

* As many as 1,500 or 45% of the city’s family households are currently “housing cost burdened” (spending more than 30% of family income for total housing expense) as well as 1,100 non-family households including single elderly persons living alone.
* 63% of all occupied dwelling units are rented, and 60% of those units are single family or duplex homes, a high percentage of which require substantial rehabilitation. Few affordable apartment dwellings are available in the city.
* The Glynn County Tax Assessor inspects properties every year. They show that 9% of all single family and duplex housing structures are rated in poor condition requiring substantial rehabilitation or demolition (unfit for human habitation); 40 % are rated in only fair condition indicating a need for modest to major rehabilitation. Another 43 % are rated in only average condition, requiring modest rehabilitation. Only 8% of all single family and duplex housing is considered to be in good or excellent condition.
* As many as 2,000 families and individuals are currently living in inadequate, costly, or substandard housing.
* Current sales and rental data indicate that some families and individuals are forced to leave the city because of inadequate housing opportunities. Many are relocating into developing Glynn County or even nearby Brantley or McIntosh Counties.
* Most new housing in the area has been built outside the city with most of it being market-rate single family or townhome rental communities. These housing units are not affordable for most of Brunswick’s households seeking adequate and decent housing.

Consider the following current market conditions in the City’s urban area:

* There are virtually no new affordable rental apartments being developed in the city due to the unavailability of sites in residential areas which are in a state of decline.
* Rental units being built in the County have rents starting at $1,250 for a one-bedroom unit and $1,450 for a two-bedroom unit. Many families and individuals renting these units must devote as much as 40% – 50% of family income for housing expenses. Thirty percent (30%) is considered affordable.
* New single family “starter homes” are only being built outside the city and are currently priced at over $175,000 compared to under $150,000 a few years ago. These units are beyond the reach of most Brunswick families. In the City of Brunswick, only 36% of residents own their home; 64% are renters.
* Federally subsidized rental housing in the city, including public housing, Section 8 voucher certificates and other tax incentivized affordable housing have waiting lists of well over 1,000 families and individuals.

Clearly Brunswick, Georgia, has an acute need for affordable housing.

**iii. Key Barriers That Need To Be Addressed**

* The City of Brunswick must develop capacity of a local nonprofit to partner with the City on A nonprofit would provide housing counseling, first time homebuyer programs, financial literacy workshops. Additionally, the nonprofit will assist the city with rehabilitation and construction of affordable housing. \
* While not a housing issue, the lack of public transportation in Brunswick is a factor that prevents low-income individuals from improving their financial condition by finding a better job or attending job training programs. Fortunately, a public transit program will begin in 2024.
* Despite the possibility of pushback by homeowners, the city must commit to strict code enforcement to force the sale or rehabilitation of dilapidated housing. The City must commit to using the International Property Maintenance Code, the Nuisance Abatement Law, the Tax Foreclosure process, etc.
* Low Median Family Income (MFI) of $33,350 and Median Household Income (MHI) of $29,362.
* Low rate of home ownership (37%) has resulted in very low investment in housing maintenance in most communities, heavily influencing the disinvestment in many of Brunswick’s neighborhoods.
* The physical condition of most communities discourages construction of or investment in housing stock.
* Outdated stormwater management infrastructure contributes to tidal and stormwater flooding, which further damages housing in neighborhoods and discourages investment.

A shortfall in funding is a barrier that must be addressed. The 20-year Brunswick Housing Neighborhood Revitalization Program is projected to cost $ 25 Million. The City is expecting to keep the investment at the current level and will seek federal and state funding as well and investments by the business communities that rely on Brunswick for its labor and many of its services.

The Master Plan for stormwater abatement and flood control called for an initial 15 projects totaling $18,400,000. So far, the City has committed nearly $12 million funding to implement the program, leaving a shortfall of $6,400,000. The shortfall is to be made up from grants and outlays of city funds.

**b. SOUNDNESS OF APPROACH**

**i. Vision**

The City of Brunswick Georgia requests a grant of $8 million from the HUD Pro Housing Program for the rehabilitation and construction of affordable housing as well as storm drainage infrastructure improvements to support the development and sustainability of such housing.

The Vision of the Brunswick Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Program mirrors the objectives of the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG): to develop viable communities by the provision of decent affordable housing, a suitable living environment, and to provide economic opportunities, principally for the benefit of low- and moderate-income persons, families, households, and neighborhoods.

 In 2018 Brunswick began to focus on the redevelopment of its downtown core area to improve its stagnant economy. That year the City’s comprehensive plan included a rather poetic vision statement:

*The City of Brunswick will grow into its future like a glorious Live Oak, with: Strong roots, Quality communities, Economic growth and a Revitalized image The City of Brunswick will cherish, protect and enhance its connections with its natural, historic, and cultural roots.   The City of Brunswick will re‐build beautiful neighborhoods with gathering places such as parks, churches, and schools, a variety of quality housing, and a strong sense of community with actively involved citizens and engaged, well‐coordinated community organizations.    The City of Brunswick will cultivate the growth of its economy and its people, by encouraging entrepreneurship, improving workforce development, and fostering community volunteer and leadership opportunities.   Brunswick will present a revitalized and rehabilitated image by showcasing its natural and historic beauty and by redeveloping its underutilized areas in a manner in keeping with its traditional, human‐scaled development pattern. Polluted, contaminated, and dilapidated areas will be vigorously rehabilitated and made available for* reuse.

**Strategic Goal 4: Advance Sustainable Communities,**

4**A: Guide Investment in Climate Resilience**

**4B: Strengthen Environmental Justice** systems including tropical storms and offshore hurricanes. Like all coastal areas it has become

 Brunswick is a Coastal Georgia City affected by seasonal flooding from rainfall and weather even more vulnerable due to climate change. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Sea levels in coastal Georgia have risen 11 inches since 1950. The rate of sea rise has accelerated over the last ten years and is now rising by over an inch every two years.

As the lowest-lying city in Georgia, Brunswick has always been flood prone. Without comprehensive stormwater mitigation, flooding will continue to threaten and damage the City’s housing stock in low lying areas like New Town, a historic African American community. Floodwater damages foundations, walls and floors, as well as electrical and plumbing systems. Mold growth and water contaminated by bacteria lead to unhealthy housing conditions. Residents are under stress due to substandard living conditions and the threat of flooding. Homeowners and landlords make minimal repairs, as water damage is likely to occur again. Builders are reluctant to develop infill lots in these in Brunswick neighborhoods due to the likelihood of flooding.

In 2017, Brunswick begin efforts to turn the city economy around. As leadership of the city became more far sighted and progressive, the need for improvement of declining housing conditions and decaying neighborhoods harboring slums, became a higher priority for government focus. The City’s recently created Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Program recognized that rehabilitation and development of new affordable housing in neighborhoods must include stormwater management and flood control as a priority.

Stormwater Drainage system improvem~~ents~~ to be funded in part by this PRO Housing grant: The following must be accomplished to handle current and future stormwater drainage as well as tidal and river flooding in most Brunswick neighborhoods:

* Tidal control. Tidewater backs up in drainage collection systems behind outfall dischargesinto marsh and river areas. Tidal control structures must be installed at each outfall to keep water from backing up into stormwater systems.
* Some Brunswick culverts have become too small to handle current drainage and must be replaced by larger culverts.
* Curbs and gutters need maintenance or replacement. Some streets have no curbs or gutters, and they must be installed to channel stormwater into system inlets.
* Some stormwater inlets are undersized and cannot handle the amounts of water inflow. Other inlets are clogged with sediment and must be cleaned out.
* Inadequate maintenance: Deteriorating stormwater drainage pipes. Pipes are clogged with sediment often caused by tidal inflow into the systems at outlets that have no tidal control devices.

To address the issue of stormwater management, the city established a Stormwater Utility in 2020 that assesses a user fee on every property in the city. To guide the utility in a comprehensive overhaul of its stormwater outfall and collection systems, an initial five-year master plan for stormwater abatement and flood control was prepared, adopted, and recommended improvements began to be funded by a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). The Master Plan called for an initial 15 projects totaling $18,400,000. So far, the city has committed nearly $12 million funding to implement the program, leaving a shortfall of $6,400,000.

Stormwater improvement projects in city neighborhoods, coupled with a newly funded Housing Rehabilitation and Neighborhood Revitalization Program, will go a long way toward retaining existing affordable housing through the city’s housing rehabilitation program and encouraging the development of new affordable housing on land currently occupied by vacant or dilapidated buildings.

**Strategic Goal 4.1C** Invest in the Success of Communities

**Goal 5.2** Ensure Access to and Increase the Production of Affordable Housing

**Goal 5.2A** Increase the supply of Housing.

Brunswick housing is a mix of historically important styles, both, from Victorian mansions in Old City, to craftsmen bungalows and “shotgun” houses in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods like New Town, an historically African American community. The City’s new Housing and neighborhood Revitalization Program seeks to rehabilitate existing houses to minimize displacement and increase home ownership as well as to incentivize the construction of new, affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families. These efforts will alleviate the many large pockets of lower income and poverty level families living in substandard housing.

Brunswick Code Enforcement Department, Tax Assessment records, and the Brunswick-Glynn Land Bank have identified and will continue to identify potential properties for rehabilitation or demolition in New Town and other areas of the city. The City Engineer will coordinate needed repairs and improvements to infrastructure and amenities in neighborhoods. Repairs will be made by city crews or by one of the City’s lists of improved contractors, including a number of minority-owned subcontractor businesses.

Owner-occupants of single-family and two-family (duplex) residential property will be offered the opportunity to rehabilitate their home to city housing code standards through financial assistance offered by the City. Rehabilitation could include the following:

* Roofs
* Interior and exterior walls
* Foundations
* Framing and structural support components
* Critical systems including HVAC, water heaters, water pumps, and related systems
* Interior flooring
* Doors/windows
* Electrical
* Plumbing
* Well/Septic Repairs (when necessary)
* Interior and exterior finishes R
* Replacement of appliances (if applicable)
* Any necessary or required Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements including special tubs/showers, access ramps, special cabinets/counters
* Sidewalks/walkways providing access to the structure, which pose a health and/or safety hazard.
* All necessary site work required to complete the rehabilitation.
* Construction material/waste removal and disposal
* Abatement activities for materials containing mold, lead and/or asbestos.

In return, owners will be required to remain in their homes for a prescribed period. For owners of single and two-family rental housing, the objective is to incentivize the owner to rehabilitate their rental properties to city housing code standards. In return, owners of rental property will be required to keep rents at affordable levels for at least 5 years.

Occupied or vacant homes that cannot be rehabilitated will be demolished. Occupants will be offered financial assistance to obtain standard condition replacement housing in a comparable location. The goal for cleared lots is construction of new single or multi-family affordable housing, preferably in the style of existing housing, which will be sold or rented to low/or moderate-income households. Incentives to developers could include:

* Market to developer offering low-cost sites for homes and apartments.
* Property tax abatement as incentive to develop affordable housing.
* Expedited building permits process
* Home purchase loan financing in partnership with local bank

Houses will be rehabilitated to meet Brunswick housing and related codes. Displacement during construction will be minimal as most major repairs can be done with owner or renter in residence. However, if tenants or owners are required to move out temporarily, the city will work with the landlord or homeowner to provide temporary assistance.

The City of Brunswick has allotted $2.5 million to the Brunswick Housing and Rehabilitation Program. Projected cost is $20.4 million for the New Town project, for a shortfall of $17.9 million.

**4.1C Invest in the Success of Communities**

Through this grant, Brunswick will increase the number and capacity of local non-profits to aid in the development of affordable housing. Currently there are but two non-profit organizations who sponsor or provide affordable housing: Habitat for Humanity with a capacity of only four homes per year, and St James Episcopal Church which owns and manages 100 units of elderly housing. We propose to assist non-profits in developing increased capacity to increase the number of homes they can develop. Additionally, the city will offer staff resources to other non-profits to educate and assist them in developing the capacity to sponsor and manage affordable rental housing. This includes offering financial literacy programs, housing counseling and first-time homebuyer programs. The City must add a full-time staff outreach professional to educate and assist new and existing non-profit organizations in sponsoring or developing affordable housing resources at $70,000/year for six years for a total of $420,000.

**4.1C Invest in the Success of Communities**

**5.2 Ensure Access to and Increase the Production of Affordable Homes**

Brunswick will develop and incentivize opportunities for re-purposing of vacant and underutilized commercial and other non-residential buildings in the Norwich Street Corridor into affordable housing. In 2018, the City of Brunswick was chosen as a Legacy Project by the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU). The Congress created a report *Revitalizing the Norwich Street Corridor*. One of the report’s conclusions was that a portion of commercial space on Norwich Street (part of New Town) should be repurposed. According to the study, *“There is 165,000 Square Feet (SF0 of existing commercial space on Norwich from 4th Street to Gloucester. An estimated 75,000 SF of existing space is vacant, often long term. Area resident retail demand will support an additional 10,000 to 15,000 SF of vacant space, thus 60,000 to 65,000 commercial space in Norwich is not needed. It should be recaptured and re-purposed as: housing, pocket parks, local business offices, or public and community use, such as a library. Pruning the existing commercial inventory will strengthen the economic health of what remains and bring new activity into the corridor.*”

The City will create several “demonstration projects” and offer incentives to others to stimulate this effort. This initiative could add up to 50 new affordable housing units to the housing stock and serve as a model for future re-purpose housing projects.The City will incentivize two commercial property owners to convert a retail or wholesale building on Norwich Street to affordable housing, or possibly mixed use with a retail establishment. Cost will be $250,000 for design and seed money for financing a commercial building repurpose to use as a demonstration project.

**ii. Geographic Scope**

The initial area of focus for the Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Program and for this grant will be New Town, the second oldest area in Brunswick. New Town extends northward from Old Town/F Street in Census Tract 8 to T Street in Census Tract 7.02. There are three main North to South corridors in New Town: Norwich Street, a former business district, now with many vacant storefronts; New Castle Street with its redeveloped and thriving downtown business district south of New Town, and Martin Luther King Boulevard, which is lined with schools, small businesses, and shopping centers. New Town is largely an African American community and includes the former Risley High School, founded in1870 as the Freedmen’s School, which is now on the National Register of Historic Place. The 2023 Affordable Housing Plan for Brunswick reported that 71% of housing Units in New Town are in fair or poor condition. Additionally, New Town has pockets of mostly vacant dilapidated structures that will require demolition. New Town encompasses Brunswick Census Tract 8 and a small portion of Tract 7.02. There are approx. 2,000 housing units in New Town, 71% in fair to poor condition. Seventy-four percent (74%) of New Town households are renters, and 44% of households have incomes below the Federal Poverty line. The VISION for New Town is a revitalized, diverse, single- or duplex-home community with quality infrastructure. We chose to focus on New Town rather than the entire city because 1) it will create more impact and can be an example of success for visitors, 2) The New Town rehabilitation project will serve as a model for replication in other Brunswick neighborhoods.

 **iii. Key Stakeholders**

* All Citizens of Brunswick who live in substandard housing in flood-prone neighborhoods.
* Government officials who are committed to revitalizing the city.
* City Frontline workers, such City Code Enforcement Inspectors and staff of the City’s Community Development Block Grant Program
* Forward Brunswick, a diverse volunteer civic improvement organization of experienced business and community leaders dedicated to the revitalization and continued growth of the City of Brunswick.
* Neighborhood and Community Organizations such as Brunswick’s Neighborhood Planning Assemblies and the Community First Planning Commission.
* Brunswick’s employers and its small business community.
* The College of Coastal Georgia, Southeast Georgia Health System, and other services located in Brunswick.
* Local contractors and subcontractors will do the housing renovation and stormwater abatement work.

The City updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2023 and completed a separate *Affordable* Neighborhood Housing Plan. Information gathered from the community for these two plans also informed the PRO Housing Grant application. During the period of developing these plans, more than twenty committee meetings, public hearings and listening sessions were held. Specifically for this grant proposal, staff made presentations at two New Town Neighborhood Planning Assemblies to solicit input, and the grant proposal was made available for review two weeks in advance of a City Commission meeting. Part of updating the city’s comprehensive plan in 2023 included an online citywide survey was conducted, with four hundred households answering the survey. The information gathered by these outreach efforts informed planning for the PRO Grant.

Finally, the City Manager’s and Mayor daily receive e-mails, phone calls and even impromptu visits from city residents describing their needs and issues. The Mayor and City Manager routinely share this information with Department staff.

The Brunswick Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Program addresses need of all residents of Brunswick, who are living in substandard housing and are severely housing cost burdened. For people with disabilities, renovations will include accommodation such as ramps and wider doors, as needed. Families and children will benefit from the renovation of single-family houses with two to three bedrooms and small yards. Mold, lead, and asbestos abatement will ensure the health of children living in these houses. Stable, healthy and safe housing will also alleviate stress on families who most cope with substandard housing and the constant threat of flooding.

**iv. Affirmatively Further Fair Housing**

Affirmatively furthering fair housing means taking meaningful actions that, taken together, address significant disparities in housing needs and in access to opportunity, replacing segregated economic and racial living patterns with truly integrated and balanced living patterns, transforming into areas of opportunity achieving the goals and objectives of civil rights and fair housing laws.

Brunswick is a city where over 60% of residents are African American and approx. 7% are Hispanic. Some African American families have lived in Brunswick for generations. The City is in the National Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, which extends from the coast of New Hanover County, North Carolina to Duval County, Florida. The Gullah Geechee are survivors of the Middle Passage, brought to the Americas as enslaved Africans. Gullah Geechee lived in relative isolation on the sea islands and coastal Atlantic plains, allowing them to preserve much of their African traditions, arts, food crafts, and language, which have strongly influenced the American cultural fabric today. There is a strong sense of Place in Brunswick, where many families have lived in and around the city for many generations.

Today, socioeconomic factors such as lack of access to good paying jobs and job training, as well as inability to afford rising housing costs, have stranded working African American families in neighborhoods plagued by flooding and deteriorating housing. Affordable housing communities built by local developers are well kept, but there are not enough of them. Approximately 1,400 families are on the Brunswick Housing Authority eight-year waiting list for public housing or Housing Vouchers.

That is not to say the legacy of racism and segregation does not exist in Brunswick. A painful reminder in 2020 was the murder of Ahmad Arbury, a young Black jogger who was chased through a mostly white Brunswick neighborhood and killed by three white men, who were subsequently convicted of murder and hate crimes. But while many young African Americans leave Brunswick seeking better opportunities in cities like Atlanta, many others remain in Brunswick due to deep roots and family ties. These residents must often settle for low-paying service jobs in the tourist/service industry.

Census Data shows that, since 2020, Georgia has attracted 200,000 new residents. One and one-half hours from Brunswick, a new Hyundai electric vehicle plant that will employ 8,000 people. Since 2019, tourism in Glynn County, where Brunswick is located, has increased 24%. Brunswick could attract commuters or people seeking a second home near barrier island beaches. Brunswick. It is vital that Brunswick renovates existing affordable housing and builds new housing for current residents. Gentrification must not displace generations.

Public Information Program: The Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Program will create a public information plan working with the Neighborhood Planning Assemblies to inform the community of its activities and houses for sale. Information about available affordable housing will be disseminated through Neighborhood Planning Assemblies, nonprofit organizations serving the community, as well as community and church groups. Fact sheet and brochures will also be placed in health clinics, childcare centers, and after-school programs, even hair salons … any entities utilized by the community.

**v. Budget**

See attached budget.

**c. CAPACITY**

**i. City Capacity to Carry Out Plan**

The city of Brunswick has a commission/manager form of government. Departments of the city report to the City Manager and each department is headed and staffed by professionals.

The Department of Neighborhood and Community Services (DNCS) manages the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) funded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 2024, the new Brunswick Department of Housing and Revitalization headed by its own director, will be located within DNCS. Assisting DNCS is the Department of Planning, Development and Codes. The department is comprised of Planning and Zoning, Building Permits & Inspections, Code Enforcement, and Historic Preservation.

The Department of Public Works and City Engineers oversee programs and activities such as the New Town stormwater drainage improvement project funded by this grant.

Russ Marane, a contract housing specialist, will provide overall assistance. Work will be bid out and done by contractors. The Brunswick Finance Department will manage provide financial management.

New positions will include the following:

* full-time housing inspectors and contract writers
* A full-time outreach specialist to build capacity of local nonprofits in housing and

 Through this grant, Brunswick will develop capacity of local nonprofits to provide housing counseling and financial literacy services, as well as assist the city with housing rehabilitation and construction.

**D. LEVERAGE**

The City of Brunswick has allocated significant funds for the launching of the Brunswick Rehabilitation and Housing Program.

* $2.5 million earmarked for housing rehabilitation.
* $11.5 million in local SPLOST funding committed to the Storm Drainage and Flood Control Master Plan
* Other SPLOST funding includes $8 million for street resurfacing and sidewalk improvements and $4.5 million for Parks and Recreation.

The City is actively pursuing other funding, including:

* The Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP), which provides funding for affordable home construction or rehabilitation. $600,000 annually.
* Corporate and foundation grants to match the city’s funding for housing rehabilitation, including Koch (Georgia Pacific) Charities. $500,000
* Infrastructure grants to match the city’s investment in stormwater and flood control. $1 million and higher.

**E. LONG TERM EFFECTS**

The outcomes of the six-year HUD PRO grant include:

* Stormwater and flood abatement in the New Town community
* Rehabilitation of at least 50 houses/year, for a minimum total of 300 houses rehabilitated.
* Demolition of 300 dilapidated structures
* Construction of 10 houses a year on vacant lots, for a total of 100 new houses constructed.
* Demonstration project on Norwich Street: a vacant commercial property repurposed into housing.

A 20-year plan anticipates the following:

* Rehabilitation of 2,000 houses throughout the City
* Removal of 400 vacant and dilapidated structures
* Construction of 1000 new houses on cleared land within neighborhoods
* Repurposing of vacant commercial properties into housing, or a mix of commercial and housing
* Introduction of new housing for moderate income families to encourage mixed household incomes in Brunswick neighborhoods.
* A community more resilient to flooding caused by frequent coastal weather through flood control structures and passive resilient measures along river and stream banks and marsh areas adjacent to them.