



CDBG Revitalization Area Strategies 2017 Applicants' Manual

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

BACKGROUND

The Revitalization Area Strategies designation provides incentives to communities who implement comprehensive redevelopment activities for targeted areas in their city or county. A local government with a RAS designation may receive bonus points on its annual CDBG application and the ability to apply annually for CDBG funds for three years, provided that all DCA timeliness criteria are met.

The program was introduced by DCA in 2005 after conferring with local government elected officials, local government and regional commission staff members and consultants. These incentives were approved by HUD and are now part of the method of distribution in the state's Consolidated Plan.

The program rewards innovative local strategies and a commitment to redevelop a targeted area with a comprehensive, collaborative approach that includes private and public partners. Areas chosen for this program must be located in census block group(s) with 20% or greater poverty where an Urban Redevelopment Plan has been adopted. For RAS bonus points to be applied to the CDBG application, the CDBG activity must take place within a DCA-designated "Revitalization Area."

BONUS POINTS FOR REVITALIZATION AREA ACTIVITIES

A RAS designation allows a CDBG applicant to receive up to 20 bonus points on its application in the following areas:

A. Threshold Requirement (5 bonus points for CDBG)

In order to be eligible for the Revitalization Area designation and bonus points, a local government must establish a local redevelopment area and plan pursuant to O.C.G.A. 36-61-1 et seq. (See page 5 for more information on Urban Redevelopment Plans.)

Note that the RAS boundaries must be within both the local urban redevelopment area and one or more Census Block Groups with a poverty rate of 20% or greater.

The RAS application must include a narrative describing the basic activities proposed, how these activities are tied to the urban redevelopment plan, and the strategies to implement the plan. The application also requires information about the existing conditions of the proposed area, including a spreadsheet listing the tax value of properties in the RAS area.

Applicants must provide documentation of a robust public advisory process, first meeting the public hearing requirement for Georgia Urban Redevelopment law and also a citizen participation process for the RAS designation that meets CDBG requirements. (The RAS public hearing may be held at the same time as the CDBG pre-award public hearing.)

See the CDBG Applicants' Manual for more details concerning these requirements. The citizen participation requirements mirror the "Citizen Participation Plan" of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, used for the State Consolidated Plan. Links to these publications are at <http://www.dca.ga.gov/communities/CDBG/programs/CDBGforms.asp>.

B. Local Redevelopment Tools (5 bonus points for CDBG)

Points may be earned through the use of such tools as State Enterprise Zones, Opportunity Zones, Tax Allocation Districts, Community or Business Improvement Districts, Land Bank Authority or other targeted investment and/or redevelopment programs targeted for the area. Applicants must indicate how tools are being used to benefit the RAS area.

C. Investment Partnerships (maximum of 5 bonus points for CDBG)

Up to 5 points may be earned through providing documentation of investments into the area by certain revitalization, residential improvement, social service funding programs or job creation / retention programs applicable to the RAS area. The programs may be chartered by the state, federal government or private philanthropic, non-profit and/or faith based organizations.

To receive points, documentation must be provided showing a firm, long-term commitment by the investment partner or a long-term commitment by the applicant to use investment partners as part of their RAS strategy. Investment partnerships may be with private developers and/or various public programs chartered by the State of Georgia, the Georgia Housing and Finance Authority, the U.S. Department of Treasury, the SBA, the USDA, the Federal Home Loan Bank, the TVA, HUD, DOL, Habitat for Humanity, The Fuller Center for Housing, or other non-profit organizations.

D. Collaboration (maximum of 5 bonus points for CDBG)

Points may be earned through the demonstration that initiatives will be created and/or undertaken within the eligible area by private for-profit and not-for-profit community stakeholders. These stakeholders may include local lending institutions, community or neighborhood housing organizations, community development organizations or other community groups who have taken responsibility to carry out some aspect of the Revitalization Area Strategy. Examples may include GICH program activities, housing or other task forces, city code enforcement efforts, credit counseling, home ownership classes, etc. Documentation may include letters of commitment, agreements, and other evidence of capacity and commitment.

Point Calculation

After the threshold eligibility is determined, the applicant receives 5 points. The remaining points are determined by assessing the documentation provided for economic development tools, the extent of investment partnerships and the degree of collaboration. News articles and supporting photos are encouraged as well as letters from collaborative and investment partners outlining specific actions planned and/or undertaken.

In years two and three of the designation, annual progress reports (using Form 2) are due which detail the ongoing activities of the RAS.

REVITALIZATION AREA DESIGNATION

Revitalization Areas will be designated or reauthorized through a review process separate from CDBG application review. The application for RAS designation can be made at any time before the deadline for CDBG applications.

A DCA Revitalization Area designation is valid for three years at which time the sponsoring entity must reapply for designation with DCA. If the community desires to alter the boundaries of an approved Revitalization Area in the meantime, an amended map and any additional pertinent information must be

submitted to DCA for approval. The RAS program allows local leaders to design an approach that brings together a variety of resources and methods in order to focus on geographic areas in need of redevelopment. Because areas targeted for redevelopment often require significant effort over time, DCA will only allow geographic amendments to RAS boundaries every three years upon application for renewal status. This will allow local leaders to continue to focus on a limited geographic area, increasing positive impacts that will be sustainable and improving the chances that positive results will “spillover” to surrounding areas.

There is no limit to the number of revitalization areas a community may designate, although parcels within a single designated area must be contiguous.

Applicants are encouraged to read this manual and also “RAS Form 1” for application instructions. Please contact DCA as soon as possible if technical assistance is needed. See contact information at the end of the manual.

APPLICATION ELEMENTS

1. Urban Redevelopment Plan, resolutions, certifications—The application must include a copy of a properly adopted redevelopment plan (including any amendments) for the area that meets the requirements of the Georgia Urban Redevelopment Act pursuant to O.C.G.A. 36-61-1 et seq. In addition, the application must include a copy of all resolutions establishing urban redevelopment area(s) and resolutions to adopt the plan. The application must include a certification from the local government’s attorney that the resolutions and policies and the authorizing resolutions for the urban redevelopment plan were adopted in accordance with applicable law and applicable public hearing requirements. In the case of a redevelopment plan that includes multiple local governments, the local government attorney in each jurisdiction must execute a certification. See more details on Urban Redevelopment Plans in section below.

2. RAS Map – Your Revitalization Area Strategy Map will include four delineated areas that overlap.

20% Poverty Block Groups	Area shown as having 20% or greater poverty by the US Census. A CDBG Revitalization Area Strategy (RAS) must be located within these block groups. Please refer to DCA’s interactive map showing Block Groups with 20% or greater poverty: http://georgia-dca.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html/ .
Urban Redevelopment Area	A CDBG Revitalization Area Strategy (RAS) must be located within the Urban Redevelopment Area. Authorized by OCGA 36-61-1, this area may be larger than your RAS area, either because the urban redevelopment plan predates the strategy or the local government has other objectives for the redevelopment plan outside of CDBG applications.
Revitalization Area	The area covered by your strategy. Please consider your ability to track property values annually as you select your area.
CDBG Target Area	The location of your CDBG Application project. The CDBG Target Area must be located within the RAS.

Application must contain two copies of a map showing the above areas. These maps may be folded and submitted in an envelope (no tube is required.) A map size of 11" by 17" is adequate for the application.

Content: (1) The map's extent shall clearly demonstrate the location of the area in relation to surrounding areas. (2) The map shall display and identify any local government boundaries within the map extent. Such boundaries shall be uniquely symbolized (i.e., type and thickness) and all jurisdictions shall be identified. (3) The map shall display and identify the Census Block Groups within the map extent. Such boundaries shall be uniquely symbolized (i.e., type and thickness). (4) The map shall display and identify the proposed boundaries of the Revitalization Area within the map extent. Such boundaries shall be uniquely symbolized (i.e., type and thickness). (5) The map shall identify individual plats within the RAS boundaries.

Caption: The map shall have a title or name which shall be contained in the caption, and the caption shall also provide the minimum following information: (1) The county or municipal corporation. (2) The date of map preparation. (3) The scale, stated and shown graphically. (4) The name, address, and telephone number of the preparer. (5) A legend that labels all boundaries and demarcations used in the map.

3. Activities to be undertaken—Application must include a description of activities to promote the substantial revitalization of the area, including the promotion of economic empowerment through job creation for the unemployed and low- and moderate-income residents.

4. Evidence of Citizen Participation—The locality must provide evidence that a local citizen participation process was used that meets the requirements of 24 CFR 91.115 and 24 CFR 570.486(a) and also demonstrates that local residents fully support the proposed strategy. Evidence may include minutes or advertisements of public meetings, advisory committee lists and minutes, news articles, letters of support from participating organizations, and signed petitions from area residents.

5. Assessment of the economic conditions—The locality must include an assessment of the economic conditions of the proposed area to include:

1. Taxable value of property for the most recent tax year available, using a spreadsheet that lists each parcel number, parcel address, value, and showing the sum of the total value of the area.
2. Number of business/ occupational licenses issued, if applicable.
3. Number and value of building permits issued.
4. Opportunities available for economic development improvement.
5. Problems likely to be encountered.

6. Representative photos—Application must include photos that depict the condition of the RAS area. These photos may be provided as individual color prints or they may be printed digitally. Photos may also be provided on a disk.

URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN—THRESHOLD CRITERION

In order to meet the threshold for a RAS designation and receive at least 5 bonus points on CDBG applications, local governments must develop an Urban Redevelopment Plan that meets the

requirements of the statute and shows a real desire to commit to a strategy for revitalization of the chosen area.

Below, we provide a list of elements that should be included in an Urban Redevelopment Plan. These items are based on the requirements of the Georgia Urban Redevelopment Law (O.C.G.A. 36-61-1 et seq.) Specifically, the list concentrates on the definition of an Urban Redevelopment Plan spelled out in §36-61-2 ¶21 O.C.G.A., which states:

(21) “Urban redevelopment plan” means a plan, as it exists from time to time, for an urban redevelopment project, which plan shall:

- (A) Conform to the general plan for the municipality or county as a whole; and
- (B) Be sufficiently complete to indicate such land acquisition, demolition and removal of structures, redevelopment, improvements, and rehabilitation as may be proposed to be carried out in the urban redevelopment area; zoning and planning changes, if any; land uses; maximum densities; building requirements; and the plan’s relationship to definite local objectives respecting appropriate land uses, improved traffic, public transportation, public utilities, recreational and community facilities, and other public improvements.

Furthermore, the list also considers the statutory language of §36-61-7 ¶ d) O.C.G.A.:

d) Following such hearing, the local governing body may approve an urban redevelopment plan if it finds that:

- (1) A feasible method exists for the relocation of families who will be displaced from the urban redevelopment area in decent, safe, and sanitary dwelling accommodations within their means and without undue hardship to such families;
- (2) The urban redevelopment plan conforms to the general plan of the municipality or county as a whole; and
- (3) The urban redevelopment plan will afford maximum opportunity, consistent with the sound needs of the municipality or county as a whole, for the rehabilitation or redevelopment of the urban redevelopment area by private enterprise.

Elements of an Urban Redevelopment Plan

The following plan elements should be included in an Urban Redevelopment Plan:

- A Statement that the URP is consistent with the city’s comprehensive plan.
- Clearly defined boundaries of the redevelopment area(s) (which need not be contiguous).
- Explanation of negative conditions in the area necessitating redevelopment and an explication of how the area meets the act’s definition of slum and blight.
- The city’s land use objectives for the area (types of uses, building requirements, zoning changes, and development densities).
- Description of land parcels to be acquired.
- Structures to be demolished or rehabilitated.
- A workable plan for leveraging private resources to redevelop the area.
- A strategy for relocating any displaced residents.
- Any covenants or restrictions to be placed on properties in the redevelopment area in order to implement the plan.
- Public infrastructure to be provided – transportation, water, sewer, sidewalks, lighting, streetscapes, public recreational space, parking, etc., to support redevelopment of the area.

- A workable strategy for implementing the plan.

In addition, the plan must provide for:

- A feasible method for the relocation of families who will be displaced into decent, safe, and sanitary housing within their means, and
- Maximum opportunity for the rehabilitation or redevelopment of the area by private enterprise.

Tips for Your URA

- To the extent possible, list or map specific properties to be renovated or demolished and indicate plan for these structures. If all of these properties have not been identified at the time of plan adoption, at a minimum you should describe the specific criteria or definitions that will be applied in making the decision to demolish structures and indicate the approximate numbers and locations of structures planned for remodeling, public acquisition and/or demolition. Using definitions of housing conditions from HUD or the census are encouraged. If properties are being acquired for reasons other than dilapidation or poor conditions please, explain the reason for this strategy.
- Please state specifically whether you plan to allow or require exceptions to your existing zoning, subdivision, building or other land development regulations. Please describe the nature of these in greater detail. For example, describe possible changes in review and approval procedures, changes to allowable uses, architectural requirements, required or prohibited building materials or landscaping requirements, changes in setbacks, heights or signage. Indicate whether implementing your redevelopment plan will require any formal amendments to your current ordinances or adoption of additional regulatory instruments. Indicate approximately when these amendments will occur or take effect (if applicable) or if no changes or exceptions are anticipated, include a statement to that effect.
- If land acquisitions will occur in order to provide public amenities or infrastructure, please indicate the approximate acreage and general locations of these projects.
- Please provide more detailed information about proposed public infrastructure to be provided – transportation, water, sewer, sidewalks, lighting, streetscapes, public recreational space, parking, etc., to support redevelopment of the area and describe approximately when these will be constructed and how they are expected to be funded, or if no such improvements are identified, please include a statement to that effect.
- Please include a transparent public process for the disposition of publicly acquired property to private sector entities that will redevelop the property according to the URP.

HOW TO APPLY

Revitalization Area Strategy applications for the 2017 Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) must be turned in on or before the CDBG Annual Competition applications. Applications will be accepted and can be approved any time before this date. Your RAS application, using RAS Form 1, and supporting materials must come under separate cover from your CDBG project application. Applicants must submit an original application and one (1) copy (set of 2). Please be sure the copy has color photographs—they may be digitally printed or provided on disk. The RAS designation is good for three grant cycles; however point values will be reevaluated each year.

Included in the submission are the “Application Elements” listed on page 4 of this manual: the Urban

Redevelopment Plan with resolutions and certifications, two maps, the strategy/ activities planned for the area, community participation process, economic conditions of the area, and photos.

REPORTING

If your application is approved, you will be required to submit an economic conditions report with your Annual Progress report, using RAS Form 2. You will submit an original and one (1) copy (set of 2). The report includes all actions taken to further the local strategy above and beyond CDBG activities that are reported on DCA's quarterly reports for CDBG Recipients.

The annual report also includes updates to the economic indicators you reported on during the application process. Failure to submit the report could affect your community's ability to draw funds or apply for future revitalization area strategy approval.

The report on the economic conditions of the revitalization strategy area includes:

- Taxable value of property for the most recent tax year available.
- Number of business/occupational licenses issued.
- Number and value of building permits issued.
- Total number of jobs created.
- Number of low- to moderate-income jobs created.

FORMS REQUIRED

1. RAS Form 1 is required for the Revitalization Area Strategy application.
2. RAS Form 2 is required for the Annual Progress Report.

Forms must be certified by the Chief Local Government Elected Official.

DEADLINES FOR APPLICATIONS, ANNUAL REPORTS AND RENEWALS

RAS applications, annual reports and renewals are due at the time of the deadline for CDBG applications. For FY 2017, the deadline is April 3, 2017. If a community's status has expired due to the expiration of the 3-year designation period for RAS, applications for renewals must also be submitted by April 3, 2017. DCA reserves the right to deny benefits under RAS to communities that do not meet all deadline and reporting requirements by providing complete information by the applicable deadlines.

Please send your submission to: Steed Robinson, Office of Community Development, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, 60 Executive Park South, NE, Atlanta, GA 30329.

Please contact Steed Robinson at (404) 679-3168 or steed.robinson@dca.ga.gov for further information.