

RESOLUTION NO. 201230

A resolution of the City of Gainesville, Florida, amending and restating Resolution Number 160416; providing for the source of funding for the ConnectFree Program; providing the projects that are eligible to receive ConnectFree grant funding; providing the criteria for each project to receive grant funding; providing for grant funding amounts; authorizing the City Manager to administer the ConnectFree Program; providing an immediate effective date.

WHEREAS, the City of Gainesville owns, operates, and maintains a utility system that provides electric power, water, wastewater, natural gas and telecommunication services to a region within and beyond the municipal boundaries of the City; and

WHEREAS, the City of Gainesville, in accordance with Sections 27-128 and 27-169 of the Code of Ordinances, imposes a 25 percent surcharge on water and wastewater connection charges incurred beyond the municipal boundaries of the City (“Surcharges”); and

WHEREAS, in 2016, the City re-established the ConnectFree Program by Resolution No. 160146. The Surcharges fund the ConnectFree Program which was established to assist with extension, construction, and connection of certain properties to the City’s water, wastewater, and reclaimed water systems; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission has determined to expand the ConnectFree Program for certain septic-to-sewer projects; and

WHEREAS, this resolution amends and restates the ConnectFree Program to include certain septic-to-sewer projects and directs the expenditure of ConnectFree Program funds.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA:

1. **Source of Funding.** All surcharges collected on water and wastewater connection charges incurred beyond the municipal boundaries in accordance with Sections 27-128 and 27-169 of the Code of Ordinances shall be used to fund the ConnectFree Program, which shall be administered in accordance with this resolution.
2. **ConnectFree Program.** The Connect Free Program provides grant funding for the following projects:
 - a. The ConnectFree Program may provide grant funding to assist with the

payment of costs associated with the extension, construction, and connection to the City's water, wastewater, and reclaimed water systems throughout the entire Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) service area; and.

- b. The ConnectFree Program may provide grant funding to assist income eligible households with the costs of on-site plumbing modifications needed to extend, construct, or connect to the City's water, wastewater, or reclaimed water systems. Income eligible households are those that meet the criteria for low income, very low income, or extremely low income as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); and
- c. The ConnectFree Program may provide grant funding for septic-to-sewer projects that address environmental problems by converting residential properties from septic tank systems to the City of Gainesville's centralized wastewater treatment system. For eligible septic-to-sewer projects ConnectFree funds may assist with the payment of costs associated with the extension, construction, and connection to the City's wastewater system, including on-site plumbing modifications. Households do not have to meet criteria for low, very low, or extremely low income criteria to be eligible for on-site plumbing.

3. **ConnectFree Program Criteria:** The following criteria shall apply to ConnectFree Program grants:

- a. For projects that receive ConnectFree Program grant funding pursuant to paragraphs 2.a and b above, funding will be limited to: 1) owner-occupied or rental residential dwellings, and 2) facilities that are owned and operated by nonprofit organizations or government entities to benefit special needs populations in the community. Special needs populations include but are not limited to: elderly persons; disabled persons; homeless persons; veterans; persons with chronic illnesses; at-risk youth; survivors of domestic violence; and persons with addictions.
- b. For Projects that receive ConnectFree grant funding for eligible septic-to-sewer projects pursuant to paragraph 2. c above, funding is limited to the following:
 - i. projects in which ConnectFree funds are used in conjunction with grant funding provided by other entities; and
 - ii. the project will address suspected or confirmed impacts to surface water as determined by Alachua County Health Department and/or Alachua County Environmental Protection Department.

4. **ConnectFree Program grant funding amounts:**
- a. For grant funding pursuant to paragraphs 2.a or b above, the maximum funding provided for an extension to an individual structure shall be \$10,000 for water facilities and \$25,000 for wastewater facilities, which shall be in addition to any applicable on-site plumbing modifications and connection charges/surcharges also paid by the ConnectFree Program.
 - b. For grant funding pursuant to paragraphs 2.a. or b which involve extensions of water, wastewater or reclaimed water to a neighborhood consisting of more than one residential structure, one of the following additional funding requirements must be met:
 - i. all structures are participating and each individual structure receives funding at or below the maximum funding limit set forth in paragraph 4.a; or
 - ii. at least 60% of the total number of structures are participating and the total extension cost to be funded by ConnectFree divided by the total number of is at or below the maximum funding limit set forth in paragraph 4.a.
 - c. For grant funding pursuant to paragraph 2.c above, The maximum funding for extension to an individual structure shall be limited to \$40,000 for an individual structure for eligible septic to sewer projects.
5. ConnectFree Program funds should be allocated on an annual basis as follows, but may be reallocated by the City Manager or designee(s) based on actual needs:
- i. **60% - Single Units/Neighborhood Extensions** – Owner-occupied/rental and non-profit/government individual properties;
 - ii. **15% - Affordable Housing (minimum \$37,500)** – Local government contribution to affordable housing development projects leveraged with federal/state low-income housing tax credits;
 - iii. **10% - Public Health, Safety, Environmental (minimum \$25,000)** – Projects to address public health, safety or environmental welfare; and
 - iv. **15% - Program Delivery (minimum \$37,500)** – Costs for administering the ConnectFree Program.
- b. Funding priorities:

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Low-Income Area or Household AND Public Health/Safety/Environmental	X		
Low-Income Area or Household		X	
Public Health/Safety/Environmental		X	

Non-Profit/Government		X	
Non-Low-Income Area or Household			X

6. **City Manager Authority.** The City Manager or designee(s) shall identify and prioritize projects to receive ConnectFree Program funding in accordance with the directions in the resolution. The City Manager or designee is authorized to administer the ConnectFree Program and disburse all funding in accordance with this resolution. Any projects receiving \$50,000 or greater require approval by the City Commission.

7. **Effective Date.** Upon adoption, this resolution shall become effective immediately and supersedes and replaces Resolution No. 160146.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 20th day of May, 2021.

 Lauren Poe
 Mayor

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY:

 Omichele D. Gainey
 City Clerk

 Nicolle M. Shalley
 City Attorney