



## Orange County Assistance Policy Urgent Repair Program 2021

### What is the Urgent Repair Program?

Orange County has been awarded \$100,000 by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency ("NCHFA") under the 2021 cycle of the Urgent Repair Program ("URP21"). This program provides funds to assist very-low and low-income households with special needs in addressing housing conditions which pose imminent threats to their life and/or safety or to provide accessibility modifications and other repairs necessary to prevent displacement of very-low and low-income homeowners with special needs such as frail elderly and persons with disabilities. A total of 14 households will be assisted under URP21.

This Assistance Policy describes who is eligible to apply for assistance under URP21, how applications for assistance will be rated and ranked, what the form of assistance is, and how the repair/modification process will be managed. Orange County has designed this URP21 project to be fair, open, and consistent with the County's approved application for funding and with NCHFA's URP Program Guidelines.

The funds provided by NCHFA come from the North Carolina Housing Trust Fund. Additional funds for construction costs are provided by Orange County in the amount of \$40,000.

**EMERGENCY and HEALTH Notifications:** Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, increased awareness of the need to protect Orange County representatives and the homeowners they service from various health-related exposures has become more apparent than ever. Homeowners participating in URP must agree to follow all local, state, and federal guidelines for emergency preparedness surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and any other emergency declared that includes their property address for the duration of construction on the property.

### Who is eligible to apply?

To be eligible for assistance under URP21 applicants must:

- Reside within the county limits of Orange County and own and occupy the home in need of repair
- Have a household income which does not exceed 50% of the County median income for the household size (see income limits below)
- Have a special need (i.e. be  $\geq$  62 years old, handicapped or disabled, a single parent with a dependent living at home, a Veteran, a large family with  $\geq$  5 household members or a household with a child below the age of six with lead hazards in the home).
- Have urgent repair needs that cannot be met through other state- or federally-funded housing assistance programs

#### URP21 Income Limits\* for Orange County

Number in Household	30% of Median (very-low income)	50% of Median (low income)
1	\$18,150	\$30,250
2	\$20,750	\$34,600
3	\$23,350	\$38,900



4	\$25,900	\$43,200
5	\$28,000	\$46,700
6	\$30,050	\$50,150
7	\$32,150	\$53,600
8	\$34,200	\$57,050

*\*Income limits are subject to change based on annually published HUD HOME Limits and will be updated each year. This update will not require a re-approval of the governing authority.*

### **Outreach efforts of the Urgent Repair Program**

Orange County will advertise or publish an article about the Urgent Repair Program in local English-speaking and Spanish-speaking newspapers serving the County (such as *The Daily Tarheel*, *The News of Orange* and *La Noticia*), at senior centers throughout the County, with the County's partner agencies, and on the County's website.

### **Selection of applicants**

The County has devised the following priority system to rank eligible applicants, determine which of them will be selected for assistance and in what order. Under this system, applicants will receive points for falling into certain categories of special need and income. The applications will be ranked according to which receive the most points.

#### **Priority Ranking System for Orange County URP21**

<b>Special Needs (for definitions, see below)</b>	<b>Points</b>
Disabled, Elderly or Veteran Head of Household ( <i>62 or older</i> )	4
Disabled, Elderly, or Veteran Household Member ( <i>not Head of Household</i> )	3
Single-Parent Household ( <i>with one or more children in the home</i> )	3
Large Family ( <i>5 or more permanent residents</i> )	2
Emergency ( <i>may submit without regard to application deadlines</i> )	2
Child under six years of age with lead hazards in the home	2
<b>Income (See Income Table above)</b>	<b>Points</b>
Less than 30% of County Median Income	10
30% to 50% of County Median Income	5

Under NCHFA Program Guidelines, a minimum of 50% of households assisted must have incomes which are less than 30% of the area median income for the household size, and no household with an income exceeding 50% of the area median income will be eligible. This guideline will be adhered to strictly and will be the primary factor in the selection of those households to be assisted under URP21.



Recipients of assistance under the URP21 will be chosen by the above criteria without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status and disability.

**The definitions of special needs** populations under URP21 are:

- *Elderly*: An individual aged 62 or older.
- *Emergency*: A situation in which a household member has an immediate threat of being evicted or removed from a home due to health or safety issues within a time frame that the program can complete a repair to stop eviction or removal. These applications will be received at any time during the funding cycle and evaluated on the ability of the program to complete the work in a timely manner that meets the goal of assisting homeowners to remain in their home.
- *Disabled*: A person who has a physical, mental or developmental disability that greatly limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.
- *Large Family*: A large family household is composed of five or more individuals; at least four are immediate family members.
- *Head of Household*: The person or persons who own(s) the house.
- *Household Member*: Any individual who is an occupant (defined below) of the unit to be rehabilitated shall be considered a "household member" (the number of household members will be used to determine household size and all household members are subject to income verification).
- *Occupant*: An occupant is defined as any immediate family member (mother, father, spouse, son/daughter of the head of the household, regardless of the time of occupancy); or non-immediate family member who has resided in the dwelling at least 3 months prior to the submission of the family's application.
- *Single-Parent Household*: A household in which one and only one adult resides with one or more dependent children.
- *Veteran*: A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.
- *Child with lead hazards in the home*: a child below the age of six living in the applicant house which contains lead hazards.

### **Client referral and support services**

Many homeowners assisted through the Urgent Repair Program may also need other services. When the Urgent Repair Program staff meet the homeowner during the work write-up process, they will discuss the resources and programs available in Orange County and provide pamphlets and a list of the agencies with contact information. With the homeowner's permission, a case file will be created and a staff person will follow up with the homeowner concerning the available services in the referral network.

### **What is the form of assistance under URP21?**

The County will provide assistance to homeowners, whose homes are selected for repair/modification in the form of a loan. Homeowners will receive an unsecured deferred, interest-free loan, forgiven at a rate of \$2,000 per year, until the principal balance is reduced to zero.



### **What is the amount of the loan?**

The amount of the loan will depend on the scope of work necessary to address the identified imminent threats to life and/or safety, and that will be determined by the County's rehabilitation specialist. There is no minimum to the amount of the loan; however, the maximum life-time limit according to the guidelines of URP21 is \$10,000.

### **What kinds of work will be done?**

Only repairs that address imminent threats to the life and/or safety of occupants of the dwelling unit or accessibility modifications will be performed under the County's URP. Please understand that all deficiencies in a home will likely not be able to be repaired with the available funds.

All work that is completed under URP21 must meet or exceed NC Residential Building Code.

### **Who will do the work on the homes?**

The County is obligated under URP21 to ensure that quality work is done at reasonable prices and that all work is contracted through a fair, open and competitive process. To meet those very difficult requirements, the County will invite bids only from contractors who are part of an "approved contractors' registry". Please request a copy of the County's Procurement and Disbursement Policy for further information.

(Homeowners who know of quality rehabilitation contractors that are not on the County's Contractor Registry are welcome to invite them to apply.)

A minimum of three approved contractors will be invited to bid on each job, and the lowest responsive and responsible bidder will be selected for the contract. "Responsive and responsible" is described in the Procurement and Disbursement Policy.

### **What are the steps in the process, from application to completion?**

Now that you have the information about how to qualify for Orange County URP21, what work can be done, and who will do it, let's go through all the major steps in the process:

1. **Completing an Application form:** Homeowners who wish to apply for assistance may apply by completing an application form, available at <http://orangecountync.gov/2211/Home-Repair-Programs> or by contacting Erika Brown at (919) 558-2700 or [ebrown@tjco.org](mailto:ebrown@tjco.org). Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis beginning October 18, 2021 until all funds are committed. Proof of ownership and income will be required. Those who have applied for housing assistance from the County in the past will not automatically be reconsidered. A new application will need to be submitted.
2. **Preliminary inspection:** The County's Rehabilitation Specialist will visit the homes of potential loan recipients to determine the need and feasibility of repairs/modifications.
3. **Screening of applicants:** Applications will be rated and ranked by the County based on the priority system outlined on page 2. The first round of households to be assisted will be selected by November 30, 2021. Household income will be verified for program purposes only (information will be kept confidential). Ownership of property will be verified along with other rating factors. From this review, the fourteen (14) most qualified applicants will be chosen according to the



priority system described above. There will also be a list of alternates in the order of qualification. If fewer than fourteen (14) applications are received by November 30, or if funds remain to assist more than fourteen (14) units, applications will continue to be accepted on a rolling basis until all funds are committed. Applicants not receiving notification by November 30, 2021 that they were chosen may contact Erika Brown at (919) 558-2700 to confirm the disposition of the application.

4. **Applicant interviews:** Approved applicants will be provided detailed information on assistance, program repair/modification standards and the contracting procedures associated with their project at this informational interview.
5. **Work write-up:** The County's Rehabilitation Specialist will visit the home again for a more thorough inspection. All parts of the home must be made accessible for inspection, including the attic and crawlspace, if any. The owner should report any known problems such as electrical short circuits, blinking lights, roof leaks and the like. The Rehabilitation Specialist will prepare complete and detailed work specifications (known as the "work write-up". A final cost estimate will also be prepared by the Rehabilitation Specialist and held in confidence until bidding is completed.
6. **Formal agreement:** After approval of the work write-up, the homeowner will sign a formal agreement that will explain and govern the repair/modification process and an explanation of the Promissory Note, which is considered a forgivable loan. This agreement will define the roles of the parties involved throughout the process.
7. **Contractor selection:** The County will, at its discretion (based on the availability of the contractor, demands of the job, and recent history of performance), select a contractor from the Contractors' Registry. The Rehab Specialist will make an effort to offer opportunity to all qualified contractors throughout each year by using the Registry on a rotational basis, returning to the top of the list once all contractors have been offered an opportunity to participate. Identified contractors will be provided with detailed work write-ups on each job and must submit a detailed and reasonable quote for the proposed work. The contractor will bill the Orange County Housing and Community Development Department and submit all invoices to the Rehab Specialist for review and approval prior to any disbursements from the Orange County Housing and Community Development Department.
8. **Execution of loan and contract:** The loan will be executed as well as the repair/modification contract prior to work beginning on the project. This contract will be between the contractor and homeowner, with the County signing as an interested third party. The cost of the actual work and project related support costs up to the maximum amount of \$1,000 will be included in the loan document.
9. **Pre-construction conference:** A pre-construction meeting will be held at the home. At this time, the homeowner, contractor and program representatives will be present and discuss the details of the work to be done. Starting and ending dates will be agreed upon, along with any special arrangements such as weekend or evening work hours and disposition of items to be removed from the home (such as old plumbing, etc.). If the contract has been executed, the County will issue a "proceed order" formally instructing the contractor to commence by the agreed-upon date within 24 hours of the pre-construction meeting.



10. **Construction:** The contractor will be responsible for obtaining any required building permits for the project before beginning work. The permit must be posted at the house during the entire period of construction. Program staff will closely monitor the contractor during the construction period to make sure that the work is being done according to the work write-up (which is made a part of the rehabilitation contract by reference) and in a timely fashion. Code Enforcement Officers will inspect new work for compliance with the State Building Code as required by the guidelines of URP21. The homeowner will be responsible for working with the contractor toward protecting personal property by clearing work areas as much as practicable.
11. **Change Orders:** All changes to the scope of work must be reduced to writing as a contract amendment (“change order”) and approved by all parties to the contract: the owner, the contractor and two representatives of Orange County. If the changes require an increase in the loan amount, a loan modification stating these changes in the contract amount must be completed by the County, and executed by the owner. If the changes result in a decrease in the loan amount, an estoppel informing the homeowner of these changes in the contract amount will be completed by the County and conveyed to the owner.
12. **Payments to contractor:** The contractor will be paid following inspection of and satisfactory completion of all items on the work write-up and change orders, if any, as outlined in the County’s Procurement and Disbursement Policy. The contractor will also be responsible for handing over all owner’s manuals and warranties on equipment, and reviewing with the homeowner all operating and maintenance requirements for new equipment installed.
13. **Closeout:** Once each item outlined in section 12 has been satisfied and the homeowner has signed a Certificate of Satisfaction, the job will be closed out (fully completed).

### What are the key dates?

If, after reading this document, you feel that you qualify for this program and wish to apply, please keep the following dates in mind:

- Applications available to the public starting October 18, 2021.
- First round of households selected from applications on November 30, 2021.
- All rehabilitation work must be under contract by October 12, 2022.
- All rehabilitation work must be completed by December 31, 2022.

### How do I request an application?

- Contact Erika Brown  
(919) 558-2700  
[ebrown@tjcog.org](mailto:ebrown@tjcog.org)
- OR download an application online: <http://orangecountync.gov/2211/Home-Repair-Programs>
- OR pick up an application at the Orange County Department of Housing and Community Development office at 300 W. Tryon Street, Hillsborough, NC 27278.



### **Is there a procedure for dealing with complaints, disputes and appeals?**

Although the application process and repair/modification guidelines are meant to be as fair as possible, Orange County realizes that there is still a chance that some applicants or participants may feel that they were not treated fairly. The following procedures are designed to provide an avenue for resolution of complaints and appeals.

#### ***During the application process:***

If an applicant feels that his/her application was not fairly reviewed or rated and would like to appeal the decision made about it, he/she should contact Erika Brown within five (5) days of the initial decision and voice their concern. If the applicant remains dissatisfied with the decision, the detailed complaint should be put into writing.

A written appeal must be made within ten (10) business days of the initial decision on an application.

Orange County will respond in writing to any complaints or appeals within 10 business days of receiving written comments.

#### ***During the repair/modification process:***

If the homeowner feels that repairs or modifications are not being completed per the contract, he/she must inform the contractor and the Rehabilitation Specialist.

The Rehabilitation Specialist will inspect the work in question. If it is found that the work is not being completed according to contract, the Rehabilitation Specialist will review the contract with the contractor and ask the contractor to remedy the problem.

If problems persist, a mediation conference between the homeowner and the contractor may be convened by the Rehabilitation Specialist and facilitated by the Orange County Housing and Community Development Director.

Should the mediation conference fail to resolve the dispute, the Director will render a written final decision.

If the Rehabilitation Specialist finds that the work is being completed according to contract, the complaint will be noted and the Rehabilitation Specialist and the homeowner will discuss the concern and the reason for the Rehabilitation Specialist's decision.

### **Will the personal information provided remain confidential?**

Yes. All information in applicant files will remain confidential. Access to the information will be provided only to County employees who are directly involved in the program, the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency and auditors.

### **What about conflicts of interest?**

No officer, employee or other public official of the County, or member of the County Commissioners, or entity contracting with the County that exercises any functions or responsibilities with respect to URP21 shall have any interest, direct or indirect, in any contract or subcontract for work to be performed with program funding, either for themselves or those with whom they have family or business ties, during their



tenure or for one year thereafter. Relatives of County employees, Board of Commissioners and others closely identified with the County, may be approved for rehabilitation assistance only upon public disclosure before the County Commissioners and written permission from NCHFA.

### **What about favoritism?**

All activities under URP21, including rating and ranking applications, inviting bids, selecting contractors and resolving complaints, will be conducted in a fair, open and non-discriminatory manner, entirely without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status and disability.

### **Who can I contact about URP21?**

Any questions regarding any part of this application or program should be addressed to:

Erika Brown  
(919) 558-2700  
[ebrown@tjcog.org](mailto:ebrown@tjcog.org)

David Saconn  
(919) 612-1527  
[dsaconn@orangecountync.gov](mailto:dsaconn@orangecountync.gov)

These contacts will do their utmost to answer questions and inquiries in the most efficient and correct manner possible.

This Assistance Policy is adopted this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2021.

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County Manager

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Notary Public