

## HJR42 INTRODUCED



1 HJR42

2 JPXBDFN-1

3 By Representatives Underwood, Harrison, Pettus

4 RFD: Rules

5 First Read: 22-Jan-26



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4 HJR\_\_\_\_ COMMENDING THE CITY OF FLORENCE AND THE OFFICE OF  
5 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ON RECEIVING THE 2026  
6 AUDREY NELSON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARD.

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8 WHEREAS, the National Community Development  
9 Association has recognized the City of Florence and the  
10 Office of Planning and Community Development for its  
11 innovative approach to community development by awarding it  
12 the 2026 Audrey Nelson Community Development Achievement  
13 Award for the Literacy Gardens at the Florence-Lauderdale  
14 Public Library; and

15 WHEREAS, the award honors exemplary use of Community  
16 Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to improve quality of  
17 life in low- to moderate-income communities; we extend  
18 special commendations to Melissa Bailey, Director of  
19 Planning and Community Development, for her instrumental  
20 role in obtaining this award; and

21 WHEREAS, the Literacy Gardens project addresses a  
22 critical community need for access to safe, flexible,  
23 technology-enabled spaces for education, work, and social  
24 connection; many Florence residents, particularly families  
25 and individuals in low- to moderate-income households, face  
26 barriers such as limited broadband access, crowded living  
27 conditions, and a lack of suitable places for outdoor  
28 learning or quiet study; and

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29           WHEREAS, at the heart of the project are two  
30   thoughtfully designed outdoor learning spaces; together, the  
31   gardens create the Shoals region's only public outdoor  
32   classrooms, filling a regional service gap and redefining  
33   how public space can support lifelong learning; and

34           WHEREAS, the Children's Garden functions as an  
35   open-air classroom for children from birth through age 10,  
36   designed with early literacy and sensory learning in mind,  
37   the space hosts story times, science activities, hands-on  
38   play, and family programs; the Reading Garden offers a  
39   shaded, peaceful environment for teens, adults, and seniors;  
40   with outdoor seating, electrical access, and public Wi-Fi,  
41   the garden supports reading, studying, remote work, and  
42   small group programs, extending the library's reach beyond  
43   its walls; and

44           WHEREAS, the project was made possible through a  
45   strategic investment of \$120,000 in CDBG funds, leveraged by  
46   more than \$250,000 in private donations raised through the  
47   Florence-Lauderdale Public Library Foundation and Friends of  
48   the Library; local businesses, donors, volunteers, and civic  
49   partners contributed funding, expertise, and hands-on  
50   support, creating a true community-built asset; and

51           WHEREAS, the City of Florence's Office of Planning  
52   and Community Development collaborated closely with the  
53   library to ensure the project aligned with federal CDBG  
54   objectives while supporting broader goals for downtown  
55   vitality, digital equity, and public well-being; as a shared  
56   civic resource, the gardens remain open and free to all,

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57 ensuring that every resident, regardless of age, income, or  
58 background, has a welcoming place to learn, connect, and  
59 grow; now therefore,

60 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH  
61 HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That we heartily congratulate the  
62 City of Florence and the Office of Planning and Community  
63 Development for receiving the 2026 Audrey Nelson Community  
64 Development Achievement Award for its impactful Literacy  
65 Gardens project, and we offer this resolution in tribute to  
66 its remarkable efforts.