

HR45 INTRODUCED



1 HR45
2 RBQKXMY-1
3 By Representatives Underwood, Harrison, Pettus
4 RFD:
5 First Read: 22-Jan-26



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4 HR_____ 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 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
61 LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, 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.