



Citizen Participation Plan Updates Summary

Note: This is a summary of the changes in the following pages the new updates are marked in **red** for the ease of the reviewer to read.

- Include a Natural Disasters and Public Health Emergencies Section.
- Include provisions relative to the Consolidated Planning process and participation waivers made available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.
- Include virtual hearings as an allowed method for citizen participation when necessary for public health reasons.
- Provide a 5-day notice/comment period for proposed amendments necessary to expedite and facilitate the use of funds to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.
- Include provisions relative to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) as well as other applicable U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funding made available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.



MACON-BIBB COUNTY CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

PURPOSE

The citizen participation requirements of 24 CFR Section 91.105 and 24 CFR Part 5, legislation requires all grantees to certify that they are following a citizen participation plan in the administration of the Community Planning and Development (CPD) programs that are funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). To comply with this requirement Macon-Bibb County through its Economic and Community Development Department has prepared a Citizen Participation Plan, which considers the elements outlined in the legislation. The Citizen Participation Plan presents the County's plan for providing for and encouraging all citizens to participate in the development, revision, amendment, adoption, and implementation of The Citizen Participation Plan, The Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), The Consolidated Plan (CP), The Annual Action Plan (AAP) and The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

The Economic and Community Development Department is the lead agency responsible for the administration of HUD CPD Programs to include but are not limited to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program, and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program.

ENCOURAGE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Macon-Bibb County through its Economic and Community Development Department (ECDD) has taken actions to provide for and encourage increased participation in the development of any consolidated plan, any substantial amendment to the consolidated plan and the performance report. The County encourages participation by low- and moderate-income persons, particularly those living in areas designated as revitalization areas or in slum and blighted areas and in areas where HUD funds are proposed to be used, and by residents of predominantly low- and moderate- income neighborhoods. The County also takes additional actions to encourage the participation of all its citizens, including minorities and non-English speaking persons, as well as persons with disabilities. Some of the additional actions include publishing information in locations where various individuals and groups seek information that may impact their neighborhood and/or communities.

Interested groups and individuals are encouraged to provide input into all aspects of the County's Consolidated Planning activities, from assessing needs to setting priorities through performance evaluation. By following the Citizen Participation Plan Process, numerous opportunities for citizens to contribute information, ideas and opinions about ways to improve our neighborhoods, promote housing affordability and enhance the delivery of public services to local residents will occur. Opportunities to comment on or participate in planning community development and affordable housing activities and projects will be publicized.

DEVELOPMENT OF CONSOLIDATED PLAN

Before Macon-Bibb County adopts a consolidated plan, it will make information available to citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties that include the amount of assistance the County expects to receive and the range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low-and moderate income.

Although the County does not anticipate any residential displacement to occur in the foreseeable future, the County is required to describe its plans to minimize the displacement of persons and to assist any persons displaced. The County analyzes the impact certain programs (especially housing) have had in the low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. When displacement is unavoidable on a temporary or permanent basis, the County will comply with the federal Uniform Relocation Act. Should displacement of residents be necessary as a result of the use of funds covered by this Plan, the County shall compensate residents who are actually displaced in accordance with HUD Handbook No. 1378, Tenant Assistance, Relocation and Real Property Acquisition.

Macon-Bibb County will publish the proposed consolidated plan in a manner that affords citizens, public agencies and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to examine its contents. The County will publish a summary of the proposed consolidated plan on the County's website and in the local newspaper, one widely publicized paper in the Middle Georgia area; The Telegraph and the minority newspapers and/or other social media advertising efforts. The summary will provide the contents and purpose of the consolidated plan and include a list of locations where copies of the entire proposed consolidated plan may be examined. If individuals need assistance or need a translator, the County's contact information to obtain assistance will be included in the summary along with the date that the 30-day comment period ends and how to submit comments. All citizen comments are reviewed and incorporated in the Action Plan, Consolidated Plan and Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) as applicable.

AMENDMENTS

If a substantial change occurs in the funding during the budgeting process, an additional 30-day comment period will be required for amendments to the Action Plan or plans affected along with the Consolidated Plan unless otherwise noted by HUD. The

additional comment period gives citizens, public agencies and other interested parties an opportunity to comment prior to implementing the amendment. The current definition of substantial change is the addition or deletion of projects and/or a decrease or increase of funding by more than 20%.

NATIONAL DISASTERS AND PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

In the event funding is provided to the County because of a natural disaster or public health emergency, Macon-Bibb County will follow guidelines as outlined in the requirements of the funds being sought.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, also known as the CARES Act, is a law meant to address the economic fallout of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic in the United States. The CARES Act made available additional funding in Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funds and Emergency Solutions Grant Coronavirus (ESG-CV) funds to grantees based on the FY 2020 grant formula. The CARES Act adds additional flexibility for both the grants and, in some cases, for the annual HUD fiscal year 2019 and 2020 CDBG and ESG grants in these unprecedented times. According to the funding regulations, the public comment period is reduced to not less than 5 days, grantees may use virtual public hearings when necessary for public health reasons, the public services cap is suspended during the emergency, and states and local governments may reimburse costs of eligible activities incurred for pandemic response regardless of the date.

In addition, the CARES Act authorizes the Secretary of HUD to grant waivers and alternative requirements of statutes and regulations the Secretary of HUD administers in connection with the use of CDBG-CV and ESG-CV funds and HUD fiscal year 2019 and 2020 CDBG and ESG funds (except for requirements related to fair housing, nondiscrimination, labor standards, and the environment). Waivers and alternative requirements can be granted when necessary to expedite and facilitate the use of funds to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

These edits do not change current citizen participation policies but have been modified to allow for necessary expedited actions during times of declared disaster or emergencies.

PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Macon-Bibb County will allow a 15-day comment period to receive comments on the Consolidated Annual Plan Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) that will be submitted to HUD at the end of each fiscal year.

Citizens are informed through newspaper articles, public notices, and public hearings concerning the grant funding objectives, changes in the use of funds, availability of Action Plan and other pertinent information as it relates to the CPD Program. When possible, the County will make use of public service announcements and the cable access channel to inform the public of matters relative to the program.

REASONABLE AND TIMELY ACCESS TO LOCAL MEETINGS

Macon-Bibb County will continue to provide its citizens with reasonable and timely access to all Public Hearings and local public meetings. Information and records relating to CPD Programs are made available to the public for review and comment in accordance with the requirements of Federal and State laws and regulations.

Notices of Public Hearings are placed in the local newspaper, one widely publicized paper in the Middle Georgia area; The Telegraph and the minority newspapers and/or other social media advertising efforts. The advertisements are headed as **Public Notices** in bold black type in the sections of the newspaper or on social media where most likely to be read by the majority of the citizens (especially those who are potential beneficiaries of the CPD Programs).

Descriptive information concerning the CPD Programs, Proposed Statement of Objectives and Uses of Funds and Final Statements, Grantee Performance reports and other information such as descriptions of the housing and small business loan programs are placed in the reception area of the office of Economic and Community Development and also made available to the website. The County will continue its efforts to make local meetings and information accessible to the general public.

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PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CITIZENS

Macon-Bibb County through the Economic and Community Development Department staff provides technical assistance to the citizens of Macon who request such assistance in developing project proposals or other information which relates to the CPD programs. There is an ECDD staff person available for all neighborhood meetings and other activities carried out throughout the County to answer questions concerning the CPD programs. The County conducts funding workshops to apprise the public of funding availability and offer technical assistance to agencies, groups and individuals. The ECDD staff is available to discuss project proposals with non-profits concerning compliance requirements, project eligibility, etc., as long as it is not during the annual request for proposal process.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Macon-Bibb County holds Public Hearings to obtain citizens' comments and concerns and to respond to questions at all stages of program planning and implementations. All activities proposed for funding with CPD funds will be carefully reviewed and appropriate recommendations will be made to the Mayor and County Commission. Notice of Public Hearings will be published in The Telegraph and at least one (1) minority newspaper at least seven days prior to the hearings. The hearings will be held at locations and times convenient for those persons who are likely to benefit from the program(s). The Public Hearings will be held at sites that are handicap accessible and has adequate parking. All Public Hearings will be properly documented to include the following:

- List of attendees
- Public comments
- Proposed objectives and projects

Written minutes of the Public Hearings will be placed on file in the Economic and Community Development Department and will be available for public review as requested. Any citizen's complaints related to the consolidated plan, amendments or the performance report should also be addressed to the address above. The County will provide a response to your complaint within 15 working days when practical.

Macon-Bibb County will consider any comments or views of citizens that are provided at the public hearings as well as any that are received in writing during the public comment period. A summary of the comments or views will also be attached to the final consolidated plan.

- For projects utilizing CDBG and ESG funds under fiscal year 2019 and 2020 and the CARES Act funding, Macon-Bibb County may conduct virtual hearings when necessary. If virtual hearings are used, real-time responses and accommodations for persons with disabilities and/or with limited English proficiency will be made available to the greatest extent possible. Also, the virtual hearing method will only be used in lieu of in-person hearings if national or local health authorities recommend social distancing and limit public gatherings for public health reasons.
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NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY/COMPLAINT REVIEW PROCESS

It is the policy of Macon-Bibb County to provide equal opportunity for services to all citizens without regard to race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, or handicap or disability. No person shall, on the basis of race, religion, sex, color, age, national origin, etc, be excluded from or be denied the benefits of any program or activity administered by Macon-Bibb County CDBG Program.

Persons who feel that they have been discriminated against by a program or project funded under the CPD Programs administered by Economic and Community Development may file a complaint, in writing, to:

Manager
Economic and Community Development Department

200 Cherry Street, Suite 100
Macon, Georgia 31201

The complaint must contain the following information:

1. Name and address of the person filing the complaint
2. Description of the act(s) considered to be in violation
3. Other available information which will assist in the investigation of the complaint.

Such complaints should be filed within sixty (60) days of the alleged discriminatory act. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Manager within fifteen (15) working days will issue a written response as to the disposition of the complaint. The response will include information concerning the right of appeal should the complainant disagree in whole or in part with the response to the complaint or if the response is delayed more than fifteen (15) working days. The appeal may be made in writing to:

Mayor
Macon-Bibb County
P.O. Box 247
Macon, Georgia 31202

The Mayor not later than thirty (30) days will issue a written response as to the disposition of the complaint. The Complainant, if dissatisfied with the response by the Mayor, may appeal the disposition of the complaint to:

Director
Community Planning and Development
U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
40 Marietta Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

The identity of the complainant shall be kept confidential, except to the extent necessary to carry out or conduct investigations, hearings, or judicial proceedings arising out of the complaint.

PROVISION FOR NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING RESIDENTS

The number of non-English speaking residents, in Macon-Bibb County is low. However, Spanish speaking residents are the largest non-English speaking residents. Therefore, to encourage non-English speaking residents to participate in the development of the Consolidated Plan, Action Plan, and CAPER the County will undertake the following initiatives for these activities:

- Publish advertisements in English and Spanish.
- Advertise with the local Spanish newspaper when possible.
- If contacted prior to the public hearing will provide an interpreter and

- The County will provide a Spanish version of meeting agendas, handouts and surveys at meetings and stakeholder interviews conducted for each planning process as requested.

CONCLUSION

Macon-Bibb County will continue to make every possible effort to comply with all Community Development Block Grant requirements and will provide for and encourage increased citizen participation in its CPD programs.

For further information concerning Macon-Bibb County's Citizens' Participation Plan, Contact:

Manager
Economic and Community Development Department
200 Cherry Street, Suite 100
Macon, Georgia 31201
(478) 751-7190