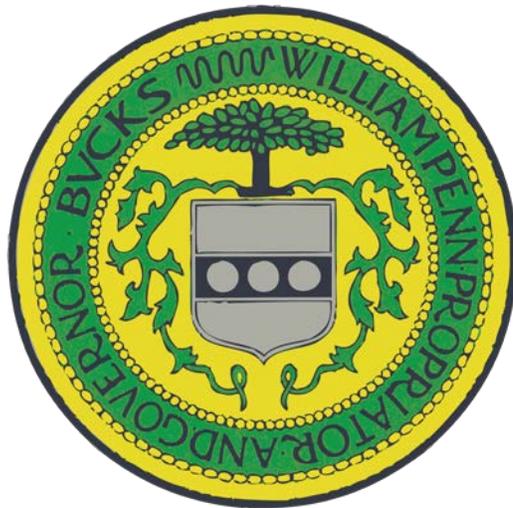


**County of Bucks
Citizen Participation Plan
for HUD Funded
Community Planning and Development Programs**

**Community Development Block Grant, Emergency Shelter Grant, and
HOME Program Initiatives**



BUCKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

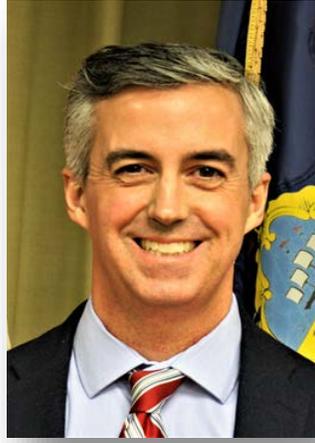
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (HCD)
Housing Services Department (HSD)
Office of Community and Economic Development (CED)**

1260 Almshouse Road | Doylestown Pennsylvania | 215-348-3845

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County of Bucks Citizen Participation Plan for HUD Funded Community Planning and Development Programs

The Citizen Participation Plan provides for and encourages citizens, organizations, businesses and other stakeholders to participate in the development of the Consolidated Plan, the Annual Action Plan, any substantial amendments to the Plans and the review of performance reports. This document sets forth policies and procedures for citizen participation in community planning and development programs funded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The County of Bucks submits a Consolidated Plan & Strategy (CPS) every five-years for the following HUD funded programs and every year it submits an Action Plan for the programs:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)
- Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME)

The County of Bucks is required to adopt a Citizen Participation Plan as set forth in the regulations for “Consolidated Submission for Community Planning and Development Programs” (24 CFR 91 Subpart B). Through implementation of the Citizen Participation Plan, the county encourages engagement by all interested persons and organizations. Participation is especially encouraged for low-and-moderate-income persons, residents of predominantly low-and moderate-income neighborhoods, minorities, non-English speaking persons, persons living in slum and blighted areas, persons with disabilities, and residents of public and assisted housing developments (including any resident advisory boards, resident councils, and resident management corporations) and by other low- income residents of targeted revitalization areas in which public and assisted housing is located. The county will provide information to the Bucks County Housing Authority (BCHA) about the Consolidated Plan activities related to its developments and surrounding communities so that the BCHA can make this information available at the annual public hearing(s) required for the BCHA Plan. Note, for the purposes of this Citizen Participation Plan the definition of residents of predominately low-and moderate-income neighborhoods’ are those residents of low and moderate income census tracts identified within the county.

The county also encourages the participation of local and regional institutions, the Housing Continuum of Care of Bucks County (HCoCBC) and other organizations (including businesses, developers, non-profit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and community and faith-based organizations) in the process of developing and implementing the Consolidated Plan & Strategy and Action Plans.

Goals of the Citizen Participation Plan

1. To provide for involvement of citizens, organizations, businesses and other stakeholders in the identification of community development needs and housing; review of proposed activities and assessment of program performance in accordance with the schedule that is adopted each year.
2. To enable the County to respond to the needs of its citizens through community development and housing programs, policies and plans.
3. To encourage citizens to submit their comments, questions and proposals regarding the County’s Community Planning and Development Programs.

Availability of the Citizen Participation Plan

Bucks County will advertise the Citizen Participation Plan and provide notice to the community via the county website, the county Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) (inclusive of the Housing Services Department (HSD) and the Office of Community and Economic Development (CED)) email notice distribution list, and will allow at least 10 days for public comment prior to formal adoption of the Plan. During an emergency declaration, HUD may allow for a modified-expedited citizen participation process, during which time the County may sanction a 5-calendar day public review and comment period. The County will consider all comments received before adopting the Plan. Interested citizens can request a no-charge copy of the plan by calling or writing the HCD/HSD/CED. The plan will also be available in accessible format for persons with disabilities who request it.

Development and Public Notice of the Consolidated Plan and Strategy (CPS)

Prior to the development of the Consolidated Plan, Bucks County will make available to citizens, public agencies, municipalities, interested nonprofit organizations and other interested parties, the following information:

- the amount of assistance the local government expects to receive (including grant funds and program income);
- the range of activities that may be undertaken;
- the estimated amount of funding that will benefit persons of low- and moderate-income;
- the local government's plans to minimize displacement of persons and to assist any persons displaced, specifying the types and levels of assistance the local government will make available (or require others to make available) to persons displaced, even if the local government expects no displacement to occur; and
- when and how the local government will make this information available.

This information will be distributed via a published notice, notice on the county website, and the HCoCBC email distribution list to allow residents, public agencies, and other interested parties an opportunity to examine its contents and to submit comments. The notice will include a summary description of the contents and purpose of the Consolidated Plan and the location(s) where copies of the entire proposed Consolidated Plan may be examined. The notice will also indicate that the county will provide a reasonable number of free copies of the Consolidated Plan to citizens and groups that request it.

Consolidated Plan and Strategy (CPS) Public Comment

Citizens will have at least 30 calendar days from the date of publication of the notice to provide comment. The county will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally at the public hearings, in preparing the final Consolidated Plan. During an emergency declaration, HUD may allow for a modified-expedited citizen participation process, during which time the County may sanction a 5-calendar day public review and comment period. A summary of all comments that are received in writing during the comment period, or which were presented orally at the public hearing will be prepared. This will include a summary of all comments or views that are not accepted and the reasons therefore. This summary will be attached to the final Consolidated Plan. The County Commissioners will consider all comments received within the designated comment period before adopting the Consolidated Plan. The Commissioners may adopt the Plan with or without amendments.

Consolidated Plan and Strategy (CPS) Public Meeting

The county will hold a public meeting, in an accessible central location, for the development of the Consolidated Plan & Strategy. This meeting will afford citizens an opportunity to point out housing and community development needs, to propose uses for funds and to obtain information about these programs.

Virtual Public Meetings: When circumstances prevent an in-person event for public hearings held in support of a Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan, a “virtual” public hearing will substitute for in-person gatherings, as allowed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The County will use a virtual hearing method or platform that provides for accessibility for persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency to participate.

Accommodation will be made for persons with disabilities by contacting the HCD/HSD/CED (contact information below). In addition, the needs of non-English speaking residents will be met in the case of public hearings where a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate by contacting the HCD/HSD/CED. Requests for reasonable accommodation or translation services must be made three (3) days prior to the meeting date and the County will provide appropriate assistance to the extent feasible.

In all cases, participation through written or phone communications will be permitted and encouraged. It is never necessary to attend a meeting in order to participate.

Consolidated Plan and Strategy (CPS) Amendments

A substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan, including any appropriate Annual Action Plan, will be made whenever the following changes take place:

- Change in its allocation priorities or a change in the method of distribution of funds
- Addition of Activity Adding an activity to the CPS not previously described in the action plan. When such activity is added the county will identify the source of funds which will be allocated to the new activity.
- Change in Purpose, Scope, Location, or Beneficiaries Making a substantial change in project purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries as described in the CPS.

The mere transfer of funds among project accounts does not require an amendment. The original funding amounts are estimates, which often require adjustments for actual costs. A minor amendment is any change that does not meet the threshold of a Substantial Amendment and does not require publication.

All proposed substantial amendments shall be published as specified under Development and Public Notice of the Consolidated Plan & Strategy (CPS) Citizens will be given a period of 30 days from the date of publication to comment before the amendment is implemented. During an emergency declaration, HUD may allow for a modified-expedited citizen participation process, during which time the County may sanction a 5-calendar day public review and comment period. A summary of any comments received in writing or orally at public hearing, including a summary of any comments or review not accepted and the reasons therefore shall be attached to the substantial amendment. The amendment shall be submitted to the HUD Regional CPD Office.

Development and Public Notice of Performance Reports

At the end of each Program Year, one or more Performance Reports, including the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER), will be prepared as specified by HUD. Prior to the submission of these reports, Bucks County will make the Performance Report available to citizens, public agencies, municipalities, interested nonprofit organizations and other interested parties and allow at least 15 days for public review.

This information will be distributed via a published notice, on the county website, and the HCD/HSD/CED, and the HCoCBC email distribution list to allow residents, public agencies, and other interested parties an opportunity to examine its contents and to submit comments. The notice will include a summary description of the contents of the Report and the location(s) where copies of the entire proposed Performance Report may be examined. The notice will also indicate that the county will provide a reasonable number of free copies of the Performance Report to citizens and groups that request it.

Performance Report Public Comment

Citizens will have at least 15 calendar days from the date of publication of the notice to provide comment. The county will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally at the public meetings, in preparing the final Performance Report. A summary of all comments that are received in writing during the comment period, or which were presented orally at the public hearing will be prepared. This will include a summary of all comments or views that are not accepted and the reasons therefore. This summary will be attached to the final Performance Report.

Performance Report Public Meeting

The county will hold a public meeting, in an accessible central location, for the development of the Performance Report. Accommodation will be made for persons with disabilities by contacting the HCD/HSD/CED. In addition, the needs of non-English speaking residents will be met if requested three (3) days prior to the meeting date. In all cases, participation through written or telephone communications will be permitted and encouraged. It is never necessary to attend a meeting in order to participate.

Accessibility

The provisions of this Citizen Participation Plan are designed to provide citizens with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, consistent with accessibility and reasonable accommodation requirements. All meetings shall be held in a location which is accessible to persons who are mobility impaired.

Telephone and video relay services are provided to facilitate communication between people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech impairments and people without hearing impairments. These services are provided free of charge under federal law and can be accessed by calling 711.

Other persons who may need special assistance, such as a translation into another language, should contact the HCD/HSD/CED; a minimum of three working days should be allowed to permit the Department to make the necessary arrangements.

Access to Records

The HCD/HSD/CED will allow residents of the community, public agencies, and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the local government's Consolidated Plan & Strategy, Substantial Amendments, Performance Reports and the county's use of assistance under the programs covered in the Consolidated Plan during the preceding five years including the availability of materials in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request.

Technical Assistance

The HCD/HSD/CED will assist any group representative of low-and-moderate-income persons that requests it. This includes information about eligible activities, available funding, application procedures, preparation of applications, and project implementation procedures.

Complaint Process

Any person having a complaint about any aspect of the planning or implementation of the Bucks County Consolidated Plan & Strategy, will be requested to present the complaint in writing to the HCD. Written response will be provided within 15 working days, where practicable. A copy of the complaint and the response will be sent to the Bucks County Division Leader of the Department of Housing and Community Development who is responsible for oversight of the Department.

Anti-Displacement & Relocation Assistance Plan

Displacement will be minimized but when it is unavoidable, any person(s) displaced due to the activities of the Consolidated Plan Programs receive(s) relocation assistance and relocation payments in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Uniform Act) or 106(d) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The relocation staff provides information and assistance one-on-one to prospective displaced persons. Consistent with the goals and objectives of activities assisted under Section 104 (d) of the Housing and Community Development Act, Bucks County will take the following steps to minimize the displacement of persons from their homes:

- The county will not use funds provided under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, to assist or undertake activities which will result in the demolition or conversion to other use of occupied or vacant-occupiable low- / moderate-income dwelling units.
- Should demolition or conversion to other use occur or become necessary as result of unforeseen circumstances, the county will replace all occupied and vacant-occupiable low- / moderate-income dwelling units demolished or converted to a use other than as low- / moderate-income housing as a direct result of activities assisted with funds provided under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, as described in 24 CFR 570.606(b)(1).

Limitations of the Citizen Participation Plan

Nothing in the Plan shall be construed to restrict the responsibility and authority of the county for the development of the Consolidated Plan & Strategy and the implementation of its programs.

Comments

Questions or comments on any facet of the policy document should be addressed to:

County of Bucks

Department of Housing and Community Development

Housing Services Department and

Office of Community and Economic Development

1260 Almshouse Road

Doylestown, PA 18901

Phone: 215-345-3845

Fax: 267-885-1376

cedhs@buckscounty.org