

**Appendix B**  
**Citizen Participation**

## **Citizen Participation**

MaineHousing and the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) work closely to ensure that the Citizen Participation Plan is implemented. Participation is encouraged through hundreds of mailings to individuals and agencies, website postings, and newspaper notices across the state. Public input is received and accepted in the forms of telephone consultations; emails; comments and testimonies at forums and hearings; and written communications, e.g., letters.

Information regarding the dates, times, locations, and anticipated program resources are published in Maine's largest newspapers of general circulation, a minimum of three weeks prior to the first public meeting. The Maine State Housing Authority and the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development supplement this process by mailing and emailing additional notices to lists of individual citizens and organizations maintained by MaineHousing and DECD. The list includes but is not limited to:

- Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs)
- Community Action Agencies
- HUD Office, Bangor
- U.S.D.A.. Rural Development state office
- Maine Municipal Association
- Maine Bankers Association
- Maine Real Estate & Development Association
- alpha one (disabilities advocacy & services)
- Disability Rights Center
- Abused Women's Advocacy Agencies
- Addictions Service Agencies
- Community Planning Directors
- Maine Department of Corrections
- Maine State Library
- Portland Family Crisis Services
- Maine Advocacy Services
- Legal Services for the Elderly
- Maine Medical Center
- Maine Primary Care Association
- Native American Housing Authorities
- York County Habitat for Humanity
- Public Housing Authorities
- Emergency Shelters
- Native American Tribal Representatives
- Mid-Coast Maine Board of Realtors
- Maine Realtors' Association
- Maine Apartment Owner Managers Association
- Maine Department of Health and Human Services
- Community Development Directors
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Regional Mental Health Centers
- Adult Education Learning Centers
- Maine Department of Education
- Maine Bureau of Elder & Adult Services
- Genesis Community Loan Fund
- Maine Aids Alliance
- Maine Community Action Association
- Regional Planning Commissions
- YMCA/YWCA Directors
- University of Maine Colleges
- Maine State Planning Office

Throughout the year, research was performed to analyze housing needs across the state. Community presentations were made to promote affordable housing, provide participants community specific housing needs data, and gather additional public input before developing the state plan.

In addition, MaineHousing convenes groups of interested parties on a regular basis to provide feedback and ideas. Various forums and rulemaking procedures required by the programs we administer provide additional feedback opportunities. Some of our regular outreach efforts include meeting with:

#### Monthly Meetings

- MaineHousing Board of Commissioners
- Efficiency Maine Trust
- Homeless Council Meetings – Regional and Statewide

#### Quarterly Meetings

- Community Action Program Housing and Energy Directors
- Commissioner of Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Low Income Home Energy Loan Program (LIHEAP) Advisory Committee
- Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston
- hoMEworks Board of Directors
- Supportive Housing Cooperative
- Maine Equal Justice Board
- Maine Real Estate Managers
- For-profit and non-profit Developers

#### Annual Meetings/Contact

- Training/input/feedback sessions at the Annual Affordable Housing Conference
- For-profit and non-profit housing developers for input and feedback on allocation of federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit
- Annual property audits
- Semi-Annual training and networking for property owners/managers
- Semi-Annual meetings with Community Action Agency Executive Directors
- Stakeholder meetings for input to proposed changes to Homeless Programs Rule

A substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan will be made when there is a decision to 1) make over 50 percent or more change to the allocation priorities of distribution of funds, or 2) to carry out an activity using funds from any program covered by the Consolidated Plan, not previously described in the Action Plan. The public will be provided with reasonable notice of, and opportunity to comment on such proposed changes in the use of funds.

## **Public Forums and Comments Received 2012 Consolidated Plan**

MaineHousing, in conjunction with the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), held four public forums for the development of the State's 2012 Action Plan. The forums were held in Augusta on June 21<sup>st</sup>, Biddeford on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, Presque Isle on June 28<sup>th</sup> and in Bangor on June 29<sup>th</sup>. The forums were designed to solicit comments from stakeholders on the three HUD programs of the Consolidated Plan – HOME, CDBG, and ESG.

Each forum included an overview of the HOME, ESG and CDBG programs, and a facilitated discussion that solicited stakeholder input. Participants were provided fair housing information and questioned about local fair housing and affirmative marketing issues. A summary of stakeholder questions and comments from the forums is provided below.

### **Homebuyer Assistance Comments Received**

- There is a need for more homeownership opportunities for seniors.
  - Housing developer in attendance asked where he could apply for funding to develop new senior housing for people with moderate incomes in Brunswick. There is a big need for more senior housing and not all seniors will want to live in the housing made available by the closing of the Brunswick Naval Air Station.
- Homeownership opportunities build personal net worth and this is economic development.
- Bangor single family homes are selling for less than \$100,000 while rental unit development costs are so much more per unit.
- A representative of Penquis Community Action Program suggested its small house design of 396 square feet could provide an opportunity for those having incomes of \$14,000 per year. They would like MaineHousing to reconsider the small house design.

### **Home Improvement Comments Received**

- The City of Biddeford is a CDBG entitlement community but it does not receive HOME funds. The City would like to work closer with MaineHousing and the Biddeford Housing Authority. Since there aren't any HOME funds available to the City for home rehabilitation they are using CDBG funds.
- A representative from Alpha One thanked MaineHousing for funding the HomeRetro Program. They are now working with MaineHousing to expand the program without additional funds. They also have an aging in place program. Home evaluations are done for seniors to determine what modifications could be made to help them stay in their homes. Alpha One also is looking at developing a handyman program to provide home safety assistance for seniors; four of their staff are Aging in Place certified and they have occupational therapists on staff as well.

- MaineHousing funds for home repair are now going to weatherization activities leaving a gap in the community action agency's ability to address the hundreds of homes on their home repair waiting list.
- The home repair network has lost its meaning at MaineHousing. MaineHousing has chosen not to participate in the network. The Consolidated Plan is not consolidating anymore. MaineHousing is sliding away from needs in Aroostook County and is going south in multi-family developments.
- MaineHousing's mobile home replacement is an excellent program. MaineHousing should have made connections with the home repair network in implementing it.
- MaineHousing should fund more home repair; recent reductions are a problem.
- There is not enough DECD Housing Assistance Grant funding available for home replacements. Communities are waiting five to six years for the CDBG funding cycle.
- The Aroostook Community Action Program has 589 homeowners on their home repair waiting list. Letters are being sent telling them not to expect assistance.
- There are fears that the Rural Development 504 Program will be cut completely.
- Rebuilding an old house may be a better use of funds than building something new.
- DECD is providing Healthy Homes funding to Veazie and three other towns. Connections are being made with social service agencies and referrals are being provided helping prioritize who gets served first.

### **Housing Development Comments Received**

- In 2010, the Town of Fort Fairfield applied for MaineHousing 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credits and was not successful. Community representatives expressed their feeling that the program is discriminatory to rural communities because they can't meet the various competitive scoring criteria like poverty and homelessness. They also felt that being adjacent to a service center community should have helped them qualify. They lost 20 points in the scoring instantly because of various points provided for criteria they could not meet.
- Rural is more in Maine's outer rim counties than coastal counties. The Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program prioritizes urban areas.
- MaineHousing's Supportive Housing Development Program appears to be financing about 60 new units per year, but the need is huge. What about reducing the subsidy amounts per unit, so that more housing units can be funded?
- Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects are very expensive per unit.

- We need to integrate people with disabilities into communities. Include more units for people who are disabled in new affordable housing developments.
- Portage Lake wants more senior housing. Seniors do not want to move away for housing.
- Rural Development has stated that there are vacancies for seniors in other Aroostook County communities.

### **Rental Assistance Comments Received**

- There is not enough rental assistance available to meet needs.
  - Waterville has an eight year waiting list for Housing Choice Vouchers.
  - Some renters having an extremely hard time paying their rent; some are paying more than half of their income.
  - Some Section 8 tenants are paying more than 40% of their incomes toward their rent.
  - There are people who are disabled, on SSI, spending 90% of their income on rents.
  - Landlords have to reduce rents and not require security deposits. The money is not there for landlords and units are not being maintained because of that. Bangor has a lot of ratty rentals.
  - More Housing Choice Vouchers are needed in Knox and Waldo counties.
- The Bridging Rental Assistance Program (BRAP) is a two year program. Some people who have been on the BRAP waiting list are being denied assistance when they get to the top of the list because they are registered sex offenders. *This comment was passed on to Sheldon Wheeler at DHHS, MaineHousing has no money in this program. Mr. Wheeler responded that there is no criminal background check for BRAP. Sex offender status would not be a reason for BRAP denial, however, not having a diagnosis of mental illness or not meeting one of the program's four priorities would result in a denial letter, which is accompanied by an appeal process.*
- General Assistance doesn't inspect units they pay rent for.
- It was suggested that participants in the ASPIRE Program be trained to conduct inspections as volunteers.
- General Assistance is difficult to get in a lot of towns.

### **Homeless Assistance Comments Received**

- There aren't any shelter beds in Waldo County and there is a need. Most homeless people are couch surfing.
- The Hearth Act will help reduce waiting lists from four years to one or two years.
- Shelters are seeing many with a mental health diagnosis. Shelter Plus Care funding is holding steady but there is not enough. Eighty percent of applicants are homeless and they receive 12

to 15 applications per day from Kennebec and Somerset County. There are not enough vouchers to help low income persons with mental illness disabilities.

- The Stability Through Engagement Program (STEP) is a great tool but for a limited number of people. Less than 10% of Bangor Homeless Shelter clients could benefit and be successful.
- The Hearth Act will be implementing a medical model approach to homeless services. The resulting service center approaches to delivery will be a downside to rural areas.
- There needs to be a more thorough review of who is receiving homeless funding. Some agencies, including faith based ones, are not in compliance with related requirements. There are also agencies not in compliance with length of stay limits. There also needs to be a look at alternative resources for families other than shelters.
- Are MaineHousing and the Department of Health and Human Services are working well together or are they at cross purposes? Substandard housing would be better than having people stay shelters.

#### **Other Issues and Recommendations**

- Is there any way to track HOME funds and the number of units created in communities? Where is the money going? Is there a method for deciding where HOME money is being used in a community? Does the community have any opportunity for input?
- Is there a report showing what funding is available for housing by geographic area?
- A representative from the Frannie Peabody Center provided an update on the HIV/AIDS problem in Maine. The Center is the sole HUD grantee for three Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) grants in Maine. HOPWA must serve individuals with HIV/AIDS with incomes below 80% of the area median income adjusted for household size. As of March 31, 2011 there are 1,568 people living with HIV/AIDS in Maine. Additionally, as of May 31, 2011 the year-to-date new HIV diagnosis in Maine was 20, 14 of these were in April.
- CDBG technical assistance providers in Aroostook County were surveyed and their biggest issue identified was housing.
- Will the minimum and maximum grant amounts be changed because of the FY 2012 CDBG funding cuts?
- Does MaineHousing see any new housing priorities in the future?
- People in rural areas want to be served locally vs. in cities. More assistance from their families may also be available.

- Do the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and MaineHousing meet with each other regarding policy models for service centers? What solutions are there for communities that don't qualify for Rural Development funding because of geography?
- A Bangor city counselor stated that he expects half of the housing in Bangor to eventually be subsidized.
- What is the plan for future funding of the DECD Brownfield Program?
- When will the DECD low and moderate income chart get updated?



**Draft 2012 Annual Action Plan  
Public Hearing  
October 20, 2011**

Attendees:     Mike Martin, MaineHousing  
                   Deborah Johnson, Dept. of Economic and Community Development

The public hearing was opened at 1:30 pm. The public hearing was closed at 2:00 pm.

There was no public comment. Additional written comments were accepted until the Annual Action Plan was submitted.

No requests were received for copies of the draft 2012 Annual Action Plan.