

**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
FOR THE CITY OF SHARON, PENNSYLVANIA
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM**

SECTION I – GENERAL:

This Citizen Participation Plan is prepared in compliance with 24 CFR Part 91.105, *Citizen Participation Plan, Local Governments*. This Citizen Participation Plan sets forth the City of Sharon's policies and procedures for citizen participation by encouraging citizens to participate in the development of the City's Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans, any amendments to these plans, applications for Section 108 Loan Guarantees, and the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER).

SECTION II – STANDARDS OF PARTICIPATION & GOALS FOR PARTICIPATION:

The Standards of Participation and Goals for Citizen Participation in the City of Sharon, Pennsylvania, are as follows:

- A. All aspects of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program shall be conducted in an open manner with freedom of access for all interested persons, groups and/or organizations.
- B. To the greatest degree possible, there shall be involvement of: low- and moderate-income persons, especially those living in slum and blighted areas, in areas where CDBG funds are proposed to be used, and by residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods; members of minority groups; residents of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization areas; the elderly; persons with disabilities; and all persons directly or indirectly impacted or affected by the Community Development Block Grant Program, and Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program.
- C. Public Hearings shall be held in areas occupied by and accessible to low- and moderate-income individuals. In addition, the City of Sharon's Community Development Office staff will speak to any group about the City's Community Development Program, its past performance and its proposed or future activities.
- D. There shall be to the greatest extent possible, and throughout all stages of planning and development of the CDBG Program and Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program a continuity of participation by citizen representatives.

- E. Citizens shall be provided, to the greatest extent possible, with timely and adequate information for the purpose of meaningful input into the CDBG Program and Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program.
- F. Low- and moderate-income persons, residents of slum and blighted neighborhoods, residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods; members of minority groups; residents of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization areas; the elderly; persons with disabilities; and all persons directly or indirectly impacted or affected by the Community Development Block Grant Program, and Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program, shall be encouraged to submit their views and proposals regarding the CDBG Program and Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program.
- G. Advisory groups that may be established for advice and input into the CDBG program shall have an adequate representation of low- and moderate-income persons, members of minority groups, and persons directly affected by the CDBG program activities.
- H. Consultation will be made, in conjunction with the Mercer County Public Housing Authority, the participation of residents of public housing and assisted housing developments, during the process of developing and implementing the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and One Year Annual Action Plans, along with in which developments are located.
- I. The City of Sharon shall provide information to the Mercer County Housing Authority about consolidated plan activities related to the housing authority's developments and surrounding communities so that the housing authority can make this information available at the annual Public Housing Comprehensive Grant Program.

SECTION III – SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION:

- A. Application Development:

Prior to the submission of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, any application for CDBG funds, an application for Section 108 Loan Guarantee funds, and prior to the submission of an application amendment, the City of Sharon's Community Development Office, in addition to meeting the minimum requirements, shall provide for public comment the following:

- 1. application requirements
- 2. eligibility of project activities
- 3. timetable for submission

4. funding amounts of both CDBG funds and program income
5. range of activities that may be undertaken with available funds
6. estimated amount of benefit to persons of low- and moderate-income
7. and any other information necessary to involve citizens in the development of plans and applications.

Information provided to the public will be in conformance with Section II above. Furthermore, prior to the development of an annual application for CDBG funds, the progress of the City's Community Development Block Grant Program will be made available to the public at meetings, public hearings and through the local news media.

B. Program Implementation:

Citizen involvement may take the form of advisory committees, direct involvement, self-help efforts or other types of citizen participation during program implementation. Annual reports of the City of Sharon's Community Development Office will be submitted to City Council, City Manager, and the general public for the purpose of reviewing the accomplishments of the City's CDBG Program.

The roles that citizens of the area will play in the implementation of the CDBG program are as follows:

1. "direct involvement and self-help" in project development and implementation
2. "continued advisory role" via call-ins, write-ins and group meetings with organized and recognized groups.

C. Monitoring Evaluation:

Opportunities for citizens to monitor and evaluate the CDBG program shall be consistent and continuous. Methods available to further these objectives are as follows:

1. direct contact with staff
2. direct contact between staff and groups
3. direct contact between citizens and the City Manager and governing body.
4. annual report of staff.
5. progress reports via the news media on a continuing basis.

D. Submission of Views and Proposals:

The submission of views and proposals from low- and moderate-income persons, minority groups, and any other persons or organized groups can be on a continuous basis and shall be encouraged to the greatest extent possible. Submissions can be in the form of:

1. personal contact
2. mail, email, and telephone contact
3. petitions
4. attendance at public meetings/hearings
5. through media questionnaires
6. other available means

The submission of views and proposals shall be an on-going process and at a minimum during the following stages:

1. the planning process
2. the application process
3. the implementation process

Responses to all submissions shall be in a timely fashion and shall not exceed a period of fifteen (15) days after the voicing or filing of an inquiry.

E. Complaints:

All complaints regarding any aspect of the Community Development Block Grant Program and Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program shall be provided in a timely, substantive written response within fifteen (15) working days after the voicing or filing of a complaint.

F. Technical Assistance:

The staff of the City of Sharon's Community Development Office shall provide technical assistance to groups which are representative of persons of low- and moderate-income that request such assistance in developing proposals for funding assistance under any of the programs covered by the Consolidated Plan.

The City's staff will assist these groups to write up their proposals and will provide assistance in preparing cost estimates for projects proposed by low- and moderate-income groups.

G. Adequate Information:

The City shall provide full public access to the CDBG program information and affirmative efforts to provide adequate information to citizens, especially those who are low- and moderate-income, and those who are

residing in predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods or slum or blighted neighborhoods. Information shall be provided on the Community Development Block Grant Program and Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program, including at a minimum the following:

1. At the time when the City begins its Community Development Block Grant Program and Section 108 Loan planning process, including:
 - a. total amount of funds available, including program income
 - b. the range of activities that are eligible or ineligible, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons who are low- and moderate-income.
 - c. plans to minimize displacement and to assist any persons displaced, specifying the types and levels of assistance the City will make available to persons displaced, even if the City anticipates no displacement. The Five-Year Consolidated Plan must state when and how the City will make this information available.
 - d. the process that will be followed in developing and approving the projects or programs.
 - e. roles and objectives of the Citizen Participation Program
 - f. summary of important program requirements.
2. Upon request, copies of all materials relating to the Community Development Block Grant Program will be made available to any person and/or group for the cost of copying only, particularly documentation concerning the following:
 - a. all mailing, promotional material and news releases
 - b. key documents, including all prior applications, letters of approval, performance and program evaluation reports, and any other applications, proposed or approved, or reports required by HUD
 - c. copies of the CDBG regulations
 - d. information on contracting and purchasing procedures, environmental policies, fair housing, equal opportunity, relocation provisions, A-95 review process, affirmative action and any other requirements or regulations relating to the CDBG program

H. Meetings:

All meetings shall be held in a timely fashion and shall be accessible to all segments of the city's population including accommodation for persons with disabilities. These meetings shall be held at a time and place that is convenient and accessible to potential or actual beneficiaries.

1. Public hearings shall be held on a continuous basis, at least two (2) times per year at different stages of the program year for the purpose of obtaining citizen views on the development of needs, the review of proposed activities and review of program performance. At least one public hearing must be held before the proposed Five-Year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and Section 108 Loan Guarantee Application is published for comments.
2. Public hearing notices shall be published at least two weeks prior to hearing date and shall be advertised as a Class 2 block ad, via the local newspaper of general circulation in the area.

I. Public Notice:

1. A summary of the proposed Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans will be published in the local newspaper of general circulation in the city for a period of not less than thirty (30) days in order to receive citizen comments prior to approval by City Council.
2. Copies of the proposed plan will be available at the following locations:
 - a. Shenango Valley Community Library
 - b. Sharon Municipal Building
 - c. City of Sharon Community Development Office
3. The summary of the proposed plan must describe the contents and purpose and include a list of the locations where copies of the entire proposed Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans may be examined. In addition, a reasonable number of free copies will be made available to citizens or groups that request it.
4. The City of Sharon will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing or orally at the public hearings, in preparing the final Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans. A summary of all comments, including those comments not accepted and the reason therefore, shall be attached to the final Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans.

J. Continuing Activities:

All continuing activities shall be subject to the citizen participation process as herein outlined.

K. Copies of Substantial Amendments to the Five-Year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plans and Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Reports:

Copies of the above will be available for reading upon request to the City of Sharon's Community Development Office.

L. Access to Records:

The City shall provide full and timely disclosures of its program records. The City will provide these disclosures within fifteen (15) days of a written request. Additionally, all records and documentation concerning the Community Development Block Grant Program shall be made available during normal business hours of the City.

M. Substantial Amendments to the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans:

1. Definition:

A substantial amendment to the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans is:

- a. a change in its allocation priorities or a change in the method of distribution of funds
- b. proposing to undertake an activity, using funds from any program covered by the Five-Year Consolidated Plan (including program income), not previously described in the annual action plan; or
- c. a change in the purpose, scope, location or beneficiaries of a previously approved activity.

2. Criteria:

The criteria used to determine what constitutes an amendment are based on the following:

- a. Purpose - the original purpose for which the activity was selected has changed, including the category of the National Objective selected.
- b. Scope - the scope of the project activity has increased which changes the cost of the activity by more than 50% of the total budgeted dollar amount for that activity.
- c. Location - the location of the project activity is different from that originally proposed, or the size of the project service area has increased or decreased by 25% in size, or the location of the activity had to be relocated to another area.
- d. Beneficiaries - the number of beneficiaries has changed, and the activity no longer serves at least 51% low- and moderate-income persons.

3. Procedure:

A description of the substantial amendment to the Five-Year Consolidated Plan or the Annual Action Plan will be published in the local newspaper of general circulation. A period of no less than thirty (30) days will be provided to receive citizen comments prior to the approval of the amendment by the City Council. The date, time, and place of the public hearing shall be listed.

- a. The City will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing or orally at the public hearing, in preparing the substantial amendment of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plans. A summary of any comments or views, as well as a summary of any comments or views not accepted and reasons therefore, shall be attached to the substantial amendment of the Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan.
- b. The substantial amendment will be presented to the City of Sharon's City Council at a public meeting. City Council must review and approve the substantial amendment.
- c. The City shall submit to HUD a description of the adopted substantial amendment. A letter transmitting such description shall be signed by the City Manager of the City of Sharon or their designee.

If any one of the above criteria applies, then a substantial amendment to a project activity has occurred.

N. Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER):

A notice will be published in the local newspaper of general circulation informing the public of the availability of the City's CDBG Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report and providing the opportunity to comment on the CAPER. A period of no less than 15 days will be provided to receive citizen comments prior to adoption by the City Council.

The City will consider any comments or views of citizens, received in writing or orally, concerning its Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report. A summary of these comments or views shall be attached to the CAPER.

O. Non-English-Speaking Residents:

If the City of Sharon anticipates that a significant number of non-English speaking residents will attend a public hearing, then arrangements will be

made to have a translator, who is fluent in the language of non-English speaking residents, available at the public hearing. The City will hire someone to attend the public hearing and translate for the non-English speaking population. Also, the minutes of the hearing will be transcribed, when applicable, for the benefit of non-English speaking persons.

P. Citizens Comment on the Citizens Participation Plan:

The City of Sharon will provide citizens with the opportunity to comment on this citizen Participation Plan. Copies of this plan will be on display as provided above. A public notice will be published in the local newspaper of general circulation in the City for a period of two weeks prior to the adoption of the Citizens Participation Plan by the City Council in order for Citizens to comment on the plan. Copies of the Citizens Participation Plan will be made available upon request, in a format accessible to persons with disabilities. Substantial amendments to this plan will follow the same procedure as the adoption of the original plan.

Q. Other Special Project Grants or Emergency Declaration:

In the event that other federal special programs are awarded to the City of Sharon or if an emergency declaration is made that affects the administration of the existing federal programs, that are authorized under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, the citizen participation requirements will be followed in accordance with either the statute or regulations set forth in the program. If HUD may allow for or provides opportunities to request waivers to specific elements of the citizen participation process the City of Sharon will determine whether a waiver is necessary and seek use of the waiver authority in accordance with information provided by HUD.