

## **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN**

### **City of Shelton**

The City of Shelton recognizes the importance of the participation of its citizens in the development of plans and proposals under the Small Cities Block Grant Program and its responsibilities for citizen participation pursuant to Department of Housing regulations.

To achieve these goals, the city will hold at least two public hearings for the purpose of obtaining citizen views and responding to proposals and questions. At least one hearing will be held at the application site. Particular emphasis on participation will be given to persons of low and moderate income who are residents of areas or users of facilities or services for which CDBG funds are proposed.

Notice of public hearings for the city's proposed application will be published at least twice (on different days) in a newspaper of general circulation with the first notice being published no less than two weeks prior to the date of the public hearing. The hearings will be scheduled during a time when citizens are generally available to attend and which time and location is consistent with normal local practice.

In addition to the Department of Housing's required notices for the public hearings, the city will also make every effort to inform those segments of the population which might not be reached through a newspaper notice that the public hearings is to be held. These efforts will be especially concentrated in the neighborhoods affected by the proposed project.

In addition to these existing Citizen Participation requirements, the city has reviewed and adopted the requirements of Section 508 of the new Housing and Community Development Act of 1987 and certifies that it will:

#### **A. GENERAL**

1. Provide for and encourage citizen participation, with particular emphasis on participation by persons of low and moderate income who are residents of slum and blight areas in which CDBG funds are proposed to be used and encourage participation of residents of low-and-moderate-income neighborhoods by the city.
2. Provide citizens with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information, and records including the proposed and actual use of funds.
3. Provide a reasonable level of technical assistance to persons or groups representative of low and moderate income at no cost who request assistance in developing proposals.
4. Hold at least two public hearings, each at a different stage of the program to obtain citizen views on the projects proposed and respond to proposals and questions. The hearing will be held after adequate notice, at a time and location convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries, consistent with local practice and with accommodation for the disabled. The city will respond to all proposals and questions

- at all stages of the community development program, including the development of needs and the review of proposed activities and review of program performance.
5. Provide for written answers to complaints and grievances, within fifteen (15) days.
  6. Identify how the needs of non-English speaking residents will be met in the case of public hearings or meetings if a significant number of non-English speaking residents can be reasonably expected to participate.

**B. SPECIFIC**

**1. The city will solicit input on local community development needs and proposed activities.**

- a. The city will furnish information concerning the amount of funds available and range of activities that may be undertaken.
- b. Any special outreach to minority, low/moderate income, and proposed target areas will be designed to solicit with regards to needs and priority concerns. This will be done so as to most effectively and directly reach special target groups, as well as citizens at large, and may include radio public service announcements, flyers, distribution through neighborhood or community associations, churches, city meetings, public services offices, newspapers, and so forth.
- c. The city will then develop a proposed application, taking into account recommendations of public input, above, and any other information, which is available to it.
- d. As required by Department of Housing, the proposed application will include the amount of funds estimated to benefit low/moderate income residents and the municipality's assessment of whether any displacement may occur as a result of activities assisted with CDBG funds. If displacement is proposed or may occur, plans for minimizing such displacement and for assisting persons actually displaced will be included in the draft application.
- e. The proposed application will identify the citizen participation procedures containing all elements required by this plan and local, state, and federal law.

**2. The city will promote public comment on the proposed pre-application and community development activities.**

- a. Notice of availability of the proposed application will be made through news releases, flyers, public service announcements, or other appropriate means, including special efforts to target low/moderate income, minority, and non-English speaking populations, as appropriate.
- b. A public hearing will be scheduled to obtain comments on community development needs and on specific activities of the proposed application. It will be held at a time and location convenient to citizens and that permits broad participation particularly by special target groups and low/moderate income persons consistent with local practice. Notices of each hearing will be published at least twice, on different days, by paid advertisement in a newspaper of general local circulation. The first notice must be published no less than two weeks prior to the date of the hearing. Affidavits of these notices will be submitted to the state Department of Housing as part of the formal pre-application for assistance.
- c. All public hearings and meetings will be disability accessible.

- d. Timeliness will be defined as a minimum of two weeks' comment period after public notices, mailing, or modifications.
- e. The city will develop a final application.
- f. The city will take all public comment into account and formally review and approve the final application at a properly scheduled meeting of its city council.
- g. A copy of the proposed application will be submitted to the regional council of government to assure conformance with regional planning objectives.
- 3. The city will provide special technical assistance to groups and representatives of low/moderate income persons.**
  - a. The city will provide a reasonable amount of technical assistance through the use of either staff or consultants to persons or groups who are or who represent low/moderate income persons. This assistance shall be made available at no cost to the person or group. Such assistance shall be provided upon request, with the level and type of assistance to be provided determined by the Mayor.
  - b. The city shall include in all advertising an address and/or phone number of a person who will be available to answer questions or provide additional information.
- 4. The city will identify the needs of non-English speaking residents.**
  - a. The city will identify any potential non-English speaking populations (by "lack of ability to speak English" as opposed to "language spoken at home").
  - b. If a significant non-English speaking population is found within the community, the city will publish notices in the appropriate language. The city will also provide a translator at hearings, as appropriate, and provide special technical assistance in defining needs, providing input, or obtaining information about the community development program, as needed and appropriate.
- 5. The city will provide for a timely, appropriate, and effective response to citizen complaints.**
  - a. The program consultant will respond to all complaints within fifteen (15) days in writing. If a complaint is referred to the state Department of Housing, the state Department of Housing will be notified within fifteen (15) days as to the action taken or proposed.
  - b. All complaints are requested to be in writing and submitted to the Program Consultant. Complaint forms are available to expedite this process, although any legible submission is acceptable. Verbal complaints shall be responded to in the same manner as other complaints outlined therein.
  - c. The Program Coordinator is designated as the Complaint Officer. If there appears to be a potential conflict of interest concerning the outcome of the complaint, the Mayor shall appoint another person to act as the Complaint Officer for that particular case. If the complainant is not satisfied with the finding of the Complaint Officer, the complainant may appeal directly to the Mayor for reconsideration.
  - d. The citizen complaint procedure and the name and phone number of the complaint officer will be made public at the outset of the CDBG Small Cities grant.
- 6. The city will provide citizens with reasonable and timely access to information.**
  - a. In addition to records relating to the proposed use of funds during the application process, citizens will be provided convenient access to general information about the community development program, and about the city's performance at all stages of the program, including information and records pertaining to the actual use of funds.

- b. Program files will be located in a convenient, central public space and be open to public review (with the exception of personal income data).
- c. Periodic reports will be given to the Mayor and to other public forums or meetings.
- d. Quarterly and Annual Reports may be made available to the public as well as to the Department of Housing. The city will prepare an annual report on program activities in an easily readable and understandable format.
- e. On-going press releases and newspaper articles will be used in a way to highlight program activities.

#### **7. Program Amendments**

- a. The city will provide citizens an opportunity to comment on, with reasonable notice, any substantial change proposed to be made in the use of funds or the transfer of funds from one eligible activity to another, if appropriate. This will be done prior to notifying or requesting approval from the state Department of Housing.
- b. In the case of program amendments or revision on directing program applications, the city shall follow the procedures outlined herein as appropriate in accordance with DOH requirements.
- c. Whenever possible, public hearings may include a virtual public hearing. If a virtual meeting is held, the meeting will also have a call-in number for those individuals who do not have computer access.

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- d. In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the City of Shelton is amending its Citizen Participation Plan, to promote and support “social distancing” and the prevention, preparation and response to the COVID-19 Pandemic while continuing to offer the public an opportunity to provide valuable citizen input and insight into the policies and procedures of the City of Shelton, particularly as it relates to the administration and implementation of its federal programs. The following process will be used to solicit citizen participation and input into any programmatic amendments necessary to quickly and effectively administer federal funding made available either directly or indirectly as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Effective April 2, 2020, consistent with the Mega-waiver issued by HUD on March 31, 2020, and for a period ending June 30, 2021, community input prior to drafting a substantial amendment to any plan will be waived, including but not limited to the proposed uses of Community Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

The City will prepare an amendment to any respective plan, where applicable, and the amendment shall include a discussion of the amount of assistance the City expects to receive, the range of activities it will undertake with this assistance, and, to the extent possible, the benefit to low and moderate income people of these proposed activities.

The Amendment will be posted in a prominent place on the City’s website, along with a notice identifying the availability of the amendment. The Notice will include the opportunity to provide electronic comment for a period of not less than five days and information on participation in a “virtual public hearing.”

As part of the Notice, the town will provide information on how citizens who have special needs may obtain the Amendment in a form which is acceptable to them. Such notice will be published in an e-newspaper of daily general circulation and on the DAS website.

Any comments received, either at the virtual public hearing or during the public comment period will be considered by the agency before the final amended action plan is submitted to the State of Connecticut Department of Housing (DOH). A summary of the comments and the City's responses will be an attachment to the final amended action plan.

The procedures and actions discussed above will constitute the City's citizen participation plan for any substantial amendments, which may need to be made during the program year. A "substantial amendment" to the plan is one which implements a change of use and/or method of distributing those funds. This amended citizen participation plan will itself be made available to the public for a five-day public comment period prior to implementation, and any interest groups may review and comment accordingly.

The foregoing is adopted and approved this 13<sup>th</sup> day of August 2020.

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Mark A. Lauretti, Mayor

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Date