

City of Sherman

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT
Citizen Participation Plan



City of Sherman
Neighborhood Services

405 N RUSK ST
PO BOX 1106
SHERMAN, TX 75091
www.ci.sherman.tx.us

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Section 1. Introduction

The City of Sherman has designed this community-wide Citizen Participation Plan to provide for and encourage citizen participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. This Plan is an essential element of the City of Sherman's present and future community development process and has been developed to comply with the regulations and requirements of the CDBG program as administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This Plan supersedes all other Citizen Participation Plans.

The primary goal of this Citizen Participation Plan is to provide all citizens of the community with adequate opportunity to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the City's CDBG program. This Plan sets forth policies and procedures for citizen participation, which are designed to maximize the opportunity for citizen participation in the community development process. Special emphasis has been placed on encouraging participation by persons of low and moderate incomes, residents of blighted neighborhoods, and residents of areas where community development funds are utilized.

Citizens are encouraged to participate in all phases of the CDBG program and will be provided full access to program information. However, final responsibility and authority for the development and implementation of CDBG program will lie with the City Council.

Section 2. Scope of Participation

The City of Sherman will make reasonable efforts to provide for citizen participation during the community development process and throughout the planning, implementation, and assessment of all CDBG projects undertaken by the City. Local officials will make every effort to involve citizens in all phases of the development, implementation, and assessment of community development programs including, but not limited to, the following phases:

- a. Identification and assessment of housing and community development needs; determination of CDBG projects and documentation; and development of the CDBG Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan (CDBG Plan);
- b. Changes and/or amendments to approved CDBG Plans; and
- c. Assessment of CDBG program performance.

All phases of the community development process will be conducted by local officials in an open manner. Citizens of the City of Sherman are encouraged to participate at all levels and will be given access to program information during each phase of the CDBG program as outlined herein.

Section 3. Citizen Participation Contact Person

The City's Grants Coordinator has been designated by the City Manager's Office to coordinate the Citizen Participation Plan and will serve as the contact person for all matters concerning citizen participation activities. This person shall be responsible for overseeing citizen participation throughout

the community development process and the implementation of all citizen participation activities and functions, except those that may be delegated to other parties by this Plan.

The specific duties and responsibilities of the Grants Coordinator with regards to the Citizen Participation Plan include disseminating information concerning proposed projects and the status of current project activities; coordinating various groups that may be participating in the community development process; receiving written comments; serving as a vehicle by which ideas, comments, and proposals from local residents may be transmitted to local officials or program staff; and monitoring the citizen participation process and proposing such amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan as may be necessary.

The Grants Coordinator may be contacted at 903-487-5976 during regular business hours. Additional contact information for the Grants Coordinator is available on the City's website. All questions concerning citizen participation in the community development process should be addressed to the Grants Coordinator.

Section 4. Technical Assistance

The staff of the City of Sherman shall provide technical assistance to individual citizens and citizen groups, especially those groups representative of persons of low or moderate income, as may be required to adequately provide for citizen participation in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the CDBG program.

Such technical assistance is intended to increase citizen participation in the community development decision making process and to ensure that such participation is meaningful. Technical assistance shall also be utilized to foster public understanding of CDBG program requirements.

Technical assistance shall be provided on request and may include, but not necessarily be limited to: interpreting the CDBG program and its rules, regulations, procedures, and/or requirements; providing information and/or materials concerning the CDBG program; and assisting low and moderate income citizens and residents of blighted neighborhoods to develop statements of views, identify their needs, and develop activities and proposals for projects that, when implemented, will resolve those needs.

Technical assistance may be obtained by contacting the Grants Coordinator.

Section 5. Public Hearings

Citizen participation in the community development process will be conducted on a community-wide basis and will actively involve the views and proposals of all citizens, especially low and moderate income persons and residents of areas where CDBG activities are proposed or on-going.

Public hearings will be held during all phases of the community development process, as outlined herein, to allow citizens to voice opinions and offer proposals concerning the development and performance of the CDBG program. Local officials will respond to questions and proposals from citizens at each public hearing. Any questions that citizens may have concerning the program will be answered and their comments, suggestions, and/or proposals will be received. Citizens may also express

comments and views concerning the community development process or any specific CDBG project to the governing body at any regularly scheduled meeting.

5.1 Public Hearing Times and Locations

At least two (2) public hearings per year will be conducted at different stages of the program year. All public hearings will be held at times and locations that will be accessible to all citizens, especially persons of low and moderate incomes and residents of blighted neighborhoods and CDBG project areas.

Public hearings will be scheduled for convenient times as determined by the City Council. Public hearings may be held at any site that, in the opinion of the City, provides adequate access for citizen participation.

Hearings will normally be held at the Sherman City Hall Building located at 220 W. Mulberry. This site is centrally located and generally accessible to all citizens. This building is also accessible to persons with disabilities. However, at the option of the City, hearings may be held at an alternate location to be specified in the public hearing notice.

5.2 Plan Development Public Hearing

At least one public hearing shall be held during the development of the CDBG Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan. The primary purposes of the public hearings are to assess community needs and problems in an effort to determine the most critical needs to be addressed by the CDBG program and to present for public comment and review the program activities that have been selected by the City to resolve the identified needs.

The first objective of citizen participation at this stage is to provide meaningful, community-wide citizen input into the decision-making process during the assessment of community needs and the consideration of priorities and options associated with the development and submission of the CDBG Plan. Local officials will also entertain proposals and comments from citizens concerning community development activities at this hearing. Citizens will be provided with information concerning the CDBG program at this public hearing. Such information shall include, but not necessarily be limited to: the goals and objectives of the CDBG program; the total amount of CDBG funds available; the role of citizens in program planning, implementation, and assessment; the range of activities that may be undertaken; the process to be followed in developing the CDBG Plan; the development and submission timetable; the activity rating process; and the schedule of meetings and hearings.

A second objective of citizen participation during this stage is to inform citizens of the proposed project activities to be included in the CDBG Plan and to solicit comments from citizens concerning these activities. Citizens attending this hearing will be provided with information concerning the activities proposed including, but not necessarily limited to: the CDBG Plan and applicable CDBG funds; specific project activities to be included; the location of the activities; the approximate cost estimate for the activities; the estimate of local match required; the impact of the project on low and moderate income persons; and the approximate timetable for implementing the activities.

This hearing will normally serve to discuss and review the information appropriate for all CDBG Plans to be submitted to HUD by the City during any fiscal year. Substantial changes in community development

or housing needs in the community as determined by local officials may necessitate another hearing to fulfill the role of the first public hearing prior to the submission of other CDBG Plans or Amendments later in the fiscal year. At the option of local officials, the City of Sherman may review multiple CDBG Plans or Amendments at one hearing when more than one CDBG Plan or Amendment is to be submitted to HUD during the same fiscal year. Such hearing shall be held prior to, and in preparation for, approval of the CDBG Plan or Amendment by the City Council.

Prior to submission to HUD, a summary of the proposed CDBG Plan describing its content and purpose and including where the document may be examined will be published on the City's website and posted in public places. Citizens will have at least thirty (30) days to review and comment on the CDBG Plan. Comments should be submitted in writing to the Grants Coordinator. The final CDBG Plan will be posted on the City's website.

5.3 Amendment Public Hearings

The City of Sherman will assure the opportunity for citizen participation during the implementation of any CDBG Plan when changes to the CDBG Plan are under consideration by the City of Sherman. Citizen participation shall be obtained and considered in any amendments to a CDBG Plan that involve changes in dollar amount spent on any activity, changes in program beneficiaries, changes in the location of approved activities, addition to or deletion of project activities, or major budget shifts between approved activities.

To ensure adequate opportunity for citizen participation in the CDBG program, the City of Sherman shall hold a public hearing on all substantial amendments that require HUD approval. For "local" amendments (as defined by HUD) and changes for which HUD approval is not required, input from citizens concerning changes or amendments will be received at regularly scheduled City Council meetings where such changes or amendments are considered.

Prior to submission of a substantial amendment to HUD, the City will publish notice on the City's website, and citizens will have at least thirty (30) days to review and comment on the amendment. Comments should be submitted in writing to the Grants Coordinator.

5.4 Assessment of Performance Public Hearings

Citizens of the City of Sherman will be provided with the opportunity to comment on the performance of local officials, the City staff, consultants, engineers, and contractors, and on the actual use of CDBG funds during the implementation of a CDBG program. Citizens will also be requested to assess the performance of the City of Sherman in resolving identified community development and housing needs, and in achieving its community development goals and objectives. On-going community assessment of the effectiveness of the community development process is considered essential to the success of the CDBG program.

At the conclusion of each CDBG Program Year, an annual performance report known as the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) must be prepared by the City for submission to HUD. Prior to submission to HUD, the City will publish notice on the City's website, and citizens will have at least fifteen (15) days to review and comment on the CAPER. The Grants Coordinator will make the CAPER available for examination during regular business hours. Comments

should be submitted in writing to the Grants Coordinator. The final CAPER will be posted on the City's website.

5.5 Additional Hearings

Other public hearings may be held as deemed necessary by the City Council in order to inform citizens of community development projects and activities, and to solicit citizen opinions and comments. All additional hearings shall comply with the requirements set forth in this Plan.

5.6 Limited English Proficiency Residents

Local officials will undertake all reasonable actions necessary to allow limited English proficiency residents to participate in the community development process. Such actions may include the provision of an interpreter and/or the provision of materials in the appropriate language or format for persons with limited English proficiency.

5.7 Public Hearing Notice

Notices for public hearings may be published or posted, separately or together, as may be deemed necessary by the City Manager of the City of Sherman. Notice of public hearings will be given according to the City's established policy. The City of Sherman may waive hearing notice requirements in cases where unusual circumstances justify alternative means of notifying the general public. In such situations, shorter notice may be given and public notices posted in public places may be used in place of a notice published on the City's website. Each notice of a hearing shall include the time, date, place, and topics and procedures to be discussed.

5.8 Accessibility to Low and Moderate Income Persons

The public hearing procedures outlined herein are designed to promote participation by low and moderate income citizens, as well as residents of blighted neighborhoods and CDBG project areas in any public hearings. Local officials may take additional steps to further promote participation by such groups, or to target program information to these persons should officials feel that such persons may otherwise be excluded or should additional action be deemed necessary. Activities to promote additional participation may include: posting of notices in blighted neighborhoods and in places frequented by low and moderate income persons and holding public hearings in low and moderate income neighborhoods or areas of existing or proposed CDBG project activities.

5.9 Accessibility to Persons with Disabilities

The locations of all public hearings as described herein shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities. The City of Sherman shall provide a sign language interpreter whenever the Grants Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more deaf persons will be in attendance. The City of Sherman shall provide a qualified reader whenever the Grants Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more visually impaired persons will be in attendance. Additionally, the City of Sherman shall provide reasonable accommodations whenever the Grants Coordinator is notified in advance that one or more persons with mobility or developmental disabilities will be in attendance.

Section 6. Program Information

Citizens will be provided full access to CDBG program information during all phases of a CDBG project. Local officials of the City of Sherman shall make reasonable effort to assure that CDBG program information is available to all citizens, especially those of low and moderate incomes and those residing in blighted and limited English proficiency neighborhoods and CDBG project areas.

To facilitate citizen access to CDBG program information, the Grants Coordinator will keep all documents related to the CDBG program. Information from the project files shall be made available for examination and duplication, on request, during regular business hours. CDBG program information and materials concerning specific CDBG projects will be available to the public at the regularly scheduled public hearings as outlined in this Plan. Furthermore, information concerning any CDBG project will be available at regularly scheduled council meetings where the program is discussed.

Materials to be made available shall include, but are not necessarily limited to: the Citizen Participation Plan; records of public hearings; mailings and promotional materials; prior CDBG Consolidated Plans and Annual Action Plans; letters of approval; subrecipient agreements; the environmental review record; financial and procurement records; project design and construction specifications; labor standards materials; performance and evaluation reports; other reports required by HUD; proposed and approved CDBG project applications for the current fiscal year or CDBG Plan; written comments or complaints received concerning the community development program and written responses from the City of Sherman; and copies of the applicable Federal and State rules, regulations, policies, requirements, and procedures governing the CDBG program. HUD-provided data is available on the HUD website.

In no case shall the City of Sherman disclose any information concerning the financial status of any program participant that may be required to document program eligibility or benefit. Furthermore, the City of Sherman shall not disclose any information that, in the opinion of the City Manager's Office, may be deemed of a confidential nature.

It is the City's policy to administer the CDBG program without displacement of households. In the event displacement is unavoidable, the City and/or other responsible parties will comply with the regulations of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act, as amended, and Section 104(d) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended. Consistent with the goals and objectives of activities assisted under the Act, the City will take appropriate steps to minimize the direct and indirect displacement of persons from their homes.

Section 7. Procedures for Comments, Objections and Complaints

The public hearings scheduled, as described in this Citizen Participation Plan, are designed to facilitate public participation in all phases of the community development process. Citizens are encouraged to submit their views and proposals on all aspects of a community development program at the public hearings. However, to ensure that citizens are given the opportunity to assess and comment on all aspects of the community development program on a continuous basis, citizens may submit written comments or complaints to the City of Sherman at any time.

Any citizen or citizen's group desiring to comment or object to any phase of the planning, development, or approval of the CDBG Plan or Amendment, or to the implementation of any CDBG project, should submit such comments or objections in writing to the Grants Coordinator. Should, after a reasonable period, a party believe that their comment or complaint has not been properly addressed or considered by the Grants Coordinator, then the aggrieved may appeal their case to the City Council.

Local officials shall make every effort to provide written responses to citizen proposals or complaints within fifteen (15) working days of the receipt of such comments or complaints where practicable.

Citizens may contact HUD directly at any time to register comments, objections or complaints concerning the City of Sherman's CDBG Plan or projects. Citizens are encourage; however, to attempt to resolve any complaints at the local level as outlined above prior to contacting HUD.

All comments or complaints submitted to HUD shall be addressed in writing to:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Attn: CPD, 6AD
307 W. 7th St., Suite 1000
Fort Worth, TX 76102

Records of all comments, objections, and complaints by citizens concerning the City of Sherman's CDBG program and subsequent action taken in response to those comments shall be maintained on file at City Clerk's Office and shall be made available for public inspection upon request.

Section 8. Amendments

The City of Sherman may modify the provisions outlined herein through amendment to this Citizen Participation Plan. It shall be the policy of the City of Sherman to periodically review and discuss the effectiveness of this Citizen Participation Plan in allowing citizen participation in the community development process and in helping to meet the community development needs and goals identified by the citizens of the City of Sherman. To this end, the effectiveness of this Plan will be discussed at public hearings held in conjunction with the community development program as discussed herein, and potential amendments to this Plan will be reviewed at that time.

Section 9. Authority

No portion of this Citizen Participation Plan shall be construed to restrict the responsibility and authority of the elected officials of the City of Sherman in the development, implementation, and execution of any Community Development Block Grant program.