



Town of Great Barrington
334 Main Street
Great Barrington, MA
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Town of Sheffield
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Sheffield, MA
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**Community Development Block Grant
Citizen Participation Plan**

Updated 2014

Executive Summary

The Towns' community development strategy processes are strengthened by informed and involved local residents and businesses owners. Needs assessment, program and project design, plan implementation, and community support are all improved with increased citizen participation.

To increase citizen participation in the preparation of the community development strategy and funding applications, such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the towns of Great Barrington and Sheffield have created a multi-faceted approach to providing public notification and disseminating pertinent information. One of these citizen participation outreach features is through the Towns' websites (www.townofgb.org and www.sheffieldma.gov). The websites serve as a source of public announcements and meeting notices, meeting minutes and materials, a repository of community development documents, and general information on the CDBG program.

The Towns of Great Barrington and Sheffield each intend to hold at least one public meeting for the purpose of reviewing and approving each town's community development strategy. Each Town will publicly post the community development strategy and allow for a public comment period.

The Towns of Great Barrington and Sheffield intend to hold two formal public hearings, one in each town, at least one month prior to the submission of the CDBG grant request for the purposes of 1) announcing the intent of the Towns to prepare a CDBG application, 2) providing the public an overview of the CDBG program and application process, and 3) receiving public input on the proposed projects.

Once awarded, at least one public hearing will be announced during the grant's implementation period to obtain citizen comments on the intended outcome and effectiveness of CDBG programs and ways to improve these program initiatives in the future. Also, public information meetings may be scheduled to provide specific information to residents in the target areas that will be directly impacted by a project or program to gauge program satisfaction.

Meeting notices will be posted in the Town Halls, on the Towns' websites, and by email to local residents.

Citizen Participation

The Citizen Participation Plan will be made publicly available on the Towns' websites.

Participation – Citizens are encouraged to participate in the CDBG and community development strategic planning process, and any substantial amendments thereof. This is especially the case with regard to participation of low- and moderate- income residents where housing and community development funds may be spent. The Towns will take whatever actions are appropriate to encourage the participation of all its residents, including minorities and non-English speaking persons, as well as persons with disabilities in all stages of the process.

The Towns encourage the participation of residents of public and assisted housing developments and recipients of tenant-based assistance in the process of developing and implementing the CDBG and community development strategy, along with other low-income residents of targeted revitalization areas in which the developments are located.

In particular, the Towns will facilitate public participation by: conducting public outreach seeking additional qualified LMI applications for the Housing Rehabilitation Program; providing updates through articles in *The Sheffield Times*, the Great Barrington Planning Department's blog, the Berkshire Record, a newspaper with circulation in both towns, and email blasts; forming a five person Citizen Advisory Committee with representatives from each town as part of the Housing Rehabilitation Program; updates presented at televised Board of Selectmen meetings; updates on the local radio, which broadcasts to both towns; and providing a program wrap-up summary and public input sessions.

Access to Information – Citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties, including those most affected, will have the opportunity to receive information, review and submit comments on any proposed submission concerning the proposed activities, including the amount of assistance the towns expects to receive (including grant funds and program income), and the range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low- and moderate-income.

Publishing the Plan – The Towns will publish its proposed community development strategy so that affected citizens have sufficient opportunity to review it and provide comments. The requirement for publishing may be met by publishing a summary of the proposed CDBG application and community development strategy in one or more newspapers of general circulation and making copies of the proposed plan available at libraries, government offices, and public places. The summary will describe the contents and purpose of the CDBG and community development strategy, and must include a list of the locations where copies of the entire plan may be examined. The Towns must also provide a reasonable number of free copies of the plan to citizens and groups that request it.

Public Hearings – The Towns will provide at least two public hearings to obtain citizens' views and to respond to proposals and questions, to be conducted at a minimum of two different stages of the program. Together, the hearings will address housing and community development needs, development of proposed activities, and review of program performance.

In order to obtain the views of citizens on housing and community development needs, including priority non-housing community development needs at least one of these public hearings will

occur prior to submission of a CDBG application in order to determine or reaffirm appropriate community development strategies and to receive public comments regarding possible projects and components in any CDBG application which may be developed.

The citizen participation hearings will be held at times and locations convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries, and with accommodation for persons with disabilities. All citizen participation hearings will be held in ADA accessible facilities. Other disabilities will be accommodated through the good faith efforts of the towns.

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.

All citizen participation hearings will be televised.

Notice of Hearings – Notice of public hearings will be placed in a legal notice in the local newspaper at least 14 days prior to the date of the public hearing. In addition, public hearings will be announced at Board of Selectmen meetings, on the Towns' websites (www.townofgb.org and www.sheffieldma.gov), group emails to interested parties, and posted flyers at well-traveled locations.

Access – Citizens will be provided with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information, and records relating to the towns' proposed use of CDBG funds, and relating to the actual use of CDBG funds.

Comments – A timely written response to those parties submitting written CDBG related complaints and grievances, within 15 working days of receipt where practical. Sent to: Town of Great Barrington, Town Hall, C/O Town Manager, 334 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230.

Substantial Amendments – If substantial amendments or changes to the community development strategy or CDBG funding application is contemplated, the Towns will inform the general public of these changes through a public hearing and provide at least 30 days to receive comments on a substantial amendment before the amendment is implemented. The Towns will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally at public hearings, if any, in preparing the substantial amendment. A summary of these comments and a summary of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons therefore, shall be attached to the substantial amendment.

Performance Reports – The Towns will provide citizens with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on CDBG performance reports. Citizens will be provided at least 15 days to receive comments on the CDBG performance report. The Towns will consider any comments or views of citizens received in writing, or orally at public hearings in preparing the performance report. A summary of these comments shall be attached to the performance report.

Availability to the Public – The CDBG and community development strategy as adopted, substantial amendments, and the CDBG performance report will be available to the public, including the availability of materials in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request. These materials will be made available to the public free on-line or at the cost of reproduction.

Access to Records – The Towns will provide citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the Towns' CDBG and

community development strategy and the Towns' use of assistance under the programs covered by the plan during the preceding five years.

Technical Assistance – The Towns, when practical, will provide technical assistance to representative groups of persons of low- and moderate-income that request such assistance in developing proposals for funding assistance under the community development strategy.

Complaints – The Towns will provide a timely, substantive written response to every written citizen complaint, within an established period of time (within 15 days, where practicable, if the towns are a CDBG grant recipient). The Town Manager in Great Barrington shall manage all grievances.