



CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

Community Development Block Grant program

Adopted this **20th** day of **April, 2020** by:

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Louis Radkowski, Mayor
Christopher Pletcher, Deputy Mayor
Andrew Mohny
Margie Brown
Joe Fleming
Bob Roberts
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ADMINISTERED BY:

Timothy J. Pearson, City Manager
Tina Gradizzi - Community & Economic Development Coordinator

City Hall
11 LaFayette Street
St. Marys, PA 15857
www.stmaryspa.gov



**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN
CITY OF ST. MARYS, ELK COUNTY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM**

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

The City of St. Marys has designed this 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'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 Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This Plan supersedes all other Citizen Participation Plans which may have been previously adopted by the City of St. Marys.

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. The 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 of St. Marys.

SECTION 2 – PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

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

1. Identification and assessment of housing and community development needs; determination of CDBG project(s) and documentation and the development of the CDBG application;
2. Modifications to approved CDBG projects; and
3. 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 St. Marys are encouraged to participate at all levels and will be given access to program information during each phase of any CDBG program as outlined herein.

SECTION 3 – CITIZEN PARTICIPATION CONTACT PERSON

The City of St. Marys, Community and Economic Development Coordinator has been designated to serve as the contact person for all matters concerning citizen participation activities by the City of St. Marys. 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 which may be specifically delegated to other parties by this Plan.

The specific duties and responsibilities of the contact person shall include, but not necessarily be limited to: disseminating information concerning proposed projects and the status of current project activities; coordinating various groups which 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 and/or program staff; and monitoring the citizen participation process and proposing such amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan as may be necessary.

The contact person, Tina Gradizzi, may be contacted at 814-781-1718 ext. 225 or by email at tgradizzi@stmaryspa.gov or by mail at City of St. Marys, Attn: Tina Gradizzi, 11 LaFayette Street, St. Marys PA 15857. All questions concerning citizen participation in the community development process should be addressed to the Citizen Participation contact person.

SECTION 4 – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The City of St. Marys CDBG Administrator shall provide technical assistance to individual citizens and citizen groups, especially those groups representative of persons of low and 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 upon request and may include, but not 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 to develop activities and proposals for projects which, when implemented, will resolve those needs.

SECTION 5 – PUBLIC HEARINGS

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

Public hearings will be held during various phases of the planning process for the annual application, as outlined herein, to allow citizens to voice opinions and offer proposals concerning the development and performance of CDBG programs. City Council members will respond to questions and proposals from citizens at each public hearing. Any questions that citizens may have concerning a program will be answered and their comments, suggestions and/or proposals will be received and reviewed as part of the application process. Citizens may also express comments and views concerning the community development process or any specific CDBG project to City Council at any regularly scheduled meeting.

Documentation that will be retained in the citizen participation file will include the Notice, Agenda, Sign-In sheet, Minutes and any written comments received.

5.1 - Public Hearing Times and Locations

All public hearings will be held at times and locations which 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's CDBG Administrator. Public hearings may be held at any site which, in the opinion of the City of St. Marys, provides adequate access for citizen participation.

Hearings will be held at City Hall in the main council room in the basement, 11 LaFayette Street, St. Marys. City Hall is easily accessible to all citizens and is also accessible to persons with disabilities. Hearings may, however, at the discretion of the CDBG Administrator, be held at an alternate location to be specified in the public hearing notice(s).

5.2 – Application Public Hearing

At least two public hearings shall be held prior to the submission of an application to DCED for CDBG assistance. The primary purposes of the public hearings shall be to assess community needs and problems in an effort to determine the most critical needs to be addressed by the CDBG program; evaluation of the past performance of the CDBG program in the City of St. Marys and also, to present for public comment and review the program activities which have been selected by the St. Marys City Council to resolve the identified needs.

An initial public hearing will be held during the development of each year's CDBG program to discuss items regarding community development and housing needs, the CDBG program and the application process. The objective of citizen participation at this stage is to provide meaningful, city-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 a CDBG application. Local officials will also entertain proposals and comments from citizens concerning community development activities at this hearing.

This hearing will normally serve to discuss and review the information appropriate for the application being submitted by the city during any fiscal year.

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 which may be undertaken; the process to be followed in developing a CDBG application; the application timetables(s); activities previously funded in the City through the CDBG program and an identification of projects which could result in the displacement of area residences or businesses; and the actions that would be undertaken if such relocation were necessary. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the Citizen Participation Plan in allowing citizen participation in the community development process and potential changes and/or amendments to the Plan will also be discussed at this meeting.

A second public hearing will be held prior to City Council's approval and submission of the CDBG application. The objective of this second hearing is to inform citizens of the proposed project activities to include in the CDBG application and to solicit comments from citizens concerning the proposed activities.

Citizens attending this second hearing will be provided with information concerning the CDBG project(s) being proposed including, but not necessarily limited to: specific project activities to be included; the location of the project activities; the approximate cost estimate for the proposed activities; any

matching funds being used; the impact of the project on low and moderate income persons; and the anticipated submittal date.

5.3 – Modification Public Hearings

The City's CDBG Administrator will assure the opportunity for citizen participation during the consideration of any modifications to previously-approved CDBG program(s). Citizen participation shall be obtained and considered prior to the approval of any modification to a CDBG program which involves the addition of any new activity to a CDBG program and/or the deletion of any previously-approved activity. Citizen participation will also be sought in the event that the service area or beneficiaries of an activity are substantially changed from what has been approved by DCED.

To ensure adequate opportunity for citizen participation during CDBG programs, the City shall hold a public hearing on all formal modifications which require the approval of DCED. For budget revisions (as defined by DCED) input from citizens concerning changes or amendments will be received at regularly scheduled meetings of City Council.

5.4 Additional Hearings

Other public hearings may be held as deemed necessary by the City's CDBG Administrator in order to inform citizens of community development project(s) and activities and to solicit citizen opinions and comments. All additional hearings shall comply with the requirements set forth in this plan.

5.5 Public Hearing Notice

Notice of public hearings will be posted on the City's website under the "Public Notice" section of the homepage and will be published in The Daily Press at least five (5) days prior to the hearing date. Each notice of a hearing shall include the time, date, place and topics and procedures to be discussed. Notices for public hearings may be published or posted, separately or together, as may be deemed appropriate by the City's CDBG Grant Administrator. Notices must also give the necessary information about how the citizen can provide written comment. It should include the address and email of the City's contact person and the deadline comments will be accepted. The City will give a minimum of ten (10) days from the day after publish/post date for receipt of written comments.

Documentation to be retained in the citizen participation file will include a screen shot of the public notice on the website that includes a date, a proof of publication from the newspaper, any written comments received during the citizen comments period and a copy of the notice.

5.6 – 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. City Council may take additional steps to further promote participation by such group 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.

5.7 – Accessibility to Persons with Disabilities

The locations of all public hearings described herein shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities. The City shall attempt to provide reasonable accommodations whenever the Citizen Participation contact person is notified at least 72 hours before the hearing that one or more persons with hearing, vision, mobility or developmental disabilities will be in attendance.

5.8 – Accessibility to Persons with Limited English Proficiency

The City shall provide translators for citizens with limited English proficiency whenever the Citizen Participation contact person is notified at least 72 hours before the hearing or if the City knows that a proposed activity will be benefitting a neighborhood that has limited English proficiency and it is expected that residents will be in attendance.

SECTION 6 – PROGRAM INFORMATION

Citizens will be provided with full access to CDBG program information during all phases of a CDBG project. The City's CDBG Administrator 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 neighborhoods and/or CDBG project areas.

To facilitate citizen access to CDBG program information, the Citizen Participation contact person will keep all documents related to a CDBG program on file in the City's Community and Economic Development Office, which will be identified in the notice. 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 and distributed 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 City Council meetings where the program is being 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 program applications; letters of approval; grant agreements; environmental review records; financial and procurement records; project design and construction specifications; labor standards materials; performance and evaluation reports; other reports required by DCED and/or complaints received concerning the community development program and written responses from the City's CDBG Administrator and copies of the applicable Federal and State rules, regulations, policies, requirements and procedures governing the CDBG program.

In no case shall the City disclose any information concerning the financial status of any program participant(s) which may be required to document program eligibility or benefit. Furthermore, the City shall not disclose any information which may, in the opinion of the St. Marys City Council, be deemed of a confidential nature.

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, at any time, submit written comments or complaints to the City's CDBG Administrator.

Any citizen or citizen's group desiring to comment or object to any phase of the planning, development or approval of the application for CDBG funds, or to the implementation of any CDBG program, should submit such comments, or objections in writing to the City's CDBG Administrator. Should, after at least fifteen days, a party believe that his/her comment or complaint has not been properly addressed or considered by the City's CDBG Administrator, then the aggrieved may appeal his/her case to City Council.

The City's CDBG Administrator 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. Should the City's CDBG Administrator be unable to sufficiently resolve an objection or complaint, it may be forwarded by the aggrieved party to DCED.

Citizens may, at any time, contact DCED and/or HUD directly to register comments, objections or complaints concerning the City's CDBG application and/or program(s). Citizens are encouraged, however, to attempt to resolve any complaints at the local level as outlined above prior to contacting DCED or HUD.

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

PA Department of Community and Economic Development
Center for Community and Housing Development
Commonwealth Keystone Building, 4th Floor
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Or

US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Community Planning and Development
The Wanamaker Building
100 Penn Square East, 12th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107

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

SECTION 8 – AMENDMENTS

The City may, from time to time, modify the provisions outlined herein through amendment to this Citizen Participation Plan. It shall be the policy of the City of St. Marys to periodically review and discuss the effectiveness of this Citizen Participation Plan in allowing the 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 St. Marys. To this end, the effectiveness of the Plan will be discussed at public hearings held in conjunction with the community development program as discussed herein and potential amendments to the Plan will be reviewed at this time.

Amendments to the Plan will be made as necessary. All amendments shall be approved by City Council and shall be incorporated into this Plan.

SECTION 9 – AUTHORITY

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

SECTION 10 – OTHER SPECIAL PROJECT GRANTS OR EMERGENCY DECLARATION

In the event that other federal special programs are awarded to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or 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, as amended and administered by DCED, the citizen participation requirements will be followed in accordance with either the statute or regulations set forth for the program or provide HUD with a request for waivers to the citizen participation process in accordance with information provided by HUD. Once the waiver is granted by HUD to the Commonwealth, the special conditions will be passed to its grantees, if necessary, to streamline the citizen participation process in accordance with the regulation in place.

The City of St. Marys amends their Citizen Participation Plan due to the following required action not covered in their Citizen Participation Plan:

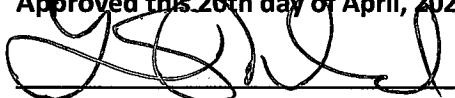
Amendment – 4-2020 – CARES ACT Authorization:

Emergency Declaration Citizen Participation and Expedited Modification Process:

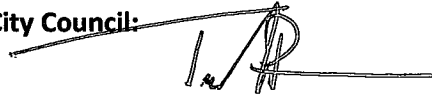
Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) allows for a grantee to adopt and use expedited procedures to prepare, propose, modify or amend its statement of activities to the FY 2019 and FY 2020 grant and new CARES funding related to the use of funding to address emerging COVID-19 response.

As long as national or local health authorities recommend social distancing and limiting public gatherings for public health reasons, Grantees do not need to hold in-person public hearings but “shall provide citizens with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment of not less than five (5) calendar days.” A “grantee may create virtual public hearings to fulfill applicable hearing requirements for all grants from funds made available under this law”. Any virtual hearing “shall provide reasonable notification and access for citizens in accordance with the grantee’s certifications, timely responses from local officials to all citizen questions and issues and public access to all questions and responses.”

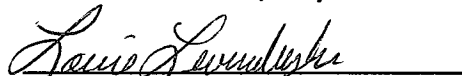
Approved this 20th day of April, 2020 by St. Marys City Council:



LOUIS RADKOWSKI, Mayor



TIMOTHY J. PEARSON, City Manager



Attest

(Seal)