

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

For the City of Uniontown's
Community Development Block Grant Program

April 2020



Approval:

Mayor

Date

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SECTION I. Introduction

The City of Uniontown has prepared this 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 Section 104(a) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended and implementing regulations at Title 24 CFR Part 91.105, as well as any CDBG program requirements as administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. This Plan supersedes all other Citizen Participation Plans which may have been previously adopted by the City of Uniontown. This Plan supersedes all other Citizen Participation Plans which may have been previously adopted by the City of Uniontown.

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(s) and will be provided full access to program information. However, final responsibility and authority for the development and implementation of CDBG program(s) will lie with the City of Uniontown.

SECTION 2 – PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The City of Uniontown will make reasonable efforts to provide for citizen participation throughout the planning, implementation and assessment of all CDBG program(s) 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 the development of CDBG applications;
- b) Modifications to approved CDBG projects; 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 Uniontown 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

Mark Rafail, Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Uniontown and the CDBG Administrator, has been designated to serve as the contact person for all matters concerning citizen participation activities by the City of Uniontown. 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, Mark Rafail, may be contacted at 724.438.7968, by email at director@uniontownredevelopment.com or by mail at Redevelopment Authority of the City of Uniontown; 20 North Gallatin Avenue; Suite 216; Uniontown, PA 15401

All questions concerning citizen participation in the community development process should be addressed to the Citizen Participation contact person.

SECTION 4 – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Mark Rafail, CDBG Administrator, 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 CDBG programs.

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 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 development statements of views, identify their needs, and to develop activities and proposals for projects which, when implemented, will resolve those needs.

Technical assistance may be obtained by contacting the City of Uniontown or the Citizen Participation contact person.

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 persons and 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. Local officials 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 the City Council at any regularly scheduled meeting.

Documentation that will be retained in the citizen participation file will include the Notice, agenda, list of attendees, 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 of Uniontown. Public hearings may be held at any site which, in the opinion of City of Uniontown, provides adequate access for citizen participation.

Hearings will normally be held at City Hall, 20 North Gallatin Avenue; Uniontown, PA 15401. This site is generally accessible to all citizens. This building is also accessible to persons with disabilities. Hearings may, however, at the option of the City, be held at an alternate location to be specified in the public hearing notice(s).

Times will be listed in the public hearing notices.

Public notices will be published a minimum of seven (7) days prior to the public hearing in a newspaper of general circulation. The daily publication of the *Herald Standard* will be used whenever practicable. All notices will be posted in City Hall, 20 North Gallatin Avenue; Uniontown, PA 15401. Notices will also be distributed to the local agencies identified in Exhibit 1. These community groups represent persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency. The intent of distribution is to make the information available through these agencies who will make it available to their constituency and display the information in locations that are frequented by these populations.

A sample public notice is included as Exhibit 2.

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 Uniontown and also, to present for public comment and review the program activities which have been selected by the City 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, 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 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 all applications submitted 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 applications later in the 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:

- a) the goals and objectives of the CDBG program;
- b) the total amount of CDBG funds available; the role of citizens in program planning, implementation, and assessment;
- c) the range of activities which may be undertaken; the process to be followed in developing a CDBG application;
- d) the application timetable(s);
- e) activities previously funded in the CDBG program; and,
- f) 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.

Following the first public hearing, the City will consider all comments and views received and develop its proposed use of funds.

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

Citizens attending this second hearing will be provided with information concerning the CDBG project(s) proposed including, but not necessarily limited to:

- a) specific project activities to be included; the location of the project activities;
- b) the approximate cost estimate for the proposed activities;
- c) the estimate of local match required; the impact of the project on low- and moderate-income persons; and, the anticipated application submittal date.

The City may, at the option of local officials, review multiple CDBG project applications at one hearing when more than one application is to be submitted during the same fiscal year, for example a competitive application. Each such hearing shall be held prior to, and in preparation for, the application's approval by City Council.

5.3 – Modification Public Hearings

The City of Uniontown will assure the opportunity for citizen participation during the consideration of any modifications to previously-approved CDBG program. 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 the (Grantee) Commissioners where such changes or amendments are considered.

5.4 – Additional Hearings

Other public hearings may be held as deemed necessary by the City Council 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 of Uniontown’s website uniontowncity.com and will be published in the *Herald Standard* 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 Council. Notices must also give the necessary information about how the citizen can provide written comment. It should include the address, e-mail of the City’s contact person and the deadline comments will be accepted. The City of Uniontown will give a minimum of ten (10) days from the day after publish/post date for receipt of written comments.

Copies of the notice will be distributed to agencies listed in Exhibit 1 which can help disseminate the information to persons who would not necessarily get the newspaper or go to the City’s website. These organizations include those that serve limited English-speaking persons, persons who are have a disability and persons who are lower income.

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. 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.

5.7 – 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 full access to CDBG program information during all phases of a CDBG project. Local officials of the City 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 City Hall 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 discussed.

Materials to be made available shall include, but are not necessarily limited to

- a) the Citizen Participation Plan;
- b) records of public hearings;
- c) mailings and promotional materials;
- d) prior CDBG program applications;
- e) letters of approval; grant agreements;
- f) environmental review records;
- g) financial and procurement records; project design and construction specifications;
- h) labor standards materials;
- i) performance and evaluation reports;
- j) other reports required by DCED and/or HUD;
- k) proposed and approved CDBG program application(s) for the current year or project;
- l) written comments or complaints received concerning the community development program, and written responses from the City; and,
- m) 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 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.

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 the Mayor.

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. Should the Mayor 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(s) 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 & Economic Development
Center for Community and Housing Development
Commonwealth Keystone Building, 4th Floor
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Or:

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

Citizens may register complaints regarding any aspect of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program by telephoning City Hall at 724.438.7968 or by email at director@uniontownredevelopment.com or by mail at Redevelopment Authority of the City of Uniontown; 20 North Gallatin Avenue; Suite 216; Uniontown, PA 15401

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 City Hall and shall be made available for public inspection upon request.

SECTION 8 – AMENDMENTS TO THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

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 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. 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. Prior to modifying approved projects grantees must:

1. Provide a public notice, at least once in the *Herald Standard*, of the proposed modification and provide the deadline by which public comments must be received. The notice must also indicate the date that the City will conduct a public hearing concerning the proposed modification. Timeliness of these notifications must be in accordance with this Citizen Participation Plan.
2. The City of Uniontown will consider all comments received as a result of the public notice and hearing, and if appropriate, modify the proposed modification.
3. Upon approval of the modification by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DECD), it must be made available for public inspection.

SECTION 9 – AUTHORITY

No portion of this Citizen Participation Plan shall be construed to restrict the responsibility and authority of the elected and appointed officials of the City of Uniontown 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 provide 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 regulations in place.

Amendment – 6-2020 - CARES ACT Authorization:

Emergency Declaration Citizen Participation and Expedited Modification Process:

The 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, the City will not hold in-person public hearings but “shall provide citizens with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment” of no less than 5 calendar days. The City shall hold 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 City’s certifications, timely responses from local officials to all citizen questions and issues, and public access to all questions and responses.

Appendices

Exhibit 1: List of Local Agencies and Organizations

Exhibit 2: Sample Public Notices

Exhibit 1

REQUIRED AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS TO CONTACT

Organization	Address	Email or Phone Number
Fayette County Housing Authority	624 Pittsburgh Road Uniontown, PA 15401	info@faycha.org , (724) 434-2100
Fayette County Community Action Agency	108 North Beeson Street Uniontown, PA 15401	(724) 437-6050
Catholic Charities	140 North Beeson Street, Suite 406 Uniontown, PA 15401	(724) 439-3531
Area Agency on Aging Fayette County District Office	137 N Beeson Blvd #107, Uniontown, PA 15401	(724) 430-4603
Salvation Army	32 W Fayette St, Uniontown, PA 15401	(724) 437-2031
Other organizations serving low/moderate-income populations, the elderly, and homeless individuals, and families.		

EXHIBIT 2: Example of First Citizen Comment Period and Public Hearing Notice

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE AND REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE (Fiscal Year) CDBG PROGRAM

Notice is hereby given by the City of Uniontown that it will hold a Public Hearing(s) on **(Date)**, at **(Time)** in **(Location including address)**. This meeting is accessible to individuals with disabilities and/or for persons with Limited English Proficiency. If you wish to attend and require special accommodations, please notify the City Administrator's office 72 hours in advance of the public hearing at 724.438.7968 or by email at director@uniontownredevelopment.com.

The purpose of the Public Hearing is to discuss the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program in general, the needs of the City and the City's performance under the previously funded CDBG Program years, and to discuss the required Three – Year Community Development Plan of the City.

The City of Uniontown is expected to receive an allocation of approximately **(allocated amount)** of **(FY)** CDBG funds from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In addition, the City of Uniontown anticipates the receipt of **(amount, if applicable)** in program income during the **(FY)** program year. At least 70% of the available funding must be used for activities which benefit low- and moderate-income persons. The proposed activities must benefit at least 51% low-moderate income persons in the service area to qualify as a low-moderate income project. The PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has announced the application submission deadline of **(Date applications are due to DCED)**.

The following types of activities may be eligible for funding under the CDBG Program: water and sewer line replacement and improvements; housing rehabilitation; construction of affordable housing; construction/reconstruction of public/community facilities; recreational facilities; public services that are new or provide quantifiable increases in the delivery of services; street improvements; historic preservation; removal of architectural barriers; code enforcement; economic development; acquisition and relocation; clearance and demolition; and general administration, planning, audit if required, and preparation of the CDBG application.

If the City of Uniontown would undertake activities that result in the displacement of families or individuals, then the City of Uniontown policy for minimizing such displacement would be in effect. The City of Uniontown is responsible for replacing all low- and moderate-income housing units that may be demolished or converted as a result of the use of CDBG funds.

All interested citizens are encouraged to attend and will be offered the opportunity to give oral testimony at the Public Hearing and/or to present written comments concerning the needs of the City of Uniontown, proposed CDBG Program activities, the prior use of CDBG funds, as well as the CDBG Program in general by Proposals and comments may be submitted to 724.438.7968 or by email at director@uniontownredevelopment.com or by mail at Redevelopment Authority of the City of Uniontown; 20 North Gallatin Avenue; Suite 216; Uniontown, PA 15401 **by (deadline date and time)**.



Example of Second Public Notice with Modifications

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED USE OF
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) FUNDS FOR CITY OF UNIONTOWN FEDERAL
FISCAL YEAR (FY Date) CDBG PROGRAM
AND ON THE MODIFICATIONS OF THE CITY'S (FY Date) CDBG PROGRAMS**

Notice is hereby given that City of Uniontown will conduct a public hearing at *(time)* on *(day and date)* at the *(Location with address)*. The purpose of the hearing is to obtain citizen views and comments on the City's proposed use of *(allocation)* in Federal Fiscal Year *(FY date)* CDBG funds, to receive any complaints or grievances regarding the City's CDBG funds, and **to discuss the modifications of the City's (FYs) CDBG Program**. This meeting is accessible to individuals with disabilities and/or for persons with Limited English Proficiency. If you wish to attend and require special accommodations, please notify the CDBG Administrator office 72 hours in advance of the public hearing at 724.438.7968 or by email at director@uniontownredevelopment.com to make such arrangements.

The projects proposed for funding and to be discussed at the hearing include:

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET
		\$196,607
		\$67,869
		\$72,595
		\$28,533
Administration		
Total Grant Request		\$248,246

