



CITY OF ALTOONA, PENNSYLVANIA CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

Adopted by City Council

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**Prepared By: City of Altoona
Department of Community Development**

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SECTION I – INTRODUCTION:

The Department of Community Development for the City of Altoona is the administering agency for the City's Federal Grants. The Department is responsible for the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME). In accordance with federal regulation 24 CFR § 91.105 for citizen participation, federal entitlement jurisdictions must adopt a Citizen Participation Plan and update the plan on an as needed basis.

The City Council of the City of Altoona adopted its initial Citizen Participation Plan in May 1995. It was last modified in April 2020 in response to The CARES Act authorizing Emergency Declaration for Citizen Participation to expedite the Amendment Process.

Based on changes to Federal Programs and the City becoming a Participating Jurisdiction under the HOME Program and other declarations in both the CDBG and HOME Programs, Altoona has updated and revised its Citizen Participation Plan accordingly.

SECTION II – PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Citizen Participation Plan is to provide the City of Altoona a guide for citizen involvement in the Federal Entitlement Programs funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Citizen Participation Plan is designed to serve the following specific purposes:

- To encourage the participation of all residents, community-based and faith-based organizations, social service agencies, housing providers, economic and community development groups, public and private non-profits, businesses, educational and financial institutions, broadband internet service providers, organizations working to narrow the digital divide, emergency management agencies, and land and water management agencies, etc. in the planning and implementation process of the consolidated plan and subsequent annual action plans.
- To present a logical and clear approach to the various components and requirements of the federal entitlement programs.
- To identify the responsible departments or agencies in the City of Altoona responsible for administering the Entitlement Programs.
- To clarify and identify opportunities for individual residents, community organizations, and neighborhood groups to work with City officials and staff in developing the Consolidated Plan, its Annual Action Plan and performance reports which show the accomplishments of the programs.
- To provide information and the means for citizens, organizations, and other stakeholders to understand and access the federal programs and required regulations.

- To act as guidance for citizen participation, to be used by all agencies, officials, and staff who are responsible for various components of the City's Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan.

SECTION III – ENCOURAGEMENT OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

The City of Altoona has prepared and adopted its Citizen Participation Plan to establish policies and procedures for citizen participation. The Citizen Participation Plan provides for and encourages citizens to participate in the development of a consolidated plan, any substantial amendments to the consolidated plan, annual action plans, and the annual performance and evaluation report. The plan is specifically designed to encourage participation by low-and-moderate income persons, particularly those residents in neighborhoods that are predominantly low-and-moderate income as defined by the City. Altoona will take appropriate actions to encourage participation of all citizens, including minorities, the disabled, and non-English speaking persons.

Altoona also encourages the participation of local and regional institutions, the Continuum of Care, and local private and non-profit organizations, including businesses, philanthropic organizations, housing providers, social service agencies, educational and financial institutions, as well as community-based and faith-based organizations.

The City will encourage the residents of publicly assisted housing developments to participate in developing, implementing, and amending (if necessary) the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan. The local public housing authority will assist the city in reaching resident advisory boards, resident councils, and resident management corporations to encourage participation.

SECTION IV – DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN AND ANNUAL ACTION PLAN:

HUD has revised and amended its regulations and procedures to apply for entitlement funds. It has consolidated the planning and applicant process for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDs (HOPWA) into a single application. The new consolidated plan document is known as the Consolidated Plan. The plan is for a five (5) year period and each year the City prepares an Annual Action Plan for how it proposes to apply its annual allocation in conformance with the goals and objectives of the Consolidated Plan. HUD has also consolidated the reporting requirements for these programs into one annual performance report known as the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

The City's Citizen Participation Plan includes the following requirements for the development of the Consolidated Plan as required by federal regulations:

- **Application Development** – Prior to the submission of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, a Section 108 Loan Guarantee Application, and other applications for CDBG, HOME, or other federal funds, and amendments to previously approved plans and applications, the City will notify residents, neighborhood organizations, and other interested parties about the application requirements; eligibility of project activities; timetable for submission; funding amounts; range of activities that may be undertaken; estimated benefit to persons of low-and-moderate income; and other information necessary to involve residents in the development of plans and applications.
- **Program Progress** – Prior to the development of annual application for CDBG and HOME funds, the City will report to the public on the progress that the City has made on its expenditure of funds at public meetings, public hearings, and through the local news media.
- **Program Implementation** – Resident involvement may take the form of advisory committees, direct involvement, self-help efforts, or other types of citizen participation during the program implementation process. The roles that residents and other stakeholders in the City play in the implementation of CDBG and HOME programs include attendance at meetings, calling-in, writing-in, etc.
- **Monitoring Evaluation** – Opportunities for residents to monitor and evaluate the City's CDBG and HOME program progress will be consistent and continuous. The following methods are available: direct contact with staff, direct contact between staff and groups, and direct contact between residents and elected/appointed officials.
- **Submission of Views and Proposals** – The submission of views and proposals, especially from low-and-moderate income persons, minority groups, and other persons or organized groups, can be made on a continuous basis and are encouraged to the greatest extent possible. Submission can be in the form of personal contact, mail, email, and telephone contact; petitions; attendance at public hearings/meetings; through questions and surveys; and other available means. Responses to all submissions shall be in a timely manner and shall not exceed a period of fifteen (15) days after the voicing of the comment, or the date of receipt of a written comment or inquiry.

Individuals submitting comments by mail should use the following mailing address:

Department of Community Development
City of Altoona
1301 12th Street, Suite 400
Altoona, PA 16601

Comments by telephone or electronically should use the following:

Phone – (814) 944-2470
Fax – (814) 949-0372
Email – planning@altoonapa.gov

SECTION V – CONSOLIDATED PLAN AND ANNUAL ACTION PLAN AMENDMENTS:

During the course of implementing the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan, the City may decide to make changes to its approved budget and/or activities. When a substantial change or substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan is proposed, the following will be followed.

- **Definition** – A substantial amendment is defined as:
 - A change in the allocation of priorities, National Objectives, or a change in the method of distribution of funds.
 - A proposal to undertake a new activity not previously described in the Annual Action Plan.
 - A change in the purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries of a previously approved activity.
 - The deletion or elimination of a previously approved activity.
 - A change of 50% or more of the line-item amount of an approved activity or program, which is either increased or decreased.
 - The use of contingency or unprogrammed funds in a given year.
- **Criteria** – the criteria used to determine what constitutes an amendment is based on the following:
 - The original purpose for which the activity was selected has changed, including the category of the National Objective selected.
 - The size or scope of work of the project activity or program has increased or decreased which changes the cost of the activity or program by more than 50% of the total original budgeted dollar amount for that activity or program.
 - The location of the project activity or program is different from originally proposed, or the size of the project service area has increased or decreased by 25% or more in size, or the location of the activity was or must be relocated to another area or site.
 - The total cost of the activity has increased or decreased by 50% or more than the original budget.
 - A new activity is proposed which was not previously approved.
 - A previously approved project is proposed to be deleted or cancelled.

If any of the above criteria apply, a substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan is required.

- **Procedure** – a description of the substantial amendment to the Consolidated Plan or the Annual Action Plan will be published in a local newspaper of general circulation. The newspaper notice shall indicate the substantial amendment will be on public display for a period of 30 days and a public hearing on the substantial amendment will be held prior to City Council approval. The Notice will include the date, time, and place of the public

hearing, along with a description of the proposed substantial amendment and when City Council intends to take action on the amendment.

- **Comments** – The City will consider any comments or views of citizens that it receives in writing or orally at the public hearing and during the time the Substantial Amendment is on public display. A summary of any comments or views will be incorporated into the Substantial Amendment, as well as a narrative of any comments or views not accepted and the reasons they were not accepted.
- **Approval** – The Substantial Amendment will be presented to the City Council after the public hearing for review and approval. The City Council will consider the amendment after it has been advertised and on public display for a period of at least 30 days. After approval of the Substantial Amendment by the City Council, the Department of Community Development shall submit the Substantial Amendment to the HUD Field Office.
- **Revisions** – The City may make a revision to its approved Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan if it does not meet the criteria of a substantial amendment. A revision is defined as a change in the budget for activities that do not substantially change the scope or beneficiaries, is not a new activity, nor the deletion of a previously approved activity and is less than a 50% reduction or increase in the line-item budget for that activity. Revisions do not require the thirty (30) day public display period nor a public hearing but do need to be presented for comment and consideration as a scheduled meeting of the City Council. After approval of the revisions, the Office of Community Development will send the revisions and supporting documents to the HUD-Pittsburgh Field Office.
- **Minor Amendments** – Minor amendments are revisions made to approved activities and budgets when the changes do not substantially alter the purpose, scope, location, beneficiaries, or national objective of the activity.
 - Revisions may include line-item budget adjustments, correction of administrative errors, minor schedule changes, funding reallocations between eligible cost categories within an approved activity, and other non-substantial changes necessary for efficient program administration.
 - Budget revisions resulting in a cumulative increase or decrease of less than fifty percent (50%) of the approved line-item amount shall be considered an administrative revision and shall not constitute a substantial amendment.
 - Minor Amendments shall not require a public hearing, public comment period, or substantial amendment process, provided the change does not meet the definition of a substantial amendment as outlined in this Plan. Such revisions will be discussed with City council during regularly scheduled council meeting and documented in the minutes for the meeting and documented internally in the program file. Revisions will be transmitted to the HUD-Pittsburgh Field Office.
 - Examples of administrative revisions may include adjustments to engineering, architectural, environmental review, activity delivery, construction, program

delivery, or other eligible line-item costs within an already approved project or activity.

SECTION VI – PERFORMANCE REPORTS:

All federal entitlements are required to file an annual performance report to HUD. HUD requires that a Comprehensive Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) be submitted to HUD within ninety (90) days after the end of the Grantee's Fiscal Year. The City Department of Community Development will publish in a local newspaper of general circulation a notice informing the public the City has prepared the CAPER, and it is available for review and comment for a period of at least fifteen (15) days. The fifteen (15) day period commences the day after publication of the notice, and the public has fifteen (15) days to make comments prior to the submission of the CAPER.

A summary of the comments or views shall be included in the CAPER. The City Department Community Development will submit the CAPER to the HUD-Pittsburgh Field Office.

SECTION VII – PUBLIC HEARINGS / MEETINGS:

All public hearings and meetings will be held in a timely manner and shall be accessible to all segments of the City's population, including accommodations for persons with disabilities. The Public Hearings and meetings shall be held at a time and place convenient and accessible to all persons who wish to participate.

Public hearings shall be held at least two (2) times per year at different stages of the program year for the purpose of obtaining residents' views on the development of needs, the review of proposed activities, and review of program performance. At least one (1) public hearing must be held during the planning process in the development of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, all Section 108 Loan Guarantee Applications, and other program applications.

The Public Hearing notices shall be published at least ten (10) calendar days prior to the hearing date and shall be advertised in a local newspaper of general circulation.

The first public hearing will serve the purpose of providing a summary of program requirements, answering questions regarding the Annual Action Plan process, provide a tentative schedule for development and submission of the application.

The initial hearing is meant to obtain the views of citizens and organizations regarding overall community development and housing needs, development of proposed activities, including the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low- and moderate-income, and to review program performance.

The intent of the meeting(s) will be to provide a mechanism for citizens participation at the City-wide, municipal and neighborhood level. Comments or recommendations on projects in specific localities will be encouraged.

The hearing will be conducted by the Department of Community Development, which is responsible for preparation of the application.

All City meeting spaces are accessible to persons with physical disabilities. If special arrangements need to be made to accommodate residents in order for them to participate in the public hearing, please contact the Department of Community Development at (814) 949-2470 or planning@altoonapa.gov. Persons who may have a hearing impediment, please contact 7-1-1 for the TTY/TTD relay. Generally, requests for assistance should be made at least two (2) working days prior to the hearing day.

Notice of the hearing will appear in the legal section of a newspaper of general circulation within the City. The notice shall be published at least seven (7) days prior to the public hearing and provide specific location of the hearing.

In the event that non-English speaking residents will be expected to attend public hearings, translation assistance will be provided so they may participate effectively in the hearing. If the Department of Community Development is notified within three (3) days prior to the public hearing, it will make arrangements to accommodate non-English speaking residents, including having a translator present at the public hearing or meeting. Also, a summary of the minutes of the public hearing will be translated in another language for the benefit of non-English speaking residents. Alternate language translations of public notices, surveys, etc. will be provided for residents who do not speak or read English.

SECTION VIII – PUBLIC NOTICE:

A legal notice will be published in a local newspaper of general circulation notifying the public that the proposed Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan will be on public display for a period of not less than thirty (30) days, in order to receive citizen comments prior to approval by the governing body.

Copies of the proposed plans will be available at the following locations:

- **City Clerk's Office and City Department of Community Development**
1301 12th Street, Suite 400
Altoona, PA
- **Altoona Housing Authority**
2700 Pleasant Valley Boulevard
Altoona, PA
- **Altoona Area Public Library**
1600 Fifth Avenue
Altoona, PA

SECTION IX – AVAILABILITY TO THE PUBLIC:

A second public hearing will be undertaken when the draft application for funding has been prepared.

Upon completion of the proposed Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan, the City of Altoona shall publish the proposed Plan or summary of the Plan in sufficient time to permit citizens to comment on the Plan prior to its approval and adoption by the City. The notice will appear in the legal section of a local newspaper of general circulation at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the adoption of the Plan and will include the locations where the Plan will be made available for public review.

The second public hearing will be conducted during the thirty (30) day review period of the proposed Consolidated Plan and/or Annual Action Plan. The notice of this second public hearing will provide locations where the Draft Plan is available for review. The notice will be published at least ten (10) days prior to the date of the hearing.

The hearing will be conducted by the Department of Community Development. Public Hearings will be held at times and locations that are convenient to potential and actual beneficiaries of the proposed programs or activities. Public Hearings will be held in the 4th floor Common room at City Hall, 1301 12th Street, Altoona, PA, 16601. The Consolidated Plan or Annual Action Plan will also be posted on the City's website: <https://www.altoonapa.gov/>.

When planning begins for the upcoming year, organizations within the City will have the opportunity to submit comments, proposals, or recommendations on the Community Development Block Group Program, HOME Program, and other Federal Programs. Any residents or property owners in the City or any organization representing City residents or property owners may participate.

Such a comment, proposal or recommendation may be directed to the attention Department of Community Development, City of Altoona, 1301 12th Street, Suite 400, Altoona, PA, 16601 or by email at planning@altoonapa.gov or by calling (814) 949-2470. All submitted written statements will receive a written response no later than fifteen (15) working days from the date of receipt, setting forth the action taken or to be taken with respect to the comment, proposal, or recommendation. However, written statements that are intended to suggest modifications to the application can only be considered if they are received by the end of the thirty (30) day review period on the draft Annual Action Plan or Consolidated Plan.

SECTION X – ACCESS TO RECORDS:

The City shall provide full public access to the CDBG and HOME program information and affirmative efforts to provide adequate information to residents, especially those who are low- and moderate-income, and those who are residing in predominantly low- and moderate-income

neighborhoods or slum and blighted neighborhoods. Information shall be provided about the Community Development Block Grant Program, HOME Investment Partnerships Program, Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program, and all other programs, as applicable, including at a minimum the following:

- At the time when the City begins its Community Development Block Grant Program, HOME Program, Section 108 Loan planning process, and any other programs, as applicable, include:
 - Total amount of funds available, including program income;
 - The range of activities eligible or ineligible, including the estimated amount which will benefit low-and moderate-income persons;
 - Actions to minimize displacement and assist any person(s) displaced, specifying the type and level of assistance the City will make available to persons displaced, even though the City anticipates no displacement;
 - The process that will be followed in developing and approving projects or programs;
 - The standards of participation and goals for the Citizen Participation Program; and
 - Summary of important program requirements.
- Upon request, copies of all materials relating to the Community Development Block Grant Program, HOME Investment Partnerships Program and all other programs, as applicable, will be made available to any persons and/or group for the cost of copying only, particularly documentation concerning the following:
 - All mailing, promotional materials, and news releases;
 - Key documents, including all prior applications, letters of approval, performance and program evaluation reports, and any other applications proposed or approved, or reports required by HUD;
 - Copies of CDBG and HOME Program regulations;
 - Information on contracting and purchasing procedures, environmental policies, fair housing, equal opportunity, relocation provisions, the 24 CFR Part 58 environmental review process, affirmative action and any other requirements or regulations relating to the CDBG and HOME programs; and
 - Costs of copying will be established by local and state laws.
- The submission of views and proposals from low-and moderate-income persons, minority groups, and any other persons or organized groups can be on a continuous basis and shall be encouraged to the greatest extent possible. Submissions can be in the form of:
 - Personal contact;
 - Mail, email, and telephone contact;
 - Petitions;
 - Attendance at public meetings/hearings;

- Through questionnaires and surveys; and
 - Other available means.
- The submission of views and proposals shall be an on-going process and at a minimum during the following stages:
 - The planning process;
 - The annual HUD application process; and
 - The implementation process.

Responses to all submissions shall be in a timely fashion and shall not exceed a period of fifteen (15) days after voicing of a comment, or the date of receipt of a written comment or inquiry.

Individuals submitting comments by mail should use the following mailing address:

City of Altoona
Department of Community Development
1301 12th Street, Suite 400
Altoona, PA 16601

SECTION XI – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

The Department of Community Development of the City of Altoona shall provide technical assistance to groups/organizations that are representative of persons of low-and-moderate income that request such assistance in developing proposals for funding assistance under any of the programs covered by the City's Consolidated Plan.

The City's staff will assist these groups to prepare their proposals and will provide assistance in preparing cost estimates for projects proposed by low-and moderate-income groups.

SECTION XII – COMPLAINTS:

Any individual or organization may choose to file a complaint concerning Altoona's Entitlement Programs. Complaints should be forwarded to Department of Community Development, City of Altoona, 1301 12th Street, Suite 400, Altoona, PA, 16601 or by email at planning@altoonapa.gov, or by calling (814) 949-2470. The complaint should contain the following information.

- The name and signature of the complaint, or if any organization has prepared the complaint, the name and signature of the officer of the organization responsible for correspondence.
- The address to which the City of Altoona's response should be mailed.
- A telephone number where the complaint or an individual knowledgeable about the substance of the complaint can be reached during business hours.
- The nature of the complaint, including any relevant information or documentation.
- A recommendation concerning how the complainant wishes to have the matter resolved.

The Department of Community Development will make every reasonable effort to provide a written response to a complaint within fifteen (15) days of its receipt. The City of Altoona will indicate its position on the matter and the action it proposes to take. The Department of Community Development will not be obligated, however, to respond to any anonymous or fictitious complaints.

If the Department of Community Development's response does not resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant may request a meeting with the City of Altoona's Mayor to seek resolution within two (2) weeks of the initial response by the Department of Community Development. This meeting, whenever possible, shall be held within fifteen (15) working days of receipt of the request for a meeting. Following such a meeting the City shall notify the complainant of its proposed resolution within ten (10) working days of the date of the meeting. If the complainant feels that the response is still not satisfactory, the complainant may follow the procedure described in the following section.

The above complainant procedure shall not be considered a prerequisite for persons or organizations wishing to file objections to applications pursuant to Federal regulations.

Individuals or organizations who have followed the procedure described above to resolve complaints may choose to file an official objection with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Pittsburgh Field Office, William S. Moorhead Federal Building, 1000 Liberty Ave # 1000, Pittsburgh, PA 15222. Persons may choose to file a complaint directly with HUD and not follow the local complaint procedure established in #6 above. Following the local complaint procedures is not required prior to filing an objection with HUD. However, citizens are encouraged to bring complaints at the local level for resolution as HUD procedures require the City of Altoona to respond to any complaint filed. Therefore, more immediate resolution to a complaint is generally at the City level.

SECTION XIII – AMENDMENTS TO THE PLAN:

The City of Altoona will provide residents with the opportunity to comment on this Citizen Participation Plan. Copies of this proposed Citizen Participation Plan will be available at the City of Altoona, Department of Community Development, and the City website <https://www.altoonapa.gov/>. A public notice will be published in a local newspaper of general circulation for a period of fifteen (15) calendar days prior to the adoption of the Citizen Participation Plan by the City of Altoona in order for residents to comment on the plan. Copies of the Citizen Participation Plan will be made available upon request, in a format accessible to persons with disabilities. Substantial amendments to this plan will follow the same procedure as the adoption of the original plan.

Revisions, amendments, and changes may be made to the Citizen Participation Plan at any time. Residents will be afforded the opportunity to comment on any amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan. A notice of the proposed amendments to the Citizen Participation Plan will be

published in the local newspaper of general circulation in the area, informing the public of the availability of the Citizen Participation Plan and its proposed changes. The City will advertise once and will notify residents that they have a period of up to fifteen (15) days from the date of the newspaper notice to respond to the proposed changes in the Citizen Participation Plan.

SECTION XIV – EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS:

When a Declaration of an Emergency has been ordered by the President of the United States, or the Governor of Pennsylvania and regulatory flexibility is permitted by HUD, the City will adhere to the following process concerning public hearings and public display of plans when necessary for public health reasons. These emergency procedures will apply to the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Substantial Amendments, and initial plan submissions, as permitted through a regulatory waiver authority or programmatic flexibility:

- If the City is unable to hold an open public hearing in person, the City will hold virtual public hearings through conference calls or an online video conference platform, as long as the public is able to provide comments during the virtual public hearing.
- If the City is not able to physically place the plans on public display at the locations referenced in the Citizen Participation Plan, the city will place the plans on the City's website (<https://www.altoonapa.gov/>) and will also email copies of the plans to any person who requests a copy of the plans, via an email request to planning@altoonapa.gov.
- If the City Council is unable to conduct an open public forum meeting, the City may approve the plans at a virtual City Council meeting, as an in-person meeting will not be held due to the Declaration of an Emergency.
- If HUD has waived the public comment period for the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan submission from thirty (30) to a lesser number of days, the public notice will include the number of days in the reduced comment period for public awareness.
- All other requirements relating to the City's Citizen Participation Plan for Consolidated Plans and Annual Action Plans remain in effect, including the consultation requirements, as required by 24 CFR 91.105.