

VILLAGE OF SHERMAN, NY

FAIR HOUSING PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

The Village of Sherman is committed to furthering Fair Housing by analyzing potential impediments to Fair Housing, taking action to alleviate and overcome identified impediments, and continually working to assure that new impediments do not arise in the future, either due to direct action, the inadvertent outcome of inaction, or the outcome of a failure to recognize an issue that represents an impediment to Fair Housing choice. An Impediment to Fair Housing Choice is defined as any action, omission or decision taken because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or familial status that restricts housing choice or the availability of housing choice, or any actions, omissions or decisions that have this effect. Policies, practices, or procedures that appear neutral on their face, but which operate to deny or adversely affect the provision of housing to persons in any protected class may constitute such an impediment. The Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice in the Village of Sherman has the goal of serving as the substantive, logical basis for the Fair Housing Plan and ongoing fair housing activities undertaken by the Village and its representatives.

II. VILLAGE OF SHERMAN, NY - BACKGROUND DATA

The Village of Sherman is located in the northern portion of the Town of Sherman in Chautauqua County, New York. In the 1800's, the surrounding woodlands provided valuable raw materials, but getting them to the nearest sawmills was arduous across the hilly terrain. What is now the Village was a population center settled in an area of relatively flat topography. French Creek flows through the Village and provided the necessary waterpower to turn grain and sawmills for the surrounding Town. The Village was incorporated in 1890. The center of the Village's Main Street today feels like stepping back into the late 1800's, as the handsome brick buildings that still line both sides of the block were built at that time following fires and floods that destroyed earlier buildings. These buildings now contain small businesses such as a pharmacy, a flower shop, an insurance company, gift shops/galleries, a bookstore, and an auto parts store.

i. General Demographics

All data is from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates unless otherwise noted. The data shows that Sherman is a hard-working, blue-collar community that remains closely tied to its roots in agriculture and forestry. The Village has a population of 685 people living in .85 square miles, making the population density 806 people per square mile. 97.8% of the population declares themselves as one race, white; 1% as one race, American Indian; and .4% as one race, Filipino. Less than 1% declares themselves as two or more races. 100% declare themselves as not being Hispanic or Latino. Most of the Village's 276 working adults are employed in construction (21.4%) followed by educational services, and health care and social assistance (21%), accommodation and 2 food service (15.6%); retail (12%); manufacturing (9.4%), public administration (5%); agriculture and forestry (4.7%); and transportation/warehousing (4.7%). The median family income is \$46,923, well below the County MFI of \$65,600. 14% of the population lives below the poverty line. 20% of the population receives cash public

assistance or food stamps. 22% of the Village's population is over the age of 65. 20.6% of the population has a disability.

ii Housing Characteristics

The Village has a total of 310 housing units, 290 of which are occupied. 78% of the housing is single family, 6.5% is two-unit, 2.6% is 3-4 unit, 7.7% is 5-9 unit, 1.9% is 20+ units and 3.2% are mobile homes. Of the 290 occupied units, 65.9% are owner-occupied. Nearly 41% of the owner-occupied homes are owned by a person over the age of 65. The average household size for owner-occupied units is 2.48 while the average for rental units is 2.13. 59% of the housing was built prior to 1940. Nearly 86% of the housing was built prior to 1980. The median value of owner-occupied housing is \$71,800, well under the median value of owner-occupied homes for Chautauqua County (\$95,000). In 2021, a windshield survey was undertaken to assess the condition of a random 10% sample of the Village's occupied housing units by the county-wide non-profit housing rehab agency Chautauqua Home Rehabilitation and Improvement Corporation. This survey consisted of 22 total housing units, based on the Village's tax rolls. A Windshield Survey Form was used to assess the condition of each unit. Primary, Mechanical, and Secondary components were given ratings of Sound (needing no more than routine maintenance), Minor (in need of repair), Major (in need of major repair or replacement) or Critical (requires replacement). Houses were then classified as to condition according to the following:

- Standard Units - Have no major structural defects, have adequate plumbing, and do not have a blighting appearance. Units need normal maintenance.
- Moderately Substandard Units - Have less than three major defects and can be restored to a standard condition for a reasonable cost.
- Severely Substandard Units - Have more than three major defects, or at least one critical defect and can be restored to standard condition at a reasonable cost.
- Dilapidated Units - Are determined to be substandard to a degree requiring clearance, or buildings that have three or more critical deficiencies that cannot be repaired to a standard condition for less than a reasonable amount.

The survey results indicated that 68% were substandard with 36.4% being severely substandard and 27.3% having at least one but no more than three major defects and 3 therefore moderately substandard. One home was determined to be dilapidated, or beyond repair for a reasonable amount of money.

III. CURRENT FAIR HOUSING PROFILE

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968-also known as the Fair Housing Act (FHA) - prohibits discriminatory practices in the sale, rental, or financing of housing on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or familial status. The Department of Housing and Urban Development is the lead agency for enforcement and compliance with the Fair Housing Act. The Village of Sherman has delegated the responsibilities of its Fair Housing Officer to the person filling the position of Code Enforcement Officer. Since the position was delegated, the Village has not received any complaints. The Village is unaware of any complaint having been filed with US Department of Housing and Urban Development prior to delegating its own Fair Housing Officer. Further, there are no Fair Housing discrimination suits filed by the Department of Justice which involve the Village of Sherman.

IV. IDENTIFICATION OF IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING CHOICE

The Village was unable to identify any overt instances of discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or familial status in the sale, rental, or financing of housing in the Village. No complaints have been filed against any seller, leaser, or financier of housing with the Village's Fair Housing Officer, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development or the Department of Justice. An examination of local ordinances and building codes does not reveal any regulations that would act to limit Fair Housing Choice for any member of any protected class. The Village recognizes that turning its attention to Fair Housing concerns is a new activity and that the lack of complaints may be due to a lack of awareness of the Fair Housing Law in the community. Likewise, the community likely remains unaware that the Village has a local official available to receive and process complaints and assist residents in seeking resolution. This lack of community awareness represents an existing impediment to furthering the goal of Fair Housing. Another significant impediment to Fair Housing choice in the Village of Sherman lies in the overall condition of a great deal of its housing stock combined with the demographic characteristics of its population. The housing stock is old and much of it is in substandard condition. This may be an issue impacting Fair Housing Choice for residents with household members who have a disability (21% of the population), since finding safe, accessible housing may pose a challenge. Also, although age is not a federally recognized protected class, the high percentage of older housing, high incidence of substandard housing and the high percentages of homes occupied by seniors, many of whom may have age-related mobility issues, may combine to create a situation where Fair Housing choice is impeded by the inability of seniors to secure housing that is safe, decent, affordable.

V. ACTIONS TAKEN TO OVERCOME IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING

The Village of Sherman has taken several actions in an effort to overcome the impediments to Fair Housing identified above, including:

- i. Creating the position of Fair Housing Officer for the Village of Sherman and aligning that responsibility with the position of the Village's Code Enforcement Officer so that it always remains filled.
- ii. Seeking funding to address the substandard condition of the Village's housing stock through the Community Development Block Grant program. The Village first sought CDBG funding in 2021. The Village plans to seek additional funding through the CDBG program and other programs if available.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Village of Sherman is committed to furthering Fair Housing choice within the Village. In order to achieve this goal, the Village puts forth the following goals:

- i. Improve general outreach efforts, through increased and improved signage at the Village Hall and other public venues and press releases, so that the general public is better aware of existing Fair Housing laws.
- ii. Improve general outreach efforts, through increased and improved signage at the Village Hall and other public venues and press releases, so that the general public is better aware of existing resources with regards to possible Fair Housing violations both within the community and through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- iii. Have municipal officials participate in Fair Housing training.
- iv. Continue to seek funding for programs to increase the quality and quantity of safe, decent, affordable, and accessible housing through housing rehabilitation programs.

- v. Continue to foster partnerships with community agencies such as Chautauqua Home Rehabilitation and Improvement Corporation, Chautauqua Opportunities Inc., Habitat for Humanity, Chautauqua County Office for the Aging, the Resource Center, and other agencies that can work with the Village to help achieve Fair Housing Goals.