

October 14, 2024

Ms. Karen Utz, REDC Regional Director
95 Perry Street, Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: NY Forward Application Round 3 – Village of Sherman

I am writing this letter in full support of the Village of Sherman's \$4.5 million NY Forward Application to the NYS Department of State.

My wife Christine and I purchased our home on East Main Street in the summer of 2020, after having lived in a densely populated area of Pittsburgh. We immediately fell in love with the quaint charm of the Village of Sherman and became part of the Sherman community as volunteers and contributors to the Minerva Free Library and Sherman Day Committee, as well as my positions on the Steering Committee and Zoning Board of Appeals. Recently, in line with the Village's goals of clean energy, we installed residential solar panels on the roof of our home with Solar Liberty out of Buffalo, NY. Christine and I are both involved in the Sherman Day Committee which hosts a weekend of events each year drawing past alumni and visitors each year. There is so much potential in this little village, and we are excited about all the proposed projects listed in this application.

As the Vice Chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals for the Village of Sherman, I am pleased that the village has completed an updated Comprehensive Plan, Downtown Market Analysis, and a NYMS Building Feasibility Study which resulted in the complete restoration of the Main Street façade along with other local business upgrades. The village also renovated both the water and sewer facilities and started a long-term stormwater project working toward a stable and sustainable future. The village installed two electric vehicle charging stations, converted solely to LED streetlights, added additional LED lights in front of the school and along the I-86 providing a safe, well-lit area drawing commuters into the village, and added two community solar arrays to offset the public infrastructure debt, working toward the goal of becoming an Advanced Community among the Clean Energy Community. The village is also participating in its second single-family and its first Mobile and Manufactured Home Rehabilitation Programs, all these initiatives incorporating the input of all stakeholders and receiving support from businesses, residents, and community organizations.

As a ZBA member, I am passionate about the revitalization of the empty commercial buildings on both ends of Main Street within the target area, and the restoration of the empty, previously burned, residential units above the retail shops. This regeneration will help meet the growing need for different residential accommodation and counter the growing blight issues, while bringing peace of mind as these old buildings and especially the attached row building units along Main Street, are brought up to current building code and fire safety standards, along with being put back to use and boosting this economy and tax base.

My wife and I are avid walkers and cyclists, and regularly enjoy the local parks and trails. We are both very happy that this initiative will also focus on trail improvements to the treasured Chautauqua Rails to Trails network and parks along French Creek which are equally critical to the village's economic development and quality of life strategies. I am looking forward to attracting new businesses and visitors by increasing access to our trail system and developing part of the greater Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, connecting Sherman and Chautauqua County to other regions.

My wife and I are very happy here and excited to see the continued investment and revitalization of Sherman's downtown. Once again, I fully support this important grant application and the community's commitment to improving the lives of people who live and work in Sherman. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Ken Labuskes,
Zoning Board of Appeals, Vice Chair
Steering Committee, Member
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