

# NYS Brownfield Opportunity Areas

## Step 2 Nomination Application

### *Sheridan Hollow Neighborhood Albany*



Applicant: Affordable Housing Partnership of the Capital Region, Inc.  
255 Orange Street, Albany, NY 12210

Partners: Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region, Inc.  
Albany Community Land Trust  
The City of Albany

Date: September 27, 2012

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## Brownfield Opportunity Area Program Application Narrative Responses

### Part B.8. - DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE of COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

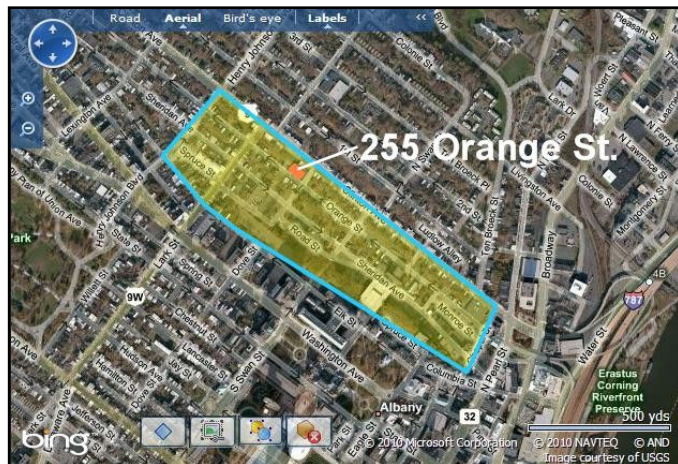
#### 1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND MUNICIPALITY

The Affordable Housing Partnership of the Capital Region Inc. (AHP) has partnered with the City of Albany, the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region Inc. (CLF), and the Albany Community Land Trust (ACLT) to implement this project. The partners have a long history of working together on a variety of development, planning and revitalization projects. For example, AHP provides homeownership counseling services to participants in Albany Community Development Agency (ACDA) programs. AHP's brokerage program, Community Realty has provided real estate services to ACDA in the buying and selling of property. ACLT renovates many of its properties in collaboration with ACDA's lead-abatement program. The Community Loan Fund administers a CDBG block grant-funded small business incubator in cooperation with the City of Albany and Albany Center for Economic Success. Project personnel are active participants in various City task forces and planning efforts including the City's 2030 Plan and the Arbor Hill Implementation Team. AHP has organized a steering committee for this project which includes major stakeholders in Sheridan Hollow including City staff. City of Albany staff was instrumental in organizing AHP in 1989 as a model of public/private partnership. AHP's by-laws call for municipal representation on its Board of Directors, a position currently held by a member of the City's Planning Department. A letter of support from Mayor Gerald D. Jennings is attached.

#### 2. RELATIONSHIP TO THE BOA AREA

The applicant proposes a BOA nomination study of the Sheridan Hollow neighborhood of Albany. The 110 acre area is bounded by Henry Johnson Blvd. to the west, Clinton Avenue to the north, N. Pearl Street to the east, and Elk Street to the south.

The applicant and nonprofit partners are all based in Albany. All three offices are located in the proposed BOA area at 255 Orange Street. Principal staff for this project come to work in Sheridan Hollow every day. Through the provision of community services in the neighborhood coupled with proximity and property ownership, AHP and its partners have a heightened familiarity with the problems, perceptions and opportunities for redevelopment in Sheridan Hollow. This Brownfield Opportunity Areas program application builds on our experience, commitment to the neighborhood, and existing momentum.



The Community Loan Fund manages a small business incubator in the neighborhood and has made loans to nonprofit groups and minority and women-owned enterprises in and around the neighborhood, including a neighborhood drycleaner, a mixed-use building, and housing constructed by the Albany Community Land Trust and the Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless. The Albany Center for Economic Success (ACES) business incubator is a strategically important site and anchor institution which hosts community forums, meetings, elections, community services and much more.

AHP's Homeownership Center is based in Sheridan Hollow and offers services to promote housing opportunity and aid disadvantaged neighborhoods throughout the Capital District. Through AHP's lending affiliate, the Capital Affordable Housing Funding Corp., the applicant has acquired property through foreclosure in the neighborhood which could become a strategic basis for revitalization.

ACLT has redeveloped property for affordable homeownership in the neighborhood and in the broader West Hill/Arbor Hill area. Through this work, ACLT has deep roots in the community and a resident-controlled Board of Directors committed to the revitalization of struggling neighborhoods.

We have learned from 20 years of redevelopment experience that a scattered site approach has been insufficient to catalyze additional investment and our neighborhoods continue to struggle. The partner organizations are committed to Sheridan Hollow by virtue of our location and investments, and are committed to creating a comprehensive plan for our community that will attract strategic investment to make it a community of choice.

### **3. EXPERIENCE IN COMPLETING PLANNING PROJECTS**

AHP was formed in 1989. Its purpose, as detailed in its Certificate of Incorporation, is to "Coordinate and/or initiate cooperative efforts of local government, not-for-profit organizations, and the corporate sector...to increase the quantity, availability and access to housing which is affordable to low and moderate income households...To aid and assist in the rebuilding and rehabilitation of deteriorated areas or structures...To provide for citizen participation in housing and community improvements...and promote and facilitate investment in under-served communities," among other goals.

In addition to direct program provision, AHP has long been active in regional planning and collaboration. AHP was the lead agency for a strong regional collaboration that resulted in, among other initiatives, the successful implementation of New York's first nonprofit real estate brokerage. AHP has developed a strong focus on improving quality of life and access to opportunity in core neighborhoods.

AHP has a strong track record of collaborating and coalition building and is well-respected within the affordable housing community. The applicant and its partners convened a task force for the creation of an Albany County Housing Trust Fund. AHP staff was active in the City of Albany's first-ever comprehensive planning effort and in the City's Vacant Building Task Force. Through its licensed real estate affiliate, AHP provides valuable real estate data to municipalities planning HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) projects. In cooperation with a regional network of housing providers, AHP has drafted several community development reports, including: *Quality*

*Neighborhoods for Regional Prosperity*, November 2006; *Solutions to the Vacant Building Problem*, November 2007; and the *Sheridan Hollow Pre-Nomination Study*, September 2012.

Together with its project partners, the applicant has assembled a highly-capable and committed management team that includes long-time managers of neighborhood-based nonprofits as well as key planning personnel with the City of Albany.

#### 4. FINANCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The applicant and its nonprofit partners each have been in existence for over twenty years. AHP is governed by a 13 member board of directors which meets six times a year. The remaining six months of the year, the organization's executive committee (comprised of officers of the corporation) meets to provide strategic and financial guidance. The board, as required by the by-laws, is comprised of members of banking institutions, municipalities, and non-profit housing agencies. The board approves the annual work plan and budget and receives regular programmatic and financial reports. The organization has had a long history of collaborative projects and is supportive of the neighborhood planning effort being proposed.

Much of the work of AHP is paid on a reimbursement basis. Organizational cash flow has been budgeted accordingly. If AHP incurs a larger than normal expense associated with the implementation of the award, the applicant may consider a cash flow loan advance from our project partner, the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region.

### **Part C. - PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND OTHER CRITERIA**

#### 1. SUMMARY PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Affordable Housing Partnership of the Capital Region Inc., and its partners, intend to complete a Nomination Study for an approximate 110 acre area characterized by widespread abandonment and the presence of known or potential brownfield sites and/or circumstances detailed in the application that hinder redevelopment in the Sheridan Hollow neighborhood of Albany. Of fifteen sites identified as strategically important during a Sheridan Hollow Pre-Nomination Study, five have verified histories of past uses prone to environmental contaminants.

The primary revitalization objectives to be achieved by this project were identified during a Step 1 Pre-Nomination Study with significant community participation and input. A vision statement and priorities for the neighborhood were adopted by the project Steering Committee:

**“Our vision for Sheridan Hollow is for a great place to live and work and a community where people want to stay.”**

*We will strive to create: a vibrant, diverse, mixed use neighborhood whose unique history and culture are celebrated; the environment is protected; development is equitable and sustainable; citizens are involved; Incomes are mixed; Affordability is maintained; Local ownership is increased; And quality of life for all residents increased.*

*Our Core Values: Community, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity, social equity*

Residents and other stakeholders then identified goals and priorities for Sheridan Hollow in the general stated areas of concern:

- **Housing**
  - Quality safe affordable housing for seniors
  - Support a variety of high quality housing types
  - Rehab/repair resources for existing homeowners\*
  - Some insured long-term affordability
  - Create incentives for local ownership, increased homeownership
  - Reduce vacancy
  - No displacement of existing residents
  - Improve residential parking
  - Strategy for senior home transfer
  - Incentives for neighbors buying adjacent vacant properties
- **Economy/Employment**
  - Job creation\*
  - Construction jobs in redevelopment and community renewal
  - Training and apprenticeships for our youth in trades
  - Training for our youth in other professions and in soft job skills like computers, financial literacy
  - Support small locally owned businesses (specific needs = fresh fruit and veggies)
  - Opportunities for small start up vendors, for example a public market
  - Develop mixed use properties with business on first floor and residences above
  - Support a diverse economy
  - Encourage responsible business practices and small business advocacy
  - Artists, small manufacturers, small drug store
  - Link to downtown business
- **Infrastructure/Environment**
  - Better lighting
  - Better trash cans (i.e. solar)
  - Reuse of vacant and underused buildings\*
  - Enhanced stairways, entrances
  - Model green buildings – improve energy efficiency
  - New pedestrian friendly streetscapes – sidewalks and streets. Increase walkability\*
  - Easier access into and out of the neighborhood and to public transit
  - Improved sewer and storm water systems, new water mains
  - Enhance existing recreation facilities, such as the Orange Street basketball court
- **Quality of Life/Services/Recreation**
  - Increase community pride, citizen involvement and democracy
  - Build social capital and opportunities for community connections\*

- Create more community gardens for neighbors
- Develop activities that engage young people in neighborhood, neighborhood improvement club Intergenerational connections
- Senior/youth activities
- Kickball field/tennis court
- More fitness options
- Connect residents to existing resources
- Drop In Center for youth, with parent participation
- More opportunities for community arts, including dance and music.
- Encourage artists
- Increase public safety and cleanliness
- Less litter

*\*Highest priorities*

During Step 2, the project will build on these goals and priorities with a scope of work that includes:

- Feasibility analysis and development of financial packages to encourage the redevelopment of existing housing;
- Promotion of the reuse of neighborhood sites with existing barriers to development;
- Planning for a safe and walkable neighborhood through street scape design and vacant lot reuse;
- Evaluation of strategic vacant sites and buildings for potential business development to provide employment opportunities for neighborhood residents;
- Support for strengthened neighborhood participation to envision opportunities for a prosperous and sustainable future, and
- Preparation of a Brownfield Opportunity Area Step 3 application.

## 2. IN-DEPTH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Overview** – The applicant and its partners have worked closely together on a Pre-Nomination Study of the Sheridan Hollow neighborhood to gain a thorough understanding of the barriers to and strategic opportunities for redevelopment. We have developed our plan of study for a Step 2, Nomination study based upon community meetings, interviews with neighborhood stakeholders, and our own 25 year history of community development, informed by our location within Sheridan Hollow.

The Sheridan Hollow study area has well defined boundaries due to its history and topography. The southern boundary is Elk Street which is at the top of a steep slope that has physically separated Sheridan Hollow from businesses along Washington Avenue. To the north, Clinton Avenue, a major boulevard, separates Sheridan Hollow from the predominately residential Arbor Hill. The eastern edge of the study area touches the central business district (Pearl Street) and the western edge is Henry Johnson Blvd., a major road through the City of Albany.

Sheridan Hollow is currently a **neighborhood in economic distress**.

- Residents are poor: 48% of residents have incomes below poverty level. The median income for some blocks in Sheridan Hollow is less than \$15,000.

- Unemployment rates for some blocks are as high as 28%.
- Tenants comprise 89% of residents, and are highly transitory. Some blocks have experienced turnover rates (over a five year period) as high as 70%.
- The neighborhood is emptying out: While the 2010 Census showed an increase in the City of Albany's population, Sheridan Hollow experienced an 11% decrease.
- The housing vacancy rate is 35% (compared to a City wide rate of 17%).
- Property values are depressed. The average residential sales price during 2011 was \$34,205. (This excludes new condominium units at the eastern edge of the neighborhood).
- The cost to maintain and rehabilitate housing in the neighborhood requires an investment that exceeds the market value of the property. Deterioration, abandonment, and demolition result.

The economic disinvestment in Sheridan Hollow has resulted in large scale vacant lots that are not cared for, poor sidewalks, and deteriorating, uninhabitable housing. Difficult to redevelop brownfield sites also fill the neighborhood.

**Concentration of Brownfield Sites** – Since its early-industrial history, the Sheridan Hollow neighborhood has been negatively impacted by unsafe and unhealthy parcels and uses which have caused persistent economic distress. As early as the 1800s the neighborhood was best known as home to the City of Albany's manure heap. By the 1990s, the neighborhood had become embroiled in an environmental justice debate between primarily poor minority residents and an incineration plant promising cheap power. An initial survey of the area conducted for this application finds that of the 650 tax parcels in the 110 acre neighborhood, as many a 1 in 10 are potential brownfield sites impacted by real or potential toxins which hinder development.

- **Strategic Sites with Likely Contamination** – Fifteen strategic sites were evaluated for a Pre-Nomination Study of the Sheridan Hollow Neighborhood. Of the fifteen sites that were identified by residents and stakeholders as significant for redevelopment, five are likely brownfield sites based on past uses involving likely environmental contaminants:

Site Address	Past Use(s)	Time Frame
236 Clinton Ave.	Buried oil tank Stained glass works (lead)	As late as 1951
276 Clinton Ave.	Former gas station Oil and grease storage	1951
127 Orange St.	Auto repair	1934 – 1950s
293-295 Orange St.	Auto garage Coal storage	Reported spills as recently as 1990s
283 Sheridan Ave.	Gas station	Beginning 1934
<i>Potential brownfield sites: Five</i>		

Our proposed scope of work for Step 2 includes environmental and related evaluation of these and other sites. Complete property profiles for all fifteen sites are included with this application.

In addition to known brownfield sites a variety of additional conditions exist in Sheridan Hollow requiring consideration. For example:

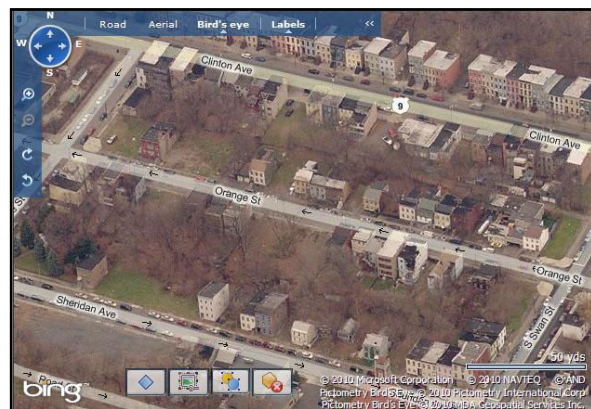
- 91-99 Sheridan Avenue** – Known as the ANSWERS Plant, this state-owned incinerator was designed to burn gas, oil and/garbage. Garbage incineration was the preferred fuel for several decades. A report published in 1991 by the environmental advocacy group INFORM compared data for seven garbage incinerators and found that the ANSWERS plant had the highest level of dioxide and lead emissions. Problems with the oil burner and wet garbage burnt in January 1994 resulted in a series of soot releases that blanketed the neighborhood.

According to the *Times Union*, Jan 11, 1994: “The dirty black particles from the state-run incinerator looked like pieces of burned paper that fell from the sky early Monday night, giving snow the appearance of black mud and filling the sky with



an acrid odor...[First Ward Alderwoman Carol Wallace] described it as ‘great chunks falling out of the sky...it was just a thick haze. It was starting to burn my throat’...” Residents and businesses filed legal notices in April 1994 claiming the plant had poisoned the air, land and homes in Sheridan Hollow. Environmental groups waged campaigns in the 1980s and 1990s followed by a lawsuit that was settled to end the incineration of garbage. Unfortunately, the troubled history of the ANSWERS Plant, with its real and perceived environmental impacts, continues to constrain redevelopment efforts in the Sheridan Hollow neighborhood. *Potential brownfield site(s): One, including perceived widespread neighborhood impact.*

- Scattered Site Vacant Lots** – A legacy of neglect and deterioration has left a neighborhood patchwork of vacant lots, typically 25' x 100' in size. With concerted planning and a strategic plan, many of these parcels could be assembled into buildable sites. Marketability would be enhanced if the developer(s) could be assured of the absence of contaminants such as buried oil tanks where buildings once stood. *Potential brownfield site(s): At least fifty.*





Sheridan Hollow is one of seven Brownfield Opportunity Areas listed for potential redevelopment in the City of Albany's Comprehensive Plan, "Albany 2030". We have worked closely with City of Albany planning staff in proceeding with our study.

**Community Plan** – The Step 1 pre-nomination study has given the project partners and the community an opportunity to come together to build a sense of identity for the neighborhood. A diverse group of stakeholders have met, including existing residents, community organizations and businesses. Together they have developed a shared vision for Sheridan Hollow:

*"Sheridan Hollow is a great place to live and a community where people want to stay"*

Four goals for the neighborhood have resulted from public meetings with community members and stakeholders as well as interviews:

- redevelopment of quality **housing** for households of all incomes and ages;
- redevelopment of commercial businesses to provide **job opportunities** for neighborhood residents including construction jobs, opportunities for start-up vendors, especially for healthy foods, support for local artists, small manufacturers;
- **enhanced environment** such as pedestrian friendly streetscapes, improved sewer and storm water systems, enhanced recreation facilities, etc.
- increased **quality of life** with community gardens, fitness options, connection to existing resources, drop in centers for youth and seniors.

The Sheridan Hollow community is beginning to develop an alternative vision for the neighborhood and overcome the legacy of neglect. They have come together to recognize the community's many strengths and to develop a coordinated plan for strategic redevelopment.

**Strategic Opportunities** – An important asset of the neighborhood is its excellent location at the edge of the central business district of Albany, the state capitol of New York. Since the 1700s, Albany has served as a transportation hub for the Northeast, and has developed into a regional medical and education center. Building on those strengths, the Capital Region is currently developing as a technology center, including nanoscale technology and manufacturing.

Sheridan Hollow has always been a mixed use neighborhood, with housing for lower-income workers and commercial uses such as commercial printing, auto services, and a bakery. Sheridan Hollow benefits from this diversity of use and building structure that will permit a variety of redevelopment possibilities to meet neighborhood goals of good housing, job opportunities and a higher quality of life. Land uses and current zoning designations support mixed use development.

Several strategic sites (or categories of properties) have been identified as high priority locations for further study and consideration for productive reuse. They include vacant

commercial properties at 210 Sheridan Avenue and the former Friehofer baking plant. They also include significant vacant parcels in key locations that could support a variety of alternative uses. Vacant residential buildings need to be evaluated for potential redevelopment and the gateways into the neighborhood (sites at key corners, the stairs to Elk Street) need to be considered as part of an overall streetscape improvement program. For more information about proposed Strategic Sites please see the Step 1 study attached.

With the variety of types of sites available to be re-used, Sheridan Hollow has a wonderful opportunity to create a comprehensive community revitalization plan. Sheridan Hollow plans to strengthen existing uses such as residential and small commercial businesses as well as explore a wide variety of potential economic uses that will enhance the quality of life in Sheridan Hollow and surrounding neighborhoods.

Rehabilitation of historic housing: The historic row houses that line Clinton Avenue and Lark Street have the potential to attract residents back to the neighborhood if rehabilitation preserves historic features. The Step 2 application requests funding to support feasibility studies for the revitalization of these historic resources.

Construction of new housing: Housing developers have seen the potential of Sheridan Hollow and have acquired vacant lots from the City as well as private owners. Seventy-five (75) new affordable residential units are proposed by Habitat for Humanity and rental housing developer Housing Visions for significant parts of the center of Sheridan Hollow. Market rate housing is being developed on the eastern edge of the neighborhood with luxury condominiums and apartments. Habitat has been able to receive many parcels that had been assembled by the City of Albany.

Economic Development Opportunities: The ability to enhance the vibrancy of the neighborhood comes from the many commercial and employment opportunities that meet resident needs and are a good physical fit for the neighborhood. The Step 2 application wishes to explore the following strategic economic sectors:

*Access to healthy foods/grocery store:*

Sheridan Hollow has very limited access to quality, full service grocery stores, and bringing a new grocery store to the area is a high priority. Smaller, independently owned stores, can be successful in low-income communities and may offer comparable prices as well as more specialized products that are attuned to local consumers' tastes and preferences. Specialty stores such as the Food Coop and Whole Foods Market can be successful in "dual market" areas that comprise both low-income and middle-income neighborhoods. With the close proximity of areas such as Loudonville and the significant local government population that travel through Sheridan Hollow and Arbor Hill, this could be a viable option. The process of improving access to healthy foods requires a detailed market study and pro forma to be used to attract a national chain or local independent grocer.

Additionally, Sheridan Hollow should explore the potential support urban agriculture and other healthy food strategies. There are several larger vacant parcels that could be redeveloped making room for urban orchards, green house development, and community garden space. The neighborhood benefits from jobs, access to healthy foods and a city and regional draw that may benefit other businesses in Sheridan Hollow.

*Childcare and After-School Care.*

Sheridan Hollow could benefit from quality, affordable day care and after school care with an educational component. This facility could have a tremendous social and economic impact on the area by providing a service to allow more families to work and also create employment opportunities for child care providers and support staff.

Balancing decisions about childcare relating to location and cost are particularly acute for low-income families with limited resources. In addition, fluctuating work schedules, nontraditional hours, and inflexible work policies that many low-income working parents experience can further limit their childcare options. There is already a need for childcare in Sheridan Hollow and the potential increase in residents will only exacerbate this need. The location of this facility at the base of the “long stairs” also creates a new the opportunity for state workers to potentially use childcare services as well. A market study to corroborate the need for childcare based on the expected increase of residents to the neighborhood is needed. The study would include the development of a proforma and economic evaluation of the idea to be used to market to existing care providers.

*Art and Culture*

L’Esperance Tile, located on Sheridan Avenue, is dedicated to the art and preservation of handmade ceramic tile and may serve as an anchor institution for craft artists and art-related historic home rehabilitation, as well as for other arts-related endeavors. The density of arts organizations and prevalence of arts events may play a role in attracting residents and businesses to (re)locate to a community by improving its image and making it more appealing.



Similarly, there are new cultural opportunities emerging in partnership with downtown’s entertainment district as well as the Albany Barn, The Barn is a non-profit organization that is an arts incubator and community arts center located on Swan Street just outside of Sheridan Hollow. Several Sheridan Hollow residents actively use their space and it offers potential for spill over programming uses on Clinton Avenue.

*Support for Retail and Service Sector Businesses*

Community residents are excited about the potential for commercial redevelopment along Clinton Avenue, home to many minority owned and operated small businesses. In addition to attracting new businesses, Sheridan Hollow would benefit from a **Merchant’s Association** that could work toward improving the general perception of Sheridan Hollow; building social capital; and developing a unique opportunity to promote local businesses and increase awareness outside of Sheridan Hollow. Recognizing the value of community identity, stakeholders noted the need for a strong branding effort around Sheridan Hollow. Small business technical assistance that can be provided by partner Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region, can help small businesses thrive.

*Job Creation/Workforce Development*

All the community partners working on Sheridan Hollow's redevelopment have agreed that increasing the incomes of the current residents of the neighborhood would go a long way toward its revitalization. Sheridan Hollow has vacant land and existing vacant commercial buildings that can be re-used to generate jobs for local residents. Are there service businesses that could be attracted to support major employers such as the hospitals and school systems? With the focus on healthy foods, are there urban agriculture opportunities for vacant land in Sheridan Hollow? What are the opportunities for worker-owned businesses. How can residents easily obtain the job skills needed.

*Infrastructure*

Improving Sheridan Hollow's deteriorating infrastructure will improve the sense of place and pride. Improved roads and streetscapes (including fixing sidewalks and curb cuts, and adding benches, lighting, and decorative accents), will have a direct impact on economic redevelopment. Public safety through environmental design can be incorporated into neighborhood plans. In addition, the long stairway that serves as an egress and ingress into the community should be improved. This will require both construction as well as landscape improvements.

**Community Partners** – The Affordable Housing Partnership, the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region and the Albany Community Land Trust are pleased to partner with the City of Albany on this application. The City has provided significant background information and insights into the Step 1 pre-nomination study as well as technical expertise in generating community maps.

Members of the board and general membership of the Albany Community Land Trust live in Sheridan Hollow and have been active in developing the Sheridan Hollow redevelopment plan. The neighborhood resident who has become a leader in the neighborhood association has worked with the Land Trust on a variety of projects.

The project partners are all located at 255 Orange Street, and share a deep commitment to the neighborhood and its equitable redevelopment.

**Economic Value** – The Sheridan Hollow neighborhood has a strong need for coordinated land use and an equitable economic development strategy. Adjacent to Albany's downtown, the neighborhood has much economic potential, both in terms of commercial activity and housing. Due to its well-defined nature, and its strategic location on the edge of New York State's Capitol and bustling downtown, the potential transformation could be a model for neighborhood planning and implementation throughout the region. The area is a HUD/CDBG Neighborhood Strategy Area and a US Small Business Administration "HUBZone."

The City of Albany's Comprehensive Plan (*Albany 2030*) has identified strategic actions to comprehensively address community revitalization, including: encouraging mixed land uses, enhancing connections between neighborhoods and downtown, attracting new investment, and supporting local business development. The Sheridan Hollow neighborhood, with its many redevelopment opportunities, can and should be an integral component of the plan.

There is growing concern that new economic growth around the high tech sector (local economic developers have been successful in branding the area as “Tech Valley”) will lead to increased disparity between “haves and have-nots.” A 2006 study for the Albany area entitled “High-Tech Growth and Community Well-Being: Lessons Learned from Austin, Texas,” by the Center for Women In Government and Civil Society, reports that Austin regrets *not* engaging nonprofits in planning and the creation of a more equitable society (where economic and racial disparities increased, especially for African Americans and Hispanics, and the cost of housing increased exponentially). Our efforts in Sheridan Hollow will combat these concerns and potential realities. With ample opportunities for growth: (1) expansion of existing neighborhood businesses; (2) start-up of new business ventures; (3) renovation of existing homes; and (4) well planned use of open land, the Sheridan Hollow neighborhood is exceptionally poised to stimulate economic activity and benefit existing residents.

In contrast to many other local economic development activities that produce sprawl and bring infrastructure to outlying areas, reinvestment in Albany’s Sheridan Hollow will be true smart growth by investing in existing infrastructure and reducing the costly pressures of unnecessary land consumption. Overall, the Capital Region will be a better place for all residents if our urban cores are healthy and sustainable. This requires private and public diligence through efforts like those described in this application, coupled with valuable resources like the BOA program, to make sure that economic development is appropriate and benefits those most in need. Smart growth strategies such as reinvestment in the Capital Region’s urban core are part of the Capital Region Economic Development Council’s strategic plan.

If funded, this BOA project will prepare the way for future local, state, federal and private investment in the neighborhood. Without a concerted planning effort, many of the opportunities outlined would not move forward. In addition, the redevelopment strategies funded will have value beyond Sheridan Hollow, as many of the strategies and recommendations may be transferred to other inner city, disinvested neighborhoods.

**Partnership Value** – As detailed throughout this application, AHP has a rich history of building public-private partnerships while leveraging community access to services, opportunities and resources. AHP will continue to build on the partnerships that have been developed through the BOA Pre-Nomination Study. AHP’s very creation in 1989 was a response by City of Albany Planning & Development staff to link bank resources, municipal goals and priorities and the expertise of nonprofit organizations. The organization’s corporate purposes, detailed in its Article of Incorporation, begin, “To coordinate and/or initiate cooperative efforts of local government, not-for-profit organization, and the corporate sector...”

Letters of support from various members of the community are included with this proposal, including a letter of support from Mayor Gerald D. Jennings. The Partnership’s board resolution is attached, and non-lead partner resolutions will be forwarded as soon as they are available. The City of Albany’s resolution will be brought to the City Council as soon as practical; a signed resolution will be forwarded as soon as possible. All of the project participants continue to be fully engaged in the many complementary projects outlined in Section #3 below.

The value of partnerships has been a constant priority at AHP, especially where the partnership enables better access to public programs and/or financial resources. A few recent examples of innovative partnerships lead by AHP include:

- The HomeSave foreclosure prevention initiative which coordinates a nonprofit response to the subprime crisis across several counties in cooperation with the New York State Banking Dept.
- The Homeownership Collaborative which brought the expertise of seven nonprofits together to create New York's only nonprofit real estate brokerage.
- Community Development Alliance of the Capital District which aligns the goals and priorities of four exceptional organizations: The Affordable Housing Partnership; the Community Loan Fund; Albany Community Land Trust and United Tenants of Albany.
- The Individual Development Account Program which coordinates the roles of nonprofits, financing institutions and the Federal Home Loan Bank to offer matched savings accounts and money management services to first-time home buyers and small business start-ups.

To ensure a successful project, the applicant has partnered with three key entities: The City of Albany; the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region; and the Albany Community Land Trust. Rather than rely on third-party consultants less familiar with the neighborhood, we have assembled a highly capable planning team in-house which includes experts in financing, microenterprise, community development and housing. The involvement of City of Albany planning leadership will ensure that efforts in Sheridan Hollow build on existing efforts and municipal priorities. Each partner has a significant stake in the long-term success of the neighborhood well beyond the planning phase.

**Environmental Value** – Environmental justice has been a predominant theme throughout the history of Sheridan Hollow. The area was settled on top of Fox Creek which was forced into culverts below ground. During the mid-1800s the area, “featured steep topography, poor drainage, insufficient infrastructure and cheaply constructed housing” according to a 2008 exhibit at the New York State Museum. The neighborhood was then, and still is, poor and underserved.

Conditions changed very little over the next 100 years until the ANSWERS incinerator plant ignited an environmental justice debate during the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, many residents have left the neighborhood and physical conditions have deteriorated significantly. BOA planning efforts are needed to identify the many natural resources in the built environment and prepare equitable strategies for the effective restoration of public resources such as pocket parks and community gardens while addressing the neighborhood's legacy of environmental injustice.

The community plans and work that will result from the Step 2 Nomination Study of Sheridan Hollow will provide an important resource for other disinvested communities. Exploration of funding for a Land Bank, financing strategies to rehabilitate vacant structures, exploring the feasibility of scattered site rental rehab projects, supporting small business development all will have broad implications for Albany and the region.

### 3. COMPLEMENTARY PROJECTS

The proposed Nomination Study of the Sheridan Hollow neighborhood builds on recent planning and development efforts as well as recent circumstances that heighten the importance of this study. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Habitat for Humanity/Housing Visions** – Habitat has assembled several large vacant parcels in the middle of Sheridan Hollow and plans to build single family and two unit homeownership housing. They have partnered with Housing Visions, a tax credit developer of low income rental housing to build two apartment buildings nearby. In total, 75 units of housing for low and very low income households are planned. Zoning variances are currently being requested as density, parking requirement and set-backs are not consistent with current zoning law.
- **Market Rate Housing** – Two major housing projects are underway or completed. They include the high-end 17 Chapel Street Condominiums and The Monroe redevelopment of the Boyd Printing Building into market rate rental housing. Both projects are meeting a new, increased demand for downtown housing by young professionals and empty-nesters. Many of the strategies proposed in the Step 2 application will address a concern that Sheridan Hollow is at risk of developing into an economically and physically separated neighborhood, with high end market rate units separated from lower income housing by the Answers Plant and Sheridan Avenue Garage. Knitting the two parts of the neighborhood together through streetscape designs and quality housing and amenities will help ensure that the benefits of redevelopment flow through the entire neighborhood.
- **Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan** – Sheridan Hollow is a sub-area of the larger Arbor Hill Neighborhood which was the focus of a major planning effort completed in July 2003. Community stakeholders including homeowners, tenants, lenders, neighborhood associations, faith-based groups, and service organizations guided City staff and consultants in the development of the year-long planning process. The Plan focused on guiding principles and desired actions in four areas: 1) Homeownership and Rental Housing; 2) Arts, Culture and Heritage; 3) Business and Job Development; and 4) Quality of Life. An Arbor Hill Implementation Team (AHIT) was established by the City of Albany to coordinate implementation efforts. Individuals from our project advisory team serve on the AHIT and on the recently established Sheridan Hollow Subcommittee. Sheridan Hollow is perceived as distinct from Arbor Hill by its low-lying topography, higher



concentration of non-residential uses, and separated by Clinton Avenue, a major corridor running between the two. The BOA Nomination Study will build on the success of the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan and support the work of the Sheridan Hollow Subcommittee.

- **UAlbany Planning Studio** – The University at Albany’s fall 2010 Graduate Planning Studio selected the Sheridan Hollow neighborhood for a study. AHP and its partners have built upon the results and analysis of that work, and have incorporated the technical data collected through this effort into the BOA pre-nomination study.
- **Comprehensive Plan** – The City of Albany recently completed its first Comprehensive Plan, *Albany 2030*. Our organizations were engaged in this process and look forward to carrying recommendations from this process forward to inform our work in Sheridan Hollow. Members of the City of Albany’s Planning Department have been and will continue to be part of the BOA project management team to ensure that links are maintained between the two plans. The Albany 2030 Plan focused on Sheridan Hollow as one of seven Brownfield sites in the City.
- **Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless** – This homeless service provider operates a drop-in center and emergency shelter adjacent to its administrative offices at Sheridan Avenue and South Swan St. The organization has recently acquired vacant buildings across the street from its office and developed apartments with financing assistance from the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region Inc. As the organization grows, both programmatically and in its footprint, so too does its role as a catalyst for neighborhood change.
- **Albany Center for Economic Success (ACES)** – This small business incubator and nonprofit facility is an anchor institution with plans to expand. Following a recent corporate reorganization, ACES is now managed by the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region Inc., a BOA project partner. The small business incubator is positioned to be an important component of equitable economic development strategies. ACES owns several large vacant parcels adjacent to its building at 255 Orange Street, including a strategically important site that borders the Clinton Avenue thoroughfare. Small businesses located in the incubator generate economic activity and provide services to the neighborhood.
- **Neighborhood Community and Economic Development Projects** – The Community Loan Fund has invested resources in more than 140 small businesses and nonprofit organization projects, totaling more than \$6.5 million, in Sheridan Hollow and adjacent Albany neighborhoods (Arbor Hill, West Hill, North Albany, Central Avenue and Downtown). It is anticipated that BOA support will create more demand for additional investment. Community Loan Fund training, technical assistance and financing will be available to complement other neighborhood projects.
- **Community Development Alliance** – The three BOA partners together with the United Tenants of Albany organization on Clinton Avenue have formed an alliance to better integrate, coordinate and grow the activities of its members.



The Alliance will undoubtedly be a key player in aspects of future project implementation.

- **Homeownership Center** – A one-stop shop for a wide variety of homeowner support and asset building services is based at 255 Orange Street in the Sheridan Hollow neighborhood. Credit counseling, matched savings accounts, homebuyer workshops, buyer brokers and a community land trust are available to buyers throughout the region. Resources from the Center would be leveraged as part of a Sheridan Hollow revitalization strategy.
- **Capital Affordable Housing Funding Corp. (CAHFC)** – The applicant's sister company is a consortium of lenders who financed over \$21 million in affordable mortgage loans. Occasionally, CAHFC is forced to take title to property through foreclosure. Over the past twelve months, CAHFC has taken title to four properties in the neighborhood. These foreclosures and the lack of market interest in these buildings are a sign of the weakness of the market and perceived lack of potential for the neighborhood. CAHFC would consider additional investment in its property if a strategic plan were in place, particularly one that addresses concerns regarding potential brownfield impacts.

#### 4. INVOLVEMENT BY THE PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

During the BOA Step 2 Nomination process, the applicant will coordinate with municipal and county officials, as well as neighborhood residents and community stakeholders:

- **City of Albany Planning Department** – The Partners will work with the city-staffed Sheridan Hollow sub-committee of the Arbor Hill Implementation Team. The City of Albany is an applicant partner to this BOA application. A letter of support is attached.
- **City of Albany Building & Codes and Police Department** – Four years ago, the City undertook an Arbor Hill Block-by-Block survey with Historic Albany Foundation to identify vacant properties and evaluate the extent of repair needed. These City agencies will be consulted during a similar study in Sheridan Hollow to determine which buildings can be considered for demolition or rehabilitation.
- **County of Albany** – In the City of Albany, Albany County manages the process of foreclosing upon properties with delinquent taxes. The Partnership has an excellent working relationship with the County and will work with them to identify potential foreclosures and evaluate the properties for opportunities for acquisition and redevelopment.
- **Steering Committee** – A steering committee of engaged residents, business and stakeholders was formed during the public participation process implemented during Step 1. This group will guide the project forward. For details about the Step 1 public participation process and a list of Steering Committee members, refer to the Appendix of the Pre-Nomination Study included with this application.

- **Neighborhood Residents & Business Owners** – A new convening of neighbors was organized during Step 1 which, with the support of continued organizing, we expect will evolve into a formal neighborhood association. During Step 2, the Partners will connect with neighborhood stakeholders to help us organize introductory meetings to better understand the issues of residents, neighborhood business owners, churches and non-profits. These issues will inform the study and plan for the neighborhood. Conversations will begin with other non-resident property owners about their plans to invest in the neighborhood.
- **Resident-Controlled Board** – Fifty-percent of the ACLT Board of Directors is comprised of residents of the Arbor Hill/West Hill and Sheridan Hollow neighborhoods and will play an advisory role to the project.
- **Other Community Stakeholders** – The Partners will inform local elected officials and other stakeholders of the proposed Brownfield Opportunity Area study and solicit their feedback.

#### **Part D. - LEVEL of SUPPORT**

The Affordable Housing Partnership has received strong support during Step 1 and for the studies proposed by the Step 2 Nomination for Sheridan Hollow. Property owners and small business owners are supportive of efforts and are eager to invest in a neighborhood that has a comprehensive redevelopment plan.

Letters of support from business, residents and government are attached. They include:

#### **Elected Officials and Academia:**

- Mayor Gerald Jennings, City of Albany
- Hon. Mert Simpson, Albany County Legislature
- Hon. Ronald Bailey, Common Council Member 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward
- Corianne Scally, University at Albany, Dept. of Planning

#### **Community Groups:**

- United Tenants
- Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless
- Historic Albany Foundation
- Albany Community Action Partnership
- Albany Housing Coalition

#### **Businesses:**

- Melville's Mug
- Hudson Valley Heating Specialties
- Downtown Business Improvement District

#### **Residents:**

- Roy Conrad
- Carl Tuhey
- Frank Smith
- Clifford Brown

- Tina Robinson
- Diane Dean
- Raymond Green
- Ms. Slaughter
- Frank Apacchon
- Lisa Telman
- Talbot Robinson, Jr.

### **Part E. - APPLICANT'S PROJECT PERSONNEL and MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**AHP Staff** – The applicant's management team for the project includes existing staff with 80 years of combined experience in affordable housing, community development and community organizing:

- *Susan Cotner*, AHP's Executive Director holds a Masters degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Cornell University. Her work experience includes an anti-displacement project in San Francisco, several years with the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal, and twenty-two years leading the Affordable Housing Partnership's work for low- and moderate-income people.
- *Louise McNeilly*, AHP Staff – Ms. McNeilly holds an MS degree in Community Economic Development from Southern New Hampshire University. Her professional experience includes over thirty years in community organizing and nonprofit community development. She played a major organizing and advocacy role in the successful \$16 million dollar Delaware Avenue, Albany Revitalization Project.
- *Eric Dahl*, AHP Staff – Mr. Dahl holds a BS degree in Urban and Regional Studies from Cornell University. He brings over twenty years of nonprofit affordable housing and community development experience. His coalition-building experience with the Capital District Homeownership Collaborative is a significant asset for this project. Eric is also the Managing Broker of AHP's brokerage program, Community Realty. As such, he is able to provide valuable data regarding property ownership, listings, purchases and sales.

**Project Partners** – Additional project management will be provided through the applicant's project partners: the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region and Albany Community Land Trust. Together, staff from the three organizations will comprise the project management team, with additional individuals, as-needed consultants, organizations and members of the public involved as the project progresses.

- **Albany Community Land Trust** – The community-controlled board of directors of the Albany Community Land Trust (ACLT) will play an important advisory role to ensure that community needs and visions are fully incorporated. Fifty-percent of ACLT's Board of Directors lives in the Arbor Hill/West Hill/Sheridan Hollow neighborhood. Eighty-eight percent of its board lives in the City of Albany.
- **Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region Inc.** – The Community Loan Fund brings a wealth of expertise in the areas of finance, socially-concerned

investing, and small business and nonprofit lending. The Community Loan Fund manages the Albany Center for Economic Success and its minority and women-owned business incubator located in Sheridan Hollow.

- **City of Albany** – The City of Albany’s Department of Development and Planning is a key player in the project. A letter of support from Mayor Gerald D. Jennings is attached. A non-lead applicant resolution will follow. Planners Douglas Melnick and Katie Bronson will be the primary point of contact for the City of Albany. As the Planning Director for the City of Albany, Douglas Melnick is responsible for providing technical assistance and guidance to the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Historic Resources Commissions, and the Planning Board. These boards are all responsible for ensuring that all proposed development within the City meetings the applicable state and local regulations. Additionally, Mr. Melnick spearheaded the City’s first Comprehensive Plan process, Albany 2030, which has a very specific focus on Sustainability. Finally, Mr. Melnick been charged by Mayor Jennings to oversee all of the City’s climate protection efforts, including the development of a municipal office of Energy & Sustainability; membership with ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability, development of the City’s baseline greenhouse gas emissions inventory; and the development and implementation of the City’s Climate Adaptation Plan, which is being developed in conjunction with our Local Waterfront Revitalization Program update. He has extensive graduate and professional coursework in planning, urban design, codification, environmental science and sustainability.

## **Part F. - PROJECT SCOPE of WORK and SCHEDULE**

Sheridan Hollow is an inner city neighborhood that is on the cusp of transition. Affordable housing developers have seen the opportunity in the vacant lots that dominate the neighborhood and are proposing several new construction housing projects that will bring many new families into the neighborhood.

To support this new investment, the applicants requests funding to create a plan for improvements to existing housing, commercial and public infrastructure, improvements that will benefit the entire neighborhood. During Step 1 Sheridan Hollow residents and stakeholders developed a guiding vision for the neighborhood which is detailed in an attached Pre-Nomination Study. The scope of work to be conducted during Step 2 responds directly to the vision, goals and priorities articulated.

The Affordable Housing Partnership and its partners envision the Step 2 award progressing over a two-year period. During that time, the following tasks will be undertaken in support of community goals:

### **1. Improve physical condition of existing housing:**

a. Feasibility studies to develop financial packages to assist current homeowners and rental property owners to upgrade and maintain their properties. Study the feasibility of using federal and state low income housing tax credit subsidies in support of rehabilitation of scattered site rental units.

b. Support for the development of tools to encourage the redevelopment of abandoned, vacant properties: Evaluate the feasibility of and funding potential for Land Banks, Tax

Increment Financing, and Rental Rehabilitation programs targeted to neighbors or near-by property owners.

c. Market studies to determine feasibility of reuse of existing buildings, including marketability of potential uses and tenure, design priorities and physical assessment of rehabilitation feasibility. Consider opportunities to market existing rental housing for its homeownership potential.

## **2. Promote reuse of neighborhood sites with existing barriers to development**

a. Phase I and Phase II environmental work for former garages or other strategic, underutilized sites that promise successful redevelopment opportunities in support of the neighborhood.

b. Archeological studies as might be necessary to prepare sites for redevelopment. Completion of a Phase IA study for the neighborhood.

c. Historic and engineering evaluations of buildings to determine rehabilitation feasibility and/or assessments of need for demolition.

d. Conceptual design work to aid in the planning and visioning of specific development sites such as ACES's parcel on Clinton Avenue.

## **3. Foster a safe and walkable neighborhood.**

a. Analyze traffic flow and develop traffic calming strategies for Sheridan Hollow.

b. Create a streetscape plan that will offer amenities such as improved lighting, street trees, etc. to support new and existing residents. Identify and prioritize improvements that will instill a sense of enhanced public safety. Review strategies to support crime prevention through environmental design.

c. Identify difficult to develop vacant lots for feasibility of selling to adjacent property owners. Pay for surveying, title work and legal expenses to subdivide and/or combine parcels where consistent with development priorities for the neighborhood.

d. Develop creative re-use plans of strategic vacant lots including:

- key gateway corners along Clinton Avenue with the help of a landscape architect and neighborhood input
- redevelopment of the stairs connecting Sheridan Hollow to downtown and Washington Avenue bus routes
- parcels such as the vacant lots owned by Tompkins along Orange, the empty lot at Sheridan and Swan.

## **4. Evaluate strategic vacant sites and buildings for potential new business development to provide employment opportunities for neighborhood residents.**

a. Support creation of business development ombudsman to smooth permitting processes among various city agencies.

b. Perform an employment opportunity survey to find potential new business enterprises that would hire neighborhood residents such as Cleveland's commercial laundry program. (Evergreen model)

c. Connect neighborhood residents with existing job training programs, including soft skills development.

d. Conduct a food access demand study to determine market feasibility for a grocery store. Work with groups such as Community Gardens on an urban agriculture plan.

**5. Strengthen neighborhood participation in the plan.**

a. Hire a neighborhood organizer to foster creation and maintenance of an active neighborhood association to build momentum and inform priorities for the plan. Research long-term funding mechanisms to support a neighborhood association and community organizer.

**6. Promote Green Infrastructure plan**

a. Assess feasibility of creating an Energy District in partnership with the Sheridan Steam Plan.

b. Consider opportunities to daylight the underground creek, promote green roofs, etc.

### Sheridan Hollow Project Scope of Work and Schedule

Nomination Study Tasks	Months (from grant award)											
	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24
<b>1. Project Start-up</b>												
Develop project outline	█											
Develop job descriptions and partner responsibilities	█											
<b>2. Analysis of Housing Conditions</b>												
Explore Funding Opportunities for rehabilitation	█	█	█									
Research, Develop Feasibility Packages for specific properties		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
Market financing programs to property owners			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Historic and structural feasibility assessments				█	█	█	█					
<b>3. Analysis of Sites proposed for Redevelopment /Re-Use</b>												
Archeological assessments, historic district analysis		█										
Phase I and II environmental assessments for specific sites			█	█								
Conceptual Design Alternatives for selected sites		█	█	█								
<b>4. Economic Development Potential</b>												
Coordinate neighborhood economic development	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Market analysis for food access/grocery store				█	█	█						
Market analysis for child care							█	█				
Art sector assessment			█	█								
<b>5. Infrastructure Assessment</b>												
Perform traffic study								█	█	█		
Develop streetscape design								█	█			
Answers Plant utility district			█	█								
Walkability Study			█	█								
<b>6. Community Organizing and Project Management</b>												
4. Prepare Nomination Study Report and Analysis of Redevelopment Potential									█	█	█	
5. Develop and Submit Application for Step 3 BOA Nomination											█	█