

# Public Participation Plan



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# Office of the Mayor

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In 2020, the City of Westland drafted and adopted the attached Public Participation Strategy. The strategy is used to identify effective/proactive engagement tools that will increase accountability and transparency, by providing a communications toolbox and a framework for seeking public input.

This strategy incorporates state and local laws as well as suggested guidance from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to establish Westland's overall communications guidelines. We will continue to review and update this strategy on a regular basis.

William R. Wild,

Mayor, City of Westland

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## *Public Participation Plan*

*The City's identified strategy to increase participation from public stakeholders*

### **Intent, Goals and Objectives**

The intent of the making of this plan is to identify policy in the City of Westland, hereon referred to as the "City", which engage and increase public participation between stakeholders and the City.

A public participation plan will establish efforts and define how the public will be engaged through City development processes.

The idea behind public participation is to resolve stakeholder concerns ahead of the development process and increase diversity in opinion. This will increase flexibility and ease in the redevelopment process by removing unforeseen barriers and obstacles posed by public concern.

- The City will oversee all efforts of public participation in an open manner, by making participation accessible to any stakeholder wishing to participate
- The City will seek a diverse group of individuals in decisions directly affecting planning, zoning, and development
- The City will encourage the involvement of stakeholders most affected by planning, zoning, and development decisions
- The City will exhaust every effort to ensure public participation through all stages of the planning and review processes
- The City will distribute information and solicit feedback through every communicative effort available to the City
- The City shall record results of public participation and distribute to stakeholders in a timely and effective manner

### **Legal**

The City not only desires input from public stakeholders, but is guided and enabled to do so through Michigan State Statutes.

#### **Michigan Open Meetings Act**

All government entities must adhere to PA 267 of 1976, the Michigan Open Meetings Act.

The City will post a list of dates, times, and locations of all meetings for the calendar year on the City's website. ([www.cityofwestland.com](http://www.cityofwestland.com))

If there is a change in schedule, the City will post a notice with the new dates, times, and locations within three days of the altered meeting.

The City will post a notice indicating a special or irregular meeting at least 18 hours in advance.

#### **Michigan Planning Enabling Act**

The following parties will be notified by the Planning Commission (by first class mail, personal delivery, or e-mail) of intent to plan and request comment.

- The county
- The regional planning commission (not required to consult with or adhere to if there is a county planning commission )

- The county planning commission or if there is not a county planning commission, the county board of commissioners.
- Each public utility, railroad, and public transportation entity that operates on or owns public space in the City
- The county road commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation if the master plan includes a master streets plan

## **Key Stakeholders**

- Commercial Business Operations: Those that have invested time and money to provide any good or service within the City
  - The City's largest employers, Relevant businesses in TIF districts, Real Estate Developers, Potential Investors, et al.
- Residents: Citizens that possess property within the City with the intent of residing within or those residing near City limits
  - Homeowners, Students, Neighborhood groups, Neighboring residents
- City Groups: Organizations (For-Profit or Non-Profit) with the intention of benefitting the City and community as a whole
  - Wayne-Westland School District, Livonia Public Schools, The City Chamber of Commerce, Religious groups, Environmental groups,
- Elected/Appointed Officials/City Employees/Other Government Officials: Those that work within operations of the City, serving in the best interest of residents
  - First Responders, City Administration Directors, Relevant Michigan State Agencies, City Council members
- Relevant City Boards and Commissions for Development:
  - Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA), Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA), Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, Economic Development Corporation (EDC), Building Authority, Historical Commission,

## **Methods of Public Participation**

### **Written Media**

Written media holds advantages which are often overlooked. Although lacking in personal relation and connection, written media is the best way to solicit information from a large group of stakeholders. Written media is the best way to deliver important information in a lasting fashion to stakeholders in the City in a way that is available for future reference.

- Print: Print Media includes anything that stakeholders are capable of holding in their hand and able to personally manipulate. This could be including but is not limited to, postcard mailings; individual mailings; newspaper postings; flier postings and availability; attachments to government mailed documents.
- Social Media/Electronic: Social Media relates to information posted on sites that are designed to connect individuals and organizations. i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. Other electronic media includes but is not limited to, posting to the City website and advertising on the local City cable platform.

### **In-Person**

In-Person Public Participation is the most effective way to solicit personal feedback from City stakeholders. By speaking in person, stakeholders are able to stress certain talking points and bring attention to matters that relate most to them.

Public Meetings offer frequent opportunities for stakeholders to express concern and offer personal input through floor openings to citizen comment.

Although less frequent than Public Meetings, City Workshops often include many forms of personal contact.

- Charette: An intensive planning session that often involves many members of a City and various organizations for input over the course of several days
- Canvassing: Going door to door to deliver information or solicit feedback on a relevant topic
- One-on-One Interviews: Sitting down face-to-face with a stakeholder for personal feedback
- Focus Groups: Groups of typically 6-12 participants that sit down with a representative and have a guided discussion about a specific topic

## **Adopted Public Involvement Methods**

### **Itemized Methods**

The City utilizes the following strategies as needed to engage stakeholders in decisions that directly impact the development of the City:

- Public Meetings
- City Hall Meetings
- Boards and Commissions Meetings
- Public Announcements
- Newspaper Postings
- Website Postings
- Social Media Postings
- Press Releases
- Local Community Media Network, WLND
- Newsletters
- Utility Bill Notices
- Charrettes
- Focus Groups
- Surveys
- Flier Postings
- Canvassing

## **Development**

The City has identified development sites and processes as a commonly controversial topic within communities. In order to reduce or prevent controversy arising in the City, this Public Participation Plan will identify needs for public participation in relation to development.

### **Stakeholder Input on Development**

In order to increase stakeholder involvement on development site plans and processes, the City will solicit input early in the development process. Prior to the required approval by City Council, stakeholders will be able to offer direct input as early as the Planning Commission Board meeting prior to City Council, and indirectly through potential surveys.

Planning Commission meetings allow stakeholders to offer input on proposed site plans to both the Commissioners and the Planning Director. Pending the outcome of the Planning Commission meeting, stakeholders will again be able to offer input during the final approval deliberation at the next City Council meeting.

Surveys may be written and distributed to stakeholders in either hard copies or posting on the City's website. By distributing surveys for proposed developments, the City is able to communicate early

and effectively to stakeholders on planned development. Surveys will solicit input from stakeholders early in the process with the intention of reducing or eliminating potential controversy surrounding a site.

### **Development Review Boards and Commissions**

All Board and Commission meetings will be publicly advertised and held according to the Michigan Open Meetings Act, adhering to the Public Participation Plan.

- **Brownfield Development Authority**

The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority promotes and facilitates the revitalization, redevelopment and reuse of obsolete properties. The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority is comprised of members on the TIFA/EDC. The Brownfield Development Authority meets following the submission of a Brownfield Redevelopment Plan.

- **Building Authority**

The Building Authority is governed by a three (3) member board that is appointed by the Mayor and subject to the confirmation of City Council. Members are appointed to six (6) year terms. The Building Authority deliberates the issuance of financial bonds enabling payment for construction of municipal buildings.

- **Downtown Development Authority (DDA)**

The DDA is governed by an eleven (11) member board appointed by the Mayor and subject to the approval of City Council. Members are appointed to four (4) year terms. The DDA promotes and facilitates plans that result in continued development, redevelopment, revitalization and/or reuse of properties within the DDA district boundaries. Regularly scheduled board meetings take place the 4th Thursday of every month at 8:00 a.m. at City Hall, 36300 Warren Rd.

- **Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA)/Economic Development Corporation (EDC)**

The TIFA/EDC Board is governed by a nine (9) member board appointed by the Mayor and subject to confirmation of the City Council. Members are appointed to four (4) year terms. The TIFA/EDC promotes, facilitates and implements plans and projects within the TIFA boundaries that support economic and business development through programs and public improvement projects that create economic opportunity, provide entrepreneurial support, and preserve property values. Regularly scheduled board meetings take place the second Tuesday of every month at 8 AM at City Hall, 36300 Warren Rd.

- **Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA)**

The LDFA Board is governed by an eleven (11) member Board with 7 members appointed by the Mayor and subject to confirmation of the City Council, 2 representing Wayne-Westland schools, 1 representing Wayne County and 1 representing Wayne County Community College. Members are appointed to four (4) year terms. The Authority's primary objective is to encourage local development to prevent conditions of unemployment and to promote economic growth. Regularly scheduled board meetings take place the third Friday of March, June, September and December each year at 9 AM at City Hall, 36300 Warren Rd.

- **Planning Commission**

The Planning Commission is governed by a nine (9) member board appointed by the Mayor and subject to confirmation of City Council. Members serve three (3) year terms. The Planning Commission reviews and recommends to City Council all

applications for amendments to the Zoning Ordinance or zoning map, applications for special land uses, site plan approvals. and planned unit developments. Meetings are scheduled for the first Tuesday of the Month at 7 p.m., at City Hall, 36300 Warren Rd., unless this date falls on a government holiday, in which case the meeting will be moved to Wednesday.

– **Zoning Board of Appeals**

The Zoning Board of Appeals is governed by a seven (7) member board that is appointed by City Council. Members serve three (3) year terms. The Zoning Board of Appeals may grant an appeal and modify the zoning ordinance based on practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships in carrying out the regulations of the ordinance. Variance applications are filed with the Clerk's office. Meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month at City Hall, 36300 Warren Rd.

## **Public Participation Implementation**

### **Occurrences that Require Outreach**

City Plan updates such as the Master Plan, the Downtown Plan, the Corridor Plan or a Zoning Ordinance Update. Updates to the overall plans for the City or certain sections of the City have the possibility of greatly impacting stakeholders and requires more extensive methods of public outreach.

The City will use more proactive methods to solicit public input from stakeholders in greater impact situations with methods such as public meetings, community workshops, and standing committees. These proactive methods will be used in conjunction with basic methods of notice and information distribution.

Individual development projects in the City will also require stakeholder input. These could include sites under review by the Planning Commission or the Zoning Board of Appeals. Individual sites are less controversial and impact the City significantly less than overall planning. However, stakeholder participation and opinion will be solicited by the City, albeit through less proactive methods. These methods would include simple mailings, meeting date postings, or general announcement on social media and local cable network. Information regarding individual development projects are listed with the Council agenda packets that are available at the request of residents.

### **Public Participation Systems**

Public Participation methods should not only be used to solicit feedback for site development, but continuously on many things for stakeholder feedback. The Michigan Open Meetings Act requires certain meetings be made public to anyone that would like to attend and become involved in the City.

Participation methods can be used in systems for increased effectiveness:

- 1. Written media can be utilized as a notice of public hearing.** Postings to social media or the City website has the potential to be viewed by more people as opposed to a simple announcement at a prior meeting. Mailings and flier postings are also a sufficient method of notification as they are more continuously viewed over a period of time.
- 2. In-Person participation can contain more depth.** A more elaborate or longer method of In-Person public participation could involve different elements for increased diversity in viewpoints. If one-on-one interviews or focus groups were held before or after a public hearing, more stakeholders would be able to speak their minds and not conform to the general agreement of an audience.



- 3. Online media can be written in conjunction with one another.** Social media postings can be duplicated across many platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. This is to ensure that desired information reaches a larger target audience who may only use one social media platform.

### **Act Early and Act Often**

Public Participation should not be reserved for the most important solicitations such as a Master Plan review. Public participation is encouraged for nearly every aspect that would involve one or more City stakeholders no matter the projected participation rate.

Public meetings that invite public participation should be actively marketed and advertised to City stakeholders. Boards and Commissions meetings which are open to the general public should be accompanied by various forms of advertisement to reach the majority of those impacted by their respective decisions.

An example of a method that could solicit input early and often on any matter while creating interest in the topic of discussion is an internet poll. A poll can be posted on the City website or distributed through various social media sites that all request information and input from City stakeholders.

Methods such as an internet poll offer stakeholders the convenience of offering their opinion from any location while still becoming involved in their City. Similar methods that could be utilized to accommodate more frequent public participation would be mailings with return postage already paid or convenient drop off locations around the City for polls.

### **Consultants**

The City may desire the use of outside sources to conduct and implement public participation strategies.

Positive impacts from utilizing consultants:

- Impartial distribution of information
- More attention may be diverted to individual methods
- Less time is diverted to accommodate frequent and time consuming public participation methods

It is crucial to the integrity and consistency of City relations to stakeholders that third party consultants adhere to the Public Participation Plan as approved.

### **Results**

#### **Data**

Data should be collected from individual participants to make sure that a diverse number of stakeholders are being reached through the various public participation methods. This could be done with a number of surveys attached to mail-in or internet polls or noted observance of public participants at hearings and meetings.

#### **Distribution**

It is the goal of the City to share the results of public participation methods with the rest of the City Stakeholders.

Defined methods of distributing results to stakeholders include but are not limited to:

- Public Meetings: Meetings may be televised on the WLND and posted to the City's website

- Surveys: Surveys may be distributed at events and also posted on the City's website for ease of access
- Community Workshops: Workshops may be held in certain cases that require feedback from stakeholders
- Focus Groups: Focus Groups may be held in instances that require more personal depth in exchanges between the City and stakeholders
- Social Networking: Results may be distributed on the City's social networking sites to increase potential exposure to stakeholders

It is not only the goal of the City to increase public participation among stakeholders, but also to inform all involved of the results of public decisions from hearings and meetings.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation of public participation methods are a necessity for the improvement of the public participation plan.

Basic surveys will be offered or made available on the City website with the intention of requesting feedback on the effectiveness of public outreach. Surveys will be requested from internal City participants as well as external stakeholders. Evaluation of public outreach methods will be managed by select individuals in the development department.

### **Review**

*The City will review and update the Public Participation Plan annually.*

Through result evaluation solicited from each event and surveys posted on the City's website, annual reviews will become well informed.

The intention of annual review is to consider responses on the effectiveness of public participation strategies and identify where improvements must be made. Presiding City officers in charge of overseeing the implementation of the Public Participation Plan will prepare an annual report to City Council which includes suggestions for improvements to be made.