



# **City of Plymouth, Michigan**

## **Public Participation Plan**

**Last Updated:  
June 19, 2020**

## Overview and Purpose

The City of Plymouth believes that public input in planning and policy development processes is crucial to building consensus and buy-in from community stakeholders. The city seeks to engage the community and allow public input to inform planning and policy outcomes in a clear and consistent manner. The city recognizes that there is no one way of communicating and this plan identifies methods that make sense for the city today. This plan is intended to create a culture of collaborative visioning that enriches democracy by allowing community members to voice their ideas, not just their complaints. Public participation, when properly executed, builds community consensus and strengthens sense of place. By documenting and analyzing information on participation efforts, the City of Plymouth will be able to more objectively assess its efforts and adjust accordingly. This creates a dynamic and effective set of best practices the city may consult for future uses. Public participation is not a one-size-fits-all exercise. Certain strategies are more appropriate in some circumstances than others and a successful practice in one situation may not be as successful in another. This plan is intended to serve as an internal resource for ideas on how to best engage productive collaboration with stakeholders and the public.

## Public Participation Goals

The City of Plymouth Public Participation Plan is based upon a set of objectives intended to guide city staff and elected and appointed officials' actions as they move through the planning and policy process:

- Involve all residents.
  - o Every resident in the City of Plymouth has an equal voice in planning and policy development. Several approaches are needed to give everyone a voice.
- Utilize effective and equitable engagement tools.
  - o Recognize that no single technique or approach will work in all cases. City staff and officials must consider the special communication needs of the public and use the best approaches to accomplish this objective. The city is committed to seeking new and innovative ways to engage and keep the public involved throughout the process.
- Educate the community.
  - o Effective participation in the decision-making process requires an understanding of land use and zoning issues and the framework for making local investment decisions. Ensure that planning related background information is easy to find and easy to understand. Planning professionals and officials should use photos, maps, diagrams, and other visual mediums that optimize public understanding of issues and concepts as often as possible.
- Develop and maintain staff expertise to inform and support participation.
  - o City staff understand the composition of the community that results in an open and welcoming environment. Staff is encouraged to convey issues and information in meaningful ways to various cultural groups. Staff should ensure equitable representation for all segments of the population and sectors of the economy.
- Provide a transparent record of public engagement.
  - o To properly capture the concerns, priorities, and vision of the public, city staff will develop a system to track the various techniques and mechanisms of public input. To maintain transparency and consistency, the City of Plymouth will share results of public participation efforts with the public.

Any third-party consultants hired by the city for assistance with any of the items noted in this plan will be required to adhere to the public participation strategies identified herein.

## Public Participation Requirements

Basic requirements for public participation are mandated in state and federal laws for certain public projects and development reviews. The City of Plymouth boards and commissions shall follow the local and state laws below that outline public participation requirements. These laws set forth the minimum standards and the city must follow. The city seeks to exceed that minimum in each area for which they apply.

City of Plymouth Code of Ordinances

Michigan Open Meetings Act (Public Act 267 of 1976)

Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008)

Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006)

Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act (Public Act 381 of 1996)

Downtown Development Authority Act (Public Act 57 of 2018)

## Key Stakeholders

The Public Participation Plan identifies important groups that can assist and enhance the public participation process. Additionally, it identifies groups that are not often engaged or involved in the planning process. The city expects this list to grow as more groups and individuals are engaged in the process. The following have been identified as key stakeholders:

- City Boards and Commissions
- Business owners
- Plymouth Chamber of Commerce
- Plymouth-Canton School District
- Plymouth Council on Aging
- Local service clubs (Rotary, Kiwanis, Lion's Club, Oddfellows, etc.)
- Area places of worship
- Major local employers
- Local real estate professionals
- Local builders
- Potential investors
- Adjacent municipalities
- County, Regional, and State elected officials

## Communication Toolbox

The City of Plymouth utilizes standard methods of announcing public meetings and other planning events. However, because these methods do not yield a consistent level of public participation, the city runs the risk of losing the involvement of identified key stakeholders. Therefore, the city has identified other tools that may be used to reach a broader audience. The methods listed below are not exhaustive and should be updated as needed.

### Tier One: Basic methods

These basic methods will be utilized when advising the public of routine planning activities:

- Website posting at [www.plymouthmi.gov](http://www.plymouthmi.gov)
- Calendar event on the website
- Notification email send to members of the "City of Plymouth Meeting Agendas & Minutes" listserv
- Legal notice posted in the Plymouth Observer (all public hearings)
- Individual mailings to neighboring properties (when required – 300-foot boundary)

### Tier Two: Enhanced methods

These enhanced methods will be used when trying to reach out to the community and ask for input on a broad range of planning, ordinance, and policy issues. These methods may require additional resources compared to the Tier One approaches. This may include one or more of the following:

- Community workshops: Presentation of information and solicitation of opinions and ideas from the public at large. The nature of the workshop will vary and depend on the project being proposed. This may include staff presentation of maps and exhibits and/or staff facilitation of discussion at different workstations.
- Social networking: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- Plymouth Pulse Newsletter (produced monthly)
- Individual mailings (beyond what is required)
- Newspaper paid postings
- Attachment to tax bills
- Fliers posted at community buildings (City Hall, Cultural Center, Library)

### Tier Three: Active engagement methods

These active engagement methods will be used when trying to engage the community and ask for input on long-range planning and land policy issues. These approaches will typically be utilized for master plans and significant land use policy issues. These methods will require more resources than the first two tiers. This may include one or more of the following:

- Charrettes: A charrette is an intensive collaborative planning process that is typically held over a two to three-day period. It is used to develop and test concepts and designs in specific areas of the community. In a charrette, professionals provide design and strategic input while community members provide local information, feedback, and critique.
- Crowdsourcing: Crowdsourcing is the practice of obtaining information or input into a task or project by engaging many people typically via the internet and social media. It is used to solicit input on specific planning concepts and approaches.
- Focus Groups: Focus group meetings provide opportunities for stakeholders to provide input and to allow ideas and concepts to be tested.
- One-on-One Interviews: Interviews may be conducted in a one-on-one approach to gather specific input regarding planning topics. Interviews may be useful when soliciting input from someone directly impacted by planning activities or by someone with expertise in a certain area.

### Strategies for Outreach

The Public Participation Plan allows the City of Plymouth to encourage and plan for public input, rather than simply reacting to it or requesting it because it is required.

The table on the following page illustrates the level of engagement applicable for the noted planning issues or activities. The level of notice may vary from project to project. This list will be refined as the Public Participation Plan is updated.

Planning Issues	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Master Plan update	A	A	A
Zoning ordinance amendment	A	A	S
Corridor improvement/sub area plan	A	A	A
Recreation plan	A	A	A
Development project/site plan review	A	S	
Public hearings	A	S	
Regular meetings	A	S	
Special meetings	A	S	
Positive meeting mentions, awards, and honors	S	S	
A= Always, S=Sometimes			

## Communicating Results

The intention of this plan is not simply to gather input from Plymouth stakeholders, but rather to engage the public in a multi-directional conversation. How the public comment influenced a process or project must be communicated. This demonstrates that the responses were heard and creates an environment of transparency. The following are examples of ways to communicate public feedback:

- Public meetings: All public meeting minutes are posted online after the minutes are approved. A hard copy of the minutes will be available in the appropriate City Hall department (Community Development or City Clerk).
- Surveys: When utilized, surveys will vary by planning project. Generally, a summary of the results will be posted online. A hard copy of the results will be available in the Community Development Department.
- Social networking: Staff in the City Manager's office are responsible for monitoring the municipal Facebook and Twitter pages and will respond to planning related public posts within 48 hours, as needed.
- One-on-one interviews: General information will be shared with the public, but names and specific details of participants will be kept confidential unless otherwise requested.
- Community workshops/informational meetings: Notes and photographs will be taken during community workshops. These notes will be posted on the City's website.

## Evaluating Success

This plan shall be reviewed in the first quarter of even numbered years. Any updates that are required shall be presented to the Planning Commission for approval and then forwarded to the City Commission for final approval.