

Public Participation Plan

Presented to and approved
by Planning Committee
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For RRC Certification

City of Laingsburg Public Participation Plan

PARTICIPATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Laingsburg strives to involve the community in the decision-making process. City staff draw on a variety of methods of communication and outreach in order to understand what our citizenry want and opine. Goals of our Public Participation Process (P3) are outlined below.

Solicit public participation in each phase of planning processes. Throughout the multiple phases of a planning process, extensive participation components are, and will continue to be, incorporated to foster public participation. Proactive participation denotes early and continuous involvement in important policy or project decisions before they are finalized. There are many opportunities for the public to play a role in shaping short- and long-term needs, solutions, and funding priorities. The earlier the public is involved in the process, the greater the opportunity to influence important land - use decisions.

Effective and attentive communication with residents. The diverse characteristics and needs of residents require different communication and outreach techniques. Every resident has a voice and a say in the planning process, so the City must reach as many as possible. There are many techniques and mechanisms available to ensure that a diverse public is well-informed and able to play a role in the planning process. Recognizing that no single technique or mechanism will work in all cases, it is up to the municipality to consider the special communication needs of the public and use the best approaches to accomplish this objective. The City will utilize effective and equitable avenues for distributing information and receiving input.

Provide educational materials and design participation initiatives that will support and encourage active and effective participation. Effective participation in the decision-making process requires an understanding of land-use issues and the framework for making local investment decisions. Planning professionals and officials need to be well-versed in and employ visualization techniques that optimize public understanding of issues and concepts. Visualization techniques can be especially helpful with specific sites or areas of re-development.

Develop and maintain staff expertise in all aspects of participation. This includes techniques for bridging language, cultural, and economic differences that affect participation; ways to convey issues and information in meaningful ways to various cultural groups; and means for ensuring equitable representation for all segments of the population and sectors of the economy.

Support and encourage continuous improvement in the methods used to meet the public need for information and involvement. Public information and involvement methods are continually evolving. The municipality is committed to seeking new and innovative ways to engage and keep the public involved throughout the process.

Record results of public engagement and recount these results back to the public. To properly capture the concerns, priorities, and vision of the public, the municipality will develop a system to track the various techniques and mechanisms of public input. To maintain transparency and consistency, the municipality will develop a method for sharing participation with the public.

STATE REGULATIONS

State of Michigan legislation details the minimum requirements for public participation. Laingsburg abides by this legislation and strives to go above and beyond the traditional practices to be proactive in soliciting public input for all projects. Below are the laws regarding public input set by the state.

OPEN MEETINGS ACT (PA 267 OF 1976)

The Michigan Open Meetings Act was created to require certain meetings of certain public bodies to be open to the public, to require notice and the keepings of minutes of the meetings.

The entirety of the act can be accessed through the state department or at the following website address: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-267-of-1976.pdf>

The following captures important highlights from the act.

In accordance with PA 267 of 1976, the City of Laingsburg will hold meetings in the City Hall building at 114 Woodhull Street, Laingsburg, MI 48848 which is accessible to the public.

The public will be notified within 10 days of the first meeting of a public body in each calendar or fiscal year; the body will publicly post a list stating the dates, times, and places of all its regular meetings at City Hall.

If there is a change in schedule, within three days of the meeting in which the change is made, the public body will post a notice stating the new dates, times, and places of regular meetings.

For special and irregular meetings, public bodies will post a notice indicating the date, time, and place at least 18 hours before the meetings.

Note: A regular meeting of a public body which is recessed for more than 35 hours can only be reconvened if a notice is posted 18 hours in advance.

Public bodies will hold emergency sessions without a written notice or time constraints if the public health, safety or welfare is severely threatened and if two-thirds of the body's members vote to hold the emergency meeting.

PLANNING ENABLING ACT (PA 33 OF 2008)

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act was created to provide for county, city, and City planning and codify laws regarding it.

The entirety of the act can be accessed through the state department or at the following website address: [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(xj3g1jal1er4tq45ve4x5vuz\)\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-33-of-2008.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(xj3g1jal1er4tq45ve4x5vuz))/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-33-of-2008.pdf)

The following captures important highlights from this act.

In accordance with PA 33 of 2008, the following parties will be notified via first class mail, personal delivery or electronic mail by the planning commission of the intent to plan and request the recipient's cooperation and comment:

- *Tri-County Regional Planning Commission*

- *Sciota Township*
- *Victor Township*
- *Woodhull Township*
- *Each public utility company, railroad company, and public transportation agency owning or operating a public utility, railroad, or public transportation system within Laingsburg, and any government entity that registers its name and mailing address for this purpose with the planning commission*
- *Shiawassee County Road Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation*

After the draft master plan has been submitted to the legislative body for review and approval for distribution, the draft plan will be submitted to the previously listed entities for review.

Before approving a proposed master plan, a planning commission will hold not less than one public hearing on the proposed master plan. The hearing will be held after the expiration of the deadline for comment as outlined in the act.

The planning commission will give notice of the time and place of the public hearing not less than 15 days before the hearing by publication in a newspaper of general circulation within Laingsburg.

The planning commission will also submit notice of the public hearing by first class mail, personal delivery or electronic mail to the previously listed entities for review.

After the adoption of the master plan, a planning commission may publish and distribute copies of the master plan or of any report, and employ other means of publicity and education.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Below is a list of groups that are able to assist in and enhance the public participation process, as well as identify groups that are often not at the visioning table. During each public event the list will be reviewed in order to make sure that the appropriate people and groups are involved. Since groups and business, and their associates, are constantly changing, this list only serves as a reference on which to build upon for each event.

- Local residents
- Downtown Development Authority
- The City of Laingsburg
- The Laingsburg School District (Board of Education & Administration)
- Large employers
- Commercial business owners
- Neighboring municipalities
- Potential investors
- Public employees (City, library, police, fire, education)
- Real estate professionals
- Religious groups
- Senior groups
- Social organizations (Lions Club, 4-H, etc.)
- Students

- Young professionals
- Entrepreneurs

Laingsburg is blessed to be full of active residents that strive to make their community better. However, the City is always trying to get more and more residents involved. The City will use various methods of communication to attempt to reach a variety of audiences.

COMMUNICATION TOOLBOX

Laingsburg's communication toolbox is full of methods including tried and true and the latest and greatest. City staff are always looking for new ways to communicate to the public, researching and experiment with creative, new methods. City Council is in charge of evaluating innovative opportunities, developing sustainable technological solutions, and promoting new media communication. Improving customer (resident) service performance is one of the City's top priorities.

The City updated their website in 2018 in an effort to streamline and enhance online communications.

Laingsburg's compact geography makes accessibility easier on residents. However, sometimes activities can tend to be concentrated on Grand River Rd. which can lead to unintended exclusion of residents in the periphery of the City. Using a variety of communication methods to get residents to a workshop, such as postcards and texts, could increase representation from all residents.

The majority of Laingsburg residents speak English. There are no identified sub populations that do not speak English. In order to prevent miscommunications, the City should make accommodations if it is found that a resident(s) have a language barrier.

Minority representation is just as important as representation from all ages, races, education levels, income levels, and political beliefs, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

BASIC ANNOUNCEMENT METHODS FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS INCLUDE:

- Newspaper announcements
- Website postings
- Fliers
- Council meeting announcements
- Postcard mailings
- Attachments to sewer/ utility bills
- Postings at the City library, post office, and City Hall
- Radio announcements

Strong partnerships and stakeholder engagement make education and collaborative visioning possible. Committed to getting wide-ranging public input, Laingsburg uses creative and innovative strategies along with the more traditional methods. Below is a list and description of methods used in the past and/ or are likely to be explored in the future.

SURVEYS

Surveys are useful for identifying specific areas of interest or concentration from a broad scope of ideas or issues. These areas of interest can then be further explored using other methods like the ones outlined below. A community may use a survey to identify where to start in the planning process, or the general climate surrounding a topic. Surveys can be useful to get a general idea of something, but should not be used as the sole method of public input. It is helpful for a municipality to administer surveys with partners. For example, schools can send surveys home with children, churches can have them available to fill out and neighborhood groups can distribute them. As with most public input efforts, it is best to vary the delivery method (mailed, handed out, electronic) and include bilingual language where applicable. Technology has increased delivery methods of surveys, including via social media and mobile phone texting.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops can be as simple as a series of question-and-answer sessions or as creative as creating a board game. Often, workshops are a great way to educate the community and hear concerns, questions, and ideas.

There are a variety of venues in Laingsburg that offer the needed space for workshops, depending on the scope of the project and expected attendance. The City Hall, Library, School buildings, Fire Hall, Churches, and meeting space in local businesses are often used for public meetings.

Using a consultant to lead public involvement adds an objective and professional supervision to help participants resolve disagreements and develop effective solutions. During the last master plan process, LIAA was hired to conduct a thorough input process that included visioning forums and a series of focus groups.

CHARRETTES

A charrette differs from a workshop because it is a multi-day event where designers and planners work on a plan in-between what are called "feedback loops." Usually between three and seven days, citizens can come to the "charrette studio," which is an office on or near the location of the proposed plan or project. Citizens offer ideas while the charrette team facilitates and observes. From these suggestions, the designers and planners change the plan to suit community input and present their creation the next day where the community offers feedback again. This makes up one cycle of a "feedback loop." There can be up to five feedback loops, resulting in a final plan shortly thereafter. This process can be completed with many different budgets, depending on the expertise of municipal state and local residents. Charrettes take much planning beforehand.

Depending on the plan or project, a charrette will be an inclusive way to envision and create. The location and participants will be dependent on the scope of the project. Ideally, stakeholders to be affected by the project will convene for the charrette and it will be located near the project site.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups can help to narrow down concepts or get a specific side of the story. During the last master plan input process, focus groups were identified by the Planning Commission and staff to prioritize issues and gather input on specific questions.

STANDING COMMITTEES

These are focus groups that repeatedly meet and will differ depending on the needs of a community. They are perfect for concerned residents, underrepresented groups, or groups that may have specific needs in a community, such as students or seniors. This is an opportunity for a municipality to draw from the expertise of residents, perhaps organizing a standing committee of real estate professionals, business owners and brokers to offer feedback.

WEBSITES

Websites offer an omnipresent, easily-accessible method for distributing information, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Users know where to go to get the information or can search for content online. Laingsburg's new website offers an attractive and practical platform to access an abundant database of contact information, service offerings, project information, and much more.

PHONE/MOBILE

These days, most everyone has a mobile phone. Texting is considered to be a technology that most people have access to and know how to use. Texting potentially reaches the widest audience. Children and young adults with mobile devices are more likely to communicate via text than other traditional and social media methods. Senior and low-income populations are the most likely to not text, but more and more are gaining access every day. Texting technology is becoming more affordable and widespread. The City will explore the different options that are available.

OUTREACH STRATEGIES

There are many situations in which the City will solicit public input for a plan or project. Public participation in the planning process not only satisfies political and public need, it also increases the likelihood of plan success by making a more durable document. When residents are involved in the plan process, they are more likely to stay involved afterwards by forwarding the vision and partaking in the action plan to better their community with a sense of ownership. Broad engagement in the planning process also helps to prevent delays caused by unforeseen issues. Engagement efforts will vary depending upon the type, intensity, and location of a project or plan.

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

The Master Plan is the visioning document for the City which future developments and policy are created from. Therefore, it is the most important planning process to get the broadest engagement and most public input. A variety of communication tools should be used with an effort to gain attention and involvement from the widest sample of residents, representative of the entire City.

At least two workshops or visioning forums should be held. Notice will be given to all residents when the planning process begins and when a draft plan has been created. A public forum will be held to review the draft document. Various other input methods should be used as well, including, but not limited to, web surveys, interactive mapping projects, electronic updates, or focus groups.

Master Plan updates are also typically developed by the Planning Commission with input from public stakeholders. Once a public hearing is held the draft Plan is sent to the following public bodies for review and comment: Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Sciota Township, Victor Township, Woodhull Township, each public utility company, railroad company, and public transportation agency owning or operating a public utility, railroad, or public transportation system within Laingsburg, and any government entity that registers its name and mailing address for this purpose with the planning commission, Shiawassee County Road Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation. At the Planning Commission the Plan is recommended for adoption by City Council. City Council then holds a public hearing to adopt the recommended Plan.

ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE

The Zoning Ordinance is the regulating document which helps forward the vision of the City as well as promote the public health, safety and general welfare. Since the document establishes comprehensive zoning regulations and provides for the administration, enforcement and amendment of those regulations, it is important that the public are informed of and can give input about updates. Zoning regulation is based off of the master plan and therefore doesn't need as extensive of an input process. However, informing and educating the public about updates or revisions of the ordinance is important. Traditional communications methods are most appropriate.

Zoning Ordinance amendments are typically developed by the Planning Commission with input from public stakeholders. Amendments are recommended for adoption by the Planning Commission to City Council.

Overall Zoning Ordinance updates are also typically developed by the Planning Commission with input from public stakeholders. Once a public hearing is held the draft Ordinance is sent to the following public bodies for review and comment: Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Sciota Township, Victor Township, Woodhull Township, Each public utility company, railroad company, and public transportation agency owning or operating a public utility, railroad, or public transportation system within Laingsburg, and any government entity that registers its name and mailing address for this purpose with the planning commission, Shiawassee County Road Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation. At the Planning Commission the Ordinance is recommended for adoption by City Council. City Council then holds a public hearing to adopt the recommended Ordinance.

CITY CODE (POLICE POWER) ORDINANCE UPDATES

Similar to the Zoning Ordinance, City Code Ordinances typically helps forward the vision of the City by addressing matters related to the public health, safety and general welfare of the City however these ordinances regulate activities rather than the use of land. These ordinances are adopted with much less regulation than zoning ordinances regarding implementation, administration, enforcement and amendments. To increase public satisfaction and ensure due process is followed, it is important that the public is informed and involved in the input process when city code ordinances are developed or updated.

Ordinances and Ordinance updates of this type can be developed and adopted by City Council, however review and recommendation from the City Planning Commission and public stakeholders can be helpful.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Downtown Development Plan is the guiding document for the vision and success of the downtown. Downtown development planning is integral to the success of a City and its economic development. Public input and engagement in this process is important. Education on topics, such as TIF financing, make this process easier as well as visioning techniques that can help the public understand various planning concepts.

Owners can be useful in bridging any misunderstandings. Public visioning sessions, websites, interactive mapping, and focus groups can all be useful in creating the downtown development plan.

Aside from stakeholders listed above, this plan would be developed by the Downtown Development Authority with input from surrounding Victor Township, Sciota Township and Woodhull Township. Ultimately the plan would be adopted by City Council.

PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

Workshops, focus groups, surveys, websites, and/or alternative methods are useful in recreation planning. The last update of the Laingsburg Parks and Recreation Plan had a public input process that included a community survey and multiple public meetings.

In Laingsburg, typically these plans would be developed by the Planning Commission with significant input from public stakeholders and approved by City Council. Input is also required by Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Shiawassee County Planning Commission, and Clinton County Planning Commission.

LOW-CONTROVERSY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Development plans require a review City staff. If the plan is low controversy, it may be approved administratively. If there are any questions, it may be forwarded to the Planning Commission for review and approval.

HIGH-CONTROVERSY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A high-controversy development plan will most likely require one or more focus groups of relevant residents, business owners, and/or organizational leaders. Proactive notification and timely education can prevent some controversy. Mailings, media, websites, and other methods can keep residents informed to prevent misinformation and misunderstanding. Public hearings can allow developers, residents and officials to work through development plans and solicit input.

Typically these plans would be reviewed and approved by the City Planning Commission, but depending on the circumstance, may also require action by the Zoning Board of Appeals and City Council.

Simple Input Requirement Chart

Plan Type/ Input Required	Master Plan	Zoning Ordinance Amendments	Overall Zoning Ordinance Update	City Code Ordinance	Downtown Development Plan	Parks and Recreation Plan	Low- Controversy Development Plan	High- Controversy Development Plan
General Public	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Planning Commission	✓	✓	✓					✓
City Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Surrounding Townships	✓		✓		✓			
Public Utilities	✓		✓					
County Agencies	✓		✓			✓		
Michigan Department of Transportation	✓		✓					
Regional Planning Agency	✓		✓			✓		

COMMUNICATING RESULTS

Results from public participation sessions will be communicated back to the public by including it in the final plan document. Media can also be released immediately following a public input session to publish how many people attended and solicit further participation for future meetings. This demonstrates that the responses were heard, shows that public input is desired, and creates an environment of transparency.

Public Meetings: Meeting minutes are posted online.

Surveys: Surveys will be compiled by a consultant or City staff no later than three-four weeks after the survey is complete. Results will be posted online or in the appendix of the plan.

Community workshops/charrettes: City staff are in charge of taking notes during workshops and charrettes. These notes will be shared at the end of the event as well as posted on a plan website if applicable. The notes will also be part of the plan appendix.

One-on-one interviews: Interview results will be kept confidential for the comfort of the participants unless otherwise requested.

Focus groups: Focus groups results will be kept confidential for the comfort of the participants unless otherwise requested.

Standing committees: Meeting minutes will be taken by the appropriate secretary and made available to the public when appropriate.

EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Continuous review of our public input processes is the only way that Laingsburg will remain a thriving and connected community. The residents are what make Laingsburg such a great community to live in. Their creativity and talent are irreplaceable in the planning processes of the community. Therefore, reflection on communication and involvement efforts is needed to verify that optimal methods are used. A Communication Event Satisfaction Survey will be used at each event (see appendix). Results can be analyzed by keeping records of participation, including the types of communication used, the quality and quantity of comments received, and the number of participants involved. The hired consultant or staff will be in charge of recording participation.

Each plan and project shall include a Public Participation Review. The Public Participation Review sample can be found in the appendix. Documentation will contribute to a public participation process that is continuously evolving to better obtain public input. To ensure that methods are effective, the Public Participation Plan will be reviewed annually and updated when necessary. Methods that have failed will not be removed from the Public Participation Plan but will be reviewed and documented so that the same mistakes will not be made in the future.

CLOSING

Public participation, when properly executed, builds community consensus and strengthens sense of place. Creating a culture of collaborative visioning enriches democracy by allowing citizens to voice their ideas, not just their complaints. This plan is to be used and reviewed as a daily guide to best incorporate the public into decisions that affect their space.