



AND ALWAYS -- A Fine City • A Great Community”

Public Notification & Participation Policy

Adopted 2/20/18

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PARTICIPATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Strive to involve the community in the decision making process. City staff draws on a variety of methods of communication and outreach in order to understand what our citizenry needs and requests are. Goals of our Public Participation Process are outlined below. Solicitation of public participation in each phase of planning processes 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/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.

Provide 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 strive to 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 and receiving information.

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. Fremont 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 of Michigan.

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 Fremont will hold meetings in the City Hall building at 101 E. Main Street, 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 for the calendar year.*
- *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.*
- *Any citizen can request that public bodies put them on a mailing list so that they are notified in advance of all meetings by contacting the following:*

*City of Fremont
Attn: Todd M. Blake, City Manager
101 E. Main Street
Fremont, MI 49412*

PLANNING ENABLING ACT (PA 33 OF 2008)

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act was created to provide for county, city, and township planning and to 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\(xj3j1jal1er4tq45ve4x5vuz\)\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-33-of-2008.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(xj3j1jal1er4tq45ve4x5vuz))/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-33-of-2008.pdf).

The City of Fremont partnered with Sheridan Charter Township and Dayton Township to form the Fremont Community Joint Planning Commission in January 2013.

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:

- *Newaygo County*
- *West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Council*
- *City of Fremont*
- *Sheridan Charter Township*

- Dayton Township
- Each public utility company, railroad company, and public transportation agency owning or operating a public utility, railroad, or public transportation system within Fremont, and any government entity that registers its name and mailing address for this purpose with the joint planning commission
- Newaygo 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 Fremont.

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
- Fremont Area Chamber of Commerce
- 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 (Rotary Club, NIKA, etc.)
- Students
- Young professionals
- Entrepreneurs

Fremont 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

Fremont's communication toolbox is full of methods including tried and true and the latest and greatest. City staff is always looking for new ways to communicate to the public, researching and experiment with creative, new methods. The City Manager 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 2020 in an effort to streamline and enhance online communications. Multiple social media accounts were created as well by the City, including Facebook and Twitter.

Fremont's compact geography makes accessibility easier on residents. However, sometimes activities can tend to be concentrated in an area 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 Fremont residents speak English, whereas 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

- Newspaper announcements
- Community Newsletters
- Website postings
- Fliers
- Council meeting announcements
- Postcard mailings
- Attachments to water bills
- City social media accounts

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

PUBLIC BOARD/COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The City has a Public Participation Policy for those present at public meetings. The City Council's Rules & Procedures Policy entails specific guidelines (section E) for those in attendance to participate in discussion during public meetings... (www.fremontmi.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2292/Fremont-Council-Rules-Procedures-). The City Council expects that all of its boards and commissions follow the same guidelines for such.

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 Fremont that offer the needed space for workshops, depending on the scope of the project and expected attendance. The City Hall, District Library, School buildings 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.

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 exchanges, depending on the expertise of municipal state and local residents. Charrettes can 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 effected 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 Joint 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.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Technology offers a unique opportunity to give and receive information to a mass of people. Municipalities can post events, share information and even solicit feedback. This public participation method is best used in conjunction with other methods because it excludes those who do not use social media. The ability to spread misinformation or post disrespectful comments easily makes it important to plan for the use of social media.

Social media has become an effective and efficient channel of communication between the community and their local government. The City of Fremont's social media efforts shall contribute toward the advancement of our presence as a digital City. Social media's ability to drive community information, news, and opinion in real time helps the City realize operating efficiencies, garner citizen engagement, and realize strategic objectives.

The City Manager's Office manages and approves all social media users. The City Manager is responsible for maintaining a current social media presence to keep users engaged throughout the year. Department personnel may be approved to post in order to post project specific content. Target audiences may differ by social media site, for example business owners and professionals through LinkedIn or parents and creatives of Pinterest. Facebook and Twitter generally have a wider audience that spans age groups, but is limited to those with the property technology to access.

Social media can be used to update audiences on progress of a project, distribute meeting notifications, solicit feedback from surveys or general comments, and generally engage and inform users.

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. Fremont's website (www.fremontmi.gov) 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.

The City has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is ‘announced’ or ‘spoken’ on behalf of the City on social media sites. A written policy establishes internal procedures for the use of social media by City of Fremont employees when posting for the City of Fremont as well as personal use of social media when applicable. Social media sites include, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and other approved sites that are similar in content and/or character.

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.

There are also many situations in which developers and/or property owners will seek City input during their planning and site plan preparation process, regarding zoning changes, landscaping and various other amenities that may improve the value or character of their finished project. City staff is always willing to accommodate visionary meetings before site plan submittal. Staff quite frequently recommends their reaching out to neighborhood property owners of the proposed development and sometime coordinate those meetings as well. (Amend 9/3/19)

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

The Fremont Community Joint Master Plan is the visioning document for the City which future developments and policy are created from **and was update September 2022**. 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 are held when the Master Plan is being reviewed. 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.

ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE

The Joint 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.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Downtown Development Plan is the guiding document for the vision and success of the downtown and commercial corridor within its District for a twenty-year (20) period. 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. The current Plan expires 12/31/2025, and the DDA has already started the planning process for its upcoming renewal.

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.

PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

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

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.
- Standing committees: Meeting minutes will be taken by the appropriate secretary and made available to the public when appropriate.
- Social networking: The City Manager's Office is responsible for monitoring

EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Continuous review of our public input processes is the only way that Fremont will remain a thriving and connected community. 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 residents are what make Fremont such a great community to live in 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 insure that methods are effective, the P3

will be reviewed annually and updated when necessary. Methods that have failed will not be removed from the P3, 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.