



Public Participation Plan

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Overview and Purpose

The City of East Tawas (City) strives to involve the community in the decision-making process, through a variety of methods of communication and outreach. It is crucial to engage citizens throughout a planning process. Soliciting input throughout the duration of the process contributes to a greater public understanding of everything involved in community projects and greater transparency in local government operations.

The City has developed this document to help guide decisions for formulating a process for gathering public information during the planning and development process. This document contains a series of policies and procedures for public involvement and outreach for tasks such as: Master Plan updates, Parks & Recreation Plan updates, zoning ordinance and map updates, major development projects (Planned Unit Development, special land uses, or other) and development projects involving publicly owned properties. This guide is intended to serve as an internal resource for ideas on how to best engage productive collaboration with stakeholders and the public in the future.

Public Participation Goals

This guide emphasizes the City's commitment to an effective means of communication with citizens and stakeholders throughout the planning and development process. The public participation tools described in this plan are to serve as a starting point for consideration of the appropriate type of extent of planned public involvement.

The following list outlines the goals in which the City of East Tawas seeks to accomplish:

1. **Solicit public participation in key phases of the planning process.** Citizens and stakeholders shall be involved in key phases to ensure maximum value of input is received. There are many opportunities for the public to play a role in shaping short and long-term needs, creating solutions, and funding priorities. The earlier the public is involved in the process, the greater the opportunity to influence important land-use decisions.
2. **Seek broad identification and representative involvement of all residents of the community and utilize effective and equitable avenues for distributing information and receiving comments.** The diverse characteristics and needs of residents require different communication and outreach techniques. Depending on the project and area affected, outreach may be in-person, online, posted by signs, published, or by written correspondence. Additionally, opportunities for feedback will also vary, such as meetings, door to door polling, surveys, or open houses. There are a number of ways to ensure the community 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

City to consider the communication needs of the public and the approach to accomplish this goal.

3. **Provide educational materials and design participation initiative that will support and encourage effective participation.** Visualization techniques can be especially helpful with specific sites or areas of re-development. Materials such as fliers, presentations, or other forms of visualizations are helpful means to bring stakeholders and residents up to date on various planning, zoning, or development projects.
4. **Maintain and develop 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.
5. **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 City is committed to seeking new and innovative ways to engage and keep the public involved throughout the process.
6. **Record results of public engagement and recount these results back to the public.** In order to properly obtain feedback from the public and stakeholders, the City will develop a system to track the various techniques and mechanisms of public input. The City will seek to develop a method for sharing received input with the public. This promotes transparency and consistency.
7. **Encourage Developers to Engage the Community.** Developers are encouraged to seek input from the community in accordance with this manual. Those efforts will be supported by the City and provided reasonable accommodations for proactive public participation in planning for private development projects.

Public Participation Requirements

Basic requirements for public participation are mandated in state and federal laws for certain public projects and development reviews. The City, through the work of the City Council and various boards and commissions which serve on their behalf, shall abide by the following local and state regulations. These regulations include provisions for the public review process, public participation, and public hearings.

Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976)

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

The following captures important highlights from the act:

- In accordance with PA 267 of 1976, the City of East Tawas will hold meetings in the East Tawas Council Chambers at 760 Newman 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 listing 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 which is visible to the public indicating the date, time, and place at least 18 hours before the meeting.
- Public bodies will hold emergency sessions without 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 East Tawas
ATTN: East Tawas City Clerk
760 Newman Street
East Tawas, MI 48730

Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008)

In accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008), the following parties are notified via first-class mail, personal mail, or email by the City's Planning Commission of the intent to amend the Master Plan and request the recipient's cooperation and comment:

- Iosco County Board of Commissioners
- Tawas City
- Baldwin Township
- Each public utility company, railroad company, and public transportation agency owning or operating a public utility, railroad or public transportation system within the local unit of government, and any government entity.

- Iosco County Road Commission
- The Michigan Department of Transportation.

After the draft Master Plan has been submitted to the City Council 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, the 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 the local unit of government. 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, the 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

Stakeholders represent a diverse set of individuals, groups and organizations which have a vested interest or are affected by the planning and land use development process. The below list is reviewed during each development process to make sure that the appropriate people or groups are involved. Since groups, organizations, and their associates are constantly changing, this list serves as a reference on which to build upon for each event.

- City Council
- City Boards and Commissions
- Public employees (City, Library, Police, Fire)
- Iosco County
- Residents
- Neighboring Municipalities
- Tawas Area Schools
- East Tawas Business Association
- Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce
- Michigan State University - Iosco County Extension
- Real Estate Professionals
- Civic and Social Organizations
- Special interest groups: students, seniors religious and environmental groups, entrepreneurs, and potential investors.
- Entrepreneurs
- Large Employers
- Commercial Business Owners

Opportunities for Public Participation

The City of East Tawas provides residents and stakeholders numerous opportunities to get involved in the planning, review and approval process.

Development Review Bodies

City Council. The City Council is the legislative and policy-making body for the City government. City Council is an elected board made up of the Mayor and six (6) council members.

Boards and Commissions. The City encourages citizens to participate in local government planning and policy decisions. Therefore, all citizens can apply for appointments to the various City boards and commissions. The boards and commissions provide recommendations to the City Council on a variety of topics and issues.

Each advisory board or commission makes recommendations to the City Council based on the scope of its service. The City Council is responsible for making the final decisions on most issues or topics, but they look to these groups for advice, background information and analysis. You can view a complete list of boards and commissions on the City's website, www.easttawas.com.

Public Meetings

In order to conform to the Open Meetings Act, meeting minutes and agendas of the City Council and other boards and commissions are made available to the public through the City's website, www.easttawas.com.

Public Comments

Opportunities for public comment shall be available at any meeting of the City Council or board or commissions in accordance with the provisions in the board and commissions bylaws and other operating policies. The participation of interested people and their input will be recorded in the meeting minutes.

Public Hearings

The City Council and its various boards and commissions shall hold public hearings when called for in their local and state enabling legislation, or when otherwise prudent, to provide the opportunity for public comment on specific topics.

Communication Toolbox

Basic Announcement Methods for Public Meetings

The following methods are used to advertise the public meetings of the City Council and boards and commissions. The City will strive to ensure that more than one notification and communication method will be used depending on the specific projects and target audience.

- Website postings
- Council meeting announcements
- Messages on water bills
- Newspaper announcements
- Radio announcements

- East Tawas Facebook Page
- City Newsletter
- Mailings

Proactive Practices

The following are some example public participation methods that are less reactive and more focused on education and collaboration.

Preapplication Coordination

Prior to submitting a land use application, or site plan, an applicant is required to submit a sketch plan or draft plan for review by the Zoning Administrator. The review shall be informal and advisory only and shall not constitute any form of approval or authorization to grant any type of permit. The review shall be done without cost to the applicant and shall be directly scheduled with the Zoning Administrator.

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 public opinion regarding specific community issues but should not be used as the sole method of public input. It is helpful for the City 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 deliver door to door. As with most public input efforts, it is best to vary the delivery method (mail, hand out, electronic) and include bilingual language if applicable.

Open House Meetings and Community Workshops

Open house meetings and community workshops can be as simple as a series of question-and-answer sessions with the public or as creative an interactive map exercise. They provide a casual setting to encourage participants to think critically and creatively surrounding a specific topic and hear concerns, questions, and ideas. Open house venues need to be accessible and approachable for all attendees. Further, volunteers, and staff must be available and knowledgeable on the project to encourage feedback from participants.

Charrettes

The 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 staff and residents. Charrettes take extensive planning before utilizing.

Walking Tours

Walking tours offer candid feedback from a variety of stakeholders when discussing a specific area. They can be paired with community workshops or charrettes to measure the perceived safety and comfort of pedestrians in a downtown, neighborhood, or corridor. Walking tours are also useful for identifying desired design, problem properties or safety concerns.

One-On-One Interviews

Interviews are a great way to get specifics on a topic. Specific community leaders may have been identified, making them ideal candidates for an interview. Communities have individuals that are very vocal about issues in the community and interviewing them may give some perspective on how to address their concerns. It is important to remember that one interview reflects the opinion of one individual and should not be considered the standing of the entire community.

Focus Groups

Like interviews, focus groups can help to narrow down concepts or get a specific side of the story. Stakeholder groups identified earlier in the planning process make ideal participants of a focus group. A focus group brings multiple stakeholders to the table to gather various perspectives and interests in one setting.

Social Media/ Web Presence

Technology offers a unique opportunity to give and receive information to a mass of people. This method of public participation is best used in conjunction with other methods because it excludes those who do not use social media. The City can post events, share information on projects, planning and development processes, and even solicit feedback.

Outreach Strategies

Master Plan Update

The Master Plan is a general statement of the City’s goals and policies. It serves as an aid in daily decision making. The goals and policies outlined in the Master Plan guide the Planning Commission and City Council in their deliberations on zoning, subdivision, capital improvements and other matters relating to land use and development. The Master Plan planning process must use a wide range of public input methods to develop the goals, objectives, and strategies for implementation.

The City shall send a notice to all stakeholders as listed in the state enabling legislation; the notice will explain that the Planning Commission intends to prepare a plan and request cooperation and comments. The public will be informed when the planning process begins and

when a draft is completed. Various methods listed in the “*Communication Toolbox*” section of this document, will be used to receive public input.

Zoning Ordinance Update

The Zoning Ordinance is the regulating document which helps reflect the vision of the City of East Tawas. It is important for the public to be involved in the adoption of amendments to the zoning map or to specific regulations contained in the text of the ordinance. Each amendment process is unique and is not always related to the entire document; however, a general process is followed to gather public input early in the process. Workshops with directly affected property owners, committees, focus groups and public meeting participation are methods used to gather input.

Parks and Recreation Plan

Like the Master Planning process, the parks and recreation planning process must also utilize a variety of public outreach methods. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) mandates that municipalities undergoing a Parks and Recreation Plan update must employ no less than two (2) types of public input methods. It is important to engage the public early in the planning process through surveys, public meetings, community workshops, or other means before a draft is written.

Once a draft plan has been completed, citizens must be given an opportunity of at least one (1) month or 30 days to review and comment before it is officially adopted. The City uses multiple locations to allow the public to view a draft plan. Copies are made available to the public at the City Library, City Hall, City Park office and the City’s website.

Once the 30-day public comment period has concluded and a final draft has been created, the City Park shall advertise and hold a public hearing in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The meeting minutes will reflect whether there was public comment and the nature of the comments received during the public hearing.

Capital Improvement Planning

A capital improvement plan (CIP) is a short-range plan, typically a five-to-ten-year plan, which identifies capital projects, equipment purchases, and a ranking of projects and purchases in order of preference. While planning for capital improvements can be technical and difficult to engage, City Council will hold a public hearing for the adoption of the CIP Plan and post the plan on the City’s website for the public to view.

Major Developments

The City must follow the local and state regulations, as listed in this guide, to review development projects that involve the approval of planning and zoning applications and permits. This applies to the review process for special use permits, site plans, rezoning requests and variance request applications. The City Council, Planning Commissions and Zoning Board of Appeals will hold public hearings, noticed in accordance with the state legislation and allow for public comment on the proposed development during a regular meeting. Additional public input methods may be used to gather community feedback, each being determined by the nature of the project, the community interest and the community’s financial involvement.

Public Participation Matrix

The various outreach strategies have a multitude of different uses and applications. Some methods lend themselves better to certain strategies. The table below provides a guide of when certain outreach methods may be optimal based upon which type of process the City is undergoing.

Method of outreach	Master Plan	Zoning Amendments	CIP Planning	Parks and Recreation Planning	Major Developments
Pre-Application Coordination	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
Surveys	Recommended	Potentially	Potentially	Recommended	Potentially
Open House Meetings	Potentially			Potentially	Potentially
Charrettes	Potentially			Potentially	
Walking Tours	Potentially			Potentially	Potentially
One-on-One Interviews					
Focus Groups	Potentially	Potentially	Potentially	Potentially	Potentially
Social Media/Web	Potentially	Required		Potentially	Potentially

Steps for Determining the Appropriate Plan

Prior to conducting a planning process the City shall create a Public Participation Plan to help guide and define the appropriate methods for public input. The purpose of the plan is to help the City through a project and to design the appropriate activities that will meet the goals for the project.

Step 1. *Describe the Project*

The first step in a public participation plan is to provide a clear description of the project to achieve success. Provide a timeline, review the geographic area, number of staff required and budget limitations for the overall project. These steps will help to communicate the boundaries

of public participation in planning, program development or decision making to those engaged in the participation activities.

Step 2. *Assess and Determine the Level of Public Interest or Concern*

It is important to anticipate the public's level of interest or concern regarding a project or program to determine the appropriate level of public participation. The public will become involved according to its perception of the seriousness of the issue.

Step 3. *Identify Public Participation Goals*

After assessing the level of public interest and concern, it will be easier to plan for the appropriate level of public participation and establish goals and objectives.

Step 4. *Identify Stakeholders*

With goals, objectives and public participation levels established you can identify stakeholders and what level of outreach is needed. While creating a list of stakeholders, be sure to engage audiences that cover a broad range of citizens.

Step 5. *Select Tools*

Different public participation goals require different tools and approaches. As listed in this guide, there is a wide range of public participation tools. Be sure to select the appropriate tools for each goal and objective.

Step 6. *Create a Schedule*

Any public participation plan should include a detailed timeline of the planning, program development or decision-making processes as well as the public participation activities within that process. It is important to provide the public with adequate opportunity to influence the decision.

Step 7. *Identify Roles and Responsibilities*

Make sure to establish an overall public participation manager responsible for tracking progress and completing each activity. Identify everyone who has a role or responsibility in the planning, program development or decision-making processes. It is important to establish this before beginning the development of public information materials and making presentations to stakeholders. Stakeholders will want to know how, when, and by whom the decision is going to be made.

Step 8. *Gather and Disseminate Input and Results*

If the public participation goals include public input, involvement or collaboration, this is an added responsibility of sharing the public's input to decision makers and referring the information back to the public at large. This "feedback loop" is necessary to demonstrate to the public that their time and effort has been well invested and their comments and concerns

have been understood and accurately communicated to decision makers. It can also show the public how their input has influenced the project, policy or program.

Step 9. Evaluate Effectiveness

It is important to evaluate every public participation activity or plan. Involving stakeholders in the evaluation is a way of partnering with the public and creating a transparent process. Plan to constantly monitor and evaluate the outcomes of public participation throughout the life of the project and make revisions as needed.

Communicating Results

Communicating back to the public the information gathered during the public involvement process will result in a greater understanding from the public that their input is valued and the City is actively seeking to involve its citizens in the community. Municipalities have many venues of communication: television, newspapers, the municipal website, social media and newsletters. Determine the appropriate venue(s) to communicate, who is responsible for this communication, and when will it be available to the public once an event is completed.

There is no one way of communicating. The following list is ways that the City will strive to communicate public feedback.

Public Meetings. City Council, Planning Commission, and all other municipal boards and commissions meetings minutes shall be posted on the City's website and available at City Hall and all meetings will be available for public participation.

Surveys. Surveys created by City staff will be compiled and results posted after the survey completion deadline. They may be posted online, or on social media with a link to the results may be provided and published in the City Newsletter.

Open Houses / Community workshops / Charrettes. A City official will take notes during public open houses, community workshops or charrettes, gather names, addresses and emails of all in attendance. In addition, the results of these events shall be sent to participants via email, and the meeting summary shall be recognized by other public boards such as City Council and Planning Commission.

Public Participation Evaluation

This guide will be reviewed on an annual basis and will be used as a daily guide to incorporate the public into decisions. A City official will be responsible for keeping records of the participation efforts and will be responsible for compiling the data and presenting it to the City and public with suggestions for actions.