



City of Huntington Woods Community Engagement Plan

The “City of Huntington Woods Community Engagement Plan” describes the process to encourage public participation on matters of public policy and planning and development initiatives. It identifies key constituents, describes tools for community engagement and opportunities to gather feedback.

Because the effectiveness of communication tools change over time, the City understands that the Community Engagement Plan needs to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The City Commission has established a Communication Advisory Committee to assist staff in exploring ways to improve communication strategies to reach specific stakeholders and gather community feedback that can be incorporated into the Plan. The City has also engaged the services of a communications consultant to strengthen our communication strategies and to be available to manage incidents that might result in media coverage. This Plan will be formally updated by the Planning Commission in conjunction with the Master Plan review process with final adoption by the City Commission.

If a third party consultant is engaged by the City for a policy discussion or planning initiative, they will be informed of the Community Engagement Plan.

Community Engagement Process

The City recognizes that robust public participation is crucial to making meaningful policy choices and informed planning decisions. The key to gathering public input is a communication strategy that is effective at reaching the appropriate stakeholders. To that end, the City identifies the following Community Engagement process:

- The City will evaluate major policy discussions and planning initiatives individually to develop a community engagement plan tailored to the topic of discussion
- The City will make the relevant information and material easily available to the public throughout the entire discussion process and in a timely fashion
- The City will encourage the involvement of stakeholders that are most affected by the policy or planning initiative

- The City shall utilize the most effective avenues to communicate with stakeholders
- The City will assist a developer or consultant to solicit input early in the approval process by encouraging public participation using the most appropriate community engagement tools
- The City will use the comments and input received from the public in their decision making
- The City shall record the results of public engagement to the extent feasible and provide summaries back to the public

Key Stakeholders in the City of Huntington Woods

The City recognizes that stakeholder groups will be impacted differently by policy decisions and planning initiatives. The following is a list of possible stakeholder groups but it can be expanded upon depending on the nature of the discussion:

- City boards, committees and commissions
- Residents
- Senior citizens
- Business owners
- Civic groups i.e. Men’s Club & Women’s League
- Berkley School District and Burton School
- Neighboring communities who may be impacted
- Potential developers
- City departments
- Relevant County and State agencies
- Utility providers
- Churches

Tools for Community Engagement

The following communication tools can be used to inform residents about upcoming policy and planning discussions and which methods will used will be dependent on the topic to be discussed:

- City Facebook page and department Facebook pages
- City twitter account
- E-newsletter sent out most weeks with general City information
- E-newsletter for specific topics sent as needed
- NextDoor platform
- Outdoor City signs located throughout the City
- City website
- Quarterly Hometown Herald newsletter mailed to residents and available online
- Free weekly C & G publication – the Woodward Talk
- Quarterly water bills mailed to residents

- Bi-monthly 60+ Crowd mailed to residents
- Public Safety Department alerts sent via Nixle
- Planning Commission, Historic District Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals public hearing notices mailed to residents within a prescribed distance of the property being discussed
- Letters mailed to residents
- Press releases
- Flyers posted at City buildings
- Cable public access channel
- Announcements during City Commission meetings

Opportunities for Community Engagement

The City provides numerous opportunities for residents and specific stakeholder groups to participate in policy discussions and to provide input on planning initiatives. All City board and committee meetings are conducted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, except closed meetings as provided for in PA 267 of 1976 as amended. Individuals with disabilities requiring reasonable accommodations can contact the City Clerk's office for assistance. When a report or memo is generated, the results of any of the community engagement methods will be acknowledged and included.

City Boards, Committees and Commissions

The City has 14 boards, committees and commissions and 96 volunteer residents serve on them. Most boards, committees and commissions are advisory in nature and make recommendations to the City Commission. The members of the boards and commissions help to analyze options and provide input on important decisions on behalf of the community. Some boards and commissions have administrative authority to make decisions such as the Planning Commission, the Historic District Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals. Most boards and commissions meet regularly and meeting schedules are posted in City buildings, on the website calendar and publicized in the weekly e-newsletter, Facebook and Twitter along with a link to the agenda. The City encourages citizen participation via City boards, committees and commissions in two ways.

One method for residents to be engaged in decision making is to be appointed to a City board, committee or commission. Most appointments are for three year terms and a resident can serve for two consecutive terms. Appointments are generally made in December and the term begins the following January although mid-year appointments can be made in case of a vacancy. Residents interested in serving on a board, committee or commission can fill out a Citizen Interest Form and submit it to the City for consideration. The City advises residents of vacancies in the weekly e-newsletter and on our Facebook and Twitter platforms. The City Commission meets one on one with interested residents before appointments are made.

The other method to encourage citizen participation is through the discussions and decision making process of the City boards, committees and commissions. The Planning Commission,

Zoning Board of Appeals and Historic District Commission mail notices for public hearings as required by law to inform residents of decisions that will be made in close proximity to them. For matters other than site plan reviews and zoning appeals, the City uses the most appropriate communication tools to advise residents of the opportunity to provide input on the matter under review that is before a City board or committee.

City Commission meetings and special study sessions

The public has two types of opportunities to address the City Commission and provide public comment. Before the regular order of business, there is an opportunity to address the City Commission about items that are not on the agenda. Then as the items of business are discussed, the Mayor invites the public to comment on that specific item. Meetings are held at City Hall but if a particular issue is expected to generate a larger than usual attendance, the meeting can be moved to the Recreation Center. The City Commission also occasionally holds special meetings to address specific issues. The public is encouraged to attend these meetings as well.

Charrettes and Open Houses

Charrettes and open houses are effective tools to gather feedback in a group setting for topics where graphics are used to explain concepts or a group consensus is needed to drive a policy discussion. This format should be considered for specific development projects. The City will select dates and times for the charrette/open house that is convenient for most residents and offer transportation to residents that need it to attend the meeting. The City could consider serving refreshments depending on the length of the workshop.

Surveys

Surveys can be employed in instances where participants can choose between clear choices to provide direction to the City. They may be developed internally or with a third party partner. The surveys can be distributed through the mail to reach the greatest number of participants or accessible online for convenience.

Focus groups

Focus groups bring together stakeholders in small groups to discuss and brainstorm options. They can be used to collect feedback on specific projects and issues. The City will select dates and times for the focus group that is convenient for most residents and offer transportation to residents that need it to attend the focus group. The City will consider providing a nominal thank you gift to participants for taking the time to participate in the focus group.

Information Available to Public

The regular City Commission meetings are live streamed and then uploaded to our YouTube channel so they are available online for viewing. City Commission meetings are also regularly rebroadcast on the two cable providers in the City – WOW! and Comcast. The agendas for all City boards and commissions are posted on the City's website and a link to the agenda is provided in the regular e-newsletter. Minutes of the meetings are also available online on the City's website.

Information on topics of community interest is highlighted in the weekly e-newsletter, posted on the City's website and on Facebook and Twitter. The website also hosts a calendar of all boards and committee meetings and other important events such as the bi-annual electronics drop off event. The City's ordinances, including the Zoning Ordinance, and contact information for City staff is easily accessible on the website.