



VAN BUREN
CHARTER TOWNSHIP

**PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION
PLAN**

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PURPOSE AND GOALS

Van Buren Township is committed to involving the community in its planning and development process. This Public Participation Plan solidifies that commitment in writing. Its purpose is twofold: to provide a proactive guide of community engagement strategies for Township staff and to give community members an overview of how they can get involved in the planning and development process. The Township has the following goals for implementing the plan:

Goals

- Guide Van Buren Township in a direction supported by community members.
- Create a transparent environment for planning and development.
- Utilize various outreach methods to reach a diverse group of community members.
- Coordinate public participation practices across Township departments.
- Proactively select the tool(s) appropriate for specific planning and development scenarios.
- Be in constant communication with the community regarding participation results, using their feedback to update this plan.

In order to accomplish these goals, this plan must be flexible, so it includes methods to update it when needed. The Township's community engagement efforts are not limited to those outlined in this document, and new strategies may be used when appropriate. Any changes to this plan will be made to meet the needs of community members.

The State of Michigan has legislation which requires a minimum standard of public participation in the planning and development process. Van Buren Township follows these standards. The Guide to Choosing a Strategy (Table 1-1) is used to go above and beyond them. Below are descriptions of the relevant legislation.

Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976)

- Van Buren Township sets the schedule for meetings in advance of the new calendar year.
- The public will be notified within ten 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 its principal office.
- Van Buren Township will hold meetings in buildings which are accessible to the general public.
- 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, times, and place at least 18 hours before the meeting.
- A regular meeting of a public body which is recessed for more than 36 hours can only be reconvened if 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, and 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:
 - For Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, or Local Development Finance Authority, contact the Planning and Economic Development Department.
 - For other Township meetings, contact the Township Clerk's office.

Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008)

- **Notification of Intent to Proceed:** The following parties will be notified via first class mail, personal delivery, or email by the planning commission of the intent to plan and requesting the recipient's cooperation and comment:

Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA)
Augusta Township Planning Commission
Canton Township Planning Commission
City of Belleville Planning Commission
City of Romulus Planning Commission
City of Wayne Planning Commission
DTE Electric Company
DTE Gas Company
Huron Township Planning Commission
International Transmission Company
Michigan Department of Transportation
Norfolk Southern Railroad
Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)
Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART)
Superior Township Planning Commission
Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners
Wayne County Airport Authority
Wayne County Board of Commissioners
Wayne County Department of Public Services
Willow Run Airport
Ypsilanti Township Planning Commission

- After the draft master plan has been submitted to the Planning Commission for review and approval for distribution, the draft plan will be submitted to the above entities for review.
- Before approving a proposed master plan, the Planning Commission will hold a 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 (42 days for an amendment, 63 days for a new master plan).
- 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 the newspaper of record. The Planning Commission will also submit notice of the public hearing by first class mail, personal delivery, or email to the previously listed entities for review.
- Upon adoption by the Planning Commission, the Township Board may adopt the same version of the plan.

Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006)

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act legislates the following requirements for public hearings:

- **Notice distribution**
 - Public notice in the newspaper of record not less than 15 days before the date of the hearing.
 - Notice given to all persons whose real property is assessed within 300 feet of the property that is the subject of the request and to the occupants of all structures within 300 feet of the property.
- **Notice shall**
 - Describe the nature of the request.
 - Indicate the property that is the subject of the request.
 - List street addresses.
 - Indicate the time and location when the request will be considered.
 - Indicate the time and location where comments will be received concerning the request.
- **Actions requiring notice**
 - **Zoning ordinance text and map amendments**
 - Planning commission shall hold at least one public hearing prior to submitting its recommendations to the Township Board for a proposed zoning ordinance or map amendment.
 - Rezoning for 11 or more adjacent properties do not require the 300-foot notice to neighboring properties.
 - Notice of time and place of public hearing shall also be given by mail to the following:
 - DTE Electric Company
 - DTE Gas Company
 - International Transmission Company
 - Norfolk Southern Railroad
 - Wayne County Airport Authority
- **Special land uses decided by the Township Board**
 - A public hearing shall be held by the Planning Commission before a recommendation is made to the Township Board.
- **Planned unit development**

- The Planning Commission shall hold at least one public hearing on the request.

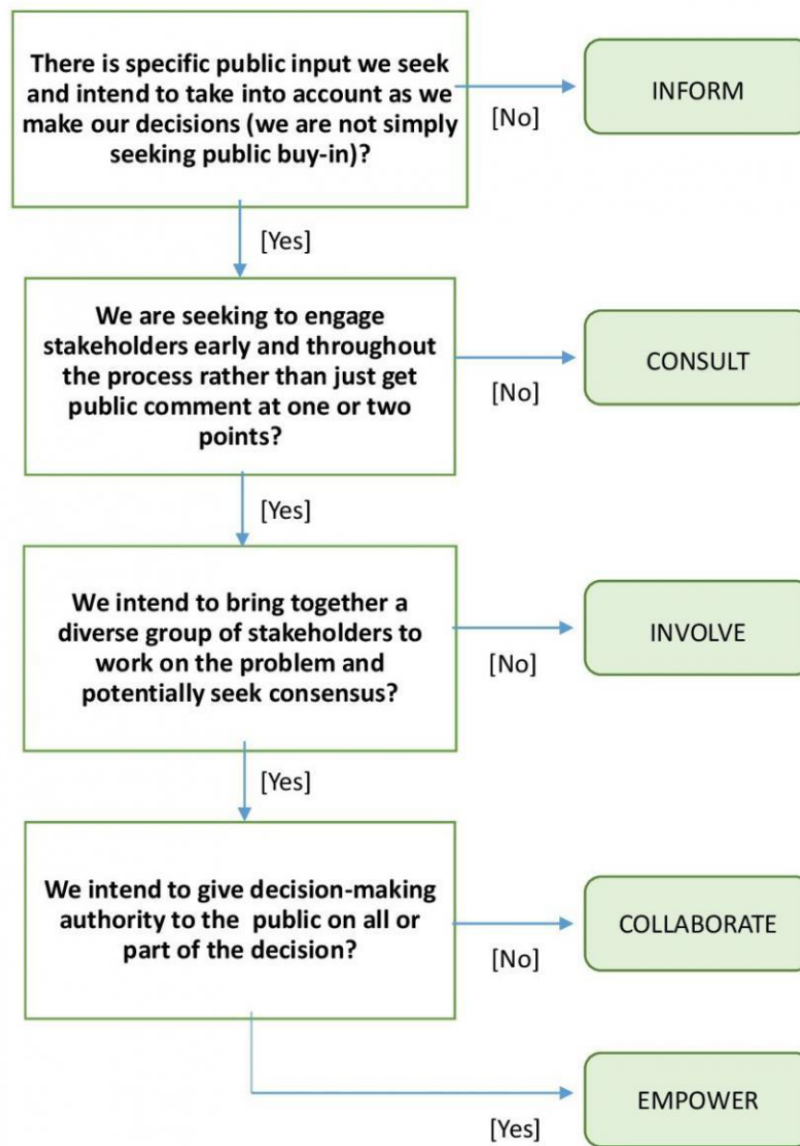
Van Buren Township is a diverse community with many different stakeholders. These can assist in the public participation process, and identifying stakeholders in this plan can help to assure that groups are not overlooked when seeking public input. The following is a list of key stakeholders in Van Buren Township's planning and development process. Though it is extensive, it is certainly not exhaustive. Groups may be added or removed when the plan is updated. Contact information for specific stakeholders is included in the appendix to this plan.

Stakeholders

Belleville Area Chamber of Commerce
Belleville Downtown Development Authority
City of Belleville
Detroit Region Aerotropolis
Home Owners Associations
Huron-Clinton Metro Parks
Religious Organizations
Service Organizations
Sumpter Township
The Arc of Western Wayne County
Van Buren Public Schools
Van Buren Township Downtown Development Authority
Wayne County
Wayne County Airport Authority
Wayne County Community College District- Ted Scott Campus
Willow Run Airport

Specific planning and development processes may require the engagement of different stakeholders. Each scenario will be assessed independently to determine which stakeholders should be included and with which level of engagement.

Van Buren Township has a wide range of public participation strategies at its disposal. These fall into five different categories: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. The categories represent varying levels of engagement, and the Township uses the following flowchart to determine which is appropriate for specific scenarios.



Source: The EPA’s “Determining the Right Level of Public Participation” flowchart

Once a category of engagement is identified, the following chart is utilized to determine which strategy is most appropriate.

Table 1-1: Guide to Choosing a Strategy

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public Participation Goal*	Van Buren Township will provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.	Van Buren Township will obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	Van Buren Township will work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Van Buren Township will partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Van Buren Township will place the final decision making in the hands of the public.
Public Participation Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Notices -Public meetings -Mailing list notice -Cable TV programming -Monthly planning updates -Outdoor signs - -Neighborhood meetings -Press releases -Citizens Academy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Public hearings -Surveys -Social media -Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Town hall meetings -Pop-up engagement -Focus Groups -Public workshops -Walkabouts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Charrettes -Committees -Citizen advisory groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ballot measures

*IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum
Legally mandated in bold

The following is a description of each public participation strategy:

Inform

Notices

- The Township will distribute notices via mail, in the newspaper of record, and as fliers in Township Hall per all legislative requirements.
- Notices will inform residents and stakeholders of public meetings and hearings.

Public meetings

- Public bodies, such as the Township Board and Planning Commission, will hold meetings open to the general public.
- Each year, the Township will set the schedule for these meetings and make it available via the website.
- All public bodies will hold meetings in buildings accessible to the general public.
- Notices of meetings will follow all legislative requirements.

Mailing List notice

- Per the Michigan Open Meetings Act, any citizen can request that public bodies put them on a mailing list so they are notified in advance of all meetings by contacting the Township.
- Information about who to contact to be put on this list is available on the Planning webpage.

Cable TV Programming

- The Township's Cable TV department may produce informational segments about planning initiatives, such as a Master Plan update.
- These will be available on the Township's Cable TV channel and its YouTube channel.

Monthly planning updates

- The Planning Department may track the progress of development projects in the Township.
- Each month, the Planning webpage will be updated with a chart of current projects and where they are at in the development process, such as having received Planning Commission approval or been granted building permits.

Outdoor Signs

- Signage may be placed at a project site to identify a development, inform of an infrastructure project, or indicate a project's completion.

Neighborhood Meetings

- Township staff may attend the regular meetings of neighborhood organizations in the Township to provide updates on planning and development projects impacting the community.

Press Releases

- Short status updates of planning and development projects may be released to local media outlets.

Citizens Academy

- The Citizens Academy is a session of weekly classes for interested residents to learn more about the day-to-day workings of Township government.
- Participants will hear from different departments, elected and appointed officials, and directors and may participate in field trips.

Consult

Public Hearings

- These are opportunities for the public to express their opinion on a particular planning or development project.
- They are generally held toward the end of a process during public meetings of bodies such as the Township Board or Planning Commission.
- The public is informed via notices per legislative requirements.

Surveys

- These are ways for Township staff to collect information from the public on their opinions of planning and development projects and the future of the Township.
- Surveys are available on the main page of the Township website, as a link shared by specific departments' Facebook pages, and in various locations throughout Township Hall.

Social Media

- **Various Township Departments may utilize their respective social media accounts to inform the public of initiatives and/or seek their comments on prospective projects.**
- **It is not the goal of social media to engage in prolonged two-way conversation.**

Interviews

- **One-on-one meetings with stakeholders may be conducted to gather information on how to better engage the public and build consensus for projects.**
- **These are preferably done in person and offer a chance for in-depth conversation between Township staff and stakeholders.**

Involve

Focus Groups

- **These are small group meetings facilitated by Township staff.**
- **The group may be made up of members of various stakeholder groups such as neighborhood associations, developers, or relevant board or commission members.**
- **Its purpose is to gather reactions from members about ideas, hear alternatives, and elicit direct feedback.**

Town Hall Meetings

- **These are informational meetings about specific planning and development projects.**
- **They are generally held much closer to the beginning of a project than at the end like public hearings.**
- **Community members are given the opportunity to engage in a more informal two-way conversation about the project and their input and questions.**

Pop-up engagement

- **This takes place when Township staff sets up a station for informal interaction with the public at community events.**
- **It is a chance for community members to offer comments and ask questions in a less formal setting.**

Public Workshops

- These are interactive meetings that educate the community on particular development or planning projects and gather their input.
- This may be done through hands on exercises, conversations, and activities.

Walkabouts

- These are a way to elicit direct and candid feedback from stakeholders during a walking tour of a specific area.
- They offer a different perspective than driving past a site, and therefore may allow new issues to be raised or ideas brainstormed.

Collaborate

Charrettes

- These are hands on workshops during which community members are invited to share their ideas for the future of the township and to work them out in collaboration with their neighbors and Township staff.
- These are part of the visioning process for the Township, so that it can move forward in a direction supported by community members.

Citizen Advisory Groups

- These are appointed boards of volunteer members who meet regularly to discuss issues regarding a specific topic.
- They advise Township staff and officials on how to act based on their meetings.

Committees

- These are groups of community members who meet for focused discussions on a specific issue in the Township, such as a zoning ordinance update or transportation plan.
- They make policy recommendations to Township staff and officials.

Empower

Ballot Measures

- The Township may ask residents to make decisions through an official election.

Van Buren Township has proactively set guidelines for what to do in planning and development scenarios with an extensive impact. The Planning Director reserves the right to modify these guidelines as appropriate in specific situations.

Township Planning Projects

Some projects, such as Master Plan updates, have great impact on the Township as a whole. To ensure that the community is properly informed and their input considered during such projects, the Township will take the following steps as the project progresses:

- **Beginning:** Inform via mailings, website or cable notices, or public information meetings.
- **Middle:** Vet alternatives through surveys or town hall meetings.
- **End:** Build consensus.
- **Final:** Hold a public hearing per the Michigan Planning Enabling Act.

Public/Infrastructure Projects

Some projects, such as repaving roads, have great impact on the immediate and nearby area. To ensure that the affected members of the Township are properly informed about such projects, the Township will take the follow steps as the project progresses:

- Hold an initial informational meeting.
- Send notices to affected residents and businesses.
- Continue to communicate during construction.
- Update businesses and residents on access during construction, individually or with signage.
- Notify how to get questions answered on status or response to complaints.

Controversial Development Projects

Some private development projects may have great impact on the community, leading to questions or concerns from residents. To ensure community members are heard, the Township requires some developers to purposefully engage with the public regarding their potential project. A controversial development is characterized by one or more of the following factors:

- Large size relative to surrounding development
- Proximity to residential area
- Proximity to Belleville Lake
- New development in an established area

Proposed developments that are characterized by one or more of those factors, or which are determined to have substantial impact on the community per the discretion of the Planning Director, must take the following steps:

- Pre-application meeting with planning staff
- Public informational meeting
- Follow-up meeting with planning staff to address community concerns

Non-controversial Development Projects

Though some development projects may be large, they do not necessarily have an impact which will elicit many concerns or questions from community members. At the discretion of the Planning Director, development projects deemed to be non-controversial must simply follow the Township’s development review process and any applicable legislative requirements for notices and public hearings.

It is important for community members to know that the Township listens to their input, as well as how it is used to guide the future of the Township. A variety of methods are used to communicate public participation results back to the community. They are described in the following table.

Table 1-2: Guide to Communicating Results

Inform	
Public Meetings	Meeting minutes will be posted on the Township website. Township Board and Planning Commission meetings will also be televised and posted on the Township’s YouTube channel.

Monthly Planning Updates	Monthly Planning Updates will be posted on the Planning Department web page.
Consult	
Public Hearings	Public hearing results will be included in the minutes from the meeting at which it took place. These minutes are posted on the Township website.
Surveys	Survey results will be posted on the Township website.
Involve	
Town Hall Meetings	A summary of the community's comments and questions discussed during a town hall meeting will be posted on the Township website.
Pop-up engagement	A summary of the community's comments and questions discussed during a pop-up engagement event will be posted on the Township website.
Public Workshop	A summary of the hands on exercises, activities, and conversation conducted during a public workshop will be posted on the Township website.
Collaborate	
Charrettes	A summary and/or photos of the charrette will be posted on the Township website.
Citizen Advisory Groups	Meeting minutes will be posted on the Township website.
Committees	Summaries of the committee's policy recommendations will be posted on the Township website.

FUTURE INITIATIVES

Consolidate social media

Van Buren Township currently has numerous social media accounts representing various departments. In the future, the Township would like to consolidate the numerous accounts into one unified social media presence to engage with the community in a more streamlined way.

Fully implement communication toolbox

The communication toolbox in this plan contains both strategies currently in use and those which the Township would like to use. In the future, the Township would like to take advantage of the numerous tools available in this guide by fully implementing the communication toolbox.

Encourage staff training on public participation

Township staff frequently attend various professional development opportunities. The implementation of this plan should encourage staff to expand their attendance of training opportunities to those which teach how to facilitate greater public participation in Van Buren Township.

This plan is meant to be continuously evaluated and updated according to its effectiveness and community feedback. To do so, the Township utilizes two documents: An Internal Public Participation Evaluation and a Community Event Satisfaction Survey. Both are included in the appendix to this plan.

Van Buren Township strives to utilize public participation in its planning efforts in order to guide the Township in a direction supported by community members. This plan equips the Township to proactively seek public input and make Van Buren Township an even better community.

Internal Public Participation Evaluation
Type of Public Participation: Date:
How was the event advertised?
Where was the event held?
Who facilitated/completed the event?
How many people attended? What groups did we miss?
Were our engagement techniques right for the audience? Did we get the right information?
Are there ways this could be improved for future events?

Community Event Satisfaction Survey

Date:

What event did you attend today?

How did you hear about this event?

Was this event held at a convenient location and time?

Were you able to get the information you needed?

Are you glad you came to this event? What did you like about it? Would you improve it in any way?

Contact Information for Key Stakeholders

- **Belleville Area Chamber of Commerce**
248 Main Street
Belleville, MI 48111
(734) 697-7151
info@bellevilleareachamber.org
- **Belleville Downtown Development Authority**
6 Main Street
Belleville, MI 48111
(734) 646-0504
dda@belleville.mi.us
- **City of Belleville**
6 Main Street
Belleville, MI 48111
(734) 697-9323
- **Detroit Region Aerotropolis**
11895 South Wayne Road, Suite 101A
Romulus, MI 48174
(734) 992-2286
Email through their website: www.detroitaero.org
- **Huron-Clinton Metro Parks**
13000 High Ridge Drive
Brighton, MI 48114
(810) 227-2757
Email through their website: www.metroparks.com
- **Sumpter Township**
23480 Sumpter Road
Belleville, MI 48111
(734) 461-6201
Email through their website: sumptertwp.com
- **The Arc of Western Wayne County**
2257 South Wayne Road
Westland, MI 48186
(734) 729-9100
info@thearcww.org

- **Van Buren Public Schools**
555 West Columbia Avenue
Belleville, MI 48111
(734) 697-9123
Emails for specific people available on their website: www.vanburenschools.net

- **Van Buren Township Downtown Development Authority**
46425 Tyler Road
Van Buren Township, MI 48111
(734) 699-8941
Email through their website: vanburendda.com

- **Wayne County Department of Public Services**
400 Monroe
Detroit, MI 48226
Email through their website: www.waynecounty.com
 - **Drain Maintenance**
(734) 326-4500
 - **Road Maintenance**
(734) 955-2290
 - **Wastewater and Stormwater Operations**
(734) 285-5500

- **Wayne County Airport Authority**
11050 Rogell Drive, Building 602
Detroit, MI 48242
(734) 247-7678
Email through their website: www.metroairport.com

- **Wayne County Community College District- Ted Scott Campus**
9555 Haggerty Road
Van Buren Township, MI 48111
(734) 699-7008
No email address available

- **Wayne County Land Bank**
500 Griswold, Suite 2800
Detroit, MI 48226
(313) 967-3669
wclbinquiries@waynecounty.com
- **Willow Run Airport**
801 Willow Run Airport
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
(734) 485-6666
willowrunairportinfo@wcaa.us