

City of Newaygo Public Participation Plan



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I. Introduction

The City of Newaygo began its' Public Participation Strategy in October of 2017 with the launch of the *I AmNewaygo!* Public Participation Forum. *I AmNewaygo!* was created through the Newaygo Economic Development Organization (NEDO) and the office of the Economic and Community Development Coordinator.

Today, the City's public engagement process provides clear input to the City from its' citizens and other stakeholders. This process is designed to:

- Celebrate success
- Shine light on areas in need of improvement
- Leave behind a strong culture of public involvement despite present or future municipal turnover.

II. Stakeholders:

What is a stakeholder?

Stakeholders can be internal or external to an organization. Internal stakeholders are people whose interest in a company comes through a direct



relationship, such as employment, ownership, or investment. External stakeholders are those who do not directly work with a company but are affected somehow by the actions and outcomes of the business. Suppliers, creditors, and public groups are all considered external stakeholders.

Stake holders that are associated with the City of Newaygo:

- Newaygo City Residents
- Rent or Own Property in the City Limits
- River Country Chamber of Commerce
- Veterans Administration
- Low-moderate income (LMI) persons
- Local Officials on all Boards
- Newaygo small business owners
- Newaygo’s largest Employers
- Newaygo Principal Shopping District
- Local brokers and Real Estate Professionals
- Neighborhood groups
- Adjacent Townships
- Potential investors
- Public employees (police, fire, health, education)
- Faith-based organizations and local churches.
- Senior groups and Care Facilities
- Healthcare Providers.
- Students and Teachers.
- Young professionals and new business owners.
- Newspapers and local online Media.

All stakeholders listed above are actively encouraged to attend City Council, Planning Commission, and NEDO Board meetings, as well as *IAmNewaygo!* public engagement meetings. Many ideas are discussed at these meetings. These ideas often include key development site strategy, parks and recreation planning, environmental projects, recommended zoning amendments, capital improvement planning, Master Plan enhancements, civic and municipal projects and updates, State/Federal funded projects, corridor improvement planning, housing needs, downtown development concepts, and more.



III. **The underlying principles of Newaygo’s public engagement include:**

Advocacy:

The City of Newaygo is looking for advocacy and support on particular topics. The City of Newaygo has a strong desire to hear from its stakeholders while advocating for best practices.

Inclusion:

Newaygo’s future needs to be designed using an intentional, inclusive process. Newaygo’s physical design will reflect the needs and desires of its stakeholders.

Communication and Feedback:

Through various means, our public engagement process provides clear communication and recommendations to the City of Newaygo on all sides of an initiative, specific topic, or project. These recommendations are designed for inclusion in City plans, policies, laws, and corresponding expenditures.

IV. **Transparency and Accountability. How we share information:**

City activities, as well as other impactful initiatives, are placed on the City of Newaygo’s web site, relevant posts made on Facebook, as well as presentations in person at City Board meetings. If deemed appropriate, direct mailers are sometimes used to disseminate information or notified interested parties of key happenings.

Public Engagement Impact:

The City of Newaygo has enjoyed active, diverse stakeholder participation since 2017, having received public feedback in a variety of stimulating and relevant



venues. These venues are selected based on our desire to engage and immerse our stakeholders in the topics being discussed whenever possible.

V. Communication Toolbox:

Venues and Engagement Efforts						
	Master Plan	Zoning Amendments	Environmental Projects	CIP planning	Parks and Recreation Planning	Major Development
Preapplication meetings		Recommended				Required
Surveys	Recommended	Optional	Optional	Optional	Recommended	
Open House meetings			Recommended			Recommended
Charrettes	Recommended	Optional			Optional	
Walking Tours					Recommended	
1:1 Interviews	Optional		Optional			Recommended
Focus Groups	Recommended		Optional		Optional	
Local events						Recommended
News, Media	Required	Required	Recommended		Recommended	Recommended
Public Hearing	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	For PUD and SLU.

Recommended
Optional
Required



VI. Outreach

The following methods are often used to inform the public of key happenings, resources available, public meetings, successes to celebrate, or other important information. These methods periodically result in greater involvement by stakeholders when the information is relevant and inspires their interest to attend a meeting, offer feedback, or seek more information. There are many means for individuals to connect or communicate with the City such as email, website contact form, phone, fax, mail, in-person conversations, public comment periods at meetings, and social media.

- Website posting
- Social media posting
- Newspaper posting
- Flier posting (city hall, churches, workplaces, community centers, social clubs, local coffee shops)
- Announcements at City board meetings (Council, Planning, TIFA, NEDO, PSD)
- Post card or letter mailings
- Announcements on water bills
- Inserts with city tax bills
- Local cable notification
- Braille postings (accommodate ADA requirements)

VII. Additional Outreach

The following are some example public participation methods that are more focused on education and collaborative visioning. *The City of Newaygo will consider these outreach methods on a case-by-case basis:*

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 put them in mail boxes. As with most public input efforts, it is best to vary the delivery method (mailed, handed out, electronic) and include bilingual language if applicable in your community.

One-on-one interviews:

Interviews are a great way to get specifics on a topic. In the stakeholder section of the strategy, specific community leaders may have been identified, making them ideal candidates for an interview. Some communities have individuals that are very vocal about issues in the community. 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.

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.

VIII. Sharing Results

Municipalities have many venues of communication: television, newsletters, the municipal website, social media, news outlets, bulletin boards, etc. The appropriate venue to communicate, who is responsible for this communication, and how soon after the public participation event are all decided on a case-by-case basis. The means will vary depending on the scope and subject matter. The following are examples of ways Newaygo communicates results to the public:

- ***Public meetings:*** All meetings are posted on the City’s website calendar of events and other places as required by law. Depending on the circumstances of the information to share and how widely in needs to be disseminated, various



outreach methods that were outlined above will be utilized. Also, minutes of meetings are posted in a timely manner as required by statute.

- **Surveys:** Surveys will be compiled within a reasonable amount of time. Sometimes it is possible to identify a date when data will be available and state it in the notice of survey. The results will be posted online and available as a hard copy at city hall.
- **Community workshops/charrettes:** A person is charged with taking notes during community workshops and charrettes. These notes will be posted online in a timely manner. In addition, the results of these events will be communicated in a wrap up community meeting. Additional information can be incorporated into the appendix of adopted plans.
- **City website/Social media/hard copies:** The City's website acts as a clearing house of information. It is a primary place for stakeholders to seek information on important community items, events, or information. It is typically the location of the greatest depth of information regarding a topic. Social media is used to supplement or notify people of what is available in greater depth on the City's website. If a person prefers to look at information in a hard copy format, they are often available at city hall.

IX. Annual review of Public Participation Strategy

This document is intended to be a living document that can adapt to changes in technology and best meet the needs of residents. Therefore, this strategy is reviewed annually, and significant public engagement activities will be reported via the annual planning commission report. Methods that have been ineffective will be reviewed and adjusted for greater effectiveness. The results will identify strengths and weaknesses and allow staff to maximize outreach methods. This feedback loop will create a continuous review process that enables officials to make improvements to strategy.

X. Inclusivity:

The city of Newaygo is committed to being inclusive when it comes to public outreach and making sure all voices are heard. Some practices Newaygo will continue to work on are:

Involve all generations

Vibrant communities are places where young people and older adults are included in all aspects of community life. That includes being involved in making the changes they want to see in their community.

Ensure diversity

People of all income levels share the benefits of safe, affordable, accessible housing and transportation options. People of all ethnicities, races and cultures share the benefits of accessible, inviting parks and green spaces. People of all genders enjoy the benefits to health and well-being of having access to quality health services and community supports. When people don't know about community projects or when they don't feel welcome, they likely won't benefit. If people who are traditionally excluded from community involvement are involved with the effort—especially the implementation effort—it will encourage other members to participate in the work as well.

