

# City of St. Ignace Public Participation Plan



Approved by the St. Ignace City Planning Commission September 10, 2019

This policy was developed by the St. Ignace Planning Commission and The Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning & Development Commission through the support of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation Redevelopment Ready Communities Program



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# Participation Goals & Objectives

A Public Communications Strategy will help meet the goals and objectives of the City of St. Ignace Master Plan, provide transparency to the goals and actions of the government, and engage the public in the planning process. The City of St. Ignace is dedicated to fostering democratic participation, reflecting the goals and desires of the community, and responsibly guiding the City's future growth.

This Plan will create consistency in public outreach as additional plans are developed, ordinances updated and changed, and as the City goes about the general business of governing. Citizens will know both what to expect from the City in terms of engagement and also that their voice can help shape the community.

A written policy will help City Hall communicate the daily functions of the local government, and provide guidance on outreach for less common events, such as a master plan, zoning ordinance, or legal ordinance update. Each of these purposes and circumstances will require tailored methods for effective outreach from each of the City departments. The City is eager to meet the standards laid out below, and exceed them, particularly when matters of particular public interest arise. To this point, 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.

## Goals:

1. The City will work to ensure that its developments, policies, and outreach are inclusive of all citizens.
2. This policy will increase transparency and accountability and ensure that voters have accurate information about how things happen in addition to what is happening.
3. The policy will increase the number of people participating in City government.
4. By demonstrating to citizens that their input makes a difference, trust and interest in local government will increase.
5. The City will develop an organization for administering and coordinating with volunteer efforts.
6. This City will improve their on-line presence through the website and social media, the City will also develop a social media policy.
7. Better communication and public participation policy will ensure that City officials, employees, and committee members are fulfilling expectations. At the same time, clarifying what tasks and indicatives are led by the City, and which ones are led by other organizations. There is overlap, but a lack of clarity can create inaccurate understanding in the public.

# State Regulations on Public Participation

State of Michigan legislation provides a foundation for public participation in local government. The City, through the work of the City Council and individual boards and commissions, follows and hopes to exceed the requirements delineated in the local and state regulations listed below. These regulations include provisions for the public review process, public participation, and public hearings.

- City Charter
- City Code of Ordinances
- Home Rule City Act (PA 279 of 1909)
- Downtown Development Authority Act (PA 197 of 1975)
- The Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976)
- Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act (PA 381 of 1996)
- The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006)
- The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008)
- Other relevant local, State and Federal legislation

## Key Stakeholders

Our community is made up of individuals from a variety of walks of life. To ensure that all voices are heard and that all citizens can understand policies and practices, and receive services, the communication strategies in this plan will consider how to best reach persons with diverse schedules, abilities, and interests.

The City has partnered on many initiatives with community groups and neighboring governments. Sustained communication and partnerships are essential to the future growth and prosperity of our community. These organizations include, but are not limited to:

- Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts
- Chippewa/Mackinac/Luce Conservation District
- The Coast Guard
- Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning & Development
- Little Traverse Conservancy
- Local Church Groups
- Kiwanis International
- Mackinac County Board of Commissioners
- Mackinac Economic Alliance
- Masons, St Ignace Lodge No. 369
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Michigan State University Extension Service
- Moran Township Board
- National Parks Service
- North Country Trail Association
- Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians
- The St. Ignace Area Hockey Association
- St. Ignace Area Schools
- St. Ignace Business Association
- St. Ignace Chamber of Commerce
- St. Ignace Community Foundation
- St. Ignace Community Foundation's Youth Advisory Committee
- St. Ignace Lion's Club
- St. Ignace Moose Lodge #999
- St. Ignace Township Board
- St. Ignace Visitor's Bureau
- Sports Booster Clubs
- U.S. Forest Service
- Other Interest Groups
- Other Community Groups

When development or other targeted activities are taking place, locally concerned neighbors and businesses will be notified directly.

# The Communication Toolbox & Communicating Results

These tools help achieve the goals of informing and engaging the residents, organizations, and businesses of St. Ignace, the results of each of these tools can be measured and reported back to the public in a variety of ways. Engaging the public at the start of a plan update or development project increases transparency, fosters relationship and community buy-in, and ensures development that meets the community's needs and desires.

Each of the tools delineated below has corresponding methods for reporting the input garnered back to the public. This reporting should be done as individual plans and projects progress.

| <u>Tools</u>   | <u>How the Results Will Be Communicated</u>  |
|--|--|
| <u>Website</u><br>City Council meeting announcements, packets, agendas, and minutes are now posted on the website, <a href="http://www.cityofstignace.com/">http://www.cityofstignace.com/</a> . The website also has contact information, the Code of Ordinances, permits and forms, public notices and planning documents. | The posting of relevant information to plan and development projects on the website, as well as records of relevant meetings will be documented. |
| <u>Traditional Media</u><br>At various times, the City will issue press releases and information for articles to various media outlets, including regional print newspapers, online news sources, and/or local cable news, specifically, the St. Ignace News, and 7 & 4 Cable News and local radio stations.                 | Copies of press releases and public notices sent out by the City to traditional media sources will be documented.                                |
| <u>City Hall</u><br>Announcements can be made during meetings, and public notices posted on City Hall property as a means of informing committee members and the public.   | These announcements will be documented through the same medium(s) as the meetings.   |
| <u>Partner Networks</u><br>Public bulletin boards and communications shared with organizational newsletters and bulletins can be another effective way to inform the public of events and meetings.  | Copies of communications sent to partner networks will be documented.  |
| <u>Social Media</u><br>The Recreation Department currently uses Facebook to announce meetings (and cancelations), events, etc. Staff responds to comments made on posts. Information on the City page is shareable to unofficial pages as well.  | Social media sites retain posts and responses, so they will remain accessible to the public.   |

|   |   |
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| <b><u>Public Hearings</u></b><br><b>Public attendance at meetings is encouraged through meeting announcements and is formally solicited during the scheduled public comment per the meeting and hearing agendas.</b>  | Feedback and comments submitted at hearing and meetings are through the same medium(s) as the meetings.                               |
| <b><u>Open Houses, Community Workshops, Charrettes, and Focus Groups</u></b><br><b>These formats allow for direct, two-way communication between the City and the public. These events provide an avenue for the public to directly contribute to the development of plans and development proposals.</b> | Public input from events will be reported in the appendixes of plans, which should be produced for public review as soon as possible. |
| <b><u>Surveys</u></b><br><b>Paper, digital, and in-person surveys directly solicit data and input from a larger number of people representing a variety of demographic backgrounds. Preselected questions allow for greater specificity and targeted problem solving.</b>                                 | Survey results will be reported in the appendixes of plans, which should be produced for public review as soon as possible.           |
| <b><u>Advisory Committees</u></b><br><b>The City uses advisory committees for specialized aspects of our community to enhance collaboration between city staff and the public.</b>  | Advisory committee meeting agendas and minutes should be made available publicly through the website.                                 |

## Strategies for Outreach

Programs and projects administered or evaluated by the City range from regularly scheduled meetings to high-impact, potentially controversial building and construction projects. In addition to the recommendations spelled out below, all City Departments should evaluate and develop their public outreach efforts using the following questions:

- What is the anticipated level of conflict, concern, controversy, of opportunity on this or related issues?
- How significant are the potential impacts to the public?
- How much do the major stakeholders care about this issue, project, or program?
- What degree of involvement does the public appear to desire?
- What is the potential for public impact on the potential decision or project?
- How significant are the potential benefits of involving the public?
- How serious are the potential ramifications of NOT involving the public?
- What level of public participation does the City Council desire or expect?
- What is the possibility that the media will become interested?
- What is the probable level of difficulty in solving the problem or advancing the project?

## MEETINGS:

The public meetings of the City Council and the authorities and commissions shall take place in a barrier-free and centrally located building, such as St. Ignace City Hall. Meetings may also be held in barrier-free neighborhood locations.

In addition to regular meetings, 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. Hearings will be advertised using more than one method. Notification methods may be adjusted according to the needs of the meeting, and can use any of the following methods:

- Press release
- Newspaper notice
- Radio announcements
- Paper posting in public place
- Website, Facebook or other social media post

### City Council

Meeting advertisement and communications

The following methods are used to advertise the public meetings of the City Council: Posted notice at City Hall, notice in the St. Ignace News, and meeting dates posted on the City website.

City Council meetings welcome public attendance. At the beginning of the meeting, attendees can indicate that they want to speak about a particular agenda item, and at the end of the meeting there is also time for general public comment.

The meetings are recorded, and minutes can be found on the City website.

### Appointed Commissions and Committees

Other relevant boards and commissions that hold meetings open to the public include:

- |                                  |                          |                           |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Ambulance Board                | • Finance Committee      | • Recreation Committee    |
| • District Library               | • Golf Course Committee  | • Street Committee        |
| • Board of Trustees              | • Negotiations Committee | • Zoning Board of Appeals |
| • Downtown Development Authority | • Planning Commission    |                           |
| • Fire Authority                 |                          |                           |



Public hearings will be held according to the individual board and commission bylaws. Any public hearings will be noticed as required in advance of the meeting. All public meetings will produce at a minimum a synopsis or meeting minutes. Additional reporting will occur when necessary and appear in the City Council consent agendas.

## **PLANS AND DOCUMENTS**

### **Plan Adoption**

The City shall follow, at a minimum, the provisions of the State legislation for the adoption of planning documents; many of these provisions can be found in the legislation listed above, for example, a Downtown Development Plan. The Master Plan updates in particular should solicit public involvement as widely as possible. Additional guidance can be found in state and federal guidelines, for example, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources published guidelines for the development of Recreation Plans, including public outreach.

Public input should form the basis of plan development, and often should be preceded by public education efforts. Education and input can be achieved by the following methods:

- Media outreach
- Open houses
- Community Workshops
- Charrettes
- Surveys- paper and digital
- Focus Groups

All plans should be reviewed during a public comment period in advance of being approved by the City Council or relevant commission, board or committee. Public comment periods can be advertised using the same or similar methods as public hearings.

### **Capital Improvement Plan**

The Planning Commission updates and recommends the Capital Improvement Plan to the City Council every year. In addition to input from departments and committees, the public has an opportunity to comment on the CIP's development. The City Council will hold a public hearing for the plan's adoption and post the plan on the City's website.

Additional methods of communication and public outreach may be used in the review and adoption process of all these plans.

## ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATES

The City shall follow, at a minimum, the provisions of the State legislation regarding Zoning Ordinance updates. In addition to protecting public welfare, the Zoning Ordinance should reflect the vision outlined in the Master Plan. Updates, amendments and waivers should all take into account the Master Plan vision, as well as input from neighbors and related organizations.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Effective and transparent communication may prevent undue controversy surrounding developments. Local and State regulations set the minimum requirements for reviewing proposed projects, planning and zoning applications, and permitting. In addition to required postings for public hearings in front of the Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Commission, or City Council, proposed high-impact developments may also be presented to the public through open houses, mailings to neighbors and/or related organizations, and/or press releases.

## CITY BUDGET AND PUBLIC SERVICES

One goal of this plan is to provide citizens and residents with clarity regarding what exactly the City does and how their tax dollars are spent.

Public Participation Matrix As stated previously throughout this section, the various outreach strategies have a multitude of different uses and applications. Some processes 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.

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

# Evaluating the Effectiveness of Participation Plans

In addition to periodically reviewing this policy itself, the City will ensure the strategies outlined above are effective in achieving the stated goals by:

- Reviewing, publishing, responding to survey responses
- Publicly displaying the results of these efforts including sign-in sheets, post-meeting surveys, etc. on the City website
- Annual meeting of City departments with visioning session, public input and inform other departments

Documentation will be the responsibility of the relevant department head. Materials will be submitted to the City Manager, who will oversee posting results to the City website.

As projects reach completion, City staff and department heads should review the public participation and assess how effective their efforts have been. Staff should keep records of the date, time and place of meetings and events, as well as who facilitated the event and how many members of the public attended. They should also assess and record if any particular group was over or under represented and any ideas they have for improving outreach in the future.

This survey should be made available at public events and meetings. Some organizers may wish to encourage survey completion with a prize, drawing, or other incentive.

|   |
|---|
| <b>Community<br/>Event Survey</b>   |
| <b>Date of Event:</b>   |
| <b>Type of Event:</b><br><input type="radio"/> Council Meeting<br><input type="radio"/> Planning Commission Meeting<br><input type="radio"/> Other _____  |
| <b>How did you hear about this event?</b><br><input type="radio"/> City Website<br><input type="radio"/> Social Media<br><input type="radio"/> St. Ignace News<br><input type="radio"/> Public Announcement<br><input type="radio"/> Local Radio<br><input type="radio"/> Other _____ |
| <b>Was this event held at a convenient place and time? (1 = not at all, 5= very much)</b><br><input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5  |
| <b>Are you glad you came to this event? (1 = not at all, 5= very much)</b><br><input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5   |
| <b>Would you improve this event in any way? If so, how?</b><br><input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes _____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____   |