



# Village of Nashville Public Participation Plan



## OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

Engaging citizens through a planning process is crucial to the success of this plan. Soliciting input throughout the duration of the process contributes to a greater public understanding of the various complexities involved in many community projects and also provides greater transparency in local government operations. Solicitation and consideration of community input by Village officials enhances the public's understanding of their ability and responsibility to affect the future of the community. As key facilitators in the Village's decision-making process, the public officials and administrators of the Village of Nashville understand the significance of public participation.

In order to effectively engage the public, there needs to be an explicit plan of action which outlines the purpose and process used in soliciting input from the public. Creating a public participation plan ("P3" as referred to by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Communities program) will allow the Village to thoughtfully engage the public during major planning, zoning and development projects and retain institutional knowledge over time. Moreover, by documenting and analyzing information on participation efforts, the Village of Nashville will be able to more objectively assess its efforts and adjust accordingly thereby creating a dynamic and effective set of best practices the Village may consult for future uses.

The Village of Nashville has developed this document to help guide decisions for formulating public information gathering processes during planning and development projects and the application of best case practices. This document contains a series of policies and procedures for public involvement and outreach for tasks such as: master plan updates, zoning ordinance and map updates, capital improvement project planning and review, major development projects (Planned Unit Developments, special land uses, or other), and development projects involving publicly-owned properties.

Public engagement is a not a "one size fits all" exercise. Certain strategies are more appropriate in some circumstances than others, and a successful practice in one situation may not be as successful in another. 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.

The Village will consider new methods of communication and engagement as they become available, and update this guide as needed. The public participation actions described throughout this guide as needed. The public participation actions described throughout this guide do not preclude additional public involvement or engagement efforts. In circumstances when the Village consults with a third party entity, that entity shall adhere to the provisions of this guide, if applicable.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOALS

1. Solicit proactive and inclusionary public participation techniques in key phases of the master planning and comprehensive planning process
2. Seek broad representative involvement and utilize effective and equitable avenues for distributing information and receiving comments.
3. Conduct all aspects of citizen participation in an open and timely manner, with freedom of access to the participation process for all interested persons.
4. Foster a cycle of seeing public input and public review of results.
5. Provide educational materials and design participation initiatives that will support and encourage effective participation.
6. Maintain and develop staff expertise in all aspects of participation.
7. Support and encourage continuous improvement in the methods used to meet the public need for information and involvement.
8. Record results of public engagement and recount a summary of the results back to the public.
9. Encourage Developers to Engage the Community.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Basic requirements for public participation are mandated in state and federal laws for certain public projects and development reviews. The Village, through the work of Village Council and the various boards and commissions which serve at its pleasure, shall follow the local and state regulations listed below. These regulations include provisions for the public review process, public participation and public hearings:

- [General Law Village Act \(PA 3 of 1895\)](#)
- [Village Ordinances](#)
- [The Michigan Open Meetings Act \(PA 267 of 1976\)](#)
- [The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act \(PA 110 of 2006\)](#)
- [The Michigan Planning Enabling Act \(PA 33 of 2008\)](#)
- [Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act \(PA 381 of 1996\)](#)
- Other relevant Local and State legislation



## 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. Different groups of stakeholders may be engaged in each of the planning and development review processes dependent upon the nature of the project or plan, level of community interest, and the potential impact of the project. Local, state and federal organizations from both the public and private sectors assist and enhance the Village's decision-making process through their input. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Village Council
- Village Boards and Commissions
- Residents
- Barry County Chamber of Commerce
- Barry County
- Community Organizations
- Commercial Business owners
- Castleton Township
- Maple Grove Township
- Taxing jurisdictions
- Potential investors & developers
- Senior citizens
- Students and student groups
- Environmental groups
- Maple Valley Schools
- Relevant state agencies
- Other relevant stakeholders



The Village is dedicated to ensuring the public is notified and involved in its decision-making processes. More effort is needed to reach beyond the public meeting as many residents will simply ever attend a meeting even if they are personally invited. Technology and information sharing through the Village website helps in this realm. While there are citizens who attend meetings periodically, the Village does not systematically analyze the data it collects on the citizens that attend public meetings or the nature of the comments that are made. Additionally, there are not specific demographic characteristics known about citizen participation. The Village of Nashville shall work to identify these stakeholders and make a concerted effort at bringing them into the decision-making process.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Village provides Nashville residents and stakeholders with numerous opportunities to get involved in the planning, review and approval process for planning processes.

- Village Council
- Boards and Commissions
- Public Meetings
- Public Comments
- Public Hearings

### VILLAGE COUNCIL.

The Village Council is the legislative and policy-making body for the Village government. Six Council trustees are elected at large for staggered two-year and four-year terms and the Council President is elected to a four-year term. The Council is responsible for making policy decisions for the Village, passing the budget and has final approval of the Master Plan, Village Ordinances and other documents pertaining to the Village.

### BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

The Village encourages citizen participation in local government planning and policy decisions. Therefore, all citizens are invited to apply for appointments to the Village's boards and commissions. These groups provide recommendations to the Village Council on a variety of topics and issues. The members of the boards and commissions help to analyze options and influence important decisions on behalf of the community.

In general, depending on the nature and location of the project, many of the boards and commissions may review a proposed plan or land use project.

Each advisory board or commission makes recommendations to the Village Council based on the scope of its particular service area. The Village Council is responsible for making the final decisions on most issues or topics, but it will look to these groups for advice, background information and analysis. As the elected body, the Village Council has discretion to accept advice in full, in part or not at all. Certain boards and commissions have an additional administrative role. This means that they are permitted or required by charter, statute or ordinance to conduct formal reviews and issue administrative decisions. These decisions are then sent to the Village Council as official recommendations.

The most relevant authorities and commissions in the Village of Nashville for the planning and development review process are the Planning Commission Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The Village encourages community members interested in serving their community through active civic engagement to apply for openings on these boards and commissions. The Village regularly informs the community of the existing vacancies on the boards and commissions. In this regard, the Village's avenues of communication include website postings, announcements at

Village Council meetings, social media and other methods. Visit <http://www.nashvillemi.us> for a complete list of boards and commissions in the Village of Nashville and their responsibilities.

It should be noted that the Village’s authorities and commissions meet regularly and provide additional opportunities for public participation in the planning and development review process. These are public meetings and allow for public comments from any interested stakeholder.

#### PUBLIC MEETINGS

In addition to conformance to the open Meetings Act, meeting agendas and packets of the Village Council, Planning Commission and other boards and commissions should be made available on the Village’s website in advance of the meeting. The meeting agenda and packet are sent, by e-mail and placed in Member’s mailboxes at the Village Office. Meeting minutes of the Village Council and the Village’s boards and commissions are posted on the Village’s website once approved.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Opportunities for public comment shall be available at any meeting of the Village Council or Village’s boards and commissions in accordance with the provisions in the boards and commission’s bylaws and other operating policies. The meeting agenda allows for public comments under a ‘Public Comment’ section. The participation of interested persons and their input shall be recorded in the meeting minutes. Approved meeting minutes, which include the outcome of the public participation, are made available to the public through various methods, including being posted on the Village’s website.

#### PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Village Council, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals hold public hearings when required by local and State statute or when otherwise prudent to provide the opportunity for public comment on specific topics. Notice of all public hearings are made at least 15 days before the hearing to give adequate time for the public to plan and prepare. All residents are encouraged to participate. Notifications are published in a newspaper of general circulation, the Village website, the Village Office, and mailed to any property owner within 300 feet of the subject property.



## PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESSES

The Village's goal is to follow a systematic plan for public engagement in the development of Village policy. In helping citizens and other stakeholders to be more involved in the creation process and not simply a reaction to a finished product, the sooner the public is involved, the better. Proactively engaging stakeholders fosters a sense of ownership and prevents delays caused by unforeseen issues. This section outlines how the community has and will be engaged depending on the input sought situation.

### MASTER PLAN UPDATE

As the visionary policy document for the future development in the Village, the master planning process must use a wide range of public input methods to develop the goals, objectives and strategies for implementation. The Village of Nashville shall follow, at a minimum, the provisions of Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended (the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, M.C.L. 125.3801 et. seq.) for the adoption of a new master plan or of an update to the master plan. The Planning Commission sends a notice to all stakeholders explaining their intention to prepare a plan and request cooperation and comment on the plan.

#### Drafting & Stakeholder Involvement

The Planning Commission and the Village Council begins work on drafting or updating the Master plan. They will involve the public through many of the methods listed in the section below "Community Engagement and Outreach Strategies." The Village encourages the involvement and participation of all stakeholders, including any marginalized groups that may be typically less involved in the planning process. Stakeholder involvement is encouraged from the beginning and the results from such public participation strategies are made available to the community and participants and incorporated as much as is reasonably possible in the drafted plan or plan amendment.

In preparation, studies of existing conditions and probable growth should be done for the basis of the plan. The Planning Commission may utilize information from federal, State, County and municipal officials, departments and agencies having information, maps and data pertinent to the Village. The Village may consult with representatives of adjacent local units of government with respect to their planning so that conflicts in master plans and zoning may be avoided. The Village may cooperate with all departments of the State and federal governments and other public agencies concerned with programs for economic, social and physical development within the planning jurisdiction and seek the maximum coordination of the local unit of government's programs with these agencies.

The Village shall encourage and track the public participation through a variety of means, including minutes, public recording of meetings, comment cards, sign-up sheets and input received verbally, though written correspondence or through website comments and other means as appropriate. The Planning Commission will submit the proposed plan to the Village Council for review and comment. The process of adopting the master plan will not proceed further unless the Village Council approves the proposed plan. The Village Council will act on the proposed plan during a public meeting held in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

If the Village Council approves the proposed plan, it will notify the Planning Commission and the Planning Commission will submit a copy of the proposed plan, for review and comment, to all the units listed in the State enabling law. These entities may submit comments on the proposed plan to the Planning Commission within 63 days after the proposed master plan was submitted to that entity (or 42 days in the case of a master plan update).



#### Public Hearing

Before approving the proposed master plan, the Planning Commission will hold not less than one public hearing on the proposed plan. The hearing will be held after the expiration of the deadline for comment. The Village Clerk 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 Nashville.

#### Decision

The proposed plan must be approved by resolution of the Planning Commission carried by the affirmative votes of not less than 2/3 of the members. Following approval of the proposed master plan, the secretary of the Planning Commission will submit a copy of the plan to the Village Council. After approval of the proposed plan by the Planning Commission, the Village Council can approve or reject the proposed plan. A statement recording the Village Council's approval of the master plan, signed by the Village Clerk, will be included on the inside of the front or back cover of the master plan.

#### ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE

The Zoning Ordinance is a document that reflects the vision of the community by regulating the character and type of development. It is important the public is involved in the adoption of amendments to the zoning map or to specific regulations contained in the text of the zoning ordinance. As each amendment process is unique and not necessarily related to the entire document, the stakeholders may vary to some extent. However, a general process of public outreach will contain early and frequent public input and a continuous facilitation of involvement throughout the decision-making process.



#### Drafting & Stakeholder Involvement

The creation of citizen study groups, ad-hoc committees, or workshop with directly affected property owners is encouraged when tackling more complicated issues. The Village Council may on its own, or upon petition signed by the owners of a majority of the property proposed for rezoning, prepare an ordinance amending or changing the district boundaries or district regulations. The ordinance will be introduced by Village Council and then referred to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation. It may be necessary for the Planning Commission or the Village Council to defer action to one or more subsequent meetings to gather further information or to accommodate additional review and debate.

#### Public Hearing

Prior to submitting its recommendation to the Village Council, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing. The ordinance will be noticed in a newspaper of general distribution in the Village at least 15 days prior to the hearing. The notification will also be sent by mail to the applicant, the owner of the subject property and the owners of property within 300 feet of the subject property. The Village Council will, on receipt of the report of the Planning Commission, set a date for a second public hearing for consideration of the proposed amendment. After the public hearing, the Village Council may choose to approve, deny or table the proposed amendment.

#### Decision

Following adoption of the ordinance to amend the district boundaries or the district regulations, the ordinance will be filed with the Village Clerk and a notice of the ordinance adoption will be published in a newspaper of general circulation in Nashville within 15 days after adoption. The ordinance will take effect seven days after its publication, unless a later effective date is specified by the Village Council or unless a notice of intent to file a petition seeking to submit the ordinance to the electors of the Village for action is filed with the Village Clerk within seven days after publication of the ordinance amendment.

#### CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A capital improvement plan (CIP) is a short-range plan, typically four to ten years that identifies capital projects, a ranking of projects and purchases in order of preference, justification for the project and an explanation of expenses for the project. The Village of Nashville is committed to working with stakeholders to make the best use of public funds. While planning for capital improvements can largely be very technical and difficult to become engaged, Village Council holds a public hearing for the adoption of the CIP plan and posts the plan in an easily accessible location on the Village's website for the public to view.

#### MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

The Village will follow, at a minimum, the provisions of 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 site plans and special use permits, rezoning requests and variance request applications. In many circumstances, the Village Council and its boards and commissions will hold public hearings, noticed in accordance with

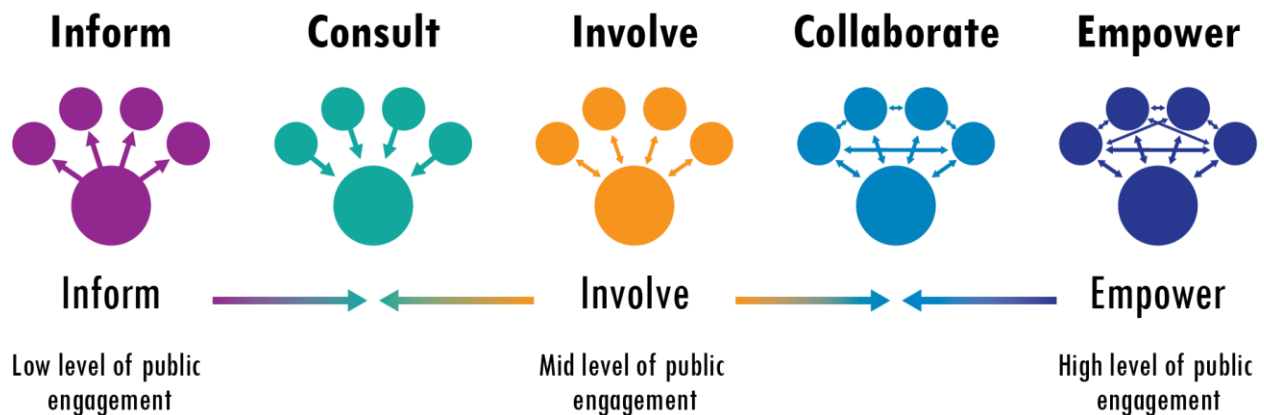
the State legislation and allow for public comment on the proposed development project during its regular meetings. Depending on the nature of project, the community interest, and community’s financial involvement, additional methods of engagement may be used to gather community feedback.

### DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLICLY OWNED PROPERTIES

On several occasions, Village Council may find it beneficial to seed development partners in order to pursue redevelopment of parcels owned by the Village. The development review process may vary based upon the scale and scope of the intended project, the significance of the parcel(s) and the stage in the development process in which the Village sought such a partner. The following describe several common steps in the review process; public participation is encouraged in all the following steps.

In general, the Village will issue the Request for Qualifications or Proposals (RFQ/P) with the intent to initiate and implement a redevelopment project affecting one or more publicly owned parcels in the Village or downtown. For projects of great significance, the Village may wish to gather the opinion of the community regarding the vision, redevelopment scale, character and uses of the parcels under consideration. The appropriate board may organize a review team representing a variety of stakeholders to evaluate the received proposals in response to the RFQ/P. The review team meetings may be open to the public.

The review team will recommend a certain number of firms to the appropriate board for further consideration. The board may hold a public hearing to select a development firm to further pursue the proposed project for the sites under consideration. The appropriate board will act upon the resolution selecting a firm as a posted agenda item during a public meeting. Pursuant to the selection of a development partner, the appropriate board will review and enter into a predevelopment agreement. The development agreement will be approved during a Village Council’s public meeting.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH STRATEGIES

The following methods may be used to gather the community's input on specific development proposals, the community vision for the Master Plan and other planning and zoning documents. The Village may use these various activities to provide additional opportunities for citizens, public interest groups, or other stakeholders to directly participate in the development review process or the creation/amendment of plans and strategies.

The Village shall communicate the results of the public participation methods in a consistent and transparent manner through the appropriate avenues of communication listed previously. More than one method of communication may be used in order to reach a broader audience and the affected persons. Those responsible for organizing the specific community engagement activity may also coordinate the communication of public participations outcomes. The results of any of the methods of engagement and outreach will be included in the report or plan generated based on the information collected during these meetings and support the development review process.



### BASIC ANNOUNCEMENT METHODS FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS

The following methods are used, when possible, to advertise the public meetings of the Village Council, Planning Commission, and other boards and commissions acting as advisory bodies to the Village Council when acting on land use or development applications. Many times, this does not result in involvement of all stakeholders, especially those with visual impairments, non-English speakers, those who are illiterate, youth, individuals with mobility limitations and those who work during the time in which public meetings are commonly held.

- Newspaper posting
- Social Media posting
- Announcements at council meetings
- Posting at Village Hall
- Website posting

The Village will strive to ensure that more than one notification and communication method will be used depending on the specific project and target audience. This list is flexible and can change based on needs and circumstances.

## PROACTIVE PRACTICES

The following are some example public participation methods that are less reactive and more focused on education and collaboration. Many of these methods have been used by the Village and are most successful with strong partnerships with stakeholders.

### Pre-Application Coordination

Prior to submitting an application, or site plan, an applicant may choose to submit a sketch plan or draft plan for review by the Zoning Administrator and/or Planning Commission. The review shall be informal and advisory only and shall not constitute any form of approval or authorization of granting any type of permit. The review shall be done without cost to the applicant and shall be scheduled as an item of business on the Planning Commission's agenda.

### 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 a municipality to administer surveys with partners. For example, schools can send surveys home with children or churches can have them available to fill out. As with most public input efforts, it is best to vary the delivery method (mailed, handed out, electronic) and include bilingual language in certain cases.

### 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 as interactive map exercises. Formal presentations can be given to a large audience and then less formal exchange of information may follow. They provide a more casual and fun setting to encourage participants to think critically and creatively about important issues. Oftentimes open house meetings are a great way to educate the community surrounding a specific topic and hear concerns, questions, and ideas. As noted above, open house venues need to be accessible and approachable for all attendees. Further, volunteers must be available and knowledgeable on a project to encourage feedback from participants. An orientation session is essential prior to commencement.

### Charrettes/Design Workshops

The charrette differs from a workshop because it is a multi-day event where designers and planners work collaboratively. Citizens offer ideas while the charrette team facilitates and observes. This tool may most often be used for specific development projects that involve significant changes to the urban form and require public input on the design layout. The Village may encourage developers to hold charrettes for specific proposed projects with significant community interest.

### Walking Tours

Walking tours allow more candid and casual feedback from participants. 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. 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.

#### Focus Groups

Like interviews, focus groups can help to narrow down concepts or get a specific side of the story from different perspectives. Focus groups can be used to invite multiple stakeholders to the table to gather perspectives and interests of various in one setting.

#### Digital Tools of Communication

Depending on the type of project, information should be incorporated into online sources. Technology offers a unique opportunity to give and receive information to a mass of people. Municipalities can post events, share information on projects and planning and developments processes and even solicit feedback.

### 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 Village is undergoing.

	Master Plan	Zoning Amendments	CIP Planning	Parks and Recreation Planning	Major Developments
Pre-Application Meetings					Recommended
Surveys	Recommended	Optional	Recommended	Recommended	
Open House Meetings and Communication Workshops	Recommended	Optional	Recommended	Recommended	Optional
Charrettes/Design Workshops	Optional			Optional	Optional
Walking Tours	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
One-on-One Interviews	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
Focus Groups	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
Digital Tools of Communication	Recommended	Optional	Optional	Recommended	Recommended

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATING OUTREACH EFFORTS**

The purpose of this section is to ensure the Village is maintaining a presence within the general community and providing stakeholders many and different methods to participate in Village decision-making. Additionally, to ensure the methods of outreach are relevant and being utilized on a regular basis.

### **TRACKING SUCCESS OF OUTREACH EFFORTS**

The Village should take steps to track and record the participation of the public. In regard to open meetings, the participation of interested persons and their input shall be recorded in the minutes. Approved meeting minutes, which include the outcome of the public participation are made available to the public through various methods, including being posted on the Village's website. The success of public participation during public meetings can be measured by counting the number of general public members who attend the meeting, the number of public comments received at each meeting, the number of comments received by the Village Clerk outside of meeting times, special planning meetings and general outreach can also be tracked.

For group meetings such as steering committees, focus groups and community workshops, attendance and number of comments may be tracked. Surveys distributed via paper form, mail or electronically may be tracked by their response rate. The Village may conduct regular surveys that allow response rates to be compared from year to year in addition to survey results. Social media allows the Village to track "likes" on Facebook. This, as well as their messaging capabilities, is a way to track participation and interest from the general public.

### **COMMUNICATING OUTREACH EFFORT RESULTS**

The Village strives to be consistent and transparent with information. The Village's website is the primary source of information including meeting schedules, agendas and minutes. Additionally, the Village may periodically report a summary of special meetings, social media usage or other related planning and development efforts.

### **EVALUATION**

The Village of Nashville will review this Public Participation Plan periodically in order to monitor the effectiveness of the procedures outlined in this document. All public participation efforts will be recorded by the various Village departments and reviewed on a routine basis. Following evaluation of the outputs and outcomes of the Public Participation Plan, the Village may revise these methods to incorporate new and innovative ways to involve the public in the planning decision-making process.