

CITY OF PORTAGE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Objectives

- The City of Portage seeks broad community-wide public participation for matters impacting the future development and redevelopment of the city, such as the Comprehensive Plan update and other community-wide plans and/or sub-area plans.
- The City of Portage evaluates each development or redevelopment project on an individual basis to determine project scope, project limitations, approving body, stakeholders, points of community impact during the decision making process, internal and external resources, and level of appropriate community involvement.
- The City of Portage makes information available in a timely manner to enable interested parties to be involved in decisions at various stages of the review and approval process.
- The City of Portage engages citizens in a transparent manner, making information easy to access for all interested members of the community.
- The City of Portage seeks creative ways to involve a diverse set of community stakeholders in planning, land use, and development decisions.
- The City of Portage uses comments and information received from interested members of the community to make decisions regarding planning, land use, and future development.

Key Stakeholders in the City of Portage

The City of Portage seeks to involve the entire community as “key stakeholders.” Each project is evaluated on an individual basis to ensure inclusion of citizens, business owners, property owners and others that may be impacted by new development and redevelopment within the community. Public participation outreach varies with each project according to the project being reviewed, as well as required public notice in accordance with state statutes and local ordinances.

Key stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Churches
- City boards and commissions
- Health care facilities
- Industrial business owners
- Kalamazoo County Government
- Local residents
- Local schools
- Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Neighborhood groups
- Neighboring communities
- Office and Commercial business owners
- Real estate professionals
- Senior Groups
- Southwest Michigan First
- Utility providers
- Other interested citizens, as identified and appropriate

Public Notice Requirements – Local Ordinances and State Statutes

The following local and state regulations pertain to various planning processes, development and/or redevelopment review projects and must be followed to ensure the required public notice for each respective project is followed, which is also intended to encourage public participation:

- Portage City Charter
- Portage City Code of Ordinances
- Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976)
- Home Rule City Act (PA 279 of 1909)
- Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008)
- Plant Rehabilitation and Industrial Development Districts Act (PA 198 of 1974)
- Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act (PA 381 of 1996, as amended)
- Downtown Development Authority Act (PA 197 of 1975, as amended)
- Local Development Finance Authority Act (PA 281 of 1986, as amended)
- Other applicable local, state, and federal regulation

Planning and Development Review Entities

- City Council: The Portage City Council is composed of seven members. The Mayor, Mayor Pro-Tem and five Councilmembers. For most planning and development review processes (excluding variances and most site plans), City Council is the final approving body.
- Planning Commission: The Planning Commission is a nine-member body. All members are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council. Planning Commissioners review and approve long-term plans for the community, such as the Comprehensive Plan, subarea plans, and the Capital Improvement Plan. The Planning Commission is also responsible for review and recommendation of Zoning Ordinance text amendments and map amendments (rezoning). Most of the Planning Commission's work activity involves development and redevelopment review such as special land use permits, site plan approval, active home occupation permits, building height modifications, and accessory building size approvals. The Planning Commission also reviews and makes recommendations to City Council regarding subdivision plats, site condominiums, and discretionary zoning approvals such as Planned Developments, Commercial Planned Developments, Open Space plans, Office, Technology and Research, among other mixed-use development projects. The Planning Commission may also engage in special projects requested by the City Council, or initiated on its own, with approval by City Council.
- Zoning Board of Appeals: The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) has seven full members and two alternate members. Each member is appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council. When a property owner or occupant cannot meet the zoning ordinance requirements, an application for variance is filed with the ZBA. The ZBA is a quasi-judicial board and all decisions of the ZBA are final. Appeals of decisions of the ZBA may be filed with the Circuit Court.

The following boards meet on an annual basis or more often as-needed in response to a development or redevelopment project that involves the use of specific incentives and/or tax increment financing:

- Downtown Development Authority: The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) consists of nine members appointed by the City Manager with approval of City Council. A majority of the members appointed to the DDA must have interest in property located in the district. The DDA district includes business properties generally along South Westnedge Avenue, extending between Kilgore Road and I-94. The principal purpose of the DDA is to promote economic growth and is a financing entity through which public improvements can be planned and constructed.

- Local Development Finance Authority: The Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA) includes eleven members total: seven members appointed by the City Manager; one member appointed by the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners; one member appointed by Kalamazoo Valley Community College and two members appointed by Portage Public Schools. The authority creates and implements a Development and Tax Increment Financing Plan to promote the growth of the LDFA district including property in the Portage Road and Sprinkle Road industrial corridors, and take steps necessary to implement the plans to the fullest extent possible to create jobs, and promote economic growth.
- Economic Development Corporation/Tax Increment Finance Authority/Brownfield Redevelopment Authority: The Economic Development Corporation / Tax Increment Finance Authority/ Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (EDC/TIFA/BRA) accomplishes economic and community development activities that are specifically authorized by Michigan statutes. The authority is comprised of nine members who are appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the City Council. Three of the members represent Portage Public Schools. The EDC/TIFA/BRA members have also been designated to perform brownfield redevelopment activities as authorized by statute. The authority is a financing entity and, through industrial development bonds and the capture of tax increment revenues, can plan and finance public activities to facilitate business and industrial growth and property redevelopment.

Open Meetings

All meetings of the City Council, boards and commissions shall be open to the public in accordance with the “Open Meetings Act,” PA 267 of 1976 as amended, except closed session meetings as provided for in the Act. Every open meeting must also provide an opportunity for citizen comment. Public notices for open meetings are posted at City Hall as required by the Act. In addition, the dates and times of all City Council, boards and commission meetings are posted to the Portage website at: www.portagemi.gov. The agendas and are available on the city website in advance of all meetings. Meeting minutes are posted to the city website after approved. Finally, City Council, Planning Commission and ZBA meetings can be viewed live on Charter Channel 995 and AT&T channel 99. All meetings can be viewed via live streaming at portagemi.gov/205.

Public Hearings

As noted above, all City Council, board and commission meetings are open meetings. Several planning and development review processes also require a public hearing during the meeting and require public notices prior to the meeting in accordance with the local ordinance and/or state statute relevant to the project. The following processes require a public hearing during the regular meeting that is open to the public.

Planning Commission:

- Zoning map amendments/Rezoning (including discretionary rezoning approvals)¹
- Zoning text amendment¹
- Subdivision plats¹
- Site condominiums¹
- Tentative and conceptual plan amendments for PD, CPD, OTR zoning districts¹
- Comprehensive Plan amendments²
- Special land use permits
- Active home occupations
- Building height modifications

- Accessory buildings in excess of the ground floor living are of the dwelling

ZBA:

- Variance requests
- Text or map interpretations
- Temporary use permits
- Appeals of administrative decisions

DDA, LDFA, EDC/TIFA/BRA:

- Amended Development Plans/Tax Increment Financing Plans¹
- Brownfield Redevelopment Plans¹

¹ These items are recommended to City Council for a public hearing and final action

² Comprehensive Plan amendments do not require a public hearing before Council, but are referred to Council for review. A resolution of approval by City Council is not required by state statute.

Statutes require the above review and approval processes be noticed in a newspaper of general distribution, as well as mailed to neighbors within 300 feet at least 15 days prior to the meeting. The City may increase the mailing distance up to 500 feet for a hearing on a proposed plan that has broader or more significant impact that justifies a more extended notification process than the minimum of 300 feet required by state law. In addition to the above, all public hearing notices are posted to the Legal Notices page of the city website and also from a link on the Community Development Department home page. All meetings are held in a facility accessible to persons with disabilities, and the city will provide reasonable accommodations or services to individuals with disabilities.

Methods for Community Participation

The initial evaluation of each project will determine the level of public outreach for the project. The following are methods that may be used to reach appropriate level of public participation when taking action on land use or development applications. For planning and development projects that have a city-wide impact, the City of Portage will always attempt to use more than one tool or method, depending on the specific project and target audience. This list is flexible and can change based on the needs and circumstances of the project.

Inform – Provide Information

- Printed postings: All public meetings and public hearings will have printed notices available for view on the City Hall lobby board.
- City of Portage website (www.portagemi.gov):
 - Lists public meetings, posts agendas and minutes, and broadcasts meetings of City Council, Planning Commission and ZBA.
 - Notices for Public Hearings are also posted to the Legal Notices page of the city website and from a link on the Community Development Department home page.
 - Lists development applications requiring Planning Commission approval at the time of receipt and posts basic site plan information from the application and a brief status. Planning Commissioners receive an email link each time projects are added to this site.

- The “Connect With Us” page of the city website provides links to the city’s Facebook page, provides Notifications via Portage Alert, Notify Me and RSS Feeds.
- Special website pages are created for community-wide planning projects.
- Cable: Upcoming Council, Board/Commission meetings are also posted to the local cable stations (Charter Channel 995 and AT&T channel 99). City Council, Planning Commission and ZBA meetings are televised on the local cable stations.
- Announcements: All Boards/Commission upcoming meetings are listed on City Council agendas.
- Newspaper: The *Kalamazoo Gazette* is the local newspaper in general circulation. The *Kalamazoo Gazette* is published daily and on-line and delivered on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. Public notices for public hearings are published in the *Kalamazoo Gazette*.
- PORTAGER: Once a month, the city distributes a municipal newsletter containing city news and updates on various planning and development projects. Information on community-wide planning projects will be featured in editions of the PORTAGER throughout the year, as applicable.
- Press releases and Articles: At various times, the city will issue press releases and information for articles to various newspapers and television stations pertaining to community-wide planning projects.

Consult & Involve – Obtain Public Feedback

- Public Meetings and Public Hearings: Public attendance at meetings is strongly supported and allows for an appropriate venue for public input.
- Surveys: Utilizing online and paper surveys allows for the collection of large amounts of data and opinions from the public.
- Community workshops: Issues that require community feedback can benefit from community-wide workshops or focus group meetings.
- Advisory Committees: The city may utilize one or more of its existing advisory committees for specialized aspects of community collaboration between city staff and the public.
- Developer Outreach: Prior to formal submission of the initial application for a major development project such as those subject to public hearings, the City will require a developer to meet with adjacent property owners and others that may be impacted directly by a proposed project. A major development would be projects such as a large housing development like a new subdivision, apartment complex or site condominium, a planned development or a new mixed use or commercial development next to a residential area. The Community Development Director will retain the ability to determine the applicability of this requirement, taking into account the scale of the proposed project, the type of application, and the potential impact to nearby properties, particularly residential neighbors. The City will work with the developer to identify potentially impacted neighbors adjacent or near the development up to the 300 feet from the development.

Communicating Results

The City of Portage will publicly communicate all results of community input on planning and development issues. The city will utilize one or more of the “Inform” methods to relay results back to the public. The City of Portage understands that the Community Engagement Plan will need to be reviewed and updated on a routine basis. This plan will be updated as needed, at a minimum of every 5 years, in conjunction with the city’s Master Plan. Updates to this plan will be drafted by staff, and reviewed and recommended by Planning Commission.

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