



# CITY OF GRAND HAVEN

## Public Participation Plan



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## I. Introduction

Grand Haven is a City that places an emphasis on the wants and needs of the community at large. To ensure that the people of this community are able to have a voice in the planning and development processes of new projects, the City of Grand Haven has implemented this Public Participation Plan, which has been approved by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Communities Program for future use by all staff members and public officials.

The following goals have been formulated to increase the number of ways that members of the community may receive information and shape future developments.

- **The City of Grand Haven encourages public participation in the drafting of each phase of the master plan.** Throughout the process of creating a master plan, the City of Grand Haven will continue its current methods for fostering public participation, while actively seeking new and effective ways for more stakeholders to become involved. The master plan is an important policy that sets the course for the future of the community, so involving stakeholders in the process will enable a plan that matches the interests of our community.
- **The City of Grand Haven will work to increase representation from all stakeholders and residents within the community.** Grand Haven is a diverse community with residents, business owners, and visitors from various walks of life. To ensure that a broad range of thoughts are heard during each development process, the city will continue to provide a variety

of methods for reaching out to all populations with information, while also finding ways to receive their input.

- **The City of Grand Haven will employ effective practices for distributing information and receiving feedback.** In order for municipal processes to remain transparent to the public, providing effective avenues for communication with members of the community is imperative. The City understands that there is not a universal platform for communication that will translate to all situations, so it is important for Grand Haven to continue to utilize a variety of methods in order to expand outreach to all members of the community.
- **The City of Grand Haven will provide educational materials for decision makers and stakeholders.** To create useful and sustainable developments, decision makers must have a working knowledge of land use issues and processes. Public participation also becomes more effective if residents have this same working knowledge of land use. Grand Haven will aim to continue to provide educational resources to the public and appointed officials so that these stakeholders can have an impact on the decision-making process and have the confidence to be able to participate.
- **The City of Grand Haven will continue to seek new methods for community engagement.** In a rapidly changing world with new advancements in technology and communication, it is important for the city to stay up-to-date with new innovations. Grand Haven will seek out new methods of communication in order to continue engaging the public in the future.
- **The City of Grand Haven will maintain records of public engagement and report results back to the public in a timely manner.** To maintain transparency in each planning process, Grand Haven will work towards recording public comments, and will subsequently track the methods used to address these comments. This information will be relayed back to the public once it has been recorded. By recording and tracking the comments and methods used, the people of Grand Haven will be able to see that their ideas have been taken into account during the planning process, and the City will be able to use the recorded information to better evaluate their own methods and processes in the future.

## **II. Stakeholders:**

An effective public engagement effort is one that strives to gather input from a variety of people who have some sort of stake or interest in the community. These people are called stakeholders. The following is a list of stakeholder groups that the City will work to engage in city projects to ensure the outcome meets the needs of the community.

- Voting Residents
- Business Owners
- People who work in Grand Haven
- Visitors and Tourists
- Schools and Students
- Young Professionals looking to live/work in Grand Haven
- Senior Groups
- The Grand Haven Area Chamber of Commerce
- The Grand Haven Main Street Downtown Development Authority
- Civic Boards and Commissions
- Neighborhood groups and authorities
- Local Nonprofit Organizations
- Neighboring Communities (Spring Lake, Ferrysburg, Grand Haven Township, Spring Lake Township)
- Potential investors and donors
- Real estate professionals
- Churches and religious groups
- Social Organizations (the Elks, the Eagles, Rotary, etc.)
- The Coast Guard Festival
- Hospitals and medical clinics

### **III. The underlying principles of Grand Haven include:**

#### ***Advocacy:***

The City of Grand Haven has a strong desire to hear from its stakeholders while advocating for best practices.

#### ***Inclusion:***

Grand Haven's future needs to be designed using an intentional, inclusive process. The City's physical design will reflect the needs and desires of its stakeholders.

#### ***Communication and Feedback:***

*The Public Participation Plan* will provide comprehensive findings and clear communications and recommendations to the City of Grand Haven 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:**

If an individual is unable to attend an in-person meeting or feedback session, the City of Grand Haven will work to highlight major pieces of information and themes from these events through a myriad of public postings.

**Public Meetings.** All city council meetings will be broadcasted on Grand Haven's local radio station, 103.5 WAWL, and it will be live streamed on Facebook and YouTube. Other City boards and commission meetings will be live streamed on Facebook. For all council, boards, and commissions meetings, formal meeting minutes will be recorded and posted on the City's website. An infographic is developed following each City Council meeting which highlights key actions taken place at the meeting. This infographic is posted to the City's social media accounts.

**Community Workshops and Charrettes.** A city staff member will be responsible for attending and taking notes at these events. These notes will be posted on the City's website and social media accounts for the public's viewing.

**Social Media Posts.** The City will utilize Facebook to post information about city meetings and engagement events. Although the community can comment on posts, those comments will not be formally monitored by City staff.

## **V. Basic Outreach**

The following methods are often used to advertise public meetings. It should be noted that these methods may have limited effectiveness for stakeholders with visual impairments, non-English speakers, the illiterate, and youth.

- Newspaper posting
- Website posting
- Social Media posting
- Flier posting (community hall, churches, workplaces, community centers, social clubs, local coffee shops)
- Announcements at council meeting
- Postcard mailings
- Attachments to water bills
- Public hearing yard signs

## **VI. Proactive Outreach**

The following are some public participation methods that are focused on education and collaborative visioning rather than reactive. Grand Haven Staff will consider these using 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 the community.

**One-on-one interviews:**

Interviews are a great way to get specific feedback on a topic. Stakeholders are ideal candidates for an interview. Some stakeholder groups 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 the community. They are perfect for underrepresented groups, or groups that may have specific needs in a community, such as students or seniors. This is an opportunity for the City to draw from the expertise of residents, perhaps organizing a standing committee of real estate professionals, business owners and brokers to offer feedback.

**Piggyback Events:**

The City can share information with the community by attending existing community events where people are already gathered, such Farmer's Market days, the Bolt Park Market, and other open houses and events sponsored by the City or other community organization. This approach is convenient for participants and it is likely the city can reach stakeholders that may not traditionally participate in a city engagement event.

## **VII. Sharing Results**

Municipalities have many venues of communication: television, newsletters, the municipal website, social media, etc. The appropriate venue to communicate, identify who is responsible for this communication, and how soon after the public participation event are all described in this section. There is no one best way of communicating. The following are examples of ways Grand Haven can share public feedback:

**Public meetings:** The meetings will be live streamed on the City's Facebook page. Also, the City will post meeting minutes online.

**Surveys:** Survey results will be compiled and the results will be posted online.

**Community workshops/charrettes:** City staff will be charged with taking notes during community workshops and charrettes. These notes will be posted on the City's website and project website, as applicable. 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.

**The Grand Haven Tribune:** This is the local area newspaper. New copies are printed daily and it is also available online to subscribers.

**The City of Grand Haven Website [www.grandhaven.org](http://www.grandhaven.org):** The website posts all civic meeting times and dates, agendas and meeting minutes for all civic meetings. The website also provides all public documents (city charter, code of ordinances, master plan, etc.) and applications to join a local board or commission. Contact information for all municipal workers is also listed.

**Press Releases:** Grand Haven distributes short news releases to a variety of media outlets around the greater Grand Haven area. These releases are published in newspapers and websites, and are also broadcasted on television and the radio.

**Grand Haven Radio 103.5 WAWL:** This radio station makes announcements on behalf of the City, and also broadcasts each city council meeting.

**Printed Fliers:** The City of Grand Haven utilizes three kiosks located in its downtown, as well as select bulletin boards located in various public buildings to post fliers announcing upcoming events and meetings.

**Social Media:** Grand Haven Facebook and Twitter accounts are used to highlight upcoming events and meetings.

## **VIII. Annual review of Public Participation Strategy**

This document is intended to be a living document that can adapt to changes in technology and to best meet the needs of residents. Therefore, this strategy is reviewed annually, and public engagement activities will be reported via the annual planning commission report. Methods that have failed will not be removed but will be reviewed and documented so that the same mistakes will not be made in the future. 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 the strategy.

## **IX. Inclusivity:**

The City of Grand Haven is committed to being inclusive when it comes to public outreach and making sure all voices are heard. Some practices Grand Haven 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 gender identifications and sexual orientations enjoy the benefits to health and well-being of having access to quality health services and community support. 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 of often excluded communities to participate in the work.