Public Participation Plan

Participation Goals and Objectives

Spring Lake Township 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, Spring Lake Township 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.

- **Spring Lake Township will work to increase representation from all stakeholders and residents within the community.** Spring Lake Township 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 Township will continue to provide a variety of methods for reaching out to all populations with information, while also finding ways to receiving their input.

- **Spring Lake Township will employ effective practices for distributing information and receiving feedback.** For municipal processes to remain transparent to the public, providing effective avenues for communication with members of the community is imperative. The Township understands that there is not a universal platform for communication that will translate to all situations, so it is important for Spring Lake Township to continue to utilize a variety of methods to expand their outreach to all members of the community.

- **Spring Lake Township 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 issues and processes. Spring Lake Township will aim to continue to provide educational resources to the public and appointed officials so these stakeholders can have an impact on the decision making process, and have the confidence to be able to participate.

- **Spring Lake Township encourages public participation in the drafting of each phase of the master plan.** Throughout the process of creating a master plan, Spring Lake Township 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 document that sets the course for the future of the community, so involving important stakeholders early on in the process will allow for a more satisfied populous in regard to the direction of future land-use projects.

- **Spring Lake Township will support and encourage continuous improvement in the methods used to meet the public need for information and involvement.** Public information and involvement methods are continually evolving. The Township is committed to seeking new and innovative ways to engage and keep the public involved throughout the planning process.

- **Spring Lake Township 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 Township to stay up-to-date with new innovations. Spring Lake Township should continue to look to adopt new methods of communication to continue engaging the public in the future.

- **Spring Lake Township will maintain records of public engagement and report results back to the public in a timely manner.** To maintain transparency in each planning process, Spring Lake Township 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 Spring Lake Township will be able to see that their ideas have been taken into account during the planning process, and the Township will be able to use the recorded information to better evaluate their own methods and processes in the future.

**State Regulations on Public Participation**

Along with this public participation plan, Spring Lake Township also follows a list of state regulations that have been implemented to help ensure government transparency, as well as opportunities for citizens to participate in governmental processes. These regulations include:

- The Spring Lake Township Code of Ordinances
- The Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976)
- The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008)
- The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006)
- Corridor Improvement Authority Act (PA 280 of 2005, amended by PA 57 of 2018)
- The Plant Rehabilitation and Industrial Development Districts Act (known as the Industrial Facilities Exemption) (PA 198 of 1974)
- The New Personal Property Exemption Act (PA 328 of 1998)
- Freedom of Information Act
- Other relevant local and State legislation

**Key Stakeholders**

When planning to incorporate public participation into a community, it is important to identify key groups that have the power and resources to be able to reach more people than the Township’s administration can on its own. These groups are an integral part of the community, and often advocate for under-represented populations in the Township. During each planning process, these groups will be notified and included to receive their input. Some examples of these key stakeholders include:

- Local residents
- Township boards and commissions
- Local nonprofit groups and foundations
- Neighborhood groups and authorities
- Neighboring communities (Ferrysburg, Grand Haven City, Grand Haven Township, Spring Lake Village)
- The Grand Haven Area Chamber of Commerce
- Local business owners
- Potential investors and donors
- Public employees
• Emergency personnel
• Real estate professionals
• Churches and religious groups
• Senior groups
• Schools
• Students
• Young professionals
• Social Organizations (the Elks, the Eagles, Rotary, etc.)
• Hospitals and medical clinics
• Visitors and tourists
• Recreational amenity users
• MDOT and MDEQ
• Ottawa County Road Commission

Methods of Community Participation

Spring Lake Township practices a variety of methods to inform and receive feedback from the community. Each project’s initial evaluation will determine the necessary level of involvement for the project. The Township will use more than one method for each project to further participation. The following are the current methods being used by Spring Lake Township. The list is flexible and can change based upon each project’s circumstance.

Inform – provide information and assist public understanding

- Spring Lake Township Website [www.springlaketwp.org](http://www.springlaketwp.org): The website posts all civic meeting times and dates and meeting minutes for all civic meetings. The website also provides all public documents (code of ordinances, master plan, etc.) and applications to join a local board or commission. Contact information for all Township employees is also listed.
- Spring Lake Township Newsletter: A biannual newsletter that announces Township news and upcoming meetings. This newsletter is mailed with the tax bills. Additional copies are distributed throughout the Township. The newsletter is also posted on the Township website.
- Spring Lake Township Electronic Newsletter: An emailed newsletter, published periodically, that provides information that is time-sensitive. Previous electronic newsletters are posted on the Township website.
- Press Releases: Spring Lake Township distributes short news releases to a variety of media outlets around the greater Spring Lake Township area. These releases are published in newspapers and websites, and are also broadcast on television and the radio.
- Social Media: Spring Lake Township Facebook accounts are used to highlight upcoming events and meetings. Nixle is used for urgent alerts.
- The Grand Haven Tribune: This is the local area newspaper. It is published six days per week.

Receive – obtain feedback and involve the public in decision making

- Public Hearings: Meetings that give residents an opportunity to provide feedback to the Township on various events and projects.
- Open Houses: These events are held for members of the community to view and receive more information on upcoming projects, while also having opportunities to articulate their opinions to public officials.
• Surveys: Printed surveys are occasionally used by the Township to collect feedback from residents through data and comments.
• Boards and Commissions meetings: These civic meetings give opportunities for members of the community to voice their concerns and bring unheard issues to the attention of these governmental bodies.
• Social Media: Township Facebook
• Workshops: These presentations are scheduled to help educate community members on a certain topic pertaining to Spring Lake Township, such as interpreting the Township’s budget or learning how to become a registered voter. These workshops also provide a great opportunity for community members to ask questions and state opinions on the processes and projects that pertain to the subject.
• Advisory Committees: These committees are formed for specific aspects of the community to enhance collaboration between Township staff, elected officials and the public.

Strategies for Outreach

Spring Lake Township looks to proactively seek new input from the public through distinguishing specific times for when feedback will be solicited. By doing this, members of the community will begin to feel a sense of ownership in the project, and unforeseen issues in the planning process will be identified earlier. This section will state which methods of communication will be used during each type of public forum.

• Planning Updates: This includes the Master Plan, Corridor Improvement Plan, and the Parks and Recreation Plan. To help cultivate public input during the formation of these written documents, all municipal boards and commissions will open the floor for members of the community to opine upon the new plans. Additional open houses or public hearings may also be scheduled for supplementary feedback on these plans. Announcements for these extra public forums will be posted on the Township website, Facebook account and contained in an electronic newsletter.
• Zoning Ordinance Updates: These updates will be decided upon during Planning Commission meetings. Like the above plans, the Planning Commission will allow time at each meeting for members of the public to address the board with comments and concerns about new ordinances. These comments will help the volunteer board make a final decision. Announcements for the time and location of planning commission meetings are listed on the Spring Lake Township website and are posted at Township Hall.
• Development Projects: Regardless if a project is of high or low controversy, Spring Lake Township will continue to use its established best practices to help boost participation. This will be done through open houses, public hearings, surveys, workshops, and social media. Through these mediums, the public will have an opportunity to not only learn more about current and upcoming projects, but will also have the opportunity to directly influence the project during the beginning, middle, and finishing stages. To stay proactive, Spring Lake Township will post information regarding these meetings and events on social media, through mass mailings, the Township’s website, and through the Township electronic newsletter. Formal meeting minutes or notes will be taken at the event and will be posted on the Township’s website after their adjournment.

Communicating Results

If an individual is unable to attend one of the listed meetings or feedback sessions, Spring Lake Township will work to highlight major pieces of information and themes from these events through a myriad of public postings.
• Public Meetings: For all council, boards, and commissions meetings, formal meeting minutes will be recorded and posted on the Township’s website.

• Surveys: Survey results will be published in a Township newsletter. This newsletter will be posted on the Township’s website, and will be distributed to all Spring Lake Township residents by mail.

• Community Workshops: A city staff member will be responsible for attending and taking notes at one of these events. These notes will be posted on the Township’s website and social media accounts for the public’s viewing.

• Social Media Posts: Posts which require a response will be replied to by a member of the Township’s staff. Facebook Private Messages will be replied to by a member of the Township’s staff.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Public Participation Efforts

For public meetings and forums to remain effective in the future, Spring Lake Township will continue to evaluate and improve their methods of fostering public participation. To guarantee future success, the Township will use the following plan to ensure that an evaluation process is executed after each public event or meeting.

At each communication event, a community event satisfaction survey will be distributed to all attendees. The survey asks questions regarding the individual’s reason for attending, as well as their overall satisfaction with the event. The attendee will also be asked how they were informed of the event, whether or not the location or timing of the event were convenient, and whether or not they would make any changes or improvements to the experience. These surveys will be collected after the event for review by a Township staff member. Surveys will then be taken into account when planning the next similar event.

After a civic project, meeting, or event has been completed, an internal public participation survey will be distributed to, and completed by, Township staff members who were involved in the planning process. The survey asks the staff members how the event was advertised, where it took place, how the public was able to get involved, how many people were in attendance, whether or not more under-represented populations could have been included, and how the event could be improved in the future. By recording these surveys shortly after a public forum, staff members are able to reflect on the effectiveness of the meeting, and use this information as a reference for future plans.

The results of these surveys will not be made public; their sole purpose is to help internal staff members improve the overall quality and effectiveness of future events. Examples of these surveys will be listed in Appendix A.

Updating the Public Participation Plan

The Township understands that this Public Participation Plan will need to be reviewed and updated on a routine basis. This plan will be updated as needed, at a minimum of every five years in conjunction with the review of the Master Plan. Updates to this plan will be drafted by Township staff, reviewed and edited by the Planning Commission, and approved by the Township Board of Trustees. At least one public hearing will be held by the Planning Commission during the update to solicit new ideas and feedback.
Closing

In closing, Spring Lake Township has created this plan to emphasize the importance of involving the public during a development process, as well as outlining the best methods to engage these community members. Staff members of Spring Lake Township, along with elected and appointed officials, are committed to fulfilling this plan, and will continue to incorporate these methods into their ongoing and future projects. With the application of this plan, the result will consist of a model system that allows for any individual to become involved, a step towards a more efficient approval process, and a community effort that will be supported by both the public and its municipal administration.

Adopted August 8, 2022
## Community Event Satisfaction Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What event did you attend today?</td>
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<td>How did you hear about this event?</td>
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<td>Was this event held at a convenient location and time?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you glad you came to this event? Would you improve it in any way?</td>
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</table>

Date

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*Appendix A*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Public Participation Evaluation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Public Participation:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>How was the event advertised?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where was the event held?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How many people attended? Was there a group that was under-represented?</td>
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<td>Who facilitated/completed the event?</td>
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<td>Are there ways this could be improved for future events?</td>
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Worksheet: Level of Public Involvement Needed
This worksheet will help to determine the appropriate level of community engagement. The level of engagement should be appropriate to the level of community interest, potential controversy and project complexity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
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<tr>
<td>What is the expected level of conflict or controversy?</td>
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<td>How significant are the potential impacts to the community?</td>
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<td>What degree of involvement does the public seem to want?</td>
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<td>What is the potential for community engagement to impact the final decision or project?</td>
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<td>How great are the possible benefits of engaging the public?</td>
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<td>How great are the risks of NOT involving the public?</td>
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<td>What level of public participation is desired or expected by the final decision makers?</td>
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<td>What are the chances that the media are or will become interested?</td>
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<td>How complex is the project?</td>
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