

City of Flint Public Participation Policy

The City of Flint strives to conduct the public's business in an open and transparent way. To achieve this goal, the City and its staff must be aware of and sensitive to the changing diversity of the City's population and culture when developing and implementing public participation, outreach, and engagement programs. Recognizing the evolving landscape of media, communication, and access, the City is proactively adopting its approach to address the needs of its population. To that end, the City has developed its Public Participation Procedures, which will offer adaptable best practices that resonate with the distinct characteristics of each community.

It is important to note that while these Guidelines provide guidance and best practices, each community is different and a "one-size fits all" procedure for public participation is not the most effective approach. Rather, the City will strive to apply best practices and methods that reflect the needs of each individual community. The primary purpose of creating, implementing, and regularly updating these Guidelines is to continue to foster stronger partnerships with individuals and groups that contribute to the City's statutory duty to protect public health and the environment. Fostering these relationships and partnerships will provide the City with meaningful opportunities to engage the public when specific events, permit applications, or community concerns within the jurisdiction of the City arise.

Notice of Non-discrimination in the Provision of City of Flint Services

The City of Flint does not discriminate in its programs and activities based on race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, veteran status, or other protected status in accordance with all state and federal laws and does not intimidate or retaliate against any individual or group because they have exercised their rights to participate in actions protected, or oppose action prohibited, by 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7, or for the purpose of interfering with such rights.

The City of Flint is responsible for coordination of compliance efforts and receipt of inquiries concerning nondiscrimination requirements implemented by 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7 (Nondiscrimination in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Assistance from the Environmental Protection Agency), including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 13 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972.

Non-Discrimination Coordinator Contact Information

If you have any questions about this notice or any of the City's non-discrimination programs, policies or procedures or if you believe that you have been discriminated against with respect to a City program or activity, you may contact:

Lesley Liggins
Nondiscrimination Coordinator
810-766-7284 ext. 2075
1101 South Saginaw Street, Flint, Michigan 48502

You may visit our website at cityofflint.com and click the link under **Departments>Legal** to obtain a copy of the City's procedures to file a grievance/complaint of discrimination.

Relevant Statutes and Policies

State of Michigan legislation details the minimum requirements for public participation. In addition to its commitment to abide by the Federal nondiscrimination laws identified in its Notice of Nondiscrimination above, the City of Flint pledges to go beyond the traditional practices to be proactive in solicitating public input for all projects. Below are the laws regarding public input as set by the State.

Open Meetings Act

In accordance with the [Michigan Open Meetings Act \(PA 267 of 1976\)](#), the City will hold meetings in Flint City Hall located at 1101 Saginaw Street, which is accessible to the general public. Within 10 days of the first meeting of a public body in each calendar or fiscal year the body will publicly post a list stating the dates, times and places of all its regular meetings at City Hall and on the City's website. City of Flint will hold meetings in buildings which are accessible to the public.

If there is a change in schedule, within three days of the meeting in which the change is made, the public body will post a notice stating the new dates, times and places of regular meetings. For special and irregular meetings, public bodies will post a notice indicating the date, time and place at least 18 hours before the meetings.

Public bodies will hold emergency sessions without a written notice or time constraints if the public health, safety or welfare is severely threatened and if two-thirds of the body's members vote to hold the emergency meeting.

Flint City Charter Section 1-405

The requirement for the publishing of notices, ordinances or proceedings of the City Council and other City boards, commissions or authorities shall be in the following manners:

- By posting in at least three (3) conspicuous places within the City;
- By posting on the City's website and/or the Internet,
- By sending notice to individuals who wish to receive public notices from the City. The City Clerk shall keep a list of individuals who wish to receive public notices from the City in a manner as provided by the Freedom of Information Act, 1976 PA 442, MCL 15.231 *et seq.* as amended. Notices shall be in an expeditious manner, as determined by the City Clerk. The City Clerk shall add to the list, any individual who requests so. The City Clerk may require that individuals confirm their desire to be maintained on the list on a yearly basis.

Stakeholders

Each project's stakeholders will be dependent on the scope and scale of the process. Each project will include an evaluation to ensure the appropriate stakeholders are targeted. The following list includes a variety of typical stakeholders:

- Neighborhood organizations
- Disability Network
- Flint Housing Commission
- MDOT and MDEQ
- County Road Commission
- Hurley Medical Center
- Genesee County Chamber of Commerce
- Mott Community College
- University of Michigan – Flint
- Flint Downtown Development Authority

City of Flint Public Engagement Toolbox

Flint has a wide range of options and tools at its disposal to engage residents and stakeholders. This section identifies the tools available and provides a process for determining which tools are appropriate for various situations.

Community Outreach

Flint is home to an extremely diverse population of residents across classifications of race, age, and economic status. This makes any one communication strategy or approach

unlikely to meet all members of a particular neighborhood or area of the city. As a result, whenever public input is sought related to a public project that impacts a particular neighborhood or area of the city, multiple communication strategies should be employed, and among those must be collaboration with neighborhood leaders and community organization who have relationships and regular contact with residents. This should also include posting information regarding an event, survey, or public meeting that impacts a particular area at public gathering places as well as having it via the city's website, social media, community news outlets, and traditional media.

Surveys

Surveys are useful in gathering feedback on specific topics from a clearly defined audience. However, the method of sharing surveys and facilitating their completion must be tailored for the intended audience. For example, a survey directed at youth must be written at the appropriate grade level and relatively short compared to a survey directed toward local developers.

While surveys are useful to get a general idea of public opinion regarding specific community issues, they should not be used as the sole method of public input. At a minimum, surveys should always be paired with interviews, a focus group session, or a public meeting to gather more in-depth feedback and provide an alternative communication method.

When a survey is created, it should also always include an electronic version and paper version. Paper versions should be available at City Hall, and depending on the audience, available at key locations within the community (e.g., Community Centers or the Library).

Interviews

Interviews allow the city to gather specific information on a topic from a single individual or small group of people. If a particular issue has a disproportionate impact on a subset of the community or if a project is being considered that engages a specific group of stakeholders, interviews are a good tool to gather detailed input. Interviews should be relatively formal and structured so that consistent questions and information regarding a topic is gathered from each interviewee or group that is a part of the process. Good notes should be taken during the interviews so that the information can be recorded, analyzed, and reported out. While interviews are a good tool for gathering in-depth information from a small subset of people, it is important to keep in mind that interview results should not be assumed to be representative of a broad segment of the population.

Focus Groups and Small Meetings

Like interviews, focus groups or small community meetings are helpful in gathering information on a particular topic or issue from a defined group of people. When conducting focus groups or small community meetings it is important to clearly define the issue and the input the city is seeking from participants, but then to be open to their feedback and let them dictate how the meeting progresses. Again, taking detailed notes or recording the meeting (if the group consents to being recorded) is important for analyzing and reporting on the results of the session later.

Open Houses and Workshops

Open house meetings and community workshops can be simple town hall-style meetings, or more complex planning sessions that include charrette-style feedback opportunities on potential design alternatives. Formal presentations can be given to a large audience and then a less formal exchange of information may follow, or some combination of the two approaches. Open houses and workshops generally provide a more casual setting to encourage participants to think critically and creatively about important issues. They can often include neighborhood residents, youth, leaders, and other stakeholders. The workshops or open houses may be conducted by city staff, or outside consultants or contractors working on a particular project or plan.

Open house meetings and workshops are also an opportunity to educate the community surrounding a specific topic and hear concerns, questions, and ideas. Open house venues need to be accessible and approachable for all attendees and notice and publication of events should be done consistent with the standards in this plan.

Social Media

Social media provides a platform for quick and frequent communication to and with the public. With the proliferation of smart phones among many communities, access to information via social media is significant, although it does not include all members of the community. The City of Flint manages several social media accounts designed for various functions. The primary focus of social media communication is to provide the public with notice of upcoming events or opportunities for input and to make the public aware of important community issues or changes that may impact their community or neighborhood.

Limited English Proficiency Residents and Literacy Challenges

The City of Flint will make all reasonable efforts to facilitate communications for limited English proficiency residents, so they are able to participate in public meetings, events,

and other activities, including providing an interpreter and translating documents. Requests must be made in writing and received at least one week prior to the meeting at which assistance is needed. The City of Flint utilizes the Latinx Technology and Community Center, Arab American Heritage Council, the International Center of Greater Flint, and the Disability Network to provide interpretation and translation services. Additionally, the City of Flint will make accommodations for any residents with limited literacy by providing documents in audio format or other means through partnership with the Flint and Genesee Literacy Network, or other similar agencies.

Selecting an Engagement Approach

When public communication or input is determined as needed for a particular issue or project, city staff should generally follow the following process to determine the appropriate course of action.

1. Define the project: Be sure the project and the purpose for public input is clearly defined. The following questions should be answered:
 - a. What is the activity being undertaken, and what is the desired end result?
 - b. What is the timeline, and is there a clearly defined budget that will impact public engagement activities?
 - c. How will public input be utilized in the decision-making process?
2. Define the audience: Who do you want to engage? This should be more specific than just “city residents”. For example, are there residents of a particular area, or residents that share common characteristics (e.g., youth) that you are targeting?
3. Determine the level of effort: How much input is the city seeking from participants? Is it feedback related to one-time issue, or is it part of a longer feedback loop for a large project (e.g., a Comprehensive Plan update)?
4. Select the appropriate engagement method(s): Based on items 1-3, determine the appropriate method or methods to be undertaken for the project. Develop a timeline for the project, draft agendas, and determine what tools or assistance will be required to achieve the desired end-result.
5. Promote and advertise: Advertise and promote the event or program through a variety of channels, including community-based organizations, leaders and stakeholders related to the target audience. There should be at least two weeks’ notice given prior to any public event.
6. Record and evaluate: Record the results of the event via meeting notes, completed surveys, recordings, and other appropriate methods. Then evaluate the overall effectiveness of the event based on how the project was defined. Did the event

meet staff and stakeholders' expectations? And if not, what can be done in the future to improve?