



## City of Allegan Public Participation Plan

*Public Participation Plan for Development Areas and Master Planning Efforts for all Boards, Committees, and Commissions of the City of Allegan*

The City of Allegan continues to seek and engage with a diverse set of stakeholders when planning for future developments and completing updates to the Master Plan and additional reports. Community voices provide invaluable insights and lived experiences that bolster the effectiveness and success of the city's efforts. The City of Allegan has set the following goals in order to maximize community involvement.

- 1) Solicit public engagement throughout the entirety of the planning and development processes.
- 2) Seek broad and representative involvement of all community members.
- 3) Utilize effective and equitable avenues for distributing information and receiving community input.
- 4) Provide educational materials and participation initiatives that will support and encourage effective engagement.
- 5) Maintain and develop staff proficiency in community engagement.
- 6) Support and encourage continuous improvement in the methods used to sufficiently inform and engage the public.
- 7) Record the results of public engagement and report these results in a way that is accessible to the public.
- 8) Adhere to state regulations regarding public participation.

### *Key Community Stakeholders*

When engaging with the community, there are influential community members and organizations that play key roles in the success and growth of the City of Allegan. These stakeholders' insights and ideas should be carefully considered in every development proposal and plan. While every community member has a vital and valued voice, the following organizations and groups are key community stakeholders.

- 1) Lakeshore Advantage; an economic development agency focused on Allegan and Ottawa Counties.
- 2) Perrigo Company; largest employer in the City of Allegan.

- 3) Ascension Borgess Allegan Hospital; healthcare system.
- 4) Allegan Public Schools and the Allegan Area Education Services Agency; education system.
- 5) Allegan Area Chamber of Commerce; local economic and community development agency.
- 6) Industrial/Manufacturing Employers.
- 7) Downtown Businesses and Retailers.

### *Public Participation Methods*

When development areas and master plan updates are being discussed by City of Allegan boards, committees, or commissions, the following methods and principles shall be considered and incorporated in adherence with this Public Participation Plan.

- 1) Basic Announcement Methods for Public Meetings: The following methods are often used to advertise public meetings in the City of Allegan. It is important to note that these methods do exclude certain community members including those with visual impairments, those with limited literacy, and non-English speakers.
  - a. Newspaper Postings in the Allegan County News
  - b. Website Postings at [cityofallegan.org](http://cityofallegan.org)
  - c. Electronic Community Message Board at City Hall
  - d. Announcements at Public Meetings
  - e. Attachments to Water Bills
- 2) Proactive Community Engagement Methods: The following methods are exemplar public participation methods that the City of Allegan can utilize to create a collaborative vision with community members. These methods are bolstered through strong partnerships with community stakeholders, and residents that are committed to public input.
  - a. Surveys: Surveys are useful for identifying community satisfaction levels, interests, and concerns. These areas of interest can then be further explored through additional community engagement methods. The City of Allegan may use a survey to identify a starting point in the planning process, or the general climate surrounding a topic. While surveys can be a useful tool, they should not be used as the sole method of public input. In order to ensure a valuable set of responses, the City of Allegan can partner with community stakeholders to administer the survey. For example, the Allegan Public Schools system can send surveys home with students, and community churches can provide them to constituents. As with most public input efforts, it is imperative that multiple delivery methods be utilized in order to reach a broad portion of the community.
  - b. Community Workshops: Community workshops are a great way to educate the community about a specific topic and hear concerns, questions, and ideas regarding development proposals and other plans. These workshops could present themselves in different ways such as Q&A sessions and community-driven S.W.O.T. analyses. When

planning for community workshops, the venue it will be held in, the time it will be held at, and the day it will be held on are all important considerations to ensure that the meeting is accessible for as many community members as possible. It is also important to consider who will facilitate the community workshops and what community stakeholders should be involved.

- c. Charrettes: The charrette differs from a workshop because it spans multiple days and allows designers and planners to actively work on a plan during “feedback loops.” Community residents and other stakeholders attend the charrette to offer ideas and feedback while the development team and other professionals facilitate the meeting and observe the community response. From these suggestions, the designers and planners change the plan to reflect community input and present their updates to begin the next “feedback loop.” Charrettes take a great deal of planning, so it is imperative that the City of Allegan plans accordingly when incorporating this method into a community review of a development area or master plan.
- d. One-on-One Interviews: Interviews are a wonderful way to receive in-depth feedback on topics of interest. While surveys are able to capture broad-level viewpoints, interviews will allow the City of Allegan to understand specific mindsets of community residents. Community leaders and stakeholders may be ideal candidates for an interview because of their involvement in the community. While interviews can provide valuable information, it is important to remember that one interview does not reflect the opinion of the entire community.
- e. Focus Groups: Similar to interviews, focus groups can be utilized to narrow down concepts or opinions and concerns of community members. Focus groups can be particularly useful when the community participants are directly involved in or affected by the question at hand. For example, if the City of Allegan wishes to understand community needs and concerns over parking in Downtown Allegan, a focus group with downtown residents and business owners could be valuable.
- f. Standing Committees: Standing Committees are valuable tools when a significant development project or report requires repeated community engagement from an invested group of stakeholders. These are ideal opportunities for a municipality to draw from the expertise of community members in a productive fashion that facilitates collaboration with other boards, committees, and commissions.
- g. Social Networking: The City of Allegan has a strong online presence through various social media platforms and accounts such as the City of Allegan and Positively Allegan. Through this medium, the City of Allegan can post public meetings, share information, and solicit feedback. It is important to note that this method excludes those community members who do not use social media and thus should be used in conjunction with other methods.

### *Communicating and Evaluating Results*

Not only is public participation crucial during the planning process for development areas and master plans, it is also important to communicate the final proposals to the community and receive feedback on the content and the efficiency of the public engagement process. The following methods provide avenues to accomplish this communication goal.

- 1) **Public Meetings:** The final proposals for development areas or plans and reports can be communicated to the public through an organized meeting. In this setting, city staff and other involved stakeholders can present the information in an accessible way to the public. Minutes or recordings of these meetings should be made available for those unable to attend.
- 2) **Surveys:** Surveys may be distributed to the public in order to solicit feedback on the content of the proposals as well as the efficiency of the public engagement process.
- 3) **Social Networking:** The City of Allegan may share information about final reports and proposals via their social media accounts. In this way, community residents are able to review the results at their own leisure; this helps to accommodate for schedules that conflict with public meetings.

\*\*\*End of Document\*\*\*

*Adopted by the Allegan City Council on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021*