

# Village of Vicksburg

## *Public Participation Plan (P3)*



June 2024

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## INTRODUCTION

Engaging citizens through a planning process is crucial to the success of that plan. Soliciting input throughout the duration of the process contributes to a greater public understanding of the various complexities involved in many community projects and also provides greater transparency in local government operations. Solicitation and consideration of community input by Village officials enhances the public's understanding of their ability and responsibility to affect the future of the community. Consistently meeting the public's expectations for public engagement serves to build a sense of trust and understanding that enhances the bond between the Village and its residents and leads to better outcomes than if it did not. As key facilitators in the Village's decision-making process, the public officials and administrators of the Village of Vicksburg understand the significance of public participation.

In order to effectively engage the public, there needs to be an explicit plan of action which outlines the purpose and process used in soliciting input from the public. Creating a public participation plan ("P3" as referred to by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Redevelopment Ready Communities program) will allow the Village to thoughtfully engage the public during major planning, zoning, and development projects and retain institutional knowledge over time. Moreover, by documenting and analyzing information on participation efforts, the Village of Vicksburg will be able to more objectively assess its efforts and adjust accordingly thereby creating a dynamic and effective set of best practices that the Village may consult for future uses.

The Village of Vicksburg has developed this document to help guide decisions for formulating public information gathering processes during planning and development projects and the application of best case practices.

Public engagement is not a "one size fits all" exercise. To this point, this guide is intended to serve as an internal resource for ideas on how to best engage productive collaboration with stakeholders and the public in the future.

The Village will consider new methods of communication and engagement as they become available, and update this guide as needed. The public participation actions described throughout this guide do not preclude additional public involvement or engagement efforts. In circumstances when the Village consults with a third party entity, that entity shall adhere to the provisions of this guide, if applicable.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. **Solicit public participation in key phases of the master planning and other comprehensive planning processes with proactive techniques.** Proactive participation denotes early and continuous involvement in important policy or project decisions before they are finalized. There are many opportunities for the public to play a role in sharing short- and long-term needs, solutions and funding priorities. The earlier the public is involved in the process, the greater the opportunity to influence important land-use decisions.
2. **Seek broad representative involvement and utilize effective and equitable avenues for distributing information and receiving comments.** The diverse characteristics and needs of residents require different communication and outreach techniques to ensure representative involvement. There are many ways to ensure representative involvement. Outreach may be in-person communication, online, posted by signs, published, or by written correspondence. Additionally, opportunities for feedback will also vary, such as meetings, door-to-door polling, surveys, or open houses. There are a number of ways to ensure that a diverse public is well-informed and able to play a role in the planning process. Recognizing that no single technique or mechanism will work in all cases, it is up to the Village to consider the special communication needs of the public and use the best approaches to accomplish this goal.
3. **Provide educational materials and design participation initiatives that will support and encourage effective participation.** Providing materials such as advertising fliers, presentations, infographics, or other forms of visualizations are helpful means to bring stakeholders and residents up to date on various planning, zoning, or development projects.
4. **Maintain and develop staff expertise in all aspects of participation.** This includes techniques for bridging language, cultural, and economic differences that affect participation; ways to convey issues and information in meaningful ways to various cultural groups; and means for ensuring equitable representation for all segments of the population and sectors of the economy.
5. **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 Village of Vicksburg is committed to seeking new and innovative ways to engage and keep the public involved throughout the process.
6. **Record results of public engagement and recount these results back to the public.** To properly capture the concerns, priorities and vision of the public, the Village of Vicksburg will develop a system to track the various techniques and mechanisms of public input. The Village additionally will develop a method for sharing received input (i.e. notes, minutes, videos) with the public. This promotes transparency, allowing stakeholders and the public to know their voices have been heard.

7. **Encourage Developers to Engage the Community.** Developers are encouraged to seek input from the community in accordance with this manual. The Village will support those efforts and provide reasonable accommodation for proactive public participation in planning for private development projects.
8. **Measuring success of public engagement.** The Village will create measurable outcomes where possible and link those to the evaluation section of the P3. This will help determine the best and most effective outreach that the Village may provide without exhausting available resources.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Basic requirements for public participation are mandated in state and federal laws for certain public projects and development reviews. The Village, through the work of the Village Council and the various boards and commissions which serve at its pleasure, shall follow the local and state regulations listed below. These regulations include provisions for the public review process, public participation, and public hearings.

### Michigan Open Meetings Act

[The Michigan Open Meetings Act \(PA 267 of 1976\)](#)

The Open Meetings Act was developed with the basic intent of requiring public bodies to conduct business at open public meetings. The Open Meetings Act is fundamental to ensuring the public has a role in policy development and adhering to its mandates is legally required.



### Key definitions

*Public body* —any local governing body (including a board, commission, committee, subcommittee, or authority) which is empowered (by state constitution, statute, charter, ordinance, resolution or rule) to exercise governmental or proprietary authority or perform a governmental or proprietary function.

*Meeting* — the convening of a public body at which a quorum is present for the purpose of deliberating toward or rendering a decision on a public policy.

*Closed session* —a meeting or part of a meeting of a public body which is closed to the public.

*Decision* —a determination or vote of a public body to formulate public policy.

### Notification of meetings

The public body must post a notice stating the dates, times, and places of all its meetings.

### Closed meetings

The law provides for closed meetings in a few specified circumstances.

### Minutes of a meeting

Minutes must be kept for all open meetings and are required to contain:

- A statement of the time, date, and place of the meeting;
- The members present as well as absent;
- A record of any decisions made at the meeting and a record of all roll call votes; and
- An explanation of the purpose(s) for which a closed session is held.

Separate minutes must be taken of closed meetings.

In accordance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976), the Village of Vicksburg will hold meetings at Village Hall, located at 126 N Kalamazoo Avenue, which is accessible to the public (or in another properly posted location as is necessary or preferable). Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services in order to participate in municipal meetings may contact the Village Clerk for assistance: (269) 649-1919. Additionally, any citizen may request that public bodies place them on a mailing or email list so they may be notified in advance of all meetings by contacting the Village Clerk.

The public will be notified within ten (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 its primary office. 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 eighteen (18) hours before the meetings.

**Note:** A regular meeting of a public body which is recessed for more than 36 hours, can only be

reconvened if a notice is posted 18 hours in advance.

Public bodies may 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.

### Michigan Planning Enabling Act

#### [The Michigan Planning Enabling Act \(PA 33 of 2008\)](#)

In accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008), the following parties are notified via first-class mail, personal mail, or email by the Village's Planning Commission of the intent to plan and request the recipient's cooperation and comment:

- Kalamazoo County Planning Commission (county planning commission);
- Schoolcraft Township Planning Commission and Brady Township Planning Commission (adjacent municipalities);
- Each public utility company, railroad company, and public transportation agency owning or operating a public utility, railroad, or public transportation system within the Village of Vicksburg, as well as all other government entities which register its name and mailing address for the purpose with the planning commission; and
- Kalamazoo County Road Commission and Michigan Department of Transportation (if the master plan will include a master street plan).

After the draft master plan has been submitted to the Village Council for review and approval for distribution, the draft plan will be submitted to the previously listed entities for review. Before approving a proposed master plan, the Village's Planning Commission will not hold less than one public hearing on the proposed master plan. The hearing will be held after the expiration of the deadline for comment as outlined in the Act.

The Planning Commission will give notice of the time and place of the public hearing not less than 15 days before the hearing by publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the Village area. The Planning Commission will also submit notice of the public hearing by first class mail, personal delivery, or email to the previously listed entities for review. After adoption of the master plan, the Planning Commission may publish and distribute copies of the master plan or of any report, and employ other means of publicity and education.

### Michigan Zoning Enabling Act

#### [The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act \(PA 110 of 2006\)](#)

In accordance with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006), consideration of the following requires advertised public hearings pursuant to the Open Meetings Act:

- Zoning text amendments
- Zoning map amendments
- Variances
- Appeals
- Interpretations
- Special land uses

In all the above cases, the Village of Vicksburg shall provide public notice of the hearing in a newspaper of general circulation in the area not less than 15 days before the date of the hearing and all persons to whom real property is assessed within 300 feet of the subject property and to the occupants of all structures within 300 feet of the subject property shall be notified.

#### [Other](#)

[The General Law Village Act](#)

[Village Code of Ordinances](#)

[Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act \(PA 381 of 1996\)](#)

[Downtown Development Authority Act \(PA 197 of 1975\)](#)

Other applicable local, state, and federal regulations

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders represent a diverse set of individuals, groups, and organizations which have a vested interest or are affected by the planning and land use development process. Different groups of stakeholders may be engaged in each of the planning and development review processes depending upon the nature of the project or plan, level of community interest, and the potential impact of the project.

Local, state and federal organizations from both the public and private sectors assist and enhance the Village's decision-making process through their input. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

#### *Public/Quasi Public*

- Village Council



- Village Boards and Commissions
- County, State and Federal elected officials
- Relevant County and State agencies
- Vicksburg Public Schools
- Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA)
- Neighboring municipalities
- Taxing jurisdictions

#### *Economic/Business*

- Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
- Vicksburg Chamber of Commerce
- Southwest Michigan First Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Major employers
- Commercial business owners
- Commercial real estate brokers/agents
- Potential investors and developers
- Southwest Michigan First
- Discover Kalamazoo

#### *People*

- Residents
- Visitors
- Village employees
- Senior citizens/groups
- Students/groups

#### *Local Organizations*

- Homeowner associations
- Social groups or clubs
- Community organizations

- Non-profit organizations
- Religious organizations

The Village of Vicksburg is dedicated to ensuring the public is notified and involved in its decision-making processes and supports efforts to conduct early stakeholder outreach, especially for planned developments, major rezonings, major changes to a surrounding area, or potential controversial developments.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There are numerous opportunities for Village residents and stakeholders to get involved in the planning, review, and approval process for planning processes.

The Village Council is the legislative body in Vicksburg and it has the final say on local laws, known as *ordinances*. Other bodies provide important recommendations and assist the Village on specialized topics, like planning and zoning, parks and recreation, or other matters.

The most relevant authorities and commissions in the Village of Vicksburg for the planning and development review process are:

- Planning Commission Board
- Zoning Board of Appeals
- Downtown Development Authority Board
- Village Council

### Development Review Bodies

**Village Council/Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA).** The Village Council is the legislative and policy-making body for the Village government and is composed of seven elected at-large citizens to serve staggered four-year terms and the Council President is elected to a four-year term. The Council appoints the Village Manager who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of Village government.

The Village Council meets twice per month, on the first and third Mondays of each month (except July, August and Sept., when it meets only on the third Monday) at 7 pm at Village Hall (126 N Kalamazoo Ave.). The Village Council meeting agenda and meeting packet shall be made available on the Village's website ([www.vicksburgmi.org](http://www.vicksburgmi.org)) at least 18 hours in advance of the meeting, although often as early as Friday the week before the scheduled meeting.

The Village Council (plus two additional appointed members) also acts at the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). The BZA has the power to hear and decide appeals on matters where the Land Development Code provides for review of an administrative interpretation, exception or special approval permit. The Board

can also authorize a variance from the strict application of the Land Development Code.

**Village Planning Commission/Downtown Development Authority.** The Planning Commission/Downtown Development Authority is composed of nine members appointed for staggered variable terms by the Village President and subject to approval by the Village Council. The Planning Commission meets every month on the second Monday of each month at 7 pm at Village Hall (126 N Kalamazoo Ave.). The Planning Commission meeting agenda and meeting packet shall be made available on the Village's website ([www.vicksburgmi.org](http://www.vicksburgmi.org)) at least 18 hours in advance of the meeting, although often as early as Friday the week before the scheduled meeting.

#### Other Boards and Commissions

The Village encourages citizen participation in local government planning and policy decisions. Therefore, all citizens are invited to apply for appointments to the Village's boards and commissions. These groups provide recommendations to the Village Council on a variety of topics and issues. The members of the boards and commissions help to analyze options and influence important decisions on behalf of the community.

In general, depending on the nature and location of the project, many of the boards and commissions may review a proposed plan or land use project. These boards and commissions function in two distinct capacities in the public policy process in Vicksburg - advisory and administrative. Some will serve in both capacities.

Each advisory board or commission makes recommendations to the Village Council based on the scope of its particular service area. Typically, advisory boards and commissions have a work agenda in place for a calendar year during which it undertakes projects, deliberates on issues, and hosts special events. The Village Council is responsible for making the final decisions on most issues or topics, but it will look to these groups for advice, background information, and analysis. As the elected body, the Village Council has discretion to accept advice in full, in part, or not at all. Certain boards and commissions have an additional administrative role. This means that they are permitted or required by charter, statute or ordinance to conduct formal reviews and issue administrative decisions. These decisions are then sent to the Village Council as official recommendations.

**Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.** The Vicksburg Brownfield Redevelopment Authority facilitates the implementation of brownfield plans relating to the designation and treatment of brownfield redevelopment zones and to promote the revitalization of environmentally distressed areas in the community served by the Village of Vicksburg pursuant to Michigan Public Act 381. Seven members are appointed for three-year terms. Meetings are held annually in May and as needed at the Village Hall.

**Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee.** The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee advises the Village Council on the operation of the parks system and the Historic Village. Five members are

appointed for three-year terms. Meetings are held the fourth Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at Village Hall (126 N Kalamazoo Ave.)

**Municipal Building Authority.** The Municipal Building Authority acquires and finances the construction and maintenance of buildings for governmental use. Three members are appointed for six-year terms. Meetings are held quarterly at the Village Hall.

**Tree Advisory Committee.** The Tree Advisory Committee provides guidance on the selection and planting of trees in public places throughout the community, works to enhance the community by encouraging proper maintenance, preservation and new plantings and educates the community about the benefits of trees. Three members are appointed for **X-year terms**. Meetings are held as needed.

#### **How to apply for Boards and commissions:**

All positions are announced at three consecutive public meetings and on the website for 3 weeks before recommendations are presented to the Village Council.

1. Review the list of vacant positions and determine your top choices. Every effort will be made to accommodate your first preference, but vacancies vary and demand for some boards may be higher than others.
2. Complete the required Boards and commissions Application Form located at <https://vicksburgmi.org/contact-us/employment/>. Paper copies are also available in the Village office (126 N Kalamazoo Ave).
3. As vacancies occur, applications are reviewed by the Human Resources Committee of the Village Council.
4. Applicants cannot be in default to the Village or be a Village employee. All board and commission members are expected to attend all regular and special meetings.
5. Applications will remain on file for one year if a vacancy is not available.

#### **Public Meetings**

In addition to conformance to the Open Meetings Act, meeting agendas and packets of the Village Council, Planning Commission, and other boards and commissions will be made available on the Village's website in advance of the meeting. The meeting agenda and packet are sent, by mail or e-mail, to all land use applicants. Village Council and Planning Commission meetings are live-streamed and posted on the Village's YouTube Channel and accessible via the Village website ([www.vicksburgmi.org](http://www.vicksburgmi.org)). Meeting minutes of the Village Council and the Village's boards and commissions are coordinated by the Village

Clerk and posted on the Village's website ([www.vicksburgmi.org](http://www.vicksburgmi.org)) once approved.

### Public Comments

Visit the [Village of Vicksburg's website](http://www.vicksburgmi.org) to find the regular meeting schedule of the Villages various bodies. Opportunities for public comment shall be available at any meeting of the Village Council or Village's boards and commissions in accordance with the provisions in the boards and commissions' bylaws and other operating policies.

You should expect to arrive just prior to the start of a meeting, as the order of business typically begins at the published meeting start time. If you wish to speak on a particular topic, it may be helpful to come with prepared notes.

Depending on the body's established rules, there may be varying time lengths permitted for commenters, or one of the comment periods may be set aside for only comments on the items listed on the agenda.

The chair of the board you are attending should announce these details, if they are relevant. The public body may vary on its level of formality and public comments do not require a response from the body, but they may engage in conversation when they feel it is important. Remember to be respectful to the public officials you are addressing; they are our neighbors who are volunteering their time and trying their best to make Vicksburg a better place.

Some Public Meetings also include a special type of public comment referred to as a public hearing on a specific topic, such as the rezoning of a parcel of land, or on the passage of a new ordinance. This happens in addition to regular public comment and if you plan on speaking on this topic, those thoughts should be held until the hearing is officially opened. This opportunity allows a stakeholder more time and a chance for dialog with the public body they are addressing.

If you would like to address the body but cannot attend a meeting due to other circumstances, you are welcomed to write a letter to that body and your communication will be shared or summarized at its next meeting after receiving it, as time permits.

Approved meeting minutes, which include the outcome of the public participation, are made available to the public through various methods, including being posted on the Village's website.

### Public Hearings

The Village Council and its various boards and commissions shall hold public hearings when called for in their local and State enabling legislation, or when otherwise prudent, to provide the opportunity for public comment on specific topics.



**Village of Vicksburg Planning Commission.** The Planning Commission shall consider holding public hearings for all land use and development applications (site plan, special land use permit, or rezoning request) that come before them though this is not required by State law to do so for all applications. The Village Clerk shall schedule and publish the notification of a public hearing before the Planning Commission in a newspaper of general distribution in the Village not less than 15 days prior to the hearing on a site plan application as mandated by the commission's bylaws. Land use and development application notifications shall be sent by mail to the applicant, the owner of the subject property, and the owners of property within 300 feet of the subject property. The Planning Commission meeting agenda and meeting packet shall be made available on the Village's website in advance of the meeting. The applicant and the Village Council shall receive written notification of the Planning Commission's recommendation.

**Village of Vicksburg Council.** The Village Council shall hold a public hearing when called for in their enabling legislation. On receipt of the report of the Planning Commission, the Village Council shall set a date for a public hearing for consideration of any proposed zoning ordinance update or rezoning. State and federal statutes require that special use permits and rezoning applications be noticed in a newspaper of general distribution in the Village no less than 15 days prior to the Village Council public hearing. Application notifications shall also be sent by mail to the applicant, the owner of the subject property, and the owners of property within 300 feet of the subject property.

The special use permit applicant is notified in writing of the Village Council's action by the Village Clerk within five days of the action. Following adoption of an ordinance to amend or update the zoning district boundaries or the district regulations, the ordinance shall be filed with the Village Clerk and a notice of the ordinance adoption shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in Vicksburg within 15 days after adoption.

**Other Boards and Commissions.** Other relevant boards and commissions will hold public hearings as needed and as required by the individual boards and commissions bylaws. The public hearings will be noticed as required in advance of the meeting. All meeting agendas and packets shall be made available before the meeting on the Village's website.

## TOOLBOX OF STRATEGIES

The public participation toolbox is virtually limitless — from tried and true methods to more creative methods. The Village will strive to ensure that more than one notification and communication method will be used depending on the specific project and target audience. This list is flexible and can change based on needs and circumstances.

### Basic announcement methods for public meetings

The following methods are used to advertise the public meetings of the Village Council, Planning Commission, and other boards and commissions acting as advisory bodies to the Village Council when taking action on land use or development applications. Many times, this does not result in involvement of all stakeholders, especially those with visual impairments, non-English speakers, those who are illiterate, youth, individuals with mobility limitations, and those who work during the time in which public meetings are commonly held.

- Website posting
- Fliers posted on communication bulletin board in the vestibule of Village Hall
- Announcements at council meetings
- Attachments to water bills
- Email if signed up for Village distribution list
- Text if signed up for Village text distribution list
- Village's social media accounts

The Village will strive to ensure that more than one notification and communication method will be used depending on the specific project and target audience. This list is flexible and can change based on needs and circumstances.

#### Collaborative Proactive Practices

The following are some example public participation methods that are less reactive and more focused on education and collaboration. Many of these methods have been used by the Village and are most successful with strong partnerships with stakeholders.

**Pre-Application Coordination.** Prior to submitting an application, or site plan, an applicant may choose to request a Conceptual Review meeting with the Village Manager and any other relevant staff or Village designee(s). The review shall be informal and advisory only and shall not constitute any form of approval or authorization of granting any type of permit. The review shall be done without cost to the applicant and shall be scheduled as an item of business on the Planning Commission's agenda.

**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 public opinion regarding specific community issues 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 or 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).



**Open House Meetings and Community Workshops.** Open house meetings and community workshops can be as simple as a series of question and answer sessions with the public or as creative as interactive map exercises. Formal presentations can be given to a large audience and then less formal exchange of

information may follow. They provide a more casual and fun setting to encourage participants to think critically and creatively about important issues. Oftentimes open house meetings are a great way 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. Further, volunteers must be available and knowledgeable on a project to encourage feedback from participants. An orientation session is essential prior to commencement.

**Charrettes.** The charrette differs from a workshop because it is a multi-day event where designers and planners work collaboratively. Citizens offer ideas while the charrette team facilitates and observes. This tool may most often be used for specific development projects that involve significant changes to the urban form and require public input on the design layout. The Village may encourage developers to hold charrettes for specific proposed projects with significant community interest.

**Walking Tours.** Walking tours allow more candid and casual feedback from participants. They can be paired with community workshops or charrettes to measure the perceived safety and comfort of pedestrians in a downtown, neighborhood or corridor. Walking tours are also useful for identifying desired design, problem properties, or safety concerns.

**One-on-One Interviews.** Interviews are a great way to get specifics on a topic. Specific community leaders may have been identified, making them ideal candidates for an interview. Some communities 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.

**Focus Groups.** Like interviews, focus groups can help to narrow down concepts or get a specific side of the story from different perspectives. Focus groups can be used to invite multiple stakeholders to the table to gather perspectives and interests of various people in one setting.

**Social Media/Networking.** Depending on the type of project, information should be incorporated into online sources. Further, more intensive projects may have project-specific websites not only to provide information but to allow for comments and interaction. Technology offers a unique opportunity to give and receive information to a mass of people. Municipalities can post events, share information on projects and planning and development processes, and even solicit feedback. This method is best used in conjunction with other methods because it excludes those who do not use social media. The strategy should identify the social media venues a community will use, the target audience of these venues and who will be responsible for making posts and monitoring the posts of others. The ability to spread misinformation or post disrespectful comments makes it important to plan for the use of social media.

Commented [1]: does this all apply if we aren't allowing comments? maybe we say we don't allow comments? Check with Catherine?

#### Public Participation Matrix

As stated previously throughout this section, the various outreach strategies have a multitude of different uses and applications. Some processes lend themselves better to certain strategies. The table below provides a guide of when certain outreach methods may be optimal based upon which type of process the Village is undergoing.

Commented [2]: Need very careful review of this by others.

	Master Plan	Zoning Amendments	CIP Planning	Parks & Recreation Planning	Major Developments
Pre-Application Meetings					RECOMMENDED
Surveys	RECOMMENDED	POTENTIALLY	RECOMMENDED	RECOMMENDED	
Open House Meetings and Communication Workshops	RECOMMENDED	POTENTIALLY	RECOMMENDED	RECOMMENDED	POTENTIALLY



	Master Plan	Zoning Amendments	CIP Planning	Parks & Recreation Planning	Major Developments
Pre-Application Meetings					RECOMMENDED
Charrettes/Design Workshops	POTENTIALLY			POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY
Walking Tours	POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY	RECOMMENDED	POTENTIALLY
One-on-One Interviews	POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY	RECOMMENDED
Focus Groups	POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY
Digital Tools of Communication	RECOMMENDED	POTENTIALLY	POTENTIALLY	RECOMMENDED	RECOMMENDED
Local Events	RECOMMENDED			POTENTIALLY	
News/Media	REQUIRED	REQUIRED			
Public Hearing	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	RECOMMENDED	RECOMMENDED	MAY BE REQUIRED

## OUTREACH STRATEGIES

The Village's goal is to follow a systematic plan for public engagement in the development of Village policy. In helping citizens and other stakeholders to be more involved in the creation process and not simply a reaction to a finished product, the sooner the public is involved, the better. Proactively engaging stakeholders fosters a sense of ownership and prevents delays caused by unforeseen issues. This section outlines how the community has and will be engaged depending on the input sought situation.



## Comprehensive Master Plan Update

As the visionary policy document for future development in the Village, the comprehensive master planning process must use a wide range of public input methods to develop the goals, objectives and strategies for implementation. The Village of Vicksburg shall follow, at a minimum, the provisions of Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended (the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, M.C.L. 125.3801 et. seq.) for the adoption of a new master plan or of an update to the master plan.

The Planning Commission shall send a notice to all stakeholders as listed in the State enabling legislation; the notice will explain that the Planning Commission intends to prepare a plan and request cooperation and comment on the plan now and when the plan is drafted. The Planning Commission and the Village will then begin work on drafting or updating the plan. They shall involve the public through many of the methods listed in the section 'Toolbox of Strategies,' including, but not limited to surveys, open houses, community meetings, community walks and tours, website updates, and social media. The Village shall encourage the involvement and participation of all stakeholders, including any marginalized groups that may be typically less involved in the planning process. Stakeholder involvement is encouraged from the beginning and the results of such public participation are made available to the community and participants and incorporated as much as is reasonably possible in the drafted plan or plan amendment.

In preparation, studies of existing conditions and probable growth should be done for the basis of the plan. The Planning Commission may make use of expert advice and information from federal, State, County, and municipal officials, departments, and agencies having information, maps, and data pertinent to the Village. The Village may consult with representatives of adjacent local units of government with respect to their planning so that conflicts in master plans and zoning may be avoided. The Village may cooperate with all departments of the State and federal governments and other public agencies concerned with programs for economic, social, and physical development within the planning jurisdiction and seek the maximum coordination of the local unit of government's programs with these agencies.

The Village shall encourage and track the public participation through a variety of means, including minutes, public recording of meetings, comment cards, sign-up sheets, and input received verbally, through written correspondence or through website comments, and other means as appropriate.

The Planning Commission will act to submit the proposed plan to the Village Council for review and comment. The process of adopting the master plan shall not proceed further unless the Village Council approves the distribution of the proposed plan. The Village Council shall act on the proposed plan during a public meeting held in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The Village Council shall decide on the approval of the distribution of the proposed plan to local governments and agencies for review and comments.

If the Village Council approves the distribution of the proposed plan, it shall notify the secretary of the Planning Commission, and the secretary of the Planning Commission shall submit, in the manner provided by the State enabling law a copy of the proposed plan, for review and comment, to all of the units listed in the State enabling law. These entities may submit comments on the proposed plan to the Planning Commission within 63 days after the proposed plan was submitted to that entity (or 42 days in the case of a master plan update).

Before approving the proposed master plan, the Planning Commission shall hold not less than one (1) public hearing on the proposed plan. The hearing shall be held after the expiration of the deadline for comment. The Planning Commission shall give notice of the time and place of the public hearing not less than 15 days before the hearing by publication in a newspaper of general circulation within Vicksburg.

The proposed plan shall be approved by resolution of the Planning Commission carried by the affirmative votes of not less than 2/3 of the members. A statement recording the Planning Commission's approval of the plan, signed by the chairperson or secretary of the Planning Commission, shall be included on the inside of the front or back cover of the master plan document. Following approval of the proposed master plan, the secretary of the Planning Commission shall submit a copy of the plan to the Village Council. Approval of the proposed plan by the Planning Commission is the final step for adoption of the plan, unless the Village Council by resolution has asserted the right to approve or reject the plan. In that case, after approval of the proposed plan by the Planning Commission, the Village Council shall approve or reject the proposed plan. A statement recording the Village Council's approval of the master plan, signed by the Village Clerk, shall be included on the inside of the front or back cover of the master plan if the Village Council takes action on the Plan.

#### Zoning Ordinance Update

The zoning ordinance is a document that reflects the vision of the community by regulating the character and type of development. To this end, it is important the public be involved in the adoption of amendments to the zoning map or to specific regulations contained in the text of the zoning ordinance. As each amendment process is unique and not necessarily related to the entire document, the stakeholders may vary to some extent. However, a general process of public outreach will contain early and frequent public input and a continuous facilitation of involvement throughout the decision-making process. The creation of citizen study groups, or ad-hoc committees, or workshops with directly affected property owners will be encouraged when tackling more complicated issues.

The Village Council may of its own motion, or shall upon petition signed by the owners of a majority of the property proposed for rezoning, prepare an ordinance amending or changing the district boundaries or district regulations. The ordinance shall be introduced by Village Council and then referred to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation. It may be necessary for the Planning Commission and/or the Village Council to defer action to one or more subsequent meetings to gather further

information or to accommodate additional review and debate.

Prior to submitting its recommendation to the Village Council, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing. The Village Council will, on receipt of the report of the Planning Commission, set a date for a second public hearing for consideration of the proposed amendment. After the public hearing, the Village Council may choose to approve, deny, or table the proposed amendment.

There are special circumstances, however, such as a written protest against a zoning amendment by property owners. Whenever a written protest against such proposed amendment, signed by the owners of 20 percent or more of the area of land proposed to be altered or by the owners of 20 percent of the area of land within 100 feet of any part of the boundary of the land proposed to be altered, excluding any publicly-owned land from either calculation, shall be filed with the Village Council, the rezoning ordinance shall not be passed except by at least a two-thirds vote of all members of the Village Council. The ordinance will be noticed in a newspaper of general distribution in the Village at least 15 days prior to the hearing. The notification will also be sent by mail to the applicant, the owner of the subject property, and the owners of property within 300 feet of the subject property. Following adoption of the ordinance to amend the district boundaries or the district regulations, the ordinance will be filed with the Village Clerk, and a notice of the ordinance adoption will be published in a newspaper of general circulation within 15 days after adoption. The ordinance will take effect upon the expiration of seven days after its publication, unless a later effective date is specified by the Village Council, or unless a notice of intent to file a petition seeking to submit the ordinance to the electors of the Village for action is filed with the Village Clerk within seven days after publication of the ordinance amendment.

Particular attention shall be paid to public outreach and communication when dealing with controversial zoning ordinance amendments or controversial development proposals. The website shall be updated regularly on decision-making processes and projects.

### **Parks and Recreation Plan**

Similar to the master planning process, the parks and recreational planning process must also utilize a wide array of public involvement strategies. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides financial assistance through its recreation grants program to communities with the State of Michigan to acquire land for parks and to develop recreation facilities. The DNR mandates that municipalities undergoing a parks and recreation plan update must employ no less than two (2) types of public input strategies as detailed in the 'Toolbox of Strategies' section of this document.

It is important to involve the public early in the process through public meetings, surveys, community workshops, open house events, or other means before the draft plan is written. It is highly recommended that additional effort be put forth to solicit comments from residents living in the vicinity of future projects and from those who may be negatively affected by the proposed projects. Special efforts must be made to involve segments of the population whose concerns are often overlooked.



These public participation methods should be well-advertised and held at an easily-accessible location.

Once the draft plan has been completed by the Planning Commission or Recreation Committee, citizens must be provided with a well-advertised opportunity of at least one (1) month or 30 days to review and comment before it is officially adopted. Ideal locations to allow the public to view the draft plan is at a public library, Village Hall, and/or the Village's website. Comments should be collected via mail, email, or other means. A finalized draft shall then be recommended for adoption to Village Council.

Once the 30-day public review period has concluded and a finalized draft has been prepared, the Village Council shall hold an advertised public hearing in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The meeting minutes shall reflect whether there was public comment and the nature of the comments received during the public hearing.

#### Capital Improvement Program Plan

A capital improvement program (CIP) plan is a short-range plan, typically four to ten years, which identifies capital projects and equipment purchases, a ranking of projects and purchases in order of preference, the plan for financing the items, a timetable for the construction or completion of the project, justification for the project, and an explanation of expenses for the project. The Village of Vicksburg is committed to working with stakeholders to make the best use of public funds. While planning for capital improvements can largely be very technical and difficult to become engaged, Village Council shall hold a public hearing for the adoption of the CIP plan and post the plan in an easily-accessible location on the Village's website for the public to view.

#### Major Developments

The Village shall follow, at a minimum, the provisions of the local and State regulations, as listed in this guide, to review development projects that involve the approval of planning and zoning applications and permits. This applies to the review process for site plans and special use permits, rezoning requests, and variance request applications. In many circumstances, the Village Council and its boards and commissions will hold public hearings, noticed in accordance with the State legislation, and allow for public comment on the proposed development project during its regular meetings. Depending on the nature of the project, the community interest, and community's financial involvement, additional methods of engagement may be used to gather community feedback.

### STEPS FOR DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATE PLAN

Prior to conducting a planning process, such as a master plan update, parks and recreation plan update, or other similar process, the Village of Vicksburg shall create a Public Participation Plan to help define and guide the methods for achieving optimal public participation.

Most public participation plans will be simple and short; however, large projects with multiple public

participation activities may need to be more detailed.

The purpose of the public participation plan is to help the Village think through a project and to design activities that will meet the project's public participation goals. A well-planned approach will save time and effort in the long-run.

Below are ten (10) steps to formulating a successful public participation plan:

**Step 1. Describe the Project**

The first step in developing a public participation plan is to provide a clear project description to lay the foundation for a successful and achievable public participation process within the timeline, geographic area, staff and budget limitations of the overall project. This information will be used to explain the project to those persons subsequently engaged in public participation activities of the Plan. This will also help communicate the boundaries of public participation in planning, program development, or decision processes.

**Step 2. Assess Level of Public Concern or Interest**

To determine the appropriate level of public participation, it is important to assess the degree to which the public considers the issue significant. The public will become involved according to its perception of the seriousness of the issue. Therefore, it is important to anticipate the public's level of interest or concern regarding a project or program.

**Step 3. Determine Appropriate Level of Public Participation**

After assessing the level of public interest or concern using the worksheet in Step 2, it will be easier to plan for the appropriate level of public participation and establish effective goals.

**Step 4. Identify Public Participation Goals**

After determining the appropriate level of public participation for the project, the next step is to define the goals for inviting the public to participate.

**Step 5. Identify Stakeholders**

With goals and public participation levels in hand, it is easier to identify stakeholders and what level of public outreach is needed. When creating the list of stakeholders, make sure audiences who may not typically be engaged are considered to try to cover a broad range of citizens.

**Step 6. Select Tools**

Different public participation goals typically require different tools and approaches. This guide provides several proven strategies to employ during various types of projects.

**Step 7. Create a Schedule**



Any public participation plan should include a detailed timeline of the planning, program development or decision-making processes as well as the public participation activities within that process. Public information and input need to be timed early enough to provide the public adequate opportunity to influence the decision.

#### **Step 8. Identify Roles and Responsibilities**

Identify everyone who has a role and/or responsibility in the planning, program development or decision-making processes. Most importantly, identify an overall public participation manager responsible for tracking progress and completing each activity. Clearly identify who the “ultimate decision makers” are with regard to the project. This will be very helpful to have before beginning the development of public information materials and making presentations to stakeholders, who will want to know how, when and by whom the decision is going to be made.

#### **Step 9. Gather and Disseminate Input and Results**

If the public participation goals include public input, involvement or collaboration, there is an added responsibility of disseminating the public's input to decision makers and back to the public at large. This “feedback loop” is necessary to demonstrate to the public that their time and effort has been well invested and their comments and concerns have been understood and accurately communicated to decision makers. It also shows the public how their input has been translated and influenced the project, policy, or program.

#### **Step 10. Evaluate Effectiveness**

Evaluation should be an explicit part of the design for any public participation activity or plan. Too often, evaluation is ignored or begun too late to help improve the project. Involving stakeholders in designing and conducting the evaluation is a further way of partnering with the public and creating a transparent process. Plan to constantly monitor and evaluate the outcomes of its public participation efforts throughout the life of the project and make revisions as needed.

### **COMMUNICATING RESULTS**

Communicating back to the public the information gathered during the public involvement process will result in another layer of transparency and a greater understanding from the public that we value public input and are actively seeking to involve the citizens in the community. Municipalities have many venues of communication: television, newsletters, the municipal website, social media. The appropriate venue to communicate, who is responsible for this communication and how soon after the public participation event are all dependent on the situation at hand.

There is no one way of communicating. In general, the following is a list of ways the Village will strive to communicate public feedback.

**Public meetings.** Village Council, Planning Commission, and all other municipal board and commission meetings minutes shall be posted on the Village's website.

**Surveys.** Surveys created by Village staff will be compiled by a designated staff person, and the Village shall have results posted after the survey completion. The results, or a link to the results, may be posted online and on social media and published in the Village newsletter.

**Open Houses / Community workshops / Charrettes.** A Village official will be charged with taking notes during public open houses, community workshops, or charrettes and getting names, addresses, and emails of all in attendance. In addition, the results of these events shall be sent to participants via email, and the meeting summary shall be publicized at other public meetings such as Village Council and Planning Commission.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION EVALUATION

This guide will be formally reviewed on an annual basis. A Village official will be responsible for keeping records of the participation efforts and will be responsible for compiling the data and presenting it to the Village boards and commissions and public with suggestions for actions. The results should identify strengths and weaknesses and give examples of how to adjust our behavior to better maximize outreach. However, if the plan is implemented as stated, the feedback loop should create a continuous review process that enables Village officials to successfully make changes through a consistently improved upon, dynamic process.

## CONCLUSION

The Village of Vicksburg strives to follow a transparent planning and development review process and will share relevant information with community members and any other stakeholders utilizing the following methods:

- Published meeting schedules, minutes, and agendas posted on the Village's website.
- Public hearing notices sent to affected stakeholders.
- An actively updated website that includes a variety of topics and information pertaining to the development review process, including the Village Charter, the Village Code of Ordinances, resolutions, strategies and planning documents, applications and fee information, maps, and much more.
- Individual web pages created for significant projects; these webpages will include related information, meeting notices and documents about proposed projects.

- Proactive community outreach about significant development efforts.

In conclusion, the Public Participation Plan effort is intended to provide opportunities for the citizens of the Village of Vicksburg to participate meaningfully. Public participation, when properly implemented, builds community consensus and strengthens a sense of place. Creating a culture of collaborative visioning enriches democracy by allowing citizens to voice their ideas, not just their complaints. This plan is to be used as a guide to best incorporate the public into decisions that affect their space.

