



Cascade Charter Township Public Participation Plan

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Objectives

Through the Public Participation Plan, Cascade Charter Township aims to ensure the entire community has the opportunity to serve as key stakeholders in determining the future development of the Township.

- Cascade Charter Township seeks to use effective and equitable avenues for distributing information and receiving feedback. The Township understands that no single technique or channel will be successful in all situations and aims to consider all communication needs of the public and develop the best approaches to reach its audience.
- Cascade Charter Township evaluates all projects on an individual basis to determine the appropriate level of community involvement, as well as project scope, key stakeholders, resources, community impact, project limitations and approving body.
- Cascade Charter Township provides educational and informational materials and resources to enable interested parties to be involved in decisions at various stages of the review and approval process, encouraging and supporting effective participation from the entire community.
- Cascade Charter Township seeks to engage all community members in an effort to understand resident needs as they relate to critical issues facing the community.
- Cascade Charter Township looks to obtain public participation in matters regarding future develop of the Township, such as the Master Plan, the Zoning Ordinance Update Process and other significant subjects.
- Cascade Charter Township considers comments and feedback received from the public to make decisions regarding planning, land use, future development and those associated with other endeavors.
- Cascade Charter Township tracks and evaluates the results from public participation efforts to provide insight and summaries to the public.
- Cascade Charter Township seeks to support and encourage continuous improvement in an effort to meet the public need for information and involvement.

State and Local Regulations

In addition to ensuring a diversified public is represented in its planning processes through local regulations, Cascade Charter Township also looks to state statutes to help guide its participation activities.

Michigan Open Meetings Act

In accordance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976), Cascade Charter Township will hold meetings in the Wisner Center located at 2870 Jack Smith Ave. SE, which is accessible to the general public.

The public will be notified within 10 days of the first meeting of the Township Board in each calendar year. The Board will publicly post a list stating the dates, times and places of all its regular meetings at Township Hall.

If there is a change in schedule, within three days of the meeting in which the change is made, the Board 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 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 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.

Any citizen can request that public bodies put them on a mailing list so that they are notified in advance of all meetings by contacting Township hall at (616) 949-1500.

Michigan Planning Enabling Act

In accordance with the Michigan planning and enabling act (PA 33 of 2008), the following parties will be notified via first-class mail, personal delivery or electronic mail by the planning commission of the intent to plan and request the recipient's cooperation and comment:

- Kent County
- Kent County Planning Commission or the Kent County Board of Commissioners
- Kent County Road Commission
- Public utility companies that operate within cascade
- Michigan Department of Transportation

After the draft master plan has been submitted to the Board for review and approval, the draft plan will be submitted to the previously listed entities for review.

Before approving a proposed master plan, the Planning Commission will hold not fewer 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 Kent County. The Planning Commission will also submit notice of the public hearing by first class mail, personal delivery or electronic mail to the previously listed entities for review.

After the 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.

Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders are those who can – and should – have a role assisting and enhancing the public participation process. These groups may include:

- All Cascade Charter Township residents
- Commercial business owners and employees
- Downtown Development Authority
- Municipal employees
- Township boards
- Emergency personnel
- Neighborhood groups
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Real estate professionals
- Industrial facilities located within the Township
- Churches and religious groups
- Schools
- Senior groups
- Community visitors and tourists
- Utility providers
- County officials
- Gerald R. Ford Airport officials
- Neighboring jurisdictions

Strategies for Outreach and Encouraging Community Participation

As explained, each project is reviewed and evaluated to determine the appropriate level of public involvement for the project. The following are methods that Cascade Charter Township may use to obtain the appropriate level of public participation when acting on land use, development applications or other issues.

Cascade Charter Township is committed to finding the best ways to reach the public and understands the importance of using more than one of the below methods based on the target audience and project in question. This list is flexible and can change based on each project's needs and circumstances.

Methods of Informing – Providing Information and Assisting Public Understanding

- **Website** (www.cascadetwp.com): The website is used to announce meetings, provide agenda items and packets, provide minutes from meetings, offer information on specific topics and issues and solicit feedback.
- **Newspaper**: The Cadence, an entity of MLive; the Grand Rapids Business Journal and MiBiz may be used to distribute information important to the residents of Cascade.
- **Cascade Connections**: Cascade Connections is a quarterly newsletter distributed to all residential addresses within the Township. It includes information important to residents, such as major issues impacting the Township, community events and reminders.
- **Printed Postings**: The Township provides printed postings regarding meetings and updates available for viewing at Township Hall.
- **Social media**: The Township uses Facebook and Twitter to relay information to residents regarding public service announcements, community activities, road closures, community partner updates and other issues, as well as to address large issues taking place within the Township and encourage dialogue.
- **Announcements**: Announcements are made during the Township Board meetings, as well as at Planning Commission meetings, DDA meetings and other board and commission meetings.
- **Press Releases and News Articles**: The Township develops and distributes press releases and news articles covering various topics, including important updates, meetings and community involvement opportunities to local print and broadcast outlets.
- **Electronic or Postal Mail**: Residents may be notified of meetings and topics for discussion by electronic or postal mail. This may be delivered in the form of postcards, letters, water bill inserts, etc.

Cascade Charter Township will continue to evaluate additional methods of informing the public, adding channels as necessary.

Methods of Consulting – Obtaining Public Feedback

- **Surveys:** The Township will host surveys in effort to obtain feedback from residents regarding various issues. These may take place electronically and/or during a community workshop.
- **Social Media:** The Township uses Facebook and Twitter to obtain constant feedback from residents and to act as a more casual form of communication with and among residents.
- **Public Hearings:** Public attendance at meetings is strongly encouraged, providing residents the opportunity to offer input on pressing issues.
- **Community Workshops and Charrettes:** Community workshops and charrettes are hosted by the Township on issues involving in-depth explanation and provide an opportunity for questions and answers. Additionally, workshops allow the Township to obtain feedback and survey responses, as well as provide access to subject matter experts for the topics in question.
- **Community Committees:** The Township has and will continue to request the participation of residents on committees to lead research and survey efforts, as well as to serve as a bridge between Township officials and community input.

Methods of Involving – Encouraging direct participation from the public

- **Community Workshops:** Community workshops are hosted by the Township on issues involving in-depth explanation and Q&A opportunities. Additionally, workshops allow the Township to obtain feedback and survey responses from those who may not be online, as well as provide access to subject matter experts for the topics in question.
- **Community Committees:** The Township has and will continue to request the participation of residents on committees to lead research and survey efforts, as well as to serve as a bridge between Township officials and community input.

Communicating Results

Results from public participation sessions are communicated to the public in one or more different ways. This demonstrates that responses were heard and considered in the decision-making process. This is critical in effort to maintain an environment of transparency and collaboration.

Some of the ways Cascade Charter Township may communicate results to the public include:

- **Public Meetings:** Meeting minutes, which may include discussion around results from feedback efforts, will be posted on the Cascade Charter Township website in a timely fashion once the meeting concludes.
- **Cascade Connections:** Results from workshops, charrettes, surveys or other methods of collecting feedback may be included in the Township’s quarterly newsletter.
- **Social Media:** The Township’s social media team may post results of feedback efforts on the Township’s Facebook and/or Twitter page once results have been compiled and made available.
- **Website:** Results from feedback efforts may be published on the Township’s website by the administrator once results have been compiled and made available.
- **Electronic or Postal Mail:** Results may be shared with the public via email or postal mail, as determined by the project lead once results have been compiled and made available.
- **Community Workshops and Charrettes:** Community meetings, including workshops and charrettes, may be held to communicate results from feedback efforts, determined by scope and significance of a project.
- **Press Releases and News Articles:** The Township may issue press releases covering various topics, including important updates, meetings and community involvement opportunities to local print and broadcast outlets.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Participation Efforts

Cascade Charter Township understands the need to review and update the public participation plan as methods of obtaining public input evolve. The Township will review this plan every five years at minimum, with updates being incorporated as necessary.

The Township may provide community event satisfaction surveys to participants to review the effectiveness of participation efforts. Township staff may also evaluate participation outcomes internally to ensure efforts were executed as anticipated and/or to identify improvements that can be incorporated for future efforts.

Closing

Cascade Charter Township aims to ensure the entire community serves as key stakeholders in the development of the Township and seeks to encourage participation from residents in decisions that affect the present and future of Cascade.

It is the Township's intention that the public participation plan builds community consensus, strengthens the sense of place in Cascade and ensures residents have a voice in the collaborative visioning of the Township.