

DATE: August 12, 2014

TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Katy Ryan, Graduate Planning Intern

RE: New Tools Created as a Result of the Citizen Participation Ordinance Evaluation

Ann Arbor's Citizen Participation Ordinance (CPO) facilitates effective citizen participation early on in the development review process. Over the last year, planning staff have been evaluating the CPO to ensure that it continues to serve the needs of both residents and developers. Based on resident and developer surveys, as well as case study analysis, staff identified several tools and resources that could improve the effectiveness of the CPO. This summer, staff developed several such resources (attached) which are now available to the public online:

- Citizens' Guide to Effective Communication: This guide provides tips for residents participating in the development review process, outlining ways to participate and how to communicate effectively when attending public meetings.
- Developers' Guide to Leading Effective Citizen Participation Meetings: This guide provides developers with strategies to lead citizen participation meetings that effectively provide information to citizens regarding proposed development. The aim for this guide, as well as the previous one for citizens, is to foster positive, constructive, and respectful dialogue between residents and developers.
- Site Plan Review Process Step-by-Step Guide: This guide outlines each step of the review process with timeframes and explanations of each stage. Although intended for developers, this guide may also be useful to interested residents or neighborhood groups.
- Postcard Template for Notice of Citizen Participation Meeting: This template ensures that developers provide citizens with all necessary information in a clear and concise manner when notifying them of an upcoming citizen participation meeting.
- Updated Website: Working with IT, planning staff reorganized the Planning & Development Services website to ensure that residents and developers can more easily find precisely what they are looking for.

As recommended by the CPO Evaluation earlier this year, these resources provide residents and developers with an increased level of information about the CPO and emphasize the importance of communication in the development review process. We hope these resources will be a first step towards making the development review process more open, accessible, and engaging for residents and developers.

Attachments:      Citizens' Guide to Effective Communication  
                         Developers' Guide to Leading Effective Citizen Participation  
                         Meetings  
                         Site Plan Review Process Step-by-Step Guide  
                         Postcard Template for Notice of Citizen Participation Meeting



# Citizens' Guide to Effective Communication

## Tips for participating in the development review process

### AN INTRODUCTION TO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN ANN ARBOR

As a citizen, you can take an active role in shaping Ann Arbor by participating in the planning and development process. Described below are several ways to become involved, as well as tips for effective communication when attending meetings and conversing with planning staff, planning commissioners, developers, and fellow residents.

### CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ORDINANCE

Ann Arbor's Citizen Participation Ordinance facilitates effective citizen participation early on in the project development process. City Code ensures that citizens and neighborhood groups are notified of proposed development projects in their community, depending on the size of the project:

- For large projects, citizens within 1,000 feet of the site are notified by postcard and invited to attend a citizen participation meeting where they can ask the developer questions and comment upon the project. Citizen feedback will be recorded and assembled into a report for the City Planning Commission and City Council.
- For small projects, citizens within 500 feet of the site are notified by postcard and given the petitioner's contact information so they can ask questions and comment upon the petition if interested.

### WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

- If a project is planned to occur in Ann Arbor, contact the developer, or if applicable, attend the citizen participation meeting for the project.
- Work with your neighborhood association to express your shared views. If you want to know more about neighborhood associations in Ann Arbor, visit [www.a2gov.org/neighborhoods](http://www.a2gov.org/neighborhoods).
- Call a Planning staff member, or, email or write a letter to the City Planning Commission.
- Attend a City Planning Commission and/or City Council meeting. Individuals will be invited to speak for up to 3 minutes during the public hearing portion of the meeting.

### EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Successful planning relies on effective communication. When attending a public meeting or citizen participation meeting, or even when speaking or writing to planning staff or Planning Commissioners, it is best to follow the guidelines explained below:

#### Be Informed

Be sure of the facts and details of the particular project or issue at hand. Your statement will have more impact if you are accurate, informed, and objective.

#### Do Your Homework

Find out in advance what, if any, the speaking limit will be. Prepare your statement ahead of time to ensure it fits within the allotted time.

#### Explain *Why*

The most constructive comments relate to City Code, the Master Plan, or specific ways a project will affect your community. Simply being for or against a project without saying *why* does not provide useful information.

#### Be Courteous

Avoid personal attacks. Be civil, courteous, and respectful. Testimony will not be persuasive if it antagonizes and alienates others.

#### Stay on Point

Be clear, concise and to the point. Try to communicate with facts rather than relying on rhetoric.

#### Have an Open Mind

Attend meetings with an open mind. Try to be receptive, ready to learn, and open to perspectives different than your own.

Remember, you don't need to be an expert or an experienced public speaker to participate. Simply become informed about the issues, get involved, and share your thoughts. We look forward to hearing from you!

For more information about citizen participation in the City of Ann Arbor, visit the Planning & Development Services website, [a2gov.org/planning](http://a2gov.org/planning), or contact staff at (734) 794-6265, or [planning@a2gov.org](mailto:planning@a2gov.org).



# Developers' Guide to Leading Effective Citizen Participation Meetings

## INTRODUCTION TO THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ORDINANCE

Ann Arbor's Citizen Participation Ordinance (CPO) facilitates effective citizen participation early on in the development review process. Per the CPO, developers must notify citizens and neighborhood groups of proposed development in their community. For large projects, developers must also host a citizen participation meeting where developers introduce the project to the community.

For more information on citizen participation meeting requirements, such as how to notify residents, setting a time and place for the meeting, and preparing a final report, see the Citizen Participation Ordinance Guide.

## STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MEETINGS

A citizen participation meeting is an excellent opportunity for developers to introduce their project to the community, answer questions, and alleviate concerns before the project reaches public hearing. If led effectively, such meetings establish working relationships between developers and residents that last throughout the development review process. To ensure that your citizen participation meetings are successful, it is best to follow the guidelines below:

### Reach out Before the Meeting

The citizen participation meeting does not have to be the first time you speak with residents. Instead, reach out to neighborhood groups prior to the meeting to introduce yourself and learn about community concerns. That way, you will be prepared to address those issues during the meeting.

### Bring Visuals

Use a variety of visuals such as maps, plan view and axonometric drawings, computer-generated images, and elevations to help residents better understand proposed development. Visuals can be displayed on posters, a PowerPoint presentation, or handouts.

### Explain the Process

Explain how the proposed development will be reviewed by staff, planning commission, and city council, emphasizing the additional opportunities for residents to participate.

### Keep the Presentation Brief

Residents with pressing questions or concerns may become agitated if made to sit through a long presentation. Instead, give a succinct explanation of the proposed project and then provide ample time to listen to residents' comments, questions, and concerns.

### Provide Handouts

Handouts should include basic information about the project as well as your contact information. They may also include information on the development review process and any other details not covered by the presentation.

### Follow Up

You are not expected to have all the answers during the meeting. For the questions you cannot answer, get the contact information of the interested residents and follow up sometime shortly after the meeting.

Remember, your relationship with citizens extends far beyond the citizen participation meeting. Stay in contact with residents, answering questions as they arise. Fostering this relationship ensure that the development review process goes smoothly, and that the final product suits the community's needs.

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# The Site Plan Review Process for Major Projects

## A Step-By-Step Guide for Developers

Preparation	<b>Introductory Meeting with Planning Staff</b> Meet with staff to introduce your project, learn about the review process requirements, and prepare for the upcoming Citizen Participation Meeting by requesting a mailing list		<b>Design Review Board</b> If the petition meets certain criteria <sup>1</sup> , present to the DRB to ensure the project meets Downtown Design Guidelines	
	<b>Citizen Notification</b> After running your notice by planning staff, notify all property owners within 1,000 feet of the petition site at least 10 business days before your citizen meeting date		<b>Citizen Meeting</b> Present your project to citizens, listen to their comments and concerns, and answer any questions	
10+ Days Prior			<b>Prepare Final Report</b> Document meeting findings including how citizen concerns will be addressed	
Application	<b>Pre-submission Meeting</b> Meet with staff to ensure your petition is ready for submission. Bring a hard copy of your site plans and a completed Petitioner Checklist.		<b>File Petition</b> All materials (application, plans, supporting documents, fees, citizen participation report) must be electronically filed through eTRAKiT* by the filing deadline, typically by noon on the last Monday of the month	
			<b>*eTRAKiT</b> Ann Arbor's online system for developers and the public to find and access up-to-date information about properties and project status.  Visit <a href="http://www.a2gov.org/permits">www.a2gov.org/permits</a>	
Week 1 - 2	<i>At this point, all petition materials are on eTRAKiT for public view</i>	<b>Preliminary Review</b> Staff will review the petition at the Development Review Committee meeting one day following the filing deadline	<b>Notification of Acceptance or Rejection</b> Petitions that include all required information will be accepted for review -- petitioners will be notified the day after DRC meeting by the planner assigned to coordinate the review.	<b>Staff Review</b> City-wide staff review the petition and provide written comments within two weeks of the filing deadline. Major petitions go before the Advisory Development Committee to review initial staff comments.
Week 3 - 4	<b>Plans Revised by Petitioner</b> Petitioners will have a week and a half following the issuance of comments to upload revised plans		<b>Staff Review</b> Staff determines if revised plans address all comments	<b>If YES...</b> Petition moves forward to public notice
				<b>If NO...</b> Plans return to petitioner for further revision
Week 4 - 7	<b>Public Notice</b> Staff provides public notice that a public hearing will be held at an upcoming City Planning Commission meeting		<b>Plans Finalized</b> Petitioner finalizes plans and development agreement (if req'd)	<b>Staff Report</b> Staff prepares report for CPC with recommendation for approval, approval with conditions, or denial. CPC packets made publicly available online the Friday before the meeting.
Week 8	<b>CPC Meeting</b> Staff presents the petition in a public hearing format. Both the petitioner and the public may make comments.		<b>Recommends Approval</b> For petitions that require City Council approval <sup>2</sup> , City Planning Commission will recommend approval, and the petition will move on to City Council.	<b>Petition Postponed</b> If tabled, the petition will return to staff review for further revisions.
Week 12 - 16	<b>City Council Review</b> City Council receives staff report and minutes in packet. Both the petitioner and the public may make comments.		<b>Petition Approved</b> If approved, the project may proceed to requesting building permits.	<b>Petition Postponed</b> Petitioner will need to make revisions and may seek approval at a later meeting.

<sup>1</sup>The DRB reviews development that is (1) in the D1 or D2 zoning districts, that is located within the DDA, or that is zoned or proposed to be zoned PUD, (2) is NOT in an historic district, (3) proposes an increase in floor area, and (4) is site planned.  
<sup>2</sup>Projects on sites without a valid site plan, or project additions that are larger than 10% of the existing floor area or 10,000ft, whichever is larger, require City Council approval.

## NOTICE OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MEETING: *NAME OF PROJECT*

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### **Citizen Participation Meeting**

Postcards are being sent to all property owners within 1,000 ft of the project site to give notice that a development petition will be submitted to the City of Ann Arbor on *xx/xx/xx*. A citizen participation meeting will be held to give you an opportunity to review plans, ask questions, and provide comments that will be considered by the developer to finalize plans and then incorporated into a report for the City Planning Commission.

### **Project Location**

Place location map here

*Street Address of Project*

### **Project Description**

*Describe the project. Include the site location, proposed uses, buildings that will be constructed, altered, or demolished, streetscape modifications, and any proposed zoning changes.*

### **Meeting Logistics**

**Date:** *Day of Week, Month Day, Year*

**Time:** *0:00 am/pm*

**Place:** *Name and address of location, with room name or number if necessary*

### **Questions or Comments**

Questions or comments may be directed *Primary contact name and title* at *email address* or during business hours at *phone number*.

*Persons with disabilities are encouraged to participate. Accommodations may be arranged by contacting petitioner's name. Requests need to be received at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.*

**Return Address**

*Company / Developer Name*

*Line 1*

*Line 2*

**Proposed Project e.g. Site Plan Review**

In accordance with the City of Ann Arbor's Citizen Participation Ordinance, you are being notified that a proposal for *Project* will be submitted to the City of Ann Arbor's Planning Department. Details about a citizen participation meeting designed for you to learn about this project are described on the opposite side of this card.

Place site plan or elevation image here

Place address label here