



Village of Breckenridge

Public Participation Plan

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Public Participation Plan

Village of Breckenridge Public Participation Plan (P3)

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Summary

The Village of Breckenridge Public Participation Plan (hereafter called the “P3”) contains the policies and procedures for public involvement and outreach in the Village’s planning and development review and approval processes.

The Village of Breckenridge is required by State law, Village Code of Ordinances, and the bylaws of the individual authorities and commissions to pursue public participation in planning and development projects. The Village follows a comprehensive public involvement process, providing timely information through public notice, and supports early and continuing involvement of stakeholders in the planning and review process. The Village Council and boards and commissions hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times, make information publicly available in accessible formats on the Village website, and utilize alternative methods to target larger audiences when needed.

This P3 emphasizes the Village of Breckenridge’s commitment to the public participation process and effective means of communication with stakeholders in the planning and development activities. The Village recognizes the importance of public input in all aspects of these processes.

The Village reviews the effectiveness of the public participation activities listed in this P3 and adjusts accordingly in order to maximize their success. The Village staff also explores ways to improve communication strategies to reach the specific project stakeholders and gather community feedback. The Village considers any new methods of communication and engagement will update this P3 as needed.

Goals and Objectives

- The Village shall conduct proactive and inclusionary public participation techniques during all phases of the master planning or comprehensive planning process. Proactive participation denotes early and continuous involvement in important policy or project decisions before they are finalized.
- The Village shall utilize effective and equitable avenues for distributing information and receiving input. Every resident has a voice in the planning process, so the Village must reach as many as possible. Recognizing that no single technique or mechanism will work in all cases, the Village considers the special communication needs of the public and uses the best approaches to accomplish this objective.

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- The Village shall develop and maintain staff expertise in all aspects of participation. This will include techniques for managing language, cultural and economic differences that affect participation. Striving to convey issues and information in meaningful ways to various culture groups; and means for ensuring equitable representation for all segments of the population and sectors of the community.
- The Village shall support and encourage continuous improvement in the methods used to meet the public need for information and involvement. The Village is committed to seeking new ways to engage and keep public involved throughout the process.
- The Village shall record the results of public participation to the extent feasible and provide summaries back to the public. To properly capture concerns, priorities and vision of the public, the Village will develop a system to track the various techniques and mechanisms for public input. To maintain transparency and consistency, the Village will develop a method for sharing public participation with the public.

State Regulations

The State of Michigan legislation details the minimum requirements for public participation. The Village of Breckenridge relies on state statues to help guide its participation activities. Below are the laws regarding public input set by the state.

Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976)

The Michigan Open Meetings Act was created to require certain meetings of certain public bodies be open to the public, to require notice and the keepings of minutes of the meetings. The entirety of the act can be accessed through the state department or at the following website address: <http://legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-267-of-1976.pdf>

In accordance with PA 267 of 1976, the Village of Breckenridge will hold meetings in the Village Hall building located at 104 E. Saginaw Street, which is accessible to the public.

The public will be notified within 10 days of the first meeting of a public body in each calendar or fiscal year; the body will publically post a list stating the dates, times, and places of all regular meetings at Village Hall.

If there is a change in the 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 or irregular meetings, public bodies will post a notice indicating the date, time and place at least 18 hours before the meetings.

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Note: A regular meeting of a public body which is recessed for more than 35 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 the following:

Village of Breckenridge

104 E. Saginaw Street

PO Box 276

Breckenridge, MI 48615

Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008)

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act was created to provide for county, city and village planning and codify laws regarding it. The entirety of this act can be accessed through the state department or at the following website address:

[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(xj3g1ja1er4tq45ve4x5vuz\)\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-33-of-2008.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(xj3g1ja1er4tq45ve4x5vuz))/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-33-of-2008.pdf)

In accordance with 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:

- *Gratiot County*
- *Wheeler Township*
- *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 Breckenridge and any government entity that registers its name and mailing address for this purpose with the planning commission*
- *Gratiot County Road Commission*
- *Michigan Department of Transportation*

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

Before approving a proposed mater plan, a planning commission will hold not 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.

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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 of Breckenridge.

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, a 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

The stakeholders represent a diverse set of individuals, groups, and organizations that are interested or affected by the planning and Village processes. A different group of stakeholders may be engaged in each of the planning and development review processes, dependent on the nature of the project or plan, the level of community interest, and the community's financial involvement in the project. Below is a list of Stakeholder

- Residents
- Village Council
- Planning Commission
- Village Employees
- Commercial Business Owners
- Local Business Community
- Breckenridge Community Schools
- Gratiot County Government
- Wheeler Township Government
- Gratiot Area Chamber of Commerce
- Breckenridge Area Action Committee
- Civic and Social Organizations
- Students and student groups
- Potential investors and developers
- Relevant state agencies
- Other relevant stakeholders

Communication Toolbox

The Village of Breckenridge toolbox is full of methods including tried and true and the latest and greatest methods. Village staff are always looking for new ways to communicate to the public, researching and experimenting with creative new methods. Improving customer (resident) service performance is one of the Village's top priorities.

The Village updated their website in 2015 in an effort to streamline and enhance online communications. The Village also utilizes a social media account on Facebook.

The majority of Breckenridge residents speak English. There are no identified sub populations that do not speak English. In order to prevent miscommunications, the Village will make accommodations if it is found that a resident(s) have a language barrier. Minority representation is just as important as representation from all ages, races, education levels, income levels, and political beliefs, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

Basic Announcement Methods for Public meetings

- Newspaper announcements
- Website Posting
- Flier posting at Village hall entrance
- Council meeting announcements
- Inserts in property tax bills
- Village media account

Strong partnerships and stakeholder engagement make education and collaborative visioning possible. Committed to getting wide-ranging public input, the Village of Breckenridge uses creative and innovative strategies along with the more traditional methods. Below is a list and description of methods used in the past and are likely to be explored in the future.

Surveys

Surveys are useful for identifying specific areas of interest or concentration from a broad scope of ideas and 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 the topic. Surveys can be useful to get a general idea on a topic, but should not be used as the sole method of public input. As with most public input efforts, it is best to vary the delivery method. Technology has increased delivery methods of surveys, including via email blasts, social media and mobile phone texting.

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Workshops

Workshops are designed to hear public input on a specific topic. Often, workshops are a great way to educate the community and hear concerns, questions, and ideas. There are a variety of venues the Village of Breckenridge can hold workshops, depending on the scope of the project and expected attendance. The Village Hall, Library, School, Fire Hall are often used for public meetings. Workshops are typically conducted by The Village staff and/or Village President.

One-on-one interviews

Interviews are a great way to get specifics on a topic. Specific community leaders or vocal residents are identified, making them ideal candidates for an interview. One-on-one interviews are a great way to get perspective on how to address a topic. Interviews reflect the opinion of one individual and should not be considered the standing of the entire community.

Social networking

Technology offers a unique opportunity to give and receive information to a mass of people. The Village of Breckenridge posts events, shares information and even solicits feedback. This method is best used in conjunction with other methods because it excludes those who do not use social media. Social media has become an effective and efficient channel of communication between the Village and the customer (residents). The social media efforts have advanced the Village to a more visual digital presence. Social media's ability to drive community information, news and opinion in real time helps realize operating efficiencies, garner citizen engagement, and realize strategic objectives. Social media can be used to update audiences on progress of a project, distribute meeting notifications, solicit feedback from surveys or general comments, and generally engage and inform users.

Website

Websites offer an omnipresent, easily-accessible method for distributing information, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Users know where to go to get the information or can search for content online. The Village of Breckenridge's website offers an attractive and practical platform to access an abundance of information, service offerings, project information and much more.

Phone/Mobile

These days, most everyone has a mobile phone. Texting is considered to be a technology that most people have access to and know how to use. Texting potentially reaches the widest audience. Children and young adults with mobile devices are more likely to communicate via text than other traditional and social media methods. Texting technology has become more

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affordable and widespread. The Village intends to explore texting communication options available to implement in the future.

Outreach Strategies

There are many situations in which the Village will solicit public input for a plan or project. Public participation in the planning process not only satisfies political and public need, it also increases the likelihood of plan success by making a more durable document. When residents are involved in the plan process, they are more likely to stay involved afterwards by forwarding the vision and partaking in the action plan to better their community with a sense of ownership. Engagement efforts will vary depending upon the type, intensity, and location of a project or plan.

Master Plan Update

The Master Plan is the visioning document for the Village which future developments and policy are created from. Therefore, it is the most important planning process to get the broadest engagement and most public input. The Village uses a variety of communication tools with an effort to gain attention and involvement from the widest sample of residents, representative of the entire village. Master Plan updates are published in the local newspaper, one-on-one interviews, and surveys are conducted. The Village posts all notices on the Facebook page as well as the Village website. The Planning commission and Village council both hold public hearings and consider all public feedback.

Zoning Ordinance Update

The Zoning Ordinance is the regulating document which helps forward the vision of the village as well as promote the public health, safety and general welfare. Since the document establishes comprehensive zoning regulations and provides for the administration, enforcement and amendment of those regulations, it is important that the public are informed of and can give input about updates. Zoning regulations are based off the Master Plan and therefore doesn't need as extensive of an input process. However, informing and educating the public is important and the Village utilizes newspaper and website postings to get the word out on any zoning ordinance updates.

Parks and Recreation Plan

Surveys, workshops, one-on-one interviews, social media and website postings are the targeted communication avenues the Village will utilize when updating the Parks and Recreation Plan.

Low-Controversy Development Plan

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Development plans require a review by the Village staff. If the plan is low controversy, it may be approved administratively. If there are any questions, it may be forwarded to the Planning Commission for review and approval.

High-Controversy Development Plan

A high-controversy development plan will most likely require public hearings and input from relevant residents, business owners, and/or organizational leaders. Proactive notification and timely education can prevent controversy. Mailings, media, websites and other methods can keep residents informed to prevent misinformation and misunderstanding. Public hearings allow developers, residents and officials to work through development plans and solicit input.

Communication Results

The Village will communicate results from public participation by including it in the final plan of the documents. Media will also be released immediately following a public input session, publishing attendance, a synopsis of the input results as well as solicit future participation for future meetings. This demonstrates that the responses were heard, shows that public input is desired, and creates an environment of transparency.

Public Meetings: Meeting minutes are posted on the Village website.

Surveys: Surveys will be compiled by Village staff no later than four weeks after the survey is complete. Results will be posted online or in the appendix of the plan.

Workshops: Village staff are in charge of taking notes during workshops. These notes will be shared at the end of the event as well as posted on a plan website if applicable.

One-on-one interviews: Interview results will be kept confidential for the comfort of the participants unless otherwise requested.

Social networking: The Village Facebook page is operated by Village staff. Engagement traffic is analyzed and methods are adjusted accordingly.

Evaluation and Improvement

Continuous review of our public input processes is the only way that Breckenridge will remain a thriving and connected community. The residents are what make Breckenridge such a great community to live in. Their creativity and talent are irreplaceable in the planning processes of

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the community. Therefore, reflection on communication and involvement efforts is needed to verify that optimal methods are used. A Communication Event Satisfaction Survey will be used at each event (see appendix). Results can be analyzed by keeping records of participation, including the types of communication used, the quality and quantity of comments received, and the number of participants involved. The Village staff will be tasked with recording participation.

Each plan and project shall include a Public Participation Review. The Public Participation Review sample can be found at the end of this plan. Documentation will contribute to a public participation process that is continuously evolving to better obtain public input. To ensure that methods are effective, the P3 will be reviewed annually and updated when necessary. Methods that have failed will be removed from the P3, but will be reviewed and documented so that the same mistakes will not be made in the future.

CLOSING

Public Participation, when properly executed, builds community consensus and strengthens sense of community. 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 and reviewed as a daily guide to best incorporate the public into decisions that affect the Breckenridge community.

Internal Public Participation Evaluation

Type of public participation: _____

Date and Time: _____

Where was the event held? _____

Who facilitated the event? _____

How was the event advertised? _____

How many people attended? _____

Was there a group under-represented? Over-represented? _____

What ways could the event have been improved?
