



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.

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