

Community Engagement Statement

**City of Swartz Creek
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Swartz Creek, MI 48473
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Objectives

The City of Swartz Creek will enable processes that are inclusive, transparent, and responsive of the broad and diverse range of key stakeholders that make up the community as it embarks upon planning, reviewing, and acting on matters related to the development.

Expectations of the City of Swartz Creek are:

- To evaluate plans and projects individually and determine the scope, stakeholders, review process, impact, and scope of appropriate community involvement.
- To make plan and project information available in a timely manner in order to enable stakeholders to review, respond, and engage in the decision making process.
- To make information available in various mediums in order to serve populations with diverse needs, abilities, and expectations.
- To enable formal in informal communication with stakeholders regarding plans and projects to foster awareness, productive criticism, deliberation, and understanding.
- To encourage participation in planning as a first step to participation in project review and decision making.
- To foster effective means to involve key stakeholders in routine and unique planning and project processes.
- To make use of comments, requests, and recommendations of key stakeholders in the decision making processes involving planning and projects.
- To reasonably record, analyze, and report formal participation in its various forms to decision makers and the public.
- To include community input from beyond the formal boundaries of the city.

Statutory and Regulatory Requirements

- Swartz Creek City Charter
- Swartz Creek City Ordinances (Appendix A Zoning)
- Home Rule City Act (PA 279 of 1909)
- Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976)
- Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008)
- Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006)
- Downtown Development Authority Act (PA 197 of 1975)
- Commercial Redevelopment Act (PA 255 of 1978)
- Commercial Rehabilitation Act (PA 210 of 2005)
- Plant Rehabilitation and Industrial Development Act (PA 198 of 1974)
- Federal Community Development Block Grant Program
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund Program
- United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development Program

Key Stakeholders in the Swartz Creek Community

- Residents of Swartz Creek
- Prior residents and area residents from beyond Swartz Creek City
- Neighboring jurisdictions and county agencies
- Swartz Creek Community Schools
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Bishop Airport
- CN Rail
- Consumers Energy
- Telecommunication providers
- Metro Police Authority of Genesee County
- Swartz Creek Area Fire Department
- Perkins Library
- Swartz Creek Area Senior Center
- Swartz Creek Chamber of Commerce
- General Motors
- Sports Creek
- Institutions of worship
- Local community organizations

Processes for Planning and Projects

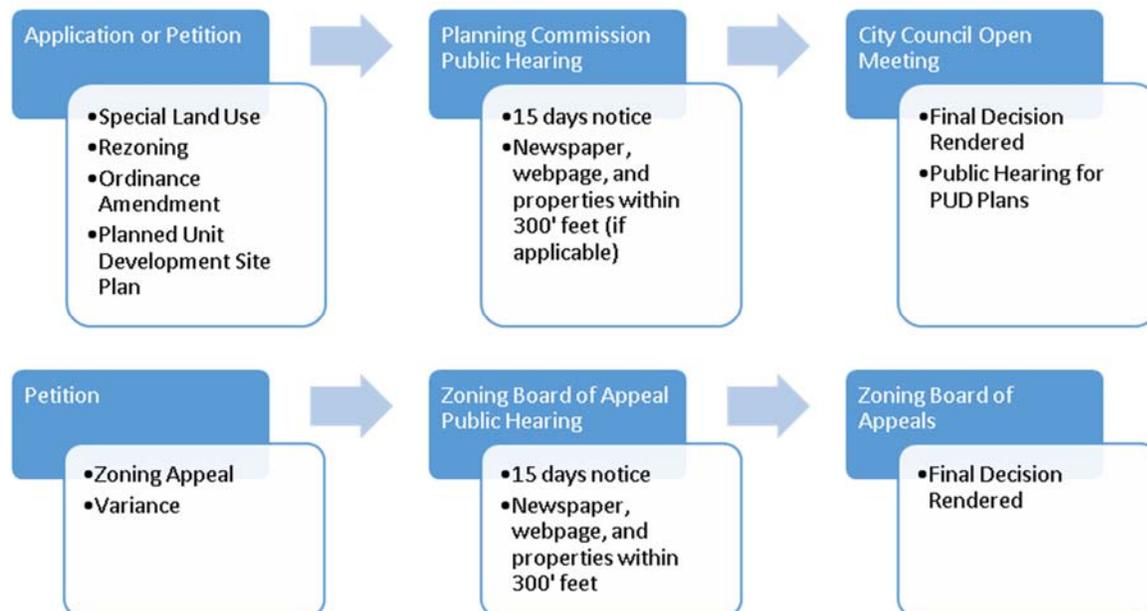
The City engages in various processes for proactively planning for its future and for acting on petitions for specific projects or developments.

Proactive planning ultimately falls under the purview of the city council to engage and approve various planning initiatives, including the city master plan, parks and recreation plan, zoning ordinance, Downtown Development Authority Plan, capital improvement plans, and miscellaneous plans. Such efforts, though approved by the city council, are often processed, publicly vetted, and heavily deliberated by other boards and commissions such as the Park Advisory Board, Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority, and ad hoc committees of the City Council. At times, joint responsibility is exercised between boards and commissions.

Project specific planning typically includes a petition for private investment that involves a zoning change, site plan, special use, or variance. The reviewing entities are the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals, in addition to the legislative responsibilities of the City Council. Planning for and review of public work projects can also be undertaken by the Downtown Development Authority, Planning Commission, and City Council.

Both plan creation and plan review necessitate public hearings and engagement. Objective notices, outreach, publication, hearings, and reporting are required for most formal plans and review processes. In addition, the city recognizes the need for more effective engagement for the purpose of informing the public, encouraging deliberation, and enabling stakeholder influence on the decision-making processes.

The flowcharts below indicate the required and expected form of the processes and public engagement:



Planning and Project Review Bodies

City Council

The Swartz Creek City Council is composed of seven members from the eligible electorate of the city. Four members are from wards, and three members are at-large. Terms are four years and are staggered two years apart for wards and at-large members. This is the city's legislative body and is responsible for all ordinances (including zoning/signs), the budget, and appointment of various administrative and official positions.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission is a nine member body, including the mayor and one other city council member. Terms are staggered and are for three years. The planning commission is the final authority for site plan approval. The commission is also responsible for guiding revision of the city's master plan, reviewing zoning amendments, reviewing special land uses, and consideration of the composite capital improvement program.

Zoning Board of Appeals

The ZBA consists of five members, including the planning commission chair, and city council member, and two alternates. The commission has three primary functions. The first is to consider interpretations of the zoning code. The second is to rule on appeals of decisions made by staff, the planning commission, and city council as it relates to zoning. The last is to consider use and dimensional variances.

Downtown Development Authority

The DDA is a nine member body, with the majority of said members having an interest in real property in the district. This body has many charges, but does not have statutory review authority. Due to its role in improving the downtown area for physical, economic, and social change, the DDA often is involved in public processes that involve investment in physical infrastructure, development of programming, and investment in private property.

Park Advisory Board

The Park Board is composed of nine members of the community. They currently serve three year, staggered terms. The primary function of the board is to revise the city's park plan and oversee its implementation. This board is involved in planning the physical and social role of parks in the community.

The city has many boards and commissions, which serve as the most direct conduit between the individual members of the electorate, the general public, and the decision making process of the city council.

The city encourages service on such boards and commissions by eligible stakeholders, as well as involvement of the general public via direct meeting participation, written correspondence, and electronic communication.

The city's webpage is a one-stop shop for meeting packets (including minutes), existing plans and studies, meeting schedules, board/commission job descriptions, project review flowcharts/checklists, and much more:

<https://www.cityofswartzcreek.org/index.php/departments/community-development.html>

Open Meetings

All meetings of the city's council, boards, commissions, and committees shall be open to the public in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, PA 267 of 1976 as amended. Public notices for regular meetings are posted at city hall, are included in the community calendar, and on the city's webpage. Special meetings are posted at city hall, on the city's webpage, and are published/mailed/posted/delivered in accordance with applicable statute.

The city conducts a mailing to all properties within 300 feet of a property subject to zoning (9 or less parcels), special land use, ZBA appeal, and ZBA variance. Such notices are also published in a newspaper of general circulation 15 days or more prior to the meeting.

All meetings are held in a facility accessible to persons with disabilities, and the City provides reasonable accommodations.

Methods and Expectations of Engagement

Inform

- **Website:** www.cityofswartzcreek.org contains all meeting packets (with minutes), the community calendar, forms/applications, routine service information, online services, contact information, and much more.
- **Newsletter:** The city distributes a paper and digital newsletter, which is mailed to all occupants of record. Information covers routine services, resident/business expectations on matters such as sidewalk maintenance, and coming events/projects.
- **Newspaper:** The Swartz Creek View is the newspaper of general circulation. Writers attend nearly all city board, commission, and council meetings. The weekly paper is used for formal notices and all editions are shared on the city's Facebook page.
- **Printed Postings/Announcements:** The city maintains a well-used notice board at the city offices. Notices are also distributed on utility bills. Announcements and the upcoming meeting schedule is included in each city council packet.

- **Notices:** Notices of the city shall meet statutory standards. Notices shall also endeavor to describe locations, projects, impacts, and standards in common terms. E.g. property subject to a variance will be identified with its street address, common business name, and other visual cues in addition to a parcel identification number; zoning standards shall be described in addition to being listed by their Section number.
- **Email:** All elected officials and the city manager can be emailed through the city website. The city maintains a distribution list for all boards, commissions, and council. Any entity can subscribe to receive such emails.
- **Social Media:** The city uses Facebook to communicate public emergencies, public notices, share news stories, and announce events. The city also receives and responds to personal messages.
- **SeeClickFix Notice:** The Service Creek Application enables the city to post and communicate community information to participating members of the free application. It also enables reverse 911 style email and notice distribution to subscribers. For example, a water main break can be GIS located and emailed/noticed to subscribers with an image and description of the issue, impact, and time of action.
- **Public Meetings:** These meetings are always conducted as an open meeting of a public body and are used to share information with the public and to receive formal comments from stakeholders.
- **Open Houses:** These events are less formal information sharing proceedings in which city official (or representatives) are able to host information sharing and potential feedback solicitation regarding a specific plan, project, or other matter of interest. For example, the city may set up an open house in the conference room of a restaurant for a day to share information and received feedback on the 20 year street asset management plan.

Interact

- **SeeClickFix (311 Service) Report:** The city operates an online and application based service by which members of the public can report issues, recommendations, and problems in a public format. The reports are public to all members, including the city response and actions taken. For example, a member might report that there are no accessible swings in a park, and the city will acknowledge the request (to be able to remedy the situation or not) and will eventually close the case with the solution. Reports can be made anonymously by device application (Service Creek), Facebook, or the website and can include images and a GIS location.

- **Surveys:** Surveys, in digital and traditional form, are used to canvass large swaths of stakeholders for objective and subjective data that can be used in shaping a vision, project, or plan objective. For example, the city engaged the general public in an online and print survey regarding its self-perception during the branding and marketing process.
- **Workshops:** Workshops are specific events hosted by the city and inviting all key stakeholders to communicate and coordinate strategy creation for a specific plan or project. This might include community input and deliberation regarding a proposal park feature, trail plan, or downtown investment.
- **Focus Groups:** These groups are assembled by commissions or boards to resolve issues or make recommendations regarding specific projects. Focusing on developer projects and their relationship to the community, these groups usually consist of a development applicant, city staff, known or self-identified key stakeholders, and board/commission representation. For example, the group might be charged with addressing a stakeholder concern about drainage or noise from a proposed development.

Impact

- **Boards & Commissions:** Qualifying individuals are encouraged to study the job descriptions of various board and commission roles and to make application to serve. Membership on a board or commission is the most direct manner to gain information, deliberate relevant matters, and contributed to the decision making process. For example, a local church that is concerning about community change could request a representative seat on the Downtown Development Authority to increase their impact as a stakeholder.
- **Ad Hoc Committees:** Mayoral Ad Hoc committees are critical to communicating and resolving in-depth and technical matters. Such groups can be formed of any array of key stakeholders to resolve the details of a street reconstruction project, neighborhood forestry objectives, streetscape design, and more. These are specific purpose committees formed under the council by-laws, and they dissolve upon completion of their dedicated task.
- **Public Comment:** Comments made at the various meeting, open house, workshop, and related venues (as well as all electric/written correspondence) is the most fundamental way to impact the decision making process for those stakeholders not directly involved in an official capacity. This option is readily available, transparent, and immediate.

Communicating Results

- **Minutes:** Minutes from boards, commissions, and committees communicate expert level findings, recommendations, public comment, and outcomes.
- **City Manager Reports/Packets:** City Manager packets, including reports, are the backbone of consolidated communication regarding the status of all plans and projects. The reports are in every city council packet and are on the city's webpage in current and archived form, enabling the public to view the progress of such plans and projects over time. Raw data, including survey results, all city minutes, routine reports, and staff/consultant findings are available and filed with the packets.
- **Annual Reports:** Annual reports (filed for PC, ZBA, Park Board, and DDA) contain succinct data, findings, outcomes, and other valuable information that is used to report all substantial activity for the respective body's policy, plan, and project activity for that calendar year. The report findings and recommendations often impact the decision making processes at the highest levels of city government.

Evaluating Results

In communicating results, an expectation of outreach will be to include attendance and participation data for staff, council, and related bodies to gauge effectiveness of outreach, venues, and related engagement circumstances.

Surveys, workshops, and related events/input instruments shall include questionnaires that include the following at a minimum:

- How did you learn of this event/project?
- How would you rate the venue/materials provided/speaker/etc?
- What can the community do to improve information sharing/feedback collection/inclusion in the decision making process?

Updating the Community Engagement Strategy

The City of Swartz Creek includes a Redevelopment Ready Communities section in the city manager's report. Quarterly audits are included in the packet and administrative processes are in place to review best practices of the RRC program, including the Community Engagement Strategy. This strategy will be reviewed by the city planning commission with their annual report and recommendations for changes will be made at that time.

