

Public Participation Plan Zoning Code Rewrite Project City of Wisconsin Rapids

INTRODUCTION

Public participation in government decision making is vital in our system of governance. While it is true that our elected officials were chosen to make decisions on behalf of the people they represent, it is also true that elected officials need to inform, be informed by, and interact with the public on an ongoing basis if their representation is to be meaningful. Regular and continuing involvement in government decision making is the very basis for the idea of citizenship. Public participation is likely to produce better decisions by utilizing the knowledge of the populace and by allocating part of the responsibility for formulating and implementing decisions to the citizens.

The City of Wisconsin Rapids is therefore committed to encouraging and facilitating public participation throughout the preparation, review, and adoption of the zoning code. This public participation Planning serves as a basic framework for achieving an open dialogue between city residents, property owners, city staff, and elected and appointed officials.

OBJECTIVES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation is intended to achieve the objectives listed below.

- The process engages people of all races, ethnic backgrounds, and income levels.
- The public has opportunities to provide input (both formally and informally) to appropriate decision makers.
- The public has access to technical information created during the process.
- Elected officials will have input from a broad range of perspectives and interests in the community.
- Public input is elicited through a variety of means (electronic, printed, and oral) in such a way that it may be carefully considered and responded to in a timely fashion.
- The process strengthens the sense of community and civic engagement.
- The process furthers the vision of having active and positive participation throughout the process by those most directly affected.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Wisconsin Rapids Common Council, Mayor, Planning Commission, city staff, and project consultant will share the responsibility for implementing the public participation activities described in this plan.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPING THE ZONING CODE

The Planning Commission will have the primary responsibility of developing a proposed zoning code and submitting it to the Common Council for further deliberations. The Common Council has the responsibility and obligation to determine the direction and content of the zoning code.



PLANNED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

- The project consultant will create a website to keep stakeholders informed during the preparation, review, and adoption of the zoning code.
- The project consultant will conduct confidential listening sessions with key stakeholders, which may include elected and appointed officials, department staff, and representatives of civic organizations, the local chamber of commerce, business groups, neighborhood groups, and the like.
- The project consultant will conduct a workshop for the Planning Commission and other invited participants to identify issues the new zoning code should address in new or different ways. After that initial exercise, workshop participants will identify and evaluate alternative solutions to the key issues. The purpose of this exercise is to develop consensus on what needs to be addressed in the rewrite and sufficient direction to begin drafting the zoning ordinance.
- The project consultant and city staff will conduct an open house prior to the public hearing to create an informal setting for residents and others to learn more about the proposed zoning code and to offer their suggestions and comments.
- The project consultant will use InSight Code Viewer to share the proposed zoning regulations in an online interactive platform so that people can find out how their property may be zoned and related development standards.
- A public hearing will be conducted to solicit input relating to the proposed zoning code and map.
- The project consultant, in consultation with planning director, may issue news releases when appropriate.
- Residents and others will be able to provide written comments throughout the entire project.
- Various drafts of the zoning code will be made available on the above-mentioned project website along with other related information as appropriate.

MEETING GUIDELINES

- A meeting agenda will be established that states the name of the body conducting the meeting and list items to be discussed and/or acted upon.
- The scheduled date and time will be convenient to encourage participation by city residents and others.
- Meetings will be held in a convenient location open to the public.
- If the meeting is intended to be a working session for the Planning Commission or Common Council, members of the public that attend will be allowed to provide comment during a designated portion(s) of the meeting (e.g., at the start of meeting, at the end, or both).
- If the meeting is intended to solicit public input, a designated facilitator or chair will (1) provide opening remarks outlining the purpose of the meeting, (2) describe procedures attendees should use during the meeting when offering input and how the input will be used, and (3) conduct the



meeting in an orderly fashion to ensure that all attendees have an opportunity to offer comments, discuss issues, or provide testimony.

- All persons attending a public meeting/hearing that desire to address the assembly should be allowed to do so. However, specific factors, such as the meeting or hearing purpose, number in attendance, time considerations, or future opportunities to participate, may require that appropriate constraints be applied. These constraints will be clearly outlined by the facilitator.
- Depending on the nature of the meeting, minutes or summaries shall be prepared and posted on the project website.
- Written materials provided to members of the body conducting the meeting will be available to members of the public upon request.
- Special arrangements will be made under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) with sufficient advance notice.

OPPORTUNITY FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS

- The project website will include the name, address, and e-mail address (if applicable) of a person(s) to whom written comments should be sent, along with any upcoming deadlines for submitting comments.
- At public meetings or hearings, the facilitator or chair will clearly announce any deadline for submitting written comments, if such comments are allowed subsequent to the meeting or hearing.
- Persons speaking or testifying will be encouraged to concisely express their comments and if appropriate provide specific details in writing.

CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Decision makers may continue a public hearing for the purpose of addressing public comments, provided the time and date of the public hearing is announced at the time the public hearing is tabled.
- Prior to the public hearing conducted by the Common Council, a report containing written comments received during the planning process and written responses, if any, and relevant meeting summaries will be made available to the council for their review and consideration.
- Substantive written comments relating to studies, analyses, or reports, along with appropriate responses, will be included in published documents if deemed appropriate.

PUBLIC NOTICES FOR MEETINGS AND HEARINGS

Public notices of all meetings and public hearings will be prepared and distributed consistent with applicable notice requirements of the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law, and any other notice requirements imposed by local ordinance or bylaws. At a minimum, the requirements of §19.31, Wisconsin Statutes, pertaining to public meetings and notification will be met.



Public notices for public hearings will be placed in the City's official paper and posted on the project website. Public notices for public hearings should include the following information:

- Name of the governmental body that will meet.
- Date, time, and location of the hearing.
- General description of the matter to be discussed and acted upon.
- Notice that interested persons may present testimony regarding matters on the agenda at the meeting/hearing or in writing to the board or committee prior to a specified deadline.
- Contact information for further information about the proposal.

APPROVAL

The Wisconsin Rapids Common Council approved this public participation plan on September 15, 2015.