



# BUENA VISTA CHARTER TOWNSHIP

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

**2022**



A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Public participation is a critical element in the development of broadly inclusive communities that are responsive to their constituents. Participation can be a powerful force as it relates to civic matters; it can drive the support needed to bolster a public initiative to success, or in other cases, significant public opposition too late in the process can spell disaster for a project. Proactive communities recognize that harnessing early input from the public is an essential step for major projects, from master planning to physical development projects.

Meaningful engagement also has the additional benefit of cultivating a more informed citizenry when it comes to identifying and addressing Township issues. When residents are aware of the facts and circumstances regarding changes in their community, they are more empowered to provide constructive feedback that can result in project modifications that better align with the needs and wants of the community. Consistently meeting the public’s expectations for public engagement serves to build a sense of trust and understanding that enhances the bond between Buena Vista Charter Township and its residents, and often leads to better outcomes than if it did not.

This Public Participation Plan is a guide for the leaders and citizens of Buena Vista Charter Township to guide collective efforts on engagement; describing the way it is expected to happen and when and where it will take place. By adopting this plan, the goals and strategies become a policy by which the Township will seek to improve its communications and outreach efforts. This plan provides stakeholders with a resource that they may look to for important details on how information will be communicated to them.





### HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This plan should be consulted by Buena Vista Charter Township leaders whenever opportunities arise for obtaining public input. Processes such as master planning or parks and recreation plan updates have requirements for public input and there are a variety of ways for obtaining this input. As these processes and others like them happen, the Township should consider employing multiple methods and opportunities in order to capture the thoughts and opinions of the broad-range of stakeholders in Buena Vista. Beyond the development of plans, the Township may also wish to solicit feedback from its stakeholders on specific development projects, events, or initiatives. For these more focused activities, Township leaders should try to identify who may be affected by the outcomes of the activity and attempt to target those stakeholder groups using the methods they are most likely to respond to.

Residents of Buena Vista Charter Township may use this plan as a resource for understanding how Township leaders might try to connect with them when input is solicited. The Township will provide annual updates on public engagement efforts to the Township Board of Trustees via the Annual Planning Commission Report. By understanding these practices a resident can be aware of the opportunities and venues where efforts will likely be targeted, and also some basic familiarity of the protocol for each of these activities.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GUIDING STRATEGY

Buena Vista Charter Township strives to provide effective communications that meet community goals and objectives, as well as provide transparency in governance through a variety of methods to share ideas and information and understand the needs of residents. A guiding strategy must begin with a vision of the future that the community hopes to achieve. The Township's goals are broad statements that, if completed, help achieve a piece of that vision.

**Vision:** *Buena Vista Charter Township is planning, rebuilding, and enhancing a new quality of life that values education, family, and commerce.*

**Mission:** *Buena Vista Charter Township strives to be a safe, progressive, diverse community where families and businesses live, work, and play.*



Goal 1	<i>Improve and progress current infrastructure</i>
Goal 2	<i>New and/or rehabilitated housing developments</i>
Goal 3	<i>Affordable housing developments</i>
Goal 4	<i>Reduce education attainment barriers</i>
Goal 5	<i>Increase public relations</i>
Goal 6	<i>Appropriate avenues for community beautification</i>
Goal 7	<i>Attract and retain permanent residents</i>
Goal 8	<i>More support to ALICE population</i>
Goal 9	<i>Increase access to entry-level employment</i>
Goal 10	<i>Implementation of healthy lifestyle initiatives</i>

*\*Based on 2020 BVCT Community Needs Assessment*

*\*Goals not listed in particular order*

### TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNANCE

The highest priority of Buena Vista Charter Township is to provide residents with increased access to transparency in governance through relevant information and in a timely fashion through multimedia platforms including web, digital and print. Governance is not exclusive to government affairs. Governance includes businesses, nonprofits, non-government organizations, associations or any group engaged in some purposeful activity.

Transparency refers to the availability of information to the general public and clarity about government rules, regulations and decisions. Transparent procedures include open meetings, financial disclosure statements, freedom of information legislation, budgetary review and audits. Transparent governance means not hiding anything from citizens, not engaging in shady deals and not making whimsical or discretionary decisions.

Overall, transparent governance ensures that money is spent towards its intended purpose. This also establishes trust. After all, the government is instituted for the purpose of serving the needs of the people, in an efficient, honest and effective way. Hence, desired outcomes are met.



REDEVELOPMENT READY COMMUNITIES

In 2019, the Buena Vista Charter Township Board of Trustees resolved its intent to pursue Redevelopment Ready Community certification by engaging in the MEDC’s Redevelopment Ready Communities program, which means these best practices must be included in the Public Participation Plan’s development to maintain a RRC-compliant document. The basic framework of criteria and expectations from these best practices, listed below, have been incorporated into this plan.

**Best Practice 1.4 - Public Participation Plan**

1. The community has a documented public participation strategy for engaging a diverse set of community stakeholders.
  - The strategy identifies key stakeholders, including those not normally at that visioning table.
  - The strategy describes public participation methods and the appropriate venue to use each method.
  - If a third party is consulted, they adhere to the public participation strategy.
  - The community assists the developer in soliciting input on a proposal early in the site plan approval process as detailed in the public participation strategy.
  
2. The community demonstrates that public participation efforts go beyond basic methods.

Best Practices	Proactive Practices
Following open meetings requirements Website postings Local cable notifications Newspaper postings Flyers in public places Attachments to water bills Announcements at meetings	Individual mailings Community workshops Social media usage (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) One-on-one interviews Design charrettes Focus groups Crowdsourcing

3. The community shares outcomes of public participation processes.
  - The community tracks the success of various outreach methods.
  - The community participation results are communicated in a consistent and transparent manner.



The RRC evaluation criteria and their expectations, while not a legal requirement, are important benchmarks that cities around Michigan should strive to achieve to achieve their planning and development goals. For the Public Participation Plan component in particular, the Best Practices suggest contemporary methods for connecting with the community with the intent of reaching out to stakeholders who may not typically be at the table.

### HOW PUBLIC PARTICIPATION HAPPENS IN BUENA VISTA

Public participation may be solicited for a number of reasons. This section provides information on the range of communication tools and methods that the Township employs, where they happen, and attempts to identify the major stakeholder organizations and partners that should be reached on projects to connect with a broad cross section of the community.

The MEDC’s Redevelopment Ready Communities program breaks down engagement methods into two types; traditional and proactive:

*Traditional methods* include tools and practices that have been commonly used by communities for decades. They are the tried and true tools that residents have grown accustomed to and their effectiveness and efficiency is why they are still used today.

*Proactive methods* include tools and practices that have increased in popularity among community developers in recent years. This may utilize modern technology or attempt to connect with residents on a more personal level to understand the complexity of an issue.

#### Public Meetings

Public meetings in Michigan require compliance with the Open Meetings Act, a State law that requires all meetings of public bodies to follow basic rules that ensure transparency in government. This includes responsibilities for governments to post the dates, times, and location of meetings; the inclusion of public comment opportunities; and assurance that all decision-making actions of the body will happen where the public is able to witness it.

You should expect to arrive just prior to the start of a meeting, as the order of business typically begins at the published meeting start time. If you wish to speak on a particular topic, it may be helpful to come with prepared notes and plan to address your points in under three minutes. Depending on the body’s established rules, there may be varying time lengths permitted for commenters, or a commenting period may be set aside for only comments on the items listed on the agenda.



The chair of the board you are attending should announce these details, if they are relevant. The public body may vary on its level of formality and public comments do not require a response from the body, but they may engage in conversation when they feel it is important. Remember to be respectful to the public officials you are addressing; they are our neighbors who are volunteering their time and trying their best to make Buena Vista Charter Township better.

Some public meetings will also include a special type of public comment referred to as a “public hearing” on a specific topic, such as the rezoning of a parcel of land, or on the passage of a new ordinance. This happens in addition to regular public comment and if you plan on speaking on this topic, those thoughts should be held until the hearing is officially opened. This opportunity allows a stakeholder more time and a chance for dialog with the public body they are addressing. If you would like to address the body but cannot attend a meeting due to other circumstances, you are welcomed to write a letter to that body and your communication will be shared or summarized at its next meeting upon receiving it, as time permits.

### **Buena Vista Charter Township Website**

Updates and pertinent Township information can be easily accessed via the Buena Vista Charter Township website; [www.bvct.org](http://www.bvct.org). The website provides a wide range of information including, but not limited to, important dates, plans and ordinances, forms, and Township news. Checking the Township website should always be a community member’s first option for finding the most up-to-date information in Buena Vista.

### **Newsletter**

The Buena Vista Charter Township newsletter is sent out quarterly to residents. The newsletters carry important local news, events, and announcements going on within the township. Copies of the newsletter can be found on the Township website.

### **Flyers Posted in Public Spaces**

Typically any public event or service flyer will be affixed to a bulletin board, visible directly upon entry into the Township Hall. This method gives building users the opportunity to view schedules and notices as they visit the Township Hall for other business.

### **Utility Bill Attachments**

In some instances, communications may be distributed to residents via their utility bills. This is an effective way to ensure comprehensive outreach. Communications on utility billings may be done with little to no additional cost to the Township, as the cost of postage is already included.



### **Social Media**

Among the many web-based social media platforms available, the Township makes use of Facebook to communicate with users that follow Buena Vista Charter Township. Quick highlights and links to more in-depth features from the Township website are commonly shared on this Facebook page. Users may interact with the Township's page administrator or other users to share information and stay current on the latest developments.

### **Media Outlets**

Buena Vista Charter Township periodically collaborates with the WTLZ (Kiss 107.1) radio broadcasting station and WSGW News radio broadcasting station in distributing Township announcements. The Township also updates Michigan Banner News with community information.

### **Community Surveys and Crowdsourcing**

Community surveys are helpful tools for acquiring a broad sample of conditions and opinions from the community and may take the form of a paper survey or a web-based questionnaire. After returned surveys are compiled, trends can be observed and reported which helps Township leadership make more informed decisions about the community. Commonly, the Township will announce a survey is open through varying outreach methods including, but not limited to, the Township website, Facebook, postcard mailings, and announcements at meetings.

### **Informational Sessions and Community Workshops**

When the highest level of engagement is needed, the Township Superintendent, elected officials, department heads, and consultants will work together to host workshops and information sessions for connecting with residents on a particular topic. This type of activity is less formal than a public meeting and allows a greater level of information sharing between both parties. In a workshop or information session, the public is the primary audience.

### **Stakeholder Focus Groups**

Directly connecting with individual stakeholders and small groups of similar individuals, such as seniors or young adults, allows Township leadership to understand the needs and wants of the community from a personal stance. When it becomes clear that a particular group may be affected by a decision, or if the Township wants to learn what the perspective is from a particular group, it may engage stakeholders using interviews and/or focus groups.





STAKEHOLDERS IN BUENA VISTA

The stakeholders of Buena Vista Charter Township make this community the vibrant and culturally-rich place that it is. Buena Vista encompasses different organizations and partners that help build community and connect our residents. The following list of stakeholder organizations attempts to encompass some of the local groups that have a presence in the Township.

Stakeholder Name
Nexteer Automotive
FedEx
Amazon
Duro-Last, Inc.
Saginaw County H.W. Browne Airport
F.P. Horak Co.
Food Process Solutions
Tia's Soul
Baldwin's Smokehouse Barbeque
Alejandro's Mexican Grill
Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen
Big John Steak & Onion

## Appendix A

Redevelopment Ready Communities Program Resolution

**BUENA VISTA CHARTER TOWNSHIP**

**RESOLUTION No. 2022- 02**

**Whereas**, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) has established the statewide Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program to empower communities to shape their future and maximize economic potential; and

**Whereas**, RRC is a program that provides technical assistance to and certifies Michigan communities who actively engage stakeholders and plan deliberate, fair and consistent processes; and

**Whereas**, the Township of Buena Vista recognizes the value of the RRC Program and seeks to improve its redevelopment readiness via a detailed review of existing development processes; and

**Whereas**, the RRC program includes evaluating and strengthening the development-related partnerships between the Board of Trustees and stakeholder organization such as: the MEDC, Buena Vista Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Buena Vista Planning Commission (PC) and Saginaw County; and

**Whereas**, the Buena Vista Charter Township seeks to formally participate in the Redevelopment Ready Communities program and desires to become certified as a Redevelopment Ready Community.

**Now, Therefore, It is Resolved as follows:**

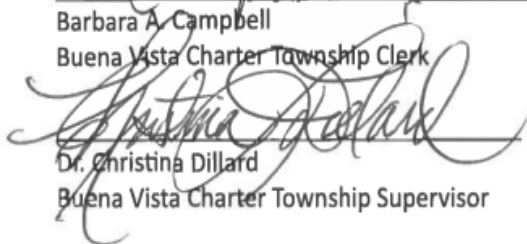
1. The Buena Vista Charter Township Board of Trustees is willing to participate in the MEDC Redevelopment Ready Communities Program, including increased interaction and partnership with the MEDC, DDA, PC, Saginaw County and other stakeholders in the development review process.
2. It is the intention of the Township of Buena Vista to utilize the RRC Best Practices and evaluation process to improve our processes and communication with stakeholders.
3. Board of Trustees is hereby authorized to proceed toward implementation of the recommendations necessary to receive RRC Certification from the MEDC.

**Certificate**

I, Barbara Campbell, Township Clerk, do hereby certify that the above resolution is true and exact copy adopted at a regular meeting of Buena Vista Charter Township Council held on Monday, March 25, 2019 at 6:00pm.



Barbara A. Campbell  
Buena Vista Charter Township Clerk



Dr. Christina Dillard  
Buena Vista Charter Township Supervisor