

# Village of Almont Public Participation Plan

December 2020

# 1.1 Plan Objective

The public participation plan ensures that the Village will do its best to involve the public in its decision-making processes. Early and continuous public participation helps interested citizens to be as informed as possible throughout the decision-making process. This helps to ensure that the resulting plan will reflect the needs and interests of the public. The public can assist as active participants in short and long-term planning, discovering solutions, and determining funding priorities. This plan is a tool to ensure transparency and improve communication between Village staff, elected officials, and citizens.

Common times at which public input should be solicited include updates to the Master Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Downtown Development Plan, Master Parks & Recreation Plan, and other projects significant to the community.

# 1.2 State Law Regarding Public Participation

## Open Meetings Act

In accordance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976), the Village of Almont will hold meetings in the municipal building located at 817 N. Main St., Almont MI 48003 in the meeting room unless otherwise posted. This location is accessible to the general public and accessible by people with disabilities. The Almont Village Council adopted procedures to govern participation by staff, councilpersons and members of the public in all Village meetings held electronically pursuant to PA 228 of 2020.

The public will be notified within 10 days of the first meeting of a public body in each calendar year. The Village Clerk will publicly post a list stating the dates, times and places of all its regular meetings at its principle office. If there is a change in schedule, within three days of the meeting in which the change is made, the Village Clerk will post a notice stating the new dates, times and places of regular meetings.

A regular meeting of a public body which is recessed for more than 36 hours can only be reconvened if a notice is posted 18 hours in advance.

The Village Clerk will post a notice indicating the date, time, and place at least 18 hours before all special and irregular meetings.

Public bodies may 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.

Upon written request, anyone can be put on a mailing list to be notified by mail in advance of all meetings. This may be subject to annual fees set by resolution of the Village Council. To be added to the mailing list, please contact:

Clerk/Treasurer Kimberly Keesler  
817 N. Main St Almont, MI  
48003  
kkeesler@almontvillage.org

Michigan Planning Enabling Act

In accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA 33 of 2008) the following parties will be notified via first class mail, personal delivery, or email by the planning commission of the intent to create a master plan and request the recipient's cooperation and comment:

- Lapeer County Board of Commissioners
- The Region V Planning region
- The Lapeer County Planning Commission (presently not in existence)
- Each public utility company, railroad company, and public transportation agency owning or operating a public utility, railroad, or public transportation system within the local unit of government, and any government entity that registers its name and mailing address for this purpose with the planning commission
- If the master plan will include a master street plan, the Lapeer County Road Commission and MDOT will also receive a notice

Once the draft master plan has been submitted to the Village Council for review and approval for distribution, the draft plan will be submitted to the above listed entities for review.

Before approving a proposed master plan, the 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.

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 the Tri-City Times. The planning commission will also submit notice of the public hearing by first class mail, personal delivery, or email to the above listed entities for review.

After the adoption of the master plan, the planning commission will publish and distribute copies of the master plan or of any report and employ other means of publicity and education as appropriate.

# Goals & Action Plans

The public participation plan has 7 main goals. Plans associated with these goals have been created to support the overall public participation plan.

## **Goal 1: We will strive to seek a wide range of stakeholders who represent the community rather than reflect the needs of special interests.**

When people from the same group of stakeholders voice their opinion and are the only ones to attend a meeting, it seems that they have the only viewpoint when in fact, there may be many others who feel quite the opposite but did not voice an opinion. That is why reaching out to a variety of stakeholders is so important.

Important stakeholder groups may include:

- Almont Community Schools
- Almont Township Government
- City of Imlay City, Dryden, Romeo, etc.
- Lapeer County Health Department
- Almont Area Seniors
- Almont Fire Department
- Almont Chamber of Commerce
- Almont DDA
- Local Churches
- Youth on Main Street
- Condominium and homeowners' associations

### **Action Plan:**

1. Maintain a list of stakeholder groups with appropriate contact information to send them notifications about planning sessions or public meetings that may be of interest to them
2. Encourage the stakeholder groups to communicate and interact with one another outside of public meetings to better understand each other's perspective and leverage one another's strengths
3. Commit Village staff to attend 1-2 meetings of local community groups per year to keep lines of communication open and demonstrate interest

## **Goal 2: Use effective means of communication. This includes distributing information and recording public comments.**

People have different outlets of communication that work well for them. Older people may favor to read about community events in the newspaper while younger people may prefer social media. Some may enjoy attending public meetings while others are prevented from doing so for lack of child care or work requirements. The Village must seek to ensure that information is disseminated in a way that does not favor one group of stakeholders over another.

**Action Plan:**

1. Follow all provisions of the Open Meetings Act
2. Continue to post meeting schedules in the newspaper and on the website
3. Continue to broadcast live Council meetings on YouTube.
4. Hold community forums and workshops when appropriate
5. Create FAQ sheets and charts or graphs to succinctly communicate important information that is easily accessed by citizens
6. Consider the thoughtful use of social media such as Facebook to appeal to younger citizens
7. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the website and reformat the information to make the most sought-after information the most accessible
8. Obtain the services of an intern dedicated to marketing the Village and increasing community engagement

**Goal 3: Hold events that promote meaningful public participation other than traditional public meetings.**

Traditional council and board meetings are very important; however, they are commonly not in a format that encourages active participation. The Village should seek to hold meetings and workshops that are more interactive than traditional public meetings.

**Action Plan:**

1. Hold ribbon cutting ceremonies and municipal open houses to invite citizens to experience what is happening in the Village
2. Offer recruitment events to help fill vacancies on Village boards and committees as well as help people learn how they can volunteer
3. Hold casual meetings quarterly at local establishments where residents can meet with the Manager and another staff member to discuss issues of interest to them

**Goal 4: Effectively record public comments**

To ensure that public comments are being incorporated into community planning, it is important to record the comments properly and ensure they can be readily accessed.

**Action Plan:**

1. Distribute well designed surveys via mail or email and compile the data promptly
2. Record responses in a way that is easy to understand (i.e. graphs, tables, etc.)
3. Keep public comments on file along with meeting minutes

**Goal 5: Maintain & develop staff expertise in facilitating public participation** Presenting information doesn't always come as second nature, especially when presenting to audiences of wide variety. Staff should be trained in methods of information presentation that will work for a diversity of cultures and ages.

**Action Plan:**

1. Instruct staff and board members as appropriate in using the Public Participation Work Plan (appendix A) to plan how they will solicit public input for projects and decision making
2. Train staff in public presentation techniques and technology for presenting information such as PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.

**Goal 6: Record the results of the participation and distribute the information back to the public**

It is important to properly record information received from the public and to demonstrate the results of the public's input. This communicates to the participants that their responses were heard and improves transparency in the planning and decision-making process. The Village should use multiple forms of communication to accomplish this.

**Action Plan:**

1. Make the results of any survey results available online, at the Village office, and in the quarterly newsletter
2. Distribute community satisfaction surveys (appendix B) following public participation driven events
3. Post meeting minutes online for easy access
4. Post photos of public meetings and forums to record the event

**Goal 7: Regularly assess the effectiveness of encouraging public participation.**

It is important to regularly assess the public participation plan to ensure that it remains current and useful. As communication methods, technology, and laws change, the public participation plan should adapt to those changes.

**Action Plan:**

1. Public participation notes and comments will be maintained by the Village Clerk
2. Use the results of community satisfaction surveys to plan future public participation events
3. Complete an internal public participation evaluation (appendix C) after events
4. The public participation plan will be reviewed every 5 years to ensure it remains effective and useful

## Conclusion

The Village of Almont Public Participation Plan is a daily guide used to allow the public to provide input and direction for their government. The Village will strive to implement the plan effectively at all appropriate times. Through the use of the plan, the Village will be more transparent and receive input from a wide variety of stakeholders.

Appendix A

# Public Participation Work Plan

Name of the project or decision:

Responsible Party:

Technique/Tool to be used:

How will this reach underrepresented populations?

Resources/partners needed for implementation

Deadline:

Appendix B

<b>Community Event Satisfaction Survey</b>
What event did you attend today?
How did you hear about the event?
Was the event held at a convenient location and time?
Are you satisfied with the event? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Appendix C

<b>Internal Public Participation Evaluation</b>
Type of Public Participation:
How was the event advertised?
Where was the event held?
How many people attended?
Was there a group underrepresented?
What can be improved for future events?

## 2.1 - Zoning Regulations

The Zoning Ordinance, in accordance with under the authority of Act 110, Public Acts of 2006, to provide for the establishment of zoning districts in such sizes, shapes and areas as are considered best suited to carry out the provisions of this Ordinance; within which districts the proper use of land and natural resources is encouraged and regulated and the improper use of same prohibited; to designate in the districts the use of land for recreation, residence, industries, trade, soil conservation, natural resources, and the uses for which buildings and structures shall or shall not be erected, altered or moved, and designate the trades and industries that shall be permitted or excluded and subjected to special regulations in each of the districts. To provide for amendments and supplements thereto; provide for the administration and enforcement of this Ordinance; to provide for a Board of Appeals and its power and duties, to provide penalties for the violation of its provisions.

In accordance with and pursuant to the authority and intent of Act 110, Public Acts of 2006, as amended, the Village of Almont is desirous of providing for the orderly development of the Village which the Village Council considers essential well-being of the community and which will place no undue burden upon its residents or upon recognized land uses. The Village Council is further desirous of providing places of residence, recreation, industry, trade, service, and other uses of land. The Village Council is further desirous of providing limitations on the inappropriate overcrowding of land and the congestion of population, transportation systems and other public facilities; to protect industry, commerce and residences against the incursion of incompatible uses of land; to promote the proper use of land for the economic well-being of the Village; to assure the provision of adequate space conducive to healthy living conditions, and to provide facilities for the parking of vehicles necessary and incident to principal uses of land, and to require that all uses of land be coordinated in conformity with the Village of Almont Master Plan.

**2.1.1 Goal:** The governing body has adopted a zoning ordinance that aligns with the goals of the master plan.

On November 20, 2018 the Village adopted the Amended Joint Master Plan with Almont Township. The joint master plan provides a unified vision for future growth and development within the Village and Township. The adoption of the plan represents a continuation of the strong working relationship that the Village and Township have fostered over the year.

A master plan is generally a 20-year plan. However, in a county such as Lapeer, which has been emerging as a developing county, plans are often updated more often to consider changing conditions within the community and its relationship: economically, socially, and environmentally; to the larger regional setting. Therefore, in 2018, the plan underwent a five-year review. The five-year review resulted in the decision to make limited amendment changes to the joint Almont Township and Village of Almont master plan.

**Action Plan:**

In developing the Master Land Use Plan in 2013 the Village and Township conducted a community-wide survey for property owners in the Village and Township. Specific questions were asked in the survey to gain an understanding of community sentiment and to gauge support for particular issues.

**2.1.2 Goal:** The zoning ordinance provides for area of concentrated development in appropriate locations and encourages the type and form of development desired.

**Action Plan:**

The Ordinance is divided into zoning districts and each district has a purpose statement which details the specific intent of that district. The zoning ordinance also list a table of uses for each district.

On November 19, 2019 the Village amended its zoning ordinance 193.4 which amended text amendments along with adding the PUD Planned Unit Development District and amended uses in the table of uses for each district.

Our current ordinance does not address some of the goals in development such as: outdoor dining, open store fronts, and it does not address historic preservation.

**2.1.3 Goal:** The zoning ordinance includes flexible tools to encourage development and redevelopment.

**Action Plan:**

The zoning ordinance addresses the issue of nonconformities. It specifically mentions nonconforming lots, structures and use of land.

**2.1.4 Goal:** The zoning ordinance allows for a variety of housing options.

**Action Plan:**

The table of uses in our ordinance shows the various housing options allowed in each of our zoning districts and if a special land use is required for that variation.

**2.1.5 Goal:** The ordinance includes standards to improve non-motorized transportation.

**Action Plan:**

This action item ties to the joint Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

**2.1.6 Goal:** The zoning ordinance includes flexible parking standards.

**Action Plan:**

The ordinance includes Article 6 Off-Street Parking and Loading. The off-street parking and loading requirements of this Ordinance are established to prevent congestion on public streets by providing clearly defined parking areas that are separated from roadways; to remove the hazard to pedestrians of emerging between parked vehicles onto a public street; to facilitate proper storm-water runoff; to prevent the generation of dust into the area; and to make clear the availability and arrangement of spaces to all users.

Section 6.01 General Parking Requirements: It shall be the duty of both the owner and occupant of any premises to provide off-street parking spaces as required in this Article. Such off-street parking areas shall be laid out, constructed and maintained in accordance with the standards and regulations provided in this ordinance.

**2.1.7 Goal:** The zoning ordinance includes standards for environmental preservations and green infrastructure.

**Action Plan:**

Article 4: Environmental Provisions of the ordinance is to preserve the quality and character of the Village's environment by regulating man-made development and by conserving natural resources. It addresses landscaping and screening requirements, greenbelts, berms, fencing, general requirements, design objectives, plant and materials and visual character. There is a chart of landscaped plantings minimum size requirements located in the ordinance.

Section 4.02 Parking Lot Landscaping Requirements. The intent of these requirements is to enhance the visual environment of the Village; to promote public safety, to moderate heat, wind and other local climatic effects produced by parking lots; and to minimize nuisances, particularly noise and glare.

**2.1.8 Goal:** The ordinance is user-friendly.

**Action Plan:**

Section 15.01 Definitions. Certain items, words and phrases shall, whenever used in this Ordinance, have the meaning herewith defined in this section of the ordinance. Many pictures, charts and tables are provided within the ordinance to specify or clarify requirements or definitions in our ordinance. The Village of Almont Ordinances are posted online on our website.

## 3.1 – Development Review Procedures

Village of Almont Guide to Development is an overview process of the development review processes in the Village of Almont. Within it you will find an explanation of the review processes, policies, steps, and other relevant information for development in our community. Links to web pages and contact information can be found throughout the guide for easy access to the most up-to-date forms, applications, and other pertinent information.

The Village of Almont’s Guide to Development is general. It is not substitution for professional guidance or negate responsibility to speak with Village staff. Each case is unique and may require modification of the general processes.

The Village’s Design and Construction Standard is an outline of the design and construction standards set inside the Village. These design standards include: streets and roadways; driveways and approaches; parking lots and lighting; storm water drainage and detention; waterlines; and sanitary sewer. Construction standards provide both written and graphics to portray a clear definition of our requirements.

**3.1.1 Goal:** The zoning ordinance articulates a thorough site plan review process.

**Action Plan:**

The responsibilities of the governing body is clearly documented in our Village Charter. Planning commission responsibilities are outlined in Ordinance 180 Planning Commission Ordinance. The zoning board of appeals responsibilities are outlined in Ordinance 190 Zoning Ordinance. Located on our website is a General Zoning Compliance Checklist to ensure that zoning requirements are met by the applicant.

**3.1.2 Goal:** The community has a qualified intake professional.

**Action Plan:**

The Village Manager assumes the role of the Zoning Administrator. The Manager works in conjunction with Rowe Professional Services Company and Construction Code Authority. The Zoning Administrator reviews the applications and site plans and submits them to Rowe Professional Services Company to provide a site plan review to be submitted to the planning commission. Construction Code Authority processes all building permits and some zoning permits unless it is a variance or site plan.

**3.1.3 Goal:** The community defines and offers conceptual site plan review meeting for applicants.

**Action Plan:**

Our current fee schedule allows for a predevelopment site plan review meeting with consulting planner/engineer. Our fee schedule is available on our website.

### 3.1.4 Goal: The appropriate departments engage in joint site plan reviews.

**Action Plan:**

The zoning administrator's checklist has a documentation section for participating departments and representatives that are sent copies of the site plan for review and comment. These are: MDOT, the Almont Fire Department, Construction Code Authority, Almont assessor's office, the village engineer, village planner, Almont School District and the planning commission.

### 3.1.5 Goal: The community has a clearly documented internal staff review process.

**Action Plan:**

The Village's Guide to Development shows an overview of the development review process and has key points of contact listed along with their primary responsibilities.

### 3.1.6 Goal: The community promptly acts on development requests

**Action Plan:**

The zoning application is submitted to the zoning administrator where it is reviewed for completeness and fees are calculated. Applicants are informed that the applications are not considered filed until all necessary documents and fees are collected. The Village amended its fee schedule to allow for pre-development meetings to accommodate early stage preliminary development inquiries.

### 3.1.7 Goal: The community has a method to track development projects.

**Action Plan:**

This goal requires methods for tracking development projects within the community. The Village will refer to RRC best practices for common tools used to monitor developments.

### 3.1.8 Goal: The community annually reviews successes and challenges with the development review process.

**Action Plan:**

Continue jointly held meetings with the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals to reviews successes and challenges with development processes through reflection of recent projects.

## 3.2 Development Review Process

**3.2.1 Goal:** The community maintains a guide to development that explains policies, procedures and steps to obtain approvals.

**Action Plan:**

Village of Almont Guide to Development is an overview process of the development review processes in the Village of Almont. Within it you will find an explanation of the review processes, policies, steps, and other relevant information for development in our community. Links to web pages and contact information can be found throughout the guide for easy access to the most up-to-date forms, applications, and other pertinent information.

**3.2.2 Goal:** The community annually reviews the fee schedule.

**Action Plan:**

The fee schedule is reviewed and adopted annually by the Village Council, and changes from time-to-time based on findings of necessity. Credit card payments are accepted at the Village Office.

## 4.1 - Recruitment and Orientation

### 4.1.1 Goal: The community sets expectations for board and commission positions.

**Action Plan:**

The Village of Almont Council is elected and defined in the Almont Charter as: VILLAGE LEGISLATIVE BODY

Section 3.1. All legislative or policy forming powers of the village shall be vested in, exercised, and determined by a Council of seven (7) members who shall be designated and known as “Councilmember.” In all cases where the word “Council” is used in this charter, the same shall mean and be synonymous with the terms “Commission” “common council,” “board of aldermen.,” “governing body,” or “legislative body,” or any other synonymous term, as the same may be used in any state or Federal law in referring to legislative or governing bodies of villages.

The Planning Commission is defined under Planning Commission Ordinance 180 and 180.1. An ordinance to re-authorize the Almont Village Planning Commission pursuant to Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008; to enumerate powers and duties of the Planning Commission; to provide for the appointment, term of office, compensation and removal of members; to establish meeting requirements; to provide for the appropriation of funds for the operation of the Planning Commission; and to repeal any ordinance provisions or resolutions in conflict therewith.

The Zoning Board of Appeals is set up in Ordinance 193 Section 11:00 Establishment and Membership of Zoning Board of Appeals. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall establish rules of procedure in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance, and the applicable State law.

The Village of Almont has an “Application for Appointment” for each of the boards or commissions for: Community Parks and Recreation Board, Downtown Development Authority, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and Village Council Appointment. Some board and commissions are a mix of citizens with certain qualifications and others are citizens representing the general public. This application is available on the Village of Almont’s website.

### 4.1.2 Goal: The community provides orientation packets to all appointed and elected members of development related boards and commissions.

**Action Plan:**

Upon election or appointment to a board or commission, each member is given the appropriate orientation packets that includes all relevant information and planning and zoning development updates.

## 4.2 Education and Training

**4.2.1 Goal:** The community has a dedicated source of funding for training.

**Action Plan:**

This is an ongoing goal as we continue to do more with less. Dedicated funding from staff is budgeted annually.

**4.2.2 Goal:** The community identifies training needs and tracks attendance for elected and appointed officials and staff.

**Action Plan:**

Upon election, Village Councilmembers are encouraged to schedule a tour of the Village. This includes the Village Office, Police Department, Department of Public Works and the Waste Water Treatment Plant. This tour is to provide councilmembers an understanding of how each department functions and the services that they perform.

Attendance for the Village Council and commission members is documented in the appropriate meeting minutes.

**4.2.3 Goal:** The community encourages elected and appointed officials and staff to attend trainings.

**Action Plan:**

The staff for each department, Police Department, Department of Public Works, and the Waste Water Treatment Plant, are required to have continuing education.

**4.2.4 Goal:** The community shares information between elected and appointed officials and staff.

**Action Plan:**

The Village Council approves annual reports for the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.

## 5.1 Economic Development Strategy

**5.1.1 Goal:** The community has an approved economic development strategy.

**Action Plan:**

On October 2, 2018 the Village Council adopted Resolution 18-10-01 Resolution to Proceed with the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) Program of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC).

The Village of Almont established a Downtown Development Authority pursuant to Act 197 of the Public Acts of 1975; to eliminate the cause of the deterioration, and to promote economic growth by establishing a Downtown Development Authority.

**5.1.2 Goal:** The community annually reviews the economic development strategy.

**Action Plan:**

The strategy has not officially been developed but is a goal of the Village Council and a requirement of engagement with the RRC Program.

## 5.2 Marketing and Promotion

**5.2.1 Goal:** The community has developed a marketing strategy.

**Action Plan:**

A marketing strategy has not been developed yet, but is a requirement of the RRC Program. A marketing strategy will be completed within three years.

**5.2.2 Goal:** The community has an updated, user-friendly municipal website.

**Action Plan:**

The Village of Almont maintains a municipal website [almontmichigan.gov](http://almontmichigan.gov). There are clear tabs marking the Redevelopment Ready Community, Village Council, Planning Commission, and ZBA. Our website provides a document center where ordinances can be searched. Forms are all available on-line as well as the ability to create an account and make online payments.

## 6.1 Redevelopment Ready Sites

**6.1.1 Goal:** The community identifies and prioritizes redevelopment sites.

**Action Plan:**

We have identified sites in coordination with the DDA, in part of the RRC requirement to identify redevelopment sites to focus marketing and redevelopment efforts.

**6.1.2 Goal:** The community gathers basic information for three priority sites.

**Action Plan:**

This goal is part of prioritizing redevelopment sites and requires a deeper dive into utility, incentive, place making and visioning efforts.

**6.1.3 Goal:** The community establishes a vision for three priority sites.

**Action Plan:**

This goal requires stakeholder engagement in identifying and visioning site development for three priority sites.

**6.1.4 Goal:** The community identifies potential resources and incentives for three priority sites.

**Action Plan:**

This goal ties to marketing sites with all potential incentives on a one-page marketing flyer.

**6.1.5 Goal:** The community assembles a property information package for a least one priority site.

**Action Plan:**

This is a goal to begin packaging marketing materials once a priority site is identified.

**6.1.6 Goal:** Priority redevelopment sites are actively marketed in accordance with the marketing strategy.

**Action Plan:**

This is an action strategy that will need to be completed once the marketing strategy is completed.