

Revised/Updated 02/25/25



City of White Cloud
Community Participation Plan | Amended/Updated 02/2025

Approved by City Council October 4, 2022



“Where the North Begins and Pure Waters Flow”

www.cityofwhitecloud.org

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Community Engagement Statement

The City of White Cloud strives to provide effective communications that meet city 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 the residents. Community engagement is not a “one size fits all” exercise. Certain strategies are more appropriate in some circumstances than others, and a successful practice in one situation may not be as successful in another. To this point, this guide is intended to serve as an internal resource for ideas on how to best engage productive collaboration with stakeholders and the public in the future.

Community Engagement Objectives

- The City of White Cloud will provide information by diverse means of methods through the utilization of current and best communication practices keeping abreast of technologies and advancements in communications.
- The City of White Cloud will provide communications in relation to emergency communications, crisis communications, policy governance, transparency in governance, ribbon cuttings and grand openings, city events, public service announcements and public information.
- The City of White Cloud will encourage public participation allowing residents to voice their opinion, provide feedback and comments.
- The City of White Cloud will encourage permitted use of the public rights of way with telecommunications providers to foster technology.
- The City of White Cloud will provide information and shared services to residents and to neighboring municipalities, shared service partners and regional partners.
- The City of White Cloud will gather insight and ideas that further the mission of providing information to City residents.



Transparency in Governance

The highest priority of the Communications Department 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, nongovernment organizations, associations or any group engaged in some purposeful activity.
- Transparency refers to the availability of information to the 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. There are clear guidelines to adhere upon. Openness is encouraged.
- Overall, transparent governance ensures that money is spent to 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 goals or outcomes are met.

Emergency Communications

The City of White Cloud will make public health and safety its top priority as outlined in the Emergency Services Hazard Management Plan.

The City of White Cloud will provide public safety information before, during and after a disaster or emergency.

The City of White Cloud will work with appropriate internal and external agencies to communicate effectively, appropriately, and efficiently including Police, Fire, the Emergency Management Team, and Newaygo County 911.

The City of White Cloud will provide public notifications to as many people as possible within the service area.

Diverse Means of Communications Methods

The City of White Cloud will provide information and encourage the engagement of citizen participation using a diverse means of methods utilizing current and best communication practices, keeping abreast of technologies and advancements in communications.

The City of White Cloud will share non-critical Information to the public in the following ways:

- Digital Media: Social Sites, Newsletters, Electronic Message Board, Websites, Emails, and Videos.
- Print Publications/Post/Mail: Reports, Public Notices, Postcard mailing, Attachments to water bills, Fact Sheets, Newsletters, Brochures, Flyers, Posters and Banners.
- Media Relations: Press Releases, Press Conferences and Media Events, One-on-one interviews, Community workshops.
- Word of Mouth: Key stakeholders, Community Influencers, and the General Public



Diverse Means of Distribution Methods

The City of White Cloud understands the diverse and broad methods in which people communicate, receive messages, and look for information. To be as inclusive and as welcoming as possible, communications methods are distributed broadly.

The City of White Cloud will provide information and encourage the engagement of citizen participation using a diverse means of methods utilizing current and best communication practices, keeping abreast of technologies and advancements in communications.

The City of White Cloud Newsletter is distributed quarterly to each household in The City of White Cloud. Event Flyers: Placed at local businesses (entryway doors, event bulletin board, bathroom door inserts), schools, social media sites.

Media Relations

The City of White Cloud will work with the media for the purpose of informing the public of information in a consistent and credible manner. Frequently, the city will utilize our local newspapers as a means of distributing information. Sometimes this is a legal requirement for public meetings and hearings. Other times, the city may be interested in sharing news on events and happenings using a press release that summarizes the details of what is being announced, allowing the media to read and share the relevant pieces of information in their articles. In the past, White Cloud has used press releases to announce actions like the adoption of new plans, open surveys, or projects that are initiating. The Times Indicator newspaper is general circulation and for that reason, the city coordinates with the paper on posting its notices and press releases. For access, a resident may purchase a subscription to have the paper delivered to their home or visit the website.



Key Stakeholders

Stakeholders represent a diverse set of individuals, groups and organizations which have a vested interest or are affected by the planning and land use development process.

Local, state, and federal organizations from both the public and private sectors assist and enhance the City's decision-making process through their input. Stakeholders include, but not limited to:

- White Cloud City Council
- White Cloud City's boards & committees
- White Cloud School Board
- Newaygo County Administration
- Major local employers
- Senior Citizens
- Students and student groups
- Potential buyers & investors
- Environmental groups

Public Relations

The City of White Cloud will connect with the public and internal staff in a favorable way to build mutually beneficial relationships.

The City of White Cloud will create materials to share with the media in a consistent and clear manner as detailed in The City of White Cloud Brand Standards Guideline for media alerts, press releases and other media related materials.

The City of White Cloud Mayor and City Manager hold “open public forum” for business owners to open a discussion about how to better serve our businesses in the City of White Cloud.

Social Media Networking

Among the many web-based social media platforms available, the city makes use of Facebook to communicate with the users connected with the City of White Cloud. Quick highlights and links to more in-depth features on the city website are commonly shared on its Facebook page. Users may interact with the City’s page administrator or other users to share information and stay up to speed with the latest developments. The City of White Cloud’s goal is to share and exchange information with those interested in topics relating to The City of White Cloud community. It is the city’s policy to accept most comments made to the city operated pages. Posted comments and images by the public do not necessarily represent the views of the city or its employees.

The City of White Cloud will strive to support the direction set by City Council Board through its policies. Social Media Policies related to the City of White Cloud Board Policy Manual include:



- Treatment of Consumers
- Communication and Support to the Board
- Regional Cooperation
- Community Linkage
- Preamble

The City of White Cloud welcomes comments on The City’s social media accounts. The purpose of City social pages is to present matters of public interest to the White Cloud community.

The City of White Cloud encourages the public to submit local photos, questions, comments, and concerns.



The city expects ideas and information shared in a respectful manner on any social media account operated by the city office staff. The city does not agree with or endorse every comment that individuals post on social media sites operated by the city.

www.cityofwhitecloud.org is the home page of the City of White Cloud and it is where you can expect to find all relevant and important information that the city shares. It provides a wide range

of information, including important dates, plans and ordinances, forms, city news, and can be a portal to reach other important information for a resident. Checking the city website should always be a resident's surest bet for finding the most up-to-date information in White Cloud.

Brand Management

By using The City of White Cloud Standard Guidelines, employees at all levels will be able to craft the voice and style of White Cloud in a fashion that is on par with promotional materials, internal documents, and other key communications. These guidelines will be used consistently and strategically as the standard for all materials produced to represent The City of White Cloud brand.

The City of White Cloud strives to work with our welcoming, family friendly neighborhoods and continue to lead and foster growth. White Cloud celebrates the vibrant, active lifestyle of its residents, business owners and visitors.

- Vision Statement: Our vision is to achieve and maintain a welcoming community with the highest quality of life for our residents. We believe the highest quality of life encompasses sustained or enhanced natural environment, health and safety, prosperity, cultural heritage, and diversity.
- Mission Statement: Providing a safe and welcoming sustainable prime community.
- Develop relationships with the City's target market, collaborate with brand ambassadors and brand advocates, key stakeholders, and constituents.
- Create brand messaging in all communications efforts which reflects the vision and mission statements.

Community Participation



The City of White Cloud will provide a variety of opportunities and ways for people to become involved in the planning, review, and approval process for planning processes.

The City of White Cloud will offer a diverse variety of opportunities for

community members to become involved in ways to give back to the community such as events, volunteering, sponsorship opportunities, regional and nonprofit partnerships, public service and more.

Open Meetings

The City of White Cloud is in accordance with the Open Meetings Act PA 267 of 1976; to require certain meetings of certain public bodies to be open to the public, to require notice and the keeping of minutes of meetings; to provide for enforcement; to provide for invalidation of governmental decisions under certain circumstances, to provide penalties and to repeal certain acts and parts of acts.



City of White Cloud will be holding meetings at City Hall located at 12 North Charles St. Official City Meetings are open to the public (or in another properly posted location as is necessary or preferable) except closed session meetings as provided for in the Act. City Council meetings are live and streamed via Zoom. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services to participate in municipal meetings may contact the City Clerk for assistance.

Each City of White Cloud official public meeting allows the opportunity for members of the public to make up to 3-minute public comment unless approval for additional time for good cause is obtained prior to the meeting. Members of the public can make public comment at the beginning and end of the meeting, as well as during public hearings.

First Amendment

The City of White Cloud will uphold the First Amendment of Speakers' Rights to Freedom of Speech except speech that is not protected, such as true threats of violence, incitements to take illegal action or is harmful in certain other ways as determined by the Supreme Court.

The City of White Cloud recognizes and upholds Freedom of Expression in different types of forums as described by the Supreme Court; traditional public forums, designated forums and limited public forums.

The City of White Cloud upholds the Freedom of the Press to circulate opinions in print without censorship by the government.

ADA Compliance

The City of White Cloud Meetings are held in a facility accessible to persons with disabilities.

The City of White Cloud accommodates individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services.

Individuals requiring disability services should contact the City Manager’s office. A ten-day notice is required.

The City of White Cloud strives to provide electronic documents, videos, and information technology accessible to people with disabilities.

Notices

Statutes require these processes be noticed in a newspaper of general distribution in The City of White Cloud, as well as mailed to neighbors within 300 feet at least 15 days prior to the meeting. The public will be notified within ten (10) days of the first meeting of a public body in each calendar or fiscal year; the body will publicly post a list stating the dates, times, and places of all its regular meetings at its primary office. If there is a change in schedule, within three days of the meeting in which the change is made, the public body will post a notice stating the new dates, times, and places of regular meetings. For special and irregular meetings, public bodies will post a notice indicating the date, time, and place at least eighteen (18) hours before the 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.

Notices are sent to the local newspaper, posted on the City of White Cloud website, included in the City Newsletter, displayed on the entry doors at City Hall Municipal Building and shared on social networks.



Community Involvement

The City of White Cloud will collaborate with regional partners, businesses, and community members to provide opportunities for involvement in areas of economic development, master planning, decision-making and outreach.

The City of White Cloud will offer a diverse method of opportunities for community members to become involved and to give back to the community such as events, volunteering, sponsorship, nonprofit

partnerships, public service and more.

Surveys

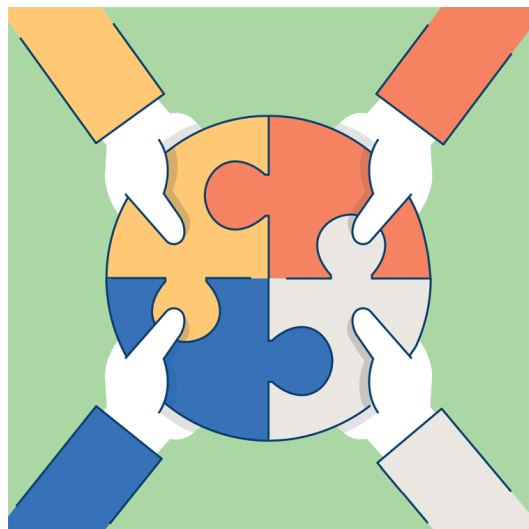
The city may employ surveys, whenever possible, beneficial, and feasible, to identify key citizen concerns. The city may design and implement, through a third-party partner or City staff, surveys to gather the community's opinion regarding specific topics (e.g., general City services, housing needs, amenities, the downtown). The surveys may be distributed through various methods of delivery to ensure the broadest reach, based on the nature of the target group (e.g., mail, e-mail, website access, copies available at City facilities). The responsible party will compile the survey results following the closing of the survey. The survey results may be posted online, published in the City's newsletter, and communicated to the City Council, residents, survey participants, investors, developers, and other stakeholders.



Committees/Focus Groups

Stakeholders represent a diverse set of individuals, groups, and organizations which have a vested interest or are affected by the planning and land use development process. Different groups of stakeholders may be engaged in each of the planning and development review processes dependent upon the nature of the project or plan, level of community interest, and the potential impact of the project. The City of White Cloud wishes to bring together stakeholders for collaborating decision making options for operations, policies, and key decisions. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Regional Partners
 - Michigan Economic Development Corporation
 - The Right Place
 - Newaygo County Road Commission
 - Michigan Department of Transportation
 - Commission on Aging
 - River Country Chamber of Commerce
 - Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency
- Non-Profits/Associations
 - White Cloud District Library
 - Religious Groups



- Community Organizations
- Youth and young adults
- Education Providers
 - White Cloud Public Schools
 - Five Cap Inc.
 - NCRESA
- Businesses
 - OPRA (Obsolete Properties Rehab Act)
 - Potential Investors and Developers
- Neighboring Municipalities/Shared Services Providers
 - City of Newaygo
 - City of Fremont
 - City of Big Rapids
 - City of Baldwin

Public Participation Methods:

	Master Plan	Zoning Amendments	CIP Planning	Parks & Rec Planning	Major Developments
Surveys	Recommended	Optional	Optional	Recommended	Recommended
Communication Workshops	Recommended	Optional	Recommended	Recommended	Optional
One-on-One Interviews	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
Focus Groups	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
Tools of Communication	Recommended	Optional	Optional	Recommended	Recommended
Open Forum Meetings	Recommended	Optional	Optional	Optional	Recommended

Third Party Compliance

The policies and procedures in this plan will apply to any third-party consultants who assist with the city planning and their adherence is expected. Developer(s) interested in working in the City of White Cloud are encouraged to engage with the City Manager and Zoning Administrator for early feedback on projects. In addition, it is strongly recommended that developers engage residents for early input and support of the project. These directors can assist your engagement process.

Monitoring and Evaluating Outreach Efforts

The city should take steps to track and record the participation of the public. Regarding open meetings, the participation of interested persons and their input should be recorded in the minutes. Approved meeting minutes, which includes the outcome of public participation, are made available to the public through various methods, including being posted at City Hall. The success of public participation during public meetings can be measured by counting the number of public members who attend the meeting.

The city strives to be consistent and transparent with information. The City's website is the city's primary source of information including access to meeting information.

Evaluation

The City of White Cloud City Council will review the Public Participation Guidebook periodically to monitor the effectiveness of the procedure outlined in this document. All public participation efforts will be recorded by the various city departments and reviewed on an annual basis. Following evaluation of the outputs and outcomes of the Public Participation Guidebook, the city may revise these methods to incorporate new and innovative ways to involve the public in the planning and decision-making project.