



Community Engagement Plan | November 2023
Approved by the Meridian Township Board on November 9, 2023



A PRIME COMMUNITY
meridian.mi.us

Table of Contents	2
Community Engagement Statement	3
Community Engagement Objectives	3
Transparency in Governance	3-4
Emergency Communications	4
Diverse Means of Communications Methods	4
Diverse Means of Distribution Methods	5
Media Relations	5
Public Relations	5
Social Media Networking	6
Brand Management	6-7
Community Participation	7
Open Meetings	7
First Amendment	7
ADA Compliance	7-8
Public Hearing Notices/Legal Notices/Zoning Amendments	8
Press Conferences	8
Community Involvement	8
Charrettes	8
Surveys	8-9
Committees/Focus Groups	9-10
Third Party Compliance	10
HOMTV	10
CAMTV	10-11
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Projects	11

Community Engagement Statement

The Charter Township of Meridian strives to provide effective communications that meet Township 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 Objectives

- The Charter Township of Meridian will provide information by a diverse means of methods through the utilization of current and best communication practices keeping abreast of technologies and advancements in communications.
- The Charter Township of Meridian will provide communications in relation to emergency communications, crisis communications, press conferences, policy governance, transparency in governance, ribbon cuttings and grand openings, Township events, public service announcements, and general public information.
- The Charter Township of Meridian will encourage public participation allowing residents to voice their opinion, provide feedback, and comments.
- The Charter Township of Meridian will encourage permitted use of the public rights of way with telecommunications providers to foster technology.
- The Charter Township of Meridian will oversee video franchise compliance in accordance with Public Act 480, which created a uniform franchise agreement between franchising entities and video providers in the state of Michigan.
- The Charter Township of Meridian will provide information and shared services to residents and to neighboring municipalities, shared service partners and regional partners.
- The Charter Township of Meridian will gather insight and ideas that further the mission of providing information to Township 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 manner 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 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. There are clear guidelines to

adhere to. 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 Charter Township of Meridian will make public health and safety its top priority as outlined in the Board Policy Manual.

The Charter Township of Meridian will provide public safety information before, during and after a disaster or emergency. Examples of community emergencies include, but are not limited to, extreme weather, large-scale power outages, pandemics, and active violence in the community.

The Charter Township of Meridian will work with appropriate internal and external agencies to communicate effectively, appropriately, and efficiently including Police, Fire, the Emergency Management Team, and Ingham County 911.

The Charter Township of Meridian will provide public notifications to as many people as possible within the service area.

The Charter Township of Meridian will utilize all feasible communication outlets in the event of a local emergency, including website takeover messages on the Meridian Township website. Emergency communications displayed on HOMTV channel 21 are contingent upon on-site staff availability and may not be feasible outside of normal Township business hours.

Diverse Means of Communications Methods

The Charter Township of Meridian 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.

- Digital Media: HOMTV, CAMTV, Social Sites, eNewsletters, Websites, Emails, Videos, eNotifications, digital Meridian Township wayfinding signs, and Capital Area Ingham County (Everbridge) Alerts.
- Print Publications: Reports, Public Notices, Door Hangers, Mailers and Mailer Inserts, Fact Sheets, Brochures, Flyers, Magazines, Posters, and Banners.
- Media Relations: Press Releases, Press Conferences, and Media Events.
- Word of Mouth: Key Stakeholders, Community Influencers, Brand Advocates, and the General Public.

The Charter Township of Meridian's use of the above communication methods varies based on the topic being covered. Methods will be chosen based on the urgency of the communicated topic, the appropriateness of a method to discuss a topic, and the number of communication methods necessary to effectively communicate the topic.

Diverse Means of Distribution Methods

The Charter Township of Meridian understands the diverse and broad methods in which people communicate, receive messages, and look for information. In an attempt to be as inclusive and as welcoming as possible, communications methods are distributed broadly.

- Prime Meridian Magazine (22,000 delivered once per year): Distributed to each household in Meridian Township (19,000), 7 Meridian Township buildings, Meridian Senior Center, Haslett and Okemos Libraries, Neighborhood Associations and Choose Lansing (formerly known as the Greater Lansing Convention and Visitors Bureau).
- Family Fun Guide (quarterly): Distributed digitally on Meridian Township's website.
- Event Flyers: Placed at 7 Meridian Township buildings (entryway doors, event bulletin board, bathroom door inserts), schools, and Haslett and Okemos libraries.
- eNewsletters (monthly): Green Gazette, Playbook, Meridian Happenings; (every two months) Meridian Senior Center Newsletter.
- Press Releases: Distributed to media outlets and various organizations within the Greater Lansing Region, based upon a media contact list managed and updated 3 times per year.
- Social Networking: Shared information and events on relevant Township-owned sites.

Media Relations

The Charter Township of Meridian will work with the media for the purpose of informing the public of information in a consistent and credible manner, coordinating with people responsible for producing news and features in mass media.

- Television Outlets: WILX 10, HOMTV, WKAR, WLNS 6, FOX 47, and ABC 53.
- Newspaper/Magazines: Lansing State Journal, Lansing City Pulse, 517 Magazine, Michigan State University (MSU) State News, and Lansing Community College (LCC) Lookout.
- Online Magazine Publications: Mlive.com, New Citizen's Press.
- Radio: Townsquare Media, MacDonald Broadcasting, Midwest Communications, Mike FM (101.7), WLNZ Radio (LCC), WILS (1320 AM),
- Colleges/Universities/Public Schools: LCC, MSU, Ingham County Intermediate School District, Okemos Public Schools, and Haslett Public Schools.
- Municipalities/Organizations: City of East Lansing, Choose Lansing (formerly Greater Lansing Convention & Visitors Bureau), Michigan Townships Association (MTA), and Michigan Municipal League (MML).

Public Relations

The Charter Township of Meridian will connect with the public and internal staff in a favorable manner in which to build mutually beneficial relationships.

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

Social Media Networking

The Charter Township of Meridian's goal is to share and exchange information with those interested in topics relating to the Meridian Township community. It is Township policy to accept the majority of comments made to the Township-operated pages. Posted comments and images by the public do not necessarily represent the views of Meridian Township or its employees.

The Charter Township of Meridian will strive to support the direction set by the Township Board through its policies. Social Media Policies related to the Meridian Township Board Policy Manual include:

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

The Charter Township of Meridian welcomes comments on Meridian Township's social media accounts. The purpose of Township social pages is to present matters of public interest to the Meridian Township community.

The Charter Township of Meridian encourages the public to submit local photos, questions, comments, and concerns.

The Charter Township of Meridian expects ideas and information to be shared in a respectful manner on any social media account operated by the Meridian Township as outlined in the External Social Media Policy.

The Charter Township of Meridian does not agree with or endorse every comment that individuals post on social media sites operated by the Township.

Brand Management

By using the 2017 Charter Township of Meridian Brand Standards Guidelines, employees at all levels will be able to craft the voice and style of Meridian Township 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 Meridian Township brand.

Meridian Township strives to work with our welcoming, family friendly neighborhoods and continue to lead and foster growth. Meridian Township celebrates the vibrant, active lifestyle of its residents, business owners and visitors. Brand messaging will reflect the Board Policy 1.0 Global Ends Statement in the Board Policy Manual which defines the vision and mission statements.

- 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 Township’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 Charter Township of Meridian will provide a variety of opportunities and ways for people to become involved and participate.

The Charter Township of Meridian 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 Charter Township of Meridian will be 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.

Charter Township of Meridian Official Township Meetings are open to the public, except closed session meetings as provided for in the Act.

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

First Amendment

The Charter Township of Meridian 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 Charter Township of Meridian 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 Charter Township of Meridian upholds the Freedom of the Press to circulate opinions in print without censorship by the government.

ADA Compliance

Charter Township of Meridian Meetings are held in a facility accessible to persons with disabilities.

The Charter Township of Meridian will accommodate individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services.

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

The Charter Township of Meridian utilizes Swagit to provide closed captioning on official Township meetings televised on the HOMTV website.

The Charter Township of Meridian uses Monsido to provide accessibility features on its website, meridian.mi.us.

The Charter Township of Meridian utilizes AbleVu in some of its facilities, allowing visitors to access walk-through tours, accessibility checklists, and other details before entering these facilities.

The Charter Township of Meridian strives to provide electronic documents, videos and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. The Department of Justice is currently developing regulations specifically addressing the accessibility of goods and services offered via the web. Meridian Township follows WCAG 2.0 Guidelines as a tool for compliance.

Public Hearing Notices/Legal Notices/Legal Ads/Zoning Amendments

Statutes require these processes be noticed in a newspaper of general distribution in Meridian Township, as well as mailed to neighbors within 300 feet at least 15 days prior to the meeting.

Notices are sent to the local newspaper, posted on the Meridian Township website, and displayed on the Official Township Meetings Bulletin Board and entry doors at the Township Municipal Building.

Press Conferences

Meetings organized for the purpose of officially distributing information to the media, making an official announcement, and answering questions from the media. A press conference is led by the Township Manager, executive management, and/or appointed press liaison.

Community Involvement

The Charter Township of Meridian 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 Charter Township of Meridian 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.

Charrettes

The Charter Township of Meridian will work with regional partners to host charrettes and encourage community involvement in charrettes. Charrettes are meetings in which stakeholders take part in a participatory planning process in an effort to collaboratively design a solution to a problem.

The Charter Township of Meridian encourages charrettes as an opportunity for residents to provide community input and feedback for designers and planners as an inclusive participatory process of planning.

Surveys

The Charter Township of Meridian will utilize online and paper surveys for purposes of

gathering public opinion and data for projects, initiatives, and key decisions.

Committees/Focus Groups

The Charter Township of Meridian will bring together stakeholders for collaborative decision-making regarding Township operations, policies, and key decisions. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Regional Partners
 - Michigan Economic Development Corporation
 - Michigan State Housing Development Authority
 - Lansing Economic Area Partnership
 - Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
 - Ingham County Road Department
 - Michigan Department of Transportation
 - Tri-County Office on Aging
 - Capital Area Transit Authority
- Non-Profits/Associations
 - Rotary
 - Kiwanis
 - Masons
 - Capital Area District Library
 - Capital Area Housing Partnership
- Education Providers
 - Okemos Public Schools
 - Haslett Public Schools
 - East Lansing Public Schools
 - Williamston Public Schools
 - Michigan State University
 - Lansing Community College
 - Cooley Law School
 - Ingham County Intermediate School District
- Residential
 - Nextdoor App Contacts
 - Okemos, Michigan Community Facebook Group
 - Haslett Community Facebook Group
 - Liaison for Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (LINC)
 - Neighborhood Leaders Meeting database via Police/Clerks Office
- Businesses
 - Economic Development Corporation
 - Corridor Improvement Authority
 - Downtown Development Authority
 - Meridian Area Businesses Association
 - Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Neighboring Municipalities/Shared Services Providers
 - City of East Lansing
 - Williamstown Township
 - Alaiedon Township
 - Bath Township

- Delhi Township
- City of Lansing

Third Party Compliance

The policies and procedures in this plan will apply to any third-party consultants who assist with Township planning and their adherence is expected. Developer(s) interested in working in the Charter Township of Meridian are encouraged to engage with the Director of Community Planning and Development and/or the Economic Development Director for early feedback on the project. In addition, it is strongly recommended that developers engage local residents for early input and support of the project. These directors can assist your engagement process.

HOMTV

The Government Access Cable Television station serving the Charter Township of Meridian is known as HOMTV. The operating policies of HOMTV are based upon the Goals and Objectives of the Communications Commission, as approved by the Meridian Township Board. Programming shall be developed in accordance with the "Goal Statements" adopted and periodically revised by the Township Communications Commission and the Township Board.

- HOMTV is responsible for providing television coverage of the regular meetings of the Township Board, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Environmental Commission, up to a total of six meetings per month. Live coverage of regularly scheduled Township meetings shall be the number one programming priority of HOMTV. Video recordings of the live coverage of Township meetings are not to be edited for replay as a whole.
- HOMTV shall present television programming pertaining to all elections held in Meridian Township. Special efforts shall be made to produce programming in "even year" Township elections, with a maximum emphasis on elections held to fill positions on the Township Board of Trustees and/or the Park Commission. All registered candidates shall be afforded an equal opportunity to be included in this coverage.
- HOMTV may be watched at the following locations:
 - Comcast Channel 21 in East Lansing and Meridian Township
 - www.homtv.net
 - www.youtube.com/user/21HOMTV
 - <http://meridianmi.swagit.com/live>

CAMTV

It is the mission of CAMTV to form a Consortium that supports programming supplied by 'residents' and organizations from the region to provide subscribers of the Lansing regional COMCAST and AT&T U-verse systems greater access to information stretching across communities.

- CAMTV Purpose: Provide programming relevant to the region and its local communities with the most technically sound playback operating system and programming at the lowest reasonable cost.
- CAMTV Vision: Capital Area Media Television will be the regional television source for non-profit and municipal information.

- CAMTV Mission: Capital Area Media Television will form a Consortium that supports programming supplied by residents and organizations across the Lansing region, providing greater access to relevant information stretching across communities.
- CAMTV Goal: Collaborate resources to create sustainability of the channel, to maximize services and technology, to promote efficiency and sustainability, and to save dollars by pooling resources.
- CAMTV programming content must not include commercial time or commercial content, political campaigning, obscenity, indecency, slander, libel or defamation as described in the CAMTV Programming Content Requirements.

Federally Funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Projects

In addition to the community engagement previously described in this Public Participation Plan, the Charter Township of Meridian will follow the additional steps on any federally funded CDBG project.

- The Charter Township of Meridian will reach out to all residents in every neighborhood where funding is proposed to be used, to seek participation from the residents therein.
- A complete file for the project, updating as the project progresses, will be made available in the Community Planning and Development Department. The file will be available at all times and include all of the following information:
 - All application information that was developed and submitted for the CDBG funding request.
 - The total amount of CDBG funds expected to be made available for the current fiscal year.
 - The activities that may be undertaken with the CDBG funds.
 - The amount of the CDBG funds proposed to be used for activities that will meet the national objective of benefit to low- and moderate-income persons.
 - Any proposed CDBG activities that are likely to result in displacement of residents and the Township's anti-displacement and relocation plans, if necessary.
- If the Charter Township of Meridian is ever in a position of being able to sub-grant funds or apply on behalf of other organizations, we will provide technical assistance and support to groups that are representative of persons of low- and moderate-income that are looking to develop proposals for funding.
- The Meridian Township Board will hold three official public hearings for any project: one prior to the application being made to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), one after the application has been approved for funding by MSHDA, and a final hearing near the end of the grant term, before grant close out. Notice shall be provided at least five days in advance of the public hearing and all residents will be accommodated, regardless of ability of language spoken.
- Charter Township of Meridian staff will provide as much advance notice as possible of any application to MSHDA, allowing for an opportunity for the public to comment on the application and proposed activities.
- Allow citizens to make any complaint or grievance to the Township Manager's office by mail at 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864 or by phone at 517.853.4254. Any written complaint or grievance will be responded to within 15 working days.