

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS

Applicants may be required to hold Public Information Meetings before Council considers the following applications:

- Official Community Plan Bylaw amendments
- Zoning Bylaw amendments
- Non-delegated Heritage Alteration Permits
- Temporary Use Permit

These meetings give community members a chance to learn more about the proposal from the applicant. They are hosted in-person at a community venue or virtually through an online platform. They also allow any problems or concerns to be raised and dealt with early in the development process. This guide explains how to plan, conduct, and summarize these meetings effectively to get the most useful feedback from the community regarding your development plans.

It is important to understand that applicants are responsible for arranging, conducting, and covering the costs of holding a Public Information Meeting for their project.

Importance of Community Outreach

Sharing information about your development project with the community and getting their feedback can have several benefits. By hearing ideas or concerns from the public early on, you have the opportunity to provide information or make changes to gain support from residents and local businesses. This lowers risks involved and can make the approval process simpler and faster. Giving community members the chance to share their concerns can strengthen your proposal and demonstrate to village staff and council that residents are well-informed about the project.

Applicants may consider using other forms of outreach **in addition to** a Public Information Meeting, such as:

- Online surveys
- Pop-up booths at community events or local businesses
- Interviews with community stakeholders
- Social media



Who Needs to be Involved?

The Applicant

The applicant's role is to:

- Inform community members, groups, and Village staff about the project.
- Explain what approvals from the Village are being applied for. Explain how the proposal is aligned with the community's vision in the Official Community Plan. Provide clear, accurate, transparent information about the project.
- Report the findings from the meeting through a summary report.
- Provide Village staff and Council with a summary of the meeting (and any additional outreach) and input received with the application submission.

Village Staff

Village staff's role is to:

- Provide advice on what is required for community outreach.
- Provide recommendations for local venues.
- Provide suggestions on key topics that should be covered in the public information meeting.

Community Members

Community member's role is to:

- Seek out information about the project.
- Listen and participate in the Public Information Meeting and other outreach events respectfully.
- Provide appropriate and respectful feedback on the project proposal.



Planning a Public Information Meeting

Tasks	Tips for Planning
<p>Set a Time and Date</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If you're hosting an in-person meeting, select an easily accessible venue, and a date and time that most people will be able to attend. ▪ Consider if public transit is nearby, if the venue has parking or can be walked to, and if it's universally accessible. ▪ Holding meetings on weekday evenings usually results in the best turnout. Avoid weekends and holidays.
<p>Invite the Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The meeting must be advertised in the local newspaper at least 10 days prior to the meeting date. ▪ Staff must approve the time, date, and location in advance of the Public Information Meeting. Village staff will send notices to residents within 75 m from the subject property at least 10 days prior to the meeting. ▪ Think about which community members you would like to engage the most (i.e. neighbouring property owners, nearby residents, and local business owners). ▪ Use a variety of advertising and communication channels to promote the meeting and reach as many people as possible. Some ways of promoting a public information meeting include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Posts on community social media groups ○ Flyers on local community notice boards ○ Posters in local businesses ○ Notices in local papers or radio stations ○ Flyers dropped off door-to-door.
<p>Prepare for the Meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider how much information you need to provide so that community members can give informed feedback. Also think about the best way to share that information. Some ways of sharing the information include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Giving a presentation at the meeting. ○ Providing handouts with key background information for people to read and take home; and



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Displaying posters or information boards for people to view at the meeting. ▪ Anticipate which topics people may be most interested in and prepare answers to the questions you expect to receive. ▪ Provide information that is easily understandable to the average person and focuses on how the project will impact their neighbourhood or day-to-day life. Consider using visual elements, such as maps or drawings, to illustrate the scope of the project. ▪ Make sure any handouts have contact information so community members can submit comments after the meeting. ▪ Be clear about what parts of the proposal are open for discussion, and what parts cannot be changed.
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Collect Valuable Feedback

Now that you have designed an event where community members can provide meaningful feedback, it is important to record comments from the public. The following tips may help organizers to gather accurate and relevant information during the meeting:

- Set aside time for a formal question and answer period.
- Have someone take notes to keep track of the comments and questions.
- For a virtual meeting, record it so that you can create a written transcript after. Make sure you let participants know beforehand that the meeting will be recorded.
- Use a sign-in sheet or virtual attendance list to keep track of the number of participants. Consider asking for their contact information so you can reach out or provide updates during the development process or provide a link to your website or other place online where they can follow the project.
- At the end of the meeting, hand out hard-copy surveys or provide a link to an online survey for attendees to share more input or feedback about the session.
- Make sure attendees are given contact information if they wish to reach out to with any questions or comments after the meeting.



How to Analyze Public Feedback

Based on the recording or notes from the meeting, the public feedback can be analyzed by grouping comments into common themes. Once the comments have been organized into key themes, it is recommended to include sample comments to illustrate the sentiment of the attendees.

Not all comments will fit neatly into a theme. These can be included if they seem to represent a broader perspective from the community, but outliers can also be grouped in a “other” or “miscellaneous” category. It may not be possible to exactly count the number of comments in each theme. Using quantifiers like “most,” “some,” or “a few,” to indicate how common that idea was among the attendees. If a survey or polling question is used, consider including relevant numeric data to highlight key themes.

Tips for summarizing comments:

- Maintain anonymity/confidentiality, avoid including names, addresses, or pronouns.
- Include the comments that were supportive, and the comments that were negative to convey the entire community perspective.
- Focus on themes rather than individual comments. What are the big picture ideas that emerged, and what were most people concerned about?

Report Back

After you have finished the public information meeting, the applicant is required to submit a report to the Village summarizing the information gathered at the meeting. This report must include the following information:

- When and where the meeting took place.
- How the meeting was advertised and how surrounding property owners were notified.
- How many people attended the meeting.
- What information was provided at the meeting.
- A summary of the feedback from community members, including what questions were raised, what comments were made, and what the discussion focused on.
- How the feedback was/will be incorporated into the development application.

The Village of Cumberland Developer-Led Public Information Meeting Report Template may be used to help you lay out the summary clearly and concisely.

