

Springfield Township Resident Input Survey Plan

This survey framework is being proposed in light of demonstrated challenges in public communication and resident confidence in Township processes. Concerns expressed by both residents and Township officials suggest that current communication methods may not be effectively reaching the broader community. The recent consultant-focused survey further revealed the need for clearer objectives, appropriate scope, and stronger accessibility standards when seeking public input. This framework is intended as a constructive suggestion to support a more transparent, equitable, and trust-building approach to community engagement moving forward.

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Purpose

To gather meaningful, accessible, and representative resident input regarding environmental review processes, communication preferences, and consultant engagement. This survey is intended to strengthen transparency, accountability, and public trust in Township decision-making.

Goals

- Collect resident input on process and transparency.
 - Gather feedback on how environmental reviews, consultant engagement, and decision-making procedures are communicated and conducted.
- Assess how residents receive information and how they prefer to receive it.
 - Identify the most effective, accessible, and inclusive communication methods for Township updates and major project information.
- Understand community priorities related to environmental and land-use review.
 - Document what residents value most when evaluating large-scale projects, including environmental protection, public health, economic considerations, and long-term planning.
- Ensure equal and meaningful access for all residents.
 - Provide multiple accessible formats so individuals of all ages, abilities, technology access levels, and language background can participate fully and independently.
- Promote trust through transparency and shared understanding.
 - Use the survey results to improve clarity, strengthen public confidence, and support accountable Township governance.
- Maintain Clarity and efficiency.
 - Design the survey so it can be completed in 15 minutes or less while still collecting meaningful and useful input.

Accessibility Requirements

Plain Language Standard

- Surveys should be written using plain language principles to ensure broad readability and accessibility. This includes:
 - Short, clear sentences
 - Common, everyday words
 - Clear instructions for each section
 - Neutral, non-technical language
 - Simple definitions provided where necessary
 - Logical question flow

- The goal is to ensure residents can understand and respond to the survey without needing technical, legal, or professional expertise.

Multiple Participation Formats

- Surveys should be available in multiple formats to reduce barriers:
 - Paper Format Surveys
 - Mailed to all households OR made available upon request
 - Available at Township offices and other public buildings
 - Pre-paid return envelope included
 - Clearly printed, easy-to-read layout
 - A clearly marked, secure, and ADA-accessible drop-off location for completed paper surveys, located in a visible area of Township offices.
 - Online Format Surveys
 - ADA-compliant
 - Screen-reader compatible
 - Mobile-friendly
 - Simple layout without excessive scrolling
 - No account or login required
 - Large Print Version
 - Minimum 16-point font
 - High-contrast black text on white background
 - Increased spacing between questions
 - Increased line spacing for comments

Assistance for Residents

- Dedicated phone line and email address for residents who need assistance
- Option to complete survey verbally with staff assistance
- Clear posted hours of availability
- In-Person Assistance:
 - Staff or volunteer support available by appointment
 - Assistance offered without influencing responses [Neutral Assistance Standard]

Language Access

- Survey translated into additional languages if census data indicates need
- Clear notice that translation assistance is available
- Translated instructions for requesting help

Accessibility for Residents with Disabilities

- Compatible with screen readers and voice-to-text tools
- No time limits that would disadvantage slower readers

- Alternative formats available upon request (e.g., accessible PDF)
- Contact information clearly listed for accommodation requests

Equitable Distribution Plan

- To ensure broad participation:
 - Mail distribution to reach residents without internet
 - Website posting with prominent homepage placement
 - Email distribution to Township mailing list
 - Social media announcements
 - Mention at all public meetings
 - Public posting in physical community locations including, but not limited to:
 - Township Hall & Offices
 - Senior Centers
 - Public Works Departments
 - Library
 - Community Recreation Centers
 - Fire Station
 - Police Station Lobby
 - Local Farmers Market
 - Community Bulletin Boards
 - Local Seasonal Events
 - Homeowners Association Newsletters
 - Local Businesses including grocery stores, banks, restaurants
 - Food Pantry Locations
 - Collaboration with local non-profit organizations
 - Township Cable Channel
 - Recorded phone message on Township main line.

Participation Window

- Minimum 90-day open period
 - A 90-day survey window provides sufficient time for broad and equitable participation while maintaining momentum and timeliness. This timeframe allows for multiple outreach reminders, accommodates varying resident schedules, and reduces concerns about a rushed public process.
- Reminder notices at 30, 60, 75, and 85 days out.
- Clear and visible closing date

Data Transparency and Reporting

- To build trust with the community, the Township should:
 - Publish total number of responses
 - Publish participation breakdown by format (paper, online)
 - Release summarized results in plain language
 - Present findings at a public meeting
 - Make anonymized data publicly available
 - Post video explanation of findings

Anonymity & Data Integrity

Anonymity is essential to ensure honest and uninhibited participation. Residents must feel safe expressing their views on public processes without concern about personal identification, professional consequences, social pressure, or retaliation. Protecting anonymity safeguards the integrity of the public process, strengthens the reliability of the data collected, increases participation rates, and reinforces the Township's commitment to a transparent and fair decision-making process.

Surveys should not require names, addresses, or other identifying information. Residents who wish to receive updates regarding survey results can *voluntarily* provide contact information (such as just an email address).

Implementation

A recommendation for successfully distributing resident surveys to ensure broad participation, the township could:

- Day 1: Announcement of Upcoming Survey
 - Press release
 - Website homepage banner
 - Email blast
 - Social media post
 - Public meeting announcement
- Day 7: Launch Survey
 - Mail paper copies
 - Launch online version
 - Post printed notices in all public buildings
- Day 30: Reminders
 - Reminder through all available channels
- Day 60: Midpoint Update

- Public update on Participation numbers
- Reminder through all available channels
- Day 75: Reminder
 - Public update on Participation numbers
 - Reminder through all available channels
- Day 85: Final Reminder
 - Reminder through all available channels
- **Clear deadline notices are essential on all documents and reminders
- Minimum response window: 90 days

Proposed Timeline

Total Resident Survey Input Project estimated timeframe: 7 months.

- Survey design & review by multiple parties including township board, planning commission, library, parks and recreation, etc.
 - Est. Duration: 3 week
- Accessibility formatting - Ensuring the survey is compliant with ADA regulations, etc.
 - Est. Duration: 2 weeks
- Public Announcement for upcoming survey
 - Est. Duration: 1 week
- Survey Completion time for Public
 - Est. Duration: Minimum 90 Days
- Data analysis
 - Est. Duration: 4 weeks
- Public presentation
 - Within 30 days of close

Post-Survey Action & Implementation Plan

To ensure the survey results are meaningfully used, the Township should adopt a structured follow-up process. Here is my recommendation:

1. Public Release of Results (Within 30 days of Closing).
 - Purpose: Transparency and accountability.
 - Publish total number of responses
 - Publish summary findings in plain language
 - Release anonymized aggregated data
 - Present findings at a public Township meeting
2. Executive Review Session (Within 60 days of Closing)

- Purpose: Demonstrate that resident input informs governance decisions.
 - Review survey findings
 - Identify major themes and concerns
 - Prioritize actional items
 - Assign responsibility for follow-up
- 3. Actionable Framework Development
 - Purpose: Translate feedback into measurable steps.
 - Develop a short written “Survey Response Action Plan”
 - Categorize items into:
 - Immediate Changes (0-3 months)
 - Short-term improvements (3-12 months)
 - Long-term policy considerations
 - Identify which concerns require:
 - Policy updates
 - Procedural adjustments
 - Communication improvements
 - Further study
- 4. Public Accountability Update (Within 90 Days of Closing)
 - Purpose: Close the loop.
 - Publish an update summarizing:
 - What changes will be implemented
 - What cannot be implemented and why
 - Timeline for adopted improvements
 - Present update at a public meeting

Resident input must inform action. The Township should commit to a structured review and implementation process to ensure survey findings result in tangible improvement to transparency, communication, and environmental review procedures.

As communication methods continue to evolve, it is important for the Township to recognize and utilize emerging channels while also preserving traditional forms of outreach. No single method reaches all residents. A balanced communication strategy ensures that individuals, regardless of age, location, length of residency, or technology access, are able to meaningfully participate in the civic process.

**** EXAMPLE SURVEY ****

This is a sample survey to illustrate the quality and scope of **questions only**. It has not been formatting for ADA compliance or required final distribution standards.

Springfield Township Resident Input Survey

Dear Residents of Springfield Township,

The following survey is designed to help improve how the Township communicates with residents, conducts environmental reviews, and engages the public in major decisions. Your input will help guide improvements in transparency, accessibility, and public trust. Survey results will be shared publicly in summary form and used to strengthen future Township processes.

Your responses are anonymous, and individual answers will not be publicly identified. Survey results will be reported in summary form only.

If you would like to receive updates about the survey results, you may voluntarily provide an email address below (optional).

Email Address: _____

Section A: Communication & Information Access

A-1. How do you currently receive information about Township matters?
(Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Township website | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Township email list | <input type="checkbox"/> Public meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social media | <input type="checkbox"/> Postal mail |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local news | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not regularly receive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Township information | |

A-2. How would you prefer to receive updates about major Township projects?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email | <input type="checkbox"/> Public meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Postal mail | <input type="checkbox"/> Recorded presentations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Text message alerts | <input type="checkbox"/> Printed fact sheets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website updates | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

A-3. How often would you like updates on major environmental or land use projects?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- At key milestones only
- Only when public comment is requested

Section B: Public Process & Transparency

B-1: How important is it that the Township provide plain-language summaries of technical reports?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Neutral
- Not important

B-2. Do you feel Township meetings allow adequate time for public input?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

B-3. What would improve public understanding of complex environmental reviews? (Check all that apply)

- Plain-language summaries
- Independent expert presentations
- Recorded educational sessions
- Written Q&A documents
- Open house style meetings
- More time for review before decisions
- Other: _____

Section C: Environmental & Community Priorities

C-1. When reviewing large-scale land use or extraction projects, what should be prioritized? (Rank top 3)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protection of groundwater | <input type="checkbox"/> Noise and air quality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protection of wetlands | <input type="checkbox"/> Economic development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property values | <input type="checkbox"/> Long-term land use planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic impacts | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protection of wildlife/habitats | |

C-2. What matters most when the Township reviews big projects? (Choose up to 3)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean drinking water | <input type="checkbox"/> Property values |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wetlands and nature | <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs and local business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic | <input type="checkbox"/> Long-term planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noise | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air quality | |

C-3. Do you trust the Township to review environmental projects?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- Not sure
- No

C-4. Do you believe environmental review processes should include independent technical experts retained by the Township?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

C-5. How confident are you in the Township's ability to evaluate environmental impacts?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Neutral
- Somewhat concerned
- Very concerned

Section D: Public Meetings

D-1. Have you ever attended a public meeting at Springfield Township?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

D-2. If you have attended a meeting, do you feel the location of Township meetings is convenient and accessible?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No
- Not sure

Optional Follow-up:

If no or somewhat, what concerns do you have about the meeting location?

D-3. Do you feel you understand the purpose of Township Board and Planning Commission meetings?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No
- Not sure

Optional Follow-up:

Would you like clearer information about how Township meetings work?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

D-4. Do you feel you understand how public comment periods work?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No
- Not sure

D-5. Have you ever spoken during public comment?

- Yes
- No
- Have not attended a meeting

D-6. Do you feel comfortable speaking during public comment?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No
- Not sure

Section E: Open Response

E-1. What would make you feel more informed and confident in Township decision-making?

Any additional comments?
