



Rochester Hills wins state planning award for public outreach

By: [Mary Beth Almond](#) | [Rochester Post](#) | Published October 29, 2019

ROCHESTER HILLS — The city of Rochester Hills was recently recognized for its excellence in engaging the public during its most recent master plan update.

The Michigan Association of Planning gave the city the Public Outreach Planning Excellence Award for its 2018 master plan.



“Engaging our community in our future plans is an essential piece of planning,” Rochester Hills Mayor Bryan Barnett said in a statement. “It’s rewarding to see elements of the plan already coming to life in our community and to be recognized statewide.”

Sara Roediger, the city’s director of planning and economic development, said municipalities are required by state law to update their master plan every five years to make sure the plan remains current and reflects the vision of the community as a whole.

“We really took a deep dive this year and really wanted to get out to the public, with an emphasis on hearing from the youth in the community,” Roediger said.

Working with consulting firm Giffels Webster, she said the team gathered public input from a diverse group of residents. The planning process included a range of online and in-person opportunities for the public, including community visioning sessions, focus groups, story maps, adult and youth surveys, a youth art contest, two public open houses, and more.

“We had special meetings with just the city’s Youth Council to hear what the high schoolers in the community think,” Roediger said. “Because we host fourth grade tours at City Hall for many of the elementary schools in the area, every fourth grader that came through City Hall was also asked survey questions to find out what they wanted to see in the community and if they wanted to live here when they grow up — which we were very pleased to hear that most of them did want to live in Rochester Hills,” she said.

Over 750 residents completed an online survey to share their input on the vision for the community, and the city also allowed residents to upload photos of things they enjoy in the community through the new Picture This! TM program.

“We really went above and beyond any master plan process I’ve ever been involved with to make sure we got the word out to the public and got their input,” Roediger said. “It was a yearlong process, but I think it was really rewarding to hear from as much of the public as we did.”

A jury of Michigan Association of Planning professionals recognized the team's approach to public outreach, specifically citing ease of readability and exceptional documentation of public input received for the 2018 master plan update.

All of the feedback from the public helped the team develop key themes for the plan: sustainability, transportation and creating an age-friendly community. The public can review the complete updated master plan at www.RochesterHills.org/MasterPlan.

Hard copies are also available at City Hall.

<https://www.candgnews.com/news/rochester-hills-wins-state-planning-award-for-public-outreach--115606>