

HOUSING NORTH



# YOUR VOICE MATTERS: Making Public Comment at a Public Meeting

## What is public comment?

The Michigan Open Meetings Act "requires public entities to provide public notice of, access to, and an option for participation in meetings of a public body where discussion of, and decisions in matters affecting public policy are accomplished.

The intent behind the act is to ensure governmental transparency, or the ability of citizens to witness, view, and participate in the actions of their government. The Open Meetings Acts (or "Government in the Sunshine Acts" in some states), along with the corresponding Freedom of Information Acts (FOIA) form a foundation and expectation of government openness and transparency for Federal, State, and local public bodies and officials."

## All you need to know <sup>1</sup>

Most opportunities for public comment are limited to three minutes and are during a specified public comment agenda item.

- ▶ Typically, you will not be asked any questions about your public comment.
- ▶ Make sure you are prepared ahead of time by researching the agenda, date, time, location of the meeting, and the local process for comment. We suggest writing your comments down in advance and rehearsing.
- ▶ Bring copies of your written testimony with you to give to the council, advisory board, or elected official. You can also follow up by email.

Follow these five steps:

1. Introduce yourself
2. State what you want to happen (project approval, zoning change, etc)
3. Describe why more housing matters to you
4. State why this issue should matter to this council, advisory board, or elected official
5. Thank the council, advisory board, or elected official

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan/-/media/Project/Websites/libraryofmichigan/For-Libraries/Administration/Library-Law/Open-Meetings-Act/Open-Meetings-Act-Info-Sheet.pdf>



## State WHY housing matters

- Did you struggle to find housing?
- Do you have friends, kids, or family that moved out of the area because of housing shortages?
- Do you know anyone who commutes a huge distance because they can't afford housing near their place of work?
- Are you an employer struggling to maintain employees due to housing?



## HOUSING PUBLIC COMMENT GENERAL TEMPLATE

Hello, I am [name] and I live at [address/area]. I'm here today representing [org/business] and Housing North. I am here today to express my support for [topic], because we need to bring more housing to our community. Allowing [topic] will encourage the creation of much-needed housing options for [target population]. I believe we need more housing in order for our community to thrive, and this is one way to do it.

Many of the people who perform essential jobs, such as teachers, nurses, or first responders for example, in [area] cannot afford to live here. This causes them to move away or commute long distances. Our community is stronger when people with diverse skills and experience can live, work, and learn together.

Please consider allowing [topic] within [area]. This change will not only result in more housing units, but also [benefit] and [benefit]. We need to create more homes for our community, and I see this as one way to accomplish that. As a local I have seen the effects of the housing shortage first hand. [Personal anecdote]

This [topic] holds great potential to bring much-needed housing development to our area. As a community, we need to respond to the changing needs of our members. According to Housing North, we need [number] housing units. In order to address our [area]'s local affordable housing crisis, we must be innovative. Other areas have adopted this change successfully, and I think we can do it too. Let's get more homes built for our essential workers and welcome back the children who grew up here.

Thank you. I appreciate the work you do for this community, and I hope you will consider my recommendation. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this meeting.



## SMALL SQUARE FOOTAGE HOMES TEMPLATE:

Hello, I am [name] and I live at [address/area]. I'm here today representing [org/business] and Housing North. I am here today to express my support for the allowance of small square footage homes within [location]. I support this proposed change to zoning requirements, because I believe we need more housing in order for our community to thrive, and this is one way to do it.

The Northwest Michigan population has changed over the years, and as a result many areas do not have the types of housing that best fits many peoples' needs. Small square footage homes are severely lacking, but they are in demand by empty nesters, retirees, individuals, and in particular young people, who are leaving our area en masse. Smaller square footage homes also cost less, and have a lower environmental impact.

As a local I have seen the effects of the housing shortage first hand. [Personal anecdote]

This zoning change holds great potential to bring much-needed housing development to our area. Our municipal code should exist as a living document, one that responds to the changing needs of the community. According to Housing North, we need [number] housing units. In order to address our [county/city/township/etc]'s local affordable housing crisis, we must be innovative. Other states have adopted small square footage homes with great success. Allowing small square footage homes is an easy way to foster more housing development, and fill a niche in the housing market that is not currently filled. We need to change our zoning to allow for the creation of more homes. This change will make it possible for our community to welcome its essential workers and welcome back the children who grew up here.

Thank you. I appreciate the work you do for this community, and I hope you will consider my recommendation. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this meeting.



## INCREASED DENSITY TEMPLATE

Hello, I am [name] and I live at [address/area]. I'm here today representing [org/business] and Housing North. I am here today to express my support for increasing density allowances within our zoning plan. I support this proposed change to zoning requirements, because I believe we need more housing in order for our community to thrive, and this is one way to do it.

This change will foster much-needed housing development for our area. Many of the people who perform essential jobs, such as teachers, nurses, or first responders for example, in [area] cannot afford to live here. This causes them to move away or commute long distances. Our community is stronger when people with diverse skills and experience can live, work, and learn together. Please consider allowing increased density within [area]. The smaller, closer-set homes permitted will reduce home costs and environmental impact while making maximum headway on the affordable housing crisis.

We need to change our zoning to allow for the creation of more homes. This change will make it possible for our community to welcome its essential workers and welcome back the children who grew up here.

As a local I have seen the effects of the housing shortage first hand. [Personal anecdote]

This zoning change holds great potential to bring much-needed housing development to our area. Our municipal code should exist as a living document, one that responds to the changing needs of the community. According to Housing North, we need [number] housing units. In order to address our [county/city/township/etc]'s local affordable housing crisis, we must be innovative. Other areas have adopted this change successfully. Increasing density is an easy way to foster more housing development.

Thank you. I appreciate the work you do for this community, and I hope you will consider my recommendation. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this meeting.



## OTHER RESOURCES

Housing North has put together a series of resources at your disposal to help you become a housing advocate. Through our website you can go over numerous free presentations, guides and information to help advocate for homes in your community.

Either way, we suggest looking at resources like:

- [Housing North Communications Toolkit](#)
- [Citizen Advocacy Training](#)
- [Housing North event - Advocacy 101](#)
- [Becoming a Housing Advocate Presentation](#)

If you need additional assistance, data or information to advocate for housing in your community, you can also [click here](#) and let us know specifically how can we help you convey the message and support your advocacy efforts.

