



Community Engagement Plan for the City of St. Joseph

February 4, 2019



Community Engagement Plan Overview and Benefits

As part of any planning process for designing and developing our community, a Community Engagement Plan is needed. A Plan is an essential tool for outlining how Elected Officials and Appointed Boards and Commissioners engage the public throughout the different planning and development processes. This plan will act as a tool to create accountability and transparency by the city when seeking public input and the best techniques to record information learned.

With any plan created by the City, it is designed to encourage community members to participate in the process in an effort to gain support for the community vision and produce a plan that best reflects the overall vision of the community for the near and many years into the future.

Some of the benefits associated with a hearty community engagement policy can include:

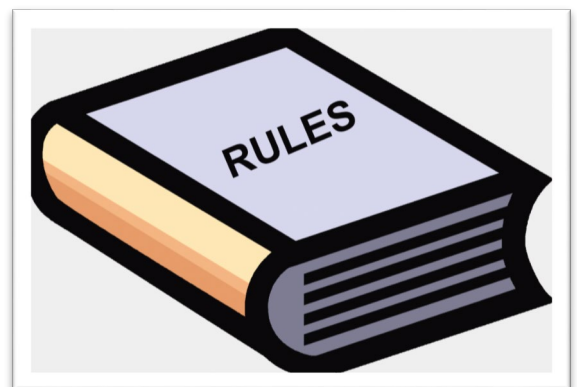
- Educating stakeholders of the different activities taking place in the community and different outcomes associated with actions taken;
- Creating ownership and support for the finished project because stakeholders were involved in a meaningful and productive way;
- Creating new or improved resources that the community will utilize;
- Creating better projects by hearing concerns earlier in the planning process;
- Bringing the community together which may create new alliances; and
- Reducing long term costs.

Community engagement is typically associated with two very different events. The first revolves around statutory requirements and in most cases involves public hearings and the second is performed to gain information from others regarding a specific item or on guiding documents for the City's future.

State and Local Regulations

The City of St. Joseph follows the Local and State regulations listed below. This includes a list for the public review process, public participation, and public meetings/hearings.

- City of St. Joseph Charter (adopted July 31, 1928)
- City of St. Joseph Code of Ordinances (as amended)
- City of St. Joseph Zoning Ordinance (adopted January 8, 2007, as amended)
- Brownfield Redevelopment Finance Act (PA 291 of 1996 as amended)
- Downtown Development Authority Act (PA 197 of 1975 as amended)
- The Michigan Open Meetings Act (PA 267 of 1976 as amended)
- New Personal Property Exemption Act (PA 328 of 1998 as amended)
- The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (PA33 of 2008 as amended)
- The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006 as amended)
- Other applicable local, state and federal regulations



Access to Information



As required by law, the City of St. Joseph provides the public reasonable and timely access to information and records associated with Community Engagement plans and activities.

The use of the City's website at www.sjcity.com is encouraged to remain informed of any meeting changes or cancellations. It can also be used as the primary source of information for meeting dates, agendas and minutes. Additional information regarding special meetings and projects being worked on by staff can typically be found

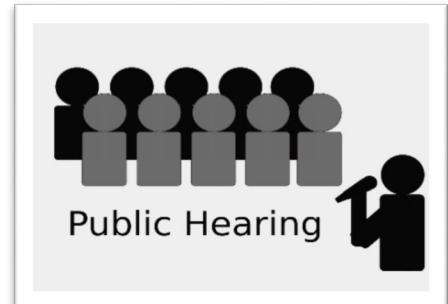
on the website.

Most meetings and public hearings take place in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall, 700 Broad Street, St. Joseph, MI which is barrier-free and accessible to the entire community. Meetings may take place at other locations, such as Riverview Cemetery and West Basin Marina which are also barrier-free and accessible. If special assistance is needed, please contact the City Clerk's Office a minimum of fourteen days before the meeting.

Many meeting agenda packets are available prior to the meeting either on the City's website or from the City Clerk's Office. Once approved, meeting minutes are posted on the City's website.

Community Engagement for Statutory Public Hearings

This engagement activity is regulated by federal, state or local law or ordinances and typically takes places in the form of a public hearing before the Planning Commission, City Commission or Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The large majority of the required public hearings involve local land use requests such as map amendments (rezoning), special use permits, planned unit developments or dimensional variance requests. The zoning ordinance requires that public notice is published in the local newspaper a minimum of fifteen (15) days prior to the public hearing and that all property owners within 300 feet of the request receive written notice of the public hearing. Staff is responsible for completing these two activities. Anyone can comment on the request during a public hearing or in writing prior to the scheduled meeting.



There are other public hearings required and conducted in accordance with the applicable laws. In many cases, the legal notice in the paper and notice given to property owners is very different than the zoning ordinance requirements.

Elected Officials

The City Commission is composed of five (5) citizens elected at large to serve staggered terms. Candidates must be U.S. citizens and a City of St. Joseph resident for a minimum of one year. They are nominated at large by petitions, signed by not less than 25 qualified electors, filed with the City Clerk in accordance with the City of St. Joseph Charter.

After each election, the City Commission appoints from its membership a Mayor and a Mayor pro tem to serve a two-year term. Depending on the item, the City Commission may be required to conduct its own public hearing. The City Commission constitutes the legislative and governing

body of the City, possessing all powers and authority to pass ordinances and adopt resolutions as it shall deem proper in order to exercise any or all powers held by the City.

In many cases, the City Commission receives recommendations from other boards and commission on specific action items. The City Commission typically meets the second and fourth Monday of each month. Check the website to confirm meeting dates and to view current and past meeting agendas and approved meeting minutes.

Appointed Boards and Commissions

The City of St. Joseph is proud to have approximately 100 volunteers who dedicate their time and talents to the many boards, commissions, and authorities. The function and responsibility of each board, commission, and authority vary, but they all work to improve the City for today while maintaining the City's history as a benefit to the residents and visitors along with future generations to come. Involvement in local government is essential in keeping our city and government officials aware of the needs of our citizens.



These boards, commissions, and authorities help ensure that the Mayor and City Commission receive a broad spectrum of public input. Individuals sitting on these boards are unpaid volunteers who take great pride in their civic service.

Members of the City Commission interview prospective volunteers and make appointment recommendations to the full City Commission. Most appointments end in April or October after a set number of years; however, the City Commission is always accepting applications to fill vacant positions that have occurred throughout the year.

If you are interested in serving on one of the City's many boards, commissions or authorities, check out the applicable descriptions on the website and complete the Volunteer Board, Commission and Authority Application and return it to the City Clerk's Office. Below is a list of boards, commissions, and authorities that the City Commission appoints:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Airport Authority* | Municipal Officer's Compensation Commission |
| Board of Review | Parks Advisory Board |
| Brownfield Redevelopment Authority | Planning Commission |
| Cemetery Board | Property Maintenance Board of Appeals |
| Construction Board of Appeals | Recreational Harbor Authority |
| Downtown Development Authority | Retirement Board |
| Housing Commission | Water Services Joint Operating Board* |
| Library Board* | Zoning Board of Appeals |
| Joint Wastewater Treatment Board* | |

*These are joint boards, commissions, and authorities which also include representatives from other jurisdictions.

Community Engagement for Public Participation

The second type of community engagement is performed to gain input from stakeholders regarding a specific item or document guiding the City's future. Documents can include master plans, specific area plans, parks, and recreation plans, bicycle routes and street reconfigurations to name a few. In many cases, routine street and utility improvements would have minimal engagement activities beyond the impacted residents along the street.

The St. Joseph City Commission will evaluate or receive a recommendation from a board, commission, authority or staff on each project to determine:

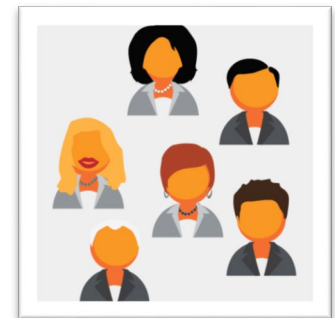
- The scope of the project – what decisions will be made;
- Limitations of the project – topics out of scope, budget, timelines, staffing;
- Identify stakeholders – who will be most affected and who needs to support the plan;
- Create objectives – what do we want to learn;
- Metrics and targets – quantifiable metrics that can be monitored which can include the number of participants, demographic and geographic mixes that can be tracked to determine if the goals are being met and if changes are needed during the project to reach out to the missing stakeholders;
- Who is responsible for oversight of the project – board, commission, authority or special steering committee on occasion it might be staff.

Many of these public outreach meetings take place in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall, 700 Broad Street, St. Joseph, MI which is barrier-free and accessible to the entire community. If larger meeting space is needed the City has used the St. Joseph Public High School, which is also barrier-free and accessible. At times, meetings may be held in neighborhood locations, to better accommodate the wide range of stakeholders.

Key Stakeholders in the City of St. Joseph

Stakeholders represent a diverse set of individuals, groups, and organizations that are interested in or affected by a planning process. A different group of stakeholders may be engaged in each of the different planning processes, dependent on the nature of the project or plan, the level of community interest, and the community's financial involvement in the project.

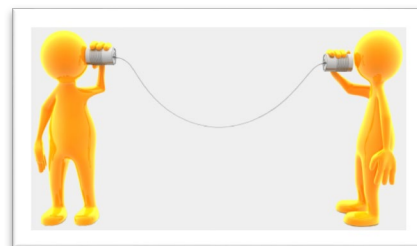
Addendum A has a compiled list of stakeholders. Because this list can change as new groups get established in the City of St. Joseph, staff would like the ability to alter the list as needed.



Existing Methods of Community Engagement and Communication Utilized

The following traditional community engagement strategies have been used by the City of St. Joseph to inform and provide information and assist the public.

Annual Calendar – Published annually and distributed to all residents, provides meeting dates and



contact information for board, commission and authority meetings, special events, water bill dates along with rubbish, recycling, brush and leaf collection.

Annual Neighborhood Meeting – An annual report by the City Manager with an overview of the past year’s activities and those for the coming year and opportunity for public input.

Charrette – During the 2016 Master Plan planning process, this type of meeting was conducted which allowed for the sharing of ideas.

“City Connection” Newsletter – Published up to six times a year and mailed to each property in the city, the newsletter provides topical articles.

Door Tags – Used to communicate activity occurring in the area that might disrupt the resident, such as street closure or paving, utility work.

E-mail Blasts – The city utilizes e-mail blasts for 750 email addresses that have signed up to receive the “City Connection” newsletter.

Facebook – Both the Public Safety and Public Works departments maintain Facebook pages that are used to provide information.

Media Outlets – The Herald-Palladium is the daily local paper that covers news in the area. The other largely found newspaper in Berrien County is the South Bend Tribune. Many of the Berrien County communities have local papers. Local radio stations include 94.9 WSJM; 98.3 The Coast, 97.5 Y-Country and 103.7 Cozy FM. Television Channels originate out of South Bend include WNDU Channel 16; WSBT Channel 22; ABC 57 and WTTE Fox. WWMT CBS from Kalamazoo covers some local news.

Meeting Dates – A list of all regularly scheduled meeting dates for all boards, commissions, and authorities is posted on the City’s website and can also be found posted at City Hall.

Meeting Packets and Approved Meeting Minutes– Agenda packets which include staff memorandums and supporting information can be found on the website prior to the meeting. Copies of these documents are forwarded to the applicant prior to the meeting. Once meeting minutes are approved, they are also posted on the City’s website.

Neighborhood Construction Project Meetings and E-mail Blasts – Prior to construction projects, residents and owners impacted by the project are invited to a public meeting. During the project, periodic e-mail blasts are sent to those requesting information and progress updates are posted on the website.

Public Announcements – During public meetings, announcements are made.

Public Hearing Notices – When required notice is completed per the applicable rules. In the case of a zoning application (map amendment, planned unit development, special use permit or variance), the legal notice appears in the local newspaper not less than fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled public hearing, in addition, all property owners within 300 feet receive notice of the hearing, in most cases, a tenant will also receive notice.

Public Meetings – All public meetings of the City Commission and appointed boards and commission have a section for public comment. This allows those in attendance to speak on items not found on the agenda.

Press Releases and Articles – When necessary, the City will issue a press release and information for articles to various media outlets.

U. S. Mail – Used when required by the Code of Ordinances for the review of a land use application, typically completed as part of a map amendment (rezoning), planned unit development, special use permit or variance request and is sent to property owners within 300 feet of the subject property. The “City Connection” newsletter is also mailed.

Website – The City of St. Joseph utilizes its website found at www.sjcity.com to provide information. Under the “Public Hub” heading, meeting agenda’s, packets and approved minutes can be found for the many boards and commissions. Sometimes the main page includes information on major interests is provided.

Website Surveys. On occasion, it has been determined that a quick survey taking five minutes or less is needed to learn more about the thoughts of the community. These surveys are typically advertised in the newsletter and are for a specific amount of time.

Community Engagement Goals

1. Encourage greater participation on boards and commissions.

The City of St. Joseph has multiple opportunities for residents to participate in local government through the various boards, commissions and authorities that advise the City Commission. Continue to encourage individuals to volunteer for an appointment with the different groups. Exposure to City government will provide residents with a broader understanding of St. Joseph’s policies, rules and regulations and may uncover ways in which these leaders can help to better integrate new and diverse residents into the larger community. At the same time, more diversity on local boards, commissions and authorities provide an opportunity for fresh perspectives and new collaborations.

Provide an opportunity to interested citizens to learn how the City runs and how they can be a part of it. The Citizen College could consist of a multi-week course to teach participants about the different City departments, how the budget works, how to engage effectively with government, and how to get involved with City initiatives.

Complete descriptions and the duties of the different boards, commissions, and authorities.

2. Communicate with homeowner/condominium associations and community-based organizations

While there are few established homeowner and condominium associations within the City of St. Joseph, these organizations are closest to the residents and therefore bring with them the opportunity to encourage broader involvement in City initiatives and policies.

The City should maintain a list of homeowner and condominium associations on the website and convene an annual meeting in a roundtable format to discuss concerns.

The City should also utilize the existing network of community-based organizations that are also stakeholders that serve and organize different groups to help identify leaders that can help promote the plan.

3. *Encourage youth involvement*

The City of St. Joseph is fortunate with several of its stakeholders having programs and activities for youth. Efforts should be made to partner with these stakeholders for a successful youth engagement activity.



Youth participation is about listening to them and turning their ideas and suggestions into reality. Youth involvement gives them the opportunity to have a say about issues and decisions affecting them, learn new skills, have fun and develop a closer connection to their community while helping adults understand the issues through their eyes.

Youth should be engaged when projects have issues that are real and relevant to them and their day-to-day experiences. Adult interaction should be honest about the issues and process while being inclusive of all youth at the event. Information should be shared with the youth to enable them to make real choices.

Engagement events for youth should be a child-friendly meeting place, where they have been before and are familiar with other adults.

4. *Educate the stakeholders and listen to comments made*

All interaction with stakeholders should involve some education about the project or the questions being asked. The educational aspect should be brief and include visual and written information.

Those involved in creating a plan will need to find and become involved with the relevant conversations and determine the next questions to ask.

5. *Promote the City of St. Joseph Brand and expand the brand when working on large planning projects*

The City of St. Joseph has created a successful brand that incorporates the iconic and restored lighthouse with the catchphrase "a special place on the lake". The logo and catchphrase also coordinate with St. Joseph



Today, the nonprofit organization which promotes downtown businesses along with sponsoring many community events with its logo which includes the lakefront and lighthouse.

To attract interest in large scale planning activities such as master plans, specific area plans, parks, and recreation plans, bicycle routes and street reconfigurations a separate brand identity should be created. This new brand should appear on all documents created and provide easy access on the website to the ongoing progress of the document. In some places, this new brand can continue to be used to inform the community of work being done to complete the plan.

back around the table with each members stating one negative thing. Do this until all post-its' are gone – the group can then review overlapping comments by the different titles. Gets everyone involved, stops one person from taking over, allows people to think of the issues differently based on the role assigned.

- ❖ Focus Groups – focus groups represented by seniors, small businesses, youth, arts and culture advocates, young professions.
- ❖ Printed Posters or Postcards – educational and informational documents that promote the brand associated with the project are placed around the City that direct people to the website to learn more about the project or important dates.
- ❖ Walking Tours – tours offer an opportunity for City staff and consultants, residents, and other stakeholders to identify and discuss specific development areas or topics. Tours are facilitated by City staff or the consultant with the facilitator taking notes during the tour and sharing them with the participants and community.
- ❖ Pop-up meetings – these meetings take place in busy public spaces and during community events or where people gather such as a coffee house. They can be as simple as asking “I want ___ in my community” posters, to answering the question, “In the future, what should St. Joseph have?” on chalkboards with their ideas and their photo.
- ❖ Kiosk in City Hall and possibly other key locations – the kiosk can allow for an informal, community friendly, non-threatening/non-intrusive way of learning about the project and to take any survey for those with limited access to the internet.
- ❖ Text message blasts – reach your stakeholders that are on the go. Most Americans send and receive text messages every day, and they are rarely without their mobile phone. Those who email on the go are a much smaller group, less than half as many people, most of whom are business people checking corporate email.

- ❖ Scenario planning – below are some suggested activities that get stakeholders involved in the process where they can be heard in different ways. Many of these examples can be modified for youth activities.
- ❖ Do it yourself Budgeting – give participants a limited amount of “St. Joseph money” in denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$50 and \$100. Ask them where they would spend their limited resources. Have piggy banks representing different categories people can choose from to spend their dollars. There will be more piggybanks than money available, everyone is forced to make tough decisions on how the money.
- ❖ A question of the Day or Voting Boards – As people walk into a meeting room or into City Hall give them one post-it to answer the question of the day. Questions should be written in the positive “What I love about the City of St. Joseph”, “Where is my favorite place to park when going to the beach” or “What is my favorite street in the city?”
- ❖ Create a "St. Joseph Pop Quiz" – create a poster with different pictures and see if people can correctly provide the location. Provide a list of possible answers to help the participant. In some case, different neighborhoods are used.
- ❖ Create “Sustainability Challenge or Underground Maze or Good Planting Gone Bad” – a great way to test residents support and knowledge of sustainable practices or what goes on underground or what type of species are best under certain conditions. The scorecard helps residents understand the potential environmental impacts of a number of landscape maintenance practices and lifestyle choices prevalent in the City. An installation

demonstrating easy DIY projects to implement sustainable practices accompanied a short survey. The survey asks what green choices residents already are in the habit of making and tested how willing they would be to make additional alternative choices for the sake of reducing environmental impacts.



- ❖ Visual Preference Survey – can be a quick and easy survey technique to better understand what people’s likes and dislikes are.

7. Social media

Investigate expanded use of Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter or other similar programs. Currently, the Public Safety Department has a policy for its Facebook page with over 2,000 followers. The Public Works Department created a Facebook page during 2018 and now has 500 followers. Written policies need to be created before implementation occurs.

Great care should be taken before starting to determine where the best return will occur. Facebook has the largest following for public use, whereas LinkedIn is geared toward the business community which would allow for a different discussion.

Content must be compelling - social media is an amplification tool for interesting content and needs to be reusable and sharable with visual documents.

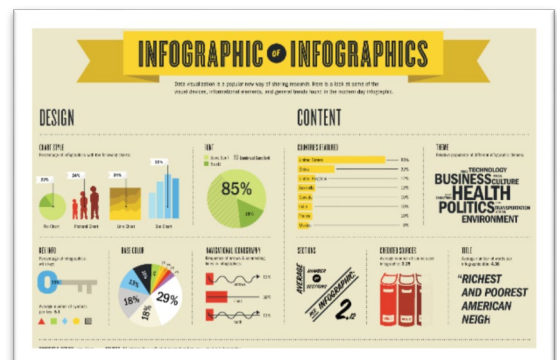
Need to focus on quality and not the quantity - focus on areas that have the highest potential impact and account for date and time swings in usage.

Create a content calendar – schedule posts in advance and fill your weekly calendar with great content. Light-hearted information at the end of the week and heavier discussions at the beginning of the week.

8. Utilize infographics

Begin the use of infographics during key steps in the project to relay important information, so the stakeholders can visually see how their opinions and thoughts are being heard.

- Infographics are easy to understand, fun to share and can be extremely engaging.
- They can be used during different stages of the process or at the end to relay what has occurred. Infographics utilize graphics to explain things.
- The use of visualized information has increased in newspapers, literature and on the internet. Infographics can be "visually wired" to visual processing, sensory receptors, and visual scene.
- Symbols can be processed at a very fast rate over written text.



- Infographics help with information overload because information is compact and visual.
- The use of color makes them more engaging.
- Infographics are more accessible because there is less written text and reading involved.
- Makes recalling information much easier especially when compared to listening or reading.

9. *Monitor and evaluate outreach efforts*

The purpose of this goal is to ensure that the City is maintaining a presence within the general community, and providing stakeholders many and different methods to participate in City decision-making process. In addition, it will help to ensure the methods of outreach are relevant and being utilized on a regular basis.



In addition to recording comments made by members of the audience during public meetings, efforts should be made to track public participation during City events, public meetings and outreach efforts. For meetings, a simple sign-in sheet with name, address, area of interest can be used to track the number of people attending a meeting and their area of interest. Surveys distributed can be tracked by their response rate and the number of “visits” to the website can also be compared from month to month or year to year. This information may help to learn more about the messaging capabilities along with a way to track participation and interest from the general public.

The Community Engagement Plan should be reviewed periodically in order to monitor the effectiveness of the procedures outlined in this document. All public participation efforts should be recorded by and various City departments and reviewed on a routine basis. Following evaluation of the outputs and outcomes of the Community Engagement Plan, the City may revise these methods to incorporate new and innovative ways to involve the public in the governmental planning decision-making process.

10. *Final plan or project adoption*

Celebrate the completion and approval of the final document. Demonstrate what impact was made on the plan based on the public input. The final plan or project document must include a section and information on how the engagement process has helped with the decision-making process – examples of changes made based on comments heard or information for the future project.



Following is a list of possible stakeholders, it is anticipated that this list will change over time:

- ❖ Residents, full-time and seasonal
- ❖ City Commission
- ❖ City Appointed Boards, Commissions, Authorities, Steering Committees or Task Forces
- ❖ Municipal departments and employees
- ❖ Neighborhood Groups
 - Below the Bluff
 - Edgewater Dunes (condo association)
 - Old Edgewater Association – Ridgeway and Upton
 - Fairways – homes located on Golden Bear Court
 - Harbor Village (under construction)
 - Old St. Joseph Neighborhood – an area bounded by Lake Blvd, Market, Main
 - Orleans Neighborhood – Lakeshore Drive and Orleans Circle
 - Condo associations
 - Jefferson Lofts – South State Street and Wallace
 - Box Factory – Broad Street
 - Tailwinds – Broad Street
 - Inn at Harbor Shores (condominium section) - Whitwam
 - Wayne Street – Wayne Street
 - Water Front – Lake Street
 - Lighthouse Point – Lake Street
 - St. Joseph Condominiums – Lakeshore Drive
 - South Cliff Condominiums
- ❖ Visitors and tourists
- ❖ Civic Institutions, Nonprofit Groups, and Social Institutions –

Area Agency on Aging	Box Factory
Curious Kids' Museum	Elks Club
Heritage Center	Kiwanis
Krasl Art Center	Lions Club
PACE	Public Library
Rotary	St. Joseph Today
St. Joseph Improvement Association	Silver Beach Center
SeniorNet	United Way
- ❖ Economic Development Partners
 - Commercial, industrial and office business owners and their employees
 - Cornerstone Alliance
 - Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce
 - Commercial Brokers and Real Estate Professionals
 - Major Employers
 - Spectrum Lakeland Health, LECO, Vail Rubber, Whirlpool
- ❖ Educational Institutions
 - St. Joseph Public Schools (K-12)
 - Lincoln Grade School
 - St. Joseph High School
 - Trinity Lutheran School (pre-school – 8th grade)
 - Lake Michigan Catholic School (6-12)
 - Lake Michigan College

- ❖ Governmental Agencies and Utility Providers
 - Berrien County – Parks Department, Road Department, Community Development Department, the court system, administrative offices
 - Comcast Cable
 - Indiana Michigan Electric Company
 - Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)
 - Michigan Gas Utilities
 - Neighboring communities, including but not limited to:
 - Benton Charter Township
 - City of Benton Harbor
 - Lincoln Charter Township
 - Royalton Township
 - St. Joseph Charter Township
 - Village of Shoreham
 - Village of Stevensville
- ❖ Religious institutions – (institutions with established permanent locations within the municipal limits)
 - First Baptist Church – 902 Broad Street
 - First Church of God – 2627 Niles Avenue
 - First Congregational Church – 2001 Niles Avenue
 - Niles Avenue Baptist Church – 1301 Niles Avenue
 - St. Joseph Catholic Church – 220 Church Street
 - St. Joseph First United Methodist Church – 2950 Lakeview Avenue
 - St. Paul’s Episcopal Church – 914 Lane Drive
 - Saron Lutheran Church – ELCA – 510 Main Street
 - The Shore Church – 623 Church Street
 - Trinity Lutheran Church – 619 Main Street
 - Zion Evangelical UCC – 3001 Veronica Drive