

City of Southfield Boards & Commissions Overview

December 2024

Expectations, Qualifiers, and Training Strategy
For Current & Prospective Board Members



City of Southfield Boards & Commissions Overview

Boards and Commissions in the City of Southfield are comprised of invested residents and corporate citizens of the community who selflessly give their time to assist all facets of the operation of City government and the Southfield community. The Boards and Commissions members, appointed by either the Mayor and/or Council, represent over 150 civic-minded individuals willing to give their time for the betterment of Southfield. Some hear and decide appeals from the strict application of Codes and Ordinances; others assist City departments by providing direction and establishing policy; and still others examine a variety of matters and formulate recommendations to the City Council.

Expectations

General expectations for those serving on a Southfield Board or Commission include the following:

1. **Attendance and Participation:** Regular attendance at meetings and active participation in discussions and decision-making processes. Members are expected to contribute their knowledge, expertise, and insights to help guide the board or commission's actions.
2. **Knowledge and Preparation:** Members should come to meetings prepared by reviewing relevant materials, documents, and reports in advance. This allows for informed decision-making and effective participation in discussions.
3. **Commitment to Public Service:** Serving on a municipal board or commission is a civic responsibility. Members should prioritize the interests of the community and the mission of the board or commission over personal or special interests.
4. **Adherence to Legal and Ethical Standards:** Members must operate within the framework of local laws, municipal policies, and any ethical guidelines established by the city or state. This includes avoiding conflicts of interest, maintaining confidentiality, and upholding the integrity of the board or commission.
5. **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Effective collaboration with fellow board or commission members, municipal staff, and the public is crucial. Respectful, open-minded communication and teamwork are expected to make decisions that best serve the community.
6. **Objective Decision-Making:** Members are expected to make decisions based on facts, evidence, and the public good, rather than personal bias or external pressure. Decisions should align with the goals, regulations, and values of the municipality.
7. **Advocacy and Public Engagement:** Members may be expected to represent the views of the board or commission in the community, educate the public, and advocate for policies or initiatives that align with the commission's mission.
8. **Commitment to Continuous Learning/Training:** Staying informed about relevant issues, trends, and changes in law or policy related to the board's work is important. Members are expected to attend training sessions, workshops, or conferences to stay current.
9. **Accountability and Transparency:** Members should be accountable to the public, ensuring transparency in decision-making processes and providing clear explanations for their decisions.
10. **Respect for Diversity and Inclusivity:** Promoting diversity and ensuring all voices, including underrepresented groups, are considered in the decision-making process is essential for fostering a fair and inclusive environment.

Interests

The following alphabetically lists all Boards and Commissions and provides a brief summary of their activities as well as areas of expertise typically demonstrated by Board candidates.

No.	Board	Description	Qualifications (Preferred Not Required)	Appointed By:	
				City Council	Mayor
1.	Administrative Civil Service Commission (ACS)	The Civil Service Commission consists of three members and one alternate appointed by the City Council for staggered six year terms. The Commission is responsible for governing the activities of all personnel except those employees regulated by the Police and Fire Commission, through contractual agreements and via exempt appointment position rules.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of labor laws and civil service regulations <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in human resources or public administration <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of municipal government operations: Familiarity with the structure, policies, and procedures of local government and its workforce.	X	
2.	Board of Review	The Board of Review, consisting of three members and one alternate appointed by the City Council for staggered three-year terms, meets in March to hear property assessment appeals and makes adjustments if needed. It operates within the City Charter and Michigan's property tax laws.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of property tax laws and assessment practices <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in real estate, appraisal, or property law <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical skills: Ability to review property assessments, compare market data, and identify discrepancies or inaccuracies.	X	
3.	Building Authority Commission	The Southfield Building Authority Commission consists of five members: four appointed by the City Council for five years, and the City Administrator as an ex-officio member. It is responsible for financing municipal facilities through bond sales or budgeted funds, including City Hall, the Library, Ice Arena, and Public Safety Building.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of local government and regulations relevant to public construction projects <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in construction, architecture, or engineering <input type="checkbox"/> Familiarity with the financial aspects of public projects: including bond issuance and budget management for municipal buildings.	X	
4.	City Centre Advisory Board	The City Centre Advisory Board, consisting of eleven stakeholders, including one citizen liaison and the Mayor, was formed to plan and implement the City Centre Master Plan. It meets monthly to support the redevelopment initiative within the City Centre district.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of zoning, local business regulations, and policies <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in retail, commercial real estate, or urban planning: Knowledge of business development, property management, and retail trends to support district growth and revitalization. <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of economic development and public-private partnerships: Familiarity with		X

No.	Board	Description	Qualifications (Preferred Not Required)	Appointed By:	
				City Council	Mayor
			strategies to stimulate local business, attract investment, and create partnerships between public and private entities.		
5.	Commission on Senior Adults (COSA)	The Commission on Senior Adults, a 15-member body appointed by the City Council for three-year terms, investigates the needs and concerns of Southfield's senior citizens and presents recommendations to the Mayor and City Council. It includes seniors and individuals with expertise in senior services.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of public policy and aging issues: Awareness of local, state, and federal policies affecting senior citizens and how they impact services and programs. <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in gerontology, social work, or healthcare <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of senior services and community resources: Familiarity with programs, services, and organizations dedicated to supporting seniors in the community.		X
6.	Construction Board of Appeals	The Construction Board of Appeals, created under Section 14 of 1972 P.A. 230, consists of five members appointed by the City Council: a licensed architect, a structural engineer, an electrical engineer, a mechanical engineer, and a general contractor with at least six years of experience. The Council may appoint an alternate if needed. Members serve three-year terms, with staggered terms for initial appointees. The Board elects a Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer annually and hears written appeals, filing decisions with the Department of Building and Safety Engineering.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of building codes and safety regulations <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in construction, engineering, and architecture (required) <input type="checkbox"/> Technical expertise in specific construction fields: Specialization in areas such as structural, electrical, mechanical, or plumbing systems may be beneficial for evaluating specific types of appeals.		X
7.	Fire & Police Civil Service Commission	The Police and Fire Civil Service Commission consists of three members: one appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council, one elected by police and fire employees, and a Chairperson selected by the other two. All serve six-year terms. The Commission oversees Police and Fire personnel matters	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of labor laws and civil service regulations <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in human resources or public administration <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of police and fire operations: Insight into the unique roles and responsibilities of police and fire employees, including knowledge	X	

No.	Board	Description	Qualifications (Preferred Not Required)	Appointed By:	
				City Council	Mayor
		under Act 78 of Public Acts of 1935, as amended.	of their training, safety requirements, and operational standards.		
8.	Fire & Police Retirement System Board	The Board consists of five members: two elected from the Police and Fire Departments for four-year terms, two appointed by the City Council for two-year terms, and the City Treasurer as an ex-officio member. The Board manages all matters related to the Fire and Police Retirement System.	<input type="checkbox"/> Familiarity with public safety pensions and regulations: including actuarial assessments and benefits structures. <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in pension management/finance, public administration, or human resources <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of retirement plans, investments, and financial management: to oversee fund administration and ensure financial stability.	X	
9.	Historic Designation Advisory Board	The Historic Advisory Board consists of nine members: four ex-officio (City Planner, Planning Commission Chair, Director of Building/Housing, and a Parks and Recreation Board member), two City Council appointees, one Historical Society representative, and two ad-hoc members. Members serve staggered three-year terms. The Board recommends Historic District designations to the City Council.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of historic preservation principles as well as legal and regulatory frameworks: including laws and regulations governing historic preservation, zoning ordinances, tax incentives, and preservation guidelines at the local, state, and federal levels. <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in architecture, history, or cultural resource management	X	
10.	Historic District Commission	The Historic District Commission, a seven-member body appointed by the Mayor for staggered three-year terms, includes a registered architect, two members from a Historical Society list, and four Mayoral appointees. It reviews Advisory Board reports and makes recommendations to the City Council on historic designations, design treatments, and guidelines for designated areas.	<input type="checkbox"/> Familiarity with historic preservation laws, regulations, and best practices: Knowledge of local, state, and federal preservation laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act and local zoning or historic district regulations. <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in architecture (one required), urban planning, or history <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment to community involvement and education: Dedication to promoting the value of preserving the city's historical assets and engaging with the community to raise awareness about historic preservation.		X
11.	Housing Commission	The Housing Commission, consisting of five members appointed for five-year terms, oversees housing for the elderly through public	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of housing laws and regulations: Familiarity with federal, state, and local housing laws, including fair housing	X	

No.	Board	Description	Qualifications (Preferred Not Required)	Appointed By:	
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		funding and the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program. It also recommends to the City Council on senior housing proposals in the community.	<p>practices, tenant rights, and affordable housing programs such as Section 8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in urban planning, community development, housing development or property management: Understanding of urban development principles, zoning laws, and the integration of housing within broader community planning. <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of public funding programs <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in social services or human services: Awareness of the needs of low-income residents, senior citizens, and other vulnerable populations, and an understanding of how housing programs support these groups. 		
12.	Library Board	The Southfield Library Board, consisting of five members appointed by the Mayor for three-year terms, with the City Treasurer serving as ex-officio, oversees library services for all community groups. The Board guides library policy, rules, and management of the Civic Center and Beech Woods libraries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of community needs and library services: Ability to assess the needs of the community and ensure the library provides relevant programs, services, and resources to meet those needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in library science or information management: Knowledge of library operations, services, and resources, with an understanding of current trends in library management and technology. 		X
13.	Library Building Authority Board	The Library Building Authority is a non-profit entity created to issue bonds and manage contracts for acquiring, equipping, and maintaining a new public library. It is governed by a three-member Board of Commissioners, appointed by the City Council for six-year terms, as per a resolution adopted June 14, 1999.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of municipal finance and bond issuance <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in architecture, construction, engineering, real estate, or property management <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of library design and space utilization: Understanding of how library spaces are used and designed to meet the evolving needs of library services, technology, and the community. 	X	

No.	Board	Description	Qualifications (Preferred Not Required)	Appointed By:	
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14.	Local Officers Compensation	The Commission, composed of seven members appointed by the Mayor, evaluates and adjusts the compensation of the Mayor, City Council, City Clerk, and Treasurer in odd-numbered years. Members serve seven-year terms.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of labor laws and public sector regulations <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of compensation and benefits structures: compensation analysis, salary structures, and benefits packages, including factors that influence salary adjustments in the public sector. <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in public administration or government operations, finance, economics, or accounting		X
15.	Parks & Recreation Board	The five-member Board, appointed by the Mayor for three-year terms with the City Treasurer as ex-officio, reviews Parks and Recreation Department activities to ensure diverse programming and quality facilities for Southfield residents.	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of community needs: Familiarity with the interests and needs of the community in terms of recreation, sports, and public spaces to ensure programs and services are relevant and inclusive. <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of budgeting and financial management <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in parks & recreation management, urban planning, or landscape design: Planning or designing recreational spaces as well as programming, ensuring that parks and facilities are well-designed, accessible, and serve the public effectively. <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in public relations or community engagement: Strong communication skills to engage with community members, promote programs, and build partnerships with local organizations, schools, or businesses.		X
16.	Planning Commission	The seven-member Planning Commission, appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council for three-year terms, reviews and makes recommendations on rezonings, Zoning amendments, and street vacations; they approve Site Plans and Special Land Use requests.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of zoning laws, land development regulations, and urban design principles <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of local government processes: Familiarity with municipal governance, public hearings, and the regulatory framework that guides zoning, planning, and development decisions.		X

No.	Board	Description	Qualifications (Preferred Not Required)	Appointed By:	
				City Council	Mayor
			<input type="checkbox"/> Background in urban planning, architecture, engineering, or real estate		
17.	Property Maintenance Code Board of Appeals	The Property Maintenance Code Board of Appeals consists of three members, appointed by the City Council, who are qualified to review property maintenance issues and are not City employees. It includes at least two alternate members to hear appeals in the absence of a regular member. Board members must be Southfield residents with expertise in building, contracting, or property maintenance. The Board provides an appeals process under Ordinance No. 1671.	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of local property maintenance codes and regulations as well as safety and health standards <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in construction, code enforcement, building trades, property management, and/or real estate: Knowledge of building codes, property maintenance standards, and construction practices to assess whether properties comply with safety and habitability requirements including needs of property owners and tenants to make informed decisions on appeals.	X	
18.	Public Arts Commission	The Public Arts Commission consists of eleven members, six appointed by the City Council and five by the Mayor, serving staggered three-year terms. It meets monthly and advocates for, promotes, and helps install public artwork in Southfield, with City Council approval, to benefit the public through the arts.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of public art practices: Familiarity with the installation, maintenance, and funding of public art projects, as well as the cultural and community impact of public art. <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of urban design and community engagement: Knowledge of how public art interacts with urban spaces and its potential to enhance the community’s aesthetic, cultural, and social fabric. <input type="checkbox"/> Background in arts administration/ management or art education: Experience in managing art-related programs, events, or organizations, including aspects such as budgeting, fundraising, and project coordination.	X	X
19.	Retiree Health Care Benefits Plan and Trust Board (RHC)	The Board consists of four members from ACS, each serving a six-year term, and five members from the Fire and Police (F&P) Retirement Board. Additionally, two active members of the State Employees Retirement System (SERS) are elected, each serving a six-year term.	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal knowledge of retirement laws: Awareness of applicable federal and state laws, such as the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), that govern pension systems and employee benefits. <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in finance, accounting, public administration, or human resources	X	

No.	Board	Description	Qualifications (Preferred Not Required)	Appointed By:	
				City Council	Mayor
			<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding Investment Strategies: Including asset management and financial markets to help guide decisions on managing the retirement system's assets.		
20.	Southfield Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (SBRA)	The Southfield Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (SBRA), created on August 20, 2001, under Public Act 381 of 1996, uses tax increment financing to promote the revitalization and redevelopment of contaminated, blighted, or obsolete properties. The City Council designated the Southfield Local Development Financing Authority board as the SBRA board.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of environmental regulations and brownfield redevelopment <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in urban planning, real estate development, or environmental science <input type="checkbox"/> Familiarity with economic development and financing tools: Knowledge of tax incentives, funding mechanisms (such as tax increment financing), and public-private partnerships used in brownfield redevelopment. <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical and problem-solving skills: Ability to assess the feasibility of redevelopment projects, including financial, environmental, and community impacts.	X	
21.	Southfield Downtown Development Authority (SDDA)	The Downtown Development Authority, established under P.A. 197 of 1975, focuses on revitalizing the downtown area bounded by Eight Mile Road, Greenfield, Mount Vernon, and Northwestern Highway. It has powers for taxation, bonding, and tax increment financing to support development. The Authority has 13 members appointed by the Mayor for four-year terms.	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of zoning laws, municipal finance, and tax increment financing (TIF) <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in urban planning, real estate development, or economic development <input type="checkbox"/> Strong business acumen: Ability to assess the financial viability of development projects, understand market trends, and promote local businesses.	X	
22.	Southfield Employee Retirement System Board (SERS)	The Southfield Employee Retirement Board (SERS), established by a Charter Amendment on November 7, 2002, consists of seven members: three from the Civil Service Commission, one appointed by the Mayor with Council approval, two elected by active employees, and one elected by retirees. The Board manages the City-approved retirement plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal knowledge of retirement laws: Awareness of applicable federal and state laws, such as the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), that govern pension systems and employee benefits. <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in finance, accounting, public administration, or human resources <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding Investment Strategies: Including asset management and financial markets to help	X	

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				City Council	Mayor
			guide decisions on managing the retirement system's assets.		
23.	Total Living Commission	The Commission, consisting of eleven members appointed by the City Council for three-year terms, recommends initiatives to enhance Southfield as a place to live, work, and raise a family, with a focus on neighborhood programming.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of local resources and services: Awareness of available community resources, such as healthcare, education, housing, and social services, to support holistic approaches to community well-being. <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of diverse community needs: Knowledge of issues affecting various demographic groups, such as youth, seniors, low-income families, and individuals with disabilities, to promote inclusive programs and services. <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in community development, public health, or human/social services <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration and partnership skills: Ability to work with local organizations, government agencies, schools, and other community stakeholders.	X	
24.	Southfield Veterans Commission	The Southfield Veterans Commission, consisting of seven members appointed for staggered three-year terms, is made up of veterans, preferably residents of the City. Its purpose is to support veterans' rights and needs, honor deceased veterans, assist veterans and families in need, collaborate with City boards and agencies, and recognize citizens who serve veterans' interests.	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of veterans' benefits and services: Familiarity with federal, state, and local veterans' programs, benefits, and resources to effectively advocate for the veteran community. <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran military service experience (required) <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in social services or veteran support organizations <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of veteran-related issues: Awareness of the challenges veterans face, including mental health, reintegration into civilian life, employment, and healthcare.	X	
25.	Wildlife Advisory Commission	The seven-member Wildlife Advisory Commission, appointed by the City Council, develops and proposes wildlife programs to ensure the safety and welfare of both residents and wildlife in Southfield. It seeks input from the community, collaborates with local, state,	<input type="checkbox"/> Familiarity with environmental laws and regulations: Knowledge of federal, state, and local regulations related to wildlife protection, conservation practices, and land use. <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of local wildlife and ecosystems: Understanding of native species, wildlife habitats,	X	

No.	Board	Description	Qualifications (Preferred Not Required)	Appointed By:	
				City Council	Mayor
		and federal agencies, and works with nearby wildlife organizations.	<p>and environmental issues specific to the area, including human-wildlife interactions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in wildlife management or conservation, environmental education, biology, ecology 		
26.	Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)	The Zoning Board of Appeals, a five-member body appointed by the City Council for three-year terms, hears public appeals and grants variances from the Zoning Ordinance in cases of undue hardship or practical difficulty. Meetings are typically held twice a month (1 st and 3 rd Tuesdays).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of zoning laws and ordinances <input type="checkbox"/> Experience in construction, real estate, urban planning, or land use <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical and decision-making skills: Ability to assess zoning requests, review site plans, and evaluate the potential impact of variances on the community. 	X	

Training Strategy

Expectations

Training is an integral part of serving on a Southfield Board or Commission and is imperative to equip its members with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively perform their duties. It ensures that members understand the legal, ethical, and procedural frameworks they must work within, allowing for informed decision-making. Training helps board members stay current on relevant laws, policies, and best practices, ensuring they make sound, consistent, and transparent decisions that benefit the community. It also fosters collaboration and communication among members, which is crucial for working as a team to address complex issues. All Board & Commission members are encouraged to attend training throughout their term. Ultimately, training helps board members serve their communities more effectively, efficiently, and responsibly.

Funding Sources

The Planning, Building, and City Clerk's departments, along with the development-related boards and commissions, prepare line items within their respective budgets dedicated to conferences and trainings. Utilization of City funding for training is subject to availability and approval from department heads and/or City Council.

Notification of Training Opportunities

The City of Southfield regularly informs board and commission members of training opportunities through regular communication such as emails or printed information integrated into regular meeting information. Staff liaisons regularly integrate pre- and post-training discussions into meetings to further encourage discussion and participation and send regular reminders and follow-ups to ensure that members are aware of deadlines and available training sessions.

Additionally, Board and Commission members are also encouraged to reach out to their staff liaison with suggestions and requests for training. Although this guide provides a recommendation on training curriculum, it is important that Board and Commission members communicate to city staff if interested in certain training opportunities to pursue, either individually or as a group. All of the aforementioned strategies help to keep members informed and engaged with relevant opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills.

Types of Training

Various training opportunities are encouraged to enhance board and commission members' understanding of current and emerging trends. Examples include, but may not be limited to:

- Reviewing existing plans and strategies (master plan, downtown plan, etc.)
- Walking tours of a local area, business or organization
- Field trips to other nearby communities
- Webinars
- Articles, blogs and books
- Podcasts

- In-house presentations from local, regional, or state partners
- One-day workshops
- Mentorship
- Evening workshops
- Multi-day conferences

Post-Training Communication

Board and commission members are encouraged to share information learned from training through brief reports or presentations at meetings, internal knowledge-sharing sessions, written summaries, and collaborative discussions. Documents are also often shared via digital resource repository (intranet) to further encourage peer learning. These methods ensure that training insights are effectively shared and benefit the entire board.

Training Resources

The following organizations offer relevant trainings, workshops, and conferences which may be available to Adrian’s development related elected and appointed officials and staff members.

- 880 Cities: www.880cities.org
- American Planning Association (APA): www.planning.org
- AARP Livable Communities: www.aarp.org/livable-communities/
- Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM): www.cedamichigan.org
- Congress for New Urbanism (CNU): www.cnu.org
- CityLab: www.citylab.com
- Form Based Code Institute (FBCI): www.formbasedcodes.org
- International City Managers Association (ICMA): www.icma.org
- International Downtown Association: www.downtown.org
- International Economic development Council: www.iedconline.org
- Michigan Association of Planning (MAP): www.planningmi.org
- Michigan Economic Developers Association (MEDA): www.medaweb.org
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) MEDC’s Community Development division: www.miplace.org
- Michigan Municipal League (MML): www.mml.org
- Michigan State University Extension–Planning: www.canr.msu.edu/planning/index
- National Development Council: www.ndconline.org
- National League of Cities (NLC): www.nlc.org
- Planetizen: www.planetizen.com
- Recast City: www.recastcity.com
- Smart Growth America (SGA): www.smartgrowthamerica.org
- StrongTowns: www.strongtowns.org

- Urban Land Institute: www.uli.org
- U.S. Economic Development Administration (US EDA): www.eda.gov

Annual Joint Meeting

Joint City Council and Planning Commission meetings enhance communication, collaboration, and decision-making by aligning both bodies on key issues. They promote transparency, streamline policy development, and improve long-term planning. These meetings, typically held within the first half of the calendar year, save time, reduce redundancy, and ensure more informed and cohesive decisions, ultimately strengthening municipal governance.

Annual Update

This training document will be updated annually to incorporate changes in educational trends and emerging information needs.