

2007 – 2008

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



ADOPTED: March 13, 2007



Introduction

Communication is a key element in achieving organizational goals. A Communications Plan is not simply advertising, promotions or public relations. Communicating is the task of seeking out customers, identifying concerns and goals, building relationships and responding to needs through appropriate avenues. A Communications Plan is a valuable tool for highlighting the assets of a community. The City of Normandy Park recognizes the value of citizen involvement and the wealth of good information and resources that the citizens of Normandy Park possess. It is important to increase the City's understanding of citizen concerns, ideas and values so they can be utilized to make better decisions. The City must identify, create and budget adequate resources to engage citizens and citizen groups to enable them to effectively become a part of the City's decision-making process.

Much of the City's overall success is shaped by the quality of its communication efforts. Therefore, a proactive approach is needed to foster effective two-way communication.

Guiding Principals

Open Two-Way Communication – Ensure that information is shared throughout the community and the organization emphasizing two-way informational flow.

Community Problem Solving – Provide citizens with complete, accurate and timely information enabling them to make informed judgments. This will help the City to make the best decisions.

Proactive – The plan attempts to give the City the opportunity to tell its story rather than rely exclusively on others to interpret the City's actions, issues and decisions.

Decentralized – Strengthen direct communication between elected officials, City departments and citizens rather than trying to funnel all information through a central point of contact or department. This provides for more knowledgeable discourse, strengthens accountability and also makes it easier to access or provide information on City activities.

Inclusive – Including everyone in the process builds teamwork and a feeling of belonging, breaking down feelings of us vs. them, which are common in many city governments and in many relationships of city government with citizens. The goal is to include everyone who cares to participate and to motivate those who are not currently engaged.

Strong and Consistent Messages – A successful communication plan is built on strong themes and is more effective than one with unrelated and scattered messages. The communication plan should support, reinforce and reflect the goals of the City government as established by the City Council and the City management, thus underscoring the idea of an organization with one common purpose: the citizens.



Targeted Audiences

Organizations frequently approach communication efforts with the assumption that everyone ever touched by services should be targeted. This approach typically results in communications that are too general to have much impact at all. Target audiences need to be identified and then communication strategies devised for each of the groups. Failure to identify the target audience and devise a specific strategy is likely to create a "ready-fire-aim" campaign. Our desire is to develop a communications with a well-planned "ready-aim-fire" approach.

Primary Target Audiences

1) Citizens of Normandy Park

Citizens of Normandy Park are the highest priority targeted audience. Strengthening the relationship between City government and 7,000 residents is the starting point of a sound communications plan. By placing our residents in the highest level of communication we will create a sense of ownership and community pride, which will help in communicating with other audiences.

There are numerous subsets to this audience. Neighborhoods, business clubs and organizations, schools, age groups, etc.

2) Members of City boards, commissions and committees.

While these people are covered under the broad umbrella of #1, Citizens of Normandy Park, the work they do on behalf of the community and government makes them a distinct and specific target audience.

3) City Employees

People employed by the City of Normandy Park in its various departments and agencies are an integral part of the success of the communication plan. Each individual reflects the organization in their daily work. Most employees reach some segment of the population everyday. This in-house target audience cannot be forgotten as it is a key element in creating a sense of community within the organization.

4) News Media

The media is an important audience to target because their coverage of the City government can have a significant influence on the public's image of the local government. Media includes a variety of print and broadcast.

Secondary Audiences

5) People outside of Normandy Park, including area residents who primarily work, conduct business and visit Normandy Park.

6) Other local governments in the Puget Sound, Washington and beyond.

7) City government associations and organizations.



Goals of the Communication Plan

The underlying principal of this Communications Plan is to present strategies to the target audiences that will change, develop or enhance their perceptions of services, issues, projects, etc.

- Ensure the Mayor and City Council are an active and integral part of the overall City Communication Plan.
- Improve City communication to and from Normandy Park citizens, businesses and organizations.
- Improve two-way communication within the City organization.
- Enhance and improve community and media relations.
- Increase awareness, interest and participation of the citizens of Normandy Park in government goals and activities.
- Minimize feelings of “us vs. them” between the City government and the residents of Normandy Park, between elected officials and staff and between departments and agencies.
- Increase awareness, interest and participation of City employees in the goals and activities of the City.
- Build organizational pride among employees and positive identification with the City government as a whole.

Strategies and Actions

Strategies

- Expand our communication research program, using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to measure attitudes and opinions.
- Develop a multi-media and multi-level communication approach and monitor and fine-tune the existing communication tools and seek additional tools. What worked in the past may have outlived its usefulness and need to be abandoned and replaced with something else. Some people absorb information audibly and others absorb information visually. Be sure that the communication tools are diverse in order to reach various segments of the targeted audiences.
- Use interactive communication tools and techniques wherever and whenever possible to involve target audiences in the communication process and increase their commitment to the idea of community problem solving.

Actions

- **Market Research**
Develop a list and solicit proposals of market research firms skilled at conducting both attitudinal surveys as well as focus groups. The method of implementation should include a diverse set of tools rather than just one form (random telephone surveys). The implementation must reach a broad spectrum of Normandy Park citizens so that the results accurately reflect the demographic make-up of the community.
- **Communications Training**
Communication training for City officials and staff is a major ongoing function. This tactic includes communication training with the Mayor and Council Members, City Manager and Department Heads as well as City staff and members of City commissions, committees and boards. We all *think* we do a good job of communicating, but without the benefit of others telling us their perception of how well we communicate we may never improve. Research firms that specialize in communication training for public entities and arrange for training to be conducted for Normandy Park officials and staff.



Communication Mediums

External

- ***City Scene***

Description: Quarterly, 11x17 bi-fold publication in four colors. Generally the newsletter includes articles about City projects, services and issues, space for graphics such as a map or graph and upcoming meetings. The *Scene* provides information about “in the news” issues related to City business. Examples of information to be communicated includes: Proposed Ordinances, Capital Improvement Projects, Budget Process, Storm Water Utility Rates, Recreation Programs, Conservation Programs etc.

Objective: To provide information on specific City issues to all Normandy Park residents particularly to residents that are not actively engaged in City government.

Strengths: Quick and easy to read, flexible and attractive format.

Weaknesses: Timeliness is limited to a four-week advance deadline.

Audience: All Normandy Park Postal Patrons (approximately 3,500).

- ***Utility Bill Insert***

Description: Monthly 8.4 x 14 quarter-fold with one panel in two colors. The insert, included in utility bills, is designed primarily to give city and community tips, dates, activities e.g. boy scout Christmas tree pick-up, Fourth of July parade, energy saving tips, Red Cross blood drives, Arbor Week, Earth Day etc.

Objective: To inform the community of activities and programs of interest to the community. Not limited to just City of Normandy Park information.

Strengths: No postage required, flexible format.

Weaknesses: Requires four weeks or more lead-time. Mailed only to utility accounts.

Audience: All Normandy Park utility accounts.

- ***E-mail Distribution Lists***

Description: Electronic mail distributed to individuals who have registered to receive electronic notifications or messages regarding a specific project, issue or service.

Objective: Keep interested individuals informed about issues that affect them directly including public notices, services, meetings, improvement projects, etc.

Strengths: Simple, easy to produce, inexpensive.

Weaknesses: Email addresses may change over time and distribution list(s) become outdated. Audience is limited to individuals who voluntarily register.

Audience: Individuals interested in specific information.



- ***Budget in Brief***

Description: 5.5 x 8.5 eight-page booklet in two colors.

Objective: To provide basic information about the current fiscal year budget. Includes pages called “Where the money comes from” and “Where the money goes”. Mailed every February.

Strengths: Easy to read simple layout “not overwhelming”.

Weaknesses: Attempts to simplify a very complex subject.

Audience: Mailed to all Normandy Park households.

- ***Web Site***

Description: Comprehensive web site that is designed to enable staff to post information from any desktop computer. The site contains news items, department listings, calendar of City meetings and events, agendas and minutes for all Commissions, Committees and Council. It offers easy access to City programs, services, documents and more. Viewers can request that news items, agendas, calendar postings etc. be automatically e-mailed when posted.

Objective: To provide “one-stop” access to City information via the World Wide Web. Cross reference information so that it is accessible from a variety of entry points.

Strengths: Extremely flexible and easy to read with a powerful search tool. Easy to keep current and to add or delete information.

Weaknesses: On-line services such as permits, licenses etc. will require significant financial investment and a web interface with City software systems. Is only available to citizens with Internet access.

Audience: Anyone with access to the Internet.

- ***Web Page Survey Tool***

Description: This is the newest feature on the City’s web page. Simple surveys or questionnaires can be posted from the back end. Persons who have completed the survey can view results. Participation is limited to one entry per computer.

Objective: To provide citizen’s with a means of commenting and providing input on City issues from their desktop.

Strengths: Extremely flexible.

Weaknesses: Only available to citizens with Internet access.

Audience: Anyone with access to the Internet.



- ***Citizen Survey***

Description: A community attitude and opinion survey to be conducted every two years. A total of 400 interviews are conducted via phone. The sample size ensures a 95% confidence level with a margin of error not greater than $\pm 5\%$. This means that if the survey were replicated using the same methodology, 95 times out of 100 the same percentages would emerge within a range of $\pm 5\%$.

Objective: The overall objective of the research is to measure change in the community's attitudes and opinions.

Strengths: Relatively quick and simple. Provides quantitative data.

Weaknesses: Many households have caller ID features on their phones and will not answer the phone if the number is not one they recognize. Consequently numerous calls must be made before attaining the target sample of 400. There is a concern that the survey does not accurately reflect the age demographics of the community. Does not provide qualitative data.

Audience: City Council and City staff.

- ***Government Access Channel 21, NPTV***

Description: Public access television. NPTV can be used to post information slides, play public informational announcements, recorded messages, etc. on channel 21.

Objective: Use public access television to provide information about City issues to the community.

Strengths: Reliable and knowledgeable staff, who are always willing to help and to improve coverage.

Weaknesses: Content must be updated frequently to attract "return" viewers. Television viewers tend to "surf" channels and land on the public access channels by chance.

Audience: Comcast Cable Television customers.

- ***Brochures***

Description: A variety of brochures are created in-house, including Conservation, Storm Water Utility Rates, Recreation Programs, Crime Prevention Tips, ADA Services, Adopt-a-Street and more. These are placed in display racks at City Hall and at the Community Center. They are mailed in response to inquiries and used as a resource by front-line staff.

Objective: To provide brief easy-to-understand information about City services and programs.

Strengths: Inexpensive, simple, easy to create.

Weaknesses: Limited distribution.

Audience: Normandy Park residents.



- ***Assorted Printed Materials***

Description: Flyers, A-boards, door hangers, postcards, maps, new resident welcome packets, etc. are created as needed to provide information about City program and issues.

Objective: Support other communication mediums with printed materials for targeted audiences.

Strengths: Provides specific information designed to targeted audience. E.g., door hangers for houses and businesses within a specific area providing information regarding a public improvement project nearby. Tent cards for restaurants alerting customers that water is served on request.

Weaknesses: Limited materials can be made in-house; most materials must be printed professionally.

Audience: Various targeted audiences depending on the message.

- ***Videos***

Description: NPTV can produces educational/informational videos each year for the City. The videos can be scheduled to run at various times throughout the day. They can also be made available free of charge for citizens to borrow through the City Clerk's office.

Objective: Provide visual and audio information on City issues and projects.

Strengths: Very effective communication tool. Professional and informative.

Weaknesses: Very limited audience/distribution. Can require a lot of staff time/coordination and may only be seen by a few people. (Future possibility of streaming the videos on the City's web site and expanding distribution.)

Audience: Citizens of Normandy Park.

- ***News Releases***

Descriptions: A prepared news or publicity item about City of Normandy Park business. News releases should be timely and relevant and contain the facts of the information. The release should include basic information: who, what, where, when, why and how.

Objectives: To provide the local media timely, accurate, and useful news about the City of Normandy Park. Releases are faxed to the local media.

Strengths: Easy to write and distribute.

Weakness: Not always "picked-up" and used by the media.

Audience: Local media.



- ***Advertisements:***

Description: The City occasionally places paid advertisements in local newspapers.

Objective: To call attention to City programs and upcoming public meetings.

Strengths: Easy to read, City logo catches readers attention. Ads are recognizable as City of Normandy Park.

Weaknesses: Expensive, short shelf life. Competes with many other ads in a variety of size and design.

Audience: Normandy Park residents.

- ***Public Notice Boards:***

Description: The City routinely posts public notices on bulletin boards at various locations in Normandy Park (QFC, City Hall, PW Shop).

Objective: To call attention to City programs and upcoming public meetings.

Strengths: Easy to read, located in heavily used areas, notices are recognizable as City of Normandy Park. Simple, easy to produce, inexpensive.

Weaknesses: Limited audience, requires individual to seek out information, experience suggests notice boards are not very effective.

Audience: Normandy Park residents.

- ***Public Meetings***

Description: In addition to the regularly scheduled Council and assorted Committees and Commission meetings, which are always open for public comment, other public meetings targeted towards specific issues are also held as needed.

Objective: To present the community with an opportunity to express opinions and give input on specific City issues.

Strengths: Attendees hear the opinions of others and have a greater appreciation for the issue as a whole beyond their own personal opinions.

Weaknesses: Often attracts the same people again and again.

Audience: Either broad base citizenry, or specific targeted group.



- ***2-1-1 System:***

Description: The 2-1-1 system is an automated voice information telephone number that can be used to provide public information.

Objective: To provide information regarding frequently asked questions or general information.

Strengths: Simple, easy to produce, inexpensive after initial investment.

Weaknesses: Limited audience, requires individual to seek out information, may be time consuming to maintain/update.

Audience: Normandy Park residents.

Internal

- ***EmployE-News***

Description: Electronic newsletter distributed to all employees bi-monthly. The newsletter includes information on benefits, computer tips, new and retiring employees and more.

Objective: Keep employees informed about issues that affect them directly including benefit changes, computer training opportunities, new employees, etc.

Strengths: Simple, easy to produce inexpensive.

Weaknesses: Can be time sensitive.

Audience: All City employees.

- ***City Manager Activity Report***

Description: Electronic report distributed weekly to Council Members. The report includes information on key issues and projects.

Objective: Inform Council Members about issues and projects affecting the City and/or community.

Strengths: Simple, easy to produce, inexpensive.

Weaknesses: Requires City Manager time.

Audience: City Council Members.

- ***All Users E-mail***

Description: Each City employee receives E-mail directed to “all users”. E-mails include news releases, Council agendas, minutes, training opportunities etc.

Objective: Ensure that employees receive news from employer; not in the papers or “on the street”.

Strengths: Quick and timely information.

Weaknesses: Not all employees check their e-mail on a regular basis.

Audience: Employees



- ***Management Team Meeting***

Description: Directors of the various departments gather each week to review up-coming Council meetings, action items and to keep each other informed of issues in their own departments. The meetings provide an opportunity for department heads to keep abreast of what is happening in all departments not just their own.

Objective: Ensure that all departments are familiar with broad issues related to City business.

Strengths: Regular face-to-face contact between department heads.

Weaknesses: None.

Audience: Department Heads

- ***Department Meetings***

Descriptions: Staff and consultants from individual Departments meet on a regular or as needed basis to exchange information and to update each other on issues and activities within the department and other departments.

Objective: Share information with all department employees about department business and citywide business.

Strengths: Provides an opportunity for employees to "catch-up" and "check-in" with each other.

Weaknesses: Because of busy schedules and conflicting meetings, department meetings are not always held on a regular basis.

Audience: Employees.

- ***Paychecks Stuffers***

Description: Occasionally information such as the United Way Campaign, changes in benefits etc, is included with employee paychecks.

Objective: Alert employees to changes in benefits, opportunities etc.

Strength: Easy to reach all employees.

Weakness: Often the material is not read.

Audience: Employees



- ***Employee Advisory Committee***

Description: A representative of each Department meets periodically to discuss employee relations and areas of potential improvement.

Strength: All segments of employees are represented allowing an opportunity for all "voices" to be heard.

Weakness: Does not meet regularly. Issues and solutions can add to already heavy workloads.

Audience: Employees

- ***Employee Communication Guide***

Description: Comprehensive handbook for all employees which includes information on the use of City graphics, city templates, working with the media, citizen participation, conducting meetings and more.

Strength: Easy to read, easy to reference.

Weaknesses: None

Audience: Primarily, managers and support staff.



Communication

Areas of Focus
2007-2008

Council goals, the work of various departments and unexpected projects and issues dictate communication efforts and communication priorities of the staff. Some things may only require printed materials, others will require collaborative work with specific audiences and stakeholders. The following is a partial list of items that will likely require a communication plan unique to that project in the upcoming fiscal year. All will involve an integrated approach and the use of many of the existing communication tools.

- Planning & Design of 1st Avenue S, Phase II-A.
- Conservation programs.
- Emergency Preparedness.
- Materials related to economic development.
- Pedestrian and traffic safety.
- Stormwater Utility program.
- Enhancements to the *City Scene*.
- Enhancements to the City website.