2023-2024 COMMUNICATION and COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Redmond
WASHINGTON

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Introduction

Background

The City of Redmond, home to over 75,000 residents, is committed to effectively inform and meaningfully engage the community via timely and transparent communication efforts. City projects, programs, and resources were, in part, derived and implemented based on feedback received from community involvement activities that serve as a roadmap for future initiatives. In a rapidly growing city, we have an opportunity to transform the way we engage with the community by cementing clear, concise, and consistent communication and community involvement practices throughout our comprehensive organization.

By implementing the strategies in this plan, the City can solidify its commitment to engaging with and informing its residents, fostering an informed community with a sense of ownership and involvement, and ensuring that city initiatives truly represent the needs and desires of the community.

Framing and Goals

With this plan, we intend to:

1. Reinforce the City's priorities outlined in the Mayor's vision, Community Strategic Plan, budget, and Redmond 2050, the City's update to the Redmond Comprehensive Plan.
2. Keep Redmond community members informed and prepared with the right information at the right time.
3. Ensure everyone in our community is knowledgeable of and has the opportunity to be involved and share their input.
4. Engage the community early and often, focusing on key topics of interest in a manner that is equitable and barrier-free.
5. Inform city decision-making with measurable results from community participation and input.
6. Standardize the City's brand.

Team Members: Roles and Responsibilities

Name	Dept./Agency	Role
Jill Smith	City of Redmond Communication Division	Communication and Marketing Manager
Brant DeLarme	City of Redmond Communication Division	Communication and Marketing Administrator
Christina Wilner	City of Redmond Communication Division	Communication and Marketing Administrator
Chip Cornwell	City of Redmond Communication Division	Video Specialist
Tyler Balser	City of Redmond Communication Division	Graphic Designer
Kyle Muir	City of Redmond Communication Division	Digital Graphic Designer
Lisa Maher	City of Redmond Executive Department	Deputy Director
Jill Green	Redmond Police Department	Public Information Officer (PIO)
Various city staff	All City of Redmond departments	Varies

Key Messages

As all Redmond programs, projects, and planning supports one or more of the City's guiding documents, city communications shall directly support these priorities, including:

I. **Mayor Birney's vision** for Redmond is:
- A connected community that enhances livability and sustains the environment, and that places Redmond as a leader locally, regionally, and nationally.

II. **Redmond's Community Strategic Plan** identifies and measures the City's priorities, including:

- **Environmental Sustainability:** Redmond works with the community to create a healthy, sustainable environment for all generations and conserves our natural resources, affords a high quality of life, and draws from scientific evidence-based data.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Redmond is a community for all, in which all residents can fully and effectively access city services, influence city policy and direction, and feel a sense of belonging and safety.
- **Housing Choices**: Redmond values, provides, and promotes livability and a variety of housing choices for all.
- **Infrastructure:** Redmond is connected, multi-modal, smart, green, and has high value for long-term infrastructure investments that support the future needs of the community.
- **Public Safety:** Redmond's public safety efforts protect all members of the community through preparedness, prevention, emergency response, mitigation, and recovery in an inclusive, equitable, compassionate, and timely manner.

III. Redmond is committed to being a good financial steward of the community's tax dollars and demonstrates this by using the **Budgeting by Priorities** process to identify the community's highest priority services and creates a biennial budget that supports:

- A **healthy and sustainable** environment that supports an active community.
- A **strategic and responsive** community that is welcoming, service-oriented, and fiscally responsible.
- A **safe and resilient** community where all people feel safe.
- A well-planned and supported community that is **vibrant and connected** and that provides a sense of place.

IV. Redmond is currently completing the State required update to its **Comprehensive Plan** through the Redmond 2050 project and planning for:
- Transitioning from a suburb to a city and working together with the community to plan for our future.
- Accommodating growth, as required by the Growth Management Act, of 24,800 new homes and 29,760 new jobs between 2019 and 2050.

Target Audience

With a multitude of city projects underway at any given time, not all projects require the same level of communications and community involvement. Consider your project and determine which target audiences are appropriate.

Primary Audience (need to know information first)

Internal
☒ City leadership
☒ City staff
☒ City Council

External
☒ Redmond residents
☒ Redmond businesses
☒ Redmond employees
☒ Community partners
☒ Boards/Commissions

Secondary Audience (may need to know the information)

☒ Neighborhoods
☒ Community partners
☒ OneRedmond
☒ Boards/Commissions
☒ Tourists, visitors, shoppers
☒ Commuters
☒ Other government entities/tribes
☒ King County
☒ Lake Washington School District
☒ Neighboring communities and businesses
☒ Media

Communication Channel Guide

Overview

Redmond uses a variety of channels to share information. Conversation styles often vary based on the type of communication; how we would write for a website is not always how we would write for a media outlet. Understanding the different channels we use to communicate will result in content that is creative, engaging, resourceful, and in alignment with the goals of the City's Communication and Community Involvement Plan.

Communication for Social Media

Social media can support more short, witty, and fun content that invites two-way engagement with the community. Content, by nature, will be less formal but must still adhere to the professionalism expected of a government agency.

A channel such as Facebook may have longer blurbs than other channels such as Twitter/X, which has a character limit. However, Facebook posts should not be long. Ideally, posts should be approximately 30-50 words in length; the lower the word count, the higher the engagement.

Social Media Channels:

Facebook:
- CityofRedmond
- RedmondWAFire
- RedmondWAPolice
- RedmondParks
- RedmondWASeniors – (Closing May 2024)
- GoRedmond

Twitter:
- RedmondWaPD
- CityofRedmond
- Go_Redmond

Nextdoor:
- CityofRedmond
- RedmondWAPolice

LinkedIn:
- City of Redmond, WA

Instagram:
- RedmondWaPolice
- CityofRedmond
- RedmondParks

YouTube:
- CityofRedmond
- RedmondWAPolice

Communication for Web Media

Writing for the website is like writing for other digital-oriented channels; content must be short and concise so that visitors obtain as much information within a short window of time.

The goal for the city website is to provide the visitor easy and intuitive access to information and services. A person should automatically know where to click or scroll to within 5-10 seconds of landing on the site; otherwise, the probability of someone exiting the site exponentially increases. Keep the following in mind when updating our city webpages:

- **Keep it concise**. Do not use more words than necessary to make a point.
- **Use headers**. Assist visitors in finding the information they are seeking by splitting content into sections.
- **Keep it simple**. Content should be written at the eighth grade reading level. If using Microsoft Word, click on "word count" under the review section for the readability score.
- **Do analytics research.** Track analytics to understand how visitors interact with the website; this can help inform how to display content on the website.
- **Integrate visuals.** Provide a balance of text and images to keep content engaging.

Web Channels:

- External:
  - Redmond.gov
  - LetsConnectRedmond.com
- Internal:
  - CityWeb SharePoint
- Program websites:
  - ExperienceRedmond.com
  - GoRedmond.com

Communication for Print Materials

When writing for print materials, it is important to focus on creating engaging, concise, and professional content. Unlike social media, the format of some print materials allows for longer and more detailed content, but it essential to maintain a level of readability and clarity. While the tone may be more formal, content should still be interesting and accessible to the intended audience. Content written for informational signage should be as concise as possible, leaving plenty of white space.

Direct mailers are a specific type of print materials that can be used to engage an audience in a highly targeted way. While the City does not prioritize citywide mailers for environmental reasons, targeted mailing allows you to share your message with specific audience segments, grouped by location. Mailers work well for reaching groups affected by a program or initiative in a specific area, if you want to reach neighborhoods you have previously struggled reaching, and more. Mailers also remove an accessibility barrier by reaching populations where they live instead of relying on internet access with digital communications.

Print Channels:

- Focus newsletters
- Direct mailers
- Flyers, postcards, rack cards
- Signage

- Utility bill inserts
- Advertisements

Communication for Email Media

Communicating via email is one of the best tools for direct communication. It is a great way to share information with interested parties in a timely manner. It is important to be clear in purpose and details to maintain recipient attention and engagement. It is important to find the right balance in how often subscribers receive e-communications to prevent loss of interest, and email fatigue.

Below are a few things to consider when sending e-communications to our growing listservs:

Use engaging subject lines.

- Be short (aim for a max of 70 characters)
- Use call-to-actions (CTAs)
- Avoid spam filters by removing unusual punctuations, all caps, emojis, etc.

Images. Use strong, engaging, and appropriate banner images with department branding for e-communications. Images should be high-quality and related to the content of the email/e-newsletter.

Use headlines. Say clearly what's going on and why it is interesting. Highlight the who, what, when, and/or where.

Be conversational. Avoid text with a lot of jargon. Always remain professional and reflect the [City's Writing Style Guidelines](#).

Keep it short and concise. E-newsletters allow for more content than a typical email message, but it's still best to keep content brief; remember, you are competing with other emails in the recipient's inbox.

Communication for Digital Advertising

Digital advertising plays a crucial role in allowing the City to connect with our community and build a strong online presence. With digital advertising, we often have options to target the audience based on demographics, interests, and behaviors. These types of media build on our social media and website presence. Most digital media provide the ability to track and analyze performance, to optimize results in the future.

Below are a few things to consider when sending e-communications to our growing listservs:

Audience. Have a strong and clear understanding of the target audience, their needs, and interests when building communication for digital media. Consider using the audience persona communication approach detailed in a subsequent plan section to brainstorm your content.

Timeline and Budget. Digital media offers a wide variety of formats including paid elements that can help you to reach your target audience. These types of digital ads usually perform better when they run for longer time periods, and therefore are more expensive than paid social media ads. Digital media is a better fit for projects with a longer timeline.

SEO. Search engine optimization (SEO) is essential for digital media content as it helps to improve its visibility and reach. Writers should include relevant keywords and phrases in their content, meta descriptions, and alt text, and optimize their content for search engines.

Establishing Newsworthiness

When thinking of sharing a story in the city communication channels, it's important to first consider what makes a story worth telling.

While there are always exceptions, it is important to consider the elements of newsworthiness when determining how the story fits – or doesn't fit – into each channel. The most basic components of the story should include the five W's, when applicable:

- **Who** - *Who is involved in this story? Who does it impact?*
- **What** - *What is the focus of the story? (Specificity is key)*
- **When** - *When did/does the story take place?*
- **Where** - *Where did/does the story take place?*
- **Why** - *Why does it matter?*

The above frames some of the most common questions readers ask themselves internally when consuming media. If readers can't easily find the answer to the above – or if the answer isn't relevant to them – they may lose interest and move on to the next best resource.

Once the basic framework is identified from the above, build upon the newsworthiness of the story to elevate value to the audience and maintain curiosity. The six elements of newsworthiness defined below help drive home the meaning of the story and ultimately keep readers engaged and interested.

Elements of Newsworthiness

Element	Definition	Questions for consideration	Example
Proximity	The closer the story, event, or topic takes place to the audience, the more important it is. Consider how location plays a role in the stories told.	• Where did/does the story/event happen? • Where is the audience located? • Where does the audience typically spend their time?	Nearly all of Redmond's communications are specific to Redmond.
Timeliness	Consider how soon the events or stories to share take place. While not every story needs a deadline or time-limited element, it is important to prioritize stories which have taken place/will take place recently/soon. Stories which capture recent events or upcoming deadlines increase news value.	• When did/does the story take place? • Is there a deadline for action?	A questionnaire or event deadline holds more news value than an event summary from last season.
Human interest	Human interest stories include features on particular people or organizations and	• Can we highlight specific people or organizations?	Including direct quotes, photos, and features about community

Element	Definition	Questions for consideration	Example
	often draw in your audience by appealing to emotion. Consider how the audience might relate to individuals or organizations featured in the story.	• Whose stories can we elevate? • How will our audience see themselves in this story? • How will our audience relate to this story?	members, partner organizations, and attendees will garner more interest than a brief summary of just the facts.
Importance, impact, or consequence	Consider how many people your story impacts. Wide-reaching stories, events, or initiatives increase the importance of your message because they affect a large chunk of your audience.	• How many people does this story impact? • What segment(s) of our audience does this story affect?	Citywide vs. neighborhood-specific.
Prominence	Certain individuals – like elected officials, entertainers, and athletes – are considered more newsworthy for the simple fact that they hold a higher status. Prioritize stories which feature prominent figures when applicable.	• Who does this story involve? • Were notable or well-known figures involved?	Events where the Governor attends in Redmond, or a celebrity is the Derby Days grand marshal.
Novelty, oddity, or the unusual	Strange stories are likely to find their way into the news for shock factor or novelty. You can increase news value of an everyday story if there is some kind of oddity, or it strays from the norm in some way, but use caution and always be professional and access any potential impacts.	• What is unique or exciting about this story? • Are there any elements outside of the norm? • How does this story differ from others?	Saving ducklings from a storm drain.

Equitable Involvement Resources

A critical component of the City's Community Strategic Plan is realizing a Redmond where all have access to city services, can influence city decision-making, and feel a sense of belonging. The City's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiative seeks to provide excellent service, encourage cross-cultural interactions, and strengthen relationships with diverse communities.

This includes aligning the City's communication and involvement efforts with DEI best practices to meet the growing needs of our communities. The City has developed several resources to support staff in this goal.

Resources

Resource	
Digital Accessibility Resources	A guide with best practices, checklists, and other resources to help make sure we provide equal access to the City's digital materials and that our services follow ADA requirements.
Religious and Cultural Holidays	A calendar to reference when planning events to identify and avoid potential conflicts with important dates.
Language Translation Guide	A guide on how to prioritize translations, what translation and interpretation services are available, and what to consider when coordinating translations with a vendor.
Equitable Involvement: Equity in Decision-Making and Overcoming Barriers	Resource includes: - Steps to be transparent and equitable in communicating decision-making. - A detailed guide to overcoming a variety of barriers to help meet people where they are and ensure everyone can be involved. - A list of community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and community gathering spaces in Redmond.
Brand Style Guide	The City's Brand Style Guide includes tips on approaching photography and messaging with a DEI lens (pages 6-9).
Cultural Media Resources	The King County Ethnic Media Resource Guide and Redmond's spreadsheet of cultural media contacts. Contact Communications if you are interested in learning more.

Monitor, Evaluate, and Adapt

City communications staff will regularly evaluate how our communication methods are performing, review questions we are receiving from the community, and adapt our plan as appropriate.

As part of the City's performance measures, this work is measured by the dashboard indicator, Community Satisfaction Rating.

1. Program Measure: Number of responses to the annual community survey and online questionnaires.
2. Program Measure: Percentage of community members responding that they feel informed regarding city programs, initiatives, projects, and issues.
3. Program measure: Percentage of community members who feel the City is utilizing community feedback on priority project decision making.

Workplan

The City's Communications Division maintains a bi-annual work plan that provides more detail to each strategy in this Communications Plan.

Editorial Calendar

The City's Communications Division maintains a calendar of seasonal messaging to help plan and manage city content across different media throughout the year.

Staff Resources

All communication and community involvement resources are available to city staff in the digital Communications Toolbox located on the City's intranet. These resources include, but are not limited to such things as:

- **Self-Serve Templates**
  News releases, PowerPoints, flyers, posters, signage, reports, designed emails, email signatures
- **Brand Resources**
  Brand Style Guide, Writing Style Guide, city logos
- **Reference Resources for Planning Community Involvement**
  Communication and community involvement plan guidelines, religious and cultural holiday calendar
- **Best Practices for Using Communications Tools**
  Formatting questionnaires, accessibility for digital and print, website, social media
- **Website Resources and Best Practices**
  Redmond.gov (primary), LetsConnectRedmond.com (community involvement), ExperienceRemond.com (tourism and buy-local)