AUBURN

CITY OF AUBURN

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04.04.2022

COMMUNICATIONS
& COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

MISSION & VISION

Strategic Plan Vision Statement
Auburn will be a community that balances urban & rural living, with safe, sustainable, livable neighborhoods that are well-connected; a community to be proud of, with a vibrant workforce and resources that are preserved and protected; a unique small city that offers quality education and bold economic, recreation, and housing opportunities.

2021-2023 Council Vision Statement
Auburn will embrace possibilities and create opportunities.

City Motto
No steps backward.

Communications & Engagement Mission Statement
Auburn's Communications & Engagement Department will be the best source of information about city government, providing innovative and creative communications solutions, and sharing effective, compelling messages, stories, maps, and graphics that foster positive community engagement and meaningful connection with our stakeholders.

PLAN **PURPOSE**

" **Communication with citizens is a basic obligation of government – an essential component of the democratic process. Good, effective public communication... should be an integral part of achieving success in almost every city project.** International City/County Management Association **"**

Auburn's 2019 Strategic Plan outlined 11 strategic recommendations; one of which was to establish this city-wide communications plan.

Auburn's Communications & Engagement Plan is a living, breathing document the city will use to align public information activities with our goals, objectives, and messaging & branding. It is a multi-year plan, intended to be adjusted and enhanced. As technology advances and the city's mission evolves, this plan will change accordingly. It defines and prioritizes our approach to communications, identifies our audience, determines our principal messages - and how and when they are delivered - and calls for the measurement of the success of these efforts.

The Communications & Engagement Department will have the primary responsibility of implementing, monitoring, and updating this plan. The department supports the city council and each city department/division through marketing, graphic design, print production, social media, website management, event planning, media strategy and response, photography, video production, and emergency communications.

With a commitment to advance our strategic vision to help position Auburn as a thriving, healthy, innovative, and sustainable community, the purpose of this plan is to:

- Define the messaging and communication/engagement tools the City of Auburn will use
- Place focus on "telling the story of Auburn" in an impactful, effective way
- Ensure that engagement between the city and our residents, visitors, businesses, and community partners is implemented in a timely, effective, and reliable manner
- Monitor brand usage to ensure consistency throughout the city
- Ensure that communications align with Auburn's Strategic Plan & council vision
- Work to advance the city's mission and enhance community pride

OUR STRATEGY

We believe that efective communication means improving our stakeholders' access to timely, accurate, and helpful information about the city and its services; providing accessible, meaningful ways to engage; and promoting transparency in our decision-making process. If we are successful, we will:

- Encourage informed participation in local government
- Understand of our community's values, ideas, and expectations
- Demonstrate the value and importance of city services
- Improve our decision-making
- Build more trust in local government
- Encourage community participation in programs and events
- Inspire and recruit future municipal leaders
- Attract & retain skilled, happy employees, and
- Improve our service delivery

COMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Everyone who represents the City of Auburn in any official capacity can be considered a "communicator" for the city. Auburn defines its core communications team as follows:

Auburn's Communications & Engagement Department
- Communications Director
- Communications Assistant
- Data, Visualization & Analytics Specialist
- Great Falls Television Coordinator

Also integral to city communications efforts:
- Mayor & city council
- City manager & assistant city manager
- Department directors and designated staff representatives
- City boards, commissions, and committees

Key responsibilities of the department include:
- Communicating clearly, concisely, openly, and proactively
- Ensuring opportunity for public participation and gathering public feedback
- Leading and supporting city staff in their efforts to keep community members informed
- Partnering with community leaders to inform and engage the public
- Planning, implementing, promoting, and supporting city activities and events

Other responsibilities include:

- Serving as trusted advisors to city leadership and staff and providing insight during decision-making processes and incidents
- Planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating internal communications strategies to provide accurate and timely information
- Providing staff with the tools and templates they need to share key messages and maintain brand consistency
- Developing and implementing key messages and brand standards for the City of Auburn and the departments within, including consistent logo usage, fonts, and colors
- Planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating digital communications strategies including the city's website, social media accounts, and email messaging
- Maintaining relationships with local media outlets, providing them with timely, newsworthy information, and monitoring media coverage
- Serving as the city spokesperson and/or providing guidance and training to the appropriate city staff members to serve in this role
- Developing and using branding tactics to support a vibrant economy, attract and retain skilled employees and highlight city services and government business.

TARGET AUDIENCE

A key component of this plan is to identify partners in the conversation. Through strategic, credible communications, Auburn's stakeholders will become more engaged with the city; develop stronger connections to the city built on trust and credibility; and become increasingly aware - and supportive - of city operations, programs, and goals.

With a commitment to telling Auburn's story – continuously, comprehensively, and enthusiastically, the city has identified the following key stakeholders:

- Residents/citizens
- Visitors
- Business leaders
- Community organizations/partners
- Schools
- Media
- Mayor & city council
- Employees (current and potential)

TACTICS

- Outreach & messaging (see tools, below)
- Paid advertising: usually only for large events, recruitment or to support community partners
- Staff training and assistance: most city employees receive basic communications training as part of onboarding. This includes review of the communications policy, and, if appropriate, website training

OUR TOOLS

The Communications & Engagement team utilizes many tools to reach its stakeholders with the city's key messages and brand:

Digital Communications

Most of Auburn's municipal communications tools are digital:
- City website: auburnmaine.gov (including government calendar)
- Economic Development website: goauburn.me
- Facebook (city, police, fire, recreation, public works, winter festival, Ingersoll)
- Twitter (city and police)
- Instagram (city, fire, and police)
- LinkedIn (city only)
- YouTube (city only)
- AccessAuburn (GIS/mapping portal)
- Great Falls Television
- Electronic signs on Auburn Hall & in New Auburn
- Electronic monitors inside Auburn Hall
- Electronic reporting (such as annual reports and recreation program books)
- RAIDS online (crime mapping through police department)

EMAIL & TEXT TOOLS
- Internal email
- "Alert Me" email and text subscriptions

EMERGENCY ALERTS
- "Alert Me" email and text subscription
- Project Lifesaver (through police department)
- CodeRed (through 911 communications)

SPECIAL EVENTS (subject to change)
- New Year's Auburn
- Riverfest
- Art in the Park
- Community Concert Series
- Acoustic Music Series
- Movies in the Park
- Liberty Festival
- National Night Out
- Riverwalk Blues & Brews Festival
- Holiday Parade & Tree Lighting

MEDIA RELATIONS TOOLS
- Press releases and advisories, press conferences, and print/online/tv/radio media

EVALUATION TOOLS
- Online surveys (SurveyMonkey & Survey123)
- Digital media analytics (Facebook Insights, Google Analytics, etc.)

PLAN GOALS

ONGOING

- To successfully and thoughtfully tell the story of Auburn
- To establish the Communications & Engagement Department as the source for clear, dependable, consistent branding, messaging & materials
- To provide support & resources for mayor, city council, boards & committees
- To provide support & resources for all city departments & staff
- To prioritize and improve community engagement
- To enhance community relations and community pride
- To provide reliable crisis communications and support public safety efforts
- To monitor brand usage to ensure consistency throughout the city
- To serve as liaison and build relationships with community organizations
- To plan, develop, implement, and evaluate strategies to involve the community in decision-making and planning
- To maintain ongoing initiatives, be responsive to change, help implement new initiatives
- To be clear and direct and ensure that all communications are understandable and accessible to the widest possible audience
- To be proactive and provide reliable information on emerging issues
- To be transparent and make information about city policies, finances, and operations available to all citizens
- To help include citizens in the decision-making process, solicit input, share feedback with appropriate staff and city leaders
- To improve our listening skills & responsiveness
- To monitor and coordinate responses to the city's general inquiry email inboxes: comments@auburnmaine.gov and connect@auburnmaine.gov
- To expand and enhance internal communications
- To update the city's website on a regular basis
- To maintain an updated media list
- To prepare professional, easy-to-understand communications materials
- To provide GIS mapping resources for city staff, boards & committees
- To explore advertising opportunities, both paid and earned

NEW GOALS WITH TIMING

WITHIN 3-6 MONTHS
· Create one city-wide events calendar
· To implement a resident satisfaction survey
· To consider a monthly or quarterly electronic newsletter

WITHIN 6 MONTHS-1 YEAR
· To evaluate, inventory and improve on Auburn Hall signage
· To develop a City of Auburn "brand standards" manual
· To design and invest in "swag" for community engagement, such as reusable shopping bags, recycling bins, magnets, decals, etc.
· To develop a social media strategy and calendar
· To explore the creation of informational and relocation packets to educate visiting individuals/businesses about the city
· To create a digital and printed passport program: a "local passport" and a "visitor passport" to highlight events, attractions, programs, etc.
· To consider and establish a public "swag store" for the sale of Auburn-branded apparel and other items

WITHIN 1-2 YEARS
· To improve mobile access through creation of a city app
· To redesign the city website
· To design and install neighborhood signs

MEASURING SUCCESS

To help the city determine the effectiveness of its communications & engagement efforts, staff will regularly evaluate:

- Are we communicating as much as we should?
- Are we communicating the right information?
- Are we using the most effective tools to communicate?
- Are we communicating in a timely manner?
- How can we communicate more consistently?
- Are our communications accessible to all of our stakeholders?

The Communications & Engagement Department will work to measure success through:

Measuring level of engagement
- Website analytics
- "Alert Me" subscribers
- Tracking the reach of social media messages
- Tracking "followers" and subscribers
- Estimating and tracking attendance at events, forums, and meetings
- Tracking the level of participation on city boards and committees
- Tracking participation in city-driven polls and surveys
- Media coverage (positive, negative, neutral)

Collecting experiences and opinions
Feedback directly from constituents can be difficult to compile and analyze in a way that provides actionable data. However, collecting comments and feedback from various sources and evaluating the general tone of the comments can be helpful. The communications team will compile these comments by:

- Making "How Are We Doing?" surveys available online and at larger events
- Collecting user ratings/reviews on social media
- Tracking and responding to social media mentions and inbox comments
- Tracking the number of fans/subscribers/followers; and
- Tracking the "tone" of city-specific comments on other sites (local media, etc.)

Plan Evaluation
The Communications & Engagement team will meet **quarterly** to discuss progress toward goals, to check in on timeline and measurables, and to make course adjustments and updates to the plan. **Annual written reports** will be shared with the City Manager and the public (within the city's annual report document).

BRANDING

In accordance with the city's Communications Policy and to guide our storytelling, city leaders, staff, and boards, committees and commissions will use only logos and materials that are provided and approved by the Communications & Engagement Department. This will be, in most cases, the City of Auburn's official seal, the city's official logo, or a logo designed by the department and approved by the Director of Communications.

City Seal
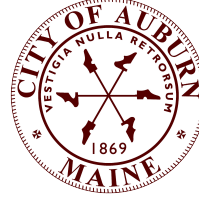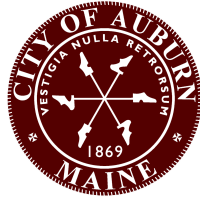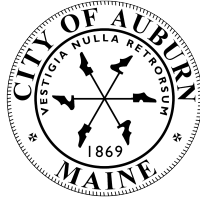
City Logo

CORE ORGANIZATIONAL MESSAGES

Consistent organizational messaging ensures consistency in our communications—and help us align our efforts, internally and externally. These core messages should serve as the foundation for our communication and branding efforts.

"Auburn: Your next opportunity is closer than you think."

(Per city council resolve 13-12062021. "Opportunity" can be replaced with job, home, meal, adventure, event, game, trade show, or similar)

2021-2023 City Council Goals:
Planning for a better future
Reclaiming our streets
Making housing more attainable
Enacting resilient solutions
Enriching neighborhood identities

STRATEGY & SCHEDULE

| **Channel**	**Messages**	**Frequency**
Auburnmaine.gov	All government departments, meetings & events News, announcements, and updates	Daily & weekly updates and posts
Goauburn.me	Economic development news	Updates as needed
GFTV	PSAs on events and services Community bulletin board Special features & content from non-profits Content from other government agency sources	Weekly updates or as needed
Facebook	News, alerts, updates, events, goodwill messages	10-12 posts/week
Twitter	News, alerts, updates, events, goodwill messages Department highlights	5–10 posts/week
YouTube	Government meetings Special events	5–10 uploads/month
Linked In	News, alerts, updates, events, goodwill messages Agency and employee successes Recruitment related messages Economic Development spotlights	3-5 posts/week

LENSES TO APPLY

Equity

Ensure the platform makes consistent communication available across multiple mediums so that all citizens can access it. Ensure communications are written and distributed at an accessible level for all.

Sustainability

When appropriate, showcase the city's sustainable projects, programs and purchases and the our commitment to sustainability.

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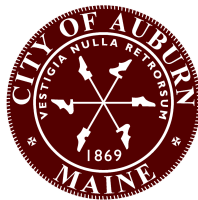
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COMMUNICATIONS
& COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

Learn more at www.auburnmaine.gov