

SINGER ASSOCIATES, INC.
PUBLIC AFFAIRS & CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

19 August 2015

To: Tom Williams, City of Milpitas
From: Sam Singer and Tina Walker, Singer Associates, Inc.
Re: City of Milpitas Strategic Communications Plan

This strategic communications plan is designed to identify goals and strategies to effectively communicate with community members, drive the development of internal communications policies and improve the overall effectiveness of the City in meeting the needs of the community.

This plan will lay the foundation for future communication policies and programs and will be a dynamic document reviewed and updated annually.

MISSION

Produce and manage strategic public communications that provide information with regards to City services; foster community dialogue and problem-solving between residents, businesses, stakeholders and the City; highlight investments in the community; provide transparency of City policies, goals and the decision-making process; and promote a positive image of Milpitas.

GOALS

- Enhance the quality of information provided to residents, businesses, stakeholders, City employees and other target audiences
- Strengthen residents' relationships with the City and each other
- Foster a sense of pride in Milpitas
- Increase outreach to stakeholders on the local, regional, national and international levels
- Showcase current businesses, residents and institutions investing in Milpitas
- Promote future investment opportunities in Milpitas
- Highlight City services that stakeholders can access to improve their quality of life.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- **Citizens of Milpitas:** By keeping residents informed, we will create a sense of ownership that will foster good communications with other audiences.
- **Media:** Local media coverage of meetings, issues, events, programs and projects reaches a significant number of target audiences. City communications are also shared with local television and radio stations, magazines and other publications, as well as government

agencies. Non-English speaking media also are an important outlet. The relationship between the City and the media is vital in order to maintain a positive image of the City.

- **City of Milpitas Mayor and City Council:** Keeping elected officials informed will assist them in representing the City, answering questions and responding to criticisms with factual and current information. Keeping elected officials up to date on City issues is extremely important as the community looks to them for answers and understanding.
- **City of Milpitas employees:** Many employees communicate with citizens on a daily basis. Employees are one of the most valuable resources when it comes to maintaining and enhancing the City's image.
- **Milpitas's Community Organizations:** Milpitas has numerous civic and community organizations. These groups are made up of volunteers who give time and money to support their organizations and their outreach efforts.
- **Local Businesses and Business Owners:** Businesses based in Milpitas serve as an economic generator for the City and help establish ownership and pride in place. Working with business owners directly to address their needs and provide them with a voice will go a long way to maintain local business. Working with the local chamber of commerce and economic development groups will help foster this relationship.
- **Surrounding Community Citizens/Visitors:** Residents of surrounding communities work, shop, dine and attend entertainment venues within the City of Milpitas. They are not residents of Milpitas, but they may be affected by the actions and decisions of the City. Milpitas' economic health is supported by out of town residents – another reason to maintain a strong public image.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Branding/Marketing: A consistent and recognizable identity is vital to the success of any brand. This identity along with key graphic elements in marketing materials will serve to build and maintain a positive image of the city in the minds of our target audiences.

Objectives

- Determine current perceptions of Milpitas and vision for the future
- Building on Milpitas' rich history, create a refreshed and progressive identity for the City to assist with strategic goals, including economic development
- Develop a Milpitas pride campaign that will weave throughout all materials and outreach

Strategies

- Conduct focus groups and online surveys to determine current perceptions of the city and the community's vision for the future
- Initiate re-branding campaign
- Retain city seal for select documents and utilize new brand for marketing purposes
- Develop citywide rollout plan for city brand (web, business system, city signage/gateways, newsletters/publications, promotional items, uniforms, vehicles, council chambers, television programming and interior signage/marqueses)

News and New Media Relations The media are an objective third-party to deliver news to citizens. When working with the media, it's important to honor their deadlines and respond in a timely manner. To make certain the City receives maximum coverage and exposure for its public messaging, regular dialogue is vital.

Objectives

- Proactive rather than reactive media relations
- Expand professional relationships with members of the media/blogosphere
- Develop a reputation as a “media friendly” City of accessible experts
- Ensure information being disseminated is consistent and timely, spoken with “one voice”

Strategies

- Routine press releases and photo opportunities surrounding breaking news, as well as upcoming events and milestones for the city – including the Super Bowl, Festival of Colors and other popular events
- Press conferences organized around breaking news and milestone events
- Furnish tailored pitches to media contacts
- Regular meetings with local reporters
- Update/develop comprehensive media lists
- Develop media kit folders for public events
- Editorial calendar monitoring of feature possibilities
- Increased use of social media (FB, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.) by City of Milpitas

Community Relations and Communications Engaging the community and disseminating timely and relevant information about the City is crucial for the success of any municipality.

Objectives

- Keep the public informed of all major news, events and milestones within the City
- Increase opportunities for two-way communications with all members of the community
- Increase opportunities for community members to interact with the City Council
- Present progressive, transparent and effective image of the City
- Obtain important feedback from the community
- Encourage civic and community pride and participation

Strategies

- Create an annual report to highlight the City's accomplishments from the prior year and disseminate to community members (digital online version will save City money and make it easier to disseminate).
- Create online newsletters apprising community members of recent news and upcoming events

- Town Hall meetings to interact with community members and provide useful information Conduct focus groups and online “Community Satisfaction Surveys” to create a benchmark and evaluate ways to improve community relations
- Continue routine communications/coordination of information with the School District, community organizations and major private sector employers within the City

Web/Social Media: The purpose of web-based information is to have an additional way of communicating to those who have an interest in the City of Milpitas and its services. Additionally, social media is an important way to engage civic participation. This format has the potential to reach a new demographic, breaking down barriers, and bringing a positive view of the City to citizens and stakeholders inside and outside of Milpitas.

Objectives

- Enhance the City’s presence on the web, social media
- Disseminate timely information through a variety of web-based communication channels
- Engage in online interaction with community members to improve outreach and efficiency

Strategies

- Update the current City of Milpitas website to create a new dynamic and interactive presence on the web, including:
 - A news portal through the site
 - Create a “submit story idea” page
 - E-Newsletter signup
 - Create and post welcome video from Mayor on home page
- Enhance the City’s existing Facebook page to promote transparency, connect with residents, business owners and visitors, and share information. The City will post links to press releases and public notices, newsletters, City Hall topics, City-sponsored community meeting information, and project updates and pictures.
- Create a Twitter account to provide quick, inexpensive, and interesting content. The City will live tweet public meetings to engage those who are unable to attend. There is also potential to reach commuters and non-residents who use Twitter but would not subscribe to a City newsletter.
- Create an Instagram account to share a steady stream of photos of City operations to give residents visual insight into the day to day operations of Milpitas, thereby increasing their connection to the city.
- Consider other forms of digital communications.
- Promote e-newsletter signup through social media and on the website

Internal Communications: Creating strong relationships with City employees creates a sense of ownership in the City, builds trust, fosters a positive work environment and creates ambassadors for the City to utilize to tell its story.

Objectives

- Ensure that employees are kept in the loop of developing news and upcoming events
- Increase recognition of employees' accomplishments, both internally and externally
- Boost morale and enhance trust in City leadership

Strategies

- More frequent communications from City Manager to staff
- Create digital regular/monthly employee newsletter
- Implement employee of the month and feature them in employee newsletter and website
- Provide employees with talking points on current events and issues within the City so they can talk comfortably with community members

Communications Training: Being comfortable when dealing with the media and having prepared messages are essential in order to optimize media interviews and public communication.

Objectives

- Ensure council and City leadership are comfortable dealing with the media
- Increase opportunities for employees to receive communications training

Strategies

- Conduct communications training briefings

Crisis Communication: Crisis communication can entail emergency management as well as image management during challenging events. Being prepared for these situations ensures that the City's response is swift and effective.

Objectives

- Effectively prepare staff to manage crisis communications
- Provide timely, accurate information to internal and external audiences during a crisis

Strategies

- Crisis management protocol
- Structure strategic messages that acknowledge the ongoing issues, while continuing to highlight the strengths, accomplishments and attributes of the City as a whole.
- Written materials for council/departments to use in emergencies
- Timely updates in emergencies

BUDGET

Singer Associates works on a time and materials basis. We estimate, based on our experience, that this effort would include an average of \$12,000 - \$15,000 in professional fees per month over the course of the engagement, excluding out of pocket costs, which we expect to be minimal. We can tailor a program to meet any budgetary requirements you may have at the City.

CONCLUSION

We are honored to be of assistance to the City of Milpitas. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this action to develop, plan and execute public affairs and public information services on behalf of the City of Milpitas. Please feel free to contact us at your earliest convenience to discuss this plan in more detail. Thank you.