

City of Sammamish Communications Strategy

July Progress Report

Today

Progress Report

What were our goals?

Priorities and desired outcomes

What 's been accomplished?

Information reviewed, interviews completed, etc.

What have we learned?

Initial findings preview

What's next?

Actions, deliverables, timeline

Goal

Evaluation & Recommendations

- Observations on effectiveness of current capabilities and practices
- Prioritized list of recommendations for improvement
- Proposed implementation strategy (short and long term)

What's been accomplished?

Interviewed Council

Mayor

Bob Keller

Deputy Mayor

Christie Malchow

Councilmembers

Don Gerend

Tom Hornish

Kathleen Huckabay

Tom Odell

Ramiro Valderrama

Interviewed Staff

City Management

Lyman Howard and Jessi Bon

Communications

Tim Larson

Finance and IT

Aaron Antin and Cynthia Tiwana

Parks and Recreation

Janie Jackson, Allison Gubata, Belle Stanley and Lynne Handlos

Emergency Services

Andrew Stevens and Frances Carlson

Community Development

Jeff Thomas, David Pyle, Kellye Hilde and Lindsey Ozbolt

Maintenance

Glenn Akramoff, Mike Keller, Martin Bohanan and Dan Johnson

Public Works/Parks Project Management

Steve Leniszewski, Angie Feser, Jed Ireland, Anjali Myer and Shelby Upton

Studied Peers

Redmond

Issaquah

Shoreline

Mercer Island

Reviewed Materials

City-developed materials

releases, newsletter, plans, etc.

Coverage

traditional and social media

Website

(content and analytics)

Branding

Survey research

Preview

Initial Findings

Big Picture

Changing community

Changing communications

Growth and change

- Community is undergoing major changes—no longer rural King County
- 23% population growth from 2015-2016, largely due to annexation

Shifting information sources

- 53% of population received news from now defunct Sammamish Review
- Tech-savvy populace and new residents have different communications expectations
- Social media use is changing tone and expectations of discussion

Big Picture

City government
is changing, too

Evolution

- Shifting from entrepreneurial mode to meeting citizens' expectations for high levels of service

Planning

- Lots of strategic planning efforts, which have revealed some shortcomings re: citizen involvement efforts and may raise communications expectations

Sustainability

- City government has prided itself on being lean (contracting for services, limiting head count), but there's a limit to what can be accomplished

Public Trust

- City leaders and staff want to build trust in a complicated, evolving environment

Council Input

All council members participated

1. How can we better understand and engage the public?
 - How does the City educate people who don't particularly want to learn about city issues?
 - How can the City better reach diverse populations?
2. How can communications enhance accountability and transparency?
 - Can proactive communications improve processes and decrease "surprises" that frustrate and anger citizens?
 - How does the City have a more coordinated and proactive message?
 - How can the City better close the communications feedback loop so people feel heard?
3. What are the opportunities to improve internal processes? (e.g., resources, organization, tools)
 - How do you transition from "startup" to a well run professional organization?
 - How can the City improve key existing tools (web, e-Gov, social media, newsletter, Channel 21/video, Town Halls)?
 - What opportunities exist to fill the communications void left by the loss of the local newspaper?



“ I don't think the way citizens listen aligns with what the city is doing...

We aren't in the driver's seat, others are steering for us.”

—COUNCIL MEMBER



“We’ve been responsive, but not accountable or transparent. I want people to see what’s taking place.”

—COUNCIL MEMBER



“I would like to be more focused on policy and try not to get in the weeds, but sometimes we do go there.”

—COUNCIL MEMBER



“Website is very important for folks trying to figure out what’s going on – particularly on development issues.”

—COUNCIL MEMBER



“We don’t know how to communicate with the non-English speaking community...

This is particularly severe when you have grandparents in the household who speak no English. We hear from police and EMS that the grandkids have to help.”

—COUNCIL MEMBER



“For transportation master plan – they’re doing polls, questions, discussions at grocery stores...

I like that they are reaching out to people where they are – the people who don’t necessarily come to meetings.”

—COUNCIL MEMBER



“The hard part is getting information back out to say we heard you, here’s what we’re doing.”

—COUNCIL MEMBER

Staff Input

8 discussion groups

24 staff members participated

1. Desire for more proactive/less reactive communication
2. Pride in lean operations, but workload and priorities are not being met
3. Concern about effectiveness of key tools (website, social, and newsletter)
4. Mix of excitement and frustration with social media—good for early heads up, but only engages a small group
5. City brand/logo discussed—want consistency in look, content and formats but not a high priority
6. Organization of/access to communications resources (files, photos, guidelines) and lack of standard practices and format limits effectiveness
7. Questions raised about expectations, who does what, what tools to use and when, guidelines for outreach, etc.
8. Concern that not enough resources exist for effective communications



"25% of this community is in IT.
They look online first."

— STAFF



“Before social media, we relied on word of mouth. Now its word of mouth through social media, but it’s often wrong info and spreading wildly fast.

The framing of issues is so much faster now. By the time it hits we are behind.”

— STAFF



“Do we need to set up daily communications push so we frame what city is working on every day?”

— STAFF



“We just don’t have anywhere near the number of bodies to meet the expectation of service that is desired.

They assume we have infrastructure in place to deliver multimedia suite of services within 10 minutes. We have never had the resource level to meet those expectations.”

— STAFF



“I think we have the tools we need.
I think what limits things isn't
tools or effort—it's the level of
interest.”

— STAFF



“Every page on the website is different, don’t know who is making sure that the links work or the information is understandable. There is no branding book. There is no standard look, voice, document style or fonts.”

- STAFF

NEXT

- 1. ANALYZE, SUPPLEMENT, SYNTHESIZE**
- 2. DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS**

July/August: Community interviews, additional jurisdiction research

September: Recommendations/priorities

October: Report to Council

Recommendations

Elements

Options

Strategic and tactical

Realistic

Prioritized

Includes resource requirements

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