

**City of White Rock
Strategic Communications Plan
2011 – 2013**

Date of Adoption: May 30, 2011



Table of Contents

Introduction

Target Audiences

Goals and Objectives

Key Messages

Communications Strategies

1. Media Relations
2. Advertising
3. Printed Materials
4. Online Communication
5. Community Television
6. Personal Contact
7. Interoffice Communications

Appendix A: Communications Planning Calendar

Introduction

The City of White Rock is strongly committed to enhancing communication with the public and believes that effective communication is important for the City's overall health and wellbeing.

Effective communication benefits citizens and helps the City facilitate open, accessible decision-making and increases public confidence in its local government. Communication encourages informed participation, builds community pride and satisfaction, encourages growth, attracts good employees and ultimately strengthens City services. Communication with citizens is a sound investment and deserves a place among the City's primary functions.

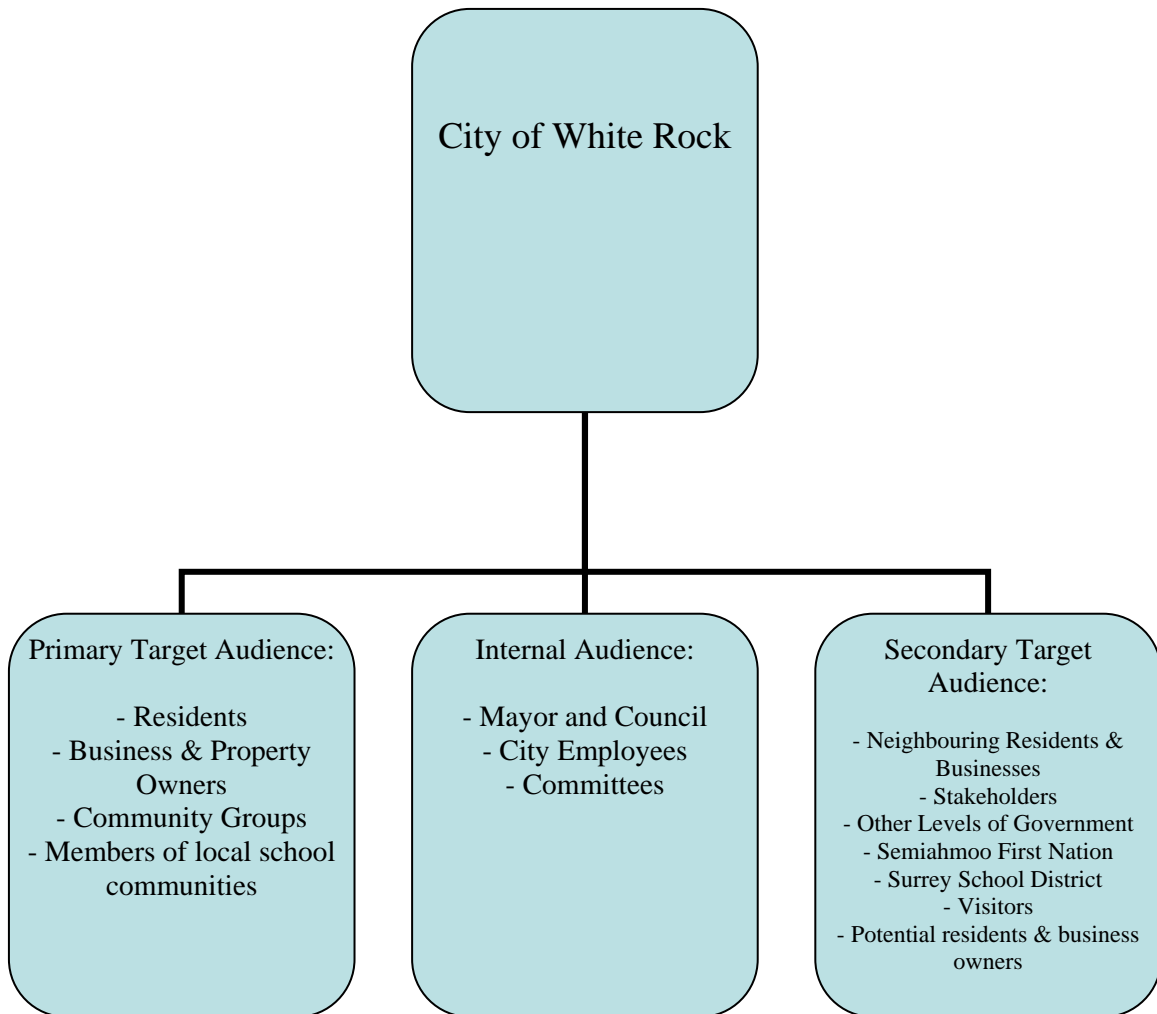
This Strategic Communications Plan will examine the wide variety of communication methods that the City currently uses and will add to those methods to improve communication. Through this plan, the City will improve when and how it communicates with all target audiences.

This plan will also address the challenge of continuing to enhance the City's communication strengths, improve internal communications within the City, and expand opportunities for more effective communication to external target audiences.

Efforts to build and improve upon communications are an ongoing process that will need to be revisited as circumstances change and as goals are achieved.

Target Audiences

The identification of target audiences is a key component of this plan.



Goals and Objectives

The overall goals of the Communications Plan are:

- To increase awareness, involvement and participation in City initiatives and activities,
- To make residents and community groups fully aware of White Rock City Council's goals and objectives and to report progress and achievements,
- To develop better relationships with the news media to enable greater coverage of City information in local papers,
- To take a proactive approach in the planning and execution of communications and to keep the lines of communication open,
- To enable two-way communication, both externally between residents and City Hall, and internally among staff, management and Council.

Key Messages

To the Citizens

White Rock is:

- Responsive to community needs, accountable and transparent.
- Fiscally responsible with a commitment to excellence in financial stewardship
- Dedicated to achieving a superior level of customer service
- A healthy and sustainable community / city

To the External Public:

White Rock is

- Committed to marketing and actively promoting the city and partnering when appropriate
- Balancing economic development with social, environmental and cultural responsibilities

To Employees

White Rock is:

- Dedicated to exceptional customer service
- A friendly and healthy work environment
- Encourages personal growth and recognizes employee excellence

Communications Strategies

The City of White Rock has numerous strengths to build upon, including committed staff, and a variety of sound communication strategies.

This section describes the specific tactics, communications tools and techniques, which will be utilized in the communications program. This is a two-year plan, running from 2011-2013.

1. Media Relations

Press Releases

Background:

- The City of White Rock prepares and submits press releases to local media to keep them informed of current information and news. This includes information about events, new programs, community services, parks and recreational programs, and other general information about what is happening in the City.
- There is currently no policy in place to guide the development, content and priorities for the issuing of press releases.

Recommendation:

- Establish a formal policy or process for developing and issuing press releases.

- Identify management staff that are authorized to speak with the media on policy issues. Managers should be clear on their lines of responsibility

Timeline:

- Develop a media communications policy by early 2011
- Implementation of the policy will be ongoing

2. Advertising

City News

Background:

- Communicating through the local newspaper is a key way for residents to receive news from City Hall. To accomplish this, a regular City News advertisement runs every Friday in the Peace Arch News.
- The regular City News advertisement features a consistent template design, with information specific to different groups and activities.
- The City News advertisement is also posted on the City's website in pdf format.
- A recent Ipsos Reid survey discovered that the top preferred method of communication from the City by residents is through newspaper (36%).

Recommendations:

- Continue using the regular City News page as the main advertising vehicle for the City of White Rock.
- Include once a month updates from Council on their goals and objectives.

Timeline:

- Ongoing

3. Printed Materials

School District Flyers

Background:

- White Rock has two elementary schools, White Rock Elementary and Peace Arch Elementary, within its borders. Residents in White Rock also attend nearby schools in South Surrey.
- White Rock distributes leisure guides through the local schools.

Recommendation:

- See if the local elementary schools have regular newsletters that can include City information, such as upcoming events, Council's actions related to families, early childhood development, health and wellness.
- Seek permission for inclusion.
- Flyers can be distributed in the backpacks of elementary school students that highlight key issues that should be communicated with families and youth.

Timeline:

- 2011

Annual Report

Background:

- The City of White Rock currently publishes an annual report, which is available in paper format or online as a pdf.

Recommendation:

- Continue publishing the report in both print and electronic form.

Timeline:

- Annually

Direct Mail

Background:

- According to a 2009 Ipsos Reid citizen survey, 22% of White Rock residents would like to receive communication by mail.
- The City of White Rock does not currently use direct mail as a regular means of contact with residents.
- The approximate cost for a direct mail campaign through Canada Post is \$0.14 per letter.

Recommendation:

- Use targeted mailings when announcing changes that directly affect residents, such as significant changes to recycling and garbage collection.
- Continue including a newsletter in the property tax mailing.

Timeline:

- 2011

Other City Publications

Background:

- White Rock Leisure Services produces a quarterly Leisure Guide detailing all recreational programs offered through the City.

Recommendation:

- Advertise Council's goals and objectives for a healthy and sustainable city in the Leisure Guide, including photos of Mayor and Council.

Timeline:

- Ongoing

4. Online Communication

City Website

Background:

- The current web site for the City of White Rock is obsolete and outdated. It is difficult to find information on most subjects, such as garbage and recycling collection, upcoming events, and even Council minutes.
- The current website is difficult to update and doesn't allow for active participation from various City departments.

Recommendations:

- Offer a progressive web site that meets the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.
- Improve the City's website by making it easy to use and by providing essential information for residents, businesses and visitors. Current updates on City events, projects, solid waste collection, and records of City Council meetings and decisions should be easily accessible.
- Simplify the City's domain name from www.city.whiterock.bc.ca to www.whiterockcity.ca.
- Provide opportunities for e-mail newsletters and mobile notification through on-line opt-in subscription services.
- Expand the information on the calendar to include special events along with other key pieces of information, such as special initiatives, public meetings, Council meetings and more.
- Include commonly used forms for residents and businesses to download and use.
- Include information on City successes and accomplishments in addition to information on how the City spends tax dollars.
- Ensure each department is responsible for updating their specific sections online.
- Enhance the look and feel of the web site while increasing usage of the site by making it user friendly.
- Include online videos of Mayor and Council and various speeches.

Timeline:

- In the fall 2010, the Communications Officer and the Manager of Information Technology began researching potential web development firms to create a user-friendly and functional web site for the City of White Rock.
- In January 2011, they started working with the design firm Atomic Crayon in order to develop a web site as outlined in the above recommendation.
- The City's web site is expected to be completed by October 2011.

Social Media

Background:

- The City of White Rock does not currently utilize any social media outlets. It's only online presence is the official City web site.

- Social networking websites, such as Twitter are free-access sites that users can join to connect and interact with other people or organizations.

Recommendation:

- That the City of White Rock creates a social media policy
- That the City of White Rock utilizes Twitter in order to connect with the segment of residents that are tech savvy in case of urgent or emergency matters.

Timeline:

- 2012

E-Newsletter

Background:

- The City of White Rock currently doesn't have the capability to gather e-mail addresses from residents.
- An e-newsletter would be a cost effective way to share timely information with residents that are online.

Recommendation:

- That the City of White Rock include op-in e-mail subscription as part of the new web site currently being developed.
- That the City of White Rock prepare a timeline for regular e-newsletters.

Timeline:

- 2012

5. Community Television

Live Televised City Council Meetings

Background:

- Shaw Cable televises and broadcasts Council meetings on their local television channel.

Recommendation:

- Continue utilizing Shaw Cable's services
- Poor sound quality, lighting issues and other filming difficulties within the current Council Chambers is an ongoing concern, making it cost prohibitive to pursue independent filming activities.

Timeline:

- Ongoing

6. Personal Contact **On Hold Messaging**

Background:

- The City of White Rock's current on hold system features music, this feature could be utilized to distribute key messages from the City.

Recommendation:

- Develop a series of key messages, such as check out our new web site, or register for recreation activities through White Rock Leisure Services, and place them on the phone's hold messaging system.

Timeline:

- This will be an ongoing communications strategy and messages will need to be updated on a regular basis.

Special Events

Background:

- Occasionally the City of White Rock will hold special events to share information, announce new projects or services and to celebrate success.
- The events coordinator with Leisure Services is currently responsible for planning City events.

Recommendation:

- Continue hosting events that communicate key messages of the City while benefiting residents.

Timeline:

- Ongoing

Citizen Survey

Background:

- Every three years the City of White Rock conducts a citizen survey, the last survey was completed in December 2009.
- This survey provides a comprehensive overview of citizens' satisfaction levels, attitudes, needs and priorities.
- This survey measures perceived quality of life, current top of mind issues, City services, perceptions of City staff and Council, communication with residents, financial planning, and more.

Recommendation:

- Conduct another citizen survey in 2012.
- By using the same questions as the previous survey, the City will be able to measure its progress since 2009.

Timeline:

- 2012

7. Interoffice Communications

Internal Communications

Background:

- The City of White Rock employs several methods for internal communications including: the City Intranet, and meetings between staff and senior management.
- Regular Senior Management Team meetings keep all department managers apprised of what is happening within various departments, allowing for collaboration when necessary.
- Minutes of the Senior Management Team meetings are distributed to all staff, creating an open flow of communication.
- The payroll system is also utilized on special occasions to communicate messages to employees by attaching information to employee pay stubs, such as information about the city wide United Way campaign.
- A citywide e-mail system is in place that may be used to inform City staff of policies, procedures, and events.

Recommendation:

- Continue all employee focused communication methods.
- Update the Intranet to allow for better ease of use and to include additional information required by City employees, such as frequently asked questions, frequently requested phone numbers, etc.
- Produce a weekly employee e-newsletter or a weekly “What’s New” bulletin for front line staff.
- Produce Q&A documentation on all new issues for front line staff.
- Produce a quarterly City Manager report for Council.
- Use paperless communication when possible.

Timeline:

- Ongoing

Conclusion

This Communications Plan should achieve the following:

- Improve communication with key audiences
- Provide structure to communicate about strategic communications issues
- Provide improved media relations coordination
- More effectively measure the communications function
- Improve upon the City’s web site through expanded options, easy to use navigation and increased usage of the web site.

Internal

Used to inform Council and/or staff of issues/events/initiatives that may have a significant impact on them and/or the community or if they will be contacted by the public or other agencies for information.

		Lead Time	Cost	Target Date
Council Briefing			Staff OT	
E-mail	Sent to all employees or select employees, as applicable to the situation	N/A	N/A	
Senior Management Team Meetings	Normally held every Tuesday morning.		N/A	
Payroll stickers/ Stuffers	Distributed to all Council and staff. Best suited for issues/events specific to City employees	Monday prior to cheque distribution	N/A	
Intranet	Post information to the City's intranet	N/A	N/A	

Print Material

Often used to supplement other communications tools.

All print material must be consistent with the City's Coat of Arms/City Logo and Registered Trademark Policy.

		Lead Time	Cost	Target Date
Letter to Affected Resident / Businesses			Postage	
Brochure/Handout/ Flyer	Consider both design and print costs	Design – 2-3 weeks Printing – 1-2 weeks	Varies	
Frequently Asked Questions	FAQs may be incorporated in a brochure/handout and/or posted to the website or prepared as a stand-alone document			
Door Hanger	Consider both design and print costs		Varies	

Internet

		Lead Time	Cost	Target Date
City Website	To be provided to either Communications staff or to the departmental representative responsible for updating departmental information. Agenda and Minutes for Council and committees are posted on a regular basis.	1 week	N/A	
External Website	Is there a sponsor or partner organization that could include a link from their website to the City's website?		N/A	
E-News	A monthly newsletter that will be developed with the new web site in 2011 and delivered electronically to subscribed recipients	TBD	N/A	
Twitter	A twitter account will be created. "Tweets" to the City's Twitter account can alert the citizens and media agencies that follow the City of White Rock's Twitter page.	TBD	N/A	

City Publications

All City publications listed below are delivered to single-family residents and/or property owners. Newspaper inserts reach the community at large. The Annual report is available online, however printed copies are available upon request.

		Lead Time	Cost	Target Date
Annual Report	Distributed in June - highlight programs/initiatives by department	Deadline – early March	N/A	
Fall Leisure Guide	Quarterly Leisure Guide details all recreational programs offered through the City.	TBD	N/A	
Winter Leisure Guide	Quarterly Leisure Guide details all recreational programs offered through the City.	TBD		
Spring Leisure Guide	Quarterly Leisure Guide details all recreational programs offered through the City.	TBD		
Summer Leisure Guide	Quarterly Leisure Guide details all recreational programs offered through the City.	TBD		
Update Newsletter with Tax Notices	Distributed with property tax notices to residential and business property owners in late May	Deadline – early April		

Media

Used to inform the public at large of civic issues/events/initiatives.

Consult the City's Strategic Communications Plan and Communication Policies regarding communication with the media, including press releases, public service announcements, etc.

		Lead Time	Cost	Target Date
Televised Council Meeting	Most Council meetings are broadcast on Shaw Cable 4. Contact City Clerk for more information.			
City News	Paid advertising with local newspaper every Friday.	Deadline – the Tuesday before	Varies	
Press Release	Information about events, new programs, community services, parks and recreational programs and other general information about what is happening in the City.	Min. 2 days prior to publish date. Local papers published on Wed. and Fri.		

Other Agencies

		Lead Time	Cost	Target Date
School District Flyers	Target audience is children and/or families. Request to have information posted on bulletin board and/or included in school newsletter and/or on the school's web site.	TBD	N/A	
Flyers for distribution to BIA/Chamber of Commerce	Target audience is local businesses. Request to have information posted on bulletin board or online.	TBD	N/A	