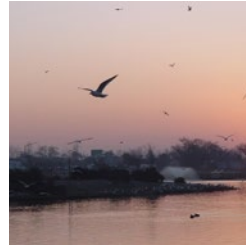




THE CITY OF
NOVATO
CALIFORNIA



COMMUNICATIONS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

OVERVIEW—PURPOSE & GOALS
HOW TO USE THIS PLAN
VISION STATEMENT & GUIDING PRINCIPLES
BACKGROUND & WHERE WE ARE NOW
OUR COMMITMENT
PARTNERSHIPS & STAKEHOLDERS
TOOLS & RESOURCES
IMPLEMENTATION
EVALUATION

The City of Novato maximizes opportunities to ***effectively inform*** and ***meaningfully engage*** the community.

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

The purpose of the Communications & Community Engagement Plan is **to improve and strengthen communication and engagement with our community**. The plan outlines the objectives, tools, and activities to help us achieve that purpose.

For us, effective communication means improving public access to timely, accurate, and helpful information about the City and its services; **providing a variety of easy, accessible, and meaningful ways to engage** with the City; and **promoting transparency** in the City's decision-making process and outcomes of key citywide issues affecting the daily lives of our Novato community. If we are successful, we will have:

Encouraged informed participation. By providing reliable and relevant information consistently, the City establishes a trusted dialogue with the community and empowers the public to more confidently engage and get involved.

A solid understanding of the public's values and ideas. Effective public engagement can provide more nuanced and collective views about an issue by a broader spectrum of the community.

Demonstrated the value of City services. The more the community knows about the connection between the services the City provides and the quality of life within the community, as well as the issues that city government solves for the community, the more they understand how their tax dollars are used and the better they feel about their government. By promoting City accomplishments, we can develop a positive reputation for the City and build community pride, support, and customer satisfaction.

Improved City decision-making and actions. The community adds an important dimension to our decision-making process. They add a crucial perspective to enrich our thinking and planning. This knowledge, integrated into local decision-making, helps ensure that the decisions we make are optimal for the community and best fit current conditions and needs.

Higher rates of community participation and leadership development. By offering a variety of and meaningful opportunities for people to take part in the civic and political aspects of their community, we encourage broader participation and community ownership in the decision-making process. These experiences provide knowledge, familiarity, and confidence in local government to our future civic and community leaders.

Built more trust in each other and in local government. Good communication and meaningful public engagement enhances understanding and respect. It inspires confidence that problems can be solved—together. By making community engagement a priority, and identifying opportunities to integrate community feedback in our processes, we can build a greater trust and confidence in our City.

Stimulated a vibrant economy, attracted & retained skilled and happy employees, and improved our services. A positive City image draws visitors, residents, businesses, and employees to a community, which ultimately strengthens City services.

These outcomes will help us facilitate our mission to “provide excellent services and enrich the quality of life within the community in a fiscally-responsible manner.”

CITY OF NOVATO

Mission

To provide excellent services and enrich the quality of life within the community in a fiscally-responsible manner.

Vision

Novato will be recognized as one of the most vibrant, desirable and sustainable communities with a small town atmosphere in which to live, work, learn, shop, play and visit.

Values

- » Ethical Behavior
- » Honesty & Integrity
- » Fiscal Responsibility
- » Respect for All
- » Setting & Focusing on Priorities
- » Excellent Customer Service
- » Teamwork
- » Community Involvement
- » Open Government



HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The Plan is organized into three main parts: where we were (Overview, Background), where we are (Situational Analysis, Partnerships, Tools) and where we are going (Key Messages & Workplan). This Plan will serve as a **resource** and as a **commitment to effective communications and meaningful engagement opportunities** for our community.

We know that approximately 54,000 community members in Novato rely on the services we provide, and effective communication and informed participation is essential to the successful delivery of those services. Our philosophy is to communicate early and often in order to build trust, dialogue, understanding, relationships, and support. This Plan describes our approach and objectives for communications & community engagement (Introduction), our current situation (Background and Situational Analysis), our key messages, our partnerships, our tools and resources, plan for implementation (Workplan and Timeline), and our measures of success (Measurement and Evaluation).

Additional supporting material on existing communications policies and procedures, and other communications resources will be regularly updated and made available to our employees and partners.

For questions about this plan, please contact Peggy Flynn, Communications Coordinator, at pflynn@novato.org or 415.899.8903.

IF YOU ARE A CITY OF NOVATO EMPLOYEE

By utilizing this Plan and the supporting [resources](#), and by engaging your department head, manager, and Communications Coordinator, we can help you organize your presentations, review your communications, assist with graphic design, plan events, develop a specific communications plan with you, and advise on variety of communications issues. **See sections on vision & guiding principles, core messages, audiences, workplan, and resources.**

IF YOU ARE A NOVATO COMMUNITY MEMBER

This Plan will explain the City's approach and commitment to communication and community engagement. You will be able to see what the City is currently doing, what we will be doing to communicate more effectively and how you can get connected, involved, and partner with us on our efforts. **See Overview, Vision, Our Commitment & Implementation sections.**

IF YOU ARE A PUBLIC OFFICIAL OR CITY PARTNER

For the first time, the City's communication strategy is articulated in one document. As the Plan will be updated annually, you will be able to review planned activities, anticipate initiatives for potential partnership, and suggest initiatives that are important to you and your constituents. Explore our plan to see what we may be utilizing to get out the word, and how you and/or your organization can leverage our efforts. **See Our Commitment, Tools & Resources, & Implementation sections.**

COMMUNICATIONS VISION STATEMENT & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The City of Novato maximizes opportunities to effectively inform and meaningfully engage the community.

As City employees, we:

- Embrace our responsibility to communicate effectively with the public.
- Provide timely, accurate, and complete information to the public, and within our organization.
- Standardize the form and appearance of our communications to ensure that the public recognizes information originating from the City.
- Deliver consistent and helpful messages about, and include the benefits of, our services.
- Reflect the City's mission statement and values when communicating who we are, how we work, and the purpose of our work.
- Ensure frequent opportunity for meaningful community engagement
- Maximize our resources and plan ahead to ensure information reaches the appropriate audiences

BACKGROUND & WHERE WE ARE NOW

In late 2012, the City conducted an informal communications audit, with the help from a Coro Fellow and under the guidance of the City's Communications Coordinator, which involved surveys and interviews of internal and external customers, a review of City communications tools and collateral, and an analysis of past media coverage.

Recommendations underscored our existing assumptions:

1. City needs to **strengthen its image and establish a brand** to improve its credibility—internally and externally.

2. City needs to **improve internal communication flow and coordination** to ensure information quality, consistency & effectiveness.
3. City needs to work closer with the community by **improving access** to clear, timely, accurate and relevant information, **and providing frequent opportunities to engage** in a meaningful way.
4. City needs a **citywide communications plan, specific communication planning** for projects, programs, & initiatives, and to incorporate **long-range communication planning** into our everyday activities to keep our audiences informed and engaged.

Guided by the feedback and recommendations from the communications audit, the City promptly implemented a number of communications initiatives—strengthening existing, and in some cases, developed new, resources to improve communications and provide opportunities for engagement:

- Built a robust social media presence—nearly tripling our audiences on Facebook & Twitter
- Redesigned the City e-newsletter, “Our Town,” that is distributed to approximately 8,000 subscribers and has increased the “open” rate to nearly 35%—more than a 10% increase over past years before the redesign and revamp
- Launched an online engagement tool—Open Novato—which allows the public to engage on citywide issues that the City Council and other City commissions will consider. To date, we have had more than 800 people visit, 300 participate, and the input is equivalent to 15 hours of public hearing testimony at regular Council meetings.
- Developed a new preview and recap e-notify that goes out regularly to subscribers highlighting previews and recaps of City Council meetings and actions
- Created a “Novato in the News” e-mail that goes out to employees informing them of stories that include or are related to the City of Novato
- Varied topics in the City’s internal newsletter, Weekly Post—allowing staff to highlight their work and learn about other departments’ initiatives and successes
- Instituted a “Frankly Speaking” series, where community members met one-on-one with the City Manager.
- Strengthened relationships with community partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Novato Business Association, by sharing and promoting information on a regular basis
- Improved relationships with the local media by providing timely, accurate information, connecting reporters to subject matter experts within the City, and informing the media of current City news
- Broadened City outreach by utilizing resources including the PRCS Activity Guide, special editions of local newspapers (e.g. City Guide in the Novato Advance), online news sources and calendars, and City commissions, committees, and boards to “spread the word”
- Cleaned-up and developed vector-based logos for the City and NPD—which allows for flexibility, and encourages consistency, in use. Also developed a logo guideline manual to aid staff and City partners in the use of the logo
- Refreshed home page on the City’s website with daily news highlights and a regularly-updated calendar of events
- Specific communication planning efforts in each department to anticipate & plan for upcoming initiatives
- Strengthened existing and developed new robust communication tools that provide our City partners many ways to promote their activities to our community
- Continue to work with Novato Community Television to update City information
- Compiled a citywide photo database of images and graphics

Continue to build organizational capacity for effective community engagement & outreach to include presentations, meetings, events, public notices, letters, and other communication to the public, graphic design, photography, marketing and branding, and other communications-related tasks.

To organize these efforts, plan for the future, and measure our effectiveness, the City has developed this Plan to be implemented citywide during the next year. The Plan anticipates our communication needs, based on a variety of factors in our current environment, including:

- A growing Hispanic and senior population
- A growing technology literacy, as well as a gap in access to technology
- Limited staff and financial resources
- Existing and potential community partnerships
- A number of special districts providing water, sanitary, and fire services to the community
- City's economic development efforts including the launch of a regional Bioscience Initiative
- A need for a permanent solution for the City's long-term fiscal health & sustainability

OUR COMMITMENT

To achieve our vision of **maximizing opportunities to effectively inform and engage the community**, we need to maintain focus on who we are, what we do, and how and why we do it. This section is, in essence, the City's "Brand Promise" to the community—a City position and commitment on any city issue, that you can rely upon.

CITY OF NOVATO POSITIONING STATEMENT

For its residents, businesses and visitors, the City of Novato will **build community** through information, education, and engagement. The City of Novato is responsible and responsive to all of its residents. Our trained and talented staff is committed to excellent city service that promises to provide a high quality of life for all who live and work here.

CORE ORGANIZATIONAL MESSAGES

Organizational or key messages ensure consistency in our communications—and help us align our efforts both internally and externally. These core messages were developed in concert with our City Council's Strategic Plan goals and will serve as the foundation for our communication and branding efforts.

CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

- » Living Well, Together
- » Environmental Legacy
- » Economic Vitality
- » Great Places
- » A City that Works

Staff should refer to the core messages when developing messaging for *specific issues and initiatives*, ensuring that everything we communicate is guided by the spirit of these fundamental tenets:

THE CITY OF NOVATO BUILDS COMMUNITY

- » We know our community and seek out their input and participation.
- » We are a safe community and devote ourselves daily to the well-being of our residents.
- » We are fiscally-responsible, strive for long-term financial health, & provide value to the taxpayer.
- » We respect our environment & plan for a sustainable future.
- » We are speedy, efficient, creative, and dedicated to superior customer service & satisfaction.
- » We are a hub of economic activity and the 'place to be' for both business and pleasure.

We can support our core messages with the following “proof points”:

WE KNOW OUR COMMUNITY AND SEEK OUT THEIR INPUT & PARTICIPATION**Proof points**

- The City updates the community with timely, accurate, and helpful information through a variety of accessible formats including its website, e-notification, public noticing, local media, e-newsletter, and direct contact.
- Our City Council and City staff is accessible via e-mail and direct phone lines and in-person, and promptly responds to public inquiries and comments.
- The City frequently conducts surveys and engages the community utilizing a variety of resources to get a better pulse and understanding on needs, preferences, and opinions.
- The City encourages community engagement by meeting people where they are—and utilizing a variety of tools including our online forum, Open Novato, social media, public meetings & workshops, surveys, and the City website.
- The City has a Public Communications Coordinator dedicated to assisting the staff and organization to improve accessibility to information and strengthen public engagement and participation.
- A key objective of the City Council in its Strategic Plan is building community through connecting and engaging our residents.

WE ARE A SAFE COMMUNITY & DEVOTE OURSELVES DAILY TO THE WELL-BEING OF OUR RESIDENTS**Proof points**

- Novato is a safe community with historically-low crime rates
- Measure F, the 5-year, ½ cent sales tax, was created to prevent additional budget cuts and maintain and restore vital City services including police, parks, recreation, and community services.
- The City has invested in the creation of the Novato Response Team—a multi-faceted approach to public safety and community problem-solving.
- The City has 27 parks totaling 470 acres, in addition to three gymnasiums, a state-of-the-art gymnastics center and a senior center, catering to residents of all ages.
- The Margaret Todd Senior Center serves 60,000 seniors annually.
- Our Public Works staff is responsible for 152 miles of streets, 133 miles of storm drains, 3.2 miles of creeks, 34 parks, 4 athletic fields, and all city-owned facilities.
- There are more than 5,540 acres of protected open space within the City limits.

WE ARE FISCALLY-RESPONSIBLE, STRIVE FOR LONG-TERM FINANCIAL HEALTH, AND PROVIDE VALUE TO THE TAXPAYER

Proof points

- The City implemented Measure F to temporarily stabilize core services and prevent further budget reductions.
- The City developed a Fiscal Sustainability Plan that provides a blueprint for the City’s future fiscal health.
- The City is consistently recognized for excellence in budget and financial statement preparation
- Through our procurement processes, City staff seeks to secure the highest-quality services for a competitive price.

WE RESPECT OUR ENVIRONMENT & PLAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Proof points

- The City has integrated recycled water into its irrigation systems
- The City is a leader in Green Building standards and with its Streetlight Conversion Program
- The City established ordinances to protect Novato’s hillsides and wetlands
- The City was an early adopter of a Climate Change Action Plan
- The City adopted citywide plastic bag and Styrofoam container bans
- The City engages the community to plan for future development in key areas, including the North Redwood corridor.

WE ARE SPEEDY, EFFICIENT, CREATIVE, AND DEDICATED TO SUPERIOR CUSTOMER SERVICE & SATISFACTION

Proof points

- Our staff is dedicated to providing superior customer service.
- The City has staff and systems in place to ensure prompt and thorough response to public inquiries.
- We are upgrading our current website to ensure quick and easy access to information.
- We employ new technologies/processes/approaches to ensure convenience to our community.

WE ARE A HUB OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND THE ‘PLACE TO BE’ FOR BOTH BUSINESS AND PLEASURE

Proof points

- The mission of the City is to provide excellent services to enrich the quality of life in Novato.
- The City has invested approximately \$300,000 to grow the bioscience industry in our area in order to boost our economy and provide high-paying jobs for our residents.
- The City collaborates with local business to promote Shop Local Novato—an initiative to keep our local dollars *local*.
- The City has an Economic Development Manager dedicated to developing and implementing a plan for economic growth and job creation.
- Our Downtown is the heart of our City and hosts many annual community events.

PARTNERSHIPS & STAKEHOLDERS

The City has four primary audiences that we regularly engage:

A. The Community

This is the City's broadest group of stakeholders. The community includes our residents, property owners, community groups, businesses, partners, and visitors to the City of Novato—all of whom are integral to the success of City efforts. **Many of these groups will have different needs and may require various methods of communication. Each group will be identified in specific communication strategies developed by staff.**

B. The City Council

The City Council's ability to make sound policy decisions for the Novato community is directly related to the availability of relevant, accurate and timely information, community input, and sound, professional staff recommendations. **It is the responsibility of City staff to solicit community input and to inform and educate the Councilmembers** on issues coming before the City Council, make public recommendations, implement actions, and to provide updates and feedback on the outcomes of all Council decisions and actions. City staff communicate early and often with the Council in a variety of ways—within the parameters of open and inclusive government laws and policies. Methods of communication include staff reports (available on the City's website), informational e-mails, weekly reports from the City Manager, and meetings with department heads and program staff.

C. Government Agencies & Other Elected Officials

The **City's ability to successfully carry out its mission relies, in part, on its relationships with other governmental agencies and elected officials.** The City collaborates with local special districts such as the North Marin Water District, the Novato Sanitary District, and the Novato Fire District on a variety of projects and initiatives. For example, the City partners with the Novato Fire District on citywide emergency preparedness and management, and City staff work regularly with the Water and Sanitary Districts on planning and building efforts.

Other intergovernmental partners include the County of Marin, the State of California, and the federal government. The City often collaborates on local, regional, and statewide levels to advocate on behalf of our community

D. City Employees

Clear and coordinated communication within the City strengthens the partnership among all levels of the City organization. Communication with staff includes an internal Weekly Post from the City Manager, all-staff meetings, departmental meetings, regular e-mail notifications, employee events, and a citywide suggestion-box program. To further facilitate employee engagement, the City Manager and department heads have an "open-door" policy and actively encourage staff to stop by and discuss any topic. Brown bag lunches with the City Manager are also scheduled periodically to discuss current issues and provide staff with an additional option for direct access to City management.

UNDERSTANDING OUR KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Another way of grouping our audiences is through **level of engagement**: engaged, aware/interested, passive, disinterested.

The most engaged residents are those who have a particular interest in the policies or programs of the City. Many of our communication efforts are specifically focused on the two most engaged groups—engaged and interested—as they have the highest interest in receiving communications from the City and have the most utility for that information, and therefore represent the most efficient use of resources.

We recognize that the most engaged audience is largely made up of two distinct groups: residents who participate in the governing process either as volunteers or through participation in specific programs (ambassadors), and those that monitor government actions to ensure that they are appropriate, ethical, and legal (watchdogs). In both cases, these audience members tend to have highly-specialized interests, such as the environment, growth, or senior programs.

Note that it is also possible for disinterested or passive audience members to shift suddenly to interested or engaged when a City policy or program impact them directly. Staff needs to keep this in mind when planning an initiative, program or project.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

This section outlines the array of tools and resources that the City currently uses, and the frequency of use for each, to communicate to the City's partners and stakeholders. *Note that the use of any given tool or resource is largely dependent upon the nature and time-sensitivity of the information, and **this is a representative, not an exhaustive,** list of what is available and utilized.*

TYPE	DAILY	WEEKLY	MONTHLY	ANNUALLY	AS NEEDED/ REGULARLY
Staff interaction w/public	•				
E-mail notification*	•				•
Website	•				•
Open Novato					•
E-newsletter			•		
News releases**		•			•
Editorial Board meetings					•
Social media posts	•				•
Community meetings					•
Weekly Post		•			
State of the City				•	
Business Licenses				•	
Staff reports		•			
Council meetings		•			
Council orientations					•
CCB's meetings***			•		
Partner e-news/e-blasts					•
Marketing/ED efforts†					•
Proclamations & Resos		•			•
Letters & notices					•
Staff training					•
Events					•
Sponsorships					•
NPAT			•		•
Signage/banners					•
Nixle (NPD service)					•
Volunteer program	•				•
Measure F report				•	
Surveys				•	•

* this effort also includes posts to online neighborhood forums & response to public inquiry

** this effort also includes other media outreach efforts by staff

*** City Committees, Commissions & Boards

† Economic development efforts

Additional tools and resources: website-hosted videos, news conferences, media & community orientations, advertising, annual reports & mailings, intranet, employee newsletter, and signage have and will continue to be utilized depending on approach and need.

IMPLEMENTATION

Based on the research, our current environment, existing staff, and current and potential resources and tools, below are activities and programs—many of which leverage existing resources and capacity—to **improve communication with, and engagement of, our community**. Each section is organized by an overarching goal, definition of that goal, objectives, and activities

Ultimately, by successfully implementing the workplan below, we can proactively **identify emerging issues and effectively communicate and engage with our community—early and often—on key City issues, policy decisions, and actions taken by Council**.

STRENGTHEN CITY IMAGE & ESTABLISH CITY BRAND

Goal: Develop a City brand & image, and embrace the City’s identity and corresponding brand “promise” through our interactions with staff, partners, and the community and ensure the quality & consistency of our communications

Objectives:

- Build familiarity of the City and its communications
- Brand City identity and reinforce key messages in City communications
- Begin to plan for a City Brand & Identity that elicits community and organizational pride
- Promote the positive attributes of the City which will support our economic development efforts and workforce attraction & retention

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME			DEPT LEAD
	ON-GOING	MID-TERM (by June 30, 2015)	LONGER TERM (by end of 2015)	
Explore options for re-branding effort			•	Central Admin
Ensure consistent use of City logo citywide	•			Central Admin
Continue to work with the media; improve tracking & distribution of coverage	•			Central Admin
Develop style guide; review & update current graphic standards manual to ensure effectiveness; make available to staff and train on how to use			•	Central Admin
Identify opportunities to incorporate current City branding (e.g. signage for Measure F-funded projects, partner publications, sponsorships, City vehicles, banners, City documents, economic development collateral, public notices, streamline signature blocks for City staff)	•			Central Admin
Incorporate Strategic Plan Goals in all work plan items; include in all items going to City Council	•			ALL
Apply for at least two City awards/honors/recognitions			•	Central Admin
Promote and support City’s economic development efforts	•			ALL
Update & maintain City photography	•			ALL
Enhance City recruitment collateral (brochures, webpages, portal to NeoGov/3rd-party software)		•		Admin Svcs
Ensure all marketing & communication efforts are coordinated & guided by the citywide Communications & Community Engagement Plan	•			ALL

IMPROVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS FLOW & COORDINATION

Goal: Coordinate communication efforts throughout the City organization to ensure information accuracy, timeliness, relevance, and effectiveness for our staff, community, and partners.

Objectives:

- Improve internal process to share information among departments on a consistent basis.
- Proactively identify and plan for issues requiring communication & outreach efforts
- Improve internal communication with staff and Council to improve dissemination of, and participation in, City activities

- Build capacity among staff to be City spokespeople/ambassadors and assist in the identification, coordination and dissemination of information internally & externally.

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME			DEPT LEAD
	ON-GOING	MID-TERM (by June 30, 2015)	LONGER TERM (by end of 2015)	
Implement citywide communications plan; roll-out to departments	•	•		ALL
Provide media and communications training (including facilitation) opportunities to staff			•	Central Admin
Develop a primer for new staff re: City's communication plan		•		Central Admin
Update admin policies related to communications/community engagement		•		
Establish Communications Advisory Committee—comprising reps from each City department—to identify & coordinate communication opportunities, maximize existing efforts, and eliminate redundancies			•	Central Admin
Continue communications planning with Executive Management Team to proactively identify issues & opportunities	•			Central Admin
Revamp Weekly Post to create a more effective update for staff		•		Central Admin
Develop an intranet to provide staff access to updated information on City initiatives, projects, & programs			•	Admin Svcs/ALL
Aggregate and provide citywide/staff access to contact lists including City committees, commissions, and boards, and other City partners			•	Central Admin/ALL

IMPROVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION—“MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE”

Goal: Explore and utilize multiple, and maximize existing, technologies to enhance the delivery of City services to best communicate with our partners and stakeholders

Objectives:

- Regularly disseminate information to the community about City activities and initiatives in a variety of formats and in a timely, convenient and proactive manner.
- Build confidence in, and strengthen credibility of, the City and its communications
- Encourage participation by consistently offering a variety of ways to connect with the City
- Enhance customer service and improve customer satisfaction by maximizing opportunities to connect with our community
- Meet the informational needs of a diverse community.

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME			DEPT LEAD
	ON-GOING	MID-TERM (by June 30, 2015)	LONGER TERM (by end of 2015)	
Revamp website to improve access (e.g. ADA compliant, translation, customer request interface) and increase community feedback, participation, & awareness		•		Central Admin/ALL
Develop Standard Operating Procedures for website		•		Central Admin
Research & recommend best practices and options for neighborhood outreach in Novato			•	Central Admin
Work with departments to inventory City collateral and make recommendations for improvement, consolidation, or creation of new material			•	Central Admin
Continue to engage community via social media outlets—promptly respond to inquiries, provide timely information	•			Central Admin
Work with departments on how to best utilize social media resources; formalize social media policy			•	Central Admin
Research & recommend translation/interpretation services		•		Central Admin
Identify and translate key City publications			•	ALL
Continue partnership with Novato Community TV to increase opportunities for outreach	•			Central Admin/PRCS
Increase use of web-hosted video to disseminate City info, messages	•			ALL

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY & BUILD AWARENESS/SUPPORT

Goal: Encourage community involvement in City’s activities and decision-making processes by fostering personal interaction with City staff and Councilmembers and maximizing opportunities for civic engagement.

Objectives:

- Identify opportunities to engage personally with community members;
- Strengthen existing and build new community partnerships
- Build awareness/support of the value of City services
- Increase community awareness and support of City initiatives

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME			DEPT LEAD
	ON-GOING	MID-TERM (by June 30, 2015)	LONGER TERM (by end of 2015)	
Identify sponsorship & event opportunities on a regular basis	•			ALL
Establish and promote a Speakers Bureau that includes subject matter experts among staff		•		Central Admin
Partner with Novato & Hispanic Chambers of Commerce and the DNBA on business mixer or event in Novato			•	Central Admin
Strengthen Volunteer program promotion & recognition			•	ALL
Develop an editorial calendar for City’s e-news “Our Town” to encourage diversity in coverage	•			Central Admin/ALL
Continue City Manager’s Frankly Speaking series	•			Central Admin
Identify gaps and redundancies in staff professional memberships & make recommendations			•	ALL
Continue to identify opportunities to utilize Open Novato	•			ALL

PLAN AHEAD FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Goal: Incorporate long-range communication planning into our everyday activities to keep our audiences informed and engaged.

Objectives:

- To anticipate and plan for opportunities and issues before they occur
- To build trust/confidence that the City is “on top of it”
- Build awareness among staff, community, & elected officials of upcoming items of interest
- Strengthen/formalize procedures for communications during a crisis

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME			DEPT LEAD
	ON-GOING	MID-TERM (by June 30, 2015)	LONGER TERM (by end of 2015)	
Work with departments to identify projects/programs/initiatives that require specific communication plans; develop plans as needed	•			Central Admin/ALL
Integrate communications planning with weekly agenda planning process		•		Central Admin
Annually revisit citywide communications plan and evaluate effectiveness of tasks; update as needed			•	Central Admin
Develop a Crisis Communications Plan to guide internal procedures and ensure effective communications during a crisis			•	Central Admin/ALL
Ongoing Emergency Operations Center training; coordinate quarterly meetings with countywide partners to share emergency preparedness information	•			Central Admin/ALL

EVALUATION & MEASUREMENT

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—the most important information, the information the public wants, and the information necessary to accomplish our mission?
- Are we using the most effective tools to communicate?
- Are we communicating in a timely manner?
- How can we communicate more consistently in both form (visual presentation) and substance (message)?

Some basic measures of success we will track include **reach and penetration**, **level of engagement**, **experience and opinion**, and **media tracking**. Based on the initiative, we will also conduct **staged measurement**—measuring at various milestones to allow for a course-correction if we aren't getting the desired results.

Some of these metrics will include:

- City e-newsletter subscriber rate, open rate, click-through and forward rates
- Website/interactive analytics—how many visitors saw our content? time spent on site? what pages did they visit? did visitors hit specific landing pages? Unique visits, click-through rates, bounce rate, referrals? Conversion rate (action taken—download, survey, registration)
- Followers on Facebook, Twitter; user ratings, re-tweets & shares
- Participants/stakeholders—how did they react?
- Media coverage (positive, negative, neutral)—how much did we receive? tone? which outlets? placement in those outlets? audience of those placements? desired visuals? pick-up our key messages? were we quoted? did the coverage focus on city initiative(s) or was it incidental to the story?
- Use of organizational core messages in communications
- Survey returns & results (use, awareness, and rating of city services; opportunities to participate; staff/partner/customer feedback & satisfaction)
- Public inquiries—how many letters/calls/emails did we receive on this topic? higher/lower than usual? tone? what was said/asked?
- Benchmarking—polling before & after (maybe during); focus groups
- Attendance at events, forums, meetings; desired audience(s)?

For each, we will establish a *baseline* and a *target* and measure our effectiveness based on *actual results*.

For questions about this plan, please contact Peggy Flynn, Communications Coordinator, at pflynn@novato.org or 415.899.8903.