

A HERITAGE OF GOOD LIVING

CITY OF LATHRUP VILLAGE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST – CORE FUNCTIONS	3
Role of The Communications Specialist	3
Office and Department Support Process	4
Strategic Communication Planning Process	5
COMMUNICATION PRIORITIES FOR COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST.....	5
Priority 1 – Lead Strategic Communication Efforts	7
Priority 2 – Create Opportunities for Effective Stakeholder Participation and Collaboration	8
Priority 3 – Provide Open and Timely Communication	9
Priority 4 – Reinforce Brand Identity.....	11
Priority 5 – Ensure a Well-Informed City Workforce	12
Priority 6 – Provide Measurements of Progress and Success.....	13
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.....	14
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	16



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLAN PURPOSE

The purpose of this Communications Plan (Plan) is to clearly define the messages, priorities, strategies, and tools the City of Lathrup Village will use when communicating with the community. The Plan ensures the Lathrup Village story is told effectively despite interference, and engagement between the City and the community is implemented in a timely and effective manner.

This Plan aligns with the strategic priorities of the Lathrup Village City Council, furthering the City's mission and enhancing community pride.

PLAN GOAL

The goal of the Communications Plan is to increase stakeholder engagement and community understanding of City services, initiatives, and resources, and to record measurable outcomes that inform future communication.



Community: Lathrup Village has an intense sense of community and pride. The fabric of our diverse community is woven together through concerts, parades, festivals, cultural celebrations, and abounding volunteerism.



Small Town Feel: Lathrup Village is the city where you know your neighbors by name. There is intense support for – and pride in – all things local. Lathrup Village is a great place to raise a family with tight-knit neighborhoods, block parties, and tree-lined streets.



COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST – CORE FUNCTIONS

ROLE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

The role of the Communications Specialist is to establish, nurture, and sustain a high level of trust in Lathrup Village’s City government among residents, businesses, visitors, and other key stakeholders. The City must maintain its organizational integrity and a positive brand reputation through its strategic communication efforts. The Communications Specialist is a primary conduit for sharing timely, accurate, important, and relevant information to the people the City serves. Below is an overview of the functions of this position and its communications process.

**Strategic Communication
Planning Process**

Implement City Council’s strategic planning goals and guiding principles through thoughtful, essential, and effective communications. This form of communication is about telling the stories of Lathrup Village services and how those services impact the community. By uncovering and sharing the human aspect of the City’s work, we illustrate how implied goals are translated into action for our residents and businesses.

**Communications
Support for Offices and
Departments**

As department leaders and City staff seek communications support for programs and projects, the Communications Specialist staff helps to ensure that projects, initiatives, and events are communicated through the lens of the Lathrup Village brand.

Public Engagement

Communications staff works to develop and carry out successful strategies to engage the public in their local government through participation at events, through digital platforms, and with City services.

Brand Management

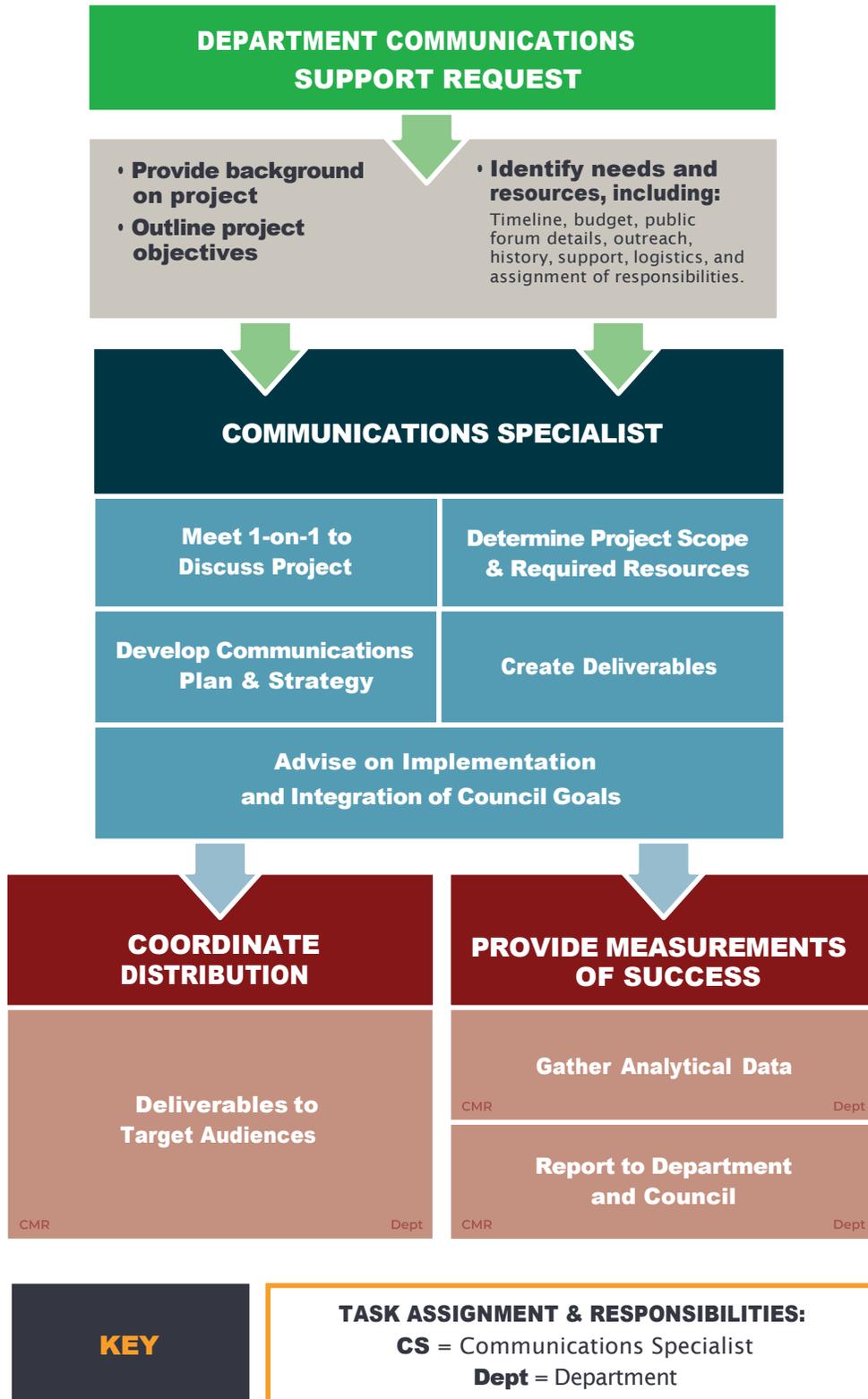
The Communications Specialist ensures the Lathrup Village brand is being used consistently and brand messages are used appropriately and often in all communication efforts.

Emergency Communication

This form of communication occurs unexpectedly and takes many forms. When a crisis occurs, the Communications Specialist will develop and position emergency messages, correctly and effectively disseminate information, prepare department leaders and emergency responders, and manage media relations.

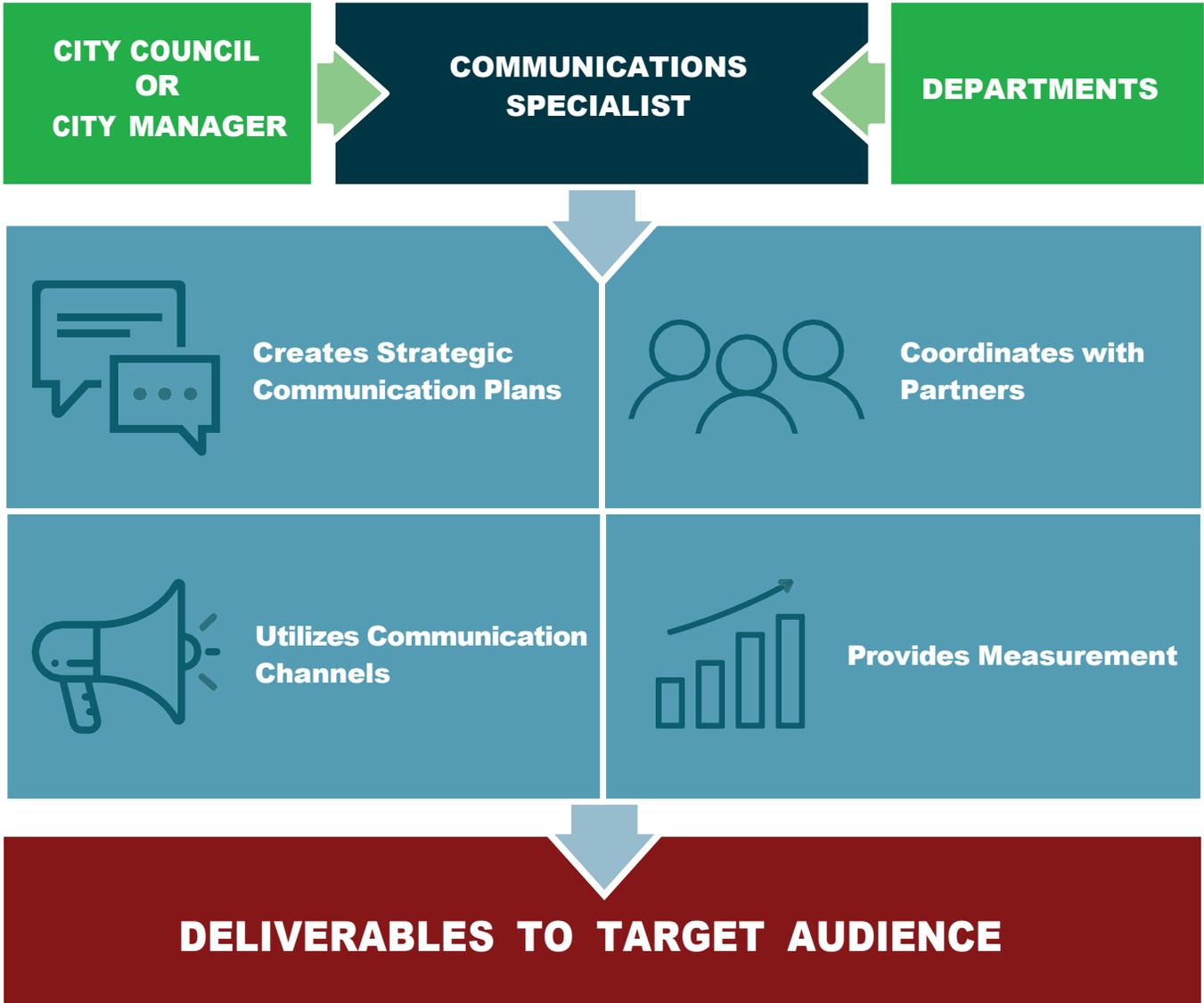
OFFICE AND DEPARTMENT SUPPORT PROCESS

Use this chart to better understand how communication requests flow through the division and the responsibilities of each team member.



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLANNING PROCESS

To best support the City, the Communications Specialist utilizes this process to intake ideas, strategize key messages and create high-quality content in order to effectively communicate and engage the residents of Lathrup Village.





COMMUNICATION PRIORITIES FOR THE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

The Communications Specialist has the principal responsibility for supporting, guiding, and managing communications functions in the overall City organization.

This Communications Plan is based on the priorities below. Practical strategies and tactics to achieve our goals follow each priority. The result of this Plan is a more effective local government with broad community interaction, and greater community understanding of City goals and services.

PRIORITY #1: Lead Strategic Communication Efforts

Work directly with Council, staff, and partners to ensure communication and outreach efforts, objectives, and outcomes align with the strategic goals of the organization and promote community understanding.

PRIORITY #2: Create Opportunities for Effective Stakeholder Participation and Collaboration

Encourage engagement through audience-appropriate, two-way communication and opportunities for constructive feedback.

PRIORITY #3: Provide Open and Timely Communication

Share accurate, non-biased information promptly through a variety of communication channels.

PRIORITY #4: Reinforce Brand Identity

Develop consistent messaging that builds and solidifies Lathrup Village's brand and tells the City's story with one voice.

PRIORITY #5: Ensure a Well-Informed City Workforce

Keep City employees informed and involved in public engagement so they can assist in telling the Lathrup Village story.

PRIORITY #6: Provide Measurements of Progress and Success

Track metrics to evaluate communication efforts and effectiveness in order to guide future communications programs and projects.

PRIORITY #1: Lead Strategic Communication Efforts

Work directly with Council, staff, and partners to ensure communication and outreach efforts, objectives, and outcomes align with the strategic goals of the organization and promote community understanding.

STRATEGIES

Create a better understanding of City Council goals and priorities. By clearly and consistently outlining the goals and vision for the City of Lathrup Village, residents will have a better understanding of why and how public policy decisions are made, and actions are implemented by the local government, and will trust that their suggestions and feedback is considered in policies, procedures, and programs.

Work directly with the city administrator and department directors to ensure messaging and communication efforts support the City's Strategic Plan and City Council priorities. Just as City projects and initiatives should align with Council's priorities and tie into the City's long-range planning initiatives, all communication efforts should also reflect and support City goals. This includes internal communication initiatives for employees, external communication to community members, and communication shared with partner organizations. This coordination ensures consistency, strengthens strategic message delivery, and enhances mutual understanding.

TACTICS

1. Quarterly Meetings with Departments

Meet quarterly with each department to discuss the major issues and opportunities coming up in the next quarter and beyond, identify communication priorities and resources, and develop key messages and communication strategies.

2. Share Goals and Vision on Website

The City's website is the first place that residents go for information about Lathrup Village, and it's important to clearly outline the vision and central goals of the City on the site. This is a simple and effective way to show the guidelines that government officials refer to when making decisions and how they are working to shape Lathrup Village for the future.

3. Integrate Vision, Goals, and Strategies into Communication Efforts

The main vision, goals, and strategies of the City should be present in all forms of communication. By sharing these points with residents, the City can regularly articulate how services and actions are related and help achieve its goals.

**4. Standardize
Communication
Processes and
Procedures**

To help ensure that a project or initiative is properly communicated, a solid communication process should be established. Through this process, standard communication steps can be outlined and then followed for each new messaging campaign. This may include sharing information on the City website, scheduling social media posts or in-person meetings, distributing information to the media and City staff, and creating custom graphics for the campaign. The process will be adjusted based on the project goals and constraints, but a general approach will provide a framework for how communication tools can be used.

PRIORITY #2: Create Opportunities for Effective Stakeholder Participation and Collaboration

Encourage engagement through audience-appropriate, two-way communication and opportunities for constructive feedback.

STRATEGIES

Use interactive communication approaches to maintain ongoing dialogue between constituents and City government. Provide opportunities for two-way communication whenever possible. It's important to solicit feedback on how the City is doing and how it can best serve the community and its constituencies. Put tools in place that make it easier for residents to engage with their local government, gain a better understanding of City services, and achieve greater consensus for programs.

Expand outreach to audiences in targeted areas and special groups. The residents of Lathrup Village are diverse and come from many cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Use a variety of communication methods and leverage partnerships to reach a broader audience. Utilize the platforms the audience prefers to more effectively distribute information.

TACTICS

1. Community Polls and Micro-Interactions

Separate from a large, formal survey, the City will offer smaller and more manageable opportunities for public input several times a year based on information the City Council and staff needs to fulfill the goals and policies of the strategic plan. It is a best practice only to ask questions about topics the City can truly influence, change, or resolve. When soliciting feedback, it is important to be conscious of how the input will be used. If the City asks for feedback on projects or programs, it is assumed by the participant that their feedback will be used in decision making. Thus, interactions should be focused on specific projects and initiatives.

2. External Advisory Groups (either formal or informal)

Establish general or issue-specific community advisory groups that can ensure the City is collaboratively marketing to reach Lathrup Village's diverse audience segments. This could include creating a more formal advisory group or intentionally engaging with external stakeholders when an opportunity arises that warrants their unique perspective and input.

3. Collaborate with Education Institutions

Meet regularly with counterparts at the local county office of education, school districts, and colleges in order to share communication goals and initiatives.

PRIORITY #3: Provide Open and Timely Communication

Share accurate, non-biased information promptly through a variety of communication channels.

STRATEGIES

Provide information that is convenient, timely, and easily accessible for the target audience. Lathrup Village should be prompt in publishing information on a variety of channels appropriate for key audiences so that the public is informed as quickly as possible. Timely and effective distribution of relevant information will reinforce the City's commitment to transparency and demonstrates that public feedback is highly valued.

Promote accurate, comprehensive local and regional media coverage. Building relationships between the City and local media is helpful to the community. By working with the media to establish greater trust, the City will have more influence over the accuracy of information that is communicated to the public and increase the likelihood of stories about Lathrup Village receiving appropriate media coverage.

TACTICS

1. Editorial Calendars

Develop an annual editorial calendar and review and update monthly to strategically plan out social media, newsletter, news media, and website content. This will help ensure communication campaigns are coordinated to reduce conflicts and resource bottlenecks, and allow the City to be strategic about communicating important projects, overarching stories, and timely topics.

2. Annual Financial Reporting

Through the Budget, the City helps facilitate resident learning about how government works and outlines the services provided by the City. Annual reports highlight spending and explain current challenges. These reports will be made more accessible when shared electronically and through social media in small pieces using infographics. This will help expand the reach of the formal reports and educate community members about government operations and policies.

4. Columns, Editorial and Paid Content Opportunities

To have greater presence and ensure consistent messages, feature articles, guest columns, and/or editorial opportunities should be developed in coordination with the Communications Specialist. The City will work with local newspapers to provide regularly scheduled columns in which a City representative writes about pertinent City-related topics.

PRIORITY #4: Reinforce Brand Identity

Develop consistent messaging that builds and solidifies Lathrup Village's brand and tells the City's story with one voice.

STRATEGIES

Empower and train employees to use the City brand correctly in order to tell the City's story with "one voice." Employees can be empowered to help reinforce the City's brand by incorporating personal stories in media interactions and online engagements and offer suggestions on how to reinforce the City's motto in everyday work. Every interaction a staff member has with the public is an opportunity to build brand awareness, whether it is through email, a phone call, or face-to-face interactions.

Implement effective strategies for increasing brand awareness through marketing and advertising. With the City's diverse demographics, the most communication impact will come from using both traditional and innovative digital communication tools. Reinforce the notion that the City brand is not the logo, tagline, and motto in-and-of themselves; it's our story, told in many ways over time.

TACTICS

1. Collaborate with Community Organizations to Market the City for Broader Awareness

Meet with social influencers and stakeholder groups to find common interests and collaborative ways to market the City of Lathrup Village and highlight all the great things the community has to offer. Example partners could include: Southfield Chamber of Commerce, Oakland County, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Lathrup Village Community Foundation, Lathrup Village DDA, Southfield Public Schools, and non-profit and public agencies. Partnering with these types of groups can add communication channels for the City to reach a broader audience. Reach out to industry or trade groups that reflect the Lathrup Village market to align storytelling efforts.

2. City Messaging

Establishing core messages about the community as well as City administration and departments, will support staff and Council efforts to help tell the Lathrup Village story.

3. Employee Ambassador Program

Empower employee “storytellers” to be the eyes, ears, and voice of the organization and expand upon the City’s traditional communication reach. These employees serve as champions, helping to spread information about important topics, listening to community concerns and ideas, and reinforcing the City’s brand. At least one employee from each department serves as an employee ambassador to support the City’s communication, messaging, and branding efforts. This group also assists in developing an editorial calendar.

4. Brand Education for Employees

Train employees to utilize the City’s brand and style guide and online brand platform. At least annually and as-needed, offer training and education on the City’s brand and importance of brand consistency.

PRIORITY #5: Ensure a Well-Informed City Workforce

Keep City employees informed and involved in public dialogue so they can assist in telling the Lathrup Village story.

STRATEGIES

Provide employees with regular opportunities to learn about the issues, challenges, and decisions affecting both the City’s operations and the work environment. Communicate with employees on as many platforms as necessary so all employees receive consistent and timely messages. Provide relevant and accurate information to employees in the office and in the field.

TACTICS

1. Regular Employee Information	Develop and distribute regular employee newsletters, email blasts, and messages from the City Administrator and other executive team members.
2. Provide Employee “Storyteller” Training	Every community meeting is an opportunity for City employees to be on the record representing the City, and thus an opportunity for news media and community networks to quote them. Training for employees will strengthen their professional skills while improving their effectiveness as representatives.
3. Develop Regular Face-to-Face Meetings with Employee Groups	It’s important for City management to meet with employees in town halls, tailgates, awards events, etc., to strengthen familiarity and trust within the organization. At the same time, these are opportunities for employees to ask questions and get straight answers.
4. Celebrate Employee Accomplishments	As teams and individuals accomplish significant milestones, we will provide opportunities for the workforce and the community to understand and appreciate these achievements.

PRIORITY #6: Provide Measurements of Progress and Success

Track metrics to evaluate communication efforts and effectiveness in order to guide future communications programs and projects.

STRATEGIES

<p>There are a variety of standard metrics, also known as key performance indicators, which will be used to track the success of the City’s communication techniques. The City will evaluate these metrics on a regular basis and compare them to previous statistics to understand what techniques are working well and which need improvements, refinement, or further implementation.</p>
<p>Less standard metrics that are quite a bit more challenging to monitor include behavior changes, attitude changes, and awareness changes. These metrics are attached to considerable effort but may give a better picture of outreach effectiveness. The Communications Specialist will continue to look for proven methods for monitoring these metrics.</p>
<p>As part of our ongoing communication planning process and ahead of each major project launch, staff will set goals then outline the key performance indicators that will be used to identify success, measure effectiveness, and refine future plans.</p>



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

MEDIA COVERAGE

News Releases	The number of releases reacted to by the media.
News Sentiment	The sentiment of mentions, articles or interviews published by the media.
Reach	The reach of advertisements (both paid and unpaid) and news stories in media outlets. Examples include ads and news stories in print and online and the number of people who saw it based on the number of publications printed or the number of people who visited the webpage where the content is located.

E-BLASTS / E-NEWSLETTERS

Subscribers	The number of people who have signed up to receive the communication.
Open Rate	The average percentage of recipients who open the email or notification.
Click-Through Rate	The average percentage of recipients who click on an active link within the email or publication.

WEBSITE

Unique Visits	The number of distinct individuals visiting the site.
Page Views	The number of times a page on the site has been viewed.
Top Pages	The pages that are visited most frequently – the top 5-10 should be tracked regularly.
Bounce Rate	The percentage of people that navigate away from the site after only viewing one page. A lower bounce rate means that people are exploring the page and finding the information they need.
Search Terms	The more frequently a term is searched, the more likely it is that visitors are not finding what they need and suggest it may need to be displayed more prominently.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Followers	The number of people who subscribe to, and follow, the City's pages.
Engagement	The number of people who take action by interacting with the City's pages including likes, comments, tags, or shares.
Reach	The number of people who saw the City's posts.
Quantity and Quality of Posts	Number of posts and metrics on content, including photos, videos, events, and polls.

PRINTED MATERIALS AND PAID ADVERTISEMENTS

Distribution Rates	The number of places a printed piece can be found – both physical and online – and the actual number of pieces distributed.
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OTHER METRICS

Quantity of survey responses
Council feedback
Reduction in unsolicited inquiries to departments (demonstrating that the proactive messaging is working at effectively delivering the message)
Digital billboard effectiveness
Video views
Poll results that demonstrate community understanding and engagement
Consistency in brand use across departments
Positive employee response to storyteller program
Positive community or industry response to advisory groups (quantity and frequency of participation)
Quantity of community complaints
Event and forum attendance



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

HIGH PRIORITY

Institute an engaging Employee Storyteller Program

Identify ways to bring brand training to employees

Integrate City vision, goals, and strategies into communication efforts

MEDIUM PRIORITY

Collaborate with community organizations to market the City, serving as ambassadors of the Lathrup Village brand

Collaborate with external advisory groups (either formal or informal) to ensure effective communication and marketing within the community

Attend quarterly department meetings in order to create mini major project-specific communications plans

Outline the City's Strategic Plan elements on the website

Develop or retool community polls and micro-interactions

Research and establish editorial calendars, along with a process of developing content for columns, editorials, and paid opportunities

Develop and implement a City branding strategy