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# COMMUNICATION STRATEGIC PLAN

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2024 - CITY OF ST. FRANCIS, MN.

A COMMITMENT BY THE CITY

# City Council

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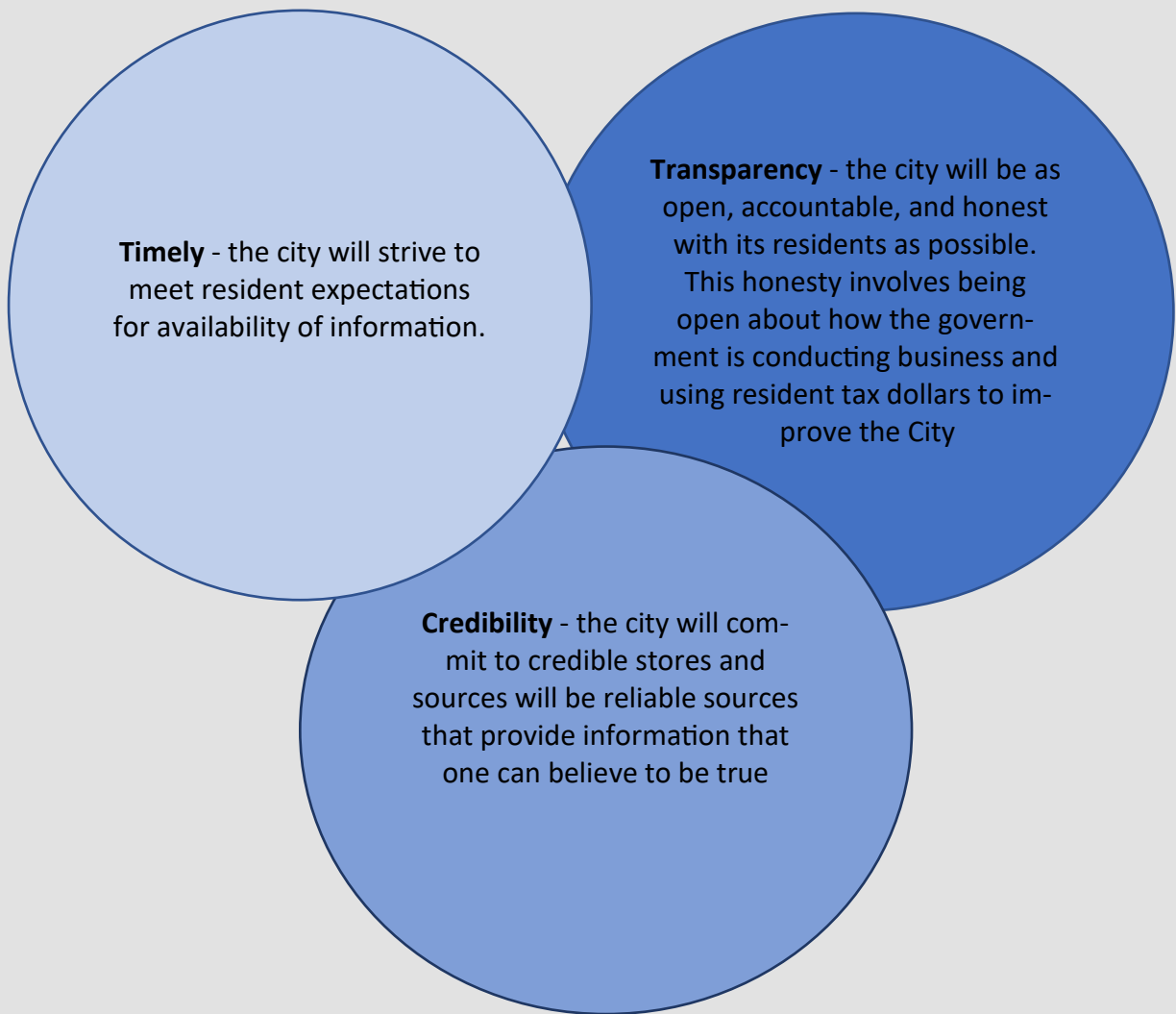
Date Adopted:

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## A COMMITMENT BY THE CITY

Outreach and community input helped shape the St. Francis Communication Strategic Plan. Together we created an overview of the key areas needed for communication and provided details on focused areas, content and frequency.



## WHY COMMUNICATION MATTERS

Studies are completed on the demographics of the fast changing communication and social media world. A study by Civic Plus identified how social media grew from the 2020 pandemic and that social media and websites have become an essential communication tool.

Social media is the best, and at times the only, place for agencies to build public awareness, gain support for initiatives and communicate with the community during a crisis. A study of the state of social media in 2022 found that 70% of adults use some type of it, however it was stated it caused a great deal of confusion. To counteract this, government agencies invest in social media to help share accurate and timely information. It is important our citizens look to government social media accounts as one of the first places to provide them with accurate updates during a crisis.

The largest impacts on communication efforts include; not understanding your audience, inconsistent messaging across channels, lack of active listening, cultural differences, poor choice of communication tools, inadequate feedback and not tailoring messages to specific demographics.

To work through these impacts St. Francis has invested time and resources in to the City website, print media and social media applications. With this investment it is important that not only the content matters but the sources matter to the individuals we are trying to reach. These efforts change often and it is the responsibility of the City to try and keep up to date.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

There is a misconception that social media accounts are easy to manage professionally because so many people use them personally. Managing these accounts as a public agency isn't the same in comparison due to the need to create content, address messages, managing topics, and meet all local and state communication requirements for public engagement.

Several St. Francis staff members participate in the current Communication efforts. Marketing and communication is spread between several staff and worked into their current roles. Each department has at least one person that works to coordinate announcements and news that is then spread among the various communication types. The communication types that require the greatest amount of time include the website, Facebook and the quarterly newsletter.

There are times when having the communication efforts spread throughout several people, items get missed or scheduling can overlap. Additionally, staff managing the communication channels are not trained in marketing and work this in when priorities allow.

High priorities that include public safety related events are managed through Nixle and released by the Police and Fire Departments at the time of an event, when staff is able. This may include a road closure , active fire , storm damage or other safety issues.

When faced with increasing costs and higher resident needs we also need to remember that staff time comes at a cost. The City wants to ensure that staff time remains efficient and valuable while meeting a high standard of transparency and communication.

## SURVEY PROCESS

**A communication focused survey was distributed for St. Francis residents and those in the surrounding area. St. Francis activities, events and projects are enjoyed and supported by others and it is important when hosting these activities we are aware of who we are reaching and the best way to reach them.**

**Surveys were distributed in the following ways:**

- ◆ Spring Quarterly Newsletter—May 2024
- ◆ Farmers Market Bags—250 bags received flyers
- ◆ Website for 90 days, including several spotlight announcements
- ◆ Facebook
- ◆ Bike Rodeo Event—100 flyers
- ◆ Night to Unite—50 flyers
- ◆ City Hall counter flyer

## THE AUDIENCE

- ⇒ Who is our audience?
- ⇒ Where is our audience?
- ⇒ What does our audience want?
- ⇒ Does our audience want to hear from us?
- ⇒ How does our audience want to hear from us?

The City conducted the Communication Survey from May 15th to August 15th, 2024. We wanted to know how we were communicating as well as how respondents felt about the information that was being released. Several questions were meant to gauge how the City communicated, what information was being searched, how the audience learned about city information and how we could improve. It was not surprising that many of the responses highlight what statistics show nationally.

**A total of 48 responses were collected.**



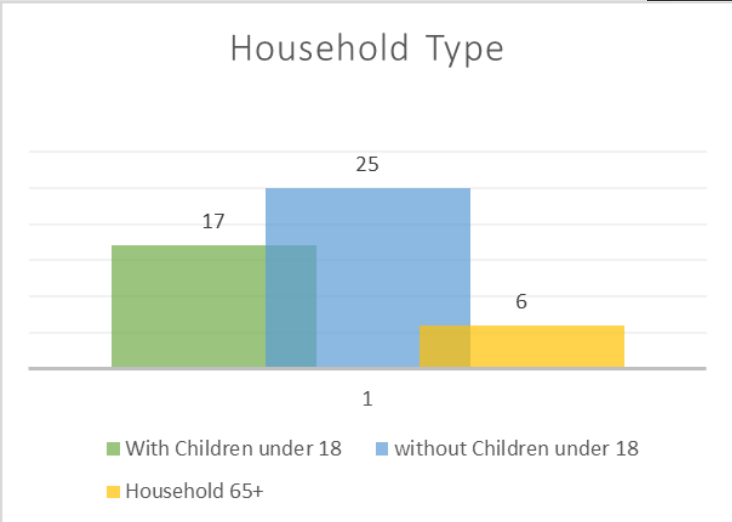
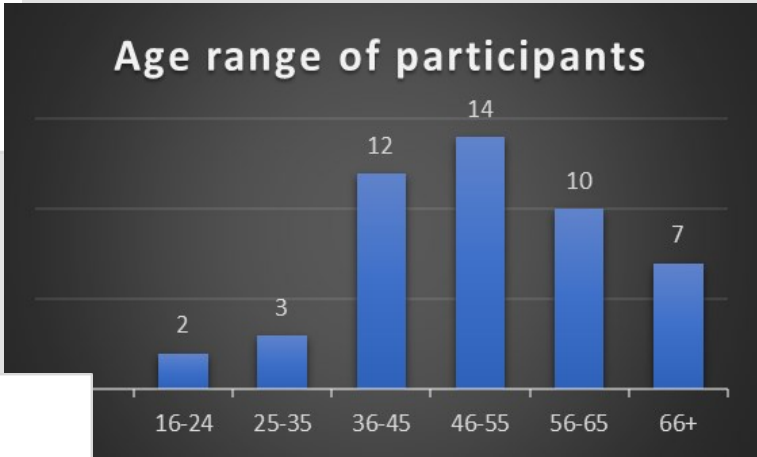
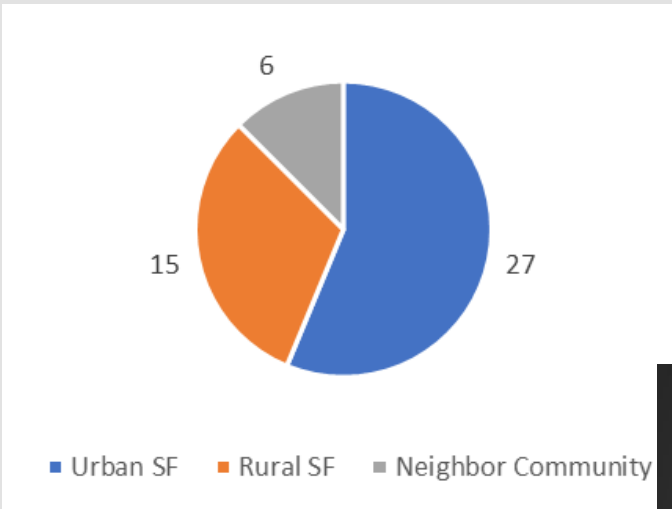


# THE AUDIENCE

## Who responded to our survey?

Residents: 43

Non-Residents: 5



## CURRENT PROCESS

Respondents were asked about how they felt the city was doing.

**How do you feel the City currently does at communicating with the public?**

- ⇒ The city does a good job communicating = 19
- ⇒ The city does a OK job communicating = 19
- ⇒ The city does a poor job communicating = 10

## CURRENT PROCESS

**Based on their answer, we requested clarification regarding what communication is favored, what do you feel is missing, what could improve?:**

- ◇ Departments are not consistent
- ◇ Use Facebook more to spread word about things
- ◇ Feel like everything is good
- ◇ I feel much the city is doing or working on is hidden from the residents. They put out only blah staff and let the community hash it all out on the fb community pages
- ◇ I think you do a great job
- ◇ The website is okay, but still not really easy to navigate. Pictures of staff, elected officials, and commissions would be a great additional. More constant posts on Facebook would be helpful.
- ◇ I do not believe that it has been communicated effectively that the fire department was getting a new building. While I do know the old building was out of date and the city needed a new building, I do agree with the building, it just would have been nice to have been more informed about the process. Same goes for when the water thingy was built. No one knew about that, yet we have to pay for it.
- ◇ I don't know what other cities communicate and how frequently, so Im not sure what to compare it to.
- ◇ Enjoy the quarterly newsletter, and updates on Facebook. Everything else I can go to the website to look for.
- ◇ As noted above, optimize searching the city website. I sometimes find it difficult to find answers.
- ◇ I believe the city makes a good effort in reaching out to the community, however unless it directly affects the individual it is pushed to the side.
- ◇ I think explaining to the residents why they are charged now a \$75 storm water fee when the state requires a couple hundred dollar permit for this nonsense. Misleading to say the least.
- ◇ They try people want lean government, yet some how everything seems to go up in price and has become all about the \$ and less about just being.
- ◇ Pretty much everything about where our money is being spent should be communicated better.

- ◇ City has done a poor job of planning growth through excessive residential expansion without industrial and manufacturing expansion, creating a “bedroom” community that is not capable of keeping up on current city plans. 75% of people leave early and get back home late and don’t know what is going on. They aren't aware unless it directly affects them or its to late too respond. People need to know what is being thought of before it gets to far along.
- ◇ They’ve always been good about providing information, when requested.
- ◇ I like to see what’s coming up, however, 4 times a year feels like not a lot is going on. You can’t post everything in the paper so it would be nice to know about more church events, like kid mid-week programs and such.
- ◇ If we don’t watch the meeting then we pretty much have no clue what is going on in our city until the quarterly letter comes out.
- ◇ I read the newsletters but a lot of people don’t and then get upset when changes are made. I'm not sure how many use Nixel but maybe if they got something on their phones they would read that.
- ◇ Easier access to what is being built in the city.
- ◇ I would like to be able to go to one place, instead of multiple.
- ◇ I think the city does a great job. Everyone complains, because that’s what people do unfortunately. You guys are going a great job.
- ◇ I want to know more on businesses coming in and feel like it’s a shock to a majority of residents when we are getting new businesses. I would have wanted a say in another auto store and dollar general. I think a direct mailer should come out for stuff like that.
- ◇ The information is there if we take the time as citizens to read it!
- ◇ I can always find the information I need.
- ◇ I talk to so many St Francis citizens and maybe one in ten is informed about what is going on .
- ◇ More information of what’s going on, decisions made
- ◇ I think as long as there is some type of communication, and as long as the city is trying to get the information out to the public, its great. Its when we find out after the fact that will cause more issues. I think you do what you can, that really all anyone can expect.
- ◇ I had emailed asking about getting a SLOW DEER CROSSING sign on the road in front of our house because the speeding traffic is horrible. There’s going to be a dead motorcyclist out there someday the way the speed. I didn’t get a response at all. I am going to try to email again.
- ◇ Need “outgoing” form of city minutes/agendas.

- ◇ Hard to find information about the city and its plans of future development.
- ◇ Could use more around development
- ◇ Newsletter and Liz's Facebook posts
- ◇ I don't feel like I am missing information
- ◇ I feel they do a great job.
- ◇ Don't hear about some events until its too late
- ◇ Nobody knows what is going on. Majority of people leave early and get home late and only get involved when it affects them or after they see it done. Your design for building a city based on heavy residential expansion is the major problem. You have no industrial or production based operations that provide for a stable tax base or quality jobs that keep people involved with their town and keep them close to home. Every project you do is poorly conceived and short sighted and constantly creates issues within a short time because you don't communicate with the people who are the most affected before you proceed. You should be putting out surveys like this for every large project and gather feedback BEFORE taking any further steps and don't be afraid of saying no or changing your plans. Also, when a project or development is brought forward, your first step should be to talk with the people closest to and most affected by it. They may just have an idea or suggestion that may make things better or easier.
- ◇ I am up to date with most happenings through the text message notification system and Facebook. If I am missing any news, I don't realize it.
- ◇ I get all of my info from st.francis prime
- ◇ Didn't even know about the new city offices until the building started.
- ◇ St. Francis city staff take care to communicate well, especially in the quarterly newsletter. I am also noticing the city has a table set up at the weekly Farmers Market in community park. Bravo!

## CURRENT PROCESS SUMMARY

Even as overall participation was limited, there was overlap within the comments:

### **What the City could improve on:**

- Consistency
- Web navigation
- Information on City process
- Budget transparency
- Events

### **What respondents felt was missing:**

- More Facebook posts
- Pictures of Staff and Council on website
- Project information and greater amount of details
- New business information
- City Council decisions

## WHAT MATTERS

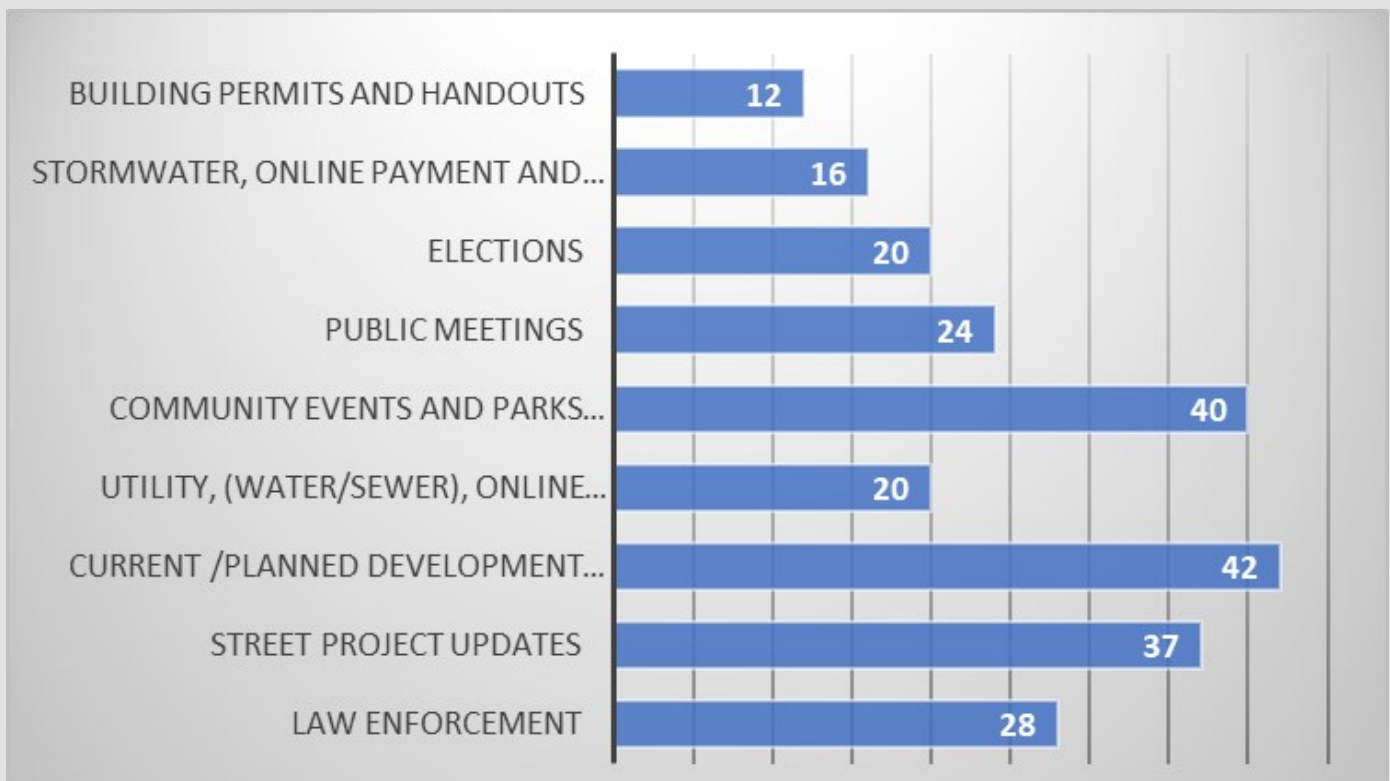
Respondents were asked:

**How Important is it to you to be well informed about the City and its functions?**

⇒ Somewhat important = 5

⇒ Very important = 43

**What types of information do you seek the most?**



## CURRNT SOURCES

**Respondents were asked:**

**Which sources do you CURRENTLY AND REGULARLY use?**

**Participants were able to pick all that applied.**

Electronic Hwy Sign	15
Quarterly Newsletter	40
City Webpage	26
City Facebook Page	41
Police Department Facebook Page	25
Nixle Emergency Communications	23
Fire Department Facebook Page	14
Bottle Shop Facebook Page	8
Bottle Shop website and/or App	4
X formally Twitter	1
Instagram	1
Direct Mail	16
Email Subscriptions	3
YouTube Videos	3
Council Meeting Material	13
Planning, Park or Charter Materials	13



## CURRENT SOURCES

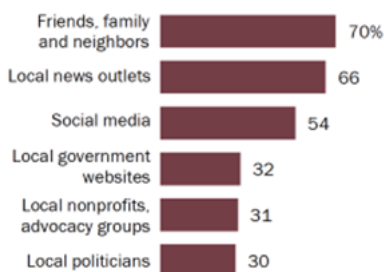
St. Francis data is not unique as studies show from 2022 to today, that Facebook has remained the most widely used platform by government agencies. This is in part due to Facebook offering the greatest flexibility without character limits and fewer restrictions on the type of content that can be shared. Allowing communicators the ability to get their entire message across.

You will notice that the City currently does not have a TikTok account. As this base has the youngest users and is the best way to reach users under 20, it is also a complicated platform for government agencies.

It is important to monitor data as the city moves forward. As media platforms change, and how the uses change through generations will determine how we are reaching all residents and not just a specific demographic.

### Friends and family, local news outlets, and social media are Americans' top sources for news about local politics

*% of U.S. adults who often/sometimes get local political news from ...*

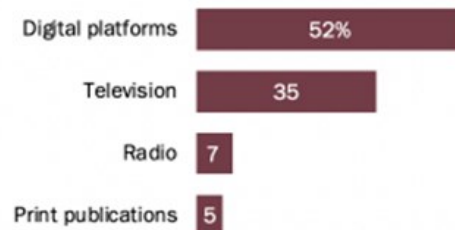


Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 22-28, 2024.  
"How Americans Get Local Political News"

PEW-KNIGHT INITIATIVE

### Roughly half of Americans prefer to get news on a digital platform; about a third prefer TV

*% of U.S. adults who prefer \_\_\_\_ for getting news*



Note: Digital platforms includes respondents who said they prefer news websites or apps, social media, search, or podcasts.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## CURRENT SOURCES SUMMARY

Page 15 and 16 of this report identifies all of the tools that St. Francis is working with to reach residents. St. Francis will review comments against these tools to ensure we are reaching out with the respondents desired content.

### **Newsletter and Facebook:**

- Look to increase information on events, parks, projects and developments.
- Continue posts from Law Enforcement
- Articles that provide more information on Council decisions
- Information on Budgets

### **Website:**

- Review to identify any areas that can improve navigation
- Get projects both development and road updated

### **Weak points/what is missing:**

- Connecting people to Nixle—continue to market
- Connect people to Bottle Shop media sites
- Consider disabling X (Twitter) and Instagram

## POTENTIAL SOURCES

Respondents were asked:

**Are there other sources that you wish you COULD USE or that the City would utilize more when seeking information? What are they?**

- Optimize searching the city website to people can find the answers to their questions
- I wish the community would be more involved. Als if the website had a few more tabs for click access
- Face page or read the packet, or attend a meeting, but nothing matters anyway, because local government like the rest do as they wish, in their mind it's the right decision, yet not always the right decisions any the time
- All city info should be listed on a website as highlights without having to search for it. Listed in order of existing items, planned and then possible. Then you simple click on the item for more detailed info. More detailed info on city work sessions.
- Activities available for all different ages - ie concerts? Youth rec options,
- Why doesn't public works have a Facebook page? You even have one set up for Farmers Market, but nothing for Public Works. I was to know when they plow. I want to know their information.
- The website is a mess and hard to navigate. Also the search bare rarely works.
- Email, text
- Anoka Union Herald newspaper

## POTENTIAL SOURCES

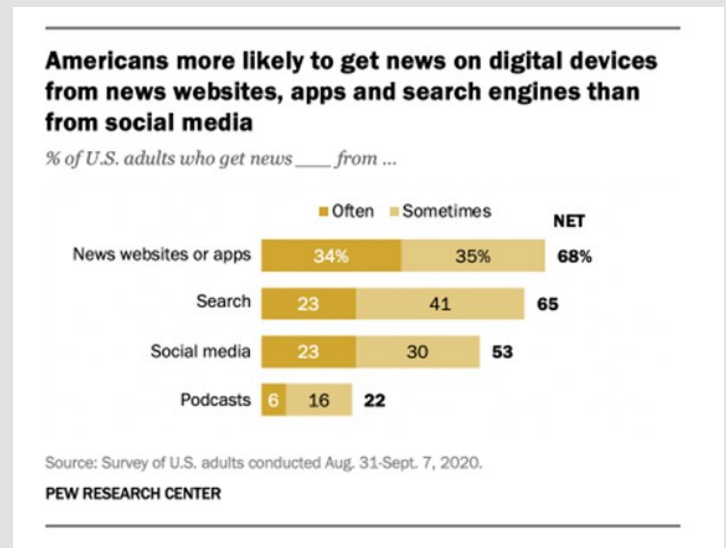
Respondents were asked:

### **Are there other examples of effective communication from other cities that you would like staff to explore?**

- Better presence on Facebook and updates to the website would be great.
- Continuing to make the city website easy to use, search, navigate serve as the single source of truth
- Maybe another digital board at the other end of town. In the future.
- Do we all of a sudden have \$ stashed away and its burning a hole in pockets?
- Lets get on anoka county for PEDESTRIAN SAFETY on these damn county roads!!
- No taxing people and building things that are unaffordable, just spending to spend, if we ran our house like government we would be in a van down by the river
- Prior attempt show this ity is very inept at exploring all the option of any subject. Also very poor at listening and accepting ideas or suggestions they didn't think of themselves. Then when proceeding they become very narrow minded and short sighted. Then don't tell residents about it till its too late.
- Stop trying to be like other cities and following their mistakes. Think outside the box and devise a plan that fits our needs and is flexible for future variables.
- I think the city needs to use social media more.

## POTENTIAL SOURCES SUMMARY

National data identifies that a majority of people tend to lean towards news sites and apps over social media. City communication is news and it is important that we are responding in a way that people find it easy to find, easy to use and navigate.



When asking our respondents; what type of platforms they wish they could use, ideas they may have seen elsewhere or which tools we should explore, we were given responses that were familiar.

### **Respondents identified they wish they could more:**

- Website—seen as hard to navigate
- More information from Public Works on Facebook
- Email and text options

### **Suggestions on what to explore:**

- Website improvements
- More Facebook and greater social media presence
- A second digital board

# NEWSLETTER

Respondents were asked:

**Currently the City mails out a paper quarterly newsletter. What do they do with it?**

- ⇒ Read each newsletter 39
- ⇒ Read the headlines only 7
- ⇒ Throw it away without reading 2

**How often the newsletter should be sent out?**

- ⇒ More than quarterly 16
- ⇒ Less than quarterly 4
- ⇒ Stay quarterly 28

## NEWSLETTER

Respondents were asked to provide the opinion of the newsletter:

### **I believe the newsletter could do a better job communicating about? (open comments collected)**

- I see a lot of confusion regarding the use of funds in SF. I.e., schools vs city building projects. This may need multiple alterations to be sure it reaches people and resolves the confusion.
- Why and how the city operates and makes decisions
- I read it only because I pay attention most glance and I'm sure it's trash
- Actually mailing it out. I have a PO Box and don't receive a copy. Let people know what is going on or what the city is trying / planning to do.
- Giving facts without the city spin. Notification of current things being discussed and being able to offer ideas and options not mentioned. Allowing responses without fear of retribution. Or codes like this would work efficiently.
- A volunteer page, highlighting volunteer opportunities in the community. Out reach groups for disabled and/or aged.
- The Mayor should do a letter to the citizens in each newsletter
- Different articles for some departments. Most of it, is recycled information year after year. Some are trying to put different out and its positive information. Love that.
- Transparency and details with less gov't spin. What is REALLY going on and what plans are in the works and allowing residents feedback.
- Nothing. The St. Francis newsletter is thorough and well planned. I much prefer it to the newsletter in Oak Grove, where I live.
- Everything. Very little information about government and ongoing projects.

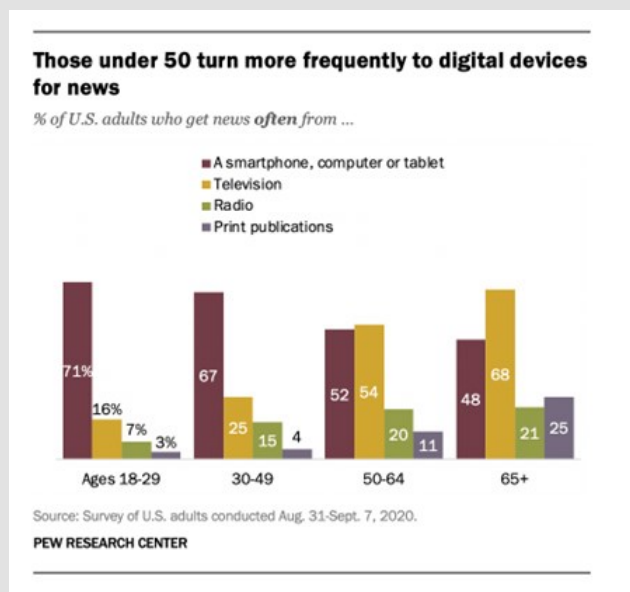
## NEWSLETTER SUMMARY

Responses are again similar to national data based on the age demographics of those who responded. A high number of respondents want to keep the newsletter quarterly or increase it to more than quarterly. This is expected with a majority of our respondents 46 years of age or older.

Print publication drops significantly as age drops in demographics. In the increasing digital world this will continue.

Keeping the Newsletter at a quarterly timeframe is manageable with the City's current capacity, but in the future the City should continue to assess the cost and use against all available platforms for reaching all residents .

As we continue to use the Newsletter to reach residents, information shared in print should also be shared digitally to capture the younger households. Limiting the information to one platform or another will miss resident groups.





## NEWSLETTER SUMMARY

Improvement suggestions for the newsletter:

- City decisions on ordinances and ongoing projects
- More explanations of how the city operates and details
- Letter from Mayor
- Wider variety of information, too much information is recycled

Continue to consider:

- Update and track value of print and digital methods to ensure value in print and where it can be shared
- Continue the newsletter quarterly

## MOBILE APPLICATIONS

Data shows that websites and Facebook are utilized by today's older generations. Younger generations use their mobile phones for everything including a host of apps and video platforms. Some cities are working into this through using short videos to create an awareness through humor. Other cities are working with app platforms to attract the additional audiences. Today's marketing is based on the information going to the user, not the user looking up the information. When users are searching information it is not always at a computer, making our platform more difficult and spread out.

In an attempt to reach others that are app users and/or the younger populations the survey proposed the idea of a city app. Additionally, with a mobile app, individuals obtain notifications unlike a website for updates. Notifications for items like election information, events, road closures and community news can be directly pushed out. Mobile applications are tied to the website so the data is the same between them but they function in different ways. For the City to create an app, our website would require improvements for the two to connect. The cost of a mobile application alone is not as expensive but the website improvements required for them to talk are more costly.

Throughout the survey questions, respondents identified they are struggling with City website navigation. If we were able, one question we need to ask those individuals is, *what type of device are they using to access our website?* Through a phone, tablet or a computer? Our website is "mobile friendly", but does not function as an app. If respondents are using mobile type devices when searching, web navigation will be more difficult.

## MOBILE APPLICATIONS

Respondents were asked:

**The City currently does not have a phone app. To provide this opportunity it would cost the City roughly \$30k to \$60k to set up. Do you feel this would improve your communication, notification or that you would utilize the app regularly?**

- Like the idea of an app or other notification system
- Would possibly use instead of current methods if all the info is on it. Would be nice to have everything in one spot.
- Not if it increases taxes. I can't afford to live here the way it is.
- I personally would use it, but I don't feel that enough people would use it to justify the cost.
- I use apps a lot, so depending on what is on the app, I would probably use it
- Don't know what a phone app is so likely not something I would use regularly
- I would rather see that money spent in keeping the city website current
- Yes it would improve communication. Although I don't know if the cost reward ratio is worth it.
- No we do not need this added expense. With the digital world already. Communication via Facebook, Twitter, newsletter is sufficient. We have the digital board at the community park. We have nixel.
- We do not need unnecessary expenses. The information is out there. And people can also do their own homework.
- I do think more public representation is in order not doing what they think is beat like it government should be
- It would improve communication but it is totally unnecessary as there are many avenues to get information to people. Now, if the app had a place you could pay your city bills, then go ahead with the app.

- No Another app isn't the answer. City does a very poor job of managing communication. City also does a very poor job of managing costs. No way it costs 30-60k. Quit wasting money.
- Only if the functionality adds to the already available communication methods. If it just repeats what's already available it would be a waste, in my opinion.
- Unknown
- No! Just more money taken from us
- I think they just need to improve the website
- I am not sure I would utilize it. Could Nixel be used to get out important messages to residents such as voting info, Hwy 47 updates, etc.
- Yes, I would use regularly as a source of information if I didn't have to go to multiple other places to get information (i.e. one source that has it all)
- No, social media and the current news letter works great. Technology is great till it isn't. Leave more room for error and technical difficulties.
- No I wouldn't want to spend the money on something like that.
- Maybe? Depends on the information it provided.
- No, another app is not the answer. Another example of how poorly this town is run. No way it costs that much for the app and you'd find a way to screw it up and cost us twice as much.
- Not if our taxes are going to go up again.
- I probably would use it
- I'm not sure
- Single answer of No = 14
- Single answer of Yes = 8

## MOBLIE APPLICATION SUMMARY

The question regarding city communicating through an app received several responses. App based engagement is not only the way communication trends are leading, but also tied to demographic and device changes as people move towards cellular and tablet based devices for information needs.

Mobile apps are seen as a better tool than websites due to their performance, they allow users to have offline access to information, apps are generally safer than websites and the user experience can be more interactive and intuitive than websites.

Prior to July, staff would not have recommended moving forward with an app as there is extensive website work that would have been necessary. However, due to updated federal regulations with Accessibility, the City is in a position in which we have to update our website for ADA compliance by April 2027. These updates have the potential to change the full face and platform of our website. The updates may move us to a position in which an application is an inexpensive add on. This will be monitored closely by staff throughout the compliance process.

## MARKETING ST FRANCIS

Respondents were asked:

**Many cities put an emphasis on something in the City that creates a marketing tool. Should St. Francis invest, market and promote a landmark? If so, is this landmark something that already exists or something to be created? Is there something unique about St. Francis we should be marketing that makes us stand out?**

- A lot of negative people in this town/area who have nothing positive to say, but are sure willing to say every negative thing. I don't know much about the town and I've lived here 20 years.
- We have Pioneer Days, although I've never heard a story about Pioneers in St. Francis.. If the marking is going to change, it should be comprehensive and meaningful to the town. To me, the river is the towns biggest asset for as long as I can remember. Unfortunately given Poor management it appears that's not the case.
- No putting too much "emphasis" on our city will bring turbulence. We can be known as the quiet little town with a big voice.
- Your turning us into Coon Rapids!!! Nothing because again your looking for a reason to steal more peoples money. And it's not ok, we the people are not pleased with government taxes, and price gouging to like check to check to make other life posh all while living off blue collar/working poor saying we understand while you are secure in life..
- No, unless you call small, cheap, packed housing a landmark. We don't need to waste more money on another boondoggle.
- Highlight the river history and involve school kids in research projects to encourage their involvement in the city
- In my opinion, the small town, close knit community is the most stand out thing. There really isn't much that we have to market and maybe that's something the city needs to change.

- I think continuing organic growth is enough for our small town.
- Woodbury Park and the gazebo
- Pioneer Days
- Maybe advertise rafting, kayaking or canoeing down the Rum River
- Not that I can think of.
- Yes, that would be wonderful. Maybe that the Rum River runs right through town. Any idea would be great. But a landmark would be so cool for our community! Thank you for all you do!
- The Inn needs to be the focus and I was excited when it was purchased. My husband and I were looking at buying it for to restore it like it was originally built for.
- Pioneers Days is all I can think of at the moment
- Maybe create something or some kind of.
- We had a great thing with a lot of memories when Pioneer days was on bridge street.
- Once 47 is redone, that will help bring more tourism for the city. Also, the Rum River is a great attribute. Canoeing, boating, river fun, should definitely be promoted. I love that the city is fixing the riverbanks! Helps with the erosion issue and its nice to look at.
- No keep it simple or just 1 event per year. I prefer the small town feel, not as many people or tourists.
- I think the Pavilion is beautiful.
- I am not sure what to suggest, unless it's the lovely gazebo in the small park on Bridge Street.
- The things this city is known for are not what you want put out in public. You had a plan brought forward a couple years ago to bring a seasonal event to town that would have attracted hundred to thousands of people and brought tons of business but you shot it down. Instead, you rather shove a ton of houses into a minimal amount of space, create another mess, and call it progress.
- The Rum River Inn!! It needs to be restored.
- Single answer of No = 3

## MARKETING ST FRANCIS SUMMARY

Many cities put an emphasis on an symbol in the City that creates a marketing tool. This can be a business, structure or park that finds a purpose for people to visit the city. Local attractions and events create economic development benefits as visitors spend money at local establishments. Additionally there are social benefits such as community pride and a sense of identity. The celebration of a local attraction creates an individual identity for a city to market them differently or stand out.

In the answers we heard the importance of the Rum River Inn and the Woodbury Park Gazebo. Both having a significant history in St. Francis. Pioneer Days has also had a long history as a stable event. The Chamber now runs Pioneer Days and annually, is faced with the struggles of dwindling volunteers. This is an important event to the economic development of St. Francis and the City should continue to support this as we can.

St Francis has a history that has been lost with the Rum River Inn and the inactivity of the Historical Commission. There have not been ongoing efforts to save or replace history lost. However the City has not created anything new to replace that identity. The City has held onto Pioneer Days while letting go of several other events such as Oktoberfest, corn feeds and other initiatives.

The highest priority brought forward was the Rum River. Interestingly enough, there are ways to tie the river into marketing ideas. Using the river, its access and its beauty as a theme that could grow into existing marketing. A little creatively and focus could support those efforts as a reason to visit St. Francis and support our businesses.



## DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The current city website was put in place in 2017. In the world of technology, this is a dated site. However, as the site continued to function and operate as needed we have not made changes.

Throughout the responses of the survey it was identified that there were navigation issues with our site. As we already discussed the issues related to the type of device being used, a second potential issue is due to accessibility. The City will be updating its site to meet Federal requirements. Due to our size, under 50,000 population, we have until April 2027 to ensure our website is ADA compliant.

Guidelines for compliance include; content structures, navigation that is consistent and predictable, images having text elements and being machine readable, correct color contrasts, meaningful links and ADA forms.

The City will be dependent on our website host to guide us through this transition. This requirement is extremely staff intensive due to the number and type of forms we have and the work needed to move to a new platform. To be in compliance on time, staff will begin this process in 2025.

## THE TAKE AWAY

**Who is our audience?** Even with limited participants the answers were similar to national data. St. Francis is not unique in communication needs or efforts. However, with the information we received it is helpful to identify the success and challenges within our communication. The City will continue to ask the questions and watch the demographics to ensure we are meeting the needs of those we are trying to reach.

**What does our audience want?** Respondents identified they want to receive information from the city related to events and parks, projects and Council decisions.

**How does our audience want to hear from us?** From the limited responses we learned that the website, Facebook and the newsletter are important communication tools. We will continue to increase information through these sources while we monitor and adapt to new communication sources and watch changes in demographics. If through ongoing website requirements a mobile application is cost effective, we will research this further at that time.

# COMMUNICATION PLAN

## **Current Tools Used:**

Electronic Hwy 47 Sign, Quarterly newsletter, city webpage, City Facebook, Police Department Facebook, Nixle Emergency Communication, Fire Department Facebook, Bottle Shop website, Bottle Shop Facebook, Bottle Shop App, X formerly Twitter, Instagram, direct mailings, email subscriptions, YouTube video's, Council meeting materials, Planning, Park and Charter meeting materials.

## **Future Tools to be Included:**

No new tools are recommended to be added at this time. Staff will work on the navigation and long term plan with the website and meeting ADA compliance as well as monitoring mobile application potential; improvements to the information in the quarterly newsletter, continue to increase those using Nixle for emergency notifications and potential subscription information

## **Communication Tools to be discontinued:**

X formerly Twitter, Instagram

## COMMUNICATION PLAN

As technology and resources continue to change it is important that the city does not become complacent using a single source or type of communication tool. It is also important that the city does not spend staff capacity on platforms that are not reaching our targeted audiences. The city currently has several social media and communication platforms being used. Throughout the survey it was identified that outreach types are sufficient in quantity, but at times people are missing the content and feel the city could increase what is shared. As we move forward staff will continue to place a priority on details and useful information.

There is value in repeating a communication survey every five– to—ten years in an effort to remain efficient and accurate in our path to reach the residents.

The survey was created and distributed as a tool to gain knowledge in the city's communication efforts. This document shall be used to identify concerns and useful suggestions that are offered by the public in making both short term and long term outreach efforts. Staff will continue to monitor feedback and trends and bring forward new suggestions on tools and outreach that goes above and beyond the survey results to ensure city news and communication is valuable.