



COMMUNICATION PLAN

The City of Maplewood is driven to be an engaged and helpful partner to its residents and businesses. One of the primary ways to build, and continually strengthen, this partnership is through dynamic and consistent communications. The Communications Department will serve as the conduit for City Hall and the City's elected officials to share news with the public.

Moving forward, the City will share timely and relevant information about the City Council, City programs, and public events and activities. This information will be shared via the Maplewood Living, the City's website, social media accounts, and other electronic and print communications methods.

The Communications Department will serve two primary functions. The first will be to actively and aggressively promote the City as a whole, as well as its residents and businesses. Touting the City's numerous achievements, and the achievements of its residents and business-owners, is a way to promote community pride while also showing regional residents and business-owners all that Maplewood has to offer. We know that Maplewood is a special and dynamic community and the Communications Department will endeavor to share that knowledge beyond our City limits.

The second primary function for the Communications Department will be to serve as a news outlet. Currently, it's tremendously difficult for the City to receive adequate coverage from external news outlets. That difficulty will only become more apparent in the coming years. Accordingly, the City must become its own news outlet and to that end, the Communications Department will create and disseminate content about the City Council, City departments, policy changes, staffing changes, finances, and other vital activities.

While the Communications Department has only been at full capacity since September 2016, it's already forged a sustainable path forward. The Communications Department, due to rapidly changing and emerging technology, will be in a constant state of change and adaptation. The way the Communications Department shares its work in 2022 will almost certainly be significantly different than the way it shares its work in 2017.

However, no matter how the tools and means of delivery change, the Communications Department's mission to promote the City of Maplewood in ways that are consistent with its values and policies, will remain the same.

City of Maplewood
Communications
1830 County Road B East
Maplewood, MN 5510

Office 651-249-2000
@MaplewoodMN
www.maplewoodmn.gov

Vision Statement

The City of Maplewood's Communications Department will strive to build a strong and lasting relationship with its diverse community. This relationship will be built through a commitment to informing residents, business owners, and visitors with timely, accurate, and accessible information with a focus on residents, businesses, elected and appointed officials, city staff, and community organizations.

While the Communications Department will seek to share the many positive and admirable things happening in Maplewood, the Department will also not shy away from sharing accurate and fair information on difficult or controversial situations. Ultimately, the Communications Department will seek to be viewed as a legitimate news and information source by the public.

Lastly, the Communications Department will continually embrace new technology and industry standards to enhance the way it communicates with its audiences. As residents continue to rely on personal devices to find news and information, the Communications Department will be prepared to reach them on those devices.

Our Audience

While the target audience can change depending on the parameters of a given project, our audience generally consists of:

- Maplewood residents
- Maplewood business owners
- City Council members
- Commission members
- City staff
- Local nonprofits and community groups
- Neighborhood leadership
- County, regional, and state agencies
- Lillie Suburban Newspapers, the Pioneer Press, and other Twin Cities media outlets

Beyond communicating with current Maplewood residents and businesses owners, the Communications Department will seek to communicate with people who visit the City to work or shop, residents of other communities in our region, businesses owners with locations in other communities in our region, and people looking to move or open a new business.

Key Messages

The Communications Department will produce material that seeks to do the following:

- Reflect that Maplewood is a stable, growing and well-run city.
- Residents are engaged in the community and have the expectation that City government is efficient and transparent.
- The City takes complaints and concerns seriously and uses that feedback to guide its decision making.
- The City is fiscally responsible.
- The City has a vibrant retail core that serves as a regional shopping hub.

Reaching Our Audience

The City is in a strong position to reach its intended audiences in a number of different ways, including:

- www.maplewoodmn.gov
- Maplewood Living (print and digital)
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Seasons
- Television/Video
- Nature Center printed materials
- Periscope
- NextDoor
- Public Service Announcement (PSA)
- Email
- Digital displays
- Brochures, flyers and posters
- Direct mail
- Public meetings/open houses

Television/Video Communications

- In 2017, the Communications Department will begin to produce video content that can be used on the website, social media, and the City's television channels.
- The focus will be on short videos that are bright and engaging while also conveying critical information.
- With staffing changes, and a resolution on equipment needs and purchases, the Communications Department will seek to produce video in-house by mid-2017.
- As much as possible, the videos will be included in a story package that has a written component, which means a single story can be utilized on all of our communications channels.
- The Department will work with elected officials and City staff to design programming that shares insights into the work the City Council and the City is doing.
- The Department will work with local entities, such as ISD 622, to share relevant external content on the City's television channels.

Measuring Success

Technology offers many opportunities to track how well the Communications Department is connecting with residents and other targeted audiences through:

- HootSuite analytics
- Website hits
- Social media likes, follows, and shares
- Participation/attendance at events the Communication Department has helped promote
- Media placements
- Social media engagements
- Community feedback

Crisis Communications

When negative or volatile situations occur, the Communications Department will work with the City Manager to come up with an action plan to handle the crisis in the best possible way for the City, including:

- Determining what staff members or elected officials are involved in the story/situation.
- Updating the Council about the story/situation as soon as possible.
- Gathering as much background as possible about the situation.
- Monitoring the situation through social media.
- Determining what staff members are best suited to offer solutions and guidance.
- Determining who will be the public face for the City if the media is requesting comment.

Other Goals and Projects

- Considering staffing options that would make the Department more efficient and responsive while also saving money. Given the desire for increased video production, this is a high priority for the Communications Department, with the goal of having a formal and finalized plan for staffing in place by May 1, 2017.
- Continue making changes and enhancements to the Maplewood Living to make it as appealing and reader-friendly as possible.
- Design a plan that will slowly convert Maplewood Living into a digital only product. Such a plan would likely be implemented over three to five years.
- The Communications Department will work with all other City departments to help create communications that is as clear and concise as possible. Additionally, the Department will also stress the importance of avoiding overly technical language, terminology, and acronyms that are often only understandable to those within a specific field or industry. It's vital the all external City communications avoid language that's "inside baseball."
- Explore advertising opportunities for City events and programs at Maplewood Mall
- Enhance cross-promotion with Parks and Rec, the Nature Center, and other appropriate departments and organizations.
- Train and work with Public Information Officers (PIOs) from each department to help them handle social media and website updating tasks. PIOs will also be trained to identify potential stories for the Communications Department.
- Translate communications projects into Spanish and Hmong so we're better to able connect with all of our residents and community members.
- In 2018, the Communications Department will begin gearing up for the 2019 website re-fresh. The City is entitled to a website re-fresh every four years. In 2018, with the help of CivicPlus, the Communications Department will put together a focus panel, made of residents, which will offer opinions and guidance leading up to the 2019 website launch.
- The Communications Department anticipates changing the communications plan on an annual basis and presenting those changes to the Council. Ultimately, the communications plan will be viewed as a living and adaptable document.

(March, 2017)