



City of Prince Albert

RPT 2024-253

TITLE: 2024 Communications Master Plan

DATE: August 12, 2024

TO: Executive Committee

PUBLIC: X

INCAMERA:

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Communications Master Plan, as attached to RPT 2024-253, be approved.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report presents the 2024 Communications Master Plan, outlining the priorities and actions for the Communications Office for the upcoming years. It will also spotlight some of the major initiatives planned for 2024.

BACKGROUND:

The last Communications Master Plan was approved in 2017. Since the plan was approved in 2017, considerable progress has been made across each of the five objective areas. During engagement sessions, it was noted that implementing a division dedicated to communications has resulted in a more centralized approach. There is more trust in the information given out by the City, and an improvement to the quality of materials and information being distributed. Our modern and user-friendly website was noted as an improvement and provided more timely responses to emerging issues.

Over the years, the Communications Office has referred to the Communications Master Plan annually to guide activities and set workplan priorities. Please see Appendix B for a list of action items that have been completed.

There has been a fundamental shift in how employees approach communications. Managers across all departments consider communication essential for implementing their projects, as it fosters transparency with the public. This plan identifies activities that will build on the success of the last several years.

PROPOSED APPROACH AND RATIONALE:

The Communications Master Plan has been developed to identify the goals of the Communications Office so that Council and Administration are aware of the direction that will be taken over the next several years. This document will be reviewed annually to ensure objectives are achieved and updated to reflect changing needs.

The five objectives of the 2017 plan are, therefore, the same as the 2024 plan:

1. Encourage a Culture of Proactive Communication

This objective is about identifying sensitive issues in advance to ensure that all information is rolled out to the public early. Rather than explaining ourselves after the fact, proactive communication adds credibility to the organization and eases tensions by supplying everyone with the information they need to understand issues fully prior to a decision.

2. Improve Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Public and Stakeholder engagement is an essential part of the decision-making process and forms an important part of effective communication. It is about actively reaching out to the public to invite feedback so that all perspectives are incorporated into final decisions. Forms of engagement depends on the size, scope and nature of the issue at hand and can range from limited or low involvement to comprehensive or higher-level engagement from individuals and stakeholders.

3. Strengthen the City Image and Establish a City Brand

There are two brands at play when discussing a City brand: the City's brand as a corporation and the City's brand as a community. The activities of the 2017 Master Plan focused largely on the City's brand as a corporation. In this regard, the goal was to establish consistency in the City's visual brand (corporate logo) and messaging. The secondary goal is Prince Albert's image as a place to live, work and invest which relates directly to the City's role in fostering economic development.

4. Improve Access to Information

Ensuring the effective delivery of information to the public is the core function of any communications office. In recent years, the focus has been on establishing new digital communication options including a website, digital billboard and social media. These new forms of communication have been highly effective, however, traditional methods remain relevant including print communication through water bills and the newspaper. The key is finding where your key audiences are and how best to reach them.

5. Improve Internal Communication Flow and Coordination

There are two core components of internal communication. The first is an understanding that the impact of decisions often crosses multiple departments and divisions. To avoid decisions made in isolation, issues should managed with fuller engagement of

employees beyond the senior management level so they may contribute their knowledge and experiences and identify solutions. The second is ensuring that employees understand the vision, mission and goals of the organization. Employees cannot contribute to the organization, if they do not understand what the organization is trying to achieve. This includes broad visions as set by City Council, but also the vision of each work unit level.

While the objectives remain unchanged, the 2024 plan introduces new action items based on feedback from consultation sessions.

Here's a brief summary of the key areas that are emphasized in the 2024 Plan:

1. Enhancing Communication and Access to Information

- *Sensationalized News and Misinformation:* Feedback highlighted concerns about the rise of sensationalized news and misinformation locally, though these terms weren't explicitly used in the previous plan.
- *Proactive Communication Culture:* The plan emphasizes proactive communication by identifying misunderstood issues and ensuring Council and the public engage with the substantive facts.
- *Improving Access to Information:* The plan includes a dual approach to addressing misinformation: understanding core issues and actively disseminating accurate information through various channels.
- *Exploring New Communication Strategies:* While traditional methods (e.g., websites, social media, billboards) are effective, they have limitations in reaching all resident segments. An ongoing objective is to explore new marketing and communication options to engage individuals better not reached by traditional methods.

2. Enhancing In-Person Interaction and Engagement

- *Feedback on Communication Methods:* Significant feedback highlighted the need for more in-person interaction rather than relying heavily on email, emphasizing the value of meaningful exchanges.
- *Relevance to Engagement and Communication Goals:* In-person interaction is crucial for improving public and stakeholder engagement, as well as internal communication flow and coordination.
- *Nuance in Communication:* The feedback underscores that in-person communication allows for a level of nuance and understanding that written communication cannot achieve, stressing the importance of engaging with both the public and employees directly.
- *Public Involvement in Decision-Making:* The public survey highlighted a desire for more community workshops and better promotion of Executive and City Council meetings to keep the public informed about agenda topics.

3. Promoting Prince Albert

- *Promoting Prince Albert* as a desirable place to live, work, and invest is a key priority for the coming years, strongly supported by the City Council.
- *Role of the Communications Office:* The Communications Office supports this objective by collaborating with the Economic Development Office to create marketing strategies that promote the city and counter negative stereotypes.
- *Progress and Ongoing Efforts:* Despite progress in recent years, ongoing feedback indicates that further efforts are needed to improve the city's image.
- *2024 Communication Plan:* These priorities have been integrated into the new Communication Action Items for the 2024 Plan, reflecting the city's commitment to enhancing its reputation.

The 2024 Communications Master Plan has 36 Priorities between the five goals and 56 Action Items. Some of the action items for this year are:

- Market Prince Albert as a Destination
- Develop training videos for report writing and communications training to expand the capacity to train more employees.
- Training in basic graphic design principles for employees, including easily accessible online design tools such as Canva.
- Promote the community calendar of events to showcase entertainment options available in Prince Albert.
- Create promotional packages highlighting what makes Prince Albert a great place to live. Offer packages to employers looking to recruit employees to Prince Albert.
- Expand the new “Move to PA” and include updated content.
- Develop interactive marketing tools such as videos to promote Prince Albert.
- Audit the search function tool on the website to determine gaps in how it is being used.
- Work with the Solutions Hub Call Centre to expand the City Works online database that addresses common inquiries and, where applicable, build out this information onto the city website, making it easy to access for the public.

CONSULTATIONS

The goals, priorities and action items for the 2024 Communications Master Plan were developed using the following:

1. A review of the 2017 plan.

Items that remained relevant were included in this plan.

2. Feedback from Council and Administration

Feedback noted from the Management Committee Communications Subcommittee meetings with Department Directors and the 2023 Strategic Planning Session with senior management and City Council was reviewed and incorporated.

3. Review of Other City Master Plans

City Master Plans were reviewed and marketing and communication priorities from these plans were incorporated. Plans reviewed included the 2023 City of Prince Albert Strategic Plan, Community Services Master Plan, Little Red River Park Master Plan, Airport Master Plan and the Culture Plan.

4. Feedback from the public

A short public survey was released on social media in April 2024. A total of 56 responses were received and relevant responses incorporated into the plan.

COMMUNICATION AND/OR ANNOUNCEMENT PLAN:

If approved, the Communication Master Plan will be updated with graphics and images and posted on the City's website to replace the 2017 plan.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Communications Master Plan was created in-house by Administrative staff in the Communications Office. There are no financial implications associated with the preparation or design of the Plan.

If approved, the small-scale initiatives identified with a cost will be paid for out of existing advertising or print shop budgets. The new projects that have larger one-time costs or projects with annual costs will come forward for consideration during budget deliberations before they are pursued.

Most of the initiatives identified in the plan are initiatives that must be internally resourced with existing employees.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

The new Communications Master Plan identifies ambitious goals and activities that are beyond the current resource levels but have been identified to ensure a comprehensive approach. The intention is not to attempt to achieve everything all at once, but instead to identify the long range outcomes and the activities that will help to achieve those outcomes. To improve it is important to have a plan forward to ensure there is measurable progress in how we communicate and not just continual maintenance of the status quo arrangements. In the long term, the vision for the communications office to be more of a centralized hub for marketing and communications expertise, advise and support for the City.

The Communications Master Plan identifies objectives for communications at the City of Prince Albert and initiatives that are achievable in the short and long term. Initiatives will be considered annually when building workplans each year. The Communications Office is the owner of the Communications Master Plan and will take the lead on many of the actions identified, but all employees have a role in ensuring good communications and will be expected to support and champion the initiatives identified relevant to their areas of operation.

While there are many initiatives identified in this plan that have no cost implications, they do require dedicated internal resources. The Communications Office includes two employees, the Communications Manager and the Digital Content Creator, who work on behalf of the entire organization. Advancing the plan will require careful consideration of tasks each year to ensure day-to-day communication and advertising needs are being met, while new initiatives are being undertaken to advance the plan.

There are no policy, privacy, legal, safety or environmental implications.

OPTIONS TO RECOMMENDATION:

There are no options to the Recommendation.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

The Strategic Plan identifies six Council Directions that relate to Communications. These have been incorporated into the plan:

- Create an environment where residents and other stakeholders can engage with the City and know that their voices are heard
- Identify Sensitive areas in advance and implement thorough quality communication
- Partner with Prince Albert Tourism to develop ways to promote Prince Albert
- Develop ways to effectively promote Prince Albert's amenities, assets and other improvements
- Promote the positive economic development outcomes generated through this plan so new residents will be attracted to Prince Albert.
- Identify opportunities to remember, honour and celebrate Prince Albert's heritage and history.

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN:

There are no OCP strategies or plans in this report.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Public Notice pursuant to the Public Notice Bylaw No. 24 of 2015 is not required.

PRESENTATION:

Verbal Presentation by Kiley Bear, Director of Corporate Services

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2024 Communications Master Plan

Written by: Wilna Furstenberg, Communications Manager

Approved by: Kiley Bear, Director of Corporate Services and City Manager