



Communications Strategy 2026



Drafted by:
Gina Pearson



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Purpose of the Strategy	6
Guiding Principles	9
Communication Goals	12
Target Audiences and How They Access Information	18
Key Messages	21
Communication Channels	23
Roles and Responsibilities	26
Content Types and Tone	28
Community Engagement Approach	30
Crisis and Emergency Communications	33
Accessibility and Inclusivity	35
Measurement and Evaluation	38
Review and Updates	40
Strengthening Council Communication and Visibility	42
Closing Summary	45

Executive Summary

The Town of Middleton communicates regularly with residents, businesses, community groups, and visitors through a variety of channels including its website, social media, email newsletters, and print materials. While the Town of Middleton has historically provided important updates and information to the community, these communications have largely developed in a reactive or informal manner rather than through a structured approach.

As expectations for transparency, accessibility, and timely updates continue to grow, municipalities are increasingly expected to communicate proactively and consistently across multiple platforms. Establishing a formal Communications Strategy helps ensure the Town of Middleton can meet these expectations while maintaining a professional, neutral, and community-focused approach.

This strategy provides a clear framework for how the Town communicates externally. It outlines communication principles, target audiences, messaging priorities, communication channels, staff responsibilities, and approaches to community engagement and crisis communication.

Key objectives of this strategy include:

- Improving public understanding of municipal services and decisions
- Increasing community awareness and engagement
- Strengthening trust between the Town and residents
- Promoting Middleton as a welcoming place to live, work, and visit
- Ensuring accurate information is shared during emergencies or service disruptions

The strategy also identifies areas where current communication practices can be improved and provides recommendations to support more consistent, coordinated, and effective communication.

By adopting this strategy, the Town of Middleton will strengthen its ability to share information clearly, respond to community needs, and maintain strong relationships with residents and stakeholders.

Purpose of the Strategy

The Town of Middleton recognizes that clear, consistent, and timely communication is essential to maintaining a strong relationship with residents, businesses, partners, and visitors. As the Town continues to grow, host community events, deliver services, invest in infrastructure, and respond to emerging issues, the need for a coordinated and proactive approach to communication has become increasingly important.

Historically, the Town has shared information with the public through a variety of channels. However, these communications have often been informal and reactive rather than guided by a structured approach. Establishing a formal External Communication Strategy ensures that information is communicated clearly, consistently, and professionally regardless of the platform, topic or timing.

This strategy provides guidance for how the Town communicates with the public, how information is shared across different platforms, and how communication responsibilities are managed internally.

The strategy is intended to:

- Ensure municipal information is communicated in a clear, consistent, and reliable manner.
- Strengthen transparency and public trust
- Support community awareness and engagement
- Provide guidance for communication during day-to-day operations, emergencies and service disruptions
- Improve efficiency and coordination in how information is shared

By establishing this framework, the Town of Middleton aims to create a communications environment where residents and stakeholders can easily access accurate information and feel confident in how the Town communicates.

Current Challenges

Several challenges exist within the Town's current communication approach:

- Communication responsibilities are not always clearly defined
- Messaging may vary depending on who is sharing information
- Information is sometimes shared reactively rather than proactively
- Residents may not always know where to find official information
- Communication processes during emergencies are not clearly documented
- Communication tools are used inconsistently across departments

Recommendations

To address these challenges, the Town should:

- Adopt a formal External Communications Strategy to guide communication practices
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for communications
- Develop consistent messaging standards and tone
- Identify official communication channels and ensure they are used consistently
- Implement structured communication processes for emergencies and service disruptions
- Ensure communication planning is incorporated into municipal initiatives and projects

By implementing these recommendations, the Town can ensure information is shared in clear, coordinated, and professional manner.

Guiding Principles

The Town of Middleton’s communications should be guided by a set of core principles that ensure information shared with the public is clear, accessible, and community focused. These principles provide direction for how information should be developed and delivered regardless of the communication channel being used.

Establishing clear communication principles also helps ensure staff maintain a consistent tone and approach when interacting with the public.

Current Challenges

Without established guiding principles:

- Messaging tones may vary between communications
- Some communications may contain unnecessary technical language
- Information may not always be presented in the most accessible format
- Communication decisions may be made differently depending on the situation

Recommendations

The Town should adopt the following guided principles:

Clear and Plain Language

Municipal information should be communicated using plain language whenever possible. Clear, jargon-free communication about decisions, projects, services, and updates helps build public trust and confidence in municipal operations.

Accessible and Inclusive

Communications should be designed to reach as many residents and stakeholders as possible. The Town aims to use clear formatting, readable design, and multiple communication channels to ensure information is accessible to diverse audiences.

Trust and Transparency

The Town is committed to sharing information openly and honestly. Clear communication about municipal decisions, projects, services, and updates helps strengthen public trust and confidence in municipal operations.

Reliability

Residents should be able to rely on Town communications as a trusted source of information. Communications must be accurate, timely, and shared through appropriate and recognized municipal channels.

Community-Focused

All communications should reflect the needs and interests of the Middleton community. Information should support awareness, engagement, and a sense of connection between the Town and its residents/stakeholders.

Respectful and Professional

All external communications must maintain a respectful and professional tone. Municipal communications must remain neutral, factual, and free from personal opinion or bias.

Consistency and Recognition

The Town will maintain consistent messaging, tone, and visual identity across all communication channels so information is easily recognizable as coming from the Town of Middleton.

Communication Goals

Clear goals help guide communication priorities and ensure communication efforts support broader municipal objectives.

Current Challenges

Without defined goals:

- Communications may focus primarily on announcements rather than engagement
- Opportunities to promote the Town may be missed
- Residents may not always understand the context behind municipal decisions

Recommendations

The Town of Middleton should focus communications on the following goals:

Improve Public Understanding

Ensure residents and stakeholders have access to clear information about municipal services and projects, policies, and decisions.

- Recommendation: Create educational content explaining how municipal services work

Increase Community Awareness and Engagement

Promote awareness of community programs, events, initiatives, and opportunities for public participation.

- Recommendation: Continue creating the monthly communication calendar
- Recommendation: Have quarterly public engagement sessions with Council

Strengthen Public Trust

Provide transparent, timely, and reliable information that helps build confidence in municipal leadership and operations.

- Recommendation: Standardize Project Updates
 - Create a branded template with:
 - Project overview (what + why)
 - Current Stage (planning, procurement, construction)
 - Timeline (with delays clearly noted)
 - Budget snapshot (if appropriate)
 - What residents can expect next
 - Post updates monthly for major projects and at key milestones

- Recommendation: Launch a “What We’re Working On” series – Introduce a recurring weekly or biweekly content series
 - Short, digestible updates on 1-2 active initiatives
 - Use plain language (avoid municipal jargon)
 - Include photos, quick videos, or behind-the-scenes clips
 - Cross-post to Facebook and website for consistency
- Recommendation: Improve Transparency Around Delays and Disruptions – Communicate proactively when things don’t go as planned
 - Use a simple framework:
 - What happened
 - Why it happened
 - What’s being done to fix it
 - Updated timeline
 - Position transparency as accountability
- Recommendation: Add a “Current Projects” section to the Town website.
 - Visual status indicators (i.e: Not Started | In Progress | Completed)
 - Filter by category (infrastructure, recreation, events, etc.)
 - Link each project to its latest update
 - Keep it lightweight and easy to maintain (even a simple table works)
- Recommendation: Continue with Council Highlights
 - Ideally, Council Highlights would be posted 24-48 hours after the last meeting of the month
 - Council highlights should focus on:
 - What decisions were made
 - Why they matter to residents
 - What happens next
- Recommendation: Use data to reinforce credibility – Incorporate simple metrics into communications
 - Examples:
 - “3km of road repaired this month”
 - “120 residents attended Family Day Event”
 - “95% of service requests resolved within 48 hours”
 - Visualize simple graphics (bars, icons, percentages)

- Recommendation : Establish a clear communication timeline – Set internal standards for when information is shared
 - Service disruptions → within hours
 - Project updates → monthly or milestone based
 - Council summaries → within 48 hours
 - Emergencies → real-time updates as available
 - This will all build predictability over time
- Recommendation: Humanize municipal operations – Highlight staff and processes behind the scenes
 - “Meet the Team” or “Day in the life” features
 - Show Public Works, admin, event setup, etc.
 - This helps residents understand where their tax dollars go and builds connection
- Recommendation: Create Feedback Loops – Make it easy for residents to respond and feel heard
 - Include prompts in posts: “Questions? Let us know below or message us”
 - Use occasional polls or quick surveys (especially for visible projects)
 - Close the loop by sharing “What we heard” summaries
- Recommendation: Maintain message consistency across channels – Ensure website, Facebook, and print materials align.
 - Same language, same timelines, same facts
 - Avoid situations where residents get conflicting information depending on the platform

Promote Middleton as a Welcoming Community

Highlight the Town as an attractive place to live, work, visit, and invest while showcasing community initiatives and events.

- Recommendation: Regularly feature Town-owned or publicly accessible assets such as:
 - Parks and recreational spaces
 - Trails and waterfront areas
 - Community Facilities
 - Heritage Sites
 - Municipal infrastructure improvements

- Recommendation: Promote Municipal Programming and Events
 - Communications should continue to promote Town-led events and programs such as:
 - Festivals and seasonal events
 - Recreation programming
 - Community celebrations
 - Public engagement opportunities
- Recommendation: Share community milestones and Initiatives
 - Infrastructure improvements
 - Beautification projects
 - Community partnerships
 - Volunteer contributions to Town initiatives
- Recommendation: Showcase the community experience
 - Seasonal scenery
 - Community traditions
 - Local history and heritage
 - Public art and landmarks
- Recommendation: Maintain neutrality
 - To ensure fairness and maintain public trust, municipal communications should:
 - Avoid promoting individual businesses or organizations
 - Avoid endorsements of commercial promotion
 - Focus on Town-led initiatives, public spaces, and community-wide activities.
 - When referencing external organizations or businesses, this should only occur when they are directly involved in a Town initiative, event, or partnership.
- Recommendation: Welcome Package for new businesses
 - Create a welcome package in a Middleton branded folder. Welcome package could include:
 - Important contact information at Town Hall
 - A checklist with regards to permits the business should have
 - Middleton brochure
 - Welcome message for Council/Mayor
 - Website and social media information

Implementation of these recommendations may include:

- “Did You Know?” posts about Middleton history
- Seasonal photography of parks and public spaces
- Updates on improvements to community facilities
- Features about upcoming Town-led events
- Highlights of volunteer contributions to municipal initiatives

These communications help tell the story of Middleton while remaining consistent with municipal communication standards.

Ensure Accurate Information is Shared Quickly During Emergencies

Provide clear, timely, and reliable updates during emergencies, service disruptions, or critical situations.

- Recommendation: Establish a formal emergency communication protocol/plan.

Support Informed Decision-Making

Ensure residents and stakeholders have access to the information they need to understand municipal decisions and initiatives.

- Recommendation: Consider sharing or continue sharing:
 - Council meeting summaries
 - Project updates and explanations of municipal processes in plain language

How did we arrive at these goals? From March 2025-March 2026:

- Communications Survey Conducted
- Public feedback through Event and Recreation surveys
- Facebook Messages
- Public feedback at Town Hall

Target Audiences and How They Access Information

The Town communicates with a range of audiences who access municipal information in different ways. Understanding how these audiences consume information helps guide communication planning and delivery.

Current Challenges

- Communication efforts can be broad rather than targeted
- Some audiences may not receive information through channels they use most

Recommendations

The Town should consider the following audience groups when planning communications:

- **Primary Audiences**
 - **Residents/Taxpayer's of Middleton**
 - Residents are the Town's primary audience and typically access information through:
 - The Town website
 - Social Media platforms
 - Local signage and print materials
 - Email newsletters
 - Word-of-mouth within the community
 - **Local Businesses**
 - Businesses primarily access information through:
 - The Town website
 - Direct communication from the Town
 - Email updates
 - Official notices and regulatory information
 - **Community Groups and Volunteers**
 - Social media updates
 - Direct outreach from Town staff
 - Community partnerships and shared networks
- **Secondary Audiences**
 - **Visitors and Tourists**
 - Visitors typically seek information through:
 - The Town website
 - Tourism-related social media content
 - Online searches when planning visits

- **Potential Residents and Investors**
 - Those exploring opportunities in Middleton typically access information through:
 - The Town website
 - Online searches
 - Regional economic development networks
 - Real estate agents and brokerages

- **Regional Partners and Other Municipalities**
 - These audiences typically access information through:
 - Direct communication and correspondence
 - Municipal networks and partnerships
 - The Town website and social media

- **Media Outlets**
 - Media organizations receive information through:
 - Official news releases
 - Media advisories
 - Direct contact with Town representatives
 - The Town website and social media

Key Messages

Key messages help ensure communications consistently reflect the Town of Middleton's values and priorities.

Current Challenges:

Without defined messaging themes:

- Communications may appear disconnected
- Opportunities to reinforce the Town's identity may be missed

Recommendations:

While messaging may vary depending on the topic or situation, the Town of Middleton's communications should generally reinforce the following messages/themes:

- The Town of Middleton is transparent, responsive, and community focused
- Municipal decisions are made in the best interest of residents
- Community involvement and engagement are valued and encouraged
- Middleton is growing and evolving while maintaining its character and history

Communication Channels

The Town of Middleton uses a variety of communication channels to share information with the public. These channels include both platforms owned and managed by the Town and external channels that help amplify information.

Owned Channels

Owned channels are communication platforms directly managed by the Town. These include:

- Town website – the primary source for official municipal information and public documents
- Facebook – used to share updates, notices, events, and community information
- YouTube – used to Live stream Council meetings
- Email newsletters (MailChimp) – used to provide updates and community information directly to subscribers.
- Print Materials – including posters, signage, brochures, and mail-outs and The Beat.

Earned Channels

Earned channels help extend the reach of Town communications through external organizations or networks. These include:

- Local and regional media outlets
- Community partners sharing Town content
- Regional organizations and municipal networks

While social media is an important communication tool, it does not replace official municipal or formal communication channels.

Current Challenges

Some communication challenges the Town currently has, or may have include:

- Over-reliance on one platform (Typically Facebook)
- Website information not updated quickly and website is outdated
 - Note: a new website will be launching in Spring 2026
- Important information not consistently shared across all platforms

Recommendations

The Town should use a multi-channel approach, including (These are listed in order of importance):

- Website: The primary source of official municipal information
 - Ensure key updates are posted on the website first
- Social Media: Used to share updates and direct residents to official information (on the website)
 - Ensure there are regular posting schedules if possible
- MailChimp: Use for major updates and community information
- Print Materials: Use posters and signage for community events and notices

Roles and Responsibilities

Clear roles and responsibilities help ensure municipal communications are accurate, coordinated, and consistent.

Council

- Provides policy direction and decision-making
- Acts as community representatives

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

- Provides oversight and strategic direction
- Approves communications as required

Communications Coordinator

Responsible for implementing the communication strategy, including:

- Content creation
- Managing communication channels
- Coordinating with media outlets
- Supporting municipal initiatives and events
- Monitoring public engagement and feedback
- Creating opportunities for engagement
- Creation of Communication Guidelines, Manuals, etc.

The communications coordinator should be made aware of all current projects, council initiatives, budget information, etc., so that important information can be shared in a timely manner with the public where appropriate. It's important to know when Public Works is working on a project, or fixing infrastructure as that is an opportunity to take photos and share with the public.

Communications related to sensitive or high-impact matters, including emergencies, legal issues, or matters of significant public interest, will follow an established approval process involving senior staff, and where appropriate, Council.

Recommendations

Establish the following structure:

- Council → policy direction
- CAO → oversight and approvals
- Communications Coordinator → strategy implementation and content creation. Sensitive communication should ALWAYS follow this approval process.

Content Types and Tone

Town communications generally fall into several content categories. Residents expect opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback.

Content Categories

- Municipal updates and notices
- Infrastructure and project updates
- Council meetings and decisions
- Community events, programs, and initiatives
- Emergency and service disruption notices

Tone

All communications should maintain a tone that is:

- Clear
- Professional but approachable
- Neutral and factual
- Community-minded

Community Engagement Approach

The Town of Middleton values respectful and constructive communication with residents and stakeholders. While the Town encourages public engagement, communication must also be managed in a way that ensures fairness, accuracy, and appropriate use of public platforms. Residents expect opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback.

Residents may ask questions or seek information through official Town communication channels including:

- The Town website
- Official social media platforms
- Email communication
- Direct contact with Town Hall

Where appropriate, staff may respond publicly to general questions to ensure consistent information is shared with the broader community. In other cases, responses may occur privately if the matter requires individual follow-up.

Certain matters are not appropriate for discussion on public platforms, including personal complaints, service requests, legal matters, or issues requiring detailed investigation.

Town staff will not engage in discussions or respond to complaints raised in unofficial community-run social media groups. Individuals raising concerns in these forums are encouraged to contact the Town directly through official channels so matters can be addressed appropriately.

Current Challenges

- Questions/comments being raised in online forums/Facebook groups
- Misunderstandings spread through social media
- Staff responding to comments/questions through personal Facebook accounts
- In general, there is a lack of engagement opportunities for the public in-person (outside of meetings) and on social media

Recommendations

- Encourage residents to contact the Town through official channels
- Town staff should not engage in debates, or correct individuals in community Facebook groups.
 - Tighten the current social media policy to reflect this

- There have been several comments made in both the communications survey, in person, and through Facebook groups that the Town of Middleton should turn their Facebook comments on.
 - Comments should be turned on for specific posts. These should only include:
 - Event information, surveys being shared, or when specifically looking for quick and easy engagement
 - Comments should not be turned on for specific posts:
 - Official notices, emergency information, council-related news and information, RCMP information.

Crisis and Emergency Communications

During emergencies or service disruptions, the Town is committed to sharing accurate and timely information to support public safety. Timely communication during emergencies is critical.

Priority communication channels during emergencies may include:

- The Town website
- Official social media platforms
- MailChimp email updates
- Alertable or other emergency notification systems

Current Challenges

- Information may spread quickly through unofficial sources
- Staff do not have a defined communication process in emergencies
 - There is no emergency communication plan

Information will be shared based on verified details from official sources and may evolve as situations develop.

The Town will coordinate communications with the Regional Emergency Management Organization (REMO) and relevant emergency partners to ensure consistent, reliable information is provided to the public during specific emergencies.

Recommendations

The Town of Middleton needs to develop an emergency communication protocol that includes:

- Priority communication channels
- Approval processes
- Coordination with the Regional Emergency Management Organization (REMO) (if appropriate)
- According to survey results, most residents would use Alertable, but only for emergency notifications.
 - Note – those that answered they would use Alertable (a digital service), responded to a digital survey.
 - Create a rollout plan to get residents signed up for, and using, Alertable for emergency situations, and notifications on Public Works emergencies.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

The Town of Middleton is committed to ensuring communications are accessible, understandable, and inclusive to all residents and stakeholders. Access to information is an essential component of transparent and effective local government. Residents should be able to easily find, understand, and engage with municipal information regardless of age, ability, or preferred method of receiving information.

Accessibility and inclusiveness in communications help ensure that important updates about municipal services, programs, projects, and emergency situations reach the broadest possible audience. The Town recognizes that residents consume information in different ways and that communication approaches should reflect these differences.

To support inclusive access to municipal information, the Town will incorporate accessibility considerations into communication planning and delivery.

Plain Language

Municipal information should be written in clear and straightforward language whenever possible. Technical terms, policy language, or administrative terminology may be necessary in some situations, but efforts should be made to explain these concepts in a way that is easily understood by the public.

Using plain language helps ensure residents can quickly understand important information without requiring specialized knowledge of municipal processes.

Clear Formatting and Readable Design

Visual presentation plays an important role in accessibility. Municipal communications should use formatting and design practices that improve readability and comprehension. This may include:

- Using clear headings and structured layouts
- Avoiding overly dense text blocks
- Using readable font sizes and styles
- Ensuring strong colour contrast in graphics and documents
- Incorporating visuals or graphics where appropriate to support understanding

These practices help ensure information can be easily read and understood across a range of formats and platforms.

- Recommendation: Create an Accessibility Guide for print and digital communications

Multiple Communication Channels

Not all residents/stakeholders access information in the same way. Some rely primarily on digital platforms, while others may prefer printed materials or direct communication.

To ensure broad community awareness, the Town will share information through multiple communication channels when appropriate. These may include:

- The Town website
- Official social media platforms
- Email newsletters
- Print materials such as posters, signage, or notices
- Direct communication with community partners

Using multiple channels helps ensure important information reaches residents who may not regularly access digital platforms.

Accessible Formats

Where possible and appropriate, the Town will make reasonable efforts to provide information in accessible formats when requested. This may include providing documents in alternative formats or ensuring digital materials are compatible with accessibility tools.

Staff will make reasonable efforts to accommodate accessibility needs where feasible and appropriate within available municipal resources.

Incorporating Accessibility into Communication Planning

Accessibility considerations should be incorporated early in the communications planning process rather than added after information has already been developed. When preparing communications, staff should consider:

- Who the intended audience is
- What communication channels are most appropriate
- Whether additional formats or visual supports may improve accessibility
- Whether the information is presented clearly and concisely

By incorporating these considerations into communication planning, the Town can help ensure municipal information remains accessible, inclusive, and easy to understand for the community.

Measurement and Evaluation

Evaluating communication effectiveness helps improve future efforts. The Town should use practical measures to evaluate the effectiveness of its communications. These may include:

- Website traffic to key pages
- Social media reach and engagement
- Attendance at Town events
- The volume and nature of resident inquiries and feedback
- Surveys

These indicators provide insight into whether municipal information is reaching and informing the community effectively. Results may be reviewed periodically to inform adjustments to communication approaches.

Review and Updates

This External Communications Strategy will be reviewed annually, or as needed, to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to evolving community needs, new communication tools, and municipal priorities.

Regular review allows the Town to adapt communication practices and ensure the strategy continues to support effective public communication.

Strengthening Council Communication and Visibility

Enhance the consistency, clarity, and professionalism of Council communications to build public confidence and ensure unified messaging. This section will help equip Council with the tools and support needed to communicate effectively and confidently with residents.

Recommendation 1: Establish Council Communication Guidelines

Develop a simple, practical set of guidelines for how Council communicates with the public.

- Define best practices for:
 - Social media use (tone, accuracy, professionalism)
 - Responding to public inquiries or concerns
 - Sharing municipal information vs. opinion
- Include “do’s and don’ts” to reduce risk of misinformation or inconsistent messaging
- This is a support tool, not a restriction

Recommendation 2: Provide pre-approved messaging and key messages

Ensure Council has easy access to accurate, ready-to-use information.

- Distribute short “Key Message” briefs after:
 - Council meetings
 - Major announcements
 - Ongoing projects or sensitive issues
- Include:
 - Key facts
 - Approved language
 - FAQs (if needed)
- This helps ensure consistency across all public facing communications

Recommendation 3: Introduce optional training and support

Offer light, practical communication training tailored to Council needs.

- Topics could include:
 - Social media best practices
 - Handling difficult conversations with residents
 - Communicating complex decisions in plain language

This will ensure capacity-building.

Recommendation 4: Create a “Council Highlights” Sharing Toolkit

Make it easy for Council to amplify official messaging

- Provide:
 - Pre-written captions
 - Graphics or shareable posts
 - Suggested wording for resharing Town updates
- Encourages Councillors to stay active while maintaining accuracy

Recommendation 5: Clarify Roles in Communication

Define who communicates what – and when.

- Encourage
 - Regular sharing of Town updates
 - Professional and respectful engagement online
 - Avoidance of speculation or unverified information
- Major updates should come from official channels first

Recommendation 6: Encourage Consistent Engagement Standards

Set a baseline expectation for public communication.

- Encourage:
 - Regular sharing of Town updates
 - Professional and respectful engagement online
 - Avoidance of speculation or unverified information
- This is not about controlling voice – it is about maintaining credibility

Recommendation 7: Monitor and Support (Not Police)

Provide ongoing support to ensure alignment.

- Offer quick check-ins or guidance when needed
- Be available to review posts or messaging requests
- Address issues proactively and constructively if they arise

Closing Summary

This Communications Strategy provides clear and practical direction for how the Town of Middleton will strengthen its communication efforts, build public trust, and better connect with residents, businesses, and visitors.

By focusing on consistency, transparency, and accessibility, the Town can move from reactive communication to a more proactive, strategic approach. The recommendations outlined in this plan are designed to be achievable, scalable, and aligned with the Town’s priorities and capacity.

Successful implementation will require ongoing collaboration between staff and Council, a shared commitment to clear and respectful communication, and a willingness to adapt as community needs evolve.

Ultimately, strong communication is not just about sharing information - it is about building relationships, fostering trust, and supporting a vibrant, informed, and engaged community.