City of Decatur Communications Audit Report

OVERVIEW

Decatur currently communicates with residents through the city website, NextDoor, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, The Decatur Minute blog, the monthly city newsletter (Decatur Focus), commission meetings streamed on the city's website, and other specialty brochures, newsletter inserts and websites.

Decatur is seeking an opportunity to enhance internal and external communications to keep its community stakeholders informed and engaged.

Decatur hired Chandlerthinks to review and assess the city's communication programs and practices and to provide recommendations on desirable practices for implementation, cost-effective actions to promote improved overall communications, as well as the creation of an overall communications plan based on the results of the audit.

The Chandlerthinks team conducted a communications audit for the City of Decatur which included a site visit, one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders, a community-wide survey as well as an employee survey and an evaluation of the current communications including digital channels.

From our research, we noticed that the City of Decatur has a high volume of work in terms of communications efforts. Thus creating a reactive approach versus being more proactive and having the opportunity to plan ahead. The good thing though is that the Citizens of Decatur, for the most part, think you are doing a good job with communications. However internal communications needs improvement.

In local government just like businesses, there tends to be a lack of communication from the top down. Therefore everyone is not aware of what's going on and people feel not informed.

Consumers in general are looking for what's convenient to them - they want to be able to easily get the information they want/need when they want/need it.

In general, people need to see a message seven times or more before they will respond. This helps so they can remember what you are "saying" amid an overwhelming amount of other messages. Therefore, a multi-channel communications approach is necessary along with a certain level of frequency.

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Communicating with the public and a City's residents has never been more heightened than today. Public trust of their local government is more on display than ever, thanks to social media. It's also never been more challenging to manage public perception and feedback. For this reason the City of Decatur needs to make overall communications an ongoing top priority and should support this with appropriate staffing and resources to do it effectively.

There is the opportunity to improve communications with the residents and businesses in the City of Decatur by proactively identifying emerging issues; improving long-range communications strategies; and communicating more effectively the identified key issues, policy decisions made, and actions taken by the City Council.

Based on what we learned through the communications audit, below are the top three areas of focus to help achieve these goals and enhance internal and external communications to your community stakeholders and keep them informed and engaged.

1. Create a culture where communications is a priority.
2. Establish a process for communications to improve efficiency.
3. Improve effectiveness by getting back to the basics of communications.

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AUDIT FINDINGS AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

THE CITY OF DECATUR IS DOING A LOT.

- There are over 1,000 pieces of communication in a year
- There are 10 websites
- Limited staff and resources to get it done
- Much dependence on Lampe-Farley

DECATUR RESIDENTS THINK YOU ARE DOING A GOOD JOB WITH COMMUNICATIONS.

- Residents prefer email but it isn't used as much
- Social Media is where most get their information
- Residents don't go to the website for information
- Age and length of residency are driving factors
- There is room for improvement

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

- Internally, the city has limited resources for communications
- Lack of structure/process
- There is a sense of timeliness and/or reactiveness
- Platform confusion
- Not enough frequency of the message
- Social media is/can be overwhelming to "manage"
- No central "portal" for communications
- Misinformation; Some feel they aren't aware of things before it is communicated to residents
- Communication is an "afterthought"
- Lampe-Farley - too much dependence on them
- Don't have a crisis communications plan for social media

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I. CREATE A CULTURE WHERE COMMUNICATION IS A PRIORITY
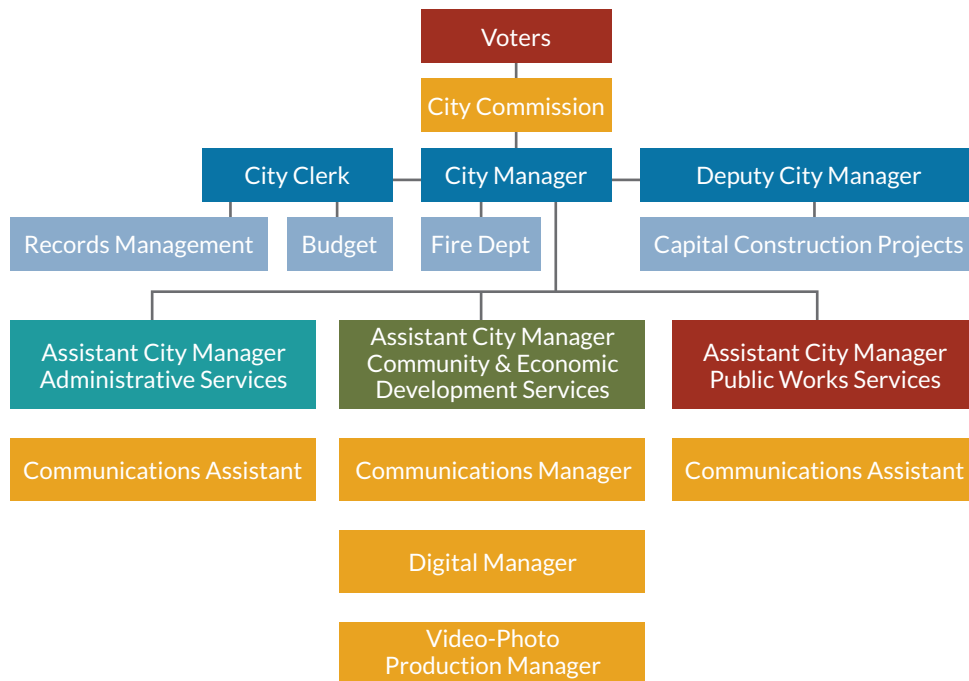
A. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Recognizing that employees are one of the most immediate and direct ways that our audiences receive information about the City of Decatur, it is important to make improvements to internal communications vehicles as resources for informing staff about the City's strategic messages and issues that may arise throughout the year.
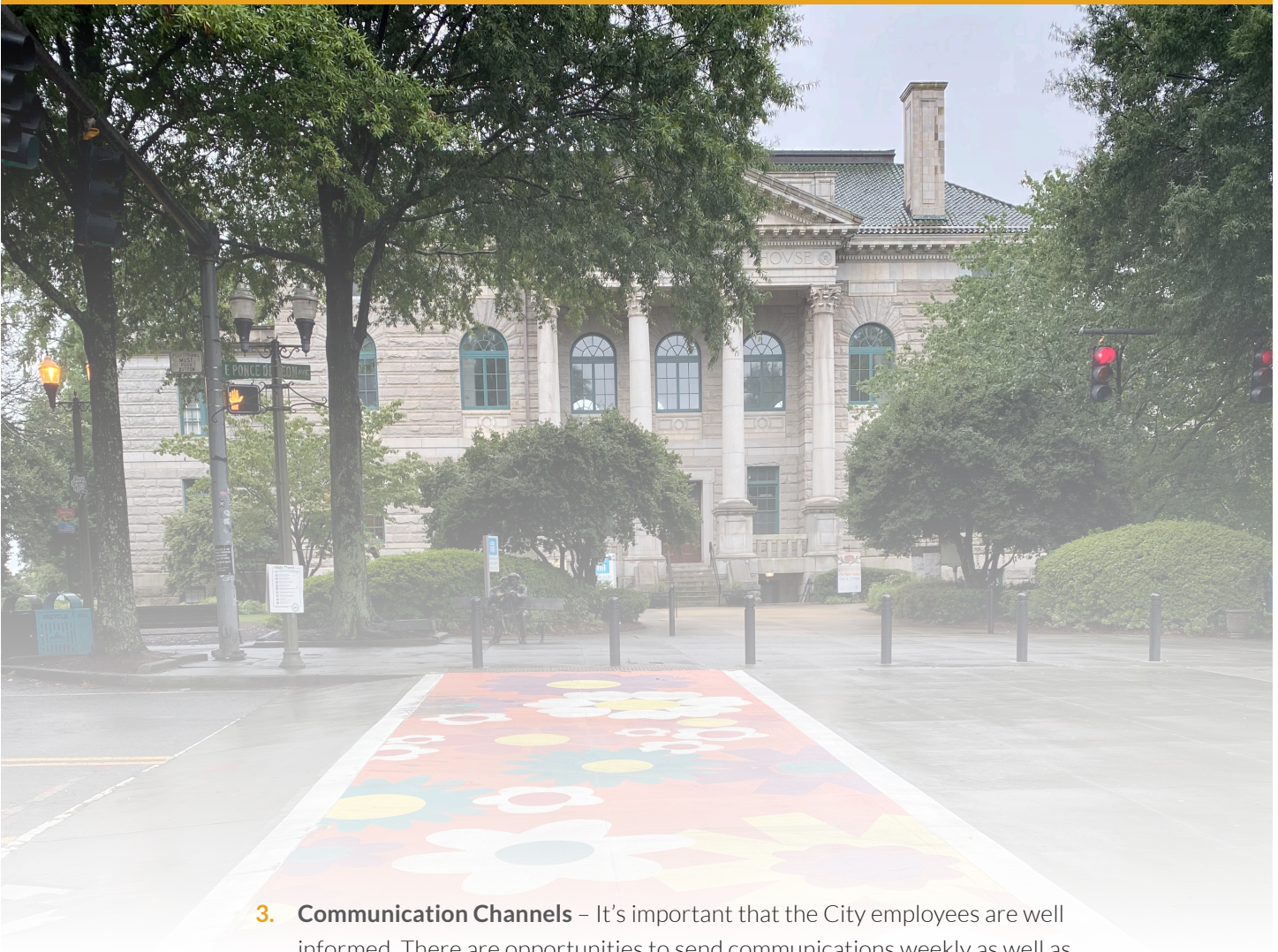
In the end, the desired outcome is a workforce that understands the City's vision, exemplifies the values, and actively communicates the key strategic messages.

1. **Set Expectations Often and Repeat** – As with any organization, it's important that all internal employees and leadership understand the expectations and priorities for communications. These expectations should be outlined for internal communication as well as external communication.

   a. Send a top-down message that communications will be a priority for the City of Decatur. This could be from the Mayor or City Administrator at annual staff-planning meeting. This message should be communicated down to a Council meeting to residents. Make a statement that measures will be put in place to ensure communications will be stronger internally and externally. This message should be developed by the Communications Department with input and collaboration from leadership.

   b. Based on the above, consider potentially a campaign internally that is memorable and can create some excitement and energy behind the new communications initiative. Chandlerthinks can assist with developing the campaign.

   c. This message should be delivered at a meeting where ALL city employees are included. If there is not a city-wide employee meeting, potentially consider hosting an event to share the message.

   d. Host on-going training sessions about the importance of communications and the process to follow. (Use the Communications Toolbox as the guide for the training) This could be an ongoing quarterly session for all new employees since the last training session and an annual refresh for everyone. This could also be done as a video series.

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2. **Resources** – Establish appropriate resources and structure for managing communications (# of people, roles, responsibilities, reporting structure/ departments). Below are a few possibilities to consider, they are listed in order of priority:

   a. Consider hiring a full-time Digital Manager to handle social media, website and email. A dedicated person in this area has become the norm not just across corporate communications but in municipal government.

   b. Each department should have someone who is a "champion" for their department and understands their needs. Add two communications assistants, one for each of the other two Assistant City Managers. They would work under that administrator but have the same process and procedures as the Communications Director, their direct report.

   c. Consider hiring a Video-Photo Production Manager: If you had a video person they could do photography, video; Decatur-TV; routine videos of council members and mayor; Social media content for all departments; Events.

Below (noted in orange) is an ideal scenario for your communications team:

Voters
City Commission

City Clerk	City Manager	Deputy City Manager
Records Management / Budget	Fire Dept	Capital Construction Projects

Assistant City Manager Administrative Services	Assistant City Manager Community & Economic Development Services	Assistant City Manager Public Works Services
Communications Assistant	Communications Manager	Communications Assistant
	Digital Manager	
	Video-Photo Production Manager	

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3. **Communication Channels** – It's important that the City employees are well informed. There are opportunities to send communications weekly as well as monthly depending on the message, the urgency, and the importance.

   a. Leverage email more for internal audiences as well. Create a weekly email – "Marketing Minute" that keeps employees updated on what's going on and important updates.

   b. Every other week , send department to department email updates. If it's important to you for other staff to know then it's up to you to share.

   c. Develop and distribute monthly "Manager's Message" about any relevant information that their team needs to know. This could come from the top initiatives or issues addressed at the Managers' meeting.

   d. Educate employees on where to access information and updates within Sharepoint.

   Note: All of these emails can be very simple and do not need to be designed, just easy to read.

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B.   EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. **The City of Decatur invested in the communications audit** – it's important to let residents know that you did this in an effort to improve communications and keep them informed. Let them know you heard them and that you plan to make communications a priority. In fact, play back some of their requests in support of some of your new changes. A simple infographic could do this effectively.

   a. Similar to what was done for Internal Communications, should be done for External Communications. Develop your message about how the City will focus on ensuring the residents and businesses are aware of what is going on. The Communications Department should help to develop the message and any graphics necessary.

   b. At an upcoming Council Meeting, share with residents and businesses this message about how you plan to maintain ongoing communications with the public and talk about the many options for connecting with City of Decatur.

   c. Create a "Have it Your Way" campaign that talks about all of the options to stay informed and engaged. Share it to residents in every issue of Focus Newsletter and regularly in other channels, especially on the city website and social media. Chandlerthinks can assist with developing the campaign and messaging.

II. ESTABLISH PROCESS FOR COMMUNICATIONS TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

Establishing a process overall will help to provide structure and better manage communications thus improving efficiency and allowing the opportunity to be more proactive in the City's communications.
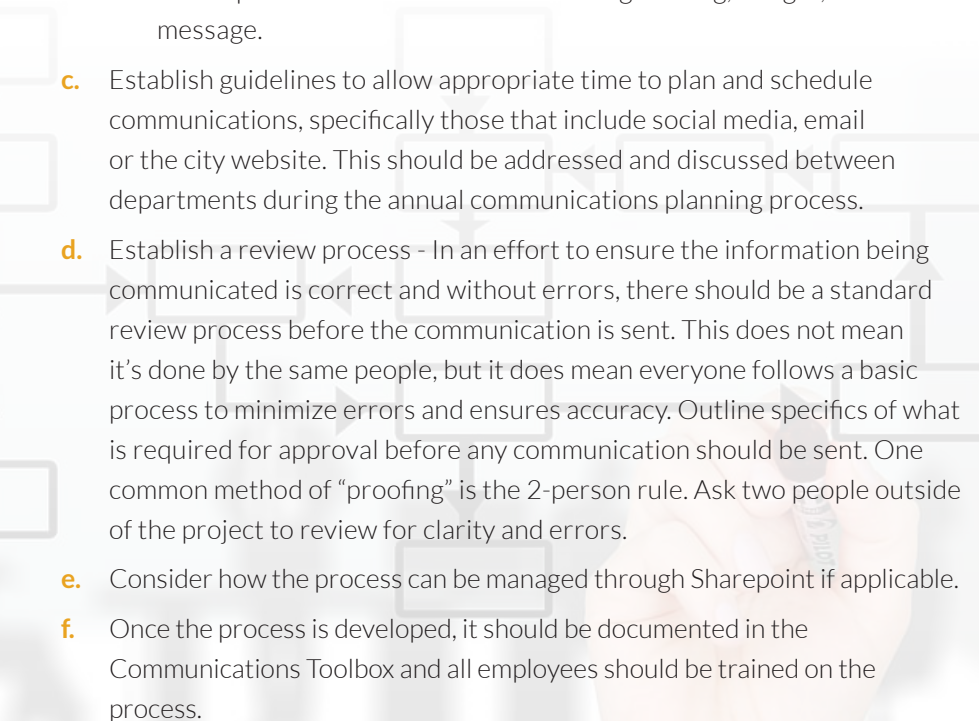
A. PLANNING

1. **Establish an annual communications plan** – As with any major initiative, it's important to start with a plan of action. A plan that outlines the objectives as well as the needs. Chandlerthinks can assist with facilitating this process.

   a. First, identify key stakeholders from each department to be a part of the "Communications Team".

   b. Then host an Annual Communications Planning meeting with this communications team.

   c. As part of the meeting, outline the key initiatives for the year, categorized by type and priority.

   d. Develop an annual communications calendar with responsibilities for each initiative. Keep it flexible. Public Works will have unexpected things come up – pot holes, snow, etc.. Parks & Rec. has routine events each year – make sure they are on the calendar.

   e. Meet monthly to review updates and adjust as needed. This will allow everyone to know what is going on and keep their department informed and should also eliminate surprises or the unknown.

   f. Do not forget the plan will need to be FLEXIBLE. Look no further back than how the events of 2020 quickly changed everything. It's better to adjust a plan than have no plan at all.

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B. MANAGEMENT & EXECUTION

Once you have a plan you need to be able to effectively implement the plan.

1. **Categorize and Prioritize Communication Needs** – Everything the City of Decatur communicates cannot be a priority. There needs to be some guidelines in place to categorize and prioritize communications so individuals behind the effort know who else needs to engaged. Outlined below is a suggested approach to prioritize communications.

   a. **Priority 1** – help beyond your control and needs immediate attention

      1. Crisis Communications
      2. Other important/critical messages that may not be a crisis

   b. **Priority 2** – need help and planning (Communications Dept. must be involved)

      1. Long-Term Plans/Major Projects/Initiatives
      2. Decatur Focus Newsletter
      3. Events
      4. Marketing Collateral – Brochures/Signage

   c. **Priority 3** – on your own

      1. On-going/Regular Communications – Annual Notices, monthly/quarterly updates, meeting notices, etc.

2. **Expand Creative Resources** – There is a huge dependence on one outside agency to provide creative support for the City of Decatur Communications. Lampe-Farley does a great job and has been a champion of the City of Decatur brand but we recommend establishing other options.

   a. Identify two to three additional agencies to provide creative support. You may want to look at agencies that offer different capabilities, some which may be better suited for PR or digital work versus collateral materials.

   b. Once the agencies have been identified, share the City Brand Standards and Guidelines and examples of creative work.

   c. Provide the list of "approved agencies" to the other departments and outline the process for engaging with the agency for a particular project.

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3. **Process** – Establish a process on how projects are started, how they should flow, the review/approval process, when/how to enlist additional creative resources based on the priority of the communication need referenced previously.

    a. Consider a project management software or something as simple as a spreadsheet that can be leveraged from the planning at the beginning of this section to keep track of all communications needs by month.

    b. Create a general PROJECT START FORM for any time a department wants help with their communications needs – typically Priority 1 or 2.

        1. This form would be used for the City Communications Department or external resource such as Lampe-Farley and other resources as the city continues to grow.

        2. The form should include specifics such as the purpose, the target audience, the message, the communication channels to leverage, timing and budget.

        3. Having a form will allow the communications department to track the number of requests made. This helps measure and manage workload as well.

        4. Facilitates planning and creates a more smooth process from concept to completion: forces one to think through timing, budget, media and message.

    c. Establish guidelines to allow appropriate time to plan and schedule communications, specifically those that include social media, email or the city website. This should be addressed and discussed between departments during the annual communications planning process.

    d. Establish a review process - In an effort to ensure the information being communicated is correct and without errors, there should be a standard review process before the communication is sent. This does not mean it's done by the same people, but it does mean everyone follows a basic process to minimize errors and ensures accuracy. Outline specifics of what is required for approval before any communication should be sent. One common method of "proofing" is the 2-person rule. Ask two people outside of the project to review for clarity and errors.

    e. Consider how the process can be managed through Sharepoint if applicable.

    f. Once the process is developed, it should be documented in the Communications Toolbox and all employees should be trained on the process.

4. **Establish process specific to managing social media.**

   a. Establish criteria for what information needs to be communicated in social media. Examples of things that are important but not a FB post (i.e. This Thursday the Women's bathroom at Glenlake Park will be closed for maintenance).

   b. A planning calendar is critical to being able to effectively manage social media for the city, especially when other departments have information to share. There are a wide variety of tools that can be leveraged to manage this. We have a template available in our Dropbox files for reference.

   c. Consider utilizing a social media tool to help manage, measure and assign social media activities. Hootsuite would be one popular example of this type of management tool that is common among municipal social media managers.

5. **Update the Communications Toolbox** – The Communications Toolbox that has already been created is a great idea and looks wonderful. Make some enhancements to keep it relevant and useful. It should clarify and communicate the City's communications mission and goals, services, and value internally while providing advice and guidance on the City's communications policies and procedures.

   a. Update the Communications Toolbox with the new communication processes.

   b. Include a section on the Intranet with a digital version of the Communications Toolbox.

   c. Meet with each department to explain the toolbox and discuss expectations, roles, responsibilities. Plan routine reoccurring internal communications for new people to learn and reminders to those that may have heard before.

   d. As part of the new employee training, time should be allotted to educate a new employee on the communications processes and provide the Communications Toolbox.

   e. Use the updates as an opportunity to personally add the physical new pieces to the Communications Toolbox by the Communications Department.

6. **Leverage Sharepoint better** – Set up system/process for leveraging Sharepoint better

   a. Organize a section specific to communications.

   b. Include important information such as the Communications Toolbox, Brand Standards, Guidelines, Contacts, Calendars, etc.

   c. Train employees on how to use Sharepoint and add and access pertinent information and news.

7. **Empower staff to become exceptional communicators –** Chandlerthinks can assist with this.

   a. Train employees on what makes interesting news stories and educate employees on realistic expectations of Public Information deliverables. One classic journalism acronym is T.I.P.P.O. (Timeliness, Importance, Proximity, Prominence and Oddity). This could be a part of the internal communications training sessions.

   b. Implement brand delivery and identity training as part of the internal communications training sessions. Everyone is a part of the City of Decatur brand. The more this is an active effort by all departments, the stronger brand (relationship) the City will have inside and out.

   c. Identify FAQs within each department and develop clear talking points to enable consistent information sharing with the public.

   d. Disaster/crisis communications training for council and executive staff. This should be something that occurs every 2-4 years.
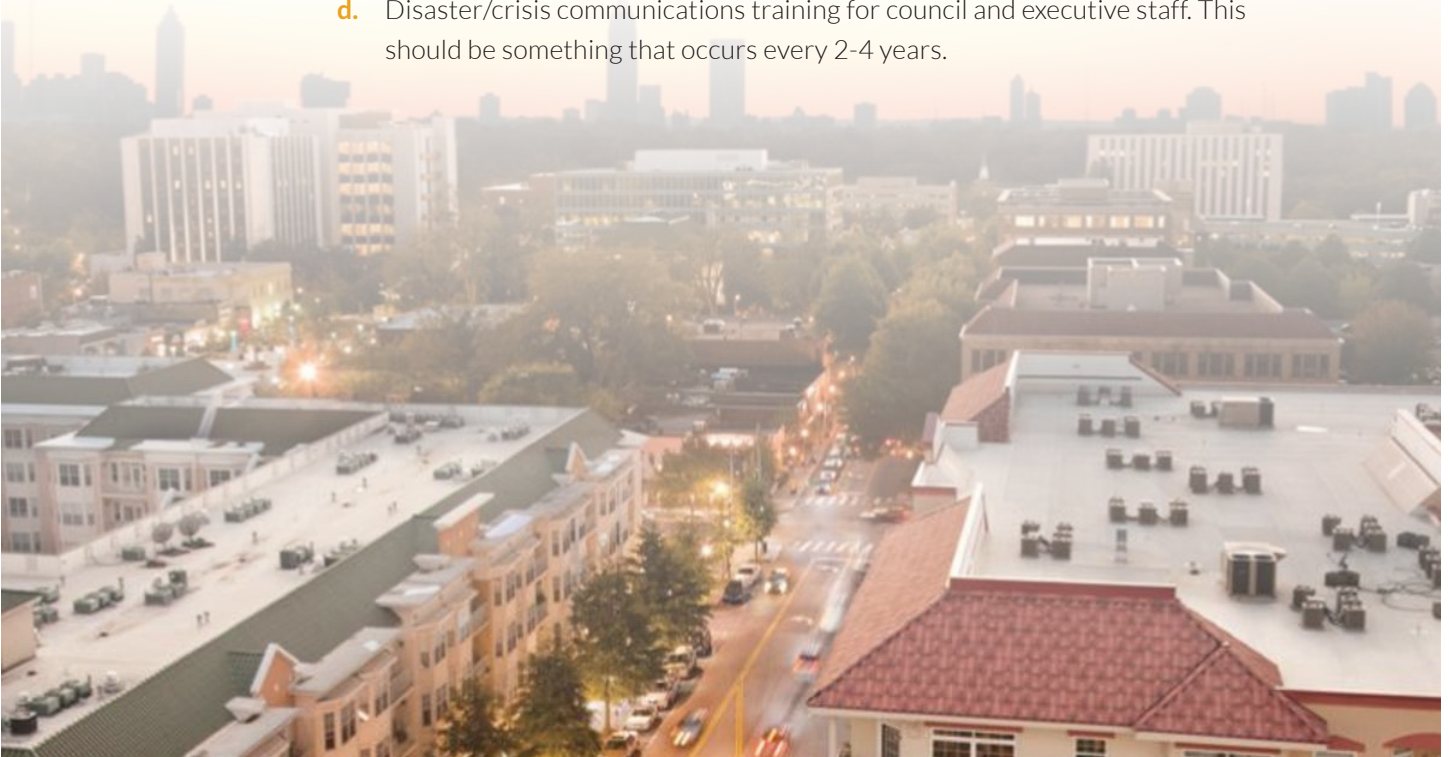
8. **Identify Key Spokespersons for the City** – A key aspect of the City's communications strategy is its responsibility to disseminate vital information to the public through trained and prepared messengers. These messengers serve as spokespersons for the City. They must be fully informed about the relevant issues and comfortable speaking to the media or in large groups. It's also important that the roster of spokespersons reflect the diversity within the City staff and the community.

   a. Identify a key group of individuals to be the City's Messengers. The individuals selected should be based on their expertise and/or their position as well as the issues and opportunities. For example, there should be a dedicated spokesperson from the following departments: Public Works; Economic and Business Development; Design, Environment & Construction; Children and Youth Services; and Active Living. This effort should coincide with the already suggested media training.

9. **Identify Broad and Consistent Calls to Action** – The intent for communications is to keep citizens informed. Our messages drive audiences to take action and often relate to specific programs and initiatives, i.e. participate in a community listening session, complete a survey or attend an event. However, for purposes of this plan, we have included some broadly applied calls to action here.

   a. Visit https://www.decaturga.com/ for more information.

   b. Call #### for answers about City services.

   c. Make your voice heard! Join a citizen board or commission.

   d. Be informed! Attend a commission meeting or watch it live on Facebook.

   e. Want to stay in the know? Subscribe on our website for everything about the City of Decatur.

10. **Leverage Task Management Software** – Long-term, the City of Decatur may want to look at a project or task tracking software. Listed below are a few examples:

    a. Airtable.com
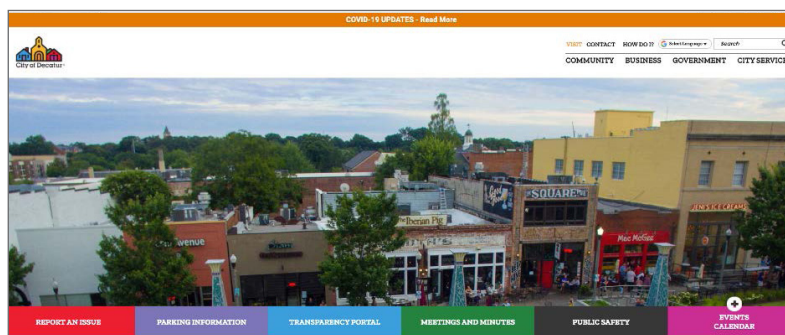
    b. Granicus.com

    c. Civiclive.com

III. IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS BY GETTING BACK TO THE BASICS OF COMMUNICATIONS

A. SIMPLIFY THE CITY WEBSITE

Currently residents are NOT typically going to the City website for information, however, with some minor enhancements to the website and a focus where communications directs the audience to more details on the website, over time, they may start to go there when looking for information.

1. Review the website analytics to determine pages that are not getting any attention and consider removing those pages. Simplify by eliminating. There are several pages on the website that receive very little traffic, if any. Reports show many pages with .1% of total site traffic.

    a. Consider a minor reorganization of content on the website to simplify the information and make a few key areas more prominent.

    b. Social media icons should be more prominent on the site – potentially at the top.

    c. Create a section of weekly updates – "What's New?"

    d. Better utilize "In the Spotlight" on the site to highlight what is important/relevant at the time such as upcoming announcements and events.

    e. Include the "Have it Your Way" campaign on the website.

    f. Establish an Email Sign up as part of the global navigation.

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2. Make the Site Map more prominent for people to see the City. The volume of content is only getting bigger, so use the site map as a tool so people can find their information more easily. Something such as, "CAN'T FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR? USE THE SITE – LOCATOR MAP.

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B. CONSOLIDATE DIGITAL MEDIA (INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA) WHERE APPLICABLE

1. Review all the websites and determine which ones could be eliminated or combined with another website. Ten is too many. It creates destination confusion and therefore residents aren't sure where to go for the information. The City of Decatur Website should be the PRIMARY source of information. Efforts should be made to direct residents to the website for more information. DecaturNext and Decatur makeover are very similar (from an outside perspective). The website https://www.mlkserviceproject.com/ is volunteer run.
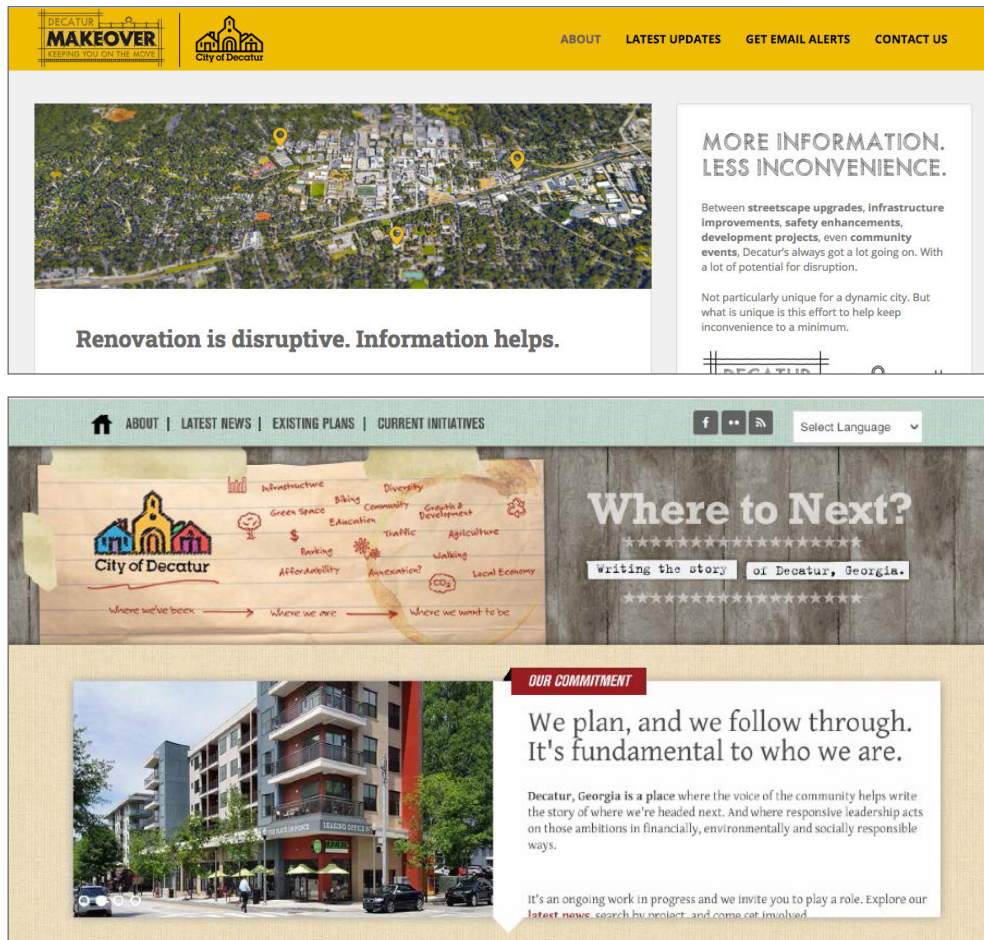
Get back to the main website. Provide quarterly updates on the progress of long-term plans and projects in development that are part of the overall strategic plan for the city. There may be too much dependency on the DecaturNext.com website for doing this and not everyone is aware of that site. Create bigger attention on the City website for planning news and notes, thus linking to DecaturNext.com. Do not assume people know it is a separate website.

2. Review all Facebook pages. Seven Facebook pages is too many. Look to reduce this number.

   Social Media is very fragmented, there are just too many channels, too many "groups" – residents aren't going to follow all of the different options and therefore could be missing out.

   a. The City's official FB page has over 20,000 followers (nice) but Active Living only has 2,400. The messages for Active Living could reach and audience up to 20,000. Designate certain days where Decatur Active Living does the City posting and get serve up its content for the week.

   b. Aim to have a Main City presence and another for public safety. Merge Police and Fire in all cases, or merge Fire into the Main City presence.

   c. Visit Decatur (tourism) is an entire different audience with different communications objectives than towards routine resident communications and should have its own social media.
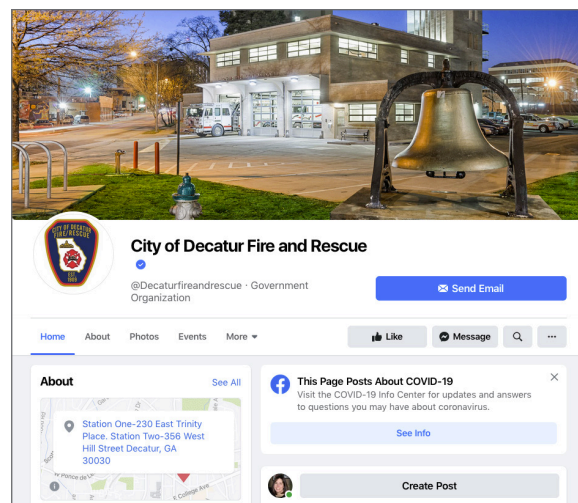
3. Review all Twitter accounts. Six Twitter accounts is too many. @DowntownDecatur Twitter account should rename itself for all City updates.

4. Review all Blogs. Three blogs are too many. The Decatur tax blog could be eliminated and those updates be on the city website and in a regular email. The Active Living blog and Decatur Minute are nice and can serve as those details for the people that need or desire that detailed content outside of main City website and social media. Combining their efforts could create more regular content and create more focus.

C. RE-EVALUATE PRINTED MATERIALS

1. Conduct a printed materials audit with the goal of minimizing the work and costs. Overall, the City of Decatur has over 1,000 pieces of communication, there gets a point where it's considered too much and overwhelming. Just as we recommended simplifying the website and consolidating digital media channels, the City should also review the various printed materials and determine if any could be eliminated or consolidated with other communications. Have departments review and evaluate their existing communications and determine which ones are still necessary and relevant – similar to how you would "Clean out the Closet". This will help to save time and money. The audits and ROI should probably be done by department.

Consider also a printed materials engagement study/survey to determine what is worth keeping and what should be tossed away? This could be as easy as an email survey to residents. Not all would apply but it could help narrow this massive list down and save time and money. Maybe some go from print to digital-only.

2. Focus Newsletter is GREAT – It is well organized and the most talked about communication piece. Keep up the good work!

D. LEVERAGE OTHER MEDIA OUTLETS

1. Be more active about telling the City of Decatur stories and celebrate your "wins". This is not just on your own media but sharing information with third-party media sources such as Decaturish.

   a. Proactive outreach to local media and blog to pitch information/stories.

   b. Maintain an updated media list.

   c. Press Releases should be part of a regular routine for high priority, "newsworthy" topics.

   d. Develop stronger relationship with Decaturish – they can be an ally. It is important that they have access to information you want to share with residents.

2. Keep NextDoor social media platform a top priority for important resident communications.

   The resident research proved this social media platform is very valuable for reaching residents. Be sure this is a part of ongoing social media efforts for important City of Decatur updates and safety news.
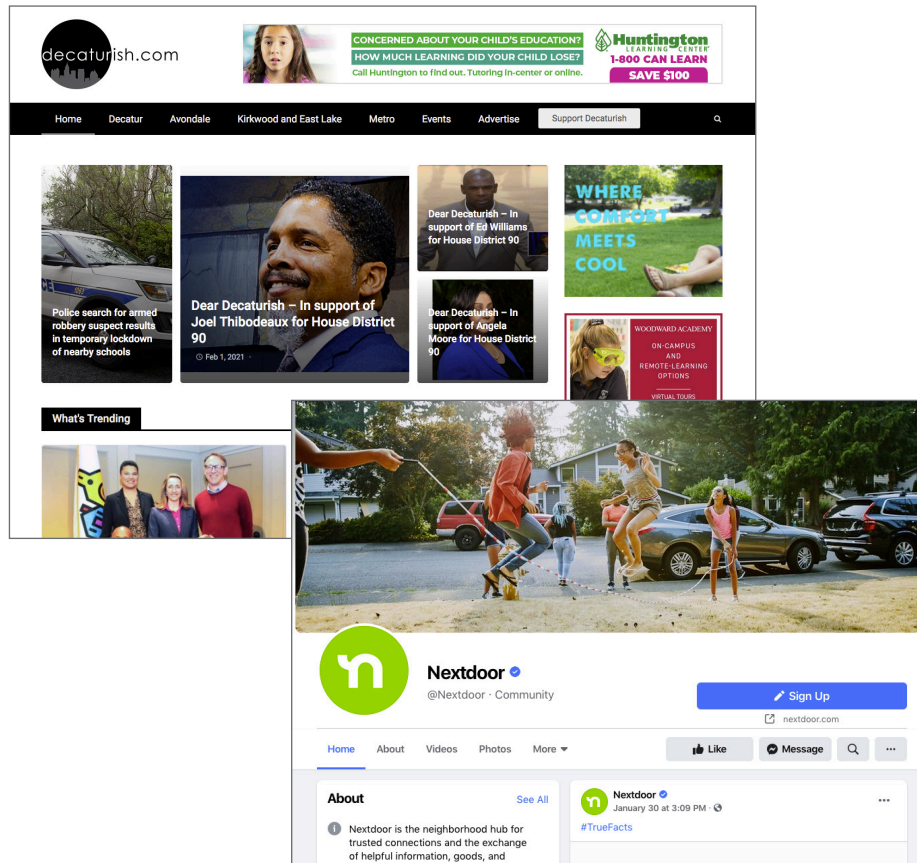
E. LEVERAGE MORE EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

1. Make email communications to residents a more regular priority. They have indicated they prefer this as a channel for staying updated on City happenings. This would also allow routine communications for the many department updates without having to post it on social media. This does not have to be a big production.

   a. Establish a single email platform service that all departments can leverage such as Constant Contact or something similar and create templates where each department can easily update and send information as needed.

   b. As referenced in the improvements to the website, there needs to be a way to sign-up for emails as part of the global navigation so it is on every page and is more noticeable.

   c. Create a database of subscribers based on topics of interest.

   d. Create standard templates in the email platform based on the type of communication.

   e. Emails should be intended to provide ALL of the information about a particular subject and should have a "call to action" that directs to the website. This will also condition residents to begin looking to the website for more information.

   f. Establish a calendar for email communications.

   g. Send a weekly email with updates – what's happening, it could be called "Decatur In the Know"- Keep it simple and functional.

   h. Create a deadline for any department to submit their updates. Require a basic format from all so it's easy to adjust into your email format.

CivicEngage (a CivicPlus product) is one example resource with tools built for municipal email management.

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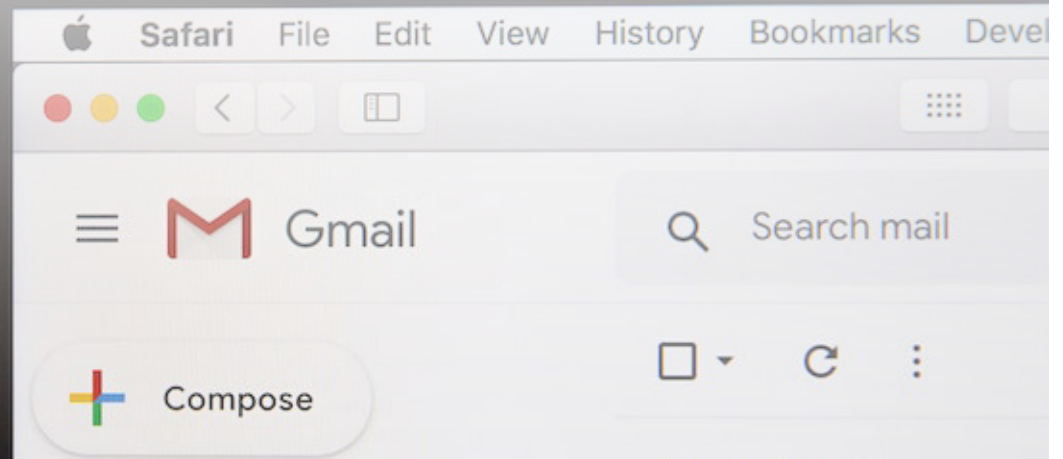
F.   UTILIZE TEXT MESSAGING CAPABILITIES

1.   Implement a "Text to Know" campaign to push out pertinent news and events. There are several companies that provide this service (i.e. txtsignal.com, Citygro.com, eztexting.com).

G.   LEVERAGE VIDEOS MORE

1.   Do more video. It creates significantly more attention to social media activity. Do more things like the Strategic Plan video. And more casual is okay. Other ideas include:

a.   Updates by council members once a month.

b.   Updates from Mayor once a month – "Inside Decatur with Mayor Patti Garrett."

c.   More creative approach to important not-so-fun communications (i.e. don't pour your grease down your sink could have be a fun video).

d.   Monthly highlights on what's new in the FOCUS newsletter and Playbook.

e.   The Three Things you need to know this week by City Admin Andrea Arnold.

f.   Consider the creation of Decatur TV – create regular programming to serve as informative information billboard; important meeting and program replay notices and other items of interest to the public. Archives can be saved on a YouTube channel.

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Video makes a stronger impact on your communications – it's more effective.

- Social media posts with video have 48% more views. (The Marketing Helpline)
- Over 1.9 billion people use YouTube. That's about one-third of the internet. (YouTube)
- Social video generates 1200% more shares than text and image content combined. (G2 Crowd)
- Video promotions are now equally as popular as photo promotions on Facebook. (Socialbakers)
- Video campaigns on LinkedIn have 50% view rates. (LinkedIn)
- By 2022, online videos will make up more than 82% of all consumer internet traffic — 15 times higher than it was in 2017. (Cisco)
- A website is 53 times more likely to reach the front page of Google if it includes video. (Insivia)
- Including a video on your landing page can boost your conversion rate by up to 80%. (Unbounce)
- Viewers retain 95% of a message when they watch it in a video, compared to 10% when reading it in text. (Insivia)

There are many sources of similar stats but all of these were taken from - https://biteable.com/blog/video-marketing-statistics/

Biteable   View templates   Create ⌄   Resources ⌄   Plans   Log in   Sign up — Free

55 video marketing statistics for 2021

2021

Video continues to be one of the most effective elements in a digital marketing strategy as we roll into 2021 — and with good reason.

H. KEEP THE MY DECATUR APP LOW PROFILE FOR NOW

In all of the research conducted during this audit, the My Decatur app never came up as an issue, a concern or of importance. This may indicate it has not found its purpose for providing valuable resident connection. As long as significant time is not being spent we would advise to keep activity low at this point (not an issue since it actually connects to working website pages). In the future it may be necessary to reevaluate it to be a working tool for the City and residents.

I. IMPROVE FREQUENCY

1. One is not done. As mentioned previously, in general, people need to see something <u>seven times</u> or more before they will respond. This helps so they can remember what you are "saying" amid an overwhelming amount of other messages. One of the challenges with the current communications is the lack of frequency of the message. One social media post is not enough.

    a. Establish a specific number of communication channels and the frequency of the message based on the priority/importance of the communication. You could have fun with it to create something catchy and memorable like 3C4T (3 channels, 4 times). For example, at a minimum the City should leverage 2 communication channels (email & website) with a frequency of 3 times for messages. Higher priority messages should leverage at least 4 communication channels (website, email, social media, & mail) with a frequency of 7 times for the message. This will help address the residents that claim to not know about key issues. It will not eliminate it, but will address more effectively.

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MEASUREMENT

Once the new processes are implemented and you have adjusted some of the communication channels, it is important to establish some measurements for success.

REACH & PENETRATION

A basic measure of the success of your communications program is the number of people who see the various media produced by the City. There are a variety of metrics to determine if the City is reaching the intended audiences. Identity the measure for each piece of communications. It will help in future evaluations.

The following data can be collected to determine reach (how broad) and penetration (how deep):

- Number of subscribers, including percentage of subscribers viewing the notifications
- Social media followers
- Email open rate and CTR
- Online video views (YouTube)
- Unique website views
- Newsletter views (City website)
- Document downloads

CITY OF DECATUR, GA

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

One way to measure engagement is to measure the reach of particular messages through individual communication channels and the actual participation, and then compare the various communications methods to determine which yield the highest levels of participation. Unfortunately, it is probably not advisable to experiment with live issues or events, so the opportunity for a rigorous approach is limited. Instead, you can adjust various communications mixes aimed at optimizing participation and see if there are any changes that are not merely related to content. Outlined below is the data to collect to determine level of engagement.

- Attendance at events, forums, and meetings
- Participation on boards and committees
- Conversion or "click through" rates
- Participation in online polls and voluntary surveys

EXPERIENCE & OPINION

One of the more challenging aspects of the changes in media is that while there is now more subjective feedback available directly from constituents on issues, this flood of information is difficult to compile and analyze in a way that provides actionable data. One way to collect comments and feedback from various sources and conduct an affinity analysis to see what the general tone of direction those comments are taking. You can monitor the following to do that analysis:

- Satisfaction with City communications (survey)
- User ratings on YouTube, etc.
- Facebook mentions
- Number of fans/subscribers/followers
- Comment tone on other sites

Another area that is evolving and will require some attention is in the realm of online reputation management. This is a type of media tracking that is done through subjective analysis of user comments on social media sites and discussion groups. There are platforms you can subscribe to in order to monitor your online reputation but for now, just monitoring your social media comments can provide insights.

BUDGET

Most of the initiatives outlined in this plan can be managed by internal resources, however there are a few items the City of Decatur will need to consider allocating budget dollars.

STAFFING: $75,000 – $200,000
Depending on resources and positions to fill.

EMAIL PLATFORM: $10,000 – $20,000 ANNUALLY
There are some "free" email platforms but it may be more beneficial for the City of Decatur to invest in a platform that allows for more flexibility and customization to your needs. This can be done through CivicPlus, Constant Contact or MailChimp (just to name a few).

STRATEGY, SUPPORT AND ON-GOING CONSULTING (OVER 90 – 120 DAYS): $20,000 - $30,000
Investing in additional resources is necessary for long-term, however, initially the City of Decatur could use some additional support to develop the specific details, process, policies and documentation for this new communications plan. Chandlerthinks can be available for support.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT: $15,000 – $20,000
In addition, there are some elements of this plan that could benefit by creating a more "designed" communication piece, therefore, we recommend allocating budget dollars for creative development. For example, messaging for how to present how the City will create a culture where communications is a priority, develop an internal and external campaign for launching this initiative, designing an easy to read process document that clearly identifies the steps necessary based on types of communication needs.

TRAINING SESSIONS: $3,000 – $5,000 PER SESSION
This plan recommends internal communications training for staff and leadership. The Chandlerthinks team can assist. The purpose of this training is to provide focused education on effective communications and marketing. Other training would include "newsworthy" education and brand delivery identity.

TIMELINE

Below is a suggested timeline to begin implementing the plan.

TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	MONTH 1	MONTH 2	MONTH 3	MONTH 4	MONTH 5	MONTH 6	MONTH 7
CREATE A CULTURE WHERE COMMUNICATION IS A PRIORITY								
Set Expectations & process for announcing internally and externally	Leadership and Communications Team	██						
Communicate expectations internally with campaign launch	Leadership and Communications Team		██					
Establish appropriate resources and hire individuals for the positions	Leadership and Communications Team	██	██	██				
Share new plans and initiatives with the community	Leadership and Communications Team			██				
PROCESSES								
Conduct the first annual planning meeting & Identify priorities	Communications Team and Departments	██	██					
Begin outlining processes and workflow	Communications Team	██	██					
Evaluate and identify appropriate email platform	Communications Team	██	██					
Review website and adjust based on communicate needs and priorities	Communications Team and Departments		██	██	██			
Evalute social media (Triwtter & Facebook) and consolidate accounts	Communications Team and Departments		██	██	██			
Evaluate websites and consolidate	Communications Team and Departments		██	██	██			
Identify and evaluate additional creative resources	Communications Team		██	██				
Update Commuications Toolbox	Communications Team with support from creative resources		██	██				
Staff Training	Communications Team			██	██			
Begin implementing new processes, testing, and adjusting as needed	Communications Team and Departments					██	██	██
IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATIONS								
Have departments review and evaluate their existing communications and determine which ones are still necessary and relevant	Departments					██	██	██
Begin implementing some initial initiatives such as email sign-up, and seting up emails	Communications Team and Departments		██	██				