

CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK

Comprehensive  
**Communications Plan**  
2015 - 2016



Updated 6-3-15

# Communication

## Project Goals

- 1. Community Collaboration**
- 2. Digital Communication**
- 3. Two-Way Communication & Customer Service**
- 4. Community Identity**
- 5. Proactive Messaging**

This Communications Plan sets forth a proactive approach to foster efficient, transparent and effective public communication for the City of Highland Park for 2015 and 2016 calendar years.

Much of the City’s success is shaped by the quality of its communication efforts. The purpose of this comprehensive Plan is to establish a set of measurable strategies and actions to:

- Increase open two-way, communication externally and internally,
- Enable strong and consistent messages that reinforce and reflect the goals of our community, and
- Strengthen community problem solving to provide residents complete, accurate and timely information.

The Plan refers to both internal and external communication including residents, elected officials, City staff, the business community and other governmental entities. The Plan was drafted with input from City staff, City Council, and the public. It will be managed and monitored by the City Manager’s Office in collaboration with the City Council, and senior and executive management staff.

City Council

Mayor Nancy R. Roterling

Council members:

- |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Anthony E. Blumberg | Alyssa Knobel     |
| Daniel A. Kaufman   | Kim Stone         |
| Paul H. Frank       | Michelle Holleman |

Staff Committee:

- Ghida S. Neukirch, City Manager
- Rudy Espiritu, Deputy City Manager
- Karen Berardi, Assistant to the City Manager



This Plan sets forth the City’s communication objectives for calendar years 2015 and 2016. Quarterly updates will be provided to the City Council and posted on the City’s web site. This is an evolving document that will be modified based on the vision of the City Council and recommendations set forth by staff.

Each goal is assigned subsequent strategies and initiatives which have been given individual timelines and target audiences. Evaluation of the initiatives will be ongoing throughout the process.

Questions about this Communications Plan can be directed to the City Manager’s Office at 847-926-1000 or email [cityhp@cityhpil.com](mailto:cityhp@cityhpil.com).

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## Strategies & Initiatives

### 1. Explore Additional Community Calendar Options

In 2014, the City, Park District, School Districts 112 and 113, and Library explored the creation of a web-based community calendar that comingled community events in one central location online. Due to technology barriers, the calendar was unable to be created.

In 2016, additional options for a community calendar will be explored such as coordination with a software or web developer.

### 2. Reevaluate 4-color *Highlander*

The City conducted a cost/benefit analysis on printing a 4-color *Highlander* in 2013. At that time, the costs of printing in color outweighed the benefits received from a 4-color newsletter. In third quarter 2015 and in preparation for the 2016 budget, a 4-color *Highlander* will again be evaluated for cost/benefit analysis. The analysis along with recommendation will be submitted to Council for their consideration. A redesign of the *Highlander* will also be considered as referenced on Page 10 of this Plan.

### 3. Reestablish the Cable Consortium with New Communities

In 2014 and 2015, the City worked in collaboration with the Villages of Winnetka, Lake Bluff and Glenview, and the City of Lake Forest to redevelop Highland Park's cable consortium. The partnering municipalities will submit a Request for Proposals in third quarter 2015 to implement a consortium operation, which includes a playback upgrade for Highland Park and Winnetka. Following the equipment installation and fiber connections necessary to make this happen, the newly established consortium will begin to work together to align cable operations under the Highland Park Public Access Center sharing services and creating efficiencies region-wide. The consortium will establish standard operating procedures in fourth quarter 2015 in order to work together in future years.

### 4. Cross-promote events, programs and services

Programs and services promoted by a sister government may pertain to the City's overarching mission and vision of transparency and collaboration. In these cases, the City will ensure cross-

## Community Collaboration

Improve City communication to and from Highland Park residents, businesses, organizations and sister governments.

promotion of the programs and services through *The Highlander*, website and social media outlets. This ongoing tactic will involve constant coordination amongst all communication teams from sister governments.

Additionally, the City will work with organizations and agencies in which the City provides financial assistance to promote special events, services and programs. These agencies include the business districts' special service areas.

#### **5. Meet with Sister Government Communication Teams Semi-Annually**

In an effort to ensure collaboration is meeting the needs of the community, City staff will meet semi-annually with communications teams from sister governments to develop collaborative goals and objectives to improve efficiency community-wide.

#### **6. Meet with Sister Governments to Ensure Transparency of Services**

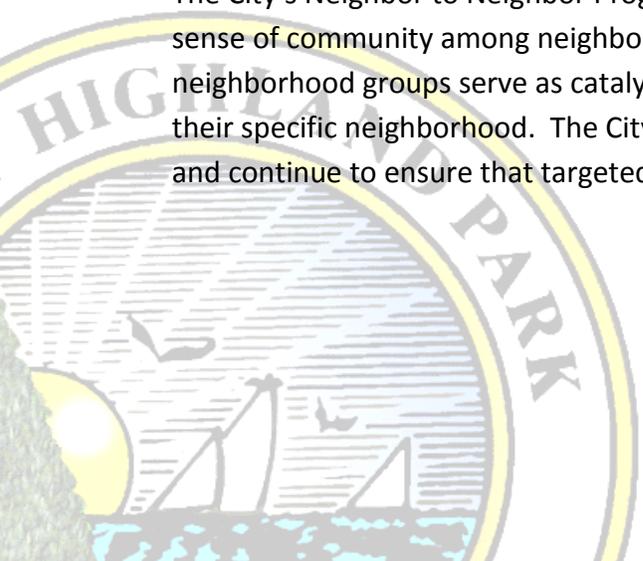
Joint meetings among all governmental entities serving Highland Park will continue to take place on a semi-annual basis to ensure cross-communication, efficiencies and coordination on major projects and initiatives.

#### **7. Collaborate with Businesses and Business Districts**

This Plan will work on a parallel track with the Business Development Strategic Plan to improve communication and collaboration with the nine business districts. On a quarterly basis, City staff will communicate with representatives of each of the formalized business districts in an effort to maintain open lines of communication and work together to advance business interests to benefit the community.

#### **8. Collaborate with Neighborhood Groups and Neighborhood Coordinators**

The City's Neighbor to Neighbor Program was launched in 2013 with the intent to foster a greater sense of community among neighbors in Highland Park. These leaders along with leaders of other neighborhood groups serve as catalysts to promoting and targeting key information that pertain to their specific neighborhood. The City staff will meet quarterly with neighborhood coordinators and continue to ensure that targeted information is communicated to all.



## Strategies & Initiatives

### 1. Revitalize the Website Design

In order to enhance the community's identity, the City website design will be revitalized in 2015-2016. Redesign efforts will include color scheme, overall look, typeface changes, picture upgrades and more.

It is expected that the redesign will begin to take place in first quarter 2016.

### 2. Film and Promote Public Service Announcements

In order to reach the public through all mediums, public service announcements will continue to be filmed, produced and promoted using a video-streaming service or website. Public Service Announcements will be educational in nature and will feature topics that are of proven interest to residents, i.e. public safety, recycling, parking, special events and more. Public service announcements will be coordinated with the City's Communications Committee and produced in-house with the video camera and an editing system in the Public Access Center.

The goal will be to produce 3-5 public service announcements annually spanning various topics and departments.

### 3. Upgrade Playback Equipment in the Highland Park Public Access Center

The playback equipment donated by Comcast to the City's cable consortium in 2009 is dated and beyond repair when equipment fails or breaks down. Because of this, an increase in errors and broadcasting has been noted in the past two years and without further action, the channel could cease to operate. Because of this, a capital budget was included in 2015 to upgrade the center's playback equipment. The City has worked with new consortium members including the Villages of Winnetka, Lake Bluff and Glenview, and the City of Lake Forest to draft and issue a Request for Proposals that will not only assist in forming a new consortium but also request playback equipment upgrades for Highland Park and Winnetka's playback equipment. The RFP will be issued in third quarter 2015 with installation expected to be completed by fourth quarter 2015.

## Digital Communication

Explore, update and utilize multiple technologies to enhance the delivery of City communications with residents and stakeholders in a timely and relevant manner.

#### **4. Explore an Alternative Live and OnDemand Web-Streaming Channel**

In conjunction with the City's agenda management software upgrade, the City will reevaluate its live and ondemand web-streaming service to ensure efficiencies and quality of service. Presently, live streaming is not viewed nearly as frequently as ondemand streaming. Additionally, the channel live feed cannot be viewed so that residents can watch online instead of on television. These services will be analyzed in third and fourth quarter of 2015 with a recommendation for implementation in 2016.

#### **5. Social Media Campaigns**

Social media campaigns will be run similar to other weekly social media posting trends such as Throwback Thursday. Instead, the City will begin Meet the City Mondays in which a staff member is highlighted, Throwback Thursday in which historic photos of Highland Park or historic facts will be posted, and Fun Fact Friday in which facts such as the number of licensed dogs in Highland Park will be posted. The campaigns will run continuously but not necessarily every week.

#### **6. Encourage Photo Sharing**

Highland Park is a beautiful city with hundreds of individuals taking amazing images of the natural beauty. To promote the City's natural landscape as well as its manmade assets, the City will encourage citizens through social media to share photos of Highland Park. Photographers will be referenced and acknowledged for their work.



## Strategies & Initiatives

### 1. Provide Responsive and Valuable Customer Service on a Daily Basis to Residents, Business Professionals and Visitors

The City of Highland Park values its customer service with residents, business and property owners, and visitors to the community. The City staff and elected officials are dedicated towards providing responsive and quality communications to its customers on a daily basis. The City will uphold this value in all its communications whether in person, on the phone, or through electronic means.

### 2. Enhance the Customer Request Module

The City, as part of its CivicPlus membership, provides customer services request on the City's website and on a mobile application since 2011. The smartphone application is available on iPhones only and is named Citizen Request Tracker. The web-based module is available at [www.cityhpil.com/requesttracker](http://www.cityhpil.com/requesttracker).

Beginning in third quarter 2015, staff will enhance the module to add new customer service requests that will include but not be limited to: report a street light outage, sign issue, non-emergency sewer issue, non-emergency water leak, water turn-on/off, tree issue, utility issue (waste hauling, electricity, cable/internet) as well as submit a vacant house notification, request for Knox Box key replacement and request for smoke detector battery replacement for senior citizens.

Work will be conducted in collaboration amongst all departments and a standard operating procedure will be developed to address workflow and tracking. It is anticipated this module and SOP will be completed by 2016.

### 3. Participate in Customer Service Request Consortium Study with Municipal GIS Partners

In June and July of 2015, the City will participate with numerous other municipalities to conduct a study on a possible customer service request consortium with Municipal GIS Partners (MGP). MGP currently operates the City's GIS interactive mapping seen on the City's website. The intent is to

## Two-Way Communication & Customer Service

Foster an environment in which the public can easily communicate with the City and provide feedback to the City on initiatives, programs and services.

conduct an innovation boot camp to understand the feasibility and cost/benefit analysis of a consortium mean to address web-based customer service requests either on a computer, tablet or smartphone.

Following the study, the City will report back on the groups' findings and make a recommendation to Council.

#### **4. Analyze the Benefits of an Online Town Hall Module**

In 2016, the City will conduct a cost/benefit analysis on the implementation of an online Town Hall Module that would allow residents to submit ideas and questions to the City on a public board that is open for comments. It would additionally allow the City to pose pertinent community-wide questions for the public to respond to in order to obtain community feedback. This analysis will take place in second quarter 2016.



## Strategies & Initiatives

### 1. Revitalize the Website Design

The City website will receive a minor redesign in 2015-2016 in order to enhance and revitalize the community identity. Redesign efforts will include color scheme, overall look, typeface changes, picture upgrades and more. It is expected that the redesign will begin to take place in first quarter 2016.

### 2. Enhance the *Highlander* Design and Layout

The *Highlander* design and layout will be enhanced to promote the overall identity of the community. Redesign efforts will include color scheme, overall layout, typeface changes and article layout. It is expected that the enhanced layout will begin to take place in first quarter 2016.

### 3. Revitalize the Content and Design of the FY2016 Budget

As part of FY2016 budget process, the content and design of the budget document will be revitalized beginning in third quarter 2015 in order to provide a general overview and understanding of city operations and city budgeting. The overall design of the document will align with the community identity.

### 4. Refresh all City Collateral Material including Stationary, Presentation Backgrounds, Brochures, Etc.

All City collateral will receive a refreshment that matches the community identity and ensures that the City's communication tools all demonstrate the same overall look and feel. Efforts will include color scheme, overall look, typeface changes, picture upgrades and more. Collateral materials that will be refreshed include, but are not limited to, stationary, presentation backgrounds, and brochures. It is expected that the initiative will begin to take place in first quarter 2016.

### 5. Reevaluate Current Cable Channels 10 and 19

In order to adjust to the modified cable consortium, City Channels 10 and 19 will be reevaluated in first quarter 2016. Due to the change in consortium members, Channel 19 may evolve solely as a Highland Park public access channel that is viewable in 11 neighboring communities. Additionally,

## Community Identity

Align all communication channels to promote one cohesive identity across all networks.

with the upgrade of equipment that will take place in third quarter 2015, the channels will receive the necessary improvements to enhance the slide presentations played in between aired programs. It is anticipated that this will take place in fourth quarter 2015 and first quarter 2016.

**6. Update Community Photography Taken Throughout Highland Park to Use for Marketing**

The City will update the City's photo stock of the community showing images of Highland Park's natural landscape, business districts, community events, memorials, public art and all other aspects of Highland Park. The photo stock will be used and kept on file for the website, *Highlander*, annual report, brochures and any other marketing efforts.

**7. Work with Business Development Team to Implement Brand Implementation Plan**

The Communications Division will continue to work with the Business Development Team to implement the Brand Implementation Plan. This will include completion of brand plan initiatives such as brochures, new resident packet, brand ambassador training sessions and more. It is anticipated that this will take place in conjunction with the Business Development Strategic Plan and in cooperation with the Central Business District, Ravinia District and Briergate District Special Service Areas as well as all sister governments.

## Strategies & Initiatives

### 1. Meet Quarterly with City Communication Committee

The City will establish a Communication Committee comprised of one representative from each department. The committee will meet quarterly to address the implementation and progression of the Communications Plan as well as discuss any challenges and barriers to communicating with the public. Additionally, the committee will address goals for the next quarter that will be met and coordinated by staff among all departments to the City Manager's Office who will distribute communication to the public via the City's communication channels.

The committee was established in 2014, but will be reevaluated annually to ensure all pertinent personnel are included.

### 2. Meet Internally with all Sister Governments to Prepare and Cross-Promote Key Messages and Initiatives

Joint meetings among all governmental entities serving Highland Park will continue to take place on a semi-annual basis to ensure cross-communication, efficiencies and coordination on major projects and initiatives. These meetings will not only entail updates on current initiatives but also take a look at future endeavors and initiatives that government partners can cross-promote.

## Proactive Messaging

Ensure key messages are clearly communicated in a timely manner by planning and preparing for communication campaigns to external and internal stakeholders.

