



Morrisville
Live connected. Live well.



Communications Strategic Plan 2023-2025

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Town Overview

Morrisville has been one of the fastest growing and most diverse towns in North Carolina. In 2022 Morrisville was named the No. 5 Best Place to Live for Families by Fortune Well, a living and wellness subsidiary of Fortune.com. The Town was recognized as an All-America City by the National Civic League in June 2021, one of only 10 communities nationwide to earn this recognition. Morrisville was also rated by Niche.com as the No. 1 Best Place to Live in North Carolina in November 2021. In 2020, Money magazine ranked Morrisville as the No. 10 Best Place to Live in the United States, and in 2019, WalletHub.com ranked Morrisville the No. 3 Best Place to Raise a Family in North Carolina. These accolades are reflective of the warm connection felt throughout the town that residents say make the Town so unique.

Morrisville is located adjacent to North Carolina’s Research Triangle Park – a national hotbed of technological development, hosting over 300 companies and 50,000 workers. The Town’s economy is based on highly skilled professional and technology industries, and a population that is diverse, affluent and highly educated. As a result, the local median household income is now \$103,000, almost twice the state average of \$54,000.

“Live connected. Live well.” is the Town’s brand tagline and philosophy. When surveyed, residents, businesses, and stakeholders communicated they value the connection they feel when in Morrisville. The connection they have to global businesses, opportunities, the great outdoors, and most importantly, to each other.

Morrisville is a place to gather together, to talk with neighbors and engage with Town leaders. It is a warm and welcoming community. The community embraces small town ideals with all the conveniences and amenities of a metropolitan city.

Morrisville is a place where diverse people and businesses connect to a world of opportunity – and are better for it.



Communications Strategic Plan Overview

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Communications Strategic Plan is to clearly define the goals, objectives, initiatives, and tools the Town of Morrisville will use when communicating with the community. The plan ensures the Morrisville story is told effectively, and engagement between the Town and the community is implemented in a timely and effective manner.

In addition to communication being a basic obligation of government and an essential component of a democratic process, communicating with the residents, businesses, and visitors to our community is vital to the continued success of Morrisville. Through consistent and engaged communication, Morrisville has the ability to grow informed participation, enhance community pride and improve overall livability.

GOAL

The goal of the Communications Plan is to increase stakeholder engagement and community understanding of Town services, initiatives, and resources, and to record measurable performance indicators that inform future communication.

Furthermore, this plan will help guide the priorities of the Communications & Outreach Department.

CONNECT MORRISVILLE STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Communication efforts should consistently support the Town's mission, vision and values. The following are taken from the Town of Morrisville's Strategic Plan (2021-2024). The first-ever strategic plan was adopted in 2018, and the plan was updated and adopted again in 2021.

Mission

Connecting our diverse community to an enhanced quality of life through innovative programs and services

Vision

A sustainable and thriving community that celebrates diversity and inclusion while enhancing the well-being of people who live, work and play in Morrisville

Values

Dedication – Integrity – Courtesy – Innovation

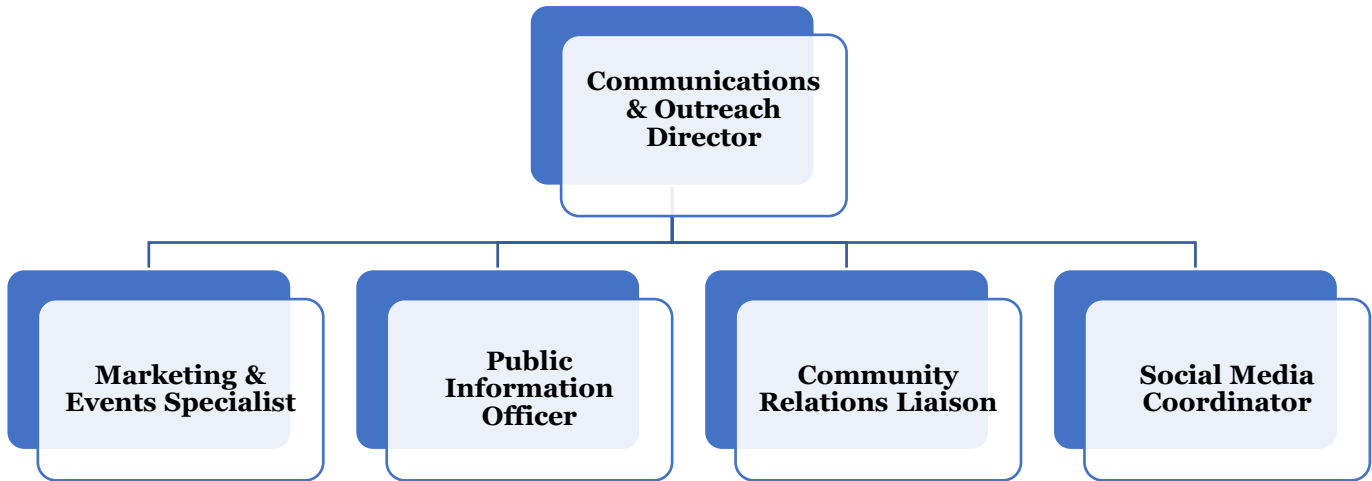
Communications & Outreach Department Overview

The Town of Morrisville's Communications & Outreach Department strives to provide clear, concise, proactive, transparent and timely information to residents, businesses, Town employees, Town Council, news media, visitors and tourists.

The department is responsible for the production and dissemination of information about the Town's operations and business. The department focuses on community outreach and engagement, media relations, public relations and signature special events.

The Town has made communication a strategic priority, with the intent of creating an engaged, inclusive community. The communications strategic plan aims to identify opportunities to share the Town's messages and streamline the methods by which those messages are shared, while conducting the business of the Town in an open and inclusive manner.

Communications & Outreach Department Structure



Communications & Outreach Director

- Develops and plans comprehensive communication, marketing and promotion strategies for Town programs, events and strategic initiatives
- Liaison for Council, Administration & HR
- Primary spokesperson for the Town

Marketing & Events Specialist

- Manages four signature Town events
- Communications liaison for Parks & Recreation
- Develops Parks & Recreation Program Guide

Public Information Officer

- Lead for website
- Coordinates weekly e-newsletter
- Develops quarterly newsletter
- Secondary spokesperson for the Town

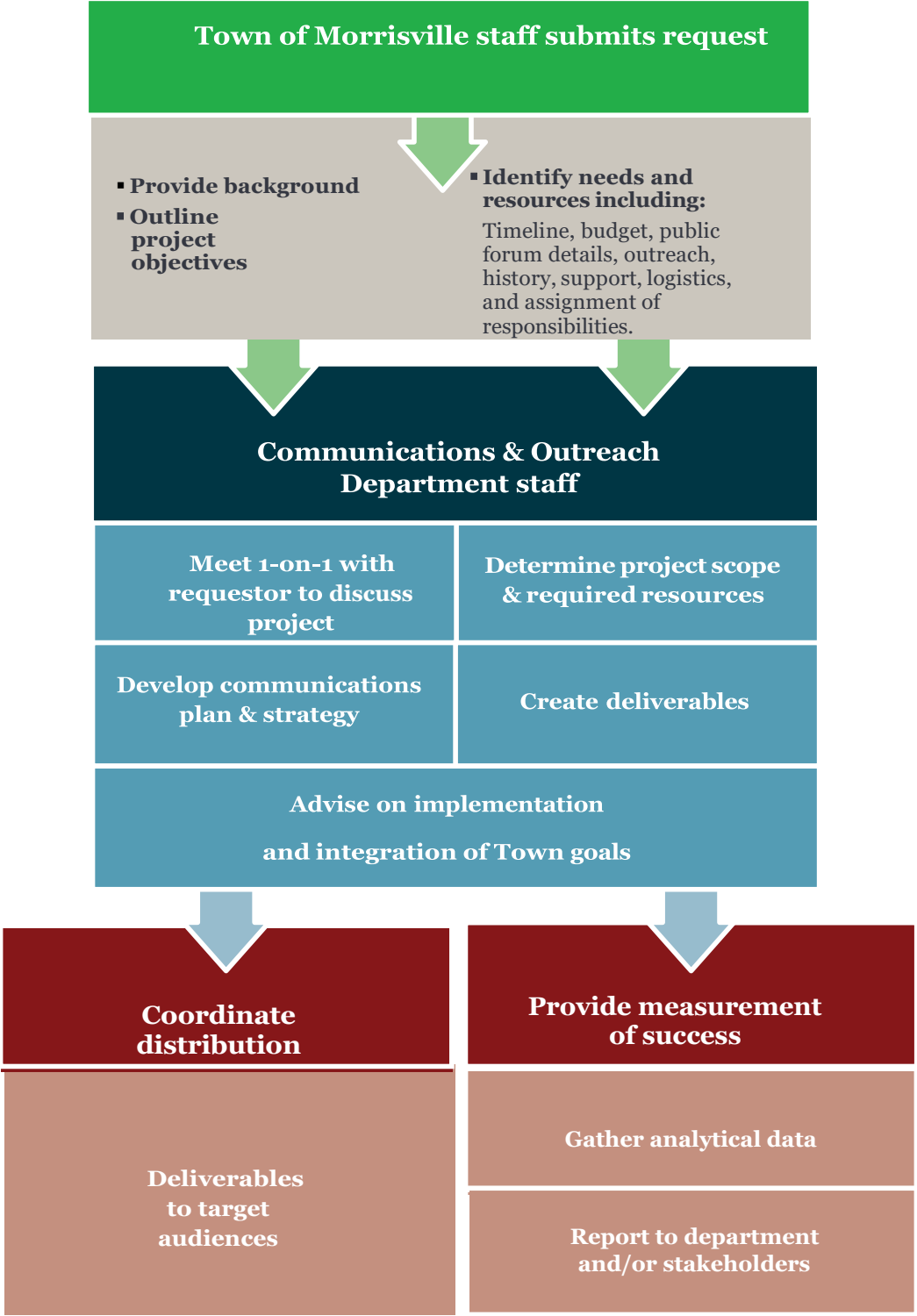
Community Relations Liaison

- Primary liaison to the business community and HOAs
- Maintains and manages contact information for contact lists/databases related to business education and outreach functions
- Assists with general project management

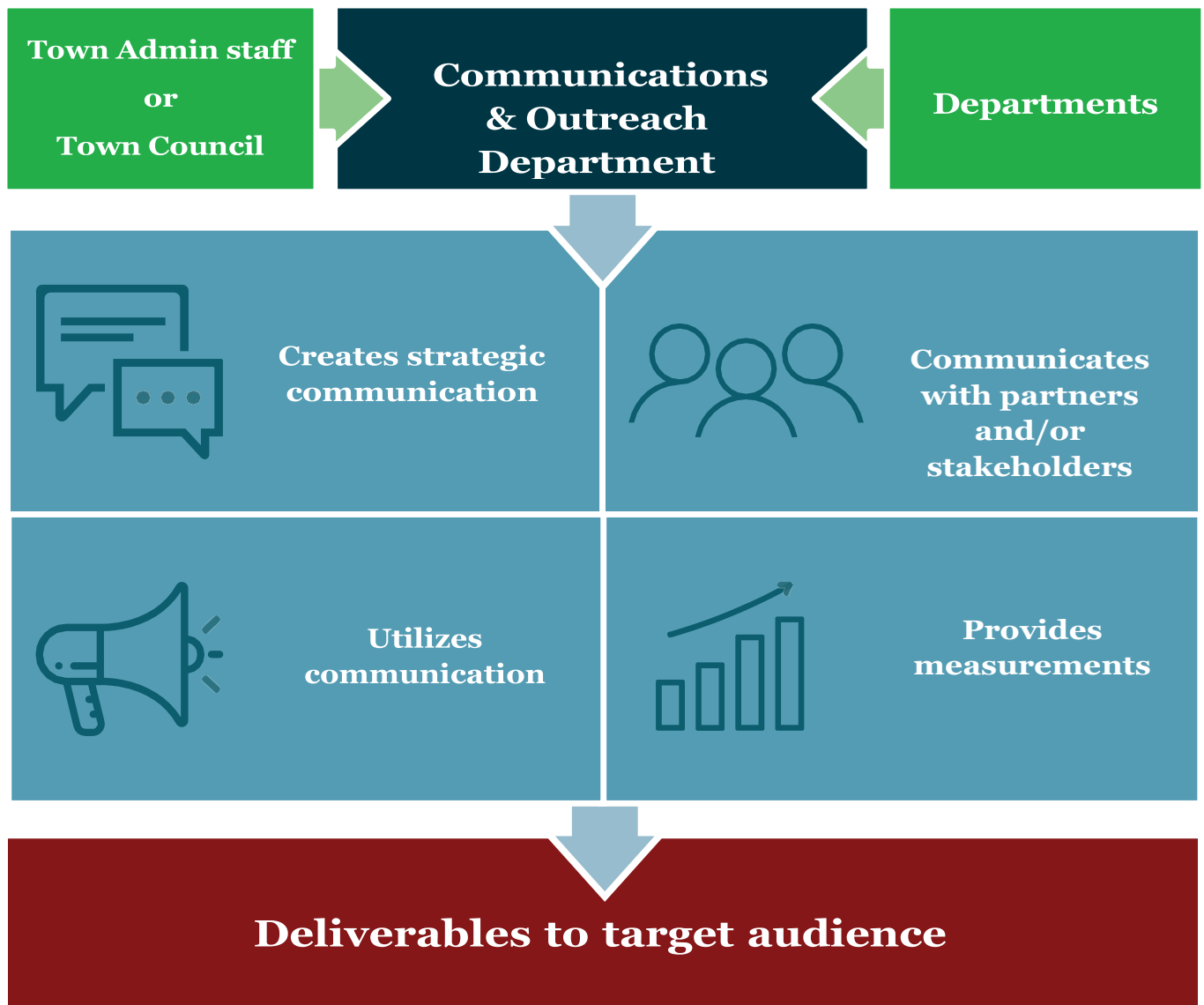
Social Media Coordinator

- Lead coordinator for social media
- Assists in promotion of special events
- Assists with graphic design

This chart outlines how communications requests flow through the Communications & Outreach Department. Requesters are asked to use the "Communications Activity Report" form to initiate requests.



To best support the Town, the Communications & Outreach Department utilizes this process to intake ideas, strategize key messages and create high-quality content to effectively communicate and engage the residents of Morrisville.



National Community Survey



In 2022, the Town of Morrisville surveyed residents to better understand the community's needs and perspectives. The National Community Survey (NCS) was developed by the National Research Center (NRC) at Polco. This scientific assessment measured community livability according to residents. It captured opinions on the community about the economy, mobility, community design, utilities, safety, natural environment, inclusivity, engagement, and more. Survey results were presented to the Town Council and shared with local media, residents and Town employees.

Communications staff is utilizing the survey data to guide their work. Understanding that only 38 percent of the residents on social media sites said they share their opinions, a Facebook group – “Talk Morrisville” – was established to create the possibility of more intimate, two-way communication with residents. The team is also encouraging Town departments to provide more opportunities for resident input at in-person Town events and programs. Eighty percent of those surveyed say they visit social media sites, and those platforms remain valuable vehicles for two-way resident communication. The Communications Department is continually exploring new and creative ways to engage residents and facilitate their input on Town initiatives.

This section below provides a snapshot of resident feedback as it pertains to communications products.

80% - percentage of residents who visit social media sites

38% - percentage of residents who share their opinions on social media sites

62% - percentage of residents who rated “residents’ connection and engagement with their community” excellent or good

76% - percentage of residents who rated “the Public Information Services” excellent or good (*up from 68% in 2017*)

68% - percentage of residents who rated “the Town’s ability to inform residents about issues facing the community” excellent or good (*higher than the national average*)

66% - percentage of residents who rated “their opportunity to participate in social events and activities” excellent or good

70% - percentage of residents who rated “the Town is open and transparent to the public” excellent or good (*higher than the national average*)

Target Audiences

- Residents
- Businesses
- Town employees
- News media
- Visitors and tourists
- Town influencers
- Stakeholders (Morrisville Town Council, Morrisville Chamber of Commerce, educational institutions, non-profits and faith-based organizations, future residents and businesses, and public and private partners)

Tactics

- Outreach and messaging (see tools below)
- Paid advertising
- Staff training and assistance (website, social media)

Our Tools

The Communications & Outreach Department utilizes many tools to reach its stakeholders with the Town's key messages and brand:

Digital Communications

Most of the Town of Morrisville's communications tools are digital:

- Town website: Townofmorrisville.org (includes Town calendar)
- Facebook (Town, police, fire, parks, stormwater)
- Twitter (Town, police, fire, parks, stormwater)
- Instagram (Town)
- LinkedIn (Town)
- YouTube (Town)
- Nextdoor (Town)

Email & Text Tools

- Internal email
- Everbridge email and text subscriptions

Special Events and Programs (subject to change)

Communications & Outreach Department

- July 3 Family Fun Festival
- S'Morrisville
- SpringFest
- Trick or Treat the Trail
- Veterans Day Celebration

Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources Department

- Diwali celebration
- Egg Hunt
- Holi celebration
- International Festival
- Juneteenth celebration
- Kite Festival
- Menorah Lighting
- Movies in the Park
- Music in the Park
- Tree Lighting

Police Department

- National Night Out

Fire Department

- Fire Safety Day

Public Works

- Earth Day
- Green Day

Media Relations Tools

- Press releases and advisories
- Press conferences
- Print/online/TV/radio media

Evaluation Tools

- Online Surveys and in-person surveys
- Digital media analytics (Facebook Insights, Google Analytics, etc.)

Communications Goals

1. Lead strategic communications efforts

Objectives:

Obj. 1.1: Collaborate with Town departments to support their initiatives [2023, ongoing]

Obj. 1.2: Create opportunities for effective stakeholder participation and collaboration [2023, ongoing]

Obj. 1.3: Successfully and thoughtfully tell the story of Morrisville [ongoing]

Initiatives:

Init. 1.1: Meet semi-annually with each department to discuss the major issues and opportunities coming up in the next two quarters and beyond, identify communication priorities and resources, and develop key messages and communication strategies [2023, ongoing]

Init. 1.2: Collaborate with Town departments to schedule open houses, information sessions, focus groups, virtual forums, volunteering opportunities, etc. [2023, ongoing]

Init. 1.3: Utilizing various communication channels, in collaboration with Town leadership and departments, relay information to residents, media and community stakeholders about Town priorities, activities, accomplishments and endeavors in a concise and clear manner [ongoing]

2. Enhance quality control procedures to ensure accurate communications products

Objectives:

Obj. 2.1: Improve audit processes for published communications materials [2023]

Obj. 2.2: Continue to emphasize quality control measures outlined in the document developed by the Communications team in 2022 (see Appendix A) [ongoing]

Obj. 2.3: Increase frequency of communication with social media coordinators [2023]

Initiatives:

Init. 2.1: Emphasize shared responsibility for ownership of content among embedded department web editors and social media coordinators [2023]

Init. 2.2: Stress the importance of error-free products during Communications staff meetings and monthly calls with embedded web editors **[ongoing]**

Init. 2.3: Create monthly meetings for embedded Town social media coordinators **[2023]**

3. Coordinate branding opportunities and re-branding of essential Town products

Objectives:

Obj. 3.1: Replace holiday pole banners on Town Hall Drive **[2023]**

Obj. 3.2: Update facilities map with locations of new Town buildings and landmarks **[2023]**

Obj. 3.3: Promote Morrisville as a destination place **[2023]**

Obj. 3.4: Consider the establishment of a virtual merchandise store for the sale of Morrisville-branded apparel and other items **[2024]**

Initiatives:

Init. 3.1: Coordinate the purchase of new holiday pole banners to replace the current ones hung on Town Hall Drive **[2023]**

Init. 3.2: Coordinate with the Engineering Department to get facilities placed to scale on the map; work with a local sign shop to create artwork and Public Works Department for installation **[2023]**

Init. 3.3: Create a video highlighting marketable Town features; Coordinate the production of professional photographs of Morrisville buildings, key locations and landmarks **[2023]**

Init. 3.4: Conduct research to determine the requirements involved and the feasibility of creating or joining a virtual platform to sell Morrisville apparel and other items **[2024]**

4. Deliver timely communications to Morrisville residents about Town issues, projects and services

Objectives:

Obj. 4.1: Familiarize residents with Town employees to put a face on those who serve the Town. **[2023, ongoing]**

Obj. 4.2: Promote the Town's new, emerging topics that require a heavy communications focus **[2023, ongoing]**

Initiatives:

Init. 4.1: Utilize digital platforms and newsletter to introduce Town of Morrisville staff to residents; Profile staff and departments monthly via video and social media profiles and newsletter features **[2023, ongoing]**

Init. 4.2: Proactively deliver timely information utilizing various platforms, including the Town’s social media pages, website, and other digital platforms to inform residents, businesses and other stakeholders about new projects, initiatives and facilities **[2023, ongoing]**

5. Continue to create, renew, enhance relationships with the business community, nonprofit organizations, educational partners and cultural organizations

Objectives:

Obj. 5.1: Gain a better understanding of the needs of small business owners **[2023]**

Obj. 5.2: Continue to promote Morrisville small businesses **[2023, ongoing]**

Obj. 5.3: Continue to develop and utilize the Town’s partnership with the Morrisville Chamber of Commerce **[2023, ongoing]**

Initiatives:

Init. 5.1: Establish a focus group of small business owners to gain a better understanding of their needs **[2023]**

Init. 5.2: Increase the number of small businesses participating in Town events. Create more space in the event layouts for businesses and expand business recruitment efforts. Profile and highlight Morrisville small businesses on digital platforms and in the newsletter **[2023, ongoing]**

Init. 5.3: Collaborate with the Chamber to coordinate business forums; utilize the Chamber’s website and newsletter to disseminate information; Share Chamber messages and information on Town platforms **[2023, ongoing]**

6. Continue to enhance digital communications

Objectives:

Obj. 6.1: Continue website enhancements **[2023, ongoing]**

Obj. 6.2: Enhance coordination of the delivery of communication products **[2023, ongoing]**

Obj. 6.3: Coordinate the future of the website **[2024-2025]**

Obj. 6.4: Continue expansion of HOA outreach [2023]

Initiatives:

Init. 6.1: Improve website performance and display, and search engine functionality [2023, ongoing]

Init. 6.2: Develop an annual editorial calendar and review and update it monthly to strategically plan out e-newsletters, news media content and website content. [2023, ongoing]

Init. 6.3: Examine the feasibility of a website refresh [2024-2025]

Init. 6.4: Develop a HOA e-newsletter to provide frequent updates to HOAs [2023]

7. Continue enhancement of special events and programs

Objectives:

Obj. 7.1: Re-align the Communications budget to facilitate successful events [2023]

Obj. 7.2: Capture the number of attendees at Town events [2023]

Obj. 7.3: Evaluate event attendee satisfaction [2023, ongoing]

Obj. 7.4: Analyze solutions to deal with increasing special event attendance [2023]

Initiatives:

Init. 7.1: Propose budget increase or line account adjustment(s) for the July 3 Family Fun Festival to account for recently expanded event [2023]

Init. 7.2: Explore the feasibility of utilizing Wi-Fi beacon technology to determine a close estimate of the number attendees at Town events [2023]

Init. 7.3: utilize on-site and digital surveys and polls during and after events to capture attendee satisfaction [2023, ongoing]

Init. 7.4: Investigate opportunities for additional parking, including for disabled persons; Prepare for disruptions that may be caused by the Town Center construction on Town Hall Drive; Seek alternative layouts for events at Morrisville Community Park [2023]

8. Continue efforts to standardize communications protocols across the Town

Objectives:

Obj. 8.1: Familiarize Town staff with the communications processes and procedures of the Communications & Outreach Department [**2023**]

Obj. 8.2: Standardize Town Survey process [**2023, ongoing**]

Obj. 8.3: Identify Town department budget priorities with communication components [**2023, ongoing**]

Initiatives:

Init. 8.1: Continue to educate staff about items in which Communications assumes the lead, including [**2023**]:

- News releases and press events
- Groundbreakings and ribbon-cuttings
- Editing and review of documents intended for public consumption
- Coordination of media interviews and media inquiry responses
- Surveys intended for mass delivery to the public

Init. 8.2: Create survey guidelines to aid Town staff in creation of successful surveys.

Init. 8.3: Collaborate with departments prior to mid-year budget submissions to identify priorities and initiatives that may involve communication products such as videos and advertising [**2023, ongoing**]

Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators provide service level measures of our activities.

Media Coverage

News Releases	The number of releases reacted to by the media
News Sentiment	The sentiment of mentions, articles or interviews published by the media – positive, negative or neutral
Reach	The reach of advertisements and news stories in media outlets. Examples include ads and news stories in print and online and the number of people who saw it based on the number of publications printed or the number of people who visited the webpage where the content is located

E-Newsletters

Subscribers	The number of people who have signed up to receive the communication
Open Rate	The average percentage of recipients who open the email or notification
Click-Through Rate	The average percentage of recipients who click on an active link within the email or publication

Website

Unique Visits	The number of distinct individuals visiting the site
Page Views	The number of times a page on the site has been viewed
Top Pages	The pages that are visited most frequently
Bounce Rate	The percentage of people that navigate away from the site after only viewing one page. A lower bounce rate means that people are exploring the page and finding the information they need
Search Terms	The more frequently a term is searched, the more likely it is that visitors are not finding what they need, and suggest it may need to be displayed more prominently

Social Media

Followers	The number of people who subscribe to, and follow, the Town's pages.
Engagement	The number of people who take action by interacting with the Town's pages including likes, comments, tags, or shares
Reach	The number of people who saw the Town's posts

Other Metrics

Estimating and tracking attendance at events and programs

Tracking participation in Town polls and surveys

Council feedback

Video views

Challenges

- Engaging a broader base of participation in town engagement beyond intermittent and topic-based involvement
- Providing fact- and content-based information to support helping inform community members
- Maintaining a “neutral” town presence and focus on town information and activities
- Management of “information overload” – volume and timing of multiple messages
- Continuous monitoring of social media, constant need for responses/engagement
- Identifying effective business outreach strategies
- Lack of Communication protocols across the organization

Opportunities

- Skilled staff with fresh perspective and interest for professional development
- Ability to tell the Morrisville story through various, creative channels
- Creating, building relationships with stakeholders, media and other partners

Lenses to Apply

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Make consistent communication products that align with the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and make them available across multiple mediums so that all residents can access them. Ensure communication products are written and distributed at an accessible level for all – in clear, concise and straightforward language – open and inclusive to all cultures.

Sustainability

When appropriate, showcase the Town’s sustainable projects, programs and purchases and our commitment to sustainability.

Appendix A – Quality Control

The table below is designed to ensure production of error-free communications products. The creator or lead of each produced item is responsible for ensuring that the correct reviewer has ample time for review prior to deadlines.

Product	Creator/Lead	Review	Frequency
Website Calendar Item	Department web editors/PIO	PIO	As needed
Next Week in Morrisville	PIO	COD	Weekly
Social Media Posts	SMC/MSEC	COD	Daily (Most created & scheduled a week in advance)
Weekly Everbridge Call, Text & Email	PIO	SMC	Weekly
Newsletter	PIO	COD/SMC/MSEC/CRL	Quarterly
News Release	PIO/COD	COD/PIO	3-4 monthly/As needed
Webpage Creation or Update	PIO/MSEC	COD	As needed
Flier/Brochure	SMC/MSEC/PIO	COD/PIO	As needed
Banner/Poster/Advertisement	SMC/MSEC/PIO	COD	2-3 monthly/As needed
Video	PIO	Involved subjects/COD	As needed
Program Guide	MSEC	COD/PIO/SMC	3 times per year
Welcome Packets	CRL/SMC (while vacant)	SMC/COD	Monthly
Signature Event Plans & Layout	MSEC	COD	4 times per year

Key:

Communications & Outreach Director – COD
 Public Information Officer – PIO
 Marketing & Special Events Coordinator – MSEC
 Social Media Coordinator – SMC
 Community Relations Liaison – CRL

