

January 2024



---

# COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

---



*The City of West Kelowna is gathered on the traditional  
territory of the syilx/Okanagan Peoples.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>WHAT'S INSIDE</b>	<b>2</b>
The What, The How, Moving Forward	<b>3</b>
<b>A PRINCIPLED APPROACH</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>OUR GOALS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>OUR TEAM</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>KEY MESSAGES</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>A CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY (OUR AUDIENCES)</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>TOOLS, METHODS AND TIMING</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>COMMUNITY RELATIONS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>MEDIA RELATIONS</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION</b>	<b>22</b>

# WHAT'S INSIDE

## 2024 BUDGET

As the City presents the Draft Five-Year Financial Plan it remains important for Council to receive community input on delivering priorities, programs and services that maintain and improve the quality of life for our residents. Throughout the budgeting process, the City is continuing to engage with the community at various levels while addressing the demand for new and affordable housing, which will come with rapid growth. Developing the budget from our...

The City of West Kelowna's Communications and Engagement Plan and Communications and Engagement Policy set out the strategic framework to achieve transparent, timely and accurate communication and engagement with our audiences, both internally and externally.

We incorporated as a City in 2007 – we are 17-years young! We're growing and we want our community to remain informed and involved in how we grow together. Council's direction is clear – we need a higher level of information, engagement and partnerships across the Greater Westside and with our advocacy in British Columbia.

As the City's first ever Communications and Engagement Plan, underpinned by a new and centralized Communications and Engagement Policy, we're underway with defined goals, the roadmap to get us there and why it all matters.

Using an integrated communications approach, our strategy includes how our people, processes and content all work together across City operations to inspire meaningful dialogue, achieve shared understanding and increase trusted relationships in all that we do.



**THE WHAT** – this Plan identifies ‘what’ we do, our goals, principles, team and who we serve, the tools and methods we use, our audience groups and more. This Plan conveys that we strategically combine the use of print, electronic and community relations tools and methods so we reach the right people at the right time with the right message to achieve results. In 2024 and beyond, our goals, deliverables, benchmarks and our success measures will demonstrate how we have accomplished what we set out to do each year.



**THE HOW** – this Plan also identifies ‘how’ we reach our goals through our annual work planning, implementation and ongoing evaluation. This includes gaining a better understanding of our audience groups, their attitudes and opinions and what’s important to them that helps to inform our future. From ground-level to Council’s Strategic Priorities, how we effectively communicate and engage are paramount to supporting the City’s overall success.



**MOVING FORWARD WITH COMMUNITY INPUT** – we’ll be seeking input from our community about what we’re doing well and what they’d like to see improved in the way we communicate and engage. Community attitudes and opinions are important to inform Council and guide staff as we remain fiscally responsible yet provide a higher level of communication and engagement in meaningful ways.

Then, we will refine our Policy and Plan annually, continue ongoing implementation and internal/external awareness, evaluation and making reasonable adjustments as we go. This Plan is a living document so we’ll keep doing what’s working well and refine our efforts to continuously improve to meet the changing needs of our community.

## The Next 10

This Plan and the Policy are designed with the Next 10 in mind. What does the next decade look like in our community, and how will our communications and engagement provide an effective structure yet remain flexible to support the success of all departments, programs and initiatives across the City? How will we meet the changing communication and engagement needs of our community? This is a chance to define where we’re going and how best to get there year-over-year.

This is our ‘start here’ roadmap, so let’s get to it...

---

# A PRINCIPLED APPROACH

---

During our planning, implementation and ongoing evaluation, these overarching principles underpin all that we do:

1

**Putting The Community First** – We value what’s important to our community and how we can help. We will seek to better understand what matters to them, and why, through their lens. We will also be a leader in our humble and highly-responsive approach to communications and engagement.

2

**Fostering Trusting Relationships** – Building and maintaining trust in all that we do is paramount. Words matter. Attitudes and opinions matter. Transparency and respect matter. We will do what we say and the proof is in our actions.

3

**Informing and Involving Early and Often** – We will inform and engage more through our print, electronic and community relations tools and methods. We will listen more and be highly responsive to input that guides informed decision-making.

4

**Remaining Responsible and Adaptable** – Our programs, initiatives and our interactions will directly support our goals using a best practice approach and fiscal responsibility.





# OUR GOALS

Our goals link directly to our Policy and the strategies mentioned throughout this Plan that are intended to:

## 1 PROVIDE OPEN, HONEST AND TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATIONS WITH LESS GOVERNMENT SPEAK AND MORE COMMUNITY-FOCUSED RELATIONS.

- Increase our advance and final notifications, enhance the way we layer our content and the tools/methods we use, and ensure we implement a no-surprise rule.
- Increase our one-on-one and small group interactions to make sure stakeholders and the public are well informed, engaged and truly understood.
- Proactively communicate with easy-to-understand language, and to provide the community with increased access to ask questions of our subject matter experts.

## 2 INCREASE ACCURATE AND TIMELY INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES WHERE INFORMED DECISIONS CAN BE MADE, AND REPORT OUT ON OUR PROGRESS.

- Increase our digital presence to provide greater remote opportunities to be informed and engaged, including the use of EngagementHQ (OurWK.ca online engagement platform), using e-notifications to provide information and a call to action, increase digital meetings and workshops and other tactics.
- Increase our understanding of who our community members are in each area through greater research, survey data and statistics.
- Complete Consultation Summary Reports after our engagement opportunities have concluded to demonstrate how feedback has been considered and used to inform our way forward.

## **3 PROVIDE RESPONSIVE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CUSTOMER SERVICE THAT SUPPORTS A POSITIVE AND MORE STRATEGIC REPUTATION.**

- Support and align internal City department communication and engagement initiatives through a centralized and coordinated work plan approach.
- Increase our efficiencies using an integrated communications approach across departments so communications is part of operational planning from the outset.
- Maximize City-wide strategic information and outreach to increase public participation without causing outreach fatigue.

## **4 REMAIN PROACTIVE, EFFECTIVE AND TRUSTWORTHY WITH OUR MEDIA RELATIONS THAT HELPS JOURNALISTS TELL AN ACCURATE, BALANCED AND FAIR STORY.**

- Be highly responsive to promptly address the needs of the media with the background, facts, why it matters and provide them with our next steps.
- Change public perception that indeed we conduct business in a transparent and highly accountable way.
- Increase our social media presence as a provider of fact-based information and opportunities to help with increased online journalism.

If we begin with the end in mind, we want to be regarded as a kind, trustworthy and community-focused partner, a leader in applying strategic communication and engagement best practices and keep our stakeholders and the public well informed and involved with no surprises.



# OUR TEAM

## Who We Are

Reporting to the Director of Corporate Initiatives, our Communications and Engagement Department (the Team) consists of 3.5 staff dedicated to communication and engagement activities: a Senior Advisor of Communications and Engagement, an Advisor, a Specialist, and a Coordinator (with the Coordinator role working half-time on grants).

## Who We Serve

The Team provides two-way communication to residents, businesses, stakeholders and government partners to be a part of making West Kelowna a great place to live, work and enjoy.



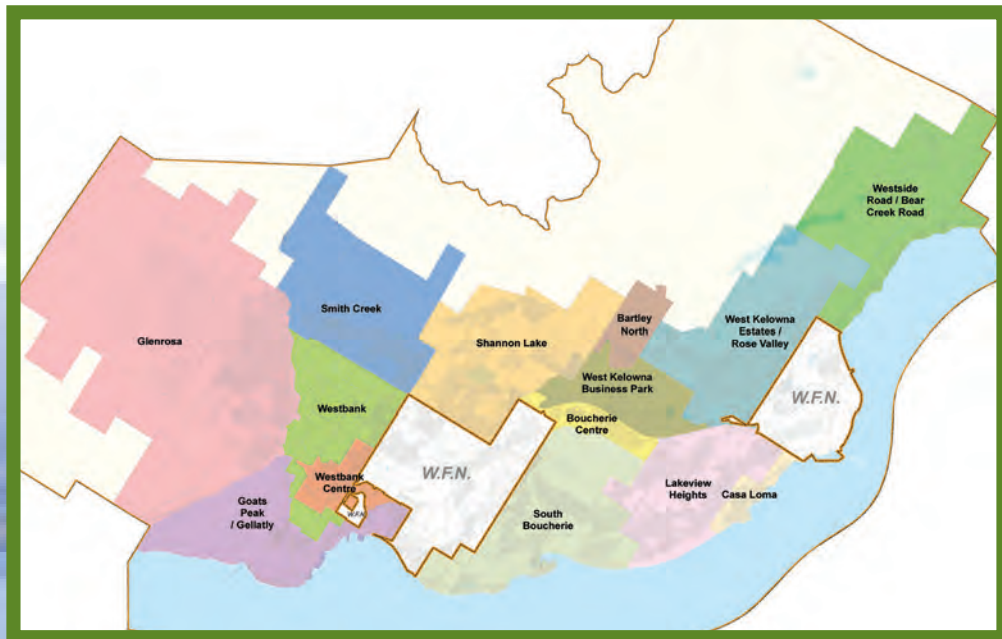
**40,715** population in the City of West Kelowna



**11,095** population in Westbank First Nation (Band Members and Non-Member Residents)



**6,382** population in the District of Peachland



## Communicating in a Complex World

The City of West Kelowna collaborates regularly with local governments such as the District of Peachland, Westbank First Nation and the Regional District of Central Okanagan.

As a young municipality that is centred in a growing region, governance and community issues are becoming more complex.

### All of Us Working Together

Our team serves as a gateway to support City staff for strategic communications planning, visual identity and daily communications needs.

We update an annual work plan process to better coordinate support for departments, streamline activities and highlight gaps for continual review and improvement.

Internal communications, outside of Human Resources employee engagement activities, include the delivery of key information to frontline staff about relevant and timely updates to aid in responding to public inquiries. Methods include a mix of print, electronic and one-on-one engagement.

## INTERNAL TOOLS AND METHODS



Intranet - Grapevine and  
All Staff Microsoft Teams



Briefing notes



Emails



Key points



Staff meetings



Video updates

Our external outreach uses similar tools such as print, electronic methods, which is described later in the plan.

# KEY MESSAGES

## Overarching Messaging

Overarching corporate messaging derives from *Council's Strategic Priorities 2022 – 2026: Annual Update 2024* and typically includes how Council and staff are delivering on those priorities. Examples include:

- Council's Vision is that the City of West Kelowna is a progressive local government, working with the community to make West Kelowna a resilient, welcoming, safe and inclusive place rich with opportunity for all ages.
- We're investing in infrastructure, our economic growth and prosperity, we're strengthening our community and fostering safety and well-being. As each initiative within these four Strategic Priority pillars is planned and implemented, we'll be working closely with stakeholders and the public so issues and opportunities are included.
- From Community Visioning to capital project consultations, we are aligning our operational plan communication and consultations to better coordinate and enhance our service levels.
- Your opinion matters and we want to hear from you!
- We need your opinion to help make West Kelowna one of the most desirable places to live, work and enjoy. Have your say and stay connected with us.



**FOSTER SAFETY  
AND  
WELL-BEING**



**STRENGTHEN  
OUR COMMUNITY**



**PURSUE ECONOMIC  
GROWTH AND**



**INVEST IN  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

## Departmental and Project-Specific Messaging

The Communications and Engagement Team collaborates with City staff to develop strategic communications that aid in informing and engaging with the public about their departments' initiatives.

Outside of Human Resources employee engagement initiatives, the Communications and Engagement Team also assists in delivering internal communications, such as providing key information to frontline staff to ensure they receive relevant and timely updates to aid in fielding public inquiries using print, digital and in-person methods such as postcards, webpage updates, fact sheets/handouts and more.

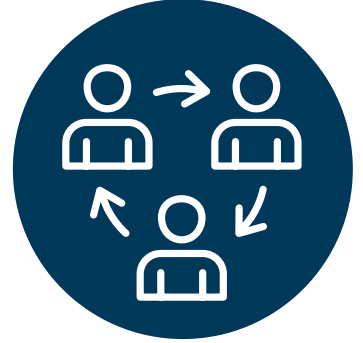


---

# A CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY

---

We remain focused on strengthening our relationships with the community, government and organizations with an interest in West Kelowna. The City shall continue to invest in group and one-on-one interactions, increasing and maintaining an inclusive, collaborative and participatory approach to its community relations.



As City-led projects occur that bring change to neighbourhoods in some form or another, we will inform and involve early and often to help guide decision making. We will build awareness, create opportunities to learn in our efforts to reduce delays and to avoid unforeseen stakeholder issues.

Community relations and engagement is built on relationships and improves situations, shapes decisions and helps set policy direction based on common goals and aspirations. We will continue to improve the way we interact with a number of community groups, agencies and other levels of government and our stakeholders.

## **Emphasize Youth Engagement**

The focus on growth and sustainability means we will discuss changes that must happen over time. To energize the discussions and reach a key demographic, outreach to youth will also be emphasized ongoing.

## **Use Strongly Engaged Citizens as a Resource**

Recognizing that there is a group of citizens who are well engaged on traditional city matters and have a lot of knowledge and skills, engagement with the “informed minority” will be a priority. This will mean connecting early and often with community associations, the development community, and other established stakeholders, challenging them with difficult issues and trade-offs, and asking for their support to raise awareness and participation rates.



## Target Audiences

The following is a list of stakeholders who may have an interest in the ongoing development of City-led projects, programs, policies and service delivery. The list serves as a starting point to help inform the development and delivery of engagement activities. This list is reviewed and supplemented throughout the process.

### a. General Public

- City of West Kelowna residents
- Property and business owners
- Individuals who work, shop or play and enjoy in West Kelowna

### b. Organized Groups

- Neighbourhood Associations
- Community Centres and Community Organizations
- Service Clubs
- Daycares and Early Education Centres
- Youth Ambassadors
- Social Agencies, Low Income Advocacy Groups, Non-Profit Housing Providers
- Sports and Recreation Groups
- Alternative Transportation Advocacy Groups
- Cultural Associations
- Non-Profit Sector – Arts Organizations, Service Providers
- Accessibility Groups
- Environmental Groups
- Seniors' Centres

### c. Business Community

- Businesses
- Greater Westside Board of Trade
- Urban Development Institute
- Rental Associations
- Property Management Companies
- Developers

### d. Education Stakeholders

- School District 23 and Board of Education
- Parent Advisory Groups
- High Schools
- Children and Youth – through School District 23
- UBC Okanagan
- Okanagan College
- Okanagan Regional Library

### e. Governments and Government Agencies

- Area MLAs and MPs
- Regional District of Central Okanagan
- Councils and staff of adjacent municipalities (Peachland, Westbank First Nation, Kelowna, Lake Country)
- First Nation (Okanagan Nation Alliance, Métis Community Services Society of BC)
- Provincial and Federal Governments and their agencies, corporations and ministries
- BC Transit
- Interior Health

### f. City of West Kelowna

- West Kelowna City Council
- Senior Management
- Project Teams
- City of West Kelowna Staff
- Fire Rescue Services
- Police Services

### g. Media

- Print
- TV
- Radio
- Online
- Social



# TOOLS, METHODS AND TIMING

## West Kelowna In the Know

A variety of communications and engagement strategies and platforms focusing on different stakeholder segments remains a focus area. A combination of print, electronic and community relations methods broadens the reach within the community and allows information to be received based on preferences.

In a world of continual change, the sheer volume of information that is produced and consumed each day reinforces the value of customizable bite-size content delivered through the appropriate communications channels at the right time.

An opportunity exists to examine a more coordinated approach to content delivery that will lead to sharing of City news and updates and increased engagement from the community.



**Print Communications**



**Digital Communications**



**Online Survey  
and Engagement Tools**

# PRINT

- Mailouts
- Brochures
- Fact Sheets
- Display Boards
- Signage
- Advertising
- Posters



Given the traditional reliance on print we will continue to produce materials using local vendors when possible for the purpose of informing the public and/or stakeholders when electronic means are not adequate or in addition to a mix of other tools and tactics.

As print materials are developed under the purview of the Communications and Engagement Department, we will consider design to enhance readability, eliminate City-speak, use less text and include more digital elements for greater understanding.

## Strategies

- Establish visual identity guidelines and branding of City materials to create consistency and brand voice.
- Prepare writing style guidelines for internal staff to support content development for reports, signage, bulletins and guidelines for programs or services.
- Prepare a suite of self-serve branded templates for staff and contractors to produce signage, brochures, fact sheets, bulletins, and other informational materials.
- Establish the Communications and Engagement Department as the go-to advisors for communications and outreach.



# DIGITAL

- Websites
- E-notification/updates – In Your Community
- Social media channels
- Webcast/Zoom/MS Teams
- Engagement platforms
- Photography and videography



## Increase in Digital Presence

We will continue to strive for accurate and timely information 24/7 that is well-organized and intuitively designed to enhance the public's experience. Access to City news, webcasts, highlights, good news stories, e-subscribe updates (In Your Community) and calendar of events will be promoted as the primary sources of information and written in plain language.

Our strategy will increase our digital presence so we can inform and engage our community as we continue to experience increasing change in a fast-paced world.

## Social Media Channels

The City uses Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube as its main social media channels for sharing City and partners' news and are managed by the Communications and Engagement Team.

**Creating a personality and humanizing the City is an important part of our social media presence.**

Reaching people through their preferred method is a key part of government communications and social media continues to be a powerful engagement tool to promote dialogue. It is a significant means to inform large audiences and create calls to action. Social media is also a hub for crisis communications and continues to be the official source of City information outside of the Central Okanagan Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).

Among our goals is continuous improvement in our social media strategy to expand our outreach on the City's channels and ensure optimal coordination and effectiveness.

Social media has many opportunities to engage but it also presents challenges in monitoring, issues management, and curbing inappropriate behaviour and misinformation. This must be carefully managed to protect members of our community and the City.

## Online Survey and Engagement Tools

Online engagement tools are key to involve a larger segment of West Kelowna's population, including the Greater Westside. Ensuring a variety of methods and platforms like MS Teams and EngagementHQ will lead to higher levels of public participation.

As part of any process, reporting back on what we heard and outreach outcomes will be an important part of the engagement process. Easy-to-use reporting tools and analytics will be a beneficial metric to understanding our reach and outcomes.

## Strategies

- Increase the City's digital presence on existing channels through the use of video, photography and content.
- Develop Key Performance Indicators to measure level of digital engagement on City platforms using a mix of methods including social media.
- Enhance our social media strategy to help guide the City's short- and long-term objectives for a friendly and welcoming social media presence.
- Ongoing review of the Policy and supporting the Plan.

---

---

# BE STRATEGIC

---

---

WE WILL CREATE AND FOLLOW  
A ROAD MAP THAT ALIGNS OUR  
**COMMUNICATIONS**  
WITH THE **GOALS OF**  
**OUR STRATEGIC PLAN**

# COMMUNITY RELATIONS

## A Community in Dialogue

Meaningful relationships help strengthen our community. They ensure we work in harmony with members of our community and partners to be responsive and welcoming while balancing the responsibility to govern. We will adjust as conditions change to community relations and engagement activities that contribute to better decision making and improved governance overall.

Creating a consistent approach to guide public and stakeholder engagement will strengthen our relationships and improve consistency with the community, government and organizations with an interest in West Kelowna. And while some decisions may not see universal support, those involved in the process will have a greater understanding of why.

Through a mix of face-to-face interactions and digital platforms, we will continue to reach out to the broader community and members that don't typically engage with local government.

### Strategies:

- Endeavour to learn more about residents' and stakeholders' communications preferences and how they would like to be engaged.
- Establish an engagement framework that provides a road map and criteria to staff to involve partners, stakeholders and members of the community.
- Continue to gauge citizen satisfaction and priorities for investment through various market research methods during key activities:
  - Annual budget consultation
  - Communications surveys
  - Exit survey questionnaires for City-led capital projects in various design and delivery phases.
- Undertake the development of a Crisis Communications Plan.
- Develop performance measures to assess progress and report out annually to Council and City staff.

**And, when it is done well, we ensure the most appropriate strategies and tactics are implemented with the efficient use of resources.**





# MEDIA RELATIONS

We are committed to providing timely, accurate and factual information across our West Kelowna community.

City news is released on the City's official channels and amplified through its platforms. All media inquiries are centralized through the Department to aid in identifying the appropriate subject expert or spokesperson and closing the loop in a timely manner.

Our Team continues to provide media relations support and protocols to support Council and staff to ensure that information released to the public is consistent, factual and timely through various methods.

For Government and government-related organizational announcements, we will follow the appropriate communications protocols as outlined by the federal and provincial governments and develop integrated communications procedures with our regional partners on an as-needed basis.

## Strategies

- Support subject experts with media training and provide accurate and factual information to help respond to media inquiries.
- Continue to monitor issues and be proactive in our response.
- Continue our role as the Public Information Officer for the EOC during emergency events within our jurisdiction.

**We recognize the importance of our local media in changing times and continue to be proactive to address issues that matter to our community and help spread the word.**





# MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

## Measuring up

We recognize how important it is to evaluate goals and objectives of communications for City initiatives and Council's Strategic Priorities. In measuring our effectiveness we are able to adjust and fine-tune our service levels and prioritize limited resources to meet the highest needs of the City.

In any evaluation process, good datasets are required to help understand our degree of success. This will include (but not be limited to) analytics from City inputs:

- Electronic communications (websites, social media, engagement platform, e-subscriber system)
- Project-specific inputs (feedback forms/questionnaires, Citizen Surveys, sentiment analysis)
- Media monitoring/evaluation
- Census data
- Market research - both quantitative and qualitative data



# CONCLUSION

Our Department has made huge strides and will continue to foster greater understanding of City-led initiatives and regionally significant issues of importance to our community.

We want to get to know our community better and apply those continual learnings for greater understanding and delivering results.

Moving forward we will continue to seek input from our internal and external groups to ensure we are effectively communicating and engaging to contribute to the City's overall success.

## Other reference documents:

- Communications and Engagement Policy
- Annual Operational Calendar
- Stakeholder Lists/Maps
- IAP2 Spectrum

**Humanizing the City and enhancing our communications process will build trust and increase engagement overall and, at the same time, build capacity internally.**





[WESTKELOWNACITY.CA](http://WESTKELOWNACITY.CA)

[OURWK.CA](http://OURWK.CA)