

AGENDA

**DES MOINES CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION
City Council Chambers
21630 11th Avenue S, Des Moines, Washington
Thursday, April 4, 2024 - 6:00 PM**

City Council meeting can be viewed live on the City's website, Comcast Channel 21/321 or on the City's [YouTube](#) channel.

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

CORRESPONDENCE

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Comments from the public must be limited to the items of business on the Study Session Agenda. Please sign in prior to the meeting and limit your comments to three (3) minutes.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Item 1. SENIOR EXEMPTIONS PRESENTATION
- John Wilson, King County Assessor
- Item 2. COMMUNICATIONS ASSESSMENT FINAL REPORT AND NEXT STEPS
[Communications Assessment Final Report and Next Steps](#)
- Item 3. CITY MANGER RECRUITMENT
[City Manager Recruitment](#)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NEXT MEETING DATE

April 11, 2024 City Council Regular Meeting

ADJOURNMENT

AGENDA ITEM

BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
City of Des Moines, WA

SUBJECT: Communications Assessment Final Report and Next Steps

FOR AGENDA OF: April 4, 2024

DEPT. OF ORIGIN: Administration

ATTACHMENTS:

DATE SUBMITTED: March 28, 2024

- 1. Communications Assessment Final Report

CLEARANCES:

- City Clerk JK
- Community Development _____
- Courts _____
- Emergency Management _____
- Finance _____
- Human Resources _____
- Legal /s/MH
- Marina _____
- Police _____
- Parks, Recreation & Senior Services _____
- Public Works _____

APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER

FOR SUBMITTAL: [Signature]

Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the Council and the public with the Communications Assessment Final Report and to discuss next steps including implementation of the recommendations. No formal action needs to be taken by the City Council at this time.

Suggested Motion

Motion: None.

Background

In partnership with the City, Consor conducted a comprehensive assessment of the City's internal and external communications and engagement practices to learn how to better serve the evolving needs of a diverse and growing city. The City worked with the Consor team to conduct several engagement activities with key stakeholders, including City Councilmembers, City staff, and residents. The first engagement activity was to interview all City Councilmembers and key City staff. The consultant team also conducted two focus groups, one with a focus on business owners and the other on residents; conducted a community-wide survey, hosted online and printed in the City Currents Magazine; and interviewed a peer city to learn about their communications strategies and practices. Feedback and insights from all engagement activities, along with a City Council work session, informed the recommendations of their initial draft report.

Consor presented their initial draft report on March 7 to the City Council and the public during a Council Study Session. Consor walked through the process they used to develop their report and then took questions from the Council and comments from the public. Finally Consor presented their draft recommendations.

Following the Council meeting, Consor compiled comments from the Council and the public and finalized their report. That final report is included as Attachment 1.

Discussion

Using all the feedback collected from the various engagement methods and suggestions from Councilmembers at the study session, the consultant team made the following recommendations:

Short-Term Recommendations: Within a Year

- Increase the variety of tools and methods to share timely, accurate information about City business with community members. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager.
- Implement an accessible community feedback process, which includes a timeline for responses and staff follow-up back to the community or community member. Implemented by City staff and City Manager.
- Update the City organization chart with roles and responsibilities. Implemented by the City Manager.
- City website updates to improve navigation and user experience. Implemented by City staff.
- Provide consistent briefing-level reports and packets to all Councilmembers ahead of council meetings. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager.
- Develop more robust and consistent onboarding and training for City Councilmembers and City staff, especially around communications protocols and policies. Implemented by HR Director and City Manager.

Mid-Term Recommendations: Between one to two years

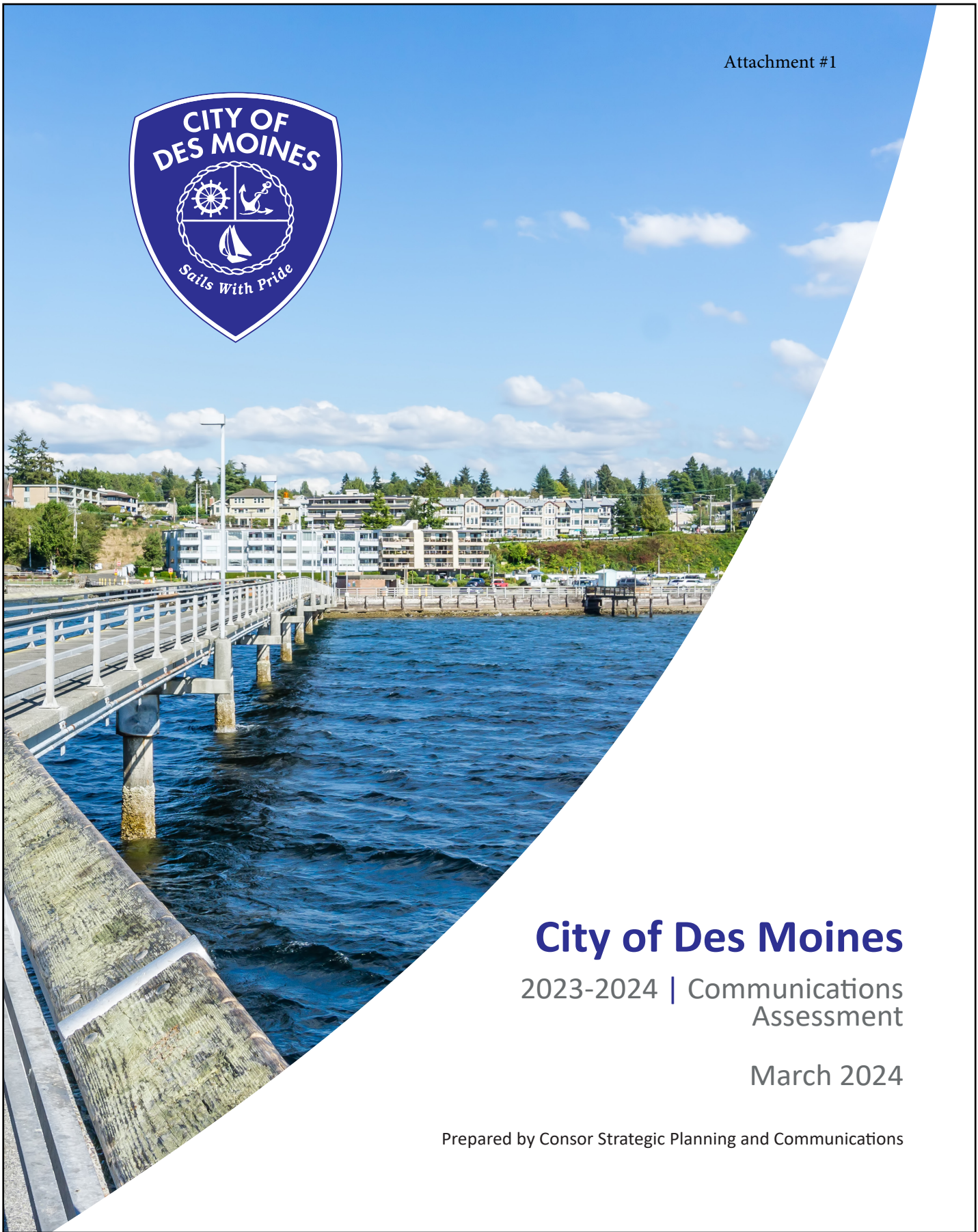
- Develop and refine community engagement guidelines, which include regular staff engagement with community members at accessible community events. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager, with support from Councilmembers.
- Begin to create a full-time communications position. Implemented by City staff, the City Manager, and Councilmembers.

Long-Term Recommendations: Longer than two years

- Develop a comprehensive, strategic communications plan to guide internal and external communications and engagement policies, practices, and strategies. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager, with support from Councilmembers.

Based on these recommendations, City staff is seeking concurrence and/or guidance from the Council on priorities and next steps. As was noted in the March 7 Consor presentation, some of these items have already been implemented by staff. Additionally, some of them can be implemented with relative ease. Staff can identify and provide updates on those items, however, Council input is needed on items that will materially impact the budget or the City's current organizational structure.

Attachment #1



City of Des Moines

2023-2024 | Communications
Assessment

March 2024

Prepared by Consor Strategic Planning and Communications

Acknowledgements

The project team is grateful to the community members of Des Moines who shared their time, feedback, and insights to engage in this communications assessment project and help the City find opportunities to grow and evolve in its communications practices. The project team is also grateful and appreciative of the support and collaboration of the following people who made this work successful.

City of Des Moines Staff

- Bonnie Wilkins,
Director of Community/
Administrative Services
- Tim George,
Interim City Manager
- Adrienne Johnson-Newton,
Assistant City Manager/
Human Resources Director
- Michael Matthias,
Interim Chief Economic
Development Officer

Consultant Team

- Chris Hoffman, Consor
- Jenna Franklin, Consor
- Nancy Thai, Consor
- Ziqi Wang, Consor

City of Des Moines City Councilmembers

- Harry Steinmetz, Deputy Mayor, Position #1
- JC Harris, Councilmember, Position #2
- Gene Achziger, Councilmember, Position #3
- Jeremy Nutting, Councilmember, Position #4
- Traci Buxton, Mayor, Position #5
(former Deputy Mayor)
- Vic Pennington, Councilmember, Position #6
(term ended Nov. 27, 2023)
- Yoshiko Grace Matsui, Councilmember, Position #6
- Matt Mahoney, Councilmember, Position #7
(former Mayor)



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Executive Summary

Beginning in 2023, the City of Des Moines conducted a comprehensive communications assessment of its internal and external communications and engagement practices to learn how to better serve the evolving needs of a diverse and growing city. The City partnered with Consor Strategic Planning and Communications (the consultant team) to lead several engagement activities with key stakeholders, including City Councilmembers, City staff, and residents. The goals were to improve the reach and impact of City communications and the City's relationship with community members. The communications assessment intends to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement, identify ways to enhance internal and external communication practices, enhance overall City brand and reputation, and make recommendations based on the understanding of current resources and how they might be allocated.

The consultant team began in May 2023 by interviewing the seven Councilmembers on Council at the time and six City staff members, launched a community-wide survey that was available online and printed in the *City Currents* magazine, hosted two focus groups (one with a focus on business owners and the other focused on residents), conducted a peer city interview with the City of Edmonds, and participated in a Council study session to share feedback highlights and key themes and proposed recommendations.

The consultant team heard several key themes echoed from the various engagement methods.

- Appreciation for the communications and tools members of City staff and Councilmembers are currently using.
- A clear need for a dedicated communications position to develop and implement a unified, comprehensive communications and engagement roadmap.
- There are opportunities for communication and collaboration improvements between City Council and city staff, amongst councilmembers, and inter-departmentally to increase transparency and accountability.
- A desire for more robust onboarding, orientation, training, employee engagement tools, and clearer communication protocols for all staff and City Councilmembers.
- More proactive, accountable, inclusive, and diverse tools and methods of communicating and engaging with the public.
- A desire to expand public comment opportunities.
- Learn from peer agencies, particularly ones with a city-manager form of government, to gain insights and ideas on how the City can improve their own communications internally and externally. This is also an opportunity for the City to share their own experiences and best practices.

Recommendations

Using all the feedback collected from the various engagement methods and suggestions from Councilmembers at the study session, the consultant team made the following recommendations.

Short-Term Recommendations: Within a Year

- Increase the variety of tools and methods to share timely, accurate information about City business with community members. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager.
- Implement an accessible community feedback process, which includes a timeline for responses and staff follow-up back to the community or community member. Implemented by City staff and City Manager.
- Update the City organization chart with roles and responsibilities. Implemented by the City Manager.
- City website updates to improve navigation and user experience. Implemented by City staff.
- Provide consistent briefing-level reports and packets to all Councilmembers ahead of council meetings. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager.
- Develop more robust and consistent onboarding and training for City Councilmembers and City staff, especially around communications protocols and policies. Implemented by HR Director and City Manager.

Mid-Term Recommendations: Between one to two years

- Develop and refine community engagement guidelines, which include regular staff engagement with community members at accessible community events. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager, with support from Councilmembers.
- Begin to create a full-time communications position. Implemented by City staff, the City Manager, and Councilmembers.

Long-Term Recommendations: Longer than two years

- Develop a comprehensive, strategic communications plan¹ to guide internal and external communications and engagement policies, practices, and strategies. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager, with support from Councilmembers.

¹ To be led or guided by the person in the communications position.

Project Overview

Purpose and Background

The City of Des Moines conducted a comprehensive assessment of its internal and external communications and engagement practices to learn how to better serve the evolving needs of a diverse and growing city. The City partnered with Consor Strategic Planning and Communications (the consultant team) to lead several engagement activities with key stakeholders, including City Councilmembers, City staff, and residents. The first engagement activity was to interview all City Councilmembers and key City staff. The consultant team also conducted two focus groups, one with a focus on business owners and the other on residents; conducted a community-wide survey, hosted online and printed in the *City Currents* magazine; and interviewed a peer city to learn about their communications strategies and practices. Feedback and insights from all engagement activities, along with a City Council work session, informed the recommendations in this report.

Stakeholder Interviews Key Themes

As an early step in the communications assessment, the consultant team interviewed City Councilmembers and key City staff between May and August 2023 to bring a broad cross-section of experience into consideration and to build a better understanding of the City's current state of affairs. The consultant team interviewed all seven Councilmembers and six City staff members (see Appendix A for the stakeholder interviews summary).

Stakeholders were asked about their roles and responsibilities, current communications and engagement practices, and what challenges and opportunities they saw related to internal and external communications and engagement. The collective key themes and takeaways from the stakeholder interviews were:

- Interviewees have strong dedication and pride in their work serving the Des Moines community.
- They expressed a clear need for a dedicated communications position to develop and implement a unified, comprehensive communications and engagement roadmap to report objective city news and events both to internal and external audiences.
- Interviewees expressed opportunities for communication and collaboration improvements between City Council and city staff, amongst councilmembers, and inter-departmentally to increase transparency and accountability.
- Interviewees identified a need for more robust onboarding, orientation, training, employee engagement tools, and clearer communication protocols for all staff and City Councilmembers.
- Stakeholders desired more proactive, accountable, inclusive, and diverse tools and methods of communicating and engaging with the public. This included improving current City tools such as the City website, social media presence, the *City Currents* magazine, and in-person engagement; and also considering new tools and tactics.
- Interviewees recommended learning from peer agencies, particularly one with a city-manager form of government, to gain insights and ideas on how the City can improve their own communications internally and externally.

Focus Group Key Themes

The consultant team facilitated two focus groups in October 2023 at the Des Moines public library (see Appendix B for the focus groups summary). The first group focused on business interests and was attended by 15 people. The second group was focused on general community interests and was attended by 11 people.

“A communications officer is needed.”

– Focus group participant


Focus group participants were asked about their current communications experiences with the City, what content and engagement activities they would like to see, and what accessibility and improvement opportunities they recommended. While both groups had slightly different focus areas, they both highlighted:

- A need for a dedicated full-time professional communications position who will be responsible and accountable for developing and implementing a comprehensive communications plan.
- A need for transparent, regular, and accountable communications from the City, which includes clear processes and procedures (i.e., standard permitting process with timeline expectations, which staff or department to connect with for public safety concerns, and an emphasis on customer service).
- A need to improve and expand the City’s current communications tools and engagement efforts, particularly the city’s website, social media presence, and the *City Currents* magazine (i.e., make the website more user-friendly, create a centralized location to share information via an all-inclusive calendar and to sign up for email listservs).
- A desire for more opportunities to engage with and hear updates and news directly from City staff.
- The importance of using diverse methods of communications and engagement opportunities and responding to community concerns in a more timely and open manner.

Community Survey Key Themes

The community survey asked participants to provide feedback that will help the City develop goals and priorities to improve City communications and engagement. The survey was open from August 28 through October 16, 2023, with 309 completed surveys from people who self-selected to take it (a convenience sampling). See Appendix C for the community survey summary. The survey was promoted through a citywide mailer, email, flyers placed at community locations, events and farmer’s markets, City social media channels and website, and a paper copy was included in the *City Currents* magazine. The survey asked general questions about how participants were connected to Des Moines and the current state of communications and engagement, and also specific questions about communications tools, concerns, issues, interests, and level of satisfaction with current efforts.


Community Preferences and Priorities Survey

 **The City of Des Moines wants to better understand the needs of our diverse and growing community!**

Help the City develop goals and priorities for improving City communication and engagement efforts with people who live, work, or visit Des Moines.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK BY OCT. 5th 2023!


Fill out the survey online or complete a print copy

 <https://bit.ly/WaterlandCitySurvey>

Get a hardcopy survey in the fall issue of City Currents magazine or at City Hall

Postmark your hardcopy survey by Oct. 5th

City of Des Moines
Attn: Community Survey
21630 11th Avenue S, Suite A
Des Moines, WA 98198



www.desmoineswa.gov

Overall, the findings emphasized the need for clearer, more accessible, and timely communication methods to engage and inform the diverse community effectively.

- **Mixed Satisfaction Levels:** The satisfaction levels with the city’s communication and engagement efforts were mixed, with roughly half of the respondents (46%) believing that improvements were needed. A significant portion, however, believed that the city’s efforts are above satisfactory, indicating room for enhancement while recognizing existing strengths.
- **Clarity and Timeliness:** While more than half of the respondents found the city’s outreach materials helpful and easy to understand, there were concerns about the timeliness, transparency, and user-friendliness. The comments suggested that residents were seeking clearer and more immediate communication.
- **Importance of Diverse Communication Channels:** Survey takers appreciated various communication channels like the Waterland Blog, emails, and personal interactions with city officials. They emphasized the importance of modernizing the city’s website, increasing social media presence, and using multiple digital communication tools.
- **Content Preferences:** Survey participants expressed a strong preference for official city news and updates, city/community events, and community initiatives. They desired more frequent updates in the *City Currents* magazine and transparency in decision-making processes. One hundred and fifty-five respondents shared their reasons and experiences when visiting the city’s website, 36 offered suggestions for improving user experiences, navigation, and content accuracy, and 88 community members recommended communication platforms or methods they hoped the city would consider adopting in the future.
- **City Meeting Experiences:** Respondents’ experiences with city meetings and events varied. Some desired more accessible, transparent, and well-timed meetings, emphasizing the need for meaningful public engagement and respectful communication.
- **Website Navigation Challenges:** Respondents found the city’s website challenging to navigate, with many suggesting a complete redesign to improve usability, visual appeal, and accessibility. Respondents indicated they want a one-stop-shop for community events and improved search functionality.
- **Interactions with City Staff:** There were mixed experiences when engaging with city staff. While some respondents had positive interactions and quick responses, others expressed frustration, especially regarding specific departments like Public Works. Respondents suggested improvements in identifying staff contacts and response times.
- **Top Priorities for Improvement:** Survey participants prioritized expanding public comment opportunities, improving website navigation, increasing digital communications usage, and holding more community meetings or town hall events.
- **Recommendations for the Future:** 76 survey participants contributed valuable comments and suggestions concerning Des Moines’ overall communication efforts, such as email updates, hard copies before major events, and the use of social media platforms like Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube. They also suggested creating a city blog, utilizing Zoom for council meetings, improving the city’s website, and exploring text notifications or apps for communication.

Peer City Interview Key Themes

As one of the final parts of the communications and engagement assessment, the consultant team interviewed a peer city to learn about their communications strategies, internal and external, and communications engagement. This aligned with recommendations heard from stakeholder interviews. The consultant team recommended the City of Edmonds to interview as a peer city because:

- They are of similar population size – Des Moines has a population of nearly 33,000 while Edmonds has nearly 43,000
- They have similar geographic elements – both have waterfronts and are situated next to I-5
- Edmonds has a dedicated communications professional on staff

The consultant team virtually interviewed Kelsey Foster, Communications Strategist/Public Information Officer (PIO) at the City of Edmonds, for an hour on December 22, 2023. See Appendix D for the peer city interview summary.

While the City of Edmonds did not have a communications professional on staff prior to 2019, they quickly recognized the importance and value of having a dedicated communications professional on their staff. When Kelsey started this new position, the City of Edmonds did not have many established communications policies and procedures. She began developing the City of Edmonds communications and engagement strategies and practices and helping educate her colleagues on her role and the skillset and expertise she brings to support all City departments and their communications needs.

Highlights from the interview included Kelsey's focus and intention in building relationships. She builds relationships with colleagues, to better understand the city's communications and engagement needs and how to support those needs; with community members, to better connect with and understand community needs and foster positive engagement; and with other communications professionals from neighboring jurisdictions, to form a support network of sharing best practices and city-related news. Kelsey also shared that the City of Edmonds uses a variety of communications and engagement tools and methods to reach community members. The city uses hyper local media to advertise events, meetings, and surveys, a quarterly printed newsletter, Facebook and Instagram, and plans to host a "Civic 101" course to help community members learn about the roles and responsibilities of the different city departments and of the City Council.

It is important to build relationships, within the City, with the community, and with neighboring jurisdictions to grow a support network.

City Council Study Session

City staff and the consultant team attended a City Council study session on Thursday, March 7, to share the feedback and key highlights collected from City Councilmembers, City staff, and community members. The first portion of the presentation (see Appendix E for the PowerPoint presentation) gave an overview of each engagement method and key highlights and takeaways. Afterwards, Councilmembers asked questions about the engagement process and results. Questions included:

- What is the City of Edmond's communications budget?
- How long did it take City of Edmond's to create their strategic communications plan?
- What can the City do to better reach less engaged community members and populations?

During the next portion of the presentation, the consultant team shared recommendations (provided in the next section this report) categorized by short-, mid-, and long-term timelines. After sharing the recommendations, community members were invited to provide comments. Some comments included:

- Agreement that the City has many opportunities for growth to better meet the communications and engagement needs of community members and City staff.
- Support for many of the recommendations shared.
- Strong support for hiring a dedicated communications professional on staff; a high priority after hiring a new City Manager.
- Some other cities that could serve as resources and examples are SeaTac and Mountlake Terrace.

Community members also submitted written comments after the presentation, which are included in Appendix F.

After public comments, the Council discussed the communications assessment recommendations. Councilmembers shared several thoughts, including:

- Consideration of a councilmember requests app, like the City of SeaTac has, to track requests over time and to use as a resource for councilmembers, current and future.
- Consideration to develop a City specific communications app that community members can download to meet all their communications needs.
- A request for more specific examples in the recommendations.
- A request that recommendations include which audiences (i.e., City staff, Councilmembers, City Manager, etc.) can implement them.

Once the Councilmembers discussion was complete, the consultant team shared the next steps would be to finalize the recommendations, incorporating feedback heard during the study session, and for City staff to review and finalize the recommendations report. City staff will then work with the Council to consider prioritization and budgeting to create a plan to implement recommendations.

“I commend the city investing in a communications assessment. This is a critical first step toward bringing our city’s communications practices up to the standards and expectations that today’s [residents] hold for public entities.”

– Written public comment



Recommendations

Based on the collective feedback and insights provided by City Councilmembers, staff, and community members, the consultant team developed a set of short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations for City and Council consideration. Additionally, based on feedback heard during the City Council study session, recommendations provide guidance on implementing recommendations (i.e., City staff, City Manager, Councilmembers). These recommendations will help to improve and evolve the City's internal and external communications and engagement practices. During the recommendations assessment, the City experienced a change in City Manager leadership in November 2023. As the consultant team was developing the recommendations, the interim City Manager began to implement several communications and engagement-related updates that were aligned with forthcoming recommendations. The updated communications processes and policies implemented by the interim City Manager, independent of coordination with the consultant team, are denoted in the following recommendations with a star ★. The timeframes for recommendation implementation of short-, mid-, and long-term are the consultant team's estimates of the time it will take to implement or begin to implement various policies, procedures, and updates. The reality of the City's resources, including time and budget, and unforeseen circumstances may necessitate a change in the implementation timeline. Furthermore, it is important to note that while the report includes timelines and specific examples for these recommendations, the plan to implement these recommendations must be informed by City staff members and Councilmembers who have lived experience in their community, can provide context and nuance, and can build support to move recommendations forward into reality.

Short-Term Recommendations

Recommendations that may be implemented within a year:

Increase the variety of tools and methods to share timely, accurate information about City business with community members. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager.

- Expand the City's social media presence.
 - o Create a consistent schedule to share information and events on the City Facebook page.
 - o Create and maintain a City Instagram account to engage with residents who use this social media platform and to extend the reach of Facebook posts.
 - o Share more human-centered content and stories about staff and residents (i.e., Staff Spotlights or Community Member Moments), to help build community relationships and culture.
- Share weekly or bi-weekly City updates on City communications channels (i.e., City website, social media accounts, email listservs, etc.)
- ★ City manager reports that include City news highlights and department updates are an effective tool to share objective, accurate City information and updates on a consistent basis. These reports can be shared on the City website, through social media posts, via email or newsletters, etc.

- Update the *City Currents* magazine to better serve community interests and needs.
 - o Feedback from focus group sessions recommend publishing *City Currents* magazine more frequently, potentially monthly, so that the City or local businesses can share upcoming events or promote specials in a timely manner.
 - o Feedback from focus group sessions also recommend increasing content diversity (i.e., adding a letter to the editor, opinions section, content for families with and without children, young adults, etc.).
- Create and maintain email listservs with specific topics, such as general City news and updates, business news, or City projects and initiatives, for people to sign up for.
- Schedule regular “State of the City” reports or townhall-style meetings.

Implement an accessible community feedback process, which includes a timeline for responses and staff follow-up back to the community or community member. Implemented by City staff and City Manager.

- One recommendation from the feedback collected during the assessment was to install a comments box at city hall. In addition to a physical submission option, add an option to submit a comment online (i.e., on the [Report a Concern](#) webpage on the City website).

Update the City organization chart with roles and responsibilities. Implemented by the City Manager.

- Create one version for City staff to help orient new staff members and clarify whom to connect with for specific needs in each department.
- Create a public-facing version to help community members decide which department and which staff member to connect with for specific needs and concerns.
 - o Additionally, develop a decision tree to supplement a public-facing organization chart to help community members better navigate through the city structure to meet their needs quickly. It could start with the most commonly requested services or questions about what a community member would like to do.
- Review and update organization charts annually, for example, adding this as an agenda item during regularly scheduled staff retreats or meetings.

City website updates to improve navigation and user experience. Implemented by City staff.

- Update events calendar to be more prominent on the website homepage, including City and community events.
- Improve website navigation based on user feedback.
- ★ Ensure the website is accessible and ADA compliant.
- Create an easy-to-use guide or process manual for the [Doing Business](#) webpage on how to do business with and in the City, including contact information for additional business related support.

Provide consistent briefing-level reports and packets to all Councilmembers ahead of council meetings. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager.

- ★ All Councilmembers will have access to the same information to be prepared to make informed decisions.
- ★ Develop more robust and consistent onboarding and training for City Councilmembers and City staff, especially around communications protocols and policies. Implemented by HR Director and City Manager.
 - Explore [Association of Washington Cities](#) resources to supplement City provided onboarding and training for Councilmember training and support.
 - Include policies governing response times to public questions or concerns and an emphasis on customer service when engaging with community members.

Mid-Term Recommendations

Recommendations that may be implemented between a year to two years:

Develop and refine community engagement guidelines, which include regular staff engagement with community members at accessible community events. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager, with support from Councilmembers.

- Identify community events to attend and staff to engage and attend in person.
- Host City-sponsored events, such as coffee with the Mayor, at different times of the day (morning, afternoon, evening) on different days of the week and weekend at accessible locations so that people have options to attend based on their availability.
- Develop guidelines that increase accessibility and inclusivity.
 - o Provide opportunities, when possible, for people to engage virtually if they are unable to attend in-person. For example, in addition to holding City Council meetings in-person, host meetings online as well using an online meeting platform such as Zoom to increase accessibility and inclusivity. Another example is to host online open houses where people can visit a website to learn about a project and provide feedback and input over several days and engage with materials in the language they use.
 - o Reduce barriers to attending events in-person, for example by providing childcare, food or light refreshments, transportation vouchers, stipends, interpreters, or translated or transcreated² project materials.

Begin to create a full-time communications position. Implemented by City staff, the City Manager, and Councilmembers.

- Identify funding and process with City Council to create this position.
- Develop a detailed position description that includes responsibilities and expectations.

² Transcreated materials are those that are translated into a language used by a specific community and also designed in a way that best meets the needs and cultural context of a specific community. While the exact text may not be the same between two documents, transcreation preserves the intent and spirit of a message and tailors it to a specific audience.

- o The person in this communications position would work in collaboration with the Police Department’s Public Information Officer and provide support on any Police Department communications needs.
- Once hired, encourage the person in the communications position to connect with other communications staff from neighboring jurisdictions to build a support network.

Long-Term Recommendations

Recommendations that may take two years or longer to develop and implement:

Develop a comprehensive, strategic communications plan³ to guide internal and external communications and engagement policies, practices, and strategies. Implemented by City staff and the City Manager, with support from Councilmembers.

- Develop strong City branding, goals and outcomes, metrics, process and policies, and guiding principles that are grounded in the City’s mission, vision, and values.
- Engage with City staff and departments to understand needs, priorities, and to inform the plan.

Next Steps

City staff will work closely with Councilmembers to develop a plan to prioritize recommendations to implement and identify budget and resources to dedicate to the implementation process.



³ To be led or guided by the person in the communications position.

Appendices

- A: Stakeholder Interviews Summary
- B: Focus Groups Summary
- C: Survey Summary
- D: Peer City Interview Summary
- E: Council Study Session
- F: Council Study Session – Public Comments



City of Des Moines

Communications Assessment

Stakeholder Interviews Key Themes and Takeaways

Introduction

The City of Des Moines is conducting a comprehensive assessment of internal and external communications and engagement practices to learn how to serve the evolving needs of a diverse and growing city. As an early step, the consultant team interviewed key staff and City Councilmembers between May and August 2023 to bring a broad cross-section of experience into consideration and to build a better understanding of the City's current state of affairs. See Appendix A for a list of people interviewed. The consultant team completed 13 interviews, and these will be used to shape recommendations, along with public input gathered through a community survey, community focus groups, a peer agency interview to serve as an external benchmark, and workshops and milestone briefings with City staff and the Council.

This summary includes:

- City Councilmembers key themes and takeaways
- City staff key themes and takeaways
- Collective key themes and takeaways
- Appendices

Highlights

The following is a summary of what interviewees shared about their work environment, challenges, priorities, and opportunities they aspire to explore as potential changes and improvements are evaluated. See Appendix B for the interview questions. The themes that emerged included interviewees pride in their work and commitment to serving the community, a desire to improve both internal and external communications and collaboration, opportunities to improve current City communication tools and explore new tactics to better serve the City's fast growing and diverse community, and a need for a dedicated communications staff position to develop and implement a comprehensive strategic communications roadmap.

City Councilmembers Key Themes and Takeaways

The seven City Councilmembers shared a need to improve transparency, share objective and accurate communication with the community, and the importance of enhancing how the City shares information with the public. Councilmembers shared that there is room for improvement in how councilmembers communicate and collaborate with one another in respectful, productive ways. Councilmembers would like to implement a strategy for more transparent and accountable communication, fostering

community unity, and improving communication channels and community engagement. Overall, interviewees called for more inclusivity, a focus on genuine engagement, and long-term and strategic planning.

Desire to serve the community

- Councilmembers expressed a strong desire to serve the community and make a positive impact.
- They are passionate about building community and see the importance of effectively communicating with the public and within the City and want to improve current City practices.

Need for a communications director

- Councilmembers see a need to hire a dedicated communications director to oversee and implement the City's communications strategy.
- They see this role as providing objective, factual, and neutral reporting of City business and to enhance internal and external communications.

Council communications and collaboration

- Interviewees expressed a desire for better teamwork and collaboration among councilmembers and with City staff.
- Disruptive behavior and lack of cohesion on the council can hinder the council from doing its work effectively.
- Interviewees called for more transparent and accountable communication, including objective reporting of city business.

Councilmember orientation and training

- Councilmembers shared that there are varying degrees of onboarding, orientation, and training for councilmembers.
- They saw a need for consistent and comprehensive onboarding, orientation, and training, clearer communication protocols, relationship building, and timely information sharing.
- Some suggestions included looking to the Washinton Cities Association for resources for councilmembers and briefing-level reports by city staff to help councilmembers stay informed.

Council and City staff engagement

- Councilmembers shared concerns about strained relationships between councilmembers and the city manager and how it could impact collaboration with city staff.
- Interviewees would like greater trust, collaboration, and sharing of information effectively and openly.

Community engagement and communications

- Interviewees shared a desire for more inclusive and accessible communications for community members with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

- Many also shared a need to improve the communications tools the City is already using, for example the city website and social media channels, and try new tools, such as a community calendar.
- Interviewees placed an emphasis on the importance of meaningful, transparent engagement and community visioning with the City's growing diversity. One person suggested hosting focus groups with diverse communities to gather their input.

Learn from peer cities

- Councilmembers suggested learning from the communication practices of other cities and agencies.
- Interviewees specifically suggested looking at other peer municipalities with council-manager forms of government for ideas and inspiration.

City Staff Key Themes and Takeaways

City staff who were interviewed shared that they take pride in the meaningful work that they do serving the community. Interviewees expressed a need to improve the City's communication culture, with an emphasis on inter-departmental coordination and responsiveness. Interviewees felt it is important to have clear protocols, training, and transparent communication to foster trust amongst City staff and with the greater community. Staff members recommended clarifying roles and responsibilities, exploring ways to improve the City's communication channels and tools, and fostering internal collaboration. These insights collectively underscore the significance of effective communication, transparency, and accountability in strengthening the City's relationship with the community and internal departments.

Internal communications

- Staff members shared a desire for a shared mission and vision and plan to implement those to anchor the entire city staff in their work and drive daily actions.
- Interviewees shared they felt there are many priorities and limited time and resources, which contribute to challenges with internal communications, especially lacking a cohesive communications plan and strategy.

Inter-departmental teamwork, and collaboration

- Interviewees expressed challenges in communicating with other departments, including not knowing who the right person is to connect with and receiving timely responses.
- They suggested ways to overcome challenges including encouraging more information sharing and dissemination across all City departments (this way one department is aware if another department is hosting or planning an event), updating the City organization chart with clear roles and responsibilities, and developing staff engagement tools and procedures to enhance internal communication and efficiency.
- While inter-departmental communication and collaboration can be difficult, several staff members commented that communication and teamwork within their own teams is strong.

Staff and City Council relationship

- Interviewees desired more collaboration with the City Council and to also see more cohesion and mutual respect amongst City Councilmembers.
- Interviewees expressed frustration when councilmembers share inaccurate information, especially about city processes.
- They also shared the importance of distinguishing between official city work and individual councilmember opinions.

Community engagement and communications

- The community desires more robust, high-touch engagement with the City and diverse communications tactics to learn about City and community news.
- The City's current website design is difficult to navigate and makes it hard for visitors to engage with and find what they need.
- Interviewees shared suggestions of more proactively sharing City news and information, including more human-centered stories, on the City website and creating an events calendar. Additionally, it is crucial to have a strong and unified city brand that serves the need of a growing, diverse community.

Challenges of remote and hybrid work

- Interviewees shared that remote and hybrid work has changed work patterns and styles and created some challenges, including impacting staff members' connection to the City's mission and ability to collaborate with one another.
- Working in a remote or hybrid setting can make it difficult to understand the work culture and norms.
- One recommendation was to improve employee training, onboarding, communications tools, and protocols to help with remote and hybrid work challenges so staff can collaborate more effectively.
- Another recommendation was to look at successful private businesses to glean ideas on how to improve remote and hybrid work that might work in a public agency.

Learn from peers and others

- Staff members suggested the City could learn from peer agencies and gain insights and ideas on how to improve the City's internal and external communication practices. Another suggestion was to create a suggestions box where communities members could share their thoughts.

Collective Key Themes and Takeaways

The collective key themes and takeaways from the stakeholder interviews are:

- Interviewees have strong dedication and pride in their work serving the Des Moines community.

- They expressed a clear need for a dedicated communications director to develop and implement a unified, comprehensive communications roadmap to report objective city news and events both to internal and external audiences.
- Interviewees expressed opportunities for communication and collaboration improvements between City Council and city staff, amongst councilmembers, and inter-departmentally to increase transparency and accountability.
- Interviewees identified a need for more robust onboarding, orientation, training, employee engagement tools, and clearer communication protocols for all staff and City Councilmembers.
- Stakeholders desired more proactive, accountable, inclusive, and diverse tools and methods of communicating and engaging with the public. This included improving current City tools such as the City website, social media presence, City Currents magazine, and in-person engagement; and also considering new tools and tactics.
- Interviewees recommended learning from peer agencies, particularly one with a city-manager form of government, to gain insights and ideas on how the City can improve their own communications internally and externally.

Next Steps

The key themes and takeaways from the stakeholder interviews, along with feedback from a community survey, focus group discussions, and a peer agency communications practices review, will help to inform recommendations to improve communications and engagement practices in the City of Des Moines.

Appendices

Appendix A

Participants

City Council

Mayor Matt Mahoney

Deputy Mayor Traci Buxton

Councilmember Gene Achziger

Councilmember JC Harris

Councilmember Jeremy Nutting

Councilmember Vic Pennington

Councilmember Harry Steinmetz

City Staff

Rochelle Caton, Human Services Management Analyst

Tim George, City Attorney

Adrienne Johnson-Newton, Human Resources Director

Sara Lee, Public Records Analyst and Manager

Michael Matthias, City Manager

Bonnie Wilkins, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix B

Interview Discussion Key Questions

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS [CITY COUNCIL]	INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS [STAFF]
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How long have you served on the Des Moines City Council?<li>2. What drew you to serve your community in this leadership position?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How long have you worked with the City of Des Moines?<li>2. What drew you to work in public service at the City?

3. Can you describe your duties and responsibilities of your role?
 - a. Optional follow-up question: What kinds of pressures do you face in your role?
4. Most typically, do you find yourself oriented towards addressing immediate near-term needs or longer-term issues?
5. What do you find most rewarding about your work?
 - a. Optional follow-up question: What do you find most challenging about your role?
6. What are the issues community members ask you about most frequently?
7. How do you typically engage and communicate with the community?
 - a. Optional follow-up question: In your experience, what are the preferred and most effective engagement tools for connecting with and serving community members, stakeholders, and partners?
8. How would you describe the City's internal and external communications and engagement culture and practices today (E.g., individualistic, collective, predictable, uncertain, accountable)?
9. What's working well today, isn't working well, and what do you think defines the successes and challenges?
 - a. Optional follow-up question: Are there risks or missed opportunities related to internal or external communications and engagement?
 - b. Optional follow-up question: How helpful and productive are internal communications and interpersonal rapport today?

- c. Optional follow-up question: How helpful and productive are external (community, stakeholder, peer, or partner agency) communications engagement activities today?
- 10. When you think about what you would like to see the City achieve through updating communications and engagement practices, what words come to mind?
- 11. Tell us about your personal work and communication style?
 - a. Optional follow-up question: Do you perceive the work styles of your colleagues as similar or dissimilar to yourself and how do you accommodate the styles different from your own?
 - b. Optional follow-up question: How do you typically interact or communicate with Councilmembers?
 - c. Optional follow-up question: How do you interact or communicate with city staff?
- 12. What are the main activities or work needs that require teaming or collaboration with colleagues to advance individual or shared interests?
 - a. Optional follow-up question: How would you describe the working relationship, collaboration, and trust or respect among Council and staff (and why)?
- 13. Did your onboarding process for your current role include any orientation or training activities (if so what, if not would they have been helpful)?
 - a. Optional follow-up question: How clearly defined is your work related to communications and engagement polices, practices, protocols, or tools?
 - b. Optional follow-up question: Is there training, policies, or procedures that guide how you work or clarify internal or external communications protocols?
 - c. Optional follow-up questions: When it comes to internal collaboration and information sharing about the status of city business or issues...
 - i. Is information shared in a timely way and at the right level of detail using effective tools to use it effectively?
 - ii. Do if you find yourself needing to reply to questions or address issues publicly without enough information or context – if so, what do you do?
 - iii. How much do you trust the content or framing of information shared with you?
- 14. What other steps would you suggest the City take related to communications to meet the diverse needs of the community, staff, and Council?

15. What is your single most important piece of advice for the City as it creates a roadmap for communications and engagement going forward?

16. Are there any other comments, suggestions, or recommendations you would like to share – including other people or a peer agency we should interview as a part of this process?



City of Des Moines Communications Assessment Focus Group Key Themes and Takeaways

Introduction

The City of Des Moines is conducting a comprehensive assessment of internal and external communications and engagement practices to learn how to serve the evolving needs of a diverse and growing city. As part of the process, the consultant team conducted two focus groups to hear from people who live and work in Des Moines about how they experience the City's current communications, what areas of growth and improvement are, and what ideas they have for the City to improve its communications and engagement. The feedback from the focus groups will be used to shape recommendations, along with the community survey, staff and City Councilmembers interviews, and peer agency communications review. The focus groups were held on October 13, 2023 at the Des Moines public library. The first group focused on business interests, was attended by 15 people, and went from 10:30 a.m. to noon (see Appendix A for the list of attendees and Appendix B for the agenda) and the second group was with 11 residents¹, and it went from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. (see Appendix C for the list of attendees and agenda). All attendees were provided with an agenda, which included a discussion topic guide, and a comment form. Each focus group was staffed by the consultant team and included a facilitator and a notetaker. Notes were taken on flip charts, which were visible to all attendees.

This summary includes:

- A highlight of what we heard from both focus group sessions
- Current communication experiences
 - Key themes from the business group
 - Key themes from the residents group
 - Key themes from both groups
- Content and engagement needs
 - Key themes from the business group
 - Key themes from the residents group
 - Key themes from both groups
- Accessibility and improvement opportunities
 - Key themes from the business group
 - Key themes from the residents group
 - Key themes from both groups

¹ A draft version of this summary stated that there were 7 residents present for the focus group, but there was a total of 11 participants.

- Appendices

Highlights

The following is a summary of what focus group participants shared about their current communication experiences, content and engagement needs, and accessibility and improvement opportunities. Participants also shared written comments (see Appendix D for comment forms). Key themes that both groups highlighted include:

- A need for a dedicated full-time professional communications director who will be responsible and accountable for developing and implementing a comprehensive communications plan.
- A need for transparent, regular, and accountable communications which includes clear processes and procedures (i.e., standard permitting process with timeline expectations, which staff or department to connect with for public safety concerns, and an emphasis on customer service).
- A need to improve and expand the City's current communications tools and engagement efforts, particularly the city's website, social media presence, and City Currents Magazine (i.e., make the website more user-friendly, create a centralized location to share information via an all-inclusive calendar and to sign up for email listservs).

Current Communication Experiences

Business group

The key themes from the business group revolved around greater transparency, clearer processes for communication, consistency, and accountability.

- Lack of transparency and oversight:
 - Concerns about a lack of transparency in the City's communication, with perceptions of decisions being made behind closed doors.
 - Concerns about an undercurrent of a secret agenda, particularly in cases like the hotel project, where the public was unaware, and public input was lacking.
 - Concerns about risky situations due to a lack of oversight and the expenses incurred from conducting investigations.
- Inconsistent and sporadic communications:
 - Lack of a clear communication plan or strategy, resulting in sporadic and inconsistent information.
 - Difficulty in finding information due to the absence of a central information source.
- Communication issues with specific departments:
 - The permitting department's communications are slow, unresponsive, and detrimental to business interests.
 - Unsure of who to contact with public safety concerns, and then when contact is made, there is a lack of follow-up.

- Outdated systems and lack of follow-through have resulted in cost overruns.
- Challenges with using communication channels:
 - Difficulty navigating the City's website, and it is not mobile-friendly.
 - Problems with the business licensing system, including vendor handling business licensing emails appearing as scams, so people have ignored them and thus been issued a late fee.
 - Lack of follow-up from the City after contact.
 - Inconsistent and disconnected use of social media.

Resident group

The key themes from the resident group revolved around a need for timely and clear communication, better utilization of current communications channels, greater transparency, building trust, clear processes for issue resolution, and more consistent and coordinated messaging from the City.

- Lack of a comprehensive communications plan:
 - People often receive materials or information last minute or day-of, making it difficult to engage thoughtfully.
 - Participants emphasized the need for more advanced planning and the availability of materials ahead of time.
 - The City's website is not user-friendly and lacks comprehensive information, information is hard to find, or has been removed from the site.
 - Public feedback and input are deemed essential before any website updates or redesigns.
 - The City's website and social media channels are not being effectively utilized.
- Trust issues and perception of City's attitude:
 - Trust in the City has eroded due to past incidents, such as the water district crisis with delayed notifications around the E. coli outbreak.
 - Timely and transparent communication is crucial for rebuilding trust.
 - Many community members feel that the City doesn't genuinely want to hear from them, indicating a lack of responsiveness or attentiveness to community concerns.
- Lack of clear contact path:
 - Residents struggle to connect with the right staff for their concerns, leading to frustration and mistrust.
 - The absence of a clear process for issue resolution is a barrier to engagement.
- Difficulty in accessing useful information:
 - While some residents find the weekly police blotter helpful, its accessibility on the city website is a challenge.

Both groups

Both groups highlighted the lack of a comprehensive, City-wide communications plan where residents get consistent, accessible, and helpful information. Both groups also commented on that while they appreciated the regular communication from one City Councilmember, they also recognized the

challenges of getting information from this source. Conflicting information from various sources can lead to confusion and chaos; this highlights the importance of consistent and clear communication from the City.

Content and Engagement Needs

Business group

Key themes from the business group revolved around accessible, cohesive City communications around events, news, and how to conduct business with the City and also more engagement between the community and City staff. Participants did note that the Saturday Markets are successful and could benefit from more official City involvement.

- Citizen advisory committee:
 - The participants wanted the Citizen Advisory Committee to meet more frequently and have a more significant impact.
- City manager engagement:
 - Residents expect the city manager to engage more with the community.
- Regular "State of the City" reports:
 - Participants were interested in receiving regular updates on city projects, business information, and what is happening in the city.
 - Participants specifically wanted to hear updates on the Sustainable Airport Master Plan (SAMP), hotel plan, and Landmark on the Sound.
- Clear process for doing business with and within the City:
 - It would be helpful to have a guidebook on how the City works and how a process works (i.e., steps of the permitting process and expected timelines).
 - Clarify which department or staff to contact for a particular issue.

Resident group

Key themes from the resident group revolved around the need for tailored and diverse modes of communication, regular updates, improvements to the Currents magazine, stronger emphasis on customer service, and increased engagement opportunities.

- Tailored communications for community needs:
 - Participants said the community desires communications that meet its specific needs, and this includes using various modes of communication and multiple tools to cater to diverse preferences.
 - There is a strong desire for more frequent updates about what's happening in the city and the progress of city projects to keep residents informed and engaged.
- Improvements to City Currents Magazine:
 - Suggestions for enhancing the city's magazine include better design, more frequent distribution (possibly monthly), and a broader range of content that caters to various age groups.

- There is a call for content diversity and the addition of sections like a letter to the editor or opinions section.
- Consideration for making the magazine independently run or partnering with a school, such as a journalism department, for support.
- Increased communication from the mayor:
 - Participants expressed a desire to hear more from the mayor and to receive regular updates from the city's leadership.
- Consistent follow-through and customer service:
 - Expectation for consistent follow-through from city staff members and a call for city communications to have a stronger customer service focus.
- Accessible community engagement events:
 - There is a need for more accessible community engagement events that are offered at various times (morning, afternoon, evening) and on different days of the week and weekends.
 - Diverse modes of engagement are sought to cater to a wide range of community members.
 - Concerns are raised about the accessibility of specific events, like "coffee with cops," and the desire for a more welcoming and interactive atmosphere.
- Direct addressing of public safety issues:
 - Participants expressed frustration with the lack of direct addressing of public safety issues by city staff, indicating a need for clearer and more effective communication processes.

Both groups

Both groups suggested an all-inclusive City calendar on the website that includes community and City events and is filterable. Both groups wanted more opportunities to engage with and to hear updates and news directly from City staff.

Accessibility and Improvement Opportunities

Business group

Participants shared that key opportunities for improvement are developing a City-wide comprehensive communications plan, with an emphasis on supporting the needs of the business community. Additionally, participants would like to see updated or new processes of conducting business in the City so business owners feel welcome, supported, and know what to do if they have an issue or concern.

- Clear process of how to conduct business, including staff support
 - A dedicated point of contact for businesses (a "business czar") is requested for accountability.
 - Clearer permitting process, with measurable metrics, so businesses can get permits in a timely, reliable manner.
 - A way to share feedback with timely responses from staff.

- Participants recommended an online business publication.
- Comprehensive communications plan
 - Use social media more often and consistently to share City news.
 - Send email updates or news directly to individuals.
 - Develop procedures that outline follow-up times to community requests.
- Update the City logo (because it looks like a police badge) and branding so messaging and communications are cohesive.

Resident group

Participants shared that key opportunities for improvement were improving or expanding the City's current communications tools and adding different methods of communications to reach different populations. Additionally, the City has an opportunity to improve internal communications, increase responsiveness to community concerns, and thus build more trust with community members.

- Clear and accessible communication:
 - Participants emphasized the need for clear and easily accessible communication. Examples of improvements include ensuring that videos and content on the city website are labeled clearly and easy to find.
- Increased City engagement with the community:
 - City staff should host engagement events to share information and genuinely gather community feedback. This can enhance two-way communication.
 - There was a suggestion to assign council members to specific neighborhoods, making them responsible for understanding neighborhood needs. This would facilitate more direct and localized engagement.
 - Participants want city events to be better advertised to encourage public attendance.
- Use multiple modes of communications tools and methods to reach diverse populations:
 - Channel 21 can be an opportunity to post events and information, which can enhance community awareness of what's happening in the City.
 - Provide opt-in options for specific email listservs allows individuals to receive information on topics they are most interested in. Centralizing these options, along with other communication tools, simplifies access to information streams.
 - Host town hall meetings to provide a platform for direct interaction between the city and its residents, allowing for discussion and feedback.
 - Constant Connect was a useful tool that could be brought back.
- Improving internal communications:
 - There is a recognized need for better internal communication within the city, particularly between councilmembers and staff. Participants suggested that internal communication improvements need to precede improving communications with the community.
- Planning Commission:
 - Establishing a planning commission is considered important for city planning and development.

Both groups

Both groups strongly recommended the City hire a full-time communications director (an external candidate) who would be a city staff member. Additionally, both groups want clearer, consistent communications, documented processes on how to communicate with the City and expectations of how the City will respond (e.g., responses are within a specific timeframe), and improving and expanding the different communications tools and methods the City uses to effectively communicate with different populations.

Appendix A: Attendance

Business Group

Jeff Whaley – Laborers Local 242

Scott Sanchez – Laborers Local 242

Dale Cannon – Laborers Local 242

Efrem Fields – Laborers Local 242

Jim Vasquez – Laborers Local 242

Bill Hetherinton – Laborers Local 242

Andrea Ornelas – Laborers Local 242

SiSi Collins – Laborers Local 242

Sam Garcia – Laborers Local 242

Mike Whiteside – Laborers Local 242

Danny Banvelas – Laborers Local 242

Caruss Bussey – Laborers Local 242

Dan Germano – Motio Media

Saundra Mock – JL Scott

Doreen Harper – Harper Studios

Resident Group

David Emery

Sharon Vail

Terri Juberg

Victoria Andrews

Chuck Coleman

Marnie Sevoires

Doreen Harper

Sally Law

Steve Quinn

Richard Kennedy

Jame Wagner

Appendix B: Focus Group Agenda – Business

Des Moines Public Library

Friday, October 13, 2023

10:30 to 12 p.m.

Agenda

10:30 to 10:45 a.m. Introduction and Welcome (15 minutes)

- Introductions
- Meeting purpose and objectives
- Icebreaker
 - Tell us your name, how long you have been a part of the Des Moines community, and what you like most about Des Moines.

10:45 to 11:10 a.m. Current Communication Experiences (25 minutes)

- Experiences with current City communication channels, meetings, or one-to-one communications
 - Level of satisfaction
 - Channels you use or like the most
 - What's working and what could be improved
 - Council/city department communication practices
 - Other strengths or weaknesses

11:10 to 11:35 a.m. Content and Engagement Needs (25 minutes)

- Content you would like to see more of
- Current practices meeting needs
 - Level of satisfaction with information (frequency, content, and clarity)
 - What topics are of particular interest to you?
 - Do you have adequate access to essential or helpful information?
 - Areas where City communications have not addressed your needs?
 - Is there anything else the City should consider doing?

11:35 to 11:55 a.m. Accessibility and Improvement Opportunities (20 minutes)

- Accessing City communication channels and gathering information.
 - How accessible is the website?
 - Any barriers to accessing or understanding City communications?
 - Are there any new platforms or methods we should consider adopting?
 - Any other feedback?

11:55 to 12:00 p.m. Closing and Wrap-up (5 minutes)

- Focus Group summary
- Next steps
- Thank you!

Appendix C: Focus Group Agenda – Residents

Des Moines Public Library

Friday, October 13, 2023

1:30 to 3 p.m.

Agenda

1:30 to 1:45 p.m. Introduction and Welcome (15 minutes)

- Introductions
- Meeting purpose and objectives
- Icebreaker
 - Tell us your name, how long you have been a part of the Des Moines community, and what you like most about Des Moines.

1:45 to 2:10 p.m. Current Communication Experiences (25 minutes)

- Experiences with current City communication channels, meetings, or one-to-one communications
 - Level of satisfaction
 - Channels you use or like the most
 - What’s working and what could be improved?
 - Council/city department communication practices
 - Other strengths or weaknesses?

2:10 to 2:35 p.m. Content and Engagement Needs (25 minutes)

- Content you would like to see more of
- Current practices meeting needs
 - Level of satisfaction with information (frequency, content, and clarity)
 - What topics are of particular interest to you?
 - Do you have adequate access to essential or helpful information?
 - Areas where City communications have not addressed your needs?
 - Is there anything else the City should consider doing?


2:35 to 2:55 p.m. Accessibility and Improvement Opportunities (20 minutes)

- Accessing City communication channels and gathering information.
 - How accessible is the website?
 - Any barriers to accessing or understanding City communications?
 - Are there any new platforms or methods we should consider adopting?
 - Any other feedback?

2:55 to 3:00 p.m. Closing and Wrap-up (5 minutes)

- Focus Group summary
- Next steps
- Thank you!

Appendix D: Comment forms

 **Des Moines**
Business Focus Group Discussion
Friday, October 13, 2023
Comment Form

Please share your comments/feedback

The city needs to have a standard manual of operations of their processes and more transparency with their current businesses or New Business. It has been too much (make it up as you go process)!

Name (optional)
Mike Whiteside Liuna Local Union 242



Rebrand THIS, looks like a PD Logo.

Des Moines
Business Focus Group Discussion

Friday, October 13, 2023

Comment Form

Please share your comments/feedback

Hire Comms director.

Direct E-mails

Turn out for this focus group was disapointingly low.

Name (optional)



Des Moines
Resident Focus Group Discussion

Friday, October 13, 2023

Comment Form

Please share your comments/feedback

This has been a very passionate discussion! Unfortunately those who have been very involved dominated the discussion & voiced their frustrations repeatedly. Little time was given to steps to take moving forward.

- A communications officer is needed
- City Currents is great! Monthly?
- A website overhaul will help us find info on the people in offices who we can reach out to for aid.

- Many have no access to computers & other tech. The TV station could be

Name (optional)

a very successful tool for them.

Tara Guberg



Resident Focus Group Discussion

Friday, October 13, 2023

Comment Form

Please share your comments/feedback

Website : (1) not HTML5 compliant

(2) not ADA compliant

(3) calendar of events needs to be more comprehensive and should allow calendar entries to be downloaded

(4) content not up to date

(5) navigation needs improvement

(6) add opt-in for list servers when updates to particular pages are made

(7) allow access to DM website when using VPN connections.

Name (optional)

Richard Kennedy (former WSC member)



**Des Moines
Resident Focus Group Discussion**

Friday, October 13, 2023

Comment Form

Please share your comments/feedback

Communications
Director!
Planning Commission!

(optional)



The City of Des Moines
Community Preferences and Priorities Survey Report

November 13, 2023



Background & Purpose

To better understand the needs of the diverse and growing community, the City of Des Moines asked community members to provide feedback that will help the City develop goals and priorities to improve City communication and engagement efforts with people who live, work, or visit Des Moines. In the fall of 2023, the City conducted a communitywide survey¹ as part of a broader process to gather feedback about the City's communications and engagement practices and to get feedback on how they can be improved. Survey respondents self-selected to participate in the survey either online or via a paper copy of the survey.

The survey was open for public input from August 28 through October 16, 2023.

The survey was promoted through:

- A citywide mailer and fliers placed at community locations
- Promotion at events and farmer's markets
- A paper copy of the survey was included in the City's Current magazine
- The City's social media channels and website

Overview of Survey Questions

The Community Preferences and Priorities survey consisted of 15 communication and engagement related questions from the city, along with a set of optional demographic questions.

- Survey questions were grouped from general connection to the Des Moines community and where respondents live and work to more specific questions about what communications and engagement efforts people value.
- The public was invited to share specific communication concerns, report issues, and provide feedback about their level of satisfaction with current efforts.
- Optional demographics and language access questions were asked to assess the diversity of participation and ensure an accessible engagement process.

Key Findings & Key Takeaways

- The survey remained open for a duration of 38 days, during which a total of 309 surveys were successfully completed, with 284 online responses and 25 hard copy responses. Among the participants, 93% identified themselves as residential homeowners in Des Moines, with residence or work history within the city ranging from 2 to over 20 years.
- **Mixed Satisfaction Levels:** The satisfaction levels with the city's communication and engagement efforts were mixed, with roughly half of the respondents (46%) believing that improvements were needed. A significant portion, however, believed that the city's efforts are above satisfactory, indicating room for enhancement while recognizing existing strengths.
- **Clarity and Timeliness:** While more than half of the respondents found the city's outreach materials helpful and easy to understand, there were concerns about the timeliness,

¹ Convenience sampling



transparency, and user-friendliness. The comments suggested that residents were seeking clearer and more immediate communication.

- **Importance of Diverse Communication Channels:** Survey takers appreciated various communication channels like the Waterland Blog, emails, and personal interactions with city officials. They emphasized the importance of modernizing the city's website, increasing social media presence, and using multiple digital communication tools.
- **Content Preferences:** Survey participants expressed a strong preference for official city news and updates, city/community events, and community initiatives. They desired more frequent updates in the City Currents magazine and transparency in decision-making processes. One hundred and fifty-five respondents shared their reasons and experiences when visiting the city's website, 36 offered suggestions for improving user experiences, navigation, and content accuracy, and 88 community members recommended communication platforms or methods they hoped the city would consider adopting in the future.
- **City Meeting Experiences:** Respondents' experiences with city meetings and events varied. Some desired more accessible, transparent, and well-timed meetings, emphasizing the need for meaningful public engagement and respectful communication.
- **Website Navigation Challenges:** Respondents found the city's website challenging to navigate, with many suggesting a complete redesign to improve usability, visual appeal, and accessibility. Respondents indicated they want a one-stop-shop for community events and improved search functionality.
- **Interactions with City Staff:** There were mixed experiences when engaging with city staff. While some respondents had positive interactions and quick responses, others expressed frustration, especially regarding specific departments like Public Works. Respondents suggested improvements in identifying staff contacts and response times.
- **Top Priorities for Improvement:** Survey participants prioritized expanding public comment opportunities, improving website navigation, increasing digital communications usage, and holding more community meetings or town hall events.
- **Recommendations for the Future:** 76 survey participants contributed valuable comments and suggestions concerning Des Moines' overall communication efforts, such as email updates, hard copies before major events, and the use of social media platforms like Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube. They also suggested creating a city blog, utilizing Zoom for council meetings, improving the city's website, and exploring text notifications or apps for communication.

Overall, the findings emphasized the need for clearer, more accessible, and timely communication methods to engage and inform the diverse Des Moines community effectively.

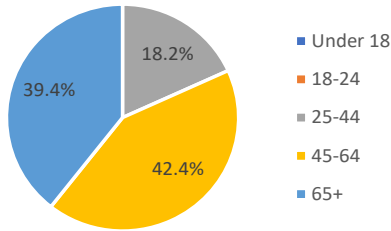


Respondent Demographics

Age

Answered: 297 | Skipped: 12

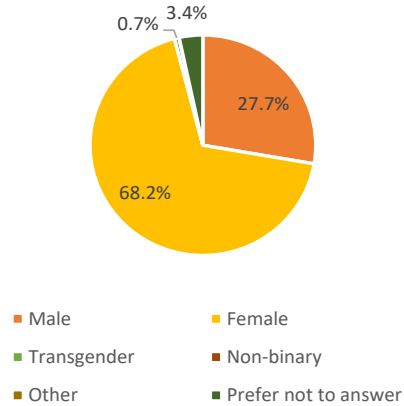
81.8% of respondents indicated they were 45 years or older.



Gender

Answered: 296 | Skipped: 13

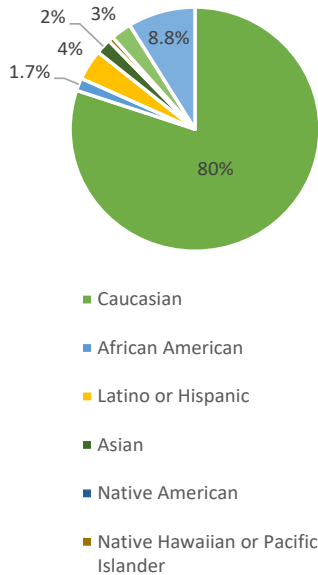
27.7% of respondents identified as male and 68.2% identified as female.



Race

Answered: 297 | Skipped: 12

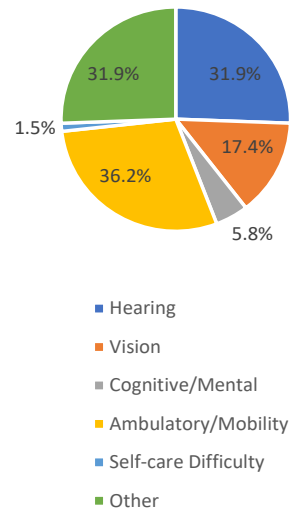
80% of respondents identified as Caucasian. Other races indicated were African American (2%), Latino or Hispanic (4%), and Asian (2%).



Disability

Answered: 69 | Skipped: 240

Most identified disabilities by the respondents include hearing, vision, and ambulatory/mobility.

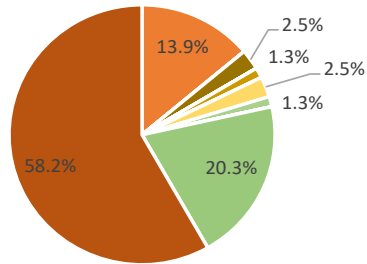




Language

Answered: 79 | Skipped: 230

Among the respondents who shared their language access preferences, the most common response was English (58%), with additional preferences including Spanish (14%), Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, and Hindi.



- Spanish
- Vietnamese
- Russian
- Somali
- Chinese
- Korean
- Ukrainian
- Amharic
- Punjabi
- Tagalog
- Cambodian
- Laotian
- Japanese
- Hindi
- Arabic
- Farsi
- Tigrinya
- Oromo
- French
- Samoan
- Prefer not to say
- English



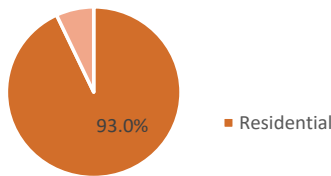
Question 1: Community members' connection to Des Moines

Answered: 308 / Skipped: 1

Survey takers were asked to share their connection to the Des Moines community and how many years they have lived in Des Moines. Of the 308 respondents, 50% of them (154 people) have lived and/or worked in Des Moines between 3-10 years, 49.7% (153 people) have lived and/or worked in the city for over 20 years, 30% (91 people) for 11 – 20 years, and 19% (57 people) for fewer than 2 years.

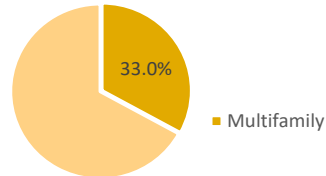
Residential

93% of survey takers were residential homeowners in Des Moines.



Multifamily

33% of respondents lived in multifamily property in Des Moines.

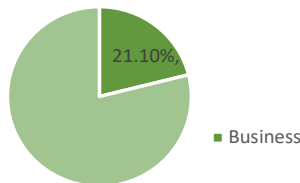


Years living in a residential property in Des Moines	
2 years or less	23 people
3 to 10 years	76 people
11 to 20 years	56 people
Over 20 years	111 people

Years living in a multifamily property in Des Moines	
2 years or less	12 people
3 to 10 years	38 people
11 to 20 years	17 people
Over 20 years	11 people

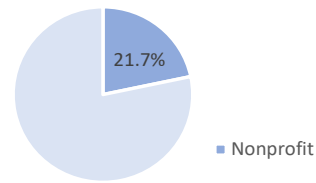
Business

21.1% of respondents worked at or owned a for-profit business in Des Moines.



Nonprofit

21.7% of respondents worked at or owned a nonprofit organization in Des Moines.



Years working in or owning a for profit business in Des Moines	
2 years or less	11 people
3 to 10 years	17 people
11 to 20 years	8 people
Over 20 years	13 people

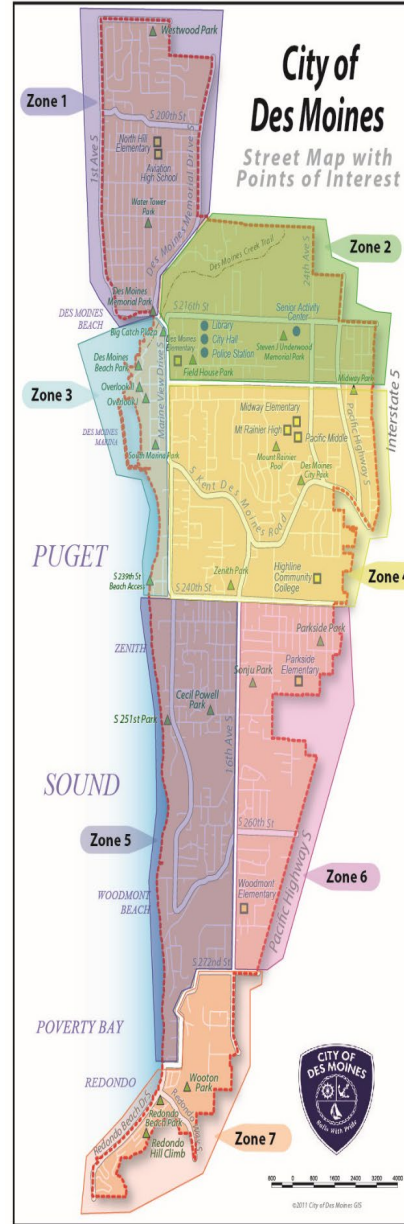
Years working in or owning a nonprofit organization in Des Moines	
2 years or less	10 people
3 to 10 years	16 people
11 to 20 years	10 people
Over 20 years	13 people



Question 2: Where in Des Moines survey takers live and/or work Answered: 302 | Skipped: 7

Survey takers were asked if they live or work in any of Des Moines’ seven zones. Respondents could identify their location on a map, respond “other” if options provided did not apply, or if they were unsure of their location.

ZONES	Zone where I live	Zone where I work	Total ²
Zone 1	40 people	12 people	43 people
Zone 2	22 people	16 people	34 people
Zone 3	54 people	22 people	67 people
Zone 4	63 people	18 people	71 people
Zone 5	40 people	7 people	40 people
Zone 6	16 people	4 people	18 people
Zone 7	54 people	6 people	55 people
I do not live/work in Des Moines	6 people	16 people	20 people
Other			17 people



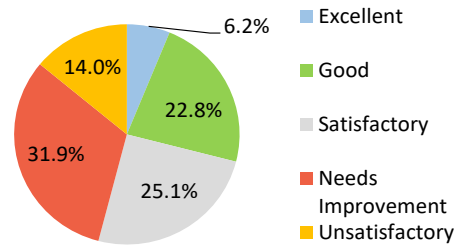
² The Total column indicates the total number of unique respondents who responded that they lived or worked in a Zone. The total sum in the Total column is greater than the number of people who responded because a person may live and work in different zones.



Question 3: Overall, how good are the City’s current communication and engagement efforts when it comes to keeping you informed or addressing community interests?

Answered: 307 | Skipped: 2

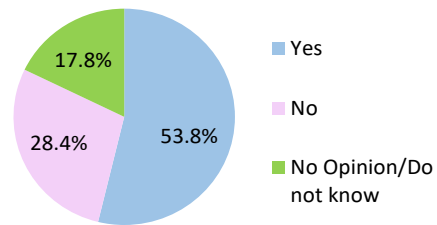
To assess the effectiveness of the City's communication and engagement initiatives, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction levels. The results indicated that 46% of respondents believed the City’s communication and engagement efforts need improvement or are unsatisfactory, whereas 54% of the survey takers think the City’s efforts are satisfactory or better.



Question 4: Overall, are the communications put out by the City helpful and easy to understand?

Answered: 303 | Skipped: 6

Survey participants were also asked to evaluate the clarity of the City's outreach and communication materials. More than half of respondents found them helpful and easy to understand, whereas 28% did not, and 18% had no strong opinion on the matter. Additionally, participants shared their experiences and comments regarding the City's communication materials and effort, with a general consensus that there is room for improvement in terms of timeliness, transparency, and user-friendliness.



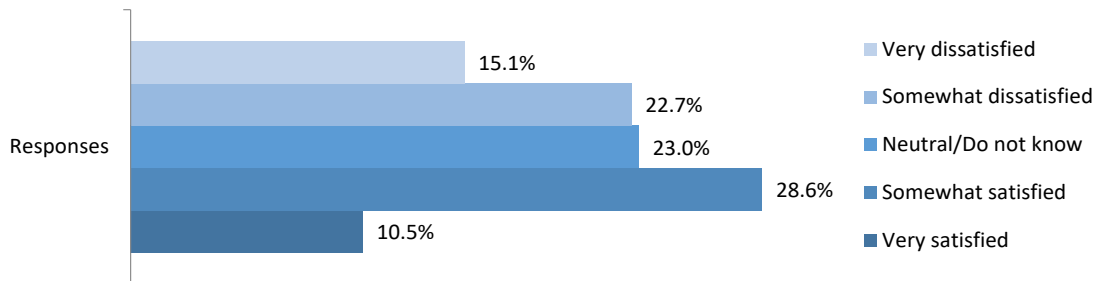
Respondents had varied opinions on the city's communications. Some found them helpful, particularly via emails and magazines, while others criticized the lack of transparency and timeliness. Suggestions included improving the website, increasing social media presence, and providing clearer information in advance. Many desired better outreach to engage residents and raise awareness of community events. Overall, there was a call for more proactive, transparent, and user-friendly communication methods to keep the public informed and engaged. A full list of comments and suggestions can be found in Appendix A.



Question 5: Overall, how satisfied are you with the frequency and timeliness of the City’s communications?

Answered: 304 | Skipped: 5

Survey respondents were asked to rank their perceptions of the City of Des Moines' communication frequency and timeliness. The results indicate that more than a third were above somewhat satisfied, 23% remained neutral, 38% were somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.



Participants shared mixed opinions about the City's communication efforts. Some feel uninformed and want more timely and clear communication through methods like email or text alerts. They called for improved transparency, accessibility, and community engagement in decision-making. Some participants criticized the website for being difficult to navigate, and many suggested monthly newsletters or updates on city activities. Respondents raised concerns about crime and safety, as well as the need for a consistent and reliable source of information. Overall, residents desired better communication, transparency, and accountability in the city's interactions with the public. Insights and opinions from participants are detailed in Appendix B.



Question 6: Which of the following sources do you prefer to use when looking for information related to City of Des Moines news, updates, or services? *Answered: 305 | Skipped: 4*

Survey participants were presented with the opportunity to select up to eight preferred information sources for accessing news, updates, and services related to Des Moines. The complete list of options, ranked from most preferred to least preferred, is as follows:

Answer Choices	Responses ³	
City Currents magazine	63.0%	192 people
City of Des Moines website	56.7%	173 people
Des Moines Community Facebook Pages	41.3%	126 people
The City's Facebook page	29.5%	90 people
Neighborhood-based activities with City Staff or Council (such as informal conversation forums, walking tours, or site visits)	27.2%	83 people
Posters, Flyers, or Factsheets at Key Locations in the Community	26.9%	82 people
Community meetings or town halls	26.9%	82 people
Email, phone, or in-person communication with City staff	24.3%	74 people
A Councilmember's personal blog, website, or social media platform	17.0%	52 people
City Council Meetings	17.0%	52 people
Other (please specify)	18.4%	56 people
Public Access TV (Comcast Channel 21)	6.9%	21 people
The City's YouTube channel	4.6%	14 people
Visiting the assistance counter at City Hall	3.93	12 people

The highlighted comments underscore the importance of a diverse and up-to-date communication strategy for the community. Residents appreciate the Waterland Blog and magazine, desire informative materials at key locations, and value positive interactions with city officials. They also suggest modernizing the City's website and utilizing various digital channels, such as email notifications and social media. The respondents emphasized the need for effective, accessible, and multi-platform communication to keep the community informed and engaged. The comments are included in Appendix C.

³ Response percentages total greater than 100% because respondents were able to select more than one response.

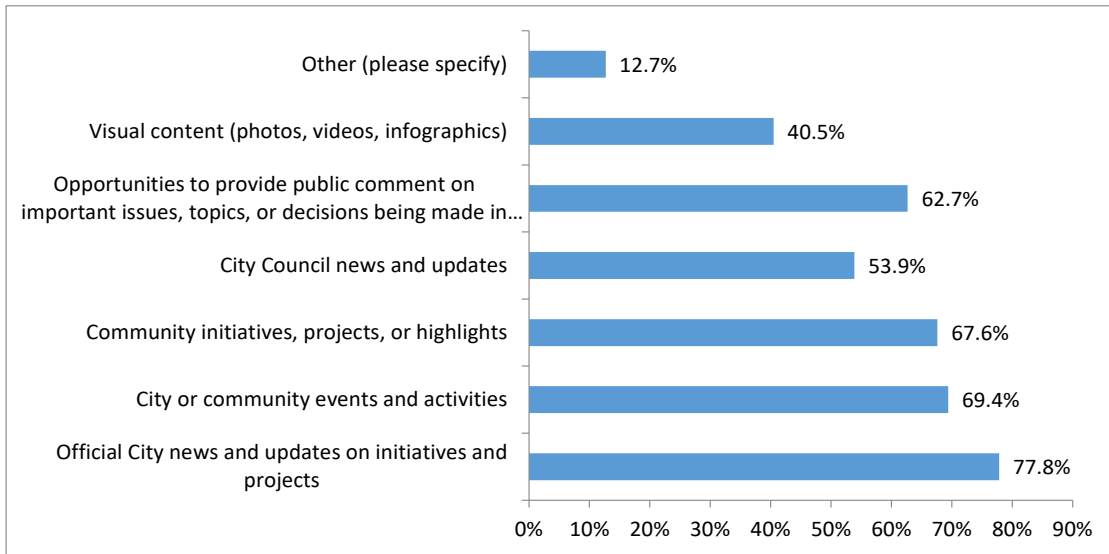


Question 7: Is there content you would like to see more of in the City's communications?

Answered: 284 | Skipped: 25

In terms of content, survey participants expressed a strong preference for the following in the City's communications:

- Official City news and updates on initiatives and projects (78%)
- City or community events and activities (69%)
- Community initiatives, projects, or highlights (68%)



Respondents also articulated interest in additional content within the City's communications, including:

- More frequent updates in the City Currents magazine about city events/activities.
- More information about development projects.
- Weekly reports featuring the City's activities and accomplishments.
- Crime reports.
- Enhanced transparency in the City's decision-making processes.

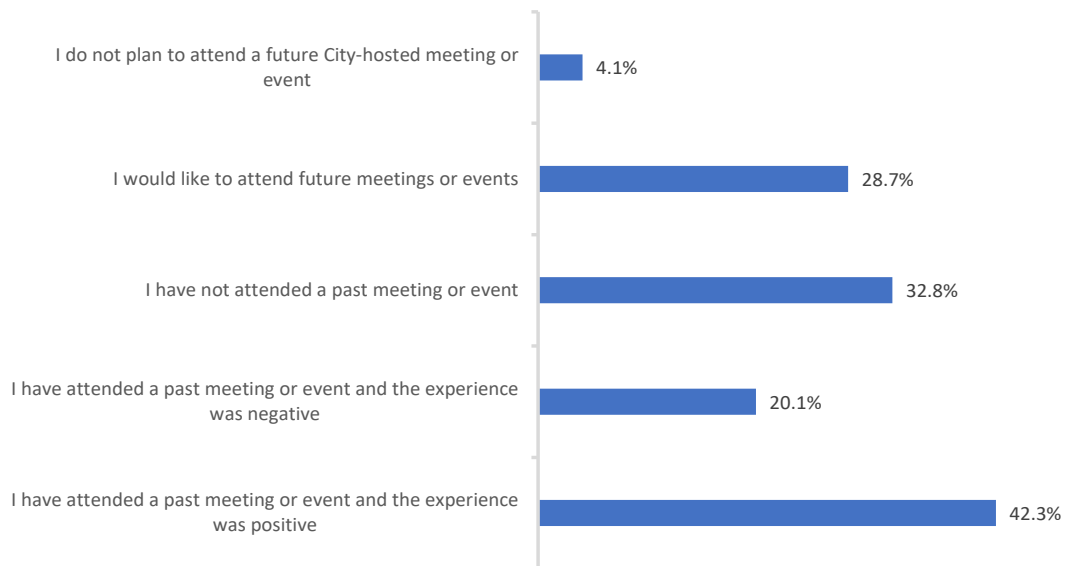
A detailed list of participant comments is provided in Appendix D.



Question 8: Have you ever attended City-hosted meetings or events and what was your experience.

Answered: 293 | Skipped: 16

The responses indicate that 42% of survey participants have attended a City-hosted meeting, and their experience was positive. Approximately 20% of respondents have attended a meeting but had a negative experience. About 33% of participants have not attended any city meetings. Notably, 29% of survey takers expressed their interest in attending future city meetings or events, while only 4% of respondents stated they do not plan to attend future city meetings or events.



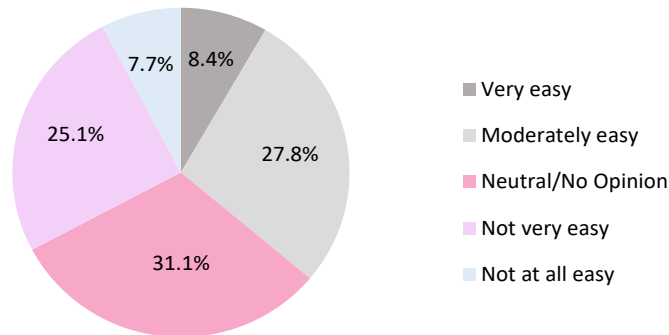
Survey participants expressed a variety of experiences and opinions regarding city meetings and events. They suggest the need for more accessibility, clear communication, and better timing of meetings and events to accommodate working residents and those with disabilities. Some feel that City officials are dismissive or unresponsive to public input, and called for more open forums, transparency, and a greater focus on community needs over personal agendas. The respondents emphasized the importance of meaningful participation, feedback, and a respectful, inclusive approach to public engagement in the City's decision-making processes. Detailed experiences and comments from survey participants can be found in Appendix E.



Question 9: How easy is it to find and access the information you need on the City's website?

Answered: 299 | Skipped: 10

To assess the ease of navigation within the city's website, survey participants were asked to rate how easily they could find information on the City's website. The results show that 8% and 28% of respondents found it very easy and moderately easy to access the information they needed on the city's website. However, 31% found it to be neutral, 25% considered it not easy, and nearly 8% found it not easy at all.



The comments mainly revolved around concerns and suggestions for improving the City's website. The key themes included website usability, navigation, and accessibility, with residents expressing their frustration with the current website's layout and functionality. They called for a more modern and visually engaging design, better organization of information, and easy-to-find updates on various city projects and initiatives. Respondents emphasized the need for clear communication, transparency, and an efficient way to access information on events, city planning, and finances. Many suggested a complete website redesign, incorporating modern user-interface principles and emphasizing user-friendliness. The desire for a "one-stop-shop" for community events and improved search functionality is also prominent in the feedback. Overall, survey respondents want a more user-friendly, informative, and visually appealing website to better connect with and engage the community. All the comments and suggestions made by participants are provided in Appendix F.



Question 10: If you previously visited the City’s webpage, why did you visit and did you find what you needed?

Answered: 155 | Skipped: 154

Half of survey respondents disclosed the reasons for their visits to the City's webpage, with the primary motivations being accessing information about water issues, development updates, event calendars, and permits. Some seek information about animal control, public works, property lines, and business-related matters. They also mentioned using the Fixit form for feedback and issues. Residents noted mixed experiences with the website's navigational ease and the availability of specific information, with some expressing frustration in locating content. Overall, they highlight the importance of an efficient and well-organized website that provides timely and comprehensive information on city services, events, and municipal updates. The website's capacity to deliver up-to-date data, including leadership changes, is a common concern among residents. A detailed list of comments is attached in Appendix G.



The Word cloud is based on the most repeated comments from the survey respondents.



Question 11: Would you recommend any of the following improvements to the City’s webpage?

Answered: 267 | Skipped: 42

Survey respondents were asked to provide their opinions on the improvements to the City’s webpage in terms of the clarity of content, purpose of content, language choices, visual and graphics, ease of navigation, and overall effectiveness. The priorities are listed below.

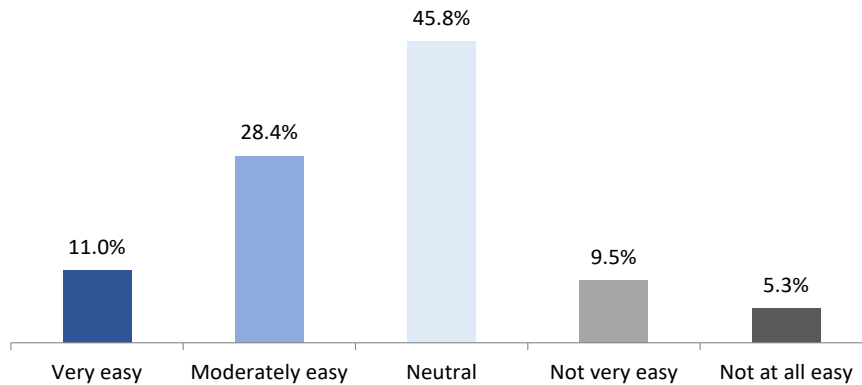
Answer Choices	Responses	
	Percentage	Count
Ease of navigation	54.7%	146
Clarity of content	40.82%	109
Purpose of content	27.3%	73
Visual and graphics	26.2%	70
Overall effectiveness	24.0%	64
Language choices	9.4%	25
I don't have recommended improvements	27.7%	74
Other (please specify)	13.5%	36

The comments are primarily focused on the usability, content, and visual appeal of the City's website. Residents expressed a desire for more current and visually appealing content, particularly with photos of recent events. Some mentioned the importance of making the website accessible to elderly individuals who may not be tech-savvy and suggested alternative options for accessing information. They emphasized the need for improved organization, clear navigation, and up-to-date information, with specific requests for sections on project statuses and email links for city departments. Additionally, residents stressed the importance of compliance with ADA and HTML 5 standards, making the website mobile-friendly, and providing more maps. Some residents offered their willingness to assist in website redesign, while others expressed satisfaction with the city's efforts but also raised concerns about specific policies and legislation. All the comments are attached in Appendix H.



Question 12: How easy is it to get helpful information or assistance in a timely manner when you engage with City staff by phone, email, or in-person? *Answered: 264 | Skipped: 45*

Respondents were asked to provide their thoughts and experiences on the level of ease engaging with City staff to obtain helpful information or assistance. Approximately half of the survey takers thought it was neither easy nor hard. 39% thought it was moderately and very easy, 15% thought it was not very easy and not easy at all.



Respondents had mixed experiences with city communication and responsiveness. Some received well-explained answers to their questions in the past, but many expressed concerns about challenging website navigation during the COVID-19 pandemic. They acknowledged the ease of reaching city departments, with quick responses and appreciation for accessible council members. However, there's a need to better advertise Channel 21 and provide more online communication options, particularly for those who gave up on building projects during the pandemic. Identifying staff contact information for projects and a tracking system for community requests are suggested improvements, emphasizing the importance of clear communication and responsiveness.

Survey participants also highlighted differences in interactions with city departments, praising the police department's efficiency while noting challenges with public works. Email response times vary, and some respondents felt ignored, especially by the city manager and certain council members. There's a desire for a dedicated Communications director and commendation for well-run departments like Parks. Residents expressed gratitude for quick responses from specific individuals, like Bonnie Wilkins. Improving communication regarding landscape requests and sidewalk lighting issues is essential, along with addressing concerns that issues sometimes require multiple requests for resolution.

Participant responses are included in Appendix I.



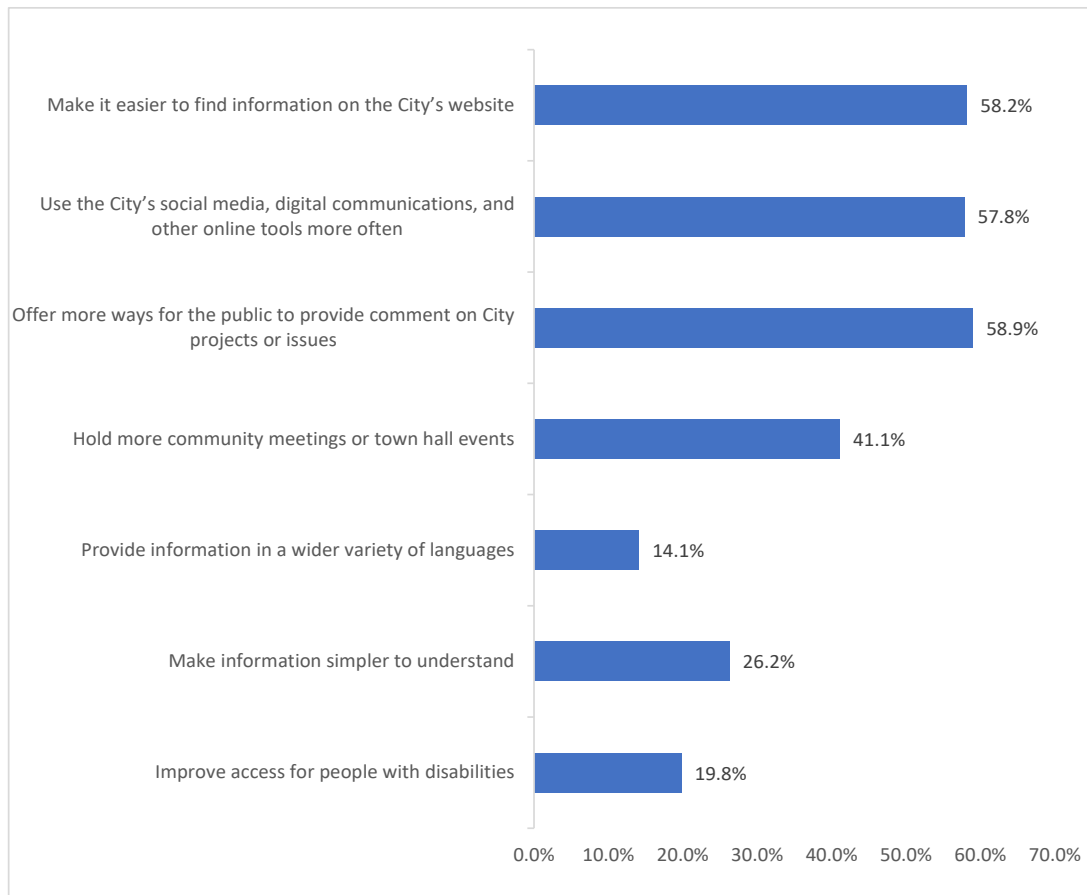
Question 13: What are your priorities for improving how the City communicates and engages with the community?

Answered: 264 | Skipped: 45

Survey respondents selected the priorities for improving the City's communications and engagement efforts. The top four priorities were:

- Offer more ways for the public to provide comments on City projects or issues (59%)
- Make it easier to find information on the City's website (58%)
- Use the City's social media, digital communications, and other online tools more often (58%)
- Hold more community meetings or town hall events (41%)

Additional recommendations and suggestions are included in Appendix J.





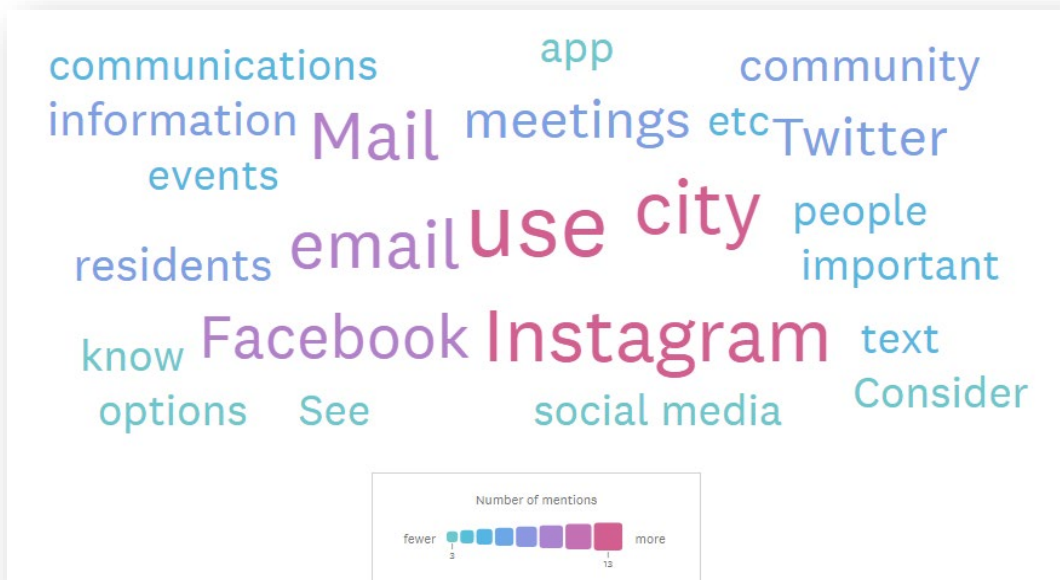
Question 14: Are there any specific communication platforms or methods you believe we should consider adopting in the future?

Answered: 88 / Skipped: 221

Participants recommended several effective ways that they believe the City should consider adopting in the future. These recommendations are categorized as:

- Send out email updates (such as email blast, email newsletter, or monthly email)
- Mailings and flyers
- Send out hard copies before major events/decisions
- Use other social media such as Instagram and X (formerly Twitter), use YouTube to livestream meetings
- Create a City blog
- Utilize Zoom for council meetings
- Improve the City's current webpage
- Use text notifications, text options for updates
- Considering building a new app for communication purposes

The word cloud captured the key words and main themes (see below). The detailed suggestions and comments are included in Appendix K.





Question 15: Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding our communication efforts?

Answered: 76 / Skipped: 233

Participants shared additional thoughts and suggestions regarding improving Des Moines' communication efforts. The comments reflected a range of perspectives on tools, materials, expectations, and other issues related to city communication. Residents suggested improving noticeboard utilization, posting updates on key locations, sending informative emails, and offering more timely information. Some expressed concerns that communication lacks opportunities for public comment and is sometimes seen as a mandate rather than collaborative engagement, citing the hotel at the marina proposal as an example.

There is a strong consensus on the need for a dedicated communications professional, crisis management expertise, and the adoption of effective communication tools and processes from other government agencies. Suggestions include remote public comment options, broader visibility for City Council Committee meetings, and more interactive meetings with the community.

Expectations of the City and staff center on a transparent decision-making process that includes resident input, addressing issues like tree destruction, warehouse replacements, and airport noise, along with providing year-round community activities and improved engagement around homelessness. While residents appreciated efforts to enhance communication, they emphasized the importance of implementing recommendations, the intended audience's understanding, and an inclusive approach.

Some respondents underscored the need to prevent crises like the marina hotel proposal through proactive communication. Residents called for a significant web page redesign, an updated online presence, and the allocation of resources to enhance the community's image. Respondents raised concerns about different city departments working independently, emphasizing the potential benefits of collaboration. They emphasized the importance of clear, non-hidden agendas and public engagement. While the survey is seen as a positive step, some residents stressed the importance of ongoing dialogue and improved communications.

A full list of comments is included in Appendix L.



Appendix A: Comments received on Question 4

Overall, are the communications put out by the City helpful and easy to understand?

- Emails announcing meetings to the public can attend.
- The only info I got is from Des Moines Current Magazine
- Weekly email update Improvement of city website
- I always have difficulty on the city 's webpages.
- communication can be more frequent.
- Very little communication misses the local newspaper.
- I see council members listen but no action to address concerns appears on the city's agenda.
- The city council needs to inform people and get input before asking for bids i.e., Marina Hotel
- We are going on our 4th year of living in the Redondo area. We have not received any letters or notices or invites to even this survey...."feel like we are the redheaded stepchildren". This survey was forwarded to us via the Redondo Community group.
- Lack of transparency.
- It would be helpful if efforts were timely. Folks must have adequate notice to attend events. Otherwise, the impression will be that the city really doesn't want or value input, while also being able to report that "notice was given". When there are forums, please genuinely seek input rather than responding with demeaning comments to the audience. Tenor and tone coupled with word choice easily communicates more than a printed message, "we value your input."
- A weekly blog on what is coming up in Des Moines for the next week. That is people friendly.
- They are easy to understand but often sent at the last minute and/or not sent at all. Little to no or not timely communication about significant issues.
- I find it less than optimal to meet or engage during "Coffee with a Cop". The officers already have so much to deal with, I don't want to waste their time. I also am not a fan of the community annual picnic. I'm just not a people person like that. What I would like is a little better communication about what's going on in our area, gang activity updates, BOLO (Be on the lookout) updates, maybe a social media page or text msg that could provide updates. It's hard to locate the city council board meetings on public tv.
- We appreciate the Currents magazine & have access to City website. The Waterland Blog has been quite helpful to keep us informed.
- I don't believe I get notified by the city about items as much as I do from community members sharing on social media.
- I'd like to find an easier way to hear about what is going on in the city of Des Moines.
- Strengthen content (relevance and implications) / Explain options considered and reasons for option selections /meeting with Q&A & 1-page summaries online.
- Use Channel 21 for information. Weekly City Manager's Report and weekly city activities calendar via email. Easy to navigate website. Monthly community meetings for questions and answers.
- Perhaps mass targeted emails. Volunteer sign ups? Website provides almost zero information about fishing pier e.g., or noise/racing along Redonda Beach Drive



- I'm not really aware of any Communication efforts. Emails would help, I live and work online so to speak.
- Online newsletter that contains information regarding city, Council meeting minutes, updates on delays of previously stated completion dates, and issues facing the city.
- Better communication with the City council and citizens. Let the citizens know (in advance) what will be discussed at council meetings.
- recently had to work with permitting office with staff in person. Figuring out what days they were actually in the office was a royal pain & added a couple of weeks to resolving the problem. The city is paying for the office space, why not use it.
- Improved communications on its website and social media.
- I've never heard from 1 council person in almost 20 years of residency in Redondo.
- Don't rely on a survey buried in the City of Des Moines magazine for communication without at a minimum putting a prominent alert on the cover!
- Still feel that the Redondo area needs more attention. The monthly meetings at the MAST Center help.
- Send text message / have an app. get up to speed with current tech.
- More surveys similar to this one. It's a quick way for me to get my opinion and info out.
- Traffic Safety. Right on the border of zone 5 and 6, as well as 260th St. Constant speeding and racing throughout the day and night right at the intersection. We need more options for broadband in the city of Des Moines. You are letting Comcast have a monopoly here. We also cannot get fiber to the home. Even though many Seattle communities already have it.
- We need up-to-date city council minutes and agendas on the city webpage.
- City needs to be much more forthright in disclosing information; 2) The City's website is very poorly used for communication but provides a great opportunity for communication.
- There are no newspapers, emails or anything. We don't even know who wins elections!
- More info about the Chilkat (catamaran from Marina to pier 66)
- The only notification I receive from the city is the Currents magazine. Communications are limited. I learn more by attending City Council meetings.
- First, communicate to the local media the correct pronunciation of the name of the city (do not sound the "s"). All staff and the council should also show pride by doing the same.
- Push email notifications - create resident email list and please send clear communications of upcoming meetings, events and info sessions. Weekly emails would be great!
- We want to support Des Moines! Community events are not publicized enough. This year I happened upon food trucks and music on the 4th of July. I live here and walk at the marina frequently. I still had no idea. We can do better.
- Text communication would be good for urgent stuff. You could also consider building an app with push notifications.
- Email distribution list
- Need more info and more often. Utilize channel 21 more with weekly updates.
- I'm new but I've never heard of any events coming up unless my client mentioned something.
- What about a regular email newsletter that folks could sign up for and then could be used for regular updates or emergency announcements?



- Better use of the city website and social media to get important information out. Currently looks outdated and not easy to navigate.
- Better UX in the webpage design. Everything blends, making it difficult to find things. - A webpage dedicated to local events in community with a QR code that can be posted in various public parts of the city. - Outside of the Des Moines City Current I don't know of any communications put out by the city. General increase in the way the city communicates with its residents. Greater social media presence, with a younger generation moving in, especially expanding to Instagram. - Invest in updating and staying current in graphic design for all community facing flyers/websites, etc.
- More content focused on non-seniors including singles, couples without kids, and families with high school age kids. Applicable to the magazine, website, and Facebook. More frequent and up to date content. A subscription email would be great to provide timely information on a monthly basis.
- Redesign the web page I can't believe I even have to write this.
- The communications need to be issued farther in advance of the event date or deadline, so people have time to respond and/or plan.
- not frequent enough. Facebook is not a satisfactory channel. I don't use other social media.
- I prefer print materials that I receive in the mail. At present, any information I receive from the city is after-the-fact. Not usually useful.
- The web page needs to be completely redesigned. I feel as though I know more about other Puget Sound cities from their web pages than Des Moines -- by a lot. Did you know we have a new police chief? Yes, it was on Facebook, but there is nothing about his hire on the web page. In fact, there is nothing at all about the entire department on the web page.
- Increase the use of social media platforms. Add direct email.
- Communications should be very fact-based without "spin" deployed to justify a decision/policy.
- I just don't think the City Council is very transparent. I get more info from the FB community group than I do in the city.
- We have a public channel that should be used by local business, I offer to take over so we can make engage with the community and business.
- The only consistent communion I receive is City Currents, which provides only one-way communication, mostly in the form of a long message from the mayor. I am aware the city has a FB page, but I rarely spend time on Facebook, and when I do, I don't often see the city's page in my feed. I can't remember the last time there was a meeting asking for community input about an issue. It seems that the administration operates on the assumption that if an issue is discussed at a council meeting, that is adequate to inform city residents about it.
- Very rare to see anything official from the city. Would like more communication via mailings or even in the DM community Facebook group.
- Better web-based communication. Highly moderated blog is info from currents etc.
- police department and those who work in it need to be honest and understand the laws that they communicate to people.
- I am big on the idea of getting control again of our local broadcast channel, 21, and using it for business, community, and local engagements, and announcements. That doesn't work so well, and the broadcasts are aired at the most bizarre times of night when most of us are asleep, or midday when we're at work, away from the broadcasts.



- Council member JC Harris is the only council member who regularly contacts his constituents. For information from any other source, it's necessary to hunt for it.
- The format and methods used to allow residents to review and provide input on community growth and development are inadequate. Full transparency is needed. ALL city development changes, and new projects should be presented on the city website with ALL applicable supporting documents and information related to the proposal, whether financial, architectural, engineering, and all supporting communications by city officials. This should be available for at least 60 days before it is discussed at a council meeting. Residents should be given an additional period to review any new information presented at the time of a council meeting before any final decisions are made.
- Stop with hidden agendas and tell the truth.
- City websites are not easy to navigate. Calendar of events needs to be easier to read. Full month on one screen.
- I am not hearing about something until a couple days after the day it happens or until another citizen talks about it in a post on Facebook.
- The channels are fine, but the format is hard to read and boring. I recommend checking out the City of Kent's Facebook page. They offer a master class in reaching your citizens in a fun, timely, and engaging manner.
- It's very difficult now that we have moved away from print and local nightly news—I wish I had something better to offer—opt-in push texts re: important events.
- Most communication from the city is incomplete or inaccurate, and the mayor blames people for misinformation when the city council produces incomplete and inaccurate communications. Also, most information comes too late to be useful or has to come second hand through social media.
- Directness. Honesty.
- I would like to see regular updates of upcoming decisions, changes, and progress regarding significant impacts to the residents of Des Moines. This can be provided by email announcements and written notices sent to residents. Also, regular requests for input (quarterly) would be appreciated.
- A modern website with active updates, a stronger presence on social media platforms and an overall increase in communication outlining the reasoning behind decisions being made and implemented.
- More proactive communication in a variety of ways (social media, email, mailers).
- I get the Waterland Blog, and our neighborhood has an active Facebook Group with city contacts, so we're pretty well informed about city happenings. I also read City Currents when it comes in. However, I don't know that people not already dialed into channels such as those are being kept as informed (e.g., I don't really receive independent emails/mailers/flyers from the city other than City Currents [quarterly], which would suggest that people not already looking for city info are likely not getting it).
- Provide clear, complete info to us BEFORE decisions are made.
- Increase frequency and offer opt-in email newsletter; cover issues more in depth with updates with maps, such as the marina redevelopment, infrastructure improvements and efforts to help our neighbors who are unsheltered.



- Compared to other municipalities around Seattle, Des Moines web site lacks helpful, meaningful information. Some of it is rather cryptic. For example, there are cases where it offers a contact for further information by first initial and last name. But no real name or email. Who is taken? As I look at the web site, I learn very little about the city and its departments. Communication should start and end with the web site and connect to other communication platforms. The web site should be a foundation for communication and in this case, it seriously needs fortifying and current information. As another example, there is a grossly outdated study on the economic value hotels bring. This study lacks credibility and cites 2018 numbers, meaning pre-COVID. Hotels have not recovered from the pandemic yet, so those numbers simply do not tell a current story. I could go on.
- The city needs Twitter. The data on the website is out of date and has some broken links.
- Published public notices may not comply with GMA requirements. Please compare with other city and King County notices.
- Quarterly? magazine paper publishing as core communication strategy is not sufficient.
- Current Magazine is a plus but only comes out quarterly. Mailing with information where additional information and updates can be found -- on a website/blog, somewhere easy to access. I appreciate the information in Currents magazine and try to follow the blog. I also appreciated it when the mayor provided his opinion (in the Current mag) and vision for what this town could be. Transparency -- Communication--for instance: There seemed to be a lot of misinformation about the hotel in the marina. I still don't know where it was supposed to be sited. It would really help if we could get the full story. I support smart development- but we need to find out what is really happening, otherwise people will react to misinformation. I would like it if the council members could be a little more approachable in the community. A greeting or friendly hello to your fellow Des Moines citizen would be most welcome. It might also open more communication.
- Follow through needed. No closure on the Water District issues, e.g., Harris cap issue.
- Keep up the Des Moines magazine it's good has all the info.
- SeeClickfix would be a better way for citizens to communicate with city departments. Like SeaTac city's responsive system.
- I can never find the city manager report on-line. It used to be available, but I haven't seen it since Piasecki left. The quarterly newsletter isn't adequate.
- I would like more information on emergency procedures - especially considering the horrific fires on Maui.
- More communication would be better. The only council member who seems to let us know what's happening is Councilmember Harris and that is via Facebook.
- This survey was an unexpected link in an unexpected email. This is dangerous. As a Cybersecurity professional it would be best if an email would have the full link of the destination rather than a shortened URL for readability or marketing.
- City needs consistent, TIMELY ways to notify residents. I follow Facebook, but we need a platform that reaches most/all citizens consistently. And in a format that is legible, easy to read. Not necessarily, artistic script type, fonts.
- Only to add that the city shouldn't base their actions on social media replies.
- Continually promote activities through Instagram and Facebook
- Constant contact email communication company and twitter



- More mailers and links to communication from the website on social media
- Is the Des Moines quarterly publication the only means of communication other than the community Facebook page?
- If I didn't subscribe to the Waterland Blog, I don't think I would know what was going on in Des Moines. A monthly email or mailed newsletter from the city would be helpful.
- We need a city newspaper. Not everyone is on the internet, and social media is slow, with most events showing up after the event, or too late to make or change plans.
- There needs to be improvement in advance notification of meetings and getting emergency notifications more quickly.
- Get rid of the City of Des Moines memo format and use shorter and succinct writing style - everything looks the same, and the bold typeface and capitalization makes it hard to scan. You can remove spurious information - if you are trying to communicate a road closure, I don't need to know all the people that were cc'd on it.
- Channel 21 should repeat city council meetings. Also post current activities. Rarely hear what is happening in the city. I heard more before when a flyer was mailed to everyone.
- City Currents is outdated and not timely enough. When information is put out by the city (social media or otherwise), it's usually short notice. The web site is clunky and difficult to find information on.
- The information is good but needs to be put out in a timely manner and in multiple ways.
- Please keep City Currents as a print magazine for those who do not access the internet.
- Seems the shareholders in Marina and making it a destination location while not providing affordable housing let alone services for our most in need. The houseless and our children most impacted by COVID and aircraft pollution should be funded. Buildings should be required to provide low income and be GREEN not just Market rates for property values to go up!
- Need communication more often. Some major communications have been done only a couple days in advance. That's not acceptable.
- Please hire a communications Director.



Appendix B: Comments received on Question 5

Overall, how satisfied are you with the frequency and timeliness of the City's communications?

- I usually do not know about an issue until it is settled.
- Email group? Text?
- Questions need to be addressed, solutions are offered, strategies to put on agenda _ Citizens up
- We have struggled to get clear and/or face to face communication from the building/permitting department. The communications we have had are not in "laymen" terms and calls are not returned. The lack of helpfulness in getting work approved, the delays and so on are borderline ridiculous. The department should be supporting and assisting their citizens in the home/property improvements because it better serves everyone and brings more money into the city's pockets due to the improved values!!!!
- When communication comes out it has been well written. However, those with differing experiences or perspectives understandably see mayor messages as propaganda that dismisses citizens. Cutting any public hearing sessions prior to deciding is another way mayor/council can easily communicate that they do not need/value public input. The improvement would be ensuring opportunities for public input as is traditional and ensuring there is communication regarding these opportunities. It's irritating when citizens feel like decisions are already a done deal and council/management is simply going through motions.
- Sometimes by the time I receive the magazine, the events are over or close to it.
- website is difficult to navigate, especially trying to look up projects, LUAs etc.
- More timely and more frequent
- Create a distribution list for email and text communications. Allow opt-in/opt-out. Model it after Puget Sound Energy notification system. When there is a power outage, I receive a text and email with information, and an update when it is resolved. It accurately sets expectations and reduces confusion among my neighbors.
- Get us accurate, timely information with less bias. Councilmember Harris actually seems to be the best communicator with his weekly blog whether you like him or not.
- I realize that you wish to emphasize the positive but an acknowledgment that crime exists would be useful. A map of where the police have been called, an update on an existing situation. For example, no one I know shops at Safeway any longer. What is Safeway allowed to do as far as seizing control from the criminals?
- I find that unless I dig for information, I simply don't know what's happening. Posting to a website doesn't help me because I have no idea something new has been posted. Honestly, it's quite frustrating.
- I love the Des Moines City Currents
- Our quarterly activity calendar, guide to events, classes is mixed. Great for seniors, and kids, not so much on the activities (really!) of government, development, and general growth activities of its city officials.
- Put out a newsletter on a monthly basis at least, and certainly after each special council meeting.
- Residents require more time to review and analyze information being presented before it goes into official proceedings and decision making.
- Listen to citizens before making decisions.



- Longer "heads up" before major decisions, and multiple methods for public input.
- Since the City does not have a newspaper, send out a monthly newsletter. Include police reports, building permits, human interest, etc. Perhaps make better use of the Waterland Blog.
- I would like to hear more from my council members (do I have a specific one?) and would appreciate it if they solicited feedback. Is there an easy place to find information? Mailing with website or blog? I try to read the council and marina meeting notes when possible.
- Maybe a monthly sheet outlining construction or renovation activities that impact traffic or getting around. The sheet could also include a brief note on development projects, and city-sponsored rec activities.
- The city needs a schedule for regular notifications as well as an effective method for special/emergency notifications to reach all residents in a timely way!
- At the very least, a daily newspaper
- There doesn't seem to be a communication plan or dedicated outlet. There needs to be a consistent go-to source for information followed up by other outlets to reach other audiences.
- More communication is needed in terms of plans and emergencies through multiple means.
- Maybe create a text-based emergency alert system. Something like that could have been used for our recent water issue.
- Transparency and accountability with the discontinuation of back room deals and bullying tactics by manager and Council heads!



Appendix C: Comments received on Question 6

Which of the following sources do you prefer to use when looking for information related to City of Des Moines news, updates, or services?

- Waterland blog
- I love this magazine.
- Where are the posters, flyers, or factsheets at the key locations in the community as listed above?
- senior center had a very good monthly newsletter a few years ago, lots of senior news
- Mayor Pina and I met, and he listened to my ideas and concerns. Nice to have personal interest
- Re Channel 21...if that's not the "YouTube" channel, I'm wondering why it isn't productively used as other cities, King County and Washington State gov does...
- Just moved here. Everyone is nice and communicative. Attended mtg with new DM Chief and he is very witty and diplomatic and responsive to people's wishes.
- Internet searches based on areas of interest.
- I will never use Facebook because it has been taken over by hostel foreign powers.
- Des Moines Senior Center
- Instagram
- Neighborhood representative
- Waterland Blog as it's the closest thing we have to a vetted source of information.
- Communications in addition to traditional channels must keep up with technology and culture, but also not allow the Freeform misinformation mongers to take over.
- I think it should become a mission of the city to encourage, foster, and assist all businesses, and organizations to create and maintain their business website, and make one if they don't have one. It should be required to have a retail business in Des Moines, to better set WA's Des Moines apart from that one in IA. The occasional meetings with the mayor, council members, outside of their official duties, but as part of shared community pride, involvement, valuation, cleanup, etc.
- The website needs a lot of modernization with the assumption made that most residents expect a more robust, mobile friendly online experience.
- Scuttlebutt at the Quarterdeck or local businesses. Waterland blog.
- EBlasts, or automated phone calls. Email, possibly snail mail if time allows. I would like to use websites, but at best it's cumbersome.
- Daily or weekly newspaper
- Broadcast robo calls or a way to sign up for them.
- Monthly mailing to everyone the current news.
- Email notifications.
- The more communication the better.
- Des Moines Facebook group
- The City Manager should resume the weekly update reports to communicate what he does.



Appendix D: Comments received on Question 7

Is there content you would like to see more of in the City's communications?

- Events and activities need to appear 2 months in advance of the event and continue until the event in the City Currents magazine.
- Break down how decisions are made for the city - who benefits from decisions to increase transparency of processes and educate citizens.
- More detailed information regarding development projects in the areas and projections for growth YoY.
- Create a variety of master plans/project plans that are vetted with public meetings and comments on documents, followed by city council review/approval is an in-depth method of communicating major topics/projects to all.
- The City Manager's weekly activity report with enough information to understand the activity. In the City Currents, accomplishments, etc. are simply a bullet point. So generic that we have no idea what happened!
- Information pertinent to our neighborhood (zone 5) within the City of Des Moines.
- Requiring people to sign up to speak at a council meeting BEFORE we have heard the conversation is ridiculous and designed to suppress public comments. That is a policy that needs to be changed.
- Redondo boardwalk could be a great place for a bulletin board.
- Transparency in finances - incoming/outgoing
- A far greater degree of disclosure by the city government.
- Consider having voluntary service or advisory committees.
- Airport Noise Pollution and assistance
- big picture discussion about the future--climate change, etc.
- Crime reports
- Volunteer events More communications on why you want to put in a hotel at the marina and take away public space.
- Monthly video updates from the mayor or city council members. I'm a videographer and would be willing to try and shoot a few of these to show the potential for it.
Spencer@wandermanmedia.com
- I feel like we learn about things long after they happen or when it's too late for the public to engage.
- In any of the formats - more frequent "touches" on key issues (the absolute worst communication is when an issue is presented to council and passed the same night now - ouch - because that is no communication at all).
- work opportunities
- it is expensive to do all things at the same time all the time, but it is important to have this sort of information available easily for people to hear, read, and access, however. YouTube, 21, and other media channels make a great place to start!
- All the above. It's called communication.
- No longer put a dot where you want something done, actually bring forth open dialogue.
- The city needs to be more transparent in their decision-making processes.



- Anything the council is going to be asked to vote on should be disseminated to them and to the public AT LEAST a week in advance, not on the night it is discussed at council meetings.
- Question six noted neighborhood-based activities with city council and staff. I have yet to see one posted other than the mayor's Coffee with the Mayor.
- Sorry, but City Currents is not where it's at.
- Perhaps an overview of community concerns and suggestions you've received, with the council's responses.
- Ways people are making a positive impact in our community.
- Instead of telling us what is already decided.... ask us what we think.
- I am satisfied with the city's communication efforts. You're doing a great job!
- City attorney actions and hostile environment created by management.
- The city relies too heavily on Facebook.
- Would love to see more transparency between the city to the taxpayers. How is our money being spent and where, for example. Who works here and what do they do? Staff profiles would be nice. Create a community of accessibility.



Appendix E: Comments received on Question 8

Have you ever attended City-hosted meetings or events and what was your experience.

- I have partial disability - it is hard to get to events.
- Encourage participation open forums in schools, outside City Hall, pet parades, apple eating contest, community building events.
- would like to have city manager talk.
- Personally, I won't attend the meeting.
- The council members would not look at or respond to residents who got up and spoke about issues.
- Before major decisions are made that will impact the communication significantly. People need to know how they can impact their decisions.
- Make communications clear - welcoming and repeat as needed. Mics that work, greeters who are friendly.
- Don't get info on when they are happening.
- I am part of the Redondo Community Group
- Again, my experience was that there was not a genuine interest in public input or questions. Please don't assume that because one is "elected" a manager that he/she knows best.
- The city manager will not answer any questions from Comments in city meetings.
- The community picnic in the parking lot was nice, a wonderful effort, but I felt uncomfortable.
- Attended a meeting via Zoom and appreciated having that option.
- Very few of these occur. It is nice when they occur, but rarely is the content complete or is there an opportunity for the public to engage. Usually it is a "one and done" event and they call it public engagement /Transparency.
- We need advance notice of meetings. We need regularly scheduled community meetings. We need proper audio/visual equipment. We need a large community meeting place.
- Have attended Redondo community meetings with city officials - mayor and police chief and found them to be very informative.
- Redondo meetings at the MAST center
- wanted to speak at a city council meeting and did not know you had to sign up.
- The Redondo engagement has been super helpful; however, it's taking too long to address our traffic issues. We were told the ticketing would be up and running June 2023 and now it's Dec 2023. We have heard NO updates confirming this can be achieved in Dec.
- Lots of lip service but completed. Take the speed camera installation on Redondo Beach drive for instance...they were supposed to be installed and up and running in early June, it's nearly Oct and zip...meanwhile the traffic and speeders are overwhelming...
- Talk, Talk, Talk, city makes decisions, takes too long to put them in place.
- I tried to attend an event at the aquarium, but it was full, and I had to put my name on a waiting list. then the follow up event didn't work with a normal work schedule
- I attended and the experience was neither positive nor negative.
- The city government hides way too much information, and very rarely seeks actual input from residents.



- Mixed reviews on city events. Council Meetings are disgraceful and embarrassing and should not be the only forum where residents receive information about what is happening with our city budget and planning.
- Why is there no "neutral" choice? Is it more important for meetings/events to be positive/negative or transparently informative?
- timing and accessibility (I am disabled) is an issue. Could more of the events be hybrid?
- I wanted to. I really did. And I found out they happened afterward. So frustrating.
- Meeting discussion was fine; however, the meeting was way too LONG, especially for someone who has a day job. The meetings need to move quicker or be structured to proceed more efficiently.
- Usually don't hear about them or when.
- More communication, advertisement needed to know when/where/what is happening. Everything seems geared toward the older generation. Sometimes I've noticed talks with the mayor happen during the workday. How can you reach and include the diverse community that is Des Moines. Not simply the over 50 crowd?
- Many of the city meetings seemed very thrown together and the content from the city manager, city council member or speaker did not seem rehearsed or entirely thought through. The city manager and city council members do not dress professionally/tidy though the city staff generally does. Kind of has an amateur feel compared to other cities I've lived in.
- I went to coffee with a cop Left after 15 minutes when cops chose to talk to one another rather than residents.
- I attended a Coffee with a Cop. It was a huge waste of time because the cops talked to each other in small groups, but largely ignored those attending. They were not very approachable. Why bother with these if you're not going to approach residents and talk?
- Both apply. Suggest that more, true, open town hall style forums be held on sensitive/controversial issues. This is hard - but better - than avoiding true engagement.
- Drama of personal lives and agendas overshadow the needs of the community. Not equipped for the growth of the community, years behind the social era as its residents and problems to address.
- I attended the community input event at the marina several years ago and it was generally positive at the time, but I have heard very little about any action resulting from that meeting, except for the presentation to the council about the marina master plan, which I learned about by accident the week of the presentation. There should have been multiple progress reports and opportunities for feedback in the years between the community meeting and the unveiling of the plan.
- What is a city hosted event? I go to the farmers market and marina area often, but I don't know what is or isn't hosted by the city.
- The mayor told me when I attended a meeting about the Pacific ridge that I was just there to be a distraction.
- Meeting times have always conflicted with my work schedule.
- Would like to see more Community engagement (allowing residents the opportunity to ask questions, and not just a presentation)
- I work most of the time when events are occurring.
- Events aren't always communicated in a timely or efficient manner.



- Putting colored dots on a map where we want the cafe to go is preposterous.
- I know the city council wants to expand tourism in our city. With everything going on in the state and county I would rather have the resources go for making the city safe and a great place to live and then go for tourism. Many times, I feel like the residents' input at meetings is blown off.
- When the city hosts meetings/events, councilmembers and applicable contractors are available and responsive. Getting news of these meetings/events out well ahead of time to the broad community is key for meaningful participation and feedback for all parties.
- The council relies too much on the city manager and there are two council members who are regularly "shut out" when they request meaningful discussions.
- Coffee with a Cop is a joke and virtually inaccessible to the public as most of the events -- including the last four for the years - take place in the mornings when most of the city's residents are working. Why bother? You're simply checking a box, saying yes, we have Coffee with a Cop. I'm not aware of any other city sponsored events.
- The city manager was dismissive of the need to include broader community feedback. I had a very disappointed response.
- I have attended Farmers markets. But find the timing and accessibility of many events, especially city council, to not sufficient.
- My past attending experience was neutral.
- The council was rude and dismissive to the public during the public comment period.
- Things and plans discussed at that meeting never came to fruition.
- I have watched City council meetings when I happen upon one on channel 21. The meetings are not consistent in time or days of month.
- At times, the meetings seemed to be a half-hearted effort to go through the motions or to sell the community on something. Other times, questions got answered which was the purpose.
- We as citizens opinions were not valued. Even though we are longtime residents.
- I attended meetings years ago but not with the current council members.
- Eye rolls by city officials while serious concerns being talked about. The hostile bullying during committee meetings when trying to hold them accountable is another instance.
- Sometimes more than one citywide meeting is necessary to include more residents.
- City staff are often condescending and negative.



Appendix F: Comments received on Question 9

How easy is it to find and access the information you need on the City's website?

- Please include park value hours of trader work in residential areas - music/noise
- Elderly people don't have technology.
- I don't easily find events, can't find music parks, dates etc.
- I think the website has gotten better but during Covid, it was horrible!!
- The homepage is quite confusing and does not show breaks or the latest news.
- There should be a website section on every major project or topic of interest and a summary of the area and latest status on progress.
- It is just frustrating. Most people use their phones, and searching for recent agendas might come up with November 2022. There is always something. Hire a communications director and technical expert. Usually, they are the same person.
- I have trouble finding updates on planned funding for initiatives. For example, I am interested on parks and recreation improvements (building/maintaining tennis or pickleball courts). I the parks and recreation email address on the city's website but did not receive a response.
- Clunky. Search feature not very inclusive
- More guidelines on whom to call or how to report maintenance and safety issues. (We often find massive amounts of broken glass that remain for long periods in walking areas, for instance. I don't have the equipment to remove it all properly.) Also, who to call when drivers are misbehaving on Beach Drive. I have tried the non-emergency number and the non-emergency website without success. I don't know when the problem rises to the level that a 9-1-1 call is appropriate.
- If you write to have a safety issue addressed and nothing is done, someone needs to get back to you and explain why.
- finding out city permit office has virtual hours was not listed. Also, information on my permit's web site is not listed - what it is - how to use it ...
- Develop a "newsroom" or blog section to better capture information about the city's initiatives, events, etc.
- Road improvements/repaving, south end of DM meeting FW on 1st Ave & leaving Redondo up to 16th Ave.
- Modernize and get an app.
- A simpler layout.
- Provide actual information on city planning and finances; 2) The search functions are atrocious.
- The website is disappointing. Navigation is not intuitive, pertinent information is not readily available. Lots of old data comes up on Google searches. Clearly it is not well managed.
- Building permit and information.
- Reporting violations of environmental regulations should be easier to find. more email addresses for departments, not just for council members.
- If I know what I'm looking for, I can find it. The problem is what I don't know that I don't know...
- Information is fairly nested. Bring the stuff that people care about to the top page.
- There is not one place for all the information. I don't want to visit several social media sites.



- Better UX. Everything is the same size, it's not visually interesting, it all blends together. Use white space strategically, add graphics, hire an expert.
- Rebuild the website from the ground up with a more modern look, better organization, and in a way that the city staff can easily update it, so it stays current.
- It needs complete redesign. It lacks engagement, pride in the city and meaningful presentation.
- I would like more information about building projects that are planned or already in the works. What are they? What is planned for this lot?
- This site needs to be completely revamped. If other communities can produce visually engaging and welcoming content, so can Des Moines.
- hire someone that knows what they're doing.
- It's very impersonal and dry. Include more fun pictures. Reword things to still be professional but also with a friendly feel.
- We suggest setting up sections in the DM city website for each of the 7 City Zones mentioned in survey point #2 above. Each zone could be numbered and named and have representatives from the citizenry and the city government ALL providing regular input for each zone. This would allow us ALL to see the WHOLE CITY and better prioritize our joint goals and issues. Then we might be able to WORK TOGETHER on them.
- There is a very apparent problem with lack of transparency regarding city growth and development ideas, projects, and agreements. This needs to be corrected.
- The design is clunky but that is typical with any government website.
- Improve useability of the website
- More crosswalks on 1st Ave S/509 East/West traveling N/S from downtown Des Moines to Burien.
- Modern UI principals should be employed in a complete redesign of the city's website. Put relevant updates and info front and center. Ex; public comment, City Council meeting schedules.
- Total revamp! And see www.EngageKentParks.com for good ways to engage with the community on upcoming proposed projects.
- It needs to be completely overhauled, like start over. There are wonderful examples of engaging web sites. Just look at other places like Redmond, Mountlake Terrace or say, Burien. What's the first thing you see on Burien's web page? Welcome to Burien. The city's web site is not very welcoming. If I'm looking for a place to live, I walk away with very little knowledge about the city as opposed to the other cities noted. I could spend an hour reviewing the city's web site.
- It depends on the information you need. A lot of information is there, it just may take a lot of time and energy to find it.
- The website has many deadlinks and is poorly organized.
- News and events on the main page. Better drop-down menus that make it easy to find content intuitively.
- We need an experienced professional website developer. The current website is not intuitive.
- I don't like that most information is converted to PDF files, rather than taking me to a new page online.
- Add more links on home page.



- The website needs to be reviewed and made more user friendly. Include a section for all community events like destination Des Moines, Legacy Foundation, Church Bazaars, etc. One stop shopping.
- The events calendar on the website is what I am generally looking for, if it could be subscribed to or available as a calendar URL, I could reference from my personal calendar that would be great. The only thing I would suggest is don't show canceled meeting or show as a different color. You want to make this as clean as possible. Also consider filter by type of event. The UI readability of the city's webpage could be improved. The navigation menus are way too wordy, the links for where I can find and how do I all run together, and search is not prominent. I am guessing you have a turnkey site builder program, and it could be much improved and modernized.
- Visually, it's uninteresting and graphically boring, stale and dated. Lots of clicking on text just to find things. Graphics or visuals representing the categories would make it read better and easier to navigate.



Appendix G: Comments received on Question 10

If you previously visited the City's webpage, why did you visit and did you find what you needed?

- Curiosity
- Fixit form and comments I get feedback, that's good but follow through!
- Not easy to navigate.
- Yes, after too much time of searching!
- Water issue, development news, event calendar
- No, no animal control.
- Crime blotter, National Night Out, and Events. Yes.
- National Night Out registration
- To try to find more information about local community events like Seafair parade or bingo. Not easy to find helpful information about local community or social events.
- I was looking for info on animal control.
- City public works department.
- See updates on a park.
- We were looking for a way to dispose of (or recycle) an outdated fire extinguisher. Could not reach a local fire department via phone. Discovered a hazardous waste collection in Burien.
- When I was starting a business that since has closed.
- I was looking for property line info and could not find what I needed.
- No reason; just wanted to check it out.
- The last time I went on the website I was looking for a parking pass for the marina and found information on utility bill help I had no idea about.
- Building permits.
- Barnes creek trail improvement/extension over 516 projects
- The web site fails to tell me anything about the city the way other municipalities do. As of this writing the new police chief has been in place for two weeks. He's not even on the city's web site yet. Then again, there is absolutely no information about the department, but still, how hard is it to have something current like a change in leadership. The fact that the city's web page is stuck in the early 1990s is nothing new, so I'm not sure what you hope to do with this information.
- Marine news. Somewhat.
- Researching issues and topics - very mixed bag on results.
- Was looking for the marina plan and found a plethora of information.
- Pet license info. Classes and rec activities.
- Permit application and process
- Permit info
- Sometimes I find it. Sometimes not.
- Events calendar. yes, with comments above.
- The potholes needed filled and roadside brush needed trimmed. Looking for permit information.
- To rent facility at DM Beach Park, usually, although sometimes phone number given was not answered and no opportunity to leave message. Also have used Fix-it Form -- good response to that.
- Looking for updates and eventually I found what I was looking for.



- Council information and actions taken by City management.
- To find council meeting info.
- Planning department for permits and the like. They are a very helpful nice group!
- I tried to find older copies of City Currents; it was difficult.



Appendix H: Comments received on Question 11

Would you recommend any of the following improvements to the City's webpage?

- Photos of recent event, such as Waterland, farmers' market, night out against crime
- Not all elderly people have technology.
- A lot of people don't spend a lot of time on the computer we need other easy options.
- I recall looking for info and the website was outdated. This may have been during COVID.
- Section for status of projects underway
- The content is fine, which is more important than the visual appeal. This could use some work but is not a high priority. Again, content counts the most.
- Email links for departments.
- My issues are more about what I don't know that I don't know and how to find out about it.
- ADA and HTML 5 compliance.
- Rebuild the website from the ground up with a more modern look, better organization, and in a way that the city staff can easily update it, so it stays current.
- The fact that these questions are being asked shows a huge disconnect. Why keep studying an issue the city freely admits needs work Just do the work.
- Again, this web site needs to be completely redone. Honestly, a survey such as this is not needed for people to know the web site is about three decades outdated. If the right people haven't figured it out by now, will this survey really open their eyes?
- Not looked at the page forever
- Some pages are not mobile-friendly (I.e., staff directory). Very few visuals, so the city is missing an opportunity to attract visitors and new residents. The website could be a vehicle for presenting the city's story—its amenities and why anyone would want to visit or open a business here. When you land on the home page, one of the main things you see is the Zenith demolition permit (which people may not recognize as Landmark property) and the information is a year old.
- Directness. Honesty.
- More maps to help me understand where a project or event is. I've lived here for more than 35 years, but I don't know all the street names and numbers to understand locations I read about. I would like to be able to opt-in to email updates with frequency between biweekly and monthly.
- Making sure the information is current. Information provided on city sites (e.g., building codes) has not been updated or conflicts with information provided to city employees.
- Searches bring up irrelevant documents instead of links to the information on the website.
- I would love to help redesign the site.
- You're doing a great job!
- intention means everything! Creating anti-camping legislation to target our houseless we are currently pushing off to neighboring Cities with rides to DAY SHELTERS. Shameful at best
- Ensure the whole website is mobile-friendly.



Appendix I: Comments received on Question 12

How easy is it to get helpful information or assistance in a timely manner when you engage with City staff by phone, email, or in-person?

- A couple of years ago, I had a question. Got a well explained answer.
- More key words. navigation is tricky now.
- blame some of this on COVID.
- It has always been easy to reach the department and the response has been within a day or less.
- Channel 21 not advertised.
- More online options (chat, more options on website)
- I have emailed city council members in the past and they have responded.
- Haven't tried since 2020 and during Covid. Gave up on building projects.
- Identify staff (contact info) with the project, plan, or other topic so one would know who/how to contact them.
- The police are fantastic - Ease of working with Public Works needs a lot of improvement - I'm not talking about problems with laws & requirements - I'm referring to ease of use working with the public works system.
- Try returning emails.
- Everyone except the planning department is good to great.
- Does the City have a tracking system for all citizen requests and questions? It could be used to ensure that a timely response is given.
- I'm grateful for the people who are there to answer our calls and help us.
- Email can be a little slow but talking to someone by phone is ideal.
- Have enough city staff so that they aren't so overloaded that they can't get back to you ever (frequently in my experience) or in a timely fashion. It's bad for businesses, builders, and citizens who live here.
- It depends on the department.
- Don't ignore your constituents.
- It depends on the person - some are super speedy in response and others never respond.
- The city manager gives no answers, most of the council gets defensive and rude. There's only one CM who while I dislike their political leaning responds in a meaningful way.
- I have found the responses to be made from emailing the council prompt, but again I felt like I am being blown off.
- City staff are not terribly responsive, in my experience (except one time when I called). I usually must make multiple attempts before return contact is made.
- A Communications director as the gatekeeper rather than the CAO.
- The parks department is well run.
- Bonnie Wilkins is very quick to answer questions. I greatly appreciate her.
- Once I reached the correct people, they were great.
- Better understand who to request city landscape requests and sidewalk lighting issues in Marina district.
- Sometimes I get a response and occasionally I have entered "fix it" type tickets that haven't received action unless I request multiple times.



Appendix J: Comments received on Question 13

What are your priorities for improving how the City communicates and engages with the community?

- Use social media more.
- Have a once-a-month public forum for Q&A on topics of interest.
- All are covered in previous responses. Redundant questions.
- All of the above assume I KNOW what is upcoming. To me the major challenge is pushing out the info in the first place (email notifications please!!)
- Needs a little bit of nightlife. Be attractive to younger crowds.
- I don't use social media but, again, just a simple email newsletter would be wonderful.
- A city app or QR codes spread throughout public places that direct people to the events page on the website.
- Consider high-definition digital displays in targeted high visibility locations to replace old fashioned bulletin boards. Locations to start with would be the Marina, City Hall, Redondo Parking Lot, and top of future Green Street/at the Des Moines Theater.
- Don't rely on a single platform Cross reference Pull outdated information off the site like financial studies.
- I cannot stress the last box enough. Completely reimagine the city's website. Again, it should not take a survey to figure that out. It says hold more community meetings or town halls. Have there been any the last year or two? Other than the inaccessible Coffee with a Cop?
- The city should/could do more to communicate/summarize to citizens about what decisions will be made at a Council meeting - simply posting an agenda and packet is - for most folks - information overload and lost. IF there will be a staff PowerPoint shared at the meeting explaining a topic, why not share it in advance (to Council, for crying out loud of course and citizens?). These presentations must be very useful, or they wouldn't take up so much time at a meeting.
- Invest in a communications director who can develop a strategic communications plan based on community input about its information/ communication needs.
- hire someone that knows what they're doing.
- Make it so people who are not online can find out information! We need an off-line communication source.
- I think the city should use social media more, but in a better way. Posting something using a boring city template to one Facebook group and then reposting to others doesn't help if the original communication is bad. The city should hire a skilled communications manager who knows how to communicate visually to reach a wide audience. Spend some time with the City of Kent's communications team - they are best in class.
- Listen to the residents.
- When asking for comments, please provide the context or background so my comments can be thoughtful.
- Make information easier to access and provide feedback. Like an app or other system that people can use more readily.



- If the public speaks - try listening for a change. We might not all PhD types but on many subjects we can out think, out implement, and compromise better than some of the city power-mongers.
- Aren't we paying some company to be working on this ?
- Please use Constant Contact. Then we could decide which council mtgs were important to go to.
- Newspaper
- Post City Council meetings online and repeat on channel 21. What is posted by the City council is usually opinions and not formal meeting minutes. Post other city information on channel 21.
- A monthly publication would be better than a quarterly. More notice for meetings and events would be effective in getting the community involved.
- Foster community spirit and communication in each of the zones outlined at the beginning of the survey.
- Go into the other community areas instead of just the marina matters mentality.
- Bring back the 30 days wait or second reading of new ordinances.



Appendix K: Comments received on Question 14

Are there any specific communication platforms or methods you believe we should consider adopting in the future?

- Set up USPS
- would like to use email- am willing to opt-in
- Mail out info on backgrounds of all elections
- I really like the coffee with a police chief/officer/mayor idea.
- Make the website easy! One click now you have to scroll and search, etc.
- Mailings. People pay more attention to things they receive in the mail.
- engage with residents.
- hard copy - sent out before major events/decisions. Send it out to residents - about upcoming town halls. list action/steps
- Be on the same page as others within your office/jurisdiction. If your inspectors are willing to pass something and your permit/building office says just the opposite what is that telling you?
- Instagram. It's the most used.
- An email blast or virtual mailing list. Not sure this already exists.
- City blog which is updated frequently and provides options for public comment. Frequent posts on DM Facebook pages.
- I would like to see a social media page like Instagram for our city to disperse information and to highlight community meetings, successes and areas of improvement.
- Attending council meetings via Zoom as night driving is an issue.
- Use TV channel 21 for delivering presentations that were previously presented and are of great interest to the public. (This is playing back prerecorded information - not live presentations.)
- All are covered in previous responses. Redundant questions.
- Just improve website. I'm not on Facebook.
- I'm a boomer so not up on the latest and greatest - but willing to learn.
- Improve websites, expand communications and medium of communications to social media pages, including Instagram, TikTok and potentially others as they become popular.
- Emails!!
- I think communication by zones could be helpful. We all have different community needs.
- A monthly email with specific subjects addressed (subjects like police activity, politics, projects, etc.) chosen by the end user.
- direct to text message
- Using modern digital technologies to communicate.
- YouTube live stream meetings where we can ask questions.
- email communications
- We visited Beaverton, Oregon, recently where a friend is on their urban renewal group that meets monthly to review and provide feedback about ideas the city is looking into. I cannot find an active community review and feedback group in Des Moines. We need this kind of group to provide feedback so that city time and resources are not wasted. Des Moines has so much potential. Meeting with other city officials that are making gradual progress to improving their cities (like Beaverton) would be helpful to hear about their lessons learned.



- Make the website searchable.
- advisory committees- seems everything decided by unaccountable staff.
- A notifications platform that provides Email and text notifications. The challenge is that social media platforms will change in popularity and frequency of use, but phone and text are more stable. Younger generation residents and workers do not use Facebook, nor do many older residents, so you are missing big contingencies at both ends of the age spectrum.
- next-door, Instagram, Facebook
- how about an email list that comes out a couple times a month with links for surveys, info etc.
- Instagram - used by a lot of people with partnership opportunities Twitter (or whatever becomes the new Twitter) Reddit - WSDOT does a great job updating communities here.
- Yes - email or text notifications (resident opt in) with info on upcoming meetings, events, info sessions, issues and other important info.
- Use Des Moines Community Facebook to announce important information.
- Instagram
- Consider building an app.
- Flyer or mailing occasionally to explain where to locate information or service.
- Have a city of Des Moines WA IG and have influencers in the area post on local events and local businesses and show people to come visit the Marina.
- Email newsletter!!!
- As already stated, Instagram. - Do you have an email list? If not, add one for monthly emails with events, projects, business features, etc. - QR codes, just like you used for this survey
- A city app
- Text option got updates.
- Subscription email on a bi-weekly or monthly basis.
- Instagram and Twitter are easy to employ.
- Don't rely on just a single platform to get your message delivered. I missed an important opportunity to meet the police chief candidates because I paid attention only to the department's Facebook page. The department gave about four to five hours' notice.
- Twitter, Facebook, Physical pamphlets/letters in the mail
- I think communication should continue to be offered on many platforms and that the city magazine should have more content about city council decisions and opportunities for citizens to comment or know when they can comment on proposals. It seems like they don't really want residents to know what is going on. I wish the city would put more emphasis on protecting green space and the unsheltered in our midst. This stuff is never discussed out in the open as far as I can tell.
- Email newsletters are an effective and relatively inexpensive engagement tool.
- more about communication ethics is honesty.
- I suggest majoring in ONE PLACE that you would like ALL people to go to get information and be able to comment and participate. Using too many sites means some people will miss out. Let's point everyone first to: <http://www.desmoineswa.gov> and then have that site direct us to others ONLY if absolutely necessary.
- Mailing letter



- Facebook, Instagram, and Threads are all easy to integrate since they are all Meta products. It's easy to cross-post and reach different audiences. Having an emergency management mass communication tool (Early Alert, etc.) or a reverse 911 would be good for things like boil notices.
- Opt-in push IMs for important news/events
- Community meetings
- Consider using X (Twitter) and Facebook to publicize open comments, City Council and other pressing events. Consider having an option for residents to receive SMS (texts) of these same updates.
- e-mail newsletter promoted on website, Facebook, etc.
- An app that can push critical information out within minutes rather than hours or days.
- The city seems to rely on single platform messaging rather than cross platform.
- Twitter/x
- Seeclickfix
- Listen to community members. Instead of plowing ahead with a pet project, take time to hear what community members think is important to them and their families.
- Community radio station
- No, because you don't keep it up to date it's worthless other than a reference footnote.
- E Mail, Text, Mail. If using social media, realize many people either don't use it, nor check frequently, or perhaps don't have a smart phone.
- Not Twitter. I only need one social media account.
- Constant contact and twitter
- Newspaper
- Robocalls for important issues, emergency alerts.
- The ability to aggregate multiples sources and conversely the ability to distribute a piece of information to multiple channels.
- Mail out information packet as to where to locate information.
- Website and social media. Maybe a monthly flyer that can be posted throughout town or downloadable from the web site to share.
- Feet on the ground
- Listserv would be helpful and simple to set up. Less Facebook.



Appendix K: Comments received on Question 14

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding our communication efforts?

- **Tools and materials for public communication and engagement:**
 - Noticeboard i.e.: marina kiosk - again under-utilized. Posters at Fred Meyer, Safeway - where people go - libraries, restaurants, easy to see.
 - Send email to residents and keep them updated without going to the websites.
 - Less communication required by technology.
 - Maybe a local information board
 - Rather than putting notices up of building plans - land destruction let know via web and how will improve Des Moines overall.
 - More timely information maybe a monthly update
 - Not very timely and frequently does not offer opportunities for public comment or debate. Sounds like a mandate from the city-for example the hotel at the marina proposal.
 - When you have future comment meetings, allow more time for public comment. Put up presentation so people in the back can see, not on a TV monitor. Do not make votes a yes only vote with different choices as the option. What happened to "NO"?
 - Keep improving by hiring an experienced communications person with website experience.
 - Look to other government or public agencies for tools or processes being used to communicate effectively with a large, diverse audience.
 - Find a communications professional with experience in crisis management. The "hotel in the marina" debacle could have been averted if the City had someone who could have been proactive and gotten in front of the issue before it exploded. Planning can prevent crises like these. The City of Kent's communications team is the best. The National Park Service also has a great communications team. Check both out on Facebook and you'll see what Des Moines' communications could be.
 - There's room for improvement! It takes a qualified professional to provide a successful communication plan with implementation.
 - Remote public comment at City Council meetings. Record and broadcast City Council Committee meetings.
- **Expectations to the City and City staff:**
 - It is important that the council major believe and understand the work for Des Moines citizens, not for personal gain or reputation. I don't like the way and have seen them treat certain council members when they don't agree, or someone asks questions.
 - Get residents opinions when building acers of trees have been torn down and replaced with warehouses. Appreciate the efforts to keep homeless "unhoused" encampments out of the city. City needs to deal more with SeaTac regarding airport noise and machinery running at 2am from the airport area Have more activities music in other seasons besides summer.
 - Thank you for seeking feedback. I hope that feedback is heard/processed even if it conflicts with a preconceived perception.



- Make sure this effort moves forward with implementation of recommendations. There could be some loss of interest after the election.
- Think about the intended audience - how the message being communicated will impact them. Along with their possible lack of knowledge on the subject & lack of technical skills in using tools available.
- Change the culture of hiding information. Change the culture to actually seek feedback from the public.
- I think the magazine is great and the website is fine for issues with your home. But we need a better means of communication about the events and life of the city that you are working to create.
- When it comes to municipal government, tell them what you are going to tell them, then tell them, and then tell them what you told them.
- I'm excited that you are looking for ways to increase your communication efforts. Thank you for asking about our experiences and suggestions. In general: - more channels - more often - consider how to be more inclusive with our diverse community. Who's being left out, who are you not reaching? - invest in a: graphic designer, UX consultant, social media/communications manager - does the demographic of your team mirror the demographic of the people you are serving? If not, whose voice/perspective is missing? I look forward to (hopefully!) hearing about the information you gathered through this survey and what you are going to do with it. How can we stay informed? This survey could have been a good opportunity to gather email addresses of people who want to know what's next in this process or stay updated on city happenings.
- We are not the small, sleepy town we once were and the city manager, council, and staff really need to step up their game as the expectations of the community have changed. I will give select city council members major credit for going out of their way to attend and make themselves available to the community at places like the Farmers Market, Marina Mercantile, etc.
- The fact that you're asking questions that have largely been answered by the very fact that a consultant has been hired illustrates a lot of wheel spinning. As noted above, why wait to begin a redesign Start now It's a dynamic product You can always tweak it.
- I cannot emphasize this enough. Reimage the web page. It should have been done yesterday. Again, you don't need a survey to figure that out. The mayor just wrote about pride in the city. The web page hardly demonstrates any pride or welcomes people to the city the way other municipalities do.
- A city of our size needs dedicated communications and community engagement staff. This would not only serve current residents, but it would also enhance economic development efforts by creating positive buzz about the community. Look at Burien. It has none of the natural assets Des Moines has.
- It doesn't seem like all the different parts of City of DM work together. The Arts commission does their own thing, parks and rec do their own thing, city of DM staff do their own thing, police, etc. No one seems to know what the other is doing. Think what great programs and services could be brought to the community if all these organizations worked together.
- Be clear from the beginning and no hidden agendas, take public seriously.



- Do more to ask for engagement from the residents instead of quietly moving through agendas, public comment periods and decisions which affect all residents, especially the property owners (taxpayers).
- I hope this is not the final word on communication. Dialogue is much better than a survey, which cannot be deemed scientific or the slightest bit conclusive.
- **Other issues the City should take actions on:**
 - Enact ordinance to prohibit after-market exhaust systems on cars driving beside boardwalk. This would easily be enforced. Not really different from prohibition upon compression brakes for big rigs. Increased police presence/enforcement along Beach Dr the park and boat launch parking lot. In the past two months, increased police patrols have had a dramatic effect on noise and reckless driving. Haven't eliminated it but I'd guess 70% reduction.
 - Precise clear directives that are appropriate to individual projects due to unusual properties in the area instead of being referred to the general requirements online. There is not one size that fits all and it seems the rules change with new hires. It can be needlessly costly and extremely stressful.
 - I bought my first house near the police station and there are so many extremely loud cars in this neighborhood that drive really fast, it's scary to walk around with my dogs. If we had sidewalks around the neighborhood in 220th towards the park I think it would be a lot safer and look better for the city, they had a bad reputation unfortunately. There's so much potential for upkeep and making this little area appealing. Let's do it.
 - My husband and I are elderly and have lived in Des Moines for 36 years, but now in Wesley Retirement Center. We are not really keeping up with current issues.
 - I would like to see more info on upcoming projects and plans.
 - Sometimes it seems communications are designed to look like keeping people informed while making it hard to know what is going on - or coming up. I'm really hoping you can help!
 - Need more locations and more often with facts, events. Many times, just driving around I find what is happening before hearing anything.
- **Encouragements and appreciations:**
 - We live in the information age. Effective communication is vital to a successful business, organization, and governmental agency. Invest in your communication efforts and you'll not only better promote the City of Des Moines, but you can bring together and connect your community by doing so.
 - I have attended the Redondo community meetings, and I am very pleased that we now have those meetings. I have become far more interested in the community since we started.
 - Thank goodness for councilman Harris' Facebook otherwise I would never know anything.
 - Thanks for doing this!
 - We Des Moines!
 - The city has improved its communications. The survey is an example. Thank you!
 - Do more, do better!
 - Like the effort.



- Thank you for asking.
- Not perfect but getting better.
- Keep up the good work.
- Thank you for the survey!



City of Des Moines Communications Assessment Peer City Interview Summary

Introduction

The City of Des Moines is conducting a comprehensive assessment of internal and external communications and engagement practices to learn how to serve the evolving needs of a diverse and growing city. The City has conducted interviews with City staff members, Councilmembers, held two focus groups, and hosted a community-wide survey. Another element of the assessment was to select a peer city to interview and learn about their communications strategies, internal and external, and community engagement.

While the City strove to interview a peer with a Council-Manager form of government like itself, it selected the City of Edmonds, which has a strong-mayor government, to interview as a peer city because of their:

- Similar population size – Des Moines has a population of nearly 33,000 while Edmonds has a population of nearly 43,000
- Similar geographic elements – both have waterfronts and are situated next to I-5
- Dedicated communications professional on staff

The consultant team virtually interviewed Kelsey Foster, Communications Strategist/Public Information Officer (PIO), for an hour on December 22, 2023. See Appendix A for the interview questions.

Interview Highlights

The City of Edmonds did not have a dedicated communications staff person until 2019, when the outgoing mayor included a part-time communications staff position in the next budget cycle. This part-time role expanded into a full-time position when the City recognized the value and need for a dedicated communications professional. The current Communications Strategist/PIO, Kelsey Foster, has been in the role for three years and is still building out the City's communications strategies and practices. While her position sits in the Mayor's office, she serves all City departments. She works closely with the police department's PIO when needed, for example, when hosting tabletop exercises to respond to natural disasters. As her position is relatively new, Kelsey continues to educate her colleagues and City Councilmembers on her role and the support and skillset she can bring to all departments and their communications needs.

Edmonds Communications Strategy

While still developing the City's communications and engagement strategies and practices, Kelsey shared some insights.

- Kelsey strives to build communication request timelines that have sufficient lead time in order to prioritize and plan communications based on urgency or strategic needs. Sufficient lead time allows buffer room in cases when more urgent requests or events occur and need immediate attention and focus. As city staff adjust to having more centralized, structured communications through Kelsey, rather than having to handle communications themselves as individual departments, they are adjusting to getting materials to Kelsey sooner to post or send out. As the central person, Kelsey is able to see all communications needs from across the City and can plan when the most strategic time is to release different communications.
- She has a focus on building relationships with colleagues to educate them about her role and the support and skillset she brings to support the City's communications and engagement needs.
 - This work to build inter-City relationships supports information sharing so that Kelsey can proactively help create marketing plans for big upcoming events.
- In addition to building relationships within the City, Kelsey has a network of communications/PIO professionals from neighboring cities that meets monthly to support one another and share best practices.
- The Mayor mandated that all press releases must go through Kelsey to improve consistency. While Kelsey is the central person, some departments write their own press releases while Kelsey supports others by helping write, format, or make the content accessible for the public.
- Kelsey wants to incorporate more relational, human-centered stories as part of the City's communications.
- Be realistic about what can be done consistently and done well, which means not using every possible communications tool available, especially with a communications team of one person. Kelsey prioritizes using tools that will reach community members and meet their needs.

Community Engagement

The City of Edmonds uses hyper local media to advertise events, meetings, and share surveys. With limited resources, the City tries to use creative strategies for their community engagement. One example Kelsey gave was asking a city planner to identify specific households within a 1.5-mile radius from a project area to send project postcards. Additionally, the city used yard signs posted at pedestrian access points within a 1.5-mile radius of the project to reach people who walked or rolled within the project area. The City's current strategy is to be as proactive as possible in their communications and outreach.

Tools and Methods

The City uses several different tools and methods to effectively reach people, including:

- Launching a quarterly printed newsletter one year ago to reach people who prefer to get their news and communications in print form.
- Using Facebook and Instagram social media platforms, which get pretty good engagement. There is a City Facebook and several active Edmonds community Facebook pages. The City will occasionally run targeted ads for specific projects.

- Planning to host a “Civic 101” course to help community members learn about what the different City departments do and the roles and responsibilities of Council versus staff. The City of Lynnwood hosts these and inspired the City of Edmonds to host one.

The City wants to connect in ways that community members want to engage, and especially connect with community liaisons and leaders.

City Council and Staff Communications

Overall, Councilmembers and City staff have very limited communications with one another since there is a distinct separation between roles. Department directors do engage more directly with Councilmembers. The City Council handles their own communications and business, with little overlap with the City communications strategist/PIO. Councilmembers do engage in community events and have hosted workshops, such as one on budgets with the community when there were concerns about a budget shortfall.

Key Advice for City of Des Moines

Kelsey shared that her key advice is to get to know neighboring communications professionals to build a support network and learn what others are doing and if there are opportunities to cross promote community events. It is also important to build relationships within the community, especially with community liaisons or leaders, so community members can support spreading City communications.

Appendix A: Interview Questions



City of Des Moines Communications Assessment Peer City Interview Questions

Format

1-hour virtual interview with one to two City staff members focused on the City's communication strategy and community engagement.

Introduction

The City of Des Moines is conducting a comprehensive assessment of internal and external communications and engagement practices to learn how to serve the evolving needs of a diverse and growing city. I am part of the consultant team supporting the City in this work. We've conducted interviews with City staff members, Councilmembers, held two focus groups, and hosted a community-wide survey. Another element of the assessment is to select a peer city, Edmonds, to interview and learn about their communications strategies, internal and external, and community engagement, so that's what we're doing today!

Questions

1. Please tell us about your roles and responsibilities at the City, related to communications, and one thing you love about your community.
2. How would you describe your communications, internally and externally, strategy? What are your guiding stars?
3. How would you describe your community engagement strategy?
4. What tools and methods do you use?
5. How do you get feedback about those tools and methods? How do you know if they're reaching their intended audience?
6. What do you consider your most effective tools and methods?
7. Do you provide any training or orientation for your Councilmembers or for staff members around communications protocols or policies?
8. Can you describe how elected officials and staff interact and communicate, both formally and informally?
9. What do you think works well with your communications? Are there any gaps you are seeing? Any challenges?
10. What is a key piece of advice or lessons learned you would share with us regarding your internal and external communications strategy?

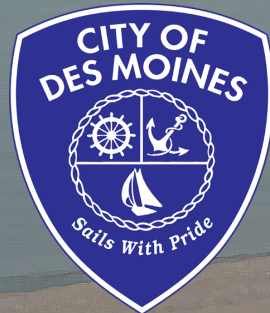
Thank you so much for your time and insights today!

Peer City Interview Questions
December 2023

CITY OF DES MOINES
COMMUNICATIONS ASSESSMENT

Key Themes and Takeaways

MARCH 7, 2024



Chris Hoffman & Nancy Thai



STRATEGIC PLANNING
& COMMUNICATIONS



Presentation Overview

Introduction & Overview

Engagement and What We Heard

- What we heard from Councilmembers, staff, and the community
- Peer city interview

Councilmember Questions

Recommendations

Public Comments

Councilmembers Discussion

Next steps

Communications Assessment Overview, Purpose, and Goals



Overview and Purpose

Evaluate the City of Des Moines' current communication and engagement needs, challenges, practices, goals, tools, and methods to determine its effectiveness with the City's mission and determine priorities for improvement.



Goals



Improve reach, impact, and relationships

**Identify strengths
and opportunities
for improvement**

**Enhance internal
and external
communications
practices**

**Enhance brand and
reputation**

**Evaluate resources
allocation**

Engagement and What We Heard



How We've Been Engaging, Listening, and Learning



Stakeholder Interviews



Outreach

- Canvassing
- Tabling Event
- Direct Email Blasts



Focus Groups



Community Survey



Peer City Interview



Staff and Council Briefing



Develop draft and final recommendations

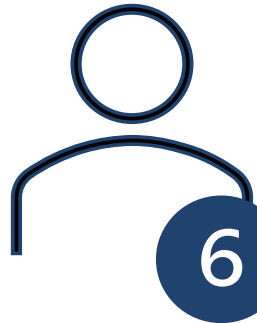
Stakeholder Interviews



Stakeholder Interviews: Participants



Councilmembers



City staff members



Councilmembers – What We Heard

Strong desire and commitment to serve the community

Need for a communications position

Learn from peer cities, especially those with council-manager form of government

Desire for more inclusive and accessible communications and engagement with growing, diverse community

Council communications and engagement

- Improve teamwork and collaboration
- Consistent and comprehensive onboarding, orientation, and training

Staff – What We Heard

Pride in the meaningful work they do serving the community

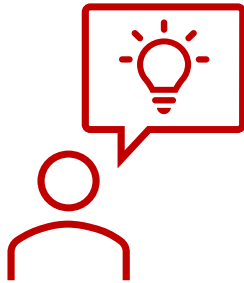
Desire to improve community engagement and communications with the community

Learn from peer agencies and from feedback from the community

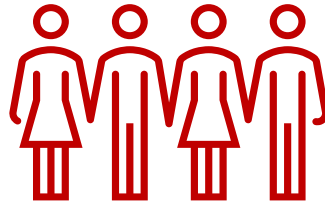
Improve inter-departmental and Council teamwork and collaboration, encouraging more information sharing and developing staff engagement tools and procedures

- Desire a shared mission, vision, and plan to anchor the entire staff and drive daily actions
- Remote and hybrid work has changed work patterns and presented some challenges

Collective Emerging Themes



Communications
position



Communication and
collaboration



Robust onboarding,
orientation, and
training



Proactive, accountable, inclusive, and
diverse communications and engagement



Learn from peers and
others

Focus Groups



Focus Groups: Participation



Business Group



Residents Group

Business Stakeholders – What We Heard

Current communication experiences

Feel there is a lack of transparency and oversight in communications

Communication issues with specific departments (e.g., permitting and public safety)

Challenges with using communication channels (e.g., difficulty navigating the City's website)

City communications were inconsistent and sporadic

Business Stakeholders – What We Heard

Content and engagement needs

Clear processes for doing business with and within the city

Regular “State of the City” reports and engagement with the city manager

Want the Citizen Advisory Committee to meet more frequently and have a more significant impact

Accessibility and improvement opportunities

A comprehensive communications plan

Update the City logo and branding for cohesiveness

Clearer processes of how to conduct business in the City and support from City staff

Resident Stakeholders – What We Heard

Current communication experiences

Appreciate current communication tools

Difficulty accessing useful information and an unclear process on how to connect to the right staff person with an issue

Feel there is a lack of a comprehensive communications plan

Expressed trust issues and a negative perception of the City's attitude towards community feedback

Resident Stakeholders – What We Heard

Content and engagement needs

Tailored communications for diverse community needs

City Currents Magazine improvements

Increased communication from the Mayor

Accessible community engagement events

Consistent follow through and stronger customer service, especially when addressing public safety issues

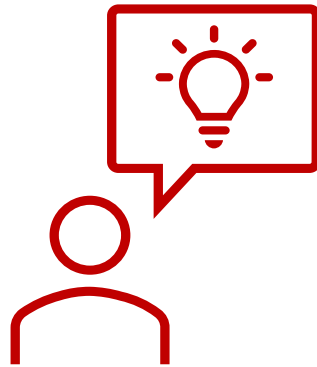
Accessibility and improvement opportunities

Increase City engagement with the community

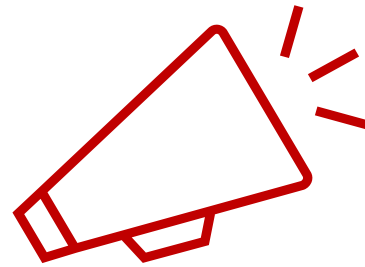
Improve internal City communications

Clear and accessible communications through multiple communications tools and methods to reach diverse populations

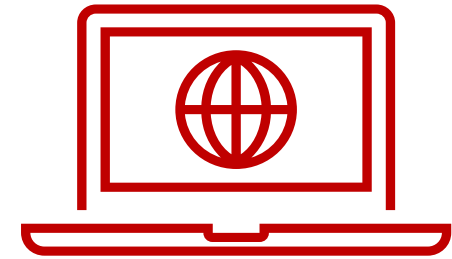
Collective Emerging Themes



Communications
position



Clear, transparent,
accountable
communications



Improve and expand
City's communication
tools and engagement
efforts

Community Survey



Community Survey: Participation



309

Surveys

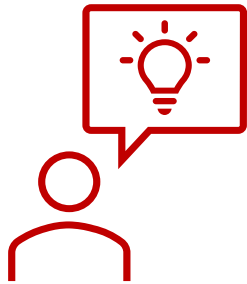


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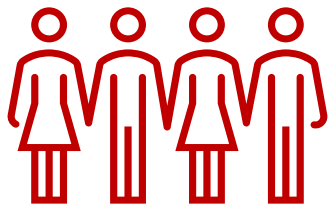
Days

Key Findings and Takeaways

Over half (54%) of respondents believed that the city's efforts are above satisfactory and that communications are helpful and easy to understand, indicating room for enhancement while recognizing existing strengths.



- Importance of diverse communications channels



- City meeting experiences – more accessible, transparent, and well-timed meetings
- Mixed interactions with city staff

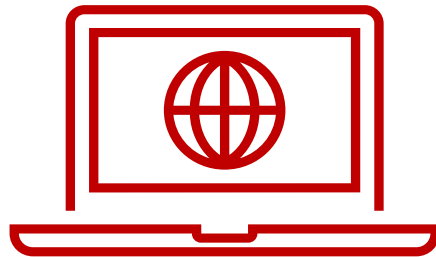
Key Findings and Takeaways



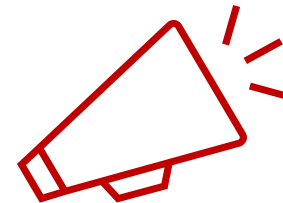
- Continue to improve clarity and timeliness of communications



- Host more community meetings or town hall events



- Website navigation challenges
- Increase digital communications tools and methods

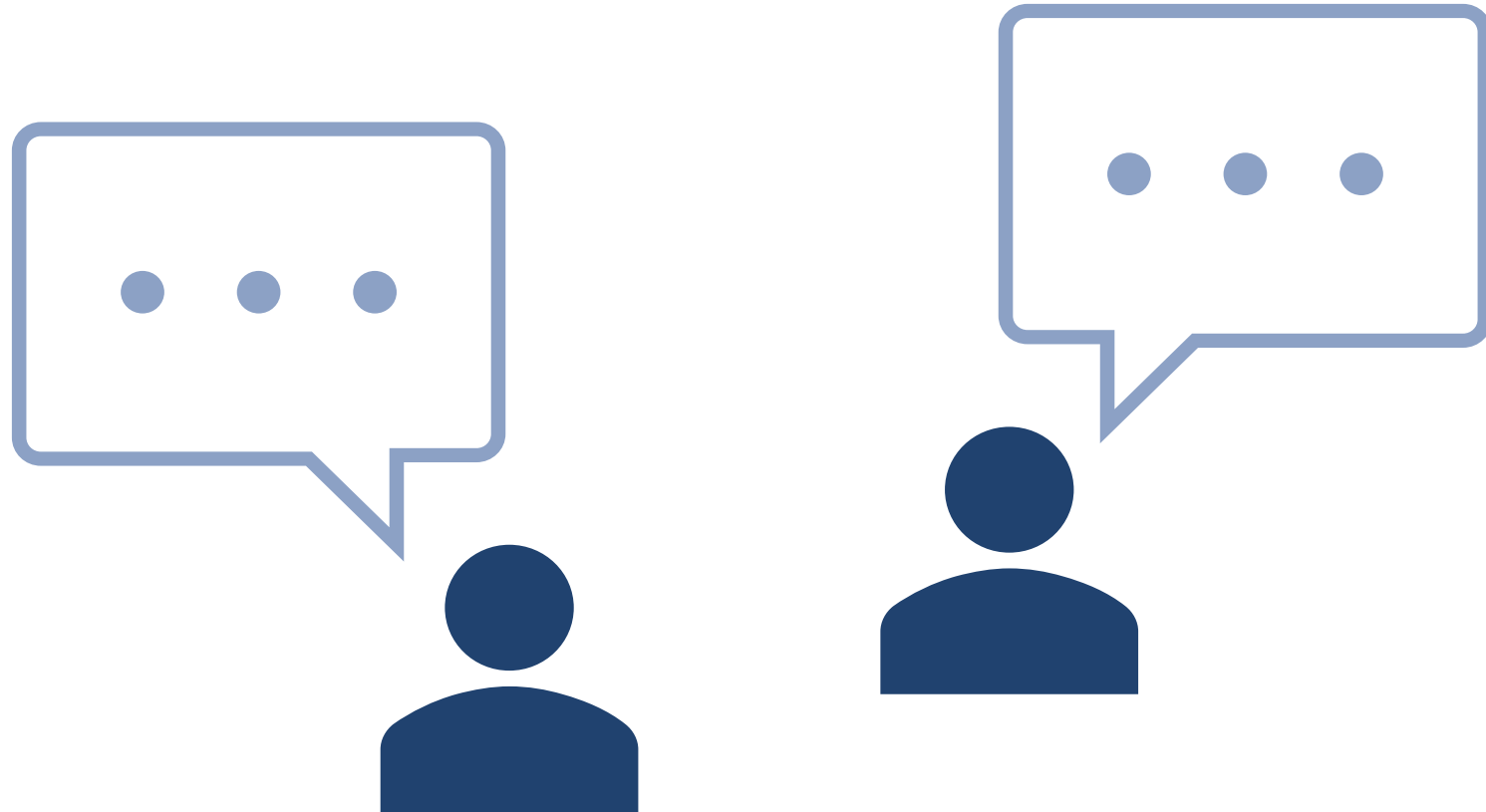


- Expand public comment opportunities

Peer City Interview



Peer City: City of Edmonds



Key Takeaways and Advice

- City has a Communications Strategist/PIO position that was created in 2019
- City is still developing their communications and engagement strategies and practice
- Like Des Moines, employs a variety of methods to reach their intended audiences
- Strong emphasis on building **relationships** within the City and different departments, with community members, and with surrounding jurisdictions

Councilmember Questions



Recommendations



Short-term: Within a year

Increase the variety of tools and methods to share timely, accurate information about City business with community members

- Expand the City's social media presence
- ★ Share weekly or bi-weekly City updates on City communications channels
- Review the City Currents Magazine for opportunities to better serve community interests and needs
- Create and maintain email listservs with specific topics
- Schedule regular "State of the City" reports or townhall-style meetings

★ **Provide consistent briefing-level reports and packets to all Councilmembers ahead of council meetings**

Short-term

Implement an accessible community feedback process

- Add a comment box at city hall and online comment submission

Update the City organization chart with roles and responsibilities

- Create one version for City staff and one public-facing version

City website updates to improve navigation and user experience

- Move City and community events calendar to more prominent place
- Improve website navigation
- ★ Make accessible and ADA compliant
- Create easy-to-use guide on how to do business with and in the City

Short-term

Develop more robust and consistent onboarding and training for City Councilmembers and staff

- Explore Association of Washington Cities as a resource
- Create policies governing staff response times and an emphasis on customer service

Mid-term: Between one to two year

Develop and refine community engagement guidelines

- Attend and engage at community events with staff
- Host events on different days of the week at different times of day

Begin to create a full-time communications position

- Develop funding strategy and process with Council to create this position
- Create detailed position description
- Consider in the budget process

Long-term: Longer than two years

Develop a comprehensive, strategic communications plan to guide internal and external communications and engagement policies, practices, and strategies

- Strong City branding, goals and outcomes, metrics, process and policies, and guiding principles that are grounded in the City's mission, vision, and values
- Engage with City staff and departments to understand needs, priorities, and to inform the plan

Public Comments



City Council Discussion



Next Steps



A scenic view of a beach. In the foreground, there is a sandy beach with some driftwood. To the right, a wooden dock extends into the water. In the middle ground, a white lifeguard stand is visible on the beach. The background is a dense forest of tall evergreen trees. The water is calm and blue. A dark blue vertical bar is on the left side of the image.

Thank you!

From: [Tim George](#)
To: [Chris Hoffman](#); [Bonnie Wilkins](#); [Nancy Thai](#); [Adrienne Johnson-Newton](#)
Subject: FW: Comment on Communications Assessment
Date: Monday, March 11, 2024 9:29:48 AM

Additional comments.

Tim

From: Catherine Carbone Rogers [mailto:carbone228@msn.com]
Sent: Saturday, March 9, 2024 10:56 AM
To: City Clerk <cityclerk@desmoineswa.gov>; _CityCouncil <CityCouncil@desmoineswa.gov>
Subject: Comment on Communications Assessment

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Mayor Buxton, Members of the Council and City Manager George,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the city's communications assessment in writing, as I wanted to see the work session presentation before giving input.

First, I commend the city investing in a communications assessment. This is a critical first step toward bringing our city's communications practices up to the standards and expectations that today's citizens hold for public entities.

I noted two related but different strands in Condor's report:

1. Customer service: identifying the right staff member or department, locating information about city departments and functions, response times
2. Communications and community engagement: Two-way communication; informing residents about city business, activities and events; building good will with the community

The city can likely get some quick wins on customer service with clear expectations for staff, basic improvements to website content and organization, and perhaps an app that funnels residents' inquiries to the correct department or person.

Improving two-way communication and engagement is a heavier lift, but one that will be well worth the investment. Consor made many solid recommendations. I am especially encouraged by the clear recommendation to create a dedicated communications position. This is long overdue, and I urge the council in the strongest possible terms to prioritize funding for this position.

Our peer cities have discovered the ROI on a dedicated communications position. It is

considered an essential function. An investment in a strategic communications program will yield dividends far beyond what any app or social media platform can deliver. Des Moines staff is doing their best to run a skeleton communication program, but it is not realistic to expect them run an effective communications program as a side gig to their full-time responsibilities.

There was much discussion at the work session about the need to reach younger and more diverse residents. As several council members pointed out, the opinion research conducted in the assessment was not representative of our community. The survey return rate was less than 1 percent and was skewed toward older, white females. The focus groups represented an extremely narrow band of our community's demographics and interests. Both the survey and focus groups were conducted in English only. If your goal is to engage residents beyond the "usual suspects," conducting robust research that taps into our whole community is Job One.

There is no substitute for a well-researched and coordinated strategic communications plan and the staff to execute it. While I appreciate the willingness of council members to ramp up their own communications, that will not amount to a measurable improvement in community engagement. Communications strategies based on council members' assumptions about where and how residents will engage will not do the job, because the council does not reflect the demographics of our city. No judgment is intended—that's just a fact.

As you prepare to hire a new city manager, you have the opportunity to prioritize funding for a communications position that will set our new leader up for success. It would be a mistake to hire a city manager candidate who does not *insist* on having a communications position in their administration. A proactive communications program allows all city staff, and especially the city manager, to spend less time putting out PR fires and more time building the community we all want to have.

As a communications professional who has conducted similar communications assessments for small and large school districts, I would offer the following recommendations:

1. Hire a qualified and experienced communications staff person now. Strong communication with residents is critical for the city manager hiring process.
2. Direct the communications staff person to conduct inclusive, statistically valid opinion research to learn our *whole* community's communications expectations and preferences. For example:
 - a. Focus groups held in apartment complexes.
 - b. Surveys conducted in languages other than English.
 - c. Partner with trusted organizations and leaders connected with underrepresented

communities to drive participation in focus groups and surveys.

3. Charge the communications staff person to develop a comprehensive strategic communications plan based on this research. We should *not* wait two years to get this started.

Thank you for investing time and energy into improving communication and customer service in our city government and for allowing me to share my thoughts. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this topic with you further at any time.

Catherine Carbone Rogers

From: [Tim George](#)
To: [Chris Hoffman](#); [Nancy Thai](#)
Cc: [Adrienne Johnson-Newton](#); [Bonnie Wilkins](#)
Subject: FW: Comments on Communications Plan
Date: Monday, March 11, 2024 9:29:22 AM

FYI some written comments we received.

Tim

From: Carl Dombek [mailto:carldombek@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, March 8, 2024 10:01 AM
To: _CityCouncil <CityCouncil@desmoineswa.gov>
Subject: Comments on Communications Plan

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Ladies and gentlemen:

I spoke at the March 7 City Council meeting but also wanted to provide written remarks for inclusion.

Consor's report includes a number of excellent recommendations, which I will address and expand upon.

HIRING A FULL-TIME COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONAL. I believe this should be made a short-term priority and addressed as soon as the City hires a new City Manager.

As a Public Relations/Corporate Communication leader with 20 years' experience in both public and private sector roles, I can state categorically that it is vital to fund this position properly. You will not get top talent without an adequate salary package or budget for travel to meet with counterparts in other cities, attend conferences and other meetings. These are all vital to learning and exchanging "best practices" which will help the City attain its communications goals.

ENGAGE WITH CITY STAFF. The report lists this as a "Long-Term Recommendation." This should be a SHORT-TERM recommendation, as "engaging with City staff and departments to understand needs and priorities" comes at very little cost, and the information garnered could help "inform the plan" as to how the City responds to other recommendations, such as using social media.

UPDATING SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE. The City should designate a page, either on Facebook or the City web site, which would serve as a landing page or "table of contents" with a list of news items, upcoming events, etc. Each city department could post what would basically be a headline on that page, with a link to the more complete article that is hosted on the department's page.

A consistent schedule for information-sharing is fine but one of the values of social media is the

immediacy it offers. A full-time communications professional will know this and be able to leverage it to the City's advantage.

UPDATING CITY CURRENTS. I support moving away from the print edition and going entirely on-line. This would save money and allow it to be updated as needed, making it more CURRENT. It would also make it less costly to move to a bi-monthly publication instead of the current quarterly publication.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. My observation is that the City is already represented at community events and City-sponsored events such as coffee with the Mayor, Coffee with a Cop, etc. While the times of these events could and should be staggered to allow greater participation by Des Moines citizens, the greater shortfall has been publicizing them with enough notice for people to incorporate them into their plans. Often, these are announced on the City's difficult-to-navigate website but, by the time they are picked up by other social media (such as Facebook's Des Moines Community Group), there is very little advance notice.

DEVELOP COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES. This aligns with my verbal comments regarding whether there is a "culture of communication" within the City. Guidelines need to include:

- An absolute requirement that inquiries be responded to, and
- A reasonable timeline for such responses.

Guidelines do NOT need to mandate a specific length of response or include boilerplate language. A timely response such as, "We're looking into your matter and will be back in touch when we have, or need, more information," "Thanks for reaching out," or "We appreciate the offer but we are fully staffed in that area," could all be acceptable responses.

CITY BRANDING. An appealing brand, used consistently, is an excellent recommendation. At present, I see "The Waterland City," "The Town by the Sound," and "Sails with Pride," none of which is particularly compelling. While an updated brand would be desirable, a short-term solution would be to settle on one of the many that already exist and use it exclusively and consistently. Given the sail-like structures along 216th west of Pacific Highway, it seems that "Sails with Pride" would work in the interim.

Respectfully submitted,
Carl Dombek
Des Moines North Hill

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

AGENDA ITEM

BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
City of Des Moines, WA

SUBJECT: City Manager Recruitment

FOR AGENDA OF: April 4, 2024

DEPT. OF ORIGIN: Human Resources

ATTACHMENTS:

DATE SUBMITTED: March 28, 2024

1. SGR Approach and Methodology
2. City Manager Job Description
3. City Manager Salary Schedule

CLEARANCES:

- City Clerk _____
- Community Development _____
- Courts _____
- Emergency Management _____
- Finance _____
- Human Resources *AJ*
- Legal /s/MH
- Marina _____
- Police _____
- Parks, Recreation & Senior Services _____
- Public Works _____

APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER

FOR SUBMITTAL: _____

Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this agenda item is for the City Council to continue the process of selecting the next City Manager. Now that an executive recruitment firm has been retained, the City Council needs to finalize the City Manager’s Job Description and assigned salary range in order to prepare for advertisement. Additionally the Council can consider whether establishing an ad-hoc City Manager Advisory Committee to provide guidance during the initial stages of the recruitment process and to provide direction to the City’s Human Resource department would be beneficial to the process. Finally, staff will provide an update on next steps.

Motion

Motion 1: None

Background

On November 9, 2023, the Council transitioned former City Manager Michael Matthias to the role of Interim Chief Economic Director and appointed Tim George as the Interim City Manager. The Council indicated they would like to retain an executive search recruitment firm to conduct the recruitment of the new City Manager. The RFP was released on January 19, 2024 to solicit bids from these specialized vendors. The City received six (6) responses. On March 7, 2024, the Council was provided information regarding the vendors' references as well as an overview of the selection process. On March 14, 2024, the City Council voted to retain the services of SGR. SGR has assigned Dave Tuan to facilitate the hiring process for the City.

Discussion

To enhance the City's chances of a successful recruitment outcome, there is work that should be done in the initial stages of the recruitment. Commonly referred to as the pre-recruitment stage, this stage involves all activities that will take place prior to advertising for the City Manager vacancy. In their proposal, SGR outlined their typical approach and methodology they use for executive recruitments (Attachment 1). You will note that their process ensures that the decision-making and direction resides with the Council. They then use that direction to facilitate the process. In order for the consultant to be effective and for the process to yield the most competitive candidates, the City Council will need to provide clear and concise direction to the consultant.

At this time the Council will need to ensure that the City Manager's Job Description is reflective of the collectives' expectations and functions of the role (Attachment 2). A clear and concise job description is essential to an effective recruitment. Additionally, the Council will need to provide direction on the appropriate salary range for this position (Attachment 3). Both of these items should be done as soon as possible so that the consultant has a clear understanding of the role and salary parameters. These two items will be discussed during this agenda item.

An additional consideration to be had is whether the Council should create an "ad-hoc" committee similar to the 2016 Ad Hoc City Manager Recruitment Advisory Committee to streamline some of the needed decision making during the process. The Council could empower the committee with some ability to decide on the more benign aspects of a recruitment e.g. the recruitment brochure or places to advertise in a more timely manner, it can provide a better venue for a more robust discussion (best practice for identifying internal and external stakeholders), and an opportunity to vet thru options (e.g. selection of interview questions) prior to bringing forth an item before the Council for consideration.

The potential of creating an "ad-hoc" committee is not intended to replace full Council involvement in the recruitment or on pertinent items like candidate selection, interview process etc. It is simply a mechanism to streamline some of the decision-making, or input required prior to listing the City Manager position. It also provides an opportunity to define how the Council would like to leverage City staff to support the recruitment process.

If the Council were to elect not to create an "ad-hoc" committee, the process may take slightly longer as decisions would need to be made at the dais during Council meetings, but it would also allow full Council participation in all aspects of the selection if that is the desired process of the Council. The City's recruitment firm has indicated they will work with either process the Council selects.

Finally, as stated in SGR's Approach and Methodology (Attachment 1), the next step is for SGR to hold a Project Kickoff Meeting. This meeting will occur during the City Council regular meeting on April 11.

At that time, the Council can finalize the job description and salary schedule if it is not completed during the April 4 Study Session.

Approach and Methodology

A full-service recruitment typically entails the following steps:

- 1. Organization/Position Insight and Analysis**
 - Project Kickoff Meeting and Develop Anticipated Timeline
 - Stakeholder Interviews and Listening Sessions
 - Develop Recruitment Brochure
- 2. Recruitment Campaign and Outreach to Prospective Applicants**
 - Advertising and Marketing
 - Communication with Prospective Applicants
 - Communication with Active Applicants
- 3. Initial Screening and Review by Executive Recruiter**
- 4. Search Committee Briefing to Review Applicant Pool and Select Semifinalists**
- 5. Evaluation of Semifinalists**
 - Written Questionnaires
 - Recorded One-Way Semifinalist Interviews
 - Media Searches - Stage 1, as described below
- 6. Search Committee Briefing to Select Finalists**
- 7. Evaluation of Finalists**
 - Comprehensive Media Searches - Stage 2, as described below
 - Background Investigation Reports
 - DiSC Management Assessments (if desired, supplemental cost)
 - First Year Plan or Other Advanced Exercise
 - Press Release Announcing Finalists (if requested)
- 8. Interview Process**
 - Face-to-Face Interviews
 - Stakeholder Engagement (if desired)
 - Deliberations
 - Reference Checks (may occur earlier in process)
- 9. Negotiations and Hiring Process**
 - Determine Terms of an Employment Offer
 - Negotiate Terms and Conditions of Employment
 - Press Release Announcing New Hire (if requested)

Step 1: Organization/Position Insight and Analysis

Project Kickoff Meeting and Develop Anticipated Timeline

SGR will meet with the organization at the outset of the project to discuss the recruitment strategy and timeline. At this time, SGR will also request that the organization provide us with photos and information on the community, organization, and position to assist us in drafting the recruitment brochure.

Stakeholder Interviews and Listening Sessions

Stakeholder interviews and listening sessions are integral to SGR's approach. SGR devotes tremendous energy to understanding your organization's unique culture, environment, and goals to ensure you get the right match for your specific needs. Obtaining a deep understanding your organizational needs is the crucial foundation for a successful executive recruitment. In collaboration with the organization, SGR will compile a list of internal and external stakeholders to meet with regarding the position. These interviews and listening sessions will identify potential issues that may affect the dynamics of the recruitment and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the position, special considerations, and the political environment. This process fosters organizational buy-in and will assist us in creating the position profile.

Develop Recruitment Brochure

After the stakeholder meetings, SGR will develop a recruitment brochure, which will be reviewed and revised in partnership with your organization until we are in agreement that it accurately represents the sought-after leadership and management attributes.

To view sample recruitment brochures, please visit:

<https://sgr.pub/OpenRecruitments>

Step 2: Recruitment Campaign and Outreach to Prospective Applicants

Advertising and Marketing

The Executive Recruiter and the client work together to determine the best ways to advertise and recruit for the position. SGR's Servant Leadership e-newsletter, with a reach of over 40,000 subscribers in all 50 states, will announce your position. Additionally, we will send targeted emails to opt-in subscribers of SGR's Job Alerts, and your position will be posted on SGR's website and Job Board. SGR provides a comprehensive social media marketing campaign that includes custom-made graphics and distribution on SGR's LinkedIn page. Furthermore, we will provide a recommended list of ad placements to be approved by the client, targeting the most effective venues for reaching qualified candidates for that particular position.

Communication with Prospective Applicants

SGR maintains regular communication with interested prospects throughout the recruitment process. Outstanding candidates often conduct thorough research on the available position before submitting their resumes.

As a result, we receive a significant number of inquiries, and it is crucial for the executive search firm to be well-prepared to respond promptly, accurately, and comprehensively, while also offering a warm and personalized approach. This initial interaction is where prospective candidates form their first impression of the organization, and it is an area in which SGR excels.

Communication with Active Applicants

Handling the flow of resumes is an ongoing and significant process. On the front end, it involves tracking resumes and promptly acknowledging their receipt. It also involves timely and personalized responses to any questions or inquiries. SGR maintains frequent communication with applicants to ensure they remain enthusiastic and well-informed about the opportunity. Additionally, SGR communicates with active applicants, keeping them informed about the organization and community.

Step 3: Initial Screening and Review by Executive Recruiter

SGR uses a triage process to identify high-probability, medium-probability, and low-probability candidates. This triage ranking is focused on overall assessment based on interaction with the applicant, qualifications, any known issues concerning previous work experience, and evaluation of cultural fit with the organization.

In contrast with the triage process mentioned above, which focuses on subjective assessment of the resumes and how the candidates present themselves, we also evaluate each candidate to ensure that the minimum requirements of the position are met and determine which preferred requirements are satisfied. This sifting process examines how well candidates' applications align with the recruitment criteria outlined in the position profile.

Step 4: Search Committee Briefing to Review Applicant Pool and Select Semifinalists

At this briefing, SGR will conduct a comprehensive presentation to the Search Committee and facilitate the selection of semifinalists. The presentation will include summary information on the process to date, outreach efforts, the candidate pool demographics, and any identified trends or issues. Additionally, a briefing on each candidate and their credentials will be provided.

Step 5: Evaluation of Semifinalists

The review of resumes is a crucial step in the executive recruitment process. However, resumes may not fully reveal an individual's personal qualities and their ability to collaborate effectively with others. In some instances, resumes might also tend to exaggerate or inflate accomplishments and experience.

At SGR, we understand the significance of going beyond the surface level of a resume to ensure that candidates who progress in the recruitment process are truly qualified for the position and a suitable match for the organization. Our focus is to delve deeper and gain a comprehensive understanding of the person behind the resume, identifying the qualities that make them an outstanding prospect for your organization.

During the evaluation of semifinalist candidates, we take the initiative to follow up when necessary, seeking clarifications or additional information as needed. This approach ensures that we present you with the most qualified and suitable candidates for your unique requirements. At SGR, our ultimate goal is to match your organization with individuals who possess not only the necessary qualifications but also the qualities that align with your organizational culture and values.

Written Questionnaires

As part of our thorough evaluation process, SGR will request semifinalist candidates to complete a comprehensive written exercise. This exercise is designed to gain deeper insight into the candidates' thought processes and communication styles. Our written instrument is customized based on the priorities identified by the Search Committee. The completed written instrument, along with cover letters and resumes submitted by the candidates, will be included in the semifinalist briefing book.

Recorded One-Way Semifinalist Interviews

Recorded one-way interviews will be conducted for semifinalist candidates. This approach provides an efficient and cost-effective way to gain additional insights to aid in selecting finalists to invite for an onsite interview. The interviews allow the Search Committee to evaluate technological competence, demeanor, verbal communication skills, and on-camera presence. Additionally, virtual interviews provide an opportunity for the Search Committee to ask candidates questions on specific topics of special interest.

Media Searches - Stage 1

"Stage 1" of our media search process involves the use of the web-based interface Nexis Diligence™. This platform is an aggregated subscription-based platform that allows access to global news, business, legal, and regulatory content. These media reports at the semifinalist stage have proven helpful by uncovering issues that may not have been previously disclosed by prospective candidates. The recruiter will communicate any "red flags" or noteworthy media coverage to the Search Committee as part of the review of semifinalists with the Search Committee.

Step 6: Search Committee Briefing to Select Finalists

Prior to this briefing, SGR will provide the Search Committee with a briefing book on the semifinalist candidates via an electronic link. The briefing book includes cover letters, resumes, and completed questionnaires.

If applicable, a separate email with the link to view the recorded online interviews is sent to the Search Committee. The objective of this meeting is to narrow the list to finalists who will be invited to participate in onsite interviews.

Step 7: Evaluation of Finalists

Comprehensive Media Searches - Stage 2

“Stage 2” of our media search process includes the web-based interface Nexis Diligence™, supplemented by Google as an additional tool. By combining both resources, we offer an enhanced due diligence process to our clients, enabling efficient and thorough vetting of candidates and minimizing the risk of overlooking critical information. The Stage 2 media search consists of a more complex search, encompassing social media platforms, and has proven to be instrumental in identifying potential adverse news about the candidate that may not have been disclosed previously. The media search provides the Search Committee with an overview of the candidate’s press coverage throughout their career. View a sample media report at: <https://sgr.pub/SGRMediaReport>.

Background Investigation Reports

Through SGR’s partnership with a licensed private investigation firm, we are able to provide our clients with comprehensive background screening reports that include the detailed information listed below. View a sample background report at: <https://sgr.pub/SGRBackgroundReport>.

- Social security number trace
- Address history
- Driving record (MVR)
- Federal criminal search
- National criminal search
- Global homeland security search
- Sex offender registry search
- State criminal court search for states where candidate has lived in previous 10 years
- County wants and warrants for counties where candidate has lived or worked in previous 10 years
- County civil and criminal search for counties where candidate has lived or worked in previous 10 years
- Education verification
- Employment verification for previous 10 years (if requested)
- Military verification (if requested)
- Credit report (if requested)

DiSC Management Assessments (if desired, supplemental cost)

SGR utilizes the DiSC Management assessment tool, which is among the most validated and reliable personal assessment tools available. The DiSC Management assessment provides a comprehensive analysis and report on the candidate’s preferences in five crucial areas: management style, directing and delegating, motivation, development of others, and working with their own manager. View a sample report at: <https://sgr.pub/SGRDiSCReport>.

For assessments of more than two candidates, a DiSC Management Comparison Report is included, offering a side-by-side view of each candidate's preferred management style. View a sample comparison report at: <https://sgr.pub/SGRDiSCCompare>.

First-Year Plan or Other Advanced Exercise

SGR will collaborate with your organization, if desired, to create an advanced exercise for the finalist candidates. One such example is a First-Year Plan, where finalist candidates are encouraged to develop a first-year plan based on their current understanding of the position's opportunities and challenges. Other exercises, such as a brief presentation on a topic to be identified by the Recruiter and Search Committee, are also typically part of the onsite interview process to assess finalists' communication and presentation skills, as well as critical analysis abilities.

Step 8: Interview Process

Face-to-Face Interviews

SGR will arrange interviews at a date and time convenient for your organization. This process can be as straightforward or as elaborate as your organization desires. SGR will aid in determining the specifics and assist in developing the interview schedule and timeline. We will provide sample interview questions and participate throughout the process to ensure it runs smoothly and efficiently.

Stakeholder Engagement

At the discretion of the Search Committee, we will closely collaborate with your organization to involve community stakeholders in the interview process. Our recommendation is to design a specific stakeholder engagement process after gaining deeper insights into the organization and the community. As different communities require distinct approaches, we will work together to develop a tailored approach that addresses the unique needs of the organization.

Deliberations

SGR will facilitate a discussion about the finalist interviews and support the Search Committee in making a hiring decision or determining whether to invite one or more candidates for a second interview.

Reference Checks

SGR uses a progressive and adaptive automated reference check system to provide insights on candidates' soft skills from a well-rounded group of references. References may include elected officials, direct supervisors, direct reports, internal organizational peers, professional peers in other organizations, and civic leaders. SGR's reference check platform is anonymous, proven to encourage more candid and truthful responses, thus providing organizations with more meaningful and insightful information on candidates. SGR delivers a written summary report to the organization once all reference checks are completed. The timing of reference checks may vary depending on the specific search process and situation. If finalists' names are made public prior to interviews, SGR will typically contact references before the interview process. If the finalists' names are not made public prior to interviews, SGR may wait until the organization has selected its top candidate before contacting references to protect candidate confidentiality.

Step 9: Negotiations and Hiring Process

Determine Terms of an Employment Offer

Upon request, SGR will provide draft employment agreement language and other helpful information to aid in determining an appropriate offer to extend to your preferred candidate.

Negotiate Terms and Conditions of Employment

SGR will assist to whatever degree you deem appropriate in conducting negotiations with the chosen candidate. SGR will identify and address any special needs or concerns of the selected candidate, including potential complicating factors. With our experience and preparedness, SGR is equipped to facilitate win-win solutions to resolve negotiation challenges.

Press Release (if requested)

Until employment negotiations are finalized, you should exercise caution to avoid the embarrassment of a premature announcement that may not materialize. It is also considered best practice to notify all senior staff and unsuccessful candidates before any media exposure. SGR will assist in coordinating this process and in crafting any necessary announcements or press releases.

Satisfaction Surveys

SGR is committed to following the golden rule, which means providing prompt, professional and excellent communication while always treating every client with honor, dignity and respect. We request clients and candidates to participate in a brief and confidential survey after the completion of the recruitment process. This valuable feedback assists us in our ongoing efforts to improve our processes and adapt to the changing needs of the workforce.

Post-Hire Services

We offer post-hire services, such as executive coaching, team-building retreats, and performance review assistance at the six-month or one-year mark. For more information or to request a customized proposal, please visit <https://www.governmentresource.com/leadership-development-training-resources>.



City of Des Moines, Washington

JOB DESCRIPTION

**CITY MANAGER**

Regular, Full-time

Salary Grade: M-49

Nature of Work

The City Manager serves as the chief administrative officer of the City, assuming full responsibility for planning, administering, directing, overseeing, and evaluating the activities and operations of the City, including public safety, economic development, community development, public works, operations and maintenance, parks, recreation, facilities, marina and administration. Reporting to the City Council, the City Manager is responsible for the efficient operation of municipal services; personnel administration; budget development and control; and the enforcement of City laws and ordinances. This position provides policy guidance to and coordinates the activities of top management staff; facilitates the development and implementation of long and short range plans, policies, goals, objectives, and programs to provide the City with technical and administrative direction in meeting and maintaining City service standards; ensures public services are delivered in an efficient and effective manner; and provides highly complex administrative support to the City Council including implementing policy decisions made by the City Council. Duties include maintaining effective relationships and communications with the City Council and other City boards, city employees, and the general public, and maintaining public and media relations. Work is subject to general review by the City Council in terms of program evaluating, analysis of accomplishments, and analysis of reports.

Essential Functions

- Assumes full management responsibility for all City operations; assesses ongoing operational needs through department heads and determines best organizational structure to meet goals and objectives; develops, recommends, and administers policies and procedures.
- Directs the development and implementation of the City's goals, objectives, policies and priorities.
- Establishes, within City policy and subject to budget constraints, appropriate service and staffing levels; monitors and evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery methods and procedures; allocates resources accordingly.
- Plans, directs, and coordinates, through department heads, the work plan for the City; assigns projects and programmatic areas of responsibility; reviews and evaluates work methods and procedures; meets with management staff to identify and resolve problems.
- Assesses and monitors work load, administrative support systems, and internal reporting relationships; identifies opportunities for improvement and implements as appropriate.
- Selects, motivates, evaluates personnel; resolves personnel concerns and issues.
- Oversees the development and administration of the City budget; approves the forecast of funds needed for staffing, equipment, materials and supplies; approves expenditures and implements budgetary adjustments as appropriate and necessary.

- Keeps Council advised of financial conditions, program progress, and present and future needs of the City.
- Explains, justifies, and defends City programs, policies, and activities; negotiates and resolves sensitive and controversial issues.
- Attends City Council and other City board or committee meetings personally or through subordinates and provides technical advice and assistance as required.
- Serves as a resource for the City Council, department personnel, City staff, other organizations, and the public; coordinates pertinent information, resources, and work teams necessary to support a positive and productive environment.
- Under policy direction by the City Council, plans and formulates major City programs and activities; plans and supervises program implementation.
- Formulates personnel policies and supervises the administration of human resource programs including recruiting, classification, compensation, and employee/labor relations.
- Establishes liaison with federal, state and county agencies, other cities, and governmental associations; attends meetings personally or through subordinates; keeps informed of their programs and activities.
- During legislative sessions, keeps abreast of the effect of proposed legislation on municipal government and lends support to legislation as necessary.
- Maintains public relations to include responding to media inquiries, issuing press releases, making presentations, attending community events, and by other means.
- Participates in and keeps abreast of community affairs; responds to media inquiries, City Council concerns and issues, and community needs.
- Responds to and resolves difficult and sensitive citizen inquiries and complaints.
- Prepares reports and recommendations for the City Council regarding City needs and capabilities, financial status, program effectiveness, and the effect of new or proposed legislation on municipal government.
- Performs all duties as may be prescribed by City Council action; directs the preparation of plans and specifications for work that the City Council orders.
- Establishes and maintains cooperative, effective working relationships with the City Council, City staff, and the general public using principles of good customer service.

Necessary Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Knowledge of:

- Operations, services and activities of a municipality.
- Advanced principles and practices of public administration and local government administration.
- Principles and practices of fiscal and strategic planning.
- Principles and practices of municipal finance and budget preparation and administration.
- Principles and practices of policy development and implementation.
- Principles and practices of program development and administration.
- Government, council, and local and state legislative processes.
- Organizational and management practices as applied to the analysis and evaluation of City programs, policies and operational needs.
- Methods of analyzing, evaluating and modifying administrative procedures.
- Principles of supervision, training and performance evaluation.
- Pertinent federal, state, and local laws, codes, and regulations.

- Principles of effective public relations and interrelationships with community groups and agencies, other levels of government, and the private sector.

Ability to:

- Manage and direct the operations, services, and activities of a municipality.
- Develop and administer City-wide goals, objectives, policies, procedures, work standards and internal controls.
- Plan, organize and direct the work of staff.
- Select, supervise, train, and evaluate staff.
- Delegate authority and responsibility.
- Negotiate and resolve complex issues.
- Be politically attuned.
- Identify and respond to sensitive community, organizational, and City Council issues, concerns, and needs.
- Prepare clear and concise administrative and financial reports.
- Prepare and administer large and complex budgets.
- Analyze problems, identify alternative solutions, project consequences of proposed actions and implement recommendations in support goals.
- Research, analyze, and evaluate new service delivery methods and techniques.
- Interpret and apply federal, state, and local policies, laws, and regulations.
- Respond to inquiries or complaints and explain regulations and procedures to the general public, members of the business community, and representatives of other agencies and organizations.
- Effectively present information to top management, public groups, and/or boards.
- Exercise sound, independent judgment within general policy guidelines
- Represent the City Council to the general public and representatives of other agencies.
- Deal constructively with conflict and develop consensus.
- Gain cooperation through discussion and persuasion.
- Demonstrate tact and diplomacy with the public.
- Communicate clearly, concisely, and effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Establish and maintain positive, effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work.

Education and Experience Requirements

- Bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration or a related field; and
- Ten years of progressively responsibility experience in municipal government including five years as city manager, assistant city manager, or department head.
- A master's degree in public administration or a related field is preferred.
- An equivalent combination of experience and education may also be considered.

Special Requirements

- Possession of and the ability to maintain throughout employment a valid Washington State Driver's License with a good driving record.
- Successful completion of a pre-employment background and criminal history check.
- Because of the known effects of tobacco use, the City of Des Moines does not hire applicants who use tobacco products.

Working Conditions and Physical Abilities

- Responsibilities require working extended hours including frequent evenings to attend meetings and occasional weekends. Work is performed in an office environment with some travel to different sites throughout the City, and outside City boundaries to attend meetings. The position requires continuous decision making, interpersonal skills, teamwork, creativity, customer service, training/supervision, performance of basic and advanced math, discretion, presentation/teaching, problem analysis, negotiation, mentoring, independent judgment and/or action; and the ability to read, understand, write and speak English.
- The position requires continual talking, hearing, and sitting; frequent fingering, feeling, grasping, handling and repetitive motion of hands and wrists; occasional standing, walking; rare reaching, bending, and climbing. Must be able to push, pull, lift, and carry 20 pounds, to operate office equipment requiring fine coordination including use of a computer keyboard, and to travel to other locations using various modes of private and commercial transportation.

Equal Opportunity Employer

- The City of Des Moines is committed to hiring a diverse workforce and all qualified applicants, including all ethnic backgrounds and persons with disabilities, are encouraged to apply. The City is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, color, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, disability status, or any other basis prohibited by federal, state, or local law.
- In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, an employer is obligated to make a reasonable accommodation only to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified individual with a disability. In general, it is the responsibility of the applicant or employee with a disability to inform the employer that an accommodation is needed to participate in the application process, to perform essential job functions or to receive equal benefits and privileges of employment.

General Information

- The statements contained herein reflect general details as necessary to describe the principal functions for this job classification, the level of knowledge and skill typically required and the scope of responsibility, but should not be considered an all-inclusive listing of work requirements.
- The physical abilities described above are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of the job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.
- The provisions of this job description do not constitute an expressed or implied contract. Any provision contained herein may be modified and/or revoked without notice.
- Updated 2016.

2024 City of Des Moines - Index of Positions and Pay Schedule Directors and City Manager

Grade/ Rank	Positions	Step/Level	Hourly Rate	Semi- Monthly Salary	Annual Salary
N/A	Municipal Court Judge		191,020		
	<i>(95% of WA Citizens Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials \$178,524 for 0.85 FTE)</i>				
M-49	City Manager	Step 1	109.4641	9,487.25	227,694.00
		Step 2	114.9346	9,961.38	239,073.00
		Step 3	120.6824	10,459.54	251,029.00
		Step 4	126.7149	10,982.38	263,577.00
		Step 5	133.0522	11,531.63	276,759.00

Per DMMC 2.12.030 the City Manager is authorized to place positions at appropriate ranges and reclassify positions provided the Finance Director certifies sufficient funds are available.

Salary Schedule effective 1/1/2024 and is subject to change