Breaking through the Noise

Crafting a Tailored Communications Plan for Any Community Need.

PRESENTED BY:

Nate Geinzer, Double Haul Solutions

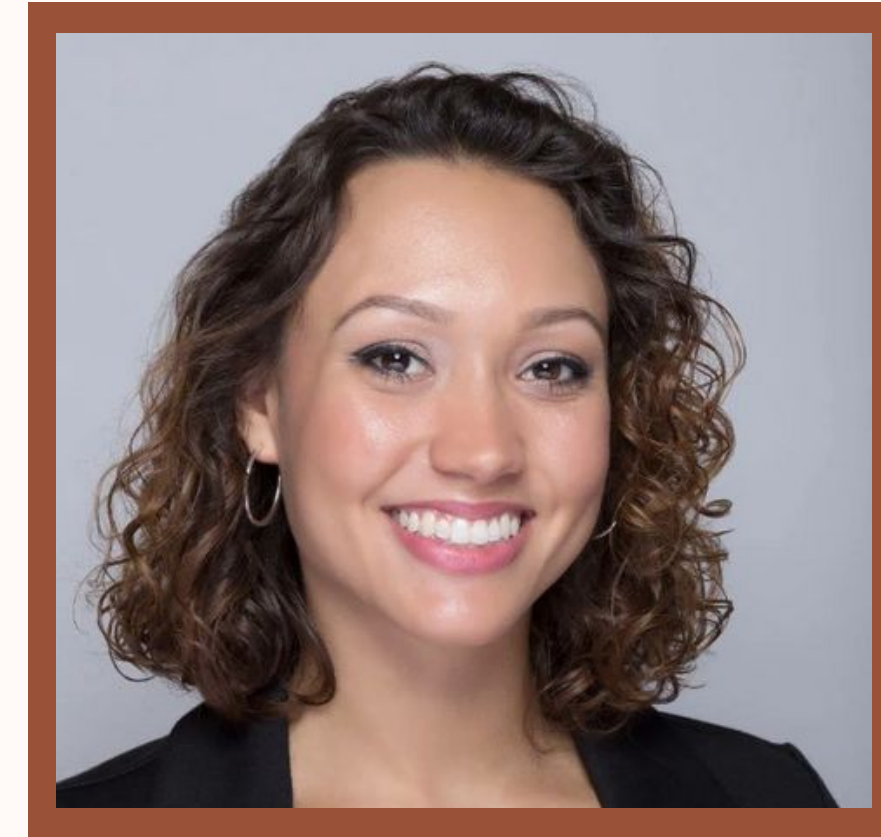Torri Mathes, Mathes Media

# Agenda

Introductions

Nate Geinzer

- Founder & CEO of Double Haul Solutions
- 17 years of experience working in city management
- Areas of Expertise: Economic Development, Strategic Planning, Financial Management, Community Engagement, Leadership & Team Building, Change Management, Public Communication, Project Management, Stakeholder Relationship Building, Municipal Consulting

Torri Mathes

- Founder & CEO of Mathes Media
- 10 years of experience working in public communications
- Areas of Expertise: Strategic Communications, Crisis Communications, Media Relations, Social Media Marketing, Community Engagement, Strategic Planning, Creative Operations, Digital Marketing, Internal Communications, Brand Research & Management, Web Design & Management
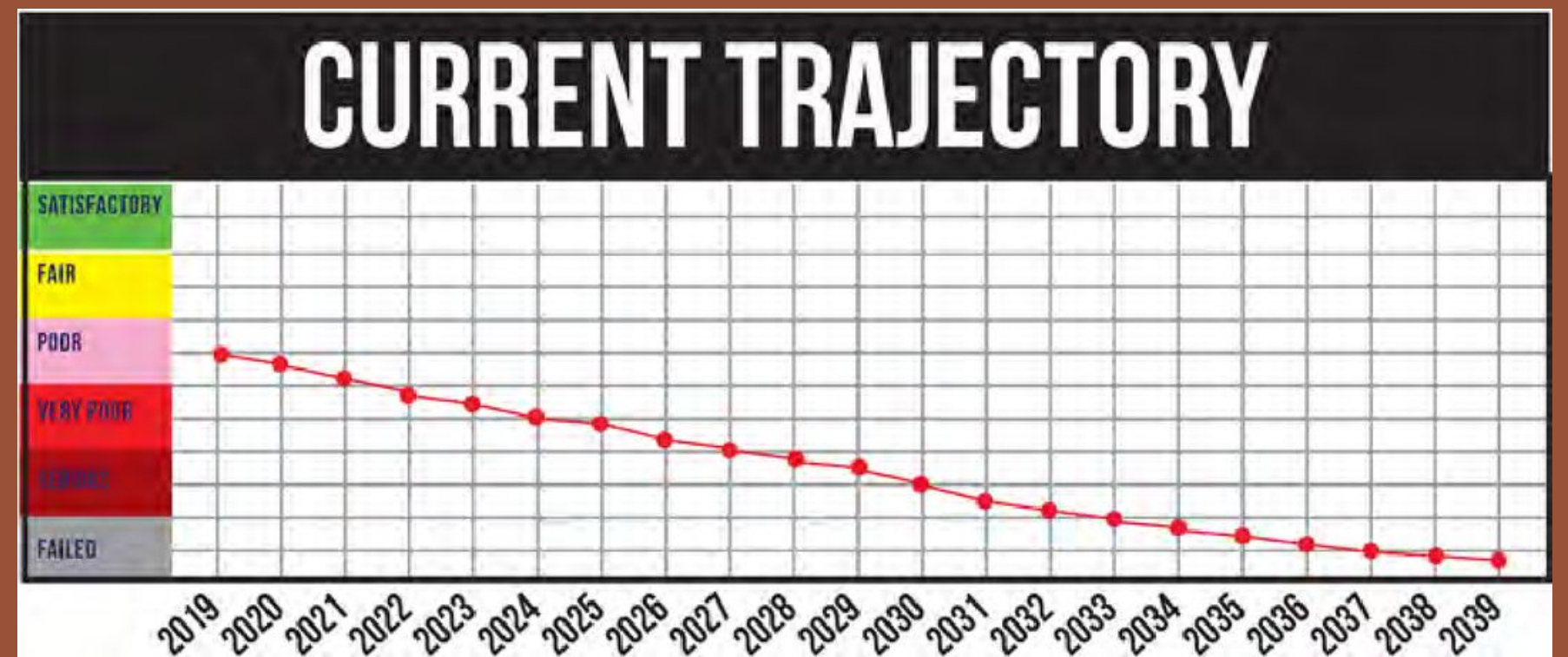
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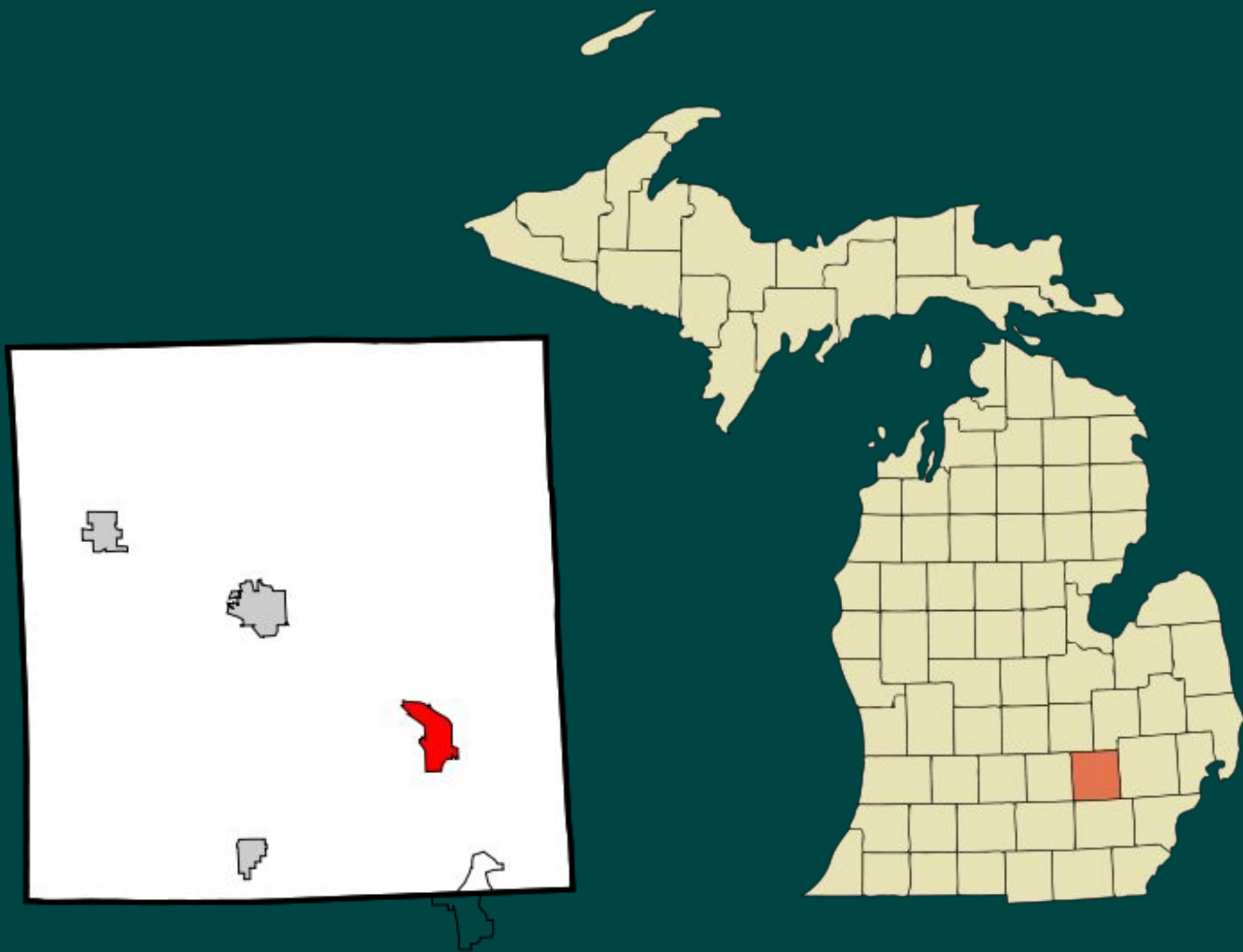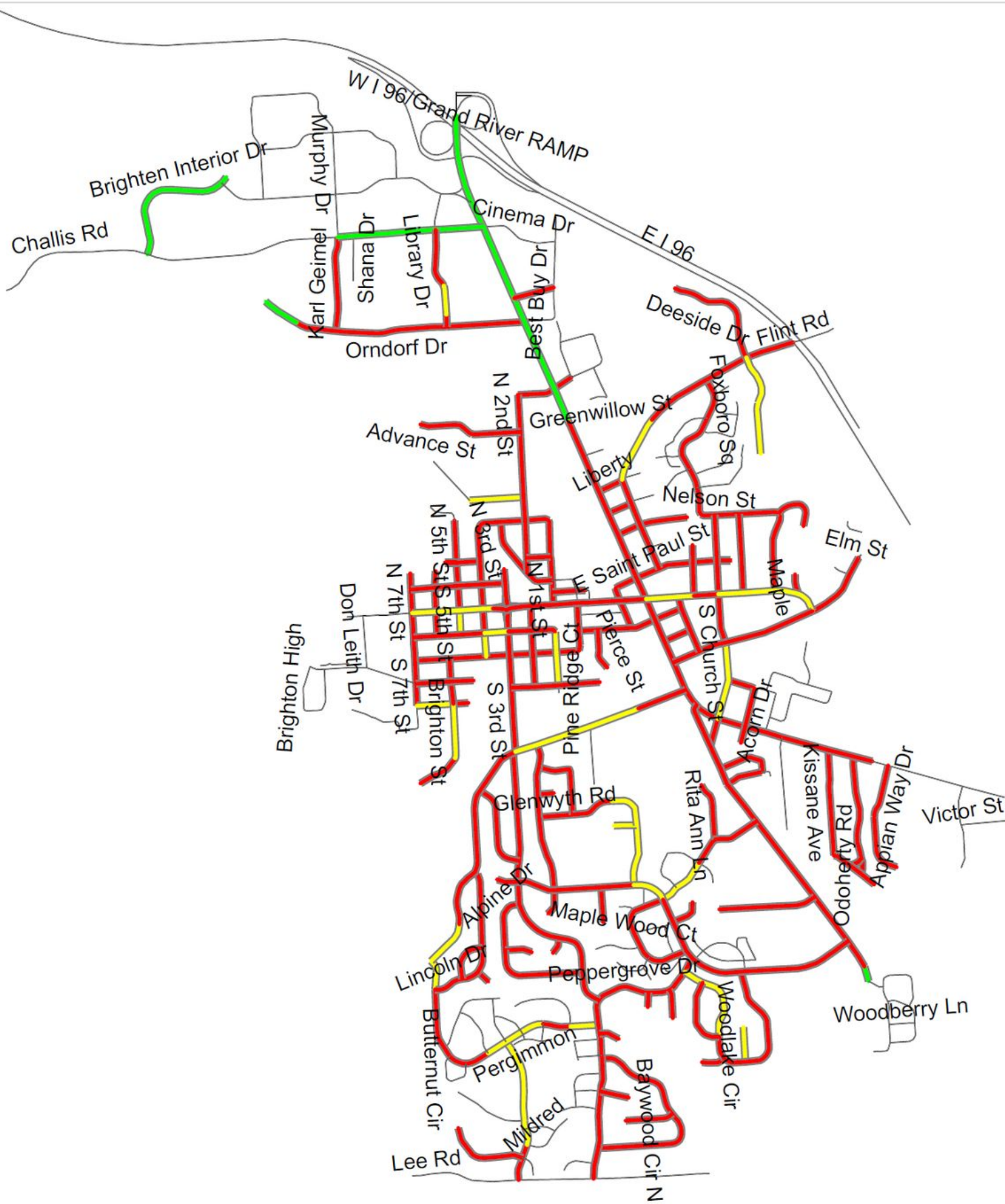
City of Brighton, 2016

- No Updated Streets Conditions Assessment
- 80% of Streets in Poor Condition
- No Strategy to Improve Street Conditions
- Downtown Neighborhood waiting for 3+ Decades for Curb & Gutter/Sidewalks
- Last Round of Street Projects 10+ Years Prior Limited Maintenance Failing Moving Towards "Poor" Quickly
- $40 Million Backlog

Seeking a Millage

- **Attempt #1:** Full Headlee Override – August
- 4.35 Mills @ 10 Years
  - Presentations
  - Open Houses
  - Mailers/Newsletters/Bill Insert
  - Shakey Elected Officials
  - Weak "Say Yes Group" with some Signs

What we learned…

- The purpose of the millage request needed to be more specific.
- The millage request was too much.
- The millage term was too long.

Choice	Party	Absentee Voting		Election Day Voting		Total	
Yes		453	41.79%	673	45.02%	1126	43.66%
No		563	51.94%	691	46.22%	1254	48.62%
	Cast Votes:	1016	93.73%	1364	91.24%	2380	92.28%

Seeking a Millage

- **Attempt #1:**

- **Attempt #2:** Partial Headlee Override – May
  2.5 Mills @ 7 Years + Operational
  Savings/Restructuring
  - More Hands Off
  - Signs Replaced

Choice	Party	Absentee Voting		Election Day Voting		Total	
Yes		434	49.15%	343	55.41%	777	51.73%
No		446	50.51%	275	44.43%	721	48.00%
	Cast Votes:	880	99.66%	618	99.84%	1498	99.73%

Results

- Don't underinvest in communications planning.

- Build community understanding and coalitions.

- Know what you don't know.

- Once voted to move forward, figure out how to keep elected officials engaged.

- Never stop listening, always be learning and adapt as necessary.

- Ask for help, its OK.

- Don't give up! There's always a solution!

Navigating the Ever-Evolving Landscape of Public Communications

The way people consume and receive information has evolved rapidly, which means local governments must keep up with these changes to better serve, communicate, and engage with their constituents. It's understandable to feel overwhelmed when considering how to communicate with the public. But, bear in mind that communication is not just another task on your to-do list; it is a valuable resource that can help you accomplish your goals and make launching projects easier.

By developing a communication strategy, you can lay the groundwork for having more meaningful conversations with your community. This section covers the importance of having a plan, the steps to develop one, and its benefits for public engagement.

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Communication involves the intentional sharing of information, ideas, and directives among organizations and their stakeholders through various mediums such as spoken or written words, visuals, or technology.

The ultimate goal of effective communication is to convey meaning and understanding which serves as a fundamental tool for sharing knowledge, fostering relationships, and facilitating cooperation and understanding among people within communities, organizations, and societies.

The Significance of Proactive Communications

Proactive communications planning is a strategic approach that involves:

➔ anticipating issues

➔ tailoring messages to various stakeholders,

➔ maintaining continuous engagement

By identifying audiences, selecting appropriate channels, and implementing targeted strategies, a communications plan will mitigate risks and build trust with local governments.

The Significance of Proactive Communications

To make it easier to remember, let's use the STREP Throat method:

S **Strategic Alignment**: Align your project goals with a communications plan to ensure coherent messaging to your community.

T **Trust Building**: By keeping the community informed even before inquiries arise, trust is fostered.

R **Risk Mitigation:** Developing a communications plan reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings, conflicts, and misinformation.

E **Efficiency & Effectiveness:** Streamlining information flow helps with anticipating potential delays, ensures stakeholders are involved, and allows for celebration at project completion.

P **Public Perception:** A positive public perception and trust are shaped because your audience is informed.

Value of Proactive Communications in Public Engagement

- **Community Empowerment and Participation:** Engages residents, making them feel involved and valued, fostering a sense of ownership and pride.

- **Social Cohesion:** Strengthens relationships between government and citizens, fostering unity.

- **Trust Building:** Demonstrates the municipality's commitment to transparency.

- **Informed Decision-Making:** Provides residents with information about upcoming projects, allowing for informed input and feedback.

- **Feedback Loop:** Encourages community feedback and input, fostering a sense of participation.

Long-Term Advantages of Proactive Communication for Your Organization

- **Transparency & Accountability:** Enhances transparency in decision-making processes.

- **Service Delivery Improvement:** Helps by having a pool of residents who are ready to provide feedback for service improvements.

- **Policy Implementation:** Facilitates public understanding and support for policies.

- **Emergency Response:** Critical for disseminating timely information during crises.

Step-by-Step Guide to Create a Communications Plan

Define Objectives: Clearly outline project objectives and communication goals.

Know Your Audience: Identify stakeholders, their needs, and preferred communication channels.

Craft Key Messages: Develop clear, consistent, and concise messages.

Select Communications Channels: Choose appropriate platforms (social media, newsletters, town halls) for dissemination.

Establish Feedback Loops: Create mechanisms for two-way communication and feedback.

Putting it into Practice.

Prompt 1

- Who are your stakeholders?
- How might you differentiate between primary stakeholders—those directly impacted—and secondary stakeholders—those indirectly affected—and prioritize their needs and concerns?
- In what ways can engagement with stakeholders be ongoing and dynamic throughout the lifecycle of a project to ensure their evolving needs and perspectives are consistently considered and addressed?

Prompt 2

- What communications channels do we currently have?

- What platforms or tools are commonly used by our audience? Which ones are most effective for our message?

- How do different demographics within our audience prefer to receive information? Which channels best suit each group?

Prompt 3

- Who would you say are your barrier stakeholder groups?
- What specific obstacles or challenges might hinder the engagement of certain barrier stakeholder groups, and how can these barriers be identified and addressed?
- How might partnerships or collaborations with community organizations, leaders, or advocates help in overcoming barriers and gaining access to marginalized or underrepresented stakeholder groups?

Share & Tell

Recap of Proactive Communications: Understanding Its Various Aspects

Improving organizational communication requires a multi-layered approach. It's important to recognize that communication is frequently reactive, and unforeseen obstacles will inevitably surface.

• The community conversation of the day can sometimes be unpredictable.
• Large-scale crises can arise unexpectedly.
• The initial approach to your public engagement may not align with the needs of residents.

The reactive nature of communication and unexpected challenges can make it hard to know what's required for effective communications until you're in the thick of it. **BUT** you can prepare yourself as much as possible by taking time to prepare beforehand can help ensure that you're not constantly improvising.

This includes developing an organizational communication plan (Step-by-Step Guide) and implementing a communications strategy (Communication & Outreach Template), and applying the STREP method into your initiatives to ensure your community is properly engaged, informed, and involve.

Q & A

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DOUBLE HAUL SOLUTIONS
Great leadership is in our nature.

MATHES MEDIA
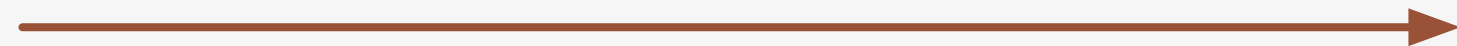
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & MARKETING TIMELINE

PROJECT TITLE   **ORGANIZATION NAME**

PROJECT LEAD(S)   **DATE**

CAMPAIGN TYPE	ADDITIONAL INFO	PHASE ONE		PHASE TWO		PHASE THREE		
		November	December	January	February	March	April	May 7
Public Relations/Local Print Marketing								
Content Marketing								
Social Media								
Online								
Onsite Education								
Video (Potential options)								
Other Community Engagement Spaces								

Key Actors/Stakeholders	Date of outreach	Purpose of Outreach	Contacts?
Internal City Staff			
K - 12 Schools			
Universities/Colleges (if applicable)			
Local Businesses (Downtown District)			
Nonprofits			
Faith Organizations			
Supporting City Orgs (i.e. Chamber)			
Corporations			
Hospitals			
Others?			

Barrier Groups	Access Points	Contacts?
Senior Living Communities		
Homebound Seniors		
Rental Units		
English As A Second Language		
Non-tech/lack of access users		
Others?		

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & MARKETING TIMELINE

| PROJECT TITLE | Millage Proposal | ORGANIZATION NAME | City of ABC |
| PROJECT LEAD(S) | Torri Mathes, Nate Geinzer | DATE | 10/26/23 |

CAMPAIGN TYPE	ADDITIONAL INFO	PHASE ONE		PHASE TWO		PHASE THREE		
		November	December	January	February	March	April	May 7
Public Relations/Local Print Marketing								
Press Release 1	Theme: General Announcement/Focus Group Outreach	**Content creation/outline Stage - Immediate release**						**Election Day**
Press Release 2	Theme: Survey polling/The WHY	**Content creation/outline Stage**	**Target release**					**Election Day**
Press Release 3	Theme: Information sessions/community engagement strategy		**Content creation**	**Target release**				**Election Day**
Press Release 4	Theme: General Announcement/Where to learn more			**Content creation**	**Target release**			**Election Day**
Press Release 5	Theme: General Announcement/Election Info					**Content creation**	**target release**	**Election Day**
Content Marketing								
Facility Posters	Theme: General Announcement/Information Sessions			**Content creation**	**Approve & Order**			**Election Day**
Road Banners	Theme: Where to learn more			**Content creation**	**Approve & Order**			**Election Day**
Educational Brochure/Takeaway	Theme: FAQ/Information Sessions			**Content creation**	**Approve & Order**			**Election Day**
Resident Monthly Newsletter				*Content creation and publishing is an ongoing monthly strategy*				
Direct Mail Postcard 1	Theme: Election focus/Where to learn more				**Content creation**	**Release at the end of the month/when AV ballots go out**		**Election Day**
Direct Mail Postcard 2	Theme: About the millage/"look at the back of the ballot"					**Content creation**	**Release at the end of the month**	**Election Day**
Water bill inserts		**Messaging & Visioning**		**Content creation**	**Approve & Order**			**Election Day**
Social Media								
Social Media Campaign Rollout - All Apps		**Messaging & Visioning**		*Content creation and publishing is an ongoing monthly strategy*				
Event - Facebook App	Theme: Information sessions/community engagement strategy	**Messaging & Visioning**	**Content creation**	**Informational session: general overview**	**Informational session: How a millage works & why city's use them**	**Informational session: How additional millage dollars will be used**	**Informational session: Millage refresh**	**Election Day**
Facebook Ad 1	PSA - 5H & W/Where to learn more	**Messaging & Visioning**	**Content creation**	**Millage fast facts**	**How money will be spent fast facts**	**Millage fast facts**	**How money will be spent fast facts**	**Election Day**
Facebook Ad 2	General Announcement	**Messaging & Visioning**	**Content creation**	**Millage election happening May 7**	**Millage election happening May 7**	**Millage election happening May 7**	**Millage election happening May 7**	**Millage election happening TODAY**
Facebook Ad 3	The WHY/Storytelling	**Messaging & Visioning**		**Content Creation**	**What the millage does for you**	**What the millage does for the city; people behind your tax dollars**		**Election Day**
Facebook Group Creation	Goal: Targeted Q&A and engagement polling	**Messaging & Visioning**		**Group creation & Content Creation**	**Q & A;**	**Q & A;**	**Q & A;**	**Election Day**
Online								
Landing Page Creation	What you need to know/Hub for all millage related information	**Messaging & Visioning**	**Content creation/outline Stage**	**Content Review/Approval Stage**	**Page Launch**			**Election Day**
Website	Banner ads on the homepage the millage		**Content creation/outline Stage**	**Content Review/Approval Stage**	**Banner Launch**			**Election Day**
Survey creation	Focus: community sentiment understanding	**Content creation/outline Stage**	**Survey launch**	**Survey Result review**	**Sharing of data with Information session**			**Election Day**
Onsite Education								
WinterFest	"Ask me anything" booth and takeaways		**Content creation/outline Stage**	**Content Review/Approval Stage**	**Information Table**			
Downtown Leprechauns Block Party	"Ask me anything" booth and takeaways					**Information Table**		
Election Day	"Ask me anything" booth and takeaways							**Information Table**
City Council Meeting	PSA/Themed or tailor subjects matters at each meeting broken down	**Public Meeting/Kick Off Announcement**	**Content creation/outline Stage**	**Themed Millage Topic/Approval of millage language**	**Themed Millage Topic**	**Themed Millage Topic**	**Themed Millage Topic**	**Themed Millage Topic**
Information Sessions	Presentations and Q&A for general public	**Messaging & Visioning**	**Content creation/outline Stage**	**Content creation/outline Stage**	**Content Review/Approval Stage**	**Info Presentations**	**Info Presentations**	
Focus Group	Ambassador group to review millage materials	**Community engagement strategy discussion/Survey polling review**	**Survey review stage/millage language review stage**					
Parks programming events	"Ask me anything" booth and takeaways							
Library programming events	"Ask me anything" booth and takeaways							
Video (Potential options)								
Educational/PSA Video	The focus could incorporate fast facts about the millage; how it was established; why we have them; details on what to expect; etc.	**Messaging & Visioning**	**Storyboard & review**	**Animation creation**	**Educational/PSA Video 1**	**Educational/PSA Video 2**		
Explainers: We The People	This will have local, recongizable individuals in the community talking about the millage and it's value. Reinstating how this impacts everyday services.	**Messaging & Visioning**	**Storyboard & review**	**People recruitment/copywriting**	**Filming & Editing Stage**	**Explainer Video 1**	**Explainer Video 2**	
Cable Station	Interviews							
Other Community Engagement Spaces								
Chamber of Commerce	Opportunities to partner/participate at chamber events to connect with the business sector	**Outreach & Relationship Building**						
DDA	Opportunities to partner/participate at DDA events to connect with the downtown community (e.g. coffee and discussion	**Outreach & Relationship Building**						
School District	Opportunities to partner/participate at chamber events to connect with the school to involve and educate students. Potential use of outreach channels via parents	**Outreach & Relationship Building**	**Content Creation**	**School Monthly Newsletter Release**	**Content Creation; PTA Presentation**	**Off to the Races Event**	**School Monthly Newsletter Release**	

Key Actors/Stakeholders	Date of outreach	Purpose of Outreach	Contacts?
Internal City Staff	August 2023	Inform; Content education & creation; Budgeting scope	
K - 12 Schools	August 2023	Inform; Gain insight on communications channels to audience; Opportunities for partnership	
Universities/Colleges (if applicable)	August 2023	Inform; Gain insight on communications channels to audience; Opportunities for partnership	
Local Businesses (Downtown District)	September 2023	Inform; Public promotional sharing; Focus group; Yes committee recruitment	
Nonprofits	September 2023	Inform; Public promotional sharing; Focus group; Yes committee recruitment	
Faith Organizations	September 2023	Inform; Public promotional sharing; Focus group; Yes committee recruitment	
Supporting City Orgs (i.e. Chamber)	September 2023	Inform; Public promotional sharing; Focus group; Yes committee recruitment	
Corporations	January 2024	Inform; Public promotional sharing	
Hospitals	January 2024	Inform; Public promotional sharing	
Others?			

Barrier Groups	Access Points	Contacts?		
Senior Living Communities	Speaker session			
Homebound Seniors	Recreation/Senior Service Department; AAA 1B/Nurses Aid			
Rental Units	Property manager			
English As A Second Language	Library; School District			
Non-tech/lack of access users	Library; Recreation; Churches			
Others?				