



I. BACKGROUND

The Town Council believes that open communication with all citizens is an important community value. The Town of Chapel Hill makes a consistent effort to be a helpful, accessible, consistent, unintimidating and human source of information; and works to assure that those served always feel welcome.

The Town enjoys a positive relationship with its citizens, conducting outreach through personal contact, at meetings, and through telephone and e-mail exchanges. Town staff members respond thoughtfully and fully to citizen questions, and Town department heads and supervisors enjoy a close working relationship with the media.

There exists a high degree of community pride among citizens and positive identification with their home in Chapel Hill. The desire to continue and enhance these feelings underlies our very basic communication efforts.

The Communications Plan works to use communications outreach as an education tool to keep the community informed about how the Town operates and the policies and procedures that are involved in that operation, and to encourage citizen participation in their local government process. It aims to meet these objectives in a coordinated, concerted and cost-effective manner. The intent of the plan is to move beyond a reactive approach that only responds to inquiries toward a proactive approach that also achieves established goals.

II. THE FIRST YEAR

The Town of Chapel Hill hired its first town information officer in April 2004. The goal of this new position is to increase awareness, interest and participation in Town government goals and activities. Chapel Hillians should receive clear and accurate information about any Town program, service or regulation that affects their lives or livelihoods. The information officer will see that Town information is delivered through media that effectively attracts the attention of those who need to know and in language that can be readily understood.

In the first year of this program, attention will be paid to creating systems to support the flow of information (for example, a web page to feature all Town news releases) and the most apparent communication needs. Some of the items in this start-up year Action Plan begin multi-year objectives while other goals will become part of the regular and recurring activities of the Town Information Officer position. Goals will take sharper focus as program fundamentals are established.

III. GOALS

The goals of the Communications Program are the following:

- Conduct a consistent public information program that regularly communicates to the public about the actions of the Council and the services provided by the Town of Chapel Hill.
- Provide information about special events and emergency conditions.
- Plan and conduct periodic citizen surveys to assist the Council and the Manager in evaluating the effectiveness of public services.
- Assist other Town employees in communicating with citizens about Town programs.
- Assist citizen groups, neighborhood associations and others in understanding Town policies and processes, and in how to be most effective in pursuing their needs and interests related to the Town.
- Manage the Town's use of public communication assets, including the use of the government access cablevision channel and Town web site.

IV. KEY MESSAGES & THEMES

A communication program built on strong themes is more effective than a program with scattered and unrelated messages. Key themes will be communicated frequently in a variety of ways, using simple, repetitive messages. Messages gain power from consistency and repetition.

Diverse communication tools will be used to deliver the following key messages:

- The Town of Chapel Hill is an ethical, effective and well-managed government.
- Town tax dollars are spent wisely.
- Town staff and the Town Council are public information ambassadors.
- The Town of Chapel Hill is an open organization, and citizens know how to access information.
- The Town Council is addressing community priorities and accomplishing strategic objectives as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. A complete list of 2004 Council Goals is included in this plan as Attachment 1. The overarching themes and goals are the following:
 - **Community Character:** Conserve and enhance those elements that define Chapel Hill's special community character and the heritage of Chapel Hill's historic neighborhoods.
 - **University Relations:** Provide an environment where the Town of Chapel Hill, UNC, and the UNC Health Care System can collaborate to maximize mutual benefits.
 - **Regional Cooperation:** Establish effective regional cooperation that promotes sustainable growth patterns, recognizing that economic development, land use, transportation, environmental, natural area linkages, and other planning issues transcend the boundaries of Chapel Hill.

- **Economy and Employment:** Increase employment opportunities for residents and satisfy local demand for commercial and retail services.
- **Housing:** Increase the availability of well-designed, affordable, safe and sanitary housing for all citizens of Chapel Hill.
- **Land Use and Development:** Promote orderly development and redevelopment to achieve appropriate and compatible use of land.
- **Environment:** Identify, protect, and preserve open spaces and critical natural areas and enhance the community's air quality and water resources.
- **Transportation:** Develop a balanced, multi-modal transportation system that will enhance mobility for all citizens, reduce automobile dependence, and preserve/enhance the character of Chapel Hill.
- **Community Facilities:** Provide community facilities and services that meet the physical, social, and cultural needs of Chapel Hill's population.
- **Fiscal Conditions:** Enhance the Town's ability to provide services and manage its development through financial stability and fiscal planning.
- **Governance:** Maximize citizen participation so that Town government is representative of and responsive to the population. Serve and govern the population in an honest, efficient, and equitable manner.

V. AUDIENCE

Primary Target Groups

Citizens

Chapel Hill's population is about 50,000. Of that population, 16,000 students are enrolled at UNC. The age distribution is dominated by the 15-29 age group, accounting for nearly 50 percent of the town's population. The racial composition is predominantly white and black with those groups comprising 78 percent and 11 percent of the population. Asians make up 7 percent and Latinos account for 3 percent of the population. The population also includes residents who characterize themselves on census reports as Asian (7 percent) and Latino (3 percent). According to the 2000 Census, 27 percent of the County population had earned a graduate or professional degree, significantly higher than the statewide percentage of 7 percent. Chapel Hillians value education, and public schools here are among the best in the nation. The town has the most heavily used library in the state with per-capita book circulation at three times the state average. Our citizens treasure and pursue a diversity of thought.

News Media

Media relations are developed through personal interactions with reporters and editors, distribution of news releases and media advisories, planning and conducting news conferences and interviews, placement of stories in various media, and other methods of communication. The town information office assists individual reporters in answering questions, responding to Open Records Act Requests, and providing sources and information, as well as proactively distributing news and information.

Prominent local media outlets in Chapel Hill are *The Chapel Hill News*, *The Chapel Hill Herald*, *The News & Observer*, *The Daily Tar Heel*, *The Independent*, and WCHL community radio.

Media groups that report on Chapel Hill from a regional perspective are television news stations, WUNC-FM and occasional coverage by outlying markets such as Greensboro. Opportunities exist to enhance coverage from television news reporters based in Raleigh and Durham (including WRAL-CBS, Carolina 14-Time Warner, WTVD-ABC, WNCN-NBC) by assisting and educating reporters to Chapel Hill activities and issues. Effort will be made to discover new markets for Town news, especially for a growing Latino population.

UNC-Chapel Hill brings a significant amount of positive national media attention to Chapel Hill. At the time of this writing, for example, Chapel Hill is mentioned in *The New York Times* of Sept. 21, 2004, in the headline, "For Women Who Worry About Fertility, Egg Bank New Option." The story cites a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of North Carolina on the topic. Chapel Hill also is frequently featured in travel articles in such outlets as *Conde Nast Traveler Magazine* (August 2004) and *Philadelphia Magazine* (August 2004).

Employees

The Town of Chapel Hill employs about 650 employees who work in areas that include fire and police protection, finance, planning, public works, inspections, engineering, transportation, library, parks and recreation, and housing. More than half of all employees do not have regular access to e-mail services for communications.

Other Target Groups

Public segments:

Town boards and committees, business, educational, medical, neighborhoods, etc.

Orange County residents

State legislators

Congressional delegation

Government associations and organizations

People outside Chapel Hill

VI. COMMUNICATIONS TOOLBOX

It is necessary to always be on the lookout for creative and innovative tools and technologies to communicate more effectively. The following are some of the valuable tools used to communicate and market messages to specific audiences (more detail on these is available in Attachment 2):

Citizens

Citizen Information and Opinion Research

Citizen Newsletter

Neighborhood Advocacy Corp

Annual Report

Fact Sheet

Web

E-mailings

Cable

Advertisements

Fair Booth
 Speaker's Bureau
 Response Line
 Telephone Books
 Town Services Booklet
 Topical Publications
 Bill Inserts
 Signage, Banners, Posters
 Special Events
 Stationery, Notepads, Business Cards, etc.
 Giveaways
 Powerpoint Presentations
 Tours
 Maps and Info Graphics

Media

Media Relations
 Media Guide and Assistance
 News Releases, Tip Sheets, etc.
 Columns
 Radio Talk programs
 News Conferences
 Special Events

Employees

Employee Newsletter
 Intranet

VII. RESOURCES

One of the goals of this program is to build on the staff resources existing within the departments of Town government, thus making decentralization of the communications program possible and avoiding the cost of building a large central department of communications. A decentralized communications system also complements the Town tradition of operating with a spirit of full disclosure.

VIII. 2004-05 COMMUNICATIONS ACTION PLAN

At the inception of this program, the following goals are outlined:

- **Goal 1: Set up shop**

Objective: Evaluate and identify resources

Actions:

1. Develop Communication Plan
2. Seek partnerships (internal and external) to maximize resources
3. Develop media lists
4. Coordinate distribution process for all Town news releases
5. Conduct communications audit
6. Track communications costs for budget
7. Form graphics and image library
8. Assist with writing position descriptions and interviewing information specialists at Transit and Stormwater Management programs

- **Goal 2: Improve citizen access to information**

Objective: Use print advertising more effectively

Actions:

1. Evaluate current advertising expenses and effectiveness
2. Improve the visual presentation of the ads
3. Establish a Town advertising “anchor section” in the newspaper
4. Coordinate issuance of notices by departments

Objective: Use Town web site more effectively

Actions:

1. Create web page for news releases from all departments
2. Reorganize web site for easier access (*ultimately, the web site should be simple to navigate, contain information from all departments, and be unified graphically under a common Town theme*).
3. Create web pages for Council members
4. Begin to reorganize and rewrite specific areas (directory, parking)

Objective: Use Cable Channel more effectively

Actions:

1. Use billboard notices to announce meetings
2. Create a system for evaluating and distributing new content
3. Explore opportunities for interview shows

Objective: Enhance Town exposure in media

Actions:

1. Write news release highlights and summaries of Council meetings
2. Establish a 30-minute pre-meeting interview period for television media

3. Issue other releases as required

Objective: Create publications to provide information

Actions:

1. Update the New Residents Guide to Services
2. Publications as needed: stormwater brochure, parking brochure

• **Goal 3: Improve the content of the information**

Objective: Report on the goals of the Council

Actions:

1. Insert goal statements into news releases reporting actions
2. Include letter from the Council in Parks and Recreation guide
3. Add goals to the web and update progress periodically
4. Issue news releases about Council progress and activities toward attaining goals
5. Include Council goals in a Media Guide to be developed

Objective: Assist the media in its coverage

Actions:

1. Hold workshop for student reporters from *The Daily Tar Heel* and classes
2. Create media guidebook covering Town government and services
3. Provide portraiture of elected officials and key staff to media

Objective: Tell the larger story

Actions:

1. Identify Town stories that require in-depth telling: 4 stories per year; market these to a larger audience
2. Explore use of Town website and publications to tell this larger story directly to citizens

Objective: Focus on graphic identity

Actions:

1. Seek involvement from Public Arts Commission on new Town logo
2. Use traditional seal for official and ceremonial purposes; use more modern and meaningful logo for other business applications

Objective: Coordinate messages

Actions:

1. Establish a media message calendar (primarily services)
2. Use themes and goals

3. Use web as the “key” for most current information – and ensure that all publications reflect the same language and message

- **Goal 4: Extend the reach of communications**

Objective: Gain exposure in national markets

Actions:

1. Develop stories for national markets
2. Add key national outlets to media list. With each national story, conduct tailored marketing to other media based on subject matter

Objective: Find new ways to reach new audiences

Actions:

1. Research audiences that are more difficult to reach, such as residents of the Northside and Pine Knolls neighborhoods, and uncover ways to communicate
2. Begin a plan for reaching these audiences

- **Goal 5: Improve internal communications**

Objective: Enhance employee access to information

Action:

1. Publish monthly employee newsletter (with summer hiatus)

Objective: Serve as a professional resource

Actions:

1. Offer media training and consultation
2. Keep department directors abreast of media reports: Town in the News

- **Goal 6: Administer agreements between Town and Time Warner Cable, and Town and The Peoples Channel**

Objective: Administration of Town issues at Time Warner Cable

Actions:

1. FCC (Basic Cable) Rate Review – annual
2. Time Warner Annual Report – annual
3. Time Warner Audit – as needed
4. Time Warner Subscriber Survey – biennial
5. Time Warner Franchise agreement
6. Time Warner complaints – ongoing

Objective: Administration of Town issues at The Peoples Channel

Actions:

1. The Peoples Channel Performance Agreement – triennial
2. Hearing on Public Access Fees - annual

IX. ASSESSMENT

Research and evaluation will be conducted to assess successes and areas for improvement. Measurements may include:

- Survey the Council
- Surveys and focus groups
- News release totals
- Content of media coverage (evaluated through Town in the News reports)
- Communications and service awards
- Responses from citizens
- Email listserv subscriber numbers
- Web visitors and Web analysis

X. SUMMARY

This Communications Plan is presented as a guide to achieve the communication goals of the Town of Chapel Hill. Like any plan, it will need updating as circumstances change. The Communications Plan will be updated periodically based on experiences and changes in needs. The Action Plan portion of this overall guide will be rewritten on an annual basis, and next year it will include an achievements section to evaluate goal attainment.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2004 Council Goals (p. 10).
2. Communications Toolbox (p. 17).

2004 COUNCIL GOALS**HIGHEST PRIORITY****1. Community Goals/Process for Horace Williams Property (Carolina North)**

Description: Continue community dialogue on the future of the Horace Williams property and discussions on process for receiving and considering additional information about the University of North Carolina's plans for Carolina North.

2. Bicycle/Pedestrian Goals

Description: Two major short-term Comprehensive Plan actions are related to Bicycle and Pedestrian goals:

3. Northside Neighborhood Conservation District Design Guidelines

Description: This project continues work underway as part of the Council's consideration of a Northside Neighborhood Conservation District. As part of the project, the Northside Neighborhood Conservation District Advisory Committee has recommended developing an accompanying set of Design Guidelines to provide property owners with information on compatible development guidelines.

4. Clean Water

Description: Three major short-term Comprehensive Plan actions are related to goals related to Clean Water:

5. Transit Master Plan

Description: Develop a Transit Master Plan for Chapel Hill Transit's future. Look at potential transit configurations 20 to 30 years in the future. Include review of potential fixed guideway corridors, such as U.S. 15-501/N.C. 54. Seek grant funds to pay for such a study.

6. Affordable Housing Report on Activity and Approaches to Date

Description: Provide a comprehensive report on all affordable housing initiatives and resources pursued or considered to date.

7. Report on Davidson, NC Inclusionary Zoning

Description: Provide the Council a report on how Davidson, North Carolina has provided affordable housing through its inclusionary zoning ordinance.

8. Parking Study/New Regulations

Description: The Council has asked the Manager to prepare a study of current parking practices and policies, and propose a set of new requirements during 2003. The study will include local parking patterns, supply, and demand. We will recommend a budget for such a study.

9. Monitor/Evaluate Land Use Management Ordinance, Phase 2

Description: We will continue to monitor and evaluate the Land Use Management Ordinance and offer advice on further action.

10. Response to Petition Regarding Council Ethics and Guidelines

Description: Council received a petition on January 12, 2004, concerning lobbying and Council ethics.

11. Development of Parking Lots 2 and 5

Description: Continue implementation of project to develop Town-owned downtown Parking Lots 2 and 5 with the Council Committee and economic development consultant, per Council contract authorization of October 27, 2003. To date, the Council has authorized funding for a market study and for the development of master plans for the sites.

12. Evaluate the Feasibility of a Downtown Transit Transfer Center

Description: An initiative in the Downtown Small Area Plan is the development of a downtown transit transfer center. The Council Committee on Lots 2 and 5 recommended studying the feasibility of a center on sites other than Parking Lot 5. The Council is discussing process options for soliciting development proposals for Lots 2 and 5.

13. Small Area Planning Process for Greene Tract and Surrounding Residential Areas (Rogers Road, Purefoy Road)

Description: The Council has discussed conducting an additional small area plan per the Council's action on the Greene Tract Work Group recommendations in November 2002. In the jointly adopted resolution among Orange County, Chapel Hill, and Carrboro, Chapel Hill agreed to conduct a small area plan for the residential area west of the Greene Tract (Rogers Road, Purefoy Road area), including the affordable housing site on the Greene Tract. The plan will include a more detailed look at the impacts of providing public services in the area,

especially the extension of sewer, and the impacts on the area of developing an affordable housing site.

14. Incorporation of Public Arts Program as a Town Government Operation

Description: Consider incorporating the Chapel Hill Public Arts Program as a Town government operation.

15. Tree Ordinance

Description: Consider protection of trees on private property and banning clearcutting, through amendments to the Land Use Management Ordinance.

16. Elections Financing

Description: Consider publicly financed elections to make elections more inclusionary and consider options for providing more disclosure of financing sources.

SECOND PRIORITY

17. Downtown Small Area Plan Implementation

Description: Develop an implementation schedule and begin implementing the Downtown Small Area Plan. The Town has completed some of the initiatives in the Plan since its adoption in 2000, but in a piecemeal fashion. This document would spell out specific projects and a timetable for completing them.

18. North Carolina Rehabilitation Code

Description: Consider adopting provisions for downtown that conform to the N.C. Rehabilitation Code, as a tool to encourage downtown revitalization.

19. Street Vendors

Description: Review street vending downtown, and a process to evaluate proposals for licensing vendors. Explore opportunities with the Public Arts Commission.

20. Rosemary Street Redevelopment

Description: Consider strategies to reduce surface parking and make property available for redevelopment on Rosemary Street.

21. Implement Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Description: A schedule for funding and implementing the 2002 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

22. Develop Process to Address Neighborhood Traffic Impacts

Description: Consider neighborhood requests for traffic calming devices and other measures.

23. Public Arts Master Plan

Description: The Public Arts Commission is preparing a Public Arts Master Plan. Include the Public Arts Master Plan under development as a component of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

24. Neighborhood Advocate Functions

Description: Consider options for providing neighborhood advocate functions within Town government, including a program neighborhood advocate education.

25. Communications with Chatham County

Description: Work to improve communications with Chatham County, possibly by reviving the Orange-Chatham Work Group.

26. Communications with Orange Water and Sewer Authority

Description: Establish a regular system of receiving information from the Orange Water and Sewer Authority.

27. Energy Bond/Efficiency

Description: Continue planning for implementation of energy bonds and achieving energy efficiency in Town buildings.

28. Transportation Demand Management Plan

Description: Develop revised Transportation Demand Management Program. The Manager will prepare a report to the Council, to include: a survey of programs in other communities, an evaluation of the Town's program, and proposals for revising the Transportation Demand Management Program. The Transportation Advisory Board and the Planning Board have petitioned the Council to evaluate and revise the Town's Transportation Demand Management Program.

29. Town Advisory Board Processes

Description: At its September 22, 2003 meeting the Council received a report on advisory boards' processes for citizen comments and applicant interviews. At that time, the Council referred this issue to the January 2004 Planning Session.

30. Public Dialogue on Homelessness

Description: Undertake a public dialogue on homelessness: its root causes; what Council can do to address it.

THIRD PRIORITY

31. Entranceway Corridors

Description: Revision of Town's 1988 Master Plan for Entranceway Corridors.

32. General Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance

Description: The Council deferred work on a general Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance until completion of work on a Schools Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance. The ordinance has gone into effect following adoption by Carrboro, Orange County and Chapel Hill-Carrboro School Board. This project would develop an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance for other types of public facilities such as roads, parks, open space, etc.

33. Prepare Non-Residential Development Strategies and Guidelines

Description: This strategy of the Comprehensive Plan relates to the economy of Chapel Hill. The goal in the Comprehensive Plan calls for a multi-faceted approach to attract and retain desirable forms of non-residential development. Approach includes developing a strategy to implement and retain non-residential development, and reviewing and strengthening existing design guidelines and standards for non-residential development. The Town would develop and implement a proactive strategy to encourage and retain non-residential development, including small businesses.

34. Use Patterns

Description: An initial draft of the new Land Use Management Ordinance contained a series of Use Patterns: descriptions of particular types of development that would represent desirable forms of development. The Council determined that a placeholder be left in the new ordinance and that work be taken up one-by-one by the Planning Board and Staff.

35. Transfer of Development Rights

Description: Initiate discussions with Orange County, Carrboro, and Hillsborough concerning a coordinated Transfer of Development Rights/Purchase of Development Rights/conservation easement strategy as a priority Rural Buffer protection action, per Strategy 5B-1 of the Comprehensive Plan. This strategy calls for working with Orange County and Carrboro to evaluate and implement options for strengthening the Urban Services Area and Rural Buffer.

36. Inventory of Post World War II Architecture

Description: This action would relate to Strategy 3B-1 of the Comprehensive Plan to strengthen existing Historic District Regulations. The proposal would update a survey of historic resources to include preservation of post-World War II architecture in Chapel Hill.

37. Health Issues Related to Stormwater Retention/Detention

Description: Study health effects of stormwater ponds and swales as they relate to the West Nile virus and other diseases potentially transmitted by mosquitoes.

38. Potential Mitigation of Traffic Congestion in U.S. 15-501 Corridor

Description: Examine potential traffic congestion mitigation beyond the “superstreet” concept for the U.S. 15-501 Corridor from Manning Drive to I-40 corridor; especially consider expansion of Chapel Hill Transit operations and configurations.

39. Town Fleet Efficiency

Description: Set goals for increased gas/fuel efficiency. Create a Chapel Hill Green Fleets Policy.

40. Defibrillators

Description: Provide defibrillators in major Town facilities.

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLBOX

It is necessary to always be on the lookout for new and innovative tools and technologies – as well as creative approaches -- to communicate more effectively. The following are some of the valuable tools used to communicate and market messages to audiences:

Citizens

Citizen Information and Opinion Research: A quantitative random sample survey serves several uses, including establishing a baseline for future communication programs, determining sources of citizen information, and measuring the perceived effectiveness of Town activities and services. ICMA offers a resource for this exploration, the National Citizens Survey.

Citizen Newsletter: A regular and consistent outreach vehicle to citizens may be a printed newsletter that is mailed, and/or an electronic version that is emailed (or both). There are a variety of formats and distribution methods from which to choose.

Neighborhood Advocacy Corp: Classroom and information tools can help educate citizens about their local government and encourage participation.

Annual Report: A report to citizens is included in the Parks and Recreation Guide that is published three times per year. The report in this guide could be expanded to include more accessible information with lively writing, graphics and photographs covering the activities and successes of Town government. An annual report could take the form of a magazine, a tabloid inserted into the newspaper, or a page in the telephone book.

Fact Sheet: A Town fact sheet prompts a regular and periodic gathering of quantitative, bulleted data that is frequently requested by citizens.

Web: An excellent municipal web site is one that is easy to navigate with complete and updated information that is locatable with minimal clicks. E-gov services improve customer service and two-way communication (forms, list-serv sign-ups, feedback buttons). A site that is designed for flexibility and ease of maintenance will have more and improved content, including visually attractive pages. A consistent graphical theme throughout the site and across various departments aids visitors in understanding Town services and better binds the organization as a whole.

E-mailings: The Town regularly distributes important announcements to citizens and interest groups through e-mail. This may take the form of an e-newsletter distributed on a periodic basis to citizens who subscribe through online interest forms. Effort should be made to develop listservs for key interest areas.

Cable Television: Regular Council meetings are cablecast live in Chapel Hill on Time Warner Cable Channel 18 at 7pm on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Mondays of most months and are rebroadcast at 9 am the Tuesday morning after a Monday night meeting. Generally, the meetings are also cablecast on Durham Cable Vision Channel 8 at 1 pm on the Friday following the Council meeting. Videotapes and DVDs of Council meetings are available for citizens to review in the Town Clerk's Office. In addition to meetings, many more opportunities are available for broadcast, including public information shows, interviews, billboard messages and calendars, and PSAs.

Advertisements: The Town uses advertisements in print media to announce public meetings and hearings, openings on boards and committees, bid openings, and special events. These advertisements will be formatted for consistency and better graphics, in an effort to improve the image of the Town and citizens' access to information. All ads may be gathered under a half-page heading to improve coordination among departments and visibility of the announcements.

Fair Booth: At Town events such as Apple Chill in April, departments organize various individual booths including Parks and Recreation, Police and Fire. A larger, comprehensive booth would offer an opportunity for face-to-face interaction in promoting involvement in local government and access to its services.

Speakers' Bureau: Direct contact with citizens through speaking engagements at civic and community clubs is an excellent and low-cost way of having continuing personal communication contact with citizen groups. Speakers bureaus are more effective when they are well planned and organized, when the speakers have interesting topics, material and audio-visual support and when the program is well publicized. Many Town staff members are involved in community non-profit groups and liaison with them regularly.

Response Line: Many municipalities employ 24-hour response telephone services to give citizens continuous information on services and programs.

Telephone Books: Town information should be easy to find under various headings in the Bell South telephone book, and possibly other telephone books. Town services should be listed in the blue pages and also in the yellow pages under headings such as Parks, Museums, Swimming Pools, Health Clubs, etc. The newcomer's guide in the front of the book also offers an opportunity to inform citizens of government and services. The Town may add a half page ad of service information in the telephone book.

Town Services Booklet: To assist residents in locating services, the booklet is produced annually. The Town may explore various modes of distribution to reach a wider audience.

Topical Publications: The Town uses brochures and flyers to further explain issues. To introduce consistency, graphic style and economy, these may be designed as single sheet flyers on pre-printed graphic templates.

Bill Inserts: The Town may research the possibility of inserting information flyers into the bills of Orange County, OWASA, Public Service Gas Co. or Duke Power Co.

Signage, Banners, Posters: There are several signage needs for the Town, including signs outside Town Hall to announce meetings and offer special messages, at the door of Town Hall to state hours of operation, and within Town Hall to direct citizens to the Council Chamber and other offices, and to announce meetings and events. Signage needs should be assessed at all facilities, from Town parking lots to recreation centers. Signs should be posted at all Town project sites. All signage should follow the Town ordinance guiding this use.

Special Events: Special events help promote specific programs. These include contests, open houses, award ceremonies, extension outreach (“how-to demos” on using services like bike racks on buses) and neighborhood meetings – in addition to its regular festivals.

Stationery, Notepads, Business Cards, etc.: Town printed stationery requires updating and revision so that contact information is current and correct. The stationery letterhead may be digitized to reduce costs of printing and the effort of scanning documents. Town business cards should consistently carry the same graphic identity and pertinent information, including the Town web site addresses.

Giveaways: Inexpensive giveaways at fairs and during tours are a positive outreach and reinforce behaviors with key messages (recycle, meet your neighbor, get involved, volunteer, etc.) Examples include pencils, stickers and buttons. They also are useful to connect with visitors and guests during special conferences.

Powerpoint Presentations: Digital presentations may be shown on laptops at public fairs, on digital signage, and at public meetings. They are dynamic, cost effective and environmentally friendly.

Tours: Tours of facilities such as Town Hall can help educate civic groups, special visitors and students about services and activities of government.

Maps and Info Graphics: Maps and facility location graphics make up a valuable communication component. Journalistic and reproduction standards should be met for all informational graphics. They are useful in a variety of mediums, from newspapers to the Internet.

News Media

Media Relations: The Town Information Officer directs media inquiries to the Town Manager, Deputy Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, department heads and other Town contacts as appropriate. As such, the position acts as the Town government’s primary point of contact with the news media. The information officer will assist in training department heads and supervisors in how to best deal with the media. She also provides background information and additional materials as requested by reporters. In

some instances, she may educate reporters to government processes (i.e. training for Daily Tar Heel reporters). The Town values regular meetings with news media (editors, reporters, news directors) and surveys to build two-way communication about question handling.

Media Guide and Assistance: A media guide book assists reporters in their coverage of Town government. This guide would include brief biographies of Council members, the Town Manager and department heads; maps and facility addresses; brief explanations of processes and definitions. New beat reporters, especially those from the university newspaper, may receive additional assistance through a Town Hall Day or other tailored outreach.

News Releases, Tip Sheets, etc.: News releases are a valuable tool for distributing information about Town services and people. Care must be taken to ensure that news releases are worth doing in the first place and that the media will be likely to use them. Alternatives to the news release are tip sheets, stand-alone feature photos with extended captions, and fact sheets.

Columns: A Town newspaper column discusses Town services, policies, Council goals and actions, and how-to information of Town government in an expository fashion.

Radio Talk programs: The primary radio outlet for Town news is WCHL, and producers are agreeable to setting up various opportunities for the Mayor, Council Members and Town staff to discuss issues of interest to citizens.

News Conferences: News conferences are a valuable communications tool when used properly. The general rule is that the fewer news conferences the better. In general, the Town policy is to announce news through other channels (such as news releases and at Town Council and other meetings) rather than to call news conferences except on very rare occasions.

Special Events: Special events for reporters are held to encourage dialogue on process to assist in coverage of Town government. Examples include public safety open houses, accompanying police patrols or fire firefighters on calls, and breakfasts with the Mayor and Manager.

Employees

Employee Newsletter: A regular employee newsletter offers an excellent forum to inform and educate, build two-way communication, praise employee performance and strengthen community within the organization.

Intranet: An intranet provides a means for employees to find information; to promote the organization's corporate goals; to publicize and reinforce key corporate messages; and to encourage the exchange of knowledge among employees. A significant number of Town employees do not have regular access to computers, so this tool has limited reach.

Overall Strategies

Communications Action Plan: This plan will determine specific goals and objectives for each year for the Town Information Officer.

Communications Counseling: Departments across the Town will receive assistance and guidance with their communications, publications and marketing needs from the Town Information Officer.

Town Information Group: Comprising key department heads and Town staff, this group helps the communications efforts of the Town move forward with limited staffing and budgetary support. The team approach also builds cooperation and consistency in outreach.

Approvals and Process: All Town publication materials that are to be professionally printed/produced/designed will be sent to the Town Information Officer for prior review. This is to ensure that all materials are of excellent quality and conform to consistent standards. Town news releases may be sent only by designated communication officers. In addition to media, the distribution list should include the Mayor and Town Council, and the Manager and senior staff.

Distribution: In communications, focus naturally is directed at producing the message and the vehicle. Distribution sometimes is neglected. The Town will make efforts to plan for distribution other than “by request.” In particular, some exploration should be taken of postal requirements for bulk mail permitting and costs associated. Additionally, unusual approaches such as using supermarkets and schools to distribute information will be explored, as well as enlisting assistance from community police officers.

Media Relations: This is one aspect of this Communications Plan. Emphasis will be given to taking information directly to residents rather than relying on the news media to deliver all information. It is recognized that the news media will continue to report on government activities and therefore contribute to shaping ideas and opinions about the Town of Chapel Hill. A continued media relations presence is needed.

Production Schedules and Calendars: An annual calendar of monthly service messages coupled with pre-produced printed Public Service Announcements, accompanying news releases and broadcast spots (radio, video). A production schedule for publication literature will be included in an Annual Communications Action Plan.

Graphic Identity: The Town’s visual identity is seen on business cards, letterhead, buildings, advertisements, vehicles and myriad documents. The current symbol is a traditional seal. The fine detail of the seal may be ill-suited to the demands of high visibility, varied reproduction and symbolic description of the Town workforce and community.

Image Library: Good photography is the heart and soul of fine publications. An Image Library is needed to store digital photographs of the Council, Town employees, facilities, infrastructure, activities and events, and more.

Crisis Communications: The Town's Crisis (or Emergency) Communication Plan should correspond to the overall communication plan.

Translation: In all communications, the Town will make efforts to reach a diverse audience. Due to limited resources, a priority list of service publications and materials should be identified for translation into Spanish.

Currency: Dates and version numbers should be included in publications and the website to ensure that the most updated information is released.