

Notice of Meeting of the Governing Body of the City of Georgetown, Texas October 27, 2020

The Georgetown City Council will meet on October 27, 2020 at 2:30 PM at Teleconference

The City of Georgetown is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you require assistance in participating at a public meeting due to a disability, as defined under the ADA, reasonable assistance, adaptations, or accommodations will be provided upon request. Please contact the City Secretary's Office, at least three (3) days prior to the scheduled meeting date, at (512) 930-3652 or City Hall at 808 Martin Luther King Jr. Street, Georgetown, TX 78626 for additional information; TTY users route through Relay Texas at 711.

**Join from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device Please click this
URL: [https://georgetowntx.zoom.us/j/99020266390?
pwd=b3hxR1FnL1g1VjJCQnZlZkd5SSStGUT09](https://georgetowntx.zoom.us/j/99020266390?pwd=b3hxR1FnL1g1VjJCQnZlZkd5SSStGUT09)**

**Webinar ID: 990 2026 6390
Passcode: 331639**

**Description: City Council Workshop and Regular Meeting for Tuesday,
October 27th, 2020
Workshop starts at 2:30 p.m.
Regular starts at 6:00 p.m.**

**To join by phone dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your
current location):
(346)248-7799 OR (253)215-8782 OR (669)900-6833 OR (929)205-6099
OR (301)715-8592 OR (312)626-6799
TOLL FREE (877)853-5257 OR (888)475-4499 OR (833)548-0276 OR
(833)548-0282**

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Citizen comments are accepted in three different formats:

**Submit the following form by 12:00 p.m. on the date of the meeting and the
City Secretary will read your comments into the recording during the item**

that is being discussed –

<https://records.georgetown.org/Forms/AddressCouncil>

You may log onto the meeting, at the link above, and “raise your hand” during the item. If you are unsure if your device has a microphone please use your home or mobile phone to dial the toll free number. To Join a Zoom Meeting, click on the link and join as an attendee. You will be asked to enter your name and email address – this is so we can identify you when you are called upon. At the bottom of the webpage of the Zoom Meeting, there is an option to Raise your Hand. To speak on an item, simply click on that Raise Your Hand option once the item you wish to speak on has opened. When you are called upon by the Mayor, your device will be remotely un-muted by the Administrator and you may speak for three minutes. Please state your name clearly upon being allowed to speak. When your time is over, your device will be muted again.

As another option, we are opening a city conference room to allow public to “watch” the virtual meeting on a bigger screen, and to “raise your hand” to speak from that public device. This Viewing Room is located at City Hall, 808 Martin Luther King Jr. Street, Community Room. Social Distancing will be strictly enforced. Face masks are required and will be provided onsite. Use of profanity, threatening language, slanderous remarks or threats of harm are not allowed and will result in you being immediately removed from the meeting.

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact the City Secretary’s office at cs@georgetown.org or at 512-930-3651.

Policy Development/Review Workshop -

- A Presentation and update regarding Tree City USA requirements -- Kimberly Garrett, Parks and Recreation Director
- B Presentation and discussion regarding the City of Georgetown Intergovernmental and Legislative Program and the draft Legislative Agenda for the 87th Texas Legislature’s Regular Session in 2021 -- Bridget Hinze Weber, Assistant to the City Manager
- C Presentation, discussion and possible direction regarding the City’s response to COVID-19 -- Jack Daly, Community Services Director
- D Presentation and update regarding the accomplishments and next steps for the 2019 Communications and Marketing Assessment -- Aly Van Dyke, Director of Communications and Public Engagement

Executive Session

In compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Government Code, Vernon's Texas Codes, Annotated, the items listed below will be discussed in closed session and are subject to action in the regular session.

- E **Sec. 551.071: Consultation with Attorney**
Advice from attorney about pending or contemplated litigation and other matters on which the attorney has a duty to advise the City Council, including agenda items
- Litigation Update
Sec. 551.072: Deliberations about Real Property
- Rivehaven -- Travis Baird, Real Estate Services Manager
- Berry Creek Interceptor, Parcels 1, 2, and 3 -- Travis Baird, Real Estate Services manager
Sec. 551.074: Personnel Matters
- City Manager Work Plan
Sec. 551.086: Certain Public Power Utilities: Competitive Matters
- Purchased Power Update
Sec. 551.087: Deliberations Regarding Economic Development
- Project Woods
- Project Wafer
- Project Farm

Adjournment

Certificate of Posting

I, Robyn Densmore, City Secretary for the City of Georgetown, Texas, do hereby certify that this Notice of Meeting was posted at City Hall, 808 Martin Luther King Jr. Street, Georgetown, TX 78626, a place readily accessible to the general public as required by law, on the _____ day of _____, 2020, at _____, and remained so posted for at least 72 continuous hours preceding the scheduled time of said meeting.

Robyn Densmore, City Secretary

City of Georgetown, Texas
City Council Workshop
October 27, 2020

SUBJECT:

Presentation and update regarding Tree City USA requirements -- Kimberly Garrett, Parks and Recreation Director

ITEM SUMMARY:

Tree City USA is sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. There are several benefits to being designated a Tree City USA community including:

1. A **framework for action** which provides for initial direction and a systematic management of tree resources set out in the standards;
2. **Education** is available to City staff as they discuss the requirements to meet the Tree City USA status;
3. **Public Image** is displayed proudly by the Tree City USA sign telling visitors that our community cares about its environment and quality of life;
4. **Citizen Pride** is a direct benefit of the program as residents value trees as an asset to the community; and
5. **Publicity** opportunities through awards and the annual Arbor Day Celebration.

The Tree City USA designation is available for cities meeting the designated standards set forth in the application.

Standards include

- Forestry Program with Annual Budget of at least \$2/Capita
- Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation
- Tree Board or Department
- Tree Care Ordinance

Of all the standards required, a tree care ordinance is the only item that the City needs to address in order to apply. There is an annual recertification required.

A public tree care ordinance provides an opportunity to set good policy that is legally enforceable. It provides a guidance for planting, maintaining and removing trees on public property including City Parks, Rights of Ways, City Streets and other Public Property. It also establishes a tree committee made up of various staff which will include representatives from Parks, Public Works, Electric and Code Enforcement.

A draft tree care ordinance is attached which will be brought forward to City Council for action on November 10th.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

NA

SUBMITTED BY:

Kimberly Garrett, Parks and Recreation Director

ATTACHMENTS:

Draft Tree Care Ordinance
Presentation

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF GEORGETOWN, TEXAS, ADDING CHAPTER 9.16 “PUBLIC TREE CARE” TO THE CODE OF ORDINANCES; ESTABLISHING PRACTICES GOVERNING THE PLANTING, CARE, AND REMOVAL OF TREES ON PUBLIC PROPERTY; PROVIDING FOR THE REMOVAL OF TREES ON PRIVATE PROPERTY UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS; PROVIDING FOR A PENALTY; REPEALING CONFLICTING ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS; PROVIDING A SEVERABILITY CLAUSE; AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Georgetown, Texas, recognizes that trees generally protect and enhance the quality of life and general welfare of the town; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Georgetown have long valued trees as a natural and often irreplaceable community resource and recognize them as assets for their beauty and service; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of Georgetown, Texas, has further determined that the protection and care of trees located on Public Property is essential to the present and future health, safety, and welfare of all citizens, and accordingly, have determined that the adoption and implementation of this “Public Tree Care” ordinance is meritorious and necessary.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GEORGETOWN, TEXAS:

Section 1. The meeting at which this ordinance was approved was in all things conducted in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551.

Section 2. The facts and recitations contained in the preamble of this ordinance are hereby found and declared to be true and correct, and are incorporated by reference herein and expressly made a part hereof, as if copied verbatim.

Section 3. The Code of Ordinances of the City of Georgetown, Texas, is hereby amended by adding Chapter 9.16 - "Public Tree Care" to read as follows:

“CHAPTER 9.16 - PUBLIC TREE CARE

Sec. 9.16.010. Purpose.

To enhance the quality of life and the present and future health, safety, and welfare of all citizens, to enhance property values, and to ensure proper planting and care of trees on Public Property, the City Council herein delegates the authority and responsibility for managing Public

Trees, establishes practices governing the planting and care of trees on Public Property, and makes provision for the emergency removal of trees on private property under certain conditions.

Sec. 9.16.020. Definitions.

As used in this Chapter, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings indicated:

Damage – any injury to or destruction of a tree, including but not limited to removal; Topping; uprooting; severance of all or part the root system or main trunk; storage of material on or compaction of surrounding soil; a substantial change in the natural grade above a root system or around a trunk; surrounding the tree with impervious paving materials; or any trauma caused by accident or collision.

Public Property – all real property owned or maintained by the City, including but not limited to parkland; plazas; sidewalks and trails; City buildings and other facilities; City-owned vacant land; City streets, alleys, and other rights-of-way; City utility easements; and drainage areas.

Public Tree – any tree or woody vegetation on Public Property.

Topping – the non-standard practice of cutting back of limbs to stubs within a tree's crown to such a degree so as to remove the normal canopy and disfigure the tree.

Sec. 9.16.030. Authority and power.

- A. *Delegation of authority and responsibility.* The City Council hereby delegates to the City Manager the authority to establish a Public Tree Committee (the "Committee"), comprised of appropriate City staff responsible for maintaining Public Property and permitting projects thereon. The Committee shall have the authority and responsibility to plant, prune, maintain, and remove Public Trees on Public Property; to establish practices governing the planting and care of trees on Public Property; and to order the emergency trimming or removal of trees and other landscaping on private property under certain conditions set forth in this Chapter.
- B. *Coordination among City departments.* All City departments shall coordinate as necessary with the Committee and shall provide services as required to ensure compliance with this Chapter.
- C. *Interference.* No person shall hinder, prevent, delay, or interfere with the Committee or its designee(s) while engaged in carrying out the execution or enforcement of this Chapter.

Sec. 9.16.040. Tree planting and care standards.

- A. *Standards.* The Committee shall develop and maintain standards (the "Standards") for the planting and care of Public Trees planted on Public Property in accordance with this Chapter. At a minimum, all planting and maintenance of Public Trees shall conform to the American National Standards Institute A-300 "Standards for Tree Care Operations" and shall follow all tree care Best Management Practices (BMPs) published by the International Society of Arboriculture, unless otherwise set forth in City ordinance or regulation.

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- B. *Requirements of franchise utility companies.* Unless otherwise expressly authorized by its franchise agreement with the City, any utility company utilizing a City right-of-way shall provide advance notice to the City of its intended non-emergency tree pruning schedule and the location of impacted area. The maintenance of Public Trees for utility clearance shall conform to all applicable City ordinances and regulations.
 - C. *Tree Species List.* As part of the Standards, the Committee shall develop and maintain an official list of desirable tree species for planting on Public Property in accordance with this Chapter (“the Tree Species List”). The Tree Species List shall organize the approved tree species two size classes: Ornamental (20 feet or less in height at maturity) and Shade (greater than 20 feet at maturity). Only trees from the Tree Species List may be planted on Public Property, and only with written authorization from the Committee.
 - D. *Planting distances.* As part of the Standards, the Committee shall develop and maintain an official set of spacing requirements for the planting of trees on Public Property. In the event any such requirements conflict with other laws, ordinances, or standards adopted by the City Council, such other laws, ordinances, or standards shall control.
 - E. *Permit required.* Any person, firm, corporation, or governmental entity that desires to plant trees on Public Property shall first obtain a Right-of-Way Permit or other applicable City approval. In the event any requirements of said approval conflict with the Standards, such other requirements shall control.
 - F. *Protection of Public Trees during construction.* Any person, firm, corporation, or City department performing construction in the area of any Public Tree must employ appropriate measures to protect the tree, including, but not limited to, placing barriers around the tree to prevent any Damage. The Standards shall identify BMPs for the protection of Public Trees during construction. In the event any such requirements conflict with other laws, ordinances, or standards adopted by the City Council, such other laws, ordinances, or standards shall control.

Sec. 9.16.050. Adjacent owner responsibility.

- A. The owner of land adjacent to any City right-of-way, with the written consent of the Committee, may plant and maintain Public Trees and other plants in the adjacent right-of-way in accordance with the Standards. Property owners are responsible for the reasonable and routine maintenance of Public Trees and other plants in the adjacent right-of-way. The Committee may at any time notify the property owner to prune or remove a Public Tree or other plant planted within the adjacent right-of-way pursuant to this Chapter. If the owner fails to comply with the notice within the timeframe set forth in said notice, the City may undertake the necessary work and charge the cost to the property owner.
- B. No property owner shall allow a tree or other plant growing on his or her property or within the adjacent right-of-way to obstruct or interfere with pedestrians or the view of drivers, thereby creating a hazard. If the Committee determines that a tree or other plant, or any part of a tree or plant, within the right-of-way constitutes a hazard, the City shall summarily remove the offending tree or plant.

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- C. Except as may be set forth in an applicable license agreement approved by the City in accordance with the City of Georgetown Code of Ordinances and Unified Development Code, all Public Trees and other plants within a City right-of-way are subject to removal by the City at any time and for any reason.

Sec. 9.16.060. Prohibition against harming Public Trees.

- A. It shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation to cause Damage to, or the removal of, a tree on Public Property without written permission from the Committee.
- B. It shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation to attach any cable, wire or signs or any other object to any street, park, or public tree.

Sec. 9.16.070. Certain trees declared a nuisance.

Any tree, or limb thereof, on private property determined by the Committee to have contracted a lethal, communicable disease or insect; to be dead or dying; to obstruct the view of traffic signs or the free passage of pedestrians or vehicles; or that threatens public health, safety, and welfare is declared a nuisance and the City may require its treatment or removal. Private property owners have the duty, at their own expense, to remove or treat nuisance trees on their property. The Committee shall provide a property owner written notice that a tree has been determined a nuisance in accordance with this Section. The City may remove such trees at the owner's expense if the owner does not comply with treatment and/or removal as specified by the Committee within the written notification period.

Sec. 9.16.080. Violations and penalty.

In addition to any other remedies afforded the City by law, any person, firm or corporation violating any provision of this Chapter shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be subject to a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for each offense. Each day that a violation continues shall be considered a separate offense.

Sec. 9.16.090. Appeal of Committee Determinations.

Any determination of the Committee in accordance with this Chapter may be appealed by the affected property owner, or the offending person or corporation, by submitting an appeal in writing to the City Manager within seven (7) days of the date of the Committee's determination. The City Manager shall be the final authority for all appeals of a Committee determination."

Section 4. All ordinances and resolutions or parts of ordinances and resolutions that are in conflict with the provisions of this Ordinance are repealed to the extent of the conflict and all other ordinances of the City not in conflict with the provisions of this Ordinance shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 5. That should any word, sentence, clause, paragraph or provision of this Ordinance be held to be invalid or unconstitutional the remaining provisions of this Ordinance shall remain in full force and effect.

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Section 6. The Mayor is hereby authorized to sign this Ordinance and the City Secretary to attest. This Ordinance shall become effective in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the City of Georgetown.

PASSED and APPROVED on First Reading ____ day of _____, 2020.

PASSED and APPROVED on Second Reading ____ day of _____, 2020.

THE CITY OF GEORGETOWN

Dale Ross, Mayor

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Robyn Densmore, City Secretary

Skye Masson, City Attorney

The Path to Tree City USA

City Council Workshop
October 27, 2020



Points of discussion

- Introduction of the Program
- Program Benefits
- Program Standards Required
- Public Tree Ordinance
- Next Steps



Tree City USA Introduction

- Sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters
- Provides structure on which the community can build its forestry program
- By meeting standards, it provides systematic management of tree resources
- Requires a Public Tree Care Ordinance
 - Provides for management practices of trees in ROW and on public property.
 - City currently only has a new development tree ordinance

Program Benefits

- Framework for Action
- Education
- Public Image
- Citizen Pride
- Publicity



Program Standards

- Forestry Program with Annual Budget of at least \$2/Capita ✓
- Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation ✓
- Tree Board or Department ✓
- Tree Care Ordinance



Public Tree Care Ordinance

- Provides an opportunity to set good policy that is legally enforceable
- Guidance for planting, maintaining and removing trees on public property
 - City Parks
 - Rights of Ways (Electric and Street)
 - City Streets – (vehicle clearance and blind corner)
 - Other Public Property
- Establishes a tree board/committee and provides for responsibilities
 - Designate staff from various departments such as Parks, Public Works, Electric and Code Enforcement to serve on a committee

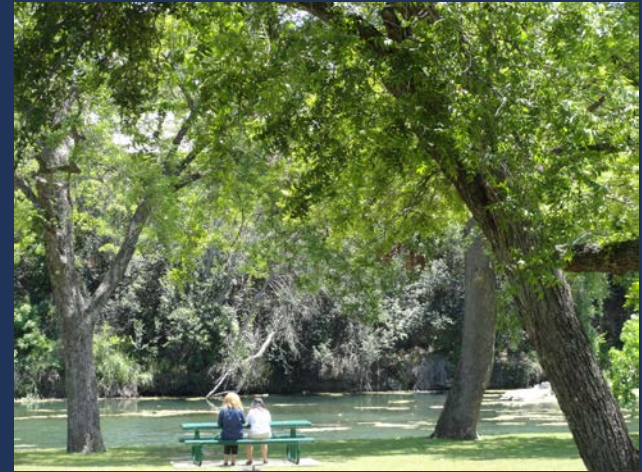
Public Tree Care Ordinance

- Affects multiple departments such as Parks, Streets, Electric and Code Enforcement
- Both the Electric Department and the Parks Department have resources to manage trees in City Parks and under electric lines
- Code Enforcement's role would be to notify resident of violation
- Ordinance reflects active management of trees in the right of way.

Next Steps

- **Consideration of Public Tree Care Ordinance**
 - 1st Reading on November 10th
 - 2nd Reading on November 24th
- **Once ordinance is adopted, apply for Tree City USA; Annual recertification**
 - Texas Forest Service has reviewed the draft Public Tree Care Ordinance and supports the language

Questions?



City of Georgetown, Texas
City Council Workshop
October 27, 2020

SUBJECT:

Presentation and discussion regarding the City of Georgetown Intergovernmental and Legislative Program and the draft Legislative Agenda for the 87th Texas Legislature's Regular Session in 2021 -- Bridget Hinze Weber, Assistant to the City Manager

ITEM SUMMARY:

Staff will an update on the 2020/21 legislative program and propose a draft State Legislative Agenda for the City Council to adopt for the 87th Legislative Session. Typically, the state legislature considers approximately 1,500 bills that directly affect Texas cities. Staff hopes to track certain bills during the upcoming legislative session, as well as communicate regularly with state elected officials and staff. To help ensure City staff is acting in accordance with Council direction, the proposed legislative Agenda will serve as a guide when engaging with state officials.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

None at this time.

SUBMITTED BY:

Bridget Hinze Weber, Assistant to the City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

Presentation

State Legislative Agenda - Task Force Redlines

Draft One Pager State Legislative Agenda - 87th Session

Draft State Legislative Agenda - 87th Session

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS PROGRAM

87TH STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

CITY COUNCIL MEETING: OCTOBER 27, 2020

AGENDA

- Overview of Legislative Program and Key Initiatives
- 2021 State Legislative Agenda for the 87th Legislative Session
- Next steps for program
- Seeking guidance on:
 - Draft 2021 State Legislative Agenda
 - Program next steps

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee
- Legislative Task Force
- Outreach and Engagement
- State Legislative Agenda
- RFIs/Position Papers

WHY WE HAVE A LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Bills Introduced *</u>	<u>Total Bills Passed</u>	<u>City-Related Bills Introduced</u>	<u>City-Related Bills Passed</u>
2001	5,712	1,621	1,200+	150+
2003	5,754	1,403	1,200+	110+
2005	5,369	1,397	1,200+	105+
2007	6,374	1,495	1,200+	120+
2009	7,609	1,468	1,500+	120+
2011	6,303	1,410	1,500+	160+
2013	6,061	1,437	1,700+	220+
2015	6,476	1,329	1,600+	220+
2017	6,800	1,220	2,000+	290+
2019	7,541	1,437	2,000+	330+

OUR ROLE IN AUSTIN

- Represent Georgetown residents
- Communicate with legislators
- Monitor legislative process and react accordingly

2020/21 LEGISLATIVE SCHEDULE



- The House will elect a speaker in January
- The Legislature can hold committee hearing in the early days of session, but per the constitution, legislators can't pass any bills during the first 60 calendar days – unless the governor declares it an emergency item or it's an emergency appropriation

LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE

- New citizen stakeholder group to engage the public in the State Legislative Agenda development process
- Comprised of existing, active leaders in the community - the leadership of City Boards and Commissions
- Met for 5 meetings from August – October to provide input on the City of Georgetown 2021 State Legislative Agenda

CITY COUNCIL

**LEGISLATIVE AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE**

(Mayor and 2 Councilmembers)

LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE

STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

- **Serves as the foundation for the City's advocacy strategy:**
 - High-level summary of City positions adopted by City Council
 - Includes funding needs with policy priorities
 - Incorporates legislative priorities of allies

2021 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Protect City of Georgetown Interests: The City of Georgetown (City) supports legislation that benefits the City and opposes legislation detrimental to the City, including bills that:

- Limit the City's ability to abide by the principle of self-government;
- Mandate increased City costs;
- Mandate decreased City revenue;
- Limit the City's ability to advocate on behalf of the community through trade associations and consultants; and
- Diminish the City's authority to provide for the public's health, safety, and welfare.

2021 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Preserve Municipal-Government Policy Enactment

- The City supports legislation that protects the rights of elected municipal officials to enact ordinances that address the policy priorities and needs of cities' residents, businesses, and visitors.

PROVIDE PROPERTY TAX RELIEF WHILE PRESERVING CURRENT SALES TAX REVENUE

The City supports legislation that provides meaningful property tax relief to owners of property in the City's jurisdiction.

- The City supports transparency regarding property tax rates, property values, and property tax income.
- The City opposes expansion of revenue, tax, or appraisal caps which limit the City's ability to raise sufficient funds to pay for critical municipal public policy services.
- The City opposes shifting the tax burden from one taxpayer to another taxpayer.
- The City supports maintaining provisions for debt financing so it can issue financial debt to pay for such expenditures as infrastructure and equipment.

The City supports legislation allowing for the local sourcing of sales and use taxes for internet orders.

PROTECTING TAXPAYERS' INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC UTILITIES AND ASSETS

- The City supports legislation that ensures the City can continue to own and operate the City of Georgetown Utility Systems.
- The City opposes legislation that negatively impacts the service level, stability, or return-on-investment for its residents.
- The City supports legislation that maintains state and regional water plans and while preserving authority to continue the City of Georgetown Water Utility's current operational system within its current jurisdictional boundaries.
- The City opposes legislation that would deny the City from being adequately compensated for the use of its rights-of-way, would erode municipal authority over the management and control of rights-of-way, or both.

KEEPING GEORGETOWN COMPETITIVE

- The City supports legislation maintaining incentives that supplement local economic development strategies to fund employee recruitment and retention.
- The City supports the continuation of Type A and Type B sales tax that can be used to pursue and retain primary employer jobs.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE GROWTH

- The City supports legislation that would allow municipal-elected officials, municipal voters, or both to approve city funding options to pay for construction, maintenance, and repair of streets, sidewalks, and transportation authorities.
- The City supports efforts to ensure the equitable distribution of state funding and the continued full funding of Propositions 1 & 7, as well as the extension of the Proposition 1 sunset provision.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT TO MAINTAIN GEORGETOWN'S UNIQUE CHARACTER

The City supports legislation to maintain the municipal election officials' authority to regulate city growth and development through city land development ordinances.

Annexation:

- Primary Position: The City supports a position which would allow for pre-2017 annexation requirements.
- Secondary Position: The City supports retaining requirements established in 2019 while expanding opportunities for voluntary annexation by property owners that are not contiguous to the city limits and allowing for pre-2017 annexation requirements for areas surrounded by City limits for contiguous City boundaries.

Development Process:

- Primary Position: The City supports legislation that clarifies that House Bill 3167 (86th Regular Session) only applies to changes made to an application intake process or unified-development-code-approval process while improving the opportunity to collaborate with applicants to solve problems and challenges.
- Secondary Position: Support the retention of House Bill 3167 (86th Regular Session) for only the largest of Texas cities or else allow for local control on decision making regarding an applicant's request for a waiver relating to House Bill 3167 requirements.

Building Codes and Materials:

- The City supports legislation that repeals amendments to House Bill 2439 (86th Regular Session) which preempted cities from regulating building materials.

PARKS AND RECREATION INVESTMENT FOR A HEALTHY GEORGETOWN

- **The City supports legislation that enhances the investment in parks and open spaces and conserves open spaces that connect communities safely to the mental, social, and physical benefits of outdoor and recreational opportunities.**

CONTINUATION OF A VIBRANT ARTS & CULTURE COMMUNITY

- **The City supports legislation that funds the arts and libraries to support a strong and vibrant City of Georgetown arts and cultural industry by:**
 - Preserving the use of Municipality Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) to fund the arts; and
 - Maintaining municipality autonomy in allocation of HOT revenue

PROGRAM NEXT STEPS

- Stakeholder outreach with the 2021 State Legislative Agenda to community partners
- Building a digital network of community advocates
- Public outreach:
 - Webpage:
<https://georgetown.org/intergovernmental-relations/>



House Bill 3167: "Shot Clock" Legislation

Georgetown Advocate –

The Texas House of Representatives is considering House Bill 3167 that will require local jurisdictions to approve, approve with conditions, or deny land development plat or plan applications within a very specific time frame - namely, within 30 days after the application was filed. This legislation will impact development in Georgetown by...

Thank you for making your voice heard.

Mayor, City of Georgetown

IMPACT ON GEORGETOWN

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CITY STAFF POSITION

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HOW TO GET INVOLVED

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Share your voice with Representative Talarico

FEEDBACK REQUESTED

- **Seeking guidance on:**
 - Draft 2021 State Legislative Agenda
 - Program next steps

City of Georgetown
2021 State Legislative Agenda - Draft
87th Legislature

Protect City of Georgetown Interests

The City of Georgetown (City) supports legislation that benefits the City and opposes legislation detrimental to the City, including bills that:

- Limit the City's ability to abide by the principle of self-government;
- Mandate increased City costs;
- Mandate decreased City revenue;
- Limit the City's ability to advocate on behalf of the community through trade associations and consultants; and
- Diminish the City's authority to provide for the public's health, safety, and welfare.

Preserve Municipal-Government Policy Enactment

The City supports legislation that protects the rights of elected municipal officials to enact ordinances that address the policy priorities and needs of cities' residents, businesses, and visitors.

Provide Property Tax Relief While Preserving Current Sales Tax Revenue

The City supports legislation that provides meaningful property tax relief to owners of property in the City's jurisdiction.

- The City supports transparency regarding property tax rates, property values, and property tax income.
- The City opposes expansion of revenue, tax, or appraisal caps which limit the City's ability to raise sufficient funds to pay for critical municipal public policy services.
- The City opposes shifting the tax burden from one taxpayer to another taxpayer.
- The City supports maintaining provisions for debt financing so it can issue financial debt to pay for such expenditures as infrastructure and equipment.

The City supports legislation allowing for the local sourcing of sales and use taxes for internet orders.

Protecting Taxpayers' Investment in Public Utilities and Assets

The City supports legislation that ensures the City can continue to own and operate the City of Georgetown Utility Systems.

The City opposes legislation that negatively impacts the service level, stability, or return-on-investment for its residents.

The City supports legislation that maintains state and regional water plans and while preserving authority to continue the City of Georgetown Water Utility's current operational system within its current jurisdictional boundaries.

The City opposes legislation that would deny the City from being adequately compensated for the use of its rights-of-way, would erode municipal authority over the management and control of rights-of-way, or both.

Keeping Georgetown Competitive

The City supports legislation maintaining incentives that supplement local economic development strategies to fund employee recruitment and retention.

The City supports the continuation of Type A and Type B sales tax that can be used to pursue and retain primary employer jobs.

Transportation Funding for Current and Future Growth

The City supports legislation that would allow municipal-elected officials, municipal voters, or both to approve city funding options to pay for construction, maintenance, and repair of streets, sidewalks, and transportation authorities.

The City supports efforts to ensure the equitable distribution of state funding and the continued full funding of Propositions 1 & 7, as well as the extension of the Proposition 1 sunset provision.

Planning and development to Maintain Georgetown's Unique Character

The City supports legislation to maintain the municipal election officials' authority to regulate city growth and development through city land development ordinances.

Annexation:

- Primary Position: The City supports a position which would allow for pre-2017 annexation requirements.
- Secondary Position: The City supports retaining requirements established in 2019 while expanding opportunities for voluntary annexation by property owners that are not contiguous to the city limits and allowing for pre-2017 annexation requirements for areas surrounded by City limits for contiguous City boundaries.

Development Process:

- Primary Position: The City supports legislation that clarifies that House Bill 3167 (86th Regular Session) only applies to changes made to an application intake process or unified-development-code-approval process while improving the opportunity to collaborate with applicants to solve problems and challenges.
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Building Codes and Materials:

- The City supports legislation that repeals amendments to House Bill 2439 (86th Regular Session) which preempted cities from regulating building materials.

Parks and Recreation Investment for a Healthy Georgetown

The City supports legislation that enhances the investment in parks and open spaces and conserves open spaces that connect communities safely to the mental, social, and physical benefits of outdoor and recreational opportunities.

Continuation of a Vibrant Arts & Culture Community

The City supports legislation that funds the arts and libraries to support a strong and vibrant City of Georgetown arts and cultural industry by:

- Preserving the use of Municipality Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) to fund the arts; and
- Maintaining municipality autonomy in allocation of HOT revenue

CITY OF GEORGETOWN

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR THE 87TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE'S REGULAR SESSION IN 2021

PROTECT CITY OF GEORGETOWN INTERESTS

The City of Georgetown (City) supports legislation that benefits the City and opposes legislation detrimental to the City, including bills that:

- Limit the City's ability to abide by the principle of self-government;
- Mandate increased City costs;
- Mandate decreased City revenue;
- Limit the City's ability to advocate on behalf of the community through trade associations and consultants; and
- Diminish the City's authority to provide for the public's health, safety, and welfare.

PRESERVE MUNICIPAL-GOVERNMENT POLICY ENACTMENT

The City supports legislation that protects the rights of elected municipal officials to enact ordinances that address the policy priorities and needs of cities' residents, businesses, and visitors.

PROVIDE PROPERTY TAX RELIEF WHILE PRESERVING CURRENT SALES TAX REVENUE

The City supports legislation that provides meaningful property tax relief to owners of property in the City's jurisdiction.

- The City supports transparency regarding property tax rates, property values, and property tax income.
- The City opposes expansion of revenue, tax, or appraisal caps which limit the City's ability to raise sufficient funds to pay for critical municipal public policy services.
- The City opposes shifting the tax burden from one taxpayer to another taxpayer.
- The City supports maintaining provisions for debt financing so it can issue financial debt to pay for such expenditures as infrastructure and equipment.

The City supports legislation allowing for the local sourcing of sales and use taxes for internet orders.

PROTECTING TAXPAYERS' INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC UTILITIES AND ASSETS

- The City supports legislation that ensures the City can continue to own and operate the City of Georgetown Utility Systems.
- The City opposes legislation that negatively impacts the service level, stability, or return-on-investment for its residents.
- The City supports legislation that maintains state and regional water plans and while preserving authority to continue the City of Georgetown Water Utility's current operational system within its current jurisdictional boundaries.
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KEEPING GEORGETOWN COMPETITIVE

- The City supports legislation maintaining incentives that supplement local economic development strategies to fund employee recruitment and retention.
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2021 STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM



CITY OF GEORGETOWN

87TH STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The City of Georgetown's Intergovernmental Affairs Program advocates, coordinates and advances the City's legislative agenda to enhance the City's ability to govern and provide essential municipal and community services. The purpose of the program is to ensure the City's interests are protected and enhanced through active involvement in the legislative process and strong intergovernmental relationships.

The City of Georgetown's 2021 State Legislative Program is formed and created by community leaders to advocate for the citizens of Georgetown.

LEGISLATIVE AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE OF COUNCIL

The City of Georgetown Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee is a Standing Subcommittee, a permanent Subcommittee of the City Council established to coordinate City policies related to state and federal legislation and local ordinances.

The Subcommittee oversees:

- development of state and federal legislative agendas
- position on local partner ordinances
- development of position papers
- policies and programs that promote interagency cooperation
- advocating activities

2020/21 Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee Members:

Mayor Dale Ross
Councilmember Steve Fought, District 4
Councilmember Rachel Jonrowe, District 6

LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE

The Legislative Task Force provided input to the Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee on the issues relevant to the State Legislative Agenda in preparation for the 87th Texas State Legislative Session. The Task Force met from August 2020 through October 2020 to develop a draft Agenda for the Subcommittee's consideration.

The Legislative Task Force is a special ad hoc group comprised of active leaders in the community - the leadership of City Boards and Commissions. With the membership comprised of the Boards and Commissions leadership, the Legislative Task Force are knowledgeable members of the community, educated on City priorities, and representing a wide range of City interests.

2020/21 Legislative Task Force Members:

Levera Patton, ADA Advisory Board
Laura Klein Plunkett, Animal Shelter Advisory Board
Jane Estes, Arts and Culture Advisory Board
Bill Stump, Building Standards Commission
George Lourigan, Commission on Aging
Dawn Korman, Ethics Commission
Gordon Pierce, Firefighters' and Police Officers' Civil Service Commission
Rick Woodruff, Georgetown Electric Utility Advisory Board
Robert Case, Georgetown Electric Utility Advisory Board
Councilmember Tommy Gonzalez, Georgetown Government and Finance Advisory Board
Larry Raper, Georgetown Housing Authority
Sheila Mills, Georgetown Transportation Advisory Board
Alfred Hajka, Georgetown Transportation Enhancement Corporation
Thomas Glab, Georgetown Water Utility Advisory Board
Amanda Parr, Historic and Architectural Review Commission
Bob Weimer, Housing Advisory Board
Michael Kelley, Library Advisory Board
Aaron Adams, Main Street Advisory Board
Katherine Kainer, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Aaron Albright, Planning and Zoning Commission: Appointed
Jaquita Wilson, Strategic Partnerships for Community Services
PJ Stevens, Unified Development Code Advisory Commission
John Marler, Zoning Board of Adjustment

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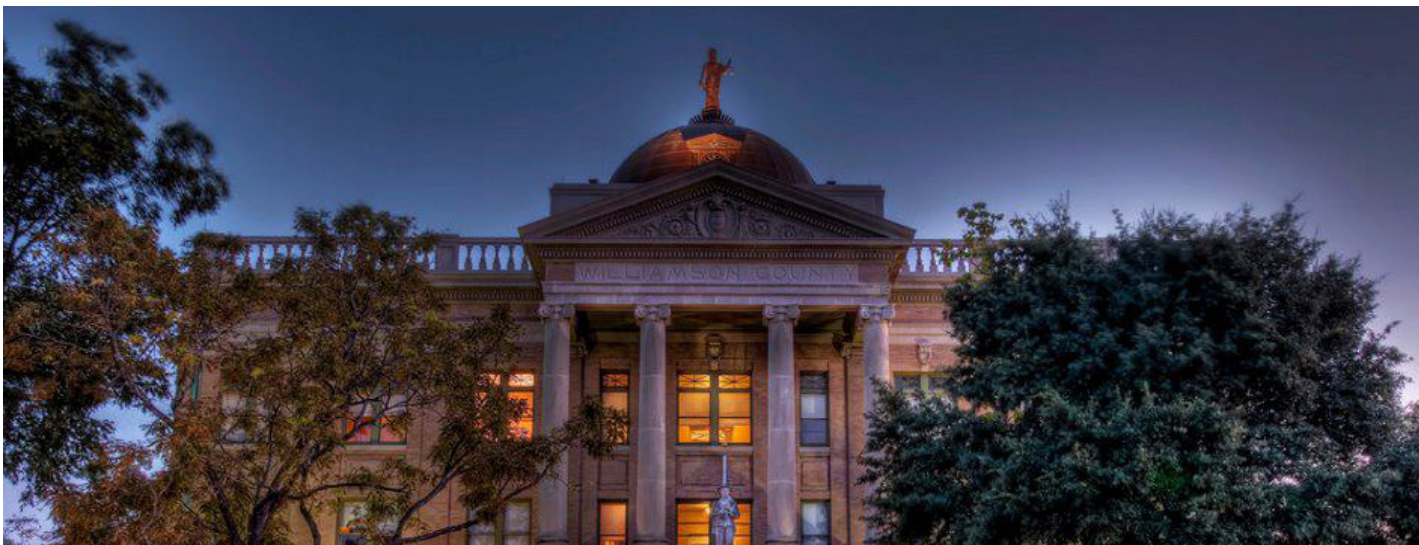
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City of Georgetown, Texas
City Council Workshop
October 27, 2020

SUBJECT:

Presentation, discussion and possible direction regarding the City's response to COVID-19 -- Jack Daly, Community Services Director

ITEM SUMMARY:

Staff will present an update regarding the City's response to COVID-19 and seek City Council concurrence on public gatherings and the approach to holiday events.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

N/A

SUBMITTED BY:

Jackson Daly

ATTACHMENTS:

Draft Presentation

Gatherings, Lighting of the Square, and Promoting Downtown During COVID-19

October 27, 2020

Overview

- **Revisit Council policy on gatherings**
- **Discuss Alternatives for Lighting of the Square**
- **Highlight Downtown Promotions During Holidays**

Seeking City Council concurrence on gatherings and approach to Light of the Square.

COVID-19 Gathering Policy

- **Governor's Order Requires Mayor Approval for Outdoor Gatherings of More than 10 People, with exceptions**
 - Exceptions for certain businesses/activities as identified in the Governors guidelines for reopening Texas
 - No occupancy limits for outdoor dining
 - Wedding Venues and Movie theaters = 75%
- Generally, City has not been approving outdoor gatherings of more than 10 people
 - For instance, would need to approve outdoor gatherings in a backyard
 - Limited all pavilion rentals (even large ones) to 10 or fewer
 - **BUT** many more people allowed in Community Center

Revisit gatherings

- **Recommendations going forward**

- Issue proclamation requiring event organizers to follow Governor guidance
- "Allow outdoor gatherings, inclusive of public spaces, so long as they follow Governor's Order"
- If event requires a special event permit, the event will be required to provide COVID-19 safety plan
- Create enforcement provisions to address violations of COVID-19 safety plan (both for event organizers and attendees)

Alternatives for Lighting of the Square

1. Host typical event (*not recommended*)
2. **“Experience the Lights” Campaign**
 - Nov. 27-29
 - Music and Food Vendors around Courthouse
 - Music, hot chocolate, kettle corn, etc
 - Virtual lighting
3. **Strictly virtual promotion**
 - Coordinated marketing to promote lights during entire holiday season

Coordinated Downtown Promotion

- **Series of events to be co-marketing with Chamber, DGA, Downtown Businesses**
 - Jingle Mingle (fka Ladies Night Out) – Nov. 19
 - Shop Small -Nov. 28
 - Artist Sunday – Nov. 29
 - Cyber Monday – Nov. 30
 - Giving Tuesday – Dec. 1
- **Expanded Market Days on 2nd Saturday**
 - Stroll cancelled

City of Georgetown, Texas
City Council Workshop
October 27, 2020

SUBJECT:

Presentation and update regarding the accomplishments and next steps for the 2019 Communications and Marketing Assessment -- Aly Van Dyke, Director of Communications and Public Engagement

ITEM SUMMARY:

In 2019, the City engaged Cooksey Communications to perform an assessment of communication processes, procedures, and resources (including public relations and crisis communications). Audit work took place Jan. 22 through April 23, 2019, and included an inventory of communication channels and outcome measures, reviewed community engagement efforts, and assessed the City's relationship with other entities.

The resulting assessment laid the foundation for a strategic communications plan for the City and made 19 recommendations, including guidance on branding and messaging, direction of measuring outcomes and successes, and suggestions on resource allocation and organization.

The Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE) Department has made significant progress toward most of those recommendations, even with significant resources being devoted to COVID-19 response throughout 2020. The five-member team has developed new internal processes to intake, prioritize, track, and analyze work; increased emphasis and content on social media, more than tripling our reach and engagement on Facebook alone; improved accessibility to City information by increasing Spanish-language translation and opportunities to engage and interact with the City; and held our inaugural State of the City event in January 2020.

Work to accomplish the 19 recommendations from the communications assessment continues this year, through updating policies and procedures to formalize and standardize communications processes and best practices and complete communications visioning with departments to better understand their overall goals and how communications can help. The most important work completed this year will be completing a branding analysis and style guide. Updating, refining, and completing the City's brand will unify the City's communications presence across departments and help position the City as a trusted, valued, recognized voice in our community. Having a completed brand is essential to accomplish the majority of remaining tasks from the communications assessment.

The City selected North Star to conduct the branding effort after a competitive bidding process, and we are in the final stages of contract negotiations. North Star is a recognized leader in its field and helped our own Convention and Visitors Bureau in 2019 develop a strategic plan. One of the elements of North Star's proposal that stood out among the firms that applied was its robust community engagement process, which calls upon City Council, staff, and the community to be involved in all stages of its development. The branding effort is estimated to take about nine months, and will leave the City with a clear understanding of who we are and how we can best communicate with our residents. Deliverables include logo update and positioning, brand voice and narrative, style guide, and implementation matrix, all of which will be used to develop our communications strategy on both a daily and strategic basis.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

\$44,000

SUBMITTED BY:

Aly Van Dyke

ATTACHMENTS:

2019 Communications Assessment
Presentation



COMMUNICATIONS ASSESSMENT



**Presented by
Cooksey Communications
April 23, 2019**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cooksey Communications would like to express its sincere appreciation to the City of Georgetown for the opportunity to partner on this comprehensive communications and marketing assessment.

We would like to acknowledge the tremendous investment of time and energy of City Manager David Morgan, Assistant to the City Manager Jackson Daly, Communications Manager Keith Hutchinson and the City's Communications Department, and the numerous City staff members and community partners who contributed their valuable input during interviews throughout the process.

Special recognition is also due to the members of the Georgetown City Council for their contributions to this plan and support of the communications audit.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For many years, Georgetown has been a quiet, small-town that is known nationally as a top destination for retirees and as a regional tourist destination. Dynamic growth in the Central Texas region is transforming the city. As Georgetown leaders welcome thousands of new residents, they are working through the growing pains of trying to maintain a small-town environment while also delivering the amenities and service that newcomers are used to receiving from larger communities. At the same time, the City has struggled with recent operational issues and media challenges that have resulted in a loss of trust from the same community members.

As Georgetown looks toward its future, it is clear that this the right time to assess its communications processes and tools. The Communications Department has been working with a core staff of three – a communications manager, an information specialist and a videographer. Additional communications or marketing positions have been hired directly into other departments, and some staff positions have absorbed communications activities into their regular duties. This decentralization of communications has limited the core team’s ability to be nimble enough to support the City’s ongoing campaigns and departments’ needs while also dealing with crises. The core team spends so much time dealing with urgent issues that it has not been able to dedicate enough time to proactive, strategic communications, creating the impression that City communications is always a step behind.

Georgetown is not the only city dealing with decentralization. Nearby, the City of Round Rock has marketing/communications positions embedded into other departments but has been able to establish a strong core team. Meanwhile, Pflugerville is in the process of restructuring its department to bring all communications positions under a single umbrella.

It should be noted that during the timeframe this report was being researched and developed, Georgetown was dealing with two major crises. At the time we conducted the resident communications survey, individual interviews and focus groups, the Georgetown Utility Systems (GUS) energy contract issue had come to light and the City announced the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) increase. It was impossible to have a discussion about City communications that was not clouded by this issue, which gained national attention. As we complete the report, the City is still dealing with the Atmos gas leak affecting a significant section of the community.

The mandatory evacuations associated with this gas leak have left some businesses closed for more than a month and families unable to return to their homes.

Strong, proactive communications are essential to helping the City work through its growing pains. This means that the City will have to take a more strategic approach, getting ahead of issues before they become a challenge, and being intentional about building community and media partnerships so that when a crisis does occur the City has a network of brand advocates who can help carry a timely, accurate message and not only inform, but also engage, the community. Similarly, the City needs to become better about proactively listening to and engaging with its stakeholders rather than just communicating to/at them, and it needs to consistently remind stakeholders that they have real, meaningful opportunities to provide input that will be taken into consideration as important decisions are being made.

The City also needs to be more proactive about sharing positive messages. So much time and effort is spent on addressing the City's problems that residents forget about all the good things that are happening, like the airport success story or the library's national recognition. This can be accomplished by adding staff resources, working from a comprehensive strategic communications plan and adopting tools that will help the team be more efficient.

This communications audit outlines in detail our assessment of the current communications tools being used by the City; feedback we received from City staff, City Council members, community partners and residents; key strategies and recommendations; and suggested measurements for evaluating the results. To place some of these items in better context, we have also included information about how Georgetown's communications processes, tools and results compare with those of peer cities.

Through stakeholder feedback, City staff suggestions and abundant research, Cooksey has identified **the following actions as the most critical** for achieving the City's strategic communications objectives.

1. Rebrand and Restructure the Communications Department. Renaming the Communications Department as the Communications and Public Engagement Department signifies the City's commitment to increasing the amount of its communications and engagement with stakeholders. The newly restructured department should be led by a Director of Communications and Public Engagement, who will provide strategic guidance and serve as a listener and bridge-builder to community

stakeholders. Under the restructured department, the title of Public Information Officer will be added to Keith Hutchinson's title, and Beth Wade will be shifted into a Marketing and Social Media Coordinator role, positioning her as a central hub for citywide marketing and communications. The restructured team also includes the addition of a graphic designer to fill this skill gap and a video production assistant. A Neighborhood Services Coordinator/Manager will also be added to support the departments increased engagement with stakeholders. This role will be filled by shifting a marketing position from another department. Additional support for the Communications Department will come from a monthly retainer engagement with a full-service agency that can provide expertise for several projects recommended in this report and support routine communications and public engagement activities.

2. Create and implement processes for strategic and proactive planning, such a developing an updated comprehensive annual or biannual strategic communication plan, establishing regular touchpoints with department leaders, creating an internal system for prioritizing projects and communicating estimated completion dates, and changing the format of the Communications team meetings.
3. Leverage cost-effective communications tools to share the most relevant information with audiences, in the ways they most prefer to receive information, including:
 - Publishing a monthly two-page Community Impact ad
 - Adjusting the content and distribution of the Georgetown Reporter
 - Expanding and redesigning the Georgetown Weekly e-newsletter to more of a digital magazine format
 - Creating a social media calendar to ensure consistent postings
 - Boosting social media posts for specific issues to increase reach
 - Producing and distributing more direct mail pieces
 - Repurposing GEM content
 - Continuing to work with Mayor Ross on monthly editorial columns and finding ways to repurpose them
 - Subscribing to a media monitoring service

4. Conduct a website analysis and make site adjustments based on the input. There are mixed feelings about the website, and while a complete redesign is not necessary, it will be worth the City's time to identify specific areas where the website, including the mobile/responsive version, may be improved. The City may also add a page to the website to highlight awards and accolades reinforcing the idea that Georgetown's government is transparent and providing high quality amenities. Items to be included in this list include top city rankings, receipt of the National Medal for Library and Museum Services from the Institute of Library and Museum Services, receipt of the Bloomberg grant and the Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association, among others.
5. Develop crisis communications plans for issues and emergency events. The City's Public Communications Policy, which includes some crisis communications procedures for emergency events, needs to be updated, expanded and developed into a complete crisis communications plan. Having a plan in place for both events and issues will establish a clear line of communications and enable the City to be nimble in its response.
6. Include a Communications Department member during initial discussions for major City projects or events, and then develop proactive communications plans for each. Communications has been an afterthought in most City projects. Including a Communications Department member at the early planning stages will enable the team to identify any potential issues and address them before they become a larger problem for the City.
7. Conduct crisis media training for staff who may serve as a City spokesperson. Any City staff who are likely to participate in a media interview should be trained for this situation. It will help staff members better understand how to integrate key messages into responses and create a sense of confidence, which will come across during the interview as being more professional.
8. Engage an external communications consultant to assist with significant crises. Sometimes it is best to get an outside opinion from a team that is not so closely involved with an issue.
9. Establish quarterly meetings with key community partners and visit neighborhood groups and HOAs annually. The community partners we spoke with all desire to have a stronger

relationship with the City, but without a Neighborhood Services Director it has been difficult to establish these ties. Communications can serve this role, working with partners to reach their audiences and collaborate on new opportunities.

10. Increase participation and engagement at public meeting and town hall events by:
 - Building on the success of the On the Table discussion
 - Hosting informal opportunities to meet with the Mayor and their Councilmembers
 - Conducting digital town hall meetings
 - Using apps that enable participants to provide instant feedback
 - Working with development partners and architects to integrate virtual reality technology
11. Leverage community partnerships to provide resources for underserved communities such as offering materials with Spanish translations, working with religious leaders to share information that impacts their parishioners, producing a limited quantity of printed materials for targeted distribution in low-income neighborhoods and becoming involved with the Georgetown Independent School District's Bilingual Services family night.
12. Develop a centralized inbound communications tool for residents to receive information from the City. Having this system in place will enhance the City's ability to respond to stakeholder questions in a timely manner.
13. Host a State of the City event. The Georgetown Chamber of Commerce currently hosts the State of the City breakfast, but it is limited to a business audience. The City has an opportunity to make this event accessible to a broader audience and have more control over the content by hosting it in the evening at a City-owned venue.
14. Update the City's logo guidelines and conduct a review of the current logos being used by individual departments. Several City departments are using individual logos that do not have a strong tie to the City's brand. This assessment will be opportunity for the City to create new logo guidelines that specify when a new logo may be created and how individual department logos may be used, and then determine whether the logos fit within the new standards.

15. Create City-branded templates for e-newsletters, ads, direct mailers, door hangers, flyers, posters, social media banners and PowerPoints for community and City Council presentations.
16. Adopt a distinctive brand voice on social media platforms by working with a third-party consultant to identify a voice that aligns with the City's culture and then use Sprout or a similar tool to manage the City's social media postings. Additionally, reduce the number of City department managed social media accounts to one per department per platform to streamline maintenance and increase reach.
17. Host a social media photo contest to secure much-needed photos of the city, generating public engagement and inspiring civic pride. The Parks and Recreation Department has a need for photos but no budget to pay a professional photographer. Hosting a social media photo contest is a fun way to get residents, show off some of Georgetown's best assets and, perhaps, secure some high-quality images that may be used for future collaterals.
18. Turn City staff, elected officials and community partners into brand ambassadors by providing them a toolkit with key messages, FAQs, press releases and other information that will help them answer resident questions.
19. Continue measuring progress on all these fronts by repeating the resident communications survey on an annual basis, with an enhanced methodology as described below in the Resident Communications Survey Analysis section (Page 16) to increase the response rate and more accurately measure external stakeholder perceptions and needs. Performing regular measurements and benchmarking activities such as this survey is important for the Communications Department as it will inform strategies for the strategic communications plan, marketing campaigns and other initiatives.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Charge to the Consultant

In 2018, the City of Georgetown issued an RFP for bids to retain a strategic communications consultant to conduct an audit of the City's existing communications materials and processes. The intended result was to generate a report offering a third-party, candid review of the City's communications resources, processes and outcomes and highlighting recommendations that may ultimately be used as a roadmap for creating a long-term, strategic communications plan.

Of the six bids that were submitted, the City decided to engage Cooksey Communications to perform the communications assessment. The agency was selected based on its proposed approach, cost considerations, its strong reputation among municipal communications professionals, and its deep bench of expertise in working with Texas municipalities and public entities. Cooksey has consulted with dozens of cities that include Lewisville, Richardson, Wylie, Cedar Park, Irving, Allen, Athens, Coppell, El Paso, Grapevine, Irving, Lubbock, Mesquite, Plano, Sachse and Southlake. Its work with other public or quasi-governmental agencies includes representations of or projects for the Port of Freeport, Fort Worth Convention & Visitors Bureau, Plano Economic Development, Richardson Economic Development Partnership, Region C Water Planning Group and Upper Trinity Regional Water District, among many others.

Cooksey began its engagement with the City of Georgetown in January 2019 with a charge to assess the current communications, processes, procedures and resources currently being utilized throughout the City to communicate with its external audiences. As part of this process, Cooksey was asked to analyze all public relations and crisis communications efforts, inventory the City's various communications channels, metrics and results, and review the City's engagements and relationships with community partners and other key audiences. Based on this information, Cooksey was asked to develop a report highlighting its primary findings, identifying key objectives and providing strategic recommendations to help the City better leverage its resources to more effectively and efficiently communicate with its target audiences.

Methodology

To initiate the communications audit process, Cooksey Communications first held a planning meeting with Assistant to the City Manager Jackson Daly and Communications Manager Keith Hutchinson at their offices in City Hall. This provided us with insight into the current processes, resources and outcomes of the City's communications initiatives. Following this initial meeting, Cooksey conducted an in-depth review of the City's communications tools and metrics and participated in follow-up calls with Keith Hutchinson for more insight into the specific uses and perceived effectiveness of these tools.

In order to gain additional insight from outside of the Communications Department, Cooksey conducted interviews with City staff members, elected officials, community partners and communications representatives from peer cities. The agency also worked with the City's Communications Department to develop and distribute a communications survey to get a better sense of where residents are currently getting City information, how they prefer to be communicated with, what type of information they want to receive, how often they want to receive it and how they want to provide public input/feedback to the City on proposed initiatives and community issues. A detailed analysis of this survey and its results begins on page 16.

Below is a more detailed list of the key activities performed during the communications assessment:

- Initial planning meeting/interview with Jackson Daly and Keith Hutchinson
- One-on-one interviews with the following:
 - Mayor Dale Ross
 - Council Member Anna Eby
 - Council Member Valerie Nicholson
 - Council Member and Mayor Pro Tem John Hesser
 - Council Member Steve Fought
 - Council Member Kevin Pitts
 - Council Member Rachael Jonrowe
 - Council Member Tommy Gonzalez
 - City of Georgetown Human Resources Director Tadd Phillips (via phone)
 - City of Georgetown Parks & Recreation Director Kimberly Garrett (via phone)

- Focus group interviews with the following City staff members:
 - City Manager David Morgan
 - Assistant City Manager Laurie Brewer
 - Assistant City Manager Jim Briggs
 - Assistant City Manager Wayne Reed
 - Assistant to the City Manager Jackson Daly
 - Communications Manager Keith Hutchinson
 - Information Specialist Beth Wade
 - Multimedia Specialist John Njagi
 - City Attorney Charlie McNabb
 - City Secretary Robyn Densmore
 - IT Director Chris Bryce
 - Municipal Court Administrator Cathy Leloux
 - Purchasing Manager Rosemary Ledesma
 - Fleet Services Manager Stan Hohman
 - Budget Manager Paul Diaz
 - Planning Director Sofia Nelson
 - Economic Development Director Michaela Dollar
 - Chief Building Official Glen Holcomb
 - Parks & Recreation Special Events/Marketing Melissa Pecorino
 - Library Director Eric Lashley
 - Assistant Library Director Sally Miculek
 - Fine Arts Librarian Dana Hendrix
 - Library Marketing Coordinator Rachael Pattillo
 - Tourism Manager Cari Miller
 - CVB Marketing Coordinator Marcy Renneberg
 - Police Chief Wayne Nero
 - Assistant Police Chief Cory Tchida
 - Fire Chief John Sullivan
 - Assistant Fire Chief Clay Shell
 - Chief Code Enforcement Officer Brad Hofmann
 - Animal Services Manager April Haughey
 - GUS Utility Director Glenn Dishong
 - GUS Water Services Manager David Thomison
 - GUS Electric Operations Manager Mike Westbrook
 - GUS Customer Care Director Leticia Zavala

- GUS Control Center Manager Chelsea Solomon
- GUS Marketing Program Coordinator Judie Mattocks
- Public Works Director Octavio Garza
- Streets and Drainage Superintendent Dan Southard
- Environmental Services Manager Teresa Chapman
- Systems Engineering Manager Wesley Wright
- CIP Manager Michael Hallmark
- Focus group interviews with the following external stakeholders:
 - Williamson County Public Affairs Director Connie Odom
 - Georgetown Chamber of Commerce Director of Marketing Allison McKee
 - Downtown Georgetown Association President Lisa King
 - Southeast Georgetown Community Council Executive Director Norma Perales
 - Southeast Georgetown Community Council Board Member Chuck Collins
 - Southeast Georgetown Community Council Community Liaison Alex Clark
- One-on-one phone interviews with the following external stakeholders:
 - Georgetown ISD Executive Director Melinda Brasher
 - Georgetown Health Foundation Vice President of Strategic Philanthropy Suzy Pukys
 - Southwestern University Chief Marketing Officer Tim Cobb
 - Sun City Community Association Director Krystal Wilson
- Review of external and internal communications materials, including but not limited to:
 - City of Georgetown website
 - City of Georgetown social media channels
 - City-produced materials
 - Departmental communications materials
 - Media outlets that cover or could potentially cover Georgetown news and events, including Community Impact, Williamson County Sun, Georgetown Advocate Profile and the Austin American-Statesman
 - Review of comparable cities' corporate communications department structures and brand positioning materials; interviews with key personnel; comparison to previous city communications plans and best practices evaluated by Cooksey Communications
 - Review of City organizational chart and budget
 - Regular discussions with Jackson Daly and Keith Hutchinson

- Benchmarking research, including a review of websites, social media or other relevant information/materials, on the following “peer” or “aspirational” cities:
 - Allen, Texas
 - Cedar Park, Texas
 - Flower Mound, Texas
 - New Braunfels, Texas
 - Pflugerville, Texas
 - Sugar Land, Texas
 - Round Rock, Texas
- In-depth benchmarking interviews with Communications representatives from the following “peer” cities:
 - Cedar Park, Texas
 - Flower Mound, Texas
 - New Braunfels, Texas (via written response to provided questions)
 - Pflugerville, Texas
 - Sugar Land, Texas
 - Round Rock, Texas

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Situational Overview

The City of Georgetown, Texas is quickly evolving into a dynamic city that is working to preserve its small-town appeal while also providing world-class amenities and services to a diverse community. Situated 30 miles north of Austin, and directly along the heavily traveled I-35, the City serves as a gateway to Central Texas and the Hill Country.

As the county seat of Williamson County, Georgetown has adapted over the years to accommodate its ever-changing audiences. The decision to locate I-35 through Georgetown spurred new economic opportunities for the agricultural hub, eventually leading to the development of the robust Sun City age-restricted community in 1995. Limited to individuals 55 and over, the 5,300-acre Sun City development offers more than 8,000 single-family dwellings and duplexes for active seniors. The tremendous success of the project earned Georgetown a national reputation as being a top retirement community, with a higher-than-average percentage of residents over the age of 65. However, the perception of Georgetown as a retirement community is changing. Georgetown, and Central Texas, are experiencing rapid growth from the region's booming economy. In fact, over the past decade the region has been identified by the U.S. Census Bureau as among the fastest-growing in the nation. Major corporations from across the nation have been moving to Austin and its surrounding cities, while longstanding tech companies such as Apple in North Austin and Dell in Round Rock, are expanding their presence. With such a heavy tech presence, Central Texas has also created an environment in which startups are thriving.

The pace of this growth has stressed nearby Austin's infrastructure, with housing become scarce or relatively unaffordable. As families and young professionals seek out more affordable housing options that include all their desired amenities, many are settling down in Georgetown. The completion of the 130 Tollway made Georgetown even more accessible for Austin commuters. Additionally, the presence of master-planned, mixed-use developments like Wolf Ranch and Wolf Ranch Town Center are making it possible for residents to enjoy Georgetown's small-town charm and still have access to employment, modern homes and big-city amenities.

Georgetown is also becoming a top tourist destination. Fitness-minded millennials have discovered the scenic parks and trails, and the City's "Most Beautiful Town Square in Texas" campaign has been effective in attracting tourists to the local restaurants, boutiques and art galleries.

This growth is visibly altering the demographic makeup of the city. As younger residents move from the big city to a smaller town, they bring along their expectations for a high quality of life and top-notch city services. At the same time, the sources from which they are getting their news and information are different from the sources that have been effective with previous generations.

In the midst of this growth, Georgetown is experiencing several communications challenges. The City's communications have become decentralized, with new marketing positions being hired directly into specific departments that can absorb the salary rather than by the core team. This decentralization has contributed to the core team's limited ability to quickly and effectively respond to several issues, such as the Georgetown Utility Systems (GUS) energy contract issue, the Atmos Energy gas leak and other recent emergency events.

With Georgetown on the verge of its next evolution, this is an ideal time for the City to step back and examine its communications tools and resources to ensure that all residents are receiving timely, accurate information through their preferred channels.

Resident Communications Survey Analysis

With the assistance of Cooksey Communications, the City of Georgetown developed and administered a confidential online survey of community residents, distributing the survey through the City's weekly e-newsletter ("Georgetown Weekly"), sent to approximately 12,000 subscribers. The survey was embedded as a link within the e-newsletter, as part of a story explaining the survey's purposes. A copy of the e-newsletter text and the final survey appear in the appendix to this report. The survey was distributed via the e-newsletter twice, on Feb. 15 and 22, and survey results were tabulated on March 6.

Survey questions were closely modeled after those used by other peer cities in Texas and nationally, to allow for optimal "apples to apples" benchmarking of the results.

A total of 281 respondents participated in the survey, with most respondents completing all or virtually all the survey's seven questions. The response rate to the survey was 2.3%, based on the e-newsletter database of 12,000. Future surveys should incorporate additional distribution and collection methodologies, as well as a participation incentive (e.g., random gift card drawing for survey respondents who agree to provide their contact information), to drive greater participation.

Survey Reliability and Respondent Demographics

The survey's reliability is good, though not as strong as it could be. With 281 respondents, we can be 95% confident that responses are accurate to within about six percentage points (plus or minus). To reduce that margin of error by half, to about three percentage points (plus or minus), the City would need about 1,000 or more survey responses.

Since the survey was administered electronically only, the survey results may be skewed to reflect the input of more digitally connected residents, perhaps underrepresenting populations with less digital access. Future surveys should incorporate phone or mail sampling as part of their methodology, both to increase the number of total responses (thus, reducing the margin of error) and also to account for residents' varying degrees of digital connectivity.

By administering the survey to residents who have self-selected themselves to receive the City's weekly e-newsletter or who follow the City's social media accounts, or saw the Facebook advertisements to take the survey, it is likely that the survey reached an audience who are more

likely to be engaged and aware, than would otherwise be the case. This could, in turn, somewhat skew the results to reflect greater awareness of the City’s communications efforts (in particular, awareness of the e-newsletter and social media).

Since the survey did not require respondents to enter a unique code or other personal identifying information, it is possible that the survey may include some duplicate responses. Future surveys should also provide for this, to prevent purposeful efforts to skew the results.

Additionally, since the survey data is being evaluated in raw form, without any weighting (by age, sex, race, zip code, or other factor) to reflect the city’s actual demographic breakdown, there could be some skewing in the data as analyzed. In the future, the city should hire a professional survey firm (or university research team) to weight the data based on key demographic factors. Demographically, survey respondents who provided their age and gender were fairly representative of the community’s overall adult 25-and-over population (using that age cutoff as a measure since that is the vast majority of those who received and responded to the survey), although survey respondents skewed slightly older than the general populace, largely due to an especially high response rate among the age 65-74 sector. The male-female breakdown of respondents was roughly in line with the community’s overall population.

	<u>Survey Respondents</u> (of adults 25+)	<u>City Population</u> (of adults 25+)
Age 25-34	5.5%	13.1%
Age 35-44	11.0%	15.3%
Age 45-54	15.1%	14.1%
Age 55-64	15.1%	17.0%
Age 65-74	35.3%	21.8%
Age 75+	18.0%	18.8%

	<u>Survey Respondents</u>	<u>City Population</u>
Male	43.8%	47.2%
Female	51.8%	52.8%
	(4.4% prefer not to say)	

Future surveys should also include an expressly stated deadline, to ensure respondents know by when they must submit their responses in order to be counted.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is noteworthy that this survey was completed shortly after the City announced plans to increase the power cost adjustment (PCA) on customers' monthly electric bills – an announcement that was not received well by many in the community. This prominent public issue directly hitting residents in the wallet right as they were receiving this survey may have skewed the survey results downward – and perhaps did so significantly, although this is hard to measure with any certainty.

Survey Responses and Question-by-Question Analysis

Quality and Effectiveness of Current Communications Tools and Strategies (question #1)

Survey respondents were asked their opinion of the quality and effectiveness of each major communication tool or strategy currently in the City's communications toolkit, or alternatively, could indicate if they didn't use or didn't have an opinion about the tool or strategy's effectiveness. Based on this, we can easily see which tools or strategies are regarded most favorably by respondents, and we can also roughly deduce which communications tools receive the most and least usage (or at least which ones register in some way with respondents).

The *most highly rated* of the City's communications tools and strategies were:

- Georgetown Weekly weekly e-newsletter (69% rated as either a 4 or 5)
- City communications through Nextdoor.com (66%)
- Georgetown Reporter utility bill insert (60%)
- City Facebook page (54%)
- GTV 10 public access TV channel (52%)
- City website (52%)

The *lowest-rated* of the City's communications tools and strategies were as follows:

- City YouTube page (only 32% rated as either a 4 or 5)
- City Twitter account (35%)
- Town Hall meetings and/or City presentations (36%)
- Street banners/pole signs (51% - not far from the bottom end of the "highly rated" list above)

Usage/Awareness of Current Communications Tools and Strategies (question #1)

Usage/awareness of the following was *highest*:

- Street banners/pole signs (only 18% don't use or had no opinion)
- City website (19% don't use/no opinion)
- City communications through Nextdoor.com (28% don't use/no opinion)

- Georgetown Reporter utility bill insert (34% don't use/no opinion)
- Georgetown Weekly e-newsletter (38% don't use/no opinion)

We have seen similar results in other cities, where street banners are noticed the most by city residents. This may reflect the fact that these banners are used primarily for special events and occasions, thus attracting significant notice from residents who travel around the city to areas where the banners are displayed.

Usage/awareness of the following was *lowest*:

- City YouTube page (83% don't use/no opinion)
- City Twitter account (80% don't use/no opinion)
- GTV 10 public access (71% don't use/no opinion)
- City Facebook page (53% don't use/no opinion)
- Town Hall meetings and/or city presentations (50% don't use/no opinion)

These results are fairly consistent with what we see from other cities conducting similar surveys, in terms of the limited audience using some communications platforms. This also speaks to the growing issue of cities needing to reach out to audiences however they like to be communicated with, which can vary significantly from person to person. However, communications channels and platforms with significantly lower usage/awareness rates should be scrutinized closely, to ensure the resources being applied specifically towards those channels are appropriate given the return on investment.

Relative Importance of Current Communications Tools and Strategies (question #2)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the tools and strategies that tended to score highest on the relative importance question were:

- City website (highest composite score)
- Georgetown Weekly weekly e-newsletter
- Georgetown City Reporter utility bill insert
- City Facebook page
- Town Hall meetings

Whereas the lowest-scoring tools and strategies for relative importance were:

- City YouTube page (lowest composite score)
- GTV 10 public access
- City Twitter account
- City banners/pole signs
- City communications through Nextdoor.com

Satisfaction with the Overall Quality and Effectiveness of the City's Communications (question #3)

Overall, 42% of respondents gave top marks (a 4 or 5) for their satisfaction with the quality and effectiveness of the City's communications with them. This is arguably the most important question in the survey, as it indicates how well stakeholders feel the City is doing, as a whole, with its communications program.

Benchmarking of this measure is necessary to understand how this score compares with other cities across Texas who have asked the same question, using the same 1-5 scale, on their own communications surveys in the past few years.

Other cities' scores are as follows (% reflects number of respondents giving the city a 4 or 5 on this question):

- | | |
|---------------------|------------|
| • Sugar Land | 79% |
| • Richardson | 78% |
| • Cedar Hill | 69% |
| • Round Rock | 65% |
| • Pflugerville | 63% |
| • Mesquite | 55% |
| • Fort Worth | 49% |
| • Tyler | 45% |
| • Georgetown | 42% |
| • Austin | 35% |

Again, we strongly suspect Georgetown would have scored more highly in the responses to this question, had it not been asked immediately after the announcement of the PCA increase.

Repeating this survey next year should yield a better analysis – especially if the survey methodology is enhanced to increase the survey data's reliability.

Non-City News Sources for Information About What’s Happening in Georgetown (question #4)

The most popular, non-City sources of local news and information were:

- Community Impact 79%
- Williamson County Sun 65%
- Nextdoor.com 56%
- Georgetown View 55%
- Friends/Word of Mouth 48%
- Local TV News 46%
- Austin American-Statesman 35%
- Facebook 31%
- Neighborhood Association 30%
- Local Radio 12%
- Other 9% (respondents cited sources such as Hello Georgetown)
- Advocate News 7%
- Twitter 7%
- Austin Business Journal 4%

This ranking is significant, as it tells the City’s Communications Department not only which media outlets and communications channels to focus their efforts on, but also may suggest a new strategy for ensuring a printed communication reaches every household in the City.

As noted elsewhere in this report, the monthly utility bill insert is a flawed vehicle for this for two key reasons: (1) It’s significantly overbroad, by reaching many utility customers/households who aren’t even in the City limits, meaning that the recipients have varying degrees of interest in the City-specific news (as opposed to utility-related news) included therein; and (2) Since many utility customers now receive their bill electronically, they do not even receive the printed Georgetown City Reporter, unless they choose to download it electronically (a step most recipients are unlikely to take).

However, since Community Impact is mailed to every household in the City, and since it has extremely high readership/reliance rates (as indicated by this survey), the editorial content included in the publication does effectively reach Georgetown residents. If the City wants to further enhance its efforts to ensure content it controls reaches residents, then the City may also wish to consider a paid monthly insert (full-page or a two-page spread) within the Community Impact publication – and if it pursues this strategy, the utility bill insert could be refocused to

concentrate on only utility-related communications, making it more apt/relevant to the recipients, if not eliminated altogether.

Please see the Recommendations section of this report for further discussion of this option.

Satisfaction with Various Forms of City Communications (question #5)

When asked to rate their satisfaction with various types of City communications on a 1-5 scale, respondents' weighted scores were as follows, ranked from highest to lowest:

- Education/outreach about City special events (Cupid's Chase, Red Poppy, etc.) 3.6
- The usefulness of information on the City's website 3.2
- The availability of information about City programs/services 3.2
- Education/outreach efforts re: stormwater, roads and other infrastructure issues 3.1
- Awareness of opps. to be involved in City public meetings & decision-making processes 2.9
- Efforts to keep residents informed about critical issues with which the City's involved 2.9
- Outreach efforts about City utilities (water, electricity, etc.) 2.7
- How well the City listens and responds to residents' needs 2.6

Likely, frustrations with the City's utility issues are playing a significant factor in the relatively low score for this type of communications. It is perhaps more noteworthy that the City's lowest score for this question relates to how well the City listens and responds to residents' needs – as opposed to how well it informs residents (pushes information to them). This suggests the City needs to make a concerted effort to improve its resident engagement, creating more opportunities to foster two-way dialogue (as opposed to one-way communications at/to residents).

How Often Respondents Use Various Social Media Platforms (question #6)

When asked about their usage of social media platforms, survey respondents indicated the following:

- *Facebook*: Over 35% of respondents use Facebook throughout the day, with another 17% using Facebook 1-2 times per day and 13% using the platform 13% per week. Facebook usage is clearly the highest, by far, of any platform among survey respondents.
- *Twitter*: This is one of the survey respondents' least-used platforms, with 64% using it never and another 8% using it only several times per year. However, there is a cohort of intense users who are active on the platform daily, with a combined 15% of respondents using Twitter either throughout the day or at least 1-2 times per day.

- *YouTube*: This platform is also fairly lightly used by survey respondents, with 41% using it never and another 14% who use it only several times per year. Only about 9% of survey respondents combined are active on YouTube throughout the day or at least 1-2 times per day.
- *Instagram*: Similar to Twitter, this is a lightly used platform by survey respondents, with 67% using it never. Also like Twitter, there is a noticeable cohort who use it intensely, with 17% of respondents saying they are active on the platform every day, either throughout the day or at least 1-2 times daily.
- *Other Social Media Platforms*: Nextdoor.com was by far the next most commonly cited “other” social media platform used by survey respondents who filled in this blank.

Open-Ended Question: How the City of Georgetown Could Best Improve or Change Its Communications With You (question #7)

Over 170 survey respondents submitted suggestions in response to this question, and the common themes were as follows, with the most frequently expressed comments listed first and the number of similarly themed comments noted in parentheses:

- Provide more transparency and openness (34)
 - Provide more information rather than less, whenever possible
 - Provide information earlier rather than later, whenever possible
 - Frankly admit mistakes and clearly communicate about proposed fixes
 - The electricity contracts and rodeo arena were specifically cited by some respondents as examples of issues where transparency and openness were perceived to be lacking
- Don't change a thing/everything's great (17)
- Improve the City website (16)
 - Making it easier and more intuitive to navigate
 - Improve the mobile/responsive version of the site to allow for similar functionality and ease of finding materials as on the desktop site
 - Make sure commonly needed materials and links are more prominently accessible through one or two clicks (utility bills, City Council meeting schedules/agendas/videos, City calendar of meetings/events, etc.)
 - Add a new resident checklist page/section to the site (similarly, consider developing a welcome packet for new community residents, to orient them to City services and communications options)
 - Improve the functionality of the search tool

- Provide more/better recurring emails or e-newsletters (10)
 - Simple emails are preferred, with links to obtain more information
 - Focus on information related to public meetings, emergencies, proposed infrastructure projects, project start/completion dates, festivals/events, etc.
 - Make sure to highlight upcoming Council/Commission meetings and agendas, where possible, and possibly also provide a brief summary of decisions made at most recent Council/Commission meetings
- Make a better effort to listen to residents' comments/concerns/needs and engage the community before decisions are made (9)
 - More and more easily accessible public meetings
 - More surveys, online Q&As, suggestion boxes, etc. to get public input
- Provide more/better emails or text alerts related to specific time-sensitive issues such as service schedule changes, emergencies, etc. (6)
 - Push notifications are preferred to making residents go seek out information themselves
 - Make better use of the website homepage (top banner/scrolling news) to showcase schedule changes and emergencies
 - Find a way to alert neighborhoods about locally relevant road closures and other neighborhood-specific/localized news (*note: an app with geo-based notification features could accomplish this*)
- Use social media – especially Facebook – more (6)
- Make sure public meetings are scheduled later in the day, when more residents can attend/participate (4)
- Better communicate about crises (gas leaks, SWAT situations, etc.) and do so in a more timely manner (3)
- Make information more easily understandable by laypeople, with more graphics and bullets, less jargon (3)
- Make better/more use of GTV Channel 10 (3)
- Improve overall responsiveness (3)

It is worth noting that virtually no respondents wanted **less** communication; rather, they all want more and better communications. Thus, resources will need to be allocated appropriately to ensure these needs are met, as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Several respondents' suggestions also revealed a lack of awareness about the City's current communications channels and tools, as they recommended the City implement efforts that are

already in place. Thus, it would benefit the City to better and more frequently/prominently cross-promote its own communications tools across all channels – encouraging weekly e-newsletter sign-ups, promoting the existing social media handles, better publicizing GTV’s options (including online streaming of Council meetings), and so on.

Key Interview Takeaways

Throughout the process of conducting individual interviews and focus group sessions with City Council members, City staff and community partners, some key themes emerged related to the City's communications processes and results. These key takeaways included the following:

- For the most part, **departments with an assigned marketing/communications person are not clear about which tasks they should be handling internally, and which tasks should be done by the Communications Department.** As a result, they primarily work with the Communications Department on developing press releases or videos.
- **The Communications Department is trying to be more strategic about its video production due to the large number of requests and limited bandwidth, but many departments are circumventing this process by developing their own videos.** In several cases, the Communications Department has received and declined requests to create videos on topics that they did not feel were good fits for this storytelling medium. In other cases, the team simply cannot fulfill the request as quickly as it is needed. This has resulted in several departments hiring their own videographers or creating their own videos.
- **Across the board, the City's staff and community partners feel like the Communications Department does not have enough bandwidth to accommodate all its requests.** They think the team is doing a great job, they just need more staff.
- **The City has need of a graphic design resource.** No one on the Communications Department has graphic design training, nor do any of the marketing/communications people in other departments. A few departments have been able to outsource some of these services, but the majority of collaterals being produced for the City are created in-house and may not be consistent with City branding.
- **There are mixed feelings about how easy it is to access information on the City's website.** Some think it's a great resource, but others say it's hard to find specific information. Many staff members expressed concern about how difficult it is to update their departmental pages on the website, and that they are unclear if they should be working with Communications or IT for assistance. Approximately 40% of the

communications survey respondents are satisfied with the website, and an additional 25% are neutral. However, many survey respondents also commented that it is difficult to find information.

- **Several City staff members and community partners do not believe there is a strong strategic direction within the Communications Department.** Almost everyone agrees that the Communications Department does a great job with the “meat and potatoes,” but they do not see the Communications Department being proactive in anticipating issues before they arise or taking a strategic approach to handling an issue once it has taken root.
- **City departments have been siloed in the past and are still adjusting to a new culture in which there is greater cooperation and information sharing.** This longtime separation of departments has created confusion about who are the appropriate contacts for various resident inquiries, as well as how empowered each department is to address their specific communications needs and issues. While staff members feel like there is more information being shared today than two years ago, they still don’t think it’s enough. This is especially true for frontline employees who deal with the public daily and often get questions that are unrelated to their departments.
- **Recent issues and emergency events have created greater awareness of the City’s need to create a crisis communications plan and to conduct media training.** Elected officials, community partners, residents and City staff members remarked on how long it took the City to share information with the community. They also commented that the language used in key messages and press releases is often too technical and needs to be easier for people who are not familiar with the topic to understand. Many would like to see the City develop a communications plan during the early stages of planning for citywide projects or at the first sign of a potential issue. They would like to see the City get ahead of issues with key messages and accurate information, rather than respond after someone else has told the story.
- **Community partners value their relationship with the City and want to be more intentional about sharing information to leverage each other’s communications channels.** In some cases, the partners are not sure who is the appropriate contact within the City for coordinating these efforts. In other cases, the partners appreciate the information that is shared but would like more two-way interaction so they can better

identify the information that is most important to their audiences and coordinate the appropriate messaging. Some partners also expressed that they would like to better coordinate the timing of information that is shared, giving their audiences an opportunity to get involved in the early stages instead of after something has been voted on by the City Council.

- **The City is doing a great job reaching senior citizens but engaging with households in disadvantaged neighborhoods remains a challenge.** Spanish-speaking households are being missed since the City does not translate most of its materials. As well, low-income homes are less likely to have Internet access and therefore rely on printed pieces for City information.
- **There is a desire to approach citywide communications with the brand in mind.** Several departments have created separate logos and manage their own social media accounts, which causes some concern about maintaining a consistent City brand when it's currently being represented by several different voices. There are some who would like to see the City move away from its neutral tone and establish a definitive brand voice, like what they have seen in Round Rock's social media. Additionally, there are some City staff and elected officials who would like to see the City's vision statement be integrated into more of the City's marketing and communications materials.

Cooksey factored in these key takeaways, along with the resident communications survey and benchmarking research, to identify the key objectives and develop the recommendations that are outlined in the Objectives and Recommendations section of this report.

Opportunities and Challenges

The City of Georgetown is a fast-growing community that is working to maintain its small-town atmosphere while managing the rapid growth that is changing its traditional demographics. Residents love their community, with an overwhelming 98% of respondents to the resident satisfaction survey indicating that they have a good or excellent quality of life and 81% indicating the value of City services is good or excellent.

Without a doubt, the city has many distinctive characteristics and amenities that are attracting new **opportunities**. They include the following:

- Georgetown is the county seat of Williamson County and serves as a gateway to Central Texas. Its location along I-35, and access to the 130 Tollway, make it highly accessible to jobs in Austin and Round Rock.
- Inadequate transportation infrastructure and high housing prices in Austin are driving newcomers to surrounding communities like Georgetown. The city provides these families with small-town charm and still provides them access to Austin's jobs, festivals
- For 20 years, the Red Poppy Festival has attracted some of the nation's top performers and thousands of guests to Georgetown's famed town square. The annual weekend event includes parades, a car show, family-friendly activities, artisans, food vendors and musical performances.
- In addition to the Red Poppy Festival, the City hosts family-friendly events throughout the year that include the 4th of July Celebration, Georgetown Swirl, Lighting of the Square and the Christmas Stroll.
- Georgetown is unique in that it owns a utility system that serves thousands of electric and water customers outside of the city limits.

- The City has a nationally recognized library system that was recognized last year with the 2018 National Medal for Museum and Library Service – the nation’s highest honor. Its expanded services include a used book store, café, senior services, children’s storytelling events, access to computers and meeting rooms. Unlike most libraries, it also has staff who are specifically dedicated to planning arts and cultural events that include special exhibits and displays, music concerts and poetry readings.
- New city facilities are creating opportunities for the City to produce higher-quality videos and foster increased collaboration among City staff and with stakeholders. The new police building offers state-of-the-art technology services, including a green screen room for producing videos and hosting press conferences. The new City Hall building in the City Center brings together City staff who previously worked in different office buildings and offers a conference room that is available for use by community organizations.
- Georgetown has some compelling but untold stories that may be leveraged to increase focus on the city’s successes. These stories include the regional airport, which had a sizable list of capital needs with insufficient operational resources. The airport recouped the investment in less time than expected, and today is operating a balanced budget.
- Georgetown has some of the most scenic parks and hiking trails in the region. There are still opportunities to leverage stories related to Garey Park, a 525-acre former ranch that was donated to the City by Jack and Cammy Garey in 2004.
- Master-planned, mixed-used developments such as Wolf Ranch are helping attract more families to the City.
- Georgetown is home to Southwestern University, the oldest chartered university in Texas and one of the top private liberal arts programs in the nation.

While the City has some great opportunities, it also faces some **challenges** that affect its ability to consistently deliver a positive communications message to key stakeholders. These include:

- In recent years, there have been several complex issues that elected officials, community partners and residents do not feel were adequately communicated. A recent, specific example is the energy contract issue with Georgetown Utility Systems (GUS). Nearly everyone we spoke with shared their concern about how long it took for the City to share

any information about what the problem was and how the City was going to address it. Once a press release was issued and key messages were being shared, many audiences commented that the language was too technical and the key messages not simplistic enough for the “average” person to understand, and that there was still a lack of clarity and “owning up” to the issue.

- The City’s communications approach to recent issues has resulted in the loss of trust among residents and other key audiences. While many of the individuals we interviewed agreed that transparency and information sharing have greatly improved over the past few years, they felt that the approach for the GUS issue and other recent incidents set-back their growing sense of trust in City government. Getting ahead of future issues and communicating in a strategic, timely manner could go a long way to repair the trust that has been lost.
- Georgetown’s demographics are diversifying as it rapidly grows. No longer just a retirement community, the city’s wide range of amenities, low tax rate and good service value, availability of affordable housing options, and proximity to Austin-area job centers are attracting more young professionals and families with young children. These various audiences have different preferred forms of communications, creating a complex challenge for the City as it tries to determine the most effective, cost-efficient way to communicate with each group.
- There are limited third-party news options for sharing City information:
 - The Williamson County Sun –It currently has an estimated circulation of about 6,000. Although it still seems to have a decent following among senior citizens due to their preference for print materials, the growing number of younger residents are using digital news sources.
 - Community Impact – According to the 2018 resident satisfaction survey, and as recently confirmed by the City’s 2019 communications survey, Community Impact has become the top source of information for Georgetown residents. The online version and its related social media platforms can be good sources for breaking news, but the printed publication with expanded stories is distributed only monthly.
 - News sources traditionally associated with Austin, such as the Austin American-Statesman, KLBJ-AM news radio, KUT-FM news radio and the television broadcast stations (KVUE, CBS Austin, KXAN and Fox 7 Austin provide limited

coverage of Georgetown. Newsroom resources are shrinking in all major markets, meaning that mainstream media outlets have fewer staff available to cover the news. Georgetown's distance from Austin-based media outlets limits their ability to cover more than major events and breaking news since editors must deploy their resources as efficiently as possible.

- The City's printed monthly newsletter, *The Reporter*, is distributed as a GUS bill insert, reaching thousands of utility customers who may live as far as 20 miles away from Georgetown. The integration of Georgetown-specific stories makes the insert a less effective tool for GUS to reach its customers, while the restriction of City information to stories that will be of interest to both residents and non-residents reduces the effectiveness of this tool as a news resource for residents. While most of the cities we spoke with currently use a utility bill insert to reach residents, Georgetown is the only city in this group with a utility system that serves residents and non-residents in an expanded area.

An added challenge to the use of a utility bill insert to communicate with residents is the growing number of households that have registered for paperless or automatic billing options. These households no longer receive a bill with the insert. This has become a primary concern for cities such as Pflugerville, Round Rock and Sachse as they work to identify ways to share the utility insert with customers digitally or find new resources to replace this communications tool.

- The City's communications efforts have become decentralized, with some marketing and communications positions becoming embedded within other departments. In addition to the three core Communications Department members, the City of Georgetown has communications staff within the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, and the Police Department. Additionally, the City's "webmaster" is within the IT department - a move that made it possible for the Communications Department to add its third position. There are also roles within Animal Services, the Fire Department, Public Works and GUS with partial responsibilities to oversee marketing and public outreach activities.

Peer city research shows us that it's not unusual for some cities to have a dedicated marketing/communications team member within the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Economic Development Department, or the Police and Fire Departments. However,

having a marketing staff position, or City staff whose partial role is communications, dedicated to a specific department is otherwise uncommon.

The decentralization of communications has left the core team extremely lean and still unable to accommodate growing demand from the City's 45 departments. This practice also reduces the effectiveness of citywide communications as there is no central information hub to maintain the City's preferred tone and key messages, ensure brand consistency or identify opportunities for departments to collaborate.

- Several City departments have created their own logos that do not integrate the City's logo elements. The "G" logo, which was introduced in 2005, was launched with a set of brand guidelines, but they only address the color, fonts and proper use/placement. The brand guidelines do not outline the circumstances under which a department may create its own logo.

Peer city research indicates that logos are tightly controlled branding tools with little leeway for departments to create a separate identity. Round Rock, Pflugerville and Cedar Park require all departments, other than Police and Fire, to adhere to use of the City's main logos. Allen, Texas recently created some brand guidelines with more flexibility for departments to create their own emblems under certain conditions.

- Due to the tremendous success of Sun City, Georgetown is primarily known as a retirement community. The expansion of Central Texas' growth into Georgetown, the development of mixed-use projects such as Wolf Ranch and more awareness of the unparalleled parks and trail systems have certainly attracted more families and young professionals to Georgetown, but the City still has a higher than average population of senior citizens at 30% (65 and older).
- Most of the residents who live in Georgetown work in Austin or its surrounding communities. Rapid growth along the I-35 corridor and the addition of the 130 Tollway has made Georgetown more accessible than ever to Austin workers. As Austin continues to struggle with inadequate transportation infrastructure and rising home prices, families will continue looking for a higher standard of living outside of the big city. Georgetown's offerings of affordable housing options, a safe community, a small-town atmosphere, a walkable downtown area, scenic parks and trails and other amenities are highly attractive to employees who work in Austin but want more for their money.

This position is not unique to Georgetown. Surrounding communities such as Cedar Park, Leander, Pflugerville and Round Rock have also experienced dynamic growth over the past decade, while cities in the southern part of the region, such as Buda, Kyle and San Marcos, are having similar growth experiences.

- Georgetown tends to be overshadowed by Austin from an economic development and tourism standpoint. Over the past five years, Central Texas has been identified by the U.S. Census Bureau as being among the fastest-growing regions in the nation. As the state capitol and the 11th largest city in the nation, Austin is the heart of Central Texas. Innovative technology companies such as Dell, Apple and Indeed have a significant presence here, reinforcing Austin's worldwide reputation as a tech hub. In recent years, Austin has also become known for fostering an environment in which startups like Kendra Scott and Yeti are thriving. From a tourism perspective, the eclectic music scene, world-famous festivals like SXSW and Austin City Limits (ACL) and lakes, trails and parks that offer some of the Hill County's most stunning scenery make Austin a top destination for global visitors.

It is not unusual for major cities to overshadow their surrounding communities from an economic development or tourism perspective. Arlington, Texas taxpayers paid millions of dollars to construct sports stadiums for the Dallas Cowboys and Texas Rangers, yet sports announcers and performers still attribute their location to Dallas instead of Arlington. It's simply a matter of people deferring to the larger, more well-known city to create context. Economic developers in Central Texas and North Texas have realized that there is power in working together to attract new business opportunities since big wins benefit the entire region.

Target Audiences

Based on Cooksey's research and interviews, there are numerous audiences that are essential for Georgetown to reach with consistent and effective communications efforts. These audiences include the following:

- Residents
- Homeowners/neighborhood associations
- City staff
- City Councilmembers
- Civic groups and religious institutions in the community
- Georgetown businesses and their employees
- Prospective businesses (retail, restaurants, startups, ED targeted industries)
- Hotel developers
- Austin-area realtors and brokers
- Developers and home builders
- Media
- Visitors, tourists and outdoor enthusiasts
- Wedding and event planners
- Meeting and conference planners
- Georgetown Utility Systems customers
- Southwestern University students, prospective students and parents

Key Messages

Below are some key messages that stood out during Cooksey's interviews and research process:

- Georgetown is a small town with big amenities.
- Georgetown is a fast-growing, dynamic community.
- Residents **love** to live in Georgetown.
- Georgetown is an extremely safe city
- Georgetown offers the lowest property tax rate in the County, and residents get a wide range of city services and amenities. The tax rate remains the same while the level of service expands each year.
- Georgetown Utility Systems (GUS) offers the third lowest rate in the County, even with the recent increase.
- The City offers award winning library services and recently received the National Medal for Library and Museum Service.
- Residents can have all their needs met in Georgetown with a variety of residential options, business opportunities, entertainment, shopping, dining and recreation choices.
- The City's parks and trails system is among the best in the region.
- Georgetown is ideologically diverse.
- Georgetown is not just a retirement community; it is attracting a diverse group of people and is a great place to raise a family.
- There are numerous opportunities for residents to get involved in Georgetown.
- As the County seat, and with several surrounding communities getting their electricity and water from Georgetown Utility Systems, things that happen in the City affect other communities.
- Georgetown prioritizes street maintenance; we take care of our roads and transportation infrastructure.
- Different offering from our neighboring communities. Residents take pride in saying, "We're not Austin or Round Rock!"

Current Communications Activities

Throughout our research process, Cooksey Communications identified and reviewed the various communications vehicles that are currently being used by the City of Georgetown to communicate with its wide range of audiences. These tools include the following:

Georgetown Weekly E-Newsletter

The Georgetown Weekly E-Newsletter is distributed every Friday to a current database of approximately 12,000 email addresses. It includes about five news briefs summarizing upcoming city events, information about roadway improvement projects and closures, citywide recycling opportunities, City and department awards and accolades, and more. It also includes a sidebar with additional information about upcoming events. The e-newsletter has a tagline indicating that the information is from the City of Georgetown and GUS, and both logos are tagged at the bottom of each issue. The format is created from a template provided by the emma E-Mail Marketing System, which is also the distribution and monitoring platform.

The Weekly e-newsletter has been a highly effective tool for reaching Georgetown residents who subscribe. It has a 98% delivery rate, indicating that the list has mostly current email addresses and is not receiving a lot of bounce backs. It averages about a 40% open rate, with a general range of 47% to 36%. In the resident communications survey, Georgetown Weekly was one of the highest rated communications tools (see page 16), and it consistently ranks among the top three city information news sources in the resident satisfaction survey that is conducted every two years.

The Georgetown Reporter

The Reporter is a one-page, double-sided print newsletter that is distributed monthly as an insert with the GUS bill. The publication is tagged as providing information from the City of Georgetown and GUS, and both logos are included at the bottom of each page. It is mailed thousands of GUS customers, who are composed of Georgetown residents and utility customers living in surrounding communities that are served by the utility – some of whom may live up to 20 miles away from the city. Based on this composition of readers, the newsletter includes a mix of news briefs that are relevant to utility customers, such as pipe maintenance and water conservation strategies, along with stories about upcoming City events, accolades, new developments and more. Some of the information may overlap with the Georgetown Weekly e-newsletter.

Georgetown residents who responded to the resident communications survey rated The Reporter among the top sources for City information. The biannual City of Georgetown resident satisfaction survey that is conducted every two years reports that 49% of the respondents use The Reporter often or very often. In the resident communications survey taken in February and March 2019, 60% of respondents ranked The Reporter as among their primary sources of City news.

City of Georgetown Website

The City of Georgetown's website (<https://georgetown.org/>) has an appealing, clean design, with visual interest being created by a video banner at the top of the home page and colorful still images at the top of subsequent pages. Large colored buttons to the right side of the home page offer direct access to the most commonly accessed pages, such as Parks and Recreation, the Library, Public Works road projects and GUS. Links to the most recent city news stories are also easily accessible from the home page, while tabs at the top help direct residents, businesses, tourists and others to more specific pages. Basic information for each page was accessible within one-to-two clicks.

Like most communities, Georgetown offers a comprehensive website that is intended to provide information for all its key audiences. Anything and everything residents, business owners, developers, vendors or other target audiences need to live, work and play in Georgetown may be found somewhere on the City's website. In fact, the resident communications survey conducted in February and March 2019 indicated that most respondents rely on the website to get information about the City, although some expressed frustration with the ease of finding commonly used information on both desktop and mobile versions of the site.

During our interviews with elected officials, City staff and community partners, feelings were mixed about the website. Some think the City has a fantastic site, while others said that it's difficult for users to find information. Many staff members also said it was difficult for them to update content. It's possible that users who cannot immediately find very specific information or forms, or users who are using incorrect references and search terms, may get frustrated with the site and consider it hard to use.

Since the website is such a comprehensive source of city information, it's worth conducting a website review to see how the user experience may be simplified. More specific comments and recommendations about the website are provided in the Strategic Objectives and Recommendations section of this report (Page 44).

Georgetown Essential Messages (the GEM)

Georgetown Essential Messages, more commonly known as the GEM, is a compilation of news briefs that are sent to City staff every two weeks. It contains information that employees need to know about payroll and HR processes, along with some City events and updates. The GEM is accompanied by a video. Producing an internal video twice monthly requires a great deal of time, limiting the videographer's ability to work on other projects. Since this amount of time is being invested in the GEM, we suggest that the City focus the videos on topics that can be repurposed beyond internal use (see Strategic Objectives and Recommendations section, Page 44).

City of Georgetown Social Media

Only 20% of respondents to the 2018 resident satisfaction survey said they use social media as a source for City news. While there are more effective tools being used by the Communications Department, social media is still the place where most people look for breaking news stories. Links to the City's social media pages are included at the bottom of each website page, making them easily accessible when people want information but are not following the City's main pages.

During some interviews, the question of whether the City has too many social media accounts came up multiple times. Georgetown does have several accounts managed by various departments:

- Facebook -13 accounts
- Twitter - 4 accounts
- Instagram – 8 accounts
- YouTube - 1 account

The logic in creating supplemental accounts is sound. Residents who are interested in keeping up with concerts and art exhibits at the Library or the latest youth athletic programs from Parks and Recreation don't want to filter through the City's other updates. Likewise, residents following City issues may not be interested that Garey House is hosting weddings, and most people are

first going to look for the Georgetown Police or Fire accounts for updates on emergency events. From this perspective, it makes sense to have so many accounts.

The challenge to having so many accounts is that it can be difficult to coordinate messaging and maintain a distinctive brand voice.

In speaking with other cities and reviewing their social media accounts, it appears that other cities are also allowing individual departments to create and maintain their own social media accounts. In Round Rock, there are 30 different social media accounts associated with the City, with the core Communications Department focused on managing the main accounts and providing assistance and coaching to the others when needed. Pflugerville has 15 social media accounts that are managed through Sprout, which allows the page managers to submit copy for review and approval by the Communications Department before being posted.

In some instances, the City has done some search engine marketing for social media posts more directly tied to specific issues, such as the renewal of a sales tax on road maintenance. However, this is not a common occurrence.

Posting to the City website is primarily based on opportunity and not planning. There is a social media calendar associated with specific City campaigns, but not for most of the year.

In addition to maintaining the City's primary social media accounts, the team is using Hootsuite to monitor for any mentions of the City in discussion groups or on other accounts. While it's natural for there to be some negative discussion in other social media platforms, it does not appear that there are any groups that are overly antagonistic to the City.

GTV Channel 10

Through the local Suddenlink cable carrier, Georgetown has the GTV Channel 10 public access television station. The station is only used to air City Council workshops and meetings. Based on the resident communications survey, few respondents are using this service. Since the station is only offered through Suddenlink, it is not accessible to households without cable, which dramatically reduces its reach.

Content aired on GTV Channel 10 is also available as streaming video on the City's website, along with a small selection of specialty videos that have not been updated since 2015. The station's site is very easy to access from a link on the City's home page, but once the user lands

on the page it is uninteresting. The main image on the landing page is a screen with a live feed. Two links above the screen allow the user to access City Council meeting archives and specialty videos, but they don't appear as tabs and clicking on them may not be intuitive.

We do not recommend investing any additional funds into the GTV Channel 10 station. However, considering how much time the Communications Department is dedicating to producing video content, the GTV site seems like an ideal opportunity to post the content for viewers to access. The landing page needs a more interesting design and there should be a more direct menu of videos to make this a tool that is more valuable to residents.

Sun City Sun Rays Magazine and Directory Ad

The City is placing monthly full-page color ads in the Sun City Sun Rays Magazine and Directory for \$3,700 per year. The ad series is themed "Play Dates" and features the Daytripper television program host, Chet Garner, and his family as they participate in activities, dine and shop in Georgetown's town square. The lifestyle publication has a circulation of more than 15,000 and is distributed to residents of Sun City. It spotlights upcoming events, human interest stories about residents and other lifestyle articles targeted for active seniors.

Annual Report

For the past five years, the Communications Department produced an annual report. It is available to residents as a pdf on the City's website, and about 500 print copies are produced and made available at the library. The goal of this piece is unclear, so it is difficult to say whether or not it's effective. There has not been a great demand for the long-form piece. Cooksey believes there is an opportunity to create a short annual report that may be handed out at a State of the City event. This report would include the 10 top accomplishments over the past year, using more images than copy to tell the story.

Direct Mailers

On occasion, the City will print and distribute direct mail pieces. These are usually tied directly to City issues, such as encouraging residents to participate in the Historical Architectural Review survey, conservation messages or the new GUS billing software launch. The pieces are well-designed and produced, with colorful graphics and the City logo clearly imprinted. Since there is no clear way to measure the response rate for these direct mail pieces, it is hard to specify how effective they are. However, in some cases it appears that direct mailers are attributed to high attendance rates or resulted in emails to the City or Letter to the Editor.

The Williamson County Sun Ad

The City publishes a monthly ad called the City Update in the Williamson County Sun. The ad design is simplistic, with block headers and footers and 3-4 news briefs accompanied with images in the body to highlight upcoming city events. Georgetown's logo is featured at the top, with contact information and the City website at the bottom. The ad is clean and easy to read, though there is nothing distinctive about the design.

The ad is 30 column inches (3 columns by 10 inches) and costs \$314 per issue. Since the publication remains a top source of information, despite declining circulation, we recommend continuing with the ads for the remainder of this year and then reviewing the cost again during the next budget cycle.

Press Releases

The City does an excellent job developing and distributing press releases on routine issues and events, such as awards, the Red Poppy Festival and town halls. They are extremely well-written and effective in relating simple messages to key audiences. In addition to sharing press releases with media, they are also distributed to contacts with community partners so they are aware of the announcement and can share it with their audiences, as appropriate. Sun City uses the press releases to include information to its residents on a regular basis.

However, when it comes to releases for more complex issues, such as the GUS energy contract, the language was too technical and not direct enough for people to fully understand the City's position.

The team may consider looking at the processes for approving press releases, especially in a crisis. While most people have nothing but good things to say about the general releases, there were many concerns shared about the amount of time it took to distribute a press release regarding the GUS issue, and about the level of control that non-Communications Department members were given over the language.

Video Production

As with the press releases, the quality of Georgetown's video production is extremely high. The stories are interesting and relevant. Once produced, they are posted to the City's website and social media accounts, in addition to being used for presentations. The core Communications Department is looking for ways to repurpose the videos. We suggest that they tag relevant

reporters or send links to relevant reporters and social media influencers to gain additional interest and reach.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective #1: Adopt a More Proactive and Strategic Approach to Communications (Structural/Resource Enhancements)

Recommendation 1 – Rebrand and Restructure the Communications Department

The Georgetown Communications Department includes three members of the Communications Department and has been led by Jackson Daly, Assistant to the City Manager in the City Manager’s Office for the past 15 months. Additional positions are embedded within other departments. Georgetown is not the only city of its size to have decentralized communications. New Braunfels has a single Public Information Officer, with an additional role in the police department and two positions associated with Parks and Recreation (Marketing Coordinator and a Recreation Center Guest Services/Marketing Coordinator). The City’s golf course contracts out its initiatives.

Until recently, Pflugerville had a decentralized Communications Department with dedicated marketing positions within the library and parks and recreation departments. The City is currently undergoing a department restructuring, bringing these individuals back under the Communications Department and elevating them to assist PIOs so that everyone in the department is cross-trained.

Neighboring Round Rock is significantly larger than Georgetown, Pflugerville and New Braunfels in population, budgets and core Communications Department, but it also has decentralized communications with a position in the Convention and Visitors Bureau, two positions in Parks and Recreation, a PIO for the Police Department and a Marketing Specialist with the utility.

In broad comparison, peer cities and communities slightly larger than Georgetown range from 1 – 8 core communications positions (more for larger cities). This places Georgetown’s team on the lean side of this spectrum. The chart below outlines some comparative statistics for cities referenced throughout this report.

City	2018 Population*	2019 Citywide Budget	2019 Communications Budget (includes salaries)	Communications Staff Positions
Pflugerville	58,013	\$142,759,192	\$770,443 (includes special events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Communications • Digital Content Web Specialist • Videographer/Multimedia Specialist • Part-Time Communications Assistant • Police Public Information Officer • Library Marketing Specialist • Parks and Recreation Special Events Coordinator (About to come back to Communications) • Restructuring the team – turning Library and Parks and Recreation roles into City PIOs
Georgetown	63,062	\$354,000,000	\$400,137	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Manager • Information Specialist • Videographer • Additional positions report to individual departments
New Braunfels	70,317	\$186,109,351	\$70,000; additional expenses incorporated into all non-departmental funds managed by City Manager's office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Information Officer • Additional positions report to individual departments.
Flower Mound	71,575	\$174,810,257	\$499,331	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Director • Communications Specialist • Senior Video Producer • Video Production Specialist
Cedar Park	75,704	\$141,600,000	\$543,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Community Affairs • Graphic Design and Communications Specialist • Neighborhood Services Coordinator • Media and Communications Manager • Multimedia Specialist
Sugar Land	86,886	\$247,350,000	\$267,594 (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Public Affairs • 2 CMO Executive Assistants • Public Affairs Executive Assistant • Public Affairs Assistant • Public Affairs Administrative Manager • Content Strategist • 2 Assistant Communications Directors • Digital Communications Manager - Web Branding • Graphic Designer and Branding Specialist • Digital Communications Manager – Production

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Journalist • Digital Communications Manager – Social Media • Community Engagement Manager • Community Engagement Coordinator • 311 Customer Service Manager • Customer Service Supervisor • 5 311 Ambassadors • 4 Receptionists
Allen	100,685	\$220,725,510	\$840,752	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and Media Relations Director • Marketing and Content Manager • Senior Marketing Specialist • Digital Marketing Coordinator • ACTV Executive Producer • 2 ACTV Video Producers
Round Rock	116,369	\$356,900,000	\$969,767	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Director • Assistant Director • Videographer/Part Time Video Specialist for City Council Meetings • Social Media Information Specialist • Public Information Specialist • Digital Designer • Arts Director • Part Time Arts Assistant • Additional positions report to individual departments

**Population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau.*

In addition to researching the numbers highlighted in the above chart, Cooksey conducted in-depth interviews with cities that were comparable in size to Georgetown (Cedar Park, Flower Mound, New Braunfels and Pflugerville). We also conducted interviews with some slightly larger cities, including Round Rock, to gauge how Georgetown's communications may evolve as the City's population and budget increase.

More information about the peer cities we interviewed for the purpose of this report, including a summary of their communications tools, is available in Appendix B.

Georgetown's decentralization of communications puts the small core team at a disadvantage, as it is not adequately staffed to address all the City's communications needs. At the same time, the communications survey indicates that residents want more communications and engagement. To fulfill this request, the City will need to restructure the Communications Department to centralize

its activities, as well as add strategic staff members to fill skill gaps and support the additional workload generated by increased stakeholder communications and engagement. Cooksey recommends that the City of Georgetown consider strengthening and restructuring the Communications Department as outlined below. A revised organizational chart is included as Appendix I.

1. **Rename the Communications Department the Communications and Public Engagement Department.** The communications survey and community partner interviews indicate there is a clear desire for more communication and for more engagement by the City. Adding Public Engagement to the department title signals the City's commitment to increasing its level of engagement, especially from a communication's standpoint.
2. **Add a Director of Communications and Public Engagement to the team.** The Director of Communications and Public Engagement is an executive level staff member whose primary responsibility is to provide long-term and short-term strategic vision and guidance to the Communications and Public Engagement Department. This position will be responsible for developing and overseeing the deployment of an updated citywide comprehensive strategic communications plan. The Director will coordinate with the internal Director team on key messages and will also provide strategic vision and guidance to marketing/communications staff members who are embedded in other departments, ensuring that everyone is working toward the same goals, delivering a consistent message and portraying the same brand image. The Director will be expected to work directly with department leaders, engaging with them on a regular basis to proactively identify communications opportunities and strategies that support their work. This position will also serve as a primary contact for community partners that include neighborhood associations and HOAs, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Georgetown, Sun City, Georgetown Health Foundation, Southwestern University, Georgetown ISD, Georgetown Southeast Community Council and others. The Director will meet with their representatives on a regular basis to proactively inform them about City issues impacting their key audiences and to identify ways to share or leverage communications tools, resources and opportunities. As appropriate, the Director will deliver presentations to these community partners and will provide guidance on creating key messages and content for town hall meetings and other public events. To further enhance community

engagement and communications, the Director will convene meetings with community influencers.

In peer cities, the Director reports to the City Manager or to an Assistant City Manager. Cooksey recommends that the Georgetown structure have this position report to an Assistant City Manager.

The ideal candidate for the Director position must have a minimum of five years of experience working with a government entity (city, county, schools district or similar), as well as experience managing a communications team. The candidate must be able to develop and manage a long-term strategic plan, while also creating project-specific campaigns, key messages and public outreach strategies. A demonstrated ability to establish and maintain relationships with department leaders, key community partners and influencers is required. Monitoring the latest municipal communications trends and ways that cities can leverage new forms of advanced technology is preferred.

The addition of a Director is one of Cooksey's highest priority recommendations, and we encourage the City to do this as soon as it's financially possible. An expected starting salary range for this type of position is from \$95,000 - \$115,000.

3. **Add Public Information Officer (PIO) to Keith Hutchinson's title.** Keith Hutchinson is a great asset to the City of Georgetown's Communications Department. With 17 years as a city staff member, his knowledge of the local history, demographics, city issues and more is simply invaluable. Everyone we spoke with thinks Keith is doing a wonderful job in his role as Communications Manager, and they expressed nothing but appreciation for the work he does, at all times of day and night, to support each department. It was clear to the Cooksey team that Keith also takes an interest in providing the Communications Department with professional development opportunities that will broaden their skills sets, enabling them to personally grow and better serve the City. He has solid relationship with local reporters and knows exactly where to go for answers the media need in a timely manner.

Cooksey suggests leveraging Keith's media and internal relationships by adding Public Information Officer (PIO) to his title, making him the official spokesperson for the City of Georgetown. At the same time, he will continue overseeing daily operations of the Communications Department, working with the Director of Communications and Public Engagement to deploy the strategic plan tactics and creating the associated content while maintaining a sense of continuity among the communications and other city staff members. He will continue drafting and distributing press releases, handling media inquiries and enhancing his relationships with the media.

4. **Shift Beth Wade into a Marketing and Social Media Coordinator position.** The purpose of the Marketing and Social Media Coordinator position is to manage and coordinate marketing and social media efforts across all department and platforms. Cooksey recommends shifting Beth Wade, currently the City's Information Specialist, into this new role. She will become a central hub for marketing and communications by maintaining a citywide master social media calendar for all departments, creating, maintaining and deploying a social media calendar for platforms managed by the Communications and Public Engagement Department, working with marketing positions in other departments to create and support marketing plans, and maintaining a master marketing and communications plan for the City. Positioning Beth in this role is the City's first step toward centralizing its communications processes.

The Marketing and Social Media Coordinator will report to the Communications Manager/PIO. This role will continue supporting the Communications Manager with development of press releases and content for the City's various communications channels.

5. **Create a Neighborhood Services Coordinator/Manager position and shift an existing marketing position into this role.** The Communications and Public Engagement Department's focus on increasing community engagement requires the creation of a role within this department that is fully dedicated to neighborhood services. Shifting an existing marketing position into a Neighborhood Services Coordinator/Manager position leverages the community relationships already established by the person in that position. Transferring an existing position to the

Communications and Public Engagement Department means that the City will not have to make a new hire and fund an additional salary.

The Neighborhood Services Manager role will work to build and maintain relationships with homeowners, neighborhood associations and community partners. The position will coordinate efforts with the Conservation Department, Housing Coordinator, Code Enforcement and Solid Waste regarding neighborhood clean-ups, rebate programs, water conservation and other campaigns, and will work directly with the Communications and Public Engagement Department Director to determine the best strategies for engaging the community in these efforts. The Neighborhood Services Coordinator will also be responsible for attending events to generate awareness of the City of Georgetown's services.

6. **Add a Graphic Design and Communications Specialist to the Communications and Public Engagement Department within the next year.** Across the board, there is a need for graphic design services. Currently, individuals are teaching themselves how to use graphic design programs to create the collateral that supports their public interactions. Cooksey suggests that Georgetown add a core Communications Department member who can be a central person within the City for print and digital graphic design services, as well assist with creating website content, blogs, social media posts and other public outreach tasks. The addition of this team member will fill out some skill gaps and round out the core team to a number that is consistent with similar sized cities. This role will report to the Communications Manager/PIO.

Most peer cities, like Cedar Park, outsource graphic design services until the City has grown large enough to afford dedicated resources for this role. New Braunfels indicated that if they could hire an additional position it would be a graphic designer to make public education, marketing, social media and cable channel graphic look more professional, and Round Rock recently brought the service in-house.

7. **Add a Video Production Assistant to the Communications and Public Engagement Department within the next two years.** There is a high demand for video production services among the City departments, and not enough resources to meet this demand. The addition of a Video Production Assistant will reduce the amount of time departments must wait for a video to be produced and will enable the team to increase production. This role will report to the City's Videographer and will assist with production, video shoots, editing and other duties.

8. **Retain a full-service communications firm to provide expertise and additional support.** Restructuring the Communications and Public Engagement Department inherently creates additional work as the City increases its level of outreach and engagement. There will be an increased volume of presentations, content generation and other items as the Department enhances stakeholder communication and engagement.

Cooksey recommends that the City identify and retain the monthly services of a full-service communications firm to support these efforts. Having a monthly retainer with a full-service agency is cost effective since it provides the City with access to the agency's full array of services and expertise. Based on the number of hours negotiated in a monthly retainer, having a streamlined agency relationship provides the City with additional support for creating content, proactive pitching and other routine activities that would not be included in a project fee. It also eliminates the learning curve since, once onboarded, an agency on retainer will already be familiar with the City and its processes. Access to crisis communications consultation may also be included in this retainer or may be on a case-by-case basis, depending on the agency. A typical monthly retainer ranges from \$5,000 - \$7,000 per month, totaling \$60,000 - \$84,000 annually.

Recommendation 2 – Create and implement processes for strategic and proactive planning.

1. **Develop a comprehensive, strategic communications plan.** The City does not have an up-to-date comprehensive, strategic communications plan to provide a roadmap for the team's efforts. Tasks are prioritized based on the level of urgency, with little time available for proactive efforts. Working without this plan is inefficient since neither the core Communications Department nor the marketing/communications team members in other departments have any shared goals or a strategic direction. They don't know what they are working toward, much less how to measure success and determine if their efforts are effective.

There are few, if any, peer cities without some sort of a strategic communications plan. Georgetown's rapid growth, the complexity of its issues, and decentralized communications structure make it critical for the City to develop a comprehensive, updated strategic communications plan as soon as possible. This task should be the highest priority for the Communications Director position. If the City does not hire a Communications Director within the first quarter of 2020, Cooksey recommends that a

third-party resource be engaged to develop the initial plan. Once created, the Communications Manager should work with the team monthly to make any necessary adjustments, and the plan should be revisited annually.

2. **Establish regular touchpoints with department leaders.** In an effort to get ahead of any potential issues, the Director or Communications and Public Engagement, or another designated representative from the core Communications Department, should have quarterly (depending on how much public facing activity is taking place within the department) touchpoint meetings with each of the department leaders. These meetings do not need to last more than 30 minutes, but should include updates on current department projects, upcoming events, resident feedback from the field and opportunities for communications support. These brief meetings will provide the core Communications Department with an opportunity to anticipate any potential issues that could become bigger problems for the city if they are left unaddressed, as well as enable the team to better allocate resources and prioritize requests.
3. **Create an internal system for prioritizing projects and communicating estimated completion dates.** Contacts from Pflugerville, Round Rock and Cedar Park all shared that prioritizing projects is their team's greatest challenge. While there is widespread recognition that Georgetown's core Communications Department is spread thin dealing with urgent issues, it remains difficult to pursue proactive opportunities because there is not an effective strategy in place for prioritizing projects.

The Communications Department may consider using some free or low-cost project management tools, such as Trello, Teamwork Projects or TeamGnatt, to prioritize projects and communicate with department contacts about the project status and estimated completion date. Many of these programs are easy to use and are customizable, allowing users to set-up individual project groups with everyone who is involved with the project.

An "old-school" form of project management is creating a master spreadsheet listing all of the team's projects, along with corresponding tasks and deadlines. Ongoing projects should be updated weekly, while new projects should be entered immediately. The spreadsheet should be kept in a location where everyone may access it, such as Google Drive.

4. **Change the format and outcome of Communications meetings.** There is a general feeling that the monthly communications meeting is ineffective. In comparison, Round Rock's communications meetings are a forum for open discussion about current communications efforts, resident feedback, collaboration, sharing resources and event planning, and Cedar Park meets weekly to discuss story ideas and priorities.

During its communications retreat, the team began discussing a new format for this meeting, changing it to a quarterly meeting that will focus on marketing best practices topics rather than communications. There will also be monthly small group meetings focused on reviewing and adjusting individual department marketing calendars and discussing metrics. The new initiative will commence with one-on-one meetings with the Communications Manager to discuss marketing calendars.

Cooksey agrees with the new format for this, as it increases engagement and collaboration. We do suggest that once the individual marketing calendars are created that they be submitted to the core Communications Department for creation of a master calendar. Any updated discussed during the monthly small group meetings should also be reflected in the master calendar.

Recommendation 3 – Leverage cost-effective communications tools to share the most relevant information to key audiences

1. **Create a Community Impact monthly ad.** Both the resident satisfaction survey taken in 2018 and the resident communications survey taken in February and March 2019 demonstrate that Community Impact is the top source of city information. We believe there is an opportunity for Georgetown to leverage the mass appeal of this publication by placing a monthly ad highlighting news and updates for residents.

The City should consider placing a monthly, two-page ad to share the most current and relevant city information with residents. The estimated cost for this ad is \$7,000 monthly. To reduce this cost, the City may consider a one-page ad, but we do not feel it will have the same impact as the two-page spread. Reducing the print volume of The Reporter could also offset this cost, and more details about this part of the recommendation are discussed later in this section.

Since Community Impact is mailed to every household, we believe this is an efficient way to get a printed City newsletter into the hands of every Georgetown resident – even

those who don't have access to a computer or who have signed up for GUS autopay or paperless billing and no longer receive the mailed insert. Round Rock has placed full-page ads in Community Impact to reinforce key messages associated with specific issues with great success.

In Georgetown, we suggest using the space to repurpose content from the Reporter, the Weekly and the GEM. When appropriate, the space may be used to accurately convey the city's key messages for complex issues, such as the Atmos Energy gas leak or the GUS energy contract issue.

2. **Adjust the content and distribution of the Reporter.** As a leading source of city news, the Reporter still ranks toward the top of the list. However, as a greater number of tech-savvy young professionals and families move to Georgetown and sign up for paperless billing and autopay services, fewer households will receive the printed insert. Additionally, there are thousands of households who are GUS customers but have little interest in the insert because they live far outside the city limits. This year is a good time to make adjustments to the Reporter that will sustain its relevance and reach new readers. This can be accomplished as follows:
 - a. Limit monthly printing and distribution of the Reporter utility bill insert to households located directly in the City of Georgetown.
 - b. Develop a quarterly print insert for all customers that includes a utility-focused message rather than a city-focused message.
 - c. Allow GUS customers to opt-in or sign-up for the monthly Reporter when they register for autopay or paperless billing. Utility customers should also be able to opt-in to the Weekly when the sign-up for service.
3. **Expand and redesign the Georgetown Weekly e-newsletter.** Like the Reporter, the Georgetown Weekly e-newsletter is credited as a preferred information source. Cooksey believes this is an opportunity to expand the content and refresh the design by transforming the Weekly into a digital publication offering in-depth features, with the Reporter being used for the "quick hits."

Depending on any limitations with the Emma E-mail Marketing program, Cooksey recommends working with a third-party graphic designer to give the newsletter template a more sophisticated look, differentiating it from the Reporter. Editorials being developed

for the Williamson County Sun and some GEM articles or videos may also be repurposed through the Weekly.

4. **Create a social media calendar to ensure consistent postings.** At present, social media posting is not consistent. On some days there are multiple posts and on others there may be only one post. Creating and maintaining a social media calendar will ensure that a minimum number of topics will be posted each day.
5. **Produce more direct mail pieces.** Results of the resident communications survey indicate that people want the city to send the information more often. While costly, direct mail remains one of the most effective ways to reach all households, despite age, income or digital experience. Cooksey suggests testing a quarterly direct mail piece with residents. An increased stream of communication, especially in the form of a direct mail piece, will reinforce the City's efforts to be more transparent with resident issues that directly impact them. Direct mailers could be an FAQ on the Atmos gas leak issue, a teaser for a citywide event, a tutorial on the budget process or a calendar of events for the library or parks and recreation department.
6. **Consider boosting some media posts related to specific issues to increase reach of key messages.** For a very small cost, the City may boost specific Facebook posts to increase its effectiveness. Cooksey suggests doing this sparingly, using it to get public input or convey key messages during a crisis.
7. **Repurpose GEM content.** A great deal of time is being spent producing videos for the GEM, and often these stories seem just as appealing to residents as they are to city staff. We suggest identifying GEM stories with wider appeal and repurposing them as stories for The Reporter or The Weekly. The content may also be posted to the City's social media channels or, as appropriate, shared with local reporters. With fewer reporters in the newsrooms and greater demand for digital content, chances are good that Community Impact may repost some of these stories to the publication's website or on their own social media platforms.
8. **Continue working with Mayor Ross to publish monthly editorials in The Williamson County Sun and repurpose content for other City communications channels.** Despite declining circulation, The Williamson County Sun is still being read by many residents in Sun City. Cooksey recommends that Mayor Ross, and any of his successors, continue to provide the publication with editorials about complex city issues. Combined with the

Community Impact ad, the editorials in The Williamson County Sun ensure the City has a voice in both local news sources serving Georgetown.

The editorial content may be adjusted to that it may be repurposed for the Reporter and the Weekly, as well as reposted to the website.

9. **Subscribe to a media monitoring service.** Georgetown is dealing with several media challenges that have been making regional and national headlines. While it may normally be sufficient to have the team focus on monitoring local media, it has become necessary for them to monitor beyond the local news. A media monitoring service can identify stories early so the team can share them with appropriate city staff and elected officials, develop responses, anticipate additional inquiries and get ahead of any issues.

Recommendation 4 – Conduct a website analysis and make tweaks based on the input.

We don't believe the website needs an overhaul, as was suggested by several interview subjects. However, comments about difficulties accessing information were frequent enough that Cooksey recommends conducting a website review to identify any adjustments that will make the site even more user friendly. We suggest getting input from a group of residents differing in age, ethnicity, internet experience level and gender to provide feedback on their use of the City's website and of any changes that will improve it. This feedback could be in the form of focus group interviews, an electronic survey, or both. Additionally, the website review should include a few focus groups with city staff who are primarily responsible for maintaining their department websites to identify some solutions for making it easier to create and upload new content.

Conducting a website review is something that will enhance the user experience, but we do not consider it to be a top priority for the City. It may wait until a Communications Director is in place who can lead this review internally, or the City may assign a point person to work with an outside resource.

When making adjustments to the website, Cooksey suggests adding an Awards and Honors page to better highlight the City's accolades.

Objective #2: Position the City to Better Anticipate and Respond to Crises and Emerging Issues

Recommendation 5 – Develop crisis communications plans for issues and emergency events.

The city currently has a Public Communications Plan that was developed in 2001 and revised in 2010. It appears to be part of the City staff handbook (see Appendix E). The document is outdated, identifying a Public Communications Director as the official City spokesperson. It outlines steps for city staff to take when approached by the media, discusses the circumstances for press release distribution and review, explains the process for review of printed and online materials, identifies what information may or may not be shared with media, provides information for responding to open records requests, and outlines a list of situations that may be deemed emergency events.

Cooksey recommends that the City of Georgetown work with a third-party consultant to develop two crisis communications plans – one that specifically addresses common emergency events, such as police and fire incidents, and another for crisis issues such as the Atmos gas leak or the GUS energy contract. The plan should provide a clear chain of communication, identify designated spokespersons, outline specific communications tools to be used in each situation (press releases, texts and email messages, social media postings, community presentations, etc.), provide timelines for deploying communication tools, and include template language for any anticipated issues and events. Having this plan in place will enable the city to be nimble in its response and, in most cases, to get in front of an issue so that accurate information is being shared from the onset of the issue.

Recommendation 6 - Include a Communications Department representative during initial discussions for major city projects or events, and then develop proactive communications plans for each.

A common theme Cooksey heard throughout the interview process was that when a project was being planned or an issue was coming to light, communications was an afterthought. In comparison, cities like Cedar Park create a communications plan in conjunction with the planning stages for major projects, ensuring that residents are aware of what is happening and have an opportunity to provide input before the project even comes up for a vote. Creating a project-specific or issue-specific communications plan should be part of the planning stage for each major city project or bond election. It not only gives the Communications

Department a roadmap to work from for the duration of the project, but it also allows the team to identify and mitigate any potential community or media issues.

In order to create this plan, Cooksey suggests that someone from the Communications core team participate in early discussions about the project. Using that information, the Communications Department can build out a project plan that includes creation of key messages, a project-specific micro-site, a handout for use during community meetings and town halls, a community presentation and script, door hangars, direct mailers, press releases timed with project milestones and social media posts. This plan may be updated as the project progresses.

Recommendation 7 - Conduct crisis media training for City staff members who may serve as a City spokesperson. It is critical that the City Manager and Assistant City Managers, the Communications Director, the Communications Manager and appropriate department leaders participate in a half-day media training session. These sessions should provide selected city staff with the skills necessary to effectively communicate key messages during a media interview, as well as provide interview strategies and media “do’s and don’ts.” Cooksey suggests these sessions last about four hours and include 3-4 interactive, real-life scenarios. The media training initiative may need to be phased, with no more than 4-5 participants per session. The City may have the Communications Director conduct media training, depending on the candidate’s related experience, or have a third party facilitate the sessions. If possible, Cooksey recommends having a third-party facilitator for media training since it’s easier for an “outsider” to ask hard questions. Having a third-party facilitator may also create a more realistic media interview scenario than working with a city colleague.

Recommendation 8 – Engage a third party to assist with significant crisis communications incidents. Whether or not there is a Communications Department member who has the experience to develop a strategic approach to a crisis, it will benefit the City to engage a third-party consultant to support with City with major crises, such as the GUS issue. A third party can provide a different perspective regarding key messages and the public outreach approach since they have not been as involved from the ground level and will be less distracted with the daily operations of the Communications Department, placing them in a better position to monitor and respond. These are just a few of the reasons it’s become common practice for cities. Pflugerville worked with a crisis communications consultant during the Austin bomber situation. Round Rock, Cedar Park and others also bring in consultants when there is a major issue to be addressed, even though they have a crisis communications plan developed.

Crisis Communications consultation is among the services that may be provided as part of the agency retainer suggested as part of Recommendation 1, depending on the agency.

Objective #3: Foster a Stronger Sense of Community Partnership and Engagement

Many cities have been able to successfully foster community partnerships with neighborhood associations, HOAs, school districts, the business community, civic organizations other local influencers through a neighborhood services department or position. However, the City of Georgetown does not have such a position. Community partners indicated that they value their relationship with the City and would like to strengthen those ties. The recommendations outlined below will help the City better foster local partnerships, which will ultimately help expand its communications reach.

Recommendation 9 - Establish quarterly meetings with key community partners and visit neighborhoods and HOAs annually.

Cooksey recommends that once a new Communications Director is hired that he or she conduct introductory meetings with all the key neighborhood associations, HOAs, civic and business partners and educational partners within the first six months of joining team. These introductory meetings would be with the full membership and may include just an introduction or a presentation of things that are happening in the City.

Following this introduction, Cooksey suggests quarterly one-on-one meetings with the communications contact for each key community partner. These meetings are intended to serve as an opportunity for the Communications Director to proactively share information and key messages that are most relevant to the partner's key audiences, identify opportunities for the City and partners to leverage resources, and for partners to share feedback from members about the City.

Georgetown has very strong relationships with the Chamber of Commerce, Sun City and Downtown Georgetown. Cooksey suggests that during the first few years the Communications Director focus on strengthening ties with the neighborhood associations and HOAs, Georgetown ISD, Georgetown Southeast Community Council and Southwestern University.

Recommendation 10 – Increase participation and engagement at public meetings and town halls.

With the exception of the On the Table events, which were created to provide small-group opportunities to discuss the Georgetown 2030 Comprehensive Plan, town hall meetings and public meetings traditionally attract little attention. Below are some strategies the City may test to try and create greater participation and engagement for public meetings.

1. Host an annual On the Table event to provide residents with an opportunity to discuss and get information about citywide issues. In October 2018, the City of Georgetown invited residents to participate in an On the Table event to get public input for the 2030 Georgetown 2030 Comprehensive Plan. This unique event encouraged residents to host a small-group conversation on Oct. 2 by inviting up to 12 of their friends and neighborhoods to any desired location (homes, restaurant, coffee shops, schools, libraries, offices, parks, churches, etc.). The event was highly successful. It not only generated discussion during the event, but participants went home and had additional discussions with contacts who did not attend.
2. Host informal opportunities for residents to talk with the Mayor and their Councilmember at a quarterly town hall. The event should take place in early evening to attract a wider audience and include drinks and snacks. Pflugerville has started a similar practice, Coffee with a Cop, to strengthen ties between residents and the Police Department.
3. Conduct a digital town hall to provide updates on the Georgetown 2030 Comprehensive Plan. With many young professionals commuting from Austin and a growing number of families with young children moving to Georgetown, it can be difficult to attend daytime or early evening town hall meetings in person. Cooksey recommends that Georgetown consider testing a digital town hall meeting format that will allow individuals to participate from the comfort of home. A link to an electronic survey should pop up at the end of the meeting, inviting viewers to ask additional questions or provide feedback about the content or format.

Candidates have been using the digital town hall format for several years to more directly reach voters, but we are also seeing more cities and government agencies adopt the format to make government more accessible. Sugar Land is among the Texas cities using this technology.

4. Provide tools that allow attendees to provide instant feedback during public meetings. Apps such as MyVote and VoteUp allow meeting facilitators to get real-time rankings, ratings and votes from meeting participants during the event. Additionally, integrating questions and opportunities for the audience to respond throughout the meeting increases the sense of engagement.
5. Partner with developers or architects to provide a virtual reality experience. It's becoming a standard practice for construction companies and architects to use virtual reality technology at public meetings and presentations to help residents visualize a project and to gain a better sense of what it will be like to inhabit the space. When possible, the City of Georgetown should work with vendors to provide a virtual reality tour of major projects during community events and public meetings. This may include street or bridge projects, new parks, new mixed-use developments or renovated city buildings.

When possible, the City should partner with Georgetown Independent School District to bring this virtual reality software to the classroom environment, using it as an opportunity to educate them about local issues, about the technology and about the project.

Recommendation 11 – Leverage community partnerships to provide resources for underserved communities.

Due to budget constraints, most communications materials produced by the City are inaccessible to residents in low-income communities. More specifically, materials that are not translated into Spanish will have limited use in households where Spanish is the primary language spoken, and low-income households have less access to computers or the internet, reducing their opportunities to access communications like the Weekly.

The cost of printing and postage has resulted in reduce us of direct mail pieces, and Spanish translations further adds to the cost.

Despite the cost constraints, low-income residents need to be aware of what is happening in the City. Below are some strategies for increasing the City's reach into these communities.

- With 10% - 13% of the Georgetown population speaking Spanish, it is necessary for the City to provide some form of translated materials. There are some cost-effective ways to provide this much-needed service. One option is for the City to include a Spanish translation on everything the City produces. The City may hire a translator or work with

community partners serving Spanish-speaking communities, such as Southeast Georgetown Community Council, to identify sources Spanish translation services. If the City does not want to include the Spanish on all materials, the team could create a limited number of printed Spanish materials and work with community partners to distribute them in the appropriate areas.

- Work with religious leaders in African-American and Hispanic communities to open the lines of communication with parishioners. This could be asking them to announce a public meeting about an issue that directly impacts the church or community, providing a limited number of printed materials for attendees to pick-up on Sunday, or inserting an announcement into the church bulletin. The Communications Director should also include regular touchpoints with these leaders to discuss ways the City can better serve low-income residents.
- Work with individual departments to identify opportunities for producing limited quantities of printed materials, and leverage community partners to help distribute them in disadvantaged communities in which households may not have access to digital information sources.
- Regularly attend the Georgetown ISD bilingual services monthly family night event to network with community members and answer questions about city services, projects, etc. The potluck family event takes place on the last Thursday evening of each month and usually includes a presentation.

Recommendation 12 – Develop a centralized inbound communications tool for residents to receive information from the City. At present, the only tools available for residents to search for information are the website and a customer care line, which is only available during business hours. After-hours calls go to GUS, which may not have time to answer and respond to calls if there is a heavy call volume and is not a resource for citywide information.

Cooksey recommends the City expand its inbound communications tools. Some options include a text and email alert system similar to what is being used by Sun City. Residents can opt-in to the system and identify whether they want to receive a text message or an email notification during an emergency situation.

Another option is to establish a 311-call center that is available to residents 24 hours, seven days a week, 365 days a year. This call center may be used for residents to report non-emergency issues, ask questions about city services or get updates on urgent situations such as electricity or water outages.

Another tool to consider is the use of a Chatbot for the City's website. Many brands have been using AI in the form of chatbots to help customers on their websites, but now cities are also looking for ways to use this advanced technology. A Chatbot may be an option for enhancing the city's website, especially to help users find specific information more easily or to get answers to questions after hours. Use of AI is certainly something that Cedar Park is watching.

Pflugerville is opting to go with a live form of the Chatbot with a program called ChatNow. The program allows users to interface with a live person to get information about afterhours incidents. The user may enter a designated hashtag or keyword and get a live response.

Some cities have launched apps to provide a convenient tool for residents to access information, ask questions or make requests. However, our research indicates that there are mixed results. Allen and Flower Mound have also introduced apps. On the flip side of the coin, Pflugerville launched an app and cancelled after three years later with only 280 users. While researching the cost of developing apps for other municipal clients, we've found estimates in the range of \$25,000 - \$35,000.

Objective #4: Establish a More Distinctive Brand Voice That Highlights Georgetown's Unique Position

Recommendation 13 – Host a State of the City event (or partner with the Chamber on expanding the event to include different audiences)

For the past three years, the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce has hosted an annual State of the City breakfast. Each January, they invite the Mayor to talk about the previous year's accomplishments and look ahead to big projects in the new year. During the presentation, a video highlighting the top 10 stories of the previous year is shared, and then posted to social media platforms and to the City's website.

The Georgetown Chamber State of the City program is well attended, with more than 125 guests at the 2019 breakfast. However, since the event is hosted by the Chamber and takes place in the morning, it attracts primarily a business audience.

It is not unusual for cities to partner with the Chamber of Commerce to host a State of the City event. For instance, Sachse, Kyle and Cedar Park are a few cities that rely on the Chamber to host the event. Other cities, however, have decided to host their own event to have more control over the logistics and content, as well as make it more accessible to different audiences.

We recommend that Georgetown host its own State of the City event, or else partner with the Chamber to produce an event that will attract more than the business community. In order to make the event accessible to the greatest number of people, Cooksey recommends hosting the event at the Georgetown Community Center, which accommodates up to 440 guests, and doing so in the early evening. Drinks and snacks could be served instead of a meal to further reduce costs. The event would consist of an hour- long program that recognizes the City Council and key city staff and includes videos and a presentation or Q&A with the Mayor. As with the Chamber breakfast, the focus of the event will be on looking at the past year's accomplishments and looking ahead toward at what's next.

Prior the event, departments may be invited to set up tables in the entry area to hand out marketing collateral and answer resident questions. During the main event, guests will be provided with a 4-page "Annual Report" that summarizes the year's highlights. The "Annual Report" should be visually interesting, featuring photos, infographics and very little copy.

Recommendation 14 – Update the City's logo guidelines.

The City of Georgetown adopted a new logo in 2005. The logo features a large "G" in a script font and is accompanied by stacked lettering of "Est. 1848 Georgetown, Texas." Several of the departments consider the logo to be too simple and have since created their own. In most cases, the logos do not integrate the City logos.

Most cities have strict guidelines about how the brand may be used, and they do not allow individual departments, other than fire and police, to have their own logo. For instance, Cedar Park, New Braunfels and Pflugerville will only allow their departments to use the city logos or certain elements of the city logo, while Round Rock outright restricts the use of individual department logos.

The City of Allen, which is in North Texas, found itself in a situation like Georgetown with several departments creating individual logos. The city assessed each of the logos and worked with individual departments to either eliminate the logo or add elements that would create a strong tie to the City logo.

Cooksey highly recommends that Georgetown work with its departments to create stronger ties between the city brand and separate department logos. The current guidelines (see Appendix D) provide information on how to use the City logo, what colors and fonts to use and how the logo is to be applied. However, it does not address the creation of individual logos, or circumstances for which “The Most Beautiful Downtown” logos should be used. As a result, Cooksey believes there is an opportunity to expand on these guidelines to address the gaps.

Working with a third-party consultant, Georgetown’s Communications Department should update the current brand guide to include guidelines for use of “The Most Beautiful Downtown” logos. As part of the process, it should also assess each department logo and determine whether the logo should be discontinued or if it should be altered with integration of Georgetown’s “G” treatment. The new guide should also provide instructions for use of all logos that are not discontinued.

Recommendation 15 – Provide graphic design templates for consistency.

With so many individuals creating or outsourcing graphic design work, the collection of citywide pieces has an inconsistent look. Part of this issue will be resolved by hiring a graphic designer, but to streamline the process we also suggest, once a graphic designer is in place, creating a series of templates for communications tools that are most commonly used among the department. This may include the creation of templates for flyers, direct mailers, door hangars or social media banners in an easily accessible graphic program such as Canva, or an e-newsletter template for programs such as Emma, MailChimp or Constant Contact.

In particular, Cooksey noticed that PowerPoint presentations do not include the City’s brand. More specifically, the Mayor’s State of the City presentation and City Council presentations were missing the logo. This can be addressed by creating a Citywide template to be used for all City Council and community presentations that include the “G” logo on each slide, ensuring that all City presentations have a consistent look and are branded.

Recommendation 16 – Adopt a distinctive brand voice on social media platforms and reduce the number of City-managed pages.

Traditionally, cities have taken a neutral tone when posting items to social media. This is certainly the case for Georgetown. However, as users become bombarded with social media messages on multiple platforms, we are starting to see some cities try to distinguish themselves by establishing a distinctive brand voice. For example, Round Rock has successfully leveraged opportunities to take on a more lighthearted tone across all of its platforms.

Cooksey recommends that Georgetown work with a third-party consultant to identify and develop a social media brand voice that is distinctive and aligns with the City's vision and culture. The engagement would also include updating the City's social media policy (see Appendix F) integrate the new voice into postings. This project may be among the services provided as part of the agency retainer suggested as part of Recommendation 1.

Cooksey recommends that the City consider using Sprout to manager the city's multiple accounts. Each page manager enters a post, which is sent to the Communications Department for review and approval before being posted. This ensures that nothing inappropriate is being posted to the City's site and that posts have a consistent message and brand voice.

Additionally, the City should limit its social media accounts to one page per platform per department. This will more directly tie programs to the City department hosting the activities and expand the reach of these posts. For example, Facebook pages for the Georgetown Adventure Program and the Challenge Course have less than 400 followers apiece, compared to the 6,787 followers for the Parks and Recreation account. While these specific programs may not appeal to all Parks and Recreation social media followers at all times, posting to the department account will create greater awareness than limiting posts to the program pages. With limited resources, it also reduces maintenance. This guideline applies to the Fire Department, Police Department, Parks and Recreation Department, Library, Arts & Culture, Downtown Georgetown and the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Recommendation 17 – Host a social media photo contest to generate citywide photos and inspire civic pride. The Parks and Recreation Department has a need for photos but no budget for a photographer. The City may test a social media photo contact encouraging people to get scenic images of Georgetown's parks and submitting for a prize. Contestants will be encouraged to post their images to the parks and recreation site, with the understanding that they may be used by the City for promotional purposes. The winners will be posted to social media and the City's website. It will also be featured in the Weekly, the Reporter and the Community Impact ad. Free

Garey Park admission or complimentary registration, a family pack of tickets to a city event or registration for a parks and recreation activity may be offered to encourage participation. In addition to providing some much-needed photos, the contest will provide additional content and an opportunity to enhance the City's social media postings with light-hearted postings.

Recommendation 18 – Turn City staff, elected officials and community partners into city brand ambassadors

While the core Communications Department is responsible for oversight of citywide communications efforts, ultimately all city staff members who work with the general public have a communications role as they represent the City. Several front-line city staff members, and some community partners, indicated they would like to have more information available to them about city services, events and issues so they may answer questions or direct residents to the appropriate city resource. For example, library staff often get questions that should be directed to GUS, Convention and Visitors Bureau or Parks and Recreation, but the staff member is not clear on which department they should reference or who is the appropriate contact within the department.

In order to empower City staff members to better serve their audiences, Cooksey recommends the following strategies for turning them into City brand ambassadors:

1. Create an ambassador toolkit for city staff, elected officials and community partners that will help them provide accurate and timely information about the City. This toolkit would include a one-pager answering FAQs about the City, an updated list of City contacts that links them to common questions or issues, and a one-pager with key general messages about the City. The tools should be available in digital and print formats so that city staff who do not work with computers may still be able to access the information when needed.
2. Update the toolkit with the media tools created for major projects, event campaigns or issues. For instance, the toolkit may be updated with a one-sheeter or press release about the Red Poppy Festival, the Austin Avenue Bridge project, or updates on the Georgetown 2030 comprehensive plan.

Recommendation 19 – Continue the resident communications survey. The best way to measure impact and ensure the City is both sharing information and engaging with stakeholders in a meaningful way is to conduct and analyze the resident communications survey annually, and by incorporating questions measuring the effectiveness implemented as a result of this plan’s recommendations. The information should be taken into account while developing or updating the strategic communications plan, marketing plan and during the annual Communications Department strategic retreat.

Monitoring Trends and Looking Ahead

While these recommendations provide a roadmap for the City of Georgetown’s communications over the next few years, it’s important to continue monitoring trends with an eye toward adopting new communications tools, as budget and resources allow. Throughout the State of Texas, cities of all sizes are using innovative solutions to engage with their residents.

While not specifically using new technology, several small-to-mid-sized cities have indicated that, if funds were available, they would add a full-time photographer to their staff. We heard this from Georgetown’s Parks and Recreation Department, and it was reinforced by Round Rock. As media becomes more visual, there is certainly a greater need for both still images and video.

Cities are also looking at ways to use virtual reality and augmented reality technology. We’ve already seen architects and construction companies using this technology to help key audiences visualize what a project will look like upon completion, as well as for quality assurance inspections. Additionally, some police and fire departments are already using virtual reality for training. Eventually, cities may use this technology to help residents visualize comprehensive plans for a community or get a better sense of what a proposed new park will look like. Convention and Visitors Bureaus may use virtual reality to help people visualize a community’s top attractions, while an Economic Development Department may customize a program to help prospects experience a 360- degree view what their project would look like on a specific site.

Measurement of Results

While the success of some communications strategies may be difficult to quantify, other communications strategies lend themselves to objective measures of success – including the mere fact of having been implemented. Suggested measurements are listed below, broken down by each of the four objectives in the plan.

Most importantly, key messages will improve the scores achieved on the annual resident communications survey. In particular, it can be measured by improvement on Question 3 regarding perceptions of the overall effectiveness and resident satisfaction with the City’s communications.

Measures for Objective #1: Adopt a More Proactive and Strategic Approach to Communications (Structural/Resource Enhancements)

- Rebrand the Communications Department as the Communications and Public Engagement Department in early 2020
- Hire a Communications Director during the first half of 2020
- Develop a strategic plan by the end of 2020
- Add Public Information Officer to Keith Hutchinson’s title in 2020
- Shift Beth Wade into a Marketing and Social Media Coordinator position in 2020
- Hire a graphic designer by the end of 2020
- Hire a video production assistant by end of 2021
- Retain a full-service communications agency by mid-2020
- Create a Neighborhood Services Coordinator/Manager position in 2020
- Participate in 2-4 media source meetings during the first half of 2020
- Participate in at least 3-4 meetings with department leaders by the end of 2020, and six meetings with department leaders by the end of 2021
- Begin using a project management program to prioritize and manage project by the end of 2020
- Subscribe to a media monitoring service in 2020
- Create marketing plans for each department by the end of 2019
- Create and deploy a social media calendar by the end of 2019
- Reduce number of department social media accounts to one per department per platform by mid-2020
- Increase boosted social media posts for the 2030 Comprehensive Plan by the end of 2019

- Design and publish 4-6 two-page spreads in Community Impact by the end of 2019
- Reduce print volume and limit distribution of the Reporter by the end of 2020
- Launch a newly designed Weekly e-newsletter in early 2020
- Increased number of email addresses in the Weekly e-newsletter by the end of 2021
- Distribute the communications survey to residents annually
- Higher open rates for the Weekly newsletter by the end of 2021
- Monitor fewer comments about the City's lack of transparency by the end of 2022

Measures for Objective #2: Position the City to Better Anticipate and Respond to Crises and Emerging Issues

- Develop a crisis communications plan for common emergency events by the end of 2020
- Develop a crisis communications plan for issue-related events by the end of 2020
- Participate in 2-3 planning meetings for major city projects by mid-2020
- Conduct an initial media training session by mid-2021
- Fewer negative comments regarding the City's handling of crises in social media forums
- Fewer negative comments regarding the City's handling of crises in open survey responses
- Fewer media articles with inaccurate information
- Experiment with inexpensive CRM tools by mid-2020

Measures for Objective #3: Foster a Stronger Sense of Community Partnership and Engagement

- Participate in introductory meetings with all community partners by mid-2021
- Host one On the Table Event in 2019
- Expand the use of one voting apps at a public meeting by the end of 2020
- Include a virtual reality demonstration at one meeting, community presentation or event by the end of 2021
- Test a digital town hall meeting by the end of 2020
- Provide Spanish translations for most city-produced collaterals by the end of 2021
- Attend 2-3 GISD Bilingual Services family events by the end of 2020
- Provide printed pieces to community partners serving low-income areas for 2-3 city campaigns by mid-2021
- Monitor a larger number of participants at public meetings or town hall events by the end of 2020, especially among Spanish-speaking and low-income communities

Measures for Objective #4: Establish a More Distinctive Brand Voice That Highlights Georgetown's Unique Position

- Host a State of the City event in January 2020
- Create and distribute an annual report to share at the Chamber's State of the City event in 2019 (highlighting 2019 stories)
- Launch updated City logo guidelines by end of 2020
- Launch city-branded templates by end of 2021
- Monitor fewer city collaterals that don't have the City logo by end of 2021
- Eliminate individual department logos that do not incorporate the City's logo
- Launch a new brand voice by end of 2022
- Distribute two direct mail pieces by the end of 2020
- Distribute the resident communications survey annually
- Monitor an increased level of resident satisfaction with communications
- Monitor an increased level of government transparency
- Monitor an increased use of city communications tools
- Increased number of posts on City's Facebook page by end of 2022
- Increased number of followers on City's Facebook page by end of 2022

Implementation Considerations

A number of strategic recommendations previously outlined above have budgetary implications for the City, many of which still need to be assessed in detail by the City Manager, based on a review of currently available resources and an assessment of other City priorities. Below is suggested timeline for implementing the suggested strategies, along with estimated budgetary implications:

2019

Create job description for Director of Communications and Public Engagement	\$250 (est. job posting costs)
Launch Sprout Social (social media management program) Est. – 6 months	\$594 – \$1,494 (\$99-\$249/month)
Begin publishing Community Impact two-page ads (4-6 ads by end of the year)	\$28,000 – \$42,000 (\$7,000/month)
Create Annual Report for distribution at Chamber's State of the City event in early 2020	TBD – pending print qty., type of press, paper quality, etc.
Estimated Budget Impact for 2019	\$28,844 – \$43,744

First Half of 2020

Launch Director of Communications and Public Engagement candidate search and hire for the position	\$95,000 - \$115,000 annual salary
Host three informal town hall events	TBD – depends on location and other resource the City contributes to supporting the event
Media monitoring subscription	\$4,500 annual (est. from Cision)
Begin investigating options for reducing print volume of the Reporter and launch digital version	Cost savings TBD
Engage agency for crisis communications plan development (issue and event plans)	\$30,000-\$40,000 for two plans

Distribute one direct mail piece	TBD – pending on quantity, quote from preferred printer, postage
Begin planning an On the Table event	TBD – depending on any paid resources are necessary to support the event
Produce an Annual Report for State of the City	TBD – depending on quantity
Host State of the City in January	TBD- depending on site and logistics
Estimated Budget Impact for First Half of 2020	\$129,500 – \$159,500

Second Half of 2020

Test more boosted social media posts	TBD
Distribute a direct mail piece	TBD – pending quantity, quote from preferred printer, postage
Retain a full-service communications agency (\$5,000 - \$7,000 monthly)	\$30,000 - \$42,000 for half the year
Engage third-party to update logo guidelines and implement among departments	\$7,000 - \$9,000
Hire a graphic designer	\$55,000 - \$65,000 salary
Estimated Budget Impact for Second Half of 2020	\$92,000 - \$116,000, plus - boosted social media posts

First Half of 2021

Engage a third-party resource for media training and conduct first session	\$7,500 - \$10,000 per session
Host a digital town hall meeting	TBD – pending logistics

Begin including Spanish translations on all city materials	TBD – pending volume of translation
Test inexpensive CRM tools to manage inbound communications	TBD
Retain a full-service communications agency (\$5,000 - \$7,000 monthly)	\$30,000 - \$42,000 for half the year
Hire a video production assistant	\$45,000 - \$55,000
Estimated Budget Impact for First Half of 2021	\$82,500 - \$107,000, plus Spanish translation, CRM test and digital town hall meeting

Second Half of 2021

Work with third-party to identify City brand voice	TBD
Estimated Budget Impact for Second Half of 2021	TBD

2022

Distribute four direct mail pieces	TBD – pending qty., printer quote, postage
Estimated Budget Impact for 2022	TBD

2023

Retain a full-service communications agency (\$5,000 - \$7,000 monthly)	\$60,000 - \$84,000
Draft scoping document and secure vendor for enterprise level CRM tool	TBD
Estimated Budget Impact for 2024	\$60,000 - \$84,000, plus CRM tool

Funding Note: Sources for funding increased resources for the Communications and Public Engagement Department may come from the General Fund, Hotel Occupancy Tax and Georgetown Utility Systems.

CONCLUSION

Georgetown's residents want more types of communications shared with them more often, and they want more opportunities to provide feedback and feel that their concerns and needs are being heard. This message was clear from the results of the communications survey. The City is working with a Communications budget and a core Communications Department that is smaller than its peer cities, making it difficult for the Communications Department to deliver on frequently pushing out information. Limited resources and ongoing media challenges have placed the core Communications Department in a position of constantly addressing immediate needs without having time to adopt a strategic, proactive approach to communications.

At the same time, media challenges that have become the Communications Department's main focus are also resulting in the loss of resident trust in City government. At the very time the City needs to be getting positive messages to key stakeholders, its attention is focused on putting out fires. Georgetown can earn back the trust of its residents by providing them with the very thing they want – more communication, and more engagement. In order to accomplish this, the City must restructure the team by adding staff and financial resources.

Cooksey Communications has outlined some fairly ambitious recommendations for communications strategies to better inform and engage the City's target audiences. However, we believe that the implementation of these recommendations is feasible with the application of appropriate resources. This is an exciting time for Georgetown, and we applaud the City's leadership for taking on this effort to assess its communications and to act on the stakeholder input and Cooksey Communications' recommendations.

COMMUNICATIONS ASSESSMENT UPDATE

OCT. 27, 2020

OVERVIEW

- **ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**
- **PROGRESS REPORT**
- **BRANDING ANALYSIS**

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

- City issued RFP for communications audit in 2018, six bids
- Hired Cooksey Communications
- Conducted review of current state, interviews, peer cities, and community survey
- Presented recommendations to Council April 23, 2019

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Timing**
- **Four primary objectives**
 - Adopt a more proactive and strategic approach
 - Position the City to better anticipate and respond to emerging issues
 - Foster stronger sense of community partnership and engagement
 - Establish more distinctive brand voice
- **19 recommendations**

PROGRESS REPORT

19 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Rebrand and Restructure the Communications Department
2. Create and implement processes for strategic and proactive planning
3. Leverage cost-effective tools
4. Conduct a website analysis and make site adjustments based on the input
5. Develop crisis communications plans for issues and emergency events
6. Include a Communications Department member during initial discussions
7. Conduct crisis media training for staff who may serve as a City spokesperson
8. Engage an external communications consultant to assist with significant crises
9. Establish quarterly meetings with key community partners
10. Increase participation and engagement at public events
11. Leverage community partnerships to provide resources for underserved communities
12. Develop a centralized inbound communications tool for residents
13. Host a State of the City event
14. Update the City's logo guidelines
15. Create City-branded templates
16. Adopt a distinctive brand voice
17. Host a social media photo contest
18. Turn City staff, elected officials and community partners into brand ambassadors
19. Repeat the resident communications survey annually

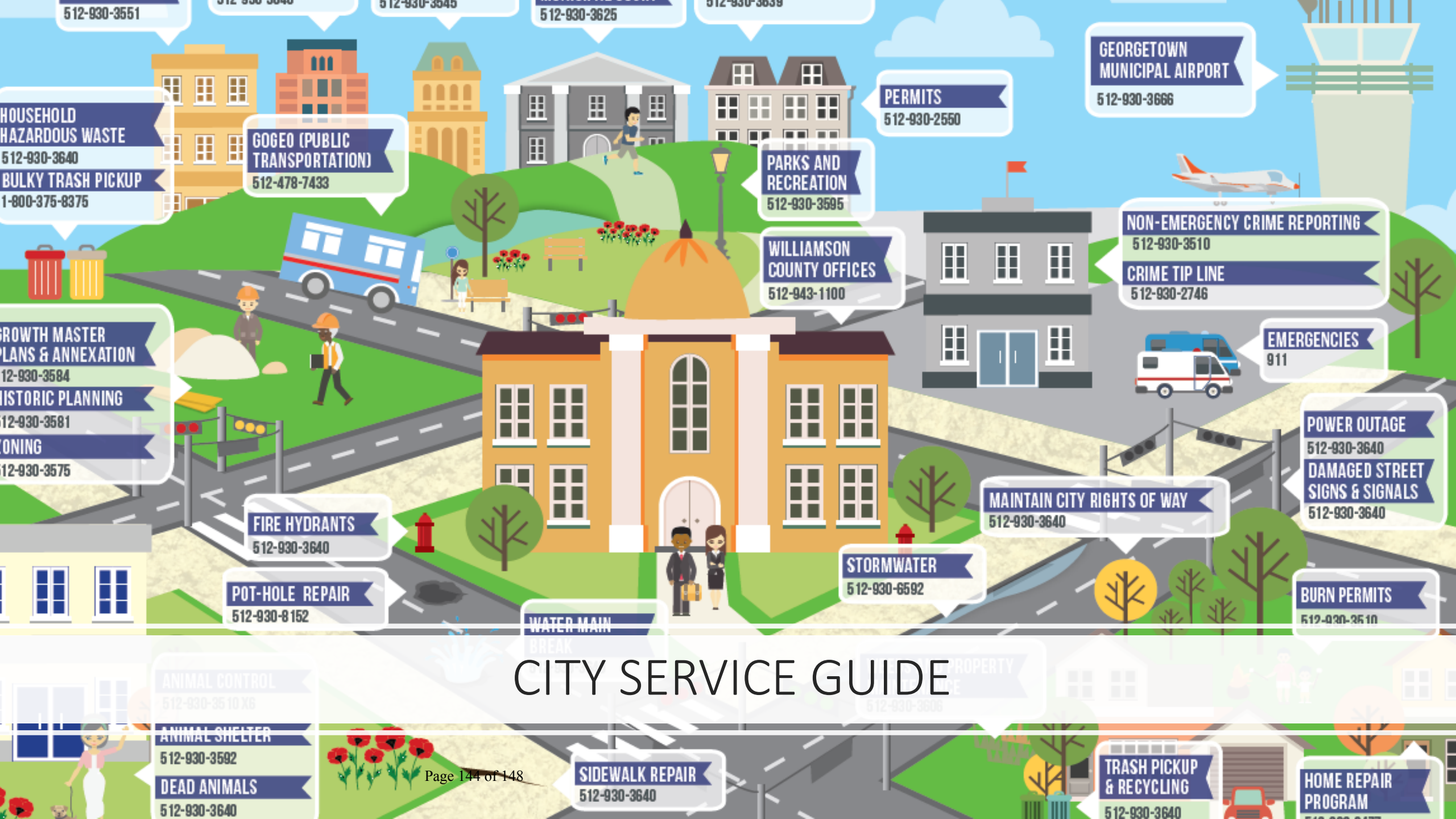
ACCOMPLISHMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- The new Communications and Public Engagement Department (CAPE)
- Increased emphasis and content on social media
- Improving accessibility to City information
- Held first State of the City event

(1/2) Is there something strange in your neighborhood:
🚫🗑️♻️ Illegal dumping
🚚🚧🚚 Spills
🐕🐈🐉 Dead animals on the road?
Who you gonna call?
Customer Care!



2:30 PM - Aug 27, 2020 - TweetDeck



HOUSEHOLD
HAZARDOUS WASTE
512-930-3640
BULKY TRASH PICKUP
1-800-375-8375

GOGEO (PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION)
512-478-7433

PERMITS
512-930-2550

GEORGETOWN
MUNICIPAL AIRPORT
512-930-3666

PARKS AND
RECREATION
512-930-3595

WILLIAMSON
COUNTY OFFICES
512-943-1100

NON-EMERGENCY CRIME REPORTING
512-930-3510
CRIME TIP LINE
512-930-2746

EMERGENCIES
911

GROWTH MASTER
PLANS & ANNEXATION
512-930-3584
HISTORIC PLANNING
512-930-3581
ZONING
512-930-3575

FIRE HYDRANTS
512-930-3640

POT-HOLE REPAIR
512-930-8152

WATER MAIN
BREAK

STORMWATER
512-930-6592

MAINTAIN CITY RIGHTS OF WAY
512-930-3640

POWER OUTAGE
512-930-3640
DAMAGED STREET
SIGNS & SIGNALS
512-930-3640

BURN PERMITS
512-930-3510

ANIMAL CONTROL
512-930-3510 X6

ANIMAL SHELTER
512-930-3592

DEAD ANIMALS
512-930-3640

SIDEWALK REPAIR
512-930-3640

PROPERTY
512-930-3605

TRASH PICKUP
& RECYCLING
512-930-3640

HOME REPAIR
PROGRAM
512-930-3640

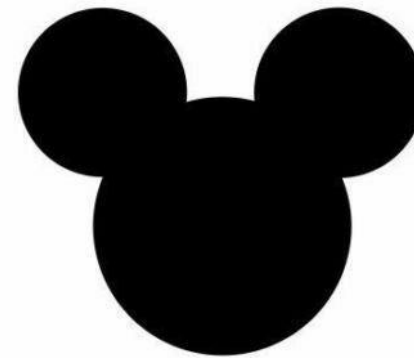
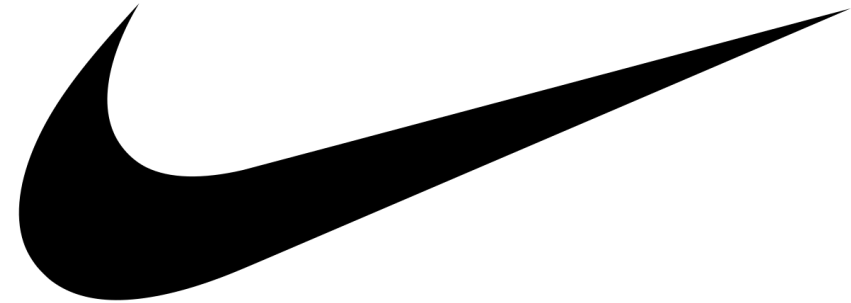
CITY SERVICE GUIDE

NEXT STEPS

- Policy and SOP updates and creation
- Communications visioning
- Use and refine new metrics
- Social media tool
- Branding analysis

BRANDING ANALYSIS

- What is a brand?
- Consultant: North Star
- 27 weeks, starts with research
- Robust community and Council engagement



BRANDING ANALYSIS

- Deliverables include logo positioning and update, brand voice and narrative, style guide, and implementation matrix
- Will use daily, strategically, and not just for communications



Connecting the soul of your community to the heart of your consumers.

City of Georgetown, Texas
City Council Workshop
October 27, 2020

SUBJECT:

Sec. 551.071: Consultation with Attorney

Advice from attorney about pending or contemplated litigation and other matters on which the attorney has a duty to advise the City Council, including agenda items

- Litigation Update

Sec. 551.072: Deliberations about Real Property

- Rivehaven -- Travis Baird, Real Estate Services Manager

- Berry Creek Interceptor, Parcels 1, 2, and 3 -- Travis Baird, Real Estate Services manager

Sec. 551.074: Personnel Matters

- City Manager Work Plan

Sec. 551.086: Certain Public Power Utilities: Competitive Matters

- Purchased Power Update

Sec. 551.087: Deliberations Regarding Economic Development

- Project Woods

- Project Wafer

- Project Farm

ITEM SUMMARY:

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

n/a

SUBMITTED BY:

Robyn Densmore, City Secretary