

# Strategic Communications in the Instant Information Age





# City of West Bend Wisconsin

**Jessica Wildes, MPA, MS**  
Communications and Economic  
Development Director







# About West Bend, Wisconsin



West  
Bend ★

- 32,000 residents, located 30 minutes north of Milwaukee in Washington County
- Thriving historic downtown with specialty shops, restaurants and cultural attractions
- Award-winning parks and trails: Downtown Riverwalk, Regner Park, Lac Lawrann Conservancy, Eisenbahn State Trail
- Sub-regional commercial and industrial hub





# Instant Information Age

- An instantaneous digital culture where it is socially acceptable to expect information and responses at a moment's notice
- Municipal communications lags in many organizations

**If a municipality is not telling its own story, then someone else is.**

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The background image shows the West Bend City Hall, a modern building with large windows and a sign that reads "WEST BEND CITY HALL". The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent blue filter. A bright green horizontal line is positioned below the text.

**Municipalities can position themselves  
for greater success by prioritizing and  
investing in strategic communications.**



# City of West Bend Communications History

## 1979-2019

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- 40+ years of cable television
- In 2016, Jay Shambeau hired as City Administrator and envisioned developing Communications Department

## 2020-2021

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- In January 2020, hired Marketing and Communications Director
- COVID-19 policy writing, internal and external communications, public relations
- *Together West Bend* video and BID Marketing Campaign

## 2022 and Beyond

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- Grant writing and fundraising
- Economic development
- Social media growth, engagement, and story telling
- Visit West Bend – tourism-focused campaign
- Humanize local government





“There was a continuous decrease of media coverage by local radio, newspaper, and television. This new void led to increased negativity to creep in this lost media space in the form of social media bloggers. I desired for the Communications Department to lead the way with unapologetic, intentional, factual, positive coverage of the great services offered by the City of West Bend.”

Jay Shambeau, City Administrator, City of West Bend

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City of West Bend

April 21 · 🌐

...

Welcome to downtown West Bend, [Jade and Ginger](#)! Opening tomorrow at noon, this new boutique shop features vintage items curated with love by an eclectic Wisconsinite—Shy Stogbauer—addicted to the thrill of unique finds. From boho to mid-century modern to maximalist and bold, Shy is infatuated with the art of the old, collecting distinctive treasures for you.

Be sure to attend the [Grand Opening :: Jade & Ginger Vintage](#) this weekend! Shop hours are Friday, April 22 from noon t... [See more](#)



You, Andrea Broker, Michelle Skinner Hoey and 507 others 78 Comments 79 Shares

# Promote Economic Development

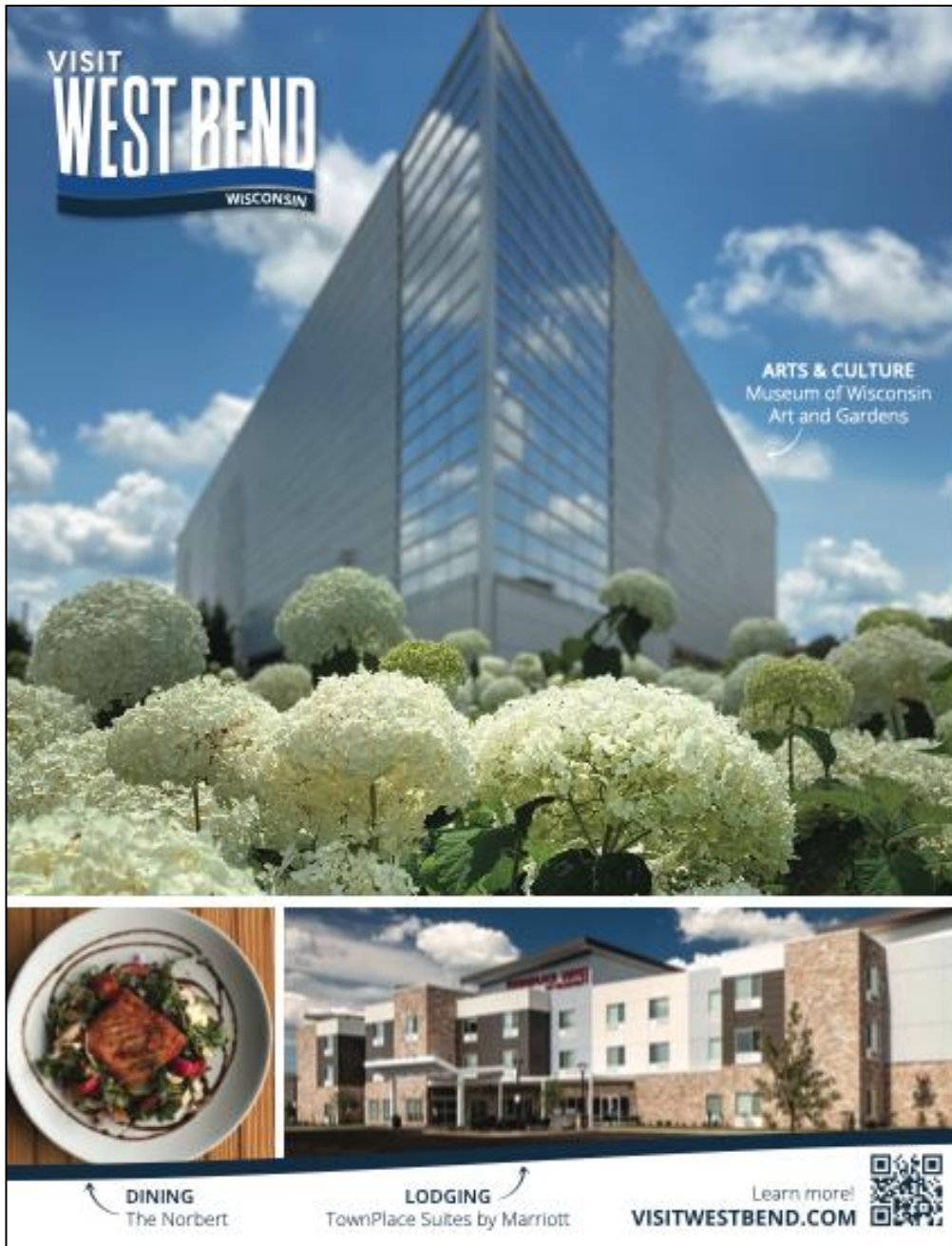
- **Business of the Month** 2:00-3:00 videos
- **Welcome to West Bend** Visits and Posts
- Assist Businesses with Main Street Bounceback Grant, Small Business Loans, Relocating to West Bend, Tax Incremental Financing



*May Business  
of the Month  
La Cabana*







# Tourism Promotion and Development

- **Visit West Bend**  
Destination Marketing Campaign
- **Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) Marketing Campaign**
- **Event Videos and Promos**
- **Promotional Grants**  
Travel Wisconsin Joint Effort Marketing, Travel Stimulus Grant, DMO
- **Tourism Commission – Local Room Tax**

*Visit West Bend campaign includes digital, social, print, billboard, television, tradeshow, and radio advertising placements.*









# Humanizing Local Government

- **The City** – 3:00-5:00 videos featuring a city department or unique area of local government
- **Election and Recruitment Videos**
- **Weekly Newsletter**
- **Holiday Video**
- **Celebrate/Highlight Wins**

*The City  
featuring the  
Engineering  
Department*



*Finance Department receives awards*



A large, shiny, metallic bird sculpture, possibly a seagull, stands prominently on a dark, rectangular pedestal in the foreground. The bird's body is highly reflective, mirroring the surrounding environment, including a paved path, a body of water, and a person walking in the distance. The bird is positioned on the left side of the frame, facing right. In the background, a modern building with a white, textured facade and large glass windows is visible. The building has a curved design and is situated on a green lawn. A small sign with the letters "MOWA" is visible on the building's exterior. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall scene is well-lit, suggesting a sunny day.

# Look forward. Be positive.

Communications departments build trust and engagement by developing and sharing well-written, factual and timely information.





# Village of Glencoe Illinois

**Philip A. Kiraly, ICMA-CM**  
Village Manager



# A bit about Glencoe:

- North Shore suburb of Chicago
- Population 8,900; \$30+ million budget; 103 FT employees
- Highly engaged constituency
- Home to the Chicago Botanic Garden, Writers Theatre
- Vibrant, quaint downtown with 100% first floor occupancy
- New Communications Manager (our first) started in February 2022





# The Communication Challenge

Engagement must be a priority, BUT

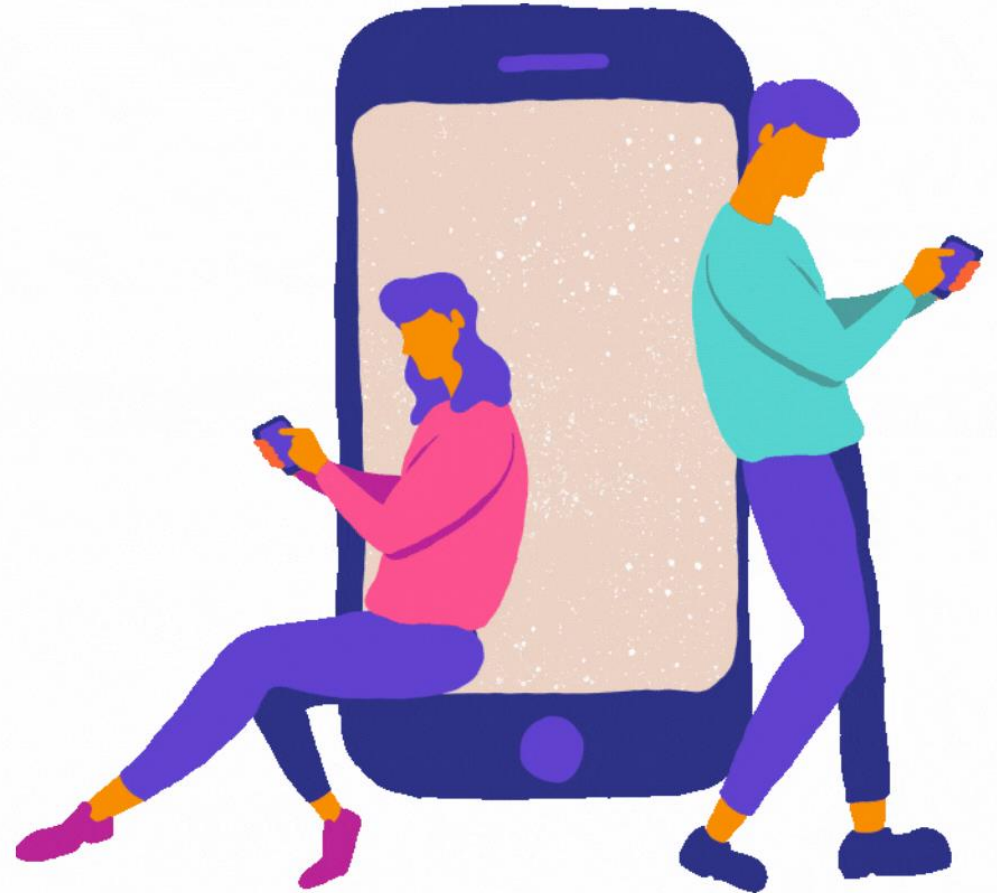
- It's easier to be apathetic and/or outraged than engaged
- People consume more **and** less information
- Policies are important; adapting is more important
- Government is boring/irrelevant/corrupt/ (fill in the blank), right?



# Glencoe's Communication Priorities

## Communications Policy and Strategic Plan-driven

- Be the unit of government that is always trustworthy
- Communications IS customer service
- Reach people where they are; do so frequently
- All materials (print and digital) should be, attractive, easy to understand and memorable
- *Engage, engage, engage* across a variety of platforms





# Communication in Glencoe Today

Policy-Driven, High-Quality, Multi-Platform, Staff-Developed

- **Print:**

- [Tri-annual newsletter](#) (shared with Park District, Library, School District and social service agency)
- [Budget](#), [Budget-in-Brief](#)
- Kiosks, flyers, signs

- **Digital:**

- Socials – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Nextdoor
- [E Newsletters](#)
- Website – [villageofglencoe.org](http://villageofglencoe.org)

- **Experiential:**

- Face-to-face/face-to-screen interactions
- Stories, polls, digital feedback
- Staff stories, [Village Manager's Blog](#)
- Some video where possible

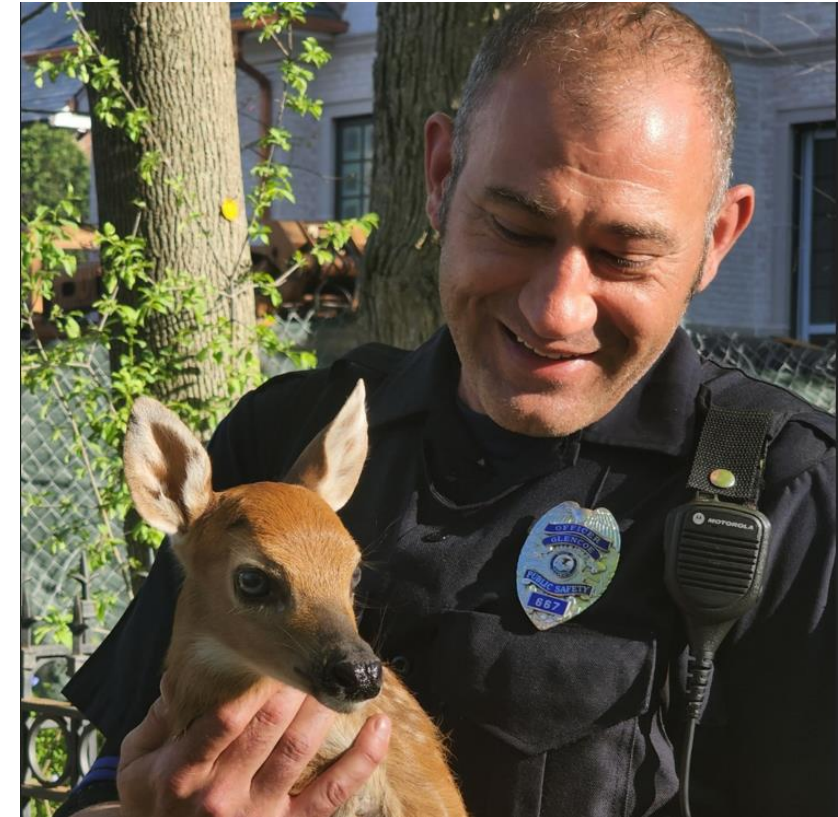




# Collaboration

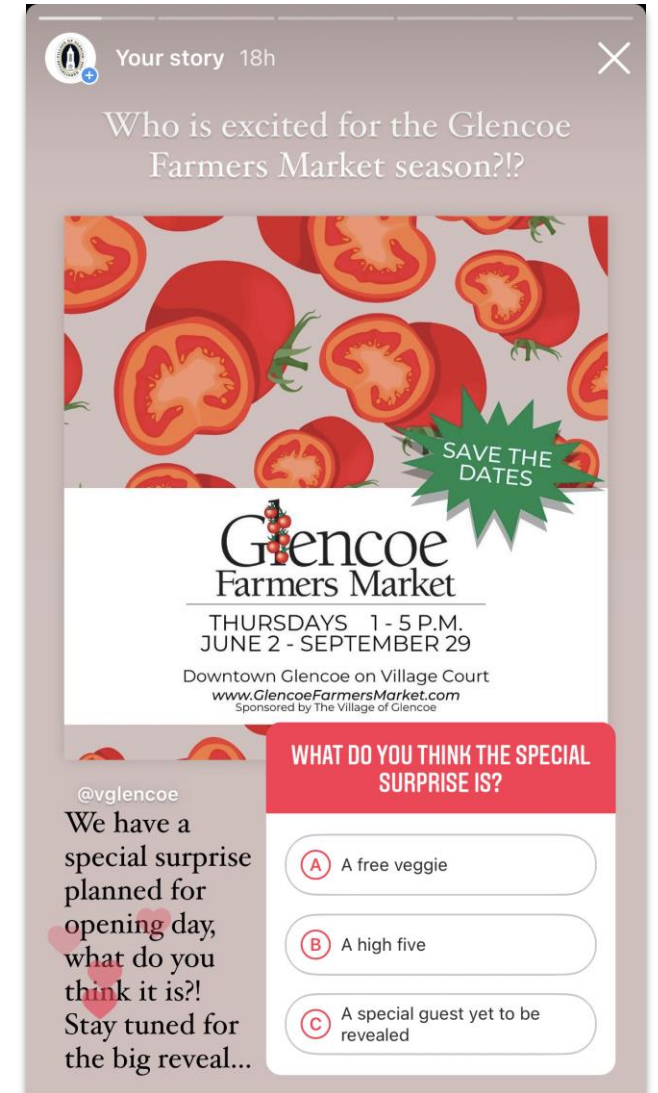


# Humanizing Government

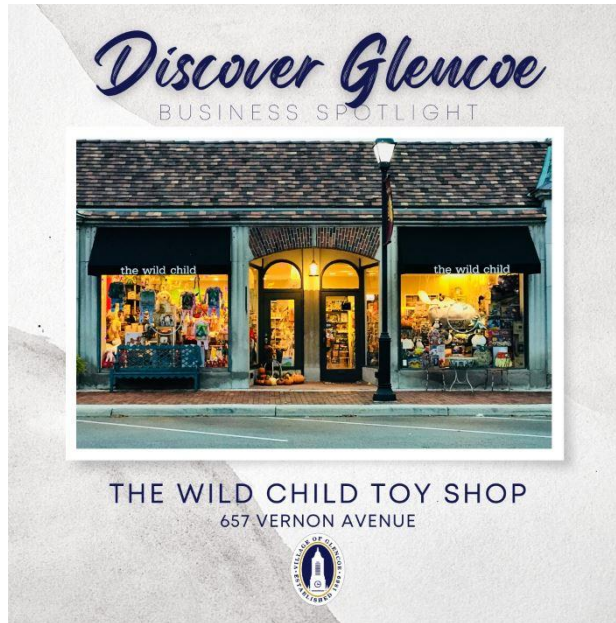




# Telling Stories, Building Engagement

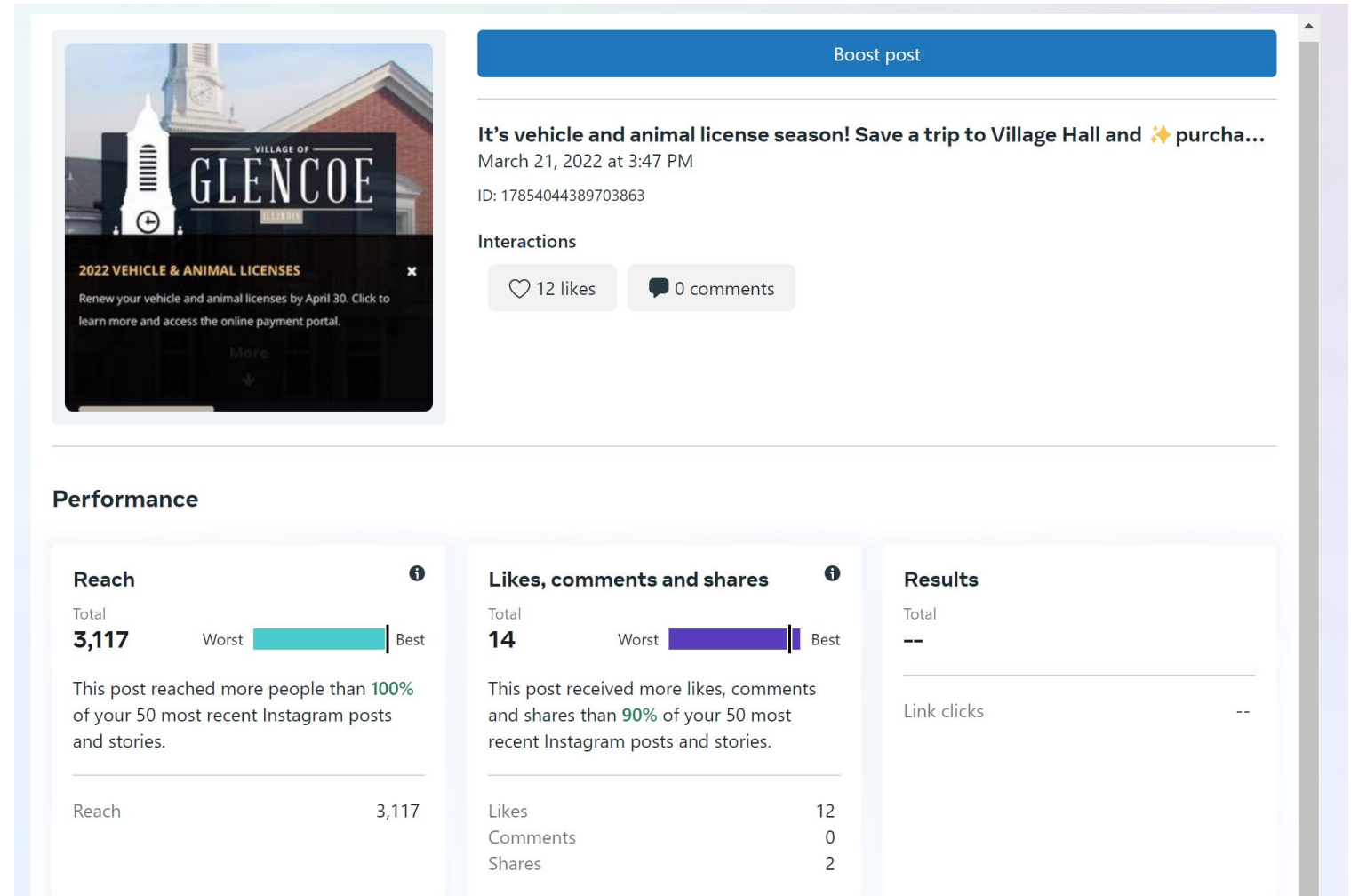


# Promoting our Community






# Tip-toeing Into Video



# Case Study: Water Meter Replacement

- Long planned, much needed
- Planned project kick off – May 2020
- Replace all 3100 water meters – first wholesale replacement ever
- \$2.5 M project, revenue bonds
- Lots of benefits to the community

We just need you to let us into your home...  
*During the height of the pandemic...*




## 2020 VILLAGE OF GLENCOE WATER METER REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

The Village of Glencoe is improving its water utility infrastructure with new water meters and water meter reading equipment in every residence and business. A systemwide water meter replacement is necessary due to the age of the existing meters, which are failing at an accelerating rate each year. Within the next three months, you will receive a letter from the Village of Glencoe requesting that you schedule a water meter replacement appointment with the project subcontractor, United Meters, Inc. (UMI). The Village values your cooperation with the approaching project and is available to answer questions that you may have about the process. Please call Management Analyst Megan Olson at (847) 461-1115 or e-mail [molson@villageofglencoe.org](mailto:molson@villageofglencoe.org) for more information.

### WATER SYSTEM 10-YEAR INVESTMENT AREAS


#### SMART WATER METERS

The installation of new "smart" water meters will improve the water customer experience and streamline water operations




#### WATER MAINS

Planned water main replacements and improvements will reduce the number of breaks and improve service reliability




#### WATER TOWER

The viability of the current location of the water tower is being assessed



#### WATER PLANT

Options and alternatives for the 92-year-old water plant are being studied




#### SYSTEMWIDE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

The Water Meter Replacement Program is a part of the Village's ongoing plan to address its aging water infrastructure, which includes the Village's water distribution mains, water tower and water plant. The vision of this plan is to maintain and improve the existing level of water service in the community, and water meter replacement is an essential step. New meter reading technology will increase the efficiency of the Village water utility and reduce the carbon emissions of current meter reading operations. The customer experience will be enhanced through an online customer portal that can send alerts about potential leaks and assist with water conservation efforts. More information about improvements can be found at [www.villageofglencoe.org/watermeter](http://www.villageofglencoe.org/watermeter).

### THREE STEP PROCESS FOR WATER METER REPLACEMENT APPOINTMENT


#### 1 NOTIFICATION

Within the next three months, you will receive a letter to schedule your appointment




#### 2 SCHEDULING

Your appointment can be scheduled by calling United Meters, Inc. (UMI) after receiving your letter



#### 3 INSTALLATION

A UMI installer will replace your water meter and water meter reading equipment



Visit [villageofglencoe.org/watermeter](http://villageofglencoe.org/watermeter) for more information

Within the next three months, you will receive a notification via U.S. mail on Village letterhead to schedule your appointment with UMI. Generally, appointments are completed within 30 minutes and your water service will be turned off during the appointment. An adult who is 18 years of age or older must be present. Most water meters are located inside of homes or businesses, and the installer will require access to the meter's location. There is no cost for the water meter replacement.



# Case Study: Water Meter Replacement

- **Full-scale outreach program to tell our “Why”**
  - Webpage, social media posts
  - Flyer, letters, signs
  - Informational video
- **Reassure, reassure, reassure**
  - COVID Protocols
  - What to expect, who will be there
- **Outcome**
  - Positive – project completed ahead of schedule
  - Few complaints; great engagement

# Case Study: Water Meter Replacement





## COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM Project Updates



SCAN TO LEARN MORE about the public  
improvement plans in your neighborhood!

# What's next?

Still Multi-Platform, still adapting

- **Pandemic changes:**

- More, better information about things we don't normally communicate
- The multi-media hit: **"Return of the QR Code"**
- Engagement changed – *thanks Zoom...*

- **Digital:**

- Video, Video, Video!
- We're looking to TikTok...
- Office Hours with the Village Manager – a new take on the Village Manager's Blog



# What's next?

Still Multi-platform, still adapting

- **Policy Revisions:**

- First Amendment
- Verification for Facebook and Instagram

- **Experiential:**

- Keep humanizing government – Get to know us!
- Fun needs to be injected into the serious





**Jenny Thompson, MPA**

Director of Community Engagement

Assistant to the City Manager

# Welcome to Rochelle, the Hub City!

- **Population 9,500**
- **Located at I-39 & I-88**
- **Two trans-continental railroads**
- **Diverse population**
- **Home to Chicagoland Skydiving Center,  
Kennay Farms Distillery &  
Rochelle Railroad Park**
- **Swoon-worthy downtown**





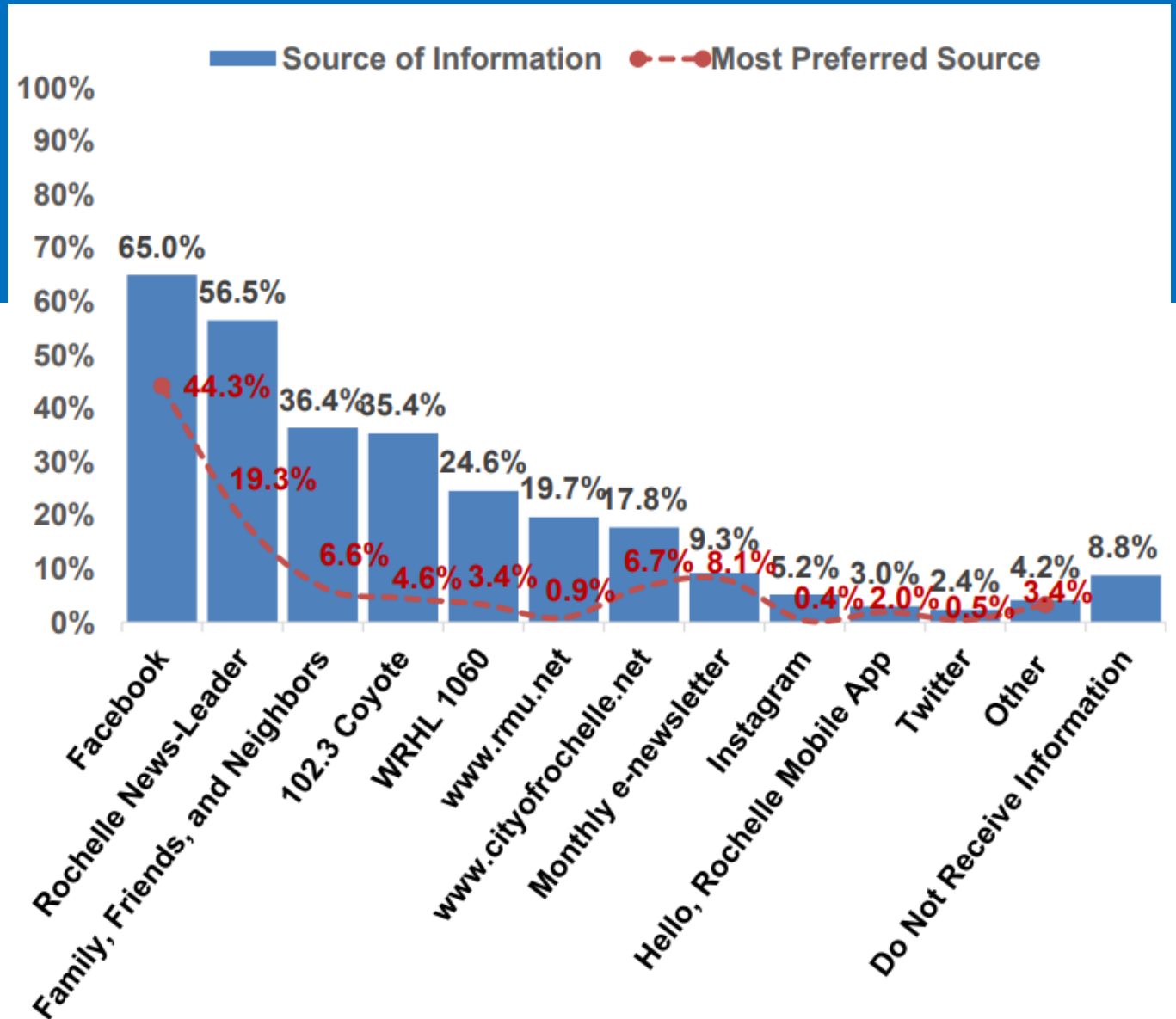
# Engagement Strategy

- **Strategic Planning**
  - Community Inclusivity & Engagement: Top 5 Priority
- **Engagement Defined**
  - Hometown Pride
  - Sense of Belonging
- **Branding**
  - Vibrant, Fun, Inviting



# Our Toolbox

- Website
- Social Media
- Mobile App
- Text Alerts
- Annual Magazine
- Community Events
- Monthly E-News
- Outdoor Banners
- Direct Mail
- Media
- Don't Forget: People!



Source: 2019 Community Survey Data



# Enjoy Rochelle!

- Community Events
- Marketing & Promotion
- For Residents First
- Attracting Visitors
- Promoting Attractions





# Celebrate Everything!

- Groundbreaking
- Ribbon Cutting
- New Business Announcement
- Our Projects
- Partner Projects
- Contributions





# Making Connections

- Empathy
- Kindness
- Invitation to Engage



# Success Stories: Citizens Academy

- 10 Week Program
- Up to 20 Participants
- Promotes transparency
- Gives staff an opportunity to show off!
- Creates citizen advocates





# Success Stories: Citizens Academy



Kerstin Butler

This was a great program! I cannot recommend it enough!

Like Reply 1w



Terri Zimmerman

Also highly recommend!

Like Reply 1w



Kevin Infante

Highly recommend it! Great experience to fully understand what's going on around our town!

Like Reply 1w



Andrew Dobberstein

I would highly recommend If anyone has time for this I had fun and learned alot it iner workings or are city

Like Reply 1w



Tyler Isham

Highly Recommend, It was so much fun

Like Reply 1w



# Success Stories: Trash Can Roll-Out

- Set expectations with Staff
- Staff Training
- Create Campaign
  - Mailer
  - Website
  - Press Release
  - Social Media
  - E-Newsletter
  - Service Group Presentations
  - Text Alerts
  - Flyer
  - English & Spanish

*Hello!* **ROCHELLE RESIDENTS!**

WE'RE MOVING TO A NEW TRASH COLLECTION SYSTEM, PROVIDING EVERY HOME WITH A WHEELED TRASH CAN.

LIKE RECYCLING, ALL TRASH PICKUP WILL NOW TAKE PLACE AT THE CURB.

NEW CANS WILL BE DELIVERED IN LATE MARCH.

## THE DETAILS:

➡ ALL HOMES WILL RECEIVE A 95 GALLON WHEELED CAN, UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED. A 65 GALLON OR 35 GALLON CAN IS ALSO AVAILABLE FOR THOSE UTILIZING THE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

➡ NEED MULTIPLE CANS? CALL NORTHERN ILLINOIS DISPOSAL TO PURCHASE OR RENT AN ADDITIONAL CAN. FIRST CAN IS FREE. NIDS: 800-930-7321.

➡ ALL TRASH MUST FIT INSIDE THE CAN, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ONE BULK ITEM PER WEEK. A TWICE-YEARLY DROP OFF EVENT WILL BE ANNOUNCED.

➡ RESIDENTS CAN RENT A DUMPSTER FROM ANYWHERE BEGINNING 4/1- THERE IS NO EXCLUSIVE CONTRACT.

➡ CHANGES APPLY TO SINGLE FAMILY HOMES & APARTMENT BUILDINGS WITH THREE UNITS OR LESS.

## PICKUP ASSISTANCE

➡ FOR SENIOR CITIZENS & ANYONE WITH A DISABILITY.

➡ NORTHERN ILLINOIS DISPOSAL STAFF WILL PULL THE CAN TO THE CURB, DUMP IT AND RETURN IT TO THE HOUSE.

➡ A SMALLER SIZED CAN IS AVAILABLE FOR THIS PROGRAM.

TO SIGN UP FOR THIS SERVICE, VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR GIVE US A CALL BY FEBRUARY 15TH: [CITYOFROCHELLE.NET/TRASH](http://CITYOFROCHELLE.NET/TRASH)

CITY HALL  
815.562.6161

RMU CUSTOMER SERVICE  
815.562.4155





# Success Stories: Trash Can Roll-Out

## YOU ASKED. WE ANSWERED.

### DELIVERY FEE FOR ADDITIONAL CANS

THE CITY OF ROCHELLE WILL WAIVE THE DELIVERY FEE BETWEEN NOW AND MARCH 1ST FOR ANYONE PURCHASING AN ADDITIONAL TRASH CAN, AS PART OF THE NEW TRASH COLLECTION PROGRAM. IF YOU'VE ALREADY ORDERED, A REFUND OF \$25 WILL BE ISSUED.

### PLANNING TO RECYCLE MORE IN THE FUTURE?

THE CITY OF ROCHELLE WILL SOON OFFER A FREE STICKER TO PLACE ON CANS YOU ALREADY OWN TO BE USED AS RECYCLING CANS.



### TRASH CAN SIZES & DIMENSIONS



**HOLDS 2-3 TALL  
GARBAGE BAGS**

*38" Tall, 23" Wide  
22" Deep*



**HOLDS 4-5 TALL  
GARBAGE BAGS**

*42" Tall, 24" Wide  
28" Deep*



**HOLDS 7-8 TALL  
GARBAGE BAGS**

*43" Tall, 28" Wide  
32" Deep*

[WWW.CITYOFROCHELLE.NET/TRASH](http://WWW.CITYOFROCHELLE.NET/TRASH)







# Success Stories: Ask Us Anything

- Monthly Facebook Series
- Received hundreds of comments
- Higher reach than any other post



# Ask Us Anything: The Good

- **Reminder that residents can always “ask us anything”**
- **Promotes Transparency**
- **Requests for Service**
- **Project Questions**
- **Opportunity to Educate**
- **Rumor Control**



James Burhenn

Has the city considered letting another Grocery Store move in where the old Sullivan's was located ?

Like Reply 3y



Bessie Chronopoulos

Imagine this.....sharing concerns, asking questions...I scrolled down..the whole tone of this is user friendly...makes people feel like their concerns matter. Sounds to me like the MANAGEMENT team at Rochelle is sensitive to their duties as public servants....Good for them.

Like Reply 2y





# Ask Us Anything: The Bad & The Ugly



- Trolls
- Trolls
- Trolls
- Trolls

**Q & A**



# Thank you!



**Jessica Wildes, MPA, MS**  
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