

# Communication **PLAN 2025**



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## Cape Coral Communications Plan

### SUMMARY

In 2021 the City of Cape Coral renewed its focus on expanding citywide communications, public information, and community engagement by creating the Office of Communications.

The following Communications plan provides a set of strategies and tactics to accomplish the City's goals in this regard. The plan acts as a compass, guiding communication and marketing efforts, maximizing and promoting access to City information and services.

This document is updated annually to ensure the strategies and performance measures remain aligned with the City's evolving needs and priorities.

The plan is organized as follows:

1. Communications and Marketing Goals
2. SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
3. Strategies and Tactics
4. Performance Measures

Communications & Marketing goals:

1. Inform the public and engage the community
2. Establish internal standards and procedures
3. Measure performance

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) 2025:

### Strengths

- Connected community is hungry to engage with the City
- Progressive City operations and community leadership
- Strong and aligned city leadership
- Strong economy and stable budget outlook
- Desirable location in SWFL
- Downtown growing hub for shopping, dining and entertainment

### Weaknesses

- Lack of city voice in online discussions
- Loudest community voices seem to be negative and often misinformed
- Lack of brand ambassadors

### Opportunities

- New communications and marketing team established
- City survey results can be used to tailor or change city approaches including how we communicate
- Leveraging resources to share development and infrastructure information
- City-disseminated information quickly goes viral within Cape Coral-specific online communities;
- Opportunities for conversations with the public
- Many dedicated ambassadors in the public and on social media who want to promote positive things about the city, especially on Facebook
- Growing and organizing photo and video library and, quality graphics
- Undergoing refresh of new website
- CCTV channel

### Threats

- Some disconnect and dissention about city growth via a loud minority of residents on social media
- Outdated communications protocols, policies, and procedures
- Lack of city brand and marketing focus for a long time has caused other outside forces to create the city's brand for the city and can lead to distrust if its not obvious that something is from the City.

## Strategies and Tactics

### 1. Re-Establish Cape Coral's Brand

As an initial effort to re-position and re-establish the City's marketing and communications efforts, branding for this fiscal year means re-establishing and reinforcing Cape Coral's brand by creating a baseline marketing focus, using much of the existing framework (such as logos) to further the city's marketing, advertising, communications and social media efforts. We are also working with the City Attorney's Office to trademark City logos.

Currently the city lacks a citywide style guide and other centralized tools to help the broader city team and partners market the city. The city's downtown lacks a brand identity. In FY 2025: Communications staff are creating a style guide, In previous years the Communications Office has created: letterhead, envelope and business card templates as well as email signatures for all City employees to utilize to increase consistency, uniformity, brand recognition and community trust and recognition.

The city's website is undergoing an overhaul and refresh which will help brand the city and become a major resource to market city programs, services and create a social springboard for further engagement with the community. The refresh will increase intuitive navigation as well as utilize the City's branded colors and logos. The new site should go "live" early in FY 2026.

#### Branding strategies and tactics include:

- Communicate and reinforce the city's brand
- Establish general messaging about the city and manage issues as they arise to help reinforce the city's brand identity
- Create a style guide and branding colors
- Continue centralized graphic design services
- Continue organizing and creating photo and video gallery
- Continue our creation of a more engaging, personable, informative "voice" for Cape Coral in appropriate channels with the public

### **Cape Coral General Messaging**

In partnership with Department Heads, our office establishes ongoing messaging about city operations and issues. The goal is to help manage a unified voice across the city to ensure the city's brand and position on items is clear. Part of the opportunity with this cohesive alignment is that over time we can create brand ambassadors both internally and externally.

### **City Branded Colors, Style Guide**

Our office is creating a style guide including branded colors for the internal team to use. This resource provides a clear branding style for communications and marketing to utilize as they create new marketing and communications materials. (see Appendix A for style guide and branded colors).

### **Review of Current City Government Website**

The City has a tremendous opportunity to increase public information through our City website. The website is a powerful tool for Cape Coral's brand and it helps achieve the City's priority of creating a virtual city hall where the public can pay a bill online, apply for permits and gain access to other City services.

The Office of Communications hired a Web Specialist in 2025 to provide the City with a dedicated expert for managing, maintaining, and continuously improving the website. Having a single point of contact for the entire site, rather than relying on individual department representatives, ensures consistency, continuity, and a more strategic approach to web updates. Our team collaborates with each department and division to keep their webpages accurate, up-to-date, and user-friendly, enhancing communication and expanding online resources for residents.

### **Other web related tools include:**

- City Department home pages
- Specially designed themed pages to showcase Parks, Events and Library
- Use of buttons designed to get users where they need to go faster
- Frequently Asked Questions to help answer the public's most asked questions about specific topics

## **Photos and Photo Gallery**

A strong photo library is essential for visually telling Cape Coral's story—showcasing the city's progress, engaged community, vital services, and key achievements. High-quality images keep the City's website and publications fresh and relevant. To ensure we have up-to-date photography, our team includes several experienced photographers who help capture new, impactful images.

To maximize the value of the City's photography investment, we've created a shared photo gallery. This ensures images are preserved and readily available for internal teams to use in marketing and communications efforts, strengthening our ability to connect with residents and stakeholders.

## **2. INFORM THE PUBLIC AND ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY**

The communications strategies developed, in partnership with Department Heads, are critical to expand the city's communications efforts citywide with the goal to share information, engage the community, educate, and inform about city events, services, and programs. Engagement through social media and the website are each important means of sharing information with the public. Traditional means of communicating will also be utilized including mailing notices and newsletters, neighborhood surveys, targeted email blasts, e-newsletters and other resources to share and gain information.

### **Establish City's Virtual Newsletter and Continue On The Move Publication**

The On The Move (OTM) publication is a quarterly newsletter delivered to every residence in Cape Coral. In 2023, our team completely transformed this periodical from an overlooked newspaper-style format into a vibrant, magazine-style publication featuring captivating photos, eye-catching graphics, and engaging articles. On The Move now highlights City events, projects, initiatives, infrastructure, programs, and services—while also directing residents to the City's website for more information.

We are also working to revamp the City's online newsletter with a fresh new approach. We plan to unveil the new layout in FY 2026, supported by a strategic marketing plan to boost engagement and expand its reach.

### **Centralized Citywide Website Event Calendar**

The City has an opportunity to better utilize its website calendar as a resource for residents. The Communications Office will manage the calendar, ensuring

City events are accurate and up to date. It also serves as a platform for free, community-driven events. To maintain quality and relevance, our team is developing guidelines that will allow us to decline event submissions that don't meet established standards.

### **Media Relations and Public Relations**

In collaboration with the City Manager and Department Heads, the Communications Manager and public relations team work to share City news and announcements through press releases, social media, and media outreach. By maintaining an updated media list, monitoring coverage, and building strong relationships with local reporters and news agencies, the team maximizes media exposure. Coverage is then shared across the City's website, virtual newsletter, and social media to keep residents informed.

### **Build Digital Communities through Expanded Social Media Presence and Focus**

A key focus for the Communications Office is growing and strengthening our digital community to better engage residents through social media. This strategy involves leveraging various platforms and marketing tactics to expand our reach.

Our priorities this year (2024/25) include:

- Expanding the City's presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, while re-engaging YouTube.
- Developing videos to tell the City's story across digital platforms.
- Expanding the digital City newsletter.
- Expanding the CapeTV channel with engaging content that is Cape Coral-specific to further connect with the community.

### **Foster Relationships with Local Media Partners**

A key goal of our Public Information team is to build and maintain strong relationships with local media partners. We engage with them both at their workplaces and in our office throughout the year, with formal meetings twice annually. Regular communication with reporters helps us ensure accurate coverage and enables us to effectively share important City messages and request corrections when necessary.

## **Expand the City's Social Media and Online Presence**

Prior to the creation and development of our office the city's official social media focus was primarily Facebook, Nextdoor and Ping. Twitter, and Instagram were not regularly updated. In 2022, we shifted our focus regarding social media and since then, the city's official Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts have gained thousands of followers and continue to grow.

### **Facebook**

Staff started to advertise on Facebook to grow supporters, increase page likes, and share event information and updates to a broader audience.

### **Nextdoor**

Residents also utilize Next Door to share information. This platform is slightly limited in that users are separated into neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods each have public forums where users can talk to one another; the City, however, cannot access these forums. Instead, the City has a government agency page that it can use to message and receive feedback.

### **X (formerly Twitter)**

The Communications Office will continue to use X to share information and engage residents and the community. Generally X numbers are growing at a slow rate (~100-200 per month). This is likely due to the overall decline in the use of X as a social network, which continues to suffer poor active monthly user counts compared to other social networks.

### **Other Social Networks**

The City also maintains profiles on Instagram and Youtube. We evaluate the use of these and other social networking opportunities on an ongoing basis.

\*For required social media content see Appendix B.

### **Virtual City Newsletter - Cape Connect (monthly; external to residents)**

City-issued newsletters can be our most popular communication tool with the public; with them, we reach an engagement audience who has “opted in” to receive our updates.

The monthly newsletter, includes information on local events and City programs, services, projects and resources. Cape Connect regularly performs above industry standards with an average 53% open rate and 1% unsubscribe rate.

### **Virtual City Newsletter - City Pulse (monthly; internal to staff)**

Our monthly internal newsletter, created in FY 2024 by the Office of Communications, is designed to keep staff informed and educated about important updates, initiatives, and resources—while helping to reduce information overload by bringing everything you need to know together in one place.

### **Emergency Network and Emergency Alerts**

The city currently uses press releases (internal and external) as well as our website and social media platforms for emergency alerts and partners with Alert Lee, Lee County Government, the police department and fire department as necessary/appropriate.

### **Campaigns to Engage the Community**

Various campaigns have been and will be created to engage the community and gain input on important issues facing the City of Cape Coral. These campaigns will use all forms of communication tools to encourage input and educate the community, including:

- Videos
- Printed and digital flyers; postcards
- Surveys/polls
- e-blasts, social media communications
- Town Hall and/or other community meetings (potentially televised)
- Media announcements
- City Website

### **CCTV**

Through our partnership with CCTV, our office utilizes the TV partner to share information with the local community.

### **City Signs**

The City electronic sign in front of City Hall can only be used for City messaging. It cannot be used for advertisements for external agencies. All messaging must be approved by the Communication Manager.

When flags are ordered to be flown at half-staff we post a graphic on the city electronic sign with verbiage explaining why flags are at half-staff.

### **City Fountain Lights**

The Fountain Lights are lit with the following colors throughout each year for the reasons specified:

- January: Red for National Blood Donor Month
- February: Pink for the Valentine's Day Holiday
- March: Green for St. Patty's Day
- April: Blue for Autism Awareness Month
- May: Green for Mental Health Awareness Month
- June: Teal for PTSD Awareness Month
- July: Red, White and Blue for Independence Day
- August: Purple in honor of Purple Heart Day
- September: Red, White, and Blue for the Labor Day Holiday
- October: Orange and purple for Trunk or Treat
- November: Orange for Thanksgiving Holiday
- December: red and green for holidays

\*The above are subject to change with the approval of the City Manager or designee.

### **3. ESTABLISH INTERNAL STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES**

There are a number of internal standards and procedures needed to align the city around communications. In conjunction with the development of the marketing and communications plan, there is the need to develop a number of standards to help support citywide communications.

Specific standards and procedures we will develop and implement, include:

- Citywide media relations policy and protocols
- Citywide social media policy

- Event calendar guidelines - open to the public, community-driven, free events
- Citywide style guide (branding)
- Templates for letterhead and memorandums
- City-wide email signatures
- Template for business cards

#### 4. EMPLOYEE RESOURCES

Office of Communications main line: 239- 242-3484  
Communications Manager: Melissa Mickey

311 Call Center Communications Supervisor:

- Michelle Dean, [mdean@capecoral.gov](mailto:mdean@capecoral.gov)

Senior Public Information Specialist:

- Kaitlyn Mullen; [kmullen@capecoral.gov](mailto:kmullen@capecoral.gov)

Public Information Specialist:

- Lauren Kurkimilis; [lkurkimilis@capecoral.gov](mailto:lkurkimilis@capecoral.gov)

Marketing Coordinator:

- Brenda Whetsell, [bwhetsell@capecoral.gov](mailto:bwhetsell@capecoral.gov)

Graphic & Digital Content Creator:

- Michael Dest, [mdest@capecoral.gov](mailto:mdest@capecoral.gov)

Website Specialist:

- [Megan Govil](mailto:Megan Govil), [mgovil@capecoral.gov](mailto:mgovil@capecoral.gov)

#### 5. TRACK GOALS AND REPORT PERFORMANCE

In addition to accomplishing the many strategies above, there is an opportunity to report on performance on a regular basis. Performance reports will be created to share successes and accomplishments and monitor overall effectiveness of communications and marketing strategies.

**Twitter:** Overall, it is anticipated that Twitter followers will decline over time, as use of this social network declines.

**Facebook:** It is anticipated that Facebook followers, likes and shares will increase. We continue to see a steady increase in Facebook followers.

**Nextdoor:** Next Door is a useful, targeted way to share information with engaged community members.

**Virtual City Newsletter:** Our relatively new City-focused newsletters broke records for Enews success, achieving 55% open rates. City Newsletter is seeing much higher open rates than average government Constant Contact clients. We will continue to monitor open rates, click-through's, and subscriber numbers.

**Videos:** Many of our videos (uploaded to Facebook) have successfully informed the public about City programs, initiatives, and projects. We are working to air our video content on our YouTube channel and most are aired on CapeTV, our local government channel as well.

**Website:** We will track website success through statistics including unique website visitors, most read pages, and other results.

**Article Report:** An article report tracks articles about the City of Cape Coral and city partners that are relevant to city operations and services and is sent to all employees weekly.

Measurables	Current (2022)	2030 Goal
Satisfaction with internal communications	Survey to be conducted in FY 2023	
Number of employees trained on media relations	65	600
Number of internal newsletters/ email blasts	560 Annually	600 Annually
Number of releases distributed to the media	190 Annually	240 Annually
Number of people signed up to receive e-newsletters/ e-blasts	3,281 New Subscribers (Total: 54,617)	102,617
Number of unique website visitors	324,770	454,978
Number of social media followers		
Facebook	11,254	19,254
Instagram	584	4,584
Twitter	3,957	4,277
Residents rating connection/ engagement with the community	46%	60%
Overall image of Cape Coral	71%	80%
Quality of public information services	66%	75%
City performance of informing residents about community issues	45%	65%

## **CONCLUSION**

Overall, we believe that the City of Cape Coral is well poised to build upon previous successes and engage the public in greater numbers over the following calendar year. With new best practices, City-wide standards, and richer media strategies in place, the City can take full advantage of all available opportunities to promote the positive aspects of the Cape Coral community, and the ways in which the City serves this community.

We also believe that data-driven, best-in-class communications strategies are an essential component of open government. We are dedicated to building and maintaining the public's trust using social networks, media relations, and other channels to promote transparency, information sharing, and two-way engagement.

## Appendix A:

Standards	Example
Use "City of Cape Coral" when referring to the agency as a whole.	The City of Cape Coral invites residents to attend a ribbon cutting.
Capitalize "City" when referring to the government agency.	In an abundance of caution, the City will enable its bubble curtains.
Lowercase "city" when referring to Cape Coral as a place.	The city is the second largest in Florida due to its land mass.
Use "Council Member" when referring to a specific member regardless of gender.	Council Member Bill Steinke recently attended the Florida League of Cities conference.
"Councilmembers" is one word and refers to all of council.	Cape Coral councilmembers attended Red, White, and Boom.
"City Council" should be capitalized like a proper noun, as it is a governing body.	On Wednesday, City Council will vote on Ordinance 23-00.
Spell out all acronyms. On subsequent mentions, use generic terms like board, division, etc. DO NOT USE ACRONYMS.	The Environmental Resources Division tests monthly for water quality. The division ensures waterways are clear of pollutants.
Abbreviate months with six or more letters if they are used with a specific date. Spell out those with five or fewer letters.	Aug. 31, June 6, May 31
Spell out the month when it is used without a specific date.	In October, Bike Night will be... Citizens Academy begins in February 2024...
For days of the month, use only numerals. Do not use nd, rd or th.	Sept. 3, April 4
Do not abbreviate the days of the week.	Monday, Friday ... Not Mon., Fri.
Use a date and day of the week when advertising events.	The Hurricane Preparedness Expo is Wednesday, May 31.
Use numbers and periods for a.m. and p.m.	7 a.m., 1:45 p.m.
Do not use a colon and zeroes when referring to an even hour.	5 p.m. not 5:00 p.m.
Use noon and midnight instead of 12 a.m. and 12 p.m.	The recognition ceremony will begin at noon.
Use a person's first and last name on first reference. On second reference, use only the last name with no title.	Water Quality Control Division Director Steve Gunderson led the panel. Gunderson said clean water is very important.
If two people with the same last name are quoted in a story, use first and last names.	... Jane Smith explained. Jenny Smith also believes ...
Formal titles are only capitalized when they appear immediately before a name. Just make sure it's a formal title and not merely a job description (teacher, coach, counselor, etc.).	Utilities Director Jeff Pearson spoke with media about irrigation improvements.
Spell out all generic street names when no numeric address is given.	City Hall is located on Cultural Park Boulevard.
When a street number is used, only abbreviate Ave., Blvd., and St., as well as directionals.	1512 N Mission St.
Spell out numbers one through nine. Use figures for 10 and higher and for the following: addresses, ages, dates, dimensions, money, percentages, speed, temperature, and time.	
Spell out numbers used in the beginning of a sentence	One thousand people work at City Hall.
Never spell out years	1999 was a bad year for technology companies.
Use hyphens for phone numbers	239-574-0436
The period and comma always go within quotation marks	"Cape Coral is a wonderful place to live," said Mayor John Gunter.
The dash, semicolon, question mark and exclamation point go within the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. They go outside when they apply to the whole sentence.	"Did you wish to file a complaint?" he asked. Who said, "Fame means when your computer modem is broken, the repair guy comes out to your house a little faster"?
Do not use a hyphen if the construction includes very or an adverb ending in -ly	This is a very big project with barely legal procedures
Avoid using parenthesis.	
Use a semicolon to clarify a series that includes a number of commas. Include a semicolon before the conjunction.	Parts for the aircraft carrier are made in Tampa, Fla.; Austin, Texas; and Baton Rouge, La.

## Brand Essence Blueprint

**Instagram:** @cityofcapecoralgov

**Website:** capecoral.gov

**Facebook:** facebook.com/CityofCapeCoral

**X:** @CapeCoral

**Personality:**

1. Sunny
2. Vibrant, family-oriented
3. Active, relaxed, coastal

**Unique to you Hallmark/ Tagline:** We Live Where You Vacation

**Color Palette:** Dark Blue, light blue, orange and yellow



#090692



#49D8E6



#F8D133

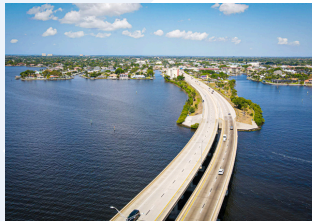


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**Patterns/photography/Videos:**



Canal



Bridge



Owl

**Phraseologies:** #CapeCoralTogether #CapeCoral #WeAreCapeCoral

**Typography:**

1. Heading: Segoe UI Black
2. Subheading: Calibri

**Mission Statement:** Provide services and resources that enhance the quality of life for those who live, learn, work, and play in our city.

**Vision Statement:** Cape Coral will thoughtfully grow into a vibrant and inclusive community that encourages residential character, creates economic opportunity, and ensures respect for its unique environment.

## **Appendix B:**

### **Social Media**

#### **Required Posts for Annual/Recurring Campaigns**

Fertilizer Restrictions

Water Quality

Water Conservation

Beware of Unlicensed Contractors

Rental Registration

Hurricane Season Preparedness

Solid Waste

Boater Safety

City Informational Messaging (project updates, sign up for e-newsletter, etc.)

Human Resources - Hiring/Vacancies

Median Beautification/Adopt-a-Median

#### **Annual Posts on Military Recognitions**

Veterans are recognized regularly on social media. The following are posts made each year:

02/23/2023 Anniversary of the flag raising on Iwo Jima

03/25/2023 Medal of Honor Day

03/29/2023 National Vietnam War Veterans Day

04/9/2023 National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day

05/20/2023 National Armed Forces Day

05/29/2023 Memorial Day

06/14/2023 Army Birthday

08/4/2023 Coast Guard Birthday

08/7/2023 Purple Heart Day

09/15/2023 POW/MIA Day

09/18/202: Air Force Birthday

10/13/2023 Navy Birthday

#### **Annual Posts on Military Recognitions**

10/26/2023 National Day of the Deployed

11/10/2023 USMC Birthday

11/11/2023 Veterans Day

12/7/2023 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

12/13/2023 Army National Guard Birthday

12/20/2023 Space Force Birthday