



City of Kirkland

City Communications Guide

A Non-Emergency Communications Overview

November 2021

Communications Program Overview

The City of Kirkland Communications Program provides outreach in order to connect the Kirkland community to City services, programs, and decision-making processes. Managed by the Communications Program Manager and under the direction of the Deputy City Manager of External Affairs, the Communications Program serves as the hub for public outreach to the Kirkland community and surrounding region. The Communications Program coordinates with other functions of the External Affairs program including Neighborhood Services, Economic Development, and Tourism, as well as supports outreach for all City departments. The program staff work in coordination with City staff, particularly the Outreach & Engagement Team, which is comprised of departmental communications staff facilitating department specific education, outreach, and communication efforts.

In addition to public outreach, the City Communications Program supports internal City communications to staff through content development and posting on the City's intranet, SharePoint, and at times "all" emails. City Staff are encouraged to follow the City's social media and sign up for listservs that will assist them to be informed of City communication efforts.

Audiences

The primary focus of the Communications Program is to provide outreach to:

- Kirkland residents
- Kirkland employees

The Communications Program also supports outreach to:

- Kirkland businesses and their employees
- Kirkland neighborhood organizations
- Kirkland community organizations
- Developers/contractors
- Partner agencies
- Tourists/visitors

Content Strategy

The Communications Program provides a wide range of outreach to the Kirkland community including:

- Alerts regarding weather, traffic, service disruptions, beach closures, and Fire and Police emergencies.
- Education about safe and beneficial practices such as crime prevention, emergency preparedness, water conservation, flood prevention, and snow safety.

- Information about City Council processes and decisions, long-range planning, and significant City projects.
- Engagement opportunities such as forums, focus groups, and surveys.
- City events and other events presented in partnership with the City or by other government agencies.
- General information about City program and services such as recreation, parks, trails, beaches, surface water, utilities, volunteer opportunities, and human services.
- Public service announcements.

Communication Principles

Proactive communications: The Communications team works cross-departmentally to inform the public on large- and small-scale projects that may impact the quality of life among Kirkland residents, guests, commuters, and business owners.

Efficiency: The Communications team strives to effectively reach the Kirkland community using strategies and tactics that are achievable within allocated resources. Communications are integrated across multiple tactics. The Communications Program relies heavily on the collaboration and support of outreach staff across all City departments, particularly members of the Outreach & Engagement Team.

Accessibility and inclusivity: As guided by Council’s Resolution R-5434 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Communications team strives to produce City information that is accessible to all people and works to reduce barriers related to language, technology and economic status. Strategies related to accessibility and inclusivity are continually evolving.

Verifiable accuracy: The Communications team strives to provide information that is accurate and verifiable, using source data from reputable, acclaimed agencies and/or relying on subject matter experts in the City of Kirkland’s employment.

Community engagement: The City Manager’s Office has developed a robust set of communications protocols aggregated in a format known as a “TREK.” A TREK is a top priority civic engagement initiative led by the City Manager’s Office that maximizes community and stakeholder input to inform the City Council as it makes decisions on City policies and programs. TREKs are aimed at policy decisions with deep impacts to Kirkland residents, guests, business owners and employees. The Communications Program supports the outreach prior to, during, and after engagement processes.

Responsiveness: The Communications team makes every reasonable effort to engage with community members and business owners who have questions and concerns or need assistance in finding additional information.

Public safety and crisis management – Communications staff is trained in the basic framework of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as guided by FEMA and Kirkland’s Office of Emergency Management. During crisis, such as a severe weather incident, Communications staff works in tandem with the City Emergency Manager and the Joint Information Center (JIC), if activated, to provide consistent accurate messaging and support the priority information getting out to the public.

Current Primary Tactics

Press Releases: For significant issues, press releases are sent to local and regional media. In addition to sparking regional media interest, local media often republishes City of Kirkland press releases as news articles, furthering the reach of information. Media relations are coordinated through the Communications Program, except for urgent Fire or Police situations that have an on scene Public Information Officer (PIO).

Social Media: The City of Kirkland manages multiple social media accounts across several platforms. Some accounts are managed by the Communications Program, others by outreach staff within City departments (see chart below). Social media provides an immediate means of providing information to those who follow the accounts.

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	YouTube	Nextdoor	LinkedIn
City of Kirkland Communications Program	X	X	X	X	X	
Kirkland Parks & Community Services	X					
Kirkland Conserves	X	X				
Kirkland Police Department		X				
Explore Kirkland (Tourism)	X					
Human Resources						X

Listserves: The City's main listserv is This Week in Kirkland, a weekly roundup of City news from across City departments and managed by the Communications Program. Other listservs are topic-specific and are managed by outreach staff throughout the City. Currently, there are over 80 topics in all.

City website: The City's website, www.kirklandwa.gov, provides information about all City departments, services, and programs. Other communication tactics actively point toward the website for further information. The website is updated by a team of over 90 web editors spread across City departments and governed by a committee chaired by the Deputy City Manager, External Affairs and supported by the Communications Program Manager, the Planning Administrative Supervisor, an IT Supervisor, and other staff.

Video and Television: The City of Kirkland has in-house video production services which provide video for use online as well as on the City's cable television channels. The channels operate 24 hours a day, Channels 21 and 75 on Comcast cable, Channels 31 and 32 on Ziplly and an interactive website. Video production is managed by IT in partnership with the Communications Program.

Direct mail: The Communications Program employs "all-Kirkland" postal mailings on rare occasions for special programs and engagement processes. Other departments coordinate targeted mailings, such as construction alerts and planning/development notices.

Additional Tactics

Utility bill inserts: Utility bills are mailed to a portion of Kirkland residents and can be a cost-effective means of mailing.

Flyers and brochures: Print collateral placed in key locations and available at events can provide useful information for events, programs and services.

Fire Station Reader Boards: Digital reader boards located at Kirkland Fire Stations can be programmed with limited characters to convey important information.

Signage: Printed signs or mobile variable message boards provide highly visible information and can be an effective means of conveying information about events, projects and road closures.