

2016 ROCKFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATION/MARKETING PLAN

“Organizations can truly be authentic with all their communication strategies but if they aren’t relevant and adding value, the community will not fully believe the message.”



*Relevant Content is
Authentic, and
Equally Important,
Believable*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Successful initiatives have Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plans and provide execution against those plans. For each of the Rockford Housing Authority's competences and goals within the Five Year Strategic Plan, the intent of this document is to create a working, organic, updated 2016 Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plan which to interweave with Phases of the RHA Strategic Plan.

The suggested goals were taken from the guiding principles, objectives and action steps detailed in the recommendations in the RHA Strategic Plan, the prior Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plans. These indicate which of the RHA's strategic directions (or goals) the communication goals most directly relate to.

To support the RHA communication needs, the 2016 Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plan includes: What, Why, Who, When and How. There is no question that the status quo of Public Housing is unacceptable. Study upon study has shown that low-income residents have a better chance of succeeding if they are able to find housing in mixed-income neighborhoods.

What: The Content of the RHA Communication

Information is of two types, the Communication/Marketing Plan concentrates primarily on the Process Information, leaving the Product Information for the Strategic Plan which has its own area-specific methods to document:

Process Information: Information about the size, timing, costs, internal risks, reviews and other needed information about the status of the project, to manage it successfully.

Product Information: What the development will produce (scope of the phase II and III for alignment with the Strategic Plan), at what level of quality, and impacts or benefits for all constituencies. The different constituencies that RHA touches includes; the board of commissioners, the executive leadership team, staff, home board councils, residents and community partners.

Why: The Purposes of RHA Communication

This topic brings all the purposes of the communication together. Communication with no clear purpose or communication only provided because the standards require it is uneconomical and defeats the goals of the Strategic Plan.

RHA communicates for a number of reasons, abbreviated on the Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plan with the following:

C= Collect: Collect information from others, while increasing their ownership stake in the project. This ranges from determining the requirements needed to achieve benefit realization, to discovering the true current status of the project.

D = Decide: Persuade others to take action: to influence the different constituencies to decide to resolve an issue.

E = Exchange: Dialogue, to arrive at mutually agreeable ways to respond to Issues or Risks.

G = Govern: Project Governance, to meet legal, regulatory, enterprise, or standard process requirements.

I = Inform: Inform others, and get their commitment, causing all interested parties or stakeholders to engage in the project, to want it to succeed, and to help assure that it meets their needs.

RHA Communications that require action include information about the need to act, the timing for action, and the benefit of acting or the consequences of failing to act. This requires use of project information, not just data.

Who: Communication Responsibilities, and the Audiences

Project communication is not just the responsibility of the communication/marketing function. Team Members are the source of the information to communicate, so clearly the Executive Leadership Team have communication responsibilities. They have a responsibility to keep RHA key management and the board apprised about the project communication status and to assure that all communication issues are followed within the guidelines of the Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plan.

The audiences for communications can be narrow or very broad. Communication entries that list stakeholders as part of the audience may require more effort in communication than all the rest of the initiative. For example, the South New Towne project requires very specific tasks and will require more time to communicate with the community, to reduce resistance, fear and manage expectations.

Community Stakeholders include all those persons or groups, internal or external to the RHA organization, who are affected by a project's results, or all who can affect its success. Late discovery of additional stakeholders is one cause of scope changes. It also increases resistance to the organizational changes needed to implement the project results successfully.

Identify and communicate with all in the RHA's audience, to maintain their interest and support of the project phase, and to manage expectations that their needs will be met. A range of early project phase activities will identify Interested Parties by role or name, establish communication with them, and help identify the unique information and methods of conveyance required by each.

When: Timing of the Information

In the Communications Plan we have separated the different types of communication based on three different timings:

1. Initial Communication, from initial stimulus; this is key because often the majority of initiative problems occur because of gaps during this period.
2. Recurring Communication, repeated throughout the initiative; a risk of this category is that it seldom shows up on schedules, may be demand-driven, and easy to skip.
3. Close-out Communications, important both politically and in terms of benefit realization, the project is not over until the project results are achieved.

Information provided too late is a waste of energy: it is not actionable. There are two aspects to planning the timing of project information:

- RHA Executive Leadership Team collects project data and information on an ongoing and as-needed basis.
- RHA Executive Leadership Team reports the information either on a regular and predictable basis or in cases where immediate action is required, on an as-needed basis.

The Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plan lists the types of information to be communicated, and either their frequency, or the triggers that will cause it to be collected and reported.

Transmedia Defined

Transmedia is what the word parts suggest. It has capacity to be a merging of media forms, the digital with the narrative, across multiple platforms and part of the persuasive narrative. RHA Marketing through “Transmedia” is telling the RHA story across multiple media and preferably, although it doesn’t always transpire, with a degree of audience participation, interaction or collaboration. In transmedia storytelling, there is the opportunity for engagement with each successive media which heightens the audience’ understanding and awareness of the story. The embodiment of the story in each media needs to be satisfying in its own right while understanding from all the media will be greater than the sum of the parts.

Analysis is what drives business thinking. It cuts through the fog of myth, gossip, and speculation to get to the hard facts. It goes wherever the observations and premises and conclusions take it. Its strength lies in its objectivity, and its impersonality, however stated, Facts inform, but Stories sell. Yet this strength of fact is also a weakness. Analysis might excite the mind, but it hardly offers a route to the heart. And that’s where one must go if we are to motivate people not only to take action but to do so with energy and enthusiasm. At a time when corporate communication often requires disruptive change, leadership involves inspiring people to act in unfamiliar, and often unaccustomed, ways.

“Story outcomes” are the basis of what behaviorists define as a sequence of a decision making order. We first perceive, based on incoming observational thoughts that are then turned into beliefs which provide an outcome of attitudes. Put another way, Thoughts = Perceptions = (goes into) Beliefs = (turns into) Attitudes.

In conclusion, The Power of Narrative is as old as civilization. It not only has a process of implementing sequential, chronological information, but it also has the most important element of synthesizing information far different than facts alone. Combining the use of digital technology with communication you now have the ability to create a platform of Transmedia marketing in a whole new way.

How: Communication Distribution and Reporting

Effective communication is seeking action and must present the information in a way that is easiest for the respondent to act. This may mean considering developing a transmedia story by providing summary information or details, providing visuals (charts and graphs) or data (words or numbers), and whether the delivery method should be formal or informal.

Executing Communication

The flexibility to consistently produce targeted information for each audience, will depend on the action decision-makers, and target the communication preferences of the receiver. This challenge will be targeted with media, online, interactive, and print. Performing project communication is more than just executing a plan. It is an ongoing responsibility of each member of the RHA team to collect the information, to report it, and to respond, when needed; whether the communication takes place in meetings, via email and reports, or face-to-face and in one-on-one briefings.

The Power of Community

RHA is a gathering place of resources in our community. Building community through trust, which states “All are welcome here” is a foundation of our shared values. We can only achieve this through our community partnerships. With over thirty eight active and engaged strategic community partners and another hundred plus ‘based on need supporters’, RHA is able to identify, direct, and connect valuable community communication resources that are of paramount importance to the lives of our residents.

The executive leadership team provides leadership, counsel and training in order to accomplish the following communication goals that were stated in the Strategic Plan by the Board and staff.

The Executive Advisory Board (EAB) advises the CEO and the Executive Leadership Team in the activities of the Rockford Housing Authority and its ancillary companies; with particular emphasis on advancing housing, supportive services and human resources so that RHA can meet its mission.

The role is to strengthen the partnership between RHA, the Board and the community by:

- Providing feedback and advice to RHA on its strategies, programs, projects and services.
- Promoting the RHA's partnership within their organizations and the broader community.

RHA will need to consider the following:

What we can improve upon as stated in the Strategic Plan:

1. We need to move from property management (tactics) to property development (strategic)
2. We need to communicate (and thereby execute with more buy-in) the strategic plan better
3. We need to win the 'hearts and minds' of our residents
4. Respect the community heritage that currently exists
5. Move to an asset-based approach
6. It's not just about real estate – it's about people
7. MUST HAVE respect and accountability not only for the residents but for our properties
8. Commitment to quality
9. We must have an honest picture of resident programs and their needs
10. We must leverage connections with community partners (mental health, etc.). We can't do it all
11. We have to establish that we are not the housing of last resort

Focus the communication efforts on engaging stakeholders to take action on behalf of residents through the ***I am Rockford*** convocation.

Audiences

Internal Audiences

- Board of commissioners
- Staff
- Executive Leadership Team
- Executive Advisory Team

External Audiences

- Residents of RHA
- Business & Civic leaders
- Media
- Legislators
- Neighborhood groups
- Rockford School District
- New Rockford residents
- Prospective residents of RHA

Four Focus Areas of the Strategic Plan as Identified

These areas are:

- Finance and Administration
- Products and Services
- Clients and Stakeholders
- Employees

To effectively define the communication performance requirements of the Four Focus Areas of the Strategic Plan, the RHA Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plan will use SMART, a mnemonic device that is familiar to most. This mnemonic device is a technique that aids information retention. And provides meaning and will be understandable to everyone.

These areas are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Timed

Understanding the importance and value of RHA initiatives is vital to making decisions. Some of RHA's Key Criteria for the marketing/communication performance requirements are to accurately capture and access all the data from the marketing and communication projects.

Content Messaging Arc

Using the SMART goals as a performance requirement model, the plan will continue to focus content outlined below; to schedule, react, create, develop and implement transmedia communication across multiple platforms.

These areas are: *organization, programs, results, benefits and support*

- RHA's mission as an *organization*
- RHA's valuable *programs*
- The end *result* of the RHA programs (why should the audience care?)
- **I am Rockford** personal stories of residents and community members who have *benefited* from RHA programs and vision
- Why the audience needs to *support* RHA's important work through its initiatives such as ReBuild, Etsy, New Mix, Culinary Institute, sustainable food production practices and workforce readiness

Relevant Subject Matter of the RHA Initiatives based on Rich Content

The subject matter of the RHA initiatives consists primarily of the meanings which supply content and understanding to the Rockford community and the residents it serves. This very process tends to set up subject matter as something of value just by itself, apart from its function in promoting the realization of the meanings implied in the present experience of the role RHA plays in the community. For individuals who live in the “stream”; that is, Twitter, the Facebook news feed, Linked IN and Google Hangouts for example, are inundated daily with thousands upon thousands of marketing/communication messages. As a result, they are filtering out the content that is not relevant to them. Everything else is noise and usually ignored.

From the RHA brand perspective, the challenge is equally as clear. So, every form of content has to be consistent in order to break through the clutter in a relevant and authentic manner.

Relevant Content is Authentic, and Equally Important, Believable

The messaging on RHA’s media channels is relevant, and delivers valuable information, to the community and RHA residents. RHA’s Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plan is to essentially position them as a trusted advisor of content related to their own products and/or industry service related information outlined below. The key is to be authentic and trustworthy; with the end goal of being believable.

Many organizations can truly be authentic with all their communication strategies but if they aren’t relevant and adding value, the community will not fully believe the message. The end result is a huge disconnect and irrelevant messages that will be ignored. Building and fostering a healthy community; establishing trust and becoming believable takes time, however RHA will see positive results through the following relevant content. While this is list, maybe not all-inclusive, much of the content based on mission and vision are relevant and very specific to RHA’s programs and services.

RHA Content Indicatives

1. POVERTY REDUCTION

Education is critical to escape chronic poverty. For some people, poverty is transitory. But the more vulnerable remain poor for long periods, even all their lives, passing on their poverty to their children. Education is a key way of reducing chronic poverty. Economic Empowerment Initiative: Improving Lives through Community Collaboration. The Workforce Connection, part of Rockford’s statewide structure to help workers and unemployed job-seekers, along with one of their key partners, Rock River Training Corp suggests the importance of preparing prospective employees for the world of work — a tool to increase the likelihood that those who are hired would persist and thrive in their jobs. Working with community partners RHA assists participants through the Rebuild

program setting and reaching short-term and long-term goals to become self-sufficient and economically successful.

2. NUTRITION IMPROVEMENT

Nearly one-third of U.S. children and teens are overweight or obese. RHA is interested in supporting healthy changes to the food environment as a way of improving children's diets and overall health. Education helps ensure a varied diet that includes vital micronutrients. Young children lacking vitamin A and iron are more likely to be malnourished and more prone to infections and anemia. Children who eat breakfast perform better in school. According to reports from the American Dietetic Association students who eat breakfast have better problem-solving abilities, recall, memory, verbal fluency and creativity. They are also less likely to be absent, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that children who do not eat breakfast, or eat an insufficient breakfast, are more likely to have behavioral, emotional and academic problems at school. Additional studies show that education contributes to lower obesity levels. Receiving advice on healthy eating and weight control tends to be more effective with better-educated people.

3. HEALTH GAINS

RHA working with community partners works to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages. Maternal education reduces all the factors that put children most at risk of dying from pneumonia, including failure to carry out vaccinations. Teaching and training young mothers the importance of education in health care are the first steps to empowerment and growth. Nutrient-dense foods such as fresh fruit and vegetables provide children with many essential nutrients needed for optimal growth and health.

How a child eats today will have a striking impact on their health throughout adolescence and adulthood. Consuming nutritious foods helps children and teens grow, develop, do well academically and feel good about themselves. Good nutrition also helps prevent child and teen issues such as eating disorders, obesity, dental cavities and iron-deficiency anemia.

RHA's involvement in these programs in conjunction with Angelic Organics is to connect people to the land, garden knowledge, to sustainable food production practices, to healthy living; all will assist RHA residents to improve their capacity to practice effective social, economic, cultural and ecologically sound cooperation with others. Rockford Housing Authority recognizes that a transition to a more sustainable society is needed if we are to leave a healthy natural environment, a prosperous economy and vibrant communities for future generations.

4. EDUCATION DELIVERY

RHA working with community partners works to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all. Access to education is

necessary but not a sufficient enough condition for education to positively impact development outcomes. Where children are not learning due to poor environmental quality, they are more likely to repeat grades and ultimately drop out. When learning starts in infancy, achievement and attainment are greater in primary school and beyond. Stimulating children's cognitive development early has large positive effects on children's future trajectories. To tap into education's power to bring change, RHA working with community partners via the ConnectHome initiative, to create new educational pathways, is a new pathway for education delivery. ConnectHome is a platform for collaboration between local governments, public housing agencies, Internet service providers, philanthropic foundations, nonprofit organizations, and other relevant stakeholders that will produce local solutions for narrowing the digital divide. ConnectHome will help ensure that students still have access to high-speed Internet once they are home. Having broad band access with functional devices in low income homes will help bridge student achievement gaps and adult access to jobs and education.

5. GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT

RHA working with community partners works to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Education can be part of a social transformation process involving men, women, boys and girls toward developing a more gender just community. Education can empower women to overcome forms of gender discrimination so they can make more informed choices about their lives. Such empowerment benefits women but also benefits the living conditions of their children and strengthens the Rockford community.

6. ENERGY SUSTAINABILITY

Working with community partners Rockford Housing Authority is accelerating the transformation of urban systems and infrastructure initiatives by helping to solve the most pressing sustainability challenges facing our community today. From deploying resiliency technologies to supporting the community ecosystem, Rockford Housing Authority is developing best practices for overcoming the unique barriers to clean and urban technology deployment in our community. Key to this strategy is supporting our community partners by overcoming barriers to implementation, and a review of state-of-the-art technologies

7. NEIGHBORHOOD AND DEVELOPMENT

RHA partners with the community and responsible residents to transform houses into homes while guiding families to self-sufficiency. RHA recognizes that all of its housing developments must provide quality of life opportunities for its residents and positively contribute to the neighborhood and community in which it is located. To ensure RHA developments meet these goals, RHA has developed a "best practices" in resident housing and community development services and practices which have focused these into a RHA redevelopment plan.

RHA supports Neighborhood associations to facilitate communication between residents and local government to support change, help organize volunteers for community projects, and organize improvement efforts. When a neighborhood needs improvements, local residents are the best resources to help initiate change. Neighborhood associations are a great resource for RHA staff and residents to develop long range beautification and improvement projects.

8. PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

RHA working with community partners to invoke community education and insight does not just alter attitudes, education helps prevent conflict and heal its consequences. Violence is a fundamental dimension of human suffering, just as are poverty and oppression. Violence darkens lives and destroys hope across the community. In the planning and implementation of development, humanitarian, economic or security engagement, RHA always seeks to do no harm, to ensure that unintentionally or otherwise, the consequences of that engagement do not themselves make things worse. The Goals and targets of the RHA five year plan will stimulate action over the next five years in areas of affordable housing will impact the Rockford community and their subsequent neighborhoods. RHA is determined to foster peaceful communication, and an all-inclusive community which is free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

9. ECONOMIC GROWTH

The term economic development encompasses the process, policies, and activities by which a community improves the long-term economic and social well-being of its people. The objective of economic growth is a sustainable increase in living standards, including per capita income, education, health, and environmental protection. The spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate progress for our residents, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge and opportunities. Through this technologically-based global economy, considerable emphasis is placed on the contribution made by people, or what economists refer to as human capital, to economic growth for a community. The theory is that the relative contribution of individuals to growth depends on their human capital – the knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes that are relevant to economic activity. Investment in human capital, that is, in education and skills training, is three times as important to economic growth over the long run as investment in physical capital, such as machinery and equipment. The results also show that direct measures of human capital based on literacy scores perform better than years-of-schooling indicators when explaining growth in output per capita and per worker.*

**A recent study used data from IALS to investigate the relationship between educational attainment, literacy skills and economic growth.*

These results together suggest that measured subjective well-being grows hand in hand with material living standards. Economic development is an important part of strengthening communities by creating and retaining jobs and income plays an

important role in influencing well-being. RHA working with community partners provides quality, affordable housing and also the vital support services needed to thrive. For low and moderate-income households, RHA creates and manages housing for individuals who may have been homeless, families with children, the elderly, people with disabilities and veterans and their families. RHA is dedicated to helping make our community more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable through community planning and development in conjunction with our partners. HUD's family self-sufficiency (FSS) program helps eligible individuals acquire the skills and experience they need to obtain work that pays a living wage, then offers them a unique savings opportunity as their earnings increase in an escrow account. RHA works with welfare agencies, schools, businesses, and other local partners to help FSS participants' access services including child care, transportation, education and training and home-ownership counseling.

RHA Social Media Situational Analysis

The development of RHA social media as a form of marketing communication has taken a different direction than those of traditional methods used in the past. Social media is a bottom-up approach that is created by stakeholders. The RHA Social media has created an intricate word-of-mouth network, where information is shared freely and instantly. The limitation of hierarchical, centralized message control is not present, nor is the constraint of time.

Unfortunately, in the realm of social media in the marketplace, timely information is more often given priority over accurate information disseminated in the Rockford community. The result can be harmful, especially if individuals who are spreading inaccurate information actually increase the perpetuation of misinformation. In an attempt to engage social media, RHA social media policies, for disseminating social media messages are assigned to the CEO and delegated respectively to the multimedia marketing firm. This policy allows RHA the freedom to utilize social media under a controlled, measured environment.

RHA Social media's networking potential can be very helpful in providing stakeholder information in the absence of other communication methods. Social media has allowed for spontaneous groups to initiate messaging and communicate with targeted populations such as Together Rockford, Transform Rockford, New Mix, Fun Safe Community and Next Rockford.

Market Segmentation

Market segmentation is an integral part of a RHA's communication and marketing strategy. It is the process of breaking down a larger target market into smaller, more homogeneous groups of residents and the community at large that RHA can more efficiently market to. RHA market segmentation will use more than one type of variable and will rely upon all types of variables outlined below.

The RHA *Demographic market segmentation* is the most common approach to the segmenting market. With this strategy, RHA will divide the larger market into groups based on several defined traits. Age, race, gender, marital status, occupation, education

and income are among the commonly considered demographics segmentation traits. However, demographic segmentation tends to be less powerful than other methods of market segmentation. Just because two residents live in the same affordable public housing does not mean they share beliefs or are moved by the same type of messaging.

The *RHA Geographic community segmentation* is used to communicate specific services and RHA products such as scattered sites to a specific group within the community. RHA will get no benefit outside of the market paying for television, radio, and magazine and newspaper ads.

Psychographics

The *RHA Psychographics or lifestyle segmentation* look to identify consumers based on interests and activities in conjunction with the RHA demographics. *Behavioral segmentation* of psychographic profiles is based on user and resident behaviors, including patterns of use, income sensitivity and benefits sought. RHA may have residents with a similar demographic makeup with distinct behavioral tendencies. For example this may prompt RHA to target specific services and products to one group of offerings for lower-income single parent who has a child at risk of not graduating from high school. However, behaviors can change over time, even among a specific demographic group. Also, behaviors tell what is happening but they do not explain why.

Attitudinal Market Segmentation

This type of *Attitudinal Market Segmentation* is powerful, because it identifies needs, beliefs and hopes. However, it can be more difficult to explain and more difficult to act upon. The RHA market can be segmented and viewed in many different ways. By doing so, RHA will garner and gain a greater understanding of the overall marketplace and is more likely to identify unmet needs sometimes referred to as market gaps, which are identified through using perceptual maps. This is a marketing technique for example in which residents' views about a location or RHA service such as ReBuild which is traced or plotted (mapped) on a chart. Resident Respondents are asked questions about their experience with the service in terms of its performance, site security, maintenance, safety, peace of mind, comfort, wellbeing, etc. These qualitative answers are transferred to a chart (called a perceptual map) using a suitable scale (such as the Likert scale), and the results are employed in improving the service or in developing a new one.

EXAMPLE of Resident Respondents

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Never	Occasionally	Fairly Many Times	Very Often	Always
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the Time	
Not At All	Occasionally	Frequently		
None	Some	Quite a Bit	An Extreme Amount	All
Far Too Little	Too Little	About Right	Too Much	Far Too Much
Much Lower	Slightly Lower	About the Same	Higher	Much Higher
One of the Worst	Below average	Average	above Average	One of the
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good

Likert scales usually have five potential choices (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) but sometimes go up to ten or more. The final average score represents overall level of accomplishment or attitude toward the subject matter.

Engaging Content with Relevant Subject Matter of the RHA Initiatives

One of the ways to understand who is influencing a conversation topic is to identify specific content that has had the principal impact. Whose Tweets, posts, or photos are driving the conversation? What made that content successful as a part of that conversation? In addition to relevance, it will be important to understand the sentiment around a specific topic and/or conversation. By analyzing which content drives a positive reaction versus a negative reaction, the plan will be to continue to zero in on the position of the audience involved, the overall feeling around the topic, and the response based on the “push” of engaging content. For example, the specific components that evoke an emotional reaction in the Hashtag # lamrockford combined with the relevant subject matter of an E-blast or a RHA Blog, the Plan will be able to use that insight to develop an action program or next step. The convocation of ***I Am Rockford*** as an initiative of the RHA brand, and the web series “FEAR” as an acronym are prime examples of influencing a conversation topic. The RHA social analytics framework is the one of the essential components of the process that enables RHA to plan and measure their social programs.

The community conversations, in the form of round table discussions, RHA is able to analyze the influence of the conversations.

These are four main attributes to determine RHA influence:

- Audience Characteristics
- Most Active Participants
- Most Influential Participants
- Most Influential Content

By identifying the total number of people reached via a specified conversation, RHA can make better decisions about RHA brand's involvement. Understanding interest and impact equates to understanding the volume of mentions and reach of a specific content, and can then be applied to analyzing influence, sentiment, and relevance. These Analytics in the planning category of engaging content involves collecting insight and intelligence about a broader social ecosystem, focusing outward instead of on specific brand activities to define strategic initiatives noted above.

People translate sensory impressions into a coherent and unified view of the community around them. Though necessarily based on incomplete and unverified (or unreliable) information, perception is equated with reality for most practical purposes and guides human behavior in general. People are symbol creators, imbuing direct impressions with collateral meanings, and inventing symbols, words that stand for direct and indirect impressions. In this way whatever they have perceived or learned can be recalled and manipulated.

For example, when RHA uses the word "equality" the word has no concrete meaning outside of mathematics. When applied to community interaction with the RHA mission, equality means what and whoever is defining it says it means. However, "equality" is a label. The label it triggers a stereotype; that stereotype determines the word's definition for the person holding the stereotype. An image could be conjured in the mind of several people of both sexes and a range of races standing together in easy companionship. Whatever the marketplace associates with the word equality becomes the definition. These associations are the stereotype. The odds of it being exactly the same as anyone else's definition is small, but with enough points of similarity the RHA symbol can be used for communication.

The Power of Fact-Based Marketing

Reality is a very fluid concept. What one sees as real is only defined by the belief structure. Often it is confused with perception and mixed with reality. That is, individuals in the community mistake how they understand things for the way that they really are. Their thoughts and feelings seem real to them, so they conclude that they must be true.

"Insight is a new configuration of knowledge that breaks the existing pattern of thinking in an unexpected way." This definition of insight comes from Luke Williams, professor of marketing and innovation at the NYU Stern School of Business. "You can say what you want about who you think you are, but it is ultimately your community who define your brand". Based on their experiences, and the experiences of their friends, the community forms their own perceptions and attitudes of the RHA brand. Another important reason

for embracing fact-based marketing is to mitigate the inherent cognitive biases. “Evidence-based management” or “data-driven decision-making” are other names applied to this platform. This approach has four key characteristics:

1. The communication is based on facts and analysis -- not intuition and personality.
2. The structure of the communication is well understood, and the decision is carefully framed to reflect the reality of the outside world.
3. Analysis is hypothesis-driven, focused in areas that drive choices between options.
4. Data gathered to support the communication is relevant and reliable (key drivers, apples-to-apples comparisons, data integrity, quantifying qualitative information).

A fact-based marketing approach is both critical and can be successful in today’s community environment. It is critical because RHA is perceived much different than it really is. A fact-based approach is successful because:

- 1) such an approach makes it more effective to getting people on the same page, and
- 2) it improves the odds of creating communication that will lead to a successful outcomes because the marketing is based on data and an understanding of what will drive RHA value -- *not* on community politics, fear or perception.

The following is an example of a fact-based marketing approach utilizing a particular model of current reality in the Rockford community.

NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION STUDY - OUT OF REACH 2015

National Low Income Housing Coalition is dedicated solely to achieving socially just public policy that assures people with the lowest incomes in the United States have affordable and decent homes. The data provided in this report is to gain a fuller understanding of the housing needs facing the Rockford community and to effect positive change through the RHA 2016 Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plan. The data in Out of Reach is sobering. In the Rockford community, working families searching for affordable rental units find little to nothing in their price range. There simply isn’t enough reasonably priced, decently maintained housing to meet the demand, and rapidly rising rents outpace wages. As a result, many households spend more than half their income on housing costs. People with low or fixed incomes face even bleaker situations in our community. Obstacles persist for low Income renters in the Rockford community. There is no state in the U.S. where a minimum wage worker working full time can afford a one-bedroom apartment at the fair market rent.

In Illinois, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$977. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities — without paying more than 30% of income on

housing — a household must earn \$3,256 monthly or \$39,067 annually. Assuming a 40-hour work week, 52 weeks per year, and this level of income translates into an hourly Housing Wage of: \$18.78 per hour.

In Winnebago County, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$741. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities — without paying more than 30% of income on housing — a household must earn \$2470 monthly or \$29,640 annually. Assuming a 40-hour work week, 52 weeks per year, and this level of income translates into an hourly Housing Wage of: \$15.43 per hour.

Target Markets

Target markets are one of the most important aspects of marketing by defining the RHA target market or segmenting the market will help decide where to commit resources and what kinds of promotional methods and messages to be use.

Marketing strategy is an explanation of the goals RHA needs to achieve with the marketing efforts. The RHA marketing strategy is shaped by the Strategic Plan's business goals. The RHA business goals and RHA marketing strategy should go hand-in-hand. This marketing plan is how RHA is going to achieve those marketing goals. It's the application of strategy that will guide RHA from one point to another.

The RHA marketing and communication messages will highlight some of the economic challenges facing low income renters, including lagging wages, inconsistent job growth, and the rising cost of living. Undoubtedly, the lack of affordable housing remains the overarching problem for low income households, a problem made worse by these economic challenges. Expanding and preserving the supply of quality, affordable housing is essential to the RHA strategy.

Social Viruses of Thought

Messaging is much like story telling. To be effective, the RHA story will be told through a consistent voice, enforce a value-based theme, and speak to a specific audience. A Meme is a message "hosted" in the minds of one or more individuals, and which can reproduce itself, thereby jumping from mind to mind. Memes are an ever-present part of the online experience, especially on social channels. The internet phenomenon has grown, along with the visual nature of the web and social media. A meme spread online could be just about anything that is voluntarily shared, including phrases, images, rumors and audio or video files. An Internet meme might originate and stay online. However, frequently memes cross over and may spread from the offline world to online or vice-versa. A meme is the cultural counterpart to the unit of physical heredity, the gene. Memes are like genes in a human's body in that they self-replicate, mutate, and respond to selective pressures.

Social Viruses of thought have been with us throughout history, but they are constantly evolving and changing. They are infectious pieces of culture that spread rapidly throughout a community, altering people's thoughts and lives in their wake. A social meme is an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture

or a community. A meme acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices that can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals, or other imitable phenomena with a mimicked theme.

“Not-in-my-backyard” (NIMBY): MARKETPLACE & BRAND PERCEPTION

Whether new housing is government assisted or market rate, it can face opposition from established residents in a community. Not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY): NIMBY sentiments may prevent a community from developing services and facilities that are needed by the community. NIMBY is a pejorative characterization of opposition by residents to a proposal for a new development because it is close to them, often with the connotation that such residents believe that the developments are needed in society but should be further away. Opposing residents themselves are sometimes called Nimbies. People give many reasons for their opposition to new houses; some are related to their effects on people next door. Quantitative analysis suggests that projects generating NIMBY protests are distinct from projects that generate other kinds of protests, especially those against growth more generally.

"Since affordable housing development involves such a delicate process, even a slight delay can sink a project. When opposition succeeds, it limits the effectiveness of public policies driving the development of affordable housing, hindering access to opportunity for moderate-and low income families, ** quality of design, density, height and the neighborhood effects, such as property value decline, traffic volumes, parking and crime, are raised. While there has been significant attention to understanding and responding to the concerns related to the physical character of affordable housing and neighborhood effects, there has been far less attention paid to how the social construction of affordable housing tenants frame the debate and can alter or deter the development of affordable housing in a community. "****

Established residents often oppose new housing developments on the grounds that those developments will make the area more congested and diminish the character the area had when they moved to it. The developers would profit economically, but the quality of life of existing residents might decline. Therefore, it is reasonable to extend similar assumptions to public attitudes toward affordable housing. Moreover, the parents in the receiving neighborhoods may be concerned that their local public schools will become overcrowded and that low-income kids from the Low Income Units will exert negative peer influences. Furthermore, widespread speculation exists in the field that NIMBY concerns regarding property values, crime, and school crowding are simply publicly professed concerns that serve to disguise privately held prejudice. Regardless of the particular factors at play in each siting battle or NIMBY attitude, it remains important to understand who opposes affordable housing and why they hold such attitudes.

*Opposition to housing: NIMBY and beyond. Available from: <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/233870060> accessed Nov 30, 2015].

** (Advisory Commission on Regulatory Barriers to Affordable Housing, 1991; Pendall, 1999)

*** (Anonymous, 1993, Dear 1992, Fischel 2001, Freeman 2003, Galster, Pettit, Santiago & Talian 2002, Lundquist-Clampet 2004, National Low-Income Housing Coalition 2001, Nguyen 2005, Pendall 1999, Santiago, Galster & Pettit 2003, and for a review, see Shively 2007)

COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES

A pre-determined plan which is format based on the four-step public relations process of research, planning and assessment, communication and evaluation includes;

1. Continue to develop clear, consistent messages that are delivered in “one clear voice.”
2. Continue to engage regular communication with the various publics and community stakeholders.
3. Implement a “RHA Team speaker’s bureau” as ombudsmen for use by community stakeholders and business organizations.
4. Create and provide in service training and review “ambassador role” with Team Leaders staff on a regular basis and recognize employee efforts as ambassadors to the community as part of I am Rockford.
5. Target new audience: Business/community leaders and their employees by providing news inserts for business/community publications.
6. Target new audience: Broad-based Faith community leaders, Initiate regular communication with local clergy as a group and kick off with a community Summit.
7. Establish and identify a new Key Communicator Network (beyond the RHA existing Network) which includes influential parents, community and business leaders, including existing community minority leaders, which RHA may not have engaged with regularity.
8. Redesign the RHA newsletter to keep key communicators informed between meetings of the new targeted groups.
9. Continue to hold town halls or forums to target the silent majority.
10. Continue to provide communication in-service training for staff.

Task Evaluation for the Communication Team

1. Understand the size/scope of the initiative, identify initial effort, additional costs, and set timelines, typically for alternative strategies.
2. Identify, evaluate and recommend alternative approaches, timings, staging, or delaying options, with strengths and weaknesses of the best alternatives.

3. Identify and manage risk opportunities and threats, responses, and responsibilities for administering them.
4. Identify timing, resources needed for next phase(s) of the I am Rockford communication Initiative.
5. Identify a safe manner for team members to share perspectives, attitudes, concerns, questions and accomplishments, either anonymous or signed.
6. Resolve open issues around Fairgrounds and New Towne before they further impact the communication initiative.
7. Capture and apply the most important lessons learned for in the, ***I am Rockford*** initiative, and for future initiatives.
8. Inform all interested parties, stakeholders and others; obtain their commitment to engage in the project, to want it to succeed, and to help assure that it meets their needs.

Through this Task Evaluation for the Communication Team, RHA will find new approaches to project management; discover key elements of the project communication process; learn how to schedule new projects and manage their scope; and, importantly, discover how to win new community stakeholder support and manage the communication channels.

The following established 2014-2015 goals are recognized as integrated activities for long-term success in conjunction with the RHA strategic plan:

- Develop and maintain positive collaborative relationships with the community to strengthen support for RHA
 - ☑ Involve stakeholders in RHA initiatives
 - ☑ Use electronic communication tools to provide information for all stakeholders
 - ☑ Build and maintain partnerships with business and community leaders
 - ☑ Develop a process for tracking, monitoring and responding to complaints
- Utilize a variety of media to maximize awareness and support of RHA's goals, objectives and programs
 - ☑ Use electronic, print, social and mass media tools to promote awareness and interest in RHA
- Establish an effective employee Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plan to improve internal communication and employee engagement
 - ☑ Work with human resources to coordinate clear, consistent messages to staff members
 - ☑ Launch and manage RHA intranet site and promote it as the primary source of information for staff members

- ☑ Provide ongoing professional development and training for staff members
- Establish strong, positive connections between RHA properties and their communities
 - ☑ Provide training for property communication teams to facilitate communication among staff and community
 - ☑ Provide resources for staff members and resident leaders and encourage their use in order to build connections and partnerships in the community
 - ☑ Increase opportunities for recognition among leaders in RHA
- Achieve coordinated communications, both internally and externally, regarding safety issues and crisis management
- Create key messages and talking points about RHA to establish “one clear voice” throughout all communication channels
 - ☑ Utilize the RHA executive team to review and offer feedback on Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Planning projects conducted by the agency
 - ☑ Use research from the The Alliance, ReThink, NAHRO and PHADA to continue to incorporate key issue content and management into the communication effort
- Establish a clear brand identity for the agency and build on that image and reputation
 - ☑ Use design guidelines to recommend accountability and evaluation methods for RHA in the production of communication materials
- Maintain a proactive media relations program to enhance RHA’s image on local, state, and national levels
 - ☑ Build relationships with media through one-on-one story development
 - ☑ Develop and sustain relationships with local emergency management officials
 - ☑ Utilize a variety of communication tactics to share information with staff and residents about safety plans and crisis management
- Utilize effective operational practices to provide good customer service, increased efficiency and quality printed materials

Media to Support Rockford Housing Authority

- Web
 - ☑ Maintain RHA website
 - ☑ Implement and maintain social media tools
 - ☑ Manage one centralized calendar on the external website

- ☑ Train key personnel for effective use of RHA’s website using content management strategies
- Video
 - ☑ Broadcast video/media through social media
 - ☑ Produce video/media of RHA special events to support internal communications
 - ☑ Create video/media (informational and educational in format) for release on website and RHA e-news
 - ☑ Utilize instructional video/media to build awareness of RHA
- Print
 - ☑ Guide staff with the publication and distribution channels of RHA news by providing templates
 - ☑ Publish RHA news to reach patrons with messages targeting key goals and RHA finances
- Media
 - ☑ Conduct media training with executive team
 - ☑ Maintain online “press room” on the RHA website to continuously update media about initiatives and programs
 - ☑ Distribute fact sheets of RHA goals and objectives to media and update the community on RHA progress

Communication Channels

A multifaceted approach to overall communication helps ensure greater impact of messages. The following list details the internal and external communication channels RHA utilizes:

- Email
- Voicemail
- Posters
- Flyers and Brochures
- Newsletters
- Website / Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, other)
- Letters to the Editor
- News stories, columns and reports (Rockford Register Star, Rock River Times, etc.)
- Press releases and press conferences
- Presentations or presence at local events and local and national conferences, and other gatherings
- Community outreach
- Community or national events
- Public demonstrations
- Word of mouth
- Videos

- TV / Radio
- Exhibits of public art

The Rising Cost of Community Attention

Attention is a necessary ingredient for effective paid advertising.

The market for community attention or “eyeballs” has become so competitive that attention can be regarded as a currency. The digital world is vast and complex, with dozens of channels and strategies that can be employed to gain RHA brand awareness. Paid media has been core to marketing for an incredibly long time; it is an evolution for Transmedia marketing with content for social platforms. Corporate Marketers are using more paid advertising. It has often been said, “One needs to market your marketing.” and, while earned and owned social media are quite prominent, those who fare better in content marketing rely on paid media as well. Poor exposure, or worse, no exposure can make RHA’s market position tenuous and as a result affect the mission and the vision of the organization.

These are important times and there are groups whose voices can overtly circumvent the RHA Strategic Plan. Unlike public-relations efforts, RHA can determine exactly where, when and how often the message will appear, how it will look and what it will say. RHA can target an audience more readily and aim at very specific groups. Building awareness and trust is a distinctive part of the brand identity of RHA. This awareness is an important component for the community messaging and will eventually become clearly associated with RHA by presenting RHA's image and messages positively and repeatedly. The community will recognize the RHA brand and services more readily and understandably in a consistent paid media presentation.

The effectiveness of paid advertising by RHA improves gradually over time because it's impossible for everyone in the community to see every ad. RHA repeatedly reminds the community and prospective residents about the benefits of the services that are provided by RHA. This long-term effort triggers recognition and helps counter the vocal few and has a direct a marketing payoff, by mapping out the long-range goals of the five year plan, and then determining how specifically marketing can help attain them. Paid advertising is very powerful at creating image.

The intention of most of the RHA messages is to inform, persuade, or remind about the services RHA provides - usually with the intention of gaining new visibility in the marketplace.

Branding is about building and maintaining a reputation for RHA that distinguishes the organization in the marketplace. Broadcast media offers creative opportunities, a dynamic message and wide audience reach. Print media allows RHA to target a geographic segment for a specific product or service. Newspapers are also viewed as a credible medium, which enhances ad acceptance, however declining circulation; a short shelf life and limited visual creativity are drawbacks. Support media include several options for message delivery which normally add to or expand campaigns delivered through more traditional media. Billboards, interior transit signage, bus benches, bus

wraps, local directories and trade publications are common support media. Each has pros and cons, but collectively, they offer ways to reach a wider audience in the community to increase frequency of message exposure to targeted market segments. Direct mail is the most common format of direct marketing where RHA mailers or postcards are targeted to specific addresses within the community. Direct marketing has become more prominent because it allows for ease in tracking community response rates and will help RHA better measure return on investment. The Internet media or “online advertising” can be used for online pop up ads, text ads and paid search placements which are common forms to drive awareness to the RHA website. Paid search placements, paid sponsor, also known as cost-per-click advertising, is a directed budget amount to present links, web videos and text/image messages to users of search engines such as Google. The segmentation opportunities in Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter marketing, gives RHA the opportunity to reach closely the part of the population within a community it wishes to target, which makes paid advertising more effective than organic searches.

Current Communication Status

The anger, fear and frustration that have been displayed by some Rockford residents toward a plan to build affordable housing on the city’s east side and the subsequent fallout is a moniker of communication encounters listed below. We need to get beyond these current, critical issues. These communication challenges need to be addressed.

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES FOR RHA

1. The major asset most people have is their homes, and any proposal that could cause or be perceived that asset to lose value, is a perceived attack. Expressing that fear is not necessarily “racist” as some have implied, although there were hints of racism throughout the meeting in June of 2015 and continues as the Project moves forward. With individual tempers flaring, sometimes rude and intimidating behavior, fear has become commonplace for some people.
2. The individual residential real estate in the New Towne neighborhood has become a diminishing asset to their owners, commencing in 2007 and continues today. When these same individuals open their property tax bills they see their tax rates increase while their property values have declined. This is a catalyst of motive and a communication push back.
3. The commercial shopping strip that used to be home to Circuit City and Pep Boys within the commercial district near South New Towne Drive, in conjunction with several other empty stores, has added to fuel this fear in the community.
4. Gorman & Company representatives were barely allowed to complete their presentation in June of 2015 and the perceived lack of communication during those months have created additional anxiety. At that time many members of

the audience didn't seem to care about the facts that were presented; they were there to say no, no matter what they heard.

5. The real and perceived increase in crime throughout the city has certain residents also fearing that crime will increase in their neighborhood with the arrival of RHA residents in new Towne.
6. The perceived influx of large numbers of children in the neighborhood has current residents concerned about overcrowding of the neighborhood schools.

Summary

In summary, the 2016 Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plan recommends that RHA establish a formalized executable quarterly paid advertising subset marketing budget during this volatile and disconcerting period in the community. The benefit of this objective method is that it allows RHA to correlate advertising expenditures with the overall marketing objectives. This correlation is important because it aligns the focus on primary business goals of the RHA Five Year Plan. Certainly the options are many, including print media (newspaper, magazine, and direct mail), radio, television, and the Internet. The media mix, is necessary to reach as much of the RHA target audience as possible. The mix of media that is eventually chosen to carry the RHA's message is really the heart of the paid advertising strategy. The objective is to go to the sources used most by the RHA target market, especially a source that that the community looks to for information making paid advertising as cost effective as possible.

If major RHA strategic changes are to be implemented and achieved, then previous budgets might not be relevant and with this new RHA marketing budget initiative, the recommendation is to provide at least 2 to 3 years to justify its existence as the Strategic Plan evolves.

Conclusion

The concept set forth in this updated 2016 Comprehensive Communication/Marketing Plan is interwoven with Phases of the RHA Strategic Plan. The overall strategy is to encompass the communities' impression, awareness and/or consciousness about RHA or its offerings. This perception is typically affected by advertising, reviews, public relations, social media, personal experiences and other channels. The community at large has subconsciously been selective as to what they perceive. An individual may look at some things, ignore others, and turn away from still others. The stimuli selected depend on two major factors; the communities' previous experience and the individuals' motives. Largely speaking the Rockford community has a Perceptual Distortion of what is perceived reality when it comes to affordable housing.

ATTACHMENTS

Goals defined in 2014 - 2015

The Rockford Housing Authority will market the RHA as a premier provider of housing and community development and human services. Staff will strategically focus marketing & communications efforts toward target audiences that will maximize positive brand and economic impact for stakeholders.

Goal 1: Maintain and strengthen financial viability.

Through interaction with Finance and Executive Staff, the following will help us recognize this goal –

1. Market improvements and efficiencies made using operating and capital funds
2. Market improvements made using unique resources
3. Market programs and development ventures that produce income/cash flow

Goal 2: Develop Non-HUD income streams.

Through interaction with the Finance, Executive Staff and Committees the following will help us recognize this goal –

1. Market grant and programmatic receipts
2. Market progress of the Revenue Growth Committee
3. Market programs and development ventures that produce non-federal income

Goal 3: Through demolition, disposition, or a combination of redevelopment and demolition, transition our residents into modern affordable housing family developments.

Through interaction with the Redevelopment Manager, QA Manager, Director of Housing Operations, Property Management and Managing Agents, Foreman and Executive Staff, the following will help us recognize this goal -

1. Routinely promote development and redevelopment plans and strategies
2. Market real estate portfolio progress and success to residents and to the community
3. Promote resident stories and perspectives on property and neighborhood transformation

Goal 4: Upgrade the Scattered Site program.

Through interaction with the Redevelopment Manager, QA Manager, Director of Housing Operations, Property Management and Managing Agents, Foreman and Executive Staff, the following will help us recognize this goal –

1. Routinely promote development and redevelopment plans and strategies
2. Market real estate portfolio progress and success to residents and to the community
3. Promote resident stories and perspectives on property and neighborhood transformation

Goal 5: Upgrade and modernize the high rise and low rise building

Through interaction with the Redevelopment Manager, QA Manager, Director of Housing Operations, Property Management and Managing Agents, Foreman and Executive Staff, the following will help us recognize this goal –

1. Routinely promote development and redevelopment plans and strategies
2. Market real estate portfolio progress and success to residents and to the community
3. Promote resident stories and perspectives on property and neighborhood transformation

Goal 6: Expand case management capabilities in our Resident Services Departments Through interaction with the Human and Community Services Management and Executive Staff, the following can help us recognize this goal –

1. Routinely promote resident services programs, opportunities and strategies
2. Market resident progress and success to residents and to the community
3. Promote resident stories and perspectives on personal or family transformation

Goal 7: Require greater accountability for participants and landlords of all HCV programs. Through interaction with the Director of Housing Operations, QA Manager, Human and Community Services Management, Housing Policy Manager and Executive Staff, the following can help us recognize this goal -

1. Routinely promote landlord and neighborhood successes
2. Market resident progress and success
3. Promote resident stories and perspectives on neighborhood transformation
4. As directed, promote fraudulent or improper activity to build enforcement and accountability

Goal 8: Achieve greater accountability for public housing residents through strengthening lease enforcement and lease provisions as well as enhanced monitoring and training. Through interaction with the Redevelopment Manager, QA Manager, Director of Housing Operations, Human and Community Services Management, Property Management and Managing Agents, Foreman, Housing Policy Manager and Executive Staff, the following will help us recognize this goal –

1. Routinely promote Management, Maintenance and community successes
2. Market resident progress and success
3. Promote resident stories and perspectives on community transformation
4. As directed, promote fraudulent or improper activity to build enforcement and accountability

Goal 9: Continue to improve efficiency and effectiveness of our work force through targeted training programs and hiring practices

Through interaction with the Human Resources Manager, Committees and Executive Staff, the following can help us recognize this goal –

1. Routinely promote staff successes
2. Promote staff and team building opportunities
3. Market HR initiatives

Goal 10: Continue to focus on curb appeal of the exterior and interior of our developments. Through interaction with the Redevelopment Manager, QA Manager, Director of Housing Operations, Human and Community Services Management, Property Management and Managing Agents, Foreman and Executive Staff, the following will help us recognize this goal –

1. Routinely promote Management, Maintenance and community successes
2. Market resident progress and success
3. Promote community transformation

Goal 11: Provide a safe environment for our residents. Through Interaction with The Housing Policy Manager, Director of Housing Programs, Human and Community Services Management, Property Management and Managing Agents and Executive Staff, The following can help us to market this goal –

1. Routinely promote Management, Maintenance, Resident and community successes
2. Promote positive gains in community transformation
3. As directed, promote improper activity to build enforcement and accountability