



COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT: HOW WE CONNECT

Why This Matters For Sartell:

Sartell's approach to communication is one that values its citizens' opinions, whatever they may be, and encourages citizens to be involved in a very hands-on way. The City realizes that communication is a two-way opportunity; it provides various means through which citizens may provide feedback, request services, make comments, and share information. In addition to informing and engaging citizens, Sartell's communications materials also promote and reinforce the City's reputation as a regional role model; they position and protect the Sartell "brand." In our technology-driven, information-laden world, Sartell realizes that people have different preferences for how they receive and send information.

Among the many media utilized by the City of Sartell are: www.Sartellmn.com; a database of about 20 media outlets for press releases and placements; social media including Facebook and Instagram; e-mail blasts; marketing brochures and publications; advertising in magazines, and newspapers.

Citizens feel that the City could do a better job of utilizing various forms of communication, through new forms of technology and old. They value the City's ability to be responsive and provide answers to inquiries, even if those answers are not always the ones they want to hear. The City understands that to move forward in implementing this plan and others, to support what's working and improve what's not, transparency and a clear mandate from the community are crucial. The main goal should be to establish a communications and engagement strategy as a strength and push it even further.

The following goals are ways that the City can make its communications strategy, even more, comprehensive and inclusive so that all voices are brought into the conversation.



COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT GOALS



GOAL 1: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE

When many people get involved and take action, good things happen. Resident involvement has helped to shape the community gardens, farmers market and many of the amenities within our parks. In this vein, Sartell must strive to meet the high expectation of residents through continued outreach, but also expand efforts to ensure that all of the City’s communities are included. Sartell should try to get the word out and encourage residents to voice their opinions. There are opportunities to build on the City’s success and provide a model for community involvement.

Potential Strategies May Include These And Other Future Cool Ideas:

1.1 Prepare a Comprehensive Communications Plan That Includes All City Departments and Commissions

City departments can communicate information on specific programs or activities as needed through the City’s Administrator/Planning Director.

Schedule a minimum of two joint meetings between the Commission(s) and Council per year to ensure the exchange of communication, priorities, goals and plans are discussed.

Create infographics and other communication pieces describing facts surrounding certain housing types, new developments, etc

1.2 Communicate With the Homeowner's Associations

Many neighborhoods in Sartell have a homeowners association (HOA). These associations represent a large portion of the population and take on activities from community policing to developing community amenities. These organizations are closest to the residents and, therefore, bring with them the opportunity to encourage broader involvement in City

initiatives and policy. The city should strive to maintain a list of homeowners associations on the website and convene an annual summit in a roundtable format to discuss concerns.

1.3 Consider Creating a Citizens College

Give interested citizens insight into how the City runs and how they can be a part of it. A Citizens College would be a counterpart to the Citizens Police Academy and consist of a multi-week course to teach participants about the different City departments, how the budget works, how to engage effectively with government, and how to get involved with City initiatives and this plan.

GOAL 2: ENCOURAGE YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Plans require a long time horizon. Recognizing that it takes years to see the implementation of many plans take place, Sartell should be involving those who stand to benefit most – local youth. Youth often are discussed as critically important but rarely have a voice in planning, community events, and other activities. Discussions at the community inputs and interviews with youth revealed the desire to get youth involved and keep them involved. Sartell should increase targeted outreach to youth and encourage their participation in ongoing programs.

Potential Strategies May Include These And Other Future Cool Ideas:



2.1 Provide Youth Volunteer Programs

Sartell has many volunteer opportunities for adults to help connect them to one another and critical services like Police. The City should work with existing programs like Seniors and Law Together (SALT) to encourage and expand participation in these programs by teens. Consider new programs to enable youth to play a meaningful role in Sartell’s future. A Junior Ambassador Program, for instance, could provide teens with an opportunity to show new residents around the City and help staff events like Summerfest, Apple Duathlon and Sartell Chamber events. Plan for adult oversight as appropriate to ensure youth volunteer time is meaningful.

2.2 Organize A Youth Council/Youth Advisory Board

Youth already plays leadership roles in schools. Juniors and seniors provide mentorship to freshmen and sophomores and help organize school functions and the first day of school activities. These teens are eager for opportunities to take

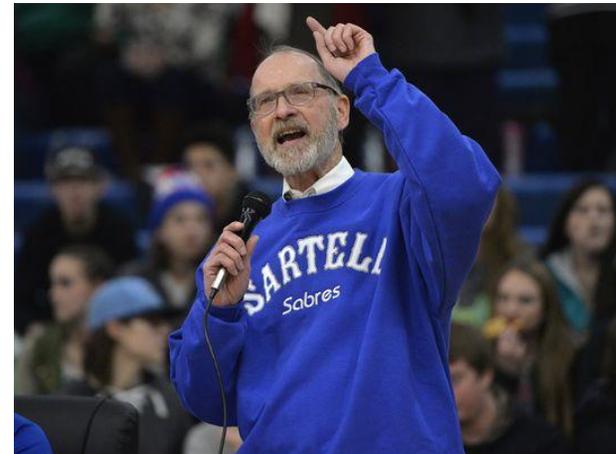
these mentorship opportunities out of the classroom and into the City. Many cities organize a Youth Council to guide city leaders in decision-making, work with local teens around issues of common interest and increase volunteer opportunities. Sartell teens in focus group meetings expressed a strong desire to be more involved with the City. They want to lend their perspective particularly to questions around teen activities and programs. Convene a Youth Council that has a seat at the table in guiding the implementation of this comprehensive plan.

2.3 Create a Formal Internship Program

Work with local high schools and colleges to create a formal internship program for students to experience first-hand the way City government works. Interns would participate in the day-to-day functions of the City's different departments.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE THE SARTELL BRAND

Within the region, Sartell is recognized for its unique qualities, amazing educational system, active living, active transportation and recreation opportunities (bike trails, bike lanes, sidewalks), access to healthy food (farmers market, community gardens, grocery stores) and healthcare facilities, progressive attitude, our school district(s) and community spirit. Much of this brand recognition stems from the City's commitment to community engagement and the focus placed on bringing residents together through a slate of events. We can and should express our accomplishments, but just because we have the most building permits for single family homes does not mean you are doing a good job. We need to expand Sartell's brand recognition further, not only as a way of attracting new residents and investment but also as a tool to strengthen the connection between residents and the City in which they live.



Potential Strategies May Include These And Other Future Cool Ideas:

3.1 Market Quality Of Life and Amenities

Market to attract workers, businesses, and new residents. Sartell includes relevant information on the City's website to help attract businesses and residents. Supplement this information and target the message to specific groups. For residents, consider a Live Sartell campaign that promotes the local neighborhoods and work with realtors to ensure that they have current data on the City. For business owners and employers, align marketing with the activities of the Sartell Chamber, the Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation and other organizations that support local businesses.

3.2 Publicize Through Media

Explore opportunities to further launch Sartell into the national and regional spotlight.

3.3 Create Distinctive Sartell Products

Bumper stickers, t-shirts, and other products are inexpensive yet effective tools to promote the City and encourage resident involvement.



3.4 Enhance and Market the Use of Community Bulletin Boards

Enhance the boards in key places to promote local activities. The Sartell Chamber operates a calendar of events online and promotes key festivals through other venues.

3.5 Design and Install Wayfinding Signage Throughout Sartell

Have signs that mark the City's entrances. Besides these small markers, it is nearly impossible for an outsider to know when they are, and are not, in Sartell. Enhance public awareness by designing and installing eye-catching signage across Sartell. Keep it playful and make a striking statement.

3.6 Work with the School District to create a joint branding strategy to capitalize on the success of our students.



GOAL 4: DEVELOP OR COLLABORATE EFFORTS IN CREATING A COMMUNITY ONLINE CALENDAR

Sartell should continue to provide various means through which citizens may offer feedback, request services, make comments and share information.

Potential Strategies May Include These And Other Future Cool Ideas:

4.1 Enhance the “Welcome to Sartell” Package to New Residents

Moving to Sartell? If so, it might be helpful to know a little more about the neighborhoods, schools, where to shop nearby and how to access local trails. Organize a short “Welcome to Sartell” brochure, distributed to local realtors and targeted to home buyers. Through this package, new homebuyers would receive a hearty welcome and relevant information about how to get involved.



4.2 Include More Information about City Council Activities in Communications

Except for those who attend City Council meetings, the inner workings of the City may not be readily apparent. When Sartell releases information or promotes events, include information on recent Council meetings and decisions, and make sure it is presented in a hip and engaging way. Create regular electronic newsletters to highlight what is going on in the City, including decisions made by the Council and Commissions

4.3 Market Existing Community Programs That Are Under the Radar

There are many programs and services that are not funded or organized by the City, such as events at the Community Band, Sartell Senior Connection, adult sports leagues, and art classes to name a few. Provide a clear list of programs and actively market these programs to help them grow and to connect residents with services.