



**MAD RIVER VALLEY**  
PLANNING DISTRICT

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## **Communications Plan**

**April 2020**

## Table of Contents

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Section I. Strategy Overview .....</b>        | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Section II. Communication Platforms .....</b> | <b>4</b> |
| <b>Section III. Messaging.....</b>               | <b>5</b> |
| <b>Section IV. Results &amp; Targets .....</b>   | <b>8</b> |

## Preliminary Questions

1. What does success look like?
2. What are the project objectives?
3. How can effective communications help advance project objectives?
4. What are the main risks and opportunities?
5. Who are the key audiences and why are they important?

# Section I. Strategy Overview

## Communication Objectives

1. Communicate the “MRVPD story” including programmatic updates, events, and outcomes to member town officials, residents, and affiliated organizations.
2. Increase transparency and build trust with town officials and residents.
3. Build public interest in, and engagement with, priority work.
4. Facilitate a two-way dialogue to gather feedback, improve work, etc.
5. Demonstrate relevance and value to community members and funders.

## Strategies & Best Practices

1. Future-focused. Where are we going, and how does this help us get there?
2. Give credit where due; recognize (better yet, tag) partners organizations and individuals.
3. Drive strategic alignment: Connect the dots for the audience. Describe our theory of change.
4. Results-based: communicate measurable goals; share success stories & lessons learned; create systems for identifying, tracking and reporting on metrics.
5. Storylines: focus on “sense making” opportunities to create meaning for citizens.
6. Avoid “Tell and sell” - prioritize dialogue and engagement; ask questions, provide space for follow up.
7. Audience-centric: What do *they* care about?

## Target Audiences

1. Town officials:
  - a. Town Administrators, Planning & Zoning Administrators
  - b. Selectboard members
  - c. Planning Commissions
  - d. Development Review Boards
  - e. Conservation Commissions
  - f. Energy Committees
2. Volunteers/local organizations:
  - a. Friends of the Mad River
  - b. Vermont Land Trust – MRV Office
  - c. MRV Conservation Partnership
  - d. Mad River Path Association
  - e. MRV Recreation District
  - f. MRV Transportation Advisory Committee
  - g. MRV Housing Coalition

- h. MRV Chamber of Commerce
    - i. MRV Community Fund
- 3. MRV residents & businesses
- 4. Funders
  - a. Sugarbush Resort
- 5. Regional & statewide players
  - a. State legislators
  - b. State agencies
  - c. CVRPC
  - d. Non-profits, e.g. VHCB; Downstreet Housing

### **Positioning Statement (Internal)**

The Mad River Valley Planning District is uniquely positioned to prioritize the long-term planning and sustainable development efforts of the three towns of Warren, Waitsfield and Fayston. MRVPD also coordinates development activities and shifting leadership related to Sugarbush Resort. Finally, its role as an inter-town planning entity provides the opportunity to support a valley-wide identity.

- Information clearinghouse; partnerships; community engagement resource leveraging and sharing; collaborative leadership; municipal planning support; regional frameworks; organizational structures to guide action.

### **Desired Action**

1. Learn/follow news
2. Attend event/meetings
3. Comment & engage on social media

## Section II. Communication Platforms

### Communication Channels, Target Audience & Message Frequency

#### 1. Newsletter

- Quarterly (to start, stretch to monthly)
  - i. Similar format to CVRPC, based off of staff report
  - ii. Serves as foundation for other communication channels
- **Target Audiences**
  - i. Town officials & partners
  - ii. Funders
  - iii. General public

#### 2. Website Articles

- 2+ articles/month
  - i. Topic specific
- **Target audiences**
  - i. Town officials & partners
  - ii. Residents & organization participants
  - iii. Funders

#### 3. Valley Reporter

- Quarterly column – topic specific or broader overview
- Monthly article including MRVPD work (earned media)
- **Target audiences**
  - i. General public
  - ii. Town officials & partners

#### 4. Front Porch Forum

- Event/meeting notices and bigger updates (e.g. end of year)
- **Target audiences**
  - i. General public
  - ii. Town officials & partners

#### 5. Facebook (could be replicated on other available platforms)

- 2+ updates each week
  - i. Website posts
  - ii. Locally and regionally relevant information, images, or events
- **Target audiences**
  - i. General public
  - ii. Town officials & partners
  - iii. Funders

## Section III. Messaging

### A. Topics (focus within each can be an event, news, or informational)

Create “sound bites” from articles above and share across social media. Every new article can be the source/inspiration for 3-6 different social media messages. As much as possible, also include links back to articles on the website

The Mad River Valley community is...

- **INNOVATIVE**
- **VIBRANT**
- **CONNECTED**
- **CARING**

#### **Valley Identity/Placemaking**

*The MRV envisions a welcoming community that builds a healthy and sustainable environment and promotes the region's historic and cultural heritage.*

- Wayfinding (e.g. MRV Byway signage and Trailhead Kiosks)
- Irasville/Common Downtown
- MRV community activities & opportunities
- MRVPD data report/indicators project

#### **Housing**

*The MRV envisions access to safe, affordable and energy efficient housing for current and prospective residents that supports the historic settlement pattern of vibrant villages surrounded by rural countryside.*

- Housing needs
  - i. # of available and/or affordable units; connection to transportation, population trends, etc.
  - ii. Infrastructure
- Potential solutions (e.g. Tiny Homes; ADUs; energy efficiency financing)

#### **Transportation**

*The MRV envisions a safe, environmentally friendly, efficient, and integrated transportation network.*

- Public transit: MRV Bus Service
- Community-based transit
  - i. Park N' Rides; Free Wheelin'; Hitching Post
- Charging stations, electric vehicle incentives
- Bike/Ped infrastructure plans and improvements

## **Recreation**

*The MRV envisions enhanced year-round recreational opportunities.*

- Active Transportation
  - i. Trailhead kiosks & mapping
  - ii. Four season recreational opportunities
- MRV Trails Collaborative

## **Environment**

*The MRV envisions the stewardship and sustainable use of the region's natural resources for the benefit of future generations.*

- Mad River as community resource
- Conservation; Climate change mitigation; Flood resilience

## **Economic Development**

*The MRV envisions a diverse economy that supports existing businesses and attracts new ones.*

- Business updates (if connected to one of above initiatives?)
- Economic Study-related items
- Post COVID-19 recovery

## **Other – share important/relevant partner posts**

- Sugarbush
- Social services, healthcare
- Crime and safety
- Education
- Culture/history
- Food systems
- Municipalities, state agencies
- Grant/funding opportunities

## **C. Key Dates**

Build up to key dates with related messaging the preceding week or month, depending on the importance of the event.

### **Spring**

- Green Up Day
- Census 2020

### **Summer**

- MRV Housing Summit 2020, Speaker Series, etc.
- MRV Trails Summit 2020
- Recreation Kick-off Event

- Fourth of July Parade

### **Fall**

- MRV Annual Data Report
- Town Leadership Meeting
- Small Business Saturday

### **Winter**

- Central Vermont Housing Summit 2020
- Town Meeting Day
- MRV Bus Service

## Section IV. Results & Targets

1. Plan and track media posts by topic [here](#), on a weekly basis.
2. More specific targets to be developed

## Section V. Social Media Policy

The MRVPD Social Media Policy (4/8/20) can be found [here](#).

### MRVPD Selectboard Tasks

1. Designate an individual to receive and respond to notifications of claimed copyright infringement. Once named, MRVPD must file a “designation of agent” form with the United States Copyright Office.
2. Designate type of speech forum for each media platform. Proposed:
  - a. Government speech (Do not allow for public speech)
    - i. MRVPD Website, Newsletter
  - b. Limited Public Forum:
    - i. MRVPD Social Media
3. To remain in compliance with open meeting law requirements, refrain from using MRVPD social media platforms to discuss MRVPD business.

### MRVPD Staff Tasks

1. Executive Director must designate a Social Media Moderator (SMM) to monitor, manage, and oversee all comments and content to ensure adherence to the Social Media Policy.
2. SMM must retain the relevant records retention schedule.