Heritage Burlington Communications Sub-Committee
Communications Strategy and Plan
Recommendations Report

OVERVIEW

Realizing the importance of communication with the public, Heritage Burlington established a Communications Sub-Committee. The Objective of the Sub-Committee is to develop a communications strategy and plan that aligns with the mandate, vision and mission of Heritage Burlington. With a unified and sustainable communications approach, Heritage Burlington will engage the community more effectively and foster an understanding of heritage matters.

Heritage Burlington communicates with the public primarily through its website and social media. In its early discussions, the Sub-Committee decided to focus first on problems with the website and second on reviewing and improving the social media presence. In addition, the Sub-Committee will develop a Communications Strategy and a Communications Policy applicable to all formats.

Website

Discovery Process

To begin the process, the Sub-Committee carried out the following tasks:
- Reviewed the existing website to become familiar with content that currently exists.
- Created a site map of the website to
  - identify the current areas of information;
  - determine what content is no longer relevant.
- Identified content that is outside the scope of Heritage Burlington because it falls within the responsibility of the City.
- Engaged the Heritage City Planner and City Clerk for information. (*See Appendix B for common questions received by Heritage Planner*)
- Considered recommendations submitted by Tory Hunt, former Communications Sub-Committee Lead. (*See Appendix A*)

Findings
- Because of website inadequacies, there is misinformation and public confusion about
  - mandate and role of Heritage Burlington;
  - value of conserving Burlington's heritage and the process to do so;
  - benefits that exist for Heritage property owners.
- The immediate priority is to ensure that the Heritage Burlington website is accessible and provides accurate information, and that the Committee can update the site easily as needed.

Website Issues
- The current website is hosted on a platform that is outdated and therefore cannot be updated.
- As a result of the outdated platform, the content on the website is inaccurate in various areas.
- The site map of the existing website shows duplication of information. The layout of current information is not easy to navigate.
- Some information on the website is unrelated to Heritage Burlington's mandate and should be accessed through the City's Planning Department. This inconsistency is confusing to the public.
- A registry of properties listed on the current site is not accurate and has not been updated.
- The website is not mobile or tablet friendly. This limitation may impact use by all generations.

Social Media

A detailed analysis has yet to be undertaken, but a general overview suggests the following:
- The current Heritage Burlington Social media approach is focused on garnering followers but the wide range of content may cause public confusion around the mandate of Heritage Burlington.
- Social media provide a great way to engage a mix of generations, but information being distributed must align with the mandate of the Sub-Committee.

Communications Policy

A detailed analysis has yet to be undertaken, but a general overview suggests the following:
- There is no unified approach to ensure that all resources align with the mandate of Heritage Burlington in all communication matters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report outlines recommendations for two phases.

Phase I (May – September 2019) – Develop and Implement New Website
- Edit website content, retaining only essential heritage related information. The Communications Sub-committee will undertake and oversee this process with input from the Heritage Planner.
- Create a new website using Word Press. This tool has been available since 2003 and provides a solid framework for the longevity of the Heritage Burlington website.
  (See Appendix A, Recommendations from Tory Hunt, former Lead, Communications Sub-Committee)
    - o The website should be developed so that Heritage Tours can be incorporated within the site. Assuring this compatibility will allow ease of updating as needed. Developing the Tours separately in the future is not recommended.
    - o The new website should have 3 to 4 buckets of information that can be easily navigated by anyone visiting the website.
    - o The new website should be mobile and tablet friendly.
    - o The branding of the new website can align with the current look and feel of the existing website. There is no need to undertake a rebranding exercise. This means a shorter development period.
- Build a better working relationship with other organizations such as Burlington Library and Historical society, to leverage these resources in curating relevant Heritage information.

Phase II (October 2019 – May 2020) – Broader Communications Strategy
- Develop a Communications Strategy that emphasizes public awareness and community engagement. The strategy will include core messaging, ways of engaging the public, and social media presence that help the public to have
    - o improved awareness of Burlington's cultural heritage and the need to conserve it;
    - o better understanding of the mandate and role of Heritage Burlington in conserving Burlington's cultural heritage.
- Develop a Communications Policy that mandates how information will be disseminated by Heritage Burlington via all communications channels. The policy will include communication activities carried out by third parties hired by Heritage Burlington.

Phase II (cont'd)

- Work with a Communications Consultant to identify and develop
    - target audience
    - core messaging
    - community engagement strategies
    - social media strategy
    - implementation of walking tours on the website

Required Resources
The Heritage Communications Sub-Committee is led by a volunteer; therefore, it is recommended that three (3) external resources be hired.

- **Communications Consultant** to support the Sub-Committee in project management as follows:
    i. Draft an RFP meeting the scope of work required for website development;
    ii. Issue the RFP to several trusted web developers on behalf of the Sub-Committee;
    iii. Work with the Communications Sub-Committee to review RFPs received and select suitable web developers;
    iv. Develop user interface wireframes for presentation to the Sub-Committee;
    v. Develop new technical design and information architecture;
    vi. Design visual look and feel that aligns with existing Heritage Burlington brand identity;
    vii. Oversee the development of the wireframes and the website alongside the web developer;
    viii. Ensure website development remains within the confines of the approved budget;
    ix. Provide leadership to the Communications Sub-Committee related to current technology, web platforms and virtual tours options;
    x. Be a resource to the Communications Sub-Committee for any other matters related to the development of the new website.

- **External Website Developer** who will
    i. build out the Word Press template and wire frames of the new website;
    ii. build CMS administrative functions allowing for ongoing content updates and management.

- **Communications Manager/Management Team** that will
    i. take responsibility on a continuing basis for maintaining the website and executing the social media strategy as defined by the Heritage Burlington Communication Policy;
    ii. work with the Heritage Burlington Communications Lead (volunteer) to assure direction and alignment of communication activities. The Communications Manager/Management Team will be the single contact for both website maintenance and social media.

    The Communications Manager/Management Team will be one individual or firm hired in response to an RFP. The vendor currently engaged by Heritage Burlington to manage its social media will be welcome to respond to the RFP.

Budget

City Clerk has identified a budget for development of the website as $10,000 including costs for the Communications Consultant and the Web Developer. As the project manager, the Communications Consultant will be responsible for hiring and direct management of the Web Developer.

The annual budget for the Communication Manager/Management Team to manage the website and social media is $100/month. This is based on the assumption that there will need to be 4 hours a month spent on social media management and 1 hour minimum a month on updates to the website.

Next Steps

- May 2019:
  Sub-Committee
  - o Present the Recommendations Report to Heritage Burlington for approval, including budget.
  - o Hire Communications Consultant to work with the Sub-Committee. Once selected, consultant will develop RFP for website development.

- June 2019:
  Communications Consultant
  - o Release an RFP to a selection of web developers for the development of the Word Press wire frames. RFP will include budget targets.
  - o Present the interface wireframes, look and feel and new technical design to the Sub-Committee.
  - o Develop new technical design and information architecture;

  Sub-Committee
  - o Present the proposed wireframes to Heritage Burlington.
  - o Select top three proposals, hold interviews and finalize the selection of web developer.

- July 2019:
  Web Developer
  - o Begin development of wire frames.

  Sub-Committee
  - o Undertake redevelopment of the content for the future website while wireframes are being developed
  - o Present high-level areas of content to Heritage Burlington for feedback

- September 2019:
  - o Finalize and launch new website.

Report submitted by
Communications Sub-Committee
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May 15, 2019

Appendix A: Recommendations from Tory Hunt, former Communications Sub-Committee Lead

The Benefits of Word Press include:

  i. Ease of Use: It takes very little technical experience to make updates to the website
  ii. The ability to extend the functionality of the website with plugins
  iii. You can start with the basic functionality and add functions as you see fit
  iv. Have Multiple Users with access levels depending on responsibilities
  v. Provide different users with different permissions to keep the website under control
  vi. Easy transition from one designer to another
  vii. If you aren't loyal to one web designer it's easy to have someone else work on your website for you.
  viii. Web developers are easy to find
  ix. With a WordPress site you'll have no shortage of options for finding talent to help you build and update a site
  x. Trusted platform

Appendix B: Common questions from the public received by Thomas Douglas, Planner - Development Review & Heritage.

Received by Thomas on March 18, 2019.

1. What is the heritage status of this property? (i.e.: is it listed on the Register, is it designated, etc.)
2. What are the implications of this property's heritage status? (i.e.: what can I do with it, what are the heritage rules)
   a. A lot of people have incorrect ideas about how a heritage designation limits them
3. Why was this property designated/listed on the Register?
4. Can my property be removed from the Register? or: I want to demolish my property. (and sometimes: can my heritage designation be repealed?)
5. Do I need a heritage permit to do X? How do I get a heritage permit?
6. Do you have any incentive programs/financial support programs for heritage properties? (i.e.: tax rebates, grants)
7. Occasional questions about impact of a heritage designation on property value, insurance rates, etc.
8. How do I find a tradesperson with heritage experience/a qualified heritage consultant/an archaeologist?
   a. For tradespeople, I direct the inquirer to check the trades listing on Heritage Burlington's website. For consultants, I direct them to the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals directory. For archaeologists, I direct them to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport's list of licensed archaeologists.
9. Can I have a copy of the Register? (i.e.: for a research project)
   a. Yes, and now it's published online for easy access.
10. Do you have any old photos of this heritage property/neighbourhood, do you have old maps of this neighbourhood?
    a. To this question my answer usually ends up being no. I end up referring them to Burlington Public Library, certain books (like those by Gary Evans), and/or Burlington Historical Society.

Most of these are pretty technical and/or process questions that I can easily answer. All of the above questions come to me from residents. I also hear the first few a lot from real estate agents and property appraisers.

Appendix C: Existing Website Content Map

Current Heritage Website – Proposed changes
As at March 4, 2019

Home Page

Communities | Transportation | Agriculture & Industry | Natural History | Culture | Rotating banner | Header Menu

One page history on Burlington Districts

One page history on Transportation

One page history on agriculture & industry

one page on natural history

one page on culture

Explore & Learn More about Burlington

Discover our Stories/Share your Story

Find a property/Join our Community

25 district/properties listed

5 entries listed

13 entries listed

7 entries listed

7 entries listed

Sub-menu Burlington's Past
Property Stories
Directory of Heritage Properties
Walking & Virtual Tours
Events
Just for Kids
Tools & Resources
Heritage Blog

Experience Our Heritage

Communities

transportation

Agriculture/Industry

Natural Heritage

Culture

Property Stories

Share Your Story - online submission form

Heritage Planning

One page on Heritae planning information - no links

Directory of Heritage Properties

Information for Burlington's Heritage Properties

Heritage Permits

Funding

New page with links to
- Community Heritage Fund
- Heritage Property Tax Rebate

Becoming a heritage Property

Frequently Asked Questions

Applications

New page with links to
- heritage permits
- funding applications
- Update of information for Heritage Listing (broken link)
- application for inclusion on Municipal Register (broken Link)

Tools and Resources

About Heritage Burlington

one external link to City of Burlington Planning & Development committee page

Heritage Burlington Advisory Committee

Volunteer Opportunities

Tools & Resources

Partners & Links

Join our Community

Contact us