

Shorewood Hills Governance Project: Communications Plan & Rollout

Laying the Groundwork Together for a Thriving Shorewood Hills

The proposed governance framework and ordinance represent a significant step forward for Shorewood Hills. This project aims to establish a more efficient, transparent, and responsive system of governance, one that adapts to contemporary challenges and opportunities and empowers both our Board and residents to build a stronger future for the community.

We understand that change is likely to be met with questions and concerns. The communications plan should address these concerns head-on by providing clear and comprehensive information about the proposed framework and ordinance. It should move beyond traditional modes of communication and consultation, towards a collaborative approach where dialogue is ongoing and policies are designed in partnership with the community.

We want residents to understand the "why" behind this project. This plan should emphasize the intent and benefits of the framework, how it will address challenges and risks the Village is facing, and ultimately, how it can improve the lives of everyone who calls Shorewood Hills home. Resident feedback is crucial. Town hall meetings, group discussions, and accessible online forums should be available for residents to voice their questions and actively participate in shaping the final framework.

Dialogue must be ongoing. As you receive resident feedback, use it to iterate and refine the proposed framework. The goal is not to impose a pre-defined solution, but rather to develop a system of governance that fits the needs and aspirations of the residents you serve.

The following recommendations offer a check list of key elements to consider in developing a strong communications plan and a suggested roadmap for keeping residents informed, engaged and empowered as you work to implement the governance changes.

Key Elements of the Communications Plan:

1. Targeted, Clear & Consistent Messaging:

- **Identify audience segments:** Segment your audience into different groups based on their level of involvement and information needs. This could include residents, specific committees, and village staff.
- **Tailor messaging:** Craft messages that resonate with each audience segment. For example, residents might be more interested in the overall impact on the village, while committee members may need more details on how the framework will affect their work.

- **Develop key messages:** Formulate a concise set of core messages that clearly explain the benefits of the new framework and ordinance. Spotlight the main changes and focus on how they will improve governance and address administrative and policy concerns by providing clearly defined, mutually agreed upon rules and steps to allow Village government and residents to work through challenges and prioritize goals.
- **Maintain consistency:** Use consistent language and terminology across all communication channels to avoid confusion, reinforce messaging and signal the Village government's commitment to this effort.

2. Multi-Channel & Ongoing Communication:

Utilize a variety of communication channels and platforms to reach residents where they are:

- **Traditional channels:** including public notices via the Village website and newsletter as well as posted pamphlets around the community (parks, school, community center, etc.)
- **Digital media:** in addition to website updates and social media posts, consider email campaigns, online forums and polls to share information and invite resident input.
- **Public meetings:** town hall meetings, committee meetings open to the public, and workshops focused on fine tuning aspects of the framework and ordinance.
- **One-on-one communication:** Board members should make themselves available for individual meetings with residents and staff who have specific questions or concerns.
- **Leverage community leaders:** Involve respected community members and local leaders in your communication efforts. Their support can help build trust and understanding within the Village and engage difficult to reach resident groups.
- **Periodic surveys** should be conducted on a regular (annual or semi-annual) basis to take stock of resident sentiment and approval and inform continuous improvement efforts.

3. Transparency & Openness:

- **Provide clear and concise information:** Make sure all communication materials are easy to understand and readily available.
- **Address concerns proactively:** Anticipate potential concerns and questions from the community and address them directly in your communication materials. (See FAQs below.)
- **Be open and responsive to feedback:** Create avenues for residents to provide feedback on the proposed framework and ordinance. This could be through surveys, comment boxes at meetings, or designated email addresses. Develop avenues for meaningful, two-way dialogue, to demonstrate feedback is not only being received but actively considered in the Board's decision-making process.
- Ensure accessibility and multilingual communication, as needed.

Roll-Out & Implementation Timeline

A phased approach to the rollout allows time for residents to absorb the information and generates community dialogue and buy-in.

Phase 1: Announcement & Background Information (month 1):

- Introduce the concept of a new governance framework and ordinance through various communication channels, starting with the town hall meeting on July 17, 2024.
 - Explain the overall purpose and objectives of the governance project (see: Statement of the Board's Intent) and how you aim to translate those goals into practical implementation steps (walk the community through the proposed governance framework and ordinance).
- During this phase, focus on building general awareness and interest.
 - Provide a high-level overview of the key changes that will be implemented.
 - Highlight the benefits for the community.
 - Include calls to action, encouraging residents to sign up for email updates or attend upcoming informational meetings and/or workshops.

Phase 2: Detailed Information and Public Engagement (month 2-3):

- Provide more in-depth information about the framework and ordinance. This could involve:
 - Posting detailed documents on the village website.
 - Holding town hall meetings or workshops with presentations from village leadership.
 - Scheduling Q&A sessions.
 - Encouraging residents to submit questions and feedback through various channels.
- Address any emerging concerns or areas of confusion proactively.
- This phase allows for deeper understanding and fosters a two-way dialogue with the community.

Phase 3: Feedback, Refinement, Implementation (month 4):

- Analyze the feedback received from residents during the previous phase.
- Consider adjustments to the framework or ordinance based on the feedback (if applicable).
- Finalize the framework and ordinance documents.
- Communicate any adjustments made and the rationale behind them.
- Develop a clear timeline for implementation, outlining key milestones, responsible parties and metrics to track progress against set goals.

Phase 4: Ongoing Communication and Support (ongoing):

- Provide continuous updates on the implementation progress. Celebrate milestones and achievements.
- Address any questions or concerns that may arise during implementation.
- Offer ongoing support and resources to help residents and village staff adjust to the new framework and ordinance.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a governance framework?

A governance framework is a set of principles, processes, and structures that guide how our village is governed. It essentially outlines the "rules of the road" for decision-making and ensures efficient and responsible leadership.

Why do we need a new governance framework?

Our current framework may not be fully addressing the challenges and opportunities facing our village. We are developing a new framework to help us adapt to changing times, operate more efficiently, reduce the risk and costs associated with liability to the Village, be more transparent and equitable, and better serve the needs of all residents.

What does the new ordinance entail?

The ordinance outlines specific changes or additions to existing village codes to align with the principles of the new governance framework.

Why do we need an outside consultant for this work?

The Trustees asked Funkhouser & Associates to bring their expertise to objectively evaluate the current Village structure and make informed recommendations. The team presented best practices for a Trustee-Administrator form of government, spent time with each Trustee and Village staff and evaluated the particular history and structure of Shorewood Hills. The draft recommendations are based on both an urgent need to address issues to reduce the risk of liability to the Village and a long-term set of recommendations that will be reviewed and modified by residents and Trustees before ordinance changes are made.

How will this new framework benefit me as a resident?

The framework aims to improve communication and collaboration between residents and the village leadership and between trustees and village administration, promote better decision-making and accountability, and ultimately improve our government's competence in doing what is required to enhance the overall quality of life in our community.

Won't this cause disruption to how we run our Village or make things more complicated?

The goal is to simplify and streamline village operations. A clear framework will provide more transparency and predictability in how decisions are made. The framework will be finalized and implemented in consultation with the community to ensure a collaborative and smooth transition to the new governance structure and/or processes.

How will this affect current village committees?

The new framework may propose changes to how committees are structured as well as their roles and responsibilities. Those changes will be implemented in coordination with committee members. Our aim is to enhance the inclusiveness and participatory nature of the committees, while also ensuring committees are structured in ways that focus our efforts on key priorities and don't generate duplicate or conflicting efforts.

How can I learn more about the proposed framework and ordinance?

We will be providing detailed information on the village website, through public forums, via social media and in accessible printed materials.

How can I provide feedback on the proposed framework?

We encourage resident feedback! We will be hosting town hall meetings, offering online surveys, and providing designated email addresses for residents to submit their questions and comments.

Will there be opportunities to participate in shaping the final framework?

Absolutely! Your feedback is crucial. We will use the input gathered to iterate and refine the proposed framework as we move toward its implementation.

Where can I find a copy of the full proposed framework and ordinance?

The documents will be available for download on the village website and in hard copy at the village office.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

We have established a dedicated email address and online discussion board for inquiries and feedback related to the governance framework and rollout.