



## Huntington Woods Communications Survey Comments Executive Summary October 2020

Between October 16 and November 6, 2020, 313 people responded to the Huntington Woods Communication Survey – 308 electronically and 5 by hard copy. All respondents were Huntington Woods residents, and nearly half (42.76%) were aged 65 or older.

The majority of responses came in between October 16-20, with 223 responses coming in during that time frame. Of respondents, 75 individuals requested a copy of the survey results to be shared with them – 74 by email and 1 by mail.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents said they are very satisfied or satisfied with the frequency of the City's current communications. 83.06% rely on the Hometown Herald compared with 57.33% on the e-newsletter and 51.14% turning to Next-Door for information about the City. Only 7.17% of respondents said they attend meetings.

Opinions about whether to invest in a mobile app were nearly split, with 37.25% of respondents advocating for it, and 34.64% opposing the move. A remaining 28.10% said they were not sure and requested more information in order to make a decision.

Respondents offered comments to many of the questions in addition to checking off specific categories. Summaries of those that garnered comments are shared below.

### **Q1 Please rate your satisfaction with the frequency with which the City shares information.**

Of respondents, 307 offered comments in response to this question. The majority of people who added comments after this question varied between the following general comments:

- It's fine as it is. You can't please everybody.
- I'd like more follow-up to issues that arise and more detailed information when calling with questions.
- We can always use more information.
- The Information balance is excellent.
- Shared information is too heavy on electronic communications.
- There are many important issues residents are not aware of.
- I'd like to hear from the City with more frequency.



- I'd like communication on personnel changes, ongoing city projects, and more text messages or emails.
- Surrounding cities such as Berkley send out email communications when there is a street closure, water main break, etc., as well as a monthly newsletter. They also communicate regularly through social media. HW's lack of communication in this day and age is inexcusable.
- The City should be the one giving out facts, not Next Door.
- We really appreciate the 60+ newsletter, the Hometown Herald, and the Friday emails.

## Q2 What types of information would you like the City to share?

Of respondents, 222 offered comments in response to this question. This question inspired responses across the spectrum, from requests for information on home sales, assessed values and selling prices to services, programs and operating hours. Many respondents reiterated that current information and delivery methods are working for them. Some people lamented the loss of a print newsletter, while others complained about Nixel not seeming to work for them or issue frequent-enough alerts. Some additional types of information requested include the following:

- Changes to policies
- Ways for citizens to be involved
- Job opportunities
- Crime within the city
- COVID numbers broken down by area and ages and other pandemic updates
- Urgent alerts regarding police activity that impacts residents
- More regular updates on the website
- More transparency
- Summary of official meetings (some people said the meeting minutes can be hard to decipher)
- More financial information on large expenditures
- Hiring processes, job postings; complete transparency on budget, hires, policies
- Highlights of city council meetings
- I would like to not have to wait for the usual city emails for more pressing matters to be addressed. Seems like this enables rumor spreading on Facebook and Nextdoor.
- Would like a calendar sent out every year with city events, major holidays, trash/recycling pickup days.



- When we have power outages, I have been disappointed that the city has little info about the outages. I understand this could well be a DTE issue.

#### **Q4: How would you prefer to hear about city news & information?**

Of respondents, 235 offered comments in response to this question. Responses ran the gamut from print to electronic methods of communication to good old-fashioned phone calls. Here are the most popular responses:

- Newsletters/e-blast
- Email
- Website
- Text for emergencies
- Facebook
- Use multiple platforms
- Electronic signboards
- Push notifications
- Mail
- I would love to see all communications standardized so they are easy to recognize and go out via email, Facebook and Twitter. The look and format of the Friday e-blasts is simple and straight forward. I would like each platform to house the information, however. I avoid Nextdoor so the Facebook link to info on Nextdoor is useless - I won't follow the link to Nextdoor.
- I know it can be a bother, but I still like talking on the phone
- The Remind app
- Some private Facebook groups have been known to spread rumors that get out of control. I know they aren't run by the City, but this is where people turn for info when the city is not active enough in its communication.
- Use sign boards more frequently.

#### **Q5 Regarding a mobile app at a cost of \$7,250/year...**

Of respondents, 306 offered comments in response to this question, and they truly ran from one extreme to another. Some people did the math and determined that the per-resident cost was so low, adding this app would be a no-brainer and a good investment for expanding



communication channels to residents. Some said an app would be a logical next step in the digital age. Others represented the opposite side of the spectrum, insisting that they did not want yet another communication channel when there are so many in use that could be enhanced or used more frequently. Some questioned the wisdom of an additional expenditure, and complained that they already manage too many apps on their devices. Some respondents were on the fence, saying that they would need more details before they could assess the wisdom of taking this step. Some notable comments included the following:

- Would it save costs in other areas, such as printing and mailing?
- There are too many free ways to get that information out now, including social media.
- An app could work after hours.
- I am in the >70 crowd and prefer computer to mobile devices.
- Why would this cost \$7K/year?
- I don't understand how this would improve communications over an email or alert on a cell phone.
- Do you have sufficient info about how well the app works across different platforms?
- Could be cool, but not sure how much value it would add.
- Wish there were a library app.
- Not sure if there is enough demand for an app to justify the annual cost.
- Many have app fatigue; not necessary
- We don't need another app; use the tax dollars for something better.
- I would much rather have a full-time children's librarian than a redundant app.
- It always surprises me when the city is willing to spend money on redundant services or non-necessary items. Especially when they are always requesting millage increases or there are budget shortfalls.
- ABSOLUTELY that is a necessity why this is even a question that's \$2/household roughly. It would allow me to stay on top of information & my bills much more easily and not fall behind like I currently am.
- It's so hard to find the right person/department. It would be awesome if there was an easier way to identify & contact the city.

**Q6 As the City updates its communication plan, do you have any other feedback to help improve City communications?**

Of respondents, 173 provided comments in response to this question. Responses ranged from specific communication-related suggestions to tangential topics, some positive and supportive and others critical. Here is a representative array of the comments offered in this section:



- Upgrade social media presence among city officials and elected officials. Improve access to conversations and issues. Social media is sorely underutilized in the city. For cost savings, stop printing Hometown Herald and just put it online and promote it on Facebook and Nextdoor. Have a Facebook Group where city news and events are always shared. Have police use Nixle more. Use more than just door fliers to notify residents of important happenings in the city.
- Keep up the good work!
- Is there a 24-hour hotline to leave a message or email address to relay a city related concern?
- You communicate the good, but not the bad.
- Unfortunately the "Nextdoor" website has become the defacto source for much city news. This often leads to rumors and incorrect information. It would be great if someone from the city monitor the website and correct and/or share relevant information.
- More electronic signage. The ones with manually inserted letters are outdated. I would like to see one outside City Hall at minimum.
- Using social media (Twitter, Facebook) is free and an easy and effective way to communicate with a particular and growing demographic. Easy way to share "breaking news." Using an App for residents also seems like a smart and effective way to communicate.
- Overall, the city does a good job. People expect a lot of the city, and I think that's one of the reasons it's a great place to live. But their expectations can be a little rigid and over the top. Thank you for working hard for us every day.
- More information is better than less. During the writing of the antiracism statement, and later the policy, many residents thought the city was not planning to address those items because they were silent on them until the finalized statements were released. A brief message alerting residents that you're considering or working on something might be useful. *ex: Your city government is troubled by the death of George Floyd and other incidents of its kind. We are working on a way to respond.* Based on the issues to which residents vocally respond, the city should be able to better anticipate what information should be shared with residents proactively. I feel the city mostly shares information reactively.
- Texting should be used for emergency updates and/or water main breaks and downed lines etc. as citizens check texts immediately. City council members should not address citizens' concerns through their personal Nextdoor accounts. This communication should be done through official Nextdoor city sites or by email/texting via city channels. Take the "personal" out of "city" business.
- The concerns I have shared with the city have gone unaddressed.
- Say it like it is. Good, bad, and ugly. In an understandable way. Have an easy way for us to communicate back to the city, and at least get a confirmation that the message has been received.
- We are living in an age of technology, but the city government of Huntington Woods hasn't adapted to those changes. Hopefully this survey will help. It's frustrating. It seems like so many of those who run the city are out of touch with the true needs of our city.
- The website does not seem to include important details. For example, under the heading Fall Leaf Collection, it does not say what date the leaf collection begins. I was searching for this information to know when I should begin raking leaves into the street.



- Have lived here in HW since 1962 and overall give the city satisfactory marks. Thanks!
- Observe the way young adults and kids communicate to see possible new and effective tools
- A section in the Herald about volunteer opportunities or organizations residents are involved in
- Make all communications mobile-responsive
- More information is always better – people can skim to find what is important to them
- I think NextDoor and HW Parents are given way too much power and attention.
- I would love to have more communication with city commissioners.
- Please have a full-time director of communications for the city. Right now city communication is sparse and does not appear to be very professional, leaving residents to turn to rumor mills like HW Parents on Facebook or Nextdoor.
- Posts to Facebook and NextDoor should be informational only. Do not permit comments on any official city posts.
- We need more open government and less secrecy. The last decade has seen less transparency in HW city government. Perhaps we need a change of leadership.
- I don't understand why the rec has its own sites and so does the library. It makes it hard to find and follow. Everything should be off the main website.
- The enewsletter has a boring format. That could certainly be improved. Every piece of information looks exactly like every other. It needs to be more creative. Check out Oak Park's.