



Punta Gorda

Florida's Harborside Hometown

FY 2026 Communications Plan

City of Punta Gorda

Annual Communications & Outreach Plan

Purpose

This plan establishes a clear, proactive framework for how the City communicates with residents, businesses, partners, and employees throughout the year. The goal is to provide timely, accurate information; strengthen public trust; support informed decision-making; and reinforce Punta Gorda's identity as a well-managed Harborside Hometown.

Guiding Principles

- Clarity – Use plain language and explain impacts to daily life
- Consistency – Coordinate messaging across departments
- Transparency – Share information early, often, and honestly
- Accessibility – Ensure communications are easy to find and understand
- Responsiveness – Address questions and misinformation promptly

Priority Audiences

- Residents and neighborhood associations
- Business community and Chamber partners
- Boards, committees, and volunteers
- City employees
- Regional, state, and funding partners

Core Communication Channels

- City website and news releases
- Email notifications and newsletters
- Social media platforms
- Public meetings, workshops, and open houses
- Internal staff communications

Annual Outreach Focus Areas

Infrastructure & Capital Projects

Objectives:

- Keep the public informed about construction impacts and progress
- Build understanding of long-term infrastructure investment

Key Actions:

- Quarterly CIP updates with visuals
- Project-specific notifications before construction begins
- Completion summaries highlighting community benefits

Timing: Ongoing with quarterly highlights

Utilities & Water Resources

Objectives:

- Educate the community on system operations and conservation needs
- Provide clear guidance during seasonal restrictions

Key Actions:

- Seasonal water conservation messaging
- Educational content explaining system capacity and planning
- Dedicated updates during dry season or regulatory changes

Timing: Seasonal, with increased activity late fall through early summer

Hurricane Preparedness, Response & Recovery

Objectives:

- Ensure residents know what to expect before, during, and after storms
- Maintain trust through clear, steady communication

Key Actions:

- Pre-season preparedness campaign
- Unified emergency messaging during events
- Post-storm recovery updates and timelines

Timing: Pre-season, peak season, and post-event as needed

Financial Transparency & Budget Education

Objectives:

- Improve understanding of the City's budget and fiscal decisions
- Demonstrate responsible stewardship of public funds

Key Actions:

- Budget season explainer content
- Visual summaries of tax rates, fees, and funding sources
- Updates on grants and legislative funding

Timing: Budget cycle with annual recap

Neighborhood & Civic Engagement

Objectives:

- Ensure residents feel informed, heard, and valued
- Increase participation in City decision-making

Key Actions:

- Neighborhood-specific outreach
- Board and committee recruitment campaigns

- Follow-up communication after public meetings

Timing: Ongoing, with annual recruitment push

Internal Communications

Objectives:

- Ensure employees are informed and aligned
- Support consistent external messaging

Key Actions:

- Internal briefings before major announcements
- Talking points for frontline staff
- Recognition of employee service and achievements

Timing: Ongoing

Measurement & Review

- Website and social media engagement metrics
- Email open rates
- Attendance at meetings and events
- Community feedback and inquiries
- Annual review and adjustment of priorities

Strategic Plan Alignment

The City's communications efforts directly support the Strategic Plan by ensuring residents, businesses, and partners understand how decisions are made, how resources are invested, and how the City protects and enhances quality of life. Each outreach focus area aligns with one or more Strategic Plan pillars, as outlined below.

Pillar 1: Infrastructure Sustainability

Strategic Objective:

Ensure reliable, resilient, and well-maintained infrastructure that supports public health, safety, and long-term community needs.

Communications Alignment:

- Infrastructure & Capital Improvement Project updates
- Utilities and water resources education
- Hurricane preparedness, recovery, and resilience messaging
- Construction impact notifications and project timelines

How Communications Support This Pillar:

- Builds public understanding of infrastructure investments
- Sets realistic expectations around timelines and disruptions
- Reinforces long-term planning and resilience
- Increases compliance with conservation and emergency protocols

Pillar 2: Financial Sustainability

Strategic Objective:

Maintain sound fiscal management while delivering essential services and planning responsibly for the future.

Communications Alignment:

- Budget education and transparency initiatives
- Grant and legislative funding updates
- Long-range financial planning explanations
- Messaging around fees, taxes, and funding sources

How Communications Support This Pillar:

- Demonstrates stewardship of public funds
- Improves understanding of how tax dollars are used
- Builds trust during budget discussions
- Clarifies the role of external funding in major projects

Pillar 3: Quality of Place

Strategic Objective:

Preserve and enhance Punta Gorda's unique character, livability, and sense of community.

Communications Alignment:

- Neighborhood and resident engagement
- Planning, development, and land-use education
- Community events and civic participation
- Public safety engagement and community well-being outreach

How Communications Support This Pillar:

- Encourages informed public participation
- Strengthens neighborhood connections and civic pride
- Reinforces the Harborside Hometown identity
- Supports balanced growth and quality of life

Cross-Pillar Support Functions

Certain communications activities support all three Strategic Plan pillars by strengthening trust, coordination, and organizational effectiveness, including:

- Crisis and issues management
- Internal employee communications
- Proactive misinformation correction
- Relationship-building with residents, businesses, and partners