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M E M O

March 30, 2010

To: Portland Plan Community Involvement Committee

From: Eden Dabbs

RE: Phase I Marketing Communications Recap

As the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability prepared to roll out a revised Portland Plan (an earlier phase occurred during 2008 and concluded with a Leadership Summit at the Oregon Convention Center in June '08), Portland Plan staff faced several communications challenges and opportunities.

First, more than a year had elapsed since the Portland Plan had been in the public eye. We needed to reintroduce the Plan to Portlanders in a fresh and compelling way that pre-empted the cynicism caused by the extended pause in activities, and assure people that we were not starting over but building on past progress. Second, we needed to communicate an important new message about the Portland Plan; specifically, that it was no longer an umbrella term for a comp plan update, a Central City plan and a citywide strategy. Rather, it would be solely a strategic plan for Portland for the next 25 years, and the comprehensive plan would be an implementation plan thereof. And, third, with a new administration in City Hall, there was greater interest in not only reaching as many people as possible but in the strategies to accomplish that.

Strategic Communications Plan

The services of an objective and creative communications consultant were solicited through a competitive RFP process, and the firm Coates Kokes was selected with the help of the CIC Communications Subcommittee. With staff input, CK developed a strategic communications plan for the Portland Plan, which included:

- a messaging framework to guide and shape our overall messaging;
- a direct mail concept and design (Granny Franny postcard);
- an advertising campaign that included the Granny Franny concept;
- a new wireframe for the Portland Plan website;
- media event planning and outreach;
- a social media plan and help with execution;
- a brochure; and
- general advice and feedback on the Portland Plan Handbook and other communications products and approaches.

Communications Objectives

Our key communications objectives were to expand awareness of the Portland Plan to a broader set of residents and businesses, generate measurable public involvement, increase participation of the reluctant and maintain the support of those already involved. Our communications strategies included using provocative information (the "27

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Things”), driving people to the website and other forms of alternative participation (surveys, social media), leveraging networks of community influence, employing behavior change principles, soliciting public bodies/partners to speak on behalf of the Plan, and tapping into our civic pride about Portland’s planning heritage.

Tactics

The following tactics and products were used to announce the rollout of the “refreshed” Portland Plan and Round 1 of the workshops, which were designed to “groundtruth” the information presented in the background reports (totaling 1,671 pages).

Documents

To help the public digest this massive amount of information, staff developed several documents that summarized the information in various ways, including:

- The draft Portland Plan Handbook – a 48-page, color “handbook” covering the trends and challenges we face as a community and the nine action areas, complete with graphics, charts, tables and photos (<http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan/index.cfm?c=51427>)
- The “27 Things” one-pager – conceived as a way of highlighting facts from the background reports that relate to each action area, the 27 Things (three from each of the nine action areas) became a way of organizing the workshop Power Point presentation as well as presenting the most compelling facts to engage Portlanders in the groundtruthing exercise; placed in the Curbsider and on the backside of the mail-in survey
- Overviews and Snapshots – created to provide condensed versions of the background reports in a more accessible way, the Overviews were essentially each report’s executive summary, and the Snapshots shortened those even more into one-pagers with pictures, bullet points and some provocative questions (<http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan/index.cfm?c=51427>)

Direct mail

The Granny Franny postcard was mailed to virtually every household in Portland (~200,000) asking Portlanders, “In a city of 575,930, who gives a rip what you think?” and telling people, “We do.” Persuasive copy encouraged people to be a part of what’s next and attend one of the seven workshops, which were listed along with the Portland Plan partners as well as the links and hashtags for the new website and social media. Feedback on the postcard has been generally very positive, and the cover model, Mary Frances Lipper, was even featured in a companion story about the Portland Plan in the *Oregonian* (11/17/09). However, a few seniors let us know they were put off by Granny’s powerful image, saying it stereotyped old people as grumpy and mean; others complained that the font was too small. That said, the high attendance at each workshop is due in no small part to a piece of direct mail hitting every Portlander’s mailbox.

Curbsider & EPNAN Newspaper

The Portland Plan became the focus of the December issue of the Curbsider, which is distributed to all single-family homes in Portland (~182,000). As most of the workshops had passed by the time the Curbsider was scheduled to drop, it became a vehicle to tell people about the Portland Plan effort, the “27 Things” and provide them with a mail-in survey. To date, we’ve received more than 5,000 surveys by mail, most of which are from the Curbsider. Mail-in surveys were also included in the *East Portland Neighborhood Association News (EPNAN)*, targeting a typically hard-to-reach population (circ. 9,000).

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Advertising

The bureau invested in paid advertising to publicize the workshops. Half-page ads designed around Granny Franny as well as a more general “New plan for Portland” concept, were placed in the following community newspapers (circulation included):

- SE Examiner (25,000)
- St. Johns Sentinel (27,000)
- Hollywood Star (23,000)
- Mid-County Memo (15,500)
- SW Village Post (10,000)
- NW Examiner (33,000)

Ads were also placed in the following cultural/minority papers:

- Skanner (6,500)
- El Hispanic News (20,000)
- Asian Reporter (20,000)
- Portland Observer (40,000)

Total circulation = 220,000

New website

With assistance from the Bureau of Technology Services, our web designer was able to implement the wireframe proposed by Coates Kokes. No small feat, the new Portland Plan website complete with new URL (www.pdxplan.com) has been a big hit ... literally. We've received nearly 134,000 hits over the past 12 months — with spikes in November (28,000) and December (40,000), which coincide with marketing and public relations efforts and the new look and feel of the site.

Social Media

Following our new mayor's lead, the bureau used social media to market the Portland Plan experience and drive informal community dialogue. Coates Kokes set up accounts with Facebook, Twitter and Flickr and performed the initial posting. Staff has now taken over that task, and a social media team rotates responsibility for uploading content each week. To date, social media for the Portland Plan looks like this:

- Facebook (1,300+ fans)
- Twitter (589 followers, 78 lists)
- Flickr (14,415 views)

With the recent addition of Chris Smith to the Planning Commission, we gained not only a new commissioner but a blogger and Tweeter as well. Smith's *PDX Planning Commissioner* blog (<http://pdxplanningcommissioner.com/2010/01/12/meeting-summary-11210/>) reports on the activities of and projects before the Planning Commission. He has written helpful explanatory posts about the Portland Plan, and he was a regular attendee and Tweeter at the workshops.

Staff in the Mayor's Office also helped with social media, Tweeting from the workshops and reTweeting off the Mayor's account.

Portland Community Media

To offer those who couldn't or didn't want to attend a workshop the chance to at least view one, we contracted with Portland Community Media to videotape each workshop. Four of them were broadcast live on Channel 30, and all seven of them were broadcast

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repeatedly for a total of 95 times. Channel 30 reaches some 200,000 households in East and West Portland.

Media Relations

In partnership with the Mayor's Office, staff sent out several media releases, including one to announce the kick-off media event at the East Portland Community Center. At the event, several Portland Plan partners spoke about their support for the Plan, including Multnomah County Chair Ted Wheeler, School Superintendents Carol Smith, Karen Gray and Barbara Rommel, and PCC President Preston Pulliams.

Coverage included an Oregonian *inPortland* cover story by Jani Har, a walk-up segment on OPB by Rob Manning (which did a nice job of tracing the Portland Plan's legacy), some highly engaging blog posts by Sarah Mirk at the *Mercury*, and an hour-long call-in show on KBOO featuring Chief Planner Joe Zehnder and Principal Planner Steve Dotterrer. These and many other media clips are posted online at <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan/index.cfm?c=49215>.

E-mail Outreach

Boilerplate copy was created to promote the Portland Plan workshops for City staff to send to their constituencies, including the:

- Mayor's lists (~10,000)
- Portland Plan list (~1,400)
- District liaisons' lists (dozens)
- ONI/neighborhood coalitions (dozens)

We leveraged the relationships inherent in the latter two lists by requesting that recipients pass along the message to their networks, which some of them did within minutes.

Other Collateral

Along the way, staff created other collateral and educational content to help provide the community with information and relevant context underlying the planning process, including:

- Fact sheets, survey results, pictures and videos by workshop/district (<http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan/index.cfm?c=51565>)
- Flyers and handouts (<http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan/index.cfm?a=278888&c=50730>)
- Lawn signs for each workshop venue
- Small pins featuring the nine action area icons
- Information boards
- Response sheets
- Workshop evaluation forms

How'd We Do?

As Workshop Lead Tom Armstrong has noted, more than 900 participants signed into the seven workshops around the city, and more than 94 percent of those people gave the experience high marks. But the demographic of the workshops is still mostly white, and participants are generally older and more affluent than the rest of Portland.

So did we achieve our communications objectives?

1. Expand awareness of the Portland Plan: The direct mail piece alone touched more people in an engaging way than ever before with planning efforts. Even if people didn't

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attend a workshop, visit the website or fill out a survey, the postcard, advertising, social media, Channel 30 broadcasts and media coverage converged to create a “perfect storm” of awareness. The buzz generated by the marketing campaign could be felt throughout the city by staff and the public alike. The challenge will be to build on that awareness and keep it alive throughout the process.

2. Generate measurable public involvement: We have comparable public involvement data to use for the Portland Plan, including the number of people who attended the Phase I workshops and the Climate Action Town Halls. The Round 1 workshops saw a marked increase in attendance and interest. More than 5,000 surveys have been sent back to the bureau, and 2,500 people have filled out the survey online. Furthermore, a greater number and variety of community and interest-based groups have requested a meeting with staff about the Portland Plan, which reflects the desire to learn more and become more meaningfully involved. And, finally, our fan base and number of followers on social media continues to grow.

3. Increase participation of the reluctant: 31 percent of workshop attendees said they were not familiar with Portland issues, so these people are probably not the “public participation regulars.” To ensure that we stay connected to this group especially, we will be sending follow-up e-mails and making regular updates to the website and social media outlets. As we reach out to the underserved, the communications team can help keep the message simple and support outreach staff in their relationship-building. This is where the tactics of creating webs and networks and employing behavior change strategies could be most useful.

4. Maintain the support of those already involved: There were many familiar faces at the Round 1 workshops, but this time they were joined by new ones; families with children, youth and young creatives joined veteran public participants in intensely engaged conversations. So there is definitely room for more voices. One of the tactics that we have yet to explore fully, however, is soliciting partners or ambassadors to speak on behalf of the Plan. Those who are already involved could be good candidates for this effort.

Next Steps

As we prepare for Phase Two of public outreach for the Portland Plan, we welcome your feedback on our communications efforts during Round 1. And feel free to give us any ideas you have for the future marketing and promotion of the Portland Plan.