Citizen Interaction Design: Downtown Construction Project Quick Guide

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Executive Summary

Purpose

This report was prepared by Chris Bulin (cbulin@umich.edu) and Cara Bloom (carabee@umich.edu), a.k.a. Team Dig, as a detailing of the data gathering, research and recommendations made to the City of Jackson with regard to the upcoming downtown construction project. The team was tasked with creating an educational exhibit based on City processes involved in construction. Research was completed about citizen engagement, downtown construction projects in other cities and data was gathered from interviews with City employees and stakeholders. The primary concerns regarding the construction project were:

- ‣ Signage and wayfinding are VERY important
- ‣ Clearly mark and route to available parking
- ‣ Maintain sidewalk access as much as possible
- ‣ Information should be clear, concise, and accurate while not being overly optimistic
- ‣ Use a variety of communication channels
- ‣ Businesses want to be able to give feedback as well as get up-to-date information all in one place
- ‣ Participants were more concerned with duration, delays and accessibility than an educational component
- ‣ Continuous and On-Demand Information is required

In response to these concerns, the team has created a two (2) phase plan and made four (4) recommendations to the City for where to begin their efforts. Phase I of the plan creates a foundation for communication and messaging for the City. This addresses the primary concerns identified in the data gathered by the group. Phase II creates the educational interactive component on top of the communication foundation. The best program could be built, but if no one knows about it, then it is a failure. Creating this two (2) phase design helps mitigate worries of failure related to communication barriers. All four (4) recommendations from the team relate to Phase I.

Recommendation 1: Communication Plan

The communication plan presented in the report requires that the City work with the DDA to develop a strategy for downtown revitalization and this construction effort. That vision will inform the branding used when communicating about the project. The components of the Communication Plan include:

- ‣ Create a vision for the project
  - – Includes logo and tagline
- ‣ Hire a public relations or marketing agency
  - – Create mailing campaign
  - – Create billboard messages
  - – Create graphic designs for posters and website regarding parking and progress on construction
- ‣ Create a timeline for initial and ongoing communication with stakeholders

‣ Create content in advance of the beginning of the project to be released throughout the duration
‣ Shape the message and release it to primary business constituents to boost the signal

The team provided examples of vision statements, timeline and advance content.

Recommendation 2: Business Contact Registry

This recommendation requires the City to collect information for the primary and secondary contact persons at downtown businesses. This information will be used to create mailing lists, an email listserv and a Facebook group to facilitate communication between key downtown stakeholders and the City as well as among the various downtown business owners. The Registry will be used to populate the website discussion (see Recommendation 4) forums as well as a channel for communication to the wider audience that includes the customer base for downtown businesses.

Recommendation 3: Signage and Wayfinding

The team recommends that there be extensive signage and wayfinding techniques used downtown for the duration of the construction project. This includes, but is not limited to, posters depicting available parking, signage that highlights handicapped accessible parking, routes and entrances, alleyway signage to help pedestrian and vehicular traffic determine the best route to take to access a particular venue.
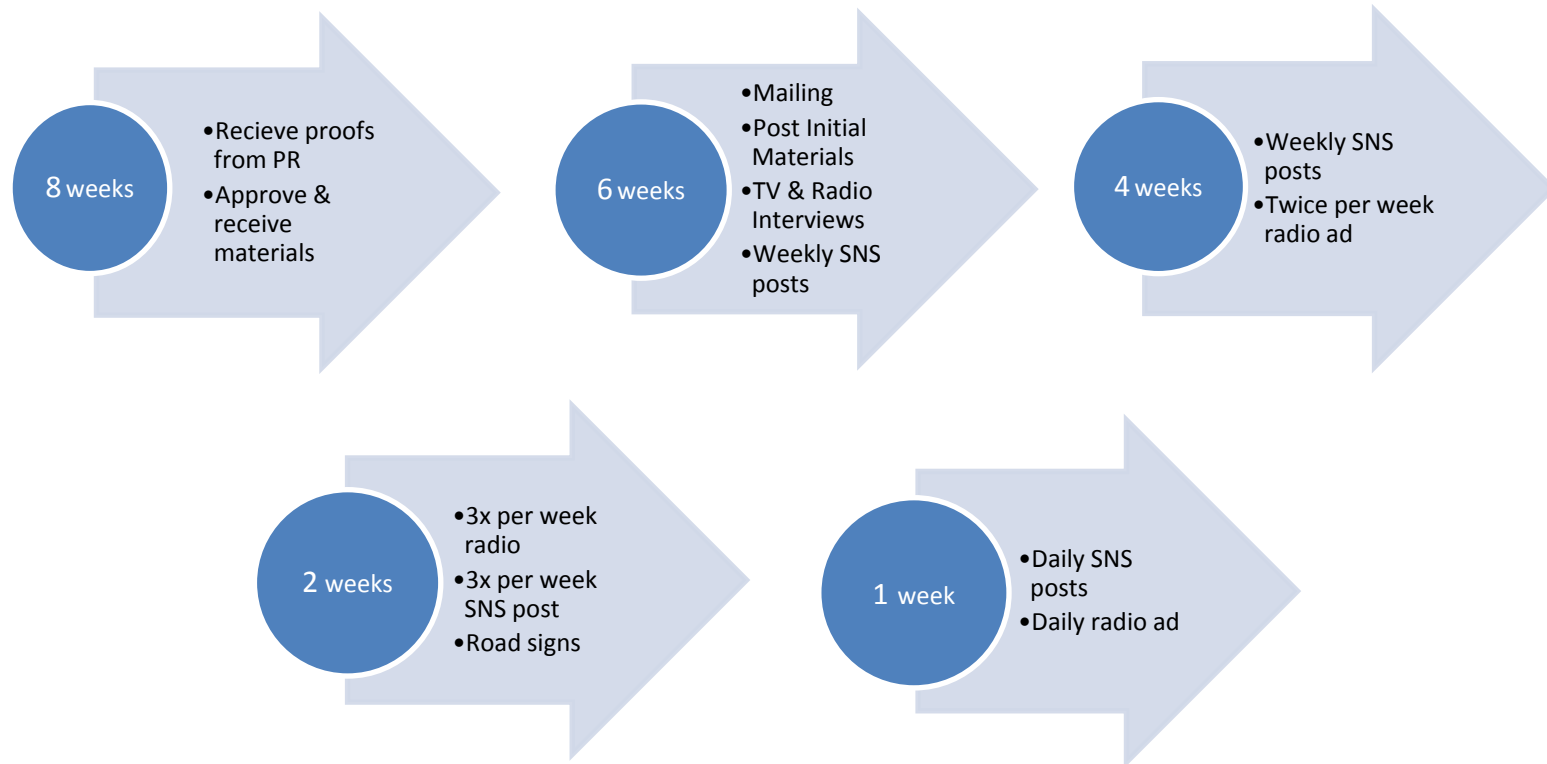
Recommendation 4: Website

Finally, it is recommended that all information about the city construction effort be centralized on a website devoted to Frequently Asked Questions, Discussion Forums, Press Releases, and Events. The team hired a web developer to create a prototype of the site which will be further developed by the summer intern. The website facilitates knowledge generation, storage and dissemination with regard to construction related queries. Using a polling feature, the site will allow the City to collect feedback and quantitative data on the fly and adjust accordingly. This feedback along with the two- way communication involved in the forums will make it a uniquely citizen centered solution.

Sustainability

The team has also provided a plan for the continuation and culmination of the project to fulfill the original task set forth in the project dossier. This involves a University of Michigan School of Information (UMSI) student as a summer intern as well as a second Citizen Interaction Design (CID) group in the fall to see the project through the remainder of Phase I and into and through Phase II. The second group will make recommendations regarding long-term sustainability and conduct an assessment of what has and has not worked in the project.

Initial Communication Timeline

8 weeks
- Recieve proofs from PR
- Approve & receive materials

6 weeks
- Mailing
- Post Initial Materials
- TV & Radio Interviews
- Weekly SNS posts

4 weeks
- Weekly SNS posts
- Twice per week radio ad

2 weeks
- 3x per week radio
- 3x per week SNS post
- Road signs

1 week
- Daily SNS posts
- Daily radio ad

Sustainability Plan Outline

City Partners: Path for Progress

- ‣ Phase 1
    - – Implement Communication Plan
        - ▪ Work with DDA on strategic underpinnings
        - ▪ Hire PR firm
    - – Consider feasibility of suspending parking restrictions and ticketing during project
    - – Create city signage as needed for alleys and wayfinding during project

Intern: Path for Progress

- ‣ Phase 1
    - – Complete Business Registry
        - ▪ Adds all primary business contacts to "Downtown Revitalization" closed Facebook group
        - ▪ Works with the city to distribute contact information to businesses
    - – Populates FAQ portion of the website with construction information gathered from Jonathan, Pat and the City engineers
    - – Adds present information to the timeline
    - – Adds parking and construction maps to the website
    - – Creates a question bank for the polling feature on the website and Facebook (questions released one per week for the duration of the project)
    - – Populates discussion forums
        - ▪ Determines and posts community rules
        - ▪ Recruits early adopters to start populating the forums
        - ▪ Verifies answers to questions with Pat or Jonathan and responds appropriately to posts as needed
        - ▪ Populates the invitation only discussion group with primary and secondary contacts in the Business Contact Registry
    - – Adds Registry Form to the website

Group 2: Path for Progress

- ‣ Phase II
    - – Adds historical and future information to the website timeline
    - – Adds short update/human interest videos to website and YouTube
    - – Creates plan for moving forward with educational and interactive components to draw people downtown
    - – Creates plan for sustaining engagement, soliciting and responding to feedback

Summary Timeline

Intern Starts

Creates Facebook group for Businesses

Populates website

If time, creates Informational Videos

6 weeks: Mailing and Posters

Weekly Social Media Updates

Billboards

2 weeks out: Road Signs

Kick Off Event: Construction Begins

Weekly Updates on Social Media

Delays and Urgent Updates on Jackson Connect as nneded