

Communications Strategy for Downtown Reimagined Construction Project — 2025–2026

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SUBMISSION DEADLINE: July 4th 2025, 5:00

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Communications Strategy for Downtown Reimagined Construction Project — 2025–2026

1. *Introduction*

The Grimsby Downtown Improvement Area (BIA), in collaboration with the Town of Grimsby, is seeking proposals from qualified communications agencies to develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy for the upcoming Downtown Reimagined construction project. This initiative aims to revitalize our Main Street by enhancing its infrastructure and public spaces, thereby fostering a vibrant downtown core.

The

Need

The BIA is seeking proposals from qualified communications professionals or agencies to support a major downtown construction project. The selected agent will play a key role in developing and executing a comprehensive communications strategy to ensure consistent messaging, effective public engagement, and community buy-in. Responsibilities will include providing strategic guidance, establishing a uniform communications approach, creating and launching a marketing campaign to introduce and socialize the project, and managing a dynamic social media content calendar throughout its duration.

2. *Schedule of Events*

RFP Issue Date: May 31st, 2025

Proposal Submission Deadline: July 4th, at 5:00 PM EST

Selection Announcement: July/August 2025

3. *Project Background*

The Downtown Reimagined project is a transformative infrastructure initiative designed to revitalize Grimsby's Main Street corridor. Spanning from Christie Street and Mountain Street to Elm Street, the project encompasses several key components designed to enhance the downtown experience for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

A primary focus of the initiative is replacing aging cast-iron water mains, which have reached the end of their service life. This upgrade is crucial to ensure a reliable water supply for the downtown area and its surrounding communities. The Town of Grimsby secured nearly \$2 million in funding through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure - Green Stream Program, a joint initiative of the federal and provincial governments, to support this aspect of the project. In addition to water main replacement, the project involves a thorough assessment and necessary upgrades to the existing storm and sanitary sewers. These improvements are crucial for supporting the refreshed streetscape and accommodating future growth.

The road reconstruction component will result in a comprehensive transformation of Main Street. Plans include widening sidewalks, reducing asphalt lane widths, and potentially adding dedicated pedestrian crossings to promote pedestrian movement. Flexible parking areas will be incorporated to accommodate temporary parking while providing additional pedestrian space when parking is not needed. Enhancements such as landscaping, public

art, and improved lighting are also planned to bring renewed energy and charm to the downtown core.

Construction is scheduled to commence with the bidding process in fall 2025, followed by watermain and sewer repairs outside the downtown core during winter and spring 2026. The main road work in the downtown area, including water main replacement, storm sewer installation, sanitary sewer repairs, and full road reconstruction, is projected to start in summer 2026. The project is expected to be completed by fall 2026.

Work on the communications plan will commence as soon as the RFP is awarded, likely mid-July. Idea generation and content creation should be wrapped up by the end of September, followed by implementation happening from October 2025-June 2026.

For more information and updates on the Downtown Reimagined project, please visit the official project page: [Downtown Reimagined Construction Phase | Let's Talk Grimsby](#).

4. Objectives

The primary objectives of the communications strategy are to:

- Clearly and regularly inform residents, businesses, and stakeholders about construction timelines, impacts, and progress.
- Maintain and enhance public trust and transparency throughout the construction period.
- Support local businesses by promoting accessibility, encouraging patronage, and minimizing economic disruption during construction.
- Facilitate effective two-way communication between the Town, BIA, and community stakeholders.
- Strengthen community engagement through strategic communication support for events, marketing campaigns, and public relations efforts that complement the Town's direct construction communications.
- Promote downtown businesses, attractions, and overall economic vitality during the construction phase.
- Establish cohesive branding and effective social media strategies to keep the community informed, engaged, and supportive of the Downtown Reimagined project.

To achieve these objectives, the selected agency will provide strategic guidance, planning, and communications materials, while the BIA and Town will be responsible for the direct implementation of:

- **Community Events:** Regular street festivals, pop-up markets, art installations, and seasonal community activities to sustain foot traffic and showcase local businesses.
- **Marketing Campaigns:** Targeted initiatives including promotions, loyalty programs, and collaborative advertising with local businesses to maintain economic momentum and customer engagement.
- **Branding:** Consistent visual identity and messaging strategies reflecting the vision and values of the revitalized downtown.

- **Social Media Engagement:** Active social media presence using interactive content, such as polls, contests, and live Q&A sessions, to maintain community dialogue and participation.
- **Non-Construction Signage:** Clear, engaging signage to guide visitors around construction zones, supporting continued downtown visitation and business patronage.
- **Economic Development Programming:** Collaborative programming such as workshops, networking events, and business support initiatives designed to minimize economic disruption and strengthen local commerce.
- **Public Relations:** Proactive outreach to media and community channels, emphasizing positive stories, progress updates, and downtown initiatives to maintain public support and enthusiasm throughout the construction period.

5. *Audience and Stakeholders*

Effective implementation of this communications strategy will hinge on the selected vendor's ability to engage and inform diverse stakeholder groups throughout the construction period. Messaging and visual assets should be dynamic, adaptable, and resonate across multiple platforms, addressing the unique needs and interests of each of the following audiences.

5.1 **Downtown Grimsby BIA Members**

The Downtown Grimsby BIA represents over 150 businesses and property owners, including independent retail establishments, restaurants, professional services, wellness studios, salons, and national franchise locations. These stakeholders rely heavily on consistent foot traffic and customer engagement. The selected agency must deliver strong promotional support to ensure businesses remain visible and accessible during construction disruptions. BIA members will also serve as key communication partners, amplifying campaign messaging through their own channels.

5.2 **Local Residents and Community Members**

Grimsby residents and individuals from neighbouring communities form a critical consumer base for downtown businesses. The communications strategy must cultivate community pride in the ongoing transformation, ensuring clarity and transparency regarding construction progress, temporary changes in accessibility, parking logistics, and the continuous operation of businesses. Clear and timely updates will be essential in maintaining trust and participation from the local community.

5.3 **Visitors and Tourists**

Visitors from the broader Niagara Region and the Greater Golden Horseshoe frequently patronize Downtown Grimsby. Many may be unaware of ongoing construction activities or alternate access routes. It is imperative that the agency crafts visitor-friendly visual materials and straightforward messaging to sustain a welcoming atmosphere, encourage spontaneous visits, and maintain tourism-related economic activity during the construction period.

5.4 Town of Grimsby Staff and Strategic Partners

Town staff and elected officials will be integral collaborators, particularly in areas such as public works, communications, transportation planning, and economic development. Regular and strategic coordination with the Town's overarching construction-related communications will be critical, ensuring consistency of messaging and maximizing the effectiveness of outreach efforts. CIMA is also a key project partner and will need to be closely collaborated with, as they hold communications responsibilities.

5.5 Contractors, Utilities, and Community Organizations

Construction companies, utility providers, and local community organizations—including the Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Grimsby, schools, and event organizers—require clear and regular updates. These groups can serve as valuable secondary communicators, amplifying campaign information and leveraging their own networks to ensure broad reach and community awareness.

5.6 Media and Public Information Channels

Engagement with local and regional media outlets, including print, digital, radio, and social media platforms, will be vital for maintaining public awareness and interest. The chosen vendor must supply press-ready materials, visual assets, and clear messaging that are easy to disseminate and adaptable for diverse media formats, facilitating accurate and proactive coverage.

6. *Deliverables*

The selected agency will be required to produce and deliver the following:

6.1 Comprehensive Communications Plan

A detailed strategy document outlining clear objectives, target audiences, key messages, timelines, communication channels, crisis communications protocol, and evaluation metrics. This plan should address how each stakeholder group will be engaged effectively, incorporating best practices for economic development, branding, marketing, social media engagement, and public relations.

Issues Management should be considered a core component requiring daily oversight to proactively address concerns, manage reputational risk, and maintain public trust throughout the project.

Crisis Communication may be included as a Provisional Item, recognizing that it can demand significant time and budget resources. Agencies are encouraged to outline an optional scope and associated cost for crisis-specific strategy, rapid response planning, and support should urgent or high-impact situations arise.

6.2 Monthly Progress Reports

Concise monthly updates documenting communication activities, stakeholder engagement outcomes, milestones reached, community feedback, media coverage, analytics from marketing and social media initiatives, and recommended adjustments to strategy.

6.3 Press Kits and Media Materials

Professional, timely media assets including press releases, backgrounders, fact sheets, infographics, high-quality images, video content, and periodic project updates. Materials must be tailored for local and regional media, ensuring ease of distribution and use.

6.4 Social Media Content Calendar

Develop a comprehensive monthly content calendar providing strategic direction, messaging themes, and engaging content ideas tailored for various platforms (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, TikTok). The calendar will guide the BIA and Town staff, who have the internal capacity to produce and manage regular social media content. Content recommendations should emphasize visual storytelling, interactive community engagement (such as polls, Q&As, and contests), behind-the-scenes highlights, local business spotlights, and construction progress updates. The agency will ensure alignment with overall communications objectives and provide best practices for maximizing audience reach and engagement.

6.5 Community Engagement Reports

Regular reports summarizing community outreach efforts, attendance metrics, qualitative feedback, effectiveness of engagement tactics, and documentation of interactions from public information sessions, community meetings, surveys, and consultations.

6.6 Non-Construction Signage and Visual Assets

Design and creation of visually appealing, strategically placed signage and wayfinding assets. These should reinforce a welcoming atmosphere downtown, highlight accessibility and business patronage, and clearly communicate alternate routes, parking locations, and amenities.

6.7 Branding and Marketing Campaign Development

The selected agency will develop targeted branding and marketing campaigns designed to maintain positive economic activity, elevate awareness of Downtown Grimsby, and reinforce the BIA's identity throughout construction. This includes creation of a cohesive visual branding package, print and digital advertising concepts, promotional materials templates, and collaborative promotion strategies involving local businesses.

All branding and marketing efforts must align with the overarching Downtown Reimagined brand. The agency will be expected to incorporate and complement this brand identity in all creative deliverables to ensure consistency across public-facing communications and initiatives.

While the Town of Grimsby and Downtown Grimsby BIA will be responsible for implementing these campaigns, the agency must deliver comprehensive implementation guidelines. These guidelines must clearly outline recommended timelines, deployment

strategies, step-by-step instructions for execution, suggested communication channels, frequency of messaging, and best practices to optimize campaign impact and effectiveness.

6.8 Economic Development Programming

The selected agency will provide strategic recommendations, creative ideas, and communications support for economic development initiatives to proactively sustain local commerce and mitigate construction impacts. Specific implementation, including logistics and direct engagement with businesses, will be managed by the Downtown Grimsby BIA and the Town of Grimsby.

6.9 Special Event Ideas and Communication Support

Provide creative and strategic concepts for special events, including festivals, pop-up markets, art installations, seasonal activities, and community celebrations. The selected agency will develop ideas, themes, and related promotional materials and messaging; however, event implementation, logistics, and on-the-ground coordination will be managed directly by the BIA and Town of Grimsby.

6.10 Public Relations and Crisis Communications Support

Ongoing proactive public relations activities, crisis communication preparedness, management of media inquiries, and rapid-response messaging developed in close collaboration with the Town's construction communications team.

7. *Submission Requirements*

All proposals must clearly address each of the following elements:

Letter of Interest

Include a brief introduction outlining your agency's suitability for this project, highlighting interest and enthusiasm for the scope and objectives. Clearly provide primary contact details, including name, position, phone number, and email.

Company Profile and Qualifications

Submit a comprehensive company profile, emphasizing relevant experience with municipal infrastructure projects, community engagement, economic development programming, branding, marketing, and public relations. Clearly demonstrate recent experience with similar municipal or infrastructure communication projects (minimum of three within the past five years).

Portfolio Samples

Provide relevant samples showcasing your firm's work on communication strategies, branding initiatives, marketing campaigns, social media strategies, and economic development programs related to municipal infrastructure or community-focused projects.

Project Team and Key Personnel

Present profiles for key personnel who will be directly involved in delivering this project.

Include clear role descriptions, relevant professional experience, specific skills, previous municipal project involvement, and hourly billing rates for each team member.

Project Approach, Process, and Timeline

Offer a detailed description of your proposed approach and methodology, outlining specific steps and processes from initial strategy development through to the final deliverables. Clearly indicate key milestones, timelines, and review periods aligned with the overall construction schedule.

Detailed Budget

Provide a comprehensive budget breakdown clearly aligned to each deliverable outlined in this RFP. Include all applicable fees, service charges, disbursements, travel costs, or other additional expenses. The total maximum project budget should not exceed \$80,000 exclusive of applicable taxes.

References

Include at least three references from similar municipal or infrastructure communication projects completed within the past five years. Provide contact information (name, organization, phone number, email) for each reference.

Submission Format:

Submit proposals electronically in PDF format. Clearly organize and label each section to facilitate evaluation.

Proposals missing required information or not following these guidelines may be disqualified from consideration.

Contract Terms and Submission Details

This RFP is open to all qualified proponents. Electronic copies of proposals must be submitted as a single PDF via email to **info@grimsbydowntown.com** no later than **July 4th, 2025, at 5:00 PM**. The email subject line must read: **“Communications Strategy for Downtown Reimagined Construction Project — 2025–2026.”**

Paper copies of this RFP can be provided upon request.

Questions regarding the RFP should be submitted by email to **info@grimsbydowntown.com**. Responses to all questions will be circulated to all vendors expressing interest, no later than two business days before the submission deadline.

Proposals should include an all-inclusive price. If certain fees or charges are excluded, clearly itemize these separately with detailed explanations. Please quote HST separately.

This project will be awarded to the vendor offering the best overall proposal based on evaluation criteria, not necessarily the lowest price. Upon selection, the BIA will negotiate final terms with the successful vendor. All contracts are subject to review by the BIA and require approval by the Board of Directors. Contracts will clearly outline terms, project scope, budget, performance expectations, deadlines, penalties for non-performance, and any other required items.

The Downtown Grimsby BIA reserves the right to modify or terminate this RFP process without awarding a contract. The BIA's decision is final.

Ownership:

All content, graphics, and associated materials produced through this project will become the sole property of the Downtown Grimsby BIA.