

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Kogon and Amherst Town Council

From: Bill Schurman, Director of Recreation

Date: January 21, 2019

Subject: **Marketing Program – Strategic Priority**

One of Council's Strategic Priorities is a Marketing Program, which focused on the question; *how do we market and position Amherst as a great place to live, work, play, to attract and retain residents, visitors and business?*

From the outset it was determined that a marketing plan would be a way to address this priority. As such, the Recreation Department completed the task of gathering an inventory of marketing and promotional materials from all Town departments to lay the groundwork for a new marketing plan. The information below provides an outline of the existing initiatives and programming that correspond to the list of Desired Outcomes listed in the Strategic Priority Work Program as determined by Council. The next step will be to review the existing materials and initiatives to identify gaps or additional information required.

The goal is to continue these initiatives and strive to identify opportunities for improvement and growth in all areas.

SUPPORT AND PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY PRIDE

Festivals and Events – Amherst has a growing reputation for supporting and successfully hosting events. Some examples of festivals and events supported by the town include:

- Expansion of established annual events such as the Amherst Winter Carnival, Canada Day celebrations, New Year's Eve activities, Bordertown Biker Bash, the Valentine Run, Fibre Arts Festival, Indigenous Day, African Heritage, Atlantic Car Show, Blue Nose Tournament, Ducks Unlimited Dinner and many more.
- Coordination of Little Ray's Reptile Zoo show at the Amherst Centre Mall.
- Production of a series of summer night markets which included a classic car show, fire performers, and circus performers along with live music, food trucks, and local artisans.
- Development of a new festival called 'A' Fest which focused on Family First, Active Healthy Amherst.
- Creation of new events to connect community members to local businesses, such as, Spirits Walk, Cookie Crawl, and Victorian Christmas.
- Community Support Grants and 'A' Fresh Start Initiative -Investing in community pride by supporting events and activities.
- Mayor, Council and Senior Management also promotes our Town by speaking and presenting at several conferences and seminars throughout the year.
- Family First Summer Student Program developed to promote community pride, and activities are coordinated throughout the summer to spread a message of Active Living and Family First.
- Stakeholders such as Senior Safety, 50+ Club, AYTC and the Community Health Board partnering to support, sell and promote community pride.

Visual identity - Our image can be seen on staff clothing, vehicles, swag and collectibles, business cards, email signatures, and the new water reservoir, with the goal to improve brand awareness.

Social media is a high priority. Our Facebook pages are a great resource for community engagement, encouraging conversations and promoting community pride. Our social media presence has increased the way our citizens connect with our Town.

Our Facebook pages have grown to a total of 9,907 likes and we have 1171 followers on Twitter, we also are using Snapchat, YouTube and Instagram with the expectation to increase in these areas.

Paid Facebook advertisements are used to reach people who are not already connected to the Town's Facebook page and people who live outside of Amherst but within a one-hour drive.

TARGETED MARKETING MATERIAL

Targeted materials have been reviewed and updated. Town advertising program is evaluated for reach and impact and is ongoing.

Printed marketing materials include an Amherst map, visitor guide, brochures and flyers, placemats used in local restaurants, facilities brochures, summer program brochures, stand up banners, promotional tables at community events also implemented.

Signage produced such as trail signs, walkability signage, Sharrows, Stadium Signage, Park and Facility Signage.

A Weekly Skinny activity schedule is produced and distributed to community members and businesses, as well as electronic newsletters.

The back of the water bill is also used to promote initiatives and events organized by the Town.

Town facilities, initiatives and events are also promoted through websites such as Fundy Connect, novascotia.com, Eventbrite, TripAdvisor, and Google Maps.

Paid print advertisements were placed in regional magazines and newspapers as well as in provincial tourism guides.

Frequently used slogans include #seewhyweloveit, Active Healthy Community, Live Work Play, and Family First. These slogans have gained recognition and have become a staple in the community.

WEBSITE UPGRADE

A refresh of the website was completed with changes to the navigation menus, reorganization of information, and an update of the visual template. Information is updated frequently and images on the home page are changed seasonally.

ENCOURAGE IMMIGRATION

YMCA Outreach Program

A Town of Amherst backdrop and recruitment booklet were created to attract physicians and other professionals to live and work in Amherst. Information packages are given to visiting physicians who are filling in short-term vacancies.

PROMOTE BORDERTOWN LOCATION

Promotional videos were created and shared on social media and the Town's website to attract visitors planning Nova Scotia vacations.

A series of itineraries has been developed to encourage travelers to make Amherst their home base for two or three days of excursions.

REFRESH/REJUVENATE ENTRANCE WAYS

New community identity signage on Highway 104 was developed with an emphasis on Amherst's built heritage.

Enhancement of entrances and main routes through town with beautiful floral displays and well-maintained green spaces.

Directional signage helps people navigate to Town facilities and the downtown core, while information kiosks provide a place to pick up brochures and find out about events. Pole banners throughout town add colour and pageantry.

TELL THE AMHERST STORY – HISTORY AND CULTURE

Through the Street Banner program, we honor our history and culture. African Heritage Month, Remembrance Day, Live Work Play, Indigenous Day, Fibre Arts, Holiday Banners, Canada Day.

The Nova Scotia Highlanders Mural was re-created and mounted on the side of Town Hall.

A Heritage Day Fair (2018) was developed as part of Winter Carnival, which featured heritage craft (weaving, spinning, stained glass art), and displays from the Cumberland County Museum, CANSA, Highlanders military museum, and Amherst Area Heritage Trust, with plans to continue each year so we can continue to promote the history and stories of our Town.

Historic walking tours and horse-drawn carriage tours were developed to bring Amherst's history to life while developing new tourism product for visitors.

The Town of Amherst has partnered with many organizations such as Amherst Area Heritage Trust, The Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, The Cumberland County Museum, Fibre Arts Festival, the Cumberland YMCA, Maggie's Place, CANSA, Cumberland Health Authority and many more to help strengthen the ties to the history and culture in our community.

Culture, Marketing and Event Coordinator position implemented.

CONCLUSION

The existing programming and initiatives listed above illustrates the significant efforts being directed at marketing the town to both residents and visitors. As such, it could be argued that the significant resources required to develop a new marketing plan might be better directed towards continuing to look for ways to more effectively market the town as part of the regular course of operations.