

**Mariano, Nicole S**

---

**From:** Malcolm Smith <malcolms@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 02, 2014 2:06 PM  
**To:** McIntyre, Alex D; Jerome-Robinson, Starla L; Brandell, Cherise E; Curtin, Clay J  
**Subject:** Re: Communications Proposal  
**Attachments:** MPCommProposal-Ballot Initiative.docx

Hello - thanks again for the opportunity to provide you with a short proposal for communications work centered on the potential ballot measure. This one is just a couple of pages, I think you'll find it contains the elements necessary to reach your communications objectives around this issue. Don't hesitate to contact me with any questions about this. I look forward to further conversations!

Best wishes,

malcolm

Malcolm Smith  
[malcolms@yahoo.com](mailto:malcolms@yahoo.com)  
408-472-8536

## Proposal for Communications Services for the City of Menlo Park

Focus: Potential ballot initiative to revise the approved Downtown Specific Plan

March 3, 2014

Prepared by Malcolm Smith

(408) 472-8536/malcolmcs@yahoo.com

The City is faced with the likelihood of a November, 2014, ballot measure by initiative, which would revise the approved Downtown Specific Plan in a manner which the City believes would be detrimental to the community and to the City's goals.

### Objective

Before the issue is officially placed on the ballot, the City seeks to **refute the issues raised** by the initiative's sponsors, and **gain a more positive public profile** of its position on the Plan by **educating and informing the community** about the value and importance of continuing with the existing Plan, respect for the extensive public process that led to the Plan, and how the Plan helps sets the stage for a healthy, economically-viable future for Menlo.

### Communications Tools/Tasks

In order to accomplish the City's communications goals related to this issue, it's recommended that a range of communications tools be utilized; in summary – producing talking points for Council and staff, fostering supporters to speak at Council and Planning Commission meetings, creating news releases, letters to the editor and opinion pieces, cultivating personal contact to achieve positive (or factual/neutral) editorials and feature stories and to gain formal support positions from selected organizations, creating an informational web page, and distributing information via Next Door and other social media.

More specifically, the related communications tasks are:

1. Develop **key messages and talking points** (both broad, and more detailed) which serve to state the City's position, and refute the arguments for Plan revision; to be used:
  - a. For Council members and senior staff responding to media or community inquiries
  - b. For community members, to speak from during public communications periods at Council and Planning Commission meetings (City to identify and contact signatories)
  - c. As a foundation to prepare other materials
2. Prepare 2 – 3 **news releases** for distribution at key milestones (upon final ballot description, upon Council placing item on ballot), and at other points as determined; media includes: Daily News, The Almanac, Palo Alto Daily Post, Menlo Park-Atherton Patch (online), and possibly San Mateo Daily Journal, Palo Alto Weekly
3. Draft **letters to the editor** for selected newspapers, to be signed by supportive community members (City to identify and contact signatories)
4. Write 1 or 2 **opinion pieces** for submission to selected newspapers, to be signed by the Mayor or a selected Council member, or a high-profile, credible community member/business person (City to identify and contact possible signatories)
5. Assist in preparation and materials for **editorial board meetings, one-on-one reporter meetings, and chamber/school district presentations**, with selected City Council member/City Manager (City to schedule)
6. Create content for an **informational/educational web page** regarding the possible ballot measure for the City's website, making it a transparent, credible, honest source of information for the community

7. Prepare content suitable for supportive community members to distribute via their own **social media** networks, through the City's Next Door network, and its other social media channels if any

### Key Messaging

Examples of the broader key messages include:

1. The City respects the extensive public process, which was lengthy, expensive, genuine, and meaningful, with a very involved community
2. Based on that process, the Plan represents what the community wants – the community agreed to this Plan and if the City wishes to honor the integrity of that process and the public's decision
3. Community survey has shown people believe the pace of development is too slow – this Plan helps to address that pace
4. The proposed revisions would set an economically-chilling precedent for requiring a vote on future projects, dramatically slowing the pace of potential development and improvements
5. This Plan provides the foundation for future economic health, will bring vitality, lead to other, thoughtful mixed development
6. The development stemming from this Plan provides significant funding (fees, property taxes) to the City for important community services (name them), and provides significant funds to the school district – even though the development is not expected to dramatically increase enrollment
7. The Plan's current ratio of office to housing/retail is lower than originally proposed, as considerations/compromises have already been made as part of the public process

In addition to fostering and expressing viewpoints regarding the value of the approved Plan, respect for the community process, and how the Plan is a foundation for a positive economic future, the key messages/speaking points and other materials can address/refute the primary arguments made in favor of revising the Downtown Specific Plan. Arguments center on these issues:

- Additional traffic on El Camino Real, and overflowing onto residential streets
- Offices "crowding out" housing and retail development
- Offices generating little tax revenue
- These developments worsen the "housing deficit"
- Loss of open space/definition of open space
- Increase in air and noise pollution

### Timing

The City will provide an outline of the timing milestones involved. Assuming qualification of sufficient valid signatures, and assuming that the City Council must take action on the initiative in July or early August, these proposed communications activities will take place during the months of March – July. Much of the written material – key messages, talking points, letters and op-eds – will be developed as soon as possible, and then be available for distribution throughout the communications period, "metered out" so that there is a fairly regular appearance of the City's information throughout the period. A more firm schedule of certain materials can be developed based on the milestones; materials also will be ready for distribution if the need arises to directly respond to output from the ballot measure authors.

### Cost

For the communications tasks listed above, including periodic meetings with City staff, research/reading and review of information, drafting/editing written materials, logistical assistance to City staff, and accounting for possible additional tasks to supplement the City's efforts, a not-to-exceed amount of \$6,500 is recommended, which represents **up to 65 hours** of work at \$100/hour. It's estimated that 50 hours is the minimum amount of time required to carry out these tasks.

More time will be spent during the first month of the communications period, to prepare the "foundation" materials, with fewer hours spent in the remaining three-to-four months.