

Report: Communications Survey Results

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The City of Mill Valley has identified the goal of communicating City news and information internally and externally in a timely, cohesive, and proactive manner, so that community members are well informed and able to access information pertaining to the City.

In 2013, the City of Mill Valley Communications Committee identified a Communications Survey as an important tool to assess the effectiveness of current communication methods, and to determine Mill Valley community preferences in receiving information and giving input about important issues.

The purpose of the Communications Survey was to achieve a better understanding of the communication and media preferences of the Mill Valley community for the use of creating a more effective strategy for citizen engagement. The results of the survey will generate more opportunities for better, more timely and cohesive two-way communication with members of the public.

The following report will give the detail of the methodologies and demographics, review results and provide some analysis, as well as provide recommendations.

Methodology

The survey questions were initially drafted by the Communications Committee, finalized by the Communications Group and approved by the City Manager before the release of the survey.

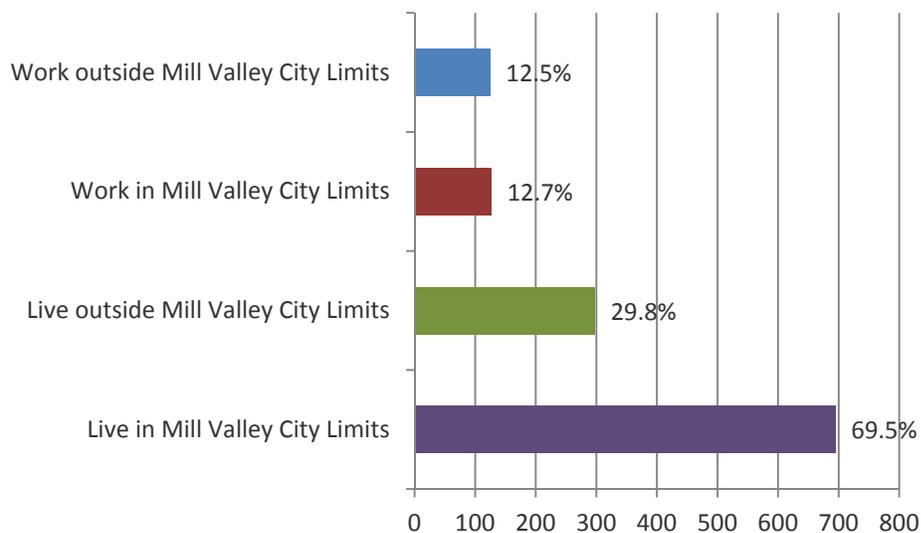
The survey opened April 29 and closed May 19, 2014. Marketing of the survey included posting a news item on the City website, sending an eNotification to several hundred email addresses, posting on Nextdoor and the Mill Valley Patch websites, posting on the City's Facebook and Twitter pages, notices in the Mill Valley Chamber of Commerce's "Friday Flash," and emailing the notice to the list of City Neighborhood and Homeowners Associations for distribution to their members. There was a small news story in the Marin IJ about the survey. It was available in paper form at the Mill Valley Community Meeting on May 1 and at City Hall for the duration of the survey open period. This marketing activity acquired around 290 responses. On May 8, Recreation staff sent the survey to 9,000 email addresses, an effort which garnered an additional 734 responses for a total of 1024 responses.

Demographics

Q1 Tell us about you. Do you...

Results:

Answer Options	Response Count
Live in Mill Valley City Limits	695
Live outside Mill Valley City Limits	298
Work in Mill Valley City Limits	127
Work outside Mill Valley City Limits	125
<i>answered question</i>	1000
<i>skipped question</i>	24



Analysis: The majority of survey participants lived in Mill Valley City limits (69.5%), and about an even split of respondents work in Mill Valley City limits and outside City Limits.

According to the 2010 Census, there are 10,612 adults (18 and older) living in City limits. Of the 1000 people who answered Q1, 695 reported that they lived within City limits. Assuming that these were adults, this gives us a response rate of 6.5%.

Executive Summary

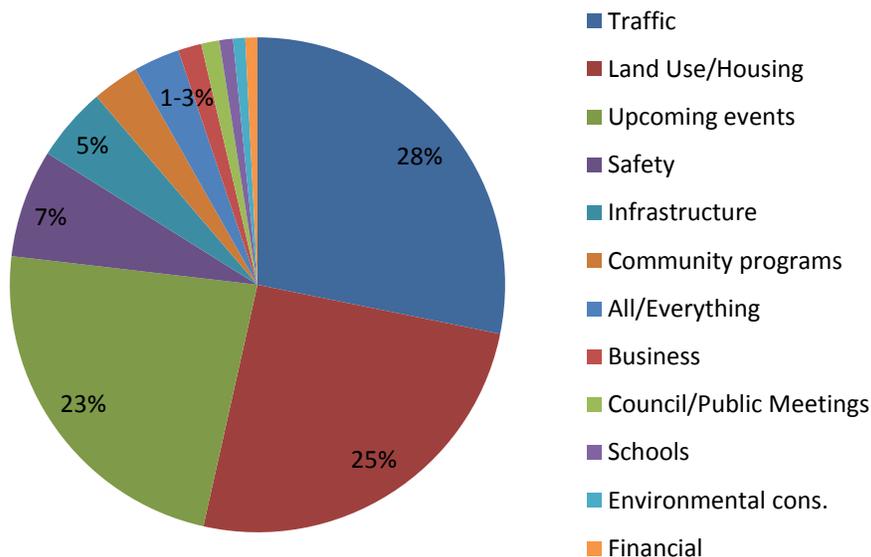
Survey Questions	Top Responses	Percent
Q2 What information is important to you?	Traffic, Road Closures and Parking Land Use and Development Upcoming events	28% 25% 23%
Q3 How do you currently get news and information about Mill Valley?	Word of Mouth Marin Independent Journal Mill Valley Patch	16% 14% 11%
Q4 How satisfied are you with the communication you receive from City of Mill Valley?	Very Satisfied Satisfied Not Satisfied Not sure	9% 53% 20% 18%
Q6 Do you use Social Media?	Yes No	71% 29%
Q7 If "Yes" - What social media do you use?	Facebook Nextdoor LinkedIn	32% 23% 21%
Q8 How would you like for the City of Mill Valley to communicate with you?	Local Print and Online News Email Marketing Signs and Banners	16% 11% 11%
Q9 The City of Mill Valley is considering sending out a printed newsletter twice a year to residents. Would you like to receive one?	Yes No Maybe	69% 16% 15%
Q10 Communication should be two-way. We want to hear from you and receive your input, suggestions and ideas. What is your preferred method of communicating with the City on topics of importance to you?	Emails Interactive Website Social Media	38% 12% 10%
Q 11 Do you find the methods listed above to be satisfying?	Very Satisfied Satisfied Not Satisfied Not sure	15% 67% 4% 15%
Q13 If the City of Mill Valley developed a mobile web application to communicate with residents how likely is it that you would use it?	Very likely I would use it I might use it I probably would not use it I definitely would not use it Don't Know	36% 34% 16% 7% 6%
Q14 How can the City of Mill Valley improve communication with its residents?	Email Newsletter Social Media	27% 14% 11%

Survey Results

Q2 What information is important to you? What do you want to hear about from the City of Mill Valley?

Results: This open-ended question garnered 837 responses. Staff read and categorized the responses to determine trends.

What do you want to hear about	Number Responses
Traffic/Road Closures/Parking	571
Land Use/Housing/Neighborhood Development	513
Upcoming Events	473
Safety/Emergency Preparedness/Crime	143
Infrastructure/Miller Ave/Paving Roads/Watershed Management/Flooding	98
Library/Recreation/Arts/Community program	62
All/Everything	61
Business/Proposals/Openings and Closing	31
Council/Public Meetings	24
Schools	18
Environmental Conservation	16
Financial/Budget/Pensions	16



Analysis: The data shows that the top three topics survey respondents consider important and want to hear about are issues related to traffic, road closures and parking (28%), land use and development (25%), and upcoming events (23%). This is followed by safety, emergency preparedness and crime, and issues related to infrastructure, Miller Avenue and floodplain management.

Respondents emphasized the importance of being able to access information on current issues, and the importance of staying informed so they can take part in decision making processes. Many respondents reported that they were interested in knowing about anything and everything that affects Mill Valley and day-to-day life.

There were many other items mentioned in the 837 responses that did not fit into the above-listed categories. These included:

- Open Space/GGNRA/Muir Woods
- Mosquito abatement
- Elections
- Health issues
- Senior citizen information
- Fundraising
- City staff changes/new staff
- Public art
- Communications
- Volunteer opportunities
- Teenage issues
- Spare the Air alerts
- Dog running areas
- Jobs
- Noise
- Partnership projects between community organizations and the city
- Charitable needs

Sample of Comments:

“Please advise of the traffic conditions and/or road closures as they develop (via email or text?).”

“All neighborhood development proposals should be communicated, IN WRITING, to nearby Homeowners to allow feedback on how these projects will affect their quality of life.”

“It's important for MV's residents to be informed so they can take part in local events.”

“Information is very important Would like more current info on the Mill Valley Police Dept web site listing all crimes in our neighborhoods so we could be more aware. Need all safety info on tides flooding and weather available to Mill Valley residents”

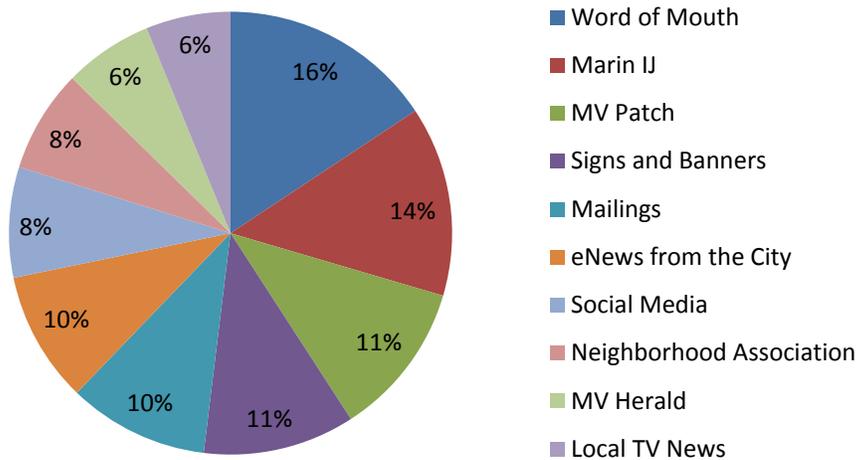
“Upcoming events: music, theatre, community, volunteer, fund raising”

“I subscribe to the information that I am interested in. The web info is very good!”

Q3 How do you currently get news and information about Mill Valley?

Results:

Answer Options	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
Word of Mouth	416	460	36
Marin Independent Journal	368	385	167
Mill Valley Patch	300	297	266
Signs and Banners	294	504	71
Mailings (i.e. Library Brochure)	272	377	201
eNotifications from the City	254	293	275
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor)	214	258	339
Neighborhood Association	199	311	313
Mill Valley Herald	172	289	369
Local TV News	164	301	361
School Newsletter	154	178	439
City of Mill Valley Website	114	408	314
Local Radio	114	286	384
Affiliation or Group	75	235	462
Attending Events	66	480	240
Chamber of Commerce Emails/Website	30	127	599
Attending Public Meetings	28	277	457
Watching Public Meetings Webcast Live and Archived Online	21	101	651
Watching Public Meetings on Television (Local Government Channel)	20	115	645
Communicating with City Council members	15	180	567
City Councilmember on the Plaza	10	99	644
	answered question	1011	
	skipped question	13	



Top 10 Cited Sources for News and Information about Mill Valley

Analysis: The responses show that there is no one, prominent place that all community members go to find news and information about Mill Valley. The top ten most frequently used sources of information are all within 10 percentage points of each other, indicating that each form of communication receives a roughly equal amount of use by community members, with the top three sources, after word of mouth, being the Marin Independent Journal, the Mill Valley Patch and signs and banners around town. It is interesting to note that regardless of the trend towards electronic noticing (website posts, emails) many people still cite mailings such as brochures and letters as a key source of information.

Respondents listed several other sources for news that was not on the list of options. These included other news media outlets such as the Pacific Sun, the San Francisco Chronicle and The Ark. Respondents also listed online family resources such as Marin Mommies, Ronnie's Awesome List, and the Southern Marin Mothers Club. Respondents also indicated that they received information from visiting City facilities and various locations around town such as Mill Valley Market and local restaurants and cafés. True to the small town character of Mill Valley, one resident cited their hairdresser as a source of news and information about what is going on around town.

Sample of Comments:

“Love Nextdoor, and that MV City joined. Easy and effective way to connect with neighbors and our elected council members. Impressed that Mayor reads posts and replies! Promotes sense of being heard, friendliness, working together.”

“I read the Patch but it is really a pathetic publication. The Herald doesn't do much good coming only once a week. The IJ is also disappointing - I don't subscribe anymore. Nextdoor is about the best outlet at this point.”

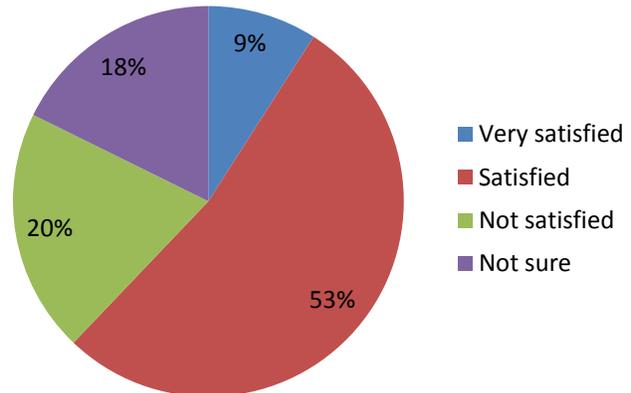
“Local TV news and newspapers streamed through the internet; forwarded emails from active neighborhood organizers”

“I've never heard of council member on the plaza! I've always wanted to meet our council member!”

Q4 How satisfied are you with the communication you receive from City of Mill Valley?

Results:

Answer Options	Responses
Very satisfied	91
Satisfied	534
Not satisfied	203
Not sure	178
<i>answered question</i>	1006
<i>skipped question</i>	18



Analysis: 62% of Mill Valley community members responded that they were “Very satisfied” or “Satisfied” with the communication they receive from the City of Mill Valley. 20% reported being “Not satisfied” and 18% were “Not sure.”

Q5 If you answered "not satisfied" please tell us more: Why are you not satisfied? What could we be doing better?

Results and Analysis: The 232 responses to this open-ended question centered on a few themes, which included the desire for a regular email newsletter, more communication about neighborhood development and construction projects, more advanced warning for meetings, street closures and events. Many respondents cited frustration with not having inquiries responded to in a timely manner, and asked for increased communication around issues of traffic, crime, and transparency in City decision-making processes.

Sample of Comments:

“I wouldn't mind a monthly newsletter, occasional urgent announcements.”

“Almost everything I hear is word of mouth. I basically am unaware of what the City does.”

“I would like more information about major construction projects in my neighborhood”

“I recently wrote to the City about something I considered to be very important. 6 weeks later I am still waiting for a response. I know the correspondence was received because I went in to check.”

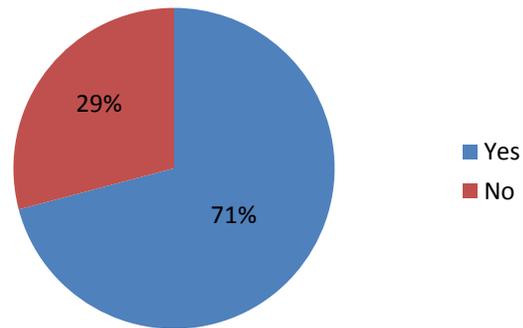
“I have signed up for all notifications but don't seem to get them all, then too many or too few, not organized, not regular, except for road closures weekly”

“Your emails and connection with Mill Valley Patch has increased communication dramatically lately. I appreciate the information and the effort you're making in getting it out.”

Q6 Do you use Social Media? (Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, etc.)

Results:

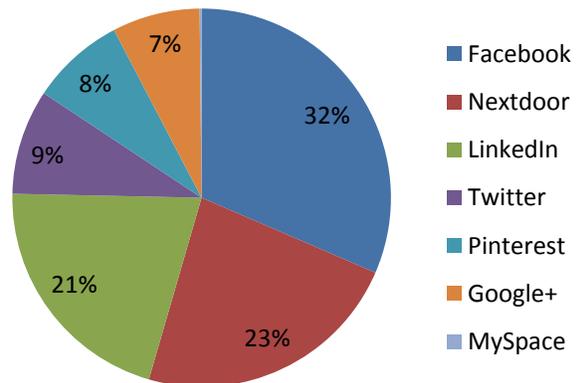
Answer Options	Response
Yes	701
No	288
<i>answered question</i>	989
<i>skipped question</i>	35



Q7 If "Yes" - What social media do you use?

Results:

Answer Options	Response
Facebook	568
Nextdoor	415
LinkedIn	376
Twitter	162
Pinterest	145
Google+	135
MySpace	3
<i>answered question</i>	1804
<i>skipped question</i>	192



Analysis: Most respondents use social media (75%) and the majority of them use Facebook (32%), Nextdoor (23%) and LinkedIn (21%). A smaller number use Twitter, Pinterest, Google+ and Instagram (although it was not listed in the survey, many respondents noted Instagram in the comments). Respondents stated in the comments that they preferred email over social media, but they found Nextdoor useful for staying up to date on local news and issues, and that they preferred Facebook for personal use.

Sample of Comments:

"I know many MV residents who are not on Facebook, Twitter, or any other social media besides Nextdoor, so that seems like the only viable social media outlet for the city to communicate with residents."

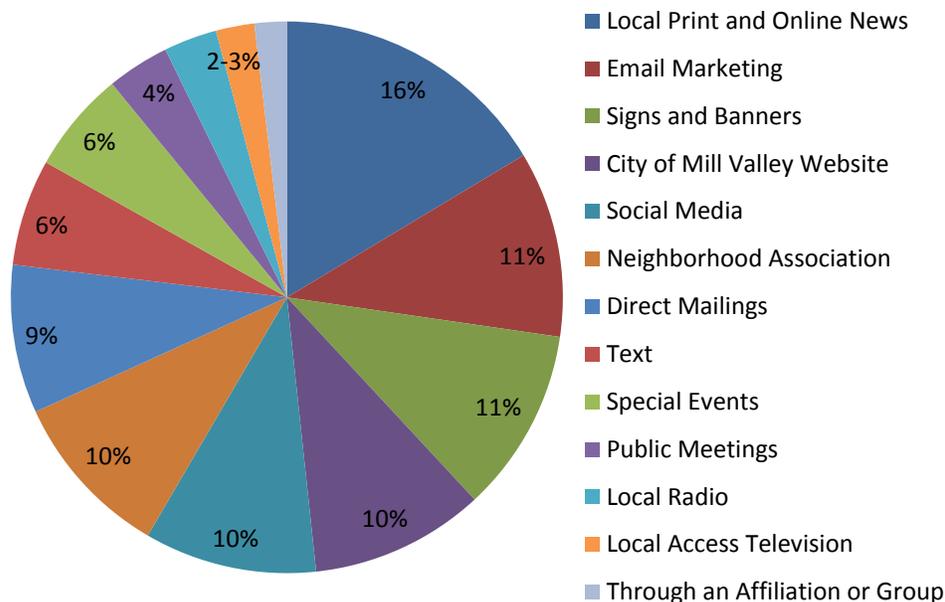
"I have accounts but use them for personal sharing. I don't want business info this way"

"I like Nextdoor but wouldn't connect on Facebook"

Q8 How would you like for the City of Mill Valley to communicate with you?

Results:

Answer Options	I strongly prefer	I prefer	I do not prefer	I have no preference
Local Print and Online News (Marin IJ, MV Patch)	305	343	87	79
Email Marketing	203	261	224	87
Signs and Banners	201	398	77	82
City of Mill Valley Website	190	309	120	153
Social Media	188	226	207	102
Neighborhood Association	182	256	154	146
Direct Mailings	162	267	216	99
Text	116	192	276	107
Special Events	111	286	131	166
Public Meetings	68	239	187	197
Local Radio	58	149	277	186
Local Access Television	42	109	324	200
Through an Affiliation or Group (i.e. Rotary Club)	35	77	240	276
			<i>answered question</i>	988
			<i>skipped question</i>	36



Analysis: The responses show that respondents prefer a variety of outreach methods for the City to employ. This echoes the results from Q3. The top cited method of communication, local print and online news outlets in Mill Valley, is made up of the Marin IJ, the Mill Valley Patch and the Mill Valley Herald. The other top methods listed for the City to communicate with the community include, email marketing, signs and banners, the City of Mill Valley website, social media, and Neighborhood Associations.

The 82 comments associated with this question supported the list of options above. Many people reported that they would like to be able to turn to one reliable source of information, although the preferences for this source are varied. Many people noted that they have found Nextdoor useful for finding news and information.

It is interesting to note that in this question and throughout the survey, not one respondent mentioned video messaging as a preferred method. This is notable, as the Communications Group had proposed using educational videos and a YouTube channel for pertinent video messaging.

Sample of Comments:

“The City website would be a great place to find information, but it rarely seems to be current.”

“Nextdoor has been terrific. Also enjoy televised City Council and Planning Dept meetings-- though never sure when they're being televised.”

“MV app with push notifications for emergencies (high tides, fire, traffic...).”

“Medium depends on content: Public safety issues via text, radio or online news; and less urgent issues via social media, website, signs, etc. Homeowners' associations = crucial”

“The emails you send are fine, if not too ample”

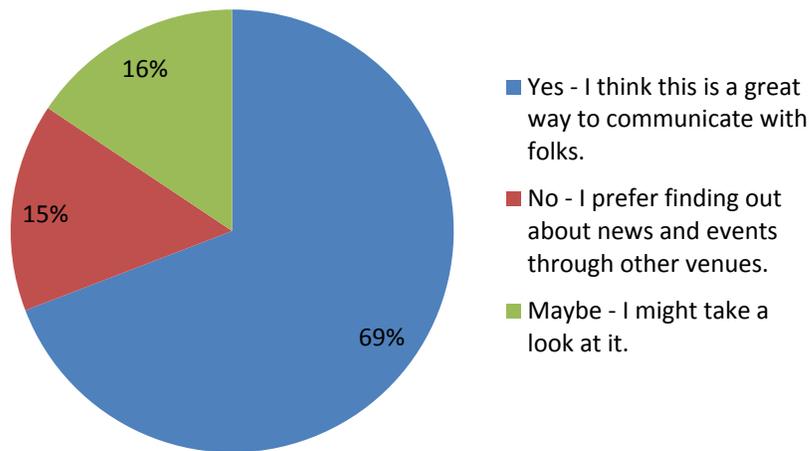
“Electronic as much as possible. No more paper.”

“I like the Friday Flash (Chamber of Commerce) email format--would love a once-a-week (or as-appropriate) email update.”

Q9 The City of Mill Valley is considering sending out a printed newsletter twice a year to residents. Would you like to receive one?

Results:

Answer Options	Response
Yes - I think this is a great way to communicate with folks.	673
No - I prefer finding out about news and events through other venues.	148
Maybe - I might take a look at it.	152
	<i>answered question</i>
	973
	<i>skipped question</i>
	51



Analysis: The majority of respondents (69.1%) said that they thought a printed newsletter sent out twice a year was a great idea. There were 286 comments related to this question, with a majority of those respondents raising strong concerns about the wastefulness and cost of a paper newsletter, a preference for email messages, and concerns that if it was only send twice a year, that it would not be timely or relevant.

There were also concerns that the content of the newsletter would need to invite input and address complex issues, and not just be a “one-way” format for the City to write only about its accomplishments and successes.

Sample of Comments:

“A printed letter is a great way to be unplugged and out enjoying Mill Valley!”

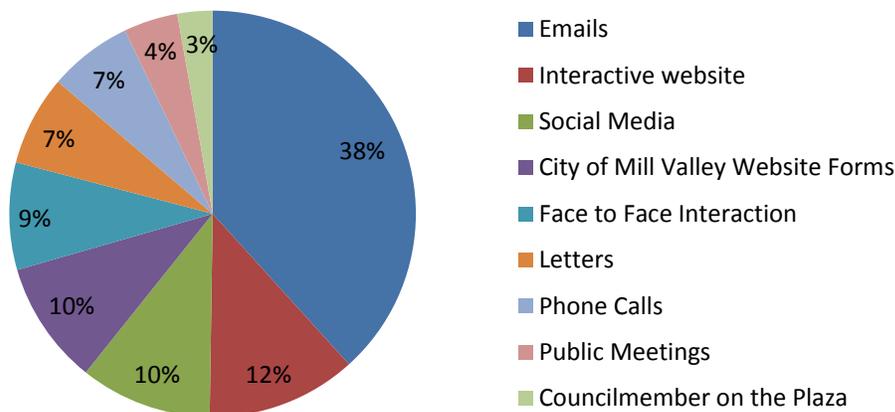
“Eliminate the paper. It's a waste.”

“I like the idea, but it seems like it would be retrospective instead of prospective. There are plenty of means for acquiring past news, but it is challenging to access upcoming issues.”

Q10 Communication should be two-way. We want to hear from you and receive your input, suggestions and ideas. What is your preferred method of communicating with the City on topics of importance to you?

Results:

Answer Options	I strongly prefer	I prefer	I do not prefer	I have no preference
Emails	507	386	35	33
Interactive website (i.e. MV2040 Mindmixer site)	158	216	169	179
Social Media	139	200	244	133
City of Mill Valley Website Forms	130	256	175	163
Face to Face Interaction	113	305	193	137
Letters	95	295	233	92
Phone Calls	88	207	383	72
Attending and Speaking at Public Meetings	57	220	296	151
Councilmember on the Plaza	37	132	252	257
		answered question		997
		skipped question		27



Analysis: The results show that email is the preferred method of communicating with the City (38%) followed by interactive websites and social media. In the comments, respondents suggested using Nextdoor, text messaging and developing a mobile application. Many people noted that they had never heard of some forms of communications, such as the Mindmixer site (used for the MV2040 General Plan update in 2013) or Councilmember on the Plaza and recommended more marketing of these methods of interactive communication. Many respondents commented that they have made attempts to communicate with the City on various issues and received no response.

Sample of Comments:

“More time for input at community meetings; less time for Council members and staff to reiterate what they are doing.”

“We have never felt the City was at all interested in hearing from us. On many issues, we hear about the outcome much later than when it's being considered.”

“I wrote a letter to the City a few months ago about yellow page phone books being dumped in our neighborhood twice a year....I never heard back - that did not feel very successful to me.”

Q 11 Do you find the methods listed above to be satisfying?

Results:

Answer Options	Response Percent
Satisfied	66.8%
Very Satisfied	14.6%
Not sure	14.6%
Not Satisfied	4.0%
	answered question
	974
	skipped question
	50

Q12 If you chose "Not satisfied" - Do you have suggestions for improvement?

Analysis: 81% of the respondents indicated that they were either "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with the list of methods of communicating with the City in the previous question. 4% were "Not Satisfied" and 14.58% were not sure.

Of the 44 comments related to this question, respondents raised concerns about the responsiveness of the City staff and officials to their comments and questions. Some suggested online tools such as an online calendar, interactive website and increased use of social media such as Facebook and Nextdoor. Some respondents asked the City to identify one method of communication and then to notify the community where to find news and information.

Sample of Comments:

"There needs to be more communication and transparency."

"It's not about "which medium?"- Each medium has their place. It's about each piece of info getting delivered in the RIGHT medium for that info."

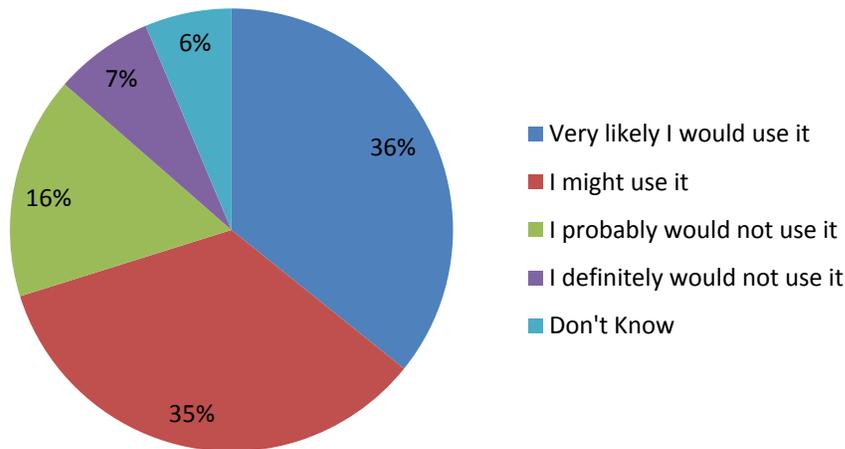
"The City's concept of "interactive" is state of the art 1996. It's all "push" out with highly limited user driven content."

"Respond to correspondence! Have a published policy about when to expect a response."

Q13 If the City of Mill Valley developed a mobile web application to communicate with residents how likely is it that you would use it?

Results:

Answer Options	Response
Very likely I would use it	356
I might use it	342
I probably would not use it	162
I definitely would not use it	72
Don't Know	63
	answered question
	995
	skipped question
	29



Analysis: About a third of respondents said that it was very likely they would use a mobile web application designed to communicate with residents. Another third said they might use it. 23.5% said that they would not, or definitely would not use it.

Sample of Comments:

Comments were not enabled for this question, however, respondents wrote the following about the idea of an application in other sections of the survey:

“Traffic conditions-real time mobile app for traffic conditions so that back ups & delays can be avoided if possible.”

“I like the mobile web idea - an app for Mill Valley would be great”

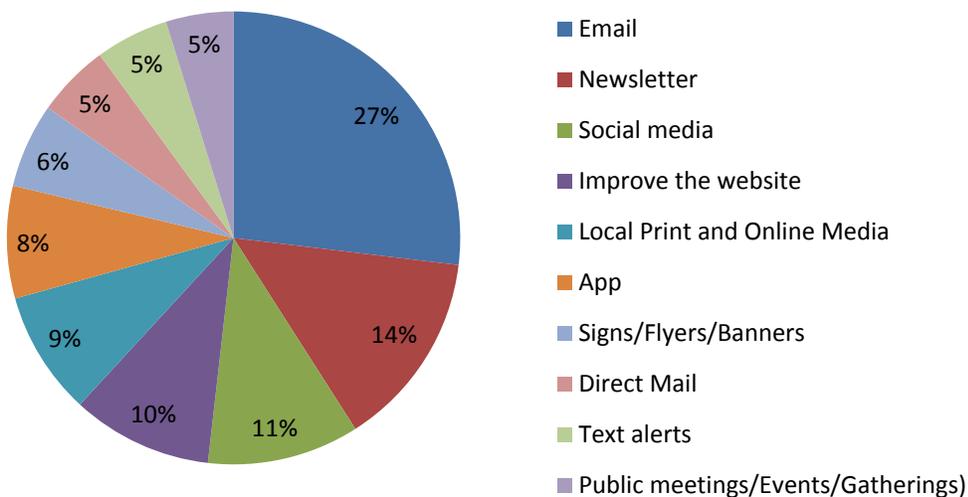
“Don't try to build an app yourself, partner with local Internet entrepreneurs and co-fund the building of a real hometown newspaper focused ONLY on Mill Valley. ”

“Local app might be nice if it had timely info - links to local content might drive usage weather, notification when equator is allowed to open, quotes of the day”

Q14 How can the City of Mill Valley improve communication with its residents?

Results: This open-ended question received 397 comments from respondents. Staff categorized the comments to analyze trends.

Suggested/Preferred Methods of Communication	Responses
Email	67
Newsletter	35
Social media (Nextdoor, Facebook)	27
Better utilize and improve the website	25
Local Print and Online Media (Marin IJ, MV Herald, MVPatch)	22
App	20
Signs/flyers/banners	15
Direct Mail	13
Text alerts	13
In person (public meetings, events, gatherings)	12



Analysis: Comments from this section are reminiscent of Q8 and many of the methods listed were repeated here. Emails are strongly preferred (27%) followed by the idea of a newsletter (14%) and social media (11%). Nextdoor and Facebook are mentioned frequently as preferred social media, echoing the response seen in Q7.

Other suggested methods of communicating listed in this section also included

- RSS feeds
- Police and Fire Blotter
- Electronic messaging board at City entrance
- Going to the Library
- Monthly webinar
- Community clubs
- Customer satisfaction surveys

Interestingly, a number of people suggested conflicting strategies regarding outreach. With all of the options that are available, some respondents suggested picking one, or perhaps only two or three outlets for news and information, and communicating to the community what these outlets will be. Others suggested an “all of the above” approach and encouraged the City to employ an multiplatform strategy to reach the largest number of people.

Suggestions for Better Communications	Responses
Improve responsiveness	18
Improve decision-making processes	12
Target communications to the right people	8
More timely	7
Include community members outside of City Limits	6
Be more proactive and communicate about important issues in advance of decision making	5

Along with suggesting outreach methods to improve communication with the community, respondents also suggested actions and strategies. Around a third of comments of this nature focused on the need for more responsiveness to questions, concerns and issues. Many comments focused on suggestions for improving decision-making processes, such as informing residents about major decisions, actively soliciting input, and serious consideration of comments, questions and concerns. Respondents suggested that overall, communications be targeted, timely, inclusive, and proactive.

Sample of Comments:

“Respond to emails, or at least acknowledge receipt with promise to respond within X days. I recently sent an email to every council member and dept. overseeing utilities-- no replies. However, a concern I submitted at recent Town Meeting was followed up by a phone call. That really impressed me.”

“DO NOT make decisions without informing local residents with several communications.”

“LISTEN to the residents, don't just talk at them. Listening is the most important part of communication.”

“I don't really see any need for more communication. Just do your jobs and keep the website updated.”

Q15 Thanks again for taking the time to complete the survey! Please feel free to add any other final comments or thoughts.

Results and Analysis: This open-ended question garnered 219 responses and gave respondents an opportunity to mention anything else that they wanted to add. The majority of respondents reiterated points mentioned earlier in the survey and made final remarks about City communications. Many people thanked the City for conducting the survey and commented that it was a good start in the process of improving communications.

The remaining comments cover the breadth of Mill Valley’s municipal purview, including:

- Housing Element
- Traffic
- Emergency preparedness
- Cyclists
- Changing character of town
- Miller Ave
- ABAG
- Infrastructure
- Leaf blowers
- Overpopulation
- Remodeling
- Panhandlers
- Development
- Electric car charging stations
- Artist in residence program
- Eucalyptus removal
- Mill Valley Refuse Service
- Public transit
- Development
- Marin Clean Energy
- Parking downtown
- Undergrounding utilities
- Rising rents
- Crime

Sample Comments:

“Thank you for trying to be transparent with issues around the City. It is challenging, and I appreciate your work!”

“Thank you for recognizing lack of communication is an issue and it can be improved!”

“City of MV has a lot to be proud of for communications with public. Sure, there's room for improvement, I think this survey is a genuine effort to do just that, but the City Council and staff and commissioners and other volunteers have accomplished a lot with outbound and inbound communication with the residents of MV and surrounding areas.”

Final Summary and Recommendations

“You are doing the right thing in trying to awaken the public on city and social issues. Well done. Now the challenge is to listen and change to reflect not the complete wishes of the people but a vision spirit of the comments.” Respondent to the Communication Survey

Final Summary

Since the first responses and comments started coming in in early May, City staff has followed the input from the community and have already been impacted by the results and comments. There were many findings that were new and enlightening and answered questions we have had about the effectiveness of our efforts over the years. A number of findings also reinforce the communications plans currently underway. Overall, staff is very encouraged by the high response rate from the community, and the sincere and constructive comments and thoughtful suggestions that were offered. While we recognize a reoccurring call for increased outreach, notification and improved responsiveness, we also recognize that there are many in the public that are satisfied with current communications and offer suggestions for making it even better. The community’s desire for improved and more two-way communication matches the City Council’s and staff’s interest in expanding and enhancing our efforts in these areas.

Two major themes that recur throughout the survey are improved responsiveness and transparency. These themes highlight the need for coordinated City policies and practices for customer service, timely return of phone calls and emails, and increased avenues for public participation in the governing process. Related to the issue of transparency, there is much that the City already does to make policy and decisions transparent but there is also significant room for improvement to inform, engage and partner with the community.

The survey results also reinforce the need to bolster multimodal efforts at communicating to the public and not rely solely on new technology to solve our communications needs. While we grow our presence in new forms of social media and internet-based platforms, the City must remain aware of the large section of our population that prefers traditional modes of communication and does not readily adopt new technologies. The ease of technology solutions to push information to the public cannot replace the importance of traditional modes of outreach, personal interaction, and the building of relationships within the community. The fact that the majority respondents hear of City news via "word of mouth" reinforces our need to build strong relationships with stakeholders and coalitions within the community to help distribute information via local networks of neighbors, colleagues, and affiliation members.

Related to existing news platforms, a number of respondents also claim to use the Marin Independent Journal and Mill Valley Herald for City news, but express frustration over the lack of a central repository for local news and information. This frustration affirms the general need for more localized and community-based news resources and increased City partnerships with local news organizations that can reliably distribute civic-related information in a timely and unbiased manner. While the City does not have the resources to start their own newspaper, as was suggested by one respondent, we have plans in place to start sending out a bi-weekly email newsletter, printing a paper newsletter a number of times a year, and exploring other methods to for outreach and communication.

Finally, the survey also helped to highlight specific issues within the community that require additional focus and attention on the part of City staff to communicate more effectively. “Traffic, road closures and

parking” and “Land Use and Development” dominate the survey responses as the highest priority issues that the community would like to hear more about. While the traffic problems that face Mill Valley are complex and cannot be simply solved by City Hall, we can improve and consolidate how we communicate traffic-related issues and improve overall education on the traffic problems and conditions within Mill Valley and the surrounding areas. Improvements to the communication of land use and development issues within the City can be developed by diversifying and expanding our public noticing tools and procedures, and improving public understanding of the land use and development process.

As we move forward and build new policy, procedures, and techniques to respond to this survey we are also mindful that continuing assessment must be part of the communication process and all future efforts at community engagement and outreach.

Recommendations

Based on the results from this survey, staff recommends the following:

Establish a Communications Policy:

- Develop an internal City Communications Policy outlining expectations regarding timeframes and standards for responses to public inquiries, complaints and requests for information. This includes a system for recording requests, ensuring timely follow-up, and using responsiveness as a performance measure in personnel evaluations.

Develop and Expand New and Traditional Outreach Methods:

- Establish regular newsletters via email (weekly/bi-weekly) and print (seasonally or bi-annually) to communicate and summarize City business. Newsletters should not only summarize past news but also provide a forecast for upcoming events/projects and provide methods and actions for public participation.
- Redesign the City of Mill Valley website to be more accessible, mobile optimized and interactive. Highlight traffic and road closures, neighborhood development, upcoming events, and crime and public safety information.
- Enhance use of social media such as Facebook and Nextdoor, and explore adding Instagram to City of Mill Valley’s social media tools.
- Explore options for developing a Mill Valley mobile application.
- Investigate options for gaining access to Comcast broadcast schedule and make available to the community.

Encourage Civic Engagement:

- Develop strategies to enhance noticing and transparency of all City Council, Boards, Commissions and Committees, with a special emphasis on upcoming land use and neighborhood development decisions.
- Improve and strengthen partnerships with Neighborhood and Homeowners Associations, local organizations (i.e. Mill Valley School District), the Mill Valley Herald, and local online family resources (i.e. Southern Marin Mother’s Club) to help disseminate City news and encourage civic engagement.

Enact Communications Marketing and Ongoing Assessment:

- Develop a marketing campaign to educate the community on the current and new communication venues available to stay informed and engaged.
- Conduct the Communications Survey annually to assess the effectiveness of existing and new outreach efforts and solicit suggestions for additional or new information sharing and outreach approaches and tools. Utilize the 2014 Survey results as a baseline for future assessments.