

City of Carmel

Department of Community Relations & Economic Development

The primary responsibilities of the department are to manage and facilitate the public communications, retention of existing business and development of new economic growth opportunities.

- ◆ City employees work hard each day to ensure that Carmel is the best place to live, work, and raise a family. Creating a strong sense of community is a large part of the quality of life experienced each day by our residents and businesses. Feeling a part of a community includes knowing what is going on, what events, programs and services are available and what upcoming projects are being planned or discussed. It is the responsibility of the department to make sure that these messages get out to the community in many different ways.
- ◆ **Multiple Outlets:** We send out messages to the community in a variety of formats to increase our chances of connecting with residents and businesses.

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- ◆ **Assisting Other Departments:** This department also assists other departments with the communications and media needs they have for various events and programs.
- ◆ **Economic Development:** This department is responsible for managing the retention of existing business in the City of Carmel as well as the research and development of new economic growth opportunities.

Department of Community Relations Staff

Nancy S. Heck

Director of Community Relations

Melanie Lentz

Community Relations Specialist

News Releases and Media Interviews

- Issues all news releases pertaining to City activities and events
 - Researches issue, writes & edits releases
 - Alerts the media to events in the community
 - Controls the nature and flow of information about all events
- Communicates on regular basis with members of the media
 - Alerts them to potential stories of interest
 - Develops a relationship of mutual trust with media contacts
- Manages communications between news media and other City employees
 - Guides media to the appropriate staff member when seeking an interview
 - Prepares the staff member for questions/answers and often oversees the interview process

Media Events and Crisis Communication

- Manages all aspects of special media events
- Arranges date, time, location, speakers, refreshments, invitations, equipment, media coverage, and back-up plans in case of rain
- Calls the news desk of the local media outlets the day of the event to ensure coverage
- Responds to crisis issues and coordinates with other agencies to synchronize response

City Publications

The department has created publications to meet the needs of residents, businesses and others seeking information about the City of Carmel. These resources include:

- Economic Development Brochure
- Arts & Design District Brochure

- Roundabout Brochure
- Parking Maps
 - Arts & Design District
 - Carmel City Center
- Relocation Package
 - Developed for people considering a move to Carmel
 - Includes Visitors Guide and information from Carmel Clay Schools, Carmel Clay Public Library and other areas of interest in the City
- Economic Development Package
 - Developed for businesses and corporations considering a move to Carmel
 - Includes Economic Development brochure and relevant media coverage about specific projects and events
- Roundabout Package
 - Includes information about roundabout interchanges in Carmel (current and proposed). It includes Carmel's "All About Roundabouts" video, information about the CarmelLink project and statistics from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Speeches and Presentations

- Creates speeches and presentations for use by Mayor and other City of Carmel employees
- Assists Department Directors and Elected Officials when speaking before groups of citizens
- Helps develop and deliver a consistent message
- Produces PowerPoint presentations, mounted maps and charts, and other materials to accompany presentations
- Responsible for setup of technical equipment and internet access

Video Productions for Government Access Cable Channel 16, Internet Streaming Video and DVDs for Presentations

The City is committed to communicating with its citizens through the production of original programming specific to Carmel. The City produces original programming relating to city services, programs and events. The City owns and maintains the equipment used to get the programs aired. However, the video production is contracted out with a local production company.

The department:

- Selects topics of community interest
- Finds and obtains programming already in distribution or
- Coordinates with other city departments to determine topics of interest for original programming
- Selects, purchases, and operates the equipment used to air programming
- Works with Bright House to address cable quality and outage issues
- Creates Power Point presentation slides for use on cable channel to share upcoming events or other information important to the community.

- Coordinates, writes, produces and oversees editing of promotional and educational video production for airing on Channel 16, internet streaming on the city’s website and youtube as well as podcasts available for download.

This original programming is utilized to effectively communicate using the following outlets:

- **Carmel’s Government Access Channel** has allowed the City to share news and information in a more lively and entertaining format via cable television. We have had much positive feedback regarding the programming on this channel.
- **Internet Streaming Video** - We also make all of our programs available via our website as streaming video. This increases the accessibility to citizens because they are available 24 hours per day/7 days a week on the city’s website.
- **DVDs for Presentation** - The original programming is used in Presentations and as promotional materials. For example, the “All About Roundabouts” is distributed to many municipalities considering using them in their traffic management plans.

Online Video Indexing

The Community Relations staff researched the available online video indexing options and selected the optimal vendor to provide this service. Through this service, the Carmel government meetings will now be available on the city’s website and will be time stamped according to the agenda for ease of viewing for citizens. This allows unprecedented access to City Council meetings for citizens and increases government transparency.

Telecommunications Advisory Commission

The department coordinates the scheduling of and preparation for the meetings with Commission President, Winston Long. Nancy Heck, the Director of Community Relations, also attends the meetings for consultation and input.

Website and Internet Presence

The web site is the first contact many individuals outside of Carmel have with the City. It must create an impression that will make people want to visit here, work and re-locate here. The department worked on the transformation of the City’s web site and a brand new site was unveiled in 2010. The department supervises the website content updates and determines the qualifying events for the community calendar to make sure it is current.

The Community Relations staff also determines the placement of new information and determines home page link content based on seasonal needs. The department also monitors news activity of the city on the internet through “Google Alerts.” The staff also researches new internet marketing tools and social media, and their compatibility with the Carmel community’s needs, such as, Facebook, Twitter, RSS Feeds and e-notifications.

Economic Development

The department is the first point of contact regarding economic development opportunities. The staff is asked to provide Carmel statistics and other relevant information to corporations considering locating in Carmel. The staff works closely with the Indiana Governor's Office, Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), Hamilton County Alliance and private economic development consultants to ensure the attentive handling of such opportunities.

We also assist in organizing tour groups visiting Carmel to find out more about city planning, traditional neighborhood development and roundabouts. We also get calls from individuals that are considering a job in the area or are considering moving here for other reasons and assist them with information about Carmel and the area serving as the City's "visitors' bureau" for lack of better term.

The department:

- Assists with groups visiting or touring the City of Carmel
- Fills in for Mayor if unable to speak to students or other groups that tour City Hall
- Coordinates the itineraries of visiting dignitaries and their entourages
- Works with the Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton County Convention and Visitors Bureau or the Hamilton County Alliance to meet needs of citizens or visitors

Carmel Neighborhood Association Network (CNAN)

In 2001 Mayor Jim Brainard asked the department to create a means for neighborhood association presidents to be better equipped to do their job. The idea sprung from a discussion during a meeting of the Carmel Business Alliance regarding the benefits of quality of life in Carmel and its ability to attract companies here and retain them. This group was concerned about the quality of older neighborhoods in Carmel and wanted to make sure that we were doing all we could to help the neighborhood association presidents network and help each other find solutions to common problems.

CNAN continues to be one of the best ways for us to share information about City departments and services. The City also benefits because this group shares their concerns about issues affecting their neighborhoods directly allowing for immediate response from the City and possible resolution to the problem.

The department:

- Determines quarterly dates for CNAN meetings coordinating with Mayor's schedule
- Decides current issues to be discussed and coordinates for appropriate speakers
- Prepares updates for CNAN binders and complete binders for new members
- Created and maintains Access database of all CNAN members
- Issues letters and emails to all CNAN members notifying them of upcoming meetings as well as keeping them informed of other community issues.
- Attends and staffs CNAN meetings

Carmel Small Business Association Network (CSBN)

In 2002, Mayor Jim Brainard asked the department to create the Carmel Small Business Association Network. The CSBN was to work in a similar manner as CNAN. This group was created to allow small business owners in the City a direct communications link to the Mayor and other City employees with whom these businesses have correspondence. These meetings allow small businesses owners the opportunity to get information directly from the Mayor about issues directly affecting their businesses such as infrastructure improvements, economic development projects, Carmel Redevelopment Commission plans and other future direction for specific areas of the City. Lunch is provided to attendees by a sponsor, who is solicited by the Community Relations staff.

The department has the same responsibilities for this group as it does for CNAN.
(See listing for CNAN above)

Awards and Proclamations

The City both gives and receives awards. Award presentations are an opportunity to showcase positive aspects of the community and its residents.

The department:

- Plans and develops presentation to make a memorable event for those involved
 - Awards given to employees or citizens for contributions to the community
 - Awards received for programs developed by the City of Carmel
- Responsible for submitting Carmel projects for various local, state and national awards
 - City Livability Awards for the US Conference of Mayors
 - 3CMA
- Drafts proclamations and coordinates their presentation
 - City employees
 - Citizens
 - Issues of national importance

Federal Grant Assistance

The department assists the Mayor and other departments with their applications and supporting materials for many of the Federal Grant and Federal Budget Appropriations requests.

The department:

- Works with consultants in Washington to determine viable projects
- Coordinates and writes grant applications
- Communicates with Carmel's consultant in Washington to make sure we have fulfilled application criteria and met deadlines
- Solicits letters of support from community for our Federal Budget Appropriations requests

Strategic Relationship Building

The department must be aware of the multiple city projects and initiatives both in the planning and development stages in the community. The department must share this information with the community.

Boards and Committees

The Mayor is often asked to serve as a representative for the City of Carmel on various committees and boards to give input from the City's perspective. While it would be impossible to accept all invitations, several are accepted each year, which allows the Mayor to show his support and interest in specific topics. The department is often asked to serve as the Mayor's liaison on these committees.

The department:

- Attends and/or participates in meetings on wide variety of issues
- The department serves as the contact in the city for various boards, committees and initiatives at the local, state, national and international levels

Information and Education

People locally and from around the world contact City Hall in need of information about Carmel. These requests range from Boy Scout troops who want suggestions about service projects they could undertake to graduate students working on a thesis. Many times the department is responsible for coordinating answers for these groups.

Public Private Partnerships

The City is involved in many public private partnerships. Building strategic relationships among those who partner with the city helps the department communicate to the community how these projects help the overall success of the city.

Some examples of the City's Public Private Partnership projects include City Center and The Carmel Arts and Design District developments.

Citizen Interaction and Outreach

The department receives many phone calls from the public regarding questions about City events, where to go for information, or how to resolve a problem. We take the time necessary to assist these residents and businesses. Many times, complaint calls end up with the department as well.

The department:

- Fields many phone calls and emails in response to community activities and events
- Channels feedback to relevant officials to help determine which issues are of interest and concern to public
- Helps officials develop appropriate responses to questions, comments and suggestions
 - Includes meetings with the Mayor or Council members
 - Articles for the newsletter
 - Development of new projects and programs

The department is also responsible for analyzing the best course of action for communicating new projects programs or initiatives with the community and implementing the solution. Examples would be road name change and construction project deadlines and closures.

Public Events

Community events create occasions for residents of Carmel to come together and celebrate our common goals, interests and accomplishments. There are many events for which the department is directly responsible. Many other events are coordinated through other City Departments and the Community Relations Department assists in the dissemination of information and media awareness of those events.

The department is directly responsible for:

- City Groundbreakings or Openings
- Veterans Day
- Works with committees to heighten community awareness of other events
- Solicit and help select specific ideas
- Holiday on the Square
- Memorial Day
- Holocaust Ceremony
- Oktoberfest at Merchants Square

Paver Sales

The Veterans Memorial Plaza, just west of 3rd Ave. SW, is home to a bronze veteran's memorial statue. The Carmel Clay Veterans Memorial Corporation (CCVMC) was responsible for raising the money for this statue to be placed by selling brick pavers. Since they dissolved in September of 2007 the City agreed to take over the responsibility of the Veterans Memorial Plaza grounds as well as the paver sales. Funds raised from paver sales are used for the upkeep of the flags and light fixtures around the statue as well as statue treatment. The department has taken responsibility for the paver sales and has created a line item especially for this in the Community Relations Gift Fund #854. Responsibilities also include promoting the sale of these items.

BPW Street Closure & Use of Public Space Approval Process

Due to conflicts with street closures and community events in the past, the Director of the department has been given the responsibility of working with the Administrative staff, Police Department and Street Department to review and give recommendations for routes and street closure requests.

- Review details of requested street closures for events happening in the community.
- Assist with the notification process of businesses in the area when necessary.
- Routes for bike, run or walk events are reviewed and alternatives are made for routes that may negatively affect neighborhoods, businesses, churches or scheduled events in the City.

Displays and Information Booths

There are many events that give the City an opportunity to showcase why Carmel is a great place to live, work and raise a family. They also provide an outlet for our citizens to learn about what is going on in the City. This includes but is not limited to sharing information about current public-private partnership projects, city events, local recycling locations, road closures due to road construction and other city services and projects.

The department coordinates the staffing, materials needed and the set up and tear down of the City of Carmel informational booth at the following events around the community:

- CarmelFest
- Chamber events (2 per year)
- Real Estate Breakfast
- Economic Outlook Luncheon

Training and Education

With advanced technology constantly changing it is necessary to keep informed and updated. In order to keep up with the changes, the department attends training courses for continuous education and is a member of national communication organizations. This provides an opportunity for networking amongst peers as well as learning about various communication tools and their effectiveness.

The department is a member of the following organizations:

- 3CMA (City County Communications Marketing Association)
 - Connecting local government innovators to achieve the highest ideals of public service through the power of communications and marketing.
The organization continues to build its network of individuals committed to improving government/citizen relationships and the delivery of services through the application of marketing strategies and techniques.
- NATOA (National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors)
 - NATOA promotes community interests in communications. A national trade association based in Alexandria, VA, NATOA represents local government jurisdictions and consortiums, including elected and appointed officials and staff, who oversee communications and cable television franchising.
- Alliance for Community Media
 - National organization that represents over 3,000 Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) access organizations and community media center throughout the country. The ACM works to protect the interests of these access centers and those who use PEG facilities and equipment to advance their causes through cable television and the Internet.

Student Mentoring and Internships

The department maintains a vibrant student mentoring and internship program. Each year, the staff hosts two to four Carmel High School students from the internship class as well as college interns, many unpaid. All student internships (high school and college) require interaction with supervisor and in-person meeting for initial interview and validation of paperwork. High school and some college internships culminate in a written evaluation and grade assignment completed by the Community Relations staff. This program is valuable to students and allows them to learn more about the government process and the professional office environment.