



Town of Amherst
Committee of the Whole
Agenda

Date: **Monday, February 9, 2026**
Time: **4:00 pm**
Location: **Council Chambers, Town Hall**

Pages

1. Call to Order

1.1 Territorial Acknowledgement

"I would like to acknowledge that our gathering today is taking place in Mi'kma'ki (MEEG-MA-GEE), the traditional, unceded and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaw people. I would also like to acknowledge that Nova Scotia has another unique people, the people of African descent whose legacy and contributions date back over 400 years predating confederation of this land. We are all treaty people."

2. Council Direction Requests

2.1 Brand, Marketing and Communications Plans - Bristol

1 - 53

3. Adjournment

TO: Mayor Rob Small and Members of Council

SUBMITTED BY: Sharon Bristol, Director Community Living

DATE: February 4, 2026

SUBJECT: Brand Strategy, Strategic Marketing Plan and Communications Plan

ORIGIN: The Town of Amherst Brand Strategy, Strategic Marketing Plan, and Communications Plan 2026-2028 have emerged from direction included in Council's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY: MGA 47 (1) The council shall make decisions in the exercise of its powers and duties by resolution, by policy or by by-law.

RECOMMENDATION: That Council forward to the February 23, 2026 regular meeting approval of the Town of Amherst Brand Strategy, Strategic Marketing Plan, and Communications Plan 2026-2028.

BACKGROUND: Direction was taken from Amherst Town Council's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, specifically requesting development of the following by December 2025: 1- New Marketing & Branding Strategies & Materials; 2- Brand Strategy – Amherst as a Destination Community; and, 3- Develop a Communication Plan/Strategy. From this direction, necessary steps were taken to produce the Town of Amherst Brand Strategy, Strategic Marketing Plan, and Communications Plan 2026-2028.

DISCUSSION: The Marketing & Communications Officers have been working on the development of the Town of Amherst Brand Strategy, Strategic Marketing Plan, and Communications Plan 2026-2028 since May, 2025. Beginning with primary research, 904 responses were received across various surveys and two focus groups. Feedback provided insights on positive features and challenges to be addressed.

This research was used to create new branding strategies, including a new tagline. Further, research directly informed creation of strategic pillars and associated actionable initiatives within the Strategic Marketing Plan. Evidence-based decision making was used to form goals, objectives, and actions for the new Communications Plan. Action items are set to commence in January, 2026, through 2028.

At the December Committee of the Whole meeting a motion was made to defer the decision to January to allow Council members time to confer with constituents about the strategy and proposed new tagline.





COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

CDR# 2026007

Date: February 4, 2026

Since December staff have engaged community leaders to test the new brand strategy and tagline. Ten community leaders provided feedback.

Based on the positive feedback staff are recommending that Council approve the Brand Strategy, the Strategic Marketing Plan and the Communications Plan which will allow staff to incorporate the action items into the yearly plan and prepare the budget for the 2026/27 year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: Actions to be implemented will be based on available departmental budget.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPLICATIONS: There will be increased opportunity for continuous community engagement, improved access to information, new and improved channels for public feedback.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS: None relating to approval of these documents.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Continued engagement with our community at large to ensure everyone has an opportunity to contribute.

ALTERNATIVES: Send back to Marketing & Communications for further assessment.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1 Community/Business Leaders Feedback
- 2 New Brand Proposal
- 3 Stay and Play Ad
- 4 Billboard Ad
- 5 Brand Strategy
- 6 Strategic Marketing Plan
- 7 Communications Plan



Marketing Communications Strategic Plan
Business / Community Leader Feedback
January 23, 2026

In response to the Amherst Town Council decision in December to hold on the approval of the Strategic Plan for branding, marketing and communications, the Director reached out to community leaders in business, industry and non profit to gain feedback into the brand strategy and new tagline. This information was sent on January 6, 2025 and feedback requested by the following week. The following ten individuals agreed to participate.

Todd Lawrence, President Waldale Manufacturing
Mark Casey, Investment Advisor CIBC Wood Gundy
Fran Hubbard, Owner Art of Eating Deli
Deanne Fitzpartick, Owner, Deanne Fitzpatrick Studio
Gillian VanSnick, Owner Damaris Spa
Jonathan Mc Master, Sales, Tantramar Chev Olds
Karen Cormier, Owner Dayles Grand Market, Chair of LA Animal Shelter Board
Trina Clarke, CAO Cumberland YMCA
Charlie Rhindress, Artistic Director, Great Amherst Cultural Society, Lead of Esther Fest
Victoria Vance Executive Director CANSA

Here is the feedback:

Jonathan MacMaster

Good morning Sharon,

I think I saw this tagline mentioned on one of the Facebook posts and immediately thought it makes a lot of sense. Operating a GM dealership in Amherst gives me the opportunity to sell and service customers from Sydney to Yarmouth to Campbellton NB and everywhere in between, all within about a 5 hour drive of our central location which customers are willing to travel to do business with us. If I was located in Sydney NS for example, I'm not going to see a customer from Campbellton or Yarmouth come to my store.

Amherst has also over the years been referred to as a "drive by town" as some proposed businesses in the industrial park etc have failed to set up their business in Amherst and have opened in Dieppe or Moncton. I think it's important that the general community and the business community circle around this new tagline for not only tourism and business but as mentioned in your proposal, people traveling on the highway purposefully stopping in Amherst on their way by for all we have to offer.

I'm happy to support this tagline and marketing plan and help your team move forward in any way possible.

Thanks for all you work on this, Have a great day.

Jonathan

Karen Cormier (via phone)

Likes the new tagline and understands how it works with the strategy. She also indicated that she really likes the current one. She indicated that Bill Schurman and her were great friends but also realizes that these things need to be refreshed after a period of time.

Charlie Rhindress

Hi Sharon,

I have read through all of the material you sent and I think it looks great. I recall going to a tourism meeting a couple of years ago discussing Amherst's strengths and challenges, and most of it is covered here.

I like the slogan a lot. I moved back to Amherst because it's my hometown, but I always tell people that I love being just two hours from Fredericton, Charlottetown or Halifax. It really is the "centre of it all."

I think the vision is clearly laid out and makes a lot of sense.

A minor thing...the phrase "second largest small town" seemed a bit clunky. Largest and small so close together seemed like a bit of an oxymoron. I know they're going for "small town" values with the advantages of a larger centre, but it just seemed a bit unclear. Is the message that it's large or small?

I noticed a couple small typos, but I know this isn't the final product so I'm sure those will be fixed.

Other than that, congratulations. I think it's a great slogan and plan. Clearly a lot of work has gone into the project. I think it's a great guiding set of principles as the town moves forward.

If you need anything else just let me know.

All the best,

Charlie

Trina Clarke

Hi Sharon,

First off thanks for asking me. Some random musings. Also, happy to discuss as well.

Initial thought is this absolutely works!

The ad samples are really great at putting it into context. It will take time (as everything does) for people to 'get it' so initial ads and usage may have to be more word heavy until people understand what is being referred to. But clearly from the material you provided there has been substantive input already to get this to where it is today.

I did some research on other towns and cities in the Maritimes and with Moncton being nicknamed 'hub city' and Truro calling itself the 'hub of NS' why can't Amherst stake their claim as being the centre of it all?

I have heard a lot of other suggestions being batted around and also the #seewhyweloveit being beloved.

But I think Amherst needs to think bigger than being the gateway to NS and the current hashtag is tired and unfortunately seems to be used more often as the butt of jokes when ANYTHING goes wrong in the community. Also, interesting to note when you look up what Amherst's current tagline is it says it is 'Create a life you love', which I did not know and does not seem to be anywhere on the town's website (at least not predominant enough that it is easy to see).

This is an opportunity to decide what we want to be and give us something to live up to. Even if some folks do not think we can claim that we are the centre of it all, just like with a vision isn't it something we can all work towards?

I like a tagline that makes me think and resonates with something really positive not just a description.

As an example:

Stewiacke, N.S.: Halfway between the North Pole & Equator. (well yes ok there is a geography lesson but doesn't get me excited or think oh that's a place I want to go (Gateway to NS falls under the same category for me)

BUT

Stratford PEI's 'Imagine that!' OR Port Hawkesbury's 'opportunities await' makes me ask myself imagine what? Or what opportunities await?

It makes them more memorable but it is missing the where, the identity marker.

Centre of it all can check off a lot more boxes. It identifies Amherst (geography which is important), it makes people question (Centre of what?) which helps make it memorable and it is original, we have enough 'hubs' already. But it also lends itself to unlimited uses for marketing as described in the package: Centre of Business, Adventure, Community but also maybe centre of opportunity, centre of fun, centre of spooky (Esther Cox) etc. These are just some initial thoughts but honestly any tagline is only as good as the people behind using it. Which is I think why #seewhyweloveit has become something people do not want to let go of. 7 years from now they will be saying that about 'Centre of it all' because the people behind the use, promotion and vision of it will be doing the work to make it seen, understood and loved as well.

Gillian VanSnick

Hi Sharon,

It seems like a good tagline with a good fit for the branding strategy. The only negative is that it is a somewhat similar take on what Truro and Moncton have done to try and capture being central, the Hub City, etc.

It's a bit wordy, but if you combine the current with the proposed, you get...

"See why we love, being at the centre of it all" 😊

The branding proposed is attractive but I'm not sure people will understand what it means. "the centre of it all" Amherst is not really the center of anything so to speak, hence the explanation of the slogan. Is not better to have a tag that is self explanatory?

"See why we love it"

(Not saying this slogan is better but is it more self explanatory?)

What do we have here to offer? My answer way of life, slower, more intimate (you know your neighbours) yes Amherst is accessible to lots of other resources or amenities but that's why people live here not why they visit. We have heritage buildings and a few stores that tourists frequent. Should the focus be on enhancing what we have to offer here, and rebuilding to offer more ♀
Advertising centre of it all but then we are sending people away to experience beaches, trails, attractions. Drawing people to a downtown that has as many empty buildings as occupied isn't welcoming.

I know we have hockey teams that come for tournaments but many don't stay here due to lack of accommodations or amenities. How do we get them to stay, how do we get them to return as tourists?

The past few years we seem to be in the decline again. Our community doesn't feel vibrant when walking through downtown. What action will be taken to change it? If advertising is driving tourists to downtown, they will have an expectation for their experience. I understand driving tourists to heritage buildings, example Victoria street but to say "downtown" what is there for tourists really? A lot of the buildings are run down and empty. I think we need to create to fill the stores create a vibrant space, have attractions and amenities that draw the tourists.

When thinking of vibrant Sackville NB small town, open shops, clean, well maintained downtown with lots of foot traffic day and evening. Or look at Kentville there revitalization was a success. What did they do different? Tatamagouche open vibrant pretty strip

Fran Hubbard

This all looks great (not my expertise) My thoughts on Amherst as I experience it and see it are

1) Businesses downtown or properties rented or sold should be under a guideline of operations that are inviting or welcoming to the Public with window displays that are attractiv .

Now I know that may or may not be possible but it certainly would be nice to know is a by law

You walk down from Dayles to train tracks and we look a bit shabby . My self included.

I also know in past we had grants for this gritty to pretty.

2) Street closures STOP IT ! We have Victoria park we have behind town hall we have behind Dayles parking lot we have Station Street to do festivals. Can we pretty that street up?

3) We need a beautiful arch that welcomes people into Amherst from the highways and one that really centre's downtown with bright vibrant color The Green colour is ugly.

4) A digital sign that displays current events happening on town hall and uptown and when things are happening advertising businesses

My 4 Cents plus more

I was writing in back of a bumpy truck so the grammar is not great. I am not sure if this is the input you had intended but as a Cafe owner downtown these are the things I see and hear about us and my views as well. This Town is beautiful we have great people community here but we are STUCK in something that does not want to give and I cannot figure it out . I bring people from the highways because of my Menu options and then they drive through stop at my place and Go WOW this town is so pretty . We would not of stopped but glad we did . It's the treasures that need to get out there the menu searches the item searches and they come in but we need a public platform visible that gives them a reason the stay ie digital board sign . I cannot always remember or have time to tell them why to stay and see things .

As well a modern take on the history of Amherst our industrial park past and present and how we can about . Q r code on each shop door or cash would help Lots more but for now Sorry for being late ugh

Deanne Fitzpatrick by phone

Reviewed the documents thoroughly and appreciates where we are going with it but feels that we need to get more specific in our marketing. Specifically, such as promoting events, Amherst's history, things to do while here. The Centre of it all is broad in scope and feels we need to drill down into more detail targeted at what/who we are trying to attract.

Victoria Vance

Hi Sharon,

Thank you for the prompt to get back to you. I have had a look and love the graphics that have been put together. They are vibrant and eye catching. The description given really drew me in, it really has a good vibe.

I do like the new proposed slogan " Centre of it All" especially with the additions (business, adventure, community). One small concern that may have already been talked through- are we worried that people might associate it with or confuse Truro being the HUB of Nova Scotia? Just a thought that popped into my head.

Well done team! It really does all look and sound terrific.

Mark Casey

Hi Sharon,

Sorry for the delay getting back to you on this. I think my homework was due on Friday. ha ha!

My feedback, which is arranged in a way that reflects my thought process (a little bit all over the place!).

I think the Centre of it All theme is solid. I think it makes a lot of sense to underscore the central location of Amherst, because it would resonate with both tourism and economic development. I think that is a great theme that you can use to build out with more detail depending on who the audience is.

I assume you would take the core elements of the campaign and specialize them for each purpose. For example, if there was a campaign or pitch toward business you could really hone in on "The Centre of Business".

One of the risks in any of these exercises is the risk of being too generic, or too broad. As you drill down to each specific effort (like a pitch to business), I think it's important to provide specific demonstrated strengths that apply to that effort. Maybe that is something to do with the kind of labour force we have, the industrial park, logistical strengths due to our location, etc.

Wherever possible I would try to add a few "proof points" that can serve to cut through generic value statements. These might include data or points that support the argument.

I like the proposed ad for summer tourism. With only anecdotal data, I think the volume of Canadian tourists in the Maritimes was way up in summer 2025, due to the Trump stuff. We definitely saw it on day trips to PEI from the cottage. I would try to find a targeted way to capture some of that volume of tourists as we know an awful lot of them would be driving by Amherst.

Some thoughts on that:

- Promote a particular summer festival that might turn drive-by tourists into visits

- Probably targeting digital ads in Ontario, Quebec, travel forums, etc.

- I have no idea about this, but are there any high profile travel influencers who could be partnered with?

Someone with some reach?

- Are there east coast bus tours that can be leveraged?

- Maybe get local campgrounds and hotels involved with some kind of stay and save package?

As a guiding principle, I think the single best thing that an exercise like this can do for a town like Amherst is promote more investment in the community, and better jobs. As always, better jobs and higher incomes will foster more amenities, restaurants, experiences, retail, etc. Cumberland County households have lower income than most other counties in the province, so I would encourage the town to be bold with how they position the town to attract business. I'm going to give this a bit more thought because that is easier said than done. We have (including me) been talking about ways to attract new industry to Amherst for years. With that said, this is a pretty disruptive time in the economy (everywhere), and I would be looking for an opening there. I am not sure exactly what that is just yet. Obviously promoting our economic development team, the Connector, and any other resources we have to make building a business in Amherst easier would be a good thing.

Maybe you and I can grab a coffee and chat more about it. I am not sure if this is helpful so far!

Mark

Amherst's New Brand

We Want to Hear From You

How We Got Here

As part of **Council's 2024–2028 Strategic Plan**, and their goal of making Amherst a vibrant destination community, staff have developed a brand strategy that produced a new tagline.

Residents, businesses and visitors were surveyed about **Amherst's best and most unique elements**. External research was conducted through history, reports, competitors, and in-person focus groups.

What We Heard

The strongest elements were used to build the foundation of our brand.

900+
Respondents

helped shape Amherst's brand

The Following Themes Emerged

Sense of
Community

Small-Town
Appeal

Location &
Connectivity

History &
Heritage

Our Brand

Personality

Vibrancy

Human characteristic that makes Amherst's brand relatable

An engaged, welcoming, inclusive community where people live, connect, do business, and choose to visit.

Essence

Convenience

What defines Amherst at its core

The ease of daily life – from a supportive community and engaged workforce to a central location that connects people, businesses, and visitors.

Proposed New Tagline:

The Centre of It All

What Does “The Centre of It All” Mean?

The Centre of It All has multiple layers of meaning:

Geography

At the centre of the Maritimes

Convenience

Easy to live, work and visit

Community

A home base that connects people to what matters

Vibrancy

An engaged, welcoming, inclusive community where people visit, connect, do business, and choose to live

Proposed New Tagline

A long-term phrase that reflects the brand’s core values

The Centre of It All

Slogans

A short-term phrase used for specific campaigns or promotions

The Centre of Business

The Centre of Adventure

The Centre of Community

Moving Forward

Our Vision

- Promote and target new business, industries, and tourism opportunities
- Encourage the relocation of newcomers to choose Amherst, build vibrancy, and increase participation in the community
- Local residents and businesses can play a role in promoting the new brand
- Communicate Amherst’s strengths with pride – locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally
- Update branded elements incrementally, as it makes sense

Amherst

NOVA SCOTIA

This summer, take the road that leads you to the heart of the Maritimes.

In Amherst, Nova Scotia, you're never far from where you want to be – sandy beaches, scenic trails, vibrant festivals, rich history, and welcoming local shops are all just minutes away.

Stroll through our historic downtown, enjoy live music and community events, or relax with great food made by people who love where they live.

Come see for yourself this summer.

The Centre of it all!

From family-friendly festivals to quiet moments exploring heritage architecture and nearby natural beauty, Amherst offers the perfect balance of connection and calm.

It's a place where summer feels easy, conversations come naturally, and memories are made without rushing.

Whether you're passing through or planning a stay, you'll find that Amherst isn't just on the way – it's the center of it all.

Plan your trip at
explorecomberland.ca



Amherst
NOVA SCOTIA



The Centre of it all!



Amherst
NOVA SCOTIA



Town of Amherst

Brand Strategy

Version: January 9, 2026

<p>MISSION</p> <p>To create a welcoming, inclusive, connected community that values authenticity, enriches the lives of our residents, and fosters opportunities for growth, culture, and collaboration.</p>																	
<p>VISION</p> <p>To be a vibrant destination community where people choose to live, visit, and do business.</p>																	
<p>CORE VALUES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Core Values</th> <th>Guiding Principles</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Community First</td> <td>We prioritize quality of life.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Authenticity</td> <td>We embrace our history, culture, and local character; every part of it.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Connectivity</td> <td>At the heart of the Maritimes, we are open, inclusive and welcoming to all.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Inclusivity</td> <td>Welcoming, accessibility, belonging</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Growth & Opportunity</td> <td>We support businesses, tourism, and innovation while investing in our residents and planning for our future generations.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. Vibrancy</td> <td>We celebrate events, arts, recreation, and shared experiences.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7. Collaboration</td> <td>We work together with residents, businesses, organizations and surrounding neighbours to build shared success.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Core Values	Guiding Principles	1. Community First	We prioritize quality of life.	2. Authenticity	We embrace our history, culture, and local character; every part of it.	3. Connectivity	At the heart of the Maritimes, we are open, inclusive and welcoming to all.	4. Inclusivity	Welcoming, accessibility, belonging	5. Growth & Opportunity	We support businesses, tourism, and innovation while investing in our residents and planning for our future generations.	6. Vibrancy	We celebrate events, arts, recreation, and shared experiences.	7. Collaboration	We work together with residents, businesses, organizations and surrounding neighbours to build shared success.
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<p>BRAND PROMISE</p> <p>We promise to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all, to celebrate our vibrancy through arts, culture, and events, and to lead with positivity as we grow together.</p>																	
<p>BRAND STRATEGY GOAL</p> <p>Making Amherst a destination community for residents, businesses and visitors.</p>																	
<p>BRAND STRATEGY OBJECTIVES</p> <p>Residents – Strengthening Community Belonging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foster community spirit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Foster collaboration and unity - Increase resident engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Civic, cultural, recreational activities to increase attendance and participation 																	

- Enhance quality of life
 - o Through making the community accessible and equitable to all

Businesses – Driving growth and opportunity

- Build pride in accomplishment
 - o Highlighting and promoting the successes of new and existing businesses
- Position Amherst as a supportive and attractive environment for businesses

Visitors – Highlighting vibrancy, convenience and variety

- Visitors:
 - o Position Amherst as a multi-stop service centre
 - Convenience for surrounding areas
 - o Leverage our geographic position within NS and the Maritimes
 - Big city convenience in small-town Amherst
- Tourists:
 - o Increase tourists' stay and spending
 - o Strengthen partnerships with regional tourism
 - E.g. Explore Cumberland
 - o Highlight Amherst as home base for exploring our greater region

BRAND PILLARS

1. Purpose

Amherst connects people, community and opportunity – creating a place where residents thrive, businesses grow, and visitors feel at home.

2. Perception

- o **Current Perception:** (Surveys)
 - Sense of community
 - Friendly
 - Safe & supportive
 - Tight-knit community
 - Quiet, peace, slow pace, simple pleasures
- o **Desired Perception:**
 - Amherst is a convenient, multi-stop service centre that is vibrant, inclusive, welcoming, and authentic.

3. Personality

- **Welcoming**
 - o Warm, approachable, friendly and genuine.

- **Confident**
 - o Sure of ourselves without being pretentious.
 - o Intelligent and capable, but down-to-earth.
- **Vibrant**
 - o Energetic and lively
 - o Celebrates culture, diversity, history
- **Dependable**
 - o A community people can count on – safe, stable, and proud.
 - o Businesses, residents, and visitors feel supported.
- **Optimistic**
 - o Embracing growth, innovation, and opportunity.

4. Position

Amherst is a convenient service centre for all.

5. Promotion

Amherst showcases itself as a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive community at the heart of the Maritimes. Through storytelling, events, partnerships, and campaigns, we highlight the community spirit, convenience, and opportunities that make Amherst the place where residents belong, businesses grow, and visitors explore and restore.

BRAND POSITIONING STATEMENT (Internal Focus)

For residents, businesses, and visitors, Amherst is the second-largest small town in Nova Scotia and the most convenient geographical point in the Maritimes, because we're in the centre of it all.

- **Frame of Reference/Market Category**
 - o Second-largest small town in Nova Scotia
- **Brand Name:**
 - o CONTEXT-BASED: Consideration for Logos
 - When we talk about our community – Local Context:
 - Amherst
 - When we talk about our community – External Context:
 - Amherst, Nova Scotia
 - When we talk about the Municipality – Internal and External Context:
 - Town of Amherst
- **Target Audience:**
 - o Residents, Businesses, and Visitors

- **Point of Differentiation/Benefits:**
 - o Amherst is the most convenient geographical point in the Maritimes.
- **Competitive Advantage:**
 - o Small-town belonging with big city convenience.
- **Reason to Believe/Proof Point:**
 - o We're in the centre of it all.

VALUE PROPOSITION (External Focus)

Amherst offers connection, convenience, and community – right in the heart of the Maritimes.

We offer residents a welcoming, inclusive and vibrant community; businesses a supportive environment for growth; and visitors a convenient homebase to explore and restore.

- Our location provides easy access to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and beyond.
- Amherst is a service centre for all.
- The events, culture and recreational opportunities here enrich the quality of life for all.

VERBAL IDENTITY

Verbal Identity = Tone of Voice + Brand Messaging

BRAND TONE OF VOICE

- Humorous
 - o Not afraid to have a little fun
 - o Playful, but never mean spirited
- Authentic
 - o Share real stories, real people
 - History, culture, local pride
 - o Owning past and present, all parts of it.
- Welcoming
 - o Friendly
 - o Approachable and genuine
 - o Warm and inclusive
- Accessible
 - o Plain language
 - o Easy to understand

MESSAGING THEMES

Brand Promise: We promise to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all, to celebrate our vibrancy through arts, culture, and events, and to lead with positivity as we grow together.

- **Residents:** belonging, pride, quality of life
- **Businesses / Investors:** opportunity, growth, regional advantage
- **Visitors:** vibrancy, experience, welcome, inclusivity

1. Community & Belonging

Amherst is a place where people feel welcome, included and connected – connected to their neighbours, to opportunity, and to something bigger than themselves. Our residents look out for one another, and newcomers are quickly made part of the story. We celebrate together, support one another, and take pride in our shared hometown spirit. We lead with kindness, inclusion, and small-town warmth that makes people want to stay.

Key messages: Connection, inclusion, pride, volunteerism, neighbourly support, civic engagement.

2. Vibrancy

Amherst's energy comes to life through creativity, innovation, and celebration. Our festivals, local artists, and community gatherings bring people together and showcase the spirit that defines us.

Key messages: Innovation, arts and culture, local events, recreation, shared experiences, and community pride, local shops and restaurants.

3. Opportunity & Growth

Amherst offers room to grow—whether you're starting a business, raising a family, or investing in the future. Our location, resources, and community spirit make Amherst a smart place to build and belong.

Key messages: Economic development, business community vitality, entrepreneurship, strategic location, innovation, collaboration.

4. Heart of the Region

At the crossroads of the Maritimes, Amherst is both geographically central and emotionally grounded. We are the gathering place of the region – small enough to know you, big enough to serve you.

Key messages: Central location, accessibility, regional importance, convenience, connection to surrounding communities, belonging.

5. Quality of Life

Our community offers a balance that few can match: a charming small-town pace with full-service amenities, surrounded by nature, moments from the coast.

Key messages: Work-life balance, recreation, affordability, green spaces, family life, wellness, day tripping/home base, simplicity.

6. People

Amherst’s greatest asset is its people—the dreamers, doers, and difference-makers who shape our community. We honour our heritage while embracing growth, diversity, and innovation.

Key messages: Leadership, civic pride, inclusivity, innovation, resilience, collaboration, history, and youth engagement.

7. Beautiful Amherst

In Amherst, there is no shortage of beautiful scenery to enjoy. We pride ourselves on showcasing the impressive collection of heritage properties build of wood and local sandstone; our parks and flower beds tell a story of a community that cares; and everywhere you turn there is a lovely vista to enjoy, different each season.

Key messages: Heritage buildings, easy access to beaches, parks and green spaces, natural surroundings, Tantramar Marsh, seasonal variation.

BRAND STORY

Amherst’s story begins in 1764. For centuries, our central location has made us a gathering place; where cultures meet, community thrives, and businesses grow to serve local and distant markets alike.

We’ve always been more than just a stop along the way. We are a place where people put down roots, build businesses, create memories and lasting connections.

Our purpose today is the same as it has always been: to create a welcoming, inclusive and connected community that enriches the lives of residents, supports business opportunity, and opens our doors to serve the needs of visitors.

We celebrate our history, while embracing innovation and growth that makes us stronger for the future.

Town of Amherst

Strategic Marketing Plan 2026-2028

Version: January 13, 2026

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1. Executive Summary

The Town of Amherst Marketing Plan 2026 – 2028 has emerged from direction included in Council’s 2024 – 2028 Strategic Plan.

This plan provides a roadmap for marketing Amherst’s strengths - including its central location, small-town charm, active business community, and strong sense of belonging - through cohesive campaigns, partnerships, and measurable actions. It positions Amherst to attract new residents and investment, grow tourism, and strengthen community pride through clear, data-driven marketing.

This plan also includes Amherst’s new Brand Strategy, which will form the foundation of all marketing and communications efforts.

2. Situational Analysis

2.1 Town Overview

Amherst is the largest community in Cumberland County, and the second-largest small town in the province, consisting of 9,700 really cool people. It is located strategically on the Nova Scotia–New Brunswick border and is known for its central location within Cumberland and the Maritimes as a whole. Amherst serves as a regional hub for commerce, healthcare, and recreation.

Great opportunities to capitalize on all of Amherst’s strengths to help make our town a destination community for residents, businesses, and visitors.

2.2 Mission, Vision

Mission: To create a welcoming, inclusive, and connected community that values authenticity, enriches the lives of our residents, and fosters opportunities for growth, culture, and collaboration.

Vision: To be a vibrant destination community where people choose to live, visit, and do business.

2.3 Core Values, Guiding Principles

Core Values	Guiding Principles
1. Community First	We prioritize quality of life.
2. Authenticity	We embrace our history, culture, and local character; every part of it.

3. Connectivity	At the heart of the Maritimes, we are open, inclusive and welcoming to all.
4. Inclusivity	Welcoming, accessibility, belonging.
5. Growth & Opportunity	We support businesses, tourism, and innovation while investing in our residents and planning for our future generations.
6. Vibrancy	We celebrate events, arts, recreation, and shared experiences.
7. Collaboration	We work together with residents, businesses, organizations and surrounding neighbours to build shared success.

2.4 Market Research & Insights

The Town conducted comprehensive primary and secondary research to inform this marketing plan, including: surveys (over 900 responses); community focus groups; a review of regional competitors; a review of Amherst’s history; and, a review of related documents and plans.

A full Research Report is included as a separate appendix to this document, which is the source of key themes, feedback, and insights that directly inform Amherst’s marketing and communications strategies.

Full research methodology, survey data, and detailed stakeholder input findings are provided as an appendix. This research report determines our audiences, current and preferred communications channels, our key messaging themes, and how the brand will be developed.

2.5 PESTLE Analysis

A **PESTLE Analysis** helps us examine the wider forces shaping how residents behave and receive information, and how the Town communicates with residents, businesses and visitors.

Political factors:

- Growing public scrutiny of government decisions
- Need for stronger inter-municipal collaboration to compete regionally for tourism and economic development (ex. Explore Cumberland)
- Provincial and federal policy shifts

Economic factors:

- Regional competition from nearby communities for businesses, workers, investment, and events
 - o Economic pressure impacting resident affordability and municipal expectations
 - o Shift toward regional travel rather than long-distance tourism

Social factors:

- o Aging demographic and youth out-migration reducing long-term community vibrancy
- o Strong local word-of-mouth culture influencing public perception – both positively and negatively
- o Growing expectations for transparency and quick communication
- o Negative social media narratives and misinformation eroding trust
- o Visible downtown decline perception affecting community morale and tourism impressions
- o Changing communication preferences across age groups

Technological factors:

- o Heavy reliance on Facebook as the primary communication channel for residents
- o Heavy reliance on word of mouth
- o Need for modernization of digital tools (website, alert systems)
- o Information fragmentation leading to confusion, misinformation, and disengagement
- o Difficult to navigate website creating frustration and reducing trust in official information on channel

Legal factors:

- Copyrighted materials
- Claims that could imply liability
- Mandated accessibility compliance (WCAG 2.1 Standards) for new digital content
- Municipal Government Act

Environmental factors:

- Seasonal tourism and weather fluctuations impact event attendance and local business activity
- Amherst’s geographical position as a border community shaping commuter patterns and visitor trends

- Environmental sustainability expectations are growing among residents and visitors

2.6 SWOT Analysis

Internal Analysis

Strengths:

- Location and accessibility as a regional hub and border town
- Strong sense of community pride
- Active local organizations, clubs, and recreational activities support community life.
- Walkable downtown core
- Strong history and heritage character
- High engagement through Facebook
- Strong resident participation in community events
- Small town appeal
- Variety of amenities and facilities

Weaknesses:

- Perceived lack of transparent and proactive communication
- Website usability
- First impression on entrance corridors
- Limited weekend/evening vibrancy
- Fragmented information sources
- Limited staff capacity for content creation and proactive communication
- Lack of formal communications protocols and content standards

External Analysis

Opportunities:

- Strengthened regional tourism partnerships
- Improved signage (digital + physical)
- Focusing on staycations and positioning as a home base for regional travel
- Improved marketing and communications to regional audiences
- Attract former residents to return

Threats:

- Negative social media narratives and misinformation
- Aging demographic and youth out-migration
- Regional competition for attention, workers, businesses, and tourism
- Economic pressures for residents
- Perceptions of downtown decline
- Information fragmentation and inconsistent messaging across channels
- Heavy reliance on word of mouth
- Seasonal tourism fluctuations
- Growing expectations for transparency and quick communication
- Changing communication preferences

2.7 Competitive Analysis

A competitive analysis was completed to understand how Amherst compares to similar municipalities and where strategic improvements are needed. Three key comparators were identified: **Truro, Bridgewater, and Sackville**

This analysis highlights how these communities position themselves and helps identify best practices and opportunities that Amherst can adapt to strengthen its own marketing, branding, and communications.

There are many other municipalities that were identified, for the full competitive analysis, see the full Research Report.

1. Truro, NS

“Make the Connection”

Truro is the most relevant comparison due to its similar population, role as a service hub, strong community identity, and heavy public comparison.

What Truro Does Well:

- A modern, unified brand centered on connection and livability
- Strong regional partnerships (Truro–Colchester Partnership)
- A funded tourism model (3% accommodation levy)
- Clear, consistent messaging across website, tourism, and business attraction

Key Lessons for Amherst:

- Regional collaboration amplifies visibility
- A clear narrative and updated brand improve trust and engagement
- Dedicated tourism funding increases capacity and reach through sustainable marketing capacity

2. Bridgewater, NS

“Main Street of Nova Scotia’s South Shore”

Bridgewater is a leading comparator due to its **rapid growth, modernized identity**, and reputation as one of Nova Scotia’s most progressive small towns. With a growing population, strong community amenities, and major investments in sustainability and digital modernization, Bridgewater has positioned itself as a forward-looking, resident-focused community.

What Bridgewater Does Well

- Modern, future-focused brand identity
- Smart Cities leadership and Energize Bridgewater initiative
- Strong digital presence and user-friendly online services
- Messaging highlights affordability, walkability, and quality of life
- Revitalized downtown and active recreation/cultural sectors
- Clear economic development tools and business support

Key Lessons for Amherst

- A strong narrative attracts residents, investment, and media attention
- Digital modernization improves public experience
- Proactive economic development messaging helps attract and retain businesses
- Testimonial-driven storytelling strengthens resident attraction

3. Sackville, NB

Brand Language: “Tantramar is where small-town charm meets big-hearted community.”

Sackville was selected due to its geographical proximity, frequent comparison by Amherst residents, and its long-standing reputation as a creative town with a strong cultural identity. Sackville also provides a useful cautionary example: following its recent regional rebrand, much of its distinctive small-town identity became less visible.

What Sackville Does Well

- Distinctive identity rooted in arts, creativity, and sense of place
- Strong experiential tourism (Waterfowl Park, arts festivals, university-linked events)
- Lifestyle-focused messaging emphasizing belonging, walkability, and culture

Key Lessons for Amherst

- Strong cultural storytelling can differentiate small towns and strengthen its identity
- Identity rooted in character and creativity help attract residents seeking connection and lifestyle
- Experiential tourism can be powerful brand drivers of visitation
- Small businesses thrive in communities with clear sense of place

2.8 What This Means for Amherst

Amherst’s comparison shows that while community vibrancy is a strength, the Town needs a more consistent brand, stronger tourism storytelling, improved digital platforms, and clearer business-focused communication. By focusing on these areas and staying true to Amherst’s unique character and sense of community — the Town can strengthen visibility, competitiveness, and overall impact in the region.

3. Audiences

The Town of Amherst serves a broad and diverse community, so our marketing and communications must reach multiple audiences with different needs. To maintain clarity and focus, we classify audiences as **primary**, **secondary**, and **emerging/underserved audiences**.

Primary audiences inform the core of the Town’s messaging and channel strategy. Secondary audiences are supported through targeted initiatives, seasonal campaigns, and partnership marketing. Emerging/underserved audiences include groups that are growing, changing, or not fully reached by current communication channels and therefore require improved or alternative approaches

3.1 Target Markets

The Town of Amherst’s target market includes the **broader population we aim to serve and influence** through marketing and communications efforts now and moving forward. This includes:

- **Residents**
- **Visitors and tourists**
- **Businesses**
- **Community partners and organizations**

3.2 Target Audiences

Within the wider target market, Amherst has historically communicated with **specific audience segments** that share similar needs, behaviours, and communication preferences. These audiences require tailored messages and channels. The following segments were compiled through survey analysis and social media analytics. Our audience mix will shift as the marketing strategy is implemented.

The detailed findings are included in the Research Report.

Primary Audiences

Primary audiences represent the residents who require frequent, essential communications and rely on the Town for day-to-day information, services, and updates.

Adults (35–64)

Our largest and most civically engaged group. This segment represents our core residents who rely heavily on Facebook, but clearly want a stronger website and a regular, structured newsletter. They also support the use of radio and occasional direct mail for important messages. They are your core audience for service updates, events, and municipal decisions.

Seniors 65+

Seniors are active on Facebook but show strong interest in traditional and accessible formats such as newsletters, radio, and clear, easy to navigate website content. They also

value direct mail. Clarity, accessibility, and trust are essential when communicating with this audience.

Families and caregivers

Parents and guardians depend heavily on Facebook and the Town website for program updates, events, closures, and schedules. They also receive information through schools and community groups. They show strong support for more structured, school-based, and predictable communication around recreation and events.

Secondary Audiences

These audiences engage with the Town less frequently but are important for community vibrancy, economic development, and regional identity.

Local Businesses & Organizations

Small businesses, nonprofits, and service groups require updates on programs, permitting, economic development initiatives, and partnership opportunities. They prefer targeted outreach such as direct emails, information on the website, and Facebook.

Visitors (including tourists and day-trippers)

People traveling from surrounding areas or further for events, dining, shopping, recreation, or regional exploration. They rely on Google search, Instagram, Facebook events, and signage.

Former residents

People who previously lived in Amherst and stay connected primarily through Facebook to stay updated on recreation, events, and community life. They remain an important audience for community pride and potential return migration.

Commuters

People who work, shop, or access services in Amherst. They prefer quick, clear updates through Facebook and have a strong engagement in word of mouth.

Emerging & Underserved Audiences

These audiences are growing, changing, or not fully reached by current communication efforts. They represent opportunities for future engagement.

Youth (13-17)

Youth use TikTok, Instagram, and school networks. They are highly engaged in recreation, sports, and peer-driven content, but are not currently targeted directly by Town communications. This group represents a long-term opportunity to build community connection and future civic engagement.

Young adults (18–34)

Young adults in Amherst are still very Facebook-centric when that is the only reliable source of information. They also use Instagram, TikTok, and rely heavily on word of mouth. They show a strong interest in newsletters and occasional direct mail. Motivated by affordability, job opportunities, lifestyle, and events, they are underserved but important for long-term community vibrancy. They are reachable with existing tools, but there is room to grow engagement with more modern, lifestyle-oriented content and better use of Instagram and TikTok.

Newcomers & ESL households

Need plain-language and visual communication across digital and print. Often receive information from employers and community organizations. Partnerships and accessible resources are key in engaging this audience effectively.

Hard-to-Reach Residents

Individuals with limited digital access, low digital literacy, or minimal online engagement. Best reached through posters in key physical locations, community service providers, partner organizations, and boosted social content.

3.3 Audience Personas

Persona 1: Carla

The Established Amherst Resident (Primary Audience)

Age: 50

Lives in Amherst as a long-term **resident**

Owns a home, raising teens and caring for aging parents

Works in town, involved in community events and recreation

What Carla Cares About

- Municipal services that affect her daily life: **roads, sidewalks, snow removal, taxes/fees, safety**
- **Events & recreation** that keep her and her family engaged
- Clear information about **growth, development, and how decisions are made**

Where Carla Gets Information

- Checks **Facebook** daily (Town of Amherst + community groups)
- Uses the **Town website** to confirm details (event dates, bylaws)
- Notices **radio, newsletters, and direct mail** as supporting channels

Persona 2: Jake

Youth & Young Adult (18–34):

Age: 23

Location: Lives in Amherst, recently moved back after school

Household: Renting with partner

Employment: Works locally; budget-conscious

Lifestyle: Social, digital-first, values local food spots, gyms, and events

What Jake Cares About

- Fun, low-cost things to do in Amherst
- Opportunities to connect with friends, sports leagues, and events
- Clear updates on weather, closures, and last-minute changes
- Feeling that Amherst is active, modern, and worth staying in long-term

Where Jake Gets Information

- **TikTok & Instagram:** For local events, trends, and what’s happening right now
- **Facebook:** Still checks for community updates, events, and Town announcements
- **Google Maps/Search:** To find businesses, hours, and locations
- **Word of Mouth:** Friends, coworkers, and local groups

Persona 3: Emily

Visitor (Daytrip)

Age: 34

Location: Lives in Pugwash

Visit Pattern: Comes to Amherst a few times a month for shopping, appointments, dining, or events

Lifestyle: Busy, practical, chooses destinations based on convenience, variety, and what's happening locally

What Emily Cares About:

- Knowing what events, markets, or activities are happening before she decides to drive in
- Up-to-date info on shopping, dining, and local services
- Deals, promotions, and seasonal experiences worth making the trip
- Easy navigation: where to park, what's open, and where to go
- Feeling welcomed and seeing Amherst as a vibrant, convenient hub

Where Emily Gets Information

- **Facebook:** Event posts, shared content, and boosted ads from the region
- **Town website:** For confirmations, event calendars, hours, and directions
- **Regional tourism pages:** Explore Cumberland, Nova Scotia tourism posts
- **Google Maps/Search:** To check store hours, restaurants, and reviews
- **Word of Mouth:** Friends, coworkers, and family mentioning events

4. Brand Strategy

Our brand strategy is a unique, long-term plan for creating a consistent identity for Amherst. Below, we have included foundational elements that serve as a roadmap for our marketing efforts that follow.

The complete Brand Strategy document can be found as a separate appendix.

4.1 Positioning Statement

An **internal statement** that will guide our approach to marketing Amherst:

For residents, businesses, and visitors, Amherst is the second largest small-town in Nova Scotia and the most convenient geographical point in the Maritimes, because we are in the centre of it all.

4.2 Brand Promise

We promise to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all, to celebrate our vibrancy through arts, culture, and events, and to lead with positivity as we grow together.

4.3 Brand Strategy Goal

Making Amherst a destination community for residents, businesses, and visitors.

4.4 Brand Strategy Objectives

Residents – Strengthening Community Belonging

- Foster community spirit
 - o Foster collaboration and unity
- Increase resident engagement
 - o Civic, cultural, recreational activities
- Enhance quality of life
 - o Through making the community accessible and equitable to all

Businesses – Driving growth and opportunity

- Build pride in accomplishment
 - o Highlighting and promoting the successes of new and existing businesses
- Position Amherst as a supportive and attractive environment for businesses

Visitors – Highlighting vibrancy, convenience and variety

- Visitors:
 - o Position Amherst as a multi-stop service centre
 - Convenience for surrounding areas
 - o Leverage our geographic position within NS and the Maritimes
 - Big city convenience in small-town Amherst
- Tourists:
 - o Increase tourists’ stay and spending
 - o Strengthen partnerships with regional tourism
 - E.g. Explore Cumberland
 - o Highlight Amherst as home base for exploring our greater region

4.5 Brand Pyramid



Tagline:**“The Centre of It All”**

This will function as Amherst’s new primary tagline. It will endure throughout marketing efforts over the next several years.

For so long, Amherst has been known as a service centre. And for good reason. This is the place where people come to complete everyday tasks. But Amherst is also at the geographical centre of the Maritimes, making us a very convenient location for tourists to make their home base while exploring the wider Cumberland region. Looking at this in another way, The Centre of It All represents Amherst’s community spirit – the way this place anchors its residents through shared history, pride, and enthusiasm for the future.

The tagline can be adapted to feature additional components of our brand language. By replacing “It All” with an element such as “Community” or “Belonging” the tagline can adapt to wherever it is being used and appropriately emphasize Amherst’s various benefits.

There may be instances where campaign-specific slogans will be developed to help convey messages. Slogans will be short-lived where our tagline will remain a fixture of marketing efforts.

Adaptation possibilities:

- Tourism: Make Amherst the centre of your getaway.
- Business: Grow your business at the centre of it all.
- Community: Amherst – the centre of community spirit.
- Campaign specific (events): Your weekend starts at the centre of it all.

4.6 Messaging Themes

Brand messaging themes are the **core storylines or pillars** that express Amherst’s identity, priorities, and personality. They connect our **brand promise** to our **audience**.

1. Community & Belonging

Amherst is a place where people feel welcome and connected – connected to their neighbours, to opportunity, and to something bigger than themselves. Our residents look out for one another, and newcomers are quickly made part of the story. We celebrate together, support one another, and take pride in our shared hometown spirit. We lead with

kindness, inclusion, and small-town warmth that makes people want to stay.

Key messages: Connection, inclusion, pride, volunteerism, neighbourly support, civic engagement.

2. Vibrancy

Amherst’s energy comes to life through creativity, innovation, and celebration. Our festivals, local artists, and community gatherings bring people together and showcase the spirit that defines us.

Key messages: Innovation, arts and culture, local events, recreation, shared experiences, and community pride, local shops and restaurants.

3. Opportunity & Growth

Amherst offers room to grow—whether you’re starting a business, raising a family, or investing in the future. Our location, resources, and community spirit make Amherst a smart place to build and belong.

Key messages: Economic development, business community vitality, entrepreneurship, strategic location, innovation, collaboration.

4. The Centre of it All

At the crossroads of the Maritimes, Amherst is both geographically central and emotionally grounded. We are the gathering place of the region – small enough to know you, big enough to serve you.

Key messages: Central location, accessibility, regional importance, convenience, connection to surrounding communities, belonging.

5. Quality of Life

Our community offers a balance that few can match: a charming small-town pace with full-service amenities, surrounded by nature, moments from the coast.

Key messages: Work-life balance, recreation, affordability, green spaces, family life, wellness, day tripping/home base, simplicity.

6. *People*

Amherst's greatest asset is its people—the dreamers, doers, and difference-makers who shape our community. We honour our heritage while embracing growth, diversity, and innovation.

Key messages: Leadership, civic pride, inclusivity, innovation, resilience, collaboration, history, and youth engagement.

7. *Beautiful Amherst*

In Amherst, there is no shortage of beautiful scenery to enjoy. We pride ourselves on showcasing the impressive collection of heritage properties built of wood and local sandstone; our parks and flower beds tell a story of a community that cares; and everywhere you turn there is a lovely vista to enjoy, different each season.

Key messages: Heritage buildings, easy access to beaches, parks and green spaces, natural surroundings, Tantramar Marsh, seasonal variation.

4.7 Next Steps

To fully activate Amherst's brand and ensure its long-term success, the Town requires consistent standards, tools, and processes that guide how the brand is used internally and externally. This section outlines the actions and activities that support our brand's effectiveness.

By strengthening the foundation of our brand, we will be fully prepared to execute the actions contained in our strategic marketing pillars.

- Update the brand guidelines manual
- Create a brand launch toolkit
- Provide brand training sessions
- Revise and improve organization of Amherst's logos
- Implement an internal brand asset library
- Complete an Amherst logo use audit
- Create branded templates for all communication channels
- Introduce a brand review process for all materials

Note:

2026 is a benchmarking year. Because consistent data has not been available in the past, all evaluations of 2027 activities will be informed by the baseline data gathered in 2026, along with any relevant data available from previous years.

5.0 Strategic Marketing Pillars

Internal Departments & Staff Roles

MarComm – Marketing & Communications Officers

CL – Community Living Department

EDO – Economic Development Officer

CWB Mgr – Community Well-Being Manager

Events – Event Coordinator / Events Team

PW / Facilities – Public Works & Facilities

IT – Information Technology

Mayor & Council

APD – Amherst Police Department

AFD / AFFA – Amherst Fire Department / Amherst Firefighters Association

Community Partners - Local organizations, regional tourism operators, nonprofits, schools, employers, accommodations, and other stakeholders collaborating on specific initiatives.

Strategic Pillar 1 – Residents				
Goal: Strengthen Community Belonging				
Objective 1.1	Increase community spirit by growing resident participation with community-focused content by 20%	Timing by 2027	Role	Budget
Actions	Work with a videographer to create four reusable videos (minimum one per season) to generate excitement around a variety of	Annual events 2026	Marcomm IT CL	Up to \$6,000 per video

	events, ensuring final videos have appropriate storage solutions		EDO	
	Produce a minimum of one good news story per month to highlight community heroes or volunteer stories, distributed to our media list	Monthly starting Jan 2026	Marcomm Other depts & community partners	Boosting option \$25-\$50 per post
	Create two posts per month highlighting Amherst’s strengths (geography, people, convenience, attractions, history)	Twice monthly (24 per year) starting Jan 2026	MarComm Other depts & community partners	Within existing content budget Boosting option \$25-\$50 per post
	Build recognition by creating and re-using event content (i.e. hashtags, Facebook events)	Per event (12 a year) starting Jan 2026	CL	\$100 Boosting
	Increase earned media coverage by sending media releases for major events, and pitch at least one story per quarter	Quarterly pitches + event-based releases beginning Jan 2026	MarComm	Staff time
Objective 1.2	Increase resident engagement with Town communications and programs by 25%	Timing Jan 2026 - Dec 2027	Role	Budget
Actions	Launch a monthly community newsletter. Further investigate appropriate, cost-effective newsletter platforms to highlight upcoming events and share information on initiatives.	Monthly beginning April 2026	Marcomm CL	Platform cost TBD
	Use targeted event-related social media boosts within 50 km for key demographics	3 per month starting Jan 2026	Marcomm	\$1,800 (\$50 ea.)
	Develop a list of high-traffic locations for event-related flyer distribution	Jan 2026	Events	N/A
	Investigate and implement a comprehensive event calendar on the website to position this information front-and-centre	March 2026	Marcomm	Plug-in costs for website \$500-\$1,000 annual
	Install a community message board in Town Hall lobby to promote information and events	Jan 2026	Sarah Marcomm Events	\$500 for Town Hall board
	Utilize the outdoor digital screen at Amherst Stadium to promote Town communications. Investigate options to update the screen	2026-2028	Public works Facilities Marcomm	TBD
	Investigate options for a digital community board (on the highway or other location)	2027 project	Marcomm	TBD
	Conduct a Voyent Alert promotional campaign. Determine feasibility for ongoing use.	Feb 2026-April 2026	Marcomm	\$500-\$1,000

	Invite community input on new cultural or inclusive initiatives by hosting community alignment workshops, starting a resident ambassador program, and other initiatives outlined in the demographic strategic plan.	Ongoing starting in 2026	CWB Mgr Marcomm CL	TBD Staff time
	Decrease information fragmentation by maintaining consistent visibility across all platforms	Starting Jan 2026 and ongoing	Marcomm	N/A
	Ensure accessibility and inclusion in marketing efforts (i.e. plain language, considerations in design)	Starting Jan 2026 and ongoing	Marcom CWB Mgr	N/A
	Boost promotion the Mayor’s radio segment across all platforms. Evaluate effectiveness of the mayor’s weekly segment to determine future investment	Starting Feb 2026	Marcomm	\$500 for promotion \$15,000 for radio package
	Offer incentives for completing calls to action, such as gift cards for survey completion	Monthly		\$600 (\$50 ea.)
Objective 1.3	Enhance quality of life by increasing resident awareness and participation in Town programs, events and services by 25%	Timing 2026	Role	Budget
Actions	Connect residents with health and wellness resources and supports that can be found in Amherst		partners, community groups, other levels of government	
	Foster understanding on the purpose of the Community Living and Recreation Facebook page, to increase understanding and followers	April 2026	Marcomm REC CL	\$500- \$1,000
	Partner with APD, AFD and community partners to create a plan that promotes initiatives enhancing safety	Dec 2026	APD AFFA Marcomm Community volunteers	TBD Boost Ads Campaign-based \$500 per campaign
Objective 1.4	Increase public feedback by 10%, by increasing awareness and access to mechanisms	Timing 2027	Role	Budget
Actions	Promote awareness of existing and new public feedback mechanisms			

	Improve the function of comments/questions/feedback on the website	March 2026	Marcomm	TBD
	Create a feedback box at Town Hall to accept all types of resident input	March 2026	Marcomm	\$100 for box
	Conduct annual public surveys and determine if focus groups are required based on feedback	Feb 2027	Marcomm	Up to \$500 for boosting and ads
Strategic Pillar 2 - Businesses				
Goal: Drive Growth and Opportunity for new and existing business development				
Objective 2.1	Build Pride in Accomplishments by partnering with at least two new economic development organizations	Timing By 2027	Role	Budget
Actions	Highlight and promote the successes of new and existing businesses	Ongoing	Marcomm EDO	TBD minimal
	Create a campaign to promote the expansion of the industrial park by developing collateral materials to support the work of the economic development department of the Town of Amherst.	Jan 2026 onward	Marcomm EDO	Budget to come from EDO
	Promote collaboration with regional employers and post-secondary institutions to attract and retain workers. Create promotional material to assist with this.	2026-2028	Marcomm CL CWB Mgr EDO	\$500-\$1,000 from EDO budget
Objective 2.2	Assist the Economic Development department with the promotion of at least two partnerships for current and new businesses	Timing By 2028	Role	Budget
Actions	Design collateral materials on the promotional needs of economic development department	Ongoing to 2028	EDO Marcomm	TBD based on need
	Identify opportunities for cross-promotion with influencers	As opportunities present	Marcomm EDO CL	Influencer fees \$1,000-\$2,500 each
	Promote the hosting of business roundtables, economic development forums, employment expos as requested	As opportunities present	Marcomm EDO	Cost TBD
	Assist the EDO with creating initiatives for shop and eat local campaigns	Jan-June 2026, Oct-Dec 2026 – Updates as required	Marcomm EDO CL	\$2,000 annually
Objective 2.3	Attract ten new business inquiries to Amherst by promoting our community as safe, accessible, inclusive and engaged	Timing By 2028	Role	Budget
Actions	Assist Economic Development Officer to create an opportunities /incentives campaign to increase business development	September 2026 onward	Marcomm EDO	\$1,500-\$2,500

			Economic development partners	
	Update and expand Invest Amherst (existing business page) website content	April 1 2026 ongoing	Marcomm EDO Ec Dev partners	\$500-\$1,000
	Promote relocation incentives for small business development	2027	Marcomm EDO Ec Dev partners	TBD
Objective 2.4	Increase awareness of opportunities for newcomer business owners to collaborate and access resources, to be tracked by measuring attendance numbers and requests to access services	Timing 2026-2028	Role	Budget
Actions	Promote regular newcomer business events	2026-2028	CWB Mgr. EDO CL Marcomm	Social boosting, other ads \$500
Strategic Pillar 3 – Visitors				
Goal: Highlight Vibrancy, Convenience and Variety				
Objective 3.1	Increase awareness of Amherst as a multi-stop service centre among nearby communities, measured by gathering input from businesses	Timing 2027-2028	Role	Budget
Actions	Create a campaign to feature all of the services available in Amherst	Oct 2027-2028	Marcomm EDO CL	\$1,000-\$2,500
	Target locations that lack services Amherst can provide, such as – with a 100 km radius – promoting Amherst’s service offerings	Oct 2026-March 2027	Marcomm EDO CL	\$1,000-\$2,500
	Ensure accuracy and availability of Amherst shopping and restaurant guides. Create new content as required.	Jan 2026 ongoing	Marcomm EDO CL	\$500
Objective 3.2	Market Amherst as a Tourism Destination to increase engagement with online tourism content by %10	Timing 2027	Role	Budget
Actions	Implement sections of the Town beautification strategy and highlight areas that relate to tourism	Jan 2026 ongoing	Marcomm CWM PW Parks	
	Create seasonal tourism campaigns for Maritime and Ontario markets	As required starting in 2026	Marcomm EDO Ec Dev	TV AD COSTS \$5,000-\$10,000 per campaign
	Improve quality and availability of visitor information	April 2026 ongoing	Marcomm CL EDO	\$500

			Community Partners	
	Determine if Town Hall will be a permanent location for Amherst visitor information services and promote as such	Feb 2026	Mayor and Council Jason	N/A
	Create promotional campaign around new signature event	March-April 2026	Events CL	Up to \$2,000
Objective 3.3	Strengthen awareness of Amherst’s central geographic position within the Maritimes by creating three regional travel resources (i.e. maps, distance guides)	Timing April 2026	Role	Budget
Actions	Develop the new resources that demonstrates Amherst’s position as a home base for exploring the greater region	April 2026	Marcomm CL EDO Community Partners	\$1,000- \$2,000
Objective 3.4	Strengthen Partnerships with five Regional Tourism Operators and Organizations to promote Amherst as a larger tourism opportunity	Timing Jan 2026 ongoing	Role	Budget
Actions	Identify and create opportunities to work together on regional initiatives	Jan 2026 ongoing	Marcomm Regional Tourism Partners EDO	N/A
	Partner with accommodations to help promote Amherst’s brand and variety of events and activities	April 2026 ongoing	Marcomm EDO Accomms Partners	\$2,000
Objective 3.5	Increase Amherst’s visibility and appeal to new and former residents by growing traffic to relocation-focused web pages and engagement relocation content by 20%	Timing by Dec 2027	Role	Budget
Actions	Implement relocations pages and resources on the Town website *Considerations for existing documents (Explore Cumberland)	After website audit 2027	Marcomm	TBD
	Create a campaign for new and/or former residents to increase awareness advantages, including strategic locations	Sept 2026	CWB mgr Marcomm Community partners EDO	TBD

6.0 Marketing Channels & Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

1. Website (amherst.ca)

Primary KPIs

- Total site sessions
- Unique visitors
- Most visited pages
- Bounce rate
- Average time on page
- Top search terms
- Accessibility compliance indicators (alt text completion, heading structure, page contrast)

2. Social Media – Facebook (Town + Community Living & Recreation)

Primary KPIs

- Reach
- Engagement rate
- Follower growth
- Click-throughs to website
- Video views and average watch time
- Performance of boosted posts

3. Social Media – Instagram

Primary KPIs

- Reach
- Engagement rate
- Reel views
- Follower growth
- Profile visits

4. Social Media – TikTok

Primary KPIs

- Video views
- Completion rate
- Engagement rate
- Follower growth

5. Email Newsletter

Primary KPIs

- Open rate
- Click-through rate (CTR)
- Subscriber growth
- Top-clicked content

6. Print Communications

Primary KPIs

- Distribution reach
- Cost per household
- Call to actions
- Resident feedback (survey)

7. Voyent Alert!

(or replacement system)

Primary KPIs:

- Subscription count
- Alert open rate
- Click-through rate

8. Radio

Primary KPIs

- Estimated audience reach
- Number of mentions / ads aired
- Traffic spikes to website or social media after radio segments
- Resident recall (survey question)

9. Community Engagement Activities

Primary KPIs

- Event attendance
- Public meeting participation
- Survey response rates
- Public feedback

7.0 Appendices

- Marketing & Brand Strategy and Communications Plan Research Report
- Town of Amherst Brand Strategy

Town of Amherst

Communications Plan 2026-2028

Version: January 13, 2026

<p>Introduction</p>	<p>The 2026–2028 Strategic Communications Plan guides how the Town of Amherst will share information, engage the community, and strengthen trust through clear, timely, and accessible communication. This plan supports Council’s priorities by improving how residents, businesses, and visitors receive information, and by ensuring all channels are used consistently and effectively. It provides a roadmap for proactive, transparent, and inclusive communication that helps people stay informed, connected, and involved in our community.</p>
<p>Our Approach</p>	<p>Our communications approach is grounded in openness, respect, and meaningful two-way dialogue. We aim to be known for positive relationships, strong community engagement, and transparent communication that supports participatory decision-making.</p> <p>Engagement</p> <p>We treat communication as two-way. We create opportunities for residents, businesses, and visitors to share input and feel heard through feedback mechanisms.</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>We work with the community, not just for the community – by fostering ongoing participation, encouraging feedback, and strengthening relationships.</p> <p>Connection</p> <p>We listen to what people tell us and share information in the ways they prefer. Our goal is to deliver relevant, timely updates that help people stay informed and connected to their municipality.</p> <p>Timeliness & Proactivity</p> <p>We strive to provide information early, anticipate questions, and share updates before issues arise to support clarity and confidence in Town decisions.</p>

	<p>Accessibility</p> <p>We ensure all residents can access, understand, and use Town information. This includes plain-language writing, accessible digital content, and inclusive communication tools.</p> <p>Accountability</p> <p>We take responsibility for the accuracy, clarity, and impact of our communication.</p> <p>Optimization</p> <p>We measure and evaluate our communication efforts, using data, analytics, and community feedback to strengthen performance and improve over time.</p>
Goal 1	Improve access to Town of Amherst information
Objective 1.1	Make it easier to access, understand and use information about living, visiting, and doing business in Amherst.
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirm how audiences prefer to access and receive information and use these channels consistently – update channels as driven by audience feedback - Anticipate questions and provide information proactively - Provide plain language summaries for complex documents when applicable - Maintain information relevance on message boards (digital and physical) - Evaluate the effectiveness of physical information kiosks and create a plan for their use moving forward - Evaluate the effectiveness of the mayor’s radio segment and identify opportunities for improvement - Explore additional opportunities for sharing information
Objective 1.2	Ensure accessibility practices are used consistently in everyday communications
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write content using plain language whenever possible - Ensure digital content functions well with assistive technologies - Review the Town’s website and implement updates to improve accessibility - Use high contrast colours in design - Plan for potential accessibility needs when organizing public communications and events

Objective 1.3	Strengthen internal communications practices to improve the flow of information
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide Town staff with regular information updates - Establish a process where staff can easily submit feedback they receive from the public - Work with Human Resources to fully develop an internal communications plan
Objectives and actions for Goal 1 will begin in Jan 2026 and will be ongoing throughout the next several years, updated and refined as we learn more from our metrics.	
Goal 2	Be consistent with and ensure effectiveness of our communications channels
Objective 2.1	Ensure all channels are used in the most effective way
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete an audit of all communications channels - Identify the purpose and the content strategy for each communications channel - Evaluate and optimize platform performance
Objective 2.2	Create guidelines required to manage content delivery
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop posting standards (how we post) - Develop content guidelines (what we post) - Develop social media terms of use
Objective 2.3	Improve the Town of Amherst website
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a complete audit of the website - Create a plan to implement all recommended updates - Improve Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to deliver better website search results - Establish guidelines for regular website content updates
Objectives and actions for Goal 2 will begin in Jan 2026 and will be ongoing throughout the next several years, updated and refined as we learn more from our metrics.	
Goal 3	Improve engagement
Objective 3.1	Diversify communications channels
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research and identifying new platforms for use as needs evolve - Identify and adopt new trends as appropriate to reach new audiences - Annual review of our communication channels to determine preference and performance
Objective 3.2	Create more opportunities for people to share feedback
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine the best ways for people to provide comments and feedback, which may include selected social media comments, alternate platforms for feedback, or directing comments to official channels - Implement feedback mechanisms

Objective 3.3	Improve proactivity of Town communications
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with all departments to better streamline public communications - Ensure timely posting of major updates - Develop an Outlook calendar to be populated and used internally to proactively address communications requirements
Objective 3.4	Increase participation in Town programs, events, and public processes
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use targeted and audience specific tactics to boost engagement with social media content - Consider the use of incentives to boost participation - Track event attendance and registration data to create a baseline for ongoing measurement - Look for opportunities to expand partnerships with schools and community organizations
Objectives and actions for Goal 3 will begin in Jan 2026 and will be ongoing throughout the next several years, updated and refined as we learn more from our metrics.	
Goal 4	Increase audience reach
Objective 4.1	Ensure more people receive the information that we share
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a mix of channels to share information, based on audience preferences - Optimize web content to improve SEO - Pay to boost certain content on social - Create cross-promotional opportunities with businesses and organization
Objective 4.2	Reach underserved or hard-to-reach audiences
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify hard-to-reach audiences - Determine how best to communicate with them moving forward, such as direct mail or new communications channels
Objective 4.3	Use data, analytics and resident feedback to guide our strategies to strengthen our reach
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review communications channels analytics - Identify high-reach content - Optimize communication strategies
Objectives and actions for Goal 4 will begin in Jan 2026 and will be ongoing throughout the next several years, updated and refined as we learn more from our metrics.	

BUDGET

The majority of our communications actions have no direct costs apart from staff time. There may be instances where costs are coded to individual departments as required. It would be helpful for departments to include a communications line item in budget planning.

There are several potential communications actions with associated costs, but the scope and frequency of these is to be determined.

- Voyent Alert subscription
- Boosting social content as required
- Direct mail pieces to share information
- Accessibility needs at events etc.
- Incentives to boost participation