



Township of  
Georgian Bay  
Brand and  
Communications  
Guidebook





# 1. Introduction and Background

## The Brand of Sustainable Balance

The main goal of this communications strategy and brand is to guide staff toward consistent communications as it relates to internal and external customers.

Internal customers are Council and staff.

External customers are residents, guests, stakeholders, partners, colleagues and any other person or group outside of the Township, be it Federal, Provincial, District, County, and fellow municipal agencies. Any communication outside staff and Council is considered external.

**Neither communication is more important than the other.**

### More Than Understanding

The Township of Georgian Bay completed a strategic planning exercise in 2014, 2018, and further updated in 2021. The strategic planning exercise examined what makes the Township unique, and what would continue to make the Township unique and valuable well into the future. An outcome of the strategic plan was a shared vision for the future, along with detailed action plans that would be utilized to bring that vision to life. The vision created the foundation of a truly heartfelt brand that holds the sort of emotion needed to rally people and the community. The mission is a reminder of how to achieve the vision.

### What Will This Brand Help Us Do?

When brought to life, the brand enables the Township to transcend an intellectual vision statement, and rally people emotionally and passionately around the Township. The brand will help the Township and the community at large to understand their inherent differences and find common ground that can be supported by all. When fully developed, the brand will enable the Township to progress faster, and more cohesively, towards achieving their vision for the future.

### Current Vision Statement

The following vision was defined by the Township, its community and stakeholder. The vision reads as follows:

***The Township of Georgian Bay is a safe, healthy, sustainable, and welcoming community showcasing and preserving our historic natural beauty.***

### Current Mission Statement

The following mission was defined by the Township, its community, and stakeholders. The mission reads as follows:

***To demonstrate leadership in the provision of services in an affordable efficient, equitable and sustainable manner.***

## Sustainable Balance

All the powerful thoughts and concepts presented in the current vision statement can be distilled into one overarching sentiment: Sustainable Balance. "Sustainable Balance" is the foundation for the Township's emotional brand. It addresses all the issues the Township hopes to tackle as it moves into the future. For example, striking the delicate balance between preserving the natural environment and developing the available land in the Township. Balance calls upon responsible, thoughtful development and action.

The brand of balance has the power to address the complex struggle of preservation versus creation. It has the power to move beyond the environment and development, by calling upon and linking to the Township's rich history and art heritage and creating a plan for creating new history and a new legacy of the arts.

The brand is about the balance between the city and country:

- Providing the sanctuary that city dwellers yearn for, while offering the required amenities of the city environment
- Creating a tranquil haven, while satisfying high level of services; and
- Maintaining equilibrium between family traditions, history, and beauty.

Sustainable balance is at the core of what makes the Township of Georgian Bay special, and what draws people to visit, work and live in the Township. Hence, this precious balance needs to be preserved.

## 2. Our Brand Story

The story of the Township of Georgian Bay is all about balance:

- Balance between a delicate environment and a rugged, timeless environment.
- Balance of ecology.
- Balance and harmony maintained by the indigenous peoples who inhabited the area for thousands of years.
- Balance between commerce, natural resources, and business.
- Balance of the environment and societal and economic progress; and
- Balance of resident needs and the wishes of Township visitors.

For all these reasons, the future needs balance. This has been tagged in the past as "between a rock and nature's beauty, which is fine for our corporate language and documentation. However as a successful brand, balance needs to be expressed in actions today and tomorrow. The concept and brand of balance needs to be brought to life to ensure people understand it, understand why it's unique, and why we all need to rally around it.

The Township of Georgian Bay showcases **SUSTAINABLE BALANCE**.

## Our Story: Reflections

Reflecting into the past, once can see that balance has been a part of the history and the story of the Township of Georgian Bay. The Township's historical balance is encapsulated in:

- The delicate and timeless environmental history of Georgian Bay.
- The culture and customs of the areas indigenous settlers – who lived in balance with the environment, creating the roots of human history that we look to today.
- The initial roots of commerce and trade, and the source for natural resources – balancing the needs of business with the needs of the natural world.
- A rich heritage of the arts – illustrating the beauty and balance of the natural world through the arts; and
- The current identity of the Township as a centre for family, traditions, and a haven from the chaos of the city.

## Our Story: Looking Forward

We need to ensure the future also encapsulates balance. The Township should aim for a future of balance:

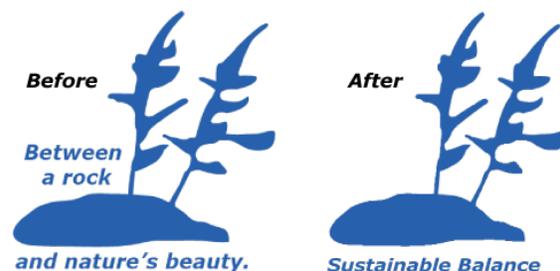
- To be an example to the world of how society can live in harmony with nature.
- Illustrate how seasonal visitors can live in harmony with full time residents.
- Demonstrate how responsible development can happen in balance with the supporting green house gas emission reduction, climate change and.
- Show how art, history and culture can be preserved, as well as encouraged for new generations.

The future story of the Township should be one of honouring the past and greeting the future; of building and preserving; and of understanding and protecting nature, while sharing resources wisely.

## 3. Tagline

The following tagline can be updated from 'between a rock and nature's beauty' and will fully demonstrate the power of the brand of balance and will capture the imagination of the community and stakeholders. This can be integrated into branding in a fiscally sound manner to

## Sustainable Balance



## 4. Communication Strategy

### Objective

The purpose of this guidebook is to ensure that communication across the Township of Georgian Bay is consistent, clear, and coordinated effectively to ensure that messages are being properly distributed, while meeting the needs of Council, employees, stakeholders, and the public.

### Target Groups

- Council
- Municipal Staff
- Stakeholders
- Businesses
- Organizations
- Community
- Residents
- Visitors
- Tourists
- Special Interest Groups
- Cultural Interest Groups
- Regional Government
- Upper Tier Government
- Neighbouring Communities
- Community Partners
- Youth
- Seniors

### Components

- 1) Internal Communications
  - a. Internal staff emails
  - b. Out of office internal email and phone messaging.
  - c. Staff Meetings and Updates
  - d. Staff Newsletters (where needed)
  - e. Senior Management Meetings
  - f. Council Updates
  - g. Community Feedback
  - h. Logo Standard Manual
- 2) External Communications
  - a. Key Messaging
  - b. Communications from Council to all Staff (Senior Staff)
  - c. Website
  - d. Council Updates
  - e. Email Blasts
  - f. Newsletter and Online Marketing
  - g. Inserts in Tax Bill
  - h. Social Media
  - i. Communication Boards
  - j. Out of Office External Emails and Phone Messages
  - k. Media Relations
  - l. Advertising
  - m. Crisis and Emergency Communications

## **Internal Communications**

Communication between Council, Senior Management and Directors will remain open, transparent, traceable, and accountable. Information will be sent in a timely manner so that each member of the municipality can be well informed. This will help to achieve the goals of the strategic plan and continue in achieving a balance in all Township communications.

### **Staff Internal Phone and Email Messages**

All staff will respond to all internal phone calls emails within 24 hours where possible. Out of office alerts are important to be in place in a timely manner. Staff are encouraged to provide an alternate contact and clearly identify a return date.

Staff must make the internal customer with staff and Council a priority to ensure that deadlines for staff reports and progress with projects are met in a timely manner.

### **Information collected in accordance with the Municipal Act, 2001**

All information about municipal services is collected in accordance with the Municipal Act, 2001, under s.8 and for Council's purposes under s.239(1) and may be used in Council deliberations, and disclosed in full, including email, names, opinions and addresses to other persons requesting access to records, or as part of a public agenda. All information submitted to the municipality is subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).

## **Indigenous reconciliation**

We acknowledge that we are working on the lands traditionally occupied by the Indigenous peoples. Indigenous people continue to care for this land and continue to shape our Township. We show our respect and will continually honour the treaties that were signed as we consider our decisions and actions.

## **Pronouns**

Staff/Council who wish to add a pronoun to support their gender identity may do so along side the signature title, zoom tag, or business card.

### **Out of Office Emails and Phone Messages (Internal)**

To keep channels of communication open and active, it is advised that all Township staff set up "out of office" email and phone messages when they are away for extended periods of time (i.e., away from the office for 1 days or more). These "out of office" messages should provide the contact information for an alternate Township staff person and who works within the same department.

### **Example Email Message**

Thank you for your email. I am currently away from the office from (date) to (date), returning to the office on (date). If you require a response before my return please contact my colleague (name, email, phone number).

### **Example Phone Message**

Thank you for your phone call. I am currently away from the office, returning on (date). If you require a response before my return please contact my colleague (name, phone number).

### **Traditional In-Office Phone Lines**

Checking traditional extensions at the Township Office while away (COVID related)

Staff should check messages on the Township extensions once a day.

Alternatively, staff members who have a company issued cell phone can identify the number of the message encouraging residents to access more immediate information

Thank you for your phone call. We are temporarily working from home during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This machine is checked daily for messages, however alternatively you can reach me on my cell phone at (phone number) or by email at (email) for a more immediate response. Please note that due to the increased call volume, staff may not be able to respond to your inquiry immediately but will do so within 24 hours.

Thank you for calling.

### **Staff Meetings and Updates**

Staff will meet regularly to discuss projects, initiatives, ideas, or challenges at the call of the CAO. Meeting summary notes and actions items will be recorded and prepared for each meeting. The summary notes and action items will be distributed to all meeting participants within a week of meeting completion. An update on action items will occur at each meeting to gauge and track progress.

### **Staff Newsletters**

Staff newsletters will occur where possible and will be included as an electronic insert along side staff pay stubs. Staff can also engage at the township staff group page.

### **Regular Senior Management/Director Meetings**

Senior managers and directors will meet bi-weekly to discuss current and upcoming projects, opportunities, and challenges. Once a meeting schedule has been developed, it must remain consistent for the remainder of the year. Meeting summary notes and actions items will be recorded via Microsoft Teams and prepared for each meeting. The summary notes and action items will also be reported in Microsoft Teams. An update on action items will occur at each meeting to gauge and track progress.

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**Council Updates**

Regular updates on Township projects and initiatives will be provided to Council by Directors/Managers. This will be done monthly. These updates will be provided in writing, and will summarize key actions, progress, and any anticipated challenges or concerns. This will be an internal document only and is not public.

The Chief Administrative Officer will be a formal part of the Council agenda. All Senior Staff shall be in attendance during the CAO update as well as attending for their regular agenda items. From this update, the CAO will then determine priorities and actions that will be distributed to staff with a clear understanding of next steps.

**Community Feedback**

To keep track of arising themes, comments, or concerns, each Township department will use an Excel template to track any inquires or comments that may be brought forth by the public or stakeholders. It is not uncommon for a member of the public to contact the Township via telephone, email, or in-person to ask a question or make a comment. These inquiries are invaluable and need to be tracked. Over time, such inquiries can show trends or concerns, and the Township can detect such trends (e.g., idling vehicles near school property) and be proactive in addressing them (e.g., publishing a story about idling-reduction in *The Georgian Bay Times* newsletter, Engage Georgian Bay or on the website).

**Logo Standard Manual**

A Logo Standard Manual has been created and will be used moving forward to ensure consistency in communication materials such as email tags, letterhead, report templates, press release templates etc.

This Logo Standards Manual is located in File Hold under Forms and should be sent as an attachment any time a logo is sent to a stakeholder.

**Electric Vehicle, GHG and Zero Emissions Project logo.**

The following logo can also be used where projects are created to support the environment, the reduction of Green House Gases and zero emission projects. Please speak to your manager for access to this logo or for clarification of use of logo.



## **External Communications**

For the Township brand of balance to survive and thrive, it needs to be expressed in many ways, through events, activities, website updates, social media, press releases and newspaper advertisements, etc.

## **External Phone and Email Messages**

All staff will try to respond to all external phone calls emails within 48 hours where possible. Out of office alerts are important to be in place in a timely manner. Staff are encouraged to provide an alternate contact and clearly identify a return date.

### **Of Note:**

Staff who are dealing with planning matters have an adjusted response time away from the typical 48-hour timeline. Staff will respond to residents about more detailed items within a 5-10 business day timeline. This is in alignment with the District of Muskoka, area municipalities and agencies related to planning. Staff require time to respond to more detailed inquiries after conducting research on the property in question.

## **Key Messages**

Key messages will be created by the communications team on a project-by-project basis. Frequently asked questions will be answered on the Engage Georgian Bay site where a specific portal will be created and monitored by communications and key senior staff. Repeat questions can be highlighted on Engage Georgian Bay.

## **Communications from Council to all Staff (Senior Staff)**

All emails from Council must have a carbon copy (CC) to the CAO. The CAO will then determine who responds and if the matter will go to Committee of the Whole, or if more information is needed further time will be required.

Staff will be given 24 hours to respond to a Council member, except for weekends and holidays.

## Website

The Township of Georgian Bay website is: <http://www.gbtownship.ca>. The website will be the main source for municipal information for the public, stakeholders, and visitors. Secondary an engagement page known as [@engagegeorgianbay](#) is available. Third options will be available via Microsoft Townsuites. It is important for each Township department to provide regular monthly updates to the Clerk to ensure that the website remains up to date. The website will also provide links to the Township's social media sites, as well as an events calendar. The website will also include RSS feeds.

## Council Updates

Following each Council meeting, updates about the resolutions and hot topics will be listed on the website as "key updates", shared in the newsletter and on social media.

## Email Blasts

Staff will not participate in email blasts. Communication can be distributed via the website, engage page, or social media.

## Newsletter, E-News and Online Marketing

Regular updates and news will be published in the Georgian Bay Times newsletter on a monthly, as well as social media.

The Georgian Bay Times will be added and archived on the website.

Note: Residents can provide email addresses on any or all pages of interest in the Township website. When new information is uploaded, residents are advised via email on the pages that are subscribed.

## Inserts in Tax Bill

Updates about what the Township of Georgian Bay is doing may be included annually in the tax bill however electronic versions should be considered.

## Social Media

### Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/YouTube

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/gbtownship](http://www.facebook.com/gbtownship)

Twitter: [@gbtownship](#)

Instagram: [@georgianbaytownship](#)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxpvt7SEPAhfxceMQtT5Efg>

Strategies to use social media more effectively should include:

- Engaging "fans" to write posts about activities
- Solicit Township ambassadors
- Develop campaigns to support community initiatives.
- Use the "like" function to get people engaged in conversations online.
- Tag posts
- Re-share posts
- Continue to post photos of events
- Uploading videos of events or projects
- Providing links to the updated Township website, and links to partner organizations or relevant resources
- Linking all social media together where possible
- Continue to use the survey feature to engage people in conversations
- Use reels, Instagram TV (IGTV), stories, and posts
- Make yearly subscriber goals
- Host contests
- Use Highlights
- Update headers and banners consistently across all sites.
- Report to Council yearly on highlighted posts throughout the year.

A designated Township staff member will be assigned to check and update social media accounts on a daily. CAO and Director of Sustainability will also follow social media pages.

## Trolls

Staff will not engage in story or post conversations with those known as 'Trolls' that offer negative comments that are discriminatory, inflammatory, or are racist regarding gender, sexuality, creed, race, religion, and any other crude comments.

All comments containing any negativity that is not critical thought (a perspective provided in a clean manner) will not be hidden.

Staff will also attempt to reach out to Trolls through Direct Messaging to attempt to thwart further comments. Continuing to use social media will ensure that Friends and Followers are provided with up-to-date information about the Township, organizations, and projects. It will also invite participation from many people in the community. All social media accounts are governed by the Township of Georgian Bay *Social Media Policy*. All Township staff that use the social media accounts must comply with the *Social Media Policy*.

## Hashtags

Hashtags are nimble populators to post that encourage more engagement. Anything can be a hashtag however more popular choices for our channels are #muskoka #georgianbay #mybay #HoneyHarbour, #PortSevern, #MacTier, #Wahta #MooseDeerPoint #StaySafeGB #SustainableGB #StayGreenGB.

Consider #sustainablebalance in future posts.

### **Voyent Alert**

A multi-purpose communication service that is designed to support your community or organization through rapid dissemination of targeted information with enriched media alerts for both critical emergencies and day-to-day notifications.

To be used for emergency messaging, events and community information.

## Communication Boards

The installation of communication boards with the intent to provide up to date information to people about news in the Township of Georgian Bay are placed in MacTier, and Honey Harbour. Port Severn communications can also be placed at Severn Suds Laundry Mat located at 50 Lone Pine Road. The communication boards will be kept up to date to ensure accuracy of information displayed.

## Out of Office Emails and Phone Messages (External)

To keep channels of communication open and active, it is advised that all Township staff set up "out of office" email and phone messages when they are away for extended periods of time (i.e., away from the office for 1 days or more). These "out of office" messages should provide the contact information for an alternate Township staff person and who works within the same department.

### Example Email Message

Thank you for your email. I am currently away from the office from (date) to (date), returning to the office on (date). If you require a response before my return please contact my colleague (name, email, phone number).

### Example Phone Message

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## Media Relations

The purpose of media relations is to ensure that the media is consistent, well-informed, timely and accurate.

- Clearly indicate an authorized spokesperson(s).
- Maintain positive relations with the media by providing them with accurate, timely information.
- Improve communication with internal and external stakeholders and enhance the public image of the Township of Georgian Bay; and
- Limit the possibility of miscommunication.

The Township of Georgian Bay recognizes that the media is an effective way of publicizing information on municipal issues, programs and events to residents and stakeholders. Social media, newspaper, radio, and television are in many cases, the key sources of information for the community on municipal issues and events.

It is essential that the Township communicate only with accredited journalists who's electronic and print media are members of the Ontario Press Council, the Canadian Circulation Auditing Board, and other relevant organizations. These reputable media include:

- Local, regional, and national publications, such as daily and weekly newspapers, professional and commercial magazines, and trade publications.
- Radio, broadcast television and cable television.
- Internet based news sites.

- Wire services; and
- Freelance writers – often working for news services, magazines, or book publishers.

### **Media Spokesperson**

The Township should designate one or two staff as designated Township spokesperson(s). It will be the responsibility of these spokespersons to ensure that news media requests, particularly for interviews or technical information, are promptly addressed with accurate information and consistent messaging. It is essential that authorized spokespeople for the municipality employ best practices to ensure that the organization speaks with one voice and presents clear and concise information.

### **Proactive Media Relations**

Media releases, news conferences and media advisories will be issued and arranged by the Township spokesperson(s) in conjunction with the Mayor, and CAO. The spokesperson(s) will be responsible for issuing media releases about Council's activities, decisions, and plans. All staff is required to pass on important information to the spokesperson(s) which could be used as a basis for a press release.

### **Advertising**

The Township should concentrate its print media advertising efforts on three local sources: Midland Mirror, Parry Sound Beacon Star, and Parry Sound North. These newspapers have the highest readership in the community, and should be harnessed to advertise Township events, projects, and Council decisions.

Staff should also purchase advertising spots and where possible collaborate with story creation with the following entities: Municipal World, Muskoka Futures, Ports, SEGBAY Chamber of Commerce, Honey Harbour Hoots, Gazette, Environmental publications as well as association publications.

### **Crisis and Emergency Communications**

In cases of crisis and emergency, the Township's Community Emergency Response Plan details the protocol for emergency communications.

## **5. Bringing our Brand to Life**

Sustainable Balance can be brought forward when fiscally feasible to do. At present all business cards, tags on emails and branding for letterhead, press releases and memorandums use "Between a Rock and Nature's Beauty" This can be updated where possible at no cost to the Township with the same blue tree, and new wording that states Sustainable Balance.

## 6. Implementation

A key component to implementing communications will be timing and responsibility, below is a recommended list. This should be reviewed and confirmed by the CAO and Council before moving forward.

Method	Timing	Responsibility
<b>Internal Communications</b>		
Staff Meetings and Updates	Immediate	CAO/All Staff
Staff Newsletters	When needed	Sustainability Department
Senior Management/Director Meetings	Immediate	CAO/Directors
Council Updates	Immediate	CAO Directors
Community Feedback	On going	All staff with advisement direct concerns to CAO
Logo Standard Manual	Complete	Sustainability Department
<b>External Communications</b>		
Key Messages	Ongoing	All Staff Need to identify staff members responsible
Communications from Council to all Staff (Senior Staff)	Immediate	CAO
Website	Clerk	Clerk
Council Updates	Immediate	
Community Branding	As needed	Sustainability Department
Newsletter and Online Marketing	Immediate	Sustainability Department
Inserts in Tax Bill	Twice yearly	Finance and Sustainability
Social Media	Ongoing	Sustainability Department
Communication Boards	Ongoing	Sustainability Department
Out of Office Emails and Phone Messages	Ongoing	All staff
Media Relations	Ongoing	Township spokesperson
Advertising	As needed	Sustainability Department
Crisis and Emergency Communications	As needed	CAO
<b>Bringing our Brand to Life</b>		
Review community branding within the community: Banners, logos, community/highway signs.	Continuous	Sustainability Department