



SUSTAINABLE DUBUQUE

Climate Action Strategic Communication Plan for Adults 24+

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Situational Analysis

Through the 50% by 2030 Community Action and Resiliency Plan, the City of Dubuque aims to halve the community's greenhouse gas emissions to improve overall quality of life, promote public health, and identify where Dubuque greenhouse gas emissions are primarily produced. The plan functions as both a roadmap and a tool for transparency, designed to inform city officials during decision-making, inform community members on emission and cost-saving strategies, and identify the primary sources of local emissions.

Despite the clear goals and the involvement of some community advocates, the Sustainability Department faces significant challenges in extending its reach beyond this core group. We have identified a challenge in Sustainable Dubuque's current communication strategy on social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, which have yet to become effective tools for engaging a broader demographic of the local community. The department's head, Gina Bell, recognized the need to revamp Sustainable Dubuque's social media strategy to better inform and involve a wider community, especially adults over the age of 24 who are crucial to the plan's long-term success.

To address these issues, our group proposes a strategic overhaul of Sustainable Dubuque's approach to social media, aiming to transform its presence on social media to be more engaging and educational. This revamped strategy focuses on consistent, dynamic, and visually appealing content that educates and motivates the broader Dubuque community to participate in sustainability efforts. Through targeted social media posts outlined in our editorial calendar, our plan aims to significantly increase community awareness and participation in the Climate Action Plan, ensuring that Sustainable Dubuque's communication strategy actively contributes to achieving the goals set in the plan.

Organizational Analysis

Sustainable Dubuque has undertaken significant initiatives under the 50% by 2030 Community Climate Action and Resiliency Plan, aiming to enhance the quality of life in Dubuque through environmental sustainability. While the plan itself covers a wide range of strategies to reduce carbon emissions, Sustainable Dubuque has encountered persistent challenges in broadening its impact beyond a small group of environmental advocates.

The department has achieved success in specific projects such as its efforts in improving public transportation and promoting green infrastructure, which reflect a tangible commitment to sustainability. However, successes such as these have not been communicated to the wider community due to the underutilization of existing digital communication platforms. The existing social media strategy, characterized by infrequent activity and low engagement, has yet to capture a broader demographic of adults over the age of 24 who are influential in community and economic initiatives. For example, the tangible benefits of the improved public transportation system could illustrate the positive

impact of the Climate Action Plan and directly address concerns of the community through posts on social media.

Our revamped strategy is designed to increase the visibility of Sustainable Dubuque's efforts, highlighting opportunities for community involvement, sustainable practices that can be easily implemented at home, and facts related to sustainability. Our goal is to inspire community members to take active roles in sustainability efforts by transforming the current communication strategy to a tool that can be used for advocacy and education, directly contributing to the plan's goals and enhancing public perception of Sustainable Dubuque's role in bettering the community.

Targeted Publics

1. Dubuque residents that are uninformed/unengaged

We believe that the most important group to target among adults over 24 is Dubuque residents who are uninformed/unengaged about the city's Climate Action Plan. We were inspired to target this group after seeing negative comments on Sustainable Dubuque Facebook page regarding the plan's feasibility and assumed political affiliation. While we understand that specifically targeting those "anti" Sustainable Dubuque may not be worth the returns, we wish to better inform those who are on the fence. To reframe (or even initially frame) this group's understanding of the Climate Action Plan, we hope to promote sustainable activities as beneficial for all— not just a particular political party or ideology.

2. Young families in Dubuque

The second most important sector of those aged 24+ is young families in Dubuque. While we see messaging to Dubuque's youth population as largely important and key to the communication plan's success, it is equally as important to target the parents of Dubuque youth. These parents ultimately have the chance to grow (or diminish) their family's involvement in any youth-centered initiatives. For this reason, it is worth the time to properly message the Climate Action Plan to these parents that want to better understand the events/messages that their children are taking part in. These new families may be more receptive to new ideas and getting more involved in their community, much like recent college graduates. They may be willing to educate themselves on the Climate Action Plan and how it may coincide with their lifestyles— particularly with their children, finances, and professional careers.

3. Recent college graduates

We see the next most important targeted public among adults aged 24+ to be recent college graduates located in Dubuque, specifically those who have graduated within the last 2 to 4 years. As Dubuque is home to a handful of higher-education institutions, we hope to motivate recent graduates to call Dubuque home post-graduation. This group is at a pivotal stage in their lives, often still exploring their passions and interests. It is important

to note that this specific generation (Gen Z/Millennials) do not need to be swayed to believe the validity of climate change, but instead persuaded to act on behalf of their beliefs ([Pew Research Center](#)). By posing the Climate Action Plan as an opportunity for personal and community growth, we aim to capture their interest to stay involved in local sustainability initiatives. Additionally, providing a platform to gain personal and professional connections may be a draw.

4. Dubuque residents age 55+

The last demographic group we are choosing to target is Dubuque residents aged 55 years and older. Dubuque is currently rated as one of the best Midwest cities to retire, with 20% of Dubuque residents aged 65+ and older. By tapping into this population, Sustainable Dubuque can grasp a stable and large audience. However, this audience will require different means of communication and outreach than our other suggested audiences. Only 45% of those aged 65+ state that they utilize social media. Therefore, a communication suggestion may be to promote Sustainable Dubuque's Climate Plan via mailers, door-to-door conversations, and local events.

Key Messages

Sustainable Dubuque's targeted publics are the uninformed/unengaged, young families, recent college graduates, and 55+ Dubuque residents. Our editorial calendar addresses these publics and ensures the ease and importance of the Climate Action Plan.

Uninformed/Unengaged: Many people in Dubuque are not aware of the Sustainable Dubuque's Climate Action Plan. The first thing they should be made aware of is that participating in the plan is a money-saving initiative in terms of transportation costs and energy bills. It's important to emphasize that it's more beneficial for them to take part in local initiatives like Sustainable Dubuque rather than investing in big conglomerate companies who don't prioritize Dubuque's best interest: immediate change in our environment so we can preserve the city for future generations.

Young Families: Many young families don't know where to start when it comes to living "green" or saving costs in energy bills, so they need to be made aware of the ease of participating in the Climate Action Plan. They are most likely to see our posts on social media because of their age, so we will maintain a consistent social media presence with our "editorial calendar" posts that encourage them to make small and easy sustainable changes. Our overall message to them is that the Climate Action Plan is an inclusive opportunity for their family's involvement in meaningful community initiatives that will ultimately better Dubuque for their children and all families.

Recent College Graduates: This public is a great opportunity for participation in the Climate Action Plan and volunteering in Sustainable Dubuque events for their own career-building needs. Our message to them is that the Climate Action Plan addresses the world's dire need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and as young graduates, they can be a part of

real change in their city's energy use, and they have an opportunity to network with community members to form strong connections for their budding careers.

55+ Dubuque Residents: With our social media posts, we aim to target their nostalgia by talking about restoration and embracing tradition. Dubuque has been making great and noticeable strides to be sustainable in the past few years, and we need to highlight that fact and encourage continuing to honor the initiatives proposed in Sustainable Dubuque's Climate Action Plan. Another message for this public is that local initiatives will ultimately preserve Dubuque for future generations. We want them to know that small work now will snowball into big changes for your children and grandchildren, therefore making (and maintaining) Dubuque a good place to live and raise a family.

Goals, Objectives, and Tactics

The Sustainability Department has set ambitious goals to increase public awareness of its mission and help the city meet its emission-reduction targets. The focus is on reaching residents aged 24 and older, ensuring they understand the department's objectives and the city's commitment to reducing emissions.

To achieve this, the department will rely heavily on newsletters and blogs. These tools will be central to the communication strategy, allowing the department to inform Dubuque residents about ongoing sustainability initiatives and underscore the department's mission. The primary goal is to create a consistent communication channel that reaches the desired demographic.

Newsletters will be sent via email and posted on websites, as this approach is more environmentally friendly and lowers the department's carbon footprint. This digital strategy also ensures effective communication across all adult age groups, aligning with the overall sustainability objectives.

For website postings and blogs, the department aims to create a dedicated section on its site for informative content. This is intended to engage a younger demographic, specifically those aged 25 to 60. According to research by the Pew Research Center, 98% of people within this age group use the internet regularly, suggesting that a focused online presence will be effective in reaching them.

Internally, the department recognizes the need for improved communication to foster a more knowledgeable and engaged community. The goal is to enhance internal communication within the department and across other city departments to ensure coordinated efforts toward common sustainability objectives.

To accomplish this, the department plans to implement an editorial calendar to streamline the process for social media and blog posts. This structured approach is expected to facilitate more consistent messaging and communication. Additionally, to strengthen

interdepartmental communication, the department intends to bridge gaps between key personnel, such as Gina and Randy, and improve connectivity with other city departments. Tools like Slack and internal intranets will be explored to resolve communication issues and foster better collaboration. These steps are designed to create a cohesive environment where the Sustainability Department and other departments work together effectively to achieve the city's sustainability goals.