



VIC TRACE
RESERVOIR
REPLACEMENT PROJECT
City of Santa Barbara

Strategic Communication Plan



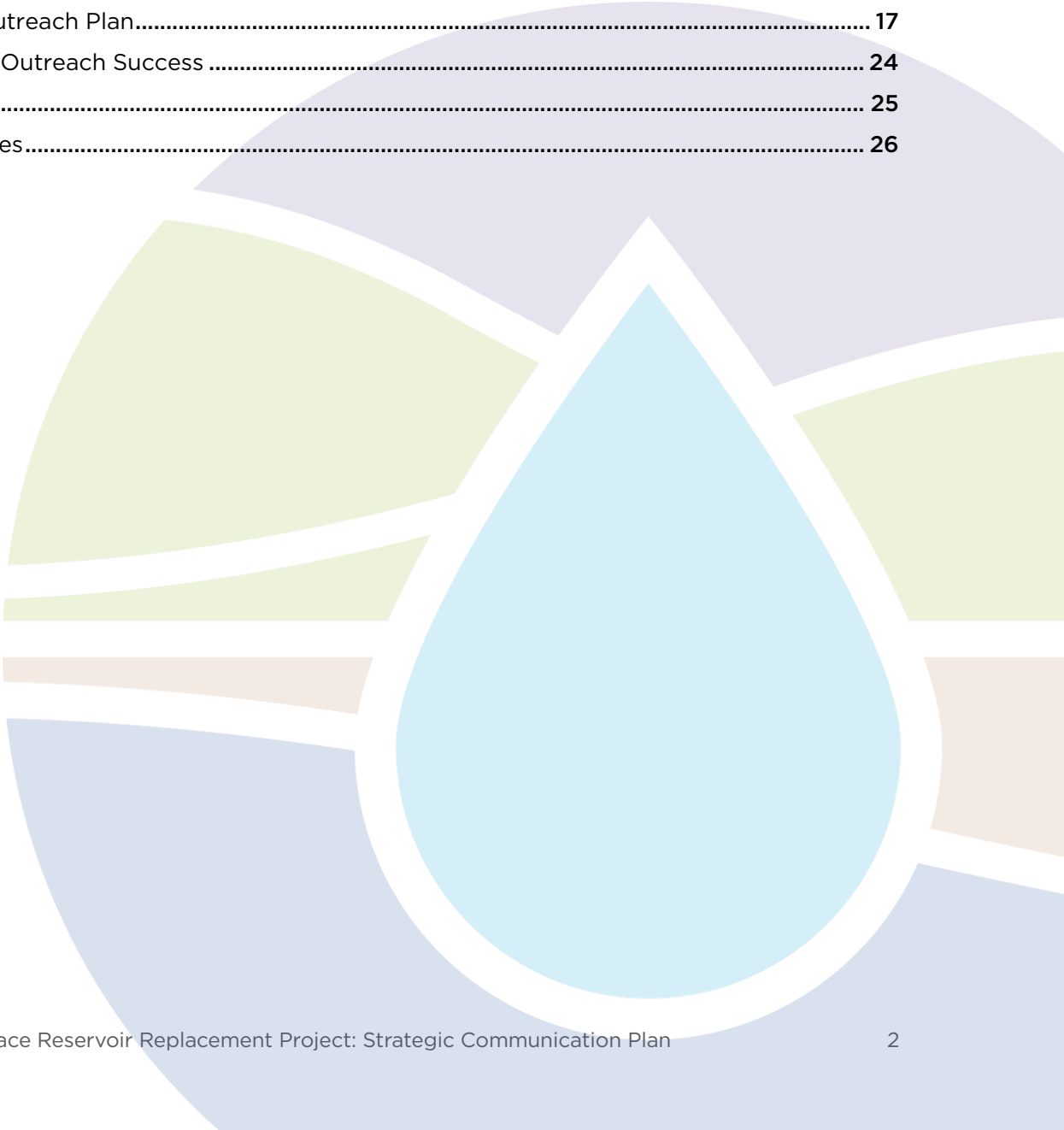
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Table of Contents

- 1. Project Background.....3
- 2. Research Overview.....3
- 3. Purpose of Strategic Communication Plan4
- 4. Project Timeline and Key Milestones.....5
- 5. Communication and Outreach Goals.....6
- 6. Key Stakeholders and Audience Groups7
- 7. Key Message Platform and Main Themes9
- 8. Communication Materials.....9
- 9. Communication Channels 15
- 10. Project Outreach Plan..... 17
- 11. Measuring Outreach Success 24
- 12. Closing..... 25
- 13. Appendices..... 26



1. Project Background

The City of Santa Barbara’s existing Vic Trace Drinking Water Reservoir is a cornerstone of the City’s water delivery system - providing water to nearly 70 percent (60,000 people) of Santa Barbara. At almost 80 years old, the reservoir is nearing the end of its useful life, requiring constant repair and increasing risk of failure. The reservoir needs to be replaced, and the City’s Public Works Department, Water Resources Division is implementing this critical Project. The reservoir was originally constructed starting in 1952 as a partially buried, 10-million-gallon concrete reservoir covering nearly two acres and is used to store and deliver treated drinking water, making it the single largest City reservoir. Located in the Alta Mesa neighborhood on approximately 15 acres of City-owned property, the reservoir serves as a vital component of the City’s water delivery system.

Past condition assessments recommended Vic Trace Reservoir for replacement due to its age, increasing repair needs, and importance to the City’s overall water storage portfolio. The Vic Trace Reservoir Replacement Project (Project) will include design and construction of one or more new buried reservoir(s) at the same total storage capacity and include evaluation of repair needs of nearby pipelines, valves, and pump stations. Along with providing significant improvements to water operations, this upgraded water storage reservoir will have improved resiliency to natural disasters and climate change, improved configuration for better water quality and more efficient operations as well as enhanced security. The City of Santa Barbara is committed to investing in its water infrastructure, including aging facilities like Vic Trace Reservoir, to ensure a safe, resilient water system for the community now and in the future.

2. Research Overview

Data and Qualitative Research Informing Strategic Communication Plan



Figure 1. Vic Trace Data and Qualitative Research Informing Strategic Communication Plan



A range of research and data gathering was performed by the City's outreach consultant, Katz and Associates, during this initial phase of work (full summaries of these activities are included in the Appendices).

1. An informative **Project Kick Off Workshop (Appendix A)** was held December 12, 2023 with key City team members. The workshop included an in-depth discussion about key stakeholders and audiences, resulting in a detailed, categorized list of potential candidates for stakeholder discussions for additional research and refinement. There was a robust discussion and evaluation of the Project's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats from various perspectives at the City, which helped guide the development of the approach for communication and outreach on the Project.
2. The **Demographic Review (Appendix B)** assisted the team in identifying the major characteristics of the Alta Mesa Neighborhood to inform the outreach approach moving forward, with a focus towards future construction activities. This included reinforcing the importance of ensuring all materials are available in Spanish in addition to English, as well as proactive communication with the three schools in the area.
3. The **Material Audit (Appendix C)** included a review of the City's existing communications materials and channels for sharing Project information with the public. This highlighted the opportunity to build out base Project information using consistent key messages and overarching themes, in addition to sharing up-to-date schedule information on various communication tools moving forward.
4. The **Branding Process (Appendix E)** comprised of two workshops with City staff, a survey and Creative Brief to capture feedback that resulted in establishing a brand and logo that reflects the importance of the Project and is easily recognizable throughout the life of the Project.
5. The five one-on-one virtual **Stakeholder Discussions (Appendix F)** with a range of stakeholders provided valuable insight into the desire for more information about the Project and schedule, as well as a lack of knowledge (from most) about the current reservoir's location and key role in the water system. All participants had questions and/or concerns about how the Project will be funded and if the City will seek state or federal funding to help minimize the impact on rates for City customers. There was a focus on what the Project's construction impacts will be and the importance of keeping stakeholders informed every step of the way. Some participants shared outreach tools that can be utilized by the City, including opportunities to use existing email lists and newsletters from various community organizations to broaden the City's reach. Much of the qualitative feedback from these discussions has been folded into this Plan and will be directly applied to the development of the Project materials, including the fact sheet and FAQ.

3. Purpose of Strategic Communication Plan

The primary purpose of this Strategic Communication Plan (Plan) is to provide a comprehensive, coordinated approach to communication and public outreach throughout all phases of the Project. The strategies and tactics described here will be implemented during the planning and preliminary design, environmental review, pre-construction and construction phases to ensure consistent and proactive outreach to all stakeholders, and to ultimately prepare them for potential impacts while keeping them informed.

The Plan serves as a road map for engaging with key stakeholders and external audiences including elected officials, civic and business leaders, community and industry groups, environmental organizations and NGOs, media, area residents and interested members of the public. This Project will garner varied levels of stakeholder interest and inquiries, and this Plan



is intended to prepare the Project team in advance for appropriate stakeholder outreach and engagement.

The City’s outreach consultant will be the lead in maintaining and updating this Plan and in public participation and outreach implementation. Project team members, including City and consultant representatives, will be involved in various aspects of communication strategy planning and tactical implementation, and references are made throughout this Plan to roles and responsibilities where possible.

4. Project Timeline and Key Milestones

Vic Trace Reservoir Replacement Project - Outreach Timeline



Figure 2. Vic Trace Reservoir Replacement Project Outreach Timeline

With the understanding that construction projects are dynamic and schedules are susceptible to change, this Plan is intended to be a flexible document that adjusts to the Project’s schedule. While there are timing recommendations for certain outreach activities within this Plan, those activities will be adjusted as needed should the Project schedule change. Outlined above in Figure 2 is a timeline for expected outreach activities throughout the life of the Project, based on the current schedule.



5. Communication and Outreach Goals

The objective of communication and outreach for the Vic Trace Reservoir Replacement Project is to **support the successful execution of the reservoir replacement** throughout the design, environmental, pre-construction and construction phases.

Design Phase (Summer 2024 through Spring 2027)

During the design phase, outreach will be focused on facilitating opportunities for the public to provide feedback on the design of the Project (once the parameters are set by the team), and to keep the public informed on the progress each step of the way, including design presentations at City meetings and community workshops. It is also important to educate stakeholders about the purpose, benefits, and likely construction impacts of the Project during this phase at every chance possible. The outreach team will provide support at design community workshops. Once design feedback is received, outreach will be re-focused on soliciting the neighborhood's construction mitigation feedback and preferences. To the extent feasible, these will be incorporated into the final bid package for implementation by the contractor. Lastly, the outreach team will support the City in conducting initial outreach to potential bidders to ensure they are aware of the Project and can find up-to-date information on it.

Environmental Phase (Winter 2025 through Summer 2026)

During the environmental phase (in parallel to the design phase), outreach will be focused on supporting the preparation of the Project's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and environmental community meetings as necessary. Specifically, to:

1. Maintain an open and transparent process
2. Communicate accurate, easily understood information about the Project, the environmental review process, and comment opportunities
3. Facilitate the intent of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for providing opportunities for interested members of the public to comment on the issues, mitigation measures, and alternatives to be considered in the EIR
4. Support City staff and the City's environmental consultant

Pre-Construction Phase (Spring 2026 through 2027)

During the pre-construction phase (between final design and onsite construction), communication and outreach will be focused on preparing the public and the adjacent Project neighbors for the anticipated impacts of the Project during construction, and reinforcing the benefits, purpose and need for the Project. The outreach team will also be available to meet with the City, and its selected contractor to collaborate on construction-phase outreach planning.

Construction Phase (Spring 2028 through 2031)

During the construction phase, outreach will be focused on proactively informing stakeholders of the Project's progress, including plans, schedules, potential impacts, mitigation measures, and what to expect during each phase of construction while continuing to reinforce the purpose and need for the Project. The outreach team will also respond to questions and concerns ensure access to up-to-date Project information and responsive contact methods.



6. Key Stakeholders and Audience Groups

Public perception is largely shaped by a relatively small number of opinion leaders – those who are knowledgeable, influential and motivated. Yet, there are myriad audiences who have varying levels of interest in the Project: some who will be impacted by construction and some who can potentially influence it. Understanding the stakeholders for this Project will be important to ensuring meaningful communication. Based on the research and data gathering completed to date, we know there is a wide range of stakeholders who are interested in the Project and will potentially be impacted by it. In general, stakeholders will include residents, property owners, businesses, community organizations, churches, schools, elected officials, motorists, non-government organizations and the general public. Additional research will be conducted to include key contacts from these organizations listed below in the Stakeholder Database (to be developed in Phase 2).

Internal

- City Staff
 - Public Works
 - Sustainability and Resilience
 - Parks and Recreation
 - Community Development
 - IT Department (representing fire and police comms needs)

Council-Appointed Community Members

- Water Commission
- Neighborhood Advisory Commission
- Youth Council
- Planning Commission
- SB Urban Water Management Plan Stakeholder Group (Water Vision 2050)

Key Elected Officials

- Mayor of Santa Barbara, Randy Rowse
- Santa Barbara City Council
 1. Alejandra Gutierrez, Councilmember, District 1 (term through Dec. 2024)
 2. Mike Jordan, Councilmember, District 2 (term through Dec. 2024, Mesa District)
 3. Oscar Gutierrez, Councilmember, District 3 (term through Dec. 2024)
 4. Kristen Sneddon, Councilmember, District 4, Water Commission Liaison (term through Dec. 2026)
 5. Eric Friedman, Councilmember, District 5 (term through Dec. 2026)
 6. Meagan Harmon, Councilmember, District 6 (term through Dec. 2026)

Public Institutions and Agencies

- Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce
- Santa Barbara County Taxpayer Association
- Santa Barbara Radio Club
- Third Party Telecommunications
- Native American Tribes
- Chumash Tribe
- Schools
 - Santa Barbara City College
 - Santa Barbara Unified School District (3 schools near Project area):
 - Washington Elementary School
 - Monroe Elementary School



- McKinley Elementary School
- Daycare/preschools
- Conscious Kids Preschool

Local Media

- TV
 - KEYT-KKFX-KCOY, ABC, FOX, and CBS
 - Telemundo (Spanish)
 - KSBY-NBC
- Digital
 - Noozhawk
 - Edhat
 - Santa Barbara Independent
 - SB City College newspaper
- Print
 - Mesa Magazine
 - SB City College newspaper
- Radio
 - Local Spanish Radio Channels (Radio Lacer, Radio Bronco, La Musical)
 - 107.7 KIST FM
 - 90.3 KMRO
- Social Media
 - NextDoor
 - Facebook
 - Instagram

Non-Profits and Local Organizations

- Santa Barbara Association of Realtors
- Community Organizations
 - Our Mesa Neighborhood Inc. (OMNI)
 - Santa Barbara Foundation
 - Allied Improvement Association
- Environmental Groups
 - Community Environmental Council (CEC)
- Hispanic Groups
 - Santa Barbara Public Library Spanish Outreach Team
 - Greater Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of SB
- Churches
 - Holy Cross Church
 - Free Methodist Church
- Nearby parks/gardens
 - Mesa Harmony Garden
 - La Coronilla Park
 - Honda Valley Park
- Local Community Clubs
 - Greater Goleta Santa Barbara Lions Club
 - Rotary Club of Santa Barbara

Neighborhood and Public

- Neighbors in Alta Mesa & East Alta Mesa (91309)



7. Key Message Platform and Main Themes

Key messages are not talking points but are rather themes around core elements of communication and action that will be woven throughout communication efforts moving forward. Once established, these messages will be used to inform the development and content of informational materials, presentations, visuals, and other communication platforms as well as for media relations and social media channels. These messages will serve as a foundation for all communications throughout the Project and will be tailored to ensure consistency and resonance across varied audiences. Project themes are outlined below:

Overarching Theme: Replacing Aging Infrastructure, Investing for Today and Tomorrow

Theme 1: Critical Investment for Affordability, Safety and Resiliency

Key Message: The City of Santa Barbara is committed to investing in its water infrastructure, including aging facilities like Vic Trace Reservoir, to ensure a safe, resilient water delivery system for customers now and in the future.

Theme 2: Purpose and Need

Key Message: Vic Trace Reservoir is a cornerstone of the City's water delivery system - providing water to nearly 70 percent of Santa Barbara customers (60,000). At almost 80 years old, the reservoir is nearing the end of its useful life, requiring constant repair, and increasing risk of failure. The time to replace the reservoir is now.

Theme 3: Project Benefits

Key Message: Along with providing significant improvements to water operations for all of Santa Barbara, this upgraded water storage reservoir will also include improved efficiency with new, updated technology, additional landscaping and security, as well as innovative and sustainable features.

Theme 4: Close Coordination and Robust Communication

Key Message: The City is committed to minimizing construction impacts to residents and nearby businesses and will continue to coordinate closely with all stakeholders throughout the design and construction phases of the Project.

8. Communication Materials

Based on the general lack of knowledge from stakeholders about the Project discovered during the research phase, there is an opportunity to build out base Project information using consistent key messages and overarching themes, as well as up-to-date schedule information to share through various communication tools. Findings from stakeholders included a need to better understand the reservoir's current location and its critical purpose within the City's water system as well as a strong interest in more information about the plans for the Project. Informational materials and tools will be tailored for different audiences to address specific concerns and information needs. These materials will provide objective, general information about the Project, and will be written and illustrated using understandable terminology and images for the layperson. All materials will be brief and visually appealing. All informational materials will be reviewed for cultural sensitivity and appropriateness, translated into Spanish and distributed in print and electronic formats to reach diverse audiences.



A list of planned Project materials is summarized in the table below, and further detailed in this section:

Communication Materials (to be developed)	
Material	Recommended Timing
1. Project Fact Sheet	By first Community Workshop (Spring 2025)
2. Project Timeline Graphic	By first Community Workshop (Spring 2025)
3. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)	By first Community Workshop (Spring 2025)
4. Project Overview Video	30-60% Design phase
5. Slide Presentation Template	By first Community Workshop (Spring 2025)
6. City Project Website	Continuous
7. Stakeholder Database	Built in Fall 2024, updated continuously
8. Site Project Signage	Pre-Construction Phase
9. Onsite Camera	Include in Bid Documents, Construction Phase
10. Existing Channels	Continuous
11. Project Information Phone and Email Address	During Design Phase
12. Stakeholder Contact Tracking Log	Continuous
13. Weekly City Newsletter (CNIB)	Continuous
14. Quarterly Water Resources Newsletter	Continuous
15. Email Notices	Template by Winter 2025, Continuous
16. Existing Community Email Lists	Continuous
17. Content for Community Newsletters	Continuous
18. Direct Mail	Continuous
19. Social Media	Continuous
20. Local Media	Continuous
21. Optional: Text Message Platform	Continuous

1. Project Fact Sheet

A Project fact sheet will be developed and made available on the website and available for printing if needed. The fact sheet will be an 8.5 x 11-inch color double-sided document. It will include information on Vic Trace Reservoir, its importance in providing water for the City, why these repairs are needed, and a Project schedule. The fact sheet will include various graphics including a site schematic, map, and overview timeline. It will also include a QR code that links directly to the City’s Vic Trace webpage. The City will coordinate all printing and translation of all Project materials.

Recommended Timing: Develop initial fact sheet ahead of the first design community workshop, expected in spring 2025. The fact sheet will be provided at the initial public workshop and will continue to be updated as Project schedule and design become finalized.

2. Project Timeline Graphic

A Project timeline graphic will be developed and graphically designed to show the Project’s key milestones as it moves forward through design and environmental phases up until construction. This graphic will be used on informational materials, the website, in presentations, and at events, as needed.



Recommended Timing: Develop the timeline prior to the initial design workshop and update as needed.

3. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The outreach team will draft Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) available electronically on the City's Vic Trace webpage to respond to common questions about the reservoir and construction impacts. Based on information gathered from stakeholders so far, questions related to construction impacts, Project funding, impact on customer rates, design, environmental considerations, and schedule will be important to include. Key questions will be highlighted on the Project fact sheet and in the Project video.

Recommended Timing: Develop initial list of FAQs prior to first design workshop or first EIR public meeting and update as needed.

4. Project Overview Video

A short introductory video will be developed to introduce the Project and plans to replace the existing reservoir. Ideally at least one City team member will be featured in the video explaining key details, benefits, overview timeline and other key elements. Visuals, including some drone footage of the existing reservoir, photos, and design renderings will be used to show the Project site to stakeholders (most of whom have never seen the site before). This video can be posted on the Project website and social media as well as shared as a link in email updates to stakeholders from the City and in community newsletters. Video content can continue to be used for graphics for future media.

Recommended Timing: Upon completion of design renderings and after first community workshop (estimated to be 30-60% design phase).

5. Slide Presentation Template

A designed, template slide (PowerPoint) presentation, using the Project branding and logo, will be developed for use at a future update to the City's Water Commission, City Council, potential briefings with elected officials, key stakeholders, and/or the public if needed. The content and design will be similar to the rest of the informational materials developed for this program and will follow City public presentation standards. The presentation could also be used during some outreach efforts related to the design and environmental phases of the Project.

Recommended Timing: Develop template prior to the first community design workshop and in advance of any City public meetings and/or updates to the City's Water Commission.

6. City Project Website

The Vic Trace Reservoir website (<https://santabarbaraca.gov/VicTrace>) currently has limited information in English and Spanish about the Project, its benefits, and videos of previous public meetings. The outreach team will be responsible for coordinating with City staff to implement content edits on the webpage, as needed. The website address will also be printed on all informational materials and will be a go-to information resource for stakeholders.

Recommended Timing: The website will be updated regularly when there are updates to share related to design, environmental process, public meetings, and information leading up to the start of construction.

7. Stakeholder Database

A robust stakeholder database will be built utilizing research discovered during the Stakeholder discussions. It will be maintained to record contact information for impacted stakeholders located within or adjacent to the Project area and beyond. The database will



include postal mailing addresses and email addresses to achieve both mail and electronic communications. Email addresses will continue to be gathered and consolidated through Project meetings and one-on-one contact, as well as through email signups on the Project website and through the City's website.

Recommended Timing: This comprehensive stakeholder database should be built in fall 2024/early 2025, so it is ready when needed.

8. Site Project Signage

Signs will be developed and placed at the entrance to the Project site (and any future strategic locations to be determined) to communicate key Project information to passersby. The signs will include the website URL, information line, and a QR code to direct people to the Project webpage. Signs will be printed on sturdy material (wooden backing is preferred) and mounted on wooden posts. The preferred size for the sign is eight feet long by six feet tall to ensure it is visible. The Project branding and logo will also be utilized on the sign. General timeline information will also be included to allow for any schedule changes. Depending on other funding sources for the Project there may be additional signage as the Project moves forward.

Recommended Timing: The content and design for the signage will be completed during the design phase (exact timing to be determined by the Project team) and posted at the site.

9. Onsite Construction Camera

A camera can be set up on the construction site, in a strategic location, for use by City staff and the outreach team for developing outreach materials. The footage can be gathered and used to make short timelapse videos set to music throughout the various phases of the Project. These can easily be used for social media and other communications materials to show the construction progress on site. The City may consider requiring the selected contractor to install, host and maintain this camera, similar to what has been done on other City projects.

Recommended Timing: Ensure research on type and system along with the City's preferred option is complete prior to the bidding documents being finalized. The camera should be set up prior to the start of construction and will require power and an internet connection.

10. Existing Channels

Currently, there are several ways stakeholders can proactively sign up to receive Project information. The City has a contact form on the Project website for stakeholders to subscribe for Project updates that can be exported as needed for sharing updates. In addition, on the City's website or using this link (<https://santabarbaraca.gov/subscribe>), Santa Barbara residents or anyone can sign up for the CNIB newsletter as well as subscribe to specific newsletters, board and commission updates as well. Currently, there is a list of Projects and Vic Trace Reservoir Replacement is an option there as well.

Recommended Timing: Continuous

11. Project Information Phone and Email Address

Currently, the primary means of correspondence between the Project and the public is via the Project Manager's phone number and email address. Though some individuals may choose not to use internet-based means of contact like email or the website form, it's safe to assume that a phone call is feasible for most of the public. The City has set up a Project email address that can be accessed by multiple team members, but it is recommended that a general Project phone number be set up as well. The program information line phone number, email and the website address will be printed on all informational materials. For inquiries received



through City channels, the outreach team will provide an initial response within one business day. It is likely, however, that some inquiries will continue to come through various team members from Public Works or City customer service centers. In such cases, the outreach team will coordinate with City staff to ensure customer service representatives and other departments have up-to-date contact information and some general Project information.

Recommended Timing: These communications channels should be established early on during the design of the Project, so that residents may contact the outreach team with questions at any point throughout the Project.

12. Stakeholder Contact Tracking Log

As inquiries are received or contact is made with stakeholders via the program information phoneline or email address, and/or in the field, details about the inquiry/ contact will be added to the contact tracking log. The contact tracking log will ideally be housed in Smartsheet (<https://www.smartsheet.com>) or a similar online system to ensure centrally located, real-time access for City staff and the outreach team. The spreadsheet can be downloaded to Excel, as needed. A Microsoft Teams project could also be set up to ensure sharable files among the Project team.

Recommended Timing: This log was started as an Excel document by the Project team and will be updated regularly as public inquiries about the Project are received. The log will continue to be maintained throughout the entire life of the Project.

13. Weekly City Newsletter (CNIB)

The outreach team will utilize the City's weekly newsletter, City News in Brief (CNIB, distributed on Mondays) to introduce the Project to the community, share updates and promote future design workshops and community meetings. The newsletter articles will include relevant visuals and FAQs, including how people can get in touch with the Project team and if they have questions. Additionally, content will include the link to the Vic Trace Project webpage.

Recommended Timing: During the Environmental, Design and Pre-construction phases, include articles in the newsletter, as needed. During construction, include articles in the City's newsletter at Project milestones or in advance of potential construction impacts.

14. Quarterly Water Resources Newsletter

The outreach team will utilize the Water Resources Division's quarterly newsletter throughout the Project's lifecycle to share information such as purpose and need, potential impacts, and public involvement opportunities. The newsletter article will include relevant visuals and links to the Vic Trace landing page on the City's website.

Recommended Timing: Include content in the quarterly newsletter once the Project team is prepared to begin sharing updates. Updates can include photos and graphics, as well as written content.

15. Email Notices

Project email notices will provide those subscribed to the Project with the latest information on Project milestones and related images/visuals. Emails will include Project branding to allow for a cohesive look across all materials and will be sent out using the City's existing Constant Contact system. Email notices, especially as the Project ramps up to construction, can be efficient for the stakeholders who need regular Project information, but who may not be in the immediate geographic area of the Projects. These may include local elected officials, Public Works Department, Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District (MTD), Caltrans, SoCal Gas, U.S. Postal Service, FedEx and UPS, waste management services and commercial waste



haulers (trash and recycling) and event organizers. Click-through counts from the email notices will be analyzed for reach and engagement. It is anticipated that not all stakeholders are reachable via an email address. As such, notifications will also be distributed via other methods described in this plan.

Recommended Timing: The template for these emails should be built in the design phase, ideally in Winter 2025, to use it to share the invitation via email for the design workshops and other updates.

16. Existing Community Email Lists

Through initial stakeholder discussions, several groups confirmed they would share Project information from the City with their members through various established email lists, including through Greater Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Alta Mesa neighborhood group and Councilmember Mike Jordan. It will be important to continue to explore if other existing email lists will be available to the City as the Project moves forward.

Recommended Timing: Share updates at key milestones throughout all phases of the Project.

17. Content for Community Newsletters

Based on feedback from stakeholders, the City will also utilize existing newsletters from various community organizations to expand its reach in sending updates to interested stakeholders. Content and articles as well as photos and visuals can be developed and shared with the following groups for inclusion in future newsletters:

- Councilmember Mike Jordan
- OMNI Group (soon to encompass the Mesa Business Association contacts)
- Mesa Magazine

Recommended Timing: Share updates at key milestones throughout all phases of the Project.

18. Direct Mail

Direct mail will be utilized as needed and can be particularly useful for reaching larger geographic areas about specific, significant work milestones. It is important to note that some stakeholders are not active online or do not check email often; mailers will ensure we can connect to those with less access to digital content. Project-specific stakeholder databases will be used for the mailings to ensure targeted distribution. Pre-construction letters will be mailed to stakeholders for the Project and postcard mailers will be utilized during construction to direct stakeholders to the Project website and alert them to changes in Project status and onsite work.

Recommended Timing: Send direct mail to invite stakeholders to public meetings and share important updates during Environmental, Design and Pre-construction phases. We recommend sending direct mail in advance of construction starting to the Project boundary identified in the Demographics Review document in Appendix B.

19. Social Media

The City's network of social media handles including the City's main account ("CityofSB"), will be used to provide up-to-date information on the progress of replacing Vic Trace Reservoir and other relevant topics. The recommended approach includes the outreach team developing a calendar of content and visuals for posts each month that can be adapted for the various channels including Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and NextDoor. The outreach team would coordinate with the City staff to post and share on the appropriate channels. By posting regularly about the Project and its milestones, the City will develop a consistent voice and hopefully encourage community members to be involved in the construction process



when possible. Content will be provided on a one-month lookahead calendar. The outreach team will determine which social media handles will be published on all informational materials. Social media networks will also be monitored for communications about the Project, and the City’s existing protocol for social media comment response and engagement will be followed.

Recommended Timing: During the Environmental, Design and Pre-construction phases, social media posts will be coordinated as needed. Content will include invitations to the public to attend stakeholder meetings along with general project updates. During construction, social media posts will be coordinated in advance of significant impacts to traffic, loud construction activities or as milestones are reached.

20. Local Media

The local media will be valuable in communicating the need for the Project early, as well as communicating milestones, public involvement opportunities, and potential impacts. Identifying opportunities to show the Project’s progress can help build trust with the media and contribute to balanced media coverage.

Recommended Timing: Share key milestones during design and environmental phases of the Project through media releases. Traffic advisories will be developed on an as-needed basis for new road closures and detours, as well as any other milestones like changes in workdays/hours.

21. Optional: Text Message Platform

Almost all adults (97 percent) own a cell phone and use it daily. Since text messaging is an extremely common form of communication, we recommend establishing a text messaging platform as an additional form of one-way communication to provide Project updates to residents who choose to subscribe to the service. This way, real time Project information can be shared in an informal and concise way with a large audience. Text messaging is a more effective way of sharing specific small scale project updates, such as material delivery, rather than typing and formatting a full email. For example: “There will be a concrete truck delivering to the site Monday, Wednesday, and Friday this week between 8 a.m.-10 a.m.” Upon initial review, there are several potential service providers including Textedly, EZ Text, Text-em-all, and True Dialog. The City’s “City Connect” app could also be used for this type of information sharing and communication to centralize inquiries and coordinate responses in a timely manner but further coordination with the City is needed to evaluate its functionality and potential use.

Recommended Timing: Use as needed during all phases, when inquiries come in. Evaluate use of the City’s Connect app prior to construction, if appropriate.

9. Communication Channels

The demographic review research and the initial stakeholder discussions yielded various communication channels the City could leverage for more targeted outreach efforts, including school outreach, business visits, pop-up events, community and small group meetings. These are not necessarily events or meetings hosted by the City, but they could be attended by the City and/or where the City would be a presenter at an existing event or function. These channels and the recommended timing are described below.

1. School Outreach

The Demographic Review findings indicated that approximately 14 percent of the population near the Project site is of school age (younger than 18 years). It is recommended outreach be coordinated with nearby schools for coordination during the Project’s construction phase.



There is potential for the Project's construction activities to require coordination with the schools' operations, specifically during arrival and dismissal times, and during special events or school gatherings. Outreach to the three nearby elementary schools via email or phone call can be conducted initially to the school's administrators to identify the correct point of contact and to add them to the stakeholder database.

Recommended Timing: It will be important to understand some of the constraints related to construction and truck routes early on during the design phase. The Project and outreach teams will invite and encourage a school representative to participate in the design workshop to provide input and ask questions. Before the project begins construction, a meeting with the schools will be offered, either individually or as a group, to discuss the project in detail and solicit any feedback. During construction, it will be imperative to communicate any expected impacts to the schools in advance.

2. Business Visits

"Business visits" refer to in-person visits to businesses near Project sites to communicate Project information to the manager or owner and gather information about business operations that can assist with advancing the Project. These visits can solicit the business's communication preferences, business and customer peak traffic and circulation, and/or unique aspects to business operations that could be impacted by the Project. The business district below the Project site at Cliff Drive includes groceries and convenience stores, emergency services, restaurants, Mesa Cafe & Bar (a favorite local spot), other businesses and several places of worship. This outreach could be in the form of meetings with certain businesses or stakeholders, or as simple as providing Project information, such as a fact sheet or flier, that can be left behind. Oftentimes the business may be willing to post Project information or distribute copies of fact sheets or notices for customers or employees to take. Business visits help ensure the business receives Project information directly and helps to facilitate Project inquiries and proactively identify scheduling issues. Business visits should also include specific communication with those businesses who could experience business loss due to road closures or heavy traffic during construction. The City team can coordinate and facilitate support through existing programs focused on business interruptions, claims and marketing support.

Recommended Timing: These business visits will occur in the pre-construction phase, but they will be invited to the design workshop to learn more about the Project and provide input.

3. Pop-up or Booth Outreach

"Pop-up outreach" refers to in-person visits to locations near the construction site and/or around the City to communicate Project information to residents and stakeholders in a more casual "meet them where they are" method. Pop-up outreach could include a table set up near a busy community thoroughfare, at a local park, shopping center, school parking lot or in a popular community gathering place, and coffee or other refreshments could be provided. Based on initial research, a few potential locations are within the Mesa Shopping Center on Cliff Drive that houses a grocery store and various eateries or near the Rose Cafe and Fire Station No. 6. (potentially in coordination with a community event at the Fire Station if timing works) on Cliff Drive as well. This is a grassroots approach to engagement and in certain communities, is highly effective. A series of pop-up outreach events can be held near local activity centers and/or at community gatherings to expand community outreach opportunities to people who typically do not participate in or are unable to attend formal community workshops. Pop-ups can take various forms but often entail setting up an informational booth that may include informal surveying or interactive activities such as games. In addition to collecting input from people who might not ordinarily participate, this type of outreach is important for publicizing the program website, expanding the stakeholder



contact database, and generating activity on the online forum. In conjunction with City staff, the outreach team will coordinate all related logistics, provide staff members to conduct outreach, and provide all informational handouts and outreach materials.

Recommended Timing: As needed during public engagement periods before construction starts.

4. Small Group Meetings

In some circumstances, it may make sense to have small group meetings with stakeholders to discuss specific issues or concerns. Often, these meetings are held at a stakeholder's home or business. Materials, such as a fact sheet or FAQ, may be provided during these small group meetings. Summaries from small group and one-on-one meetings should be developed and saved as part of a specific Project's records. For this Project, it may be appropriate to host an Alta Mesa neighbor-specific meeting prior to construction activities.

Recommended Timing: To be determined based on the feedback received from stakeholders as the Project moves forward.

5. City-Hosted Community Meetings and Open Houses

Prior to commencing various phases of the Project, a City-hosted virtual and/or an in-person community meeting will be held at a strategic location near the construction site or route. The meeting's objective is to inform the community about the Project, the specific phase, upcoming construction, and to answer questions. Presentations and other materials will be made available online following the meeting for stakeholders to reference later. Typically, the City offers both an online webinar and an in-person community meeting for those who cannot attend in-person. Additional follow-up with stakeholders will be performed to ensure the meeting occurs on a day and at a time to maximize attendance.

Example and Recommended Meeting Format: Meeting formats will include a brief Project presentation followed by an open house format meeting with information stations arranged around the room by topic. The information stations will feature poster displays related to design, construction, maps, and Project fact sheets, renderings, and other photos/visuals as available. The poster stations format will allow attendees to ask questions and converse one-on-one with the Project team and allow for community members to come-and-go as needed.

Meeting Locations: Venues should provide ample room for a presentation style setup and poster stations. Venues, to the extent possible, should: provide free parking, be ADA-compliant, ideally accessible via public transportation, and have sufficient lighting. The Monroe Elementary School, Free Methodist Church and the Holy Cross Church near Cliff Drive have been used for public meetings in the past and provide a good starting point for planning purposes.

Recommended Timing: To be determined as the Project moves forward with one planned near-term for spring 2025. This first community workshop will focus on preliminary design feedback.

10. Project Outreach Plan

During planning discussions with stakeholders, many were pleased to learn that as of summer 2024, the design for the Project had just begun. There was a general interest in learning more about the planning efforts and the components of the Project as design moves forward. The recommended opportunities for public participation are broken down by internal and external, and may vary throughout the Design, Environmental, and Pre-construction phases of the Project. There may be public participation opportunities where gathering community input for public comments is valuable, and there may be other phases, such as during



construction, where outreach will be conducted to inform the community about anticipated impacts, even though there will be limited opportunities for input.

The plan and recommendations for each phase of the work is summarized in the table below and further detailed in this section:

	Phase	Timing	Summary of Recommended Activities/Deliverables
1	Design	Summer 2024 - Spring 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Discussions • Preliminary Design Workshop (Spring 2025) • Final Design Workshop (TBD) • Quarterly Internal Project Briefings • Initial Contractor Outreach • Water Commission Meetings (as needed)
2	Environmental	Winter 2025 - Summer 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEQA Notifications Support • CEQA-Focused Materials and Support • EIR Scoping Meeting • Draft EIR Public Review Period • Notification and Outreach Support • Internal Briefings
3	Pre-Construction	Summer 2026 - 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction Impacts Workshop • Participation in Community Events and Meetings • Contractor Outreach Orientation • Business Visits • City Spokesperson Message and Media Training
4	Construction	Spring 2028 - 2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction Relations Work Plan • Other activities to be identified after completion of the work plan (e.g., Groundbreaking Ceremony, Ribbon Cutting, Coffee with a Contractor, Open House, etc.)

Design Phase

During the design phase of the Project there may be elements of the Project that change, whether it be the anticipated schedule, design components, or site layout. While these design details and changes are commonly understood amongst the Project team, the public will need to follow the design process largely via presentations to the Water Commission and City Council to receive Project updates.

The Project’s outreach priorities during the design phase are to:

1. Keep the public informed of the progress on the Project, and any significant changes that have or may occur during the design.
2. Gather public input on elements of the design (at the City’s request) that will contribute meaningfully to the Project.
3. Gather stakeholder information (such as school or business operation information or resident concerns) that contribute meaningfully to the Project design



Below is a list of recommended outreach activities to implement during the Project's Design Phase:

External Public Participation

1. **Additional One-on-One Stakeholder Discussions:** Perform additional one-on-one stakeholder discussions (up to 5) to gather information from relevant stakeholders about their concerns regarding the Project's potential impacts, as well as their preferred methods of receiving City communications and Project updates. Stakeholder interviews will be documented and used to guide future outreach activities.

Recommended Timing: (late) Fall 2024 or early 2025 and ideally with design concepts for stakeholders to review. This will inform possible feedback to be received at the first community design workshop anticipated in Spring 2025 (see below).

2. **Preliminary Design Community Workshop with Stakeholders:** Planning and implementation of the Project's first public design workshop to provide input on draft Project designs. The design workshop will allow the public to learn basic information about the Project and provide input on the elements pre-determined by the Project team to be open to public input. Because the Project is near several residences, providing as many opportunities as feasible for these stakeholders to give input on the design of the Project will set the Project up for success. This workshop will be developed and planned in coordination with the Project team and is assumed to take place in-person with a member of the outreach team and City representatives. The outreach team will lead the effort to draft and send invites to the public informing them of the workshop. Additionally, the City and outreach team should schedule to plan a similar online, webinar version of the workshop mirroring other City project design workshops.

Recommended Timing: Anticipated to host the first workshop in Spring 2025 with a follow-up meeting with stakeholders to share progress on design in late 2025 to be considered.

3. **Final Design Community Workshop with Stakeholders:** Planning and implementation of the Project's second and "final" public design workshop to provide an update on the Project's final design. Similar to above, the workshop will be held both in-person and online with the goal of providing the community with a presentation of the Project's anticipated final design and how public feedback was incorporated (or not) into the final design.

Recommended Timing: Either late 2025 or early 2026 upon finalization of design and in consideration of public meetings required for the Environmental phase of the Project.

Internal Communications

4. **Quarterly Internal Project Briefing (Update):** It is critical for the Project team to regularly engage with internal stakeholders at the City to inform them about the Project during each phase leading up to construction. These stakeholders include the Water Commission, City Council, City Departments and others identified through our research. Our team recommends the following to keep the City's internal stakeholders up to date on the Project.

Quarterly updates to be prepared for these internal stakeholders, via email or printed deliverable. The content will be limited to less than one page (similar to City staff generated Project briefs generated previously) and will report on the



Project's current design considerations, timeline, upcoming activities, etc. Quarterly updates will also be provided to the Public Works Division Manager starting in Fall 2024. The quarterly updates will serve as the primary method of keeping the Water Commission and City Council updated on the progress of the Project and allow for feedback and questions from the members.

Recommended Timing: Begin Fall 2024, continuing throughout Project

- 5. Initial Contractor Outreach:** Additionally, the outreach team will perform initial contractor outreach to ensure potential bidders are aware of the Project, can find up-to-date information, and are prepared to bid and work on the Project. Specific additional outreach strategies and tactics will be described in the Contractor Outreach Plan. The goal of this plan is to ensure an open and inclusive process that encourages a robust, diverse, and qualified pool of consultants and contractors to bid on Program projects.

Recommended Timing: Throughout 2025 as Project design moves forward

- 6. Water Commission Meetings (as needed)**

Recommended Timing: Throughout design as directed by the Water Resources Manager

Environmental Phase

The City will begin preparing the Project's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in January 2025 and is expected to be completed in Summer 2026. Public involvement is a required component of EIR preparation, and it is an essential part of the CEQA process. The outreach team will assist with planning and coordinating outreach activities throughout the Scoping, Draft EIR and Final EIR process, as needed.

A detailed Public Involvement Logistics Plan will be developed by the Outreach team, in coordination with the City's environmental consultant (Rincon Consultants), to further clarify roles and responsibilities throughout the CEQA process, as it pertains to public notifications, public meetings, and internal briefings.

The requirements interwoven into the CEQA guidelines have two purposes:

- To fully inform the public of the environmental impacts of a proposed Project; and
- To provide the opportunity for public comment on the environmental issues and impact conclusions, mitigation, and Project alternatives evaluated in the EIR.

The following activities are likely to be coordinated and implemented by the City Staff and the Project's outreach and environmental teams:

External Public Participation

- CEQA Notifications Support:** The outreach team will support the environmental team with notifications related to all phases of the CEQA process, as needed.
- CEQA-Focused Materials and Support:** The outreach team will develop a fact sheet for the EIR process that includes Project background, summary of subject matter areas to be reviewed as part of the environmental review process, a summary of the EIR findings once the EIR is prepared, EIR overview timeline graphic and next steps. This can be distributed to the public throughout the environmental review and public comment period to educate stakeholders on the environmental review process, findings, and public comment opportunities. Additional content would be developed for use on the webpage and on other



outreach materials regarding the environmental process as well. Other support can be provided for the EIR process, as needed.

Recommended Timing: Initial materials developed in Spring 2025 prior to EIR scoping meeting but will be updated as needed throughout the CEQA process

EIR Scoping Phase

- 3. EIR Scoping Meeting:** Planning and support for the EIR Scoping meeting that would include Project information. If needed, the outreach team will coordinate with the Project team to plan and attend the EIR scoping meeting to help plan, design invitations and materials, and share information with stakeholders, as needed. The EIR scoping meeting will provide attendees with an opportunity to give feedback to the Project team on the environmental impacts they believe should be considered as part of the Project.

Recommended Timing: Summer 2025 as part of the planned EIR Scoping meeting

Draft EIR Phase

- 4. Draft EIR Public Review Period (45 calendar days):** The outreach team will coordinate and support the public review process for the draft EIR, as needed. This includes an expected presentation to the Water Commission.

Recommended Timing: Fall 2025

Final EIR Phase

- 5. Notification and Outreach Support:** This phase is not anticipated to require public feedback, or any additional public meetings. However, the team will be available to support the Water Commission and City Council presentations when the final EIR is presented. Once the Final EIR is prepared, the outreach team will coordinate with the Project team to inform the public that the Final EIR is completed. Outreach will be focused on informing the public as to where the Final EIR is located and how it can be reviewed.

Recommended Timing: Summer 2026

Internal Communications

- 6. Internal Briefings:** As described in the Design Phase, the outreach team will include environmental updates Quarterly Internal Project Briefings. The outreach team will also support any specific briefings and presentations to Water Commission and/or City Council related to the EIR process, as well as at key milestones to ensure these key stakeholders stay up-to-date throughout the CEQA process. A briefing to the City Council will be required to certify the Final EIR, but if additional briefings are required before this phase, the outreach team will assist with that coordination too.

Recommended Timing: As needed throughout the entire CEQA EIR process, but a focused briefing is anticipated before the City Council is expected to approve the Project in Summer 2026.



Pre-Construction Phase

During the pre-construction phase, outreach and public participation will be focused on educating and preparing external stakeholders on what to expect during the construction phase.

External Public Participation

- 1. Construction Impacts Workshop:** The construction-focused workshop will inform attendees of the anticipated construction-related impacts of the Project. The workshop will provide an opportunity for them to give input that may help guide future outreach activities during construction and be utilized in bid documents for contractor selection. The outreach team will plan, coordinate, prepare materials for, and lead the workshop in coordination with City staff and the design team. The purpose of this meeting may also be to solicit construction impact feedback that can be incorporated into the project's construction bid documents. Examples include, timing of demolition noise, sound mitigation, signage, etc.

Recommended Timing: Fall 2027 (subject to change)

- 2. Participation in Community Events and Meetings:** The outreach team and/or Project staff can attend community meetings to provide updates on the Project and elaborate on the anticipated impacts and build relationships with stakeholder groups. Depending on the group and their relationship to the Project site, it may be necessary to attend multiple meetings throughout the pre-construction phase. These meetings would provide an additional outlet for sharing information beyond the construction focused workshop mentioned above. Initial feedback from stakeholders would indicate participating in an OMNI Town Hall meeting or a meeting organized by the District's Councilmember would be beneficial but additional research will be conducted moving forward.

Recommended Timing: Fall 2027 (subject to change)

- 3. Business Visits:** The outreach team and/or Project staff can coordinate local business visits to discuss the Project, share information about the schedule and expected impacts and gather feedback. While businesses may not be impacted by the construction itself, they will likely be impacted by the increased construction traffic to and from the site. Keeping them informed, and maintaining an open line of communication should issues arise will help resolve them quickly and maintain a positive relationship between the local business community and the Project.

Recommended Timing: These business visits will occur in the pre-construction phase, but they will also be invited to the design workshop to learn more about the Project and provide input.

Internal Communications

- 4. Contractor Outreach Orientation:** Because outreach should be a shared responsibility with the contractor, an outreach orientation should be conducted to inform the contractor of the City's expectations for public outreach, remind the contractor on the importance of being a good neighbor, treating stakeholders with respect and addressing specific public-facing situations in the field. The outreach orientation should also discuss roles and responsibilities for outreach implementation.

Recommended Timing: After award of the construction contract and before any onsite construction work (Fall 2027 or early 2028).



- 5. City Spokesperson Message and Media Training:** It is important to ensure the City has identified several key spokespeople to talk about the Project with stakeholders and the media, as needed. The Outreach team will facilitate a workshop for all identified City staff where there will be a discussion on how to effectively share information using key message and background information. An on-camera session can also be useful to record participants answering challenging questions and receiving some coaching after viewing the playback of the video. Santa Barbara CityTV could be utilized for this training, if possible.

Recommended Timing: Towards completion of the final design (anticipated to be Spring 2027).

Construction Phase

Once the Project enters the construction phase, a new set of considerations and information needs will arise. Stakeholder concerns associated with construction projects are nearly always associated with insufficient notification, noise and traffic impacts, inaccurate information, changes in schedule, and/or conflicting messages. All of these can be addressed through early planning and close coordination between Project team members. Construction projects are dynamic in schedules and work activities, and an integrated team approach with close coordination should result in the most efficient and effective communication. With construction anticipated to start in Spring 2028, it is critical to prepare the stakeholders for potential impacts and ensure they stay informed.

Construction Phase Communication Objectives

1. Ensure consistency through foundational messaging, talking points, and updates across communications platforms
2. Continue flow of up-to-date and accurate Project information through regular communication
3. Continue to foster awareness around the Project benefits while adding messaging and tactics that prepare stakeholders for construction
4. Maximize already-existing communication tools to reach existing audiences and expand when possible
5. Create enthusiasm around Project milestones including funding, permitting, and construction start and finish
6. Continue existing and develop new partnerships with community groups and other agencies allowing for rapid delivery of updated information during construction
7. Specific to pre-construction and construction phases, proactively inform stakeholders of Project purpose and need, plans, schedules, benefits, potential impacts and mitigation measures, and ensure access to up-to-date Project information and responsive contact channels

The main outreach deliverable recommended during the Construction Phase is outlined below:

Construction Relations Work Plan: The outreach team, in coordination with Project team members and City staff, will develop the Project's Construction Relations Work Plan (Work Plan), which will be informed by much of the items identified and implemented in this Plan (key messages, team reporting, materials, outreach tools, stakeholder research). However, it will also focus on construction-related strategies and tactics, including team coordination and planning, meetings and events, media planning as well as rapid response and emergency response planning. It will also



include an approach for developing and implementing specific construction outreach materials and tactics like the Project site camera, community meetings, door hangers, email blasts, text message notifications, and letters, and recommended timing as well as an approved communications and outreach protocol for communications during an on-site emergency. The overarching goal of the Work Plan will be to ensure the City conveys timely, accurate and clear program information to local leaders, stakeholders and residents during construction on the Project.

Recommended Timing: Plan development, City review of the plan, and finalization to occur in late 2027/early 2028 in advance of construction starting. Coordination between the City, the selected contractor, and K&A will need to take place to ensure the contractor is aware of the outreach activities they're expected to complete.

11. Measuring Outreach Success

Outreach activities will be assessed regularly to ensure all tactics meet the outreach objectives as mentioned at the start of this plan and are effective for the City and stakeholders. Measuring outreach metrics and outreach success is of utmost importance to the City and allows for continuous improvement of outreach strategies.

Metrics that will be measured during the Project by the outreach team include, but are not limited to:

- Project mailers (number) sent directly to City residents
- Attendance (number and diversity if possible) and comments (number) received during community workshops
- Comments (number and quality) received during scoping and the Draft EIR phase
- Stakeholder reach (number of people contacted) for each Project update (both digital and print)
- Media coverage (such as the number of print articles and television news segments, and sentiment)
- CTR (click-through rates) from e-blasts
- Engagement on social media
- Website visit metrics
- Engagement and attendance at pop-up or booth outreach events
- Number of inquiries handled by phone and email
- Sentiment (positive or negative) for inquiries received, and customer satisfaction
- Response time for inquiry resolution
- Direct feedback from stakeholders about outreach and information provided

An online survey may also be conducted to analyze how and where people receive information about the Project and to keep track of public sentiment and stakeholder satisfaction. The team will also consider a post-construction survey to gather feedback on the Project and City's management throughout the entire project process.

This data will be maintained by the outreach team and made available/updated before each public presentation for quick reference when called upon.



12. Closing

As a cornerstone of the City's water delivery system, providing water to nearly 70 percent of Santa Barbara customers, the Vic Trace Reservoir Replacement Project is critical to ensure a safe, reliable water supply for the future. Along with providing significant improvements to water operations for all of Santa Barbara, the upgraded water storage reservoir will also include improved efficiency with new, updated technology, additional landscaping and security, as well as innovative and sustainable features.

This Project is a large component of the City's One Water approach to all water projects, which focuses on working with stakeholders to align the City's efforts with community goals and balance interests. The City is committed to minimizing construction impacts to residents and nearby businesses and will continue to coordinate closely with all stakeholders throughout all phases of the Project. This Strategic Communication Plan supports that by developing a clear roadmap to engage key stakeholders while charting a path for sustained engagement throughout each phase.



13. Appendices

Appendix A:

Project Kickoff Workshop Agenda and Summary & SWOT Analysis

Appendix B:

Demographic Review

Appendix C:

Materials Audit

Appendix D:

Key Messages

Appendix E:

Branding

(Survey, Creative Brief, Workshop Agenda Logo Sheet, Summary of Effort with Final Logo)

Appendix F:

External Stakeholder Discussions

(Approach and List of Stakeholders, Stakeholders for Phase 1 Discussions, Draft Email to Stakeholders, Discussion Guide, Summary Report)

