

Communications

St. Marys Business Improvement Area (BIA)

August 2018

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1.0 SCOPE

The provisions of this document will apply to all employees and volunteers working for the St. Marys BIA. This includes but is not limited to: the BIA Board, BIA Employees/Staff, and BIA Volunteers (e.g. Committee Members).

2.0 GENERAL PROVISIONS

6.1 General goals of St. Marys Communications are to:

- a) support and develop cohesiveness within the BIA;
- b) create common messages and themes for the BIA;
- c) communicate the BIA's unique assets;
- d) ensure the loyalty of BIA stakeholders and visitors;
- e) attract new visitors and stakeholders to the BIA; and,
- f) increase interest and knowledge of the BIA's heritage.

2.1 Communication about the St. Marys BIA can be provided to Members and Stakeholders in many ways, including but not limited to the following:

- Annual General Meetings (AGM)
- Board Meetings
- Electronic Mail (Email)
- Facebook
- Marketing & Advertising Products (brochures, visitor guides, advertisements, radio spots, etc.)
- Media Releases
- Meeting Agendas and Agenda Packages
- Meeting Minutes
- Membership Meetings
- Networking Events
- Newsletters
- Town of St. Marys Events Calendar
- Posters/Flyers
- Website

2.2 All communications generated by the St. Marys BIA should maintain consistent standards including the following:

- a) communications are implemented in a manner that positively enhances the St. Marys BIA and Downtown St. Marys image and reputation;

- b) communications provide a consistent and professional voice so that Members, Stakeholder and Visitors can be assured that the information they are receiving can be trusted; and,
 - c) communications are effectively managed to ensure that they provide timely and accurate information and responses.
- 2.3 St. Marys BIA communications will not:
- a) contain pornography, harassing, offensive or threatening language or images;
 - b) promote illegal or dangerous activities;
 - c) target any individual or group; or,
 - d) contain hate crime language and/or images or Human Rights infractions.

3.0 PRIVACY

- 3.1 At the discretion of the St. Marys BIA, any information, photos or videos that are used, shared or posted to its social media account(s) may be reproduced for promotional and other purposes with the appropriate permissions and acknowledgement of the source.
- 3.2 Comments and messages solicited and collected by the St. Marys BIA for the public record will be subject to the provisions of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

4.0 PARTICIPATING IN ST. MARYS BIA COMMUNICATIONS

- 4.1 If a Member wishes to communicate an item through a St. Marys BIA communication product or initiative, the following criteria will apply:
 - a) the Member must not be in contravention of any BIA policies, procedures, or by-laws;
 - b) the event or activity must be related to a business or service in the St. Marys BIA;
 - c) the event or activity must be open to all who wish to attend/participate;
 - d) communication must adhere to and be consistent with all St. Marys BIA policies, procedures, and by-laws;

5.0 GUIDELINES FOR ST. MARYS BIA COMMUNICATIONS

- 5.1 **Current:** Communication content must be consistent, current and up to date.
- 5.2 **Know your audience:** Use language, messages, and images appropriate for the target audience.
- 5.3 **Think twice before finalizing communications:** Never print, send or post anything you wouldn't want to appear in a public forum.
- 5.4 **Be accurate:** Don't react to or repeat rumours. Research all facts before finalizing any communications on behalf of the St. Marys BIA.
- 5.5 **Be considerate:** Encourage informed and respectful communication/dialogue, and do not engage in personal attacks. Do not criticize BIA projects, BIA Members, or BIA decisions. Don't be slanderous of any person, illegal, offensive, abusive, inflammatory, or in the opinion of the St. Marys BIA, be otherwise unacceptable.
- 5.6 **Don't be partisan or political in nature.** St. Marys BIA resources and/or communications cannot be used to promote individual political opinions or campaigns.
- 5.7 **Be responsible:** Do not reveal confidential information. Do not make known the personal data of other individuals, including their name and address, phone number, email or other personal data.
- 5.8 **Respect copyright laws:** Ensure that all content is permitted; do not reproduce or borrow content that violates trademark or copyright laws but do provide links to interesting and relevant materials. Do not infringe any copyright, database right or trademark, or other third party right of any other person.
- 5.9 **Do not encourage prejudice** based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, marital status, family status, disability, pardoned conviction, or sexual orientation.
- 5.10 **Avoid religious and political messages:** Do not make comments that promote religious or political messages that might be deemed prejudicial to other religious or political groups are not permitted.
- 5.11 **Social Media:**
- a) Do not respond to inflammatory comments.
 - b) The St. Marys BIA will remove inappropriate content and comments that do not comply with BIA policies, procedures and by-laws. The user may be blocked.

7.0 ST. MARYS BIA ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

- 7.1 The St. Marys BIA will develop advertising and marketing tools and tactics.
- 7.2 The St. Marys BIA may establish a Communications and/or Marketing & Advertising Committee. A Terms of Reference will be developed prior to establishing this Committee. The Terms of Reference will define roles, responsibilities, and any other aspects of the Committee.
- 7.3 The St. Marys BIA may hire an outside Agency/Company to develop/create advertising and marketing tools, tactics, and products. Hiring practices will conform to the St. Marys BIA Purchasing and Procurement Policy document.
- 7.4 Advertising and marketing tools and tactics can be developed and implemented solely by the St. Marys BIA and/or with stakeholders and partners. Stakeholders and partners may include but are not limited to the following:
- Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA)
 - Ontario Ministry of Tourism
 - Stratford Tourism Alliance (STA)
 - St. Marys Bed & Breakfast Group
 - St. Marys Farmers' Market
 - St. Marys merchants, restaurateurs and service providers
 - St. Marys Museum
 - Station Gallery
 - The Town of St. Marys
 - The County of Perth
- 7.5 St. Marys BIA advertising and marketing tools and tactics will directly support and relate to the St. Marys BIA Strategic Plan and an approved project or initiative.
- 7.6 All St. Marys BIA Members will be made aware of all advertising and marketing opportunities that affect the St. Marys BIA and/or its Members, and given the opportunity to participate in a timely manner.
- 7.7 Communication of advertising, marketing, and communications tools and opportunities will be the responsibility of the xxx.
- 7.8 When appropriate and seen to be beneficial to the BIA and its Members, advertising and marketing tools and tactics may be applied to outside of the St. Marys BIA (e.g. Stratford bus advertisements, Stratford Tourism Alliance Visitor Guide, Town of St. Marys Visitor Guide).

8.0 ST. MARYS BIA LOGO

8.1 **St. Marys BIA Logo:** The current St. Marys BIA logo is: (insert logo)

8.2 **Using the St. Marys BIA Logo:**

9.0 ST. MARYS BIA BRAND

9.1 **Developing a St. Marys BIA Brand:** Brand is a combination of both tangible and intangible benefits delivered to a customer or stakeholder, ideally creating both a rational and emotional connection to the promise of value. Almost anything can be branded, including a product, person or even idea.

Branding is a 360 degree look at every aspect of the area and touch point with members of the target audiences (external and internal). This can include everything from the sidewalk experience, parking, signage, shopkeeper attitudes, websites, community outreach and other items.

To be successful, a brand must be defined from the user/customer point of view, that is, the value that they need to have delivered. Brand reputation refers to how well the area/destination has delivered the brand value over time and whether residents and visitors trust the location's ability to continue to provide value.

When branding an area or destination, a variety of factors come into play depending on the nature of the place. In the case of the St. Marys BIA, some of those variables will include:

- the political and government environment (e.g. Town of St. Marys branding);
- business mix;
- local heritage;
- behaviours and attitudes of the residents and business people;
- character of the surrounding community and outside communities;
- xxx

Developing a strong brand that can survive over time means that the brand must be:

- **Differentiating:** the brand needs to carve out a clear unassailable position in relation to its perceived "competition".
- **Compelling:** the brand needs to appeal to audience drivers.

- **Credible:** the brand’s claims and messages must be believable. The target audience must be able to believe that the area or community can deliver what it promises.

A very significant difference when branding an area or destination like a downtown is that the value of the brand on a day-to-day basis is largely delivered by the shopkeepers and service providers whose businesses are in the downtown area. As a result, BIA Members are both “stakeholders” and “deliverers”. Adding some challenge to this issue is the fact that independent businesspeople cannot be dictated to regarding their role and/or behaviour, and may believe that the area should be branded to reflect personal values and priorities as opposed to those of their customers and/or the area as a whole.

10.0 ELECTRONIC MAIL (EMAIL)

- 10.1 Email account: The St. Marys BIA’s email address is: stmarysdowntown@gmail.com.
- 10.2 The St. Marys BIA Administrative Assistant is responsible for managing the email account.
- 10.3 Messages received will not be amended in any way except where authorized by the sender.
- 10.4 The St. Marys BIA will coordinate mass emails to St. Marys BIA Members for topics including but not limited to:
- Communications, Advertising and Marketing Opportunities
 - Agenda Packages
 - Events
 - Meeting Minutes
 - Notices of Meetings (e.g. Annual General Meeting)
 - Project Opportunities (e.g. Project Committees)
- 10.5 Email Distribution Lists: The BIA Administrative Assistant is responsible for maintaining St. Marys BIA Email Distribution Lists. The lists will be updated on a regular basis to ensure accuracy.
- 10.6 Email Distribution Lists may be created for: Members, Suppliers/Contractors, Volunteers, Key Stakeholders, and other groups.

11.0 FACEBOOK

- 11.1 Facebook Account: The St. Marys BIA Facebook Page is:
<https://www.facebook.com/DowntownStMarysOntario/>.
- 11.2 x is responsible for monitoring the information on the Facebook page to ensure that it is accurate, complete, up-to-date and in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.
- 11.3 All required changes to the Facebook page
- 11.4 To post content on the St. Marys BIA Facebook page

12.0 WEBSITE

- 12.1 Information about the St. Marys BIA is housed on the Town of St. Marys website
- 12.2 x will review the website information on a monthly basis to ensure accuracy.
- 12.3 x will coordinate requests for updates to the information.

13.0 MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

- 13.1 Public awareness and support of the St. Marys BIA, its Members, and its activities are enhanced through the maintenance of good working relationships with the media, stakeholders, and public. The St. Marys BIA strives to disseminate information in a timely, cooperative and coordinated manner to those who request assistance.
- 13.2 The Chair, x, and x serve as St. Marys BIA spokespersons and convey the BIA's official position on issues of general BIA-wide impact or significance, or of a controversial or sensitive nature. Inquiries from the media regarding such issues should be immediately referred to the Chair.

- 13.3 Committee Chairs and/or designates are free to respond to requests from the media regarding their specific project. In such cases, Committee Chairs are asked to notify the BIA Chair to ensure a coordinated response if other BIA representatives are contacted on a similar issue.
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14.0 ST. MARYS BIA COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

14.1 St. Marys Communications Plan

The St. Marys BIA may develop a Communications Plan to identify and prioritize goals and objectives, identify target audiences, define the S. Marys BIA brand, and clarify other items that relate to communications, advertising, and marketing.

- 14.2 The St. Marys BIA may hire an agency / consultant to develop a Communications Plan.
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15.0 REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

- 15.1 Inquiries for general and routine information can be answered by the appropriate St. Marys BIA representative, but only to the extent the request relates to information that is publicly available. Inquiries cannot be answered if and to the extent that the inquiry relates to Confidential Information.
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16.0 INTERNET DISCUSSION FORUMS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- 16.1 In order to ensure that Confidential Information is not inadvertently disclosed, St. Marys BIA Staff and Volunteers are discouraged from participating in Internet discussion forums, chat rooms and bulletin boards on matters pertaining to the BIA or its activities.
- 16.2 Posting on official St. Marys BIA social media forums is restricted to authorized xxx. The content of such postings must adhere to guidelines set by the BIA Board Member responsible for xxx.
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17.0 RUMOURS

- 17.1 Subject to compliance with applicable laws, the St. Marys BIA will not normally comment, affirmatively or otherwise, on rumours or speculation (whether in the media on the Internet or otherwise).
- 17.2 In certain circumstances (for example, in the case of rumours or speculation relating to safety or security), the Chair may determine that it is appropriate to issue a response. In such cases, any response to rumours or speculation will be under the direction of the Chair and in compliance with this Policy.
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18.0 PUBLIC STATEMENT OF PERSONAL OPINIONS

- 18.1 St. Marys BIA Board, Staff, Volunteers and anyone hired to perform work for the St. Marys BIA, should refrain from making public statements of personal opinion regarding the BIA or from presenting a personal opinion regarding the St. Marys BIA as a fact.
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19.0 COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- 19.1 All information or materials required to be delivered to the Board of Directors as a whole or to individual Board Members, shall be delivered through or with the approval of xxx.