



PENNY
FOR YOUR
THOUGHTS

2017 COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

This communication strategy is intended to provide a promotional plan for the first-annual Penny for Your Thoughts contest and increase visibility of the Capital Region Community Foundation (“Our Community Foundation”) within its communities.

OBJECTIVES

To build a stronger community presence and maximize diversity and volume of contest submissions through tailored communications for each audience group.

KEY MESSAGES

- Our Community Foundation is a forward-thinking leader within the community.
- Penny for Your Thoughts is way to voice your opinions and be heard.
- Penny for Your Thoughts welcomes all ideas from community members.
- Penny for Your Thoughts is a way to take ownership of your community and participate in its improvement and growth.

GOALS

The goal of this communication strategy is to provide our Community Foundation with a clear, focused plan to inspire community members to submit their ideas to Penny for Your Thoughts. This strategy provides the necessary tools for our Community Foundation to appeal to defined target audiences. Clear and consistent messaging will ultimately drive the success of the Penny for Your Thoughts campaign.

QUANTIFIABLE GOALS

- Recruit 6 businesses along Michigan Avenue (3 in downtown Lansing area, 3 in downtown East Lansing area) for initial distribution of promotional materials
- Gain 10 new followers to our Community Foundation’s Twitter account and 20 new likes on Facebook
- Gain 100 followers to the Penny for Your Thoughts Twitter, 150 likes on Facebook and 50 followers on Instagram
- Over 100 submissions to Penny for Your Thoughts

AUDIENCES & ASSUMPTIONS

Our Community Foundation seeks to engage target audiences throughout the Greater Lansing area to solicit contest entries and increase visibility within the community. Challenges in general include an overall lack of brand awareness or clear focus in current communications as well as the newness of the Penny for Your Thoughts campaign. In order to effectively engage these audiences and produce the desired results, the following assumptions are made about their perceptions and understandings of our Community Foundation.

COMMUNITY IN GENERAL

Most of the general public does not have significant engagement with our Community Foundation. Penny for Your Thoughts provides an opportunity to establish our Community Foundation as an organization that does good work and leads positive change. It also allows the general public to join the conversation to improve our region.

MICHIGAN AVENUE CORRIDOR RESIDENTS

Community members who live on and around the Michigan Avenue corridor have a high level of engagement with the Penny for Your Thoughts focus area. Because of this, they know which parts of the corridor are most thriving/see the most consumer traffic/are the most vibrant, and can provide insight into why those areas perform as well as they do. They also harbor a strong sense of ownership of the corridor, as it is both a part of their community and the place they call home.

MICHIGAN AVENUE CORRIDOR BUSINESSES

Similar to residents of the corridor, businesses along the Michigan Avenue corridor have a high level of engagement with our focus area. They are knowledgeable of the populations they serve and understand how the state of the surrounding area affects their own business and engagement with the public. Business owners seek to have a vibrant environment in which they can welcome patrons new and old and will provide valuable insight into boosting economic prosperity along the corridor.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Most MSU students are primarily familiar with the section of the corridor that transitions into Grand River Avenue past Abbot Road. While this is outside of the Penny for Your Thoughts focus area, attracting and retaining talent is a key component of achieving economic prosperity and community growth. MSU students provide key feedback on what ideas would be most effective in attracting young professional to the area, as they will soon become young professionals themselves.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY FACULTY

MSU faculty are members of both the MSU community and the community in general. Because of this, they are a valuable tool to inspire MSU students to engage with contest and they are potential sources of ideas themselves. Faculty are familiar with the needs of students, and what young professionals seek in their first post-graduation environment; they also have their own needs from their community, and can offer ideas to attract young talent and retain other populations.

COMMUNICATION STAGES

PRE-LAUNCH

KEY GOAL: Evoke excitement surrounding the contest and build anticipation for the launch date. This will be done primarily through Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to provide flexibility and the opportunity to reach a wide audience quickly and at a low cost. Communication pieces should be colorful, dynamic and conversation-centric.

KEY GOAL: Introduce new audiences to our Community Foundation. This will be achieved through sharing our website link with each Penny for Your Thoughts promotional message, which will drive users to our website and prompt them to learn more about not just Penny for Your Thoughts, but also who we are and what we do.

DURATION OF CONTEST

KEY GOAL: Consistent engagement with target audiences during the month-long run of Penny for Your Thoughts. These communications should invoke curiosity and creativity through bright colors and consistent branding in both print and web spaces. Social media will be key in sustaining conversations with participants and other audience members.

KEY GOAL: Inspire audiences to submit ideas and engage with ideas that have been submitted. These communications should be conversation-centric and will mostly use social media tools such as hashtags and link-sharing. Audiences should be reminded that their opinions are valid and heard.

POST-CONTEST

KEY GOAL: Keep audiences updated on the finalists' progress. These communications will be less frequent and take place on social media and our Community Foundation's website. This allows audiences to retain a sense of the contributions put forth by those who submitted and reacted to ideas. Keeping audiences updated on the progress of finalist ideas through implementation also sustains a conversation between the public and our Community Foundation, extending reach and strengthening community relationships.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

COMMUNITY IN GENERAL

PRE-LAUNCH: Messaging should focus on building excitement and anticipation for the launch of Penny for Your Thoughts. Will take place one week prior to the contest launch.

- Social media
 - Introduce hashtag: #pennythought
 - 3 Facebook posts
 - 4 Instagram posts
 - 6 Twitter posts

DURATION OF CONTEST: Messaging should focus on inviting ideas and encouraging engagement with ideas that have already been posted. There should also be an emphasis on taking ownership of the community and working together to improve it.

- Social media
 - 3-5 Facebook posts a week
 - 4-6 Instagram post a week
 - 6-8 Twitter posts a week
- Posters at businesses and restaurants along the corridor and near campus
- Coasters at restaurants along the corridor and near campus
- Light post banners along Michigan Avenue
- Vinyl coverage at 2619 Michigan Avenue
- Radio promotion with Townsquare Media
- Television promotion with TV 10

POST-CONTEST: Messaging should focus on sustaining conversation between our Community Foundation and the community and aim to keep community members updated on the progression of selected ideas.

- Social media as necessary for progress updates

MICHIGAN AVENUE CORRIDOR RESIDENTS

PRE-LAUNCH: Messaging should focus on building excitement and anticipation for the launch of Penny for Your Thoughts. Will take place one week prior to the contest launch.

- Social media
 - Introduce hashtag: #pennythought
 - 3 Facebook posts
 - 4 Instagram posts
 - 6 Twitter posts

DURATION OF CONTEST: Messaging should focus on inviting ideas and encouraging engagement with ideas that have already been posted. There should be a particular emphasis on corridor residents' particular ownership of the area they call home.

- Social media
 - 3-5 Facebook posts a week
 - 4-6 Instagram post a week
 - 6-8 Twitter posts a week
- Posters at businesses and restaurants along the corridor
- Coasters at restaurants along the corridor
- Light post banners along Michigan Avenue
- Vinyl coverage at 2619 Michigan Avenue
- Radio promotion with Townsquare Media
- Television promotion with TV 10

POST-CONTEST: Messaging should focus on sustaining conversation between our Community Foundation and corridor residents and aim to keep residents updated on the progression of selected ideas.

- Social media as necessary for progress updates

MICHIGAN AVENUE CORRIDOR BUSINESSES

PRE-LAUNCH: Messaging should focus on building excitement for the launch of Penny for Your Thoughts and inviting partnership with our Community Foundation to get the public excited. Will take place one week prior to the contest launch.

- Emails to selected businesses inviting partnership to use coasters and posters
- Promotion on social media

DURATION OF CONTEST: Messaging should focus on leveraging this partnership to improve their own business while encouraging economic prosperity for the region in general. There should also be an emphasis on thanking business partners for their role in making Penny for Your Thoughts successful.

- Promotion of business partners on social media
- Posters and coasters at other businesses and restaurants along the corridor
- Light post banners along Michigan Avenue
- Emails inviting additional businesses to partner each week, showcasing the businesses who are already participating

POST-CONTEST: Messaging should focus on thanking businesses for their partnership, updating them on the status of finalist ideas and sustaining a relationship with our Community Foundation.

- Thank you emails to all business partners
- Solicit feedback – see what patrons said, what they asked about, ideas for increased engagement, etc.
- Social media as necessary for progress updates

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

PRE-LAUNCH: Messaging should focus on building excitement and anticipation for the launch of Penny for Your Thoughts. Will take place one week prior to the contest launch.

- Social media
 - Introduce hashtag: #pennythought
 - 3 Facebook posts
 - 4 Instagram posts
 - 6 Twitter posts

DURATION OF CONTEST: Messaging should focus on inviting ideas and encouraging engagement with ideas that have already been posted. There should be a particular emphasis on sharing ideas as future young professionals – “What would make you stay in this area after you graduate?”

- Social media
 - 3-5 Facebook posts a week
 - 4-6 Instagram post a week
 - 6-8 Twitter posts a week
- Posters at businesses and restaurants as well as in campus buildings
- Coasters at restaurants near campus
- Vinyl coverage at 2619 Michigan Avenue

POST-CONTEST: Messaging should focus on sustaining conversation between our Community Foundation and the MSU community and aim to keep students updated on the progression of selected ideas.

- Social media as necessary for progress updates

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY FACULTY

PRE-LAUNCH: Messaging should focus on building excitement and anticipation for the launch of Penny for Your Thoughts, and encourage faculty to share with their students and get them excited as well. Will take place one week prior to the contest launch.

- Social media
 - Introduce hashtag: #pennythought
 - 3 Facebook posts
 - 4 Instagram posts
 - 6-8 Twitter posts
- Emails to Arnold Weinfeld and Scott Witter

DURATION OF CONTEST: Messaging should focus on inviting ideas and encouraging engagement with ideas that have already been posted. This should encourage both submission of ideas by faculty, and continued engagement with students.

- Social media
 - 3-5 Facebook posts a week
 - 4-6 Instagram post a week
 - 6-8 Twitter posts a week
- Posters at businesses and restaurants as well as in campus buildings
- Coasters at restaurants along the corridor and near campus
- Vinyl coverage at 2619 Michigan Avenue
- Radio promotion with Townsquare Media
- Television promotion with TV 10

POST-CONTEST: Messaging should focus on sustaining conversation between our Community Foundation and the MSU community and aim to keep faculty updated on the progression of selected ideas.

- Social media as necessary for progress updates
- Email to Andrew Weinfeld and Scott Witter

MODES & MEDIA

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a primary channel of communication and allows fast, sustained reach to wide populations. Short, attention-grabbing posts that use text, images and color effectively will engage target audiences best. Brevity is invaluable through each channel, and examples of messaging can be found in Appendix A.

- **TWITTER** is a popular platform for engaging young professionals because its most active demographic tends to be young professionals looking for fast-moving information updates.
 - **Links** get the most engagement on Twitter, so this is a key space for sharing our Community Foundation website frequently.
 - Because Twitter is all about fast moving information, it's appropriate to post more **frequently** on this platform.
 - Twitter is one of the best platforms for **hashtag** use.
 - It's important to use the contest hashtag #pennythought, as well as any other relevant hashtags to the geographic area, such as #lovelansing
 - Keeping tweets short and using fewer than the 140 character limit whenever possible will increase **engagement**, as will asking questions, joining conversations and sharing information regularly.
- **FACEBOOK** allows currently engaged audiences to share information on their walls with their own networks of friends. Facebook also has a large community of users over 50 years old, so this is a great platform to engage a variety of demographics simultaneously.
 - Like most social media, content on Facebook has a short shelf life so it is important to be **consistent** and post content regularly.
 - A **variety** of content options will give followers diversity. Examples are:
 - **Calls to action:** Encouraging audiences to enter the contest or share their thoughts on ideas that have already been submitted.
 - **Interesting information:** Tips for success and examples of how placemaking ideas have been implemented well in other communities.
 - **Emotional content:** Stories – what community members hope to see, short interviews with entrants, etc.
 - **Events:** Especially during the implementation phase, groundbreakings/grand openings/etc.
 - **Images** work well on Facebook to break up strings of text posts and tend to garner the most engagement because they catch your eye.
 - Posts should be a paragraph or less to maintain maximum **engagement**.
- **INSTAGRAM** is the perfect platform to share strong visuals of current areas of need along the corridor and images of submitted ideas. Like Twitter, Instagram's most active demographic tends to be users mid-30s and younger.
 - **Hashtags** are also popular on this platform.

- It's important to use **high quality** images when posting on Instagram since it is a platform centered on appealing visuals.
- **Brevity** is important when it comes to text posts on Instagram, as the focus will be on the image rather than paragraphs of copy.

PRINT MATERIALS

All print materials will use a similar design to promote consistency and immediate brand recognition. This design will include the Penny for Your Thoughts logo and our Community Foundation's website URL on a bright background of our new brand yellow. A list of potential business and campus partners can be found in Appendix B.

POSTERS: Posters are the primary print method of engaging target audiences. These will be distributed to businesses along Michigan Avenue and Grand River Avenue, as well as on campus.

- Start with 3 businesses each along Michigan Avenue and Grand River Avenue, and aim to increase by 1-2 businesses each week.

COASTERS: Coasters will be distributed to restaurants along Michigan Avenue and Grand River Avenue. These should correlate with businesses chosen to display posters in their windows.

- Start with 2 restaurants each along Michigan Avenue and Grand River Avenue, and aim to increase by 1-2 restaurants each week.

LIGHT POST BANNERS: 38 light post banners will be posted along Michigan Avenue for pedestrians and drivers-by.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA CHANNELS

RADIO: Our Community Foundation has partnered with Townsquare media for the duration of the contest.

- 15-second and 30-second PSA

TELEVISION: TV 10

- PSA with b-roll footage and Penny for Your Thoughts logo feature

PRESS RELEASE: Refer to Appendix B for a list of contacts for distribution.

GUERRILLA MARKETING

Vinyl building coverage at 2619 E. Michigan Avenue will be used to draw attention to an underutilized space, promote inspiration along the area of focus and generate excitement for the contest. This tactic has the potential to garner high levels of engagement because it is both high visibility and is a more nontraditional marketing approach.

WEBSITE

OUR COMMUNITY FOUNDATION WEBSITE will be the first point of contact for all audiences related to the contest. Because we are using our primary domain in marketing materials rather than the contest-specific subdomain, traffic will be driven to our Community Foundation's website. This allows audiences to engage with our Community Foundation in general before progressing to the contest website by clicking the "idea contest" button.

PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS WEBSITE will provide all information audiences need to learn about the contest, submit an idea and engage with previously submitted ideas. This website is run through WordPress on a subdomain and gives users an interactive space to exchange ideas and start conversations with one another. Each idea will be published as a blog post and sorted into its respective category, allowing users the opportunity to browse ideas chronologically or by specific category depending on their interests. There is also a link to the fillable PDF entry form.

NEEDS

PERSONNEL RESOURCES

- Design print materials
- Implement and manage Penny for Your Thoughts website and social media
- Liaise with printer for print materials
- Liaise with City of Lansing for light post banner installation
- Liaise with business and campus partners and distribute materials
- Author PSAs and voiceover for PSAs
- Shoot b-roll footage for TV spot

DIGITAL RESOURCES

- Our Community Foundation website – <http://ourcommunity.org>
- Penny for Your Thoughts website – <http://pennycontest2017.ourcommunity.org>
- Social media accounts
 - Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/pennycontest2017/>
 - Paid promotion of select posts to increase reach
 - Twitter - <https://twitter.com/pennycontest17>
 - Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/pennycontest2017/>
 - Paid promotion of select posts to increase reach

PRINT RESOURCES

- 11" x 18" posters
- 3 7/8" cork coasters
- 18" X 35" light post banners
- Custom vinyl decals

ASSESSMENT

A “How did you hear about us?” question on the submission form will be included as a way to track the overall effectiveness of our communication channels. This will help determine which marketing tactics were most effective, guiding the way for future contest promotion and aiding in improvement of channels that did not reach as far.

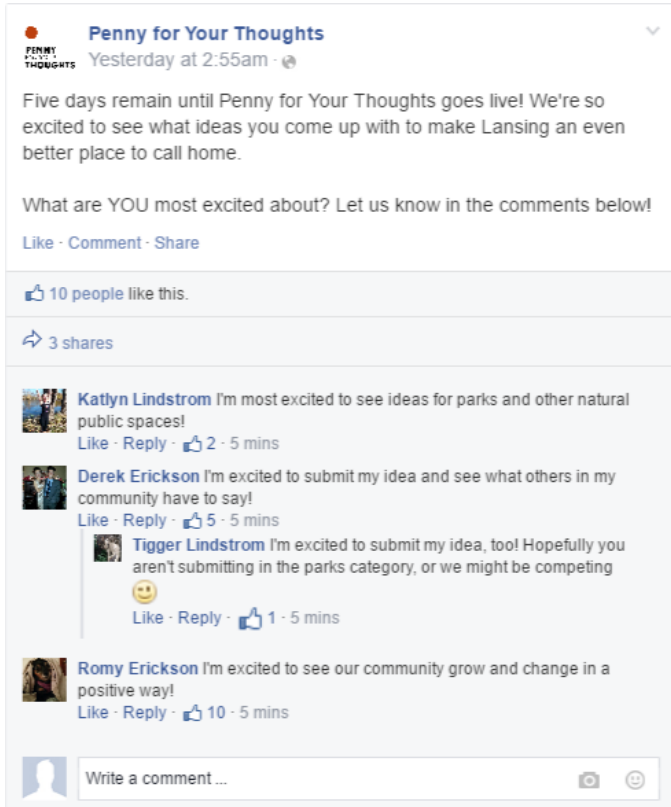
SOCIAL MEDIA

Some assessment of social media can be done during the run of the contest to increase effectiveness of social media messaging. These include:

- Monitoring weekly Facebook insights and track analytics of all social media through a social media management system such as Trello or Hootsuite.
- Organic self-correction based on the types of posts that audience respond to the most.

APPENDIX A

FACEBOOK PRE-LAUNCH



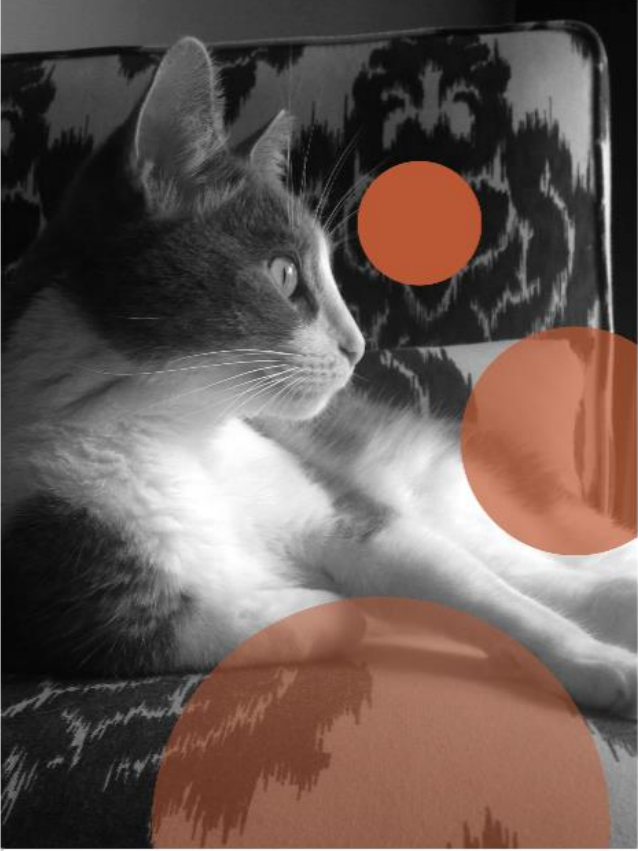
Text post example



Image post example

DURATION OF CONTEST

Penny for Your Thoughts
Today at 11:40am · 🌐



"I want to convert the parking lot in front of Clara's into a natural area and bird sanctuary. An important part of sustainable development is making sure all community members - even the ones with wings or fur - have a comfortable place to play in and call home!"


-Tigger, Lansing Resident, "A Home for Our Feathered Friends"

react to Tigger's idea and see what other community members are submitting here: www.ourcommunity.org.

Like · Comment · Share

👍 12 people like this.

↪️ 5 shares

 **Romy Erickson** This is such an awesome idea! I love birds, too.
Like · Reply · 5 mins

Write a comment...

Contestant spotlight sample

Penny for Your Thoughts
Yesterday at 2:55am · 🌐

Just three weeks left to give us YOUR idea to make Lansing vibrant! This is the chance to be heard and help strengthen your the community you call home - plus, the top 100 ideas will earn a \$25 cash prize.

To submit your idea and check out what others have submitted, go to www.ourcommunity.org now!

Like · Comment · Share


👍 7 people like this.

↪️ 15 shares

Write a comment...

Text post sample

Penny for Your Thoughts
Yesterday at 2:55am · 🌐



Are you struggling with idea inspiration? Well, penny for your thoughts: what could THIS be?


A colorful mural? A revitalized streetscape? Or maybe something totally different!


Let us know what YOU see now at www.ourcommunity.org.

Like · Comment · Share

👍 41 people like this.

↪️ 9 shares

 **Katlyn Lindstrom** This is such a great idea! I've really been struggling with where to focus my ideas.
Like · Reply · 👍 6 · 5 mins

 **Derek Erickson** Me too! Do you want to meet up at Strange Matter sometime and chat about ideas together?
Like · Reply · 👍 1 · 5 mins

Write a comment...

Conversation-starter sample.

BUSINESS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

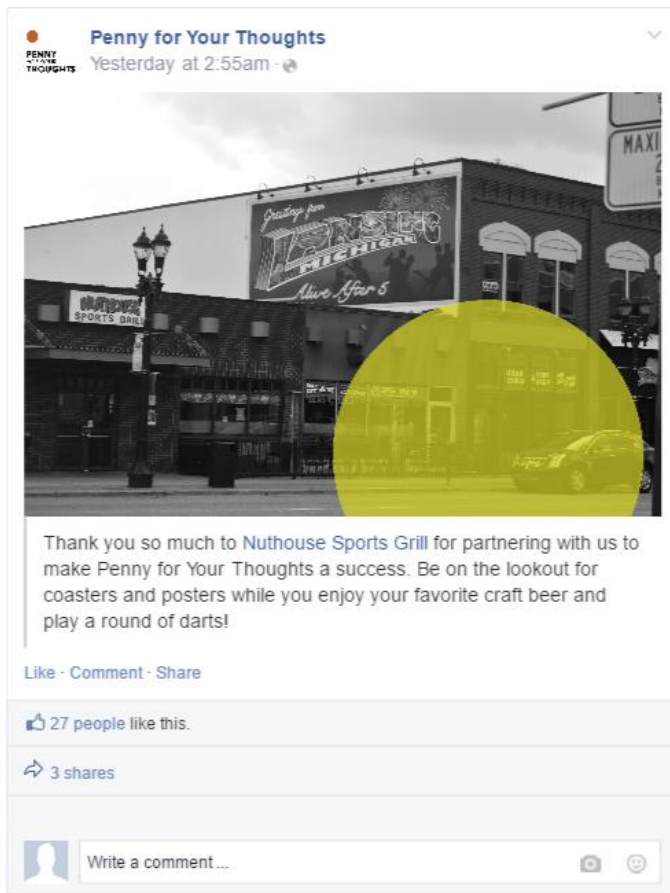


Image post sample



Text post sample

TWITTER PRE-LAUNCH



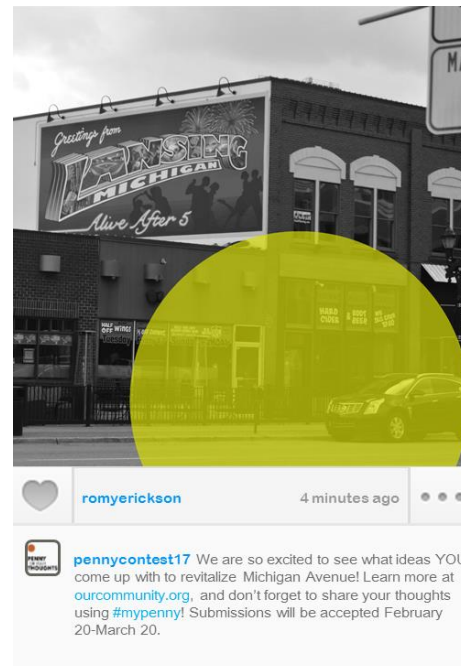
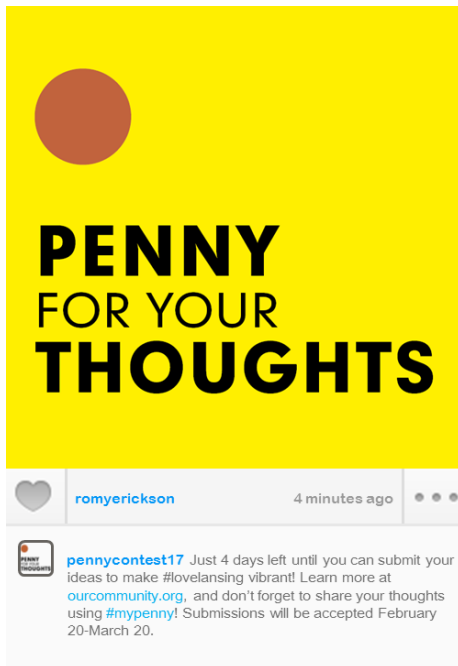
DURATION OF CONTEST



BUSINESS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



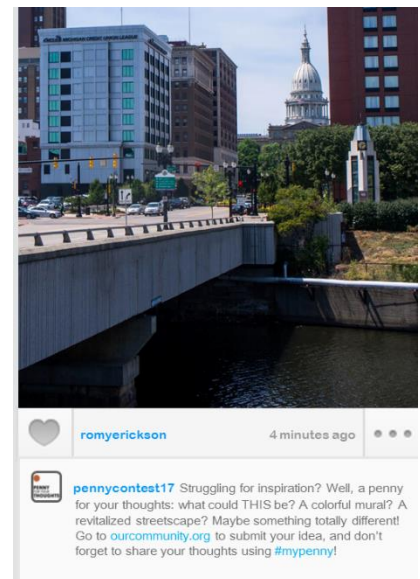
INSTAGRAM PRE-LAUNCH



DURATION OF CONTEST



Contestant spotlight sample



Idea prompt sample

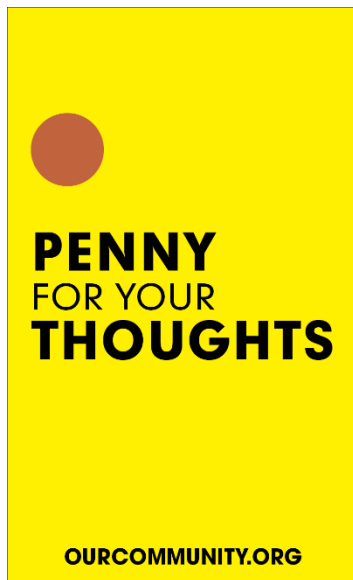
BUSINESS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



PRINT MATERIAL SAMPLES



Coaster sample

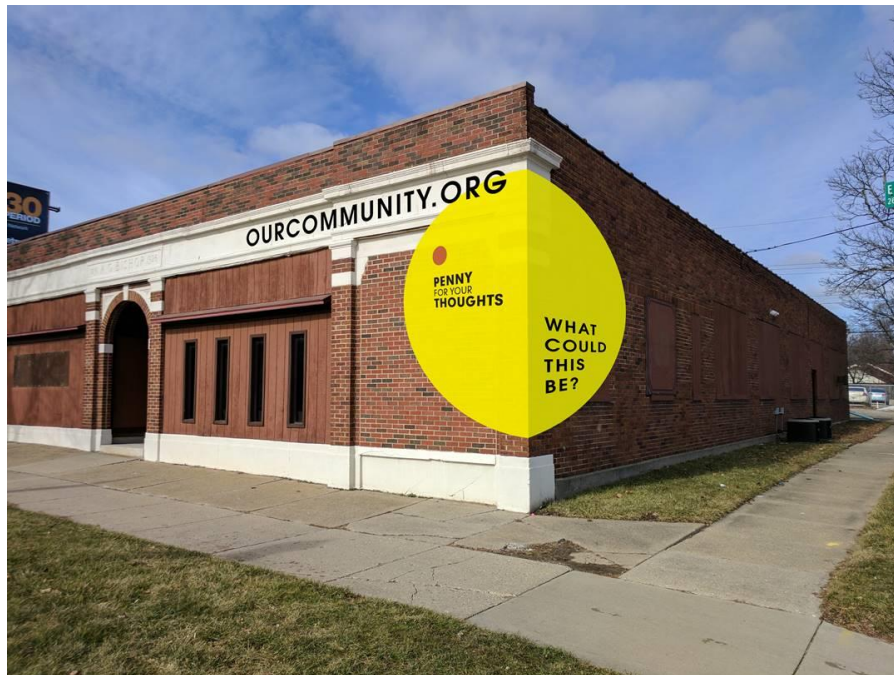


Poster sample



Light post banner sample

GUERILLA MARKETING SAMPLE



Concept image courtesy of Redhead Design Studio

RADIO AND TELEVISION PSAS

15-SECOND

A Penny for Your Thoughts! That's right, our Community Foundation wants to know YOUR ideas to make Lansing vibrant. The top 100 ideas will get a \$25 cash prize! Go to [OUR COMMUNITY DOT ORG](http://OURCOMMUNITY.ORG) to share YOUR ideas, now through March 20th.

30-SECOND

A Penny for Your Thoughts! That's right, our Community Foundation wants to know YOUR ideas to make Lansing vibrant. The top 100 ideas will get a \$25 cash prize! Contest categories include parks, buildings, waterfront, art, entertainment and more. Projects must be located along or near Michigan Avenue, east of the capitol. Go to [OUR COMMUNITY DOT ORG](http://OURCOMMUNITY.ORG) to share YOUR ideas, now through March 20th.

PRESS RELEASE

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES CONTEST

Wanted: Ideas to make Lansing vibrant! The Community Foundation's "Penny for Your Thoughts" is a contest for ideas to make Lansing's urban core vibrant and attractive. A \$25 cash prize will be awarded for the top 100 ideas submitted by individuals, businesses or organizations in the Greater Lansing area. The contest runs February 20-March 20.

Contest categories include parks, buildings, waterfront, art, entertainment and more. Projects must be located along or near Michigan Avenue, east of the Capitol. Contest participants are directed to OurCommunity.org for contest guidelines, to share ideas and to comment on others' ideas.

The "Penny for Your Thoughts" contest kicks off the Community Foundation's new placemaking initiative, creating vibrant communities to attract talent and enhance economic prosperity in our region. The Foundation defines placemaking as a collective community vision and process of re-imagining public spaces (such as neighborhoods, downtowns, waterfronts, parks, plazas, markets, etc.) and the arts and activities that create culture and a social environment.

"Placemaking is an investment that attracts and retains a talented workforce, employers and jobs, which develops our region's economy," said Dennis Fliehm, president and CEO of the Community Foundation. "An improved economy helps everyone, especially the disadvantaged."

Although the Community Foundation is focusing first on the region's urban core - the Michigan Avenue corridor - the Foundation plans to expand placemaking efforts in other downtowns throughout the region.

About Our Community Foundation

The Capital Region Community Foundation was created in 1987 by the community to support the charitable needs and philanthropic interests of people living in Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties. **Our Community Foundation's three priorities are donor services, grantmaking and strategic projects.** The Foundation works with donors to meet their unique charitable goals, then makes grants and leads innovative projects that drive community growth.

PARTNERSHIP INVITATION EMAIL FOR BUSINESSES

MICHIGAN AVENUE

Subject: Improve Michigan Avenue, Improve Your Business

Improving the Michigan Avenue corridor means good things for your business!

You can help by promoting "Penny for Your Thoughts" - our contest to generate ideas to make the corridor vibrant. The contest runs February 20-March 20.

Reply to klindstrom@ourcommunity.org and we will bring you posters and drink coasters next week!

GRAND RIVER AVENUE

Subject: Vibrant Community, Vibrant Business

A vibrant community attracts and retains students and young professionals – which means good things for your business!

You can help by promoting “Penny for Your Thoughts” – our contest to generate ideas to make the corridor vibrant. The contest runs February 20-March 20.

Reply to klindstrom@ourcommunity.org and we will bring you posters and drink coasters next week!

MSU CAMPUS

Subject: Attract New Spartans to Our Community

A vibrant community attracts new students and faculty– which means good things for our Spartan Family!

You can help by promoting “Penny for Your Thoughts” – our contest to generate ideas to make the corridor vibrant. The contest runs February 20-March 20.

Reply to klindstrom@ourcommunity.org and we will bring you posters to hang in residence halls next week!