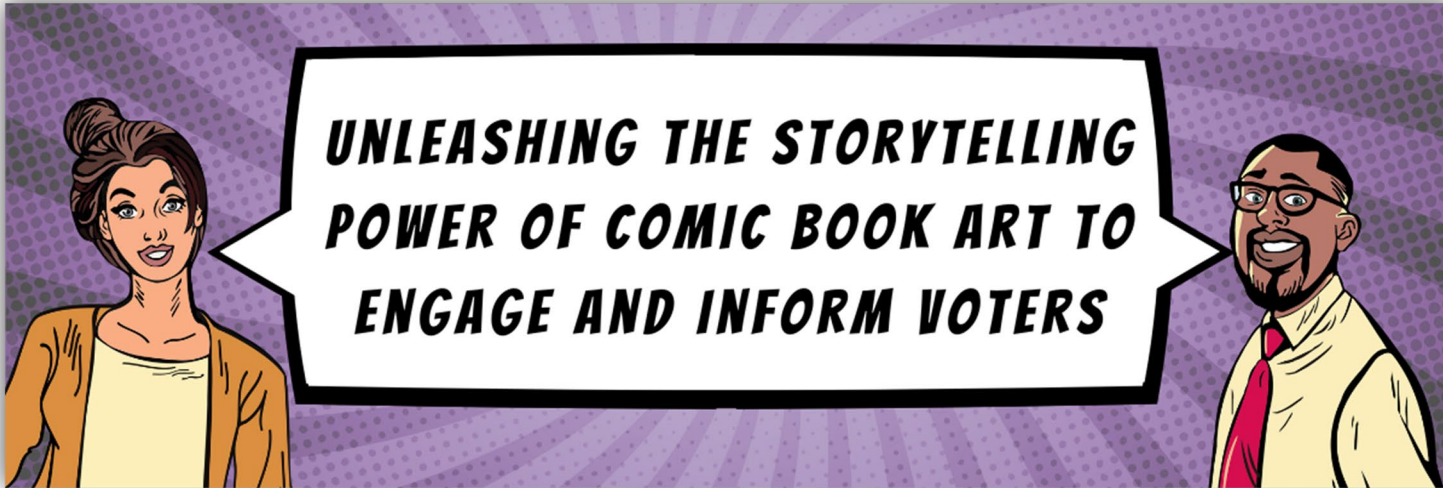




Snohomish County Elections

A Division of the Auditor's Office



2023 EAC Clearinghouse Awards

Distinguished Voter Education and Communications Initiatives

Mission Statement: "To conduct fair, accountable elections and encourage people to understand and participate in the voting process."

With the proliferation of information about elections and voting through both traditional channels as well as through social and digital media, it can be challenging for elections administrators and their offices to be heard. Snohomish County Elections has leveraged comic book-style art to cut through the chatter and better reach and engage its voters and community.

This voter education and communication strategy is innovative, sustainable, cost-effective, and easily replicated by other local election officials.

WHY COMIC BOOK-STYLE ART?

Comic book art has long been recognized for its persuasive storytelling power and ability to educate, inform, and impact the attitudes and behaviors of its reader. Comic book-style art is approachable, appeals to a wide range of audiences and age demographics, and can be leveraged consistently across communication channels ranging from social media to bus ads to voter pamphlets. The format, which includes engaging visuals and story frames/strips, is a powerful storytelling technique that helps to simplify complex information and ideas. The use of relatable characters creates a positive association that taps into the emotional aspect of communication and can promote self-identification and foster a deeper connection with our audience. Comic book-style art also helps establish a strong visual identity when consistently applied across communication channels.

HOW WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

Snohomish County Elections began incorporating comic book visuals and storytelling elements into our voter education and outreach materials in 2023.

2023 Primary Local Voters' Pamphlet

The first project utilizing the comic book style was Snohomish County's August Primary local voters' pamphlet. The aim was to communicate why voting in local elections is important using a more innovative design approach.

The carefully worded conversation between the two characters effectively informs voters why voting in local elections matters and the conversational form allows readers to connect with and relate to the characters. The background scene depicts one of our local libraries—a choice that sought to anchor the characters within our community and create a sense of belonging for readers. After its publication, the library wrote to express their excitement: "Our Library Manager was both proud and joyful to see our library featured on the cover."

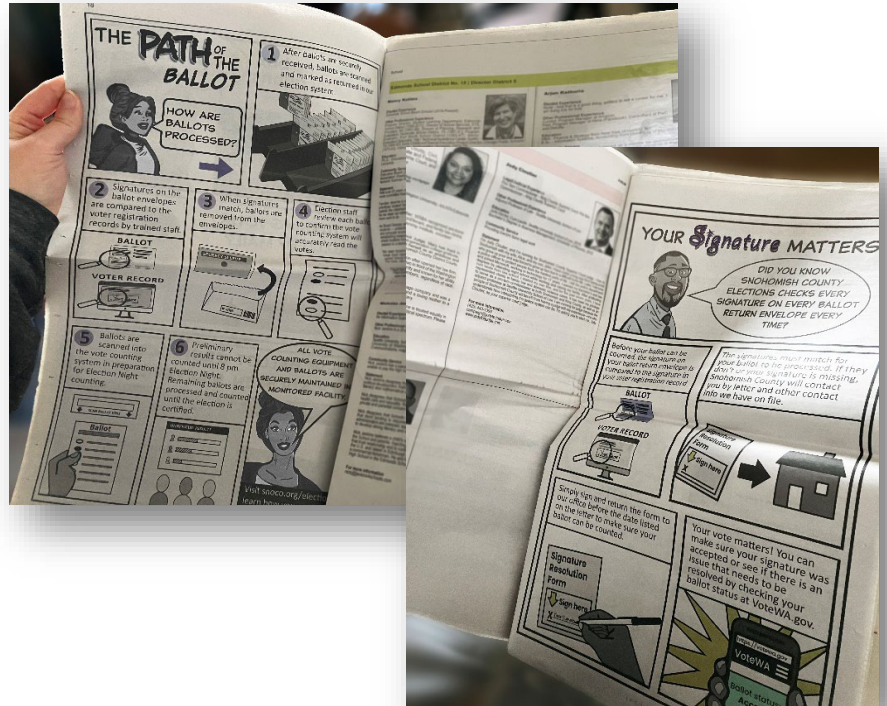


2023 Primary Local Voters' Pamphlet continued...

The use of comic book-style art continues inside the pages of the voters' pamphlet.

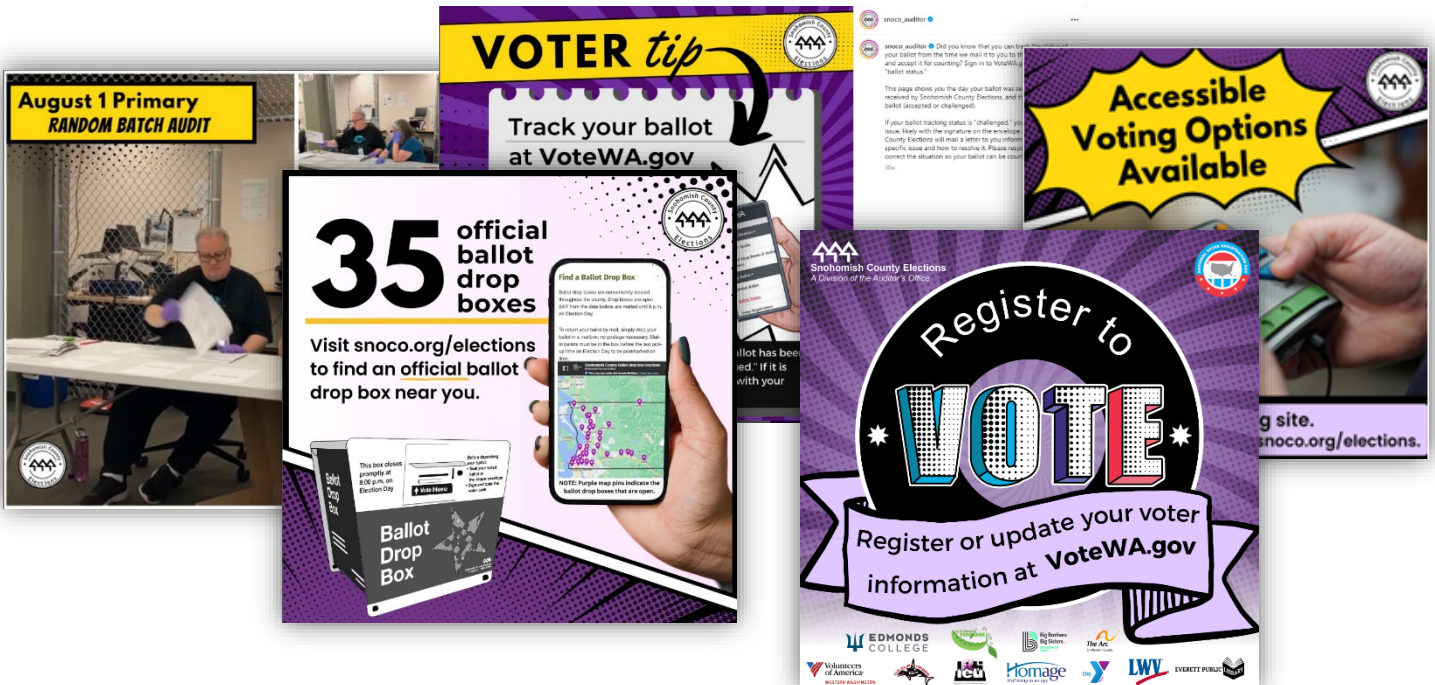
Comic book strips and frames were designed, outlining the mail ballot process, the mail ballot signature verification process, and election security features. We also incorporated a series of small "voter tips" designed with the comic book-style feel to grab voters' attention and provide accurate information and tips to ensure their vote is counted.

The response from the community exceeded our expectations. Voters from various age groups and backgrounds expressed how engaging, informative, and helpful the new graphics were.



Social Media

After seeing the success of our voters' pamphlet, Snohomish County Elections expanded the approach across our social media channels. Elements like bold call boxes, starbursts, and comic shading techniques were combined with photos to draw people into the messaging. The bold comic book-style art created a memorable visual identity. When people see our social media posts, they instantly know it is from Snohomish County Elections.



2023 General Election local voters' pamphlet

In November of 2023, Snohomish County Elections continued using comic book-style art in its local voters' pamphlet. As with the Primary, the cover depicts characters in conversation about voting outside a local library. Phrasing from a separate outreach campaign entitled "Voting is easy!" was included to connect the two campaigns and extend our reach. The inside informational pages were also redesigned to incorporate the comic book theme further. The comic book elements helped to significantly improve the readability of the information.

Snohomish County Official Local Voters' Pamphlet

November 7, 2023 General Election



Snohomish County Elections
A Division of the Auditor's Office

Ballots mail October 19

Snohomish County Official Local Voters' Pamphlet November 7, 2023 General Election

This pamphlet contains news and updates for you as an eligible voter in Snohomish County. The information is available online at www.sno.wa.gov/elections. If you are unable to access the website, you may call the Elections Office at 425-382-3444. This pamphlet is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, and other languages.

Letter to Voters

Dear voters, this pamphlet is here to help you understand the process of voting in Snohomish County. It contains information about how to register, how to vote, and how to make changes to your registration. We hope this information helps you make the most of your vote.

Vote by mail: If you are not registered to vote by mail, you must register to vote by mail. You can register to vote by mail at www.sno.wa.gov/elections.

Vote in person: If you are registered to vote by mail, you can still vote in person. You can vote in person at a polling station on Election Day, November 7, 2023.

Register to vote: You must register to vote in Washington. You can register to vote online at www.sno.wa.gov/elections or by mail at www.sno.wa.gov/elections.

Who can register? To register to vote in Washington, you must be a citizen of the United States, at least 18 years old, and a resident of Washington for at least 30 days before Election Day.

Registration Deadlines: The deadline to register to vote online or by mail is October 30, 2023. The deadline to register in person is Election Day, November 7, 2023.

Accessible Voting Sites: Each Accessible Voting Site is equipped with Accessible Voting Sites (AVS) which are accessible by wheelchair. AVS are available at the following locations:

Ballots mail October 19

WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

ONLINE BY MAIL

IN PERSON

Register to vote and get a ballot in person at our office or an Accessible Voting Site through 8 p.m. on Election Day.

General Voter Information

Voting is easy!

In Washington, voters are automatically mailed to register. Voters can return their voted ballot by mail or in person at an accessible voting site. You can also vote in person at a polling station. See Accessible Voting Sites on page 7. Your vote is counted in the election results.

About the General Election

You may wonder why there are more races on your General Election ballot than on your Primary ballot. This is because the primary election only allows voters to vote for one candidate for each office. The general election allows voters to vote for any candidate for each office.

Register to Vote

To register to vote in Washington, you must be a citizen of the United States, at least 18 years old, and a resident of Washington for at least 30 days before Election Day.

Registration Deadlines: The deadline to register to vote online or by mail is October 30, 2023. The deadline to register in person is Election Day, November 7, 2023.

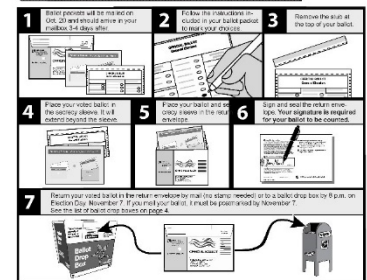
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General Voter Information

How to VOTE



Accessible Voting Sites

Each Accessible Voting Site is equipped with Accessible Voting Sites (AVS) which are accessible by wheelchair. AVS are available at the following locations:

Register to vote and get a ballot through 8 p.m. on Election Day, November 7.

Ballots mail October 19

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Register to vote and get a ballot in person at our office or an Accessible Voting Site through 8 p.m. on Election Day.

As an excellent example of comic book-style art's appeal, two librarians from the library featured on the cover recreated the scene and posted their recreation to social media, garnering significant engagement from followers and expanding the reach of our messages.

"[Our] library received our voters' pamphlets and we are featured in the cartoon on the cover. We feel like rock stars!!! Please extend our thanks to the artist and all the SnoCo elections folks !! 😊"

Email from local library staff



Other Voter Outreach Materials

Since the initial response and outcomes from voters and our community partners were overwhelmingly positive, we continue to build upon this sustainable and cost-effective foundation and embrace comic book-style art and elements in our other voter outreach materials including direct mailing, flyers, posters, and more.



We have found that materials designed in comic book-style for the local voters' pamphlet have been useful in other settings such as serving as instructional posters at outreach and tabling events. Having these resources at the ready has also increased our capacity to do more events in the community.



2024 Presidential Primary Educational Posts

In early 2024 Snohomish County Elections developed a series of educational social media posts to educate the public about the unique aspects of Washington State's Presidential Primary system. Again, the approachable characters and the ability to match a conversational tone with simple images helped deliver our messaging in a positive manner.



WHAT TOOLS WERE USED?

An in-house employee performed all the design and implementation work. She found inspiration from a variety of sources, including photographs, online reference images, and comic books. She used Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop to create the cover art for the Primary and General Elections local voters' pamphlets. She designed the characters and constructed the background scenes featuring local libraries.

To craft our social media posts, she relies on user-friendly design tools such as Canva and Adobe Express and the vast collection of free design templates and comic book-style illustrations available through Adobe Stock. The availability of these resources means that other election offices can easily replicate this process of infusing comic-book-style art into the full range of voting materials.

WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES?

Snohomish County Elections has received significant positive feedback on its use of comic book-style art in its communications and has seen increased engagement with its social media content. Immediately after the distribution of the 2023 Primary Local Voters' Pamphlet, our social media audience grew by 25% after just one week, and overtime, our audience engagement increased by 532% (Yes, you read that correctly)! We have also noticed a consistent trend that our comic book themed posts on social media are shared by community members, local school districts, and nonprofit organizations 80% more often than our other posts.

As we mentioned earlier, community partners have recreated our comic book-style scenes in-real-life and it continues to be an excellent bridge-building initiative. Our community partners have also recognized and appreciated the benefits and effectiveness of the comic book-style art as we highlight their work.



“The League of Women Voters of Snohomish County deeply appreciates our partnership with Snohomish County Elections. We've been impressed by their creative approach to voter outreach. Their willingness to try new ideas has been inspiring and effective. For the 2023 general election, a QR code link to League candidate forum was included in local voter pamphlets. The comic was fun, informative, and engaging. As a result, we saw a significant increase in views and 'listens'. Visits to our YouTube and podcast recordings increased by more than 80%. Many voters had not been aware of these local forums. We believe this partnership provided much needed non-partisan information that helped voters make more informed decisions. We look forward to working together in 2024.”

Karen Crowley
President - LWVSC

Conclusion

The decision to incorporate comic book-style art into a full range of voting materials has achieved successful outcomes for Snohomish County Elections, voters, and community partners. The response from our community has been overwhelmingly positive, and as we continue to build upon this innovative approach to communicating elections information and integrate comic book-style art and elements into more of our voter education materials, we expect to see more organizations and communities benefit from this initiative.