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Are Municipal Branding Campaigns Worth the Price?

Branding marketing promises new attention -- and money -- to cities.

BY: RYAN HOLEYWELL | DECEMBER 2012

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For the last 12 years, Don McEachern has been traveling the United States and making a relatively simple pitch to city leaders coast to coast. For a modest sum -- typically somewhere between \$80,000 and \$200,000 for a medium-sized city -- he can help improve a city's image, contributing to gains in tourism, economic development and citizen pride.

Many of his clients are places you've probably never heard of and will probably never visit, like Brookings, S.D.; Walton County, Ga.; and Goshen, Ind. But if McEachern has his way, once acquainted with them, you'll never forget them. McEachern's Nashville-based North Star Destination Strategies is one of the leading firms in the field of place branding, a specialized type of marketing that promises to help tell a community's story by drawing on lessons learned from market research, focus groups and surveys. In short, McEachern helps cities develop their brand. Call it their essence, their character, their spirit -- whatever it is, a brand, McEachern explains, "is what they say about you when you're not around."

The field has its skeptics. Critics of place branding say McEachern and his ilk are selling a false promise. A city's brand is developed over years by its policies and its amenities, and a glorified marketing effort can't change that, they argue. But advocates for place branding say services provided by firms like North Star are so integral to the success of a city that it's nearly impossible to compete without them.

Ultimately, does place branding really work? That depends on whether you trust McEachern. He insists it does. But he's also the first to acknowledge that he has almost no proof.

brookings

SOUTH DAKOTA

BRING YOUR DREAMS.

Every city is trying to capture a little bit of the branding magic that has helped put some of America's best known cities on the map. Many are associated with catchy slogans -- not necessarily developed by city governments themselves -- like "Keep Austin Weird" or "What Happens in Vegas Stays in Vegas." Other places have an instantly recognizable nickname, like the Windy City, the Motor City or the Big Easy. Those in the branding community say that while a slogan or motto is part of a brand, they're more concerned with projecting a broader image of a community, like the reputation Portland, Ore., has as a haven for

independent-minded hipsters, Santa Fe's position as a destination for those embracing Southwest arts and culture, or Miami's role as a place for sun, surf and nightlife.

But most cities aren't Portland, Santa Fe or Miami. The vast majority of America's small and midsize cities don't have much of a reputation very far beyond their borders. That's where branding consultants like North Star and its competitors come in, pledging to help communities distinguish themselves.

North Star officials speak at events run by groups like the National League of Cities and the International City/County Management Association. The firm distributes information about successful campaigns to potential clients, and its efforts have been well documented in local newspapers across the country. So when city leaders decide to pursue branding, McEachern says, "people think of us."

The typical product provided by North Star and other companies includes a logo, a slogan and a broader message or narrative about a community, as well as a list of steps that should be taken to help spread that story. "I wish I had a dollar for every time I heard 'small-town charm with big-city amenities,'" McEachern says. "That might be extremely relevant about a place, but it's not the least bit distinct."

If a community has done a particularly good job at identifying and understanding its brand, it won't just serve as a marketing tool. Rather, it will actually be used to guide decision-making, almost like a citywide mission statement. Advocates for the process don't shy away from emphasizing how important they believe developing a brand to be. A report by the group CEO for Cities says branding can help repair a city's image problem and raise awareness of what makes a city a good place to live. It goes so far as to call branding the foundation of what makes a place desirable. "A city is not Coca-Cola," says Alison Maxwell, deputy director of economic development for Glendale, Calif. "It's a living, breathing, amorphous entity. Good branding can bring the sum of the parts together and give you a hook to hang your identity on."

You've likely never heard of Petersburg, Alaska, pop. 3,000. The tiny town about 110 miles southeast of Juneau sits on a coastal island that's only accessible by boat or plane. With snowcapped peaks towering over a quaint harbor, it's a picturesque Alaska fishing town -- which doesn't make it all that different from many of its neighbors.

So last year, in an effort to distinguish itself, Petersburg hired North Star for the full branding treatment. (Since landing Sumner County, Tenn., as its first client in 2000, North Star has provided services to about 180 communities.) The firm conducted a series of focus groups, interviews and surveys of stakeholders, residents and Alaskans from other parts of the state. The data revealed some interesting aspects of the city. Its best assets, research found, include its reputation as an authentic town not inundated with tourists like other Alaskan coastal communities, and the fishing industry in Petersburg is well known and respected. Petersburg is also unique in having a deep-rooted Norwegian culture. While residents overwhelmingly said they recommend it as a place to visit, they weren't as enthusiastic about recommending it as a place to live. Ultimately, the city's historic lack of messaging meant many Alaskans -- even those living near Petersburg -- weren't that familiar with the city. While obstacles like high transportation costs weren't helping Petersburg get visitors, neither was its hesitancy to be its own advocate.

The key to a good brand, McEachern says, is linking up research with an authentic message that resonates. North Star concluded that while Petersburg can't claim the distinction of being Alaska's best fishing village, it could own the title as Alaska's best Norwegian fishing village. That, North Star says, works to the city's advantage because it plays into the town's reputation as industrious and hardworking. North Star -- as it does with all clients -- boiled it all down into one sentence known

as a "brand platform" that's meant to be the driving force behind all the city's messaging efforts: "For those seeking adventure and independence, Petersburg is at the heart of Southeast Alaska on Frederick Sound, where the fishing culture is distinguished by a strong Norwegian heritage, so your hard work and pursuit of authenticity are rewarded."

X In addition to developing a logo for the city (featuring six fishing ships) and a new slogan ("Little Norway. Big Adventure."), North Star suggested some other ways the city could spread the brand. McEachern typically proposes strategies beyond traditional advertising, largely because he works with cities that don't have big budgets for major ad campaigns. For starters, North Star told Petersburg to inventory all things "Norwegian" about the city -- festivals, foods, traditions -- and highlight them. It also recommended developing an online community calendar, a citywide Flickr account (followed by a photo contest), an endurance race through area trails and online job listings -- all to generate buzz about the town.

The firm designed signage for the airport and harbor, and directional markers around town that feature Petersburg's new logo and color scheme. It offered suggestions for content and design of a new website, print advertisements and trade show booths. It gave ideas for merchandise to be branded with the new city logo, like workboots and fleece jackets. It provided city leaders with words they should use in written materials and even in conversation to spread the brand, like "authentic Alaska," "small-town feel" and "adventure." It even suggested a new way for city staffers to answer their phones that plays up the Norwegian angle: "Velkommen to Petersburg."

The city and affiliated entities are using the new logo and slogan on business cards, stationery and websites. A new public library will include a totem pole that incorporates Norwegian designs, per North Star's recommendation. A recent promotion with Dodge Ram at the Alaska State Fair offered fairgoers the chance to win a free trip to Petersburg. The chamber of commerce is scheduled to have a booth at the upcoming Seattle boat show in January. The community is even planning or advertising in Alaska Airlines' in-flight magazine. "I couldn't believe the number of people who came up to me and told me 'I so excited about this project,'" says Liz Cabrera, coordinator of the Petersburg Economic Development Council. "It was almost like the horses got let out of the corral."

Skeptics may wonder why Petersburg needed to spend \$75,000 to get consultants to travel 2,500 miles and confirm that the Norwegian fishing town is, in fact, exactly that. But McEachern says that in the case of Petersburg, his company's value is in providing insight on how the city should convey its message, as opposed to the message itself.

Still, skeptics contend that at a time when cities are struggling financially, it's irresponsible to spend money on amorphous branding campaigns that don't provide a concrete return on investment. Many have also questioned whether a process originally designed for corporations can work for a community. A 2006 paper on city branding by a pair of Danish professors noted that city branding campaigns tend to be bland -- and thus fail to stand out -- thanks to the manner in which they're developed. Cities are diverse places: In order for a brand to see the light of day, it needs buy-in from a broad group of stakeholders. So while the intent of place branding is to emphasize what makes a city unique, the messages that come from branding efforts can sometimes be anything but that. "The result may appear well meant," the researchers concluded, "but the remarkable and catchy will elude the branding effort."

Indeed, while Petersburg gave North Star a lot to work with, other communities offer greater challenges. Some slogans developed by North Star -- like "Bring Your Dreams" for Brookings, S.D., or "Yours Truly" for Lee's Summit, Mo. -- could probably be used in any city in America. Steve Arbo, the city manager of Lee's Summit, a Kansas City suburb of 91,000, says that there was some skepticism when that slogan was first revealed. "There are those that said, 'This is a waste of money as you could have paid me \$75,000 to come up with 'Yours Truly,'" Arbo says. But he dismisses those critics as people who "don't have a full understanding of what we're trying to do." The slogan is part of a broader message that emphasizes Lee's Summit as a place that values community.

X Critics also wonder why an outside consultant is even necessary. Glendale, Calif., for example, finalized a branding campaign led by North Star last year. The city didn't have a bad image, says Maxwell, the deputy director for economic development. It just didn't have much of a reputation at all. Ultimately, the city and North Star selected "Your Life. Animated." The intent is to highlight Glendale's position as home to DreamWorks Animation, the studio behind animated movies like "Shrek" and "Kung Fu Panda," and Walt Disney's Imagineering, which develops components for Disney's theme

parks. The phrase has a double meaning meant to convey positive feelings about the city beyond the industry. "It gives you something we can talk about," Maxwell says. "It helps everyone coalesce around an image and sense of self."

Dave Weaver, a retired engineer who serves on the Glendale City Council, says he's not convinced the city needed to hire outside consultant. "I said, 'You've come from the East Coast, and you want me to tell you about the town I was born and raised in so you can tell me how to brand ourselves?'" He says the effort could have been done internally, or the city could have used creative types from the area. "Let the entertainment people come with their ideas," Weaver says. "It's in their own backyard."

City officials would be better off focusing on concrete improvements they can make to their communities, some have argued. "I said from the beginning: If you want to change the image of the city, change the city," says Steven Holzman, a city commissioner in Boynton Beach, Fla., which spent about \$15,000 on a branding campaign. "We have areas that are blighted. There's trash strewn. The landscaping needs to be replaced. We don't have sidewalks and curbs on major streets. You can tell people all you want about how beautiful it is, but when they drive and see it with their own eyes, it's not as beautiful."

That kind of criticism isn't unique. North Star's own Petersburg report, for example, notes that the city faces serious hurdles: declining population, a lack of higher education opportunities and few entertainment venues to attract new, young residents. It's hard to imagine a branding campaign reversing all of that. Scott Doyon, a principal with PlaceMakers, a firm that specializes in urban planning and marketing, says cities undergoing branding campaigns risk advancing a message that's too aspirational and not rooted in reality. The best plan, he says, is to try to leverage positive qualities -- not dupe people. "Cities already have a brand whether they've done anything to cultivate one," Doyon says. "They tend to get the most respect if they can find a way to leverage that reputation."

Still, Holzman wonders if the relatively small amount of money that his city and other midsize communities spend on branding will have much impact, considering that they don't have the resources to spend millions of dollars on advertising campaigns that will get lots of eyeballs. If they can't go all out, he reasons, then what's the point? But McEachern counters that his efforts give cities the power to get the smartest use out of the limited dollars they've already budgeted for marketing.

Sometimes -- for reasons that can't always be anticipated -- branding efforts flop when they're first rolled out. When Oak Park, Ill., revealed its new logo, bloggers suggested it resembled a stylized phallus. Critics of Dunwoody, Ga.'s new logo, which featured sky-blue text and a large neon asterisk, said it was remarkably similar to Walmart's. And Colorado Springs faced a double dose of criticism. After committing \$111,000 on a branding project, city officials didn't get the reception they had hoped for. Its slogan, "Live It Up," was panned as generic and unoriginal (it turns out Battle Creek, Mich., had used the same one), and some said the logo looked like clip art.

"You spend months working on a strategy, and people say 'Show me the logo, show me the tagline,'" recalls Doug Price, president and CEO of Colorado Springs' Convention and Visitors Bureau. "We got to the end, and when we announced it was going to be 'Live It Up' ... everybody's a critic. People say, 'How did you come up with something that stupid?'"

Colorado Springs ultimately kept the slogan. Price is a fan, noting its double meaning ("It's an attitude and it's an altitude"). It still responded to the criticism of the logo with a redesign contest and wound up with a new logo that was vastly more popular. "My advice is to pull the tent flaps back as far as you can and get as many people involved," says Price.

In the end, the most critical question is whether branding matters. Experts in the field say that, to an extent, its return on investment can be measured by social and economic indicators, job creation numbers, tourist trips and opinion surveys of the brand itself. Indeed, the New Mexico Tourism Department, which recently launched a multimillion dollar "New Mexico True" campaign, says it's so critical to measure the ROI that it's budgeted for a consultant to study the ads' impact.

Still, it can be difficult to measure the true return, since indicators like jobs don't change in a vacuum. Ask a new resident whether the "Yours Truly" campaign helped convince her to move to Lee's Summit, and she'll probably say no -- even if the campaign really did play a role -- since marketing done well is subtle. "I've been asking people all over the country if anyone ever moved anywhere or even spent a vacation somewhere because they had a great logo and a line," McEachern says. "Nobody's raised their hands."

Cities may not be able to point to specific effects of a branding campaign, but in many cases, McEachern says, a new brand will infuse existing city efforts with new energy. "There are so many variables at play, there's no clean return on investment this, and if anyone tells you there is, they're selling you something. There simply isn't."

Arbo, of Lee's Summit, says he knows the campaign on its own won't prompt people to move to his city or open businesses there. But he hopes -- and expects -- that it might be enough to get people to give Lee's Summit a second look. "The rest," Arbo says, "is up to us."

Images courtesy of North Star Destination Strategies

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 INTRODUCTION

4 OWNERSHIP

5 PHILOSOPHY

SCOPE OF WORK

6 Education and Buy-In

7 Research and Planning

10 Insights

11 Creativity

12 Action

13 Evaluation

14 TIMELINE

13 INVESTMENT

16 REFERENCES - *Separate Document*

19 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

20 KEY PERSONNEL

23 CONCLUSION

NORTH STAR

Manchester Road Corridor BrandPrint

December 13, 2012

NORTHSTARIDEAS.COM

INTRODUCTION

The Manchester Road Great Streets Master Plan has illustrated the community's vision for the corridor between Routes 141 and 109, in the municipalities of Ballwin, Ellisville and Wildwood. It has also identified the need for the corridor to develop a destination identity for the pursuit of economic vitality and sustainability for the region.

North Star is one of the nation's leading research, community branding and strategy development companies, focused on communities across the U.S. In the past 12 years, North Star has partnered with more than 150 communities in 38 states nationwide to identify their competitive strengths and leverage those strengths strategically, creatively and tactically for the purposes of increasing overall economic viability.

Our approach to economic development is grounded in the philosophy that economic development strategies cannot be pursued in a vacuum. Rather, the most successful regions work encourage all consumer touch points send the same strong singular messages about the area. Building a reputation that exists outside your communications is critical since the most current data indicates that 75% of capital investment deals don't involve an initial contact with an EDO until a short list of potential location options for investment has been created. Economic development is built on relationships . . . both internal and external. As part of its process, North Star spends considerable time on relationship-building practices. We will educate your internal constituents on the true potential of branding (it is NOT just a logo and line). Branding done right helps all ships rise; as such, it is of interest and value to everyone.

With your internal audience energized, we work with them on brand discovery. Who better to help uncover the Manchester Road Corridor business brand than those who work in it every day? Bottom line, your internal audience will be more likely to support the brand tomorrow if they have a hand in shaping it today. At the same time, we conduct brand discovery with key audiences outside the region, the state and even the nation. Economic development prospects, site selectors, relocation executives and state-level economic development executives will share their views on the Manchester Road Corridor's identity, strengths and weaknesses.

Once the brand is developed, it's again time for relationship building. Without grassroots support, branding seldom rises above the status of a graphic identity. As such, we help grow an internal ambassador network to carry on the purpose and the passion of the brand. Only after we have created this insightful army of ambassadors, do we turn our eyes outside to the ever-important external audiences with a strategic plan that combines marketing, PR methodologies, special events and more. At this point, every source of information your key audiences encounter regarding the Manchester Road Corridor as a place to do business – peers, red carpet tours, digital media, advertising, media coverage –

should offer the same memorable and resonating messaging regarding the Corridor's business advantage.

Just as valuable as the distinct brand that North Star can help the region uncover and bring to life, is the way North Star's process brings diverse players together to work collaboratively to strengthen the region's economic vitality.

Of course, a real key to being successful in economic development is having the right team. So, selecting the right branding partner for an initiative of this magnitude is critical. Following is our customized work plan for uncovering and implementing the Manchester Road Corridor's economic development brand.

OWNERSHIP

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North Star Destination Strategies, Inc. was established in 2000 and is owned by:

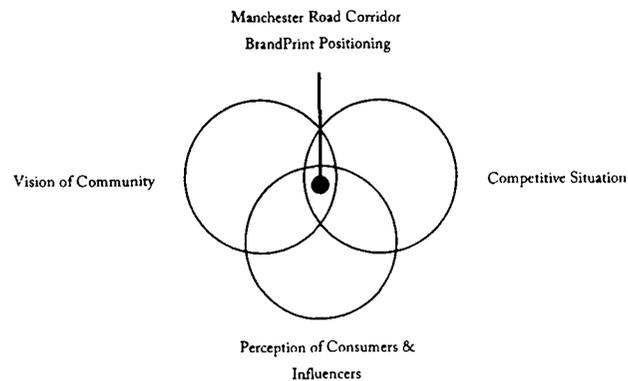
Don McEachern – President & CEO

We are over two dozen professionals committed to building strong community brands.

PHILOSOPHY

We believe that through research, strategy, creativity and action, your brand can connect the soul of your community to the heart of your consumers.

Through the **Community BrandPrint** process, we determine the Manchester Road Corridor's most distinct promise by triangulating your competitive situation, the vision of your stakeholders and the perceptions of your consumer. From that promise, we craft a brand strategy that positions Manchester Road Corridor in the minds of businesses, CEOs, site selectors, entrepreneurs, creative talent, economic development influencers, the media, City leaders and residents. Then, we develop compelling creative, powerful brand action ideas and effective communication and recruitment tools, all of which reinforce the positioning and assure brand equity and growth.



SCOPE OF WORK

1. EDUCATION AND BUY-IN

Helping stakeholders understand branding

One of the most valuable skills North Star brings to the branding table is an understanding of how best to navigate the political waters that surround such a project. This "intangible" benefit is strictly a result of experience. We know when projects can derail, how to maneuver difficult political situations and who to include in the process. And we have developed strategies for sidestepping potential problems and keeping your branding initiative on course.

North Star also provides tactics for the use of a brand as a pivotal rallying point to help forge win-win partnerships between the public and private sector. Such partnerships can help fund the brand initially and fund its integration into the community eventually. In addition, working toward the common goal of the brand inspires non-siloed teamwork within the public sector that results in more effective use of limited resources.

Early understanding is also critical to the smooth implementation of a community brand. Educating your citizens, businesses and stakeholders on the purpose, process and possibility of a brand early is the first step in achieving buy-in from these important audiences. North Star has created an array of educational tools designed to elicit understanding of and support for the Manchester Road Corridor branding initiative.

- 4 **Educational Presentation:** Live PowerPoint presentation (during the in-market trip) to private and public sector stakeholder groups (determined and assembled by client) for purposes of educating and furthering buy-in of community branding.
- 4 **Press Release:** General discussion on what a brand is and does. Highlight need for the public's help during the process.
- 4 **Educational PowerPoint:** Community branding PowerPoint presentation given to client for use in making additional presentations, for distribution to interested parties or for placement on community websites
- 4 **Educational Website:** Website open to community to provide input on brand development and creative executions if need.
- 4 **Educational Brochure:** For distribution to general public. If needed,
 - 4 North Star will work with the Manchester Road Corridor team to write and lay out the brochure to the point of a print-ready file.
 - 4 The Manchester Road Corridor team is responsible for providing information for customized writing and printing

SCOPE OF WORK

2. RESEARCH AND PLANNING

What are current brand perceptions?

This stage addresses the current positioning of the community; in other words, how the Manchester Road Corridor is perceived by stakeholders, residents, and prospective consumers. North Star strongly advocates a mixed method approach to research where quantitative studies tell you "What" and qualitative studies tell you "Why". Only through mixed methodology can your region obtain a true picture of where your brand is now, why, where it should be and how that preferred identity can best be accomplished. In addition, understanding the importance of community involvement and outreach from the get-go, North Star includes several resident focused methodologies including an online community survey, man-on-the-street interviews and resident Tapestry studies

4 COMMUNITY

- 4 *Situation Analysis:* Questionnaire and meeting with stakeholder groups to understand your primary objectives, general history, political landscape, resources, competitors, etc.
- 4 *Research and Planning Audit:* Comprehensive review of research and planning documents
- 4 *Communication and Media Audit:* Review of existing marketing materials from public and private sector stakeholders as well as recent press related to the region
- 4 *Familiarization Tour:* Tour of commercial sites, business parks, housing developments, downtown, retailers, restaurants, outdoor recreation areas, parks, the arts, etc.
- 4 *Key Stakeholder Interviews:* One-on-one interviews with key stakeholders to gather perceptions
- 4 *Stakeholder Focus Group:* An in-depth group discussion with the individuals responsible for driving the branding initiative.
- 4 *Vision Survey:* An open-ended questionnaire distributed to the community leaders of the Manchester Road Corridor
- 4 *Online Community Survey:* A quantitative version of the Vision Survey posted online for community-wide participation.
- 4 *Brand Barometer:* A tool to measure the strength of the Manchester Road Corridor's reputation relative to the rest of the United States as a place to live, work and play
- 4 *Undercover Interviews:* Informal discussions with residents, local merchants and visitors
- 4 *Tapestry® Resident vs. Region Profile:* A detailed market segmentation report created with ESRI's Arcview, Tapestry and Business Analyst software - including U.S. Census Bureau data and consumer buying behavior data from Mediamark Research Intelligence (MRI)
 - Who Report:* Resident socio-economic classifications
 - What Report:* Profile of resident lifestyle habits such as media usage, travel behavior, household buying preferences, recreational interests, civic involvement, dining choices, retail preferences, lodging tendencies.

SCOPE OF WORK

4 CONSUMERS

- 4 *Consumer Mapping:* Origin information from existing databases (inquiries, lodging properties, attractions, etc.)
- 4 *Online Brand Monitoring:* Review of your online reputation that measures quantity and quality of the Manchester Road Corridor's online "mentions" plus the current topics of discussion and keywords surrounding the Manchester Road Corridor. Will be used to guide brand action for purposes of online marketing strategy suggestion and product development.
- 4 *Tapestry® Consumer Profile:* Detailed psychographic report describing consumers to the Manchester Road Corridor using merchant or visitor records.
 - *Who Report:* Consumer demographic and socio-economic classifications; this report also compares your consumers to the profiles of your community. In other words, are your residents like or unlike your visitors?
 - *What Report:* Profile of consumer lifestyle and media habits such as media usage, household buying preferences, recreational interests, civic involvement, dining choices, retail preferences, lodging tendencies, travel behavior and more
 - *Where Report:* Grid showing relative comparisons of feeder markets based on the highest concentration of core consumers
- 4 *Qualitative Perception Study:* Telephone interviews to gather insights from economic development prospects, site selectors, relocation executives, meeting planners, group tour operators, regional, state-level economic development & tourism executives.
- 4 *Business and Development Perceptions Study:* Survey conducted to assess the perception and reputation of the economic development potential of the Manchester Road Corridor. Respondents will be targeted by a select list of company and profession attributes within a predetermined target mile radius. Potential attributes could include business type, industry segments, annual revenue, geographic footprint, and business title or business occupation. Specifically, the survey measures:
 - Overall awareness and perceptions of the Manchester Road Corridor's business climate
 - Attitudes regarding the Manchester Road Corridor's strengths and weaknesses as a place to conduct business
 - Business professional opinions regarding what needs to added to or taken away from the Manchester Road Corridor's business climate
 - Changes in business professional perceptions of the Manchester Road Corridor over time
 - Measurements of the Manchester Road Corridor's delivery of quality-of-life indicators.

SCOPE OF WORK

4 COMPETITION

- 4 *Competitive Positioning Review:* A brand message assessment to evaluate the Manchester Road Corridor's position relative to the competition
- 4 *Competitive Analysis:* A comparative analysis using Business Analyst Software to uncover industry information on the Manchester Road Corridor's top five economic development competitor communities. Insights are derived by comparing retail surplus and leakage levels, projected annual growth rates, size of target industries (classified through SIC and NAICS codes), median household incomes, household types, and the dominant Tapestry segments of resident bases/workforces.
- 4 *Perception Studies:* Understanding of perceptions and attitudes regarding selected competitors

SCOPE OF WORK

3. INSIGHTS

Where is the heart of your brand?

The goals for this initiative may involve a number of elements: identify core economic development industries and/or themes, cohesive regional identity and consistent marketing efforts, collaboration among the corridor communities, highest use of available resources, business and resident recruitment/retention and gross receipts. Branding influences these goals by influencing expectations and affecting attitudes, thus affecting behavior and usage. The most successful brands establish an emotional – not simply an intellectual – connection. Our insights come from asking a number of thought-provoking questions. What brand “story” does the research tell? What emotional attachments can the brand hold? How does the brand fit into various audience lifestyle? How can the brand best be used to elicit the Manchester Road Corridor's desired emotional/behavioral responses? It is from these insights that we determine the overall positioning of the brand.

These insight questions are compiled in a succinct storyline that leads directly to the Manchester Road Corridor's strategic brand platform. This platform is the critical touch point for all branded activity moving forward. For maximum brand impact, all efforts, thoughts, communications and actions should literally and symbolically support its essence.

- 4 Situation Brief: Review of all research findings
- 4 Blue Sky Meeting: Internal session for developing insights based on significant research patterns and findings
- 4 “Understanding and Insights” Presentation: Comprehensive review of all relevant research and recommended strategic direction.
Brand Platform Statement Development: The guiding statement for the management and development of your brand including:
 - 4 *Target audience:* Consumers for whom your community has the most appeal
 - 4 *Frame of reference:* Geographic context of your community
 - 4 *Point of difference:* What makes your community special
 - 4 *Benefit:* Why it should matter to the consumer

NOTE: Here, we conduct a meeting to present all of the research findings as well as our recommended brand positioning based on those findings. Brand Platform approval is required before proceeding.

SCOPE OF WORK

4. CREATIVITY

How should your brand look, feel and sound?

In this stage, all the data and high-level strategies are transformed into tangible creative products that embody your brand. Straplines and logos (with graphic standards) are created. Foundation creative recommendations and looks are developed including targeted marketing messages and advertising, digital design and content recommendations (apps, web portal, social media), collateral materials, stationery and a color palette. Additional deliverables may also be developed including environmental applications, signage, promotional items, economic development prospecting packages and more.

- 4 **Name Development:** Name recommendation and rationale with alternative recommendations
- 4 **Written Creative Concepts (3):** Three different written concepts for communicating your brand will be developed
- 4 **Logos (5) & Graphic Identity Looks (2):** This collaborative process results in a unique and memorable visual identity for your brand. In a word, how will your community's brand look?
 - 4 *Note: There is critical collaboration that takes place at this point with a select group of stakeholders to address the written creative concepts and the development of the foundational graphic identity. North Star then provides solutions for the remainder of the creative work based on that agreed-upon direction.*
- 4 **Brand Narrative:** Takes the foundation of the written concept and breathes life into it through an artistic interpretation of language. Its purpose is to help residents, businesses, influencers and consumers connect and embrace the emotional story of the brand to their own lives. It represents inspiring language meant to describe the Manchester Road Corridor's assets as they relate to your new brand and to garner excitement among brand drivers, brand partners, and regional stakeholders.
- 4 **Brand Identity Guide:** North Star will assist the client in identifying a list of custom deliverables that target your specific goals. Typically those ideas might include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Logo or logo evolution if needed 4 Graphic standards guide 4 Strapline development 4 Color palette 4 Iconic entryway design 4 PowerPoint slide design 4 E-newsletter template 4 Mobile website 4 Signage design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Collateral design 4 Sample advertisements 4 Brand vocabulary 4 Website design application 4 Social media design 4 Business prospect video recommendation 4 Stationery design
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SCOPE OF WORK

5. ACTION

How should your brand act?

In this stage, North Star develops a must-do strategic action plan for the first 6 to 36 months following your brand's development. This plan comprises 15 fundamental actions steps that ensure the brand gains traction and maintains momentum. Many of these tasks involve setting up the organization and cooperation that will propel your brand forward. Our goal – and yours – is to make sure that the Manchester Road Corridor brand is the guiding principle for your economic development future. Not just a logo and line on your letterhead.

These action ideas will include a selection of high-impact custom ideas designed to raise the profile of your brand and put it to work in every corner of your community. Custom ideas generally fall into the following categories:

- 4 Policy (laws or measures that support the brand strategy)
- 4 Sports (tournaments, events, youth sports, etc.)
- 4 Environmental Applications (look at your community as if it were a canvas)
- 4 Purpose Initiatives (charities, sponsorships, etc.)
- 4 Festivals (repackage existing events/festivals or develop new ones that connect to your brand strategy)
- 4 Arts (public art campaigns, partnerships with art organizations, art contests with visitors, residents, students, artists in residence programs)
- 4 Private Sector (ideas and tools to engage businesses and other private sector organizations)
- 4 Exports (goods that are manufactured, grown or packaged in your community for export; even a famous person or idea from your community can be considered an export)
- 4 Awards (civic awards, organizational awards, etc.)
- 4 Education (programs in schools, small business/entrepreneur mentoring, education for front-line hospitality staff, etc.)
- 4 Sustainability (residential green initiatives, tax incentives for green industries, etc.)
- 4 Health (community health programs, school-based health initiatives, business-based health initiatives, hospital and health care agency partnerships)
- 4 Economic Development (marketing, communications, training, outreach, resources, etc. . . all specifically related to economic development)
- 4 Tourism (marketing, communications, training, products, packaging, merchandise, etc. . . all specifically related to tourism)
- 4 Events (any organized activity that ties back to the brand ranging in scope from festivals to health fairs to career counseling to community clean-up days)
- 4 Incentives (tax incentives for businesses, entrepreneurs, art organizations, etc. that are in line with the brand strategy)
- 4 Master Planning (design and development of infrastructure and support systems that correlate with the brand strategy)

SCOPE OF WORK

6. EVALUATION

How the brand is performing

Evaluation yields new information, which may lead to the beginning of a new planning cycle. Information can be gathered from concept pre-testing, campaign impact in the marketplace and tracking studies to measure a brand's performance over time. Ideally, two basic questions will be answered: have responses to the brand among target audiences changed in the way the BrandPrint intended? And have these changes resulted in action that will achieve the desired objectives of the brand?

No single measure of success works for something as complicated as an economic development brand. As such, every research study in this plan – from the media audit to stakeholder interviews to the external qualitative perceptions study – is designed to produce benchmarks . . . results that can be used for comparison with future studies in areas of advocacy, perceptions of the existing Manchester Road Corridor brand and attitudes regarding how well the Manchester Road Corridor performs as a place to do business and to attract a talented workforce. Additionally, our 12 years of branding experience has shown that true success can be seen in the spread of excitement, inspiration and innovation among your stakeholders around the brand. This is a "soft measurement", but it is vitally important.

Finally, North Star builds hours into our BrandPrint process for official follow-up with our clients. North Star provides a 6- and 12-month follow up. However, we do not limit communication to these two instances. Your success is our success. And everyone at North Star – from the president and CEO to the office manager to our research assistants – takes the success of our clients personally. Toward that end, we are always available to answer questions and help with problems. In short, we have maintained an ongoing personal and business relationship with most of our clients, some for more than a decade.

- 4 6 Month Check Up
- 4 12 Month Check Up
- 4 Recommended Measures of Accountability
 - o Qualitative Perception Study
 - 4 Brand Barometer

NOTE: Here, we conduct a final presentation that delivers the creative product, the brand action ideas and recommended measures of accountability. A final report is produced that delivers these items as well as the research findings, insights and strategic brand platform.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

Research & Planning	
Getting started call	Week 1
Situation analysis	Weeks 1 – 2
Research and planning audit	Weeks 1 – 2
Communication and media audit	Weeks 1 – 2
In-market visit (fam tour, focus groups, interviews)	TBD
Vision Survey sent, received and entered	Weeks 4 – 8
Online community survey sent, received and entered	Weeks 4 – 8
Competitive positioning review	Weeks 4 – 8
Competitive analysis	Weeks 4 – 8
Tapestry® Resident Profile	Weeks 6 – 10
*Tapestry® Consumer Profile	Weeks 6 – 10
*Data compiled and mapped	Weeks 6 – 10
*Qualitative Consumer Perception Study	Weeks 11 – 13
Qualitative Competition Perception Study	Weeks 11 – 13
Insights	
Understanding and Insights development	Weeks 17 - 21
Blue Sky - strategy meeting	Week 21
**Understanding and Insights presentation	Week 22
Creativity	
Creative brief development (internal)	Week 23
Creative concept development	Weeks 24 - 26
**Approval of creative concept	Week 27
Brand identity guide development	Weeks 29 - 32
Action	
Action idea development	Weeks 32 – 34
Final report development	Weeks 32 - 36
Proposed Timeline	Weeks 34 – 36

* = Dependent upon how quickly records are received
 ** = Dependent upon how quickly approval from client is received

INVESTMENT

<i>Research and Insights</i>	\$52,000
<i>Creativity, Action and Evaluation</i>	\$36,000
Complete BrandPrint	\$88,000

Payment schedule:

We request a third of the payment upfront with an agreed-upon signed contract. The next third of payment is due at the completion of the Understanding and Insights presentation. The remaining third is to be paid in equal payments over the three months following the Understanding and Insights presentation.

- Travel expenses will be billed to the client at net cost when incurred.
- North Star does not bill for copying, fax, or courier.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Approximately two dozen North Star team members will play a role in crafting the BrandPrint for the Manchester Road Corridor. To manage this process a North Star team member will be assigned as the single point of contact (project manager) throughout the process. A variety of communication methods are used including telephone, email, in-person visits and webinars. Weekly status reports are sent to keep the Manchester Road Corridor team apprised of the progress.

The following is a comprehensive list of threshold events and deliverables:

- 4 *Getting Started Package* – Documents and discussions to begin the BrandPrint program via the telephone. Dates are set for the in-market trip and the BrandPrint process is reviewed.
- 4 *In-Market Trip* – North Star will send a team to the Manchester Road Corridor for an intensive period of research.
- 4 *In-Market Debriefing* – The in-market team report and presentation back to the North Star team.
- 4 *Strategy Development Session* – Group meeting to discuss research and resulting insights for the development of the overarching brand platform
- 4 *Understanding and Insights Presentation* – North Star will send one person to conduct a live presentation of the research findings and recommended BrandPrint strategy.
- 4 *Creative Development* – A series of presentations and discussions via the web and telephone to develop the creative product and its customizations.
- 4 *Action Idea Development* – The North Star team will craft action ideas that address specific Manchester Road Corridor goals in the context of the new brand.
- 4 *Final Report* – Final document containing research findings, strategic development and creative deliverables.

KEY PERSONNEL

North Star maintains a full-service staff, each of whom is involved with every step of the process. We are all in the same building, conferring and meeting on clients daily. For example, our creative director helps us to craft a strategic brand platform with visual possibilities. She also helps during the strategic planning process by contributing visual ideas for how the brand can connect in the community. Our research director offers a completely different perspective. All are critical to the end product.

DON MCEACHERN, PRESIDENT & CEO

Don McEachern has been growing brands and leading teams for more than 20 years. His experience includes working for multi-national advertising agencies as well as nationally recognized creative boutiques. During his time in the ad world, McEachern put his stamp on some of the world's most famous brands including Goldkist, Hawaiian Tropic, Suntory Bottled Water Group, Trump Plaza, Panasonic and Lanier Worldwide. For his efforts he received numerous awards, including a prestigious national Effie for marketing effectiveness and a Clio for excellent creativity.

Ten years ago, McEachern struck out on his own. With a dream and a dollar, he launched North Star Destination Strategies, specializing in brand marketing for communities. A decade and more than 150 nationwide cities later, McEachern has become the recognized expert in the exploding field of community branding. With a process that combines education, research, strategy, creativity and action, he has helped create unique and effective brands for big-name cities like Anchorage, Alaska; Dayton, Ohio and Providence, Rhode Island. That same process and passion has also been applied to small cities that will soon be household names such as Sebastopol, California and Warensburg, Missouri.

McEachern is also a sought-after speaker on the topic of community branding. He has spoken at national, regional and local conferences; served as keynote speaker, panel moderator, session leader and break out facilitator and has judged branding competitions including the National Association of Government Communicators. He has helped CVBs, mayors, city councils, governors, city managers, economic development, and chambers.

McEachern lives on a horse farm in Nashville, Tennessee, where he rides horses, paddles kayaks and plays tennis with his children. As of yet, no member of his family has been branded.

SHANNON GRAY, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH

Shannon was born with an insatiable curiosity about people and what drives them to do what they do. When she discovered anthropology, the study of human behavior, she never looked back. Shannon received her BA in Cultural Anthropology from Eckerd College and a dual degree of an MA in Anthropology and an MBA with emphasis on marketing and market research from the University of Colorado at Boulder--Leeds School of Business. These days Shannon is a consumer anthropologist and ethnographer, which means instead of digging up bones or studying tribal ritual she studies the humans in our current society: their choices and decisions, traits, motivations, relationships, needs, joys, experiences and day to day lives.

As North Star's Director of Research Shannon has helped community clients understand their target markets (residents, visitors and businesses) on a deep level . . . understanding that guides choices leaders make about the future of their community. Recent clients include South Bend/Mishawaka, IN; Columbus, OH; Columbus, Georgia; the Mississippi Gulf Coast; Castle Rock, CO; and the Susquehanna River Valley, PA and Red Wing, Minnesota. Prior to working with North Star, Shannon served as an ethnographic analyst for Context-based Research Group in Baltimore, MD. There, she determined the research needs of clients, designed research studies and conducted field research using methodologies such as in-depth interviewing, observation or shadowing, behavior and relationship mapping and self-expression exercises. The insights she gained served to further the efforts of businesses and organizations in industries including healthcare, consumer packaged goods, retail, transportation, and telecommunications.

Shannon is also an avid sailor and, having just left the sailing mecca of the Chesapeake Bay, is learning to cope with the delicate intricacies of lake sailing in Middle Tennessee.

ED BARLOW, VICE PRESIDENT/DIRECTOR OF CLIENT SERVICES

Ed loves a good riddle. Ever since being the fastest to find the toaster in the tree in his pediatric dentist's waiting room, he has been solving marketing and operational challenges with creative and strategic instincts. Along the way he has collected a cum laude business degree in Hospitality Administration from Florida State University and a Master's degree in Creative Writing and English Literature from Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

Most recently Ed gained valuable experience on both the client and agency sides of the branding relationship as an ADDY-award-winning Director of Marketing and Communications for the parent corporation to a group of national facility services companies serving transportation, travel, aviation, retail, healthcare, and hospitality industries. He has also worked as Senior Copywriter and Marketing Strategist for a branding design firm in Nashville specializing in persuasive content for Music Row, corporate, and non-profit clients. His success can be traced to intense curiosity, ability to listen intently, and all those questions that lead to solving any riddle.

Ed caters to North Star clients with creativity, effective communication and customer service. His insights and instincts lead clients to a broad, inclusive approach to successful community place branding for the long-term. He has led successful community place branding initiatives for Iowa's Creative Corridor; Lima/Allen County, Ohio; Lauderdale Lakes, Florida; Brookings, South Dakota; Jamestown, New York; Helena-West Helena, Arkansas; Downtown New Orleans, Louisiana; Arapahoe County, Colorado, State of Mississippi; State of Florida; Goshen, Indiana and Tehachapi, California.

After living off the grid for several years in Taos, New Mexico, enjoying hiking, mountain biking, and discovering some artistic talent, Ed returned to his native Tennessee. Back home he launched 2 eds design, a small enterprise with Ed Sr. specializing in creating home furnishings and custom artwork in wood and metal.

LEE LIPSCOMB, CREATIVE DIRECTOR

A designer with over 22 years of experience in the industry, Lee made her start in New York City with Pluzynski/Associates, directing photoshoots and creating direct mail catalogs for American Express, Paramount Pictures, Avon, and Coach Leather. After receiving her Master's Degree in graphic design from The Savannah College of Art & Design, she joined Slaughter Group, an award-winning advertising and design firm located in Birmingham. Lee returned to New York City and freelanced for several years with a number of agency's including Anderson & Lembke, Kirshenbaum, Bond & Partners, Culver Associates, Athorn, Clark & Partners and i.e. design. Moving to Nashville in 2001, Lee spent nine years with Locomotion Creative, working with a diverse group of clients including VF Imagewear, The Little Clinic, Tractor Supply Company, Bass Berry & Sims, Fazoli's, Orange Park Medical Center, Amsurg, Simplex, Diabetes Care Club, Hearing Planet and NFIB.

She has been an adjunct instructor at Watkins College of Art & Design, has been a board member for AIGA and is a current board member for the Art Institute in Nashville. Lee has been honored in both PRINT and HOW magazines' design annuals for her work as well as several "best of books" produced by Rockport Publishing.

CONCLUSION

One of the often-neglected responsibilities of economic development leaders is the job of building a reputation that is fair, honest and powerful. Whether leading a small town, a growing region or a world power, leaders owe it to their individual and institutional constituents to dig out the "competitive identity" of their community. This identity comes from the history, the industry, the culture, the geography and the society of the place – as such, it should be an accurate reflection of the genius and the will of the people.

Congratulations to the Manchester Road Corridor leaders for taking the first step in digging out your unique competitive identity! Having provided more complete branding solutions to more communities than any other branding company, North Star is the industry leader in place branding. We are the only company to combine research, strategy, creativity and action in one program specifically for economic development regions.

At the completion of the Manchester Road Corridor Region BrandPrint, North Star will have discovered your optimum brand positioning, the best use of resources to leverage your equity in that brand and the ideal creative message to positively influence businesses, influencers, site selectors, prospects, residents and more. We will also have developed an action plan designed to take that brand identity and make it come to life in every corner of your corridor.

We are delighted with this opportunity and would consider it an honor to work with you and the Manchester Road Corridor Committee.

12.13.2012

Don R. McEachern
President & CEO

Date