

Council Meeting Staff Report

April 4, 2017

Agenda No.:	B.
Indexes (Council Goals):	2018 Council Goal – Economic Vitality – Build the Local Tourism Economy
Presenters:	Julie Habiger; Kelly Stewart, Marketing Specialist
Legislative File:	8843-16

Title

Brand Action Plan Review and Approval

Recommended Action

I Move That Council Accept The Brand Action Plan.

County Manager's Recommendation

The County Manager recommends that Council approve the motion as presented.

Body

In this latest update of the Los Alamos branding initiative, County staff presents the Brand Action Plan for integrating the brand into the community, and marketing the brand to tourists and prospective business owners and employees.

Attached for review are the Brand Action Plan (Attachment A) prepared by branding consultants The Idea Group of Santa Fe and HK Advertising, the Brand Action Plan presentation (Attachment B) which the consultants will deliver to Council, and the Economic Development Budget for Branding (Attachment C).

Background

In 2014, the Los Alamos County Economic Development Division launched a branding initiative to proactively define, manage and market the community's brand to increase tourism, business and community development. Consultants North Star Destination Strategies performed significant research, and provided findings and strategies to direct future Los Alamos reputation management.

In 2015, Atlas Advertising was hired to conduct brand development and implementation services, assisting in the development of the brand identity, including the logo ("Balance"), the strapline ("Where Discoveries Are Made"), and the Identity Style Guide defining colors, fonts and applications of the brand identity. The Brand Marketing Plan was developed during this time which defined Los Alamos County's three target audiences: 1) the community; 2) businesses and talent; and 3) tourists and other visitors, as well as the marketing strategies and tactics recommended to most effectively reach each audience.

Throughout the brand development and implementation process, the County engaged a Brand Review Committee comprised of County staff as well as representatives from the Lab and the local business community. By the end of the process, it was evident that our first priority audience for creating brand awareness, understanding and excitement was the local community - the "brand ambassadors" - who will deliver the Los Alamos brand promise to the new visitors (prospective residents, employees, return visitors) that find their way to our town.

At the July 12, 2016 County Council meeting, Council voted to accept the Brand Identity Style Guide and approved staff's recommendation to finalize the Brand Marketing Plan in-house. Additionally, Council approved the FY17 Economic Development budget allocated for branding (\$85,000), using a

portion for County and community brand engagement activities and a portion to initiate a Request For Proposal to hire a marketing firm to assist in the implementation of the Brand Marketing Plan.

During the summer/fall of 2016, staff completed the Brand Marketing Plan, revised the Identity Style Guide, conducted numerous trainings with County personnel and consultants on how to apply the new brand identity to different media, built the logo into the 15th and Central intersection, posted new, branded street banners and distributed branded giveaways to the public during the County Fair and Rodeo weekend as a “soft launch” of the event. The brand identity was incorporated into County and tourism media and platforms during this time, and two local businesses entered into licensing agreements with the County to produce branded items.

In November 2016, following a competitive solicitation, The Idea Group of Santa Fe and HK Advertising was hired and initiated a 60-day series of interviews/briefings to prepare the Brand Action Plan. In addition to listening to each stakeholder’s perceptions of the brand, the consultants shared examples of how local community members can incorporate the brand into the way they do business and interact with other residents and visitors.

The Brand Action Plan (“The Plan”)

The Plan provides a road map for the community to follow to successfully enhance the overall reputation of Los Alamos. It is different from a marketing plan which is designed to drive behavior and performance. The goals of the plan are to instill the mindset of the brand into the fabric of the entire community, build a support network that will collaborate to deliver on the brand promise of “where discoveries are made,” and promote Los Alamos with strong, unified voice and identity. During the development of The Plan, the branding consultants distilled the Los Alamos brand down to a simple statement to resonate with the community-“cultivating curiosity and creating aha moments.” This brand essence reflects the heart and soul of Los Alamos and emphasizes what makes the town unique, compelling and attractive to prospects who seek out the places, products and experience that current residents and businesses love about the community.

Implementing the strategies and tactics identified in The Plan will ensure that residents, businesses, organizations and local government share a clear understanding of what Los Alamos stands for and work together to make the community a great place to live, work, play and stay. It embraces a major rule of community branding: Before sharing the brand outside the community you must first have alignment inside the community. The proper execution of The Plan will positively shape the perceptions of Los Alamos in the minds of business and talent prospects as well as tourists and visitors. It complements the research, strategy and brand marketing plan developed in past phases with detailed actionable tasks that address the following: 1) Community Engagement; 2) Business and Talent Attraction; and 3) Tourist and Visitor Attraction. It includes metrics to gauge performance of each tactic in terms of top objectives, key perception indicators, success measures, general assumptions, timeline and budget.

The budgets reflected in The Plan represent priorities for FY 2018. Many strategies will continue into FY 2019 and beyond. As community engagement evolves, new opportunities to enhance Los Alamos’ reputation will emerge and shift future priorities and timelines. The costs outlined in the matrices in The Plan are exclusive to the time that is projected for guidance, consultation, or facilitation by the Idea Group and HK Advertising. Additional budget will be needed to execute The Plan. The branding budget in the Economic Development Division will pay for these items, which will cover a range of costs and needs, especially in the first two years of community outreach. Funds will be spent to supplement resources not available in the County. The Idea Group and HK Advertising will work with the County to identify the best use of the budget, focusing on items that provide the most cost effective options or offer the best return on investment.

Staff will return each year during the early stages of the budget process to present progress and results of the past year, as well as the scope and budget request for the upcoming year.

Council's acceptance of The Plan will enable staff to move the Los Alamos branding initiative from the planning stage to action.

Alternatives

Council could direct Staff to discontinue implementation of The Plan.

Fiscal and Staff Impact/Planned Item

Fiscal impact is shown in Attachment C and is a budgeted item in the Economic Development Division's budget.

Staff Impact - Significant staff time will continue to be spent by County staff in Economic Development and Communications and Public Relations to be involved and oversee The Idea Group's implementation of The Plan.

Attachments

A - Brand Action Plan Final

B - Los Alamos Brand Action Plan Overview County Council

C - Economic Development Budget for Branding Initiative