

Los Alamos County Branding Initiative Actions To Date

Apr 5 2010: Council Accepted the Economic Vitality Strategic Plan (EVSP). Council accepted the mission, goals and objectives of the EVSP, including Goal 2. Diversify the Economic Base. Objective: Los Alamos doubles the amount of primary income derived from non-LANL sources. Potential Supporting Actions: Brand and promote Los Alamos in support of and consistent with this Economic Vitality Strategic Plan. Branding should effectively communicate a credible story of what is unique about our community (example ideas for branding themes could include, but should not be limited to "Energy City", "Science City," "Discovery City," "The Smartest Place to Be," or similar.)

July 5, 2011: Council adopted goals as part of a 20-year Strategic Leadership Plan. The plan included a shared vision for the community: *Los Alamos is a world-renowned community where discovery and innovation are inspired by its dramatic history and magnificent mountain setting. We offer extraordinary educational, recreational, and cultural opportunities in a vibrant, small-town atmosphere.* In support of the Vision, ten strategic focus areas were identified, along with actionable goals to help measure success. Goal statements reflect leadership priorities and direction that will define the basis for policy formulation, and revenue and resource generation and allocation. Under the focus area "Quality of Life", the corresponding goal is "Quality cultural and recreational amenities" for which the actionable goal is: *Market and brand Los Alamos as a scenic destination featuring recreation, science and history.*

August 7, 2012: Council approved ED budget. County Council approved the 2013-2017 Economic Development Plan and Budget which included a \$50,000 "Branding and Marketing" budget allocation to conduct a professional brand development process to establish a stable operating and marketing foundation and fill information gaps with targeted data

October 28, 2012: County issued an RFP for a Brand Study sponsored by the Los Alamos County Economic Development Division and funded with Economic Development Sustainability funds.

November 27-29, 2012: County Selected North Star Destination Strategies. Proposals were reviewed by a selection panel including Kelly Stewart, Greg Fisher, Julie Habiger, Charlie Kalogeros-Chattan and Kendra Henning and evaluated per criteria listed in the RFP, including research capability, expertise, evaluation capability and references, brand marketing development and cost. On November 29, 2012, based on the sum of the scores, North Star was selected as the winning bidder. The selection panel agreed that the selected contractor demonstrated the capabilities, expertise and qualifications to forego a formal interview.

January 15, 2013: Council approved the Brand Study contract with North Star. The contract included a term of January 1 through December 31, 2013, with one optional one-year renewal and funded from Economic Sustainability Funds in the amount of \$50,000 plus GRT and \$5,000 reimbursable expenses to cover the cost to implement its three-point Community Brandprint Process based on 1) the Vision of the Community; 2) the Competitive Situation; and 3) the Perception of Consumers and Influencers develop

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the County's "most distinct promise" (a promise that can be embraced and delivered by our community); and that is compelling to people we want to come work, live, visit and play.

Jan-Jun 2013: North Star conducted in-market research of the Los Alamos Community. Research included: 1) Situation Analysis; 2) Research and Planning Audit; 3) Communications and Media Audit; 4) In-Market Interviews; 5) On-Line Community Survey; and 6) Resident Tapestry Research to understand and document Los Alamos existing conditions in terms of community perceptions, behaviors, assets and promotion.

Jun-Sep 2013: North Star conducted external consumer research. Research consisted of a mix of four different qualitative and quantitative pieces conducted to gather external perceptions of the County from regional residents, visitors and non-visitors, regional and state level professionals in economic development, tourism as well as site selectors and developers. Tapestry studies revealed shopping patterns, media preferences, behaviors, lifestyles, preferences and affluence levels of residents identified as most likely to visit or be attracted to Los Alamos County. Counties selected by North Star in consultation with the County were Santa Fe, Rio Arriba, Taos, Sandoval, and Bernalillo Counties. Other competitor counties in terms of geography, population, economic development/tourism target markets and national laboratory presence included: Bernalillo, Sandoval, Santa Fe and Albuquerque counties in New Mexico; Boulder and Jefferson counties in Colorado and Coconino County, AZ; and Oak Ridge, TN and Tri-Cities, WA.

Jul-Nov 2013: North Star evaluated research results, with the goal of identifying the collective community conscience, cohesive community identity, highest use of available resources, business and resident recruitment/retention and gross receipts—all of which are influenced by how a brand triggers behavior and usage.

Dec 2013: Once North Star completed the evaluation of the results and synthesized the insights, the branding process transitioned from objective to subjective. In order to allow for adequate time for the creative development and review process, the County executed the one-year extension provision of the contract with North Star. As prescribed by the Brandprint process, the County assembled a Branding Review Committee of community leaders representing interests involved in the economic development marketing process to participate in efficient and effective review and selection of the creative elements (e.g., Brand Platform Statement, Brand Narrative, Strapline, etc.). The Branding Review Committee was initially comprised of Harry Burgess, Julie Habiger, Kelly Stewart, Greg Fisher, Anne Laurent and Charlie Kalogeros-Chattan from the County, along with LACDC Executive Director Scott Randall, RE/MAX of Los Alamos owner and realtor Kendra Henning and LANL Communications Department Director Lisa Rosendorf. Committee members met December 17, 2013, January 10, 2014 and April 14, 2014.

Dec 2013: County Council reviewed, updated and reprioritized its 2011 strategic focus areas and corresponding goals. On February 4, 2014, Council adopted the updated

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goals, retaining the goal to *Market and brand Los Alamos as a scenic destination featuring recreation, science and history*. Progress on this goal was reported by the County in Council's Annual Report published on-line in February 2014: *"Understanding that the County might be viewed differently by visitors and tourists outside the County, as well as businesses who may be looking to relocate or open a new business in the county, staff contracted a national marketing and branding study that will help guide overall Economic Development plans. Research and surveys were conducted summer 2013 by a professional marketing and branding firm as they sought to understand perceptions inside and outside the community. The firm is currently using the data gleaned from their research to develop a brand that will be presented to Council in early 2014."*

Jan-Apr 2014: Through a set of insight questions derived from the research, the North Star team developed the County's brand storyline," and then synthesized it down to a single sentence: the Brand Platform Statement. Based on the Brand Platform Statement, North Star developed four different written creative interpretations, each with its own conceptual narrative and "strapline" (the industry term for a tagline or slogan that is intended for broad and lasting implementation). The Brand Narrative uses descriptive language of Los Alamos' assets to help residents, businesses, influencers and consumers connect and embrace the Los Alamos experience. Based on the brand narrative and strapline selected by the Branding Review Committee, North Star developed a Brand Identity Guide, presenting distinct "looks" in the form of taglines and/or graphic images customized to the County's assets.

Apr 2014: North Star produced a Brandprint Study Results Summary for Council's review prior to North Star's presentation to Council on May 6. North Star also published the final Brandprint Report comprised of the research results and the Los Alamos branding elements selected by the Branding Review Committee.

May 6, 2014: Council approved Brandprint Report and strapline presented by North Star. Council accepted North Star's Brandprint Report, including the brand platform, the written narrative and the strapline, and directed staff to return within 12 months with brand logo design and implementation plan options for Council's consideration and possible selection.

May 7-July 12, 2014: County staff proceeded with the plan to initiate both the development of the Brand Implementation Plan and the Brand Logo Design concurrently, based on Council's direction. However, staff discovered that this approach was not possible due to several factors:

- North Star advised staff that the brand logo strongly influences the rollout of the brand and that it was more effective to develop the deliverables sequentially: brand logo design/selection first (6-8 week process); brand implementation plan second (6 weeks).
- North Star had completed their scope and was not eligible to bid on either project.
- Staff recognized the additional need for public involvement in the creation and selection of the Brand Logo Design.

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- The County does not have the expertise and/or available staff resources required to complete the Brand Logo Design, the Brand Implementation Plan or the design, media planning and other tools required to execute the launch of the brand over the recommended 3-5 years.
- The contract must be structured to incorporate milestones contingent upon County Council approval and available funding.

In consideration of all of these factors, the Community and Economic Development Department worked with the County's Procurement, Legal, Communications and Public Relations Office and the County Administrator's Office to create a Request For Proposal (RFP) that invited experts in the different fields (graphic design and brand marketing) to bid on one or more sections of a 3-part contract for Brand Logo Design Services, Brand Implementation Plan Services and Brand Execution Services.

July 13-14, 2014: County advertised and distributed the Brand Services RFP in the Los Alamos Monitor and the Albuquerque Journal North and e-mailed the RFP to graphic design firms and marketing companies statewide and in the region.

July 21, 2014: County issued RFP Addendum 1 to the RFP distribution list, including corrections, clarifications and answers to questions received via e-mail from two prospective proposers.

July 29, 2014: County facilitated a non-mandatory pre-proposal conference attended by one proposer, Griffin and Associates.

August 5, 2014: County received two proposals, each bidding on all three sections of the RFP: Griffin and Associates, Inc., (Albuquerque, NM) and Atlas Advertising, LLC (Denver, CO).

August 6-8, 2014: The Brand Review Committee reviewed, evaluated and discussed proposals and determined that both proposers offered equal strengths in different areas and the committee recommended that interviews be conducted to collect additional information to make a decision. *NOTE: Brand Review Committee members had changed due to availability, but representation remained the same: County staff, plus representatives from the Lab (Communications Director Lisa Rosendorf), LACDC (Communications Manager Blake Jackson) and the public-at-large (Ryn Herrmann).*

August 12, 2014: Branding Review Committee interviewed both proposers. Interviews were conducted in person with the Griffin and Associates team and via conference call with the Atlas Advertising team. The Brand Review Committee requested clarification regarding the public participation process offered by each proposer in the development of the Brand Logo(s).

August 22, 2014: County staff issued an e-mail to both proposers requesting clarification regarding the level of public participation offered as part of the scope of services proposed for Brand Logo Design. Staff also conducted reference checks.

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August 25, 2014: Brand Review Committee recommended award of contract to Atlas Advertising, LLC based on e-mail responses received from both proposers.

Oct 10, 2014: Council voted 6-1 to approve the Brand Services Contract with Atlas Advertising. Councilor Sheehey stated his preference that the contract be amended to facilitate reconsideration of the strapline, "Live Exponentially." The contract was finalized and signed by both parties with a start date of mid-November. Atlas and County staff begin scheduling an in-market visit to conduct a series of stakeholder interviews on Nov 19-20 as prescribed in the contract scope.

Oct 28, 2014: The Lodgers' Tax Advisory Board voted to support the Brand Services Contract as approved.

Oct 28, 2014: Council voted 4-2 to approve a motion to reconsider the Brand Service Contract at a future meeting, scheduled for Friday, December 5. Discussions during the meeting focused on a desire to ensure that contract services provided for participation by the local small business community.

Nov 4, 2014: County staff notified Atlas Advertising regarding Council's motion to reconsider the contract. Consequently, the decision was made to move back the initial stakeholder interviews until after the first of the year.

Nov 25, 2014: Council voted to reschedule the December 5th meeting to a regular council meeting time on Tuesday, December 9th to accommodate Councilor availability and to provide adequate time for Council and Public comment regarding all agenda items, including reconsideration of the Brand Services Contract.