



1. Does your community have a “brand”? *Branding can sometimes make it easier to promote your community and attract tourists or locals. Consider working with a consultant before creating a brand (if it is in your budget) to determine if your community is ready for a brand. In some cases, there is work to be done before branding a community would be effective.*
 - a. YES: Proceed to step 2.
 - b. NO:
 - b1. Methods for creating a “brand” for your community:
 - Design firm
 - Hold a local contest that allows residents to submit logo and/or tagline designs and award a prize to the person whose design is selected.
 - Allow input from the public (i.e. community brainstorm meeting) to determine their concerns and preferences in balancing social, economic and cultural values.
 - Best practices “field trip” - planners visit a neighboring community to gather information on branding their own. What worked, and more importantly, what didn’t work?
 - Task force who researches points of differentiation of the community
 - b2. Items to consider when creating a community “brand:”
 - Historical happenings or buildings/parks with historical significance
 - Natural resources/landmarks - the overall visual character of a community
 - Goods/services that the community is known for
 - Projected improvements/revitalization efforts
 - Attracting new business and economic development
 - Consider branding just a district or small area of the town, rather than establishing and promoting a brand for the entire town or city. Working on a smaller scale will make the process easier and will allow you to make a bigger impact with your branding.
 - b3. Once the “brand” has been created, it has to be established as recognizable within the community, consider one of these options for presenting your community’s new “brand:”
 - Communicate with local news outlets to get your new “brand” promoted.
 - Throw a community party to present the new logo and/or tagline.
 - Time the presentation of the new logo and/or tagline to happen during a prominent event that will have a high attendance.
2. Determine what type of signage would be most effective for your community based on short-term or long-term planning (will the signage reflect permanent or temporary community events/branding?) and how signage will weigh in the overall urban design process. Signage can serve to preserve existing character or to establish a new sense of place.
 - a. Common types of signage you may want to consider using:
 - Banners - lamp post or other street signage
 - On-premise signage (like event sites)
 - Transit-oriented including public transportation, terminals/stations, bus stops
 - Directional signage including street signs
 - Corridor planning - differentiation between areas of the city
 - Public places - schools, parks, public service buildings, community centers, etc.
 - OOH - “out of home” traditional and digital billboards
 - Temporary - sidewalk graphics, removable window clings, public transportation “wraps” (bus wraps, trolley signage)

What is the best way to design the signage?

- b. What is the function of the sign? Deciding how it will be used is the first step in design. Form follows function - commercial signage will differ from residential, will differ from landmark, will differ from directional, etc.
- c. Visual renderings in context will help determine scale, colors, and materials
 - i. Consistency in design is crucial; developing guidelines/standards for all levels of usage.

3. Appropriate times to use signage:

- a. during events and festivals
- b. holidays
- c. sporting/other events when community gets a significant amount of traffic

4. Variations on signage:

- a. Changing up signage for holiday themes
- b. incorporating local sports teams/university logos during orientations/games/events
- c. material restrictions may cause various types of signs to change in context of placement
- d. location of signage may dictate changes in size, colors, style, sympathy to architecture (structural limitations) and considerations of view (sightline, blocking views of natural landmarks or vistas) and safety (obstructing view of roads or intersections, etc.)

5. Budget Considerations

- a. Design, printing & material costs
- b. Installation
- c. Removal
- d. Maintenance

6. Policy/Administrative Considerations

- a. In many cases, permits are required before any signage can be posted. Check with your local government.
- b. Signage on or near roads requires approval from the Department of Transportation. Be sure to check with your DOT before posting any signage.

LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES

- Consider your area's weather when choosing materials for signs. Sometimes going with the more expensive material is beneficial in the long run because the signs won't have to be replaced as often.
- Find out the requirements for signage in your community. Many require permits or approval from the Department of Transportation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What approval do you need for posting signage?

Cities differ and each has its own sign ordinances. Most times, a city's website will have a section within their zoning department for both temporary and permanent sign ordinance information.

What is a realistic budget for creating signage/branding?

It depends on the scope of your signage project. Each city will have varying numbers of signs to "cover" the city. In Greenville, there are over 100 lamp post banner locations and one must provide signage for all of them (there is no partial use permit), so installation alone is around \$1300. Design and printing can range from \$2000-\$3000. Large scale signage to cover larger cities can be upwards of \$10,000 or more.

What is the most effective usage of signage? Do people notice certain types of signage over others?

Effective signage is driven by function. In pedestrian areas, signage needs to be sized, placed and readable by people on foot. In drivable areas, signage should be easily readable from the road without obstructing the driver's view. In some cases, the design of freestanding signs should recognize that they are a part of the landscape and blend in. The use of low mounting walls, shrubs and ground cover, and seasonal plantings can help integrate these signs with their locations. Other times (as in the case of commercial areas that serve travelers), signs should be bold and prominently placed so travelers can easily find locations.

What is a method for determining effectiveness of the signage?

If your intention is to put up permanent signage, consider using cheaper temporary signage first to determine whether or not it is effective. For example, if you want to put up signage that helps an individual navigate to a location in the community, put up temporary signage to see if the signs are followed first before you spend the money on the more expensive permanent signage.

This How-To: Branding & Signage Guide is part of the How-To Guides for Community Vibrancy, an initiative of Ten at the Top's Community Vibrancy Task Force. The task force includes stakeholders from across the Upstate with a goal to maintain and reinvigorate the vibrancy in our region's small towns and urban areas. For more information about Ten at the Top, please visit www.tenatthetop.org.
Last Updated: September 8, 2015