

Mackenzie Branding Initiative

OVERVIEW: In early 2016, the District of Mackenzie started down the path of community branding. We've broken the branding initiative into two phases - the first begins this spring and lasts until early winter. The main outcome of the first stage of the branding process will be a **brand book** and a **visual identity**. This book will contain defining elements such as unique

attributes and assets of Mackenzie, community values, vision, personality, target audience, competing communities, and strategic positioning to name a few. The ultimate goal of the first phase of the branding initiative is to define what makes us great, and to stick and flag in the ground and say, "**this is who we are!**"

Branding... that's a logo, right?

Wrong. But not entirely. Think of a brand as a reputation to the outside world. It is a combination of the spirit, personality, values, and associations that **other people** hold about a place.

When you go through the process of branding, you actively dig into the true identity of a community, and define what it is that makes it a unique and attractive place to visit, invest in, or move to.

Once a brand is articulated on paper, the next step is to bring it to life with the development of the visual identity (yes, that starts with a new logo). The logo is simply a visual thumbprint reflecting the intangible essence of a brand.

Place Branding Defined

*"A **place brand** is the totality of thoughts, feelings, and expectations that people hold about a location. It's the reputation and the enduring essence of the place and represents its distinctive promise of value, providing it with a competitive edge.*

***Place branding** provides a framework and toolkit for differentiating, focusing, and organizing around the location's competitive and distinctive identity. It is grounded in truth and reality."*

~ Bill Baker, Destination Branding for Small Cities

Why should we brand?

A community with a strong brand is more competitive when it comes to attracting new businesses, new investment, new residents, and visitors. This all translates into more customers for existing businesses; more money flowing into the local economy by attracting new events, conferences, and government programs; a stronger and more diversified population base (increasing the local tax revenue); and new businesses

and services. The list could go on, but you get the drift. Currently, Mackenzie does not have a clearly defined brand. The result is that the outside world doesn't quite know what to make of it. Is it just a logging town with a big tree-crushing machine? Is it a mountain biking destination? Is it a snowmobile mecca? What could Mackenzie do in the future to set it apart from other BC communities? Branding will help clarify this.

Visit the District of Mackenzie's website to learn more about the branding initiative, how you can be involved, receive updates, and access resources as they become available. We're looking forward to working with the community to develop a community brand that shines! www.district.mackenzie.bc.ca

What's happened so far?

We've only just begun! So far, the District of Mackenzie has entered into an agreement with a branding company (Boldfish Creative) to complete Phase One of the branding process. The outcomes for each stage are briefly outlined below.

On Wednesday, May 11, 2016, the District held an open house to introduce the branding project, the contractor working with the District on Phase One, and to provide residents and businesses insight as to what branding is and why we're doing it.

The Branding Process

Branding is not something you do once. It is a continuous process that evolves as your community does. When you are starting out, however, there is a logical progression to follow. Here is how we've broken it down.

Phase One (spring 2016 – early winter 2016)

Background Research & Discovery

At this stage, the goal is to take stock of our community – it's history, culture, values, vision, personality, environmental (physical) assets, perceptions, and past brands. This is where we research and dig into the stories and past knowledge that will paint a picture of where the community has been and what has shaped it up until this point. Community input is solicited at this stage.

Outcome: background research document

Distilling the Brand

With a knowledge of where the Mackenzie has been and what it is today, attention is turned to distilling the unique set of features that make Mackenzie a compelling place to be, identifying the main audience for the Mackenzie brand, and identifying competing communities. In a nutshell, this stage is an exercise in the "strategic positioning" of Mackenzie. It's about deciding what face we want to show the outside world.

Outcome: Brand Book – articulating Mackenzie's brand platform

Creating the Visual Identity

We create the logo at this stage to serve as the thumbprint of the Mackenzie brand. It is not meant to convey everything the brand represents, rather, it is meant to be a recognizable symbol that becomes associated with the brand that we are building. Over time, and with consistent long-term branding efforts, the logo will come to have meaning (and value) to those who see it.

Outcome: Logo and guidelines for its use (included in the Brand Book)

Phase Two (Winter 2016/17 and onwards)

On the heels of Phase One, Mackenzie will move straight into Phase Two. This phase can be broken into two main activities that are ongoing, and happen concurrently:

Communicating the Brand (telling the story)

At this stage, a marketing strategy and communications plan should be created. Marketing materials are crafted (think website, brochures/visitor guide, promotional items, trade show displays, outdoor signage, etc), and marketing and communications initiatives are undertaken.

Community Development & Asset Management (making the story come true)

If you make a promise, you better make sure you can deliver! Official Community Plans are a great tool for helping set the direction for development and growth so that the brand vision is realized. Also, seeking out funding for community development initiatives that are consistent with the brand should be planned for.

Stay Involved...

During Phase One, we will be looking for community input. There will be an opportunity to participate in a survey, and some may participate in a targeted workshop that will have a diverse cross section of people from across the community and region. If you have a particular story or perspective to share about Mackenzie, feel free to contact us at any time.

diane@district.mackenzie.bc.ca | 250-997-3221

