



Memorandum

DATE: Sept. 1, 2016

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Nikki Ripley, Communication and Media Relations Manager, x8846

THROUGH: Andrew Ching, City Manager, x8844

SUBJECT: City of Tempe Branding Initiative: Research and Strategy Update

At the Sept. 1 Work Study Session, the city's branding consultant, North Star Destination Strategies, is presenting the City Council with an update on its research activities and recommended strategy.

As you know, the branding effort began with the formation of a four-member Council working group to discuss city communication. The working group members – Mayor Mitchell, Vice Mayor Arredondo-Savage and Councilmembers Navarro and Granville – discussed applying additional funds to tactics such as Facebook advertising, as well as more traditional communication tools such as printed materials. They tasked the members of the Communication and Media Relations Division to make recommendations about resources that would be needed to do their jobs even better. Working as an internal team, along with representatives from ASU, the Tempe Chamber, Tempe Tourism and Downtown Tempe Authority, the group recommended starting at the foundational level of determining the city's strategic brand platform before proceeding with recommending tactical elements (such as advertising, etc.) that have associated ongoing costs. The Council working group approved this approach and the full Council in December 2015 approved seeking the help of an experienced branding consultant to lead the city through its first-ever branding process.

North Star began work in February 2016 and has been engaged in a robust research process throughout the spring and summer. The firm was chosen in part for its comprehensive approach to research as the basis for a solid, resonant, lasting brand platform. Why so much research? The idea is to fully understand local, regional and out-of-state perceptions about Tempe so that we can determine what type of branding approach will motivate audiences of all kinds to choose Tempe as a place to live, do business and visit.

While taglines and other creative expressions of a brand may change over time, a well-done brand platform gets to the core of who we are. North Star calls it our "DNA." That will remain relevant for many years – and continue to get stronger – because it taps into the fundamental, emotional motivations of our audiences. Branding can be used for marketing/PR/communication, but it also can be used as a touchstone in decision-making for things like infrastructure and policy questions.

Among the studies, examinations and interviews North Star has conducted:

- An "in-market" visit to Tempe in April, during which the Mayor and Council were interviewed, along with community leaders, artists, longtime residents, business owners, students and more. Focus groups, individual interviews and anonymous "man-on-the-street" interviews were conducted. The firm also toured Town Lake, ASU, downtown, a variety of neighborhoods and other areas of Tempe.
- An online survey of business leaders and stakeholders.
- An online survey open to all community members.

- An anonymous survey of Valley residents and Los Angeles-area residents. Tempe Tourism information led to the choice of L.A. as an area to explore for external perceptions of Tempe, since L.A. is the primary external market for visitors coming to Tempe.
- An ongoing evaluation of data from three Tempe hotels. Tempe Tourism has provided invaluable assistance in asking local hotels for detailed data about their visitors. North Star will be able to use this information to come up with additional informative research including a visitor profile.

North Star Vice President of Strategic Planning Ed Barlow, who met with Councilmembers one-on-one in March, will present a brief overview of North Star's research. What you will see on Sept. 1 is a recap of the research for purposes of time; the full data will be available in a final report later this year.

Barlow also will present North Star's recommended brand strategy for Tempe. Tempe's brand is already felt in various ways by stakeholders, including residents, businesses and visitors. The research process is about uncovering those impressions and solidifying/unifying them in order to create and maintain preference for Tempe as a place to live, do business and visit. Barlow will explain the drafted strategy and get Council input on it.

Following the Work Study, and if the recommended strategy is approved, North Star will work with the city for several more months to develop the ways in which Tempe can best express its brand platform through its communication activities and more.

The Branding Steering Committee has provided expertise and energy during this project and they continue to do so. In addition to the staff members of the Communication and Media Relations Division, the process has been made better thanks to the contributions of:

- Dan Dillon, Chief Marketing Officer, ASU
- Mary Ann Miller, former Executive Director, Tempe Chamber of Commerce
- Stephanie Nowack, President and CEO, Tempe Tourism Office
- Kate Borders, President and Executive Director, Downtown Tempe Authority
- Andrew Ching, City Manager
- Rosa Inchausti, Strategic Management and Diversity Director
- Donna Kennedy, Economic Development Director
- Shelley Hearn, Community Services Director

North Star should conclude its work with Tempe around the end of 2016.