

NORTH MAIN STREET COLUMBIA



REBRANDING PROPOSAL

ABOUT US

We are a collection of senior level strategists who have spent our entire careers building strong brands and sharing their stories with award-winning work. Our mission is simple — to help you accomplish your marketing objectives, whether they are big or small.

We pride ourselves on a client-first approach where every team member gets to thoroughly know each client. This way, we can best utilize our wealth of experience with clients of all sizes in a variety of industries. As a small agency, we can offer a level of personal service not found in larger agencies. We're accessible and responsive to you with no junior level staff. This helps us develop a close working relationship with you, which leads to more efficient workflows and on target strategies.

We approach each client with an open mind. We listen. We ask questions. And we get to know you. Then we use our experience and expertise to develop and execute effective marketing solutions that meet your unique needs.



You name it, we do it.

Whether you need a logo design, a website or an integrated branding strategy, our capabilities provide you with almost limitless possibilities. While we have many tools, perhaps our greatest is curiosity. We ask questions. We listen. We ask more questions. We listen some more. We learn about you, your business, your customers and your competitors. We do our homework. And then we get to work.

CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

The North Main Street corridor is located just several blocks north of Columbia's city center district and serves as a major artery through Columbia. The area has virtually no identity and has historically been perceived as an underserved part of Columbia.

A general questionnaire study in the spring of 2015 asked local business owners along North Main to give their overall perception of the North Main street corridor. Research concluded that Main Street Columbia north of Elmwood Avenue is undesirable, rundown and neglected, with little business or industry. This overall perception extends beyond the business owners of North Main. Residents of metropolitan Columbia will agree that North Main Street reflects an undesirable location because of the vast commercial and industrial abandonment along the North Main Street corridor.

In May of 2015, queue reached out to the Executive Director of the North Main Business Association, Sabrina Odom, after the NCBA announced its desire to rebrand North Columbia at the National Small Business Week Celebration kick-off.

After queue's initial meeting the Sabrina Odom, it was learned that the NCBA, which was formed for the purpose of promoting business in North Columbia, was seeking a strategy and solution to offset the negative branding issues that face North Columbia, and particularly the North Main Street corridor. At the time of this first meeting, there was no timeline or strategic plan developed by the NCBA to rebrand North Main Street. It was then decided by the Chairman of NCBA that queue would provide the blueprint needed to rebrand North Main Street.

NORTH MAIN STREET TODAY

Despite the perception, several new businesses have opened along North Main over the past year. Vino Garage, a specialty beverage store for wine and craft beer enthusiast, along with Lamb's Bread, a vegetarian cafe, have taken advantage of cheaper real estate and convenience to Columbia's city center. Commercial abandonment still dominates the landscape of North Main, but the NCBA is interested in seizing the opportunity to expand on these recent and exciting redevelopment efforts by rebranding North Columbia as a place with great potential.

Carolina Imports, an antique shop along the North Main corridor, made the move to North Main Street from The Vista in 2014 to take advantage of warehouse space at a more affordable cost. The NCBA would like to build on the successes of these locally owned businesses by launching a campaign to rebrand North Columbia as a vibrant and affordable mixed-use community where people will want to live, work and play.

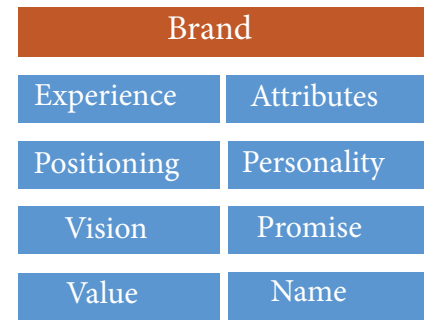
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REBRAND?

It's becoming an increasingly common practice for a city's leadership to develop fresh brand identities for particular localities, especially when the areas are being redeveloped and their basic characters are evolving.

In rebranding North Main Street, the goal is to position the community as a desirable place in which to live and invest; a place where people will want to visit for social, business and recreational purposes. A successful rebrand should position the area as a place to open a new business venture, shop, dine, be entertained, and more.

It will be important that this rebranding effort include City of Columbia leadership, NCBA leadership, North Main business owners, and both long-time and new residents in the area. Including these various audiences will help ensure the development of a brand image that resonates with the entire community. The new brand must appeal to multiple audiences, including businesses, current residents and visitors, without compromising urban culture and the current characteristics of North Main Street Columbia. It should continue to reflect the community's local attributes, characteristics and core identity while building on the "new" North Main Street Columbia image.

THE MAKEUP OF A BRAND



WHAT WOULD A NEW BRAND MEAN FOR NORTH MAIN STREET?

A brand image generates a unique set of ideas, feelings and attitudes in people about a product. For example, to remain competitive, large companies sometimes alter or completely replace their images and relaunch themselves as fresh corporate brands. Similarly, competition between urban places to attract new investments, businesses, tourists and residents has led many areas to establish completely new brand identities in neighborhoods within large urban areas.

A rebranding campaign can help remove any negative thoughts or perceptions about the area, and begin to build a positive image. Communities that have been defined as socially and economically disadvantaged are often portrayed as places of homelessness, high areas of crime, vandalism, and more. It is therefore important that the community begin to change these perceptions and reposition itself as a place with vibrancy, vitality and great opportunity.

A carefully planned and executed rebrand can help build civic pride and spur community and city-wide development. A new brand image of the North Main corridor will also help create a sense of local ownership and will serve to infuse a sense of pride, develop a cohesive image and create an identity for the community without losing its personality. The rebranding of North Main Street would be positioned as something in which the entire city of Columbia will benefit and celebrate. The rebrand of this part of Columbia has the potential to serve as an effective means of uniting the entire city around the project.

To be successful, a rebrand requires developing an effective marketing strategy that builds awareness and generates excitement around any positive changes occurring along North Main Street. A smooth and successful rebranding effort should be based on proper preparation, effective communications and memorable creative designed to introduce a refreshed brand identity.

"Neighborhoods are no longer geographical areas defined and populated by communities, but brands methodically built by the community and business. As such, names become an important way to define the brand identity. Build it and they will come, but brand it and the right sort of "they" will come."

The Guardian, January 2015

A BRAND IS MORE THAN JUST A LOGO OR NAME. IT DEFINES THE ESSENCE OF THE COMMUNITY. FROM A MARKETING STANDPOINT, THERE ARE SEVERAL ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN REFRESHING A BRAND:

- Creation of a unique positioning statement that perfectly places the North Main Street brand in the minds of your target audience(s)
 - Development of a unique brand voice and visual style that both differentiates North Main Street while building deeper and closer ties with other regions within the city, such as the Bull Street Commons development and the new baseball stadium, just blocks away
 - Development of cohesive brand style guidelines for use in all advertising, public relations and marketing efforts
 - Use of the positioning statement as a catalyst for weaving messages into print, website, collateral materials, street signs, bumper stickers, streetlight banners, social media, etc.
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REBRANDING- WHERE DO WE START?

PHASE ONE: RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

The first phase of the rebranding initiative includes research and pre-planning by queue, such as NCBA board meetings and/or an “open door” community workshop that involves local business owners and residents. These workshops will help queue learn more about the expectations each individual or business may have about North Main. For example, what type of residents or commercial businesses do they hope to bring to North Main with the re-branding approach? The strengths, weakness and opportunities addressed will be recorded so that queue can digest the material and encompass this information into the overall branding, conception and design work.

Open Door workshops or focus groups conducted by queue will also include discussion of the following issues:

DEFINING THE ACTUAL GOAL

What will North Main Street look like in 2020, or 2025? What will the overall perception of North Main Street be to the citizens of Columbia? What will be the evidence that the rebranding strategy is successful? Answering these questions and setting clear expectations and timelines for the residents and business owners early in the rebranding process will help determine if the goals are being achieved.

DEFINING THE TARGET MARKET

Think of the North Main street rebranding initiative as a tangible product. Who do you need to “speak to” with your marketing efforts in order to sell North Main Street? If the NCBA wants more owner-occupant buyers, you might need to “speak to” real estate agents and potential buyers with sub-branding efforts. If you want greater engagement by residents in the day-to-day management of the neighborhood, you might need to “speak to” neighborhood residents. If you want more positive media stories, “speak to” the local media. If you want enhanced city services, “speak to” those who provide them. Open door workshops will help queue answer these questions and develop multiple target markets for the rebranding effort.

ASSETS OF NORTH MAIN STREET COLUMBIA

What incentives or natural attractions are already in place to bring business and residential to the North Main corridor? New businesses such as the Vino Garage and Carolina Imports have recently relocated to North Main Columbia. These businesses will tell you that real estate and rent made the area appealing but is that the only reason? Perhaps these businesses moved to the area because they too see the potential that North Main has to offer Columbia? queue will interview these business owners to help target which types of new businesses could benefit from relocating or opening along North Main Street.

FRIENDLY POLITICS

Politics will play a major role in the branding process and will undoubtedly inform the process. queue will reach out to the government agencies that could provide incentives to help possibly cover the costs of a rebranding project. Local businesses already established along North Main may also be able to contribute financially or in other ways. Important planning and proper execution of a branding study by queue may need to be presented to the City of Columbia in order to obtain funds for a rebranding initiative.

PHASE TWO: DEFINING THE NEW BRAND

The education and research phase of the rebranding initiative will help inform queue's work on the creative side of the project. This includes the selection of a new name and positioning statement for the North Main Street corridor.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

What will the area be called? Naming the selected area is an important step and could prove to be very subjective by the community and media. Therefore, queue recommends that a list of no more than three potential community names should be taken under consideration. A vote on one name may then be needed and declared by the NCBA board.

Once a name has been established, brand identity guidelines will be developed, including a new logo, tagline and any positioning statements. Following this, a strategic advertising campaign will be created for the general public. The campaign will set a visual and messaging tone that showcases North Main Street as a vibrant, happening place, full of opportunity. It's important to translate this new brand into easily understood messages that can be integrated into promotional materials. Cleverly designed marketing materials will attract attention and build awareness and recognition. This process will take 3 to 4 months and will include the following:

- Evolution of a new logo with a unique look that maintains the clear connection to the geographical area fabric that makes up the North Main Street corridor of Columbia
- Development of a positioning statement that captures the essence of the new brand in the community's mind
- Selling the new name to specific target markets, including potential residents, business owners, developers, and civic leaders

PHASE THREE: EXECUTION OF THE BRAND

Once all of the rebranding material has been approved, it's time to execute North Main Street's new brand and positioning statement. Traditional and nontraditional advertising mediums may be utilized depending on funds available, along with publicity strategies produced by queue and delivered to the media. queue will feed local media with positive stories about the new North Main Street rebranding kick-off. This may include a press event or party unveiling the new name and logo along with news or public interest stories about North Main that are already having a positive impact on the community.

DISCOVERING A UNIQUE INCENTIVE FOR NORTH MAIN

It would be beneficial for North Main to find and publicize a unique value proposition that no other neighborhood in Columbia currently provides. Perhaps an initiative highlighting the neighborhood's leadership in green technology? For example, a rehab loan or grant program that reduces energy consumption such as a rain barrel collection program with neighbors. This idea, along with the rebranding efforts help reinforce the "brand touchpoints," or interaction between the neighborhood brand and its residents or visitors.

NON-TRADITIONAL BRANDING

The more you repeat the brand message the more it will stick. And consistency is important. Putting neighborhood logos on decals for neighbors to put in their windows and businesses to display on their front door helps reinforce the brand. Placing the logo on house flags or awarding them to new homebuyers and leaders of the neighborhood association can help. The logo can also be attached to structural elements such as streetlight banners and telephone poles.

PROTECTING THE BRAND

queue will set standards for organizations that wish to use the branding messages and logos to ensure consistent use. queue will also assist in trademarking and licensing the logo and tagline so that they cannot be used inappropriately and/or without permission.

SUB-TARGETING THE NEW BRAND

A 'sub-campaign' targeting commercial and residential developers is recommended by queue to help "speak the language" to real-estate firms, contractors, government agencies, or anyone interested in urban renewal projects. As stated in the education and research phase of the proposal, queue would need to develop a sub-plan targeting developers with digital and collateral material. Subsequent campaigns that continue to build on these same elements, but are more focused on individual community features such as business or entertainment, would follow.

PHASE FOUR: CONTINUATION OF THE BRAND

Executing extraordinary creative campaigns is rewarding, but the ultimate goal of any marketing effort (internal and external) is its ability to impact the bottom line, in this case, delivering on the promise inherent to the new North Main Street brand. As a measuring metric, queue suggests quarterly meetings with NCBA and "brand champions," local high-energy community leaders who are in positions of authority or respect and are prepared to champion the brand passionately at the highest community levels.

Branding a neighborhood community does not happen overnight. Once launched, the overall branding of North Main Street is expected to remain consistent for years to come and has no expiration date. There are three measuring metrics associated with the rebranding of North Main Columbia that queue will record throughout the longevity of the campaign.

- **Behavior Metrics**

Behavioral metrics provide an ongoing understanding of how the brand is performing internally externally. Intelligence gained through brand awareness, perception surveys, customer traffic, occupancy rates, home sales, etc. is commonly used to measure the effectiveness of external community branding initiatives.

- **Perception Metrics**

Asking the simple question, "What do people now think and feel about your neighborhood?" Insights are gained through brand awareness and recognition measures, and the attributes perceived by potential customers, business owners or residents.

- **Performance Metrics**

Evaluate how people "act" on their perceptions and help assess how brand-building activities directly drive overall business results. These measures facilitate the neighborhood's ability to estimate an accurate financial value of its brand equity.

THE FUTURE OF NORTH MAIN

The rebranding success of North Main Street needs to be viewed like it's a tangible brand product. A brand promise is good only if it's kept. If a company doesn't deliver on its promise the vast majority of the time, its reputation—and sales—will likely decline. In this particular case, North Main Street could easily fall back into an undesirable part of the city with no identity. To help avoid this scenario, queue will conduct a market perception survey every six months with local businesses along the corridor and interview new residents in the area. While encouraging things might be said just because they are already in the area, that may not always be the case, and constructive criticism or new ideas need to always be considered.

"For cities, it is actions, not words, that really affect reputation. An effective city brand strategy brings all stakeholders together – from investors to officials to residents – at the beginning of the process. That way, they can define a common vision and then agree on a plan to reach it."

City Metric - August 2014

Over time, the new North Main Street name will begin to resonate with people in much the same way that Five-Points or The Vista currently do to those living in metropolitan Columbia. North Main Street will slowly become a destination, just like its neighboring communities. In order to capture this, the brand image, or perception of North Main Street will now have its own identity, truly unique to its name, fostering greater unity and revealing its true potential.