



**City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 18-127**

To:	Mayor & Council
From:	Gerard Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer
Resource Staff:	Lanie Hurdle, Commissioner, Community Services Craig Desjardins, Director, Office of Strategy, Innovation & Partnerships
Date of Meeting:	April 17, 2018
Subject:	Community Branding Initiative

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to recommend the development of a process to establish a community-wide brand for the city of Kingston. This process will seek to channel and strategically align current and past branding efforts undertaken in the community.

As part of this process, the City will play a lead role in facilitating the collaborative efforts of key community stakeholders. External consultants in the field of brand strategy, design, and stakeholder engagements with expertise in place-making and city branding will be retained to support this process.

In the past month, multiple stakeholders have identified an interest in the development of a brand for Kingston. Some stakeholders started to advance conversations in regards to branding within their own fields. City staff believe that it is critical to bring all the key stakeholders together to develop a Kingston brand that is cohesive and comprehensive, as opposed to an ad hoc process that risks multiple brand identity. The effort to coordinate the Kingston branding is not to diminish the work various agencies may have done in advancing their shorter term focus; it is necessary to ensure success in the long term.

Successful brand strategies are by definition long-term initiatives, and require deliberate planning and execution across a wide range of marketing and communications efforts. The development of a community brand will create a targeted, integrated, and focused approach

April 17, 2018

Page 2 of 7

when communicating about and marketing Kingston. The alignment of current efforts is critical to Kingston's continued success in attracting residents, visitors, businesses, investors, tourists and diverse talent in today's competitive landscape. It is important to note that this community brand will not be replacing or competing with existing brand marketing but rather the intent is to build foundations for marketing.

Recommendation:

That Council direct staff to initiate and facilitate a process that will bring key stakeholders together to develop a Kingston community brand; and

That Council approve a budget of up to \$125,000 from the Working Fund Reserve to fund the facilitation process and the development of a community brand; and

That Council authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute all agreements related to the development of a community brand to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal Services.

April 17, 2018

Page 3 of 7

Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Gerard Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Lanie Hurdle, Commissioner, Community Services

Jim Keech, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston

Not required

Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer

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Denis Leger, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services

Not required

April 17, 2018

Page 4 of 7

Options/Discussion:

A number of established brands and slogans are used to promote and market Kingston. Several other brands and slogans across a variety of sectors and organizations are in various stages of development. Examples include: “*where history and innovation thrive*”; “Canada’s Most Sustainable City”, “The Freshwater Sailing Capital of the World”; and “Canada’s First Capital”. The creation of a community-wide brand for Kingston will leverage this momentum through the collaborative involvement of key stakeholders, while ensuring alignment with past, present and future branding efforts in the community.

The goal of this community process is to create a brand that serves as a unifying anchor for the community and articulates Kingston as an ideal location to live, work, invest, play, study, and visit. The Kingston city-wide brand will provide a foundation and help to foster and support civic pride among community members, stakeholders, businesses, and other key audiences. It will guide the way the community engages, delivers and caters its experiences, and will seek to empower residents, visitors, and other key stakeholders to advocate and share their unique Kingston moments.

Through facilitation by the City and with the support of an external branding firm, key stakeholders from across the city will collaboratively establish prevailing thoughts of Kingston’s history and perceptions of it today, and its aspirations for the future. The process will seek to identify key facts that serve as points of differentiation that make Kingston unique, and uncover key branding elements to highlight. As part of this process, stakeholders will review and revitalize the city’s overall branding, ensuring that it is reflective of Kingston’s past, present and its vision for the future.

Key components that may be included in the process of community-wide brand development are as follows:

- Research and engagement
- Brand audits
- Development of a new identity system
- Creation of an implementation strategy
 - Marketing strategies and tactics to promote and increase the awareness of the brand
 - Public relations strategies to capture the tone and character of the brand and establish a consistent brand message
 - Delivery, alignment and promotion of unique Kingston experiences to residents and visitors
- Supporting marketing and communications with on-brand messages and tools
- Creating a Kingston Brand Partnership with key stakeholders
- Developing a process for identifying signature initiatives

April 17, 2018

Page 5 of 7

- Monitoring and reporting brand metrics

The first step in this process will be to establish the involvement and commitment of key stakeholders that will drive brand development forward. An extensive review of best practices in community branding will be undertaken to better understand how cities can most effectively promote themselves to key audiences. A local audit will be completed to capture the branding currently and formerly utilized in Kingston, and to better understand how each of them connects. Stakeholders will then work to develop an authentic, consistent, and bold shared vision that seeks to influence actions and perceptions in Kingston. The end product will equip the community with the necessary tools and framework to proactively manage and strengthen Kingston's reputation, and empower residents to be ambassadors for their brand story.

City branding is important. As competition intensifies at a regional, national and global level for access to highly skilled workers, resources and business investment, cities must engage in branding processes to affect the perception of targeted groups through the development of marketing and communication content. Globalization, the exit of baby boomers from the workforce, advances in digital communications and disruptive technologies and increased mobility of corporations and residents all contribute to a more competitive environment for municipalities and key community stakeholders.

A place brand, when properly conceived and executed, can elevate a city, focus its tourist offering, empower its investment attraction and retention, reframe its reputation and create renewed pride among its residents. Cities that do not seek to develop and manage a brand run the risk of being positioned by competitors or other interest groups.

For a city, place branding can be a complex exercise due to the presence of many community stakeholders with their own brands and the relative associations (or not) between these brands, each with their own product or service and distinct target markets. There may or may not be alignment between the brands and target markets, although the community is the sum of the brands. While there are similarities and differences between corporate brands and place brands, place branding is generally more complex. For example, the stakeholder matrix is considerably more complex in place branding. Place brands require multilateral alliances throughout the community and beyond from post-secondary education, healthcare, federal and provincial public sectors, military and corporate entities. With the number and nature of stakeholders, it is more difficult to select partners and there is not a formal organizational structure or control mechanisms. Additionally, place branding involves the perceptions not just of those a city is looking to attract but the perception of the residents of the community and their definition of the values and brand of the community.

It is particularly timely, given the renewal of Council's strategic priorities following the upcoming municipal election, that the process of community branding be initiated now. The process will involve coordinating stakeholders across the community and will identify what issues are

April 17, 2018

Page 6 of 7

important for the future of our community and why these issues are important. A city brand can be the starting point for the formulation of a new strategy and an important precondition for a new direction.

The city brand design considers relationships between brands (Queen's University, St. Lawrence College, Royal Military College, and others) as well as relationships between the stakeholders. In the case of a place brand, the overall organization of brands or brand architecture is a way of defining relationships; the opportunity exists to build new relationships with organizations.

Acceptance of a place brand requires 'buy-in' on the part of stakeholders, particularly internal community stakeholders. For city brand management to be successful it must not be just a Council initiative, but a city-wide initiative. Managers of the place brand need to ensure that the brand promise is delivered by the community.

Key performance indicators for a place brand include both tangible and intangible outcomes including:

- **Tangible Outcomes**- infrastructure improvements, new businesses, construction activity, population growth, employment growth, visitor numbers and technical/higher education
- **Intangible Outcomes**- culture, reputation and strategic alliances

Existing Policy/By-Law:

Not applicable

Notice Provisions:

Not applicable

Accessibility Considerations:

Not applicable

Financial Considerations:

It is proposed that a budget of up to \$125,000 be funded from the Working Fund Reserve, as the project is a one-time initiative for lasting results.

Contacts:

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April 17, 2018

Page 7 of 7

Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

JC Kenny, Director, Communications & Customer Experience

Julie Fossitt, Manager, Cultural Marketing

Matt Kussin, Workforce Development Analyst

Exhibits Attached:

Not applicable