

Memorandum

To: Mayor and Council
From: Tom Baker, Town Administrator
Date: June 7, 2016
Re: Next Steps: Marketing Plan

Purpose: The purpose of this item is to identify direction for continued work on the Town's marketing plan. It is staff's expectation that this item will take two meetings: at tonight's meeting we will discuss identified strategies and add strategies that we feel are relevant. Council can discuss capacity and we can undertake a preliminary exercise to identify Council preferences. If all this is completed prior to 9:00 PM, then staff has direction. If not completed by 9:00 PM then we can continue to next meeting.

Background and Discussion: During the Town Council retreat in October of 2013 Council identified an Economic Development strategy entitled "Expose New Castle", which was an effort to focus town resources to "expose" both residents and visitors to the variety of outdoor recreation activities that can be enjoyed in the New Castle area. During the winter of 2013/14 Town Council invited Ann Stuckey of AJ Design, a marketing specialist, to explain to Town Council the process necessary to build a strategy for marketing New Castle's outdoor activities. Ms. Stuckey explained that in the digital media era it is essential to have a robust website with in-depth content about New Castle outdoor recreation opportunities so that interested parties can explore from their computers, phones, etc. She explained that the website was the foundational element of any strategy and that all future materials – brochures, web ads, press releases, radio spots, etc. – then refer the interested party to the website where in-depth information can be acquired. Ms. Stuckey explained that once the website was up and running then a marketing plan could be undertaken to make people aware of what New Castle has to offer in the way of outdoor recreational activities.

In the May, 2014 revised Strategic Plan Council stated: **Goal 1.1 Promote New Castle Outdoor Recreation Opportunities (New Website Active Summer 2014).**

In the spring of 2014 the Town issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to develop a new website that had both outdoor recreation/tourism and government information. Two teams were interviewed and the team of AJ Design and Monument Graphics was awarded the contract. The Town and consultant worked together for over six months with many design and content improvements and in the spring of 2015 the website was introduced to the public. Since that time the Town has received many comments, both professional and community-based, on the high quality of the website. In total the town invested approximately \$30,000 in the new website and continues to invest in the website with quarterly updates and maintenance. (We were fortunate to have Councilor Bruce Leland lead this effort pro bono. Councilor Leland is a former university professor and has specific website development experience.)

During the Town Council retreat in October, 2014, Council revised the Strategic Plan and stated **Goal 1.1 Develop and implement a marketing strategy that builds on the new website**

(2015/16). In the last half of 2015, the Town issued a Request of Proposals (RFP) to develop a Marketing Plan. We interviewed six teams and awarded the contract to the team of Hill Aveium and Darnauer Group. At our recent April 19th meeting, Linda Hill of Hill Aveium presented the marketing plan to Council. The Town invested \$20,000 in the Marketing Plan. Of that \$20,000 investment \$6,900 was provided through a grant from the Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC is the Council of Governments Group in our area).

The Emergence of Trails as an Economic Driver: Over the past several months, the Town has become aware that a sizeable portion of the community is interested in and willing to help fund and build soft trails. Additionally, through a new citizen group called New Castle Trails (NCT) and their efforts to raise community/Council awareness of the health and economic benefits (Better Living Through Trails presentation May 6, 2016) that trails can bring to a community, we (the Town) have come to understand that trails can be a significant economic driver for our future. Further, trail development and trail building, especially soft trails, are in large part within the Town's control due to relative low cost and community volunteerism for planning and construction. In the past, the Town has pursued economic development ideas that require significant investment or significant third party participation – Kuersten/Senior Housing and Senior Care; developing town-owned land, expanding City Market; City Market Fueling Center... This is not to say that the Town should not be aware of these opportunities and pursue them if they mature, but only that we should also recognize an opportunity like trails (outdoor recreation) that offers significant local control.

Because the emergence of soft trails is so recent, the Marketing Plan does not identify it as a goal. If we were developing the Marketing Plan in the summer of 2016 I think we would offer the following, which staff recommends as an amendment to the Marketing Plan:

Goal 6

Continue to engage the community, especially New Castle Trails (NCT) and the Bureau of Land management (BLM), in creating an extensive network of soft trails for outdoor recreation - biking, hiking, running, walking in and around New Castle. Market New Castle as a place for active living (New Castle's LiveWell Brand) where one can bike, walk, or run out their front door and access 50 miles of trails. Attract new businesses to Main Street and the Mall that cater to an active living community. (I recently visited Fruita, which is doing just this. They have invested in a significant trail network and biking events and Fruita's downtown is alive with eateries, bike shops, brew pubs... Many people visit Fruita to enjoy the trails and lifestyle.)

Strategy

1. In 2016 and 2017 work with the BLM and NCT to develop an extensive network of soft trails in town and on the public lands adjacent to town. Council has already committed to provide funding for environmental and cultural clearances for Phase I (400 acres). As this Phase I work is being

completed, the Town and BLM should work together to have Phase II work included in future BLM budgets.

2. Create an “Outdoor Recreation Guide” for the New Castle Area – hiking, running, biking, climbing, golfing, river sports, fishing, off-roading.....
3. Update the Trails Master Plan.
4. Develop a Wayfinding Plan. Continue adding to the trail signage that Public Works developed. Include wayfinding signs for trailhead parking and trails and also work with the County to include wayfinding for the Buford Area trail system – these trail users will see New Castle as a destination point for these trails.
5. Work with CDOT to create bike lanes on Main Street.
6. Continue to work with private land owners/developers to create trail connections on private land – offer private partners protection from liability for public use trails.
7. Work with NCT, the Chamber of Commerce, Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association and others to create a trail centered annual event, which will showcase New Castle’s quality of life, trails, businesses, and business opportunities. Ideas that have been talked about are making New Castle part of a larger down Valley Race Series – running and/or biking.
8. Add trail content to the website to showcase New Castle’s trail system as a primary component of the website. Trail users throughout the US refer to various websites in their travels to alert them to hiking, biking, climbing, golfing opportunities. MTBproject.com, Singletrack.com, mtbr.com.....

Next Steps: In order to focus Town resources it is important to identify which strategies will be pursued over the next 18 months. This discussion will also help us develop a 2017 budget, a draft of which staff will begin creating next month for Council’s eventual review in late summer/fall.

Staff will summarize the Goals and Strategies of the Marketing Plan, see attachment, to clarify the strategies or next steps. The Complete Marketing Plan can be found in the Informational Folder in the Dropbox. Council can discuss each strategy as needed and then Council will select its five top priorities by placing dots on your most important strategies. Once that is accomplished we can talk about the resource needs to accomplish those priorities. Please remember that staff is recommending Goal 6 with its Strategies as an amendment to the Marketing Plan, see above.

Goal 1

Continue the vision plan for Main Street New Castle. Incorporate the heritage of the area (mining) and explore theme opportunities - western, mining, etc. to support the Authentically Colorado tagline. Attract new businesses and events to the Main Street area that in turn will attract resident and visitor use.

This is considered more of a long-term goal so strategies will need to be addressed over time. A recurring theme heard during interviews and envisioning was the need to create a reason for people to go downtown and a viewpoint that downtown “needs to be cleaned up”. Development or review of a current master plan is key and inviting collaboration from residents and the business community could assure success. Exploration should occur on embracing businesses that are there while at the same time determining ways to build upon them.

Strategy

1. Identify if master plan can address a downtown theme that would pay tribute to the history of the area and address parking, pocket parks, cottage business mix and signage (separate strategy).
2. In the short-term, clean up downtown (west end and in general, the backside along I70). As part of the clean-up, embrace and try to enhance those businesses that may not have the “optimum” storefront.
3. Identify additional infrastructure opportunities that could be created downtown and administered by the town. Determine a way to embrace businesses already there helping them enhance or reinvent their properties. Ex. The Barn in Castle Rock, a center for small boutique shops, arts and crafts in a setting that complements old town Castle Rock.
4. Continue with the health and wellness vision.

Goal 2

Improve directional signage throughout New Castle – Main Street, Flat Tops Recreational area access, etc. Look at lighting and pathing opportunities that would draw the eye towards Main Street as people approach the I70 main intersection. As part of a long-term urban design planning process, wayfinding, informational and business visibility signage become part of the fabric of a community's identity. The signage and wayfinding within a city cannot only serve to add clarity and simplicity to navigation, but to add to the character and charm of the place. Signage can also help multi-modal transportation – walking, biking, public transit, parking, etc - the need for good signage to make these activities easier becomes more and more apparent.

Strategy

1. Review the signage master plan to see if it addresses some of the following:
 - a. Clearly identifies with graphic integrity the brand of the Town of New Castle and helps to reinforce the character of the town
 - b. Informational signage follows a similar themeline
 - c. Addresses the opportunity for multi-modal signage development
 - d. Make the main interchange the priority in 2016 to improve wayfinding to downtown. Larger, more legible, apparent with brand personality
 - e. Create lighting and pathing towards downtown
2. Evaluate the local arts community. Does it exist and can an art plan be developed over the long term for purchase of sculptures, display areas, art on buildings, etc.
 - a. Utilize public art to help people to engage in a different way at various points throughout New Castle.

Goal 3

Build awareness of the Town of New Castle's many amenities including the areas outdoor recreation opportunities and events with the result of increasing website sessions by 25% (to 46,427) in 2016. The number of sessions (visitors) to the website in 2015 was 37,142.

Strategy

As part of this goal, general awareness by residents of what there is to see and do in New Castle needs to increase. A number of opportunities exist to generate more awareness of New Castle's trails, amenities, events, etc. While there is limited awareness of the Town of New Castle website, consistent education, optimization and communication will help more people become aware of the site. The fact that the website is considered a "government" website contributes to residents only visiting for town related needs. It will be important to position the site as the source for getting information on the many things to see and do in New Castle.

1. Develop a communications plan that will target residents. Include an integrated mix of communications (online media, public relations, print collateral, electronic communications, promotions, social, etc.)
2. Website - Identify content improvements that need to occur to the website to support the goal of the site being the single strongest resource for residents and visitors.
 - Improve Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for key search terms. This will take a concentrated effort over time.
 - Support SEO with pay-per-click and remarketing/retargeting strategies using banner ads to drive visitation in the short term. Push events and other key messaging targeting the New Castle resident and surrounding area residents.
3. Establish an events commission to help leverage current events and identify new ones. How can they be enhanced, who do they target, what additional opportunities exist? Assure that main events occur downtown – from Farmers Markets to Burning Mountain Festival.
4. Map trails and access points to trails. Place trail maps on the website for people to download. Eventually develop an app for residents or visitors to download.
(<http://www.mapmyride.com/us/newcastle-co/> <http://www.trailink.com/city/new-castleco-trails.aspx>)
5. Map parks and access points to parks. Place on New Castle website.
(<http://www.newcastlecolorado.org/departments/parks-and-trails>)
6. Create a way for long-time residents who have the history of New Castle to record their history by partnering with the library. Begin by Videotaping Founder's Day storytellers and post to the website.
7. While focusing on residents of New Castle, extend reach to Appletree as well.
8. Due to the history and heritage of New Castle, harness the oral histories of long-time residents.

Goal 4

Review the current brand position of New Castle and determine if it needs to be enhanced to incorporate the recreational and outdoor opportunities.

The positioning of a community destination that has all the outdoor recreational amenities and history of the Town of New Castle provides an opportunity to review the current logo and tagline – New Castle - Authentically Colorado. Does this resonate with the residents of New Castle, how does it compare to other Colorado destination logos and taglines? We are recommending a brief research study to residents of New Castle to explore what “Authentically Colorado” means to them.

We are also recommending that the tagline be compared to other destinations to assure that it differentiates New Castle from its competitive set. This will help determine how New Castle should be positioned moving forward and the use of the New Castle logo as the entry point to the brand.

Strategy

1. Conduct a resident survey to identify the strengths of Authentically Colorado and quantify some of the findings in the interviews and envisioning sessions. Through the survey gather ideas important to residents. Survey could be online and the e-newsletter could be the way to provide the link.
2. Write a creative brief for New Castle that will provide direction for the message platform. Create identity standards as guidelines for town administrators to follow.
3. Expand on the outdoor recreation opportunities available to residents and visitors through the development of communication materials.

Goal 5

Define the role of the Town as it relates to the following:

1. Marketing the area.
 - a. By default the town will have responsibility for this in the near term and possibly longer term depending on the ability of a Chamber or other organization to assist
 - b. Will the Town need a marketing coordinator to assist?

2. B2B environment and collaboration
 - a. Identify possibility of resurrecting the chamber and evaluate the depth or lack of interest from the business community to support a Chamber effort.
 - b. Identify economic development opportunities

3. Resident engagement - Identify ways for more engagement of the younger demographic in the visioning of the Town and its growth.
 - a. Begin with the special events commission, engaging a younger demographic of the community to spearhead events as discussed previously.

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