

Branding Initiative enters second phase

PUBLIC TO BE ASKED “WHAT IS STOUFFVILLE’S REPUTATION?”

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Everything has a brand. The shoes you wear have a brand. The store you bought them from has a brand. The shopping center that store was at has a brand.

Even you have a brand.

A ‘brand,’ by definition, is the reputation something has. Towns and cities all around the world have a reputation. Las Vegas’ reputation, and thus its brand, is gambling. Paris’ brand is romance, and Rome’s brand is history. These are a set of *intangible* assets that help define a place.

City brands (also called “place brands” or “community brands”) can be influenced by several factors. For example, Las Vegas’ brand is gambling, but through their marketing and advertising, the city can influence how you think of gambling, and thus the city itself. This ‘influencing’ is commonly done using *tangible* assets, such as attractive colours, logos, typography, photography and other visual insignia. These insignias make up our (fully controllable) ‘brand identity.’

Coca Cola, Amazon, Nike, Apple, and every other company, do the same thing. They want you to think of them in a positive light that would make you spend your money buying their products.

Last year, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville started an exercise to re-brand the town. It is a five-phase project expected

to conclude later this year with a refreshed, vibrant image to portray and market to the world.

Phase One of the Town’s “Branding & Corporate Identity Initiative” was completed in December with Council deciding that henceforth, the Town will be called “The Town of Stouffville.” The official (i.e. legal) name is still Whitchurch-Stouffville, but we will be called Stouffville in all marketing, advertising and branding moving forward.

Community branding and marketing is more than a compelling logo, good promotional sales pitch, a new website and communication materials. It is a synergistic process of engagement and partnership building. Our outcome will be to develop a brand identity that not only our residents and businesses support, but also tourists and investors. It will be a whole new way of portraying ourselves.

The need to create and manage our town’s brand is more important today than it ever has been. One just needs to look around the GTA to see many aspects of competition. Businesses are moving to one location because of effective transportation routes, people are moving to others because of ample forest and greenspace, investors are interested in locations with affluent populations.

The reasons to brand our town (and creating effective marketing afterwards) to address these concerns are twofold: 1) a town needs to

WHY ARE WE IMPROVING OUR BRAND?

- it helps put our community on the global, regional and national map
- it increases a sense of local identity, well-being and pride
- it helps attract new businesses, industries, investments and high profile events
- it draws in new populations and a diversity of skills and talents
- it increases tourism
- it develops and maintains a clear and consistent sense of community identity and messaging for the outside world, and
- it supports coherent local development efforts overall as physical, social, economic and cultural sectors come together to deliver our brand promise.

let the public know what they have to offer, and 2) to let the public know that their offerings are better than the neighbouring town.

A well-executed community branding and marketing exercise can be a vital and empowering process of local democratization, active citizenship, and participation.

Phase Two has just begun and consists of determining what our brand is. We will be answering the question “what is our reputation?” We need to know what people think of us. To do this, we will be conducting interviews, workshops and Open Houses to solicit citizens’ opinions. An online survey will be launched on March 23 at cometogetherws.ca. Public Open Houses will be conducted at the end of March or early April.

Phase Three will then take that information and formulate a new brand image that makes Stouffville attractive and a welcoming place to do business, live or visit.

This phase will be completed by the summer with a launch aimed for late summer or early fall.

For more information about the project, and to fill out the survey later this month, go to cometogetherws.ca/branding-corporate-identity [1]

