

Branding project hits consultation stage

PUBLIC BEING ASKED TO COMMENT ON NEW DESIGN CONCEPTS

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In the March edition of “On the Road,” I wrote an article mentioning that our new Branding & Corporate Identity Initiative is entering the second phase. Little did we know that would be halted because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second phase of the project was, at the time, to consist of an extensive public engagement process. Residents and businesses of Whitchurch-Stouffville were going to be asked what they thought of the Town’s current brand and how it could be improved.

Despite the project being temporarily halted, we are happy to announce we are back up and running and excited to continue on!

As I also mentioned in the March article (found on townofws.ca/otr), a town’s brand is crucial in today’s world. 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 vast forest and greenspace; investors are interested in locations with affluent populations. Whitchurch-Stouffville needs to compete. Like many of the world’s most significant companies, it requires a compelling brand to complement it.

“A well-executed community branding and marketing exercise can be a vital and

empowering process of local democratization, active citizenship, and participation,” I mentioned.

Up until March, we had only completed Phase One - to determine what the name of the town should be. After extensive public consultation, Council decided to retain the name “Whitchurch-Stouffville” however, they gave permission to market the town as simply “Stouffville.” For more information about the potential name change, see *OTR October 2019*.

To keep the project moving during the early stages of the pandemic, we began public consultation with 20 select individuals within the community. This feedback allowed us to get a general idea of what the community thought about our town.

Eight Themes Emerged. The branding consultant hired for the project, Toronto’s *Trajectory Brands*, conducted 20 interviews with one key objective: to gather enough data to formulate Stouffville’s “Brand Story.” It will be through this story that our image, our reputation and our brand will be crafted.

The results of this engagement were encouraging, uplifting and, at times, surprising. But the common element was one of positivity and pride. Eight themes (detailed on the opposite page) emerged from the responses, all of which are

contributing to this new brand.

The first theme, that there “is no consistent description of Stouffville,” is a mostly positive sentiment, suggesting we are growing into a new identity.

The second theme, that “Stouffville is in a period of transition,” suggests the town, including its citizens, are looking to take advantage of opportunities to improve. We are prioritizing the community’s best interests for the benefit of everyone.

The third theme that emerged was a sense of “tremendous pride.” Most people have actively chosen Stouffville; they invested in it, they are proud, and they want to thrive here.

A “warm and welcoming character” is the fourth theme that people feel should be valued and protected.

The fifth theme, that “people see opportunity ahead,” is a very refreshing viewpoint that emphasizes a growing enthusiasm for Stouffville to clearly define its path forward.

Downtown Stouffville was the subject of the sixth theme - that opportunity exists in its revitalization. This is the most specific theme and the only one geared towards a precise geographical area. Many of the interviewees felt that the downtown is a significant asset.

The seventh theme showed concern and opportunity, with the challenges to small businesses and entrepreneurship. Many external forces are helping make Stouffville more attractive to small businesses; however, the town needs to support them in more substantial ways.

Finally, the last theme centered on our slogan, “Country Close to the City.” According to many of the respondents, the tagline is not “wrong” but it does not resonate like it once did. While the elements of the slogan may hold true, there is an appetite to re-frame it or say something different entirely.

Brand Pillars Guide the Way. As a group of eight themes, there is too much information to harness to create a brand. Although each is very important and will be well represented in the final product, the “Stouffville Brand Story” needs to be conveyed in simpler terms.



Town Economic Development Officer David Tuley (center) shows *Trajectory Brands*’ Stephen Weir (left) and Jeanette Hanna around Downtown Stouffville in February. *Trajectory* has developed design concepts of Stouffville’s new brand based on themes identified in a series of community interviews. Public input is now open on cometogtherws.ca/branding-corporate-identity

BRAND THEMES

The first stage of the public consultation revealed eight themes relating to what people thought Stouffville was all about. These themes helped create the three Brand Pillars.

No Consistent Description

Mostly positive sentiment, but also acknowledgment that Stouffville is in a transitional period in its history and beginning to grow into a new identity

Period of Transition

People are looking for leadership to guide Stouffville through this period of change, to take advantage of opportunities, and to always prioritize the community's best interests

Tremendous Pride

Most people have actively chosen Stouffville; they are invested in it, it is their home, they are proud of it, and they want it to thrive

Warm & Welcoming Character

The town's character, though changing somewhat, is incredibly warm and welcoming and a valued community asset worth protecting

Opportunity Ahead

There is growing enthusiasm (alongside the expected skepticism) for Stouffville to clearly define its path forward by seizing opportunities, both big and small

Downtown Revitalization

Though people acknowledge much work is to be done, there is a strong sense that a reinvigorated Main St. could be an important asset to the Town

Small Business & Entrepreneurship

Many external forces are helping make Stouffville a more attractive place for entrepreneurs/small business, but the town needs to support them in more substantial ways

1

BRAND PILLARS

Independently minded

Welcome to home turf for enterprising, independently minded creative sparks.

- Creatives, makers, entrepreneurs and self-starters find great support and connections here.
- We're a municipality focused on progressive, long-term economic development strategies.
- Straddling the ecologically sensitive Oak Ridges Moraine, we're committed to sustainable futures.
- Locals share great pride and optimism in Stouffville's enterprising nature.

2

Natural fit

Create your own fine balance

- Continuum of urban, suburban, & rural living with strong community connections
- Ideally situated, only 14K from Toronto with many transportation access points
- Abundance of sport & outdoor recreation options (trails, cycling, equestrian, golf, hiking) and the wellness benefits it unlocks
- Immense natural assets (Oak Ridges Moraine, forests, Bruce's Mill, Rouge Park nearby)
- Wealth of culture, sports, history, heritage, and faith-based resources.

3

Powered by neighbours

Neighbours care. Neighbours engage. Neighbours belong. We are all neighbours here.

- Welcoming to all, embrace diversity and inclusion
- Authentic and real relationships
- Run on people-power – active and engaged participation
- Next-level neighbourly
- Supporting families of all types

ABOVE: In the spring, twenty community residents were asked what they thought about Stouffville. Eight common themes emerged from their answers, which were then used to create the "Stouffville Brand Story" (left). This story was then used to develop three branding pillars (right) through which our image, reputation and our brand will be crafted.

Therefore, *Trajectory* came up with three defining Brand Pillars. It is these three pillars that the new brand will be based on.

The three Brand Pillars are: "Independently Minded," "Natural Fit," and "Powered by Neighbours."

Stouffville's sense of being independently minded is rooted in the notion that there are connections here for innovators and entrepreneurs. This leads to pride and optimism in Stouffville's future.

In addition to encompassing our beautiful environment and natural setting, the "Natural Fit" pillar emphasizes a continuum of urban, suburban and rural life. It concentrates on a

sense of comfort, community and belonging with importance on our recreational options, sports and history.

The third pillar, "Powered by Neighbours," shows that we are welcoming too all, we embrace diversity and inclusion. We have authentic relationships and, in a nutshell, neighbours care.

Design Concepts Developed. Using those pillars, *Trajectory* has developed numerous design concepts of a new brand. From these, the staff steering committee has chosen three that they feel accurately represent what Stouffville is all about. Now we need your

opinion about what we desire.

Having started on September 28, an online survey asks residents what they think of these three choices (I'm not printing them here - you have to go look!). From these opinions, we will finalize the new concepts, which will form the basis of our new brand.

Additional surveys are available at the Leisure Centre, Museum, Library and other town facilities. Visit cometotogetherws.ca/branding-corporate-identity for a complete list.

For more information about the project, and to fill out the survey, go to cometotogetherws.ca/branding-corporate-identity [\[1\]](#)