Branding, Development & Marketing Action Plan

Recommendations List
August 2012
MT. VERNON RECOMMENDATIONS

For the first time in U.S. history, location-based branding – promotion of a city based on its location – is no longer a strong economic development tool. Mt. Vernon is a perfect example of that. Being at the intersection of two busy interstate freeways can be helpful in getting passersby to stop, but it is no longer a primary reason for a business to relocate, families to settle, or visitors to spend their time. In the case of Mt. Vernon, the first question we asked was “How’s that working for you?” What used to work no longer applies. St. Louis is already considered to be a major crossroads destination and even in their case, it’s not enough to be their primary draw.

In this new age of community branding and marketing, location-based brands seldom work.

To compound matters, businesses that locate in a city because of its location, such as Continental Tire or Walgreens, may not help that community to attract residents and local spending. Workers have no problem commuting an hour – sometimes more – to and from work, creating a tremendous amount of “leakage” where locally earned money is spent in other communities. Many vehicles now include cruise control, Internet access, navigation systems, all-wheel drive, air conditioning, and many include DVD movies or game consoles to keeps kids busy and occupied. Living close to work is no longer the primary consideration for workers when choosing a place to live.

For the first time in U.S. history, quality of life is the leading reason why start-up businesses, tech and service-industry businesses, and even manufacturing (light industrial) start operations or relocate to specific areas. Quality of life includes:

- Great schools
- Excellent recreational opportunities and facilities (particularly family-friendly parks and related facilities)
- A vibrant, thriving downtown
- Family activities
- Nightlife (including theaters, dancing, concerts, dining, and entertainment – not just the bar scene)
- Third places (the place we go to hang out)
- Expanded shopping options
- An art-driven atmosphere catering to the Creative Class you hope to attract
- Beautiful neighborhoods with quality housing options

These are the core issues for Mt. Vernon and the primary driving factors around this Branding, Development & Marketing Action Plan.

Mt. Vernon, as a community, has been taking some bold steps to address these issues:

- The new high school will be a great improvement and sends a message that the educational system is, in fact, a good one.
- The new aquatic facility tells local residents, and new workers coming into the area, that this is a great place to raise a family.
- Development of the Broadway Market will give downtown an “anchor tenant,” create a great “third place” and will drive an arts-focused branding effort.

With these core attributes, a “second phase” project would include working with the school system to create artisan live/work space in some of the buildings where the high school is now, recruitment of art-focused industry from film, graphic design, app development and other creative fields where affordable living and commercial space is a major attractor. Mt. Vernon is a perfect candidate for this.
When it comes to tourism, location is no longer the deciding factor, but it is always a secondary consideration to the primary experience. When people use the web they search for activities and then a general location: “Fly fishing” and then “southern Illinois” or “St. Louis area.”

This is the age of specialization – being known for that one thing that sets you apart from everyone else and makes you worth a special trip. From the major market areas you must answer the question “What do we have that people can't get or do closer to home?” And “Will that bring them back time and again?” “Been there, done that” attractions are not sustainable.

Finally, if you hang your hat on something that the markets you're hoping to attract can do closer to home, then your activity must be clearly better. People will fly to Vancouver, BC and then drive two hours to ski at Whistler Resort, even though they'd be passing up dozens of ski areas closer to home. If it's so much better, we'll skip over the same activity close to home to go there instead. Another example is Disney parks over dozens of other theme parks.

This is the approach we have recommended for Mt. Vernon. Create an outstanding experience that will “turn the tide” of a declining downtown, attract the Creative Class, be family-friendly, and make Mt. Vernon a desirable place to live, have a business and visit. Visitors go where the locals go. If you don't hang out in your downtown, neither will visitors. During the assessment process, every local resident we asked “where do you go to hang out?” mentioned other cities – most notably Fairview Heights.

THE PRIMARY GOALS OF THIS EFFORT (in order of importance)

1. To slow the leakage. Create reasons for local residents to spend more time and money in Mt. Vernon.
2. Revitalize downtown by creating Third Places and activities after 6:00 pm and giving downtown an “anchor tenant” – that business that makes downtown worth a special trip.
3. To create new small business opportunities, particularly in the creative pursuits: artisans, service-industry businesses including graphic design, technology development, research and development.
4. To give overnight visitors places to spend time and money – and a reason to drive more than a quarter-mile off the interstate.
5. To attract regional residents into Mt. Vernon – even for day trips.
6. To make Mt. Vernon THE destination of choice for multi-day stays, and a more-than-desirable place to live and raise a family.

THE TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BRANDING

1. Branding is the art of setting yourself apart from everyone else. Being a place that has “something for everyone” can be anywhere and says nothing about you.
2. A brand is a perception – what people think when they hear Mt. Vernon mentioned. It’s also a promise that you will deliver on that perception (good or bad.) In the case of Mt. Vernon we know that part of this effort is “repositioning” or “rebranding” Mt. Vernon.
3. Logos and slogans are not brands. They are just marketing messages and graphic images used to support and reinforce your ownership position. After all, brands are about owning your niche in the marketplace.
4. Never use focus groups for brand development unless you want a watered down generic brand that can fit just about anyone, anywhere. Mt. Vernon's Brand Development Committee was not a focus group, but a group of local businesses and supporting organizations whose primary purpose was to develop the product that reinforces and supports the perception and promise being developed and marketed.
5. A great brand evokes emotion. It’s a feeling someone has about you. This is why you focus on activities more than physical attributes such as historic buildings or the courthouse.

6. All successful brands are built on product, not marketing. We can develop new advertising, graphics, websites, mobile apps, signs, and posters, but if the product doesn’t change or improve what have you accomplished? The increase in sales will be temporary.

7. You never “roll out” a brand. It’s earned – good or bad. It will take several years before Mt. Vernon can really “sell” its brand direction and then only when the product is in place to back it up.

8. You cannot do branding by public consent. Yes, we did ask local and regional residents to weigh in on the brand direction, but in the end, the idea that is most feasible is the one that is being used to push the brand forward. This has been a grassroots effort.

9. You build your brand on feasibility, not just local sentiment. Typically, the most feasible brand direction is built on a foundation already in the district.

10. Branding is built through public relations. Advertising is used to cement your ownership position of the brand.

THE BRANDING PROCESS

Starting in April of 2012, the City of Mt. Vernon embarked on the 13-step branding process as follows:

1. Creation of the Brand Development Committee (BDC) and bringing in an outside facilitator to guide the city through the process. Included on the BDC were the following people:
   a. Mary Ellen Bechtel
   b. Sharon Bradham
   c. Brandon Bullard
   d. Mayor Mary Jane Chesley
   e. Casey Cunningham
   f. Rex Cusumano
   g. Debbie Greene
   h. Bonnie Jerdon
   i. Cyndy Mitchell
   j. Ron Neibert
   k. Todd Piper
   l. Angela Schrum
   m. Kevin Settle
   n. Laura Thacker
   o. Jamie Wheeler

   Destination Development International (DDI) was retained to facilitate the process, led by Roger Brooks.

2. Education and outreach. In April, the DDI team performed a secret shopping “assessment” of Mt. Vernon and presented it in a 2.5-hour workshop, followed by an Assessment Findings & Suggestions Report. At that time an in-person and online questionnaire was developed, and over the following several weeks nearly 250 people weighed
in on what they thought Mt. Vernon should be known for. They also provided feedback on what they saw as major challenges and best assets. They answered other questions including what they thought was missing from the Mt. Vernon mix that would get them to spend more time (and money) in the area. The responses were exceptionally enlightening.

3. Identify the markets we’re hoping to attract to Mt. Vernon. In terms of geographic markets (in order of priority):
   a. The residents of Mt. Vernon and adjoining neighborhoods.
   b. The communities within a 25-mile radius of Mt. Vernon for day trips and as a central-hub location.
   c. Visitors already staying in Mt. Vernon – getting them out of the hotels and into local restaurants, retail shops, and places where they can spend time and money. The hotels are nearly full year round, yet visitors rarely venture more than a quarter mile from the freeway exits.
   d. The communities within a 50-mile radius, as day-trip visitors and some overnight.
   e. Visitors already spending time in Rend Lake, making Mt. Vernon a “must visit” destination while in the area.
   f. Ultimately, the goal is to make Mt. Vernon a destination, in its own right, for visitors from the major metro areas of Indianapolis, St. Louis, Nashville, Evansville, Louisville and as far away as Chicago.

In terms of demographic markets:
   g. Families that work in Mt. Vernon but live elsewhere. What can we do to entice them to move to Mt. Vernon and embrace it as their home community?
   h. Singles, couples and young families in their late 20s, 30s and early 40s who are the future of Mt. Vernon. These are folks in the creative industries whether artisans in action: woodworkers (custom furniture design and manufacturing), metal work, glass blowers, other visual art mediums; graphic arts and service industries from app development, to graphic design, copy writing, film, and tech/medical research and development.
   i. Boomers will follow both of these groups. They are looking for high quality of life and inexpensive living in quality neighborhoods.

In terms of psychographics (lifestyle):
   j. The Creative Class. Creativity-oriented people look for emerging opportunities, low cost of living, and places to start a business (incubators) in an inspiring atmosphere.

4. Compilation of the feedback and market research. The Brand Development Committee spent several weeks reading through local feedback and applying it to the “Feasibility Testing” process. Here are the ten questions we asked of each idea that came from local and area residents:
   a. Is this something the people we are hoping to attract can’t get or do closer to home? If it isn’t, we didn’t toss it aside, but put it in the “complementary activity” category rather than as a primary brand candidate.
   b. Is this something the private sector can invest in? This is the challenge of hanging a brand on your history. Where is the investment opportunity? This branding effort is geared towards finding ways to import more cash into Mt. Vernon or offset the tremendous leakage the community now sees.
   c. Can we make it obvious what Mt. Vernon is about when people come into town?
   d. Is it experiential – based on things to do, not things to look at? Both locals and visitors are looking for immersive or active opportunities. Things to look at become “been there, done that” – activities not sustainable.
e. Is this something local residents can buy into? If we were to suggest branding Mt. Vernon as the Illinois version of “Sin City” we probably wouldn’t get much buy in locally.

f. How much will it cost and when will we see a return on investment? Both for public projects and privately developed opportunities.

g. How wide an audience will it attract? We want a narrow focus or niche, but not one that’s too narrow!

h. Will it extend our seasons? The challenge with outdoor recreational brands is that they are not typically year round activities. Being a softball capital may be great for several months, but what about the rest of the year?

i. Are there those who will tirelessly champion the cause? Without true champions no branding effort can succeed.

j. Does it have legs? Can we start with a niche, and then expand it? If you wanted to be a sports-oriented community, you might start with softball, then add soccer, then football, then tennis and eventually you’d end up being the “sports capital of Southern Illinois.” Each of these sports is an extension to the brand.

5. Once the brand direction was finalized, the BDC set about creating the Brand Leadership Team, which is detailed in the recommendations. The Brand Development Committee’s primary job was to determine the brand direction. The Brand Leadership Team (BLT) is charged with leading the effort – making something happen. This is the group that will implement this plan. These will be the pioneers and champions who will make it all happen. They never take “no” for an answer and will move mountains to make a difference.

6. Next up was the creation of the “product BrandBank” – the product that needs to be developed, improved, added to, or changed to reinforce the brand direction. Remember that brands are built on product, not just marketing. In fact, product sells itself. The bulk of the recommendations in this plan are product development initiatives.

7. Write the Brand Promise. Now that we know what the brand is, and the product that will reinforce and support it, the brand promise was created. This is the guiding principal for everything the City and its partnering organizations will focus on for the next three to five years.

8. Create the look and feel of the brand. This is where the logo, tag lines, concept ads, pole banners, wayfinding signage, and other graphic elements come into play. They must portray the feeling that supports the brand promise.

9. Develop the Action Plan. During the week of June 11th, 2012, the Brand Development Committee donated four days of their time to set the future of Mt. Vernon for the next several generations. It was intense, fun, included heated debates, at times created brain overload, but it was also rewarding to be THE champions and pioneers charting the future for the city. The list of recommendations below came from this week’s work.

10. Make something happen. As you read through the recommendations you’ll see that this is an aggressive plan. It requires digging deep to make some very specific things happen over the next few years. The work has already begun but won’t end for perhaps a decade. Once the city and its partners accomplish the items in this plan, they will come back together and develop the next list – always with the same goals and the same brand running the program. Product development is an ongoing process – not a one-time thing.

11. Keep the energy high. This is why true champions must lead the effort. Their unbounded enthusiasm will push the agenda forward. There are only three killers of any branding effort:

a. Local politics (typically worse with membership organizations than with elected officials)

b. Lack of champions
c. Lack of money (both public and private investment)

The bottom line: If you have true champions, they will ALWAYS get through the politics and they will find the money. ALWAYS.

12. Tell the world. 2012 and 2013 are the “getting ready years” and in 2014 the world will start to see this effort unfolding. It’s exciting! One word of caution: Do not use the new brand graphics, key marketing messages, and branding elements until you are ready to deliver on the promise. If you tell the world you’re this incredible arts community, yet beyond Cedarhurst there’s little to show, the brand will wilt before it has a chance to blossom.

13. On October 29th, 1941, Winston Churchill spoke to the boys at Harrow School and made this famous statement, “Never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.” While this may be a little overly dramatic for Mt. Vernon’s branding project, it sets the stage for never taking no for an answer. Where there’s a will, there’s a way.

Dr. Robert Anthony once said, “Forget all the reasons why something may not work. You only need to find one reason why it will.”

THE MT. VERNON BRAND

The Brand Promise is the simple statement and guiding principle that should be placed on every wall in every department and in the offices of your partnering organizations. It is your guiding principle. Everything you do to further the brand should help achieve the goal the brand promise stands for.

“Celebrating creativity through a series of festivals, artisans in action, and a vibrant downtown market.”

This is what you want to be known for. To put it in marketing terms:

“The Midwest’s Festival City. Artisans, music & creativity with a twist.”

When you tell someone, ten years from now, you’re from Mt. Vernon, you want them to respond:

“Oh yeah! I know Mt. Vernon! You’re that place with all those very cool art studios, festivals and that awesome market!”

KEY MARKETING MESSAGES (Used when you can deliver on the promise)

“There’s a place in south central Illinois that shrugs off the ordinary and embraces the extraordinary. A place where creativity with a twist is the norm, not the exception. A place that fosters and supports creativity in business, is obvious as you meander through more than 100 sculptures throughout town, and is renowned for its artisans in action at the incredible Broadway Market. This is Mt. Vernon where creativity is constantly being redefined.

“Whoever said art is for the elite and is only seen on coffee tables, in display cases, and hanging on walls, simply has never visited Mt. Vernon, Illinois. This is where you’ll see incredible customized motorcycles and cars, can participate and play with pin striping, leather, and ceramics artisans at the Plaza at Broadway Market – the showcase arts market in the Midwest.

“You see, the people of Mt. Vernon are redefining creativity every day and it’s nothing short of amazing. See for yourself at www.CreativityMV.com”

For “The Recycled Art Festival”

“Visit the hippest, most eco-conscious festival of the year, and see for yourself how people are giving new life to items that
were landfill bound. This is recycling redefined.”

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following represents the initial list of recommendations to get you started. During the BrandCamp week all of the sessions were recorded, and it’s important to play those back, make notes, and write down ideas, thoughts and recommendations.

While this document was developed using Adobe InDesign, and sent to you via PDF file, we have also included the original Microsoft Word document that you can open, edit, add notes, recommendations, change the order, and make improvements as you deem appropriate.

The idea is to have the Brand Development Committee and Leadership Team write the plan following DDI’s facilitation process. So after the BLT has read through this document, then the group should meet to discuss:

- Next steps
- Costs and funding sources
- Timelines
- Add or rearrange the recommendations
- Assign tasks for each

NONE of these recommendations should be removed. All are important to making Mt. Vernon an outstanding community. Think of this plan as a puzzle. If you toss away some of the pieces, it becomes a worthless puzzle. All the elements integrate, and that integration and implementation is what leads to a successful effort.

Happy reading!
JULY/AUGUST 2012

1. What: THE BRAND LEADERSHIP TEAM
   Who takes the lead: The Brand Development Committee
   Approximate cost: None
   Funding source: None required
   Rationale and/or details:
   This is the first and most important recommendation of the entire effort. Without strong champions, this effort cannot succeed. After working with more than a thousand communities around the world, the only time an effort like this has failed is when there were no champions to push it forward. These must be doers not simply directors. Even though you’ve already taken this step, please review the following to make sure you have the right champions in place:

   The BLT should be comprised of those individuals committed to “championing” the brand, and making it happen.

   The members of this team will be the “voice of the brand,” working in a hands-on capacity as advocates for the brand vision, being instrumental in fulfilling all of the recommendations set forth in the Action Plan.

   The BLT should include key “movers and shakers” from the community – business and/or property owners, downtown or business association members, City Council and staff, tourism and economic development representatives, chamber of commerce representatives, and others who are good communicators and committed to the brand vision.

   Local organizations and city officials should read through the Action Plan and then decide whether or not they feel passionate about the objectives and projects detailed therein. Characteristics of a good BLT member include:

   • A willingness to invest time (and in some cases, money).
   • An ability to take a few hits along the way: They need to have thick skin. Not everyone will agree with the brand direction. You simply cannot be all things to all people, and you can’t let local politics kill the branding effort.
   • Good speaking abilities: The BLT will be asked to sell the brand direction to various groups, boards and state/regional organizations. They should be good public speakers and be 100% behind the brand.
   • Enthusiasm: Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” This must be the motto of the Leadership Team members. Enthusiasm is contagious!
   • A willing doer, not someone who just wants to direct: Each member will be expected to dedicate two to four hours a month to this cause, attending meetings, speaking to various groups, coming up with great ideas and pushing the effort forward.
   • The Team will also be the “brand police” when it comes to key marketing messages, use of the brand identity and tag lines, and are also charged with making sure the brand stays narrow – to resist “brand creep,” as there will be a desire to keep broadening it until it becomes more and more generic, and less and less effective.

   In addition, individuals with something to gain from the implementation of the plan also make good BLT members. They’ll work all the harder to see it succeed. This entire effort will rest on the shoulders of the BLT. Without champions, the branding and product development process cannot succeed and nothing will come of this plan.

   The first order of business is to set up some ground rules. This is a group dedicated to working with the organizations that can make things happen. You might consider this a “booster club” but with some heavy hitters and the ear of key organizations.
Ground rules might include:

- **Number and frequency of meetings.** Some meet every other week for the first six months as assignments are fleshed out and implemented, then reduce it down to one meeting a month – and additional meetings as needed for consultant selection or other special to-do items.

- **Assignments:**
  - Have one person take minutes and act as the BLT secretary.
  - One would organize and remind members of meeting times and dates.
  - Another would be charged with setting up the speaking engagement calendar. Coming up with a list of organizations, contacting them with times during the year they’d like to see what’s happening. This person would hand out assignments to fellow members – such as which event they would individually speak at.
  - A BLT member would be charged with the PowerPoint and graphics so that everyone is using the same resources. A unified message is very important.
  - One would work with the city or other funding organizations to set up times to review proposals, Requests for Qualifications, and to set up meetings for interviews or the selection process.
  - The “BLT Chief of Police” would be the lead “brand cop” gathering marketing pieces created by partnering organizations and materials generated using the Brand Style Guide, and then presenting them to the BLT for approval.

- **If a member misses more than two meetings in a six-month period, they are removed from the team.** This effort, particularly in the first year, requires a commitment to be a doer – including attending meetings and playing an active role in the effort.

- **Generally, BLT members would serve for two years, and then among themselves would invite new members to come in as needed.** So the entire BLT is not changed over at the two-year mark, there will be some natural attrition. What you don’t want is the BLT to think at the two-year mark they are done. This could result in the disbanding of the BLT. So the two-year rule is simply a guideline. Some champions would stay for the long haul and as long as the enthusiasm doesn’t wane, bring them on!

A brand cannot be built without investment, and the initiatives in the plan require both public and private investment. Therefore, this team must be willing to take a stand and be the voice of reason.

The key is to have a small enough team that things can actually get done, since this is about implementation. There may need to be additional people on the team.

If it is possible to develop a larger BLT without politics and personal agendas interfering with progress, then the more people on the ground, the more effective the effort will be.

With a strong implementation program, once the brand starts moving, it will take on a life of its own. Generally, the idea is to have the BLT work itself out of a job after five to seven years. Once again, this is not a steadfast rule, but at some point perhaps an organization will take on the role of brand cop and another take on product development, etc.

The life of a BLT typically ranges between five and twenty years. As the brand takes hold, meetings can be less frequent. In some cases, the BLT becomes a registered non-profit agency with some funding mechanisms to take on specific projects tied to the brand development effort.

It is important to point out that branding is never done. You cannot rest on your laurels. If you are the best, people will be gunning for you. Just think about Napa Valley. How many wine regions in California alone are looking to topple Napa
as the wine capital? Likewise, Disney doesn’t remain static, but adds new attractions and events all the time. Winners can never rest, so this is not something you start and then walk away from. There will always be a need for champions of change.

Finally, there are only three killers of any branding product:

1. Local politics
2. Lack of champions
3. Lack of money, both public and private

If you have great champions, they will get through the local politics and find the money and/or the development interests to make it all happen. No brand can succeed without tireless champions who pioneer the effort. This is the BLT’s mission.

Once again, this is the most important decision in the entire Action Plan. Read the plan, adopt it, then become Champions for Change – active pioneers in bringing it to life. If you ever want to create a lasting legacy, this is the perfect vehicle.

The importance of the BLT with committed brand champions cannot be overstated. We surveyed 400 well-branded towns in North America, and in 396 of those communities, the brand was a grass roots effort. Rarely will a top-down effort yield success. Why? Elected officials are voted into office to be all things to all people, yet brands are about being known for something specific. The days of “we have something for everyone” are over. In this age of specialization, you must jettison the generic. A generic branding effort yields a watered down, mediocre, ineffective brand.

These individuals will do the work to see that the product is developed that will bring the brand to life, fulfilling the brand promise. The concerted effort by these people will be the force of the entire branding effort, keeping the brand image in focus, keeping the plan on track and overseeing the successful development of the brand.

2. What: BLT KICKOFF MEETING.

Who takes the lead: Brand Leadership Team

Approximate cost: None

Funding source: None required

Rationale and/or details:

a. Set a regular schedule for the Brand Leadership Team (BLT) to meet. Perhaps once a month. Here are the things to cover in this first meeting:

b. Set up five committees:

   i. The Marketing Committee would handle all brand-related marketing from brochures, website makeovers, approvals of all things brand related when it comes to graphics – including wayfinding signage design.

   ii. The Broadway Market Committee is charged with pushing the Broadway Market forward. This group would be a selection committee for required expertise, business plan development, finding funding sources, and programming the market.

   iii. The Streetscape Committee will be charged with the wayfinding process as the city’s selection committee, and will work closely with downtown on beautification and recruitment efforts. In essence, anything that makes Mt. Vernon a more attractive and easier place to spend time (and money) will be handled by this committee.
iv. The Arts Committee will work to attract artisans in action to Mt. Vernon, work with the school system on possible donation of buildings for artisan live/work space, and work to add more public arts projects throughout town. All things related to the arts brand will be steered by this committee.

v. The Festivals Committee will be charged with inviting outside organizations into Mt. Vernon to host their events locally, including working with logistics such as closing off streets or securing use of the Plaza at the Market.

c. Make a list of local organizations that hold monthly, quarterly or annual meetings including (but not limited to) school boards, chamber of commerce, city council, economic development, tourism, hospital boards, Kiwanis, Rotary, other auxiliary organizations, Cedarhurst, downtown – every local organization in the city, county and even at the state level (Illinois Tourism, for instance).

Then assign Brand Leadership Team members to contact each organization. Set up a time for the BLT members to give a presentation to each of these organizations over the next six to eight months. We left you with the PowerPoint/Keynote presentation that can be redeveloped to fit the time limit (usually 20 to 30 minutes) and the speaker’s style.

The idea of this is not to try to “sell” everyone on the brand direction, but to tell them we’re headed in this direction, and we’d love to hear their ideas on how to make it happen and ways to make it even stronger and more successful. For example, if people belong to a local classic car club, would they consider having that organization host a car show in Mt. Vernon in a couple of years when the market is open and ready for them? How about quilt shows? Do they know local artisans that would love a workspace in the market?

This is to garner support, new ideas, and to get the community excited about the market, a revitalized downtown, and an arts focus that’s not just within the fence line of Cedarhurst. This is how you make the brand inclusive.

3. What: MARKET BUSINESS PLAN EXPERTISE

Who takes the lead: Broadway Market Committee

Approximate cost: $10,000

Funding source: Perhaps grant funds, city general funds (to be discussed)

Rationale and/or details:

Contact Aaron Pohl-Zaretsky, the premier public market expert in the country. He ran the famous Pike Place Market (14 million visitors a year) in Seattle for nearly ten years and currently lives in Asheville, North Carolina. His contact information is as follows:

a. Website: www.publicmarketdevelopment.com

b. Phone: (828) 645-9291

Have him come to Mt. Vernon for a couple of days to see the armory and talk to him about next steps, development of a business plan, programming, etc. I’m sure he’d do this for a reasonable fee, and it’s a great starting point.
4. **What: ARCHITECTURAL & ENGINEERING EXPERTISE**

   Who takes the lead: Broadway Market Committee

   Approximate cost: $7,000 (local initial expertise)

   Funding source: To be determined – grant funds are available for this use

   Rationale and/or details:

   It's important to have an architect in the mix – one that specializes in public markets and public assembly spaces. They will know buildings like this and also know what's required to have a successful public market as well as artisan workshops and display space.

   If you don't have anyone locally, Aaron might be able to provide some contacts for you or perhaps can even bring someone with him.

   The goal is to get an architectural firm, engineering firm, and a public market specialist “team” put together to start the conversion process. Start by hosting an exploratory visit to Mt. Vernon to discuss:

   - Approximate costs to redevelop the armory and exterior “plaza” into a public market per the initial recommendations we've provided to the city.
   - Ownership and operation of the market.
   - Programming of the market and artisan workspace. (Type of vendors, vendor mix, hosting events, entertainment, operating days and hours, etc.)
   - Capital costs.
   - Revenue streams and operating, ongoing costs.

5. **What: CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL GRAPHIC DESIGN EXPERTISE**

   Who takes the lead: Marketing Committee

   Approximate cost: None

   Funding source: None required

   Rationale and/or details:

   With an arts focus, nothing will be more important than the look and feel of your marketing materials, ads, posters, billboards, brochures, logo gear, videos, photography, and everything else that embodies and reinforces your brand.

   Continuity is also critical: you MUST have all of your partnership organizations on the same page, pulling in the same direction. Imagine the nightmare if every Coca-Cola bottling plant designed its own Coke logo, bottle and can design, ads, trucks, etc. It wouldn't be one of the world's top brands. In fact, it wouldn't exist as a company.

   You have one chance to do this right, and so don't skimp on securing the best graphic design expertise you can find. They do NOT need to be local. Issue a Request for Qualifications and let them know they will be charged with a number of projects including:

   - Wayfinding identity (what the signs look like. Wayfinding expertise will design the system)
- Pole banners
- Creation of the Brand Style Guide (the final graphics everyone will use)
- Brochures and printed marketing pieces
- Website design concepts
- Logo gear and collectibles
- Billboards, water tower designs, and outdoor advertising
- The look and feel of videography, still photography
- Ads (radio, print, television – down the road)
- Anything and everything that portrays the “new” Mt. Vernon

Pick the top three firms (or people) after issuing the RFQ. Qualifications should include:

- Experience promoting communities
- Experience promoting tourism, chambers of commerce and economic development organizations
- Depth at print advertising, design and production of promotional materials
- Style Guide creation experience
- Talent (the most critical element. Look at the work they’ve done: does it make you want to go there? To buy the product they are promoting? If not, go to the next one.)
- Range of talent (an art-focused brand looks a whole lot different than someone promoting rail history, for example. Do they have range with their designers?)
- Copywriting expertise. Ads must command attention. You must jettison the generic.
- Social media expertise (setting up a YouTube channel, Facebook Fan Page, Twitter account, etc.)

Interview your top three picks and pick the one you think is the most talented, will be timely in submitting ideas and deliverables, is affordable, and is easiest to work with. Many graphic designers are defensive of their work, and you need someone (or a team) that will listen to you and do you proud.

They would be hired on a per-project basis and would bid each project with a not-to-exceed cost so that you can work with tight budget restraints. But DO spend the money to bring in professional graphic design expertise. It’s critically important in everything you do. Once the Style Guide has been developed (their first priority and one of the following recommendations) they will be able to do projects for Tourism, the Chamber, Economic Development, the City, Downtown and other organizations, creating continuity in everything you do. You will also save money through this cooperative buying agreement. They get half a dozen clients in exchange for perhaps cutting the normal prices by 25% or so.
6. **What: GIVE DOWNTOWN A NAME**

Who takes the lead: Downtown Main Street organization, City of Mt. Vernon

Approximate cost: None

Funding source: None required

Rationale and/or details:

Nearly every successful downtown will have a district with a name. The word “downtown” or “central business district” is a geographic designation, not a destination. The idea is that your wayfinding system, when developed, will identify attractions more than just geographic designations. The French Quarter in New Orleans sounds like an attraction, whereas “Historic downtown New Orleans” sounds like a geographic area.

Come up with a name that makes downtown a destination. You might not use it for a few years until you can deliver on the promise of actually becoming a destination, but it provides some incentive to help push downtown forward. Perhaps the “Market District” or “The Arts District” or even “The Plaza District” can make downtown sound like a great place to spend time.

Start working on a name now, make sure it fits with the brand direction, and then hang onto it. The graphic design firm can develop an identity for it, and in a year or so you can develop pole banners (once the Market opens), gateway signage, and the district name will be placed on your wayfinding signage.

Do NOT make this a public process. Choose a great name using a small group of people and then present it to the city for their approval.

**SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2012**

7. **What: BRAND STYLE GUIDE**

Who takes the lead: Marketing Committee

Approximate cost: $15,000

Funding source: A combination of funds from economic development, Chamber of Commerce, City of Mt. Vernon, Downtown (Main Street), and Tourism. Split four ways the cost would be $3,000 each.

Rationale and/or details:

Development of a Mt. Vernon Brand Style Guide. Before people start redeveloping brochures, websites, new letterhead and business cards, the top priority is to create a community-wide “Style Guide” or “Brand Standards and Practices Manual.”

The logos and concepts you have already received were just that – a concept – a starting point. Our graphic designer has done a whole lot more over the last few weeks, but this all needs to come together in a Style Guide, which will be the “bible” every organization will use to create continuity with your brand direction.

Right now you have a general look and feel to the brand, but now it's time to get down to specifics and particulars. That's what a Brand Style Guide does.
The Brand Style Guide, or standards and practices manual, will contain graphic design standards for logo and slogan use, guidelines for website development, guidelines for the production of printed sales and marketing materials, as well as the proper use of key marketing, advertising and promotion messages.

The BLT will be responsible for overseeing proper use of the graphic identity. This Style Guide will provide the official guidance for how to use the community’s graphic identity.

Sample Table of Contents:

- Brand Overview
- The Brand Identity
  - Clear space and sizes
  - Proper uses
  - Improper uses
  - Sub logos
  - Tag lines
- Brand fonts and colors
- Business cabinet
- Printed materials
- Signage and pole banners
- Electronic media
- Usage guidelines and sample usage agreement

Examples of approved logo and brand use should be provided in the guide. This includes dimensions and minimum sizes, as well as fonts and colors. Logo colors must be identified as specific Pantone colors and/or as percentages of the four process colors: cyan, magenta, yellow and black (CMYK). Guidelines for reproducing the logo in black and white and in one color need to be included.

Wrong usage of the logo (in structure, color or fonts) needs to be spelled out. Combining the logo with other logos or branding elements should never be permitted.

Web design concepts should be illustrated showing use of the logo, color palette, and structure. RGB and HMTL colors should be listed. Examples of PowerPoint presentations with the logo should be incorporated.

Continuity and consistency are critical when developing a strong branding program that creates top of mind awareness of the brand. The logo and brand design should give the community an easily recognizable identity – a symbol and message that represents the community and the experiences it has to offer. Whenever the logo is used, it should bring to mind images of enjoying that community.

Repetition helps reinforce the viewer’s perception, but consistency is the only way to ensure logo and brand recognition. That is why the Brand Style Guide is a highly detailed document, providing specific instructions on how to use the graphics – font sizes, colors, guidelines for reproduction, guidelines for web design, PowerPoint presentations, and advertisements, etc. Examples of logo use should be provided for the city and local organizations that will utilize the logo, as well as for signage and wayfinding.

All organizations that market the community need to do so with consistency in the look and feel of their marketing. The Style Guide helps get everyone on the same page, pulling in the same direction. The BLT should work with all marketing
organizations that promote the community on proper use of the logo and other graphic elements to create a unified, consistent look and feel.

A Brand Style Guide costs approximately $15,000 to develop and you can have it done locally by a qualified graphic design firm, or by someone like our graphic designer. It includes:

- Final identities for the city and each of your organizations with variations in full color, two-color and black and white, and in various formats
- The proper use and spacing (along with identified improper uses) of your brand identities
- The look of your business papers (letterhead, envelope, business cards, labels, your e-mail signatures)
- The color schemes, patterns, font styles for headlines, body text, and other elements of your websites and printed materials, and print advertising
- Photography styles and other imagery
- Tag lines and key marketing messages
- Brochure covers
- Website home page and interior page guidelines
- Outdoor (billboard) marketing guidelines
- Print advertising (full page, half page, and 1/3 page guidelines)

It may include other elements as well, but this is the Guide EVERY partnering organization would use for ALL of their marketing efforts. Continuity is absolutely key to a successful branding program.

This is extremely important. Remember that all you have, at this point, are concepts.

When it comes to funding, we'd suggest that each organization perhaps pitch in $3,000 each to make this happen:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Tourism
- Economic Development
- City of Mt. Vernon
- Downtown Mt. Vernon

If you decide to take this out to bid, we advise you issue a Request for Qualifications, not an RFP. Find the very best, then negotiate a deal, scope of work and timeline with them. If you'd like an example of a Style Guide, let us know and we'll send you a PDF of one to look at.
8. **What: GO THROUGH THE ASSESSMENT AND ADD TO THIS PLAN**

Who takes the lead: Brand Leadership Team, all committees

Approximate cost: None

Funding source: None required

Rationale and/or details:

Sit down as a group and go through the Assessment Findings & Suggestions Report and address each of the “suggestions” made throughout the report. Most are already incorporated into this plan, but others are not. Things like getting downtown crosswalk buttons to work, eliminating 30-minute parking in front of retailers like The Dish that can kill a business, and many other suggestions that should be turned into recommendations.

Go through them, decide whether or not they should be included in this plan, then add them, in order of timeline, assign the task to an organization or committee, and then obtain some costs, find possible funding sources, and bring them to fruition.

The Assessment was a $25,000 project so don’t let it go to waste. There are a lot of great ideas, examples to emulate, and suggestions that should absolutely be added to this plan.

9. **What: ISSUE RFQ FOR WAYFINDING SYSTEM DESIGN**

Who takes the lead: Streetscape Committee

Approximate cost: $80,000 (see notes below) citywide

Funding source: Federal transportation grants

Rationale and/or details:

Wayfinding System. Begin looking for funding for creation and development of a Wayfinding System. This is the “plan” that will provide bid-ready documentation for a complete citywide wayfinding system. Look for federal and state grant funds, and then find out what local matches will be.

Work on the local match portion as part of the upcoming city budget process. Include the county if at all possible. A countywide system will be far more advantageous than just a citywide system. This way signage can direct people throughout the county, not just once they’re off the interstate in Mt. Vernon. You will also get state DOT support when it’s a countywide effort AND, you’ll save money by making it a partnership process.

The first step is looking for funding to design the system, and then look for funding to implement the system.

To design the system, countywide, we estimate the cost would be about $125,000 including bid-ready documentation so the plan can be presented to fabricators for bidding the construction and installation of the system. To do a citywide system, the cost would be in the $75,000 to $80,000 range. If it were a countywide effort the cost would be perhaps evenly split at about $62,500 each. While Mt. Vernon is the largest city in the county, the county is quite spread out and has more miles of roadways that need wayfinding or directional signage.

Included in a wayfinding system:

- Highway/freeway directional signage
- County and city thoroughfares
- Pedestrian wayfinding downtown
- Pole banners (often seasonal) for downtown and the rest of the city/county
- Visitor information kiosks
- Gateway signage (community and downtown)
- Marquee signage for parks and other public facilities (like the public market)
- Water tower graphics can be included

This is NOT a public works project. It is as much a science as an art, and it should be left to professionals.

10. What: SCHOOL PARKING LOT ACQUISITION

Who takes the lead: Broadway Market Committee working with the city

Approximate cost: Hopefully none

Funding source: None required

Rationale and/or details:

An important element to the market is securing the high school parking lot adjacent to the Plaza at the Market. In our visits to Mt. Vernon, even during the school year, we never saw more than a handful of cars parked in this gravel lot. The goal is to have the school district give the lot to the city for public parking. This means the school can still use it while the new school is being constructed, and once the Market opens, the school will have also opened in its new location. Without this lot, the Market may not be feasible. Parking immediately adjacent to the Market is a critical factor. This is also a staging area for delivery vehicles each morning.

The Plaza at the Market should NOT be used for parking. This is where you host exterior farmers market goods, motorcycle shows, RV shows, boat shows, and large-scale exhibitions and entertainment.

11. What: COMMUNITY PROFILE AND OPPORTUNITIES BROCHURES

Who takes the lead: Marketing Committee working with partnering organizations

Approximate cost: $6,000

Funding source: City general funds (perhaps partnering with economic development, the chamber of commerce)

Rationale and/or details:

Create Community Profile and Opportunities brochures. Included along with these recommendations are sample community profiles and opportunities brochures. These should be very key, simple, straight-forward snapshots of Mt. Vernon that can be used by local real estate agents (commercial and residential), the chamber as part of relocation packets, economic development for recruitment purposes, and tourism to attract conventions, festivals and events. Also provide copies to your major employers: hospitals and medical facilities, Walgreens, Continental Tire and others. Perhaps these will encourage new employees to actually move to Mt. Vernon.

These should be updated every year and should also be available as multi-page downloads in PDF format on every local website. Consider printing 6,000 copies. Distribute perhaps 200 to every real estate office in the region, and then the rest
will be available as needed. They should be available at the visitor information center, in each partnering organization office and at city hall.

With the “Opportunities” piece, list the top seven opportunities. Consider the following:

- Downtown retail, restaurants and residential development
- Downtown lodging facility (to complement the Broadway Market and that space, which can accommodate trade shows, exhibitions, and conferences)
- Artisans (live/work space, studio space at the market)
- Residential development (single and multi-family) per the growth of Continental Tire and other local businesses.
- Development of Artist Live/Work space
- Creative industry office space (get rid of the fluorescent lights, suspended ceilings, and provide polished concrete floors and flex space. Think creative)
- Creative industry tenants: graphic design, photography and film studios, architectural, landscape architectural, engineering firms, software and app development, medical and tech research and development businesses.

Make sure you concentrate the marketing on WHY Mt. Vernon – not just what you have or where it’s located. WHY should I move or start a business in Mt. Vernon?

12. What: BEST OF MT. VERNON BROCHURE

Who takes the lead: Marketing Committee

Approximate cost: $4,000

Funding source: Tourism marketing budget

Rationale and/or details:

Always promote your “anchor tenants.” These are businesses and activities that people would drive half an hour, or more, to visit. Do not let politics get in the way of promoting your “best ofs”. Here’s a sample set of criteria you can use to determine who you’ll promote:

- The must be open six days a week
- They must be open until at least 7:00 pm on Fridays and Saturdays
- They must have good curb appeal: they have an inviting appearance
- They must be highly regarded by someone other than themselves (70%+ positive reviews on TripAdvisor, Yelp and/or have great reviews in publications such as Midwest Living Magazine.
- They cannot be chains or franchises found elsewhere. They need to be unique to Mt. Vernon. If we can get the same thing closer to home, why would we drive to Mt. Vernon for the same thing?

The guide would contain perhaps six eating establishments, six retail shops (if possible), and six attractions or things to do while in Mt. Vernon. When it comes to restaurants, they can have great food (9th Street Grille), great ambiance, or great characters.
This is a self-funded project. Each participant is invited to be a part of the Best Of project and they would pay the cost for the one panel dedicated to them. The cost is based on printing approximately 30,000 brochures each year. Tourism would cover the design and production cost.

Once the piece has been printed, distribute them as follows:

- Every hotel should put one in each room and encourage guests to take them. Housekeeping would make sure one is in each room. The most asked question of hotel guests, around the world, is, “Where’s a good place to eat?” And they don’t want a list. They want your recommendation.

- In the visitor information center and at kiosks, which will be developed as part of the wayfinding system and will include brochure distribution.

- One should be mailed to every household in Mt. Vernon with a simple card that reads, “The number one reason people travel is to visit friends and family. We hope that you will hang onto this brochure so that when you host visitors, you will show them the best of what Mt. Vernon has to offer. After all, we believe that every dining room table should be a concierge desk.”

- At Rend Lake and other regional visitor information centers. Even in Certified Folder Display cases, if budget and quantities are sufficient.

This brochure is a good way to get regional visitors to actually stop in Mt. Vernon, a great way to get hotel guests to go beyond a quarter mile of the freeway exits and chain restaurants, and a good way to educate locals of what you’ve got and where it’s located.

For each featured business, include a photo (interior preferable), their logo, address, phone number and website address, and a description of why they are so good and are a “must visit” place while in Mt. Vernon or the area. Each would get a full panel. The brochure would fold to 4” x 9” to be a standard brochure rack size. Consider adding a QR code next to the logo so potential customers can quickly go to their website to look at the menu, operating hours, or other specifics.

It should also be available for viewing and download on the tourism and economic development websites.

13. What: CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEOGRAPHY

Who takes the lead: Marketing Committee working with your graphic design team

Approximate cost: $10,000 (could be less – see notes below)

Funding source: Tourism, other organizational marketing budgets

Rationale and/or details:

We are in the age of visual communications. You can work with the local college, a University photo and video education department, or contract for professional photography and videography – but the key is having great content and HD resolution. Your photos need to be world class – like you’d expect to see in a National Geographic publication. Videos, on the other hand, need to be more artsy and not too polished. The idea is to sell great experiences totally different than what the visitor can get closer to home, and to fit within the framework of the Brand Style Guide – your look at feel.

You can reduce costs by assuring the photographer that the images will only be used by local non-profit organizations and/or the city to promote Mt. Vernon and the area, including their name next to every use (in credits on video content) – photo credits, and even including a QR code or website address promoting the photographer. This way you create a reciprocal relationship. Consider having a page on your websites dedicated to the photographer without linking to another site.
Make sure your videographer also has studio skills. You’ll want to create a number of 20 second to two-minute videos, every season of the year, promoting great experiences.

Develop a knock-your-socks-off B-roll library of video and perhaps 100 signature photographs, keeping mind:

- The photography and videography MUST fit within the Style Guide requirements and recommendations.
- Always focus on people having a great time. Especially at festivals and events. Don’t show just art – show the artist in action. People – not objects. The horse in front of Cedarhurst is awesome, but photos of the artist building the horse would be far more fascinating. People see themselves where they see other people. Remember; always sell experiences, not places, not objects. We want to see people walking around enjoying the Historic Village or Cedarhurst, not pictures of buildings or art objects.
- Keep the photography tied to the core brand of art, festivals, events and markets.

November/December 2012

14. What: CONTRACT FOR WAYFINDING SYSTEM DESIGN

Who takes the lead: Streetscape Committee working with the city

Approximate cost: Already included above

Funding source: Included above

Rationale and/or details:

Select the top three firms (best methodology, design expertise and experience) and be prepared to pay a stipend to get them to visit Mt. Vernon. No wayfinding expert will be able to provide a price to design the system without spending a day or two getting to know the community: roadways, neighborhoods, commercial areas, freeways and access points, traffic counts, etc.

When they visit you can interview them, tour them around the community and have them prepare a cost estimate to design the system. Here are some important things to remember:

• You want a system that is designed right down to individual signs and fabrication drawings of each sign.
• Have them design the system to a predetermined fabrication and installation budget. You can install a complete wayfinding system for $200,000 or can develop a single gateway for more than a million dollars. It’s critically important to have the system designed to a predetermined budget – including possible phasing. For instance, if the city can afford $25,000 a year for the system, then the system should be phased in over a number of years to fit that budget.
• Typically a wayfinding system includes the following elements:
  - Changes or additions to existing freeway signage
  - Exit signage
  - Vehicular directional signage to your attractions, amenities (parking, restrooms, visitor information, airport, downtown), and key local services (police, emergency services, hospital)
- Pedestrian wayfinding in the downtown core area.
- Pole banners (often seasonal)
- District identifiers (welcome to downtown, Broadway Market & arts district)
- Gateway signage (Welcome to Mt. Vernon)
- Place identifiers (at parks and public facilities)
- Free-standing visitor information kiosks (at or near hotels, golf courses, the airport, downtown, Broadway Market)

The firms will likely need to get back to you with a proposal. Based on those, you can make the final decision and award a contract to proceed with development of the plan.

The plan should be a “bid ready” document you can take to local or regional sign fabricators so they can bid the system. The plan should also include installation guidelines so the system can be installed using city or local services, or can be installed by the fabrication company (usually the best bet).

Remember that phasing will add to the cost, but does allow you to work within budgetary restraints. Pole mounted signs can typically be fabricated and installed in the $600 to $750 each range, while freestanding signs can cost from $1,700 to $3,000 each depending on size, location and design.

15. What: BROADWAY MARKET DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Who takes the lead: Broadway Market Committee working with the city

Approximate cost: $140,000

Funding source: Grant funds (Perhaps EDA since the market will double as a business incubator)

Rationale and/or details:

This is the work that determines the future of the armory and whether or not it’s a feasible location for the market. All indications are that it is a sound building, the location is excellent, and the price is right (free).

Develop a Request for Proposals for a complete Broadway Market Development, Management & Marketing Action Plan. The disciplines required will include engineering, architectural, arts incubator expertise, and public market-specific expertise. The deliverables should include:

- Architectural changes, upgrades, and other elements that will make the market the “stand out market in the Midwest” – a first-class facility that will be Mt. Vernon’s showcase and downtown’s “anchor tenant.” It must be a market that people will drive an hour (or longer) to visit every week or at least multiple times a year.

- Complete architectural plans including construction drawings. Elements that should be included:
  - Replacing the roof with glass panels so it’s like a greenhouse, not a gymnasium. This is extremely important. The glass panels should be able to open up to let heat escape during the summer months, and closed to keep heat in during the winter months.
  - A freight elevator so the basement area can be used to store booth space, staging, lighting and other furnishings and fixtures. The market will change by season and can be reconfigured to accommodate concerts, large banquets, conferences, exhibitions (hunting and fishing shows, RV shows, etc.) and so FF&E storage space will be needed and
should be easily accessible.

- The wall facing the exterior plaza area should be opened up so the interior of the market is seamless with the exterior plaza area.
- Redevelopment of the ring spaces into artisan studios.
- Green rooms on each side of the stage to house concerts and other guests who may be performing at the market.
- Lowering the stage (if possible) so that it is at floor level. This way, the space will be usable by market vendors when it’s not in use for entertainment. The market should have a centrally located stage in the center to accommodate daily lunch and dinner music/entertainment.
- A redeveloped exterior plaza: Consider replacing the concrete with stone/brick pavers (this will allow for drainage). Power must also be supplied to this space so it can accommodate concerts and other shows where lighting and power is required.
- Public restroom redevelopment.
- The ticket booths should remain and be included at two entrances so that when large-scale events, conferences, conventions, private functions (where they rent the space), and admission-based events are produced, the ticket booths will be available.
- Replace the chain link fence around the Plaza area with wrought iron. This still needs to be closed space, but it needs to be attractive.
- KEY: The market should be open at least four days a week, year round, and should open at 10:30 or 11:00 am and remain open until 8:00 pm, perhaps later during the summer months.

- Exactly what needs to be done, engineering-wise, to bring the building up to code including ADA access with costs.
- Programming for the market (the vendor mix).
- Management and ownership of the market including a complete business plan that includes financing redevelopment costs, funding sources, management structure, staffing, etc. This would include market vendor fees, artisan incubator rental fees and rules, leases or rents, etc.
- A complete marketing plan for both the market, arts incubator, rental fees and estimated revenues from venue rentals, etc.
- The plan should include proforma budgets including revenues, subsidies (if any), operating costs, staffing, and programming.

This will be the bible for the development, operation, and growth of Broadway Market. This is perhaps the most important element of the entire branding effort. The idea is to take a tremendous asset (the armory) and redevelop it into a regional attraction that will attract visitors to Mt. Vernon, increase local spending, provide downtown with an “anchor tenant,” create a Third Place for people to spend time, and be an incubator space for artisans, helping build on the foundation of an arts brand – beyond Cedarhurst.

We’d recommend starting with a Request for Qualifications, pick the best team, and then negotiate the methodology, fee and scope of work with them. You want the best of the best since you have just one chance to do this right. This is critically important and the goal is to have a self-sustaining Market in the heart of downtown Mt. Vernon.

Once you have this anchor tenant, you’ll start to see other retailers, restaurants and supporting businesses moving downtown. This is the core downtown revitalization project. Every downtown, like a mall, must have an anchor tenant if it hopes to survive.
16. What: BEGIN THE SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT TOUR

Who takes the lead: The entire Brand Leadership Team (everyone plays a role)

Approximate cost: None

Funding source: None other than perhaps brand promotional items (to be determined) such as posters, logo gear, or prizes for coffee mugs or other collectibles that can be given away at each speaking opportunity. Consider perhaps $1,500 for the purchase of brand-building items that can be given away over the course of a year at each engagement. It’s a great icebreaker and builds support for the effort.

Rationale and/or details:

Start the speaking engagement tour to bring in more champions and to spread the work regarding Broadway Market, the Artisan Studios at the Market, Plaza festivals and events being recruited to Mt. Vernon. Every person on the BLT should be assigned two to three presentations a year promoting the future of Mt. Vernon to organizations they are affiliated with: Kiwanis, Rotary, City Council, your boards, school districts, etc.

Not everyone will agree with the brand direction and there will be naysayers. But this effort is to educate people about how cool this can be for Mt. Vernon. A common complaint in Mt. Vernon has been that every organization is off doing its own thing, and there’s no continuity or coordination. This is a great way to show that a unified effort is working to make this all happen.

The goal is to find more champions who are excited about making Mt. Vernon a great place to live, establish a business, and to visit. When you can get a few thousand champions on board with you, the naysayers will play a noisy, but very minor role in bringing the entire effort to fruition.

You have a copy of the brand presentation given at the end of the BrandCamp week and that is available in both PowerPoint and Mac Keynote formats. Feel free to add to it, shorten it – make it yours, with your personal voice. Most presentations will be approximately 20 minutes, so you want to sell the audience on “imagining” the things that can bring Mt. Vernon back to its glory days – a great place to live in.

Present the brand to state tourism officials, state legislators representing the Mt. Vernon area, regional economic development organizations. Don’t keep it to just Mt. Vernon audiences. Start garnering champions outside of Mt. Vernon who may decide to move or invest in this great up and coming destination.

17. What: ITINERARIES & DAY TRIPS FROM THE LOCALS

Who takes the lead: Marketing Committee, all partnering organizations

Approximate cost: None

Funding source: None required

Rationale and/or details:

This is a great exercise that can be a part of your speaking engagement tour.

Develop itineraries designed by locals. Take groups through the seven-question list (feel free to develop new questions) and develop itineraries for niche markets:

a. Families with kids under ten years old
b. Families with kids from ten to 18 years old
c. Girls’ weekends out
d. Guys’ night out
e. The romantic celebration tour
f. For the big spender set
g. Theater itinerary
h. Sunday morning brunch tour
i. Calorie burn itineraries (healthy living)
j. Friends in town tour
k. Arts weekend tour
l. The day at the market tour
m. Festival weekend

The questions asked during the BrandCamp week included:

a. Where is the best place to get the perfect meal? Name the restaurant and the signature dish. Its attraction can be great ambiance, good food, or great characters.
b. Where can I check my e-mails?
c. Where can I buy the perfect gift – something locally or regionally made? Name the store and a sample of the type of gift.
d. Where can I take the photo that says I was really there? The best photo opportunity for Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, etc.
e. Where can I get the best dessert? Name the place and the dish. The dessert to simply die for.
f. What is the one thing I MUST do while in Mt. Vernon? (It can be any day of the week or any time of day)
g. Where can I get gourmet items for a picnic? And where would I picnic?

Put these answers together into itineraries. Once you have these itineraries, put them on the web. Tweet them, include them on Facebook. Even show photos of the people who developed them. Each should take place during a weekday or weekend afternoon, an evening, or even on a Sunday morning. Include photos of each venue or business. Do NOT try to be politically correct, and do not shy away from promoting individual businesses. These businesses are the lifeblood of the district!
18. What: WORK WITH SCHOOL DISTRICT ON ARTISAN LIVE WORK SPACE  
Who takes the lead: Arts Committee working with the city  
Approximate cost: None (yet)  
Funding source: None required  
Rationale and/or details:  
Begin a dialogue with the school district on donation of the building adjacent to the Broadway Market once the school moves to its new location. The goal is to bring these buildings into public ownership (city) so that they can be redeveloped into artisan live/work space. Should the school be willing to donate these buildings (you choose which ones make sense to redevelop and which ones should be demolished) then you begin working on a plan on how to move this forward.

19. What: SECURE OWNERSHIP OF THE ARMORY  
Who takes the lead: City of Mt. Vernon  
Approximate cost: None (hopefully)  
Funding source: None required  
Rationale and/or details:  
Even before the business plan and architectural/engineering work is done, you'll know whether or not the armory project makes sense. If it does, now's the time to bring it into public ownership. If it doesn't make sense, for some reason, this is STILL a key project. Just find a location and build one. It may not have the artisan studios, but it will still give you the anchor tenant and year round market you need.

Winter/Spring 2013

20. What: ARTISAN LIVE/WORK SPACE DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
Who takes the lead: Arts Committee working with the city  
Approximate cost: $30,000  
Funding source: To be determined: grant funding  
Rationale and/or details:  
Contract with experts to determine the feasibility and next steps of redeveloping these buildings into an arts campus. DDI’s Lanie McMullin has spent years working to develop spaces like this into artisan incubator space. In fact, it may be worth a Best Practices Mission to visit the space Lanie developed in downtown Everett, Washington, about an hour north of Seattle. Lanie, in this case, would bring Art Space (a national non-profit based out of Minneapolis) into the mix to see if this is a project they would take on. They typically purchase (or are granted) the buildings (campus), and then using their own funding resources, redevelop the project into artisan live/work space. They are masters at doing this (it's all they do)
and they have incredible projects that have helped revitalize entire downtowns – both rural and urban.

This price is not for a complete business plan, but pays for two multi-day visits by Lanie (or someone with comparable knowledge) and Art Space to determine the feasibility of the project and put together a Feasibility Analysis and next-steps plan – including approximate costs of next steps, timelines, and possible funding sources.

We do not see this as a city-owned project, but the city can certainly play a leadership role in getting the right players lined up to take on the project. With the arts brand as the focus, moving beyond the Broadway Market is a must. Imagine this entire “Mt. Vernon Arts Campus” that includes the Artisans at the Market, the Arts Campus behind the market, and partnerships with the Southern Illinois Art and Artisans Center, Cedarhurst, and other regional arts organizations. This creates an exceptionally strong foundation so that Mt. Vernon can actually “own” the arts brand.

21. What: BEGIN INVITING CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO HOLD EVENTS IN MT. VERNON

Who takes the lead: Festivals Committee

Approximate cost: None

Funding source: None required

Rationale and/or details:

By now you should have quite a list of regional clubs and organizations and now’s the time to put together a simple (one page) letter with some accompanying marketing information asking them to host their events in Mt. Vernon.

You’ll help them with street closures, provide power where needed, put welcome signs throughout the community, and work with them on other logistics. They do the rest. They bring in vendors, displays, staging equipment, signage, and do all the marketing of the event.

Make sure you tell them WHY Mt. Vernon is such a great destination for hosting their events. The obvious reasons:

- Your location within a three-hour drive of major markets including Indianapolis, Louisville, Nashville, Evansville, St. Louis, Springfield.
- Your crossroads location.
- Ample hotel rooms (many are high quality).
- A city that will bend over backwards to make sure you have a great time.
- Ample places to host events and close off side streets.
- Easy access.
- Rend Lake and other recreational areas are nearby (within minutes).

22. What: BRAND RECOGNITION POSTERS

Who takes the lead: Marketing Committee

Approximate cost: $4,500

Funding source: Marketing budgets
Rationale and/or details:

Create an initial series of three or four posters and make them 24” x 36” (movie poster size), print 50 of each, have them matted, mounted and framed. These will begin to inform the world of what’s coming for Mt. Vernon. It’s a fantastic way to cement “ownership” of your brand. After all, brands are about ownership. Napa Valley owns the wine brand. Nashville owns the country music brand. Orlando owns the family vacation brand.

Once you have them framed, distribute and offer to hang the posters in city offices, the library, in every organizational office, hotel meeting rooms or lobby areas, at restaurants, in retail shops, the county courthouse – everywhere you can. This will spread the work and create additional buy-in for the brand direction.

The posters should be “collectibles” with strong imagery, and each year a new poster would be developed and added to the collection. After a couple of years, people will purchase the posters to add them to their collection.

The reason for actually going to the time and expense of framing, mounting and matting them is to make sure they do get hung in key locations. Handing someone a rolled up poster they can hang at their convenience will result in a lot of posters sitting in back rooms to be put up when or if they have time. Make it easy, and you’ll see it happen. This is a big part of your outreach efforts.

23. What: CREATE A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

Who takes the lead: Marketing Committee

Approximate cost: None (unless you contract this out to expert writers and/or PR professionals)

Funding source: None required

Rationale and/or details:

Nothing creates top of mind awareness like constant reminders. And the most unobtrusive reminder can be in the form of a monthly e-newsletter. BUT it can’t be a sales pitch. It should be short, to the point, and offer upcoming events and tips and tricks on how to live the creative lifestyle. One month it might contain instructions on how to create popsicle-stick art, or showcase a very cool Lego creation, or showcase a pin striping how-to video for motorcycle or car enthusiasts. Make it fun, informational, and provide links to “the rest of the story.” “How-to’s” are always great teasers.

Provide things to do, not just stuff to read. Make it engaging. Tell everyone you know to subscribe. Wouldn’t it be great to get subscribers from all over the country? You can if you make the e-newsletter shine in terms of content and reasons to visit Mt. Vernon for its festivals and events.

Use Constant Contact as a great, inexpensive, database to work from. Each month consider the following:

- A great tip, trick or idea that you can do yourself. Perhaps a recipe one month, Christmas decorations the next
- A great small-business opportunity
- Incredible events coming up in the next 60 days
- The latest video that’s just a hoot!
24. What: BEGIN REDEVELOPING WEBSITES

Who takes the lead: Each partnering organization, Marketing Committee

Approximate cost: Depending on each project. For tourism: $10,000

Funding source: Tourism marketing budget, each organizational budget

Rationale and/or details:

The web is critically important. In fact, this is how your individual budgets should be spent:

- 45% should be spent on online marketing: website, pay per click, web-based ads, e-newsletter, search engine optimization, hosting costs, social media.
- 20% on public relations – telling the world who you are. You build your brand through public relations; advertising is used to maintain your ownership position.
- 20% on advertising to drive people to your website.
- 10% on collateral materials: printed brochures and marketing materials. All of these should be available for viewing and download from your website.
- 5% on outdoor, trade shows and other marketing venues.

Use a WordPress site. You can choose from hundreds of templates, and most are free or sell for $80 or less. You can buy widgets (many are free) from a couple of dollars to perhaps $30. You can create your own online store to sell brand posters, logo gear, art and tickets to local events.

Why use WordPress? It’s the future. Spend your money on content, not on the delivery system. At DDI we spent thousands of dollars a year working with our Webmaster every time we wanted or needed a change. Like you, the last thing you want is a website that’s a “been there, done that” event. With WordPress, we redeveloped our sites internally, without any HTML or web-development expertise, and now can make updates, add videos, photographs, build a store, include a calendar of events, and more, in just seconds. With the funds we saved, we hired a great videographer instead – investing our money on content, not the delivery system.

Bring in a WordPress professional (they are just about everywhere) just to show you the ropes of how to get started. Or bring in Jordan Pogue from the DDI team and have him spend a day or two with you. He manages all of the DDI sites (two so far and growing to four by mid-August, 2012).

Also make sure you work with your graphic design firm to have common elements and a consistent look and feel among your sites. They do not all have to be cookie-cutter or use the same template, but they do need to have complementary and unified color schemes, fonts or graphic elements.

25. What: BRAND LOGO GEAR

Who takes the lead: Marketing Committee

Approximate cost: Reimbursed from retail sales

Funding source: To be determined

Rationale and/or details:

To start telling the world about the “new” Mt. Vernon consider developing logo gear that can be sold at hotels, in the
visitor information center, and at Cedarhurst and other retail outlets. Using the new brand identity and tagline, create collectibles and logo gear that can be sold:

- Polo shirts (have the brand identity stitched) above the breast pocket location. Don't make these billboard shirts with huge logos on it.
- Baseball caps
- Coffee mugs and/or water bottles
- Paper weights
- Bookmarks (the front would be a full color photo of local art, and on the back would be “Did you know...” facts about Mt. Vernon and the area. Make sure they are cool or surprising facts, not mundane historical information.

Make sure they are colorful and something a visitor would want to wear and want to have. Think like a visitor – what you might buy and wear when you go to Yellowstone National Park or another great city (San Antonio or Orlando).

Come up with pricing (including cost of design) and then offer them to local retailers with 20% of the sale coming back to you to fund further promotional efforts. For instance, if a polo shirt at wholesale costs $12.50, it would retail for approximately $24.95. Tourism (if the lead organization) would pay the $12.50, would add on $2.50 (20% of the wholesale price) for a total wholesale cost of $15.00. This way the retailer gets the additional $10 markup.

Also develop Broadway Market fabric shopping or “market bags,” caps and shirts – once the project becomes a reality. Even before it opens. This creates a sense of anticipation.

**Summer/Fall 2013**

26. **What: STAFF THE REND LAKE FREEWAY EXIT VISITOR CENTER**

Who takes the lead: Mt. Vernon Tourism

Approximate cost: Staff/volunteer time

Funding source: Tourism's annual budget

Rationale and/or details:

More than two million visitors frequent the Rend Lake area every year, and this is a golden opportunity to take a currently closed visitor information center and bring it to life promoting Mt. Vernon. Most of these visitors pass through Mt. Vernon, and few stop. Those that do don't venture more than a quarter mile from the freeway where they can find food, supplies and gas readily available.

By having volunteers, and/or rotating staff at the visitor center, it provides an opportunity to promote Mt. Vernon for the upcoming Broadway Market, your anchor tenants (The Best of Mt. Vernon), golf, the airport, Mt. Vernon events, Cedarhurst, the Historical Village, and other attractions actually IN Mt. Vernon.
27. **What: CONTRACT FOR A DOWNTOWN MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

   Who takes the lead: The City of Mt. Vernon, Downtown Main Street program

   Approximate cost: Between $60,000 and $90,000

   Funding source: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – planning grants, Main Street, other grant sources.

   Rationale and/or details:

   Just about every site selector will tell you they gauge the health of a community by the condition of its downtown. In the case of Mt. Vernon, what once used to be a thriving commercial hub of life and activity has been replaced by more convenient big box stores (Wal-Mart, Lowes), restaurants, hotels and even residential neighborhoods closer to the major Interstate. This is not unique to Mt. Vernon, but a new trend is emerging: People want downtowns more than ever. Downtowns are back.

   But to get downtown re-energized and revitalized will require a Downtown Master Development Plan, produced by experienced urban planners and designers. To kick off this effort consider having Roger Brooks come back to Mt. Vernon and do a half-day workshop “The 20 Ingredients of an Outstanding Downtown.” Over a six-year period, DDI surveyed 400 successful downtowns and downtown districts, and from those found the 20 most common ingredients that led to their success. Roger broke those down into projects where the city took the lead, those where property owners led the effort, and ingredients spearheaded by merchants.

   Then issue an RFQ for creation of the Master Plan. The effort concentrates on what property owners can do to fill their spaces, orchestrates the business mix, and will ultimately make downtown a destination in its own right. Too often cities will spend millions of dollars making downtown beautiful with nice streetscapes, when, at the end of the day, it's what's in the buildings that makes downtown a draw. The rest is window dressing. Beautification, street trees, well-signed parking, and façade improvements are extremely important, but they only make up half of the equation. No matter how beautiful a theater is, would you go there if nothing were happening on the stage? This applies to downtown. But you need to start with a plan: What you want downtown to be known for beyond just the courthouse.

   Once you have a plan in place, you can hire recruitment services that will work with the property owners, the city and downtown tenants to recruit the business mix that will bring downtown back to life. The Broadway Market will play a key role in opening that door and encouraging downtown investment, but you still need a detailed Action Plan and a recruitment effort to bring it all together.

28. **What: SCHEDULE FACILITATOR VISITS**

   Who takes the lead: Brand Leadership Team

   Approximate cost: $10,000

   Funding source: Various sources, general fund revenues

   Rationale and/or details:

   This plan is a three-year plan but has such major projects in it that we felt it was important to not overwhelm the community with too much. The goal is to accomplish the initiatives in this list, and then have DDI, or an outside facilitator, come back in with “the Next List” of projects.

   Additionally, it’s extremely important to keep the energy high. If need be bring Roger Brooks in every six months, or once a year (in some cases he’s been back every few months) to keep the process moving forward and to keep your champions energized and on track. There will always be roadblocks, red tape, and issues that can create speed bumps and sometimes
barricades as you move through the process, but all of these can be overcome.

There is no such thing as a project killer if you have the right champions in place – including recessionary times.

Winter/Spring 2014

29. What: HIRE RECRUITMENT SERVICES

Who takes the lead: Downtown Mt. Vernon

Approximate cost: $80,000 per year over a three-year contract (renewable each year)

Funding source: To be determined

Rationale and/or details:

Once you have a Downtown Development Master Plan completed, then contract with a professional commercial real estate professional (perhaps someone near retirement or that can add this project to their current work load) to recruit the orchestrated business mix into downtown Mt. Vernon.

Typically this is a sub-contracted position where the recruiter primarily works with property owners to help fill their spaces with an orchestrated business mix. They operate on a three-year contract, which is renewable each year. If they don’t do a good job and make headway each year, then they are dismissed and you find a great replacement.

This will not be an effort where you place ads to recruit the businesses and hope for the best. It requires a personal touch – knocking on doors, recruiting specific businesses into specific spaces to bring it all together.

30. What: DEVELOP A BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR DOWNTOWN

Who takes the lead: Downtown Main Street organization, City of Mt. Vernon

Approximate cost: Self funding through a Business Improvement District program

Funding source: Property owners through property taxes or other means

Rationale and/or details:

What comes first? The plan. Then recruitment. Then beautification. The Downtown Master Development Plan will include streetscapes and beautification, and as new retailers and businesses are recruited to downtown, then the blocks around them will be beautified. This makes the effort a true public/private partnership.
OTHER IDEAS TO BE CONSIDERED

1. Working with South Central Transit on creating day trip excursions from Rend Lake to Mt. Vernon's Cedarhurst and the Broadway Market, when it opens.

2. New look and feel to “Destination Mt. Vernon” so it fits within the look and feel of the brand. The same with the “Visitors Guide,” which should be an “Activities Guide.” The days of marketing lists are over. Even with restaurants and hotels, provide teasers and more information for each.
Standard 4-Color Logo

mt. vernon
illinois

Creativity Redefined!

Reverse 4-Color Logo

mt. vernon
illinois

Creativity Redefined!
Recycling reimagined.

There’s a place in south central Illinois that shrugs off the ordinary and embraces the extraordinary. A place where artistic endeavors with an unusual twist is the norm, not the exception. A place that fosters and supports creativity in business, is renowned for its incredible artisans, and is home to Southern Illinois’ renowned Broadway Market. It’s obvious what this town is about as you meander through more than 100 sculptures at nearly every turn. Welcome to Mt. Vernon where creativity is constantly being redefined.
Copper Bike - Mark Jacobson
Designed entirely of rubber tires, his creatures are often fantastical and fearsome versions of ones we already know — in other words, mutants. They are designed to provoke questions over mankind’s current obsession with genetic engineering.

Easy Rider reimagined.

Whoever said art is for the elite and is only seen on coffee tables, in display cases, and hanging on walls, simply has never visited Mt. Vernon, Illinois. This is where you’ll see works of art far beyond the ordinary. Watch as customized motorcycles and cars are being developed, participate and play with pinstriping, leather, and ceramic artisans at Mt. Vernon’s Broadway Market — the showcase arts market in the Midwest.

You see, the people of Mt. Vernon are redefining creativity every day and it’s nothing short of amazing. See it for yourself.
Garden art reimagined.

Whoever said art is for the rich and the refined simply hasn’t experienced the mind-blowing creativity you’ll find in this special place. A place where pure imagination meets dreamers who turn the ordinary into the extraordinary. A place that fosters and supports and encourages out-of-the-box thinking – in business, in education, and in life.

Isn’t it time you pursued your passion in a place that fully supports dreamers and doers? You’ll find it in Mt. Vernon, Illinois. Redefining the art of creative living.
Fine art, meet chalk art.

If you’ve got a fertile imagination, incredible passion for all things artistic - whether in business or in life, then we’ve got a place for you. Where the cost of living is low, amenities are world-class, and where creative pursuits are fostered, embraced and promoted. Just an hour and a half from St. Louis surrounded by lakes, trails, and country living you’ll find this special place. Welcome to Mt. Vernon - the creative nexus in South Central Illinois. Isn’t it time you challenged your dreams and brought them to life? This is the place and now’s the time. Find out how at www.CreativityMV.com

Sidewalk Trompe l’oeil - Jergen Hansmer
Designed entirely of rubber tires, his creatures are often fantastical and fearsome versions of ones we already know – in other words, mutants. They are designed to provoke questions over mankind’s current obsession with genetic engineering.
We’ve got big plans for you.

Where are you headed this weekend? Pick any weekend, log on, check out the festivals, and you’ll be making tracks to Mt. Vernon. From concerts, to motorcycle exhibitions, classic car rallies, hunting and fishing shows, lake sports, artisans in action events, and Southern Illinois’ best market - Mt. Vernon has become the festival city. Fun, engaging, exciting, and ultimately creative, no place gets the juices going like a weekend in the country.

So pick your passion, pack your bags and head to Mt. Vernon this weekend and let your creative juices loose.

The Jim Parsons Band
Throughout the year you’ll find every type of music, on a variety of locations, from classic rock and roll to the Philadelphia String Quartet. The Jim Parsons Band hails from Chicago and is a real crowd pleaser you won’t want to miss!
It's time to feed your passion for cars, motorcycles, great food and music every weekend in July. Make tracks to Mt. Vernon's Plaza at the Broadway Market to see an incredible collection of hot wheels, meet pinstriping superstars like Kenny Howard and the host of the popular television show Top Gear, Jeremy Clarkson. Attend car care workshops and the largest classic car auction this side of Chicago. Browse the 60+ vendors, enjoy a Segway tour of Mt. Vernon, and have the time of your life. Log in, pick your weekend, pack your bags and get ready to rumble!
IMAGINATION TOURS! THE BEST OF MT. VERNON

Come see what happens when art gets creative!

www.creativitymv.com

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Mt. Vernon, Illinois | Recommendations & BrandGraphic Concepts
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The Festival Arts City

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JCDC Logo & Card Design
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Mt. Vernon, Illinois | Recommendations & Brand Graphic Concepts

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Broadway Market Logo Design
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