

Branding for Downtown

Branding is the definition, creation and implementation of a system to share your community's authentic personality. The system is a collection of graphics or graphic language that must be flexible enough for a variety of media applications, but cohesive enough to generate a consistent recognition response from viewers. To do this the graphic language should use four primary tool **font, color palette, image** and **message**.

Overview. The first three items to consider are well within the design realm. Identifying the unifying image for your downtown and creating an expandable graphic language is a significant part of creating and implementing a brand image. It is vital not to overlook the message associated with that brand. This is particularly true when branding a downtown which is a collection of individual brands, i.e. businesses. That is to say, you can develop the most fantastic image, color palette, and font combination seen in North Carolina, but if the intended message is not supported by the experience of downtown the impact of the brand will be lost and the whole effort will be wasted.

Font. An effective system uses a consistent font, one perhaps two, but preferably no more than two.

Color Palette. An effective system uses a consistent color palette. Though you can choose to have a larger number of colors than fonts, it is important not to go over board. The chosen color combination can be used in a variety of formats for effect.

Image. This is often the first thing that people will think of when branding is mentioned and yet it is one of the most difficult elements to settle on. The image is the mark and is complimented by color and font. The image should be both authentic and unique to your community. Ask yourself what image of our downtown is found nowhere else?

Message. This is the story your brand is telling visitors, residents, customers, etc. It has everything to do with the experience your downtown delivers. If you haven't already engaged in a visioning exercise, this should be the first thing you pursue in defining message.