



INFORMATION & BACKGROUND SHEET

NEW MARKETING LOGO and BRANDING

Town of Middleburg

Summary

The Town of Middleburg has been working with a branding and graphic design firm to develop a new marketing logo and brand for the Town. This logo will not replace the official seal (above) but will complement it by providing a new logo and materials to attract more visitors and business activity to the Town.

Background

The current Town Seal for Middleburg was developed in 1984 to reflect the history and tradition of the fox as an emblem of the Town. This seal has been used to denote official business and correspondence of the Town. Prior to the use of the current seal, the Town of Middleburg's official logo/seal for decades was that of a horse and rider jumping over a fence on a foxhunt, with the phrase "The Nation's Horse and Hunt Capital."

In 2017, the Town's Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) – comprised of 9 local business leaders – along with the "Futures Group" provided input to the Town Council that embarking upon a robust and directed marketing initiative would support the Town's business community. At the time, the Town was facing vacant storefronts and was still recovering from recessionary trends. EDAC recommended a branding effort that would lead to better marketing and attraction of both visitors and businesses, while at the same creating an emotional draw for people to visit Middleburg and experience its authentic community. Soon thereafter, the branding project became one of the Town Council's Top 12 Strategic Initiatives.

Since that time, the Town Council has substantively discussed the branding project over 18 times in public Council meetings, to include specific work sessions solely focused on the branding project.

Public Engagement and Input

In April 2018, the Council awarded a contract to develop a brand audit for Middleburg and create a logo/marketing content. This process involved the initial outreach to dozens of local business owners and residents, over 20 social media influencers and target audience members from surrounding regions, and over 1,500 people in the DC region. The firm's results reiterated the need for the Town to do a better job of marketing the Town's history, assets, and retail/dining/shopping opportunities. The results also indicated two key themes that represent the Town: aspirational equestrian and a modern fox.

Draft logos were then market tested with approximately 30 local residents and business owners, as well as to over 1,000 people in the DC region. The aspirational equestrian was clearly preferred over the modern fox, with a modern horse being ranked similar to the modern fox. This further underscores the input received from respondents to the "Futures Group" survey that strongly referenced "horse" and "equestrian" in their descriptions of Middleburg's reputation.

Design

After multiple reviews of the draft concepts by this firm, the Town Council decided to move in a different direction for the graphic design stage. The Town solicited proposals from local, regional, and national firms and short-listed 6 firms for interview. Out of that process, the Town Council issued a contract to a firm out of Ashburn. Their team visited Middleburg multiple times prior to submitting a proposal, and their team has continued to visit Middleburg for inspiration and clarity during the design phase.

Many iterations and concepts were presented for review, which led to two final concepts for the Council's consideration. After discussion in public, the Council decided to go with the concept featuring a horse jumping over a stone wall as described in the prior document.

Application

The Town is not replacing the Town seal. It will continue to be used for official correspondence, utility bills, actions of the Council, and similar governmental purposes. The goal of the new logo and brand is for tourism and economic development marketing, event promotion, wayfinding signage, digital and print media, and other means of outreach to position Middleburg as the ideal place to visit, shop, open a business, and escape from the city. It is also intended to be used widely by businesses and groups in the Town who wish to create their own merchandise with the Town's logo to sell.

Cost

The Town originally budgeted \$65,000 for the entire brand audit (research), graphic design, content creation, and implementation of the project. Approximately \$26,000 was expended in the original contract, which gathered the community and customer input on Middleburg. The contract with the new graphic design firm is for \$40,000. Of that amount, only \$6,000 is for the actual design of the logo. The remainder is allocated for brand positioning, style guide, application on various media (print, website, materials), content creation, custom social media graphics, and more once the final logo is selected.

The Town is also the recipient of a \$60,000 grant from Loudoun County to use the new marketing materials to promote overnight stays in Middleburg. This may take the form of print and digital ads, along with other promotional materials, to further spread the word about Middleburg and encourage support of our local business community.

Next Steps

After approval by the Town Council, the design team will continue with the next phases of the project, to include a comprehensive roll-out across multiple platforms.

Contact Information

The public is welcome and encourage to reach out to the Town with any questions or input.
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