

Sunset Valley Branding Executive Summary

The Sunset Valley City Council and Marketing Ad-hoc Committee have been engaged in a process to determine the best branding approach for long term success as a destination, and specifically to create a viable and prosperous interest in spending time and money in our retail community. The work was led by The Ampersand Agency and unfolded in four phases: Discovery, Research, Strategy and Creative Development. The fifth phase (Execution/Production) will begin with the approval of the proposed plan.

Discovery

There were four different exercises completed as part of the Discovery phase: Target Audience Identification, Competitive Audit, Positioning Continuums and Brand Voice/Tone/Personality.

Target Audience

It was decided that the primary target audience would be the potential shopper community, which was determined to be people living and working within a 5 to 15 mile radius of Sunset Valley for routine shopping and visitation*. A specific goal that was articulated in the RFP drove the selection of this group as the primary target, which was to increase retail spending to approximately \$1000 per family per month. The secondary target market is residents in Sunset Valley.

Some additional information uncovered in the Research phase led to a realization that a \$1000 per month spend might be harder to achieve without the presence of a grocery store within the city limits of Sunset Valley. So, in the research section, you will see some insights and additional recommendations that were made regarding how to evolve and attract a variety retail stores over time, and to target and provide incentives for specific retailers that can increase the average spend in Sunset Valley.

*The 5-15 mile radius is for retail marketing and larger radius is for destination marketing.

* For special events such as art fest the targeting will reach beyond the radius to other parts of Central Texas and beyond if budget allows.

Key Insight: Target Demographics

Young families, Singles and Hispanic consumers in the middle income bracket are heavily concentrated in the target radius surrounding Sunset Valley. And, because of work done by Ampersand using device ID targeting (for a different client earlier in the year) we also know that more than 200,000 unique individuals from these areas set foot inside a retail store in Sunset Valley in 2019.

[Please refer to the Dynamic Insights presentation link outlining the work conducted for the initial marketing review and target audience exercises.](#)

Competitive Audit

As part of determining the ideal way to attract more visitors to Sunset Valley, it was necessary to examine how competitive communities are positioning and messaging their inherent attributes and retail benefits. Several communities were audited including Kyle, Buda, Westlake Hills, Round Rock, Bell Terra/Dripping Springs. We also reviewed the advertising and communications for nearby shopping centers that compete in the same 5 to 15 mile radius Sunset Valley is targeted. Shopping centers that were audited included Hill Country Galleria, the Arboretum, Arbor Trails, Brodie Oaks, Barton Creek Square, Southpark Meadows, The Domain, Village at Westlake, and the South Congress Avenue district.

Note: We also had an in-depth discussion about project plan for the future Brodie Oaks development. Although we don't know what retail stores will be in the area, we do recognize this will present some new challenges for retail revenue in Sunset Valley.

Key Insight: Social Media

The competitive audit revealed that most competitors (cities and centers alike) have a much more robust social presence than Sunset Valley. Many also had dedicated retail landing pages that ads from social placements or digital campaigns pointed people to for additional information about shopping experiences, events and other promotions and contests.

Key Insight: Integrated Messaging/Marketing

As far as messaging was concerned, the use of unique slogans, hashtags and URL's as well as seasonal ad campaigns and ongoing social media content were all being deployed by each city in cooperation with shopping centers; but, also independently of official city websites. Most of this activity occurred on dedicated landing pages and social platforms that are being used as a means of building each city's brand, driving traffic and creating both engagement and interest in retail and nearby residential events and activities.

Key Insight: Walkability, Events and Promotional Coordination

Many communities had similar national brand retailers in their shopping districts; but they also had infrastructure and promotional coordination with their cities to create annual events such as holiday tree lighting ceremonies, festivals and spaces dedicated to ongoing attractions such as concert venues, movie theaters, farmer's markets, parks, playgrounds and community gathering spaces. These features were being designed and promoted specifically to attract visitors and encourage increased time and money spent in their communities.

[Please refer to the competitive audit deck link provided for the complete presentation of competitive findings.](#)

Positioning

After looking at what other communities are doing to attract visitors, we began the process of differentiating Sunset Valley. In a series of exercises designed to carve out unique messaging and reveal inherent traits that could be used to promote Sunset Valley, we began by discussing

what the committee felt were brand “truths” for Sunset Valley—things that are fundamentally true and part of the community’s DNA. Some of those truths included:

- Nature/wildlife/peace/quiet/beauty
- Culture of preserving the balance of what’s best with what’s convenient
- Very few people recognize SV as a “place” –so defining who and what we are precedes promoting ourselves as a **destination**.
- We are a **hidden gem**. But the TRUTH is that other people around us do not see us in the same way we see ourselves.
- Population is **diverse** and somewhat **eclectic**—there is a desire to express that in some creative or artistic way in our brand. Need to also match up and associate this eclectic nature with our shopping experience. Right now—it’s all about value and convenience.
- The residents and current retail mix in Sunset Valley are not completely aligned. In other words, residents may not consistently **shop local**. Need to work on ways to create interest and **support local businesses**.
- Our **size is defined** and that is not going to change. But our size is also an advantage. We can make change with city government and local officials, but we need to work towards **improving relationships, planning** and the way we pursue an improved experience.
- **Transforming** from what we are today to what we want to be takes time. From developing Upper Cougar Creek to changing the retail mix we are looking at a process that will happen over the **next 10 years**.

Next we engaged in a positioning continuum exercise where the committee was asked to plot current perceptions of Sunset Valley, values, and aspirations along several continuums showing both where we might currently fall, versus where we’d like to be. This exercise revealed some important guardrails for creative development that would be rooted in truths but also aspirational and realistic for Sunset Valley. Choices made by the committee in this exercise included being perceived as:

- An urban enclave with rural roots (natural beauty, community gardens, farm to table sensibilities, permaculture mentality, etc.)
- Eclectic—If Austin is “weird” then Sunset Valley is unexpectedly diverse, artistic and creative
- Creativity (in all its forms) was identified as both a truth and a desirable attribute for Sunset Valley imaging. Expressing creativity and supporting creative people, events and endeavors was highly valued.
- Funky but also practical. This pertained specifically to resident’s lifestyle and also to local boutiques where interesting one of a kind items can be found among necessities and staples.

Brand Voice/Tone & Personality

Finally, the committee was asked to identify personality traits using celebrities, products and other well known brands that are expressing themselves in ways we might envision the Sunset Valley brand coming to life. Some examples of celebrities chosen included:

1. Matthew McConaughey - Friendly and Approachable.
2. George Clooney – Well respected and determined
3. Chip and Joanna Gaines - Down to earth
4. Rachel Ray – Carefree and easygoing

The committee was also asked to create a list of descriptive words that would serve as a guide for copy writing for the Sunset Valley brand. This list is to be used as a reference when writing for the brand voice to life Sunset Valley to life in a specific and consistent way. Words that made the final tone and personality list are:

1. Down to Earth
2. Quirky
3. Eclectic
4. Approachable
5. Independent

Finally, an archetype exercise examined the universal Human truths expressed through archetypes to determine which combination of these types best represented Sunset Valley.

[Please refer to the creative strategy and positioning deck link provided to see the work and reference material that was used to zero in on creative parameters for the above mentioned exercises.](#)

Research

Executive research was conducted beginning in December and continuing through mid-January. During this time frame, Ampersand conducted more than 20 interviews with key retailers in Sunset Valley. Each executive was asked the same set of questions about their experiences in Sunset Valley, the retail climate, their perceptions of working with the city and many more questions. The interviews yielded some very valuable information about how retailers see the business climate in Sunset Valley, the opportunities and the challenges. [We highly recommend that you view the Research deck link provided for additional context and insight into the results of this research.](#)

Key Insights Summary

- [Most businesses in Sunset Valley believe the Business Environment in Sunset Valley is fair to good but not great.](#)

- Sunset Valley businesses believe that **improving the business environment won't happen** unless the City of Sunset Valley provides the leadership, vision, and resources to help their business community adapt and keep pace with Austin's rapidly changing metropolitan area.
- They **would like to see** Sunset Valley become:
 - More of a **family destination** with shopping at more unique stores
 - Restaurants and gathering spaces that promote staying in the area for **longer periods of time**.
- Sunset Valley is **easily accessible to the 4 major freeways in Austin**. This proximity and accessibility makes it easy for people to visit, if we successfully establish it as a destination.
- They felt there was a lot of upside potential to tell the story of **what Sunset Valley is all about**.

Strategy

Following the research and discovery phases, the agency engaged in a strategic planning process to recommend specific assets that might be most useful in helping Sunset Valley meet all of its branding objectives. Given the key insights and goals outline in the discovery phase, several assets rose to the top of the list for production this year, as well as some new ideas that were not originally envisioned as marketing products and were not designated as part of the brand RFP scope of work. Some of the biggest priorities that emerged are:

- Making Sunset Valley's boundaries more visible and defining its points of entry visually
- Highlighting local businesses as part of SV branding
- Highlighting some of the natural, hidden gems in Sunset Valley alongside retail imagery to create more connection between the two experiences
- Creating a more competitive and robust social presence for Sunset Valley
- Supporting the retail community with:
 - Seasonal ads to draw visitors
 - Incentives to attract new business
 - Increasing frequency of contact with business leaders
 - Co-promotion to increase visibility of unique/local businesses
- Creating a B2B pitch deck that can be used to attract ideal businesses to Sunset Valley
- Expanding the scope and duration of Art Fest, as well as a long-term vision and goal for integration a variety of artful expressions into the Sunset Valley experience

A list of recommended assets and a media plan for the back to school/Labor Day time frame, as well as a potential media plan for the 2021 Christmas Holiday season were then developed with these priorities in mind. [Please refer to the strategy deck link provided for a complete list of recommended assets for the remainder of 2021, 2022 and considerations for 2023 and beyond.](#)

Creative Development

While strategic planning was taking place, Ampersand also issued a creative brief outlining key findings from Discovery and Research to the Canales & Co. team to begin the design process. The agency oversaw the development of several options for a new Sunset Valley branding approach that would incorporate all of the committee's choices from Discovery, including logos, boundary art, banner art, mural/wall art, SV merchandise and potential advertising samples. Three rounds of concepts were vetted before landing on the final concept statement, logo and tagline: *It's Good To Be Here*.

[Please refer to the creative presentation link for the complete view of all creative assets presented.](#)