

To: Mayor Tom Kneeland  
 Members of Council  
 City Attorney

From: David Kusz  
 Director of Marketing & Communications

Date: July 6, 2017

**Department of Marketing & Communications Action Item**

The GoForward Gahanna strategic plan includes Strategic Result 4.4 Brand Launch, and Council authorized funding in the 2017 Budget for this project.

**Purpose**

The goal of this initiative remains to establish an insights-based umbrella brand for the City of Gahanna and our community stakeholder organizations. This brand will shape perceptions and make Gahanna a community of choice in Central Ohio for residents, businesses and visitors; differentiate Gahanna from other municipalities and provide a *true* competitive advantage; and allow the community to achieve awareness synergies by leveraging a single brand identity. Direct benefit to the City includes an enhanced ability to attract and retain businesses and related tax revenue growth. The brand will also create a rallying point for the residents of Gahanna, providing a shared expression of what Gahanna is.

**Phases**

This project has been broken into two phases: 1) Research and Brand Development, and 2) Brand Implementation. The immediate focus is only on research and brand development up to the point of having brand standards and training. The heart of Phase 1 is research. The qualitative research digs deep to uncover what Gahanna means to residents and businesses (current and prospects), visitors, community leaders and City staff. And once a strategy and positioning are formulated, brand ideas (or concepts) are tested with quantitative techniques to determine which idea resonates the strongest.



## **Process**

In late March, an RFP was issued to identify prospective agency partners for the project. We received 17 responses and through two waves of internal reviews, identified the four best proposals. The four respective agencies were invited to present:

Cult Marketing, Columbus, OH  
Fahlgren Mortine, Columbus, OH  
Frazier Heiby, Columbus, OH  
North Star Destination Strategies, Nashville, TN (presented remotely via skype)

The purpose of the presentations was to review the proposed methodology, get to know the team that would be assigned to the project and benefit from any additional background information the agency wanted to share. On May 24, each agency presented to a group of 16 representatives from Gahanna including key City staff and the project's Advisory Committee consisting of:

Gahanna City Council  
Gahanna Schools (GJPS)  
Gahanna Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Gahanna Area Chamber of Commerce  
Gahanna Community Improvement Corporation  
Creekside District Alliance  
Columbus 2020 (special committee member)

The general consensus among the Advisory Committee was that each of the four firms was highly qualified and could likely complete the project. This put us in the enviable position of being able to dig deeper into each of the firms' qualifications and strengths—particularly regarding the firms' experience and success with qualitative and quantitative research. Based upon the qualitative input from the Advisory Committee, proposals, presentations, qualifications of the staff assigned to the project, firm-size and location, and other due diligence, we believe that *Cult Marketing is uniquely qualified for this project.*

## **Cult Marketing**

Cult Marketing – a local agency based just 10 minutes away – presented a very clear and descriptive outline of its methodology for uncovering the essence of our brand, its emotional benefit and translating these insights into high-impact, break-through brand creative and identity. Cult's methodology and its ability to articulate its plan is a significant differentiator versus the other firms we met with.

Cult is highly recommended by its clients based on conversations with Kara Trott, CEO of Quantum Health, and Mary Cusick, Director of TourismOhio. Cult also gets accolades from Mary Jo DiSalvo, Event Administrator, City of Dublin, for its creative work and ability to translate insights and strategy into brand creative.

The Advisory Committee expressed concern that our project could get lost within the client roster of a big agency. Fortunately, Cult is comprised of a small but well-seasoned team of 10 branding, strategy and advertising professionals who are very excited about the Gahanna project. Doug McIntyre, CEO and Founder of Cult, will be personally involved in the project.

## **Next Steps**

The Mayor will sign a Professional Services Agreement with Cult Marketing, LLC and the project will commence.

## Tentative Project Timeline

month	activity
July / August	Mayor signs professional services agreement; Cult Marketing officially engaged
	Project kickoff and agency immersion
August / September	Recruitment for qualitative research
	Qualitative research
September / October	Analysis and strategy development
	Brand development and concept testing
November / December	Umbrella brand development
January	Develop creative brief and brand standards
February	Brand training workshops