

## Minutes

The City Council of the City of Leawood, Kansas, met for a Work Session at 4800 Town Center Dr., Leawood, Kansas at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 6, 2022. Mayor Peggy Dunn presided.

**Councilmembers Present:** James Azeltine, Julie Cain, Jim Rawlings, Mary Larson, Chuck Sipple, Lisa Harrison and Andrew Osman; Debra Filla (present via Zoom)

**Staff Present:** Patrick Geschwind, Interim City Admin.      Chris Claxton, Parks, Rec & Arts Director  
Stephen Powell, City Clerk                                      Stacie Stromberg, Asst. City Clerk

**Others Present:** Marc Elkins (Planning Commission Chair), Alice Hawk (Leawood Foundation Chair), Anne Blessing (Arts Council Chair), Megan Stephens (Willoughby Design), Nicole Satterwhite (Willoughby Design), and Natalie Gonzales (Willoughby Design)

## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Brand Strategy

Mayor Dunn called the work session to order at 6:00 p.m. She thanked Chris Claxton, Parks, Rec and Arts Director and the Task Force for their work on this project. She expressed her gratitude for everyone's involvement and the great ideas and discussion during the entire process.

Megan Stephens, Principle with Willoughby Design, addressed the Governing Body. She thanked the Governing Body for allowing her to share the brand identity process. She also thanked the task force members.

Ms. Stevens said the City of Leawood is celebrating 75 years and that there has been a lot of growth and success over this time. An opportunity was identified to refresh the City's brand position and brand identity to be more relevant and better resonate with today's residents, potential residents, business leaders, and visitors. Ms. Stephens stated that there are new residents coming into the City and current residents who have lived in Leawood a long time who are committed to the City.

She stated the goal of this project is to continue elevating community engagement by uniting all citizens around the shared City vision and the opportunity to participate in the way that is best for them. She said it was important for everyone to feel welcomed and be able to participate.

Ms. Stephens said Leawood has a legacy brand that has a lot of history, so they are not looking to do a complete rebrand. They want to identify the amazing assets, attributes, and things people love and then determine what needs to be done to continue to grow our communications and stay relevant. Ms. Stephens discussed the concept of brand evolution and its importance for a City to be done to engage and listen to residents.

Ms. Stephens said their first step will be to identify the audience and what the audience members want. Audiences include Leawood residents, commercial/business owners, employees of Leawood businesses, and visitors.

Ms. Stephens noted Leawood is a residential community that includes many multi-generational families: grandparents, parents, and young adults (with or without children) having the desire to live, raise families, and stay in Leawood. It is also an upper income and highly educated community.

Ms. Stephens discussed commercial and business owners and employees of Leawood businesses that may not live here but they work here every day as additional audiences. She stated that retail is a very important part of Leawood.

She discussed visitors who come to Leawood. She referenced discussions about the beautiful amenities Leawood offers to the surrounding Kansas City community (beautiful parks, trails, restaurants, and retail centers).

Ms. Stephens discussed several exercises used during the process. The first was asking people to write down words that come to mind when they think about the brand. When people think of Leawood, they think of parks, trees, safety, good schools, restaurants, excellence, distinctive, and beautiful. Next, they asked what words might be missing. Words like visionary, inclusive, modern, and friendly came up as words that need to be expressed more. Ms. Stephens said these exercises led them to identifying brand pillars or shared values.

Ms. Stephens stated that brand pillars are ideas used to help summarize the brand. She said the first shared value is “ease of living”, meaning accessible retail and restaurants, food, culture, access to amenities and services, parking, walkable, bikeable, safe, good infrastructure, and proximity to the KC metro, and other amenities in the surrounding area. Ms. Stephens said the next shared value is “curated beauty” that would be defined as dedicated green spaces, public art, manicured trails, trees, historic parts of the neighborhoods, and a sophisticated thoughtful and serene feeling. Ms. Stephens said an important shared value is “strong community”. Words that came up included active leadership, welcoming, safe, good neighbors, high home ownership, investment in schools, family friendly, multi-generational, public events, civic engagement, generous, meticulous, and strong faith community. Ms. Stephens said the last shared value is “forward thinking”. Words that came up included visionary, deliberate, plan and execute, re-greening, growing inclusively, and engaging.

She summarized by stating that they believe that optimum quality of life can be achieved by a united community working together for the greater good and that everything the City does is approached with thoughtful planning, attention to detail, community engagement and deliberate consideration for future generations.

Ms. Stephens stated that they discussed the current logo and themes that were important, but that the City has grown a lot since the original logo was created. She noted that as a “Tree City USA,” the City of Leawood identifies strongly with trees, nature, and green space, and that the color green still makes sense. Other considerations included ease of reproduction, welcoming, modern, unique to Leawood, reflective of new values.

Nicole Satterwhite, Principle with Willoughby Design, addressed the Governing Body. She introduced the City of Leawood’s new identity (brand image) that included a new tree icon. She pointed out that trees in Leawood are legendary and important to the City, so the tree icon has been updated to be more modern. She stated that the four branches represent the four brand pillars or shared values. The “City of Leawood” wordmark has been updated to pay homage to the previous logo by using a distinctive “L”.

Ms. Satterwhite said the phrase, or tag line, that comes to mind when thinking about Leawood is: *Strong Community. Bright Future.*

Ms. Satterwhite introduced the City of Leawood color pallet. It included Blue Spruce, which is a dark teal/blue green color; Spring Oak, a color of trees in the springtime, and Cottonwood Green. She stated that these colors bring brightness and energy. She stated she will work with the internal team to make sure the colors are consistent as the brand is rolled out.

She showed how the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary could be celebrated with a custom wordmark to be used in conjunction with the new brand and how it can be used independently or together. She explained that there will be rules on how to use them together or pull them apart so that everyone will know the message is coming from the City of Leawood.

Ms. Satterwhite showed how the new brand identify could be used on the City's website, business cards, polo shirts, vehicles, and public signage. She concluded her presentation and stood for questions.

Mayor Dunn thanked Ms. Stephens and Ms. Satterwhite for their thoughtful presentation.

Councilmember Azeltine asked to be reminded of the four pillars. Ms. Stephens stated the four shared values or pillars are Ease of Living, Curated Beauty, Strong Community, and Forward Thinking. She highlighted the meaning behind each value.

Councilmember Harrison stated that she loves the colors and that they look modern and crisp and easy to work with. She asked who participated in the workshops. She asked if others were involved. Ms. Stephens said it was the seven members of the task force.

Councilmember Harrison asked about the custom typeface and how easy would it be for staff to use it. Ms. Satterwhite said they will have access to an online brand standards manual where all the brand images can be downloaded. She said they will chose a common typeface that can be used on a Mac or PC. The brand standards manual will have much more detail on how to use the brand properly.

Councilmember Larson asked if the "Growing with Distinction" tag line is being abandoned and if the "75" would remain past the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Councilmember Larson added that she thought the new logo was clear, crisp, and looked modern and could be used for a long time.

Mayor Dunn said the "City of Leawood" and new logo, as well as the new tag line "Strong Community. Bright Future." would be ongoing. The years were purposely taken out because the "75 Years" banners could be used for five or more years. She confirmed "Strong Community. Bright Future." will replace "Growing with Distinction."

Councilmember Larson said she would miss "Growing with Distinction." Mayor Dunn said she and several task force members felt the same way. Councilmember Harrison asked if "Strong Community. Bright Future." was up for discussion. Mayor Dunn said it was the recommendation but was open to discussion. She said the task force discussed the fact that Leawood is a strong community and wanting to be future thinking, and that was how the tag line "Strong Community. Bright Future." began. Mayor Dunn stated that it is easy to remember and short. She stated there were a number of other options reviewed but no one liked those as much as they liked this one but that it is open to discussion.

Councilmember Larson said the tag line could be said of a thousand places and maybe “Growing with Distinction” could have been said of a thousand places 25 years ago.

Councilmember Sipple asked what other tag lines were reviewed. Mayor Dunn said at least 10 were considered. Ms. Stephens said they looked at going more emotional. She said this was more descriptive of the values specifically.

Ms. Claxton stated that their discussion brought up the point that within 25 years the City had grown with distinction but that it did not make sense to use it moving forward. Mr. Elkins stated there was discussion for “Living with Distinction”, and that he said he specifically still liked the word “distinction”.

Ms. Stephens stated that it is possible to take several words and use them in various applications. Options considered included:

- “Community of Distinction”
- “The City of Leawood, Distinctively Yours”
- “Leawood: An Artful Community”
- “Strengthened by Community. Inspired by Possibility.”
- “Leawood. It’s lovely here.”
- “Leawood. Beautiful. Artful. Distinctive.”
- “Thoughtful. Artful. Beautiful.”

Councilmember Filla said she liked the tree and the idea that there are strong roots in the City’s history.

Councilmember Rawlings asked about the color pallet. Mayor Dunn said the colors might be difficult to distinguish between the Blue Spruce and Cottonwood on the screens. Councilmember Rawlings asked if there was any discussion about changing out the old logo on trucks and signs. Mayor Dunn said it would be very slow to roll out completely because it would be too expensive.

Councilmember Cain noted that some people might not be able to see the level of distinction between Blue Spruce and Cottonwood colors because they are so close. She asked about the colors on the 75 Year banner. Ms. Satterwhite said the intent is to have the two colors be fairly close to one another because they could be used on various applications.

Councilmember Cain said she likes that they are keeping a tree. She said it is a lot more feminine than the current logo but she likes the simplicity and colors. She liked “Strengthened by Community. Inspired by Possibility.” She felt it was more encapsulating of the City of Leawood.

Councilmember Azeltine said “Strengthened by Community. Inspired by Possibility.” jumped out at him because of the action words. He said the other taglines are fine, but pointed out that action words are desirable. Mayor Dunn said she likes those phrases as well but they seem a little long, especially if they are to be printed. She said she would prefer a tagline with the word “Distinction” in it.

Councilmember Harrison mentioned that the current colors are close to a Kelly green and gold. Ms. Claxton pointed out that staff currently uses the green and gold in different ways depending on the application. Ms. Satterwhite said the Graphics Standards Manual would include the appropriate ways to use the logo, tagline, and colors.

Councilmember Larson liked “Strengthened by Community. Inspired by Possibility.” because of the action words and that she really likes the use of the word “Inspire.” She also remarked that it would be easier to remember. Councilmember Azeltine thought the font could be different and bigger for the words Community and Possibility.

Councilmember Cain said the website is probably one of the first things to be updated. She thought the information on the slide, titled “The City of Leawood is a Vibrant and Beautiful City”, was beautifully written and should be used. Ms. Stephens said it came from what they heard and she appreciated the fact that it resonated.

Councilmember Rawlings liked the tagline “Living with Distinction” and wondered if that would be used too. Ms. Stephens said it is something they will look at when they are working on extending the voice to make it part of the language.

Councilmember Cain said it would be good branding to use these phrases and taglines in various places. Ms. Stephens said many brands have mantras or guiding principles that are used by employees. This is something that could be an extension of this project.

Mayor Dunn called on members of the task force. Ms. Hawk said it came out wonderful and the words came out terrific. Ms. Blessing commending Willoughby Design for listening to the task force and bringing back a lovely visual and tagline.

Mayor Dunn said she loved the conversation about using multiple taglines from time to time and that there is a lot of good material. Ms. Stephens said many brands have varying voices that used for certain situations. She stated that some flexibility is okay and is something they can explore. Mayor Dunn said you have not seen “Growing with Distinction” used very often over past years.

Councilmember Cain said it would be great to see street signs updated to include the new logo, similar to other cities in Johnson County.

Councilmember Filla asked if the color palate should include a gold or red that could be used seasonally. Ms. Satterwhite replied that they design core campaigns that will last for a long time. There are times when brands will bring in another color, but it is important to keep a core system. She thought Blue Spruce and Spring Oak would be the primary colors for the City of Leawood, but that they could look at a secondary pallet that could be an accent in the future.

Mayor Dunn asked if Ms. Claxton or Stephen Powell, City Clerk, had anything to add. Ms. Claxton said the brand strategy and standards will be helpful. She was not sure how a secondary palate would work. Mayor Dunn said it is helpful to know we could do a secondary palate in the future but it is not something we would do right now. Ms. Claxton discussed the three colors and pointed out that the Spring Oak replaced the current Gold and the Blue Spruce replaced the green. The Cottonwood is the third commentary color that would be used less.

Mr. Powell said keeping it simple is a good approach to start. He agreed having a core brand identity and color pallet would make it easy for residents and business owners to identify with it. It also makes it easier for staff as they roll it out along with a graphics standard manual. It will help identify the low hanging fruit and be more strategic on the long-term roll out.

Mayor Dunn said the discussion was wonderful. She said the item would be on the agenda for acceptance. The taglines would be part of it, but not part of another work session. She asked if Ms. Satterwhite and Ms. Stephens needed anything else to complete the project. Ms. Stephens said everyone agreed on the visual perspective. She said they will begin writing the Graphics Standards Manual. Ms. Stephens said they will go back and look at combining the voice to incorporate what they heard at tonight's meeting.

Mayor Dunn thanked Willoughby Design and the Task Force for their work.

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.