

DESTINATION: GALLUP

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City logos get fresh coat of paint

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Gallup is getting a brand refresh.

Based on surveys of residents and past visitors, as well as local history, the branding consultancy company Bandwagon LLC has developed a color palette and mood for a new logo to be used in Gallup promotional materials including print, digital advertising, billboards, visitor guide, and tourist merchandise, such as T-shirts.

The new logo and slogan are a move away from “GallupRealTrue,” as the city works to forge a unique brand as a destination city.

“The art, the jewelry, the weavings were things that all the surveys brought up,” Bandwagon partner Cory Cart said. “We realized there was a very distinct color palette and a very distinct shape that is in everything from jewelry to the fashion designer [Navajo Spirit]’s logo.

“You’re seeing it in one of the hotels, the columns holding up the porch to a drive under,” he said.

Bandwagon commissioned Navajo artist Victor Pascual, who grew up in Farmington, to design the logo. The hope is that the chevron-shaped logo suggests both Native American and cowboy cultures that are embedded in Gallup’s history.

“We have a unique opportunity to bridge the past of Gallup and the future and what visitors are looking for now,” Cart told the City Council at its July 13 meeting. “We’re giving you guys a brand that is nodding to that historical past.”

While Arizona, Oklahoma and Texas have benefited from increasing Route 66 tourism in recent years, New Mexico has not been as aggressive about marketing its strip of the Mother Road, Cart pointed out. The new logo design is part of a plan to capitalize on that while building Gallup’s singular identity.

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“It’s going to be an invitation from you and the people that make Gallup unique to the visitors,” Cart said. “It’s an invitation to come and visit you in your home.”

It’s not just Gallup leaving the “True” image behind. Cart noted the state tourism department is moving away from the New Mexico True slogan, drifting back to “The Land of Enchantment.”

“Santa Fe has never gone with the True brand. Neither has Albuquerque,” he said. “It takes 15 minutes to explain what the slogan means.

“That takes time away from explaining the destination,” he said.

Also, consumers researching vacation spots tend to search for community information using the terms visit, experience, or enjoy with the city name, hence the pending visitgallup.com website, which should be unveiled in September.

Gallup’s City Council unanimously approved the Gallup-McKinley County Chamber of Commerce tourism services contract and city budget adjustments for tourism grants.

The city’s tourism department won a 2:1 matching grant from the New Mexico Tourism Department, which means the city will spend \$42,491 of its own money and \$84,983 in grant funds to market Gallup tourism.

The grant funds will help cover 12 months of social media amplification and Google Search management for the new website; six months of digital display advertising on cell phones and embedded in games and social media, including a three-month campaign in Phoenix, Ariz.; and a year of advertisements in “ROUTE” Magazine.

The \$115,000 budget allocation for the Chamber includes \$15,000 for advertising and promotional services, \$75,000 for the operation of the year-round Visitor Information Center and \$25,000 to print the 2022 Visitor Guide. In exchange for developing the guide, the Chamber

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gets the right to keep revenue from guide ad sales.

Complementing the measures approved July 13, will be digital kiosks downtown, where travelers can get updated information about what's happening in town. The Council approved the kiosks in the spring at a special meeting for Capital Improvement Projects. Kiosk placement won't be determined until the website widget and app are complete, Gallup Tourism and Marketing Manager Jennifer Lazarz told the Council.

This year's budget shifts some money from marketing to operations to keep up with increasing wages and make sure the visitor center can stay open. That's especially important because the next nearest visitor center to the Arizona state line has been closed for repairs for some time, Chamber of Commerce CEO Bill Lee said.

It gives Gallup an opportunity to pull in visitors who, in the past, might have stopped there instead.

"To our west is the Manuelito visitor center run by the state," Lee said. "It has been closed for a long time and there is no opening date scheduled.

"It's usually the top-running visitor center in the state – the other one is Del Rio on the other side of the state," he said.

Lee and Lazarz are both excited about developing the Visit Gallup app, not least because it's easy to update as things change. The last Visitor Guide was created in 2019, then COVID-19 hit and shut down a lot of tourism.

"Of the traders listed in the [current] Visitor Guide, at least five are no longer in business," Lazarz said. "Of the restaurants, at least three are no longer in business.

"But we've got other exciting businesses that have opened since that are not in the Visitor

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Guide,” she said.

Using a cell phone app will let tourism staff update information “in a flash,” Lee said, as well as meeting travelers where they are.

“It’s much easier to deal with than carrying a book,” he said. “We’re still finding a happy medium.”

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