

Planning Commission Branding Committee

Update – March 2026

Why Branding?



- Boost Economy
- Compete for Resources
- Community Pride
- Attract Residents, Talent & Visitors
- Shape Perceptions Support Local Initiatives
- Boost Community
- Memorable Identity

Credit: Marketing Department, Inc.

What is....

- **Marketing?**

The process and activities of growing business and achieving goals. Essentially the City's Master Plan.

- **Brand**

Houghton's reputation. What and how people think and talk about Houghton.

- **Branding**

The way you want to be perceived.

- **Identity**

What people see. Logo, graphics, ads, people, etc.



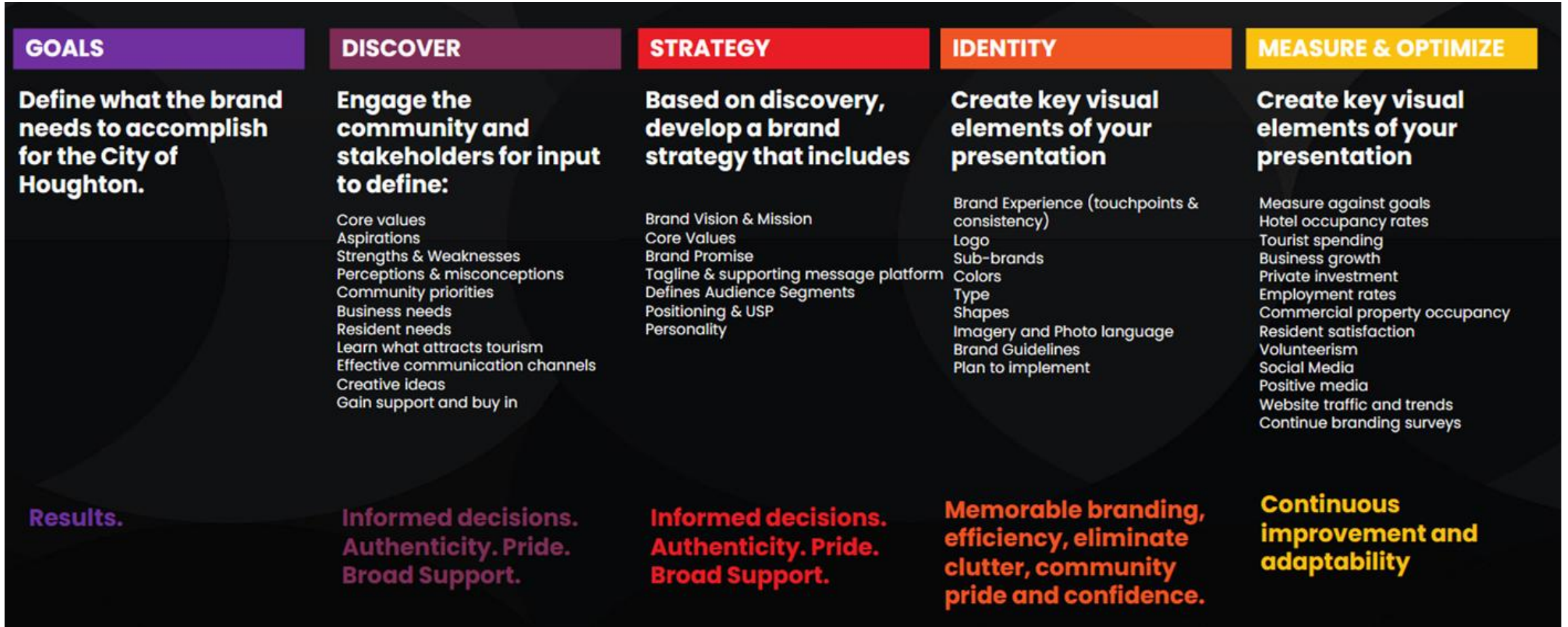
Credit: Marketing Department, Inc.

What this effort is NOT...



- **Rebranding...**
It's likely that this is the first time the City has taken a deep dive into figuring out its identity. This is NOT an effort to change that identity, but an attempt to capture sentiments and better understand how our community perceives itself.
- **an Opportunity for Input...**
A survey, information sessions, and even social media have allowed for public comment and shaped the committee's progress to this point.
- **the Finish Line...**
We know who we are as a community...How we're perceived and how we want to be perceived. If this is to move forward, the City needs professional help and investment.

Branding Blueprint



Credit: Marketing Department, Inc.

Community Engagement - Volunteers

- Jared Evans
- Adam Johnson
- Susan Liebau
- Maripat Ruttan



DISCOVER

Community Engagement - Committee

- Data Review
- Distillation
- Validation
- Discovery
- Path Forward
- Confirmation



Core Values - Home

- Downtown
- Friendly
- Small-Town
- Safe
- Walkable
- College Town



DISCOVER

“Small town hospitality with a big city spirit. It’s like coming home. A southern town with a funny accent and snow.”

“Houghton is an idealistic hometown where people genuinely care about each other, want to know each other and help each other.”

“Beautiful, Welcoming, Home!”

“Still homey and accessible to all. A place where people come back home and decide to stay. Actual futures for our youth here, family oriented, counseling services

“Homey charismatic, beautiful.”

“Home sweet Houghton 😊 that’s what I’ve always called it.”

Core Values – Views

“Full of local flavor, friendly people, gorgeous views and abundant access to Some of the best views there are in Michigan. And close to a variety of things to see and do outdoor activities. Grab a pizza and a beer, sit outside and soak it up - it's that simple!”

Some of the best views there are in Michigan. And close to a variety of things to see and do.”

“Nature, great views, wonderful people.”

“Houghton is an idealistic God’s Country. Clean water, beautiful views, steep hills.”

“Lovely city with amazing views, rich history, and natural beauty.”

- Recreation
- Nature
- Beauty
- Hills
- Waterfront
- Lift Bridge
- Waterway



Core Values – Progress

- Historical
- Thriving
- Growth
- Development
- Technology
- Adaptive



DISCOVER

“Historical town on the water that is becoming more progressive.”

“Progressive with a small town feel!”

“City has found a way to embrace its history while progressively modernizing as both a tourism draw as well as a regional hub.”

“Breathtaking and heartwarming natural beauty that has remained steadfast as the generations have progressed and grown.”

“Leader in rural Michigan’s progressive vibrancy”

“Sisu. Growing. Progressive.”

Survey – Core Values

HOME

A place where you
feel like you've
always belonged



DISCOVER

VIEWS

A landscape that
inspires year-round

PROGRESS

A city rooted in
history, built for
tomorrow



CITY OF
Houghton

Community Engagement – Open House



- Posters
- Feedback
- Discussion
- Community Input
- Questions



DISCOVER

What's Next



Next Steps - Strategy

- Brand Vision & Mission
- Core Values
- Branding Promise
- Positioning & Attributes



STRATEGY



Credit: Marketing Department, Inc.

Professional Assistance



- RFQ & Vendors
- Scope of Work
- Timeline
- Costs
- RRC Best Practices
- Community Goals



STRATEGY