



Town of Mount Airy Strategic Marketing Plan

March 2016



Strategic Marketing Plan

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Introduction

In an effort to maximize the marketing, branding and overall positioning of Mount Airy, the town has hired MarketWorks to develop a Strategic Marketing Plan. Together, we will work to develop a cohesive, focused marketing strategy that encompasses internal and external marketing functions to exploit opportunities, increase awareness, and enhance visitation — each designed to bolster the Town's economic development, community involvement and success. The suggested marketing tactics identify several recommendations for Mount Airy's marketing deliverables and communication vehicles.

I. Marketing Objectives

The implementation of this Strategic Marketing Plan will positively impact Mount Airy in the following ways:

- Strategically positions the Town as a gateway to business transactions, recreational activities and events;
- Creates a unified and cohesive brand image for Mount Airy, which will be conveyed visually and verbally across all communications;
- Increases visitor interest in Mount Airy;
- Increases resident interest in Mount Airy;
- Increase awareness of Mount Airy as a key destination for buying local;
- Prioritizes marketing strategies and tactics, based on a consistent, focused brand and market position;
- Sets the framework for marketing tactics for the short and long term;
- Establishes a viable promotional and marketing tactics timetable for the year 2015 and beyond.

I.A. Marketing Methodology

This Plan is drafted as the result of data collection, derived from a series of qualitative and quantitative sources:

- Strategic Marketing Questionnaire
 - The survey contained 17, open-ended questions and was sent to 167 businesses. A total of 21 questionnaires were returned, generating a 13% response rate.
- Focus Group
 - MarketWorks facilitated a qualitative focus group to determine the opinions, ideas and thoughts of Mount Airy business owners. While owners from businesses throughout Mount Airy were invited, a total of 6 attendees from 4 downtown businesses attended the interactive session.
- Secondary Research
 - MarketWorks used secondary sources for additional information
 - Maryland Municipal League
 - Demographic Data (US Census, City-Data, Google)



- Previous Mount Airy surveys
- Research data, including article review

I.B. Marketing Positioning Statement: Why Brand a Town?

The Mount Airy brand is more than just a name or logo – it's the identity that defines the experience the town provides and the impact the town makes. The brand will exemplify a core set of ideas, principles and values to portray a clear sense of identity. The Marketing Positioning Statement succinctly communicates an organization's desired positioning and image in the marketplace. This positioning focuses the Town's marketing tactics and action towards its overall positioning goal. All marketing materials, tactics and programs should reinforce this Marketing Positioning Statement. The following statement is recommended:

Mount Airy is conveniently located at the intersection of four counties. Its charming offerings and locally-owned or operated businesses provide an accessible way to buy close by.

I.C. SWOT Analysis

The overall review of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (known as SWOT) can help define the “current state” of Mount Airy. Strengths and Weaknesses contemplate the internal environment of the town; that is, reviewing all aspects of Mount Airy, with a critical eye toward areas of marketing and operations, as well as a review of opportunities for improvement. Our summary of threats scans the external environment, or the market in which Mount Airy exists. Opportunities are part of the recommendations provided at the end of the Plan.

<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural yet convenient - Friendly and tightly knit - Full of charm and character - Numerous long-standing, successful businesses, owned by local residents - A great place to work and live - Many businesses engaged and willing to stay open for community events - Traditional American town, providing an organic experience often replicated in an artificial way in other locations (e.g., White Marsh, Hunt Valley) 	<p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parking is seen as inconvenient or difficult in some areas - Additional stores needed for a more enticing “destination” experience - Varied retail is needed to enhance the business mix - Marketing materials are very limited - Limited networking opportunities - Low awareness among target market - Lack of a consistent and sustained marketing message - Lack of specific and helpful information to facilitate new businesses coming to Mount Airy
<p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create perceived value by showcasing the unique characteristics found only at Mount Airy - Educate the target market about Mount Airy’s offerings, which may entice new visitors - Create a logo and tagline for Mount Airy to reinforce the brand strategy - Expand a specific social media presence - Exploit the “buy local” trend with a Shop Mount Airy campaign to attract people to the town - Design new marketing materials to increase awareness, including rack cards and a billboard - Create and implement a specific marketing tactical plan and budget for 2015 and beyond 	<p><u>Threats:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Big box stores and shopping areas in Frederick and Westminster - Larger variety of stores in Frederick and Westminster - Financial challenges - Economic limitations

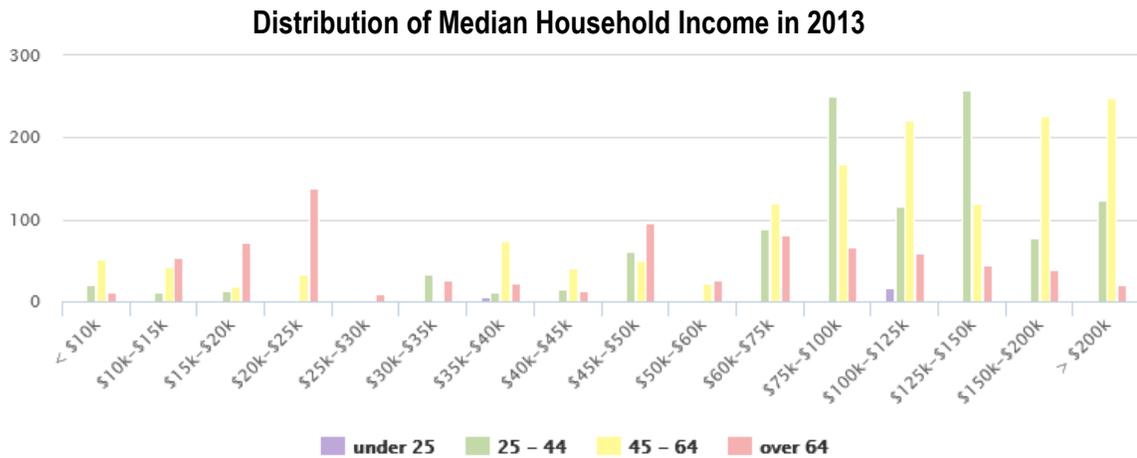
I.C. Target Market

Mount Airy’s marketing strategy identifies a specific, targeted market. Defined, geographics is the range or distance that a likely visitor will travel to Mount Airy. Demographics are the typical characteristics of your target market – the people who will visit. Psychographics focus on the target market’s lifestyles, interests and behaviors. Said another way, demographics help us understand *who* will visit, and psychographics help us understand *why* they visit.

Town Demographics:

According to US Census (2014 data) city-data.com (2013 data):

- Population: 9,388 town residents in Mount Airy in 2013 (US Census), up slightly from the 9,365 recorded in 2013.
 - 45.8% increase since 2000
 - 45.4% males; 54.6% females
- Median resident age: 37.1 years (38.2 years in Maryland)
- Race (2010 data): 92.1% white, 4.7% Hispanic, 2.4% African American, 0.8% other
- Education (persons 25+, 2009 – 2013)
 - High School graduate or higher: 93.0%
 - Bachelor’s Degree or higher: 42.6%
- Mean distance travel to work: 37.8 minutes
- Median household income: \$97,290
 - Was \$66,967 in 2000
 - Estimated per capita: \$38,857
 - Above median household income statewide: \$72,483



Targeted Demographics:

The targeted demographic includes town residents and visitors:

- Age: The targeted age range is 25 to 60, with a concentration of those in the 25 to 44 age range given the median household income levels shown in the above graph.
- Income: The targeted market has an income generally exceeding \$75,000 per year, which is above the state median household income level. The offerings of Mount Airy businesses most appeal to married couples and families.

Geographics:

Mount Airy town limits cover 4.12 square miles of land area, but attracts visitors and residents from multiple counties and areas (source: US Census Data)

The survey and anecdotal information demonstrate that a significant amount of visitors come from within 15 miles of Mount Airy. However, given its close proximity to major roadways, and the convergence of four counties at its center, Mount Airy could become a strongly visited location from patrons up to 40 miles away if awareness of Mount Airy as a destination was increased.

Targeted Geographics:

The targeted geographic includes:

- Town residents
- Visitors within a 7 mile radius of the town
 - Taylorsville, Woodbine, Damascus, New Market
- Visitors within a 15-20 mile radius
 - Above, plus Westminster, Sykesville, Eldersburg, Gaithersburg, Germantown, Frederick

Psychographics

The psychographic profile includes visitors who value quality. The targeted visitor is interested in “buying local”, supporting locally-owned and operated businesses. This customer also values the non-chain experience.



II. Brand Strategy Map

As part of the Strategic Marketing Plan, MarketWorks creates a Brand Strategy Map. The Mount Airy map includes the brand vision, unique selling proposition (USP) and “big idea”.

VISION: To build awareness of Mount Airy as a destination for unique shopping, recreation, events and dining – the gateway to shopping, eating and experiencing local.

USP: Mount Airy is singularly situated at the heart of a four county community to offer a distinctly different and convenient shopping and dining experience.

VISUAL: Branding could include the train station or B&O locomotive which the Mount Airy Community was built around.

BIG IDEA: Buy Close By.				
<u>PROMISE:</u>	<u>STRATEGY:</u>	<u>STORY:</u>	<u>FRESHNESS:</u>	<u>EXPERIENCE:</u>
Eat, Shop, Experience Mount Airy – the Gateway to shopping local.	Building awareness of Mount Airy as a charming convenient destination; Making the “heart” top of mind	Buy Close By in a Town where convenience meets charm. Mount Airy – the heartbeat of four counties	At the gateway of convenience and charm – Mount Airy brings together four counties and countless possibilities.	Experience the small town charm of Mount Airy - at the heart of four counties

III. Recommendations

The following marketing tactics are recommended in an effort to maximize Mount Airy's visibility and market penetration.

1. Create a new brand for Mount Airy, based on the Marketing Positioning Statement and Brand Strategy Map.

To enhance Mount Airy's market position, MarketWorks recommends the development of a new brandmark. This brandmark will reinforce the marketing positioning statement while exploiting Mount Airy's Unique Selling Proposition. Use of the caboose and/or train station as the visual depiction of the brand is recommended.

2. Create a series of marketing materials to reinforce the new marketing positioning and brand.

MarketWorks recommends the creation of a series of marketing materials. These materials will clearly communicate the Town's mission, offerings, and unique value. Specific attention should be given to streamlining and customizing information to address the preferences of each of the targeted markets. These materials include:

Rack Cards

Create a series of rack cards to showcase the offerings at Mount Airy. These cards can reinforce the destination experience and demonstrate the breadth of businesses, recreation and events available in the town.

Rack Cards can include:

- Downtown Businesses (restaurants, retailers)
- Events (signature events)
- Recreation
- Greater Mount Airy Businesses

Outdoor Advertising

Design and place a billboard to build awareness of Mount Airy as a destination for shopping or visiting. This billboard can be placed in various locations in Carroll County, in Mount Airy and potentially in Frederick. Outdoor opportunities in Howard and Montgomery Counties should also be explored.

Online newsletter

Design and create two newsletters to clearly communicate upcoming activities and events in Mount Airy. One newsletter's audience will be businesses, and the other's audience will be for the community at large.

Online Marketing Presence

In today's world, a strong, organic online presence is more important than ever. To that end, MarketWorks recommends the addition and revision of Mount Airy's online marketing tactics.

Website

MarketWorks recommends working with an organization such as CivicPlus, a well-known website firm, to create a friendly and inviting new website for the town.

Social Media

Update Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter with visuals and copy that comply with the new brand strategy. Given the target demographic, MarketWorks also recommends the creation of a Pinterest page. Social media tactics include:

- Identify a social media specialist to post on Mount Airy's behalf on a regular basis. The minimum recommendation is six hours per week.
- Create Facebook events for every Mount Airy happening. Invite residents and businesses to share the event posting.
- Update Google Maps to include a calendar of events.
- Post on Facebook weekly, and share other business' posts to create additional engagement.
- Create hashtags to be used by the businesses for additional reach.

Co-Op Advertising

Develop a platform in which businesses can work together to cross-promote in a coordinated, cost effective way. Many businesses who responded to the survey utilize print advertising, and a shared cost structure can increase the advertising presence in a unified, branded way.

2. Create a Tagline for Mount Airy.

A new tagline should be created, based on the final marketing positioning statement and brand strategy map. This tagline will reinforce Mount Airy's value proposition and unique characteristics that elevate and distinguish the town.

Defined, a tagline is a slogan that succinctly, memorably, and descriptively summarizes an organization or product. The art of crafting a tagline can be complex, since a well-constructed tagline can endure in the minds of consumers for years. Once a tagline is complete, it should be



included in all marketing materials. A tagline can sometimes make or break an organization's success. It is intended to promote an overall positive view of an organization, to remind people and to make the audience feel good about it.

When considering a new tagline for Mount Airy, several key words were considered:

Charming	Small Town	Gateway	Convenience
Family-Friendly	Exciting	The Place to be	Americana
Quaint	Cute	Four Corners	Suburban
Accessible	Nice	Great location	Character
Rural	Historic	Growing	Welcoming
Buy Local	Small	Quaint	Locally Owned & Operated
Support Local	Beautiful	Heart of 4 counties	Our Town

A number of taglines were presented for review at September 9, 2015's focus group meeting and the Economic Development Commission meeting on September 23, 2015:

- Buying local at "your town"
- The Gateway
- The Heart of Four Counties

As a result of the discussion, the group developed:

Heart of the Four County Community

3. Establish clear metrics and objectives for all marketing materials and efforts.

During this inaugural year of the Strategic Marketing, building awareness and attendance should be a key metric for Mount Airy. Awareness can be measured in increased number of visitors, Facebook likes/shares and web hits following the launch of the new brand and marketing effort. In 2015, metrics should be established:

- For residents and visitors:
 - o Increased awareness of Mount Airy offerings, including awareness of new campaign
 - o Increased attendance at Mount Airy events and venues
 - o Change in buying behavior – buying local
 - o Increased park reservations

APPENDIX



Strategic Marketing Questionnaire Results

Responses: 167 questionnaires sent
 21 returned, all from independent businesses (no chains): 12.6% response rate

Locations:	Downtown Mount Airy	7	Peacock Shopping Center	1
	Ridgeville/Ridgeside Area	2	Mt. Airy Shopping Center	2
	Main Street (Not Downtown)	2	Center Street	2
	Twin Arch Road Area	2	Prospect Road Area	1
	Food Lion Shopping Center	2		

Types of Businesses:	Retail	4	Medical/Dental	5
	Office (Tax, law, etc.)	3	Commercial Property Owner	2
	Restaurant	2	Contractor	2
	Childcare	1	Massage Therapist	1

Amenity/Offering	Number	Mean	Mode
Each respondent rated five amenities on a 5-point scale, first for Greater Mount Airy and then for their respective location. The results are below.			
<u>Greater Mount Airy</u>			
Convenience of Location	21	4.19	5
Parking	21	3.43	3,5
Variety of Business Openings	21	3.38	3
Marketing Materials	19	2.63	3
Internet	14	3.50	3,5
<u>Downtown Mount Airy</u>			
Convenience of Location	6	4.0	5
Parking	6	2.50	1,3
Variety of Business Openings	6	2.0	3
Marketing Materials	3	2.0	1,2,3
Internet	3	4.0	5
<u>Ridgeville/Ridgeside Area</u>			
Convenience of Location	2	5.0	5
Parking	2	2.50	1, 4
Variety of Business Openings	2	4.0	4
Marketing Materials	2	4.0	3,5
Internet	2	4.0	3,5
<u>Twin Arch Road Area</u>			
Convenience of Location	2	4.50	4,5
Parking	2	5.0	5
Variety of Business Openings	2	3.0	3
Marketing Materials	2	2.50	1,4
Internet	2	2.50	1,4

Amenity/Offering	Number	Mean	Mode
<u>Mt. Airy Shopping Area</u>			
Convenience of Location	3	3.67	2, 4, 5
Parking	3	2.33	3
Variety of Business Openings	3	3.33	2,3,5
Marketing Materials	3	3.0	1,3,5
Internet	3	3.33	4

The following locations had one or less responses: Center Street, Park Avenue, Food Lion

Direct Feedback:

Specific answers to questions are noted below.

If you could describe Mount Airy in one sentence, what would it be?

- “A great place to live and work” (3)
- “A great place to raise a family” (2)
- “Friendly people and great location” (2)
- “Always seems to be growing and changing”
- “Big businesses on the outskirts and charming small businesses downtown”
- “A traditional American town”
- “A place between uptown and downtown”
- “Suburbia meets farmland”
- “A pretty cool little town”
- “All necessities in one place”
- “Bedroom community with its own identity”
- “Small town with great character”
- “Variety of businesses established by your neighbors”
- “Small town historical charm”
- “Great area with a lot of opportunity for growth”
- “A tightly knit community with great people”
- “A mix of industrial and residential”
- “Town with small town charm”
- “Country with convenience”

What Marketing Tactics do you currently employ?

- Website (19)
- Word of Mouth (18)
- Social Media (13)
- Print Ads (12)
 - Hometown Observers, Mt. Airy Messenger, Mt. Airy Orange Pages, Frederick News Post
- Cross Promotion with other businesses (7)
- Email Campaigns (6)
- Direct Mail/postcards (4)



- Donating to local nonprofits/participating in local events (2)
- Radio
- Billboard

What types of events would you like to see Mount Airy Host?

- Live Music (15)
- Holiday Events (12)
- Wine Tasting (11)
- Farmers' Market (9)
- Festivals (9)
- Ladies' Night Out (8)
- Children's Activities (8)
- Wellness events



Suggested Tactics Calendar

Marketing Tactic	November					December			
	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28
Finalize and announce new brand strategy (tagline, overall strategy)									
Logo/brandmark development, review, approval									
Social Media: Platform development									
Rack Cards: Copy platform and layout suggestions									
Rack Cards: Finalization and printing									
Outdoor Advertising: Layout, printing, location selection									
2016 Tactics									
Website: Phase I: Research, copywriting, planning, mapping									
Website, Phase II: Art direct, concepting, copywriting									
Online newsletter development: For Businesses									
Online newsletter development: For Residents									
Events Plan: Strategy and Tactics									
Events Promotional Materials: Rack cards, posters									