



# *Raleigh, N.C.*

## Destination Brand Strategy Manual

# Destination Brand Strategy Manual

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INTRODUCTION:  
*The Brand Strategy Process*



*Prospects aren't likely to buy a brand if they can't remember its name without working hard.*

*Top-of-mind (or unaided) awareness is a rough indicator of how prominent a brand is in the minds of the respondents surveyed.*

From Lynn B. Upshaw's *Building Brand Identity*



Keenan Hairston

## *The Brand Strategy Process*

In the book *Building Brand Identity*, Lynn B. Upshaw reinforces the importance of testing and discussing the living, breathing brand. “The best brand stewards are accomplished detectives, constantly searching for what works, and what works against the cause.” In an effort to refine the destination brand strength and identity of the Raleigh area, the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau embarked on a thorough reanalysis of internal and external audience and stakeholder research to guide the strategic assessment and redevelopment of the visitRaleigh destination brand.

Following key research insights, GRCVB developed and embraced a fine-tuned and focused brand strategy. The intent was to reassess the current destination brand strategy platform and to ultimately inspire the GRCVB, its partners, stakeholders and the Raleigh area, as well as the customers who fuel the Raleigh area’s hospitality and tourism sector.

The discovery phase of the visitRaleigh brand reassessment involved the completion of in-person stakeholder interviews, competitor destination analysis and a total of four surveys completed by internal audiences, including local C-level and management stakeholders. External stakeholder customer audiences who were surveyed consisted of: previous and prospective visitors, meeting and convention planners and the media.

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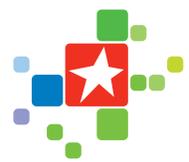


**CORE ELEMENTS**  
*of the Raleigh, N.C., Brand*



*Strong unaided brand awareness is  
the trailhead to a strong identity.*

From Lynn B. Upshaw's *Building Brand Identity*



## *Core Elements of the Raleigh, N.C., Brand*

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### *Key Elements Identified to Bolster the Raleigh, N.C., Brand*

*Smart / Savvy / Educated*  
*Passionate / Driven / Entrepreneurial*  
*Modern / Innovative / Thriving*  
*Undiscovered / Emerging*  
*Community / People / Personalities*  
*Quality of Life*  
*Cultured / Heritage*

Research revealed a need to better define and strengthen the foundational branding elements GRCVB deploys when engaging in destination marketing. Raleigh area destination assets were generally “unknown” or were perceived as “undeveloped” among internal and external audiences. This is the greatest challenge to increasing visitor arrivals.

Yet, the aggregate insight compiled through research reveals that opportunity exists to effectively define, own and bolster key destination identifiers that will set Raleigh apart from other travel destinations.

GRCVB’s brand reassessment process revisited previous brand attributes and messaging to reveal specific destination attributes that are unique to Raleigh and the area. Some attributes were found in previous destination brand identifying exercises, while others were created to emphasize the makeup of Raleigh and the area as a desirable place to visit. Key elements were identified as desirable attributes for visitors who either do not know what Raleigh offers as a destination or who find the value proposition difficult to understand.

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**DESTINATION BRAND NAME:**  
*A Focus on Raleigh, N.C.*



*Context branding, the idea that what surrounds a brand or any other immediate environment that hovers around a brand — is nearly as critical to the success of the brand as specific cues that its sponsors send out to their constituencies.*

From Lynn B. Upshaw's *Building Brand Identity*

# Raleigh, N.C.

## *A Focus on Raleigh, N.C.*

The usage of “Raleigh, N.C.,” as a destination brand name and identifier allows the GRCVB to concentrate and focus destination awareness, leveraging Raleigh’s status as the largest city in Wake County, as North Carolina’s capital city and seat of state government.

The usage of the N.C. abbreviation defines the destination’s geographic location for those who may be unsure. Larger state tourism identification efforts such as Visit North Carolina also utilize the abbreviation as an identifier. The website URL [visitnc.com](http://visitnc.com) is one example.

Additionally, external research indicates that Raleigh is the most frequented and favored city in the region among consumers, meeting and convention planners and the media. Providing a strong anchor and harnessing the energy of the entire area will strengthen awareness, drive interest, convert visitation and grow Raleigh/Wake County’s tourism sector. This will be achieved by positioning the Raleigh, N.C., name at the forefront of all brand communications. Another important consideration is ensuring that audiences further removed from the Southeastern United States can easily identify Raleigh in a state with other North Carolina destinations, such as Charlotte, that enjoy strong name recognition. Attracting visitors outside of the drive markets is important because it often translates to longer stays that result in greater economic impact.

**04**



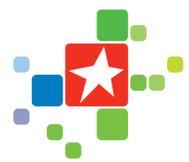
**VALUE PROPOSITION:  
*Communicating the  
Destination's Value***



*A brand's value proposition is a statement of the functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits delivered by the brand that provide value to the customer.*

*An effective value proposition should lead to a brand-customer relationship and drive purchase decisions.*

From David A. Aaker's *Building Strong Brands*



## *Communicating the Destination's Value*

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### **Raleigh, N.C.'s Destination Value Proposition**

*Visitors to Raleigh will leave feeling enriched and energized by their experiences — whether dining/food, event/festival, music or sports experiences — thanks to the investment made into this historic capital city by a smart, passionate, inventive local population.*

This statement defines the relationship between the destination and the personalities driving growth and innovation, and it illustrates the functional benefits of the brand experienced by visitors. By emphasizing words such as enriched, energized, smart and passionate, Raleigh further communicates emotional and self-expressive aspects to the target audience.

The underlying message in this statement is that the destination experience ultimately leads to the enrichment and energized emotions a traveler, either leisure or business, will encounter in Raleigh. This strong and clearly defined approach provides internal and external audiences with a unified identity that will be bolstered by the destination's marketing focus, which will be inspired from within the local community.

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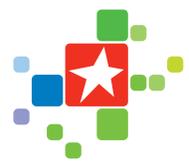


BRAND POSITIONING  
STATEMENT:  
*A Distinct Place*



*Brand position is the part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target audience and that demonstrates an advantage over competing brands.*

From David A. Aaker's *Building Strong Brands*



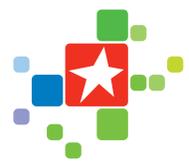
## *A Distinct Place*

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### **Raleigh, N.C.'s Destination Brand Positioning Statement**

***Raleigh is a thriving Southern capital city shaped by the passionate minds of its residents.***

Smart and savvy locals are the lifeblood of the city, the brains behind its educational institutions, renowned research facilities, historic preservation efforts and enviable rankings for a quality of life that is physically represented through lush greenways and natural parklands. Travelers intrigued by Raleigh's long list of superlatives will discover that its entrepreneurial locals are responsible for its emerging success and for the fostering of its cultural heartbeat, including museums, arts, live music, craft culinary and beverage scene, handcrafted goods and historic experiences.



## *A Distinct Place*

Raleigh, N.C.'s positioning statement maintains and confidently proclaims Raleigh's status as a capital city, but it goes further in explaining that Raleigh has been developed directly by a community that is committed to creating and nurturing a strong quality of life. This same passion is what propels the development of North Carolina's best cultural assets and a growing lifestyle scene that is introducing new visitor experiences among restaurants, the arts, live music options and retail. The city is thriving because it is fueled by smart and independent thinkers who call Raleigh home. This allows Raleigh to stand apart from other regional competitor destinations that instead leverage their heritage.

When identifying the messages that are to be actively communicated to target audiences, the following advantages over competing brands create the cornerstone of Raleigh, N.C.'s brand positioning:

- The impact of a well-educated and smart local population
- Raleigh's superb quality of life and natural parklands
- An entrepreneurial environment that breathes life into local tourism experiences

Story Photographers



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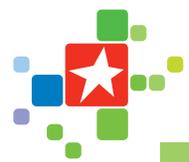
RALEIGH, N.C.,  
BRAND PROMISE



*Love the food in Raleigh and the surrounding area...great people who love to tell you their history and museums/culture...*

*Great families, great people welcome you to their area. I love the genealogy, history information they have available in Raleigh.*

*— Visitor Feedback*



## Raleigh, N.C., Brand Promise

*Visitors to Raleigh will depart feeling enriched by what they have experienced in this Southern capital city, thanks to Raleigh's smart and passionate residents who are shaping the growth of the historic city's emerging creative businesses, innovative festivals and food establishments, passionate music and sports scenes and modern cultural experiences.*

Raleigh, N.C.'s brand promise serves to clearly articulate what is communicated in the value proposition and brand position but goes one step further to extend a promise to every type of visitor: the destination experience will result in an enriching visit thanks to Raleigh's passionate residents. Raleigh's residents have put their brainpower to work and regularly reinvent the businesses, festival, event, culinary, craft brew, music and sports scenes. Raleigh is not a historic city that lies stagnant but rather one that changes to continually meet the needs of savvy locals, which in turn benefits travelers. In fact, many of Raleigh's best visitor assets have organically grown due to the community's commitment to developing a culturally rich and appealing place to live.

Raleigh is committed to an innovative, forward-thinking lifestyle, which affords visitors the opportunity to learn and depart enriched by their experiences. The brand promise communicated here will be at the center of communications conveying the unified appeal of the destination and clearly pronouncing its advantages over competing cities and regions.

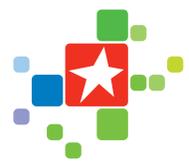
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**BRAND THEMELINES:**  
*Communicating the Core  
Brand Identity to Key  
Audiences*



*The core identity by definition represents the central, timeless essence of the brand. Thus the most unique and valuable aspects of the brand are often represented in the core identity.*

From Lynn B. Upshaw's *Building Brand Identity*



## *Communicating the Core Brand Identity to Key Audiences*

The themelines are core to the Raleigh, N.C., brand identity. Each of these major themelines encapsulates the strongest and most central attributes of the destination brand based on research. The adoption and execution of these messages by internal and external stakeholders and with customers reinforces the brand's value proposition, brand position and, ultimately, the brand promise.

**SMART:** Continually fueled by one of the world's most significant research and educational epicenters, Raleigh benefits from a stream of savvy students- and professionals-turned-residents who are collectively driving the city and area's cultural renaissance forth, creating experiences for enrichment and learning.

**A MODERN ESTABLISHMENT:** Driven by the desire to innovate, a pursuit of prosperity and the need to live well, Raleigh's community is embracing a modern vision for their historic capital city area. This has given life to business big and small, new music, arts and cultural experiences that join Raleigh's existing cultural assets, expansive green spaces and institutions to create an appealing destination.

**UNDISCOVERED:** Raleigh's unassuming stature as a destination has allowed it to develop organically and sustainably, evolving naturally for the greater good of those who live here and those who will visit. It is that genuine element that defines many of the destination's handcrafted experiences and provides the visitor with an assurance that discovery in Raleigh will always be authentic and unique – qualities rarely found in today's more established destinations.

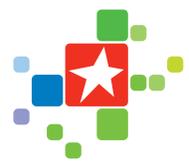


Chris Richman



Chris Richman





## *Communicating the Core Brand Identity to Key Audiences*

### **SMART**

One of the most unique attributes of the Raleigh area is the strong educational and research presence. In fact, the many area colleges and universities as well as the Research Triangle Park — one of many local economic drivers for Raleigh — have bred a community of smart residents. Smart residents have blossomed into a community of entrepreneurs whose passion extends well beyond the founders of technology-focused businesses. A smart community is indicative of equally smart, local cultural and lifestyle experiences built by its residents, for its residents.

#### **What it Means**

An authentic and favorable quality of life experience exists in Raleigh, N.C. It stands to reason that GRCVB and destination marketing partners should continue to leverage this element, luring visitors to a destination much different from its major competitors. Smart entrepreneurship now permeates the arts, culture, cuisine, festival and consumer products through companies and events such as Raleigh Denim Workshop, Hopscotch Music Festival and Videri Chocolate Factory, to name a few.

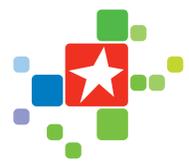


Ted Richardson



Story Photographers



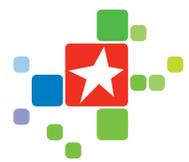


## *Communicating the Core Brand Identity to Key Audiences*

### How to Communicate

#### “Smart”

- Highlight and profile in marketing communications local individuals who are innovating and creating smart ideas — businesses and innovations that directly or indirectly affect the visitor.
- Seek opportunities to partner with and leverage the power of educational institutions and universities and their faculty and students to help mold and define the visitor experience.
- Develop itineraries and story ideas for visitors, customers and media that expose the facets of the destination that focus on creating a superb quality of life.
- Develop a formalized brand ambassador program to allow passionate and smart locals to tell their own story to leisure visitors, business travelers and meeting planners.
- Harness the “smart” message through all integrated channels, developing engaging video and image content that reinforces the idea and helps potential visitors connect the concept of “smart” to actual visitor experiences.
- Promote “smart” travel, eco-friendly tourism and new ideas within the hospitality community and challenge local businesses to embrace “smart” and sustainable operations.



## *Communicating the Core Brand Identity to Key Audiences*

### **A MODERN ESTABLISHMENT**

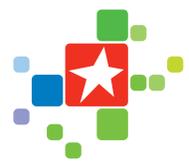
Defining Raleigh as modern, especially without losing sight of Raleigh’s historic context as a capital city, is a powerful idea. The educational and demographic landscape throughout Raleigh points to a community that is modern by nature: it is home to students, young families and a cutting-edge technological and scientific sector, settled into a city established in 1792. “A Modern Establishment” is a statement that Raleigh can own among its competitive set.

#### **What it Means**

Raleigh holds an enviable position among larger Southern destinations. The region’s dynamic and progressive research and educational foundation continues to draw residents and investment from around the world. This convergence of unique viewpoints, tastes and desire to lead a good life contributes to an idea that Raleigh, N.C., is a place that continues to forge ahead and is not bound or characterized solely by its historical past. With a competitive set that many times places a special focus on history and pedigree, Raleigh has a unique opportunity to own and promote the idea of the “Modern Establishment.”



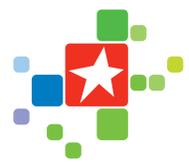
Ted Richardson



## *Communicating the Core Brand Identity to Key Audiences*

### **How to Communicate “Modern Establishment”**

- Embrace the destination’s diversity and find a place within the destination’s marketing channels to communicate the places, people and ideas that are creating a modern community.
- Champion and promote local and community policies or policy changes which directly support this idea.
- Highlight Raleigh’s culture, arts and sports to all audiences. By reinforcing an image of a place that embraces modern ideas, it provides an inspirational canvas for artists and professional athletes and drives diversity and sportsmanship.
- Develop marketing and communications programs and partnerships with local universities, corporations and research facilities to test and implement new concepts that directly or indirectly impact quality of life and the visitor experience (i.e. technology, transportation, navigation, hospitality, etc.)
- Enact marketing and communications campaigns that highlight sustainability, non-profit, eco-tourism or other modern ideas that resonate with target audiences.



## Communicating the Core Brand Identity to Key Audiences

### UNDISCOVERED

This core theme entices an educated, lifestyle-seeking visitor to come to Raleigh to uncover destination experiences that have grown organically. Unlike competing destinations, Raleigh’s music venues, craft beer pubs, retail and lifestyle offerings aren’t contrived to cater to the demands of visitors but rather created to appeal to the tastes of local residents. This makes them unique to the community in which they exist.

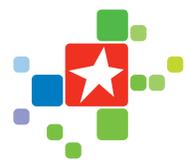
#### What it Means

Raleigh’s appeal is its “underground” and “below the radar” experiences that smart and savvy visitors are motivated to discover. For many locals this idea will require a shift in thinking. Assuming that the region’s best assets are suitable for only locals is no longer the case. Visitors are excited by the idea of traveling to somewhere never before seen or experienced. The experience of uncovering something new or unassuming is often promoted through visitor word-of-mouth and social channels.



Chris Richman





## *Communicating the Core Brand Identity to Key Audiences*

### **How to Communicate “Undiscovered”**

- Educate local communities on the importance of the visitor and the uniqueness of the destination as “undiscovered” so that they can also partake in and communicate this idea and vision.
- Tell the story of compelling local personalities who are shaping the Raleigh of today. Through social media, earned media and marketing campaigns, highlight their inspiration and personalities, leaving blatant destination messaging aside in favor of communicating authenticity instead.
- Guide the visitor through destination discovery through the creation of self-guided walks, maps, apps and tours highlighting experiences and businesses that are unique to Raleigh.
- Recruit “insiders”: individuals from all walks of life who can help create content, become destination brand ambassadors and provide local, authentic and unbiased advice on their Raleigh.
- Encourage small and local businesses, the arts and other services to partake in destination marketing efforts.
- Collaborate with local commercial, educational, cultural and corporate institutions to fund new and innovative small businesses, creative ventures and opportunities through innovation tanks and the like.

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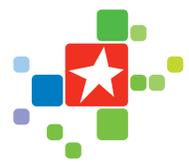
**EXPRESSING THE BRAND:**  
*Guidelines for Visual and  
Verbal Communication*



*Execute the communication program so that it not only is on target with the identity and position but achieves brilliance and durability.*

*Generate alternatives and consider options beyond media advertising.*

From David A. Aaker's *Building Strong Brands*



# Guidelines for Visual and Verbal Communication

Expressing Raleigh, N.C.’s brand through visual and verbal communications requires an adherence to the brand strategy set within this document. Regardless of brand mark or style, visual and verbal communications must support the core identity elements: smart, a modern establishment and undiscovered, while reinforcing the destination’s brand promise.

## Suggested Vocabulary

### How visitors feel

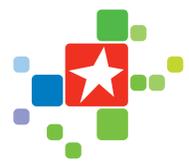
- bettered
- broadened
- energized
- enlarged
- enlivened
- enriched
- filliped
- grateful
- impressed
- improved
- inspired
- jazzed
- pleased
- piqued
- pumped
- quickened
- revived
- revved
- sparked
- surprised
- stirred
- stoked
- uplifted
- warmed
- wowed

### The culture of Raleigh

- authentic
- collaborative
- creative
- diverse
- educated
- entrepreneurial
- evolving
- fired up
- genuine
- grass roots
- hip without trying
- home-grown
- humming
- independent
- innovative
- inventive
- living well
- motivated
- natural
- not fake
- on its own terms
- organic
- passionate
- quality of life
- quirky
- real
- successful
- trendy
- unassuming
- undercurrent
- under the radar
- unexpected
- unsullied
- upscale
- upwardly-mobile

## What it Means for Verbal Communication

- Avoid superlatives and over-generalizing destination attributes.
- Draft verbal statements that connect experiences with their perceived value to the visitor.
- Identify the inspiration, source or backstory when explaining the value or virtue of a destination experience.
- Frame the overall destination experience assuming the reader knows little or nothing about Raleigh.
- Maintain a consistent voice across all channels and within target audiences to ensure the destination’s brand promise is accurately communicated.
- Avoid comparisons to regional or national competitors.
- Don’t communicate a “something for everybody” message, instead explain why Raleigh’s attributes and experiences are worthy of attention and exploration.



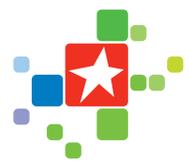
## *Guidelines for Visual and Verbal Communication*

Expressing Raleigh, N.C.'s brand through visual and verbal communications requires an adherence to the brand strategy set within this document. Regardless of brand mark or style, visual and verbal communications must support the core identity elements: smart, a modern establishment and undiscovered, while reinforcing the destination's brand promise.

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### *What it Means for Visual Identity/Photography*

- Source and curate imagery that evokes authentic experiences from the viewpoint of locals.
- Shy away from stock photography, models, staging and video lacking focus on specific subjects.
- Photograph and create videos focused on personalities and local business owners perfecting their craft and explaining their passion.
- Opt for local content creators or ambassadors, including amateur (students) to professional-level photographers and videographers to allow locals to tell their unique stories.
- Encourage visitors to generate photo and video content by communicating campaigns and social media promotions that welcome storytelling and content creation.
- Refresh visual assets often, cataloging businesses, trends and themes in the destination.



## *GRCVB's Trademark for the Brand: the visitRaleigh Logo*



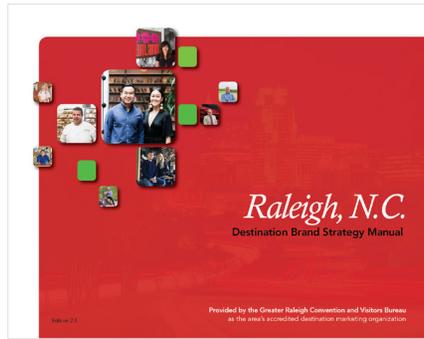
The visitRaleigh logo design is a registered trademark of the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau.

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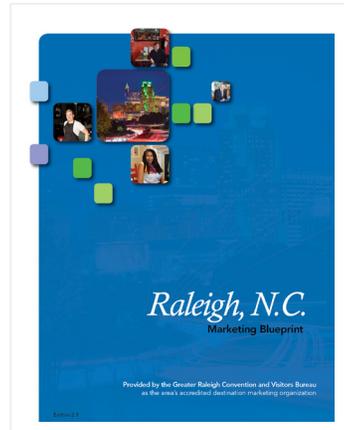
### *Logo Design for Destination Marketing*

The visitRaleigh logo design, called Pulse, symbolizes the following:

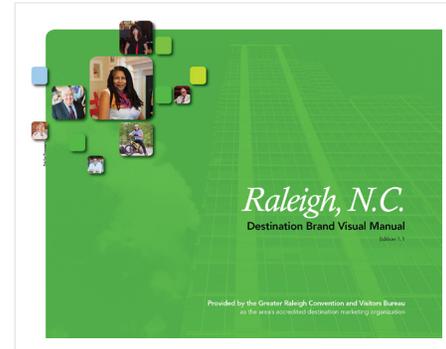
- The color palette is a series of squares of varying shades, green representing the beautiful, green environment, with yellow-green representing new growth; red for the strength and vitality of the capital city; blue and purple representing lakes and the beautiful Carolina sky; and purple for elegance and sophistication.
- The palette spreads from purple to yellow-green, from left to right, also signifying growth and progress. The green squares surround the red center square, representing a “city in a park” concept.
- The grided squares are symbolic of several of the area’s attributes: pixels representing Raleigh’s relationship to the Research Triangle Park, the large number of patents from area companies, the large number of professionals with college degrees in the area, the \$1-million shimmer wall of the Raleigh Convention Center, a forward look to the future (through digital media) and smart city/county growth planning through highly organized but organic components.
- There are 12 squares in the logo, representing the 12 municipalities within Wake County.
- The center star represents the state capital. It is non-symmetrical to add contrast and interest to the symmetrical, rounded-corner, grided squares and to express the handmade, imaginative quality of the visual and performing arts in Raleigh.
- The word “visit” is italic to show activity and to communicate the word as a verb and call-to-action.
- The font for the word “Raleigh” is from a classic typeface that is legible, friendly and elegant in its simplicity and graceful curves.



This **Raleigh, N.C., Destination Brand Strategy Manual** is one of a three-part series of Raleigh, N.C., Destination Brand Guides.



**Raleigh, N.C., Marketing Blueprint**



**Raleigh, N.C., Destination Brand Visual Manual**

The series may be found at...  
[www.raleighncbrand.com](http://www.raleighncbrand.com)

Research & brand development by Development Counsellors International

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