

# Final Report of the Milwaukee Image and Perception Task Force

November 21, 2011

Regarding File #: 091196, created 12/22/2009

Substitute resolution creating a task force to assess perceptions and image of greater Milwaukee and recommend development of a Milwaukee brand identity.

Sponsors Ald. Witkowski, Ald. Hines Jr., Ald. Davis, Ald. Bauman, Ald. Witkowiak, Ald. Coggs

To The Honorable Members of the Community and Economic Development Committee:

In February of 2010 two dozen professionals versed in tourism, public relations and promotion came together at the direction of this Committee to:

- a.) Assess Milwaukee's image and perceptions of Milwaukee.**
- b.) Devise methods, plans and ongoing monitoring of the promotion of Milwaukee and Milwaukee's image.**
- c.) Make recommendations to the Common Council and community leaders regarding possible funding sources and designation of an organization to serve as primary coordinator for Milwaukee's image marketing, perception and brand identity.**

A series of meetings were held which included Ald. Witkowski representing the Common Council as well as representatives from: Department of City Development, Port of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County Executive, Milwaukee County Board, Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Wisconsin Department of Tourism, General Mitchell International Airport, VISIT Milwaukee, Wisconsin Center District Board, Milwaukee Metropolitan Association of Commerce, Greater Milwaukee Committee, Spirit of Milwaukee, Milwaukee 7, Cultural Alliance of Greater Milwaukee, Business Improvement District #21, Business Improvement District #40 (Airport Gateway), Milwaukee Water Council, World Trade Center Wisconsin University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Marquette University, Milwaukee World Festival, Inc., FUEL Milwaukee.

At the first meeting, attended by the Mayor and Council President Hines, Milwaukee's Image and Perception Task Force was called to order and Paul Upchurch, president and CEO of VISIT Milwaukee was designated chair. Over time, representatives were invited from other businesses and industries to offer their assessments and expertise.

## **a.) Assessing Milwaukee's Image and perceptions of Milwaukee**

One of the first tasks undertaken, as directed by the committee, was an assessment of the current image and perception of Milwaukee. Since many of the participants at the table had done such surveys and studies in the recent past, it was agreed that spending any more time or money was unnecessary. Instead these previous studies were reviewed and discussed.

It was acknowledged from the studies and anecdotally that Milwaukee has neither a positive nor a negative image, but instead lacks a recognizable image both nationally and internationally. It was also agreed that an effective brand identity could help stimulate economic activity and increase the number and size of conventions as well as general tourism.

## **b.) Devise methods, plans and ongoing monitoring of the promotion of Milwaukee and Milwaukee's image.**

Since the effort is one of creating awareness and bringing people to the Milwaukee area, a solid communication plan is our most valuable tool.

### **Image and Perception Task Force Communications Plan**

**Purpose:** The Milwaukee Image Task Force exists to continually improve the image of the Milwaukee region as a great place to live, work, visit, learn and play.

**How this is accomplished:** The Milwaukee Image Task Force serves as a catalyst, interacting with key community partners on a communications plan to promote Milwaukee to internal and external influencers.

The goal of the communications plan is to prioritize, coordinate and execute public relations activities that support strategies to improve Milwaukee's image. As these strategies evolve, the communications plan will be updated to adapt to the ongoing needs of Milwaukee.

**Objective:**     **Execute a consistent message that differentiates, promotes and enhances the perception of the Milwaukee region.**

**Audiences:**    Local, national and international media; influencers and residents of the Milwaukee region; state, national and international influencers; potential visitors; and the general public at large.

#### **A. Overall Brand Management**

1. Establish and maintain a working group of core organizations, including VISIT Milwaukee, M-7, Milwaukee Downtown BID 21, Spirit of Milwaukee, City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Gateway to Milwaukee, Greater Milwaukee Committee (GMC), Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) and Milwaukee Water Council, which will review Milwaukee area marketing and communications strategies, collateral and materials in order to coordinate and improve the overall image of the Milwaukee region, and ensure that it is presented with a consistent message and speaks with one voice.

Budget:    \$0

Timeline:  Ongoing

Lead:       Image Task Force

2. Develop a dynamic and compelling micro website that provides Milwaukee area facts, success stories, new information, favorable rankings, etc. The site would be linked to other key community sites and would be marketed and promoted to continually grow traffic.

Budget: \$0  
Timeline: Fall 2011 or TBD?  
Lead: VISIT Milwaukee with collaboration of task force members

3. Create a branding toolkit, i.e. photos, high-def video, factoids, quotes, fact sheets and area descriptions. Makes these resources available on the new micro site and through links to other sites like Choose Milwaukee, MMAC, GMC, etc., so all parties involved in both the internal and external marketing of the Milwaukee region have common images and language, ensuring a consistent look and message for the Milwaukee Brand.

Budget: \$0  
Timeline: TBD – done as funds are available  
Lead: VISIT Milwaukee

4. Revitalize the use of the “Milwaukee Mark” as the official symbol of our region. Oversee and maintain its proper usage in websites, collateral material, i.e. letterhead, business cards, etc. Distribute a graphics standards manual and make logo images available to all community organizations.

Budget: \$0  
Timeline: Ongoing  
Lead: Image Task Force

5. Meet with, discuss and distribute talking points among community leaders, PR and communications professionals, top area businesses and organizations on positive attributes, facts and stories on the Milwaukee area. Encourage them to incorporate these positive facts and stories into their internal and external communications. Our goal is to induce substantially more positive messages about Milwaukee.

Update the facts, talking points and stories regularly, distributing them to this group through email linking to the micro site.

Budget: \$0  
Timeline: Ongoing  
Lead: Image Task Force

## B. Media

1. Regularly communicate positive stories, updates and facts to all community organizations and all media sources through traditional press releases, emails and social media. Content to be provided from sources including City of Milwaukee, MMAC, GMC, VISIT Milwaukee, Milwaukee Water Council, Creative Alliance, etc.

Budget: \$0  
Timeline: Ongoing  
Lead: Image Task Force

2. Maintain a crisis communications team to respond to negative publicity on the Milwaukee area.

Budget: \$0  
Timeline: Ongoing  
Lead: Image Task Force

3. Conduct regular media briefings and contacts with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Business Journal of Milwaukee, Biztimes and OnMilwaukee.com, as well as other significant regional media outlets.

Budget: \$0  
Timeline: Ongoing  
Lead: Image Task Force

Respond to regional, international and national media inquiries to proactively place positive media stories

Budget: \$0  
Timeline: Ongoing  
Lead: VISIT Milwaukee, Image Task Force members

Conduct FAM tours for regional, national and international media.

Budget: TBD  
Timeline: Ongoing  
Lead: VISIT Milwaukee, Image Task Force

4. Host tours of Midwest and national media to produce positive stories targeted to the tourism market.

Budget: \$30,000  
Timeline: Summer, ongoing  
Lead: VISIT Milwaukee in collaboration with Image Task Force members

5. Develop a coordinated program to assist national media visiting the region during major events, i.e. sports championships, presidential elections, etc.

Budget: TBD  
Timeline: As major events occur, i.e. baseball & basketball playoffs, major golf tournaments, presidential campaigns  
Lead: VISIT Milwaukee, Image Task Force

The Task Force recommends developing and administering a Milwaukee perception study and compare results over time. Those results would be communicated to the Common Council and community leaders.

**Measures of Success:**

- Improved perceptions of the region by local residents
- Improved perceptions of the Milwaukee area regionally, nationally and internationally
- Consistent positive messages in a variety of media
- Increased business development success
- Increased tourism growth

The Task Force was also charged with developing and coordinating an easily recognizable identity for the market.

**c.) Make recommendations to the Common Council and community leaders regarding possible funding sources and designation of an organization to serve as primary coordinator for Milwaukee’s image marketing, perception and brand identity.**

**Purpose:** One of the first and perhaps easiest decisions of the Task Force was to recommend a revitalization and expansion of the use of the “Milwaukee Mark.”

This particular design was created and endorsed under the coordination of the Spirit of Milwaukee in December of 2009. The stakeholders involved in that process are many of the same people participating in the current *Image and Perception Task Force*.

**How this will be accomplished:** The Task Force strongly urges that the City (and ideally, the County) utilize the design in as many ways as possible. For City departments this could include decals or adhesive vinyl on City vehicles (as has been done in previous efforts).

Envelopes and letterhead should be changed entirely to the “Mark” or use the Mark as a secondary imprint on existing letterhead designs. Ideally, all City letterhead would be of the same design and carry the Mark as present stock is depleted.

With City government leading the way, the Task Force will then ask its own members as well as their community and business peers to use the Mark in the course of their own marketing.

Color is also an integral part of the Mark. Blue was chosen to reflect the City and major industries’ focus on the potential of Milwaukee becoming a fresh water hub – nationally and internationally. That effort is well underway. So in applications where the Mark itself may not be appropriate, the color alone can become a symbol for Milwaukee and used on signage, vehicles, street amenities, etc.

Usage guide and use follow the end of this Report.



### **Image and Perception Task Force: Centralized Community Calendar**

**Purpose:** To provide internet access to an aggregated list of all the activities (arts, sports, special events) taking place in the Milwaukee area.

This centralized community calendar, dubbed Artsopolis, will represent all there is to do in Milwaukee in one robust calendar. This calendaring system, also used in 34 other metropolitan areas will become the one source for all information and the centralized feed for all other event calendars. Aggregating ALL there is to do in Milwaukee will elevate the perception of the community as a place of constant and diverse activity. In communities where this calendar has been implemented, the arts, attractions and local businesses have all seen increased exposure and attendance. With all the world class offerings in Milwaukee, a world class community calendar will benefit all.

### **Image and Perception Task Force: Milwaukee Image Video**

**Purpose:** To create a positive visual presentation of Milwaukee to the local community and, through the internet, to the rest of the world.

Milwaukee is not on the consciousness map for many people outside the region -- and our own internal perceptions are at best cautious -- at worst negative. We have a great story to tell and if we're going to convince the world Milwaukee is a great place to live, work, and play, we have to convince ourselves first. The purpose of this video is to create a sense of pride at home, and turn local fans into ambassadors who will repeat our story to others. The target audience for the video would be local residents, business and political leaders, business prospects, talent recruiters, and potential residents. The video would be made available to organizations like M7, MMAC, GMC, City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Corporations, and Foundations -- any organization with a stake in promoting the Milwaukee area. The goal of the video is to create local pride and awareness that answers why "Milwaukee is a great place to live, work and play."

**Make recommendations to the Common Council and community leaders regarding possible funding sources and designation of an organization to serve as primary coordinator for Milwaukee's image marketing, perception and brand identity.**

### **Image and Perception Task Force: Funding**

**Purpose:** To support the ideas and goals set by the Taskforce

As we all know, funding is an issue for everyone. But we believe that a coordinated program can be created by tweaking the existing efforts of many of the participant organizations that came to the table over the course of the Taskforce's meetings.

For example, by encouraging government entities, and public and private corporations located in the Milwaukee area to consistently use "The Mark" on their stationery, in advertising, and on signage and City vehicles, recognition of our most marketable landmark will grow at little or no cost and can be implemented over time.

The "Artsopolis" calendaring project is an extension of, and improvement to, a project that VISIT already does on an ongoing basis.

The same is true for VISIT's Familiarity Tours, regular "good news" stories to media in the Midwest and nationally, and assisting with major events like the Navy's upcoming War of 1812 Commemoration this summer. These are all things that VISIT already does and budgets for. But we will be doing it on a consistent basis that promotes the Mark, our image and our message. And we will be working with the partnerships established through this Taskforce.

We will bring together a Mark Team or Image Board that will review our progress, consolidate efforts when and where appropriate, and support each other's efforts. A perfect example of working together for the good of Milwaukee's image is the recent Downtown Holiday Lights activities. Individually, none of our organizations could afford to pull this off. But with the combined efforts of Milwaukee Downtown, East Town, Westtown, the RiverWalk District, Milwaukee County Parks, City Government and local businesses and corporations, we have a Downtown Holiday we can all be proud of.

**Image and Perception Task Force: Designation of the organization to serve as the primary coordinator for Milwaukee's marketing, perception and brand identity.**

**Purpose:** To provide ongoing direction and encouragement to all Milwaukee area entities charged with growing our perception and brand identity.

The Taskforce was unanimous in its decision to designate VISIT Milwaukee as the primary organization to move this process forward. It is also recommended that a taskforce remain in place to provide ongoing support and direction to VISIT.