

Branding Committee Conclusions and Recommendations

Participants: Russell Barnett (Guadalupe Bank), Mark Bosma (City of Ingram), Justin Carpenter (Cross Kingdom Church & Trio restaurant), Denise Cartwright (concerned resident), Wanda Cash (HCAF), Don Harris (Kerr County Pct. 4 Commissioner), Mark Morrison (new resident), Carl Schupp (Rightening Renovation), Keri Short (West Kerr County Current), Kerry Sutton (HCTC), Bobby Templeton (Ingram ISD), and David Summers (committee chair). Note: Input was received from two Ingram high school students.

General Observations:

While there is much to be done, Ingram/West Kerr County (WKC) are in fairly good shape, especially compared to other areas of the state. We are at a good starting position.

Ingram's look and business dynamics are critical to overall area development. Ingram is the central business hub of the area. How Ingram develops will greatly influence the overall outcome.

There are concerned citizens who care about the future of the area. Any improvement efforts will require the work of many.

Major findings:

1) Three separate images of the area emerged.

- 1) Image outside the area – very good.
- 2) Image of West Kerr County and Kerrville – poor (no reason to go to Ingram/WKC which is a bias based partly on old stereotypes)
- 3) Image of Ingram residents – not a dynamic place to live

2) Retirees are our major source of outside money. We are well positioned to attract retirees and they are already coming. Many are coming to WKC. (Note: the county has a higher median income than Kerrville which is probably a reflection of the affluence of the retirees living in the county) The psychographic profile of the zip codes (except Ingram) in the county verifies the conclusion.

3) Visitors to the area are another major source of outside money. We have a good reputation with those outside the area and we just need to promote the area as a good place in the hill country to come. We will need to further develop the recreational, cultural, shopping, dining, etc. in the area to accommodate new tourists. There are about 4.5 million people living within a three-hour drive of our area. (Note: The summer camps and hunting experiences are major factors in having a good outside image.)

4) We need to focus on attracting Kerrville and WKC shoppers to Ingram and WKC. Kerrville and WKC residents are extremely underutilized customer bases. Note: Business activity in Ingram is critical to the economic wellbeing of our area. Ingram will lead the way to the customer base.

5) We are fairly well situated for people wanting to move to the area (needs more of a focus). Jobs, however, are a must to have. (fairly well positioned for remoter workers)

- 1) Fairly low cost of living (except housing) (total below national average)
- 2) Good health care facilities
- 3) Fairly safe environment
- 4) Schools are improving (making big improvements in some areas – becoming a selling point for the area)
- 5) Recreational opportunities are good
- 6) Infrastructure is fair (cell and internet service are questionable in some areas) (close to major airports and metro areas)
- 7) Housing is the weak area (affordable housing and housing in the \$200K to \$250K is lacking). We do need to provide for people wanting affordable housing, but also for middle and higher income residents as well. We need housing for all income levels.

6) Young people of the area would like to be able to stay in the area. They need jobs.

7) Business needs to be more dynamic. This is especially true in Ingram. (retail, dining, cultural, new business starts, greater variety of business [e.g. professional services, healthcare], some new business recruitment)

8) There are three major community institutions – school, government (Ingram and Kerr County), and churches. The school and churches provide the most community contact and both need to be developed.

9) Great community support for the area including the city of Ingram and Kerr County. (Note: The local churches could play a more active role.)

10) Ingram needs to look prosperous. It is the “gateway” to WKC.

11) The west part of the county looks good, but the businesses and communities need to be included in promotion and development efforts.

Brand (desired image):

Outside: “Where the city comes to live or play.”

Kerrville and West Kerr County: A unique place to shop, dine, play, and be entertained (i.g. HCAF). It is worth the drive Ingram and WKC.

Ingram: A dynamic, attractive, and fun place to live and work. (people need to see things happening)

Note: It is critical that the current images are managed better to reflect the desired images (brand). Creating a supportive image should be a primary goal.

Recommendations:

We recommend the formation of three committees. They are different in focus, but related. The committees could be formed of both First Thursday and West Kerr County Chamber of Commerce (WKCCC) members.

1) Image promotion committee (marketing):

- a. Promote to area outside the Kerrville/Kerr County region. Emphasize the area amenities. A good place to visit or stay.
- b. Promote to Kerrville and WKC. Capture that customer base in both Kerrville and WKC.

- 2) **Ingram and surrounding area beautification and community development committee:** Focus on making Ingram/WKC attractive and building the community. Better manage the image of Ingram. Its image is critical to the area.
- 3) **Business development committee:** Focus on starting, attracting, and aiding business in the area.

Community leadership training. Leaders need to be well versed in economic and community development. Many communities have leadership programs that could be used as models.

Initial ideas for each committee:

Image promotion committee:

Outside of Kerr County region:

- 1) More for visitors to do
- 2) Map project promotion
- 3) Unique shopping and cultural experiences
- 4) Paddling trail (proposed)
- 5) Good place to live
- 6) Use WKCCC website to promote both play and live image (have sections for both on the website)
- 7) List of amenities for people considering moving here
- 8) Job board
- 9) List of business assistance programs and resources

Kerrville/WKC promotion:

- 1) Special shopping days
- 2) Take advantage of Arts and Crafts Festival
- 3) Build on “cedar hacker” image. Have a cedar festival with cedar chopping contests, cedar products, etc.
- 4) Take more advantage of the HCAF.
- 5) Promotion aimed at the Kerrville market
- 6) Coupon books to transfer students in Ingram ISD.

Ingram and surrounding area beautification and community development committee:

- 1) Ingram “Y” lighting
- 2) Keep grass cut
- 3) Flowers and beautification of existing businesses
- 4) Facade grants to improve the look of Ingram
- 5) Unite local churches to address community problems
- 6) Public pool
- 7) Cleanup projects
- 8) Recreational opportunities for kids
- 9) Aid in solving social issues (i.e., drugs, abuse, etc.)
- 10) Constant communication between school and local paper (Ingram ISD is a good source of positive stories to better manage Ingram’s image.)

Business development committee:

- 1) Business startup classes
- 2) Job board
- 3) Provide special training to existing business owners (i.e., social media marketing, employee skill building, hospitality training, etc.)
- 4) Grant programs for startups
- 5) Revolving loan programs for business startup and expansion
- 6) Work on business attraction (professional services, medical clinic, more retail, more comprehensive grocery store, etc.)
- 7) Work with business and property owners to improve properties
- 8) Possible A or B sales tax program
- 9) Business incubator, hatchery, co-work spaces etc.
- 10) More formal economic development program
- 11) Affordable housing
- 12) Housing in the \$200K to \$250K range
- 13) Apartments (live in Ingram instead of Kerrville)
- 14) Promote the area as a good place for remote workers
- 15) WKCC website to provide information for people wanting to build businesses or move to the area

Personal recommendation: There needs to be community leadership training. Leaders need to be well versed in economic and community development. Many communities have leadership programs that could be used as models.