November 2022

Connecticut's Countryside
BRANDING INITIATIVE
Marketing Implementation Plan

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INTRODUCTION

An Action Plan for Economic Vitality was prepared during 2020-2021 for the four towns of Bolton, Coventry, Mansfield and Tolland by AdvanceCT, in collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Community & Economic Development. In the plan, AdvanceCT recommended that the region could better promote its assets to encourage visitor attraction and business growth. The plan can be viewed here (https://bit.ly/3h0rxm2).

The Action Plan identified that the region has significant opportunities to be seen as a desirable destination to dine, shop and play, based upon its distinctive combination of resources across the four towns. These resources include outdoor recreation, agriculture and agri-tourism, culture and entertainment, higher education institutions, and small businesses and entrepreneurs.

The plan also recommended that the region could better promote its assets, both digitally and physically, to encourage visitor attraction and business recruitment.

As a result, in June 2022, the four towns hired DKA to create a branding initiative for the four-towns region. The goal was to develop a new collective brand identity and marketing recommendations for the region as a destination. This branding and marketing will serve as a supplement to each individual Town's efforts (and not replace each individual Town's logo or branding).

The branding initiative project plan and timeline are summarized on the next page.

PROJECT PLAN & TIMELINE

Activity	June	July	August	Sept.	October	Nov.
Kick-Off Meeting with 4 Towns' Core Team	🟩					
Develop Initial Names, Taglines, Logos, Colors		🟪				
Revised Concepts Based on Internal 4 Towns Feedback		🟧	🟧			
Concepts Testing Public Research				🟦	🟦	
Recommendations for Final Selection					🟥	
Produce Artwork and Brand Guide/Communications Toolkit						🟨
Produce Marketing Implementation Plan						🟩

PHASE 1:

Direction Setting with the "Core 4" Team

BRANDING & MARKETING PLAN GOALS

- Build awareness of the four towns region as a destination
- Increase traffic to attractions, stores, and restaurants
- Increase visitation to agricultural, recreational, educational, arts and cultural, entertainment, and tourism assets
- Build synergy between the four towns and regional marketing agencies, such as The Last Green Valley and CTVisit
- Promote the four towns region as a location to start a business or support an existing business
- Measure and benchmark the success of the branding, marketing, public relations, and other communication initiatives

PRIMARY TARGET MARKET & AUDIENCES

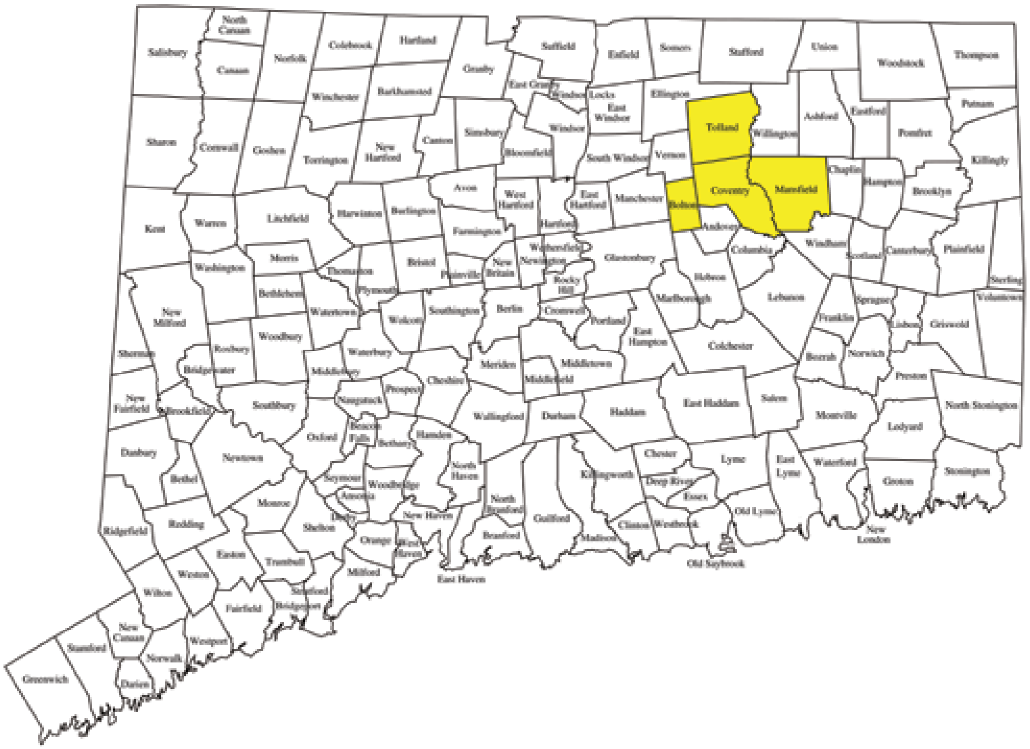
- Day visitors from inside and outside the region (50-mile/1-hour-drive radius)
- University students and their families

WHAT DEFINES THE BRAND?

- Creating a sense of **identity** (name)
- Creating a sense of **place** (location)
- Creating a sense of **destination** (distinctive assets and attributes)

IDENTITY & PLACE

- Identifying the 4 Towns Region
- Awareness and equity of town names: Bolton • Coventry • Mansfield • Tolland
- Northeastern Connecticut location


Tolland
Coventry
Mansfield
Bolton

DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION ASSETS & ATTRIBUTES

- Outdoor Recreation
- Agriculture & Agri-Tourism
- Culture & Entertainment
- Higher Education Institutions
- Small Businesses & Entrepreneurs

MARKETING KEYS TO PROMOTING THE REGION

- Cross-pollination of assets and attributes
- Building the itineraries
- Economic vitality (driving visitor engagement with local businesses)

OUTDOOR
RECREATION

AGRICULTURE & AGRI-TOURISM

CULTURE & ENTERTAINMENT

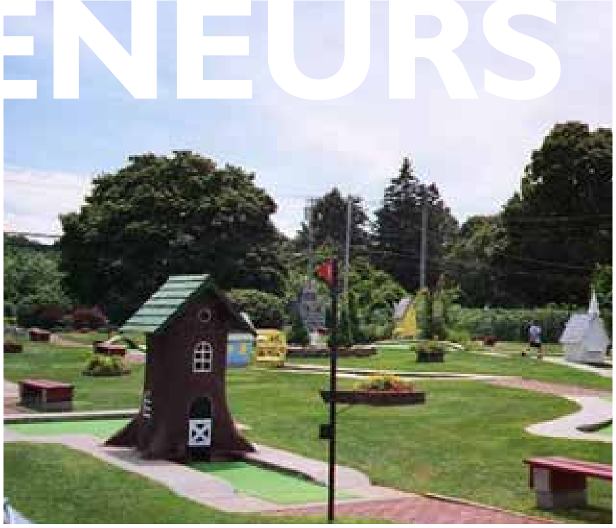
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURS

SHOW LOVE, #SHOPSMALL
SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY NOV 26
SHOP SMALL

The Bidwell
EST 1822
Tavern
&
Cafe

The FARMER'S COW
Calfé & Creamery



PHASE 2:

Creative Concepts & Community Feedback

- Developed multiple initial concepts for names, taglines, logos and colors and presented to Four Towns Region representatives
- Revised concepts based on representatives' feedback ad represented for additional consideration
- "Core 4" Team selected three "finalist" concepts for public opinion research

PHASE 3:

Research Results & Recommendations

- Developed online questionnaire on Survey Monkey
- Prepared news release, social media post and flyer invitations for Four Towns representatives to circulate in the communities
- Presented research findings and final branding recommendation to Four Towns Economic Vitality Steering Committee
- Consensus received on final branding selection

THE FARMER'S COW
Calfé & Creamery

We Want *Your* Opinion

PLEASE TAKE OUR SURVEY ON OPTIONS FOR A NEW REGIONAL TOURISM BRAND

The Towns of Bolton, Coventry, Mansfield and Tolland are in the process of creating a tourism brand for the four-towns region. The region has a significant opportunity to be seen as a desirable destination to dine, shop and play, based upon its distinctive combination of resources across the four towns. These resources include outdoor recreation, agriculture and agri-tourism, culture and entertainment, higher education institutions, and small businesses and entrepreneurs. The four towns are seeking community input on the draft branding options.

A short survey is available online. It will only take a few minutes to complete and your responses will remain anonymous. Your votes will help determine the final branding selection!

The online survey is available through October 11, 2022.

TAKE THE SURVEY HERE:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/4TownsBrandSurvey
or https://bit.ly/3qHjCM4

ONLINE PUBLIC SURVEY (Survey Monkey)

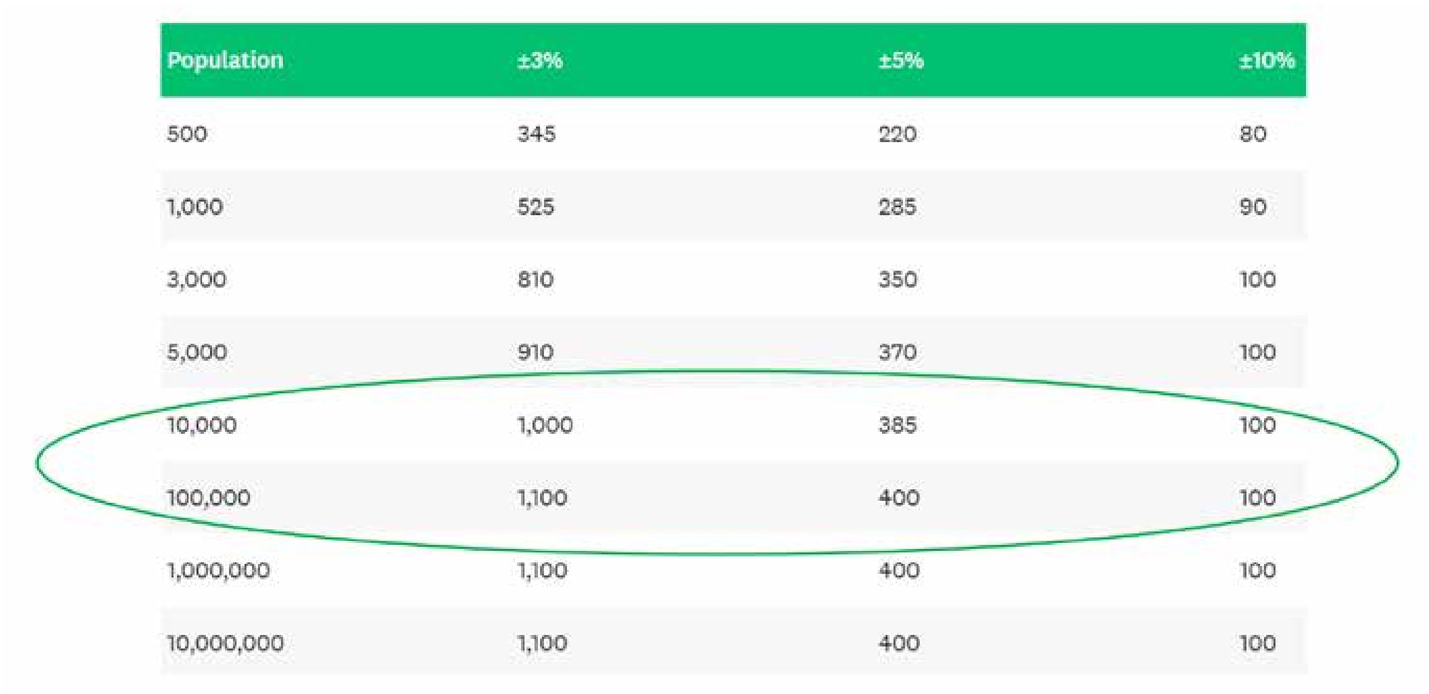
- Survey Period: September 26 – October 11, 2022

- 722 Completed Surveys

STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE BASED ON POPULATION

Bolton:	4,819
Coventry:	12,205
Mansfield:	26,357
Tolland:	14,511
	57,892

RESPONDENTS NEEDED AT ERROR OF ±3%, ±5%, AND ±10%



Population	±3%	±5%	±10%
500	345	220	80
1,000	525	285	90
3,000	810	350	100
5,000	910	370	100
10,000	1,000	385	100
100,000	1,100	400	100
1,000,000	1,100	400	100
10,000,000	1,100	400	100

4 Towns Tourism Branding Survey

Welcome to our survey!

The Towns of Bolton, Coventry, Mansfield and Tolland have hired Dornenburg Kallenbach Advertising (DKA) to create a tourism brand for the four-towns region. This new collective brand for the region as a destination will be a supplement to each individual Town’s marketing, and will not replace each individual Town's logo or branding.

An Action Plan for Economic Vitality prepared in 2020 by AdvanceCT in collaboration with the CT Department of Community & Economic Development, determined that the region could better promote its assets to encourage visitor attraction and business growth.

The Action Plan recommended that the region has a significant opportunity to be seen as a desirable destination to dine, shop and play, based upon its distinctive combination of resources across the four towns. These resources include outdoor recreation, agriculture and agri-tourism, culture and entertainment, higher education institutions, and small businesses and entrepreneurs. You can view the plan here.

At this point in time, we would like community input on the draft branding options. This short survey will only take a few minutes to complete and your responses will remain anonymous. Thank you for your interest!

Please complete the survey by October 11.

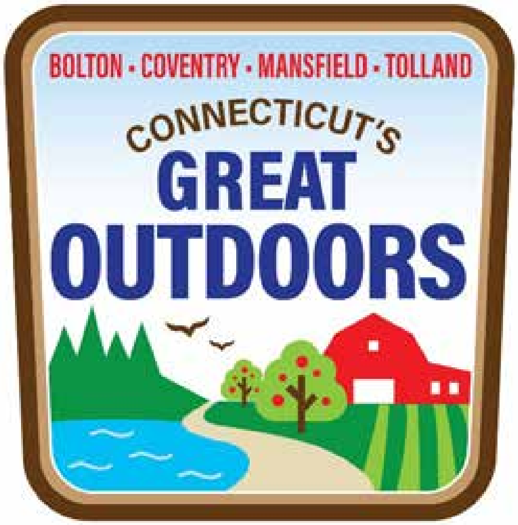
4 Towns Tourism Branding Survey

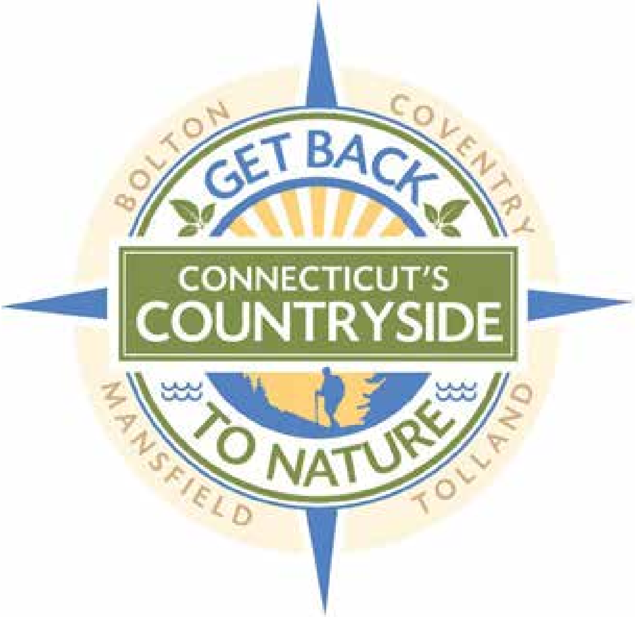
Instructions

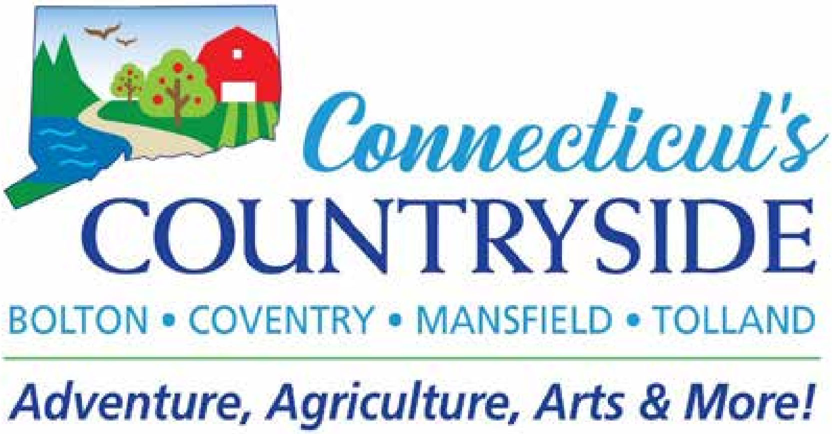
On the next page, we're going to show you three proposed branding options. These will be presented in random order. Please review the options and rank these (1, 2, 3) in order of your preference.

At the end of the survey, you will also have the opportunity to add comments, if you wish.

4 Towns Tourism Branding Survey


BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND
CONNECTICUT'S
GREAT
OUTDOORS


BOLTON
COVENTRY
GET BACK
CONNECTICUT'S
COUNTRYSIDE
TO NATURE
MANSFIELD
TOLLAND


Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

* Please rank these branding options in order of your preference.

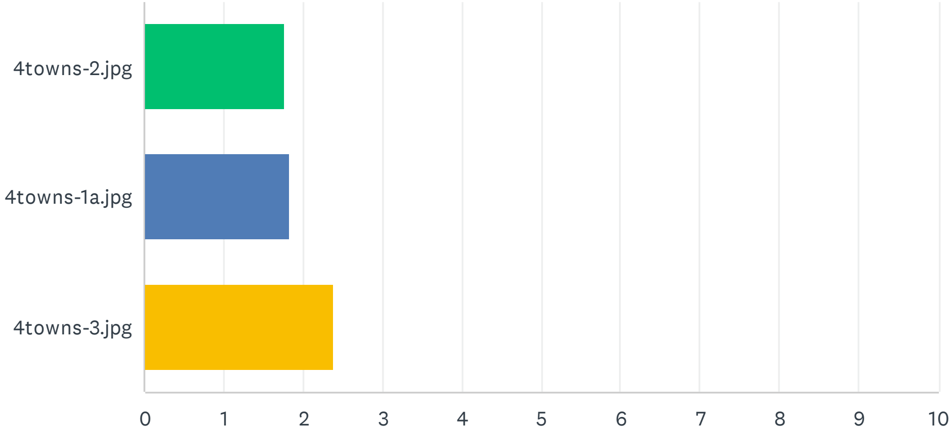
(Please note: If you're viewing this on a touch screen device, you can either use the toggles or drag the images into the order of your preference. Then use the grey scrolling bar on the far right side of your screen to scroll down and click Next to submit your vote.)

4 Towns Tourism Branding Survey

Please add any comments, if you wish.

Q1 Please rank these branding options in order of your preference. (Please note: If you're viewing this on a touch screen device, you can either use the toggles or drag the images into the order of your preference. Then use the grey scrolling bar on the far right side of your screen to scroll down and click Next to submit your vote.)

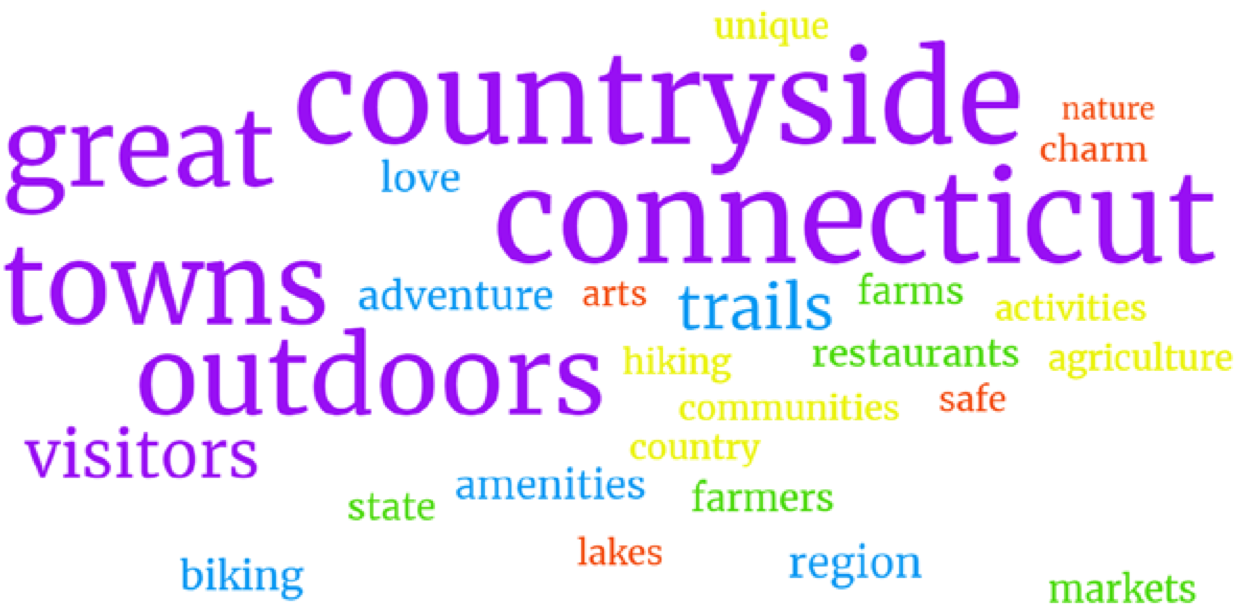
Answered: 722 Skipped: 0



	1	2	3	TOTAL	SCORE
	22.02% 159	33.38% 241	44.60% 322	722	1.77
	22.44% 162	38.37% 277	39.20% 283	722	1.83
	55.54% 401	28.25% 204	16.20% 117	722	2.39

COMMENTS

- 150 (20%)
- Word Cloud (frequency of mentions)



RECOMMENDATION

Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND

Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

PHASE 4:

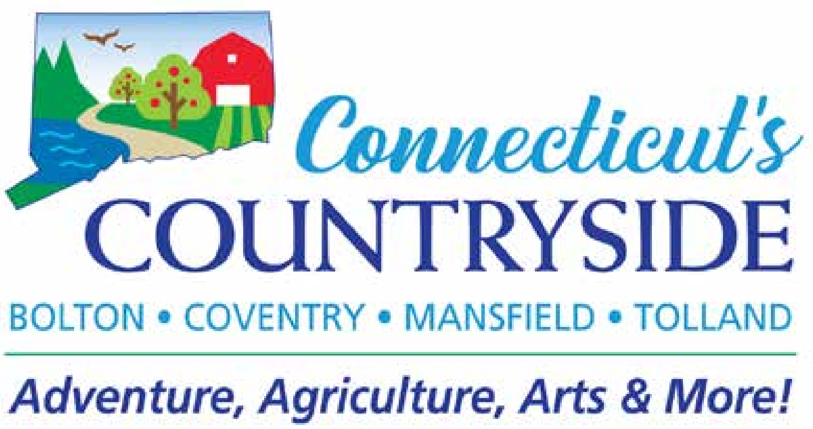
Branding Elements

- Produced Logo Artwork files and Brand Guide/Communications Toolkit

LOGO GUIDELINES

PRIMARY LOGO

The primary logo is the foundation for the Connecticut's Countryside visual identity. It is the strategic brand tool with the most power to be recognizable for the public.


Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

PRIMARY COLORS

Primary colors help consumers to quickly identify a brand. These are the core colors of the brand.

🟦	🟦
PMS 2736	**PMS 2925**
C100 M90 Y0 K2	C75 M18 Y0 K0
R30 G34 B170	R0 G156 B222
#1E22AA	# 009CDE

SECONDARY COLORS

Secondary colors highlight and compliment the primary colors.

🟩	🟩	🟫	🟨	🟥
PMS 347	**PMS 375**	**PMS 7567**	**PMS 7500**	**PMS 185**
C92 M0 Y97 K0	C40 M0 Y98 K0	C0 M39 Y66 K46	C0 M5 Y19 K11	C0 M100 Y89 K0
R0 G154 B68	R151 G215 B0	R137 G83 B47	R223 G209 B167	R228 G0 B43
#009A44	#97D700	#89532F	#DFD1A7	#E4002B

PRIMARY FONTS

Weiss Medium
Weiss Italic
Weiss Bold

Frutiger 45 Light
Frutiger 55 Roman
Frutiger 65 Bold

SECONDARY FONT

Austein Script

WINDOWS COMPATIBLE FONTS

To be used only when primary fonts are not available.

Palatino Regular
Palatino Italic
Palatino Bold

Calibri Light
Calibri Regular
Calibri Bold

LOGO GUIDELINES

PRIMARY LOGO – ONE COLOR

GRAYSCALE LOGO

This version most closely resembles the color logo and should be used for most black & white applications.

Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

BLACK LOGO

This version should only be used when the color or grayscale logo will not work.

Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

WHITE LOGO

When placing the logo on a dark colored background, the white (or knock-out) version should be used.

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BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

SECONDARY LOGO OPTIONS

The secondary logos should be used sparingly and when special circumstances apply.

LOGO WITH NO TAGLINE

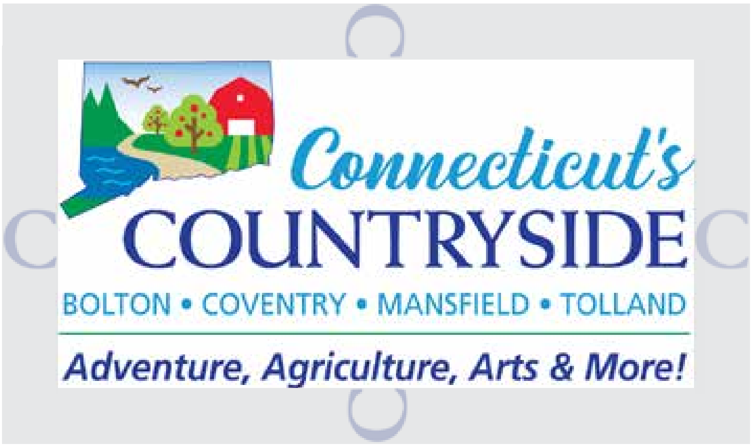
Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND

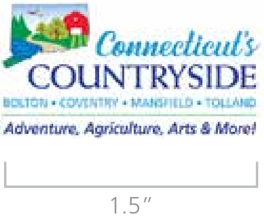
LOGO ICON ONLY

LOGO GUIDELINES

CLEAR SPACE

A space equal to or greater than the “C” in Countryside should be left around the logo in all applications.


Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!
C
C
C
C

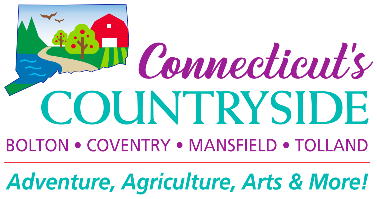

Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!
1.5”

MINIMUM SIZE

In order to ensure legibility, the logo should never be scaled to smaller than 1.5” across.

EXAMPLES OF WHAT NOT TO DO

Do not change logo colors


Connecticut's
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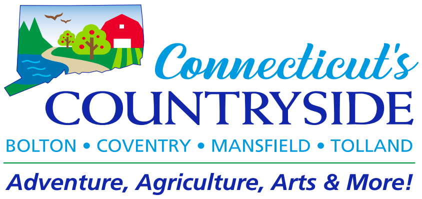
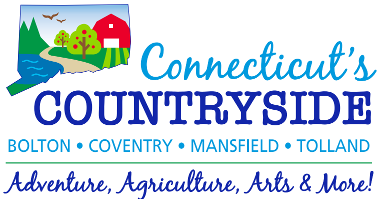
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

Do not stretch or squeeze logo


Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

Do not change logo fonts


Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
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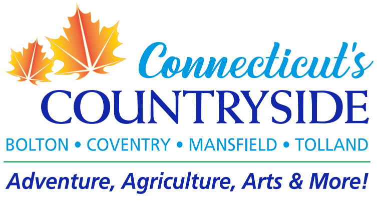
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

Do not replace icon


Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
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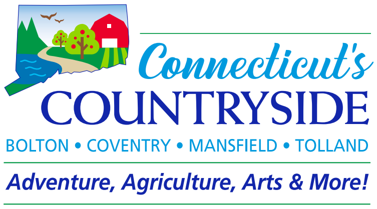
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

Do not add logo elements


Connecticut's
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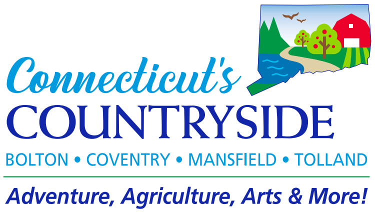
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

Do not rearrange logo elements


Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
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Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

PHASE 5:

Marketing Implementation Plan

MARKETING RECOMMENDATIONS

While the four towns region is embarking on a new branding and marketing plan, it will serve to complement the identities and supplement the marketing efforts of the individual towns. Town identities will remain and, in fact, be reinforced by the new regional branding campaign. So, there is no need to change existing Town logos, signage, marketing materials, etc. This regional plan also acknowledges that currently there is not a centralized staff department, person or budget assigned for regional marketing efforts. Therefore, we are recommending a phased-in approach to implement the new branding and marketing campaign, with the goal of positioning the four towns region as a great place to live, do business, work, learn, play, and visit.

Achieving this goal will largely depend on positioning the four towns region through the Connecticut's Countryside brand as attractive and appealing to visitors and businesses, as well as to the current resident populations. This means that the marketing campaign will eventually need to reach beyond the four towns' borders, and this will require additional investment over time.

The marketing recommendations below are prioritized with this suggested system:

✓ Already done or planning to do this now
! Short-Term Recommendation (should do in the next year)
? Long-Term Recommendation (should consider within the next two to five years)

Many of the recommendations have a "one-time" development cost, while others have recurring/ongoing costs. These will be more fully detailed in the budget recommendations section that follows.

RECOMMENDED MARKETING STRATEGIES

✓ Already done or planning to do this now

1. Define the Unique Selling Points ✓

Arguably the single most important step is to clearly define what makes your destination distinctive:

Distinctive Destination Assets & Attributes:

- Outdoor Recreation
- Agriculture & Agri-Tourism
- Culture & Entertainment
- Higher Education Institutions
- Small Businesses & Entrepreneurs

2. Define the Target Audience & Market ✓

The target audience identifies people who are likely to want to visit the destination and for what reasons. This will include several different audience segments, as each may have different interests and reasons for wanting to travel to the destination.

Primary Target Market & Audiences:

- Day visitors from inside and outside the region (focus on "car travelers" within a 50-mile/1-hour-drive radius)
- University students and their families

3. Brand the Destination ✓

The concept of branding includes the logo, graphic icons, color scheme, typography, tagline and associated terminology (i.e., the names of the four towns). Ultimately, branding is about being recognizable and standing out from others.

Connecticut's
COUNTRYSIDE
BOLTON • COVENTRY • MANSFIELD • TOLLAND
Adventure, Agriculture, Arts & More!

This branding should be used as consistently as possible (see the brand guide) in all marketing and promotional messaging, so that people become familiar with it.

The principle messaging can be extended, such as creating hashtags for people to use on social media.

4. Involve Stakeholders ✓

A significant component of destination marketing involves looking out for the interests of various stakeholders, in order to establish trust and facilitate engagement. The stakeholders should include officials from your towns, as well as attractions, restaurants, shopping venues, lodging and other service businesses.

Encourage these various parties to participate and support the destination marketing efforts. Get stakeholders to agree to use the Connecticut's Countryside branding elements, as well as to run their own marketing and promotional campaigns, in order to maximize visitor interest.

5. Create Initial Marketing Materials ✓

To effectively market the four towns region to prospective visitors, residents, students/families, business owners and others, a few key pieces of branded literature and other elements are needed to help equip "stakeholders and gatekeepers," including visitors centers, chambers of commerce, university admissions and human resources representatives, local realtors, local businesses, local attractions, regional tourism groups, etc. This content should be made available digitally (e.g. links and downloads on websites), and well as in printed form. These items include:

- Connecticut's Countryside "rack" brochure ✓ (included in deliverables of this project)
- Distribution of Connecticut's Countryside digital logo files for businesses to display on their websites and other marketing elements ✓ (included in deliverables of this project)
- Branded window decals, counter mats/floor mats, napkins/coasters, shopping bags, etc., for businesses to display **!**
- Expanded visitor and information guide **!**
- Booth banner/tablecloth/display for four towns' use when exhibiting at local events **!**

! Short-Term Recommendation (should do in the next year)

6. Initiate Branding of Public Facing Elements !

We are recommending placing the new branding on public-facing elements for two reasons.

First, to ensure that that the new branding will resonate with target audiences outside of the four towns, you need to start establishing the new brand inside the four towns. This will build awareness and understanding of the new brand and its purpose in positioning and promoting the region for consumer and business growth.

Second, the new branding needs to become established in the communities in order to create a sense of pride, place and purpose in context with the "visitor experience." From a consumer marketing perspective, the four towns need to mark the destination – especially for newcomers – "at the point of purchase." There are numerous public-facing elements that can effectively display the Connecticut's Countryside logo. Most of these can be accomplished at no- to low-cost. These items include:

- Town websites
- Town social media pages
- Town employee email signatures (as appropriate)
- Town publications, brochures, flyers, newsletters
- Town gateway and park signage
- Town street pole banners
- Branded apparel and promotional items (e.g. T-shirts, ballcaps, shopping bags, water bottles, etc.)

7. Create an Experiential Website !

Regardless of their reasons for visiting, the majority of people use the internet to research their destination before traveling. A destination website for Connecticut's Countryside is the ideal place to showcase unique selling points, communicate directly with your target audience and promote the destination through descriptive copy and engaging content, such as images, an events calendar, itineraries (e.g. hiking, biking, antiquing, farm stores/farmers markets, etc.), videos, virtual tours, an on-site blog and other "fresh content" that will encourage people to keep coming back to the website.

A website is essential for your online presence. It shows credibility and tells your story. Tourism and travel websites are dynamic and thrive on interactive communication. Your website needs to immerse each visitor by giving them glimpses of what they can experience at your destination.

The website design needs to stand out and grab attention. It should tell your brand story and deliver your tone of voice.

You can use the website to provide visitors with all of the information they need ahead of their trip, and to promote attractions, events, places to eat and drink, shop, stay and more. It is also important that the website is optimized for mobile. Users need to be able to perform the same tasks as comfortably on their mobile devices as they can on the desktop version of your website.

In addition to a website, developing a mobile app can be a good way to reach out to frequent travelers. Through an app, you can create a personalized experience for your visitors by sending them push notifications and reminders based on their interests, as well as their previous behaviors on the application.

8. Utilize Search Engine Optimization !

When people use search engines like Google to look for things related to your destination or features that your destination can offer them, you want to make sure your website is near the top of those search engine results pages. The best way to do this is to create a comprehensive search engine optimization strategy.

This involves researching keywords, creating content that targets those keywords, and using a range of other techniques to improve your placement. You can also use SEO principles to promote videos and images. An on-site blog can be beneficial here, too, as it will give you plenty of fresh content to optimize with strategic keyword usage.

If and when you decide to establish a specific centralized "office" or "welcome center" location for Connecticut's Countryside, a good place to start your SEO efforts is Google My Business. This is a free tool that enables you to control how a business shows up on Google Search and Google Maps. It specifically enables you to add your business name, contact details, location, hours, photos, etc. You can also monitor and respond to customer reviews, and see where and how people are searching for you

9. Utilize Data for Analytics !

Online, the website will allow you to use tools like Google Analytics to find out about your website visitors, who they are, where they came from and what their motivation was.

Offline, you can find out information about actual visitors, such as the average age, whether your destination appeals more to men or women, the areas/distance they traveled from, etc.

Once you have gathered sufficient data, you can analyze it to identify the best people to reach out to, the best ways to reach them and the best messages to push out to them.

Get to know your customers' needs through research. Focus groups, customer surveys, social media listening, keyword research, and customer journey mapping are cost efficient and can help you know your target audience better.

10. Develop Email Marketing !

Utilize the website to capture email addresses from visitors looking for more information and the latest weekly or monthly updates on seasonal events, promotions, etc. Additionally, collecting an email list of interested prospects is a way to build a virtual community for your brand. Travelers are naturally open to meeting new people and going through new experiences, so they're more likely to engage with other travelers and interact with event invitations, contests, polls, etc., that you can initiate.

To get started, MailChimp is a popular email marketing platform that is easy to use and offers a free plan, which allows you to send emails to your first 500 contacts up to five times per month (2,500 email messages sent per month). You can always upgrade to a more advanced plan based on the number of contacts on your mailing list and/or the frequency that you send out emails.

11. Develop Social Media Strategies !

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram serve as an ideal means to reach people and promote your destination. The destination marketing strategies here are almost endless, from simple promotional posts, images and video content – to live events, promotions, polls and other content that encourages viewer engagement.

People want to be immersed in and see themselves as part of the experience. If they can see it, they can plan it. Instagram especially is a strong visual platform, which makes it perfect for marketing a destination.

Additionally, most social media platforms offer paid marketing opportunities, such as advertisements or sponsored posts. These can boost the visibility of your social media marketing efforts and can be aimed at very specific demographics, meaning you can target people based on age, gender, location, interests and even their online browsing habits.

12. Develop Public Relations Strategies !

While creating content regarding news and events for the website, email and social media platforms, it is also important to reformat and distribute that content to news media for getting the word out broadly. You should maintain a news contact list of email addresses that consists of reporters, as well as others that help spread the word among their own organizations and contacts. We recommend that news releases be developed and deployed on at least a quarterly – if not monthly – basis.

Regular PR activities should include:

- News releases on major activities and events occurring in the four towns
- Media relations and interviews, including outreach to statewide, regional and national travel and tourism-related media
- Representation and participation in regional tourism and business development events and activities

13. Create Videos and Virtual Reality Marketing !

In online marketing, it's become a fact that videos achieve far better reach and engagement than still images. In the travel industry specifically, video content viewing is rampant. Online videos are viewed throughout the entire customer journey from awareness to purchase, mainly to make travel decisions. Leisure and business travelers use videos of all forms when looking for activities to do in a particular destination.

Video tells your brand story better than any other medium. You're engaging your audience with sights and sounds that convey an immersive message.

Both video marketing and virtual reality marketing can go a long way towards boosting your destination marketing efforts. Video content can be easily shared on your website and shared across social platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok, as well as through your e-newsletters. Video topics can promote local places of interest and feature local visitors and businesses speaking about the destination, their experiences and their offerings.

Virtual reality marketing goes a step further and provides ways for your target audience to actually experience aspects of your destination from the comfort of their own home. This could be a virtual tour of a local business, a virtual travel experience of a nearby trail, farm or arts & entertainment venue, or a 360-degree tour of an attraction or landmark.

? Long-Term Recommendation (should consider within the next two to five years)

14. Promote the Destination on Travel Websites ?

In addition to having your own destination website, it is important to be able to reach people who do not have existing awareness of your destination. Travel websites provide a perfect solution and this can include international travel websites, such as TripAdvisor, as well as local websites (CTVisit, The Last Green Valley, etc.) or websites aimed at specific demographics.

There are various ways you can use travel websites to promote your destination, including posting images, publishing stories, creating video content and even promoting virtual tours. You can also use travel websites to monitor reviews, respond to criticism and improve feedback over time.

15. Work With Influencers ?

In simple terms, influencers are people with an established following on platforms like Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook or their own blogs.

Their followers tend to be loyal and to trust the influencer's opinions more than they would trust an organization's. By partnering with influencers, you can promote your destination across different platforms, even to niche audiences, who are then significantly more likely to react positively to the message being promoted.

"Micro-influencers" usually have between 1,000 and 500,000 followers and specialize in niche categories, such as travel, food, fashion, action sports, etc. They reach niche and very targeted audiences. As such, they often have higher engagement, more loyal followers, and better conversions on their social channels than the macro-influencers do. Plus, they are more affordable. Micro-influencers are often tied to short-term objectives. This makes them the perfect medium to promote major events, limited-time discounts, and holiday/seasonal packages.

16. Develop Online Advertising Strategies ?

The information and data you have gathered about your visitors and your target audience can be used to inform your online advertising. Using this information, you can target search advertising to specific regions, pay for display advertising on the right platforms and promote content on third-party websites visited by your target audience.

In addition, re-marketing allows you to reach out to people who have previously engaged with your website or your social media channels. This gives you the ability to remind people of your destination, knowing that they have already previously shown interest, which can be great for encouraging them to commit to a visit.

17. Develop Offline Promotional Strategies ?

Once you know your target audience, what they are looking for and where they are coming from, you should also be able to identify when they are likely to travel. For instance, some places attract more visitors in the summer months, while others also attract people for winter activities and events. Some events and attractions might hold greater appeal at Christmas or another holiday. This information then makes it easier to devise a comprehensive offline promotional strategy.

Some of the offline methods you might use include billboard/transit advertising, TV advertising, radio advertising and advertising in newspapers and magazines. With the latter two examples, you could pay for advertisements and/or write feature stories (advertorials) about your destination, and target specific local and regional publications in areas where your target audience resides.

18. Create Experiential & Personalized Marketing Strategies ?

Most travelers are motivated by experiences, so it makes sense to market a destination this way. Instead of just listing attractions, you can show how people experience them. One way to do this is to feature user-generated content on your website, social media platforms and e-newsletters, so that people can share their own moments with your target audience.

When you achieve this, you turn your own visitors into ambassadors for your destination. Word-of-mouth promotion can be extremely successful, because it is considered more trustworthy than hearing from an organization with a clear motive. On top of this, virtual tours can be a great way to allow online users to envision their own experiences.

The suggestions below can initially be created as visitor "virtual itineraries/tours" on the website. At some point, those interests/experiences with high appeal might be developed as actual tours and visitors packages for purchase.

EXPERIENCE MORE!

Experience tourism is becoming the norm because consumers would rather spend their money on experiences and not on things. The emphasis now is on seeking out activities that appeal to niche personal interests rather than just checking must-see sites and monuments off the to-do list. For the majority of leisure travelers now, especially younger ones, it's all about the journey, not just the destination. Visitors want to connect with a place on a personal and emotional level.

Here are some trending types of experience tourism and relevant marketing ideas:

FOOD TOURISM

The key message for food tourism marketing is focusing on growing community awareness and pride in local food traditions. Visuals and aesthetics play a major role here. That's why video marketing and social media are some of the best marketing channels, along with educational content marketing.

- Tasting of local dishes and beverages
- Following regional product routes (wine tastings, brewery tours, coffee roasters, ice cream shops, etc.)
- Sharing meals with local people (farm-to-table events, communal dining, etc.)
- Participating in food events and festivals
- Visiting local markets
- Learning about the production of food by visiting farms and artisan producers
- Participating in cooking classes
- Visiting places that explain the history of local cuisine
- Culinary expeditions with chefs and local producers
- Taking a street food tour

ECO-TOURISM & RURAL TOURISM

The simplest way to explain the concept of eco-tourism is with two words: travelling responsibly. Simply put, eco-tourism is tourism that centers around awareness of the environment and the local community. As eco-tourists, the goal is to visit an area with the well-being of the local people and nature in mind.

Rural tourism focuses on actively participating in a rural lifestyle. It can be a variant of eco-tourism. Showcasing the rural life, art, culture, and heritage of rural locations thereby can benefit the local community economically and socially. This works well when many local producers and businesses are hospitable and eager to welcome and host visitors. Moreover, it enables interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience. These include:

- Agri-tourism: educational visits, meals, recreational activities and sale of farm products or handicrafts
- Farm tourism: seeking hands-on experiences at farm operations and attractions, as well as rental stays in farm accommodations
- Wildlife and Forest tourism: exploring the wilderness and natural beauty of the rural area, including interactions with wildlife and nature, such as photography, bird watching, hiking, boating, camping, etc.

ADVENTURE TOURISM

Adventure travel tends to be associated with high levels of activity by the participant, most of it outdoors. Adventure travelers expect to experience various levels of excitement and to be personally tested. Hard-adventure activities are risky in nature and, therefore, are often led by professional guides. These activities involve caving, mountain climbing, rock climbing, ice climbing, trekking and sky diving. Soft-adventure activities, on the other hand, are less dangerous. These include backpacking, bird watching, camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, kayaking, canoeing, paddle boarding, orienteering, snorkeling, skiing, snowboarding, sandboarding and surfing. This type of soft-adventure tourism also attracts multiple and cross-generations, such as families. Since it all thrives on adrenaline, you definitely want to give glimpses of that through your marketing communications. Video marketing and virtual tours are the best tools to use to attract adventure tourists.

ARTS & HERITAGE TOURISM

Towns with rich arts, cultural and historic assets are known to attract residents, visitors and new businesses. Many of the arts, cultural and entertainment assets are fulfilled by having attractions such as the Nathan Hale Homestead, the University of Connecticut and Eastern Connecticut State University in proximity to the region. Other local marketing strategies can include promoting a variety of arts, cultural and heritage types, including performances, architecture, public and fine arts. Here are some examples: house and garden tours, farmers markets, arts and crafts shows, antique shows, film festivals, town fairs, murals/street art, and local seasonal events and celebrations.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES & SPECIAL EVENTS

One key marketing strategy for smaller towns includes putting an emphasis on the family. Families look for towns like Bolton, Coventry, Mansfield and Tolland that have an abundance of parks, playgrounds, farms, hiking and biking trails, and rivers and lakes for swimming, fishing and boating. Family-friendly places and annual events in the four towns serve to provide activities and entertainment throughout the year. Marketing these elements will attract families interested in visiting, as well as those considering making a more permanent move.

MARKETING PLANNING & BUDGETING (NEXT STEPS)

DECIDING WHAT TO DO AND WHEN TO DO IT: EVALUATING AND PRIORITIZING MARKETING INVESTMENT BY FEASIBILITY

Here are some key questions to consider when evaluating marketing strategies:

- What are some of the specific assets and attributes of the four towns region that will position and leverage awareness of the Connecticut's Countryside brand?
- Is it realistic that we can deliver on the experience expectation that we create right now?
- Will it benefit current residents and how?
- Is it something that will attract visitors to the communities?
- Is it something that will benefit local business?
- Is it something that can attract new businesses to the communities?
- How much will it cost, and how and when will we see a return?

ANTICIPATED INVESTMENT

Please note that these are ballpark budget ranges for discussion purposes only. A major variable is hiring of a staff marketing person(s) and/or consulting firm(s) to take on the content development and project management of these strategies (i.e., the development portion of the total estimated costs).

Strategy	Development	Production	Total Cost Estimate	Timing
Branded Business Elements (window decals, counter mats/floor mats, napkins/coasters, shopping bags, etc.)	Logo design done	Printing	$2,000 – $3,000	Year 1
Visitor & Information Guide	Content development	Printing	$5,000 – $7,500	Year 1
Event Display Materials (booth banner, tablecloth, backwall display, etc.)	Logo design done	Printing	$500 – $750	Year 1
In-Town Branding Elements (gateway and park signage, pole banners, apparel/promotional items)	Logo design done	Printing and fabrication	$10,000 – $15,000	Year 1
Website	Content development	Website development, hosting, maintenance	$20,000 – $30,000	Year 1

Strategy	Development	Production	Total Cost Estimate	Timing
SEO	Content development	Website coding and content placement	$5,000 – $7,500	Year 1
Market Research (surveys, focus groups, intercept interviews, etc.)	Research planning	Research implementation	$5,000 – $7,500	Year 2 and ongoing each year
Email Marketing	Content development	Email deployment	$3,000 – $6,000	Year 2 and ongoing each year
Social Media	Content development	Content placement	$6,000 – $12,000	Year 2 and ongoing each year
Public Relations	Content development	Content placement	$6,000 – $12,000	Year 2 and ongoing each year
Videos	Content development	Video production	$6,000 – $12,000	Year 2 and ongoing each year
Advertising (digital, social, influencers, traditional)	Content development	Media planning and placement	$6,000 – $12,000	Year 2 and ongoing each year
Experiential Marketing (itinerary development, tour packages, etc.)	Content development	Content placement	$6,000 – $12,000	Year 2 and ongoing each year

Year 1 Marketing Budget Range: $42,500 – $63,750
Year 2 (and ongoing each year) Budget Range: $38,000 – $73,500

NEXT STEPS

Further development of a marketing action plan for Connecticut's Countryside will require your feedback on these recommended marketing strategies, along with some further discussion on resources, including personnel (staff and/or outsourced) and budget. With that information, the action plan can be refined to include specific recommendations for:

- Marketing and media options, outlets, mix and timing
- Appropriate reach, frequency and spending levels
- Response tracking and measurement
- Staff and/or consultant roles
- Additional marketing needs for specific initiatives

The additional planning process will lead to determining a marketing budget and work plan that best meets the needs and objectives of promoting the Connecticut's Countryside brand.