

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

January 17, 2017

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a Study Session at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 17th day of January, 2017, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray, and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Allison, Castleberry, Chappel, Clark, Heiple, Holman, Karjala

ABSENT: Councilmember Hickman and Mayor Miller

Item 1, being:

PRESENTATION FROM JASON SMITH, NORMAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COALITION, AND DAN SCHEMM, VISIT NORMAN, REGARDING A BRANDING STUDY FOR NORMAN, A PROJECT OF THE NORMAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COALITION, VISIT NORMAN, AND THE NORMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

Mr. Jason Smith, Execution Director of the Norman Economic Development Coalition (NEDC) said about ten years ago communities and organizations began focusing on how to attract and retain talented young individuals. The primary leader of that movement was Mr. Richard Florida who wrote the book Rise of the Creative Class, which many cities used as the foundation in developing their policies. The whole concept of the movement was “people first, jobs follow people.” Historically, the consensus among community planners and economic professionals has been to recruit the jobs that people will follow. Mr Florida felt that was true in some ways, but in other cases that was reversed when there were skill gaps in high wage, high skill jobs. He said companies were locating to areas they normally would not want to locate because they might not be able to find the available talent; however, the companies understood they had to be where the talented people were locating.

Mr. Smith said each year Area Development Magazine, a national site selections magazine, surveys corporate executives around the United States (U.S.) and over the last five to seven years, the availability of skilled labor consistently ranked in the top three site selection factors. Other site selection factors included highway access; quality of life; occupancy and construction costs; available buildings; labor costs; corporate tax rate; proximity to major markets; state and local incentives; and energy availability and costs. He said quality of life had never been a factor in any of the previous surveys, but now has moved to the top ten, which is why projects like Norman Forward are so important to provide amenities that will retain people in the community. Places that people think may not have issues attracting talent over the last decade have made extraordinary efforts to retain and attract people.

Mr. Smith said NEDC asked Visit Norman and the Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) to be part of a branding process for Norman because this process is very cyclical. In theory, if a place can attract visitors it can then attract residents and businesses to locate near where people want to live, those businesses hire workers, those workers have their quality of life improved which demands higher amenities, which attracts more visitors and the cycle continues.

Mr. Smith said as the three entities began coordinating selling points and what Norman’s story is, they found it to be a difficult process because they could not find anything tangible to tell an entrepreneur to start a company in Norman. They brought in experts, VI Branding, to help with the process. NEDC, Visit Norman, and the Chamber identified the process as a research process so it is not an ad campaign, a

logo, or a tag line. This is strictly research on what the community thinks about Norman, what business owners think about Norman, and what students think about Norman. They used three different variables in the branding process that included 1) is it a desirable position, 2) is it something that can be delivered (something genuine, believable, and effective), and 3) is it available or does it somehow differentiate Norman from the pack? While it is difficult to differentiate every community from each other, there are certain attributes in Norman that make it different from most other communities.

Mr. Dan Schemm, Visit Norman Director, said to develop the ideal brand position for Norman the three entities used a discovery process that included a Norman community survey; University of Oklahoma (OU) student survey; internal in-depth interviews (community stakeholders and business owners); external in-depth interviews (site selectors and entrepreneurs who were from Norman but chose to start their business elsewhere); and a competitive analysis on similar communities.

A Steering Committee was formed that included members from NEDC; Visit Norman; the Chamber; Downtowners Association; Campus Corner Association; Chamber Board; City of Norman; NEDC Board; Visit Norman Board; Norman Next; and OU.

Mr. Schemm said the purpose of the internal in-depth interviews (IDIs) was to find out business leaders and stakeholders' attitudes toward Norman, their priorities, what they think about the culture of Norman, and what Norman's authentic, true deliverable experience is. The IDIs took place in May, June, and July 2016, and 22 people were interviewed that consisted of 12 males and 10 females.

The purpose of the external IDIs was to try to understand what the Norman community wants, what would motivate them to choose Norman, what does Norman do well, and where can Norman improve? Eight people were interviewed consisting of one female and seven males.

The Norman Community Survey took place in August and September with the goals to solicit community feedback to involve the community in the process, to understand the community's current perception of Norman, and to uncover Norman's greatest assets. The survey was distributed via email, social media, [The Norman Transcript](#), and was facilitated by Survey Monkey. There were 390 responses that included 172 males, 205 females, and 11 who preferred not to answer. Based on that survey, OU is considered to be Norman's greatest asset and Norman was described as artsy/cultured, friendly/quaint, and diverse/progressive/liberal. When asked what the community would change about Norman the top responses included infrastructure/traffic/roads; City permitting/government; more walkability; and more diverse housing market.

The OU student survey took place in September with the goals of understanding current students' perceptions of Norman, ascertain barriers to living and working in Norman, and uncover Norman's greatest assets. There were 300 responses that consisted of grad students, seniors, and juniors. The survey was distributed through OU Career Services and facilitated by Evolve Research. The margin of error for this research is +/-5.62% at the 95% confidence level which means if the survey were repeated 100 times, 95 of those times the responses would fall within 5.62% of the current results. Predictably, given the research audience, Norman, as a brand, is associated with OU. Norman is viewed as a homey, quaint, and exciting college town with a fun atmosphere and good people. However, while these brand attributes are important to students, they do not necessarily translate well to the next state of their life, which is the metamorphosis into young professionals.

Mr. Schemm said while Norman may be an exciting place to live, students view the City as primarily a college town and associate Norman with education and student life, not as a place to live or work after graduation. He said only 3% of the students surveyed indicated they would definitely stay in Norman after graduating. He said student respondents see businesses and entertainment options in Norman as primarily catering to students. After graduation, students are driven to find a job and out-of-state students

want to return to their home state and in-state students will go wherever the market takes them in an effort to find employment. Norman is not viewed as a City that provides them with the necessary job opportunities. Although students indicate they are primarily focused on job opportunities they do not discount the importance of living in a likeable and affordable community. Being in a community they like with an affordable place to live top their importance scale.

Mr. Schemm said in asking students what events in Norman they have attended, 58% attended the Medieval Fair; 53% attended the Norman Music Festival; 24% attended the Norman Art Walk; 11% attended the May Fair Arts Festival; and 25% had not attended any events. Senior students are more likely to have attended the Norman Music Festival, Norman Art Walk, and juniors are more likely to attend the Medieval Fair. Students 24 years old or older are more likely to attend the May Fair Arts Festival than 21 to 23 year olds. Students who would recommend Norman as a place to live or work are more likely to have attended the Medieval Fair than those unlikely to recommend Norman.

Mr. Smith said, unfortunately, there is no definite in this research, but the Steering Committee feels very strongly that jobs have come to the forefront because of the downturn in the oil and gas industry. He said there has been less on-campus recruiting than in the past so people are thinking about it more. Also, out-of-state students are not thinking about jobs because they are going back to their home state and the ones thinking about jobs are the Oklahoma students who will live where they can find a job. He said if some perceptions of the community can be changed then in-roads will be made with out-of-state students. He said quality of life and affordable housing is very much a part of the decision making process as well.

Mr. Schemm said competitors must be reviewed to determine what brand positions are occupied in our targets' minds, as well as to identify remaining positions we can own. He said competitors reviewed consisted of Moore; Edmond; Oklahoma City; Tulsa; Boulder, Colorado; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Fayetteville, Arkansas; and Lawrence, Kansas.

From the data compiled in the research, four distinct attributes of the Norman brand were discovered: diverse, vibrant, inviting, and cultured. Mr. Smith said diverse is diversity in thought, diversity in income, and diversity in a number of different areas. He said diversity was a common theme in each survey. Most college communities are vibrant for a variety of reasons and are inviting for new people, mostly students, moving to the community every year and Norman is cultured because for a community of its size Norman has an enormous amount of cultural offerings. He said from these attributes Norman can develop the brand vision and the Steering Committee felt the opportunities in Norman allowed people to be engaged in whatever activities they wanted to be engaged in much quicker and much sooner than in other communities. He said brand vision for Norman is to provide the greatest opportunity for an enriched life.

Mr. Smith highlighted the brand story as follows:

- Norman is uniquely desirable among a population that is dynamic, active, and has high aspirations. Our difference attracts a common mindset. Everyone has dreams. But, while most people are more passive and hopeful about theirs, others pursue their dreams with energy and focus. That is the type of person Norman attracts.
- As a community, Norman embraces lofty ideals and supports an infrastructure that welcomes independent thought. Music and art, research and education, sports and recreation – all in an inviting and charming setting. We want you to get what you want from Norman. Because when one life is enriched, we are all better for it.
- When you become an active member of our community, you are a local. No matter where you come from or how long you have been here, you can give a little and receive a lot. It does not take too much for a good idea to gain traction here.
- Whatever you dream about, you can realize it in Norman.

Mr. Smith said the next steps include rolling out the newly developed brand position to key internal audiences. From there NEDC, Visit Norman, and the Chamber will begin a more public rollout via the 2017 Economic Summit and several public relations (PR) tactics. He said after they have successfully rolled out the new brand, messaging and marketing efforts will take place to reflect the new brand. This will require coordination with and participation from all entities who outwardly promote the Norman brand, including NEDC, the Chamber, the City of Norman, OU, and Visit Norman.

Mr. Smith said the idea there was no connectivity between students and young professionals was something the Norman Next group took on as a project and there will be an event in February called "Live or Play, Love Norman" that will consist of a number of food vendors, informational booths, live music, etc. All juniors, seniors, and grad students will be invited and provided information on where students live in Norman, what activities they engage in, where some of the jobs in the community are that they may not be aware of, etc. There will also be unofficial activities after the event for downtown to try to get students downtown to show them what activities take place in the downtown community at night.

Councilmember Clark asked how they are promoting the event on campus and Mr. Smith said he did not know, but could find out. Mr. Smith said if Council has any ideas regarding the event, Norman Next would be open to hearing those. He said eight businesses will be at the event to talk about available job opportunities and NEDC will discuss the incubator and starting a business in Norman.

Mr. Smith said as a collaboration effort, a booth can be set up at job fairs for promoting jobs in Norman. He said Norman businesses do not always participate in job fairs, but work directly with Career Services at OU; however, this alone does not tell students there are jobs available in Norman and what those jobs are. Councilmember Allison felt working together to create a Norman job fair booth was a great idea.

Councilmember Clark asked if Visit Norman has a booth at Howdy Week in the fall and Mr. Schemm said yes and Visit Norman created an app for students and parents to get to know Norman. Councilmember Clark said OU wants students to stay on-campus because freshmen are required to live on campus and new housing around OU is being designed to keep older student on-campus. She said because of that, Norman businesses need to make the extra effort of doing things on-campus to get information out to students.

Mr. Smith said NEDC will acquire a new, separate logo out of this process, which will be unveiled at their Economic Summit on February 9, 2017, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. He said if Council is interested in attending the summits, please let him know.

Councilmember Allison said college students are not the only ones that should receive the information being provided, high school students need to be targeted as well. No one talked to him about staying in Norman when he was in high school except OU who wanted him to attend college there. He said not all high school students will attend college, but some may attend a technical trade school and those students need to be retained in Norman as well since the Moore-Norman Vocation Technology Center is located in Norman. Mr. Smith said if students do not want to stay in Norman for college or a trade education, they should at least keep an open mind to coming back to Norman at some point.

Councilmember Castleberry asked if this study was funded by Visit Norman using hotel/motel tax and Mr. Smith said it was a jointly funded by Visit Norman, NEDC, and the Chamber.

Councilmember Castleberry said it is encouraging to have a brand that says Norman is a good place to live with lots of job opportunities. He said if Norman continues building on its quality of life, there will be a greater chance of students staying to work and live in Norman.

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Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Norman Branding, a Project of Norman Economic Development Coalition, Visit Norman, and Norman Chamber of Commerce

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The meeting adjourned at 6:14 p.m.

City Clerk

Mayor