LIVE. GROW. THRIVE. LAKEWOOD.
A REBRAND OF THE CITY OF LAKEWOOD

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COMA 499

Contents

Introduction

"What can we do to improve the City of Lakewood?" This is a question I was often asked as a member of the Lakewood City Youth Council. It was not an easy question to answer then nor is it now. At the time, I recently moved to Lakewood from California to start a new life and begin high school. To me Lakewood, especially the Towne Center and American Lake, was a place for shopping, eating and just hanging out with my friends after school. However, during my term as Youth Representative, I soon realized that not everyone had the same affinity for Lakewood as I did.

Five years later, Lakewood still has the same bad reputation. The city is viewed as a place that is uncared for and rife with crime. Even though the city has beautiful scenery, it is not viewed as a desirable place to live like Tacoma or Seattle by the community. As I finish up college, I continue to ask myself why this is the case and what can we do to improve the City of Lakewood?

Within the past four years alone, Lakewood has done a lot to improve itself and the community, yet, this often goes unnoticed or misinterpreted because of the ongoing repute. To change the community's reputation, we must first change the perception. My goal is to foster that transformation by providing a new, fresh brand and logo with recommendations that showcase the natural beauty of Lakewood. This new brand will inspire the community to rally behind an identity and move past its current reputation. It will be the visual proof the community needs to show that the city is turning over a new leaf, so they can live happily, grow economically and finally become a thriving city.

About Lakewood

The first step in a large-scale rebrand is to learn about the history and demographics of the brand in question. Lakewood's history is incredibly rich and begins in the early 1800s. It was initially called the Prairie due to its wide-open plains, rivers, and lakes. In its infancy, it was a place of commerce—whether that was fur, flour, or corn trade—because of its easy port access. By the late 1800s, drastic changes began to take place. Houses, roads, and estates were built on the lakes. It became a perfect paradise for upper-class living and activities. With this came the implementation of railways and new attractions to the city such as the Tacoma Country Golf Club. The famous Tacoma Speedway, located where Clover Park Technical College currently stands, was also built during this time. It was a "mile-long wooden track [that] circled the open prairie and drew racing greats, such as Barney Oldfield, Louis Chevrolet and Eddie Rickenbacker" (About Lakewood, 2014).

During World War I, the population began to increase with the influx of military. The vast, open land was excellent for landing huge aircrafts, and the ports were great for shipping. With the armed forces and community working in tandem, the Prairie began grow and thrive. About 75 years later, the citizens of the Prairie voted to incorporate it as a city. On February 28, 1996, the Prairie became the official city of Lakewood (About Lakewood, 2014).

In its present day, Lakewood is most known for the Lakewood Towne Center, its various lakes such as American Lake, and South Tacoma Way. As such, most of its attractions involve the town center or nature in some way. According to their website, it has 11 parks spanning more than 540 acres of land and five lakes that allow for fun activities like water skiing, swimming, rowing, and fishing. The city estimates that there are roughly 60,000 residents and 3,500 businesses. One of the surprising statistics included on the website is that the median age is 36.6

(About Lakewood, 2014). This means the population is relatively young. The website also claims

that Lakewood has been named one of the nation's "One Hundred Best Communities for Young

People" by America's Promise Alliance six years in a row (About Lakewood, 2014).

      While Lakewood has a lot of offer its community, its biggest hindrance is its reputation.

As previously mentioned, the city is viewed as a place that is uncared for and full of crime. On

review websites and databases, such as Niche, Area Vibes, and Best Places—where community

members can express their views—this is extremely evident. For example, one testimonial

recently posted on Niche by former resident in April stated, "The City government does nothing

(and doesn't seem to care) about the crime and homeless people wandering the streets…I won't

even go to the Lakewood Town Center anymore because of the people wandering the parking

lot…I moved out of Lakewood and would advise the same to anyone else who wants some peace

in their lives" (Niche, 2018). This opinion carries over to the other sites like Area Vibes where

Lakewood is rated a 57/100 for livability which is not ideal (AreaVibes, 2018). When one looks

at the most recent review of the city, one sees another resident who is disappointed and unhappy

with the lack of care in the city (Appendix II). Best Places gives Lakewood 2 out of 5 stars and

provides statistics on crime in Lakewood putting violent crime, on a scale from 1 (low crime) to

100, at 65 and property crime at 58 which is higher than Seattle-Tacoma Metropolitan area and

the national average (City-Data, 2018). Again, the first review seen is from a former resident

warning all not to move to Lakewood.

      These ratings and reviews demonstrate why Lakewood has a poor reputation and why

that reputation continues to spread. Additionally, these reviews are very detrimental to the city's

image because they are the first thing consumers see when trying to learn about the city.

Although Lakewood has this poor reputation, it still has a lot to offer from its intriguing history

to their newest endeavors of expanding the city to include a downtown Lakewood. This is the

side of Lakewood that needs to be presented in the brand redesign to change perceptions and,

hopefully, change its reputation.

Competitor Analysis / Case Study

Case Study

The second step in a large-scale rebrand is to analyze previous successes and neighboring

competitors. One of the most prominent and successful city rebrands was the city of Amsterdam.

In the early 2000s, Amsterdam noticed a decrease in the volume of tourist due to competition

with other popular destinations in Europe. As a result, they decided to rebrand into something

timeless and universal.

Figure 1 Final Logo

In September of 2004, Amsterdam released a new logo and identity along with the

slogan: "I AMsterdam"—which is a clever visual play on, "I am Amsterdam." The new brand

was an attempt to raise awareness and reidentify the city with its core values rather than its

prevailing reputation. It came equipped with all the parts of a marketing plan such as a mobile-

friendly website, social media accounts and even an app (Stamp, 2012).

What made the rebrand so successful was its ability to appeal to tourist as well as its

current population. With the combined power of tourists and citizens, the city was able to use

consumer-to-consumer marketing and spread their brand as far as possible. Moreover, the brand

slogan and logo are easily applicable to various mediums—the city created a sculpture of the

slogan, clothing apparel and more—making it easy for citizens or tourist to use or wear and

promote the brand. Because of the brand's immense success, the city saw an increase in tourism once again.

Local Competition

According to the Communications Manager for the City of Lakewood, Brynn Grimely, there are two cities considered to be local competition. The first city, when looking at business and economic expansion, is Tacoma. Tacoma is a large city—it merely attracts more residents and businesses. Additionally, it is seen as an industrial city brimming with economic opportunity and a great place to live for waterfront views.

Tacoma's website is exceptionally functional making it easier for the end-user to gain information quickly. It also includes a biweekly e-newsletter that users can sign up for to get updates on events and news. All their social media platforms are well maintained—often posting at least one day and receiving a fair amount of interaction. Throughout the city, you have reminders of where you are and what the city stands for. For example, the new statue that doubles as a playground, near the Tacoma Art Museum, is an excellent testament to the city's value of youth, arts, and culture.

However, Tacoma does some flaws. Its brand image lacks consistency in some regards. For example, the logo on the website is vastly different than the logo used on social media and some of the environmental designs like the posts that mark the city borders. It is possible that the website logo is an official city seal while the other is simply destination branding, but it is questionable as to why they wouldn't include their brand image on their official city website too.

Nevertheless, one could assume that this is a problem Tacoma has already recognized seeing as the city has announced a new resolution called City of Tacoma's Ten-Year Citywide Strategic Plan and Vision, Tacoma 2025. The plan includes detailed tactics for improving social

needs of citizens and improvements to infrastructure, economy, and government. In addition, the

city will be updating their brand image and their collateral. If this is successful, Tacoma will

surpass all local competition which could be very devasting to Lakewood.

The second city considered to be local competition is University Place. It is seen as

Lakewood's primary competition for obtaining residents. Assumedly, this is due to University

Place's reputation for being a location for upscale and affordable living. University Place has a

beautiful aesthetic with stunning views of the Puget Sound and natural beauty that industrial

cities such as Tacoma and Lakewood cannot achieve. The brand and its image are focused on

nature and beauty which is seen in their flower logo and website.

However, University Place has not done as much work to maintain its brand image. The

website is straightforward and adequate for transactional user interactions, but the site does not

include social media links—most likely because they do not use it. Through research, the only

social media platform being used was Facebook, however, the last post was created early

February. No other information about what they use to market themselves could be found. This

implies that University Place heavily relies on their reputation to promote themselves.

Brand Inventory

The next step in completing a large scale rebrand is to consider

where the brand can be found and how it is currently used. Currently, the

city logo is seen through the official documentation within the Lakewood

City Council and on some police cars. Lakewood does have a website,

use social media, and produce some print materials.

Figure 2 Current Logo

Overall, the website lacks functionality. It is difficult to ascertain whether the site was

intended for transactional users looking only for information or traditional users looking to

interact and learn more about the city. It is also not mobile friendly at all which can be a

deterrent for young adults who are trying to find information. Through the website, users can

find information about a mobile app called Lakewood311 that allows citizens to send service

requests, complaints and concerns, and compliments to the city council. Users can also read

about current news on the website's blog.

Users can also see icons linking them to the city's Vimeo, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter

and Instagram accounts on the website. However, some of these accounts are not frequently

maintained—especially the Vimeo account which has almost nothing on it. The most active

accounts are Facebook and Twitter which receive postings nearly every other day. Moreover, the

hashtag, "#IAmLakewood," that was created in 2015 is used on all their accounts and listed on

their website.

Lastly, there is a magazine that is sent out to the public every few months. However,

ways to receive the magazine or its pertinent information are not easily accessible through the

website. As someone who has lived in Lakewood for the past eight years, I have never received

this magazine nor has any of my acquaintances. It implies that it is only available for some

households rather than all who want it.

The Design

Putting it all together

In summation, there are a lot of factors that will need to be reinvented for a successful

rebrand such as the logo, website, environmental and print materials. With an understanding of

Lakewood's history and demographics, competitors and current brand inventory, it is clear what

the rebrand will look like.

Essentially, Lakewood is a product—"a product that is never finalized or completed but something that is continuously adapting and evolving." Before we can successfully rebrand the city, we "must consider all facets of what [our] city can offer" (Slavica Mitrovic, 2017). What does Lakewood have to offer that other neighboring cities do not? Its Lakes. Lakewood has more lakes than both their competitors. By homing in on this advantage, we can make their brand consistent with the state's brand but uniquely suited for the city.

Additionally, we must apply what we learned from successful rebrands. The brand needs to be something that can easily be replicated on multiple platforms to ensure longevity and distribution of the brand. It must also have the power to resonate with those in and out of the city. The new brand needs to incorporate nature, more specifically water and needs to be modern, clean and fresh to truly represent Lakewood's efforts to transform itself. Based on Grimely's feedback, we know that the website is not fulfilling its intended purpose. It makes it difficult for the user to gain information or see what the city looks like. Thus, a website redesign where it is easy to navigate, more interactive, and highlights the city's natural beauty is necessary.

Based on the Symbolic Interaction Theory of Communication, "human beings act towards things according to the meanings that these have for them" (Potts, 2015). Many citizens have negative emotions and perceptions of Lakewood. As a result, they continue to share their negative impressions of the city and create a snowball effect. However, by creating a fresh, modern brand centered around lakes and nature, we can help them associate new meanings and build new interactions with the city. These new interactions and perceptions will enable the city to take advantage of consumer-to-consumer marketing—thus, creating an original image for Lakewood through the citizen's eyes.

My Design

Initially, I believed the best way to fulfill this rebrand was to demolish the old brand and start fresh. I thought something bold and red centered around the Towne center would be striking and help Lakewood turn over a new leaf. However, I realized, after speaking with Grimely, that natural beauty and water was what they always wanted to be known for. Thus, I wanted to create a brand that stayed true to Lakewood's original identity and values but was updated and modernized.

In Appendix III, you can see that result of my research and analysis. The new brand incorporates a modified version of blue and green colors from the original brand with secondary colors cream and brown. Each color represents nature in some shape or form: Blue for water, green for leaves, and brown for wood. As such, one of the most important facets of this brand is always to incorporate an image of nature or Lakewood to highlight each color's correspondence with nature. The primary font chosen for the brand is Gill Sans. Gill Sans is an antique font developed in the 1920s. It is a sans serif with subtle hints of geometry in its structure that makes for high legibility and signage. With the font's history and modern aspect, it perfectly matches Lakewood's goals. The secondary front is Baskerville, an antique, serif font, chosen to contrast the primary font directly and make the primary font stand out.

The Logo

The original logo, without the exterior type, was decent enough. However, when the logo had the "City of Lakewood" type wrapped around it, it lost its legibility and appeal. Many publications of the logo are also pixelated which hinders the brand's image. Moreover, the

seen in Appendix IV, there is not only increase legibility, but it also focuses on the lakes.

Figure 4 Final Logo Design

Figure 3 Final Logo Design - Option 2

My vision was to embody the calming effects of water and give viewers a feel of relaxing lakeside or looking at out to the lake. However, I also wanted to provide an opportunity to include an area for subtext on the logo which can be seen above. The subtext above the logo can be changed from, "CITY OF" to read, "EST. 1996". This could be an easy and efficient way to highlight Lakewood's history. Due to the city's growth and popularity, I believe we can simplify and omit this part of the logo to make room the "Est. 1996" subtext.

Parts of the logo can also be separated or interchanged. Thus, allowing the logo to have a lot of flexibility when being applied to different mediums. In some cases, you might only see "Lakewood" or the lake or both together. For example, the "Lakewood" text without the lake, can be applied to apparel items such as shirts, grocery bags and stickers for a pure, clean finish.

The Website

As previously stated, the current website lacks functionality. According to Grimely, it is difficult to navigate and lacks photos of the community. An effective redesign of the website would make it easier for users to find the information they need, allow for some form of community interaction, and include visually stunning images of the city.

My redesign of the website has many features that follow suit. The first is the red strip at the top of the page which can be seen in Appendix V. This would allow for urgent news or warnings to be quickly displayed on the page. In the case where the power went out in April, this

feature coupled with twitter would be a great way to keep the city informed and up-to-date.

Regarding social media, the website has multiple access points where users can visit social

media or sign up for e-newsletters which would be another effective way to engage the

community and keep them updated on current news and events. The newsletter can also be an

opportunity to highlight local business or spotlight people within the community which would

make business and locals more likely to promote the newsletter and, thus, gain more traction

among the community.

      To fix the navigation issue, the new site also includes two separate navigations. The first,

being right under the logo allows, for essential, yet common headings such as "Events", "News"

and "About" for quick and easy access while the second is a grid located underneath the hero

images. This second navigation will enable users to look through each tab and quickly find a

page that matches what they are looking for.

      In addition to the pages Lakewood already has, there will be a new interactive page called

Visit Lakewood. Typically, this can be a separate website that highlights what people can find

when visiting here but for simplicity, it will be the same site. On this page, users can find

restaurants, hotels, businesses and other activities to do in the city. This page will be another

reason for local people to promote the site or another avenue for people to learn more about what

Lakewood has to offer.

      Lastly, the website will include quick access to upcoming events and a social media

scroller at the bottom of the page. The vision is to use both sections to gain more attendance at

events and incorporate more images of the city has while also encouraging locals to interact with

the site. For example, the social media scroller can include pictures from people who have used

the #IAmLakewood. Showcasing these images may encourage others to use the hashtag more

often and help Lakewood gain more images of the city without additional work.

These are features the other competitors do not have but successful rebrands do have.

Having a functional website to back up the city will help increase organization, number of user

visits, community perceptions, and overall engagement. By highlighting successful community

members or businesses—in addition to the entire redesign of the site—perceptions of

Lakewood's reputation will change. Locals will begin to believe that Lakewood genuinely cares

about community success.

Applying the Brand

Aside from the logo and the website, there are some other stipulations that go along with

the new brand. The first and arguably most important is always to try and use some sort of

imagery whenever possible. If there is a logo present, then there should be an image that goes

along with. The best possible way to change perceptions about the city is to show them how

different the city is.

The second requirement will help continually reinforce the idea of lakes and water. If the

logo cannot be paired with an image, then the logo should be paired with some form of a lake.

The lake can be represented by the lake used in the logo or by including a branded blue colored

strip below the logo. An example of this can be seen in the tank top mockup in Appendix VII. By

keeping the logo above the blue; it implies the lake is still there and allows the logo to be

versatile.

Thirdly, the introduction of a branded slogan can also help propel the brand. This slogan,

or motto, will allow the city to tell what the city's core values are visually. Currently, on the

Lamp Sign mockups, the slogan is, "Live. Grow. Thrive. Lakewood". I choose this slogan to

help Lakewood tell a story through visual and verbal cues. Also, I wanted to have a slogan that continued to utilize the idea of nature by playing on the word "grow." To me, the slogan represents what Lakewood wants: to have a community living and working together, to grow economically and to develop a thriving city.

Recommendations

The brand of a city at the core of things is the standard perceptions people have of that place. Regarding Lakewood, the city will need to incorporate a multitude of changes for impressions to rebrand. To do this Lakewood will need to change their image, invest in their infrastructure and tap into the youth.

Unlike Lakewood's competitors, Lakewood does not list its core values—if it is listed on the website, it was not findable. My first recommendation is for the city to evaluate what their core values are so it can be reflected in the brand and throughout the city. For example, if one of Lakewood's core values is Nature than the brand should continuously highlight images of nature within Lakewood. Moreover, it should provide activities, programs, and information on nature. No matter what the values are; each one reflects the city's brand image and reputation. Doing this will help the city be perceived as caring and consistent.

Prior to the rebrand being release, Lakewood should invest in its infrastructure. While I lack knowledge in this area, having sidewalks and lamp post around congested parts of the city is something I have always advocated for even when I was a member of the Youth Council. Although this is not an easy feat, having lamp posts will present another opportunity to promote their brand which can be seen in Appendix VI. For those driving through the city, this will remind them where they are and what Lakewood believes in similar to what is seen in Tacoma. However, if we dive deeper into the previous example of nature being a core value, then

Lakewood should invest in branded recycle bins throughout the city—especially at the lakes where trash accumulates. Conversely, if Lakewood values history, having signage throughout the city, or at each lake, that provides information and tells its history. Regardless of what is invested into, it needs to reinforce and align with the core values of the city. However, since the brand is focused on nature and lakes, I recommend investing in ways to protect the environment or keep the lakes clean such as recycle bins and branded reusable bag (Appendix VII). This will not only show that the city has lakes but that it also cares about the environment and its communities.

Lastly, I highly recommend increasing Lakewood's online presence. There are many ways to do this such as including a new, high-quality introduction video on the About page, Snapchat geo-filters throughout Lakewood, or developing a new hashtag that focuses on the new brand. However, the two most efficient ways to increase online presence is: first, making sure the website is mobile friendly. At my internship, I learned that younger users typically view sites on their phone and if the website is not mobile friendly then they log off and never return. Currently, the website is not mobile friendly, and yet they have an app. Instead of using the app, just make the site mobile-friendly and delete the app. Second, posting and interacting on social media more. Since the city's median age is so young, it is imperative that it reaches the target demographic. On some social media sites, specifically Instagram, continually interacting with other pages increases the chance your post will come up in other feeds. Essentially, interacting online with others will help the city engage with the public more, make the city stand out online, and prove the city values community.

Conclusion

In design, there are hardly ever wrong or right answers—there is only a problem and a potential solution. The problem Lakewood faces is years of poor perceptions and reputation.

Through analyzing Lakewood history, competitors, and current brand a solution arose. The

potential for Lakewood to create a new brand that establishes what they believe in.

    For this brand, the best course of action is to focus on what makes them unique: the many

lakes. Capitalizing on Lakewood's love of nature and natural beauty will demonstrate that the

city has more than meets the eye. Developing a new, mobile-friendly website will help the

community learn and engage with Lakewood more. Investing in the city's infrastructure will

ultimately reinforce what the city values community and, thus, change perceptions.

    With or without the rebrand, Lakewood still has a lot of work ahead of them to ensure it

is promoting itself to the best of its ability. Nevertheless, the city can begin with small steps. By

following each of the recommendations—finding their core values, investing in infrastructure

that aligns with those values, and increasing online media presence—Lakewood can become a

city that rivals Tacoma or even Seattle.

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Appendix

Appendix I – Current Logo & Website
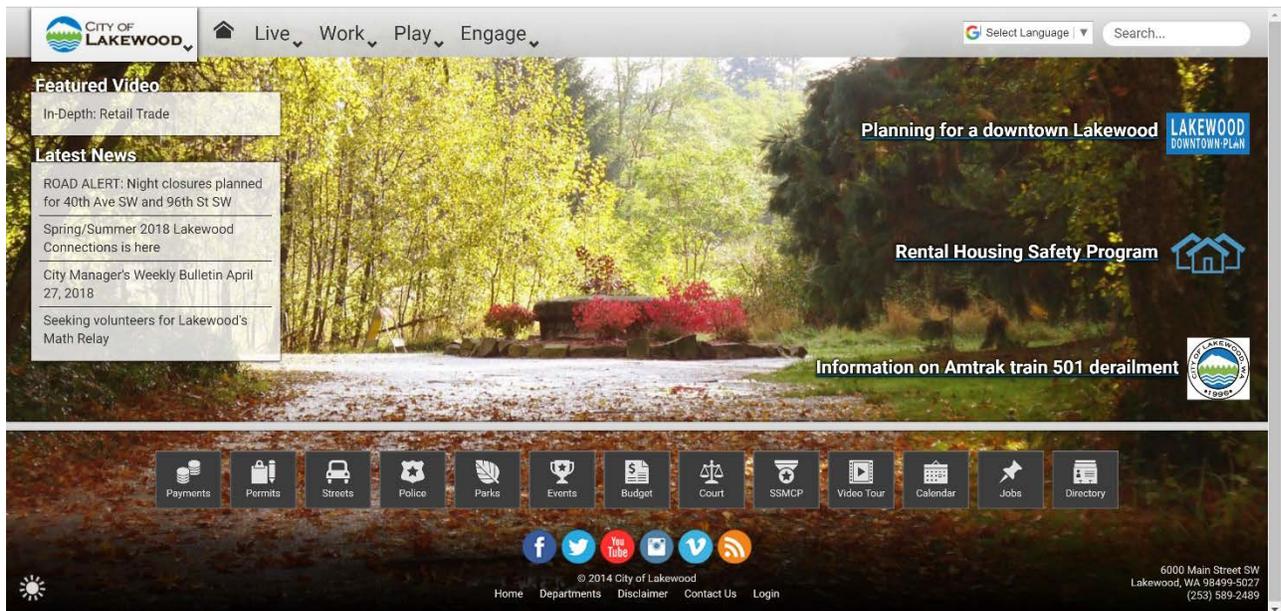
Appendix II – Online Testimonials

"The City government does nothing (and doesn't seem to care) about the crime and homeless people wandering the streets. I see a lot of beautification projects going on in Lakewood but nothing being done about crime and homelessness. The beautification will not matter when you have a high crime rate and homeless people wandering about stealing from the local stores and panhandling out side of them. I won't even go to the Lakewood Town Center anymore because of the people wandering the parking lots trying to take what I just purchased. I have spoken to the police on numerous occasions and they have a complacent attitude about it. They say they really can't do anything so the answer is what? Just live with it? Not me. I moved out of Lakewood and would advise the same to anyone else who wants some peace in their lives. While I know crime happens everywhere, at least get into a City that makes a point of caring about solving crime instead of just accepting it as the norm."

 - Posted by a former resident on April 27, 2018, Niche.com

"As a life time resident of Lakewood I must say I am sorely disappointed in this City. The newer City Hall building is nice but look behind it where their are junkies and trash. That's what you find all over the City now. Junkies, panhandlers at every store, teens running around trashing property, and when I have called to report activity of this kind I get a rude snotty response. Obviously, no one cares in this City what goes on. Traffic is horrible and getting worse, people are stealing the stores bare.....I just don't see how any business can continue without some kind of change in City Government. This used to be a nice area but not anymore. Avoid at all costs."

- Posted by Lucky Linda on March 30, 2018, AreaVibes.com

Appendix III – Final Logo & Brand
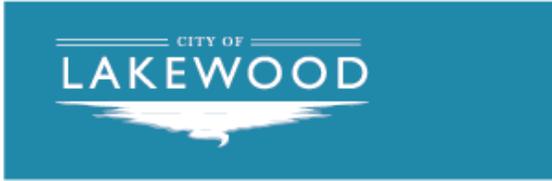
Appendix IV – Logo Mock Ups with Secondary Logo Option

Appendix V – Website Layout & Mock Up
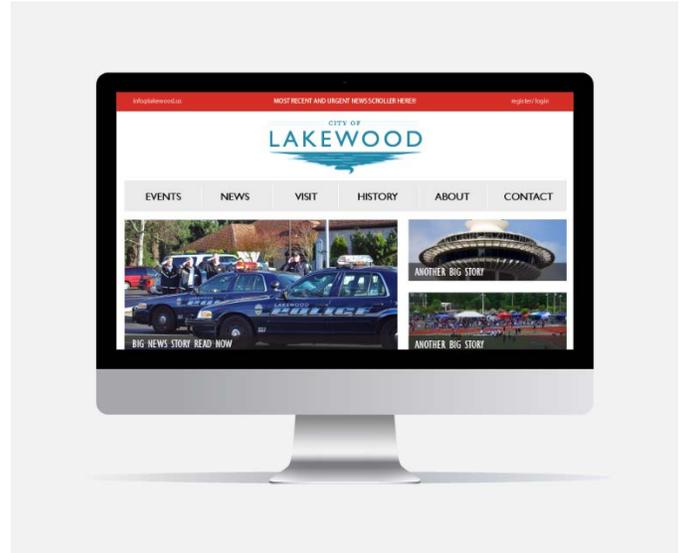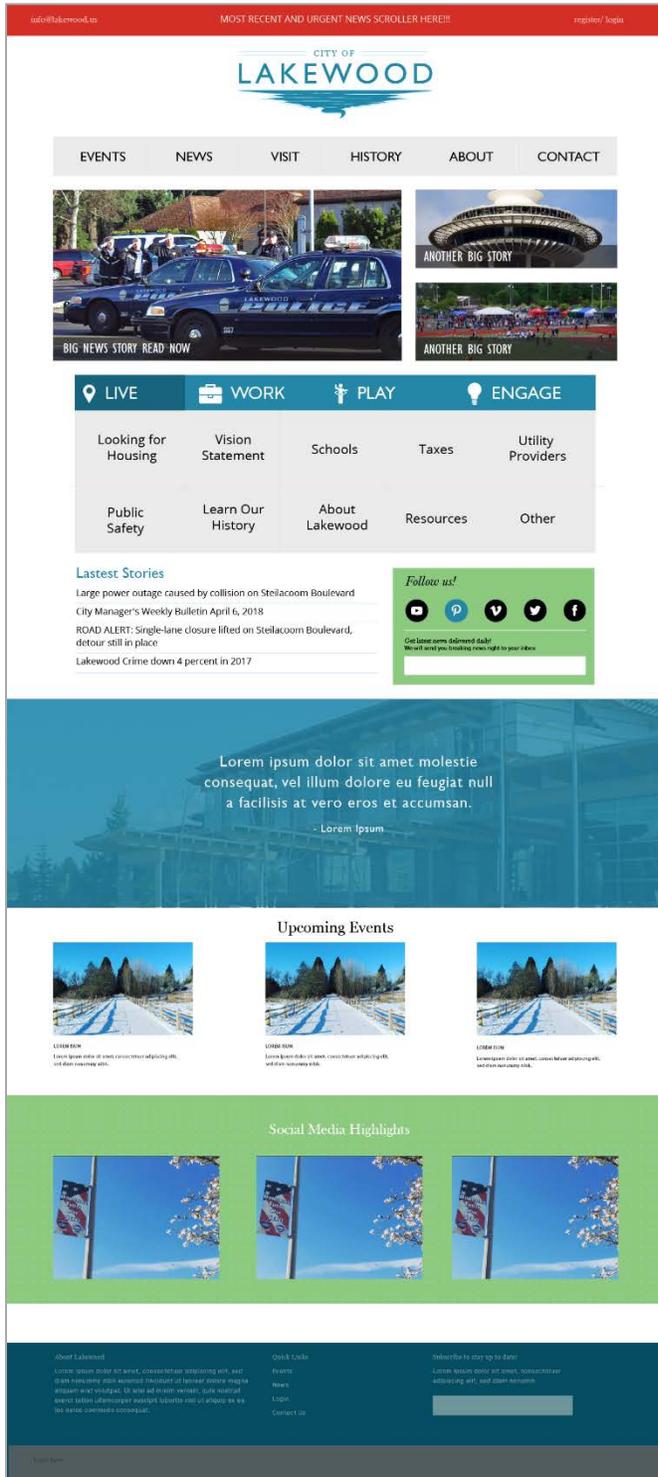
Appendix VI – Lamp Banner Mock Up: Live, Grow, Thrive. Lakewood

Appendix VII – Supplementary Mock Ups