

LAGRANGE COUNTY TOGETHER

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR OUR COMMUNITIES
OUR VOICE.
OUR VISION.
OUR FUTURE!

SPECIAL VOLUME: COMMUNITY BRANDING

Technical Analysis Memo | Comprehensive Plan
for the Communities of LaGrange County

DRAFT | DECEMBER 2021



SPECIAL VOLUME
COMMUNITY BRANDING

TECHNICAL ANALYSIS MEMO | COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
FOR THE COMMUNITIES OF LAGRANGE COUNTY

DECEMBER 2021

The following report provides an initial analysis and introduction to Community Branding. This report includes both a technical review of existing community brands, overview of the purpose and focus of branding, and benchmark examples from communities across the country. This is intended as a foundation for future discussions regarding a countywide brand for LaGrange County. For questions on this report, please contact the project manager for LaGrange County Together, Logan Stang, planner with planning NEXT, at logan@planning-next.com.

Contents

1. OVERVIEW.....	3
1.1 WHAT IS COMMUNITY BRANDING?	3
1.2 WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?	3
2. EXISTING BRANDING EFFORTS	4
2.1 COMMUNITIES.....	4
2.2 BRANDING CONSIDERATIONS.....	7
3. BENCHMARK EXAMPLES	8
3.1 ASHTABULA COUNTY, OHIO.....	9
3.2 IOWA CITY, IOWA.....	12
3.3 FAYETTEVILLE AND CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA	14
3.4 ALLEGHANY COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA	16
3.5 COLUMBUS, INDIANA	19

1. OVERVIEW

The following section introduces the purpose of community branding, provides a definition for branding, and highlights the importance of community branding to a collection of communities. Existing county brands are identified to provide a baseline for future discussions. Through thoughtful and strategic planning this section can be used as a guide to build a great brand for the county and its communities.

1.1 WHAT IS COMMUNITY BRANDING?

Community branding is the practice of creating a name, message, and visual identity that distinctively identifies a community. The community brand is how people describe the place to others, tells the story of local residents and workers, and allows a community to showcase the most valuable or unique assets. A highly regarded brand could be the most valuable asset for sharing the story of the county and its distinct communities. It defines a clear direction for messaging and wayfinding while building a sense of community pride in what makes each community unique. LaGrange County is a collection of several communities, each with a rich history that is worth sharing with residents, workers, and visitors.

1.2 WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A brand embodies the story of a community and provides a guide in taking a region to the next level, conveying a message around the identity of the area. Branding tells a story before people visit, move, or work in the area. Logos and taglines allow communities to establish their unique visual identities that set them apart from others. These can be incorporated into wayfinding signs highlighting local businesses, parks, or attractions and can establish icons for special districts, areas, or destinations. Narratives and stories from local residents provide a deeper insight into the type of community and the quality of life. These become key messages for local organizations, businesses, and governments to use in their communication and marketing efforts. It also ensures that all the communities in the county are sharing a consistent message about the type and quality of place.

Pursuing this type of process would allow for the entire community to join together, defining the type of place that is LaGrange County and its communities. It would seek to create a clear message about the county that support the uniqueness, charm, and character of each distinct place. Marketing material would be developed including logos, taglines, letterhead, stock images, and other similar elements that visually define the county's brand. Local residents could be interviewed to share their experiences about living and working in the county, whether they're a long-time resident or new business owner. These features all have an essential role in defining the community and establishing a clear understanding of what makes LaGrange County different within the region, state, and country.

2. EXISTING BRANDING EFFORTS

This section reviews the existing branding efforts within LaGrange County. An introduction to each community is provided along with assets unique to the location within the county. This is intended as a foundation for future branding discussions for the communities of LaGrange County to consider.

2.1 COMMUNITIES

LaGrange County has numerous towns with unique identities. Overall, the branding should reflect each town's value to share the story and overall collaboration between the county's places. The following descriptions were developed by the Convention and Visitors Bureau to define each community in LaGrange County.

2.1.1 LaGrange

Introduction: The county seat is the centrally located town of LaGrange, which celebrated its 175th Birthday in June of 2011. The historic red brick county courthouse, built in 1878-79, dominates the main street of the county's largest community. The courthouse has recently undergone a complete restoration, and the historic building is still the center of the county government. The town offers many countywide celebrations including the LaGrange County 4-H fair in the late summer, and corn school, which is the October Street fair, which has been celebrating our autumn harvest for over 90 years. The 4-H fairgrounds, located on the northeast corner of town, is also the home of our annual Steam and Gas Engine Show.¹

Community Assets:

- Seat for the County and County Government
- County fairgrounds
- Heron Creek Golf Club
- Splash Park
- Steam and Gas Engine Show
- Crossroads of the county (SR-9 and US-20)

Existing Brand Example:



Figure 1: Town of LaGrange Logo

¹ LaGrange County Convention & Visitors Bureau | Tourism - LaGrange

2.1.2 Shpshewana

Introduction: This quaint town in the western part of the county is quickly becoming a capital of tourism in northeast Indiana. Shpshewana is known for its large flea market where visitors can find everything from antique treasures to fresh fruit and produce. Charming Bed & Breakfast Inns, Country Inns and Craft Shops, and a wide variety of restaurants offering home-style cooking have blossomed in this small town. The countryside near Shpshewana offers visitors a look at the simple lifestyle of the Amish people. Horse and buggy transportation, used by our Amish neighbors, is a common sight in and around Shpshewana. The town has an annual Mayfest celebration, many quilt auctions, and a Christmas festival with many activities for both residents and tourists.²

Community Assets:

- A Shpshewana Christmas (November-December)
- Ice festival & Chili Cookoff (3rd Weekend in January)
- Pajama Day Sales (1st Saturday in February)
- Mayfest (1st weekend in May)
- Shpshewana Majestic
- Shpshewana Quilt Festival (Mid- June)
- Shpshewana Antique Festival (Early August)
- Fall Crafters Fair (Early October)
- Various Flea Market Special Events

Existing Brand Examples:



Figure 2: Town of Shpshewana Logo

2.3.3 Topeka

Introduction: A quiet, slow-paced atmosphere is part of the daily life in Topeka, a community located in the southwestern part of LaGrange County. Amish farmsteads and small home-based businesses dot the countryside.³

Community Assets:

- Annual 4th of July Celebration
- Topeka Livestock Auction

² LaGrange County Convention & Visitors Bureau | Tourism - LaGrange

³ LaGrange County Convention & Visitors Bureau | Tourism - LaGrange

- One of the Largest sales of registered Belgian and Percheron horses in the United States.

Existing Brand Examples:



Figure 3: Town of Topeka Logo

2.1.4 Howe

Introduction: Howe is rich and fertile with many beautiful lakes. Also winding its way through the town is the Pigeon River. An 18-hole golf course is also located in Howe, just a few miles northeast of Howe at Cedar Lake.⁴

Community Assets:

- Twin Lake Communities
- Great Commission University
- Cedar Lake Gold Course
- Northern entrance to the County (SR-9 and first community from the Indiana Toll Road)
- Proximity to Pigeon River Fish and Wildlife Area

2.1.5 Wolcottville

Introduction: The many lakes in this area make it a popular recreation spot in the summer months. The businesses in Wolcottville cater to the lake visitors during the summer months and offer a wide variety of antique shops. Many camping areas, parks and lakes are within a ten-minute drive of this community.⁵

Community Assets:

- Winter Snowmobile festival
- Annual 4th of July Celebration
- Surrounding lake communities (Adams, Atwood, Dallas, Oliver, Westler, Witmer, and others)
- Southern entrance to the county (SR-9)

2.1.6 Rural Crossroads

Introduction: Communities that value their quaintness and natural resources. These four non-incorporated communities are located in eastern LaGrange County, are the center of actives for many nearby lakes. Mongo is located in the heart of the Pigeon River Fish and Wildlife Preserve and offers visitors scenic woodland beauty and peacefulness. The Pigeon River flows through the heart of the

⁴ LaGrange County Convention & Visitors Bureau | Tourism - LaGrange

⁵ LaGrange County Convention & Visitors Bureau | Tourism - LaGrange

preserve and has many public access sites. The depth of the water makes it an ideal river for fishing and canoeing.⁶ The Rural Crossroads can establish an identity unique to the area.

Community Assets:

- Recreational activities (fishing, camping swimming, canoeing)
- Access to rivers and waterways
- Trading Post Outfitters

2.2 BRANDING CONSIDERATIONS

Each community has attractions or features that are unique and provide a sense of place within LaGrange County. A branding process would seek to identify these elements to share a story about how the communities influence and support each other. The following outlines some key considerations for the county when determining or defining a potential branding effort.

Collaboration from all Communities

The branding process should include discussions with each community to understand how residents, business owners, and elected officials describe their community. This would reveal features that would help develop and share the story, including potential connections to tourism attractions or destinations. This effort also builds on previous countywide discussions to work together towards investments that benefit all places, whether incorporated towns or rural communities.

Inventory of Community Assets

Alongside the discussions with each community, a comprehensive inventory of county destinations, attractions, and unique areas should be compiled through the process. This inventory will provide additional details on how these community assets define characteristics of each town or rural community. Some amenities could represent the identity for the area such as lake communities and their connection to waterways while others represent one or many opportunities available to residents and workers. Additionally, this inventory would assist with future tourism initiatives to connect amenities and attractions within the county, providing marketing opportunities for each place that leverage one another.

Vision for the County

Understanding the future of the county is a critical element towards defining the message and identity. Some communities use their vision as the focus, sharing how the community is promoting growth within the county and region. A few benchmark examples outlined in the next section leveraged their vision as the key message for attracting residents and workers. Defining a united vision for LaGrange County will help guide how communities invest in their services, amenities, and attractions. The branding effort should further connect each community with the future outcome, revealing how each place whether incorporated or rural has a presence within the county. LaGrange County Together will build upon previous planning work to establish that unified vision that can guide future branding efforts.

⁶ LaGrange County Convention & Visitors Bureau | Tourism - LaGrange

3. BENCHMARK EXAMPLES

The following section outlines benchmark examples of branding initiatives from around the country. Each example gives insight on the work of the communities to highlight their distinctive characteristics and establish unified branding. An overview of the community or collection of communities is provided along with branding details such as costs, brand examples, and other similar elements.

The following benchmark examples are included in this section:

- Ashtabula County, Ohio
- Iowa City, Iowa
- Fayetteville and Cumberland County, North Carolina
- Alleghany County, North Carolina
- Columbus, Indiana

3.1 Ashtabula County, Ohio⁷

Population: 97,241 residents

Land Size: 702 square miles

Communities: Ashtabula, Conneaut, Geneva, Andover, Geneva on the Lake, Jefferson, North Kingsville, Orwell, Roaming Shores, Rock Creek

Overview: Ashtabula County, Ohio, is designated as the state’s premium wine country. Located in Northeast Ohio Ashtabula County has an array of natural beauty including the Lake Erie shoreline. Four of Ohio’s 15 wild and scenic rivers, two state parks, and an abundant agricultural scene including a bustling grape-growing region. This is coupled with attractions like Geneva-on-the-Lake, Ohio’s oldest summer resort and Pymatuning Lake, home to thousands of campsites around a 26-square-mile lake. Ashtabula needed a logo that both stood out and remained unforgettable. The branded “A” symbolizes the beginning, the inception, the first when you think of Ashtabula think of a brand-new start whether it be business, tourism or living. Whatever the need is Ashtabula will answer the call. Their Bureau of Visitors prides itself by storytelling authentic experiences of those who live, work, and play in Ashtabula. “Come for the wine, stay for the recreation. Northeast Ohio will surprise and delight you! Authentic, Affordable, Ashtabula County.”

Funding: Not Available

Brand Examples:



Figure 4: Community Logo Icons

⁷ About | Ashtabula County Visitors Bureau (visitashtabulacounty.com)



Figure 5: Letterhead



Figure 6: Business Card



Figure 7: Wayfinding



Figure 8: County Flag



Figure 9: Website Home Page

3.2 Iowa City, Iowa

Population (City): 75,130 residents

Johnson County: 151,140 residents

Land Size: 614 square miles

Communities: Iowa City, North Liberty, Coralville, Johnson County

Overview: This charming college town sits along the Iowa River. The city is the focal point for art, culture, education, and recreation. Downtown is a thriving hub for entertainment with its various bars, restaurants, boutique shops and unique/historical neighborhoods. Think Iowa City first appeared in 1983 as the city's new effort. The community is known as America's first United National Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Creative writing is synonymous with Iowa City. For nearly a century, Iowa's writer's workshop has been teaching the world to write at a collegiate level and the University of Iowa. In 2008 it was only fitting that Iowa City became the world's third community inducted in this distinguished organization. The rebranding consultant Cubiccreative outlined the following guidelines to create a brand that integrates the past and future.

Branding Guidelines: ⁸ Brand guidelines were created by the consultant team to establish a clear understanding of the process and effort underway. The following includes key sections from the guidelines.

The Goal

Attract overnight visitors who would appreciate Iowa City's special blend of collegiate energy, progressive thought, and Midwestern values.

The Solution

In Iowa City, curiosity is cultivated, and thoughtfulness is a way of life. Cubiccreative wanted the work to not only reflect that, but also promote it. From the naming structure to the variable logo, distinctive brand identity system, and provocative advertising, and the firm did just that.

Tourism is one of the top industries in Iowa, supporting thousands of jobs and generating millions in tax revenues. Tourism related jobs account for \$66 million in earnings for the county.

Mission

Think Iowa City advances the economic vitality and quality of life for residents and visitors as Iowa's premier destination.

Funding: Not Available

⁸[Think Iowa City Case Study | Belo + Company \(beloandcompany.com\)](#)

Brand Examples:



Figure 10: Iowa City Logo

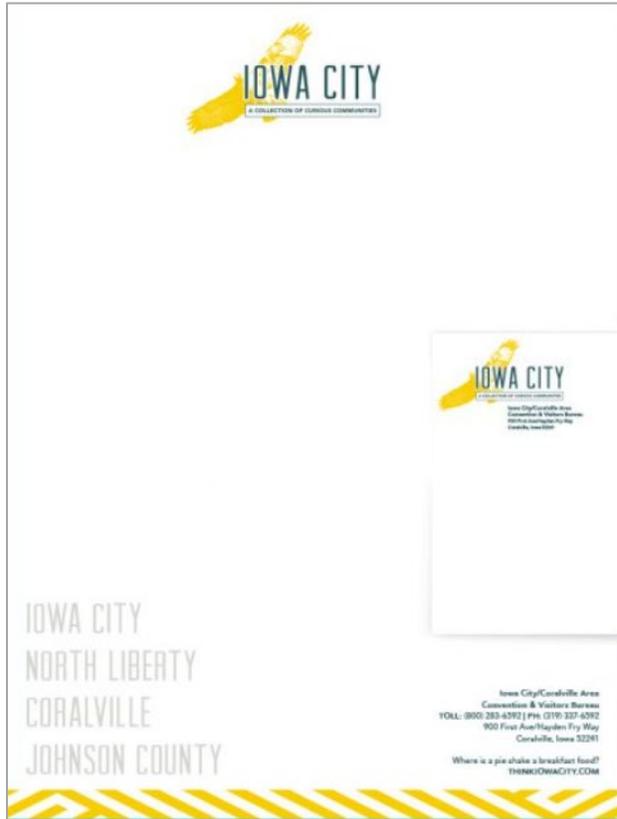


Figure 11: Letterhead



3.3 Fayetteville & Cumberland County, North Carolina⁹

City Population: 211,657 residents

County Population: 335,509 residents

Land Area: 652 square miles

Overview: The City of Fayetteville and Cumberland County jointly rebranded themselves as “Can Do Carolina” which reflects collaboration and commitment to regionalism. This also helps to promote both Fayetteville and Cumberland County as an ideal place to live and work. The slogan shows the potential of the community it serves as being a place that Can Do anything. The message conveys who they are and who they want to be. With help from their consultant NorthStar the two-year branding development helped elevate this region to international status. The following guidelines show the multiple concepts behind the campaign.

Elevator Speech:¹⁰ The “elevator speech” is a short introduction to the communities, highlighting the key messages of the branding effort.

“Fayetteville & Cumberland County are *Can Do Carolina*, where readiness, service and generosity support people and organizations in the pursuit of their goals and dreams.

The Background:

Fayetteville and Cumberland County are *Can Do Carolina*, a community with a central location in both the Carolinas and the East Coast, that is home to over three hundred thousand people and includes Fort Bragg—the largest U.S. military installation in the world.

The Pitch:

Many in our community are deeply rooted in the local tradition of good things done through hard work, determination, service and generosity. Others from across the country and the world have joined this tradition, and together we are building the next great region of the Carolina.

We count on our military connection, engaged citizens, diverse economy, excellent arts scene, and three outstanding area colleges – to help use move towards that future, with a thriving downtown, start-of-the-art baseball stadium and new development throughout the county, there’s no end to what we can do.”

Funding: \$75,000 (included joint partnership for rebranding over a two-year period)

⁹ [Fayetteville and Cumberland County | We are Can Do Carolina](#)

¹⁰ [637424245350830000 \(fayettevillenc.gov\)](https://www.fayettevillenc.gov/637424245350830000)

Brand Examples:



Figure 13: Community / Organization Logos



Figure 14: Community Document



Figure 15: Downtown Fayetteville Logo

3.4 Alleghany County, North Carolina¹¹

Population: 11,137 residents

Land Area: 235 square miles

Communities: Sparta

Townships: Cherry Lane, Cranberry, Gap Civil, Glade Creek, Piney Creek, Prathers Creek, Whitehead

Overview: Alleghany County, North Carolina, is in the Blue Ridge Mountains Region. This county needed a logo that moved the county into the future while preserving its community qualities and natural beauty. Destination by Design led this important conversation for the county in 2017.

Destination by Design (DbD) crafted a comprehensive brand strategy for Alleghany County, helping to unify the county’s messaging and outward image, while simultaneously designing a new streetscape for the Town of Sparta, the county seat. Whether it’s the charm of downtown Sparta, the pristine mountain farmland, or the natural beauty of the Blue Ridge Parkway or New River, Alleghany County has plenty of priceless assets to behold. In an effort to help reverse a recent economic downturn, DbD developed a unifying outward image and a comprehensive brand strategy for the county.

Funding: \$126,500 (comprehensive effort) and \$55,000 (specific promotional materials)

Brand Examples:



Figure 17: Logo Icons

¹¹ [Alleghany County - Destination by Design \(dbdplanning.com\)](http://dbdplanning.com)

ALLEGHANY
COUNTY PA

**MORE FARMS
THAN FAST FOOD.**

Authentically ALLEGHANY

From generation to generation, Jonathan and Deborah have a family tradition of farming the same land that Jonathan's grandfather did. Their mission and their work is to bring all you'd expect from a farm to the table in a way that's not just good for you, but also good for the planet. They're committed to raising their animals with the care and respect to do the right thing.

“We’re focused on raising ethically and sustainably sourced food for our local community, but we also make sure to have a merry time with visitors from near and far.”

AuthenticallyAlleghany.com

ALLEGHANY
COUNTY PA

**WE HAVE FOLK ART.
NOT SOUVENIRS.**

Authentically ALLEGHANY

From all the folk art in Allegheny County, there's a common thread that binds all pottery makers in the Allegheny area. It's not just the clay, but the love and passion that goes into every piece. It's the quiet nature of the pottery studio that makes us feel truly at home.

“With a momentum for arts and culture that is certain to surprise, the neighborliness of Sports and the quiet nature of Allegheny County makes us feel truly at home.”

AuthenticallyAlleghany.com

ALLEGHANY
COUNTY PA

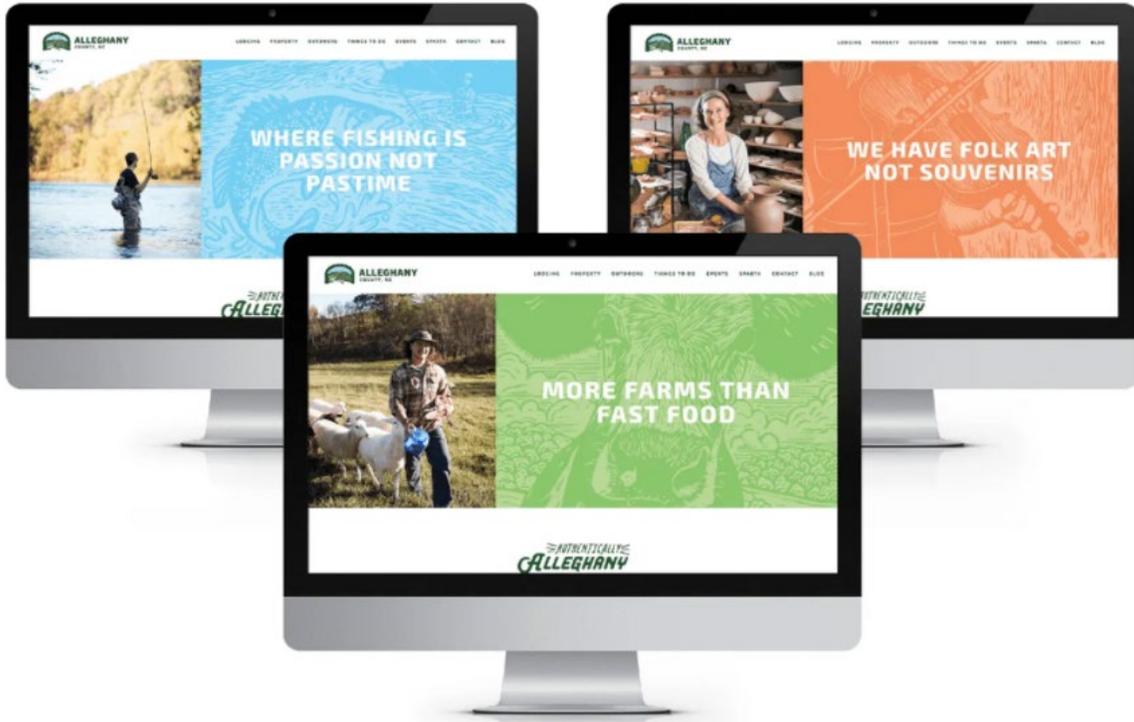
**WHERE FISHING IS A PASSION.
NOT A PASTIME.**

Authentically ALLEGHANY

From the quiet nature of the river to the excitement of the catch, fishing is a passion that is deeply ingrained in the Allegheny County community. It's the quiet nature of the river that makes us feel truly at home.

“The New River gives a sense of serenity and peace only magnified by the true beauty presented along its banks.”

AuthenticallyAlleghany.com





3.5 Columbus, Indiana¹²

Population: 48,046 residents

Land Area: 27.5 square miles

Communities: Columbus

Overview: Columbus, Indiana, is more than meets the eye. Located in Bartholomew County, the city boasts hundreds of acres of parkland and is ranked number one by the National Recreation and Parks Association for a small city. Also, Columbus is ranked sixth in the U.S. for its architectural significance behind Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Boston, and Washington D.C. North Star developed the concept Unexpected. Unforgettable. This logo highlight's the endless opportunities and resources the community has to offer. After Paul Rand's 1974 book Columbus Indiana: A Look at Architecture showcased the Dancing C's Paul, gave Columbus permission to adopt it for branding.¹³ However, in 2017 leadership propelled the city into the future with a goal to develop consistent graphics that show connections in a unique way for each neighborhood.

Funding: Not Available

Brand Examples:



Figure 22: Community Logos

¹² [Columbus, Indiana Case Study | North Star Place Branding \(northstarideas.com\)](http://northstarideas.com)

¹³ [Thirst | Columbus Community Branding \(3st.com\)](http://3st.com)

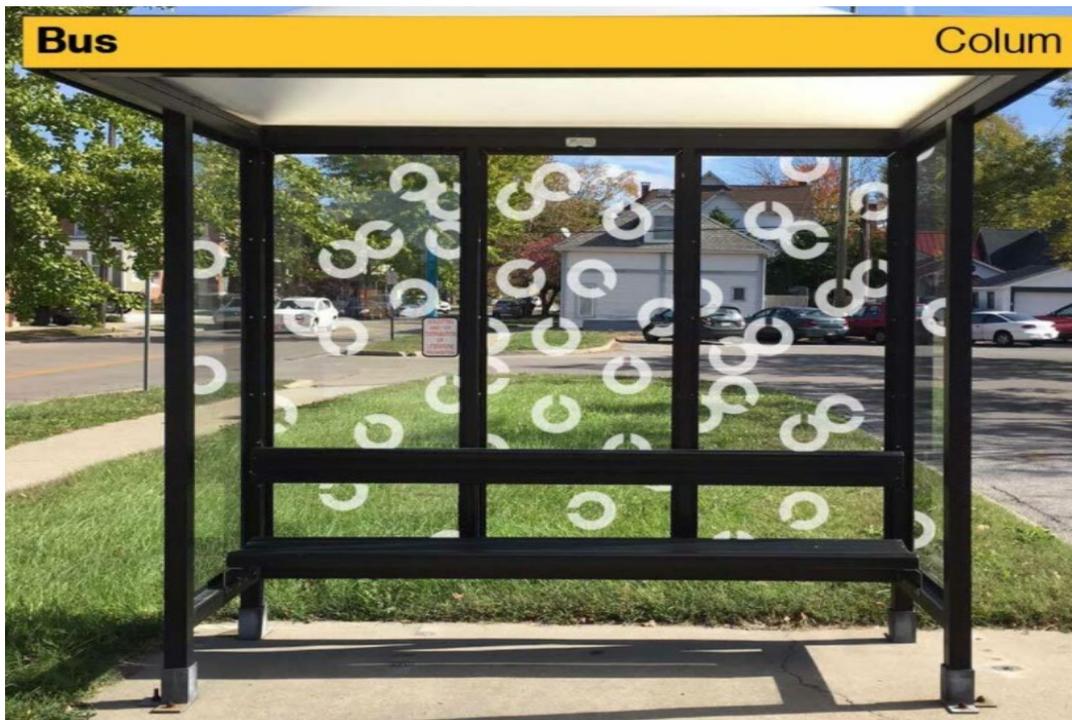
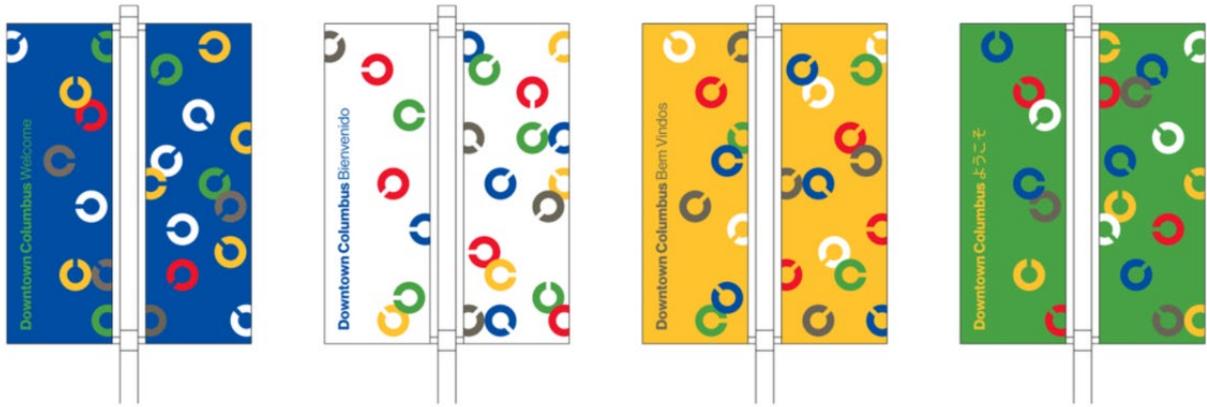


Figure 24: Bus Shelter Signs

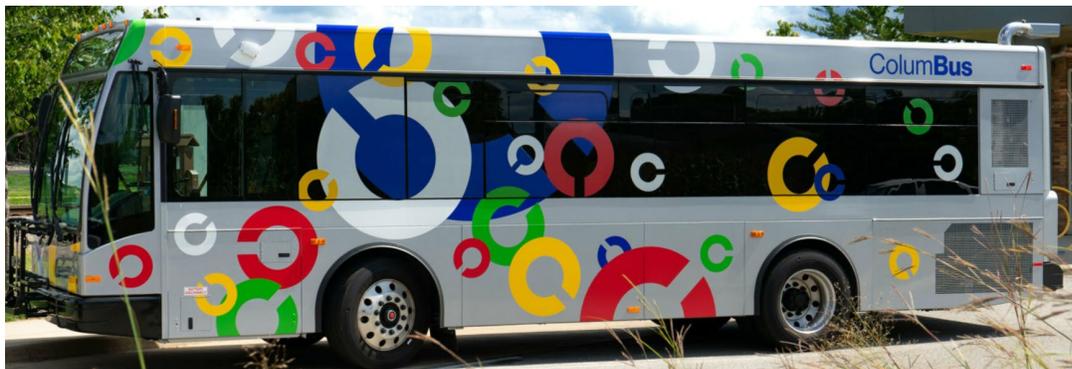


Figure 25: Bus Wraps