



Natchitoches HDDC Branding Project Research and Branding Platform

Natchitoches HDDC Branding Project

Natchitoches is the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase. While deeply entrenched in its proud heritage, Natchitoches focuses on future growth and economic development.

Currently, Natchitoches does not have a consistent brand to reflect the community today as a beautiful, tourism-based center. We seek to define those things that make Natchitoches, Natchitoches, to help show the local community, and those coming to our community what we have to offer.

The branding process began with Discovery Research. We have taken this research and moved to Define a Branding Platform.

Research Overview

A branding survey was completed by more than 300 participants - Unaided Responses to questionnaires, for residents and visitors.

Questions included requests for information regarding perceptions of Natchitoches, iconic representations and landmarks that define the area, audiences, and opportunities.

Additionally, we held seven, in-depth interviews with community stakeholders, in addition to a listening session attended by members of the community. Additional information was gathered from local tourism personnel as well as tourism peers from other areas.

- Mayor Lee Posey
- President Chris Maggio at NSU
- Cynthia Sutton, President/CEO at CRNHA
- Parish President Rick Nowlin
- Tony Davis, Natchitoches Economic Development
- Dr. Steve Horton, Executive Director of LSMSA
- Warren Reuther, Natchitoches Grand Hotel
- Additional discussions with Natchitoches Marketing Committee.
- Local, hotel personnel, tourism frontline staff
- Interviews with tourism peers

DISCOVER: Main Research Findings – Key Attributes

Initial Perceptions

Christmas, Christmas Festival
Front Street/Downtown
History, Historic
Northwestern
Cane River
Beauty (Slightly more visitors noted than residents)
Food (3x more visitors noted than residents)
Quaint (9x more visitors noted than residents)
Meat Pie (Slightly more visitors noted than residents)
Steel Magnolias (2x more visitors noted than residents)
Friendly (3x more visitors noted than residents)
Brick/Cobblestone Streets (2x more visitors noted than residents)
Family
Oldest Settlement (5x more visitors noted than residents)
Plantations (2x more residents noted than visitors)
Homes (5x more visitors noted than visitors)

Top Landmarks/Icons

Front Street /Historic District
Cane River
Christmas, Lights
Homes (3x more visitors noted than residents)
Fleur de lis (2x more residents noted than visitors)
Brick, Cobblestone Streets
Steel Magnolias
NSU (2x more residents noted than visitors)
Meat Pies
Plantations
Melrose Plantation
Churches
Kaffie-Frederick

Perceived Audiences

Older people, retirees – (2x residents than visitors)
Families – (2x residents than visitors)
History Buff – (2x more visitors noted than residents - #1 with visitors)
Christmas-Fest Enthusiasts
Students/Parents of Students
Couples
Shopper
Someone who wants to relax
Foodie
Women

DEFINE – Branding Platform defined from research

Purpose

Provide a warm welcome to visitors and potential businesses, and a wealth of things to do, to enlighten, enthrall and embrace them, to return, tell others and potentially become a part of the vibrant landscape of the Natchitoches community.

Audience Composite

Our visitors are independent, with an appreciation of history and a bit of pioneer spirit, looking for charming surroundings, southern hospitality, and unique celebrations of life, such as festivals and food. They enjoy beautiful surroundings, whimsy, quaint main streets, and are not afraid to go exploring.

Target

Natchitoches is for the historically-minded, who seek a cultural getaway that combines the best elements of relaxation, discovery and adventure.

Brand Setting

Central Louisiana, just off I-49

Brand Promise:

Natchitoches, Louisiana's oldest settlement, will surprise with unexpected experiences and celebrations of life while providing a vibrant mix of historical sites and new attractions.

Brand Story:

Natchitoches embodies the spirit of southern hospitality beginning with its brick-lined main street along the Cane River. In the bed and breakfast capital of Louisiana you can rest assured that time will seem to stand still as you rock on a front porch, cool drink in hand. History whispers its gentle call through the branches of majestic oaks and noble pecan orchards. Like our younger cousin, New Orleans, we often greet you from wrought iron balconies. The stories are significant and told through 32 historical sites, ranging from plantation tours and byway drives to a leisurely carriage ride and fort visits. Adventure is also sure to be found in Natchitoches. You can cast a line, hike a trail in the Kisatchie Forest or paddle your way through Cane River, and as the sun dips behind our pine-covered hills, you'll feel this is a Louisiana experience like no other. You would also be hard pressed to find a more picturesque college campus, and the students of NSU are quick to greet a visitor with a smile and maybe a tip or two on how to experience Natchitoches like a local. For many our name brings to mind meat pies and Christmas lights but we are so much more. We are building and thriving, engaging with our citizens to create new experiences for them and those who come to visit (and want to stay).

Brand Attributes to Deliver on the Promise:

- Historic - 32 Historic sites on Cane River NHA, Main Street Homes, Plantations
- New Riverfront Development on a river that is timeless
- Main Street shops, including Louisiana's oldest general store
- New Kayaking, hiking and other eco-tourism adventures in an area as old as the hills

- Christmas Festival, arts festivals, historic reenactments
- Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame
- Northwestern State University, arts, research, development
- Louisiana School for Math, Science & the Arts
- Forestry, Port, Manufacturing

Competitive Advantages (Items that differentiate us from surrounding areas)

Main Street

History – Oldest Permanent Settlement, 1714

Creole Culture – this story is not widely told and could bring in new audiences

Cane River

Christmas Fest

Arts and discovery Northwestern State University brings to the table

Who Is The Competition?

According to Visitors, Alexandria, Monroe and Ruston are not competitors

New Orleans, Natchez, Shreveport, Texas where visitors might go instead of Natchitoches

Opportunities

Improvements – In order to attract additional business and an additional visitor base, we need to focus on the things that make Natchitoches different than our competitors – a willingness to embrace our progressive side while not losing sight of our history and heritage.

Diverse Things to Do – By far the number one request

Lodging, especially downtown

More shops & restaurants

Parking

Location – not much can be done about that, but we can potentially add signage and possibly a visitor center/kiosk at I-49. to draw in visitors who do stop off I-49. [Can we put a video loop on the French Market TV?]

Traffic/Transportation

Crime

Roads

Cost

Suggestions

Add trolley

Expand events, shops to Second Street, further back

Diversify the types of things to do, shops, dining, nightlife, for young people

Hang hat on more than Christmas

Add water fun, paddle boats, cruise, dinner cruise

Add crafters area, brewery, winery