



## Staff Report

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### Honorable Mayor and Members of the Hermosa Beach City Council Study Session of February 7, 2018

#### **VISUAL IDENTITY AND BRAND FOR THE CITY OF HERMOSA BEACH** (City Manager Sergio Gonzalez)

##### **Council Input Requested:**

Provided below are four categories in which staff are seeking input and general direction from the City Council on how to proceed with updating branding, signage, and graphics to create a consistent visual identity for the City.

1. **Scale of changes** - What scale of changes, if any, would you like to see related to our existing seal/logos?
  - simple updates to give consistency in brand
  - refresh to represent current trends/graphic styles while bringing elements of existing seal and/or logo into new design
  - overhaul of logo and/or seal
  - creation of coordinated but unique logos or styles for different departments, programs, or areas of town
2. **Graphic design support** - What kind of graphic design support should staff seek?
  - expand existing design contract from PCH/Aviation work
  - new request for proposals process
  - a call for artist concepts/selection of an artist to be paid for additional design work
  - staff led design development
3. **Community engagement** - what methods or approaches would you like to see the City use to engage the community in this process?
  - Working group or committee?
  - Community feedback (in person and online) on proposed brand elements (colors, slogan, typography, style, complexity, etc)
  - Civic pride art exhibit/panel discussions/chamber discussion?
4. **Work products/outcomes** - how do you want this work to be used? How would you rank the following components in terms of priority?
  - Style guide for overall city graphics (website, official documents, email signatures, flyers and outreach, social media) including any coordinated logos for departments or initiatives
  - Policy/Code Development on proper use of City logo/seal
  - Gateway Signage (entryways to the city, monuments)
  - Facility Signage (parks, parking lots, public facilities)
  - Directional Signage (street signs, directional/arrow signs, parking signs/markers)

- Informational Signage (pole-mounted/marquee sign, banners)

Additional context on the need for updates, the history of the City seals and logos, and the work that has been completed in recent years, is provided below.

## **Purpose/Need for Update**

The City of Hermosa Beach will soon undertake several efforts and initiatives that rely upon the graphics and branding of the City as the basis of design for the work products. Some of these initiatives include an overhaul of the City website to comply with accessibility laws and improve mobile viewing of the site, upgrading or installing new gateway signage and corridor enhancements, and updating signage at civic facilities and parks. Additionally, in the current era of visual overload and wide access to graphic design tools, it is important for the City to establish and provide consistent standards to distinguish official city communications and to protect our visual identity from modification or use/misuse by both internally and externally.

In recent years, graphic efforts have focused on updating signage and graphics along Pacific Coast Highway through the work of the PCH/Aviation Improvement Committee. This group was formed in 2010 and had worked with staff and consultants to develop the Conceptual Design and Master Plan for the PCH-Aviation Corridor Beautification Project (see **Attachment 1**). As part of the conceptual plan development, the PCH/Aviation committee engaged a graphic designer to develop proposed designs for signage along the corridor and extending throughout the city. This conceptual plan was approved by City Council in May 2014, though it should be noted that Council's 'vote to approve' in no way committed future funds or held the City to a particular design/strategy moving forward. The action simply paved the way for staff to proceed with the crucial next steps of applying for funding opportunities related to design and implementation phases.

In 2015 and 2016 the PCH/Aviation Committee worked with the graphic designer to refine and further detail signage concepts. These proposed signage designs were a topic of discussion during City Council Strategic Planning efforts in 2016, and refined slightly based on that feedback in late 2016 and early 2017 (see **Attachment 2**). In 2017 there was mixed community impressions of the proposed concepts and concern that they deviated a fair amount from the elements that highlight Hermosa Beach culture and identity. It was also recognized that any new street or gateway signage should be developed through a full city-wide public process so as not to create separate or bifurcated signage/identity for different parts of town.

With that in mind, this memo provides information about the City's current branding (and some history of past efforts), the components and work products of a branding/signage/logo strategy, and the different types of signage that is relevant in Hermosa Beach. The memo also identifies the questions in which staff is seeking direction from Council on improving consistency of the City's brand.

**It should be noted that not making any changes to the City's logo, seal, or other signage is also an option.**

The goal however, is to create a unified set of images, graphics, and visual style to represent the City of Hermosa Beach consistently as an organization and as a community. Having a discussion about these elements provides Council with an opportunity to determine what, if any, changes should be made to create a consistent visual identity for the City prior to staff undertaking projects or initiatives that rely on that design style.

## **Branding and Logo Basics**

Organizations and agencies often develop branding and style guides to articulate the graphic standards and

visual elements to be used when creating materials to represent the organization. Elements typically include:

- color palette
- typography/fonts
- iconography and photography
- formatting style
- a logo to bring the elements together
- a slogan or tagline

A successful branding strategy includes more than just creating a logo/style. A consistent visual identity that depicts the values of the community has the ability to: generate greater recognition across communication platforms, add an additional layer of credibility and professionalism as an organization, increase the effectiveness of marketing/promotion for economic development/event sponsorship purposes, and elevate the sense of civic pride among the community.

In the case of a government organization or agency, it is common to have a City seal, to denote official city organization materials and communications, and a logo, to represent or highlight the larger community. The City seal is often presented on letterhead, business cards, and to certify official documents like resolutions or proclamations, while the logo may be used for signage around the city, sponsorship of events/programs, and general marketing of the city.

### **History/Evolution of Hermosa Logo and Seal**

The City of Hermosa Beach currently has both a logo and a seal, but does not have an officially adopted set of fonts or color palette to consistently distinguish the City.

The current City seal was designed by Mr. and Mrs. John T. Hales and adopted by the City Council on May 5, 1964. The new seal was developed through a community competition in conjunction with the dedication of City Hall in 1965. A description of the elements of the seal are provided in **Attachment 3**.

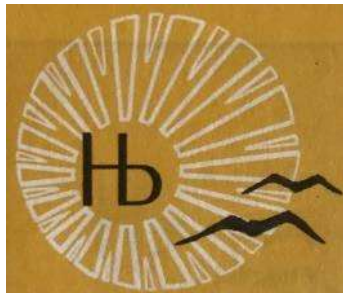
The current City “logo” was developed by city staff in 1968 and has -with some variation - been used on City gateway signs and street signs. The logo built off of the seal with the Hb lettering, and was designed to represent the Vetter Windmill (or a sunburst) with a pair of seagulls. Prior to 1964, Hermosa Beach had a logo/seal that was adopted in 1923 and depicted the waves of the beach and the building previously located at the pier head and included the previous City slogan - the Aristocrat of the California Beaches.

There are also several modified, spinoff, or special use logos presented below that have been used by the City of Hermosa Beach over the years. To celebrate the centennial of Hermosa Beach, a new seal and logo were developed in 2006. The seal was designed by former Public Works Director Rick Morgan and graphic designer Michael Thompson to depict 100 years of beach culture with the pier, a lifeguard tower, a surfboard, and beach volleyball. The second piece was the centennial logo that was used for banners and marketing efforts, and was designed by local South Bay graphic designer and Hermosa Beach native Chris Davis.

Current City Seal  
(1964- Present)



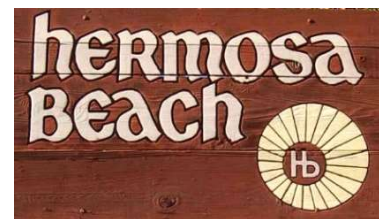
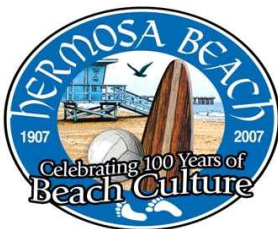
Current City Logo  
(1968- Present)



Previous Seal/Logo  
(1923- 1964)



Other logos/variations in use by the City and/or community



## Relevant Logos and Graphics

When looking at the City brand, it is important to consider the graphics of other local organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, the School District, or local businesses (Note that the School District has just adopted a new logo). The City seal, and logo in particular has been modified or used many times by other local groups as their logo, for artwork, or for merchandise such as hats or t-shirts. It is also important to review the logos and identity of other communities (particularly coastal California cities) to ensure our brand is unique and differentiated from others. This is also an opportunity to look at examples from other communities that have updated their logos or brand to create coordinated sub-brands for departments, neighborhoods, or marketing purposes. These images are provided as **Attachment 4**.

## **Style Guide and Policy**

Whether Council provides direction to make changes to the City's existing seal or logo, or not, it is recommended that a style guide is developed for overall city graphics to ensure that our website, official documents, email signatures, flyers and outreach, social media and used consistently. This would include direction on any coordinated logos for departments or specific initiatives that warrant a separate, yet coordinated look. Many cities and organizations have developed similar branding guidelines or style guides and a one-page example from the City of West Hollywood is provided as **Attachment 5**.

To minimize the inappropriate use of a logo or seal, many cities adopt a formal policy or add language to their municipal code to prevent the reproduction or modification without written consent of the city. In Hermosa Beach, the City Clerk is designated as the official custodian of the City seal, and the use of the City seal may not be used on any campaign materials, though there is no equivalent guidance regarding use of the City logo.

## **Signage Program Components**

City signage is one of the primary ways in which the community interacts with the City, playing an important role in communicating information to drivers and pedestrians, to residents and visitors, and to those with different interests. Signage is also a key factor affecting the visual environment in and around Hermosa Beach, with inconsistent, outdated, or too much/too little signage potentially causing confusion and degrading the image of the City. Provided below is a brief description of the different types of signage that can be found throughout most cities, including Hermosa Beach.

### *Gateway Signage*

Typically placed at key entryways to the city, gateway signs or monuments are generally iconic or unique to let everyone know that they've entered the community. Gateway signage will often include larger structures, lighting, landscaping, water features, or other unique materials.

### *Facility Signage*

Facility signage is meant to mark an entrance into parks, parking lots, public facilities so that users know they have arrived at a specific location within the City. While these signs may be unique to fit the character/architecture of a specific building, there can be value in having consistency across facilities to improve recognition that the facilities are City-owned/operated.

### *Directional Signage*

Directional signage includes street signs placed at most intersections, arrow signs to provide instruction for accessing a facility, or parking signs/markers. To improve navigation, it is important that these types of signs are visually consistent, easy to read, and offer helpful navigation tips. Directional signage can be used by pedestrians, drivers, or cyclists and the mode in which they are traveling should be taken into consideration

when designing this type of signage.

#### *Informational Signage*

Pole-mounted signage, such as the sign located at the corner of PCH and Pier Avenue, or marquee signs and banner signs are often used to provide information to the community about specific upcoming events. For consistency, these signs can incorporate elements of gateway signage or directional signage, but are primarily used to communicate information that is changed on a fairly frequent basis.

#### *Regulatory Signage*

Like all cities, regulatory signage is necessary to provide information or instruction to those using the space. These types of signs may include instructions for parking, hours of operation, or restrictions on the use of the space.

#### **Attachments:**

1. May 2014 Conceptual Design and Master Plan for the PCH-Aviation Corridor Beautification Project
2. PCH Aviation Committee Previously Proposed City of Hermosa Beach Signage Program - February 2017
3. Description/Background on the City of Hermosa Beach Seal Adopted in 1964
4. Relevant Logos and Graphics to the City of Hermosa Beach
5. City of West Hollywood Style Guide 1-pager

**Respectfully Submitted by:** Leeanne Singleton, Environmental Analyst

**Concur:** Nico De Anda-Scaia, Assistant to the City Manager

**Approved:** Sergio Gonzalez, City Manager