**Agenda Item**
**VIII. A.**

**Meeting Date:** June 20, 2017

**Department:** EDA

**Topic:** **Amherst County Branding**

**Board Action:** The Board is being asked to adopt a Community Branding and Marketing Plan

**Attachment:** Overview sheet

**Summary:** The EDA's branding and marketing plan is complete and will be presented.

Leading the branding and marketing process has been Arnett Muldrow Associates, a planning firm who has completed over 50 community brands in Virginia and over 450 across the US. Over the last several months approximately 400 community members and leaders were engaged through interviews, focus groups, Facebook, and an online survey, to gather the community thoughts on the values and character that make Amherst County a special place and to work together to tell Amherst's unique story.

The Community Branding and Marketing Plan will be implemented using all of the EDA's, County's, and allie's marketing tools: website, social media, materials, promotions, etc.

**Recommendation:** That the Board adopt the Community Branding and Marketing Plan for Amherst County as presented and direct staff to begin implementing the brand.

# Branding of Amherst County Overview

*As of May 26, 2017*

The Branding of Amherst County was one of the 2016 Economic Development Strategic Plan strategies. The need to market Amherst County was identified in each and every point of community engagement - marketing for business, tourism, and residential growth.

The EDA is the lead marketing organization for business attraction in Amherst County; however, there is no clear brand identity to leverage. There is no consistency among ally organizations in how Amherst County is portrayed and marketed. A branding process will continue the unification effort started by One Amherst, the Economic Development Strategic Plan. Time is of the essence for the branding project as a branding company can utilize the information gathered in the strategic plan to reduce cost and avoid duplication.

**Goal**: Create a brand that will connect people and companies to Amherst County.

**Strategy:** Engage the community and stakeholders in a branding process that will result in a brand that can be used not only by the EDA but the County, Town, education and the arts.

A branding process typically includes background information gathering, community familiarization, branding workshop, and the development of a brand, logo, tagline, style guide, templates, and usage guidelines.

- Community branding is not just the creation of a simple logo. Rather, it is a position, graphic identity, tagline, and style set that presents the overall vision and values within the place. Ultimately it will be the foundation of a seamless system to market and promote the community.
- Brand Position Statement – This is the "elevator speech", a brief narrative that connects the values and assets within the community, and lays the foundation for the identity of the place. For Amherst County, this will include key messages and targets that will be addressed in the marketing strategies, building upon the five initiatives of the Strategic Plan.
- Tag Line - This is the phrase that presents the brand statement narrative as a concise description of the community's identity and market position.

**Action Steps:**

- Leading the branding and marketing process is Arnett Muldrow Associates, a planning firm who has completed over 50 community brands in Virginia, and over 450 across the Country. Public Kick-Off Meeting was held March 29.
- Over the last several months approximately 400 community members and leaders were engaged through interviews, focus groups, Facebook, and an online survey, to gather the community thoughts on the values and character that make Amherst County a special place and to work together to tell Amherst's unique story.
- Unveil the brand and marketing plan for adoption during the June 20, 2017, EDA and Board of Supervisors meetings, and begin implementing the brand using all of the EDA and Ally's marketing tools: website, social media, materials, promotions, etc.