City of Northampton

Casino Mitigation Marketing Plan

Draft 1

[**Rhyme.**]

[Introduction]

In September 2017, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission awarded Northampton a $100,000 grant from its Casino Mitigation Fund to create and implement a marketing and advertising plan to attract MGM Springfield casino visitors. A 2013 Camoin Associates report commissioned by the city determined that Northampton could experience a $4-$8 million loss in recreational spending once the casino opens, and the marketing plan is viewed as a crucial step towards offsetting those losses. There has also been no consistent/sustained marketing and advertising campaign for Northampton in previous years, and this project is viewed as a stepping stone toward creating one.

Rhyme Digital was hired in April 2018 to develop the marketing plan for the city. Over the last several months, we have met with numerous business and community leaders, conducted focus groups, and done diligent research toward understanding not only how Northampton can compete with/attract visitors from MGM Springfield, but also how the city can further build on its reputation as a hub for arts, shopping, dining, entertainment, and more for years to come.

This plan represents what we feel is necessary to build a solid marketing foundation utilizing the current project budget, as well as outlining steps for continuation and expansion of efforts into 2019/2020, and beyond. It is clear that the $100,000 budget will not last long, and that it will require developing creative assets which have maximum utility by reaching the right people at the right time. We recommend testing ideas on smaller scales before committing large sums of money, and measuring success with a variety of metrics.

Ultimately, the success of marketing Northampton to the surrounding regions will depend on the sustainability and consistency of the project beyond this phase. This may require things such as sponsorships from the business community, coordination amongst the various existing associations and organizations already working to promote Northampton, or investments from the city itself. This project will provide a roadmap on how to get there, but it will not answer the question regarding who will bear the financial responsibility. Our hope is that the results from this phase will convince others to take up the torch.

Overall, Northampton is well-positioned to continue its role as a cultural and economic hub in Western Massachusetts. While the MGM Springfield casino may bring some economic threats, it also will provide opportunities that Northampton should be able to capitalize on. We feel that this marketing plan outlines the best path towards achieving those goals.

President, Rhyme Digital

[Executive Summary]

It is no secret that there is a direct overlap between Northampton's greatest strengths and MGM Springfield's newly developed assets—dining, nightlife, entertainment, and retail. Northampton currently has an advantage with a wider variety in each and every one of these areas, both when compared to MGM Springfield as well as against other cities/towns in the area. While Springfield is working to develop more of these industries around MGM, Northampton has had an established footprint in Western Massachusetts for decades.

Current marketing for the area plays to these strengths in generic ways—there is a definitive lack of personality, which fails to capture the essence of what makes Northampton unique, and instead could be described as "Anytown, USA." This is especially true because most of the content developed for these initiatives comes in written form, making it harder to differentiate. There is a distinctive lack of visual media when it comes to marketing assets specific to the City of Northampton, especially for the key dining, nightlife, entertainment, and retail economic segments. Developing compelling visual media which captures the eccentric/authentic Northampton experience will be essential in differentiating the city from "manufactured" experiences like the MGM Springfield casino.

The budget for this project should also be used in a way that maximizes its value and also provides crucial assets, data, and information. This is an opportunity to not necessarily commit to using the entire budget on a single approach up front, but to test messaging, targeting, and creative in order to make the next phase even more successful and to determine where to put future budget money. For all these reasons, digital and social media channels will be the most cost-effective and targeted use of advertising dollars.

This data-driven approach should also provide a compelling argument for continuing the project beyond this initial budgeted phase. Nearly everyone we spoke with underscored the need for a sustained tourism campaign for the city, but in the same breath were reluctant to support any future efforts without a direct benefit. A short- and long-term roadmap with summary data and recommendations is part of our overall plan.

We therefore recommend the following strategic priorities for the marketing plan:

- **Centralized curation of media assets and event/promotional information** with the help of local businesses, organizations, and other potential sources. These can be used across different platforms such as a website, social media, print, and more, and centralized in an online format which can be used as a hub for all marketing, tracking, and reporting for the project.

- **Market segmentation of creative assets/messaging**, customized to various geographic locations, audiences, and industry segments.

- **Market awareness** via monthly digital advertising campaigns which test creative, messaging, targeting methodologies, and channels, plus reporting which focuses on tracking key metrics and optimizing results.

[Research Methodology **]**

Throughout this process, Rhyme has taken the time to speak individually with a wide variety of business and community leaders across a variety of industries and representing a variety of interests. We have also met with several business organizations for Q&As, plus conducted focus groups that were designed to provide insight to target audiences, branding, and marketing methodology. We also have poured through a wealth of data and resources, including potential impact analyses for the current CT casinos, current CT casino demographic information, analyzing aggregate analytics provided from local Northampton businesses and organizations, marketing plans from similar sized cities, and more.

One theme that emerged was that Northampton suffered from a lack of consistent, centralized, and frequent tourism marketing. While there have been efforts in the past to market the city, it has been fragmented and sporadic at best, with often many different organizations applying their own techniques and messaging. There was also an overall cynicism that marketing would have any impact on tourism until the city addressed other problems such as panhandling and/or parking.

As we reviewed the data we received, we paid particularly close attention to metrics that we can use to measure success and examine trends over time. Getting more businesses and organizations to participate in aggregating and/or segmenting this data will help provide clearer feedback as the campaign moves forward.

We believe that the best way to ensure that the marketing campaign for Northampton is sustainable is to be transparent with this data and share it freely with local businesses and organizations. This way, they can hopefully not only support the ongoing efforts, but also apply the lessons learned to their own marketing.

[Strategic Priority Overview]

Curation of media assets, event, and promotional info.
Development of a single platform where a public-facing library of photos, videos, event information, and local promotions can be submitted, curated, stored, and made searchable to the general public.

Short Term	Near Term	Long Term
• **ST1** - Website platform with landing pages, submission process & curation capabilities • **ST2 -** Develop partnerships and/or outreach with key local businesses in restaurant, entertainment, and nightlife businesses and organizations, as well as local photographers and videographers • **ST3** - General consumer outreach on social media platforms to solicit contributions using contests	• **NT1** - Identify brand ambassadors from different market segments who can contribute and curate regular content • **NT2**- Coordinate efforts between campaign and local tourism organizations • **NT3**- Determine additional funding/ways to provide additional incentives and contests to reward and encourage participation	• **LT1**- Develop app which can direct-post photos and videos to the platform • **LT2**- Earn revenue via boosted payment system which allows businesses/orgs to pay for premium placement • **LT3**- Earn additional revenue via paid ad placements via networks like Google Display

Segmentation of creative assets/messaging.
Organize creative assets and develop messaging for up to four different target audiences that overlap with the casino and current Northampton demographic segments: millennials/young professionals, high-income women, the LGBT community, and generic outreach to population within a 45-minute drive time.

Short Term	Near Term	Long Term
• **ST4** - Develop testable messaging for each segment, focused on retail, dining, nightlife, entertainment events/venues • **ST5** - Develop strategy for email list development • **ST6** - Implement A/B tests on all messaging via email and digital ads	• **NT4**- Expand messaging to include other industry and audience segments • **NT5**- Segment email lists based on market as well as interests • **NT6**- Develop additional creative assets based on A/B test results	• **LT4**- Ensure consistency and regular frequency of communications to each market segment based on test results • **LT5** - Continue to expand geographic reach to other major metro markets

[Strategic Priority Overview **]**

Market awareness.
Dedicate a significant portion of the budget for digital and social advertising, optimizing delivery and targeting over time. Using an agency or dedicated marketing staff will be essential to not only create the deliverables, but also actively monitor the campaign and adjust according to incoming data. Use lessons learned to expand into more traditional mass media as budget allows, as well as expand geographic reach.

Short Term	Near Term	Long Term
• **ST7**- Develop branding/identity and ad creative across digital and social platforms • **ST8** - Set conversion goals, such as interaction rates with local businesses, orgs • **ST9** - Focus digital/social ads on targeted segments and geography • **ST10**- Monitor and report on results monthly	• **NT7** - Saturate key market areas while measuring/ establishing average cost-per-conversion data • **NT8** - Boost ad budgets during key seasonal dates • **NT9** - Develop segmented remarketing lists • **NT10** - Deliver comprehensive report to the business community to help them improve their own marketing/targeting	• **LT6**- Continue to scale up digital program using cost-per-conversion metrics • **LT7** - Present quarterly reports to the business community • **LT8** - Survey email lists annually to find ways to continuously add value • **LT9** - As budget allows, explore traditional media placements such as outdoor, TV, etc utilizing results • **LT10** - Pitch to media, bloggers, and social media influencers • **LT11**- A "big hairy audacious arts project"

[Key Audience Segments]

While we found a great many audience segments that currently frequent downtown Northampton (including students from the colleges and their visiting parents), we are focusing this plan on the ones who will likely frequent the casino. Our hope is that once this initial plan takes hold, the City of Northampton can expand its reach to include these audiences, but that these are initially the most important in the near term. We address these additional audiences in the long-term plan recommendations.

A.   Millennials/Young Professionals
- Age 25-40
- $50K+ income
- Interested in social outings/experiences
- College educated

B.   Higher Income Women
- Age 45-65
- $75K+ income
- College educated
- Looking for exciting, high-end experiences, not necessarily gambling
- Enjoys the shopping experience

C.   LGBT Community
- Promote LGBT events like Pride Parade, but also focus on how the "pride exists year-round"
- Promote LGBT-specific venues in Northampton
- Knows about Northampton's reputation for supporting the LGBT community, and just needs to be reinforced

D.   Foodies/Travelers/Shoppers within 45-minute Drive Time
- Focus on the diversity of options in these categories
- This is best audience for experimentation, and would be ideal to determine audiences outside of the above (i.e., consider how to draw older men out from the casino).
- Population centers such as Hartford, Worcester, and Springfield should be prioritized along with the entire I-91 corridor from Hartford to Brattleboro.

[Short-Term Strategies & Tactics]

Curation of media assets, event, and promotional information.

- Developing media assets is expensive, especially photos and videos
- Tough to find current happenings and event information from nightlife, dining, arts/entertainment, and retail establishments for all in one central place
- Existing businesses are doing great things on Facebook and Instagram, and there is a wealth of artists in the local area
- If content could be curated to highlight what is happening in a creative way, as well as give people the ability to easily push content to a central location, it would provide a steady feed of new content and reduce the potential ongoing workload
- A website/app platform would also be key for tracking digital activity, performance, building remarketing lists
- Will be crucial to spend time to curate content initially to gain momentum and develop a full content calendar
- Contests/incentives would help spur participation
- Artists/photographers/videographers/businesses/organizations should be courted to participate
- Needs to be EASY

ST1 - Website/Microsite

- Central hub for all marketing—route traffic through appropriate channels.
- **Functionality:**
    - **Frontend:**
        - Mobile-friendly
        - Ability to view event listings by type
        - Ability to view photos/videos by type
        - Ability to submit event listings
        - Ability to submit photos/video
        - Ability to share events, photos, videos on social channels
        - Ability to sign up for email lists segmented by events and/or media
        - Accounts/logins for approved businesses/orgs who are permitted to submit promotions
        - "Featured" section to promote participating businesses/orgs/events
        - Ability for account/logins to manage a simple profile that showcases their content
    - **Backend**
        - Ability to moderate and categorize submissions
        - Ability to input manual event listings, photos, video
        - Ability to create/approve business/org accounts
        - Database with potential for API to drive future app

Rhyme.

Website (continued)

- **Other:**
  - Pull feed from Gazette for other event listings
  - Possible backend Facebook and Instagram
  - Consider utilizing the "explorenorthampton.com" domain if possible, as other dot-com options are fairly limited and lengthy
  - MailChimp integration for email list development and segmentation
- **Content**
  - In addition to category pages, **specialized campaign landing pages** would be developed and search-engine-optimized for various terms, such as "things to do near MGM Springfield" and other terms that match up with the target audience demographics
  - An "About Northampton" page that explains how Northampton has grown to be a walkable, inclusive, and unique retail/dining/entertainment/arts experience, addressing each of the target audiences
  - Information about parking as well as instructions/links on how to download the Parkmobile app, downtown area maps, etc.

ST2 - Building a Coalition and Encouraging Participation

- **Local Outreach to Organizations & Businesses**
  - Outreach to local businesses, organizations, artists, photographers, and videographers for support and giving them premium account access
  - Premium account access includes their own login and ability to post featured promotions or events, which will be highlighted on the website, as well as a profile page where they can showcase their content
  - Consider specialized contests targeted specifically to businesses/orgs for the chance to to promote themselves with advertising across the website
  - Need to represent full range of target audiences, such as NAYP, Noho Pride, DNA, and more
  - Develop business/organization-specific email lists in MailChimp and simple targeted campaigns to organizations based on audience with links to PDFs outlining the key benefits

ST3 - Consumer Outreach on Social Media

- **Establish Social Media Accounts**
  - Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are the primary channels for images/video, with Twitter useful for event updates as a calendar is formed.
  - The agency/individuals responsible for organic social posting should be upbeat, enthusiastic, genuine, and friendly in tone/voice.
  - Schedule minimum of 1 post every day, with encouragement for more when possible.
- **Consumer Contests**
  - All contest prizes should involve experiencing Northampton somehow and encourage taking photos/videos or sharing them to win
  - *Example 1*- A social media contest (#NorthamptonMA hashtag) where participants can either submit the best photos/videos from their night out and win another night out on the town for up to 4 people. Themes could change each month (breweries, shopping, dining, favorite) and run along target audience segments.
  - Example 2 - Comment Giveaway Campaign - in exchange for likes and comments, users are entered into a giveaway from a local business.
  - *Example 3* - Social cause campaigns: Social causes are incredibly effective at spurring customer engagement. Connecting a contest with a charitable experience (Hot Chocolate Run etc), can significantly improve interaction.

Segmentation of creative assets/messaging.

ST4 - Develop testable messaging

- **Overall**
  - Northampton—*always* different.
  - Wanna _____ in Northampton?
  - _____is never just _____ in Northampton.
- **Millennials/Young Professionals**
  - Tonight is about to get a little bit nuts.
  - I'll meet you guys in Northampton.
- **Older High-Income Women**
  - Shopping doesn't get any better than this.
  - Find your style.
  - You look amazing in Northampton.
- **LGBT Community**
  - Come be yourself.
  - Pride happens 24/7/365.
  - Everyone is awesome in Northampton.
- **Foodies/Shoppers/Travelers**
  - Shopping, dinner, and a show in a place that's unlike any other.
  - You've heard about Northampton, now experience it.
  - Check out what you've been missing.

ST5 - Email List Strategy

- **Establish Multiple Touchpoints & Partnerships**
  - Ensure that email list signup links/forms are available from all social media accounts and new website/microsite.
  - Partner with existing local member organizations to promote the link to sign up for the email lists in their existing email outreach/communications.
  - Implement low-cost paid Facebook Lead campaigns to generate direct signups to get the list up and off the ground.
  - Reach out to other existing Facebook pages to help spread the word to existing audiences (Only in Northampton, Northampton MA Group Page, Northampton Photo of the Day, etc)
- **Feature Email Signup Prominently for Contests**
  - When running contests, ensure that email list signup is featured prominently as part of the promotions, i.e. to submit photos/videos, but important to not make it a requirement to participate to lower barrier of entry.
- **No More Than Two Lists to Start, But Collect Additional Interests**
  - Weekly emails should be around **Upcoming Events** and the latest **Featured Promotions** (could potentially be automated from the website/Mailchimp)
  - However, also ask people when they register about their other interests and log them during signup for future use.
  - Future lists should be further segmented around interest and/or audience, but not until critical mass is achieved.

ST6 - A/B Test All Messaging

- **Test Multiple Subject Lines for Every eBlast**
  - Mailchimp allows for testable messaging of subject lines.
  - Ensure that each email has a testable subject line that matches up to one of the audience segments.
- **Test Images/Headlines for Each Facebook/Display Campaign with Tracking**
  - Both Google and Facebook allow for A/B testing of campaign creative
  - Ads should be developed for each audience with testing in mind for headlines, imagery, and calls to action.
  - In each case, [Google Campaign URL Builder](#) should be used to identify and track performance of each ad set via Google Analytics
  - Run for a minimum of 2 weeks, then add in new messaging along with winner of previous test.
- **Test Landing Page Messaging/Calls-to-Action**
  - In order to determine the best way to encourage actions such as email signups and shares, we recommend running Google Optimize (or equivalent) campaigns on landing pages for minimum of 4 weeks.
  - These specialized campaign allow you to run experiments with multiple variations of text/images and show messaging to multiple audiences in order to determine effectiveness.

Generate market awareness.

ST7 - Develop Brand Identity and Ad Creative for Campaigns

See Appendix for Example Branding

- **Google AdWords Search**
  - It will be important to not compete for keywords that are too expensive, so suggestion is to use phrase-match keywords as opposed to broad match to be specific.
  - Geo-targeted for 60 miles outside Northampton and including I-91 corridor down to Hartford
  - General Keywords/Ad Groups initially focused on:
    - Things to Do in Western Mass/MA/Northampton/Springfield
    - Events in Western Mass/MA/Northampton/Springfield
    - Dining/restaurants in Western Mass/MA/Northampton/Springfield
    - Concerts in Western Mass/MA/Northampton/Springfield
    - Shopping/retail in Western Mass/MA/Northampton/Springfield
    - LGBT-friendly cities near Western Mass/MA/Northampton/Springfield
  - Ad copy should match keyword focus to boost Quality Scores, and be paired with ideal category landing page on website.
  - Consider Dynamic Headline Replacement to match relevant searches, so that user search terms become the ad headline.

- **Google Targeted Display Banner Ads & YouTube Preroll**
  - Ad groups should be set up with targeting to match market segments and rough demographics (age/gender) where possible
  - Create additional ad groups for website remarketing segments.
  - Geo-targeted for 50 miles outside Northampton and including I-91 corridor down to Hartford.
  - Same general categories as Search Campaign (above).
  - Where budget allows, HTML5/video ads are more expensive to create but will help to reduce cost-per-click.
  - Campaign strategy should initially be focused on generating impressions and saturating the local market until moving to a click-based strategy.
  - Avoid displaying ads on mobile/tablet-app/games placements to reduce unwanted clicks.
  - Set up key media outlets as targeted placements within the Google Advertising network. Ads will display below the fold in most cases but costs will be much less than a direct placement for the initial stage (direct placements can be procured as future budget allows). Examples:
    - MassLive.com, Courant.com, GazetteNet.com, Recorder.com, WWLP.com, WesternMassNews.com

- **Facebook Targeted Ads & Likes Campaigns**
  - Since Facebook is not incredibly effective on its own, the goal should be to maximize impressions on Facebook with clear calls to action to push users to the site where they become part of the overall Google Display remarketing list or to like the Facebook Page.
  - Link Click ads with a mix of images/videos that align with the key market segments with captions to see more on the website.
  - Like Campaigns should focus on liking page to keep in touch with what is happening in Northampton.
  - Consider partnering with business/orgs to promote specific events according to content calendar.

ST8 - Set conversion goals

- It is imperative to properly set up Google Analytics to capture key information in one place with Goals that can effectively be traced back to campaign efforts (via properly tagged URLs) on the website.
- Conversion data can then be fed back to the advertising sources (Google/Facebook) in order to improve the campaign performance.

- **Key Calls to Action**
  - **Email sign-ups** should be the primary call to action on the site and should be A/B tested to determine the best way to convert.
  - **Submission of Photos/Media/Events** will be key to identifying brand ambassadors and segmenting the audience to encourage repeat submissions.
  - **Social Shares** will help to organically expand the reach and will identify popular content.

- **Additional Goals**
  - **Pageviews per session**, along with bounce rate, will be key to understanding how popular the content is across the site and identifying interested audiences.
  - **Frequency of visits** is also important as the goal is to make the website a place that people come back to frequently to check for updated information.

ST9 - Focus ads on targeted segments and geography

- **Google Ads**
  - General demographic targeting using basic age/gender/interests is the best we can do to start, with a few select placements.
  - As emails get collected and traffic picks up, segmented audience data based on specific pages visited on website can be used to create "lookalike audiences" based on the data collected.
- **Facebook Ads/Likes Campaigns**
  - Utilize Facebook's robust and cost-effective targeting criteria for each audience and market segment.
- **Geographic Targeting**
  - Given Northampton's situation off of I-91, targeting a 45-minute drive time is best to start the campaigns.
  - Where possible (such as with Google Ads) campaigns should be weighted to focus on the I-91 corridor, especially coming from Hartford.
  - Likewise, the I-90 stretch from 1-91 to I-84 contains some of the desirable demographics from the market segments.
  - The Berkshires can be targeted seasonally from late Spring to late Fall, when most of the "vacation home" population is present.

ST10 - Monitor and report on results monthly

- **Establish a committee of local marketing professionals**
  - For reporting purposes, it will be important for the agency/marketing professional to report to a local group of their peers. This will help evaluate performance metrics and provide accountability for recommendations and results.
- **Establish reporting that is easy to read and focuses on cost-per-conversion data**
  - While reports can certainly include data such as clickthroughs and impressions, establishing a reliable cost-per-conversion metric will be key to determining future ad budget spends and measuring impact.
- **Ensure all reports include recommendations**
  - Rhyme encourages all reporting to follow a Descriptive (what happened), Prescriptive (what we intend to do about it), and Predictive (as a result, we expect X to happen) model, which has proven successful.
  - When analytics have been successfully set up correctly, this makes the process easier to decipher.

[Near-Term Strategies & Tactics]

Curation of media assets, event, and promotional information.

- As the campaigns are launched and the basic foundations for the digital advertising are in place, establishing relationships with existing organizations/ leaders, identifying new leaders who can assist with media efforts, and engage the business community to provide incentives to consumers.

NT1 - Identify brand ambassadors

- **Frequent Submitters**
  - The easiest way to identify people who will be willing to participate will be by frequency of posts to the website, whether via photos/videos/events.
- **Key Northampton Hashtags**
  - Because we want to push the use of #northamptonma, tracking submissions to the hashtag and identifying potential help based on the quality of posts.
- **Recruit via Social & Email**
  - Similar to how TripAdvisor encourages repeat posts, using MailChimp (or equivalent) to automate follow-up emails to people who have submitted events/photos/videos to encourage additional participation.
  - Calls to Action on social posts for people willing to submit entries should be a monthly task.

NT2 - Coordinate efforts between local organizations

- **Cross-promotion of Key Events**
  - Key annual events such as the Sidewalk Sale, Pride Parade, Arts Night Out, Tuesday Farmers Market, and more should be cross-promoted between organizations.
  - Sharing of calls to action between email lists will also be crucial, especially when initially getting the campaigns up and off the ground.
- **Monthly Contact Regarding Events**
  - Agency or marketing team should maintain regular contact with key members of each organization to maintain up to date event listings.
  - When possible, encourage members to post events directly to the site themselves, or coordinate a way to feed events from each others' sites using an XML feed.
- **Publish/Share Resources**
  - One of the key components of this marketing plan is to share resources between these organizations in order to bolster efforts among all parties. This includes actively reaching out with photos, videos, website and campaign data, and more.

NT3 - Solicit/procure additional funding, incentives, and contests

- **Business Donations**
    - Appeals to local businesses will only be possible once we have established a continuous and documented flow of traffic to the site.
    - Donations in the form of products/gift-cards for use in contests/promotions should be considered in exchange for exposure on the site and to the email list.

NT4 - Coordinate efforts between local organizations

- **Cross-promotion of Key Events**
    - Key annual events such as the Sidewalk Sale, Pride Parade, Arts Night Out, Tuesday Farmers Market, and more should be cross-promoted between organizations.
    - Sharing of calls to action between email lists will also be crucial, especially when initially getting the campaigns up and off the ground.
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Segmentation of creative assets/messaging.

NT5 - Expand messaging to include more segments

- Initial focus on dining, arts/entertainment, nightlife, shopping/retail.
- Once these have been established, expand ad sets to include:
    - Hotels
    - Family activities
    - Recreation
    - Relaxation
    - Landmarks
    - … and more

NT6 - Further segment email lists based on interests

- Once the email lists have reached a critical mass, use the identified user interests to further segment the email lists by the additional topics/interests above.
- The same content can be generated as previous emails, but split across the segments and result in shorter emails so as to avoid additional/duplicate work.

NT7 - Develop additional creative assets based on A/B test results

- While developing the assets for these new segments, be sure to incorporate all lessons learned from the A/B testing, especially calls to action.
- Curate/create more video ads into the mix based on A/B test results where possible across Google/YouTube/Facebook.
- Consider adding new filters/categories/landing pages on the website to accommodate these new categories.
- Continue to set up new A/B tests on the new segments:
    - Email subjects
    - Landing page calls to action
    - Digital ads

Generate market awareness.

NT8 - Saturate key market areas, establish average cost-per-conversion

- As campaigns are launched, these metrics will determine how far the budget is stretched, and also help determine the average spend needed for each desirable action on the site.
- If we can determine that the average cost to acquire a new email list subscriber is $10, it helps to set realistic goals and expectations for future campaigns.
- **Google AdWords/Facebook Saturation**
    - In order to determine market saturation in Google AdWords, pay attention to the Display Impression Share and Search Impression Share.
    - These numbers will tell you the percent of your ads which are served up in the targeting are reaching your audience. The reasons why they may not be reaching the audience are evaluated by either a loss attributed to budget or rank.
    - If budget is not the cause, concentrate on improving Ad Rank with better Quality Scores in the ads. This will help to maximize budgets on Google AdWords.
    - Facebook's saturation is determined by a few factors:
        - Drop in first time impressions
        - Increase in impression frequency with full audience reach
    - If either of those drop without full audience reach, additional budget or revised targeting is needed.
- **Google AdWords/Facebook Cost-Per-Acquisition**
    - Ensure that analytics tracking is correctly informing both AdWords and Facebook of conversion data in order to determine accurate cost-per-acquisition.
    - Use a tool such as Google Data Studio to aggregate data between platforms.

Boost ad budgets during key seasonal dates

- Based on data from other organizations and businesses in the area, the key dates where ad budgets should be increased are:
    - College arrival/departure/graduation/parents' weekends, as college parents' are one of the larger sources of retail revenue.
    - Start of warmer weather in the spring, most notably April 1 through May 15 when the city becomes most walkable.
    - Summer weekends.
    - Peak foliage season from Labor Day through mid-October.
    - Holiday shopping season, Thanksgiving to Xmas.
    - Consider trying creative ways to bolster the shoulder season of January through April, such as capturing traffic passing up and down I-91 for ski season.

NT9 - Develop segmented remarketing lists

- As more topics are added to the website, it will be important to further segment remarketing lists along the same lines.
- This will help further to refine/target digital ads to interested parties and monitor saturation and frequency across all the market segments, helping to determine budget.
- Additional remarketing segments should be formed based around:
  - Converters/non-converters
  - High-engagers
  - Geolocations (i.e., MGM Springfield, CT visitors)

NT10 - Deliver comprehensive report to the business community

- Upon completion of the initial phase of the project, the most useful piece of information should be a comprehensive report on the achievements and data gathered over the course of the campaign.
- This report should explain the methodology and targeting used, along with recommendations for digital activities for the different business segments in the City.
- The agency/marketing team should lead a Q&A discussion where members of the community should be allowed to ask questions and review performance.
- The goal of this report should be to make a case to the business community on how this program made a direct impact to their businesses and how they can use the lessons learned to either continue to support the program or to use the information to improve their own marketing.

[Long-Term Strategies & Tactics]

These recommendations are intended to be implemented beyond the scope of funding for the initial project and are dependent upon additional funding to sustain the program. They build upon the foundation established in the initial phase and seek to capitalize upon those efforts in a way that continues to maximize its effectiveness.

Curation of media assets, event, and promotional information.

LT1 - Develop native apps which can direct-post photos and videos

- It is imperative that in the planning for the website development that a backend be considered which can support a native (iOS/Android) app.
- The native app should support viewing/posting of photos/video and event submissions, and be as simple and easy to use as the website.
- Custom branded app could also allow for push-notifications to subscribed event reminders, promotions, and deals.
- Would require consistent development (i.e., budget), which could be offset with boosted payments/paid promotion/ad revenue options for businesses.

LT2 - Boosted payment system

- Similar to how Facebook makes it easy for businesses to pay to promote posts, etc., allow businesses and organizations to pay to promote their posts/events for a fixed amount of time.
- Addresses the reluctance of businesses to commit to fixed monthly subscriptions and allows them to pay only when they need it.
- Price points would have to be evaluated to determine competitive rates based on impressions/engagement/etc.

LT3 - Google AdSense

- Placing non-intrusive ads on the site would offset some ad spend with ad revenue, but would need to be monitored to flag undesirable ads.
- Would allow local businesses to target the site themselves, giving them a bit more control over audience targeting, etc, without necessarily needing to pay the site maintainers directly.
- Would also need a discussion as to who manages the account and its funds.

Segmentation of creative assets/messaging.

LT4 - Ensure consistency and frequency of communications

- Whatever the long-term budget, regular and consistent communications that continue to A/B test and adjust messaging based on the results is imperative.
- Each year should begin with a set of audience goals and a testable set of assumptions designed to enhance the messaging to achieve those goals.
- Consistent use of the logo and other creative assets should be monitored and reviewed annually to determine effectiveness.

LT5 - Expand geographic reach to other major metro markets

- As saturation of the local market is achieved, the geographic targeting should be shifted to include major metro markets such as Boston, NYC, and Albany.
- These markets should be treated as completely separate campaigns with a separate strategy for each one.
- Efforts should be coordinated with local Mass tourism organizations to avoid overlap of efforts, but start with the same audience targeting original to the local campaign.

Market Awareness

LT6 - Continue to scale up digital program using cost-per-conversion metrics

- With consistent cost-per-conversion metrics, campaigns should be able to scale and maintain the same cost-per-result.
- The goal will be to determine the point at which the campaign spend sees a plateau of diminishing returns.

LT7 - Present quarterly reports to the business community

- Regardless of budget, similar to the initial phase campaign report there should be quarterly reports released to the business community which explain goals, efforts, results, and recommendations.
- Reports should become a local event in and of themselves, building anticipation for their release.

LT8 - Survey email lists annually

- It will be important to survey the mailing lists each year to solicit feedback, new ideas, and evaluate the value being delivered to potential visitors.
- Simple and easy-to-use tools such as SurveyMonkey should make this process easy.
- Data should be evaluated and shared publicly as an addendum to the reports.

LT9 - Explore traditional media placements such as outdoor, TV, etc

- While these recommendations are largely budget-dependent, they should be considered as the budget for the digital campaigns can demonstrate that it has saturated the digital market and determined the most effective messages for reaching each audience.
- All ad content should also purely focus on dining/nightlife/entertainment options and include A/B tested call to actions.
- **Digital Billboards Along I-91/I-90**
  - There are several digital billboard placements along Interstate 91, most notably the one on the Chicopee curve, on the Mass Pike just before Springfield, and just north of Hartford.
  - Digital placements are less expensive and easier to procure and swap content.
- **Springfield/Holyoke DMA Television Ads**
  - Simple, straightforward ads that mimic banner advertising with video.
  - Do not need to be more than :15 in this market.
  - Consider streaming TV ads for targeting millennial cord-cutters as it is a much cheaper option.
- **Paid Placements/Takeovers of Local Media for Specific Local Events**
  - When events are scheduled in and around Northampton that can be determined to be a significant draw, we recommend considering a homepage takeover for one of the local media outlets for days overlapping the event.
  - Examples include conventions/exhibitions in the MassMutual Center, The Big E, and others.

LT10 - Pitch to media, bloggers, and social media influencers

- Once a critical mass of photos/video have been accumulated on the website, it provides some compelling ammunition to pitch media, bloggers, and social media influencers.
- Potential pitches/coverage should align with dining, travel, nightlife, entertainment, LGBT, and other segments from the campaigns.

LT11 - A "Big Hairy Audacious Arts Project"

- Northampton has a reputation for being supportive of the arts and artists, and there are numerous art installations across the city.
- This program could support the development of a physical art installations and/or mural in the city, especially something that ties together the photos/videos that have been collected in a way that tells the collective story of Northampton in a unique way.

[Budget & Timeline Breakdown]

Website Development $35,000

- Includes everything outlined in ST1
- Recommend to build in phases so as to not delay launch of the campaigns.
- Phase 1 launch within 1-2 months
  - Basic event listing information
  - Categories of pictures and video
  - All content able to be manually managed/curated in CMS backend
- Phase 2 launch within 3-4 months
  - All frontend user submission functionality
- Includes budget of $100/month for website hosting and domain registration

All Other Activities - Hire Agency/Marketing Professional $30,000 on 6-9 month Retainer Basis

- Rather than quote out each individual piece of ad creative, email send, and individual report, it will be far more efficient to contract with them on a retainer basis for a set number of hours per month.
- This gives flexibility to ramp up activity when needed as well as react to campaign performance.
- **At minimum, the monthly retainer should include in the first 3-5 months:**
  - **ST2** - Community outreach to develop relationships with business/photographers/videographer
  - **ST3** - Consumer outreach on social media platforms
  - **ST4** - Development of testable messaging for each market segment
  - **ST5** - Email list development & segmentation
  - **ST6** - A/B testing across all ads/email subjects/landing pages
  - **ST7** - Branding & identity options based on included guidelines, plus recommendations for ad creative
  - **ST8** - Setup of conversion goals and analytics tracking
  - **ST9** - Setup and ongoing management of all segmented campaigns
  - **ST10** - Monthly monitoring and reporting
- **In the following 3-5 months, the retainer activities should expand to include:**
  - **NT1** - Identification and outreach to brand ambassadors
  - **NT2** - Outreach to local tourism organizations
  - **NT3** - Solicitation of donations/prizes for promotional use
  - **NT4** - Expansion of ad messaging to include additional market segments
  - **NT5** - Segmentation of email lists based on interest
  - **NT6** - Development of additional creative assets based on A/B test results
  - **NT7** - Evaluation of market saturation and cost-per-conversion data
  - **NT8** - Management of ad budgets during key seasonal periods
  - **NT9** - Setup of segmented remarketing lists
- Finally, the retainer should conclude with the **NT10 Final Summary Report.**

Digital Advertising Budget $20,000

- It is recommended to start testing ad campaigns with no more than $1,000 for 3-4 weeks to gather recommended data.
- Following the initial data gathering process, agency/marketing professional should present recommendations for budget allocations.

[Future Budget Recommendations]

These recommendations should be evaluated against actual data upon the completion of the initial phase/budget for the Casino Mitigation Project.

MAINTENANCE LEVEL $45,000 annually

This level assumes the minimum level of engagement required in order to keep the program active, updated, and effective in a "maintenance mode."

Digital Ad Spend $1,000-$2,000/mo

- At these minimum levels it should be possible to achieve the same results and market saturation over time, given a total annual budget of roughly $20,000.

Campaign Management $1,000-$2,000/mo

- Assuming that the results of the initial campaign are optimized by the end of the program, it should be possible for a marketing professional or agency to manage the digital ad campaigns at a basic level on an annual basis for roughly $20,000 annually.
- Hiring a part-time communications manager for the program is also an option.
- This would include at minimum:
  - Monitoring and management of the digital ad campaigns and placements.
  - Occasional ad creative updates.
  - Social media management.
  - Website moderation/curation.
  - Monthly reporting.
  - 1-2 emails per month.

Website Maintenance $5,000 annually

- The website should be actively updated and maintained with the latest software.
- Includes hosting fees of approx $1,200 per year.
- Includes minor assistance with landing pages.

SUSTAINED GROWTH LEVEL $75,000 annually

This level assumes a budget that seeks steady growth, optimization, and progress for the program over time, reaching an ever expanding audience.

Digital Ad Spend $2,500-$3,000/mo

- At this level it should be possible to expand targeting to new markets and segments and reach some of the nearby major metro areas, given a total annual budget of roughly $32,500.

Discretionary Ad Spend $5,000 annually

- This budget should be reserved for strategic ad buys such as local market cable television ads or direct site placements during key times of year.
- Decision/audience/placements to be determined by previous ad performance.

Campaign Management $2,500/mo

- Hiring an agency or part-time communications manager to manage the program actively with monthly creative updates, adjustments, and recommendations to the digital program should ensure steady growth and help to widen the targeting with the increased budget. Annual budget would be approx $30,000.
- This would include at minimum:
    - Monitoring and management of the digital ad campaigns and placements.
    - Monthly ad creative updates.
    - Social media management including monthly promotional contests.
    - Regular contact with business community and brand ambassadors.
    - Basic monthly reporting with recommendations.
    - Website moderation and curation.
    - 4-8 emails per month.

Website Maintenance $7,500 annually

- The website should be actively updated and maintained with the latest software.
- Includes hosting fees of approx $1,200 per year.
- Includes assistance with landing pages, search engine optimization, additional analytics tracking features, and user interface improvements.

COMPREHENSIVE GROWTH LEVEL $125,000 annually

This level would be ideal for checking off all items on a complete and comprehensive marketing approach which addressed a balance between targeted digital placements and mass-market reach across the region.

Digital Ad Spend $2,500-$3,000/mo

- This same level of targeted digital placements should remain the same given the extra exposure from other traditional media outlets, with an annual budget of roughly $32,500.

Television Advertising Placements $30,000 annually

- Local market TV ad buys during key periods throughout the year.
- Ad subjects to be determined by digital ad data/performance from initial program.
- Should also include streaming TV and YouTube preroll ads in addition to cable television to maximize the reach and include cord-cutters.

Digital Billboard Placements $20,000 annually

- Strategically placed ads on digital billboard locations throughout the I-91 and I-90 corridor would maximize the daily impressions.
- Placements should be timed around key events throughout the year, depending on location.

Campaign Management $2,500/mo

- This would remain similar to the previous level at $30,000 per year.
- This would include at minimum:
  - Monitoring and management of the digital ad campaigns and placements.
  - Monthly ad creative updates.
  - Social media management including monthly promotional contests.
  - Regular contact with business community and brand ambassadors.
  - Basic monthly reporting with recommendations.
  - Website moderation and curation.
  - 4-8 emails per month.

Website Maintenance $7,500 annually

- Same as the previous level—actively updating and maintaining the website with the latest software.
- Includes hosting fees of approx $1,200 per year.

ONE-TIME EXPENDITURES

These options are provided as potential one-time budget items.

Native Mobile Application $50,000-$75,000

- Development of a cross-platform native mobile application (for iOS and Android) which interfaces with the website in order to perform the following functions:
    - Allows all users to view events, photos, and video previously posted to the platform.
    - Login or register for account-level access.
    - Ability for logged in users to post events, photos, and videos to the platform.
- Includes design of interface based on existing branding/identity as well as cross-platform development.
- Budget for a minimum of $5,000 in annual maintenance to keep application updated for both platforms.

Arts Project $5,000-$10,000

- Procurement of a local artist to create an installation which utilizes media and elements from the initial campaign to tell the Northampton story.
- Location would be determined by the city.

[Answers to Potential Questions]

As we set out to develop this plan, there were numerous suggestions and strategies that were offered up from various members of the community, and while we have included some in our proposal, we felt the need to offer some answers to potential questions on ones that may not have made it into our recommendations, for clarity:

- **Why not put more effort into directly attracting MGM casino-goers?**
  While looking at marketing plans for other casinos as well as MGMs, it is going to be much more difficult to pull people away from the casino when they have built their own centralized retail/dining/entertainment complex. We feel it is a better strategy and use of budget to focus on people who have not decided to go to the casino yet (i.e., further up their decision-making process) to convince them that Northampton has more options.

- **Why no traditional brochures/rack cards which can be added to hotel room packets in the area?**
  We felt that given the cost of printing, shelf-life, and the volume of material already in those packets, it was not cost-effective to place information in hotels, especially as more move to digital delivery and hospitality options expand with AirBnB. Given the initial budget, most any printed pieces with limited shelf life would not be a responsible use of funds.

- **Why is everything mostly digital and not traditional media?**
  Because of the measurability and trackability of digital media, we felt it was important to use the initial budget as cost-effectively as possible and to gain as much data in the process. Digital media is ideal for this scenario.

- **What about addressing things like wayfinding, parking, beautification, and other issues?**
  The city already has efforts for wayfinding signage in process, and we plan on addressing the parking issue with clear instructions for using the ParkMobile app on the website. There are also other plans for street maintenance/beautification in process, but which are outside the scope of this proposal.

- **Why are you only focusing on certain industries to start? Why is mine not included?**
  This initial campaign is designed to combat the effects of lost revenue to the casino, which primarily includes dining/retail/nightlife/entertainment. These are the most sensible areas to focus on to start because Northampton has the biggest advantage in terms of variety and quality of options.

[Branding/Identity Guidelines]

Because we are recommending going with a targeted digital campaign for this program, one of the elements that we are sensitive to is the development of a Northampton identity including logo and tagline.

We have the following criteria/guidelines for the identity, given our experience with previous digital campaigns:

- **Keep things simple and reusable across many situations** (i.e., have a logo that works in vertical and horizontal formats, a tagline that can be applied universally to all markets/industries).
- **Create ad concepts and headlines that are easy to test**, meaning that they can easily be swapped out for other headlines/images/colors and that there are minimal combinations of elements to test. For example, including 1-3 images in an ad as opposed to a large collage, one headline versus multiple with body copy, etc.

We are also recommending that because the top performing hashtag on Instagram for Northampton is #northamptonma, we should use that as a way to drive participation in the program. **This means actually using #northamptonma as the logo and not just as an afterthought.**

Tone & Messaging

- **Authentic.** In order to juxtapose the experience of downtown Northampton to that of the MGM casino, we need to show real pictures of real people, real locations, doing real things in Northampton. No stock photography, ever. While this will incur a burden of curating media for the project, it helps reinforce the concept.

- **Action-oriented.** Messaging should always be about "doing something" in the city.

- **People-focused.** People should always be included in any photos/videos to connect viewers to the activities featured, preferably in groups.

- **Bright & Colorful.** Use of bright, colorful hues and language is representative of Northampton's persona, from its painted sidewalks, unique storefronts, and general architecture.

- **Weird/edgy/goofy at times.** The ads should try to highlight Northampton's weird and unique side, since that is also a big differentiator to other cities/towns in the region.

The following pages show recommended examples of this type of thinking, and are not meant to represent exact representations of the ad campaign, but to provide guidelines which should help facilitate its development.

do it in
#northampton**ma**

do it in
#northampton**ma**

do it in
#northampton**ma**

do it in
#northampton**ma**

do it in
#northampton**ma**

do it in
#northampton**ma**

Wanna get a new look?
do it in
#northampton**ma**

Wanna see some fresh music?
do it in
#northampton**ma**

Wanna have some beers on the deck?
do it in
#northampton**ma**

Wanna feel pride?
do it in
#northampton**ma**

#northamptonma

#northamptonma

#northamptonma

ALWAYS DIFFERENT

ALWAYS DIFFERENT

ALWAYS DIFFERENT

'COFFEE' ISN'T JUST 'COFFEE'
IN NORTHAMPTON

#northamptonma

ALWAYS DIFFERENT

'A BITE TO EAT' ISN'T JUST
'A BITE TO EAT' IN NORTHAMPTON

#northamptonma

ALWAYS DIFFERENT

'DRINKS' ISN'T JUST
'DRINKS' IN NORTHAMPTON

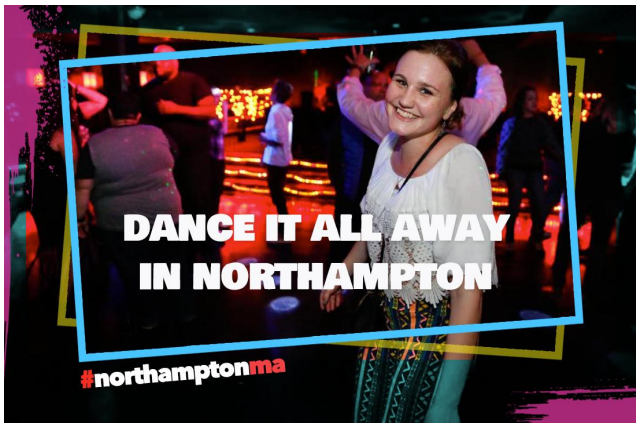#northamptonma

ALWAYS DIFFERENT

A 'CONCERT' ISN'T JUST A
'CONCERT' IN NORTHAMPTON

#northamptonma

ALWAYS DIFFERENT

[Thank You]

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