



Staff Report

Report To: Council
Report From: Jamie Eckenswiller, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk
Meeting Date: November 19, 2024
Subject: West Grey Brand Refresh

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of staff report 'West Grey Brand Refresh', Council:

1. Approves the attached West Grey brand refresh as presented; and
2. Directs staff to bring forward a bylaw to repeal bylaw 52-2020 (West Grey Communications Strategy bylaw).

Highlights:

- West Grey is undertaking a brand refresh to modernize our existing branding.
- The refreshed West Grey brand is in keeping with the existing branding.
- The colour palette of the refreshed brand was inspired by photographs and imagery from across West Grey that reflect community assets and values.
- The new logo font is easier to read from an accessibility perspective than the current cursive font.
- This brand refresh aligns with the goals and objectives of the 2024-2026 strategic plan.

Previous Report/Authority:

None.

Analysis:

Municipal branding is a strategic effort by a municipality to create a distinct identity that reflects its unique characteristics, values, and aspirations. This brand encompasses everything from the visual elements, such as logos and taglines, to the overarching narrative that communicates the essence of the municipality to residents, businesses, and visitors.

A municipal brand is more than just a logo or slogan; it is the collective image and perception of a municipality by its stakeholders. It encapsulates the municipality's identity, including its history, culture, services, and future vision. The brand serves as a promise to the community, symbolizing the municipality's commitment to quality, consistency, and a shared set of values. It is reflected in all aspects of municipal operations, from public communications and infrastructure to community events and economic development initiatives.

Rationale for a Branding Refresh:

While a well-established brand is an asset, it is essential to periodically assess and refresh the brand to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Several factors can necessitate a branding refresh.

As municipalities grow and develop, their strategic priorities may shift. A branding refresh can help to communicate new goals, projects, and initiatives, ensuring that the brand accurately represents the municipality's direction and focus. West Grey's 2024-2026 strategic plan contains goals and objectives within all three pillars related to identity and branding such as the enhancement of the West Grey website, which is currently underway, updating wayfinding signage, creating consistency through branding, and improve and expand West Grey signage. Refreshing the West Grey brand before these strategic priorities are completed will ensure that the refreshed brand can be incorporated into items such as the new website and updated wayfinding signage.

Another goal of the brand refresh is to gain enhanced engagement and participation. A refreshed brand can reinvigorate community engagement and participation. By introducing new and contemporary visual elements, messaging, and platforms, the municipality can capture the attention of residents and stakeholders, encouraging them to take an active role in municipal affairs. This renewed interest can translate into increased participation in community events, public consultations, and volunteer efforts.

The inspiration for the West Grey brand refresh was derived from wanting to pay homage to the existing logo, and from comments from the public and Council on wanting more colour to be introduced into the branding.

Colour Palette and Brand Inspiration:

Rich in history and heritage, the former townships of Normanby, Bentinck and Glenelg, the town of Durham and the village of Neustadt resonate with a deep sense of pride, tradition, and culture. The River Styx, Rocky Saugeen, Beatty Saugeen, and South Saugeen Rivers that transect our 876 square kilometre geography have always been the arteries that have connected our communities for generations. Today our towns and villages resonate with the vibrancy of community, commerce, and social energy, setting the stage for a bright future.

The colour palette is a crucial component of our brand refresh, serving several key purposes:

- The selected colours create a cohesive visual identity that distinguishes the West Grey logo and brand from other municipalities. They will be used consistently across all branding materials, including logos, signage, marketing materials, and digital platforms.
- Each colour is carefully chosen to evoke specific emotions and associations. By using colours that resonate with the community and its values, we aim to foster a deeper emotional connection with residents and visitors alike.
- The colours reflect different facets of West Grey, allowing us to tell a richer story about the area. Whether highlighting its natural beauty, agricultural roots, or vibrant community spirit, the palette helps communicate the unique character of West Grey.
- Consistent use of the colour palette will enhance brand recognition. When people see these colours, they will immediately associate them with West Grey, reinforcing our brand identity in their minds.
- By incorporating a range of colours, we celebrate the diversity of the community. Each hue represents different elements of West Grey's identity, ensuring that all aspects of the area are acknowledged and valued.

The colours proposed for the West Grey brand refresh have been selected after an extensive process of review and assessment, based on identified value propositions that reflect the history and heritage of the region, the natural attributes of our geography, as well as demographic and psychographic characteristics of the people and businesses that create the fabric of our municipality.

The colours recommended in the brand refresh guide are pulled directly from photographs and images of West Grey that were compiled in storyboards; the textures, the landscapes, geographic formations, skies, water, farmers' fields, forests and wildlife. Additional textures found within many of these images have further informed consideration of the proposed colour palette – strong, bold, natural and rugged.

Brown – Place of Industry

The communities in West Grey have a long and proud history of industry and commerce. That history continues to be reflected and honoured today in our business community, where generational businesses and business owners new to the area bring an entrepreneurial spirit to their work and continue to build a legacy that will support their families and the broader community long into the future. We are proud to be a working-class community, and across our 876 square kilometres you will find businesses and industries that specialize in resource-based activities such as

agriculture, forestry, stone and gravel, construction, and natural amenity-based recreation and social activities.

In the refreshed colour palette, the brown hue represents the earthy tones of the rich farmland that can be found throughout West Grey. It symbolizes stability, reliability, and the hardworking spirit of the community. This colour reflects the deep roots and traditions of the area, evoking a sense of warmth and connection to the land. Just as the soil nurtures crops, this brown represents the foundation upon which the community grows, embodying both resilience and a commitment to preserving the past while building for the future.

Green – Nestled in Nature

Our 876 square kilometre West Grey geography showcases the tapestry of the best of Ontario's rural landscape. The myriad of waterways that transect and connect our communities are the anchor for all-season recreational pursuits. Towering old-growth pines and forests can be seen when driving on our backroads, hiking our trails, and when visiting our parks and conservation areas. Ontario's rich agricultural heritage is evidenced by the rustic barns that dot the landscape and the farm fields that provide food for our community and contribute to our rural community. The Municipality of West Grey has utilized the tag line "nestled in nature" for many years, which embodies the abundance of opportunities that are rooted in nature and shape the essence of the community.

The green hue symbolizes the abundant natural beauty that West Grey is so fortunate to have. It represents growth and renewal, reflecting the landscapes that offer a sense of peace. The lush greens of the fields and forests emphasize the community's commitment to preserving its natural environment, inviting residents and visitors to explore the area's beauty.

Grey – Family Driven Communities

There is a bustle of activity in and around our towns and villages, evident by the people you see gathering and connecting, year-round. Residents and tourists embrace the myriad of pursuits available across the entire municipality: waterfalls and beaches; swimming, kayaking and tubing in the rivers; art galleries; Ontario's oldest operating brewery; shops, restaurants and cafes; all showcasing the best of West Grey.

The grey hue represents the strength and resilience of West Grey. It symbolizes the solid foundation of the community, reflecting its rich history and enduring spirit. Grey evokes a sense of balance and sophistication, mirroring the blend of traditional and modern elements found in the area's architecture and lifestyle.

Blue – Small Town Roots (Past, Present, and Future)

Our communities are shaped by their deep history and connection to the past. Germanic, Irish, and Mennonite communities first settled our town and villages, and many generational families still call this area home. While new residents have discovered the beauty of our municipality, and now call West Grey home, it is exciting to see generations working together, sharing a passion for building a long-term legacy for the future.

The blue hue represents trust and reliability, which are key components of West Grey's community. The strong bonds among residents foster a supportive environment, where businesses and individuals work together to create a welcoming atmosphere.

Fonts:

Each font in our brand refresh is selected to play a crucial role in conveying our brand's identity and values:

- Each font contributes to a distinctive visual identity, making West Grey recognizable across various communications and materials.
- The unique characteristics of each font evoke specific feelings and associations, helping us connect with community members and reflect the essence of West Grey.
- The variety of fonts showcases different aspects of our community—its history, culture, and modernity.
- A consistent use of fonts ensures uniformity across all branding materials, reinforcing a cohesive message and visual presence.
- Each font is designed for clarity and legibility, making our communications more engaging and easier to understand.
- Certain fonts may resonate with local heritage and pride, celebrating our community's unique character and fostering a sense of belonging.
- The range of fonts allows for versatility in application across various mediums, ensuring alignment with different community initiatives and events.
- A well-defined font selection contributes to brand recognition, helping community members and visitors easily associate materials and initiatives with West Grey.

By thoughtfully integrating these fonts into our brand refresh strategy, we reinforce our community's identity, values, and aspirations, creating a vibrant and unified presence.

Broadsheet LDO Font

This font is used in the logo for the words ‘West Grey’ in the refreshed brand.

The ‘Broadsheet LDO’ font is designed for clarity, making it easy to read both in print and on digital platforms. The font has a clean and professional look, which helps establish credibility and trust within the community. With various weights and styles, ‘Broadsheet LDO’ can be used across different media—posters, brochures, websites—maintaining a cohesive brand identity. The classic design of the font can evoke a sense of history and belonging. The font’s design often adheres to accessibility standards, ensuring that materials are inclusive and legible for all community members, and stands out among more common typefaces, helping to create a unique visual identity for the community.

Highway Font

This font is used adjacent to the logo/wordmark, as a companion to the core “West Grey” graphic: for the words ‘Municipality of’ (for all corporate and legal correspondence); in the tagline (‘Nestled in Nature’) or when the logo/wordmark includes the names of the individual communities (Ayton, Durham, Elmwood and Neustadt)

The ‘Highway’ font complements our branding by reinforcing a sense of belonging, modernity, and approachability, helping us engage effectively with both residents and visitors. Its rounded and open letterforms create a welcoming feel, as West Grey is accessible and friendly. The font family includes various weights and styles, allowing us to maintain a consistent visual identity across different materials, from signage to promotional materials. The clean lines of the ‘Highway’ font contribute to a contemporary look that aligns with our community’s forward-thinking values while still being grounded in tradition. Designed for clarity, ‘Highway’ ensures that our messaging is easy to read, which is essential for effective communication within our community.

Arial Font

This font is the primary font type for administrative purposes in, reports and public communications (i.e. media releases and public notices).

‘Arial’ is one of the most commonly used typefaces, making it familiar and easily recognizable to our community members. The font’s clean, sans-serif design enhances legibility in various formats, ensuring that our communications are clear and accessible. It conveys a straightforward and professional look, which is essential for official documents, reports, and public communications. With multiple weights and styles available, ‘Arial’ can be used effectively across different types of materials, from print to digital, maintaining a cohesive brand identity. ‘Arial’ is widely supported across different software and platforms, ensuring that our documents and communications appear consistently, regardless of where they are viewed.

Open Sans Font

This font will primarily be used for communications across West Grey's social media channels.

'Open Sans' is designed for excellent legibility, both on screens and in print. This ensures that our messages are clear and easily understood by all community members. It has a contemporary and clean aesthetic that reflects our commitment to professionalism and transparency in communication. With a range of weights and styles, 'Open Sans' is adaptable for various applications, helping us maintain a cohesive brand identity. The font's neutral design makes it suitable for a wide audience, allowing us to convey important information without overwhelming or distracting from the message.

Financial Implications:

The West Grey branding is found throughout the municipality. To avoid unnecessary costs, visual assets will be replaced as required, during the normal lifecycle replacement schedule. Internal forms and templates have minimal to zero budget impact as they are completed with in-house resources. This timeline ensures a smooth transition while respecting budget considerations and operational practicalities.

Communication Plan:

Communication of this report is through the posting of agendas on the West Grey website. Once approved, staff will update the branding on all electronic mediums and will communicate the refreshed brand through our social media platforms.

Consultation:

West Grey Senior Management Team

Communications Coordinator

Attachments:

- West Grey Brand Refresh Guide

Recommended by:

Jamie Eckenswiller, AOMC, AMP
Director of Legislative Services/Clerk

Submission approved by:

Michele Harris, Chief Administrative Officer

For more information on this report, please contact Jamie Eckenswiller, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk at clerk@westgrey.com or 519-369-2200 Ext. 229.