

How to Transition San Diego to a Tier I World Class City

By nearly all measures, EXCEPT ONE, San Diego has reached the point of being a Tier I World Class City. The one area where San Diego currently falls short (but need not for long) is that it does NOT have an iconic visual image and brand of itself to project to the world. (See the appendix on page 3 for an explanation of the tier rankings.)

Facts

1. Few cities in the world have as much to offer as San Diego does.
2. Even fewer cities in the world have successfully attached a meaningful and recognizable catchphrase to themselves. New York's "*Big Apple*" (launched in 1971) and Las Vegas's "*What Happens Here, Stays Here*" (launched in 2003) are two recent successes.
3. Most people visualize Tier I cities based on their iconic architecture, examples:
 - New York – we visualize its unique skyline and the Statue of Liberty
 - Chicago - we visualize the Sears Tower
 - San Francisco - we visualize the Golden Gate Bridge and Transamerica Building
 - Paris – we visualize the Eiffel Tower and Arc de Triomphe
 - Athens – we visualize the Parthenon and Acropolis
 - Cairo - we visualize the Great Pyramids and Sphinx at Giza
4. Tier II and III cities lack iconic architecture to define themselves. What do you visualize when you think of Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Miami, Atlanta, or Denver? What do people in Iowa or Missouri visualize when they think of San Diego? (The beach is not good enough...there are hundreds of other destinations that spur beach visuals as well.)
5. Seeking iconic architecture has become an elusive and ultra competitive game, not to mention enormously expensive and time consuming. It can still be done, as evidenced by the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain designed by Frank Gehry, but it is more difficult than ever. Is San Diego prepared to build a 120-story building in order to compete with the likes of New York, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai and Taipei?
6. No city we know of has successfully created a "non-architectural" iconic visual image of itself to project to the world; meaning something we would instantly visualize when we think of that city. (The one possible exception may be the statue of *Christ the Redeemer* on top of Corcovado Mountain in Rio de Janeiro.)
7. Corporations, on the other hand, have a long history of creating "non-architectural" iconic visual imagery to define themselves and their products, examples:
 - Walt Disney – Mickey Mouse
 - Nike – the swoosh
 - Coca Cola – white script with red background
 - Starbucks – the black and white female face encircled by green
 - Franklin Templeton Investments – Benjamin Franklin portrait
 - NBA – outline of dribbling basketball player

With These Important Facts in Mind, How Do We Successfully Establish an Iconic Visual Image and Brand for San Diego?

1. First and foremost, we must agree the time has come for San Diego to embrace a “visionary” branding plan that employs a new catchphrase along with complimentary iconic visual imagery. We, however, seek something far more expansive and elusive than just a business slogan and logo, we are seeking to embrace San Diego’s STATE OF MIND...as depicted in word and form.
2. Recognizing the reality that most Tier II cities are “locked out” of the iconic architectural imagery game, we need to follow the road less traveled in order to make our mark. This is the road corporations have successfully embraced, yet cities have not. This means we need to embrace “non-architectural” iconic visual imagery in order to trumpet SAN DIEGO to the world.
3. Corporate “non-architectural” visual imagery (logos) are almost always static creations that are used for products, letterhead, advertising, etc., and as such, most have limited shelf lives before becoming stale. In light of this, we need to go beyond the standard corporate branding strategies and embrace a “living logo”, one that can be continuously adapted to our varying needs.

How the “*Celebration of Life*” Art Series Fits Our Needs

The “*Celebration of Life*” art series fits our needs because it is not merely a logo, it is a living artistic interpretation of San Diego’s STATE OF MIND. As evidenced by the numerous examples in the *City of Life* proposal and *Life Sciences Addendum*, the “*Celebration*” imagery is exceptionally unique in that it can be incorporated into unlimited venues. No matter what the blue figures (backed by yellow and red) are doing, their very presence will trumpet SAN DIEGO to all who see them. Furthermore, because the blue figures do not have individual identities they can be utilized in both single and multiple figured designs. Try to think of another logo, corporate or not, that is as malleable and universal to diverse needs as this one is. (Not even Mickey Mouse can be employed in so many ways.)

By placing “*The Flight of Life*” on the Commuter Terminal at Lindbergh Field, along with other “*Celebration*” imagery at chosen locations, San Diego will quickly soar as the first city that truly defines itself through “non-architectural” iconic visual imagery.

Why Now?

With this campaign, San Diego has the “dynamic edge” and therefore the opportunity to leapfrog over all other Tier II cities. This is the final piece of the puzzle San Diego needs to become a distinct Tier I World Class City.

GREAT LEAPS FORWARD happen not by chance, but rather by seizing the day and taking calculated risks!

Appendix

The Three Tier Table for Categorizing Cities

This table is designed as a general tool for categorizing the cities of the world based on their familiarity. It is not intended to demean or diminish the importance and humanity of any city, large or small.

Tier I Cities – The large size population centers that are instantly recognized by a majority of the world’s populace. In fact, most people can site the general location of these cities and name the iconic visual imagery they are known for. (e.g. - New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Paris, London)

Tier II Cities – The mid and large size population centers that much of the world’s populace has heard of, but has little knowledge about. In fact, most people remain fuzzy on the specific locations of these cities and can NOT name any unique visual imagery they are known for. (e.g. - Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Miami, Atlanta, Denver)

Tier III Cities – The small and mid size population centers that a majority of the world’s populace has NOT heard of. (e.g. – Flagstaff, Roanoke, Spokane)