

**HI. WELCOME TO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HERE**

# PLACES ARE PEOPLE, TOO



## **Lev Kushner**

### **Economic Development Expert**

Lev has been forging real estate and economic development partnerships for over 14 years. A veteran of the Bloomberg Administration in New York City and both the Newsom and Lee Administrations in San Francisco, Lev created new places from the ground up. He is the founder of real estate consultancy Box Joint Advisors, where he navigates public and private projects through technical and political minefields. His past work includes rebuilding industrial campuses, creating new neighborhoods from former military bases, activating public spaces, and strengthening constituent relationships.



## **Josh Levine**

### **Brand Strategist**

For more than 15 years Josh Levine has built culture-driven brands that empower employees and engage customers. His passion for culture flows through all of his ventures: consulting with purpose-driven organizations as principal of Great Monday; redefining the future of work as co-founder of CultureLabX; and in conversation with MBA students as an instructor at California College of the Arts. Josh is a frequent contributor to conferences as well as national business publications. His book Great Mondays: How to Design a Company Culture Employees Love will be published in 2018 with McGraw-Hill Education.

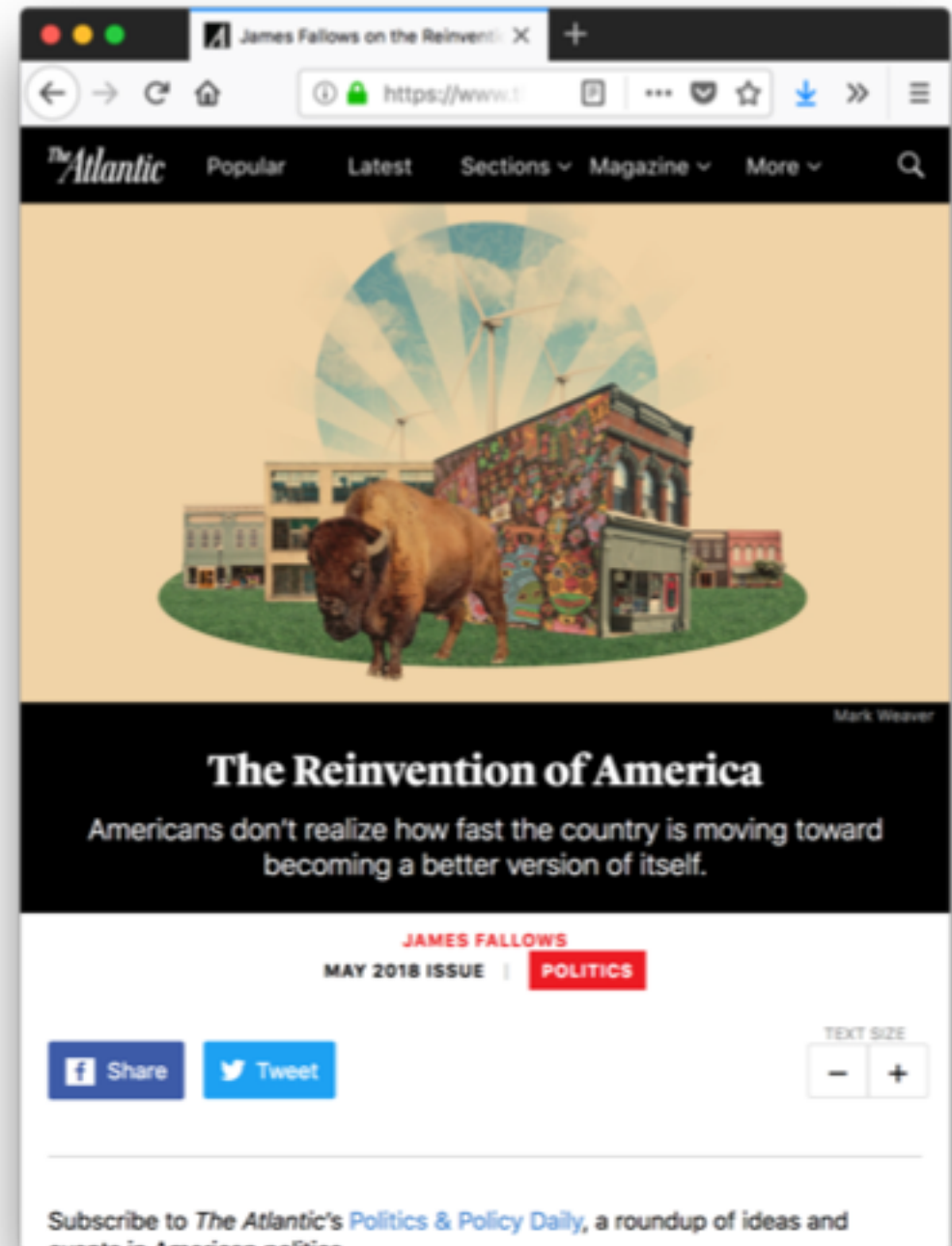
# places are changing

In today's rapidly changing urban environments, with contentious gentrification battles, a revolutionizing retail landscape, shared work- and living-spaces, and increasing social dislocation, places desperately need compelling, thoughtful brand stories to forge lasting connections with residents, visitors, and businesses.

In James Fallows' article "The Reinvention of America" in *The Atlantic*, he writes about a young man whose move from a coastal city to a small town has made him feel fulfilled.

"If you want to **consume** a fabulous community, you could move to some place like Brooklyn," the man says.

"If you want to **create** a great community, you move someplace that needs your help," like his new hometown.







# places give meaning

The places you inhabit give meaning to your day-to-day existence through your relationship with them. You come to know them as characters in your life.

Every place has a personality.  
We surface it.

# WHAT IS BRAND STRATEGY, ANYHOW?



**BRAND  
IS  
YOUR REPUTATION**

**BRAND  
STRATEGY  
IS  
THE STORY THAT  
CREATES IT**



**REAL ESTATE**

**DESTINATION**

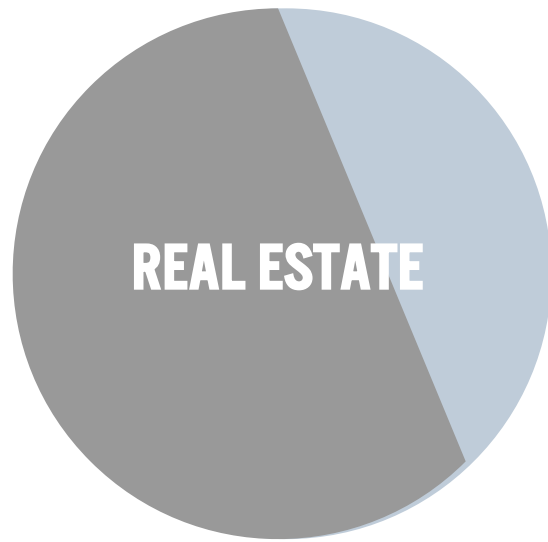
# Place Branding

exists for these



# Place Branding

but not for this



**REAL ESTATE**



**DESTINATION**



**ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

# Place Brand Strategy

In reality, what others call 'branding' for these areas is actually just marketing—brochures and logos—and most of it happens too late to make a difference. Department of Here works with clients to develop a brand strategy from the get-go that brings the personality of place to life so they can achieve their goals faster.

# HOW WE DO IT (OUR 6-ISH STEPS)

## 1 Identify the core value

Through interviews and workshops, we work with the client to determine the key issues and identify the core value of the organization.

## 2 Understand the market

We learn what we don't know and report on competitors and economic drivers.

## 3 Define what's different

Positioning is all about finding what is unique about who you are and do. We compare the values from 1, and identify which are most compelling.

## 4 Find your people

To help us and our clients understand the people we're trying to reach we talk to audience types and produce composites of 3-5 personas.

## 5 Write the story

We develop story directions to share with our client. This internal language defines the strategy and creates alignment.

## 6 Look, Talk, Act

Now it's time to tell the world. We develop targeted messaging and work with clients to develop visual identities and strategic roll-outs.



In the world of brand, your story is communicated in three ways:

- 1 How you talk
- 2 How you look
- 3 How you act

When the *brand* is a *place*, these three channels become

- 1 Brand messaging
- 2 Urban design and graphics
- 3 Events and activities



OUR CLIENTS ARE

properties / neighborhoods /  
cities / regions

Our projects typically fall into one of two types.

01

**ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

02

**REAL ESTATE  
DEVELOPMENT**

Project Type 01

# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

is for clients who represent an existing place—an arts district, a downtown, a city or an entire region—and need to articulate its personality so they can better attract and retain business.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE WHO IS THIS PLACE?

1

Yes, businesses come to or stay in a city because it is economically viable, but they also want to be friends with it. They may not say it, but leaders of companies choose a city because they like its values and traditions and want them to rub off on their company.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE  
BE A YARD GOAT (OWN YOUR QUIRKS)

2

The Connecticut Yard Goats are a minor league baseball team. The name might seem odd at first, but it's all about encapsulating their city's personality. When considering your city's story, own your quirks. The most effective stories are the one's that stand out. Don't try to be like someone else: be you.

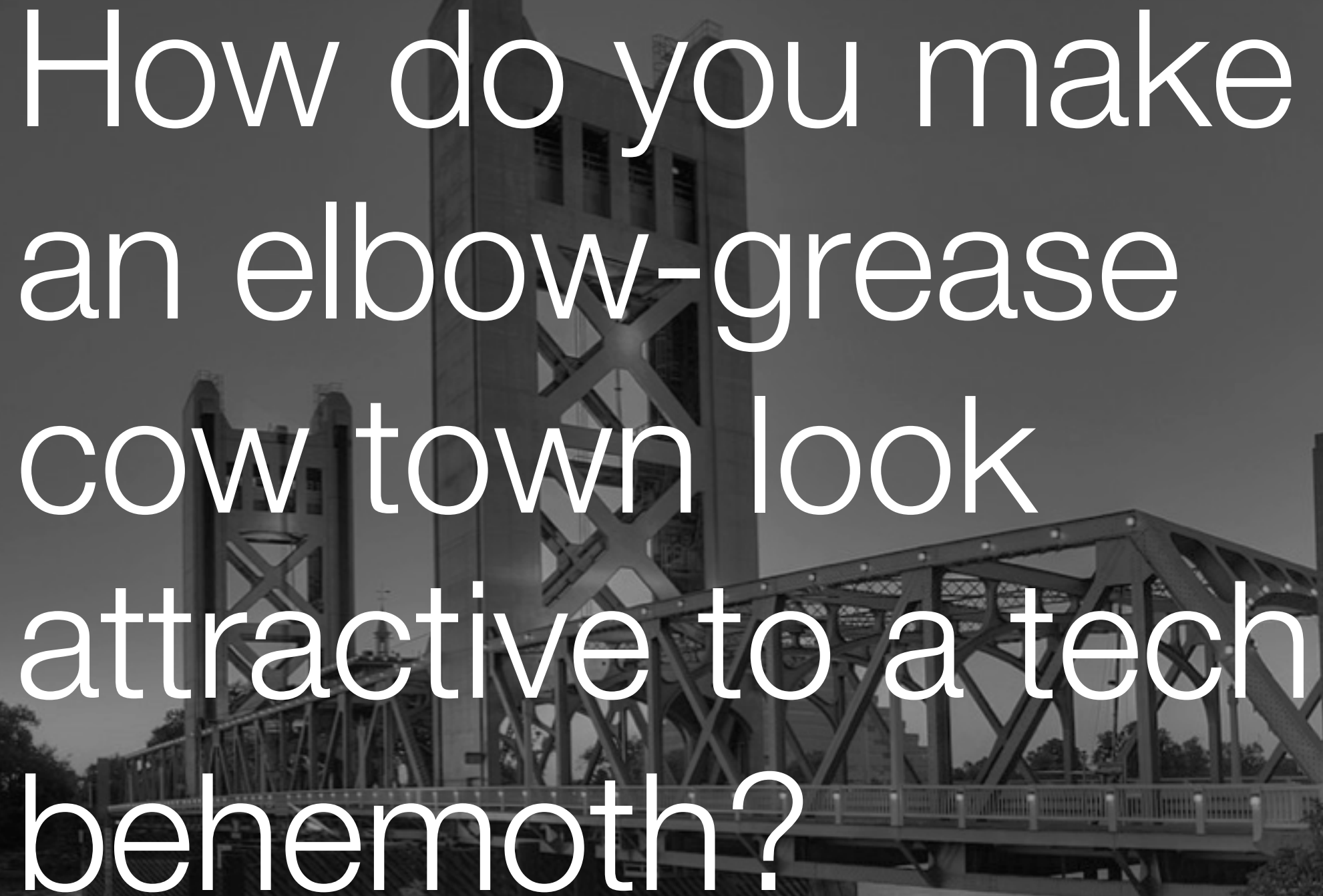


Repurposing your tourism brand to lure companies is like using a duck call to hail a taxi. People choose where to visit based on what they want to do for a week. But what's fun in small doses is not necessarily ideal for the rest of your life.

We applied these three principles when we helped the **Greater Sacramento Economic Council** develop their pitch for Amazon's second headquarters.

Through our research we realized Sacramento had to answer only one question.





How do you make  
an elbow-grease  
cow town look  
attractive to a tech  
behemoth?

The first strategic deliverable in all of our work is the **positioning statement**, a single statement that outlines the argument in four parts and drives the story that separates you from the competition.

## COMPETITIVE FRAME

The lens through which you position yourself against other choices

## TARGET MARKET

Narrows the focus to an audience, both existing and potential

## BENEFIT

What you have that your target needs

## REASON TO BELIEVE

Why we are the only one who can offer it

## COMPETITIVE FRAME

Sacramento combines the California culture of innovation, the wide open landscape and lifestyle of the Great American West, and the upstanding stability of farming and ranching life.

## TARGET MARKET

From day one, Sacramento has attracted leaders who know how to push hard and keep people working together. Our young, big-hearted culture anchors our region's growth.

Sacramento is the Heartland of the New West,

where people and companies that prioritize relationships

have always cut a new path

because tenacity, stability, and honesty is who we are.

## BENEFIT

Sacramentans know this is where you build your future. You work hard and you get creative - that's how we define success.

## REASON TO BELIEVE

Sacramento is good living distilled down to its roots. This is a city that's favorite cafe was launched using an honor code pay system. Our cherished architectural landmark is called The Barn.



Once our positioning is set, we developed messaging. Our deliverable includes 100, 50, and 10-word stories, but when we can we try to say it in even fewer words.

A photograph of a crowd of fans at a Sacramento Kings game. In the foreground, a young girl with purple face paint and a purple baseball cap is holding a purple sign that says "SACRAMENTO PROUD". To her left, a boy is wearing a black baseball cap and a purple t-shirt. In the background, other fans are visible, some wearing purple clothing. The text "THE HEARTLAND OF THE NEW WEST" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

# THE HEARTLAND OF THE NEW WEST

Project Type 02

# **REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT**

is for the clients who own the property — whether it's a patch of dirt, an existing building, or a campus — and have greater control over the birth and growth of the project.

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE  
**ENTITLEMENT IS SALES**

1

Real estate developers often hire marketing firms to inform their building designs and brand the product. That's two years too late. Entitlement is an exercise in communicating what the building will be. To do that, you need to establish the outlines of the project and build trust with stakeholders by staying consistent.

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE  
**STORIES NOT METRICS**

2

Skeptical stakeholders will never be calmed by knowing a parking ratio or the number of units. Never forget that everything about a building revolves around people - they design it, they approve it, and they will live in it - and people are moved by stories.

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE  
**WORDS + DEEDS**

3

Having a resonant narrative isn't enough; you have to back it up with actions that reflect the story. Do you have a vacant parcel? Fill it with events and temporary uses that grow out of your story.



Department of Here was asked by real estate developer **Long Market Property Partners** to help them tell a story that would flip negative associations with the city of Concord.





# The Shops at **Todos Santos**

The place has all the amenities but is on the wrong side of the tracks. Brokers get nowhere. How can you make people take a second look?

### TARGET MARKET

Young families and individuals who are moving from the inner Bay Area, professionals who work nearby, and existing Contra Costa residents.

### COMPETITIVE FRAME

With transit and amenities befitting the largest city in Contra Costa County, paired with traditional West Coast Americana roots, Todos Santos is an accessible, uniquely activated urban plaza with a small town feel.

The Bay Area comes to Todos Santos

a quintessential town square in a classic early California city,

to find a place where life is good

in a neighborhood that is how it used to be, today.

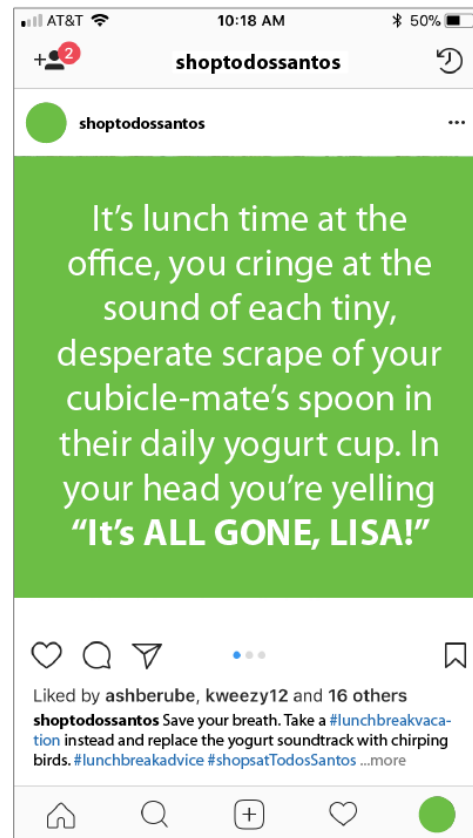
### BENEFIT

The good life is defined by stress reduction (affordability), an escape from cubicle life and the car-dominated strip malls (walkability), and meaningful interactions with people and places (authenticity).

### REASON TO BELIEVE

Todos Santos ties together the roots and salt-of-the-earthiness of 20th Century hometown America with the amenities of 21st Century life.

# Todos Santos: How life used to be, today.



# LET'S TALK

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