

‘Do More. Due East’: Santee responds to ‘East County stigma’ with new brand  
By: Shayne Jones

On a summer night in 1975, Lynda Marrokal leaped through the tall grasses that skirt Santee Lakes towards a cave the other Santee neighborhood kids called Sleepy Hollow. She was supposed to meet some friends there for a keg party.

As she approached, the familiar sound of bonfire wood crackling made Lynda grin. But when she rounded the last corner, her grin vanished and she whipped around, sprinting back towards Mast Boulevard. Behind her, a blazing inferno engulfed a cross and figures in pointed white hoods encircled it, chanting.

The Klu Klux Klan was having a meeting.

Marrokal, who is now 62 years old and has lived her entire life in the southwest end of Santee, said that while her city has previously been referred to as “Klantee” by San Diegans due to its history of hosting the KKK and a white supremacy group called the “Santee Originals,” it has grown tremendously over the years.

“We’ve changed. We’re not like we were in the past,” Marrokal said. “That stigma should go away.”



In February, the Santee City Council approved an \$80,000 contract with North Star Destination Strategies to help the city create a new brand. The Tennessee-based marketing agency worked with the Envision Santee planning committee for nearly ten months, discussing their plans for the city and analyzing over 1,000 survey responses from people who live and work in the city.

**North Star Destination strategies  
unveiled brand logo and strapline  
at Dec. 11 council meeting**

At a council meeting Dec. 11, Ed Barlow, the company’s vice president and strategic planner, unveiled the new logo and strapline for Santee: “Do More, Due East.”

“I do warn you that a logo and a line are not going to do all of your work,” Barlow said at the meeting, addressing members of the council.

How the city utilizes its new brand over the course of the next two years, Barlow said, will determine how well the Santee community receives it.

The council members agreed that using the brand to emphasize the positive aspects of their city would have the greatest impact on people’s perceptions.

“We are trying to dispel any negativity in our past,” City Councilman Stephen Houlahan said in an interview with San Diego Union-Tribune. “And if there is any current negativity, we want to face it head on.”

Jesse Jewell is an SDSU junior and grew up in Santee. Jewell attended West Hills High School, which she said was colloquially titled “White Hills High School” at the time due to its predominantly Caucasian student body.

“Growing up in Santee, the ‘Klantee’ stigma was an unspoken, but well-known stain on the city’s history,” Jewell said. “The area is still not known for its diversity, but there has been some change over the years, however little.”

Jewell said that a brand change may be effective in mitigating a portion of the preconceived notions people have of Santee, but if the purpose of the campaign is to “paint over” the “Klantee” stigma then the city could still receive negative backlash.

“It’s a serious issue that I think is important to address,” Jewell said. “I believe the effort that the city is putting forth to rectify this is a step in the right direction.”