

A tropical landscape at sunset. The foreground is filled with a field of green plants and small, colorful flowers. In the middle ground, there are several palm trees, including a large one on the right and a smaller one on the left. The background shows a bright sunset over a body of water, with the sun low on the horizon. The sky is a mix of blue and orange.

# ISLE *of* PALMS

**RESPONSE TO RFP 2026-02  
CITY OF ISLE OF PALMS,  
SOUTH CAROLINA**

Markstein  
**Brand**ab****

## **A. COVER LETTER**

### **City of Isle of Palms**

**Attn:** Joshua Uys, Public Information Officer

The Isle of Palms is more than simply a destination. It's a balance between a thriving residential community and a nationally recognized coastal destination.

Markstein has a clear understanding of that balance. The City is making a strategic decision to unify how it communicates as a government, community, and family-friendly beach destination. And that is exactly the kind of work we're built to do.

For more than 20 years, we have partnered with municipalities and public-sector organizations to translate complex civic identities into clear, practical brand systems. Systems that work across departments, across audiences, and across real-world applications, from signage and documents to digital platforms and destination marketing.

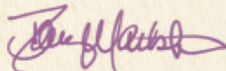
As an out-of-state partner, we bring an advantage that is particularly valuable for this moment. We see Isle of Palms with fresh eyes, free from local assumptions, while applying national best practices. Just as important, our process is deeply collaborative, ensuring the final brand is shaped by the City's voice, its leadership, and its community.

We understand the stakes. The brand must do more than look good. It must align stakeholders, strengthen perception, and function consistently across every touchpoint.

We are confident in our ability to deliver a brand system that is strategically grounded, visually distinctive, operationally practical, and worthy of Isle of Palms.

**Thank you for your consideration.**

Sincerely,



Danny Markstein (Authorized representative for this proposal)  
Founder & Chairman  
danny@markstein.co  
202.262.0966

## **B. UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROJECT**

**The City of Isle of Palms** is undertaking a comprehensive branding initiative that goes beyond visual identity. The goal is to create a unified system that represents the City as a family-friendly beach destination, aligns with its Strategic and Comprehensive Plans, works across government operations and destination marketing, and reflects input from leadership, staff, residents and tourism partners.

Currently, inconsistent visuals and messaging across departments weaken clarity and trust. The new brand will establish a cohesive, flexible, and credible system that works across all applications.

This effort focuses on four core goals:

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01 | Unifying how the City communicates

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02 | Strengthening Isle of Palms' position as a premier family-oriented destination

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03 | Aligning stakeholders across government and tourism

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04 | Supporting long-term implementation with practical tools and guidance

## C. FIRM PROFILE & QUALIFICATIONS

Markstein is a full-service strategic communications and brand firm founded in 2003. We specialize in helping municipalities, public agencies, and place-based organizations clarify who they are and communicate effectively through strategy, design, and implementation.



### **What sets us apart:**

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#### **Built for real-world use:**

We design identity systems that work across daily government applications: documents, signage, apparel, vehicles, websites, and more.

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#### **Strategic before stylistic:**

We begin with research, alignment, and positioning before design, ensuring the final work is meaningful, defensible, and effective.

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#### **Stakeholder-centered process:**

Our approach builds alignment among leadership, staff, and partners, reducing friction and increasing adoption.

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#### **Implementation-minded:**

We deliver systems that are scalable, usable, and sustainable, not just visually compelling.

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### **Out-of-State Advantage**

Our out-of-state perspective is a strength, not a limitation. We bring objective insight free from local bias or legacy constraints and proven frameworks that accelerate clarity and decision-making. At the same time, our process is immersive and collaborative, ensuring the final brand reflects Isle of Palms authentically.

## D. PROJECT APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

Our approach is structured, collaborative, and tailored to municipal decision-making.

### Phase 1: Discovery and Alignment

We begin by listening and learning.

#### Activities:

- Stakeholder interviews with City staff, City Council, the Charleston Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), and key community partners
- Audit of existing brand usage
- Review of strategic plans and materials
- Competitive and peer destination analysis
- Identification of key brand elements, messaging opportunities, and success criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the brand

**Outcome:** A shared understanding of goals, audiences, challenges, and opportunities.

### Phase 2: Brand Strategy & Positioning

We translate insight into a clear strategic foundation.

#### Activities:

- Define brand positioning and narrative
- Identify core themes and differentiators
- Develop messaging framework and tagline direction
- Align with family-friendly destination positioning

**Outcome:** A strategic platform that guides all creative decisions.



### Phase 3: Brand Identity Development

We develop and present multiple branding concepts for review, each grounded in strategy and tested across real-world applications. Deliverables include logo and seal system, color palette, typography, iconography, and visual language.

Each concept is tested across real-world applications to ensure usability.

### Phase 4: Refinement & Validation

We refine selected concepts through structured feedback, including a facilitated workshop with City Council and key stakeholders, followed by iterative revisions.

**Outcome:** A finalized identity with strong alignment and confidence.

### Phase 5: Brand Guidelines & Asset Development

We translate the brand into a usable system.

#### Deliverables:

- Comprehensive brand guideline
- Templates (letterhead, presentations, social media, etc.)
- Digital asset library

### Phase 6: Implementation & Launch Strategy

We ensure the brand is successfully adopted and activated.

#### Activities:

- 3-year implementation roadmap
- Internal rollout strategy
- Public launch campaign recommendations
- Training and guidance for City staff



## **E. DELIVERABLES**

### Markstein will provide:

- Executive summary report with findings
- Brand strategy and positioning
- Logo, seal, and visual identity system
- Tagline, vision statement, and messaging framework
- Comprehensive brand guidelines
- Templates for signage, brochures, website layouts, presentations, social media, report covers, letterheads, business cards, and email signatures
- Editable asset files in standard formats for ongoing City use
- Three-year implementation roadmap
- Brand rollout and launch strategy

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**All final branding assets and materials will be delivered in editable formats and will become the property of the City of Isle of Palms for ongoing use in accordance with the established brand standards.**

## **F. MEASUREMENT & SUCCESS METRICS**

Markstein will define and track success through measurable outcomes aligned with the City’s goals as both a municipality and destination.

**Key metrics may include:**

- Brand consistency across departments and materials
- Stakeholder adoption and ease of implementation
- Engagement across digital platforms and communications
- Perception of Isle of Palms as a family-friendly destination
- Alignment between City, residents, and tourism partners

**We will provide guidance on how to monitor and evaluate these metrics over time, ensuring the brand continues to deliver long-term value.**

## **G. TARGET AUDIENCES**

We recognize that Isle of Palms must speak to multiple audiences simultaneously, each with distinct motivations:

**Residents**

Value quality of life, preservation of character, and responsible growth.

**Visitors (Families)**

Seek safe, memorable, and accessible beach experiences.

**Tourists (Regional & National)**

Look for differentiated coastal destinations with strong identity and ease of planning.

**City Staff & Departments**

Need tools that are clear, consistent, and easy to implement.

**Tourism & Community Partners (CVB, businesses)**

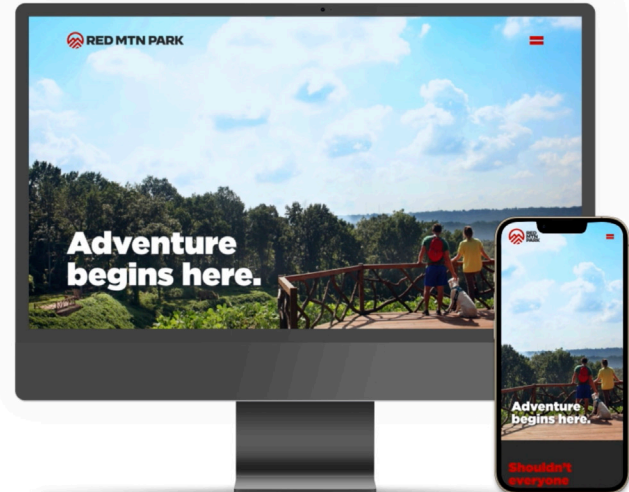
Require a flexible system that supports collaboration and amplification.

## **H. FIRM EXPERIENCE AND PAST PERFORMANCE PROJECTS**

Markstein brings more than 20 years of experience delivering brand strategy and identity systems for municipalities, public agencies, and community-based organizations. Our work is grounded in stakeholder alignment, practical implementation, and real-world usability across daily applications.

The following projects demonstrate our ability to meet Isle of Palm’s requirements, including developing clear, recognizable identity systems, balancing heritage with modernization, and ensuring consistent application across departments and use cases.





**Red Mountain Park**  
**Scope: Brand Strategy, Visual Identity System, Brand Application**

**Challenge**

The park needed to differentiate itself within a competitive recreation market while increasing awareness and visitation, while also improving how visitors navigated and experienced the park across multiple touchpoints.

**Solution**

Markstein evolved the park's brand identity and visitor experience through updated visual systems, messaging, and wayfinding, ensuring the brand was consistently expressed across signage, materials, and communications while enhancing clarity and usability.

**Results**

The refreshed brand strengthened the park's reputation as a premier outdoor destination, improved visitor experience and navigation, and created a more cohesive and memorable brand presence that supports increased awareness and engagement.

**Relevance to Isle of Palms**

Demonstrates Markstein's ability to position a place as a destination, aligning brand identity with visitor experience, directly applicable to Isle of Palms' goal of strengthening its identity as a family-friendly beach destination.



### **Cahaba River Coalition**

**Scope: Brand Identity, Visual System, Stakeholder Alignment**

#### **Challenge**

Following a merger, the organization needed to unify two established entities under a single identity while honoring legacy equity, aligning stakeholders, and clearly communicating its mission to the public and partners.

#### **Solution**

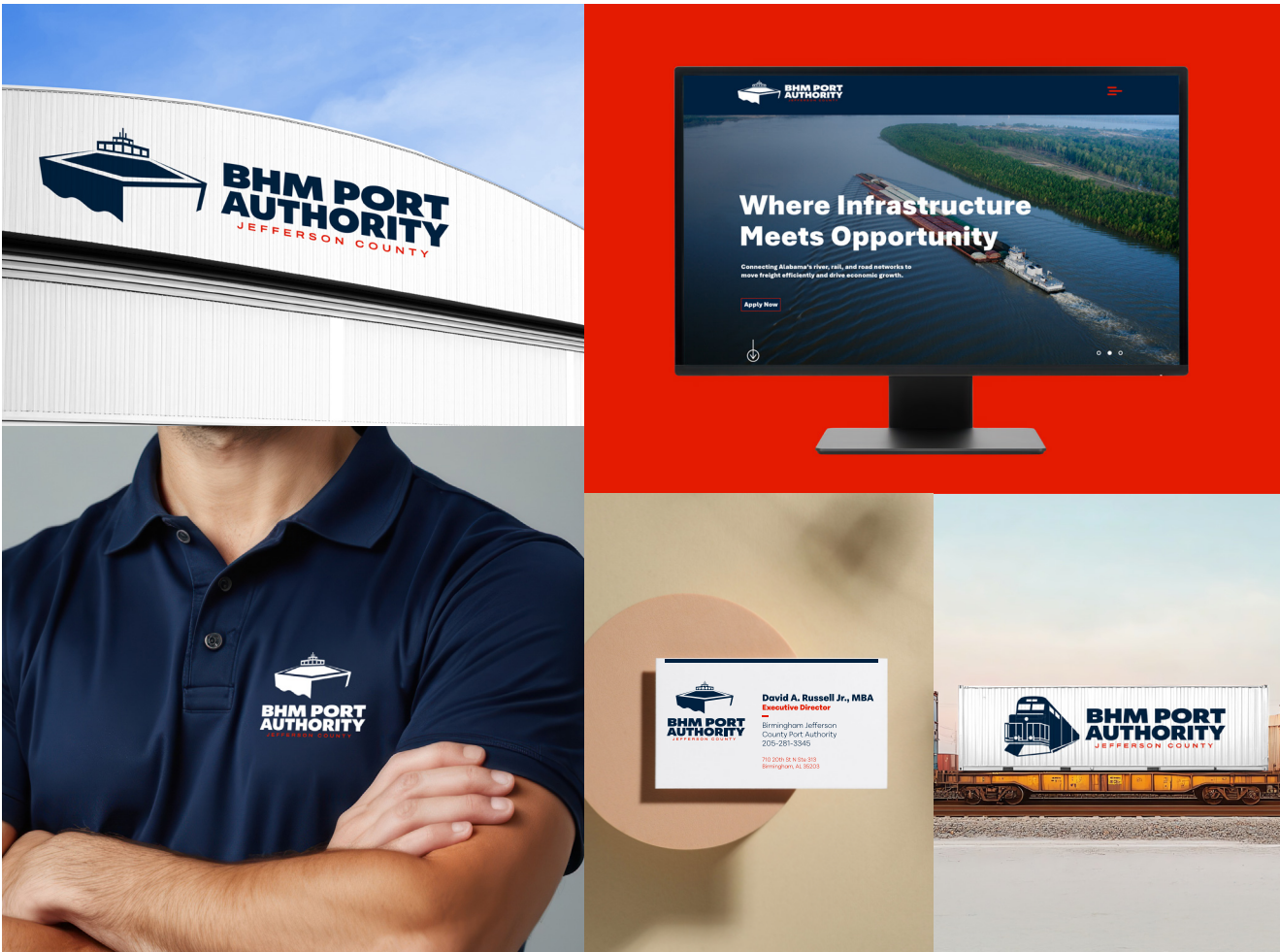
Markstein developed multiple brand concepts rooted in the river's natural identity and refined a unified direction into a comprehensive brand system, including logo, messaging framework, color palette, typography, and detailed brand guidelines designed for consistent application across all communications and partners.

#### **Results**

The resulting brand successfully unified the organization under a single, cohesive identity, strengthened stakeholder alignment, and established a clear, compelling public presence, providing a durable foundation for consistent communication and long-term engagement.

#### **Relevance to Isle of Palms**

Demonstrates our ability to translate natural assets and sense of place into a compelling, unified brand, directly aligned with Isle of Palms' need to reflect its beach, marsh, and community character while appealing to families and visitors.



**Birmingham-Jefferson County Port Authority (BJCPA)**  
**Scope: Brand Strategy, Visual Identity System, Brand Application**

**Challenge**

BJCPA lacked a consistent brand across touchpoints, limiting its ability to clearly communicate its value and effectively engage diverse audiences, including visitors, partners, and stakeholders.

**Solution**

Markstein refined BJCPA’s messaging and developed a cohesive visual identity system, extending the brand into a modern digital experience designed to ensure consistency across communications, marketing, and operational applications.

**Results**

The work resulted in a stronger, more unified public presence, improved clarity across audiences, and a scalable brand system that supports long-term communication, engagement, and growth.

**Relevance to Isle of Palms**

Demonstrates our ability to unify fragmented communications into a cohesive brand system that works across audiences, critical for balancing Isle of Palms’ identity as both a municipality and a destination



**100 Alabama Miles Challenge**  
**Scope: Brand Identity, Visual System, Website**

**Challenge**

The 100 Alabama Miles Challenge is a statewide program designed to inspire all Alabamians to kick-start an active, healthy lifestyle while exploring the beautiful state and connecting with fellow participants.

**Solution**

Markstein worked with community and public health leaders to design and promote the 100 Alabama Miles Challenge to walk, run, hike, bike, swim, paddle, ride or roll 100 miles each year.

**Results**

The visual identity included over 200 custom badges and a website where Alabamians could log their miles and parks visited. This helped pave the way for Alabamians to log more than 120,000 miles to date.

**Relevance to Isle of Palms**

Demonstrates Markstein's ability to build and design a cohesive brand system for a public entity, inspiring action and using a visual brand ecosystem to highlight the uniqueness of place and natural beauty.



**Jefferson County Greenways Commission (JCGC)**  
**Scope: Brand Identity, Visual System, Stakeholder Alignment**

**Challenge**

As a newly formed public entity overseeing multiple parks and preserves, JCGC needed a cohesive identity that could unify properties, align stakeholders, and function consistently across communications and public-facing materials.

**Solution**

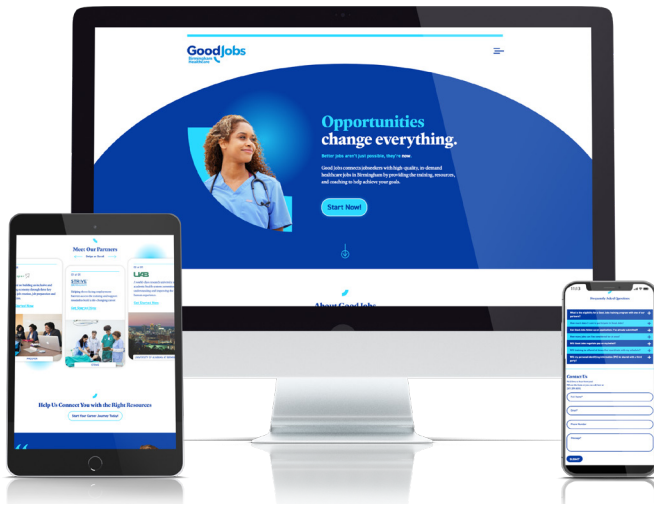
Markstein created a unified brand identity and supporting brand standards designed for flexibility and scalability, ensuring consistent application across properties, teams, and communication channels.

**Results**

The new identity established a clear and cohesive public presence, improved stakeholder alignment, and provided a strong, practical foundation for ongoing communication, fundraising, and long-term brand management.

**Relevance to Isle of Palms**

Demonstrates Markstein’s ability to build a unified, multi-use brand system for a public entity, directly aligned with Isle of Palms’ need for consistency across departments, partners, and applications.



**Good Jobs Birmingham**  
**Scope: Brand Identity, Visual System, Digital Platform, Stakeholder Alignment**

**Challenge**

A City-led initiative designed to serve multiple audiences through coordinated communication and outreach—similar to Isle of Palms’ need to align City departments, partners, and the public under one brand. The initiative needed to communicate complex information clearly while aligning multiple stakeholders, including City departments and community partners with varying priorities.

**Solution**

Markstein developed a clear and accessible brand identity system designed for consistent use across departments, partners, and outreach efforts. This included a flexible visual system and an integrated digital platform that simplified communication, improved usability, and ensured the brand could be easily adopted across a wide range of users and applications.

**Results**

The work resulted in significantly improved clarity and accessibility of communications, along with stronger alignment across City departments and community partners. The system continues to support scalable growth, enabling consistent messaging and brand application over time.

**Relevance to Isle of Palms**

Directly reflects our ability to create brands that are not only compelling, but usable across departments and partners, essential for consistent implementation across City operations and tourism efforts.

## I. PROJECT TEAM AND ROLES

**Markstein assigns a senior-led, multidisciplinary team to every municipal engagement. This team structure ensures Isle of Palms receives both high-level strategic thinking and hands-on execution with a single point of contact, regular check-ins, and direct access to senior leadership throughout.**



**Danny Markstein**  
**Founder & Chairman**

Danny provides executive oversight, ensuring the work aligns with the City's long-term vision, stakeholder priorities, and positioning as a family-friendly beach destination. With more than 20 years of experience advising municipalities and public-sector organizations, he brings a national perspective on how communities successfully define and differentiate themselves. Danny ensures the final brand reflects both the character of Isle of Palms and the expectations of modern destination audiences.



**Chris Hoke**  
**Chief Creative Officer**

Chris leads overall creative direction, ensuring the brand identity is both visually compelling and strategically grounded in place. His work focuses on translating community character, natural assets, and destination appeal into clear, memorable visual systems. For Isle of Palms, Chris will guide the development of a brand that captures the island's coastal identity while remaining flexible across tourism, civic, and operational applications.



**Patrick Daugherty**  
**Creative Director**

Patrick leads the development of the visual identity system, ensuring it functions seamlessly across real-world applications—from signage and wayfinding to digital platforms and promotional materials. He specializes in creating identity systems that are both distinctive and highly usable, ensuring consistency across City departments and visitor-facing touchpoints.



**Angela Thomas**  
**Brand Director**

Angela leads day-to-day brand strategy and stakeholder engagement, ensuring alignment across City leadership, staff, and external partners such as the CVB. She facilitates input, synthesizes feedback, and ensures the final brand reflects a shared vision. Her role is critical in building consensus and delivering a brand that is both authentic to the community and effective as a destination platform.



**Katie Doyle**  
**Director of Content**

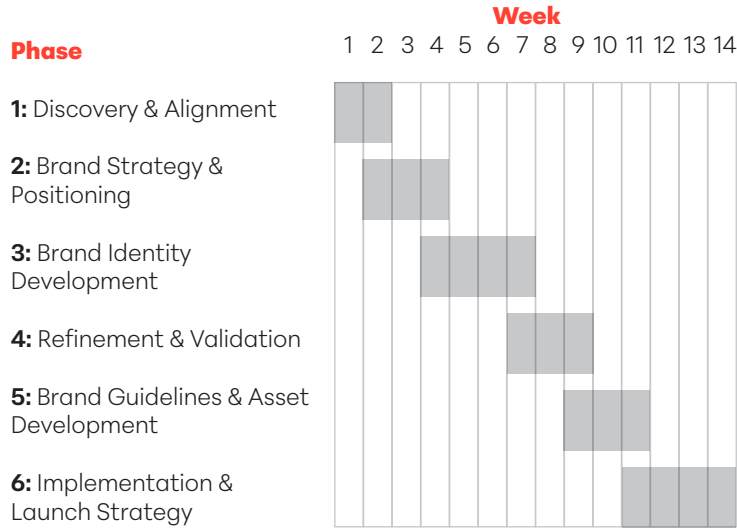
Katie leads the development of messaging and brand voice, ensuring the identity is supported by clear, compelling language. She focuses on articulating Isle of Palms' unique positioning as a family-friendly beach destination, translating strategy into messaging that resonates with residents, visitors, and partners. Her work ensures consistency between visual identity and verbal expression across all communications.



**Sarah English Fields**  
**Director of Project Operations**

Sarah English serves as the primary point of contact and oversees all project management, timelines, and coordination. She ensures the project remains on schedule, on budget, and aligned with milestones, while facilitating communication between the City, stakeholders, and the Markstein team. Her structured approach ensures a smooth, transparent process from discovery through implementation.

## J. PROJECT TIMELINE



**TOTAL = 14 WEEKS**

## K. COST PROPOSAL

Phase	Cost
1: Discovery & Alignment	\$7,500
2: Brand Strategy & Positioning	\$7,000
3: Brand Identity Development	\$11,000
4: Refinement & Validation	\$3,500
5: Brand Guidelines & Asset Development	\$9,000
6: Implementation & Launch Strategy	\$6,500

**TOTAL \$44,500**

## L. REFERENCES

### David A. Russell Jr., MBA

Executive Director  
Birmingham-Jefferson County  
Port Authority

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### Dr. Olivia Cook Howell

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### David Butler

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