

Double vision



Here are some current slogans for U.S. cities — and what they don't want you to know.

CITY	WHAT THEY PITCH	WHAT THEY HIDE
Las Vegas	What Happens Here, Stays Here	Bribery convictions of ex-pols in sex-laced "G-Sting" trial
Cleveland	Cleveland Rocks!	Mistake On The Lake
Baltimore	Get In On It	2004-05 homicide rate: 37.7 per 100,000
Hershey	The Sweetest Place On Earth	Onion headline: 'Hershey's Ordered To Pay Obese Americans \$135 Billion'
Palm Springs	Give In To The Desert, You're Surrounded	Give In To The Boredom, You're Surrounded

Every city wants a ditty; not all of them are pretty

By HOLLY M. SANDERS

Blame it on something in the water, but a slogan craze seems to be sweeping U.S. cities.

From Baltimore to Palm Springs, Calif., more and more towns are trying to craft distinctive catchphrases that helped set places such as New York and Las Vegas apart from the pack.

TaglineGuru, which last year released a ranking of the city slogans based on a survey of ad execs, estimates some 80 percent of towns with populations of 25,000 or more either have a motto or are actively trying to come up with one.

Plenty of places sport mottos born of history, tradition or geography, but the current surge in

sloganeering is being driven by cities that are serious about branding and have the marketing budgets to boot.

A growing number, especially those slogan-challenged cities, are hiring marketing firms to help them. Allen Adamson, a managing director at branding firm Landor Associates, said it seems each week a new one comes calling.

"They're coming in everyday," he said. "We have to decide which ones are serious and have the stomach and the wallet for the long-term view."

Baltimore paid Landor \$500,000 to come up with its new slogan: "Get In On It." The city will spend a reported \$1.2 million more on a marketing campaign.

The hope is that people will see the city as a secret waiting to be discovered rather than a place with a historically high crime rate.

"It's not just the slogan," said Eric Swartz, the president of TaglineGuru. "That may be the battle cry, but it's an empty promise unless you can back it up."

Las Vegas gets the credit — or the blame — for kicking off the slogan race with "What Happens Here, Stays Here," considered by many to be a clever nod to the city's sinful past.

"Vegas was a hit when people thought it was impossible to come up with a good slogan," said Erik Torkells, editor-in-chief of Budget Travel.