

## Washrooms attract more than flies and other notes of convenience

### The Rule of Visitor Amenities

#### Suggestion:

Washrooms translate to spending. They are one of the easiest ways to get travelers to stop in your community. If public washrooms also include a visitor information kiosk, or if they are located next to a gift shop, restaurant or attraction, the facilities can be very effective at bringing in customers.

Many businesses make the mistake of posting signs stating that washrooms are for customers only. These type of prohibitive signs discourage visitors from becoming customers. Rather than just telling people “No!”, tell them where they can find the public washrooms, as this shop in Wickford, RI, does. Posted on their door, the sign lets visitors know that public restrooms are located behind the pharmacy.

Smart communities have a profitable secret - they provide people with what they need most. People need washrooms. Provide them, and promote them.



## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

Visitors don't just travel during business hours. Make sure your visitor information is working 24/7, 365 days a year. Provide outdoor displays, visitor information kiosks, and weather-proof brochure holders.

Place your visitor information in a place where travelers can also spend money. When they stop for information, it's natural for travelers to want to stretch their legs. If there is a shop or restaurant nearby, they'll be very likely to pay a visit.

These kiosks are never closed. The Teton Pass Trail kiosk (top right) is designed to fit the mountain ambiance. Ashland, Oregon's kiosk (bottom left) offers a wealth of information, from lodging and dining information, to maps and information about the Shakespeare festival. Moses Lake's little "information station" (top left, bottom right) cross-sells sites throughout the area. You could certainly improve on the graphics, but at least they have the right idea of promoting "must see" attractions while in the area.





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS



### Suggestion:

There are several different ways to provide 24-hour visitor information. The gazebo (top left) is located in Beatty, Nevada near Death Valley. A local craftsperson developed the kiosk inside the gazebo, which has maps of the area and provides brochure distribution for local merchants. This gives a great opportunity to promote local businesses and to cross-sell to other activities in the region.

This Visitor Center (top right) has brochure holders right on their front door. A very inexpensive way to provide 24 hour information.

Gig Harbor, WA has visitor information with brochure holders mounted on each of their public restrooms. (bottom right)



## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

Add brochure distribution here (right). This is a great opportunity to provide visitor information. Make the focus be on things for visitors to do, not just where to attend church. Cross-promote the other attractions in the region. The more there is for visitors to see and do, the longer they will stay, and the more they will spend.

Make sure you keep the information fresh and relevant. The information in this kiosk looks as though it's been there for years. Information is faded, hard to read, and falling down inside the display case.

Another example of visitor information, located outside restroom facilities (below). This offers information about the area, a map, and brochures.





## Other Notes and First Impressions

### Suggestion:

The sign and curb appeal of the museum is excellent. Good job!

The grounds are a great place to “hang out.” Some of the best attributes include the beautification, benches for sitting, attractive outdoor furnishings that includes the trash receptacle, signs, cleanliness and the overall ambience.

Downtown, take note and follow this example. You are not giving visitors any good reasons to cross the busy highway.





## Great Stories Make the Campfire Memorable

### The Rule of Telling Stories

#### Suggestion:

Consider adding lawn-mounted interpretive displays that walk visitors through a story (top, right) like the example shown (bottom right) in Taylor, BC.

The museum has a nice collection of things in the “theme” rooms. (bottom left)

We suggest that the museum follow a central theme or focus. Then tell the stories about what is on display - don't just display artifacts. Stories engage the visitor emotionally and help to bring alive the past. When visitors feel that connection, they will stay longer and that can translate into more spending.



## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

The average museum visit in the U.S. and Canada lasts between 20 and 40 minutes. If you can captivate the visitor for two hours, spending will increase.

Museums should always tell stories - not just display artifacts.

Visitors aren't interested in who donated the items they are viewing - they would much rather know who used them, how they were used, and what interesting story there is about the item or the person who used it.

### Suggestion:

Add interpretive signs for the train (top). We weren't sure how it fit into the overall story or even the area.

Move the dumpster to a different location – it detracts from the otherwise good ambiance of the site.

### Suggestion:

What was it like to go to school here? (bottom) Tell the story. Maybe highlight one outstanding person who taught here or went to this school. Tell about their experiences.

We understand that plans are in the works to build a new museum here. We hope that it will go far beyond the display or artifacts but will walk visitors through the story of what it's like to live here - past and present. Static displays quickly make most museums “been there, done that” attractions with declining visitation and worn-out volunteers.





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

Without this sign (far right) it would have been easy to miss the Appaloosa Horse Club. We couldn't figure out what a spinning wheel had to do with the horse club.

Is it a museum or horse club? Visitors are not likely to visit a club headquarters, but might be interested in a museum dedicated to Appaloosas.

Could the Appaloosa Museum be moved to a better location? Signs next to a junk yard eliminated the desire to go there (bottom right).

Could the tree be replaced with other decorative landscaping to make the museum more open and inviting? (top left)





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

Consider removing the Christmas lights until the holiday season (top).

### Suggestion:

The Frontier Western Shop is your “anchor tenant” or primary visitor draw and an outstanding store worth a two-hour drive from Calgary and other areas. But even they could use some hanging baskets and greenery. Near the hub of the Cowboy Trail, Frontier cements that brand image.

### Suggestion:

You have some terrific murals. (Left page, bottom) Tell the story. Pull visitors into the community - it will pay dividends.



## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

The golf course looks like a very nice course. The sign (top) doesn't do it justice. Consider using a monument sign, like the one pictured bottom right. As noted earlier, curb appeal can account for 70% of visitor sales at golf courses.

The club house makes an excellent first impression. Add a marquis sign for the restaurant out front. Make it a centerpiece.

Is the course open to the public? Are there club and cart rentals? Do you call for tee times? How many holes? Add some signs to answer these questions.





## In a Nutshell

- Claresholm has tremendous potential and great “bones” to work with.
- Start with one downtown block on a side street as a “demonstration project.”
- Make it a showcase with beautification, attractive storefronts, seating areas, and good lighting.
- Develop a theme around Frontier and the Cowboy Trail - perhaps with an equestrian focus.
- Rearrange the business mix in the block to create a critical mass of destination retail, restaurants, and entertainment.
- Develop a façade improvement program in that block.
- Encourage that demonstration project to spread - so that eventually, several blocks have been rejuvenated.



## Critical Mass is Not Just a Religious Experience

### The “Mall Mentality” Rule

- The #1 visitor activity in the world is shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting.
- Critical mass is vital to success: visitor-oriented retail should be in a compact setting. Separate “neighborhood retail” from “visitor retail.”
- Average rule of thumb for rural communities: ten retail stores, ten dining/treats facilities, ten places open after 6:00 PM with entertainment.
- Ever wonder why fast food restaurants and gas stations gather together at intersections? The critical mass (choice) translates to increased sale for all. Another example is antique malls.



## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

Create a pedestrian-friendly shopping area, with an “open market” atmosphere. Create gathering areas, where events can be held, such as flea markets, farmers markets, arts and crafts fairs, entertainment and education.

Narrow the streets to create an intimate setting.

Sisters, Oregon, worked hard to create an attractive destination retail area. Before they began their efforts, only one car in 1,100 would stop; now, one in forty cars stop. In fact, it has become a major day trip, and is on its way to becoming an overnight destination (top right).

Make the pedestrian-friendly area a real gathering place, with entertainment (bottom right), banners and outdoor seating, street trees (bottom center) and public art that fits the brand (bottom left).

Create a hub of activity - a place where locals can hang out after work. That will also draw visitors and will increase your sales downtown.





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

Consider creating a “gateway” into the demonstration block.

Attractive gateways into downtown instill a “sense of place,” an identifiable destination where business owners develop the “mall mentality” - that they are all in the mall together and work together as a unit. Creation of boundaries and gateways identifying the core area helps develop a place people are drawn to, proud of, and where they want to spend time and money. Businesses in the area tend to share common goals and efforts in terms of marketing, signs, operating hours, outdoor dining and displays, parking, and public amenities.

Ever wonder why housing developers create elaborate and attractive gateways to their most expensive developments? Those gateways increase the perceived value of the whole neighborhood. The same perception happens with communities and their gateways.

The example shown here is in Lethbridge. The missing ingredient in their case is the lack of critical mass - the business mix



## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

Develop gathering places - places for events to be held, places for people to “hang out.” People love to gather in attractive, bustling surroundings. A lively downtown is healthy - you can help create that by providing the space with seating, tables, trees, flowers, public art, and a location for events and performances.

We saw RVs and car after car stopping at the restaurant (right photos) just up the road from Claresholm. Why? Because the signs had great lures, there was outdoor dining in a fenced area and there were people there. It looked like a popular spot. People are always drawn to where other people are. It must be good if that many people are there.

In Nelson, British Columbia, restaurants are allowed to put decks on the street to create outdoor dining areas. During the winter months, the decks are put in storage, then brought out each spring. The creation of gathering places is critical in attracting people to downtown settings.





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

Separate outdoor dining and gathering areas from road traffic with some type of decorative barrier, such as railings or flower boxes. These photos show more examples from Nelson, BC (all three photos). Bring downtown to life.

