

Assessments, Findings and Suggestions

Fort Macleod, Alberta

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Destination **ddi**
Development **inc.**





First impressions and some ideas to increase tourism spending

In June of 2007, a Community Tourism Assessment of Fort Macleod, Alberta was conducted, and the findings were presented in a two-hour workshop. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of the community – how it is seen by a visitor. It includes a review of local marketing efforts, signs, attractions, critical mass, retail mix, ease of getting around, customer service, visitor amenities such as parking and public wash rooms, overall appeal, and the community's ability to attract overnight visitors.

In performing the “Community Assessment,” we looked at the area through the eyes of a first-time visitor. No prior research was facilitated, and no community representatives were contacted except to set up the project, and the town and surrounding area were “secretly shopped.”

There are two primary elements to the assessment process: First is the “Marketing Effectiveness Assessment.”

How easy is it for potential visitors to find information about the community or area? Once they find information, are your marketing materials good enough to close the sale? In the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment, we assigned two (or more) people to plan trips into the general region. They did not know, in advance, who the assessment was for. They used whatever resources they would typically use in planning a trip: travel guides, brochures, the internet, calling visitor information centers, review of marketing materials, etc. - just as you might do in planning a trip to a “new” area or destination.

The community has five opportunities to close the sale:

- 1) Personal contact (visitor information centers, trade shows)
- 2) Websites
- 3) Brochures and printed materials
- 4) Publicity (articles)
- 5) Word of mouth - the most effective means

We tested all of these methods by contacting area visitor information services and attractions, searching the internet for activities, requesting and reviewing printed materials, looking for articles and third-party information, and questioning regional contacts. We reviewed both commercial and organizational Websites promoting the area, state tourism Websites, read travel articles, and looked at CAA and AAA Tour Book reviews and suggested activities.

The marketing assessment determined how visible the community was during the research, and how effective the marketing was in convinc-

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ing a potential visitor that the community would be worth a special trip, a stop, or an overnight stay. The key to the marketing assessment is to see if you have a primary lure that makes you worth a special trip. The question on most visitors' mind is: what do you have that I can not get closer to home? What makes you worth a special trip?

Where most communities fail is when they merely provide a "list" of what the community has, whether it's truly "unique" or not. Nearly every community in North America promotes the usual list of diversions: local museums, unique shops and restaurants, plenty of lodging, golf, outdoor recreation (bird watching, hiking, biking, and boating), historic downtowns, scenic vistas, and so on. Of course, nearly every visitor can do this closer to home. So, what makes your community worth a special trip?

Always promote your primary lure first - what makes you worth that special trip, then your diversionary activities. Would to go to Anaheim, California, if Disneyland was not there? Do you think that Universal Studios and Knotts Berry Farm get upset that Disneyland gets all the glory? That they are diversions? Of course not. Eighty percent of all tourism spending is with diversionary activities. Disney does the heavy lifting in terms of advertising and promotion, and the diversionary activities ride on those coattails.

In a nutshell, the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment looks for things that make you worth a special trip and an overnight stay. The secret shoppers look for details, details and more details. To be successful you must provide itineraries and specifics - not just generalities. Are your marketing efforts good enough to close the sale?

The second part of the assessment process is the On-site Assessment. During this part of the assessment, we spent several days in the community, looking at enticement from freeways and highways (signs, billboards, something that would get a visitor to stop), beautification and overall curb appeal, wayfinding (ease of getting around), visitor amenities (public wash rooms, visitor information, parking), activities, overall appeal, retail mix (lodging, dining, shopping), critical mass, customer service, area attractions, pedestrian friendliness, gathering spaces, evening activities, and the availability of marketing materials and their effectiveness.

The community benefits from tourism when visitors spend money, and they do that in the local gift shops, restaurants and hotels. Therefore, the On-site Assessment includes a candid look at private businesses as much as public spaces and amenities.

For every shortcoming or challenge we note during the assessment process, we provide a low-cost "suggestion," where possible, on how the challenge can be corrected or overcome. The suggestions are not termed "recommendations," as they were developed without consulting the community first

about possible restraints, future plans, or reasons the suggestions may not be appropriate. Hopefully, this assessment process will open dialogue within the community; leading it to adopt some or all of the suggestions; taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

It is important to note that to increase the community's tourism industry, fulfilling one or two of the suggestions may have little impact. Implementing a number of them, if not all, can have a profoundly successful impact on the community's ability to tap into the tourism industry.

Implementation of these suggestions must be a community-wide effort, involving both privately owned businesses as well as local, county, and state agencies, where appropriate. Every local organization plays a role in tourism, downtown revitalization, or economic development efforts. A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO, CVB, Chamber, TPA, etc.) can not be successful, if the tourism effort is not community-wide.

In many cases, issues may come up that you are already aware of and are already working on. In that case, the assessment validates those efforts. But more often than not, the assessment will point out things that you are painfully aware of but can not mention or bring up without paying a political price. Local politics can be a killer of the tourism industry.

While marketing efforts are important, product development is the most important factor of a successful tourism industry. Visitors want activities, not just things to look at. How much time can a visitor spend enjoying activities that cater to their interests within your community? Does your community have truly unique attractions the visitor can not get closer to home? You must be able to deliver on your marketing promises. Otherwise visitors might come once, but they would not come back. It is much more cost effective to bring people back, than to always go out and entice new visitors into town. "Been there, done that" communities eventually run out of visitors and find they do not have a sustainable tourism industry, or simply become pit stops or gateways on the way to somewhere else.

After spending several days reviewing marketing materials and assessing the community, we have looked at all of these issues, developed some suggestions and ideas the community can discuss and possibly implement to help increase tourism spending locally.

SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TRANSLATES TO CASH

Tourism is successful when the community imports more cash than it exports. When residents spend their hard-earned money outside the community, the community is exporting cash - often referred to as "leakage." Tourism helps fill that gap, importing cash into the local economy without

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the necessity of having to provide extended social and other services. Visitors come, spend money, then go home. When you import more cash than you export, you have a positive “balance of trade.” Communities with successful tourism programs easily see that the industry subsidizes the community, whereas other communities find that they subsidize visitors – providing services visitors use without them leaving enough money behind to cover the costs.

The primary goal of the tourism industry is to bring more cash into the local economy. This does not happen when visitors come into the community, get out of their cars, and take photographs. And it does not happen when visitors go swimming in your city’s lake while sunning, and eating the lunch they brought from home. And it does not happen when visitors hike down your trails, enjoy your interpretive centers, or stroll through your lovely arboretums. These are all great things to do, and you do want your visitors to do these – but, you also want to entice them into your shops, your cafés, espresso stands, restaurants, galleries, B&B’s, hotels, and ultimately opening their wallets to make purchases. That is what helps your local economy, your small merchants, your hoteliers, and your tax coffers.

To entice visitors to spend money in your community, you need to have places for them to spend it. You need to have the right mix of shops, restaurants, entertainment, and lodging facilities in an attractive setting. You want to give them reason to visit you in the first place.

THE THREE TYPES OF TOURISM

1. Visiting friends and family

The number one purpose for travel is to visit friends and/or family. If you did nothing to promote tourism, you would still have tourism in your community. However, when friends and family come to visit, do local residents take them out to eat, shop, dine locally? Or do they head to a neighboring community? Do your locals even know what you have to offer? An effective tourism marketing effort also includes educating locals as to what you have and how to find it through effective wayfinding signs, gateways and advertising.

2. Business travel

The second most popular reason for travel is business. Included in this category is educational travel: colleges and universities, conventions and meetings, corporate travel and vendor travel. Like leisure travelers, this group is looking for things to do “after hours” while in the area. The most successful convention and trade show towns are the result of their secondary activities or “diversions,” not because of their convention and exhibition facilities. DisneyWorld, Disneyland, San Antonio’s River Walk are great examples.

3. Leisure travel

The third, and most lucrative type of visitor, is the leisure traveler. They have no personal connections to the community, but are coming purely to enjoy themselves. They stay in commercial lodging establishments, eat virtually all their meals in local restaurants, and their top diversionary activity is shopping and dining in a pedestrian-friendly setting.

The average leisure visitor is active 14 hours a day, yet typically only spends four to six hours with the primary lure. They then spend eight to ten hours with diversionary activities - things they could do closer to home, but will do while in the area. A good example of this is Branson, Missouri, the “live music-theater capital of the world.” This town of 6,500 residents hosts 7.5 million visitors a year. The primary “lure” is the 49 music theaters. The average visitor attends two shows a day for a total of four hours. During the other ten hours, the visitor will participate in any number of other activities they could do closer to home, but will do while visiting Branson.

THE THREE STAGES OF TOURISM

1. Status quo

If you take no action to develop the tourism industry, you will still have an element of tourism, simply because some travelers will pull off local highways or freeways for services, but the number one reason for travel is to visit friends or family. If you have residents, you will have some tourism.

2. Getting people to stop

The first priority of developing a successful tourism industry is getting people to stop. Imagine how successful businesses in the community would be if just 50 percent of the vehicles traveling through pulled off the highway for gas and spent an extra 30 minutes getting ice cream for the family?

If there is a strong pull, imagine the money spent by folks staying two hours; extra time spent (always) translates to additional spending.

The first goal is to get those travelers to stop.

3. Becoming the destination

To become a destination community, you must have attractions and supporting amenities that convince visitors to spend the night. Those attractions must be different from what the visitor can get closer to home.

Overnight visitors spend three times that of day visitors, and nearly ten

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times that of visitors using your community as a pit stop on the way to somewhere else.

THE FOUR-TIMES RULE

Visitors will make a point of stopping or staying in a community, when there are enough activities that appeal specifically to them. And remember - you need enough activities to keep them busy four times longer than the length of their trip.

In other words, if a person has to drive 15 minutes to visit you, do you have enough for them to do to keep them busy for an hour? (4 times 15 minutes). If a visitor has to drive an hour, do you have the activities and amenities to keep them busy for four hours?

The more you have to offer, the further visitors will come, and the longer they will stay and spend. This is why it is so important for communities to market more than just their immediate geographic areas. By marketing neighboring activities and attractions, you present much more for a visitor to do, and you make the visit worth the trip.

Visitors don't care about city limits or county lines – so market the broader package and you will be able to keep people in the area long enough to translate to another meal, some more shopping, and hopefully, an overnight stay.

SELL THE EXPERIENCE, NOT GEOGRAPHY

Nearly every destination marketing organization is charged with promoting a geographic area, yet visitors could not care less about those boundaries. They are looking for activities that cater to their interests, and location is second to the experience. ALWAYS promote the primary lure first, then the location. If I want to go see Andy Williams, I do not care whether he is in Muskogee, Oklahoma or in Branson, Missouri. Visitors, by the millions, head to Disneyland, DisneyWorld, Dollywood and other attractions. They are not going to Anaheim, Orlando or Pigeon Forge.

Always sell the activity or the experience and THEN the location.

LURES, DIVERSIONS AND AMBIANCE

Too often communities promote the list of diversions that nearly every community has. The primary lure is the activity that a visitor can not find closer to home.

Always promote your primary lure, then the diversions. Do not try to be all things to all people. Have you ever gone anywhere because they had “some-

thing for everyone?” Of course not - you go there because they have something specific for you. Find your niche and promote it like crazy.

Historic downtowns provide ambiance. They are not attractions, diversions, nor are they a primary lure. What is in the buildings makes a downtown a destination.

The same can be said for scenery. Unless your vista is a world-class scene, such as Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon, scenic vistas create wonderful ambiance. They do not translate to spending, and they only last a few minutes. Then what?

All too often communities promote their heritage as a primary draw. How far would you travel to visit a mining museum? A timber museum? An agricultural center? A county historical museum? Heritage must be outstanding and pervasive throughout the community to be a primary lure, such as Plymouth Plantation or Salem, Massachusetts.

Thousands of communities are the “capitol” of something. For instance, in California, Borrego Springs is the grapefruit capitol of the world. Gilroy is the garlic capitol. Modesto is the tomato capitol. Gridley is the kiwi capitol. Oxnard is the strawberry capitol. Fallbrook is the avocado capitol. But here is the question: Have you ever gone anywhere because it was the capitol of a fruit or a vegetable?

Your local heritage is important to the community and can set the ambiance, even becoming a diversionary activity. But to the vast majority of potential visitors, it is not a reason to make a special trip.

BE DIFFERENT OR THE BEST

Why should a visitor come to your community, if they can enjoy the same activities closer to home? Too many communities promote “outdoor recreation” as their primary draw. Unfortunately, that is the same attraction promoted by nearly every community in North America.

If you are different, then you have a reason for travelers to choose to visit you. If you are the best, then visitors will generally flock to your doors.

If you have great hiking trails, then market their unique qualities. Be specific and paint the image of how wonderful they are in the minds of your potential visitors. If you have one fantastic restaurant in town, let people know about it – a unique dining experience is something many people will travel far to enjoy.

Ashland, Oregon, previously a depressed timber town, began a Shakespeare

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Festival. It now runs nine months of the year and draws hundreds of thousands of visitors who spend an average of six nights in the community. The Shakespeare Festival made Ashland different from any other community.

Leavenworth, Washington, another dying timber town, adopted a Bavarian architectural theme and produces dozens of Bavarian events every year. Some now say the town looks more genuinely Bavarian than towns in Bavaria. It is now one of the primary tourist destinations in Washington state, hosting more than 2.5 million visitors annually. They offer a different experience, an experience that is pervasive throughout town.

Okanogan County, Washington is an outdoor recreational paradise – just like 37 of the 38 other counties in Washington. So why go to the Okanogan? Because they are the best. They researched guidebooks, newspaper and magazine articles, and pulled quotes they could use in their advertising efforts. Like, “Pinch yourself, you’re in Okanogan Country with perhaps the best cross country skiing on the continent.” This, and other quotes like it, make it worth the drive to visit Okanogan Country. The third-party endorsements show that they are the best.

Set yourself apart from everyone else, and you’ll see that in being unique, you will become a greater attraction.

CRITICAL MASS MEANS CASH

Although it may not be the primary reason why visitors come to your community, shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity of visitors. Besides lodging, it is where visitors spend the most amount of money.

Do you have a pedestrian-friendly shopping district? If not, can you create one? Many communities have been highly successful with the development of a two or three block long pedestrian “village” including visitor-oriented retail shops, dining, visitor information and wash rooms, — all in an attractive, landscaped setting.

The general rule of thumb in those two or three blocks (not spread out all



over town) is 10+10+10. You start with ten destination retail shops, which includes: galleries, antiques, collectibles, home accents and furnishings, artists in action, book stores, logo gear (clothing), souvenirs, outfitters, tour operators, activity shops such as kites, jewelry, wine or tobacco shops, and other specialties. The second ten is for food: ice cream, fudge and candy stores, soda fountains, sit-down dining, coffee shops, cafés, bistros, delis and the like. And the final ten are businesses open after 6:00 PM: bars, dance clubs, theaters (movies and performing), retail shops with activities (piano bar in a wine shop) and other evening entertainment. The important point is to group these businesses together to create the “critical mass” in a pedestrian-friendly setting. This will attract visitors and locals, making it worth their while to stop and shop. People are always drawn to critical mass – the opportunity to have multiple choices and multiple experiences in a convenient and attractive setting.

TOURISM IS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

The goal to successful tourism is for folks to come into the community, spend money and go home. Tourism is nearly a \$650 billion dollar industry in the U.S., supporting millions of jobs. Ninety percent of tourism industry businesses are small businesses of which 90 percent have less than 15 employees. Tourism provides the opportunity for entrepreneurs to get started, for small family-run businesses to thrive, for artisans and craftspeople

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ple to find a market, and creates a basis for unique niche-retail environment including wineries, artists and crafts. Tourism provides a diverse market within the community, expanding its potential. Enhancing the community through beautification efforts creates an attractive setting for both locals and visitors — key in revitalizing a community's downtown. A tourism-friendly town will attract non-tourism industries faster than others. New businesses will see the community as a visitor before they make a final determination about the community. Tourism is the front door to your economic development efforts.

The benefits of a healthy tourism industry can rejuvenate a town, foster community pride, encourage economic diversity, and lead the way to a vital, successful community.

NEXT STEPS

The findings and suggestions in this report can provide your community with many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue in the community and becomes a springboard for the community in enhancing its tourism industry, leading to greater prosperity, rejuvenation, and enjoyment by all the citizens.

This report offers a first step in reaching that goal. To fully realize the benefits of this assessment, the community should take these findings and



suggestions, discuss them and evaluate them, and develop a plan for implementation.

A detailed "Community Branding, Development and Marketing Action Plan" builds on the results of this assessment, adding in-depth research, evaluation, and community input to develop a unique brand and implementation program. The assessment process essentially provides a look at where you are today.

The next steps in the planning process is interviewing local stakeholders, providing public outreach, and reviewing past and current planning efforts. This determines where you want to go as a community.

The third step involves research, feasibility and market analysis, and determining your brand - what you are or hope to be known for.

Then comes the "development" portion of the plan or the "how to get there" program; determining what product development initiatives need to be undertaken to reinforce and grow the brand. This also includes defining the roles of the various local organizations. Brand-building takes a village with everyone pulling in the same direction, each with a "to-do list."

Finally, there is the detailed marketing plan: how and when you will tell the world who you are and what makes you special: the place to live, work and play.



This Branding, Development and Marketing Plan should be an "action plan," as opposed to a "strategic plan." You want a to do list, by organization, not just general strategies, goals and objectives.

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For every recommendation the following elements should be detailed:

1. A brief description of the recommendation
2. Who would be charged with implementation?
3. When it would be implemented?
4. How much it will cost?
5. Where the money will come from?
6. The rationale for making the recommendation

The recommendations should provide all the necessary steps for your community to be successful in attaining its goal of a more diverse economy with an enhanced tourism industry, becoming a more attractive and enjoyable community for both visitors and citizens.

If you move forward with the development of the Action Plan and hire outside services, always hire the most qualified team you can find (issue a request for Statement of Qualifications) and then negotiate the scope of work and cost. If you are not able to reach an agreement, then move to number two on your list. A good plan will get local residents and the business community pulling together to enhance the community, building its unique image in the minds of visitors and residents alike. The result of your efforts will be a prosperous, enjoyable environment to live, work and visit.

First Impressions Really Are Lasting Impressions (The rule of perceived value)

We all make judgments about restaurants, shops, attractions, and communities based on our first impressions. Have you ever gone anywhere and used the words “that looks like a good place to eat”? We form our expectations based on what we see from the outside - from our first impressions.

Would you eat at the restaurant in the photo to the right? Probably not. It doesn't look inviting, comfortable, clean, or even very safe. And yet this little barbecue in Texas has been written up in GQ Magazine as one of the best places to fly for dinner.

The entryway to your community gives visitors their first impression of any community. They will begin to judge the character and quality of your town by the gateways and by what's around them.

What are your impressions of the towns in the bottom right photo? Does it look like a community you'd like to visit? In the case of Ellensburg, Washington, they are replacing this with a sign that states “Welcome to Ellensburg,” but followed by the words “Historic Shopping District - ahead 1.5 miles.” In essence they are stating “Don't judge us yet, you still have another 1.5 miles to go.” If you put your gateway signs at city limits, make sure they are directional signs to the core shopping or spending district.

Many communities make the mistake of creating sign clutter at their entry ways. This can include auxiliary organization signs, listings of events, etc. Sign clutter creates a less-than-desirable impression and reduces overall visitor spending in the community.



ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS



Suggestion:

If you were cruising down the freeway and saw the Lakeport sign (above), would you take the next exit? Try to ignore the litter along the highway, the dead trees and trash in the background. Would you assume that this is not going to be much of a community in terms of quality?

Quality entries state that you are a quality community, thereby increasing the perceived value of the area. The greater the perceived value, the more visitors will spend, and the longer they will stay.

The right two photos are both of downtown Lakeport. Are you surprised?



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Suggestion:

The Historic Fort Macleod entry sign is very nice. It would be better to have it function as a directional sign - "Historic downtown - ahead 1 km."

Replace the gravel with native landscaping. The sign is very attractive - make the surroundings be attractive as well.

Suggestion:

There is so much sign clutter here (bottom), don't promote this as part of Fort Macleod.

Always put your gateway signs where you will make the first, best impression. The challenge for Fort Macleod is that the welcome sign looks good, but then right after it visitors are hit with a barrage of billboards and commercial signage, which eliminates the good impression and any semblance of a "historic" community or downtown.

This is why it's important to add "Historic Fort Macleod - ahead 1 km." As in the earlier example it states "don't judge us yet! You still have another kilometer to go."



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Suggestion:

Consider creating gateways at each end of the central two-block historic area. This would help identify this core area of downtown as an attraction - the destination. The bottom two photos show possible location for gateways.

Gateways provide visitors with a sense of arrival, slows traffic, and results in increased spending. It also help to unify merchants in the district who then tend to keep common hours and work together on curb appeal and other issues - as merchants do in a mall. This is often called the "mall mentality." You're more effective together as a single destination.

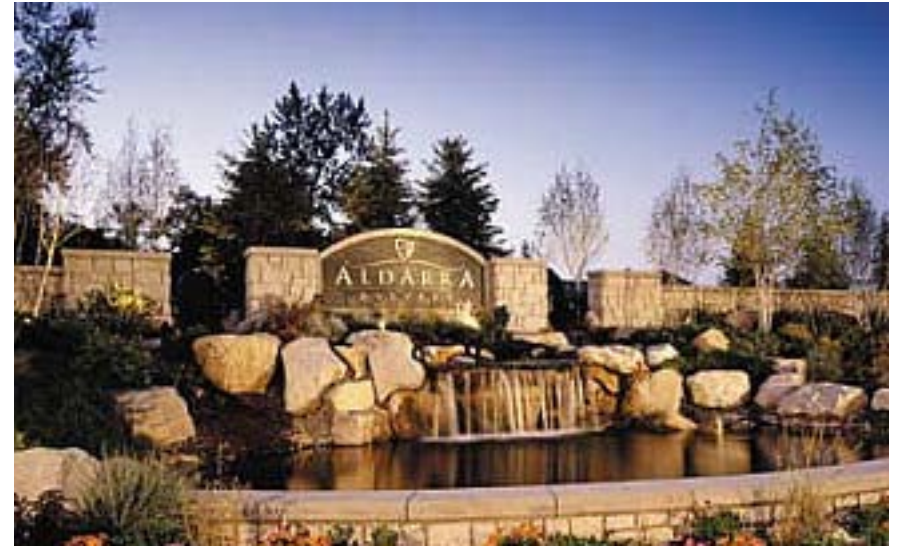


Create Gateways and Boundaries (Create the “Mall Mentality”)

Some examples of “gateways” are shown here: Crockett Street in Beaumont, Texas; Weed, California.

Welcome signs and entry ways should be considered an investment with a tremendous return. They should be attractive, professionally produced, and impeccably landscaped.

Defining boundaries with gateways helps unify the downtown, creating a sense of shared purpose among merchants, and a feeling of “arrival” for visitors. Look at the residential subdivision entry (top, right). Why would a developer spend so much money on an entry? Because it creates pride of ownership, draws your attention, helps sell the real estate in the development faster, at an increased price. The same applies with your downtown. Notice the Weed entrance. If this was not there, would you turn down this street? But with it there are you curious? There’s actually a charming downtown around the corner at the bottom of the hill.



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Suggestion:

Installing decorative crosswalks is another way to define boundaries. Decorative crosswalks enhance the brand image of downtown. These crosswalks (far, right) were created by StreetPrint, with operations throughout Canada. The process embeds decorative designs into the asphalt - this is not paint - that will last for decades.

You can imprint whatever designs you'd like - choose something that reinforces Fort Macleod's brand image.

Hawthorne, Nevada, "America's Patriotic Home" is working on having 26 foot stars in each intersection and red, white and blue crosswalks (upper left).

This is an ideal spot (below, left) for a "Plaza style" intersection or crosswalk. Decorative crosswalks create outstanding boundaries, make it easier to see the crosswalk, and can reinforce the overall "brand" of the community.



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Suggestion:

These two photos were taken in Lethbridge and show a gateway into their downtown core area. These slow traffic, provide an intimate setting, and add to the overall appeal, particularly when planters are part of the gateway.

In Lethbridge this nice block-long “district” is beautiful - but a key element is still missing. And that’s the “critical mass.” As nice an area as this is, it’s what’s IN the buildings that makes a downtown a destination.

Giving downtown a name, creating entries, adding landscaping, decorative crosswalks are all important, but merely set the stage - providing the ambiance. Without the right business mix downtown, these efforts don’t yield the desired increase in spending.

In the case of Lethbridge, they may need to recruit a different business mix into this district so that it becomes the place to hang out. A gathering place for both locals and visitors.



Real Men Don't Ask For Directions (The Rule of Wayfinding)

Suggestion:

How easy is it for visitors to find Fort Macleod's attractions, amenities, and services? Make it easy - very few visitors stop at information centers, so if an attraction isn't easy to find, they'll just drive on past.

Wayfinding signs help visitors and locals find what you have to offer. Cardston (bottom right, two photos) sets a good example for all other communities in Southwestern Alberta in terms of "connecting the dots" through wayfinding signs.

Appleton, Wisconsin (bottom left, two photos) has installed a decorative wayfinding system for both drivers and pedestrians, which increased retail sales by double-digits. The signs should fit the brand or ambiance of the community. Resist the standard sign-shop or public works stamped aluminum signage.



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Suggestion:

This Tourist Information sign is very good, although it is a little confusing to get in and out of. (top)

Suggestion:

When visitors “step into” Fort Macleod, take them back 100 years or so to a different era. Your signage should reinforce and enhance that ambiance. The Welcome sign (below, right) doesn’t fit the theme or ambiance of the town at all. It would be fine for a theme park, however.

Fort Macleod has an incredible opportunity of creating an authentic “theme” town with some of the most outstanding architectural appeal of any town in the region. When people walk or drive into the core historic district it should be as if they stepped back in time - in terms of architecture, curb appeal, way-finding signage, and even merchant signage. Even the business mix should include some “old time” shops: confectionery, candle shop, florist, merchantile, etc.



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20/20 Signage Equals \$\$\$ (The rule of signs that sell)

Suggestion:

Storefront signs should be perpendicular to the street (blade signs) and of uniform height and size, making it easier for motorists and pedestrians to see what's available. Decorative signs increase the perceived value of the shop.

Use no more than six words on a merchant sign, and avoid script lettering. The general rule of thumb for lettering height: one inch for every 12 feet of viewing distance.

These photos show some great examples of effective blade signs in various communities including Leavenworth, Washington (top, right), Nantucket Island, Massachusetts (bottom, right), Carmel, California (bottom, center), and Banff.



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Suggestion:

Can you tell what's in any of the shops in these photos, besides the Empress and the law firm down the street?

Using blade signs would let people know what shops are available, making it much more likely people will stop. Visitors (both pedestrians and in vehicles) notice signage that is perpendicular to them and will miss signage mounted on the face of buildings.

Blade signs should be located no lower than seven feet from the sidewalk to the bottom of the sign, and extend no higher than nine feet, and should be no wider than four feet.

No more than four to six words should be on a single sign. And finally, the town might consider developing a "Signage Review Committee" made up of local residents who would approve retail signage. This creates a jury of peers, who work together to make sure their signage is effective and in keeping with the historic ambiance of downtown Fort Macleod.



ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion:

Can you tell what shops are available in the two far right photos (top and bottom)?

Lethbridge is a great example of some well-themed and well-designed blade signs - these would also work very well in Fort Macleod. This type of sign will withstand 100 kmh wind loads.

