

Assessment Findings  
& Suggestions  
June 2007



# Glenwood & Hill Spring, Alberta



## INTRODUCTION

### First impressions and some ideas to increase tourism spending

In June of 2007, a Community Tourism Assessment of Glenwood and Hill Spring, 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 convincing 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?

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Always promote your primary lure first - what makes you worth that special trip, then your diversionary activities. Would you go to Anaheim, California, if Disneyland wasn't there? Do you think that Universal Studios and Knott's 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 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

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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 aver-

age 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 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



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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 "something 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



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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 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.

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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.

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### 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 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.

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

### Suggestion:

If you were driving down a highway in Northern California and saw the signs for Lakport (right) would you take the next exit? What is your impression of the town based on this first impression?

We all make judgments about restaurants, shops, attractions, and communities based on the first things we see - typically gateway signs. Because we're not familiar with the area or town, the only thing we can go by is the outward appearance or curb appeal.

The entryway to your community gives visitors their first impression. They will begin to judge the character and quality of your town by the gateways.

Would you be surprised to learn that the bottom two photos, and the lake photo (top left, next page) show downtown Lakeport? It's a beautiful town but its gateway sign sells it short.





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS



### Suggestion:

Would you eat at the restaurant shown in the top right photo? 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 in the world to fly for a meal.

Many communities make the mistake of creating sign clutter at their entryways with auxiliary organization signs, listings of events, etc. Sign clutter creates a less-than-desirable impression, as in the photo (bottom left) of Ellensburg, WA. Instead, Ellensburg at its city limits should state on its gateways "Historic Downtown Ellensburg - ahead 2 miles." This, in essence, tells the customer "Don't judge us yet, you still have two miles to go." Otherwise we'd judge Ellensburg by the first impression, which is not a good one.

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.



## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

When visitors drive into your town and see your welcome signs, what impression are they receiving? Your town entryways are like the cover of a book, making a statement about what your community is like on the inside. Make sure your entrance signs are placed where they will make the best first impression. The City limits may not be the right place.

Be sure to keep your gateway signs fresh and clean. The slogan on the Hill Spring sign (top right) should be white. It is very hard to read in blue.

The gateway signs into Hill Spring look dated, and are in various stages of disrepair. Both of these should be replaced, or at least repainted. This should be done probably every two to three years so they always create a positive first impression of the community.

Use directional arrows on all signs to tell people where Hill Spring is. The bottom sign, at a “T” intersection provides no information as to where the town is. Remove the “Rural crime watch area.” This sends a message that the community is struggling with crime - not a message you want to send to visitors.





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

The Street Market sign (bottom left) does not give enough information. Is it every Saturday? Year round? Where? Perhaps the signage beneath the “Street Market” sign should be removed. The paint is peeling and it’s in poor condition.

It is unusual for a community’s entry sign to include the name of a local business. Is Saputo Foods (bottom right) something that travelers will have heard of and want to visit? Additionally, the sign has no directional arrows telling visitors which way to turn to get to Glenwood. Add one!

The small town of Oroville, Washington has placed its welcome sign well within its city limits, at the beginning of its downtown shopping district. Consider developing monument signs as introductions to the community. And always place your welcome signs where you will make the first, best impression, never at the town limits.





## Invest in Beautification

### Nothing Sells like Beautiful Places

#### Suggestion:

Curb appeal is an investment with tremendous return, and can account for 70 percent of sales at restaurants, wineries, lodging, retail shops and golf courses.

The greater the “perceived value,” the more visitor will spend and the longer they will stay. This is why residential subdivisions spend so much money on entries. The same principle applies to your community or business.

Sisters, Oregon, (right) has created stunningly beautiful streetscapes, and now can boast of having the highest retail sales per capita of any city in Oregon.

Note the street scene in the photo below left. It’s attractive and clean, but see how the addition of planters overflowing with flowers and street trees make it even more appealing. (bottom right) Retail sales increased in this block by nearly 25% - just with the addition of the planters.





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

Soften the transition between the buildings and the sidewalks or parking areas with planters filled with flowers, trees and shrubs (top right) Likewise, this little shop (top left), with its outdoor flower and furniture displays, makes visitors want to come in and browse.

LaRua in Whistler, BC is a great example of the power of beautification. (top right) Likewise, this little shop (top left), with its outdoor flower and furniture displays, makes visitors want to come in and browse.

Glenwood and Hill Spring are both small communities, but these beautification measures would make the towns more inviting and attractive for visitors - making it (more) likely travelers will stop in. People are drawn to beautiful places - including shops.





## Real Men Don't Ask For Directions

### The Rule of Wayfinding

There are two primary sign issues that are critical to the success of any community: gateways and directional (or wayfinding) signs. Gateways introduce visitors to your community and provide a sense of arrival. Directional signs help visitors (and residents) navigate the area, telling them what attractions and amenities are available and where to find them. The importance of easy-to-follow wayfinding can not be overstated. If a visitor cannot find what they are looking for, they will head down the road.

Cardston is a great model for all the Southwest Alberta communities for their wayfinding and directional signs. It is important to “connect the dots” between attractions. Wayfinding signs should be decorative to fit the local ambiance. Note the use of the horse and carriage on Cardston’s signs. Appleton, Wisconsin’s wayfinding signs (bottom right photos) are decorative in keeping with their “apple” theme.





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

If it's not easy to find, chances are that visitors will not find what you're offering and will move on. Adequate signage is essential to help visitors know where attractions and amenities are located, and what you have to offer. Both Hill Spring and Glenwood should develop and implement a new sign program to address:

- Wayfinding
- Gateways and entries
- Attractions
- Amenities
- Billboards
- Marketing displays

General rule of thumb: one inch lettering for every 12 feet of viewing distance. The Pioneer Parlour & Cheese Museum signs are good (top right), but need directional arrows. Use eight words or less on signs.

The Barn Dance was easy to find - good signage! (bottom right)

What do these signs mean? (middle, bottom) Keep all four wheels on the ground 90% of the time? The photo (bottom left) shows signage used in Nausup, British Columbia, which make it easy for people to find their attractions and amenities.



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

### The Rule of Visitor Amenities

#### Suggestion:

If you want to attract visitors, there are three primary elements needed to be successful:

1. Wayfinding or directional signage - connecting the dots.
2. Public restrooms - or private restrooms visitors can use.
3. 24 hour visitor information (next page).

The number one reason people stop is to use washroom facilities. Take advantage of that, and provide washrooms, and promote them in your signage.

Washrooms translate to spending. Make sure your washrooms are located where visitors can spend time and money. Once visitors get out of the car you have a four times greater chance of getting them to spend money.

Businesses should never just say “no” (bottom left). Tell visitors where they can find the public washrooms, like a shop in Wickford, RI has done (top and bottom right).

McDonald’s has a policy of not stating that washrooms are for customers only. The reason? Because 75% of those who use the washrooms buy something while there. Half buy out of impulse: “while we’re here, let’s get something to eat (or drink).” The other half out of guilt. In fact, they call it “guilt sales.” “Gee, we used the washrooms; we better buy something.”





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

Visitor information should be working 24 hours/7 days a week/365 days-a-year. Visitors don't just travel during business hours.

Put up visitor information kiosks and outdoor brochure holders at local attractions, parking areas, and at visitor amenities such as public washrooms.

Ashland, OR (top right) offers 24 hour visitor information with a map, lodging information, dining options, and events.

Moses Lake (bottom two photos) provides this "information station" located just off the highway. While it would be easy to improve on the graphics, at least they have the right idea of showcasing other "must see" attractions in the area.

And the Teton Pass Trail kiosk (top left) is designed to fit the lodge-style ambiance of the area. The Teton Valley area is working to develop 14 of these throughout the region, each cross-selling other attractions and "Must do" activities in this region of Idaho.

Make sure you include brochure distribution. People want to take something with them.





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

Put up visitor information kiosks and outdoor brochure holders throughout the area - at local attractions, parking areas and at lodging facilities. Work with the other communities throughout Southwestern Alberta to cross-sell other attractions, diversions, and amenities throughout Southwestern Alberta. The more there is for visitors to do, the longer they will stay.

Ideas shown on these two pages includes:

Stevenson, Washington (top right, bottom right): In this case they had vandalism problems so they had the kiosk professionally designed, but had local youth build the structure. The vandalism stopped since kids typically won't vandalise their own things. Then the chamber of commerce added the marketing panels (bottom right).

In Beatty, Nevada, they purchased a kit gazebo (below) and had a local craftsperson build the interior structure, which includes map of the area and includes brochure distribution wrapped around all four sides of the structure.



## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS



### Suggestion:

Include visitor information at public washrooms, and be sure to include brochure distribution. Make it easy for people to take the information they need with them. In Gig Harbor, Washington, each washroom provides visitor information (top two photos).

In Oxnard, California, they simply used small real estate sales holders mounted on the door (left), which hold brochures and guides.

It doesn't have to be expensive, but it's important to provide information - including things to see and do, places to eat, places to stay.



## Other Notes and First Impressions

### Suggestion:

Make room for brochure distribution at this visitor information board (bottom left). Tell the visitor why they should spend time in the area. Promote your “anchor tenants” your primary businesses. Add some landscaping and some flowers here.

The map says there is so much to see (top right). Tell the visitor what there is to see specifically. Then provide a sheet that provides directions and information so visitors can take it with them.

Consider removing the Christmas

lights from this shop (bottom right) until November. Keep the sign fresh and clean. Add some beautification, such as plants, trees, hanging baskets or a bench. Promote “Life in a ranching town.” Pull customers into the store.





## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS



### Suggestion:

Is this a business or a home? (bottom left) Is it open? It is very hard to tell and if visitors aren't sure, they tend to play it safe and keep on driving.

These outdoor seating areas help lure customers, and promote a primary lure to attract visitors. (left two photos) Consider adding one or two tables with chairs to the Museum and Ice Cream Parlor below.

We enjoyed our visit to the Cheese Factory Museum but the best part was listening to the stories told by the lady working there! She gave us a good feel for life in a small town. (bottom right) Make sure the museum tells stories and not just displays artifacts.

Add some planters next to the benches. Make it beautiful.





## Great Stories Make the Campfire Memorable

### The Rule of Telling Stories

#### Suggestion:

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

Museums must learn to tell stories, not just display artifacts and give facts and figures. People will become much more interested in your history, if you tell it with stories. Engage the visitor's emotions, pique their interest.

No offense, but visitors do not really care who donated various items. But they might be interested in a story

about that person.

Visitors, particularly foreigners, are fascinated by life in rural farming communities.

The old gasoline pumps are great. Perhaps this is an opportunity for interpretive signs.

Is Aspen Log Furniture open to the public? If it is, be sure to let visitors know. We were very interested in seeing more but there didn't appear to be too much available for visitors.



## ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS

### Suggestion:

We had no problem finding the Barn Dance - although we were not quite sure, once we started down the gravel road. They've done a good job of providing wayfinding signage at all important intersections.

The directional sign is very good, once at the Barn Dance (bottom left) but add signs to let visitors know WHEN the barn dances are held.

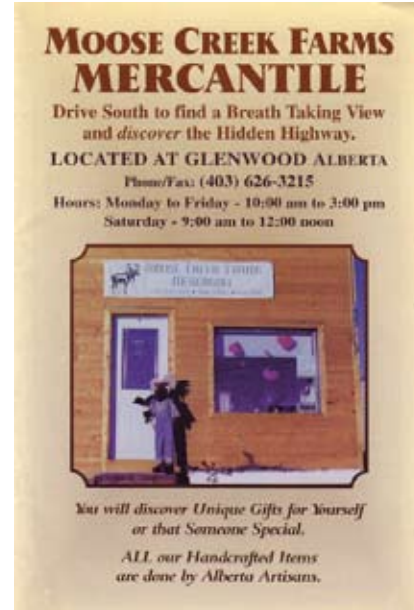
Is the barn open to the public? Is it ok to take a look around?

The Great Canadian Barn Dance is the "anchor tenant" (using mall terminology) for this area and a great activity. While we know they host a lot of private functions, it was unclear how often it was open to the public, if at all.





ASSESSMENT AND SUGGESTIONS



Suggestion:

Is this a performance stage? (top left) If the barn is open to the public, consider posting a sign, "Come on in and look around!"

Suggestion:

The Moose Creek Farms Mercantile looked like it would be a great place to visit (top right), but we had a hard time finding it.

Make it easy for visitors - post signs that answer their potential questions. Is this it (below)? Without beautification it's difficult to tell what's in business and what's out of business.

