



Economic Development Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 11, 2017

Committee members in attendance:

Charlie Albano – Chair
Peter Anderson- Planning Board Rep
Michael Amaral- Conservation Com Rep
Ginger Marsh-Sugar River Bank/Business Rep
Darryl Parker- Schoodacs/Business Rep

Not Present:

- A. Aeden Sherman
- B. Christine Frost-Citizen at large
- C. Joe Mendola-School Board

Minutes from December 12th were approved.

The taped recorder did not function – the following are highlights from this meeting.

1. Darryl Parker presented the **Goals/Objectives** for **Business Retention and Expansion**. (See attached). This is the 3rd component of the Committee's 3 phase outline. The other 2 being **Organization and Education** and **Business Development**.

In essence this presentation highlighted the need to concentrate on 3 objectives:

Objective 1: Actively participate in community initiatives that will improve Warner's quality of place and reinforce a positive image of Warner among local employers and their employees.

Objective 2: Assist Warner's primary employers and small businesses to enhance and encourage local expansion by engaging in public relations efforts that help improve their visibility and **brand** awareness.

Objective 3: Work with local farmers, farms, and agricultural business to foster and celebrate the rural character of the Warner Area.

The committee had an outstanding discussion around the above objectives and related tasks to meet these objective. The discussion included the need to have coordination of events and services that Warner offers and expand our outreach to community businesses.

The conversation then centered on the following 4 sets of information presented by Charlie.

1. **A definition of Economic Development:** "Economic Development should be a net gain of money flow, called an "economic base" into the community. This is equally true in Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Vienna, Dubuque, and an African village".

The idea is to bring in "new money" into the community – that gets circulated back through the community, to benefit its residents.

2. **Community Branding.** “Branding is the process a community embarks upon to change, refine or improve what people are saying about you”. A result of Branding can be a visual image of a place you would like to visit (tourism), work and live. It reflects the value of place. **(See attached)**
3. **Tourism Branding Study. Snohomish County Washington State.** This is one example of many that discusses the steps that a community can take to attract tourism. **(See attached)**
4. **Tourism and Economic Development.** “Tourism and economic development are good partners by the very definition of economic development – a new activity that generates income from outside sources for your community”. **(See attached)**

The connection of Tourism and Economic Development resonated with our committee. Our initial discussion sparked many great ideas/initiatives that we as a committee plan to introduce to the Selectman as a result of our work. For example: Identifying all of our “attractions”; finding a way to coordinate those “attractions” with an up to date community calendar (New Web Site), supporting retail business, make our community “walk able”, make our community an “experienced based” tourism attraction, cross promote all existing “attractions” to benefit both tourists and local businesses, etc.

There are many opportunities to develop tourism in our community. Farming and agro-tourism fits perfectly within this realm of community development.

Tourism is also encouraged in the town's Master Plan.

The committee is starting to collect what we believe are foundation documents that will help clarify community and economic development opportunities.

A key to developing these opportunities will be to attract and infuse a younger generation into this committee. We plan to invite for example representative from the Kearsarge Food Hub. Existing Warner business will soon be invited as well.

The next meeting:

Date: February 21st

Time: 6:00PM

Location: Sugar River Bank

Agenda:

Overview of Tax Cards for Commercial Properties – Ginger

List of Warner business – Darryl

Draft EDAC report for Selectman (to be review by committee) - Charlie

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Albano

EDAC Chair

GOAL: Business Retention & Expansion

OBJECTIVE: Actively participate in community initiatives that will improve Warner's quality of place and reinforce a positive image of Warner among local employers and their employees.

TASK: Invest in annual and regular tourism events like the Warner Fall Foliage Festival and the Davisville Flea Market.

TASK: Develop a plan to establish a permanent and staffed Parks & Recreation Department and improve visibility and use of local recreational activities.

TASK: Improve road signage within and around the Town of Warner.

TASK: Increase the walkability of Warner by supporting complete streets and trail development.

OBJECTIVE: Assist Warner's primary employers and small businesses to enhance and encourage local expansion by engaging in public relations efforts that help improve their visibility and brand awareness.

TASK: Prepare a directory of primary employers and small businesses with relevant business and contact information for collaboration and growth.

TASK: Establish an annual meeting with primary employers and small businesses to present economic development activities, opportunities and listen to input.

TASK: Work with primary employers and small businesses to improve business representation on the Town of Warner boards and committees

TASK: Develop an economic development chapter for the Town Report that includes data on tourism, workforce, and business climates.

OBJECTIVE: Work with local farmers, farms, and agricultural businesses to foster and celebrate the rural character of the Warner area.

TASK: Work to establish an agricultural organization or committee within the town of Warner that includes local farmers and agricultural interests like the 4-H.

TASK: Increase the Town of Warner's collaboration with the Warner Area Farmer's Market with improvements to the market venue, better signage, marketing, and public relations.

TASK: Support efforts to increase and place emphasis on agritourism including events like the Kearsarge Maple Festival, the Warner Fall Foliage Festival and annual farm tours.

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Snohomish County, Washington

Tourism Branding Study

For those wanting to explore and pursue, between Seattle and Canada along I-5 and barely contained by Puget Sound and the Cascades, Snohomish County is where Seattle gets outside and opportunities open up.



Key Challenge

Being a destination located just outside of one of the nation's most well-known and desirable cities can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand there is the positive association of that geographic location; on the other hand there is the competitive association with that geographic location. Such was the case with Snohomish County, WA, situated 30 minutes north of Seattle. Snohomish County leaders were looking to tie together the region's six very diverse asset categories into a brand identity that complemented the Seattle experience rather than competing with it . . . particularly important since the majority of Snohomish visitors hail from Seattle.

Critical Insight

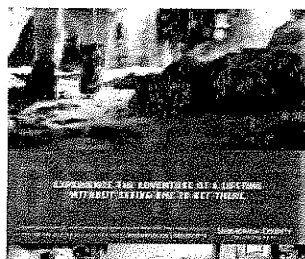
Even when you live in one of the world's greatest cities, there is still the need to escape urban complexities. Wide open and naturally beautiful, Snohomish County offers Seattle residents – or any visitor – the opportunity to get outside both literally and figuratively. Get outside the city, get outside into some of the area's greatest

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outdoor recreation, and get outside their own everyday lives. And all of the County's assets – aviation, shopping, business/events, gaming, sports and outdoor recreation – support that idea. It turns out Snohomish County is not just a destination outside of Seattle. It is where Seattle goes to get outside.

Brand Identity

The line “Open Up” embodies the essence of the strategy in a way that is both memorable and unique. It speaks to the wide open, undeveloped natural feel of the destination (in contrast to Seattle's more urban congestion) and to the opportunities visitors have to open up to life. It is infinitely flexible and representative of all of Snohomish County's diverse assets. Like the destination it represents, the logo is fresh, natural and uncluttered. The font feels young, active and fun with a nod to the native culture from which Snohomish County draws its name. The kerning on the strapline is quite open, visually supporting the meaning of the line. Breathtaking photography provides pleasing contrast between wide open spaces and up close shots of singular details in a scene (like the feet of a hiker or a hand holding a wine glass).



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Tourism and Economic Development Go Together

Tourism and economic development are good partners by the very definition of economic development we use--a new activity that generates income from outside sources for your community.

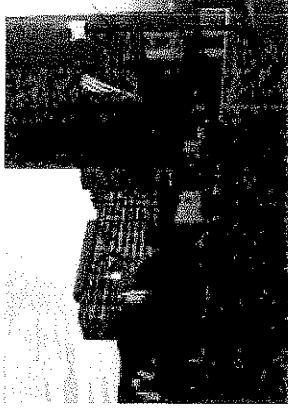
To show at least a partial connection between tourism and economic development, you'll need:

- At least one tourist attraction, which we define as something a person outside your community would want to see or experience.
- Supporting retail businesses, including at least one restaurant that's not a smoky local bar, or otherwise so local that an outsider will feel uncomfortable there. In a very small town, a gas station with an ATM machine and a place to buy an anti-acid and a fountain soda is essential.
- Clear wayfinding mechanisms, which might vary from a gaudy but effective billboard on the highway to wonderful graphics and discreet signage within your city or town. Wayfinding also could be a tulip path, public art, or graphic painted on the street, you know.
- Parking and restroom availability and wayfinding to them. Tourism and economic development organizations need to provide them.
- A sense of hospitality and knowledge of tourist attractions in the city/town, especially among individuals most likely to come in contact with tourists.
- Safety enhancements if there is any sense that the tourist attraction might be in an unsafe neighborhood. Activity is the best safety enhancement, but visible law enforcement, escorts from cars, or private security greeters could be necessary in the toughest of circumstances.

You cannot take short-cuts on any one of the above. If the person that answers the phone at the inn says there's no maze in town, but there is, you just struck out. This happened to a friend.

You'd be surprised that many a thriving antique store-boutique kind of street reaches a plateau because people get disgusted that the parking feels a little isolated, or the public bathrooms are out of order or non-existent. Again tourism and economic development organizations need to divide the work of making sure everything stays clean and active.

It's alarming but true that just because you have a tourist attraction, not everyone will want to see it. Is the price right? The hours? The attitude? Is it well interpreted?



Interpretation means explaining the significance of a natural or historic tourist attraction, a factory, and so forth. Even the most spectacular view in the world can become a larger tourist attraction if you begin to tell visitors in an engaging way, through audio or guided tours, signage, brochures, or artwork, more about the geology, botany, chemistry, and history behind what visitors see.

Can the people working there, whether volunteers or paid, accurately gauge whether people want to talk or be silent, whether they want to spend a lot of time or a little, and whether they want to know more or just see the basics.

From One Tourist Attraction to More

Then you need a technique for converting one tourist attraction, which most locations already have, or can uncover or create, into more than one attraction. If you have one of something, attempt first to develop more attractions that people with similar interests would enjoy.

Sometimes in smaller communities the additional attractions need to take the form of organizing a tour or joint promotion that extends over several nearby towns. In one area where I worked, about eight wineries in four or five towns over a 30 or 40 mile area combined marketing efforts with considerable success. You may have seen antique stores combine to help antiquers hop from one town to the next, to the benefit of all.

But back to the main point of developing another attraction. For example, if a visitor to your town is pointed proudly to one historic home open for tours, and the tour takes half an hour, that won't give you critical mass for tourism. In this case, if this is the only historic home that survived, or the only one where you can obtain ownership and information, try a compatible and interesting restaurant, which can serve as a tourist attraction in itself, next.

Related:



Zoning for Bed and Breakfast



Short-Term Rental Zoning

minimize the number of mistakes actually made.

Cultural economic development now is a recognized trend, and it applies to cities and towns with a strong sense of place and a strong cultural or higher education institution or a cultural or intellectual history of serious import. If you have something in your community of interest to intellectual historians or scholars, talk with them about how it might be enhanced. Sponsor that archaeological dig someone's been wanting to do for years. The history of utopias or poets might not be your cup of tea, but someone's interested. And if you can make your "brand" strong enough, the international community will be interested.

Of course, there are numerous exceptions to the "quality and taste" suggestion. Someone could argue that the most noteworthy examples of tourism and economic development really brand themselves as places to party without inhibition and absolutely without taste. And others are the hunting and fishing paradises, where not a single white tablecloth restaurant need appear.

But in these cases, the larger trend applies: experience-based tourism and economic development will prevail. Las Vegas and hunting clubs provide distinctive experiences, and within their particular speciality, they must provide quality.

Particularly when seeking to expand on experience-based tourism, look to the locals for the entrepreneurs you need to build new attractions, retail, and accommodations. They likely will be the most passionate about your sense of place, and your job as a proponent of tourism and economic development is to inspire them to think afresh about those portraits and artifacts that are rotting in the attic.

Festivals are another type of experience-based tourism and economic development. If you've been doing a successful festival for several years, make sure you do some visitor surveys occasionally to find out what experience is growing stale and what is becoming more attractive.

Quiz vendors carefully, as the continued success of your festival depends on their attendance. Can you offer them a hospitality suite, Sunday brunch respite, or more set-up help? Is your pricing structure irritating or inconvenient in some fashion you could remedy?

Use the festival to educate and educate some more about what your location offers during off-festival times. While the festivals draw crowds, those very crowds may make it more difficult to explore everything you have to offer.

Conferences and classes are another major type of experience tourism and economic development. Cater to them. Organizing a conference around an important attraction begins with asking the person in charge for contact information for the major expert in the field of Victorian architecture, Emily Dickinson, the steam engine, or whatever your attraction is.

If you can find one somewhat receptive expert, you can at least obtain from them the contact information for other experts if that one won't help you organize a conference. Using a referral chain, you can locate top talent and then over-deliver their every preference in setting up the first annual conference.

Note that another major tourism and economic development trend, the self-contained resort, retreat center, dude ranch, or spa, is an older variation on the experience-based tourism trend. Now the challenge is for a community that consists of many entrepreneurs and property owners to adapt the same kind of collaboration that makes those destinations so appealing as an unusual experience.

The goal is to lengthen the amount of time spent in your location, which enhances the possibility that someone will need an aspirin or gasoline. Then both tourism and economic development benefit.

If you have developed your charming historic house and a nice complementary restaurant, next you need a couple of antique shops or unusual boutiques, and then maybe a bed and breakfast. If your tourism and economic development base is larger, add a non-chain inn or a really well-run chain motel, and a couple of restaurant choices, at least one of which would make a typical male feel comfortable.

Branch out, based on the reason your house is historic. If the person who lived there was a politician, that's politics. If it was a famous general's house, you could try a little military museum. If your town is where a famous author lived, develop another museum about other authors from a similar era or genre.

Critical to almost every tourism and economic development plan is the concept of the walkable community. In one town with a spectacular mountain view, I successfully fought to connect the motels and fast food restaurants to one another by building a sidewalk with a view. Tourists and travelers (who can be converted to tourists) enjoyed the opportunity to take a short walk in the evening. In other situations, the walk-around area is critical to the success of specialty retail and certainly of historic districts.

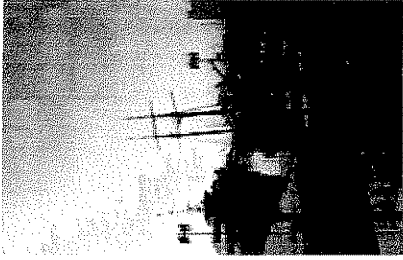
Your walk-around area needs a walkway in very good repair, with good signage or an easily understandable structure, such as one large loop. Pleasant pedestrian-scale lighting would be very helpful. Everything along the walkway needs to be as pleasant and clean as possible. We don't need to see your garages falling down, smell your stinkweeds, or hear your chain saws and lawn mowers incessantly.

At that point you are within reach of critical mass. Particular accidents of geography, such as being the only spot to stop along the interstate highway within 90 miles in each direction, may mean that you had critical mass already, but especially in this "captive audience" situation, you have an excellent opportunity to expand tourism and economic development.

The Experience-Based Society

Now, more than in previous decades, people respond well to quality and taste. The trip is about the experience. People with more money to spend in your town are particularly apt to be sensitive to incongruous elements that seem to ruin the atmosphere.

The most appealing towns and cities demonstrate that not every single building and business must contribute to the ambiance, and that a place can still be a magnetic destination even with a few mistakes thrown in. But try to avoid mistakes all the time, and thus to



Waterfront
Redevelopment

When You're Already a Big Player in Tourism and Economic Development

Since we mentioned Las Vegas, let's say there's almost no effective limit to how large and complex your tourism base might become. So if you have a tourism base, continue to add to it judiciously, and usually you can have an even better tourism base.

However, as the previous sentence suggests, if you add to your tourism base without applying judgment, your situation actually could deteriorate. For example, when a town based on some genuine history and a lot of nostalgia for a by-gone America adds a chain motel or huge discount center in the middle of town, it may have just created a glaring distraction from its principal asset.

Another lesson Las Vegas and Orlando can teach us is that you can always add new twists when you have major infrastructure for tourism in place already.

If your scale is big--as in both of these examples as well as in downtowns of cities--you can aim for other large attractions, whether they match your existing tourism base in tone or are something very different.

Welcome any small additions you have; both Las Vegas and Orlando would benefit from more "off the beaten path" areas in our opinion. Our point is only that if you are set up for very large crowds, feel free to reach out to a very large attraction that's way out of your current lineup.

But when Las Vegas started adding first-class chef restaurants and world-class art, the ambiance began to change just a bit. And complexity is more interesting.

The new Las Vegas Springs Preserve introduces desert ecology and a green experience that could form the nucleus of another tourism tangent. Note that both expansions into new territory required at least one very high quality entry in the new category.

Developing seasonal offsets is hugely important. If your climate attracts people in the fall or winter, develop things to do in spring and summer.

If you have large facilities, try to attract off-season conferences. This will be like starting from scratch with a tourism and economic development program. So look at all your brochures, and pick the attraction that is the least similar to all the others, or that is the most counter-seasonal. Begin there and see what you can build, following the advice at the top of this page for small communities!

The same strategy applies to downtowns where there's little activity at night, and night life districts where there's little activity during the day. If you can grow activity from 8 to 24 hours a day, you'll have economic development.

Dynamism is important from a tourism and economic development perspective too. Even if you have a great brand and a strong experience, eventually people will tire of it if it basically doesn't change from year to year. You won't have repeat visitors. At least if you're in America, you have to keep the "new" coming.

But advertise the "new" within a comfortable framework. If you develop a new district, explain and map it in relation to the old familiar district.

Middle Ground: Most Places Could Open More Attractions

Of course many communities fall within a middle ground between the "one claim to fame" town and Las Vegas or New York in the probable success of a tourism and economic development program. Our theory is that if you have some, you can build more.

Begin with a catalogue of your existing tourism assets, and pay attention to where they are located, what types of people they attract, and what else that same demographic or interest group might appreciate. If using public money or money raised for economic development, try to drop the next tourist draw right across the street or in very close proximity to your best tourist attraction.

Pamper first the current group of tourists, in almost all cases. Building a deluxe hotel is not a good choice for public subsidy or encouragement if most of your visitors are of modest income and mostly are interested in buying a T-shirt for the grandkids.

Cross-promote all over town and in fact all over the county or region. Here's an obvious step but one that so many communities overlook:

You must do a very comprehensive **inventory of visitor attractions**, and then map and sign it well. There's no substitute for looking with imagination at everything around town and adding a tourism and economic development element wherever possible.

Geography problem? Don't whine. Solve it. If you're really remote, you might have to build a little airstrip and fly people in once a week. Wouldn't that be exclusive?

Less dramatically, I love what Berea, Kentucky, did. Located well off the interstate, they built a store at the interchange offering merchandise from many local shops and artisans. It's impressive enough some people decide to make the trek into town, and if they don't, local artisans still prosper.

Perhaps you will be able to build an actual tourist district, which is great as long as it offers an escape valve. I love touristy places, Key West and New Orleans and Cape Cod and Fishermen's Wharf and the Grand Tetons, but some people don't. So try to make a way for the family member who doesn't like tawdry souvenirs and larger-than-life enticements to escape to normalcy for an hour or two.

Scale and the Public Sector in Tourism and Economic Development

Many individual tourism-related businesses and attractions fail because they begin at the wrong scale. While finding a local entrepreneur often is an essential piece to building and tourism and economic development program you want, make sure that local person is supported in the same ways that I hope you support all local entrepreneurs.

In particular, they need to do market research and be sharp and realistic about expectations.

Local boosterism can cause someone to jump in faster than the market will absorb. Tourism is often a slow build in communities where there has not been much tourist activity. If the public sector believes strongly in tourism potential, it may want to absorb some of the early-years risk for an entrepreneur through whatever economic development incentives are available in your state.

Another way the public sector can assist is by providing an overall facility, whether through zoning a district, or constructing or redeveloping a market, block of stores, or conference center.

Rentals can eventually amortize this cost, but having the government bear the development cost of a versatile structure that adapts to the market could be a huge benefit to entrepreneurs.

Providing the facility or group of facilities in one area also is an effective method for a government to help tourism and economic development reach critical mass by seeming more important since all attractions are grouped together.

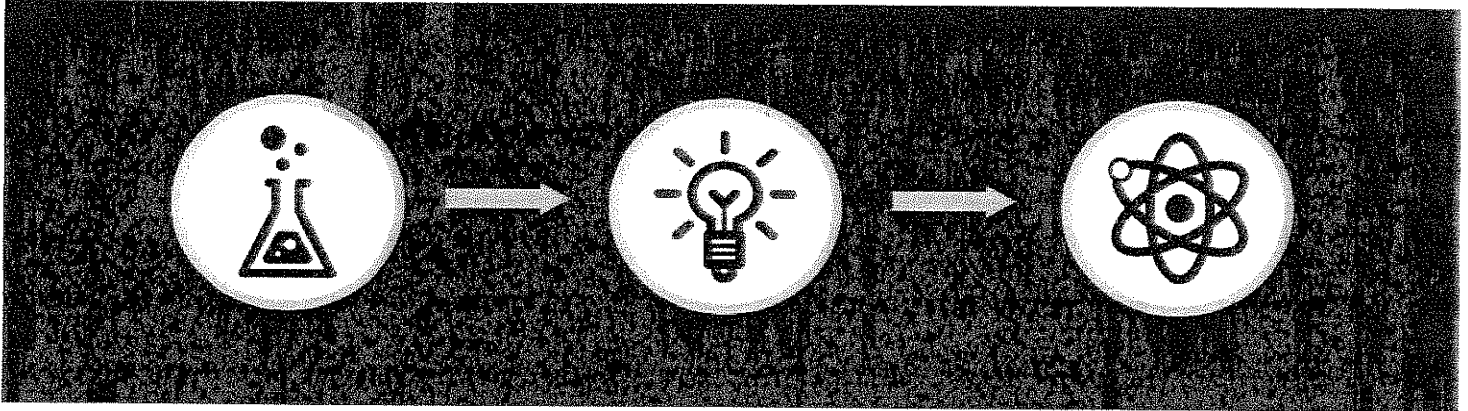
One more piece of advice for the public sector professional would be to consult market research folks for franchises. Even if you're repulsed by the idea of a Fast Food Giant in a tourist destination, their market study might tell you a lot.

So next time they contact you, don't brush them off. Consider playing their game; their real estate and market perspective could teach you about your own city.

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Processes



Our Process

Your community brand is what people say about you when you're not around. It is a combination of emotional and intellectual reactions to all the different experiences, marketing communications and behaviors people have encountered on behalf of your community. Branding is the process a community embarks upon to change, refine or improve what people are saying.

The idea of community branding is deceptively simple: use a community's greatest strength to create a consistent memorable identity that will help propel the city to its preferred future. However, the process of branding is much more complex. The best identities are grounded in reality but aspirational in vision. They bridge the past and the present with an eye toward the future. They are uncovered and brought to life through a process that unites rather than divides. And they serve the interests of diverse groups within the community with different agendas.

Of course, branding is not a panacea for all ills. It cannot eradicate racial discord or turn a culturally desolate city into a cultural mecca. What branding can do is focus people on the positive differentiator in your community, which can help it stand out relative to the competition. And that differentiator does not necessarily have to be a huge visible asset like endless retail or incredible skiing. Perhaps your community boasts a more relaxed pace or excellent value for families. Creatively presented in a unique and memorable way, these characteristics can make people want to spend their time, their money . . . even their lives there.

The North Star approach to community branding is a comprehensive process that combines research/strategy, creativity and action. Not only does this methodology allow for seamless transitions between phases, it allows for collaboration amongst different skill sets at every stage of the initiative. Quite simply, more brain power from different perspectives makes for a better product.

Our approach is so flexible it works for communities of all shapes, sizes and footprints. North Star has successfully branded tiny villages with fewer than 5,000 residents and major cities of more than 500,000. We have branded villages, towns, cities, counties, regions and states for the purposes of tourism, economic development or to create a consistent community-wide identity that supports the missions of all the public sector entities.

Research

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