

Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report

Tehama County, California
September, 2010



Assessment

INTRODUCTION

In August of 2010, an Assessment of Tehama County, California, was conducted, and the findings were presented in a two-and-a-half-hour workshop. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of the county - how it is seen by a visitor. It includes a review of local marketing efforts, signage, attractions, critical mass, retail mix, ease of getting around, customer service, visitor amenities such as parking and public washrooms, overall appeal, and the community's ability to attract overnight visitors.

In performing the Assessment, we looked at the communities and 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. The town and surrounding area were "secretly shopped." Any person looking to relocate their business, industry, or residence will come to your community as a visitor first. Tourism is the front door to all your economic development efforts.

How easy is it for potential visitors to find information about the county and communities? Once they find information, are the 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 didn't know, in advance, who the assessment was for. They used whatever resources they would typically use in planning a trip: travel books, brochures, the internet, calling visitor information centers, review of marketing materials,

etc. - just as you might in planning a trip to an unfamiliar destination.

A typical community has five opportunities to close the sale:

- 1) Personal contact (visitor information centers, trade shows, etc.)
- 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, and read travel articles and guidebooks.

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 of a two-hour drive - or from further away. The question on most visitors' minds is: What do you have that I can't get closer to home? What makes you worth a special trip?

Where most communities falter is when they merely provide "lists" 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, shops and restaurants, plenty of lodging, golf, outdoor recreation, historic downtowns, scenic vistas, etc. Of course, nearly every visitor can do these things closer to home. So, what makes your community worth the trip?

Always promote your primary lure first - what makes you worth that special trip. THEN, promote your diversionary, or "complimentary" activities. Would you go to Anaheim, California, if Disneyland wasn't there? Do you think that Universal Studios and Knotts Berry Farm mind that Disneyland gets all the glory? Of course not. Eighty percent of all tourism spending is with those secondary activities. Disney does the heavy lifting in terms of advertising and promotion, and the diversionary activities benefit.

In a nutshell, the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment looks for what makes your county worth a special trip, or a great place to live, or to do business. The secret shoppers look for details, details, details. Do you give a reason for visiting, and do you provide enough information to make it easy to plan a trip? Are the marketing materials 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 county, looking at enticements 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 restrooms, 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 communities benefit from tourism when visitors spend money, and they do that in the local gift shops, restaurants, hotels, etc. 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 why the suggestions may not be appropriate. Hopefully this assessment process will open dialogue within the communities, leading them to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

It's important to note that to increase the county's tourism industry, fulfilling one or two of the suggestions may have little impact, but implementing a number of them, if not all, can have a profoundly successful impact on the county'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.) will 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 aware of but can't 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 - in your communities? Do your communities have truly unique attractions the visitor can't get closer to home? You must be able to deliver on your marketing promises – otherwise visitors might come once, but they won't come back. It's 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 don't 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 cost of those services.

The primary goal of the tourism industry is to bring more cash into the local economy. This doesn't happen when visitors come into the community, get out of their cars, and take photographs. And it doesn't happen when visitors go swimming in the lake at your city park all day, sunning, and eating the lunch they brought from home. And it doesn't 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, of course, you do want your visitors to do these – but, you also want to entice them into your shops, your cafes, espresso stands, restaurants, galleries, B&B's, and hotels, 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, all in an attractive setting, as well as attractions that make them want to visit you in the first place.

THE THREE TYPES OF TOURISM

1. Visiting friends and family

The number one reason people 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 your 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 signage, 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, as well as conventions and meetings, corporate travel, vendor travel, etc. 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 simply because of their convention and exhibition facilities. Think Disneyworld, Disneyland, San Antonio’s River Walk, Banff, to name a few.

3. Leisure travel

The third, and most lucrative of all types of visitors, 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 over about four hours. During the other hours of the day, the visitor will shop in local outlet malls, head to the water parks, theme parks, and other attractions, play a round of golf, hike, bike, fish, do some bird watching, and 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 gas, food, or lodging, as well as the fact that 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% of the vehicles traveling through pulled off the highway and spent just 30 minutes in your community – buying gas, an ice cream cone, a sandwich, a gift or souvenir?

If there’s a strong pull, imagine the money spent if visitors stayed two hours in the community, which nearly always translates to additional spending.

The first goal is to get those travelers to stop and Edmundston couldn’t be more perfectly situated to tap into the travel-through visitor.

3. Becoming the destination

To become a destination community you must have attractions and supporting amenities that convince visitors to spend the night. And 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 if it has enough activities that appeal specifically to them and will keep them busy four times longer than it took them to get there.

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, collectively, the further visitors will come, and the longer they will stay, and of course, the more they will 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’ll 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 couldn't 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 don't care whether he's in Muskogee, Oklahoma or in Branson, Missouri. People 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 - the experience - 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't 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. It's what's in the buildings that 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, but don't 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 Plimoth Plantation or Salem, Massachusetts.

Thousands of communities are the "capital" of something. For instance, in California, Borrego Springs is the grapefruit capital of the world. Gilroy is the garlic capital. Modesto is the tomato capital. Gridley is the kiwi capital. Oxnard is the strawberry capital. Fallbrook is the avocado capital. But here's the question: Have you ever gone anywhere because it was the capital of a fruit or 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's 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 its Shakespeare Festival, which 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’ll 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 also how 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, restrooms, etc., 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: 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, cafes, bistros, delis, etc. And the final ten are businesses open after 6:00 pm. This includes entertainment: bars, dance clubs, theaters (movies



and performing), retail shops with activities (piano bar in a wine shop), etc.

The important point is to group these businesses together to create the “critical mass” in a pedestrian-friendly setting. This will attract visitors as well as locals, and make it worth their while to stop and shop. People are always drawn to the critical mass – the opportunity to have multiple choices, multiple experiences, all in a convenient and attractive setting.

TOURISM IS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

The goal of successful tourism is for people to come into the community, spend money, and go home. Tourism is nearly a \$650 billion dollar industry in the U.S., nearly \$75 billion in Canada, and supports millions of jobs. Ninety percent of tourism industry businesses are small businesses of which 90% 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, crafts, etc. 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. And 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 will provide your county with many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue in the county and becomes a springboard for the county 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 county should take these findings and suggestions, discuss them and evaluate them, and develop a plan for implementation.

A detailed “County 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 include 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 - everyone pulling in the same direction, each with it’s own “to do list.”

Finally, there’s 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 & 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.

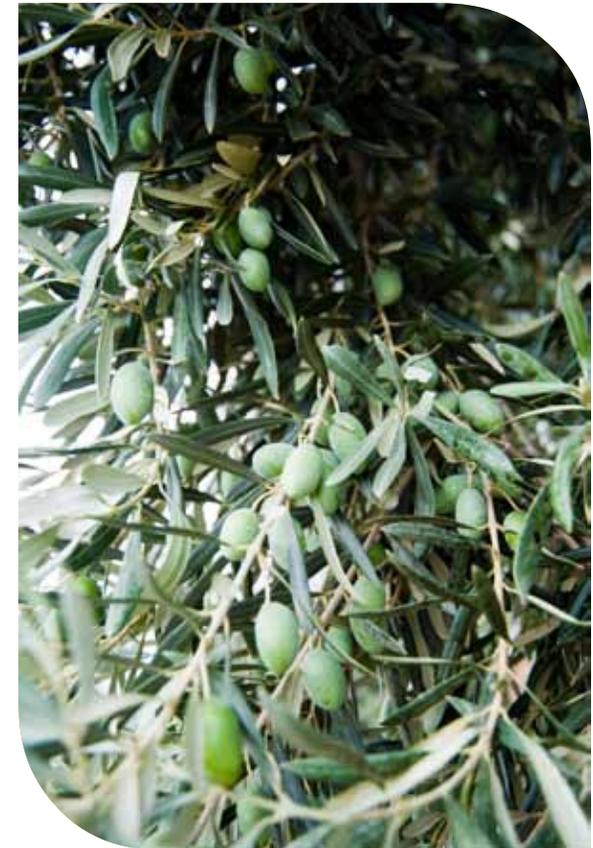
For every recommendation the following elements should be detailed:

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 county to be successful in attaining its goals of a more diverse economy with an enhanced tourism industry and to become a more attractive and enjoyable county 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), then negotiate the scope of work and cost with them. If you are not able to reach an agreement, then move to number two on your list. A good plan will provide a program to 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 in which to live, work, and visit.





Findings & Suggestions

Tourism is an Economic Development Activity

The object is to have people come, spend money, then go home.

90% of tourism industry businesses are small business.

A tourism-friendly city will spawn non-tourism industries faster than others.

The Internet has changed everything.

94% of the population with Internet access use it to decide where to travel, where to live, where to work or where to establish a business.

The Internet should be your top marketing priority.

70% are frustrated with travel planning on the web. They have a hard time finding the information needed to plan their trip. Why? They are looking for activities while most towns are promoting geography - towns, counties and cities or geographic locations. Have you ever gone anywhere because it was a county?

We are exposed to nearly 1,200 marketing messages a day. We ignore everything that doesn't



Assessment Findings & Suggestions
Tehama County, California



This is about cash



75% of households now have internet access.
90% access the web at work, school, local library, etc.



88% of community-based promotional organizations spend more on printed materials than on the web.

directly appeal to us. Find your niche - that one thing that sets you apart from everyone else.



- Avoid these words & phrases:**
- Explore
 - Discover
 - Outdoor recreation
 - Unlike anywhere else
 - So much to see and do
 - The four season destination
 - Where the seasons come to life
 - Historic downtown
 - Center of it all
 - Best kept secret
 - We have it all
 - Experience...
 - Visit (name of town)
 - Beauty & heritage
 - Naturally fun
 - Gateway
 - Close to everywhere
 - Right around the corner
 - Your playground
 - So much history
 - Purely natural
 - The place for all ages
 - ...and so much more!
 - Home away from home
 - A slice of heaven
 - It's all right here
 - **Far from ordinary**
 - The perfect getaway
 - The place for families
 - Start your vacation here
 - Recreational paradise
 - Take a look!



The big question to ask yourself is this:

What do you have in Tehama County (or in your community) that a visitor can't get (or do) closer to home? If they live as far away as Chico, Redding, Susanville, Sacramento, or Medford, OR. Why should a visitor make a special trip to Tehama County? What sets you apart from other locations?

Whatever you have that truly sets you apart and makes you worth a special trip is what you should hang your hat on.

The narrower the focus, the stronger the success will be. Promote specifics, not generalities!

Using generic words and phrases in your marketing efforts won't attract anyone anymore. They don't set you apart.

Having "something for everyone" just means you don't have anything specifically for me, and your marketing efforts will result in mediocrity and ultimate failure. Membership organizations, who want to promote every member equally, can kill your marketing efforts.

Promote activities, not just scenic vistas and ambiance. When people see others doing fun activities in a great setting, it's easy for them to imagine themselves there too. Promote people over places. Remember that in your photography and in everything you do.

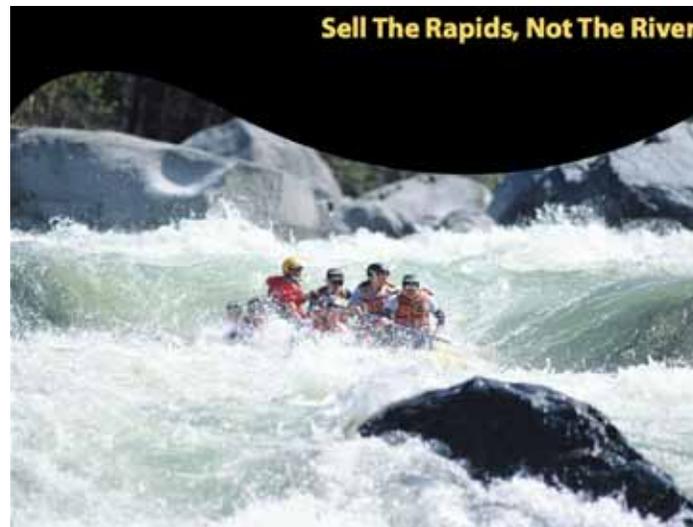
Promote experiences over locations. Your location is always second to the activity - people are looking for things to do first, then they'll consider the general location second.

Visitors don't really care about boundaries - it doesn't matter if they are in a specific region, county, district, city or town.

These are not primary lures:

- Your location
- Historic downtowns
- Scenic vistas

These are all part of the ambiance. To succeed, you need activities.

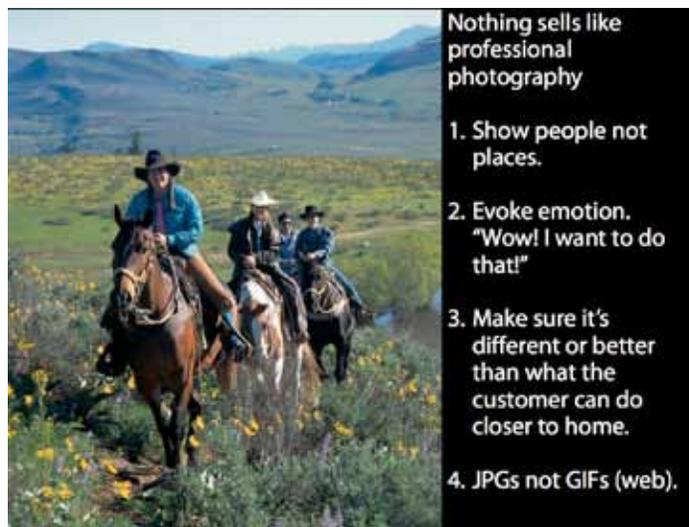




Promote the EXPERIENCE. Brands are perceptions, and the perception is based on what people expect to experience. Base your brand on activities - that's what people are looking for.

Evoke emotion! Great photography that shows people having a great time helps your potential visitors imagine themselves doing the same thing.

Promote activities first - location second. Have you ever gone somewhere because it was a county? Or turned around at the county line because you were at the boundary?



Nothing sells like professional photography

1. Show people not places.
2. Evoke emotion. "Wow! I want to do that!"
3. Make sure it's different or better than what the customer can do closer to home.
4. JPGs not GIFs (web).

Notice the photos on this page: activities are in the foreground, the location is in the background. Remember that in all your marketing efforts.

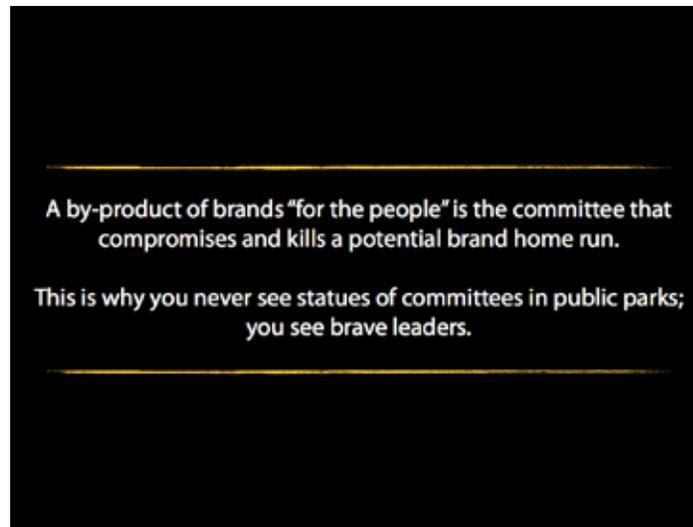
Look at your photography and what you market: Is it truly different - or significantly better - than what the customer can do closer to home if they as far away as Chico?

Over several years, the DDI Team surveyed 400 successful, well-branded towns and downtown districts throughout the U.S. and Canada to find the common ingredients that make each a thriving, healthy community or downtown.

The first ingredient is a strong brand - something that sets the community apart from all the others. Brands are built on product - not marketing.

Local politics can kill a branding effort. Successful brands are always about something specific. Unfortunately, brands "by the people" are nearly always generic; "we have something for everyone." No one wants to be left out; no one wants to play favorites. But brands need to be built on feasibility - not just local sentiment - to be successful, and that means they need to be specific. It's not about playing favorites - it's about what actually will attract visitors and economic development investment. Promoting the "anchor tenants" is the best way to benefit everyone.

Don't try to be all things to all people. Promote your primary lure.



Find your niche and promote it like crazy. The narrower your focus, the greater your success will be.



During the on-site assessment, we drove and walked through your communities, looking at signage and wayfinding, your gateways, the overall appeal, critical mass of shopping, dining, and entertainment, amenities, attractions and customer service.

This “Findings and Suggestions Report” is a conversation starter. And it’s not just about tourism - but, tourism is the front door to your non-tourism economic development efforts. Anyone interested in investing in Tehama County will come first as what? A visitor. Is this a place they’d want to live? Their employees would relocate to?

No question the Olive Pit is an “anchor tenant” for Corning. Notice this billboard. 14 words. The max you should ever use. Good job!



So far, the impressions are good.



I’ve driven through this area of California many times, but never went more than a couple of blocks off the interstate. My first impressions of Tehama County from the freeway are good (bottom right).

The Olive Pit did a good job getting my attention with their billboards (bottom left).

Obviously the area is primarily agricultural. Clean, nice rolling hills. Nothing negative like you'd find along much of Highway 99 to the south. So far, so good!

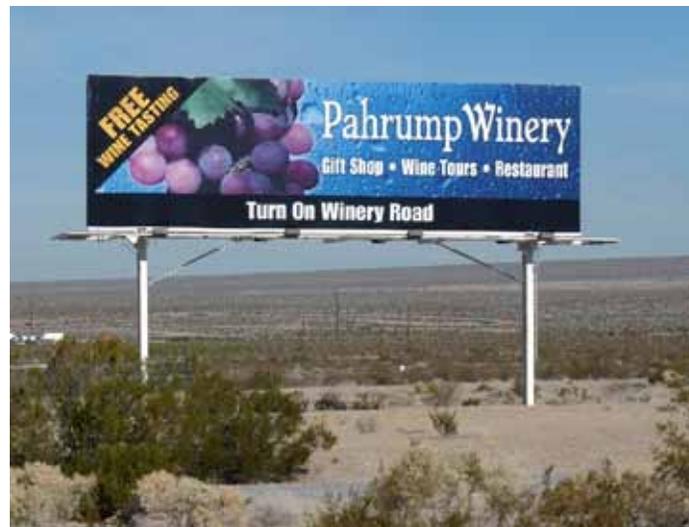
Signs along the highway can be a very good way to get travelers to stop and spend time and money in your community. They are most effective when they give people a reason to stop - such as food, an attraction, an event, or even to use "the facilities."

Billboards must be eye-catching. Use the right words; be brief; keep the design simple; and keep the sign well-maintained.

Use strong action words, not worn out or meaningless words like "welcome," "discover," "explore." These words don't give travelers a real **reason** to stop.

Travelers along a highway have only four seconds to read a sign or billboard. If the sign has too much text, too many graphics, or is cluttered, most travelers will just ignore it. Never use more than 12 words - preferably fewer. Look at what's around the billboard (bottom right).





Keep the graphics simple. Most photos and graphic images are difficult to see well from a distance. Magazine-style ads do not make good billboards.

Make sure to keep signs well-maintained. Don't let weeds and grass take over. And don't leave up signs for events that have already taken place. Keep your signs fresh and in good condition. After all, they are giving travelers their first impression of your community or business.

Tell me why I should stop - the billboards on this page give travelers a reason. The Oak Tree Inn provides a respite for travelers who don't want all the noise, smoke, and gambling that fills all the other hotels in the area. Little America Travel Center has built a successful business providing a "rest stop" along a long stretch of empty freeway. Subway grabs your attention. The Pahrump Winery offers free wine tasting, and tells you how to get there. Yellow on black always grabs the eye.

Billboard Rules:

- Never use more than 12 words - eight is better!
- Billboards should never look like print ads.
- Only use one graphic and make it simple. Note the examples on the previous page. The billboard (top left) is far too cluttered and busy.
- Never use outlined or shaded letters.
- Use a contrasting background.
- Tell me WHY I should stop, or buy - don't just tell me what you have.
- Remember - you have only four seconds to make the sale!
- Use #1 quotes when possible.

Be sure to keep signs fresh and attractive (bottom right). They are a visitor's first impression of your attraction, community, or business, and they are a direct reflection of the quality. This one is so faded it does little to attract attention.

Suggestion: Start over. 35 words, too many graphics. Impossible to read in four seconds. Nice print ad, but not suitable for a billboard.



You can't miss the casino and the nice lawn area makes it inviting.



Few attractions are noted on the freeway, but this looks like a good one.



This sign is faded and easy to miss. Looks "ok."



As you get up into the Red Bluff area, the terrain becomes more scenic and interesting. Overall a good first impression.



You have four rest stops in the county. This presents a tremendous marketing opportunity.



The terrain in Tehama County is very appealing - it's a beautiful setting. Other than a trailer park backing up to the freeway and one or two eyesores, the impressions from I-5 are good.

Twenty-seven million people drive through Tehama County ever year. How many of them are you getting to stop and spend some time and money in the county?

Consider every place visitors might stop as an opportunity to promote the area. Take advantage of the four rest areas in the county - visitors stop and get out of their cars, presenting a prime opportunity to let them know what the area has to offer.

There are some information panels...



...and publication dispensaries.

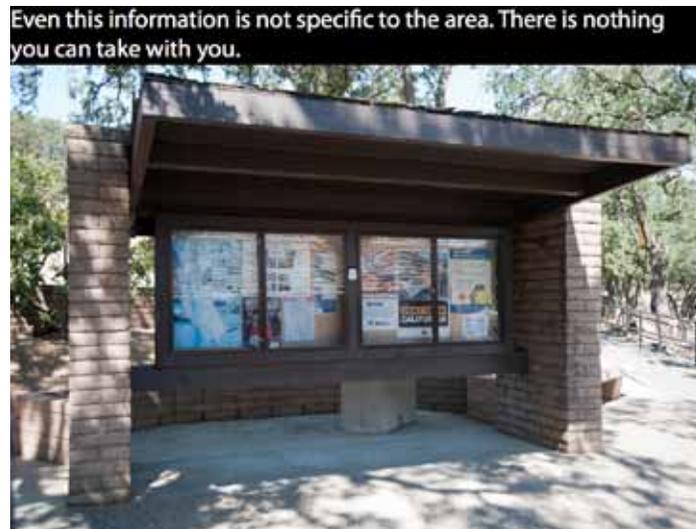
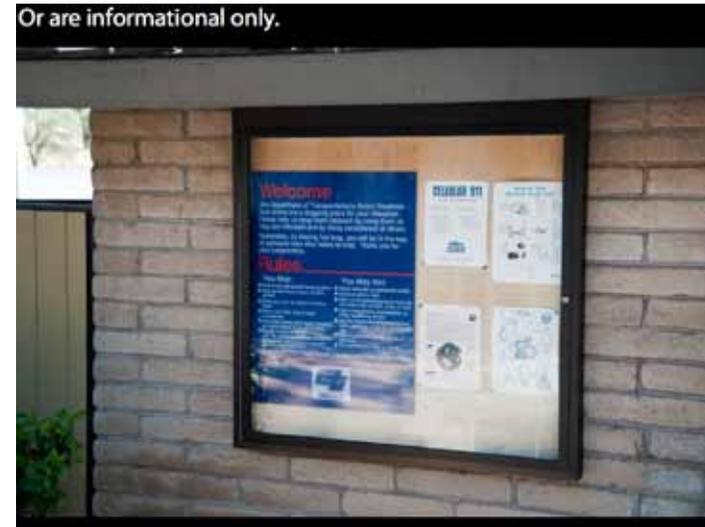
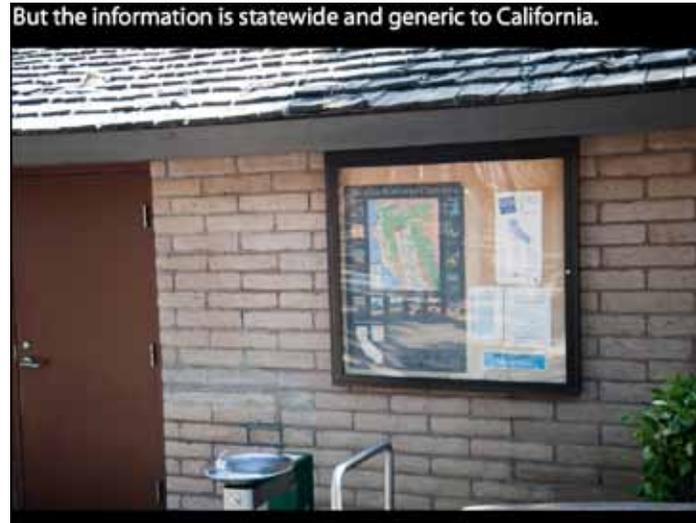


I stopped at all four rest areas, and none of them had any information about Tehama County or any attractions/ activities in the area that I could take with me. This means brochure distribution is critical to promoting the area.

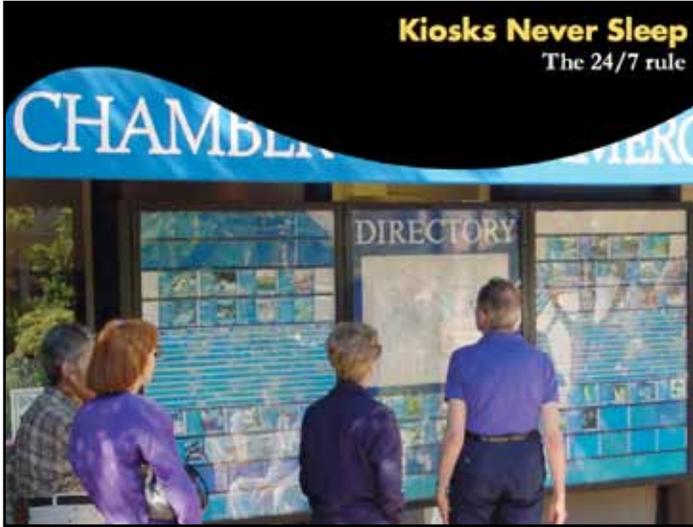
You can never have too many visitor information sites. Convenience is critical and, in fact, drives much of consumer behavior.

Not only should you have displays of information, including maps, highlights of "must visit" attractions, and amenities, you need to provide information visitors can pick up and take with them.

Work with CalTrans on "adopting" some of the empty panels at rest areas. Then add brochure distribution.



Suggestion: Better yet, could an information gazebo be built here if the community paid for it and kept it stocked? Worth asking!



Visitor information kiosks can offer the information visitors need 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Besides having kiosks at the rest areas, they should be placed strategically throughout the county so that they can cross-promote activities, events, attractions and amenities. The more visitors see there is to do in the county, the longer they will stay and the more money they will spend. Every site should cross-sell to other sites, attractions and amenities.

Kiosks come in all shapes and sizes - they should be designed to fit the character of the town or location. Maintain and stock them regularly. Keep the information up-to-date.



This visitor information display (top right) is in Ashland, Oregon, home of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Several of these kiosks (bottom right) provide information along the Teton Pass Trail. They are designed to reflect the mountainous beauty of the area.

The gazebo (above, bottom) was built by volunteers from a kit for Beatty, Nevada. A local craftsman donated his time to build the information display and brochure holders inside.

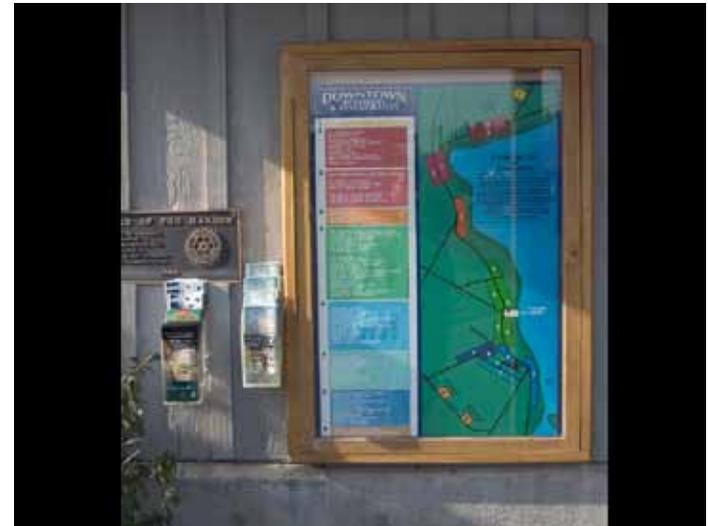
This “information station” (top left) was built by a local service organization in Moses Lake, WA. Although it doesn’t have brochure distribution, it does point out “must see” attractions in the area. They’ve got the right idea.



This kiosk in Kingsport, TN (top right) is built to coordinate with the town’s architecture. Up close (bottom left) you can see the brochure holders. Businesses pay \$5 a month to have their brochures displayed, and the \$5 pays to restock and maintain the kiosk, plus provides funds for construction of additional kiosks.



This visitor information display is in Gig Harbor, WA (bottom right), and includes brochures. Placed on the outside of their public restrooms, it offers a very convenient location for visitors to get information about the town. This turns your public restrooms into economic development tools!





Another great location for a gazebo or some type of area visitor information kiosk.



There are four phases of tourism:

1. Getting people to stop.
2. Getting people to stay at least two hours, which translates to increased spending.



Visitor encounter: "There's just nothing about this entire area!"



3. Becoming the "central hub" for the Northern California Experience.
4. Becoming the destination.

Weather-resistant brochure holders can be as simple as this wooden bin (top left) with a plexiglass lid, or these holders on the wall outside the door of a chamber or visitor information center office (top right).

Visitors don't always travel during business hours, so it's essential to provide 24 hour information. Besides having information at the rest areas, also place visitor information in places where visitors can spend money. That provides a much greater opportunity - when visitors get out of the car for information, they'll be tempted to step into the little shop next door or grab a bite to eat at a nearby restaurant. It also reduces the chance of vandalism.

Design a visitor information kiosk and work to install perhaps 40 of them throughout the county at various locations.

I drove up and down I-5 - did I miss anything?

The theme "Recreation Unlimited" is very broad, and it isn't carried over into marketing materials, visitor information, the communities, or wayfinding. In fact, once I left the freeway, there was nothing to tell me where the recreation was.

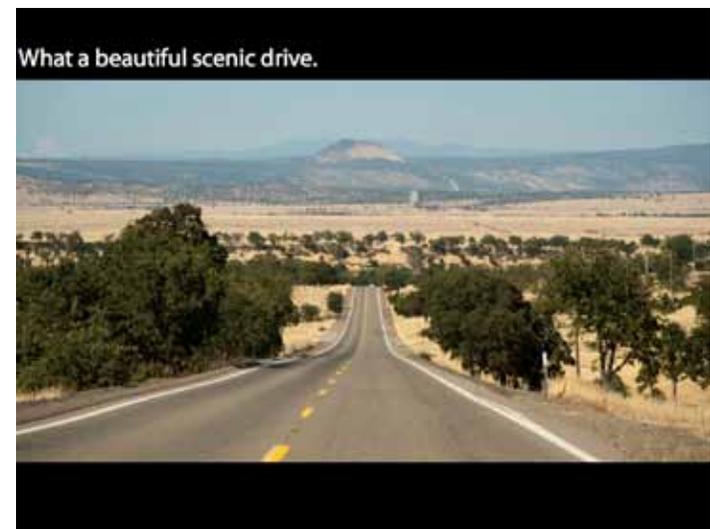
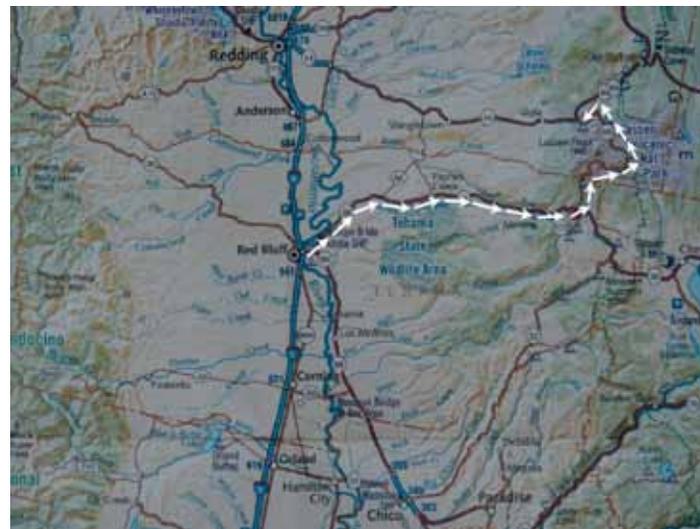
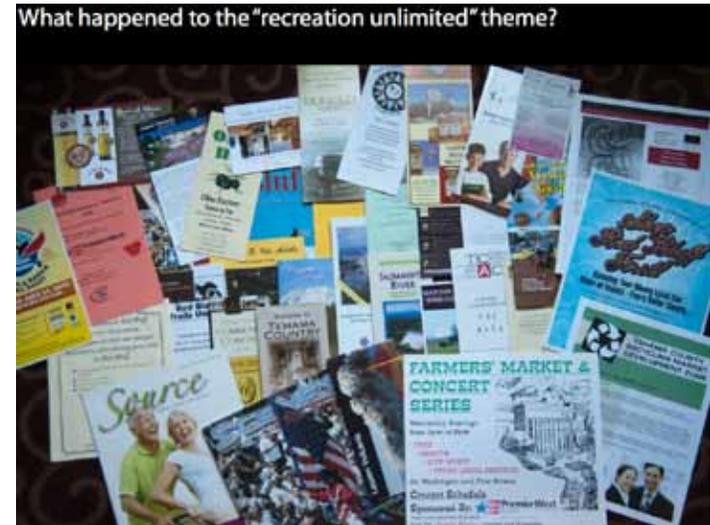
How does "Recreation Unlimited" set you apart from any of the other 58 counties in California, all of which have an abundance of outdoor recreation. What sets Tehama County's recreation apart from every other place in Northern California?

In a nutshell, first impressions along I-5 are good. There is nothing major to work on other than some of the billboards.

The "Recreation Unlimited" signs could easily be retrofitted with a stronger brand or focus.

The communities do very little to attract travelers off the freeway.

Once off the freeway, I headed east towards the National Park.



What a stunning area. Hard to believe this is less than an hour from the valley!



Wow. What a stunning area. I had no idea.



Mineral was a great stopping-off point and "provisioning headquarters" for Lassen Volcanic National Park.



I did stop at the Visitor Center, but - as usual - there was no marketing materials about Tehama County and its communities.



At Red Bluff, I left the freeway and headed east on Hwy 36 towards Lassen Volcanic National Park - what a beautiful drive!

Be sure to include information about Tehama County's communities at the Visitor Center at the National Park. This would not only help the communities, it also would help visitors!

This is "cross-selling" where the communities and the National Park each market each other.

Lassen Volcanic National Park is outstanding! Besides being a stunningly beautiful place, its volcanic activity makes it wonderfully unique. Of course, we all know about the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, but I never knew about the eruption of Lassen Peak in 1915 - that's recent history, especially for a volcano. With the volcanic activity, fumaroles and boiling mudpots, the park really stands out, and offers visitors experiences they can't find in other places in the U.S.

Having visited nearly half of the 384 national parks, monuments or shorelines, Lassen must be the most undersold and undermarketed of them all.

It's barely mentioned in your marketing materials. It should be promoted front-and-center. It is your "anchor tenant" for tourism. I was actually shocked that it played such a minor role in regional tourism promotional efforts.



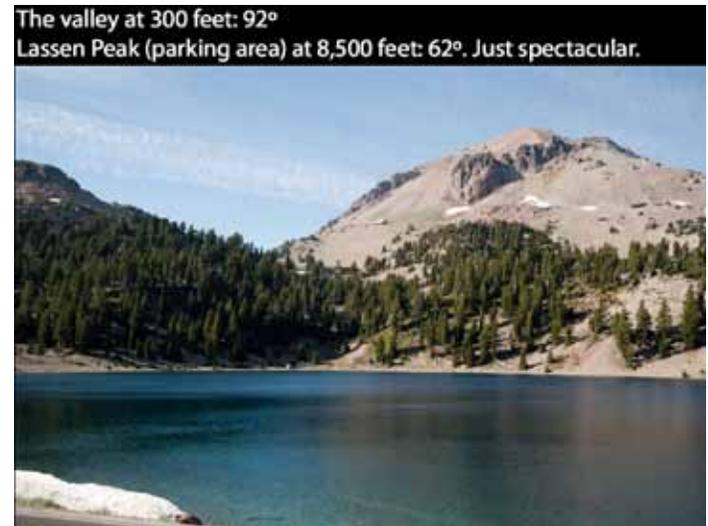
It's a very nice visitor center.



The displays are very nice although they could use more photographs, video, and less text.

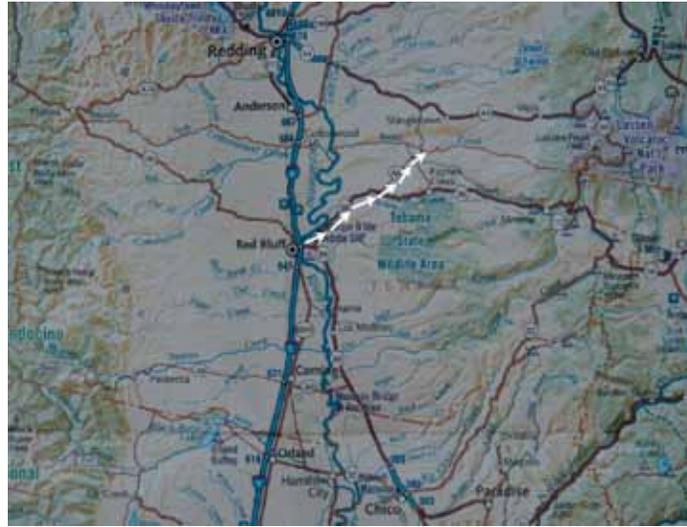


It is your "anchor tenant" for tourism, and makes you (Coming and particularly Red Bluff) worth a two-night stay. One for the park.



The valley at 300 feet: 92° Lassen Peak (parking area) at 8,500 feet: 62°. Just spectacular.

For most visitors they can't get or do this closer to home. Yellowstone, Glacier, Yosemite - Lassen should be in that list.



When I called the DDI office, they let me know that there was a museum in Manton, and that I should check it out.

There is a lot of sign clutter at the "Welcome to Manton" sign. But I appreciated the directional signs to the wineries. Suggestion: Consider making a true gateway sign - a decorative sign for Manton for this location. The Volunteer Fire Department's sign could be smaller and included as a snipe below the welcome sign. The sign for the wineries is great. I had no idea there were this many wineries in the area. That was a pleasant surprise.

Well, I'll be darned! Wineries! (Great sign)



Great store, complete with a full display and complement of Manton wines - and visitor information. Excellent job.



Thank goodness Shasta Daisy put up “reminder signs” along the route to the winery. They let me know I haven’t missed it and to keep going. Otherwise I would have probably given up finding it. To first time visitors, five or ten miles can seem like 15 or 20 miles.



This is really an “Explorers Wine Trail” Into “California’s outback.”



Ringtail and Shasta Daisy were the only two open - but most or all are open on weekends. During peak months: try three days a week.



The wine region around Manton could be known as the “Explorer’s Wine Trail” or something similar. Very, very few wineries are set among forests, particularly in a mountain setting. This makes this wine area truly unique from others.

I visited during the week, and only two wineries were open, but most of them would be open on weekends. Consider opening on Fridays and Mondays during the season as well. Or perhaps Wednesday through Saturday.



The Manton area, with its wineries, Manton Corner store and Julia's, is a great hidden gem. The proximity to Lassen Volcanic National Park makes Tehama County worth a visit of at least two nights (so far).

Consider more beautification for Julia's and the Corners store. Hanging baskets and pots of flowers would add a lot of appeal. 70% of first-time sales at shops, restaurants, golf courses, and wineries can be attributed to curb appeal. Have you ever uttered these words when you travel: "That looks like a nice place to eat"? We all do. If we have nothing else to go on, we judge the quality based on curb appeal. Always soften the transition of building to parking lot with planters, pots, shrubs, trees, outdoor seating, etc.



On the way back I paid a second visit to Manton Corners store.



This "hidden gem" makes the stay in Tehama County worth two nights - so far.

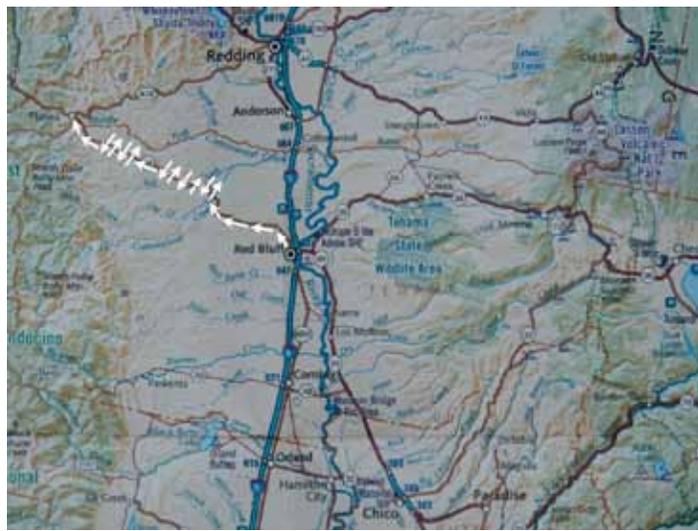
It should also be front and center in your marketing efforts.



Julia's looks nice. Suggestion: Add some hanging baskets to dress it up even more. Overall, a good job. Tasting room here?



By the way, I never did find the museum. Someone said it was back behind the school somewhere. Nothing here about it at all.



Hmmm. What am I getting myself into? Doesn't look unpaved.
Suggestion: Contact NavTech and have them correct this.



After visiting the Lassen area, I headed west on Hwy 36 from I-5, and my navigation system indicated it was unpaved! It turned out to be wrong, so it would be good to have that corrected with NavTech, who does most of the mapping for all navigation systems. Their website includes places for providing updates and corrections. This would be a good intern project.

Oh boy. This could be fun. I HOPE it's all paved!



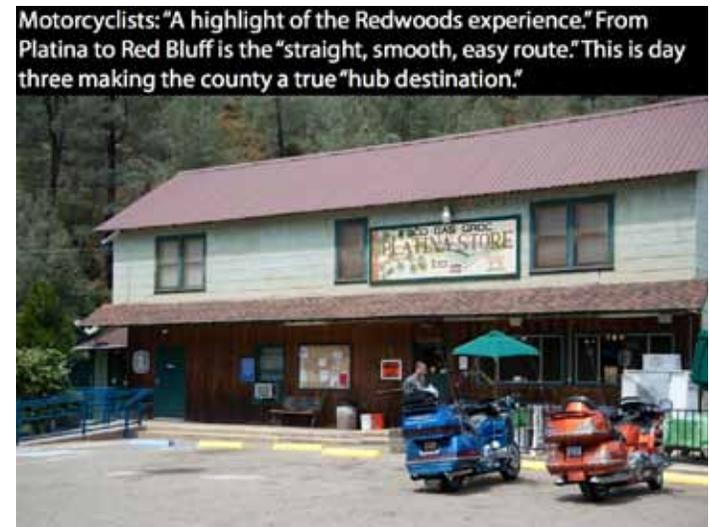
Call to office: "Can you see if anyone rents motorcycles in Red Bluff or Corning?" "Yeah! What a ride!"

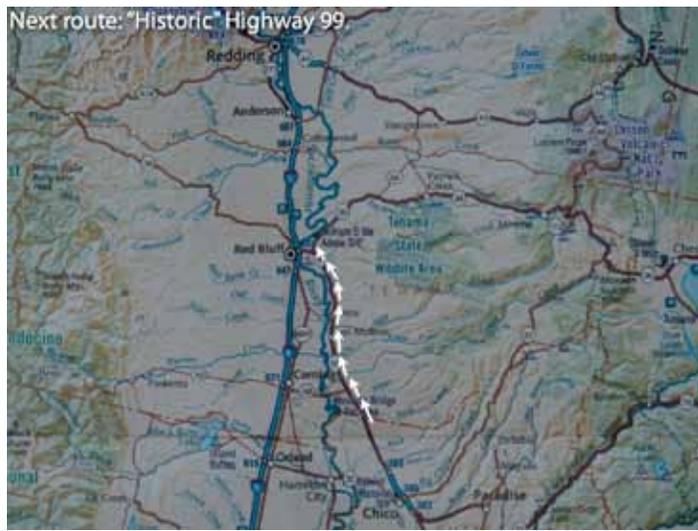


What a fun, scenic, winding drive! Where's my motorcycle when I need it! Perhaps a business opportunity in the area would include a dealership with rentals. This would be an incredible ride.

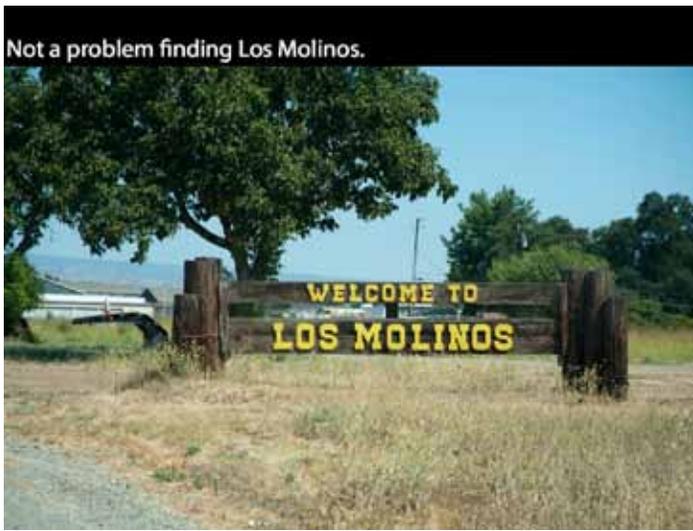
Driving west on Hwy 36, I found myself in Platina - very rural, with a ranch, camping, RV park, and nice store. This route could be promoted as a great trip for motorcyclists or auto clubs to enjoy. It's easily worth a visit (and an extended stay) from the Bay Area.

Promoting the area as a scenic driving route would help existing businesses along the route and perhaps encourage others to invest in the area - just don't overdo it! One of its charms is the lack of commercial activity.





Suggestion: Work on cleaning up some of the blighted areas. Lake County did a novel program to do this. This is a problem all along the Valley - for 500 miles.



First impressions are lasting impressions.



Next, I traveled north along historic Hwy 99 from Tehama County's southern border towards Red Bluff.

Los Molinos has a very nice gateway sign, but the blighted areas made it less than appealing. Work to clean up areas like these (bottom left and right).

It seemed as though the area is really struggling economically and was easily a "pass-through" destination not worthy of a stop. Remember, that's the first impression, not necessarily the reality.

Chain link fencing and barbed wire give a “prison-like” feel to a town (top left), and don’t provide adequate screening for industrial locations. Suggestion: Work towards providing screening with wood fencing for areas like this.



Work to keep retail shops and restaurants free of weeds. Sometimes it’s hard to tell if a business is still operating when the exterior is left uncared for. Making the outside of your business look good is an investment - not an expense. First impressions really are lasting impressions. Customers are much more likely to go into your shop or restaurant if it has good curb appeal. Besides general maintenance, that also means attractive signage and landscaping.

Without planters and exterior maintenance, it’s nearly impossible to tell if businesses like this are still operating.



Empty, unused signs are an eyesore and make a town look blighted. Suggestion: Remove them.

Fact: Curb appeal can account for 70% of first-time sales. Suggestion: work on weed abatement, beautification, updated sign.



Signs like this one should be removed (at least the top half).



This business has a great opportunity. Add planters (half barrels), outdoor tables and chairs, anything to pull us in the door. Some ideas and examples coming up.



I saw signs for the Tehama County Recreation Area, but never could find it. At least not in this immediate area.



This restaurant (top left), looks clean, but harsh. The building walls meet the sidewalk, and there's nothing to "soften" the transition.

When a business softens their facade and entrance with outdoor furnishings and potted plants, they make their business inviting - encouraging customers to come in.

The signs for the "Recreation Area" just stop (top right) - there isn't any follow through. It's critical to "connect the dots" with a wayfinding system.

Is this it? The road seems to end about here. Confusing.



Because there is little "wayfinding" once off the freeway, it's nearly impossible to find Tehama County attractions and activities.

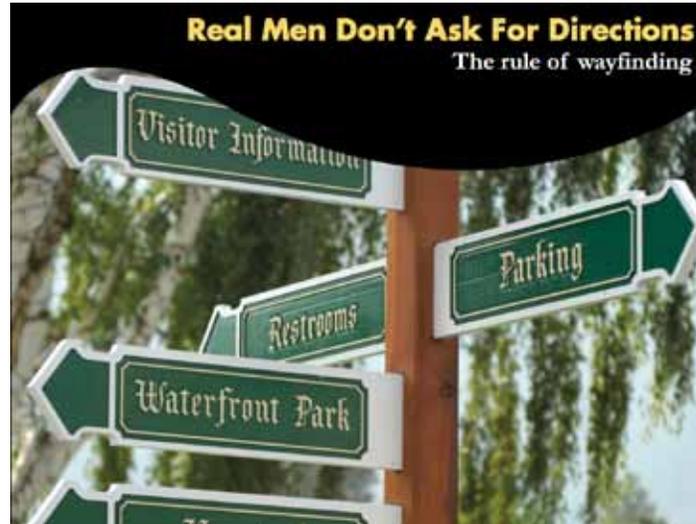


I missed many activities and attractions due to the lack of directional signage.

In performing the assessment, the first thing I did was try to navigate around the county to find attractions and amenities. If visitors end up frustrated while trying to find key attractions and amenities, many will simply say one word; "Next" - and they're gone. The top priority for ANY community is the development of a "Wayfinding System." Connecting the dots to your attractions, amenities, and local services through a professionally produced directional and gateway signage system.

The easier you make it for visitors, the more likely they are to spend additional time in the county and, as a result, spending will increase. Additionally, wayfinding not only educates visitors about what you have and where it's located, but will also educate your front-line employees about your attractions and amenities.

Developing a system is an investment, not an expense.





Some examples of good wayfinding systems:

- Leavenworth, WA (opposite page, top left). The town has a Bavarian theme.
- Oak Harbor, WA, (opposite page, top right) with blue signs for community services and gray signs for visitor amenities and attractions.
- Modesto, California (top left).
- The Woodlands, Texas (top right).
- French Lick, IN (bottom left).
- Turlock, CA (bottom right).

Develop and implement a wayfinding system. It should include:

- Wayfinding signs
- Gateways and entries
- Attractions
- Amenities
- Billboards and marketing displays

Less than 5% of visitors stop at visitor information centers, so good wayfinding is essential to help travelers find what you have to offer.

Wayfinding is something the county should take the lead in doing, with partners including each of the communities paying their pro-rata share of the system design, fabrication and installation. This is something that could be phased in over a number of years.

Pull customers in the door by adding more curb appeal (top left). Take a look at this business in Kingman, AZ (top right). The bright colors and picnic tables make this place look like a fun place to eat. Consider adding planter areas and tables and chairs and benches outside.

Both of these were, at one point, gas stations. Which one would get you to stop?

Beware of sign clutter (bottom left). When there is an overload of signs, drivers just ignore them all.

I tried to get from Corning to the casino without going on I-5. Suggestion: Add some large pots, planter areas. Make it inviting. Make it fun and colorful.



This is in Kingman, Arizona.



This creates more sign clutter than it is helpful. Wayfinding should be a top priority. It is an investment - not an expense.



also checked out Tehama and Gerber.



Cute little place. Suggestion: Consider moving the car and putting tables, chairs, Catalina umbrellas there for outdoor dining. Add a couple of half-barrels of annual color, a couple of hanging baskets.



Nice museum. Suggestion: Add signage that tells visitors when the museum is actually open.



Nothing pulls people into a restaurant like curb appeal - and outdoor dining in a courtyard-like setting is the best. This little spot has that potential (top left).

Be sure to invite people in (top right). Let people know when you're open!

Nice park. Tehama is a cute little village.

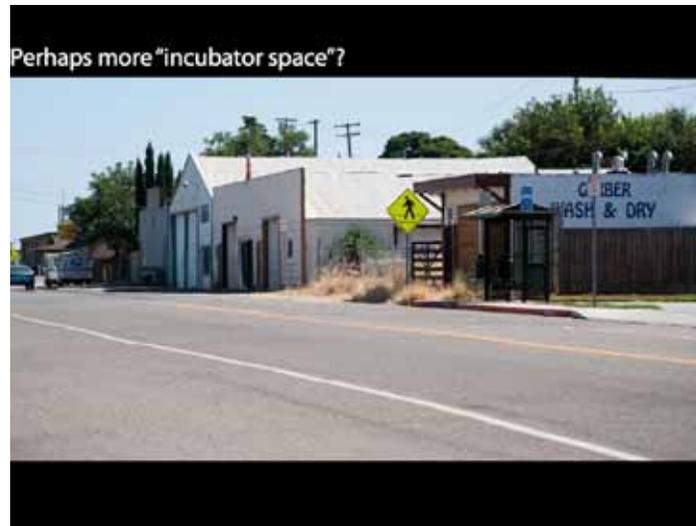


Gerber seems to be another challenged community in terms of commercial businesses and development.



Gerber looks like it has seen better days. To help revitalize it economically, consider entrepreneurs. Small business development and opportunities. Creative businesses, arts and locally produced goods. Research grant funding and small business loans for start-ups, and use it to set up a program to get businesses going - maybe as an incubator. Work with building owners on providing affordable space for the start-ups.

This looks like a great opportunity for some sort of artists-in-action incubator area. Glass-blowers, leather work, woodworking shops, textile arts, potters, etc. Over time it could become a visitor attraction and a must-visit destination.



Back on "historic" Highway 99, there were many interesting displays, like this one.



Suggestions: Work with high school or college students on creating better signage. Replace the flag. Weed eat the area.



There are some great "anchors" along Highway 99. This is one. Suggestion: Promote them specifically.



Suggestion: Produce a "Best of Tehama County" brochure. Set up some criteria to vet the candidates.



Traveling along Hwy 99 was full of surprising things to see. There were some real "gems." There were also some eyesores.

Produce a "Best of Tehama County" brochure to promote those specific shops, restaurants and attractions that are one-of-a-kind and make Tehama County special. The criteria:

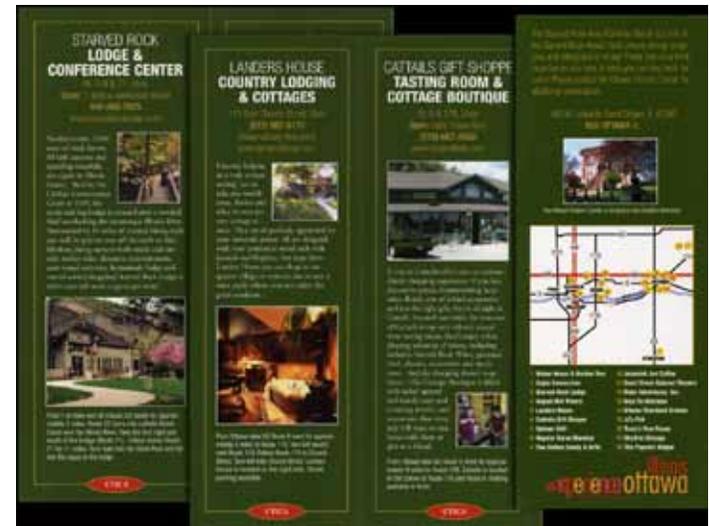
- Must be open at least 6 days a week. Can be closed Mondays.
- Must be different than what the market can get closer to home.
- Must have good curb appeal.
- Must be open until at least 7:00 pm.
- Must be highly regarded by someone other than themselves.

The Red Barn is outstanding and one of your "anchor tenants."

A “Best Of” guide can have a dramatic impact. Ottawa, Illinois created this “Best Of” guide a few years ago. They used a strict criteria to select the businesses - they had to be something people couldn’t find in Chicago (their major market area); they had to have good curb appeal; and they had to be open consistent hours and some evening hours. When the brochure was printed, the CVB mailed a copy to every resident in the city with a note that read, “Please hold on to this guide, and when friends and family come to visit, we invite you to bring them to downtown and experience the best your city has to offer. We believe that every dining room table should be a concierge desk.”

Shortly thereafter, merchants reported that residents started showing up in their shops, saying that they had never known there was a shop like that in town until they received the brochure.

It’s important that the brochure NOT look like a bunch of ads. Use an advertorial format; include lots of photos with specific, descriptive text.



Here's another anchor. Suggestion: Have a professional sign done. This one is hard to read from a distance.



What a stunning setting.



This one shop, alone, is worth getting off of I-5 and heading up Hwy 99 to Corning, then back to the freeway. Both Corning and these businesses would benefit. Great job. Great chocolate!



This great shop (all photos this page) is worth a special drive and a reason to get off of I-5. It should be promoted specifically as one of your Best Of's - an "anchor tenant."

When you promote specific shops, restaurants, and attractions, everyone benefits. Just like a mall that promotes its anchor tenants, promoting the "Best Of's" in the county brings visitors into the area to visit that particular anchor. People are looking for specifics, and when they come into town to visit a particular shop, while there they will also look around to see what else is available.

Everyone wins. Would you go to Orlando if Disney World wasn't there? Universal Studios and more than 100 other attractions all realize that Disney owns the "primary draw" or is the "anchor tenant" and they all benefit from Disney World being there. The same is true of Disneyland and its area attractions.

Suggestion: This olive (top left) could be an icon for Corning. Consider relocating it to the center of town and adding an interpretive sign that tells about olives: the varieties, how they are picked, the seasons, and why this area is so well-known for its olives.

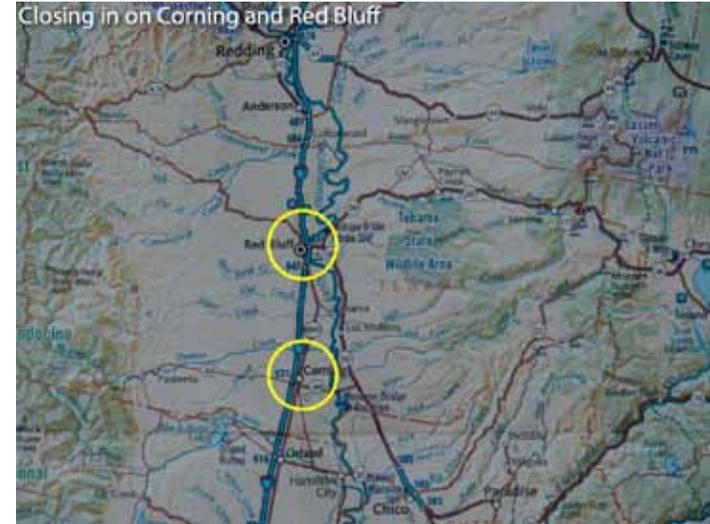
One more reason for a comprehensive wayfinding system: I had a hard time finding the Salmon Viewing Plaza or any place to watch the salmon. Once I found it, I wasn't sure if it was, in fact, the Salmon Viewing Platform.

I was baffled by the tire puncture gear at the gate of the Red Bluff Recreation Area (bottom right). It gives a negative impression of the area - is it dangerous?

Heading down a side road, I found this. Could this be put in the center of town next to an olive tree? Pretty clever. Make it an icon.



Closing in on Corning and Red Bluff



I did find the Red Bluff Recreation Area but I never did find the Salmon Viewing Plaza or any place to even view salmon.



With the tire puncture gear at the gate I assumed this is a trouble-laden area. Is that really necessary?



This kiosk is all about the project and says little about any activities, experiences, or WHY we should spend time here.



Suggestion: Add a map of the trail system at every trail head. Include distances and grade (ADA? Strollers? Kids? Bikes allowed?)



Be sure to include information visitors need to enjoy their use of the facilities (all photos this page). Tell me WHY I will enjoy the place - activities and experiences. Where are the trails? How long are they? Are they wheelchair accessible? Are bicycles allowed? What will I see on the trail? Any wildlife or unique plants? Provide a map of the trail system. We're looking for specifics, not generalities.

Be sure to include details, details, details in all of your marketing materials. Visitors need specifics in order to plan their activities - not just information about the development and background of the projects.



In a few places distances are actually noted, which is nice. Now add a map of the trail system.



The interpretive displays (top left and right) were very nice, and very educational.

The Salmon Viewing Platform is promoted as one of the major attractions in the area, so you should take advantage of the visitors to this spot to provide marketing materials that will cross-sell other things to see and do in the area.

One challenge: So far, there are lots of things to look at and few things to actually do. People are looking for immersive activities.

Nice interpretive platform, but difficult to see where the fish would come in (or leave). Is this the viewing platform I was looking for?



A great explanation.



Nice interpretive displays, but nothing about other activities or the communities in Tehama County. A missed opportunity for cross-selling other things to see and do in the area.



Is this the "diversion dam" talked about in brochures?



This is very cute. Nice mural. Is this the entire Interpretive Center?



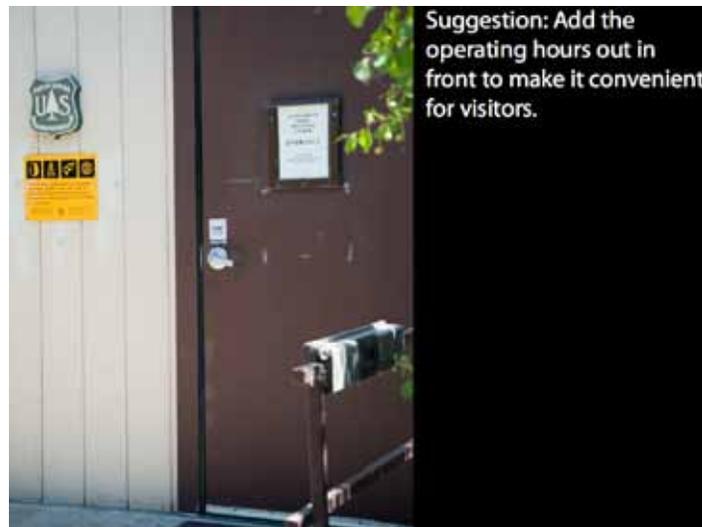
Is this part of the interpretive center or just a visitor center? If this IS the interpretive center, include that on the sign.



The facilities at the Sacramento River Discovery Center are great.

Suggestion: Post operating hours at the front to encourage visitors to return when you're open!

The trail system looks very good. Add a little more information - details - like distances and difficulty levels, outstanding sights to see along each trail, what wildlife to watch for.



Suggestion: Add the operating hours out in front to make it convenient for visitors.

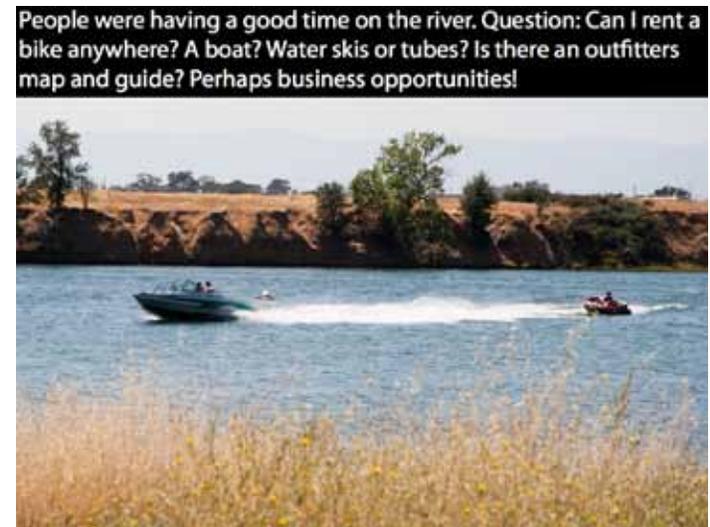
Suggestion: Add distances and average walking times for each loop. This is a great map! What will we see along the way?



It seems to be standard practice for park facilities to focus almost exclusively on listing their rules and regulations, and neglect actually welcoming visitors first.

Of course, the rules have to be communicated, but it's also important to treat the visitors as guests and encourage them to enjoy the facilities. This includes saying "welcome," as well as providing details about what activities people can enjoy while there.

Are there any businesses that rent boats or bikes in the area? This might present a number of good business opportunities. If there are, be sure to make it easy for visitors to find out who and where they are. A sign or a brochure on site would be a good start.



Aha. Another recreation area.



The typical list of rules and regulations. Nothing that says welcome. It's the "nine commandments." Note that number 8 is missing.



Again, take advantage of the opportunity to cross-sell other places in Tehama County to those visiting the recreation areas.

Of course, you want visitors to come and enjoy your recreation areas, but the real benefit of tourism comes when those visitors spend money in your community. You want to encourage visitors to go to your shops, restaurants, and have enough to do so they'll spend the night. Good visitor information, in convenient locations, can help accomplish that.

Suggestion: Another opportunity to add information about other things to see and do while in Tehama County.



Hey! The word Welcome! Could this kiosk be adopted and used to promote the rest of the county? Other activities?



Visitors aren't spending money while hiking the trails, boating on the river, or engaged in other recreational opportunities. They spend money at the end of the day, or before they head out in the morning. Promote the businesses where they can buy provisions, food, fuel, etc.

The R.V. Park looks like a very nice place, although it looked like it was more for permanent residents rather than visitors. In fact, we had a hard time finding any transient spaces. Seems to be a mobile-home park, not an RV park. The two don't mix well.

It's a beautiful campground, even though it was almost empty (other than permanent residents). There didn't seem to be any river access. That seems to be a common problem in the county.



I also eventually found the William B. Ide Adobe Historical Park.



Good job with visitor information. Could some be added promoting the county's other attractions and activities?



The B. Ide Adobe Historical Park is very nice. I saw that visitor information was available outside - good job. Consider adding more information to promote the area and cross-sell other attractions and activities. The more visitors have to do, the longer they will stay in an area, and the more money they will spend.

The recreation areas are nice, but they aren't the "anchors" you should hang your hat on. They should be promoted and taken care of, but they don't set Tehama County apart from the rest of Northern California. You still need that "point of differentiation."

A beautiful site.



Still no river access, but good interpretive information.



So far I found the key attractions to be the Manton Wine Trail, Lassen Volcanic National Park, and the road to Platina (as a motorcycle route).

Then comes the "diversionary" activities - things we can do closer to home, but will do while visiting here. That includes your Best Of Tehama County businesses and activities like the Red Barn, the Olive Pit and other specific businesses in the area.

Your community gateways, or welcome signs, are a visitor's introduction to the community. What they look like, and where they're placed, gives visitors their first impression, which is a lasting impression. Be sure to place your gateway signs where they will make the first, best impression, and that is NOT necessarily at your city limits.

What impression does Othello's welcome sign give you of the community? (top left)



Develop something along this line to reduce the clutter at your gateway locations. Place these where people can stop and get information about meeting times.



Keep your gateways free of excess signage (sign clutter). A clean, tidy appearance is more important than adding numerous signs promoting various awards and auxiliary organizations. These extra signs can be posted in a different location.

Building a sign frame, such as this one in Gig Harbor, WA (bottom left) provides a great way to display auxiliary and award signs. Place it in a location where people can actually stop, get out of their cars, and read them. Besides looking much more attractive, this way your visitors are able to see the meeting times and locations, in case they want to attend.

Great to have a brand as The Olive City. The sign, however, could use some organization. Note: You need activities tied to the brand.



Good sign, although the chain link fencing should wrap around behind the sign. Look at your gateway locations.



Coming back from Lassen National Park, this is how you're greeted to Red Bluff. Suggestion: Remove it or replace it.



Nice sign though rather generic. Virtually every community thinks it's a great place to live. Right across the street is a failed business.



Ever wonder why developers create elaborate gateways at the entries to their high-end residential developments? They increase the perceived value of the community and create community pride. They give a sense of "arrival" - that you've reached a special destination. The same rules apply to city and town gateways. Beautiful gateways into a city or town achieve the same results.

- Sets an increased perceived value
- Creates pride of ownership
- Gets your attention
- Says something about the community
- Sells the real estate faster
- At an increased value

All these reasons apply to communities.




This welcome sign (top left) doesn't provide a good first impression of Red Bluff. Suggestion: It should be replaced with a more attractive sign - or simply removed.

This gateway in Oldham County, KY (bottom right) is a good example of a simple, but beautiful entryway.

Many, many towns promote themselves as "a great place to live (work and play)." This slogan is so overused that it has lost its meaning. What sets Red Bluff apart from other nearby towns? Promote your unique qualities.

Oldham County, KY is just north of Louisville, and is well known for its upscale country-living among its bedroom communities. These two examples of community gateways in Oldham County (top left and right) do a great job of making a very good impression. These residential gateways are well done and create a positive first-impressions. Communities need to follow suit.

Corning

Rolling Hills Resort and Casino (bottom left and right) does an excellent job with its gateways. Any doubt that their beautiful entryways help increase business? People are attracted to beautiful places. It pays. It's an investment. Good job!

Prospect. River Bluff. Goshen. Oldham Acres. Belknap Beach.
Brand: Louisville's upscale country-living bedroom community.



Stunningly beautiful.



The casino does an excellent job with curb appeal. Lawn areas, flowers, trees, and good signage.



Very nice gateway sign.



This is worth the effort and makes it inviting. The communities should take note.



The hotel looks great as well.



Since good curb appeal can account for 70% of first-time sales at restaurants, wineries, golf courses, and lodging facilities, the casino is very smart to make sure their grounds are beautiful. They do a great job.

Wayfinding signage is critical, but this one (bottom right) has far too many items for drivers to read unless they stop. Suggest dividing this into more than one sign, spaced apart.

General rule: Never more than five items on any one sign.

The water feature at the main entrance is stunning and is in a lot of photographs, which are all over the Internet.



Suggestion: Rule of thumb - no more than five items on any one sign. This would be better divided among three or four signs.



Note the wayfinding signage at the Kemah Boardwalk in Texas (top left). They use several signs, spaced well apart, to include all their directional signage.

The golf course (top right) looks nice. Suggestion: Post signs to let visitors know if it is open for public play, and what amenities are available. There is virtually nothing that says “welcome” or even “open for public play.” Are there cart and club rentals? A restaurant?

Again, add some cross-promotional visitor information to help keep visitors in the area longer.

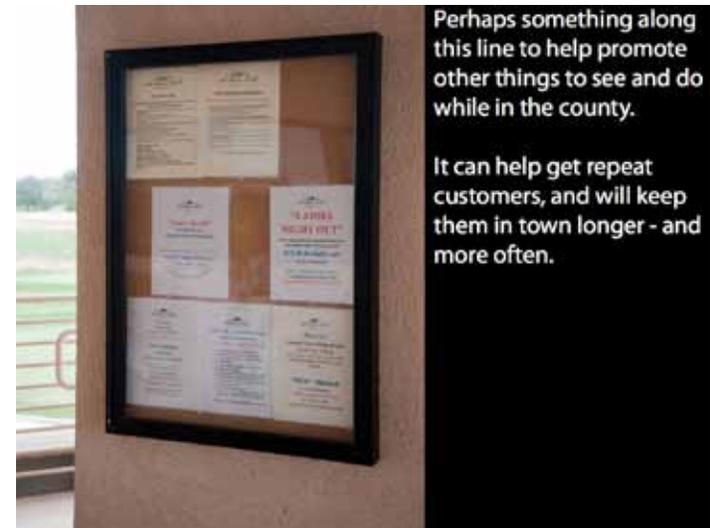
Kemah Boardwalk near Houston, Texas.



I found the golf course, which looks very nice. Is it open for public play? Are there club and cart rentals? Add some signage if so.



Suggestion: Can we add some visitor information here? Even a wall-mounted display?



Perhaps something along this line to help promote other things to see and do while in the county.

It can help get repeat customers, and will keep them in town longer - and more often.

I did see the balloon, but you still need to give me a reason to venture past the Olive Pit and gas stations.



The Olive Pit is, without a doubt, one of - if not the - primary "anchor" for Corning.

Promote it with the Best Of's.

The entryway into Corning (top left) isn't unattractive, but really doesn't showcase anything enticing. Why would I want to venture (maybe out of my way) to go past the services that are available within a few blocks of the freeway?

The Olive Pit is a definite draw. It should be promoted specifically in your marketing efforts.



It has great curb appeal and is inviting.

it's a great shop - and has good food.



Some things you might consider doing include:

Develop a permanent public market. People are looking for activities - not just scenery. Provide activities and entertainment.

Open-air markets have been steadily growing in popularity for residents as well as visitors. People are drawn to the activity and vibrancy of that type of market place, as well as the opportunity to interact with the farmers and craftspeople who sell their wares. Open-air markets usually have the feeling of a festival, and people love it.

Fallbrook, CA (bottom left and right) removed a dilapidated building from their downtown, and turned the space into this permanent open-air market, as part of their downtown revitalization strategy.

#1: Make a lot, like this one, a permanent public market. It would give you an "anchor" at this end of downtown.



Public markets are now a huge draw for both locals and visitors.





The Fallbrook open air market (top left and right) is on a corner lot - approximately 70 feet by 80 feet in size. The city leases it to a local business person who operates the market and earns a living from vendor space rentals.

These types of markets change by season from produce and food goods, to landscape goods, artists in action, to music shows, to seasonal holiday displays: a Christmas tree forest, for example.

Mahone Bay, NS



The Market - Olympia, WA



This open air market in Mahone Bay, NS (bottom left) does a booming business.

A non-profit group in Olympia, WA built this permanent structure (bottom right) to house their public market. The walls roll up like garage doors to open the building during operating hours. It operates April through December.

These photos (top left and right) also show the Olympia, Washington Farmers Market. The protection of the structure makes it possible for a wide variety of local craftspeople, bakers, and growers to sell their products.

A long-time local farmer in Carnation, WA, famous for their pick-your-own fields, has opened a wonderful market right at their farm site (bottom left).

The tradition of public markets goes back thousands of years. This market in Chania on the Island of Crete (bottom right) is on the site of an ancient marketplace.



#2: Add some beautification on the facade side of the sidewalks. Downtown is very stark looking and not overly inviting.



Downtown Corning has a stark appearance. Consider beautification - add pots of plants and flowers, hanging baskets, and decorative perpendicular signage. Soften the exteriors. Make it inviting rather than bland.

Encourage people to “hang out” downtown by adding places for them to sit. Benches, tables and chairs.

Nothing enlivens a downtown like outdoor dining. Your sidewalks are nice and wide - you have room for several tables and chairs. It can make a huge difference.

People want an enjoyable downtown now more than ever. Create gathering places.

#3: Create gathering places. Benches, tables and chairs, additional landscaping.



#4: Allow merchants to use 8' to 10' of the sidewalk for outdoor dining. You got the room, use it!



Look around the downtown, and pay attention to those little things that are so easy to get used to, but can contribute to a negative impression, such as weeds, neglected paint, dirty buildings.

Consider painting murals on bare, blank walls. This one (top left) is a prime candidate. Murals can range from modern art, to historical scenes, to trompe l'oeil (architectural art - "fool the eye"). Take a trip south to the town of Exeter in the southern Sacramento Valley. Look at the murals they've developed. It adds tremendously to their overall appeal and ambiance.

Work with the merchants to encourage and find solutions for beautification efforts. Ideas include cooperative purchases of planters and baskets, soil, and plants.

Add some color! Do all the commercial buildings need to be gray, beige or brown?

#5: Add some murals. Paint the poles. Get rid of weeds. Add hanging baskets. A good Boy Scout project.



It's August. The Christmas lights should come down in January. Perhaps they're just early this year.



#6: Work with merchants to take it up a notch. Use those planters. Make it shine. Pull us in.



Promote any "Best Of's" you might have that will keep us heading down the road past the Olive Pit.



The chamber does a good job. Now add some benches.



So does the Century 21 office. Great job setting the standard.



The plaza park is beautiful.



Toilets Attract More Than Flies
The gotta go rule



There are some spots downtown that look great. The chamber (top left), Century 21 office (top right), and the plaza park (bottom left), to name a few. But they can't do it alone. It takes a village to win. Be sure to add benches to encourage people to linger and spend time downtown.

Restrooms are one of the easiest devices for luring visitors into your community. The most common reason for travelers to stop is to use the facilities. A billboard with the words "Clean public restrooms - easy access" can translate to visitor spending. Especially if the restrooms are located among shops, cafes or restaurants. While they've stopped to use the restroom, travelers will often venture into a nearby shop, or decide to have lunch or a snack. Add visitor information, and you might entice travelers to spend even more time in your town! Or come back again.

Relieved visitors will stay in town longer and spend more money. Put up signs to direct people to visitor information and public restrooms.

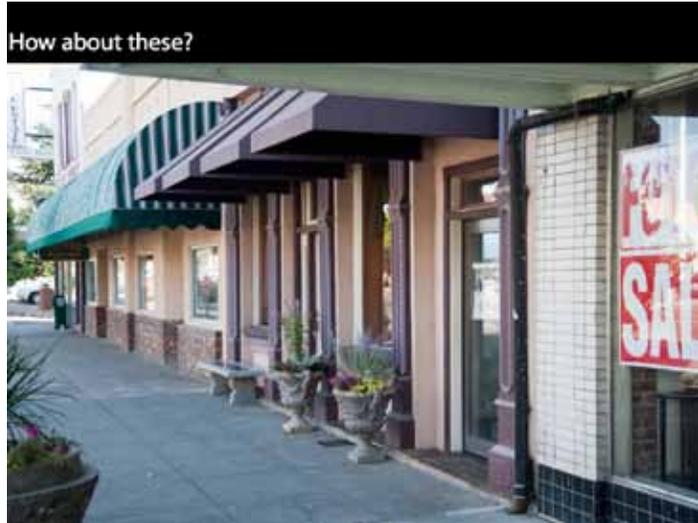
Red Bluff

Without wayfinding, it was challenging trying to find some attractions in Red Bluff. I used a navigation system, but not all travelers have them.

From this angle (across the street) I can see the Kelly-Greggs House Museum's sign (top left). But if I'm driving or walking, I can't see the sign at all (top right). Signs should always be perpendicular to the road.

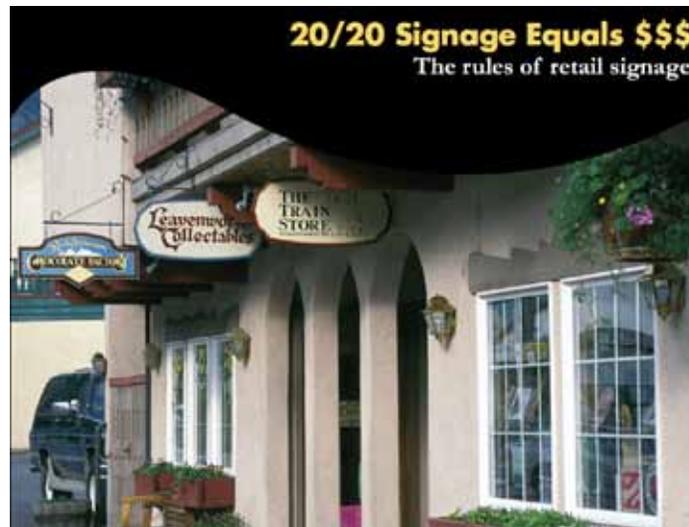
Walking down this street (bottom right), it's impossible to see what's in any of these buildings. There's nothing to tempt me to continue down the street.





Take a look at these street scenes (top right and left, bottom left). There's no way to know what shops are here. There's nothing to entice shoppers down the street in terms of signage or curb appeal (for the most part).

Signs placed perpendicular to the building allow drivers and pedestrians to read them easily, even from a distance. Note the use of blade signs in Leavenworth, WA (bottom right).



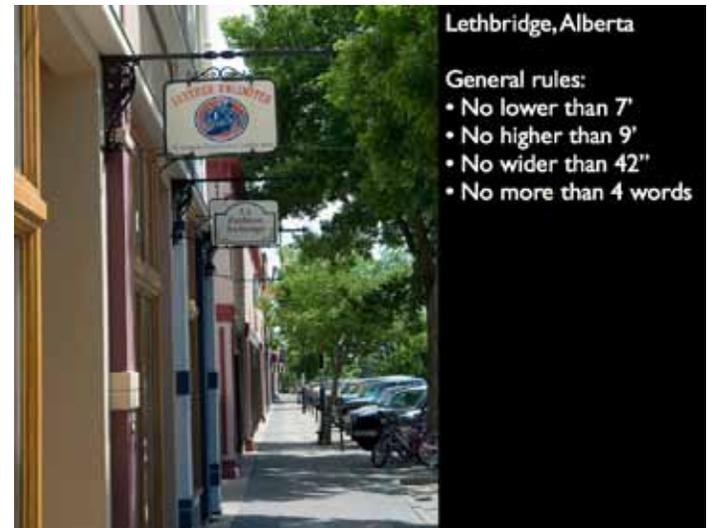
Perpendicular (blade) signs are seen ten times more frequently than facade-mounted signs.

Blade signs should be decorative and placed between seven feet (bottom edge of the sign) and nine feet (top edge), and typically no more than 42 inches wide. They should be double-sided, and fit the ambiance of the town and architecture.

The most successful downtowns have merchant blade signs. Note the signs in Nantucket, MA (top left), Carmel, CA (top right), and Valparaiso, IN (bottom left).

The signage frames in Lethbridge, Alberta (bottom right) are practical and attractive. They can withstand temperature extremes and high winds.

Good, decorative, perpendicular signs that promote the product first, then the name of the shop, can have a tremendous impact on a shop's success.



Lethbridge, Alberta

General rules:

- No lower than 7'
- No higher than 9'
- No wider than 42"
- No more than 4 words



These signs in Lethbridge (top left) were just being installed. If a business moves, or a new one starts up, it's easy to change out the sign with these versatile sign frames.

Signage says a lot about you. Merchant signage is usually a potential customer's first introduction to your restaurant or shop. What impression does your signage give?

Cobblestone Collectibles' attractive A-board sign (top right) fits the store's ambiance.



Always promote what it is you're selling - the lure to bring customers in...

before you promote the name of the business.

This fun sailor sign for a seafood restaurant (bottom left) grabs your attention and attracts a lot of customers.

Can you tell what Kelly's Famous Laffin Crab sells? (bottom right) Seafood restaurant? Comedy club? The shop sold kites and windsocks. How could potential customers know? The store is no longer in business because it sold kites and windsocks. Always promote what you sell before the name of the business. Promote your primary lure.

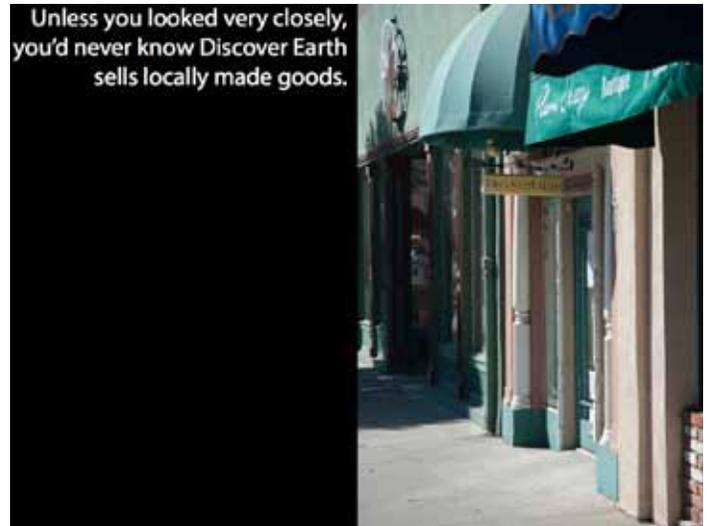
This store has a nice, well-cared-for facade. If I get up close to the window (top left) I can see what's on display. But there's nothing that entices me to walk down the street and find out. A blade sign that promotes what is being sold would help remedy that. A few potted shrubs and flowers would also attract attention, getting potential customers to check the store out.



The Wood Merchant (top right) changed his sign to promote their quality "handmade gifts and furniture," and his business increased.



Grizzly Rick's Market (bottom left) added the small addition to their sign promoting their snacks, sundries, and drinks, and business increased by nearly 35%.



I'm not too sure what the Prairie Rose is or sells.



This is a great icon downtown.



Suggestion: Tell us about it. Add an interpretive sign.

Prairie Rose (top left) has a nice blade sign, but it doesn't tell me what the shop sells.

Add interpretive signage to tell about this attractive structure (top right). Telling the story about an icon helps visitors (and residents) connect with your town, endearing them to your history.

The planters are stunning and really make downtown Red Bluff inviting. Now the merchants need to do their part - facades.



If a dental office can do it, so can merchants who stand to gain more than service businesses.

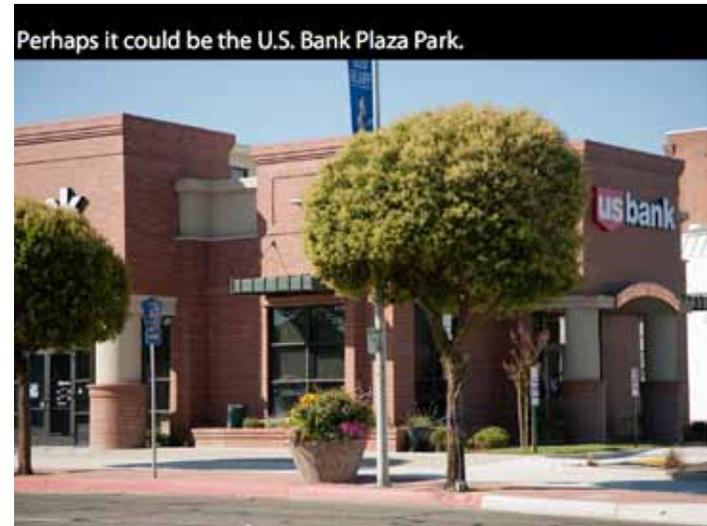


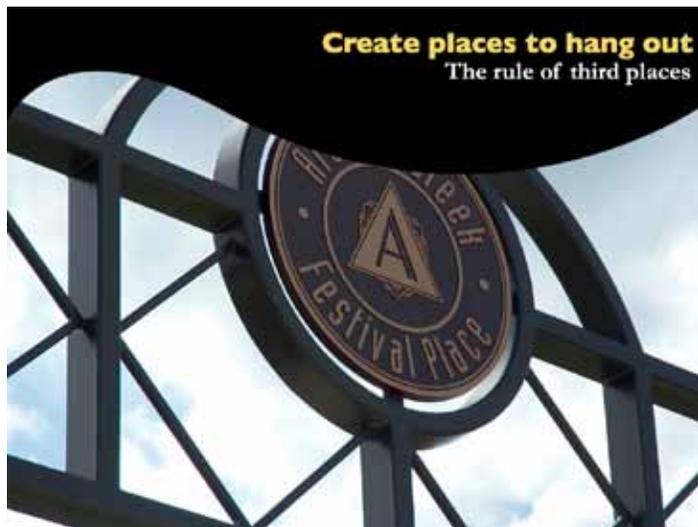
Throughout downtown Red Bluff, the large planters are a great addition, and really make a major difference in the feel and ambiance of the city. But the merchants also need to do their part and dress up the facades - their storefronts.

Retailers, who stand the most to gain, should follow the lead of this dental office.

There are many opportunities for outdoor dining (top left). Note how Vacaville makes use of their wide sidewalks for outdoor dining (top right). It doesn't take much space.

Create gathering spaces downtown - places for activities, performances, concerts, exhibits, etc. Include water - people enjoy fountains, particularly interactive fountains, and will spend more time around them. This spot (bottom left) caught my eye as a possible candidate for a signature amphitheater or plaza - a central gathering spot.





DDI surveyed 400 successful downtowns, and one thing really stood out: The towns with "third places" were considerably more successful than those without.

One of the biggest challenges we found was that many people believe that beautiful streetscapes will revitalize a downtown. That's only half of the equation. At the end of the day, it's what's IN the buildings that really make an outstanding destination. The business mix.

Successful "third places" attract people because, besides being beautiful spaces, they're full of life and activity. There are things to do.

A top priority should be to create "gathering spaces" in a pedestrian friendly setting - places where people like to congregate because they can be comfortable in attractive surroundings, there's a focal point and things to do.

The heart and soul of every community, besides its people, is its downtown. If locals won't "hang out" in your downtown, neither will visitors.

Pedestrian-friendly areas provide locations for outdoor dining and socializing. The pictures on these pages show several successful downtown districts that have become very popular destinations. Note the features they have in common: walkability, beautification, places to sit, places to dine, things to do - activities.

Turn your downtown parks into plaza areas. It's worked in Italy and throughout Europe for centuries. We seem to be slow learners in the U.S. People now want out of their cars and away from asphalt.

Santa Barbara (top left) has done an excellent job making downtown a major gathering spot for both locals and visitors.

Encourage outdoor dining - even if you have to lose a couple of parking spots so you can extend sidewalks - and bring downtown to life.



Newport on the Levee, KY



Newport on the Levee, KY



Ellicottville, NY



Nelson, BC



At Newport on the Levee, Kentucky (top right and left), across the river from Cincinnati, restaurants focus on exterior dining - even during the winter months.

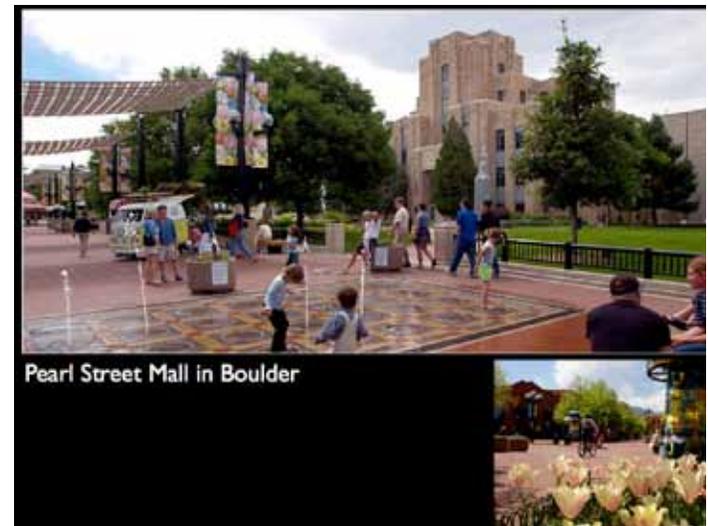
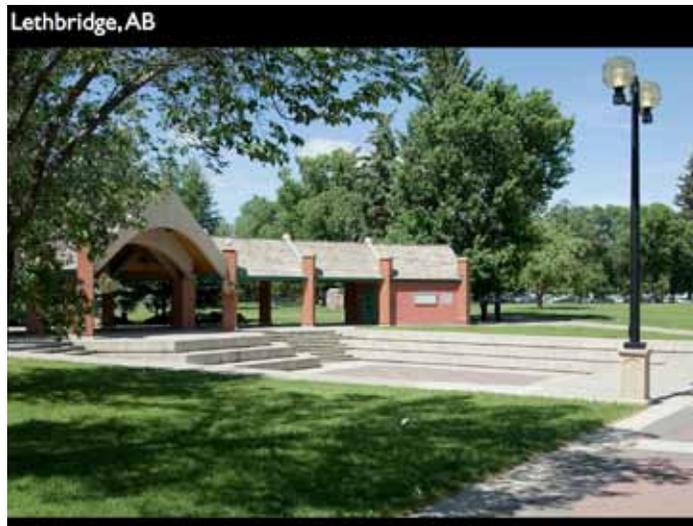
This street scene in Ellicottville, NY (bottom left) is also very inviting - the hanging baskets, outdoor seating, awnings and decorative signs create a stunning scene. Not bad for a town of just 2,000 residents.

In Nelson, BC (bottom right) restaurants are allowed to build temporary decks, which take up one or two parking spaces and provide outdoor dining space without filling the sidewalk. They remove them in the winter for snow removal.

Kalamazoo, MI, has invested in several downtown gathering areas including Arcadia Creek Festival Place (top left and right) - after seeing the success of their first one, they went on to create additional plaza areas. By developing these places, they became very successful event venues and now Kalamazoo is a very popular weekend destination for visitors living in both Chicago and Detroit.

This amphitheater in Lethbridge, AB (bottom left) is perfect for holding performances, events, and exhibits. It's located in a park right downtown.

Pearl Street Mall in Boulder, CO (bottom right) is a bustling, vibrant stretch of pedestrian space, several blocks long. Among the attractions is this flush-mounted fountain, popular with children on a hot summer day.





Turn your parks into plazas. This park in downtown Oxnard, CA (top left) is lovely. They use part of it for a weekly farmers market, which is taking place in this photo. Most of the time it is barely used. Instead, many people hang out in a small plaza across the street. It is paved and has benches, tables and chairs, and a decorative arbor and large trees for some shade. The city is considering changing the park to something like the design shown here, top right. Plans call for reducing the lawn area, adding an amphitheater and an interactive fountain.



This amphitheater in Carson City, NV (bottom left) is used for events and performances. People also enjoy casually spending time there - eating lunch, reading, playing games.

Include a focal point in your plaza, such as a large sculpture or fountain, such as this stunning centerpiece (bottom right) in Neenah, WI.

Water is a great attraction. Interactive fountains draw both children and adults, like these in Stockton, CA (top right and left) and Olympia, WA (bottom left). The fountains can be turned off, and the space used for events or exhibits.

Lots of downtowns have great old theater buildings, and it would be wonderful to see them renovated and used for the community. It appears that this theater (bottom right) might still be in use. We later found out it recently closed.



It was sad to see this iconic theater in this condition.

Seems like it has some potential as a performing arts venue.

Is it being used at all?

If so...

...invite us back! Put the display windows to work. When is your season? Promote upcoming events or performances. Anything!



Two hour parking is a good way to destroy a vibrant downtown.

At least tell us WHERE we can find all-day or even four-hour parking.

If the theater (top left) is in use, be sure to post information about coming attractions, times, costs, etc. Once again, we found out after the assessment that the theater recently closed. We hope it will reopen soon.

The theater is a beautiful facility. If it reopens, help it shine! Give the building some paint, and invite us back!

Visitors usually need a minimum of four hours in a downtown to accomplish all the shopping and dining they've come to do. Two hour parking limits can really cut short your visitor spending. If you must limit parking to two hours, be sure to provide some parking areas for at least four hours and all-day parking, and post signs to tell visitors where to find that parking.

Red Bluff's unfriendly park. Do people come in and then walk back out to the street to read through the list of regulations and city ordinances? Move the sign in the park for reading once out of the car. Sheesh!



I, and other visitors, thought Riverpark was the commercial building next to the sign. Hardly becoming of a real park - and such a gem.



Red Bluff River Park is beautiful, and I almost missed it. The large River Park sign at the entrance doesn't look like a sign for a park at all - it's too industrial-looking. Consider changing it for something that suits the ambiance of the park, and would promote the park better.

Include some information about the park on the park grounds, such as trail information.

Suggestion: Get rid of the ugly sign and put something like this over the entrance. The park is easily worth it.



This is really the gem of Red Bluff - and a spot I nearly missed.



Suggestion: Add some signage for the trail. How long is it? Where does it go? Is there river access besides the boat ramp?



Where does this take you?



Consider wrapping the building in a mural so it fits better into the landscape. As is, it's pretty non-descript.



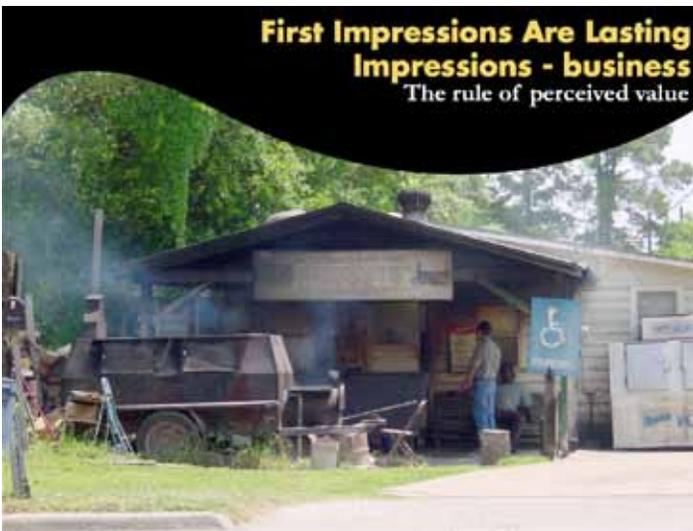
What a setting!



First impressions are critical - for both communities and local businesses. We all tend to “judge the book by its cover.”

Would you eat at this restaurant? (bottom left) Or shop at First Impressions Pottery? (bottom right) Probably not - you form your first impressions based on appearances which, in these cases, are very poor. We all look at retail shops and restaurants and make judgments about them based on what we see. And those first impressions are usually the ones we retain.

First Impressions Are Lasting Impressions - business
The rule of perceived value

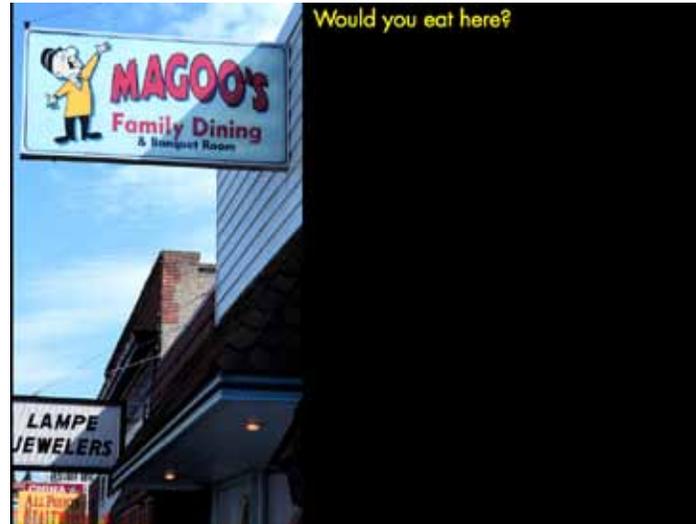


Would you eat at Magoo's Family Dining? (top left) How about the Bakery? (top right) How about this restaurant? (bottom left)

Now take a look at Magoo's actual storefront (bottom right). It actually looks like a nice place to eat. But the sign looks third-rate, and based on the sign alone, most people would pass Magoo's by.

The Bakery, on the other hand, has a decorative wood sign, which is attractive, and makes most people assume the Bakery will serve wonderful food - as good as its sign looks.

The restaurant (bottom left) just looks harsh, stark, and bad - everything from its signs to the door to the building. With no effort to make it attractive, it appears the owner wouldn't do anything to make the food be good either.





Florists get it. They know how important this effort is. Great job here in Lake City, MN.



Winner of the "Best Curb Appeal in Downtown Lake City."

Exceptional. The interior is also exceptional.

Beautification is an investment with tremendous return.

The most successful downtowns have excellent curb appeal - the city creates beautiful streets, and the merchants do their part by creating beautiful storefronts.

This florist (top left) makes her shop stunning. And this natural foods store (top right) looks like a wonderful place to shop. People like to spend time in beautiful, inviting places.



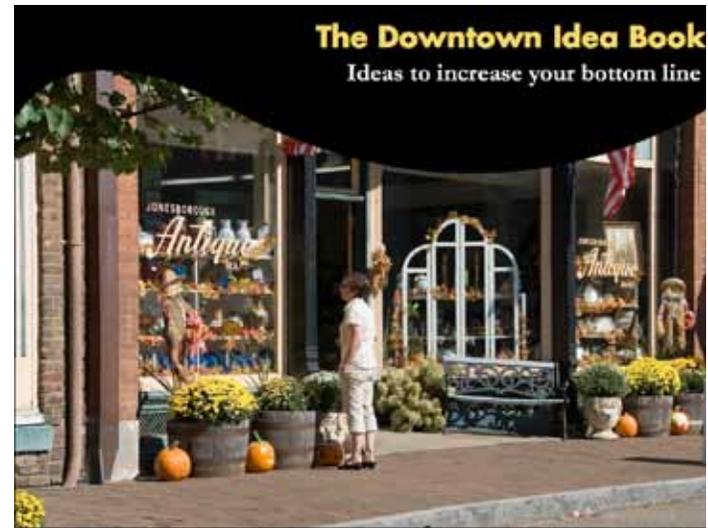
Sisters, OR (bottom left) has worked hard to beautify their town and develop critical mass. As a result, they have the highest retail sales per capita of any town in Oregon. Population: Just 1,100.

Ally yourselves with Keep America Beautiful, a wonderful organization whose goal is to help communities with their beautification efforts.

A research study had four towns plant street trees every 30 feet along one block and then surveyed sales in that block for a year. Sales in the block with the street trees increased 18% - three to four times that of the rest of town! Street trees create a wonderful ambiance in a downtown, and people place a higher value on shops and their merchandise where there are street trees - they are willing to spend more.

Neenah, Wisconsin (top left) did a downtown makeover. Note the streetscape in the top left photo. Although it's clean and neat, compare it to the street just one block down, after the makeover (top right). Note how the planters soften the facades and create a fresher, more inviting sidewalk. Retail sales in the block with the beautification increased by more than 25% of the unbeautified block.

Other examples of merchant beautification: Cambria, CA (bottom left) Jonesborough, TN (bottom right). Don't they look like great destinations?



Ellicottville, NY



Gatlinburg, TN - Great Smoky Mountain Art Trail



Streetscapes are one piece of the puzzle that makes a downtown successful. Storefronts are another piece - when they're attractive and inviting, people are much more likely to be enticed inside and spend money. Good curb appeal - the combination of streetscapes and storefronts - is an investment with an incredible return.

Some examples include: Ellicottville, NY (top left) - great hanging baskets, tables, chairs and benches, decorative signage.

Gatlinburg, TN (top right) - holiday decorations and benches.

El Dorado, Arkansas



El Dorado, AR (bottom left) - autumn display with mums and pumpkins, and the lighted awning makes it complete.

This shop (bottom right) in Fredericksburg, Texas has a lot of appeal with the artistic sign, elegant facade, lights, and potted plants.

These photos showcase Fredericksburg, the most visited small town in Texas. With a population of only 12,000, the city hosts two million visitors annually. The appeal? More than 80 shops, galleries, boutiques and emporiums, in a pedestrian-friendly, beautiful historical setting. The town is always “decked out” in its finest.

The pictures on this page were taken in early March. Note that they use a lot of evergreen shrubs and plants to keep downtown green and inviting year round.





Outdoor retail displays can be a beautiful and successful sales tool, luring customers into your shops and restaurants.

This merchant in Grass Valley, CA sets out silk flower displays every day (top left). Doesn't it make you want to go inside?

Beautification doesn't have to include pots and planters. Look at Maggie Mae Mercantile's display (top right). Select store merchandise (window displays set in exterior spaces) is artfully arranged, and the large "open" flag invites customers inside.



Suggestion: If you are the Olive Capital, then really showcase it. Think of the Napa Valley wineries. Remember the 70% rule.



This shop owner in Blaine, WA, (bottom left) says that the twenty minutes it takes her to set out her displays each morning is well worth the effort. She had been afraid she would have to close her business, but when she started putting out the displays, so many more customers were attracted into her shop that she's been successful ever since.

Once again, seventy percent of first time sales in retail shops and restaurants come from curb appeal.

Treat customers like guests. Welcome them!

This restaurant in Banff (top left) not only entices patrons in by posting their menu, they created a decorative display for the menus that tells customers how much they value their patronage.

Instead of posting a "closed" sign, use signs like these (bottom photos). Tell the customer you want them to come back, and let them know when.

Always create invitations, not rejections! Tell us WHEN you'll be open, instead of "go away."



Suggestion: Get rid of all CLOSED signs. Instead tell us when you'll be open. Create an invitation bringing us back.





Suggestion: Don't post signs that say "Restrooms for customers only" or "No public restrooms." Instead, tell people *where* they can find public restrooms! (top left)

Seventy percent of ALL consumer spending takes place after 6:00 pm. If your shops are not open after 6:00, then they are missing all of that spending.

Women account for 80% of all spending. Add plenty of benches downtown for weary shoppers and spouses to be comfortable. Encourage people to linger. These photos (bottom two) show what a good strategy that is - add benches and people will enjoy hanging out.

Make it a gathering spot for both employees, downtown workers, and visitors.



Pole banners are a great way to add color and beauty to a town. They can also be used for wayfinding, to promote an event, and to build your brand. Appleton, WI uses pole banners to promote their downtown entertainment theme. While Allegany, NY uses theirs to promote the village ambiance. Notice that these promote ambiance, not a physical structure or something that can fit anyone, anywhere.

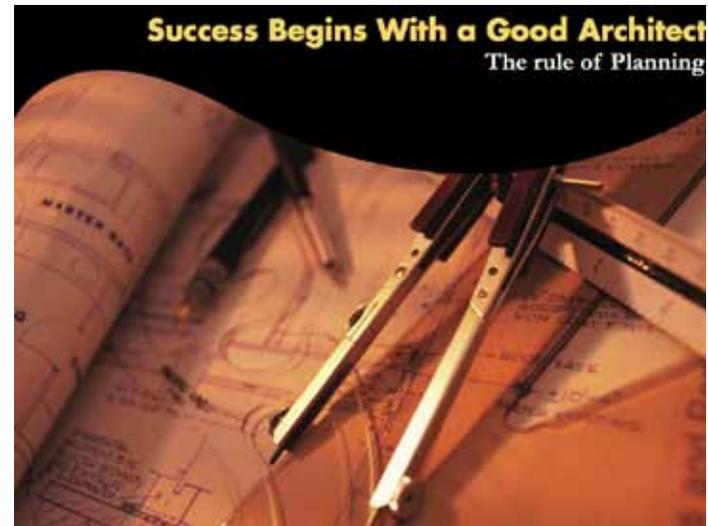
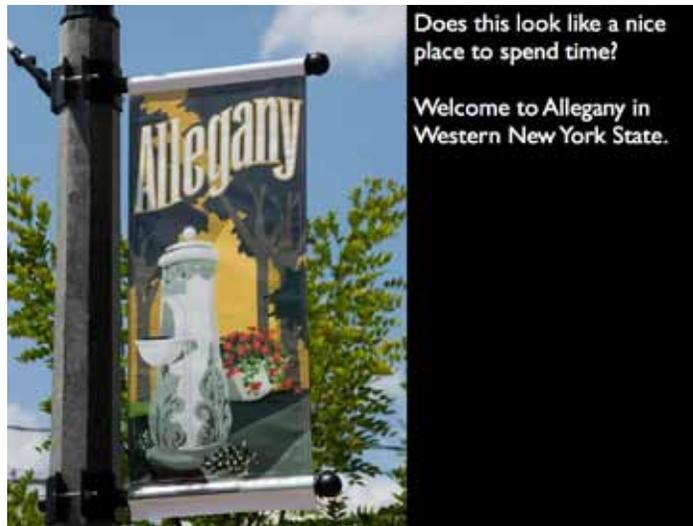
Consider creating a Tehama County Branding, Development and Marketing Action Plan.

Branding - what is it you want to be known for?

Development - what do you have to do to "own" that brand?

Marketing - how do you tell the world?

Action Plan - a to do list, not general strategies, goals and objectives.





Create a Community Branding, Development & Marketing Action Plan

No more strategic plans!

When you can get everyone on the same page pulling in the same direction it becomes fun!

That's what a plan does.

It takes a village to win.

It MUST be a grass-roots effort.

Angels Camp, California

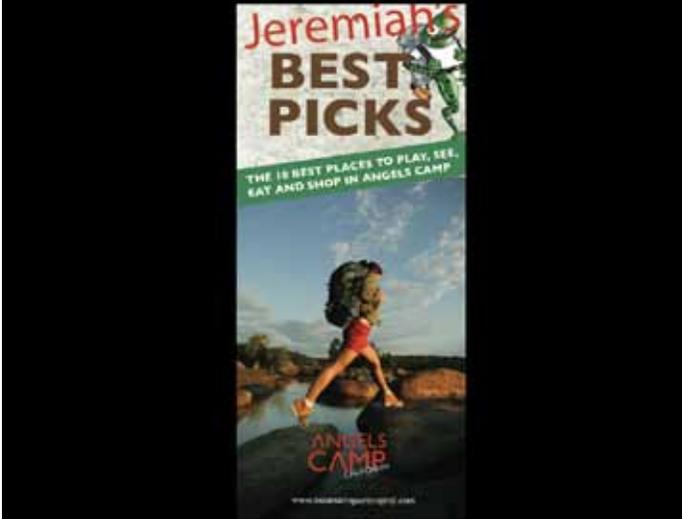
The brand:
California's Mountain Sports Capital

The Powerline:
"Redefining the rush"

Key marketing message:
This is why you bought it. Use it.

Community Branding Examples:

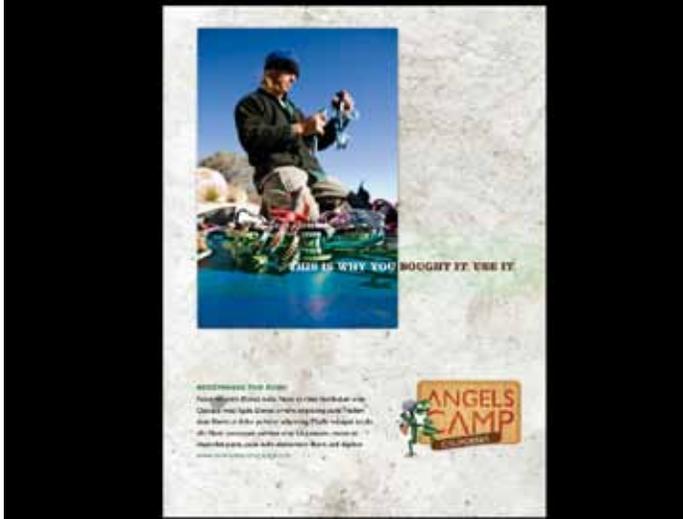
Angels Camp is located in the foothills of California's Sierra Nevada Mountains. With a struggling downtown and increased competition from surrounding communities, the city has been looking for ways to make downtown a destination for both residents and visitors. Destination Development International (DDI) was retained to assist Angels Camp to create a Branding, Development and Marketing Action Plan.



Jeremiah's BEST PICKS

THE 10 BEST PLACES TO PLAY, SEE, EAT AND SHOP IN ANGELS CAMP

ANGELS CAMP



THIS IS WHY YOU BOUGHT IT USE IT

ANGELS CAMP

Angels Camp's location puts them in the center of the action for numerous mountain sports, all in one of America's most spectacular settings. After visiting the town and conducting extensive research, DDI recommended Angels Camp become the Mountain Sports Capital of California. The town will become the base camp for recreation-oriented visitors as well as the retail destination for anyone looking to purchase gear, outfitting or provisioning for mountain sports.

Stockton, California had garnered a reputation as an unsafe city, lacking an active resident population and community downtown. City leaders wanted to change Stockton's image and breathe new life into downtown. DDI was invited to work with Stockton to develop a comprehensive plan. After visiting the city, talking with stakeholders and researching options, DDI found a diamond in the rough. Stockton has the solid foundation for a brand that focuses on events and a new vision for the future was formed.

With the tagline "Celebrate!" and a brand promise of becoming the destination of choice for people wishing to celebrate life, art, food, music, theater, sports and recreation, Stockton is well on its way to revitalizing its downtown.

The Plan includes detailed recommendations for bringing the brand to life, including recruiting new retail businesses, creating an Entertainment District, developing a wayfinding system, downtown beautification and developing a targeted marketing program.

Stockton, California

The brand:
Northern California's Festival City

The tagline:
Celebrate!

Key marketing messages:
Celebrate Life!
Celebrate Sports!
Celebrate Food!

City of Stockton
Downtown Stockton Alliance
Stockton Chamber of Commerce
Stockton Conference & Visitors Bureau
Stockton Events

Celebrate!
2009 Activities Guide
Stockton California

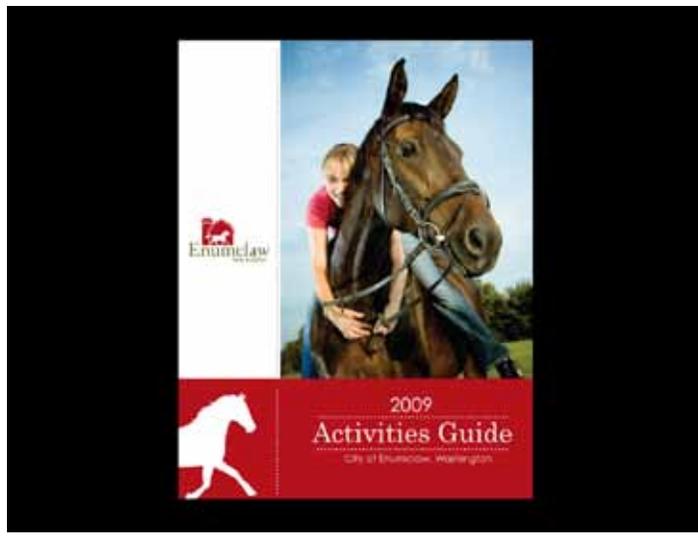
Best of Stockton
Best places to dine, see, stay and celebrate

Enumclaw, Washington

The brand:
Washington's equestrian capital

The tagline:
Horse Heaven

Key marketing messages:
Unbridled Fun!



Located en route to Mount Rainier National Park, Enumclaw, Washington is a rural community that sees hundreds of thousands of visitors passing through, but few rarely stop. Enumclaw desired to change that, as well as enhance the quality of life for its residents. They retained DDI to create a Branding, Development and Marketing Action Plan.

DDI helped create a vision for Enumclaw: The city is working towards becoming the Equestrian Capital of the Northwest and is well on their way to implementing much of the original Action Plan. DDI was called on again to further develop their marketing efforts. The Marketing Action plan gives Enumclaw the tools they need to tell the world about their new identity, particularly those in target markets. The marketing initiatives are aimed at securing the brand and making sure the right people hear about it. The Plan includes graphics and taglines, a first class visitor website, targeted communications, collateral materials, as well as wayfinding and gateways that will showcase the Equestrian theme.

The bottom line:

Work on creating a county-wide umbrella brand and sub-brands for each community.

Get a wayfinding system in place. It should be your top priority.

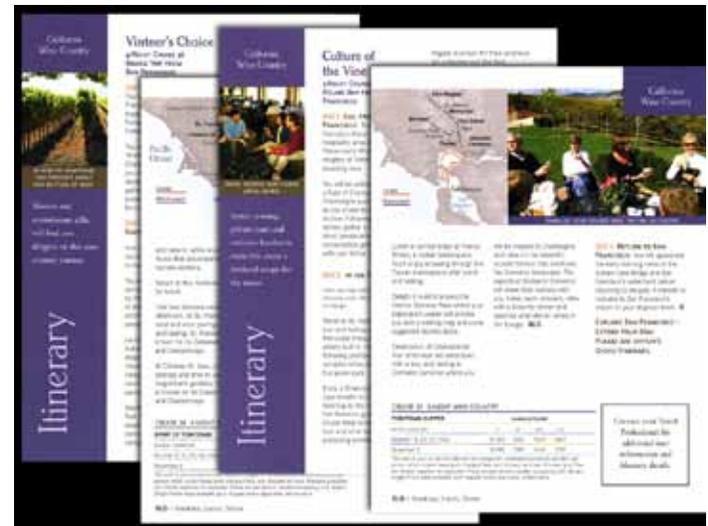
Market your “anchor” businesses - the Best of Tehama County.

Develop information kiosks that cross-sell activities and attractions.

Develop detailed itineraries. Think like a travel writer. Tell the stories that make this county great.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” -Margaret Mead

“If you think you’re too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room.” -Unknown





Tehama County Marketing Assessments

The following pages contain assessments and reviews by our secret shoppers, who researched the area from a distance, reviewing marketing materials to see if they could find the area, and if the materials they found were convincing enough to make them want to visit.

Tehama County, California

In searching for visitor information about Tehama County, California, the first thing I noted was the difficulty in finding good information. If someone was searching Northern California for a place to visit, they aren't likely to happen upon Tehama County. And if they did, I'm afraid there isn't much there to close the sale.

I did find the Red Bluff Tehama County Chamber of Commerce, and this site does have a small section dedicated to visitor information. It gives the usual lists of hotels, restaurants and area attractions. But it is clearly a subsection of a website that is dedicated to other things (area business, etc.) and doesn't have a visitor feel to it. Lists of attractions and area services just aren't going to cut it, even if they include some brief descriptions. I browsed the site and was left with the question, "But why should I go there?"

That's the question you want to answer in your marketing, particularly your website. A visitor to the website should be immediately drawn in with lots of great photography of the area, as well as brief but colorful descriptions of what the area has to offer. Show the user what they're missing, and what

they'll experience if they come. A list doesn't do much to excite someone and make them wish they could go there.

I found a little more information on the Northern California Travel & Tourism Information Network website (www.shastacascade.com). This site has a section on Tehama County, but I had to know what to look for to find it. I wouldn't have happened upon Tehama County by chance. Its description of the area was a little more interesting than what I found on the Red Bluff Chamber's site. It at least touted Red Bluff as "combining elements of the Victorian era and western heritage," which sounds like it has some potential.

It also touts the recreational opportunities in the area, which I'm sure are good. But most areas have great recreational opportunities, so that doesn't do much to set the region apart from the competition – and when it comes to outdoor recreation, the competition is fierce.

As for the rest of Tehama County, the most I could find described it as, essentially, a bunch of smallish towns that provide services to the agricultural areas in the Sacramento River Valley.

Tehama County could be a hidden gem, full of possibilities. But someone looking for visitor information about the area isn't going to find that. The Internet is an enormous travel planning tool used by the majority of travelers today. It's an excellent way to reach potential visitors and answer the question, "Why should I go there." Right now, Tehama County isn't answering that question.

Tehama County, California

My task was to plan a road trip from Sacramento north into Oregon with a few days to take in the sights, so I started with my AAA Northern California & Nevada Tourbook. As I looked over the map, two places immediately caught my attention: Lake Shasta and Mt. Shasta.

I browsed through the Tourbook's "Exploring Northern California" section, which gives highlights of the area, and I was struck by the variety of wonderful experiences to enjoy all through this enormous region. Wineries, gold country, Lake Tahoe, the redwood forests, the coast ... there were a lot of places competing for my visit. This section of the Tourbook didn't even mention the area I was planning to go through, though.

I made a list of the towns and cities along the route, and then looked them up in the Tourbook. The only city in Tehama County included was Red Bluff. The Red Bluff Roundup is listed as a AAA Gem, which makes it a must-see attraction. Unfortunately, it's held in April, and my trip is in the fall. Also listed in the Tourbook are Gaumer's (a jewelry shop with a mining and mineral museum - closed evenings and weekends, uhoh!); a Salmon Viewing Plaza on the Sacramento River; and William B. Ide Adobe State Historic Park.

There are several listings of lodging facilities in Red Bluff, as well as some restaurants that sound good.

I also looked through my Fodor's book for California, and they state, "Historic Red Bluff is a gateway to Mount Lassen National Park. Established in the

mid-19th century as a shipping center and named for the color of its soil, the town is filled with dozens of restored Victorians, resulting in a downtown that resembles a stage set for a Western movie. It's a great home base for outdoor adventures in the area." That sounds promising!

Next I searched the Internet for "Northern California I-5 Attractions." The Northern California Travel & Tourism Information Network showed up (shastacascade.com), which looked very promising.

I liked the search feature, where you can build an itinerary by searching for specific activities in specific locations. I searched for all activities in Red Bluff/Tehama County, and five showed up: Gaumer's Jewelry, Kelly Griggs House Museum, Sacramento River Discovery Center, Corning Museum, and the Tehama County Museum. I wondered what the outdoor adventures were that Fodor's mentioned - no clue, and no mention of Red Bluff's Victorian downtown. No wineries, no shopping (except jewelry), no hiking or trails. What about Lassen Volcanic National Park?

I searched further on the website, and found a summary page for Red Bluff/Tehama County, that does mention "strong western heritage;" "hiking, camping, scenic tours, hunting and fishing;" and Lassen Park. It goes into more detail about the Victorian homes, plus mentions Corning and the olive industry, as well as the other small towns with agriculture and recreational opportunities. There is nothing specific, so it just gives a "teaser" for the area, but not enough information for me to plan any activities, or even know where to find activities.

I thought I'd better search for Red Bluff directly, and found the City's website. There is no "visitor" section that I could find, but I looked at the list of "Historic Landmarks and Places of Interest." It was a list with brief descriptions and no photos. In fact, I was having a hard time finding any photos of the area.

Then I found the Red Bluff Chamber of Commerce website, which looked more visitor-friendly than the city's. It has a few photos, but not any that really show the area or the downtown. The Visitor section has lists of lodging and restaurants, a link to community events, and highlighted attractions in the area.

I saw the link to "Shop Red Bluff First," and I expected to see some photos of downtown with some of the shops, to see how appealing it is. The link took a very long time opening (must be a large PDF file) but it was just an ad encouraging people to shop locally.

I also clicked the link for the Tehama Trail, and that was more successful. The PDF file that opened showed a fun experience - a route to tour olive producers and wineries. That caught my attention, and sounds very appealing. The piece looks nice, and the map is good - very explanatory.

The one printed marketing piece we received for the area was the full printed version of that same Tehama Trail brochure. I think it does a fairly good job of promoting the county.

I like that the top of the cover promotes the activity first - Olive and Wine Tasting! - good! When it goes to reprint, consider changing the color of those

words from white to yellow - yellow is more eye-catching.

It would be a much easier brochure to use and read if it didn't open like a map though. An accordion-fold or roll-fold brochure, or a saddle-stitched booklet, would be much more effective. Not only is the map fold difficult and awkward to use, it's very easy to miss pieces of the subject matter. They are just all jumbled together on one large page. With a roll-fold brochure, readers can focus on one or two panels at a time.

The map is very helpful, and I love how all the attractions are noted on it. The use of the wine and olive bottles is well done and appealing. I love the name "Volcanic Wine County."

Suggestion: Use many more photographs. A picture really is worth a thousand words. Wow people with stunning photos. Most of them should include people having a great time - not just scenery. You should include photos of downtown Red Bluff - it sounds like it's nice, but photos would really sell it. Photos of the wineries, and if the Abbey of New Clairveaux (which sounds amazing) is beautiful, show it off! Photos of Julia's Fruit Stand, the olive shops, the Sacramento River, and Lassen Volcanic National Park. Include people enjoying activities in these photos. Promote the experience.

Include many more photos on the website as well - same thing - people enjoying activities in beautiful surroundings.

While thinking about what would attract me to spend a couple days in the area as I travel north on

I-5 from Sacramento, there wasn't a lot that stood out from the materials. The olive and wine trail sounds good, and maybe downtown Red Bluff.

Suggestion: Promote very specific attractions and activities - especially activities. For example, Lassen Volcanic National Park is promoted as having great outdoor recreation - that doesn't sell me on it - be more specific. What can I do there? Hike? What will I see on a hike? Are there trails that are outstanding? How long are they? Do any of the trails have special names? Tell me about the incredible experiences I can enjoy during a visit to the park. And show me with photography.

If there are some one-of-a-kind shops in Red Bluff, promote them. It can be as simple as a great bakery that makes incredible pies - that can be enough to pull travelers off the highway and get them to stop. And once they've eaten their pie, they'll want to take a look at the other shops that are nearby, especially if they have great curb appeal.

Make the Visitor section on the Chamber's website more visible. Write some one- two- or three-day itineraries, and post them on the site. Be very specific. Add photography and rewrite the text descriptions of the attractions to tell me WHY I would want to visit that attraction. What makes it outstanding?

Promote your very best attractions, activities, restaurants. Entice visitors with what makes Tehama County such a great place.

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