



# Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report

Truro, Nova Scotia & Surrounding Areas  
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International



## Opportunity Assessment

### INTRODUCTION

In August of 2015, an Opportunity Assessment of Truro, Nova Scotia, and area, was conducted, and the findings were presented in a two-and-a-half hour workshop. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of the Truro area – 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 Opportunity Assessment, we looked at the area through the eyes of a first-time visitor. No prior research was facilitated, and no community representatives were contacted except to set up the project. Truro and the 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.

Once potential visitors find information about your area, are the marketing materials good enough to close the sale? In the Marketing Assessment, we reviewed your visitor website and print marketing materials.

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 searched the internet for activities, requested and reviewed printed materials, and looked for articles and third-party information. As we prepared for travel to your community, we searched both commercial and organizational websites promoting the area, tourism websites, and read travel articles and guidebooks.

The marketing assessment determined how effective the marketing was in convincing a potential visitor that the area 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 one-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 Truro worth the trip?

Always promote your primary lure first - what makes you worth that special trip. THEN, promote your diversionary, or “complementary” 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 community worth a special trip, or a great place to live, or to do business. We 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 area, looking at enticements from the highways (signs, billboards, something that would get a visitor to stop), beautification and overall curb appeal, wayfinding (ease of getting around), visitor amenities (public washrooms, 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 area benefits 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 community, leading people to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

It's important to note that to increase the area'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 an area's ability to tap into the tourism industry.

Implementation of these suggestions must be a region-wide effort, involving both privately owned businesses as well as local, county, and provincial 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 region-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 area? Does your community 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 they simply become pit stops or gateways on the way to somewhere else.

After spending several days reviewing marketing materials and assessing the area, we have looked at all of these issues, and have developed some suggestions and ideas the region 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 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

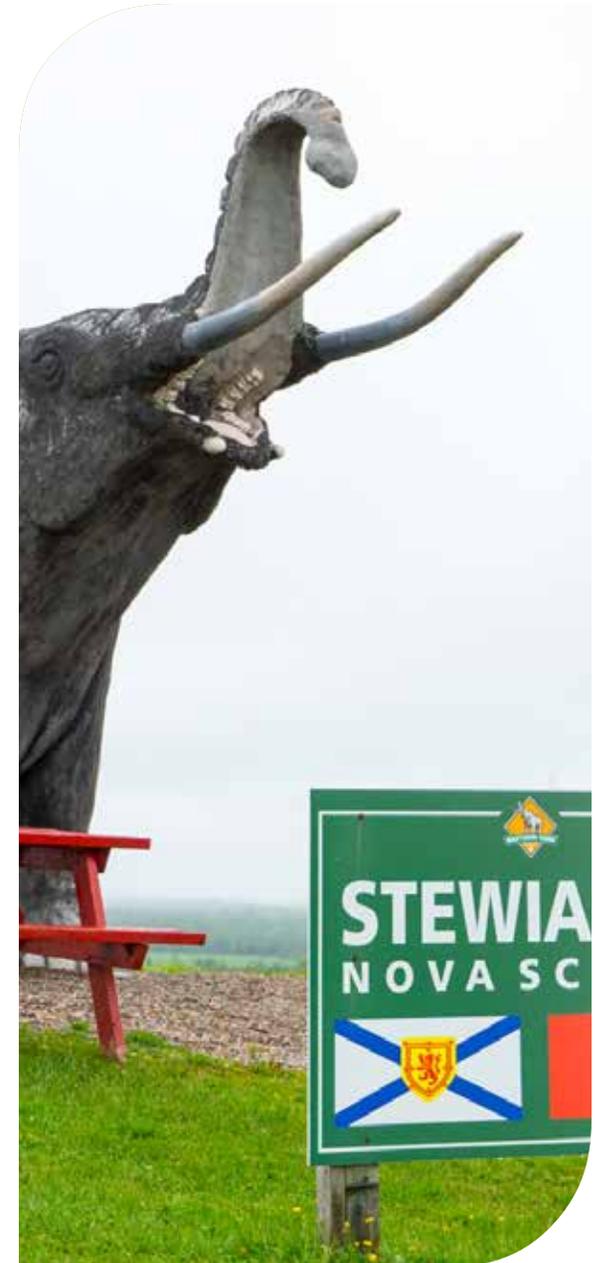
The second most popular reason for travel is business. Included in this category is educational travel: colleges and universities, as well as conventions and meetings, corporate travel, vendor travel, etc. Like leisure travelers, this group is looking for things to do “after hours” while in the area. 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 area would be if just 50% of the vehicles traveling through pulled off the highway and spent just 30 minutes in your communities – 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.

#### 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. 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. For local heritage to be a major attraction, it needs to combine activities with ambiance, and it needs to be pervasive throughout the area.

### **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 by being unique, you’ll be 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, washrooms, 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 arts), retail shops with activities (piano bar in a wine shop), etc.

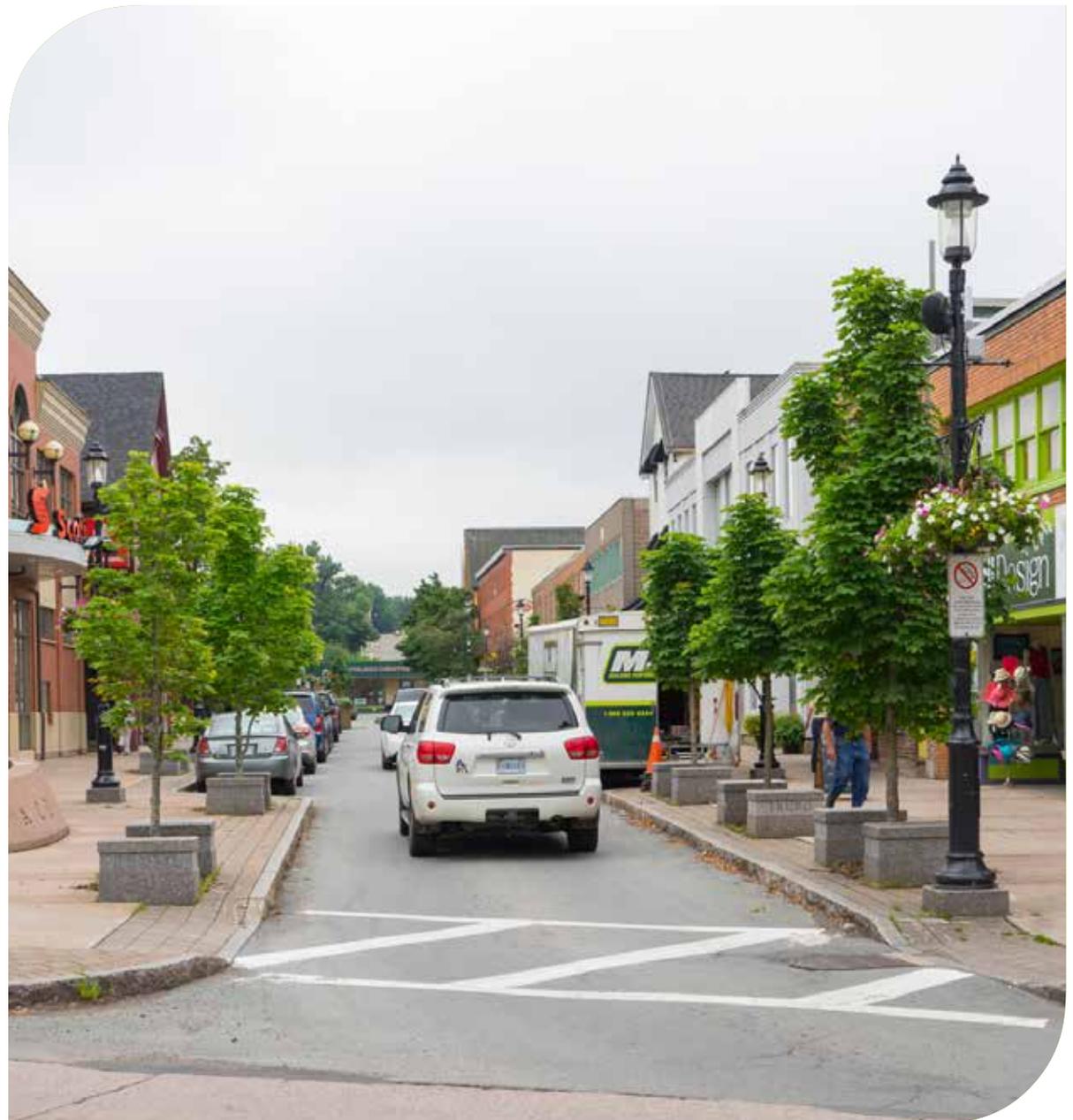
The important point is to group these businesses together to create the “critical mass” in a pedestrian-friendly setting. This will attract visitors as well as locals, and make it worth their while to stop and shop. People are always drawn to the critical mass –

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 many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue and becomes a springboard for the area in enhancing the tourism industry and other economic development efforts, 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 communities should take these findings and suggestions, discuss them and evaluate them, and develop a plan for implementation.

A detailed branding plan would help to build on the results of this assessment, adding in-depth research, evaluation, and local input to develop a unique brand and implementation program. The assessment process essentially provides a look at where you are today. RBI's BrandCamp program helps build your branding plan from the ground up - with local input, brainstorming, research, and creative planning. We can work with you to guide you through the process, helping create a plan that has local champions and community buy-in.

The next step in the planning process would be to provide public outreach and review past and current planning efforts. This would determine your goals as a region.

The third step would involve 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 their 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.

The branding 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.

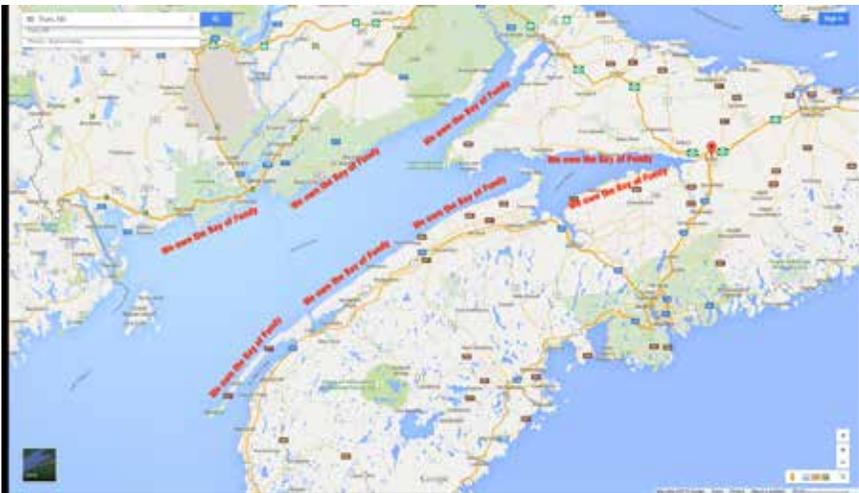
The recommendations should provide all the necessary steps for your town to be successful in attaining its goals of a more diverse economy with an enhanced tourism industry and to become more attractive and enjoyable for both visitors and citizens.

A good plan will provide a program to get local residents and the business community pulling together, building the town's 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



The primary goal of tourism development is to increase the amount of cash that is “imported” into the community. Fortunately, many of the same ingredients that make a destination attractive to visitors also make the community attractive to residents and new business development - and investment - making it a better place to live, work, and play.

During this assessment, we examined 60 key elements about Truro and the surrounding area.

When we first arrived, our big challenge was to find attractions, downtown, amenities, and to scope out the “lay of the land.” We used Truro as “home

base.” We drove along Highways 236 and 215, and then around to Avondale. We also drove down Highway 2 to Shubenacadie and Milford, as well as going northwest to Masstown (top left).

We suggest you give the area along 215 to Avondale its own special name. The Glooscap Trail covers such a large area, and naming this portion would set it apart, making it a destination.

The Truro area definitely “owns” the “Tidal Bore Rafting” designation, but so many other places claim the renowned “Bay of Fundy” (bottom left), that it doesn’t set Truro and the region apart from all the other places on the bay.



We started by heading out from Truro to visit the Avondale Peninsula via Highway 236 to 215. As we approached Hwy 215, we came to the intersection shown in the photo bottom right on the previous page. There is so much sign clutter we were overwhelmed! When visitors are bombarded by so many signs, they will ignore them. We suggest creating a directory sign, similar to this one (top left) on the Cabot Trail. That would still provide people with directions, but it would eliminate the sign clutter, which creates a negative impression.

We saw the Avon River Heritage Museum and Cafe in Newport Landing

(bottom left), and it looks very nice, with its focus on Planter and Acadian history, shipbuilding, and culture. We didn't eat at the cafe, but the online reviews are very, very good! The sign is good and creates a good impression.

We saw this sign (bottom right) with the map of the peninsula, but there's no way we could read it. There is so much text, the only way to read it would be to stop the car and walk close to the sign. Signs along highways should never have more than 14 words - and 8 is preferable. Unfortunately, more than that makes the sign ineffective.



These signs (top left) are all jumbled, facing different directions. And they are all difficult to read without getting out of the car and walking up to them. A directory sign here would solve the problem.

Remove the "EcoTour" sign (top right). We have seen a number of these signs, but we've never been able to find any information that ties the route together or tells about what you can find along the tour. Some of the signs are missing. Without having any information or actual route map, it is confusing for visitors.

This sign for the Avon River Heritage Society (bottom left) is almost impossible to read, and it's hard to know what it's actually promoting. Is this for the heritage society's office? That's what I would assume. If it's for a museum or gift shop, or other attraction, promote the attraction - not the organization.

The general rule for the size of lettering on a sign is at least 10 cm high.

A directory sign in this location could read: • Heritage Museum • Cafe • Gift Shop • Gallery • Visitor information • Bay of Fundy views



We drove into this beautiful spot (top left). The sign should be replaced - this one is very difficult to read.

If there are events held here (top right), post a readerboard to let people know about upcoming attractions. That's a great way to invite people back.

This beautiful place (bottom left) was closed when we came by, and we weren't sure if this was the location of the museum, gallery, and cafe. We saw the plastic banner promoting the art show, but there wasn't much more information.

The first goal of tourism is to get visitors to stop. If you can provide them with enough to do so they stay at least 2 hours, spending will increase. But if your shops, galleries, and restaurants aren't open, and we don't know when they will be open, you've missed your opportunity to get us to stop and spend money.

We continued driving, and came to the fantastic Avondale Sky Winery! (bottom right) Fortunately, we were hungry, so we stopped for lunch. This was a great place, and one of the highlights of our visit.



No shopping mall is successful without anchor tenants, which are specific businesses people go out of their way to visit. People usually go to the mall for the anchor tenants, such as Macy's or Dillard's. The other businesses benefit by being in close proximity to the anchor tenants. Another example is Disney World in Orlando. There are lots of other attractions in Orlando, but most people visit Orlando to go to the anchor, Disney World, and they see the other attractions while there.

It's important for communities to promote their "anchor tenants" too. Promote

your anchor tenants with a "Best Of" guide. It can have a dramatic impact on visitor spending.

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.

It's critical to establish criteria to select the very best that you have. Market your best 6 restaurants, 6 retail shops, and 12 activities and attractions.

This is a sample of "The Best of Alpena, Michigan" brochure (bottom left and right).

## Sample criteria:

- Must be highly regarded (80%+ positive peer reviews, regional publications, TripAdvisor, Yelp, etc.)
- Must have good curb appeal
- Must be open year round
- Must be open until at least 6:00 pm
- Must be open six days a week (they can be closed on Mondays)
- Must be unique to the area (no chains, sorry)

## Summerville



We suggest that you create two of these “Best Of” brochures: one for the shoreline area (Hwy 215 and area), and one for Truro and the attractions south. You could give the shoreline area its own unique name - we referred to it as the Avondale Shore, simply because it sounds really good. It adds a unique “flavor” to the area, which makes it appealing. Of course, you could pick a different name for the area, but we do suggest that you give it a special name.

You need to promote these specific “best of” businesses. The benefit of tourism is when people spend money, and they do that at private businesses. That will

benefit your local economy and increase your tax base.

We drove through Summerville and saw the Flying Apron Inn (bottom left and right). We thought it looked fabulous, and we checked to see if it was in Taste of Nova Scotia. It is! We had just had lunch at Avondale Sky Winery, so we weren’t ready to eat again. Instead, we returned to Summerville all the way from Truro just to have dinner at the Flying Apron. That is the power of a “best of” restaurant. It is worth the drive. And it was wonderful!

## The very best of the Avondale Shore

Avondale Sky Winery  
Flying Apron Inn & Cookery

Cambridge



Walton

So far, we feel that you need to include Avondale Sky Winery and Flying Apron Inn & Cookery in the “Best Of” brochure.

We went on to Cambridge and saw Minas View Golf Links. They did an excellent job with their entry sign, which is very attractive. Their sign also includes: walk-ons, rentals, power carts, licensed canteen. That is excellent! It’s important to let visitors know this information, and putting it on your entry signage will increase business. Other golf courses should do this also. One thing that’s missing from this sign is the number of holes.

As we drove in, we could see that the course itself was beautiful, and it had stunning views. The facilities, though, looked tired and run down (bottom left). Add more signage here (make it decorative), and add some curb appeal. Some landscaping, etc. would do a lot to make it look more appealing.

We drove on to Walton.



Walton is in a beautiful area. We saw the welcome sign (top left), and it looks great. Work on the sign clutter (top right). One of these signs looks like it's falling down behind another. Visitors will usually ignore most of the signs when there are too many. Add a directory to help tidy up the signage.

Signs for attractions, such as this one for the lighthouse (bottom left), should always have one graphic, the name of the attraction, the distance, and the arrow. Always include the distance.

We saw the Walton Variety Store (bottom right), but it looked like just another pit stop along a highway - it didn't have any appeal to draw us in. Add curb appeal - make it attractive.



We saw the Walton Pub & Eatery (top left and right), along with their nice sandwich board and funny sign "Home of the Whopper - Under a Billion Served." We got a kick out of that.

The outdoor eating deck (top left) didn't have much appeal, though, since it was right on the parking lot. If there is some way to have the deck be on the side of the building with views of the river, that would make a huge difference.

Make your signage for the Pub & Eatery more prominent. A permanent,

decorative sign promoting the Eatery would attract more customers.

We visited the Walton Lighthouse (bottom left). It has an excellent prominent sign out by the highway that shows the distance, and states that it has a gift shop with local crafts and a rest area. What a stunning location. Consider using wrought-iron or vinyl fencing; chain-link looks too much like a jail or industrial area. And be sure to say "welcome" on your sign before you list all the rules. The lighthouse and grounds are spectacular. And the volunteer working there was fantastic. Great hospitality.



We discovered the website (top left) that shows webcams throughout the province, and Walton Lighthouse was there! It was very fun looking at this.

The pole banners throughout the community are very nice. They add a bright, festive touch to the area.

We went on to visit Burncoat Head Lighthouse, and we noticed some signs called it "Burncoat Head" while others stated "Burncoat." We're glad to learn there's a budget in place to fix the incorrect signs.

Suggestion: Every spring, go along the highway and trim back the underbrush, particularly around the signs. A lot of signs were being partially covered by the overgrowth. Also, repair and refresh any signs that need it. This one (bottom left) is leaning over.

The dirt road leading to Burncoat Head Park (bottom right) is so full of potholes it's almost impassible. Please grade it to smooth it out.



Burntcoat Head Park is gorgeous (all photos this page). The lighthouse is beautiful, and the gardens are spectacular. Be sure to keep the washrooms maintained, though (top left). They are pit toilets, and they were desperately in need of being cleaned out.

We followed the trail down the stairs to the beach (bottom left), and it was spectacular. In fact, it was so fascinating that we came back later to see it when the tide was out (top right). There were a lot of other people there - this is a popular spot, and it's worth it! The longer you can keep visitors in your

area, the more money they will spend - at restaurants, gift shops, galleries, etc.

The shrubbery was extremely overgrown in the park (bottom right), so we suggest trimming it back in certain spots. You can open up some areas so that people can see the view from up top. Many people aren't able to navigate the steps to go down to the beach, and it would be great if they were able to see the beach from up top. Trimming back the fast-growing shrubs would make that possible.



Burntcoat Head Park should definitely be on the list of "Best Of's."

We drove on to Selma, and we saw these signs for attractions in the area (top right). Be sure to include distance on your signs for attractions. We could barely read the text in the white circle sign. It's important to keep signs maintained year after year.

We saw the entrance for Anthony Picnic Park, and we almost didn't go in because we couldn't see the beach area from the road, and we didn't think there would be much to see or do besides have a picnic. But we were so glad

we did. The beach, views and scenery were spectacular (bottom right). The extreme tide variations are so fascinating to see. It's amazing how so much land can become exposed when the tide goes rushing out. Walking on the bottom of the bay is truly a fun and memorable experience!

We saw these interpretive displays (bottom left). It's great to have them here, but they need some maintenance and freshening.



We saw Gallery 215 (top left), but unfortunately, we didn't have a chance to go in. Wonderful historic building! We love anyplace that sells Nova Scotia arts - anything made right here in Nova Scotia. They are unique to you and are worth going out of our way to see.

The stretch of highway between Selma and Burntcoat Head is so rough (top right and bottom left) that you might need to warn RVs about it in advance. It's in very poor shape. Work with the province in getting this stretch of road repaired. The rest of the highway is great.

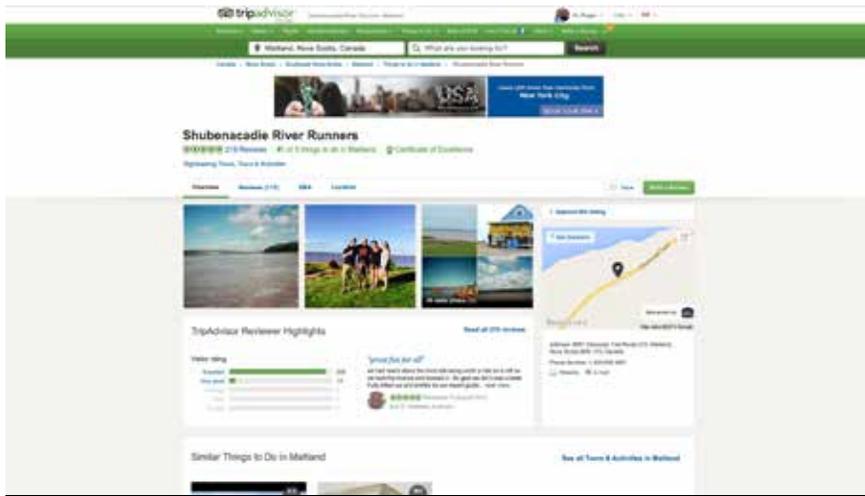


When we arrived in Maitland, we were very impressed by the welcome sign (top right). It looks great. It says that Maitland is Nova Scotia's first heritage conservation district, which is very nice, but would you choose to visit a town because it's the first conservation district? Probably not. What are the things you can see and do there? Of course, the sign is fine, but keep in mind when you are promoting your town that you want to promote activities and experiences - that's what people are looking for.

We arrived at the Lawrence House (bottom left). Their sign was easy to

see right out front, and it gave their open hours, which is fantastic. The Lawrence House museum looks wonderful - we saw the cairn outside and the interpretive sign for the grounds. The costumed staff provides excellent guided tours of the house, explaining the unique features created by Mr. Lawrence for his family's comfort. Great views and lots of information. Good job!

We saw River Runners (bottom right), and it created an excellent impression. It looks fantastic.



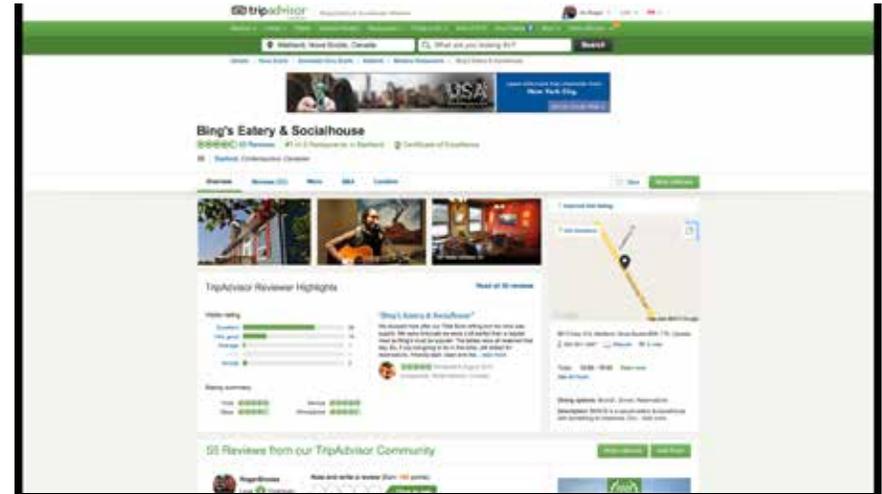
We looked up River Runners on TripAdvisor, and their reviews matched our first impression. Number one of five things to do in Maitland, and over 200 excellent reviews.

TripAdvisor is the most used website for travelers. People rely on the peer reviews to help make their decisions, so it's very important to monitor your reviews, and to respond to them. Especially respond to negative reviews, thanking the reviewer for posting, letting them know that you appreciate their comments, and if something was wrong, that you are working to correct the issue. While TripAdvisor indicated that Maitland has five things to do, there are

probably more. You can go to TripAdvisor and add more activities, information, and businesses. TripAdvisor wants as much info on their site as possible.

We saw Beyond the Wharf Artisans (bottom left), but we weren't sure if it was open or closed, or when it would be open. Suggest a sign showing hours, so people can see easily from the road.

We went into the Frieze & Roy General Store (bottom right), which was in the visitor guide as one of the top five locals' picks. We could see how it would be a locals' spot to hang out, but it didn't seem to have a lot to offer for visitors, except as a quick stop for a snack.



**The very best of the Avondale Shore**

Avondale Sky Winery  
 Flying Apron Inn & Cookery  
 Walton Lighthouse  
 Burntcoat Head Lighthouse & Park  
 Gallery 215 - Nova Scotian Art  
 Shubenacadie River Runners  
 Bing's Eatery (work on those hours and days)

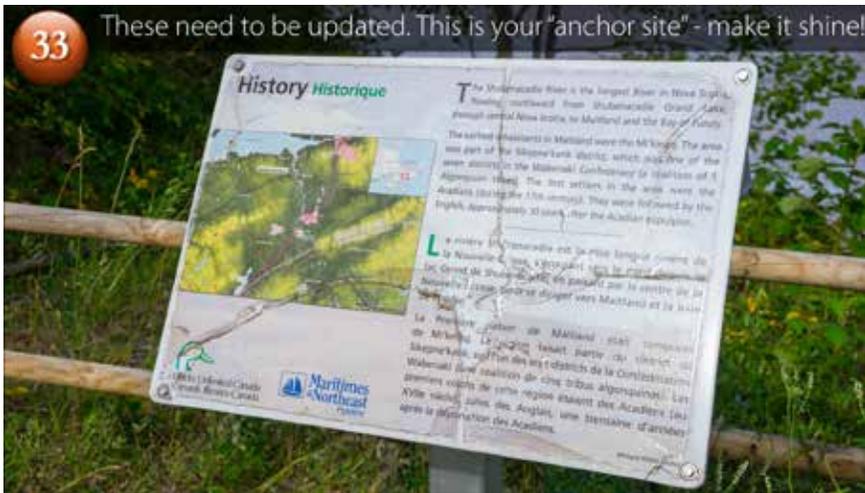
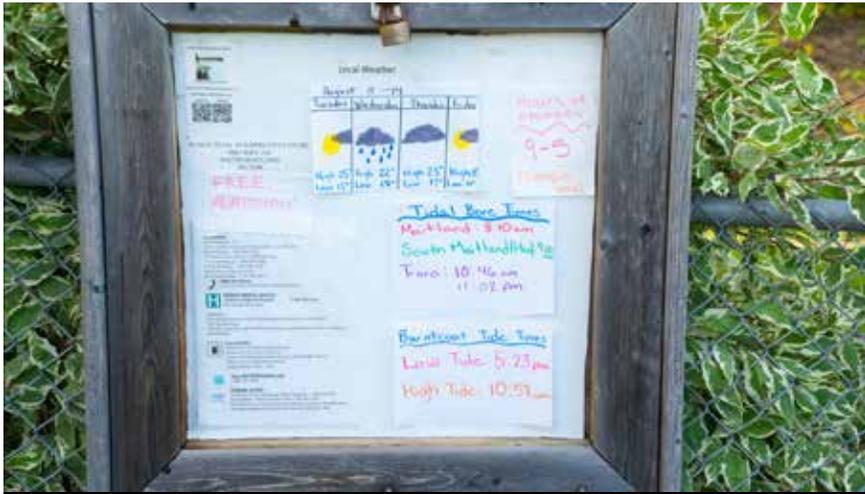


We saw Bing's Eatery (top left), and it looks like a great place to eat. Good curb appeal, and we could tell it was open because of the flag. Suggestion: There is only one car in the parking lot, and that makes it look like it's probably the owner's. People are hesitant about going into a restaurant and being the only ones - they feel too conspicuous. If the owner has two cars, park them both in the parking lot!

We checked Bing's out on TripAdvisor, and it fared very well. There are two negative reviews, and since most visitors will read the negative reviews first, it's important for restaurants and merchants to always respond. Don't be

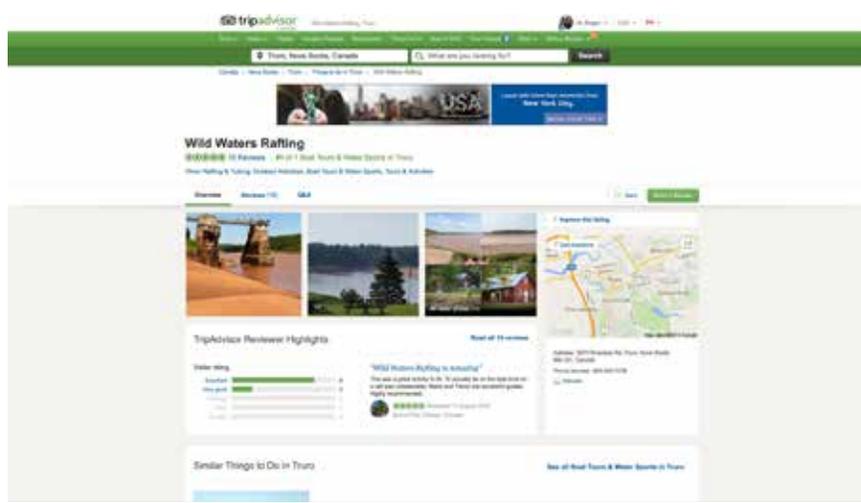
combative - thank the reviewer for writing, and tell how the situation will be better.

We went to the tidal bore viewing area by the visitor center (bottom right). It's an amazing place to stop and watch the tide going out or coming in. One thing that's very important is to always provide visitor information 24/7. You need visitor information outside - weather proof brochure holders well-stocked with visitor information brochures. People don't just travel during business hours. We were there in August, and the VIC closed at 5:00 - visitors are still active in the evening hours during the summer months, especially.



This weather display and tide chart (top left) was excellent! We liked that it was handwritten - it was authentic. We walked out to the viewpoint (top right) and watched the river flowing out, carrying the tide away. There are several interpretive displays (top right and bottom left). There wasn't much about the tidal bore - there should be! That's what people are most interested in when they stop at this viewpoint. Add more information about how the tides impact the rivers.

So far, there's a lot to see and do along the "Avondale Shore." Your "Best Of" list is growing!



This intersection (top left) has too many signs. It's impossible to read all of these. Consider doing a directory sign - everything is to the right - and just do a list: Tidal bore activities, galleries, restaurants & cafes, Burntcoat Head Lighthouse, Walton Lighthouse, adventure tours, museums, lodging.

We saw the sign to Wild Waters Tidal Bore Rafting, and drove down the gravel road to find it. It was a long drive, and we almost turned back, but when we got there, the view of the river was stunning.

We got there and it was closed (top right). We weren't sure what the log was doing against the door. Trying to keep the employees from escaping?

Wild Waters Rafting had good reviews on TripAdvisor, and it should be considered one of the Avondale Shore's "Best Of's."

## The Avondale Shore drive (Highway 215)



## The very best of the Avondale Shore

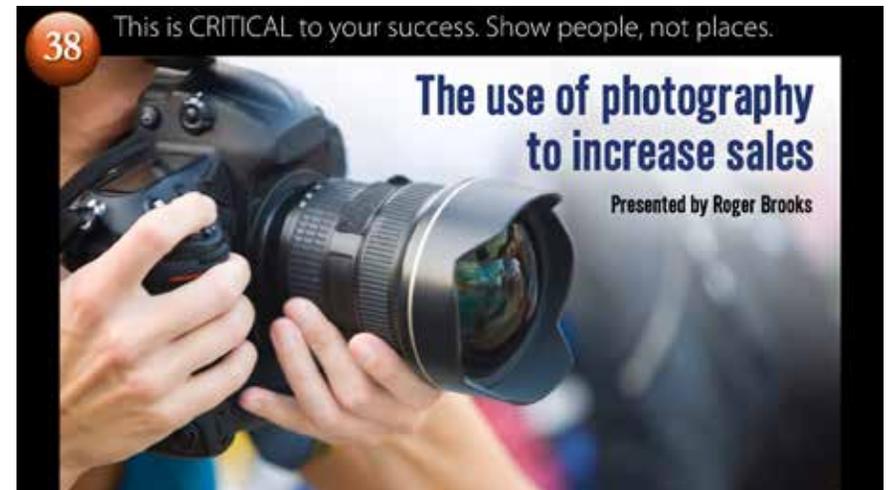
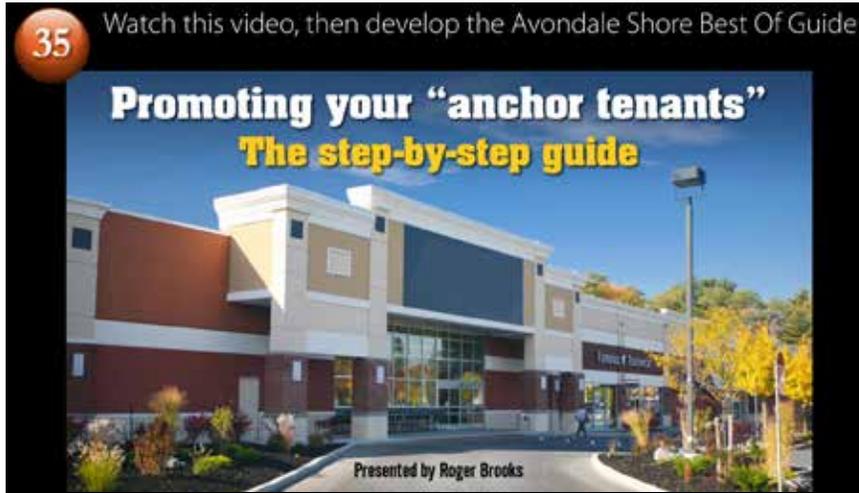
Avondale Sky Winery  
Flying Apron Inn & Cookery  
Walton Lighthouse  
Burntcoat Head Lighthouse & Park  
Gallery 215 - Nova Scotian Art  
Shubenacadie River Runners  
Bing's Eatery (work on those hours and days)  
Wild Waters Rafting  
The Avondale Shore (of the Glooscap Trail)

## Marketing the Avondale Shore (Along the Glooscap Trail)

The drive along Highway 215 - what we've been calling the Avondale Shore drive - is a great experience. It's not going to compete with the Cabot Trail, the Ceilidh Trail, or the Bluenose Coast, but it does have a beautiful pastoral setting, some great sights and fun things to visit. Burntcoat Head Lighthouse, Walton Lighthouse, Maitland, Lawrence House, and a lot of scenic viewpoints. We suggest calling them viewpoints rather than look-offs.

We suggest you even include the drive as one of your "Best Of's." It has so much beautiful scenery!

We also suggest you give this drive a unique name. We've been calling it "The Avondale Shore." Choose whatever name you'd like to call it - just for marketing purposes. And tie it in with the Glooscap Trail, like The Avondale Shore on the Glooscap Trail.



Be sure to take advantage of our online video library. We have many educational videos to help you make your destination the best it can be. These are streaming videos, and you have access to them for four months following this presentation.

“Promoting Your Anchor Tenants” gives you information about how to create the “Best Of” brochure.

One of these videos, “The Power of Itineraries” gives you information about developing detailed itineraries. When you create itineraries, think like a travel

writer - include specifics. Don't just tell me to visit one of your wineries, tell me which winery and the type of wine I should try there. Don't just tell me to sample some blueberry scones - tell me where I can find the best ones. Don't just tell me to watch the tidal bore - tell me where I can go to see the best.

Put together 1/2-day, 1-day, 2-day itineraries. Include specifics, such as: Lunch at Avondale Sky Winery; visit Burntcoat Head - twice to see both high tide and low tide; have dinner at Flying Apron Cookery; etc.

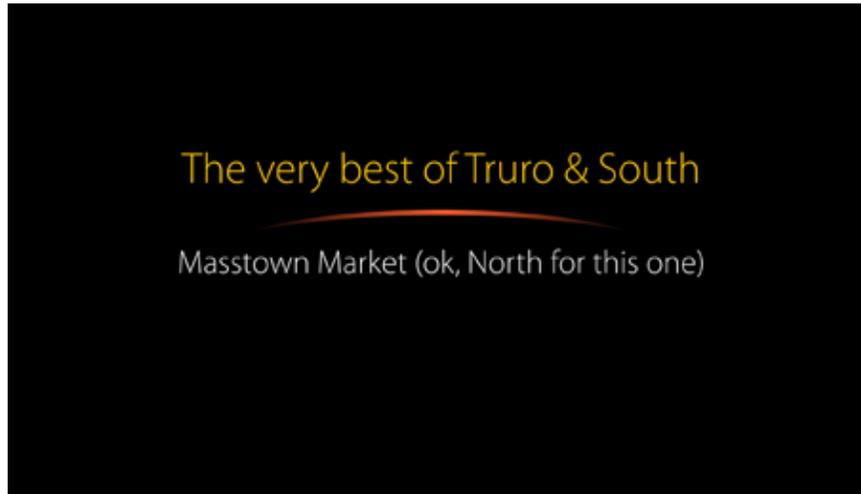
Put your detailed itineraries online, and include teasers in your brochures.



We went out to the Masstown Market, which is a great place to visit, and makes a fun day-trip experience from Truro. It was packed with people - and it's a lot of fun to visit.

We've seen a couple of accidents at the intersection by the Market, and it seems like this is a dangerous spot. See if there's something that could be done to make this a safer intersection for traffic to negotiate.

If you wanted to focus marketing efforts on being a great destination for families with kids, you've got a lot of activities that would fit right in: Masstown Market, the corn maze, the Shubenacadie Provincial Wildlife Park, Mastodon Ridge, Victoria Park, and more.

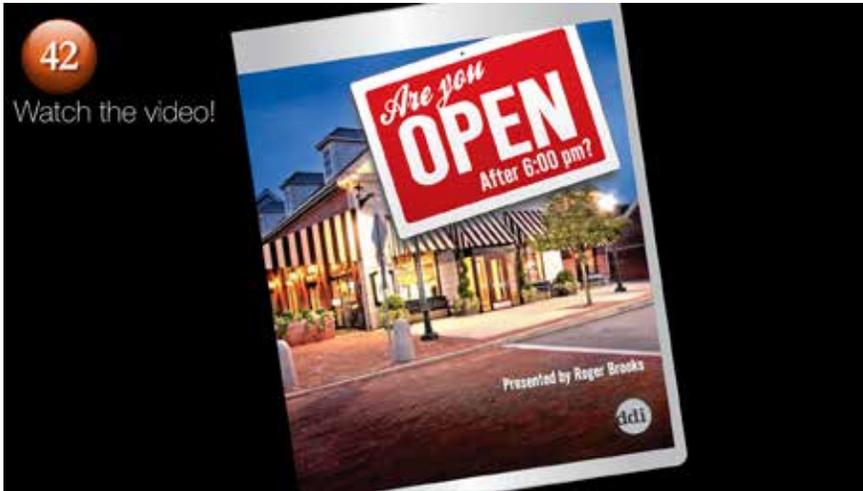


We suggest you create two of the “Best Of” brochures: one for the “Avondale Shore,” and one for the Truro area and South. Include Masstown Market in the Truro area one (even though it’s north, it is in the Truro area).

According to Bentley University’s Center for Marketing Technology, prior to traveling, 32% of travel decisions are made using brochures or printed pieces (#1: internet, #2: friends and family). But once we are in the area, 81% of travel decisions are made from brochures (#1). People still want and need brochures when they are traveling. You can increase your retail sales just by providing

24/7 access to visitor guides and brochures. The “Best Of” brochures are some of the most effective marketing pieces you can have.

One of our favorite places is Cape May, NJ (top right and bottom left). They have created a very attractive, self-serve visitor information kiosk. We don’t need technology here, just an old fashioned kiosk where you can pick up a printed brochure. Place visitor information kiosks in multiple locations around in the region.



We drove back into Truro, looking for a place to eat dinner, and we accidentally found Inglis Street downtown. It looked like an attractive, fun part of Truro, unfortunately, it was after 5:00, and most shops were closed. Inglis Street and downtown Truro was empty of life.

We found the Ho-Ho Wok Restaurant (top left), and we had dinner there.

70% of retail spending takes place after 6:00 p.m. With most people working or at school all day, they can't spend their daytime hours shopping. Your area is a recreational paradise. If your visitors are out seeing Burntcoat Head

Lighthouse, Walton Lighthouse, tidal bore rafting, hiking or bike riding, even if they are visiting your museums and paying the small admission charge, they are not buying things and spending money. If your downtown closes at 5:00 or 6:00, when visitors are usually finished with their outdoor recreational activities, there's no place for them to spend money. Some of your restaurants even close early. Those businesses are losing out on 70% of their potential sales, and your visitors are left with nothing to do.

We encourage you to watch our online video "Are you open after 6:00 pm?"



Fact

Curb appeal can account for up to **70% of first-time sales** at restaurants, golf courses, wineries, retail shops and lodging facilities.



The next day we headed south to Millbrook. For years we've passed the backside of Glooscap (top left) as we drive past on the freeway, and we were looking forward to seeing what he was all about.

Millbrook, as well as everyone else, can benefit from a greater emphasis on beautification - creating curb appeal. 70% of first time sales can come from curb appeal - beautification is critical to attracting customers into your shops, restaurants, and businesses, especially first-time visitors.

80% of all spending is made by women. Women prefer spending their time in places that are attractive and safe. And 70% of all consumer retail spending takes place after 6:00 pm. We call these the 7-8-7 rules.

This shop in Gatlinburg, TN (bottom left) is beautifully decorated, even though it's winter. The holiday flowers are silk. One of our favorite towns is Mahone Bay (bottom right). A major reason it is a favorite is that all the shops are so attractive - brightly painted buildings, flowers and landscaping everywhere.



The Tea Brewery in Mahone Bay (top left) is very attractive and inviting. This restaurant in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia (top right) has window boxes and planters full of flowers, and they even make their menu board decorative to entice customers inside.

Beautification includes more than flowers - merchants should use the outdoors as a place for "window displays" of their merchandise. Displays of merchandise, artfully arranged, can really pull customers into a shop.

Neenah, Wisconsin did a downtown makeover (before: bottom left, and after: bottom right). Retail sales in the block with the beautification increased by one-third of the non-beautified street.



Would you go into this shop? (top left) With the bars over the windows and doors, it looks like there's a crime problem here. The poles are beautiful, but it's not enough to give the shop much curb appeal. Trim weeds, add pots of flowers, get rid of the bars.

This shop (top right) also very little curb appeal. There is a small attempt with the hanging baskets, but the bars look forbidding. Even though they say they are a trading post, the more obvious signage for "Cheap Smokes" gives a poor impression. We suggest changing the signage, removing the bars, adding

more beautification, and trimming the weedy grass.

We could tell Saltscapes (bottom left) has gone out of business. If there are plans for anything new to open there, be sure to put out a sign saying "Coming Soon."

This new hotel, still under construction, looks like it will be very nice (bottom right). Change the sign - it says opening Spring of 2015, which is long past.

48 Add some landscaping. Some mural art. ANYTHING to dress this up.



49 Wild suggestion: Glooscap Heritage Centre & Mi'kmaw Museum



50 Explain the difference between Mi'kmaw and Mi'kmaq.

The easier you make it, the more we'll remember it.



## The very best of Truro & South

Masstown Market (ok, North for this one)  
Glooscap Heritage Centre & Mi'kmaw Museum

This building is as harsh and stark as anything we've seen (top left). Add some beautification. Consider painting a decorative mural. You'll entice a lot more customers if the building looks like a nice place to visit.

We went to the Millbrook Cultural & Heritage Centre (top right). We saw it advertised as the Glooscap Heritage Centre and Mi'kmaw Museum, so we were confused by the different name on the sign. We suggest using Glooscap Heritage Centre and Mi'kmaw Museum. Don't bother with the name of the town. People are interested in the First Nations' heritage, and the name

Millbrook doesn't mean anything to them. Don't promote the name of the town - promote the experience. The experience is Glooscap heritage and Mi'kmaw culture. Promote that, and don't confuse visitors with a different name on the sign.

The heritage centre was fantastic - a really terrific experience. We were there the same time as a tour bus, so we were able to see the demonstrations and storytelling that were presented for the tour. It was great. Glooscap Heritage Centre & Mi'kmaw Museum should definitely be in your "Best Of" brochure.



51 Make everything double-sided! From the museum: a bust.



52 Please maintain this! It's August!



This is very sad and a black eye for the province.



53 Add #Glooscap here. Wi-fi. Encourage people to post to SM sites.

There is a visitor information kiosk at the museum, which is good (top left). Unfortunately, the displays are only one sided, and from the museum it looks very poor. Also, there are no brochures - nothing a visitor can take with them. This empty brochure holder (top right) isn't helpful.

This is a great spot for visitors to take photos and post them to social media sites (bottom right). The power of social media is in its value as word-of-mouth promotion. People telling their friends about you.

Encourage your visitors to post pictures of themselves on social media sites by offering free wifi, and by putting up signs with hashtags and reminders about posting.



An excellent example of how to make it easy for visitors to help market you through social media is a little museum in Concordia, Kansas, called the Orphan Train Museum. In several spots, they posted these signs (top left). There was free wifi, which made it easy, and they even gave their facebook address, so you could link to it and like it.

When your visitors post their photos, showing themselves having fun at your locations, they are spreading the word about what a great place you are. This encourages their friends and family (and THEIR friends and families) to visit you

as well. Word-of-mouth is the best kind of marketing there is.

We encourage you to watch our online video about social media (top right).

We drove further south to Stewiacke. When we reached this intersection (bottom right), there were no signs telling where downtown Stewiacke was located, so a sign should be added here.



We had a brochure for a historic walking tour of Stewiacke. It was difficult to follow the map, though, because it was laid out somewhat like 3-D. The map was awkward, and the names of some of the buildings on the map didn't match what the buildings currently are. Some of the buildings included on the map were not historic at all, such as this strip mall (top left). We think this old building (top right) was included too.

One big problem with the walking tour was that Stewiacke is not a very walkable downtown. There aren't any sidewalks, and a lot of the walking space

is like this (bottom right). There were some attractive buildings and churches, so consider redeveloping the brochure with a better map and more precise names. Don't include non-historic buildings.

The biggest problem with this walking tour, though, is that there is no place for a visitor to spend any money. The benefit of tourism is when visitors spend money in your community, and if there isn't any opportunity for that, then you're not monetizing your assets.



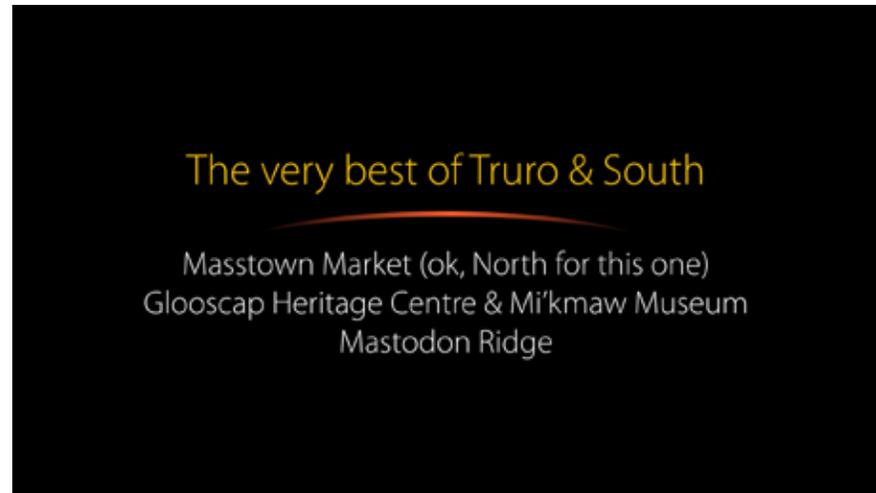
On our way back to the highway, we saw the sign for visitor information, so we pulled in to Mastadon Ridge and the visitor information centre (top left). We saw the signs for a gallery, ice cream, attractions, and we thought it looked very fun.

Here again, make sure you provide free wifi, and encourage visitors to post and hashtag their photos. There is ample opportunity for fun photos!



They did an excellent job of offering wonderful photo opportunities!

We suggest moving the picnic table that's in front of the mastodon (bottom right), because if a family is having a picnic here, other people won't take a picture in front of the mastodon.



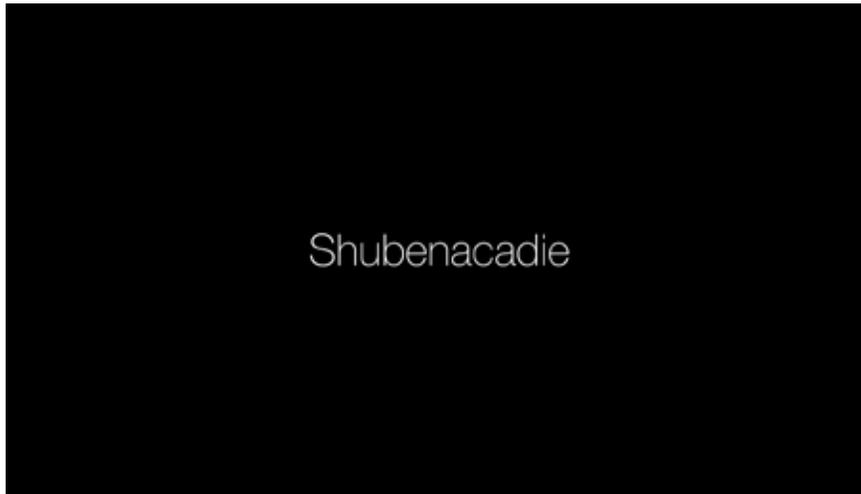
Be careful to not let Mastodon Ridge become too “cheesy.” Work on upping the game a bit, making the displays a bit more realistic (especially inside). But it’s a fun place, and it’s great for kids.

The ice cream shop (top right) was closed, even though the sign on the door said they should be open. If a shop says it’s going to be open during certain hours, then it should be open.

The canons made us laugh (bottom left), as if they are warning visitors to

stay away. We weren’t sure what their significance was - we didn’t see any information or signs explaining them. But they’re interesting.

We think Mastodon Ridge should be included in the “Best Of” brochure.



We continued driving to Shubenacadie. First thing we noticed about the town was the gorgeous hanging baskets (top right). Beautiful! Other communities should follow their lead.

We stopped at the Village Bakery (bottom left) for lunch. It was great - some of the best chicken salad ever. They should be included in the "Best Of" brochure, absolutely.



This also looked like a great place to eat.



This is very nicely done.



61 You were only the capital for one year? Take off the year!



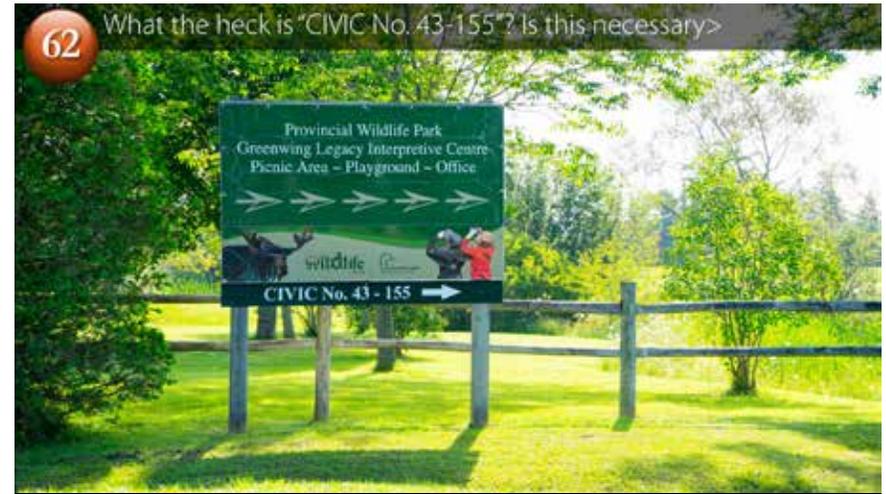
We saw Yummy's Deli (top left) in Shubie, too, and it looks like a very nice place to eat too.

The MacInnis Trail (top right) looks great. The sign is very well done - it's good to see a "welcome" to visitors, with information, prior to the rules. Good job. We understand a lot of donations and volunteer effort went into making this trail a reality, and that's awesome.

The Tin Shop Museum looks very fun (bottom left). We suggest taking the year

off the plastic banner for the award of the Milk Can Capital of Canada. In fact, if it is still the milk can capital, where are the milk cans? Suggestion: Put some milk cans outside, or else take the sign down.

Shubenacadie's welcome sign (bottom right) looks very nice. It's great that it promotes the wildlife park.



We visited the Wildlife Park on a beautiful sunny day, and it is awesome (top left and right). There were a lot of families there, a lot of strollers, and everyone looked like they were having a good time.

The displays were very well done - plenty of good information - and it was fun to see the variety of animals.

We were disappointed that we couldn't find anyplace to buy the tee-shirts (bottom left). There was no information about where to find them.

It would be good to monetize the wildlife park experience more - offer more

items for sale (like the tee-shirts), and make it easy to find them. Consider selling refreshments as well.

We almost missed the Wetland Centre. It could use a permanent, more prominent sign than this little sandwich board (bottom right). We found the gift shop there, but we didn't see any of the tee-shirts for sale.



The displays in the Wetland Centre were great (top left).

There is a great opportunity to monetize these attractions better. Consider bringing in food trucks or other vendors during the summer months. With so many people visiting the parks, there is a lot of opportunity. Instead of needing to leave at lunchtime, visitors could get their food at a truck, and the parks could receive a percentage of sales.

Consider combining the two parks under one name for marketing purposes.

We found it somewhat confusing with both attractions having different names but being in the same location. Make it easy.

The Wildlife Park and Wetland Centre should definitely be in your "Best Of" brochure!



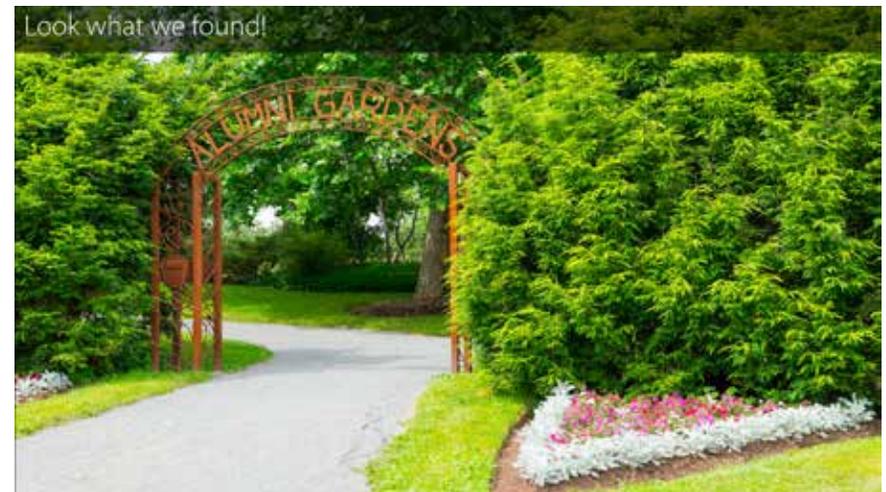
67 Oh wait. I guess we're not there yet. Where IS Bible Hill? Fix this.



68 Where are the Alumni Gardens? How about some signage?



Our Garmin Nuvi took us here to central Bible Hill. Cool!



Look what we found!

Next we decided to check out Bible Hill. We were in Truro and saw a sign on the top of a bridge that said it was Bible Hill. We thought we'd check it out. But when we crossed the bridge, we saw another sign (top left) directing us to continue to the right to find Bible Hill.

We drove past Dalhousie University (top right), and looked around for the Alumni Gardens, since we had read about them in the visitor guide. We didn't see any signs for them, though.

We couldn't find any place that seemed like a center for Bible Hill, so I used my navigation system. It took us out into the outskirts of town (bottom left), and said we had reached the town center! Didn't look quite right.

So we backtracked, and found some of the major streets again, and this time we found the parking lot for the Alumni Gardens (bottom right). They are gorgeous.



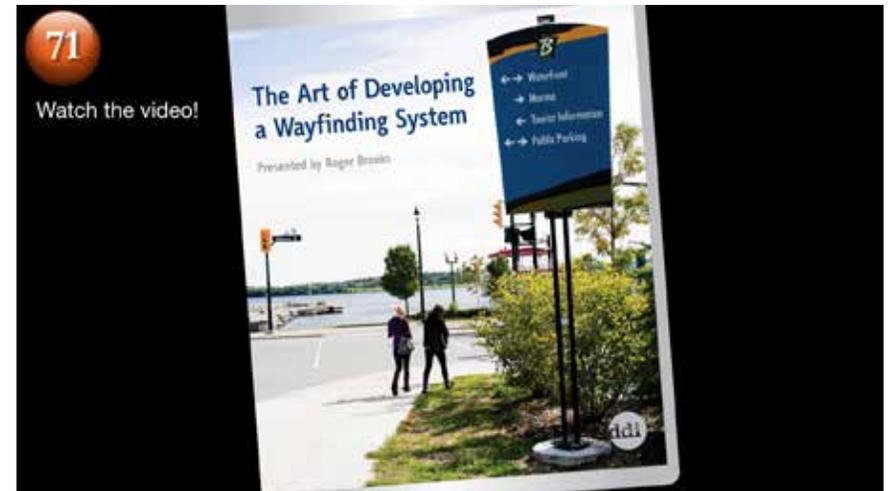
The Alumni Gardens are lovely, but there weren't any other people there, and we got the impression nothing much happened there. Consider holding some events there, such as daytime concerts and performances, culinary events, art shows. Utilize these beautiful gardens, and give people a reason to visit them.

We saw Stanfield's factory (top right). We understand there's a factory outlet store, but we didn't notice signs at the factory. We did visit their store in downtown Truro, though.

We had a little brochure for Cobequid Trail segway tours. It was supposed to be in Bible Hill. We looked everywhere for signs to the Cobequid Trail, but we never could find it, and no one that we asked knew about it.

We really wanted to check out the segway tours, so we entered the address on the brochure for the segway rental center into our navigation system (bottom left). It took us to this residence (bottom right). We later learned that the owner used to have a storefront in Truro, and now he brings the segways into Truro for prearranged tours. We never did find out about the Cobequid Trail. That was kind of a wild goose chase.

70 A top priority: A county-wide wayfinding system



One of your top priorities should be to design and implement a wayfinding system. A wayfinding system includes:

- Gateways and entries into Innisfail
- Attractions and activities
- Amenities (parking, washrooms)
- Trail markers and access points
- Visitor information kiosks
- Pedestrian wayfinding in your downtown

Wayfinding signs should have no more than five items on a sign. They should always be decorative and work with the community's brand.

Always make signage easy to read and avoid condensed text or script lettering. While wayfinding signage should be easy to read and follow, it should also be decorative, as these examples are from Modesto, CA (top right) and the Woodlands, TX (bottom left).

We urge you to watch our online video (bottom right), which has a wealth of information about developing great wayfinding systems.

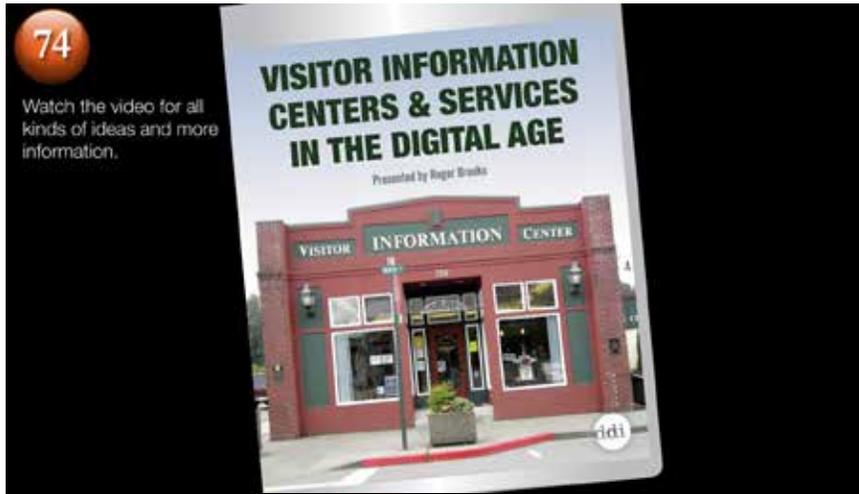


Include your trails in your wayfinding system, including the trails at Victoria Park. When you make it easy for people to find and to know what to expect, they'll come, use your trails, shop in your stores, and dine in your restaurants. Good wayfinding will increase your sales and services (an average of 18%), and help residents and visitors know what you have to offer and how to find it, making for a more enjoyable experience.

Work with the province, counties, and every town in the area with a task force. Apply, collectively, for federal transportation grants. Develop a pro-rata share

for design and implementation.

Visitor information kiosks should be part of your wayfinding system. They should include brochure distribution. This kiosk in Kentucky (bottom left) is designed to complement the surrounding architecture. It has maps and a weather-proof brochure holder, designed to hold numerous brochures (bottom right). Businesses that distribute their brochures here each pay between \$3 and \$5 per month, and those funds help pay for upkeep, to keep it stocked, and to help pay for building more kiosks.



74

Watch the video for all kinds of ideas and more information.



This makes a strong statement (a good one) about Truro.



75

This should be greatly simplified: Downtown, Left Lane.

Be sure to watch our online video about visitor information and visitor centers (top left).

We've driven into Truro several times in the past, always taking the second Truro exit, where we've either gotten gas or fast food. When people take that exit, there are no signs telling them that this stretch of roadway isn't downtown Truro. If you continue driving, you don't see a sign for downtown for several kilometres. And then, the sign directs people two different ways. It's confusing.

Suggestion: After taking the second exit from the highway, place a sign that tells people: Downtown Truro ahead 5 kilometres (or however many). Don't direct people two different ways - just give them one direction.

The Wilson Aquatic and Rath Eastlink Community Centre (bottom left) look fantastic. Driving past that (from the first Truro highway exit) gives a great first impression of the city.

This sign (bottom right) is difficult to read. Simplify it. Make sure "Downtown Truro" is prominent.



76 This is a great sign. Move it to where people can pull over.



77 Redevelop the signage in Truro. It's very hodge-podge & a mess.



78 Add 24/7 visitor information!

This is a very nicely done directory of auxiliary organizations in Truro (top left). The only problem is that drivers can't read them in this location, and there's no place to stop and get out of the car. We suggest moving this directory next to the Visitor Information Centre, where people have easier access.

The wayfinding system throughout Truro needs to be redeveloped. Of course, right now it's election season, so there are a lot more signs than normal, but most of the wayfinding is hodge-podge at best. Take a look at the signs top right. There are some spread up the light pole and some in a separate location. They are difficult to read and confusing to follow.

The Truro Welcome Centre (bottom left and right) looks very nice, and the staff is very helpful. They weren't allowed to suggest a good place for lunch, though, and that is not helpful for visitors. One way to get around that is to ask visitors more questions: What type of food do you like? Are you looking for fast-food or sit-down? Do you like seafood? Doing this, the representative can narrow the choices and make a suggestion that makes sense, without playing favorites.

Be sure to include outdoor 24/7 visitor information - this kiosk (bottom right) is an ideal location.

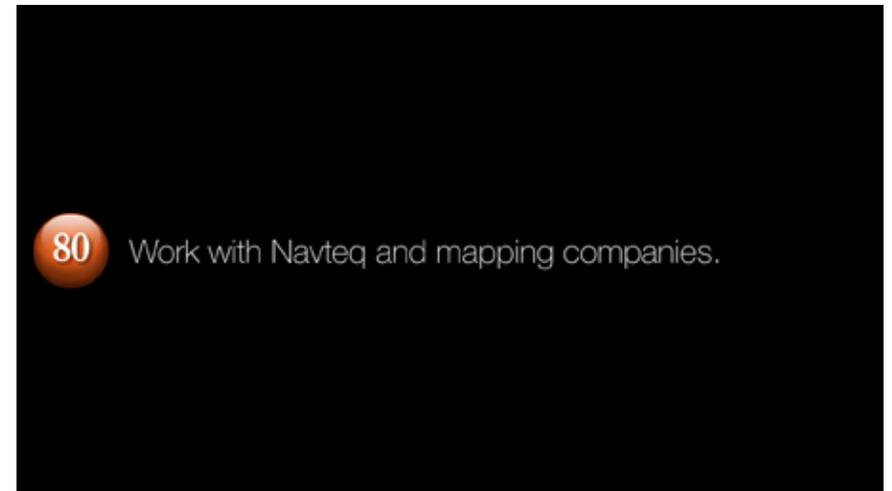


79 Get into the photo op and social media game. Up your game!

At the North Platte, Nebraska visitor information center, they added a simple weather-proof brochure holder (top right and left) to provide access to information around the clock. Consider something like this.

Make your photo opportunity spots social-media friendly (bottom left). Provide free wifi, and post signs to encourage visitors to take their photos there and post them to Facebook, Pinterest, Flickr, Tumblr, etc.

25% of people now use navigation systems on their smart phones, built into



their cars, or on tablets. Navigation systems are great, but they rarely show all your attractions, shops and restaurants. You usually have to know what you're looking for first.

Work with the mapping companies that provide the information for navigation systems: Tom Tom, Garmin, Magellan. Get volunteers with various units to test locations: lodging, restaurants, shops, attractions, etc. Then work with the mapping companies to make additions and corrections.



Cool! Two Victoria Parks! This one is a sports centre.



81 Anything ever happen here? Add a readerboard! Invite us back!



When we used our navigation system to try to find Victoria Park in Truro, the closest Victoria Park in the system was in Halifax (top left). You can work with mapping companies to add Victoria Park, other attractions, restaurants, shops, lodging, and more. Work with their “map reporter” features.

We did find Victoria Park (top right), but we knew this couldn’t be the whole thing. We weren’t sure where the rest of it was, so we turned the corner and continued on down the road. Then we found the Victoria Park sports area (bottom left). We kept going and found the rest of the park (bottom right). Part

of a new wayfinding system should include signage directing visitors to the park, and to all the different areas within the park.

We wondered if any performances ever took place at this nice covered stage. There was no information. If so, post a readerboard listing upcoming events. Invite us back!



82

Great opportunity for a Visitor Information Centre. Add brochures!



83

A trail map and signage would be great. Waterfalls?

The very best of Truro & South

- Masstown Market (ok, North for this one)
- Glooscap Heritage Centre & Mi'kmaw Museum
- Mastodon Ridge
- Village Bakery in Shubenacadie
- Nova Scotia Wildlife Park & Wetland Centre
- Victoria Park in Truro

Downtown Truro

Add visitor information and brochure distribution here (top left). We saw the map, which is great, but it would be good to have brochures of the park, as well as other brochures to cross-sell attractions in the area, available too.

We wanted to see one of the waterfalls that are described in the park brochure, and we thought we could drive to it. We learned later that although the map shows "roads," they are in actuality pedestrian-only trails. The park brochure is excellent, but it would be good to point that out.

Victoria Park is spectacular. We wished we had more time so that we could hike on some of the trails and enjoy it more! It should definitely be included as one of the "Best Of's."



We saw the Little White Schoolhouse Museum (top left), and it looks great. There was a graduation going on there, so we couldn't go in. Parking was difficult, as well, because 50% of the parking spaces nearby were handicapped spaces only.

We saw the Museum and Archives (bottom left), and it looked very nice. There was information about their open hours, and the building and landscaping are beautiful.

We really enjoyed exploring downtown Truro. Downtowns are becoming more

important than ever.

### Seven Facts about Downtowns

#1 - Downtowns translate to visitor spending. The #1 Activity of visitors is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly, intimate setting. Downtowns. This is where 80% of all non-lodging visitor spending takes place. That's why Disney has built Downtown Disney outside each of its parks (bottom right).



#2 - Tourism IS economic development. Tourism is the front door to your non-tourism economic development efforts. Your downtown is the litmus test for the economic health of your community. Downtown organizations and tourism should be joined at the hip (top left).

#3 - Downtowns are critical to your success. The heart and soul of any community, besides its people, is its downtown. If your residents don't hang out in your downtown, neither will visitors. You need to provide activities and entertainment downtown to give your residents a reason to spend time there

(top right). Bring downtown to life.

#4 - Downtowns are back! Here's why:

This is becoming the age of Third Places. Our First Place is where we live - our home (bottom left). Our Second Place is where we work (bottom right).



Our Third Place is the place we go to “hang out.” Where we like to spend leisure time, enjoying the company of our friends and family, where we go to relax (top left).

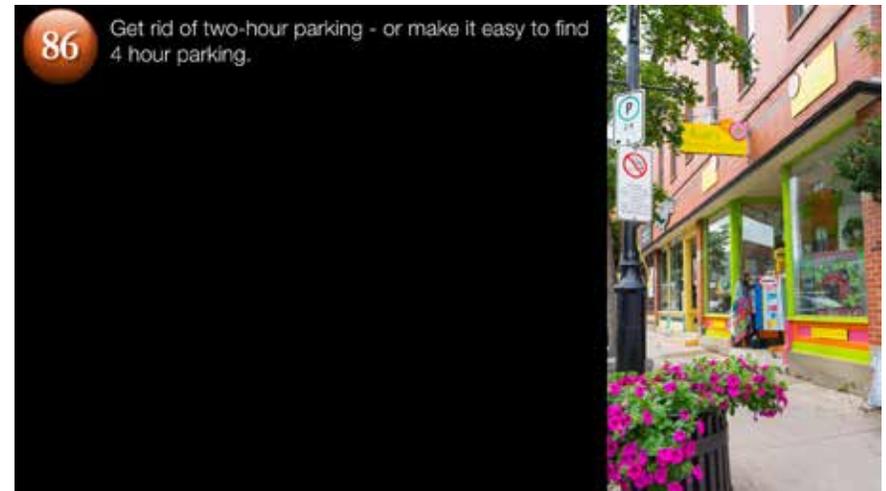
Starbucks built a whole brand - a whole culture - around becoming a Third Place (top right).

#5 - The future of downtowns is to be the place we go after work and on weekends. The future of downtowns is to become our Third Place. That was what was disappointing about Inglis Place - it pretty much shut down at 5:00.

We are moving to the European standard - dining and shopping later in the evening hours. We want to be able to gather with our friends in an attractive setting where there are things to do (bottom left). In Europe, most towns are centered around plazas (bottom right), where people gather to spend time, talk, eat, shop, be entertained, relax, and laugh together.

## Nova Scotia's great towns & downtowns

- Argyle Street in Halifax
- Halifax waterfront
- Mahone Bay
- Lunenburg
- Hall's Harbour
- Annapolis Royal
- Bear River
- Guysborough
- Baddeck
- Wolfville
- Up and coming:
- Chester
- LaHave
- Kentville
- Great potential
- Truro
- Pictou
- Tatamagouche



#6 - In economic development, tourism, and community development, there is absolutely nothing that's more important than your downtown.

#7 - The business mix rules. One of the biggest mistakes we've seen towns make is thinking that simply making the streetscapes attractive will revitalize their downtown. While attractive streetscapes are important, they are only half of the answer. It's what's IN the buildings that attracts people. Your downtown needs to have the right business mix.

It's hard to spot these signs (top right). Make them about four times larger.

Two-hour parking can kill a downtown. But if you have four-hour or all-day parking available, be sure to point it out, and make the signage clear.

We weren't sure if the Free Parking (bottom left) was for all-day or just two hours. Make it clear.



Define your downtown core. Give it a name - that will make it “feel” more like a destination in people’s minds. We figured that Truro’s downtown core was most likely this part of Prince Street and Inglis Place (bottom left). Giving downtown a name makes it a destination rather than just a geographical designation. Many cities and towns are giving their downtowns, public plazas or squares, or special districts, names that add an attractive ambiance, and make people more likely to want to visit, such as the Pearl District in Portland, Oregon, or Pioneer Square in Seattle, Washington. Using the name on highway

and wayfinding signage helps lure people into downtown. Use the name on decorative pole banners to give people a sense of arrival.

Add gateways to your downtown core. Gateways can help to further define the downtown. They help merchants feel more unified, becoming more likely to work together on marketing and beautification.

We had lunch one day at the Nook & Cranny (bottom right). It was great, and so much fun to dine outside in the sunshine.



We were thrilled to see several restaurants offering outdoor dining (top left). That is one very good way of bringing downtown to life.

The Marigold Cultural Centre (top right) looks great. Invite people back by putting up a readerboard with upcoming events.

We saw the sign telling about the upcoming library replacement (bottom left), which is great.

The existing library looks pretty sad (bottom right). Since it is being replaced,

this may not apply to this building, but keep this in mind for other buildings. Trompe l'oeil murals can turn a plain building into a masterpiece. Architectural murals can help make newer, plain walls fit in with historical buildings.



Trompe l'oeil murals are architectural or scenic murals that “fool the eye” - appearing real. One example is the photo top left. This blank wall was painted to appear as an old-fashioned grocers. The windows, doors, soda machine - even some of the plants - are all painted to create the illusion of a real grocery store.

An example of a mural in progress (top right). First, the blank wall (small upper left), then in progress (small lower left), finally, the stunning finish.

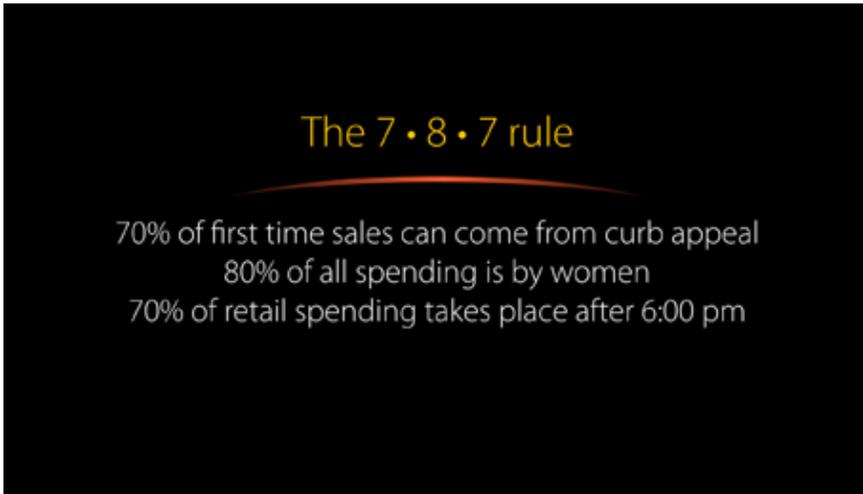
Trompe l'oeil can also be used indoors. This brew pub (bottom left) had a long, boring expanse of blank wall. The artist painted images of hallways branching off, and the results are spectacular (bottom right). People have even tried to walk down the painted hall.



This wall in Winslow, Arizona (top left) is actually just a simple wall. The building is no longer even there - just the one wall remains. It's mural illustrates the famous Eagles' song about standing on a corner in Winslow, Arizona. Everything you see on the wall is painted on - the windows, the reflection of the red truck, the eagle in the upstairs window. People will drive miles to Winslow just to have their picture taken in front of this mural.

This trompe l'oeil example, done on a plain building in Huntsville, TX (top right), provides the same type of architectural detail that appears on most of the town's historic buildings. All the building details are painted on.

This pastry shop (bottom left) would look so much more inviting if it had a couple tables with chairs, an umbrella, some pots with flowers, possibly a bench outside. Dress it up! We heard that this restaurant (bottom right) serves great food, but it doesn't look inviting. Add pots, benches, some beautification.



Curb appeal can account for 70% of first time sales. It's so important!

Notice all the men sitting on benches outside the shops (top right) in this photo? Think benches. Downtown Truro should have about one hundred benches. They should be at the building facades, facing out, and be flanked by pots of flowers or shrubs.

This example shows a furniture store that has set up a display outside (bottom left). Doesn't that make you want to take a closer look? And the bicycles on

display outside encourage people to slow down and check them out.

This sign, placed in a decorative cart, makes you want to check out the shop (bottom right). It gives a great impression.



91 Consider a BIA that could take on some of this.

We saw too much of this in downtown Truro (all photos this page). There are weed and debris in the paving and against the buildings. This should be cleaned up and maintained. This makes the city look gritty.

Merchants need to work together with the city to keep the sidewalks in front of their shops looking good. In Europe, you often see the merchants outside sweeping off their sidewalks before opening their stores. After all, the sidewalks in front of the stores give customers their first impression of the store. It's in the merchant's best interest to keep it looking good.



We went into the Emporium (top left), and it was a great shop. It should be included as one of Truro's "Best Of's."

Curb appeal - beautification - is critical for a successful downtown.

The Emporium does have some hanging baskets, which look very nice, but they need to do more to improve curb appeal. Perhaps pressure-washing the bricks, and a bit of touch-up paint, as well as benches and planters (bottom left).



We saw Thrown Together Pottery & Art (top left), and it was a very fun shop. It should be one of the “Best Of’s.”

We went back to Inglis Place during the day (bottom right), and it was full of shoppers and people eating lunch - it was vibrant and fun. It looks great. Now just work on having it be vibrant during the evening hours.



This plaza is nice (top left), but there's nothing going on and no people spend any time there. Clean it up, add some pots of flowers and some benches or tables and chairs. Add some activity.

We suggest you watch our online video, "How to bring your downtown to life." It gives tips on street musicians and entertainers, outdoor dining, and other activities that can help your downtown become a destination.

This empty lot (bottom left) is a good opportunity for building a plaza. A plaza

is much more usable than a green space. You can place outdoor furnishings there, have a fountain, have some entertainment, even a few vendor carts or a food truck.

An alley like this (bottom right) is another opportunity. In Europe, many alleys like this actually hold a narrow row of tables and chairs for outdoor dining. There could be murals and beautification. In Rapid City, SD, they've allowed graffiti artists to cover the walls with their art, and it has become a visitor attraction.



This lot is another opportunity for a public gathering space (top left). Be sure to watch our online video about the power of public plazas. It gives a wealth of information and ideas.

It's important to get people to come downtown and spend time there on a consistent basis - 250+ days a year. After people are coming downtown, then businesses will be motivated to move downtown too - their chances of success are much greater.

How to get people downtown? Provide them with things to do. One of the best ways is with a programmed public plaza. It needs to be programmed to be successful - with activities, events, dining, shopping, and more. If you have a flush-mounted fountain, it's a great place for kids to play in the summer. You can convert it to an ice rink in the winter, and you've got more activities.

We spent some time in Halifax and took some photos showing ideas to help bring activity and life to downtown. These cargo containers (bottom left and right) are fantastic for being portable kitchens or storing segways for tours.



This container holds bikes for rent (top left). What fun! People want activities.

Consider some rows of bright chairs (top right). Isn't this cool?

Can you tell what's in any of these buildings? (bottom left and right)

When visitors drive (or walk) through downtown, signs that are placed flat against the building are almost impossible to read. Perpendicular (blade) signs take care of that problem.

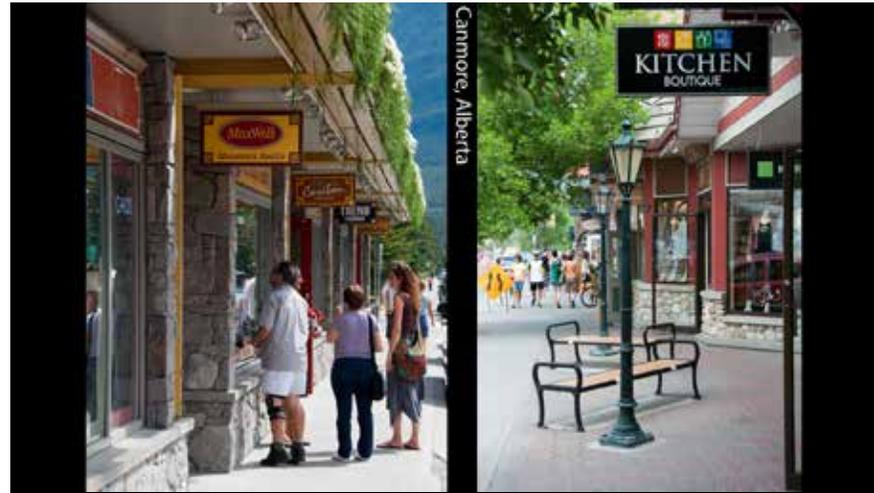
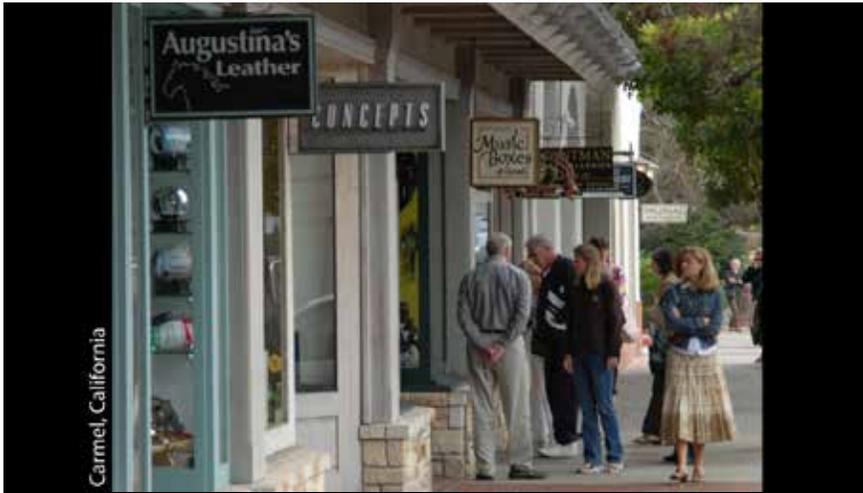


When people have to walk out into the street to read the signs way up high on the buildings (top left), they can miss a lot. Blade signs tell people what is in the shops further down the street, and this gives them a reason to keep going.

effective blade signs. Nantucket, Massachusetts (bottom right) also uses very good blade signs.

One of the ingredients of a healthy downtown is that shops use blade signs. The right kind of signage can make or break a retail shop or restaurant. How will potential customers know what you're offering unless you tell them?

These signs in Leavenworth, WA (bottom left) are excellent examples of



These signs in Carmel, California (top left), are very attractive and easy to read. Most successful downtowns have blade signs.

Downtown retail signs should follow these guidelines:

- Lettering should be one inch tall for every twelve feet of viewing distance.
- Script lettering should always be avoided.
- The signage should be decorative to enhance the ambiance of the city. Real signs, no billboards or painted plywood signs.
- Retailers and attractions should promote the primary lure first, then the

business name.

- Blade signs should be a consistent height and size.
- Keep verbiage to four words - no more than six words.

These blade signs are in downtown Canmore, Alberta (top right).

This shop does a good job with beautification (bottom right), but there should be two chairs at the table.



The very best of Truro & South

Masstown Market (ok, North for this one)  
 Glooscap Heritage Centre & Mi'kmaw Museum  
 Mastodon Ridge  
 Village Bakery in Shubenacadie  
 Nova Scotia Wildlife Park & Wetland Centre  
 Victoria Park in Truro  
 Nova Scotian Emporium & Fireside Tea Room  
 Thrown Together Pottery & Art  
 Bistro 22

98 You need to orchestrate the "critical mass"

This is an excellent display (top left). The shop is using their merchandise to present a very attractive outdoor display.

We had a good time on Inglis (top right). You can see we spent quite a bit of money!

Bistro 22 was a great place to have lunch. It should be included in your "Best Of" brochure.

Downtown businesses are much more successful if they follow the Rule of

Critical Mass: the 10+10+10 Rule.

This would include a MINIMUM, in three lineal blocks:

- TEN places that sell food: soda fountain, coffee shop, bistro, cafe, fine dining, family restaurant, wine store, deli, bakery, confectionary.
- TEN destination retail shops: galleries, antiques, home accents, outfitters, collectibles, books, kitchen supplies, garden.
- TEN places open after 6:00 pm: entertainment, theater, performing arts, bars and bistros, specialty shops, dining, open air markets, etc.



Consider how antique malls do more business when they are grouped together than when they are separate (top left). How food courts are successful because they give people so many options all close together (top right).

Argyle Street in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is a great example of how like-businesses clustered together can make a great attraction. Argyle Street is up a steep hill from the waterfront in Halifax. The waterfront is a great location to spend time - lots of shops and restaurants along a fun wharf full of entertainment.

One owner of a restaurant on Argyle Street saw the potential of attracting more business if there were more restaurants along his street, so he started recruiting them. He also approached the city with the idea of getting rid of the parking spaces along the street so that the restaurants could create outdoor dining on the sidewalks. The city agreed, and gradually, more and more restaurants opened (bottom left and right).



Now Argyle Street is always busy - there are 21 restaurants in 2-1/2 blocks, and they are packed. People are willing to walk up the hill because there are so many restaurants to choose from, and the whole street is vibrant with activity and entertainment. The restaurants have even started spreading down the side streets (top left). Sometimes you have to orchestrate the effort to achieve critical mass. Start by working with the property owners.

There's a difference between an outdoor display and a garage-sale look (top right). Don't pile merchandise on a table - that's not attractive. If you wouldn't

consider it a window display, don't put it outside either. Here are some good examples of outdoor merchandise displays in Canmore, AB (bottom left).

We made sure to visit the Truro Farmers' Market when it was in operation (bottom right). It was great. We spent a lot of money here too.



We loved that there was farm-fresh produce as well as prepared foods and other locally made arts and crafts. Public markets like these are a great visitor attraction. In fact, the Pike Place Market in Seattle, Washington is that state's biggest tourism draw. It is open seven days a week, all year long.

Consider operating your market year-round. Watch our online video about the power of public markets.

The fastest growing trend in travel is now multi-generational travel. Be sure to watch the video about that, too. More and more grandparents are traveling with their kids and grandkids, and they are looking for fun family activities.

Truro and area has a lot of great family activities - consider focusing on appealing to that market to bring in more visitors to your terrific destination.



We enjoyed visiting Truro and the surrounding area. Some of the signs we spotted show what a great sense of humor Nova Scotians have!

“Cold beer this way. Just kidding! We sell furniture, home decor & kitchen.” - Gets our attention with a smile!

“Skinny people are easier to kidnap! Stay safe. We have pie!” - Love it!

You have a beautiful destination.



Here are some of the wonderful sights we saw -

Avondale Sky Winery (top left)

Lots and lots of beautiful peacocks at the Wildlife Park (top right)

Outstanding churches in Truro (bottom left and right). They reminded us so much of Scotland.



102 Make a list of these, hand them out, discuss them, turn some to recommendations, and implement them!

*"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.  
The second best time is today."*

Here's to the extraordinarily bright future of Truro and your incredible neighboring communities!

For tips, tricks & ideas, sign up for the Monday Morning Marketing Memo  
[bit.ly/rogerweekly](http://bit.ly/rogerweekly)

Thank you for allowing us the privilege of assessing your beautiful area!

## Truro and Area Marketing Assessment

### Website: [www.fundyfun.com](http://www.fundyfun.com)

- This website places a good emphasis on the experiences in the area, not just the location. The information about the tides on the front page is interesting (beginning to answer the question – what makes this place unique and worth a special trip), and it leads right into what you can experience there. Good start.
- The Explore the Bay section has high copy to photo ratio – there are a lot of words and not enough photos. The information is interesting, but it could be beneficial to find ways to break up the text a bit and do more “showing” (with photos).
- White text on a dark background is very difficult to read for some people.
- Some of the pages are quite long and might work better if they were broken up into multiple pages – for example, the whale watching page has a long section at the bottom with information about the various whale species. Interesting info if a person is already interested in visiting, but people tend not to scroll down very far, and large blocks of text encourage people to click away.
- In the What To See and Do section, I'd suggest changing the sidebar menu on the left to “What To” instead of “What To See” – doing is more experiential than simply seeing.
- A few ideas of things to add to the website:
  - o Itineraries. Create itineraries for different types of vacations, such as, “An Adventure Weekend,” or “Family Fun.” There should be a variety of themes as well as time frames and they should include a full day of activities and food choices.
  - o Seasonal information: a section allowing people to pick their season might be helpful, so people can see what there is to do at various times of the year

### Website: [www.fundyshore.com](http://www.fundyshore.com)

- This seems to be a portion of the province’s website, and it is excellent. The focus is on the activities, and it really makes me want to visit.

### Website: [www.truro.ca](http://www.truro.ca)

- This website is the municipal website, so it has information for businesses, residents, and visitors as well. It doesn’t have a lot of visitor information, and it provides a link to the province’s tourism site.
- Consider adding more to the website for visitors. You could offer information on activities in the area, especially tidal bore rafting. You could also promote downtown Truro for its shopping and dining. Use professional photography, and always include people having a fun time.

### Bay of Fundy and Annapolis Valley Visitor and Activity Guide

- It is always good to keep in mind the audience and intended use for a piece. People generally use the internet for advance planning, but printed pieces are preferred when visitors are in the community.
- The Visitor Guide is well done with a lot of good information.
- The size makes it easy to carry/use while in the community.
- One thing to consider would be going to an Activities Guide format that does not utilize ads, but a public/private partnership with advertorial style participation. Ads tend to clutter and make a piece less readable, although the ratio of ads to info in this Visitor Guide is quite good.
- I love the “Top 5” format.
- I also love that “Locals Picks” are included – that’s a great way to showcase the hidden gems or special places in each community.

- Overall, this booklet is easy to use, full of good information and seems to be quite useful to those who are making their way around the region.

### **Downtown Truro Visitors Guide**

- In general, this piece is very copy heavy for the small number of pages. The text is quite small and I'm not sure how necessary much of it really is.
- Again, the primary purpose of a printed Visitor Guide is to give visitors easy access to information while they are in the area. People like to have a brochure or booklet to refer to as they go about their visit.
- Smaller blocks of text, broken up with subheads and bullet points, would be more readable, and therefore more likely to be read.
- Seven pages of the booklet are devoted to a list of businesses. Marketing with lists doesn't work. In this case, it is hard to read with very little to draw the eye. If people aren't reading it, it is just wasted space.
- Instead of listing everything, consider focusing on the "best ofs" for downtown Truro. You don't have to showcase every single business for all businesses to benefit. Highlighting the "best ofs" allows you to showcase what makes downtown Truro worth a special trip, provide useful and interesting information that will make visitors want to come and spend money, and other businesses will benefit from the increased traffic to the town as a whole.
- Many of the pages have several small photos. Consider showcasing one photo per page instead of trying to cram in a lot of small ones. This will declutter the piece as well as giving you the opportunity to highlight the more impactful images. More is not always better.

### **We suggest adding these marketing pieces to your repertoire:**

"Best Of" Guides for Truro Area and South, and for the "Avondale Shore" (or whatever name you choose for the Highway 215 drive.)

What do you have in the Truro area that I can't get anywhere else? Your "anchor tenants" are your very best businesses or attractions that people would go out of

their way specifically to visit. You need to promote them in "Best Of Guides."

Use fairly strict criteria to select which businesses will be included. These brochures can be a public/private partnership, with the invited participants contributing the cost for their panel. Include the best shops, best restaurants, and best activities for each town, and each "best" would have a full panel. They should not look like ads, though. They should be in an advertorial format, with some great photography and very specific text to let visitors know why this is one of the best.

Don't include lodging facilities in these brochures, because we want lodging facilities to hand them out. They should be available at all visitor information centers and kiosks, as well as at lodging facilities, retail shops and restaurants throughout the county.

With some flexibility, the criteria should include:

- Must be highly regarded (80%+ positive peer reviews, regional publications)
- Must have good curb appeal
- Must be open year round (with some exceptions)
- Must be open until at least 6:00 pm and be open six days a week
- Must be unique to your town (no chains)

These "Best Of" Guides are very effective at increasing visitor spending – you are promoting specific attractions, shops, and restaurants, and those specifics are what can really lure visitors to Truro, the other towns, and the shore drive. They want to check out these great places. While they are there, they will also go into the other businesses, especially if they have great curb appeal. Everyone benefits.



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**ROGER BROOKS** >  
International