



Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report

Wolfville, Grand Pre, Kentville Regions, Nova Scotia



Opportunity Assessment

INTRODUCTION

In July and August of 2010, a Regional Assessment of the Wolfville/Grand Pre/Kentville area was conducted, and the findings were presented in a two-hour workshop in October. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of the 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 communities' ability to attract overnight visitors.

In performing the Regional Assessment, we looked at the communities and the area through the eyes of a first-time visitor. No prior research was facilitated, and no community representatives were contacted except to set up the project. The town and surrounding area were "secretly shopped." Any person looking to relocate their business, industry, or residence will come to your community as a visitor first. Tourism is the front door to all your economic development efforts.

How easy is it for potential visitors to find information about the communities and region? Once they find information, are the marketing materials good enough to close the sale? In the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment, we assigned two (or more) people to plan trips into the general region. They didn't know, in advance, who the assessment was for. They used whatever resources they would typically use in planning a trip: travel books, brochures, the internet, calling visitor

information centers, review of marketing materials, etc. - just as you might in planning a trip to an unfamiliar destination.

A typical community has five opportunities to close the sale:

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

We tested all of these methods by contacting area visitor information services and attractions, searching the internet for activities, requesting and reviewing printed materials, looking for articles and third-party information, and questioning regional contacts. We reviewed both commercial and organizational websites promoting the area, state tourism websites, and read travel articles and guidebooks.

The marketing assessment determined how effective the marketing was in convincing a potential visitor that the region would be worth a special trip, a stop, or an overnight stay. The key to the marketing assessment is to see if you have a primary lure that makes you worth a special trip of a two-hour drive - or from further away. The question on most visitors' minds is: What do you have that I can't get closer to home? What makes you worth a special trip?

Where most communities falter is when they merely provide "lists" of what the community

has, not whether it's truly "unique" or not. Nearly every community in North America promotes the usual list of diversions: local museums, shops and restaurants, plenty of lodging, golf, outdoor recreation, historic downtowns, scenic vistas, etc. Of course, nearly every visitor can do these things closer to home. So, what makes your community worth the trip?

Always promote your primary lure first - what makes you worth that special trip. THEN, promote your diversionary, or "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. The secret shoppers look for details, details, details. Do you give a reason for visiting, and do you provide enough information to make it easy to plan a trip? Are the marketing materials good enough to close the sale?

The second part of the assessment process is the On-site Assessment. During this part of the assessment, we spent several days in the region, looking at enticements from freeways and highways (signs, billboards, something that would get a visitor to stop), beautification and overall curb appeal, wayfinding (ease of getting around),

visitor amenities (public 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 it to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

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

Implementation of these suggestions must be a community-wide effort, involving both privately owned businesses as well as local, county, and state agencies, where appropriate. Every local



organization plays a role in tourism, downtown revitalization, or economic development efforts. A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO, CVB, Chamber, TPA, etc.) will not be successful if the tourism effort is not community-wide.

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

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

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

SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TRANSLATES TO CASH

Tourism is successful when the community imports more cash than it exports. When residents spend their hard-earned money outside the community, the community is exporting cash - often referred to as "leakage." Tourism helps fill that gap, importing cash into the local economy without the necessity of having to provide extended social and other services. Visitors come, spend money, then go home. When you import more cash than you export, you have a positive "balance of trade." Communities with successful tourism programs easily see that the industry subsidizes the community, whereas other communities find that they subsidize visitors - providing services visitors use without them leaving enough money behind to cover the cost of those services.

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



To entice visitors to spend money in your community, you need to have places for them to spend it – you need to have the right mix of shops, restaurants, entertainment, and lodging facilities, all in an attractive setting, as well as attractions that make them want to visit you in the first place.

THE THREE TYPES OF TOURISM

1. Visiting friends and family

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

2. Business travel

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

3. Leisure travel

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

The average leisure visitor is active 14 hours a day, yet typically only spends four to six hours with the primary lure. They then spend eight to ten hours with diversionary activities - things they could do closer to home, but will do while in the area. A good example of this is Branson, Missouri, the “live music-theater capital of the world.” This town





of 6,500 residents hosts 7.5 million visitors a year. The primary “lure” is the 49 music theaters. The average visitor attends two shows a day over about four hours. During the other hours of the day, the visitor will shop in local outlet malls, head to the water parks, theme parks, and other attractions, play a round of golf, hike, bike, fish, do some bird watching, and participate in any number of other activities they could do closer to home, but will do while visiting Branson.

THE THREE STAGES OF TOURISM

1. Status quo

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

2. Getting people to stop

The first priority of developing a successful tourism industry is getting people to stop. Imagine how successful businesses in the community would be if just 50% of the vehicles traveling through pulled off the highway and spent just 30 minutes in your community – buying gas, an ice cream cone, a sandwich, a gift or souvenir?

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

3. Becoming the destination

To become a destination community you must have attractions and supporting amenities that convince

visitors to spend the night. And those attractions must be different from what the visitor can get closer to home.

Overnight visitors spend three times that of day visitors, and nearly ten times that of visitors using your community as a pit stop on the way to somewhere else.

THE FOUR-TIMES RULE

Visitors will make a point of stopping or staying in a community if it has enough activities that appeal specifically to them and will keep them busy four times longer than it took them to get there.

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

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

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

SELL THE EXPERIENCE, NOT GEOGRAPHY

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

Always sell the activity - the experience - THEN the location.

LURES, DIVERSIONS AND AMBIANCE

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

Always promote your primary lure, then the diversions. Do not try to be all things to all people. Have you ever gone anywhere because they had "something for everyone?" Of course not - you go there because they have something specific for you. Find your niche and promote it like crazy.

Historic downtowns provide ambiance - they are not attractions, diversions, nor are they a primary lure. It's what's in the buildings that makes a downtown a destination.

The same can be said for scenery. Unless your vista is a world-class scene, such as Niagara Falls or

the Grand Canyon, scenic vistas create wonderful ambiance, but don't translate to spending, and they only last a few minutes. Then what?

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

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

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

BE DIFFERENT OR THE BEST

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

If you are different, then you have a reason for travelers to choose to visit you. If you are the best,





then visitors will generally flock to your doors.

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

Ashland, Oregon, previously a depressed timber town, began its Shakespeare Festival, which now runs nine months of the year and draws hundreds of thousands of visitors who spend an average of six nights in the community. The Shakespeare Festival made Ashland different from any other community.

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

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

Okanogan Country. The third-party endorsements show that they are the best.

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

CRITICAL MASS MEANS CASH

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

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

The general rule of thumb in those two or three blocks (not spread out all over town) is 10+10+10: Ten destination retail shops, which includes galleries, antiques, collectibles, home accents and furnishings, artists in action, book stores, logo gear (clothing), souvenirs, outfitters, tour operators, activity shops such as kites, jewelry, wine or tobacco shops, and other specialties. The second ten is for food: ice cream, fudge and candy stores, soda fountains, sit-down dining, coffee shops, cafes, bistros, delis, etc. And the final ten are businesses open after 6:00 pm. This includes entertainment: bars, dance clubs, theaters (movies and performing), retail shops with activities (piano bar in a wine shop), etc.

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

TOURISM IS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

The goal of successful tourism is for people to come into the community, spend money, and go home. Tourism is nearly a \$650 billion dollar industry in the U.S., nearly \$75 billion in Canada, and supports millions of jobs. Ninety percent of tourism industry businesses are small businesses of which 90% have less than 15 employees. Tourism provides the opportunity for entrepreneurs to get started, for small family-run businesses to thrive, for artisans and craftspeople to find a market, and creates a basis for unique niche-retail environment including wineries, artists, crafts, etc. Tourism provides a diverse market within the community, expanding its potential. Enhancing the community through beautification efforts creates an attractive setting for both locals and visitors, key in revitalizing a community’s downtown. And a tourism-friendly town will attract non-tourism industries faster than others – new businesses will see the community as a visitor before they make a final determination about the community. Tourism is the front door to your economic development efforts.

The benefits of a healthy tourism industry can rejuvenate a town, foster community pride,



encourage economic diversity, and lead the way to a vital, successful community.

NEXT STEPS

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

This report offers a first step in reaching that goal. To fully realize the benefits of this assessment, the community should take these findings and suggestions, discuss them and evaluate them, and develop a plan for implementation.

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

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

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

Then comes the “development” portion of the plan or the “how to get there” program: determining what product development initiatives need to

be undertaken to reinforce and grow the brand. This also includes defining the roles of the various local organizations. Brand-building takes a village - everyone pulling in the same direction, each with its own “to do list.”

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

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

For every recommendation the following elements should be detailed:

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

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

If you move forward with the development of the Action Plan and hire outside services, always hire the most qualified team you can find (issue a request for Statement of Qualifications), then negotiate the scope of work and cost with them.

If you are not able to reach an agreement, then move to number two on your list. A good plan will provide a program to get local residents and the business community pulling together to enhance the community, building its unique image in the minds of visitors and residents alike. The result of your efforts will be a prosperous, enjoyable environment in which to live, work, and visit.





Findings & Suggestions

Talking points:

1. Tourism is an Economic Development Activity

The object is to have people come, spend money, then go home. The whole idea is to import more cash than you export.

Tourism spending in Canada reached \$75 billion in 2007. It is the country's third largest industry and the fastest growing.

Nova Scotia tourism is a \$1.82 billion industry. Are your communities receiving their share?

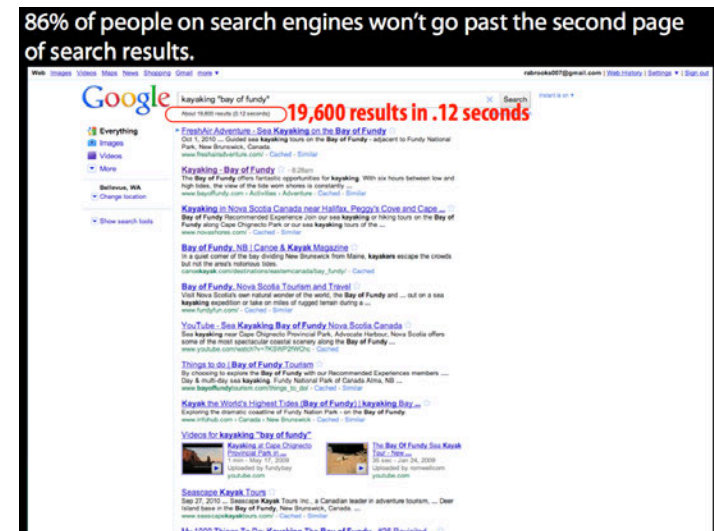
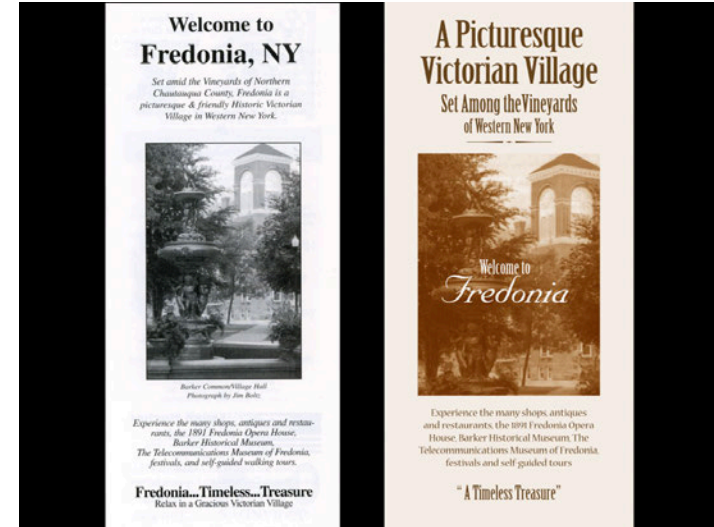
2. The Internet has changed everything!

75% of Canadian households now have internet access. 90% of all Canadians have access, if not at home, at work, school, library, etc. Of those, 94% use the internet to decide where to travel, where to live, work, establish a business.

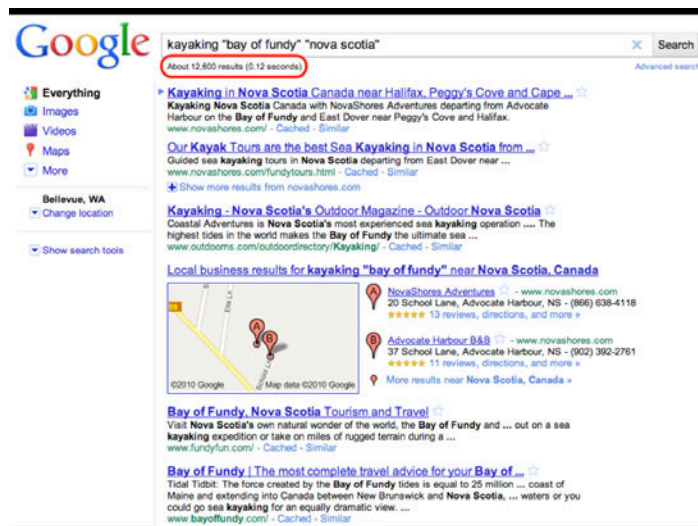
But people are frustrated because it's hard to find the results they want. They are looking for experiences - for activities, but destinations are busy marketing locations.



Visitors using search engines look for experiences before places: Kayaking, Nova Scotia. Wineries, Nova Scotia. Experiences first, general location second. If you saw a brochure (top right) for Fredonia, New York and you happened to be in the area,



would you pick it up? What about the one next to it that said "A picturesque Victorian Village set among the vineyards of Western New York." Would that pique your interest? Market the experience BEFORE the location.

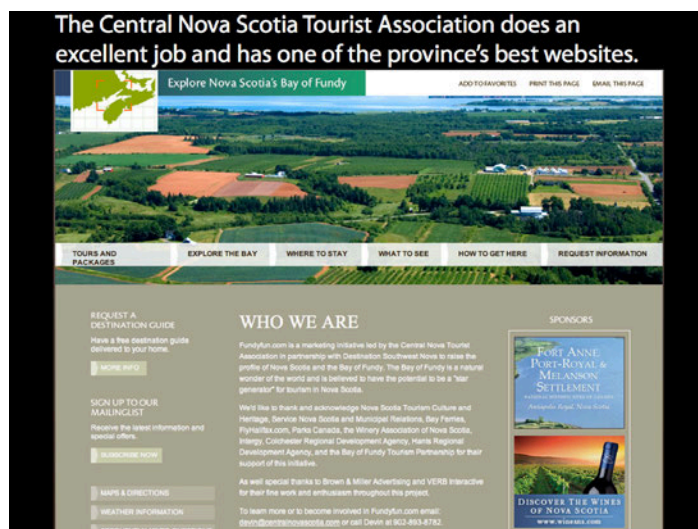


88% of community-based promotional organizations spend more on printed materials than on the web.



Location is almost always second to the "primary draw" - that one thing that puts you on the map, and makes your destination worth traveling to.

To win, you must quit marketing locations. The Annapolis Valley is a big place with many communities. Nova Scotia has many regions that have a lot to offer. So, why should a visitor choose the Wolfville/Grand Pre/Kentville area? What do you have to offer that sets you apart from everyone else?



The baby boom generation accounts for 80% of ALL travel spending.



If you want new businesses, residents, or visitors, it starts in front of a computer screen. The web should be your top marketing priority.

3. The travel demographic is changing.

The baby boom generation controls 70% of North America's wealth, and another 400,000 people are turning 50 every month. Travel is a favorite activity, even in tough economic times. Empty nesters prefer to travel during the shoulder seasons: April, May, September, October. To win you must eliminate the summer-only focus.

The “Echo Boomers,” the children of the “Baby Boomers,” are another huge travel market. They enjoy many of the same experiences as their parents: Culinary, art, ethnic events, public markets.

The number one activity of visitors in the world is shopping and dining in a pedestrian-friendly setting. They want those “third places.”

Successful “third places” attract people because, besides being beautiful spaces, they’re full of life and activity.

Things to consider:

Create “gathering spaces” downtown - places where people like to congregate because they can be comfortable in attractive surroundings, there’s a focal point and things to do.

What makes a good “Third Place”?

- Things to do after 6:00 pm
- Critical mass
- Gathering places - plaza areas
- Street vendors and musicians - activities
- An attractive setting (beautification)
- Water features

EXPERIENCES EMBRACED BY ECHO BOOMERS

- **Culinary** tourism: Visiting chefs, restaurants, education
- **Art:** Artists in action, learning new hobbies, education
- **Ethnic** events as long as they are experiential
- Public **markets** - add entertainment
- This is the age of third places.

The “First Place” is the place we live. Home.



The “Second Place” is the place we work



The “Third Place” is the place we go to hang out. Downtowns are back. Bring yours to life.



Nova Scotia towns that do a good job of creating third places include:

- Halifax
- Mahone Bay
- Lunenburg
- Baddeck
- Wolfville

Those with unrealized potential:

- Annapolis Royal
- Windsor
- Kentville
- Parrsboro
- Truro (it's hub location)
- Antigonish
- Pictou
- Chester

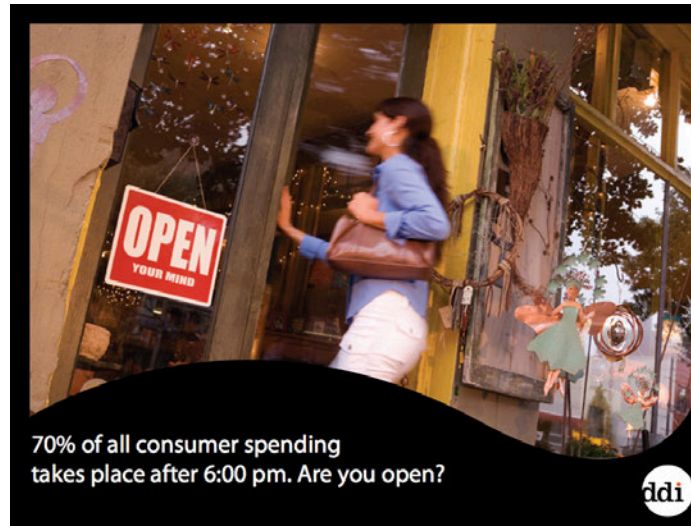
Note: We haven't been to the southern side of Cape Breton

Note: EVERY town has the potential of becoming a great "3rd place."

In this age of differentiation you must



It's a brand new game



Your downtown areas are critical partners in your tourism efforts. If locals don't spend time in your downtown, neither will visitors.

Bring your downtowns to life! Particularly during the evening hours.

Important statistic: 70% of all consumer spending takes place after 6:00 pm. Are you open?

Welcome to the era of the brand:

We are exposed to nearly 1,200 marketing messages a day. This has created a situation where we ignore everything that doesn't directly appeal to us. Competition has never been more fierce, and communities are forced to specialize in order to stand out from the crowd.

Find your niche - that one thing that sets you apart from everyone else and makes you worth a special trip.

Branding is the art of setting yourself apart from everyone else. Nearly every community in Nova Scotia is looking for that one thing that differentiates them - their niche.

The art of setting yourself apart from everyone else



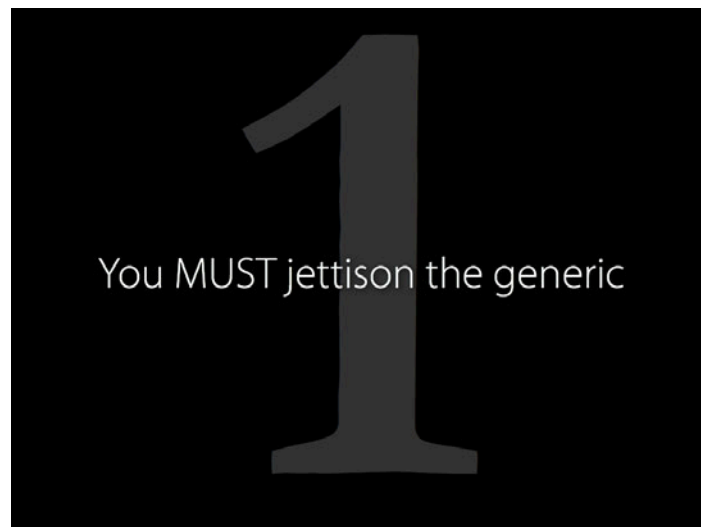
Since nearly all communities are saying the same thing, we tend to ignore community-based marketing.

The challenges:

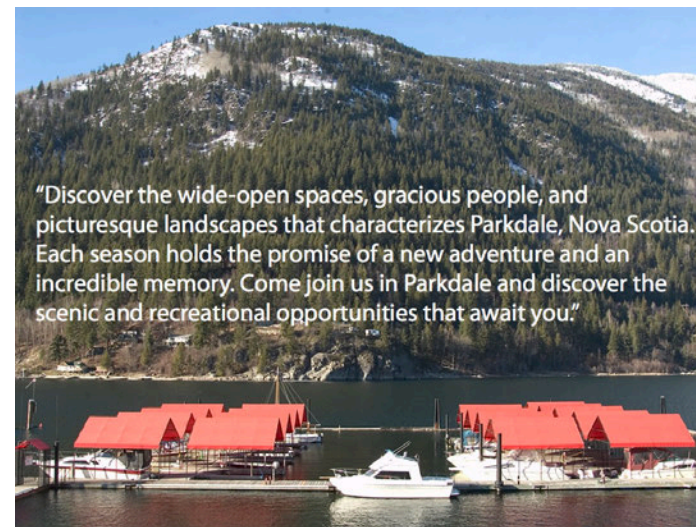
- Competition has never been more fierce.
- Communities have been forced to specialize - to be known for something specific.
- Yet most communities are still trying to appeal to everyone - "the group hug mentality" or even worse - the "membership mentality." They want to promote all their members equally, and nobody but their members. But visitors want to know what makes your community special - what do you have that I can't get or do closer to home? Membership lists don't tell visitors what is best or why they should visit.

You must JETTISON THE GENERIC! If you can insert the name of any other community into your marketing materials, and it still rings true, then toss it and start over.

Could this text (top right) apply to just about any community anywhere? If so, you just lost a



sale. If your marketing messages can fit anyone, toss them and start over. By the way, this text wasn't written for Parkdale - it was written for Nelson, British Columbia. We just swapped the names and it still rang true. Another potential sale lost.



"Discover the wide-open spaces, gracious people, and picturesque landscapes that characterizes Parkdale, Nova Scotia. Each season holds the promise of a new adventure and an incredible memory. Come join us in Parkdale and discover the scenic and recreational opportunities that await you."

Avoid these words & phrases:

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

A few Central Nova Scotia tag lines:

- Small Town, Big Heart
- Your Route to World Class Attractions
- Explore the World's Highest Tides
- Discover [name of county]
- Discover [name of community]
- Discover [name of attraction]
- Gateway to Nova Scotia
- Lot's to see and do!
- From our mining past to a greener future
- Seaspray, Sunshine & Sandcastles
- A place to relax and have some fun
- Phenomenal!
- Best kept secret
- Four Seasons Retreat
- You will find it all here!
- The hub of Nova Scotia

You **MUST**
jettison
the
generic

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

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

Promote your primary lure.

LURE: What sets you apart from everyone else and makes you worth a special trip.

Visitors are active 14 hours a day, but usually spend only 4 to 6 hours with the primary lure. The rest of the time is spent on diversionary or complementary activities, which is where 80% of visitor spending takes place. It's OK to be a diversionary or complimentary activity. You'll make the money. The top diversionary activity is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly setting. Your downtown.

Nova Scotia is filled with very strong lures (bottom left) that create excellent brands for their communities. Brands are built on product - and they are a perception in people's minds. Marketing is used to tell the world about your brand.

Strong brands in Nova Scotia

Acadian culture	Cheticamp
Artists in action, galleries	Ingonish Art Trail - Cape Breton
Cape Breton sound (music)	Cabot Trail - Baddeck
Dining & entertainment	Halifax
Farm experience	Ross Farm - New Ross
Fossils	Joggins
French culture/history	Louisbourg
Hidden Gem (art)	Bear River
Hiking	Skyline Trail, Cape Split
Kayaking	Bluenose Coast, Cape Chignecto
Lighthouses	Peggy's Cove, Cape Chignecto...
Lobster meal	Halls Harbour
Scallops	Digby
Tidal bore rafting	Hantsport (?)
Village shopping destination	Mahone Bay
Whale watching	Digby Neck - Westport
Wineries	The Wolfville/Grand Pre area
World Heritage Site	Lunenburg

Successful efforts are built on product,
not marketing

Product development is critical, and it never ends. You can never rest on your laurels.

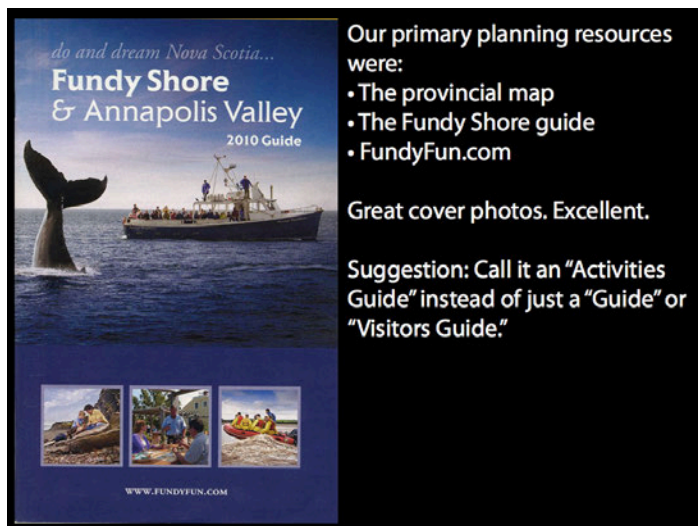
Your brand is your promise - the promise of an expected experience. You must deliver on the promise or your branding efforts will fail.

Branding only works when people in the community work together - when your key players are on the same page, pulling in the same direction.

Over the past few years, DDI has assessed many regions within Nova Scotia (bottom left, areas assessed are green). This assessment process looks at marketing effectiveness as well as the on-site experience. It is a conversation starter, and isn't meant to provide all the answers. But it is an honest look at many first impressions of the communities, and can provide starting points and ideas to consider to improve all the communities. This is not just about tourism, but tourism is the front door to your non-tourism economic development efforts.

Note the list of 60 items covered (bottom right) in a typical assessment process.





• "Top 5" approach is excellent.

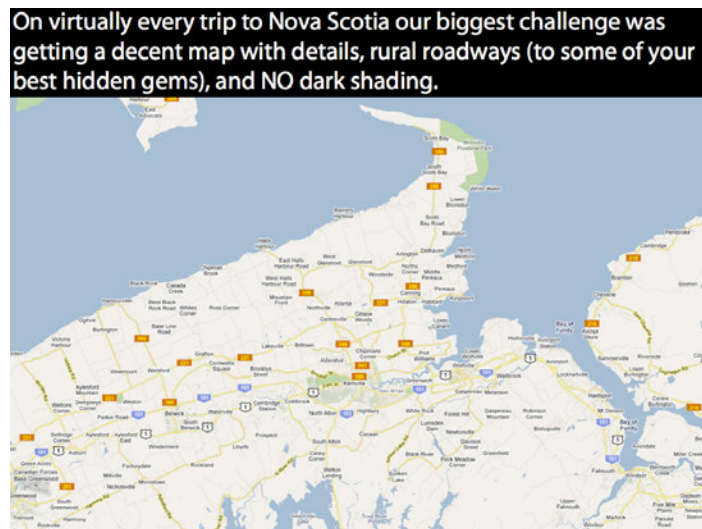
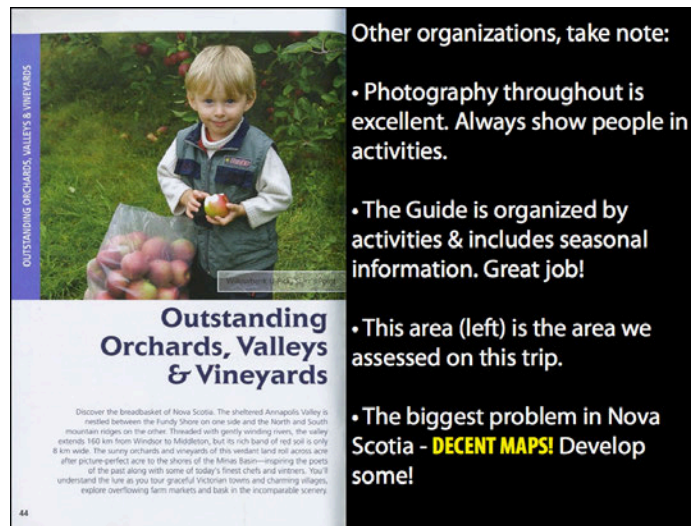
• Suggestions:

1) On photos (or in a caption) tell us where we can get more info.

2) Add open hours where possible.

3) Add info about downtown areas with photos.

4) Include one, two and three-day itineraries!



We primarily used the Fundy Shore & Annapolis Valley 2010 Guide to help us in traveling the area. We loved how it included specific highlights - not-to-be-missed activities! Very good!

Suggestion:

Develop better maps of the area. Nearly every map we've seen is too small and doesn't include the detail a traveler needs. Get a copy of the Bluenose Coast map - it's perhaps the best in the province.

Other suggestions: Include additional specific information, like operating hours, downtown information (with photos), and detailed itineraries.

The Top 5's made it very easy to see what there was to see and do in the area. In fact, we probably wouldn't have known about Halls Harbour if it hadn't been included in the guide, and visiting Halls Harbour was one of the favorite things we did! Likewise, the Blomidon Look-off surpassed our expectations.

Listing the "Top 5" is excellent. Don't be afraid to include signature retail shops and restaurants in the Top 5 list.

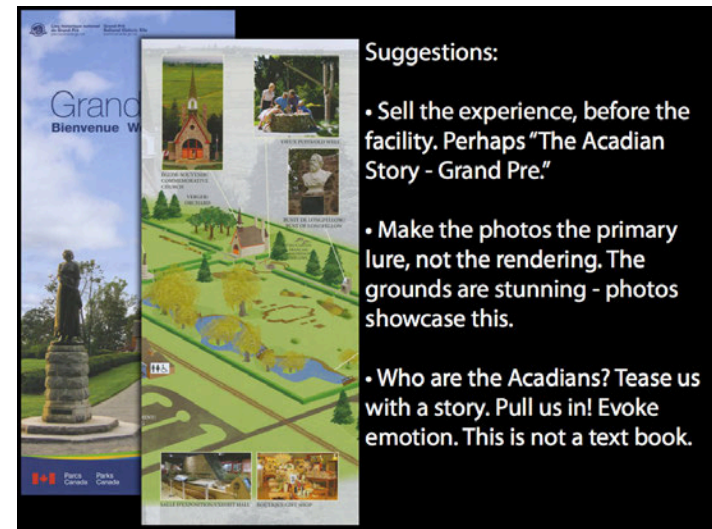
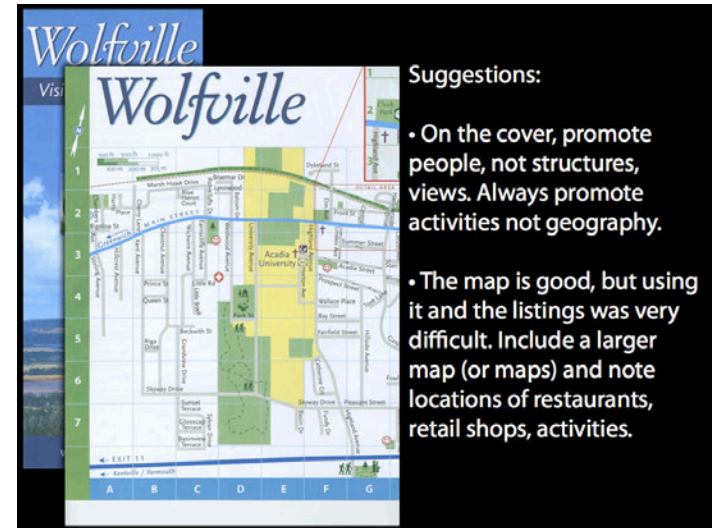
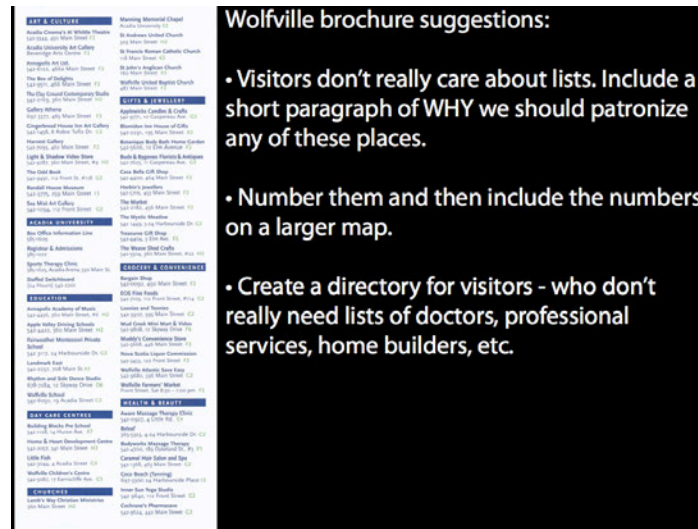
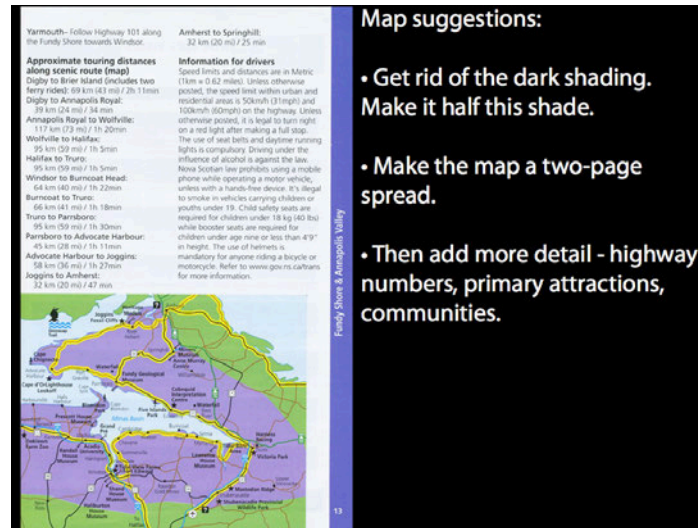
Suggestion:

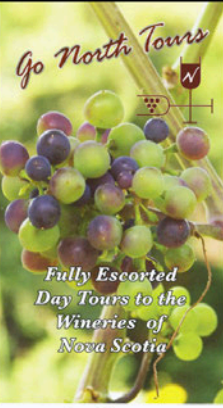
The Wolfville map (top right) was difficult to use, except for noting where streets were located. Finding a restaurant or shop from the listing was cumbersome, and we ended up putting the map away and not using it.

Visitors would be most interested in locating restaurants, shops, and lodging (usually not doctors, home builders or professional services). Consider numbering each restaurant, shop, and lodging facility and inserting the number in its location on the map. Lists don't do anything to "sell" a restaurant or shop. But a one or two-line very brief description will attract customers.

Suggestion:

Grand Pre's brochure (bottom right) could accomplish so much more. Tell the story of the Acadians - it is heart-breaking and compelling. Use large photos. Sell the experience!





Go North Tours

Fully Escorted Day Tours to the Wineries of Nova Scotia

Official Partner of the Winery Association of Nova Scotia

Suggestions:

- Always sell the experience before the business. "Fully escorted tours to the wineries of Nova Scotia" or even just "Wine Trail Tours" should be the header.
- Show people in a vineyard, wine tasting, etc. Always promote activities more than grapes and apples.



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We visited all six of the wineries in this region. While each was unique, they were all very enjoyable. Their marketing materials were attractive and appealing (top right). The simple Wolfville Farmers' Market rack card was effective, cute, and gave all the information needed.

Suggestion: Every destination needs at least one anchor tenant, and anchor tenants should be promoted specifically.

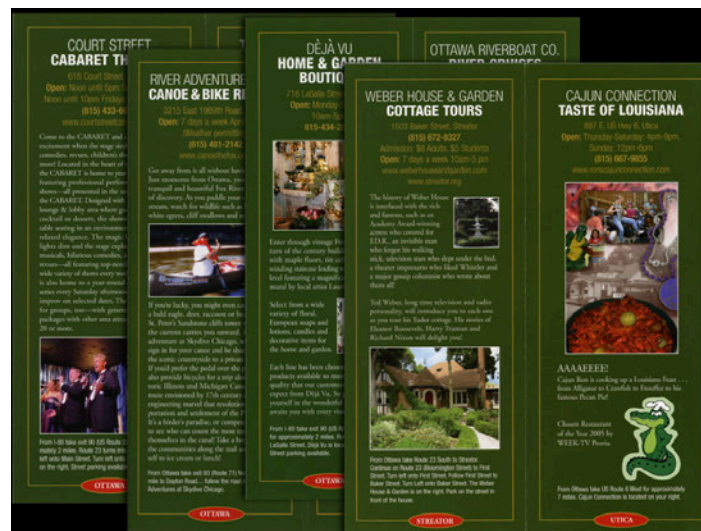
Would you eat at this restaurant? (bottom left) Probably not, based on its appearance. It seems to break every rule in the book for attracting customers. And yet, GQ Magazine listed it as one of the ten best restaurants to fly to in the world. The New Zion Missionary Baptist Church Barbecue attracts bus loads of diners - for several reasons. The barbecue is delicious, and the dining experience is truly one-of-a-kind. (bottom right)

The New Zion Baptist Church Barbecue in Huntsville, Texas's is one of the city's "anchor tenants." It draws crowds from far away. Does Huntsville promote the restaurant specifically? You bet! And when people come for lunch, they'll also spend time shopping in downtown Huntsville - everyone benefits.

Ottawa, Illinois, one and a half hours southwest of Chicago, produced a brochure to specifically promote their anchor businesses - "The Best of Ottawa" - each page includes one or two photos and descriptive text about a shop, an activity, or a restaurant, that visitors couldn't find closer to home. They sent copies to each household in town to use when visitors came, plus they had a copy distributed to each car entering the nearby state park, which was very popular with Chicagoans.

Within six months, Ottawa's hotel occupancy rates increased by more than 30%, and their downtown shops were actually getting more business, not just from visitors, but from locals as well.

When you create a brochure, it's important that the brochure NOT look like a bunch of ads. Use an advertorial format; include lots of photos with specific, descriptive text. Use strict criteria - these businesses must truly be the best.



Suggestion:

Create a **"Best of Nova Scotia's Wine Region"** cooperative brochure.

Make this a top marketing priority:

- Create the vetting process
- Select the best ofs: restaurants, retail shops, activities. No lodging facilities.
- Make it a partnership project.



On the way we passed through Centreville. Suggestion: If the tagline can fit anyone, consider a new one. What sets you apart?



We decided to see the rural areas first, then work our way back into the primary communities.



We love the sign with the flower basket. Great job, great location, not overstated.

**Suggestion:**

A "Best of Nova Scotia's Wine Region" brochure would provide powerful reasons for people to visit the area. People are looking for specific, unique activities that they can't get, or do, closer to home. The gold stars on these pages are some initial suggestions or ideas based on places we visited during the assessment.

As we toured the region, we traveled out to the more distant rural areas first. The Fundy Shore & Annapolis Valley Guide gave us details about what to expect. We headed north, through Centreville towards Hall's Harbour.

The drive was beautiful, and each community has very attractive gateway signs - good introductions to each community.

Hall's Harbour

We didn't know what to expect of Hall's Harbour - the guide indicated there was a "lobster pound." But we didn't know what that was.

We stopped in a couple wonderful galleries on our drive to Hall's Harbour. Then, as we rounded a bend, we saw Hall's Harbour below us, and it looked absolutely charming!

So far, the drive had easily exceeded our expectations. What a beautiful, charming area of the province.

As you can see from the "gold stars" on this page, we thought these could easily be promoted as some of the "Best of the Annapolis Valley." Both galleries were exceptional, and of course Hall's Harbour is a real provincial gem that every visitor should frequent.

What a beautiful drive. And on the way we spotted (and spent money) in a couple of outstanding galleries.



So far, we're off to a great start. Both of these galleries are exceptional.

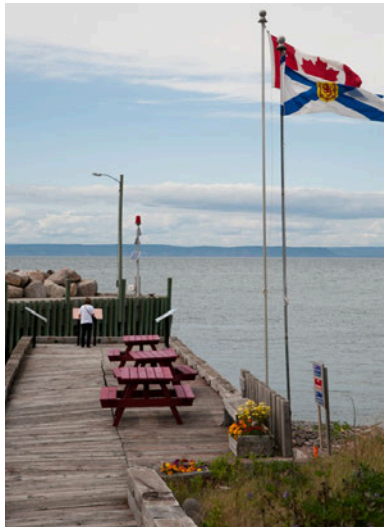


This gallery is right across the street.



This is what visitors "imagine" Nova Scotia to be like.





A great setting for watching a working marina, with interpretive information.

We watched the boat offloading lobster, and interacting with fisheries officials.



The Harbour - a real working harbour - included working fishing boats, wharves to stroll along, interpretive signs, several great shops, picturesque homes overlooking the harbour, and the lobster pound. Many visitors were there enjoying a part of their day here. What a great setting.

The interpretive displays were very good. Visitors love stories.

Suggestion: Work towards having consistent operating hours among the shops. Post hours of operation, so visitors will know when to come back, and be sure to keep the hours that are posted. When is the stained glass studio open?

Several visitors (including us) would have gone into the Stained Glass Studio - but it was never open while we were there (mid-day)



We noted the trail system. Suggestion: Add some information. How long is it? Where does it go? What will we see?



Suggestion: Add information about the trail - visitors are much more likely to venture out along a trail if they know where it goes and how long it is. Encourage as many activities as possible to keep visitors there longer. The longer they stay, the more money they will spend.

It was easy to spend a couple hours at Hall's Harbour. We had fun sitting at the picnic tables watching the tide go out and a fishing boat unload its daily catch. And you can see it all from your picnic table overlooking the harbour basin.

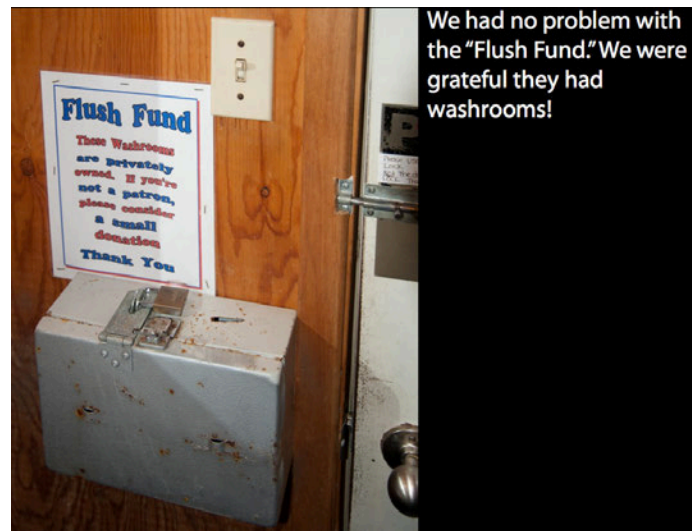
Suggestion: Keep the wharves and decking in good repair.

The atmosphere at Hall's Harbour was casual and fun. Of course, we had to have a fresh lobster! Picking out your lobster and taking it to the cook makes it very experiential. We enjoyed visiting the gallery and shops.

Someone has been eating too many lobsters. Suggestion: Repair this as soon as possible. It made us feel uneasy about the decking.



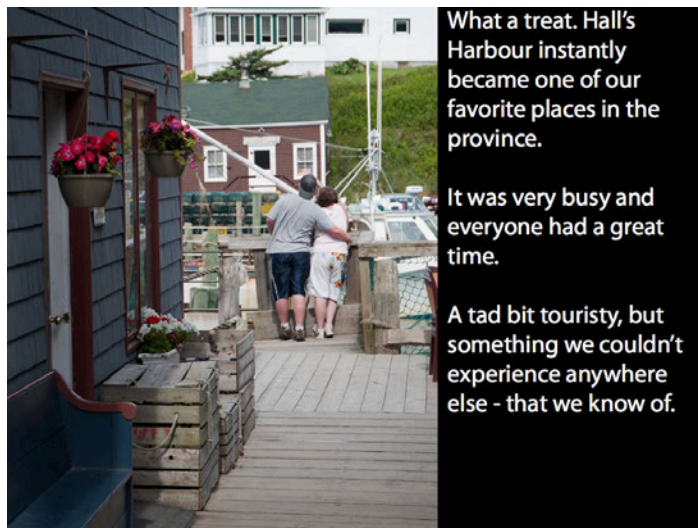
We almost felt guilty knowing this poor fellow was about to become lunch.



We had no problem with the "Flush Fund." We were grateful they had washrooms!

And then noticed the Captain Hall's Treasure Chest. A nice little gallery.





Hall's Harbour was definitely a provincial must-visit attraction and instantly became one of our favorite places in Nova Scotia.

The welcome signs and farewell signs (top right) were perfect.

We continued exploring the area (see map, bottom left), and headed out to Blomidon Provincial Park. We learned the name is actually derived from "blow me down" - what fun!



The park was very nice, and there were dozens of cars in the parking lot - a lot of people enjoying the beautiful day on the beach and on the trails.

Seeing the extremely low tides at the beach was stunning. It is quite an experience.

Suggestion: Post more information about tides and the trails, as well as adding map brochures.

Also consider adding more general visitor information to cross-sell other attractions and amenities in the region. A small visitor information kiosk with a brochure holder would be ideal.

Include photos of the beach area at extreme low tides and extreme high tides so people can see the difference - and the magnitude of the Bay of Fundy tides - one of the province's main attractions.

Suggestion: Include a brochure holder so that day-hikers can take a map with them.



Otherwise hikers will need to somehow write down the trail markers and what they mean.

Suggestion: Tell us how long the trails are (time needed to hike them), whether or not they are suitable for kids, etc.

What kind of shoes are required? Provide more information.



Suggestion: Consider posting tide charts somewhere at the park.

A local resident noted that people have been trapped in the caves when they misjudged the incoming tides.





The "lookoff" provides exceptional views of the entire valley. Stunning views. Suggestion: Consider "view point" not "lookoff."



We continued driving north out to the Scotts Bay/Cape Split area, hoping to see Cape Split. We assumed we could drive right up to the cliffs, park the car, and look across split.

The Blomidon Look-off is included in the Fundy Shore & Annapolis Valley Guide as one of the Top 5 Photo Opportunities in this region, and it certainly lives up to the promise! (top right)

Suggestion: The words "look-off" seem negative and don't really sell the experience. Consider changing this to "view point" or "Scenic Vista," both of which sell the experience more than the geographic location.

What a perfect location for a small business - across the street from the Look-off (bottom left). We were compelled to go in for drinks and ice cream.

Suggestion: Consider working on the curb appeal - even though its location means the business is already getting customers, curb appeal would bring in increased spending. Remove weeds, plant flowers, add a table or two with umbrellas for shade. Make it a gathering spot.

Great location for a snack - or meal right across the street. Suggestion: Work on the curb appeal: weed removal, landscaping.



Suggestion: Consider wrought iron, cedar or other fencing. Avoid the use of chain link in non-industrial areas. This is not a jail.



Scott's Bay was another stunning location. There were beautiful scenes everywhere we looked. What a drive!

There was a little ice cream shop set up in someone's backyard - it was charming. (top right) What a great idea for a little business in this popular location.

Many cars were parked at the trail head to Cape Split. It's obviously a popular trail.

Suggestion: Add more information about the hike so that visitors will be prepared. (bottom left) We hoped to see Cape Split, but we had no idea how far the walk was, how difficult (or easy) it is, how long it would take round trip, and what we'd see once there. Can you actually look across the split? What will you see along the trail? Provide brochures, a trail map we can take with us, and some photos of what we'll see.

So, we headed out to the Scotts Bay area. Photo opportunities like this make the Bay of Fundy an exceptional experience.



A great place to stop for ice cream. Nice people.

4



Suggestion: Once again, we need distances, time to hike to Cape Split, what we'll see, what gear we should have, etc.

5



Yikes! That's a scary thought! Is this a popular hunting location?



Especially at low tide (the tide was coming in when we got there).
The park would be a great spot for a visitor information kiosk.



As we drove past Scott's Bay, we notice a local park, and decided to stop in. It was a terrific beach area with wetlands, the beach, and a great viewpoint (top left). Add more signage to the park.

Suggestion: Consider adding a visitor information kiosk at the park. Provide outdoor brochure holders so visitors are able to take the information with them. Promote places visitors can spend time and money so there's an economic benefit to visiting the area.



Providing visitor information in many locations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week cross-promotes the area and helps visitors find more activities - thus keeping them in the area longer.

These examples of outdoor visitor information are from Ashland, Oregon (top right); Teton Valley, Idaho (bottom left); Moses Lake, WA (bottom right).

As a general rule, place kiosks where visitors have the opportunity to spend money. When they stop for information, they're likely to go into a nearby shop for a souvenir or snack.

This visitor information kiosk (top left and right), in Stevenson, WA, was built by high school students. Although it doesn't include brochure distribution, it is a great example of a simple, effective kiosk design, with eight terrific displays.

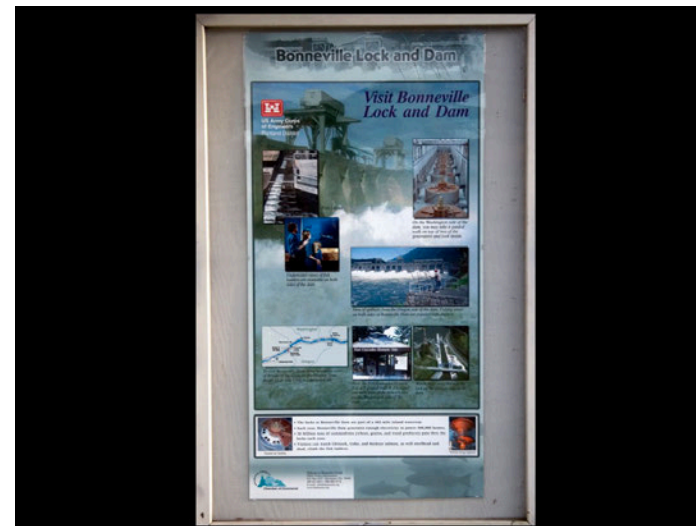
We loved the Cape Split area, and it's a "must see" place for hikers. But for those in vehicles, there were no public washrooms and few places to spend money.

On our return drive, we headed into Canning (bottom right).

Be careful to avoid sign clutter, especially at your gateways.

Suggestion: Remove the "Village of Canning" sign on the metal post. It serves no purpose and creates sign clutter.

The auxiliary organization sign is excellent as is the welcome sign next to it. Nicely done!



Nice gateway signage. Suggestion: Remove the "source water protection area." What's its purpose? It just creates sign clutter.



Nice directory sign. Suggestions: Reduce the text. People have just a few seconds to read through the signs. Fix the viewpoint arrow.



Canning is a charming little town with a mix of great, good, ok, and ugly. The potential here is very high. Head to Mahone Bay.



Canning has a lot to offer, and in general we found it very pleasant.

Suggestion: Good job putting up directional signs for the attractions, but note how much easier it would be to read if the signs were simplified, as in the example (top left). Visitors only have a few seconds to view signage - the fewer words and graphics, the more effective the signage will be. Also use contrasting colors. White lettering on a light blue background should be avoided.

A great little restaurant. Good food. Good people. Very busy.



Some great shops, but not enough in terms of "critical mass" to make it a stand-alone destination.



There were a few good shops in the downtown core, and some of the buildings were very attractive, while some were in sad shape. There's a lot of potential here, but to ultimately become one of the provinces outstanding destinations, property owners need to work together. The old adage "you're only as good as your neighbor" is often true - particularly in downtown commercial areas.

In order for a downtown core to be a successful destination, it's necessary to have a "critical mass" of shopping, dining, and entertainment - similar businesses grouped together.

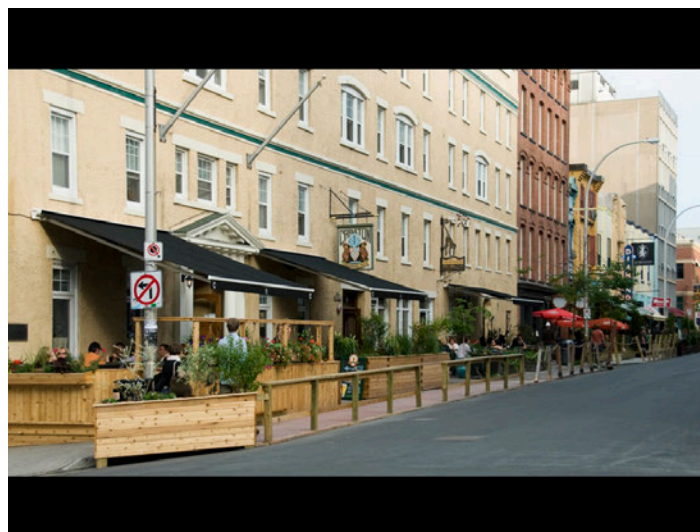
Critical Mass would include a minimum, in three lineal blocks:

- TEN places that sell food: soda fountain, coffee shop, bistro, cafe, fine dining, family restaurant, wine store, deli, bakery, confectionery.
- 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.

When like businesses are congregated together, the attraction can be powerful and dramatic.

Consider Argyle Street in Halifax (top right and bottom photos). With 22 restaurants in 2-1/2 blocks, people are drawn from all over for the dining variety.

Sometimes it's necessary to orchestrate the development of critical mass in a downtown. Begin by working with property owners, not tenants. It only takes one-third buy-in for the process to get going.



With some additional planters, pots, and benches, Canning would be a great place to spend some time - and money.



It's good to see perpendicular signs - or "blade signs."

Suggestion: Ocean Spirit Studio should move there so you don't have sign clutter.



Suggestion: Some additional beautification in Canning - increasing curb appeal - would help Canning stand out with a greater ambiance. Planters, pots, benches.

Downtowns need to work as a "mall." The rules of success for a mall:

- Stores operate on consistent hours and days
- Stores are open late into the evening hours
- Like businesses are clustered
- Malls recruit and promote their "anchor" tenants
- They become a gathering place

20/20 Signage Equals \$\$\$
The rules of retail signage



Shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity of visitors, and it's where 80% of non-lodging spending takes place.

The most successful towns use perpendicular "blade" signs of a consistent height and size, and they are decorative to add to the ambiance of the town. These examples are in Leavenworth, WA (bottom left) and Nantucket, MA (bottom right).

Some additional examples of proper blade signs from Carmel, CA (top left).

Retail signage should always promote what you're selling before it promotes the name of your business. What would you expect Kelly's Famous Laffin Crab sells? (top right) Is it a restaurant? Comedy club?

They sold kites and windsocks. The store is no longer in business - when it's not obvious what it is you sell, there's no reason for them to go into your shop! We simply say one word: "Next."

Grizzly Rick's Market (bottom right) increased their sales by double-digits by adding "Snacks, Sundries, Drinks" to their sign.

These eye-catching birdhouse signs are great (bottom right). They really grab your attention and add some unique character to the town. Can you buy these anywhere? We, and others, were looking for them. Perhaps a business opportunity!



Suggestion: This would be a great place for a visitor information kiosk - with brochure distribution.



A nice gateway sign - in a good location. We couldn't wait to see the lighthouse at the end of the pier.



The park (top left) was very nice. Consider adding a visitor information kiosk here.

We continued on to Kingsport (bottom left).

The picture on the gateway sign is very nice, but we expected to see the long pier and lighthouse in Kingsport (bottom left). We looked, and looked but never found it. Perhaps it's time to change the sign!

There were some very nice interpretive displays along a boardwalk by the water in Kingsport, but no long pier and lighthouse. Did we miss them?

A great little ice cream shop worth a stop after visiting the Blomidon Winery.



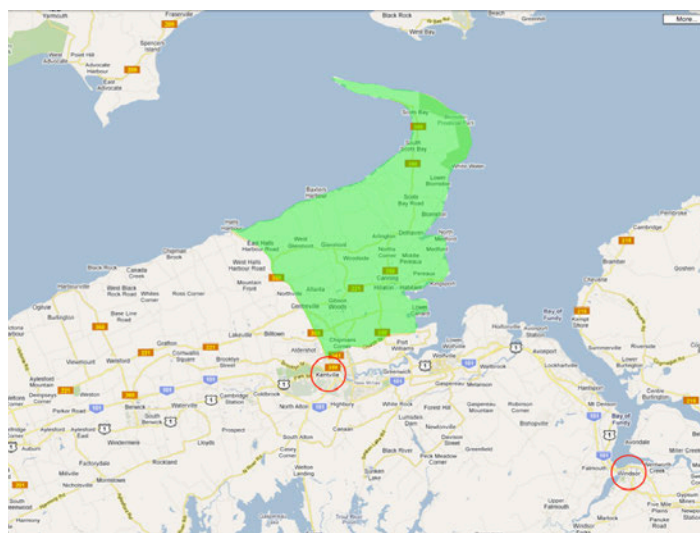
We also followed the coastline through rural areas when we were heading back from Blomidon Park (top left). It was a beautiful drive, and had some terrific view points (top right).

Heading south (bottom left) we came to Kentville (bottom right).

Gateway locations are just as important as the gateway signs themselves. When visitors see your gateway signs, they immediately judge the community based on the appearance of the sign and the surrounding area - what they see immediately after the sign. If there's trash, debris, run-down buildings, etc., it creates a negative impression of the community. Always place your gateway signs in the first, best location - which is not necessarily at your city limits.

Kentville's gateways (bottom right) are attractive and well-placed, providing a good first impression of the community.

Suggestion: Keep the lawn areas mowed around the sign - and especially along the curb.



We almost missed the scenic route along the coast line to Blomidon Park. Thank goodness we didn't!



The gateways are nice leading into Kentville. To other communities: Look at your gateway locations. Make sure they are in good locations.



Very nice. Suggestion: Add some landscaping around the base of the sign. Perhaps a garden club project?



We went by the concrete house once, but when we tried to find it we couldn't. Suggestion: Make sure signage connects the dots!



Gateways into town provide a sense of arrival and attractive gateway signs increase the perceived value of the community. This welcome sign (top left) is very nice, but could have an even greater positive impact.

Suggestion: Add some landscaping at the base. Bright annuals would look wonderful here!

As we came into Kentville, we attempted to navigate around the area, looking for attractions. If visitors end up frustrated while trying to find key attractions and amenities, many visitors will simply say that word - "Next" - and they're gone. The top priority for ANY community is the development of a "Wayfinding System." It's important to connect the dots to your attractions, amenities, and services through a professionally produced directional and gateway signage system.

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

We had a hard time finding visitor info. When you get to the "T" there is no additional signage. Where is it?



Like the concrete house, we never found the Eagle viewing area.



A wayfinding system includes:

- Vehicular wayfinding signage
- Pedestrian wayfinding
- Pole banners, by town, often by season
- Visitor and downtown information
- Gateways and entry points

Be sure your wayfinding signs are large enough to be spotted and easy to read. General rule of thumb: 1 inch tall lettering for every 12 feet of viewing distance. This is as much a science as it is an art.

Leavenworth, WA (top left) uses a wayfinding system that is decorative to fit their Bavarian theme. Make sure yours are thematic.

Oak Harbor, WA, (top right and bottom left) has developed an effective system with blue signs for community services and gray signs for visitor amenities and attractions. They have a nautical theme reflecting the harbor brand.

North Adams, MA (bottom right) uses both pole banners and stand alone signage for their wayfinding.



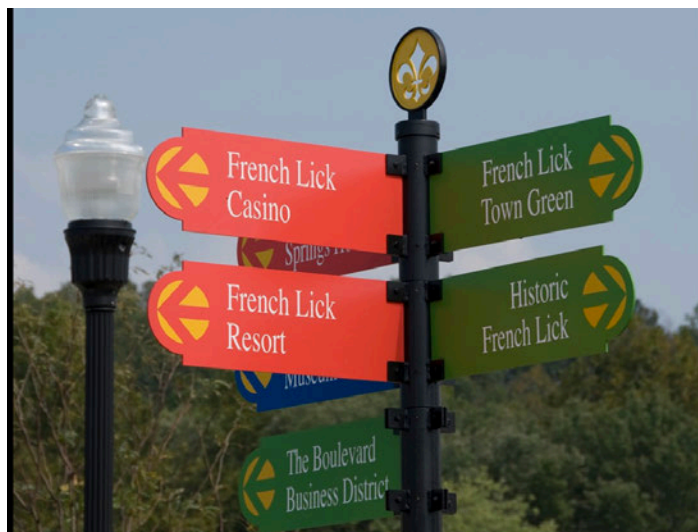


The easier you make it for visitors, the more likely they are to spend more time in the community and, as a result, spending will increase. Additionally, wayfinding not only educates visitors about what you have and where it's located, but will also educate your front-line employees about your attractions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

Developing a system is an investment, not an expense.

Other examples of good community wayfinding signs:

- Modesto, CA (top left)
- The Woodlands, TX (top right)
- French Lick, Indiana. (bottom left)



When you get to the next intersection - the wayfinding disappears.



It's essential that wayfinding signage connects all the way through to the destination.

First impressions are critical - for both communities and local businesses. We all tend to "judge the book by its cover."
Fact: Curb appeal can account for 70% of first time sales at restaurants, wineries, lodging, retail shops and golf courses.

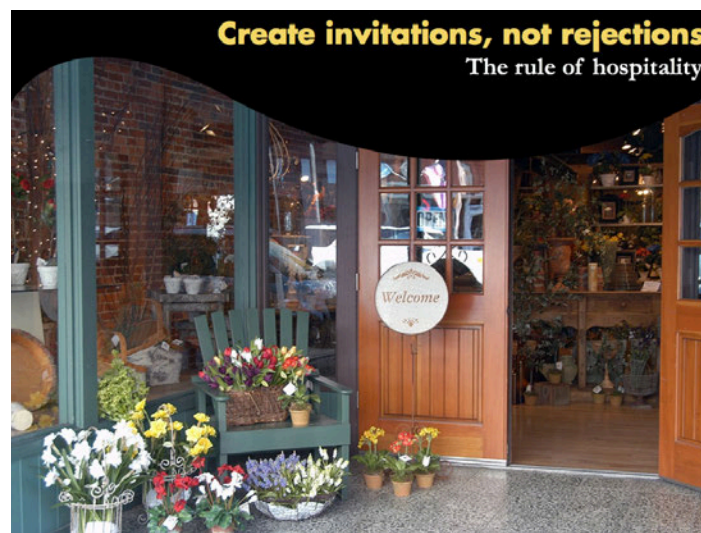
The sidewalks in Kentville looked stark. There were some street trees, but there was nothing to soften the transition between the building facades and the sidewalks. This is the responsibility of the business - not the city.

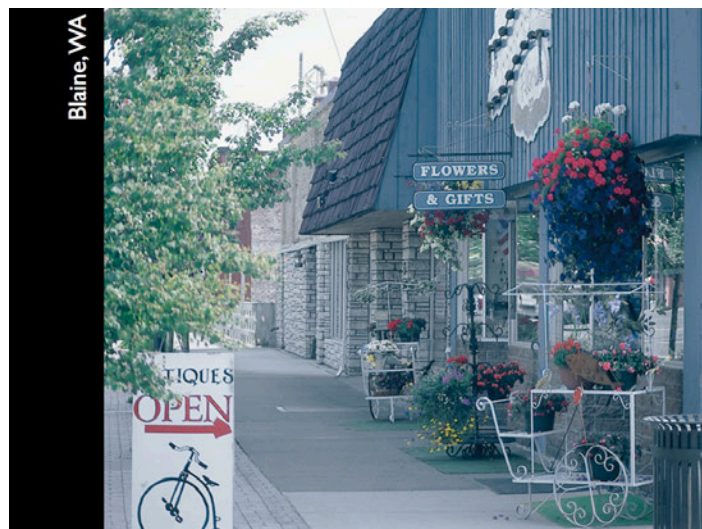


Make the entries to your businesses look inviting. That begins at the sidewalk - not just once inside the door.

This shop in Grass Valley, CA (bottom left) uses silk flowers to create a beautiful entryway.

Beautification doesn't have to include only flower pots and shrubs. Look at Maggie Mae Mercantile's display (bottom right). Select window displays are artfully arranged in the exterior spaces, and the large "open" flag invites customers in.





This shop owner in Blaine, WA, (top left) says that the twenty minutes it takes her to set out her displays each morning is well worth the effort. She had been afraid she would have to close her business, but when she started putting out the displays, so many more customers were attracted into her shop that she has been successful ever since. Look at the shop just down from hers. Would you go in?

Suggestion: Restaurants should post their menus outside, as this one in Banff does (top right). When the menu display is as well done as this one, you can bet they lure customers inside.



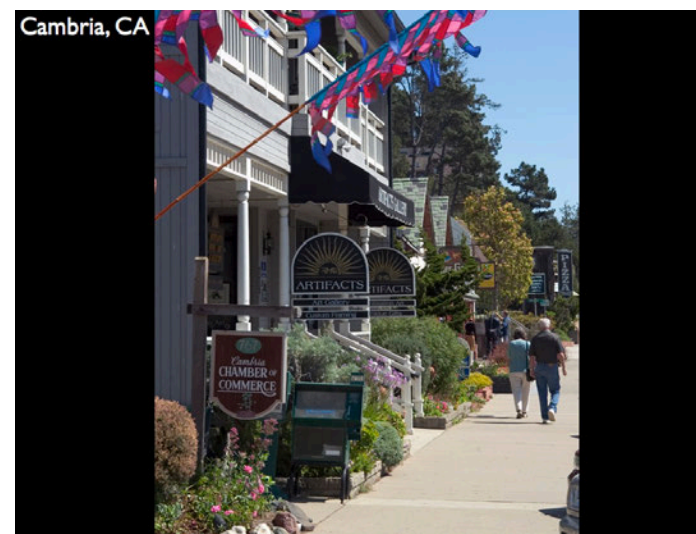
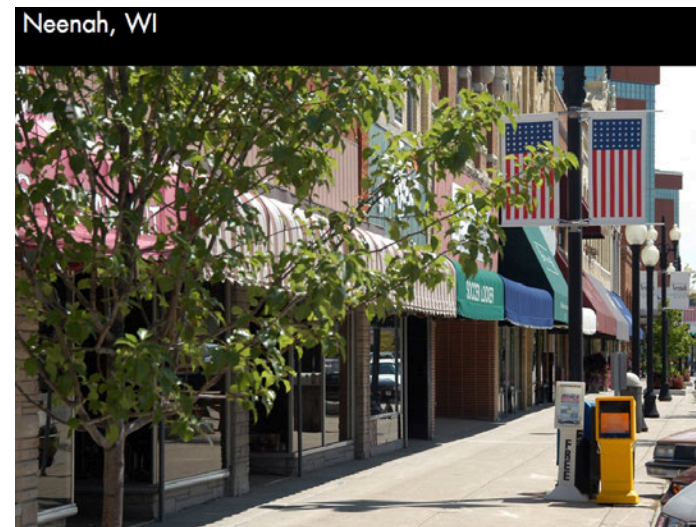
This shop in Wickford, RI (bottom left) has a gorgeous and inviting entry. It also has a small sign in its door that says "Public Restrooms are located behind Brooks Pharmacy." Rather than a rejection - "No Public Restrooms" - they tell people *where* they can find the restrooms.

This natural foods store (bottom right) looks like a wonderful place to shop. People like to spend time in beautiful, inviting places. This was in October.

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

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

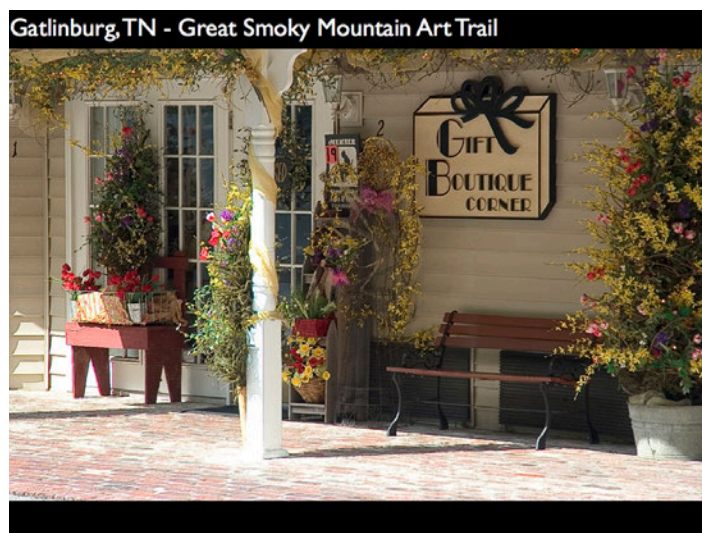
Doesn't this row of shops in Cambria, CA (bottom right) look like a great place to spend time?





The merchants in Jonesborough, TN (top left) always have beautiful outdoor displays. This autumn display includes mums and pumpkins, and they always have plenty of benches. Population: 4,500.

Ellicottville is a very popular ski destination in eastern NY (top right). It is also a very popular visitor destination in the summer because of the collection of great shops and restaurants in a gorgeous pedestrian-friendly setting. The merchants work hard to make it beautiful, and their efforts are well worth it. Population: 2,000.



The Great Smoky Mountains Art Trail provides many appealing shops - this gift boutique (bottom left) is decorated with flowers, trees, ribbons and outdoor furniture. Just imagine what it's like inside!

Another striking autumn display, this time in El Dorado, Arkansas (bottom right).

Fredericksburg, Texas (population 12,000) hosts nearly three million visitors annually and is the most visited small town in Texas. Visitors drive from Dallas, Houston and San Antonio - hours away - to spend weekends in this charming town (all photos this page).

The merchants have created a beautiful setting with potted shrubs, planters, annual color, window boxes, decorative signage, beautiful lighting, benches, and covered sidewalks. These photos were taken in March - and the hill country has some wild temperature swings. Most of the plantings are evergreen.

Suggestion: Create a merchant buying co-op, where everyone pitches in some money, then they bulk-buy pots, soil, evergreen shrubs, and contract with Boy Scout or youth groups to help place and plant them all. This is a great way to make an amazing difference, affordably, and quickly.





Suggestion: Avoid outdoor retail. Window displays in exterior spaces is perfect.



You get the idea. Suggestions: Have merchants and property owners get together to develop a streetscape program.



The photos top right and left were also taken in Fredericksburg. The town is always “decked out” in its finest. These photos were taken in early March.

Note that they use a lot of evergreen shrubs and plants to keep downtown green and inviting year round.

Beautification is an investment with a great return. Do the Fredericksburg shops look inviting? Does it look like a great place to spend time and money?

Suggestion: Avoid the “garage sale” look downtown (bottom left). There’s a big difference between outdoor displays and outdoor retail. Outdoor displays should be a decorative extension of a window display, but never racks of clothing or tables stacked with merchandise.

Suggestion: Work on weed removal - particularly next to buildings (bottom right photo), and then on a beautification program. The city has done a great job with its hanging baskets, but the merchants seem to do very little to improve their curb appeal.

Although many of Kentville's streets appear stark, the town has some great spots. This corner cafe (top right) looks inviting.

Suggestion: Take it up a notch and add more - additional planters, tables and chairs, an umbrella or two to make it more intimate and inviting.

These shops have a lot of appeal (top right, bottom left). in fact, even though these were a block from the primary thoroughfare, their appeal drew us to them. They have done a first-class job and win our "curb appeal" award for Kentville:

- Blade signage
- Window displays extended to exterior spaces.
- Excellent beautification
- Outdoor dining
- Easy to tell that they are open

Some of the architecture is beautiful (bottom right). Any possibility of this becoming a boutique hotel?

A great start here. Suggestion: Add a couple more tables and chairs, along with a Catalina umbrella or two.



Great job with exterior displays, blade signs, beautification. These businesses really set the standard for the Annapolis Valley.



The best shops in town (curb appeal) are down the street. These look terrific.



A beautiful building. Would be a great hotel.



We didn't find the visitor info centre until we walked the town.
Suggestion: Put a sign outside when open, or use the facade.



Suggestion: A great opportunity for a signature restaurant with outdoor dining.



We were in Kentville in July. Not too sure about the October pole banners or how the pumpkin scarecrow promotes "Live... Enjoy... Prosper!"

Suggestion: Consider a different look and a less generic tagline.

As we walked through downtown, we finally found the visitor information center (top left). Although there was signage to it, the wayfinding didn't conclude at the info center. The signage for the info center is easy to miss.

Suggestion: Consider adding an A-board sign outside, or a banner or flag when open.

This location (bottom left) would make a terrific restaurant with lots of space for outdoor dining. Imagine this spot with trees in planters to define the space, tables with Catalina umbrellas.

These are important in developing Third Places. Great job here. And it was very popular.



This restaurant (bottom right) looks very inviting. Looks like a lot of people consider it a great place to "hang out" - a great "Third Place." It was almost always busy.

The "First Place" is our home.

The "Second Place" is where we work.

The "Third Place" is where we like to spend our free time, socializing, relaxing, playing, "hanging out." Successful downtowns are "Third Places."

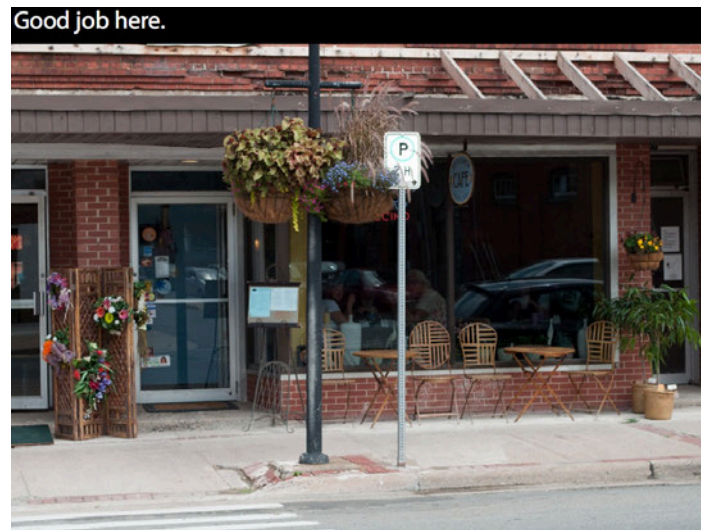
This shop looks attractive and inviting (top left).

Suggestion: The Bakery (top right) could add more appeal by setting out pots and a bench or a couple of small tables and chairs. Give the impression that you want people to sit and enjoy your shop!

Beautiful landscaping here (bottom left). This is the most beautiful building - and landscape in Kentville. Very, very nice.

Suggestion: Add a menu board outside, or a sign that notes whether or not the establishment is open for breakfast, lunch or just dinner. Is it also a restaurant or just a pub with typical pub food? What kind of menu do you have? English? Celtic? What are your hours?

After spending time in Kentville, we went on to the Port Williams area.



One of the best gateway signs in the region. Very, very nice!
Excellent setting as well.



Nice interpretive signage as well.



What a beautiful entry into Port Williams! (top left) A very nice gateway sign.

Foxhill Cheese is a terrific store, in a great setting, and they also have very good signage (bottom left). The shop itself looks bare, and could benefit from some beautification, which the owners are working on. With the very nice setting, it wouldn't take a lot to make it look outstanding - maybe just a couple of large planters beside the doors.

Great sitting area and overall very good ambiance...



...but the shop needs some curb appeal. Suggestion: Consider cedar planters on both sides of the doors.



The “Key” signs for attractions could work very well, but the system needs to post more information.

Suggestion: Work with the Province to update the “Key” sign system throughout the province, so that each sign includes enough information to help visitors: 1) Know what the attraction is; 2) Know what direction it is located; 3) Know how far away the attraction is.

The Prescott House is beautiful (top right).

Port Williams is an attractive little town, but other than the nearby Foxhill Cheese shop and Prescott House, there wasn’t a lot for visitors and few places to spend money - the benefit of tourism. The shops (bottom left) didn’t really seem oriented to visitors.

We continued on to New Minas.



At least New Minas has a strong brand. The Valley's shopping centre, which is easily is. Great job.



For visitors New Minas is the "provisioning headquarters" town. Nothing wrong with that!



New Minas (top left and right) has a wealth of big-box retail shopping, as well as lots of other provisioning stores. While this doesn't make the city a classic visitor destination, visitors are always happy to have these resources available when they're staying in the area a few days. Visitors will shop in the stores for their necessities, and be grateful for the convenience.

Beautiful golf course. Suggestion: Add signage if it's open for public play. Cart and club rentals? 9 holes or 18? Drop-ins ok?



Look like a nice clubhouse. Restaurant or cafe? Pro-shop? Suggestion: Add some signage if these things are available.



The golf course and clubhouse look stunning (bottom left and right). But we couldn't tell if it is open for public play, or what facilities were available. Add signage.

We continued on our way to Wolfville (see map, top left). The gateway sign (top right) made a very good impression - we especially like the landscaping.

Suggestion: Repaint the sign every other year - some of the lettering is fading, and paint is peeling on the lower areas of the sign. When you repaint it, consider reducing the text to no more than eight words. "Welcome to Wolfville. Land of Evangeline. Home of Acadian University." This is ten words, and will work, but the sign currently has more than 25 words on it - most not visible from a vehicle.

Willow Park and the Wolfville Tourist Bureau are gorgeous (bottom left). The visitor information center was very good - the people working there were extremely helpful.

Some of the B & Bs in Wolfville are fabulous destinations in themselves! They are stunning! Victoria's Historic Inn (bottom right) is definitely at the top. Wow.

Suggestion: Showcase these in your marketing efforts. It raises the perceived value of the entire area as a top-notch, first-rate destination.



Nice gateway sign.



With a great visitor information center. Suggestion: Add some exterior brochure distribution.



★ They set the "standard" and overall perception of the community as an upscale destination.



12 Wolfville and Annapolis Royal seem to have the province's best (or most historic) B&Bs.



Even other lodging facilities in the area are very nicely maintained and seem like great places to stay.



The Blomidon Inn is also exceptionally beautiful (top left).

The standards appear to be very high in Wolfville for quality lodging. Our impression is that Wolfville is a great place to stay and visit in elegant comfort!

Downtown Wolfville (bottom left) was a treat. Lots of great shops and restaurants, all in a pedestrian-friendly, attractive location. The rule of "critical mass" is demonstrated here and you can see how it works. The town was far busier than other towns of similar size throughout the province. And we were there during the summer months when the University was, for the most part, closed.

Wolfville is one of the few communities that has the "critical mass" to become a stand-alone destination. It was very busy - even though the university was not in session.



We got to enjoy Wolfville's Farmers Market - a huge draw these days. Not only for local residents, but also for visitors.



We were lucky to learn about the Wolfville Farmers Market (bottom right) Saturday morning. It was busy!

Farmers Markets have been growing in popularity over the last several years - attracting residents as well as visitors. People enjoy the "festival" atmosphere, the interaction with growers, artists, and craftsmen, the freshness of the produce and food, and the unique items that are available.

Adding the entertainment at the Farmers Market is excellent.

The abundance of outdoor dining in Wolfville adds to the town's charm and appeal. It helps establish downtown as a great "Third Place."

DDI surveyed 400 successful towns or downtowns to determine their common ingredients. Of them, one thing really stood out: The towns with "third places" were much more successful than those without.

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

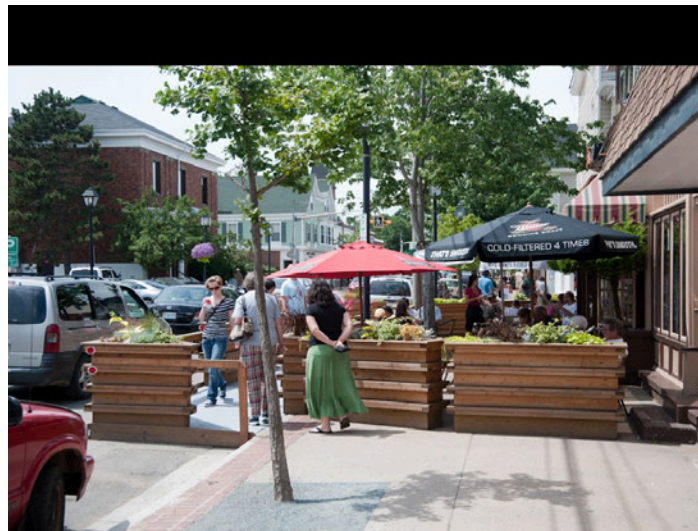
Making your downtown a "Third Place" requires planning on a pedestrian scale. Think about what people need and want when they're walking around. Sidewalks are one obvious requirement, and they need to be wide enough for several people to walk abreast.

Places to relax, socialize and eat is another requirement. Outdoor dining attracts many people because it's easy to see the activity and enjoyment.

Good job adding music. It makes the market a central gathering spot.



There are numerous places with outdoor dining - part of creating outstanding "third places."



This would be a great courtyard for additional seating or even street vendors.



Cannon Beach, Oregon



Suggestion: Consider plaza and courtyard areas (top left) for expanded uses, such as more outdoor dining, street vendors, or stages for outdoor performers.

Bring your downtown to life: Street musicians, performers, mimes, magicians, and artists in action are all great draws for a downtown district.

Start with Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays during the peak season. Make it a place that attracts locals from throughout the county. Visitors will follow.

Nelson, British Columbia



Greenville, South Carolina



People are attracted to vibrant places, and one way to help make downtown more active is to recruit street performers. This magician (top right) is performing on the sidewalk in Cannon Beach, Oregon.

These musicians in Greenville, SC (bottom right), attract a lot of busy shoppers downtown. Recruit a variety of entertainers and artisans - especially on weekends and during evening hours.

Nelson, BC (bottom left) has a number of different musicians and entertainers in their downtown district "Baker Street."

Think Asheville, NC, where you will find street musicians, magicians, and artisans performing 360 days of the year (top left and right).

Work with colleges, the University, even high schools. Invite art guilds to hold classes downtown. Develop an entertainment budget and pay performers a small amount for coming downtown. They make the rest of the money through tips.

Also recruit artisans in action to put on demonstrations of their crafts. Think Santa Fe, NM. These can be part of a festival retail area, part of the farmers market, or even individual showings done on the wide sidewalks downtown.

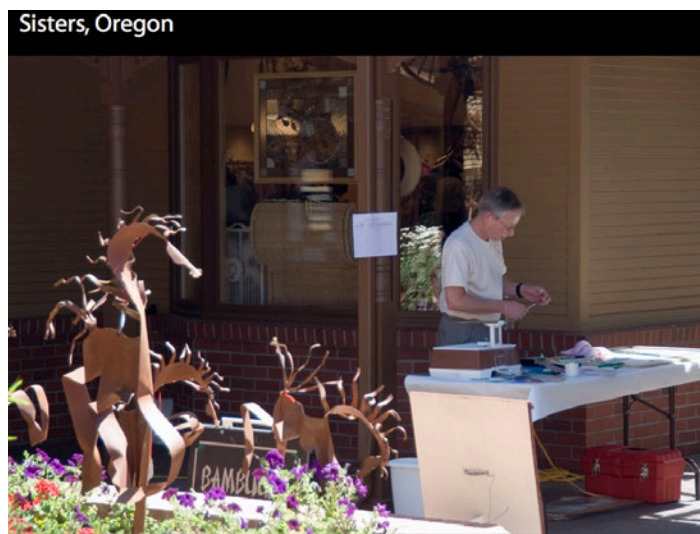
People are four times more likely to buy art when they meet the artist.



Asheville, North Carolina



Asheville, North Carolina



Sisters, Oregon



Artists in action



These are stunning. Now the merchants need to do their part.

A great opportunity for a restaurant with an outdoor dining area.



The city does a good job here with beautification efforts (top left). Making attractive streetscapes needs to be a joint effort between the merchants and the city. The merchants also need to do their part.

Wouldn't this spot (top right) make a great restaurant with outdoor seating? Consider a recruitment effort.

Turn these grounds (bottom left) into a beautiful gathering place (not just a park) for residents and visitors. They could be the focal point for downtown Wolfville, with activities and socializing for all ages.

A great place for a central gathering spot. Suggestion: Consider an amphitheater here with a major water feature.



Kalamazoo, MI



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

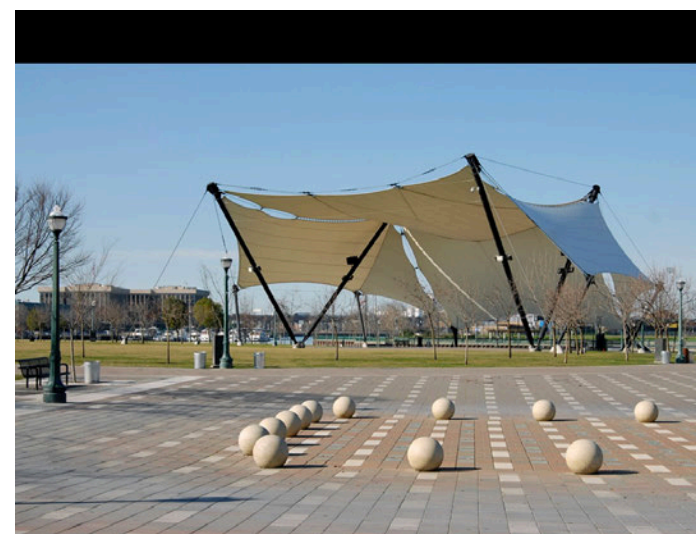
Think plazas, not just parks.

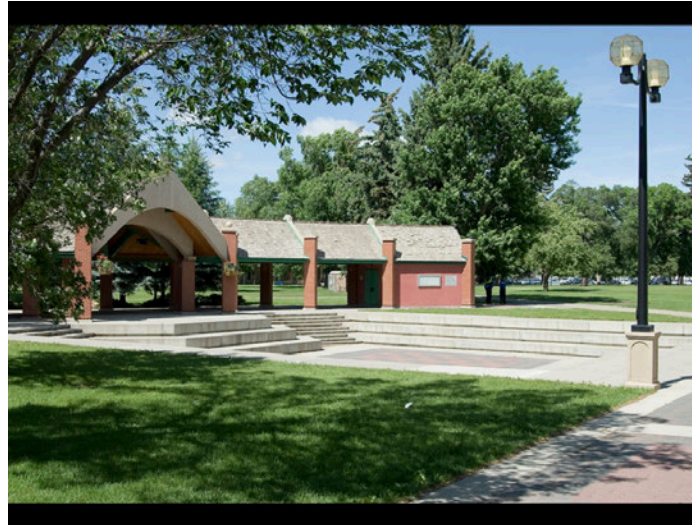
These photos (top left and right) show additional shots of gathering spaces in Kalamazoo.

Plazas are most successful when they are surrounded by restaurants, shops and entertainment. When shops are open into the evening hours, downtowns can be vibrant and alive even after 5:00. Considering that 70% of ALL consumer spending takes place after 6:00 p.m., it's vitally important.

This rendering (bottom left) is a conceptual design for a town center in Big Sky, Montana. It includes a tall clock tower and an amphitheater with water feature that can be shut off when desired. In winter, the fountain area can be flooded and frozen for ice skating. Something along this line in Wolfville, would make the city one of the province's best destinations.

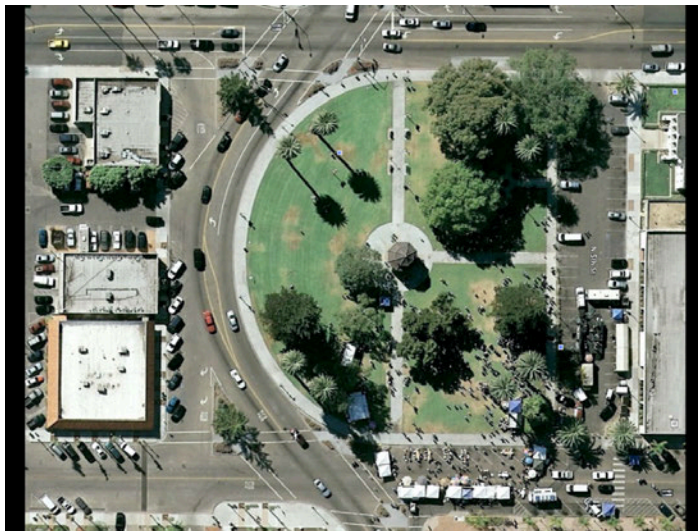
Another plaza area in Stockton, CA (bottom right). This is actually a flush-mounted fountain, where children can play in the water when it's turned on.





This stage in Kalamazoo (top left) gets a lot of use for concerts and performances.

This small amphitheater in Lethbridge, AB (top right) is perfect for small plays, concerts, exhibits, art shows, even open-air markets.



Oxnard, CA has had a park in the center of downtown for years (bottom left). It is pretty, and they use it for an occasional festival, but the lawn areas are usually empty.

Oxnard is considering converting most of the park into a plaza area with a central fountain and amphitheater (bottom left). This will give this central space more versatility for events, exhibits, displays, shows, and concerts. Even when no special event is scheduled, the plaza and amphitheater will attract more people to spend their time.

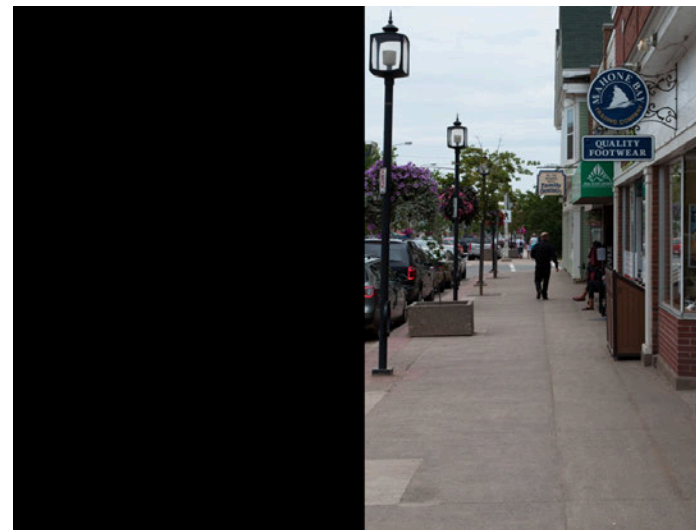
Something along this line would be ideal for Wolfville.

While some merchants in downtown Wolfville do a good job making their storefronts and entries attractive and inviting, many do nothing at all to entice visitors inside. Even though the sidewalks are clean, they look stark and bare. Consider working on a cooperative beautification program like the example of Fredericksburg, Texas.

Outdoor displays should always be decorative - not just merchandise placed outside for sale.



Suggestion: Merchants/property owners should work on a beautification program. This is pretty stark and uninviting.



Suggestion: Avoid the garage sale look. Extending window displays to exterior spaces is terrific.

Setting out folding tables or clothes racks should be avoided.



'Nuff said.

Two hour parking is a good way to kill a downtown. Suggestion: Tell us WHERE we can find four hour parking.



Ventura, California

Shoppers, especially those from out of town, spend an average of four to six hours when shopping and dining. If visitors are forced to keep watching the clock because they don't have enough time on their parking meter, they usually leave before they're done spending. Rarely will they go out and feed the meter, or move their car to a different spot. They simply leave reducing local spending.

If you are going to offer limited two-hour parking, be sure to offer 4-hour and all-day parking. People are willing to walk a couple of blocks for longer-term parking. Use signs to point visitors in the right direction for all-day parking, like they do in Ventura, CA (top right).

Spokane, WA will give out "warnings" instead of parking tickets to first-time offenders (bottom left).

Public parking areas are perfect locations for visitor information displays (bottom right), like this one in Lewiston, Idaho.



When visitors get a parking ticket, even though they were in the wrong, they are upset and in many instance, won't come back. Do everything you can to make it easy for visitors to find 4-hour and all-day parking. It doesn't have to be free - people are willing to pay reasonable rates for convenience.

NOTE: Remember that parking is an economic development tool NOT a fund-raising mechanism. Change the mentality towards parking and you'll see your retail sales rise.

Add signage to let visitors know **where** they can find all-day parking (top right).

Benches downtown encourage people to spend more time there. Women account for 80% of ALL spending - be sure to provide plenty of benches for the guys!



We got there during the construction project. This will be very nice when completed.



Yes, we saw this newer development. Seems more residential with little for visitors.



Wolfville seems to be a thriving town, with new construction and projects going on.

Suggestion: Be sure to include brochure distribution in the kiosks downtown (bottom left and right). When visitors can take a brochure with them, they're more likely to take advantage of the activities available, spending more time and money in the community.

Suggestion: Avoid the bulletin board look - how often do you look at all the fliers in these displays? Change them out at least weekly, and organize them by events and merchant happenings.



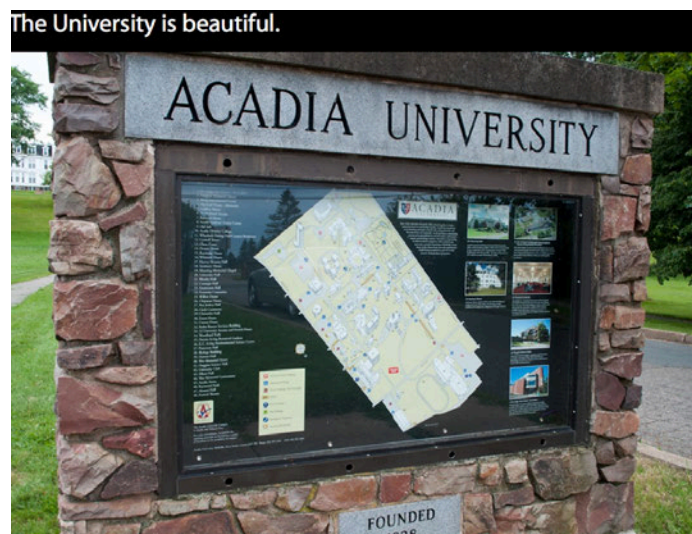
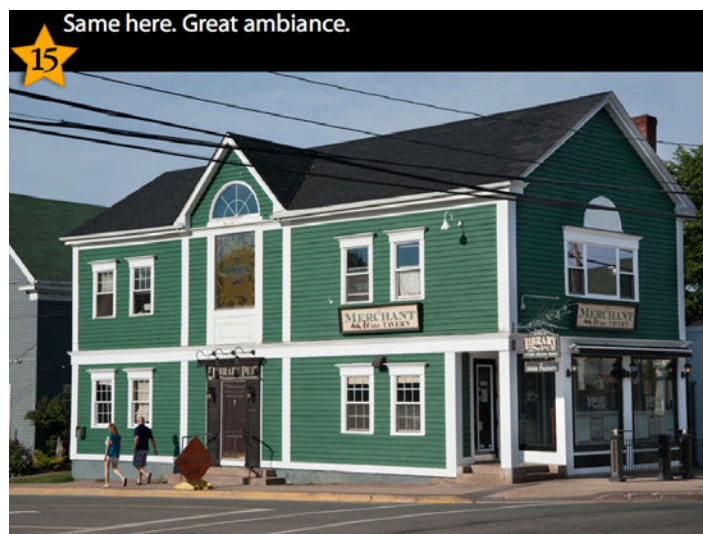
Nice visitor kiosks in town.
Suggestion: Add brochure distribution if at all possible.

Same here.



Wolfville has a lot of signature shops and restaurants that should be promoted specifically - as "Best Of's." These are "anchor tenants" - places people will travel out of their way to go to, because they can't find a shop or restaurant like that closer to home.

Everyone benefits from the anchor tenants - as is the case with shopping malls.



We found the gardens but could never find parking within a reasonable distance - and so directional signs to any public parking.



There was no public parking on the other side of the gardens either, so we passed on visiting the campus.



We looked for, and found, the gardens at the University (top right and left), but there was no parking at all nearby - no street parking allowed, and no signs to tell us where we could park. So, like many visitors, we simply didn't visit the gardens. The lack of parking clearly stated to us (and other visitors we spoke with) "go away."

Suggestion: If street parking near the gardens is forbidden, post signs letting visitors know where they can park.



We visited the Grand Pre Historic Site, which is stunning and tells terrific stories of the Acadian people.



We continued on to Grand Pre - a stunning historical site. This center is a real gem, and not to be missed!

A beautiful facility in every way - the building and grounds, the displays and information.

This should be promoted as one of the top attractions in the area.

The museum does an excellent job bringing the visitor into what it was like to live and work in the area. The "objects of daily life" was an excellent way for visitors to visualize and experience how hard life was.

The brochure should include more photographs and teaser stories - it doesn't do justice to the museum, which is perhaps the best museum we've ever visited that showcased the Acadian culture.



The museum does an excellent job of visualizing what life was like.



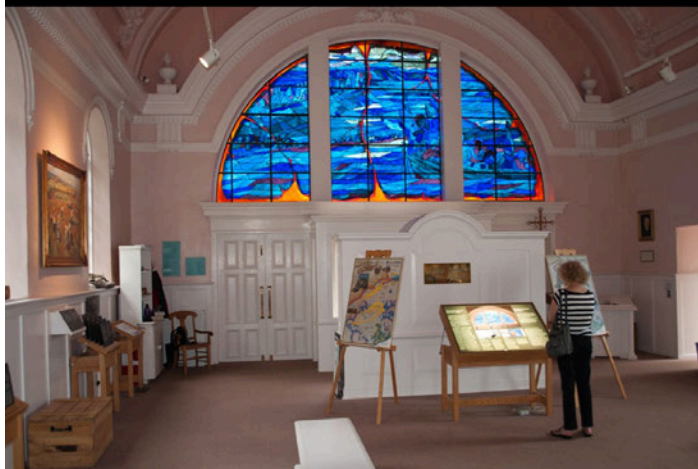
This is a "must see" attraction for anyone coming into the area.



The grounds are spectacular as well. Visitors should plan on spending about two hours at the historic site & museum.



The chapel is stunning as well - inside and out.



We visited other great shops while in the area as well. Unfortunately, this one was closed when we were there.



There were several charming shops in the immediate area as well. They have excellent curb appeal and offer a unique experience.

Tangled Gardens was a treat - especially their homemade, unusually flavored ice creams.

The area is beautiful - quite the "string of pearls."

The lodging facilities in the area - for the most part - do a great job of beautification. They "look like a nice place to stay."



Another "anchor tenant" and even a tour stop destination.



Tangled Gardens (top left) was very busy both times we stopped in.

We continued on the road, heading in the direction of Hantsport.

On our way, we saw this spinning wheel attraction sign (bottom left and right), but we never could find its location. We also didn't really know what it was. The system definitely needs to be overhauled! It was a mess just about everywhere we went.



Suggestion: These signs are critical to your tourism efforts, but the system need an overhaul. We never did find this place. We tried.



We ran out of time so didn't get a chance to visit the museum here.

It must be somewhere between these signs, but we never did find it.



The system needs to include all four elements: 1) Key 2) Name 3) Arrow 4) Distance.



Very nice gateway sign welcoming us to Hantsport.



Hantsport is a very attractive community in a lovely location. The hanging baskets are stunning. There are some seasonal activities, including hiking and berry picking. We didn't see a lot for visitors as we drove through.

Another nice visitor information center. Suggestion: Add exterior displays with brochure distribution.



A very nice community, but we didn't see a lot for visitors.



We continued heading southeast towards Windsor.

Every gateway sign into the communities in this area have been very nice, and Windsor's was also very attractive. In fact, it was one of our very favorite gateway signs.

The first thing we noticed was the stunning architecture of historical homes.

The Haliburton House Museum and grounds were very nice. Museums should make sure to tell stories, not just display artifacts. Stories about the people who lived there - how they lived, what they did, specific occurrences, etc. Bring the characters to life, and that will make a connection with the visitors.



A very nice gateway sign. So far, so good!



A gorgeous home. Unfortunately, we got there right at closing so didn't have the opportunity to visit.



We also missed visiting the Haliburton House Museum, but did get to take a look at the grounds. We hope they tell great stories.



There are thousands and thousands of historic homes. What pulls people in are great stories. Make sure you tell them.



The beautiful landscaping helps support the brand as the “growers capital of Nova Scotia” - a perfect fit with a wine region brand.



Windsor is full of beautiful historic homes, many with lovely gardens!

The wayfinding was helpful! Good job! Windsor is one of the very few communities that has wayfinding.

We weren't sure if this was a retail shop or restaurant. Suggestion: Let us know what it is you are.



Windsor has added some wayfinding signage. Thank you!



Another Key (top right). We didn't know what it was for or how far it was.

Suggestion: If there are activities or events coming up in the park (bottom left), post this information so that more people and visitors will know.

Suggestion: Likewise at the rowing center (bottom right). If this is open to the public, add signage with the information.



These are very helpful. Other communities: follow suit.



Not again. This one is missing the name and the distance.

Beautiful central park. Suggestion: Consider making part of the park more of a gathering area - a plaza.



We did see the rowing center. Public or private? Can you rent kayaks or canoes here? Are there excursions? If so, let us know.



Beautiful waterfront. How long is the trail? Where does it lead? If it's an attraction, consider adding some information.



Great job here. Restaurant or bar? It looked like more of a bar, so we looked for a different place to eat.



There is some beautiful architecture in downtown Windsor.



The waterfront is very nice (top left). Great trail and gazebo.

Suggestion: Post information about the trail, such as distance and if it passes other attractions of note. This creates an incentive to stay in town longer, translating to additional spending.

Downtown also has some attractive historic buildings.

Suggestion: Restaurants - Consider posting your menus outside so that visitors can easily peruse them. It is a good welcoming gesture.

The Spitfire Arms (bottom left) has very good curb appeal - the flags and multi-colored umbrellas are great. We weren't sure whether it was a restaurant or just a pub/bar.

Suggestion: A menu-board or sign would be a great way to educate and encourage visitors to come on in.

It looks like the city has worked hard to add beautification and attractive elements to the streets, such as these planters (top left), and the murals.

Have you ever said, "That looks like a good place to eat"? Visitors usually have to make a decision based on curb appeal - how does the outside of a restaurant look. We had a difficult time making a decision about where to eat in downtown Windsor. The best curb appeal was The Spitfire Arms, but we thought it looked like a bar or tavern, so we went to this cafe across the street (bottom right).

Lisa's Cafe could make the entrance more appealing by simply adding a potted shrub or hanging basket by the door.

Some of the businesses have done a good job with curb appeal and the planters are terrific.



There are some terrific murals in Windsor. These add to the ambiance.



Suggestion: Consider adding some planters along here.



We ended up having dinner here, even though the curb appeal was somewhat lacking.





Very few businesses have added anything to make them inviting places to shop. Always promote what it is you're selling.



Always work to soften the transition between facade and sidewalks. Beautiful architecture would be complimented with beautification.



While many of the buildings have great architecture, the sidewalks still look stark (all photos this page). There is very little done to add beautification or to soften the appearance of where the building meets the sidewalks.

Suggestion: Pots, shrubbery, flowers, benches and street trees should all be added, making downtown much more attractive. Downtown Windsor could easily be a provincial showcase community.

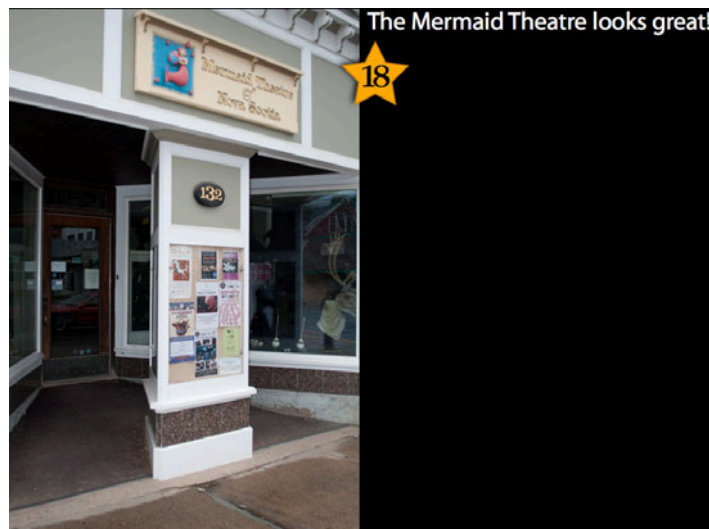
Suggestion: Shop owners should consider the sidewalk in front of their stores as their "entries." They are a continuation of the store, and need to help "pull" people into the store. Just as you create a welcoming entry hall at home, you want to create a welcoming entry way for customers into your shops.

Suggestion: Be sure to promote what it is you're selling - not just the name of the store (bottom left). Promote the "lure." The name of the store - "Stewart's" - doesn't give me a reason to go in - I don't know what you're selling.



We considered dining at this cafe (top right), which has fairly good curb appeal. But there were no other customers, and the staff was outside on a cigarette break.

It looks like Windsor has seen much brighter days in its past. Hopefully, it will be able to see brighter days again. Overall, it seems to be a struggling community. Hopefully we're wrong, but that was the first impression we got while spending time in the city.



There were no cars, and the staff was outside having a smoke. Kind of a turn-off.



In spite of some real bright spots and a great setting, Windsor seems to be a town that's really struggling.



Scenes like this don't help endear us to the community.



If you come into Windsor from the highway, this is how you're greeted. Very sad.



Assumption: Long gone and out of business.



The Exhibition Arena and Playland Park both look like they're no longer operating. Do they have potential for revival? Are they in good structural condition, or would they need substantial investment to turn themselves around?

Unfortunately, this is one of the saddest sites we've seen anywhere in the province.

Suggestion: Put up signage explaining what happened. Put all the piled up signs, boards, and other items and put them inside one of the vacant buildings. Remove the "Playland" signage. Remove the temporary chain-link fencing, and install permanent cedar fencing - or some type of fencing that will block the eyesore areas.



Suggestion: Avoid any signage that relates this to Windsor. This is NOT a good first impression.



Amusement areas and exhibition areas should be fenced with either wrought iron or cedar - not with chain link and barbed wire. This makes it look like a failed prison site.

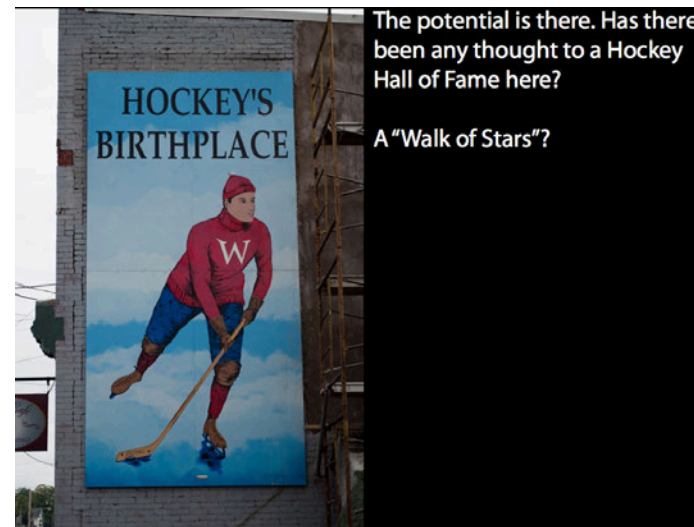
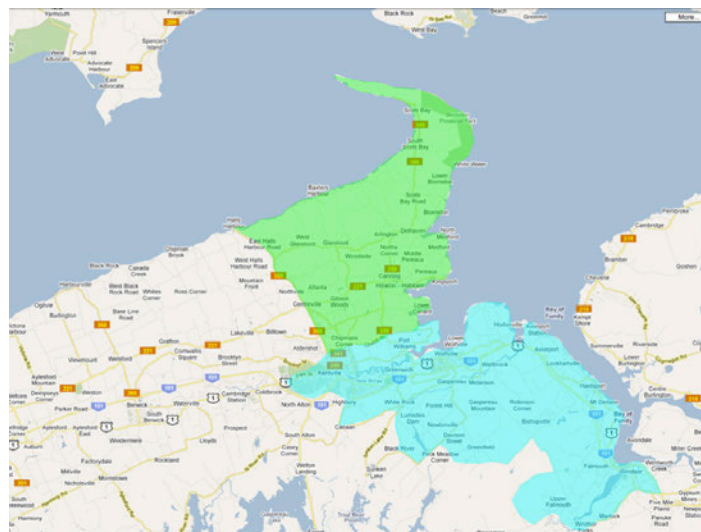
Even the industrial area looked as though it's struggling.

Hockey is such a popular sport, there may be a lot of possibilities in focusing on "Hockey's Birthplace" as a theme or brand for Windsor.

Note: Many people, even in Windsor, doubt that hockey was really born here. In fact, two people said hockey started in Europe during the middle ages - far before Windsor was a city or Canada was even a country. Perhaps Windsor is the birthplace of North American, or modern day hockey. If so, this could be a good opportunity for a long-term branding strategy.

This region - the "Outstanding Orchards, Valleys & Vineyards" is filled with farmers markets, produce stands, vineyards and wineries, flowers, and a whole ambiance of "wine and gardens."

Suggestion: Always avoid chain link fencing except in industrial areas. Wrought iron or even cedar would be better here.



The potential is there. Has there been any thought to a Hockey Hall of Fame here?

A "Walk of Stars"?

The farm markets in the area really lend themselves to the possible "wine region" brand.



Suggestion: Consider creating a “Farm to Market” website featuring all of these businesses. They are already a draw to the area.



A Farm to Market website could promote so much of what this region offers. More and more, people want the fresh, local, natural food that this region produces.

The Annapolis Valley region is clearly defined by its wineries, markets, growers, and landscape products. In fact, we witnessed hundreds of people who actually make the pilgrimage to the area every weekend for the farmers markets, restaurants, and locally grown produce and dairy products.

That would include nursery's, farmers markets, outdoor living retailers, etc.



Great job.



We made sure to visit all of the wineries in this region, and they were all enjoyable and well-worth the visit. Wineries are strong attractions, and this region has plenty to make it worth a special trip.

The Nova Scotia winery brochure is excellent and helped us find them, and the winery signs (bottom right) were great! They do a very good job. They were about the only key signs that were up to date.

While wine tasting is a fun activity, by adding even more activities at a winery, the attraction for visitors will be even stronger. Tours through the vineyards and of the wine production areas are very popular, and make a solid connection for the visitor to the winery, creating customer loyalty. Gift stores that sell "logo" wine accessories are also excellent.

Suggestion: Have picnic areas on the winery grounds, and sell prepared picnic foods to encourage more visitors. Consider having musicians perform or holding a concert on the grounds. Packages that combine wine tours, accommodations and dining are good as well.

We have visited eight of the nine wineries in Nova Scotia. All of them are very nice and should be heavily promoted.



Making it experiential should always be a part of the winery experience - not just wine tasting.



Perfect. Without these signs, we would not have found two of the wineries in the Gaspereu Valley.



Suggestion: Remove the private sign tacked to the pole. Keep the weeds down. This system should have a maintenance program.



The Gaspereau Valley is stunningly beautiful.



The area is so beautiful. Try to avoid sign clutter (top left).

Suggestion: Make this a directory sign. Arrows should always point only one direction. In this case, have them both go left or right.

The wineries all are doing an excellent job of catering to visitors - it makes for a very, very enjoyable experience.



A very popular place.



It would be excellent if the Province allowed wines to be shipped to other locations throughout Canada and into the U.S. We would have loved to purchase some wine to take home, but we weren't allowed to do so.

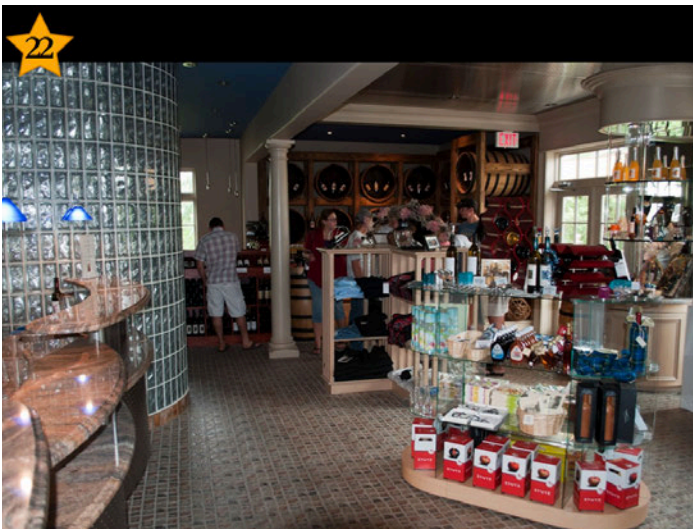
And once back home, we can't order any, limiting wine to just provincial consumption.





The Muir Murray Estate Winery looks like a popular place for events. It's a beautiful setting.

Each of the wineries could be a "don't miss" attraction - the wine tour is very good.



This sign is missing the arrow and the distance. We ended up using a navigation system to find the winery.



The Saint-Famille winery sign (top left) is gorgeous. The building could use some updating.

What a beautiful and enjoyable region! It has a tremendous amount to offer visitors.

The “starred” items are our picks for the region’s “Best Of’s,” and we came up with 22 - no doubt there are more. Promote these specifically, as “anchor tenants.” These Best Of’s clearly set the region apart from other areas in Nova Scotia and make the region worth a special trip.

This is, without a doubt, Nova Scotia’s Wine Region - and it should be promoted as that. It’s a strong brand, ties easily to the agriculture heritage - including the farm to market retailers - and makes the area a premier destination for all things locally grown and prepared.



Suggestion: Consider painting the interior with some murals to help reduce the stark off-white walls.



As the “oldest winery in Nova Scotia,” it could actually use a little updating. Suggestion: Consider a different building color.



Suggestions & ideas

The Annapolis Valley region should be known as “**Nova Scotia’s Wine Country**” just as Napa Valley is in California.

Wine lends itself to:

- The farm to market retailers
- Outdoor living shops
- High-end dining and entertainment
- Theatre
- Fashion and art
- Farmers markets
- Nurseries

This does NOT mean you need to start a new regional marketing co-op, but provides differentiation within an existing region.

Remember that history isn't a point in time.
Today is the day you can start creating new history for
the Annapolis Valley area.

And remember, you **MUST** deliver on the promise.
Don't lead people to the promised land if you can't deliver.



We came up with 22 Best Of's, but you should end up with about 30.
Market them - specifically - and everyone will benefit.



The Valley communities have a
lot to offer as one of Nova Scotia's
premier destinations.



WOLFVILLE/GRAND PRE/KENTVILLE REGIONS,

Marketing Materials Assessments

Fundy Shore & Annapolis Valley 2010 Guide

This 120-page booklet packs a lot of information and encompasses a large region, from Amherst and Cape Chignecto, around Minas Basin, and west all the way to Brier Island. The Bay of Fundy is this region's defining feature. Both areas we are assessing are included in this guide. In this section, I'll look at the Fundy Shore that includes Parrsboro, Port Greville, and Joggins Fossil Cliffs.

The large cover photo is incredible! It really pulls you in and makes you want to experience that whale watching adventure.

Suggestion: Change the name to 2010 Activities Guide. Consider changing the text to yellow – yellow attracts the eye.

The photography throughout is wonderful! Good job! The "Welcome" text is a good introduction to the guide and Nova Scotia.

Suggestion: Add a few teaser phrases about the specific activities visitors could enjoy while there – nothing too long, but just touch on a few specifics.

Good information about traveling to Nova Scotia.

Suggestion: The guide needs a good map. The only map is so small it's not very helpful. Consider doing a map of each area to go with its section, so that it can show more detail.

Tide charts – excellent!

The section highlighting specific attractions and activities during the four seasons is very good. It gives a good flavor of each season. Again, good photography!

The Do & Dream page introduction to the four separate eco-zones included in the guide is very nicely done. The brief description of each zone paints a picture and tells visitors what they can expect to experience, in a nutshell. Immediately following is 10 Don't Miss Attractions encompassing the whole region – with a photo for each – very nice.

The Outstanding Orchards, Valleys & Vineyards section includes the area we are assessing. Again, a detailed map of just this region would have been very helpful. This section includes the Top 5 Photo Opportunities; the Top 5 Outdoor Activities; the Top 5 Locals' Picks; the Top 5 Festivals & Events; the Top 5 One-of-a-kind Shopping; and the Top 5 Heritage & Cultural Attractions. More options in those categories are included in the back of the guide as well.

These Top 5's made it very easy to see what there was to see and do in the area. In fact, we probably wouldn't have known about Halls Harbour if it hadn't been included in the guide, and visiting Halls Harbour was one of our favorite things to do! Likewise, the Blomidon Look-off surpassed our expectations.

Suggestion: Add open hours where possible. For example, the Wolfville Farmers' Market operates

Saturday mornings, so it's very important to include that information in the guide.

Suggestion: Consider adding another page about downtown areas within the region. The number one activity of visitors is shopping, dining, and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly setting, and seeing photos of a downtown shopping and dining area will help pull visitors into the towns to spend money. Some shops are highlighted in the shopping section, but it would be helpful to include a section that shows the charms of downtown Wolfville and information about downtown Kentville.

Suggestion: Add some two- and three-day itineraries based on type of vacation, such as a couple's dining and winery weekend, or girls' weekend getaway, or family outdoor vacation.

Wolfville Visitor's Guide Map

The photos on the cover of this map brochure do a very good job of portraying the flavor of Wolfville and the surrounding area, although it would be more compelling to include activities in addition to the geography. The map inside shows every street, and is large enough to be very easy to read and useful. The map key includes parks, hiking trails, public washrooms, churches, museums, police, tourist information, and other services. It does not include restaurants, lodging or shops. There is a directory list of shops, services, doctors, restaurants and accommodations on the back pages that includes addresses, phone numbers, and the grid numbers to correspond to their locations on the map.

Suggestion: The map was difficult to use, except for noting where streets were located. Finding a restaurant or shop from the listing was cumbersome, and we ended up putting the map away and not using it.

Visitors would be most interested in locating restaurants, shops, and lodging (usually not doctors, home builders or professional services). Consider numbering each restaurant, shop, and lodging facility and inserting the number in its location on the map. Also, lists don't do anything to "sell" a restaurant or shop. Even a very brief description that will attract customers would help. Promote the "lure" to bring customers in. Consider eliminating the lists of businesses that are primarily for local residents, such as doctors, builders, equipment, etc., and then there will be more room to promote the businesses that visitors are most likely to be looking for.

Celebrate Wolfville's 117th Birthday – July 25 – 31, 2010

This special event brochure does an excellent job of making it sound fun and providing all the information visitors (and residents) would need to enjoy each event. The cover, showing several mud-covered young people piques curiosity, but it's a little too dark, making it easy to miss in a brochure rack. Consider adding a fun title at the top of the cover next time, maybe something like "Fun in the Mud – Wolfville's Birthday Celebration!" We wish we had been here to experience it!

Wolfville Farmers' Market

This bright green one-color rack card is simple but does its job. The drawing of the sunflower on front is fun, and quickly tells where, when, and what to expect. Mentioning over 50 vendors year-round, with fresh local food, live music, and art on the front lets people know they'll have a great time at the market. The map and information on the back provides the details people need and want to know to make their experience the best.

Grand-Pre

This Parks Canada full-color tri-fold brochure is nicely produced. The cover has a pretty photo of the statue of Evangeline and the commemorative church, and the caption, "Grand-Pre Bienvenue Welcome."

Suggestion: Sell the experience first. Unless someone is already knowledgeable about the Acadians, the deportation, and the historic site at Grand-Pre, the cover won't mean anything to them. Include a caption at the top of the brochure cover page that says something like, "The Acadian Story – Grand-Pre."

Although the drawing of the grounds at Grand-Pre inside the brochure looks nice, it doesn't portray the true beauty and experience of the place. The photos are too small to have an impact, and some are too small to really see what they are at all.

Suggestion: Dispense with the drawing, and use larger photos to really show the best of the highlights of Grand-Pre. You don't need to show

everything. And tell the story of who the Acadians are, as well as how they came to settle at Grand-Pre. Point out that this site is where their settlement was located. Tell the story of their deportation from a personal standpoint. The deportation story in the brochure currently reads like a textbook. Show what a terrible event the deportation was for the Acadians – how they were suddenly torn from their homes – homes they had built with their hands, fields they had plowed from the wilderness. They didn't know what would happen to them next, or where they would go, or how they would live and care for their families. Explain how this site has been set aside as a remembrance for those people. Pull your readers in, and they will want to visit Grand-Pre and tell everyone they know about it.

Wineries' brochures

We visited all six of the wineries in this region. While each was unique, they were all very enjoyable. Their marketing materials were all attractive and appealing.

Go North Tours' brochure promoting their day tours to the wineries of Nova Scotia is nicely done. Their tours sound like a lot of fun!

Suggestion: For the brochure cover, promote the activity at the top, then the name of "Go North Tours." For example, promote "Day Tours to the Wineries of Nova Scotia" at the top, in yellow. This would catch people's attention in a brochure holder.

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