

Olean, New York  
July 2008



## Assessment Findings & Suggestions Report



### Ideas to increase tourism spending

In August of 2008, a Community Tourism Assessment of Olean, New York, was conducted, and the findings were presented in a three-hour workshop. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of the community – how it is seen by a visitor. It includes a review of local marketing efforts, signage, attractions, critical mass, retail mix, ease of getting around, customer service, visitor amenities such as parking and public restrooms, overall appeal, and the community’s ability to attract overnight visitors.

In performing the “Community Assessment,” we looked at the area through the eyes of a first-time visitor. No prior research was facilitated, and no community representatives were contacted except to set up the project, and the town and surrounding area were “secretly shopped.”

There are two primary elements to the assessment process: First is the “Marketing Effectiveness Assessment.”

How easy is it for potential visitors to find information about the community or area? Once they find information, are your marketing materials good enough to close the sale? In the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment, we assigned two (or more) people to plan trips into the general region. They did not know, in advance, who the assessment was for. They used whatever resources they would typically use in planning a trip: travel guides, brochures, the internet, calling visitor information centers, review of marketing materials, etc. - just as you might do in planning a trip to a “new” area or destination.

The community has five opportunities to close the sale:

- 1) Personal contact (visitor information centers, trade shows, 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, read travel articles, and looked at AAA Tour Book reviews and suggested activities.

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

Where most communities fail is when they merely provide a "list" of what the community has, whether it's truly "unique" or not. Nearly every community in North America promotes the usual list of diversions: local museums, unique shops and restaurants, plenty of lodging, golf, outdoor recreation (bird watching, hiking, biking, boating, etc., etc.), historic downtowns, scenic vistas, and so on. Of course, nearly every visitor can do this closer to home. So, what makes your community worth a special trip?

Always promote your primary lure first - what makes you worth that special trip, THEN your diversionary activities. Would you go to Anaheim, California if Disneyland wasn't there? Do you think that Universal Studios and Knott's Berry Farm get upset that Disneyland gets all the glory? That they are diversions? Of course not. Eighty percent of all tourism spending is with diversionary activities. Disney does the heavy lifting in terms of advertising and promotion, and the diversionary activities ride on those coattails.

In a nutshell, the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment looks for things that make you worth a special trip and an overnight stay. The secret shoppers look for details, details, details. To be successful you must provide itineraries and specifics - not just generalities. Are your marketing efforts good enough to close the sale?

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

information, parking), activities, overall appeal, retail mix (lodging, dining, shopping), critical mass, customer service, area attractions, pedestrian friendliness, gathering spaces, evening activities, and the availability of marketing materials and their effectiveness.

The community 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 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 community'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.) cannot be successful if the tourism effort is not community-wide.

In many cases, issues may come up that you are already aware of and are already working on. In that case, the assessment validates those efforts. But more often than not, the assessment will point out things that you are painfully aware of but can'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 community? Does your community have truly unique attractions the visitor can't get closer to home? You must be able to deliver on your marketing promises - otherwise visitors might come once, but they won't come back. It's much more cost effective to bring people back, than to always go out and entice new visitors into town. "Been there, done that" communities eventually run out of visitors and find they don't have a sustainable tourism industry, or simply become pit stops or gateways on the way to somewhere else.

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

### **SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TRANSLATES TO CASH**

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

The primary goal of the tourism industry is to bring more cash into the local economy. This doesn't happen when visitors come into the community, get out of their cars, and take photographs. And it doesn't happen when visitors go swimming in the lake at your city park all day, sunning, and eating the lunch they brought from home. And it doesn't happen when visitors hike down your trails, enjoy your interpretive centers, or stroll through your lovely arboretums. These are all great things to do, and, of course, you do want your visitors to do these - but, you also want to entice them into your shops,

your cafes, espresso stands, restaurants, galleries, B&B's, 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 the 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 local residents take them out to eat, shop, dine locally? Or do they head to a neighboring community? Do your locals even know what you have to offer? An effective tourism marketing effort also includes educating locals as to what you have and how to find it through effective wayfinding 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, to name a few.

#### **3. Leisure travel**

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

The average leisure visitor is active 14 hours a day, yet typically only spends four to six hours with the primary lure. They then spend eight to ten hours with diversionary activities - things they could do closer to home, but will do while in the area. A good example of this is Branson, Missouri, the “live music-theater capital of the world.” This town of 6,500 residents hosts 7.5 million visitors a year. The primary “lure” is the 49 music theaters. The average visitor attends two shows a day over about four hours. During the other hours of the day, the visitor will shop in local outlet malls, head to the water parks, theme parks, and other attractions, play a round of golf, hike, bike, fish, do some bird watching, and participate in any number of other activities they could do closer to home, but will do while visiting Branson.

## THE THREE STAGES OF TOURISM

### 1. Status quo

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

### 2. Getting people to stop

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

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

The first goal is to get those travelers to stop.



### 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. Visitors, by the millions, head to Disneyland, DisneyWorld, Dollywood and other attractions. They are not going to Anaheim, Orlando or Pigeon Forge.

Always sell the activity - 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 a vegetable?

Your local heritage is important to the community and can set the ambiance, even becoming a diversionary activity. But to the vast majority of potential visitors, it'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., supporting 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 can provide your community with many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue in the community and becomes a springboard for the community in enhancing its tourism industry, leading to greater prosperity, rejuvenation, and enjoyment by all the citizens.

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

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

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

The third step involves research, feasibility and market analysis, and determining your brand - what you are or hope to be known for. Then comes the "development" portion of the plan or the "how to get there" program: determining what product development initiatives need to be undertaken to reinforce and grow the brand. This also includes defining the roles of the various local organizations. Brand-building takes a village - 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) and 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 to live, work, and visit.



## Real Men Don't Ask For Directions The rule of wayfinding

There are two primary signage issues that are critical to the success of any community: gateways and directional (or wayfinding) signage. Gateways introduce visitors to your community and provide a sense of arrival. Directional signs help visitors (and residents) navigate the area, telling them what attractions and amenities are available and where to find them. The importance of easy-to-follow wayfinding cannot be overemphasized.

First we stopped at the visitor information center (bottom left) along I-86. In speaking with workers at the information center, we were told that Olean is the hub city, or commercial center for the county, and is home to WalMart. There weren't a lot of attractions mentioned, other than that.

During the assessment process, we entered the city from various directions: I-86, Highways 16, 417, and 353. We found and visited Portville, Allegany, Town of Olean, City of Olean, and Westons Mills.



## Suggestion:

No attractions were noted along the interstate and local highways. If there are any visitor attractions in Olean, we never found them. We did note the signage for the Community College Business Institute (top), but other than that no attractions or visitor activities were identified including local visitor information, lodging, dining, or other services.

The gateway signs (bottom left and right) are well placed and attractive, creating an overall good first impression of Olean.

Bottom line: Getting to downtown Olean was not a problem. If there are things to do, then create a wayfinding system that will identify attractions, amenities, and local services. The wayfinding system will inform visitors (and locals) what there is to do, as where they are located. In fact, Cattaraugus County should consider developing a county-wide system, which will result in increased visitor and local spending. It is an investment with a return.



## Suggestion:

Great curb appeal, good signage, the Chuck Wagon (top) looks like a great place to eat. Good teaser with “we love hungry people.”

Pleasant Valley (bottom left) also looks like a popular, and very nice, destination as showcased with excellent curb appeal.

I found Portville. (bottom right), the home of a “clerk and courtroom” with “hunting and fishing licenses.” Interesting gateway sign. Attractive, but unusual to promote the clerk, courtroom, and licenses. Apparently Portville is a bedroom community with nothing for visitors, other than perhaps the place to go to get a fishing and hunting license.

Communities should use this opportunity to promote their “brand” - what it is they’d like to be known for. For instance, it could read “The Historic town of Portville.” Or “Welcome to Portville. Western New York’s Garden Fresh Town.” Always promote the image you want to leave with locals and visitors.



## Suggestion:

Portville's gateway signs (top right) are very attractive, although I didn't see anything that looked very colonial. But, at least, the community is trying to promote its brand as a colonial town. The challenge is that you must always "deliver on the promise" and there was little, other than the sign, that promoted a colonial feel or ambiance.

Gateways into every town provide a sense of arrival, introducing visitors to their first glimpse of the community and what it's like. Just like residential subdivisions, your community gateways are a direct reflection of the overall community in terms of quality and desirability as a place to live and work. Nice job, Portville.

A drive-in! (bottom left and right) This could be fun. It's not very often we find a working drive-in theater any more. The theater operator should always include showtimes on the readerboard to make it convenient for people so they know when to come back for a showing.



## Suggestion:

I noted signs along the highway promoting Whispering Mountain Lodge. (top right) They were good enough that I was intrigued and decided to check it out. It looked like a fun place to go, although it was difficult to tell when it opens each day or what it is: Restaurant? B&B? Motel? Private residence?

Miller's Farm Market (bottom left) looks like a great local draw and a possible "anchor tenant." Communities should always promote the businesses that can pull people into the town. Everyone benefits, just as in shopping malls, where the anchor tenant pulls people in and the other stores (think Radio Shack, Hallmark, GNC Nutrition, etc.) benefit.

I stopped at a local retailer and asked the clerk if there was a major attraction in Portville. I couldn't even finish the sentence before I got a response. "That would be Sprague's." I heard this in several locations in Portville, yet there were no signs, of any kind, directing me to Sprague's (bottom right). Had it not been for local workers who provided directions, chances are that I would have never found it.



## Suggestion:

Another excellent gateway in Portville (bottom left). Other communities, take note. These really set the standard for the entire county. Suggestion: Make them consistent in design.

Sprague's (two right photos) is obviously Portville's "anchor tenant" and a major attraction in the county. As such, is should be front and center in promotional and marketing efforts. Always promote your anchors.

This area of the county is stunningly beautiful and could be part of a scenic tour route of some kind. The pastoral feeling, rivers, ponds and ambiance is exceptional and peaceful.



## Suggestion:

Heading the other direction I accidentally found St. Bonaventure University (top), a beautiful campus.

Nice directory (bottom left), but...

...totally useless. Suggestion: Develop a new map (bottom right) This one is completely unreadable. Consider adding a brochure holder here so visitors can grab a map of the campus to find their way around. It's a large campus and there are so many structures that even with a good map here, it would still be very beneficial to have a map available that visitors can take with them.

In my case, I simply drove around until I found what I was looking for. Replacing this map with a new one should be a top priority.



## Suggestion:

It's a stunning campus (top right).

The Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts (bottom left) is terrific and a great asset to the entire region. I was actually stunned and how nice a facility and gallery it is, yet it's not really promoted as a local attraction. It's worth the visit.

Are those arrows (bottom right), crosses, or bullet points? Suggestion: Make them more user-friendly. My guess is that these things (listed on the sign) are all in the Quick Center for the Arts and that those are bullet points. While I was there, another person was just as confused. Make bullet points obvious.





## Suggestion:

Looks like a beautiful golf course. (top) Really? Turn here? Is that an arrow on the sign? Public play? 9 or 18 holes? Let people know.

This can't be right. (bottom left) There's a golf course in the cemetery?

"Stay to the right - it's at the 'dead end.'" Very funny.

Suggestion: Add a small sign (bottom right) here at the corner: "Clubhouse" with an arrow to the right. When I entered the cemetery I found myself on a scenic tour of the graveyard while trying to find the golf course.

Golf rule:

Listen for the word "FORE!" so you don't end up next door, six feet under.



## Suggestion:

It looks like a beautiful course (top). Is it 9 holes or 18? Open for public play? Suggestion: Market it to the public. Post signs to let the public know more information about the course - if you are open for public play. The restaurant and pro-shop could use some curb appeal enhancements to make them more inviting.

After 630 assessments, this is a first. A golf course joined at the hip with a local cemetery. (bottom left)

I spent a little time in Allegany (bottom right). These are terrific banners that do a good job of selling a feeling or ambiance - the basis for any branding effort. Very nice.



## Suggestion:

The town (top right) has a nice relaxed homey feeling to it. If you have the opportunity, put the power underground.

Work on a weed abatement program (bottom left), and work with merchants on curb appeal enhancements. Curb appeal is a critical investment with tremendous return, and it starts with the merchants. It can account for 70% of sales at restaurants, wineries, retail shops, lodging, and golf courses. Merchants should think of the sidewalks in front of their shops as a customer's first introduction to their business. Keeping it clean, free of weeds and trash, and beautified with potted flowers, shrubs and benches makes the entrance welcoming and inviting.

A few of the merchants (bottom right) do a good job, but the town is missing the critical mass - the necessary quantity of retail - to make it a strong destination.



## Suggestion:

The following page details more about the rule of “critical mass” - what makes any downtown a hub of activity for both locals and visitors alike.

While exploring the area I was able to find Rock City, but never found Rock City Park. Once again, there’s a lack of wayfinding in the county.

If there are other attractions in and around Olean, then develop a wayfinding system so that people can find them easily.

Wayfinding should be decorative, as in these examples, and it should fit the “brand” or theme of the community. Besides being an art, wayfinding is also a science. Don’t include more than five items on a sign, and be sure the lettering is large enough to read from a distance.



## Suggestion:

Downtown Modesto, California (top) is an excellent example of decorative, easy to read wayfinding signage.

Likewise, Woodlands, Texas (left) uses wayfinding signage that fits the town’s ambiance and is easy to follow, and easy to read.

Some wayfinding rules:

- Never place more than five items on any one sign.
- Make sure lettering is visible from a distance. Typically 6” to 8” tall.
- 1” tall letters for every 12’ of viewing distance.



## Critical Mass is More Than a Religious Experience

### The 10+10+10 rule

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

For a town to have the critical mass to attract visitors, this is the minimum needed in three lineal blocks:

1. TEN places that sell food: Soda fountain, coffee shop, bistro, cafe, sit-down restaurant, wine store, deli, confectionery.
2. TEN destination retail shops: Galleries, antiques (not second hand stores), collectibles, books, clothing, home accents, outfitters, brand-specific businesses, garden specialties, kitchen stores, cigars, etc.
3. TEN places open after 6:00: Entertainment, theater (movies, performing arts), bars & bistros, specialty shops, dining, open air markets, etc.

Sometimes it's necessary to rearrange the businesses in town, to achieve the critical mass in one district.

Sisters, Oregon (bottom) is a good example. Situated on a small mountain highway in Oregon, Sisters was little more than a pit stop on the road. Maybe one in 1,100 cars would stop. A local resort saw the advantage of creating something more for visitors to do, so the owner helped the town develop the critical mass to give passersby a reason to stop. They built new buildings on secondary streets to house local services, and they attracted new retail and restaurants to fill the main streets. Now, about one in 40 vehicles stop, and the town is a major day trip for vacationers, and it's becoming an overnight destination in its own right. Sisters boasts the highest per capita retail sales in the state.



## Suggestion:

To help any local downtown attract residents as well as visitors, here are some suggestions:

- Create pedestrian-friendly shopping districts or areas.
- Create “open market” events or that type of atmosphere:
  - Flea markets
  - Farmers markets
  - Arts & crafts fairs
  - Include education & entertainment
- Narrow the streets to create an intimate setting.
- Bring downtown to life with music and entertainment.
- Populate downtowns with dining, non-chain boutique shops, entertainment and activities.

Remember, if locals won't hang out downtown, neither will visitors.



## Suggestion:

Each town in Cattaraugus County should have a branding focus. In the case of neighboring Chautauqua County, the county is branding themselves as “The World’s Learning Center.” Each town has an opportunity to tap into that brand (including towns and activities in Cattaraugus County).

1. Bemis Point: The floating stage concerts
2. Dunkirk: Blue water sailing
3. Findley Lake: Learning to kayak and canoe
4. Fredonia: The art of set design, stage productions
5. Hwy. 5: The art of wine making (Chautauqua Wine Trail)
6. Mayville: Home of the Chautauqua Institution
7. Jamestown: Home of Lucille Ball

Each town should have a branding focus. Some ideas:

1. Randolph to Gowanda: New York’s Amish Trail
2. Allegheny Reservoir & State Park: Environmental paradise
3. Salamanca: Gaming & antiques (downtown)
4. Ellicottville: Skiing, the mountain shopping village
5. Portville. Allegany: ???
6. Olean: The provisioning headquarters for the Allegheny/Enchanted Mountains experience.

Olean’s advantage: As a “provisioning headquarters,” Olean offers services including RV and auto repair, WalMart, grocery stores, veterinarians, movie theater, lodging facilities, laundromats, a mall, and a variety of other essential services. The missing ingredient is nightlife and gathering places for people to socialize, stroll, and gather.



## This is about community first:

- The heart and soul of every community, besides its people, is its downtown.
- The number one diversionary activity of visitors is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly, intimate setting. By offering a beautiful downtown with a critical mass of retail shops, restaurants, and entertainment, you will attract locals and visitors as well.
- KEY POINT: 70% of ALL consumer spending takes place after 3:00 pm. Are you open? This is true for both locals and visitors alike.

## Parking Is Not Just For Lovers

### The parking limits rule

Do you want to encourage people to spend time downtown, shopping, dining spending their money? Then provide plenty of parking spaces that are easy to find, well-marked, with rates that are reasonable, and easy to understand.

50¢ an hour is fine. (top right) If there is free parking anywhere downtown, be sure to identify it.

What the heck? (bottom left) Why is there a sign directing people AWAY from the city's public parking lot? Why send us away?

What constitutes a "valid coin"? (bottom right) I can't use plugs? The parking in Olean is confusing. Thirty minutes for 25¢ requires people to carry around a roll of quarters. Consider an hour for 25¢. The eight hour limit is fine, but requires 16 quarters. How many do you carry around with you?





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

I drove and walked N. Union Street a dozen times, day and night. Also spent time on Highway 417, both east and west. The city (top right) has some great architecture.

Can you tell me what's in any of these shops? (bottom right) They are lacking both perpendicular signage and curb appeal.

Successful cities always use perpendicular "blade" signs. Make them consistent height and size. Note the blade signs used by merchants in Nantucket, Massachusetts (bottom left). Typically there are no lower than 7' above the sidewalk, no higher than 9' (24" maximum height in this example), and typically no wider than 42". This way you don't end up with sign clutter. People in both automobiles and on foot see signs that are perpendicular to them. When we don't have a clue what's in these shops, visitors say one word: "Next" - and they move on.



### Suggestion:

There are broken and abandoned sand bags (top right) all over downtown and lots of grass and weeds growing in sidewalk cracks. Start a weed abatement program. Clean up the sandbags. Help! Make your downtown shine!

The only way to know what's in these buildings (bottom left and center) is to be across the street. People driving by would have to slow down and turn their heads from side to side to see what shops are here. Use blade signs! Make it easy for pedestrians and motorists to see what's available.

Consider creating a merchant-driven design review board to address signage, beautification, exterior displays, sandwich boards, etc.

The only obvious business in this block (bottom right) is Jordan's. Even its sign is somewhat dated and far too large to fit the historical character of the town.



## Suggestion:

Soften the transition between facades and concrete. These street scenes (top two photos, and bottom left) show tidy sidewalks, but they are very stark and bare, even with the street trees. Adding potted plants and flowers against the buildings would soften the hard concrete feeling, making the street much more attractive and welcoming.

People are attracted to beautiful spaces. Studies show sales increases of more than 20% in beautified downtowns.

The city is doing its part along the curb-side of the street. It's time for the businesses to do their work.

More examples of blade signs (bottom right); these are in Carmel, California. Perpendicular signs are seen ten times more frequently than facade-mounted signs.



## Invest in Beautification

### The rule of invitations and staying power

Beautification is an investment with a tremendous return and creates customer loyalty. LaRua (top), a restaurant in Whistler, BC is an excellent example of stunning beautification efforts. As the top ski destination in North America, the resort is actually busier in the summer than in the winter. The ambiance of its pedestrian retail area is part of the reason for the large volume of visitors and a year-round season.

In Ellensburg, Washington (bottom left) merchants adopt corner gardens, planting and caring for their flowers and shrubs. Small signs give credit and help promote each participating merchant.

Sisters, Oregon (bottom right) has planter gardens in bulb-outs at intersections. The flowers, trees, and shrubs along the streets encourage visitors to take their time, shopping and enjoying the ambiance. Their local garden club plays an important role in downtown beautification efforts.



**Suggestion:**

Neenah, Wisconsin (population 5,000) did a downtown makeover. Notice the photo, bottom left, with the typical building facades meeting the sidewalks. Now take a look at the shops shown, bottom right, just half a block down the street. Which set of shops would get your attention? Retail sales increased after the beautification enhancements in this block nearly three times faster than in the rest of town.

This merchant in Grass Valley, California (top right) is an expert at enticing people into her shop through her beautiful outdoor displays. She says that the extra time it takes to set this up every morning is well worth the number of customers who are drawn inside because of it. The flowers, by the way, are silk. It takes the merchant just ten minutes each morning to set up the display. Does it make you want to go in?



## Suggestion:

Outdoor displays, such as this one in Blaine, WA (top right), can entice many customers into shops. But outdoor displays are different than outdoor retail - where merchandise is simply set outside on tables, racks, or in boxes. Outdoor displays should be decorative - window displays extended to exterior spaces.

This street scene in Cambria, CA (bottom left) illustrates excellent use of perpendicular signage and strong beautification efforts.

Fredericksburg, Texas (bottom center and right) is the most visited small town in Texas. With a population of only 12,000, it hosts two million visitors a year, with a season lasting 48 weeks. People drive across the state to spend the day there. The appeal? More than 150 shops, galleries, boutiques and emporiums, most within easy walking distance, in a gorgeous historical setting. The town is always “decked out” in its finest - flowers, trees, shrubs, activity.



## Suggestion:

These photos of Fredericksburg, Texas show what an impact potted shrubs and flowers can have at the entrances to shops or restaurants. They add so much appeal, making the entrances very inviting. The merchants work together to purchase pots, plantings, and seasonal color. Most of the plantings are evergreen shrubs to reduce maintenance and to keep them green year round.

Merchants should think of the sidewalks fronting their shops as entry halls to their stores or restaurants. Beautiful settings attract people.

The state of New York works hard to attract visitors to the state, and local tourism offices do their best to bring visitors into the community. But it's up to the merchant to attract those visitors into the store to make a purchase. And one of the most important ways to attract those customers is to make the outside of the shop - the entryway - be attractive and inviting.



### Suggestion:

Merchants could come together to develop a merchant-driven signage and outdoor display program, setting down guidelines for blade signs, outdoor displays, and facade improvements. The program would offer ideas and co-op buying for improvements. As a group, deals could be made with vendors for purchasing quantities of signs, pots, plantings, etc., with the savings passed on to the merchants.

More examples of beautification efforts from Fredericksburg, TX (top and bottom left).

A research study had four towns plant street trees every 30 feet along on block (bottom right), then surveyed sales in that block for a year, comparing them to sales in the rest of the town without street trees. The results found that sales in the block with street trees increased 18% - three to four times the increased retail sales in the rest of the town.



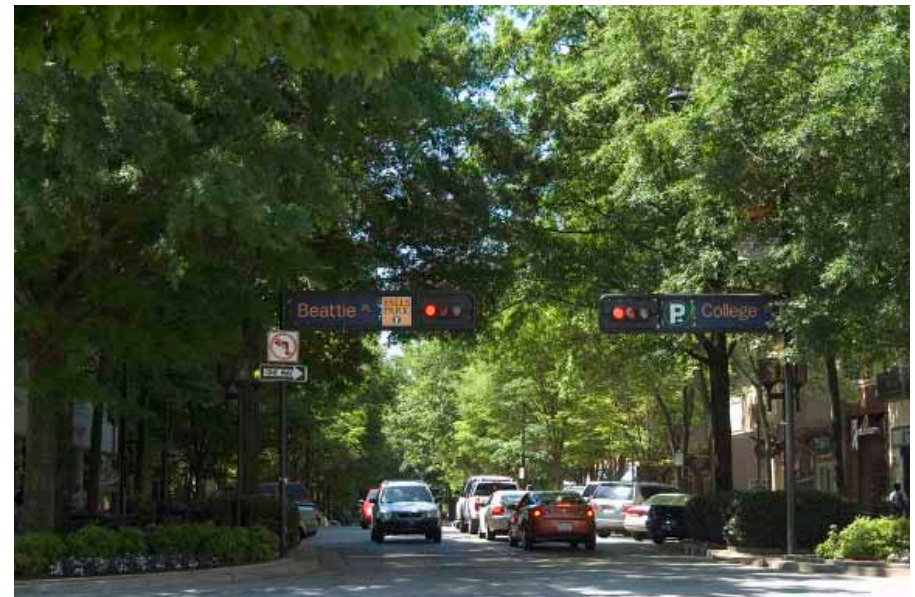


## Case history: Greenville, South Carolina

This case history in photos shows Greenville, South Carolina (top right) as it was in the 1970s, struggling to survive with all the competition from shopping malls and people moving to the suburbs.

Greenville narrowed the street to two lanes, planted street trees, added angle-in parking. (bottom left) This photo was taken in the 1980s.

Here is Greenville today (bottom right), the same street. The canopy of trees is spectacular, and the merchants never complain. Greenville is vibrant, active, and full of busy shoppers. In fact, it has become one of the most popular destination downtowns in the entire state. It's a great place to "hang out." While the trees require maintenance, the return on investment in the form of tax base, far exceeds the cost of the additional maintenance. It looks like a great place to visit, doesn't it?



## Suggestion:

The photos on these two pages show more of the ambiance of Greenville, South Carolina. The wide sidewalks and tree canopy provide wonderful places for outdoor dining, relaxing, strolling, and shopping.

“First places” are our homes - our private domains. “Second places” are the places we work. And “third places” are the places we go to hang out - to socialize, gather, dine, be entertained. More and more communities are realizing the importance of providing these “third places” - not just for visitors, but also for residents. Greenville has worked hard to turn its downtown into that important “third place.”

“Third places” not only provide space for people to enjoy being together, but they are also excellent downtown revitalization opportunities.



**Suggestion:**

The park (bottom right) is also used for events and performances. The small stage provides flexibility for a variety of uses, and attracts people to this gathering space in downtown Greenville.

Consider making Lincoln Park in Olean an activity center rather than just a community park. Create a permanent home for an open air market. Turn your parks into plaza areas - gathering places, not just pretty places.

This is about keeping spending local. Reducing “leakage” when locally earned money is spent elsewhere.



## Suggestion:

Greenville (photos this page) also provides pedestrian wayfinding signage with this downtown map (bottom left). Other maps and signage are placed throughout downtown.

Local banks actually “sponsor” free parking (bottom center) on nights and weekends to draw people downtown. Independence National Bank gets the promotion and actually paid the city a fee to provide the free parking. Why would the bank do this? To build goodwill and help its customers, who happen to be downtown.

Greenville’s wide sidewalks and open areas provide perfect locations for musicians and performers. People are drawn to downtowns that have activities, entertainment, events, and interesting things to see and do.



## A wild idea

Create a well-defined district between Laurens and East State along N. Union. Make it a destination with a strong mix of businesses.

Note: Bluebird Square? Santa Claus Lane? Simplify things! Get rid of multiple street names. They are confusing.

Create consistency with your street signs. These are a number of very different designs, and the city should create continuity and help promote the “theme” of the town if the street signs were the same design - a decorative design would be great.



## Give Downtown a Name The rule of destinations

When you see signs to “business district,” or “downtown,” do these words pull you in? Do they entice you to visit? Even the words “historic downtown” are used so frequently that they are rarely a drawing card. Yet signs that direct you to “Pioneer Square” of Seattle help make it an appealing destination, not just a place.

A few “named” downtowns or districts include:

- Vancouver: Gastown
- Seattle: Pioneer Square
- San Diego: Gaslamp District
- Portland: Pearl District (top photo)
- Nelson, BC: Baker Street
- Snoqualmie, WA: The Rail District
- New Orleans: Bourbon Street, The French Quarter
- Woodlands, TX: Marketplace
- San Antonio: The Riverwalk
- Hawthorne, NV: Patriot Square
- Denver, CO: Larimer Square
- Reading, OH: The Bridal District
- Boulder, CO: Pearl Street Mall

You could turn the streets between Laurens and East State along North Union into a dining and entertainment district, complete with gateways. Only by moving one or two businesses, you could have 13 restaurants in this two block district. There are 10 vacancies now.

The more you have, the further people will come and the longer they will stay.



## Suggestion:

Consider narrowing the street in these two blocks (bottom right). This is wider than nearly all the county and state highways leading to downtown. Think Greenville, which had a very similar situation.

Ever wonder why residential developers create elaborate and attractive gateways to their developments? Those gateways increase the perceived value of the whole neighborhood, increase community pride, sell real estate in the development faster, and at an increased price. Gateways into community districts can create the same kinds of perceptions.

Crockett Street (top right), is an entertainment district in Beaumont, Texas and it's just one block long - but that block is filled with entertainment venues, and people drive from Houston, 80 miles away, to take in a show and spend the night. The county campus (bottom left) has the best gateway in the county. You need one like this for your key downtown district, creating a sense of arrival - making it a true destination.



## Suggestion:

Encourage restaurants to bring dining to outdoor spaces, such as this wide sidewalk (top photo). It's a great restaurant (and the best curb appeal in downtown Olean), but imagine it with outdoor dining. It would bring downtown to life.

The two bottom photos show outdoor dining in Asheville, North Carolina. Cities around the country are adding outdoor dining spaces, alcoves for entertainment, beautification, and gathering spaces.

By widening the sidewalks, creating bulb-outs or even closing a street to traffic to make it pedestrian-only, you can create locations for outdoor dining, events, shopping and socializing. People love to gather in bustling, vibrant places.





## Suggestion:

This page and the following few pages show more examples of what other cities have done to accommodate dining outdoors.

Asheville, NC (top right) - one of the bulb-outs used for both dining and outdoor entertainment.

Another location in downtown Asheville (bottom left) where two parking spaces were removed to create a small seating area in front of a restaurant.

Along a plaza area in Newport on the Levee in Kentucky where tables and umbrellas create a cozy spot to dine and watch passersby.



## Suggestion:

This restaurant (top right) in Covington, Kentucky, has created an elegant and beautiful dining area outside.

It doesn't require a lot of space to set up outdoor dining. There's just enough room on the sidewalk for this cafe in Ellicottville (bottom left) to set up a few small tables and chairs. No wonder this is one of the area's favorite towns.

Likewise for this restaurant (bottom center) in Asheville, NC. Outdoor dining has tremendous appeal for both residents and visitors. It helps bring a downtown to life.

This cafe in Turlock, California (bottom right) has defined its space with a small wrought-iron fence and planter boxes. The umbrellas also create a cozy, comfortable ambiance for the diners.



## Suggestion:

This street in Santa Barbara, California (top right) is lined with restaurants - all with outdoor dining. The beautiful wide tile sidewalks provide a perfect spot for setting out the umbrellas, tables, and chairs, with potted shrubs to help define the space.

Another small sidewalk cafe (bottom left) in Lodi, California.

Argyle Street in Halifax, Nova Scotia (bottom right) is devoted almost entirely to dining. The 22 restaurants here have built decks over the sidewalks along one side of the street to accommodate tables and chairs. During the dinner hour, all the seats are full. It has become the “hot spot” in all of Halifax. It proves the power of critical mass of like businesses grouped together. Think antique malls, auto malls, food courts.



## Suggestion:

More photos of Argyle Street in Halifax, Nova Scotia on this page show how the restaurants have built their decks, which are removed during the winter. They decorate their outdoor spaces to reflect the ambiance of each restaurant, and provide a small walkway for pedestrians.

These are not professionally done, but they are effective. Because it's such a great place to hang out, people don't mind having to walk a block or two from parking areas, since the parking here has been replaced by walkways.



## Suggestion:

These restaurants on Argyle Street in Halifax (top and bottom left) provide outdoor dining right on the sidewalks, with awnings, umbrellas, and flower boxes providing screening and definition. Note how busy they are for dinner! People congregate on Argyle Street in the evening for the many dining options they can find there, and the chance to eat outside. It has become a major attraction, and it's active year round. They have winters perhaps harsher than you do in Western New York, yet this is a year round destination.

Imagine this courtyard (bottom right) full of tables, chairs and entertainment. It's a great location - take advantage of the space to make it a real destination. This is NOT a good location for a government office. Think "highest and best use."



## Suggestion:

Imagine this courtyard (top) filled with evening vendors: musicians, artisans in action. It would also be a great place for outdoor dining.

The vacant retail spaces here (bottom left) are made to order for dining and entertainment.

Wouldn't it be great if Angees (bottom right) would consider relocating into this dining district? This business has the right idea with outdoor dining to the side of the restaurant. Good job - and a busy spot.



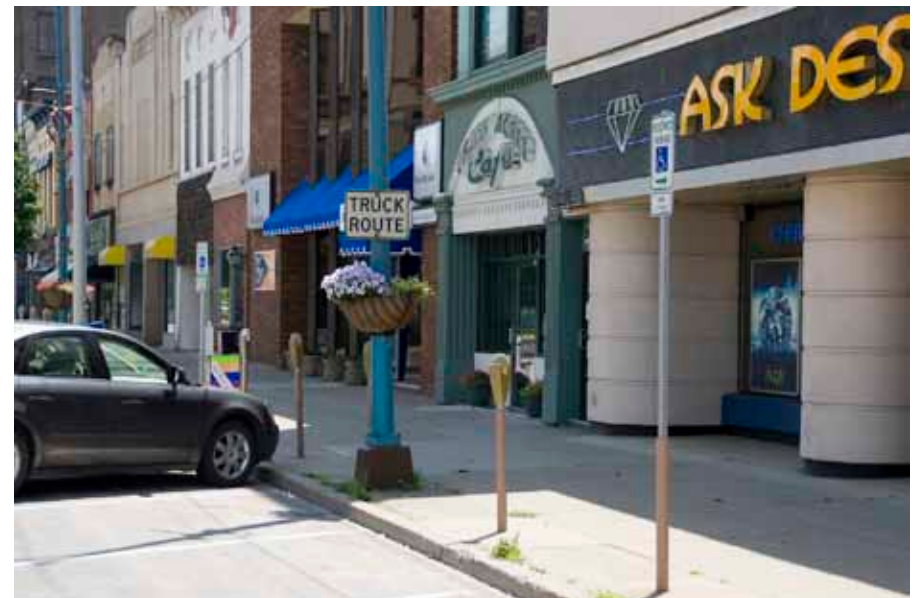
## Suggestion:

Beef 'N Barrel (top) seems to be the “anchor” for this suggested dining and entertainment district.

What a great gathering area this could be (bottom left). The flower baskets are beautiful, and the street lights add a lot of ambiance. Add more planters with flowers against the buildings, along with a few tables and chairs.

Green Acres (bottom right) is already in the district, but imagine adding tables, chairs, Catalina umbrellas. Lose a parking space or two and expand the dining area out, as in some of the examples on the previous pages.

Olean could easily be a major gathering spot for this entire area of the state.



## Suggestion:

Another restaurant opportunity. (top right) You can even use the alley for shade and additional seating, as they do in many small alleyways in Europe. Add some planter boxes and hanging baskets with flowers.

And another opportunity (bottom left) ...

...and another. (bottom right) There is NO community, that we know of, in Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, or Allegany Counties that has the urban district like this. Ellicottville is the closest - and is very popular because of it. Take advantage of it, and develop a restaurant and entertainment district. People are drawn to activity-based urban districts and these two or three blocks easily have that potential. You can make it stunningly beautiful but at the end of the day, it's what's IN the buildings that makes downtown a true destination.





**Suggestion:**

The next ingredient for downtown is activities after 6:00 p.m. Bring downtown to life with things for people to see and do in the evenings. Shops open after 6:00, entertainment, outdoor events and markets - all of these help make a downtown be vibrant, full of life and activity, and a successful place to do business.

The number one diversionary activity of visitors - in the world - is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian friendly setting. That's why a vibrant, active downtown is so important to tourism.

Recruit street musicians and performers to entertain visitors and locals. Work to become a hub of activity. This creates a fun, festival-like ambiance, making people want to be there.

Asheville shopping (top); Appleton, Wisconsin downtown market (bottom left); street magician in Cannon Beach, Oregon (bottom center); and musicians (bottom right) in Nelson, British Columbia.



## Suggestion:

In Asheville (top right), restaurants pay musicians to entertain patrons seated in outdoor dining areas. They say this increases business by 50% or more.

Musicians performing in an outdoor gathering area (bottom left) in Gowanda, New York.

Provide space for artisans to work and sell their art. People are fascinated by watching artists at work, and are three times more likely to make a purchase if they meet the artist.

Recruit musicians, artists, performers, and entertainers to help bring downtown to life. Of course, people love to be entertained, and making downtown a hub of activity and fun things to see and do, will attract locals and visitors.



## Suggestion:

Across the country people are moving into downtowns that have music, art, entertainment, food, and specialty shops. (top right) Residential units downtown provide a built-in customer base for businesses.

The mall (bottom left) seems stuck in the 70s and looks dated. It doesn't look like there is enough retail to attract many customers. Fits the rule of "critical mass:" The more you have to offer, the further people will come and the longer they will stay. Locals tend to head to the Walden Galleria in Buffalo, where there is more to offer.

What would it take to revitalize the mall? Updating the building? Reduced rents? Recruitment of new businesses? A truly unique shop? A theme?

The Old Library, (bottom right) neighboring B&B and Lincoln Park make a great "book end" to the core downtown district. Beautiful.



Use the readerboard! The mall has some potential, but seems to be a failing project.



**Note:**

Yes, the squirrels are fun and are a nice touch. Public art is always appreciated by local residents and visitors alike.

Love the tuxedo squirrel!



Very fun! Gee, can you guess who sponsored the squirrel shown in the bottom right photo? Very clever. These are nicely done.



## Suggestion:

I saw signs everywhere (top) promoting a number of events. Suggestion: Create a calendar of events and have it distributed to all the hotels, restaurants, and have posters of it mounted in shop windows downtown.

You must recruit and promote those specific businesses that support and grow the brand.

Visitor information should be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Visitors don't just travel during business hours. The Chamber (bottom left) should add 24 hour visitor information, using weather-proof brochure holders and displays outside to offer maps, guides, and "The Best of Olean" brochure.

Ottawa, Illinois developed a "best of" brochure (bottom right), which includes specific businesses that are truly unique - that visitors can't find closer to home. It is proving to be very successful.



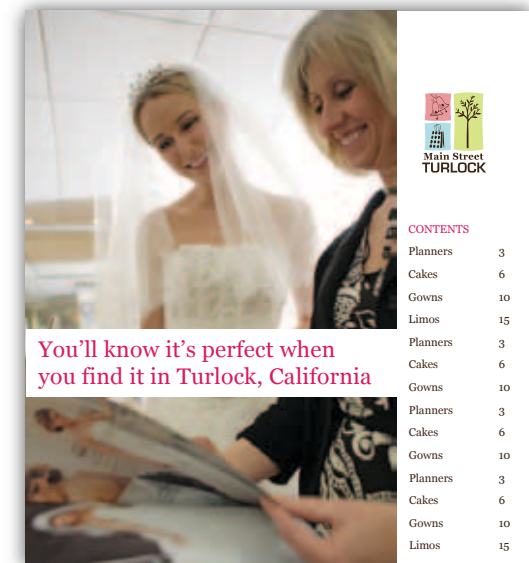
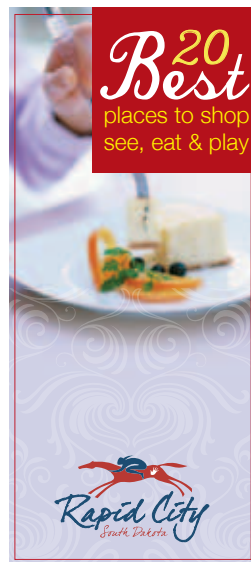
## Suggestion:

Create a “Best of Olean” brochure that highlights specific shops, attractions and restaurants that are unique. The days of generic marketing are over. This brochure should include only the best - it’s not membership based. The selections included must be chosen because they are truly unique and excellent.

Each attraction, shop, or restaurant should have its own page, with photos and text that gives specific information. If a shop carries items handmade by a local artisan, then those items should be included, with brief information about the artist. If a restaurant has a signature dish, that dish should be described. Sell specifics! That’s what makes people’s mouths water and their imaginations spark. That’s what makes people want to visit.

Sample criteria could include: 1) They must be open at least 6 days a week. 2) They must have good curb appeal. 3) They must be highly regarded by someone other than themselves. 4) They must be open into the evening hours - at least 7:00 pm.

Other concepts were designed for Rapid City, SD (near right), Stockton, CA (top right) and for Turlock, CA (bottom right) who is turning their downtown into a bridal shopping district.



**Suggestion:**

This (top right) would be an excellent spot for visitor information - especially during events or peak hours and seasons.

Some of the architecture and buildings in Olean are incredible (bottom photos).





## Suggestion:

Olean has a great downtown made to order with lots of potential to become the region's most popular "Third Place."

There are some great shops and a wide array of services that can easily make downtown Olean the "Home base for the Allegheny & Enchanted Mountains experience." Olean could be the provisioning headquarters.



## Marketing Assessments:

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

### Review of Marketing Materials

#### Enchanted Mountains Guide

The overall look and quality of the piece is good. It has a lot of great photography – people enjoying things in the region, as well as shots showcasing the beauty of the area. The layout is clear and easy to follow, and the copy is broken up well with photos, captions, headers and white space.

The only thing it lacks is a very brief welcome or description of Cattaraugus County. The Welcome Page is listed as page 2, which is adjacent to the table of contents; this page has a bulleted list of areas and attractions. However, I think a two or three sentence paragraph introducing the reader to the area (where it is, as well as a very quick synopsis of what there is to see and do) would help open the piece and set the stage for the rest of the information.

#### Fannie E. Bartlett Center rack card

This piece has most of the basic information a visitor would need if interested in visiting the Center, with the exception of admission (and if free, it should say that as well.) On the backside, the text is broken up by two black boxes; the first black box contains part of the first paragraph. It makes it more difficult to read with the paragraph's background color changing mid sentence. I would recommend taking the black boxes out entirely.

Overall, this piece is simple and appears homemade. It needs to be sure to address all the relevant information, including admission prices and adding a few word description of where it's located could help too (such as "Located next to the post office downtown.")

#### Olean Calendar of Events

This piece is a bit unwieldy to handle when it is unfolded all the way. Perhaps a different layout would make it more readable. The look of it is ok,

but it would be good to give it a look and feel that is consistent with other Olean marketing materials, in terms of colors, graphics, etc. Also, the list of attractions should include websites where possible.

#### Rock City Park rack card

This piece has a few photographs, which is nice to see in such a small card. It is a little copy heavy; the side with the map has a better balance of copy to photos and whitespace.

#### Sprague's Maple Farms brochure

Overall, this is a nice piece. It's a bit heavy on copy; I'd recommend sticking to the highlights, breaking up paragraphs with bullets where possible.

### Olean and Salamanca, New York, Distance Marketing Assessment

I began my search for travel information by Googling Cattaraugus County (CC), New York, where I found several listings. The third item seems the most promising for tourism information; however, it is a website (<http://www.cattco.org/nyconnects/>) for "choices for long term care." It does have a visitor tab, though, and I am off to the Enchanted Mountains website (<http://www.EnchantedMountains.info/>) where I continue my search for Salamanca, the Seneca Nation and Olean. Going through the regions of Cattaraugus County, I find Salamanca and the Seneca Nation of Indians listed in the South West region. Olean is the largest city in the South East region. I like these "Get to Know Us" pages as they give quick overview of the region and provide links to the cities.

Olean's direct link is to the Chamber of Commerce site (<http://www.oleanny.com/2/>), which needs a little technical work. Its "Upcoming Events" are listed over the title, and the listing of pages has a line running through them. The misty picture of the rock park looks very flat and not particularly inviting with what appears to be a warning sign tacked to a tree in the foreground. Perhaps the information will be better than the graphics.

Area Accommodations provides a very thorough listing of everything in the area with direct links to all the Olean lodgings. Nothing stands out as far as a great resort or four-star hotel. The Arts & Culture page is wonderfully full

and gives the idea of a vibrant town with many interests. The Dining and Shopping page would look nice if it didn't have the big JC Penney sign; all the other pictures are portray a quaint town. Having to go to the membership directory is annoying, and then do you search under retail or shopping? Visitors don't care who is a member, they're more interested in easily finding the information they need. This list needs work too, and so does the dining list. Both lists need some graphics or logos to spice them up. I do appreciate the descriptions for many of the listings. Moving on to recreation, it seems there are some options in and around Olean. The Allegheny River Valley Trail looks like it would give you a good workout and view of Olean and St. Bonaventure University. I nearly missed the listings for Golf, Fishing and Hunting and Winter Fun at the bottom of the page, as their type is so small. It seems like a nice place, but do I really want to visit? I'll give them a call.

The helpful woman at the Chamber said that Olean wasn't a very big town but St. Bonaventure and the Village of Allegany are nearby. She immediately thought my sons would enjoy the squirrel sculptures that had been commissioned and placed throughout the town. Based on the website I believe it is called Woodlands in the City. She also suggested Rock City Park, but it is not listed on the recreation page of the Chamber's site. Other ideas included the Salamanca Casino, the museum in Seneca, and I asked about canoe rentals, and she thought A-1 Rentals in Allegany could help us. She gave me four possible hotel/motel listings, and said, "They are all very nice accommodations." I asked her to send me information as soon as possible as we were planning to visit at the end of August. Our call lasted nearly 12 minutes. I received my batch of information in four days.

The information included one full size, color brochure entitled The Enchanted Mountains of Western New York, a map of Olean and 14 slender brochures. The first thing I noticed about the full size guide is that every picture has a caption so that you know exactly where to find that particular activity. It makes for a lot of text, but then you know they just aren't stock photos. I will say that the guide does a great job of showcasing the great variety of this area. It seems like you could have fun there summer or winter. The Calendar of Events was very impressive, too, along with the fold out map in the center of the book. The maps include great details of the area and excellent coverage of all the major attractions.

After reviewing the Enchanted Mountains brochure I gave them a call (1-800-331-0543). The woman on the other end was friendly, yet hesitant with her enthusiasm. We spoke for about 9 minutes, and she told me about Allegany State Park, and that it is the largest park in NY. She said the Allegheny Reservoir is one of "our hidden jewels." I asked if we could rent boats at the Onoville Marina and she explained that right across the street at the Bay View Lodge is where you rent the boats. She suggested I make a boat reservation especially if we were visiting on a weekend. She said there were "lots of historical places" and that all the info was in the brochure. I asked about the Seneca Iroquois Museum and she said, "They do a nice job." When I inquired about boutique shopping she suggested Ellicottville, and that my husband and sons could go to the nearby 18-hole golf course while I shopped. The Amish country is nearby, and I asked her about that, and she said it was pretty and they sell all sorts of crafts. She reminded me that everything was closed on Sundays and to not take pictures of the Amish. I did most of the asking and she seemed almost reluctant to give me too much of a description about any location.

Going through the other information from the Olean Chamber I was surprised there is only one hotel listing and only a few dining options—not very informational for the tourist. The "Amish Trails" brochure has a great map, and I liked the description of Amish life and beliefs. I would say it is the best Amish map/guide I have seen so far. "Antique Trails" brochure is also produced by CC, and it too has a very clear map. The "Activities for a Rainy Day" brochure is a great idea and another good map. The CC brochure regarding the "Wagon Train ..." is filled with bicentennial information and looks like it would be quite an adventure.

Other leaflets covered the Allegheny River Valley Trail, Onoville marina, a bad copy of the Fannie E. Bartlett Center leaflet, The Seneca-Iroquois National Museum, Rock City Park, Olean, NY Calendar of Events, Sprague's Maple Farms, Cutco Ka-Bar Visitors Center, and the Eldred WWII Museum. They all had the necessary information, obviously color ones are more interesting. My top three choices out of the pile would be: Onoville marina, the Valley Trail and the Seneca-Iroquois Museum. The Eldred museum appears to be maybe an hour south of Olean and might just be worth the visit for an avid WW II history buff.

Moving onto Salamanca and their chamber website (<http://salamancachamber.org/>). It is a little busy with advertisers, and the photo at the bottom the page is not very pretty; however I do like the revolving pictures at the top of the page. “Area Attractions” is a short list with descriptions of some of the attractions including direct links. The “Visit Salamanca” page lists accommodations, shopping and dining with direct links. They need to make shopping look more fun – the photo is a bit boring, and not very many shops are listed. I gave the Chamber a call (716-945-2034) and spoke with a representative for about 8 minutes. She explained that Salamanca was surrounded by a reservation and that they had a “great” museum. She told me about some upcoming events and that CC was celebrating their bicentennial so there were lots of celebrations all year long. I told her we were coming in a couple of weeks and could she please me information soon. I received my envelope in exactly one week!

Included was the CC “Enchanted Mountains ...” brochure, accommodation listings from their website, and 15 leaflets. Two leaflets were repeats from Olean (Wagon Train and Onoville Marina). Another CC production features the “Driving Tour of the Old Chautauqua Road” which is very, very detailed with driving instructions, but looks like it could be fun in the fall. The other leaflets cover three museums: historical society, the rail museum and the Seneca-Iroquois; along with two accommodations, rental property (Brookhaven), summer Sunday concert series, Crosspatch horseback riding, Hampshire Mills, Welcome to Salamanca, an Allegany State Park map, and a Seneca Nation of Indians brochure.

Purusing all this information quickly, I wanted to check out the Park map. The park appears to be very large and it would be fun to explore especially on horseback. There are numerous ads that caught my eye, especially the Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Center— only a half hour away in Jamestown, NY. The accommodations are two extremes – a B & B and Holiday Inn Express. I get the idea that Salamanca is not as big as Olean and seems a bit more rural.

I was curious to see how Olean and Salamanca are portrayed on the NY state website (<http://www.iloveny.com/>). Olean’s page features a picture of Big Rock Park. The sentence that refers to Olean as “the major commerce and industrial center” for CC and the surrounding area doesn’t exactly make

it sound as bucolic as it appears to be. The aforementioned attractions are highlighted, but missing from this list is the Allegany State Park and the Onoville Marina. There is a direct link to the Chamber’s website.

Salamanca does not have a picture but has a short page listing all its best attractions, including the park, Seneca Iroquois Museum, and the casino. There is a link to the CC Visitors Bureau. I also explored the Seneca Nation of Indians website (<http://www.sni.org/>), which is graphically pleasing, but this website is not really for tourists. I explored the Seneca casino websites (<http://www.senecaniagaracasino.com/>, <http://www.senecaalleganycasino.com/>, <http://www.senecagamingcorporation.com>) and they are all very dynamic.

Gave NY state tourism a call (1-800-CALL-NYS), and they very quickly told me that I needed to call the Finger Lakes region – I was on the phone less than two minutes. Calling Finger Lakes (1-800-548-4386), I spent most of the seven minutes waiting for the consultant to find out where Olean is and whom to call. She said it was near Jamestown and that I needed to call them, and then she found Olean’s number and gave me the Chamber’s number. Clearly, the state needs some geography lessons along with the nearby regions.

In conclusion, if I lived about two hours away I might go to the Allegany State Park and definitely the Onoville Marina. I do love knives and would go to the Cutco Visitor Center and would probably stay in Olean. I’m not sure why, but I just like the sound of Olean better. I think you could visit the Enchanted Mountain region at anytime of year; summer and fall would be my preference. I think it is a great family location, although I could see escaping to a cabin in the park with my husband or having a rustic girlfriend weekend. The Enchanted Mountain area could increase their tourism if they let the state and surrounding regions know about their location. I think the Enchanted Mountains have done a good job with their brochure, and it already seems very family focused. I think they should continue to work this angle. It is a great weekend place, and you could probably spend a week in the area in summer. I would not drive more than two hours to visit this region.

P.S. Why is Allegheny/Allegany spelled two different ways? It is very confusing!!!!

### **Olean, NY Distance Marketing Assessment**

It's rare that I am this stumped when it comes to finding travel information for a region, city, town or even small hamlet in the middle of nowhere. Usually the Chamber of Commerce will have a spot on their website entitled "Travel", "Tourism" or "Visitor Information," and although said page might not be overflowing with useful information, it will at least contain an attempt to list things to see and do in the area. Barring that, you can usually find an independent website or other regional website that will have information on attractions, lodging etc. When it comes to Olean, however, I seem to have met my match.

That isn't to say there is no visitor information available for Olean. It's just buried and quite frankly, I spent much more time looking for it than you could expect an actual potential visitor to do. The Chamber of Commerce website, first and foremost, lacks a link from the homepage to anything visitor related. If they're lucky enough for someone to click on "Area Information", there is some information under the subheaders there. But it's not obvious visitor information. "Arts and Culture" has some information on attractions, such as the Bartlett Historical House and Olean Point Museum, but it also lists dance studios and the public library.

I also checked the Enchanted Mountains website ([www.enchantedmountains.info](http://www.enchantedmountains.info)) to see if I could find more information about Olean. Unfortunately, this site doesn't list anything by city. I'd have to wade through all of the attractions, amenities, etc. looking for places located in Olean, in order to find out more about Olean specifically. It's highly doubtful a potential visitor would be interested enough to spend that kind of time singling out Olean.

The verdict: Olean is not a place I'd plan to visit, whether I lived 5 hours or 30 minutes away. Essentially, I found no compelling reason to go. I couldn't find interesting attractions or anything that makes Olean unique and worth a visit.

To get visitors to go there, Olean should start by making relevant, compelling, or even just some visitor information available, and just as importantly, easy to find. A visitor information page on the Chamber of Commerce website would be a start, although an entire site dedicated to tourism would be ideal. The lack of easy to find information is an immediate turn off. Someone looking for information on the area will be quick to move on to the next town when their search brings up next to nothing.

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