

Libby, Montana

Visitor Experience Assessment

September, 2016



Tourism provides economic development opportunities. To be successful, residents, business owners and stakeholders must provide hassle-free experiences and services that meet visitors' needs and exceed their expectations.

With so many destinations for visitors to choose from, why should someone choose Libby and/or Troy and what will their experience be like once they arrive?

This project focused on answering this question by taking a candid look at where Libby and Troy are today and what will make the communities stronger. It also establishes a foundation for on-going conversations about whether tourism makes sense in terms of economic development and in terms of quality of life for residents.

Communities who successfully continue to attract visitors work hard to develop a strong identity and

strong sense of place backed by a solid product and effective marketing. When you deliver on the promise you make to your visitors, they are eager to return and will share their positive experience with their friends, family and a variety of online sources.

It's important to note that emphasizing tourism isn't for every community. Having a strong sense of place and being a great place to live comes first. If residents are choosing to spend their free time elsewhere, their community probably won't appeal to visitors either.

This assessment, coordinated by Kootenai River Development Council and the funded by The Friends of Scotchman Peaks and a grant from the Montana Main Street program, is a look at Libby and Troy through the eyes of a visitor. It is intended as a tool for identifying strengths upon which to build, challenges to mitigate, and opportunities to consider. Containing both a marketing assessment and an on-site assessment, it is a snapshot in time, a baseline against which to gauge progress



PROJECT OUTLINE

Summer 2016

A team of five completed the marketing assessment to determine if Libby and Troy show up as an option when people plan a Northwest Montana vacation. The assessment started with planning a trip to Northwest Montana and then focused on Libby and Troy to determine whether they would visit and what they would do if they did visit.

Getting past the first step, where visitors gather information, is challenging for all destinations. When visitors are making decisions about where to spend their time and money, they consciously and subconsciously access an array of resources over an indeterminate period of time.

The team was free to use any resources they would normally use when planning a trip, including:

- Recommendations from friends and family
- Books
- Movies and TV shows
- Magazine and newspaper articles
- Guidebooks and brochures
- Print advertising
- TV and radio advertising
- On-line advertising
- Social media including Facebook and Twitter
- Websites
- Blogs
- YouTube and Flickr
- Billboards
- Highway signs
- Previous travel experiences

Summer 2016

Another team conducted the on-site assessments of Libby and Troy. The purpose of this phase was to experience the communities the same way a first-time visitor might. Questions addressed were:

- Can visitors find Libby and/or Troy?
- What's the first impression?
- Where can visitors get information?
- What is the tourism product?
- Is the tourism product worth the visit?
- Where are the public restrooms?
- Can visitors find their way around?

The team took pictures, explored, visited attractions, made purchases, ate in restaurants and talked to business owners, residents and other visitors.

September 21, 2106

A meeting was held to review the assessment findings and begin the conversation about the area's future as a tourism destination.



STEP 1: PLAN A TRIP TO NORTHWEST MONTANA

You're looking to explore away from the Glacier area and its crowds. Is there any place that you've read about or heard about that sounds interesting? This can be towns, historic sites, activities, restaurants, lodging, retail, natural areas, anything.

Marketing Assessment Team

JOEY

Single, 20s
Travels with friends
Lives in Central Montana
Likes outdoor recreation, breweries

ANNA

Married, 30s
Travels with family, 2 children under 10
Just moved to Central Montana
Likes family-friendly, outdoor recreation, historic sites, breweries, geocaching

PAULA

Married, 40s
Travels with spouse and teenage children
Driving from the Midwest
Likes outdoor recreation, historic sites, events, shopping, breweries

DAVE

Married, 40s
Travels with spouse/friends
Driving from Washington
Likes outdoor recreation, breweries, events

ALAN

Married, 60s
Travels with spouse/friends
From Alberta but full-time RVer
Likes outdoor recreation, breweries, historic sites, festivals



Search Terms Used

Traveling in Northwest Montana
Things to see and do in Northwest Montana
Top 10 cities to visit in Northwest Montana
Top experiences in Northwest Montana
Where to vacation in Northwest Montana
Top antique shops in Northwest Montana
Things to see in Montana before you die
Towns in Northwest Montana
Northwest Montana Fair
Northwest Montana map
Northwest Montana tourism attractions
Hiking in Northwest Montana
Water sports in Northwest Montana
Places to eat in Northwest Montana
Northwest Montana +
 Hand-crafted
 Ghost towns
 Road trips
 Family-friendly
 Coolest small towns
 Scrapbooking
 Quaint events
 Events and festivals
 Small town fun
 Trip ideas
 Kayaking
Paddleboarding
Unique shops
Kid favorites
Live music
Wineries
Geocaches
Outdoor recreation
Hiking trails
Biggest things
Food Channel
Living history
Galleries
Live theatre
Historic sites
Quirky places
Events
Camping
Lodging
Cultural activities
Fishing
Boating
Asked on Facebook
Asked on Twitter



What places and/or activities in Northwest Montana look interesting?

- Missoula
- Eureka
- Keystone
- Flathead Lake
- Wa-SUP Shack
- Tobacco Valley
- The Front Porch
- Finger Lake Trail
- Whitefish
- Whitefish Lake Golf
- Teller Wildlife Refuge
- Skalkaho Highway

"I found mostly outdoor activities. A trip to this area is going to be a VERY active trip and that's what we're looking for!"

~Joey

"We recently moved to Montana and I'm excited to explore the state. While researching, I found the Bitterroot area and loved it. After I finished my research, I found out it was SW Montana. I thought I was crazy but, when I went back to my searches, the Bitterroot area items were the first hits in most cases. . . weird."

~Anna

- Lolo Pass
- Bitterroot Valley
- Hamilton
- Browning
- Lewis & Clark Trail
- Lost Trail Pass
- Caras Park
- Yellow Bay State Park
- Stevensville
- Philipsburg
- Bigfork
- Conrad Mansion

- Corvallis
- Thompson Falls
- Wild Horse Island
- National Bison Range
- St. Ignatius Mission
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Tobacco Valley
- Ten Lakes Scenic Area
- Webb Mountain
- Murphy Lake loop

"I am not familiar with NW Montana at all so I spent a great deal of time searching for places and then looking at maps. It would help if sites would put their location into context for me."

~Paula



What places and/or activities in Central Texas look interesting?

- Kootenai National Forest
- Rails to Trails (Eureka)
- Flathead Lake
- Jewel Basin
- Columbia Falls
- Ninepipes NWR
- Whitefish Mountain Resort
- Bear Paw Battlefield
- Eureka Farmers Market
- Missouri River
- Little Therriault Lake

"I asked for recommendations on Twitter and Facebook about what to do in Northwest Montana and everyone told me to go to Glacier or Missoula. I've been there, I'm looking for places away from people."

~Dave

"Even though I'm from Alberta, this is an area I've never explored. What a mistake!"

~Alan

- Finger Lake Trail
- The North Fork
- Flathead National Forest
- Stahl Creek
- Lookout Trail
- Museum of the Plains Indian
- Lewis & Clark Caverns



After all of their research, did Libby or Troy show up?

Barely—they identified the Kootenai National Forest, but that was it.

This led to the next step where the team was asked to specifically focus on Libby.

The feedback indicated below reflects their initial research. On the next page is a list of what interested them when they were looking at the county as a whole.

STEP 2: WOULD YOU GO TO LIBBY?

If No, why not?

If Yes,

Where would you go?

What would you do?

Joey—Maybe

Anna—No

Paula—No

Dave—No

Alan—Maybe



Search Terms

Libby MT
Libby MT +
 Family-friendly
 Outdoor recreation
 Hiking
 Antiques
 Ghost towns
 Fishing
 Where to eat
 Quirky things to do
 Historic sites
 Shopping
 Breweries
 Things to do
 Attractions
 Events

Boat rentals
Bike rentals
Wineries
Best beer
Why should I visit
Galleries
Outfitters
Water Sports
Camping
Local food
Where to stay
Restaurants

Asked on Facebook
Asked on Twitter

What places and/or activities in Libby look interesting?

Riverfront Blues Festival
Pasture Pickin'
Nordicfest
Ignite the Night
Libby Logger Days
Lake Koocanusa
Heritage Museum
Kootenai Falls
Libby Creek Gold Panning Area
Drive-in Movie Theater
Cabinet Mountain Brewing



"I like the statement that I found . . . 'unencumbered by crowds of people!' We would hike in the mountains and do some fishing but I'm not sure I would spend any time actually in Libby except at the brewery or at an event if there was one."

~Joey

"When I asked my neighbors and people at work about Libby, they told me about the asbestos and said there were safer places to take the kids hiking and camping."

~Anna

"Finding information was not easy. The Chamber website was difficult to navigate and many of the links did not work . . . I'm interested in the recreation options but all of the stories about the asbestos scared me."

~Paula

"I just want to go fishing and camping and get away from people but, the stories about asbestos make me question whether the water is safe."

~Dave

"Why are they the City of Eagles? I don't see anything about actual eagles just photos of sculptures . . . I would expect a variety of eagle viewing areas but saw no information like that."

~Alan



STEP 2: WOULD YOU GO TO TROY?

If No, why not?

If Yes,

Where would you go?

What would you do?

Joey—Yes

Anna—No

Paula—Maybe

Dave—No

Alan—Maybe

Search Terms

Troy MT

Troy MT +

Family-friendly

Outdoor recreation

Hiking

Antiques

Fishing

Where to eat

Historic sites

Shopping

Breweries

Things to do

Where to stay

Asked on Facebook

Asked on Twitter



What places and/or activities in Libby look interesting?

Fishing

Hiking

Mining history

Ross Creek Cedars

Yaak River

Museum

Geocaching

Roosevelt Park yurt

Lake Koocanusa

Kootenai Falls

Swinging Bridge

"Definitely want to see the Ross Creek Cedars and the Swinging Bridge but otherwise there isn't much there."

~Joey

"I could see us maybe stopping at the Ross Creek Cedars if we were driving through. From the websites there really isn't anything else there except the museum and I couldn't find any hours and no one ever answered the phone."

~Paula

"I'd like to go to the Cedar Grove and hike to see Kootenai Falls but all of the asbestos information that kept coming up and that I've heard about is a little scary so I won't be going anytime soon."

~Anna

"Troy has nothing of interest since it was difficult to find information."

~Dave

"It's hard to tell what is associated with Libby and what is with Troy. The things I'm interested in are outside of town so I'm not sure which town to say I might visit."

~Alan



After visitors have identified a destination or a region and are searching online for what there is to see and/or do, they usually search for something like “things to do Libby MT” That’s exactly what happened with our team. Unfortunately, all of them had trouble finding what they considered to be relevant, current information. How do you fix this?

(1) Every business needs to claim their Google Business listing

(2) Every restaurant, attraction, and lodging option needs to claim their Yelp listing and include phrases like this in the description:

- one of many things to do in Libby (or Troy) MT
- Libby (or Troy) Montana
- refer to the business in relationship to other places and businesses (cross-promotion)

(3) Every restaurant, attraction and lodging option needs to claim their TripAdvisor listing.

(4) Every restaurant needs to claim their listing on Zomato (formerly UrbanSpoon)

(5) Update websites and be sure they meet the following minimum requirements:

- Address—including city, state, zip
- Phone—including area code
- Hours
- Check all links to make sure they still work
- Use great photos
- Use at least 18 point fonts
- Don't be afraid of white space
- Keep the information current and relevant



Onsite Assessment/Expectations

A separate team conducted the onsite assessment during the summer. The purpose of this phase was to experience the communities the same way a first-time visitor might. Team members visited Libby and Troy twice to understand what visitors experience. These visits took place on various days and at different times of day. We took pictures, explored, visited attractions, made purchases, ate in restaurants and talked to business owners, residents and other visitors.

Prior to the onsite assessment, a list of expectations was compiled in conjunction with the marketing assessment team. The expectations were:

- Blight due to asbestos
- Uncrowded
- Mountain views
- Rivers with clear water
- Unique boutiques/mom-and-pop shops
- Wide variety of restaurants and cuisines
- Friendly people
- Outdoor recreation equipment rental options
- Camping options
- Hiking trails at all skill levels
- Bike trails
- Temperate weather
- Interesting museums
- Bald eagles

Finding Libby and Troy

Knowing where Libby and Troy were was initially a challenge but once they were located on a map, navigation was simple. Although they are tucked up in the corner of the state, once a visitor gets on Highway 2, they can't miss either community.

This is important when people are considering a destination. The simpler the directions, the more appealing a place will be.

Basic wayfinding could be improved in both communities—examples and recommendations are provided throughout this report.



LIBBY FIRST IMPRESSIONS



Gateways are a community's front door. They say "We're glad you're here. Let us show you around."

Gateways should always go where you make your best first impression and they should reflect your identity and character. They let people know you're proud of your city.

This regional gateway is well-situated. It remains visible while blending nicely with the surroundings.



The gateway sign for Libby is buried in the trees and sits in shadow most of the time. With the lack of contrast between the background and the lettering and the way the landscaping has grown up to the point that the sign is blocked from the roadway, it is now nearly invisible



This is a nice area and the eagle sculpture is imposing. When the welcome sign is re-done, this would make a good location due to the higher visibility.

LIBBY FIRST IMPRESSIONS



This is the best entry corridor into downtown—well-landscaped with overflowing baskets and mountain views—you have a stellar front door.

Extending the streetscape into downtown will improve the experience, draw more visitors and make it an appealing location for businesses.



It is important to keep main corridors clean and well-maintained. Weeds and trash combined with vacant storefronts create a forlorn feeling.

Visitors entering Libby from the Lake Koocanusa loop need enticement to stop and spend some time. Banners and effective signage would add vitality and information about what Libby has to offer.



Those driving through on Hwy 2 are greeted by a wall of banner signs on the school fence. Is there another place to put these or another way to publicize events and activities?

Banners should be used for short periods of time for events and not for on-going information.

If the banners must stay, be meticulous about how they're positioned and remove them as soon as they are no longer relevant. .

LIBBY FIRST IMPRESSIONS



The use of garbage cans for promoting events is an excellent idea. However, their current condition contributes to a negative, wobegone impression about the community.

Touching up the paint and removing the rust spots indicates community pride and affirms that the events are still happening.



The quantity of public art in Libby was surprising. We enjoyed the eagles (although we didn't understand the connection with the city) and found hidden, whimsical pieces like this.

Promoting this as a selfie spot would be a fun way to get people to stop and look around.



Highway 2 is the main street for many communities across Montana and this will lead some visitors to assume that this commercial corridor is your downtown as well.

Directing any vehicles passing by to your actual downtown with simple wayfinding will increase visitation and spending.

TROY FIRST IMPRESSIONS



Troy's welcome sign is combined with its museum and visitor center sign. The location and landscaping make it visible and attractive.



The landscaping continues into this delightful seating area. Utilize the space for small events and activities whenever possible. You spent a lot of money on it, use it!



The drive into and through Troy is charming and creates the expectation of an intimate, interesting downtown..

TROY FIRST IMPRESSIONS



The expectations about downtown are reinforced by the banner along Highway 2.



Unfortunately, the expectations about downtown are not met. Currently, there is nothing of interest to a visitor in downtown Troy.

This could change with a different business mix and an improved streetscape.

WHERE CAN I SHOP AND EAT?

Finding information about shopping and dining options was not easy. Listings on the websites were inadequate and often out-of-date.

Highlighting a fitness center as the top place to shop or visit and calling out its "big-box retailer" as an option for the "traditional shopper" makes no sense from a visitor perspective.

The fact that the Ace Home Center is the first retail listing seems odd. Without more information, it's easy to pass this off as a traditional hardware store, nothing more.

Detailed information is critical in small towns as a way of encouraging people to stop and look around. Even a 2-hour stop can make an economic impact.

Where Shop and Visit

- For the fitness-focused traveler, a full-service fitness and wellness center is located in close proximity to downtown Libby
- Libby's fitness opportunities are further expanded to include a women-only fitness center that provides a highly specialized workout setting for ladies on the go
- Plenty of unique boutiques and mom-and-pop stores offering clients a high level of service and a genuinely positive shopping experience
- Libby's big-box retailer and chain supermarket will meet the needs of the traditional shopper
- While exploring the sights and sounds of downtown Libby, don't pass up visiting the family-friendly neighborhood brewery housed in one of the oldest buildings in town

Retail Stores, Gifts & Confections

20 items found

Search Criteria: **Category**

[print](#) [new search](#)



[Ace Home Center](#)

507 West 9th Street Libby, MT 59923

(406) 293-2735



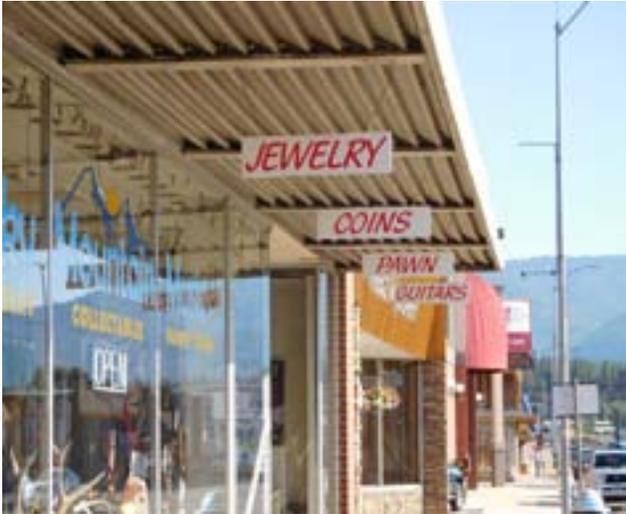
[Achievements, Inc.](#)

101 Mineral Ave Libby, MT 59923

(406) 293-8848



WHERE CAN I SHOP AND EAT?



Rocky Mountain Music is one of your destination retailers. It draws musicians and enthusiasts for shopping as well as events.

Publicize their events on the visitor website and elsewhere to bring in additional overnight visitors.



While we're not suggesting the Libby Sports Center change its name, it's a good example of why detailed information is important.

Every member of the team thought this was a traditional athletic store. Even with the mural as a clue, they didn't expect it to have outdoor recreation gear and equipment rentals.

Request Info | Print | Email A Friend

Libby Sports Center retail stores, gifts & confections | apparel | sports & recreation

204 West 9th Street
Libby, MT 59923
(406) 293-4641
Fax: 406-293-5229

phone: (406) 293-4641 fax: 406-293-5229 request info

Libby Area Chamber of Commerce
www.libbychamber.org

search engine optimized
Powered by ChamberMaster

WHERE CAN I SHOP AND EAT?

Dining information was out-dated as well and by having the Chamber serve as the visitor center, they are placed in the position of potentially recommending restaurants that are not members. The Chamber website also lists members that are not actually restaurants and this gives the appearance that there are limited options.

Most visitors simply want accurate information about types of cuisine that are available, hours, and what the price range is. Accurate information on review sites like Yelp and Zomato will help as well.

Where to Eat

- Choices include formal dining establishments and pub style eateries featuring a variety of all-American cuisine
- Casual restaurants where diners can eat breakfast, lunch and dinner in a cozy, relaxing atmosphere
- Enjoy the traditional fast-food chains serving up an arsenal of tacos, burritos, burgers and more
- Discover the innovative flavors of cultural, ethnic cuisine on a seasonal basis

Restaurants, Food & Beverages

20 items found

Search Criteria: **Category** [print](#) [new search](#)

	Asnt T's Coffee Corner & Crafting Club	
	417 Mineral Avenue Libby, Montana 59923	(406) 200-8373
	Cabinet Mountain Brewing Company	
	206 Mineral Avenue Libby, MT 59923	293-BREW
	Flathead Beverage	
	801 Cabinet Heights Rd Libby, MT 59923	(406) 293-5548
	Fun Beverage, Inc	
	P.O. Box 1179 Libby, MT 59923	(406) 293-3484
	Glacier Wholesalers, Inc.	
	16 West Reserve Drive Kalispell, MT 59903-5369	(406) 752-4479



WHERE CAN I SHOP AND EAT?



In addition to the scattered restaurants on Hwy 2, there is this bar/restaurant in downtown Troy. If attracting visitors for a local experience is a goal, better signage would help



Cabinet Mountain Brewing is another downtown destination draw but it's hard to know where it is. Interestingly, we had several people give us directions that sent us back out onto Hwy 2.

Brightening the building facade with a mural or adding a large, vintage-style neon sign would help it become a visual icon for downtown and draw people down the street.

WHAT IS THERE FOR ME TO DO?

Every person's reason for traveling is different. Their process for selecting a destination or activities may be deliberate and well researched with detailed itineraries or it may be totally spontaneous. Their interests are diverse and the core question is: "What do you offer that interests me that I can't get closer to home?"

Not every destination or activity will appeal to everyone and trying to be all things to all people is an exercise in futility. Building upon who you are as a community and the experiences you already provide will be more successful in the long run.

Don't be like Las Vegas when they tried to add "family-friendly" to what they offered. They spent millions but because it conflicted with an already well-defined identity, it was ineffective and a waste of time and money.

Strengthening and improving your experiences instead of trying to completely change who you are as a community builds a future based upon your existing foundation. New opportunities should complement, not create a disconnect with, current offerings.



Libby Dam and its visitor center are at the core of the area's offerings with the well-designed and challenging Kooky Noosa disc golf course as a pleasant surprise.

Recreation in a stunning setting is the region's primary draw with the Dam as a strong infrastructure and amenities partner.

Partnerships like this with public and private entities create opportunities for richer visitor experiences



WHAT IS THERE FOR ME TO DO?



The setting and interpretation at Kootenai Falls is exceptional and provides a solid context for the river and the region.



As a primary attraction, the falls and swinging bridge offer a range of experiences from this overlook of the falls to the hike along the river to the bridge crossing itself.

Once the visitor website is improved, a video of this experience would be a solid selling point.



Camping in a wooded setting in town is not often found. Improving the amenities here would bring more visitors to an area where they can spend money and contribute to the economy.



WHAT IS THERE FOR ME TO DO?

Libby's Heritage Museum is one of the best local museum we've seen. The exhibit flow and interpretation are insightful and delightful.

Difficult periods of history are challenging to portray but the exhibit on asbestos and its impact rises to the task by placing the events in context.

Consider a walking tour brochure to add interpretation for the outside exhibits for times when volunteers are not available.



Better signage and stronger promotion are needed for the museum. This is an untapped asset for the region and people need to know about it—what a gem!

WHAT IS THERE FOR ME TO DO?

Libby's events are attractive to visitors and make it worth the trip. Murals and street furnishings to publicize the annual events are effective.

Keeping the event timeframe near the top of the mural will help ensure visitors see it. Don't forget to keep the murals bright and refresh the paint when necessary.



WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION?



Having a full-time visitor center in a prime location on Highway 2 puts Libby in a position to attract visitors passing through the area.

The staff is helpful and despite being a Chamber of Commerce, information was provided about non-member shops and restaurants but it was made clear that the business was "not a member" and could not be recommended.



Strong signage and a well-maintained building made it appear that there was information available in Troy. However, the visitor center was never open, there were no hours posted and there were no materials available in an outside rack.



Printed materials are still important and there was a wealth of information at the Libby visitor center. Maps and trail guides are often hard to find but the surrounding area was well represented.

Some of the brochures and trail maps were photocopied and hopefully, this was a temporary fix.

CAN I FIND WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR?



Troy's wayfinding signs are a good idea, but are too small to be effective for drivers.

When the banners are replaced, try using a sans serif font for legibility and retain the contrast between the lettering and the background for visibility.



This downtown sign is a good idea in a poor location.



This downtown sign is a little better in terms of its location, however, when cars are parked in the lot, the turn arrow is blocked.

HOW WERE WE TREATED?

In nearly every situation—asking for directions, eating in restaurants, walking down the street, visiting shops and attractions—we were treated with kindness, respect and sincere friendliness. Well done!

No one made us feel like we were an imposition or annoyance and that's unusual. Generally, there are at least a few residents or staff members who are curt, disinterested or downright rude but we didn't encounter any.

WAS OUR #1 NEED MET?

Clean, accessible restrooms are the #1 need for visitors. When we were at the museum or a restaurant, they were available but other times, they were hard to find.

Remember that when visitors need to use a restroom and can't find one they're likely to get in their car and drive somewhere else. Once they've left, they're unlikely to return.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Visitors are on vacation.

They want things to be easy, they want to enjoy themselves. They're looking for experiences and opportunities that they can't get closer to home.

2. Not everyone uses a smartphone.

Even if your visitors have smartphones, they're not necessarily using them for anything other than phone calls, texting, taking pictures and checking email. Don't assume they'll be looking online for information, be sure to provide alternatives that are available beyond business hours on weekdays.

3. You love your town but visitors don't know your town like you do.

It can be difficult to see your community through fresh eyes. Can visitors navigate easily? Do they feel welcome? Are your "hidden gems" too well hidden?

Shop and restaurant owners should stand across the street from their businesses at least once a week and look at the impression their business makes. Are the windows clean? Are displays (including menus) fresh, attractive and inviting? Can people tell you're open?

4. Your visitors have interesting places and cool shops and restaurants in their towns too.

People travel—whether for the afternoon or the week—to see and experience something different. Every community has its own sense of place, its own personality. Help visitors experience and appreciate what makes your community different, what makes it worth their time and money. Don't try to be everything to everyone and don't create experiential expectations that you can't meet. Not every town will appeal to everyone and that's okay.

5. A number of your visitors may have disabilities related to vision, hearing or mobility.

There are little things you can do to provide accessibility. Making sure the videos are closed-captioned and that written materials can be accessed in auditory format goes a long way toward providing a rich experience.

Historic buildings and communities often have uneven surfaces and awkward transitions. Do what you can to mitigate these or provide alternatives.



WERE OUR EXPECTATIONS MET?

Blight due to asbestos—No. There was no visual evidence of the area's asbestos history.

Uncrowded—Yes. Most of the area was relatively uncrowded. Traffic jams at the swinging bridge and along the road to the dam were evident during peak times but, otherwise, things are peaceful.

Mountain views—Yes. The views are in every direction and they are stunning.

Rivers with clear water—Yes. Even from the road, you can often see to the riverbed.

Unique boutiques/mom-and-pop shops—Not really. Currently there are a few shops that fit this description and you have the potential for many more.

Wide variety of restaurants and cuisines—Not really. There is a good foundation and the potential to expand upon it.

Friendly people—We had a few negative experiences but overall people were friendly and helpful.

Outdoor recreation equipment rental options—Yes. They need to be promoted more with information available in a variety of places.

Camping options—Yes. Any camping experience you want is available.

Hiking trails at all skill levels—Yes. Trail maps need to be more accessible because the variety surprises people.

Bike trails—Some. This is constantly improving and will, eventually, make the area more attractive to bikers.

Temperate weather—No. Expectation was created based upon the descriptions used on websites and marketing materials.

Interesting museums—Yes. One of the best museums in the state.

Bald eagles—No. We couldn't find any information on where to see eagles. The sculptures need to have an experience incorporated—a treasure hunt, a photo challenge—but make sure the map is available in places other than just the visitor center.



LIBBY AND TROY AS VISITOR DESTINATIONS TODAY

Strengths & Opportunities

- Outfitters and equipment rentals
- Easy access to mountains and trails
- Easy access to rivers for fishing and boating
- Feels safe
- Brewery in Libby
- Amtrak station in Libby
- Heritage Museum in Libby
- Visitor center buildings in Libby and Troy
- Camping in town
- Libby Dam recreational infrastructure
- Increased trail connections
- Summer events

Challenges & Threats

- Libby's empty storefronts/downtown streetscape
- Troy's lack of a downtown
- Asbestos/Superfund history
- No focused tourism entity
- No clear tourism management strategy
- No coordinated marketing efforts
- Dated, ineffective websites
- Front-line workers provide limited information



NEXT STEPS

Recommendations contained within the report

- Relocate and improve the Libby gateway sign
- Create and promote selfie spots
- Continue the downtown streetscape improvements
- Add amenities at the campground
- Clean up weeds on California Avenue
- Promote the falls and swinging bridge
- Deal with banners on school fence
- Move date information higher up in the event murals
- Spruce up downtown garbage cans

Additional recommendations

Claim Your Listings

Every Libby and Troy business, attraction and facility should claim their listings on the following sites. This will increase each community's online presence and assist businesses in getting more traffic.

Set up a gmail.com email account that is only used for these types of sites. That way, no one's personal emails are at issue when log-ins are shared.

- business.google.com
- biz.yelp.com
- zomato.com/business
- tripadvisor.com/owners

The Chamber of Commerce could also hold workshops to provide additional training about managing these listings.

Review Your Websites

Go through this basic checklist for all websites:

- Phone (including area code) and address (including city and state) should be on every page
- Current hours—be sure to update this as they change seasonally
- Check links—this needs to happen on a regular basis, maybe monthly
- Use great photos and change them often
- Use at least an 18 point font—even though

it's easy to change the font size when viewing webpages but remember, many don't know how to do this or get irritated when it's necessary.

Changing Top-of-Mind Perceptions

Pushing accurate content, getting outdoor travel writers to visit, updating websites (especially tourism-related ones) with content on a regular basis—these steps will all help move the asbestos stories further down in the newsfeed.

Establish Who You are and Own It

You are no longer the asbestos/SuperFund cities. Yes, that's your history, but it's not who you are now. This is a time to step back and think about who Libby and Troy are at their core.

- Why would someone want to visit?
- Why should a business remain or locate here?
- What needs to be preserved?
- Why would someone want to live here?

Once the community has a defined identity, everything else should be positioned to support and enhance that identity.

Work with what you have and embrace it!



NEXT STEPS

STOP HERE?

This is a decision point. Do you want to pursue visitors? Do you want the positives and negatives that tourism brings? Deliberately moving forward to develop your tourism product is an important decision.

Tourism Management Strategy

Currently, there is no strategic plan for the management or marketing of tourism in Libby or Troy. Creating a plan will provide you with a focused approach that will maximize your efforts and allow you to be more effective. This also provides the opportunity to get more for the money and track the success of various efforts.

Marketing and tourism product development are not an exact science. Sometimes even the most creative, well-thought-out plans are not as successful as they're expected to be. Having both a strategy and a primary focus makes it easier to step back and analyze what's working, what isn't, and adjust your approach.

The strategy should also include more than just a marketing plan. Incorporating product development and event ideas helps you clarify who should manage the area's tourism and help the shift into a big picture tourism management mentality.

One way of funding this would be to create a Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID).

Develop Product and Events to Support Defined Identity

After Libby and Troy have clearly defined their identity, working toward developing the product and events outlined in the tourism management strategy will be an important community-wide project. Starting these efforts independently may result in chaotic attempts that conflict with one another. Working together and implementing the plan will allow building upon an

increasingly more successful foundation.

Develop Collaborative Marketing Plan

Your message will be stronger if everyone is communicating the same identity, the same story.

Ways to start now:

- Update the map and make it more visitor-focused
- Whenever events are listed, put them in chronological order
- Try to limit ads, find other ways to pay for publications
- Consolidate information and make it easily available on-line
- Remember that PDFs do not work well on phones, have a mobile site instead

Wayfinding

Creating a simple system that lets people know where things are is all you need. The signs in Troy are a good idea but they're not very effective. The font is too small and the signs are not well located.

In Libby, using the branding color palette will not be the possible. The colors will wash out in natural light and be ineffective.

