

Visitor Readiness Report Fern Ridge Area, OR

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Introduction

The Fern Ridge Area Visitor Readiness Report is an initiative by Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce, the department of Lane County Economic Development and the Convention & Visitors Association of Lane County Oregon. It is designed to provide a checklist of actions to enhance the destination's tourism performance. It is not a tourism development, branding or marketing plan, hence does not include all of the actions that the area may address in annual tourism programs.

The Fern Ridge area is centered on Veneta and includes Alvadore, Crow, Elmira, Lorane, Noti, Triangle Lake and Walton. Fern Lake Reservoir has many attributes that make it attractive to visitors including camping, swimming, water-skiing, world class sailing, and an abundance of wildlife to observe. The lake is drained in winter to allow for flood control, and the resulting marsh (and wildlife refuge) hosts tree frogs, newts, ospreys, rare purple martins (in Spring), black-tailed deer, red foxes, beavers, muskrats, minks, pond turtles, and great blue herons. These wetlands are making Fern Ridge an attractive destination for birders because of the 250 bird species including tundra swans, northern harriers, Canadian geese, mergansers, and peregrine falcons, that can be observed here.

Motorists can travel along Highway 126 through Veneta and not recognize that the area has excellent outdoor recreation and wineries. It is likely that they would sense no real reason to visit or stop in the city, except for gas and food.

The recommendations in this report were created after site visits by the TDM team, consultation with local stakeholders, and research. It is not a tourism development strategy or marketing plan, hence does not include all of the actions that the city may address in its annual tourism programs.

The priority issues identified in the report are:

- Focus on key experiences
- Brochures and information distribution
- Streetscapes
- Product development
- Signage and wayfinding
- Web marketing

The recommendations should not be interpreted as meaning that current tourism efforts have been flawed. They are designed to fine-tune critical points of contact and communications with visitors and to take the area's tourism performance and economic benefits to the next level.

Methodology

The development of the Visitor Readiness Report for Fern Ridge area involved a variety of actions which included:

- An extensive review of past reports, strategies and plans relating to Fern Ridge.
- Review and analysis of past and current marketing materials, including brochures, web sites, maps and partner marketing materials (e.g. wineries).
- Online research to review key web sites relating to Fern Ridge and Veneta, as well as those that potentially should carry references to Fern Ridge.
- An online community survey providing stakeholders with an opportunity to express their opinions.
- Personal interviews with local business and community leaders.
- Discussions with local residents, particularly those in contact with visitors.
- On-site assessments of the city and its surrounding region by the TDM team.

Visitor Readiness Report

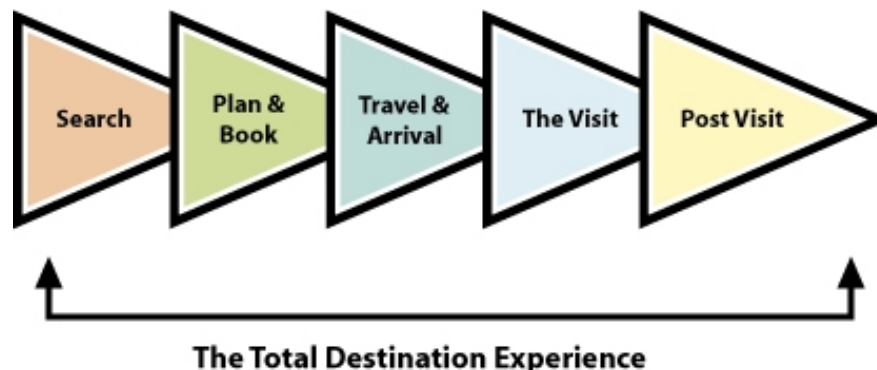
Total Destination Experience

The Visitor Readiness Report is founded on the need to deliver outstanding and appropriate experiences at every point of contact with visitors at each stage of their destination experience. The information and experience needs of prospective visitors change according to their stage in the decision making in regard to the destination.

The following model is useful for considering customer's decision-making and satisfaction at key moments in their contact with Fern Ridge. It reflects that as customers proceed from one stage to the next, their behavior, desires and needs change. This has a direct influence on the methods and content of communications. These five stages are:

1) *Search*: This stage includes the early points of contact that influence whether the person becomes a customer for the destination or not. Commonly, these points of contact include advertising, articles in newspapers and magazines, brochures, web sites, guidebooks, word of mouth, emails and past experiences.

2) *Plan, Compare and Book*: Bridging the gap between a potential visitor's consideration of a community and becoming a customer is possibly the greatest challenge facing all destination marketers. The points here commonly include fulfilling the questions from prospects and the ease of making transactions and bookings. They may relate to web sites, reservations services, price, conditions and rules, discounts, packages, and staff.



3) *Travel and Arrival*: At this point the experience is well underway, and the journey is an integral part of the total destination experience. The cost, quality, and ease of access and transport can influence attitudes toward the place. Upon arrival in the city, is it easy to find their way around? What are their first impressions? Is there a sense of welcome?

4) *The Visit*: This is the phase where we are most conscious of the experiences associated with a destination. What is the quality of the attractions and their experiences? How are customers interacting with the place? What are the quality and service standards? What is the

appropriateness of attractors, signage, brochures, tour guides, taxi drivers, and visitor services?

5) *Post Visit*: This phase is frequently overlooked and does not receive the attention that it deserves to build positive word of mouth and positive memories. What is their reaction to leaving the place, engagement in social networking, souvenirs and local products, direct mail, and “thank you” correspondence?

The Visitor Readiness Report

This report provides recommendations for enhancing Fern Ridge’s capabilities and competitiveness in ways that are essential for successful tourism. It is divided into the following sections:

- 1. Positioning and Branding** What does the city want to be known for and how will it build its reputation as a desirable destination?
- 2. Attractors and Experiences** These are the elements that attract visitors, encourage them to stay longer and are the core components of the area’s tourism experiences.
- 3. Streetscapes, Signage and Wayfinding** Streetscapes are integral to the visitor experience, while signage and wayfinding inform, guide, and motivate travelers.
- 4. Marketing Communications** These are the actions that communicate the tourism benefits of the city.
- 5. Soft Adventure Operators and Outfitters** These businesses enhance the visitor experience by enabling a higher level of engagement and excitement with the destination.
- 6. Leadership and Organization** These capture the way that the area is organized and motivated for tourism.

1. Positioning and Branding

While fundamental positioning and branding issues are addressed in this report, it is not a brand strategy. Increasingly, places of all sizes are turning to the principles of positioning and branding in order to shape their marketing and help them stand apart from competitors. Positioning establishes what the city wants customers to think and feel about them as a prospective place to visit. This plays a role in influencing whether people plan to visit, recommend it to others or decide to stop there in transit to other places. This top-of-mind awareness is activated when people hear the name of the place or associate it with activities or experiences. While addressing some positioning and branding issues, this report is not a brand strategy.

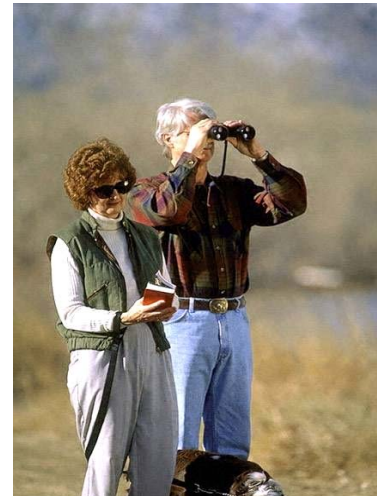
“A brand is a living entity – and is enriched and undermined cumulatively over time, the product of a thousand small gestures.”

Michael Eisner, Disney CEO

The three most important concepts for places like the Fern Ridge area to master in branding are (i) differentiation and positioning, i.e. leading with what sets it apart, (ii) focus on those attributes that provide its positioning, and (iii) being consistent in how the attributes are presented, and ensuring that tourism partners deliver on the city’s brand promise.

The strongest positioning frequently involves temporarily sacrificing, or more specifically lowering, the initial profile of some attributes in order to lead with those that are the most enticing, meaningful and differentiating. The objective is to attract attention and visitation on the basis of the strongest attribute and then introduce and disperse attention to other aspects of the area. This does not mean that other city attributes are forgotten.

In the case of Fern Ridge, it means that birding should take the lead as much as possible with the support of complimentary attributes such as wineries, country crafts and events. It is through this focus and consistency over a long period that positive awareness will increase and Fern Ridge will become synonymous with birding which will boost all aspects of its tourism and economic development.



Fern Ridge Positioning and Branding

The attribute or distinctive advantage that allows Fern Ridge to stand apart from other communities is the outstanding opportunities the area presents for viewing migratory birds. This attribute was identified as the focus for the area’s brand strategy. While an attractive logo has been designed and usage guidelines prepared, the TDM team saw little evidence of the implementation of this brand strategy.

The Chamber of Commerce is using a very generic sailboat logo and is only using the birding logo on the web site page dedicated to birding. This approach (i) confuses prospective

customers and stakeholders as to what the brand is about and (ii) demonstrates that the strategy has not been adopted or consistently followed. The only location where the team saw the logo being used was on the side of the BiMart store.

“Inspired by Nature” is the tagline that accompanies the birding logo. This tagline may be an effective rallying point for locals, however from the customer’s perspective it is somewhat vague and non specific in what distinguishes the community. It is a tagline that could apply to just about any community in the Pacific Northwest. It needs to more precisely capture the area’s great strength that relates specifically to birding.



It seems as though this brand has not been adopted by the community or even the Chamber of Commerce. A brand is much more than a logo and tagline. While Fern Ridge has a “Brand Strategy”, it is little more than the usage guidelines for the logo. The full dimensions of this brand have not been conveyed to stakeholders. Without this definition, it cannot gain the support and traction necessary effectively to be communicated and the underlying experience to be delivered to visitors.

Recommended Actions:



1. Strengthen the **Fern Ridge brand strategy** by redefining and re-endorsing the positioning founded on the aspect of birding. Implement measures to gain the understanding, support and use by key stakeholders. Birding should **lead images, copy and experiences** in brochures, web sites and articles. This does not mean that other area attributes are forgotten. It is just that birding opportunities should take the lead as much as possible and be used in conjunction with other attributes such as wine. It is through this focus and consistency over a long period that awareness will increase and Fern Ridge will become synonymous with birding and wildlife viewing opportunities.
2. Implementation of the Fern Ridge visual identity strategy already developed by the Chamber needs to be improved. **Conduct a review of the communication applications** where the brand’s visual design, images and words to determine where they should be applied by the Chamber of Commerce, City and key stakeholders.
3. **Refine or change the tagline** to more precisely capture the competitive strength and relevance of birding in the area.
4. Identify a series of **key phrases and words** to be consistently used in conjunction with Fern Ridge. These may include, “the best of Oregon birding”, “migratory bird viewing”, “birding trails”, “birding and wine”, “wings and wine”, “country crafts”, etc. Encourage all organizations to use these terms when describing the city from a tourism perspective.
5. **Communicate** the positioning based on birding to local stakeholders to generate their support.

6. The Chamber of Commerce, in association with CVALCO, should **convene meetings** with all relevant businesses throughout Fern Ridge to demonstrate the importance of the new county and local area branding and positioning. The organizations should convey how the initiatives will enhance the success of the area's businesses and the steps that need to be taken to underpin and deliver the brand to visitors.
7. Constantly **innovate and develop strategies** to ensure that the area is able to consistently excel at being perceived as a leader in birding in Oregon.

Alignment with the Regional Brand

The new regional tourism brand is founded on accessible soft adventures. The Fern Ridge area experiences which are most aligned with this brand are birding, wildlife viewing, water sports, camping and exploring wineries. Particularly relevant are the excellent trails and outlooks around Fern Ridge Lake.

Recommended Actions:

8. **Collaborate with CVALCO** to ensure that Fern Ridge's soft adventure activities are projected wherever appropriate in the region's brand communications and product development initiatives.

2. Attractors and Experiences

These are the features and attributes that motivate people to visit a place and in turn encourage them to extend their stay. They may be physical sites, events, places or a feeling that people derive about the place.

Key Experience Themes

Key experience themes are the broad categories of activities that complement the positioning of the city. These themes reflect its value proposition and competitive advantage in delivering outstanding customer moments in these activities.

The key visitor attributes of Fern Ridge that support the area's brand are centered on the area's outstanding birding and wildlife viewing opportunities. These experiences are centered on Fern Ridge Reservoir. The nearby wineries, the annual Oregon Country Fair, and Wings and Wine Festival also draw visitors to the area.

Recommended Actions:

9. The recommended **key experience themes** for Fern Ridge are:

Priority:

- Birding and wildlife viewing. Birding should be the lead experience theme highlighted in most Fern Ridge marketing.
- Events

Complementary:

- Wine
- Country crafts and food
- Sailing and water recreation

Birding and Wildlife

Fern Lake is increasingly being recognized as an attractive birding location. In early fall and winter the Fern Lake Reservoir water level is lowered to a minimum level and exposes large mudflats and shallow waters that attract shorebirds, gulls, ducks, geese, herons, egrets and the raptors that prey on the species. During summer, the water level at its peak provides nesting habitat for many marsh birds. Among the popular and developed sites for birders are:

Royal Avenue - This is an area that is not signed and is not designated on maps of the area as a birding area.

Fern Ridge Dam Area - Access to this area is via Kirk Park parking lot.

Perkins Peninsula Park - This park was closed when the TDM team visited, however it was well signed and seems to effectively serve both residents and visitors.

Cantrell Road and K.R. Nielson Road - There are some very pleasant trails along these roads. The advanced warning signs and entry from Highway 126 is very tight given the speed of traffic on this road.

West Side - This access off Territorial Road is through a trailhead and park called Applegate Unit. There are no advanced warning signs for this location.

Recommended Actions:

10. Introduce advanced warning signs for the **Applegate Unit**.
11. Introduce advanced warning signs for **Kirk Park**.
12. Install at all trails and birding areas the **international symbols** for hiking and wildlife viewing (binoculars) that are effectively used along Cantrell Road and K.R. Nielson Road. Cross-reference these symbols on maps and brochures.
13. Investigate developing a **safer entrance** with advanced warning signs at the entrance to Cantrell Road and K.R. Nielson Road for east bound motorists.
14. Introduce **interpretive displays** at key wildlife viewing sites to introduce “non-birders” to the species and their behavior, as well as the seasonal changes to the local eco-system. These displays should make the experience rewarding even if the visitor does not have a brochure or guide book.
15. Install **display maps** at each trailhead to inform visitors of the directions, distances and areas of interest along the trail.



There are excellent trails and wildlife viewing areas throughout Fern Ridge, however many trailheads are not well signposted.

Fern Ridge Lake and County Parks

Fern Ridge Lake is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. It includes more than 12,000 acres of upland, wetland, open water and marsh habitats. The lake has been rated as one of the leading sailing venues west of the Mississippi. The lake attracts boaters, fishermen, birders, campers and hikers. There are four County Parks in the vicinity of the lake, Richardson Park, Orchard Point Park, Perkins Peninsula Park and Zumwalt Park. All of the parks were closed during the TDM team inspection visits. Our limited inspections showed them to be generally attractive areas with adequate facilities.

Fern Ridge Wineries

There are several wineries within a fifteen minute drive of Veneta. These include the King Estate which presents world-class experiences for wine tourism visitors, yet the winery is not officially in the Fern Ridge area. The team did not find a comprehensive brochure on the Fern Ridge area wineries or any signs to the nearby wineries at the critical corner at Territorial Road West and Highway 126. There is not a strong synergy from the visitor's perspective of these wineries and those further along Territorial Road in Fern Ridge. Wine tourists in other region have shown a strong interest in country arts and crafts and fresh produce. Fern Ridge has many arts and craft outlets products which could be combined with the winery experience.

Recommended Actions:

16. Rather than limit the participating wineries to those in Fern Ridge, work with CVALCO and Lane County Wineries to investigate the feasibility of a **wine route along Territorial Road from Veneta to Cottage Grove** that also includes country crafts and fresh produce. This will stimulate traffic for all wineries from both directions, including Cottage Grove's I-5 entrance and those originating in the major source market of Eugene-Springfield and the Oregon Coast via highway 126. It will also present a more substantial critical mass of winery experiences and present greater variety for visitors.

Reevaluate Fern Ridge wine tourism marketing to:

- Rationalize the names to a single name for the winery route
 - Gain the participation of all wineries, especially King Estate
 - Reevaluate the optimal location for signs throughout the route
 - Add wine route directional signs at the I-5 entrances at Exit 174 and at Territorial Road and Highway 126
 - Publicize the route through web sites and a brochure
 - Encourage all wineries to publicize the route
17. An **integrated wayfinding system** should be designed for directional, advanced warning and winery signage for use on roads throughout the designated wine route.

18. Consider the Wine Route strategically as a **product in its own right** and constantly review means of increasing its awareness and improving experience delivery to visitors. Develop an annual marketing plan for the route.
19. Install a directional sign for **Secret House Winery** at the intersection of Suttle Road and Territorial Road.



The Fern Ridge wine tourism marketing should be reviewed to incorporate King Estate, greater consistency in signage and link with the wineries along Territorial Road in Fern Ridge.

Applegate Trail

The Fern Ridge area was settled by virtue of the Applegate Trail that skirts the western edge of the Willamette River Valley, which is approximated today by the Territorial Highway. The Trail was a major thoroughfare for the supply of California's markets from early Oregon development. There are interpretive displays commemorating the Trail in Zumwalt Park. These displays are showing wear and some aspects of them are not easy to read.

The Museum in downtown Veneta on Broadway also features exhibits on the Trail. The TDM team was unable to visit the museum because it was closed. An obvious link between the Museum and the interpretive displays where they for cross-promotion purposes is missing.

Recommended Actions:

20. Ensure that the **interpretive displays** in Zumwalt Park are well maintained and attractive to visitors. Also introduce links between the Museum and the interpretive displays to encourage visitors to stay longer in the area.

Events

Fern Ridge hosts two events that are drawing visitors from distant locations. The most significant is the Oregon Country Fair which is held in Veneta for three days every July and attracts thousands of visitors. It features entertainment, food, educational displays and hand-made crafts on a large scale. The other event is the *Wings and Wine Festival* which celebrates International Migratory Bird Day in May and presents opportunities for

birdwatching and wine tasting. Events such as these are very important because they have the capacity to introduce new visitors to the area and enhance the image of the area.

Recommended Actions:

21. Investigate the feasibility of either initiating another community event in Fall or expanding the *Wings and Wine Festival* through additional community support.

Country Crafts and Foods

Located throughout the area are a variety of outlets for hand-made country crafts and fresh foods. These have an important role to play in the visitor experiences because they are likely to appeal to the same people who are attracted by birding and wine. Several of these outlets have joined the Fern Ridge Country Trail and are promoted through a web site and the Oregon Country Trails brochure, *Travel the World in Your Own Backyard*. There are three other trails in the region, all marketed for agri-tourism, and also included in this brochure, "Oregon Country Trails". This brochure cover features a wolf in the wild and does not accurately project the majority of experiences being offered. The result is that prospective customers will not understand why this brochure is important to their visit to Fern Ridge.

Recommended Actions:

22. Ensure the integration of country craft and fresh food outlets in visitor information, particularly those related to the wine route.
23. Encourage the publisher of the Oregon Country Trails brochure, "Travel the World in your own Backyard" to use an image on the cover of the brochure that is more appropriate to farms, winery and craft experiences.

Lodging

The Fern Ridge lodging options at present are limited to camping in County Parks surrounding Fern Ridge Reservoir. However, while these are of a high standard, they are only open on a seasonal basis. It is possible that the location on Highway 126, close proximity to Eugene, and emerging interest in area birding and wineries is generating sufficient business to investigate the development of appropriate hotel, RV and B&B lodging.

Recommended Actions:

24. When feasibility has been verified, encourage the development of appropriate accommodation in the form of hotel, RV and B&B lodging options in Veneta.

3. Streetscapes, Signage and Wayfinding

This section addresses the logistics, place elements and signage that are needed to provide a quality visitor experience. These promote a sense of place, welcome and community spirit.

First, impressions start at the entrance to the city. Appearances really do count when it comes to attracting visitors and the economic well-being of places. Visitors are attracted to, and spend more time in places that are enticing, clean, welcoming, and well maintained. It is easy for communities to overlook the appearance of their streets, the absence of trees, poor lighting, trash and bad signage that may have evolved over the years. Visitors however, are much less forgiving. Where attention has been paid to the aesthetics of a place (including preserving or enhancing its natural qualities and environments), it gains the reputation as a “special place”.

Signage and wayfinding systems also serve vital roles. They inform, guide, and motivate travelers. They are also important in shaping the identity of a place through their style, design, colors, lettering and content.

Directional Signage and Wayfinding

Many potential customers for local services from outside of Fern Ridge are not aware of the area’s amenities or attractions. Each day thousands of motorists travel through Fern Ridge along Highway 126. The installation of authorized advanced warning attractions / visitor services signs identifying the city amenities and attractions would encourage people to stop and would result in additional income to downtown businesses.

While the Visitor Information Center is well signposted from some directions, there is the need for a thorough review of all the signage needs of the center. Additionally, there are no signs on Highway 126 identifying the many nearby wineries.

Recommended Actions:

25. Form a group to evaluate the locations where **directional signs** to visitor attractors should be positioned. This planning exercise should be conducted by driving through the area using only the available brochures/maps and the signs - not by using the existing knowledge of participants in the exercise. This should be addressed by driving into the area from all directions.
26. Conduct a review of the signage needs for the **visitor information center** (Chamber of Commerce). Introduce official “Visitor Information” advanced warning signs from both directions on Highway 126.

Downtown Veneta

The downtown area of Veneta, which is mainly along Broadway, is not an area that holds any appeal for visitors. There is the need for business infill, more attractive streetscaping, design standards, signage and improved building facades and presentation. These issues are being addressed through the City’s Urban Renewal District strategy. The pizza restaurant and

museum are the only enterprises that may be of interest to visitors in the downtown. The main precinct for visitors is the strip mall at the corner of Highway 126 and Territorial Road. This area has retail shopping, fast food restaurants, and a service station that are important generators of income for the community. However, there is a need for greater variety of retail, service business and restaurants in the city. This can best be achieved through a redeveloped downtown pedestrian precinct.

The Veneta Urban Renewal District Master Plan is the cornerstone of the city's economic development goals. The City of Veneta hopes to build a downtown where one does not currently exist with the intended outcome of creating a non-highway pedestrian friendly walkable business district. It is likely that they will be breaking ground on several key projects in Spring or Summer 2009 to establish the first phase.



The signs leading to downtown Veneta are untidy and should be consolidated. The Applegate Trail Pioneer Museum is the only attractor in the downtown area.

Recommended Actions:

- 27. Support the strategies outlined in Veneta's Urban Renewal District Master Plan which is directed toward enhancing the downtown core as a viable pedestrian precinct for retail, dining and entertainment.
- 28. Encourage new business development, particularly where this will result in a greater variety of retail, service businesses and restaurants.
- 29. Clean up the signage clutter at the corner of Territorial Road and Broadway. All of these signs, including those for the churches could be contained on one wayfinding sign. Many of the local businesses on the old hand-painted sign are possibly now out of business. Even if they do exist, it does not set a good impression. This sign should be removed.

4. Marketing Communications

This section outlines the approaches that should be taken to communicate Fern Ridge's brand messages to prospective visitors. These actions may be enhanced in the future according to the scale of the budget available for these activities and the level of partner participation.

"What's in it for me?"

In order to ensure that all communications are customer-focused and convey enticing benefits, imagine that the customer is looking over your shoulder as you prepare the marketing materials. When you proof-read the copy, select an image, or complete the production, imagine that the customer asks you, "*So, what's in it for me?*" This technique helps to maintain a customer-centered approach and can counter the bias of locals. The approach becomes all the more relevant when trying to satisfy people with specific special interests such as wine tasting and birdwatching. Generalized statements are not effective with these visitors. They require specific, detailed information expressed using the terms that they recognize.

Wherever possible, all communications should be led by core experiences and benefits, and not by facts, member lists or information included mainly to please internal stakeholders. Marketing materials must portray how the place will make customers feel and answer their perennial question, "*What's in it for me?*" In doing this, it is important to recognize where the visitor is in their decision-making and total destination experience. Don't make the mistake of overwhelming the prospective visitor with too much information that is irrelevant to their immediate needs.

Publications

Despite the advances in online communications and the Internet, brochures continue to play an important role in marketing and visitor satisfaction. However, they need to be well designed, thoughtfully written, and carefully distributed. Importantly, brochures should be designed so that they are aligned with the visitor's information needs at specific points in their decision-making as outlined on page 4.

Many cities try to promote themselves by using uninteresting lists of local attractions, businesses and services. While this information does have a role later in the decision-making of customers, it is rarely important at an early stage when visitors are developing their initial awareness and image of the place. Lists of where to shop, eat, and stay" alone do not achieve this. Prospective visitors first need to be convinced of what is appealing, special and memorable about the place, i.e. the reason/s for choosing to visit.

The only printed material that the TDM team received on Fern Ridge at the Visitors Center was a map produced by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a map produced by the Chamber of Commerce (now out of print), and a brochure produced by "The Oregon Country Trails" which contains some of the areas wineries and craft businesses. There was no single brochure or map that presented the area in a comprehensive, informative and enticing manner.

Importantly, we were informed by the Chamber Executive Director that no local brochures were readily available for the public. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the Fern Ridge brochure and map is designed for visitors and not be a community directory for locals and Chamber members.

There is the need for brochures that concisely convey what to see and do in order to strengthen initial interest in visiting the area. These publications should be written and designed in a manner that enables prospective short-term visitors to quickly reference the type of information and activities that they are seeking. Accurate maps are essential for visitors to find their way around. This is particularly important to Fern Ridge because of the network of trails and the widespread location of points of interest.

Care should be taken to ensure that advertising in brochures does not dominate the design and detract from its effectiveness. Do not include businesses that are not directly relevant to visitors, e.g. insurance agencies, etc. Brochures should not be used as a device to publicize all members of the Chamber as this is counter productive.

There is the need for an increased level of collaboration between CVALCO and all Chambers of Commerce throughout Lane County to develop a brochure and map production strategy. This will serve to conserve resources, improve quality, increase distribution and avoid duplication.

Recommended Actions:

30. In addressing the brochure needs of the city, the Chamber should take advantage of CVALCO resources and participate in the development of a county-wide publication and distribution strategy. A Fern Ridge Activities Guide should be produced. This **lure or rack brochure** should have its sole focus on what to see and do, highlighting in the birding trail and winery experiences. It should be designed to entice people from one hundred miles from the area. Accurate maps are essential for visitors to find their way around the bird viewing areas, wineries and country craft outlets. This is particularly important for Fern Ridge because of the network of trails and the distance between points of interest. Wherever appropriate the international activity symbols used on signs around the area should also be used in the brochure and map. The map in this guide does not have to be as detailed as the Corps of Engineers map.

The Activities Guide should include:

- Concise descriptions of the main trails including distance, trailheads, international activity symbols and difficulty
- Highlight information on local outfitters
- Major events calendar
- Winery tour route including arts and country crafts
- Include URL/web addresses for lodging and attractions

31. Work with **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** to produce an updated map of the lake that is readily available for visitors and clearly shows all important features such as trailheads, parking and bird watching areas.
32. **CVALCO's Visitors Guide** description of Fern Ridge should be more specific than general of the area. The copy and images must focus on the main themes of the birding and wildlife viewing, the new wine route, and country crafts. It should provide specific examples of things that visitors can see and do.
33. Ensure that Fern Ridge is included in future editions of the **Travel Oregon Trip Planner**. Information should be specific as provided in the CVALCO brochure suggestions.
34. Ensure that specific birdwatching trails and the experiences that they represent are featured in CVALCO's proposed **soft adventure guide**.

Information Distribution

Access to visitor information in the form of brochures, maps and personal advice is critical to visitor satisfaction and extending a visitor's length of stay in a community. In the case of the Fern Ridge area, well produced and distributed information will assist in encouraging people to stop, visit and extend their stay in the area. Fern Ridge visitor information should be readily available county-wide and particularly in the Visitor Information Centers along the regional highways, in lodging, and locally through businesses in the area.

The Visitor Information Center in the Chamber premises is an extremely attractive venue, but is poorly signposted. It was not well stocked with local brochures and maps to hold prospective visitors in the area. There was not one overall publication to tie all of the pieces in Fern Ridge together. A visitor information kiosk is located in the parking area of the mall at the junction of Highway 126 and Territorial Road, but is not a staffed center. The kiosk is visible from the highway and mainly serves as an advertisement for the Chamber of Commerce.

Recommended Actions:

35. Add a **display map** of the area and all-weather brochure dispenser/rack outside the Chamber of Commerce office (and in relation to the kiosk) to serve after hour visitors.
36. Optimize the opportunity presented by the **Visitor Information kiosk** in the car park to ensure that it provides local and regional maps and up to date information that is always attractively and well presented.
37. Local brochures should be available from all **relevant local businesses**.
38. **Staff in the Chamber's Visitor Information Center** should always be well informed about the current best possible sites for bird watching, wineries, country crafts, and fresh produce.
39. Ensure that brochures (when produced) are **distributed to Visitor Information Centers** and other outlets on the Oregon Coast as well as throughout the Willamette Valley.

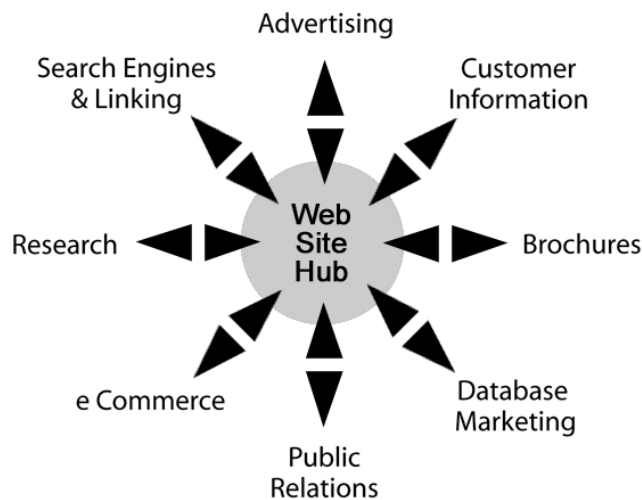
40. In collaboration with CVALCO, work with **brochure distribution companies** to ensure that Lane County community and operator brochures are visible and organized together (possibly on the top shelf) in brochure racks. This task may eventually rest with the management of lodging to ensure that this local information is prominently and conveniently displayed because it can directly add to their guest's length of stay.

Web Marketing

The Fern Ridge web site should be the central hub for all external marketing and communications programs conducted by the Chamber. It should provide the focal point for consumers, media, and travel trade to easily access information and interactive experiences. People searching online for travel information are generally seeking four important benefits:

1. They want to find the site they are looking for quickly,
2. They want the site to be very easy to navigate,
3. They want comprehensive and credible content, and
4. Assistance in taking the "next steps".

The following diagram illustrates the marketing activities that can be integrated into the Chamber's web site.



Fern Ridge Web Sites

The internet enables small destinations like Fern Ridge to project their message globally at a fraction of the cost of a decade ago. However, simply having a web site does not guarantee that online visitors will access the site nor guarantee that once there they will spend time exploring it.

City and Chamber web sites are frequently the front windows for their communities and play essential roles in the marketing and economic development of their communities. They are also important to the self image that residents hold of the place where they live. At present

neither the Chamber nor the City web sites are projecting the distinctiveness or character of the place.

The reality for Fern Ridge is that, unlike many other small cities in Oregon, it has the capacity to compete regionally and nationally for the attention of bird watching enthusiasts. Hence, the web site must be able to compete against places that are more established and have larger marketing budgets.

The Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce web site serves a dual role in trying to provide information for Chamber members and visitors. At present the web site, while basically attractive, is not functional from a visitor's perspective. It fails to make the sale! It is not readily apparent where to find visitor information (it is listed under the link *Inspired by Nature*) and the information is inadequate and poorly presented. It should include more information based around the area's key experience themes and be easier to navigate. At the moment, one finds very little to substantiate the area's claim to be a leading venue for birding enthusiasts.

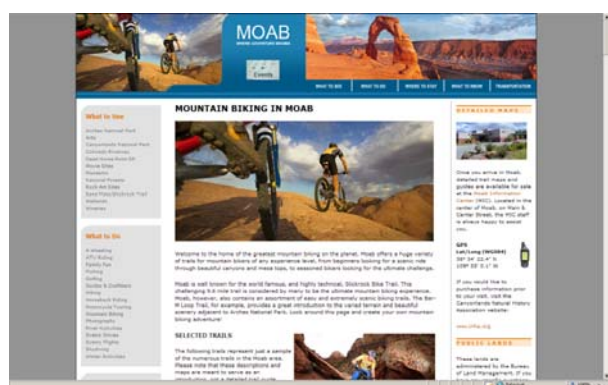
While the design includes a logo with a yacht, this is not the logo designated in the Fern Ridge brand strategy. The brand logo appears in the section of the web site titled, *Inspired by Nature*". This dissonance does not provide any clear identity for the area. The site includes a directory of members and other information for members and for people interested in relocation.

The City of Veneta web site is functional from a city administration perspective, but does not project the area in an attractive manner for either visitors or new residents. The site does not carry any visitor information or links for visitor information from the Chamber of Commerce.

The CVALCO web site has an important role in the search for information. There is a level of dissonance because the copy refers to Veneta and not the Fern Ridge area. The information needs to be focused around the key experiences and project the "must do's" of the birding and wildlife viewing sites and trails, the wine route, events, and country crafts.



Breckenridge, CO



Moab, UT

Landing on local web sites for many people is the result of searching on other web sites, including Travel Oregon, CVALCO and Oregon.com. These people are possibly near the end of their search and are wanting detailed, accurate, relevant and easy to read and navigate

information on specific subjects. They want less generic copy. Now is the time to sell Fern Ridge by expressing why it's special and how to experience it.

Search engines regularly visit web sites and filter their content to analyze, record, and file every word on every page. After thoroughly analyzing the site, algorithms are assigned to these words and phrases and a value assigned to the overall site. The web site's content and ease of navigation are instrumental in determining the priority that it is allocated by search engines and their ranking when visitors are searching for information. Additional elements which enhance the profile of web sites for search engines are meta tags and meta descriptions that make it easier for online visitors to find their way around. It would seem that many of the techniques mentioned here have not been practiced.

Recommended Actions:

41. The Chamber **web site should be redesigned** in close consultation with CVALCO to utilize their advanced tourism marketing expertise. The web site should **instantly convey** that Fern Ridge is one of the leading places in the state for birding and the images, copy and content convey that "we understand your needs" as a birder. The **web site should include:**

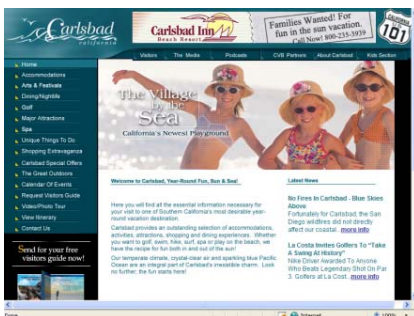
- Birding and Wildlife
- Events
- Find a Bird - description of species and seasonality, distance of trails, trailheads, descriptions of important sites
- Find Outfitters and Guides
- Links
- Local Organizations and Businesses
- Lodging (nearby)
- Maps
- Media Room
- Register for the newsletter, etc
- Testimonials
- Web cams at key birding sites
- What to See and Do
- What's New Feature on Home Page - possibly latest sightings, new wine releases or events
- Where to Eat
- Where to Shop
- Wineries and Country Crafts

42. Investigate the possibility of the CVALCO and Fern Ridge sites sharing a **common database** of information. This will contribute to more relevant, accurate and comprehensive information being distributed and avoid the duplication of this task by both organizations.

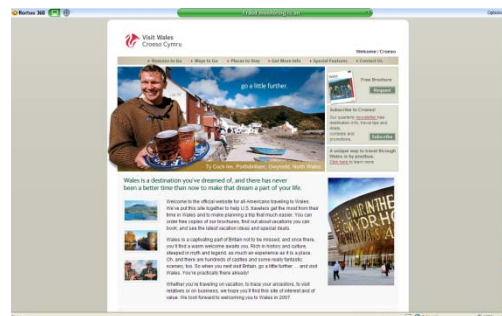
43. In conjunction with CVALCO, engage the services of a **search engine optimization specialist** to ensure that all aspects of the web site are operating at optimal performance

levels for search engine optimization. Ensure that meta tags, meta descriptions, links, and key word density are reviewed.

44. Maximize links to the site from Fern Ridge partners and other organizations and third party sites. It is particularly important for local partners to provide links from their web sites for prospective visitors to the area.
45. The City of Veneta's web site should include some copy and images on the Home Page that better reflect the character and attractiveness of the city and provide links for visitor information.
46. Invite visitors to the web site to register to receive future email newsletters regarding coming events, sightings of particular birds and news of migratory birds.
47. Those destinations that orient their web site content and images around experiences and emotion have found that they are able to generate stronger connections with prospective visitors and this leads to a higher conversion rate to travel and positively influences their length of stay. Some examples of sites effectively using experiences and emotion are:



www.carlsbad.com



<http://travelwales.org>



www.bellingham.org



www.gonewport.com

48. The best web copy has a balance between motivational and informative and strikes a chord with the reader because it does not speak in generalities, lists or features that are common to most places. The copy speaks directly to the readers and connects with them by addressing how the place will make them feel and how this place meets their particular needs like no other. The copy on the Travel Wales web site (www.travelwales.org) is a good example of these techniques. The same techniques should be employed in preparing the copy for brochures and other collateral materials.

Images

Fern Ridge is competing against destinations that are well financed and use highly sophisticated marketing techniques. It is essential that Fern Ridge use high quality images to project the beauty of the region and the exciting opportunities for birding and winery enthusiasts.

Recommended Actions:

49. In conjunction with CVALCO, develop a portfolio of evocative and **high quality images** of the area's key experience themes.
50. At the first opportunity, create or obtain the rights to high quality video imagery of the area's key positioning themes, experiences and attractions. It should be applied in all relevant marketing applications, particularly media, visitor center videos and web video.

Public Relations

Allocating resources to generating increased media coverage can be highly effective in reaching key markets. The dissemination of materials to the media, handling their enquiries, and coordinating their visits can generate positive coverage of city attributes. Public relations should play a dynamic role within the Chamber's strategy to attract more visitors. The objective is to gain synergy from the collective efforts of local partners as well as those of CVALCO and Travel Oregon to maximize media exposure.

Recommended Actions:

51. **Actively collaborate with CVALCO** to assist them and Travel Oregon to publicize the area's key experience themes.
52. In conjunction with CVALCO develop a **basic media kit** to promote birding, wineries, country crafts and events.
53. Make the **media kit available online** and provide updates as needed.

Co-operative Marketing

Tourism businesses in Lane County have a variety of marketing opportunities at their disposal. Among the most effective are often the opportunities presented by CVALCO and Travel Oregon because they produce material that is integrated into wider marketing communication programs. These provide exposure in applications that may not normally be accessible to small budget advertisers. Other co-operative marketing opportunities include public relations activities, database marketing, online marketing and direct mail. Importantly, these organizations are generating interest in Oregon and Lane County as destinations.

Recommended Actions:

54. Consult with CVALCO to optimize the city's participation in the **co-operative marketing and free publicity** activities offered by CVALCO and Travel Oregon.

55. Collaborate with CVALCO to ensure that **advertising** in publications by the Chamber and local tourism partners is targeted toward the most appropriate outlets and most likely to generate the best results.

Partners and Third Party Marketers

Destination marketers rely on a wide variety of organizations and partners to distribute information about their attractions and travel products. Fern Ridge is no exception and in this regard there are several organizations such as CVALCO, Travel Oregon, AAA and a variety of others that are in touch with prospective visitors to the area.

A short time spent using online search engines, browsing guide books and reviewing the brochure racks in Visitor Information Centers may reveal opportunities for additional exposure for the area. It is possible that Fern Ridge and its key attractions have been inadvertently omitted or have incorrect copy in important publications, articles and web sites.

Bookstores offer dozens of guidebooks relevant to travel in the Northwest and Oregon. Fern Ridge has a relatively low profile in many of these. The guidebooks cover a wide variety of interests from traveling with children and pets, to driving, hiking, camping, bird watching and weekend escapes. These guides are widely distributed in the USA and overseas and are highly influential in assisting readers, particularly interstate and international visitors, with their travel decisions.

There are several third party web sites which are prominent in Google searches that are not controlled by the Chamber or City. These may not be highlighting information and attractions that should be a priority for the Chamber.

Another important area that now requires constant monitoring by tourism organizations (and businesses) is the realm of social networking. Over the past decade, we could not have dreamt of the power that is now at the fingertips of our customers because of this new online technology. We seem to be leaving the information economy and now entering a conversation economy. Everyone can now be a journalist, travel writer, documentary-maker, promoter, opinion-leader, travel advisor, or food critic. These are low cost, yet high impact. The most powerful medium today for enticing customers isn't advertising - it's the conversations that we have among our family, friends and colleagues - and increasingly these are digital conversations through a screen of some sort.

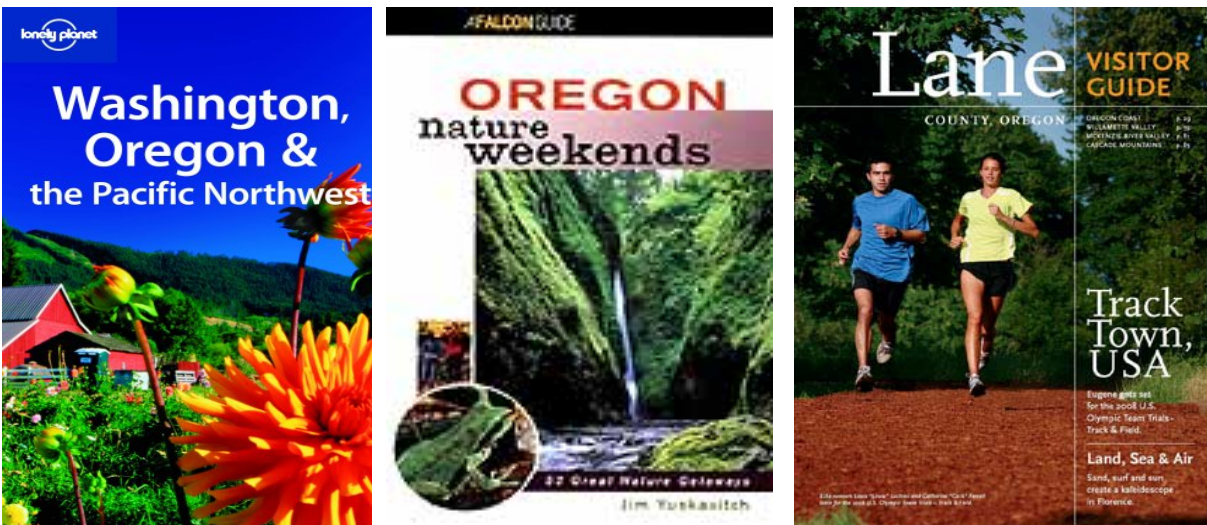
Visitors to destinations already have the tools to instantly blog about their experiences (good or bad) from anywhere in the world (and at any time), find their friends using mapping technology, use Flash applications to make their arrangements, subscribe to information sources using RSS, access someone's video of their vacation on YouTube, see pictures and comments on MySpace, and read the critiques of past visitors on sites like TripAdvisor. All of these applications are available outside of the control of DMOs - and will have a profound impact on destination branding.

The challenge for places like Fern Ridge is to remain relevant when so much communication is taking place through informal channels. The marketing team, even in small cities will have to

be more actively engaged in these social networking formats to monitor and assist the user-content that is being created.

Word of mouth has always been the most powerful element in destination marketing - it's now on steroids - where the experience and customer satisfaction are absolutely paramount. Places now have to pay even more attention to the experiences that you are delivering and explore how to play a meaningful role in social networking applications.

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being created. Places now must pay even more attention to the experiences that they are delivering and explore how to play a meaningful role in social networking applications.

Recommended Actions:

56. Conduct a thorough review of the coverage of Fern Ridge in **third party brochures, maps and web sites**. Check for accuracy, whether they project the area in the best light, and whether they conform to the identity that the community wants to project. Contact these organizations immediately because harnessing the distribution power of third parties through their web sites, maps, and brochures can provide considerable leverage, add credibility and help get the city on more visitors' "shopping lists".
57. Establish a group of volunteers to **monitor exposure** of Fern Ridge in publications and web sites.
58. Annually review the coverage of the Fern Ridge area in travel **guidebooks** such as Fodors, Lonely Planet, Moon, Rough Guide, and the many special interest guides for dining, hiking, wildlife viewing, birding and kids etc, and their online versions. Check facts and whether the area is projected accurately and favorably. Ensure the coverage conforms to the identity that the community wants to project. When appropriate, approach guidebook publishers with any suggested additions or corrections.
59. In collaboration with CVALCO develop a plan (that is constantly revised) to actively monitor and be engaged in **social networking applications** to ensure that Fern Ridge is accurately represented and provide clarification when needed. This should be closely integrated with CVALCO's own social networking strategy because visitor comments in most cases will relate to local attractions, lodging and services.

Research

Research does not have to be an expensive proposition. There are many cost effective options. Gaining an understanding of visitors and their motivations, attitudes and behavior can lead to greatly improved performance. It is important to constantly monitor visitor satisfaction and seek ways of improving the experiences that are extended to them. This can be achieved by making a simple survey form or card available to them. The objective of this survey is not necessarily to register a high number of responses, but to monitor the specific issues that visitors raise in regard to the quality of their experience and identify where improvements might be necessary.

Recommended Actions:

60. In conjunction with CVALCO and local partners, initiate **customer surveys** to gain insights into the demographics, behavior, motivations and satisfaction of visitors. Provide opportunities for visitors to provide feedback by making a **simple satisfaction survey** or feedback form readily available through lodging, dining, Visitor Information Centers and online. It is particularly important to conduct these surveys during major events.
61. **Discuss visitor satisfaction** results at every Chamber tourism committee meeting.

5. Soft Adventure Operators and Outfitters

The diverse topography of Lane County makes it an ideal location for soft adventure activities. The region has an increasing number of soft adventure operators and outfitters offering activities and services such as sandboarding, rafting, fishing, mountain biking, and sea kayaking. These are generally small businesses that do not have broad distribution and sale of their products. However, when their role in the visitor experience is fully understood and acknowledged, they do represent many benefits of importance to those communities in which they operate.

The Benefits of Adventure Operators and Outfitters

These businesses enable communities to develop a more professionally based tourism industry and capture many benefits that may otherwise elude the community.

The simplest way to illustrate this point is that when such experiences are available and made known to visitors, they not only increase the reasons to make a visit, but also extend the time and spending of visitors.

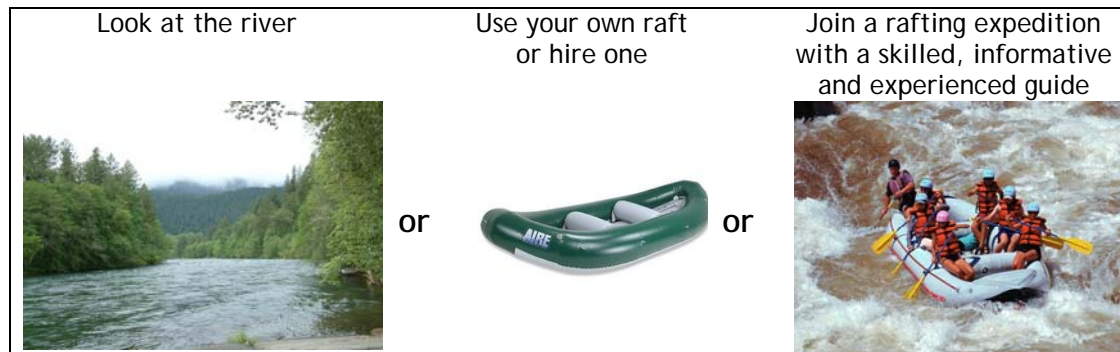
Having something to do for a half or full day, rather than say an hour, can mean the difference between a visitor either driving on or returning home, without the need for an overnight stay - and depriving the community of valuable income.

The range of benefits to communities includes:

- Attracting incremental visitors that the community may not have otherwise welcomed
- Attracting high yield visitors who usually buy other local services
- Increased length of stay
- Promoting the community through their marketing, thus complementing the Chamber's marketing efforts
- Increased economic and employment opportunities for the community
- A more personalized and authentic experience for visitors
- Increased interest from interstate and international visitors
- More small and micro businesses for small communities

Adventure Operators and Outfitters Add Value

A challenge for places that rely on nature-based tourism is one of generating economic benefits for their community. Forests, rivers, lakes and trails are usually free of charge or may involve a small parking, entrance or use fee, as in the case of County Parks, State/National Parks and some other categories of Federal/State land management agencies.



The river in its natural form can be considered a commodity and not generate any direct economic benefit. A visitor might bring his own raft from home and in this case makes no direct, local economic contribution through use of the river. When the visitor hires a raft from a local outfitter, an economic contribution is made. However, when the visitor joins a rafting expedition that may include a mini-bus transfer, a meal, seat on the raft, the personal involvement of a skilled and experienced guide, and a fascinating and informative commentary about the river, he is purchasing a value-added experience. He has purchased more than a ride on the river, he has purchased a sense of security, an adventure he might not attempt without expert assistance, and a level of engagement that has created a memorable experience.

Adventure operators and outfitters not only add value to the experience of visitor's experiences, but also add to the greater economic well-being of their communities. The added economic value for the community is generated through the local payments for supplies, services, equipment, and the payment of wages to local staff.

The Power of Networking

Adventure operators and outfitters are small, independent businesses that must be highly targeted in their marketing activities. *Cross selling* may provide the synergy to generate increased distribution and sales by providing existing or potential customers with the opportunity to enjoy complementary or similar experiences. The idea is to capture a larger share of the consumer market by meeting more of their needs and wants and successful destinations deliberately set out to make this process as seamless or effortless as possible for the visitor. Within the region this concept most readily applies to soft adventure operators and outfitters who can boost business for each other, as well as their communities and other tourism businesses, e.g. lodging and dining establishments, general stores, etc. by adopting a more collaborative approach.

Some of the cross selling techniques that can be employed include:

- Displaying brochures of other attractions
- Providing information and advice on other activities whenever possible
- Packaging and bundling of the products of different operators
- Develop pricing incentives such as discounts or two-for-ones, e.g. take a rafting trip and get a 10% discount on bicycle rental

- Recommendation and selling the product of others to consumer, trade and media
- Web and brochure coverage and links to other operators
- Staff training in products of other operators

Recommended Actions:

62. **Meet with operators** from around the region on a quarterly basis to explore ways to collaborate and address priority issues of importance to all.
63. Operators from around the region should identify and activate appropriate **cross selling techniques**.
64. Operators should participate in appropriate CVALCO and Travel Oregon **co-operative marketing** opportunities that are directed toward their target audiences.
65. Ensure that soft adventure operators are given prominence in the **Chamber's destination marketing** and not treated as "just another member". They are attractors in their own right, just like a Broadway show is to New York. They can provide a competitive edge over other places and may attract visitors who may not otherwise visit the area.
66. Work with appropriate **local and regional lodging** to encourage them to actively promote operators to guests, develop packages and include operators in web and brochure copy
67. Ensure that the services of local operators are **easy to book** via phone and internet.
68. Investigate the need for and feasibility of a **regional reservations system**.
69. Ensure that all Fern Ridge soft adventure opportunities are included in **CVALCO's proposed adventure tourism brochure**.

6. Leadership and Organization

Tourism is an important form of economic development and is about generating added income and jobs for communities. Successful tourism requires a seamless delivery of information and experiences between public, private and non profit organizations. Optimizing its benefits will require the support and actions of more than the Chamber of Commerce. It will also require the long-term advocacy, support and collaboration of many individuals and organizations both within Fern Ridge and outside the area.

The TDM team observed a need for the Chamber to refocus its approach in regard to tourism and address basic issues relating to branding, product development, web marketing and information distribution.

Recommended Actions:

70. Establish **Fern Ridge Tourism Development Working Group**. It is recommended that this group comprise representatives of a variety of local, county, state and national organizations with an interest in tourism and economic development. It should not be dominated by members of any one local organization category. The objective should be to facilitate the effective development of tourism by optimizing access to marketing, funding, and governmental agencies at county, state, and national levels.
71. **Leverage the experience and expertise of CVALCO and Travel Oregon** to strengthen the city's tourism marketing.
72. The Chamber should convene a **tourism committee** to review and implement recommendations from this report and to foster cooperation and collaboration with local partners and CVALCO.
73. The tourism committee should review the recommendations in this Visitor Readiness Report with the view to developing an **Implementation Action Plan**. After considering the actions required, the budgets, timeline and organizations responsible for each recommendation, they should all be prioritized according to their importance/impact, urgency and resources required. In developing the action plan it is important to ensure that there are some quick and easy early successes. Consider 30 day/90 day/ six month and one year action goals.
74. Develop an annual Tourism Action Plan in consultation with CVALCO to ensure that all opportunities are being optimized.
75. Participate with other **Lane County destination marketers in regular meetings (led by CVALCO)** in order to optimize integration of web marketing, brochure production, information distribution and the optimization of cooperative marketing opportunities between communities and businesses.
76. Increase awareness among residents of the **economic and social benefits** of tourism to Fern Ridge particularly as it relates to birders, events, wineries and transit motorists. The

target audiences here should be residents, community opinion leaders and government officials.

77. In conjunction with CVALCO conduct **Tourism 101 workshops** for local tourism partners to ensure that they are familiar with the tourism marketing, distribution and product development best practices.

The Spirit of Hospitality

Oregon's visitors are becoming more experienced and discerning in what they expect from the places they visit, where they stay, shop, eat and relax. The "Q Program" developed by Travel Oregon is an excellent primer for communities to refresh and refocus on service.

Recommended Actions:

78. Introduce the "**Q Customer Service Training Program**" to Fern Ridge. Note: this is only a start and is part of a never-ending focus required for quality assurance programs.
79. **Front line staff** in lodging and restaurants should be kept informed about things to see and do locally for their guests. This can be achieved by visits to the attractions and familiarizations designed for them.
80. In conjunction with the local media introduce an educational program to **encourage local residents** to become familiar with the city's trails and recreational opportunities.

Appendix 1: Fern Ridge Community Online Survey

The following are results from the online survey for local residents and stakeholders conducted by Total Destination Management between October 13 and December 6, 2008. A total of 12 people completed various questions in the survey. Note that the responses in this report are verbatim and may include typographic and grammatical errors which were in the original responses.

1. What do you consider to be the TWO greatest STRENGTHS of Fern Ridge from a visitor's perspective?

- 1. Fern Ridge Lake 2. Wineries
- 1. Multiple vineyards with wine tastings. 2. Water sport and bird sanctuary area for mid-destination rest or full weekend end-destination use.
- Fern Ridge Lake & water based recreation Birding Proximity to area wineries
- Fern Ridge Reservoir The uniqueness of the local community
- Fern Ridge Reservoir and Fern Ridge Library
- Friendly and Great Businesses
- Location access and Community information available walk in, phone or website
- Nature and wineries
- The lake and our vineyards
- The unique ambience of a small town and its people and the "best place to stop for a while and take a break" between the coast and Eugene.
- There are a lot of wineries in close proximity to Fern Ridge
- Various outdoor activities--water, hikes, etc.. Friendly, helpful citizens

2. What do you consider to be the TWO greatest WEAKNESSES of Fern Ridge from a visitor's perspective?

- 1. Lack of lodging 2. Coordinated events
- 1. Public rest room and telephone service in not findable. 2. No obvious facilities defining the area. (Gas, food, services are too spread out to find.)
- A variety of businesses is lacking
- Downtown Veneta and viable Chamber
- Lack of overnight accommodations Lack of articulation between Veneta and Fern Ridge Lake
- No hotel or clear direction/unification of industry
- No overnight accomodations.... No boutique type shops/food service.....
- No unique shops and the community is not attractive. There are no flags, flowers, dead grass in the summer. There isn't any cohesive plan.
- Not enough marketing on Fernridge Area
- Not enough organized activities and poor knowledge of our area
- The office isn't open during regular business hours all of the time. Time for new leadership
- Very poor business district in Veneta (needs facelift, improvements, and more competition to lower rental rates) Road accessiblity is too limited (2-lane road out 126)

3. From time to time you may hear complaints or negative comments from visitors to Fern Ridge. What is it that you are most likely to hear?

- 1. Locals are rude. 2. "Nothing worth while here."
- 1. What is there to do ? 2. What is unique to this area?
- Desire for area accommodations during Oregon Country Fair

- Didn't know where to go/what to do
- I really have not heard a lot of complaints from my customers.
- No overnight accommodations... Nothing "to do" at night
- Nothing to do.
- People do not know what businesses are available
- Restrictive Highway 126 and incomplete shopping accommodation possibilities.
- Roads are poor
- There is nothing to do in Fern Ridge. There is nothing for the kids. There is not a map.

4. Considering your replies to question 3, what do you think needs to be done to address these issues?

- 1. Consistent, coordinated marketing 2. Development of unique events and existing efforts (like Farmer's Market & Wings and Wine
- 1. Individual businesses must use each other and recommend to other users/travelers. 2. Have a desirable stopping information area.
- A visitor's center
- Ask Kitty Peircy apparently she wasn't sure even after multiple votes in favor of expansion of 126
- Encourage a chain of motels to consider the area...help with the establishment of a bed and breakfast or two. Encourage local food service establishments to include local musical or comedic talents to perform on site
- Make people more aware of all the wonderful things we do have in our area. From nature to our gorgeous landscape, we have a lot to offer as far as sight seeing goes. However, I think we need to truly capitalize on our small town charm by expanding with bed and breakfast area's, guided tours, etc...
- More Marketing
- Motel and mens/womans clothing store.
- We need a plan to invite unique businesses to Fern Ridge. The city has done almost everything it can to repel growth. We don't have businesses so 85% of our residents commute into Eugene for work. Since they leave the businesses we do have have severe financial challenges. The city doesn't believe in incentives so we have nothing that is inviting for business.

5. How can Fern Ridge capture more business from passing motorists?

- 1. Better promotion of existing businesses (Our Daily Bread; Events Center; Wineries)
- Being allowed signage on the highway.
- Better signage better advertising
- Create a more appealing frontage, and support more local business promotion as a whole.
- Grow unique businesses. Offer incentives to attract business. Pay the Chamber the county funds since it is doing the job of serving visitors 5 days a week instead of giving the majority of the funds to a weekend event.
- Have an events bill board/ sign at major intersection announcing what's going on in the area
- Have signage at the road listing everything in town & the direction it lies in.
- Having more places/more attractive places to spot - making it a fuller experience with all of the amenities
- joint wine tasting room and interpretation center at primary intersection.
- Motel and dress up Highway 126, particularly at Territorial intersection.
- Signs are a great way. Have fancy banners made to hang from the 4 way intersection.
- We need a motel, some large fast food purveyors.... A more diverse shopping experience

6. Would you like to comment on how Fern Ridge can improve its visitor experiences in regard to the following? NOTE: It is not necessary to respond to all questions.

a. Visitor Attractions (Heritage and Cultural)

- A memorial or landmark would me nice but I'm very much in favor of donated money as opposed to using federal or state dollars
- Applegate Museum (open only two Sundays each month)
- Coordinate a wineries map and events
- Fern Ridge Lake locations, Applegate Trail heritage, museum, stage and community center, pool.
- Have maps available with suggested outings and day trips
- Local museums and library are not known nor advertised, even by word of mouth.
- The memorial recognizing our military branches would be something.
- What heritage and cultural attractions ?????

b. Natural areas (e.g. Forests, parks, coast, rivers, trails etc)?

- Existing and planned hiking, biking and bird watching need a coordinated, promoted effort
- Fern Ridge Lake locations, birding possibilities, develop park along 126 west of Territorial.
- Fern Ridge Lake, Zumwalt Park, Perkins Peninsula Park, Richardson Park, Orchard Point Park, wildlife veiwing area on Cantrell Road. Not sure how apparent all these assets are.
- Fern Ridge Reservoir is quite nice
- Have maps available with suggested outings and day trips
- These are doing well I think.
- They're well known
- We need signage that leads people to the wineries, the rivers etc.
- We once again must capitalize on our wonderful outdoors.

c. Lodging Facilities?

- Actually for a small hotel or encourage more B and Bs to start up
- Attract a motel.
- Bed and breakfast area's. Like Sisters, OR. Very small community whom has done a great job not growing too large, keeping a small town cottage feel and attracts so many people for that reason. I think that if we could push our community in that direction the fern ridge area could due very well. We are right on the way to the coast, we could be very popular as a tourist passing spot.
- Functionally none in the area. Even local B & B or wine-staying areas are not known to me.
- it would be nice to have access to lodgine while visit the Fern Ridge area. The hotel on W Ilth is a bit of a drive
- There are none!
- There are virtually none with the exception of camping
- We are still too small to attract a hotel but we are getting close to have the nucleous of residents to support a hotel. I believe this should be a unique boutique hotel not a cheap chain.
- What lodging facilities?????

d. Shopping?

- A map/cluster brochure informing visitors about what IS available - again with suggested outings and day trips
- Mens' and womens' clothing.
- More advertising
- More is good

- More ma and pop restaurants. Anyone can purchase a McDonalds or Taco Bell and offer food. They have those in Eugene & Florence. We need something unique.
- Our Daily Bread is distinctive Ixtapa and Rosalina's (Mexican) Restaurants I think restaurants could offer birders boxed lunches, and maps of key birding areas
- Restaurants do a good advertising job, either by signage or loction. Shopping other then food is not visible to travelers.
- Restaurants like Our Daily Bread, Rosalina's and Robbie's Window Box Cafe need better signage on 126
- Shopping is spread out all over the place. IT would be good to have shopping areas closer or even a map of whats where available at shops to inform traveler/people new to the area where things are
- We have heard time and time again about the need to have clothing, shoes, furniture, more upscale restaurants
- What we have is good, but we need a variety.

e. Signage, Wayfinding, Parking, City Gateways / Welcome?

- A more visually appealing signage for the Veneta/Fern Ridge areas might be very helpful to direct attention the wonderful array of local business.
- An area attractions map should be on display at all area shopping and restaurants.
- Dress up area around Highway 126 and Territorial.
- Highway signage is crucial for any business, however feasibility is nill (as far as with ODOT)
- Need a Gateway sign towards the heart of Veneta. Destination marketing with smaller signs would be nice too.
- OK already; new digital sign should help
- Signage
- The East aspect of Fern Ridge is signaged decently, though I constantly hear confusion about "when the town actually starts" due to Veneta sign being after businesses.
- The Veneta code is too restrictive so what little is here is not promoted adequately.

f. Events, Festivals and Performances?

- 2 BBQs in summer - very close together - Wings and Wine weekend well attended.....otherwise (the country fair notwithstanding) THERE'S NOTHING HAPPENING !!!
- Annual events such as the light parade are great. I think we need to throw large festivals like that for Christmas, New Years, St. Patricks, 4th of July. Make our area a place people want to come to celebrate. Where they want to come to get away from the cities and be with the family.
- Country Fair and other revenue generating activities for local business and the community are good.
- Develop central events location with stage and covered space and youth center.
- Have focused events. Not conglomerate events like the biz expo and health fair...in my oppinion that was a major flop. Lack of attendance. Pay attention to other events going on and schedule events at a time when theres not huge competition
- Need a fall event. Need to tie into the vineyards' events and promote ourselves as part of that gateway
- The Country Fair is a successful event but we are not harnessing any of those funds.
- We have events and no one knows about them. Regional coverage is needed more then town coverage.
- Wings and Wine Festival needs support, staffing and promotion

g. Outdoor Recreation and Soft Adventure Activities?

- Boat rentals in Veneta area would be helpul, and water recreation and birding maps
- Parks and connecting paths. Swimming pool and youth center.

- Sounds great
- These are present, though no one thinks of them due to not knowing what is present. Hotel flier, magazine, and newspaper usage in regional area would help.

h. What marketing or visitor information initiatives would you like to see Fern Ridge improve or introduce?

- Cluster brochures highlighting local businesses, trips, events, etc . . . - A visitor center - A couple annual events the community can rally around and promote our area to tourists (and that benefits everyone involved) - Local maps with tours and suggested day trips
- Any would be wonderful. If I was to drive through The Fern Ridge area I would look for a visitor center sign, something large. I think that would help
- Lots
- Stable Chamber of Commerce.
- The Fern Ridge Chamber needs to embrace tourism and acquire funding for visitor information

7. What additional businesses, services or activities do you think are needed to supply the necessary experiences and products for increased visitor satisfaction in Fern Ridge?

- A Wine "Store" for all the area wineries; a wine/harvest type event for the fall; acquiring lodging for the area
- Better marketing from our chamber
- Boutique hotel or B and Bs Tourist shopping area that includes small specialty shops
- Copy center, clothing store, book store (I'm working on that one).
- Figure out what people are driving to Eugene to purchase and get similar businesses out there. Costco
- More professional services - there is medical but more tax preparation, civil law, etc
- MOTEL, BED AND BREAKFASTS, LARGE CHAIN FAST FOODS, because DAIRY QUEEN CLOSSES AT 9:30 (RIDICULOUS!)
- Motel, pool, theatre, covered community center, youth center, park along 126.

8. CVALCO is going to increase its focus on soft adventure activities. What does Fern Ridge need to do to capitalize on this?

- Advertise in young, moneyed, alternative life-style venue areas to gain folks doing the activities and have money to spend on the experience.
- Covered community/youth centers, theatre, motel, country club.
- Highlight fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, we need campsites!
- Highlight our strengths and make them attractive to visitors with suggested day trips and outings - **MARKETING!!** We have everything but the lodging to create the ideal situation for visitors
- Provide areas to have soft adventure, find ways for local businesses to participate/support
- The hiking/biking plan needs to be implemented through acquiring funding/ staffing. A Parks and Recreation District needs to be developed

9. What can be done to enable soft adventure / outdoor recreation related businesses in Fern Ridge and in other parts of the county to improve their tourism performance?

- A marketing and advertising plan needs to be developed and funded
- Businesses need help working together to create a fuller county visitor experience. Workshops or roundtables with related tourist businesses may help - actually meeting people on the other side of the county in a related field so that we might collaborate - great things could happen. Small business owners don't have time to go out and meeting other business owners, especially that far

away. A facilitated meeting with a purpose (tourism/ outdoor rec) may get all (more) of these people to the table.

- Develop covered meeting spaces, theatre, parks, pool, lake access.
- explain what soft adventure is to community. Advertise in local paper, through chamber, at schools. Show the community what the benefits are for them.
- Plan multi-business activities with interactive sponsoring techniques and shared visibility venues.

10. Which of the following descriptions best describes your organization or relationship to tourism in Fern Ridge? Please check ONE answer only.

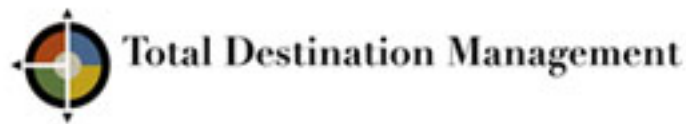
	Respondents
Attractions, events, tours	1
Visitor Services - Restaurant, Retail, Transport, Entertainment, etc.	2
Other business	3
Non profit	2
Government	1
Interested resident	1
Skipped question	2

11. Would you like to make some additional comments?

- Getting word out for tourism is great, yet over signage and unplanned business build up looking to a single financial inflow to aid all business is unreasonable and leaves residence living in a dreamed economy then a real one. Please balance both.
- I truly love the Fern Ridge area. I'm proud to call it my home. I don't want our growth to make us just another city. I believe we have a great chance to make our community something very special because the people that live and work here are truly special. We just have to be careful the way we push our growth.

12. It is NOT necessary to identify yourself. However, if you would like to identify yourself, please do so here.

- Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce
- Kim McCartney Owner of Hydrogen Fueled Solutions/Cloey Shea Treasures and Gifts also part time sales for Tri-County News / West Lane News



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