

Visitor Readiness Report Cottage Grove, OR

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Introduction

The Cottage Grove Visitor Readiness Report is an initiative by Cottage Grove 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 city's tourism performance. 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 recommended actions contained in this report were created after site visits by the TDM team, consultation with local stakeholders, and research.

Cottage Grove is located in the southern part of Lane County and is on I- 5. Its attractive downtown is a designated National Historic District and is a very attractive pedestrian precinct with many cafes and dining opportunities. Six of the covered bridges in Lane County are located in or around Cottage Grove and along with Dorena Lake, and Row River Trail make it a potentially attractive place for a variety of visitors.

Motorists traveling the I-5 can stop in Cottage Grove and not recognize that they are in close proximity to many covered bridges, wineries and great opportunities for biking and hiking. In fact, visitors may think that there is no real reason to visit or stop in the city, except for gas and food. Harnessing these opportunities will result in considerable economic benefits for the community.

The priority issues identified in the report are:

- Branding and positioning
- Brochures and information distribution
- Focus on key experiences
- Product development initiatives through trails
- 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 enable the area's performance to generate greater economic benefits from tourism.

Methodology

The development of the Visitor Readiness Report for Cottage Grove involved a variety of actions which included:

- An extensive review of past reports, strategies and plans relating to Cottage Grove.
- Review and analysis of past and current marketing materials, including brochures, web sites, maps and partner marketing materials (e.g. hotels).
- Online research to review key web sites relating to Cottage Grove, as well as those that potentially should carry references to Cottage Grove.
- 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 to experience the city through the objective eyes of a first time visitor.

Visitor Readiness Report

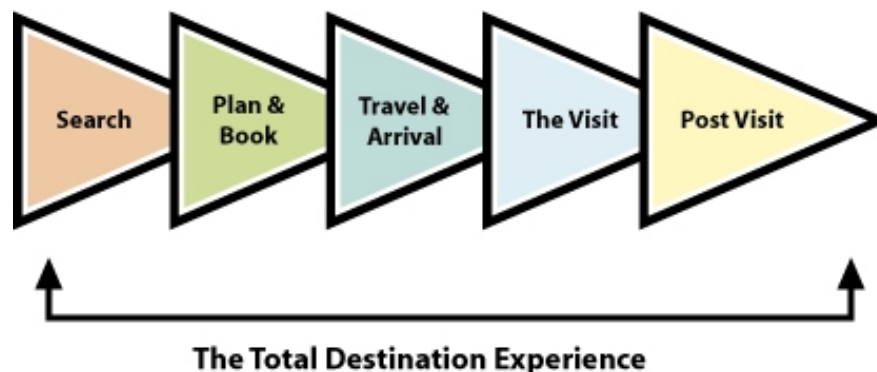
Total Destination Experience

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 total destination experience. The information and experience needs of prospective visitors change according to the stage in their 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 Cottage Grove. It shows 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 sites, souvenirs and local products, direct mail, and “thank you” emails and correspondence?

Visitor Readiness Report

This Visitor Readiness Report provides recommendations for enhancing Cottage Grove’s capabilities and competitiveness in ways that are essential for successful tourism. It is divided into the following sections.

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| 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 | The place elements, signage and wayfinding inform, guide, and motivate travelers. |
| 4. Marketing Communications | These are the actions that communicate the tourism benefits of the city. |
| 5. 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 stand apart from competitors. It clarifies what is special about the place. Positioning establishes what the city wants customers to think and feel about it 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.

The three most important concepts for places like Cottage Grove to master in branding are (i) differentiation and positioning, i.e. leading with what sets it apart, (ii) focus on “sticking” to 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.

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

Michael Eisner
Former Disney CEO

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 city. This does not mean that other city attributes are forgotten. In the case of Cottage Grove, it means that covered bridges should take the lead as much as possible with the support of complimentary attributes such as the historic downtown, Row River Trail and wineries. In the absence of a formal brand strategy, we recommend that the city’s positioning as “the covered bridge capital of Oregon” lead marketing initiatives. It is only through this focus and consistency over a long period that positive awareness will increase and Cottage Grove will become synonymous with covered bridges which will boost all aspects of its tourism and economic development.



The Chamber should officially adopt the tagline, “The Covered Bridge Capital of Oregon” and this line should be added to the Chamber of Commerce and City of Cottage Grove logos.

Recommended Actions:

1. Cottage Grove should **formally adopt the positioning** based on being “the covered bridge capital of Oregon.” Covered bridges should **lead images, copy and experiences** in Cottage Grove brochures, web sites and articles. This does not indicate that other city attributes be forgotten.
2. Cottage Grove should officially adopt the **tagline**, *Covered Bridge Capital of Oregon*.
3. The **logo for the Chamber of Commerce** should include the line, *The Covered Bridge Capital of Oregon*.
4. Identify a series of **key phrases and words** which are consistently conveyed to support the brand in all marketing applications by the Chamber and stakeholders. These may include “covered bridge capital of Oregon,” “Cottage Grove Covered Bridge Trail,” “covered bridges within minutes of I-5,” “covered bridges and wine,” “a small town surrounded by covered bridges,” etc. Encourage all organizations to use these terms when describing the city from a tourism perspective.
5. **Communicate** the positioning and branding based on covered bridges to local stakeholders in order to generate their support.
6. The Chamber of Commerce, in association with CVALCO, should **convene meetings** with all relevant businesses throughout the city to demonstrate the importance of the new county and local area branding and positioning. The organizations should convey how the initiatives will success of the area’s marketing 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 city is able to consistently excel at being perceived as the covered bridge capital of Oregon.

Alignment with the Regional Brand

The new regional tourism brand is founded on accessible soft adventures. The Cottage Grove experiences that are most aligned with this brand are cycling, hiking, water sports, camping, scenic drives, and exploring wineries. Particularly relevant is the Row River Trail which is ideal for cycling enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels.

Recommended Actions:

8. **Collaborate with CVALCO** to ensure that Cottage Grove’s soft adventure activities, particularly cycling and hiking on Row River Trail, are included 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 may 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 visitor attractions of Cottage Grove are centered on covered bridges, Dorena Lake, outdoor recreation and nearby wineries. The city's Main Street, a designated National Historic District also provides a very enjoyable walking precinct. It features a variety of retail and dining options, as well as more than twenty murals on the sides of buildings. The 14 acre Bohemian Park development at Main Street and 10th has commenced and this will be a valuable addition to the tourism appeal of the city. It will feature a museum, amphitheater, fitness course, tracks and open space for events.

9. The recommended key experience themes in Cottage Grove are:

Priority

- Covered Bridge Trail - These should be the lead experiences highlighted in most Cottage Grove marketing.

Complementary

- The Downtown National Historic District
- Cycling and hiking - The Row River Trail
- The Wine Tour Loop
- Major events

Covered Bridge Tour

Cottage Grove is credited with being the "Covered Bridge Capital of Oregon." The city's Covered Bridge Tour is the one attraction that uniquely sets Cottage Grove apart from most other places. Covered bridges evoke very positive emotions in people and have the capacity to encourage transit visitors, especially interstate and international motorists, to stop in the city and drive the route because it is so appealing.

There is the need for many more directional "Covered Bridge Tour" signs because of the distances involved (sometime 5-6 miles between signs) and the need for signs to accommodate motorists who are randomly visiting the bridges rather than following the trail's

specified order. If motorists are not travelling in the specified direction, there may be no signs at some points to guide them. There is the considerable risk that if visitors become disoriented along the route, they may end up at Bohemian Mining District wilderness area and thus spend much more time on this excursion than planned.

The Covered Bridge Tour is potentially of such importance to the community that a concerted effort must be made to ensure that it is functional, rewarding and easy to follow. The current publications, "The Covered Bridge Tour" and large Chamber map when used together are confusing because they each direct the motorist in different directions to tour the bridges and the bridge numbers on the map and the brochure are in different orders.

Recommended Actions:

10. Rather than refer generically to the city's covered bridges, the "**Cottage Grove Covered Bridge Tour**" should be developed as an attraction in its own right. It should be the feature in all external marketing and given extensive publicity. Consideration should be given to changing the term "tour" in regard to the covered bridge route. "Tour" can give the impression of an organized excursion at a specific time. Trail or route is in more common use in regard to covered bridges in other parts of the country.
11. Form a group to evaluate the locations where **Covered Bridge Tour signs** should be positioned. This planning exercise should first be conducted by driving the route using only the available brochures/maps and the signs - not by using the existing knowledge of local participants. Consideration must be given to making it navigable for those visiting the sites in a random order. The route should be designed in such a way that it enables motorists to return to the city without completing the entire journey. To facilitate this option, increase the number of signs guiding visitors back to Cottage Grove. The route should be made readily accessible from Row River Road as most visitors will be more familiar with that road due to its access from lodging and the I-5.
12. **Interpretative signs** should be added to each bridge describing its history and points of interest.
13. Add "**Covered Bridge Tour**" **directional signs** at or near all North and South freeway exits into Cottage Grove at Exit 174.
14. **Chambers Bridge** in the city does not have any advanced warning signs, interpretive signage, pull off or parking area. These should be addressed as the budget becomes available.
15. An official directional sign on Row River Road near LaSells Stewart Park (at Laying Creek Road) has "Cottage Grove" misspelt as "**Cottate Grove.**"
16. Improve the description of the Cottage Grove Covered Bridge Tour on the **CVALCO website**.
17. The **covered bridge tour signs** are in pale colors and easily overlooked by motorists. Redesigned with dynamic graphics and colors they will increase interest and help motorists commence and stay on the route.



A review of the Cottage Grove Covered Bridge Tour is necessary to ensure that all signs and brochures are accurate and appropriate to visitor needs. The Applegate Trail Interpretive Center adjoining Centennial Bridge should be converted to interpretation of covered bridges.

Cottage Grove Wine Loop

There are five or six wineries within a twenty minute drive of Cottage Grove and the I-5. These include the King Estate which presents world-class experiences for wine tourism enthusiasts, yet the winery is not in the Loop brochure. The brochure describes the route as a “Winery Loop,” but the directional signs refer to it as a “Winery Tour.” The term “wine tour” may be misinterpreted to mean that it is a formal tour with specific departure times as opposed to a wine route or trail. The Wine Tour sign at the intersection of Main Street and Highway 99 does not easily or logically lead to the wine tour route. It actually leads away from it. Additionally, there are too few wine tour directional signs to designate a wine route. The team found many critical points in Cottage Grove that did not have the route signs and no “Wine Tour” signs were seen outside of the city on the Cottage Grove-Lorane Highway which is the route that visitors would follow to several of the wineries. This included no signs near the wineries or at the critical corner at Territorial and Hill Road West at Lorane.

Recommended Actions:

18. Reevaluate Cottage Grove Wine Loop concept to:

- Rationalize the names for the route currently used to a single identity
- Gain the participation of all wineries, especially King Estate
- Reevaluate the optimal location for signs within the city and along the route
- Add wine route directional signs at the I-5 entrances at Exit 174

19. Rather than limit the participating wineries to those in Cottage Grove, work with CVALCO and Wineries of Lane County to investigate the feasibility of a wine trail along Territorial Road from Cottage Grove to Veneta. This will stimulate traffic for all wineries from both directions, including a viable loop or circuit (including I-5) for those originating in the

major source markets of Eugene-Springfield and the Oregon Coast. It will also present a more substantial number of winery experiences and the addition of country crafts.

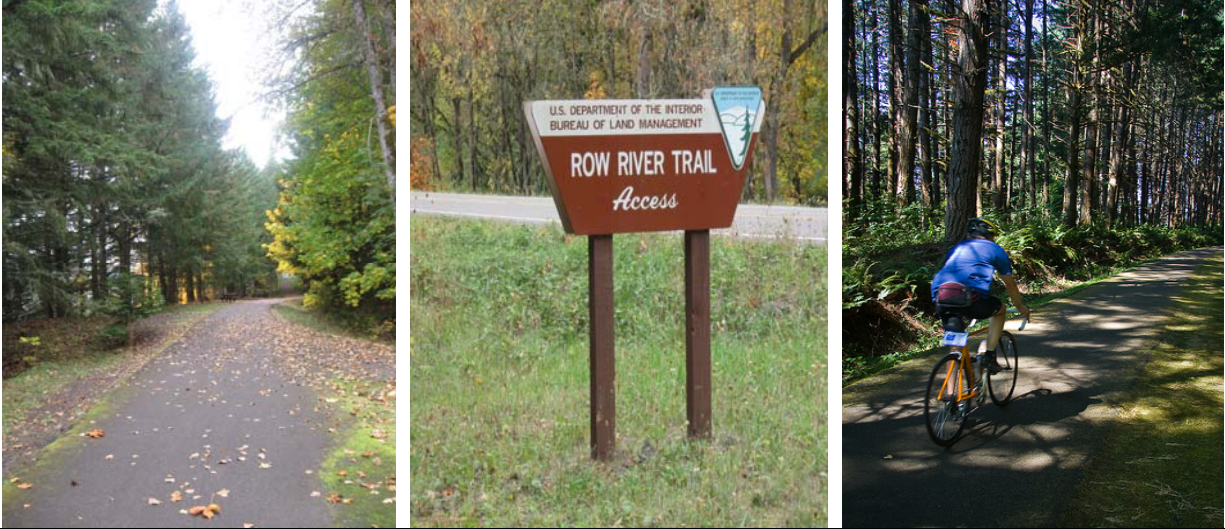
20. Introduce Wine Loop signs at the intersection of Highway 126 and Territorial Road in Veneta from both directions. This will aid a circular flow of visitors to both Cottage Grove and the wineries in the Fern Ridge area.
21. An integrated wayfinding system should be designed for directional, advanced warning and participant signage for use on roads throughout the designated wine route.
22. Consider the Wine Loop strategically as a **product or destination in its own right** and constantly review ways of increasing its awareness and improving the experience delivery to visitors. Develop a basic marketing plan for the route to aid this mindset.



The Cottage Grove Wine Route should be reviewed to incorporate King Estate, greater consistency in signage and link with the wineries in the Fern Ridge area.

Row River Trail

The Row River Trail runs 15.6 miles from Cottage Grove to Dorena Lake, Culp Creek and the nearby Umpqua National Forest. It was a Rails-to-Trails project on the abandoned Oregon Pacific & Eastern (OP&E) rail line. The trail traverses a variety of landscapes that include urban lands; pasture and farm land, timber lands, Dorena Lake shoreline, and the Row River. It provides access to an extensive network of forest trails managed by the Umpqua National Forest. Importantly, the trail is paved and the grade does not exceed 5 percent. Curves along the trail are banked to help bicyclists maintain their balance and allow for proper drainage. The trail and facilities along the trail meet or exceed standards for accessibility. This makes it an ideal venue for accessible low impact soft adventure activities.



Row River Trail is an outstanding fifteen mile trail with an excellent surface that makes it ideal for cyclists and walkers of all ages and skill levels.

Recommended Actions:

23. Ensure that trailheads with parking are well signposted, including advanced warning signs and are included in all relevant brochures and maps.
24. Consider Row River Trail as a **product or destination in its own right** and constantly review ways of increasing its awareness and improving experiences delivered to visitors.

Cottage Grove Speedway

The Cottage Grove Speedway attracts sprint car racing enthusiasts from across the western states. The most popular of these events is the “World of Outlaws” in September. While the racing events are noisy and many residents do not like the presence of the speedway, there is the opportunity to extend the stay of these visitors, while not increasing the number of racing events.

Recommended Actions:

25. Depending upon the outcome of the legal cases relating to the speedway, investigate the feasibility of creating a more festive event that is built around the “World of Outlaws.” This should not involve adding to the speedway events, but may be achieved by packaging other activities such as golf, live music, wineries and downtown businesses to form an attractive weekend to keep speedway enthusiasts in Cottage Grove.

Cottage Grove Museum

The Cottage Grove Museum does not project a strong invitation to prospective visitors. It is managed by a small group of volunteers who are working extremely hard on a very limited budget. It is only open Saturday 1-4 PM. The sign at the front of the building simply states, "Museum." It does not display a phone number to arrange a visit outside of these hours or for group visits. From the outside, it is not clear what type of exhibits the museum features.



Moving the Applegate Interpretive Center to the Forest Grove Museum will redirect the Applegate directional signage to the museum, thus increasing traffic to that site and freeing space at the Centennial Bridge for signage explaining the significance of covered bridges in the area.

Recommended Actions:

26. If it is considered that the museum should play a more active role in tourism the presentation of the museum building and its exhibits need to be improved. **Museum signs** should clearly communicate its focus and special exhibits.
27. Rather than simply calling the building, "Museum," it should be renamed to more accurately project its special themes to make it more enticing to visitors.
28. Relocate the "**Applegate Trail Interpretive Center,**" which is comprised of four interpretative displays adjoining the Centennial Bridge to the grounds of the Cottage Grove Museum. These displays are also showing signs of wear. It may be possible at the museum location to include other exhibits relevant to the Applegate Trail.
29. After moving the "Applegate Interpretive Center" to the Cottage Grove museum, the available space at the Centennial Bridge should be used to **tell the story of covered bridges** and answer the question, "Why are there are so many in Cottage Grove?" This will help in validating the claim that the city has more covered bridges than any other place in Oregon. The Lowell Covered Bridge on Highway 58 is an excellent example of the use of interpretive displays to tell the stories of covered bridges.
30. If the museum is to feature Applegate Trail exhibits the **Interpretive Center's directional signs** should be redirected to help build traffic for the museum.

Lane County Parks

The Baker Bay County Park provides important access to Dorena Lake for campers, hikers, boaters and fishermen. Lasells Stewart County Park provides picnicking areas and hiking access to aspects of the Bohemian Mining District.

Recommended Actions:

31. The **Baker Bay Park** sign on the left side of the road driving toward Cottage Grove is obscured by foliage. A sign should also be placed on the right side of the road because while there is an advanced warning sign, the entrance is narrow and obscured.
32. **Lasells Stewart Park** does not provide any indication of the activities available at the site. There are no signs, other than those for “No Camping” and the danger of fires. More positive signs should be added at the entrance to indicate the services and activities available in the park.

3. Streetscapes, Signage and Wayfinding

This section addresses the infrastructure, 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.

Historic Downtown

Downtown Cottage Grove is a delightful pedestrian precinct and is a designated National Historic District. It has an intact downtown shopping and business area that features several restaurants, a variety of retailers, and many service businesses with very few vacant buildings. An added feature for visitors is a covered bridge within walking distance at the end of Main Street. Main Street is also home to twenty murals painted on buildings to commemorate important aspects of the city’s history.



Fleur de Lis on Main Street (Left) has made excellent use of perpendicular blade signs to identify the restaurant to passing pedestrians and motorists. The center and right images highlight how businesses in the Old Town District of Florence are also successfully using this style of sign.

While some buildings could be refreshed with paint and landscaping, the overall impression of the street is very positive. The main deficiency along Main Street is in the form of the quality and style of many business signs. Most business signs are parallel to the street and this makes them difficult for motorists and pedestrians to see in advance. It would create a more attractive streetscape and better business environment if perpendicular blade signs were introduced, making them more visible and attractive to pedestrians and motorists.



Murals should be added downtown to celebrate the filming of "Animal House" and "Stand By Me." Interpretive signage should be added to the old firehouse structure at Main and 7th Street.

Recommended Actions:

- 33. Encourage businesses on Main Street to use attractive blade signs to identify and promote their businesses. This can add interest to the street as well as make it easier for prospective customers to identify businesses. An excellent example of this principle can be seen at Fleur de Lis French café on Main Street.
- 34. Add a mural to Main Street to commemorate the filming of scenes from the cult classic "Animal House" (1978) in Cottage Grove.
- 35. A year or so after unveiling the "Animal House" mural, unveil a mural for "Stand by Me" (1986), parts of which were also filmed in Cottage Grove, to again generate maximum publicity.
- 36. Add interpretive signage to the old fire house replica at the corner of Main and 7th. At present the structure lacks context without relevant explanation.

Directional Signage

The I-5 entrances and gateways to Cottage Grove provide an excellent opportunity to make positive statements to thousands of motorists every day. Importantly, many of them are interstate and overseas visitors who may have only an hour or two to spare for exploring the area but by their volume can also make a valuable economic contribution to the city.

The city is well signposted on I-5, but signage on the actual exits and gateways could be improved. The sign to the City Center from I-5 guides visitors past an unattractive route over the rail line, past light industry and storage facilities onto 9th Street.

While the Visitor Information Center is well signposted from some directions, there is the need for a thorough review of the signage needs of the center. For instance, there are no signs from Main Street to the Visitor Information Center or on Gibbs Street outside of the center when approaching from Cherry Street.

Recommended Actions:

37. Form a group to evaluate the locations where signs to visitor attractors should be positioned. This planning exercise should be conducted by to the city 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.
38. Develop attractive landscaped gateway welcome features at the Exit 174 entrances to Cottage Grove. These should be attractively landscaped and maintained to highlight that Cottage Grove is "The Covered Bridge Capital of Oregon."
39. Improve the visibility of the Cottage Grove sign at the northern entrance to the city on Highway 99 which is obscured by a 35mph speed limit sign.
40. Rename the signs to "City Center" as "Historic Downtown." This will present a more enticing destination for visitors.
41. Redirect the route of the current "City Center" signs to lead visitors to the city along Gateway Boulevard instead of via 9th Street. This is a much more attractive entry to the downtown and creates a more positive impression. It also leads people past several retail outlets and will guide people in a more direct route to downtown and the future Bohemia Park and museum.
42. Add visitor information directional signage on Main Street, conduct a thorough review of Visitor Center Signage needs and add new signs as required.
43. Add an official Oregon Tourism Information Council attraction sign on I-5 to publicize the Cottage Grove Covered Bridge Tour. This will be an extremely effective way to increase tourism to the city.

4. Marketing Communications

This section outlines the approaches that should be taken to communicate Cottage Grove'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, covered bridges and cycling. 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 for choosing to visit.

The current Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce rack brochure is of high quality, however it is heavy in text and treats all city features evenly. There is the need for the brochure to concisely convey what to see and do in order to strengthen initial interest in visiting the area i.e. covered bridges. This publication should be written and designed in a manner that

enables prospective short-term visitors to quickly reference the type of information and activities they are seeking. Accurate maps are essential for visitors to find their way around. This is particularly important for Cottage Grove because of the network of trails and the distance between points of interest.

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:

44. 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 Cottage Grove Activities Guide should be produced. This **lure or rack brochure** will have its sole focus on what to see and do, highlighting the covered bridge trail. It should be designed to entice people from one hundred miles from the city. The cover image should show the iconic image of Main Street and the Centennial Covered Bridge. It should also include the Winery Loop, Historic Downtown and Row River Trail, and all other relevant activities. The idea is to get the visitor to take the next step.
45. Produce a **visitor's guide for Cottage Grove**, specifically for use by visitors staying in the city. Care should be taken to ensure that advertising in the publication 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. This publication should not be used as a device to publicize all members of the Chamber as this is counter productive to the purpose of the guide.
46. **CVALCO's Visitors Guide** description of Cottage Grove should be more specific rather than general. The copy and images must focus on the main themes of the Covered Bridge Tour, Historic Downtown, Row River Trail and the Winery Loop. It should provide specific examples of things that visitors can see, and do and not simply describe the area.
47. Ensure that Cottage Grove is included in future editions of the **Travel Oregon Trip Planner** and information should be specific as in the CVALCO brochure suggestions.
48. Ensure that Cottage Grove **hotel brochures** use the most enticing and relevant copy and images when describing the tourism opportunities in the city.
49. Ensure that the Row River Trail and the low impact cycling and hiking experiences that it represents 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 the community and whether they return to the city. In the case of Cottage Grove strategically located information can assist in encouraging people to stop, visit and extend their stay in the area.

The Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce Visitor Information Center has a wide range of brochures available on the area. This material is available 6 days a week. The building is closed on Sundays. Brochures were not readily available at other locations around the city, including hotels.

The tourist information kiosk on the I-5 north of Eugene operated by Oregon Travel Information Council features several panels purchased by Cottage Grove. The information on these panels involves too much reading on many of the city's attractions and events for that particular location.

Recommended Actions:

50. Add a **display map** of the area and all-weather brochure dispenser/rack outside the Chamber of Commerce office to serve after hour visitors.
51. Evaluate further participation in the Oregon Travel Information's **visitor information kiosk** on I-5 north of Eugene. The focus should be on the Cottage Grove Covered Bridge Trail as the main lure to attract visitors. This is the city attribute that will interest the most people in transit who may make spontaneous decisions. They can then be dispersed to other attractions. This is not the ideal medium for promoting city events.
52. Establish a **seasonal visitor information outlet** at the entrance to the city off I-5. This will make visitor information more visible and readily accessible, particularly from spring through fall. This can be accomplished through the steps that the Chamber is currently taking to position a yurt as a visitor information outlet at the southbound entrance off Exit 174.



Review distribution of Cottage Grove information to make it more attuned to the needs of visitors at specific times in their travel decision-making.

53. 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

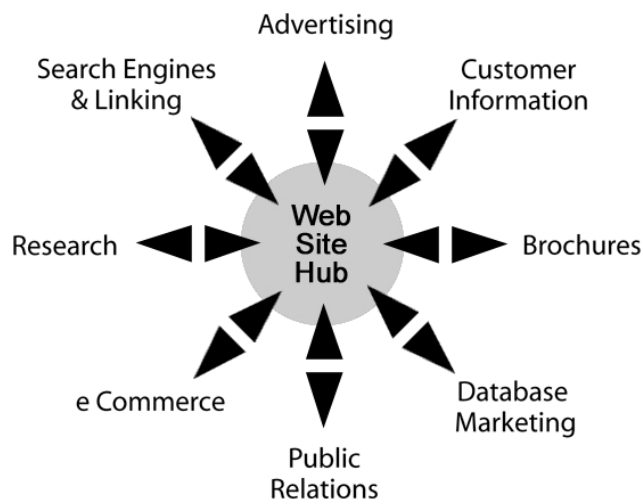
management of lodging to ensure that this local information is prominently and conveniently displayed because it can directly add to their guest's length of stay.

Web Marketing

The Cottage Grove 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.



Cottage Grove Web Sites

The internet allows small destinations like Cottage Grove 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 Cottage Grove.

The **City of Cottage's Grove** web site Home Page is unattractive and is comprised totally of links to other pages. It does not contribute toward projecting the identity of the city as an attractive place for residents and visitors. The site does not provide any details of interest to visitors, but does provide a link to the Chamber of Commerce. This site could give a prospective visitor the impression that there is no reason to visit the city.

On the other hand, the **Chamber of Commerce's** web site is much more attractive and functional than the City's, but is trying to serve multiple roles in providing information for Chamber members, visitors and prospective new residents and businesses. Improving the design, content and navigation could increase the city's profile and result in more visitors and business relocation prospects. It should be organized around key experiences with the copy having sub headings to and links to more detailed information.

The challenge for the Chamber is to satisfy the needs of all audiences without negatively impacting the others. At present the visitor appeal of Cottage Grove as a distinctive place is diluted because of these multiple roles. It is possible to create a site that benefits all audiences. The tourism identity of the city should lead the design, content and navigation. Where the tourism identity of a community is secondary to member communications, it is far less successful. Increasing the emphasis on the city's key experience themes will be a direct benefit to current, new and prospective residents, not to mention added business for members.

Landing on local web sites for many people is the result of searching on other web sites, such as 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 Cottage Grove by expressing why it's special and how to experience it.

The **CVALCO** web site has an important role in the search for information. The Cottage Grove information on this site must be more specific and also align with the brand identity that the Chamber must develop. Again, the information needs to be focused around the key experiences and project the "must do's" of the Covered Bridge Trail, Historic Downtown, Row River Trail, and the Wine Loop.

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 key words, 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.

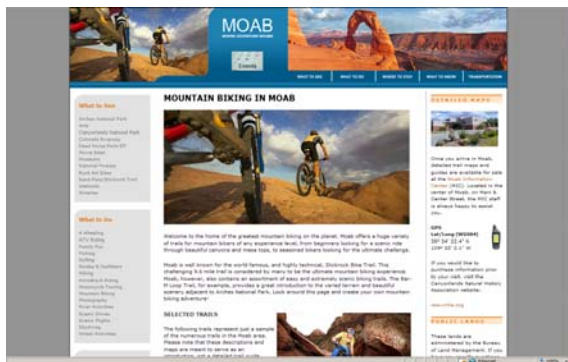
Recommended Actions:

54. The City of Cottage Grove and Chamber of Commerce **web sites should be redesigned** to project a stronger identity for the city as an attractive place to visit. The Chamber should address its web design needs in close consultation with CVALCO to ensure that the site embraces the latest techniques appropriate to tourism marketing. The features on the redesigned Cottage Grove **web site should include:**
- Covered Bridge Trail - description, distance, approximate time required, PDF of trail, descriptions of each bridge
 - Distances to Other Places (outside of city)
 - Events
 - Find Outfitters & Guides
 - Historic Downtown- description, history, murals, PDF map
 - Home Page - establishing the identity as “the covered bridge capital of Oregon” based on the complimentary key experience themes
 - Links
 - Maps using an application such as Google Maps
 - Media Room
 - Row River Trail - description, distance, trailheads, international activity symbols, PDF of Trail, important sites on the route
 - Testimonials
 - Travel trade - group tour information
 - What to See and Do
 - What’s Happening
 - What’s New feature on Home Page
 - Where to Eat
 - Where to Shop
 - Where to Stay
 - Winery Loop - description, distance, winery and wine descriptions, dining options, PDF of Loop, important sites on the route
55. Investigate the possibility of the CVALCO and Cottage Grove 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.
56. The web site should instantly convey that Cottage Grove is one of the leading places in the West for **easy access to covered bridges**. The images, copy and content should show that the city makes it easy for you, even if you only have limited time. This should include a PDF map of the tour, descriptions of each bridge, and the distance and likely traveling time between each.
57. In conjunction with CVALCO, engage the services of a **search engine optimization specialist** to test all aspects of the web site to ensure that it is operating at optimal performance levels and that meta tags, meta descriptions, links, and key word density are reviewed.

58. **Maximize links to** the site from Cottage Grove partners and other appropriate organizations. It is particularly important for local lodging partners to provide links from their web sites for prospective visitors to the city.
59. 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 the length of stay of their guests. Some examples of sites effectively using experiences and emotion are:



<http://breckenridge.snow.com/home>



www.discovermoab.com/



www.bellingham.org



www.gonewport.com

60. 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.

Public Relations

Allocating resources to generating increased media coverage can be highly effective in reaching key markets. The dissemination of materials to the media, efficiently 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:

61. Actively **collaborate with CVALCO** and Travel Oregon to publicize Cottage Grove's key experience themes.
62. In conjunction with CVALCO, **develop a basic media kit** to promote covered bridges, historic downtown, wineries and cycling.
63. 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 in many cases is integrated into wider marketing communication programs including advertising. 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 county and state organizations are generating interest in Oregon and Lane County as destinations.

Recommended Actions:

64. Consult with CVALCO to optimize the city's participation in the **co-operative marketing and free publicity** activities offered by CVALCO and Travel Oregon.
65. Collaborate with CVALCO to ensure that **advertising** by the Chamber and local partners is targeted toward the most appropriate media and most likely to generate the best results.

Images

Cottage Grove is competing against destinations that are well financed and use highly sophisticated marketing techniques. It is essential that Cottage Grove use high quality images to project the beauty of the region and the exciting opportunities for covered bridge, winery and cycling enthusiasts.

Recommended Actions:

66. In conjunction with CVALCO develop a portfolio of evocative and **high quality images** of the area's key experience themes.
67. 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.

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. Cottage Grove 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 city. It is possible that Cottage Grove 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. Cottage Grove 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. For instance, one such web site is promoting the Bohemia Mining District and another is using the tagline, "a goldmine of adventures." These add a level of dissonance and a lost opportunity to convey more important brand messages.



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 city.

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 imagined 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 sources of

opinion. 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 have the tools to instantly blog about their experiences (good or bad) from anywhere in the world 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 Cottage Grove 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. 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:

68. Review the coverage of Cottage Grove in **third party brochures, maps and web sites**. Check for accuracy, whether they project Cottage Grove in the best light, and if 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 and added credibility for a small destination such as Cottage Grove and help get the city on the visitor's "shopping list."
69. Annually review the coverage of Cottage Grove in travel **guidebooks** such as Fodors, Lonely Planet, Moon, Rough Guide, and the many special interest guides for cycling, birding and kids etc, and their online versions. Check facts and whether Cottage Grove 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.
70. In collaboration with CVALCO develop a plan (that is constantly revised) to actively monitor and be engaged in **social networking applications** to ensure that Cottage Grove 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 to not necessarily 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:

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

5. Leadership and Organization

Successful tourism requires a seamless delivery of tourism experiences and an integrated approach between public, private and non profit organizations.

Tourism is an important form of economic development and is about generating added income and jobs for communities. Successful 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 Cottage Grove and outside the city.

Recommended Actions:

73. Leverage the experience and expertise of CVALCO and Travel Oregon to strengthen the city's tourism marketing.
74. Convene a **tourism committee** to implement recommendations from this report and to optimize the economic benefits of tourism for the community.
75. 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.
76. Develop an annual Tourism Action Plan every year in consultation with CVALCO to ensure that all opportunities are being optimized.
77. Participate with other **Lane County destination marketers in regular meetings** to be lead by CVALCO to optimize integration of web marketing, brochure production, information distribution and the optimization of cooperative marketing opportunities.
78. Increase awareness among residents of the **economic and social benefits** of tourism to the city, particularly as it relates to covered bridges, trails, downtown visitors, events and wineries. The target audiences here should be residents, community opinion leaders and government officials.
79. 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:

80. Introduce the "Q Customer Service Training Program" to Cottage Grove. Note: this is only a start and is part of a never-ending focus required for quality assurance programs. www.oregonqcare.com
81. **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 their place of business and familiarizations designed for them.
82. 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: Cottage Grove 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 November 30. A total of 34 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. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about tourism and destination marketing in Cottage Grove.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A. As one of a number of industries, tourism is important to the economic mix of Cottage Grove	22 66.7%	11 30.3%	1 3.0%	0	0
B. The overall benefits from tourism in Cottage Grove outweigh any negative impacts	11 33.3%	17 51.5%	2 6.1%	3 9.1%	1
C. Cottage Grove presents a distinctive and attractive image of itself	5 14.7%	19 55.9%	5 14.7%	5 14.7%	0
D. The levels of service by hospitality and tourism businesses in Cottage Grove are of a high standard?	0	18 52.9%	8 23.5%	7 20.6%	1 2.9%

2. Would you like to add any comments in regard to any of the above questions or issues? Be sure to identify what issue you are commenting on.

- We still need to work on our image... We have so much going for us but can't seem to get everything together. D. - The Village Green is a great asset to Cottage Grove but as far as the others I think we could use some improvement
- We need more economic development! Something that draws people... we do not have that.
- Some of our hospitality businesses are lacking in service and attractiveness but I suppose there is a place and need for variety.
- We need to improve our presentation in print, web and other media formats.
- Cottage Grove needs to become a destination place that symbolizes charm and class!! Start with having an awesome downtown!!
- It would be nice to keep Cottage Grove "quiet" while functional and self-reliant, in regard to services/products available. To be a "retreat-type destination" for vacationers/visitors.
- I think the service industry needs some training in dealing positively with the public.
- We need to continue to work on the standards of service and quality of goods. Mostly "goods made in america" is an excellent selling point. We need more places that sell better food, more organic shops.

3. What do you consider to be the TWO greatest STRENGTHS of Cottage Grove from a visitor's perspective?

- 1. location ~300 miles south of Seattle 2. location ~500 miles north of San Francisco
- ATA Martial Arts and Fleur De Lis Patisserie (but I am very biased :)
- Beauty of the town, friendliness of people
- brochures of our Historic Downtown district and residents' friendliness
- Covered Bridge Tours, Outdoor recreation
- Covered bridges Bicycle path
- COVERED BRIDGES AND SMALL TOWN FRIENDLINESS
- Covered Bridges make a nice tour Our lakes are a big draw Row river bike trail attracts visitors Murals/downtown park/Bohemia park(under construction)
- Covered bridges, trees
- Covered Bridges/Murals and lakes for outdoor recreational activities.
- Easy access off I-5, a lot of history and great places to see within miles of the town.
- Friendly small town atmosphere Historic and outdoor recreation opportunities
- Friendly, small-town feel Row River Trail
- Golf courses and the trails.
- good people
- Historic Downtown area. Outdoor recreation
- Hunting, fishing, boating, swimming, hiking, biking, quaint little shops with great bargains, easy access to the freeway. Wholesome activities for the whole family.
- Location (close to Eugene, wine tour, freeway) and quiet and charming atmosphere
- Our Covered Bridges and the Lakes. Unfortunately, they don't bring a lot of visitors to the business community.
- Our Lakes, our city park
- Peaceful Beauty and the friendliness of townfolk
- proximity to covered bridges; the murals
- Recreation - lakes, bike paths, etc.. Diverse Downtown Business
- Small town charm and natural beauty of Oregon
- The natural beauty and the potential it has to become a true destination place.
- The parks & murals as well as the covered bridges.
- The recreational offerings - the lakes and wine tours, covered bridge tour, mural tour, village green
- The variety of things to see in the area and the friendliness of the residents. Not necessarily in the service industry but the residents.
- We have a lot of history and 2 beautiful lakes. The covered bridges are a real draw.

4. What do you consider to be the TWO greatest WEAKNESSES of Cottage Grove from a visitor's perspective?

- 1. access to Main St area 2. Grovers seem disinclined to market to I-5 trade
- Access to the visitors information center and signage issues on I-5 and off the freeway
- Chamber of Commerce location lack of signs, maps around town (I know there are some, but not enough. Get lots of people asking for maps. Map kiosks might work@!)
- Comfortable logging with things to do Too close to Eugene to really get away
- downtown too far from freeway, depressed economy
- empty churches
- Homes in rural areas that have loads of junk and "car farms" in their yards, no movie theatre.
- Insufficient indoor attractions/activities i.e.: movie house, tennis/racquetball, mini-golf, internet cafe. Which may help with the 2nd weakness ... insufficient teen activities available.
- Juvenile delinquents causing problems and lack of family activities
- Lack of activities for visitors, lack of unique or local products for sale. There is little "night life" or activities for visiting families or adults (the new bowling alley will be helpful). It would be nice to have a dance club or something for adults to do in the evening. Cottage Grove is not a destination spot. Although Walmart is good for residence, visitors would enjoy being able to shop for local or unique products.
- Lack of cohesive involvement among businesses to keep streets clean of litter and graffiti on property/buildings Apathy among residents of town to support local business
- Limited hours of operation for downtown businesses
- Lodging, health food store
- Major intersection of Main Street & Hwy 99 is unattractive (though proposed Bohemia Park will help alot) Insufficient good restaurants
- No one visiting can really see Cottage Grove has to offer beyond the fast food restaurants and gas stations - lack of shopping retailers.
- NOT A WHOLE LOT FOR TEENAGERS TO DO.
- not enough businesses have brochure information to discuss what there is to see and do in the area.
- Not enough cool places to visit downtown in order to keep people here for the day and not enough signs to direct them on where to go!
- Not enough positive publicity;
- not having a way to show freeway traffic we have more than the Gateway fast food area
- Not knowing what's here Nothing to do at night
- Signage including finding the chamber office. We don't promote Cottage Grove and its assets enough to the public through media resources.
- The empty storefronts and lack of parking in the downtown area.
- The hours of operation of the businesses that are not of the big box variety. They open late and close early and that keeps both visitor and locals from being able to access their services.
- The need for more youth after school activities and the attitude toward building.

- There is not a lot to do, things to see, etc...
- Vacant shops on Main Street Info booth at Community Center no open on weekends
- vandalism
- we need more for children and teens after dark. Not much to do at night. The streets are getting very dangerous at night.

5. From time to time you may hear complaints or negative comments from visitors to Cottage Grove. What is it that you are most likely to hear?

- "Everything is closed on Monday! Wish everything was open during working hours.
- "It's just a McDonalds and a Wal Mart!" "Where the heck is downtown?"
- A lot of people say they did not realize Cottage Grove is more than Gateway fast food area.
- As mentioned in question #4 - junk on people's rural properties.
- Bad service.
- Closure of downtown businesses on Mondays
- Don't hear many negatives.
- Don't know where to go unless you've planned ahead of time
- Hard to find.
- How to find something.
- I don't hear negative comments
- Lack of activities to do while visiting. Too much traffic (car) in the downtown area.
- Lack of clear signage to area attractions
- No coffee at the visitors center and no keepsakes.
- No music or events
- Not enough sit down places to eat.
- Not enough time to thoroughly enjoy the area.
- Not much for the kids to do.
- people abusing the parks
- See above NO BIKE RENTALS!!
- So many business's being closed on Mondays
- That it is easier to drive to Eugene and find family activities than to try to find something in CG.
- That the downtown need to become a place that people can spend the day, not just a few hours and go!
- They think we have a strong drug problem in the area.

6. Considering your replies to question 5, what do you think needs to be done to address these issues?

- A big, obnoxious decorative archway with a sign saying "Welcome to Historic Cottage Grove" over the Cottage Grove connection from I-5 with lots of trees to hide the restaurants.
- As before, we need much more signage.
- Better signage
- Discuss the need for longer hours with the merchants?
- Encourage more of a family atmosphere at different restaurants and try to get more family activities going at various businesses, like the hotels in the area could have a family night once a month featuring fun activities or even family competitions that are fun to participate in as well as watch.
- Expanded hours of operation
- I believe there should be some type of regulation specific to rural properties that allows for only a certain amount of storage of what appears to be junk or rusting cars kept on the property.
- Increase hospitality of visitors center
- It would be good to have a strong downtown association with goals of showing off the town, and working together.
- maybe a billboard letting traveler along I5 know what we has to offer
- More positive information reported in the media. Instead of saying 12% of our youth are on drugs, why not say 88% are clean. Brag on the good!
- Music venue a overnight spa
- Open up more restaurants
- Road work and signs . Encourage the businesses in that area to cater to the I-5 trade.
- See #4 above. Maybe a public parking area off the main drag - or perhaps better signage for the existing ones. Also, heavy traffic down 9th steet and 99. Perhaps better policing of speed limits.
- Training for all tourism staffing at different organizations.
- Try to promote our downtown as one of the coolest places to come eat, shop and spend the day in beautiful Cottage Grove!
- Unfortunately when you have small business owners there isn't a lot you can do because they deserve a day off once in a while too!
- Uniform signage
- Youth night club with bands and music. Video arcade(state of the art). Youth program with movies, popcorn, adult supervision, internet and internet games.

7. How can Cottage Grove capture more business from passing motorists?

- a means of transportation from the Village Green would help (perhaps in the form of horse and wagon or trolley just to see "Old Town." It is astounding the number of tourists who think Gateway blvd. is Cottage Grove! It would be good to have similar information at the Village Green like the Chamber has. And also brochures at the Vintage Inn. CG lost its identity with the building of the freeway, which now separates two factions.

- Advertise on the freeway about the covered bridges
- Advertising in tourism magazines local and otherwise.
- Advertising of our strengths. Signs on the freeway.
- Better freeway signage and a sprucing up of hwy 99 through town.
- Better placement for advertising area attractions and business opportunities
- Better signage incorporating the Historic Downtown
- better signage letter motorists know what's in town
- better signage on freeway and off
- Bigger truck stop
- Catchy billboard signs on fwy (approx 25 miles out?) highlighting the area...
- Clean up the area around the exit, too many homeless people on the corner right at the exit, they might as well just turn around and go to Eugene.
- Freeway signage is good in that it reflects historic district, wine and bike tour. etc. Stronger event signage for all events besides BMD such as Chili Cookoff, Buster Keaton Silent Film, current Cottage Theatre production, WOE, etc.
- HWY 101 signage and advertising at the rest stops.
- I think we should use billboards at least 20 or 30 miles north & south promoting visiting historic cottage grove, the covered bridges, & winery tours.
- letting them know there is an historic downtown along with covered bridges etc.
- Maybe a Billboard or more signage to direct people to the business areas.
- More activities to bring in people
- passing' motorists are only interested in freak shows, gas, and McDonald's (or it's equivalent). I think Cottage Grove needs to make itself a destination/point of interest, not a pit stop. Pump up the covered bridge angle as well as start pushing the winery touring industry. The artisan angle could also be developed as it has (VERY successfully) in Dixon, NM. Check it out.
- Signs, signs, signs! Work on the City to let merchants put up more signs!
- SIGNS, SIGNS, SIGNS!!!!!!! HIGHWAY SIGNS! IN TOWN SIGNS!
- Try. Actually try to capture trade. At the corner where Carl's Jr. is all you can tell is that you have the usual selection of fast food. There's no indication of a pretty nice italian restaurant, a couple of good chinese and mexican places, or a very good restaurant (Sheila's) right over the odd looking bridge. You can hardly tell there's a place to eat at the Village Green even when you're standing in their parking lot! There's a grocery store close to the exit? Who knew? I'm gonna calm down now, but I think the way the roads are laid out in that area is a crime, and only serve to send business to Eugene or Roseburg. I won't even start on the other exit...
- Upgrade resturants and the quality of foods, bed and breakfast, lodges, motels, Advertise on the freeway and in tourist magazines, hunting, fishing, camping, biking, hiking magazines. KEEP THE OLD GROWTH FOREST.
- welcoming sign...Gateway to almost Heaven

8. Would you like to comment on how Cottage Grove 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)

- Advertising out of the area. If they don't know what's here, they won't come unless by accident.
- Covered Bridges, Dr. Snapp House, Murals, Museum
- Do we have a visitor information center? Is that something the Chamber should be involved in?
- I would love to see more artisan events (I mean it, check out Dixon, NM!!!!)
- It would be nice to have a running film that visitors could watch as an orientation to the area.
- Keep up with the murals! It's a strong drawing point and list that in tourism magazines.
- More activities! Most of the people who live in or near Cottage Grove do not even know or go to these attractions!
- More info on Covered bridges and wineries which seem to be the hot attractions right now
- More signs to downtown and covered bridges
- Open a museum, broader advertisement for our cultural activities so people from towns nearby want to day trip here. Make the trails, and streets safer.
- Provide a brochure with locations and maps and books to learn about this aspect of CG
- Spruce up hwy 99 through town. Better advertising of existing events. Perhaps raffle or advertise w/ gift packages for out of area residences for Bohemia days, concerts in the park, theater productions etc. (Use lodging, restaurant, and activity)
- Use buses for around town tours of the murals, and historic downtown district and historic homes, with step-on tour guides narrating.

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

- Amazing!
- Be sure to advertise camping areas and trails which are fantastic. Do we have a bike rental shop here in town?
- Help people feel safer by cracking down on the juvenile delinquents and others who frequent these places and not only create a bad image but leave drug paraphernalia lying around.
- KEEP THEM CLEAN AND SAFE
- Make sure the rest rooms are clean.
- Our lakes are great.
- Really good in this area!
- Row river trail from main street to wal mart is covered in graffiti and garbage. This could be maintained better.
- the 2 lakes, the Coast Fork River needs promoting water usage (perhaps canoeing or casting fishing lines from the Greenway Park. perhaps a fishing Derby for young ages each Spring
- We could better promote the bike trail and hiking areas. Maybe an nature awareness week with activities for the bike trail, hiking trails and lakes. Advertising to out of area people and include gift packages.
- year-round campgrounds

c. Lodging Facilities?

- cleaner
- Independantly owned lodges conveniently located near the highlights. Yurts, hot tubs, wine tours, dine in or out. B&B for those who just want to get quiet and relax.
- It is improving
- More facilities both resort-wise and economical inn's.
- More facilities with indoor pools
- More packages to offer
- The village green rocks, but the holiday inn will work if you're on a budget.
- They could offer discounts to restaurants and/or shopping in Cottage Grove if they show their local room key, etc.
- Very good and competative pricing
- We have what we have.
- We need a Community Center for big events. Plans need to be in the making for the acquisition of the Armory and its renovation.
- We seem to have adequate lodging. As a B&B owner, I would, of course, appreciate a bigger promotion of B&B's in the area.

d. Shopping?

- A Penney's, Fred Meyers Quiznoz, Fish & Chips
- Daily specials and changing menus.
- Fleur De Lis patisserie is the most DEVINE place to eat, whether here in Cottage Grove, Eugene, Springfield, Portland, Seattle, wherever!
- More boutique shops
- MORE OPTIONS!!
- not that great!
- Of course I would like to see all historic Main Street buidlings occupied and successful. I was very sorry to see McCoys close. I would love to see a Thai restaurant open here. We don't need more Mexican since we have two great Mexican restaurants already.
- Our downtown businesses are not much of a tourist draw
- Shops open later and on Sundays-Selling quality goods, wines, cheeses, picnic supplies. Make the shops like stepping back to the 20th century in places like Sonoma, Napa, Monteray. Hand carved, hand made things that you can't get anywhere else.
- We need more quality restaurants and shops
- We need more unique shops. Restaurants are great!

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

- An area informational kiosk or small office at close proximity to fwy exit(s).
- Better downtown public parking or better signage and maintenance of current parking.
- billboards south and north
- Fix the streets so signage shows better, more colorful.
- Fix signs at Kentucky Fried chicken and burger king, for one!
- I already mentioned our signage is lacking. We should have atleast 1 more sign before each Cottage Grove exit inviting people to visit Historic Downtown.
- It would be nice to have some directional signs to show business's off the beaten track.
- Like I said, big freaking arch over the Cottage Grove Connection (put another one over Main Street and Hwy. 99 too!
- More of each one. More signs directing downtown visitors to the City parking lots.
- Most people enter Cottage Grove from I-5 and think of Cottage Grove as just a line of fast food places. A welcome sign or other signage in that area would be beneficial.
- PUBLIC PARKING AND MORE SIGNAGE!!!!
- Something needs to be done about getting people away from the "fast food district" and into the downtown area.
- The completion of Bohemia Park will be a big drawing for visitors.
- The new winery tour signs are great. I think anything like that is extremely helpful.
- To downtown
- Welcome to a bit of Heaven
- woefully inadequate
- Yes Yes more needed

f. Events, Festivals and Performances?

- Amphitheater is on the way!
- Better well rounded events
- Celebrate the arts by encouraging the arts.
- HAVE MORE!
- I do not like the draw and "punk/eclectic" venue that Centro (the little theatre on Main Street) brings in.
- i live here and sometimes i don't even know what is going on...
- More activities that are cheap to put on but free and fun for the family. Also we need things for the teens and young adults to do to keep them out of trouble creating a more positive atmosphere.
- More advertising for targeted audiences/atendees
- needs improvement
- Nice idea but hard to execute with limited volunteer time
- Seems like there is plenty to do

- The events we have in Cottage Grove don't seem to help the business community a lot but they do bring awareness to the community.
- The Toga party is dead. We need to bring it back (and put someone else in charge of running it for once!!!!)
- Use Bohemia Park.
- We have a nice mix of events and festivals, and Cottage Theater shows.
- We have some nice activities in the summer. I don't know if we do enough to promote them.

g. Outdoor Recreation and Soft Adventure Activities?

- I had someone suggest that we have a bike rental by the trail head the other day. It's a thought...
- maps to the attractive swimming holes. Maps to on or off path hiking along the creeks and rivers, maps to picnic spots.
- More effective signage
- More guided tours by volunteers? Guided nature hikes?
- Rafting! That would be cool. Maybe a bungee-jumping tower too... Creswell has skydiving at their airport! Can't we have that too?!

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

- Better location for visitors center
- Bus tours perhaps? Guides to take people around to see the sites, eat and shop! AGAIN, NOT ENOUGH COOL BUSINESSES FOR THEM TO VISIT!
- Commercial advertising (in-state) via local television
- I would like to see a visitor information booth right off the highway that can ensure visitors would know all of the wonderful possibilities Cottage Grove has to offer.
- I would like to see me get off my duff and build cottage-grove.net and 97424.info .
- More activities listed on the Chamber website, more information given at hotels.
- More like what Umpqua valley vineyards are doing - collective marketing paid for by a group. But, this group needs some steering from someone who knows!
- More signage on the freeway between Roseburg and Eugene to Salem. Turkey shoots for charity(not shooting real turkeys just targets for Turkeys for families.
- New covered bridge brochure/map, other self-guided tours, better visitor info center
- package deals from different types of businesses
- Signs
- Signs. People aren't going to see what's here unless we show them! TV commercials would be good. Especially for big events.

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

- A Women's Dress shop, Men's Wear, a department store downtown.
- Another hotel maybe with conference center, indoor pool
- Building regulations for businesses, a different Mayor (who cares), More shopping and eating opportunities, less franchises. No more franchises. Make the streets safe.
- Experience Cottage Grove Packages -- breakfast, rent bikes for bike ride on the trail, or morning of golf, or tour the bridges and lakes next relax with a massage/facial/mineral foot treatment, then replenish the body with a light lunch along with a beverage or glass of wine from a local winery then stroll down River Road across the swinging bridge walking through downtown, then back to Village Green to stroll in the gardens before dinner
- Family oriented attractions, fun family restaurant, movie theatre (even a cheap \$1.50 showing movies that are a little older would probably help)
- I think allowing more 'commercial ' business in destroys what's really cool about Cottage Grove. I think the businesses need to be small, local, and eclectic.
- Indoor activities, as mentioned earlier.
- Lodging, visitor info center
- MORE THINGS TO DO - EVENTS
- Movie theatre, bike, ATV & Jet Ski/boat rentals.
- Small support businesses, such as hunting, fishing, bicycling Of course Wal mart and Bimart have those things so someone would have to find a niche to market.
- WalMart Super Store!
- We could use some unique downtown shops. It is expensive to have a business downtown. Could the city give incentives to building owners to reduce rent? Services for outdoor activities (boat rentals, bike rentals, paddle boat rentals etc. for the lake)

10. CVALCO is going to increase its focus on soft adventure activities. What does Cottage Grove need to do to capitalize on this?

- Advertise with CVALCO our soft adventures
- Fantastic! I would imagine an outfit that provides the service would be necessary with options for an affordable price.
- Get businesses and people together to creat activities and get volunteers to do tours.
- Giant bungee tower.
- I don't know what soft adventure activities are.
- I don't understand this term.
- Improve aesthetic appeal of Trail Head park through to Thornton Rd. It could be a beautiful walk if barriers were put up in the industrial areas.
- Prepare/complete a study on soft adventure activities in other small towns in Oregon to determine which are the most desired & beneficial. Bring that to Cottage Grove.
- Sorry, define soft adventure activities.
- Virtual tours for advertising. Use the internet to plan your next adventure. Capitalize on our beautiful Golf courses.

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

- Advertise, advertise, advertise!
- Assistance with start-up expenses and marketing.
- Bring big planes back into the Eugene Airport. Schedule regular Annual Golf Tournaments. Catch and release fishing, bird watching. Dog contests like fly ball, agility contests, soft hunting games for dogs.
- FAIR AND FRIENDLY
- Get more involved.
- linked to each other maybe offering packages that align with other parts of county
- Not familiar with term soft adventure, fishing tournaments, guided walks in the woods?
- Rental bikes and scooters might be fun.
- Trail guides, fishing guides, lakes promotions, wine touring promos.

12. Which of the following descriptions best describes your organization or relationship to tourism in Cottage Grove? Please check ONE answer only.

Attractions, events, tours	1
Lodging	2
Visitor Services - Restaurant, Retail, Transport, Entertainment, etc.	6
Other business	15
Non profit	5
Interested resident	1
Skipped question	4

13. Would you like to make some additional comments?

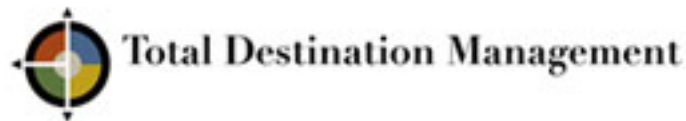
- CG has a wealth of natural beauty with the river and the surrounding countryside. The Historical Society had volunteer tour bus guides for showing our Covered Bridges in the mid 1980's when all the sawmills were closing and we were in a very depressed state. Two years ago a class of six were trained to be ready when called upon. Only 2 tours were booked this past year! Tourism promotion was turned over to the C of C. There needs to be more cooperation between the Village Green (which books groups in for meetings in my opinion) and the Tourism committee of the Chamber.
- Don't forget that in addition to being located on I-5, we're also located on part of the Internet backbone. Don't just think in terms of physical visitors, think about virtual visitors as well.
- Downtown Cottage Grove needs a face lift. Fix the streets. Advertise the purity and cleanliness of our rivers and streams.
- Sure. I like you. You're nice.
- We couldn't click on one (#19) - we are "other." We would like to expand our business operations

in the CG area to include indoor activities for locals as well as tourists. Currently, we are seeking financing options for this purpose. Please send any available info to: saldanasystems@yahoo.com
Thank you!

- We moved to Cottage Grove after visiting for several years. We picked this town for a reason. We love it here. People are friendly, it's beautiful and it has so much potential for positive growth.

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

- APPLE INN BED AND BREAKFAST
- Celia at Gray Cat Inn
- Crystal Watson, Senior Independent Beauty Consultant Mary Kay Cosmetics
www.marykay.com/crystalcumper
- Erin Baker, Professional Ninja Owner, ATA Martial Arts 802 E. Main Street Cottage Grove, OR 97424 Phone: (541) 942-0215 Fax: (541) 942-5175 Email: ebaker@bakersata.com Cell: (541) 554-0431 Home Address: 2292 Harvard Drive, Eugene, OR 97405 Home Phone: (541) 683-0619 Height: 5' 8" Weight: Not telling Blood Type: Not sure Likes/Dislikes: Reading/spiders
- J. Toman toman@lillibolero.com
- Marcia Allen, past president of Historical Society Librarian of Historical Society Library CG First Citizen of 2006
- Marge Wrightson, Bohemia Realty, Inc
- Saldana Optimum Systems, Inc. dba: Jani-King (Cottage Grove) Johnny Saldana III and Iva Pfeifer
- Three Clouds on 3rd



20212 SW 86th Ave.

Tualatin, OR 97062

Phone: 503 692-4603

Email: billb@destinationbranding.com

Web site: www.DestinationBranding.com

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