

Independence, Oregon Tourism Marketing Plan



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Marketing Plan Overview

Independence, Oregon is a gemstone destination waiting to be faceted and polished as a gleaming jewel. It is fortunate to boast a downtown historic district, turn of the century homes, expansive riverfront park and amphitheater, boat launch, modern eight-screen cinema, heritage museum, two popular annual festivals and a movies and music summer series, new and technologically equipped city hall, a committed and active volunteer community, a well-regarded city administration, a downtown association, large and active Hispanic community, art and antique galleries, and two important distinctions, one old and one new – it was once the hops capitol of the U.S. and it was recently named a Preserve America historic town. It also has popular destination attractions, including Wings of Wonder and Rogue Hop Farm and B&B, and is located within popular winery routes, as well as the Willamette Valley Birding Trail, Scenic Bikeway and River Water Trail.

The town is not without challenges. Lodging is extremely limited, with only one B&B offering three rooms. Several buildings, prime for historic development, are vacant, held by absentee and mostly unconcerned landlords, and one unfinished modern building is a community eyesore. The stunning park and river access are under-utilized, and the existing festivals could be enhanced. Travel Salem and Willamette Valley Tourism Association, which are the official destination marketing organizations for the area, offer little or no tourism development assistance. There are also no ongoing marketing or public relations initiatives, or distinctive branding that would attract more visitors.

Independence has the potential to become a popular tourist destination for a variety of target markets, including bicyclists, birding enthusiasts, craft beer fans, history buffs, paddling and boating groups, antique lovers, and more. It remains somewhat of a secret on the tourist map, although it is centered near wine country and is a closely connected neighbor to Monmouth, a historic and college town. With a concentrated marketing and promotions effort, Independence can be a shining jewel.

Ten community leaders and volunteers, and two city officials were interviewed in order to attain broad input on tourism status and potential of Independence, Oregon. Those interviewed include:

Ted Baker, Historic Preservation District

Natascha Cronin, Rogue Hop Farm

Cheryl Gaston, Independence House B&B

Rick Gydeson, Rick's Place Coffee House (summer movies and music coordinator)

Betty Heriford, Wings of Wonder

Jane Honbeck, Downtown Association

Marilyn Morton, City Council Member

Elena Pena, Community Social Services Organizer and Event Volunteer

Peggy Schorsch, Heritage Museum

Marie Trucco, Greater Independence Business Incubator

Shawn Irvine, City of Independence, Economic Development Director

David Clyne, City of Independence, City Manager

In addition to the interviews, four site visits were made, and a marketing and communications review was conducted. Also reviewed was a tourism readiness assessment for the city of Monmouth, a document developed by Bill Baker of Total Destination Marketing Company.

This assessment sets the stage for recommendations for marketing initiatives.

Part 1: Tourism Segment Overview

Experiential tourism is the most significant trend in travel. Already worth an estimated \$40 billion and growing by 10 percent a year, experiential travel is a niche yet lucrative area of the travel market and one which is fast becoming one of the most dominant. Demographically, the experiential traveler is a senior, baby boomer or GenY-Millennial (in 20s or early 30s, no kids), with disposable incomes and higher levels of education.

Experiential travel consumers want more than just a cruise, trip or hotel stay—they want a living, breathing experience and engagement with locals and local customs. They seek truer, more adventurous, more responsible and more ‘beyond the ordinary experiences’, all without sacrificing any standard of comfort or safety. They want to swap stories with the fishers on the dock, the farmer at the market, the artist in the gallery, and the beer maker behind the bar. They want to eat local specialty foods, find a new best friend, see a place “up close,” and make an *emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual* connection to a place they can’t get anywhere else. And they want to go home with lasting memories and stories to tell.

Another travel segment that can be attractive for Independence is the family market, which has largely become a “staycation” market. It is looking for family-centered events, attractions and activities that are inexpensive and close to home. Independence, Oregon has much to offer for residents of neighboring towns and Oregon’s urban dwellers. Portland is just an hour’s drive, Salem a 15-minute drive and Corvallis 30 minutes or less. It also has a desirable geographic location: close to I-5 yet just far enough away to feel a ‘true escape.’ The 4th of July event, summer movies and music, regional sports and farming activities, such the weekly market, 4-H and Future Farmers groups, and sports tournaments are all attractive to families. In the 2006 Travel Activities and Motivations study, “keeping family ties alive” was a highly important travel benefit to 45% of Americans. This desire is reflected in the key motivators for the family segment, which have been identified as: “creating family memories, promoting

family togetherness and keeping family ties alive."

And with 6- 7 churches in downtown Independence, it would not be inconceivable to create a regional market for those desiring faith-based activities, even religious music events. This type of travel would attract experiential and family segments.

In order to see success of this marketing plan, city administrators will need to dedicate resources to marketing efforts, including contractor or personnel to implement communications, media and public relations, seek funding, organize volunteers and identify resources to oversee new and enhanced festivals. City administrators will also need to undertake research and sourcing of development for hotels, attractions, signage and other marketing initiatives.

Part 2. Core Assets and Supporting Infrastructure

Independence has several assets and competencies that make the town unique for tourism and experiential travelers. These core assets are perfectly in tune with tourism trends of authentic experiences, wine and craft beer tourism, adventure and active travel, birding, agritourism and festivals. Two other assets also worth mentioning that support revitalized tourism efforts are the innovative, committed city administrators and the passionate community volunteers.

Historic Preservation: Downtown Independence offers the traveler a look back into Oregon's pioneer history and architecture. The Heritage Museum, despite a shrinking budget, presents engaging stories and artifacts of the area, including the history of hops growing. Ghostwalks are popular during the Hop and Heritage Festival, and would be an ideal activity to extend through Halloween.

Riverfront Park, Amphitheater: A truly spectacular setting, with the potential for more use. River access from downtown is also an asset.

Scenic Bikeway: Independence is a popular cycling area and stop, and is often included in the weekend rides prior to the Cycle Oregon event. Cycling to the Rogue Farm is also a popular ride. Roads in and around Independence are bike-friendly.

Wine Trail: Independence is centrally located along mid-Willamette Valley wine routes.

Birding Trail: Independence is part of the Luckiamute Loop birding region.

Willamette Water Trail: Fully mapped “blue highway” is popular with paddlers and boaters, and in 2011 will be the route of the annual Paddle Oregon journey.

Farming and agritourism: Many farms still cover the landscape, and farming is a major employer and industry. There is a farmers market in the summer, which could be expanded. Rogue Farm has planted hops on its land, and is a popular destination. There are also active local 4-H clubs and a regional Future Farmers organization. One of the empty storefronts downtown could become an agricultural resource center for training and educating urban farmers and those who are thinking of relocating to Independence and purchasing a small farm.

Downtown retail shopping: Several antique stores make this a destination for shopping. An artist gallery, fabric store, scrapbookers shop, used book shop, gift stores and other experiences.

Destination entertainment: The town boasts an 8-screen cinema, Wings of Wonder butterfly farm, 3-4 popular festivals, summer music and movies in the park, and a small parade of holiday lights.

Restaurants: Raging River, Pink House, new bakery, pubs, Thai and Mexican food, and take-out food is offered downtown. Cuisine is not exceptional, and is currently not enough to make Independence a culinary destination, but certainly visitors will find good food.

Signage: There are clear road signs leading to Independence as well as to Rogue Farms and Wings of Wonder. If funding and county clearance can be obtained, a large, historic –style sign at highways OR 22 and OR 51 would be more inviting to potential visitors.

Part 3: Independence Oregon Tourism Brand

While there is currently no vision or mission statement, logo or tagline for tourism in Independence, the city website does promote the town’s historical assets and offers links to events and activities. However, this information is in need of better visibility and more frequent updating. Many of the links take web visitors away from the Independence website and often to event or festival websites that are less than inspiring to a visitor seeking quality activities.

Developing a tagline that conveys a sense of place unique to Independence can help create a brand on which Independence can market itself as a tourism destination. While a tagline is not a brand in itself and will not represent all that Independence has to offer, it helps travelers connect to the town’s main story and to unfold all its layers. Among possibilities: Oregon’s Historic Hops Capitol; Historic Hops Capitol of the World; Oregon’s Home of Hops and History.

Part 4: Objectives

There currently does not exist a strategic plan for tourism in Independence, although this marketing plan, which should be a subset of a strategic plan, recommends five-year goals. According to Marilyn Morton, the Chambers of Dallas, Monmouth and Independence will be meeting in Fall 2011 to discuss the creation of a regional tourism plan. The purpose of this assessment, recommendation and promotions plan is to help meet the following marketing objectives:

1. Establish Independence as a worthy destination on its own, as well as a meaningful experience in conjunction with other tourism or regional activities.
2. Make Independence top of mind for activities relevant to the city's main assets by developing stories that support experiential, family and agritourism travel.
3. Increase new visitors, encourage repeat visitors, and bolster off-season tourism through new and revitalized activities and programs that build awareness and bring economic benefits to the city.
4. Bring attention to Independence and all it offers through media opportunities, including developing relationships with travel writers, the creation of a tourism website, frequent media releases, more central and active social media activity.
5. Plant seeds for the future of tourism in Independence, with a vision for new attractions and activities.
6. As an adjunct and natural partner to tourism development, increased visibility has the potential to attract businesses, small farms and new residents, promoting and supporting the cultural and economic vitality of the Independence region.

Part 5: Resources

With just one, 3-room B&B in town, there is little lodging tax funding available to the city for a promotions budget. However, city administrators are innovative and resourceful in finding sources for many programs in Independence. It is therefore highly conceivable that the city of Independence will find resources to support the building and promotion of tourism, perhaps through training and grants from Travel Oregon, county lodging tax revenues, Ford Family Foundation, Rural Development Initiatives, the USDA, U.S. Historic Preservation Fund and other organizations related to the recommended marketing programs.

There are many long-time committed volunteers who are instrumental in the continuing success of established festivals and activities. New volunteers and new ideas will be needed to fulfill the recommendations of this plan. Reaching out to residents, and across age groups and cultures, will help bolster the volunteer effort in the city. The large Hispanic community, which has for two to three generations provided support for the farming industry, is a largely untapped resource for building tourism in Independence. Leaders of the Hispanic community organize the Mexican festival each year, which brings thousands of visitors to town.

Part 6: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Product Line

Independence has numerous product lines/assets that are attractive to tourists: parks, cycling, birding, historical sites, festivals, river access, restaurants, wineries and craft beer, destination activities (Wings of Wonder, Rogue Hop Farm, ghostwalks) and much more. Independence is often described in contrast to Monmouth, where Independence is known as the “blue collar town” and Monmouth is a “college town,” even though Independence is as historically significant as Monmouth, and in some ways, more significant: it was known as the Hops Capitol of the World in the 1930s. However, Independence would be wise to use its “blue collar” reputation and history to its advantage when developing tourism attractions and activities, because this history is a prime resource for storytelling.

Geographic Markets

The primary geographic markets for Independence are the mid-Willamette Valley (regions surrounding Independence and Salem), Portland, Eugene, and drivers on I-5, which could be in-state or multi-state. Access is easy, from I-5 to secondary highways, and the town can now be reached by the new Buena Vista ferry from Salem and I-5. Visitors can also arrive by boat, bicycle and motorcycle, and there is a private airport, but few visitors would arrive by plane. Independence is also situated between the mid-Willamette Valley and Lincoln City on the Oregon coast, and could be an easy stop for visitors traveling east or west. There is also a potential market for group travel originating from other parts of the U.S., such as tours from Elderhostel (Road Scholar) and group cycle tours, including groups other than Cycle Oregon.

Competitors

In the region, Monmouth, Salem, St. Paul, Albany and Corvallis all have historic centers, and Monmouth and Corvallis are university towns. These towns have large city parks and multiple choices in lodging. There are several other historic towns in a similar relationship to I-5, such as Ashland and Jacksonville in Oregon and Centralia in Washington State. For the historic traveler driving on I-5, Independence is an attractive destination. These towns are all within the same travel budget levels, except for Ashland and Jacksonville, which offers several more higher-end options, mostly due to the demand of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Britt Music Festival. Corvallis and Jacksonville are also designated as Preserve America towns, as is Independence. However, Independence has two things these towns do not have: a beautiful and spacious riverfront amphitheater, and Rogue Hop Farm, which builds on a historic legacy of both hops and farming.

Distribution

Distribution (promotion and communications) is very limited. The website for the City of Independence does offer links to events (which are not frequently updated), historic preservation information, and the Heritage Museum. The Visit Salem tourist publication refers briefly to Independence, but does not promote it. The Willamette Valley Birding Trail brochure includes a birding region of Independence (Luckiamute Loop). The chamber office offers brochures of the area, as well as maps to cycle enthusiasts. A local Spanish-language radio station promotes the Mexican Festival. Rogue Farm, Wings of Wonder and the Independence House B&B all have their own websites. There are Facebook pages for Independence, Oregon, and the Independence Historic District, but they only contain information from Wikipedia. There are no posts made to the pages. TripAdvisor shows several high ratings for Independence House B&B, and one recommendation for Wings of Wonder.

External Environment

The economic downturn has resulted in many tourist segments seeking destinations closer to home. These so-called "staycations" have brought benefits to small towns such as Independence, particularly in the family market, who are looking for low-cost but meaningful experiences. Staycationers are actually a rich resource of regional tourists—both new and repeat visitors—who may turn a visit to Independence into a family tradition. With slow economic recovery in Oregon, and the trend in experiential travel, staycations are here to stay.

Experiential travelers cross all age groups. Unlike mass tourists, they seek authentic experiences wherever they travel. Independence has much to offer these travelers, from historical discovery and festivals to cycling and agritourism.

Internal Environment

Resources are limited, but enthusiasm and resourcefulness are not. City administrators have proven resourceful in gaining funding for projects, including the creation of the riverfront park. The Historic Preservation organization is actively committed, but is thwarted in attempts to get absentee landlords to rent or sell historic properties. There is active interest in helping develop tourism projects and activities from Rogue Brewery, in particular the Rogue Farm manager, Natascha Cronin, who has experience as a museum educator and curator. A hotel would be a welcome asset.

The population includes a large second-generation Hispanic community, which should be considered a significant economic engine as well as a significant cultural force. More inclusion of this community in festival and event planning would be a plus for Independence tourism.

Part 7: SWOT Analysis

The following SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and threats) analysis is based on stakeholder interviews, observations and research.

Table 7.1: *SWOT Analysis: Strengths*

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historic Hops Capitol of Oregon, the U.S., and the World Hop farms still in area, including Rogue Hop Farms, an agritourism destination - Historic downtown district Active league of preservation volunteers - Heritage Museum Includes hop farming exhibit - Preserve America designation Finalist for All America City - Exceptional riverfront park and amphitheater - Five popular festivals: July 4th, Hops and Heritage, Mexican Festival, Christmas parade, Movies & Music New festival begins summer 2011: “soldiers and cowboys” - Wings of Wonder and Rogue Hop Farm are one-of-a-kind destinations/attractions - Popular biking, birding and paddling region - Eight-screen modern theater in the heart of downtown - Shopping opportunities for antiques, quilters, local artisan works - Six-plus churches in downtown core area - New civic/city administration building with high-tech conference center for small group meetings - Five parks in or within close walking distance of downtown core area - Community culture contrasts and complements Monmouth’s culture - Close proximity to and easy access from Salem and I-5, and enroute to and from Oregon coast

Table 7.2: *SWOT Analysis: Weaknesses*

Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little marketing effort other than for historic preservation, Heritage Museum on city website, and links to festival websites, which are lacking in current information - Riverfront park and amphitheater is under-utilized (unanimous opinion among stakeholders) - Festivals and events seen as not meeting their potential – room for enhancement - Festival marketing barely in operation (as of July 25, no updated website info for Hops and Heritage) - Little or no DMO support - Restaurant scene not robust or very diverse as of summer, 2011, but new options opening - Tourist information limited to general brochures - Little or no media coverage or public relations (July Oregonian coverage on Wings of Wonder) - Little or no social media activity - Volunteer corps in need of new ideas, more inclusion of Hispanic community

Table 7.3: SWOT Analysis: Opportunities

Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take advantage of hops and history heritage and Preserve America designation - Riverfront park and amphitheater is under-utilized (unanimous opinion among stakeholders) - Improve highway signage with historic story - Enhance current and create new festivals to better utilize park and amphitheater - Create new festivals to attract cyclists, craft beer enthusiasts, history fans, music/movie fans - Expand and diversify farmers market - Develop downloadable itinerary maps for bike and drive visitors - Develop audio, QR or mobile phone walking tours of downtown history - Acquaint travel writers and editors with area - Engage social media - Develop itineraries for tour companies (bus and bike) - Volunteer corps in need of new ideas, more inclusion of Hispanic community - Expand on river access for paddle sports and events

Table 7.4: SWOT Analysis: Threats

Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No current strategic plan to guide tourism efforts - Unknown funding availability to implement marketing initiatives - Little or no tourism marketing efforts - No downtown visitor’s kiosk (current chamber office in Monmouth) - No community tourism committee to drive efforts or plan - No hotel or the resulting lodging tax revenues - Empty historic and unfinished/vacant buildings a detriment to downtown - Volunteers stretched to capacity

Part 8: Overall Objectives

Overview

The goal of this marketing plan is both market driven (building brand awareness for Independence) and finance driven (increase economic vitality throughout the year). The overall objective is to increase tourism throughout the year, not just in high summer season. This will not only benefit business owners and farms, but also increase the familiarity of the town's many assets

Marketing Objectives

With little tourism marketing budget or statistics available, a baseline on which to measure improvements as a result of this marketing plan may not be obtainable. **NOTE: IS THERE INFO AVAILABLE?** Marketing efforts must therefore rely on increasing town foot traffic (subjective, except in reporting of increased sales from stores and visitors to Heritage Museum), increased attendance at existing festivals, and attracting new visitors with new events.

Instead, it is recommended that in the first 24 months of implementing this plan, Independence set marketing objectives based on the number of travel writers who visit, the number of media placements, the ability to gain email subscribers and Facebook friends, and the number of attendees to new or enhanced events.

Financial Objectives

With only one B&B in Independence, measuring success by the increased number of "heads in beds" is limited. Current tax revenues from that B&B amounts to \$000. An achievable goal is often 2-3% increase in tax revenue from new marketing efforts, however, it is unrealistic to measure success of tourism efforts based on the lodging tax of a single, 3-room B&B.

Part 9: Recommendations Overview

Even though Independence is a small town and can be overshadowed by its bigger neighbor, Monmouth, and its biggest neighbor, Salem, it has several unique offerings that will prove desirable to tourists, including regional visitors. The challenge will be in promoting itself as a destination, finding resources for promotions, revitalizing current activities, creating new events, and planning and implementing the “big ideas,” which are the development of a new Hops Museum, and the addition of lodging facilities, something the city administrators are already addressing.

Recommendations are presented in three categories: activities that can be implemented within 12 months; ones that can be implemented within 12-24 months; and ones that require long-term planning, and may take up to 5 years to implement. All are intended to help make Independence a desirable tourist destination with distinctive attractions, accommodations and events.

Among the activities that can be implemented quickly are the development of a dedicated tourism website or microsite; set up of a visitor kiosk near center of downtown; organize fam tours of three travel writers at a time (maximum rooms at Independence House B&B); conduct ghostwalks during Halloween weekend; jumpstart social media and public relations efforts; and more.

Within one to two years, new events can be launched: Bines and Vines (a hop and vineyard weekend); Christmas lights showcase in riverfront park (like Shore Acres State Park near Coos Bay); Gospel choir or church organ music festival – held in all churches in downtown; Halloween festival and ghostwalks; and much more. Within five years, funding and development of a hops museum is a possibility, as well as the building of a new boutique hotel and renovating a downtown building as a small inn.

Twelve-Month Recommendations

The first order of business is to develop storylines, or product lines, that make Independence unique to visitors. These storylines set the stage for overall tourism marketing. Possible storylines include “Historic Hops Capitol of the U.S.”, Preserve America town, home to riverside festivals, gateway to vines and bines, Oregon farming and heritage, Willamette water and birding trails, etc.

It is important to quickly develop a separate website or a microsite linked from the City of Independence website that is dedicated to tourism, events and activities. Eighty percent of travelers now start their research for planning trips by searching on the internet. A website is a destination’s business card, travel brochure, event calendar and photo album all in one customer-facing package. This website needs to have an email capture so that the city can regularly communicate with those who actively want to know more. Email newsletters are a great way to promote festivals and events.

Just as a website is important for sharing tourism assets in Independence, social media is important for visitors to share their Independence experiences. Activating a Facebook page is an immediate consideration. Social media needs frequent postings and requires a dedicated poster.

Getting travel writers to the town for an overnight stay and guided tour of the town’s many assets is a priority. This familiarization (“fam”) tour would include a stay at Independence House B&B, a guided Heritage Museum tour, walk through the riverside park and amphitheater, dinner at Raging River, guided ghostwalk, visit to Wings of Wonder, visit to Rogue Farm with a tour of the hops barn and fields, and a picnic on the grounds, and a ride on the Buena Vista Ferry. Participating businesses would need to contribute to the goods and services provided for the fam tour. Cheryl Gaston has already offered to provide complementary rooms for the travel writers.

Marilyn Morton stated that the majority of visitors who stop by the visitor center (currently in Monmouth) are seeking cycle route maps. It would be beneficial to develop a combination itinerary and attraction map (online, downloadable and print) that included a cycle route, wine route, self-guided history walking tour, etc. Perhaps a grant from the county or Travel Oregon can help cover costs. When funds permit, a mobile app with the same information should be made available.

For Halloween, the popular ghostwalks of the Hops and Heritage festival can be conducted the week or weekend of Halloween. In 2012, it is recommended that a Halloween festival, or possibly Day of the Dead if acceptable, be held that could include the Hispanic community. Costume parade, straw bale maze, apple dunking, UNICEF drive, pumpkin carving, storytelling in the cemetery, and more could make it a fun annual family event.

The Christmas Parade of Lights can also be enhanced, if not for 2011, then for 2012. With donations from area businesses (and Home Depot, Loews, Fred Meyer, etc.), and local volunteer teams, the riverfront park can be transformed into a walk-through Winter Wonderland, much like the one staged at Shore Acres State Park near Coos Bay, Oregon. The city could charge an entrance fee that goes to charity, or ask for a donation to the holiday food drive.

For every enhanced festival, local businesses benefit. A visitor information kiosk located centrally downtown and clearly marked with a standard "i" sign would benefit tourists.

Planning for future tourism projects can begin in the first 12 months. Independence is already considering applying for Travel Oregon's Rural Tourism Studio workshops. In addition, city administrators can approach Rogue Brewery about the possibility of a Hops Museum on the grounds of Rogue Farm or in a building in the historic district. This may be an ideal project for Rogue, as well as other members of the craft beer industry.

12 – 24 Month Recommendations

Within 24 months, Independence can make significant strides in creating awareness of the town if regular and consistent marketing efforts have been implemented. New and enhanced events will provide more reasons for visitors to discover Independence. And many seeds will have been planted for future growth.

Showing, and not just telling, potential visitors about Independence is vital to engagement. Visual promotions are important to helping potential visitors discover the area. It is recommended that Independence contract with a videographer, or find a local college audio-visual team (create a group internship project), to create short videos of locals and visitors talking about the town in “I am Independence” stories. In addition, an online image bank in a popular photo-sharing site can be used to tell stories. Image-telling helps create word of mouth advertising.

Telling, that is storytelling, is vital to engaging visitors. Historical storytelling, such as the ghostwalks, should be expanded. While in-person storytellers are the most entertaining way to relate history, visitors should be able to have these stories available during any visit. A podcast or other type of audio guide would be a highlight of Independence storytelling. A professional actor could be hired as voice talent to make recordings entertaining.

In the previous 12 months, the city or its media consultant will have spent time building relationships with state, regional and perhaps, national, editors from Sunset, 1859 Magazine, Northwest Travel, American History, Historic Preservation, Craft Beer News, Good Old Days, Travel 50 and Beyond, and more. This is the time to invite them, or their contributing writers, for carefully guided editor visits, themed to the magazine’s content and audience.

New and revitalized events, helped along with an infusion of new volunteers, is important to better utilizing the park and amphitheater, and to help put a spotlight on Independence. Signature events can be developed by contracting with experienced event planners who have done similar festivals. Established events would benefit from new and refreshing ideas, which new volunteers would bring. See Appendix 1 for ideas of new events.

During these first two years of the tourism marketing plan, city administrators will be continuing in their quest for a hotel property and developer, a new owner for the historic soda fountain space, and perhaps commissioning new tourism-related signage.

It is also important during this time to set the stage for long-term tourism planning. Convening a summit or one-day conference with stakeholders from Independence, Monmouth and Dallas will establish Independence as thought leaders and set common goals for the area. It is important that stakeholders view the tourism experience from the eyes of the tourist, who sees the area as a whole experience and not just a visit to a single town. What's good for each of the towns benefits others.

Part 10: Promotions and Activities Schedule

Table 10.1 Immediate Recommendations (within 12 months)

Communications	PR & Media	Enhanced Events	Future Planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop storylines as basis for all communications development. - Develop a stand-alone website or microsite linked from within the city website that tells the tourism story is necessary to give travelers a way to explore Independence experiences. - Engage Facebook and Twitter with weekly posts. - Set up Independence destination page on TripAdvisor. - Set up email capture on tourism website. - Ask businesses and organizations to share email lists, or to share tourism communications with their database list. - Publish monthly destination e-newsletter to subscribers. - Begin development of itinerary maps for cyclists, historic downtown and local attractions - Research grant funding for visitor communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize a fam tour for Portland-based freelance travel writers: stay at Ind. House B&B, tour Rogue Hop Farm, Wings of Wonder, historic downtown tour, dinner at Raging River or other dining spot, ride on Buena Vista ferry. - Invite Willamette Valley area freelance writers who specialize in beer, nature, adventure stories -Establish regular contact with Pacific Northwest editors with media alerts, story ideas, etc. - Begin contact with regional magazine writers and editors through media releases. - Identify downtown location for an Independence and regional tourism information kiosk. - Publicize all events with save the date, newspaper calendars, social media posts, media alerts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct Ghostwalks at Halloween, Oct 28-31. - Decorate Riverfront park with walk-through Christmas light display (like Shore Acres Park in Coos Bay) with donations from local and regional businesses, and set up by volunteers. Make it a charity event: food or Toys for Tots drive. - Begin discussions and identify volunteers or professional organization to plan possible new festivals (see Appendix 1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply for Rural Tourism Studio with Travel Oregon - Approach Portland-area restaurateurs about soda fountain investment - In conjunction with Monmouth tourism, contact Elderhostel (Road Scholar). Discuss possibility of agritourism, birding or historical tour for Independence and Monmouth. Trips currently go to Salem – possible add-on to itinerary. - Begin discussions with stakeholders about future attractions (see Appendix 2)

Table 10.2 Intermediate Recommendations (12-24 months)

Communications	PR & Media	New and Enhanced Events	Future Planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop audio walking guides or mobile app historic tour, or use QR codes that direct to a dedicated story website - Set up editorial/promotions schedule to freshen website, Facebook, publish email news. - Start farm, bike, history and brews blog - Hire videographer for Independence YouTube channel with “I’m Independence” videos - Start a Flickr or Shutterfly account for posting images (with captions) and allowing visitors to do the same, creating “visual word of mouth” - Engage locals with addition of tourism information and events in monthly city newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tourist info Kiosk in place in central downtown. - Invite regional travel editors and writers for fam trip/tour (Sunset, Beer etc.) - Step up as thought leader: Host a day conference on area tourism (Tourism 2020): how does Independence/ Monmouth/ Dallas envision it. Invite chambers and community stakeholders, plus sustainable tourism experts - Attend Go West Summit or Pow Wow with regional tourism director (Salem?) to promote local experiences and tour opportunities. -Host Elderhostel and EverGreen Escapes trip planning fam tour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance summer movie and music events with bigger name bands already on tour in region. Fee for entrance (similar to Edgefield) - - Christmas in the Park with larger walk-through light display, music and food carts. - Launch two new festivals (see Appendix 1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advance discussions with stakeholders on funding and locating new attractions (see Appendix 2) - Identify funding for enhanced highway signage - Identify hotel developer and investors. - Identify investors/ restaurateurs for soda fountain. - Enter discussions with McMenamins for downtown hotel.

Appendix 1: Ideas for New Festivals and Events

based on sense of place, tourism segment and regional population and success of types of festivals

- Christmas in the Park (walk-through holiday lights display, similar to Shore Acres Park at Oregon coast)
- Vines and Bines Festival (wine and beer)
- Halloween at the Park (possible tie-in to Day of the Dead celebration, if appropriate – includes haybale mazes, apple dunking, music, family games, costume contest, ghostwalks, storytelling in the cemetery, etc.)
- Independence Film Festival (themed film festivals: movies about farming, food, documentaries, holiday topics)
- Brews, Bones and Bluegrass Festival (or “Bonefest” – beer and BBQ)
- Country Music Weekend (bands, food, barn dance, horse rides, classic pick-up trucks, lassoing lessons)
- Gospel Choir or Hymn Choir Competition (involve local/regional churches)
- "Senior Prom" with Swing Music
- High School Musicals (popular Broadway musicals staged by high school students)
- Hispanic Music Festival
- Visiting theater groups: college or amateur acting groups stage plays in the park

Appendix 2: New Attractions

based on area assets, local interests and uniqueness to region

- Hops Museum
(perhaps on the Rogue Farm site, or in town, and in cooperation with Craft Beer Industry)
- Farm Resource Center
(in town, with museum-style displays, larger farmers market, educational center, involvement of 4-H and Future Farmers, Oregon State University extension, presentations by local farmers, winegrowers and gardeners, classes for urban farmers, classes on raising farm animals, management of farm internships, etc.)
- Regional Kids Soccer Camp
(use county and city parks, schools and possibly private land – to hold a sports jubilee)