



Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report

Sioux City, Iowa
April, 2016

ROGER BROOKS >
International



Community Assessment

INTRODUCTION

In April of 2016, a Community Assessment of Sioux City, Iowa, was conducted, and the findings were presented in a two-and-a-half hour workshop. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of Sioux City - how it is seen by a visitor. It includes a review of local marketing efforts, signage, attractions, critical mass, retail mix, ease of getting around, customer service, visitor amenities such as parking and public restrooms, overall appeal, and the community's ability to attract overnight visitors.

In performing the Community Assessment, we looked at the area through the eyes of a first-time visitor. No prior research was facilitated, and no community representatives were contacted except to set up the project. The city and surrounding area were "secretly shopped." Any person looking to relocate their business, industry, or residence will come to your community as a visitor first. Tourism is the front door to all your economic development efforts.

Once potential visitors find information about your area, are the marketing materials good enough to close the sale? In the Marketing Assessment, we reviewed your visitor website and print marketing materials.

A typical community has five opportunities to close the sale:

- 1) Personal contact (visitor information centers, trade shows, etc.)
- 2) Websites

- 3) Brochures and printed materials
- 4) Publicity (articles)
- 5) Word of mouth - the most effective means

We searched the internet for activities, requested and reviewed printed materials, and looked for articles and third-party information. As we prepared for travel to your community, we searched both commercial and organizational websites promoting the area, tourism websites, and read travel articles and guidebooks.

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

Where most communities falter is when they merely provide "lists" of what the community has, whether it's truly "unique" or not. Nearly every community in North America promotes the usual list of diversions: local museums, shops and restaurants, plenty of lodging, golf, outdoor recreation, historic downtowns, scenic vistas, etc. Of course, nearly every visitor can do these things closer to home. So, what makes Sioux City worth the trip?

Always promote your primary lure first - what makes you worth that special trip. THEN, promote your diversionary, or "complementary" activities. Would you go to Anaheim, California, if Disneyland

wasn't there? Do you think that Universal Studios and Knotts Berry Farm mind that Disneyland gets all the glory? Of course not. Eighty percent of all tourism spending is with those secondary activities. Disney does the heavy lifting in terms of advertising and promotion, and the diversionary activities benefit.

In a nutshell, the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment looks for what makes your community worth a special trip, or a great place to live, or to do business. We look for details, details, details. Do you give a reason for visiting, and do you provide enough information to make it easy to plan a trip? Are the marketing materials good enough to close the sale?

The second part of the assessment process is the On-site Assessment. During this part of the assessment, we spent several days in the area, looking at enticements from the highways (signs, billboards, something that would get a visitor to stop), beautification and overall curb appeal, wayfinding (ease of getting around), visitor amenities (public restrooms, visitor information, parking), activities, overall appeal, retail mix (lodging, dining, shopping), critical mass, customer service, area attractions, pedestrian friendliness, gathering spaces, evening activities, and the availability of marketing materials and their effectiveness.

The city benefits from tourism when visitors spend money, and they do that in the local gift shops, restaurants, hotels, etc. Therefore, the On-site Assessment includes a candid look at private businesses as much as public spaces and amenities.

For every shortcoming or challenge we note during the assessment process, we provide a low-cost "suggestion," where possible, on how the challenge can be corrected or overcome. The suggestions are not termed "recommendations," as they were developed without consulting the community first about possible restraints, future plans, or reasons why the suggestions may not be appropriate. Hopefully this assessment process will open dialogue within the community, leading people to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

It's important to note that to increase the city's tourism industry, fulfilling one or two of the suggestions may have little impact, but implementing a number of them, if not all, can have a profoundly successful impact on the city's ability to tap into the tourism industry.

Implementation of these suggestions must be a region-wide effort, involving both privately owned businesses as well as local, county, and state agencies, where appropriate. Every local organization plays a role in tourism, downtown revitalization, or economic development efforts. A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO, CVB, Chamber, TPA, etc.) will not be successful if the tourism effort is not region-wide.

In many cases, issues may come up that you are already aware of and are already working on. In that case, the assessment validates those efforts. But more often than not, the assessment will point out things that you are aware of but can't mention or bring up without paying a political price. Local politics can be a killer of the tourism industry.



While marketing efforts are important, product development is the most important factor of a successful tourism industry. Visitors want activities, not just things to look at. How much time can a visitor spend enjoying activities – that cater to their interests – in your area? Does your community have truly unique attractions the visitor can't get closer to home? You must be able to deliver on your marketing promises – otherwise visitors might come once, but they won't come back. It's much more cost effective to bring people back, than to always go out and entice new visitors into town. "Been there, done that" communities eventually run out of visitors and find they don't have a sustainable tourism industry, or they simply become pit stops or gateways on the way to somewhere else.

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

SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TRANSLATES TO CASH

Tourism is successful when the community imports more cash than it exports. When residents spend their hard-earned money outside the community, the community is exporting cash – often referred to as "leakage." Tourism helps fill that gap, importing cash into the local economy without the necessity of having to provide extended social and other services. Visitors come, spend money, then go home. When you import more cash than you export, you have a positive "balance of trade." Communities with successful tourism

programs easily see that the industry subsidizes the community, whereas other communities find that they subsidize visitors – providing services visitors use without them leaving enough money behind to cover the cost of those services.

The primary goal of the tourism industry is to bring more cash into the local economy. This doesn't happen when visitors come into the community, get out of their cars, and take photographs. And it doesn't happen when visitors go swimming in the lake at your park all day, sunning, and eating the lunch they brought from home. And it doesn't happen when visitors hike down your trails, enjoy your interpretive centers, or stroll through your lovely arboretums. These are all great things to do, and, of course, you do want your visitors to do these – but, you also want to entice them into your shops, your cafes, espresso stands, restaurants, galleries, B&B's, and hotels, ultimately opening their wallets to make purchases. That is what helps your local economy, your small merchants, your hoteliers, and your tax coffers.

To entice visitors to spend money in your community, you need to have places for them to spend it – you need to have the right mix of shops, restaurants, entertainment, and lodging facilities, all in an attractive setting, as well as attractions that make them want to visit you in the first place.



THE THREE TYPES OF TOURISM

1. Visiting friends and family

The number one reason people travel is to visit friends and/or family. If you did nothing to promote tourism, you would still have tourism in your community. However, when friends and family come to visit, do your residents take them out to eat, shop, dine locally? Or do they head to a neighboring community? Do your locals even know what you have to offer? An effective tourism marketing effort also includes educating locals as to what you have and how to find it through effective wayfinding signage, gateways and advertising.

2. Business travel

The second most popular reason for travel is business. Included in this category is educational travel: colleges and universities, as well as conventions and meetings, corporate travel, vendor travel, etc. Like leisure travelers, this group is looking for things to do “after hours” while in the area. The most successful convention and trade show towns are the result of their secondary activities or “diversions,” not simply because of their convention and exhibition facilities. Think Disneyworld, Disneyland, San Antonio’s River Walk, Banff, to name a few.

3. Leisure travel

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

activity is shopping and dining in a pedestrian-friendly setting.

The average leisure visitor is active 14 hours a day, yet typically only spends four to six hours with the primary lure. They then spend eight to ten hours with diversionary activities - things they could do closer to home, but will do while in the area. A good example of this is Branson, Missouri, the “live music-theater capital of the world.” This town of 6,500 residents hosts 7.5 million visitors a year. The primary “lure” is the 49 music theaters. The average visitor attends two shows a day over about





four hours. During the other hours of the day, the visitor will shop in local outlet malls, head to the water parks, theme parks, and other attractions, play a round of golf, hike, bike, fish, do some bird watching, and participate in any number of other activities they could do closer to home, but will do while visiting Branson.

THE THREE STAGES OF TOURISM

1. Status quo

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

2. Getting people to stop

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

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

The first goal is to get those travelers to stop.

3. Becoming the destination

To become a destination community you must have attractions and supporting amenities that convince visitors to spend the night. And those attractions

must be different from what the visitor can get closer to home.

Overnight visitors spend three times that of day visitors, and nearly ten times that of visitors using your community as a pit stop on the way to somewhere else.

THE FOUR-TIMES RULE

Visitors will make a point of stopping or staying in a community if it has enough activities that appeal specifically to them and will keep them busy four times longer than it took them to get there.

In other words, if a person has to drive 15 minutes to visit you, do you have enough for them to do to keep them busy for an hour? (4 times 15 minutes) If a visitor has to drive an hour, do you have the activities and amenities to keep them busy for four hours?

The more you have to offer, collectively, the further visitors will come, and the longer they will stay, and of course, the more they will spend. This is why it is so important for communities to market more than just their immediate geographic areas. By marketing neighboring activities and attractions, you present much more for a visitor to do, and you make the visit worth the trip.

Visitors don't care about city limits or county lines – so market the broader package and you'll be able to keep people in the area long enough to translate to another meal, some more shopping, and hopefully, an overnight stay.

SELL THE EXPERIENCE, NOT GEOGRAPHY

Nearly every destination marketing organization is charged with promoting a geographic area, yet visitors couldn't care less about those boundaries. They are looking for activities that cater to their interests, and location is second to the experience. ALWAYS promote the primary lure first, then the location. People by the millions head to Disneyland, Disneyworld, Dollywood and other attractions. They are not going to Anaheim, Orlando or Pigeon Forge.

Always sell the activity - the experience - THEN the location.

LURES, DIVERSIONS AND AMBIANCE

Too often communities promote the list of diversions that nearly every community has. The primary lure is the activity that a visitor can't find closer to home.

Always promote your primary lure, then the diversions. Do not try to be all things to all people. Have you ever gone anywhere because they had "something for everyone?" Of course not - you go there because they have something specific for you. Find your niche and promote it like crazy.

Historic downtowns provide ambiance - they are not attractions, diversions, nor are they a primary lure. It's what's in the buildings that makes a downtown a destination.

The same can be said for scenery. Unless your vista is a world-class scene, such as Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon, scenic vistas create wonderful ambiance, but don't translate to spending, and they only last a few minutes. Then what?

All too often communities promote their heritage as a primary draw. How far would you travel to visit a mining museum? A timber museum? An agricultural center? A county historical museum? Heritage must be outstanding and pervasive throughout the community to be a primary lure, such as Plimoth Plantation or Salem, Massachusetts.

Thousands of communities are the "capital" of something. For instance, in California, Borrego Springs is the grapefruit capital of the world. Gilroy is the garlic capital. Modesto is the tomato capital. Gridley is the kiwi capital. Oxnard is the strawberry capital. Fallbrook is the avocado capital. But here's the question: Have you ever gone anywhere because it was the capital of a fruit or vegetable?

Your local heritage is important to the community and can set the ambiance, even becoming a diversionary activity. For local heritage to be a major attraction, it needs to combine activities with ambiance, and it needs to be pervasive throughout the area.

BE DIFFERENT OR THE BEST

Why should a visitor come to your community if they can enjoy the same activities closer to home? Too many communities promote "outdoor recreation" as their primary draw. Unfortunately, that is the same attraction promoted by nearly every community in North America.

If you are different, then you have a reason for travelers to choose to visit you. If you are the best, then visitors will generally flock to your doors.

If you have great hiking trails, then market their unique qualities. Be specific and paint the image





of how wonderful they are in the minds of your potential visitors. If you have one fantastic restaurant in town, let people know about it – a unique dining experience is something many people will travel far to enjoy.

Ashland, Oregon, previously a depressed timber town, began its Shakespeare Festival, which now runs nine months of the year and draws hundreds of thousands of visitors who spend an average of six nights in the community. The Shakespeare Festival made Ashland different from any other community.

Leavenworth, Washington, another dying timber town, adopted a Bavarian architectural theme and produces dozens of Bavarian events every year. Some now say the town looks more genuinely Bavarian than towns in Bavaria. It is now one of the primary tourist destinations in Washington state, hosting more than 2.5 million visitors annually. They offer a different experience, an experience that is pervasive throughout town.

Okanogan County, Washington is an outdoor recreational paradise – just like 37 of the 38 other counties in Washington. So why go to the Okanogan? Because they are the best. They researched guidebooks, newspaper and magazine articles, and pulled quotes they could use in their advertising efforts. Like, “Pinch yourself, you’re in Okanogan Country with perhaps the best cross country skiing on the continent.” This, and other quotes like it, make it worth the drive to visit Okanogan Country. The third-party endorsements show that they are the best.

Set yourself apart from everyone else, and you’ll see that by being unique, you’ll be a greater attraction.



CRITICAL MASS MEANS CASH

Although it may not be the primary reason why visitors come to your community, shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity of visitors. Besides lodging, it is also how visitors spend the most amount of money.

Do you have a pedestrian-friendly shopping district? If not, can you create one? Many communities have been highly successful with the development of a two or three block long pedestrian “village” including visitor-oriented retail shops, dining, visitor information, restrooms, etc., all in an attractive, landscaped setting.

The general rule of thumb in those two or three blocks (not spread out all over town) is 10+10+10: Ten destination retail shops, which includes galleries, antiques, collectibles, home accents and furnishings, artists in action, book stores, logo gear (clothing), souvenirs, outfitters, tour operators, activity shops such as kites, jewelry, wine or tobacco shops, and other specialties. The second ten is for food: ice cream, fudge and candy stores, soda fountains, sit-down dining, coffee shops, cafes, bistros, delis, etc. And the final ten are businesses open after 6:00 pm. This includes entertainment: bars, dance clubs, theaters (movies and performing arts), retail shops with activities (piano bar in a wine shop), etc.

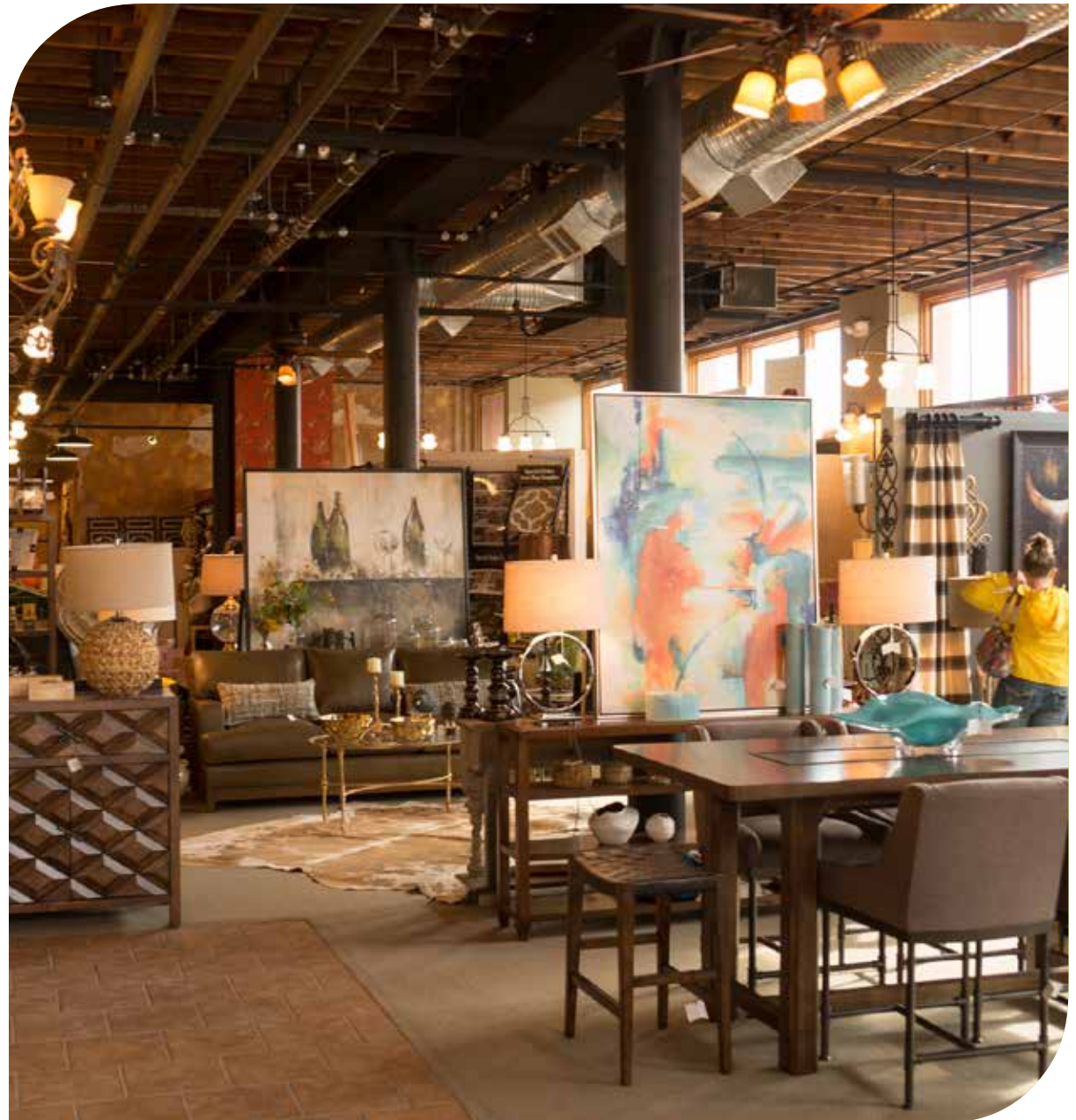
The important point is to group these businesses together to create the “critical mass” in a pedestrian-friendly setting. This will attract visitors as well as locals, and make it worth their while to stop and shop. People are always drawn to the critical mass –

the opportunity to have multiple choices, multiple experiences, all in a convenient and attractive setting.

TOURISM IS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

The goal of successful tourism is for people to come into the community, spend money, and go home. Tourism is nearly a \$650 billion dollar industry in the U.S., nearly \$75 billion in Canada, and supports millions of jobs. Ninety percent of tourism industry businesses are small businesses of which 90% have less than 15 employees. Tourism provides the opportunity for entrepreneurs to get started, for small family-run businesses to thrive, for artisans and craftspeople to find a market, and creates a basis for unique niche-retail environment including wineries, artists, crafts, etc. Tourism provides a diverse market within the community, expanding its potential. Enhancing the community through beautification efforts creates an attractive setting for both locals and visitors, key in revitalizing a community's downtown. And a tourism-friendly town will attract non-tourism industries faster than others – new businesses will see the community as a visitor before they make a final determination about the community. Tourism is the front door to your economic development efforts.

The benefits of a healthy tourism industry can rejuvenate a town, foster community pride, encourage economic diversity, and lead the way to a vital, successful community.



NEXT STEPS

The findings and suggestions in this report will provide many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue and becomes a springboard for the community in enhancing the tourism industry and other economic development efforts, leading to greater prosperity, rejuvenation, and enjoyment by all the citizens.

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

A detailed branding plan would help to build on the results of this assessment, adding in-depth research, evaluation, and local input to develop a unique brand and implementation program. The assessment process essentially provides a look at where you are today. RBI's BrandCamp program helps build your branding plan from the ground up - with local input, brainstorming, research, and creative planning. We can work with you to guide you through the process, helping create a plan that has local champions and community buy-in.

The next step in the planning process would be to provide public outreach and review past and current planning efforts. This would determine your goals as a region.

The third step would involve research, feasibility and market analysis, and determining your brand - what you are or hope to be known for.

Then comes the "development" portion of the plan or the "how to get there" program: determining

what product development initiatives need to be undertaken to reinforce and grow the brand. This also includes defining the roles of the various local organizations. Brand-building takes a village - everyone pulling in the same direction, each with their own "to do list."

Finally, there's the detailed marketing plan: how and when you will tell the world who you are and what makes you special - the place to live, work and play.

The branding plan should be an "action plan" as opposed to a "strategic plan." You want a to do list, by organization, not just general strategies, goals and objectives.

The recommendations should provide all the necessary steps for your town to be successful in attaining its goals of a more diverse economy with an enhanced tourism industry and to become more attractive and enjoyable for both visitors and citizens.

A good plan will provide a program to get local residents and the business community pulling together, building the city's unique image in the minds of visitors and residents alike. The result of your efforts will be a prosperous, enjoyable environment in which to live, work, and visit.





Findings & Suggestions



During this assessment, we examined 60 key elements about Sioux City, looking for ways to make the city more attractive to business, residents, investors, and visitors.

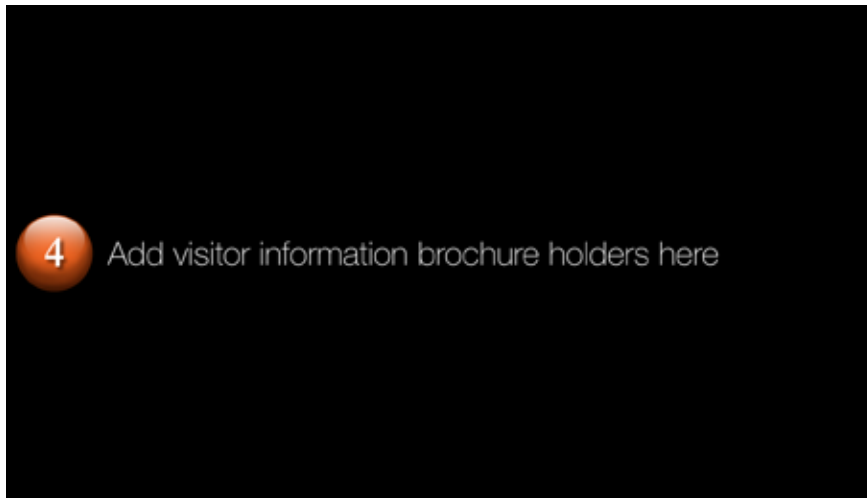
We flew into Omaha and drove north from the airport. As we approached Sioux City, we stopped at the Rest Area just south of the city to see what kind of visitor information was available.

There were several information panels about different areas around the state, including one about downtown Sioux City. We suggest that you work with

IDOT to add brochure distribution at the Rest Area. Travelers need information they can take with them to look at in the car or in their hotel.

We tried to use this electronic visitor information device (bottom right), but we weren't able to get it to work. One big problem with these electronic devices is that only one person can use them at a time. Also, the visitor still doesn't have anything to take with them to refer to later. Are they going to take the time to write everything down?

Visitor information is one situation where brochures are still necessary.



It's easy to provide brochure distribution around the clock. For example, North Platte, Nebraska, built these weather-proof brochure holders for about \$300 (top right) to put right outside their visitor information center. These boxes can hold three different brochures of different sizes, and they enable their visitor information center to be working 24 hours every day.

We suggest you work with IDOT to put up brochure holders in these two locations on the building (bottom left). Consider "adopting" the rest stop and providing visitor information there about Sioux City.

As we drove closer to Sioux City, our first introduction was this water tower (bottom right). When we see our first sign, water tower, or whatever, that says we are in Sioux City, we immediately start judging. What do we see? This is the city, and is it attractive? Wherever you put your first signage, letting visitors know they have arrived, they will look around and judge your city by their very first impressions.



When we worked in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, we designed artwork to dress up their water tower (top left). This was to help portray their brand image, and it really helped. Consider being creative with your water tower - have it fit your city's brand image, once you determine what that should be.

We continued down the highway and saw the sign (top right) for Lewis and Clark Stadium and the Sgt. Floyd Monument. We tried to find the stadium, but we weren't ever able to, and we didn't know who Sgt. Floyd was.

We were hoping to see an exit to "downtown" Sioux City, but we didn't find that. We did pass by this great-looking monument (bottom left), which we

assumed was in honor of Sgt. Floyd.

Then, while navigating the highway construction zones, we finally saw the sign welcoming us to Sioux City (Kum & Go). It was in an industrial area, which didn't give us a great first impression.

People tend to "judge the book by the cover." So when our first glimpses of the city are of a beat-up water tower and a welcome sign in the industrial district, we don't get the impression that the city is going to have a lot to offer us as visitors. Put your welcome signage in a location that is more attractive.



7 Number one, very top priority, no excuses, do it right now: a wayfinding system.



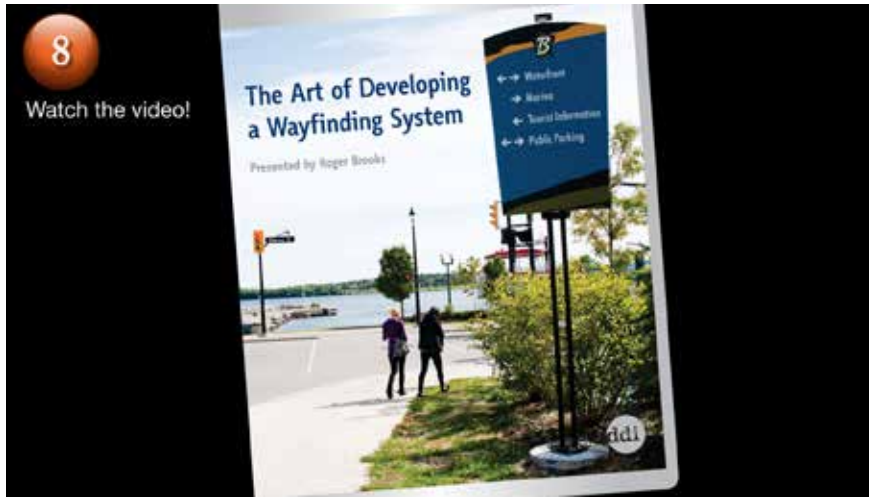
As we drove along the freeway looking for an exit to downtown Sioux City, which we didn't ever find, we saw that we were approaching the state line. So we decided we'd better take the next exit (top left). From here, we had no idea where to turn to find downtown.

One of our biggest challenges in Sioux City was finding anything. With the different highways, the road construction, the confluence of rivers, and the lack of any wayfinding signage, we frequently felt lost. You are losing millions of dollars because visitors have no way to find your attractions, restaurants, and shops.

Our first suggestion is to develop a wayfinding system. It should include:

- Gateways and entries
- Attractions and activities
- Amenities (parking, washrooms)
- Trail markers and access points
- Visitor information kiosks
- Pedestrian wayfinding in your downtown

The signage should be decorative to fit your ambiance and easy to read, such as these examples from Modesto, CA (bottom left) and Woodlands, TX (bottom right).



We suggest you watch our online video about the “Art of Developing a Wayfinding System” (top left). Put together a task force of state, county and city representatives to watch the video and work on this together. Apply for federal transportation grant fund to assist.

20% of people now use navigation systems on their smart phones, built into their cars, or on tablets. Navigation systems are great, but they rarely show all your attractions, shops and restaurants. You usually have to know what you're looking for first. A wayfinding system can educate locals and visitors about your attractions and amenities, and it will help the other 75% of people who don't use a nav system.

We weren't sure where to go once we exited the freeway, but we headed toward the river, and we saw this little building (top right). It may just be a pumphouse, but if it has any historical significance, add an interpretive sign. We also saw the Hilton Garden Inn (bottom left), and its visual appeal and location convinced us to change our lodging and stay here. We also saw Bev's, and it took us a bit to figure out that Bev's is a restaurant, and not a hair salon or an ice skating rink. The sign looked like a hairstyle, while the building looked like a rink - we suggest changing to sign to read “Bev's Riverfront Patio Dining.” That makes it clear. And consider a new logo. Never use script lettering on a sign. And we ate at Bev's, and it was wonderful.



As we scouted the immediate vicinity, we saw this sign for the Jolly Roger (top left). We didn't know what it was, or where it was, and we couldn't call (even if we had wanted to call) because there was no area code. We did figure out that it must be a restaurant of some type, but we didn't know if it was an operating business, or closed for the season, or what. Businesses should make it easy for people to know when they are open and what they do. Invite us back! Post your open hours and days (and seasons).

Add signage to let people know more about the marina (top right). When does

it open? Is it private only? Will there be boat rentals?

We went on to see the River Museum and Visitor Center. This is a beautiful setting, and the boat housing the museum and center looks very cool - from a distance. Up close, we could see that it needs some maintenance.

We went in to the visitor center and museum, and the staff was very helpful. It was going to close (at 4:00), so we couldn't spend as much time there as we would have liked. There were good interpretive displays.



We saw the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, and it looks fabulous (top left). We decided to come back to that later, though, so we could continue becoming familiar with the area.

We continued looking at the riverfront area, which seemed to be a succession of different parks. We found the memorial of Flight 232 (top right), but it took a while to figure out what it really was. Here at the memorial, be sure to tell the story. Bring it to a personal level. Placing a structure as a memorial is good, but to really help people remember, you need to tell the story of what happened and bring it to life for visitors.

We also saw the Anderson Dance Pavilion (bottom left and right). Again, it took a while before we could see what this was, and we still don't really know what it is used for. Add information! If events are held here, put up a readerboard to let people know and to invite them back. We were disappointed that the pavilion is falling into disrepair. It looks like it isn't used any longer.



15 Create a Redevelopment & Programming Plan for this.



16 Have a local garden club adopt the gardens. Activate it!



17 Dance pavilion? Add an interpretive sign - or events schedule.



What's wrong with this picture?

I can park here where there's no place to spend money for four hours.

Downtown? Two hours. Go figure.

The dance pavilion could be a beautiful showcase, but it seems no one is taking care of it. Later, we learned that it had been damaged in flooding four years ago, but it is still in poor shape.

Consider creating a redevelopment and programming plan for the pavilion. Enlist the help of garden clubs and volunteers to repair and revitalize it, and if public events are held there (and they should be - it's a beautiful setting!) be sure to put up a sign to let the public know.

The entire waterfront area has very few places where visitors can spend money, yet there is free parking for four hours (bottom right). Downtown, where there are many more opportunities to spend money, parking is limited in many places to only two hours. Do you really want to kick people out of downtown before they're finished spending money?



We could see that there is a lot of construction going on along the river, as well as the freeway construction, but we didn't know what was being built (top left).

If you have drawings of the future riverfront vision, put up signs that let people know what to look forward to. Do this wherever there is a construction project. It shows that you are creating a great city, with beautiful new places. It gives people a reason to come back. It shows that you are optimistic for the future of Sioux City, and that you're working towards a great goal. This sign (top right) shows an example of a "coming soon" sign at a different construction site, and

this sign (bottom left) is an example we made up.

Make sure that construction crews clean up when they leave for the day, so it's obvious everyone cares about their town (bottom right).



20 Route your visitors where you make the first best impression.



21 Add signage to this side of the Tyson Center. Add murals.



We decided to find downtown, so we came back out to this intersection (top left), which was just after exiting the freeway. There are no signs telling us how to find downtown, so we decided to try going right.

We passed a lot of old warehouse-type buildings, barbed wire, potholes, and we were second-guessing our decision to go down that road, when we finally ended up stopped in front of this large building (bottom left). We had to either turn left or right, and right would put us on the freeway. We didn't know what this building was. Suggestion: Put up a sign on the Tyson Center on this side,

and add murals to make it more appealing. If you add murals similar to this one (bottom right), people could see the rich cultural depth you have. Add a sign to let visitors know that downtown is to the left.

We also suggest routing visitors a different way to get downtown. You want to make a good first impression, so put up directional signage that routes visitors along an attractive route - from the freeway all the way into downtown.

We saw the Hard Rock Casino, and it looks awesome (top right).



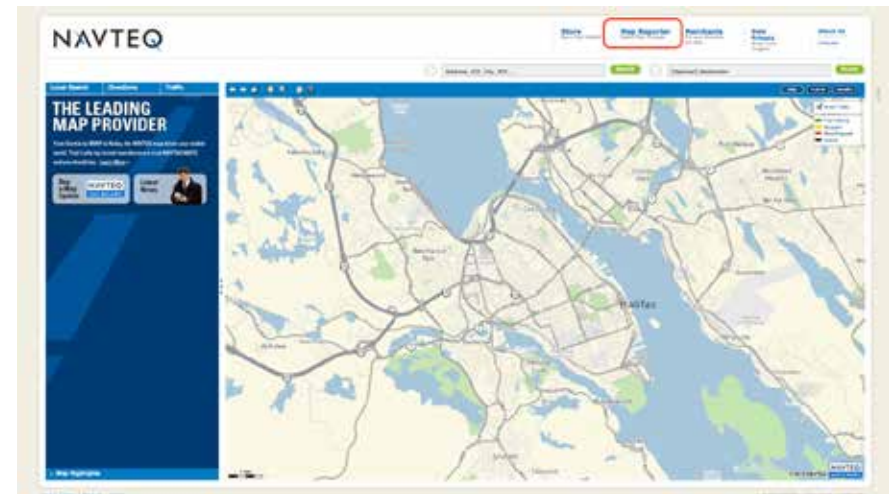
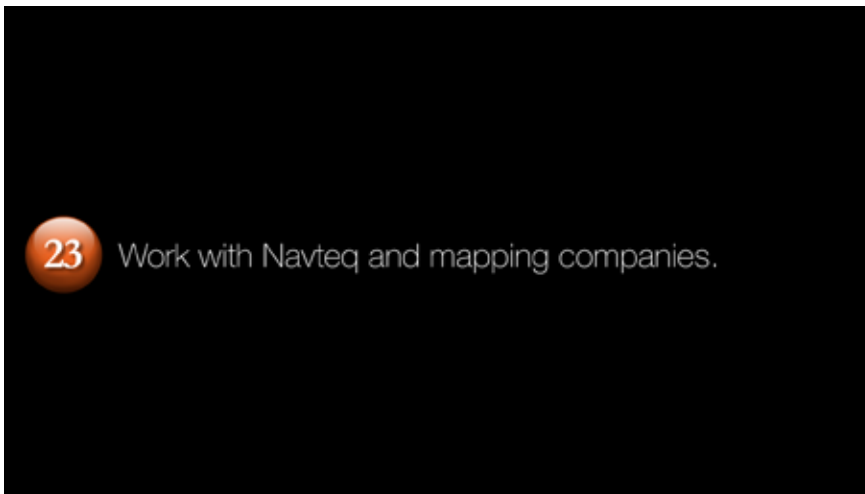
Once we turned the corner, we found some wayfinding signs (top left). You need to include wayfinding to help people find downtown first, not just wayfinding after visitors have already reached downtown.

The text on these signs is much too small to read while driving. It should be about twice this size. Always use upper and lower case letters on a sign, and don't use condensed type. So, down the road, consider redoing the signs to make them easier to read. Another wayfinding rule: 1" tall lettering for every 30' of viewing distance.

We found 4th Street, and it looks great. The historic architecture is attractive, the street lights and sidewalks look very nice.

By this time, we were hungry for dinner, and we luckily found one restaurant open - SoHo. We were surprised there weren't more restaurants open for dinner on 4th Street. But the food was good and our server was excellent. In fact, she gave us a lot of great tips on places we should visit, and we were excited to explore.

We had a difficult time finding our way back to the hotel!



The next day we were going to explore some of the attractions. We looked through all of your marketing materials (top left), and there were so many it was confusing. We ended up primarily using two pieces: the Siouxland Visitor Map and the small Visit Sioux City brochure.

Many of your attractions aren't included in navigation systems, and some that no longer exist, are included, such as the Argosy Casino (as well as being in your brochures). Work with the mapping companies that provide the information for navigation systems: Tom Tom, Garmin, Magellan. Get

volunteers with various units to test locations: lodging, restaurants, shops, attractions, etc. Then work with the mapping companies to make additions and corrections.



One of the map brochures we received was difficult to use because it was so large (top left). And the paper was so thick that after refolding it a few times it started to tear. It was a beautiful map, but impractical. So we ended up using the smaller map brochure that we picked up at a visitor center.

We had heard that we should visit War Eagle, and that it was somewhere near Stone State Park. It wasn't in our navigation system, but we headed out in that direction. We took the freeway exit toward Stone State Park and saw this nice-looking park (top right). The sign needs to be repainted. Perhaps an Eagle Scout project?

Add some directions here (bottom left) so that people know how to find the fields and amenities at the park. When people come for tournaments, directional signage would be helpful.

We saw the Bruguier Cabin (bottom right), built in 1849. The sign says that he was Sioux City's first white citizen. Is there anything else that can be said about him? Are there any stories that would make seeing his cabin more interesting? Bring his history to life - tell us something about him.



27 Yikes! What does it say about Sioux City? Clean it up.



28 Perhaps not. Remove this.



29 Consider "welcome" before all the rules. Put in the parking area.



30 Great sign. Make another one for the main entrance!

We were surprised to see that Sioux City has a port district! (top left) This is right by the Riverside Park. It should be cleaned up.

When we first saw this bridge (top right), we could see that it went across the river to the golf course on the other side. We went to take a closer look and saw that it is falling apart. It should be removed.

We saw the Riverside Pool, and it looks great (bottom left).

Parks often focus on their rules and regulations, and they forget that their purpose is to be available for people's enjoyment. Say "Welcome" to your visitors before hitting them with all the rules (bottom left).

Could you place another one of these great signs at the entrance to the park? (bottom right)



So we found the way to War Eagle (top left). We were again hit with a lot of rules and regulations, but we went ahead.

The monument to War Eagle was very nice, and we were happy to see the interpretive displays that told about his life and his connection with Bruguier. So we were able to learn a little more of the first white settler in Sioux City, as well as feeling a warm connection and respect for War Eagle. It was great.

The views from this spot are great - you can see two rivers joined right here. We suggest adding interpretive signage and a map to let visitors know what

the two rivers are. Also, consider replacing some of the chain link fence with view fence so that visitors can take good photographs.

Now, after reading about War Eagle, Bruguier, and War Eagle's two daughters, the importance of the cabin (bottom right) becomes apparent. It's so important to tell the story!



We came across the Community Theatre and were really pleased to see that it is doing productions. The building looks a little tired, but our first thoughts were that we wished it could have a theater location in downtown - closer to the cultural center of Sioux City, and closer to its audience.

We also went to the Railroad Museum (top right, bottom left and right). It is almost impossible to see the open hours on their sign, so we suggest they simply repaint the hours in a larger type, to make it easy to read.

We were a little confused about the Railroad Museum because brochures

described it as the Milwaukee Railroad Shops Historic District. We wondered where the shops were - we thought there would be gift shops, perhaps a bakery, etc. But that wasn't the case. Perhaps the shops are simply railroad car repair shops? The railroad cars and buildings looked great, but it wasn't what we had expected.

We saw that there is an admission charge, but we didn't know where to go to pay, or how the "district" worked. Change the signage to make it easier for visitors. Add visitor information.



We continued up the road to the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center (top left). This is a very attractive sign, but it really isn't necessary to include "Woodbury County Conservation Board." It makes the sign too cluttered with extra text, and it doesn't mean anything to visitors. It can be included in literature, and perhaps on the building itself.

Then we saw this sign (top right), which very clearly tells visitors the hours and days the Nature Center is open, and that is great. As we drove in further, we saw this great sign (bottom left), which made us feel very welcome. Great job! A welcome, plus letting us know the trails are always open, and to use the

lower lot if we are using the trails after hours. Perfect!

The Nature Center is world-class! (bottom right) The displays are beautiful and very well done, the ladies working there were friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable. We thought everything about it was first rate. The trails are beautiful. The Nature Center gave us a lot of reasons to really like Sioux City!



38 Promote your "anchor tenants" - The Very Best of Sioux City



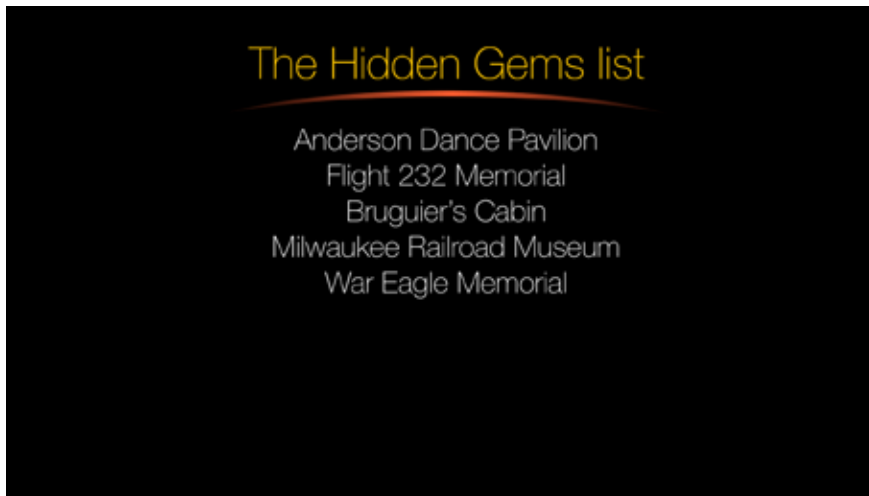
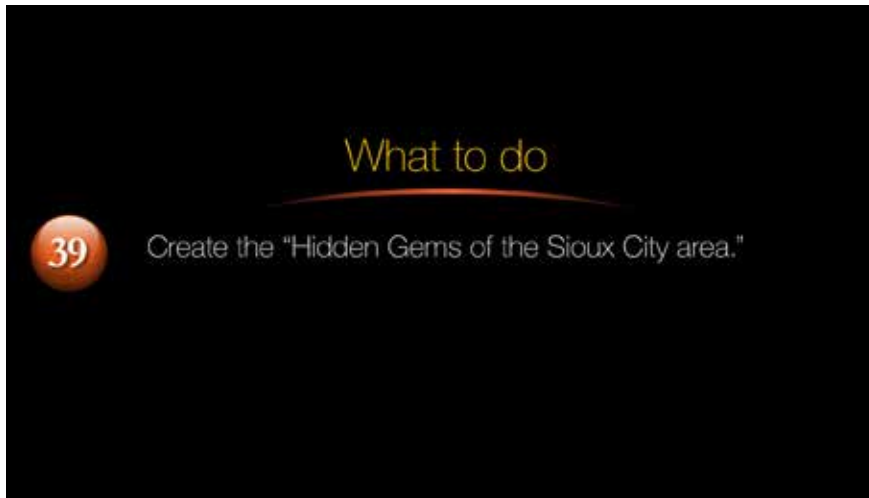
When we left the Nature Center, we appreciated the sign (top left) that said "Thank you for visiting, please come again." Every park and attraction should have a sign that welcomes visitors when they arrive, and one that thanks them for visiting and invites them back when they leave.

Create a "Best Of" guide - it can have a dramatic impact on visitor spending. Its purpose is to promote your "anchor tenants" - those businesses and attractions that your visitors can't find closer to home - those you would drive an hour or more to visit. The Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center is definitely one of your "best of" attractions.

It's important that the brochure NOT look like a bunch of ads. Use an advertorial format; include lots of photos with specific, descriptive text.

- Must be highly regarded (80%+ positive peer reviews, regional publications)
- Must have good curb appeal
- Must be open June through October (to start)
- Must be open until at least 6:00 pm and be open six days a week
- Must be unique to your town (no chains)

The examples shown in the photos promote the best of Alpena, Michigan.



In addition to a "Best Of Sioux City" guide, create a book about the "hidden gems" of Sioux City. One of Door County, Wisconsin's most successful marketing pieces is a small book written by a private person called "101 Things to do in Door County" (top right). These are basically "hidden gems," and they are very specific, fun, mini-itineraries for things to do while visiting Door County. They aren't Door County's best attractions, they are things only locals would know about. They let visitors know about all the other fun things to do, besides your major attractions.

you could include (bottom left).

We came back to 4th Street downtown to find some lunch. We are big fans of electronic parking meters (bottom right) - they make it much easier than having to find a bunch of quarters. We downloaded the app, and saw that there was a two hour limit. But the app let me pay for three hours, so we were relieved. Two hours is not enough time for visitors to get something to eat, walk around, and do some shopping.

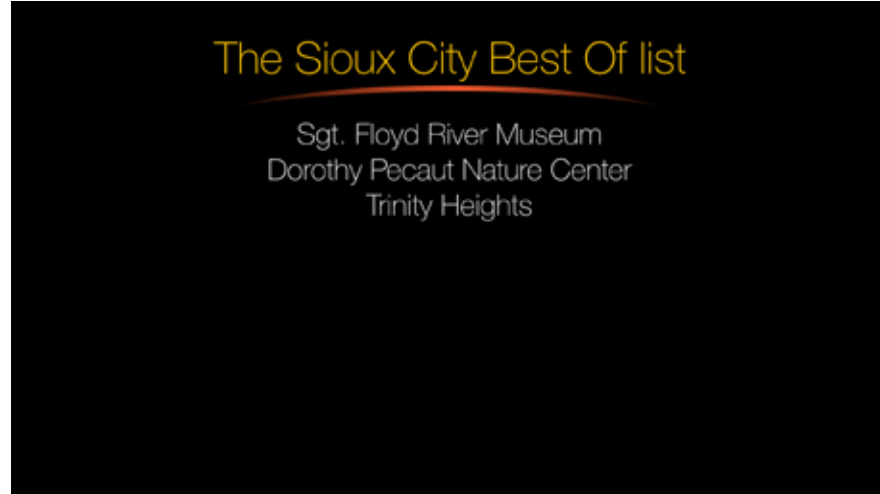
We suggest you create a Hidden Gems book, and here are some of the things



So we started looking for a place to have lunch, and the only place close by that was open was Soho, where we had eaten the day before. So we continued down the street looking for some other restaurant that might be open. Then we saw that just a block away - closer into downtown - was free parking, with a three hour maximum (top right). It didn't make sense for there to be free parking just a block away from metered parking. It made us feel "ripped off."

We saw the Howard Johnson's with its restaurant (bottom left), but it didn't "look" all that inviting (bottom left). So we kept walking all the way across

downtown to Famous Dave's (bottom right). We were relieved they were open!



After lunch we continued to explore, and we found Trinity Heights (top left). It was absolutely beautiful. We used the navigation system to find Trinity Heights, but when we got fairly close, we did see wayfinding signs.

The grounds and artwork were stunning, and the whole place was so peaceful and enjoyable to visit. It is well maintained, and there were great maps and brochures. We think Trinity Heights is one of Sioux City's "Best Of" attractions.

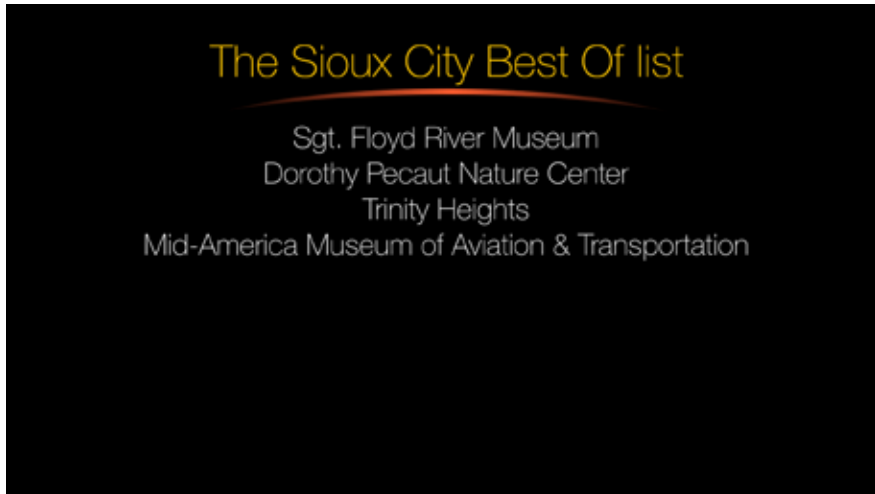
We also looked at several of Sioux City's schools, and they all look great - which is important for site selectors.



41 Add hours to the gate and open the gate all the way if you're open.



42 Add some pots and planters (in season). Make it inviting.



The Sioux City Best Of list
 Sgt. Floyd River Museum
 Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center
 Trinity Heights
 Mid-America Museum of Aviation & Transportation



We found the Mid-America Museum of Aviation & Transportation, but the gate was partially closed (top left), so we thought it was probably closed. It looks like a very nice facility (top right). Add a sign for the gate to let people know the hours it is open. Also, add pots and planters outside the door and windows to make the entrance more inviting.

The museum was difficult to find, so wayfinding signage definitely needs to be added.

While we were there, we saw the airport (bottom right), which looks great. The whole surrounding area looked very nice.

Great signage & wayfinding at the airport and business parks.



Look! An easy way to get back downtown!



Sergeant Bluff's Historic 4th Street.



While we were driving in this area, we crossed the freeway to see Sergeant Bluff, and we saw that there was an easy, back-road way to get back to downtown Sioux City (top right). The sign points us to Historic 4th Street.

We had to laugh when we saw that this was Sergeant Bluff's Historic 4th Street (bottom left). It is a cute town center.

We came across the First Bride's Grave (bottom right). We were intrigued, wanted to find out the story about who this was and why this was an attraction.



So, we found the spot for the First Bride's Grave, and we saw the garbage cans and the rules, and we wondered if the stone with the plaque was the grave marker (top left).

It turned out to be a memorial for one of the city's first mayors (top right).

There was no information or signs to tell us where to find the first bride's grave, who she was, and why her grave is important (bottom left). So we left.

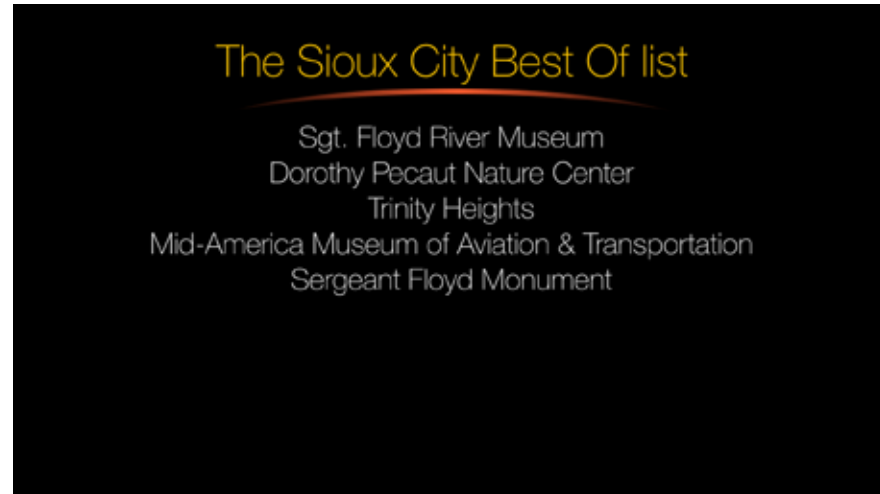
The First Bride's Grave could be included with your "Hidden Gems" if you add interpretive signage and directions at the site. Make sure it's worth the visit. Tell the story!



Interpretive signage is excellent. NOW we know who Sgt. Floyd is.



Excellent job connecting the two attractions.



We found Sgt. Floyd's monument, and we spent some time there reading the interpretive displays and looking at the view (top left and right). The interpretive signs were excellent, and we felt like we really got to know Sgt. Floyd and his tragic story.

We were very impressed to see the sign (bottom left) cross-selling the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center. Good job - cross-selling attractions is very effective marketing.



We decided to head back downtown, but we got stuck on the other side of the railroad tracks, and it took us a long time to figure out how to get back (top left). Without any wayfinding signage to direct people, it can be frustrating trying to find your way around.

Then we tried to find the big box retail shopping centers at Morningside. Again, there wasn't any wayfinding, so we struggled, taking several wrong turns, but we finally found the shopping center with Lowes. It looked like there were shopping centers on both sides of the freeway, but we weren't sure how

to get from one to the other.

The Unity Point Health Center (top right) looks fabulous. We saw the Marshalls, Bed, Bath & Beyond, Lowes, and the other stores. It looks like there is a lot going on in this part of the city, with a lot of new neighborhoods and retail being developed (bottom left and right).

We immediately thought that downtown better get busy, or there will be no reason people will need to go there.



We wanted to find the shopping centers on the opposite side of the freeway, and it was a real challenge. We saw East High School, which looks great (top left). Eventually, after winding our way through neighborhoods, then getting back on the freeway to try a different exit, we found the shopping center (top right). There's a good variety of shops, and it looks like a nice place.

We drove around the area to check it out, and we saw Whispering Creek and Whispering Creek Golf Club (bottom left), which looked very nice. Suggestion: Add signage letting people know if the course is open for public play, if it is 9 or 18 holes, if golf carts and clubs are available for rent, and if there is a pro-

shop and/or restaurant.

The little "downtown" district of Morningside (bottom right) looks very nice. Morningside felt like it must be at least 10 miles from downtown Sioux City, but we learned later that it is only about one mile away. Wayfinding signage would help people understand where they are and how far away other attractions are.



Note

This may be the most challenging city we've ever tried to find our way around.

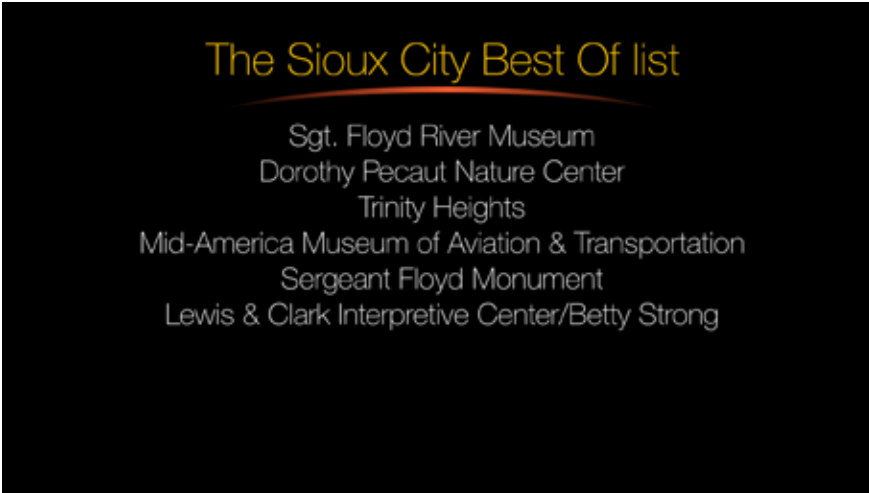
Highways: 20, 29, 75, 12, Bus. 75, Bus. 20.
Did we get them all?



We found the college (top right), which looks fabulous.

But we didn't know where we were in relation to the rest of Sioux City. This was a very challenging place to drive around. With so many highways criss-crossing the city, three rivers intersecting, and the railroad tracks cutting off a portion of town, it was difficult to find things and know where we were.

We headed back to our hotel area and to see the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center (bottom right). The sculptures outside were fabulous, and really drew us into the center.



We looked through the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center as well as the Betty Strong Encounter Center. We didn't know what to expect with the Encounter Center - the name is not self-explanatory, and we didn't know who Betty Strong was. It is a beautiful facility, and the photography was gorgeous. We really enjoyed reading the stories about all the children.

The Interpretive Center was fun (top right). There were a lot of children visiting while we were there, and we thought their favorite thing to see was Thomas Jefferson giving his explanation. The displays are beautifully done, but consider making the center more interactive, so that you can bring the history

more to life.

We headed downtown and took a look around the Hard Rock, and it is very nice (bottom right). The architecture is gorgeous, and the hotel and casino have really turned the building into a fabulous attraction.

We ate at the Main & Abbey, and it was excellent. We look at TripAdvisor to check out the ratings of the restaurants before we give them a try, and Main & Abbey is rated #1. It was easy to see why.



The Sioux City Best Of list

- Sgt. Floyd River Museum
- Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center
- Trinity Heights
- Mid-America Museum of Aviation & Transportation
- Sergeant Floyd Monument
- Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center/Betty Strong
- Main & Abbey



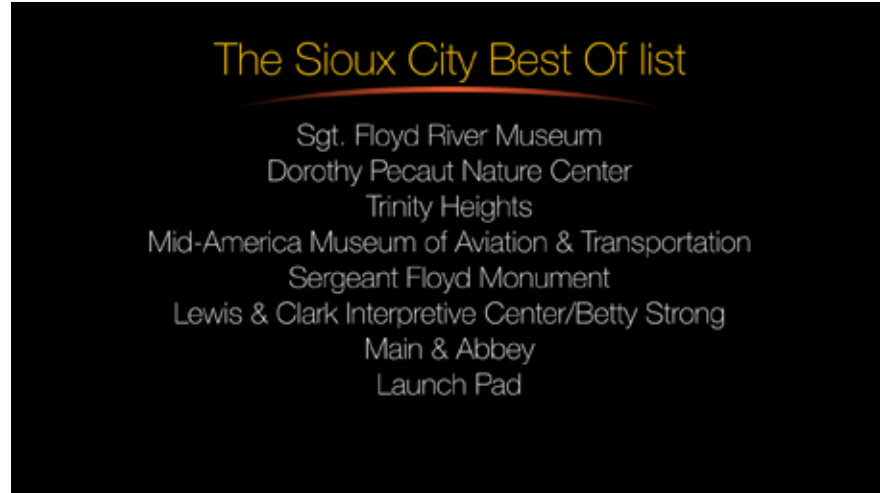
Things we never found

- Alas Courtyard
- Milwaukee Railroad Shops
- Shepherd's Garden
- Spirit of Siouxland Sculpture
- Siouxland Freedom Park
- Adams Homestead & Nature Preserve
- The Promenade

Your Sioux City “Best Of” list is getting long! (top right) Besides attractions, you definitely want to include your best private businesses, such as restaurants and shops. Main & Abbey should be on your list.

Finding our way back to our hotel from downtown was always a bit of a challenge, and one of the problems was this roundabout (bottom left). It’s partly a street, partly a parking lot, so it was confusing. We assumed the street was converted to a roundabout to slow traffic here, for the safety of the casino’s patrons who are parking in the far parking lot.

There were a number of things we read about in marketing materials, but we were never able to find (bottom right). Be sure to use consistent names for your attractions - if it is called one thing on its signage, make sure your marketing materials call it the same thing. A good wayfinding system will help take care of that problem, too.



We checked out the Launch Pad (top left). The Launch Pad is promoted as a children's "museum," but it is really a lot more than a museum. It is really an activity center. But regardless, it is fabulous.

We were shown around, and we really enjoyed seeing so many children having so much fun. What an awesome place to bring your kids!



We looked at the Tyson Events Center (top left) and the Long Lines Rec Center (top right). We weren't sure if they were all one facility, and if you used the Rec Center, would you really have to wait in long lines? We later found out that Long Lines Communications has naming rights, but it was kind of off-putting.

The Tyson Events Center looks like a fabulous facility - what a great asset for the city.

We drove past this side of this building many times before we found out what

it is (bottom right). It is a very attractive building, and you can see the modern sculpture outside, but we really didn't know what it was for a long time. Suggestion: Add signage to this side of the building to make it obvious and attract visitors who drive from this direction.



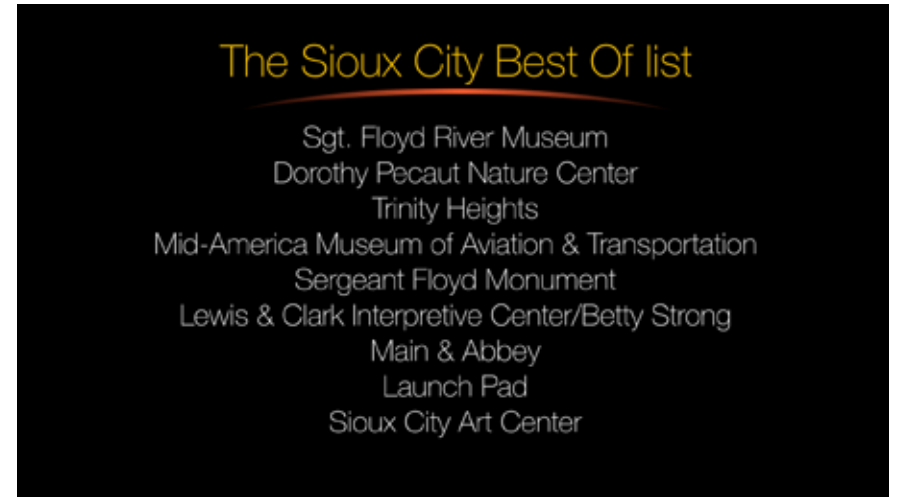
The Sioux City Art Center is beautiful (top left). When you build something, you do a fantastic job. It's very impressive and really makes you want to go inside and see what there is.

We saw the information about Sculpt Siouxland (top right). This is great. Consider putting three or four more of these around town.

When we went inside the Art Center, we saw that there was a video running (bottom left). We didn't know how much longer it would continue. This is for everyone who runs videos for the public in their facilities: Be sure to let visitors

know what the video is and how long it lasts. Also, indicate the video's start times, or if it runs continuously. We were hesitant to stay and watch it because we didn't know if it would run 5 minutes or an hour.

We looked at all the exhibits at the Art Center, and they were all excellent! We really enjoyed the Art of the Brick exhibit (bottom right). It was phenomenal!



Your exhibit of art by local students was also amazing (top left). The wide variety showed that many of your students are extremely talented.

We thoroughly enjoyed the Sioux City Art Center - from the building itself to the incredible exhibits. Definitely one of your "Best Of" attractions.

Nearby we saw the Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center (bottom left). But we also saw that it is called River's Bend. We were confused - is it the Stoney Creek Hotel & River's Bend Conference Center?

Make it easy for visitors and be clear what the name of your business is - don't have two different names on different signs. We'll never figure it out, and that can cost you business. It does look like a very nice place, though.

Looking around downtown, we saw the wayfinding signs (bottom right). Most of the wayfinding points to government buildings or places we couldn't find. If you want visitors to find these, be sure to have the wayfinding follow all the way to the destination, and be sure to have a sign at the destination - for example, the Promenade. We never found it, and perhaps there is simply no sign for it once we arrive.



We really enjoyed looking at the wonderful architecture you have throughout the city (all photos this page). The old high school (top right) is gorgeous, and even this building (bottom right) with its glass block windows, is outstanding.

Consider creating a driving tour brochure, so visitors can find a lot of your outstanding buildings and learn about them.



Pearl Street is a gem in the making.



An emerging entertainment district.



The Ten+Ten+Ten rule
In three lineal blocks (not square blocks)



Think antique malls - 10x the business when together

We could tell that Pearl Street is a gem in the making. Right now it is a bit hodge-podge in its offerings, but it is becoming a very cool place. It looks like an emerging entertainment district.

Downtown districts are much more successful if they follow the Rule of Critical Mass: the 10+10+10 Rule.

This would include a MINIMUM, in three lineal blocks:

- TEN places that sell food: soda fountain, coffee shop, bistro, cafe, fine dining, family restaurant, wine store, deli, bakery, confectionary.

- TEN destination retail shops: galleries, antiques, home accents, outfitters, collectibles, books, kitchen supplies, garden.
- TEN places open after 6:00 pm: entertainment, theater, performing arts, bars and bistros, specialty shops, dining, open air markets, etc.

Sometimes this effort must be planned and orchestrated - deal with property owners first. Once you have 1/3 of the property owners on-board, the effort takes on a life of its own.

City Hall and the courthouse next door are stunning.



And, of course Palmers!



The Sioux City Best Of list

Sgt. Floyd River Museum
 Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center
 Trinity Heights
 Mid-America Museum of Aviation & Transportation
 Sergeant Floyd Monument
 Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center/Betty Strong
 Main & Abbey
 Launch Pad
 Sioux City Art Center
 Palmer's Old Tyme Candy Shoppe

48 A great candidate for an Art Space project



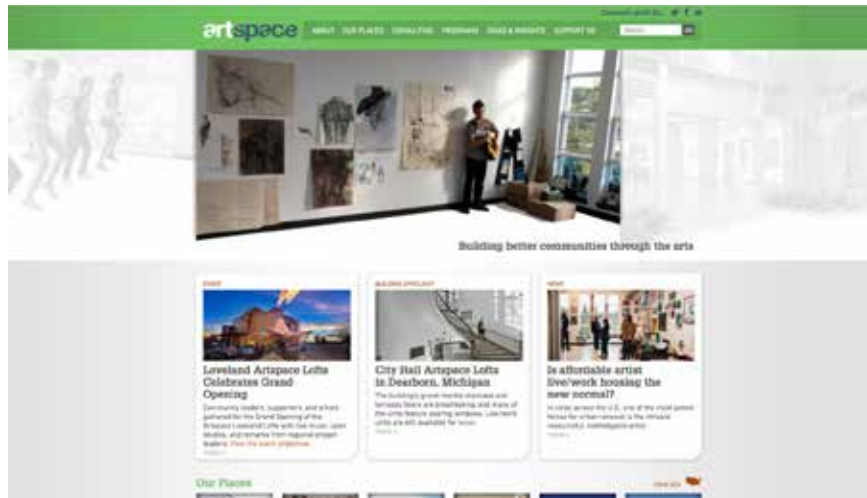
Downtown has a lot of attractive buildings - City Hall and the Courthouse are stunning (top left). But we had a very hard time finding places to spend money downtown.

Retail stores that are clustered together do much more business than if they are spread out. Think about antique malls - they do 10 times the business when they are grouped together. Or auto malls - they do seven times the sales when the dealers are close to each other. There's also corner gas stations and fast food restaurants - they tend to cluster together because people are drawn to the "critical mass."

We did find one shop to spend money in - Palmer's Old Tyme Candy Shoppe! What a great store. We arrived at 5:20, and they close at 5:30. But they stayed open long enough for us to make a lot of purchases! Palmer's is only one shop though, and there needs to be a lot more to make downtown a destination.

We noticed all the traffic leaving town - all the workers heading out of downtown to go home. When everything closes at 5:00 or 5:30, there's no reason for anyone to spend time downtown after work!

We saw this very cool, old building (bottom right). It looks like a good candidate for an Art Space project.



Art Space is a national non-profit organization that buys old buildings and turns them into artist live/work space (top left and right). They recently opened a new building in Michigan City, Indiana, and they have great success helping to revitalize downtowns with their efforts. Consider looking into Art Space.

We were trying to find parking downtown, and we saw several parking garages. But we weren't sure if they were for private use because there were no signs to tell visitors that they were public parking.



We thought this parking garage might be a private garage for a business called Discovery (top left). This parking lot was definitely private (top right), while this parking lot (bottom left) looked impossible to get into.

stay downtown longer.

Make it easy for people to find parking. When parking is available for the public, put up signage that says "Public Parking." Post the prices, so people won't avoid the garages because they think it will be too expensive.

Consider having a "maximum" parking rate. If a visitor parks longer than 4 hours, give them the rest of the time for free. That will encourage people to



Generally, two-hour parking limits can kill a downtown. Leisure visitors to downtown typically need four hours to do everything they want. Usually, they will have a meal, and then they spend more time shopping. The longer they spend downtown, the more money they spend too.

If you have some two-hour parking areas, be sure to put up signage to let people know where they can find all-day parking.

Be sure to watch our video about parking (top left).

We saw the sign for the trolley stop (top right), and we waited for a while for it, but we assume it only runs during the summer season. Add information at several spots downtown to let people know when, where, and how often it runs.

We decided to check out the Skywalk system - it looked like a great way to get around downtown, especially in the winter, and it looked fun too. Some of the entrances are well marked (bottom right), like this one.

Got it. If you want to find stuff, use the Skywalk. Wayfinding!



51 Add some art! This is as utilitarian as it gets.



We were happy to see the Skywalk wayfinding! (top left and right) It was very well done and made it easy to find our way around.

The walkways were very stark and barren, though. The skywalk could be a fun attraction in the city if it was filled with art and interesting things to see. One of the hallways at the Art Center (bottom right) was filled with these beautiful decorations, and we think the Skywalk could be a gallery of art as well. Then it would be an attraction, not just a way to walk from point A to point B.



The entire Skywalk should be a gallery. Really.



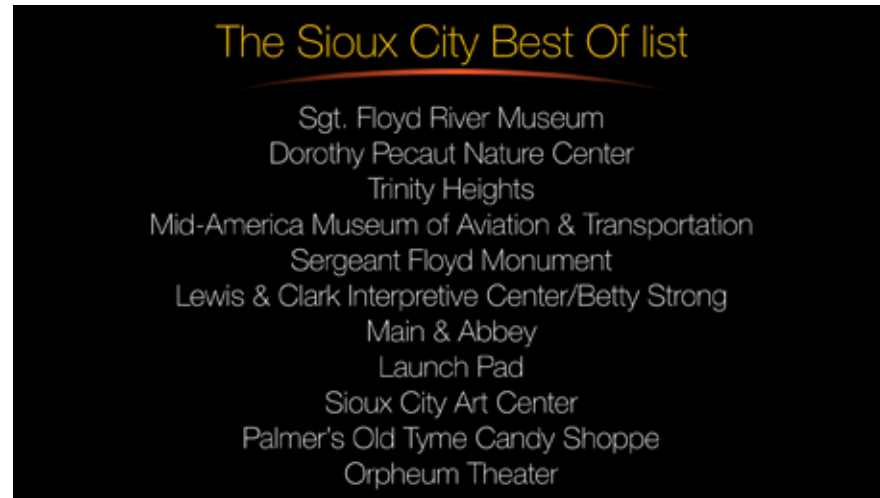
Art Alley in Rapid City, South Dakota



There was one fun section of the Skywalk (top left), but it would be good to have the entire walkway be filled with art. You could use graffiti art in there (top right).

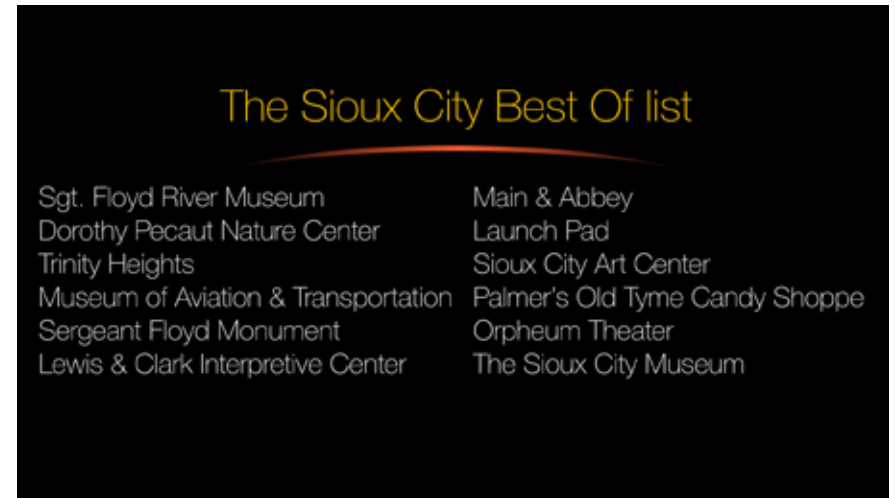
In Rapid City, South Dakota, they turned an alley into a major attraction - "Art Alley." Graffiti artists are allowed to create their art, with a few rules: No profanities or swastikas, respect others' art, and respect private property. Some of the art is absolutely amazing. It is now such a big attraction that they do walking tours.

Sioux City has a lot of talent. Consider a way to use that talent to make the Skywalk an incredible gallery.



The Skywalk gave us directions to find the Orpheum Theater (top left), which looks fabulous. It was locked, of course, but we looked through their brochure, and we would love to be able to see inside sometime.

We also came to the Public Museum through the Skywalk. Consider giving it a different, more creative name. "Public Museum" doesn't have much appeal. The museum itself, though, is wonderful! It's one of the most beautifully designed museums we've seen.



One fun thing you can do at the museum is take a picture of yourself in the "corn palace" and e-mail it to yourself or your friends (top left). That helps promote the museum and Sioux City.

We added Sioux City Museum to our growing list of "Best Of" attractions (top right). It's getting long!

Add visitor information to a number of locations (bottom left) to provide 24/7, 365-day information with brochure distribution. Take advantage of every

opportunity to offer visitor information, and make it easy to find.

Even with the internet, brochures are still important. Bentley University's Center for Marketing Technology found that prior to traveling, the number one way people make a decision about travel is from the internet; the number two method is from friends (word of mouth); and only 32% of travel decisions come from brochures. But after the visitor is in the area, 81% of decisions about what to do are made as a result of brochures.



This small kiosk in Moses Lake, Washington, (top left) provides information about not-to-be-missed attractions in the area. It was created by volunteers.

This visitor information kiosk (top right and bottom left) is a great example of a kiosk that fits the ambiance of the town. This includes brochure distribution (bottom right), and each business or attraction that displays their brochure pays \$5 each month, which covers the cost of restocking, maintenance, and a little more to go for building another kiosk.

Place visitor information all around town - make it easy for your visitors to

learn what you have to offer and to cross-sell other attractions and amenities in the area. The more you have to offer, the longer people will stay, and the more money they will spend.

Consider having a couple portable visitor kiosks that you can move around to different events or sports tournaments.

For more information, watch our video about visitor information centers in our online library.



One of our favorite places is Cape May, NJ (top left and right). They have created a very attractive, self-serve visitor information kiosk. We don't need technology here, just an old fashioned kiosk where you can pick up a printed brochure. Note the message at the top, "Welcome friends, old and new, linger here a day or two."

Flemington, NJ (bottom left) built some of these unmanned visitor kiosks. They are small enough to go almost anywhere, and they have maps and several brochures.

We headed back to Historic 4th Street to look more closely at the businesses and attractions there.

We saw this business (bottom right), and we assumed from the clutter that it was being remodeled, or temporarily closed, or something. It didn't give us a good first impression as a place we'd want to come back to. Consider screening this clutter to create a better impression.



We saw this trompe l'oeil mural on the wall on 4th Street (top left), and we thought that it must have once been very nice. But it has deteriorated over time, and no one has bothered to maintain it. It seems to be a pattern in the city - so busy building great new things that the old things are ignored and not maintained.

We noticed things like this (top right). The grate is out of place, creating a trip hazard. It was like this Monday, and it is still like this four days later.

It's also a problem with private sector businesses too. This pallet was lying in

the alley Monday (bottom left and right), and it's still there. The alley is a mess, and it needs to be screened or cleaned up.

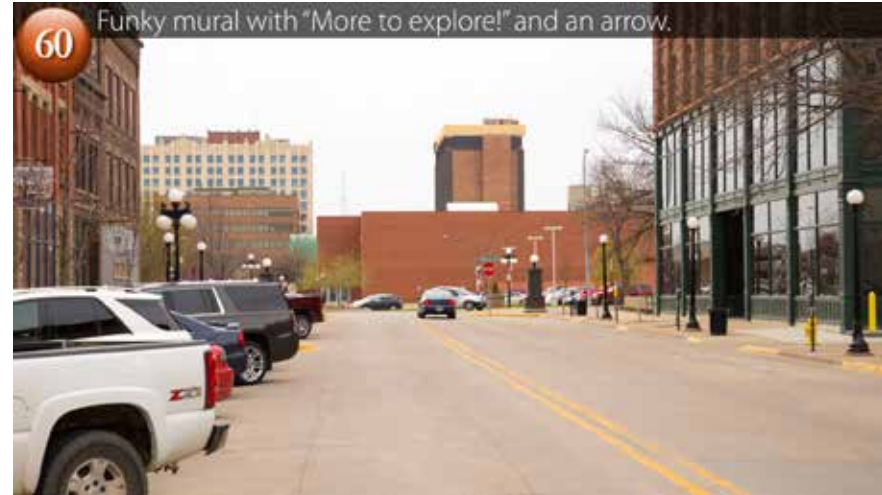


You have incredible art around the city, like this smoking dragon (top left). But then right across the street is this empty pedestal (top right), where the piece of art is gone. How long has it been like this?

We walked along 4th Street after dark, and we counted more than 40 burned out bulbs on the streetlights (bottom left). It gives the impression that no one cares.

When we went up to the convention center, we were shocked to see the sign posted "Convention Center Patrons Only." So you are sending away any visitors who are downtown and need visitor information or perhaps a restroom. There are no public restrooms downtown. And above the convention center doors is a sign that says, "VisitSiouxCity.org," which gives the impression you have visitor information here.

The convention center is in the hospitality industry, and you should be welcoming visitors - not telling them to go away!



Relieved visitors spend more money. The convention center should be promoting public restrooms and visitor information. Welcome visitors!

When you are coming down 4th Street (top right), it looks like the street dead-ends at the convention center. The expanse of blank brick wall looks like a barrier. Suggestion: Create a large, decorative mural on this wall, with an arrow and the words, "More to explore!" This will entice people to check out even more of downtown.

Another thing that would benefit merchants is blade signs. Blade signs are

perpendicular to the street, so they are easy to see and read as you are driving or walking on the sidewalk.

These signs in Leavenworth, WA (bottom right) are excellent examples of effective blade signs.



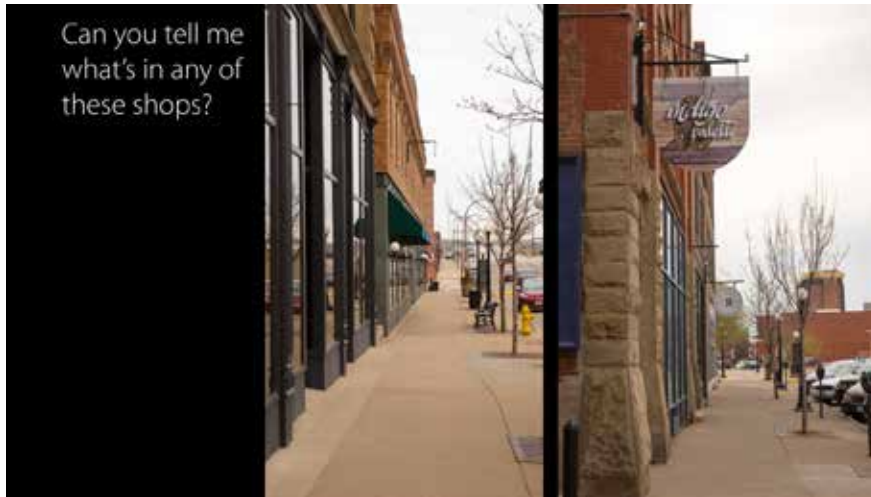
Downtown retail signs should follow these guidelines:

- Lettering should be one inch tall for every twelve feet of viewing distance.
- Script lettering should always be avoided.
- The signage should be decorative to enhance the ambiance of the city. Real signs, no billboards or painted plywood signs.
- Retailers and attractions should promote the primary lure first, then the business name.

- Blade signs should be a consistent height and size.
- Keep verbiage to four words - no more than six words.

These blade signs are in Nantucket, MA (top left), Carmel, CA (top right), Canmore, Alberta (bottom left), and Owen Sound, Ontario (bottom right).

Most successful downtowns use blade signs.



Can you tell what is in any of these shops? (top right and top left) There's no reason for me to continue walking down the street, because there are no signs telling me what is there - there's nothing enticing me to go further.

A few shops do have blade signs, but they are too high, and need to be moved lower. They are out of the line of sight and easy to miss.

You need blade signs. If there's an ordinance prohibiting them, change the ordinance. Blade signs increase sales.

70% of all consumer retail spending takes place after 6:00 p.m. We found that all the shops downtown, with the exception of some restaurants, closed at 5:00 or 5:30 p.m. If you look at TripAdvisor reviews of Historic 4th Street, you'll see that visitors thought the street was pretty, but nothing was ever open.

Shopping and dining go together. When a critical mass of restaurants and shops are open in the evening hours, in an intimate setting, people will gather and spend time there, and the businesses will thrive.

People choose to hold conventions in places where there are things to do AFTER the convention day is over.



Facts about downtowns:

- Downtowns = visitor spending. The #1 activity of visitors is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly, intimate setting. This is where 80% of all non-lodging visitor spending takes place. That is why Disney built "Downtown Disney" outside its theme parks.
- Tourism IS economic development. Tourism is the front-door to your non-tourism economic development efforts. Site selectors, new businesses, new residents, come to your city as visitors first. The health of your downtown

shows site selectors the health of your community. Downtown organizations and tourism organizations should be working together.

- Downtowns are critical to your success. The heart and soul of any community (besides its people) is its downtown. If you, as residents, don't hang out in your downtown, neither will visitors. Bring your downtown to life with street entertainers, musicians, and events.

Downtowns are becoming the place we gather to relax with friends - it's becoming our "Third Place." Our "First Place" is our home.



Our "Second Place" is where we work. And our "Third Place" is the place we go to "hang out," socialize, and relax with friends and family. Downtowns are perfect to be our "Third Place."

- Downtowns are back! People want to spend time in a vibrant downtown now, more than ever before. We are moving to the European standard, where we want out of our cars and into a pedestrian-friendly experience. We want to dine and shop later in the evening.
- The future of downtowns is to be the place we go after work and on

weekends. We want a relaxed atmosphere with casual entertainment, outdoor dining, and easy shopping after our long day at work. We want the community feeling that our own downtown can give us. We want the community connection.

- In economic development, tourism, and community development there is NOTHING that's more important than your downtown.

The 7 • 8 • 7 rule

70% of first time sales can come from curb appeal
 80% of all spending is by women
 70% of retail spending takes place after 6:00 pm

62

Just two words

Think benches
 You should have 30 to 40 downtown.



• The business mix rules. The biggest mistake most communities make is when they think that revitalizing the streets and sidewalks with beautification and some facade improvements will “fix” their downtown. It’s what’s IN the buildings that makes your downtown a draw.

First, you have to have the critical mass of shops, restaurants and entertainment.

Beautification is important too, though. 70% of first-time sales can come from

curb appeal. And 80% of all consumer spending is done by women. Women like to spend time in safe places that are beautiful.

Downtown Sioux City has nice streetscapes, but it is stark and bare. Add benches! They make a street feel much more welcoming. Flank each bench with pots of flowers.

Retailers need to do their part, too! Beautification of storefronts is the merchant’s responsibility.



Make beautification a top priority for downtown. Seventy percent of first time sales at retail shops, wineries, restaurants and golf courses can come from curb appeal. Beautification is an investment with tremendous returns.

This shop in Grass Valley, California (top left) makes you feel very welcome. They leave the door open (with a heat screen to blow warm air down during the winter), and the silk flowers and the welcome sign create a very inviting entrance.

St. Albert, Alberta, decided to become Alberta's botanic arts city. They

knew they would need to live up to their claim. They created a downtown beautification program, where the city paid 50% up to \$2500 for businesses to add beautification.

One coffee shop took them up on their offer. Top right is "before," and bottom left is "after." Their retail sales went up 400% as a result of the beautification.

Have you ever said, "That looks like a nice place to eat"? That's the effect of beautification!



Beautification makes a downtown shop or restaurant inviting, making people want to go inside. We all tend to “judge the book by the cover.”

This is in Neenah, Wisconsin (top left). This attractive confectionery is in Madison, Indiana (top right).

Take advantage of little alleyways, like they did in Shipshewana, Indiana (bottom left). This is a great little gathering space.

The town of Leavenworth, Washington (bottom right) is gorgeous. Hanging baskets, pots, decorative signage - it all makes people want to spend time there.



There are times when the rules of beautification can be broken, and the business still does well. That's because the business will have something special that makes up for it. It usually takes word of mouth for those businesses to do well.

Diamond Thai Cuisine (top left) is one of those restaurants - no curb appeal, but such great food and interesting characters that people don't care about the lack of curb appeal. Word of mouth gets customers in the door.

People love to dine outside. Not only that, but seeing other people dining

outside motivates more people to dine outside as well.

Encourage your restaurants and cafes to provide outdoor dining. It's a very popular and growing trend, and it can really help bring your town to life.

We saw this spot (bottom left), which would be great to set up with lots of chairs and tables and beautification. Outdoor dining should also be available in the front, on the sidewalks, like this restaurant in Newport on the Levee, Kentucky (bottom right).



Wolfville, Nova Scotia



This outdoor dining area (top left) is in Salem, Massachusetts in March. The flowers are silk. See how the Catalina umbrellas provide a sense of intimacy?

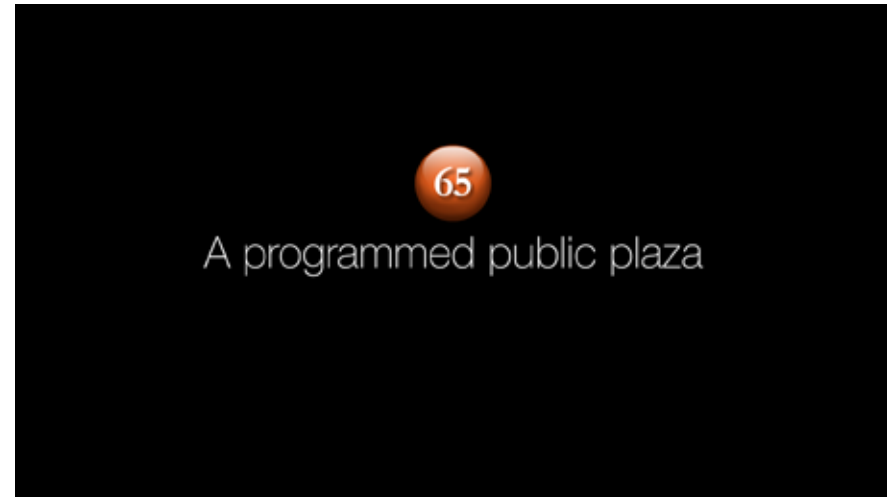
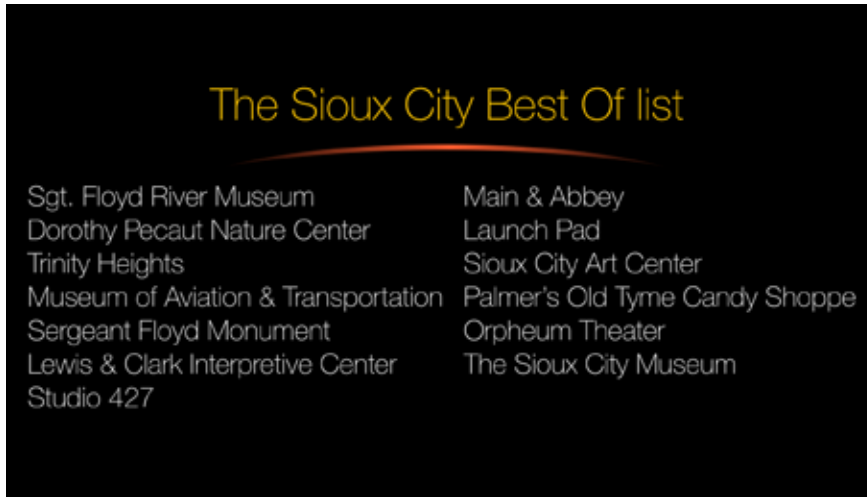
In Wolfville, Nova Scotia (top right), restaurants are allowed to reroute the sidewalks around their outdoor dining area. They provide the barriers to protect pedestrians from the traffic, and in winter, they remove them. Sure, they lose a parking space or two, but the outdoor dining more than makes up for it - people love it.

Canmore, AB (bottom left) is doing so many things right. There is an abundance of outdoor dining, and this restaurant, with its little fence for intimacy and its geraniums, does a good job of being welcoming. This restaurant, also in Canmore (bottom right), is also very inviting.



Part of the charm of the British Arms (top left) in Barrie, Ontario, is the “organic” ambiance it has created with its outdoor dining. The merchant has built sidewalks to wrap around their dining space, and then made them decorative. Here are some additional views (top right and bottom left).

You have some amazing restaurants and shops on 4th (bottom right). This shop is one of the best ever - we liked everything in it. The problem is, there are not enough of the great shops. You need more to reach “critical mass” and become a destination.



We're in the age of third places. The first place is where we live. The second place is where we work. The third place is where we hang out - a gathering space.

People want downtowns more than ever, because downtowns are usually the perfect third places. A plaza in downtown is an ideal central gathering space. People are the heart of a community and your plaza needs to be the soul.

We are slowly moving to the European standard: Plaza areas alive with music, street artisans and vendors. This model has worked for centuries.

All plazas need to be monetized - ringed with restaurants and some retail shops (but primarily dining). They need to be programmed with events, activities, and entertainment. A downtown plaza like this can completely revitalize a downtown.

A case history: Main Street Square, Rapid City, SD
 Rapid City's downtown was dead, even in the middle of summer. Four million people visit, but leave for the surrounding attractions. Right downtown, they had an old Sears building and a parking structure (bottom left). We suggested they build a plaza. Now the old building is full of restaurants and retail (bottom right).



Because they have the plaza, numerous organizations started hosting their events in downtown Rapid City. Their downtown has become an attraction in its own right.

They have a splash pad that attracts families and kids. They create an ice skating rink in the winter.

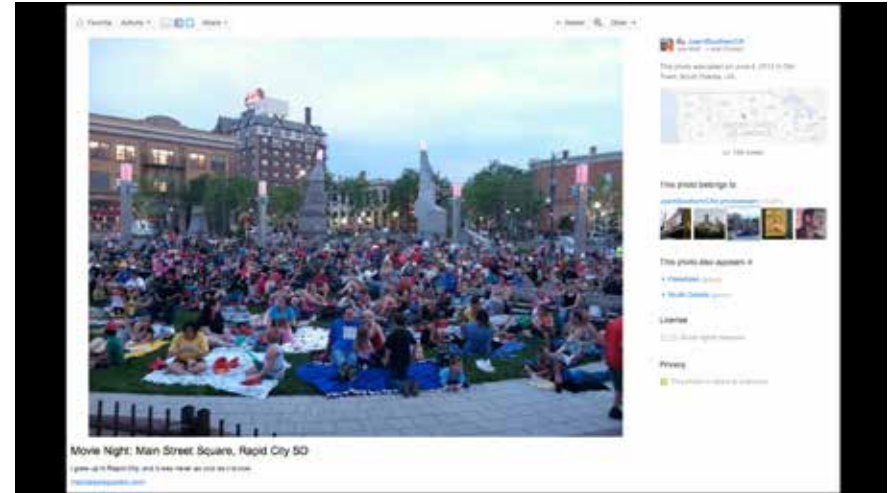
Total cost was \$8 million (and it could have been built for \$5 million). Funding sources: \$4.5 million from philanthropy, \$3.5 million from the city. Ongoing operations, marketing and maintenance \$500,000 per year.

To put it in perspective, they make \$130,000 per year just in ice skate rentals.

A plaza MUST be programmed, not just a space.

Rapid City is now considered a cool place to be. They are attracting younger residents. The average age of a person buying a home in Rapid City dropped by 12 years within 24 months of the plaza opening.

Main Street Square is now nearly as big an attraction as nearby Mount Rushmore.



A true plaza is:
 THE central gathering place with lots of seating.
 A year round activity center.
 Includes interactive water features.
 Is programmed with events and activities.
 Includes a stage and audience areas.
 Incorporates retail/food year round (fixed or pop up).
 The fountains at night are gorgeous (bottom left).

Main Street Square earns more than \$120,000 each season just renting ice skates (top right). It's now a year round gathering area for locals and visitors. During the summer months, the city hosts "Monday Night Movies on the Square," which draws more than 3,500 people into downtown Rapid City each Monday (bottom right).

Plazas are an investment, not an expense. This is how you get residents of Sioux City to spend more time and money in their downtown. Where people go, so do retailers. If you give reasons for your residents and visitors to spend time downtown, businesses will follow.



Many businesses in Rapid City were opposed to the idea of building a downtown plaza. They were afraid of the expense and losing customers. After the plaza had been constructed for about a year, we went to 14 of those businesses, and this is what they said:

- It's the best thing Rapid City has ever done.
- There are no retail vacancies, and a much lower turnover of retailers.
- Businesses stay open into the evenings.
- Businesses have broken sales records.
- The average age of the population is dropping.

- Rapid City now gets lots of conferences and conventions.

We thought the movie theater was no longer operating (top left) because there were no signs, no beautification, and most of the buildings nearby were vacant. Suggestion: Add signage, beautification, benches.

The space in front (top right) has tremendous potential to be a gathering space. In fact, the plaque (bottom left) indicates that the Roths intended this area to be used as a "gathering place for children, parents, and grandparents." Unfortunately, it isn't. Right now it's a dead space.



So, we were thinking, "How could you use some of this space downtown to create a plaza - a true gathering space - to activate downtown and have enough room to put in a fountain, an ice skating rink, tables and chairs, events, etc.?"

We put together this image (top left). If you close off the streets in green to cars, and make it pedestrian-only, that would give plenty of room. Add a hotel and parking structure where the orange rectangle is.

I know many people would scream about closing off all of those streets, so what about closing off only this one (top right - green). This side street (bottom left) has very little traffic, and there are plenty of other routes cars can take. This would open up this whole area to become a plaza, and there are plenty of buildings for restaurants and shops. In fact, the one lonely coffee shop along here must struggle - it's kind of hidden away.

Right now this is pretty much just dead space, but turning it into a programmed plaza would help bring it back to life.



If this space (top left) in green were closed to cars and turned into a plaza, there would be room for a flush-mounted fountain area that could be turned into an ice-skating rink in the winter, room for exhibits and events, room for a stage with seating, and plenty of surrounding retail space for cafes with outdoor dining and specialty retail shops.

For example, Caldwell, Idaho, wanted to revitalize their downtown. The city bought this lot (brown, bottom left photo), and we suggested they close off the adjacent street (also in brown). This gives them enough space to create a plaza like the one shown in the drawing bottom right.



If Sioux City created a plaza similar to Caldwell, Idaho's, you could have street trees lining the edge in raised beds like these (top left). The borders for the raised beds are wide enough to provide seating for people.

You could have small kiosks for vendors during events and holidays (top right).

Restaurants on the plaza could have gorgeous outdoor dining during summer, like this (bottom left).

Downtown Disney in Anaheim has lots of raised beds with trees, and they are all surrounded by seating - they are built not just for appearance, but for people (bottom right). So often, downtown spaces are designed just to be attractive, but not to be enjoyed, to be comfortable, to be used by people, to be great gathering spaces.



Another great photo of Downtown Disney in Anaheim (top left) showing families using the seating around the planters.

This drawing (top right) shows another view of the plaza for Caldwell, Idaho. Another plaza concept for Whyte Avenue in Edmonton, Alberta is shown bottom left. The beauty of these is that the space can be used for many different purposes. The fountains are flush-mounted splash pads. They can be shut off to use the space for tables and chairs, for exhibits, etc. You could fill the space with chairs for performances on the stage. You could hold a “Taste

of Sioux City” event here, with portable food trucks, restaurants, and vendors selling their specialties. You could have art exhibits, demonstrations and classes, such as yoga (bottom right).

Wouldn't it be great if people came downtown after work, to see what is happening on the plaza?



66 What's your brand?
Your unique selling proposition?

67 Make a list of these, put together a team and start working on turning some of these into action items.

This is about bringing downtown Sioux City to life. What if you had a Convention Center hotel next to the Convention Center, across the street from the movie theater? (Drawing top right) The plaza could extend all the way across, with vendor booths, outdoor dining, a splash pad, stage, and lots of trees in large planters (top right). With programming, events, outdoor musicians and performers, and beautification, this plaza could add a real focus to downtown, giving residents and visitors a reason to spend time there, and bringing downtown to life.

There are 946 cities and towns in Iowa. What sets Sioux City apart from the

other 945? What is Sioux City's focus - what makes Sioux City different or better than them?

This Assessment is meant to be a conversation starter. Make a list of the suggestions in this report, discuss them, and see what you think would be best for Sioux City. Work on making some of these happen.

Sioux City is a fabulous town with a lot of great assets and beauty, and many fantastic, talented, hard-working people. We know you can achieve a lot and make your city even more successful and enjoyable for your residents, businesses, and visitors.



Sioux City, Iowa Marketing Assessment

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

Website: visitsiouxcity.org

- The home page, including the rotating banner at the top, focuses on local events. This isn't necessarily the best way to introduce potential visitors to the community, unless events are the main attraction.
- The inclusion of the calendar on the banner doesn't seem to serve a purpose. This space (the entire banner, including the rotating ads for events) should be used for professional photography that showcases the community.
- The website follows the convention of many visitor websites, which is "list marketing." Clicking on Attractions, for example, brings up a list. This does include a picture and brief description, as well as links to other websites for more information. The problem is, lists aren't effective marketing. The website needs to be aimed at closing the sale—convincing potential visitors to make a special trip. A list of possible activities or attractions does not do enough to close the sale.
- Place more emphasis on what makes Sioux City unique. What can people get/see/do there that they can't closer to home. Feature that prominently. There is plenty of space on a website to include information about other attractions and activities, but lead with what makes Sioux City special, rather than simply listing everything. Provide specifics.
- There could be a lot more photography on the website. High quality photography, particularly people having fun and experiencing what the community has to offer, is critical.
- Add itineraries to the website. These could be themed (History Buff, Girl's Weekend, Family Getaway, Romantic Weekend, etc.). Include specific activities, restaurants, etc.

Visit Sioux City brochure

- We're not sure what the photo on the cover is supposed to convey. It shows a bridge and a field with a lot of tents. It is colorful, but it's not doing anything to showcase what Sioux City has to offer. Is this an event? A market? A tent city?
- It is important to keep in mind the use and purpose of each marketing piece that is produced. The majority of people use websites for travel planning prior to the trip. But once people are at their destination, they often like to use brochures and printed pieces to help them navigate and make decisions.
- With this in mind, a printed brochure should give visitors key information that will help them navigate the area, find the best attractions, and showcase the best the community has to offer.
- The brochure should also be easy to handle – not too large. It doesn't need to include all possible information. It should have enough to help visitors navigate their way and make choices about what they'd like to see and do as they go.
- As we used the marketing materials to find attractions during our on-site assessment, we found that some attractions listed in the materials are no longer there, or they're not signed. Be sure to keep your materials up to date, so your visitors don't search for attractions that aren't there any more.
- We suggest you create a "Best Of Sioux City" guide with your very best attractions, restaurants, and shops. More information about this is provided in the body of this report.
- Also, create an "Activities Guide." This should provide visitor information arranged by "season" and then by "activity." Visitors coming in the winter should know what to expect, and what activities there are for them to do. Visitors in the summer will have a different experience, and you can promote different activities.
- Make sure you don't just promote everything you can think of. For

example, your convention center is not an "attraction." Neither is the transit system. The Sioux City Art Center IS an attraction. Think of what visitors can do – people are looking for activities to enjoy.

Other materials

- A large number of other printed materials were provided.
- In general, fewer marketing pieces are often more effective. One loud voice will be heard far better than numerous smaller ones. A "Best Of" brochure can help provide the individual focus each attraction wants, but in one single brochure piece.
- For rack cards, make sure you lead with the experience at the top, rather than the location. For example, if there was a rack card for rock climbing, the headline at the top should say "Rock Climbing" so that's what visitors see first. People are looking for experiences, not locations.
- For your economic development pieces, we suggest providing specifics with great photography. Photo montages on covers are usually not as effective as one or two stunning photographs. These pieces do give good, straightforward, specific information, but the layouts are too cluttered. Consider streamlining the designs, especially of the covers.
- We received a Sioux City map that opened into an enormous map with advertising. It was too large to be very useful - difficult to manage, and the paper was so heavy and coated that the folds tore after just a day of use. It must have been expensive to produce, and it is a beautiful piece, but it wasn't easy to use, so we didn't. We obtained a smaller Sioux City map brochure at the Visitor Information Center, and we found that one was easy to use and helpful.



Contact Information

Roger Brooks International, Inc.
24654 N. Lake Pleasant Pkwy
Suite 103-487
Peoria, AZ 85383
(206) 241-4770

Email: Becky@RogerBrooksTeam.com
www.RogerBrooksInternational.com

ROGER BROOKS >
International