

FOCUS 2020

Visitor Development Committee

Report to the Focus 2020 CAT • February 19, 2009

Following is a summation of the process followed by the Visitor Development Committee and is submitted to the Focus 2020 CAT committee for its consideration.

1. Finalized the Committee Objective and defined visitor. They are as follows:

- **Committee Objective:** *“To evaluate the economic opportunities and challenges of Visitor Development in the Mitchell area, and to recommend possible investments and/or actions to enhance Visitor Development.”*
- *A visitor is a person who resides outside of the city of Mitchell and who makes, or has a potential to make, an economic impact.*

2. Developed survey and letter for various organizations in the Mitchell Community.

- Sent 55 organizations a survey and letter.
- 22 organizations responded.

3. Developed questions as guidance for the speakers’ presentation. They were as follows:

- What is your organization doing to enhance Visitor Development?
- What can the Visitor Development Committee do to help your organization?
- Does your organization have the ability to expand?
- Whom does your organization turn to for funding/holding an event?

4. Scheduled the following speakers for presentations:

- **October 21, 2008**
 - Corn Palace Gift Shop: Dale & Barb Odegaard
 - Chamber City Beatification Committee: Jim Wold, Jan Quenzer, Karen Jorgenson
 - Corn Palace Convention & Visitors Bureau: Allison Thompson, Bryan Hisel
- **November 4, 2008**
 - Main Street & Beyond: Dave Brooks and Jeff Logan
- **November 11, 2008**
 - Dale Odegaard & Mark Schilling
- **November 25, 2008**
 - CVB & Visitor’s Center: Allison Thompson, Mary Lou Voigt
 - Pheasant Country: Brad Zimmerman
 - Extreme Cheerleading: Traci Loecker
- **December 9, 2008**
 - Mitchell Baseball Association: Dave Huber
- **December 16, 2008**
 - Mitchell Soccer Association: Denise Werner
- **January 6, 2009**
 - High School Activities Association: Curt Hart
- **January 13, 2009**
 - Mitchell School Activities Director: Geoff Gross
- **January 20, 2009**
 - Jim Johnston
- **February 3, 2009**
 - Prehistoric Indian Village Amphitheatre Project

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

VOLUNTEERISM:

FINDINGS:

1. The ability to host events is dependent on the strength of the respective associations and their underlying volunteers.
2. There is a lack of organized effort to promote community volunteerism
 - How are businesses encouraged to promote volunteerism amongst their employees?

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Organizations should be encouraged to develop and maintain a volunteer list.

CORN PALACE UTILIZATION:

FINDINGS:

1. There is a lack of clear coordination and accountability for utilization of Corn Palace as relates to tourism and events, including marketing, scheduling and adequacy of the facility.
2. The use of the Corn Palace for tourism attraction and event functions are not consistently compatible
3. It was reaffirmed that the Corn Palace is inadequate for major state events.
4. Tourism still matters.
5. The Corn Palace has not adapted to changing tourism tastes and travel.
6. The Corn Palace is an indispensable asset to the identity of the City of Mitchell.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Regardless of the outcome of an events center, an investment in the Corn Palace is essential IF it is to remain a part of Mitchell's identity, to include structural improvements and enhancing the tourism experience.
2. Separation of tourism and events activities may be advisable.
3. Separation of physical space between tourism and activities should be considered.

MAIN STREET:

FINDINGS:

1. Parking continues to be an obstacle to Main Street development.
2. Absentee ownership presents unique challenges to Main Street investment.
3. Corn Palace activities are beneficial to Main Street.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Main Street and Beyond is deserving of continued city support.

PREHISTORIC INDIAN VILLAGE AMPHITHEATRE PROJECT:

FINDINGS:

1. If tourism is to continue to play a role in Mitchell's economic future, we need to recognize that tourists are interested in the Native American culture.
2. The amphitheatre proposal presents an opportunity to expand Mitchell's tourism base and to further promote the Native American history and culture to travelers.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The committee for the development of the Amphitheatre project is deserving of continued consideration and support.

EVENTS COORDINATION:

FINDINGS:

1. There is a lack of community events coordination. Individual associations take sole responsibility for the solicitation, hosting and staffing of events.
2. The community is not represented as a whole when soliciting state/regional events
3. If the reward of an event to an association is not commensurate with the effort involved to host the event, there may not be incentive to promote the event

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Chamber of Commerce needs to re-assess its role in events coordination and management, and how it can best assist in resolving the above findings.
2. Consideration should be given to the establishment of an Events Authority
3. Although the City and Chamber attempt to maintain respective community calendars, greater effort is needed to maintain a more complete calendar of events. Such a calendar might promote increased community participation and volunteer effort.

WHAT IS AN EVENTS AUTHORITY:

An Events Authority could be established for the purpose of facilitating, coordinating and assisting with the solicitation, promotion and hosting of various community athletic and cultural events.

The Focus 2020 CAT should consider the feasibility of such an Authority and determine the proper structure and accountability for this authority. However, we believe it should have specific funding resources and should require paid staffing positions.

OTHER MATTER TO BE ADDRESSED—The community's effort to promote visitor development must also consider the impression the City leaves on the visitors. Specifically, how do our entrances, residential and commercial properties appear in the eyes of a new visitor?

Respectfully Submitted, Focus 2020 Visitor Development Committee

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Visitor Development Committee

Summary Statement—

Over a period of four months, the Visitor Development committee of Focus 2020 met on a weekly basis with the objective to “evaluate the economic opportunities and challenges of Visitor Development in the Mitchell area, and to recommend possible investments and/or actions to enhance Visitor Development.” Included in this effort was a survey to over 50 community organizations and personal interviews with 14 organizations and their representatives. Findings and recommendations will be forthcoming to the representatives of the Coordinating Assistance Team of Focus 2020.