



TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2028

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
ABOUT THE PROCESS	4
STRATEGIC GOALS	5
WHAT IS TOURISM/WHO IS A VISITOR	6
SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS	8
STRATEGY INPUT PROCESS	26
RECOMMENDATIONS	30
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	54
APPENDIX A- ADDITIONAL VISITOR DATA	58
APPENDIX B- TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS	64



INTRODUCTION



Tourism is a vital part of the Lewis County and the State of Washington economy. The current state of the tourism industry offers significant opportunity for continued growth and development. This Strategic Tourism Plan was created to identify the tools and investments needed to strengthen Lewis County's tourism industry while providing direction on how to engage new and traditional visitors to the area in ways that compliment and doesn't overwhelm the community.

The following recommendations, strategies, and tactics included in this plan will effectively guide the community on how to diversify, empower, and move tourism forward in Lewis County, enhancing this destination for visitors and residents for years to come.

Photos

*Cover: Lewis & Clark State Park, Mary's Corner
Page 2: Green Mountain Road Lookout, Alta Vista
Page 3: Elkcamp, Mineral*

ABOUT THE PROCESS

Situational Analysis

Understanding what and who makes up the County's tourism target markets is critical to the success of managing and developing tourism products, tourism marketing, and connecting the dots among the county's many assets.

Visitor Data Analysis
Stakeholder Survey
Competitive Analysis
Lewis County's Local Regional Context
Marketing & Branding Audit
Tourism Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, + Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Tourism Enhancement Recommendations

Using the results of the Situational Analysis & Assessment as a basis, the project team synthesized the input into detailed recommendations made to improve the following:

Product Development
Marketing & Promotions
Organization
Implementation Plan
Success Measures

STRATEGIC GOALS

Expand Tourism Offerings

Develop a vibrant array of tourism-related products and services that not only widen the range of experiences for visitors but also enrich the cultural fabric and quality of life for Lewis County's residents. By intertwining the interests and lifestyles of the local population with the offerings for tourists, we aim to foster a dynamic and sustainable relationship between tourism and community well-being.

Support Small Enterprises

Enrich the tourist experience by innovatively broadening the scope of tourism-related products and services, which in turn serves as a catalyst for fostering entrepreneurship and stimulating growth in the local small business sector. This approach will not only diversify the local economy but also promote a more resilient economic ecosystem that can adapt to changing tourist trends and demands.

Enhance Collaborative Efforts Among Tourism Entities

Forge stronger lines of communication and cooperation among the various organizations that champion tourism in Lewis County. By improving these channels, the aim is to create a more unified and effective approach to promoting Lewis County, streamlining efforts, and leveraging shared resources for maximum impact in the tourism sector.



WHAT IS TOURISM

For the purpose of this plan, tourism is defined as adopted by the World Tourism Organization:

“The activities of people traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business or other purposes for not more than one consecutive year.”

It should also be noted that all tourism should have some travel, however not all travel is tourism.

Tourism Products

Tourism products can include both tangible and intangible elements. These elements include activities, attractions, facilities, natural and cultural resources, and services. Typically, elements are either related to a specific interest or geographic area, and when combined create the overall visitor experience.

Tourism products include:

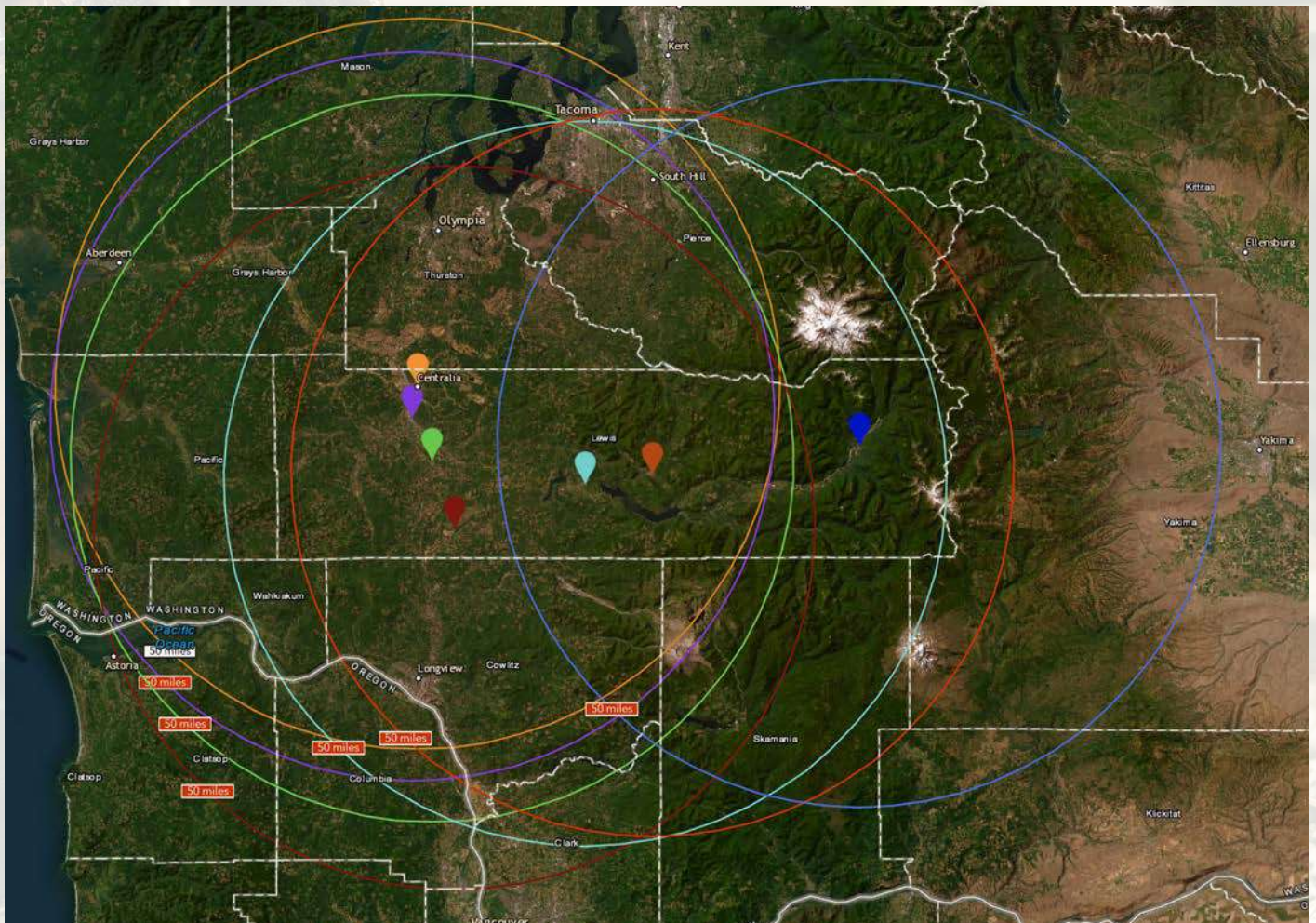
- Accommodations
- Hospitality services, including food and beverages
- Parks and trails
- Cultural attractions including museums and historical places
- Shopping
- Festivals and events including athletic tournaments
- Guided tours and tourist guides

WHO IS A VISITOR

The definition employed for visitors or travelers in this plan is:

“A person traveling to a place outside of his or her normal commuting pattern, for a period of 24 hours or more and/or traveling 50 miles or more, for the primary purpose of leisure whether for recreation, health, sport, holiday or religion.”

Lewis County's sheer size presents the situation where one doesn't have to necessarily need to leave the county to be considered a visitor. The map below shows the 50-mile radius for the communities of Centralia (orange), Chehalis (purple), Napavine (green), Toledo (red), Mossyrock (light blue), Morton (dark orange), and Packwood (blue.) In the case of Lewis County, who a visitor is depends on where specifically you are in the county.



SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

*Mineral Lake,
Mineral Lake Lions Den Campgrounds, Mineral*

LEWIS COUNTY, WA



85,370
Population



2,436 sq mi
Size



1,944
Full-Time
Businesses

3,943
Part-Time
Businesses



535,000+
Acres of Public Land



33 sq mi
of Water



80
Public trails, totaling almost
670mi

COMMUNITIES

Winlock
Vader
Toldeo
Salkum
Randle
Pe Ell
Packwood
Onalaska
Napavine
Mossyrock
Morton
Mineral
Glenoma
Evaline
Ethel
Doty
Dryad
Chehalis
Centralia
Boistfort
Adna





VISITOR DATA

Overview

To better understand visitors within the county, three primary areas were created using geofencing technology. For the purposes of this report, these areas, shown below, are referred to as North, West, and East. The North area encompasses primarily Centralia and Chehalis and stops along I-5 short of US-12. The West area encompasses the I-5 corridor from just north of US-12 to the county line and includes communities such as Toledo, Onalaska, Napavine and Salkum. The East area runs along US-12 from Mossyrock to Packwood. The data captured runs from July 1, 2021 to July 31, 2023.

A full breakdown of visitor data information, including zip code origination, household income, ethnic diversity, and gender is available in Appendix A.

Please note: the geofence areas are labeled (East, North, West) for internal identification only and in no way is it meant to market these areas by said labels.

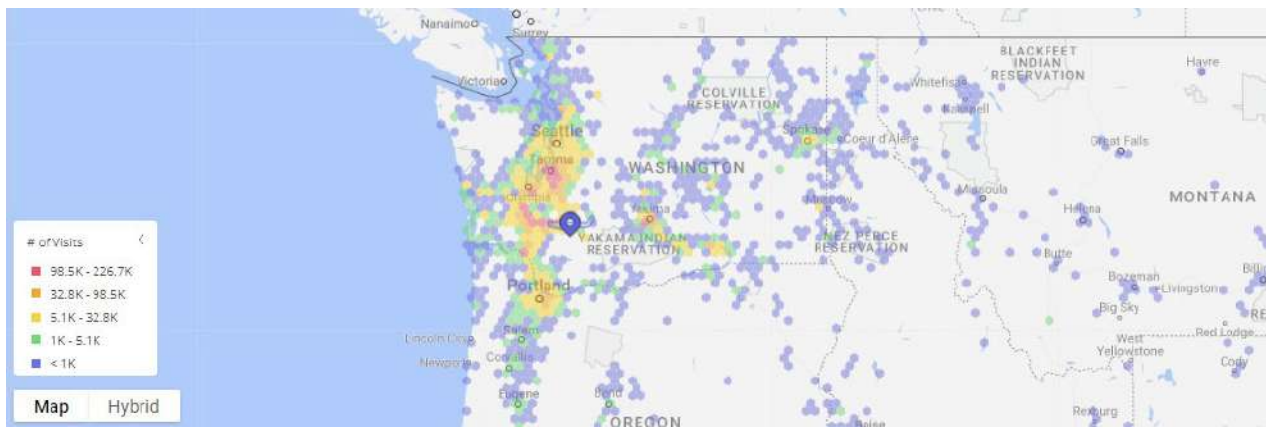
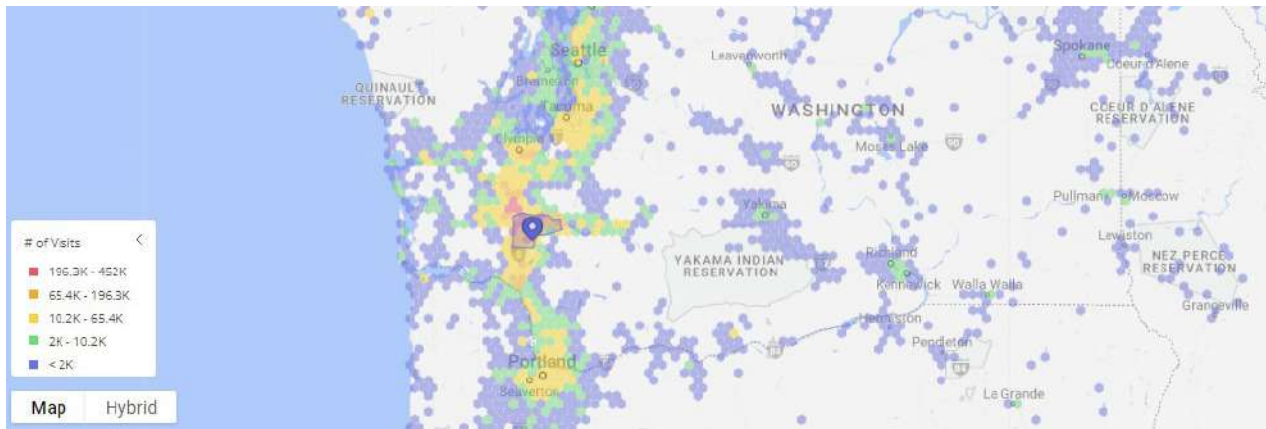
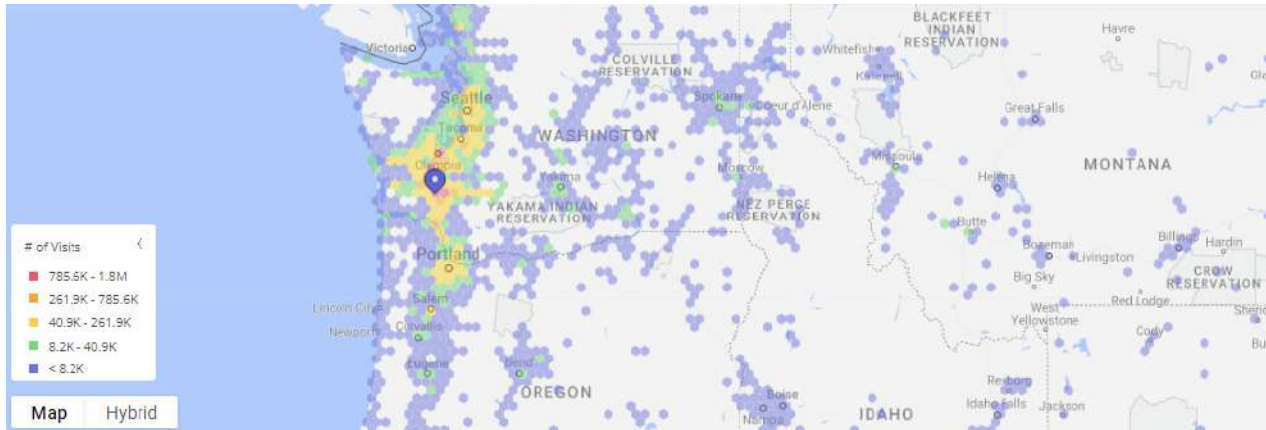


Area	Total Visitors	Unique Visitors	Avg Visits Per Visitor
North	28,900,000	2,300,000	12.36
West	20,200,000	1,400,000	13.97
East	6,100,000	739,800	8.22

VISITOR DATA

Visitor Origination

The maps below show the origin points of visitors for the time frame analyzed.



While volumes differ between the three areas, there are similarities in visitor patterns. There appears to be a cyclical pattern to visitor activity, centering on July and August, key summer months for tourism. This cycle is more pronounced in the East area with a larger differentiation off-season months and summer.

VISITOR DATA

Key Takeaways

Visitors to Lewis County are often:

- More affluent, with household incomes above the average for the County
- More ethnically diverse than the demographics of the County, with a significant positive increase in the Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander category, followed by individuals who identify as black
- Slightly more female than male
- Less likely to be from Seattle or Portland, and more likely to be from Olympia, Tacoma, Yakima, or closer and skews more from the north than the south



Mint City Coffee Roasting, Chehalis

TARGET DEMOGRAPHICS

Based on the existing demographics of those currently visiting Lewis County, a series of potential target audiences emerge using a tool called market segmentation. Market segmentation is the process of dividing a market of potential customers into groups, or segments, based on different characteristics. The segments created are composed of consumers who will respond similarly to marketing strategies and who share traits such as similar interests, needs, or locations.

Using a market segmentation tool called Mosaic, our team has identified the top five groups Lewis County should focus on as visitors.

	% of North Visitors	% of West Visitors	% of East Visitors
Booming with Confidence	14.4%	14%	13.4%
Power Elite	11.8%	11.6%	10.7%
Singles and Starters	10.5%	10.7%	11.1%
Flourishing Families	9.8%	9.8%	9.5%
Bourgeois Melting Pot	6.6%	6.5%	6.5%

Booming with Confidence



Key Marketing Channels:

- Email
- Social Media

Characteristics:

- Environmental philanthropists
- Savvy investors
- Upscale housing
- Affluent
- Highly educated

Booming with Confidence represents married couples in their peak earning years, often with dual incomes and few children, living in fashionable homes in quiet, suburban or city neighborhoods, mostly located in the West and Northeast. These homes, valued over \$350,000, are in areas they've inhabited for over 15 years, with many housing young adults. Earning six-figure incomes, they are well-established in white-collar jobs and enjoy a cultured lifestyle, underscored by their college education and international travel. Their sophisticated tastes reflect in their leisure activities, including attending cultural events, frequenting museums and antique shops, and traveling internationally. At home, they indulge in reading various magazines and enjoy classic, comfortable fashions and mid-range vehicles. While not early technology adopters, they appreciate modern home appliances. Their media consumption balances between traditional print, TV, particularly cable sitcoms and reality shows, and digital media.

TARGET DEMOGRAPHICS

Power Elite



Key Marketing Channels:

- Email
- Social Media
- TV (earned media recommended)

Characteristics:

- Charitable giving
- Well-invested
- Politically conservative
- Highly educated
- Active and fit

The Power Elite, America's wealthiest group, encompasses six types of affluent households predominantly residing in the nation's most exclusive areas. Typically middle-aged or older, many are highly-educated professionals like lawyers, doctors, and corporate leaders. They often reside in luxurious properties in prestigious locations, ranging from Beverly Hills to Old Greenwich, with many homes valued over a million dollars. With over half holding college degrees, these white-collar professionals and entrepreneurs, often dual-earners, enjoy high incomes, with over a third earning above \$250,000 annually and having the highest discretionary spends in the US. They indulge in regal lifestyles, actively participating in philanthropy, arts, and leisure activities, from attending cultural events to engaging in golf, swimming, and tennis. As leading consumers of luxury goods and latest technologies, they shop extensively online and in high-end stores. Globally traveled, they often visit exotic locations in style.

Singles and Starters



Key Marketing Channels:

- Social Media
- Streaming Media

Characteristics:

- Foodies
- Single adults
- Rental housing
- Technologically savvy

Singles and Starters encapsulate young, unattached Generation Y individuals, predominantly under 35, residing in small cities across the U.S., with many being single or single-parents. These aspiring professionals, either college-educated or pursuing degrees, are kickstarting their careers in entry-level positions. They live in affordable apartments in vibrant college-town-like neighborhoods, with most residing in their current homes for less than three years. Their active lifestyle includes frequenting bars, nightclubs, and enjoying outdoor sports, while also engaging in hobbies like painting and cooking at home. Fashion-conscious, they shop for affordable designer labels and are keen on modern electronics and technology, making them prime targets for related marketers. Digital natives, they predominantly consume media and entertainment online, including streaming TV and music, and are highly active on the internet for shopping, socializing, and professional advancement.

TARGET DEMOGRAPHICS

Flourishing Families



Key Marketing Channels:

- Email
- Social Media
- Streaming Media

Characteristics:

- Family-oriented activities
- Saving for college
- Athletic activities
- Charitable contributors
- Affluent

Flourishing Families, primarily married, college-educated adults in their late 30s to 50s with children of all ages, enjoy suburban comfort across U.S. cities like New York and San Francisco. Living in spacious homes valued over \$300,000, these families have achieved financial stability, often with dual earners in management, law, education, and technical professions, supporting a car-dependent lifestyle with a preference for SUVs, CUVs, and hybrids. Their leisure revolves around family-centric activities, from sports like hiking and cycling to vacations in Hawaii and the Bahamas, alongside hobbies like gardening and reading e-books. A prime market for toys, digital games, and bargain shopping at stores like Kohl's and Costco, they lean towards online shopping for convenience. While traditional media engagement is low, they are active internet users for information and entertainment, receptive to ads on streaming TV, mobile, and social media platforms.

Bourgeois Melting Pot



Key Marketing Channels:

- TV (earned media recommended)
- Social Media
- Streaming Media

Characteristics:

- Married
- Suburban living
- Blue collar
- Comfortable spending
- Multi-cultural

The Bourgeois Melting Pot demographic, mostly middle-aged, married couples without children, resides in suburban neighborhoods in older homes built between 1950 and 1990, often on quarter-acre lots. These residents, having moved within the last nine years, enjoy stable, tree-lined neighborhoods with a mix of imported SUVs and pickups. With average educational backgrounds, they've carved out middle-class incomes through skilled blue-collar, sales, and office jobs, though they face concerns about maintaining their lifestyle and retirement security. Their unpretentious, low-stress lifestyles include hobbies like gardening, cooking, and casual outings to bowling alleys or restaurants, along with light gym workouts. As consumers, they favor brick-and-mortar stores for mainstream brands and are growing into savvy online shoppers, often seeking discounts. While they enjoy sitcoms on TV and a variety of music, their attention is increasingly drawn to online brand learning and shopping, making them receptive to streaming TV and mobile display ads.

KEY REGIONAL ASSETS

Overview

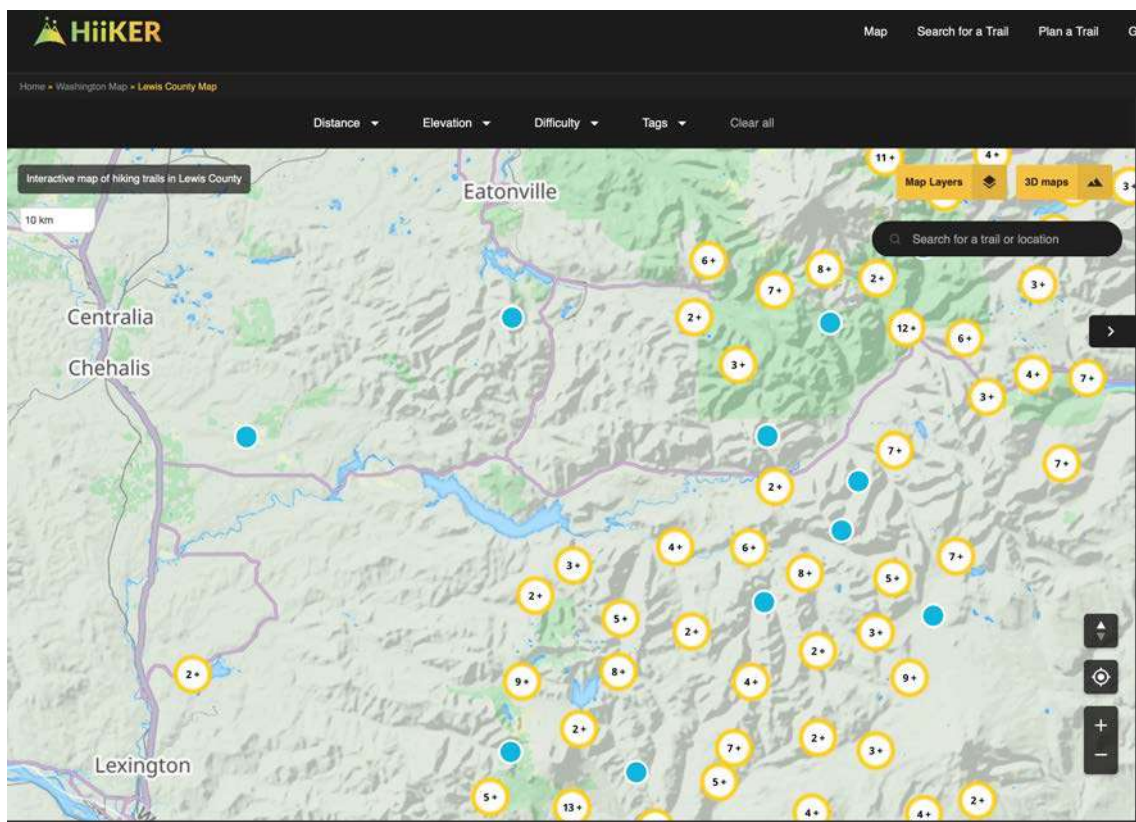
Lewis County is fortunate to have numerous assets that both contribute to a high quality of life for residents and are attractive to visitors. These assets should be further leveraged and enhanced to make the community more attractive.

There are seven categories of assets that are the most influential in creating a high quality of life for residents and attractive to visitors. These categories are:

- Hiking Trails
- Parks
- Lakes and Rivers
- Venues
- Downtowns
- Unique Retail Businesses & Attractions
- Restaurants
- Festivals and Events

Hiking Trails

With 80 hiking trails totaling more almost 680 miles, Lewis County is haven for hikers in a region known for the outdoors. With numerous trails in the shadows of Mount Rainer and Mount St. Helens, these trails attract tens of thousands of visitors per year to the county as well as provides residents with an incredible amenity taking advantage of the natural beauty of the area.



The hiking community is aware of Lewis County and the numerous trails that are here. However, continuing to keep the area top of mind is a key marketing challenge.

KEY REGIONAL ASSETS

Parks

Parks play a crucial role in tourism, contributing to the overall visitor experience. From well-known state parks to picturesque day parks, the diverse parks throughout Lewis County feature stunning landscapes, diverse ecosystems, and natural beauty all while offering a variety of recreational activities. These green spaces allow visitors to engage in activities they may not have access to in urban environments, while appreciating the scenic views and the history of an area.



Rose Park, Lewis County



Swofford Pond, Lewis County

Lakes and Rivers

The natural environment of Lewis County offers many opportunities for visitors, and residents alike, to get on the water for recreational activities. Boating, fishing, kayaking are all healthy and enjoyable experiences to be had. Many lakes and rivers are prime locations for wildlife encounters and bird watching, and can serve as inspiration for photographers, artists and other creatives.

Venues

Having the spaces for people to gather is critically important to attracting visitors. Lewis County has several potential venues for a number of activities. Most prominent is the Northwest Sports Hub, which includes a flexible, open span arena that holds 8 full size basketball courts, or 14 volleyball courts on the hard surface base. The state-of-the-art synthetic turf surface is large enough to host full size softball and Little League games or two full size indoor soccer fields. This turf can also accommodate arena football, lacrosse, arena softball, and more. Included in the outdoor complex are six full size baseball fields, two Little League fields, eight softball fields, six tennis courts, four full-size soccer fields, and a turf football/soccer/track stadium with seating for 3,500 people.



Northwest Sports Hub, Centralia

KEY REGIONAL ASSETS

Downtowns

The hub of community activity, downtowns are often rich in culture and history, architecture, art, and museums along with a diverse range of shopping and dining experiences, all in a condensed area that is highly walkable. These are also areas where a diverse mix of people are present, and visitors can sense the energy of the community. Downtowns come in many different sizes and Lewis County is no different. These include the downtown areas in: Packwood, Winrock, Vader, Napavine, Morton, Mossyrock, Toledo, Chehalis, and Centralia. These are the main areas where community and visitor infrastructure is already present and could be further enhanced. They are also the place where many of the assets listed in this section are located.



Downtown Morton



Olympic Club, Centralia

Restaurants

Restaurants often reflect the cultural identity of a region allowing visitors the opportunity to explore and appreciate the local culture through the food, ambiance, and hospitality. Whether a farm-to-table restaurant like Jeremy's in Chehalis, a coffeehouse like Rivers Coffeehouse & Bistro in Morton, or a local brewery like Longmire Springs Brewery in Packwood, they all contribute to an authentic visitor experience. Restaurants also serve as social hubs for both locals and tourists. Providing space for people to gather, share experiences, and interact. This social aspect enhances the overall atmosphere of a destination, making it more attractive to tourists seeking vibrant and welcoming environments.

KEY REGIONAL ASSETS

Unique Retail Businesses & Attractions

One-of-a-kind type shops offer something different, an opportunity to break from the ordinary and a chance to discover something new. Typically located in downtowns, these unique shops tend to showcase local or artisanal products, and have an emphasis on craftsmanship. Visitors are drawn to these types of shops to learn more not only about the area but the people of the community and its history. Lewis County is also home to many unique and historic attractions. Visitors can step back in time with the Chehalis-Centralia Railroad and Museum, visit the oldest operating Catholic Church in Washington-St. Francis Xavier Mission was established in December 1838, or even see more than 70 unique tractors at the King Agriculture Museum. These types of authentic experiences allow visitors to further enhance their understanding of the county.



Chehalis



Toledo Cheese Days, Toledo

Festivals and Events

Festivals and events are significant drivers of tourism and economic activity. Showcasing culture, traditions, or talents local festivals create a sense of community and celebration. Whether tied to a season or holiday, like SummerFest, an activity like the granddaddy of logging shows, the Morton Loggers Jubilee, or food like the Mossyrock Blueberry Festival, events offer visitors an opportunity to experience the unique traits of a community. In addition, these festivals and events often allow the visitor to engage with the community, learn about traditions within the community, and participate.

STRATEGY INPUT PROCESS



STRATEGY INPUT PROCESS

Tourism has a tremendous impact on Lewis County. From outdoor recreation to youth sports to festivals and events, the community relies on tourism to help fuel the local economy. Because this impact is so large, it was important for our team to get input on the strategy from a broad number of people representing a wide variety of areas from the community. In total, this plan sought the input of almost 500 stakeholders, including council members, city staff, small business owners, residents, and community volunteers.

These stakeholders were engaged through a variety of methods including one-on-one interviews, community round tables, community open houses, and an online survey.

One-on-One Interviews

Several times during our input process, our team conducted one-on-one interviews with stakeholders. These individuals were typically people who could not attend the round tables or community open houses, but whose perspective was important for our team to hear.

Community Meetings and Round Tables

Meetings were held with key stakeholders and the general public in several communities. These included meetings in Packwood, Morton, Mossyrock, Toledo, Onalaska, Centralia, and Chehalis.

Online Survey

Recognizing the need for broad community input and also recognizing not everyone may be able to attend a singular public meeting, an online survey was conducted to further gain insight from the public on their opinions regarding tourism.

Participant Numbers At-A-Glance



376
Online Survey
Responses



500+
Miles Driven
across
Lewis County



12
Communities
Toured



5
Community
Round Tables



2
Open House
Community
Meetings

STRATEGY INPUT PROCESS

About the Online Survey

An online survey ran from July to September of 2023, and gathered input from 376 residents, business owners, and visitors in Lewis County. The 20-question survey asked participants about their values and priorities for tourism in Lewis County, which destinations and events they participate in, how they would rate existing offerings, and concerns and hopes for the future.

Resident and Business Owner Tourism Concerns

When asked about any concerns regarding tourism in Lewis County, county residents most commonly cited issues related to having an influx of people in the community. Residents stated that infrastructure improvements are needed to be able to meet the needs of both locals and visitors, and they were concerned about overcrowding, traffic, and having adequate parking. Homelessness and substance abuse in the community was also a top concern among residents. Residents also expressed a desire to protect the county's natural resources, maintain a small-town feel, and encourage proper etiquette among visitors.

Business owners noted the need to enhance and coordinate promotion across businesses so that visitors are more aware of everything Lewis County has to offer. Business owners also expressed concern about being able to find reliable staff and staff being able to find affordable housing. Similar to residents, Lewis County business owners were also concerned about the ability of the county's infrastructure to handle an influx of tourists. Respondents mentioned needed improvements in roadways, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, signage, and internet.

Visitor Stay

Visitors to Lewis County were asked about their length of stay and what types of accommodations they were staying in. The majority of survey respondents were taking a day trip or staying overnight with friends or family. Only 22% stayed overnight at lodging in Lewis County including 10% in a hotel, motel, or lodge, 7% in a campground, and 5% in a short term rental.

Events, Sites, and Destinations

Survey participants were asked to select which Lewis County events and destinations they have visited in the past year. The top event was the Southwest Washington Fair, followed by the Centralia Lighted Tractor Parade, Packwood Flea Market, and Morton Loggers Jubilee. Three quarters of survey respondents reported visiting a state park or forest in the past year. The top outdoor destinations cited by respondents were Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Mayfield Lake, Mount Rainier National Park, White Pass Scenic Byway, Cowlitz River and Chehalis River.

Participants were asked which sites, resources, and events were most important to them. While many of the responses mirrored the results above, there was a really wide array of responses. The number of diverse responses is indicative of how much Lewis County has to offer in terms of natural resources, events, and destinations.

Community Values

When asked about the values most important to them, respondents focused on two key areas: access to nature and community. Values mentioned include natural beauty, small-town feel, cleanliness, inclusiveness, preservation, outdoor recreation, and family.

STRATEGY INPUT PROCESS

Amenities

When asked about the importance of various amenities, respondents rated trash bins and public restrooms highest. This response relates back to concern about protecting the natural environment, encouraging proper visitor etiquette, and having the necessary infrastructure to support visitor traffic.

Hiking trails and amenities related to hiking trails (trail signage, parking at trailheads, historical and interpretive signage, and posted regulations) were also given high importance.

For more information, see the detailed survey findings located in Appendix B.

Key Takeaways

- Residents in Lewis County expressed concerns over infrastructure issues like overcrowding, traffic, and parking, as well as homelessness and substance abuse, emphasizing the importance of preserving natural resources and the small-town atmosphere.
- Business owners highlighted the need for enhanced promotion, staff availability, affordable housing for staff, and upgrades to roadways, pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure, signage, and internet services.
- Most visitors to Lewis County were on day trips or staying overnight with friends or family. Only 22% used local lodging options, including hotels, campgrounds, and short term rentals.
- The most visited events included the Southwest Washington Fair, Centralia Lighted Tractor Parade, Packwood Flea Market, and Morton Loggers Jubilee.
- Top outdoor destinations were Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Mayfield Lake, Mount Rainier National Park, White Pass Scenic Byway, and the Cowlitz and Chehalis Rivers.
- Survey respondents prioritized access to nature and community values such as natural beauty, a small-town feel, cleanliness, inclusivity, preservation, outdoor recreation, and family.
- High importance was placed on trash bins and public restrooms, reflecting concerns about environmental protection and visitor etiquette. Hiking-related amenities (trail signage, parking at trailheads, historical/interpretive signage, and posted regulations) were also valued.
- The wide array of responses to the survey's questions on preferred sites, resources, and events indicates Lewis County's rich variety in natural resources, events, and destinations.

STRENGTHS

- World class beauty and natural resources
- Easy access to metropolitan markets in the PNW
- Wide array of visitor activities across the county
- Access to Mount Rainier, Mount St. Helens
- White Pass Scenic Byway
- Charming cities, towns, and communities
- Recreation and Sports Tourism
- Fresh opportunity to re-examine tourism as economic development

WEAKNESSES

- Development pressure in Eastern Lewis County without adequate infrastructure
- Overall growth pressure throughout the county creates a housing crunch
- Housing v. Short Term Rental challenges in Eastern Lewis County
- Lack of workforce/losing young talent
- Need for greater variety of lodging
- "Pass through" to get to other destinations
- Inconsistent perception on value or desire for tourism

OPPORTUNITIES

- Better connect regions within the county
- Enhance accommodations options
- Better communicate the role of tourism in the local economy
- Create a baseline analysis to evaluate progress of tourism within the county
- Enhance communities for residents that will also be attractive to visitors
- Curate experiences to manage expectations locally and for the visitor
- Develop more entrepreneurial businesses throughout the county

THREATS

- Profound regional growth and change
- National housing crisis and acute needs in Lewis County thwarting efforts to pursue sound planning
- Unwillingness to embrace incremental changes to create more tourism product
- Aging infrastructure failing
- Natural disasters

RECOMMENDATIONS



Roxy Theater, Morton

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Discover Lewis County are classified under three main categories:

- Product Development
- Marketing & Promotion
- Organization

Product Development

The following recommendations are aimed at improving the physical assets and programming that attract visitors to Lewis County.

Downtown Redevelopment

Downtowns across Lewis County were specifically identified as critical assets during the interview process and in the survey data for this plan. Residents indicated that downtown planning and revitalization efforts must be a continued vehicle to enhance communities for residents thus making them more appealing for visitors as well.

Whether it was thriving Main Street programs in Chehalis and Centralia to community-based efforts in smaller incorporated communities such as Winlock, Toledo, Morton, Mossyrock, Napavine and Vader, or community investment in unincorporated places like Mineral, Randle, and Packwood residents felt strong sentiment toward community vitality, local events, and the ability to enhance entrepreneurial businesses in traditional commercial districts. The importance of leveraging the unique character of each community creates authentic and appealing experiences for visitors.



Revitalization efforts for communities can range from simple improvements to small areas to larger master planning efforts. The communities should be planned first for the local and regional resident and consequently be appealing places for the visitor. Historic downtowns that appeal to locals often attract visitors for several reasons:

Authenticity and Character- The downtowns of Lewis County boast unique architectural styles, preserving the charm and character of a bygone era. Visitors are drawn to the authenticity and sense of history that these areas provide.

Cultural and Historical Significance- Most of the historic downtowns in Lewis County are home to landmarks, museums, and sites of cultural or historical significance. Visitors, as well as locals, are often interested in exploring these places to learn more about the community's past.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Local Businesses and Shops-Locally-owned businesses, boutique shops, and artisanal stores offer economic development opportunities for entrepreneurs while attracting locals and visitors.

Community Events and Festivals- Lewis County's downtowns are the focal point for community events, parades, and festivals. Visitors are drawn to the vibrant atmosphere and the chance to experience local culture and traditions.

Walkability and Pedestrian-Friendly Atmosphere- Many historic downtowns are designed with pedestrian-friendly streets and sidewalks. The walkability factor contributes to a more relaxed and enjoyable experience for visitors who can leisurely stroll and explore.

Dining and Culinary Experiences- Across Lewis County, the downtowns feature a diverse array of restaurants, cafes, and eateries. Visitors are enticed by the opportunity to sample local cuisine and experience the culinary offerings that reflect the region's culture.

Civic Engagement and Community Spaces- For local residents, historic downtowns are hubs for civic engagement with town halls, community centers, and public spaces.

Examples shown here are from downtown planning efforts in Cle Elum, Washington where the community continues to plan for its own residents while curating an increasing visitor market. These plans were crafted to show small pocket parks, façade improvements to buildings, and opportunities for infill development on vacant sites.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider Mobility Hubs At Key Locations in Lewis County

The central concept of a “mobility hub” is to move people. Mobility hubs are places of connectivity where different modes of travel including walking, biking, transit, and shared mobility seamlessly converge. These hubs could be used as “expanded kiosks” or “information centers” where visitors can learn about the community, engage in multi-modal transportation options, get access to high-speed internet, charge electric vehicles, and enjoy park and picnic spaces.

Mobility hubs aim to streamline and improve the overall transportation experience for users, providing a seamless transition between different modes of transport. They often feature amenities like real-time transit and tourism information, ticketing services, bike racks, and charging stations for electric vehicles. The goal of a mobility hub is to create a more sustainable, efficient, and interconnected transportation network. For Lewis County these hubs could be a way to create destinations in the various commercial districts and downtowns while connecting visitor information with communities.

As grant funding for mobility hubs increases along with the use of electric vehicles, Lewis County can leverage this funding to provide real time visitor information about parking, routing, road closures, events, local shopping and dining, and other visitor guides in a shared location with locals who might use the same space for high speed wifi access, transit, and park space.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Explore a Wayfinding System and Plan

A good wayfinding system plays an important role in the perception and experience of any community. Clear and straightforward wayfinding guides both vehicles and pedestrians through a community, directs visitors to key destinations, and curates the visitor experience. Well-designed signs and markers help people easily find parking areas, entrances, and key locations.

Investing in straightforward vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding is a fundamental aspect of successful visitor curation, its place brand, and the flow of how visitors are directed to downtown and community attractions. The components of the wayfinding system include the following:

Primary Gateways- Gateway signs create a sense of arrival and help establish the community's identity. These highly visible gateway signs should be placed along the main entry ways into a destination. In Lewis County a solid foundation for signage is displayed with the stacked stone and clean designs for the White Pass Scenic Byway. These signs could be emulated in other locations at a smaller scale where appropriate.



Trailblazers- Trailblazers are the directional signs leading motorists to the main destinations and attractions in the area. These should have a maximum of three locations per sign and transition motorists from gateways to parking resources. Colors can be used to distinguish between different districts where they exist. Signs should become smaller as traffic speeds slow and the scale of the roadway narrows.

Street Banners- Banners are very popular and help add color and consistency to the lanes of travel, often acting as a traffic calming device. They too can be color coded by district and can promote local events, as well as promoting the brand, and in some instances, sponsors. These would likely be installed in downtowns and commercial districts in Lewis County.



Parking Signage- Well-signed parking resources are an important component to a cohesive, functional wayfinding system. Visitors are more likely to walk a block or two to shop if the signage system leads them directly to a public parking lot and tell them how to proceed. The parking markers can be stand-alone monuments or attached to existing poles or trailblazer signs.

Pedestrian Signage- Orienting visitors once they have transitioned from motorists to pedestrians is the final step in a comprehensive wayfinding system. These signs should be visible from the prominent parking resources and located along busy sidewalks at relevant intersections. This could include information kiosks that help a visitor get oriented, inform them of rules and usage regulations, and contextualize a location.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conduct Retail Gap Analyses for Lewis County Communities

Retail gap analysis is a method used to assess the difference between the demand for certain retail goods and services in a specific area and the existing supply. It involves comparing the retail offerings in a community to the potential demand based on demographic and economic factors. Understanding retail gaps is crucial for communities. For Lewis County this would be a way to identify gaps in the market that could be filled by entrepreneurs in communities across the county both large and small.

In Lewis County, conducting a retail gap analysis can help identify areas where there may be an undersupply of certain goods or services, leading to residents having to travel elsewhere for their shopping needs. This information is vital for local economic development and planning, as it can inform decisions on attracting new businesses or expanding existing ones to better serve the community. The size of the county warrants that several of these studies be conducted to identify needs in larger cities like Chehalis and Centralia to smaller communities like Morton, Mossyrock, Mineral, and Toledo.

By understanding the retail gaps, community leaders and businesses in each community can work collaboratively to address these deficiencies, enhance the local economy, and improve residents' access to essential goods and services. While focused on the local market a retail gap analysis can be beneficial for visitors as well by:

Understanding Tourist Preferences- To gain insights into the types of goods and services that visitors may be looking for. This helps in tailoring the retail offerings to match the preferences and expectations of the tourist demographic.

Enhancing the Visitor Experience- Addressing retail gaps ensures that visitors have access to the products and services they desire during their stay. This positively impacts the overall visitor experience, encourages longer stays, repeat visits, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Local Economic Growth- Filling retail gaps in visitor-oriented markets can contribute to local economic growth by attracting more tourists and encouraging spending within the community. This, in turn, supports job creation and stimulates the local economy.

Diversification of Offerings- Retail gap analysis helps communities diversify their retail offerings to appeal to a broader range of visitors. Whether it's unique local products, cultural experiences, or specialized services, addressing gaps ensures a more comprehensive and attractive market for tourists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Additional Accommodations

One of the major concerns that emerged through the survey is the pressure for accommodations in Lewis County. This pressure creates different issues in the eastern and western portions of the county.

In eastern Lewis County the Covid pandemic and the increasing trend of converting housing into short term rentals has created acute issues in the housing market in this portion of the county. While in Centralia particularly, three aging hotels have closed decreasing room capacity.

This recommendation emphasizes the importance of expanding the scope of accommodations, from curated branded hotels to unique inns and alternative lodging options throughout the county.

Accommodation Diversity- To alleviate pressure on converting existing housing stock to transient housing, a multifaceted approach to accommodations is recommended. Curated branded hotels, with standardized amenities and services, can cater to visitors seeking a familiar and reliable experience. Simultaneously, encouraging the development of unique inns and boutique lodgings enhances the region's appeal to those seeking a more personalized and distinctive stay.

Alternative Lodging Option- To further diversify the accommodations landscape, the strategy should explore alternative lodging options. This may include promoting the development of eco-friendly lodges, glamping sites, and grouped vacation rental clusters. By strategically branding certain areas as hubs for specific types of accommodations, such as wellness retreats, adventure lodges, or historic inns, Lewis County can create a niche appeal that attracts a diverse range of tourists. These can cluster in downtowns in Eastern Lewis County. These alternative options not only offer unique experiences but also minimize the strain on residential housing, allowing locals to maintain their living spaces while catering to the growing tourism influx.

Strategic Partnerships and Branding- In Centralia and Chehalis a strong collaboration with established hotel developers and known branded hotel chains can reinvigorate the hotel market with a mix of new flagged properties that appeal to the modern traveler.

Preserving Community Identity- It is important to consider that the development of accommodations aligns with the Lewis County's identity and values. Design guidelines and zoning regulations should be established to maintain architectural integrity and preserve the natural beauty of the region.

Curated branded hotels to unique inns and alternative lodging, a diverse range of accommodations will not only enhance the visitor experience but also contribute to the sustainable growth of tourism in the region. This approach ensures that Lewis County remains an attractive destination while respecting the residential fabric that makes it unique.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Create A Guide Program For Lewis County

The community survey for the county indicated a desire for curated experiences for visitors to Lewis County. Residents also wanted to maintain the character of the outdoor experience and communities of the county. This presents an opportunity to create a guide program for young people, active empty nesters, and entrepreneurs in Lewis County to provide services to visitors.

Creating a guide program for tourism in Lewis County, Washington, can provide valuable opportunities to enhance the visitor experience and promote the region. Here are some potential opportunities:

Guided Tours- Develop guided tours for key attractions and points of interest in Lewis County. Locally certified guides can lead tours that showcase the area's natural beauty, historical sites, and unique cultural offerings, providing visitors with in-depth insights and a more engaging experience.

Local Culture and Cuisine Guides- Guide programs could focus on promoting local culture and cuisine. Guides could curate experiences for visitors with cultural events, art exhibitions, or food tours, sharing the distinct flavors and traditions of Lewis County. Themed tours such as the railroad history of Lewis County could be a way to engage partners and connect attractions.

Outdoor Adventure Guides- Lewis County's natural landscapes offer opportunities for outdoor adventures. Establish a guide program for activities like hiking, bird watching, or fishing. Certified guides can ensure the safety and enjoyment of participants while highlighting the region's remarkable landscape.



Guide Program Partnerships- A guide program could partner with local businesses or non-profit groups to integrate guide services into their offerings. Discover Lewis County should explore partnerships with local schools and colleges to create training programs for individuals interested in becoming tourism. This can include training on local history, hospitality, customer service, and sustainable tourism practices.

By strategically implementing a guide program, Discover Lewis County can both enhance the visitor experience while fostering a sense of community pride ultimately contributing to the economic growth of the region.

An excellent example of a guide program is in Wyoming where guides play a vital role in facilitating immersive experiences for visitors keen on exploring the state's diverse landscapes. The Wyoming Outfitters and Guides Association (WYOGA) has been instrumental in shaping and upholding the standards of guided adventures. With a focus on outdoor recreation, WYOGA represents a network of skilled guides who lead visitors through the state's natural wonders. These guides, certified by the association, offer a range of experiences, from guided hikes and wildlife excursions to fishing trips and backcountry adventures. WYOGA ensures that these contemporary guides are well-trained, knowledgeable about safety protocols, and equipped to provide visitors with not only thrilling experiences but also a deep understanding of Wyoming's unique environment. As a result, contemporary guides and the WYOGA contribute significantly to Wyoming's tourism industry. The statewide program has local affiliates that focus on countywide guide programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Marketing & Promotions

The following recommendations are geared toward improving the marketing and promotion activities of Discover Lewis County.

Continued Social Media and Website Presence

Discover Lewis County has established itself online and via social media, using Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube content, images, and video for storytelling. To continue to build on the framework that has been established consider developing the following:

Content Strategy- Develop a compelling content strategy that focuses on the many and diverse stories of Lewis County. Share captivating narratives about the destination, the culture, history, and unique experiences a visitor can have. Use a mix of visuals, including high-quality photos and videos, to engage the audience. Encourage user-generated content by running contests or campaigns that encourage visitors to share their own experiences. By weaving this narrative around Lewis County an emotional connection will be built with the audience, making them more likely to engage with and share the content.

Interactive Campaigns and User Engagement- Implement interactive campaigns to boost user engagement. This can include live Q&A sessions with locals, virtual tours, interactive maps, and even quizzes. Respond promptly to comments and messages to show attentiveness and value of the audience's input. User engagement not only helps build a sense of community but will also increase the visibility of Discover Lewis County's content on the social media platform due to algorithms favoring content with higher engagement.

Influencer Collaborations and Partnerships- Leverage the power of influencers to expand the reach of Discover Lewis County online. Identify influences who align with the values and images of Lewis County, and collaborate with them to promote the area. Influencers can create authentic content that resonates with their followers, providing a fresh perspective on the area. This will increase Discover Lewis County's visibility and credibility.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Specific to the DiscoverLewisCounty.com website

Regularly Update Content- Keep the DiscoverLewisCounty.com content up to date by regularly adding new information, articles, and blog posts. Continue to highlight upcoming festivals, events, and seasonal happenings. Ensure that content is accurate. Valuable visitor blog posts could include travel tips, first-time visitor information, local stories, and insider guides. In addition, this type of content will improve the search engine ranking and make DiscoverLewisCounty.com more likely to be discovered by potential visitors.

Dynamic Visuals- Continue to wow the web visitor with the visuals, high-quality photos, and video, by regularly updating the high-quality photos showcasing different experiences of the area. In addition, consider using virtual tours, 360-degree photos, and drone footage to provide an immersive experience for potential visitors.

Responsive Design and Mobile Optimization- Ensure that the website is not only visually appealing but also user-friendly across various devices. Continued website optimization for mobile devices as a significant portion of users access travel information on smartphones and tablets. Regularly test the website's responsiveness to guarantee a seamless experience for users on different platforms. Additionally, stay informed about the latest web design trends and technologies, and consider periodic redesigns or updates to maintain a modern and visually appealing online presence.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Include More 'Non-Mountain' Activities

While the mountains are a draw for many to the area, Lewis County offers a variety of diverse experiences to be had. It's crucial for potential visitors to understand that Lewis County is a well-rounded destination.

Home to an array of outdoor recreation for all interests and abilities, at a variety of parks and trails; a fresh culinary scene at many local restaurants, food trucks, and breweries. The area is rich in culture and history; and celebrates with a variety of festivals and events.

These different experiences cater to a broad spectrum of interests and preferences that need to be communicated to potential visitors. Curated experiences and itineraries are one way to educate visitors how they incorporate many different experiences into one visit.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflect Diversity

Reflecting diversity in tourism marketing is essential to appeal to a broad range of visitors and show a commitment to inclusivity. Here are a few recommendations on how to do so:

Diverse Imagery and Representation- Use a diverse range of images and visual in marketing materials. Showcase people of different ethnicities, ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Ensure all marketing materials represent the diversity of the area as well as the target audience.

Accessible Information- Ensure Lewis County marketing materials are accessible to people with disabilities. This includes providing information in various formats (text, audio, video) and ensuring websites are accessible.

Highlight Diverse Experiences- Showcase a variety of travel experiences that cater to different interests. This could include adventure travel, cultural experiences, family-friendly activities, and more. Feature testimonials and stories from a diverse range of visitors.

Celebrate Diversity Events- Acknowledge and celebrate cultural events and holidays. This shows that Lewis County values and respects diverse cultures and traditions.

Feedback and Adaptation- Seek feedback from visitors, the target audience, and stakeholders to understand how well the marketing efforts are reflecting diversity. Adapt based on feedback and changing societal norms.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Freelancer/Fam Tour

Collaborating with freelance and travel writers can be a highly effective way for a tourism destination to gain exposure and attract more visitors. Typically organized for travel professionals, journalists and influencers, Familiarization (FAM) trips are an effective way to allow writers an opportunity to experience Lewis County firsthand. Use the following as a guideline on how to host a successful and memorable FAM trip:

Clearly Outline Objectives of the FAM Trip- Identify the target audience and specific aspects of Lewis County to be showcased.

Create an itinerary- Develop a detailed itinerary that highlights the key attractions, experiences, and activities. Balance the schedule to include a mix of must-see sites and unique, hidden gem experiences.

Select Participants- Invite journalists, bloggers and influencers who align with Lewis County objectives.

Partner with Local Stakeholders- Collaborate with local businesses, attractions and service providers to enhance the FAM experience. This could include hotels, restaurants, festivals, and venues.

Communicate with Participants- Share detailed information to participants before the trip. This can include the itinerary, packing tips, and any other information for the trip. This helps the participants prepare for the experience and builds excitement. Maintain communication with participants post trip as well. Provide additional information, answer questions and express appreciation for participating.



Coordinate Logistics- Pay close attention to transportation, accommodations, and meals. Ensure participants are comfortable and have what they need.

Incorporate Engaging Activities- Plan activities that allow participants to experience Lewis County authentically. Interactive experiences, cultural performances, and hands-on activities can leave a lasting impression. Also schedule networking opportunities to foster relationships among participants as well as with locals. This can lead to collaboration and future promotion of the area.

Social Media- Encourage participants to share their experiences on social media. Create a specific hashtag for the FAM trip to easily track and share content.

Gather Feedback- Ask for feedback from participants at the end of the trip to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Use this information, along with insights gained during the FAM, to adapt and improve future FAM trips.

Measure Success- Evaluate the success of the FAM trip by analyzing media coverage and social media engagement from the participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Photo Contest

Quality photos are a must in marketing a destination, and photo contests can be a fantastic way to engage residents and visitors while generating visual content and showcasing the beauty of Lewis County. To ensure a successful photo contest, here are a few steps to consider:

Define Objectives- Outline the goals of the photo contest. Identify what outcomes of the photo contest. Increasing brand awareness, promoting tourism experiences, or creating user-generated content.

Set Rules and Guidelines- Establish clear and concise rules for the photo contest. This should include criteria for eligible entries, submission guidelines, deadlines, any themes, or specific requirements for the photos. This should also include judging criteria and how the photos will be used post contest as well. Clearly communicate these rules through various marketing channels including social media and DiscoverLewisCounty.com.

Choose a Theme- Select a theme for the photo contest. This could be based on season, adventure, activity, or any other defining features. A theme provides participants with a clear focus.

Determine Prizes- Attractive prizes can motivate participants and increase the overall excitement of a photo contest. Consider partnering with local businesses or sponsors to provide prizes. Ensure the prizes align with the interests of the target audience.

Photo Submission- For maximum participation, set up a user-friendly way to submit entries. This could be a dedicated page on DiscoverLewisCounty.com. Ensure the submission process is simple and includes fields for essential information like the photographer's name, contact details and a description of the photo.

Promoting the Photo Contest- Use various marketing channels to promote the photo contest. Leverage social media and DiscoverLewisCounty.com to reach potential participants. Encourage participants to share the contest with their networks. Create a unique or catchy hashtag for the photo contest and encourage participants to share their entries on social media. This will help create an ongoing buzz around the contest.

Judging- Assemble a panel of judges, which may include local photographers, business owners, and residents, to use the clearly defined judging criteria to select a winner. Alternatively public voting could be incorporated into the process. Make sure to announce the winners through Discover Lewis County marketing channels.

At the conclusion of the photo contest, thank participants for their submissions and show appreciation for their efforts. Consider offering special mentions or recognition for outstanding entries even if they didn't win.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Testimonial/Stories

Testimonials, user generated content and personal stories play a crucial role in promoting a destination. This type of content can provide potential travelers with authentic and relatable insights into the experiences of others.

Use Discover Lewis County's marketing channels not only to share but to solicit testimonials and personal stories from recent visitors. Social media platforms, DiscoverLewisCounty.com, along with festivals and events are opportunities to ask visitors to share their stories.

Genuine experiences shared by real people can resonate with potential travelers. These testimonials will likely show a range of perspectives and highlight the diversity of experiences to be had in Lewis County, thus helping to attract a broader audience.

Testimonials contribute to building a positive image, fostering trust, and attracting a diverse audience to a tourism destination. They leverage the power of personal experiences to influence potential travelers and contribute to the overall success of the marketing efforts.

The screenshot shows the 'Share Your Story' form on the Excelsior Springs Missouri website. The form is titled 'Share Your Story' and includes a navigation menu with 'HOME', 'EXPERIENCE', 'ENJOY', 'EVENTS', and 'EXPLORE'. The main heading is 'Share Your Story'. Below the heading is a large image of a hallway with people. To the right of the image is a text box with the following text: 'We would love to see your photos and/or hear your stories and experiences about visiting Excelsior Springs. Please share by using the form below. Attach a photo of your favorite Excelsior Springs venue! Your email address will not be published, it will only be used in the event we need to contact you.' Below this text is a text input field labeled 'Your Name (required)'. To the right of the form is a testimonial from Patti C Whittington: 'difficult for him. He is very accommodating and he absolutely LOVES doing tours. My mother was thrilled to observe supernatural happenings and she actually has mentioned going back! We will definitely make the 5-hour drive to ghost hunt there again! Patti C Whittington'. Below the testimonial is a text box with the following text: 'We would love to see your photos and/or hear your stories and experiences about visiting Excelsior Springs. Please share by using the form below. Attach a photo of your favorite Excelsior Springs venue! Your email address will not be published, it will only be used in the event we need to contact you.' Below this text is a text input field labeled 'Your Name (required)', a text input field labeled 'Your Email (required)', a text input field labeled 'Your Message (required)', and an attachment field labeled 'Attachment:' with a 'Choose File' button and 'no file selected' text. Below the attachment field is a 'SEND' button.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Branded Merchandise

This is an opportunity to expand the Discover Lewis County brand, boost tourism internally and connect with both visitors and stakeholders. By creating tangible products like clothing and souvenirs that reflect the county's unique charm, the initiative aims to leave a lasting impression on locals and tourists alike. These items serve as walking advertisements, showcasing the beauty of Lewis County and fostering a sense of community pride. The connection formed between the brand and patrons not only strengthens the local tourism industry but also establishes a powerful link between the organization, visitors, and key stakeholders, solidifying Lewis County as a destination.



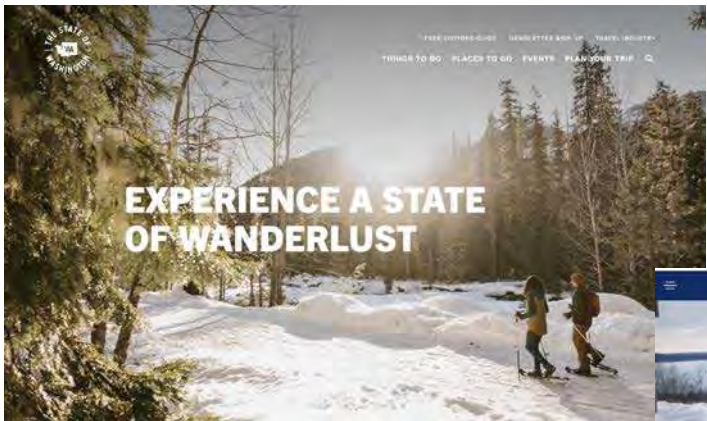
RECOMMENDATIONS

Organization

The following recommendations are geared toward creating a more cohesive organization as well as communication and coordination between tourism entities in Lewis County.

Position Discover Lewis County as a Statewide Tourism Entity

Given the expansive and diverse offerings within Lewis County, positioning Discover Lewis County as if it were a state-level tourism entity is a strategic move to underscore the richness of experiences available. Despite its county status, Lewis County boasts a scope and variety comparable to many states, making it an ideal candidate to have a robust tourism entity. By adopting this approach, Discover Lewis County can effectively convey the breadth of attractions, cultural assets, and outdoor adventures that rival those found on a larger scale, enticing visitors to explore the wide array of experiences. Other recommendations in this strategy outline the way to position the organization in this manner.



Sweet Home Alabama Vacations

Few states can claim that they have something for everyone, but Sweet Home Alabama can! Alabama vacations offer everything from culinary contentment to outdoor adventure to city elation. Spend days on the beaches of the Gulf of

RECOMMENDATIONS

Formalize the Lewis County Advisory Committee into the Lewis County Tourism Partnership

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County should formalize its tourism advisory committee into a formal board structure, ensuring comprehensive representation from across Lewis County. The board would serve as a guiding partnership with representatives from existing entities in both Chehalis and Centralia along with tourism representatives from across Lewis County. This would be the guiding board to implement this strategic plan. The Lewis County Tourism Partnership will also serve as the guiding body for strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and collaborative efforts to promote tourism. The board should include the following:

Countywide Community Representation- Ensure inclusive representation from various communities within Lewis County. Invite individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to actively participate in the partnership. This will not only provide a well-rounded perspective but also engage communities in the tourism development process.

Specific Representation from Chehalis and Centralia- Recognize the unique contributions of Chehalis and Centralia to the tourism landscape of Lewis County. Include dedicated seats on the board for representatives from these cities, allowing them to play a direct role in shaping and implementing tourism initiatives that align with their local interests.

Collaborative Decision-Making- Emphasize the importance of collaboration among board members. Encourage open dialogue, information sharing, and joint decision-making to foster a unified approach to tourism development. This collaborative effort will maximize the impact of tourism initiatives and benefit the entire county.

The Lewis County Tourism Partnership will create a robust framework for sustainable tourism development. This initiative will not only showcase the diverse attractions within the county but also strengthen community ties to stimulate economic growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish Protocols for Regular Communication with Tourism Industry Partners

The size and scope of tourism in Lewis County is like that of a region or state. Tourism issues and regular communication within the industry will be a critical component of enhancing the value of Discover Lewis County. These techniques can vary but might include the following:

Quarterly E-Newsletters- Provide periodic newsletters to industry partners with updates on tourism trends, upcoming events, and relevant news. Include success stories, testimonials, and collaborative opportunities to foster a sense of community.

Intranet or Online Portal- Establish a secure online platform for industry partners to access important documents, share resources, and engage in discussions. Utilize the portal for real-time updates, policy changes, and collaborative projects.

Collaborative Workshops and Training Sessions- Organize workshops to enhance the skills and knowledge of industry partners. Cover topics such as customer service, sustainability practices, and marketing strategies.

Social Media Groups- Create private social media groups for tourism partners to facilitate informal communication. Encourage the sharing of ideas, industry insights, and promotional activities within the group. Consider using targeted emails for specific partner segments to ensure relevance.

Internal Forums or Discussion Boards- Establish online forums where partners can discuss challenges, share solutions, and collaborate on joint projects. Encourage active participation and designate moderators to facilitate discussions.

Interactive Surveys and Feedback Mechanisms- Use surveys to gather feedback from partners on current initiatives and communication methods. Implement changes based on feedback to improve overall satisfaction and engagement.



Here you'll find the latest tourism industry reports and initiatives, as well as the most up-to-date Travel Michigan program updates.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Customized Partner Events- Host exclusive events, such as partner appreciation gatherings or networking mixers. Provide a platform for partners to connect, share experiences, and explore potential collaborations.

Partnership Recognition Programs- Implement recognition programs to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of industry partners. Feature partner spotlights in communication channels to showcase success stories.

Centralized Communication Hub- Develop a centralized hub for industry updates, guidelines, and resources. Ensure easy access to important information, reducing the risk of miscommunication or missed updates.

Additionally Discover Lewis County can solve a critical issue in the county by being the designated host for community web pages. This would be a great service to alleviate issues related with volunteer groups and changing leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create Themed Itineraries for Integrated Tourism in Lewis County

In an effort to enhance the tourism experience in Lewis County and foster stronger connections between communities, Discover Lewis County should initiate the development and implementation of themed itineraries. This initiative would serve the dual purpose of internal collaboration and as a valuable tool for visitors seeking curated immersive experiences within the county. The rationale for this recommendation is multi-faceted as it would do the following:

Improves Internal Community

Connectivity- Themed itineraries provide a structured approach to highlight the unique attractions and offerings of various communities within Lewis County. This facilitates collaboration among local businesses, attractions, and stakeholders, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose.

Enhances Visitor Engagement and

Experience- Enables visitors to explore Lewis County through curated, thematic itineraries tailored to their interests. Enhances the overall visitor experience by offering a cohesive and well-planned journey through the diverse landscapes, activities, and cultural offerings of the county.

Develops Cross-Promotion and Increases

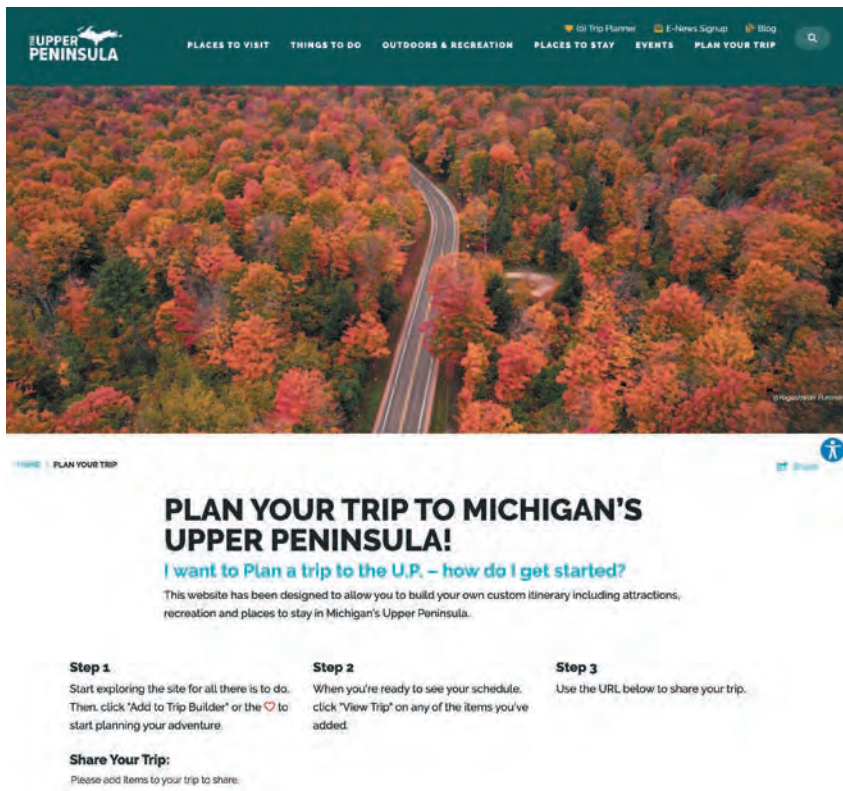
Economic Impact- Encourages cross-promotion among businesses and attractions within Lewis County. By strategically linking different communities through themed itineraries, local businesses can benefit from increased visibility, foot traffic, and economic opportunities.

Fosters Collaborative Planning-

Internal use of themed itineraries facilitates collaborative planning sessions among communities, ensuring that each locale is represented and invested in the success of the tourism initiative. Establishes a framework for ongoing dialogue and cooperation between community representatives and Discover Lewis County.

Diversifies Thematic Options-

Themed itineraries can cover a range of interests, such as outdoor activities, historic and cultural experiences, and food and shopping, railroad experiences. This diversity caters to a broad spectrum of visitor preferences, making Lewis County an appealing destination for a wide range of demographics.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation

These itineraries can be created and used in numerous ways. These include:

Internal Workshops and Collaborative Sessions- Conduct workshops involving representatives from different communities to collectively design and refine themed itineraries.

Interactive Online Tool for Visitors- Develop an online platform or mobile application that serves as a user-friendly tool for visitors to explore and customize themed itineraries. Include features such as interactive maps, detailed descriptions, and the ability to personalize itineraries based on individual preferences.

Marketing and Promotion- Implement a robust marketing strategy to promote themed itineraries both locally and beyond. Utilize digital channels, social media, and tourism publications to create awareness and generate interest in these curated experiences.

Feedback Mechanism- Establish a feedback mechanism to continuously refine and improve themed itineraries based on visitor experiences and community input. Regularly update and expand the thematic options to ensure ongoing relevance and appeal.

The introduction of themed itineraries aligns with the vision of Discover Lewis County to create a cohesive and compelling tourism experience. By fostering internal collaboration and providing visitors with curated journeys, this initiative has the potential to enhance Lewis County as a destination that offers unique and authentic experiences while preserving and highlighting local businesses.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Create Ambassador Program

When those directly interacting with visitors, including frontline staff and volunteers, deliver excellent service it increases the likelihood of visitors having a positive experience. Destinations of all sizes have used Ambassador Programs to educate and align members of the community around the power of tourism. A successful program can increase visitor spending through in-depth knowledge of the visitor experiences and the tourism product. It can unite front line employees and volunteers, increase tourism business, and build a positive destination image.



Through a local curriculum, customized by Discover Lewis County, the Ambassador Program will educate industry and community members on the importance of tourism, the visitor experience, and the visitor opportunities in Lewis County. This critical training program also serves as a networking opportunity for tourism industry employees. Upon completion of the program, participants would be awarded an Ambassador designation. To ensure participants stay up to date on the area ongoing education through either recertification or a refresher course should be considered.

State of Tourism Annual Event and Report

As part of the ongoing efforts to enhance tourism development in Lewis County, we propose the incorporation of an Annual Tourism Summit and the creation of a State of the Industry Report into the strategic initiatives of Discover Lewis County. This comprehensive approach aims to foster collaboration, provide valuable insights, and strengthen the foundation for sustainable tourism growth.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider a Countywide Tourism Promotion Area

In the state of Washington, the legislative body of any city or county may form a tourism promotion area (TPA) to generate revenue specifically for tourism promotion. Pursuant to Washington State Legislature, Chapter 35.101 RCW, a charge of up to \$2 per room per night may be applied to lodging properties with 40 rooms or more. In the case of Lewis County, Chehalis and Centralia already have an existing TPA, consequently this TPA would cover the rest of the county including other municipalities.

Formation of the TPA is initiated by petition to the county by lodging operators. The petition must include a description of the proposed TPA boundaries (the balance of Lewis County), the total estimated revenues, and the proposed uses of the revenues. The petition must contain the signatures of those lodging business operators who would pay at least 60% of the proposed charges.

In conjunction with the creation of a TPA is the need for the identification of the administrative arm for the TPA as well as an advisory committee/commission/board to provide oversight on the distribution of the funds. The advisory committee/commission/board should include representatives from participating lodging facilities as well as non-lodging members.

The lodging businesses collect the charges and remit them to the Department of Revenue, which deposits the revenues into the Local Tourism Promotion Account. This revenue must be used to promote tourism that increase the number of tourists to the area. As defined in RCW 35.101.130, these funds can be used for 'activities and expenditures designed to increase tourism and convention business, including but not limited to advertising, publicizing, or otherwise distributing information for the purpose of attracting and welcoming tourists, and operating tourism destination marketing organizations.' The legislative body can also put forth additional regulations for the use of these funds.

TPA assessment funds should be made available to eligible organizations through an application process with the TPA advisory committee/commission/board.

Potential Uses

TPAs can be used for a number of potential activities. A key to these uses is to be able to tie the activities directly to attracting visitors to Lewis County. Based on observation and uses by other communities, our recommendations on potential uses for TPA funding are:

- Ongoing professional photography for print and digital uses
- Website upgrades to Discover Lewis County website, including search engine optimization.
- Overall promotion and marketing.
- Grants to establish new programming, including.

Discover Lewis County and the municipalities that have not already completed a TPA should be deliberate in its consideration of the TPA and its operations, if established. Determining the purpose and goals of a TPA and its activities, as well as clear and ongoing communication, will be critical to its success if it moves forward. This is particularly important because Chehalis and Centralia already have an existing TPA with committed expenditures. The opportunity within Lewis County would capture revenues from the proliferation of short-term housing rentals and campgrounds.

Ultimately, the State of Washington Tourism organization might explore modifying state TPA legislation to allow for a portion of the revenues to go toward affordable housing provision.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Product Development

Action	Priority/ Timeline	Cost	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Downtown Redevelopment	••• High Mid to Long-Term	\$\$\$	Local Communities	Economic Alliance/ Discover Lewis County	Completion of Downtown Plans, Tracked Investment in new businesses and buildings
Mobility Hubs	••• Medium Mid-Term	\$\$\$	Discover Lewis County	Economic Alliance, Local Communities, White Pass Scenic Byway	Implement 4 mobility hubs in Lewis County
Explore a Wayfinding System	•• Medium Mid-Term	\$\$\$	Discover Lewis County	Lewis County, Local Communities, White Pass Scenic Byway	Create and place new wayfinding signage
Conduct Retail Gap Analysis	••• High Short-Term	\$	Discover Lewis County	Local Community Associations/ Main Streets	Completion of Countywide and Locally Focused Retail Market Studies
Additional Accommodations	••• High Short to Long-Term	\$\$\$	Private Sector	Economic Alliance/ Discover Lewis County	Addition of 500 units of new accommodation options
Create Guide Program	••• High Short-Term	\$\$	Discover Lewis County	Local Education Partners	Guide program trains 10 new guides per year

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Marketing & Promotion

Action	Priority/ Timeline	Cost	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Continued Social Media and Website Presence	••• High Ongoing	\$	Discover Lewis County	Economic Alliance	Website updated monthly; 3-5 social media posts per week
Include More 'Non-Mountain' Activities	•• Medium Short-Term	\$	Discover Lewis County	Local Community Associations/ Main Streets	At least 33% of social media posts feature non-mountain activities
Reflect Diversity in Marketing	••• High Short to Mid-Term	\$	Discover Lewis County	Local Community Associations/ Main Streets	Regularly featuring posts of visitors of different backgrounds
Freelance/Fam Tour	•• Medium Mid-Term	\$\$\$	Discover Lewis County	Local Community Associations/ Main Streets	Host one FAM Tour per year
Photo Contest	••• High Short to Mid-Term	\$\$	Discover Lewis County	White Pass Scenic Byway	Annual contest held
Testimonials/Feature Stories	•• Medium Mid-Term	\$\$	Discover Lewis County	Local Community Associations/ Main Streets	One testimonial or feature story posted per month
Branded Merchandise	•• Medium Mid-Term	\$\$	Discover Lewis County	Private Businesses	Branded merchandise available for purchase

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Organization

Action	Priority/ Timeline	Cost	Responsible Entity	Supporting Entity	Success Measure
Lewis County Tourism Partnership	••• High Short-Term		Discover Lewis County	Community Organizations	Formalization of Partnership, Partnership MOU
Position as Statewide Entity	••• High Short to Mid-Term	\$\$	Discover Lewis County	Localities, Lewis County, Partners	Continue to be the lead for visitor information in Lewis County
Create Themed Itineraries	••• High Short-Term	\$	Discover Lewis County	Local Community Associations/ Main Streets	Create 6 themed itineraries that can be used on social media and web
Industry Partner Communication	••• High Short to Mid-Term	\$	Discover Lewis County	Economic Alliance	At least monthly communications to partners
State of Tourism Annual Report/ Meeting	••• High Mid-Term	\$	Discover Lewis County		Annual report issued
Legislation Advocacy	••• High Short-Term	\$	Discover Lewis County	Other Tourism Entities/WA State Tourism	Passing of bill to create dedicated funding stream



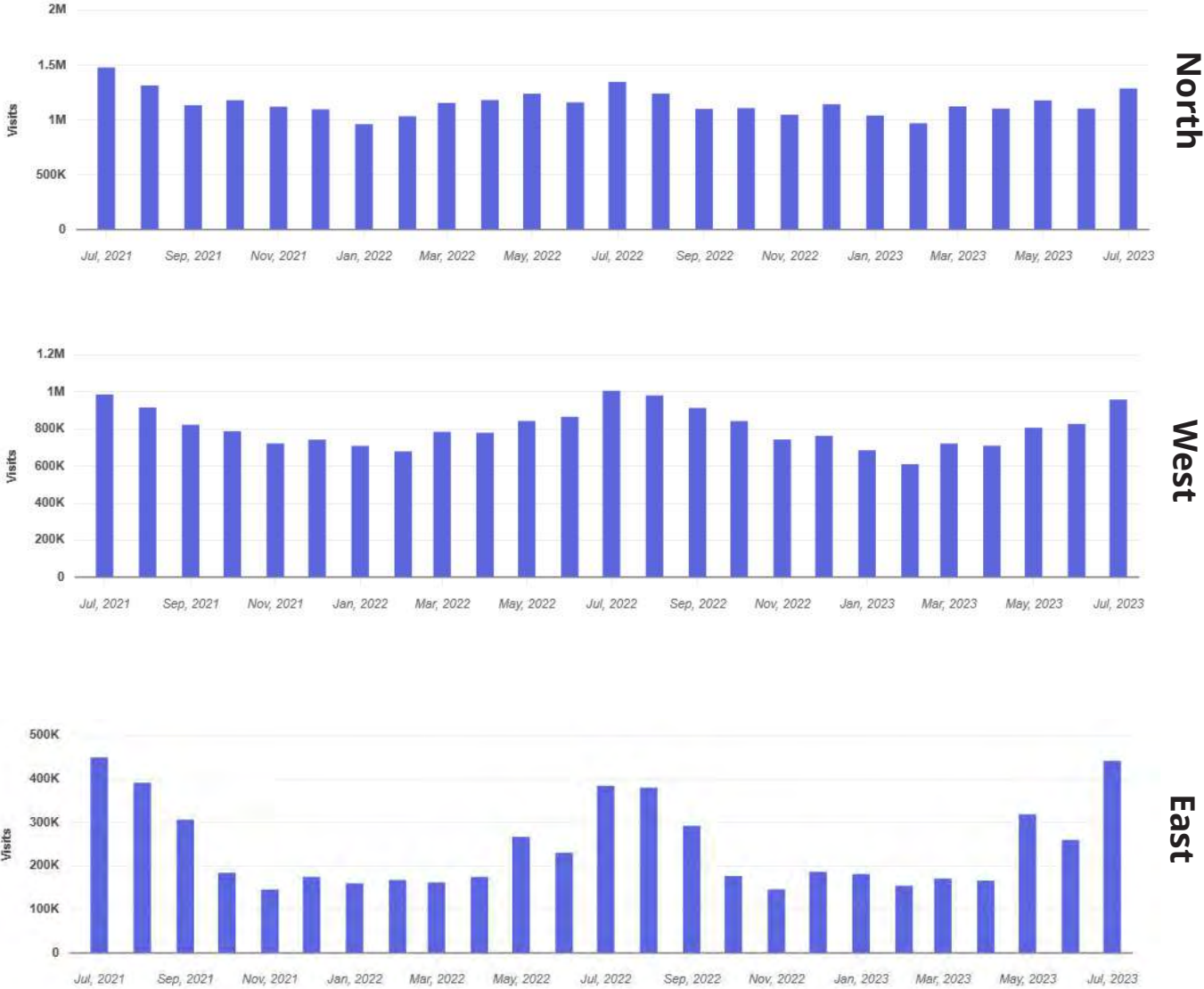
APPENDIX A- ADDITIONAL VISITOR DATA

Elcamp, Mineral

ADDITIONAL VISITOR DATA

Visits By Month

The charts below show the frequency of visits to each area by month for the time frame analyzed.



While volumes differ between the three areas, there are similarities in visitor patterns. There appears to be a cyclical pattern to visitor activity, centering on July and August, key summer months for tourism. This cycle is more pronounced in the East area with a larger differentiation off-season months and summer.

Please note: the geofence areas are labeled (East, North, West) for internal identification only and in no way is it meant to market these areas by said labels.

ADDITIONAL VISITOR DATA

Top Visitor Zip Codes and Counties

The following are charts outlining the top 20 zip codes and counties visitors originate from to each area. A key takeaway from these charts is that the vast majority of visitors aren't from Seattle or Portland, but from closer by, with the lion's share of visitors being fellow Washingtonians.

North

Rank	Zip Code	City	State	% of Visitors	Rank	County	Visits	% of Visitors
1	98532	Chehalis	WA	12.397	1	Lewis County, WA	9,024,237	31.30
2	98579	Rochester	WA	8.253	2	Thurston County, WA	6,423,317	22.30
3	98596	Winlock	WA	5.46	3	Pierce County, WA	1,782,977	6.20
4	98512	Olympia	WA	2.767	4	King County, WA	1,617,578	5.60
5	98570	Onalaska	WA	2.73	5	Grays Harbor County, WA	1,163,385	4.00
6	98531	Centralia	WA	2.685	6	Cowlitz County, WA	1,039,221	3.60
7	98501	Olympia	WA	2.484	7	Clark County, WA	683,100	2.40
8	98589	Tenino	WA	1.793	8	Snohomish County, WA	491,410	1.70
9	98591	Toledo	WA	1.708	9	Multnomah County, OR	467,174	1.60
10	98632	Longview	WA	1.524	10	Washington County, OR	373,831	1.30
11	98503	Lacey	WA	1.454	11	Mason County, WA	338,677	1.20
12	98513	Olympia	WA	1.37	12	Kitsap County, WA	255,838	0.90
13	98502	Olympia	WA	1.309	13	Clackamas County, OR	255,548	0.90
14	98564	Mossyrock	WA	1.294	14	Pacific County, WA	253,504	0.90
15	98568	Oakville	WA	1.203	15	Clallam County, WA	175,053	0.60
16	98584	Shelton	WA	0.936	16	Whatcom County, WA	158,137	0.50
17	98520	Aberdeen	WA	0.852	17	Marion County, OR	144,697	0.50
18	98597	Yelm	WA	0.815	18	Spokane County, WA	130,276	0.50
19	98626	Kelso	WA	0.792	19	Yakima County, WA	127,959	0.40
20	98516	Olympia	WA	0.785	20	Lane County, OR	106,179	0.40

ADDITIONAL VISITOR DATA

West

Rank	Zip Code	City	State	% of Visitors	Rank	County	Visits	% of Visitors
1	98532	Chehalis	WA	10.793	1	Lewis County, WA	3,659,256	26.30%
2	98531	Centralia	WA	7.55	2	Thurston County, WA	1,281,827	9.20%
3	98632	Longview	WA	3.144	3	Pierce County, WA	1,245,189	8.90%
4	98626	Kelso	WA	2.299	4	King County, WA	920,636	6.60%
5	98579	Rochester	WA	2.266	5	Grays Harbor County, WA	809,322	5.80%
6	98611	Castle Rock	WA	2.177	6	Cowlitz County, WA	753,354	5.40%
7	98564	Mossyrock	WA	1.933	7	Clark County, WA	397,544	2.90%
8	98596	Winlock	WA	1.645	8	Snohomish County, WA	268,837	1.90%
9	98512	Olympia	WA	1.243	9	Multnomah County, OR	262,945	1.90%
10	98570	Onalaska	WA	1.176	10	Washington County, OR	210,607	1.50%
11	98604	Battle Ground	WA	0.905	11	Mason County, WA	209,817	1.50%
12	98501	Olympia	WA	0.862	12	Kitsap County, WA	133,064	1.00%
13	98356	Morton	WA	0.855	13	Clackamas County, OR	125,209	0.90%
14	98503	Lacey	WA	0.806	14	Pacific County, WA	108,145	0.80%
15	98502	Olympia	WA	0.743	15	Clallam County, WA	92,714	0.70%
16	98682	Vancouver	WA	0.727	16	Whatcom County, WA	91,055	0.70%
17	98513	Olympia	WA	0.724	17	Marion County, OR	90,043	0.60%
18	98377	Randle	WA	0.691	18	Spokane County, WA	89,110	0.60%
19	98584	Shelton	WA	0.591	19	Yakima County, WA	85,345	0.60%
20	98597	Yelm	WA	0.576	20	Lane County, OR	83,768	0.60%

ADDITIONAL VISITOR DATA

East

Rank	Zip Code	City	State	% of Visitors	Rank	County	Visits	% of Visitors
1	98532	Chehalis	WA	4.333	1	Lewis County, WA	1,288,236	21.20%
2	98531	Centralia	WA	2.672	2	Pierce County, WA	1,195,400	19.60%
3	98564	Mossyrock	WA	2.299	3	King County, WA	497,612	8.20%
4	98570	Onalaska	WA	1.974	4	Thurston County, WA	447,456	7.40%
5	98596	Winlock	WA	1.765	5	Yakima County, WA	324,110	5.30%
6	98533	Cinebar	WA	1.531	6	Clark County, WA	232,900	3.80%
7	98632	Longview	WA	1.48	7	Cowlitz County, WA	217,749	3.60%
8	98387	Spanaway	WA	1.32	8	Snohomish County, WA	152,805	2.50%
9	98328	Eatonville	WA	1.316	9	Multnomah County, OR	126,829	2.10%
10	98356	Morton	WA	1.203	10	Kitsap County, WA	97,829	1.60%
11	98501	Olympia	WA	1.191	11	Benton County, WA	86,582	1.40%
12	98591	Toledo	WA	1.13	12	Grays Harbor County, WA	84,245	1.40%
13	98908	Yakima	WA	1.12	13	Clackamas County, OR	58,592	1.00%
14	98466	Tacoma	WA	1.109	14	Mason County, WA	56,528	0.90%
15	98582	Salkum	WA	1.087	15	Washington County, OR	45,420	0.70%
16	98902	Yakima	WA	1.077	16	Pacific County, WA	32,123	0.50%
17	98377	Randle	WA	0.943	17	Los Angeles County, CA	31,242	0.50%
18	98338	Graham	WA	0.92	18	Franklin County, WA	29,788	0.50%
19	98335	Gig Harbor	WA	0.893	19	Spokane County, WA	27,842	0.50%
20	98444	Tacoma	WA	0.89	20	Pima County, Az	23,151	0.40%

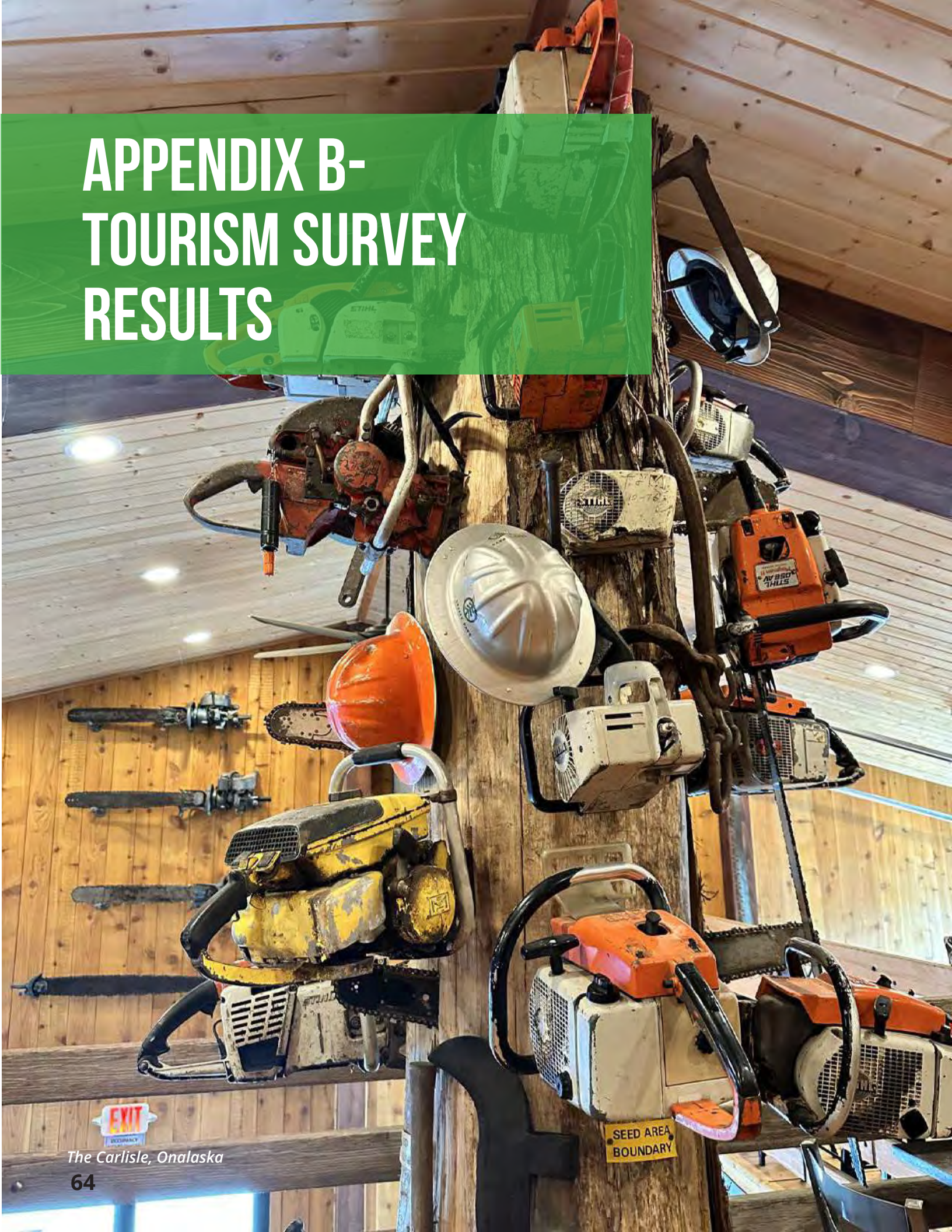
ADDITIONAL VISITOR DATA

Visitor Demographics

The chart (below) shows the demographic breakdown of visitors to each of the areas. While not exactly the same, there are striking similarities among all three areas. A key takeaway from this data is the visitors to Lewis County are more culturally diverse compared to the population of the county. The biggest category is in the Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander category, followed by individuals who identify as black. This suggests marketing should better reflect people of color.

Characteristics	North Visitors	West Visitors	East Visitors	Area Demographics (County Wide)
Gender				
Female	50.40%	50.40%	50.40%	49.90%
Male	49.60%	49.60%	49.60%	50.10%
Ethnicity				
White	68.40%	68.00%	67.30%	87.00%
Hispanic	10.30%	10.80%	11.60%	10.90%
Black	4.30%	4.30%	4.30%	0.90%
Asian / Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	10.10%	10.10%	9.90%	1.30%
Other Race	6.90%	6.80%	6.90%	6.70%

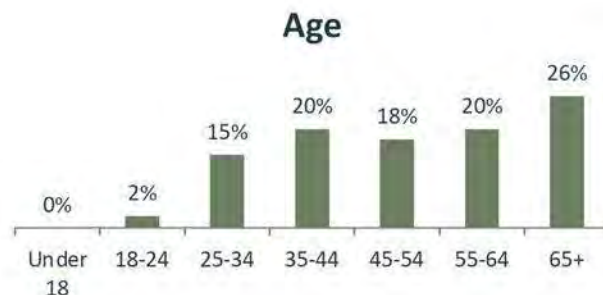
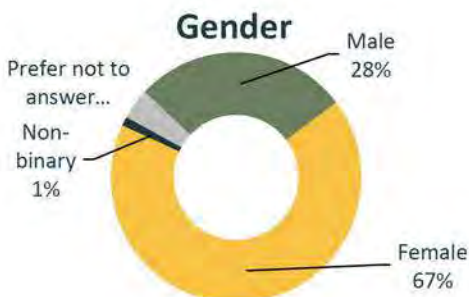
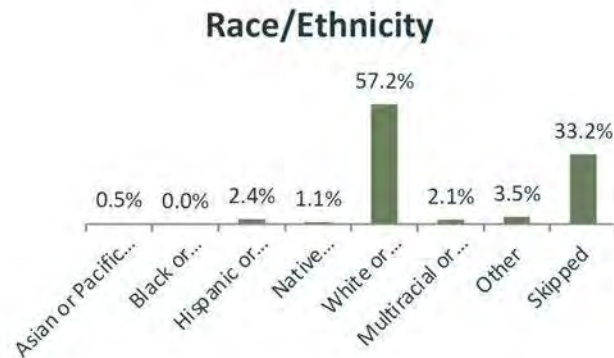
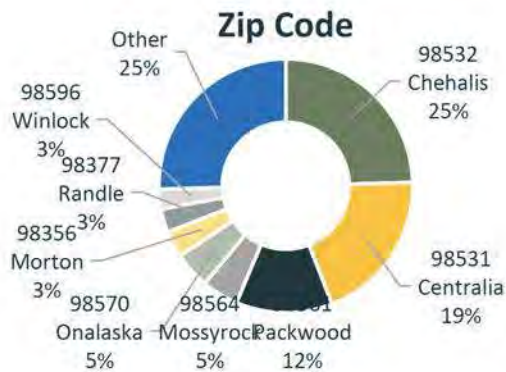
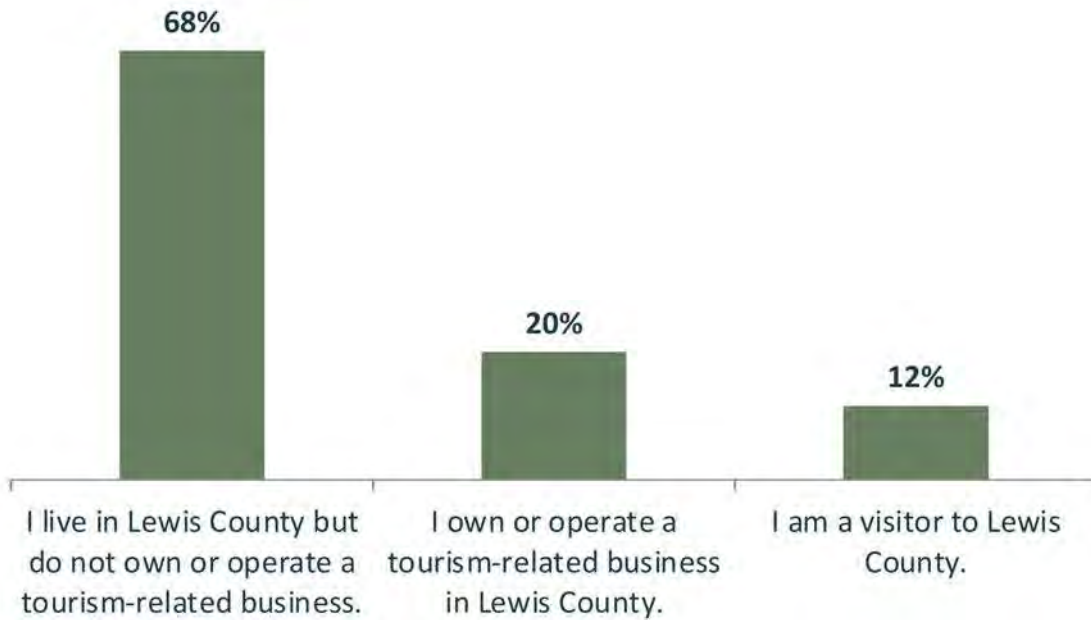
APPENDIX B- TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS



TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS

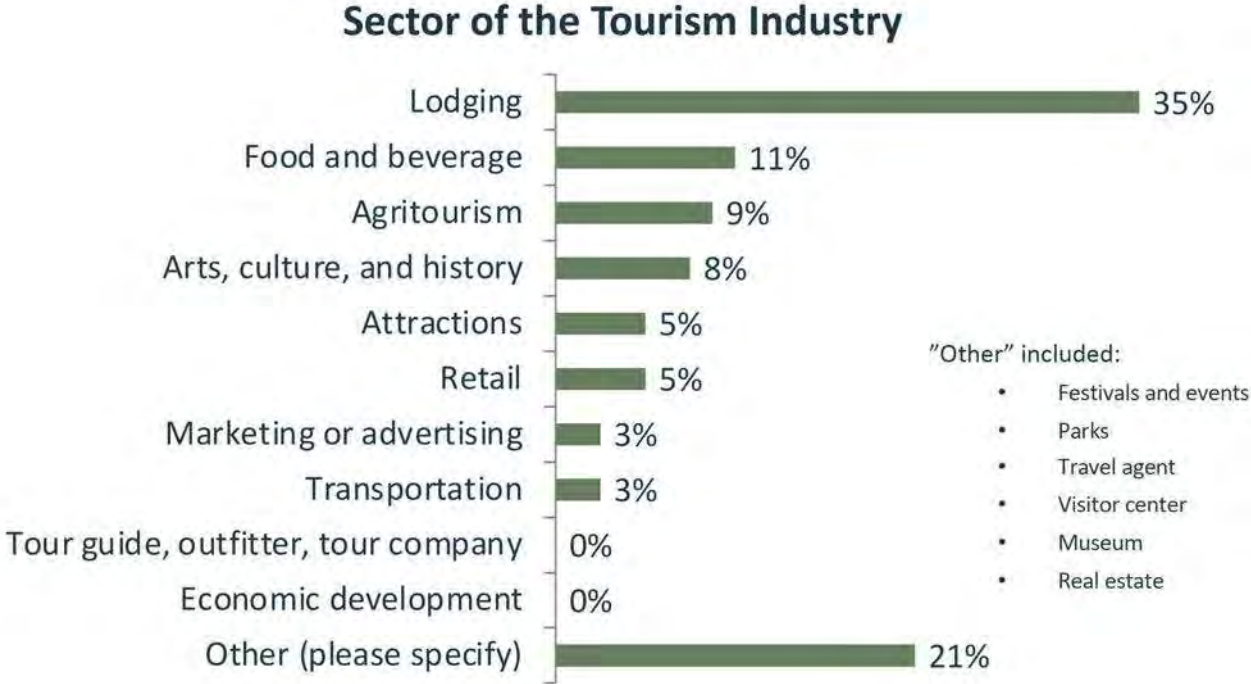
The following pages are the results from the online survey taken July to September 2023.

Who took the survey?



TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS

Who took the survey?



TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS

What concerns do you have about tourism in Lewis County?

Business Owners:

- People don't know everything that Lewis County has to offer
- Need for additional promotion including maps, links, signage
- Coordinate promotion so that customers visit multiple places on one trip
- Staffing – finding reliable staff
- Affordable housing for workers
- Beautification and maintenance
- Public restrooms
- Need additional lodging
- Not equipped to handle influx of tourists
- Infrastructure improvements – roads, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, internet
- Decrease in visitors to area due to Mt. Rainier hours of operation
- Need to be more welcoming to visitors
- Encourage people passing through to stop
- Signage regulations too restrictive
- Honor history and culture of area
- Protect natural resources
- Short-term rentals
- Homelessness, drugs, safety

Residents:

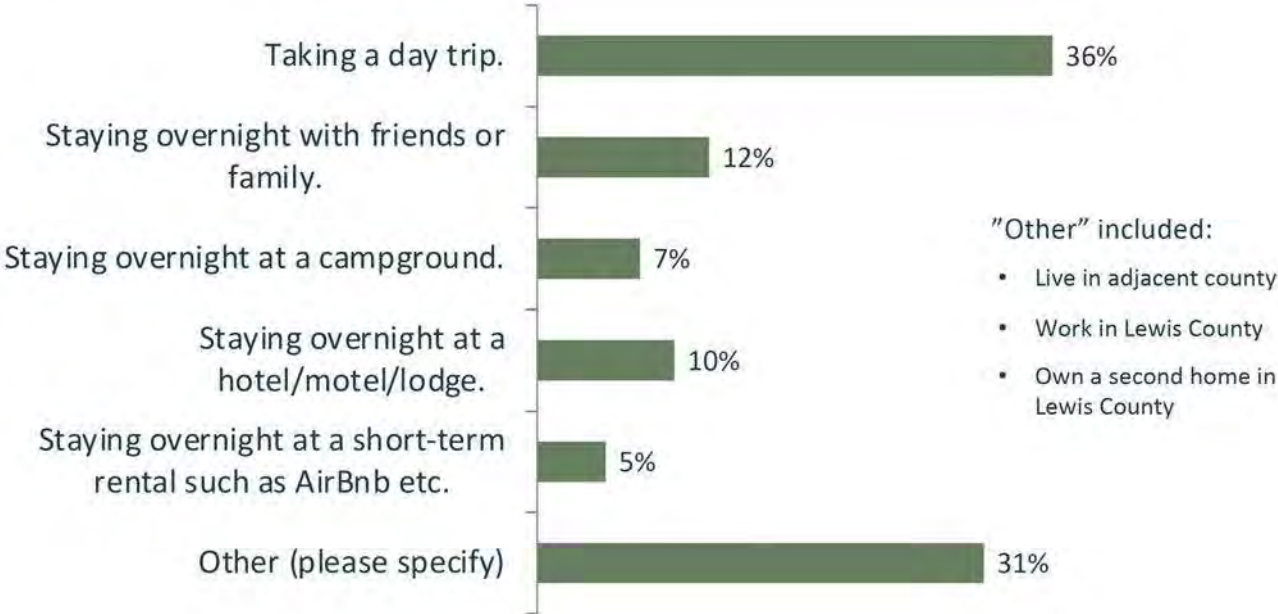
- Traffic, overcrowding***
- Adequate parking***
- Homelessness, drugs***
- Infrastructure improvements to be able to meet needs of locals & visitors***
- Protecting natural resources
- Proper etiquette of visitors, especially traffic violations & littering
- Need better strategy to increase tourism, coordinated promotion
- Need more dining, lodging, entertainment, events
- Loss of smalltown feel
- Safety
- Increased taxes
- Visitors' impressions of Lewis County, improve perception
- Beautification, improving image
- Would like a store with all things Lewis County, information, tourist merch
- Centralized events calendar
- Improving communication, especially in emergency situations
- Tourists prioritized over residents
- Lack of affordable housing due to short-term rentals
- Need to be more welcoming to all types of people

*** Mentioned multiple times

TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS

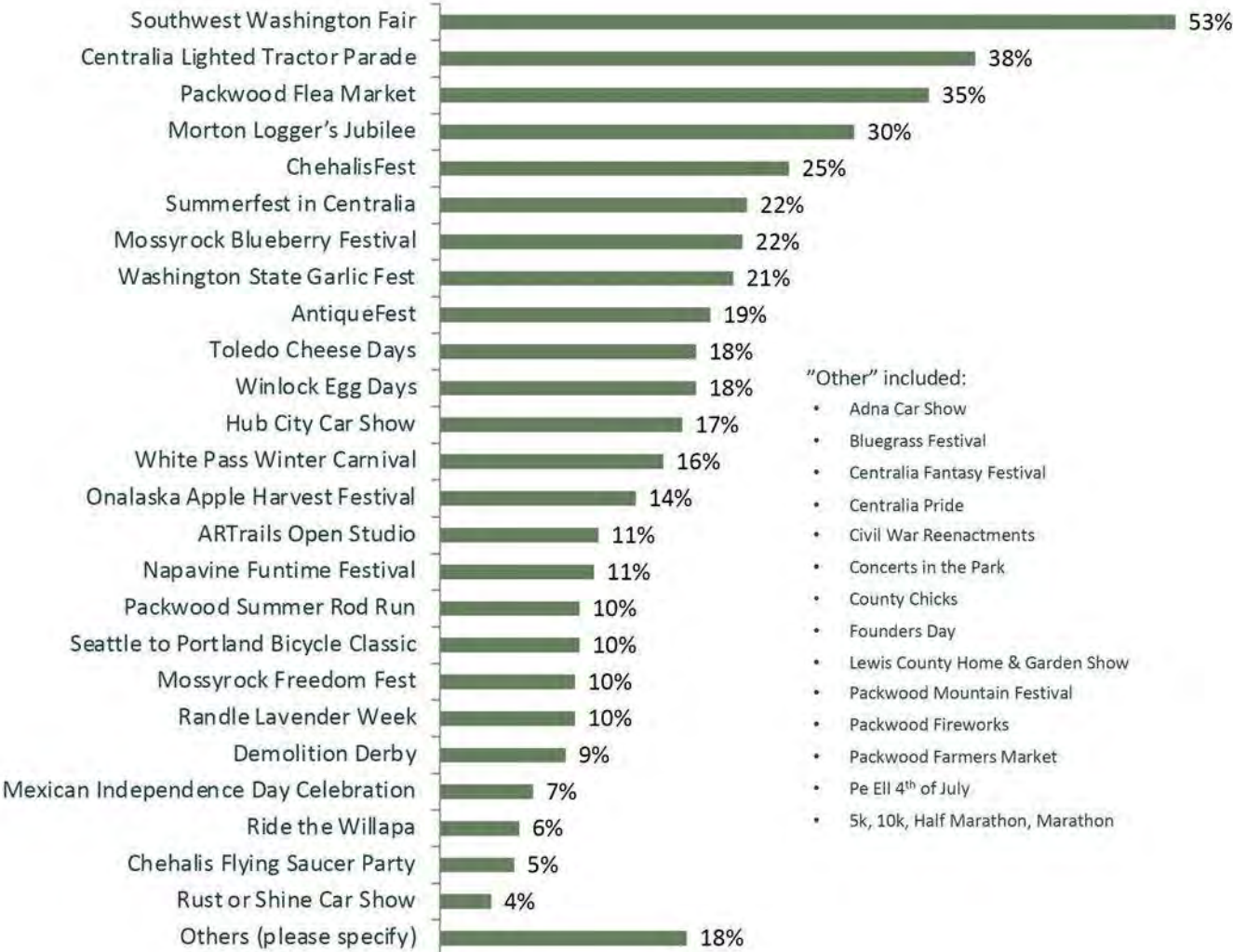
Visitors

As a visitor to Lewis County, are you:



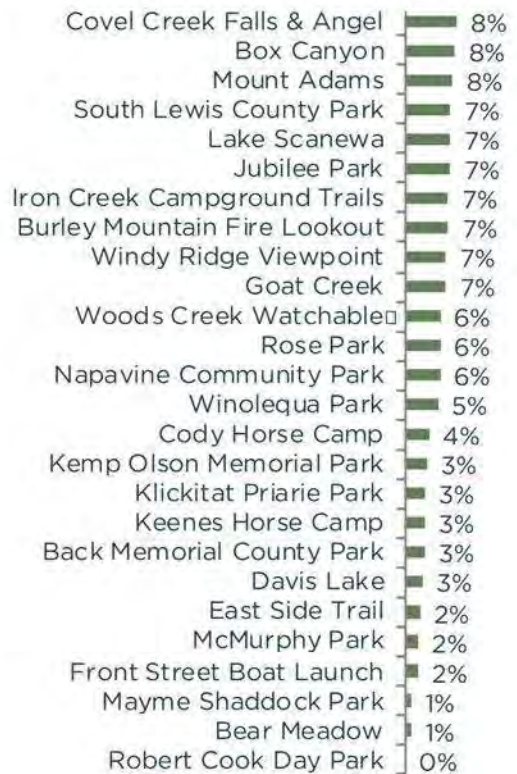
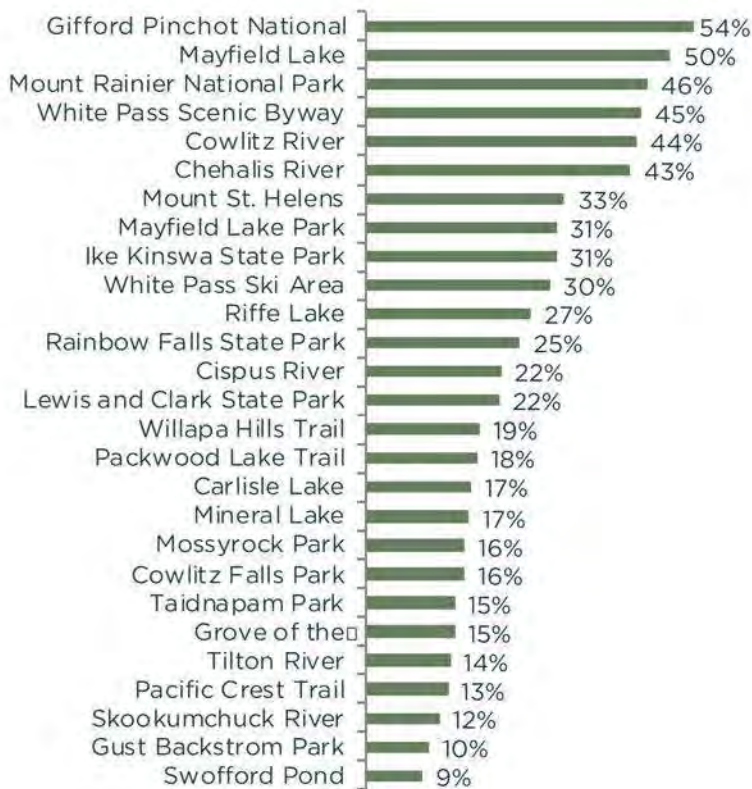
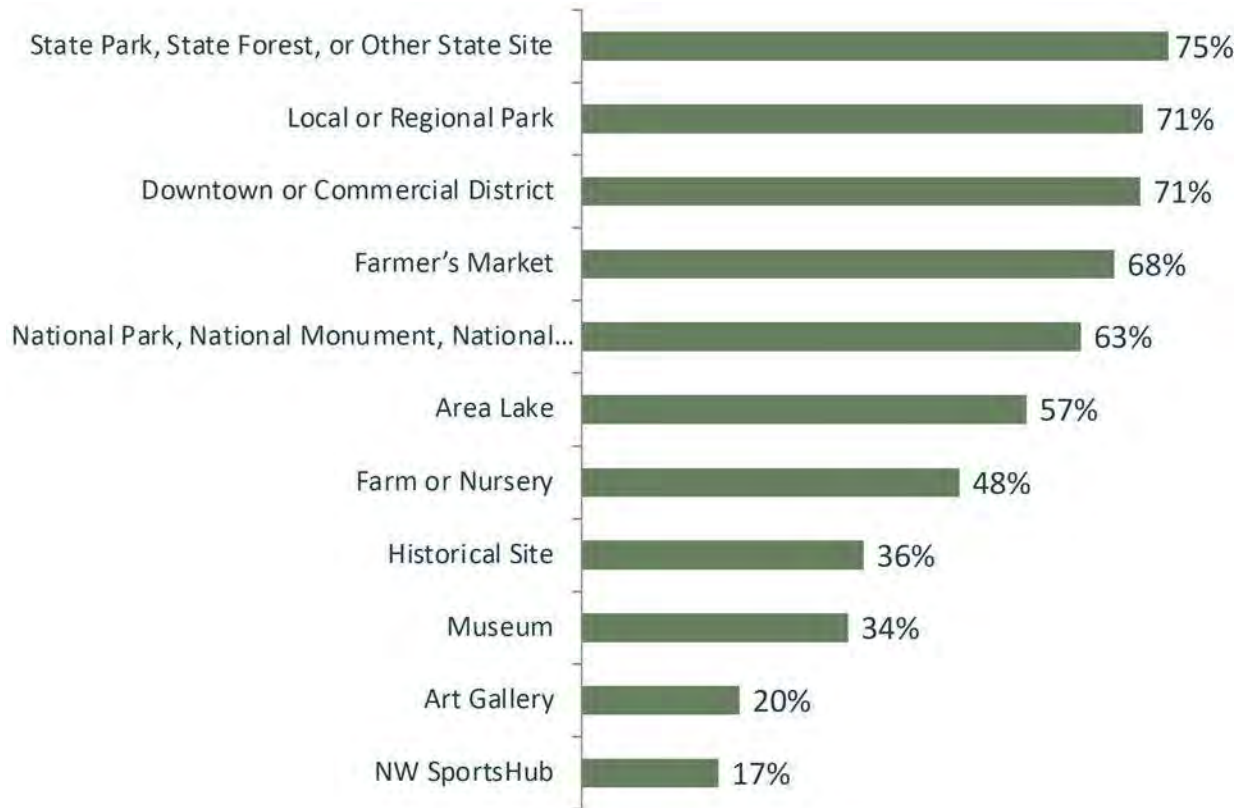
TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS

What events have you participated in?



TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS

Destinations



TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS

Top Responses: Sites, Resources, and Events

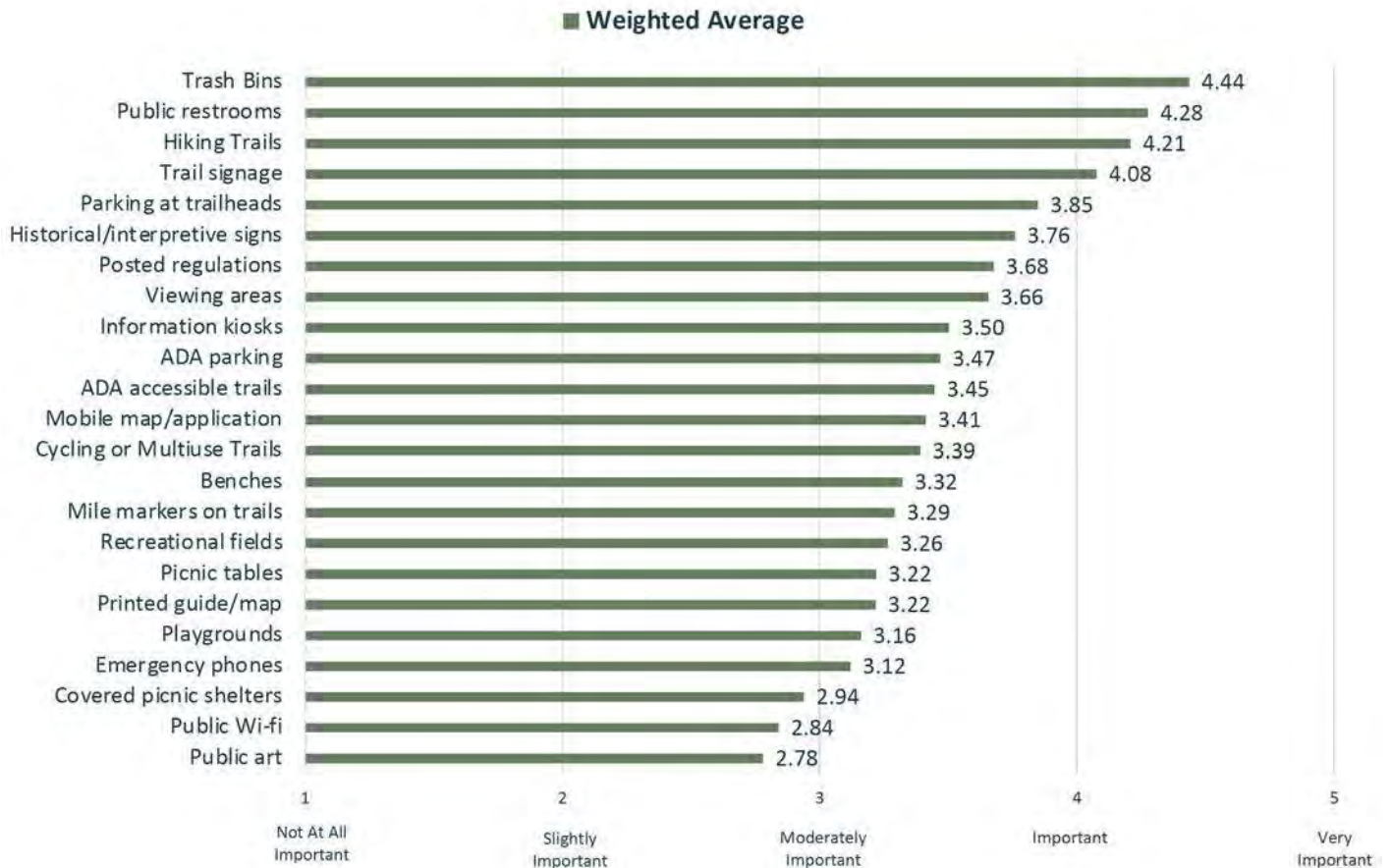
- Mount Rainier
- White Pass Ski Area
- Southwest Washington Fair
- Gifford Pinchot
- Lakes and rivers (Packwood, Mayfield, Cowlitz, etc)
- Parks and trails
- Historic downtowns
- Farmers markets
- Camping
- Local events (esp. Lighted Tractor parade and Loggers Jubilee)
- Penny Playground

Top Responses: Values

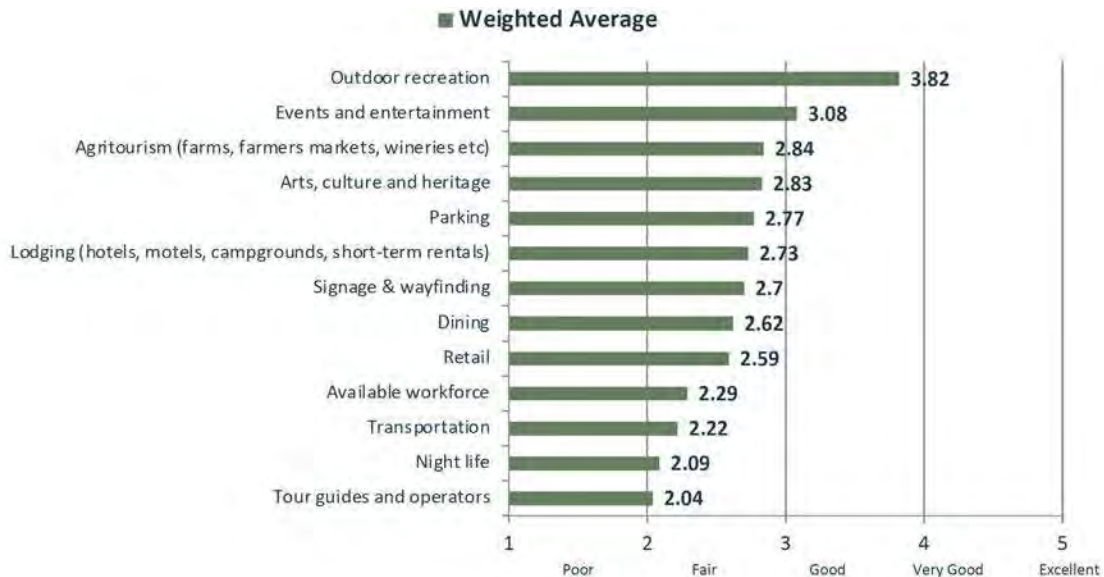
- Access to nature
- Natural beauty
- Community
- Small town feel
- Cleanliness
- Inclusivity
- Welcoming
- Preservation
- Outdoor recreation
- Family

TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS

Amenities Desired

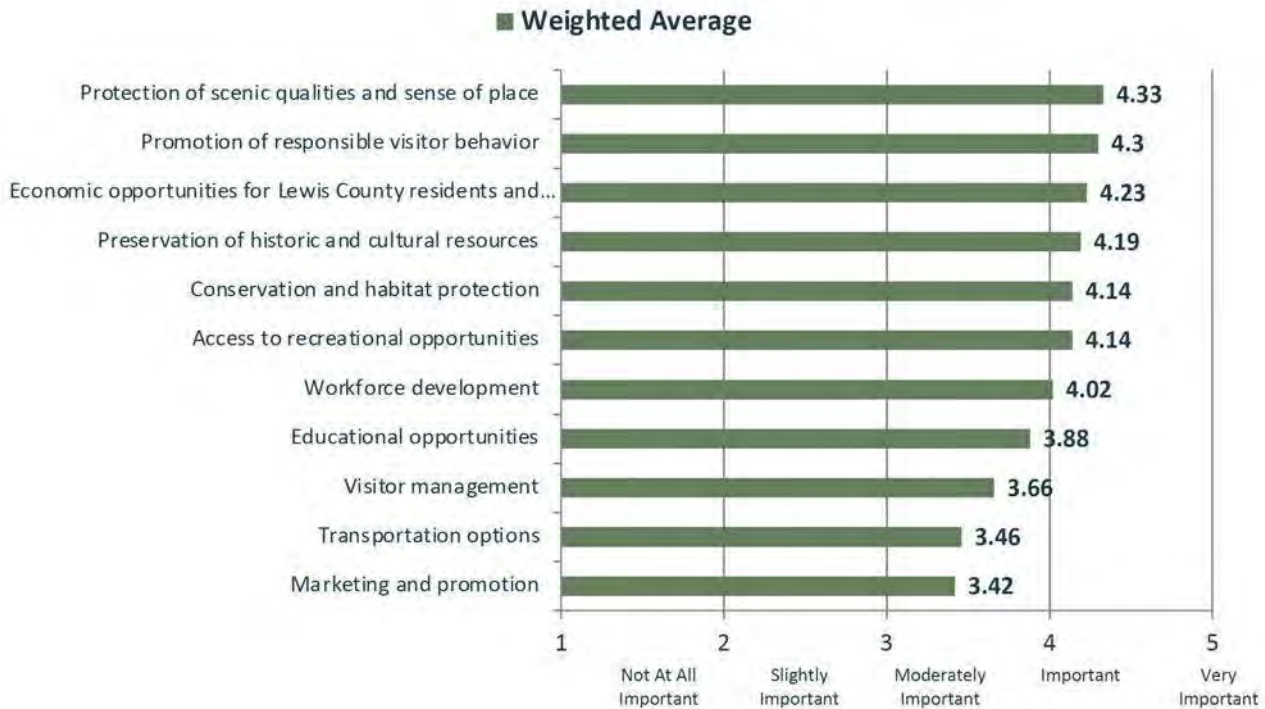


Quality of Offerings

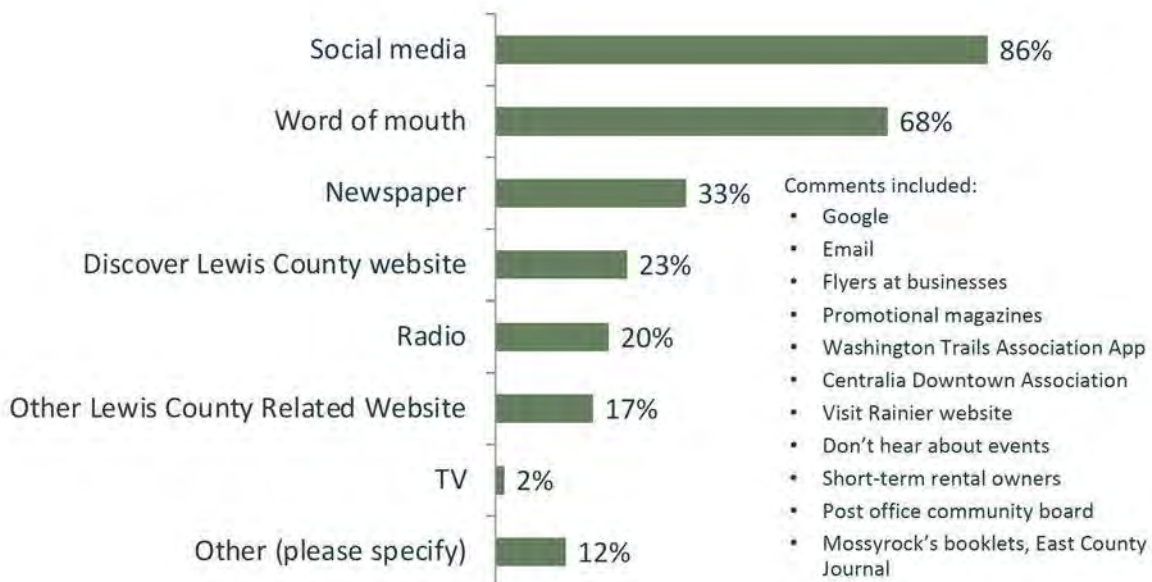


TOURISM SURVEY RESULTS

Priorities



How Do You Find Out About Lewis County Events?



This Plan Created By:



ARNETT MULDROW
PLACE + MAIN