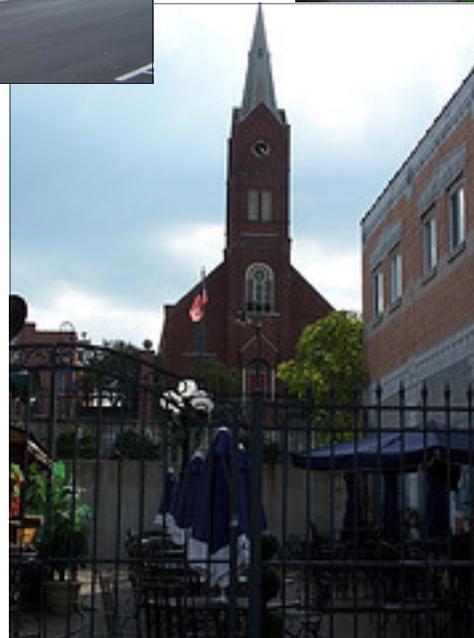


Washington, Missouri

DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

DESTINATION
ASSESSMENT
JULY 2009



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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INTRODUCTION

The DREAM Initiative concentrates efforts on downtown revitalization because the overall health of the community is greatly influenced by the vitality and viability of its downtown. Moreover, downtown reflects the unique attributes of a community—its heritage, its people and its future. While much of America becomes culturally homogenized, our downtowns should retain their unique identity and reflect the incredible diversity contained within the American story. For tourists, downtowns embody the character of the community and represent hidden treasures awaiting discovery.

The DREAM Initiative recognizes that downtown exists within a larger context. Tourists may visit a city for destinations outside downtown, such as a nearby natural or historic attraction, but downtown should be a part of their adventure. In order for downtown to be viable as a tourist destination it must offer unique shopping and dining opportunities and recreational opportunities.

The Destination Assessment component of the DREAM Initiative will help Washington better understand its potential to derive benefits from tourism. Many communities already enjoy a significant economic impact from tourism, while others have fledgling tourist industries. In either case, the assessment will help formulate an aspirational *and* realistic vision for the future. Recommendations will address potential synergies among existing features to capitalize on Washington' Downtown and the surrounding area's tourism assets.

The "Destination Assessment Team" is a collaborative effort among representatives of PGAV, the Missouri Division of Tourism, and the Missouri Arts Council. The findings and recommendations contained within the Destination Assessment, while primarily prepared by PGAV, represent a coordinated effort to address the "tourist" or "visitor" experience from independent consultants and key State agencies involved in tourism and the arts. It is anticipated that the Missouri Division of Tourism and the Missouri Arts Council will play an ongoing role in providing technical and financial resources, as applicable.

This assessment will assume, as numerous Washington officials, residents, and businesses noted in early meetings, that the style of tourism Washington desires to promote is of a controlled, sustainable, orderly nature. The City would like to avoid the connotative meanings attached to the word 'tourist' and are more interested in the characteristics described by the word 'visitor'.



THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM

A vibrant tourism trade offers many potential benefits to a community. Tourism can help enhance the image of an area, increase local pride, and improve quality of life. As an industry, tourism is recognized as an important component of a diverse economy providing employment, redevelopment, and investment opportunity. All together, tourism can help to build a distinctive, unique, and productive community.

The economic benefits of tourism include job creation, as well as increased retail sales generation, essentially bringing new money into the community. The potential new retail sales from tourism can help to counter the changing nature of the retail environment, which has generally lead to a decline in sales tax revenues over the last few decades. While this effect is felt community-wide, it has had a particularly strong impact on many small Downtowns. The attraction of new money to the community through tourism is an effective strategy to deal with the financial gap left by these trends as new money travels into and circulates throughout the community.

The positive effects of a successful tourism industry resonate through many business sectors, including non tourism related businesses and the local community. The positive impacts will be felt by local businesses and residents alike. Local residents will benefit from added or improved visitor services and infrastructure, increased employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, and improved shopping convenience and increased choice. A well balanced mix of retail and services will make Downtown a destination, attractive to residents, visitors, and investors.

In light of the far-reaching impacts of a successful tourism industry, and the size of the local industry, tourism should be viewed as a strategic sector in Washington's economic future. Any Economic Development strategy for Washington should specifically address the tourism industry and its importance to the local economy.



ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The Destination Assessment provides a snapshot of the tourism industry operating community-wide, with a focus on Downtown. The “rapid assessment” process employed consists of reviewing existing data and marketing materials, as well as, conducting field work, visiting the community, its key destinations, and meeting with tourism leaders. This report and the recommendations contained herein should serve as a foundation, providing strategic direction for Washington as it moves toward destination success. Understanding the framework used to evaluate Washington’s destination potential will provide useful context for the recommendations and suggestions for improvement.

Development of a tourism enhancement strategy, just as any business or product development strategy, begins with an evaluation of the relationship between product and customer in a competitive marketplace. The analysis of these relationships results in the development or identification of a competitive advantage. A competitive advantage gives a community an edge over its rivals and an ability to generate greater success. The more sustainable the competitive advantage, the more difficult it is for competitors to neutralize the advantage. Competitors in this scenario are other communities that are attempting to attract in whole, or large part, the same target market.

Product

For the purposes of this analysis the product is Downtown, its amenities and environ including; businesses, restaurants, museums, infrastructure, people, streets, sidewalks, parks, events, etc. Downtown is evaluated in terms of a theme park or resort, striving to provide the same level of services. Downtown needs a balance of businesses and amenities that address, at a minimum, the basic needs of customers. A key to a successful product is maintaining focus on the primary product, service, or destination strengths while at the same time adapting to changes and taking advantage of opportunities.

The Destination Assessment will identify areas in need of improvement that will overlap with other DREAM Initiative tasks. Those tasks will be noted and addressed in greater detail in their corresponding analyses.

Customer

The customer, in this evaluation, is the visitor or patron including residents of the community, neighboring areas, traditional tourists, etc. The community must understand who their current customers are, who is currently visiting Downtown and why, as well as, who they might be able to target and how. To understand and target customers it is helpful to categorize visitors. A common categorization of visitors is by the reason for their visit:

Business Travelers—Most likely to travel during the week, driven by businesses, primarily basic needs of lodging, restaurants, services, gift shopping, and evening entertainment, potential to impress and return for pleasure.

Family Travelers—Most likely to travel during the weekend, driven by relatives, less likely to need lodging, potential needs of services and restaurants, general shopping.

Ethnic and Cultural Seekers—Looking for exposure to new experiences, development, and education. Interested in the areas ‘way of life’ and people. Adventurous and looking for more than basic needs. Museums, galleries, concerts, festivals, and performances. Likely to shop for unique items.

Heritage and Passive Recreation Enthusiasts—This visitor enjoys the scenery and feel of the area more than the interaction with the people. They are more inwardly focused and reflective. Their needs are similar to the culture seeker, but are just as likely to enjoy a drive through town to look at architecture or a walk in the local parks.

Active Outdoor Adventurers—Intense enjoyers of the parks and natural areas. These sportsmen enjoy a wide variety and are not always young. Outdoorsmen, boaters, hikers, or golfers; they are on the move. They are devoted and spend money on their chosen sport.

Urban Entertainment—The shoppers, team sport spectators, college visitors, night owls, or amusement park attendees. They tend to travel in groups and have a higher expendable income. Internet connectivity and cell phone access is important to them.

Market Positioning and Brand



Once an understanding is reached on exactly what the product is and who the customers or target markets are, the focus turns to identifying the market positioning. An important component of a competitive advantage is a distinct market positioning and brand—something that draws on the strengths of the destination, its authenticity, and leverages customers’ desire for unique experiences.

It is essential to understand how customers currently perceive the destination, especially relative to competitors. This perception is the community’s image or brand. The destination must craft a strategy that builds on the positive aspects of its current image and, if necessary, repositions it to a more

advantageous and competitive position. Repositioning takes time, patience and persistence as it typically involves modifying previously held perceptions about your destination.

Customers carry a preconceived idea of the destination’s brand. The brand represents what people think of you—your image. The destination’s brand is important as it is essentially a promise to provide a product or service in a consistent way.

Destination brands have four distinct components that make up brand image in the mind of the customer. Each component represents an opportunity to differentiate from competition and offer a unique consumer benefit. Destinations can reach their maximum potential by leveraging all four components.

REALM ONE—PLACE:

If you visit the Empire State Building, you go to a building with the city surrounding it. Up at the observation tower, the **place** becomes an oasis high above bustling Manhattan. What benefits does the place provide for the guest? Some people like the high energy feeling of being in the city, but they may also like taking a break from the intensity. People go to a destination. It exists in a physical place. A destination should try to get the most out of the power of its place.

REALM TWO—EXPERIENCE:

Hike in the canyon. Ride the coaster. Attend a show. People want to *do* something at a destination—something unique, something to brag about, or something to share. The experience of a destination can provide key benefits to guests and a fundamental part of its brand. A destination can reach its full potential when it promotes the benefits of a unique experience and delivers.

REALM THREE—MINDSET:

Sometimes a destination epitomizes or evokes an attitude, value, or mindset that has meaning beyond the physical limits of the site. Colonial Williamsburg set out to “own” the concept of Colonial America, and people might feel more patriotic just thinking about it. When a destination can symbolize an aspirational concept, it can form a powerful connection with its guests. The destination becomes a touchstone for the concept and people return to renew their connection with it.

REALM FOUR—ORGANIZATION:

What role does the organization behind the destination play in the brand? The Niagara Parks emblem conveys tremendous trust among regional guests, who want to spend their money with the organization that helps preserve the nature and heritage of Niagara Falls. The organizational dimension of a destination may also make a big difference to future employees, donors, business partners, granting agencies, or other organizations. People want to associate with a cause or organization they feel good about, one that expresses their own values and aspirations.

When people think of your destination, do they long to be in the place, get excited by the experience, aspire to the values represented, and trust the organization behind it? When you can answer ‘yes’ to all four, people will attribute a high value to your destination brand. That value is your destination’s competitive advantage, which relates directly to attendance and financial success.

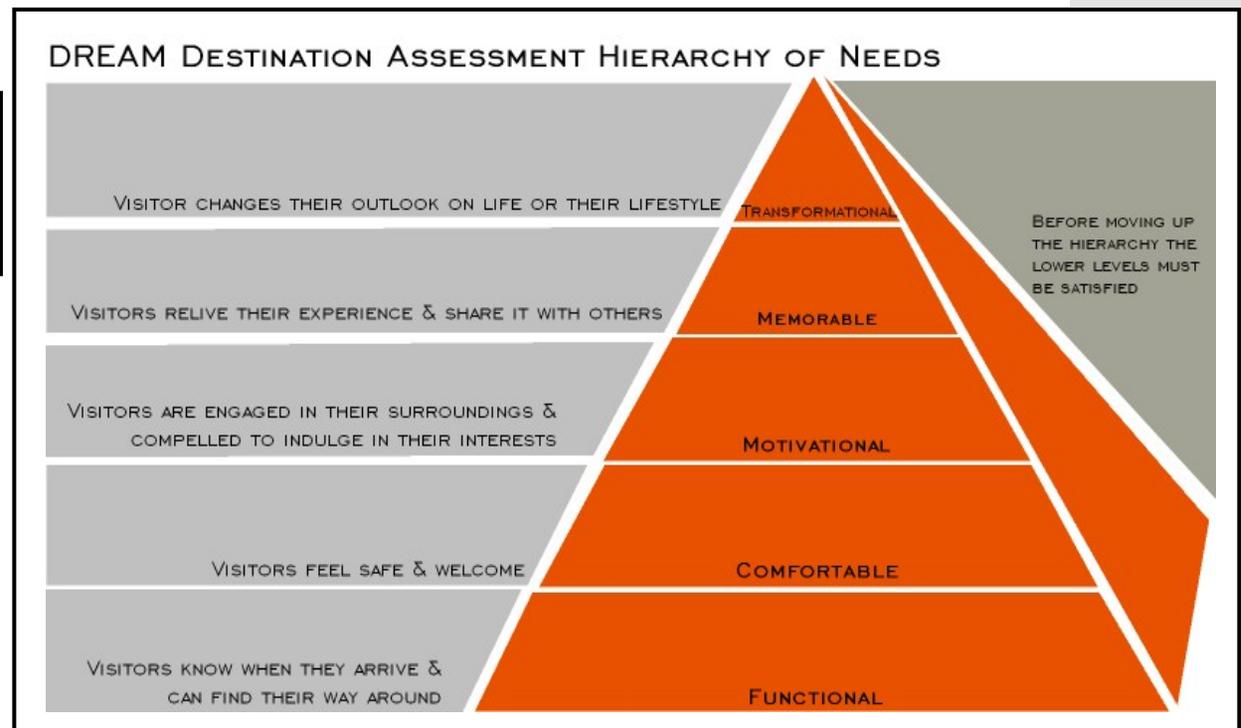
HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Destinations and, in a larger sense, downtowns are basically customer-oriented businesses and therefore should always take the customer point-of-view. As stated earlier, when destinations conduct product development and determine marketing decisions they must address what the customer wants and needs. During the Destination Assessment Kick-Off Meeting, the Destination Assessment Team introduced the concept of a destination consumer “Hierarchy of Needs,” which hypothesizes that customers must have their most basic needs met before they can attain higher levels of fulfillment. This customer-focused theme will recur throughout the recommendations for each community.

For the purposes of this Destination Assessment, PGAV uses the hierarchical scheme shown here, listed from bottom to top, to illustrate and describe the motivations of the typical, “downtown” Missouri tourist.

There are a great number of reasons or desires that drive an individual consumer’s decision to travel and their choice of destination. The “Hierarchy of Needs” describes the requirements a typical visitor has to have met in order for them to have a fulfilling destination experience. Questions a destination community may ask themselves regarding whether or not their community’s destination assets meet these needs are:

1. Functional: Does the City provide adequate wayfinding to make travel throughout the area easy and somewhat intuitive? Do visitors know when they have “arrived”? Does the City adequately provide basic comforts, such as parking, bathrooms, and a place to rest? Is information about destinations and events easily attainable?



2. Comfortable: Is the downtown pedestrian friendly and well lit? Are the building facades and streetscape designs aesthetically pleasing? Are numerous lodging and dining options present throughout the municipality? Does the downtown provide adequate comforts so that the visitor can relax and get away from home?
3. Motivational: Does the downtown provide visitors with activities in which to participate? What will move the visitor to get out of their car and get involved? Does the downtown provide a chance to learn, interact with others, and an opportunity for adventure or escape?
4. Memorable: Does the downtown leave the visitor with positive memories? Do visitors repeatedly return to downtown? Do visitors recommend a visit to downtown to others? Is there positive word-of-mouth about downtown?
5. Transformational: If the City meets the aforementioned needs, then they've created a fulfilling experience to the visitor, which, hopefully, will positively change the visitor; thus imbuing the visitor with not only a valuable rejuvenative experience, but also a new and positive outlook on life. The visitor will want to return to and reconnect with the destination to renew that positive outlook in the future. The visitor will actively seek to bring others and share the rejuvenate experience.

In the case of a visit to a destination like a resort, zoo or theme park, a single organization manages the tourist experience to ensure a “seamless” experience; one that flows smoothly and consistently from parking and restrooms to attractions, food and shopping without breaks in the “brand.” People have come to expect this level of product and service. Destination communities would benefit from emulating this model to the degree they can considering the complexity of their destination environment (i.e. multiple tourism product owners and interests). For example, Destination communities can develop organizational structures that support a coordinated aesthetic presentation of downtown; manage a consistent and unified marketing plan; administer special event planning; and guide businesses towards consistent business standards (i.e. uniform business hours).

Although Destination Assessment focuses on tourism and arts, many of the recommendations promise to improve quality of life for both visitors and residents. Conversely, many of the recommendations in other parts of the overall DREAM initiative, such as streetscape improvements and traffic management will provide essential infrastructure to support tourism. This synergy of benefits illustrates the key strategy of the initiative—that an integrated approach to planning and implementation will achieve the best results for Washington.

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT AND ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE

ASSESSMENT VISIT EXPERIENCE

In September of 2007, the Destination Assessment Team visited Washington, various attractions, and held a ‘kick-off meeting’ with various officials. The initial reviews were conducted free of influence and without any local representative input. After the ‘first impressions’ were documented, local opinions were solicited. Some members of the Assessment Team stayed overnight. After the meeting, additional research was conducted as the Assessment was compiled.

A majority of visitors to Washington travel from the St. Louis region or the surrounding counties of Missouri and Illinois. Many weekend visitors are “day-trippers” and do not spend the night, and most visitors came to Washington for its fairs, the surrounding wineries and shopping. Most visitors are adults, although families do visit as a stop on their way to or from Shaw Park Nature Reserve, Six Flags, or Purina Farms. There are a significant number of business travelers staying in Washington, which may represent an “untapped” market for capturing economic activity.

The array of annual festivals – from the “Art Fair and Winefest” in May to the “Olde Fashioned Christmas”

Welcome to Washington, Missouri, the Heart of Wine Country! Located just 50 miles west of St. Louis, we like to boast that we have a little bit of everything. Our historic downtown district has specialty shopping, boutiques, antiques, and galleries in beautifully preserved buildings. Washington has several fine restaurants that offer the best in American cuisine, as well as Italian, Mexican and other specialties, so be sure to bring your appetite.

*Washington, Missouri Visitor’s Guide “The Heart of Wine Country”,
published by Downtown Washington*

celebration in December – draws visitors to Washington from around the bi-state region of Missouri and Illinois. Washington’s location as the portal to more than 25 different wineries in the Missouri River Valley wine region makes Washington a great starting place or last stop on any winery tour. Visitors can rest, enjoy the Missouri River and the shops along the main streets, and then dine at a fine restaurant or just have a piece of pie after their tour. The museums and galleries in Washington add to the

“Heart of Wine Country” experience. The Corn Cob Pipe Museum, Washington Historical Society Museum, Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame and the Firehouse Museum add a bit of unique history to Washington, while galleries such as the Gary Lucy Gallery and the Mid-Missouri Fine Arts Gallery give visitors a chance to bring some of their Washington and Wine Country experience home.



Festivals and musical performance enhance the attractions and provide activities for visitors and residents to attend. The “Sunset on the River” series customarily draws many residents to the Rennick Riverfront Park to enjoy music and food, and brings large numbers of the Washington community into the Downtown on a regular basis. Regular events such as band festivals, classic car shows, craft festivals and holiday celebrations held in Washington’s historic Downtown create a rich fabric of activities that provide the basis for a personal and enriching Downtown experience for residents and visitors.

Most approaches to Washington include a pleasant drive past farms, fields of crops, vineyards, or a few grazing horses. As one of the few bridge crossings along the Missouri River in the eastern portion of the State, Washington enjoys the benefit of major access of highway/interstate systems heading east to west and north to south.

The approach from Highway 100 and Interstate 44 leads visitors on a two lane road until the City limits. There is a sign for the Highway 100 exit along Interstate 44, but it inadvertently creates some confusion as there are two exits from Interstate 44 to Highway 100. When on Highway 100, the Destination Assessment Team found it difficult to follow the very few signs directing visitors to Downtown Washington. After turning onto Highway 47, a visitor could easily continue over the

Missouri River Bridge instead of driving to Downtown (i.e. the intersection of Fifth and Highway 47). There was no direct or clearly defined route to Downtown Washington when approaching the City from Highway 100.

Accessibility to Washington via Interstate 70 presents similar issues. “Downtown Washington” is noted on a brown interstate sign when heading westbound near the Interstate 70 and Highway 47 exit. However, this exit places the visitor within the City of Warrenton and approximately 15 miles from Washington. Arrival to Washington while heading southbound on Highway 47 offers a picturesque view of the City and Downtown as motorists cross the Missouri River. Without the benefit of seeing Downtown from the Missouri River Bridge, visitors would not likely be aware of Downtown’s location to the west of Highway 47. As previously noted, the intersection of Fifth Street and Highway 47 has no prominent wayfinding signage.



A final route for arriving in Washington is Highway 94. It is this highway that provides the “transportation spine” to the eastern section of the Missouri River Valley wine region – also making Washington a central location. Direct access to Washington must occur via Highway 47, but the Highway 47 and Highway 94 intersection is only a couple of miles from the City. It is more likely that “leisure” visitors from the St. Charles County region as well as visitors frequenting the many wineries along Highway 94 enter Washington from this direction. Directional signage is once again lacking from either direction along Highway 94 with no “advertising” signage “redirecting” travelers off of the Highway 94 wine trail and into Washington.

In general, there are residences and some businesses along the routes, with little or no signage or wayfinding directing visitors to the historic Downtown district, Main Street or to the Visitors Center. It is easy to get lost.

The first impression a visitor has of a destination is typically a lasting impression. Once visitors enter Main Street and the historic Downtown district, Washington appears to be a welcoming, quaint, and thriving town. The Destination Assessment Team could see evidence of street, storefront and building improvements – sidewalks, street light banners, and tent signs helped to demarcate the area. The historic renovations or building improvements appeared fresh and well-done.



PERCEPTIONS, UNDERSTANDING & CURRENT POSITIONING

Washington's Main Street is just one block away from the Missouri River and the several Downtown cross streets will lead visitors to the Riverfront. Once on the Riverfront, there is easy parking, Rennick Riverfront Park, and the Amtrak Train Station that houses the Washington Visitor's Center. The Visitor Center houses a nice exhibit of miniature trains and models that appeals to kids and adults alike. However, the walk from the Riverfront to Main Street is a steep climb – even though it is only one block, and could prove difficult for many Riverfront and Front Street visitors to walk to Main Street. Conversely, many visitors may be reluctant to walk down to the Visitor Center for information because of the steep walk

Day Trips. Whether you choose a day trip, a weekend, or an overnight stay, Washington's restaurants, downtown shops, shopping centers, area wineries, bed & breakfasts, hotel/motels, parks, and riverfront recreation beckon you. All are easily accessible and here for your enjoyment...

Washington, Missouri Visitor's Guide "Historic Washington Missouri", published by Washington, Missouri Division of Tourism

back up to Main Street. Washington also provides visitors with access to public restrooms, located in the Farmer's Market. In addition, Downtown has a variety of business where visitors can rest and purchase simple conveniences, such as Droege's market. Providing these amenities for visitors is a basic need and important to creating a seamless experience.

Although there are no wineries located in Washington, there are about 25 wineries and vineyards located within a one hour drive of the City. The drive to those wineries is picturesque and enjoyable. The City's Downtown "partners" – the Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Commission and Downtown Washington Inc., have positioned the City as the "Heart of Wine Country". The Washington Division of Tourism published a small brochure that helps visitors plan day trips to groups of wineries, and highlights the restaurants, shopping and lodging in Washington – the place to begin the wine tour, and place to rest when the day is done. The Destination Assessment Team found this presentation welcoming and easy to follow. In addition, Washington does have the restaurants and other activities that make it a good town or portal for the wineries in the Missouri River Valley. The "Experience the Heart of Wine Country" campaign is also found through the www.washmo.org web portal and is presented in the comprehensive visitor's guide.

Although the many wineries in the environs of Washington mostly appeal to adult visitors, there are other attractions in or near Washington that attract a broader audience, including families: the Daniel Boone Home and Boonesfield Village, Katy Trail State Park, Purina Farms, Shaw Nature Reserve, Six Flags and the Washington Fair.



In addition, local events on Main Street and in the Downtown district reinforce the value of Main Street and strengthen the residents' connection to Downtown Washington. The Farmers Market is open two days a week from May through October (including additional hours during the Winter Holiday Season), and "Sunset on the Riverfront" occurs the fourth Thursday of every month from April to September. The active local grocery store, Droege's, and neighborhood coffee shops also support Downtown shopping by residents, as well as visitors.



There is an active community of artists based in Washington and the environs. Many of the artists display and sell their work in local galleries and shops. Many of the festivals hosted in Washington throughout the year feature "crafts" or "arts" as part of the event. This provides another opportunity for visitors to purchase artwork. In addition, almost of the festivals and events provide a venue for music and theatrical performances.

There is a good variety and density of shops, galleries and restaurants along Washington's Main Street and intersecting streets. Starting the day with a latte and muffin or finishing with dinner from gourmet restaurant, Washington's Main Street seems to welcome visitors as they start or end their day. It was noticeable that almost all of the shops and galleries seemed to be open, encouraging visitors to stroll up and down the streets of Downtown. There did not appear to be any "isolated" or abandoned blocks of buildings in the Downtown district, although there was active construction or renovation of several buildings.

Washington's lodging is varied and appears to be able to accommodate most visitors. There several bed and breakfasts for individual or small groups of travelers, as well as moderate priced hotels and motels in the immediate area. Most of the overnight stays are from business travelers during weekdays. The fact that Washington is an easy day's drive from St. Louis and regional towns does not usually require weekend overnight stays.

MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY WINE “REGIONS” ASSETS

The City’s position as the “portal” to the Missouri River Valley wine region and associated wine trails (Missouri Weinstrauss and Herman Wine Trail) is a tremendous asset to the City’s destination “product”. The State has made a significant investment in the promotion and production of wine making and the winery experience. This important industry to the State, along with the City’s proximity to the St. Louis metropolitan region, provides a unique opportunity for broadening the City’s destination appeal. Exhibits depicting the wine trails and Washington’s proximity to Missouri wineries are located in the Appendix

In smaller wine-producing states such as Missouri, tourism surrounding the wine experience often provides a larger economic benefit than the actual retail sale of the wine produced, such as California wineries. Therefore, the “winemaking and winery experience” become the centerpiece for tourism of communities located in proximity to wineries. Successful “wine tourism” regions often see ancillary businesses locate to support the core winery experience. These businesses include health spas, restaurants, bed and breakfast accommodations, horse rides, bicycling, “outdoor recreation” and balloon rides. Note that these types of businesses are also “experiential” in nature—wine tourists often make decisions based on their anticipated “experience” as much as the quality and price of wine (although these items are a factor for some wine tourists). The relationship of wine to other travel interests or special-interest travel is well documented. The City appears advantaged in positioning itself with the following “wine pairings”:

Wine and Food: Most wine tourism regions offer wine and food together. The historic “pairing” of these offerings makes them a natural fit (plus many people believe wine tastes better with food). The City’s position in this regard could encourage the ongoing attraction and development of restaurants in Downtown, a “wine tasting” venue (in addition to the La Dolce Winery), promotion of the Farmer’s Market during peak wine tourism seasons (wine tourists enjoy fresh produce, hand crafted cheese and breads, and home-made meats to eat during their winery visits), and a food/wine tourism packaging.

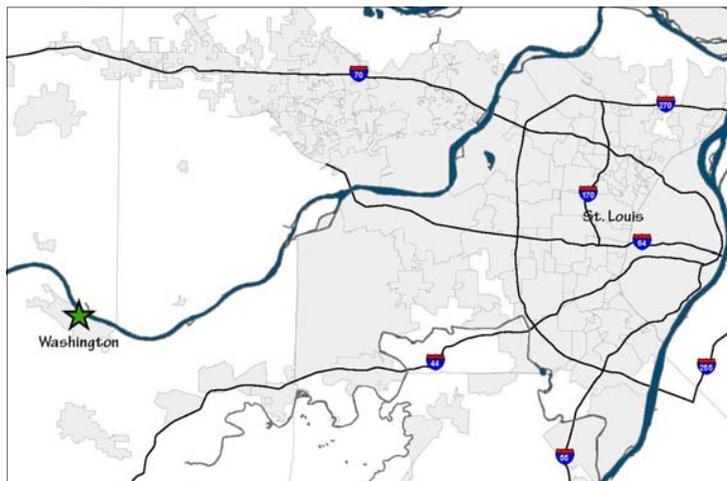
Wine and Cultural Tourism: Cultural tourists often seek out the novelty or the educational experience of destinations. The City’s cannot offer a direct educational “wine making experience” as no onsite wineries are located in the City and are prevented in Franklin County. However, the City can coordinate with nearby wineries to offer “organized” tours of the winemaking process and the history of winemaking in the region. As the “portal” to the Missouri River Valley wine region, the coordination of these “day trips” to experience the wine making process may be necessary to capture the “after hour” tourism interests of the wine or cultural tourists—dining, shopping, and art.



Wine and Art: The relationship between wine and art is as much a “cultural” phenomenon as a demographic one. Wine and art have historically been associated through the traditions of European wine making and artistic creativity. In contemporary times, art has become a primary concern for “marketing” wine—labels have become as much a statement about the wine as the wine itself. Many wine tourists are typically wealthier and often seek out unique art within wine regions. The City’s Art and Wine Festival continues to be successful and growing. This clearly demonstrates the successful execution of “pairing” these elements together. The presence of the Gary Lucy studio as well as other art studios in Downtown Washington offer year-round opportunities to capture wine tourists as they utilize the “portal” to wine country.

Wine and the Landscape: The Missouri River Valley offers tremendous natural vistas and beautiful scenery along Highways 94 and 100. The Katy Trail provides a truly unique recreation asset within the wine region. Boaters along the Missouri River (while not as frequent as it could be) take in the serenity of the River views. Downtown Washington offers one of the most opportune vantage points to take in the Missouri River and the valley beyond. Many wine tourists are equally inspired by the surrounding landscape of the wine region for recreation, relaxation, or ecological connection. Washington’s proximity to the St. Louis region presents opportunities for “urban” tourists to venture into a more agrarian setting while maintaining access to the accoutrements of urban living— shopping, dining, culture and art.

The success of Washington’s “wine tourism” strategy is partially dependent on the success of cooperation among the Missouri River Valley wineries and the neighboring cities sharing in the wine tourism opportunities that are present.



REACHING DESTINATION POTENTIAL

General “Brand” Strategy

Washington’s Downtown district features a vibrant Main Street, a rich variety of restaurants and businesses, and entertaining events that welcome residents and visitors to Downtown Washington throughout the year. There are range of attractions and events appealing to adult visitors within the Washington area. In particular, the combination of wineries, galleries and shops provide an integrated “destination experience” by virtue of combining unique beauty, history, socialization and recreation. In addition, Washington has several local attractions that appeal to families, such as Rennick Riverfront Park, Washington Historical Society Museum and the Photojournalism Hall of Fame.

The special event festivals and fairs in Washington occur throughout the year and appeal to a broad audience of families, adults and seniors. Events such as The Art Fair and Winefest, Chili Cook-Off, Washington Town & Country Fair, Fall Festival of Arts & Crafts, Halloween Family Fun Night, Holiday Parade of Lights and Photos with Santa Downtown are scheduled throughout the calendar year and attract residents and visitors of all ages to Washington’s Downtown district. It is the strong sense of “homecoming,” “apple pie” and thriving “small town” community that characterize the “Main Street USA” brand embodied by Downtown Washington’s.

This more encompassing “brand position” for Washington as “Main Street USA” can build on the capital associated with the existing Main Street organizational approach as well as the actual Main Street in Downtown. The “Main Street USA” brand concept speaks to the “lifestyle” experience many visitors can relate too depending on individual preference. It struck the Destination Assessment Team that Washington’s many cultural/tourism assets, it’s relationship to the wine region, ongoing special events, diverse recreation choices, beautiful landscape, and Downtown business mix provide a recurring and changing resource from which to offer “different experiences” to repeat visitors over time. Washington is no “one trick pony” but a melting pot of experiences that speaks to different levels of visitor attraction and expectation —family, get away, business, shopping, history, culture and recreation.



Washington's proximity to local and St. Louis regional attractions further broadens the appeal for a visitor. Although there are no wineries located in Washington itself, the City is located within an hour's drive of many wineries in the Missouri River Valley. There are many attractions with an hour's drive of Washington, such as the Daniel Boone Home, Shaw Nature Reserve, Six Flags and Purina Farms.

Summary issues related to the "brand strategy" of "Main Street USA" include:

"Main Street USA" can be a stand alone concept for the destination experience in Washington and it represents what the community and visitors already "feel" about the City.

"Main Street USA" connects to some unique aspects of "Americana" present in Washington— the Missouri River, trains, the Corn Cob Pipe Factory, Photojournalism, the Farmer's Market and the Busch brewing connection.

"Main Street USA" fits together (where or when appropriate) with the "portal" concept for the Missouri River Valley wine region and the existing "Heart of Wine Country" campaign. No other community within the Missouri River Valley wine region can offer the comprehensive and diverse visitor experiences that the City has and can develop. Art. Food. Culture. Landscape.

"Main Street USA" reaches out and reconnects to the modern tourists notion of "stepping back in time" to what the American experience used to be. This is particularly relevant for Baby Boom tourists that will form the largest demographic "block" for tourism in the foreseeable future.

"Main Street USA" already exists in Washington. There is room for enhancement of the offerings and the "brand itself", but the feel is authentic. New "lifestyle" and "town center" developments are fabricating the very essence of what Washington already has in place and they are successfully attracting visitors to these "inauthentic" destinations. Demand exists for this type of experience.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

There are different levels of recommendations that Washington can follow in order to reach its destination potential. Improvements can range from better signage and wayfinding to developing excellent customer service and guest practices common to successful destinations. Moreover, these steps will reinforce Washington as “Main Street USA” and reinforce its position as the portal and “heart” of Missouri’s wine country. Addressing basic needs of visitors and coordination of existing resources and attractions can have a significant impact in helping Washington realize its potential.

Improve Signage and Wayfinding

It is important that Washington establish a sense of place, define the boundaries of Downtown Washington, and promote “Main Street USA”. Good wayfinding is one of the most basic needs of visitors. Not only will wayfinding establish a sense of place for the City, it will also provide reassurance to visitors that they are on the right road, and that they are in the right place. This represents a missed opportunity to establish an arrival experience, to define the community of Washington as “Main Street USA”, and to promote the position of Washington as the Heart of Wine Country.

An improved and clearly defined corridor from Highway 100 /Highway 47, and Highway 94/Highway 47 to Downtown Washington and the River will establish a sense of place for visitors, introduce the “Main Street USA” brand and begin to create the setting for relaxing visit and tour through wine country. The use of consistent and well-placed signage along the several roads leading to town, banners as part of the streetscapes, and signage that is coordinated with signs on the interstate will make the drive to Downtown Washington easy for any visitor. The City’s Jefferson Street streetscape project should serve as the “cornerstone” for future Downtown streetscape guidelines. A comprehensive City and regional wayfinding planning effort should be encouraged to promote improved visibility for Downtown and the City’s other visitor assets.

Improve Visibility and Access to Visitor Center

Providing information to visitors is a vital component of a successful destination. In Washington, the Visitor Center is the first place visitors would go if they arrived by Amtrak train, since the Visitor Center is also at the same site as the train station, along the Missouri River. It is not the first place many visitors would go to for information about Washington. There are not many signs providing direction to the Visitor Center, and it is not located on Main Street or Jefferson – one of the two streets that most visitors would travel once they first enter Downtown. The Visitor Center is located down a steep one-block walk from Main Street.



Improve Visibility and Access to Visitor Center (continued)

The Visitor Center itself is quaint and welcoming, full of brochures and information about Washington, wineries and area attractions. It also has public restrooms for the convenience of visitors. However, it is just not as easy to locate this Visitor Center as other businesses, such as the Farmer's Market or the office for the Division of Tourism (Chamber offices) located on Main Street.

The visibility of the Visitor Center should be improved with better signage along the corridor from Highway 47 to Downtown and at other key locations. The Visitor Center and accompanying information should be easy to locate for any visitor traveling by any means. One way to accomplish this is through improved wayfinding and signage, a simple and cost effective solution. The information from the Visitor Center should be available 24 hours/7 days a week, such as making brochures available outside the Visitor Center when it is closed.

In addition to the above, it would be very beneficial to add an additional Visitor Center kiosk on Main Street. In fact, the office of Division of Tourism, located near the Farmer's Market on Main Street, currently makes available many brochures about Washington and surrounding attractions in a rack in front of its offices. This would be a good location for an extension of the Visitor Center. There is parking available for visitors to stop in and pick up information. This could be the Washington Visitor Center "Outpost" or "Annex." It is convenient for many visitors, there is public parking immediately nearby, there are public restrooms available in the neighboring Farmer's Market, and it is very likely that Main Street will be the place where most visitors will make their first stop. This additional location would meet many basic needs of visitors.



Provide Transportation to Main Street

An important component of a seamless experience is access to safe and reliable transportation. Currently, the majority of visitors travel to Washington by personal vehicle or bus. Visitors arriving by bus are left with no other method of transportation once they arrive in Downtown Washington. Additionally, visitors arriving by personal vehicle will likely park in one location and walk around most of the Downtown area. Most of the attractions, shops and restaurants are in a 4 square block area, a distance that is "walk-able" for most visitors. However, the hike up the steep-one block hill from the Riverfront and Visitor Center is difficult for seniors, young children and handicapped visitors. Some form of transportation up that hill and around Downtown would promote a seamless experience, help solve parking problems at major events, and help extend visitor stays.





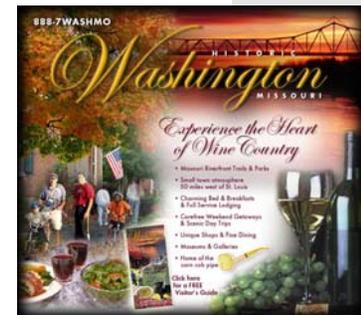
Form A Local Arts Organization

Arts, crafts, music and performances are part of almost every event or festival hosted by Washington. Plus, there are many galleries or shops that feature local artists along Main Street and in Downtown. There are many talented local and regional artists that rely on Washington as a venue to show and sell their work. Finally, there are attractions in Washington that are tied to the arts, such as the Photojournalism Hall of Fame and special shows at the Washington Historical Society Museum.

Washington must form an arts council. Not only would the arts council be able to coordinate and communicate with all artists in and around Washington, but the arts council would be able to better utilize the resources of the Missouri Arts Council and can be more competitive in its bid for community arts grants. The Washington Arts Council could first be started or operated by Downtown Washington Inc., with status as a 501c(3) organization.

Continue Position as Heart of Wine Country

The wineries along Highways 100 and 94 in the Missouri River Valley are a main attraction for many visitors to the Washington area. There is a density of winery and vineyards here that does not exist in western Missouri or in the surrounding states. People travel to Washington for the shops and events along Main Street and the Riverfront – but they also travel to Washington to begin their winery tour. Washington has the distinctive position as a small town with a vibrant Main Street, filled with shops and restaurants, AND a small town in a picturesque location at the entrance or portal to the wine country of eastern Missouri. The strength of Washington’s business community in Downtown can sustain its position as “the Heart of Wine Country.” Opportunity exists for Washington to arrange for formal “wine tours” via motor coach or shuttle bus systems to solidify its position as the “portal” to wine country.



Maintain and Enhance Diversity of Experience in Downtown Washington

One of Washington's strengths is the diversity of attractions and businesses in Downtown. This characteristic distinguishes Washington from other towns in Missouri, and encourages repeat visits; each visit to Washington can be completely different from the other. For example, one visit may be to attend a Sunset on the River event at Rennick Riverfront Park, another visit may be to go shopping and dine at a fine restaurant, or another may be to visit the Farmer's Market and stop by the Photojournalism Hall of Fame. In addition, Washington has history and beautiful views of the Riverfront and streetscapes that make the Downtown a destination worth visiting many times. Washington is more than a portal for Missouri's wine country by virtue of these diverse experiences, and can attract a wider audience. Washington should maintain and promote this characteristic of diversity in its attractions and businesses.



Improve Existing Attractions; Develop New Attractions

Currently, most visitors come to Downtown Washington for festivals, wine tours, shopping and dining. Attractions such as the Photojournalism Hall of Fame, Meerschaum Corncob Pipe Factory, and the Washington Historical Society Museum are not the main draw to Washington per se, but they are a bonus attraction for visitors once they are in town. Collectively these several attractions have the potential to improve and appeal to a broader range of visitors.

The Photojournalism Hall of Fame is a unique attraction and can appeal to a broad audience – from seniors to school children. Photography is a very accessible form of art and can be viewed from a historic, art and journalism points of view. This Hall of Fame has great potential and should be developed. Specifically, the Photojournalism Hall of Fame’s first steps at improvement would be to locate to a permanent facility; retain a director who has the time to raise funding, curate and schedule exhibits; and, develop a marketing program that reaches the local Washington community as well as regional newspapers, magazines and universities (such as University of Missouri and Webster University journalism programs).

The Washington Historical Society Museum houses a wonderful and unique collection of zithers. That collection, as well as the history and music associated with it can be a featured attraction for the Museum. Improved access to the exhibit, improved video of the history of the zither and live interpretation and demonstrations can draw visitors to the Museum, and can make the Zither Performances a distinct destination for Washington.



The Meerschaum Corncob Pipe Factory provides a uniquely “American” experience. Corncob pipes are part of American history; they appear in photographs, illustration and movies. And all of those pipes were manufactured at the Meerschaum Corncob Pipe Factory. These stories and images can be added to an improved museum at the Factory or retained as a stand-alone attraction located in Downtown (possibly at the Visitor’s Center) if necessary. This is another attraction that appeals to a broad audience, and is unique to Washington.

Once these attractions become a “must see” during a visit to Washington, they will induce visitors to extend their stay, possibly spending the night in Washington. Similarly, the addition of new attractions will serve the same purpose. Not only will they extend the visitors’

stay once in Washington, the opening of a new attraction can be “the” reason why people will want to visit Washington or use this town as their starting point for wine tours, instead of driving directly to the wineries or starting from another location.

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CONCLUSIONS, IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE WORK

Washington has made significant accomplishments in the renovation of Downtown and has successfully developed a “Main Street, USA” community full of active businesses, and a rich mix of arts and regular events that convey a vibrancy that encourages people to visit and stay. Many of the higher level needs of the Destination Hierarchy have been addressed by Washington. Downtown Washington and the surrounding region provide memorable, motivational, and comfortable experiences through the existing tourist assets. In some cases, individuals may even reach transformational experiences.

However, Washington’s greatest and most immediate impediment is one of the very “basic” of the Hierarchy of Needs; that is, the need for wayfinding and signage. The Main Street and surrounding blocks in Downtown have been (and continue to be) beautifully and historically renovated. Shops and restaurants have begun coordinating their hours of operation and have extended hours during festivals and busy times of year. Residents have made Downtown part of their routine. All of this reflects a strong community that is full of life and activity. But, if visitors can’t find Downtown, they will go to another town or use a popular winery as their first stop in Missouri’s wine country. In order to enhance the existing tourism assets, this basic need should be addressed.

Overall, Washington will be able to reap the benefits of a “quick win” by addressing the recommendations that focus on the “basic needs” and “social experiences” of the visitors’ Hierarchy of Needs. Specifically, improving signage and wayfinding and adding a Visitor Center annex to Main Street will provide all visitors with a level of comfort and sense of place of Washington that will encourage them to visit and stay in Downtown. A formal “Wayfinding” planning process will assist in identifying the key locations and look and feel of appropriate signage. DREAM’s assistance through the Streetscape Guidelines will assist the City in providing wayfinding and aesthetic improvements within the Downtown District. In addition, improving wayfinding and signage in Downtown will make it easier for visitors to enjoy the dining and shopping after a long day of wine tours or festival activities.

Addressing these basic needs will significantly highlight Downtown Washington, securing its position as the portal to the Missouri River Valley wine region and enhance the “Main Street USA” brand. This will allow visitors to look beyond their comfort and safety needs, and explore the attractions and events that will deliver that “personal” and “enriching” experience that visitors hope to find in a destination. For Washington, visitors will be able to repeatedly enjoy the richness and variety of arts, food, and shopping, as well as join the residents as they celebrate the vibrant and welcoming Downtown Washington experience.

APPENDIX
INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS

Inventory of Attractions		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Historic Sites/ Points of Interest	Amtrak Train Station	Providing daily service from Chicago, St. Louis and Kansas City to Washington's train depot and Visitor Center.
	Historic Downtown	Three National Register Historic Districts and "Main Street" shopping and dining - all overlooking the Missouri River.
Museums	German School Museum	The arts and crafts of yesteryear are well preserved in the Historic Washington Museum rooms at the German School. Built in 1871, the building served as Washington's elementary school until 1955. The town clock has been operating since 1890.
	Washington Historical Society Archives & Records Center	Two floors of fantastic historic exhibits telling the tale of Washington from its early beginnings. Includes the Four Rivers Genealogical Society Library and Archives; videos, dioramas, and souvenirs.
	Washington Fire Company Museum	The museum was established in 1971 when station #2 was dedicated. The volunteers salvaged and restored old fire equipment that had been stored in sheds throughout Washington.
	Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame	First of its kind in the nation. Inductees in their careers must have made an impact in Missouri with their work to be eligible for nomination to the Hall of Fame.
	Corn Cob Pipe Museum	Nostalgia room attached to the Missouri Meerschaum factory.

INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS

Inventory of Attractions		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Shopping/Antiques/Galleries	Farmer's Market	Downtown's newest attraction. Seasonal fruits and vegetables, locally produced bake goods, arts and crafts and special events under the
	Specialty Shops	The Art Center The Blackthorn Stick, Irish Imports & Gifts Brown's Shoe Outlet Copper Sun Altemueller Jewelry Designer Threads Custom Embroidery & Gift Shoppe Droege's Supermarket & Catering Elm Street Company The Fudge Shoppe Hillermann Nursery and Florist I.B. Nuts and Fruit Too Inscriptions Engraved Gifts/Show Me Trophies & Awards Loaves and Fishes Bulk Foods Not Just Cut and Dried, Inc. Office Supplies & Equipment Schulte's Bakery Toadly Frogs Urban Accents Wedding Creations Zuzu's
	Antiques	Annie Rose Linen & Antiques Dusty Attic Antiques East Main Street Antiques Waterworks Antiques Willow Creek Antiques
Studios/Galleries		Gary R. Lucy Gallery Mid-Missouri Fine Arts Gallery Pogue's Sculpture Studio and Art Gallery

INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS

Inventory of Attractions		
Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Parks and Recreation	Rennick Riverfront Park	Large lighted pavilion, medium pavilion, mini shelter houses, picnic areas, Missouri River boat ramp access and dock, hike and bike trail.
	Rotary Riverfront Trail	Bikeway that begins at Rennick Riverfront Park and parallels the Missouri River.
	City Parks	Nine parks are available for recreation with some providing playgrounds, ball fields, picnic tables and an Olympic-sized swimming pool.
Family Entertainment	Various	Town n' Country Lanes Four Rivers YMCA Washington City Pool Cinema 1 Plus
Accommodations	Hotels/Motels/Inns	Sleep Inn, Inn & Suites Washington Super 8 Motel
	Bed & Breakfasts	Brick Inn Bed and Breakfast La Dolce Vita Guest Haus Bed & Breakfast
Annual Events		Annual Home Show Sunset on the Riverfront Annual Art Fair & Winefest Cruise with the Blues Downtown Washington Town & Country Fair Downtown Washington's Chilli Cook-Off Fall Festival of the Arts & Crafts Halloween Family Fun Night Holiday Parade of Lights Washington's Olde Fashioned Christmas

