

DRAFT

Berea Economic Advancement Team Meeting - Tourism Group - January 12, 2012

Attending: Peggy Baker, Kristen Dalessio, David Rowlette, Paul Reynolds, Ronnie Terrill, Diane Kerby (recorder).

Tourism Strategic Plan

The leakage analysis indicates there is a demand for an expansion of tourism in Berea that would create new jobs. The disconnect of arts centers, no fun, lack of gathering spaces and aging artisan population are listed as weaknesses in the SWOT analysis. That analysis lists opportunities as building upon Berea's existing arts reputation and taking a broader approach to tourism by emphasizing local scenery, sports tournaments, recreation activities and local history and culture.

The tourism group met twice and agreed that the goal to leverage tourism as an economic development tool should be: to broaden the definition of tourism to include diverse recreational activities and events, history, scenery, exercise, arts and an event center while continuing to support artists and craftspeople.

Strategies to achieve this goal

1. Develop a master calendar/schedule/inventory of all events/activities/opportunities/facilities that would be accessible and available to citizens and visitors.
 - a. This would increase the customer base for existing businesses and opportunities for new ones. Tool for hotels, restaurants, event planners.etc. It would provide options for tourists and locals and would increase foot traffic.
 - b. It is low cost and should use web based- use technology. The costs would be IT support and staff to monitor. There could be kiosks located through out town and there would be a cost to maintain those.
 - c. Action Plan- ask Tourism to work with others to investigate feasibility, costs and implementation plans. City Council would have to endorse this effort and approve funding. This would need to be a coordinated effort between Tourism, Chamber of Commerce, Berea College, merchants, churches and any one sponsoring or coordinating events.
2. Create events - recreational, swim meets, runs, trail hikes/walks/events, tournaments, agritourism.
 - a. This would increase sport/recreation/culture sales for local businesses – t shirts, books, sports related equipment. Activities would generate more business for local merchants – food, lodging, gas. It could generate new businesses – run/bike shops.

- b. Since Parks and Rec and Tourism are already doing many events and are challenged to do all they do, they should evaluate offerings and add or delete and explore options of partnering with others to offer events. Low cost events like runs or hikes could be added easily.
 - c. Obstacles may be the current resource allocation method used by Tourism. Can more \$\$ be spent on local events? Need to understand and evaluate funding and limitations/possibilities. Events could also pay for themselves or generate additional revenue.
 - d. Action plan – identify slow times, space for events, possible events and venues, link to regional activities, identify partners. Ask Tourism and Parks to investigate.
3. Create more facilities that would promote events and interaction and review existing physical image.
- a. More spaces and better image of existing facilities would provide opportunities for a variety of activities – passive and active for locals and tourists.
 - b. Action plan –
 - i. Develop master plans to upgrade Berea physical image – no unique identity – Chestnut street needs facelift. Create dynamic community – make Berea feel different. Need consistent look - play up history, tell Berea’s story. More public art, signage, maps. Bury utilities. Benches, bike racks, more recycling.
 - ii. A master plan should be developed for city wide parks/greenspaces/gardens, bird sanctuaries, dog walks. It should identify possible locations (Moore farm, parks throughout town) and conceptual plans. Look at examples (Yew Dell Gardens) from other cities.
 - iii. Conduct a feasibility study for a facility that would serve as a community/conference center. Define what it is, determine conference revenue potential and demand (less than 300 participants), inventory existing facility resources, explore the possibilities of partnering with local industries Hitachi, Berea College, and explore underused or unused facilities.
 - iv. Finalize and implement the City of Berea “Trail Plan”. Develop an action plan and timeline.
 - v. Explore ways to partner with Berea College to share resources and revenue.
 - c. The City would have to commission studies and allocate resources for plans. Planning process should include as many people as possible. Chamber, Parks, Tourism, Berea College, clubs and organizations.
4. Investigate alcohol sales in Berea as an economic driver.
- a. This could attract tourists and provide entertainment opportunities for local citizens. It could also attract new businesses such as restaurants.

- b. Action plan- develop a committee to study the possibilities and economic impacts.
Obstacles might be moral objections to alcohol consumption.
- 5. Random thoughts
 - a. Need a separate strategy for partnership development?
 - i. College
 - ii. ECU Center
 - iii. State tourism
 - iv. Nonprofits - Berea Arts Council, Artisan Center
 - v. Financial inst.
 - vi. Private land owners to develop trails
 - vii. Agri tourism – foxhollow example
 - b. Mass transit
 - a. Event Planner – additional staff for tourism
 - b. Grants available
 - c. Create events around Berea’s uniqueness – Historical Berea Day