

Visitor Readiness Report

Oakridge, OR

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Introduction

The Oakridge-Westfir Visitor Readiness Report is an initiative by Oakridge/Westfir Chamber of Commerce, the department of Lane County Economic Development, and the Convention & Visitors Association of Lane County Oregon. It is designed to provide a checklist of actions to enhance the destination's tourism performance. It is not a tourism development, branding or marketing plan, hence does not include all of the actions that the area may address in annual tourism programs.

Located at the foot of the western slopes of the Cascade Mountains, Oakridge-Westfir boasts some of Oregon's most picturesque and challenging recreational opportunities. Oakridge and Westfir are completely surrounded by the Willamette National Forest which means that visitors are just minutes away from a long list of trailheads. In fact, there are nearly 500 miles of trails within an hour and a half of Oakridge-Westfir. There are trails for every kind of outdoor recreation including hiking, biking, cross county skiing, and equestrian activities.

Despite these considerable assets, motorists can travel along Highway 58 through Oakridge and not recognize that they are surrounded by these recreational opportunities. In fact, visitors may think that there is no real reason or need to stop in the city.

There are several proposed initiatives that TDM believes will have significant positive impacts on the area as a visitor destination over the next few years if they are fully implemented. These include the proposed International Mountain Biking Association ride center, the Oakridge-Westfir Community Trails Plan 2008 and the City's active business and industry relocation efforts.

The recommended actions were created after research, site visits, and consultation with local stakeholders.

The priority issues identified in this report include:

- Branding and positioning
- Information distribution
- Marketing Communications
- Signage and wayfinding
- Product development

The recommendations should not be interpreted as meaning that current tourism efforts have been flawed. The Chamber to date has been doing a good job with very limited financial and staff resources. The recommendations are designed to fine-tune critical points of contact with visitors and to suggest methods for the area's performance to generate greater economic benefits from tourism.

Methodology

The development of the Visitor Readiness Report for Oakridge-Westfir involved a variety of actions which included:

- An extensive review of past reports, strategies and plans relating to Oakridge-Westfir.
- Review and analysis of past and current marketing materials, including brochures, web sites, maps and partner marketing materials (e.g. hotels).
- Online research to review key web sites relating to Oakridge, as well as those that potentially should carry references to Oakridge.
- An online community survey providing stakeholders with an opportunity to express their opinions.
- Personal interviews with local business and community leaders.
- Discussions with local residents, particularly those in contact with visitors.
- On-site assessments of the two cities and their surrounding region.

Visitor Readiness Report

Total Destination Experience

The Visitor Readiness Report is founded on the need to deliver outstanding and appropriate experiences at every point of contact with visitors at each stage of their destination experience. The information and experience needs of prospective visitors change according to the stage in their decision making in regard to the destination.

The following model is useful for considering customer's decision-making and satisfaction at key moments in their contact with Oakridge. It reflects that as customers proceed from one stage to the next, their behavior, desires and needs change. This has a direct influence on the methods and content of communications. These five stages are:

1) *Search*: This stage includes the early points of contact that influence whether the person becomes a customer for the destination or not. Commonly, these points of contact include advertising, articles in newspapers and magazines, brochures, web sites, guidebooks, word of mouth, emails and past experiences.

2) *Plan, Compare and Book*: Bridging the gap between a potential visitor's consideration of a community and becoming a customer is possibly the greatest challenge facing all destination marketers. The points here commonly include fulfilling the questions from prospects and the ease of making transactions and bookings. They may relate to web sites, reservations services, price, conditions and rules, discounts, packages, and staff.



3) *Travel and Arrival*: At this point the experience is well underway, and the journey is an integral part of the total destination experience. The cost, quality, and ease of access and transport can influence attitudes toward the place. Upon arrival in the city, is it easy for to find their way around? What are their first impressions? Is there a sense of welcome?

4) *The Visit*: This is the phase where we are most conscious of the experiences associated with a destination. What is the quality of the attractions and their experiences? How are customers interacting with the place? What are the quality and service standards? What is the

appropriateness of attractors, signage, brochures, tour guides, taxi drivers, and visitor services?

5) *Post Visit*: This phase is frequently overlooked and does not receive the attention that it deserves to build positive word of mouth and positive memories. What is their reaction to leaving the place, engagement in social networking sites, souvenirs and local products, direct mail, and “thank you” correspondence?

Visitor Readiness Report

This Visitor Readiness Report provides recommendations for enhancing Oakridge-Westfir’s capabilities and competitiveness in ways that are essential for successful tourism. It is divided into the following sections:

- 1. Positioning and Branding** What does the city want to be known for and how will it build its reputation as a desirable destination?
- 2. Attractors and Experiences** These are the elements that attract visitors, encourage them to stay longer and are the core components of the area’s tourism experiences.
- 3. Streetscapes, Signage and Wayfinding** Streetscapes are integral to the visitor experience, while signage and gateways inform, guide, and motivate travelers.
- 4. Marketing Communications** The actions and messages that communicate the tourism benefits of the area.
- 5. Soft Adventure Operators and Outfitters** These businesses enhance the visitor experience by enabling a higher level of engagement and excitement with the destination.
- 6. Leadership and Organization** These capture the way that the area is organized and motivated for tourism.

1. Positioning and Branding

While fundamental positioning and branding issues are addressed in this report, it is not a brand strategy. Increasingly, places of all sizes are turning to the principles of positioning and branding in order to shape their marketing and help them stand apart from competitors. It clarifies what is special about the place. This plays a role in influencing whether people plan to visit, recommend it to others or decide to stop there in transit to other places. This top-of-mind awareness is activated when people hear the name of the place or associate it with activities or experiences.

Positioning is at the heart of branding and establishes what we want customers to think and feel about the place. It relates to the position in consumer's minds (and hearts) that we want to occupy. The strongest positioning frequently involves temporarily sacrificing some attributes in order to select the most enticing, meaningful and differentiating. The objective is to secure the largest number of high yield customers possible, while upholding the community's values and achieving its strategic objective of benefit for the community.

The three most important concepts for places like Oakridge-Westfir to master in branding are (i) differentiation and positioning, i.e. leading with what sets it apart, (ii) focusing on those strengths, and (iii) being consistent in how these attributes are presented, and ensuring that tourism partners deliver on the city's brand promise.

"A brand is a living entity – and is enriched and undermined cumulatively over time, the product of a thousand small gestures."

Michael Eisner
Former Disney CEO

Oakridge-Westfir Positioning and Branding

Oakridge-Westfir has a strong competitive edge over other Northwest destinations because of its 350 plus miles of well developed mountain biking tracks, and several small businesses and events catering to these enthusiasts. The current positioning as "Oregon's center for outdoor recreation" does not provide a competitive edge that the area can own. This can be, and is, claimed by many other Northwest locations that have much more highly developed capabilities - except in their capacity for mountain biking. Oakridge has been acclaimed by Bike Magazine which recognized the place as one of "America's Five Best Mountain Biking Towns" by Bike Magazine. Mountain biking has the potential to gain national and international publicity for the city as a desirable destination for mountain bikers from around the world. The general offering of "outdoor recreation" does not have the capacity to achieve this for the area.

Additionally, the prospect of Oakridge becoming a ride center location for the International Mountain Biking Association will place the city at the forefront of mountain biking internationally. No other aspect of outdoor recreation in the area can achieve this.

Adopting the positioning based upon mountain biking does not mean that Oakridge is forgetting about hiking, horse-riding, fishing, hunting, bird watching and other recreational

activities. The focus on an attribute that has the capacity to generate international awareness for the city will benefit all tourism businesses in the city.

Recommended Actions:

1. Oakridge-Westfir should adopt its brand **positioning** based on mountain biking, not general outdoor recreation. Mountain biking should **lead images, copy and experiences** in Oakridge brochures, web sites and articles. This does not mean that other area attributes are forgotten. It is just that mountain biking takes the lead in the majority of situations. It is through this focus and consistency over a long period that positive awareness will increase and Oakridge will stand apart from others and be synonymous with mountain biking.
2. If the budget is available, the Oakridge **logo** should be redesigned to feature mountain biking.
3. Oakridge should adopt the **themeline**, *Mountain biking capital of the Northwest*.
4. Identify a series of **key phrases and words** to be consistently used in conjunction with Oakridge-Westfir. These may include, "mountain biking capital", "500 miles of trails surrounding the city", "a small town surrounded by the vast Willamette Valley National Forest", etc. Encourage all organizations to use these terms when describing the area from a tourism perspective.
5. **Communicate** the positioning and branding based on mountain biking to local stakeholders to generate their support.
6. The Chamber of Commerce, in association with CVALCO, should **convene meetings** with all relevant businesses throughout the area to demonstrate the importance of the new county and local area branding and positioning. The organizations should convey how the initiatives will enhance the success of the area's businesses and the steps that need to be taken to underpin and deliver the brand to visitors.
7. Constantly **innovate and develop strategies** to ensure that the area is able to consistently excel at being perceived as the mountain biking capital of the Northwest.

Alignment with Regional Brand

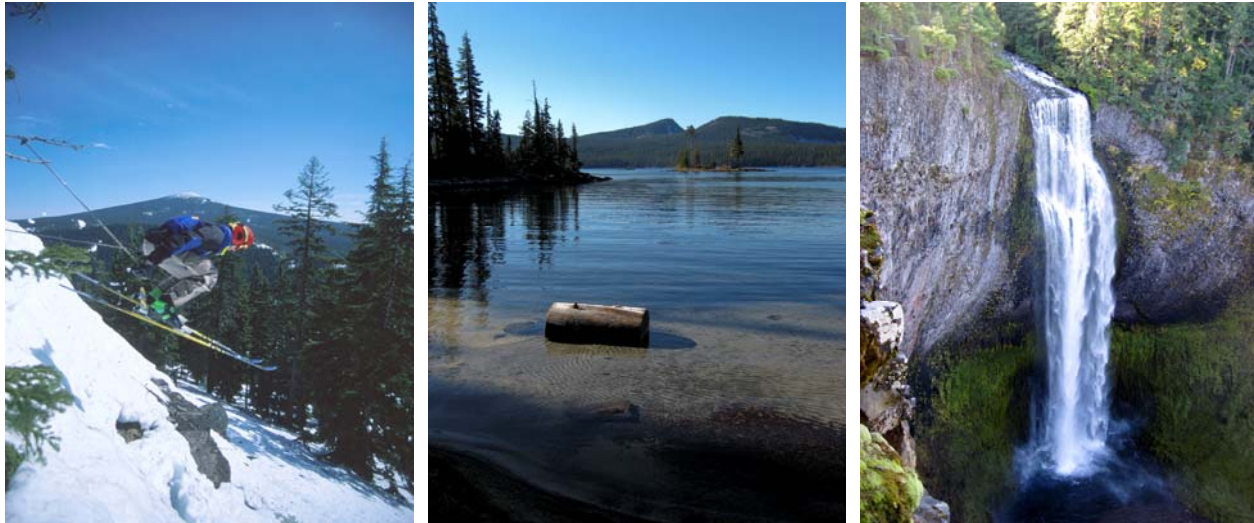
The new regional tourism brand is founded on accessible soft adventures. The Oakridge-Westfir experiences that are most aligned with this brand are mountain biking, cycling, hiking, camping and scenic drives. Particularly relevant are the hundreds of miles of mountain biking trails which are ideal for enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels.

Recommended Actions:

8. Collaborate with CVALCO to ensure that Oakridge's soft adventure activities are projected wherever appropriate in the region's brand communications and product development initiatives.

2. Attractors and Experiences

These are the features and attributes that motivate people to visit a place and in turn encourage them to extend their stay. They may be physical sites, events, places or a feeling that people derive from the place. The visitor attractions for Oakridge-Westfir are centered on nature-based experiences. The area is renowned for its outstanding mountain biking trails which are also ideal for hiking and horse riding enthusiasts.



Oakridge's close proximity to Willamette Pass, Waldo Lake and Salt Creek Falls makes it an ideal base for visiting regional attractions.

Key Experience Themes

Key experience themes are the broad categories of activities that complement and support the positioning of the city. These themes reflect its value proposition and competitive advantage in delivering outstanding customer moments in these activities.

The primary visitor attractions of Oakridge-Westfir are mountain biking, cycling, hiking, fishing and hunting, and areas of outstanding scenic beauty.

9. The recommended **key experience themes** in Oakridge are :

Priority

- Mountain biking , which should be the lead experiences highlighted in most Oakridge marketing.

Complementary

- Hiking, birding, camping, wildflowers
- Hunting and fishing

- Equestrian

Mountain Biking Trails

Oakridge-Westfir is gaining a reputation as one of the leading mountain biking centers on the West Coast. The majority of visitor activity is focused on Oakridge, although the trailhead at Office Covered Bridge in Westfir is important to the mix of options for riders. Oakridge is surrounded by hundreds of miles of highly rated advanced trails that have resulted in it being recognized as one of “America’s Five Best Mountain Biking Towns” by Bike Magazine.

While there are excellent trails, there are some critical issues which are limiting the area’s capacity to present outstanding experiences to its visitors. Very few trails are accessible close to town, although there are transfer services for cyclers. At present there is not a central location in Oakridge for riders to meet, relax, equip, eat and plan trips.

The proposed International Mountain Biking Association ride center and the Oakridge-Westfir Community Trails Plan 2008 address many of the gaps and deficiencies with the area’s current mountain biking experiences.



The outstanding mountain biking trails require better signposting and trailhead identification.

Recommended Actions:

10. The Oakridge-Westfir Community Trails Plan 2008 should be well supported. The Plan addresses many of the issues that the TDM team has identified to be important for a successful and sustainable mountain biking destination.
11. The proposed International Mountain Biking Association ride center that will focus development on three trail gateways (Fish Hatchery, Office Covered Bridge and Greenwaters) should also be supported.
12. **Identify two trails**, one advanced and one much less challenging and more accessible to be branded and marketed as “must do” experiences for soft adventure enthusiasts. As

appropriate, they should be publicized to illustrate the generic term “mountain biking” when describing what to see and do.

Outdoor Recreation Outfitters

The availability of quality outfitters and guides is vital in order for many visitors to enjoy their outdoor experiences. They are often associated with fishing, rafting, hunting, and trail riding. There are permanent outfitters for fishing and mountain biking based in Oakridge, and for kayaking during the summer months.

The fishing outfitter on Highway 58 is not readily visible to motorists. We understand that there are no fishing guides in Oakridge.

The bike store in Oakridge has the potential to become an even more important central hub for mountain bikers. While it is well known by locals, its name “Willamette Mountain Mercantile” does not communicate that it is a specialist in mountain biking and other recreational activities. Visitors need to be able to easily recognize that this business rents mountain bikes for their use. It is also not readily apparent that there is a guide and transfer service in Oakridge for mountain bikers.



The clustering of outfitters, a coffee shop, and Visitor Information Center will create a very interesting and engaging precinct for visitors.

Recommended Actions:

13. Create a hub and meeting place for outdoor recreation enthusiasts in the city. There are many side-by-side vacant buildings on Highway 58. If the opportunity presents itself, consider relocating the bike shop, fishing store and other outdoor recreation businesses to where they can be situated together. This in turn may support a coffee shop and restaurant to form a viable precinct during peak months. The series of empty buildings to the west of Best Western may represent such an opportunity. Another alternative may be to locate the recreation businesses in the Uptown area. When competing or complementary businesses are clustered together they can generate more business than if they operate in isolation to each other. Examples of this phenomenon can be seen on

freeways where many fast food outlets operating in close proximity can represent convenience and choice.

14. The availability of **mountain bike rentals and transfers to trailheads** should be prominent in all communications. These are potentially points of differentiation from other competitors and can attract visitors who may not have otherwise have visited the area.
15. Encourage **outdoor outfitters and guides** to relocate to Oakridge-Westfir. There are presently no fishing guides in Oakridge.

Greenwaters Recreation Area

This very attractive park, along the Willamette River at the eastern entry to Oakridge, offers highly accessible recreational opportunities for visitors to the city. The park features picnic tables, an amphitheater, play areas, restrooms and the Visitor Information Center. However, unless visitors explore the park it is not readily apparent to them that across the footbridge is an excellent hiking and biking trail.

Greenwaters Recreation Area serves many important functions for visitors. Several of the signs relating to the park require attention. The “Greenwater Recreation Park 2 miles” sign at the western approach to Oakridge appears before the “Oakridge” sign. The trail from the park is excellent and it is the closest and most readily accessible for visitors to the city, but is not signposted. The availability of clean, safe and accessible toilet facilities is not only an important public service, but can encourage stopping and spending more time in the community. For many international visitors and possibly domestic visitors, the current signs saying Rest Area would not necessarily convey that toilet facilities are available.



Greenwaters Recreation Area provides excellent, accessible trails and facilities, however there are several types of signs that are needed to enhance visitor experiences and awareness of the area.

Recommended Actions:

16. The **international activity_symbols** for hiking, biking, information, toilet and picnic tables should be added to the Greenwaters Recreation Area advanced warning signs to convey the availability of these activities at the site.
17. Within the park, there should be directional signs to the **Larison Rock Trailhead** along with an indication of the length of the trail. Display maps should be installed showing the system of trails from this point.
18. The signs for Greenwaters Recreation Area should show the availability of **toilet facilities**.
19. A sign should be added at the "T" intersection immediately inside the entrance to Greenwaters Recreation Area to direct visitors to the **Visitor Information Center**.

Touring Route

The TDM team was informed that many international visitors stop in Oakridge while traveling to or from Crater Lake. A route originating in Portland and including Oakridge, Florence and Crater Lake would be of interest to international visitors.

Recommended Actions:

20. Develop and publicize a **self-drive itinerary for international visitors** in conjunction with CVALCO and Travel Oregon.

Willamette Fish Hatchery

The range of appealing experiences at the Fish Hatchery, such as the interpretation trail, mini golf facility, live bird displays and museum, are not immediately apparent upon arrival at the entrance to the facility. The hatchery has the capacity to attract more visitors and to hold them for several hours given the range of activities offered. This may be partially solved with the proposal to locate one of the International Mountain Biking Association's Ride Center portals at the Hatchery.

Recommended Actions:

21. **The Fish Hatchery** offers many visitor experiences in addition to the hatchery facilities, however these are only discovered after the visitor has explored the grounds. The publicity and signs for the Hatchery should more fully convey the diversity of activities available.

Events

Oakridge-Westfir hosts several events associated with mountain biking. Events of this nature are extremely important to the development of a viable tourism industry in the area. Some of these events are near capacity due to restrictions on the usage of the trails. They are also instrumental in developing an identity for the area as an outstanding center for mountain bikers. The mountain biking market in western USA is large, growing and well travelled.

Recommended Actions:

22. Investigate the feasibility of adding another event in Fall related to the trails. Ideally, this should again be associated with mountain biking, but due to carrying capacity issues may have to relate to hiking, orienteering or birdwatching.



The Willamette Fish Hatchery offers a surprising range of activities including trails that are not apparent upon entering the site. Signage and promotional materials should more fully outline the available activities.

Oakridge Museum

The Oakridge Museum does not project a strong or attractive invitation to prospective visitors. It is only open Saturdays from 1PM to 4 PM or by appointment. The phone number in the window had several digits missing. While the museum has an extensive collection of artifacts, machinery and images that reflect the heritage of Oakridge and the surrounding region they are not well presented. The museum is managed by a small group of volunteers who are working extremely hard on a very limited budget. The challenges of maintaining and preserving such a museum and its collection to a standard that will appeal to contemporary tastes are considerable.

Recommended Actions:

23. If it is decided that the museum should play a more active role in tourism the presentation of the museum building and its exhibits must be considered. It should improve the appearance of the building, rationalize and better interpret the collection that is currently on display and organize it around a small number of themes to better tell the Oakridge story.
24. Consider building a permanent collection related to the history of mountain biking (nationally) with the view to making this the special focus of the museum in future years. This could complement the International Mountain Biking Association ride center.

3. Streetscapes, Signage and Wayfinding

This section addresses the streetscapes, place elements and signage that are needed to provide a quality visitor experience. These provide a sense of place, welcome, and community spirit.

First Impressions start at the entrance to the area. Appearances really do count when it comes to attracting visitors and the economic well being of places. Visitors are attracted to, and spend more time in places that are attractive, clean, welcoming, and well maintained. It is easy for communities to overlook the appearance of their streets, the absence of trees, poor lighting, trash and bad signage that may have evolved over the years. Visitors, however, are much less forgiving. Where attention has been paid to the aesthetics of a place (including preserving or enhancing its natural qualities and environments), it gains the reputation as a “special place”.

Signage and wayfinding systems also serve vital roles. They inform, guide, and motivate travelers. They are also important in shaping the identity of a place through their style, design, colors, lettering and content.

Directional Signage and Wayfinding

Many potential customers for local services from outside of Oakridge are not aware of the city’s recreational sites, amenities or attractions. Each day thousands of motorists travel through Oakridge along Highway 58 and are not aware of the trails and other outdoor recreation facilities in this city surrounded by national forests. The installation of State authorized international symbols and icons for attractions and visitor services on signs would encourage travelers to stop and explore the area. Excellent examples of the use of these symbols can be seen on Highway 126 in the Willamette Pass.



Advanced warning signs for the city’s nature-based attractions should feature international symbols as in these signs on Highway 58 near Willamette Pass.

Recommended Actions:

25. Wherever appropriate and possible throughout the city and surrounding areas introduce **international symbols and icons** in collaboration with ODOT to identify the activities that can be enjoyed at specific points of interest.
26. Review the **number and location of signs** on the east bound approach to the Middle Fork Ranger Station with the view to refining or consolidating them.

Gateways

The *gateway* to a community provides a valuable insight into the appeal of the place and whether it is welcoming and can satisfy the needs of visitors. Prior to entering Oakridge, motorists travel through very attractive, densely forested areas. The “Welcome to Oakridge” gateway stone features at the eastern and western entrances to the city are of very high quality, however the tagline is too small to read.

Recommended Actions:

27. “The center of Oregon recreation” gateway display should be replaced with the themeline, “The mountain bike capital of the Northwest”, and in larger and more visible typeface.
28. The “Oakridge” sign at the western entrance to town should be relocated before the Greenwaters sign by reversing their positions.



Oakridge gateway displays are attractive however they are emphasizing a message that can be claimed by many other communities in the Northwest.

Streetscapes

Highway 58 Corridor

The Highway 58 corridor is essential to the Oakridge visitor experience. It is almost impossible for visitors to enter the city without experiencing some aspect of this two-mile thoroughfare. Unfortunately, while many improvements have been made, the corridor is the source of many negative feelings about the city.

The 1989 report, “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis for Oakridge, Oregon prepared by Oregon Economic Development Department”, stated, “.....the poor appearance of Highway 58 serves to reinforce the image of Oakridge as a struggling depressed community this image is communicated by a two mile long commercial strip that shows signs of poor building and landscape maintenance, vacant and boarded up properties, extensive and poorly designed signage. The practical business effect of this image is to discourage people from stopping and spending money.”

Since the report was released there have been many improvements, however because of the scale of the problem along the two mile corridor, many locations remain that detract from the attractiveness of the city as a place to stop or stay for an extended period. A few examples of good practice can be seen at Rite Aid, the Chinese restaurant and Best Western.

Among the issues that still require attention are:

- Lack of trees and landscaping in many areas
- Unattractive blocks e.g. RV Park
- Poor quality business signs

- Derelict and poorly maintained buildings
- Buildings currently in need of painting and beautification, e.g. The Moose, Sportsman Café
- Vacant and untidy blocks of land that create gaps in the streetscape

Many of the solutions to the visitor readiness issues along Highway 58 corridor are dependent upon Oregon Department of Transport, its budget, authority and priorities. However, broad community action and volunteerism may assist in advancing many issues.



The Highway 58 streetscape does not present an attractive, welcoming and coherent impression to visitors. The derelict buildings, poor business signage, lack of trees and vacant blocks do not provide an attractive sense of place.

Recommended Actions:

29. Establish a **working group** to address improving the attractiveness of the Highway 58 corridor. The group should be highly action oriented and comprise representatives from businesses, service groups, schools and government. Actions may include periodic cleanup days, painting of buildings, removal of derelict structures (with permission), tree plantings, landscaping, development of parks, and replacement of unattractive and obsolete signs.
30. Consider **painting the empty buildings** to the west of the Best Western and others in the "Cascadia" colors to provide a more attractive entrance to the city, overcoming the distressed appearance that immediately greets the visitor. Beautification may also make the buildings more attractive to prospective new tenants.
31. Encourage **ODOT** to more proactively activate its corridor design strategy for Highway 58 to aid the economic vitality of the city.

Uptown

The downtown area of Oakridge, centered along First Street between Hazel and Beech Streets, is referred to as “Uptown”. This area is in need of revitalization, not only for visitors, but also as a catalyst for community pride. There are many buildings that are empty, in disrepair and abandoned. There is the need for landscaping, improvements to sidewalks, signage, and a more bicycle friendly environment. Uptown has very few businesses that are capable of satisfying visitor needs. Brewer’s Union, a micro brewery, is one of the few bright spots in the area.



The Brewer’s Union micro brewery is an excellent example of the style of development that can make Uptown an attractive precinct for visitors when streetscape and façade improvements are completed.

The deficiencies of this area are being addressed by a local non-profit organization, the Uptown Business and Revitalization Association (UBRA). After revitalization this area of Oakridge will re-emerge as the heart and soul of the city. UBRA has a very proactive plan to address the needs of the area and is seeking grant funds. The grant will finance streetscape improvements, bike lanes, sidewalk enhancements, bike racks, landscaping, lighting, water fountains and street art. These projects will greatly improve the experience for visitors and cyclists and create a more attractive sense of place. In conjunction with the improvements to the precinct is the need for improved directional signs to Uptown.

Recommended Actions:

32. Support the plans and programs for the redevelopment and *revitalization of the Uptown district by UBRA* and the introduction of more directional signs to Uptown.

4. Marketing Communications

This section outlines the approaches that should be taken to communicate Oakridge's brand messages to prospective visitors. These actions may be enhanced in the future according to the scale of the budget available for these activities and the level of partner participation.

"What's in it for me?"

In order to ensure that all communications are customer-focused and convey enticing benefits, imagine that the customer is looking over your shoulder as you prepare the marketing materials. When you proof-read the copy, select an image, or complete the production, imagine that the customer asks you, *"So, what's in it for me?"* This technique helps to maintain a customer-centered approach and can counter the bias of locals. The approach becomes all the more relevant when trying to satisfy people with specific special interests such as mountain biking and hiking. Generalized statements are not effective with these visitors. They require specific, detailed information expressed using the terms that they recognize.

Wherever possible, all communications should be led by core experiences and benefits, and not by facts, member lists or information included mainly to please internal stakeholders. Marketing materials must portray how the place will make customers feel and answer their perennial question, *"What's in it for me?"* In doing this, it is important to recognize where the visitor is in their decision-making and total destination experience. Don't make the mistake of overwhelming the prospective visitor with too much information that is irrelevant to their immediate needs.

Publications

Despite the advances in online communications and the Internet, brochures continue to play an important role in marketing and visitor satisfaction. However, they need to be well designed, thoughtfully written, and carefully distributed. Importantly, brochure should be designed so that they are aligned with the visitor's information needs at specific points in their decision-making as outlined on page 4.

Many cities try to promote themselves by using uninteresting lists of local attractions, businesses and services. While this information does have a role later in the decision-making of customers, it is rarely important at an early stage when visitors are developing their initial awareness and image of the place. Lists of where to eat, shop and stay alone do not achieve this. Prospective visitors first need to be convinced of what is appealing, special and memorable about the place, i.e. the reason/s for choosing to visit?

There is currently one main high quality map and brochure produced by the Oakridge-Westfir Chamber of Commerce, however it needs to be fine-tuned to project the community strength in mountain biking and address area information in greater detail.

There is the need for brochures that concisely convey experiences in order to strengthen initial interest in visiting the area. These publications should be written and designed in a

manner that enables prospective short-term visitors to quickly reference the type of information and activities they are seeking. Accurate maps are essential for visitors to find their way around. This is particularly important to Oakridge because of the network of mountain biking trails.

Care should be taken to ensure that advertising in the brochures does not dominate the design and detract from its effectiveness. Do not include businesses that are not directly relevant to visitors, e.g. insurance agencies, etc. Brochures should not be used as a device to publicize all members of the Chamber as this is counter productive to the purpose of the publication.

There is the need for an increased level of collaboration between CVALCO and all Chambers of Commerce throughout Lane County to develop a brochure and map production strategy. This will serve to conserve resources, improve quality, increase distribution and avoid duplication.

Recommended Actions:

33. In addressing the brochure needs of the city, the Chamber should take advantage of CVALCO resources and participate in the development of a county-wide publication and distribution strategy. An Oakridge-Westfir Activities Guide should be produced. This **lure or rack brochure** should have its sole focus on what to see and do, highlighting the mountain biking and hiking opportunities on the trails. It should be designed to entice people from one hundred miles from the city. The goal of this publication is to attract people to the city. To achieve this it is important to convey the most compelling information and experiences to prospective visitors and use high quality images and evocative copy. The cover image should show mountain bikers at a distinctive and dramatic location. The publication should include:
 - Concise descriptions of the main trails including distance, trailheads, international activity symbols and difficulty.
 - Highlight information on local outfitters and transfers to trails.
 - Include URL/web addresses for lodging and attractions.
 - Basic regional map showing where Oakridge area is located and main highways to get there.
 - Concisely state distances to Portland, Eugene, Crater Lake and the Oregon Coast.
34. The Oakridge-Westfir Visitors Map should be resigned to be the **Oakridge-Westfir Visitors Guide** for use by visitors after arriving in the city. This Guide should contain detailed information on the trails and attractions, as well as lodging, places to eat, etc.
35. CVALCO's **Visitors Guide** description of Oakridge should be more specific than general. It should be focused around the specific opportunities presented by mountain biking, cycling, hiking and horse riding. It should provide specific examples of experiences that visitors can enjoy and not simply describe the place.

36. Ensure that Oakridge is included in future editions of the **Travel Oregon Trip Planner**. The information should be specific as in the CVALCO brochure suggestions.
37. Ensure that Oakridge **hotel brochures** use the most enticing and relevant copy and images when describing the tourism appeal of the city.
38. Ensure that mountain biking and specific trails are featured in CVALCO's proposed **soft adventure guide**.

Information Distribution

Access to visitor information in the form of brochures, maps and personal advice is critical to visitor satisfaction and extending a visitor's length of stay in the community. In the case of Oakridge, strategically located information will assist in encouraging people to stop, visit and extend their stay in the area. The **Oakridge Visitor Information Center** is well stocked, however it should be located along Highway 58.

The **Middle Fork Ranger Station** is an excellent facility 4 miles west of Oakridge with friendly, helpful and knowledgeable staff and a well-stocked Visitor Information Center. The station performs an important function for the city and the surrounding national forests. There is the potential, particularly for international visitors, to bypass the center because they are not aware of the services offered by a ranger station. There is a small "visitor information" sign attached to the ranger station sign immediately before the entrance to the station. However, given the speed of motorists at this point, there may be insufficient notice for them to turn safely into the center.

The approach to the Ranger Station on Highway 58 has eight signs within a ¼ mile. These are confusing and are not allowing motorists to fully absorb all of the information. It is possible that not all of the information may be necessary at that point.



The Middle Fork Rangers Station is an excellent facility for visitors approaching Oakridge-Westfir from the west, however many visitors may not be aware that it is a very well stocked Visitor Information Center.

Recommended Actions:

39. Increase the amount of detailed information available at the **Office Covered Bridge** which is one of the most easily accessible trailheads. However the trail itself was blocked and despite an attractive information kiosk, it does not have information on the area or information about where mountain bikes or guides can be found.
40. The **Greenwaters Recreation Area Visitor Center** should have its opening hours displayed, easily accessible brochures and a weather proof enlarged tourism map for after-hours reference which is clearly visible and well lit.
41. The **Visitor Information Center** located within Greenwaters Park must be clearly identified on the more detailed map of Oakridge-Westfir found within the Visitors Map.

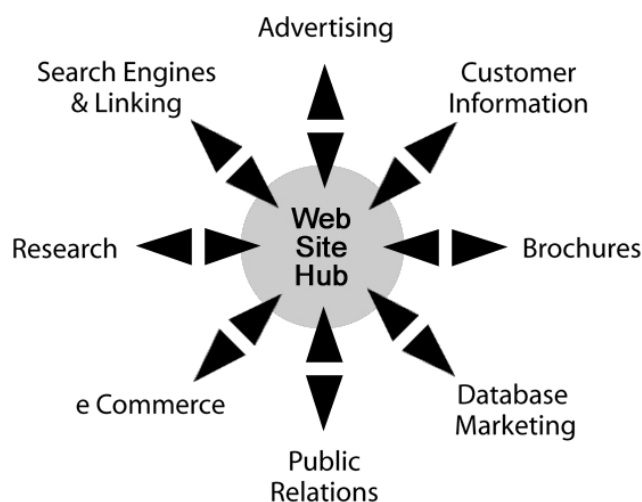
42. **Hotels** should be encouraged to display Oakridge brochures separate from the brochures for other regions in their lobbies.
43. Encourage the National Forest Service to use the name '**Ranger Station and Visitor Center**' because it may not be readily apparent for many visitors that the ranger station has such comprehensive information and visitor amenities. Using the name "Ranger Station & Visitor Center" on advance warning signs will communicate more effectively to motorists, particularly the international visitors.
44. The **Middle Fork Ranger Station** counter staff must continue to be fully aware of all equipment rental options available in Oakridge-Westfir for participating in adventure activities, particularly mountain biking.
45. In collaboration with CVALCO, work with **brochure distribution companies** to ensure that Lane County community and operator brochures are visible and organized together (possibly on the top shelf) in brochure racks. This task may eventually rest with the management of lodging to ensure that this local information is prominently and conveniently displayed because it can directly add to their guest's length of stay.

Web Marketing

The internet enables small destinations like Oakridge-Westfir to project their message globally at a fraction of the cost of a decade ago. However, simply having a web site does not guarantee that online visitors will access the site nor guarantee that once there they will spend time exploring it.

People searching for web sites are generally seeking four important benefits:

1. They want to find the site they are looking for quickly,
2. They want the site to be very easy to navigate,
3. They want comprehensive and credible content, and
4. Assistance in taking the "next steps".



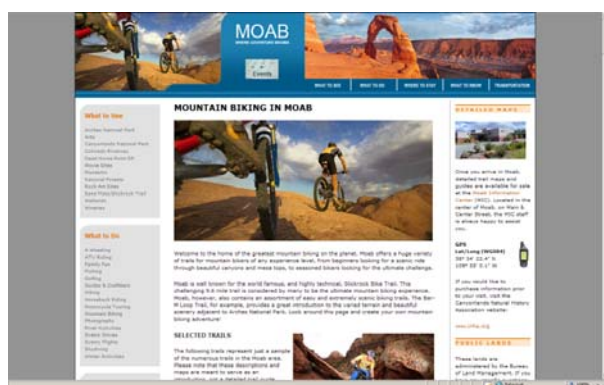
The Oakridge-Westfir Web Sites

The Oakridge web site serves a dual role in trying to provide information for Chamber members and visitors. The focus needs to be more clearly focused on satisfying the needs of visitors. The Oakridge web site should include more information and provide more categories of information to navigate.

The Oakridge-Westfir Chamber of Commerce Home Page looks like the home page of many small communities in the Northwest and does not project the distinctive, competitive edge that the community enjoys with its 500 miles of trails. The reality is that Oakridge, unlike many other small cities in Oregon, is competing nationally for mountain biking enthusiasts. Hence, the web site must be able to compete against competitors like Moab UT and Breckenridge CO that are more established and have larger marketing budgets.



Breckenridge, CO



Moab, UT

Landing on local web sites for many people is the result of searching on many other web sites, including Travel Oregon, CVALCO and Oregon.com. These people are possibly near the end of their search and are wanting detailed, accurate, relevant and easy to read and navigate information on specific subjects. They want less generic copy. Now is the time to sell Oakridge by expressing why it's special and how to experience it.

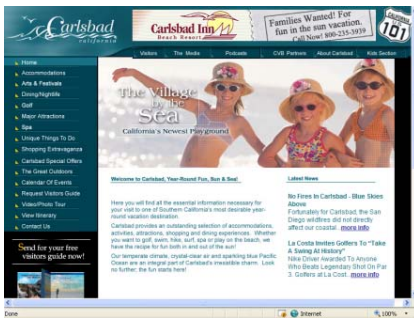
Search engines regularly visit web sites and filter their content to analyze, record, and file every word on every page. After thoroughly analyzing the site, algorithms are assigned to these words and phrases and a value assigned to the overall site. The web site's content and ease of navigation are instrumental in determining the priority that it is allocated by search engines and their ranking when visitors are searching for information. Additional elements which enhance the profile of web sites for search engines are meta tags and meta descriptions that make it easier for online visitors to find their way around.

The CVALCO web site has an important role in the search for information. The Oakridge information on this site needs to be more specific and also align with the brand identity that the Chamber must develop. Again, the information needs to be focused around the key experiences and project the "must do's" of mountain biking, hiking, and outdoor recreation.

Recommended Actions:

46. The City of Oakridge and Chamber of Commerce **web sites should be redesigned** to project a stronger identity for the area as an attractive place to visit. The Chamber should address its web design needs in close consultation with CVALCO to ensure that the site embraces the latest techniques appropriate to tourism online marketing. It needs to be more clearly focused on satisfying the needs of visitors and integrated into other marketing and information distribution programs, including those of CVALCO and Travel Oregon. The site should include more information and provide more categories of information to navigate based on the city's key experience themes. The web site should include:
 - Events
 - Find a Trail - description, distance, trailheads, international activity symbols, level of difficulty, transport to trails
 - Find Outfitters and Guides
 - Group tour information
 - Home Page - establishing the identity as "the mountain biking capital of the Northwest" with complementary key experience themes
 - How to get around: Transfers to and from trailheads
 - Maps
 - Media Room
 - Register for the e-newsletter
 - Seasonal Information
 - Testimonials
 - The Coast-Cascades and Crater Lake Route
 - What to Do
 - What's Happening
 - What's New feature on the Home Page
 - Where to Eat
 - Where to Shop
 - Where to Stay
47. Investigate the possibility of the CVALCO and Oakridge sites sharing a **common database** of information. This will contribute to more relevant, accurate and comprehensive information being distributed and avoid the duplication of this task by all organizations.
48. The web site should **instantly convey** that Oakridge is one of the leading places in the nation for mountain biking and the images, copy and content show that the area understands your needs, of a mountain biker.
49. In conjunction with CVALCO, engage the services of a **search engine optimization specialist** to ensure that all aspects of the web site are operating at optimal performance levels for search engine optimization. Ensure that meta tags, meta descriptions, links, and key word density are considered as appropriate.

50. Maximize links to the site from Oakridge and Northwest organizations and other third party sites. It is particularly important for local lodging partners to provide links from their web sites for prospective visitors to the city.
51. Invite visitors to the web site to register to receive future email newsletters regarding coming events, trails and seasonal news.
52. Those destinations that orient their web site content and images around experiences and emotion have found that they are able to generate stronger connections with prospective visitors and this leads to a higher conversion rate to travel and positively influences their length of stay. Some examples of sites effectively using experiences and emotion are:



www.carlsbad.com



www.bellingham.org

53. The best web copy has a balance between being motivational and informative and strikes a chord with the reader because it does not speak in generalities, lists or features that are common to most places. The copy speaks directly to the readers and connects with them by addressing how the place will make them feel and how this place meets their particular needs like no other. The copy on the Travel Wales web site (www.travelwales.org) is a good example of these techniques. The same techniques should be employed in preparing the copy for brochures and other collateral materials.

Public Relations

Allocating resources to generating increased media coverage can be highly effective in reaching key markets. The dissemination of materials to the media, efficiently handling their enquiries, and coordinating their visits can generate positive coverage of city attributes. Public relations should play a dynamic role within the Chamber's strategy to attract more visitors. The objective is to gain synergy from the collective efforts of local partners as well as those of CVALCO and Travel Oregon to maximize media exposure.

Recommended Actions:

54. In conjunction with CVALCO, develop a basic media kit. It should contain information with a level of detail that establishes the area as a leader in mountain biking.
55. Make the media kit available online and provide updates as needed.

56. Actively collaborate with CVALCO continue to explore how to assist them and Travel Oregon to publicize the area's key experience themes.

Co-operative Marketing

Tourism businesses in Lane County have a variety of marketing opportunities at their disposal. Among the most effective are often the opportunities presented by CVALCO and Travel Oregon because they produce material that is integrated into wider marketing communication programs, including advertising. These provide exposure in applications that may not normally be accessible to small budget advertisers. Other co-operative marketing opportunities include public relations activities, database marketing, online marketing and direct mail. Importantly, these organizations are generating interest in Oregon and Lane County as destinations.

Recommended Actions:

57. Consult with CVALCO to optimize the city's participation in the **co-operative marketing and free publicity** activities offered by CVALCO and Travel Oregon.
58. Collaborate with CVALCO to ensure that **advertising** in publications by the Chamber and local tourism partners is targeted toward the most appropriate media that are most appropriate and most likely to generate the best results.

Images

Oakridge is competing against destinations that are well financed and use highly sophisticated marketing techniques. It is essential that Oakridge use high quality images to project the beauty of the region and the exciting opportunities for mountain bikers.

Recommended Actions:

59. In conjunction with CVALCO, develop a portfolio of evocative and high quality images of the area's key attractions and mountain biking.
60. At the first opportunity, create or obtain the rights to high quality video imagery of the area's key positioning themes, experiences and attractions. It should be applied in all relevant marketing applications, particularly media, visitor center videos and web video.

Partners and Third Party Marketers

Destination marketers rely on a wide variety of organizations and partners to distribute information about their attractions, travel products and destinations. Oakridge is no exception and in this regard there are several organizations such as CVALCO, Travel Oregon, AAA and a variety of web sites that are in touch with prospective visitors to the region. Ensure that coverage of Oakridge-Westfir is up to date, accurate and relates to precise places and activities that visitors can experience. Avoid generalities and descriptions that can apply to other locations.

A short time spent using online search engines and reviewing the brochure racks in Visitor Information Centers and guide books may reveal opportunities for additional exposure for Oakridge. The city and its key experiences may have been inadvertently omitted from relevant publications, articles and web sites. Contact these organizations immediately because harnessing the distribution power of third parties through their web sites, maps, and brochures can provide considerable leverage and added credibility for a small destination such as Oakridge and help get the city on the visitor's "shopping list".

Bookstores offer dozens of travel guidebooks relevant to travel in Northwest and Oregon. However Oakridge has a very low profile in them at the moment. These guidebooks cover a wide variety of interests from traveling with children and pets, to driving, hiking, camping, bird watching and weekend escapes. The guides are widely distributed in the USA and are highly influential in assisting readers with their travel decisions.



A short time spent using online search engines, browsing guide books and reviewing the brochure racks in Visitor Information Centers may reveal opportunities for additional exposure for the city.

Another important area that now requires constant monitoring by tourism organizations (and businesses) is the realm of social networking. Over the past decade, we could not have imagined the power that is now at the fingertips of our customers because of this new online technology. We seem to be leaving the information economy and now entering a conversation economy. Everyone can now be a journalist, travel writer, documentary-maker, promoter, opinion-leader, travel advisor, or food critic.

These are low cost, yet high impact sources of opinion. The most powerful medium today for enticing customers isn't advertising - it's the conversations that we have among our family, friends and colleagues - and increasingly these are digital conversations through a screen of some sort.

Visitors to destinations have the tools to instantly blog about their experiences (good or bad) from anywhere in the world at any time, find their friends using mapping technology, use Flash applications to make their arrangements, subscribe to information sources using RSS, access someone's video of their vacation on YouTube, see pictures and comments on MySpace, and read the critiques of past visitors on sites like TripAdvisor. All of these

applications are available outside of the control of DMOs - and will have a profound impact on destination branding.

The challenge for places like Oakridge is to remain relevant when so much communication is taking place through informal channels. The marketing team, even in small cities will have to be more actively engaged in these social networking formats to monitor and assist the user-content that is being created. Places now must pay even more attention to the experiences that they are delivering and explore how to play a meaningful role in social networking applications.

Recommended Actions:

61. Review the coverage of Oakridge in **third party brochures, maps and web sites**. Check for accuracy, whether they project Oakridge in the best light, and if they conform to the identity that the community wants to project. Approach the publisher with any suggested additions or corrections.
62. Annually review the coverage of Oakridge in travel **guidebooks** such as Fodors, Lonely Planet, Mountain Biking Oregon, etc and their online versions. Check facts and whether Oakridge is projected accurately and favorably. Ensure the coverage conforms to the identity that the community wants to project. When appropriate, approach guidebook publishers with any suggested additions or corrections.
63. In collaboration with CVALCO develop a plan (that is constantly revised) to actively monitor and be engaged in **social networking applications** to ensure that Oakridge is accurately represented and provide clarification when needed. This should be closely integrated with CVALCO's own social networking strategy because visitor comments in most cases will relate to local attractions, lodging and services.

Research

Research does not have to be an expensive proposition. There are many cost effective options. Gaining an understanding of visitors and their motivations, attitudes and behavior can lead to greatly improved performance. It is important to constantly monitor visitor satisfaction and seek ways of improving the experiences that are extended to them. This can be achieved by making a simple survey form or card available to them. The objective of this survey is to not necessarily register a high number of responses, but to monitor the specific issues that visitors raise in regard to the quality of their experience and identify where improvements might be necessary.

Recommended Actions:

64. In conjunction with CVALCO and appropriate local partners initiate **customer surveys and research** to gain insights into the demographics, behavior, motivations and satisfaction of visitors. Provide ongoing opportunities for visitors to provide feedback on their experiences by making a **simple satisfaction survey** or feedback form readily available

through lodging, dining, Visitor Information Centers and online. It is particularly important to conduct these surveys during major events.

65. **Discuss visitor satisfaction** results at every Chamber tourism committee meeting.

5. Soft Adventure Operators and Outfitters

The diverse topography of Lane County makes it an ideal location for soft adventure activities. The region has an increasing number of soft adventure operators and outfitters offering activities and services such as sandboarding, rafting, fishing, mountain biking, and sea kayaking. These are generally small businesses that do not have broad distribution and sale of their products. However, when their role in the visitor experience is fully understood & acknowledged, they do represent many benefits of importance to those communities in which they operate.

The Benefits of Adventure Operators and Outfitters

These businesses enable communities to develop a more professionally based tourism industry and capture many benefits that may otherwise elude the community.

The simplest way to illustrate this point is that when such experiences are available and made known to visitors, they not only increase the reasons to make a visit, but also extend the time and spending of visitors.

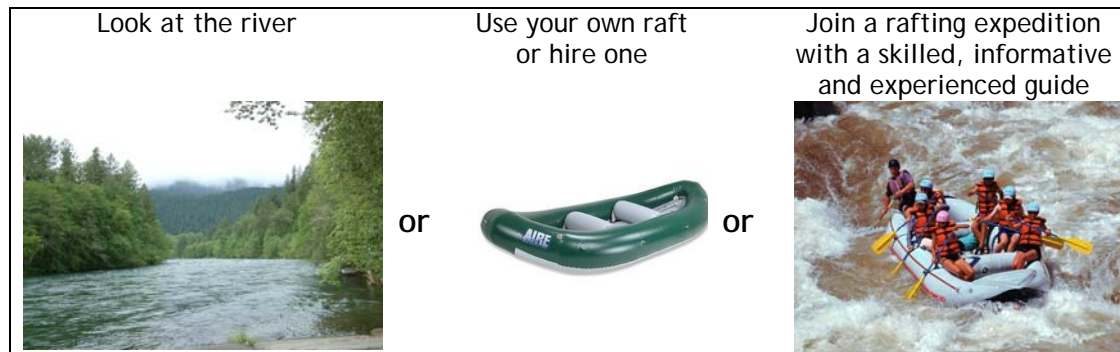
Having something to do for a half or full day, rather than say an hour, can mean the difference between a visitor either driving on or returning home, without the need for an overnight stay - and depriving the community of valuable income.

The range of benefits to communities includes:

- Attracting incremental visitors that the community may not have otherwise welcomed
- Attracting high yield visitors who usually buy other local services
- Increased length of stay
- Promoting the community through their marketing, thus complementing the Chamber's marketing
- Increased economic and employment opportunities for the community
- A more personalized and authentic experience for visitors
- Increased interest from interstate and international visitors
- More small and micro businesses for small communities

Adventure Operators and Outfitters Add Value

A challenge for places that rely on nature-based tourism is one of generating economic benefits for their community. Forests, rivers, lakes and trails are usually free of charge or may involve a small parking, entrance or use fee, as in the case of County Parks, State/National Parks and some other categories of Federal/State land management agencies.



The river in its natural form can be considered a commodity and not generate any direct economic benefit. A visitor might bring his own raft from home and in this case makes no direct, local economic contribution through the use of river. When the visitor hires a raft from a local outfitter, an economic contribution is made. However, when the visitor joins a rafting expedition that may include a mini-bus transfer, a meal, seat on the raft, the personal involvement of a skilled and experienced guide, and a fascinating and informative commentary about the river, he is purchasing a value-added experience. He has purchased more than a ride on the river, he has purchased a sense of security, an adventure he might not attempt without expert assistance, and a level of engagement that has created a memorable experience.

Adventure operators and outfitters not only add value to the visitor's experience, but also add to the greater economic well-being of their communities. The added economic value is generated through the local payments for supplies, services, equipment, and the payment of wages to local staff.

The Power of Networking

Adventure operators and outfitters are small, independent businesses that must be highly targeted in their marketing activities. *Cross selling* may provide the synergy to generate increased distribution and sales by providing existing or potential customers with the opportunity to enjoy complementary or similar experiences. The idea is to capture a larger share of the consumer market by meeting more of their needs and wants and successful destinations deliberately set out to make this process as seamless or effortless as possible for the visitor. Within the region this concept most readily applies to soft adventure operators and outfitters who can boost business for each other, as well as their communities and other tourism businesses, (e.g. lodging and dining establishments, general stores, etc.) by adopting a more collaborative approach.

Some of the cross selling techniques that can be employed include:

- Displaying brochures of other attractions
- Providing information and advice on other activities whenever possible
- Packaging and bundling of the products of different operators

- Pricing incentives such as discounts or two-for-ones, e.g. take a kayaking trip and get a 10% discount on a mountain bike rental
- Recommendation and selling the product of others to consumer, trade and media
- Web and brochure coverage and links to other operators
- Staff training in products of other operators

Recommended Actions:

66. **Meet with operators** from around the region on a quarterly basis to explore ways to collaborate and address priority issues of importance to all.
67. Operators from around the region should identify and activate appropriate **cross selling techniques**.
68. Operators should participate in appropriate CVALCO and Travel Oregon **co-operative marketing** opportunities that are directed toward their target audiences.
69. Ensure that soft adventure operators are given prominence in the **Chamber's destination marketing** and not treated as "just another member". They are attractors in their own right, just like a Broadway show is to New York. They can provide a competitive edge over other places and may attract visitors who may not otherwise visit the area.
70. Work with appropriate **local and regional lodging** to encourage them to actively promote operators to guests, develop packages and include operators in web and brochure copy.
71. Ensure that the services of local operators are **easy to book** via phone and internet.
72. Investigate the need for and feasibility of a **regional reservations system**.
73. Ensure that all Oakridge soft adventure opportunities are included in CVALCO's **adventure tourism** brochures and online marketing.

6. Leadership and Organization

Successful tourism requires a seamless delivery of tourism experiences and an integrated approach between public, private and non profit organizations.

Tourism is about generating added income and jobs for communities. It is an important form of economic development. Oakridge has made great strides in recent years, however it has a number of important shortcomings in the way that it presents itself to visitors. Underpinning these is what could be described as an apathy or “anti-tourism” disposition among some residents. Tourism does not seem to be understood by many residents for the positive role that it can play as a form of economic development, and the contribution that it can make to small business development and entrepreneurship, downtown revitalization and the viability of the city.

Optimizing the benefits gained from tourism will require the support and actions of more than the Oakridge-Westfir Chamber of Commerce. Their involvement is critical, but it will also require the long-term advocacy, support and participation of many individuals and organizations throughout the community.

Recommended Actions:

74. **Leverage the experience and expertise of CVALCO and Travel Oregon** to strengthen the city’s tourism marketing.
75. **Establish an Oakridge/Westfir Tourism Development Working Group.** It is recommended that this group comprise representatives of a variety of local, county, state and national organizations with an interest in tourism and mountain biking. It should not be dominated by members of any one local organization category. The objective is be to facilitate the effective development of tourism by optimizing access to marketing, funding, and governmental agencies at county, state, and national levels.
76. The tourism committee should review the recommendations in this Visitor Readiness Report with the view to developing an **Implementation Action Plan**. After considering the actions required, the budgets, timeline and organizations responsible for each recommendation, they should all be prioritized according to their importance/impact, urgency and resources required. In developing the Action Plan it is important to ensure that there are some quick and easy early successes. Consider 30 day/90 day/ six month and one year action goals.
77. Develop an annual Tourism Action Plan in consultation with CVALCO to ensure that all opportunities are being optimized.
78. Participate with other **Lane County destination marketers in regular meetings** led by CVALCO in order to optimize integration of web marketing, brochure production, information distribution and the optimization of cooperative marketing opportunities.

79. Increase awareness among residents of the **economic and social benefits** of tourism to the city, particularly as it relates to mountain biking and trails. The target audiences here should be residents, community opinion leaders and government officials.
80. In conjunction with CVALCO conduct **Tourism 101 workshops** for local tourism partners to ensure that they are familiar with tourism marketing, distribution and product development best practices.

The Spirit of Hospitality

Oregon's visitors are becoming more experienced and discerning in what they expect from the places they visit, where they stay, shop, eat and relax. Generalized conclusions about the extensive Oakridge-Westfir customer service standards would neither be practical, advisable or accurate given the range of possibilities and variables arising. So observations on this issue must be limited to the 'secret shopper' experiences encountered as a visitor at those establishments and services able to be patronized within the time available.

The good news in this regard is that virtually all of the lodging, dining and store and gas purchasing service experiences encountered by the TDM team were of a good, appropriate and satisfying standard. Although, locals readily indicated that they felt that service standards were below acceptable levels in some tourism-related businesses.

Recommended Actions:

81. Introduce the "**Q Customer Service Training Program**" to Oakridge-Westfir. Note: this is only a start and is part of a never-ending focus required for quality assurance programs.
82. **Front line staff** in lodging and restaurants should be kept informed about things to see and do locally for their guests. This can be achieved by visits to the attractions and familiarizations designed for them.
83. In conjunction with the local media, introduce an educational program to **encourage local residents** to become familiar with the city's trails and recreational opportunities.

Appendix 1: Oakridge-Westfir Community Online Survey

The following are results from the online survey for local residents and stakeholders conducted by Total Destination Management between October 13 and November 30, 2008. A total of twenty people completed various questions in the survey. Note that the responses in this report are verbatim and may include typographic and grammatical errors which were in the original responses.

1. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about tourism and destination marketing in Oakridge.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A. As one of a number of industries, tourism is important to the economic mix of Oakridge	18 94.7%	1 5.3%			
B. The overall benefits from tourism in Oakridge outweigh any negative impacts	11 55%	7 35%	2 10%		
C. Oakridge presents a distinctive and attractive image of itself		6 31.6%	4 21.1%	7 36.8%	2 10.5%
D. The levels of service by hospitality and tourism businesses in Oakridge are of a high standard?	1 5.6%	3 16.7%	7 38.9%	6 33.3%	1 5.6%

2. Would you like to add any comments in regard to any of the above questions or issues? Be sure to identify what issue you are commenting on.

- B. Mostly yes, the benefits would far outweigh a negative impact. As long as marketing was done correctly and sustainable practices remain intact... ie- bikes on bike paths, dirt bikes hidden away in designated areas, and care taken to maintain paths, it's going to be a win win.
- B. Excessive amplication of concerts at Greenwaters Park. C. See #4 below D. Who are they? Need to identify our diversified assets and focus on promoting these strengths.
- C. Need more photos of the fish hatchery and Greenwaters Rec area.
- I can not express enough how important hearing thank you is now a days in any business.
- I think some of Oakridge wants to present an attractive image of itself but over-all I think there is physical work to be done, especially on Highway 58 where most of the tourists go through. As far as question D: I think some businesses offer a high level of service, but others do not.
- I think that we are working on our image and it gets better as time goes by with the help of our City Administrator.
- Oakridge's presentation of itself is much better than it has been and is getting better everyday. There are major projects that need to be done including the rebuilding of Highway 58. The building blocks are in place for a bright future.
- Rich with opportunity, unable to capitalize on it
- The amount of debris and trashed properties is distressing and a big turn off. Hospitality folks are mostly fine on the surface but seriously need to present a friendlier face. One restaurant pays more attention to locals than tourists, even ignoring faces they don't recognize.
- Under C. above, we are distinctive, but far from attractive!
- We are surrounded by beauty in Oakridge, we need to just work on the appearance of the buildings.
- You forgot Westfir

3. What do you consider to be the TWO greatest STRENGTHS of Oakridge from a visitor's perspective?

- 1) Strategic location completely surrounded by a National Forest and on a major pass highway.
- 2) Diversity of recreational opportunities.
- Beautiful surroundings; friendly people.
- Beauty of the area and exceptional weather ('above the fog and below the snow').
- Location in the National Forest, most services are available.
- Outdoor Rec Views
- outdoor recreation safety
- surrounded by National Forest, and the abundance of recreation opportunity
- surrounding area activities distance from Eugene & Bend
- The beauty of the area and the weather
- The beauty outside of the town & the small town feel.
- The natural beauty of Oakridge is outstanding. There are many established trails, campgrounds, and lakes to explore and enjoy in a secluded atmosphere.
- The Rivers and lakes and the Mountain View. The concerts in the Park. Need to advertise in Eugene and surrounding areas.
- The setting Recreational possibilities
- The two greatest strengths are the physical beauty of the area and the recreational opportunities that radiate from that and, for the most part, the weather.
- Trails and watersports
- Variety of outdoor activities and variety of restaurants.
- vast outdoor opportunities

4. What do you consider to be the TWO greatest WEAKNESSES of Oakridge from a visitor's perspective?

- 1) Small-mindedness 2) Resistance to change
- 1. Hiway 58 and vicinity is not attractive. 2. Needs more services and better hours of operations.
- appearance of shabby empty buildings, we don't have a large meeting place for gatherings.
- Attitude of the people The look of the City
- distance from metro centers lack of advertising dollars
- Distance to a major city; no Main Street (walking tours).
- Highway 58 vacant business fronts and residences on commercial property.
- How the overall Hwy 58 corridor looks / run down w/ too many vacated buildings.
- How ugly parts of it are how the people look like uneducated hicks with half their teeth missing. I hear banjos...
- HWY 58 Uptown
- Lack of choices.
- Lack of retail services and inadequate signage to direct people to the amenities that we have.
- Lack of things to do besides outdoor things and lack of knowledge of what the community does have to offer: karaoke, festivals & celebrations, golf course, fish hatchery, and/or any other special things going on in the community at the time.
- limited services available some citizens attitudes
- Much of the town appears run-down. Not enough visitors to sustain an economy has resulted in few restaurant choices..... if people start coming, that will change.
- no or limited in town entertainment some of the "board ups" and vacant buildings
- Nothing for Families to do for an extended stay. Nothing for Adults to do if they don't want to go to the great bars that we have.
- Poor appearance of the Highway 58 & Uptown corridors and Poor customer service from the businesses
- town has too many eyesore looking buildings and property some parts of town look abandoned

5. From time to time you may hear complaints or negative comments from visitors to Oakridge. What is it that you are most likely to hear?

- "Two tooth Joe" "There's nothing to do here is there?" (I even heard that one from the Chamber board) "Why can't they clean up that ugly mobile home park?" "Why can't they clean up....."
- Clean it up
- Depressing first impression of Hwy. 58 empty business locations.
- I didn't know that there was a whole other area of town.
- Lack of things for kids to do for fun while visiting.
- Most of our visitors use the restaurants, hardware store, automotive store, grocery store, pharmacy, and golf course. Comments on restaurant variety and quality are good, as well as the golf course. Most would like more variety for groceries and auto supplies, and better hours for hardware and pharmacy.
- Nothing to do or highway speed trap.
- Nothing to do. Nothing is open past 9pm.
- Oakridge? Why do you live there? (People are referring to the run-down state)
- Poor appearance of the Highway 58 & Uptown corridors and Poor customer service from the businesses...
- Rude reception Substandard facilities
- The prices are too high
- There's nothing there.

6. Considering your replies to question 5, what do you think needs to be done to address these issues?

- A sound wall or trees that block the Aristocrat Mobile Home Park. Getting a decent dentist in town that will do some work pro bono. Educate everyone, even locals, about all there is to do here.
- Conduct an image analysis (professional). Forget the highway and curb cut issue and assist (advice and money) with visual improvements. What do people see when they drive into/through Oakridge? Local pride of ownership? A more concerted effort to support existing businesses over trying to create new ones.
- Get the word out.
- Help business/people who don't want help... (don't tell me how to run my business attitude) and Q training targeted to Oakridge
- Increase inventory and hours where appropriate.
- It would be nice to have more shopping ie; crafts, local artists. We need a movie theatre, maybe just open Fri & Sat.. We need an indoor fun center for Families or young adults to go to. We could use a shuttle service for skiers that want to stay in Oakridge. It would be nice to beautify some of the older buildings along HWY 58 and up by the Banks, which I see is being done up there now. We could use more advertising in poss fishing Hunting Magazines and invite some Fishing experts out for say seminars or a show at the Greenwaters Park. We could use another Museum other than just the one at the Fish Hatchery.
- More and appropriate signage to direct traffic off the highway.
- Obviously, more businesses for kids which would help us locally as well.
- Persistence and creativity.
- Since we only have 1 market and the gas stations won't do competitive pricing, there isn't much we can do.
- The economy needs a boost and redefining. Tourism would be a great market to boost this failed economy. The timber industry will not resume here, but something needs to.
- Work with UBRA

7. How can Oakridge capture more business from passing motorists?

- A box of nails strewn on the highway...
- Available parking, attractive signage.
- being more open armed
- By updating it's store fronts, adding attractive landscaping to the streets, and hiding low income homes and/or mobile home parks behind screens (fencing or hedges)
- Encourage new businesses that will either upgrade or replace old buildings.
- enforce codes that the new buildings in town had to do regarding landscaping, sidewalks. The main drag in town needs a facelift
- Fix up the ugly businesses and homes on HWY 58
- further develop the uptown area for pedestrians
- Give them something to stop for.
- I would like to see the family fun center that's in the works actually happen because it would stop families and maybe generate more overnight stays. I would like to see at least one flashing yellow cross walk so people really slow down and people can cross the highway easier.
- Improve its' image and foster enthusiasm. Put on a happy face.
- Make it so motorists don't 'pass'. Make this a destination point. Marketing and advertsing in Oakridge is very difficult also.
- more business that would attract passerbye. MUCH better signage
- More cool looking shops that make you want to stop. Like Sisters!
- More shops perhaps.
- Provide an inviting infrastructure that promotes slower traffic and facilities ingress and egress from the highway. More attractive businesses. More businesses that are tourist related.
- Signage
- Uptown area requires more highway signage.
- Need a hook. Suggest doing murals on the Highway bldgs. that would connect with the history of the area. Maybe doing painted full sized elk throughout the town like the ducks in Eugene.

8. Would you like to comment on how Oakridge can improve its visitor experiences in regard to the following? NOTE: It is not necessary to respond to all questions.

a. Visitor Attractions (Heritage and Cultural)

- Advertise them more
- Consider logging industry history in area, and focus attraction areas around that.
- Get museum onto the highway
- Greenwaters Park. Get the Museum from Uptown to the F.S. highway location. Brew Pub and the beautique are great starters for Uptown. The Westfir Office Bridge and Westfir B&B Lodge. New "72 Oaks" B&B conversion of a historic home on hwy. 58. Community Theater. Art gallery.
- Museum staffing and location needs to be improved.
- The Fish Hatchery is great, but I don't feel it has the advertising that it should have. It would be nice to have another Museum on HWY 58. Visitors could stop by and see it and have lunch! Maybe a childrens day of bicycling!
- The Museum needs serious, professional attention.
- The museum needs to be updated, renovated, and perhaps placed in a new and central location. A visitors center needs to be clearly marked from highway 58, staffed 7 days a week, with updated information and friendly service.
- They are not readily visible. museum, what else?
- This is not our market...there are other places that offer more in this area and we should NOT try and be everything
- We have a wonderful Fish Hatchery and if our museum could ever get into a climate controlled space and actually display what they have in a more professional way that would be great. The annual Pioneer Picnic could be a much bigger event, as could Tree Planting in this age of environmental awareness.

b. Natural areas (e.g. Forests, parks, coast, rivers, trails etc)?

- A simple guide to hiking trails with levels of difficulty (kid friendly? etc), huv (?) trails should be made available. Our natural areas are our greatest existing asset in Oakridge and should be photographed, videotaped, and advertised.
- continue to have local sponsored maps
- couldn't get better
- Look around us.....it's all here!
- Mega-advertise the hiking/biking/nature trails. Promote indigenous flora events (walks, education, etc.) - mushroom, berries, forest plants ...
- Signage PR Set ourselves apart
- Sometimes the Forest Service can be hard to work with... Often, they do not give a clear process of how to accomplish the goals of the community on the National Forest. Also, most people in the community do not understand the processes the Forest Service must go through as land managers...
- The trails need better and more informative signage.
- There are some people with private property on the way to scenic places that have not taken care of their property and really need to. It's a real turn off when people are going into nature and they see dilapidated machinery rotting in a hollow with blackberries climbing over it.

c. Lodging Facilities?

- Better range of quality... more higher end (B&B) and Hostel (inexpensive extended stay)
- Personally I think most of the signage for our lodging stinks. You can barely read the Oakridge Motel's sign. It's too busy. The Blue Wolf Inn is likewise hard to read. The people at the Oakridge and Best Western are very nice and informative. The Chamber should create some kind of booklet to put in motel rooms describing the town, its amenities and a directory of local services.
- Some look good and some are not inviting.
- There currently seems to be "enough" lodging, but mostly for people just passing through. It would be nice to have at least one upscale facility..... perhaps near the golf course.
- Up-scale/spa, bed 'n Breakfast.
- very good for a small community. All greatly improved in the past few years.
- We are trying and doing the best we can in this area We need a resort
- We sure couldn't handle a convention or overnight seminar of sorts. (Unless it would be outdoors....then maybe we could get use of Kitson Springs..... or Greenwaters Park, or the Tired Dog Ranch on LaDuke)

d. Shopping?

- Almost non-existent. Two ethnics. Fast food.
- As mentioned previously, one restaurant will ignore outsiders until they can't. I waited for 45 minutes before I so much as got a cup of coffee when I first moved to the area. No one except Lee's Chinese and Mazatlan really get the concept of customer service. There is little shopping and it's spread all over the place.
- Getting better Pub, Trailhead and Lee's are proof we trying to get better
- hospitality training
- More needed & they need to be attractive & well maintained. Most everything looks so dumpy here.
- More of each.
- Most have such poor customer service. Most of the independent small business have no experience in retail before opening a business.
- No real shopping opportunities. Limited types of restaurants
- Oakridge lacks in shopping. If the town is to boom again, merchants need to be encouraged to open in Oakridge with stores that would appeal to people passing through.....or who may want to stay and explore! Clothing, better gifts, cascade related gifts....etc.

- Outlet mall would help.
- Pretty good restaurants. Shopping sucks.
- we need a steakhouse/family restaurant that holds more than 10 people
- we need more shopping
- We need more shopping. Our Restaurants are great and I really enjoy the new pub.
- What shopping? Several of the restaurants we have are really good!

e. Signage, Wayfinding, Parking, City Gateways / Welcome?

- Have ODOT allow us to put signs on the hwy directing them to uptown area
- Hiway 58 needs to be attractive. The frontage areas need to be better defined and limited to hiway access.
- Lousy.
- Need more realistic cooperation from ODOT to advertise and promote #13.
- OK. The F.S. outside of town helps.
- Signage needs to be more professional & clean
- Signage needs to be WAY better Wayfinding bad Parking OK Need gateways
- The granite gateway signs are great!
- The nicest sign in Oakridge is its own logo. The rest of the town and storefronts need to update with a central theme and look..... it needs to look like a town that takes pride in itself. I know that the logo was designed by a company called Polaris, and it's my understanding that they have now grown and specializing in branding and have branded several towns. Oakridge needs this if it is going to rebound and attract and keep visitors.
- We, as a community, too often we are not getting the right visitors to the right places to give them a good experience of Oakridge

f. Events, Festivals and Performances?

- Advertise them more
- Central location to post these items that is available to the general public and tourists. Many times people in the community are not even aware of what is happening.
- continue to sponsor music in the park, current festivals.
- More regional advertising.
- Quite a few and some are very well attended.
- Some events are great Oakridge tries to hang onto outdated events people don't attend. They try and promote events as regional but really they don't promote things outside the area...they are just community events...be honest about that.
- The events and festivals have always been low cost, low quality. The annual fishing day is very nice though...the Fish & Game department does put a lot of effort into it... but advertising is very poor.
- The park events are great. In addition, Oakridge needs a single event that is unique, spectacular, and doesn't compete with other area festival/event schedules.
- These are pretty good for a small town in the middle of the woods.
- To many of the events (tree planting, sugar plum and all the concerts) are not sustainable. Every year we pour \$1,000's to keep them going without a return on that investment.
- Use every excuse to celebrate! Here's where we could take a lesson from the 'good old days' folks.
- We could use more Summer Festivals and maybe some Fishing shows/seminars, Bird Watching groups? Another Car show, maybe a Car Club could sponsor it and run it and bring extra business to the City.
- We have some very good events here that no one but locals know about. We have one of the best fireworks displays around on July 4. We have a wonderful amphitheatre with good concerts (though we need more variety) in summer. We have a Tree Planting Festival in spring that could be huge and a Pioneer Picnic in summer that could be a national draw if done right. The annual

Sugar Plum Festival Crafts Fair in December and the nearby Office Covered Bridge Holiday Lighting celebration are wonderful, cheerful events no one from outside actually knows about.

g. Outdoor Recreation and Soft Adventure Activities?

- Expand Mountain Bike Oregon, look into a similar format for organized hiking, perhaps an annual fishing tournament. Alternate activities for non-participating significant others.
- Hiking is great around here, lots to see. Of course there's the mountain biking. The Fish Hatchery and its educational mini-golf are rarely used resources.
- I think there are two companies offering biking adventures in and about Oakridge. A rafting company could also be a great draw..... if there is a safe spot to do it... I do not know.
- It's here for the taking. Analyze community demographics. What we have so far is great. Diversify to reach the most people.
- More family friendly activities not just for adults.
- Our strongest asset.
- promote more than just biking events. not everyone wants to bike.
- Superlative!
- This is our strong point
- We, as a community, too often we are not getting the right visitors to the right places to give them a good experience of Oakridge

h. What marketing or visitor information initiatives would you like to see Oakridge improve or introduce?

- "Lost Wagon Train"/ Pioneer Heritage. The Free Emigrant Road (through here) doubled the population of Lane County within 2 years.
- a responsive chamber
- Better quality customer service training. It really needs to start with Explaining why this is important and how it will make business more money. Most business think they have great customer service when they really do not! The people of Oakridge can be its biggest asset and its biggest liability... Most days its hard to tell.
- customer service training
- Design and put out an Community Guide
- Have the chamber man the info booth at the rest stop like the old days.
- I would like the Family Fun Center happen and the Chamber move into a place on the highway where people could actually see it and get information about the community happen. I think tehre needs to be a directory of all business services available in the town regardless of chamber membership--just anyone with a license.
- More and better signage that point people to the recreational opportunities.
- Oakridge needs to be branded..... have a theme and it needs to enforce its city codes with local merchants. It needs to advertise on television in California, Washington, and Oregon. It needs to advertise in travel magazines and have a user friendly, modern, tourist-oriented website. As I mentioned earlier, there needs to be a visible, functional visitor center located off of highway 58... on the main strip.
- Something about getting away even just for the day out in the country. Fresh air / No traffic/
- We have a Visitors Information booth at the rest stop. Are we using it to the max? Could we acquire (or utilize) the vacant office building W. of Dairy Queen for a F.S. annex to sell fire wood cutting or Xmas tree permits, bike and flora and hiking trail maps, etc. etc. etc.
- Would be nice to have a visitors center visible and open.

9. What additional businesses, services or activities do you think are needed to supply the necessary experiences and products for increased visitor satisfaction in Oakridge?

- Another competing grocery store (although in this economy that is doubtful), more indoor recreational activities, more evening activities.
- Attractive retail shops, with friendly, customer oriented staff. We need clothing, Cascadian themed gifts, better gifts, jewelry stores (silver and fine), ice cream shop, etc.
- Bakery, kayaking and canoeing.
- bowling alley open more. More things for teenagers, video etc.
- Fun Center, another Museum on HWY 58, Building renovations along HWY 58, More shopping...
- Gifts shops along the hwy that are open on the weekends. family restaurants like a Denneys?
- More shops & restaurants of quality
- More/better full package experiences... guided tours, bike (road & mtn.), ski, hunt/fish, kaiak/rafting, hiking, eco tour...
- Previously addressed, especially the basic needs of travelers (things break, medicine, groceries).
- Resort
- Restore the skating rink to a skating rink/dance hall/special (maybe even competitive) events center/stage theater (make good use of that gorgeous floor and protect it). Get some action/exercise/enthusiasm going there.
- theatre, miniature golf, arcade, after hours medical facility, customer service training for businesses, craft supplies & 'tourist' type knick nacks... (coffee mugs, hats, bells, spoons, etc.. for either Oakridge, Cascade Mountains, or Oregon in general)
- We need a shoe store, a place to get dressier outfits, the family fun center if it happens will have a small theatre for movies and corporate meetings, an Italian restaurant, a quality "date" restaurant, a place to get tourist related trinkets (the fun center has one planned), a day spa with hot tubs, saunas, enzyme baths, etc., and a Fred Meyer kind of place where you could get basic camping stuff, frames, sheets, towels, dishes, etc.

10. CVALCO is going to increase its focus on soft adventure activities. What does Oakridge need to do to capitalize on this?

- Be real about what we have to offer Many of our trails are advanced...be honest about that On the other hand work what we do have because it is great
- Birding is huge in the area. We see peregrine falcons and bald eagles almost daily as well as all sorts of species of smaller birds. Hiking, the Fish Hatchery, Salt Creek Falls and the covered bridge are also important soft adventure sites.
- Fishing/camping/mushroom picking/crafts/musical instrument/acting/career training/visual arts appreciation/dancing/foreign language (etc) classes. Maybe a bit more aggressively than LCC. Learning is an exercise, too.....and, an adventure.
- guide service
- Have a point person to interface between CVALCO on what they are doing, and the various merchants/service business in Oakridge/Westfir.
- I don't know what a "soft" adventure is.
- Invite some Bird Watchers to provide a short bird watching event. Guided hikes...
- Make them family friendly for kids of all ages to participate in
- not sure what a soft adventure activity is
- Oakridge needs the help of experienced towns and organizations. Our bike trails are outstanding. We have unique birds in our area and bird watching tours with a trained guide would be great. We have abundant and unique wildflowers, guided nature walks could be an excellent draw. Our rivers and campsites offer lots of family fun and beauty. Basically, whomever you are speaking to in Oakridge, needs to sit down and have a pow wow with those with the capacity and knowledge of how to move forward with capitalizing on our existing resources. Perhaps representatives from CVALCO can meet with a diverse group of individuals from Oakridge to determine it's best areas of capitalization and how to proceed.
- swimming pool/gym/public showers/arcade for children to play
- Wagon or horse and buggy rides. Horseshoe and fishing tournaments.
- What is a soft adventure?

11. What can be done to enable soft adventure / outdoor recreation related businesses in Oakridge and in other parts of the county to improve their tourism performance?

- Better signage to get the people to the various trail and camping experiences.
- Encourage businesses to set up beautiful, visible store fronts. Hire trained guides who specialize uniquely in the tours they are leading. Educate the population on the benefits of tourism, how it will directly affect their lives in a positive way as it relates to economy... jobs, money.... and the integrity of the town.
- Get them exposure to try and set us apart from others
- have local business train employees to be advocates for their community.
- I think people think the world ends in Eugene and that there's nothing until Florence and nothing at all eastward. The county needs to emphasize that it's all here: brew pubs, wineries, all types of biking and hiking (beginner to very advanced), tons of lakes that are rarely used, fishing, camping and boating in Lowell and the Willamette National Forest not to mention the Willamette River, Waldo Lake, Salt Creek Falls. Why wrestle with Portland when you can see a nice waterfall and ski in the Cascades east of Eugene?
- Kids eat free at restaurants/ affordable activities for one day users
- Maybe I don't quite know what you mean by "soft adventure".
- We need to be aware of what our natural competition is what their business are providing and charging and, where our soft adventure/outdoor recreation is better, exploit it.

12. Which of the following descriptions best describes your organization or relationship to tourism in Oakridge? Please check ONE answer only.

Attractions, events, tours	2
Lodging	2
Visitor Services - Restaurant, Retail, Transport, Entertainment, etc.	3
Other business	7
Government	2
Skipped question	2

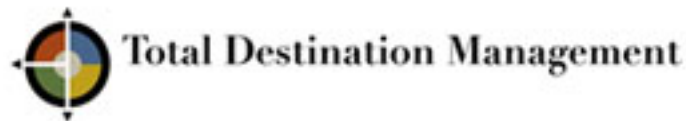
13. Would you like to make some additional comments?

- I think it would be more valuable to Oakridges overall stability & economy to focus less on special events & businesses & activities that can be done all year long for families.
- It can get very discouraging to face people who don't understand the most basic customer service and who think you're some prissy Californian when you mention a suggestion. I was born in Oregon but I have lived all over the country and I have never run into a small town that had such a negative attitude about people from the outside. That is changing, but until we can get some more businesses in town and more residents to offset those who are rude and hostile Oakridge will continue to have the image problems it has in the Valley. When I first took my job in Oakridge, people I met in Eugene would say, "I'm sorry." and "That place is never gonna change. Why even bother?" That is because it is viewed as some kind of "Deliverance" place full of toothless hillbillies or, as one person humorously put it, "Mayberry with attitude." Oakridge and Westfir could become the equivalent of a well-planned Lake Tahoe, with all the charm and small town flavor we love and none of the negative attitudes that have stymied efforts to improve the community. I believe in Oakridge and its potential and want to see it come out of its cocoon and be the beautiful butterfly it is.
- Leaving out Westfir is creating backlash

- Oakridge is a beautiful town. There is lots of potential. The recent economic crisis has thwarted it's growth and hope. The people of Oakridge need to be inspired to accept growth ideas if anything is going to work. They need to know how any particular change is going to benefit them as individuals. There is a large, older populous that resists change and can appear bitter. The town psychology seems to be very cautious... even those interested in new ideas resist being the inovators..... the majority seems to want to see others do it first..... and maybe they even want it done for them... without much work on their part. There are many wonderful people in Oakridge as well, who would be open to seeing positive growth occur.... and they need to be inspired. The key to real change in Oakridge, is convincing the people of the town that they need it.

14. It is NOT necessary to identify yourself. However, if you would like to identify yourself, please do so here.

- Annette Dodge Owner A&W Restaurant
- Bob at Casey's
- Coralie Schwartz 541-321-2482
- Joy Kingsbury
- Pat Harmon



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