



Proposal for establishing a Door County Strategic Destination Management & Marketing Plan

Destination Assessment:

A Destination Assessment was conducted in June-July of 2005. Destination Development, Inc. of Portland Oregon conducted the assessment. The assessment was conducted with no input from the Chamber of Commerce. The purpose was to determine the impression the destination makes on a visitor from the planning stage to the actual visit. Area traveler communications were evaluated including the Chamber's web site, all visitor guides, telephone visitor assistance, current marketing campaign and the Door County product itself. The consultants were highly impressed with the Door County product and the quality of the area's hospitality services. The assessment also resulted in over 50 suggestions for the positioning and marketing of Door County to the traveling public. See attached assessment.

Steps being taken to implement some of the recommendations immediately include a complete redesign of www.doorcounty.com. In addition to the suggestions resulting from the Destination Assessment, the International Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus (IACVB) evaluated the Chamber's web site in cooperation with Purdue University, which also provides several suggestions for improvement. These suggestions will be incorporated in a request for proposal to be sent to web designers in September. The Internet Committee will make the selection in October and the new site will be launched in early 2006.

In order to implement some of the marketing strategies suggested in the Destination Assessment the Chamber's advertising agency has been instructed by the Marketing Committee to make some immediate changes in ad copy. The Marketing & Research Committee will recommend a short-term marketing plan to implement the suggestions that are within the organization's marketing budget for review by the Board of Directors at their August, 2005 meeting.

When the Destination Assessment was presented to the Chamber's Board of Directors, Marketing, Publications and Internet Committees by Destination Development President, Roger Brooks, he stated that implementing a county wide room tax and continuing the single destination marketing strategy are essential for the future health of Door County's travel and hospitality industry. This recommendation is also made in the Door County Economic Adjustment Plan.

The first step toward considering the recommendation to adopt a countywide room tax will be a presentation on Wisconsin Room Tax Law by Bill Geist of Zeitgeist Consulting, a Madison based tourism consulting firm, to Door County Innkeepers in September. The presentation will explain, in detail, the Wisconsin Room Tax Law. Specifically, Bill will discuss the provision in the law for the establishment of a Tourism Zone, the Tourism Commission and the representation required by state statute for the Commission. Also, he will explain the statute with regards to the collection and distribution of the tax revenues.

In addition to the presentation on Room Tax law in September, the Marketing & Research Committee will issue a request for proposal to advertising agencies. Roger Brooks of Destination Development, Inc. will return to Door County in early November to present his findings to all interested parties, including business owners, elected officials, residents, vacation home owners, etc.

Next steps for establishing a strategic marketing strategy for Door County's travel and hospitality industry:

Establish a research timetable that includes the following:

- ☐ Travel and hospitality business owners' survey of business climate over past 5 years
- ☐ Resident survey of perception of Door County as a vacation destination
- ☐ Elected officials' survey of perception of travel and hospitality industry and Door County as a vacation destination
- ☐ Visitor survey while in the destination, including demographic and psychographic data
- ☐ Focus group study with travelers from current markets and potential new markets
- ☐ Door County vacation homeowners' survey regarding average annual use of the home as well as frequency of various activities (dining, theater, shopping, etc.) during use of the home

In all research work with our partners, including UW Extension, all local municipal governments, county government, Door County Economic Development, Inc., all community business/civic associations to obtain the data needed to create a Door County Strategic Destination Management & Marketing Plan. This plan should be a long-term plan with clearly defined success measurement criteria and provisions for reviewing and adopting annual marketing plans.

The first step towards a Door County Strategic Destination Management & Marketing Plan is the establishment of a destination vision. Simply, a destination vision is an image of what the people of the destination aspire for it to be or become. An effective destination vision statement will have (1) a focused concept, (2) a sense of noble purpose and (3) a plausible chance of success.⁽¹⁾

The characteristics of a successful vision are⁽²⁾:

- Imaginable – conveys a picture of what the future will look like
- Desirable – appeals to the long-term interests of the stakeholders
- Feasible – comprises realistic, attainable goals
- Focused – is clear enough to provide guidance in decision making
- Flexible – is general enough to allow individual initiative and alternative responses in light of changing conditions
- Communicable – is easy to communicate; can be successfully explained within five minutes

In order to establish a successful vision for Door County all the partners identified above must have input. The community needs to embrace a shared vision for Door County's travel and hospitality industry in order for a Door County Strategic Destination Management & Marketing Plan to be effective.

While a great deal of needed data can be gathered by the Chamber and the community partners, ultimately the raw data needs to be evaluated by a third party destination management/marketing consultant. The evaluation must include the following:

- ☐ The community vision of what the destination is and wants to be in the future

- ☐ Components of a long-term sustainable destination management plan
- ☐ Components of an effective community relations plan
- ☐ Niche markets appropriate for the destination and conducive to a sustainable destination management plan.
- ☐ Critical success factors for the destination and the Chamber.

The benefits of conducting research are defined as the five “C’s”⁽³⁾ :

Credibility: Prove to those who are assisting you that the means are being used effectively and efficiently

Customers: Know as much as possible about your visitors and their needs, wants, desires, and expectations.

Change: Keep up with new issues and trends affecting destinations and travelers.

Competition: Keep up with changes occurring in competitive destinations and market segments.

Confidence: Be more certain about making appropriate and substantive decisions.

Conducting the appropriate on-going research to adopt and review a Door County Strategic Destination Management & Marketing Plan will have impact on the organization’s budget. However, considering where this destination is in the Destination Life Cycle⁽⁴⁾, any delay on obtaining the necessary data to establish a Door County Destination Strategic Management & Marketing Plan may result in the destination experiencing long term decline.

Successfully initiating the recommendations that result from on-going research will allow Door County to position and brand itself as a destination attracting new and repeat visitors for generations to come.

To be done immediately:

- ✓ Assess resources available through UW Extension for research project (August 2005)
- ✓ Inventory lodging facilities by municipality (August 2005)
- ✓ Send RFP out for web redesign and advertising agency (September 2005)
- ✓ Prepare intercept survey to be conducted with fall visitors (September 2005)
- ✓ Prepare surveys for business owners, residents (both seasonal and year round) and elected officials regarding business climate and perception of destination (October 2005)
- ✓ Evaluate and (if necessary) revise web survey to obtain appropriate data (October 2005)
- ✓ Plan focus group studies with travelers in primary markets (November 2005)
- ✓ Provide education on Wisconsin Room Tax Law and establishing a Tourism Zone for the purpose of implementing a Door County Strategic Destination Management & Marketing Plan (September – December 2005)

Prepared by
Karen Raymore
Executive Director

(1),(2) Don Anderson, MBA CDME CMC Purdue University - *Strategic Issues in Destination Management* (2005)

(3) Allistair Morrison, Ph.D, CDME Purdue University – *Destination Marketing Planning* (2005)

(4) C.P. Cooper – *Tourism Management* (1990)