

CITY OF BENICIA
Strategic Tourism Marketing Plan
April 2, 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Introduction and Purpose of Project	2
Market Position	4
Market Analysis (SWOT)	6
Destination Branding Blueprint	7
Planning	8
Recommended Marketing Implementation	15
Measurement	19
Appendix	20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan begins by reviewing the current position of Benicia in the market as a day-trip destination. The primary target audiences are within a 40-minute drive-time radius, skewed towards women in order of priority: 1) 35+, upscale couples and women, 2) Families. It is clear from the SWOT summary that the key strengths are a quaint atmosphere, history, art, appealing retail stores and restaurants, and the waterfront area.

Investment is needed to move Benicia to the next level to attract tourists and take advantage of the opportunities in these areas. There is a good deal of tourist interest in California history (especially living-history experiences), waterfront areas, and art. We recommend designating 1st Street up to H Street and the waterfront promenade as a focal point for tourists to Benicia and incorporate art, history, restaurants and specialty shops as part of the promenade.

We recommend improving the infrastructure by increasing the hours that shops and attractions are open, improving directional and interpretive signage and dealing with the marketing, funding and organizational needs. To market the current attractions we recommend increasing the quality and quantity of the web presence; developing effective marketing materials; generating media exposure and creating events that highlight the key strengths.

Benicia is a focal point for art, shopping, dining and California history set in a beautiful waterfront location.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF PROJECT

Tourism Defined: For cities large and small, economic-development programs are initiated to attract new businesses. Successful economic-development efforts generate tax revenues, support local businesses, create new jobs, and fund public services and programs. Tourism ranks high among the industries that offer the potential for economic benefits to the communities that support such activity.

Tourism Development: When carefully planned and implemented, tourism can be a major contributor to the economic health of a community. Furthermore, by enhancing the community's image, tourism can build pride among the people who live and work there.

For some communities, tourism is easily developed, utilizing assets that can be made into attractions with little effort. In contrast, other communities must work hard at attracting tourists.

Fortunately for Benicia, it has many attributes and assets that can be marketed to attract tourists. The city offers a charming environment that makes it an appealing place to visit and it is easily accessible. Benicia also has a rich history and artists have found it to be a good place to create and showcase their work.

Even with diverse assets, tourism development is an intensely competitive activity. Within the Bay Area there is no shortage of attractions and events vying for the attention of local residents and tourists from around the region, the state, and the rest of the world. Benicia is just one of a very long list of places to visit, and things to do. Despite its attractions, it is easy for travelers to bypass Benicia while en route to other more well-known destinations.

Prudently, local government, business people and residents have chosen to pro-actively market Benicia as a tourist destination. The City seems very interested in making change happen. They have recently completed a Downtown Mixed-Use Master Plan, and now this branding report. Also, the City's latest Economic Development Strategy supports tourism growth.

Benicia's assets and liabilities have been cataloged and evaluated. The community's strengths have been identified, and weaknesses have been candidly acknowledged. Opportunities were analyzed, and threats were recognized.

The result was a clear picture of how this historic and appealing community could be presented to the marketplace as a destination that presents opportunities for pleasant, informative, relaxing, and memorable experiences. To do so requires skillful branding, defining the product – Benicia – in ways that encourage tourists to take part in its many offerings.

The key to successful branding is the creation of a marketing plan that will inform travelers, and motivate the target audiences to give priority to visiting Benicia. In this process, target audiences are defined, key messages are created, and the vehicles best suited to inform the marketplace are chosen.

It is important to make certain such an effort is looking ahead, not lingering in the past. What opportunities can be developed? How can existing resources be used in new and imaginative ways?

This document summarizes the plan that has been created to accomplish these important elements and market Benicia as an appealing tourist destination.

MARKET POSITION

Current/Near Future Positioning

Today, Benicia has interesting attractions that draw day trip travelers, particularly within a 20 – 40-minute travel radius. The key attractions include: the waterfront glass art studios, historical structures, the Benicia Historical Museum, shops, stores, and restaurants. Special events also serve as tourist attractions.

The quaint atmosphere, waterfront location, retail businesses and charming appeal all make Benicia an interesting destination. The character and atmosphere of Benicia make it an attractive destination for market segments that are looking for interesting day-trip destinations.

There is much that can be done to increase the appeal of Benicia as it currently stands today, thus adding tourists. While Benicia has many essential elements necessary to being an important tourist destination, it has not been adequately packaged to effectively attract those tourists.

Future Positioning

If Benicia wishes to become a regional draw to tourists from within the regional market, then substantial development in the areas of accommodations and attractions would need to occur. Benicia will need to increase its critical mass of shops, restaurants and waterfront destinations. The waterfront – a term which generally refers to First Street south of B Street, the fishing pier and the Marina Green -- could be a large draw for tourists if it was developed with restaurants with views, activities such as windsurfing, walking areas that connect with the shoreline park, and a venue for entertainment, either indoor or outdoor.

The glass blowers and other artists could be promoted to attract additional tourists from the region. At present, however, many galleries and studios are not open on a consistent basis. There are opportunities to utilize art as a significant attraction – such as the establishment of an artists' cooperative downtown, which was previously recommended by the Downtown Market Study (2002).

There is also significant history in Benicia to promote. But it is currently not presented in ways to make it a strong regional draw. Other historical attractions could include additional refurbished historical structures, expanded museum offerings, and costumed re-enactments to bring Benicia's history to life.

Benicia has a quaint and comfortable small town appeal. This leads Benicia to be viewed not as an intensely active destination such as Sausalito, but more relaxed and accommodating like Half Moon Bay, Pacific Grove, Capitola, Petaluma or Pt. Reyes Station. With new development, the waterfront could become an even more appealing attraction.

By increasing the quaint atmosphere, adding shops and restaurants, and by preserving the history, Benicia's overall appeal will also increase.

Over the long term, changes will occur that will affect the diversity of business activity in Benicia. For example, a proposal is being considered for a 528-acre business park that could include hotels, restaurants and other retail businesses.

As Benicia becomes better known and as the visitor infrastructure is enhanced, businesses throughout the city will benefit from the spillover effects and additional customers.

MARKET ANALYSIS (SWOT)

A complete list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats was developed with the Economic Development Board and public input on November 28, 2007. This list is found in the Appendix along with the comparison analysis.

After gathering input and reviewing the market demands, we selected those attributes we felt were most relevant to the task of generating an increase in tourism in Benicia.

The key strengths were identified as:

- 1st Street and waterfront area: shops, stores and restaurants
- History (museum, capitol building)
- Art (glass art studios and other art galleries)

Major weaknesses are:

- Lack of funding for development, infrastructure and marketing
- Scattered attractions
- Inadequate directional and interpretive signage
- Absence of image marketing
- No dedicated tourism staff

The most prominent opportunities are:

- Expanded waterfront attractions. Tourists like waterfronts
- Commandant's Mansion and other historic structures could add to the strengths
- Market for day trips in the Bay Area is strong
- Interest in historical experiences is high
- Capitol building and other historic structures are underutilized
- Market for art and decorator items such as paintings, ceramics and sculptures in the Bay Area is excellent
- Hotel opening provides promotional opportunities, and more accommodations

Threats from the outside that may need to be addressed:

- Competition from other local destinations (particularly nearby cities that might enhance their waterfront along the Bay)
- Degradation of historic buildings
- Public opposition

DESTINATION BRANDING BLUEPRINT

City of Benicia

Brand Elements	Strategies, Descriptions, Comments
Brand Destination	California history and glass art; focus day trip; local hometown; shops and restaurants
Brand Vision	“Must See” regional art, history and shopping destination
Brand Positioning (Current)	Currently not well known, generally. Known to select enthusiasts. 20-40 mile radius.
Brand Target	History - 35+, school children and families Art - adults; special interest in buying, viewing, learning about art Shopping – women 35+
Brand Name	Benicia, California
Brand Identity	TBD in phase 4; limited established identity
Brand Promise	A unique experience; once capital of California; Needs to be developed – currently not well known and passive. Assets need more development: signage, walking tours, larger focus on events.
Brand Personality	Charming, welcoming, quaint
Brand Emotion	Easy to get here. Easy to be here. Comfortable. Warm. Happy and lucky to have discovered a hidden gem.
Brand Experience	Welcoming combination; unique attractions and home-town atmosphere (not stand-off and elitist)
Brand Quality	High-quality glass art. Significant historic buildings. Specialty shopping. Waterfront. Less expensive than many touristy destinations.
Brand Pricing	Moderate
Brand Packaging	Charming and quaint; need signage; better utilization of waterfront; marketing material. Unified images.
Brand Distribution	Very limited exposure at this time; billboards and some advertising.
Brand Association	Solano county; Historical society.
Brand Credentials	Buildings on Historical register
Brand Message	Benicia is a focal point for art, shopping, dining and California history set in a beautiful waterfront location.

PLANNING

OBJECTIVES

Following are four broad objectives, along with marketing and non-marketing goals that support the overall objectives. The intent is to use the character of the community and its assets to attract tourists to the destination.

City of Benicia Tourism Marketing Program Objectives

- Increase day trips to the city
- Increase overall sales-tax collections from retail and restaurants
- Increase utilization of tourism assets including the Benicia Historical Museum and the Capitol Building
- Increase community pride in Benicia's assets

Marketing Goals

To accomplish these objectives, the marketing program would work toward the following:

- Increase positive image of the city of Benicia among locals and tourists
- Increase awareness of the city of Benicia's offerings among locals and target audiences within the 40-minute travel radius
- Use the current destination offerings to lure tourists to make the trip

Non-Marketing Goals

- Add new tourism offerings to the city
- Increase the appeal of the current tourism product
- Promote and fund improvements
- Provide an enjoyable tourist experience

STRATEGIES FOR REACHING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

As stated in the market position, there is much that can be done to increase tourists and the appeal of Benicia as it stands today. The strategy utilized in this plan is to optimize the current state of the destination by:

- Increasing awareness of the destination
- Targeting niche markets that would have an interest in Benicia's art, history, shops and restaurants.
- Making the most of the assets currently in Benicia by increasing the visitation by the targeted market segments.

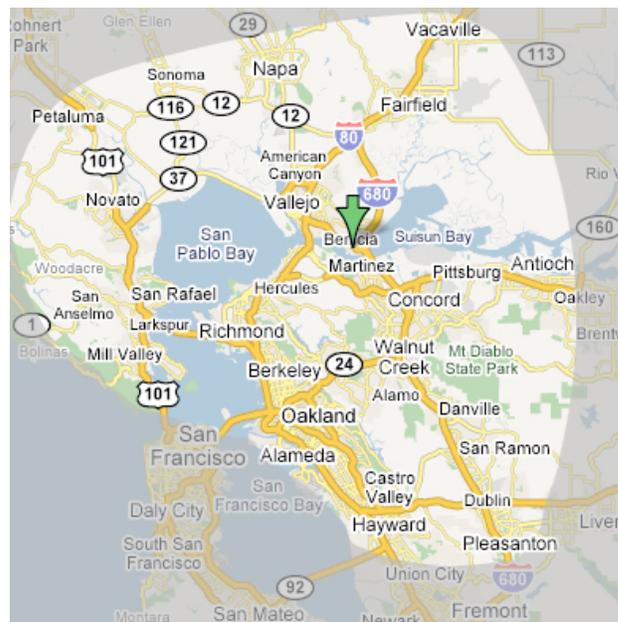
Additionally, plans should be started to encourage development of new assets that fit with the newly established brand:

Benicia is a focal point for art, shopping, dining and California history set in a beautiful waterfront location.

TARGET AUDIENCE

With the key destination attractions being its charm, waterfront location, art and history, we feel that the target audiences are primarily tourists 35 and up, living within a 40-minute driving distance. Their income and education level should represent up-scale, active audience segments. Generally tourists with an interest in these elements will be college educated and have an above average household income. A secondary audience is families with young children who have an interest in many of the events, historical attractions, the Shoreline Park and outdoor facilities.

A 40-minute driving radius includes Contra Costa, Napa, Marin, Alameda, Solano and San Francisco Counties. The following map shows the approximate area of the target audience, with the exception of San Francisco, which is not within the 40-minute drive range due to traffic. The 40-minute radius includes: Davis to the northeast, Napa to the north, Petaluma and San Rafael to the west, Pleasanton to the south and Hayward to the southwest.



As Benicia's critical mass increases, the target audience will expand to include tourists from up to 1½ hours driving distance. This covers most of the Bay Area including Gilroy to the south, Cloverdale to the north and Stockton to the east, which are all 90-minutes away. Sacramento, San Jose and San Francisco are within a 1-hour drive during normal driving conditions.

KEY MESSAGES

The following key messages convey the diverse attractions that make Benicia a pleasant place and appealing to visit.

- Benicia offers a glimpse of California history through the Benicia Historical Museum and restored Capitol Building
- Benicia has a thriving glass arts community that is accessible and presents high-quality glass art
- Benicia puts on an array of fun events downtown
- The waterfront is a beautiful and relaxing spot to get away
- Benicia is a charming and quaint shopping experience, with a diverse array of locally owned stores offering unique and appealing merchandise
- There is a variety of interesting, locally owned restaurants
- Benicia is safe and tourist friendly
- There are a number of parks and outdoor recreational areas for tourists to use

ORGANIZATIONAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Short Term Priorities (up to 18 months)

Internal Communication: Benicia is a conservative community that embraces change slowly. There has been limited interest in redevelopment and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) as funding mechanisms in the past. There may be some fear in the community that increased tourism could lead to loss of community character, increased crime and traffic congestion. We recommend:

- Implementing a tourism-education program to inform Benicia residents of the program and to ease community fears about negative impacts of increased tourism
- Continuing the encouragement of community participation in the tourism program; e.g. meetings and volunteer opportunities

Designate a Manager: This could be a new city position or a paid executive director type who can pull together the various entities in the coalition and conduct outreach to attract developers who would expand Benicia's critical mass. Having a manager will help in the coordination of efforts by various participants, and identify and pursue opportunities.

Organize a Tourism Marketing Coalition: Once a manager is designated then it would be important to create a team to support the expansion of tourism in Benicia. Members of the team could include: the Chamber of Commerce; Main Street Program; Arts Benicia; Benicia Historical Museum; Fire Museum; State Capitol and other entities that could contribute to – and benefit from

– expanded tourism to Benicia.

The group would represent stakeholders with an interest in tourism development. They would be encouraged to look for ways of initiating new co-op marketing efforts. Such cooperation is already being utilized in downtown events that Benicia Main Street helps coordinate such as the “Holiday Gift Guide”, “Benicia in Bloom” and the “November Stroll.” Other possibilities could be an on-line mall on the Internet and other promotions that allow merchants to cooperate and work with community groups and organizations.

The groups could also share resources such as volunteers, customer lists, survey results and other feedback to help each other’s success.

Form a Marketing or Business Association in the Arsenal: This group could contribute dues, and both fund and guide implementation of marketing the Arsenal—primarily the arts uses and other tourism related activities. This group could be part of the above-mentioned Tourism Marketing Coalition and also explore the idea of a BID in the Arsenal (see long-term recommendations) and be the pre-cursor to such an entity.

Hours of Operation: To increase the number of tourists visiting Benicia, there needs to be expanded access to the key tourist attractions at times when visitors want them to be available. For example, it is essential to increase the number of days that galleries and museums are open to the public, and to increase the number of special art showings and “Open Studio” events.

It is also important for visitor information to be available (at the Chamber of Commerce, Depot or other locations) on a consistent basis. Extended hours for 1st Street businesses to stay open late on at least one common day per week will be beneficial to build recognition of Benicia as a shopping destination.

Improve Directional Signage: Improve access route signage, paying special attention to any point where the tourists might ask, “where do I go now?” Create graphic continuity for signage so that tourists know what to look for. Ensure that the size, colors and typefaces are selected for maximum visibility and readability.

Waterfront District: Designate 1st Street up to H Street, and the waterfront promenade area as the Waterfront District to highlight this very attractive part of Benicia. This will provide a focal point for those visiting Benicia. The main reason to do this is because the waterfront is a key

differentiator and giving it a name will bring focus to this area. Additionally, there is a need for “one more thing to do” after dinner. Including a bookstore or music venue on the waterfront would provide that added incentive to go to Benicia for dinner. The Railroad Depot is an ideal place for this type of use.

Improve Interpretive Signage: Improve signage at key historical locations by detailing the histories of each landmark rather than simply identifying them.

Mid-Term Priorities (18 months to 5 years)

- Attract bicyclists from new Bay Trail and bike path on Benicia Bridge (see Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan page 3-15)

Work to expand the appeal of the waterfront area. Attract windsurfing/boat/kayak rental companies to provide activities at the waterfront

Cross-Promote Benicia with other regional tourism facilities and destinations such as, Mare Island Historic District and other historic military sites, and Jelly Belly in Fairfield, and nearby hotels to expand the availability of accommodations. Cross promotions could range from funding the placement of brochures for Benicia attractions at these destinations to more extensive involvement such as co-op advertising.

Call the Waterfront District the Waterfront Arts District when two more galleries or outdoor art join the art gallery, the crafts store and the existing theater. Encourage merchants to partner with arts entities to benefit from such events.

Longer-Term Priorities (over five years)

The Arsenal needs to increase its concentration of activity to create and enhance a regional image. Doing so will make it a community and regional resource, rather than just a loose collection of historic sites, buildings, studios and a gallery. It needs to be presented as a consolidated destination, similar to Fort Mason, the former military terminal facility on the San Francisco Bay waterfront. Abandoned by the military, it is now an active center for entertainment, history and cultural activities.

As stated in the Downtown Mixed Use Plan, downtown needs to increase its critical mass and image with a denser (and less linear) concentration of retail, restaurants and waterfront amenities (especially south of E Street).

Possibly a performing arts center or group visual arts gallery could be added. There should be fewer office spaces on ground floor. Streetscape, historic preservation and beautification improvements – such as street furniture and flowers -- would be desirable along with entertainment attractions.

- Make sure there is citywide initiative to encourage the maintenance and restoration of historic buildings, especially those open to the public. Consider other buildings that may be used to house community services organizations, arts and performing arts groups, and cultural programs. Doing so will help retain the historic character of Benicia which can be a tourist attraction.
- Adopt a city policy to address traffic and parking issues proactively before they become public concerns.
- Establish a mechanism to fund gateway enhancement.
- Find a non-profit group to restore the Commandant's Mansion at the Arsenal and other historic properties – such as old homes and commercial buildings and promote their use.

Funding Possibilities

Following are possible options for generating needed funds to implement the marketing communications program. Further exploration and discussion would be needed with a specialized consultant to provide the city with the best alternative.

Public Sector-Driven Options:

- City of Benicia General Fund
- Redevelopment tax increment (although downtown is not likely to meet criteria for a redevelopment area)
- Explore an increase in the city TOT tax to fund tourism promotion, in addition to the TOT revenue increases generated by new hotels
- Explore a city sales tax increase to fund tourism promotion
- Foundation grants

Private Sector-Driven Options:

- Formation of a Tourism Marketing Coalition within the Chamber of Commerce could generate additional revenue through chamber memberships, providing funds that could be spent on tourism promotions
- Form a voluntary marketing or business association among businesses in the Arsenal

and collect dues to pay for promotions

- Explore an Arsenal BID or TBID. This could be a marketing BID, or also fund cleanliness and maintenance and other physical improvements. If new residential is going to be built there, consider the CBD version that includes residential owners in the assessment. Develop a plan of activities first and then sell it to those to be assessed
- Consider a downtown BID. Develop a plan of activities first and then sell it to those who would be assessed. This could fund and be based in the Benicia Main Street Program (which makes most of its money from special event income now - very time consuming) or be a separate entity that funds multiple types of downtown improvements
- Consider one large BID that combines downtown and the Arsenal
- Consider other events that could raise funds through admissions or sponsorships
- Corporate funding and foundation grants

RECOMMENDED MARKETING IMPLEMENTATION

Tagline: A tag line would be developed for the purpose of reinforcing the branding process. The tagline is generally a sentence or phrase that summarizes the essence of the brand. It can be used in many ways. Following are a few examples:

The line can be presented in an ad, adjacent to a logo or elsewhere on the space.

A tag line can be incorporated into media materials developed for the press.

It can be used on letterheads, brochures, other printed materials, or the Web.

A tag line can be used, with or without the logo, on promotional materials such as t-shirts or computer mouse pads.

Marketing Materials: Review and upgrade existing materials to more effectively communicate the brand message; cross-promote its current destination with other regional destinations such as Mare Island historical sites and Jelly Belly in Fairfield.

Review existing collateral and develop graphic continuity. Develop new materials – for hard copy and on-line applications -- as follows:

- Produce an arts/gallery brochure/guide
- Produce a detailed historical-sites map with photos and descriptive narrative
- Consider need for a detailed restaurant guide

- Identify and promote business clusters/niches/nodes among downtown businesses using a Boutique Directory, a co-operatively produced art and home décor catalog (hard copy and on-line), signage, or advertising/PR campaign

Web Site Presence: Information about Benicia is available through many sites presently on the Web. However there is no consolidated source of information about the community, attractions, accommodations, restaurants, and other tourist services. There needs to be one central site with information and links to other sources of information of interest to tourists.

Following are suggestions for ways to improve information access through existing sites:

- Make the city's Web site more appealing to tourists or create a separate tourism Benicia site
 - Include a link to shopping, the Chamber, Main Street, etc.
 - Include more attractive photos
 - There needs to be a complete calendar for all Benicia tourism related events and activities
- Make the Chamber Web site more appealing to tourists
 - Create a downloadable PDF printable Tourists Guide on the Chamber Web site
 - Sell ad space to raise revenue for tourism promotions
 - Include more photos in the Chamber Web site's Tourists section
 - Include a shopping section in the Tourists Guide area
 - Make certain open studios links work
 - Include a link to Benicia Main Street's Web site
- Make the Benicia Main Street Web site more interesting to tourists
 - Call it the Benicia Waterfront Art District Web site
 - Include more photos of the buildings, shops and businesses on the Home Page
 - Put a short and current calendar of events clearly on the Home Page
 - Include text geared to tourists on the Home Page
 - Update the Main Street Downtown events guide and business listing annually
 - Include event dates and times (not done currently)
 - Make it easier to find on the Main Street Web site
- Upgrade the Benicia Arsenal Web site
- Initiate a Web site search optimization program to ensure Benicia's site shows up when people are searching for something to do in the Bay Area

Publicity Program:

The publicity program would be directed at all media that reach the target audiences.

- Develop an on-going media outreach program to place stories about the unique things to do in Benicia
- Generate and place feature-stories about Benicia
- Use publicity to promote selected events to Bay Area audience
- Write and distribute media releases about various subjects such as development activity in Benicia to encourage other developers to consider Benicia, upgrades in tourism facilities, and events and evergreen stories such as history and arts
- Outreach to local lifestyle writers to encourage them to visit Benicia and write about it
- Tour-bus operator familiarization trips

Target publications – travel and lifestyle sections in:

- Contra Costa Times
- Napa Register
- Marin Independent Journal
- Oakland Tribune
- Tri-Valley Herald (Pleasanton, Dublin, Livermore)
- Hayward Daily Review
- Fairfield Daily Republic
- Via Magazine (AAA)
- Diablo Magazine
- San Francisco Chronicle
- Also: Radio travel shows (such as “On The Go” with John Hamilton on KGO radio); and TV destination programs (such as “Bay Area Back Roads” on KRON)

Advertising:

- Selected image advertising in local travel sections
- Use advertising in weekend sections of local newspapers (such as Contra Costa Times’ entertainment section and “96” hours in the San Francisco Chronicle) to promote major events

Events:

- Select 4-5 events during the year to make into major attractions. This would require bringing on a professional event promoter to obtain sponsorships and create events large enough for wide appeal

- Work with volunteer groups to develop historical re-enactment events

Direct Mail/Email Marketing:

- Mailings to clubs and organizations that have field trips
- Mailings to schools to encourage field trips to the Capitol Building and the Arsenal
- Link up with Contra Costa Times and purchase email distribution to their members about events
- Work with specialty travel e-newsletters to advertise Benicia events

Program costs would depend on how much is handled by dedicated tourism staff and how much is outsourced to a marketing agency or freelance communication specialists.

MEASUREMENT

Tracking the program's results can take many forms. The most comprehensive documentation would be detailed surveys conducted before the program begins and at various milestones as the program is implemented.

However, such research is costly and time consuming, and we recommend that data related to the program be gathered through the use of less expensive means.

Following is a list of measurement tools:

- Museum attendance
- Restaurant revenue figures
- Retail sales figures
- Sales tax figures
- Tourism entity inquiry figures
- Hotel, motel and B&B occupancy rates
- Publicity value
- Publicity column inch tracking and message tracking
- Event attendance

Some of this data will be easy to obtain, while other data will be more difficult to procure. The most important factor in this data gathering will be to obtain base-line information prior to the initiation of program activity, and then follow up with timely updating of the information.

APPENDIX

BACKGROUND

The Outlook for Tourism

Travel ranks high among the activities undertaken by residents of developed countries. Americans are no exception. We love to travel, whether visiting an interesting place a short drive from home or flying to a more distant destination. The Travel Industry Association reports that more than 80 percent of the trips taken by Americans are for leisure travel.

American travelers spent more than \$600 billion on travel (domestic and international) in 2006. That figure is projected to increase to \$725 billion in 2010.

International tourists spent \$85 billion on travel in the U.S. in 2006. That market is expected to grow to \$112 billion by 2010. The decline in the value of the dollar has made travel to the U.S. a bargain for foreign tourists.

The relevance to Benicia is stated in the adage “a rising tide lifts all ships.” Properly marketed, Benicia can benefit from the overall growth of tourism. The result will be more diners, more shoppers, more event participants and more tourists simply enjoying Benicia’s charm and beauty.

Changing Travel Conditions

Like any major industry, tourism is a dynamic activity. It is constantly changing. Those changes can work to a destination’s benefit or diminish a destination’s appeal. Events of the past few years have resulted in changing travel conditions that present opportunities for Benicia.

Among these changes are:

- Growing interest in short-haul travel (less than 6 hours drive) and day trips, particularly in the heritage-travel segment of the market
- The Travel Industry Association’s 2005 report on domestic travel - the most recent study they have done - reports that Americans took nearly 2 billion person trips. Of those trips, 85 percent of the travel used cars, truck, or RVs. This represents a massive amount of travel activity, including day trips and other short-haul travel done by vehicle and not using long-haul air transportation
- National pride is sparking increased interest in U.S. historic sites

- Increased air-travel costs coupled with a decline in the value of the dollar against many other foreign currencies, makes long-haul travel less attractive. Although air travel has been able to maintain good safety records, there is increased news coverage about the inadequacy of current air-traffic control systems, raising concerns about the safety of air travel. In addition, terrorism concerns and airport security line delays make car travel even more appealing

Input report and interview intake sheets are on file with City Economic Development office.

COMPLETE SWOT LIST

Strengths

- History and art are major attractions
- Location/Access - geographically convenient
- Quaint, friendly, charming, authentic atmosphere
- Clean, safe environment
- Attractive spaces and buildings
- Local's pride in Benicia
- Waterfront location of downtown
- Walkable; bikeable
- State recreational area
- Sense of community
- Good weather
- Strong, unique shops; good retail mix
- Specific events - Peddler's Fair and Farmer's Market
- Restaurants with diverse cuisine

Weaknesses

- Limited overnight accommodations
- Lack of tourism support staff
- Limited public transportation
- Tourist attractions scattered around city
- Directional signage is limited
- Interpretive signage needed
- Parking is adequate now, not for future
- Inadequately communicated images
- Fragmented marketing
- Skateboarding on sidewalks
- Problem and dangerous sidewalks
- Inadequate performing arts venues
- Lack of funding stream
- Need for cleaning and maintenance
- Lack of ADA compliance
- Need unified image
- Historic buildings need repair
- No pianos in public performing facilities
- No easily found information office

Opportunities

- Waterfront
- Increased market for artists and art experience
- Holiday Inn opening
- Historic reenactment/living history is under-represented in Northern California
- 88 percent of Californians travel by car
- \$506 million is being spent in Solano County by tourists
- 80 percent of travelers have an interest in heritage and history
- Public interest for a downtown with many unique, non-chain, quality retail stores
- Promote skate park
- Need improved streetscape on 1st Street
- Use sports venues for events; e.g. X- Games

Threats

- Competition
- Crisis: local, regional, national
- Potential public opposition
- Need reliable funding source

SWOT ANALYSIS – INVEST:

We compared internal strengths with external opportunities to determine what areas would be most effective to invest marketing money and effort. This is where the largest pay-off will happen and where your effort will have the most impact.

Opportunities	Strengths		
	History	Art	1 st Street / Waterfront
People like waterfronts		X	X
Commandant’s Mansion and other historical structures	X		
Market for day trips in the Bay Area is good	X	X	X
Interest in historical experiences is high	X		
Underutilized Capitol Building	X		X
Market for art in the Bay Area is excellent		X	X

History: The combination of a Bay Area location and the quantity of historical buildings and

events makes history a key strength for Benicia to attract new tourists. Benicia's primary competitors are the cities of Sacramento, Monterey, and San Francisco. Based on this chart, the history strength can be paired with a number of opportunities to increase tourists. The upgrading of the Capitol Building as a destination by adding interpretative signage and reenactments and the restoration of the other historic structures such as the Commandant's Mansion, are two opportunities that should be pursued. Historical reenactment by volunteer groups also provides excellent opportunities to highlight Benicia's role in California history.

Art: The existing artist studios and the quality and uniqueness of the art being produced makes Benicia very competitive in attracting tourists interested in viewing and purchasing art. The key art niche Benicia has developed is glass art blowing, display and sale. The primary Northern California destinations that Benicia will compete with in attracting art tourists are Santa Cruz, Carmel, Mendocino and Sausalito. However, Benicia's art offerings are sufficiently unique to make these other destinations essentially not direct competitors. Additionally, there is an opportunity to combine the art with the waterfront in the form of public art or shows.

1st Street and the Waterfront Area: Benicia has a very attractive commercial corridor. There are opportunities to make the 1st Street and the waterfront even more attractive and to compete with many of the other "quaint and charming" downtowns in the area. To do so, Benicia will need to increase its appeal to the target market segments. One asset that Benicia has over many other downtowns is the proximity to the waterfront. This opportunity should be invested in to increase Benicia's tourist appeal.

SWOT ANALYSIS - DECIDE:

Compare areas of external opportunities with areas of internal weakness. This will assist in helping to decide which resources should be allocated to overcome the weaknesses and to take advantage of the opportunities.

Opportunities	Weaknesses				
	Funding / Money	Scattered Attractions	Signage Needs	Image / Marketing	Dedicated Tourism Staff
People like waterfronts	X			X	X
Commandant’s Mansion and other historical structures	X	X	X	X	X
Market for day trips in the Bay Area is good	X	X	X	X	X
Interest in historical experiences is high	X		X	X	X
Underutilized Capitol Building	X		X		
Market for art in the Bay Area is excellent	X	X	X	X	
Hotel Opening			X	X	X

Funding/Money: The need for funding to take advantage of opportunities affects all aspects of developing the tourism market. There is a need to find developers who will use the waterfront location for tourist amenities, find a group to restore historic structures, take advantage of the Capitol Building, and communicate the art offerings to people in the Bay Area.

Scattered Attractions/Signage: We combined these two weaknesses because one of the most practical solutions to the scattered sites is installing signage that directs tourists to the attractions.

Image and Marketing: There is a need to communicate the brand to potential tourists, which affects nearly all opportunities.

Dedicated Tourism Staff: There is currently a tourist center run by the Chamber of Commerce open during the week and on the weekend from 11 am – 3 pm. The Benicia Historical Museum

and the Capitol Building are staffed. To effectively take advantage of all opportunities, there needs to be a professional person focused on projects that will increase tourism.

SWOT ANALYSIS - DEFEND:

We matched internal strengths with outside threats to determine which strengths need to be defended.

	Strengths		
Threats	History	Art	1 st Street
Competition	X	X	X
Degradation of historic buildings	X		
Public opposition	X	X	X

Competition: There is competition for all three strengths, but there are also strategies that would take advantage of and expand on what is already in Benicia. Some possible changes might include: History – signage and establishment of an active reenactment group; Art – focus on glass; 1st Street – upgrade the physical appearance, increase number of stores and restaurants and add public waterfront attractions.

Degradation of Historic Buildings: This is a threat to increasing the history-related tourists and overall appeal of Benicia. This will need to be addressed in the strategic plan.

Public Opposition: A lack of support for the plan would affect all activities. The community input meeting was a good start to addressing this threat by building community support. The strategic plan will include recommended communication to gain support going forward.

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