

Cultural & Heritage Alliance  
2008 Meeting

## **Visitor Center 2.0**

THIS AIN'T YOUR  
MAMA'S VISITOR  
CENTER!

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# Why Visitor Centers Matter

# Three Truths...So Help Me God!



1. The key to successful destination development in any community begins with delivering memorable visitor experiences.

# Three Truths...So Help Me God!



2. For many visitors, their first emotional engagement experience with your brand begins when they enter your destination's Visitor Center.

# Three Truths...So Help Me God!



3. If you can deliver your brand promise via a positive visitor center experience, you're on your way to building an unstoppable word-of-mouth, consumer-generated brand buzz about the destination and ultimately your cultural assets.

**It All Starts With The...**

**Brand Promise**



## **The Asheville Area Brand Promise**

**We guarantee you a life-enriching experience each and every time you visit Asheville. It's personal, personal to you. And it is also personal to us. We live that same genuine experience and want to share it with you. We empower you to discover a collection of experiences that is as unique and varied as each individual who visits us, and allows you to do so in a warm, embracing and creative environment.**

# The Asheville Area Brand



## Our Core Values: Welcoming ~ Natural ~ Vibrant

Today's value proposition is to translate your brand promise, core values, and essence into a living, breathing Visitor Center that generates business and customers for you...

**It's ALIVE!!!**

## Or, in the Mind of a Visitor...

“How can you help me partially plan the next 48-72 hours of life by making my experience in your community both memorable and unscripted... so I’ll tell more people, return more often, stay longer, and spend more money?!?”

**Your Visitor Center stop here will  
enrich your life.**

# Visitor Center 1.0

ASHEVILLE



- Adjacent to major interstate
- 160,000 annual visitors
- 45 parking spots
- Only two “relief” stations
- 800 sq. ft. total
- Too packed to even think during peak seasons

# Visitor Center 2.0

ASHEVILLE



- 5 acre site
- \$5.8 M for building; \$8.5 M total cost
- 200,000 annual visitors
- 147 official parking spots, 250 possible; motorcoach/RV accessible
- 33,000 sq. ft.; 8,000 sq. ft. of space available to lease
- 4,000 sq. ft. Visitor Center
- 800 sq. ft. retail space
- One-stop shop (Chamber & CVB)

## **Guiding Principles in Design and Programs**

- On brand
- Welcoming, natural, vibrant design
- Tech-friendly
- Flexible space & seasonal messaging
- Multiple sponsorship opportunities
- Easy for staff/volunteers to work

# Guiding Principles in Design and Programs

continued

- Tons of options to “get info and get going,” as well as customized and personal service
- Easy access to all services including merchandise
- Open to whatever comes your way

# Show me the Money!



Total sponsorships/vendor leases

- Kiosks, posters, window/mantle displays, computer bank, accommodation board, Biltmore Estate, trolley tours, Segway tours and much more.

# Recent Survey Facts

ASHEVILLE



- February 2007
- Over 1,300 responses from our opt-in e-newsletter subscribers



**When you travel to a new destination,  
do you typically visit the local official  
visitor center?**

**75.8% - Yes**

**24.2% - No**

## **Have you visited the Asheville Visitor Center at its new location off Interstate 240 near downtown Asheville?**

**71.3% No, but I plan to stop by next time I'm in the area.**

**17.8% Yes.**

**10.9% No, I don't typically go to area Visitor Centers.**

**If you answered yes to the previous question, please select the services below that you are aware the Asheville Visitor Center offers. Check all that apply.**

**83.5% Area maps**

83.3% Brochures

59.3% Knowledgeable volunteers

59.1% Gift shop

59.1% Area businesses information

**When visiting a destination, are you likely to purchase any items at a visitor center gift shop?**

**77.2% - Yes**

**22.8% - No**

# What do you *always* purchase when visiting a destination's Visitor Center?

## ALWAYS PURCHASE:

- 48%** Local food items (i.e. jams, coffee, etc.)
- 39% Postcards
- 32% Local crafts
- 28% Maps
- 22% Typical souvenirs
- 19% T-shirts

## Never Purchase:

- 82%** License plates or license plate frames
- 73% Golf shirts
- 65% Pet apparel/gifts
- 63% Children/infant apparel
- 52% Framed pictures of the destination
- 49% Children's gifts

**Would you be more willing to shop at a visitor center shop if you had a coupon?**

**89.7% - Yes**

**10.3% - No**

Note: For those e-news subscribers who completed the survey, a 20% off coupon was offered to drive more business to our retail shop.

# What Have We Learned?





1. Trust and loyalty are the new currencies of 2009: Visitor Centers will become more valuable to both visitors and residents as the place to go for personalized and honest information about your destination or attraction.



2. Creating a memorable brand experience within the walls of your Visitor Center builds life-time brand champions.



3. Have fun! After all, your visitors haven't travelled this far to find out where misery hangs out.

# Obama Stops By Visitor Center

