
Visitor Experience Plan 2006



Situation Analysis

In November 2004, Council identified Visitor Experience/Economic Development as a key priority for 2005. The goal of this priority was to define the role of the Town of Banff in the areas of visitor experience and economic development. In November 2005, this goal remained, but evolved to include a broader priority surrounding Industry Collaboration. The first step in this area included the hiring of a Visitor Experience Coordinator. This individual's challenge was to meet with stakeholders with the intent to clarify the community's desire for the Town of Banff to provide input in this area, and to determine how the municipality could best invest resources in the areas that would have the most positive impact on the visitor experience within the town.

Over the past six years, the international tourism market has become increasingly competitive. The Town of Banff recognizes that to remain a world-class destination the municipality needs to make a greater investment in visitor focused initiatives ranging from collaboration with industry partners, to a shared community vision, to enhanced visitor infrastructure. To confirm the Town's hypothesis and gain visitor insight, the Town of Banff conducted primary research into visitor needs and expectations (see attachment). In addition, industry views on the visitor experience were gathered. This primary research informs this plan which lays the foundation for the Town of Banff to collaborate with industry to positively affect economic development. The Visitor Experience Coordinator will lead the execution of this plan.



Key Planning Considerations

It is important to identify issues that may impact the implementation of this visitor experience plan. The considerations have been identified through primary research completed by the Visitor Experience Coordinator.

Ambiguity surrounding visitor experience vision

The words “visitor experience” mean different things to different stakeholders. This results in confusion about the products and services that affect the visitor experience and the expectations surrounding their delivery. To properly engage all stakeholders it is important to understand the stakeholders’ role in affecting the visitor experience. It will also be key to bring these groups together to determine a shared vision for visitor experience, buy-in on the Town of Banff’s role, as well as a plan on how each stakeholder executes on this vision.

Multiple stakeholders are involved in delivering visitor experience

Multiple stakeholders are involved in bringing visitors and large groups (1,000+) to town and managing all of the details necessary to provide the visitor experience. The Town of Banff must provide a single point of contact to liaise with these groups to ensure all municipal product and service offerings are considered, that policies are adhered to, that permits are completed and that all affected businesses receive notification of the event or activity when appropriate. That said there are times when the Town may not be engaged, and thus, will not have the capacity to affect the visitor experience.

Changing visitor expectations

In the past six months the Town of Banff did its first assessment to determine visitor expectations within the town site. This baseline data informs this plan, however, primary research should be completed on an ongoing basis to keep a pulse on changing visitor needs and to measure municipal progress to enhance the visitor experience through the execution of this plan.

Fiscal responsibility

Although Town Council has identified the visitor experience as a strategic priority, a 2007 budget will not be identified until late 2006. In keeping with the Town of Banff’s mandate, this plan must identify strategies that are fiscally responsible and include avenues to leverage the visitor experience budget.

Maintaining momentum

In the past two years, due to a shift in priorities by Town Council and Banff/Lake Louise Tourism, there appears to be a heightened focus on enhancing the visitor experience. To date, the affects of this shift are intangible. To create excitement and maintain momentum surrounding this work, it will be important to celebrate milestones (i.e. consensus on shared visitor experience vision) and the execution of tangible priorities.



Audiences

Primary

Key Stakeholders (those who have a stake in the quality of the visitor experience in Banff) and Partners (those who influence or affect the visitor experience):

- ❑ Town of Banff
- ❑ Banff Lake Louise Tourism and its members
- ❑ Hotel Motel Association
- ❑ Small Business Association
- ❑ Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation
- ❑ Restaurant and Food Association
- ❑ Ski Banff, Lake Louise, Sunshine
- ❑ Banff Bed and Breakfast Association
- ❑ Parks Canada
- ❑ AMPPE
- ❑ Bow Valley Naturalists
- ❑ Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association
- ❑ Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (Calgary/Banff Chapter)
- ❑ Defenders of Wildlife (Banff representatives/members)
- ❑ Under the Sleeping Buffalo
- ❑ Recreation user groups
- ❑ Residents
- ❑ Provincial and federal government

Visitors:

- ❑ Habitual visitors (focus on one main activity i.e. skier, climber, hiker: CDN: under 2 nights)
- ❑ Getaway visitors (short visits that include a range of activities: CDN: shortest length of stay)
- ❑ Park experience visitors (stay in campgrounds and hostels, want to learn about heritage and culture: US or Europe – often German: long trips away from home)
- ❑ Site seeing visitors (longer visit with a focus on indoor activities such as driving and gondolas: US and Europe)
- ❑ Meetings, conventions and incentive travel groups



Objectives

- **Position the Town of Banff as visitor friendly**
 - Stakeholders agree the Town of Banff is proactively engaged in economic development
 - Stakeholders agree the Town of Banff is flexible and easy to deal with in planning and organizing visitor experience initiatives
 - Stakeholders believe the Town of Banff brings forward solutions for building unforgettable visitor experiences
 - Visitors feel welcome

- **Coordinate municipal service delivery to optimize the visitor experience**
 - All Town of Banff departments' decision making reflects community's visitor experience vision.

- **Create a shared stakeholder vision of the visitor experience**
 - Stakeholders collaborate to create a visitor experience vision
 - Community buys-in to the shared visitor experience vision

- **Create and support unforgettable visitor experiences**
 - Package Town of Banff municipal services as experiences
 - Visitors say the Town of Banff is a great destination
 - Visitors say they will return to Banff or will tell others to visit
 - Residents support Town of Banff's role in enhancing the visitor experience

- **Secure secondary funding sources to support visitor experience plan's execution**

Strategies by Audience

Visitor Strategies:

- ❑ Use research tools to identify the expectations of visitors pre-arrival and to determine their level of satisfaction when in the town
- ❑ Improve the visitor experience through enhancements to existing municipal services and communication tools
- ❑ Shift municipal products and services to visitor experiences

Stakeholder Strategies:

- ❑ Develop partnerships with stakeholders to create a shared visitor experience vision for Banff
- ❑ Provide municipal support for engaging, innovative and entertaining opportunities that attract new and return visitors
- ❑ Utilize partnerships to help finance broad visitor experience initiatives

Resident Strategies:

- ❑ Engage residents in visitor experience discussion
- ❑ Encourage all partners to add a resident focus to visitor oriented events



Visitor Tactics

Seasonal Visitor survey: pre-arrival

- Partner with hotels/tour groups to identify future visitors and seek approval to survey
- Use an online survey to determine guest expectations about Banff and their trip, prior to their arrival
 - Identify how guests make their decision to come here
 - Identify what they plan to do when they arrive
 - Identify how they will determine if their trip exceeded their expectations (i.e. what would make them recommend our destination to others, what would make them come back)
- Prepare a report of key findings and share with key stakeholders

Seasonal Visitor survey: in destination

- In-person survey with guests to determine their level of visitor satisfaction as they leave the destination
 - Identify the activities that guests participated in
 - Determine guests level of satisfaction with destination products and services
 - Identify gaps in service delivery
- Prepare a report of key findings and share with key stakeholders

Visitor comment cards

- Develop a simple visitor “comment card” pulse check which may be delivered verbally or through print to gain feedback on specific Town of Banff facilities, products and services
- Provide a summary of results to appropriate departments semi-annually
- Establish metrics to evaluate progress

Facilitate interdepartmental coordination on visitor experience activities

- Work with all Town of Banff departments to coordinate visitor-focused activities and initiatives
- Facilitate town-wide conversations to ensure all public spaces (interior and exterior) reflect the community’s visitor experience vision (as identified through the Banff Community Plan and the Banff Summit)

Enhance holiday pageantry

- Identify opportunities to enhance the holiday pageantry downtown and in all public places. Improved holiday pageantry should fulfill visitors' expectations of Banff as a winter wonderland
- Work with stakeholders to enhance holiday pageantry beyond public spaces managed by the Town of Banff

Realign Town of Banff web presence to have a greater focus on visitor

- Work with key stakeholders to provide easy-to-access content on activities and facilities within the town (i.e. ball diamonds for rent, skate park, gazebo rental, park spaces, trail information, picnic shelters, event calendar etc.)
- Use the website as a tool to market municipal products, services and experiences

Create and execute on a way finding plan that meets visitor needs

- Create a visitor-focused way finding plan for the LATB area (to include directional signage at vehicle and pedestrian level, information or “you are here” kiosks and entry way signs)
 - Apply for a municipal sponsorship grant to fund this activity
- Apply street dressing to all appropriate roadways to serve as a Banff attraction
 - Shift to sculpted street signage that enhances the connection to place (i.e. Big Horn street sign is shaped like the majestic animal)
 - Add sidewalk fossils to appropriate streets (i.e. squirrel tracks on occasional sidewalk block on Squirrel street)
 - Add decorative imagery to manhole covers (i.e. Bears on manhole covers on Bear street)
 - Initiate public art program to encourage civic address iconography that relates to heritage/street name

Shift Banff Public Transit from a service to an experience

- ❑ Purchase buses that are reflective of national park values – at a baseline they should be environmentally friendly (i.e. hybrid or electric)
- ❑ Turn buses into larger than life grizzlies, elk, goats, sheep etc. (i.e. wrap buses in life-like, quality images, so they become an attraction), so that people *want* to take the bus
- ❑ Use interior bus panels and technology to tell the stories of Banff
- ❑ Create a route schedule that is more frequent and reflective of visitor needs (i.e. a service where visitors don't have to know the schedule...the bus comes every 10 to 15 minutes; the bus travels to all sites and trails in the LATB area)
- ❑ Work with the marketing and communications department to increase awareness of public transit amongst visitors

Support the transition of Banff's public taxi service to an experience

- ❑ Initiate new guidelines to encourage taxi companies to use environmentally friendly vehicles (i.e. hybrid) and provide TOB incentive for licensing fees
- ❑ Make the taxis feel like they're in a national park. Provide taxi companies with finished artwork, so cabs could be larger than life flowers or birds from this area

Improve marketing/communication surrounding municipal facilities

- ❑ Identify additional means to distribute promotional materials to visitors on Town of Banff products, services and experiences (i.e. through information centre, hotels, restaurants and additional visitor venues etc.)

Support Banff refreshing initiative to bring the “park” downtown

- ❑ Support the Town's effort to make the 100 and 200 blocks downtown more reflective of the environment and more pedestrian friendly
- ❑ Be the voice of the visitor in the planning and execution of this initiative

Audit of existing TOB promotional materials

- ❑ Work with Communications to review all Town of Banff promotional materials to ensure they address baseline visitor needs (i.e. good way finding principles applied to trail maps; easy to understand transit schedules etc.)
- ❑ Work with Communications to ensure Town of Banff materials are distributed through the most effective visitor streams to encourage use (i.e. at the information centre, in hotel lobbies, intuitively placed on our website etc.)



Take advantage of new marketing opportunities

- ❑ Ensure the Town of Banff has a presence at appropriate events held in Banff (i.e. Touring Tin, Canada Day, WinterFest etc.)
- ❑ Seek out opportunities to market Town of Banff visitor-focused products, services and facilities outside this community

Enhanced Parade Presence

- ❑ Create permanent floats for the summer and winter parades (with a three-year lifespan) to promote the town as a visitor friendly destination
- ❑ Seek additional “parade” opportunities for Town of Banff float (i.e. Calgary Stampede, Capital Ex etc.)



Stakeholder Tactics

Partner with Conference and Incentive Travel groups

- ❑ Provide access to municipal products and services where needed
- ❑ Partner with large organizations to ensure events and pageantry are consistent with Banff principles/guidelines

Stakeholder liaison

- ❑ Liaise with stakeholders and visitor groups for all matters related to visitor experience
- ❑ Act as a resource to visitor groups and local stakeholders looking for municipal products or services
- ❑ Monitor visitor-focused activities to gain insight and learning on how to improve the Banff experience
- ❑ Ensure the Town's interests remain a priority when negotiating with industry and associations for new or revised tourism related programs and services

Stakeholder meetings

- ❑ Meet with key stakeholders to learn how they define visitor experience and to identify their individual vision for the visitor experience
- ❑ Meet with key stakeholders to identify how they affect the visitor experience (this includes internal Town of Banff alignment on visitor experience goals)
- ❑ Educate key stakeholders on the Town's products and services that affect the visitor experience.
- ❑ Gain buy-in on partnering to create a premium visitor experience

Banff Summit

- ❑ Host a Banff Summit event/workshop to discuss the business community's vision for the visitor experience

Financial support

- ❑ Continue to seek federal and provincial grant support to fund projects that enhance the visitor experience
- ❑ Work with partners (i.e. Banff Lake Louise Tourism, Parks Canada) to identify alternative financial support for items/activities/initiatives that may move beyond the scope of standard municipal services (i.e. enhanced pedestrian way finding, a transit service that moves covers the LATB area etc.)



Stakeholder & Resident Tactics

Visitor Experience Banff Summit Phase II

- Host a follow-up Banff Summit event (with all stakeholders) to come to consensus and execute on shared vision
 - Use draft vision concepts from phase one to craft draft vision
 - Come to consensus on shared vision
 - Establish priorities to bring vision to life
 - Establish working groups to implement vision
 - Identify metrics to evaluate progress
- Use this shared vision to create guiding principles for creating the unified visitor experience throughout the town
 - Distribute shared vision and guiding principles to all partners for quick and easy reference

Special Events Corporation

- Secure a board position for the Town of Banff visitor experience coordinator
- Provide input and support for engaging, innovative and entertaining opportunities that attract new and return visitors
- Provide support and access to municipal services to support visitor focused events with an economic impact
- Educate partners on Town of Banff guidelines surrounding pageantry and how it can affect the visitor experience

Building Community Goodwill

- When working with groups planning larger (1000+) visitor focused events, negotiate community-focused events to build community goodwill and ongoing support for visitor events
- Encourage locals to engage in visitor events as an added attraction for visitors

