

CHAPTER 5 . TRAIL TOWN ASSESSMENT, BUSINESS, MARKETING & TRAIL TOWN INFRASTRUCTURE



Stakeholders Interview

Visitors Experience Survey
(OC-100)

Trail Town Needs Assessment

Results of the Trail Town
Needs Assessment

Local Versus Visitor
Perceptions

Improvement Opportunities

Titusville Trail Town
Assessment Report

Data gathering included Stakeholder Interviews, a Special Visitor's Survey (OC-100), a Trail-to-Town Route Analysis, and a Trail Town Assessment.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with local and regional business owners, vendors, and agency/government officials. A summary of the findings is listed below. Please refer to the Appendix for the stakeholder interview questions and answers.

A series of 14-interviews were held over a four week period; including 6 business owners, 4 nonprofit agency representatives and 4 non-local businesses. Six additional businesses were contacted but were not reached despite repeated attempts. One business did respond to an email but did not answer interview questions.

Key Findings:

All but one of those interviewed were aware of the Trail Town initiative and familiar with its goals of increasing outdoor recreational user visits.

A majority felt the goals were achievable and realistic.

1. *"We had a couple in a few years ago and they biked in. I asked them how much they spent on their trip in Franklin and Titusville and they said close to \$300."*
2. *"Cycling is the top outdoor recreational draw to the area."*

Titusville has many outdoor recreational opportunities in addition to biking. This was mentioned by almost all interviewed.

Specifics noted were: Marathons, Fishing and Hunting, Paddling and Kayaking on the dozens of lakes and streams in the region,

1. *"Fishing and kayaking are up."*
2. *"The OC 100 was our busiest weekend of the year."*
3. *"Outdoor recreation is good for business. We let bikes into the rooms."*
4. *"We might see 2 to 40 cyclists on any given train ride. We accommodate bikes on the train."*
5. *"Two bike rental potential business interests have won the Entrepreneurs contest in past years. There must be some interest."*
6. *"More and more people look for outdoor recreation mini-vacations."*
7. *"Crawford County now has an outdoor recreational resources and amenities map and guide. They will be distributed through the welcome centers."*

Titusville also has many attractions which appeal to visitors.

Mentioned by at least one of those interviewed were: Drake Well Museum, Blue Canoe Restaurant, the "Q", Scenic train ride, Queen City Trail, Caboose Motel, Historic district.

When asked about what needs to be improved, several mentioned weekend hours.

1. *"The hours may not be conducive to visitors."*
2. *"Not very many restaurants are open on either Sunday or Monday and that's when tourists are here."*
3. *"The hours businesses are open remains an issue. Many are not open on weekends. The response has been, 'everyone goes to the malls anyway.'"*

Another challenge to be addressed according to several of those interviewed is a non-participatory business community.

1. "It's like pulling teeth..."
2. "Some promotions have only a few participating."
3. "People do not understand the value of the trail."
4. "A few of the businesses in town really get it. Others seem disconnected from the market."

Marketing suggestions were varied but most agreed itineraries with nearby and regional attractions made sense.

1. "My business would offer discounts as part of programs with the Trail Town initiative."
2. "A QR Code which calls up the menu would allow cyclists to order ahead."
3. "Itineraries are good; particularly those that include natural resources. Factor in historic, culture and the arts."
4. "Clear, high quality signage, aggressive Facebook outreach strategies for businesses."
5. "Package as a region."
6. "Bike Racks and a welcoming community are important for this market."
7. "Titusville can be the 'food drop' for long distance trips."

VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE SURVEY (OC-100)

A special visitor's survey was conducted with participants of the Oil City-100 (OC-100, a 100 mile long distance race); the results were tallied using an electronic trail user survey. Participants responded to a variety of questions about the town, their family's experience, and the race. <http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/cycleforward/titusville-visitor-experience-survey/>



Most participants said they were pleased with the conditions, amenities and experience in Titusville. Others gave insightful responses about the hours of business, condition of buildings and quality of services that can be used for positive response.

November 2012

45 respondents – nearly all participants of the OC 100 and a few Drake Well Marathon Participants

NOTE: Some of the questions asked of the visitor survey respondents are similar to questions asked of local stakeholders in the Trail Town Needs Assessment. Where applicable, the local assessment team's responses are noted to compare local and visitor perceptions. The complete results of the Trail Town Needs Assessment are available in a separate document.

Did you or your family visit Titusville's downtown area when visiting for your most recent race event or training experience?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		91%	41
No		9%	4
Total responses:			45

If you did not visit the downtown area, was it because (check all that apply):

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
You did not feel enticed to visit town		29%	2
You did not know what products or services would be available, so you packed all that you needed		71%	5
You were focused on your race event and not looking to spend time in town		57%	4
Total responses:			7

If you did visit the downtown area, did Titusville's business district feel distinct or special?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		62%	25
No		38%	15
Total responses:			40


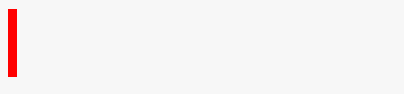
100% of the local assessment team responded "no" to the similar Assessment question D1.

Did Titusville appear economically healthy?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		40%	16
No		60%	24
Total responses:			40



100% of the local assessment team responded "no" to the similar Assessment question D2.

Did Titusville feel safe?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		98%	40
No		2%	1
Total responses:			41



100% of the local assessment team responded “yes” to the similar Assessment question D3.

Was a walk through the business district generally a pleasant experience?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		95%	39
No		5%	2
Total responses:			41



100% of the local assessment team responded “yes” to the similar Assessment question D4.

In general, did buildings and storefronts appear to be well-maintained?



Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		66%	27
No		34%	14
Total responses:			41

To the similar “In general, are vacant storefronts reasonably maintained? (D6)” the entire local assessment team responded “maybe” (meaning “some are, some aren’t”). The full team responded the same (100% “maybe) to Question D14, “Are storefronts maintained?”



Were you easily able to find information on Titusville or the region while doing your trip research?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		82%	33
No		18%	7
Total responses:			40

Were you easily able to find information on Titusville or the region after you arrived to the area?



Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		62%	23
No		38%	14
Total responses:			37

Was there adequate way-finding (directional) signage for you as a motorist?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		74%	32
No		26%	11
Total responses:			43

100% of the local assessment team responded “no” to the similar Assessment question T4.



Was there adequate signage (business information, interpretive signage) for you as a pedestrian?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		68%	26
No		32%	12
Total responses:			38

Did you have cell phone reception while:



	Yes	No	Total Responses
In town	39 (91%)	4 (9%)	43
On local trails	10 (26%)	28 (74%)	38

Did business hours generally match your needs?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		81%	34
No		19%	8
Total responses:			42



100% of the local assessment team responded "no" to the similar Assessment question B2.

Generally, were you greeted warmly when you visited local businesses?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		98%	42
No		2%	1
Total responses:			43

80% of the local assessment team responded "yes" to the similar Assessment question B4.

Were you able to find publicly-accessible restrooms, in businesses or otherwise?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		79%	31
No		21%	8
Total responses:			39

60% of the local assessment team responded "yes" to the similar Assessment question B9.

What of the following services WERE NOT available in Titusville during your visit?

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Coffee shop		31%	8
Ice cream / Candy shop		23%	6
Family-style restaurant		8%	2
Bar or tavern		4%	1
Vending machines		8%	2
Restaurant with liquor service		4%	1
Restaurant with outdoor seating		54%	14
Restaurant serving local and seasonal foods		35%	9
Hotel or Inn		15%	4
Bed and Breakfast		8%	2
Hostel		23%	6
Nearby Camping		4%	1
Outfitter / sports equipment and rentals		69%	18
Convenience store		4%	1
Access to public email service		19%	5
24 hour ATM		8%	2
Public Transportation / taxi service		35%	9
Retail shops		35%	9
Souvenirs		35%	9
Urgent Care Center (such as a Walgreen's Take Care Clinic)		27%	7
Drug store / Pharmacy		4%	1
Total responses:			26

It is worth noting that when asked what could have made their visits to Titusville better, the most common response was (paraphrased) "Nothing, everything was fine!" Additionally, several respondents noted how much they enjoyed the people, the hospitality, and the area in general.

TRAIL TOWN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

On November 13, 2012 a trail town needs assessment meeting was held with the steering committee. This meeting included a walk-about through the community to evaluate the City of Titusville through the eyes of a visiting trail user. Teams were briefed on what typical trail user's value and were provided with an assessment check list.

Other members of the team reviewed the four selected streets for the best way to connect the trail to town central. Perry, Franklin, Martin, and Brown were reviewed and compared. Martin was favored for a variety of reasons: low ADT and truck route activity, accessibility and safety, a wide road favoring low cost for implementation, and a direct route to town central.

The Trail-to-Town Route Decision Matrix can be found in the Appendix along with detailed plans for bike lane implementation.

After the walk-about through the city, we met with the committee and completed a debriefing and held an assessment review session; most common were the following responses:

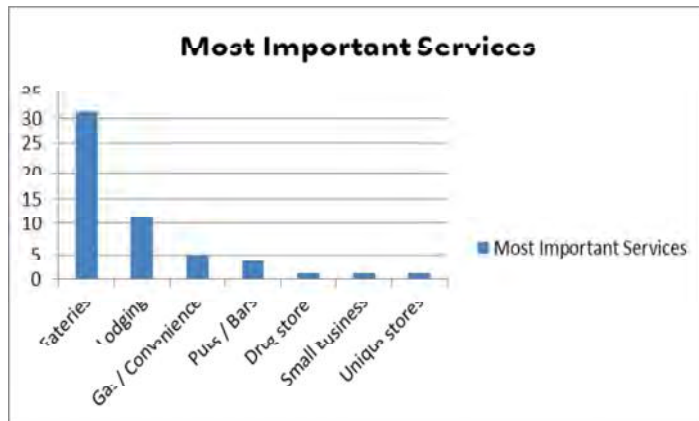
- » What's Great about Titusville- school district, university, hospital, strong volunteerism, safety, compact business community
- » Opportunities for Improvement- retail shops, welcome center, bike shop/outfitter, business hours convenient to recreation/trail users, general appearance of business district

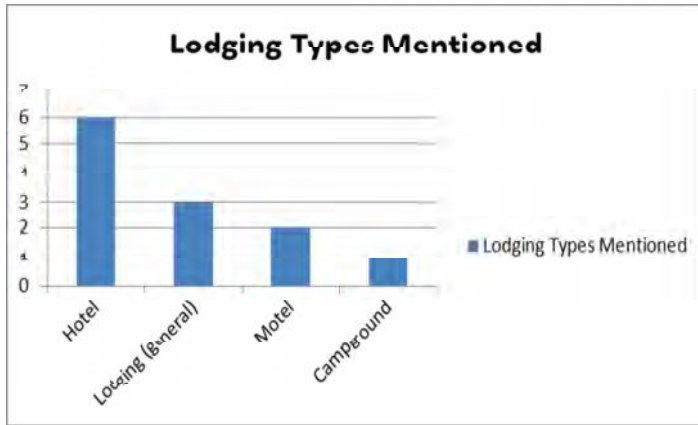
RESULTS OF THE TRAIL TOWN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Trail Town Needs Assessment exercise provided key insights into how local stakeholders perceive their community and how well it addresses visitor needs. A suggestion during the assessment debrief discussion to survey recent visitors has proven to be a great opportunity for outsider insight to both challenge and validate local perceptions.

Generally speaking, the local assessment team was harsher in its perceptions of Titusville than the recent visitors were. It has been invigorating to work with a team that wants to hold the community to high standards, as this will lead to substantive improvements as this project continues. However, it has been helpful to learn that visitors are not as critical of Titusville and its offerings and generally enjoyed their visits. Any improvements pursued moving forward will only enhance their return visits and those of out-of-town cyclists.

What types of business services were most important to you when visiting Titusville?

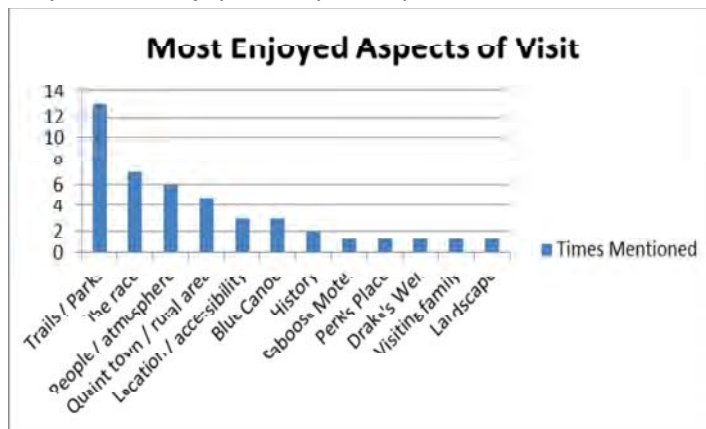




Additional insights:

- » The Blue Canoe was mentioned three times, and one respondent specifically stated, “The Blue Canoe is worth the drive alone.”
- » A casual coffee shop, eateries open on Sundays, and eateries open for breakfast, and “quick, good food” each were mentioned once as important business services.

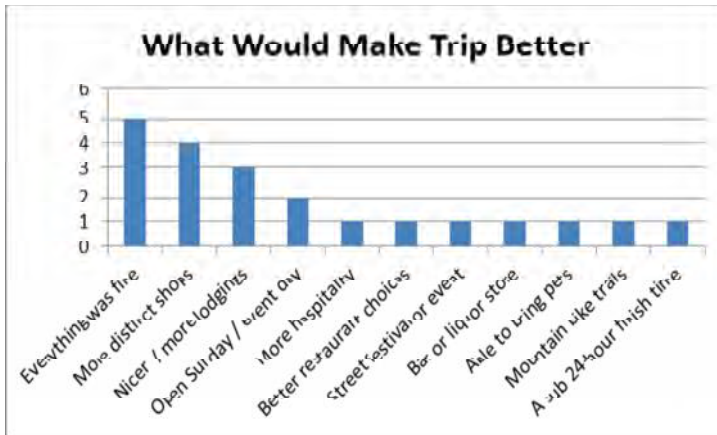
What did you most enjoy about your trip to Titusville?



Specific comments about the people, town and atmosphere:

- » The people were fabulous!
- » Nice little town
- » Great volunteers
- » Small city feel with rich history in a great area
- » Attractive, viable town in a peaceful rural area
- » Quaint town
- » Small town, but with just about everything

What would have made your trip to Titusville better?



Specific comments:

- » Match your market with the race date (not for me, as I run, but for my family who wants to do something during that time).
- » More selection of restaurants, outfitter, shops, drug store, convenience store, not a dead beat town with many abandoned businesses and buildings

LOCAL VERSUS VISITOR PERCEPTIONS

The major discrepancies in visitor and local perceptions were related to:

- » Whether or not Titusville's business district feels distinct or special
- » Whether or not the town appears to be economically healthy
- » The adequacy of way-finding signage
- » Whether or not business hours match customer needs

In all of the above questions, visitor perceptions were far more positive than those of the local assessment team. A direct comparison of responses can be viewed later in this report where the survey responses are shown.

The topics on which visitor and local perceptions were most similar are:

- » Safety of the town
- » Whether or not a walk through the business district is a pleasant experience
- » General maintenance of the buildings and storefronts
- » Whether or not customers are greeted warmly upon entering local businesses
- » The availability of public restrooms

Both groups found the town to be safe, hospitable and generally pleasant. The maintenance of buildings and the need for publicly accessible restrooms are potential areas for improvement.

IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities for improvement as identified during town assessment exercise, according to the tallied walking assessment results:

- » Gateway signage / public art
- » Establish a local trailhead and parking
- » Bike racks
- » Bike lanes
- » General appearance of buildings and storefronts (Supported by visitor survey results)
- » Enforcement of building codes, sidewalk improvements
- » Expanded business hours (weekends)
- » Improved business signs – hours posted, services stated, clearly visible, professionally designed
- » Information kiosks and improved way-finding signage
- » Availability of visitor information in town
- » Position front-line staff as local ambassadors
- » Cross promotions between businesses
- » “Clean and Green” elements such as picnic areas, native plants, and rain gardens
- » Demonstrate pride in place

Opportunities for improvement and potential projects identified during the assessment debrief discussion:

- » Need retail shops, souvenirs
- » Need a welcome center
- » Need a bike shop and/or outfitter with sporting equipment
- » Business hours need to be expanded
- » General appearance of business district
- » Façade improvements, night lighting
- » Communication and awareness building
- » Bike map (like the example from Pitt’s Main Campus)
- » Way-finding signage
- » Information kiosks
- » New bike racks (or relocation of existing racks)
- » Different style bike racks, “post and ring” style or potentially shaped as oil derricks
- » Establish a trail head
- » Fleming Park improvements

Respondents to the visitor survey made clear that **the most important business services are food followed by lodging.**

The most sought after lodging by this group is hotel / motel. The most noted business services NOT available were:

- » Outfitter / equipment rental (69% of respondents noted this, as did the local assessment team pertaining specifically to bike shops and rentals)
- » Outdoor seating (54%) – *this also was identified in the town assessment*
- » Local and seasonal foods (35%)
- » Public transportation (35%)
- » Retail shops (35%)
- » Souvenirs (35%)
- » Coffee shop (31%)
- » Ice cream / candy shops (23%)
- » Hostel (23%) - *this also was identified in the town assessment*

Other comments regarding what would have made visitors' trips better included:

- » Distinct shops
- » Improved lodging options
- » Sunday hours
- » "Quick, good food"
- » A "casual coffee shop"
- » Eateries open for breakfast

TITUSVILLE TRAIL TOWN ASSESSMENT REPORT

The report shares the findings of the Titusville Trail Town Needs Assessment completed by local stakeholders, as well as the Visitor Survey completed by 45 recent visitors that participated in the OC-100 and Drake Well Marathon races. Below are Assessment Report excerpts, refer to Appendix for complete Trail Town Assessment Report and Findings.

It was determined that in Titusville the following items need to be addressed:

- » Streetscape, general building appearance improvements
- » More business open on weekends; hours posted
- » More bike racks, bike lanes
- » More B&B's and other types of lodging
- » Bike rental in town
- » Expanded outfitter services (and for winter sports)
- » More retail shops, souvenirs
- » Visitor information, signage, informational kiosks
- » Outdoor cafes and more restaurant offerings (seasonal foods)