

The Chautauqua Wine Trail

The Chautauqua Wine Trail is exceptional. Most of the wineries we visited (more than ten) were staffed with friendly people, have nice wine-tasting rooms, and were well merchandised. They had consistent hours and were, for the most part, easy to find.

The challenge with wine is that it is now the most overused brand in the United States. Nearly every state has multiple wine trails and a new winery is coming online in the country at a pace of nearly one a day. Remember the question “What do you have that I can’t get or do closer to home?” People in Erie and Pittsburgh can find wine trails much closer to home than traveling to Western New York. Those who live in Upstate New York or New York City, or even Rochester, can head to the Finger Lakes wineries without the trek to Chautauqua County.

This does not mean the wine trail is not worth promoting, but it does mean that wineries are, increasingly, becoming a diversionary activity and not the primary draw. The average visitor is active 14 hours a day, but typically spends only four to six hours with the primary draw that brought them there. Then they spend the next eight to ten hours enjoying diversionary activities. Primary lures cannot succeed without diversionary activities, so the wine trail plays a very important role in providing interactive activities while visiting the area.

For some, the wine trail will be the primary draw, but for most it will be a “must do” activity while visiting the area for a different reason. While most of the wineries were attractive and inviting, some were less so. Curb appeal can account for as much as 70% of visitor sales at restaurants, lodging facilities, retail shops, golf courses and wineries. First impressions are lasting impressions.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Wineries should consider developing a kiosk program where each cross sells to other wineries. Most have an area outside where a free-standing kiosk or wall-mounted kiosk could be posted showing the wine trail map, where you are now, and noting where the next wineries are. If you do this, the kiosk should have a similar look, and map brochures should be available for the visitor to take with them.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

WESTFIELD

The gateway signs into Westfield were among the best in the county. They are decorative, reflective of the history, very attractive, and placed in excellent locations.

However, once in Westfield, the sign (below) eliminates the historic feel of the downtown core area.

Suggestion: Remove the sign, or turn it into an attractive readerboard. The sign is a collection of six signs (sign clutter) that do not fit the character and feel of downtown Westfield. It simply assaults visitors with more advertising. Consider something along the lines of the sign shown (bottom right), located in McCloud, California. Simple, clean, reflective of the community, easy to read, and fits the ambiance. Each of the merchants showcased on the sign pitched in to create it.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

Downtown Westfield is beautiful in terms of architectural appeal. Visiting on a Saturday, we enjoyed the farmers market (below). A challenge: we couldn't find any public restrooms, something that should be addressed if you want to capture visitors in town for more than an hour or two.

The parking and shuttle services are exceptional (bottom right). Great job. Include how often the shuttles run between the parking area and downtown on the signage. Convenience is rule number one with visitors. The shuttle should run every 15 minutes or so to maximize ridership.

The market itself was nice, but relatively small. Certainly worth a special trip from nearby communities, but probably not sufficient to pull people from Buffalo or Erie. A great diversionary activity for visitors already in the area visiting friends and family, or perhaps boating on the lake (either one).



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

The museum looked like another diversionary activity while visiting the town and the market. Surprisingly, it was closed. Suggestions include the following items:

1. The exterior can use a good cleaning. There was dirt and mildew on the building's exterior, which brought down its overall appeal.
2. There are two signs in the door both stating "CLOSED." These are very difficult to read, even when standing at the door. Instead, put a sign on the exterior or the museum that states WHEN it will be open. Perhaps visitors would come back again if they knew when they could visit.
3. Can the "Environmental Quality Act" sign be reduced so it doesn't create sign clutter and dominate the actual sign to the museum? Is it really necessary to promote the funding organization? Can this be done INSIDE the museum?



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

While downtown Westfield has attractive street trees and planters (very nicely done), the property owners and tenants need to do more to soften the transition between building facades and concrete sidewalks.

Neenah, Wisconsin (population 5,000) did a downtown makeover. Notice the photo, bottom left with the typical building facades meeting the sidewalks. Now look that the shops shown, bottom right, just one block down. Which set of shops would get your attention?

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ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

One thing that really surprised us was how little interest there was among retailers to reach out to those attending the market. Only one merchant (below left) did anything to draw people across the street. They've done an excellent job by adding planters, creating a gathering place to sit outside, and adding the umbrella and colorful flags to draw attention to the store. Unfortunately, they cannot bring "downtown to life" all by themselves.

Suggestion: Can you tell what's in any of the shops (top right)? Add perpendicular or "blade signs" to these store fronts. We notice signs that are perpendicular to the street and sidewalks. Notice the retail signage photo on Page 13, taken in Nantucket.

Bring downtown to life. Add chairs, planters, benches, extend window displays to exterior spaces. There's little appeal to pull visitors into these shops.

First impressions are always lasting impressions. Have you ever used the words "that looks like a nice place to eat." We all tend to judge the book by the cover when we travel.



These look like great places to stay (bottom left, top right) and the restaurant (upper left) looks like a great place to eat. Westfield is home to some incredibly beautiful buildings, but remember, it's what's IN the buildings that makes a downtown a true destination.

ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Summary

Westfield did not have a lot to offer visitors, at least from what we were able to find while visiting on three occasions. The most memorable part of Westfield were the beautiful homes in the community. The potential to become an attraction or visitor draw is in the community. It has terrific “bones” in terms of overall and architectural appeal to work from.

Additional suggestions:

1. Remove signs like the one shown, top right. It doesn't fit the character of the town and simply creates additional sign clutter. An example is shown on how to better do this, later in this assessment.
2. Develop a downtown focus or brand and then recruit the business mix that will make downtown a great destination.
3. Property owners need to be pushed to do more. Note the gray plywood covering in the photo, bottom right?



While in Westfield, we visited with four different merchants who, out of the blue, began “venting” about local politics, taxes driving them out of business, wineries getting a lot of subsidies, city management, and a host of other issues. We were, quite frankly, shocked. None of these folks had any idea we were doing an assessment. We simply would ask about things to do in the area, and how they like the town, triggering a plethora of issues.

We left Westfield depressed. In most of these instances we were speaking with property owners, not just front-line employees. What a shame.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

PEEK 'N PEAK RESORT

Once we found the resort, we were very impressed by the overall area, starting with good signage at the gateway locations and throughout the resort area. The signage and beautification easily fit the area and the ambiance of the resort. It looks like a well-maintained and well-managed ski and golf resort community.

The landscaping was very nice. We spent a couple of hours “discovering” the resort and left impressed with the resort as a regional destination.

While not high in elevation, we noted several snow blowing capabilities, and nice chair lifts (bottom right).



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

The golf course was spectacular and the residential condos and homes at the resort were very nice. If this were located within a two to three hour drive of home, this would be a “must visit” destination for both summer golf (including miniature golf - near right) and winter skiing.

The pro shop and restaurant were very attractive (top right) as well.

The resort looks like a great second-home or vacation-home community. A great place for reunions, conferences, meetings, retreats, and trade shows.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

It was obvious that there is lots of potential for Peek 'N Peak to become a premier resort destination. The lodge (bottom two photos) looks like a great place to stay. Staff, throughout the resort, was friendly and helpful.

Suggestions:

1. Develop the critical mass. Shopping and dining is the top diversionary activity in the world. The most successful resorts concentrate on developing critical mass. We couldn't find any retail shops or much choice in the way of dining.
2. When is the pizza shop open? Seasonal only? Closed permanently? Lunch? Dinner? Put up an "OPEN" sign, some outdoor seating - anything to pull customers in. Let people know when it's open.
3. Consider a name change? For some it may be difficult to buy into the name "Peek 'N Peak." You want to be taken seriously and the name is not one that reflects a top notch destination resort area. Just an observation.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

FINDLEY LAKE

What a great little accidental find. The welcome sign (top right) is understated and perfect for this little community. The location couldn't be better with the flower gardens right there. A terrific first impression.

The sign clutter (below) was a distraction and we assumed the restaurant had gone out of business and is permanently closed (until a new buyer comes along). If, in fact, it is still operating, let people know when it will be open. Remove the holiday lights during the summer (bottom right) and work on curb appeal. As noted before, up to 70% of sales can come from curb appeal.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

The town has a great collection of shops and most of the merchants do a great job of pulling visitors in. Signage and beautification efforts are nice. We drove around the lake and as we drove we found ourselves picking out houses we wanted to move into.

Findley Lake is one of those communities you hope won't change. It is what it is: quaint, quiet, serene, intimate, and beautiful.

Suggestion:

1. Merchants, once again, should not use CLOSED signs, but instead say "We're here every day from 10 am to 6 pm." This invites people back, rather than simply sending them away.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

Avoid the use of plastic banners (bottom left) whenever possible. They are unattractive and take away from the overall ambiance. Decorative signs are well worth the cost and are much more inviting.

We couldn't really tell where the front entrance to the restaurant was. Is this the front, shown in the top right photo? If so, it should be stunning and inviting. Take a look at the Nic L Inn (bottom right) located in Cattaraugus County near the Onoville Marina. The curb appeal made this easily seem like the best place to eat in the county. If it looks this good, it must be good.

This type of look would fit perfectly for the restaurants and shops in Findley Lake.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Notes

What a great little town and “hidden gem” of Chautauqua County. It was the ONLY community outside of the Chautauqua Insitution, that had public rest-rooms (that were easy to find and were open).

The Waterwheel Overlook and mill site is in a great location and makes a good gateway into the shopping district.

Suggestion: Add visitor information outside the Overlook so when it's closed, visitors can still get information. Visitor information should always be working 24/7, 365 days a year.

Other communities, take note.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

There are several opportunities for visitor information in Findley Lake. We noted two bulletin boards (top right, bottom left), which had lots of rules and regulations but little to offer visitors in terms of things to see and do while visiting the community.

Questions we had, as visitors, included: Can we rent boats on the lake? When is the museum/visitor's center open? Can we bring boats to the lake? Is there a public swimming area or park on the lake? Are there overnight home rentals here if we wanted to come back?

The gazebo (bottom right) would be a great place for 24/7 visitor information. Notice the gazebo on the next page, located in Beatty, Nevada near Death Valley. A local craftsman developed the kiosk inside the gazebo, which has maps of the area and region, and provides brochure distribution for local merchants. This would be a great opportunity to promote local businesses and to cross-sell to other activities in the area and county.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

Findley Lake is a great boating destination, particularly for non-motorized boats. A hidden gem absolutely worth “discovering.”

Suggestion: Don't change a thing other than some window dressing in downtown shops. Remove plastic banners. Add 24/7 visitor information.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

DUNKIRK

The gateway signs are well located, but a little busy with various shapes, graphics, colors, and additional signs, which are unreadable from a distance.

Suggestions:

1. Consider just “Welcome to Dunkirk on Lake Erie.” If possible, can you remove the “donated by..” signage? Perhaps they can be presented with a plaque for their generous contribution. We are not too sure what the other signs mounted on the larger sign are for. Use one simple graphic.
2. Remove the chain-link sign (bottom left), which is unsightly and not a good reflection of the community. Instead, put auxiliary signs in a location where people can stop to get additional information, like Gig Harbor, Washington has done (bottom right).
3. “Industrial and vacation land” is not a good mix. No one wants to vacation at an industrial site or around big industry. That’s why New Jersey residents vacation at Rhode Island’s beaches instead of their own. Remember, first impressions are lasting impressions.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

The Wright Park sign is nice, but once again the donating entity's sign is nearly as large as the park sign.

Suggestion: When is the Beach House Grill open? Is it seasonal? Weekends only? Just for lunch? Add a decorative (professionally produced) sign that notes when the grill is open for business - if it's still in operation. We went by three or four times and it was never open.

Of all the communities we visited in the county, Dunkirk was the most confusing from a wayfinding standpoint. Being divided by the interstate and other highways made finding downtown Dunkirk nearly impossible. In fact, we gave up once, but because we were doing the assessment, came back and finally found it.

We saw the sign for "Chadwick Bay" (top right), which is a nice gateway to the community's waterfront area. We assumed that Dunkirk is located on Chadwick Bay, a part of Lake Erie.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

The waterfront provides a stunning view of the community (top right). We saw the historical society sign (near right), but never could find the museum - if there IS a museum.

Suggestions:

1. Promote the museum, the experience, not the organization, unless this sign is for the offices of the historical society.
2. The signage is confusing. Is this Chadwick Bay or Dunkirk Harbor? Or is it City Pier at Dunkirk Harbor, on Chadwick Bay, in Dunkirk on Lake Erie?



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

Once we were at the waterfront, we turned around to see that Chadwick Bay is the other direction - away from the waterfront (top right photo). Is Chadwick Bay the town? An area of downtown? If Chadwick Bay IS the waterfront, consider removing the sign on the north side of the railroad trestle.

Can you see the visitor information kiosk in the bottom left photo?

Suggestion: Always place your signage, including visitor information, perpendicular to the road. We drove past this twice before noticing it.

This is actually a nice kiosk and it was great to see it even included a brochure for the Dunkirk area. Good job.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

We salivated at the site of the waterfront park in Dunkirk (top right). What a natural location for a major public gathering and event place. The access roadway (bottom left) could be converted to a waterfront promenade - primary attractions around the country.

It reminded us of a project we recently completed for Oak Harbor, Washington, where their waterfront park is being converted from just large expanses of lawn, to plaza areas for concerts, events, open air markets, walking trails with interpretive signage, and gardens (bottom right). It is anchored by a waterfront amphitheater.

The following page shows a couple of renderings illustrating how an area like this can remain public space, and a major gathering place for both locals and visitors.

Stockton, California also has a very similar site (see photos next page) which was converted into a “festival and event plaza” and a major regional attraction. Having places like this is ideal for recruiting outside events to the town.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

Welcome to the “meanest museum” in the U.S. The Lighthouse Veteran’s Park Museum looked like a nice place to visit, but we were so taken aback by the negative signs (not one single mention of the word “welcome”) that we decided it was a place to avoid. When you first drive up all you see is a list of threats and negatives: STOP, Admission charged. No alcohol. No pets. No trespassing. Violators will be prosecuted.

It gets worse from there:

Admission starts here. Private driveway. No turn arounds (see photo next page). Very, very poor for a museum and sad. It seems as if they have some serious vandalism problems or freeloading guests.

Suggestion: We also spotted several “War of 1812” signs (bottom left) but had no clue as to how these fit into Dunkirk’s history. Perhaps have an informational or interpretive sign at the site letting visitors know what the connection is. Is there a driving tour? Is this an historic site?



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

The museum might be a great attraction, but we were actually afraid to go in. The grounds (from outside the gates) look very nice. There was no one at the gate so we weren't sure whether it was open or if we could go in.

As we continued, we came to the "do not enter" signs (bottom left), and realized we needed to turn around. After reading "You turn around, you will be charged" sign (top right), we made sure we turned around in the freshly asphalted driveway (bottom left).

We are sure the museum folks are well meaning, but it is so important to invite visitors in before hitting them with rules and regulations - particularly in such a harsh and negative manner.

Suggestion: Instead of charging people \$1 to walk the grounds, just charge a flat fee of \$5 for adults and \$2 for kids and they can stay on the grounds or visit the museum. Their choice. Also, where does a visitor go to pay the admission fee? It wasn't clear which building you go in once you arrive.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

Point Gratiot is a beautiful park and has the best sign in town (top right). The park is a great place to bring a picnic lunch or let the kids roam free for a bit. It was very well maintained and offers one of the best views in the county. Another great place for reunions, sporting events, clubs and organizational events, etc.

We had a difficult time finding the park from the museum, but the effort was well rewarded once we arrived.

Once we finally found downtown Dunkirk (bottom right), we were impressed with the architecture of most of the historic buildings.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

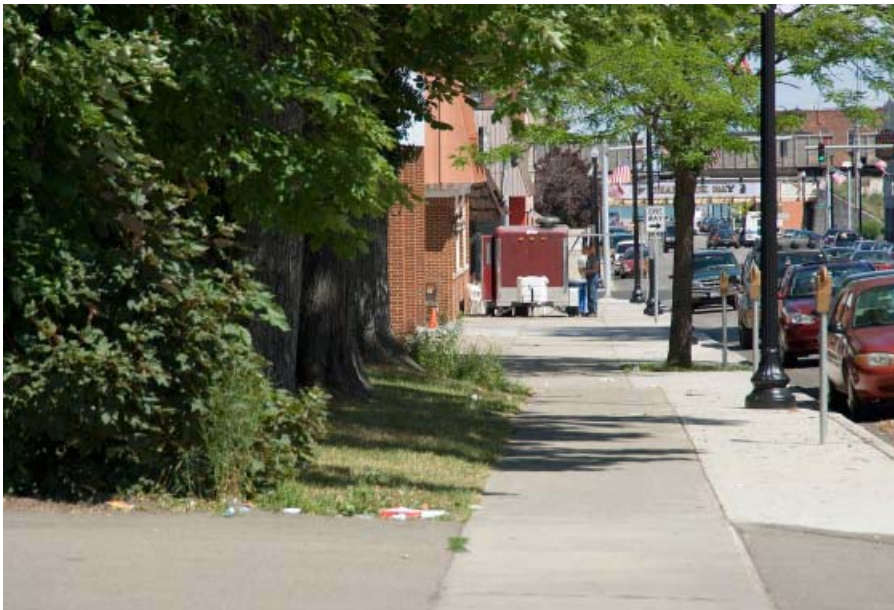
Suggestion

Downtown Dunkirk didn't seem to offer much for visitors and so our trip there was short-lived. Of note, we noticed a lot of trash in garden areas, in lawn areas (bottom left) and on downtown sidewalks (bottom right). We assume that the area gets hit with winds from the lake, but a couple of locals let us know that it's "always like this."

Dunkirk is located in an absolutely superb location with easy access from the freeway and regional highways. The town could become a hub for regional attractions, once there is some critical mass and things to do after 6:00 pm.

Things Dunkirk could concentrate on include:

1. Development of a wayfinding system.
2. Consider development of the waterfront park (not Point Gratiot) into a major event plaza area. It's a fantastic location for tourism development.
3. Continue "cleaning up" downtown.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Silver Creek

A very nice gateway sign (top right) and in a good location.

Suggestion: Consider gradually replacing the other signs (bottom two photos) with similar signs. Move the auxiliary signs to an area where people can pull over and see what time and where Kiwanis, Rotary and other organizations meet. Look at the example on Page 31.

The locations are fine, but the signs seem somewhat dated and tired. Remove other signs to avoid sign clutter (circled below).



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

Silver Creek has a nice ambiance to its downtown, but most of the buildings seemed to be in various stages of disrepair (top right), leaving us with the impression that the downtown core area is struggling.

The park (bottom right) is very nice.

As in other towns in the county, merchants need to understand the benefit of beautification. The Hogg Dairy, for instance, is a great building with a lot of rural charm, but imagine if there were planters all around the building and better window displays to pull visitor in.

Suggestion: Businesses need to promote the primary lure - the thing they sell that is most likely to pull customers inside. In the case of Hogg Dairy, we assumed that it sells fresh milk and perhaps other dairy products. There was nothing stating otherwise. The sandwich board is too far away to be legible to someone in a car, or even on foot across the intersection.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

The bulletin board in the park (top right) would be a great place to perhaps provide some visitor information: things to see and/or do while in Silver Creek. Make sure the items on the bulletin board are up to date.

The town smelled quite good and we finally figured out it must be the Petri cookie factory - or we assume it's a factory. Are there tours? Can you watch the cookie making process? All we saw was the outlet store, but no information about the company or its products.

As we drove around Silver Creek we noticed what is probably this area of the county's major attraction: Valvo's. With so much going on, we couldn't resist and had to stop. While we weren't too sure what to think, once inside we found an absolutely delightful store. Friendly people, great candy and an old time feel and ambiance.

Another "hidden gem" for the county that needs to be promoted. Its location is terrific in "starting your Chautauqua experience here" for westbound travelers. From here, following Highway 5 or 20 is very nice.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

Throughout this assessment we've been talking about the power of curb appeal. Perhaps this example can bring the concept to life. While looking for a place to eat lunch in Silver Creek, we spotted two choices right across the street from each other. The first, Aunt Millies, caught our attention. The red and white striped awnings, an attractive sign (top right), beautiful landscaping (bottom left), outdoor dining, and a spotless parking lot certainly made a commanding first impression.

Across the street is the Sunset Grill. In this case, there was no landscaping, a gravel parking lot, signage from the 50s or 60s, and more of a "greasy spoon" look. As visitors we have no idea which is actually the better restaurant so we go to the next decision making step: which has the most cars parked outside.

In this example, if we were looking for a burger and shake - a quick meal - we might have chosen Sunset Grill. But for sitdown dining, and probably better food (just a guess) we chose Aunt Millies. We all go through this decision-making process, but we do it in just a few seconds.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

On a subsequent visit to Silver Creek, we noted the Hideaway Bay Restaurant sign (top right) and decided to head there for lunch. The tunnel (below) is a great gateway and the setting once on the lakeside is another gem. Once we got to the restaurant, we assumed it was permanently closed. There were no cars in the parking lot (it was about 12:30 in the afternoon), and nothing that we could read from the car that said when or if the restaurant was still operating. Interestingly, we were there for about 20 minutes, and in that time at least a dozen other cars came in, looked around, and left. Always include signage that states (in large letters) “Open every day at 5 for the best dinners on the beach.”

Silver Creek is in a great location as the “Front Door” to the county for west-bound visitors. To tap into these visitors, work to develop additional “diversionary activities” rather than be a gateway community that people simply pass through. Promote private businesses that are your “anchor tenants” and make you worth at least a stop heading to Niagara Falls or points beyond.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

FREDONIA

The first impressions of Fredonia are very nice. Anchored by a beautiful park and the theater, the town is in remarkable shape. The buildings, for the most part, are well maintained and it seems to be a thriving town getting close to the critical mass in terms of becoming a destination downtown.

The visitor information center in the park (bottom right) is in a great location. In three visits to Fredonia during the assessment process we had three different experiences with the information center. The first time, in mid-day, it was closed with no signage stating when or if it would be open. The second time it was staffed with high-school aged kids, but with all their friends hanging around, we couldn't get close enough to ask questions about the area. The third time the young people were still staffing the center, but didn't do much to help visitors other than answer questions. They were very friendly and nice, but need some training on welcoming guests and asking three key questions:

1. Where are you from? (This engages the visitor and lets you know where people are from).
2. Would you like some information about Fredonia?



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions

1. Make sure you have your visitor information working 24/7. Add a brochure rack outside the visitor information center in the park, or build a stand-alone kiosk in the park.
2. Can the NYS Environmental Protection Fund sign be removed? We applaud their efforts, but is this really necessary? It dominates the bulletin board (top right).
3. What are the time limits on the parking meters? Add this. Consider 30 minutes for an hour instead of half an hour. Don't make visitors dig for enough quarters to stay for an hour or two. How often do you have four quarters with you?
4. Consider painting the meters so they fit better with the ambiance. Dark green or brown. Most looked as though they were in pretty rough shape.
5. We had a difficult time finding a parking space downtown. Half hour parking (bottom right) sends visitors away before they are done spending money. Visitors will spend an average of three hours in a pedestrian-friendly shopping district, which Fredonia has. Don't send them away before they are done spending money.

IF you insist on half hour or even two-hour parking, add signage that tells them WHERE there is all day or four-hour parking.

6. Provide public restrooms, or at least identify them if you have them. We finally found restrooms in the basement of the theater, but even then we had to pass through a maze of police bicycles and storage items to find them.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions

1. When is the Fredonia Farmer's Market? This is a great sign (top right) but doesn't tell us when we should come back or what time of year the market operates. And is this the location? Consider instead of "There's something for everyone" doing something along the lines of "Saturday's from 10 until 2. May through Sept." Invite the customer back.

2. Can you see the museum in the bottom left photo? If you weren't from Fredonia would you know where it is? The museum should reposition the sign (bottom right) so it sits just inside the fence on the front lawn, perpendicular to both pedestrians and those in vehicles.

It's a nice sign, use it to your advantage! Make it double-sided.

The wrought-iron fence is very nice. All downtowns in the county should avoid the use of chain link fencing in their downtowns and instead use the much more attractive wrought iron fencing.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

The White Inn is a great “tenant” to have in downtown Fredonia. We assumed that it is, in fact, an inn and that it only serves lunch, per the sign shown in the photo, top right. We had lunch here, which was very good. The front porch dining area is very nice, in season.

We have no idea what the Duncan Hines sign (bottom center) has to do with The White Inn. Perhaps an interpretive sign is in order explaining the connection. The sign should be reflective of the historic inn, rather than an iron pipe.

The shops in Fredonia are very nice and the merchants seem to understand the importance of creating lures to pull visitors in. Each should make sure, however, that they promote the primary lure into the store, and not just the name of the shop. We assumed that Sunny’s (below left) is a tanning salon. All you need is one word: “Gelato” or “Antiques.”



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

The Upper Crust Bake House seemed to be one of the most popular places in town, and for good reason. There are seating areas outside, it has good ambiance, and seemed inviting. Each time we visited Fredonia, it was busy. People are drawn to where other people hang out or gather.

Places like Coyle's Pub (bottom left) have tremendous charm and potential, but in this example consider some paint where chipped away, planters on each side of the entry, perhaps a hanging basket on each side near the facade lamps, create a screen for the dumpster, and include a perpendicular sign so you know what the business is without having to be across the street.

Can you tell what's in any of the businesses (bottom right photo)? Your retail signage doesn't have to be large or garish to be seen. Perpendicular, or blade signs, are seen ten times more frequently and easily than facade-mounted signs. When we first came into Fredonia we didn't see much for visitors. But when we came back and actually walked around we found more than a dozen places to eat, numerous shops worth visiting, and other great places we had totally missed while driving in and around downtown.

Notice the examples on the following page of decorative blade signs. They should be placed between seven feet (bottom edge of the sign) and nine feet (top edge), and typically no more than 42" wide. They should, of course, be double-sided, and should fit the historic ambiance of the town and its architecture.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS



Note

Examples of blade signs, clockwise from top left:

1. Lethbridge, Alberta. They created a single type of sign holder with removable centers. These are built to withstand 100 MPH wind loads.
2. Leavenworth, Washington, a Bavarian-themed town.
3. Carmel, California, known for its fine art galleries and shopping.
4. Nantucket, Massachusetts. All of these are outstanding destinations and all use this type of signage. In fact, its critical to their business.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions

1. Always promote your greatest lure. We assumed that Muldoon's is a bar, but have no idea whether or not they serve food. We have no idea what "The Hairy Lemon" is nor do we know whether Ellicottville Brewing is a restaurant, bar, or simply a brewing company. There was nothing that told us anything about the business. Always promote what you're selling.
2. Add some crosswalks (bottom left). It's nearly impossible to cross the highway in town.
3. Work on the landscape buffers between sidewalk and street. Include trash removal as part of the effort.



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Suggestion

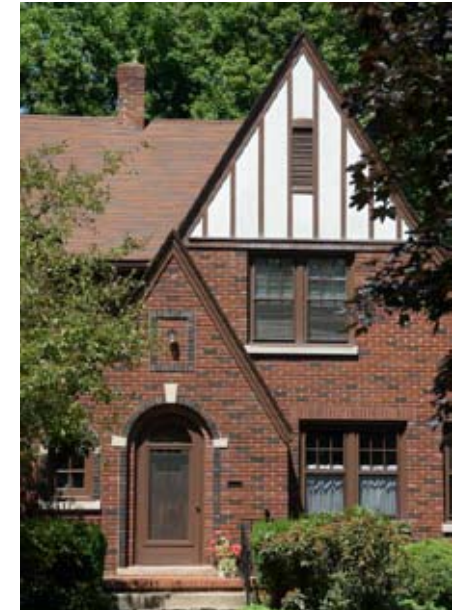
The playhouse is spectacular and a great diversionary activity for both locals and visitors to the area (bottom left). Consider a large poster showing the calendar of events for the theater (bottom center) that is easier to read from a distance. Also include a “Coming Soon” teaser.

Have posters placed in businesses throughout town. Make them collector items.

The historic walking tour is exceptional and is another Chautauqua “hidden gem.” The walk alone, makes Fredonia easily worth the drive from the Chautauqua Institution and other areas of the county.

The route is easy to navigate and on a nice day is a very pleasant and rewarding experience.

The biggest surprise on the “trail” was finding the spectacular creek (see photo next page).



ASSESSMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Summary

Fredonia is perhaps the closest community in the county in terms of critical mass and the Ten+Ten+Ten rule. It is a beautiful downtown with incredible Victorian homes in neighborhoods surrounding the downtown core area.

Suggestion: Keep working on critical mass. You're getting close. Then create a primary lure that would make the community a destination. The ambiance is already in place.

When marketing the community, remove the focus from the town, to the "experience." We show the brochure around the country. Mentioning Fredonia to people outside the area means nothing. But when you mention the "picturesque Victorian village set among the vineyards..." it sells the ambiance and what the town is about.

