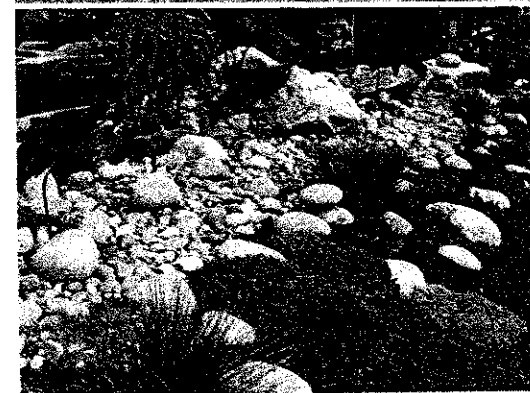
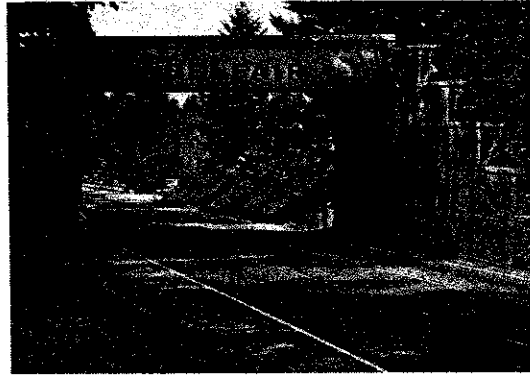


# Belfair, Washington

## Visitor Assessment Findings & Suggestions



May, 2004

Belfair, Washington • May, 2004

## First impressions

...and some ideas to increase tourism spending and economic development activity in the community.



In May of 2004, a Tourism Assessment of Belfair was conducted and presented in a two-hour public workshop. A "Visitor Assessment" is a process in which the area is looked at from the eyes of a visitor. No prior research was facilitated, no community representatives were contacted except to set up the workshop, and the town and surrounding area was "secretly shopped."

The Assessment process includes a look at enticement from the highway (signs, billboards, things that would pull a visitor off the road), beautification, wayfinding (ease of getting around), visitor amenities (public restrooms, visitor information), things to see and do, overall appeal of the community, business attractiveness (drawing power), signage (public and private), customer service, area attractions (things that might prompt a visitor to spend the night), retail mix (lodging, dining, shopping), critical mass (are these things concentrated in a pedestrian-oriented area?), availability of marketing materials and their effectiveness in "closing the sale" - convincing a visitor to make Belfair a stop or an overnight destination.

The "Recommendations" made herein are referred to as "suggestions," as they were developed without consulting the local community. It will be up to the community to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

For every shortcoming we found in the community, we have provided a low-cost suggestion on how the challenge, obstacle or negative element can be corrected. It's important to point out, that to increase the community's tourism industry, fulfilling one or two of the suggestions will have little impact, but implementing a number of them, if not all of them, can have a profoundly successful impact on the community's ability to successfully tap into the tourism industry.

Implementation of these suggestions must be a community effort - involving both privately owned businesses as well as county and state agencies, where appropriate.

**Successful tourism translates to cash**

- The idea is to import more cash into your community than you export. When you earn money in Belfair, and spend some of it outside the community, this is referred to as "leakage." Tourism is a way to fill that gap, importing cash into the community - without the necessity of having to provide extended social and other services.

Communities with successful tourism programs will see that the industry subsidizes the community, whereas communities which don't have successful tourism programs find that they are subsidizing visitors - providing services which visitors use, but don't leave enough money behind to cover the cost of having them available.

**There are three kinds of tourism**

- **1. Status quo**

If you do nothing to further the tourism industry, you will still have an element of tourism, just by the fact that some visitors will pull off the highway for services (gas, food, lodging), and by the fact that the number one reason for travel is to visit friends or family. If you have residents, you will have tourism.

- **2. Getting people to stop**

Getting people to stop is always a top priority of successful tourism. Imagine how successful the businesses in the community would be if just 50% of the vehicles traveling through (there are hundreds of thousands every year) pulled off the highway and spent just 30 minutes in your community.

And if there's a strong pull, imagine the money spent if visitors stayed two hours in the community, which almost always translates to additional spending. The suggestions made in this assessment will help pull potential visitors from the highway.

- **3. Becoming the destination**

You cannot be a successful tourism destination if you can't get people to stop. And to become the destination, you must have attractions (things to see and do) or amenities that will convince visitors to spend the night.

### The Four-Times Rule

- Visitors will make it a point of stopping or staying in your community if you have enough to offer to keep them busy four times longer than it took them to get there.

In other words, if a person has to drive 15 minutes to visit you, do you have enough for them to do to keep them busy for an hour? (4 times 15 minutes). If a visitor drives an hour, do you have the activities and amenities to keep them busy for four hours?

In a nutshell, if you hope to keep visitors overnight (overnight visitors spend three times more than day visitors), you must make it worth the drive.

The more you have to offer, the further visitors will come, and the longer they will stay. This is why rural communities MUST typically market more than just the immediate downtown areas. You need to market neighboring communities, outdoor recreational opportunities, exploration, discovery.

### Critical mass means cash

- While it may not be the primary reason *why* visitors come to your community, shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity - and where visitors spend the most amount of money - other than lodging.

Do you have a pedestrian-oriented setting? If not, can you create one? Many rural communities have been highly successful with the development of a two or three block long pedestrian "village" which would include visitor-oriented retail shops, dining, visitor information, restrooms, etc., all in an attractive, well-landscaped setting.

The general rule of thumb is seven to nine retail stores (more on that in a minute), and three or more dining establishments which can include sit-down restaurants, espresso bars, cafes, dessert and ice cream shops, etc.

"Visitor Retail" would include antique stores, galleries, collectibles, souvenir shops, t-shirt shops, outfitters, bike and jeep rentals, guided tour operations, activity shops (kites, hiking, climbing gear, etc.), home accents, jewelry, old-fashioned hardware stores, casinos, entertainment facilities such as movie theaters, etc.

By grouping these businesses together, you will create the "critical mass" in a pedestrian setting that will draw visitors and will

make it worth their while to stop and shop.

Have you ever noticed at major intersections you will see a Chevron, Union 76, Conoco, and Shell on each of the four corners? Or how about fast food franchises? McDonald's, Burger King, Jack In The Box, and Wendy's on each corner. You would think these places would avoid being next to the competition, but they know that visitors are drawn to the "critical mass" where they have multiple choices that are convenient.

Where are your visitor-oriented shops? If they are spread out, they will be marginally successful when it comes to tapping into visitor spending. Put them all together, and you have what it takes to get visitors out of their cars (or busses and RV's) and into your stores.

**Market the broader package**

- Most rural communities MUST market more than just their community in order to be successful with their tourism efforts.

Remember the Four-Times Rule and also remember that visitors don't stay within boundaries - so market what you have around your community that might keep people in the area long enough to translate to another meal, some shopping, or an overnight stay.

The more you have to offer "collectively," the longer visitors will stay. And the longer they stay, the more they spend.

**You must be different or better than everyone else**

- To become a destination community, where you are the place visitors will spend the night and/or multiple days, you must set yourself apart from everyone else.

In order to make your community "worth the drive" and/or "worth a special trip," you must be better or different from other competing communities.

Ashland, Oregon, previously a depressed timber town, adopted its Shakespeare Festival which runs nine months of the year and draws hundreds of thousands of visitors who spend an average of six nights in the community. It became "different" than other communities and the festival set it apart.

Leavenworth, Washington, another dying timber town, adopted a Bavarian architectural theme and all of their events revolve around their Bavarian theme. The town is one of the primary tourist attractions in Washington state, hosting more than two million visitors annually. They have something different to offer.

Okanogan County, Washington (just south of the Canadian border in central Washington) is an outdoor recreational paradise - but so are 37 of the 38 other counties in Washington. So why go to the Okanogan? Because they are the best. They researched guide books, newspaper and magazine articles, and

pulled quotes they could use in their advertising efforts. They started using quotes along the line of "Pinch Yourself, you're in Okanogan Country with perhaps the best cross country skiing on the continent."

This, and numerous other quotes, makes it "worth the drive" to visit Okanogan Country. They became the "best."

Just look at how powerful movie ratings are when it comes to box office receipts. "Two thumbs up" carries a lot of weight.



### Economic Development Overview

Successful tourism, as an economic development activity, imports more cash into a community than it exports. It also operates as the front door to your community for other economic development efforts. People like to live and work in places that they like to visit.

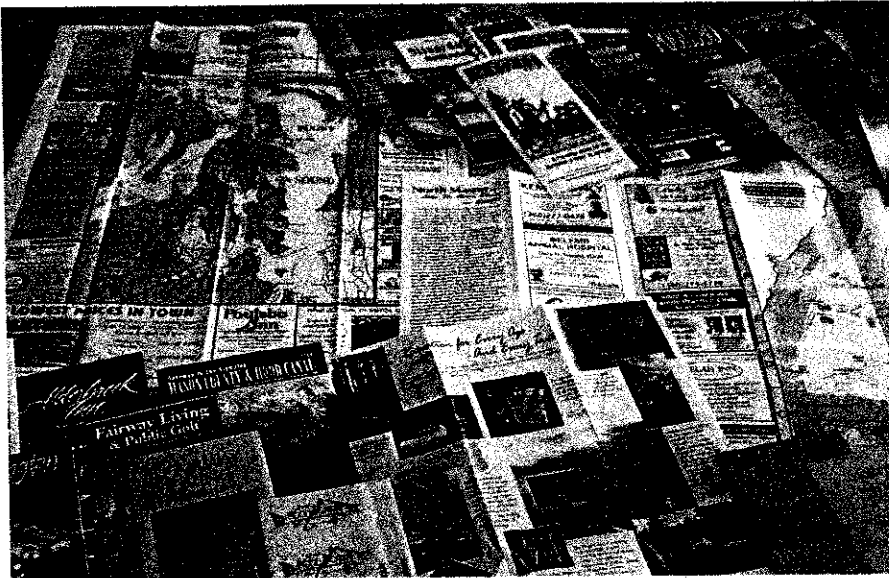
There has been a growing trend across the nation for less sprawl and more community. People want to live and work where there is a sense of community; where there is a sense of place; where there is a sense of identity. This trend has resulted in developers planning mixed-use developments – retail, office space, and residential located in one easy, pedestrian-friendly location. Existing municipalities and other communities are striving to revitalize their centers to become a place where people not only live, work, and shop, but also gather socially. Combine that center with a theme or branding effort, and a community is able to form a unique sense of their identity.

Belfair is a community that has grown up along State Route 3 without a real town center. Shopping and services are laid out to serve automobile traffic, rather than pedestrians. This configuration, combined with the heavy traffic flow through town, and the safety issues of crossing the highway, makes it more difficult to establish that sense of place and identity.

The proposed reconstruction of SR3 is designed to not only improve the appearance of Belfair, but also to provide pedestrian connections, sidewalks, bike and walking trails, and landscaping. A sewer system is also part of the plan, which will allow for additional construction, business opportunities, and housing. These improvements will greatly enhance the ability of Belfair to not only attract new business, but also to help the existing businesses be more successful. Making the town more attractive and safer and easier to navigate, whether by foot or by car, will make it more likely people will stop, shop, eat, and spend money in Belfair.

Successful economic development doesn't just include attracting new business to your area; it also includes assisting the existing businesses to be successful and grow. Nearly 90 percent of all new jobs are created by businesses and people already in the community. One of the best ways to help existing businesses is to survey them to find out what their concerns are for staying in business. Sometimes their needs are easily met; sometimes the dialog can open new doors to solutions that will help many of your businesses.

## COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT & SUGGESTIONS



There is no continuity, whatsoever, in the marketing materials used in Mason and Kitsap Counties, making it confusing for visitors to determine what and where activities, attractions, and amenities are. Likewise, even all the variations of maps are confusing, most cutting off at county lines - making it nearly impossible for visitors to "connect the dots."

The entire Hood Canal/Kitsap Peninsula should market itself as one unit. Individual communities will certainly have their own theme or marketing emphasis, but the area, as a whole, will be much more effective as one loud voice as opposed to a bunch of smaller voices.

### Suggestion #1

The communities of the Kitsap Peninsula market themselves as being part of either the Kitsap Peninsula, Hood Canal, Mason County, Kitsap County, North Mason, South Kitsap, North Kitsap, Central Kitsap, Key Peninsula, or the Olympic Peninsula. This can be very confusing for potential visitors – it can be confusing even for people who've lived their whole lives in the Seattle area, just a few miles away. So, where is Belfair in all this?

Visitors, as well as most businesses and residents, really don't care about county lines. Make it easy for people to find out where you are.

We suggest that Kitsap and Mason Counties' tourism marketing efforts come together to create a unified "brand" for the area. This is particularly appropriate for Belfair and the surrounding regions, as they have much in common with South Kitsap County - perhaps even more so than with Mason County.

The two counties should develop a joint Tourism Development & Marketing Plan that would address branding issues, create a cooperative marketing and advertising effort, would create continuity with marketing materials and websites, and would help visitors identify what's where in terms of attractions, amenities and services.

A major problem with the Hood Canal communities is knowing where they are and how to find them via bridges, ferries and roadways.

## COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT & SUGGESTIONS

Yahoo! Search Results for hood canal

http://search.yahoo.com/search?fr=fp-pull-web-tsp=hood+canal

Yahoo! Mail Welcome, Guest [Name] Search Home Mail

YAHOO! search kitsap peninsula

Web Images Directory Yellow Pages News Products

SPONSOR RESULTS (What's Hot? | Screens & Suggested)

- Vacation Rentals Hood Canal** Specializing in vacation rentals on and around the Hood Canal and Olympic Peninsula. [www.hoodcanalvacationrentals.com](http://www.hoodcanalvacationrentals.com)
- Hood Canal Virtual Tours + MLS Listings** Access virtual tours of Hood Canal Properties & use our Mls search system to preview every waterfront listing in the area. [www.hoodcanalrealestate.com](http://www.hoodcanalrealestate.com)

TOP 20 WEB RESULTS out of about 228,000. Search took 0.49 seconds. (What's Hot?)

- hood canal bridge**  
traffic.wsdot.wa.gov/hoodcanal/ivetrans.htm
- Hoodsport, WA**  
South Hood Canal WA area attractions, events, & services. Olympic National Forest, fresh & salt water recreation, hiking, camping, & boating. ... South Hood Canal Business Association. SOUTH HOOD CANAL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION ... [www.hoodsportwa.com/](http://www.hoodsportwa.com/) - 25k - [Cached](#)
- WSDOT Project Update - SR 104 Hood Canal Bridge**  
Frequently Asked Questions ? Graving Dock Fact Sheet ? Olympic Region Live Hood Canal Bridge Camera. SR 104 Hood Canal Bridge East-half Replacement and West-half Retrofit Project. Click image to enlarge ... Click image to enlarge. The Hood Canal Bridge is located between Kitsap and Jefferson counties at the northern mouth of the Hood Canal. It serves as a ... [www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr104hoodcanalbridgeeast](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr104hoodcanalbridgeeast) - 24k - [Cached](#) - [More pages from this site](#)
- Hood Canal Real Estate in Quilcane, Jefferson County Washington**  
Hood Canal Real Estate in Quilcane, Jefferson County Washington ... Full service real estate along Hood Canal in Jefferson County, Washington ... Designed by Agent Support Center. © 1999-2004. By Windermere Real Estate/Hood Canal. All Rights Reserved ... [www.hoodcanal.com/](http://www.hoodcanal.com/) - 11k - [Cached](#)
- ONE Recreation Report Hood Canal Pacific Ranger District North**  
HOOD CANAL RANGER DISTRICT ? NORTH. Hood Canal Ranger District. Pacific Ranger District. Hood Canal Ranger District-North ... [www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/recreation/reports/report\\_quilcane.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/recreation/reports/report_quilcane.htm) - 33k - [Cached](#) - [More pages from this site](#)
- ONE Recreation Report Hoodsport Hood Canal Ranger District-South**

Yahoo! Search Results for hood canal

http://search.yahoo.com/search?fr=fp-pull-web-tsp=hood+canal

Yahoo! Mail Welcome, Guest [Name] Search Home Mail

YAHOO! search hood canal

Web Images Directory Yellow Pages News Products

SPONSOR RESULTS (What's Hot? | Screens & Suggested)

- Vacation Rentals Hood Canal** Specializing in vacation rentals on and around the Hood Canal and Olympic Peninsula. [www.hoodcanalvacationrentals.com](http://www.hoodcanalvacationrentals.com)
- Hood Canal Virtual Tours + MLS Listings** Access virtual tours of Hood Canal Properties & use our Mls search system to preview every waterfront listing in the area. [www.hoodcanalrealestate.com](http://www.hoodcanalrealestate.com)

TOP 20 WEB RESULTS out of about 228,000. Search took 0.49 seconds. (What's Hot?)

- hood canal bridge**  
traffic.wsdot.wa.gov/hoodcanal/ivetrans.htm
- Hoodsport, WA**  
South Hood Canal WA area attractions, events, & services. Olympic National Forest, fresh & salt water recreation, hiking, camping, & boating. ... South Hood Canal Business Association. SOUTH HOOD CANAL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION ... [www.hoodsportwa.com/](http://www.hoodsportwa.com/) - 25k - [Cached](#)
- WSDOT Project Update - SR 104 Hood Canal Bridge**  
Frequently Asked Questions ? Graving Dock Fact Sheet ? Olympic Region Live Hood Canal Bridge Camera. SR 104 Hood Canal Bridge East-half Replacement and West-half Retrofit Project. Click image to enlarge ... Click image to enlarge. The Hood Canal Bridge is located between Kitsap and Jefferson counties at the northern mouth of the Hood Canal. It serves as a ... [www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr104hoodcanalbridgeeast](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr104hoodcanalbridgeeast) - 24k - [Cached](#) - [More pages from this site](#)
- Hood Canal Real Estate in Quilcane, Jefferson County Washington**  
Hood Canal Real Estate in Quilcane, Jefferson County Washington ... Full service real estate along Hood Canal in Jefferson County, Washington ... Designed by Agent Support Center. © 1999-2004. By Windermere Real Estate/Hood Canal. All Rights Reserved ... [www.hoodcanal.com/](http://www.hoodcanal.com/) - 11k - [Cached](#)
- ONE Recreation Report Hood Canal Pacific Ranger District North**  
HOOD CANAL RANGER DISTRICT ? NORTH. Hood Canal Ranger District. Pacific Ranger District. Hood Canal Ranger District-North ... [www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/recreation/reports/report\\_quilcane.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic/recreation/reports/report_quilcane.htm) - 33k - [Cached](#) - [More pages from this site](#)
- ONE Recreation Report Hoodsport Hood Canal Ranger District-South**

## Suggestion #2

Visitors not knowing about Belfair will be drawn to Hood Canal and/or the Kitsap Peninsula. Most people in the Puget Sound Region (including our staff) don't know whether Belfair is part of Hood Canal or the Kitsap Peninsula, Mason County, or Kitsap County.

The only way we could find Belfair on any web searches (Google and Yahoo! command nearly 85% of all web searches) was to type in "Belfair Washington" or to find it by going into other sites, looking for a link.

Less than 10% of all internet users will go past the second page of search engine results, meaning that Belfair rarely can be found unless visitors specifically know in advance what they are looking for.

Consider placing a major emphasis on creating strong keywords, or even purchasing keyword listings on both Google and Yahoo! You bid for position, and you pay each time someone clicks on the link to your site, but the few cents is far cheaper than sending information via mail (printing, cost of envelopes, cost of mailing), and the customer gets the instant information they look for these days.