



Blue Ribbon Committee Report

- Respectfully submitted January 5, 2009



Blue Ribbon Committee Report

TO THE CITY OF OWOSSO

The Blue Ribbon Committee is a group of community residents appointed by the City Council in May 2008 for the purpose of creating a cohesive forward vision for the City of Owosso. The Blue Ribbon Committee was created to not only set the bar for Owosso, but to demonstrate a distinct pathway to successfully spring over the bar.

The Blue Ribbon Committee report is the direct result of the committee's collaboration, research, commitment, and effort over the past many months, and includes the ideas presented during meetings and those researched by the subcommittee groups. It describes a clear vision for Owosso's future and defines a strategic direction for attaining that vision so that each citizen may enjoy a high quality of life and a strong sense of place and pride in our community.

The document being submitted is organized in the following manner:

Section A: Blue Ribbon Committee Report

The Committee suggests that the City of Owosso develop a set of Core Values, Organizational Values, a Mission Statement, and a Community Vision to embrace and uphold. Those described in this portion of the report have been developed as a suggested starting point for the Council's consideration.

Using the suggested Mission Statement, Community Vision, Core Values, and Organizational Values as a catalyst, the Blue Ribbon Committee is recommending that City Council set the strategic direction for the Owosso city government through a directive to implement ten *Key Strategic Initiatives* and supporting *Policy Initiatives*.

- The Strategic Initiatives serve as focused organizational goals.
- The Policy Initiatives identify intentional actions to be undertaken by the Owosso city government in order to achieve the desired outcomes.
- ❖ The Policy Initiatives marked in this fashion are those that the committee has identified to be of highest importance.

Section B: Blue Ribbon Committee subcommittee reports

These are the working documents prepared by the subcommittees during the research phase and contain the subcommittee reports in their entirety.

The Blue Ribbon Committee respectfully submits this report to City Council, and asks that the Council vote to direct the City Manager to implement the strategic direction via policy initiatives such as those described in the plan.

Respectfully yours with a commitment to the future of Owosso,

The Blue Ribbon Committee Members:

Cindy Popovitch, Chairperson

Terri Brown

JoAnn Goodson

T.J. Gaffney

James Civile

Geoffrey Washburn

Debra Adams-Mills

Thomas Cook

John Orin

James Bartlett

Jessica Thompson

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Section A:

City of Owosso Mission Statement

ON BEHALF OF THE CITIZENS OF OWOSSO, WE WILL PROVIDE SUPERIOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES, AND IMPLEMENT GUIDING PRINCIPALS THAT CONTINUALLY ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE.

City of Owosso Community Vision

The City of Owosso strives to set the bar. We focus on conducting daily business as a City aiming to provide our citizens with the best quality of life possible. The City Council and City staff are committed to moving in a direction that is best for the overall character and betterment of our community based on the voices and opinions of those living in Owosso. We believe that the cornerstones needed for a successful community are a fierce entrepreneurial spirit, a highly qualified and inspired city staff, an educated and extremely engaged citizenry, and a set of focused and attainable short-term and long-term goals.

As a historic city with an entrepreneurial heritage, we recognize the importance of quality of life, neighborhood integrity, education, and responsible growth and rehabilitation in our community. We must focus on forward thinking policies that retain the integrity and standard of service to which our citizens have become accustomed. Continual revitalization of our downtown commercial corridor, the city's neighborhoods, and our educational system is of the utmost importance to the city government.

Owosso, the proud home of numerous creative and entrepreneurial leaders and the heart of the Shiawassee County, will be a vibrant, progressive, knowledge-based community, which promotes the highest quality of life by...

- > ensuring safe, tranquil, clean, and healthy neighborhoods with enduring character
- > increasing and maintaining the mobility of Owosso citizens through a comprehensive and well-planned transportation system
- > expecting urban development and management that strives to preserve our natural environment
- > supporting well planned, quality and sustainable growth
- > valuing and protecting our cultural and historical community resources
- > developing and maintaining quality cost-effective community facilities, infrastructure and services which ensure our city is cohesive and well connected
- > pro-actively creating and maintaining educational and economic opportunities for all citizens

Owosso will remain among the friendliest and most responsive of communities and a demonstrated partner in maintaining and enhancing all that is good and celebrated in the Shiawassee County area. It will forever be a place where history is in the making.

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City of Owosso Core Values to Uphold:

The health, safety, and general well being of the community
Excellence in customer service from City employees
Fiscal responsibility
Involvement and participation of the citizenry
Collaboration and cooperation among City departments
Regionalism: be an active member of the Shiawassee community and beyond
Active community participation that fosters municipal empowerment
Well-equipped, clean, safe community parks and green space
Community accessibility via support for a variety of means of transportation

City of Owosso Organizational Values to Uphold:

Be One City, One Team
Respect everyone
Deliver excellent service
Initiate
Create
Innovate
Be personally responsible
Do the right thing
Act with integrity and honesty
Have fun

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KEY STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Citywide Safety & Security

Safety and security of Owosso citizens is imperative. We want to ensure all citizens and visitors to the community feel safe while enjoying the high quality of life that Owosso has to offer.

Policy Initiatives

- ❖ Invest in our public safety infrastructure to provide consistent and high quality public safety services and benchmark them against other similar communities to ensure we are setting the pace at a national level.

Growing Sustainable Revenue Sources Balanced with Needs

Fiscal soundness and growing revenue sources is required in order for Owosso to finance quality services and meet the demands of further enhancing our infrastructure.

Policy Initiatives

- ❖ Partner with other local jurisdictions and facilitate regional tax-base sharing to create authorities that coordinate infrastructure and delivery of services for the purpose of decreasing costs for all residents. Examples: recreation, public safety, etc.
- ❖ Develop innovative income strategies to diversify, enhance, and strengthen our income and tax base.
- ❖ Improve business practices to ensure we achieve the best value for dollars invested.
 - Re-evaluate and update financial policies to ensure they continually meet our needs as a city government.

Sustainable Quality City Workforce

Our employees are our most valued assets. We want to ensure that the City of Owosso work environment is exceptional while encouraging innovation and creativity. We want to be able to retain highly competent individuals and attract the *best and brightest* to serve Owosso citizens.

Policy Initiative

- ❖ Create a work environment that *attracts and retains* highly qualified individuals to form a city staff comprised of positive forward-thinking individuals who share the vision and strong commitment to the betterment of Owosso.

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Exceptional Infrastructure

Our infrastructure is the backbone of our core service delivery system.

Policy Initiatives

- ❖ Provide core city services that are customer focused, cost effective and have the highest quality.
 - ❖ Establish monthly curbside leaf and brush pick-up services for city residents.
 - Take the necessary steps to ensure our infrastructure is well maintained and expands to meet the needs of our citizens and various city services.
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Destination Place to Live, Work, Learn, and Play

Owosso must be a destination city that attracts visitors, residents, businesses, and investment. To promote and maintain a high quality of life, we must be a community that provides diverse opportunities for work, entertainment, livable neighborhoods, and business development. Owosso must be among the best entrepreneurial environments in the United States.

Policy Initiatives

- ❖ Create a “sense of place” for Owosso citizens by establishing public/private partnerships to develop key recreational facilities common to communities of our size. These recreational facilities will provide social, cultural, physical, and entertainment outlets to Shiawassee county families, i.e. all-season aquatic center, sports complex, civic center, RV park, municipal golf, etc.
- ❖ Partner with the Arts community and public schools to develop and integrate public art into the landscape of Owosso.
- Identify and invest in those programs and activities that promote Owosso as the best entrepreneurial climate to live, work, learn, and play.

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Green Owosso

Sustainability and resource conservation has become a constant on the local government landscape, and Owosso is no exception. Our emphasis on the quality of life for the community demands that we aggressively work towards creating a culture in the community that embraces sustainability and preservation as its mantra.

Policy Initiatives

- ❖ Reduce the overall volume of waste generated in the community while developing environmentally sound and economically feasible means to dispose of waste, including a citywide recycling program.
- ❖ Develop specific strategies to promote efficient use of our land while protecting our natural resources.
- ❖ Identify ways to maximize use the region's existing resources such as agriculture, agri-tourism, natural areas, recreational land use, river assets, and green energy such as wind, water, and other alternative energy sources.
- Include renewable green energy in a portion of our purchased power while reducing the overall energy consumption.
- Develop mechanisms to re-use water in the community.
- Promote open and green space as a prominent component of our community character.
- Inventory global warming emissions in the City operations as well as in the community and set realistic reduction targets.

Exceptional Transportation & Mobility

Development of an efficient multi-faceted transportation system is needed to promote a healthy local economy and to support the community's quality of life for all citizens.

Policy Initiatives

- ❖ Develop a transportation plan that supports the development of Owosso in regard to its land use and transportation needs. Lobby for state and federal transportation funds, and implement the plan.
- Advocate for a rail/bus commuter line between Owosso and Ann Arbor and other cities.
- Partner with our medical facilities to promote walking and non-motorized transportation methods as a healthy lifestyle. Design our sidewalks and streets to promote walking and non-motorized lifestyles.

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Diverse Growing Economy - Community & Project Development

We will provide leadership and effective policies to encourage the diversification and continued growth of our economy. We will actively collaborate with our community partners to produce economic benefit to all citizens.

Policy Initiatives

- ❖ Further develop what is needed to make Owosso the most inviting place in the region to start, locate, or relocate a business, i.e. facilities, land, buildings, housing, workforce, government aid and assistance.
- ❖ Develop and implement plans that promote redevelopment of strategic areas of Owosso, including the river front areas and particularly those from downtown to the Oakwood Bridge.
- ❖ Design the “Future Owosso” model in a strategic plan. Engage experts to conduct a study and provide a list of the types of businesses that the community needs and would support. Target specific businesses to recruit based on the results of the plan.
- ❖ Support the SEDP’s efforts to financially support entrepreneurs by identifying tax credit opportunities and enlisting investors such as angel investors, investment syndicates, venture capitalists and the Small Business Administration through local banks.
- Establish a permanent steering committee consisting of representatives from the City of Owosso, Chamber of Commerce, Owosso School System, Baker College, and Memorial Healthcare with a single goal of “Economic Development.” This group would meet regularly to strategize on how to best utilize their combined expertise and facilities to expand entrepreneurship programs and fulfill the vision for Owosso.
- Adopt an entrepreneurship vision statement for Owosso that embraces entrepreneurship as a core economic strategy, such as: “Owosso embraces and encourages the entrepreneurial spirit at all levels of economic development. This is a great place to operate a business, whether it be industry, retail, tourism, or service-based.”
- Adopt the philosophy that Owosso is “OPEN FOR BUSINESS.” Expand our entrepreneur base by attracting and aiding entrepreneurs from many callings.
- Seek economic development opportunities and partnerships that position Owosso as a national center for new technologies.
- Make a final determination for the use of the Armory.
- Survey existing businesses in the area to find out what their obstacles are for growth and help them overcome the obstacles.
- Explore ways to support RETENTION - of existing resources, people and knowledge, and how to put that retention to use in terms of economic development.
- Develop the needed infrastructure to support the tourism segment of our economy.

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Neighborhood Integrity

Neighborhoods are where we live, raise our families, and socialize with friends. They are the basic building blocks of our city. In many ways our city is only as strong and sustainable as our neighborhoods.

Policy Initiatives

- ❖ Promote comprehensive neighborhood planning, development and management of sustainable housing, and neighborhood rehabilitation and preservation through housing programs that address the needs of various population groups including multi-purpose, affordable, senior, and upscale housing. Actively pursue grants to support the programs.
- ❖ Enhance the City's enforcement tools to better ensure a quality rental market.
- Ensure zoning codes and other developmental regulations are simple to use and match to the established plans for neighborhoods.
- Create and promote annual volunteer efforts to help with yard work, painting, and repairs for those who are physically impaired - should involve local businesses.
- Support community-based organizations involved in revitalizing neighborhoods.
- Increase responsiveness of the city to citizen complaints, and create an avenue for neighbors to work together through neighborhood associations.
- Orient service delivery toward neighborhoods.
- Designate a vacant properties coordinator to use code enforcement, provide incentives and develop partnerships to minimize demise of vacant properties.
- Reinvest in all neighborhood parks in the next five years.
- Create areas for winter recreation opportunities.
- Build a 'playscape' to support economic development opportunities in downtown area.
- Create 5-year plan to develop a multi-use and multi-partner 'Community Center'.
- Study the City Charter to explore the possibility of changing our election process from an "at-large" process to selection by neighbors or precincts.
- Re-investigate the creation of Historic Districts; take action to create more interest and awareness in preserving and restoring our historic housing stock.
- Support the School system's efforts to create and foster a sense of community pride by teaching our students (and their parents) about the history of Owosso through community/ neighborhood walking tours, field trips.
- Invite seniors to help with crafts, reading and speak on the history of neighborhoods.
- Continue to work on regional tax-base sharing with surrounding entities to support infrastructure throughout the mid-county region.

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Effective Communications & Marketing

Effective two-way communications with both internal and external audiences is essential to the continued success of the many programs and services offered by the City of Owosso. Utilizing a variety of media and technology, we will strive to market our services, communicate our mission and values, engage our citizens in the decisions of city government while telling the Owosso story to our elected officials, employees, citizens, community partners, and others nationwide.

Policy Initiatives

- ❖ Hire a marketing director for the City of Owosso charged with taking a leadership role along with a variety of organizations including the Convention and Visitors Bureau, DDA, Chamber of Commerce, Owosso Public Schools, Baker College of Owosso, and Memorial Healthcare to provide economic change, forge partnerships and provide strategic planning.
- ❖ Market the City of Owosso as a superior service provider, quality of life, and entrepreneurial opportunity.
 - Coordinate marketing efforts between the City of Owosso, Chamber of Commerce, Public Schools, and the CVB to execute an organized and succinct marketing campaign.
 - Online Marketing: Create a cohesive online marketing presence for the City of Owosso; Increase Owosso's presence online by revitalizing the city's website and ensuring the website is tied into all major search engines to promote tourism.
 - Establish relationships with local media in order to effectively disseminate press releases, advertising campaigns, and grassroots marketing.
 - Invent and market a new "Brand" for Owosso. For example: *"Welcome to Owosso. Come to visit, stay to live."*
 - Develop consistent branding, organize media events, and develop print pieces which could include 19th century architecture, James Oliver Curwood's conservationist legacy, Steam Railroad Institute, etc.
 - Work closely with the Convention and Visitor's Bureau to develop a relocation package to distribute to realtors and interested individuals.
 - Develop a City of Owosso information packet. Packet will highlight all Owosso has to offer and will be distributed to potential residents, Shiawassee County realtors, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
 - Marketing Consultant: Consider procuring the services of a marketing consulting firm to work with marketing director and city manager to create short-term and long-term marketing objectives and branding.
 - Create opportunities for community interaction by using our public television cable channel to: communicate our goals, enhance communication to senior citizens, and feature neighborhood and school activity.

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- Establish a community volunteer network to assist with events and welcoming new residents.
- Collaborate with community partners to build a greater “sense of place,” belonging, and pride among residents.
- Partner with Owosso Public Schools to promote city events and news weekly in the Trojan Times publications in The Argus-Press, and monthly in The Independent newspapers.
- Interact with appointed committees to ensure the City Council's vision and expectations are known and adhered to when discussing policy.
- Implement a communication strategy, which informs our citizens about the local government and its activities.
- Use city utility bills and other mailers to share community news with city residents.

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Committee collaboration during meetings

A SUMMARY OF THE VALUES EMBRACED BY THE CITIZENS OF OWOSSO

The residents of Owosso hold certain values that should guide the work of our local government and serve as a compass for all of our collective efforts to improve our community. Our elected officials and our public staff should be guided by these values in the plans and policies they adopt, ordinances adopted and enforced, investments budgeted and made, and all the actions undertaken on behalf of the City of Owosso.

Residential Quality of Life

Owosso is a great place to live: to start out in, to raise a family, to retire to. We seek to provide a range of housing types and prices for all our residents, to ensure safe and healthy living environments, and to create vibrant neighborhoods in all parts of our community. We welcome anyone new who wants to be a part of our community.

Entrepreneurism

Owosso is a great place to start a business, whether it be an industry, a retail store, or a service-based enterprise. We support new local businesses with advice, friendly local government services, and targeted assistance when possible. We will cooperate with others in the public and private sectors that support the economic development of our community.

Health and Safety

Owosso is a safe place to live, and the health care in our community is second to none. We ensure the well being of our residents with responsive and effective police and fire services, by seeking to protect and improve the health of all our residents, and by working with community-oriented health care providers.

Accessibility

It is easy to get around in Owosso, whether in vehicles, on a bike, or while walking. We seek to provide transportation options for all our residents through a well-managed street network, sidewalks, bike paths, and public transportation.

Downtown

Owosso has a vibrant downtown. We make public investments to support our downtown as the public gathering place, economic hub, and point of pride for our community. We work with businesses and community organizations to support the economic development of downtown and to strengthen its role as the true center of our community.

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Education and Youth

Owosso has great schools and it is a great place to grow up in. We cooperate with our schools, the community, and parents to create places of learning, opportunities for growth and play, and a safe environment for all the children of our community. We provide a library and support continued learning for those of all ages.

History and Culture

Owosso has a rich cultural life and a strong sense of history. We create an awareness of our history through public displays and events, and respect the past through the preservation of historic structures and places. We foster the arts as an opportunity for individual expression, community celebration, and personal enrichment.

Environment

The Shiawassee River locates and defines our community; our trees, gardens and parks connect us to the natural world. We protect our water resource, trees, and all parts of the environment that sustain our quality of our life and our economy.

Parks and Recreation

Owosso has wonderful opportunities for recreation. We provide parks in all our neighborhoods and work to keep them safe, clean, and well-equipped. We work with our schools, community organizations, and businesses to provide a range of recreation opportunities for all our residents.

Involvement and Cooperation

Owosso is a place where people come together for fun, to get things done, and to make our community a better place. We help host community gatherings, support organizations that bring our residents together, and seek out partnerships to help achieve our goals. We are committed to an open, inclusive governance system that gives all our residents a voice in the community.

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Blue Ribbon Subcommittee

PARTNERSHIPS

Thomas Cook, Terri Brown

In the City of Owosso, we are proud of our heritage as a representative local government that serves the residents of this community. We seek to best employ the assets, skills, and resources of the City, but we recognize that local government alone cannot meet all the needs of the community. Thus we recommend that the City seek out partnerships with the private sector, business and community organizations, and service groups.

We are also proud of our history as the economic and cultural center of Shiawassee County and we recognize the responsibilities that come with our location. To promote Owosso, serve its residents, and contribute to the health of the entire County, we recommend that the City seek out partnerships with other units of local government and public agencies.

The City should establish partnerships whenever any of the following goals can be achieved:

- furtherance of the objectives of the City of Owosso, consistent with the values of the community
- improvement in the quality of life for city residents
- leverage of city resources or other cost efficiencies
- addition of skills or capacities not found with city government
- mutual goals that benefit the city, surrounding areas, or Shiawassee County

The following list describes areas of partnership and potential partners:

<u>Areas of Partnership</u>	<u>Potential Partner</u>
Marketing	Chamber, CVB, DDA, Schools (OPS)
Economic Development	County, Cities, SEDP
Housing/Neighborhoods	County, churches, Habitat, realtors, builders
Recreation, Parks	YMCA, County, Schools (OPS)
Cultural Facilities	SAC, OCP, Amphitheater, Schools (OPS)
Education	Schools (OPS & RESD), Baker College
Delivery of Municipal Services	Townships, City of Corunna
Planning	County, Townships, City of Corunna

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Blue Ribbon Subcommittee

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Debra Adams-Mills, JoAnn Goodson, James Bartlett

Additional information available in the *Bartlett Project Development Addendum section*

The city of Owosso is a community with a history of recreational venues and services that made living in Owosso a wonderful place for families. Over time some of those recreational venues have gradually deteriorated and, in some cases, have not been replaced. The fact is, that in order for a community to compete for new businesses and new families it must have the venues and recreational services that have become standard in other towns and cities.

While more, better paying jobs are on the top of the priority list, an integral part of attracting new businesses and families, and keeping families as Owosso residents, is the need for a community where wonderful memories are created and where one generation can share the experience with the next generation.

The following projects are recommended to restore previously available recreational facilities, the development of more community facilities and venues to improve the community and to address current environmental issues:

Project Development Initiatives:

- Identify potential recreational venues, use what we have, develop what is needed
- Community center
- Youth activities/venues
- Large scale recreational facility/park
- River & riverfront preservation & revitalization
- Aesthetic and environmental issues

Purchase the Armory:

Renovate the building for multi-purpose use to include: youth to senior activities; rental spaces for crafters, artists and clubs; year around farm market and many different types of entertainment venues.

- Rental spaces for crafters, artist and clubs,
- Year around farmers market,
- Flea market
- Different types of entertainment venues. Continuation of the summer concert series.
- (Other local markets open 3 days a week, selling cheese, meats, bakery goods, wines, books, fruits, vegetables)

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Riverfront Preservation and Revitalization:

Develop the riverfront from the Arts Council building to the Stream Railroading Institute to make it a significant year round attraction of the town.

Riverfront and SRI Area Renovation

Former Riverside building used to house a restaurant, public restrooms, possibly small shops for people to use when coming into town to ride the train. Make the whole area family friendly, and a very pleasant to the eye area when visitors are there for the SRI

Family Indoor Fun Zone (AO Smith Building)

- Must pay to enter and use (More seasonal use during the winter)
- All activities indoor
- Courts for Basketball, Racquetball, Tennis, Volleyball, Shuffle Boards
- Card Playing area
- Laser Tag
- Video Game Area
- Area like a park setting, (benches, trees in pots, paved area) esp in an area set up for small children. Indoor playscape

Parks, Playgrounds & Community Pool & Water Park:

These facilities are now considered a significant part of a quality lifestyle for a family oriented community. Whether it involves the relandscaping of existing parks, installing new playground equipment and renovation or replacement of Holman pool, these are what it necessary to create the kind of community that will attract new businesses and families.

Park Renovation (Bentley Park)

- This park needs to be designed for multi-purpose use for everyone.
- Large playscape w/ lots of seating around the playscape
- Skateboarding and Inline skating
- Ice Skating with Lights maybe small warming house (promote hockey clubs to form)
- Frisbee Golf and Miniature Golf
- Basketball, Volleyball, Racquetball, Tennis
- Shuffle Board and Bocce
- Also host music fest, cook-off contests
- Possibly build our own sledding hill between AO Smith building and the park, with sledding down to the park side, possibly where the ice-skating is taking place.

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Tourist Center:

A city that is in the business of attracting tourists requires a tourist center that provides information on local attractions, maps, discount coupons for area businesses. Owosso has a significant number of things that would be of interest to tourists. This would not necessarily be a 365 operation, but summertime hours and wintertime weekend hours would be a benefit to the community.

Middle School - Long Term Goal:

The need for a new high school, and abandoning the current junior high building has been discussed. It is highly unlikely that a new school millage would be approved in a community that is losing population. We projects subcommittee members think the current site of the junior high is a facility that is central in the community and the building is in good condition. When, and if, the school becomes available it could be an expansion of the Armory's programs and be utilized to host meetings, as a training center, and to house community humanitarian organizations.

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Project Development Addendum

By James Bartlett

Armory Addendum

Purchase the building and renovate it for multi-purpose use to include: youth to senior activities; rental spaces for crafters, artists and clubs; a year around farm market and many different types of entertainment venues.

1. The building was dedicated in 1915 and represents the classic form of architecture of that period. It is located next to the river although there are only a couple of window openings on the top floor that face the river.

2. **Critical Issue – Developing Our Youth.** The issue was raised about our youth who are littering, turning to vandalism and possibly other illegal activities with the suggested solution of maximum punishment for any offenses. A better solution would be to initiate preemptive and proactive programs that will provide all community youths a creative and athletic outlet for their energy. These would be programs for the majority of children and teens who do not get to be on the schools' varsity teams, while providing good role models, which for many them is definitely needed. Programs could include:

a. **The National Association of Police Athletics/Activities Leagues (National PAL).**

Started a over 60 years ago, there are over 400 PAL Member Chapters in law enforcement agencies servicing over 700 cities and 1,700 facilities throughout the United States. PAL exists to prevent juvenile crime and violence by providing civic, athletic, recreational and educational opportunities and resources to PAL Chapters. This program is currently in use in: Alma, East Lansing, Grand Rapids, Detroit, and South Haven. Please read more at: http://www.nationalpal.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=section&id=4&Itemid=49 10/25/08.

b. **The Girls and Boys Clubs of America.** "In every community, boys and girls are left to find their own recreation and companionship in the streets. An increasing number of children are at home with no adult care or supervision. Young people need to know that someone cares about them. Boys & Girls Clubs offer that and more. Club programs and services promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging and influence. Boys & Girls Clubs are a safe place to learn and grow – all while having fun. They are truly The Positive Place For Kids." Some 4.8 million boys and girls served at more than 4,300 Club locations, including: Lansing, Flint and Saginaw. Please read more at: <http://bgca.org/clubs/> 10/25/08.

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c. **Summer Youth Program.** This program is currently offered in the summer at the Baker Bentley Campus for 13 to 19 year olds who are usually dealing with issues as previously described. The person who runs the program is Heather Kirk, so local expertise on these programs is available.

d. **Brownies and Girl Scouts – Cub Scout and Boy Scouts of America.** The Armory could serve as meeting and athletic spaces.

3. **Year Round Farmers’, Artists’, Crafters’, Flea Market.** The renting of stalls or rooms for those who want to sell their merchandise directly to the public. The farmers could expand their offerings to include lasting wreaths, dried floral arrangements and other non-seasonal products. Year round markets are currently available in:

a. **Flint Farmers’ Market.** Open Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday the market sells cheeses, meats, bakery goods, wine, books, artist’s works, there are foods to tastes a restaurant and they feature guest chefs. See more at: <http://www.flintfarmersmarket.com/default.asp>

b. **Holt Farmers’ Market.** where fruits, vegetables, meats, baked goods, Amish products, gourmet coffee, original artisan works including jewelry, metalwork and paintings. See more at: <http://www.holtfarmersmarket.org/>

c. **Ann Arbor, Saline, Ypsilanti (open 90 years).** Other sites for year round farmers’ markets.

4. **Artist Studios.** In collaboration with the Arts Council convert part of the Armory into artist studios where they could both work and *teach area residents* painting, ceramics, pottery, sculpture, carving, dance, music to name just a few. Finished works and shows could be presented in the large, first floor space. There are many residents who have never had the opportunity to express themselves artistically and the use of the Armory for this purpose could be very popular. See more at: <http://www.workspacelimited.org/> - please see the artists page to view some of their wonderful creations.

5. Other Community Uses:

a. Use facility to extend the summer concert season.

b. Community activities such as a Christmas celebration and activities celebrating other holidays. Holiday parties for children, Halloween, Santa’s Workshop the Easter Bunny,

c. Dances and mixers for age specific groups or with particular music tastes ranging from country line dancing, to disco, rock-n-roll, square dancing and ballroom.

d. Educational programs and clubs for people of all ages, most of which could be conducted by volunteers.

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6. **Restoration of Armory Grounds.** The Chamber of Commerce should be moved out of the building in front of the Armory, the building demolished and the site landscaped to include a fountain or a sculpture depicting something to indicate Owosso's beginnings. The Chamber could be moved into the Matthews building which needs a permanent tenant. This would allow for a renovation of that building, which is just across the street from City Hall and has been a long time detraction from the downtown area.

Access Websites: When this document is viewed on a computer with an internet connection, use the mouse to move the cursor over the web address (different color letters) push down on the [Ctrl] button, hold it down and click on the left button of the mouse and the website will open in a few moments.

7. **Restoration of the Facility.** The building will most likely need major renovation to address such things as:

- a. Installing an elevator for handicap accessibility.
- b. Central air and heating system.
- c. Many of the window openings have been bricked which might have been an effort to reduce heating costs. Other windows will probably need to be replaced to reduce energy bills.
- d. Roof status unknown.
- d. **Environmental issues** such as **lead paint**, which the walls most likely have many coats of, and **asbestos** lagging used to insulate steam pipes, possibly asbestos containing ceiling tiles. There is almost certainly a layer or more of asbestos containing floor tiles which will also have to be removed. The roof may also contain asbestos materials as it was used extensively as a fire retardant material.

Special Note On Price Negotiations: considering the environmental issues that should be **mitigated by the seller of the building**, the price of the building should be zero dollars. In fact, after quotes are obtained for removal of the hazardous materials it may be necessary to negotiate that the seller pay for part of the mitigation costs.

e. Once the hazardous materials are removed and the major systems have been upgraded, the use of volunteers to help rehab the facility has been successful in other communities. Teens and adults can do miraculous things to schools and old buildings, and there is the talent provided by Baker College students and graduates for such things as a central heating and AC system, interior decorating, etc. The idea is to do it as a self-help and educational program where all will benefit from the experience and the community will gain a worthwhile addition to its list of community facilities and services.

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Riverfront Preservation & Revitalization Addendum

While there will be significant improvement to the riverfront under the current plans. Additional improvements are recommended to develop the riverfront from the Arts Council building to the Steam Railroading Institute and beyond which will make the area a significant year round attraction of the town, include:

1. **Revitalize Properties.** There are several properties along, or in view of, the river that are underutilized, some are poorly maintained and they detract from the current and planned downtown and riverfront improvements. As they sit now they are not generating significant, if any income, nor do they serve as valuable tax base.

a. Former Riverside auto dealership could be renovated to include a dinner theater overlooking the river and public restrooms for those who use the river walk. A microbrewery restaurant would also be another choice. The parking area could be an extension parking lot for the Steam Railroading Institute.

b. The area between Cass Street and the river could be a green area or an extended parking lot.

2. **Create Business & Traffic.** The pictures show what San Antonio did to revitalize what was once a blighted area. This is just one of what hundreds of communities have done to completely revitalize their waterfronts.

San Antonio Riverfront Nightlife – And Daytime Fun



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Parks, Playgrounds & Community Pool & Splash Park Addendum

These facilities are now considered a significant part of a quality lifestyle for a family oriented community. Whether it involves the relandscaping of existing parks, installing new playground equipment and renovation or replacement of Holman pool, these are what is necessary to create the kind of community that will attract new businesses and families. The success of McCurdy Park is ample evidence of success and community pride.

1. **Bentley Park.** For a community park to be successful, as determined by its rate of usage, it is no longer sufficient to have a grassy area, a few swings, a couple of tennis courts, covered pavilions and charcoal grills. The park needs to be designed for multi-use for everyone from a parent bringing their infant for a ride in the sun, to seniors enjoying each others company at games, to children with too much energy, groups getting together for a celebration, and as a place to host entertainment venues.

2. **Public Park Survey.** Many people of all ages have been surveyed (more than a hundred), to find out what they would like to have in their public parks.

- Playground equipment. See the Skytowers at <http://www.playworldsystems.com/pw/abt.asp> 10/26/08



- Splash park. A pool deck surface with intermittent water shooting up from the deck. See for many types of parks including in expensive skateboard parks: <http://www.allplaydoesitall.com/> 10/26/08



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- Skateboard and inline skate park. See Meijer Skate Park – Brighton, <http://www.skateboardparks.com/michigan/meiver/index.html> 10/26/08
- Ice skating rink with lights, music and a portable shelter. A rink could generate interest in the formation of hockey clubs.
- Frisbee golf also called disc golf. See the Professional Disc Golf Association website at <http://www.pdga.com/welcome-to-the-new-pdga.com> 10/26/08
- Mini-golf. There are 78 mini-golf courses in Michigan the nearest to Owosso are in Flushing and Frankenmuth. See <http://www.golflink.com/miniature-golf/state.asp?state=MI> 10/26/08
- Basketball, volley ball courts and racquet ball courts.
- Covered park benches and fixed game tables.
- Shuffle board and bocce (Italian lawn bowling, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bocce>).
- Large park to host major festivals such as: jazz, bluegrass, one ring traveling circus, cook-off contests, harvest festivals, to name just a few possible summer entertainment venues. Cook-off contests always draw huge crowds.
See <http://www.foodreference.com/html/recipecontests.html> 10/26/08

3. Family Indoor Fun Zone. Support by the city for the acquisition of the former A.O. Smith factory for the purpose of converting the building to a commercial Family Fun Zone. The facility would house many activities for the families, a food court, indoor walking paths (especially for seniors) and sports facilities. Please see the Economic Development Subcommittee report for more details.

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Blue Ribbon Subcommittee

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Cindy Popovitch, John Orin, Geoff Washburn, James Bartlett

Additional information available in the *Bartlett Marketing Addendum section*

The economic base of Owosso, the region and the state has changed significantly as the result of being a part of a world economy. Just like the industrial revolution followed by the computer revolution changed society from an agrarian based society, so too does being part of the world economy change forever what will be the economic base of this community.

For this community to meet the challenges of the next economy it will take a new vision of what can be created and a spirit of entrepreneurship to ensure that it happens. Economic development requires continuous cooperation between local government, businesses, civic groups and community members. In support of this statement, the following recommendations are proposed to the city to foster entrepreneurship:

Project Development Initiatives:

Steering Committee: Establish a permanent committee consisting of representatives from the city of Owosso, Chamber of Commerce, Owosso School System, and Baker College with a single goal that of “Economic Development.” This group would meet periodically to strategize on how to best utilize their combined expertise and facilities for fulfilling the vision of Owosso. Objectives could include, but are not limited to:

- Design the “Future Owosso” model in a strategic plan.
- Engage consultants to conduct a study and draft a plan for providing a list of the types of businesses that the community needs and would support.
- Target specific businesses to recruit based on the results of the plan.

Entrepreneur Vision Statement: Adopt an entrepreneurship vision statement for Owosso that embraces entrepreneurship as a core economic strategy:

- “Owosso embraces and encourages the entrepreneurial spirit at all levels of economic development. This is a great place to operate a business, whether it be industry, retail, tourism, or service-based.”
- ***Loudly*** proclaim that Owosso is “OPEN FOR BUSINESS.”

Entrepreneurial Financial & Economic Support:

- Further development of what is needed to make Owosso the most inviting place in the region to start, locate, or relocate a business, i.e. facilities, land buildings, housing, workforce, government aid and assistance.

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- Enlist investors to financially support entrepreneurs such as the Small Business Administration through local banks, angel investors, investment syndicates, and venture capitalists.
- Identify tax credit opportunities that will attract entrepreneurs and businesses.
- Expand on ways to reach out to the community and beyond using the Internet, newspapers, and the public television station.
- Evaluate whether to partner with established expert organizations that will assist with the implementation of an entrepreneurial growth strategy. Examples include:
 - The RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, <http://www.energizingentrepreneurs.org/pages/sitemap.php> 10/27/08
 - The Entrepreneurial League System® (ELS) http://www.entleaguesystem.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=48&Itemid=101 10/27/08
 - Agracel, Inc. Industrial Developers, <http://www.agracel.com> 10/27/08
- Expand the existing Chamber and Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership support for new local businesses by implementing the following:
 - New business resource guide to provide a one-stop resource guide containing all information needed by anyone wanting to start, locate or relocate a business in Owosso.
 - City resource guide listing city agencies, committees, authorities and their functions.
 - Friendly local government services to reach out and follow-up with entrepreneurs and guide them through the business startup procedures.
- Survey existing businesses in the area to find out what their obstacles are for growth and help them overcome the obstacles.
- Build cooperative economic and community relationships and support entrepreneurship between them:
 - Identify previous, current and proposed relationships within public and private sectors.
 - Identify commonalities and barriers to potential partnerships.
 - Develop and pilot new partnerships, for example:
 - Recreational and sports medicine center - possible partners could be: Baker College, YMCA, Mid-Michigan Physicians, Memorial Healthcare, etc.
- Work with Baker College and the local school systems to develop and expand entrepreneurship programs. Develop academic programs to meet community and industry specific needs, examples:
 - A diesel locomotive repair program to be included in the Baker College curriculum and headquartered at the Owosso campus. This would be in answer to the shortage of

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- and considerable demand for individuals able to operate and repair diesel locomotives in the current gasoline-fuel-stressed economy.
- Hospitality career education that will focus on the operations, management and service aspects of running a senior residential facility, hotel, restaurant or similar business.
 - For high school and college students develop externships that last a few days, and internships that last weeks or months, as a means of introducing students to the world of business and the qualities that are needed to be an entrepreneur.
 - Expand participation in the Leadership Shiawassee program: Offer city-sponsored scholarships to high school and college students and community members seeking self-improvement through higher education.
 - Sponsor college scholarships for those seeking medical doctorate degrees and other specialty degrees for those willing to return and/or stay in Owosso upon completion.
 - Explore ways to capitalize on the locally headquartered railway system, Great Lakes Central, as a means of providing mass public transit to and from Owosso. The idea would be to enable people to live in our beautiful community inexpensively, while easily, quickly, and affordably commuting to work and shopping/entertainment venues in the Ann Arbor, Detroit and Chicago areas via passenger rail.
 - Identify ways to exploit the region's existing resources such as agriculture, agri-tourism, natural areas, recreational land use, river assets, green energy such as wind, water, and other alternative energy sources.
 - Identify target markets and foster entrepreneurship directed toward them: empty nesters, elderly population, youth, families, etc.
 - Expand our entrepreneur base by attracting and aiding entrepreneurs from many callings:
 - Artists such as painters, potters, sculptures, glass blowers, furniture makers, jewelry makers, quilters, knitters and weavers, dry floral arrangers, metal smiths, etc.
 - Food producers such as honey bee products, wines, beers, chocolates and other candies, pastries and breads and specialty and holiday foods of all types. Food products that could be sold over the internet to a worldwide market.
 - Generate entrepreneurial spirit through the use of the Armory (as outlined in the Projects Subcommittee report) which included:
 - Use of part of the Armory space as a year round farmers market and other small retail businesses.
 - Use the Armory for community members to test the marketability of new products.
 - Explore ways to support RETENTION - of existing resources, people and knowledge, and how to put that retention to use in terms of economic development.

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Economic Development Addendum

By James Bartlett

Destination Owosso Overview: As all those who have been so diligently working on economic development plans for Owosso know, it is a complex issue requiring many different components to be carefully coordinated for a successful plan to come together. Whether economic development means recruiting new businesses, entrepreneurs and their families or becoming a tourist destination with attractions like an authentic 1950s retro downtown, the Steam Railroad Institute and the magnificent Perre Marquette 1225, or the many historical homes, these are the components working together that will create a vibrant, growing community and economy.



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1. Create Entrepreneurial Environment - subsections to include:

a. Entrepreneurial Support System. Utilize existing training programs to prepare entrepreneurs for successfully operating a business, because 95% of all new businesses fail within the first two years. Provide guidance to ensure that new businesses don't make the same fatal errors by coordinating their development with resources such as the Small Business Administration, the Shiawassee Chamber of Commerce Small Business Resource Center, the Bentley Campus of Baker College which provides business educational classes and the main campus that provides ten week education programs.

b. Investment group support. Nothing happens without money to invest in new businesses. Even if the business qualifies for a loan under the many different SBA programs, initial capital is always needed that may exceed the savings of the individual or individuals involved. An investment syndicate could be established for those who would like to invest in local business opportunities. It may be beneficial to establish a new business as an S Corporation so that the first years of negative cash flow can be passed through to the investors who may need a tax right-off. There are many options to be considered including exchanging free rent of a facility for the first year or two in exchange for the property owner receiving a portion of the stocks and/or future income of the business.

c. Business incubator facility and support services. This type of a facility is usually a front office space with warehousing and light manufacturing space that is subdivided and used by small businesses to get started. They share the expense of the front office staff and services. It keeps the fledgling business costs low while giving the business a place to operate. Here is an example of a business incubator: <http://www.jeffersonabc.com/> 08/20/08

d. Sheltered workshop services. Owosso has a sheltered workshop that is very small and probably underutilized. This type of workshop can be a valuable resource for any community by providing jobs for persons with disabilities and support services for existing businesses. Kandu Industries is a business that the author used to assemble and ship medical products all over the country. Kandu plays a very important role in providing worthwhile work for those who might otherwise be unemployed. Information from their website: <http://www.kanduindustries.com/pages/home/company-info.php> 08/20/08

"Over the years, KANDU has experienced tremendous growth and today, KANDU employs over 200 "clients" (persons with disabilities) along with a staff of 40, placing KANDU as one of the leading not-for-profit work centers in the Midwest. KANDU has provided industrial services to over 60 companies supplying them with high quality production, quick turnaround times, and competitively priced custom services. With continued opportunities in outsourcing and to accommodate the increased demand for high-volume packaging and assembly, KANDU expanded its production operations into the former Parker Pen/Gillette Arrow Park facility, adding 60,000 sq ft. of production area."

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Special Note: Their most successful services included repackaging for parts and food companies and recycling items for General Motors.

2. New Businesses to Replace Lost Businesses

There is a lot of talk leading up to the 2008 election about the “new economy, the green economy.” The fact is, while making the country independent of foreign oil is a desirable and necessary goal the reality is that the new economy cannot supply all the jobs that are needed to meet the needs of its working citizenry. The second fact is, that it may be a long time before the green economy impacts Owosso let alone creates any new jobs in that sector. *The third fact is, the new economy, the next generation of economic growth is already here. For specific concept recommendations see Appendices A through C.*

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Appendix A

Retirement Market Booming, Boomers to Keep It Hot for Decades

“The Media Audit says those adults, who are nearing retirement, are now one of the fastest growing demographics in the country and this horde of Boomers will keep the retirement boom going for the next few decades. Consumption habits of aging Americans are likely very different from those of their predecessors because they are living longer, achieving higher levels of education, are wealthier, and redefining what it means to be retired.” Excerpt from: <http://www.seniorjournal.com/NEWS/Boomers/2008/8-03-11-RetirementMarketBooming.htm>
11/05/08

1. New Types of Senior Housing and Support Services - Senior Living That Allows Seniors To Age In Place. The area has some traditional nursing homes and some senior apartments, but none have gone so far as Age In Place Project outlined below, which is the kind of senior living we would all prefer.

2. Small Town Appeal. Owosso, because of its small town appeal and all of the amenities needed by seniors is a very popular place for them to retire. Owosso has an excellent hospital and many specialty clinics, and a cancer treatment center. There is also an excellent door-to-door bus service. **All these factors make Owosso ideal for senior living for those who prefer to stay near family and friends. *Special Note: the author has noted from personal experience that many seniors are not happy with living in Florida.***

Farmers who are retiring and moving into town, seniors who are downsizing after the children have left home, Floridians who are tired of hurricanes, bugs and rapidly increasing congestion are retiring in places like Owosso. Senior housing and services are the hot market for the next 30 years. See The Green House Project below.

3. Important Statistics:

- 83% of the retired adults in the U.S now own their own home
- Thirty percent of retired adults have cash, stocks and CD's valued at more than \$100,000, the highest figure ever reported
- 16% of adults who frequently stay in hotels are retired, compared to 14.7% five years ago, a jump of almost 10%
- Retirees now make up nearly 20% of all adults who frequently dine out.
- Baby Boomers between the ages of 45 and 64 spend a considerably higher amount of time online - 123 minutes per day.

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- The most affluent retirees can be found in larger markets such as Washington, D.C., where the average retired adult earns \$64,000 in household income.
- San Jose, California, Fort Myers- Naples, Florida, San Francisco, California and Long Island, New York, follow behind with household incomes of more than \$50,000.
- Currently the top ranking retiree markets are: Ocala, Florida (36%), Fort Myers- Naples (34%), Daytona Beach (33%), West Palm Beach (31%), Melbourne-Titusville (29%).

Special Note On What Makes the Owosso Housing Market Attractive: While the statistics indicate the continued top ranking of Florida for the retiree market there are a number of important factors that are not addressed:

- Florida housing is rapidly increasing in price, even mobile homes packed into trailer parks are much more expensive.
- Severe stormy weather has resulted in major property loss, which has resulted in far fewer insurance companies willing to insure properties and skyrocketing insurance costs.
- Many Michigan seniors do not migrate south for the winter months, and those who are elderly and need supportive services are far less likely to because it is too difficult to arrange for the support services in two different locations.

Senior Living That Allows Seniors To Age In Place

The state of Florida's Department of Elder Affairs developed a program that encouraged the development of facilities that would allow seniors to age in place that would provide different levels of care so seniors would not be forced into nursing homes as they aged.

In Florida, the author worked on a project for a community of 4,000 homes and apartments to meet the objectives of the program by providing homes and community facilities that were 100% handicap accessible and provided the support services and innovative in-home technologies that would enable seniors to live out their days in their homes.

The Green House Project

The need for senior housing and support services is one of the fastest growing segments of our market. One example of a project that has been successfully instituted in several states with great success is called, "The Green House Project." To quote an excerpt from their web site information:

"It's a fact of life that none of us likes to think about: As long as we live, we grow older. More Americans are living longer, but the downside of longevity is that more of us will spend more of our time dealing with the infirmities of age. We all want every phase of our lives, and the lives of our

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loved ones, to be as independent as possible, but the fact is that most seniors will need some sort of help during the last years of their lives.

Unfortunately, the thought of going even to a well-operated and caring nursing home strikes fear into the hearts of many seniors and the people who love them. Adding to this anxiety are the well-publicized reports of elder abuse and neglect emerging from some facilities. Providing needed help to our seniors without sacrificing their comfort and dignity is the goal of a new movement in senior care called "The Green House Project.

The Green House Project turns the traditional idea of a nursing home upside down. A Green House is almost indistinguishable from any other house in the community and is home to seven to 10 seniors, who live and eat together much as a family does with the help of a separate clinical support team. The Green House Project is the brain child of Dr. William Thomas, a geriatrician from upstate New York, who grew dissatisfied with the health and happiness of seniors living even in the best traditional nursing homes."¹ For more information click on website below.

¹ "Examining the Green House Project senior living concept," Carla Fenswick & Lillian Gilmer, Nashville Business Journal, <http://nashville.bizjournals.com/nashville/stories/2006/03/06/focus3.html?surround=ef> 03/28/08

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Appendix B Creation of an Entertainment Zone

The following is a portion of the minutes from the Downtown Development Authority meeting of Oct. 4, 2006:

“C. Entertainment District Designation and Enhancements. With the opening of the Hot Spot at Capitol Bowl, Ex. Dir. Hathaway asked the membership to discuss the timing and extent of marketing downtown Owosso as an entertainment district. Given the nature of the widely dispersed venues it was decided not to map a district at this time but to adhere to the earlier action to establish a design group to lay out the connecting walkway between the footbridge and the 1225 Museum.” DDA Minutes Oct. 4, 2006. <http://ci.owosso.mi.us/ReferenceDesk/AgendasMinutes/D.D.A/2006DDA/100406DDAMinutes.pdf>

1. Entertainment District. It was identified that downtown Owosso does not have an entertainment district because the venues are too widely dispersed. For the purposes of economic development the next question should be, **“Why not create a downtown entertainment district to incorporate and expand the venues that already exist?”** See the Family Fun Zone below.

2. Examination of the Logic of Developing an Entertainment District:

- It would create an attraction for local and area residents as well as a tourist attraction.
- High gas prices has resulted in families staying closer to home.
- Individuals and families have many different types of entertainment that they want for good, clean fun.
- Michigan weather, especially the winter cabin fever period, makes it logical to make it an indoor facility.
- Owosso, downtown, has large, empty or minimally used buildings that could be used to create entertainment attractions.
- A large entertainment facility would also create many new jobs ranging from first time jobs to middle and upper managers.
- Such a facility would need extensive maintenance and many different local suppliers.
- It would attract thousands of new shoppers and patrons for existing restaurants and stores.

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3. Revitalizing Underutilized Properties. There are several properties along, or in view of, the river that are underutilized, some are poorly maintained and they detract from the current and planned improvements. As they sit now they are not generating significant, if any, income, nor do they serve as valuable tax base. These properties are in desperate need of redevelopment and if the owners are unable, or unwilling, to develop or sell the properties for redevelopment, existing laws concerning abandoned properties or eminent domain should be used to improve the community both aesthetically and economically. The entire area needs to be viewed as a community redevelopment project just like so many of the big cities have done to beautify their downtown areas. Include in the redevelopment the train depot, to be again used as a train depot, all open lots and lands and unutilized buildings and storage sheds.

Family Fun Zone

There are many examples of indoor family fun facilities, and surprisingly, many are in warm climates. Such facilities are a major tourist attraction, especially in a cold climate like Michigan – the perfect place to take the family when cabin fever sets in. They also create hundreds of jobs for those employed for the first time to middle and upper managers. Such a facility also requires a steady stream of supplies from local suppliers. View more information on operating businesses at the following websites: <http://thefunzoneburlington.com/> & http://www.thefunplex.com/mt_laurel/index.html which has both inside and outside facilities & <http://thegrandevent.net/concessions.html>

The A. O. Smith building, adjacent to Bentley Park, is a 200,000 sq. ft. (4.6 acre) building with 12 to 15 feet ceilings which makes it unsuitable for many manufacturing operations, but ideal for a family fun zone that would provide a very large, year round facility that could provide different forms of healthy fun for 3,000 to 4,000 people.

The source about the building was provided by the Chamber of Commerce who has been trying to market the building to new businesses. The property is owned by Seed America, a 501C3 Non Profit Corporation, and with the de-evaluation of so many properties they are looking to sell the building. Apparently other properties have been purchased from them at very reasonable prices.

The facility could be decorated in many different themes and natural plants and flowers would be featured. The activities and features could include:

- Walking paths for seniors
- Children's rides, there is usually a classic carousel in the middle of the children's area
- Action and arcade games, such as featured at Chucky Cheese Pizza
- Laser tag
- Athletic section with racquet ball, tennis batting cages
- Miniature golf and video golf

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- Billiard and pool
- Video game arena – please see next section.
- NASCAR simulators – which are *extremely* popular. For more information visit this website: <http://www.motorsportsbykramer.com/>
- Food courts where area restaurants could feature fingers foods and a coupon restaurants
- Stage and seating for live performances and dances

Video Game Arena

Purpose: Provide a place for gamers to play and compete for prizes. Beverages, snacks and music in a high tech environment. The arena will feature playoff competitions using a variety of the most popular racing, sports and battle games with the finalists playing for prizes on big screen game consoles.

Customer Base: Teens to adults in their 30s. The gamer market is huge and this would be a large draw from all over Mid-Michigan as it would be the only one in the region. This is a business that will need room for expansion because while it will start with hundreds competing, when tournaments are held it could realistically draw several thousand gamers to the area.

Background Information: “The rising penetration of broadband combined with consoles with online capabilities, wireless phones capable of downloading games, and technologically advanced consoles are credited with driving the video game industry's strong growth. PwC says that the gaming industry will see a compound annual growth rate of 9.1 percent between 2007 and 2011, resulting in a \$48.9 billion global video game market in 2011, up from \$37.5 billion this year. The US market will grow much more slowly than that, though, going from \$10.4 billion to \$12.5 billion over the same period (a 6.7 percent CAGR). PwC says that Asia will see the greatest growth during that time and see the largest amount of spending, topping out at \$18.8 billion in 2011 with a CAGR of 10 percent. The report also makes note that global spending on console and handheld games will go up from \$6.5 billion in 2006 to \$7.9 in 2011.”²

Video gaming at colleges is a major event on many campuses, such as Harvard.³

² “Report: Video game spending to surpass music spending this year,” Jacqui Cheng
<http://arstechnica.com/news.ars/post/20070623-report-video-game-spending-to-surpass-music-spending-this-year.html> 03/25/08

³ “Video Gamers Crowd Harvard, Compete For \$400 in Prizes, Over 100 compete in tournament featuring four popular video games,” Sue Lin, Crimson Staff Writer
<http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=517486> 03/25/08

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Gaming is developing into a professional competition, just like skateboarding and so many other activities that used to be just something for the kids to do. An example of this is:

Johnathan 'Fatal1ty' Wendel has made a career out of playing video games. He wants to see others do the same.

- Johnathan Wendel has been gaming since he was five
- He has won \$500,000 in prizes
- He also has corporate sponsorships and a clothing line⁴

⁴ “Globe-trotting gamer blasts competition,” Peggy Mihelich, CNN Technology Reporter
<http://www.cnn.com/2007/TECH/fun.games/04/11/fatal1ty.profile/index.html> 03/25/08

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Appendix C Other Business Ideas

Bed & Breakfasts Homes

At present there is one newly created B&B, the Dimick House. It was noted that there were a number of the large, historical homes that were up for sale. It was reported that the owner was asking \$1 million for all four houses. There are also a number of other excellent properties, including the Colby House that has been beautifully restored by a couple over the past 20 years.

B&Bs have become quite popular for mature couples to travel and stay in and they plan their trips using web sites that feature B&Bs.⁵ Please visit the website posted in the reference posted below.

One of the key issues has been in getting people to spend a few days and enjoy the small town atmosphere and the shopping, and B&Bs tend to draw people who are not in a rush to get somewhere and have the financial means to enjoy the restaurants and the shopping.

24/7 Day/Night Care - for working families when parents work the PM or night shift, for example at the hospital.

Comedy and Dance Clubs - for people of different ages and music tastes that could feature professional and area bands. This would be another draw for people to visit and stay in Owosso.

Aquaponics Farming – convert factories to food factories to grow fresh produce, shrimp and fish. Examples include:

SoCal Aquaponics – website: <http://www.socalfishfarm.com/fish/>

Business Journal more information on fish farming -
<http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/stories/2000/09/25/focus6.html>

New Fish Farms Move from Ocean to Warehouse - <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5718>

A new business in development in KY –
http://www.enquirer.com/editions/1999/03/23/fin_raise_money_for.html

In-depth report on Tilapia farm fishing including the financial report -
<http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/alt-ag/tilapia.htm>

Microbrewery –

Dinner Theater –

⁵ Bed & Breakfast.com, <http://www.bedandbreakfast.com/?bid=3&aid=CD395&opt=> 03/28/08

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Blue Ribbon Subcommittee

NEIGHBORHOODS

T.J. Gaffney, James Civile, JoAnn Goodson

- Create a Parks Committee to maintain and expand current parks in neighborhoods to foster recreational activities.
- Define neighborhoods with visual cues, such as signs identifying areas possibly by the Elementary schools (i.e. “Emerson Neighborhood”).
- Facilitate programs to encourage home renovation and a “fit-it-first” policy to upgrade existing facilities.
- Support community-based organizations involved in revitalizing neighborhoods.
- Continue to work on regional tax-base sharing with surrounding entities to support infrastructure throughout the mid-county region.
- Create opportunities for community interaction by using our public television cable channel to communicate our goals.
- Make sure zoning codes and other developmental regulations are simple to use and match to the plans we establish for neighborhoods.
- Designate a vacant properties coordinator to use code enforcement, provide incentives and develop partnerships to minimize demise of vacant properties.
- Partner with our medical facilities to promote walking and non-motorized transportation as a health lifestyle. Then design our sidewalks and streets to promote walking and non-motorized transportation.
- Partner with our schools to promote safe paths for students to walk to our neighborhood schools by using our public television channel.
- Enhance communication to senior citizens by using our public TV channel to expose the neighborhood school activity. Help them to have pride in their neighborhood. Invite seniors to help with crafts, reading and speak on the history of the neighborhood.

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- Create and promote an annual volunteer effort to help with yard work, painting, repairs for those who are physically impaired - should involve local businesses like Home Depot, Meijers, Gilberts, etc.
- Increase responsiveness of the city to citizen complaints, and create an avenue for neighbors to work together to settle differences before taking them to the City where possible.
- Study the City Charter to explore changing our election process from an “at-large” process to selection by neighbors or precincts.
- Re-investigate the creation of Historic Districts, and do what we can to create more interest and awareness in preserving and restoring our historic housing stock.
- Create and foster a sense of community pride by teaching our students (and their parents) about the history of Owosso through community/ neighborhood walking tours, field trips, etc.

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Blue Ribbon Subcommittee

MARKETING – PUTTING OWOSSO ON THE MAP

Terri Brown, James Bartlett, Jessica Thompson

Additional information available in the *Bartlett Marketing Addendum section*

The city of Owosso is in a state, national and international competition for tourist dollars, new businesses and new families in order to create more economic opportunities that will maintain the city as a vibrant place to live, which in turn will create a tax base that will support the infrastructure of a growing and evolving community.

To be competitive, all the tools that are available to market the community should be coordinated with the currently planned enhancements and future growth of the community. Developing Owosso and our conjoined twin community, Corunna, as a tourist destination is a very realistic goal that will create jobs and bring in tax revenue. About 90% of the infrastructure already exists. Owosso is a tourist goldmine just waiting to be discovered.

Project Development Initiatives:

Marketing Director:

Hire a marketing director for the City of Owosso. Responsibilities of the marketing director to include, but not limited to:

- Work with the City Manager and City Council members to execute an organized and succinct marketing campaign.
- Increase Owosso's presence online by revitalizing the city's website (seek proposals from local vendors first) and ensuring the website is tied into all major search engines to promote tourism.
- Collaborate with community partners to build a greater sense of belonging and pride among residents
- Establish relationships with local media in order to effectively disseminate press releases, advertising campaigns, and grassroots marketing.
- Organize media events and develop print pieces with consistent branding.
- Organize events to showcase the assets of the city. Examples: 19th century architecture, James Oliver Curwood's conservationist legacy, Steam Railroad Institute, etc.
- Work closely with the Convention and Visitor's Bureau to develop a relocation package to distribute to realtors and interested individuals.
- Establish a community volunteer network to assist with events, welcoming new residents. To include a community welcome wagon service. Please see website at: <http://www.welcomewagon.com/?cc=1> 10/27/08

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- City of Owosso marketing director will take a leadership role along with Owosso Public Schools, Baker College of Owosso, and Memorial Healthcare to provide economic change, forge partnerships and provide strategic planning.

Marketing Consultant:

Procure the services of a marketing consulting firm to work with marketing director and city manager to create short-term and long-term marketing objectives and branding. Organize focus groups made up of residents including but not limited to senior citizens, students, parents, and business owners to develop a comprehensive and diverse marketing plan that reaches all members of the community.

Online Marketing:

Online marketing now accounts for over 90% of all planning and arranging all recreational travel in the U. S. Owosso virtually has no online presence as a tourist destination. The formula for success is, **“If a community wants to be a tourist destination, first it must be discovered on the web.”** As such, the city’s web page needs to be professionally developed and managed.

Print Media:

Partner with Owosso Public Schools to promote city events and news in the weekly Trojan Times publications in The Argus-Press and monthly in The Independent newspapers.

- Develop a City of Owosso information packet. Packet will highlight all Owosso has to offer and will be distributed to potential residents, Shiawassee County realtors, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- Weekly press releases to local news.
- Use city utility bills and other mailers to share community news with city residents.
- Newspaper advertising in The Argus-Press and Independent newspapers.

Mass Media Marketing:

Community events to include live entertainment, cook-off competitions, traveling circus

- Billboards
- Cable access channel programming
- Radio advertising
- Cinema advertising
- Partner with Agnew Graphics, Young’s Chevrolet, Baker College and other businesses to feature monthly “Points of Pride” on their electronic signs.
- On-screen ads at Capitol Bowl

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Marketing Addendums

By James Bartlett

Tourist Goldmine Addendum

1. **Marketable, Outstanding Community Attributes:** Unlike many communities that have to develop features that make their community unique and one that will attract tourist, Owosso and Corunna already have 90% of what they need to be an excellent tourist experience and to attract new families. **The missing link is a well developed marketing plan.** Some of the significant features of the area include:

a. Owosso and Corunna have one of the largest collections of 19th century architecture in the state.

b. Over 100 people from the area went on to national and/or international recognition.

c. James Oliver Curwood, (1878 – 1927), an American novelist and conservationist. Many of his writings about the wilds of the North were turned into movies. In 1988 French director Jean-Jacques Annaud used Curwood's 1916 novel, *The Grizzly King* to make the film *The Bear*. Annaud's success generated a renewed interest in Curwood's stories that resulted in five more films being produced in 1994 and 1995.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Curwood> 10/05/08. (Note – see directions at bottom of the page to access websites).

Special Note: Curwood Castle is a unique writer's studio in the shape of a very small castle. But, in today's world of environmental concerns the fact that James Curwood was one of the very earliest conservationist would seem to make that fact an important marketing tool for attracting visitors to tour his studio. Include with that, the fact that many of his books were turned into very successful movies. A James Curwood film festival would be another way to market his contributions.

d. The Steam Railroad Institute's museum, rail yard and restored cars tours, the train rides and other special events is a major marketing tool.

e. A picturesque downtown with many wonderful stores and shops, the likes of which has all but disappeared from the American landscape will provide unique shopping experiences for the majority of the visitors who can only shop in strip malls and shopping malls.

f. Shiawassee County Courthouse in Corunna, architect was Clare Allen, who designed the building in the French renaissance style and is one of the truly magnificent buildings of the early 1900s in the state.

2. **Community Marketing Comparison:** By comparison, Frankenmuth, when Bronner's was just getting started, was a rather plain, one main street town. Starting in 1957 it took the effort and cooperation of a lot of people, and a decade, to turn the town into a Bavarian-style village. Owosso is starting way ahead of Frankenmuth and it has four times the population to support it.

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Access Websites: When this document is viewed on a computer with an internet connection, use the mouse to move the cursor over the web address (different color letters) push down on the [Ctrl] button, hold it down and click on the left button of the mouse and the website will open in a few moments.

Online marketing now accounts for over 90% of all planning and arranging recreational travel in the U. S. The formula for success is, “If a community wants to be a tourist destination, first it must be discovered on the web.” As such, the city’s web page needs to be professionally developed and managed.

1. **Owosso’s Online Presence.** When making a decision as to what is needed to market the area as a tourist destination the obvious place to start is to evaluate its online presence. To do this research was conducted of all the major Michigan tourist websites.

Special Note: Of extreme importance is to have Owosso listed on Michigan tourist websites and all major search engines using high traffic keywords. (Competitive keywords are used to build traffic to a website and move it to higher placement on the search engines.)

2. **Web Research.** Owosso’s status as a tourist destination revealed the following:

www.michigan.org

http://www.michigan.org/Default.aspx?m=0&NRC=TM_GG&NRX=TM6206&WT.src h=1

Michigan’s state website and Owosso is not listed as a featured destination, the nearest is Flint. If a person knows the name of Owosso they can type it in the search box and find very limited information – not enough to draw visitors.



<http://www.planetware.com/tourist-attractions-/michigan-lower-peninsula-us-mi-low.htm>

Owosso is not listed although many other smaller towns are listed in the area.

The Michigan Business Directory

<http://www.michiganbusiness.us/index.php?nic=michigan-tourism>

Listed are:

- Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
- Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village
- Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn Lodge
- Mackinac Island

Owosso is not listed

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Absolute Michigan, all Michigan all the time

<http://www.absolutemichigan.com/lodging&travel/destinations/>

105 Tourist Destinations – NO Steam Railroad Institute, Curwood Castle or Owosso listed.

Travel.com

Michigan Weekend Getaways and Day Trips

49 travel guides found for **Weekend Getaways and Day Trips** in Michigan.

<http://www.allgetaways.com/guidebook.asp?productfamilyid=50603>

Owosso is NOT even listed as a search!

3. How to Revitalize Owosso's Website. It is important revitalize the Owosso website so that it will serve as both a marketing tool and a community hub for its residents. The procedure should include:

a. First, remove old web pages of outdated web sites and minutes of old meetings by the different Owosso organizations. When Michigan websites are visited to select a tourist destination they should not be expected to sort through a lot of outdated information.

b. The site should be professionally developed and managed by a company such as MetaSpring which is a design, development and website management company located in Ann Arbor MI, <http://www.metaspring.com/> (note – see page 3 on how to access website). It is important to keep the community website current to serve as an effective marketing tool for the businesses and organizations within the community. MetaSpring can provide:

- 1) Branding and identity
- 2) Custom website design
- 3) Internet marketing and e-commerce solutions
- 4) Interactive media design
- 5) Viral marketing

6) Search engine optimization – so Owosso ranks high in the search engines and can be found amongst millions of tourist destination websites.

c. Features of a community website is based on what is the desired outcome, which in this case is to attract tourists, new businesses and new families. Some suggestions during committee discussions included incorporating email distribution lists in marketing efforts, website communication and linkage between the different sites serving the interests of Owosso and Corunna. There are hundreds, if not thousands of options to be considered in planning a multi-function website which will need to be addressed by experienced website designers in concurrence with city management. More than a dozen website designers were researched and MetaSpring is one example of a company that can both design and maintain a community website:

MetaSpring contact information:

8178 Jackson Rd #B, Ann Arbor MI, 48103

Julie or John Paul Narowski, 800.420.9324

Email: info@metaspring.com

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Print Media Marketing Addendum

1. **Print Media Marketing.** Coordination of a print media marketing program:

a. Make full use of the Independent and the Argus Press including cable and mass email efforts. The Independent can provide marketing expertise for the marketing program.

b. City to support the Convention & Visitors Bureau with brochure distribution for relocation and familiarization information to the individuals that are seeking information on Shiawassee County. Their support could be monetary as well as including helpful community information and a welcome letter from the Mayor and City Council

c. Implement the "branding" for Owosso and utilize the monthly bills already being mailed from the city. Mailing could include information about projects underway, where individual can help and volunteer. This correspondence needs to be in a positive tone to generate more support and enthusiasm for the community members of Owosso. We need to generate a "buzz" for Owosso.

d. Community business locations map and coupon book aimed at marketing to new arrivals through a Welcome To Owosso packet, specifically Baker College students the majority of which are not from this area and do not know what is available.

e. Coordinate with the Chamber of Commerce to include in the Welcome to Owosso packet information about our excellent schools that have much higher graduation rates than the most of the rest of the state. There are numerous opportunities within the schools to get involved and we can supply our marketing pieces.

2. **Owosso Brand/Logo.** Make the new Owosso brand/logo available to the newspapers and it should be shared freely with businesses, service clubs, etc. to allow for cross promotion.

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Mass Media Marketing Addendum

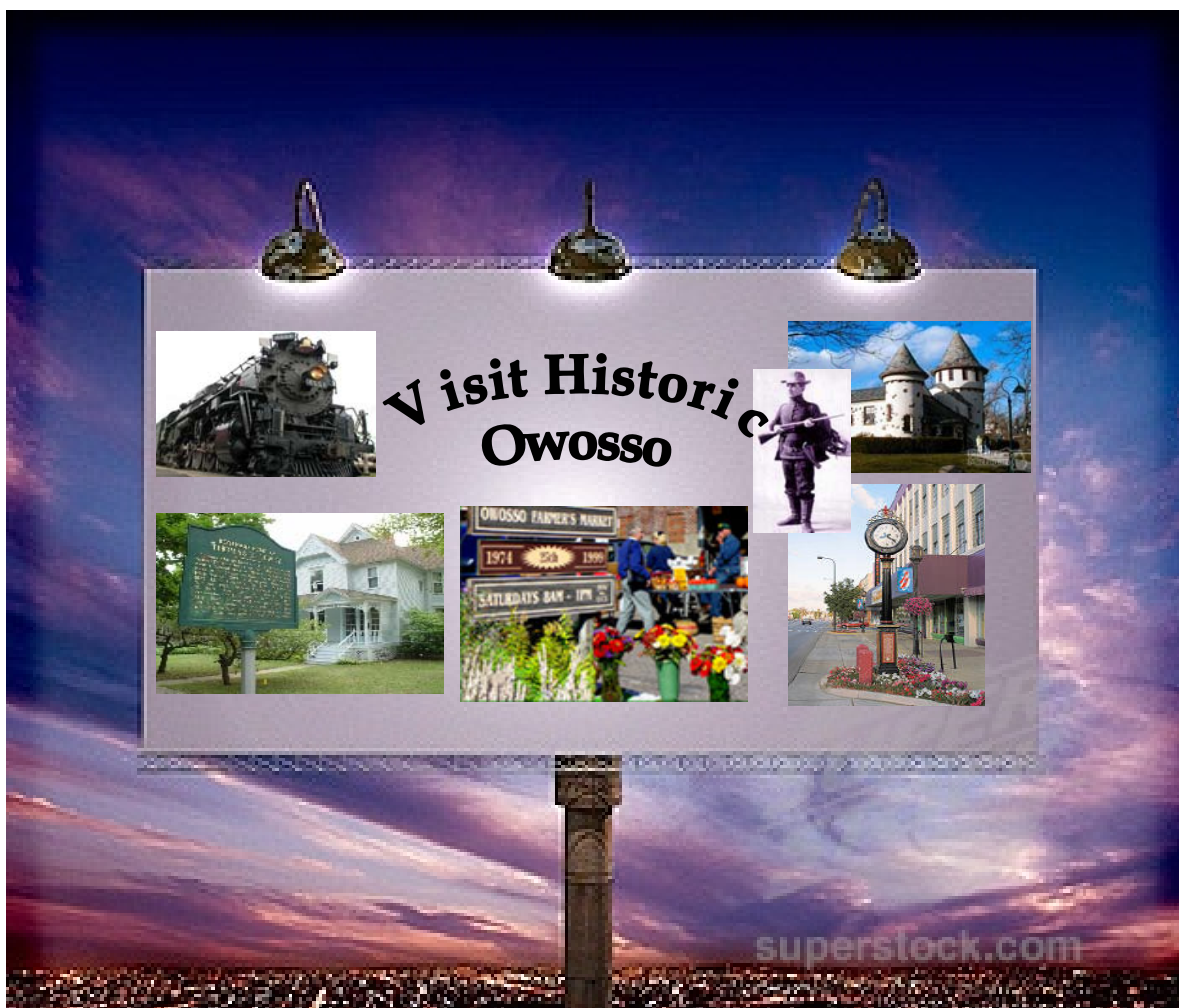
1. **Billboards.** In addition to having visitor information brochures at the visitor tourist centers located along the interstate highways, billboards could also be used to attract visitors starting with the early Spring of 2009. Billboard envisioned would include:

Upper left corner - the Pere Marquette 1225 locomotive

Upper middle – “Visit Historic Owosso” (or something to the effect)

Upper right corner – Curwood Castle with a photo of James Curwood superimposed with “James Curwood Early Conservationist”

Across the middle and bottom large photos of the downtown shopping areas and some of the 19th century homes



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2. **Historic Signage.** Signage on the historic buildings and posted in front of homes of the people who went on to become famous. Registration could be through the National Register by the State Historic Preservation Office or signs that are locally produced which would take far less time. The historic architecture of well over 200 homes, commercial buildings and factories is a very significant marketing tool that will draw many visitors because in many parts of the country these types of buildings are disappearing or never existed.

3. **Visitors' Information Center.** A center to distribute brochures, maps and coupons during the summer months, holidays and on weekends. If the community is to be a tourist attraction it has to equip itself as a tourist attraction.

4. **Electronic Signage.** Many of the businesses that have electronic signs in town are willing to post community information. Grass roots marketing like this can go a long way.

5. **Guided Trolley Tours.** Tours could be scheduled out of the visitors' information center. The trolleys could also be used to transport people to and from events and parking during festivals and around the shopping district to provide a unique experience for customers. The trolley could also be rented out for special occasions. Trolleys (streetcars) played an important role in Owosso history, see the pictures at website: <http://www.shiawasseehistory.com/streetcar.html> 10/28/08



If the community is to be a tourist attraction it has to equip itself as a tourist attraction.

Trolley tours are very popular and are used with great success. If a community has many sites to visit how are tourists to get from one point to another and learn about the sites?

Boston, MA – visit:

<http://www.trolleytours.com/boston/>

Bar Harbor, ME – visit:

<http://www.acadiaislandtours.com/>

Cap May, NJ – visit:

http://www.gatrolley.com/h_ww1.htm

Gatlinburg, TN – visit:

http://www.eventsgatlinburg.com/event_detail.aspx?id=13

Savannah, GA – visit:

<http://www.savannahtours.us/tours/tourType.cfm/ttid2/1108>

St. Augustine, FL – visit:

<http://www.trolleytours.com/st-augustine/>

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6. **Broadcast Media.** We live in a visual world and the one way to reach everyone is via radio and television. Imagine the interest of area residents being seen in school productions such as games and plays and people being interviewed at local events.

a. The City of Owosso has a cable access channel that is very underutilized. This could be a huge asset to employ marketing efforts and should be included in a marketing plan. The City of Midland, for examples, has a thriving cable access channel that promotes area events and features a variety of locally produced segments and event coverage. Some of the programs could be produced by local high school and college students which would provide valuable experience which could be used on the graduates' resumes.

b. Continue to utilize the local radio station to market community events, new business openings or featured sales and have them do live broadcasts from the site of the events. To increase their listening audience they can feature contests and giveaways to local businesses like a dinner for or a gift certificate.

7. **Develop More Community Events.** There are many more types of events that would draw people to the area as tourists and shoppers.

a. Large church or charity bazaars, which usually include a small carnival with rides and games like Elliott's Amusements <http://www.elliottsamusements.com/>. Included are bake sales, locally made craft and games and many other area specific fun ideas. Not only do they raise a lot of money while people are having fun, but they draw a lot of people into town.

b. A couple of years ago Durand had a traveling circus put on shows for several days. It was one of the old-fashioned one ring shows with about 30 performers who put on the entire two hour show. For about \$10 a person it was great family entertainment and drew a good crowd.

c. Food festivals are popular all over the world and draw very large crowds. Here is an example: <http://www.foodreference.com/html/us-food-festivals.html>

d. Entertainment headliners create a lot of buzz and can pack an indoor or outdoor venue: <http://www.primetimeentertainment.com/roster>