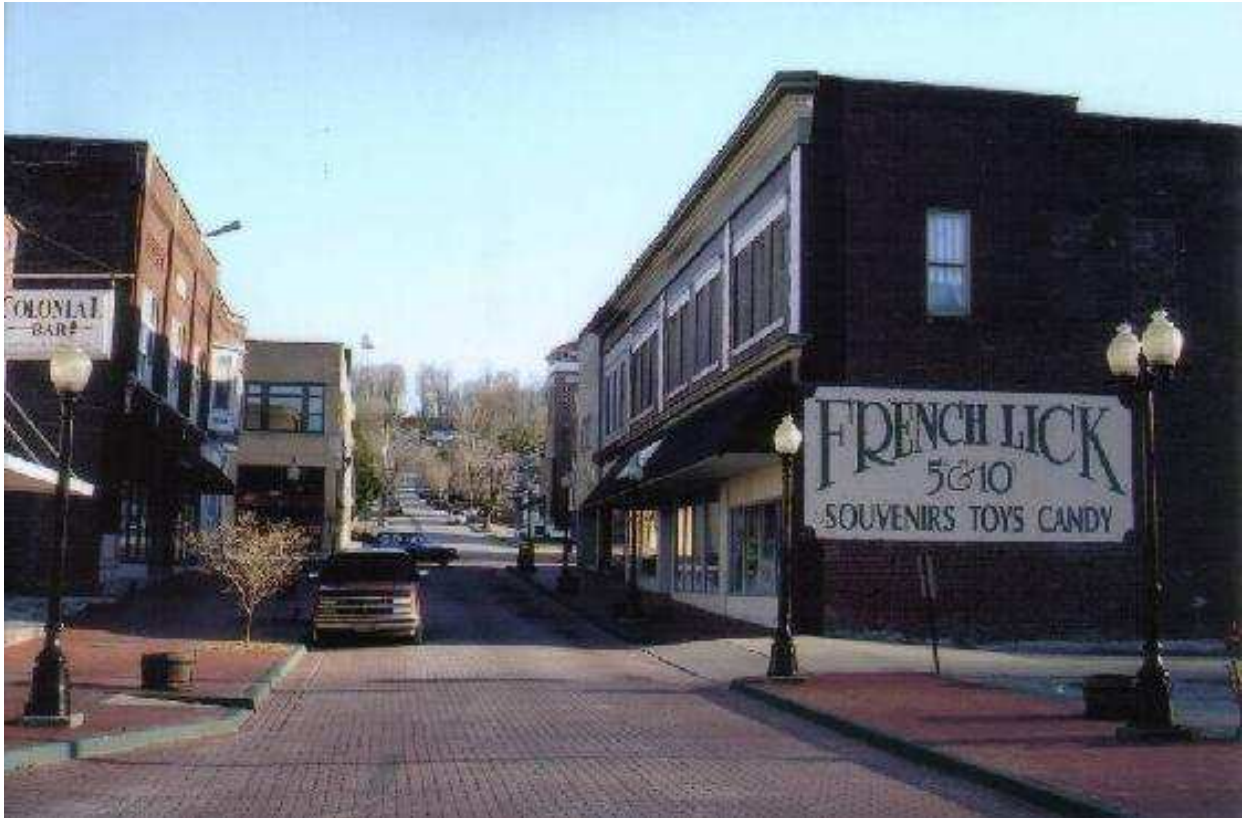


Town of French Lick, Indiana



Community Tourism Action Plan

FINAL COPY

July 2009

Introduction

Purpose, Benefits and Uses

The French Lick *Community Tourism Action Plan* was prepared based on two workshop sessions with invited participants representing town and county governments, local business owners/operators and others with an interest in sustainable tourism growth for the community held on April 17 and 27, and a final presentation meeting on June 30, 2009. A total of 25 participants were involved in these discussions, including key representatives from the Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau (OCCVB), now doing business as Visit French Lick West Baden (VFLWB), who are highly supportive in the preparation and implementation of the enclosed action plan.

The purpose of the tourism action plan was five-fold:

1. To understand clearly the current tourism situation in French Lick, including opportunities for new development and marketing
2. To know the critical issues and challenges facing French Lick future visitor potential
3. To determine the French Lick destination brand vision and current visitor brand promise
4. To identify and prioritize French Lick visitor-related programs and projects
5. To acknowledge the critical factors for successful French Lick tourism growth.

The *Community Tourism Action Plan* is to be used as a directional and guideline document for the effective development and marketing leadership of French Lick's tourism resources. Its intent is to provide an agreed-to and consistent focus on priority tourism initiatives over the next several years that will allow increased visitor spending and overall beneficial impact to the community.

Details on the components of this new *Community Tourism Action Plan* follow.



Community Tourism Situation

SWOT Analysis and Conclusions

Based on meeting discussions, a SWOT analysis was conducted from a visitor perspective and covered commentary on the town’s tourist experience, marketing and advocacy communications and organization leadership. This analysis follows with conclusions.

<p>Strengths (present advantages)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Architecturally significant French Lick Resort property ➤ French Lick Casino ➤ Historic golf courses ➤ New “Big Splash Adventure” Indoor Waterpark & Resort ➤ French Lick Scenic Railway/Indiana Railroad Museum ➤ Recent downtown redevelopment and marketplace ➤ Springs Stadium 4 movie theater ➤ Natural topography (valley and hill vistas) ➤ Casino and circus cultural heritage stories ➤ Affordable transient/condominium lodging ➤ Upgraded French Lick airport ➤ Local historic tours 	<p>Weaknesses (present disadvantages)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Limited dining and shopping facilities ➤ No public transportation ➤ Lack of an appropriate resort community retail/service mix ➤ Few recreational events/activities and festivals ➤ Minimal local government support for tourism ➤ Restricted retail operating hours ➤ Minimal visibility of county visitors center ➤ Limited evening entertainment ➤ Minimal parking and inefficient traffic logistics downtown ➤ Community apathy
<p>Opportunities (potential advantages)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Proposed French Lick West Baden Museum/Interpretive Center ➤ Continued downtown revitalization (retail, office and residential) ➤ Appropriate retail/service mix ➤ Performing arts facility opportunity ➤ Expansion of current festivals (Pumpkin and Beaux Arts) ➤ Icon/signature community event development ➤ Arts/cultural tourism potential ➤ New partnership/investor formations ➤ Reinstatement of French Lick Resort shuttle ➤ Galleria/“Big Top” domed area downtown 	<p>Threats (potential disadvantages)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Economic downturn effects on travel behavior ➤ Fluctuating gas prices influence ➤ Casino legislation changes ➤ Authentic community identity loss ➤ Visitor dissatisfaction ➤ No downtown “infill” development ➤ Necessary infrastructure on hold

Given the SWOT analysis above, it was generally found that there was:

1. Excellent opportunities for further sustainable family-based tourism development
2. Need for an appropriate downtown area retail/services mix with key anchor attraction(s)/event(s) in place
3. More investment required in branded community tourism marketing with key visitor industry partners.

Main Tourism Issues and Top Challenges

From the SWOT analysis conclusions and related follow-up workshop commentary, it was understood that the top issues/challenges affecting the progressive growth of French Lick and specifically the visitor experience are as follows:

- Focus on a revitalized downtown area with appropriate retail/service mix and subsequent plan of action centered on visitor experience development and marketing
- Strengthened year-round resort destination presence with more leisure family amenities, activities and visitor-friendly walkable environment
- Formulation of an attraction/event strategy to provide additional activities in the shoulder/off-season
- More leisure niche/special interest travel programming and packaging focusing on new events and best recreation/adventure travel potentials.

Critical Factors for Community Tourism Success

For the community to progress and to nurture increased tourism, the following critical factors need to be recognized and focused on to reach success:

- Downtown people-oriented attractions and events
- Development of a specialized downtown retail district (arts/cultural offerings, dining and related activities)
- Identified tourism action plan champion and implementation leader.



Community Visitor Experience

Key Visitor Market Segments and Activities

The main visitors to French Lick were determined by the workshop participants to be primarily leisure families and couples, meeting/convention delegates and gaming travelers all providing a majority of overnight stays. Specific visitor segments are as follows.

Visitor Type	Key Activities
Business Travelers	
↻ Meetings/conventions	pre/post meeting activities centered on evening entertainment, dining, shopping and special events
↻ Corporate/government	business sales and professional services
↻ Social/weddings and other fraternal gatherings	personal events, service clubs and special interest group meetings
Leisure Travelers	
↻ Gaming	casino, dining, shopping and evening entertainment
↻ Cultural heritage	community events/festivals and resort hotel activities
↻ Spa/wellness and waterpark	pre/post treatment and special occasion activities centered on dining, shopping and evening entertainment
↻ Golf/outdoor recreation	golfing, walking/hiking, fishing/hunting and other soft adventure travel
Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)	
↻ Family/friends reunions	personal events



Community Appeals and Brand Positioning

From a countywide visitor image and perception research study conducted in 2008, random travelers to French Lick identified the following destination attributes and characteristics.

- French Lick Resort
- Beautiful hotel restorations
- Casino
- Some unique shopping
- French Lick railroad
- Historic place
- Small town feel
- Relaxing atmosphere
- Stress-free
- Fun and exciting

Community Brand Promise

Given this destination positioning and emotional feelings, a brand promise was formulated that could be currently delivered to visitors.

The French Lick and West Baden region is a relaxing destination that is home to the historic landmark, architecturally significant and elegant French Lick Resort properties in Southern Indiana.

With a culture of friendly people, the destination emphasizes four seasons family-oriented recreational experiences. It is an affordable and nostalgic escape where visitors can enjoy the pleasures of rural hometowns, the Hoosier National Forest and Patoka Lake, winter skiing, gaming and varied sports entertainment venues, all embraced with beautiful hillside scenic vistas.

Community Brand Vision

Similarly, a 2020 brand vision for French Lick was prepared by the workshop participants to build upon the above brand promise and the town's potential as follows.

French Lick is recognized as the Midwest's premier, majestically elegant and historic year-round resort community with its redesigned and vibrant downtown area providing a unique retail marketplace and residential dwellings mix.

Community Tourism Goals

Brand Promise Long-Term Goals

To enhance its visitor presence with a focus on downtown redevelopment, French Lick needs to accomplish four long-term goals.

Community Tourism Experience

To invest in the French Lick brand experience through the facilitation and support of downtown revitalization projects, family and specialized adventure travel programming and packaging, gateway upgrading and beautification and related infrastructure.

Community Tourism Marketing

To co-promote and sell the French Lick brand experience with required off- and online collateral materials in conjunction with the Visit French Lick West Baden organization.

Community Tourism Advocacy

To advocate the benefits of town revitalization and tourism to the French Lick community with appropriate research and performance results.

Community Tourism Organization and Funding

To form a strong integrated destination team to implement the Community Tourism Action Plan.



Community Tourism Activities and Measurement

Goal Areas Priority Tourism Projects Identification and Implementation Steps

To realize the French Lick brand vision, meet its community/destination challenges and deliver more effectively on its brand promise, the following priority initiatives need to be undertaken. These initiatives are assigned to a lead organization(s) shown below in bold and implemented through a committed project chairperson and a supportive team complement.

Project/Program	Priority Focus	Responsibility	Timing		
			2009	2010	2011
Town Center and Original Downtown Revitalization	1				
↻ agreement on appropriate retail/services mix and solicitation strategy			●		
↻ retail/restaurant investment opportunity		TFL	●		
↻ office commercial investment opportunity		FLRC	●	●	
↻ residential development opportunity		SI/INDOT	●	●	●
Attraction/Event Strategy	2				
↻ assessment and agreed-to plan		FLTC	●	●	
↻ existing event development		VFLWB	●	●	●
↻ Indiana Railway Museum upgrading		TFL	●		
↻ downtown icon/signature event investigation		FLRC	●	●	
French Lick Visitors Center	3				
↻ best location analysis		FLTC/VFLWB	●		
↻ facility/signage needs assessment		TFL/FLWBCC	●	●	
Destination Marketing and Sales	4				
↻ best targeted market opportunities identification		VFLWB/FLR	●		
↻ partnership visitor programming/packaging		BSAWR	●	●	●
French Lick West Baden Museum/Interpretive Center Development	5				
↻ casino and circus exhibit focus		FLWBMG/VFLWB	●		
↻ attraction business plan development		TFL/TWBS	●		
↻ funding requirements		OCCC/OCDC	●	●	●

Key

BSAWR	Big Splash Adventure Waterpark & Resort	FLWBMG	French Lick West Baden Museum Group	SI	State of Indiana
FLR	French Lick Resort	INDOT	Indiana Department of Transportation	TFL	Town of French Lick
FLRC	French Lick Redevelopment Commission	OCCC	Orange County Council/Commissioners	TWBS	Town of West Baden Springs
FLTC	French Lick Tourism Commission	OCDC	Orange County Development Commission	VFLWB	Visit French Lick West Baden (Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau)
FLWBCC	French Lick West Baden Chamber of Commerce				

Community Tourism Action Plan Initiatives

Project/Program	Lead Organization/ Chairperson and Team Members	Key Activities
Town Center/ Original Downtown Revitalization	TFL/FLRC	
Attraction/Event Strategy	FLTC/VLWB	

Project/Program	Lead Organization/ Chairperson and Team Members	Key Activities
French Lick Visitors Center	FLTC/VFLWB	
Destination Marketing and Sales	VFLWB	

Project/Program	Lead Organization/ Chairperson and Team Members	Key Activities
French Lick West Baden Museum/ Interpretive Center Development	FLWBMG/VFLWB	

This *Community Tourism Action Plan* was facilitated and prepared on behalf of the Town of French Lick through the Office of Professional Development, College of Consumer and Family Sciences at Purdue University. This Office provides technical assistance to communities throughout Indiana who are interested in the furtherance of their sustainable economic and tourism development.