

The New Generation of Visitors Centers

A 20-Year Pictorial Record



A Destination Consultancy Group
Presentation

Copyright © DCG 2023



Visitors Centers and Services



① Challenges & Opportunities

② New Directions

Visitors Centers and Services Challenges & Opportunities

1

No responsibility for on-site visitor needs – absence of full DMO commitment to visitor services

2

Reality/perception as a cost center – reactive/wait and see marketing with unrecorded returns

3

Minimal community engagement – inbound focus with scant attention to resident and VFR needs

**Visitors Centers
Profile Handout**

Visitor Centers and Services New Directions

The Old Concept

Past/Current Roles

- Information assistance
- Printed collateral/map distribution
- Static displays
- Rest area/breakation place
- Onsite or nearby meeting/tour group services

Priority Focus

Reactive/Passive Mode – “order taking”

Visitor Centers and Services New Directions

The New Concept

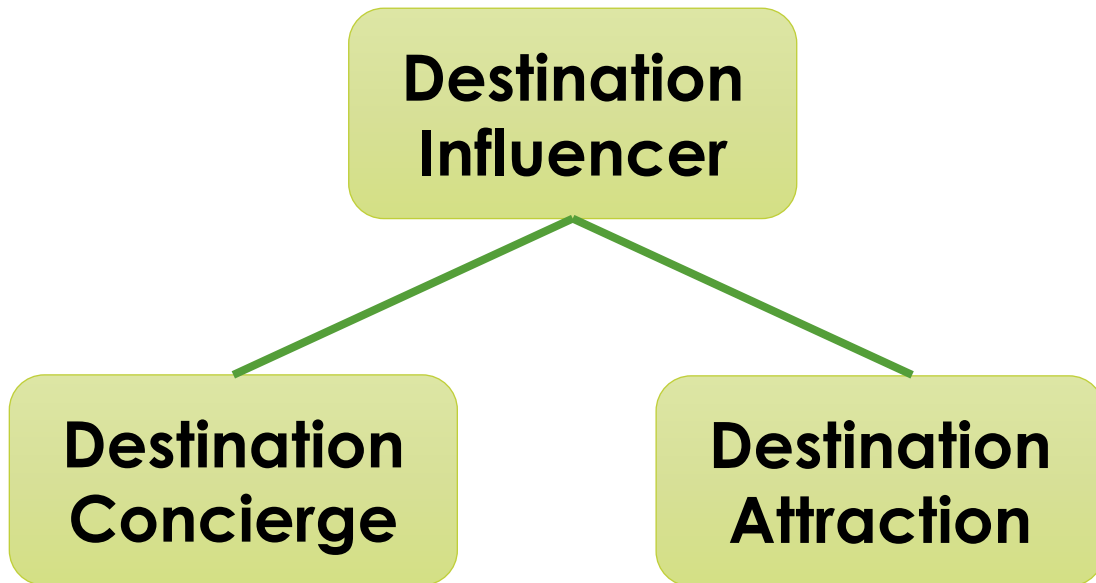
Future Roles

- Proactive visitor influencing venue
- Personalized advice
- Destination concierge service provider
- Brand-driven, experiential and self-sufficient/profitable attraction entity

Priority Focus

Proactive/Engaging Mode – “order making”

Visitor Centers and Services New Directions



Function Before Form



1.0 Visitors Centers: 16 – 20 Years Ago



Asheville Visitor Center (NC) – Successes and Best Practices www.exploreasheville.com

1.0 Visitors Centers



Asheville Visitor Center (NC) – Successes and Best Practices www.exploreasheville.com

1.0 Visitors Centers

- Downtown location
- Branded visitor experience (exhibits)
- Extensive retail shopping/crafts
- Strong revenue generation (ticket reservations, day tours, Biltmore Estate rental, partner advertising)

1.0 Visitors Centers



Indiana Welcome Center, Lake County (IN) -
Successes and Best Practices www.southshorecva.com

1.0 Visitors Centers



Indiana Welcome Center, Lake County (IN) - Successes and Best Practices
www.southshorecva.com

1.0 Visitors Centers

- Adjacent I 80/90 exit location
- State of Indiana sanctioned welcome center
- Branded visitor experience (exhibits, state/county illustrative floor maps)
- Large exhibit trade show space and theater

2.0 Visitors Centers: 4 – 15 Years Ago



Fredericksburg Visitor Center (TX) – Successes and Best Practices
www.visitfredericksburgtx.com

2.0 Visitors Centers: 4 – 15 Years Ago



Fredericksburg Visitor Center (TX) – Successes and Best Practices
www.visitfredericksburgtx.com

2.0 Visitors Centers: 4 – 15 Years Ago

- Excellent downtown off Main Street location with ample parking
- Branded visitor experience (Texas Hill Country, 50+ wineries)
- Well-trained paid host corps
- Love FBGTX resident engagement program with exterior photo op site

2.0 Visitors Centers



Louisville Visitor Center (KY) – Successes and Best Practices www.gotolouisville.com

2.0 Visitors Centers



Louisville Visitor Center (KY) – Successes and Best Practices www.gotolouisville.com

2.0 Visitors Centers

- Downtown location near convention center with separate DMO offices
- Major funding partner (Yum Foods/KFC)
- Allied KY Bourbon Trail/Urban Bourbon Trail experiences
- Supplemental branded visitor experiences (Muhammad Ali Museum, Kentucky Derby, Colonel Sanders)

2.0 Visitors Centers



Elkhart County Visitors Center (IN) – Successes and Best Practices www.visitelkhartcounty.com

2.0 Visitors Centers



2.0 Visitors Centers

- Near I 80/90 exit location
- Well Crafted brand application
- Allied Heritage Trail and Quilt Gardens Tour experiences
- Amish Country/People & Places differentiated décor

2.0 Visitors Centers



Unlock Tampa Bay Visitors Center (FL) – Successes and Best Practices www.visittampabay.com

2.0 Visitors Centers



Unlock Tampa Bay Visitors Center (FL) – Successes and Best Practices www.visittampabay.com

2.0 Visitors Centers

- Downtown high-rise office tower location with DMO offices on 29th floor and visitor center at ground floor
- Extensive retail shopping/branded items
- Strong revenue generation (clothing gear, souvenirs, admission ticket sales) with active online store

2.0 Visitors Centers



2.0 Visitors Centers



2.0 Visitors Centers

- Perimeter of Morgan City adjacent Highway 90
- Visitor center built on swamp to provide an immersive experience walkabout
- Active swamp tours booking agency
- Certified Louisiana Retirement Area designation

2.0 Visitors Centers



2.0 Visitors Centers



Sedona Visitor Center (AZ) – Successes and Best Practices www.sedonachamber.com

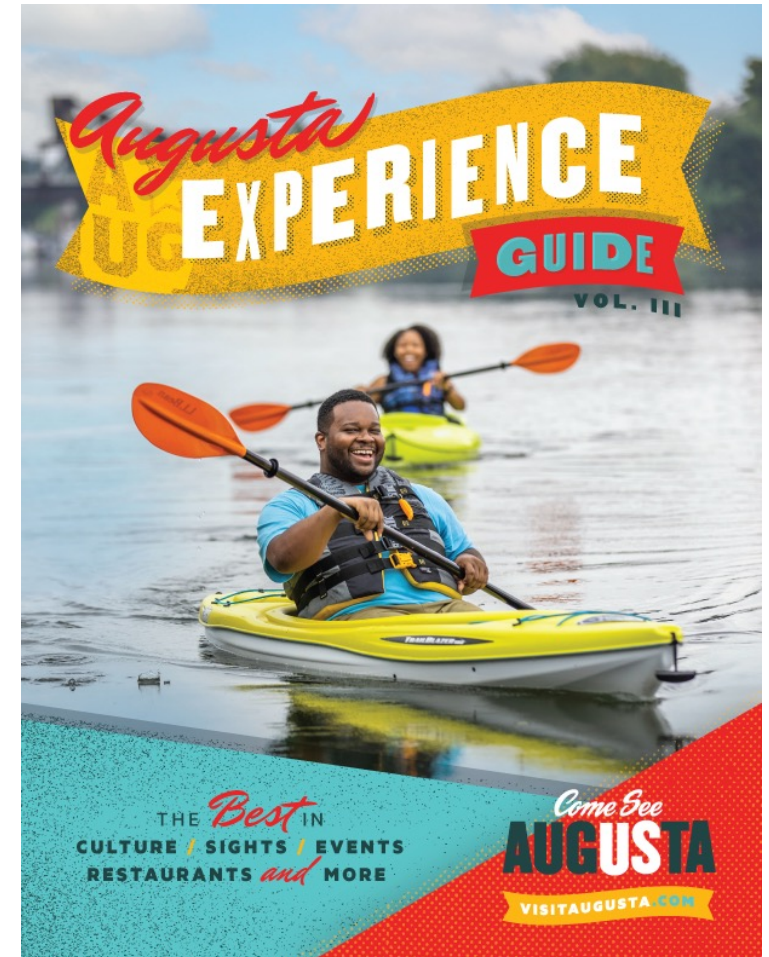
2.0 Visitors Centers

- Key uptown location with approximately 350,000 annual visitor volume
- Well-trained senior volunteer corps
- Sustainability messaging throughout (Sedona Cares Pledge and Seven Principles of Leave No Trace)

3.0 Visitors Centers: Last 3 Years



3.0 Visitors Centers



3.0 Visitors Centers

- Building conversion in a visible downtown location
- Identified as an Experience Center and actively promoting to residents/VFR influencers
- 10 Authentic Augusta Experiences (exhibits)
- Strong local retail presence with tasting bar
- Destination Augusta photo op site

3.0 Visitors Centers



Kelowna Visitor Centre (BC, Canada) – Successes and Best Practices www.tourismkelowna.com

3.0 Visitors Centers



3.0 Visitors Centers

- Attractive downtown city location on Lake Okanagan
- In Okanagan Wine Country with 100 wineries
- Iconic architectural building with related interior design
- Love for Kelowna gift store/online retail

3.0 Visitors Centers



Chattanooga Information Center (TN) – Successes and Best Practices
www.visitchattanooga.com

3.0 Visitors Centers

- Downtown area adjacent to high volume Tennessee Aquarium attraction and Tennessee River
- Downsized visitors center with available photo vistas
- Independent DMO administrative offices
- Influential VFR program to locals
- 24/7 exterior touchscreen info kiosk

3.0 Visitors Centers



Experience Greater Green Bay Visitor Center (WI) – Successes and Best Practices
www.greenbay.com

3.0 Visitors Centers



Experience Greater Green Bay Visitor Center (WI) – Successes and Best Practices
www.greenbay.com

3.0 Visitors Centers

- Adjacent to I 41 and close proximity to Packers Lambeau Field
- Unique atrium style building with opening in late 2023
- Leveraged internationally-known Green Bay Packers brand with City Signature Experiences exhibits
- Strong fundraising program with over 25 contributing sponsors/investors
- On-site hospitality educational training facility

Experience Greater Green Bay Visitor Center (WI) – Successes and Best Practices
www.greenbay.com

Visitors Center Design and Development Strategy

Comparable Center Success Attributes

Visitors Center Development

- Accessible venue location and adjacent adequate parking
- Architecturally unique/well-designed building(s) and surrounding area
- Attached or adjacent to a key visitor generator/attraction
- Interpretive destination brand “storytelling”
- Technology driven learning experiences
- Public restrooms and gathering/meeting place

Visitors Center Marketing and Operations

- Branded customer service delivery and recommended advice
- Visitor industry and community partnership participation
- Attraction admission and reservation sales potential
- Area/State print collateral and online availability
- Commercial/merchandise opportunities
- Visitor-friendly operating hours with 24/7 information accessibility

Visitors Center Development and Operations Critical Success Factors

- Adoption of success attributes from comparable state and nationwide visitors centers
- Strong commitment from local government as a priority brand influencing and welcoming project
- Community and/or business/economic development agency acceptance and active involvement as a collaborating partner
- Mutually-supporting multi-year partnership with private sector sponsors/investors
- Effective business plan with solid capital and operating foundation
- Operating from a business/entrepreneurial platform

**Business Plan
Summary**

Typical Visitors/Hospitality Center Business Plan Outline

- I. Purpose of Visitors Center Analysis
 - Background
 - Assessment and Business Plan Work Program
- II. Visitors Center Situation Assessment
 - Center Location
 - Center Site and Building Structure
 - Center Issues and SWOT Analysis
 - Center Main Challenges
- III. Visitors Center Design and Development Strategy
 - Preliminary Center Experience Concept
 - Center and Services Trends
 - Comparable Center Success Attributes
 - Center Vision Formulation
 - Center Development Guidelines

Typical Visitors/Hospitality Center Business Plan Outline

IV. Visitors Center Marketing Strategy

- Center Goals
- Center Target Markets and Value Proposition
- Center Promotion, Sales and Services Programming
- Center Performance Metrics

V. Visitors Center Operations and Financial Strategy

- Center Staffing, Operations Plan and Income Projections
- Center Property and Building Capital Budget Estimates
- Center Partnership Investment and Funding