

Township Marketing Plans

Many small towns in regional Australia are facing situations which make it difficult for their business community to survive and thrive. Escape spending, drought, changes in population, loss of a major employer in the region or an emerging tourism market can all create challenges for small business owners.

This program gives local businesses and their supporting organisations the chance to contribute to a strategic marketing plan developed to address the specific needs in their community.

Unlike community consultation programs which rely on public meetings to generate ideas and support for a project, this program works primarily with a local coordinator and a small group of motivated business owners.

The planning process is facilitated by small business marketing expert, Linda Hailey, who works with the program coordinator and key businesses to develop a cost effective marketing plan. Development of the marketing plan is based around a visit to the town. To maximise the time spent onsite, research can be conducted prior to the visit. The on-site visit includes a retail review, a discussion group with key businesses, a retail seminar and development of key strategies.

Following the on-site visit, the final plan is developed. Typically a plan is 20 – 25 pages long. Although each plan is different, you could expect a town marketing plan to include:

- Documentation of issues arising out of workshop with key businesses
- Documentation of “gaps” in the existing retail mix and product mix
- Documentation of target markets
- Strategies for tailoring the retail mix to fit target markets
- Strategies for capitalising on existing tourism markets (if applicable)
- Strategies for coping with escape spending
- Strategies for increasing awareness of the business community
- Recommendations for improving signage and visibility
- Recommendations for window displays and merchandising
- Recommendations for customer service development
- Recommendations for promotions
- Recommendations for an advertising program
- Recommendations for individual businesses (if applicable)

The plan will also include suggestions for funding and implementing the recommendations.

In addition to the plan the community also receives a retail mix spreadsheet which identifies the mix of retailers in the main street.

Following is detailed information about each phase of the project.

Research

Phone Briefing

Five to six weeks prior to the on-site visit a phone briefing is held with the project coordinator to determine the key issues facing the business community and develop the research brief.

Information Gathering

Two to three weeks prior to the on-site visit, the coordinator will be asked to gather any research data or information that will assist the planning process.

Information to be provided may include:

- Photographs of the central business district including streetscapes, individual buildings of note, adjacent areas such as beachfront
- A list of businesses in the central business district and other areas such as light industrial parks or main road if appropriate
- A list of key business owners in the community who are likely to be involved in the planning process
- Tourism information on the area if appropriate
- Reports from any Council or tourism funded consultancies or research projects
- Reports from community consultation or DSRD funded research projects

Other information can be collected through on-site research. Research exercises may include:

- Postcode surveys conducted by individual retailers
- Shopper surveys conducted by independent researcher or the coordinator
- Shopping basket comparison with other centres in the area by independent researcher or the coordinator

On-Site Visit

Retail Review

Once Linda arrives on-site she will conduct a retail review of the main shopping area including visits to key retailers and businesses which may be aware of market changes. These businesses might include real estate agents, service clubs and coffee shops. In most cases she also develops a retail mix of the main street showing location of businesses by category. Each review is different but you could expect a retail review to cover:

- Signage
- Visibility
- Identity and branding

- Product stock levels
- Product ranges in stores
- Traditional versus innovative products
- Merchandising
- Streetscaping
- Access and egress to main street
- Architecture
- Heritage values
- Customer service
- Tourist attractions

Planning workshop

Linda will facilitate a planning workshop with key business owners to identify the key issues that may have an impact on the marketing of the community. This workshop would be tailored to suit the community but could cover:

- Positives and negatives to be considered in the marketing
- Previous marketing initiatives
- Impact of escape spending
- Population changes
- Tourism trends
- Gaps in the retail mix
- Target markets
- Marketing opportunities
- Operational issues to be considered such as funding and staffing the project

On-site planning

The consultant works on-site with the program coordinator to review all the information gathered and develop the core marketing strategies and a step-by-step plan. Members of the retail community can be consulted if necessary during this process.

Final Plan

Following the on-site visit, the consultant will prepare a planning document detailing first impressions, the focus group feedback, recommended target markets for the business community, consolidation strategies and marketing strategies.

In most cases the plan is accompanied by a retail mix spreadsheet detailing the mix of businesses in the main street.

The report is presented in an easy to read “dot point” format and is usually completed within 6 weeks of the site visit.

Linda is available for unlimited phone support during the implementation phase.