

2.1. Highlight Montana's vibrant and charming small towns

This Strategic Action strengthens Montana's tourism marketing efforts.

Recommended Tactics

TAC, MTOT, Regions

- » Collaborate on ways to highlight and assist in the development of Montana's "vibrant and charming small towns."

MTOT, Regions, Tribes

- » Highlight vibrant and charming small towns, their arts, culture, events and amenities in visitor information and identify their location clearly.
- » Assist Montana communities' efforts to "tell their story" (see Strategic Action 2.2.) and use their story (arts, culture, heritage, events, amenities, etc) to attract visitors.
- » Create traveler tips or itinerary ideas that link vibrant and charming small towns together, and link them to the main travel corridors for visitors.
- » Highlight Montana's vibrant and charming small towns, their arts, culture, events and amenities in marketing materials to strengthen the Montana Brand.

Indicators of Success

- » Montana's "vibrant and charming small towns" are highlighted in Montana's visitor information and their location is clearly identified on the Montana map.
- » Images of these towns are used across marketing materials to strengthen the Brand pillar.

Background & Rationale

Research shows the importance of reducing the perceived "riskiness" of a destination by assuring travelers that the amenities, services, and comfort that they seek will be available. Montana's branding research reiterated the importance of providing information to mitigate visitors' perception of the state's remoteness. Visitors need reassurance that the comfort, services, and amenities they seek are available in Montana. The Montana Brand promise of "vibrant and charming small towns" serves this purpose, but that promise must be credible. It is important for the visitor who values very charming small towns to be able to identify those towns, perceive their vibrancy and charm, and find their geographic locations when planning an itinerary.

ITRR data indicate that Montana's non-resident visitors largely undertake *multi-destination* trips, rather than staying in one town. This increases the importance of highlighting a number of towns that could serve as the basis of visitor itineraries. Awareness of these towns could also encourage more travelers to extend their itinerary outside the main travel corridors.

Delivering on the brand promise by helping visitors to find vibrant and charming small towns will improve the visitor experience and visitor satisfaction, contributing to extended stays, return visits, and positive word-of-mouth.

Highlighting the “gems” among Montana’s many charming small towns has the additional benefits of strengthening community pride; building respect by highlighting the benefits of tourism; and encouraging other communities to come together to improve their towns’ vibrancy and charm.