

Review #2 – Tourism Planning Documents

Document Review: 2006 Related Reports on Tourism Planning (3 Reports):

- Ladysmith Situation Analysis 2006 (Tourism study)
- Ladysmith Tourism Plan 2006
- Ladysmith Tourism Plan Update 2008

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The program presumed that Ladysmith would move on to have a funded and staffed tourism marketing program, which has not happened, but in spite of that, many of the recommendations made have taken place by now and those that have not are probably still relevant. It has to be understood that funding the Visitors Centre and maintaining a good website are an excellent start but both are "preaching to the already converted" in that by the time someone is in the Visitors Centre or on the website, they have already decided to be interested in visiting Ladysmith so the missing step is how do we attract their attention in the first place.

First, the good news. Signage has been improved, the marinas have expanded their short term moorage capabilities, several new "up market" eating establishments have opened recently, the Visitors Centre has relocated to a more accessible site, off street parking is more obvious, the Arts Centre has blossomed, the Nanaimo Airport has been upgraded, local public transport now exists, and local events such as the Festival of Lights continue to attract new visitors to Ladysmith that would not otherwise come.

However, several key recommendations are no closer to implementation than they were in 2008 when a review took place. These include:

1. The need for a quality hotel or motor hotel where visitors who do not connect with B&B's would stay rather than just being here for a few hours. The study says ideally such a facility should be highly visible and have eating facilities and meeting rooms.
2. Development of a RV and camping park within or closer to the town than what exists now.
3. A plan to get more highway travellers off the road and into town. One recommendation for this was to locate the Visitors Centre right on the Highway itself, which of course would be costly.
4. Development of a Tourism Organization which guides the activities made up of the Town, the Chamber, the LDBA, and all of the tourism oriented business to insure the best use of efforts and funds.
5. Explore opportunities for co-operation with Chemainus and Tourism Cowichan that would bring real results to Ladysmith's tourism sector.
6. Find ways to attract more day visitors from "our backyard", ie., Parksville to Victoria.
7. Try to get some of the bus tours which pass by town on the highway to include a stop in Ladysmith. Perhaps with our new eateries opening, a meal stop could be an easy sell.
8. Development of the waterfront in a way that promotes tourism.
9. Conducting research to find out who comes to Ladysmith and why and who doesn't and why not. Perhaps this could be another project to take to the VIU tourism program who did a signage survey for Ladysmith as part of the tourism planning exercise.
10. Encourage more co-operation and joint efforts by the individual players in the sector.

The first step is to get the folks who have the most to gain together and get them all on the same page.