

2.8 Tourism

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Assessment Process	
A.	Annual surveys, focus group studies, and an annual strategic planning retreat order the assessment and guide the direction for the Tourism program.
B.	Lamar participates in the Southwest Missouri Tourism Association, which conducts assessments of endeavors related to regional tourism.

Program Standards	
A.	Organization: Through a main fiscal agent, Barton County Community Development Corporation (BCCDC), funding is combined with the resources of the Barton County Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber's Tourism Committee to serve as the primary organization for tourism activities in Lamar.
B.	Mission Statement: The prime directive of the Tourism program is to increase the economic impact of local tourism attractions through retention of sales dollars in lodging, food service, and retails goods and services. The Tourism program also seeks to preserve and enhance local attractions and their value to the quality of life for the community.
C.	Program Development and Evaluation: The Economic Developer networks with officials from the Southwest Missouri Tourism Association and the Missouri Division of Tourism for development and evaluation of local tourism programs. The Chamber has also secured the services of a national consultant for a long-range plan to enhance the economic value of local attractions.
D.	Inventory of Attractions and Services: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. University Extension assisted in the original tourism inventory of Lamar/Barton County. 2. This inventory is documented in the following manner: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Full-color brochure and visitors guide b. Business directory and relocation guide c. The Chamber's award-winning website, www.bartoncounty.com d. A seven-minute promotional video available in VHS, DVD, and CD-ROM formats 3. All existing historical, cultural, natural, and man-made attractions are catalogued along with amenities such as hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, restaurants, service stations, and repair services
E.	Information Center: A full-time Visitor Information Center is available on the Downtown Square with close proximity to U.S. Highway 160 and many of Lamar's tourism attractions. A part-time Visitor Information Specialist is employed by the Chamber to assist with the operation of the visitor center during prime hours. Visitor Information Kiosks are under development for placement at local attractions and high-traffic businesses offering amenities to visitors.

F.	<p>Marketing Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Chamber participates in the Southwest Missouri Tourism Association for regional and national marketing endeavors. The Association administers a marketing plan with research mechanisms in accordance with standards of the Cooperative Marketing Program from the Missouri Division of Tourism. 2. Locally, the Chamber's action plan contains components of tourism marketing activities conducted by the Chamber's Tourism Committee. Key marketing mechanisms of the Chamber include a full-color brochure, seven-minute video, and website. 3. The local plan includes marketing efforts recommended by a national consultant to increase the economic impact of tourism in Lamar. 4. Local plans have been set in motion for the development of a group tour market for Lamar.
G.	<p>Hospitality Training: Hospitality Training is conducted by Barton County Historian Bob Douglas at the option of local employers. A familiarization format of this training is included in the Chamber's Leadership Development academy. The Chamber's Tourism committee is currently updating the Hospitality and Tourism resource manual for use by employees of key local businesses.</p>
H.	<p>Infrastructure and Visitor Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streets have been widened and signalization has been added or improved at key intersections. • The City of Lamar made extensive improvements to sidewalks and pedestrian traffic ways on the Downtown Square and the Truman Birthplace State Historic Site, the two locations with the highest volume of tourist traffic in Lamar. • Directional and Information signage for tourism has been upgraded to more modern standards of visibility and clarity • Adequate Police and Fire personnel are available to the public and meet the standards as addressed in MoCAP Sections 4.1 and 4.2 • Public Restrooms are available the Downtown Visitor Center. Handicapped-accessible restrooms are available at the Downtown Courthouse and the Truman State Park Historic Site, the two locations with the highest volume of tourist traffic. • Community Beautification provisions are present in volunteer means through Lamar Community Betterment and through mandatory code enforcement through the City of Lamar. These efforts meet the standards addressed in MoCAP Section 1.6. • Adequate public parking is available in accordance with regular volume at each of Lamar's tourism attractions. Missouri's Second Largest Downtown Square provides ample parking for downtown attractions. Additional downtown parking is available in a new covered parking pavilion just one block from the Square. Improvements in parking designed for visitors and motorcoach busses have been implemented at the Truman Birthplace State Park. • To the greatest extent feasibly possible, accommodations have made at each of Lamar's tourism attractions for facilities and services to be accessible to the handicapped.

Program Goals and Planning

Goal #1	Increase economic impact of tourism through better retail shopping opportunities
	(See MoCAP Sections 2.5 and 2.9 for more information on this mutual goal)

Goal #2	Increase economic impact of tourism through Group Tour marketing
Strategy	Increase the frequency of group tours and motorcoach visits of local attractions and shopping venues
Funding	Chamber resources, Barton County Commission, Southwest Missouri Tourism Association, Missouri Division of Tourism
Timeline	Three to Five Years
Goal Evaluation	Increases in visitor counts, increases in retail sales, balances in retail leakage, increases in employment opportunities in hospitality and retail-related firms

Goal #3	Increase resources for tourism marketing
Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incorporate a lodging tax to provide needed funds for tourism marketing 2. Develop a Lodging Tax Commission to administer expenditures for specific tourism projects and offer promotional grants to civic organizations offering special events that meet tourism impact criteria
Funding	Chamber resources and donations by private businesses
Timeline	One-Year from planning to full implementation
Goal Evaluation	Increase in resources available to tourism impact marketing; increases in visitor counts, increases in retail sales, decreases in retail leakage, increases in employment opportunities in hospitality and retail-related firms

Goal #4	Increase economic impact of agricultural-related business and attractions for tourism
Strategy	(See MoCAP Section 2.10 for more information on this mutual goal)

Program Evaluation

The success of Tourism endeavors for Lamar are addressed through:

- Specific economic indicators available from the local agencies, the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center and the U.S. Census Bureau
- Benchmarks established through the Lamar Baseline Study
- Monthly focus group sessions conducted by the Chamber of Commerce
- Annual Surveys of the local business community
- Annual Strategic Planning Retreat of Chamber Board Members and invited executives from other local civic organizations engaged in economic development