

ADDENDUM

Possible Follow-up Programs

After reviewing the information submitted by the local visitation team, the OSU Extension Community Awareness Team believes that the community of Salem, West Virginia might benefit by exploring and developing programs in the following areas: strategic planning for economic development, housing rehabilitation, infrastructure development, and downtown revitalization. A good program to use that would begin the process of addressing most of these issues is West Virginia University Extension's Community Design Team Program. Another resource for economic development planning is the West Virginia Regional Planning and Development Council, located in Fairmont, which serves the region containing Harrison County.

The following section is intended to assist Salem after they have reviewed the report and have begun to identify some potential strategies.

Program	Description	Contact
Community Design Team Program	This program brings volunteer professionals from a variety of disciplines to your locale to assist community members in beginning a process of laying a course for the future. Teams might include landscape architects, planners, geographers, architects, engineers, historians, and economic development experts. The mix will depend upon the needs of the locality. There is a cost for this program.	Steve McBride and Don Armstrong Jeremy Morris, Program Assistant Landscape Architecture Program wvucdt@mail.wvu.edu (304) 293-2141 Ext. 4399 http://www.wvu.edu/~exten/
West Virginia Regional Planning and Development Council – Region VI	The councils' mission is to assist the region with community and economic development planning and strategies designed to meet community needs. The council seeks funding for programs that will address local and regional goals.	Region VI Planning and Development Council 304-366-5693 Jim Hall jhall@regionvi.com http://www.regionvi.com/what.htm

COMMUNITY AWARENESS TEAM OBSERVATIONS

Woodsfield, Ohio visiting Salem, West Virginia

1. Housing Comments:

The visitation team noticed that many older homes were well maintained, especially in those residential sections away from Route 50. Nearer to the center of town many of the homes needed refurbishing and did leave an image of neglect. The older brick homes and sandstone walls were interesting to the visitors and could become an asset for Salem if they are in a maintained condition.

Can the leaders of Salem implement programs that would aid homeowners and landlords in the improvement to their properties? Also, are there housing codes and nuisance regulations that could be used to encourage individual property owners to do a better job of maintaining their properties? A general clean up and refurbishing of many buildings, both retail and residential, would enhance the overall attractiveness of the community and leave a better impression to visitors and pride for community residents.

2. Comments on Streets and Landscaping:

The visitation team commented that in many locations throughout town the streets, sidewalks and curbs were in need of repair. Also, many locations were weed covered and did not present a good image of Salem.

How can community residents be encouraged to demonstrate pride in their surroundings by better maintaining their properties and landscaping? Is state assistance available to help with the condition of local roadways?

3. Directional and Informational Signage:

The team found that it was confusing to find their way around town because of a lack of street and directional signage. Also, individual public buildings such as the police station, city building, and Salem University were not well marked and therefore not easy to recognize or find.

Some communities have installed uniform informational and directional signs to provide needed information to visitors, to promote certain sites, and to provide a certain "look" for the community. An effective way of

greeting visitors and helping them find their way to the downtown business district and community facilities is to install a community “welcome board” on the entrances to town. Such a board could indicate the direction of Salem University, the historic site, the downtown, schools, and other locations that visitors may be interested in finding. Can Salem enlist the help of a Landscape Planner from West Virginia University to assist them in developing a coordinated signage program and landscaping for the community? This would serve to enhance the community’s already existing efforts to attract tourists.

4. Receptivity of Residents:

The volunteer visitors found that the people they talked to in the City Building and throughout the community were friendly, knowledgeable and helpful. The clerk and other staff at the City Building should be commended for their hospitality, knowledge of the community, and warm reception of the volunteer visitors.

The team was asked to find the Chamber of Commerce and did ask many times for its location but no one was able to help them. It may be that Salem does not have a Chamber. If not, is there some central point, such as a Tourism office or visitors center where information about Salem for those not familiar with the area can be obtained and where the staff is prepared to assist visitors with their questions? Normally when a visitor comes to a community the Chamber and Tourism office are among the places they stop for information. Do local businesspeople and offices know where to send visitors? Also, are these locations open on evenings and weekends that could provide visitors with needed information when public offices are closed? Or perhaps even an informational kiosk could be set up in a central location?

5. Central Business District and Local Economy:

Visitors observed that there seemed to be many closed businesses in the downtown area. At the same time they commented that more hometown shopping was needed. Is there an opportunity for Salem to assist local entrepreneurs or attract new retail businesses to the downtown in order to provide more services for local residents and to help revitalize the downtown? The major local employers seem to be a Rehab Center, a Youth facility and Salem College. Are there needs that these employers and their employees have that might provide market niches for new downtown businesses? Can Salem conduct a retail market analysis to identify the types of businesses that might work in the community?

Salem is unique in that it is home to an international university. Are there opportunities that might be available by partnering with the university on the identification of mutual economic development goals and resources? Does the university have some unique abilities that might help to benefit the overall economic health of the community, and can the community provide a more attractive environment in which the university can flourish?

6. General Observations:

It appeared that Salem desires to attract tourists to their community as was evident through the high quality materials readily available and designed to meet the needs of this type of clientele. The visitors were impressed with the tourism brochures and promotional pieces, especially the placemats and community tabloid, which were available in several locations. Salem hosts a number of festivals and events and is home to a historical site. Tourism can be an effective economic development strategy for small towns like Salem, bringing outside dollars into the local economy. However, in order for tourism to be successful, a community must not only have local events and sites, but must also be a desirable and attractive place to visit. Amenities that are necessary for tourists, such as payphones and clean public restrooms, will need to be provided. In order to capture the full benefits of tourism, Salem will need to take steps to enhance the overall attractiveness of the community through landscaping and weed removal, general cleanup, street improvements, improved informational and directional signage and refurbishing older buildings. The OSUE Community Awareness Team suggests that Salem undertake a community wide planning process to determine overall community goals and vision, and develop a plan of action that will enable Salem to reach these goals.