Where the Old West meets the New West

Maricopa, Arizona

ASU College of Public Programs
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

About this Report

This report describes a strategic tourism development plan created by doctoral students in the School of Community Resources and Development under the guidance of professors at Arizona State University. This international team has strong academic credentials and extensive experience in community tourism planning.

The doctoral students:

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The professors:

Rhonda Phillips	(PhD. Georgia Institute of Technology) – Community and Economic Development
Timothy Tyrrell	(PhD. Cornell University) – Tourism Economics

The title of this report is **"Where the Old West meets the New West"** emphasizing our major recommendation that Maricopa needs to establish its brand as a place where rich history meets modern lifestyles.

This report is the third project conducted at ASU for the City of Maricopa and the Maricopa Chamber of Commerce. The first was "Tourism Resource Assessment" conducted by students in a spring 2010 session of TDM402 (Assessment and Evaluation) under the direction of Dr. Tyrrell and presented to the City Council in May 2010. The second was "Tourism Evaluation" conducted by students in a fall 2010 session of TDM 402 under the direction of Dr. Phillips and presented in December 2010. This third project builds on the findings from the previous projects to recommend three specific tourism development strategies as well as a branding and marketing recommendation for the City.

A Message from the Chamber of Commerce

"The Maricopa Chamber of Commerce is pleased to have participated in this joint venture. As we grow as a City, and are better prepared to accommodate visitors, we realize the importance of tourism to our long range planning and success. In addition to tourism's contribution to the growth of our community, our entire membership stands to benefit individually through the resulting increase in business at every level. We thank you and your students for inviting us to participate.

Bob Gillespie
Board Chairman
Maricopa Chamber of Commerce

A Message from the Mayor

"Tourism and higher education are critical elements to be developed in the City of Maricopa. By partnering with the Chamber of Commerce and ASU, we will accelerate our progress towards identifying the assets that promote Maricopa's proud history and vision for a prosperous future."

Tony Smith
Mayor
City of Maricopa

A Message from ASU Professors

The approach to tourism development taken in this research project can be described as "Tourism for the Community." By focusing on the qualities of the community that make it both a desirable place to live for residents and an attractive destination to visitors Maricopa can become highly competitive with other tourist destinations. This report is intended to stimulate deliberate discussion about the possible future of tourism in Maricopa and its many roles in community development.

We include quotations from tourism community development scholars and key findings from our informational investigations of Maricopa. Our team evaluated many alternative strategies before arriving at three specific strategies and a branding and communication recommendation. We recognize that additional investigation is needed to determine their feasibility. Each suggested strategy includes a "To Do List".

Tim Tyrrell
ASU Professor of Tourism
Director, Megapolitan Tourism Research Center

Rhonda Phillips, PhD
ASU Professor of Community
and Economic Development

A destination's competitive environment constitutes the most salient elements that define its immediate arena of competition. Apart from the destination itself, it includes members of the travel trade (i.e., tour packagers, suppliers, retail travel agents, specialty channelers, and facilitators), tourism markets, competitive destinations, and a destination's publics or stakeholders (including residents of the destination, employees of the tourism and hospitality industry, citizen-action groups, the media, financial, and investment institutions, relevant government departments, and immediate neighborhoods).

Crouch and Ritchie, 1999, p146

Project Organization and Protocol

This project was conducted in three stages as shown in the figure.

(1) The project team conducted an assessment of tourism development resources based on reviews of published and unpublished materials, site visits, and on-site interviews. Results were summarized as a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). This stage identified a list of potential tourism development strategies by comparing the SWOT results with three data sources: a tourism resource inventory, existing Maricopa plans and reports, and survey results of local perceptions about tourism development.

(2) The study team narrowed the list of potential strategies to three: redevelopment of the downtown cultural district, development of culturally relevant festivals and special events, and development of an agritourism sector. The actions needed to develop these strategies were translated into a "To Do List" for each.

(3) The project explored and recommended a branding process for Maricopa and the effective use of online technologies to communicate with prospective visitors.

The results of this project are presented in three parts: Background, Three Strategies and Branding and Online Communications.

Figure 1. Project Protocol
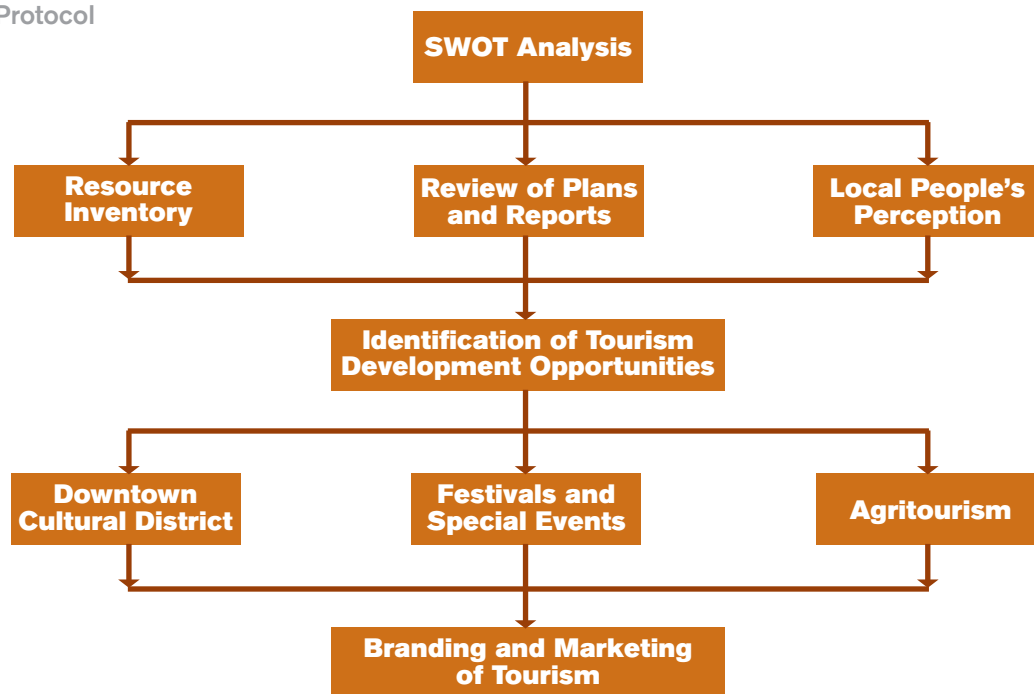
"Given the complex nature of cities, it is argued that the promotion of urban tourist destinations requires a citywide integrated management approach based on governance principles and strategic vision of competitiveness. … [P]romotion of tourist cities should be redefined to creating a city appeal that is aspiring to all stakeholders—tourists, businesses, and citizens." Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007

Background
Tourism Resources Inventory

An inventory of retail and service businesses in Maricopa revealed that while there are places to dine and drink, activities to participate in, and places to visit in the city, the spectrum of choice is comparatively narrow (SCRD, 2011, Appendix II.) The absence of theaters and multi-use shopping centers in particular has resulted in the economic leakage of residential and visitor spending to other communities. The lack of leisure, recreation and retail facilities and services not only affects the attractiveness to tourists but also the quality of life for local residents. Tourism accommodations and transportation are lacking in the downtown area. Although a fully accredited tourism information center has been operating for several years, it is not open during weekends and holidays.
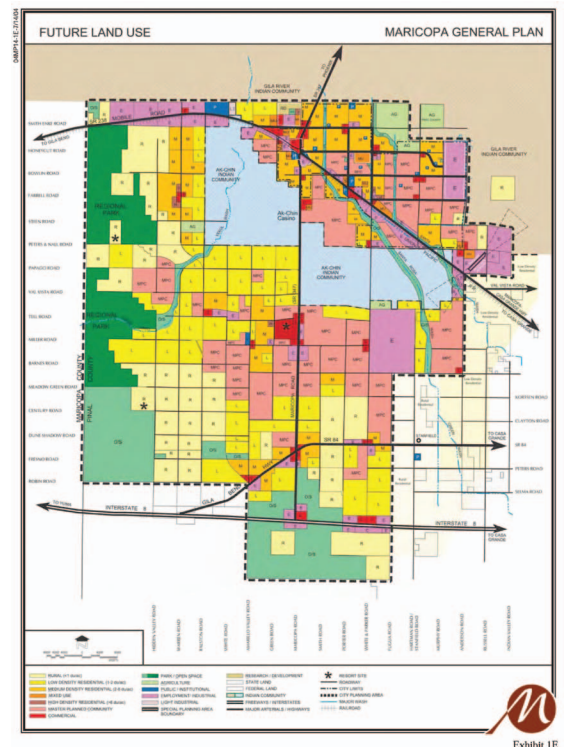
Review of Maricopa Plans and Reports

The Maricopa General Plan (2006), City of Maricopa Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan (2008), City of Maricopa Redevelopment District Area Plan (2009), City of Maricopa 2010-2013 Strategic Plan, and Capital Improvement Plan (2011) are among the plans which specifically suggest implementation of various activities helpful to tourism development in the City.

For example, accepting tourism as a driver of economic development and a potential service sector contributor, the Maricopa General Plan recommends revitalization of the downtown cultural area, development of a city parks and trails system, and construction of additional north-south and east-west regional connections, highway railroad crossing, and improvement of arterial streets.

The City of Maricopa Parks Trails and Open Space Master Plan suggests development of a balanced system of conveniently located parks, interconnected paths and trails system, open spaces and multipurpose recreational facilities.

The City of Maricopa Airport Feasibility Study (2008) provides detailed information regarding establishment of airport in the area. At least eight transportation studies have been conducted since 2005 address travel from outside and within Maricopa (SCRD, 2011, p.5). Other studies have recommended travel-related municipal investments, labor supply development and industrial clustering. A variety of city codes, ordinances and development fees also impact tourism development opportunities.

Future Land Use Map - Airport Feasiblity and Site Selection Study
http://www.maricopa-az.gov/vns/index.php/government/economic-development/reports-a-publications/other-documents

> "The tourism industry is driven by private sector enterprise, principally for profit maximization" Community planning on the other hand "is a public sector activity undertaken for the good of the community of general public. Town planners have generally not been exposed or achieved any significant understanding of the market dynamics which drive the tourism industry and as a result have often found it easier to ignore tourism or deal with it in a peripheral way."
>
> Dredge & Moore, 1992

Perceptions about Tourism Development

An online survey was conducted of Maricopa residents to understand local perceptions about tourism development. The survey was conducted in fall 2010, and 81 completed questionnaires were obtained (SCRD, 2010b.) The results showed that residents favor promotion of both overnight visits and day-trips to Maricopa. Eighty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed with increasing overnight visits and 88% agreed or strongly agreed with increasing day-trips. In addition, the residents indicated strong support for the construction of a specialty retail and entertainment complex including a movie theater (89%) and special events focused on family entertainment (64%). See SCRD (2011, Appendix III)

A SWOT Analysis

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis for Maricopa tourism was conducted by the research team after studying city related materials, previous reports and studies and making several visits to the City and the region. The team listed 157 items classified as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats to tourism development. (SCRD, 2011, Appendix I). The eight sets of initial scores were revised using a Delphi approach and final scores were standardized. The top five in each category are shown.

Strengths

Recreational facilities

Community events and festivals

Potential attractions

Local awareness of tourism

A "melting pot" for old and new cultures

Weaknesses

Lack of a Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Lack of a Maricopa brand

Lack of a tourism development strategy

Lack of hotel rooms and other tourist attractions

Lack of hospitality services

Opportunities

Heritage corridor, historic train station and water tower

Partnerships with neighbors

Partnerships with the Casino golf courses and museums

Unmet residential demands

Interests in new cultural events and festivals

Threats

Economic leakages

Lack of funding and venture capital

Lack of collaboration with Native American communities

Weak U.S and Arizona economy

The Casino has branded Maricopa

> **Economic development is the sustained, progressive attempt to attain individual and group interests through expanded, intensified, and adjusted use of resources. Important elements in development include: (1) setting of goals, (2) identification of individuals and groups and their interrelationships, (3) understanding of the present and future effects of decisions made now, and in the future.**

Shaffer (1989, p.7)

II. Three Tourism Development Strategies

Based on the tourism resource inventory data, a review of Maricopa plans and reports, local perceptions and a SWOT analysis, the research team recommends three tourism development strategies - 1. Downtown Cultural District Revitalization, 2. Festivals and Special Events and 3. Agritourism.

1. Downtown Cultural District (DCD) Revitalization

Key Findings

Maricopa has a rich history as a transportation hub and agricultural center, but the majority of historic buildings, farming areas, neighborhoods, and other historical elements were demolished at various points in the development of the city.

Maricopa experienced significant growth in the last decade, which has resulted in a community with well-planned neighborhood subdivisions but no clearly defined "town center" and few opportunities for community leisure and entertainment. According to the Tourism Resource Assessment for Maricopa, Arizona (SCRD, 2010a, p.5) 'Residents are underserved and could support eating, drinking and entertainment businesses.' This was echoed in the City of Maricopa Strategic Plan (2010, p.2) where it was stated that 'Maricopa is still a very young community with significant infrastructure needs, an inadequate economic base, and transportation/circulation challenges.'

Residents feel that the greatest strengths of the Maricopa area are:
- A small town feel, and frendliness of residents
- An opportunity to make choices that could have a positive impact on the future
- Location
- A great history with the railroad and agricultural heritage

The issues hindering development of the DCD area include:
- Lack of existing historic structures and historic ordinances to protect existing buildings
- Code violations in older neighborhoods
- Temporary structures for government buildings
- Few pedestrian or bike friendly areas
- No signage to identify areas
- No unifying theme for the area

"Infrastructure development is a vital component in encouraging a country's economic growth. Developing infrastructure enhances a country's productivity, consequently making firms more competitive and boosting a region's economy. Not only does infrastructure in itself enhance the efficiency of production, transportation, and communication, but it also helps provide economic incentives to public and private sector participants. The accessibility and quality of infrastructure in a region help shape domestic firms' investment decisions and determines the region's attractiveness to foreign investors." Alexeenko & Graefe 2008

1. Downtown Cultural District (DCD) Revitalization

Key Findings - Cont.

Given its resources and community interests, it is most feasible to begin redevelopment of the City in its historic heart. Development of the downtown would capitalize on the history of the area, the Amtrak Station, the small town atmosphere, access to State Route 347 and abundant open land for development. In addition, revitalization of a Downtown Cultural District would take advantage of the proposals for development of a city park, renovation of historic train station, and remodeling of the water tower to visually identify the City. Centering redevelopment efforts on the Downtown Cultural District (DCD), Maricopa will bring in businesses and visitors, meeting needs of residents, and preserve the small town feel while developing an economic base for the long term.

Tourism Development 'To Do' List

- Create a committee of stakeholders to oversee DCD renewal
- Per the Redevelopment Plan continue to analyze zoning in the DCD to ensure there are no issues to prevent development
- Per the Redevelopment Plan proceed with adoption of the comprehensive renewal plan for DCD
- Share plans with residents and local business owners in many venues (town meetings, social media, newspapers, flyers, neighborhood association newsletters)
- Beautify the DCD area (e.g., host a neighborhood cleanup day, improve sidewalks and street lighting, plant native plants and trees next sidewalks, water tower, Zephyr train, and Amtrak Station.)
- Build and strengthen relationships with surrounding communities and tourism resources (Farms, Sail Port, bed and breakfasts and other businesses)
- Collaborate with the Ak-Chin community (promote the DCD at the Ak-Chin Casino and establish regular shuttles from Casino to DCD)
- Build a permanent structure in the DCD for a Tourism Office, separate Chamber of Commerce office and Amtrak Station office.
- Develop the Water Tower as a town center/park/special events venue in the DCD

maricopa - water tower

LOCATION: Just south of the 347 and 236 intersection
Photo by: Jose Albanil

II. Three Tourism Development Strategies - Cont.

2. Festivals and Special Events

Key Findings

Despite its rich history, Maricopa does not promote a coherent theme. The theme could be built around Native America, Agriculture, the American Old West and the American New West. Events and festivals can be effective ways to promote such a theme by preserving and revitalizing local culture, attracting visitors and building social capital in the community.

Special events enhance the quality of life and connect diverse residents in the transitioning communities like Maricopa. They are recognized as part of an existing social and cultural system as described in the opening pages of the tourism resource assessment for Maricopa, Arizona (SCRD, 2010a) and have the potential to be immediately utilized as a tool for both community and tourism development.

Special events include cultural celebrations such as commemorations, carnivals, festivals, religious events, parades, arts, and entertainment, but might also include business & trade fairs, as well as sporting, educational, recreational, political, or private events. Some of these exist in Maricopa today (e.g., Fishing Derby, Stagecoach Days, Easter Eggstavaganza, The Living Nativity, Great American BBQ, Holiday Homes on Parade, Movies in the Park, Mysterious Mansion Mayhem and the Salsa Festival).

Maricopa has a heritage district with a historical water tower that can identity the DCD. A special event that centers on Maricopa's heritage and features the renovation of its water tower and surrounding grounds would provide a unique attraction for visitors while creating a point of pride for residents.

As suggested in the City of Maricopa Redevelopment Area Plan, a renovated heritage corridor and water tower would create a place for special events. For example, a one-time event focused on the creative painting of the water tower and landscaping of the area might animate Maricopa as a place with special meaning. Using water towers as a unique attraction is not an original idea, but rather a well-known, tested, and successful strategy employed throughout the country (Artistic Water Towers: Where and Why, 1999). While the event itself might generate limited original economic impact, it could serve as an incubator of future economic development. Being on both the route to the casino and the AMTRAK rail line the water tower would create instant visual identity for the City. The surrounding DCD area would be a place for future community and tourism focused special events.

Just as the Rotary Club brought the community together five decades ago with special events to create a park, a unified group of today's residents could provide the volunteer inertia behind coordinating such a special event.

> **" The members of a community must value the potential of their heritage as a tourist product, in order to widen their offer; in order to do this, it is fundamental for the local population itself to establish a "relationship of consumption" with its heritage; in other words, heritage must be positioned strategically in the symbolic construction of community. "**
>
> Ballesteros Esteban R., Ramirez Macarena H., 2007, pg. 686

Tourism Development 'To Do' List

- Appoint an individual or small group to champion event projects

- Create an event organization involving all stakeholders of Maricopa

- Hire a professional event planner

- Conduct a financial feasibility study that examines possible costs and potential resources, including volunteer labor and in-kind donations

- If deemed feasible, complete a detailed program plan that includes financial, marketing, and activity plans, task assignments and timelines.

- Evaluate successes and failures after the initial event.

- Adopt a follow-up marketing and event development plan to capitalize on the successes.

Stagecoach Days 2010 - Photos by Howard Waggner

II. Three Tourism Development Strategies - Cont.

3. Agritourism

Key Findings

The City of Maricopa is historically linked to its agricultural resources. Farming activities can provide a wide range of activities and services to compliment the City's tourism industry including accommodations, entertainment, education and outdoor recreation. In return tourism development can provide new markets for agricultural products, greater brand recognition for its farms and a new source of income for the City.

A Maricopa farm inventory found seven local farms located within a reasonable day-trip distance to Arizona urban population centers. Shamrock Farm, Alpacazona, Hickman's Egg Ranch, Gila River farms, Sawyer Cattle, Smith Farms and the Ak-Chin Farm. Distance from the point of production to market is a key factor that can contribute to success of agritourism enterprises (Slater and Narver, 1994.) The populations of Phoenix and Tempe as of 2010 were 1,445,632 and 161,719 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011) respectively, representing large potential markets for Maricopa. Agritourism research indicates that urban and suburban residents are more likely to visit a farm than rural residents (University of Kentucky, 2004.) In addition to the farms located in Maricopa is the University of Arizona, Maricopa Agriculture Center, an important agricultural research facility collaborating with Maricopa farms. The Center could be a agritourism attraction because of its integrated agricultural technologies.

Each Maricopa farm has a unique production focus which could be exploited in a complementary way for tourism development. Shamrock Farms for example, can expand its dairy farm tours to educate visitors about the milk process from cows to processing, packaging and transportation to the market. Hickman's Egg Ranch may expand egg related activities to educate visitors about stocking, feeding, egg collection, handling, cleaning, weighing, and packaging. Ak-Chin Farm can offer crop-based visitor activities, while Sawyer Cattle Co. and Smith Farms can base tourist attractions on cattle raising activities.

Together the farms, agricultural services and other organizations (such as the University of Arizona Agricultural Research Center) in Maricopa can develop an agritourism sector of the City's tourism industry.

> " Recreation and tourism are social businesses. Farm/ranch recreation providers must have an understanding of why people recreate, particularly if they want to stay in business in such a specialized market. Providers must also have good interpersonal skills to make agritourism businesses successful. "
>
> Nickerson et al, 2001, p.25

Tourism Development 'To Do' List

- Establish farm level goals for Agritourism that exploit comparative advantages of production facilities and locations.

- Conduct an Agritourism Market Analysis to identify product and service demands – this might require services of a consulting firm or help from a small business development center.

- Establish a Maricopa Agritourism Association to provide leadership for the industry and opportunities for collaboration and services to its members such as joint procurement, marketing, financing and processing.

- Develop front line customer services for interacting with visitors – this can be a very challenging issue for traditional farm owners, managers and workers.

- Develop detailed farm level business plans for directly reaching target visitor markets and supplying products to regional hospitality businesses.

III.   Branding and Online Communications

The process of destination branding involves a series of deliberate actions by a wide range of stakeholders who share a common tourism vision. Once a city-wide brand is established a key activity for tourism development in Maricopa will be the effective use of web-based communications and social media.

"Destination branding is the set of marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; that (2) consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk. Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice." (Blain et al, 2005, p.337)

"The benefits of branding a destination include: assurance of quality, limiting the ability of customers to make price comparisons, social visibility, and product prestige. The image associated with the brand can be a central factor in a consumer's travel decision and selection of a destination (Balakrishnan, 2009).
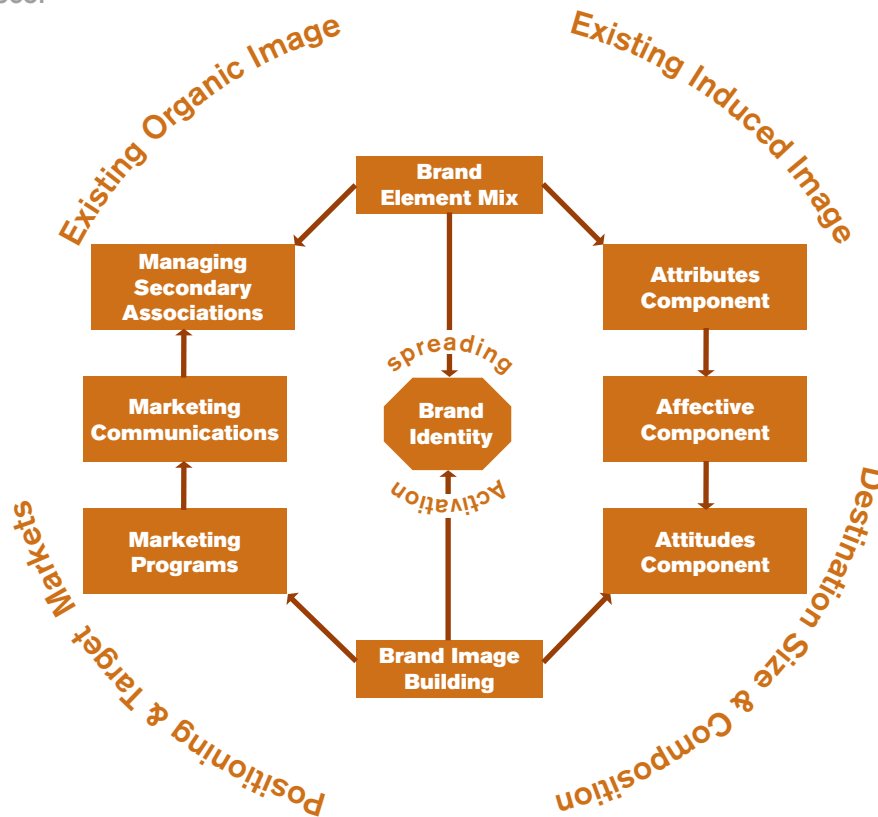
Developing a Maricopa Brand

The process of destination branding has been described by Cai (2002, p.725) as one that "goes beyond the tourist-oriented approach to encompass what image a destination marketing organization (DMO) wants to project." Figure 2 illustrates this process as the effort to build a destination's identity through spreading activation under four conditions of existing organic image, existing induced image, destination size and composition, and positioning and target markets. The brand image itself is determined by attributes, affectation, and attitudes of visitors (on the right) which are dynamically linked to marketing programs, marketing communications, and managing secondary associations (on the left). Cai's model emphasizes the importance of visitor perceptions and the potential gap between these and the DMO's vision for the destination.

Cai has tested his model in the branding process employed by the tourism development organization in Southwest New Mexico. "Taking advantage of its geographic proximity and similarity in the rich history of Cowboys and Indians and multicultural heritage, the organization has used its own name to project a common image." (p.728) The result was that the DMO adopted the name "Old West Country."

> " Branding "City branding provides the basis for developing policy to pursue economic development and, at the same time, it serves as a conduit for city residents to identify. "
>
> Nickerson et al, 2001, p.25

Figure 2. Project Protocol

Maricopa currently lacks a coherent city-wide tourism brand and should adopt a process like the comprehensive seven step process used in New Mexico beginning with visioning the future for Maricopa and ending with developing a consistent visitor feedback and monitoring system. Our research team has proposed the tag line for Maricopa "Where Old West meets New West" to signify the changes that Maricopa has undergone while remaining true to its Old West roots.

Tourism Development 'To Do' List

- (1) Vision the future of Maricopa while recognizing limitations
- (2) Develop a strategy that balances benefits and costs to all stakeholders while delivering best practice products and services.
- (3) Target customers and potential customers for Maricopa tourism.
- (4) Assess and develop a product portfolio to match customer demands.
- (5) Developing a branding strategy that positions and differentiates Maricopa as a unique destination for visitors.
- (6) Develop a communication strategy with special attention to online media.
- (7) Develop a consistent feedback mechanism for customers, continuously monitoring and revising response management strategies.

(adapted from Balakarishnan, 2007)

III. Branding and Online Communications - Cont.

Communicating a Maricopa Brand Online

A successful brand is "an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added value which match their needs" (Caldwell & Freire, 2004). The communication of this brand to travelers can be conveyed in both online and offline platforms. Once a Maricopa city-wide tourism brand is adopted, it should be incorporated into each tourism development strategy. For example, the redevelopment of the cultural/downtown district, special events and agritourism could each showcase the "Old West meeting the New West."

A January 2011 survey by Destination Analysts, Inc. (2011) revealed that 44% of leisure travelers used user-generated reviews or blogs to plan travel. This compares to 40% who used print resources (magazines, guidebooks and brochures), 35% who used opinions of friends and families, 34% who used DMO websites and 26% who used social media (friends, fans of a destination and interactive photo sharing). It is clear that web-based information will be critical to tourism development in Maricopa.

The City of Maricopa currently has a government and Chamber of Commerce website, a Facebook page and Twitter profile. By using these more effectively Maricopa can reach out and connect with future tourist, customers and current residents (Goldenberg, Han, Lehmann, & Hong, 2009).

All marketing material (banners, flyers, postcards) should provide links to online profiles (Maricopa website, Facebook, Twitter). In addition all websites, web pages, messages and profiles should use the approved color schemes, images and logos of the adopted city-wide tourism brand to give customers a consistent and secure feel when they are searching for information

Websites | 'To Do' List

- Ensure that all calendars on all websites are up to date with accurate information.
- Keep use of Flash content to a minimum or avoided entirely to ensure smartphone and tablet users can access the site.
- Create a separate page on the City of Maricopa's website for the downtown cultural district, festivals and special events, and agritourism. The DCD page should have retailer information, a map of the area, tourist information, history on the City of Maricopa, and events in the district. The event page should have a complete list of events that are upcoming in the next six months with a link to each specific event page. The agritourism page should have information on attractions, show times, tour times, retailer's information, animals and a map.

"Prior to the Web, organizations had only two significant choices to attract attention: Buy expensive advertising or get third-party ink from the media. But the Web has changed the rules. The Web is not TV. Organizations that understand the New Rules of Marketing and PR develop relationships directly with consumers like you and me." Scott, 2010, p.5

Social Media | 'To Do' List

- Ensure that all logos and colors are consistent with the associated website pages.

- Limit Facebook pages to one for the City of Maricopa and one for the Chamber of Commerce.

- Ensure that Facebook profiles, Twitter messages and other uses of social media conform to terms of use agreements.

- Designate a singular person per organization to be responsible for all Facebook and twitter updates. This person's face should be used in the Twitter profile when applicable.

- Use the City of Maricopa's Facebook page to create iframe tabs specific to the DCD, special events and agritourism. (The iframe tab is a 2011 option in Facebook that allows apps to be written and integrated with social plugins.) These tabs need to be linked to the City of Maricopa website.

- The DCD tab should include a list of attractions, map, retailers and events going on in the area.

- The special events tabs, should be added at least three months prior to the event date. All information regarding the event details (price, hours, location, website, etc.), volunteering for the event and contact information for the organization running the event should be posted.

- The agritourism tab should include information on what agritourism is, what it includes and how Maricopa plays a role. Information on attractions such as bed and breakfasts, barns, barn dances, concerts, historical re-creation, horse-farm tours, and scenic tours should be included.

- The responsible person should regularly monitor what people are saying about Maricopa and respond to tweets with appropriate information. They should follow users on Twitter who live in Maricopa and encourage use of one specific Twitter hashtag #Maricopa.

- Separate hashtags should be used for the cultural district, and each different event should use the general City of Maricopa hashtag for agritourism.

Maricopa Tourism Website
www.maricopachamber.com/tourism
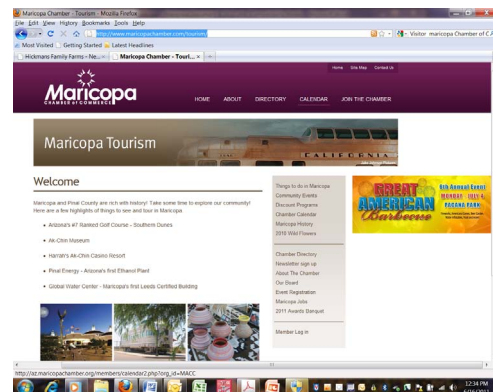
IV. Conclusions

A successful community is created by citizens coming and working together toward mutual goals, building social capital for themselves and their organizations. The SWOT analysis conducted as part of this project identified numerous weaknesses, many of which have to do with infrastructure and social cohesion of the community. In addition, the SWOT analysis identified many strengths associated with the history and culture of the community. We have concluded that Maricopa needs to redevelop its downtown cultural district, increase its production of special events and festivals, and develop agritourism to make it a unique and interesting place to visit.

The Downtown Cultural District should be revitalized as a multi-use town complex, which integrates the subsystems of business, recreation, leisure, retail, entertainment, transportation, and builds reliable and reciprocal relationships among these subsystems. The development should distinguish Maricopa from other homogenous competitors by conveying the positive small town image and welcoming personality of the city. By creating a lively and attractive Downtown Cultural District where residents and tourists are welcomed, Maricopa can compete successfully as a tourist destination.

Special events are important elements in the toolbox of community development, providing a tested and proven method to build a community's social capacity. Maricopa needs increased investments in planned special events that create a tourism attraction as well as a point of community pride. It is suggested that by first engaging in a tourism-focused special event project to bring the residents of Maricopa together as a stronger community that more significant economic impacts will follow.

Given Maricopa's unique location and agricultural assets, agritourism can serve as an especially potent instrument to develop tourism and diversify local farming activities. Drawing on the larger potential market surrounding Maricopa, agritourism venues and enterprises may serve to foster the area as a destination for agritourism.

An especially important component of tourism development is the adoption and cultivation of a local brand by which visitors and residents can identify the uniqueness of Maricopa. This brand and its associated logo, images and color themes should be incorporated in all its marketing programs.

On-line media is an effective way to keep residents and tourists knowledgeable about Maricopa. Social media is a particularly important and inexpensive way to provide information and get feedback from customers and residents. Beyond the development of an attractive and useful City website, Facebook and Twitter are the easiest and most popular ways to reach a large number of people with minimal effort.

The research team found Maricopa to have a considerable number of strengths and opportunities by which to overcome its weaknesses and develop a uniquely competitive tourism destination for local residents to be proud of.

> **Each society is faced with the decision of how best to provide for the well-being and quality of life of its citizens. The choices involved span complex economic, sociocultural, political, and environmental considerations. In particular, the economic base that a society chooses for itself has wide ranging ramifications. Increasingly, cities, states, and nations are turning to tourism as an important element in their economic portfolio as they recognize the potentially significant economic rewards at stake. Much of tourism development entails community development. If handled appropriately, tourism can become an important engine for achieving broader social goals.**
>
> **Crouch and Richie, 1999, p. 137**

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