



# Assessment Findings and Suggestions Report

Ely, Nevada  
November, 2017

## NEXT STEPS

The findings and suggestions in this report will provide many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue and becomes a springboard for the community in enhancing the tourism industry and other economic development efforts, leading to greater prosperity, rejuvenation, and enjoyment by all the citizens.

This report offers a first step in reaching that goal. To fully realize the benefits of this assessment, the community should take these findings and suggestions, discuss them and evaluate them, and develop a plan for implementation.

A detailed branding plan could help to build on the results of this assessment, adding in-depth research, evaluation, and local input to develop a unique brand and implementation program. The assessment process essentially provides a look at where you are today. RBI's BrandCamp program could help build your branding plan from the ground up – with local input, brainstorming, research, and creative planning. We could work with you to guide you through the process, helping create a plan that has local champions and community buy-in.

The next step in the planning process would be to provide public outreach and review past and current planning efforts. This would determine your goals as a region.

The third step would involve research, feasibility and market analysis, and determining your brand - what you are or hope to be known for.

Then comes the “development” portion of the plan or the “how to get there” program: determining what product development initiatives need to be undertaken to reinforce and grow the brand. This also includes defining the roles of the various local organizations. Brand-building should be a community-wide effort – everyone pulling in the same direction, each with their own “to do list.”

Finally, there's the detailed marketing plan: how and when you will tell the world who you are and what makes you special – the place to live, work and play.

The branding plan should be an “action plan” as opposed to a “strategic plan.” You want a to do list, by organization, not just general strategies, goals and objectives.

The recommendations should provide all the necessary steps for your town to be successful in attaining its goals of a more diverse economy with an enhanced tourism industry and to become more attractive and enjoyable for both visitors and citizens.

A good plan will provide a program to get local residents and the business community pulling together, building the town's unique image in the minds of visitors and residents alike. The result of your efforts will be a prosperous, enjoyable environment in which to live, work, and visit.





## Findings & Suggestions



Ely, Nevada  
Assessment Findings & Suggestions



The assessment process:

- **Marketing effectiveness**
  - Visibility (finding information)
  - Effectiveness: ability to close the sale
  - Competitive analysis
  - Convenience
- **On-site assessment**
  - Signage, gateways, wayfinding
  - Overall appeal
  - Critical mass
  - Amenities: parking, restrooms, information
  - Attractions: things to see and do
  - Customer service, cross selling



1. Why tourism is important
2. First impressions
3. Suggestions for local businesses
4. Promoting your "anchor tenants"
5. Creation of detailed itineraries
6. Re-activation of downtown
7. Monetizing tourism (even more)



Why tourism is important  
and a key component of Ely's future

Our assessment process included reviewing Ely's marketing materials, plus looking at your online presence, reviews on TripAdvisor and other information sites, as well as performing the "secret-shopping" on-site assessment. We looked at signage and wayfinding (how easy was it to find your attractions and amenities?), appeal, critical mass (were there places in the city to spend money?), your attractions, amenities, customer service, and more. We have a list of 60 key elements we review.

We looked at Ely as: 1) a place to live and raise a family, 2) a place to work, invest in, or bring a business, and 3) a place to visit.

Before we arrived, we requested information. We reviewed how easy it was to find information about Ely (visibility), was that information good enough to close the sale (effectiveness), how do you compare to other nearby destinations and was it easy to get information about Ely.

After spending our time in Ely, there are seven primary issues we're going to address (bottom left): Why tourism is important; first impressions of Ely; suggestions for local businesses; promoting your "anchor tenants;" creation of detailed itineraries; re-activation of downtown (we saw that there are about 41 vacant buildings); and how to monetize tourism even more.

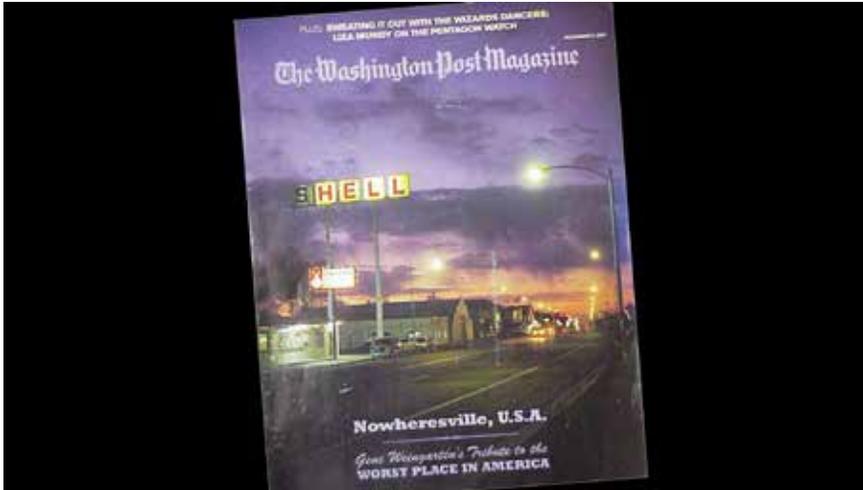


Why tourism is important and is a key component of Ely's future:

- Tourism is a means to an end. It is about jobs and economic vitality.
- Tourism is the purest form of economic development. People come, spend money, and go home.
- Tourism is the easiest way to combat "leakage:" when locals spend their money elsewhere.
- The #1 activity of visitors is shopping, dining, and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly, intimate setting. Your downtown. That is why tourism and downtowns need to work together.

- This is where 80% of all non-lodging tourism spending takes place. That's why Disney created Downtown Disney (top right) – to get that 80%.
- Tourism is the front door to your non-tourism economic development.
- For the first time, quality of life is leading economic development.

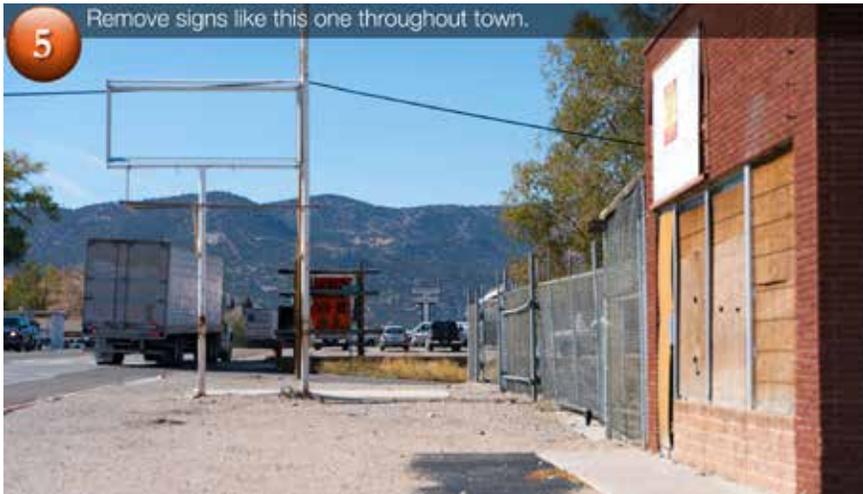
First impressions are lasting impressions, so you always want them to be as good as possible. Your gateways and entries into town are critically important, but some places on the way into Ely are very unattractive (bottom right). Suggestion: Consider an abatement program to take down unused, run down buildings.



Ely would be better off with empty lots than old, dilapidated buildings that are not in use at the entrance to town. Work with property owners to see if grants could be offered to help take the unusable buildings down and clear abandoned cars (top left). Even adding street trees or fencing to these lots would give a better first impression.

When we first started doing assessments in Nevada, the Washington Post did a cover story about the worst places in America (bottom left). They called Battle Mountain the worst place, 'Nowheresville,' USA (bottom right). Instead of getting mad, the town cleaned up their streets and became a model for outback Nevada. They worked with a scrap metal company who agreed to remove 40 tons of scrap metal from the town for free.





Suggestion: Have an abatement program that would require property owners to take down structures like this empty sign post and frame (top left) if it remains empty after 120 days. Otherwise, this type of disuse sends the message that you are not a thriving community, which is untrue.

You have some great buildings in Ely. Not all empty buildings need to be taken down.

Suggestion: Consider converting buildings like this (top right) using a program similar to the ArtSpace program in Minneapolis, that takes unused buildings like this one and turns them into art/work spaces (bottom left). They make the bottom floor into spaces for students/artists to learn, work, and display, and the upper floor into living space for the students/artists.

Even the plain white wall of this building (bottom right) would be a perfect spot for a trompe l'oeil mural. Trompe l'oeil murals are architectural or scenic murals that “fool the eye” – appearing three-dimensional.



This page has several examples of trompe l'oeil. The top two images show walls before before and after. The scenes are so realistic. Trompe l'oeil is a beautiful solution for a stark blank wall. One example is of a mural in progress (all – top left). First, the blank brick wall (small upper left), then in progress (small lower left), finally, the stunning finish.

Another example of trompe l'oeil is shown top right – before and after. The scene is so realistic – even the people standing and looking at the scene are painted. It's a beautiful solution to the stark blank wall in the “before” photo.

The windows and the railing on this wall in Virginia City (lower left) are part of the painting, as is the detailing just below the roof line and the lower windows. With so much of the town's architecture being “Old West Mining Town,” this building's blank concrete wall was very out of place, and the trompe l'oeil is perfect to help it blend in.

This wall in Winslow, Arizona (bottom right) is not even attached to a building anymore, but the ‘windows’ are so realistic that people drive miles out of their way to see and photograph this example of trompe l'oeil. It illustrates one of the Eagles' songs.



Here is another candidate for trompe l'oeil (top left). Suggestion: Clean up the debris around this building, take out the sign, and have it painted. Then it would become an attraction, rather than an eyesore.

Consider a facade easement program to provide grant funding for painting buildings like this (top right). You could have windows painted along the top section and add some color to the otherwise drab facade.

This example in Alberta, Canada (bottom left) shows how adding paintings to the outside of a building that has no actual windows adds interest and color.

We would love to see you enlist a volunteer clean up crew once a month to pick up garbage, spray weeds, and paint poles. This would be a low cost way to make your streets look better (lower right).



11 Some paint? Pull weeds. Pick up trash. Love the bright color!



12 A great place for a pretty pocket park - at your main intersection.



This shop (top left) just needs some maintenance to improve its storefront, including fixing the peeling paint, picking up garbage and taking out the weeds. You don't want first time visitors to have the impression that you don't care. First impressions are very important.

This location would be ideal for a pocket park (top right). The park could be created as an Eagle Scout project or a Kiwanas project. Even if the lot is privately owned, you may be able to get permission to just make it look nice until it needs to be used otherwise. Simply adding flowers and benches like in this example (lower left) would be an improvement.



12 A mix of alpine firs, junipers, perhaps a small paver area with a couple of benches.

This building (lower right), Anytime Fitness, was the best looking building we found in all of Ely! Just planting trees and shrubs in some of your other locations would make them more appealing and improve their ability to create a positive first impression.



We also had some suggestions for some of the local businesses in operation, that are meant to be helpful and could be applied to everyone. We are not singling these out, just using them as examples.

We came across this building (top left) and could not tell from the outside that it was a restaurant. It would benefit from some curb appeal. Suggestions: Add a sign to the street-front side, paint the awning and put some barrels with flowers around the outside. Without getting out of our car and looking in the windows, we were not able to tell that it was a restaurant. How many visitors just drive by because they don't know?

It could even benefit from a fenced area on the outside with tables and chairs for outdoor dining like this eatery (top right) in Door County, Wisconsin. Umbrellas would add some color, even when they are closed due to windy conditions.

This pizza place in Wisconsin (bottom left) originally had parking along the front. The owner took that out, added tables and chairs, added landscaped barrels along the front as well as artificial turf, and his sales increased by 300%.

This little place (bottom right) was closed the whole week we were there. They should post their open hours, so that visitors will know when to stop by.



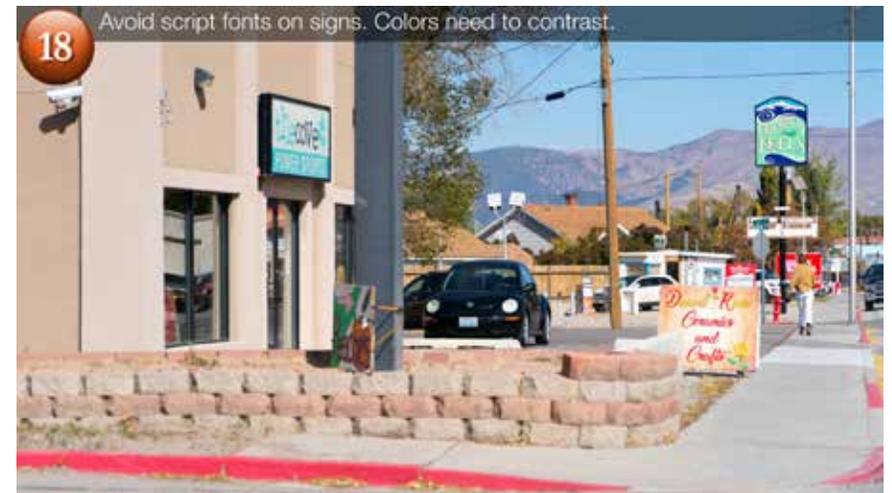
Looks like a fantastic shop. Paint over or remove the flooring sign.



Is this store ever open? Signs like this don't help. Tell us WHEN you'll be open.



Cover the large sign. Take down the building sign.



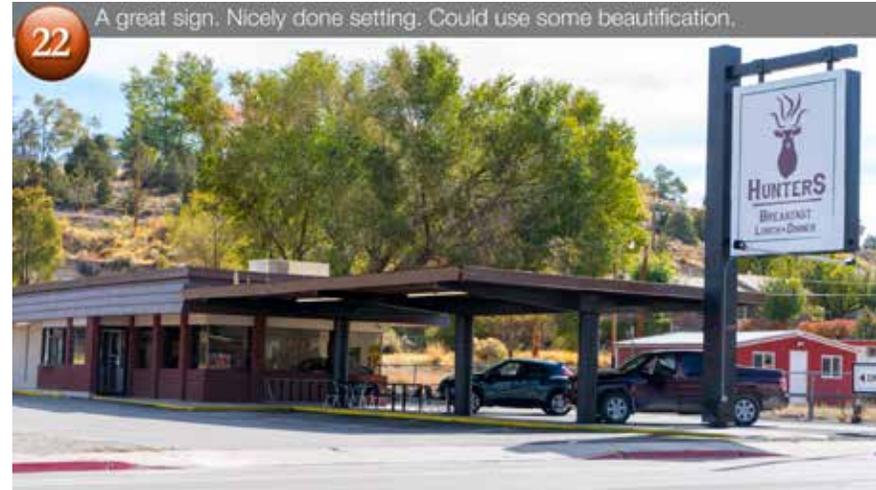
Avoid script fonts on signs. Colors need to contrast.

We could not find a single tourism-oriented retail shop open during the time we were in Ely. The peak months for boomer travel is April, May, September and October. This demographic does most of the spending, therefore you need to be open during those months.

This store (top left) had some really cool 'Wizard of Ahhs' window displays. It appeared that it used to be a flooring store but was now actually selling something else, we just weren't sure. And, it had an open sign in the window but was not open all week. Locals say they don't bother with it because it's never open. Stores need to be open consistent hours and days.

The sign in this store (top right) had a place to note when it would be open, but that space was blank. These signs are not helpful.

This used to be a powersports store (bottom left) but is now something else. Suggestion: Take down the sign on the front of the building and the large sign out front so that visitors can tell what is being sold here. And, stay away from using script fonts on signage, as they are too hard to read by passersby (bottom right). This sandwich board sign is also hard to read because it is obscured by the retaining wall. It could be set on top of a picnic bench to make it higher and more visible.



The sign at the Rustin Inn (top left) notes that they have free wifi. It would be better if they noted something that would make people want to stop and stay, like 'comfortable beds' or 'themed rooms'. And, many of the reader boards in Ely had signs that were missing letters, and they looked like they were totally ignored. That gives the appearance that the merchants just don't care.

We did go into the Sportsworld (top right). Here you can see that they had one bench along the side of the store, however with such a long expanse of wall, the bench gets lost. For beautification, add flower pots and benches all along the wall every 3 to 6 feet apart here.

Adding some beautification in Ely with color and plants would make it more inviting. This example (bottom left) is in Vernal, Utah. Consider creating a business co-op for purchasing pots and plants for downtown. As it is now, everything is stark and brown or grey.

Hunters restaurant (bottom right) does a great job. Their store front is clean and well kept, but it would be even better if they would add some hanging flower baskets and a little beautification.