

RED CLOUD HERITAGE TOURISM THREE-YEAR DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

Background and Introduction

This document provides a proposed three-year heritage tourism Action Plan for the community of Red Cloud, Nebraska.

Questions and Additional Information

Don Macke – Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
402.323.7336 – don@e2mail.org – www.energizingentrepreneurs.org

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Budget Assumption

Our three-year heritage tourism development Action Plan is aggressive. This action plan is based on an assumed annual budget of \$150,000 per year over the three-year period or 2014 through 2016.

Other Resources...

We recommend this Action Plan be used in conjunction with the following documents:

- [Recommendation Report, Red Cloud Heritage Tourism Project.](#) November 2013.
- [Heritage Tourism Potential for Red Cloud, An Illustration.](#) January 2014.
- [Job Description for a Heritage Tourism Development Director.](#) January 2014.

Formula for Success

As every farmer knows, you cannot reap what you do not plant and cultivate. The same is true with the proposed heritage tourism development Action Plan. There must be serious commitments, investments and a lot of hard work. The potential is present if there is the will within Red Cloud to act on this remarkable development opportunity. Remember, success is rooted in the following focused investments and actions:

Lodging	Services	Experiences	Hospitality	Marketing
Expanding appropriate visitor lodging options is paramount.	Expanding appropriate heritage tourism and general services.	Enhanced experiential offerings that enrich visitor involvement.	Genuine and community-wide culture of hospitality including appearance.	A smarter and more robust marketing resource and program.

These five areas of attention: lodging, services, experiences, hospitality and marketing are all associated with a strategic focus on heritage tourism as a primary development opportunity for Red Cloud and Webster County. Committing to a strategic focus for development is one of five key commitments that Red Cloud must make to ensure optimal opportunity for success with heritage tourism development. These five key commitments are:

Strategic Focus. There must be a strategic focus rooted in this genuine development opportunity. Trying to do too much with too little is a fatal error.

Clear Goals. There must be clear, compelling and aggressive development goals that inspire action and move the initiative towards desired development outcomes.

Smart Action Plans. There must be smart action plans that will ensure progress.

Talented Staffing. Hiring and supporting skilled and experienced staff is a must. It will require investment. Finding the right talent is key.

Robust Budget. There must be consistent, robust and long-term funding for this initiative. Inadequate or insecure funding will undermine the potential for initiative success.

Professional Staffing

Red Cloud has experience with recruiting highly specialized professionals like a medical doctor or a school superintendent. Key to success with this initiative is recruiting and retaining a very experienced and skilled professional to staff this initiative.

Projected Outcomes at the End of Year Three

At the end of three years or 2016, Red Cloud would see a 30% annual increase in heritage tourism activity and economic impacts.

Refer to the [Heritage Tourism Potential for Red Cloud, An Illustration](#) paper for additional details.

<p>Visitors</p> <p><i>3,500 Visitor Couples Annually</i></p> <p><i>Increased Overnight and Multi-Day Stays</i></p> <p>A base of 1,500 is assumed for 2013.</p>	<p>Spending</p> <p><i>Visitor Spending = \$3.5 million</i></p> <p><i>Economic Impact = \$5.8 million</i></p> <p><i>77 Net New Jobs</i></p> <p>Bases of \$225,000 and \$337,500 are assumed for 2013.</p>	<p>Local Taxes</p> <p><i>Sales Tax = \$87,000</i></p> <p><i>Lodging Tax = \$23,000</i></p> <p>Base sales taxes of \$5,063 and minimal lodging taxes are assumed for 2013.</p>
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To achieve these increased heritage tourism outcomes (within the next three years), the following investments will be required:

<p>Expanded Program</p> <p>An expanded heritage tourism development program including full-time staffing and robust budgeting will be required.</p>	<p>Appropriate Visitor Lodging</p> <p>Increasing locally available and appropriate visitor lodging is essential and must be expanded to increase both visitation and spending per visit.</p>	<p>Visitor Experiences</p> <p>Significant enhancement in visitor experiences including packages providing guided tours and other activities identified in the Hargrove recommendations.</p>
<p>Visitor Services</p> <p>Expanded visitor service provided by local businesses including food service, shopping, antiques and the like.</p>	<p>Hospitality & Appearance</p> <p>There must be significantly enhanced community hospitality and appearance.</p>	<p>Marketing</p> <p>Smart and robust marketing will be necessary to attract this higher level of more engaged visitors.</p>

Focus, Pacing and Realizing Desired Impacts

Generational Vision, Commitment & Transformation

The U.S. Census Bureau defines a generational period as 25 years or a quarter of a century. Transformative change requires longer periods of time in order to be realized – such as a generation. Red Cloud has been undergoing chronic and severe depopulation due to farm mechanization and the loss of area farmers dating back to the Great Depression of the 1930s. Red Cloud is at an important tipping point that could result in either severe decline based on nearly 100 years of depopulation, or the opportunity to not only stabilize this decline but move into a period of modest growth and increased community prosperity. We recommend that Red Cloud embrace this vision of increased prosperity and make the necessary commitments to realize this dream.

Three-Year Heritage Tourism Development Action Plan

Making long-term plans can be valuable but it is challenging to be detailed and specific enough to guide decisions, investments and actions. We recommend that a three-year action plan is both feasible and desirable. This document provides Red Cloud with a detailed three-year heritage tourism development Action Plan based on our November 2013 [Recommendation Report](#).

Annual Development Campaigns with Three Development Pushes

We recommend Red Cloud embrace annual campaigns over the next three years to advance its heritage tourism development agenda. Within these annual development campaigns we recommend breaking each year into three time specific pushes where specific objectives can be set and accomplished, building towards annual goal accomplishment and desired outcomes at the end of the three-year period.

New Year Push

January through April

Summer Push

May through August

Fall Push

September through December

We will employ this framework to present our recommendations for action for 2014 through 2016.

Annual Action Plan Snap Shot

Year	Key Commitments & Actions	Key Outcomes
2014	Decision to Move to the Project’s Phase 2 Funding of Phase 2 Budget Establish Heritage Tourism Consortium Create a Heritage Tourism Board Hiring a Heritage Tourism Staff Person Implementation Strategies for the Hargrove Recommendations Year 1 Progress Assessed and Evaluated Year 2 Action Plan Updated	Phase 2 Work Moves Forward 3 Years of Phase 2 Funding Secured Heritage Tourism Consortium is in Place and Working A Heritage Tourism Board Established and Operating Heritage Tourism Staffing Hired and Working Hargrove Recommendation Strategies Completed Year 1 Performance Evaluation Completed 2015 Action Plan Completed and Ready for the New Year
2015	Early Implementation of the Hargrove Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Tourism Asset Development • Willa Cather “Book Club” Packages • Monetize Willa Cather Tours with “Upselling” Options • Targeted Marketing • General Marketing Year 2 Progress Assessed and Evaluated Year 3 Action Plan Updated	<p><i>2015 progress benchmarks are realized for each of the five Hargrove recommendations and their components.</i></p> Year 2 Performance Evaluation Completed 2015 Action Plan Completed and Ready for the New Year
2016	Continued Implementation of the Hargrove Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Tourism Asset Development • Willa Cather “Book Club” Packages • Monetize Willa Cather Tours with “Upselling” Options • Targeted Marketing • General Marketing Year 3 Progress Assessed and Evaluated Development of a New Three-Year Development Action Plan	Significantly Expanding Lodging and Services Options Packages Developed, Tested and Expanded Upselling Options Developed, Tested and Expanded Comprehensive Targeted Market Program Implemented General Marketing Recommendations Fully Implemented Year 3 Performance Evaluation Completed A New Three-Year Development Action Plan Completed and Ready for the New Year

By the end of 2016, Red Cloud will document at least a 30% increase in longer-stay, destination, heritage tourism visitors and corresponding local economic impacts.

2014 Action Plan

New Year Push	Summer Push	Fall Push
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decision to Move to Phase 2 2. Establish Heritage Tourism Consortium 3. Secure Funding for 2014 4. Secure Funding Pledges for 2015 and 2016 5. Create a Heritage Tourism Board 6. Complete a Job Description for Staffing 7. Implement a Recruitment and Hiring Process 8. Hire a Heritage Tourism Staff Person 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Review, Update and Expand the Hargrove Recommendations 10. Prioritize and Sequence Implementation Strategies for All Hargrove Recommendations 11. Develop Specific Implementation Strategies for Hargrove Recommendations to be Acted Upon in 2014 and Early 2015 12. Prepare for Prioritized Strategies Implementation 13. Development of an Enhanced Web Resources and Electronic Communication Programs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Implement Enhanced Market Research of Existing and Potential Visitors 15. Begin Implementation of Specific Options for Enhancing Visitor Lodging Resources 16. Engage the Red Cloud Community and Businesses in Identifying and Expanding Services Suitable for Targeted Visitors 17. Begin Implementation of an Enhanced Marketing Program including Web Resources and Electronic Communications
<p><i>In November of each year, the Heritage Tourism Initiative should complete a performance assessment of progress realized for the previous year. In December of each year, the Initiative should review and update the Action Plan for the coming year including budgeting of resources.</i></p>		

2014 is a critically important year where Red Cloud commits to an aggressive heritage tourism development strategy. Early in this year, new organizational capacity will be created and full-time staffing procured. Recommendations developed in Phase 1 of this work will be evolved into specific strategies, priorities will be established and important development work will begin. Startups are always challenging and there will be setbacks and slowdowns, but adopting an aggressive pace is also important if ultimate development outcomes are to be realized.

2015 Action Plan

New Year Push	Summer Push	Fall Push
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of the Visitor Packages 2. Development of Upselling Offerings 3. Development of “Red Cloud/Catherland”- approved Businesses and Services 4. Development and Implementation of Marketing Strategies for both Visitor Packages and Upselling Options 5. Development of Heritage Tourism Hospitality Training Program 6. Development of a Community Beautification Program 7. Development of an Enhanced Signage Program 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Begin Offering Visitor Packages 9. Begin Offering Upselling Options 10. Expand ‘Red Cloud/Catherland’-approved Business and Services Program 11. Expand Marketing Efforts for both Visitor Packages and Upselling Options 12. Implement Heritage Tourism Hospitality Training Program 13. Implement Community Beautification Program 14. Implement Enhanced Signage Program 15. Add Visitor Trip Planning Concierge Services 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Continue Implementation of Actions 8 through 15 in the Fall Period 17. Refine Execution of Actions 8 through 15 18. Evaluate the Expanded Programs and Services to Identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Gaps and Opportunities 19. Develop a Refined Action Plan Based on this Evaluation for 2015 <p><i>Continued development of visitor lodging options, heritage tourism assets and collateral visitor services is required throughout the three-year Action Plan.</i></p>
<p><i>In November of each year, the Heritage Tourism Initiative should complete a performance assessment of progress realized for the previous year. In December of each year, the Initiative should review and update the Action Plan for the coming year including budgeting of resources.</i></p>		

2015 is the year where the heritage tourism development work matures and hits its stride. Significant progress is realized on specific prioritized development activities. There is evidence of increasing visitation and particularly increased overnight and multi-day destination visitors. Increased longer-stay visitors reflect expanded lodging options and enhanced experience offerings. Heritage tourism assets and opportunities expand – presenting visitors with a wider range and richer collection of experiences. The expanded marketing program begins to generate impact as the level of actual and potential visitors increase.

2016 Action Plan

New Year Push	Summer Push	Fall Push
<p><i>In the third year of our recommended Action Plan, continued implementation of programs is critical. Corresponding with aggressive implementation, there must be an on-going program of assessment, evaluation and program refinement. Continued effort and learning enables emergence of optimal activities and strong execution of the game plan. With heritage tourism, quality control is very important to ensure both repeat visitation and strong word of mouth referrals.</i></p>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revisit the community’s generational vision of its future (Action Planning) and the role of heritage tourism within it. 2. Begin work on the development of a new three-year action plan. 3. Begin work on recapitalization of the 2017 through 2019 Action Plan. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Adopt a new community generational vision with respect to heritage tourism. 5. Adopt a new three-year heritage tourism development action plan. 6. Secure pledges for capitalizing the new 2017-2019 action plan. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Make preparations to begin implementation of the new three-year action plan. 8. Host a community celebration to recognize the progress made and how heritage tourism is strengthening Red Cloud’s genuine identity and increasing prosperity.
<p><i>In November of each year, the Heritage Tourism Initiative should complete a performance assessment of progress realized for the previous year. In December of each year, the Initiative should review and update the Action Plan for the coming year including budgeting of resources. In this last year of the first three-year development program, we recommend that a new three-year vision and action plan be created to guide development in 2017, 2018, 2019 and beyond.</i></p>		

2016 is an important year. This is the year where the first three-year heritage tourism action plan hits full stride, and desired outcomes and impacts are becoming evident. Staying the course, following the plan, making changes when necessary, working hard and executing well is paramount. 2016 is also the year when Red Cloud and its heritage tourism consortium must re-engage in visioning and action planning. This is the year when a new three-year action plan must be developed that will guide future work in 2017 through 2019 and beyond.