

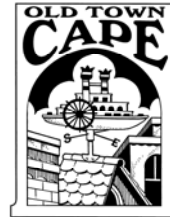
Cape Girardeau, Missouri

DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

DESTINATION
ASSESSMENT
MAY 2009



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION &
ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR
MISSOURI (DREAM) PROGRAM SPONSORS:



DESTINATION
ASSESSMENT

PLANNING CONSULTANT



This Page Intentionally Left Blank

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
The Importance of Tourism	2
Assessment Methodology	3
Hierarchy of Needs	6
CURRENT ENVIRONMENT AND ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE	8
Assessment Visit Experience	8
Visitor Profile	11
Current Positioning	13
REACHING DESTINATION POTENTIAL	14
Suggested Positioning	14
Suggestions for Improvement	15
CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLEMENTATION	21
APPENDIX: Inventory of Attractions	23

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

INTRODUCTION

The DREAM Initiative concentrates efforts on Downtown revitalization because the overall health of the community is greatly influenced by the vitality and viability of its Downtown. Moreover, Downtown reflects the unique attributes of a community—its heritage, its people and its future. While much of America becomes culturally homogenized, our Downtowns should retain their unique identity and reflect the incredible diversity contained within the American story. For tourists, Downtowns embody the character of the community and represent hidden treasures awaiting discovery.

The DREAM Initiative recognizes that Downtown exists within a larger context. Tourists may visit a city for destinations outside Downtown, such as a nearby natural or historic attraction, but Downtown should be a part of their adventure. In order for Downtown to be viable as a tourist destination it must offer unique shopping, dining, and recreational opportunities.

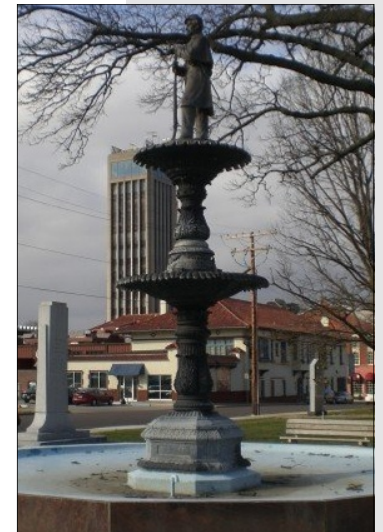
The Destination Assessment component of the DREAM Initiative will help Cape Girardeau better understand its potential to derive benefits from tourism. Many communities already enjoy a significant economic impact from tourism, while others have fledgling tourist industries. In either case, the assessment will help formulate an inspirational and realistic vision for the future. Recommendations will address potential synergies among existing features to capitalize on Cape Girardeau's Downtown and the surrounding area's tourism assets.

The "Destination Assessment Team" is a collaboration of representatives of PGAV, the Missouri Division of Tourism, and the Missouri Arts Council. The findings and recommendations contained within this document, while primarily prepared by PGAV, represent a coordinated effort to address the "tourist" or "visitor" experience from independent consultants and key State agencies involved in tourism and the arts. It is anticipated that the Missouri Division of Tourism and the Missouri Arts Council will play an ongoing role in providing technical and financial resources, as applicable.

The destination assessment will assume, as numerous Cape Girardeau officials, residents, and businesses noted in early meetings, that the style of tourism Cape Girardeau desires to promote is of a controlled, sustainable, orderly nature. The City would like to avoid the connotative meanings attached to the word "tourist" and are more interested in the characteristics described by the word "visitor."



Existing Riverfront District



Existing Statue on the Grounds of the Common Pleas Courthouse.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM

A vibrant tourism trade offers many potential benefits to a community. Tourism can help enhance the image of an area, increase local pride, and improve quality of life. As an industry, tourism is recognized as an important component of a diverse economy providing employment, redevelopment, and investment opportunity.

The economic benefits of tourism include job creation, as well as increased retail sales generation, essentially bringing new money into the community. The attraction of new money to the community through tourism can be an effective strategy to enhance the business of a downtown.

The positive effects of a successful tourism industry resonate through many business sectors, including non-tourism related businesses. The positive impacts will be felt by local businesses and residents alike. Local residents will benefit from improved visitor services and infrastructure, increased employment, and improved shopping convenience. A well balanced mix of retail and services will make Downtown a destination, attractive to residents, visitors, and investors.

In light of the far-reaching impacts of a successful tourism industry, and the size of the local industry, tourism should be viewed as a strategic sector in Cape Girardeau's economic future. Any economic development strategy for Cape Girardeau should specifically address the tourism industry and its importance to the local economy.



River Tales Classic Car Show



Heroes & Legends Air Festival

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The Destination Assessment provides a snapshot of the tourism industry operating community-wide, with a focus on Downtown. The “rapid assessment” process consists of reviewing existing data and marketing materials, as well as, conducting field work, visiting the community and its key destinations, and meeting with tourism leaders. This report and the recommendations contained herein should serve as a foundation, providing strategic direction for Cape Girardeau as it moves toward destination success. Understanding the framework used to evaluate Cape Girardeau’s destination potential will provide a useful context for the recommendations and suggestions for improvement.

Development of a tourism enhancement strategy, just as any business or product development strategy, begins with an evaluation of the relationship between product and customer in a competitive marketplace. The analysis of this relationship results in the development or identification of a competitive advantage. The more sustainable the competitive advantage, the more difficult it is for competitors to neutralize the advantage. Competitors in this scenario are other communities that are attempting to attract in whole, or large part, the same target market.

Product

For the purposes of this analysis the product is Downtown, its amenities and environ including: businesses, restaurants, museums, infrastructure, people, streets, sidewalks, parks, events, etc. Downtown needs a balance of businesses and amenities that address, at a minimum, the basic needs of customers. A key to a successful product is maintaining focus on the primary product, service, or destination strengths, while at the same time adapting to changes and taking advantage of opportunities.

The Destination Assessment will identify areas in need of improvement that will overlap with other DREAM Initiative tasks. Those tasks will be noted and addressed in greater detail in their corresponding analyses.

Customer

The customer, in this evaluation, is the visitor or patron including residents of the community, neighboring areas, traditional tourists, etc. The community must understand who their current customers are, who is currently visiting Downtown and why, as well as who they might be able to target and how. To understand and target customers, it is helpful to categorize visitors. A common categorization of visitors is by the reason for their visit:

Business Travelers— They are most likely to travel during the week. They are driven by businesses. Their primary basic needs include: lodging, restaurants, services, gift shopping, and evening entertainment. There is a potential to impress them and have them return for pleasure.

Family Travelers — They are most likely to travel during the weekend. They are driven around town by relatives. They are less likely to need lodging. Their potential needs include; services, restaurants and general shopping.

Ethnic and Cultural Seekers — They are looking for exposure to new experiences, development, and education. They are interested in the area's "way of life" and people. They are typically adventuresome and looking for more than basic needs. Major interests include: museums, galleries, concerts, festivals, and performances. They would be likely to shop for unique items.

Heritage and Passive Recreation Enthusiasts — This visitor enjoys the scenery and feel of the area more than the interaction with the people. They are more inwardly focused and reflective. Their needs are similar to the culture seeker, but are just as likely to enjoy a drive through town to look at architecture or a walk in the local parks. Recent studies indicate that heritage tourists stay longer at their destinations and have higher levels of expendable income when compared with other visitors.

Active Outdoor Adventurers — Sports enthusiasts enjoy a wide variety of recreational opportunities. Outdoor enthusiasts, boaters, hikers, or golfers are typically on the move. They are devoted, and spend money on their chosen sport.

Urban Entertainment — This group includes; shoppers, team sport spectators, college visitors, night owls, and amusement park attendees. They tend to travel in groups and have a higher expendable income. Internet connectivity and cell phone access is important to them.

Market Positioning and Brand

Once an understanding is reached on exactly what the product is and who the customers or target markets are, the focus turns to identifying the market positioning. An important component of a competitive advantage is a distinct market positioning and brand—something that draws on the strengths of the destination and its authenticity, and leverages customers' desire for unique experiences.

It is essential to understand how customers currently perceive the destination, especially relative to competitors. This perception is the community's image or brand. The destination must craft a strategy that builds on the positive aspects of its current image and, if necessary, repositions it to a more advantageous and competitive position. Repositioning takes time, patience and persistence as it typically involves modifying long held perceptions about your destination.

Destination brands have four distinct “realms” that make up brand image in the mind of the customer. Each component represents an opportunity to differentiate from the competition and offer a unique consumer benefit. Destinations can reach their maximum potential by leveraging all four components.

REALM ONE—PLACE:

If you visit the Empire State Building, you go to a building with the city surrounding it. Up at the observation tower, the **place** becomes an oasis high above bustling Manhattan. What benefits does the place provide for the guest? Some people like the high energy feeling of being in the city, but they may also like taking a break from the intensity. People go to a destination. It exists in a physical place. A destination should try to get the most out of the power of its place.

REALM TWO—EXPERIENCE:

Hike in the canyon. Ride the coaster. Attend a show. People want to *do* something at a destination—something unique, something to brag about, or something to share. The experience of a destination can provide key benefits to guests and is a fundamental part of its brand. A destination can reach its full potential when it promotes the benefits of a unique experience and delivers.

REALM THREE—MINDSET:

Sometimes a destination epitomizes or evokes an attitude, value, or mindset that has meaning beyond the physical limits of the site. Colonial Williamsburg set out to “own” the concept of Colonial America, and people might feel more patriotic just thinking about it. When a destination can symbolize an inspirational concept, it can form a powerful connection with its guests. The destination becomes a touchstone for the concept and people return to renew their connection with it.

REALM FOUR—ORGANIZATION:

What role does the organization behind the destination play in the brand? The Niagara Parks emblem conveys tremendous trust among regional guests who want to spend their money with the organization that helps preserve the nature and heritage of Niagara Falls. The organizational dimension of a destination may also make a big difference to future employees, donors, business partners, granting agencies, or other organizations. People want to associate with a cause or organization they feel good about, one that expresses their own values and aspirations.

When people think of Cape Girardeau as a destination, do they long to be in the place, get excited by the experience, aspire to the values represented, and trust the organization behind it? When the answer is “yes” to all four, people will attribute a high value to visiting Cape Girardeau.

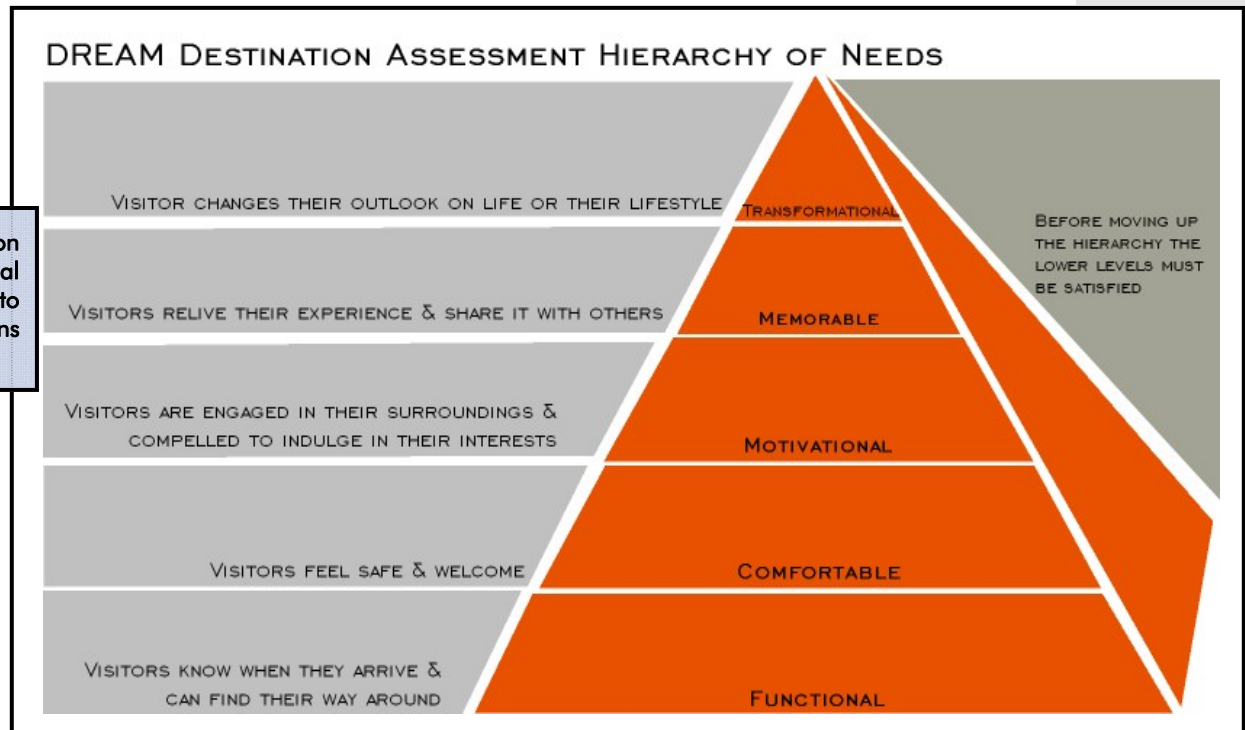
HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Destinations and, in a larger sense, Downtowns are basically customer-oriented businesses and therefore should always take the customer point-of-view. As stated earlier, when destinations conduct product development and determine marketing decisions they must address what the customer wants and needs. During the Destination Assessment Kick-Off Meeting, the Destination Assessment Team introduced the concept of a destination consumer “Hierarchy of Needs,” which hypothesizes that customers must have their most basic needs met before they can attain higher levels of fulfillment. This customer-focused theme will recur throughout the recommendations for The Old Town Cape District.

For the purposes of this Destination Assessment, PGAV uses the hierarchical scheme shown here, listed from bottom to top, to illustrate and describe the motivations of the typical, “Downtown” Missouri tourist.

There are a great number of reasons or desires that drive an individual consumer’s decision to travel and their choice of destination. The “Hierarchy of Needs” describes the requirements a typical visitor has to have met in order for them to have a fulfilling destination experience. Questions a destination community may ask themselves regarding whether or not their community’s destination assets meet these needs are:

1. Functional: Does the City provide adequate wayfinding to make travel throughout the area easy and somewhat intuitive? Do visitors know when they have “arrived”? Does the City adequately provide basic comforts, such as parking, restrooms, and a place to rest? Is information about destinations and events easily attainable?



2. Comfortable: Is the Downtown pedestrian experience friendly and well lit? Are the building facades and streetscape designs aesthetically pleasing? Are numerous lodging and dining options present throughout the municipality? Does the Downtown provide adequate comforts so that the visitor can relax?
3. Motivational: Does the Downtown provide visitors with activities in which to participate? What will move the visitor to get out of their car and get involved? Does the Downtown provide a chance to learn, interact with others, and an opportunity for adventure or escape?
4. Memorable: Does the Downtown leave the visitor with positive memories? Do visitors repeatedly return to Downtown? Do visitors recommend a visit to Downtown to others? Is there positive word-of-mouth about Downtown?
5. Transformational: If the City meets the aforementioned needs, then they've created a fulfilling experience to the visitor, which, hopefully, will positively change the visitor; thus imbuing the visitor with not only a valuable experience, but also a new and positive outlook on life. The visitor will want to return to and reconnect with the destination in the future. The visitor will actively seek to bring others and share the transforming experience.

In the case of a visit to a destination like a resort, zoo, or theme park, a single organization manages the tourist experience to ensure a “seamless” experience; one that flows smoothly and consistently from parking and restrooms to attractions, food and shopping without breaks in the “brand.” People have come to expect this level of product and service. Destination communities would benefit from emulating this model to the degree they can considering the complexity of their destination environment (i.e. multiple tourism product owners and interests). For example, Destination communities can develop organizational structures that support a coordinated aesthetic presentation of Downtown; manage a consistent and unified marketing plan; administer special event planning; and guide businesses towards consistent business standards (i.e. uniform business hours).

Although Destination Assessment focuses on tourism and arts, many of the recommendations promise to improve quality of life for both visitors and residents. Conversely, many of the recommendations in other parts of the overall DREAM Initiative, such as streetscape improvements and traffic management will provide essential infrastructure to support tourism. This synergy of benefits illustrates the key strategy of the Initiative—that an integrated approach to planning and implementation will achieve the best results for Cape Girardeau.

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT AND ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE

ASSESSMENT VISIT EXPERIENCE

The approach to Cape Girardeau from Interstate 55 is straightforward, and there are two well-marked exits. Signs for the many hotels and restaurants also greet visitors as they make their turn off the highway. However, once off the highway, the route to Downtown is not as well-defined. There are hotels, shopping centers, gas stations and residences along the main routes, with little or no signage or wayfinding directing visitors to the Downtown or to the Visitors Center. There was no direct or clearly defined route to Downtown - it is easy to get lost.

The first impression a visitor has of a destination is typically a lasting impression. On first impression, Cape Girardeau appears to be a typical city along any Interstate, with a mix of familiar chain hotels and restaurants immediately visible. The riverfront and historic attributes of The Old Town Cape District that distinguish it from other towns are not at all visible to visitors. The storefronts of the shops and restaurants are a mix of new, attractive displays and older more run-down displays.

Once in the historic Downtown area, the Destination Assessment Team could see evidence of street improvement; sidewalks and benches helped to demarcate the area. Initially, the Team was disappointed that the riverfront area was separated from the Mississippi River by the levee wall when we were in a town “where the river turns a thousand tales.” However, the large mural on the levee wall was an attraction, and we enjoyed the interpretive signs spaced along the length of the wall. The levee wall openings reveal the river at different points. We noticed that there is a modest pedestrian area on the river side of the wall. Also, the service entrances and loading docks of Downtown businesses face the river/mural wall, and do not create a visitor-friendly backdrop for viewing the wall.

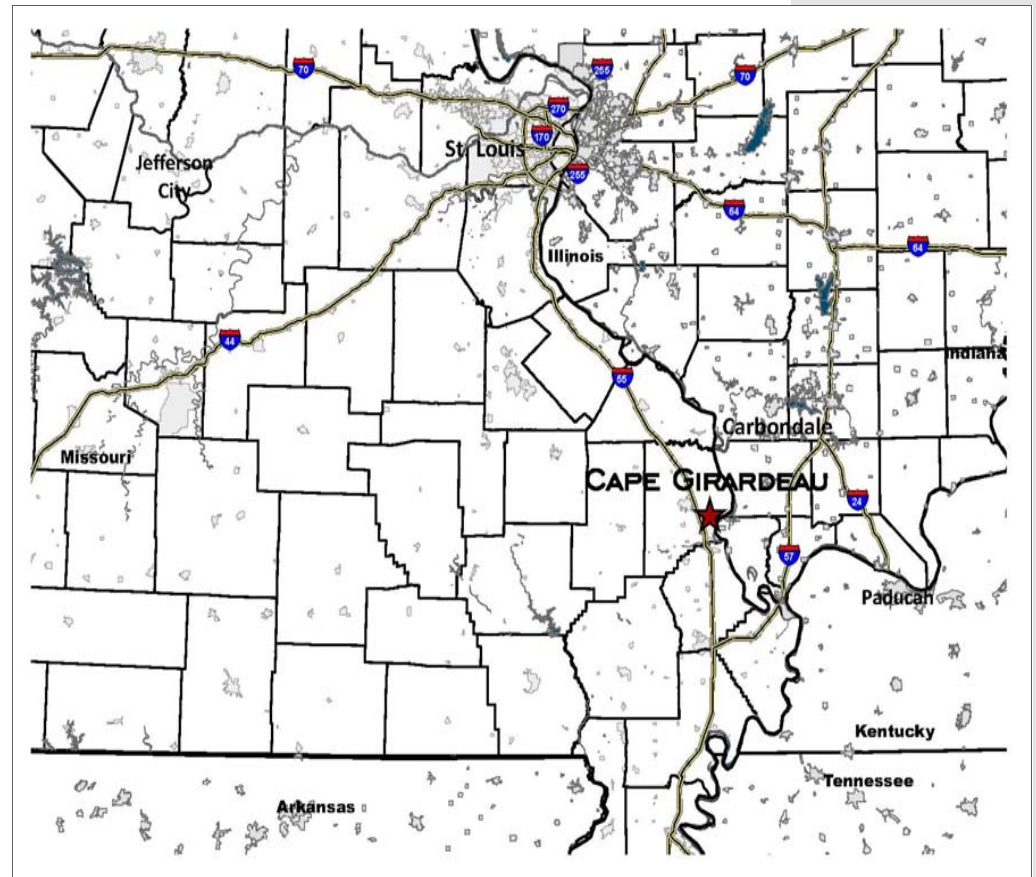


Figure 1: Regional Map

There are several attractions near Downtown and in the environs that complete the historic picture of Cape Girardeau: Red House Interpretive Center, Old St. Vincent's Church, Glenn House, Cape River Heritage Museum and Lorimier Cemetery, to name a few. The several sites that are located in Downtown Cape Girardeau have very limited hours of operation, and although the experiences are remarkable when visited, it can be very frustrating to travel to an attraction and discover it's closed.

It is noteworthy that the Discovery Playhouse, the existing children's museum, is in the process of expansion. That expansion includes the purchase of property in the Downtown area and the addition of more activities that appeal to children and families, including hands-on exhibits, a kids' village, water play and other tactile exhibits.

Cape Girardeau's Parks and Recreation division operates the Shawnee Sports Complex (South of the DREAM Boundary), a large athletic complex that serves as the regional hub for soccer and softball. Cape Parks and Recreation hosts regional and national athletic tournaments. These tournaments attract the participants, as well as their families: siblings, parents and grandparents. The teams and their families often stay overnight in Cape Girardeau. These visitors need something to do between games. Local parks and attractions do not seem to meet this demand. Visitors are often frustrated on visits Downtown because there is not enough to do and the hours of operation of shops and attractions are limited.

Southeast Missouri State University's Show Me Center hosts a wide range of events. Built as a city-university complex, the Show Me Center is the site for University basketball games, concerts, rodeos, trade shows, banquets, meetings and conventions. The Center's visitors are a mix of day-trippers and over-nighters. Show Me Center staff note that Cape Girardeau attracts a strong regional base, drawing from cities such as: Carbondale, IL, Harrisburg, IL, and Paducah, KY.

The Southeast Missouri State University campus has a significant presence in Cape Girardeau. The River Campus at the south edge of Downtown has a beautiful setting overlooking the Mississippi River. The campus theatre provides visitors and residents with the opportunity to enjoy theatrical performances and art exhibits. The university provides transportation between the River Campus and its main campus. The presence of the university Downtown also creates a good opportunity for student housing Downtown, and can bring more people and activity into The Old Town Cape District.



Southeast Missouri State University

The riverfront area appears to have a foundation of unique shops, restaurants and attractions that include the Riverfront Park adjacent to the levee wall. However, there is little coordination among these different businesses and attractions. The limited hours for attractions minimizes the length of stay of a family traveling to Downtown, and can deter repeat visits to The Old Town Cape District.

The lodging is varied and appears to be able to accommodate most visitors to Cape Girardeau. There are several bed and breakfasts for individual or small groups of travelers, as well as camping grounds that appeal to groups and families. Hotel and motel lodging is more dominant and serves the people who visit Cape for conventions, sports tournaments, or events. Most of the lodging is located on the west side of the City near Interstate 55, and there are very few lodging options in The Old Town Cape District. This is another, very important, reason to clearly define a corridor that leads directly to The Old Town Cape District, and to provide regular transportation from the west side of town to the riverfront attractions and dining in The Old Town Cape District.



Common Pleas Courthouse



Existing Conditions of Mississippi Riverfront

VISITOR PROFILE

Business, conventions and meetings bring many people to Cape Girardeau during the week for an overnight stay. It appears there is sufficient lodging for the business visitors during the week. According to the hotels there are many of the “Business Traveler” category of visitors already coming to Cape Girardeau.

The Southeast Missouri State University campus in Cape Girardeau draws prospective students, alumni, and families several times throughout the school year. The university’s athletic teams also draw visitors to the campus and city on a regular basis. These visitors fit into the “Urban Entertainment” category.

The other local events, theatre, shops and parks in Cape Girardeau provide a range of activities and venues that appeal to all visitor types, but particularly to the “Ethnic and Cultural Seekers.” These visitors would be pleased to attend a symphony performance at the River Campus or spend the weekend at the Storytelling Festival.

In late 2007, the DREAM Initiative conducted a Visitors’ Survey for Cape Girardeau. Survey responses were gathered during special events held Downtown, therefore most respondents (75%) indicated that their reason for visiting Cape Girardeau was to attend a special event. A complete copy of the Cape Girardeau Visitor Survey Results is available from The City of Cape Girardeau. Interesting responses include:

- 58% of respondents said they visit Downtown once a month or more. 20% said they visit Downtown more than once a year, but less than once a month.
- Dining, Shopping & Entertainment are among the top reasons indicated by respondents of why they were planning to visit Downtown.
- Of respondents, many (76%) stated they do not bring children under the age of 18 with them to Downtown Cape Girardeau.
- A majority of those who visit are between ages 18-34 (40.5%), followed by: those between ages 35-49 (25%) and those between 50-64 (25)%.
- 62% of respondents thought Downtown was “very” or “easy” to navigate.
- 36% of respondents thought the Downtown business hours were “somewhat” convenient.
- More than 66% of respondents felt that Downtown parking was “somewhat” or “very” convenient.
- Almost 60% of the respondents were staying with friends or relatives.

- 37% of respondents felt that “more/better restaurants” would make them more likely to visit Downtown. Other reasons to visit Downtown included: clothing stores, more shops, book stores, art galleries and coffee shops.
- “More special events,” “bands/live concerts,” “family events,” and “theater/movies/plays” were the top responses for recreation or entertainment opportunities likely to make a visitor come to Downtown.
- “Renovation of historic buildings,” “better maintained buildings,” “more parking,” “new or better sidewalks,” and “benches/green space” were the top physical improvements indicated by respondents.
- Respondents to the visitor survey were asked their primary zip code. Figure 2 illustrates the primary zip codes of the visitors (respondent zip codes are illustrated in red). Respondents’ states not indicated on the map include: California, Florida, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Utah and Washington.

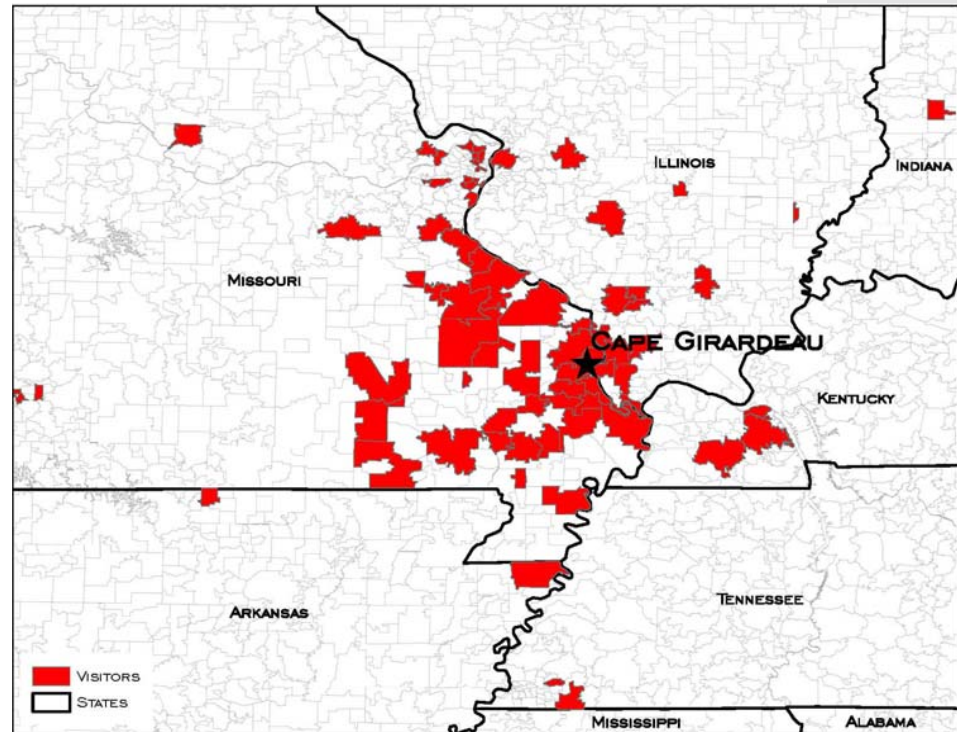


Figure 2: Visitor Survey
Respondent Zip Code Map

CURRENT POSITIONING

Cape Girardeau enjoys a strong reputation for being a Mississippi River town with a historic Downtown and an active university community. Cape Girardeau has many institutions and events which add to the City's reputation as a regional destination for shopping, recreation and entertainment. The many destinations which showcase the region's history, such as the Red House Interpretive Center and Old St. Vincent's Church, reinforce the City's historic river town image. The many exhibits, museums and events highlighting the region's role in the settlement of the Mississippi Valley also add to the vast history and civic identity of Cape Girardeau. The City's destinations and events have been creatively summarized in the civic brand of "Cape Girardeau, Where The River Turns A Thousand Tales." This branding statement is broad, encompassing the extensive history of Cape Girardeau and refers to the City's river heritage.

The City also has many opportunities in the tourism/visitor market being the home of Southeast Missouri State University. The university has a current enrollment of over 10,000 students and annually brings new visitors to the City from throughout Missouri, the Midwest and the country. Many students come from the greater St. Louis metropolitan area, the closest major city to Cape Girardeau. The excellent access to St. Louis allows for a direct market of tourism for the Cape Girardeau region. While Interstate 55 is the most direct route to Cape Girardeau from St. Louis, many state highways and local routes bring visitors through scenic country sides, state parks and historic towns on their journey to and from Cape Girardeau.

Life today is fast and furious. We all treasure those rare opportunities to get away from it all — if even for just a few days. So pack up, head out and prepare to kick back. Let the getaway begin...

Scenic Drive from St. Louis to Cape Girardeau and Back
published by the Cape Girardeau Convention
and Visitors Bureau

The current marketing of Cape Girardeau is very impressive, with numerous entities providing information for tourists and local citizens to visit the City and region. The internet websites of the Chamber of Commerce, the Convention and Visitor's Bureau, Old Town Cape, Inc. and the City provide extensive information on various destinations, routes, events and facilities. The brochures and maps produced by these respective entities are also very helpful for visitors to use during their visit to Cape Girardeau and adjacent areas.

A challenge with the current market position for Cape Girardeau is to ensure that Downtown retains its position as the center for entertainment and hospitality for the region. Southeast Missouri has numerous destinations and events which attract visitors from throughout the bi-state area and the Midwest. Old Town Cape Inc., Convention and Visitors Bureau and the other civic organizations must continue to be creative and aggressive in the promotion of Downtown Cape Girardeau as the central destination for the region.



Figure 3: Current Marketing Brochures of Cape Girardeau

REACHING DESTINATION POTENTIAL

SUGGESTED POSITIONING

Cape Girardeau: The Arts and Cultural Hub for the Region

Cape Girardeau is not the only river town in Missouri. Other cities located along the Mississippi or Missouri Rivers promote their history associated with the rivers, Lewis and Clark and the Civil War. However, Cape Girardeau possesses a unique combination of attributes and assets that distinguish it from other river towns. The cultural and entertainment opportunities appeal to a wide range of visitors, and the dining and lodging options support business travelers as well as families attending local events. The University, historic buildings and river access are strong assets that individually, and collectively, add to the City's image.

Cape Girardeau's history will not be the main attraction for most visitors, but its history definitely adds richness and authenticity to the arts, performances, and events. In fact, Cape's community brand "Where the River Turns a Thousand Tales" should be positioned to tell contemporary tales related to arts, culture and entertainment – from live performances at the River Campus to the Children's Museum at Discovery Playhouse.

The Old Town Cape District can build upon its existing efforts to become an arts and cultural district that features unique dining experiences, university culture, public art, festivals and live music. This will distinguish Cape Girardeau from other cities along Interstate 55 and attract both visitors and residents to The Old Town Cape District.



Storytelling Festival



Garden Gallery



Garden Gallery Wine Tasting

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

There are different levels of recommendations that Cape Girardeau can follow in order to reach its destination potential. Improvements can range from better integration of existing community resources to developing excellent customer service. Moreover, these steps will help to establish The Old Town Cape District as a cultural and entertainment hub for Southeast Missouri and Southern Illinois. Addressing basic needs of visitors, coordinating existing resources, and promotion of attractions can have a significant impact in helping Cape Girardeau realize its destination potential.

Improve Signage and Wayfinding

It is important that Cape Girardeau establish a sense of place, define the boundaries of the historic Old Town Cape District, and promote the brand of The Old Town Cape District. There should be simple and clear directions to the Downtown area, especially from the I-55 Corridor. A streetscape plan for the William Street and Broadway corridors would identify these two major streets as the connections from the interstate to Downtown. Improved streetscape elements and signage that is coordinated with signs on the interstate will make the drive to The Old Town Cape District easy for any visitor. A wayfinding system should be developed to allow easy navigation among to major Downtown destinations. The system should be flexible and modular in design to allow for modifications and ease of maintenance. The system should incorporate elements of the civic brand “Where the River Turns a Thousand Tales.” The wayfinding system should extend from the interstate into and through Downtown. City monument signs at interstate intersections should be designed to reflect Downtown’s historic architecture (key elements of the civic identity of Cape Girardeau).

In addition, the new signage and streetscape should demarcate The Old Town Cape District. Signage, lighting, landscaping and art are just some of the design elements which can help to define The Old Town Cape District. These design elements will give a tangible definition of The Old Town Cape District as a destination for both residents and visitors to Cape Girardeau.



Examples of Wayfinding
Signage
(Webster Groves, Missouri)

Improve Visitor Center Brand Visibility



Convention and Visitors Bureau

Providing information to visitors is a vital component of a successful destination. The Cape Girardeau Convention and Visitor's Bureau visibility could be improved, thus making it easier to locate. Currently, visitors may completely miss the Visitor Center, depending upon the route they take to The Old Town Cape District. Improved wayfinding and signage is a simple and cost effective solution. Information from the Visitor Center should be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Making brochures available outside the Center, when the office is closed, is one way to help achieve this. A digital "touch screen" kiosk, highly visible outside the building, should also be installed. In addition, providing other visitor kiosks at locations such as: the intersection of Main Street and William Street, Southeast Missouri State University's River Campus, the Show Me Center and at the Shawnee Sports Complex, would be effective in communicating information to visitors.

Coordinate Downtown Businesses and Cultural Activities

Cape Girardeau and The Old Town Cape District have a diverse mix of attractions and character that make it a unique destination; however these attractions must work in concert in order to be successful. Improve coordination simply through increased communication of community events to visitor-oriented retailers, service providers, attractions and event activities. It is important that all businesses in The Old Town Cape District and those located on the west side of Cape Girardeau work together to provide visitors with a seamless experience. The sporting events or performances may provide the main attraction, but it is only through the coordination of all businesses that the basic and higher level needs of a visitor will be met. Improved communication and coordination can help retailers and attractions develop similar hours of operation. This would encourage visitors to extend their stay and fully enjoy their visit to Cape Girardeau.

Promote the Cape Girardeau Storytelling Festival

The Cape Girardeau Storytelling Festival of 2008 was a major success for the City. The festival is a major commitment of civic resources to build an annual world class event. This commitment must result in visitor expenditures on dining, hospitality and necessities. Festival organizers should promote the importance and benefits of the event with the local business community: hotels, restaurants, shops, service stations, etc.

Supplement the festival with seasonal storytelling festivals around Halloween and St. Valentines' Day. Identify opportunities for the university and local schools to teach storytelling as an art form. The entire Cape Girardeau community should provide hospitality of the highest quality for visitors to the festival. A comprehensive 5 year marketing plan for the event should be developed to promote the Storytelling Festival in markets throughout the Midwest and nation.



Storytelling Festival

Focus on Contemporary Tales of Art and Culture

Tourism in Cape Girardeau is mainly driven by its sporting events and performances. Cape Girardeau is also an important stop for many travelers along Interstate 55. The history and river heritage of Cape Girardeau is an asset, but it is not the feature that attracts the majority of visitors. Notwithstanding the rich stories and characters who visited Cape Girardeau over the past 200 years, history alone is not what draws most people to Cape Girardeau. However, this history adds character, richness and authenticity to the “tales” the visitor experiences in Cape Girardeau.

Cape Girardeau can offer many contemporary tales as well as historical tales. These can include stories of craft artists, sports heroes, river ecology, the environment, Southeast Missouri State University students, Cape Girardeau families and recent events. Highlighting a wide variety of stories will peak the interest of residents and visitors, and will encourage them to spend more time in The Old Town Cape District. All of the tales of art and culture should be presented in Downtown; further defining The Old Town Cape District as a destination for Cape Girardeau residents and visitors.

Expand Public Art, Festivals and Art-Focused Events

The River Walk Murals establish a strong artistic foundation for the addition of more artwork in Downtown. Public art and storefronts filled with art would enhance the streetscape. A beautiful streetscape in The Old Town Cape District and the addition of more public art creates a wonderful setting for more festivals, musical performances and art-focused events.

The fact that Southeast Missouri State University is a well-established institution with strong performing and fine arts programs also provides a good resource and reason for improving the arts culture. The new River Campus will also bring more visitors to the Downtown district and reinforce The Old Town Cape District as the place for the arts. Capitalize on the City’s and region’s rich and varied architectural heritage. Identify buildings for a potential Architectural Museum. Such a destination will attract the “cultural seeker,” generally of a higher income and educational background. In addition to a museum, architectural workshops, tours, and “architectural history” trails will help develop Cape Girardeau as the architectural capital of Missouri and the region.



Christmas Caroling in The Old Town Cape District.



River City Fashion Show



River City Music Festival

River Connection

Cape Girardeau owes its heritage to the Mississippi River. While the riverfront park and various events are located on the river, greater use of this natural resource should be encouraged. Respectful of the river's dynamic natural systems, the City should promote the river as a recreational, educational and eco-tourism destination.

Renewed interest in the natural environment has seen growth of outfitters for canoe and kayaking trips on the Mississippi River. The Missouri River 340 River race, from Kansas City to St. Charles, draws teams from around the world. Such events on the Mississippi River from St. Louis to Cape Girardeau should be developed. These events would attract active and extreme recreation customers. Moab, Utah has achieved this hub status with mountain bikers and hikers.

The river should also be promoted as an educational destination. Collaboration with Southeast Missouri State University and Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla should be developed. Conducting research on the river in regards to water quality, ecology and sustainable design will help to de-mystify the river. Cape Girardeau should investigate opportunities for attracting research and development funds on river/water issues. Establishing a research center in Downtown could bring in more educational and professional tour groups. An educational facility could be combined with an aquarium to attract tourists. A good precedent is Woods Hole, Massachusetts, which has a concentration of marine science facilities, that promote ocean ecology and research.

The City should continue to develop trails and greenways along the river to attract active recreation visitors. Enhanced and continued use of the Mississippi River will foster a greater appreciation of the river as a recreation and education destination.

Improve Retail Operations

The shops and restaurants in The Old Town Cape District can benefit greatly by improving their retail operations and productivity. This can be accomplished through a variety of means including: increasing communication, improving product offerings and displays, and coordinating hours and events.

Increasing communication between tourism-oriented venues, such as the Show Me Center and shops in Old Town Cape, hotels and attractions located in and around Old Town Cape will allow retailers to improve productivity through their increased knowledge of the market. For example, retailers can adjust their hours of operation to open in coordination with attractions and special events.



Missouri River 340 Race



Trail of Tears Triathlon



Downtown Cape Girardeau

Improve Retail Operations (continued)

Retailers should modify or expand their product offerings to address the needs of visitors, taking into account both basic needs and higher needs. Particular attention should be paid to the specific visitor being targeted and their corresponding needs. Additionally, providing attractive displays and coordinating themes and hours of operation will help create a positive shopping experience.

Improve Streetscapes and Buildings

First impressions make for lasting impressions, and the first impressions of Downtown will be the streetscapes and buildings. There are several buildings and infrastructure in The Old Town Cape District which should be improved to provide the visitor and residents with a more pleasant experience. Streetscapes should be improved with attention paid to wayfinding, sidewalk repair, benches, lighting, burying of power lines, landscaping and beautification. Empty storefronts should be filled with merchandise or art, and the dilapidated buildings in the Downtown area should be rehabilitated maintaining the historic qualities of the buildings. Improving these elements will improve a visitors' first impression as well as the whole Downtown experience.



Site Furnishings in The Old Town Cape District

Develop University Village on Broadway

Southeast Missouri State University is a tremendous asset for the City of Cape Girardeau. The university lies immediately northwest of Downtown, with Broadway providing the south border of the campus. The Broadway corridor from West End Boulevard to Sprigg Street has the opportunity to develop into an "University Village." The existing buildings and pedestrian scale of the street present the opportunity for redevelopment of the area. Businesses and retail shops, such as software stores, mobile phone stores, bike shops, coffee bars, daycare facilities, and dry cleaners could serve the university community, which includes students, faculty and staff. A concentration of such shops and businesses, along with improvements to the built environment by the City and University will help to develop a community identity for the University Village. Broadway could become a classic example of a Town and Gown neighborhood, similar to other neighborhoods in university towns such as Aggieville in Manhattan, Kansas or 6th Street in Austin, Texas.

Provide Public Amenities for Visitors

Access to public restrooms is a basic need and important for visitor satisfaction in The Old Town Cape District. Most business establishments have restrooms for their patrons, but quite often there are visitors viewing the murals, visiting the museums and just enjoying Downtown who will need a restroom. Furthermore, the facilities will provide shelter, a place to rest, and possibly the opportunity to purchase simple conveniences.

Enhance Transportation System: Bus, Trolley, Bicycle & Walkways

An important component of a positive visit is access to safe and reliable transportation. Currently, the majority of visitors travel to Cape Girardeau by personal vehicle or bus. Visitors arriving by bus are left with no other method of transportation once they arrive in Cape Girardeau. Additionally, visitors arriving by vehicle must continue to drive from attraction to attraction and from the west side of town to The Old Town Cape District. In order to promote transportation alternatives, use of the public bus system and a potential Downtown trolley vehicle should be implemented. Pedestrian and bicycle circulation can be enhanced with on-street bike lanes, off-street trails and sidewalks. Such facilities would give visitors a choice to reach various destinations.

Coordinate Lodging with The Old Town Cape District Dining Options

Many of the hotels and motels are located on the west side of town, near Interstate 55, while most of the unique dining experiences are located in The Old Town Cape District. Promoting the position of The Old Town Cape District as the hub for arts and culture includes offering unique dining experiences. It is important that the majority of visitors who stay in hotels on the west side of town can easily find their way to the unique restaurants in The Old Town Cape District, and be assured that when they arrive, those restaurants will be open. Restaurant activities such as wine tastings, seasonal dinners or cooking demonstrations by celebrity chefs should be promoted with the hotels on the west side of town. The ultimate goal would be to locate a hotel in Downtown. The hotel would be supported by business travelers, tourists and by university functions. A hotel to serve the Downtown and university community would add to the growth and stability of The Old Town Cape District.



Example of a trolley vehicle



Upscale Dining in The Old Town Cape District

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLEMENTATION

Cape Girardeau possesses an attractive mix of historic sites, recreational complexes, performance venues, and festivals that can be positioned to clearly establish Cape Girardeau as the cultural and entertainment hub of the region. The numerous historic sites, seasonal events, a major state university and the Mississippi River provide Cape Girardeau with an abundance of destinations to offer visitors and local residents.

The integration of business operations, aggressive promotion of events and implementation of infrastructure improvements will strengthen the visitor experience. Such measures will allow Cape Girardeau to realize its destination potential as the region's cultural and entertainment hub "Where the River Turns a Thousand Tales."

Developing an implementation strategy for enhancing the assets of the community will be critical to sustaining and improving the destination experience in Cape Girardeau. Implementation of the various programming, marketing and physical improvements will require coordination amongst the various civic entities, with the collective goal of improving the experience of Downtown Cape Girardeau. The visitor should be considered, as identified in the Hierarchy of Needs (page 6). Implement programs to make Downtown functional, comfortable and motivational for the visitor. The experience of the visitor, in The Old Town Cape District, should be memorable and transformational to ensure their return to Cape Girardeau. Key implementation improvements should be prioritized for both short and long term goals. Such improvements include:

Improve Signage and Wayfinding: The visitor experience cannot begin until they arrive. Make their arrival experience easy to understand and enjoyable while they are in Cape Girardeau. Implement unique, yet simple to use wayfinding program for Downtown Cape Girardeau in the I-55 Corridor, William Street, Broadway and within Downtown.

Promote the Cape Girardeau Storytelling Festival: The energy of the initial Cape Girardeau Storytelling Festival should be used to build the festival into the signature event for Cape Girardeau. The creativity, broad appeal and joy the festival brings to visitors and residents alike should be documented and promoted throughout the region and nation. Program and promote the festival to develop into one of the top 5 storytelling festivals in the country, within 5 years. Continue to support the Convention and Visitors Bureau's efforts in leading the development of the festival.

River Connection: Develop a communitywide appreciation for the Mississippi River as a natural ecosystem and destination of recreation and education. Promote the City's access to the river as an international destination for recreation, research and eco-tourism.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (CONTINUED)

Enhance Transportation System: Bus, Trolley, Bicycle & Walkways: Enhance transportation modes for visitors and residents to visit the many attractions in Downtown and beyond. Whether building upon the City's existing bus and greenway systems or developing walking tours, these alternative methods should use The Old Town Cape District as the central hub and gathering space for various trips.

Improve Streetscapes and Buildings: The visual appearance and function of the streets and parking lots should be improved. Streetscapes should have a uniform aesthetic of historic period lights, street furniture, landscaping and signage. Sidewalks should be accessible and free from obstacles. Pavement should be well maintained to avoid tripping hazards and potholes. Parking lots should be well defined with landscaping, fencing, lighting and signage. Overhead utility lines should be buried below the surface, as financial resources allow, especially along Water Street. The rehabilitation and maintenance of buildings will improve the image of The Old Town Cape District. Property owners should be encouraged to use historic tax credits to rehabilitate their historic buildings. Design standards for The Old Town Cape District, which are supplemental to the existing building codes, should be adopted and enforced by the City of Cape Girardeau.

APPENDIX

Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Historic Sites/ Points of Interest	Bollinger Mill State Historical Site	Historic gristmill, built in the 19th Century.
	Mill & Covered Bridge	Oldest covered bridge remaining in Missouri.
	Lorimier Cemetery	Established in 1808 as a public burial ground.
	Old St. Vincent's Church	Built in 1853. A beautiful example of 15 th century, Italian Renaissance Architecture. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.
	Red House Interpretive Center	A project of the Cape Girardeau Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commission. It commemorates the visit of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to Cape Girardeau on November 23, 1803.
	Oliver-Leming House	The Missouri State Flag was designed and created in Cape Girardeau by Marie Watkins Oliver in 1908.
	Kage House	Home is reminiscent of eighteenth-century New Orleans architecture, and was built sometime before 1883.
	Glenn House	Designed in 1883 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
Civil War Sites	Fort D	Operates as part of Cape Girardeau Parks and Recreation Department. Admission is free and open daily.
	Old Lorimier Cemetery	Many unmarked graves of soldiers who died during the Civil War.
	Union Monument & Fountain	Cast monument of a Union soldier & fountain erected in 1911.
	Common Pleas Courthouse	Completed in 1854. Important to Union forces during Civil War. First concrete construction in Missouri south of St. Louis.
	Confederate War Memorial	Presented to the city in 1931. Stands 14 ½ feet tall and weighs 12 ½ tons.
	Minton House	Built in 1846. One of Cape's oldest homes. Served as a United State smallpox hospital during the Civil War.
	Battle of Cape Girardeau	Site of 1863 battle.

INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS

Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Museums	Southeast Missouri State University Museum	Permanent and special exhibits. Located on the main campus.
	The Red House Interpretive Center	1800's exhibit that reflects the lives of the early settlers of the "Old Cape Girardeau District."
	Old St. Vincent's Church	Tours arranged for groups of 10 or more.
	Historic Glenn House	Restored rooms depict life around 1900.
	The Cape River Heritage Museum	Located in the old City Fire Station. Displays river-related artifacts and historical items.
	Common Pleas Courthouse	Completed in 1854. War memorials on west side of courthouse.
Murals of Cape Girardeau	Great Murals Tour	Mississippi River Tales Mural Missouri Wall of Fame Welcome to Cape Mural Coca-Cola Mural Hecht's Store Mural River Heritage Mural Riverfest Mural Southeast Missourian Murals Jack Wells Bicentennial Mural Jack Wells University Mural Heritage of Music Mural City Hall Murals History of Medicine Mural
Wineries	River Ridge Winery (Commerce, MO)	Open daily, 11 am – 6 pm, except Christmas Day.
	Tower Rock Winery (Altenburg, MO)	Open Saturday and Sunday, Noon – 6 pm
	Hemman Winery (Brazeau, MO)	Open Saturday and Sunday, Noon – 6 pm

INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS

Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Parks and Recreation	Trail of Tears State Park	State park of 3,415 acres, fishing, lake, swimming beach, interpretive center, and restrooms.
	Shawnee Park	131 acres, five lighted softball diamonds, 12 soccer fields, and walking trail.
	Arena Park	Municipal park of 90 acres, four tennis courts, one football field, 16 ball diamonds, two soccer fields, two basketball courts, two sand volleyball courts, one rugby field, walking trail, and playground.
	Twin Trees Park	Municipal park of 61 acres, walking trail
	Cherokee Park	Municipal park of 55 acres, one ball diamond
	Osage Park	Municipal park of 52 acres, walking trail, houses the Osage Community Centre
Golf Courses	Arena Park Golf & Putt Putt	Public
	Bent Creek Golf Course	Public
	Cape Girardeau Country Club	Private
	Cape Jaycee Municipal Golf Course	Public
	The Dalhousie	Private; named "one of the Top 10 Best New Private Club Courses in America" by Golf Digest Magazine in 2004.
	Kimberland Country Club	Private
Entertainment	Show Me Center	Home court for the Redhawks varsity men's and women's basketball teams of Southeast Missouri State University. Also hosts concerts, other sporting events, top-notch family entertainment, and a first-rate banquet, convention, and meeting facility.
	River Campus	School of Visual and Performing Arts (SVPA) at Southeast Missouri State University. Theatre and concert performances. Open to the public. Conference and meeting space available.
	Southeast Missouri State University Athletics	The Southeast Missouri State University Redhawks compete in 13 inter-collegiate sports, as members of the Ohio Valley Conference.
	Movie Theaters	Cape West 14 Cine Town Plaza Cinema

INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS

Type of Attraction	Name of Attraction	Comments
Shopping/Antiques	Shopping Centers	Broadview Plaza Cape West Plaza (The) Crossroads The Village Town Plaza Shopping Center West Park Mall West Park Village
	Antiques and Specialty Stores	A-1 Consignment Center Annie-Em's Annie Laurie's Antiques Back Porch Antiques & Collectables Brick Street Gallery Doris's Antiques & Collectibles Dockside Furniture & Antiques Early Era Shoppe (The) Furniture Garden Golden Goose Antiques and Collectibles Gung Ho Militaria Knock on Wood Mitchell Antiques Pastimes Antiques Patricia Ann's Garden Gallery Peddler's Corner River City Coins and Jewelry Riverfront Antique Mall Spanish Street Mercantile

INVENTORY OF ATTRACTIONS

Event	Comments
Saint Francis Indoor Soccer Invitational	January
Monster Truck Winternationals	January
Indoor Rodeo	February
Sports Show	February
Antique Car Club Swap Meet	February
Smith's Classic Car Auction	March
Home & Garden Show	March
Gun & Knife Show	March
Antique & Collectibles Show	March, November
Cape Girardeau Storytelling Festival	April
Steamboat Classic Triathlon	April
Wine Festival	April
Mississippi River Valley Scenic Drive	April
Tunes at Twilight	May, June, July, August, September
Fort D Days	May
Louis J. Lorimier Memorial World Famous Downtown Golf Tournament and All-You-Can-Eat Catfish Fry	June
Outdoor concerts at Trail of Tears and Bollinger Mill	June, September
Libertyfest: 4th of July Fireworks and Patriotic Music on the Mississippi River	July
Heroes and Legends Air Show Festival	July
Jaycee's BBQ Fest	August
SEMO District Fair	September
Trail of Tears Triathlon	September
Music Festival	September
River Tales Classic Show	September
Tour de Cape Bike Ride	October
Southeast MO State University Homecoming	October
Black Forest Village Octoberfest	October
Ghost Story Telling Festival	October
Women's Show	October
River Heritage Quilt Show	October
Annual Arts and Crafts Extravaganza	November
Christmas Parade of Lights	November
Holiday of Lights Tour	December
Downtown Open House	December