

# Visitor Assessment Butte, Montana

November, 2013



Tourism is about residents, business owners and stakeholders providing a hassle-free experience that meets visitors' needs and exceeds their expectations. The ultimate goal: return visits, increased customer base for existing businesses and attractions, and the very best marketing tool available – word of mouth.

The question Butte needs to answer is:

*With so many destinations for people to choose from, why should they choose Butte and what will their experience be like once they arrive?*

Communities who successfully continue to attract visitors combine a strong identity backed by solid product and effective marketing. When you deliver on the promise you make to your visitors, they are eager to return and will share their positive experience with their friends, family and a variety of online connections.

Fundamentally, Butte is a community with a strong identity and significant history that is still visible in its topography, its architecture and its culture. Over the past several decades major efforts have resulted in preservation of iconic buildings and remnants of its mining history. The community is to be commended for its passionate dedication to retaining its heritage and working to develop experiences for visitors.

According to the Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research (ITRR) at the University of Montana, nearly 4 million people drove through or past Butte in 2012. What an incredible potential market that is already here. You don't have to get them to Montana, they're already in your backyard, but are they stopping?

The Montana Folk Festival estimates 170,000 people attended the 2013 festival with an economic impact of \$30 million (\$176/person). That's great, but it's only one weekend. What about the rest of the year?

2012 visitation numbers at the World Museum of Mining and the Berkeley Pit indicate a base visitation of about 20,000 people. This is an average of 110 people/day during the six-month season and only one-half of 1 percent of the people driving through Butte annually.

Using the festival impact amount of \$176/person, 20,000 visitors would have an economic impact of \$3.5 million/year. What if Butte could gradually grow this number to 100,000 (only 2.5% of those driving through) over the next five years? Instead of a five-year impact of \$17 million, the potential could be closer to \$50 million. This is the power of tourism to improve quality of life for residents, create jobs and strengthen a community's overall economic vitality.

In 2012, as part of its on-going tourism effort, an action plan for heritage tourism was created and in 2013, as part of the implementation process, a tourism assessment was conducted by Cygnet Strategies, LLC.

This assessment is a look at Butte through the eyes of a visitor. It is a tool for identifying strengths upon which to build, challenges to mitigate, and opportunities to consider. Containing both a marketing assessment and an on-site assessment, it is a snapshot in time, a baseline against which to gauge progress.

The marketing assessment took place in early summer 2013 to determine if Butte shows up as an option when people are planning a trip to Montana.

The on-site assessment of Butte took place during the summer of 2013 and the purpose of this phase was to experience the community the same way a first-time visitor might.

The questions this portion of the assessment addressed were:

- Can visitors find Butte?
- Does Butte make a good first impression?
- Where can visitors get information?
- What experiences does Butte offer?
- Where are the public restrooms?
- Can visitors find their way around Butte?

On November 20-22, 2013, a series of public meetings were held to review the assessment findings and begin the conversation about Butte's future as a tourism destination.



## 2.0 Marketing Assessment

Visibility is critical. If people can't find information about Butte, they won't know it exists. Unlike Yellowstone and Glacier, Butte is currently not a primary destination for resident and non-resident visitors. In fact, most people probably won't specifically search for information about Butte, but, that doesn't preclude a successful process where visitors:

- (1) Find information about Butte
- (2) Choose to visit Butte
- (3) Visit Butte
- (4) Butte meets or exceeds expectations
- (5) Tell friends and family about Butte
- (6) Return to Butte
- (7) Repeat

The good news: Butte's presence on the Internet can be as strong as any other community's.

The not so good news: with the breadth of information available, people have become less trusting of what you say about yourself. They want to know what other people say about you, and you have minimal control over this.

As part of this assessment, a marketing snapshot was conducted using five groups/individuals who live in a variety of strong markets for Butte and who are interested in history, festivals and events.

### TYLER

- Single, late 20s
- Travels with friends/girlfriend
- Road trip from Seattle
- Historic sites, golf, outdoor recreation
- Budget-conscious

### ELLIE

- Married, 30s
- Travels with spouse/friends
- Fly from LA, then driving
- Cool local places, history, unusual activities
- Value over price

### RUTH

- Married, 40s
- Travels with teenagers/extended family/friends
- Road trip from South Dakota
- Historic sites, festivals, arts & culture
- Value over price

### LEO

- Married, Baby Boomer
- Travels with spouse/extended family
- Road trip from Minnesota
- Historic sites, scenic routes, natural history
- Average budget

### ALLEN

- Single, retiree
- Travels with friends/extended family
- Road trip from Alberta
- Historic sites, music festivals
- Value over prices



## 2.0 Marketing Assessment

All five were told to assume they've been to Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. They were then asked where else they would like to visit in Montana.

Getting past this first step, where visitors gather information, is challenging for all destinations. When visitors are making decisions about where to spend their time and money, they consciously and subconsciously access an array of resources over an indeterminate period of time.

- Recommendations from friends and family
- Books
- Movies and TV shows
- Magazine and newspaper articles
- Guidebooks and brochures
- Print advertising
- TV and radio advertising
- On-line advertising
- Social media including Facebook and Twitter
- Websites
- Blogs
- YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram
- Billboards
- Highway signs
- Previous travel experiences

In addition to various books, travel magazines, and recommendations from friends, family and social media contacts, the team used a variety of search terms for their on-line research.

Some of these terms they used:

- Coolest town Montana
- Montana richest homes
- Montana events
- Montana golf
- Fun things to do Montana
- Montana travel
- Montana activities
- Montana vacations
- Montana outdoor recreation
- Montana scenic drives
- Montana ranch vacations
- Montana best road trips
- Montana music festivals
- Best places to visit in Montana
- Montana historic sites
- Montana history
- #Montana
- #Tourism
- #Travel
- #Vacation
- Locals Know Montana (Canadian radio campaign)



## 2.0 Marketing Assessment

### What places and/or activities in Montana look interesting to you?

*"I love finding local artists and following historical trails to learn all kinds of obscure historical tidbits... If there is an interesting festival or event - I'm there!"*

*~Ruth*

*"We both visited Montana as kids and can't wait to drive the back roads and explore together. Virginia and Nevada Cities look interesting so we'll probably focus on that area and also visit Bozeman and Philipsburg. The Sweet Pea Festival and the events in VA/NV cities look sweet!"*

*~Ellie*

*"We'll drive through Missoula, visit Philipsburg, Anaconda, Lewis & Clark Caverns, Big Sky and then visit Red Lodge."*

*~Tyler*

*"We love history - both the cultural and natural varieties. I'm ready to find the road less traveled in Montana and learn about its origins and growth."*

*~Leo*

*"The 'Locals Know' campaign that ran on Alberta radio stations encouraged me to consider a loop tour. I want to end up in cool towns."*

*~Allen*



### What places and/or activities in Montana look interesting to you?

- Lewis & Clark Caverns
- Beartooth Highway
- Philipsburg
- Georgetown Lake
- Anaconda
- Old Works Golf Course
- Big Sky
- Seeley-Swan Scenic Drive
- Polebridge
- Virginia City
- Stay in unusual lodging
- Festivals & events
- Billings
- Chico Hot Springs
- National Bison Range
- Helena
- Whitefish
- Indian Trail
- Pioneer Scenic Byway
- Magic City Blues Fest
- **Montana Folk Festival**
- Lewis & Clark Center
- Red Lodge
- Red Ants Pants Festival
- Russell Wildlife Refuge
- Pine Butte Swamp
- Bair Family Museum
- Highway 2
- Crow Fair
- CM Russell Museum
- Bozeman

**After all of their research, the only Butte-related place or event to show up was the Montana Folk Festival.**

**Everyone then moved on to Phase 2 where they answered the question: Would you go to Butte?**



### Would you go to Butte? Why or why not?

*"I did some searches and looked at the CVB site, mainstreetuptownbutte.com, Virtual Tourist and TripAdvisor and nothing really stood out for me. Everyone listed a pit as an attraction but I just don't get it - a polluted pool of water? The things that were the most interesting to me were Fairmont and Old Works - both outside of Butte"*  
~ Tyler

This is evidence of an ineffective online presence. Improving the quality of available information, claiming listings on review sites and creating (and effectively implementing) a detailed, collaborative digital marketing strategy will address this weakness.

Taglines and slogans that make sense to residents may confuse visitors. This, combined with a weak digital presence, makes it easy for people to move past Butte as a destination.

Events are a key draw for Butte during the summer. Keeping information access as simple as possible maintains attention during the information gathering phase. Accurate and complete contact information is necessary but it shouldn't be considered a replacement for the basics - what, where, when, how much.

*"Probably not. After our online research there didn't seem to be anything interesting in Butte and what does 'Tap'er light' mean? Butte is clearly proud of being the 'Richest Hill on Earth' but is that still true? Events seem infrequent, even the folk festival listing on the CVB site doesn't tell us what month it's in. We were by also frustrated by the listings and how many clicks it took to get to actual information."*

~Ellie

*"I'd stop in Butte for the day and might do the Urban Safari Tour. Actually, I might do other things but it's hard to find detailed information. I think I'd stay at the Iron Wheel Guest Ranch and go to Crystal Mountain. just curious, what does 'Tap'er light' mean?"*  
~Ruth

More support for improving Butte's online presence. If people can't find information, they assume there isn't any information to find and they move on to considering other destinations.



### Would you go to Butte? Why or why not?

*"I might stop in Butte for a few hours, but the Berkeley Pit isn't my idea of interesting. I spent a long time on the mining museum site but couldn't find any info on its hours or directions. Ordinarily I never would have worked that hard to find info. I would have looked for something else."*  
~ Leo

When one of the largest attractions has an incomplete website, it makes it very difficult for the destination as a whole to be a strong draw.

Providing workshops for individual attractions and businesses to assist with improving their websites and digital presence would support any improvement efforts by the larger tourism organizations.

Allen's words sum up the current situation. However, Butte is fortunate - there is a lot to work with and there are passionate residents who continue to step up with their time and money to work toward keeping Butte a great place to live and strengthening it as a destination of choice for visitors.

*"Butte seems stuck in the past without really being able to create a solid visitor experience out of its amazing history. That's sad. So many slogans:*

*Tap 'er light*

*It's Easy to Imagine, It's as Real as It Gets*

*For all the right reasons,*

*The Richest Hill on Earth*

*None of these slogans make any sense to me and I'm in marketing. I can't imagine they make sense to other visitors either. What is the experience? What can I expect when I come to Butte? Those are answers I was unable to find even though I really wanted to get excited about Butte."*

*~Allen*

### What did we learn?

Currently, Butte's online presence is not as compelling as it could be and you may be failing to "close the sale" with potential visitors. Developing and implementing a strategic approach to digital marketing expands the area's reach and complements print campaigns and printed materials.



## 2.0 Marketing Assessment

<http://www.buttecvb.com>

One of the first places visitors get information, after they've decided to visit a destination, is its webpage.

This is the homepage for the CVB and is where the assessment team became confused by the phrase "tap 'er light." While the photos used on the slider reflect the Butte experience, they do little to help visitors understand the phrase.



## 2.0 Marketing Assessment



If you knew nothing about Butte and you saw these photos, would you have any idea what "Tap 'er Light" means? Would you care?

Localisms are a rich part of a community's history and can help evoke a sense of place but it helps when they can be put in context or when visitors hear residents using the phrase. During multiple visits to Butte we never heard anyone use the phrase and no one we asked knew what it meant.

## 2.0 Marketing Assessment

### Facebook

There is no Facebook presence for Butte as a destination although there is one for the Chamber of Commerce. With a limited staff, a choice needs to be made and a Visit Butte Facebook page with information and conversations related to the tourism experience would potentially drive more engagement and draw more visitors to the community than the current Chamber page. Both the Chamber page and the Mainstreet Uptown Butte page push information but see little interaction.

Residents who are passionate about Butte are one of your biggest assets and by developing a strategy that drives engagement between residents and visitors you create a stronger presence and a more appealing destination.



### Twitter

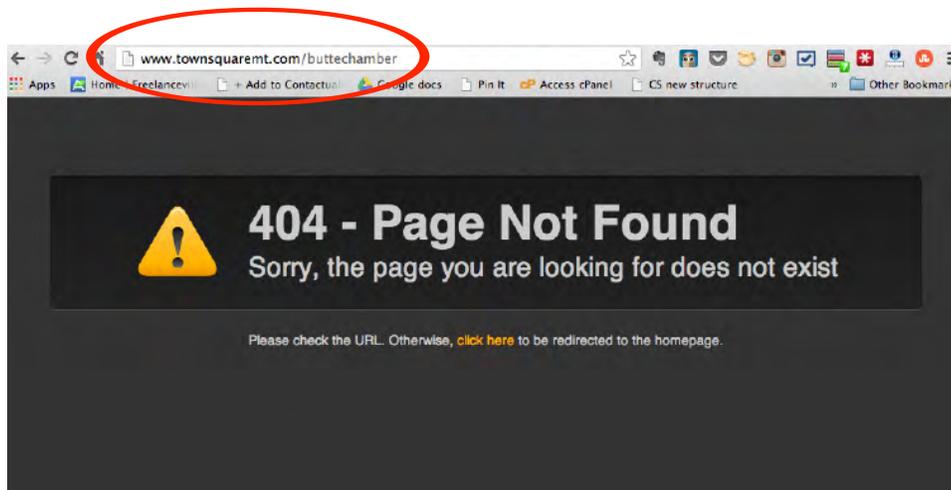
There is no Twitter presence for Butte as a destination although there is one for the Chamber of Commerce (@ButteChamber). This account is used solely to push information and is linked to the Chamber's Facebook page, resulting in identical posts/tweets.

Twitter is where real-time information is exchanged and it requires a different strategy from that needed for Facebook.

Unless content is being adapted for the Twitter audience, a strategy is developed and the administrator is willing to engage in conversations, respond to information requests and retweet photos and other content, there is no reason for there to be a Twitter account. When staff and time become available, @VisitButte should be utilized as a destination account.



One of the challenges with digital marketing is verifying that links continue to work. It may be time-consuming, but it is critical. The last thing you want is for someone who is interested in more information to end up at a dead link.



## Twitter

People are talking about Butte on Twitter whether there is a presence for the destination or not. Having the @VisitButte account active provides the opportunity to build upon the comments and conversations that are already taking place. You can thank others for kind words, deal with customer service issues, provide additional information or simply share content.

The screenshot displays a Twitter search interface for the query "butte montana". The results are organized into two columns. The left column shows a list of tweets from various users, including Chance Pipal, Téada, Derek Tiggelaar, LilsChildBereavement, and Marilyn Terrell. The right column shows tweets from helenaironline, KBZK TV Bozeman, MT, Big Sky Journal, MontanaVacationInfo, and MERCURYcsc. Below these columns, two additional tweets are visible: one from Mark Riffey and another from Bozeman Chronicle, both discussing a goat walking into a bar in Butte.

**Results for butte montana**  
Top / All / People you follow

**Chance Pipal** @ChancePipal  
Montana Old Fashion! Flathead cherries and Butte whiskey!  
instagram.com/p/c2Zi00GC1f/  
Expand

**Téada** @teadamusic  
Having a fantastic weekend at An Rí Rá Montana Irish Festival in Butte. Great to see the growth of the festival... fb.me/2Zi8x8LFS  
Expand

**Derek Tiggelaar** @D\_Tiggs  
Happy birthday to Pat Bute from Butte, Montana #AlmostPerfect  
from Silver Bow Northwest, MT

**LilsChildBereavement** @LilLeesCB  
Support group helps children grieve the loss of a loved one |  
KXLF.com | Butte, Montana: kxlf.com/news/support-g... #LilLees  
Expand

**Marilyn Terrell** @Marilyn\_Res  
Why Cornish pasties have a crimped edge ow.ly/20O5tq via  
@WheresAndrew in Butte #Montana  
Retweeted 2 times  
Expand

**helenaironline** @helenaironline  
Have you, or do you plan to, attend the Montana Folk Festival in Butte?  
Music from around the world... fb.me/1myHYNjJA  
Followed by MERCURYcsc and 2 others  
Expand

**KBZK TV Bozeman, MT** @KBZK  
It was a great night in Butte at last night's Montana Folk Festival. The festivities continue today and tonight -... fb.me/2cyfYnFj0  
Followed by Heidi O'Brien and 3 others  
Expand

**Big Sky Journal** @bigskyjournal  
Kicking off tomorrow, the Montana Folk Festival brings musicians from around the world to Butte: ow.ly/mJntq  
Followed by Big Sky Town Center and 1 other  
Expand

**MontanaVacationInfo** @MTVacationInfo  
It's almost here, everyone! Who's going to Butte for the Montana Folk Festival this weekend? fb.me/CMZKcP2r  
Followed by Yellowstone Country and 14 others  
Expand

**MERCURYcsc** @MERCURYcsc  
From one all-American holiday to the next. Gearing up for Evel Knievel Days, July 25-27 in Uptown Butte mrcry.us/18BjWE #Montana

**Mark Riffey** @MarkRiffey  
Where else would it walk into? :) RT @bozchron: AP: A goat walk into a bar in Butte, taken to shelter bit.ly/1096Wut  
Followed by Mark Schaefer and 6 others  
Expand

**Bozeman Chronicle** @bozchron  
AP: A goat walks into a bar in Butte, taken to shelter bit.ly/1096Wut  
Expand

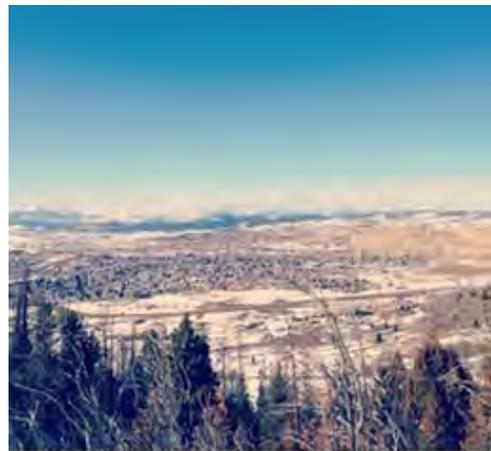
## Pinterest

There is no Pinterest presence for Butte as a destination, however, Butte-related photos are still being pinned and re-pinned by others. This is an excellent resource for content and for insight into how visitors and residents are experiencing the community.



butte montana, one very historical and strange place...but the people are nice..many of Irish descent

22 repins 1 like



Butte Montana--Saw this from another pinner and it was on a "bucket list" Never thought of Butte as a place to be on a bucket list....but I've been here quite a few times!

1 repin 2 comments



Repinned by  
**Jennifer Taylor**

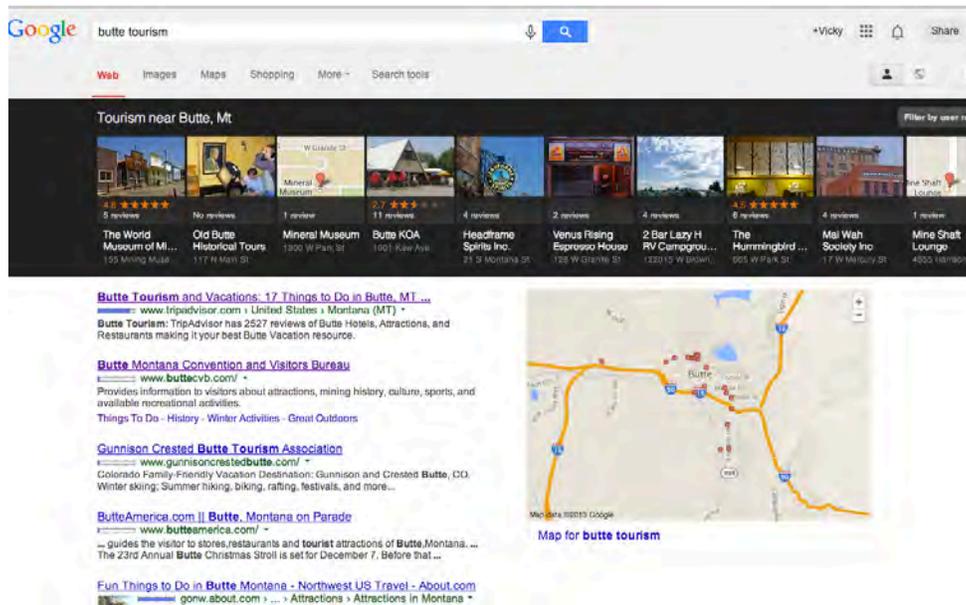


**onto**  
Travel-Places I've been

## Local Search

Visitors are looking for you in places you may have never heard of and it is important for Butte to claim its listing- as a destination - in order to control the content and have the ability to respond to reviews. Attractions, shops, restaurants and lodging should claim their listings as well.

The new format for Google provides results like this:



The information, photos and videos that show up in the slider are linked to Google Places, not the business websites. Claiming a listing takes a few minutes to enter the information and about a week to receive the verification PIN in the mail.

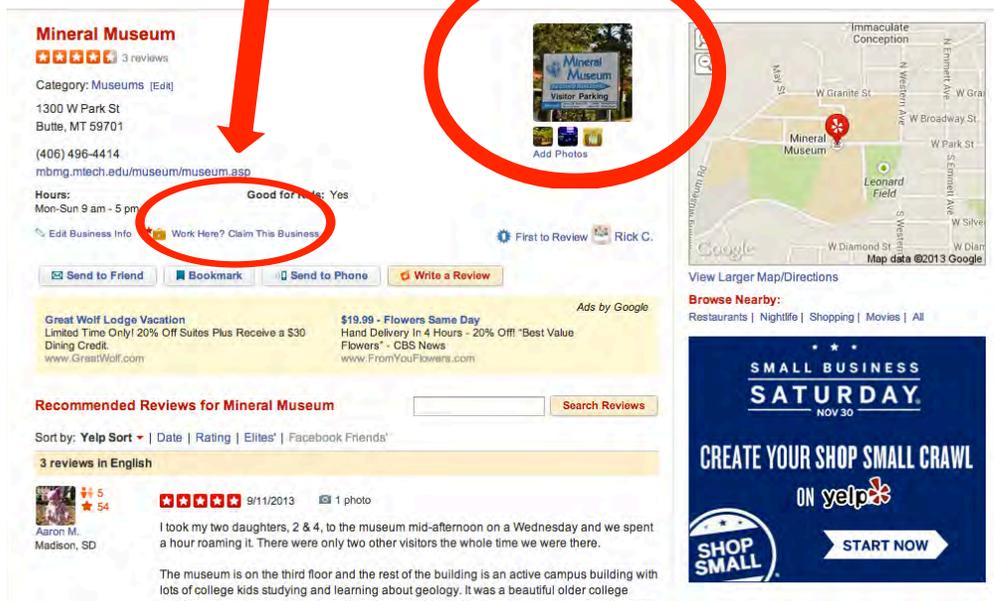


## Local Search

This is the listing for the Mineral Museum as it appears on 

This is where you can tell that the listing has not been claimed. Because it has not been claimed, you cannot respond to comments.

These photos were not posted by the museum. If the listing has not been claimed, anyone can post any photo they choose and you have no control over it.



**Mineral Museum**  
3 reviews  
Category: Museums (Eak)  
1300 W Park St  
Butte, MT 59701  
(406) 496-4414  
mbmg.mtech.edu/museum/museum.asp  
Hours: Mon-Sun 9 am - 5 pm  
Good for:  Kids,  Families,  Pets,  Yes  
Edit Business Info Work Here? Claim This Business First to Review Rick C.  
Send to Friend Bookmark Send to Phone Write a Review  
Great Wolf Lodge Vacation Limited Time Only! 20% Off Suites Plus Receive a \$30 Dining Credit. www.GreatWolf.com \$19.99 - Flowers Same Day Hand Delivery In 4 Hours - 20% Off! "Best Value Flowers" - CBS News www.FromYouFlowers.com  
Recommended Reviews for Mineral Museum  
Sort by: Yelp Sort | Date | Rating | Elites' | Facebook Friends'  
3 reviews in English  
Aaron M. Madison, SD 5/5 9/11/2013 1 photo  
I took my two daughters, 2 & 4, to the museum mid-afternoon on a Wednesday and we spent a hour roaming it. There were only two other visitors the whole time we were there.  
The museum is on the third floor and the rest of the building is an active campus building with lots of college kids studying and learning about geology. It was a beautiful older college building. The museum is in a beautiful old room. It looks like it used to be a reception hall

### Can Visitors find Butte?

Road maps, GPS and highway signs were used as navigational tools during the assessment and Butte was very easy to find. Signs at every decision point coming from Missoula, Dillion, Bozeman and Helena indicated accurate information concerning direction of travel and mileages.

GPS accuracy is becoming less of a challenge in rural Montana and there were only a few places where the directions became unreliable. However, this is not a problem due to the assistance provided by highway signage and Butte's location at the intersection of I-15 and I-90.

### Does Butte make a good first impression?

Before visitors exit I-15 at one of the gateways into Butte, they are forming opinions about the community. The mining-scarred landscape differs from the lush forests travelers have been experiencing along the highway and this is the foundation of getting them to ask "why?" and enticing them off the highway to find out.

While the landscape itself cannot be easily changed, the "welcome mat" of signage, gateways and roadside landscaping can be inviting and will communicate that this is thriving community with treasures to share.

### INTERSTATE 15



The first views of Butte are significantly different from the landscapes in the surrounding area. The visible impact of mining is part of your history but those passing by on the Interstate may not know this.

This sign creates an expectation that being a Cultural Heritage Area is a big deal. When we searched online, the only information we found was the enabling legislation.

In addition, the sign looks forlorn and gives the impression that Butte is too.

If the sign means nothing, get MDT to remove it. If it does mean something, help visitors find out more.



## 3.0 On-Site Assessment

### I-15 GATEWAY, exit 127

This sign on I-15 WB, before exit 127 is confusing. Without an exit number and because it is close to an exit, visitors may be uncertain. If they do exit at Harrison Avenue, they are greeted with the signs below.



Taking exit 127 brings you to this sign grouping at Harrison. It's the first sign we saw indicating an airport and there are no directionals for historic Uptown or a historic district.

It's easy for people in an unfamiliar place to become frustrated and this results in them looking for the quickest way out of town.

Since Uptown is off the primary arterials, make it easy for people to find it.

The sign clutter at this exit could be simplified like this with the airport icon sign remaining.



## 3.0 On-Site Assessment

### I-15 GATEWAY, exit 126

The inclusion of information about a Transportation Center gave the impression that the Historic District was far away from where we would park our car and that it would be an experience of its own.



The different colors of these MDT signs and the different sizes of the arrows make the Visitor Information Center appear more important than Uptown.

Creating a customized wayfinding system and simplifying the signage shows the community cares and that they are eager to make it easy for visitors to find their way around.



### MONTANA STREET GATEWAY

This gateway on Montana, off I-15, is nicely landscaped and well-maintained in the summer. Be sure it is equally welcoming the rest of the year.



As a welcome mat into your historic core, this location for a gateway sign is ideal. However, keep in mind that what visitors see immediately after the gateway sign is another first impression.

This may be the district boundary but visitors don't care about that, they want to know what the experience is. Does what they see past the sign accurately reflect the experience awaiting them?

Consider a sign that simply and visually reflects Butte's personality. Refer to Historic Uptown instead of using the formal district name and add a distance (1 mile). This tells visitors that they haven't arrived yet and encourages them to keep driving.



### MONTANA STREET ENTRANCE TO UPTOWN

As visitors get closer to the core of Uptown, the streetscape along Montana is pretty bleak and does not reflect the experience once they turn down Park, Granite or Broadway.

This is a decision point for many visitors and if they don't see a place that encourages them to park their car and explore on foot, they may just head back to the Interstate.



Adding trees and keeping them trimmed softens the hard edges, especially along wide streets.

Awnings, perpendicular blade signs, trees, flowers and a variety of facades create interest.



### UPTOWN IMPRESSIONS

It was a bit unsettling that one of the most beautifully landscaped place we found was at the Berkeley Pit. Clearly, a great deal of time and money has been invested into making this parking lot a pleasant experience but we're not sure why.

Is this what Butte wants to have as its iconic history-related experience?



What a delightful Uptown treasure! This is truly a hidden gem that needs to be brought out into the sunlight. We found it by accident and only because we were covering all of Uptown. Ordinarily we probably wouldn't have ventured into the area.

If all of Uptown looked like this, it would be on every bucket list for Montana visitors.

Ghost signs are a core component of Butte's sense of place. They provide additional connections to the past and visitors constantly post photos of them on social networks. This increases Butte's exposure and builds its reputation as a historic community worth a visit.



## 3.0 On-Site Assessment

### UPTOWN IMPRESSIONS



Street furniture is important and should complement a community's sense of place. Benches should back up to buildings - people feel more secure if others are walking in front of them than behind them - and garbage cans should evoke a similar time period.

Adding more clocks could serve as anchors for each block and information maps (shown below) could be attached to the poles.

This type of information kiosk is relatively inexpensive and by adding them to the clock tower poles, they would be easy for people to find.



### Where can visitors get information?

Although many visitors access information on-line through tablets and smartphones while traveling, it is still important to provide 24/7 access to printed information once they arrive in Butte.

Visitors need to know where to find activities, attractions and services like food, gas, lodging and restrooms. This is usually provided by a combination of directional wayfinding signs and information kiosks.

Today, the primary source of visitor information for those who are actually in town (particularly in the evenings and on weekends) is digital and extremely limited.

Training front line staff to answer questions and provide visitors with directions, options and information would be worth the effort. Future efforts aimed at kiosks and signage will be beneficial as well.



The signs for the visitor center are difficult to see and the "Transportation Center" phrase is confusing since we also saw signs for a "Transfer Center."

Transportation Center generally means a local transportation hub, however, we learned that the Transportation Center was actually related to the trolley tours offered in the summer.

The Visitor Center is an excellent facility, however, it is difficult to find and not within walking distance of Uptown. A satellite space or at least some information kiosks are needed to help inform visitors when they are on foot in the Uptown area.

In the short term, providing printed materials (including maps) in Uptown businesses would supplement the word of mouth recommendations from front-line staff.



## What experiences does Butte offer?

A visitor's experience is built from their expectations, the physical setting, their sense of safety, the attractions, the food, the shopping, the sounds, the smells, the customer service and the vibe on the street.

Butte is in an enviable position. The physical remnants, the stories and the culture that define Butte combine to create an opportunity unlike anywhere else, most communities are not this lucky.

Meeting the challenge of combining entertaining experiences with engaging interpretation and solid services requires infrastructure, a focused, coordinated effort, passionate stakeholders and quality marketing.

Summers appear busy in Butte with plenty of festivals and activities, but the reality is that on most peak season days Uptown and the attractions are pretty quiet. Field research also indicates businesses are relocating from Uptown to high traffic areas along Harrison Avenue.

Bringing more visitors into Uptown supports Uptown businesses and helps preserve it as a thriving and attractive area while improving Butte's overall appeal as an outstanding destination for visitors.

Shoulder seasons are just as important as the summer. Many visitors travel during the spring and fall (and even the winter) to avoid the crowds. What kind of experiences or opportunities could be expanded upon to attract these visitors?

Butte has been successful at drawing a variety of sporting events and tournaments. When these are held, be sure information is provided to each participant/family about what is available for them to see and do throughout the community.

Coupons, special offers and even extended hours create a positive experience. There is plenty of down time between games - give them a reason to come Uptown and spend their money. "Spend your down time UPTOWN"



## 3.0 On-Site Assessment

### What experiences does Butte offer?

Finding the attractions in Butte was not easy. We started with the World Museum of Mining. There were multiple signs that were too small, awkwardly positioned, and with a variety of designs.

Creating a consistent wayfinding system where signs are placed appropriately will dramatically improve the visitor experience.



### What experiences does Butte offer?

Finding the Piccadilly Museum was complicated by the lack of a perpendicular sign and the reflective windows. With the flyers taped in the window and the juxtapositioning of the display items, it looked like an empty storefront.



It was only when we were across the street that we could see the name.

This is a great experience but the sign is worn, making it look like the tours are no longer provided.

In addition to repainting the sign, generally you want the arrows at or near the top so they're not blocked by pedestrians and vehicles. You should also advertise the experience first – Uptown Guided Tours – and then the name of the business.



### What experiences does Butte offer?

We saw several of these signs but there were no arrows. We also couldn't find any information online other than the fact that the route is used during Evel Knievel Days.

Anytime there is a route, loop or trail, you should provide a map and interpretation, otherwise there is no experience for visitors and the signs are simply clutter.



Opinions about having a pit of toxic water, surrounded by lush landscaping, as a tourist attraction that helps fund the Chamber of Commerce continue to appear on various review sites.

As Butte defines its story and how to interpret its history, consideration should be given to whether the Berkeley Pit is a tourism asset.

This puts a new spin on the drive-in movie and is an unusual experience for visitors. Any additional activities that can be developed to use the setting at The Original will be a way to attract people off the Interstate.



### What experiences does Butte offer?

We found no signs to the following attractions and when we asked for directions, most people either had no idea or provided vague information:

- Berkeley Pit
- Mai Wah Museum
- Piccadilly Museum
- Mother Lode Theatre
- Mineral Museum
- High Schools
- Granite Mountain Mine Memorial
- Our Lady of the Rockies

Since Uptown and most of Butte's attractions are not easy to find, it is critical to implement wayfinding, provide information kiosks, make printed materials available and be sure that listings on local and review sites are claimed and up-to-date.

### Strengths & Opportunities

- Residents are passionate about Butte
- Significant visual remnants of history
- Historic architecture
- Recreational opportunities nearby
- Solid core of restaurants and shopping
- Events/Festivals - Butte celebrates!
- Access to transportation corridors

### Challenges & Threats

- Wayfinding
- No cohesive brand or tourism effort
- Rough reputation - safety perception
- Inadequate online presence
- Volatile winter weather
- Strategic Plan fatigue
- Limited downtown lodging options
- Sunday and evening hours are limited

### Next Steps - Short Term

#### **UNIFIED TOURISM PRESENCE**

Bringing all of the local tourism stakeholders together to identify who will take the lead and what the structure will look like is an important step. This will include:

- Butte-Silver Bow County
- Butte Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Butte -Silver Bow Chamber of Commerce
- Mainstreet Uptown Butte
- Butte-Silver Bow Tourism Business Improvement District
- Attractions managers
- Shop owners
- Restaurant owners
- Event organizers
- Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
- Historical organizations
- Trails groups

Placing all of the burden on the CVB or maintaining a situation where each organization operates independently is generally ineffective. Facilitating conversations and strategic planning sessions will allow the stakeholders to develop a collaborative framework and establish a clearly-defined organization to oversee tourism development and marketing.

COST: \$3,000 - \$10,000

#### **VISITOR INFORMATION IN UPTOWN**

Making maps and brochures available throughout Uptown is important. Work with shop owners and restaurants to have an attractive, visible display area.

#### **VISUAL APPEARANCE**

Continue the beautification efforts and identify additional pocket park options, if possible. Keeping the streets and sidewalks clear of trash and weeds makes a big difference to visitors. They probably won't notice the absence of trash, but they will notice the forlorn look created by trash and weeds. Adding more garbage cans throughout Uptown will help.

#### **PUBLIC RESTROOMS**

Building public restrooms is a major capital project. Consideration should be given to creating a satellite visitor center with restrooms in the first floor of one of the historic building. In the short term, however, businesses and attractions that are willing to open their restrooms to the public should be identified. Providing an incentive - discounts on water/sewer bills, assistance with plumbing bills due to increased stress on older systems, tax rebates - may make it easier to get participation.



### Next Steps - Short Term

#### ONLINE PRESENCE

Improvements to the buttecvb.com website are already underway and will provide a good foundation for Butte's online presence. Keep the focus on the visitor perspective: assume they don't know where places are located and that they need more than just addresses and phone numbers. Having an individual who is focused on and responsible for the entire digital presence is important.

(1) Be sure the website updates are user-friendly, support the broader digital marketing plan, and can be revised as needed.

(2) Encourage local businesses to claim their profiles on:

- Google Places
- Facebook Places
- Bing
- Yahoo
- Yelp
- Urbanspoon
- Foursquare
- Superpages
- Yellow Pages
- Citysearch
- Hotfrog

(3) Develop a digital marketing strategy and content calendar for participation on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr and YouTube. This adds more potential touchpoints for visitors. However, not every platform is appropriate for every business. Since consistency is critical, selecting one and becoming proficient is usually the best approach before adding another. Where are your potential customers looking for you? Where do they hang out online? That's where you want to be.

COST: \$5,000 - \$40,000/year depending upon how this is structured

#### WAYFINDING

This is one of the most effective improvements to the Butte visitor experience. It improves sense of place, helps visitors navigate, and communicates what there is to see and do. Trail signs and interpretive signs should also be a part of the system. Design of the signage, determination of destinations and sign locations, creation of a message schedule and development of bid-ready documents would be needed.

COST FOR DESIGN AND DOCUMENTATION: \$50,000 - \$90,000

COST FOR IMPLEMENTATION: \$100,000 - \$300,000



### Next Steps - Long Term

#### **FACADE PROGRAM**

The preservation and revitalization effort throughout Uptown over the years is commendable. Continuing to uncover historic facades where possible or adding appropriate facades where they no longer exist will improve the overall aesthetics of Uptown.

#### **SHOULDER SEASON OFFERINGS**

Many of the visitors interested in what Butte offers are traveling during the spring and fall shoulder seasons. Developing activities, extending hours and creating a solid experience during these months as well as during the summer could dramatically increase visitation. What are opportunities that don't exist in the summer because it's too hot? What interest groups, tour groups or associations can you advertise with?

#### **EXPAND/ENHANCE INTERPRETATION AND VISITOR EXPERIENCES**

Defining Butte's identity in a way that all stakeholders understand and can collaborate with will be a huge step forward in strengthening tourism product and visitor experiences. A full-scale branding process is a major project and it can be challenging to find the right contractor - one who will work with what Butte has in ways that are sustainable, affordable and improve the quality of life for residents while appealing to visitors. This process should be complemented by the development of an interpretive plan to tell Butte's stories and enhance the historic experiences.

COST: \$70,000 - \$150,000

#### **PUBLIC SPACES AND PUBLIC RESTROOMS**

Defining indoor public space Uptown for events and festivals will make it easier for smaller events to continue adding vitality to Uptown. Repurposing historic buildings or outdoor spaces to create indoor and outdoor spaces where people gather in the evenings with music and food vendors. Adding public restrooms downtown, adjacent to the gathering spaces would be good for summer visitors and those attending events and festivals. By adding indoor spaces, the event season can be expanded into the shoulder seasons.

COST: varies depending upon the scope of project and land acquisition costs