



CHAPTER VII: ISSUES TO ADDRESS
COMMUNITIES BECOMING TOURIST ATTRACTIONS
Are You Ready for Visitors?

When company is coming over, we tend to look a little bit closer at our homes. Suddenly we notice the dust on the furniture, the vacuuming that needs to be done, the piles on the table, the dishes in the sink or the laundry that has piled up. Outside, it may be that the yard needs to be mowed or the gardens could use some weeding. Any other time, we would have a tendency to overlook these things, but when company is coming, we suddenly begin to see our home with a bit more critical eye.

This is also true in our communities. Over time, we tend to look over some of our community's faults which to others are eyesores. This was apparent in meetings in both Dante and St. Paul. The consultant commented on the fact when she came through the community of Sun on Hwy 63, she saw "piles of junk" on both sides of the road.

Those in the room responded that she must be referencing all the refrigerators at one of the businesses, but in fact, refrigerators actually lined both sides of the road in two different locations and down the road, an auto repair shop had broken down cars, piles of scrap metal and auto parts strewn out on both the left and the right. Many in the room drove past that area a couple of times a month, some twice a week, but no one realized just how bad it had gotten until photos were shared. Now when they go by, they are seeing the area as a first time visitor would see it, and what they see is not what they want presented to the public.



Over the years this had just become part of the landscape to those who drive by it every day.

Efforts are now being taken to clean up the mess.

What does it take to be "visitor-ready"? Sometimes it is the little things that can make a big difference. On the following page is a small community of about 2,000 people in southcentral Kentucky who decided to give themselves a facelift. They started with rehabbing some of the storefronts, replacing broken windows and cleaning up the trash. It has gradually spread to placing all their utilities underground, fixing their sidewalks and adding light posts, benches, coordinated trash barrels, and landscaping.



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The end product....You decide.

Would you want to live here? I would.



As noted, most of the benches and even some of the trash cans, and landscaping were donations in memory of loved ones. This is an excellent way for people to give back to the community while at the same time honoring others.



Interpretive signs have been added so visitors can learn about the rich heritage of this small community.

And with a little paint, they are even bringing beauty to the alleys and parking lots.



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Below are a few features in some of the communities along the Virginia Coal Heritage Trail that stand out as more “visitor ready” than some of the others.



The Town of Coeburn has many features which are pleasing to one’s eye.



This vacant lot in Appalachia could have become an eyesore. Instead, it was changed into a small park with park benches, trees and a stage for outdoor performances.



Appalachia has done a wonderful job with cleaning up the outside of their buildings, moving wires underground and adding landscaping and benches.



Plants, flowers, street lamps, unique dining opportunities with outside tables and park benches, without overhead wires or a proliferation of signage makes Downtown Richlands very inviting.



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Big Stone Gap offers an amazing number of high quality museums, well-signed historic walking/driving tours, an outdoor drama and a unique visitor center in a historic rail car.



June Tolliver House



Lonesome Pine Outdoor Drama



Southwest Virginia Museum



Lonesome Pine School & Heritage Center,



The Home of John Fox Jr.



Harry W. Meador, Jr. Coal Museum



Coordinated walking/driving tour signage throughout the community



Visitor Center in an old rail car

But lodging, shopping and unique dining experiences are a bit limited which in turn limits the overall economic impact visitors have while in the community.