

The Intentional Tourist  
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Last month, I came up with 7 keys to accomplishing community development goals. Part of my motivation is recognizing that there's so much more work to do than what Heritage Tourism Development can accomplish. People living in small rural communities want and deserve nice things. If you believe that "good enough is not good enough" then please read on.

First, you need to *research thoroughly and document sources*. A great idea means nothing if you cannot back it up and it cannot move forward if you don't have a budget and a plan. You will need to reference experts to persuade others. The second key is to *get organized and get others organized*. Put together a list of potential helpers—don't cross them off if they can't commit to meetings. Make sure the meetings you do have are meaningful and energizing. Key #3 is to *market and educate*. You have to let people know what is going on. Make press releases, write letters, do social media, contact local press, do public presentations, and (Key #4): *have civil 1 on 1 conversations*. It's almost always more productive to work with the willing than it is to subject yourself to verbal abuse, but you will need to win over cynics, especially if it's an issue that requires a public vote or the cooperation of local government. A polite 1 on 1 conversation is the best and most effective way to communicate.

Key #5 is to *seek professional help*. Others have likely done something similar and can guide you towards resources, strategies, and prevent you from running into obstacles. Key #6 is to *seek out partnerships*. Collaboration is critical—it's the quickest way to get anything accomplished. For both #5 and #6 though, resist the urge to just let experts or local organizations replace your volunteer led efforts. Your role is to lead, not to complain until someone does something. They are not going to have the same passion and commitment to your project, even if they can provide critical help.

Don't spend so much time on #1-#6 that you forget the seventh and most critical key to success: *fundraising*. It's nerve-wracking to ask people for money, but it's the best way to move something forward. Don't get hung up on landing a government grant. Qualifying for and then landing a government or charitable grant is far more difficult than people imagine. You likely will need substantial matching funds, will have to jump through regulatory hoops, and you will have to get used to waiting for decisions. Better then to start by asking people you know care about your community rather than folks that have to care about every community. Invite someone you think might have the means to help through time, talent, or treasure out to coffee or dinner and let them know you need their help. You'll eventually need to demonstrate public support to granting organizations anyhow. Having a specific amount in mind is helpful. The worst they can say is no.