

SEATTLE SOUTHSIDE
Strategic Brand Document



EXCLAIM 2009

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Introduction

As the official destination marketing organization of the cities of Tukwila, SeaTac, Kent and Des Moines, Seattle Southside provides leadership and services to competitively market the destination. This function helps create jobs, grow tax revenue, and improve quality of life for residents and businesses. Seattle Southside has nurtured a powerful and effective travel brand over the past several years, building awareness of member cities as a collective destination and contributing to economic growth. Now, it is time to take that brand to the next level.

- Intensified marketing activity from other tourism organizations and the growing level of media saturation in general require us to “step up our game” in order to compete effectively.
- Member cities have matured, providing new and compelling attributes for Seattle Southside as a destination that should be embodied in the brand.
- Continuous learning about our audience has provided insights which can allow us to more effectively target the right prospects using the right techniques.
- The Web has become a rich and powerful platform for people to learn about, plan, and purchase travel, and we need a brand that takes full advantage of these opportunities.

This Strategic Brand Document offers a guide to enhancing the Seattle Southside brand in ways that address these issues.

Organization Bio

As the official destination marketing organization of the cities of SeaTac, Tukwila, Kent and Des Moines, Seattle Southside provides leadership and services to competitively market the destination. This function helps create jobs, grow tax revenue, and improve quality of life for residents and businesses.

Vision Statement:

Over the next five years, Seattle Southside will lead destination marketing for the region by:

- Nurturing a powerful and unified brand for Seattle Southside
- Reaching influencers and potential visitors and influencers through creative, targeted communications and strategic use of media opportunities
- Building corporate and community alliances
- Delivering information and services that build demand and keep users coming back for more
- Growing the leisure and group visitor segments

Mission Statement:

To position Seattle Southside as a destination of choice for leisure, group, and business travelers while enhancing the image, confidence and economic strength of the community.

Geographic Range

Our main audience is in Washington and 13 western states. Western Canada as well as Japan, Europe, and the rest of the United States are secondary targets.

Values Statement:

- We believe that tourism-related events, facilities and campaigns should have a positive impact on the community's spirit as well as its economy.
- We believe that Seattle Southside stands on its own as a great place for visitors – and work hard to make it even better.
- We embody the Seattle Southside values that we want our visitors to experience: give people more than they expect, treat them with hospitality, and work hard to be the best.

Business Objectives

Objective 1: Put a face to the customer

- Who would prefer to stay in Seattle Southside?

Objective 2: Create a memorable brand

- How do we present ourselves to Seattle Southside visitors and influencers in authentic and memorable ways that compel them to take action?

Objective 3: Deliver the brand and get results

- Where and how do we reach our audience?

Objective 1: Put a Face to the Customer

The Practical Traveler

Three main categories of visitors make up our target audience: groups, business travelers, and leisure travelers. While we may target these groups through distinct channels and with distinct messages, we believe that, for Seattle Southside, they are largely made up of similar individuals, whom we call “Practical Travelers.”

These travelers seek value, familiarity, and comfort over ostentation, extreme adventure, and surprise.

- Value: They don't like to overspend, and they do like to get a lot of value for their money. They don't mind going a little bit out of their way if it means they will save money.
- Familiarity: When they travel, they like the security of knowing that they have access to familiar restaurants, shopping, and experiences.
- Comfort: They like comfort (but not ostentatious luxury). Regardless of race or class, their approach is fundamentally suburban – find a comfortable outpost and use it as a base for everything else you do in life.
- Independence: They book their own travel, rent cars and find their own way around the city. They take pride in doing things themselves as opposed to handing over control to someone else.

Things they are more likely to enjoy:

- * Sporting events
- * Mall and chain shopping
- * Eating at familiar restaurants
- * Tours (Underground Tour, Ride the Ducks)
- * Car camping
- * Organized outdoor activities
- * Community and fraternal organizations
- * Hobbies
- * Family time
- * Theme parks
- * Picnicking
- * Four-Wheeling, fishing, skiing

Things they are less likely to enjoy:

- * "High culture"
- * Exploring with no fixed destination
- * Backwoods camping
- * Boutique hotels
- * Nightlife

Likely Demographics

We believe that, although there may be concentrations in certain demographic areas, the psychographic type of the Practical Traveler probably cuts across ethnicity, age, gender, and even, to some degree, social class. Still, we expect them to skew toward the following categories:

- 35-64
- 1+ children
- Married
- Occupations: Small business owner, skilled tradesperson, manager, educator, homemaker
- Annual HH Income: \$50,000+

Touchstone brands

Brands with which they feel more affinity

Dell
Kia, Honda, Saturn, Chevy
Best Western, Howard Johnson
Nike
Target, Fred Meyer
Applebee's, Outback Steakhouse, McDonalds

Brands with which they feel less affinity

Apple
Audi, Mercedes, Saab, Volvo
Four Seasons, W, boutiques
Versace
Whole Foods
Nobu, Charlie Trotter's

What the Practical Traveler is not

The Practical Traveler is not an ethnically homogeneous group. The suburbs are not the “white” suburbs of the 1950s. They are ethnically and economically diverse.

What the Practical Traveler Wants

The Practical Traveler wants a home base – a refuge of familiarity where she can just be herself, to which she can return after adventures of all kinds. That’s what Seattle Southside gives her.

- She doesn’t need to be in the so-called “center of the action.” According to her logic: she doesn’t live downtown; why would she stay there when she travels? Downtown means scary traffic, noise, expensive parking, and sketchy people.
- When she does go downtown, she’ll probably sign up for a tour or visit a well-known attraction – simply “being downtown” holds zero interest for her.
- Art museums, theater, ballet, and nightlife are secondary at best in her travel plans – she’d rather go for a hike, take in a sporting event, go to the mall, or take her family to an amusement park. None of those things require that she stay in the urban core.
- In sum, all she needs is comfortable proximity to the city – and if she can have proximity to the city and to lots of other things, so much the better.

Objective 2: Build a Memorable Brand

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Value for the money
Parking
Complete amenities as a group
Convenience as regional home base
Sports
Shopping
Middle-class values
Diversity

Weaknesses

Lack of collective identity
Industrial/rural
Excessive focus on organization and bureaucracy instead of residents and potential customers

Opportunities

Changing perceptions of what is worth spending money on
Cultural disgust with luxury-seeking behavior
Perception of Seattle as “big bad city”

Threats

Perception of local influencers about area
Reduced reliance on cars
Travelers who associate diversity with poverty and crime
Perception of Seattle as a region rather than a city
Non-Seattle Southside communities cannibalizing business

Brand Positioning Statement

Seattle Southside is the Practical Traveler's home base – a comforting refuge giving her the confidence to explore as far as she wants, knowing she can always return. It's a place that welcomes families, groups, and business travelers equally, with superior hospitality and value that exceeds expectations.

It's got everything the Practical Traveler needs for a great trip:

- Comfortable hotels and familiar restaurants
- Waterfront walks to family attractions
- Mall bargains to small-town shops
- Unique museums to thrilling sports events
- Close proximity to adventures of all kinds, from a day in the city to a walk in the mountains

From the home base of Seattle Southside, the Practical Traveler is perfectly positioned to explore everything the Northwest has to offer.

Brand Character

Seattle Southside is about substance more than style, comfort more than luxury, and value more than status. It would rather wow you with value you don't expect than promise you the moon and not deliver. It welcomes everyone with the same hospitality and friendly smile. It's proud of who it is and doesn't need to compare itself to others. It's happy for the success of its bigger siblings, but it's not jealous – it's got plenty of great stuff going on for any visitor. Most of all, it's a place where travelers can be comfortable and relax, whether they're getting work done or having fun.

Personality Statement

She lives in the suburbs or a smaller town. She works hard for her money and knows the value of a dollar. She's not the type to put on airs or spend a lot of time with those who do; no need to be the center of attention. She's down-to-earth, friendly, practical, and fun. She likes to have a good time, but family is the center of her life. The perfect vacation would be to go to the amusement park with her kids in the morning, sneak away to the mall for a couple of hours in the afternoon, then take in a baseball game in the evening. She's not a status-driven striver – on a business trip, she wants to get things done and still have time for a little relaxation. She has limited tolerance for exotic food, overpriced boutiques, and "high culture." Traveling is not a status symbol for her – it's just another way to enjoy the life she has built for herself and her family.

Creating the Brand

- Promote familiar stores, restaurants, and attractions.
- Speak in a genuine, direct, and friendly way rather than in florid travel-brochure language.
- Commission new professional imagery that highlights what Seattle Southside is really like – the people, the attractions, the landscape.
- Be genuinely proud of what Seattle Southside has to offer – promoting local attractions and amenities first.
- Use testimonials, quotes, profiles, and personal stories to communicate what's great about staying here.
- Focus on the customer and the destination, not the organization. Information on the organization is important, for annual reports and stakeholder meetings, not customers.
- Don't compete on price. The brand is about comfort and familiarity.

Objective 3: Deliver the Brand and Get Results

Media Analysis

What media influence the travel behavior of Practical Travelers?

- Word of mouth: The recommendation of a local friend or relative – or one who has stayed in the area – is compelling.
 - The Web: These are Internet-savvy consumers, although their lives are not consumed with online activities. The Web is their primary source of information about travel.
- o Online travel booking engines: This is where Practical Travelers build their trips. They may use multiple sites, looking for deals and specials.
- Travelocity
 - Expedia.com
 - Orbitz
 - Priceline.com
 - Hotels.com
 - CheapTickets
- o User-driven (Web 2.0) travel sites and forums: Where they get and share information about destinations
- Yahoo! Travel
 - Tripadvisor
 - Travelzoo
- o Other travel sites
- Guidebook sites (Frommers, etc.)
 - Destination sites (visitors' bureaus, tourist guides, cities, etc.)
- o E-mail newsletters
- Print
 - Direct mail
 - Television

Tactics

Build Positive Word of Mouth

Of all our marketing channels, word of mouth from locals is one of the most powerful. If residents of Seattle Southside, Seattle, and the region personally deliver the message that it's a great place to stay, visitors will believe it. If we overpromise, local press and influencers will be skeptical at best. If we don't emphasize the positive, people will not want to stay here. It's a delicate but crucial balancing act.

- Many travelers base their purchasing decisions on the recommendation of a friend, family member or professional colleague.
- This group may host visiting friends and relatives (VFR) who may stay in their homes, but many stay in hotels.
- Washington residents make up 51% of visitor spending in Washington State, according to studies from the Business and Tourism Development Office.

Seattle Southside needs to build positive perception of the destination through targeted efforts to each of the following three local influencer groups:

- Seattle Southside Residents: Develop an initiative to build awareness and pride about Seattle Southside as a destination for visitors. Give locals the tools to promote what's great about the destination.
- Seattle SODO to Olympia/I-5 Corridor Residents: These are people who might have family or business contacts visiting the area and could recommend Seattle Southside in a powerful way. Their perceptions are probably most colored by stereotypes about the area. They can be brought along through positive PR and media relations about the communities involved: events, activities, businesses, and people who shine a light on what's great about Seattle Southside. Anything good about any of the four cities is something good about Seattle Southside. Perceptions about the area are already changing; we should help that process along.
- Western Washington Residents: With less knowledge of the area, their opinions of Seattle Southside may be somewhat more flexible than Seattle residents. Building awareness is the key here.

Own the Web

The Web continues to grow in importance as a means of researching and booking travel. Owning the web for Seattle Southside means more than updating the website, although that is critically important.

Seattle Southside Website

If the Website is going to be a destination, it needs to do more than offer reservations and calendars. It needs to engage travelers with enjoyable content that they will seek out and share;

offer opportunities to interact through forums and reviews; and deliver the distinctive brand.

- Immediately engage site visitors with original fun, interesting, frequently updated content.
- Use search engine optimization and content depth to achieve a top 5 ranking for key search terms.
- Build an e-mail list and begin a regular (monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly) newsletter about Seattle Southside as a destination.

Travel Web 2.0

This is the social Internet, essentially word-of-mouth taken online. It includes social media sites such as Yahoo! Travel, Yelp, and TripAdvisor, booking engines such as Expedia, Hotels.com, and Priceline, and user-generated content sites such as Wikipedia.

- Respond to user questions and comments in forums on top traveler community sites.
- Ensure that user-generated content around cities, activities, lodging, and so on is complete and accurate. (Wikipedia, Yahoo Travel, TripAdvisor, etc.)
- Continually submit information on local activities, events, and specials to key travel sites.
- Build relationships with these sites to offer travel packages and information resources.
- Build relationships with online travel purchase sites such as Expedia, Priceline, Kayak, etc.
- Cultivate relationships with regional travel bloggers.
- Building our own online social media presence: a Seattle Southside blog, e-mail newsletter, and Facebook page.

Leverage the Media

Positive stories about Seattle Southside in general and about how it's a great destination are some of the most powerful ways to reach both travelers and influencers.

- Build relationships with print and online media to get stories about the destination – people, attractions, and activities – in key travel and general-interest publications.
Maximize Advertising Dollars with an Integrated, Brand-centric Campaign
Launch an integrated media campaign highlighting traveler stories, local color appealing to Practical Travelers, and the benefits of staying in Seattle Southside (comfort, familiarity, value, home base). Ads should be targeted toward the Practical Traveler audience with fun, down-to-earth content. Given that any traveler to the area probably already knows about the major attractions, emphasize what's great about Seattle Southside.

Ongoing Initiatives:

- Purchase media placements/advertisements in travel-related publications, including Sunset Magazine luring visitors with the value and convenience of staying in Seattle Southside and entice them with the appeal of favorite, familiar attractions in Seattle and other lesser-known attractions in the area. All advertising includes a call to action for purposes of tracking and evaluation. Media placements vary annually, see annual media schedule.
- Recommend adding AAA travel publications to media schedule.

Be the Go-To Visitor Information Resource

Provide friendly visitor services to the public while encouraging overnight stays in Seattle Southside and assist in the development of new guest services that will enhance the guest experience.

Ongoing Initiatives:

- Offer visitor information services dedicated to providing personalized assistance over the phone to travelers who demand the best the region has to offer. Our visitor information specialists use an extensive database of goods, services and information, ranging from local hotels, transportation, restaurants, shopping and regional attractions to assist guests with their travel plans.
- Obtain and process visitor inquiries, then tracking that information for statistical analysis.
- Mailing “Visitor Information Packets” to guests who call the toll-free information line, contact Seattle Southside VS via email through the website or come in monthly via “reader response labels” from magazines Seattle Southside VS advertises in.
- Continue to lead the transportation initiative, “Seattle Southside Express”. The shuttle achieves visibility for the area and increases the level of satisfaction of hotel guests and shoppers.
- Offering online and printed tourism-specific promotional discount coupons to convert visitors into consumers.
- Produce and distribute a Seattle Southside Vacation Planner that represents SeaTac, Tukwila, Kent and Des Moines hotels, restaurants and regional tourist attractions. Distribute through website request, reader response cards from publications with a media buy, Certified Folder kiosks, hotel front desks, Seattle CVB information requests, targeted direct mailings, toll-free phone calls, and so forth. Distribution will include highly visible locations throughout the area. It is imperative that visitors be able to easily obtain information to help them access the sites and attractions that will maximize the value of their stay in Seattle Southside.
- Build volunteer and internship program to help establish SSVS as a leader in the industry.

New Initiatives:

- Build and promote new bundled hotel packages that include attractions, restaurants, shopping, transportation, etc.

Get groups

Establish Seattle Southside as a value-driven, quality destination for groups hosting events for 10 to 200 people, with an emphasis on increasing off-peak bookings (weekends and October to May).

Ongoing Initiatives:

- Partner with the Seattle Sports Commission to coordinate bids for regional and national tournaments that generate overnight stays.
- Develop new sightseeing itineraries seasonally.
- Continue to pursue and research cooperative marketing opportunities that focus on the group travel market.

New Initiatives:

- Develop and implement a new position statement for all publicity-targeted group travel, "Seattle Southside: Your Home Base in the Pacific Northwest."
- Purchase media placements/advertisements in meeting/group travel magazines including Corporate Meetings & Incentives, Association Meetings, The Meeting Professional, Seattle CVB's Professional Travel Planners Guide and Meeting Planners Guide, Group Tour Magazine, and Religious Conference Manager. All advertising includes a call to action for purposes of tracking and evaluation. Ad placements vary annually. See Annual Media Schedule.
- Review and revise meetings and convention press releases in Southside press kit. Include a cost comparison for holding a meeting in the Southside versus Seattle.
- Distribute and pitch seasonal press releases to group travel editors annually.
- Coordinate sales efforts to qualified tour operators and meeting planners in the Pacific Northwest, California and relevant travel tradeshow through a series of sales calls by staff and industry partners.
- Participate in state tourism-sponsored tour operator blitzes in targeted markets. Make prearranged sales calls to qualified group tour operators and established travel press.
- Participate in the state tourism office-subsidized International Tour Operator Sales Mission. Make prearranged sales calls to qualified group tour operators and the travel press at the International Pow Wow.

Convert Business Travelers

Extend the corporate/business travel market by engaging groups and individuals in leisure activities.

Ongoing Initiatives:

- Place visitor information in hotels.
- Send direct mailings to targeted corporate travel agencies.
- Distribute “What’s New” press release (twice annually).
- Support the corporate hotel sales staff as needed.

New Initiatives:

- Develop and implement a new position statement for all publicity targeting corporate travel planners: “Seattle Southside: Your Home Base in the Pacific Northwest”
- Coordinate and distribute tote bag of Southside tourism communications products and coupon books to area corporate travel planners to encourage independent familiarization trips to Seattle Southside (include coupon for free RT ride on the Seattle Southside Express).

Support Sales at Businesses and Hotels

Support the marketing and sales needs of Seattle Southside tourism businesses and hotel sales teams in particular. Seattle Southside VS strives to sustain a role as a helpful and dependable resource to members of the tourism industry.

Ongoing Initiatives:

- Maintain and make available Seattle Southside VS’s databases including visitor information request, media, associate partners, leads, etc. on disk or labels to hotel marketing & sales staff for hotel-specific discount or promotional offerings.
- Develop a public awareness campaign utilizing monthly electronic newsletters that report on the program, provide partner co-op marketing opportunities, and other value information.
- Organize Tourism Networking Summits at least semi-annual.
- Maintain a consistent profile with local tourism interest groups by attending/participating in their monthly meetings.
- Continue presentations to various groups including chambers, visitor bureaus, and city and industry groups.
- Sustain a program of business press releases to relate news important to the tourism industry and announce important Southside activities for use on the website press room, newsletters, newspapers and radio.
- Keep abreast of ongoing product knowledge through site visits to visitor venues.
- Publish periodic “Outcome Reports” that include visitor industry statistics.
- Maintain a comprehensive resource library of materials pertaining to the travel tourism industry in King County and Washington State.
- Continue to collect demographic data on all callers for purposes of building a complete database for future promotions while asking all callers “how did you hear about us” for

evaluation determination. The database is made available to local hotel sales teams for additional promotional opportunities.

- Maintain memberships and cooperate, network and participate in co-op marketing efforts where appropriate of the following trade organizations:
 - o Travel Industry Association (TIA) represents the whole of the U.S. travel industry to promote and facilitate increased travel to and within the United States. It is through this organization that we receive Travel News Links, industry research, access to International Pow Wows and overall marketing resources.
 - o National Tour Association (NTA) is the premier packaged travel association in North America. NTA's membership comprises more than 645 tour companies that package and sell to and within North America.
 - o Seattle CVB
 - o Tacoma CVB
 - o Washington State Tourism
 - o Washington Tourism Commission
 - o Washington State Group Tour and Travel Association
 - o Washington State Hotel and Lodging Association
 - o Washington State Destination Marketing Organizations
 - o Western Association of CVBs
 - o Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce
 - o Southwest King County Chamber of Commerce
 - o Kent Chamber of Commerce

Build community with similar organizations

Build relationships with the regional tourism network to create awareness about the Seattle Southside Tourism Program and take advantage of partnership opportunities.

Ongoing Initiatives:

- Coordinate and distribute tote bag of Southside tourism communications products and coupon books to Seattle concierges to encourage independent familiarization trips to Seattle Southside (include coupon for free RT ride on the Seattle Southside Express).
- Professional Travel Planners: Tourism leisure business can be developed through relationship building with professional travel planners by inviting them on familiarization tours (FAM) and continuously updating them on new product offerings.

New Initiatives:

- Establish cooperative, cost-effective initiatives with Washington State Tourism, Seattle CVB, Tacoma CVB, Port of Seattle, and the Washington State Hotel and Lodging Association. Include working with the Seattle CVB's experts, leveraging their experience to increase exposure in the international market segments, including the highly lucrative Japanese market.

Internal Audiences: It is important to maintain a high degree of communication between all stakeholders in order to sustain active participation and support to achieve the goals of this program, i.e.: Tukwila Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC), SeaTac Hotel/Motel Advisory Committee (HMAC), Southwest King County Chamber of Commerce (SWKCC), City of SeaTac and Tukwila (Mayors, Council, City Management, Planning, and Parks & Recreation), SeaTac and Tukwila hoteliers, SeaTac and Tukwila restaurateurs, area retailers, transportation venues, etc.

External Partner Organizations: Partnering with the following organizations will leverage marketing opportunities and strengthen the Seattle Southside VS tourism program: Seattle CVB, Tacoma CVB, and the Puget Sound Attractions Council, Washington State Group Tour and Travel Association, Washington State Tourism, Washington State Hotel and Lodging Association, South King County Hotel Association, Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce, Seattle Concierges Association and the Port of Seattle.

Be a Thought Leader on Tourism Issues

Contribute in economic development planning by providing input on tourism issues requested by respective City Management.

Ongoing Initiatives:

- Maintain a high degree of communication between City of SeaTac, Tukwila, Kent and Des Moines (Mayors, Council, City Management, and Planning Departments) regarding economic development planning by providing input on tourism issues requested by respective City Management
- Participate in committees, community meetings and conferences as requested by respective City Management

Keep Seattle Southside Stakeholders Informed

Ongoing Initiatives:

- Provide quarterly reports to LTAC, HMAC and City Management requested by respective City Management
- Issue periodic reports to community partners as requested by respective City Management

New Initiatives:

- Provide an Annual Report to the Community reporting on program outcomes and progress towards stated measurable objectives