

Methodology

A professional Reconnaissance Team visited the Saint Charles area at the request of the Greater Saint Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau (GSCCVB). The dates of site visitation were June 1 - 5, 2005. Repeat visits to the area were made while conducting intercept interviews with visitors on the following dates: July 19-23, 2005 and October 20-23, 2005. Due to heat advisories and low visitation in the downtown area, surveys were positioned at the Visitors Center and on the trolley for visitors to complete and mail to RTM.

The goal of the Reconnaissance Team was to experience the Saint Charles area through the eyes of the visitor. Therefore the team made all of its schedules and arrangements using the tourism marketing materials made available by the Greater Saint Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Missouri Visitor Guide, the Missouri State Welcome Center's various regional materials and the Internet sites for both the state and Greater Saint Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau. Attractions listed in these materials were located and visited. The team also explored restaurants, shopping and lodging where possible. The area was seen in good conditions, as the weather was warm with only limited rain showers during the visit.

Dr. Larry Gustke, Ph.D., N.C. State University developed the professional method of selection, evaluation and analysis used in this process. The report does not follow any chronological order since we visited many areas more than once and tried to enter and exit the area from all of the possible routes used by visitors. The following is a documentation of the Reconnaissance Team's findings.

Overview of Saint Charles

Saint Charles is a suburb of St. Louis and is located in Saint Charles County in eastern Missouri on the shores of the Missouri River. According to the 2000 census, Saint Charles has a growing population of 60,321 with a total of 283,883 in Saint Charles County. The area is primarily suburban in nature with Saint Charles as the seat of county government. Interstate 70 bisects the County on an east/west axis and is the primary traffic artery. In recent years a number of bedroom communities have been developed in the eastern part of the County as the St. Louis urban sprawl brings new growth and dramatic increases in commuter traffic. As a result, bypass roadways have been developed to help move traffic around the area and we noted numerous road and bridge construction projects underway. RTM also noted new industrial development on the perimeters of Saint Charles with the most significant new development north of town just off the 270 beltway.

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The historic riverfront district in downtown Saint Charles has been marketed as the primary tourist attraction since it was revitalized in the 1970s. The area has seen recent attention with the renewed interest in the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition that passed through here.

In recent years a spectacular Ameristar Casino has opened on the riverfront and a new convention center has opened just east of the downtown on Interstate 70. These two facilities have dramatically shifted the profile and trip experience for travelers to Saint Charles. It must also be noted that within Saint Charles City and County there are numerous sport and nature facilities for both team and individual activities in addition to the Daniel Boone home site and a significant region of wineries.

While touring around the Saint Charles area we made the following observations:

- Σ Gateway signage is present at most ingress points, but the signage is inconsistent in design and appearance thus missing an opportunity to build recognition for a standard brand or image for the city. The gateways also lack directional signage to visitor's information.
- Σ New streetscapes into the historic district are evident with attractive brick sidewalks and gas streetlights.
- Σ The historic district is facing some serious product life cycle issues. At times while shopping here we felt as if we were back in the 1970s. The district is attractive in appearance but the merchandise offered is dated. This shopping district stands in noted contrast to what we find in other tourist areas as we travel around the United States. Most of the merchandise offered has primary appeal for the Silent Generation that is no longer in the accumulation stage. Therefore we expect to find that retail sales have declined in recent years. We noted less than five stores that have an updated image that would appeal to Baby Boomers who are in their peak spending years. Saint Charles runs the risk of losing these dollars to more upscale shopping found in the metro St. Louis area such as St. Louis Mills and South County Mall.
- Σ Saint Charles is not delivering on the positioning "Come and Relive the Early American Spirit". While there is Lewis and Clark interpretation and Missouri's First State Capitol the experiences at these sites are too limited to be considered a destination experience.
- Σ The marketing is focused on history and shopping and needs to layer in the gaming and conventions in a historic riverfront shopping district. This combination is a unique angle for Saint Charles.
- Σ Saint Charles is not using the Daniel Boone and wineries products to extend the stay.
- Σ There is a great opportunity to target men with golf, Bass Pro Shops, Harley Davidson rentals, fishing and casinos in the region.
- Σ There is a huge opportunity to create destination dining that would be so unique as to draw folks from St. Louis for the experience.

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Gateways

The ancient Egyptians understood the importance of gateways. Nomadic travelers emerged from the desert and found huge avenues lined on both sides by massive golden Sphinxes leading them to huge, gated entrances into the walled cities. It was impossible to arrive at the ancient Egyptian cities without having a sense of awe at the city before you.

Most cities in modern America have lost the sense of importance for gateways. This is perhaps due to the fact most cities in America have grown in a concentric pattern, with growth coming on the outer rings of the city. Thus, what happens over time is the traveler basically arrives at the “back door”, prior to seeing the more impressive areas of the destination. An effective gateway announces to the traveler they have arrived in an area and provides a sense of place. Similarly, directions to visitor information, wayfinding and signage are critical elements in assisting travelers and making them feel welcomed. Effective attention to these elements can result in longer guest stays and better conversion, thus, greater economic impact.

Overall Gateway Analysis

Interstate 70 is the primary gateway for visitors to and through the Saint Charles area. Saint Charles is most likely a drive-in destination even though there is a major airport within twenty minutes. Local merchants indicated to us that they estimate that approximately 75% of tourists enter the town through the Interstate 70 Fifth Street exit. If this is proven to be the case there is a definite opportunity to improve the orientation and facilitation of visitors at this primary gateway to drive increased economic impact.

Our team drove the length of the Interstate 70 corridor through Saint Charles and Saint Charles County and found heavily congested roadways. When this occurs research has shown that motorists are focused on driving conditions primarily and are not paying attention to roadside scenery and often miss informational and directional signage. In other words it is entirely possible that they drive through Saint Charles with little or no knowledge of where they are. It is certainly hard to imagine that a historic riverfront town is located just beyond this major freeway.

The Saint Charles city and county borders, as well as the towns within Saint Charles County are well marked with standard DOT signage indicating county and city lines. Additionally, the DOT has provided occasional but inconsistent brown site marker signage for various historic districts and attractions, etc.

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Our team was surprised to find Saint Charles has not taken the opportunity of creating more impressive and attention-winning formal gateways or gateway signage providing a greater sense of place for travelers through the County.

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A strong gateway would announce to travelers that they have arrived in Saint Charles, help to make travelers more aware of the name of the area, welcome them formally, include positioning information, and provide directions to a visitor center. RTM recommends this be considered by Saint Charles. Think of Interstate 70 as a highway of money flowing through as travelers pass by Saint Charles and don't pull in to leave an economic impact. This is a huge missed opportunity.

Evaluation of specific gateways into Saint Charles:

Interstate 70 (approaching Saint Charles from metro St. Louis):

Traveling into Saint Charles from St. Louis and the St. Louis airport, one finds a standard brown Department of Transportation sign indicating "Historic Downtown Saint Charles / First State Capitol Exit 229B". This sign is placed prior to the Missouri River Bridge. Just after this sign there is a standard green Department of Transportation mileage sign indicating, "Saint Charles exits / Fifth Street 1_, First Capitol Drive 2_, Zumbel Road 3_". After crossing the Missouri River we came to the Fifth Street exit where there are multiple, overhead green DOT signs indicating Fifth Street North and South exits as well as First Capitol Drive one mile. After taking the Fifth Street exit, we found a strip mall on the right and a large lodging property on the left surrounded by retail. Just as we were beginning to think that we were in "Anytown USA" surrounded by chain retail and no unique atmosphere, we saw a large directional sign on our right indicating a casino to the right and the historic district straight ahead. Just after the first stoplight we were relieved to see a large brick gateway sign directing us off to the right for the historic district. As soon as we turned off to the right we found new brick sidewalks and gas streetlights creating an impressive gateway into the historic district. Clearly the City of Saint Charles is working to pull the historic district out to the highway and this is good! However, there is minimal signage to compel travelers to pull off Interstate 70 and explore Saint Charles. The interstate highway is a heavily congested corridor that speeds travelers *past* Saint Charles and thus pulls them away! Improved signage and a gateway at the exit are critical along this corridor. We were told that approximately 75% of visitors to the Historic District use this exit. If this is the case, we would highly recommend creating the impressive gateway here.

Interstate 70 (approaching Saint Charles from the West):

Our experience on this corridor was nearly identical to our approach from the east with the exception that road and bridge and construction made this approach a bit more confusing. We found ourselves focused on traffic and lane

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closings and thus paying little attention to directional signage. Informational signage to generate interest in visiting Saint Charles would be most effective if it is placed prior to O'Fallon. The Interstate Highway through O'Fallon and St Peters just prior to Saint Charles is congested and has a significant amount of visual clutter.

Missouri Highways 370 and 94

These roads are the secondary gateways into Saint Charles after Interstate 70. We found a variety of signs at the city perimeter indicating that we had arrived in Saint Charles, recognizing various championship teams and other similar points of pride. At these ingress points, we always look for gateways that would accomplish three things: welcome us, position Saint Charles as a unique place to visit and direct us to visitor information. Many of these ingress points have the typical highway traveler amenities including gas, food and lodging but there is little here to encourage a motorist to drive into Saint Charles and spend some money.

St. Louis Airport (Lambert Field)

Our team flew into this large metro airport on a USAir regional jet. Like most large airports, this one has generic utilitarian interiors and does little to create a sense of place that the traveler has arrived in the “Gateway City to the West”. We did not see any visitor guides or local information brochure racks. We did see the standard lodging information that is typically placed in the baggage claim area. It must also be noted that most rental car companies have streamlined their processes so that arriving travelers can go directly to their cars with minimal human contact. This means that a large percentage of travelers move quickly through a generic airport and into local transportation while missing the opportunity to be welcomed to the area and provided with a positioning message or information that tell them what is unique about the local area. Airports are gateways and should be designed based on the Nashville model where everything in the airport has imagery indicating that the traveler has arrived in a “music city”.

Welcome / Visitor Centers

Travel research shows many travelers orient themselves to an area they are visiting by beginning their trip at a welcome or visitor center. These information centers are usually funded by the state or local governments and are intended to provide travel and trip planning information for the traveling public. Staffing at these information centers is usually full-time, along with some part-time or volunteer assistance. Many local visitor centers are staffed entirely by volunteers. The traveler usually forms the all-important first impression of an area while they are in the visitor center. Visitor centers should be staffed by friendly well-informed people who enjoy using the brochures, maps and guides in stock to help the visitor plan their stay. A visitor center is a front-line sales agency that should proactively place visitors in lodging, dining, attractions and retail. This is the opportunity to make direct economic impact on an area.

Missouri Interstate 270 Welcome Center (at the Illinois state line)

This is an old facility that has a scenic hilltop location. One finds sufficient parking outside of the building, along with nice landscaping, picnic tables and grass areas. Upon entering the building, one notes it is small with vending machines just inside the door adjacent to small rest rooms that accommodate only two to three people at a time. Just across from the restrooms (to the right if entering from the parking lot) we found a door leading into the visitor center. We noted crowded spaces and tight turns at the doorways making this a nuisance for the handicapped.

Upon entering the small room we noted an overall dated appearance. It looks like a 1960s public library with lots of boxes stacked against the walls and old worn furniture and fixtures. This is one of the worst looking state welcome centers we have encountered in our travels. The dingy appearance of the space indicates to the traveler that Missouri must not be a very attractive place to visit.

We walked around looking at the brochures and noticed stacked cases of brochures along all of the outer walls with brochures displayed on top of the cases. There is a divider in the center of the room with some informational displays and more brochures. We approached the visitor information counter and were greeted by an older gentleman who asked if we needed any assistance. We asked for a state travel guide and a map which he opened and showed us where we were located. We asked for information on Saint Charles and he pulled a Saint Charles CVB Visitor Guide out from under the counter. He showed how to find Saint Charles on the map noting the exit numbers to help us navigate the highways. He did not tell us anything unique or exciting

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about Saint Charles. As we were about to depart he asked for our zip code. Overall we give this welcome center a failing grade in appearance and performance. This center won't generate much economic impact for Missouri unless it is revitalized.

Saint Charles Convention and Visitor Bureau Visitor Center

The Saint Charles visitor center is currently located on Main Street in the historic district. It is housed in an attractive brick building that fits into the historic setting beautifully. There is ample parking on the riverside of the building and it can be accessed from the street or the parking side. Accessible restrooms are located just inside the door on the parking lot level. Just outside the restrooms, we found a small brochure rack with a few brochures located in it. However, there is no sign indicating the complete supply of brochures and information can be found on the upper level.

On one occasion, we entered the visitor center from Main Street and on another occasion we entered from the lower level. Both times we found a woman sitting at a small desk just to the left of a large reception desk. The woman greeted us and asked if we needed any help. We told her that we were visiting the area and she handed us a visitor guide. As we looked around the visitor center, we were surprised by the small space, and the limited amount of information available. This space looked more like a reception area than a visitor center. The large reception desk takes up most of the space, and there were some bookcases along to the wall to the right. We gathered some brochures and information, signed the guestbook and walked toward the exit. We stopped to ask the woman for a recommendation on a place to have lunch and she told us that all the restaurants are good with very good options located within a close walk from the visitor center. She also mentioned the dining section in the visitor guide. This woman was friendly and helpful, but never got up out of her chair to help us.

Saint Charles Chamber of Commerce

We located the Chamber of Commerce using a map of the area and we did not see any signage directing us to this building. The chamber is housed in a new building and while it has excellent curb appeal, it is easily missed due to the visual clutter along this busy roadway. Directional signage along First Capital Drive will help ease this situation.

As soon as we entered the chamber reception area, we were welcomed by a friendly woman seated at a desk located just behind a large counter. She

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asked if she could be of assistance and came over to help us locate a map of the area that we had requested. She was engaging and conversational and asked what brought us to the area and what were we going to do while here. She provided us with a relocation package and said it would provide additional information to help us enjoy our stay. She also provided the Saint Charles Convention and Visitor Bureau Visitor Guide and told us it included lots of information on things to do, places to see and places to eat. The Main Street shopping area and the riverfront area were her recommendations for the best places to start to have a good time. We rate the experience at this chamber highly and our only recommendation would be to clean up the cluttered brochure racks just inside the door.

Attractions

Typically, we find attractions listed in tourism promotion materials in alphabetical order. This is done to be “politically correct” and to give all attractions equal attention. Unfortunately, this is not in the best interest of the customer. The tourist wants to know the “attractors” or those things that are “must sees” while in the area. Other attractions are important to the visitor and should be identified, but should be described accurately and in context. Also, it is critical to include accurate hours of operation, street addresses (rather than mailing addresses) and cost of admission. Any other charges, such as parking fees, should also be noted. A suggested amount of time required for a visit to a particular attraction is an excellent feature. If the attraction is targeted at children or perhaps more appropriate for adults, it is good to include this in the description. Also, if an attraction is not open on the weekend, the attraction should probably not be included. Weekends are the busiest time in tourism. If a particular attraction is not open on weekends, those tourists who have misread the hours of operation and arrive to find a closed facility will be disappointed. Doing these things prevents customer frustration and helps the guest facilitate a visit.

Those attractions achieving excellence usually offer:

- Σ Excellent signage and wayfinding to the attraction.
- Σ An orientation for each visitor to help them understand why the attraction is worthy of their time, what they will learn, see, do and/or experience and how best to spend their time at the attraction.
- Σ Clean and accessible rest rooms.
- Σ Guided, narrated tours and interpretive experiences (or user-friendly self guide materials). Incorporating the senses (visual, hearing, touch, smell and taste) are important in creating an interactive experience. Static “read the plaque and look at the artifact” type museums or attractions suffer complaints from today’s demanding tourism customer.
- Σ Travelers today want to be in control of their time.
- Σ Benches, chairs and other resting spots, where a weary traveler can pause for a moment’s rest.
- Σ Suggestions from the attraction for other things to see and do in the area, as well as, lodging and dining recommendations to better help the customer plan their visit.

During the reconnaissance, the team differentiates between attractors and attractions. Attractors are the events, facilities, and “things to see and do” that motivate people to buy an airplane ticket or get off the interstate and visit a place. Attractions are “things to see and do” that ~~compliment~~ compliment or

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supplement the major reason or purpose for travelers to visit a place. We differentiate between these because of the importance they play in attracting visitors. Our observations and impressions focus on the value and pull power of attractors and attractions.

Main Street Saint Charles

This is the primary attractor for Saint Charles Main Street runs parallel to the Missouri River and the entire length of the historic street is paved with brick. There is an incredible variety of historic buildings with very few modern structures interrupting the charm of the area. This area is a definite “wow”. We were truly surprised to find a colonial style village atmosphere west of the Mississippi River and we definitely see this as the primary tourism product for Saint Charles.

After having said that, we must note that we have some concerns for this historic district. While we could see definite evidence of authentic historic preservation, we can also tell that many of the businesses here are not thriving. There were far too few visitors in the area during our multiple visits. Very few of the visitors we saw were carrying packages with purchases. This indicated to us that many are shopping and few are buying. This was our first indicator that either the products offered lack appeal or there is a marketing program bringing visitors whom are not interested in buying the product that is offered. After returning on many occasions and spending an extensive amount of time visiting every shop and restaurant we could find open we found the situation appears to be a combination of the above. There are too few visitors coming and many of those visitors are not buying. Too many of the shops offer the same merchandise, which in turn limits the audience that is interested in shopping here. In the shopping and dining sections of this report, we have provided detailed commentary on all of the businesses we visited in the historic district.

While roaming Main Street on a Saturday, we observed some costumed interpreters representing various types of merchants and residents of historic Saint Charles. We liked the fact that some of these interpreters were children and found all of the interpreters adept at staying in character. At one point we did see one of the costumed interpreters taking a call on her cellular telephone.

On the last day of our first visit, one of the merchants spoke at length about the issues existing between North and South Main Street. We can definitely state from a visitor’s perspective, this is a merchant issue and should be kept as such. We had walked the street many times and could not tell the difference between North and South Main. While there is a cluster of nightclubs and restaurants on North Main, the overall appearance of the street varies little.

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There are just as many buildings on South Main that need attention and repair as there are on the North Main side. We encourage all of the merchants to work together toward a common goal and avoid these turf wars. Some merchants may not like the nightlife that takes place on North Main Street but most visitors want to see some evening activity rather than a dark street with all shops closed at 5:00 PM. We encourage everyone to work in concert to offer one thriving Main Street that provides visitors with unique shopping, good dining and varied activities well into the evening hours.

Historic Frenchtown

Just north of Main Street, we found Frenchtown whose main avenue of shops and restaurants is North Second Street. Frenchtown is an up-and-coming area that has many buildings with wonderful architectural character. A good variety of shops and restaurants are scattered among these buildings. Currently the area lacks a core density. There are just too many empty buildings and vacant lots scattered among the wonderful businesses that have been developed here. We found some unique shopping and dining and encourage the merchants in this district to continue creating a village with an authentic Franco-American culture and style. We do not encourage the merchants in this area to copy or emulate Main Street. If Frenchtown wants to attract visitors it will have to offer a unique experience. Again, our specific comments about the businesses in this area can be found in the shopping and dining section of this report.

Frenchtown Heritage Museum

This little museum is located in a former firehouse in Frenchtown. Museum hours are posted as 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM Wednesday through Saturday. We had to plan our day around these hours to make sure that we were able to get inside and this was a bit of a nuisance. Visitors to an area become very frustrated with limited hours of operation as it forces them to do too much planning and limits their ability to just roam about. Once inside the little museum, we were impressed with the size of the collection and have to admit that it was far more than we expected based on the exterior appearance of the building. A very friendly retired man immediately greeted us. He seemed shocked when we came through the door. A review of the limited number of signatures and the guestbook indicated to us that this museum gets very few visitors. The man gave us a brief introduction to the museum and the local resident who had collected most of the artifacts presented here. While this museum is in Frenchtown, it appeared to us the collection went beyond Frenchtown and was really a historic archive for all of Saint Charles.

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This collection is presented in a typical archivist fashion, where visitors must look at an object and read the plaque that explains it. Unfortunately, in this age of technology, and communication this type of static experience is just plain boring for many visitors. We could clearly see from the state of the building there is very limited funding for this museum. Therefore, it is painful for us to recommend that money needs to be spent reinterpreting this collection to make it more interesting for visitors. However, this must be undertaken if the goal is to get visitors in the door.

Foundry Arts Center

As the name implies, the Foundry Arts Center is located in a massive former foundry that has a contemporary yet industrial appearance. We found ample parking, and an easily identified entrance to the building. As soon as we entered the large open space, the sound of classical music and the sight of varied art forms filled our senses. There are large galleries and education spaces off of the main open space on the first level. We particularly enjoyed going up the stairs to the second level, where working artist's studios are found. We roamed about and many artists invited us into their space. We enjoyed discussing their work with them. Most of the art in the facility is for sale and we noted a gift shop just inside the main entrance to the right. This is one of the most impressive arts centers that we have seen in our travels. All of the facilities here are in top condition, and the space is particularly attractive. We saw some pictures where large formal banquets can be held in the main open space. This is truly a multipurpose facility and well worth the visitor's time to come and in and see the artwork on display.

Just to the left of the building we noticed a train car and were told that this was the presidential train car used by President Truman during his famous campaigns. The car is locked up and we were unable to see inside and there was no signage or information about how we could visit. This has the potential to be a tourist attraction and nothing is being done with it as far as we could see. We later wondered why this car is located here. Was it built at the foundry? They missed opportunity for interpretation for the visitor.

Carriage Rides in the Saint Charles Historic District

We noted multiple white carriages providing visitors rides along Main Street in historic Saint Charles. The carriages were beautifully maintained and the horses certainly attract the interest of visitors as they clip clopped down the street. This helps deliver on the positioning, "where history comes alive every day". This tagline is found along the front of the visitor's guide. However, we observe these carriages on multiple occasions and rarely saw the coachman interacting with the visitors sitting in the carriage. The coachman was driving the horses and the visitors were talking amongst themselves. From what we saw, this is just a carriage ride and not an interpretive experience. What a shame. This could be a much better experience for the tourist if the coachman told wonderful stories as they progressed through the historic district. This is the model used in other historic districts around the United States.

On Saturday we saw a bride and groom in a carriage on their way to a wedding reception in one of the Main Street restaurants. This tipped us off at the

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potential for a wedding promotion and the development of Saint Charles as a popular wedding destination. Our instincts were further confirmed when we were in the Thistle and Clover shop on Main Street and noted kilt rentals for weddings and special events.

Theme weddings are extremely popular now and this is something worth advertising. Why are the carriage rides not listed as an attraction in the visitors Guide? We found them listed under Tourism Related Services on page 38. Another missed opportunity.

Historic District Trolley

While roaming the historic district, we continually saw a bus (converted to look like an old fashioned street trolley) and rarely saw any passengers. It then occurred to us that while in the area we never saw a map of the bus route, we never saw signs indicating where the bus stops were located, and we never saw brochures telling us about the operating hours, the route, the fees or anything else concerning these trolleys. Of course, with no passengers, as it is, it is currently a well-kept secret. You can see it but you don't know where to get on and where it might take you. Some effective marketing and planning could make this a popular transportation device connecting the shots to the casino, convention center, dining and lodging. Another missed opportunity. Why is this trolley not listed in the visitor guide as an attraction? With some interpretation provided by the driver this could be a fun visitor experience and a great way to get a preview orientation of the shopping and dining in the historic district. We have seen far more effective trolley tours operated in Marietta, Ohio; Macon, Georgia; Fredericksburg, Virginia; and Cody, Wyoming. Please go take some of these trolleys and see what the potential is here in historic Saint Charles.

Note on trolley signage – did see a couple of trolley signs on Main, however the tree limbs obscure reading some of them and they are small and not attention-getting. Maybe Free or Complimentary Trolley signs on the vehicle itself, or take two of the light poles, paint the same red color as the trolley, add signage for the stops, etc. would help. With more promotion rider ship would increase if clearly explained and the stops were more visible.

Ameristar Casino

Gambling in some form is now available in nearly every American state. The gambling market has become competitive and casinos have to deliver a quality entertainment experience in an exciting atmosphere if they want to attract visitors from out of town. This casino has one of the most impressive entrances we have ever seen. Casinos do their research and really know how

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to design their product for the gamer and this facility certainly shows it. Everything is first class. Guests enter through an arcade that features seven different dining and entertainment venues and offers something for everyone. We found a standard casino buffet, a sports bar, a seafood restaurant, and a large diner to name a few of the options. This casino controls access into the gaming area with guests registering prior to entering and only those over 21 years old being allowed into the gaming section. This system is mandated by Missouri law, and also requires casinos to collect a two-dollar admission fee. No one under 18 years of age is allowed to enter the gaming areas of the casino.

Lewis and Clark Boathouse and Nature Center

The Lewis and Clark Boathouse and Nature Center is located in a relatively new facility on the banks of the Missouri River in historic Saint Charles. The center derives its name from the boathouse structure in which it is housed. The open air, lower level of the facility houses two large boats that are replicas of those used by Lewis and Clark on their expedition west. The staircase and elevator take visitors up to the main (second) level, where we entered a large attractive gift shop area. Here we paid our admission to a costumed docent and began our tour through the facility. The entire museum is laid out in a small scale of benign that provides ideal interpretation for children. We found child size replicas of early historic buildings in the area, dioramas of scenes from the Lewis and Clark expedition, exhibits on the Native Americans that assisted Lewis and Clark, Lewis and Clark family histories, and other general information that pertained to this great expedition that began and ended in Saint Charles. One of our favorite parts of the exhibits is the campfire section located in front of a massive window overlooking the Missouri River. Upon exiting, we made some purchases in the gift shop. This attraction is a great activity for families with kids, but will most likely not hold the attention of adults traveling alone.

Fast Lane Classic Cars

While this attraction is located north of Saint Charles just across Highway 370, we found it easy to locate using the map and directions provided in the Fast Lane brochure. We do consider this an attraction even though it is a selling showroom for restored classic cars. Upon arrival, we found ample parking. One of our team members was compelled to look at every car in spite of the fact he has never had much interest in this hobby. He even found himself lusting after a classic 1950 era convertible. The cars are presented in beautiful showrooms with roll up doors creating the illusion of a wide open space. With a great brochure, a good map of directions, a great web site and a great-looking facility, this is a definite attraction for the Saint Charles area! Our only

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disappointment was that no one on staff spoke with us while we were there. They may have missed a sale on that convertible!

Haviland Museum

According to the Saint Charles Visitor Guide, this museum provides tours on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Unfortunately, we discovered this on Thursday afternoon when it was too late to get a tour. Imagine the task of the visitor who has to read the hours of operation of every attraction in the area, and then plot an itinerary based on the geography of the attraction locations and their hours of operation. This planning process takes all the fun out of roaming around so most visitors just don't bother. While the Haviland Museum occupies a particularly beautiful building on a well-trafficked section of South Main Street, we would be willing to bet that it gets very few visitors. This street is packed with shops and is in need of a good attraction to provide a diversion for the visitor.

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On a return visit, it took some doing to get a tour of the Haviland Museum. A tour was arranged via the phone number on the location sign and we scheduled to meet our tour guide at the house at 12 noon. After climbing over the gates and prying open the latch (really rusty!), we rang the doorbell several times. At 12:15, a nice young man appeared from the restaurant next door and informed us his aunt was running late, but was on her way. (We shopped in the great boutique hidden under the stairs until Donna, the Haviland collector and tour guide, arrived around 12:30). Donna, a delightful person, is wild about Haviland China and didn't inherit one piece of the china. She started her collection on her own and now has 9,000 items, most of which are quite valuable. She has stories for many of the china sets exhibited in the home (the home is owned by another person) which include Judy Garland and many US presidents. Donna and one collector in Iowa have the largest privately owned collections in the United States. The pieces are stunning, with patterns from the 1800's to the 1930's. Even if Haviland China is not your favorite, you would have to admire the workmanship, especially as most of the pieces were intricately hand painted.

While the standard charge is \$2.50 per person for the tour, we contributed \$5 to the Haviland "Money Jar" for the hour tour. Donna keeps the beautiful Haviland Money Jar brimming with bills on a chair. The Haviland Museum has tremendous potential if you can find a place large enough to showcase the pieces properly. There are 1,000 pieces in the five main rooms of the house on one floor. The pieces are displayed on pianos, mantels, tables, curios, stands, couches and on the floor, etc. This could have great potential if there were a grand location, the items were properly lit and preferably behind glass (like Replacements Ltd. in Greensboro, North Carolina). Even having Donna on video describing items, maybe providing the history of the Haviland Company, you could really entice visitors to this attraction. Donna has a lot of background info on the production of pieces. For example, in the Victorian era there were servants and therefore many pieces were included in a set of china. With the industrialization of the US, servants become factory workers and therefore made it difficult to find domestic help which resulted in fewer pieces produced.

Academy of the Sacred Heart/Shrine of St. Phillipine Duchesne Have you ever been somewhere, toured a site and left wondering what it was that you saw? We had that experience at the Shrine of St. Phillipine Duchesne. The Saint Charles visitor guide provided the only interpretation of this site. While driving north on Second Street, we noticed the sign for this site on our left. We were a bit confused when we had to circle the block to find the

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entrance on the other side of the site. Once inside the gate, there was inconsistent signage to help us find the Shrine. We became frustrated, parked the car and started roaming about. We found a kind woman who was on her way into services in the church. Even though services were about to begin, she led us right through the center of the church to the sarcophagus where the remains of St. Philippine are interred.

While the church and burial site are lovely, we do not see these as a tourist attraction. This is a sacred site for the devout. There is little interpretation for the average tourist to make this an educational experience. We then roamed the grounds outside and found a small octagonal shaped building that appeared to be a burial site for St. Philippine. Was she buried here prior to being buried in the church? There is probably a very compelling story about the life of this nun, who was canonized in 1988, according to the Saint Charles Visitor Guide, but if the story is told at this church/school we did not find it. Based on our experience, we can only recommend improved interpretation and signage to effectively tell the life of this Saint who is enshrined in Saint Charles.

Missouri's First State Capitol

Many travelers would expect a state capitol to be in the center of an open city block with a large dome at its pinnacle. However, Missouri's first state capitol from the period 1821 through 1826 is located on South Main Street in a red brick row house type structure. We located the building easily using the Saint Charles Visitor Guide and noticed a modern visitor center established to the left of the former capitol building. Upon entering the visitor center, we were greeted by a friendly woman seated behind the reception desk. We asked if we could take a tour and she said the last tour of the day had already taken place. She encouraged us to enjoy the exhibits on the main level and the balcony above after viewing the slide show presentation in the room just behind the reception desk. There were no other visitors present so we received a private presentation and found it to be dated and in need of reformatting. The presentation focused on the history of the building, its architecture, and the archaeology utilized in the restoration process. We then went toward the static exhibits on two levels of the main visitor center room. These primarily consisted of wall panels with photos and interpretation of the history events that took place here. There was also information about the Lewis and Clark expedition.

The following morning we returned to take a tour of the capitol. A friendly woman seated at the reception desk in the visitor center greeted us. We asked

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to take a tour and she told us that a guide would be available in a few minutes. She then called upstairs to the guide who could be heard talking to someone in an office. We waited for approximately 10 minutes for the guide, who could be heard, continuing his conversation. Again, we were the only visitors present. The guide came downstairs and led us over to the capitol building for our tour. We walked through the covered breezeway and began the tour on the back porch. The guide provided interpretation of the archaeology of the site and the restoration of the buildings which was pretty much a repeat of what we learned in the slide show. The tour continued inside in the general store where we learned many interesting facts about the authentic merchandise on display.

The guide was extremely knowledgeable but a bit too sarcastic for our taste. He interjected too much of his personal opinions and banter into the historical narrative. Visitors definitely want historic sites to make their interpretation more entertaining through the use of compelling storytelling. This guide needs to focus on weaving the historic fact into a compelling story and not trying to be a comedian.

The tour continued on the second-floor where we saw the House and Senate Chambers, along with the governor's office and a committee room. It was an extremely hot day during our visit and it was difficult to imagine the historic proceedings that took place here in the dead of winter. The state has done a wonderful job with the authentic restoration of this building. We were disappointed with the overall experience and found little else other than the architecture on Main Street to tie in with the historic era of Missouri's founding. Once visitors leave this building, there is little else in Saint Charles to make history come alive, as is promised, in many marketing pieces. We consider this historic site to be an incredible asset that has not yet reached the potential to be an attractor for Saint Charles.

Lindenwood University

On many occasions, we find an area visitor guide listing attractions that are not really attractions. This is just such a case where we drove about the campus for approximately 45 minutes, exited the car and walked through some of the buildings and left having no idea what we saw. We first observed that there's literally no signage on this campus. We saw no names on the buildings, no street signs, no directional signs, and no visitor signs, which left us looking for exit signs. We have never seen a college campus where the buildings are nameless. How do the new students find their way around this campus? The visitor guide mentions Sibley Hall being on the National Historic Register and we are sure we saw it but we just don't know which building it was! The visitor guide also mentions a 3,000 seat performance arena and a cultural center; however we had to guess as to which buildings they were. We walked through one large new building that has a contemporary clock tower hoping to find a cultural center but we could not even find signs inside the building. We did see the new stadium under construction and all of the beautiful new buildings being constructed. This is really going to be a gorgeous campus when it is finished.

As we were leaving the University property, we noted a car in front of a building and, at long last, a sign indicating a visitor center. Inside the large open room with many traditional wood desks we found one student studying a textbook at

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a desk in the far corner. We told him that we were looking for anything of visitor interest at the University and he assured us that there was nothing. He struggled for a minute and said we could go look at Sibley Hall, “the old building with the columns”, but that was about it. So we left.

We would encourage the Convention and Visitors Bureau to list the entertainment venues at this University, as just that, entertainment venues. The University should also be listed as a historic site in all visitor's guides and maps. Don't mislead the visitor to believe that this is any more than a drive to work, unless you intend to provide an experience with more to offer than that.

Eagle Rider Adventure Rentals

We would venture to guess that many local residents will read this listing in our report, and wonder what this is and where it is located. While driving through the Bass Pro Shops parking lot, we noticed a new strip mall building and saw the Harley-Davidson logo on one of the businesses. We saw some Harleys out front with a rental sign and immediately knew that we had stumbled onto an attraction. One of the great themes of modern America is the thrill of the open road and the Harley-Davidson motorcycle is undeniably one of the great icons of American pop culture and transportation. Therefore, we can imagine many visitors would love to have the opportunity to come to Saint Charles, enjoy some gambling, shopping and dining in an historic district and hitting the open road on a Harley. What a great way to take a wine tour through the spectacular countryside of Saint Charles County. Rentals are based on a 24-hour period with unlimited mileage, and the weekend rate is \$135 per day. This is a guaranteed hit with baby boomers and Gen X and should be featured in future marketing as an attraction.

Missouri Wing Commemorative Air Force

This collection of restored World War II era aircraft is located at Saint Charles County Smartt Airport and includes a museum...

Saint Charles Empress

We saw this listed as an attraction in the Saint Charles Visitor Guide. The visitor guide states that this luxurious motor yacht offers daytime and evening group cruises for corporate groups, weddings, black-tie events and senior groups. We located the office for this charter vessel in the lower level of a building at 524 South Main Street. The office was closed, however, later, while we were touring the Lewis and Clark Boat House and Nature Center we saw a luxurious yacht anchored nearby. We wondered if we were looking at the Saint Charles Empress. Based on the fact that this is not available to visitors on a regular basis, we consider the Saint Charles Empress a venue for events and not an attraction. Therefore this should not be listed in the visitor guide as an attraction. It should be listed as an event venue.

Bass Pro Shops

There comes a time when a shopping experience becomes so large and unique that it is an attraction in and of itself. Bass Pro shops is an attractor for Saint Charles. We found brochures for this sportsman's warehouse in many regional visitor centers, which speaks to the traveler appeal of this store. Bass Pro Shops is a quality company that always develops a first-class shopping experience and the Saint Charles store is no exception. Not only is it huge, but also it is ideally located at the intersection of Interstate 70 and Fifth Street, the primary gateway into Saint Charles. As is always the case at these stores, we found a friendly and well-trained staff that is eager to interact with shoppers and provide product demonstrations to make this an entertainment experience. Most all of the equipment can be tested and demonstrated making this a great rainy day activity for visitors who are in town and may have had no intention of coming here. This one store must drive significant economic impact, in terms of taxable sales, property taxes and jobs provided to local residents. We see this store as the perfect complement to the shopping in the historic district as it fills a void by offering a significant shopping alternative for men. The Saint Charles visitor guide is absolutely on target, while listing this store as an attraction.

Saint Charles County Historical Society

The historical society is located in a white stucco building at the corner of Main Street and Jefferson. We attempted to visit on a few occasions while walking Main Street and found the door locked. We looked through the glass door and it appeared to be an archive like a public library. The Main Street Map and Directory states that there is a museum display but we could see no evidence of that through the door.

Saint Charles Municipal Band Concerts

We happened to be in town on Thursday evening and wandered down to Frontier Park to hear the band play their first concert of the season. It was a very hot, muggy evening and a good-sized crowd was gathered to hear the concert. We roamed throughout the crowd and found most to be senior citizens with a few families with children present. The riverfront location of this concert series and the sight of an orchestra playing in the large bandstand make this a great visitor activity if it is marketed as such. Nighttime entertainment is critical to the success of a tourism community and this is a great activity to keep people in the historic downtown area. We found the setting and overall atmosphere to be delightfully charming and almost idyllic. This really captures the very essence of all that is good in small-town America. We particularly

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loved the fact that the patriotic tunes were so well received by the crowd who clearly take great pride in their hometown orchestra.

Saint Charles County Office Building

Our research team paused in front of this beautiful building constructed with a classical architectural style and wondered how many visitors come here and mistake this large, hilltop, domed government building to be Missouri's first state capitol. We wandered around the site on a Saturday and found the building locked up tight. The grounds are beautiful and we enjoyed the monuments and memorials scattered amid lush landscaping. There is a grand view of the river from this hilltop location that overlooks the historic district. We wondered if the inside of the building is as spectacular as the exterior and if there is anything inside of tourist interest. We also see this hilltop area as an excellent location for a future Inn as it is in walking distance to the historic districts, dining, courthouse, hospital, and local government. The inn would have an excellent mix of leisure visitors and business travelers that would all enjoy staying in upscale unique accommodations with a view.

Saint Charles Convention Center

Our team was given a tour of this new facility in the month before it opened and we were awed. Many communities are foolishly building convention centers with no plan or target markets at a time when overall convention attendance has been declining. Our initial reaction to this new convention center is that it will be the exception and should do very well for Saint Charles. The facility is of top-notch quality and includes all of the key elements meeting planners expect. Additionally it has the critical element of on-site full service lodging and dining. It is conveniently located with interstate access and in close proximity to unique shopping and nighttime entertainment. With a focused sales effort this convention center should thrive in spite of the current challenges facing the convention and meetings market.

Heart of Saint Charles Banquet Center

As we were driving west on Interstate 70 and crossing the Missouri River, we could not help but notice this hillside facility located just off the interstate highway. The high ceilings, glass walls and chandeliers caught our eye. We walked through the facility and found that while its architecture is a bit dated, it is clean and well maintained. The large semicircular ballroom, visible from the highway, was beautifully set for a wedding at the time of our visit.

Banquet Center of the Little Hills

We had a difficult time locating this banquet center. When we did locate it we were surprised to discover that it is in the Sundermeyer RV Park which we had already visited two days prior. The listing for Banquet Center of the Little Hills in the Saint Charles visitor guide does not mention that it is located at the RV

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Park. The banquet center is very nice and well maintained.

REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS AND WINERIES

Weldon Spring Site

While driving toward the wine region, south of Saint Charles on United States Highway 94, we were awestruck by the sight of a massive mound of white granite rock on the right side of the road. We pulled in to investigate and were surprised to discover that it is a massive environmental cleanup of a contaminated industrial weapons site. We parked the car and walked into the visitor center which is located in a large blue building. As soon as we entered the door, a friendly fellow named Brendan McGee greeted us and seemed glad to have some company. Brendan gave us a great overview of the site history and then walked with us as we went through all of the exhibits. Most of the exhibits were educational and related to the scientific and environmental issues involved in the cleanup of the site and were mostly two dimensional static photos and graphic displays mounted on large vertical freestanding panels. The quality and preparation of the exhibits is top-notch, however, the scientific subject matter could easily bore the average visitor after the first few panels. We have to admit we found ourselves picking up the pace as we progressed through the exhibits.

Brendan walked with us out the back door where we were faced with the massive mound that covers 45 acres and reaches some 60 feet into the air. It is stark white, uniform and almost eerie. The level field surrounding the mound has been planted with native wildflowers, and there is a path through this field to a staircase that climbs to the top of the mound. We were surprised to find three senior citizens descending the staircase from the top of the mound. Up until this point, we thought that we were the only visitors on the site. As we began our ascent of the mound, we stopped and interviewed the three people descending the staircase and learned that they were local residents who had been driving by the site for years and decided to finally stop and walk to the top. They told us stories of attending the nearby high school and their familiarity with the site over the decades. They had watched the reclamation of the site with fascination and yet had never hiked to the top of the mound.

We found the height to the top of the mound to be deceiving as it took more effort than we would have expected. This is one giant pile of rocks and it is a bit eerie to think about what is buried under the pile of rocks. At the pinnacle, we found a few monument signs that provided limited interpretation. There are a few benches where people can sit, rest from the climb and take in the 360° unobstructed panoramic view. Brendan had hiked to the top with us and told us that this 45-acre solid white object is an excellent navigational landmark for

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pilots and could possibly be seen from outer space. We never would have expected an environmental cleanup site to be an interesting stop on our tour of the area but we came away having had a good experience here and would recommend it to others.

Historic Daniel Boone Home and Boonesfield Village

Having grown up in the 1960s, many on our research team were immersed in the folklore of Daniel Boone. We confess to being surprised to find Daniel Boone in this area because we had always associated him with Kentucky. Once we saw the Daniel Boone name in the visitor guide and on a rack brochure in the visitor center we knew we wanted to see this site, so we incorporated it into our tour of the wine region. We located the site easily due to excellent directional signs which helped us navigate the rural roads. We parked in the gravel parking area and walked over to the gift shop which is located in one of the former working barns. We paid our admission fee and were told that the orientation film was about to begin in an adjacent building.

We were joined in the film room by two retired couples that were traveling together. One of the couples were Dutch and they were visiting cousins who were local residents. The local resident couple commented after the film they had enjoyed it very much and found it to be a great improvement over their last visit here approximately 30 years ago. Unfortunately, this set the theme for their day as they compared every part of the tour and everything they saw to their previous tour 30 years prior. The two couples eventually ruined the tour for our team and five others with their constant interruptions and disagreements with our docent who was extremely knowledgeable and infinitely patient. The film was of excellent quality and presented a great orientation that prepared us for our visit to the site. It was the only uninterrupted part of our tour.

Our tour guide led us past the judgment tree which is now dead and lying on the ground. We toured the Daniel Boone house that is beautifully preserved and authentically presented with period furnishings. While dealing with constant interruptions from the local couple on our tour, the docent managed to bring the house to life with stories about the Boones life here. Five women who appeared to be old friends having fun and spending a day touring the wine region joined our tour. Everyone on the tour was fascinated by the story of Daniel Boone building his own casket and storing it under his bed until it was needed. The docent then told us the story of Daniel Boone's burial at the foot of his wife's grave and the fact that the state of Kentucky moved the wrong body when they thought they were moving the body of Daniel Boone for burial in Kentucky. This story has the potential for huge public interest and could generate excellent PR to bring visitors to the site in Saint Charles.

The tour included the lower level cooking areas and it ended on the lawn behind the house where many photos were taken. We were surprised that the docent made no mention of Boonesfield Village, which is clearly visible just

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behind the house. We can only assume at this point she was desperate to end the tour as the local couple had worn on everyone's patience.

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Boonesfield Village is a collection of historic buildings from the surrounding region that were saved from the wrecking ball and moved here. Among the buildings we found a cabinetmaker shop, a one-room schoolhouse, a pretty church that is as perfect as a movie set, and a historic house. Unfortunately we had arrived late in the afternoon and due to the site closing, we did not have the time to tour the buildings in this village.

St. Peter's Cultural Arts Center

We used our maps and went to a lot of effort to find this cultural arts center that is listed in the Saints Charles Visitor Guide. It was difficult to find. It would have been much less of a challenge had the visitor guide said that it is located at the base of the water tower! This is an attractive new facility with unique metal sculptures in the parking lot areas. Inside we found galleries featuring local artists presented in an attractive space. This would be something nice to see if you were in the neighborhood but we did not find it to be worth the special trip that we made from Saint Charles.

Harrah's Casino

This large casino is located across the Missouri River and to the south of downtown Saint Charles. While this casino is not in the county or city we see it as an asset for Saint Charles because it can be used to extend the stay of those overnighing in the Saint Charles area lodging. A strategy should be developed whereby visitors are encouraged to stay in Saint Charles and enjoy all of the Saint Charles area amenities and gaming, then stay an extra night or two to enjoy other area activities that could include this casino. The first priority will be to keep visitors and their money in Saint Charles.

Missouri Wine Country

WOW! This was an unexpected surprise for our team. We did not expect to find wineries in Missouri and were certainly surprised to discover that these wineries go back hundreds of years. The drive from Saint Charles south on United States Highway 94 begins as a congested suburban road that fades into spectacular rolling hills along the western banks of the Missouri River. The Saint Charles visitor guide provides an effective map that we used to locate most of the wineries. We were interested to learn of the German heritage of winemaking here that has earned this area the name, "Missouri Weinstrasse". There are more than nine wineries located in relatively close proximity to one another along United States Highway 94. Each winery offers a unique experience and some also provide meals. We stopped and had a delicious sandwich for lunch on the hilltop deck at one of the wineries. The spectacular view complemented our lunch nicely and we noticed how busy this place is

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even on a weekday. A car club was having a road rally and they were enjoying a lunch at the winery. These wineries should be marketed as a perfect day trip to expand overnight stays for visitors in Saint Charles lodging.

Sports, Parks, Recreation and Golf

During this reconnaissance our team noted Saint Charles has some excellent recreational facilities. Typically, local parks are designed for the local and regional population and are not considered as attractions for visitors unless they have some unusual feature or attractor. Naturally the larger state parks with camping and lodges do attract many visitors from far and wide and are attractors for the area. Sports tourism can provide excellent economic impact and Saint Charles has some impressive facilities to build this market segment. Just as in the attractions, the dining and shopping, the sports visitor is looking for unique sports facilities to motivate them to come to Saint Charles. Otherwise they will stay home or go elsewhere rather than come to Saint Charles for a mediocre or average sporting experience.

Frontier Park / Lewis and Clark Monument

This scenic park is located on the banks of the Missouri River, just one block from the Main Street historic district in downtown Saint Charles. The park is one of the main ingress/egress points for the KATY Trail State Park (see below). This park has a number of walking paths, a large band shelter, a historic train station, a large impressive statue of Lewis and Clark, and an interpretive kiosk that provides information on the Saint Charles area and the Lewis and Clark expedition. The riverfront location and close access to the historic district make this park a must see for visitors. The KATY Trail State Park runs through this park on its journey west.

KATY Trail State Park

We found an interpretive sign kiosk along this trail in Frontier Park explaining to us the origin of the name “KATY” which comes from a railroad that ran from Missouri through Kansas and then into Texas. At one time, this railroad was a major transportation link between Saint Louis and Galveston. After struggling through the middle part of the 20th century the railroad was finally shut down in the 1970s. In recent years, the rail line between Saint Charles and Clinton, Missouri has been converted to a nice trail system for leisure activities. The trail system follows the Missouri River between Saint Charles and New Franklin and offers numerous vista points and varying scenery. We noted everyone from joggers, cyclists and hikers enjoying this trail.

KATY Bike Rental

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While driving through Defiance, Missouri we located this cute bike shop that looks like a classic General store. For visitors who have come to the area without a bicycle this type of rental site makes the KATY trail much more accessible. Future visitor guides should have a section to show visitors how easy it is to rent a bike and get out on the trail. Just listing the bike rental shops might be too subtle to sell the experience.

Saint Charles Family Arena

This arena is listed in the attractions section of the Saint Charles Visitor Guide even though it is only open for events. We located the facility on Arena Boulevard, which runs adjacent to the Missouri River south of Interstate 70 and the historic Saint Charles downtown area. The arena is a very large impressive facility, with ample parking, and we're sure it provides a great venue for sporting events, family shows, conventions, conserves and trade shows. We are also told that the minor-league hockey hosted here has become very popular due to the strike affecting the National Hockey League.

Saint Charles Mueller Soccer Complex

We found this massive soccer complex easily due to its location right off Highway 370 and it is clearly marked in area maps and guides. Our team counted a total of 16 fields with two lighted for nighttime play. There is ample parking and easy highway access which makes this an ideal site to host tournaments. Soccer tournaments drive credible economic impact in a community. Youth soccer has become a national obsession and these tournaments fill a lot of hotel rooms and restaurants. While in Saint Charles, there were no soccer events at the field. We spoke with the CVB sports person and they confirmed there would not be attendance if there were no matches scheduled.

SLYSA Soccer Complex

While reviewing the map one last time before departing we noticed this soccer complex located near the Saint Charles Mueller Soccer Complex. We went back and reviewed the Saint Charles Visitor Guide and noticed that it is not listed as a sports facility on pages 26 and 27. On our next visit we intend to come here and see the quality of this facility....

Grand Prix Karting

Driving on Highway 95 North, we found this go-cart track compound to be a quality facility offering a fun recreation alternative for families with kids. This could be a great release for kids who have been frustrated with mom shopping all day. This type of facility is more of a regional attractor and is unlikely to attract regular overnight visitation, however it can provide a fun evening activity for families who want to do something after an early dinner.

St. Peter's Rec-Plex

St. Peter's appears to be a bedroom community that has exploded in recent years. This recreation complex is tied to the city government buildings and is a state-of-the-art facility. You will find everything here from ice-skating, a

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swimming pool, indoor Aquatic Park, as well as a food court. This is a great place to host events/groups and could be a good part of the leisure travel mix to drive winter visitation.

Saint Charles Golf Course

This is a typical municipal tract located in close proximity to the convention center and Interstate 70. In its current condition, this course would not attract out of town golfers who hit the road seeking a unique and challenging experience.

Blanchette Park

Just west of Frenchtown, we found this large city park on Randolph Avenue. This is a very well maintained city park and appears to have been a popular spot in Saint Charles for decades. We drove through the park and saw the water park area crowded on a hot day. The aquatic area had lots of new fountains and slides and was providing lots of fun for the children. This park also offers ball fields, tennis courts and lots of open space for picnics and outdoor activities. While driving through the Park, we also noticed the Parks and Recreation offices are located here.

Old Hickory Golf Club

We noticed the address in the visitor guide was listed as #1 Dye Club Drive. When assessing the golf product and a community we always look for unique and challenging tracts that will compel golfers to come and spend the night and play. When we saw the name "Dye" we immediately wondered if this was a Pete Dye course and we wondered why a major name would not have been mentioned in the visitor guide description. We drove to St. Peter's to see this Golf club but had a difficult time locating it. We did not see any signage along the main road and this was our first clue that the club does not want the public to find it. The only marker is a small green street sign indicating Dye Club Drive. We just happened to arrive on a Saturday afternoon when a huge wedding reception was beginning and the main road into the club was a traffic jam of cars who had all left the church at the same time and were looking for parking. We got stuck in traffic and had plenty of time to admire the spectacular conditions of this beautifully designed golf course. Knowing that it was a bad time to visit we turned around and left. We later visited the web site for this course and the only sign that we could see indicating whether public is welcome was information on hosting golf outings and tournaments. We called a phone number listed in the visitor's guide and learned that this course is not open for public play. This should be clearly stated in the visitor's guide.

Saint Andrews Golf Club

This course is located in close proximity to our hotel and we pulled in when we saw the sign along the interstate 70 Frontage Road. We then noticed that the golf course has been redeveloped as a subdivision with homes being built on

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what was once fairways and greens. Just adjacent to the Hampton Inn, we noticed a driving range that is still in use and wondered if this was once the driving range from the golf course.

Shopping and Retail

Nationally, shopping is the most popular activity while traveling. In fact, recent studies have shown travelers rate their vacation experience higher based on higher levels of retail spending. In other words, the more money spent shopping the better the vacation. This is particularly the case in resort destinations. Large outlet malls have been cropping up in America to take advantage of this trend. That first rainy day of vacation delivers overflow crowds to the large malls, where vacationers accomplish back-to-school, household, gift and Christmas shopping. A full year's worth of shopping can take place in a matter of days! This is in addition to the traditional souvenir buying which remains popular for travelers. Therefore, shopping is an important attractor for a community and a major area of economic impact for the local economy.

Overall

Saint Charles area merchants and the Saint Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau have done a very good job promoting each individual shop in the visitors guide and the historic downtown seasonal map and directory. However, we have found the emphasis being placed on marketing each individual shop rather than marketing historic Saint Charles as a unique shopping destination. One cannot underestimate the popularity of shopping in travel and tourism for all segments of the industry. While our team was impressed with the overall quantity of shopping opportunities available to business and leisure travelers to this region, we were disappointed to find so many stores on Main Street had nearly identical merchandise. We went in every store and saw the same candles, figurines, Angels, wind chimes, and souvenirs, etc. Furthermore, we found much of this merchandise to be dated. Many of the shops have the same merchandise that we saw 20 and 30 years ago.

The traveling consumer has changed dramatically in their taste and many of these stores have not changed their merchandise to offer what would appeal to the traveling public. Having seen many of the shops, we can just imagine that declining sales over the past five to ten years frustrates many merchants. Consumer spending is at an all-time high for Americans who desire to run up their credit cards on retail purchases, and there is no end in sight. We encourage the Saint Charles merchants to read this critical evaluation with a positive attitude and hope they will consider any criticism as an opportunity for improvement and increased profitability. There are millions of people looking for a fun shopping experience, so let's go find them and bring them to Saint Charles for some unique shopping fun. It is time to diversify the retail product

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mix in the Historic District or accept declining sales and loss of revenues in the future.

300, 400 & 500 Block North Main Street

- Σ **302, Remington's** – An art and frame shop whose exterior doesn't invite visitors in because it looks like a typical small merchant that caters to locals with balloons and centerpieces. Visitors don't usually need framing so the exterior needs to feature products that appeal to visitors if the goal is to lure them in.
- Σ **319, Antiques & Oak** - The visitors guide says this was voted the number one antique shop in the area. We did find some of the highest-quality merchandise here of all the antique shops in the area. The man seated behind the counter reading his newspaper seemed completely disinterested in us. We asked some specific questions and he provided specific answers but did not elaborate. When we experience this attitude from a merchant it is an indicator that the area gets a lot of foot traffic and few buyers.
- Σ **331, Main Street News** - This is a relatively new and small newsstand that provides much needed sundries for visitors. It is conveniently located to restaurants, which means visitors can pick up a newspaper to read while they eat.
- Σ **401, Great American Diving Company** - This scuba shop was closed when we were there and looked like it is primarily a place for locals to shop. Is there the possibility to develop a visitor diving activity in local pools, lakes or rivers? If so this should be listed in the visitor guide under attractions or sports and recreation.
- Σ **520, Foundry Art Center** - Wonderful art in all types of media is for sale here with the unique ability for visitors to interact with artists. This is a shopping attraction. Note: see our detailed comments regarding the Foundry Arts Center under "Attractions" in this section of the report.

200 Block North Main Street

- Σ **222, Worthington Stove and Hearth** - This is a really large retail space primarily featuring wood stoves and fireplace tools. While in the store we thought we heard the sound of a train coming through and then we realized that the racket was coming from upstairs. Upon exiting the building we noticed that the Performing Arts Center dance classes are held above the store. While this store does not have primary appeal for many visitors there is ample retail space to expand the product line to include outdoor grills, smokers and barbecue related items that are very popular now. Travelers will buy large items and ship them home. Just ask the grandfather clock folks down the street and they will tell you that they ship clocks all over. This store is featured in the Main Street map and directory but is not listed in the CVB Visitor Guide.

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- Σ **226, Performing Arts Centre** - Located just above Worthington Stove and Hearth this facility appears to be primarily used for offices, rehearsals and classes. The name “Performing Arts Centre” could confuse the visitor who is reading the main Street map & Directory into thinking this is an event venue.
- Σ **229, Thro’s & Michelle’s** - The exterior of this store looks like a typical small-town clothing store. As visitors, we did not feel compelled to enter as we did not think we were going to find anything unique or special. We did go in the store and found very nice merchandise, but were not surprised when the merchant told us that they get few visitors who come in and shop. Main Street is packed with merchants selling decorative accessories and we think there is a great opportunity to sell clothing to visitors. Some changes in the store's exterior to make it a bit more in line with the historic atmosphere of the area and to expand the window displays could bring in many visitors. Imagine what this storefront looked like as a classic old clothing store from 100 years ago. We did purchase a very nice shirt. We had never seen one quite like it.
- Σ **230, Walters Jewelry** - This store is listed in the map and directory but not in this CVB visitor guide. It looks like a very high-quality nice local jewelry store that is not trying to appeal to visitors. There are many merchants on the street selling various types of jewelry to visitors. We see an opportunity here to include this store in the promotion of Saint Charles as a wedding destination where you can buy the rings and have a complete turnkey wedding in a historic setting.

100 Block North Main Street

- Σ **105, Abby’s Vintage Clothing** – This shop was closed during our visit but we looked in the window and it appeared to be a fun alternative to the typical clothing store.
- Σ **107, JIL Flea Market and Oldies** - This store is appropriately marketed in the CVB visitor guide as having a live wood carver. Brilliant! We enjoyed talking to the wood carver and seeing his beautiful detailed work. Live woodcarving provides an activity that just happens to be of interest to many men who could possibly be bored waiting on their wives who are shopping. By providing this activity this merchant makes it possible for wives to shop longer by keeping their impatient husbands entertained. We enjoyed watching this take place while in the store. We also picked up the brochure for Frenchtown in the store and were pleased to see this cross-promotion taking place.

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- Σ **115, Stamp and Art Specialties** - We were rather intrigued by this store that is dedicated to rubber art stamps and their use for artistic endeavors. The store really smells of rubber when you walk in and we enjoyed looking at the various displays of stamp art. The clerk was busy helping someone so we were unable to ask any questions but we think this is a great opportunity for demonstrations and participatory classes where visitors could have a fun activity.
- Σ **122, Captivation's Jewelry Design Studio** - This is a lovely jewelry store featuring some high-end brand-name jewelry. The challenge with jewelry stores is to convince the visitor that there's something inside that they can't find at home.
- Σ **126, Gene's Shoes** - We were excited when we saw a shoe store listed in the visitor guide and the Main Street map and directory because shoe shopping is always popular with visitors. However, we were disappointed with Gene's from a visitor's perspective. The store windows were so filthy it looked as if they'd never been washed and the merchandise did not look like anything special that would be of interest to visitors.
- Σ **147, Hollywood Gems** - This store was closed but we enjoyed looking in the window at the jewelry that had apparently been worn by famous Hollywood stars. There were pictures of the stars wearing the jewelry right next to the jewelry on display. Pretty cool.
- Σ **149, Home Theater Heaven** - This store occupies a very large building and apparently customizes home theaters for local residents. This large corner location needs to be occupied by a business that is of visitor interest.

100 & 200 Blocks South Main Street

- Σ **104, Touring Cyclist** – This is a classic old-fashioned bicycle shop and we were pleased to see that they have bicycles for rent. They have a large inventory and very friendly staff. We would suggest a banner or flag out front that says “rent a bike and go for a ride on the KATY Trail”. Visitors can pick up a bike here and a picnic lunch at one of the many restaurants within the block. Sounds like a package deal to us!
- Σ **119, Centuries Past Antiques** – This is a typical antique and collectible shop but nothing stood out to us to distinguish it as a unique shopping experience.
- Σ **207, First Capital Trading Post** – This is a large store featuring figurines and collectibles. In fact it may take the prize for the most figurines that we've ever seen in one store with huge inventories of Hummels, Precious Moments, Lladro, Swarovski, etc. We commented that we

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would hate to have to take inventory here. This is a beautiful store and it is spacious but we wonder if demand is declining for figurines?

300 Block South Main Street

- Σ **304, Simply Dazzled** – The Main Street map and directory calls this store “Simply Dazzled” while the CVB Visitor Guide calls this “Bijou Bead Studio”. A friendly young girl greeted us as soon as we walked in the door. She was seated at a table making jewelry. She showed us how she was making jewelry and was eager to help us find something to buy. This should be a good shop to entertain visitors of all ages.
- Σ **307, Clowns and Friends** – This shop features collectible clown and gift items.
- Σ **308, The Enchanted Attic** – As we walked up the stairs into the shop we could hear the merchant on the telephone with a personal call. We noticed a sign for a free gift with purchase and the scent of incense was very strong. We took our time walking through the store and noticed that there were two other parties shopping. The merchant never got off the phone and never spoke to any of the shoppers. This is a new age style shop and should have good appeal with the younger demographic.
- Σ **310, Native Traditions Gallery** – This is a large store featuring a good array of Native American art, crafts and gifts. The merchants were friendly and spoke to us and were very helpful in shipping our purchase home.
- Σ **311, The Bear Factory** – Two ladies were blocking the door deep in conversation when we arrived. One appeared to be the merchant and no greeting was offered so we wandered through the store. It is very cute and has a large selection of bears in three primary rooms. There is a small room in the back called “the stuffin station” where children can have a make your own bear birthday party.
- Σ **318, Tiffany Gardens/Glass Workbench** – We found a beautiful store inside featuring all kinds of contemporary and classic glasswork and stained glass. Beautiful. While the store is in the center of the block, it opens onto a garden where flowers and garden accessories are featured. We had no contact with a merchant while in the store.
- Σ **319, Silks and Treasures** – This store is packed with silk flower arrangements, home accessories of every kind and is beautifully merchandised. The store is in a historic house that is set back from the street. Many folks were shopping and the merchant was busy helping them and yet had time to speak as we entered. We found one room filled with lace and linen merchandise.
- Σ **322, Main Street General Store** – This is a very authentic general store, but the storekeeper did not seem particularly friendly. She said hello in a sullen tone and busied herself tidying the shelves. It appears that the

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store has just expanded into the space next door and seemed to us that there is very little merchandise in the store.

- Σ **328, Memories in the Attic** – This store features dolls and quilts. The merchant in the store was on the phone when we entered and did not speak to us while we were in the store. We noted a car parked at the front door with the license plate that had the store name on it. We wonder how many merchants use front door parking and let their customers walk from the parking lots?
- Σ **330, Thistle & Clover** – This store features everything Scottish and was quite busy when we were there. We were particularly impressed with the large selection of authentic kilts and that they have kilts for rent. This should be featured in advertising of weddings to help make historic Saint Charles a wedding destination.
- Σ **334, Old Town Spice Shop** – The wonderful aroma of spices greeted us in the street and lured us into this store. We have never seen such a large selection of spices and wonder how they manage to turn the inventory. This is a great opportunity for cooking demonstrations to show people how to use the various spices and drive sales. The two ladies on duty were very friendly and we enjoyed a laugh together.
- Σ **335, Crafty Ladies** – We walked in and the attendant was busy playing a game on a computer behind the counter. She never looked up to acknowledge us. There is very little merchandise in the store and it is not very crafty. We expected craft to mean handmade items and this is more about novelties.
- Σ **337, Patches Quilt and Button Shop** – This store was rather busy and is beautifully merchandised. Quilting is growing in popularity among the younger demographic that is showing increased interest in handwork. Great opportunities exist for weekend workshops packaged with local lodging.
- Σ **340, Karen's Treasures** – The name does not impart that this is a nature store with lots of things that would catch the eye of teenagers.
- Σ **341, Stitches Etc.** – This is a large cross stitch and needlework store. The women in the store came to a standstill when one man from our research team walked in by himself. The women looked at him as if he were a curiosity and never spoke. He might have been buying a gift for his wife or mother, and you just never know, some men might do needlework! He was amazed by the size of the store and in the amount of inventory. This is another good opportunity for weekend workshops packaged with local lodging.

400 Block South Main Street

- Σ **401, The Homestead** – This store is located in an authentic cabin that is one of the oldest buildings in town. There is nice interpretive signage out front. The interior is very much like an old cabin and features quilts pottery and primitive art. The merchant was friendly and nice and the atmosphere was very pleasant.
- Σ **407, Lewis And Clark Rendezvous** – This store features oak furniture with some antiques and scented candles. There are a lot of scented candles on Main Street in Saint Charles.
- Σ **407, Silver City** – This store features Native American jewelry and art.
- Σ **409, Goodarts Gallery** – This is a lovely framing business in a bungalow style cottage. There is framed artwork for sale featuring Jesse Barnes.
- Σ **413, The Gift Nook** – This little shop is filled with novelties and prank gifts. The merchant here is a real character. He greeted us at the door and stayed with us the entire time having fun showing us some of the silly items. He worked harder than any merchant we encountered at making a sale.
- Σ **415, Designer Like** – This looks like a small store that is new. A woman was seated on the counter and offered help if we needed it. The store sells handbags, scarves and jewelry that are stylish and very popular with many women today. This store should do well among Gen X and Baby Boomer women.
- Σ **416, Riverside Sweets** – A friendly young girl greeted us when we walked in the door and we found lots of kids having fun looking at the pre-packaged candy and fudge.
- Σ **416, Treasure House** – This store is behind Riverside Sweets and can be accessed through the sweet shop or from the garden entrance. Again this store looks to be relatively new with home decorative items that are very popular today. The female merchant was extremely friendly and had a precious puppy.
- Σ **416, We All Scream for Ice Cream** – Great name for a popular product on hot day. We saw kids in the street licking the ice creams that they had just purchased.
- Σ **418, Lost Treasures** – This is a small antique shop. The male merchant was sitting behind a desk working on a laptop computer. He never spoke or acknowledged us while we were in the shop.
- Σ **419, Priscilla's, Inc. Gift and Bridal House** – This two-story shop is located in a historic house and is packed with merchandise. There's a little bit of everything here with lots of angels, collectibles, figurines, and bath items. The male merchant downstairs was just as friendly as the

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- female merchant upstairs. We noted upstairs a small room in the back that was absolutely packed with formal dresses.
- Σ **420, Cottage Antiques** – This shop was closed.

 - Σ **423, Debs Gifts and More** – This shop is in a white clapboard house set back from the street. Inside we found children’s merchandise, flags, banners, doormats, picture frames and other various gift items.
 - Σ **427, Chickadees** – Again we found a merchant and another woman busy talking and we received no greeting. This shop has candles and home accessories.

500 Block South Main Street

- Σ **506, Poor Man’s Art Gallery** – This gallery is packed with framed paintings and prints that are mass-produced and sold at rock-bottom prices. The store was very busy and we noted people making purchases of large paintings.
- Σ **508, Morgie’s Gifts & Things** – No information available on this shop
- Σ **510, The Tintype Photo Parlor** – Getting together with family and friends and having an old-fashioned photo made in period costumes is fun. This is a good visitor activity.
- Σ **519, Baby Petunia** – This is a cute children’s boutique with unique and stylish merchandise. This would be a great place to buy someone a baby gift.
- Σ **524, Figueros’ Coffee and Gourmet Specialties** - This store is deceptively large. You think there’s one room in the front and then it just keeps going back and back and back. There’s one room with the largest selection of hot sauces that we’ve ever seen. Has this ever been featured on the Food Channel? In the back room we found an espresso bar but no one was in there.
- Σ **523, Family _____** - this new store opened on May 16 and we found wind chimes and lamps presented in a lovely setting. The merchant here was friendly and was sitting outside on a bench soaking up some sun when the shop was empty.
- Σ **525, The Hearth Room** – This store features primitive decor and decorative accents with a few more candles. It is very small and appears to be new. The merchant was friendly and helpful.

600 Block South Main Street

- Σ **600, Country Garden** – This is a lovely accessories shop that features Williamsburg items for the home. A friendly female merchant greeted us and asked if she could be of assistance.

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- Σ **603, Maison Rive** – This is a large Victorian house set back from the road with many steps to get up to the main level. Inside we found a wide assortment of antiques with some high-quality and expensive items. We asked for some help to see the price on an item that was locked in a cabinet. The merchant had a hard time locating the key and climbing over the debris piled behind the counter.

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- Σ **608, Jansen's Clocks** – This store features Howard Miller clocks and was under renovation when we dropped in. All of the merchandise was piled in the middle of the room under a tarp and yet the merchants could not have been friendlier. They nearly jumped off the ladder to greet us. They pull back the tarps so we could see the clocks and told us that a man had just come in and purchased a \$3,000 clock and asked that they ship it to his home. This demonstrates that visitors are willing to make big-ticket purchases while traveling.
- Σ **610, Friperie** – This is a relatively new shop that offers a hip combination of lady's clothing accessories and home decor items. The women that work here are stylishly dressed and very friendly. This is a much needed addition to a street that has so many figurines and scented candles. By offering different types of merchandise, Saint Charles has the ability to appeal to a much broader market and attract many types of travelers.
- Σ **612, Holiday House** – Most every tourist town that we have been has a Christmas shop. This satisfies a segment of folks who like to buy Christmas ornaments on their travels.
- Σ **620, The Flower Petaler** – This may be the largest collection of silk flowers that we've ever seen in one place. The store was busy with ladies making purchases and even though the merchant was busy she had time to say hello and greet us.
- Σ **621, Main Street Books** – This small bookstore is located in a cute little brick building that is set far back from the street. The small space limits the amount of merchandise, however, this merchant has done a great job of offering a broad selection of books with something to appeal to everyone. It would be wonderful if there were shaded comfortable spots in the yard where people could curl up with a book for the afternoon. This would be a great way for husbands to pass the time while their wives shop. Buy a book, buy something to drink and sit outside and read.
- Σ **625, String Along With Me** – This jewelry and bead shop is located in the basement of a large house in which the upper floors serve as the Havilland Museum.

700 Block South Main Street

- Σ **700, The Garage** – This clever shop features gifts for boys and toys for men. We found all kinds of toy and model cars and yes, for once, we saw women waiting on the men to do their shopping. This shop was busy.
- Σ **700, John Dengler Tobacconist** – This tobacco was filled with the rich smell of various types of tobacco. We saw just as many women as men

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showing interest in their cigars. We think this store could expand the seating area and add a smoking room for men so they could buy cigars and magazines and pass the time while their wives shop. In some cases women just might like to join them.

- Σ **700, Cliff's Custom Cut Outs** – This woodworking shop is just around the corner and is entered from the side of the building. We noticed on a Saturday that an interpreter was outside doing authentic woodcarving to the delight of visitors.
- Σ **701, Lewis And Clark Jewelers** – We enjoyed looking at the estate jewelry at the small store. The merchant was very friendly and enjoyed discussing the beautiful pieces with us.
- Σ **708, Main Street Marketplace** – This is a convenience store featuring various sundries.
- Σ **709, Laura's La Petite** – This shop has the same type of merchandise that we found in so many other shops in Saint Charles. Candles, figurines, novelties, quilts, accessories, dolls and holiday items. The merchant here was busy talking with a friend about personal matters and never acknowledged us.
- Σ **710, Winery of the Little Hills Wine Shop** – This was a busy spot as wine is very popular with travelers. This shop brings the wineries of the Missouri Weinstrasse to historic Saint Charles.
- Σ **719, Karen's River Cabin** – Again, we experienced déjà vu. More candles, bears, decorative accessories, cute cat items, etc. As we were exiting this shop two middle-aged women stopped us and asked what kind of merchandise was in this store. We told them what we had seen inside and they said, “oh more of the same”.
- Σ **720, Fran's** – As we walked in we noted that the merchant was watching a television set mounted on the wall above the door. She said hello but never took her eyes off the TV. We roamed through the rooms that featured more dolls, accessories, candles and decorative items. We asked about the new store on the corner and she told us that she had just opened it and then she apologized for the mess in her store. She said she had pulled her store apart moving merchandise to the new store.
- Σ **723, Collectors Centre** – More collectibles including Department 56 Villages and snow babies, lighthouses, flags, and mailbox covers. This is the first time that we have seen some Halloween villages. We kept hitting our head on low hanging merchandise.
- Σ **724, Silver City** – This store features Native American jewelry and art which is attractively displayed.
- Σ **724, Fran's Reflections in Glass** – This shop has upscale contemporary glass. The merchant was a lovely lady who showed us the beautiful glass objects. She is a master at the soft sell! Good job. She wasn't pushy but she was determined to get us interested in making a purchase.

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800 Block S. Main St

- Σ **803, Cobblestone Cottage** – This is a lovely store that is deceptively large. We felt like we were back in Williamsburg and we shopped here because it had unique merchandise. You could furnish an entire house out of the collection in this beautifully merchandised store.
- Σ **812, La Gallerie** – This is an art gallery selling original and mass-produced paintings and prints. Much of the merchandise here is nearly identical to a Poorman’s Art Gallery.
- Σ **814, Reflections of Missouri** – This gallery features artistic John Stoechley’s prints. A college student was studying a textbook at the cash register and took the time to personally greet us, provide a brief introduction about the artist and offered to answer any questions. This is a unique and special shop where travelers could take home a unique image of Missouri.
- Σ **822, Nature Loft** – This store stood out to us because it smelled of leather when we walked in. There were lots of tooled belts and unique leather items that would interest a visitor. Mixed in with these unique items were more of the same inexpensive novelties and souvenirs that we have seen in so many other shops on Main Street.
- Σ **825, This Olde House** – Again we found more of the same merchandise that we have seen in so many stores on Main Street. Victorian dolls, candles, country decor items, etc. The merchant was friendly and greeted us.
- Σ **828, Oak Tree Furniture** – This is a large furniture store featuring oak and pine furniture. We would call this country style. The two ladies working there were very friendly and we could see this as an ideal place to furnish a lake cabin or a getaway spot.

900 Block South Main Street

- Σ **902, One of a Kind** – A common door with a central hall services the entrance for this jewelry shop and the basket shop next door. The jeweler greeted us upon entry and there were other folks in the shop looking at the custom designs.
- Σ **904, Any Basket Under the Sun** – This is a small shop offering an assortment of baskets and small gift items to create packaged, unique gifts. We thought the selection was a bit thin.
- Σ **906, Plank Road Pottery** – This pottery shop is set back from the road and just the walk through the garden is a wonderful experience. We saw a sign that said this is one of the oldest historic houses in the area. Inside a man was carving a wooden toy and we enjoyed looking at the

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beautiful pottery, dulcimers, baskets and prints. The small room to the left had a potter's wheel set up.

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- Σ **912, Groovy Tees and More** – It was hot in here on a hot day but we can imagine how the kids must love the tie dye tee shirts and other hip merchandise.
- Σ **915, Country House** – This large home store truly sells a country lifestyle. You could furnish a house complete in a country look. This is very well done.
- Σ **917, Airedale Antics** – This shop is easy to miss, as it is set at the back of a parking lot away from the street. We were greeted when we entered the door by someone in the back of the shop. We found an assortment of inexpensive antique and flea market items. There was no consistency to the product and the products there were not attractively displayed. It seemed to us that this merchant has just lost interest.

1000 Block South Main Street

- Σ **1019, Hobbits Hole Antiques** – This large house features an array of antiques that appear to be offered by multiple merchants. We asked the merchant what there was to do in the area and he suggested that the Main Street area to be about it. We asked about the Lewis and Clark Boat House and he commented that everyone is sick of hearing about Lewis and Clark.

Frenchtown

Frenchtown is the up and coming historic district of shops and restaurants. Second Street is the main thoroughfare on which shopping and dining are located. Frenchtown is just slightly north of the Main Street shopping and dining district and currently has some unique shopping and dining but it lacks core density. Vacant lots and empty buildings are scattered among the wonderful new things that are being developed. It would be far more effective if all of the new and unique places were located within a dynamic two or three block area. While many merchants were flying the French fleur-de-lis flag, we did not notice any French style architecture or unique heritage to make this be a like a French village.

700 – 900 Blocks North Second Street

- Σ **729, 801, and 810, Preston's Furniture** - This is a home furnishings store that is primarily of local appeal. We did not see any unique product that would appeal to travelers.
- Σ **804, Belle Fleur** - This looks like a lovely flower shop with some antiques for sale but we could not get inside, as there was a note on the door indicating that they were off doing a wedding.
- Σ **806, Blossom** - A great-looking shop featuring antiques and decorative items. The shop is merchandised attractively and has a French country atmosphere.
- Σ **820, Doug's Place** - The name sounds like a bar, but inside we found shopping for men. This antiques store is filled with antique fishing lures and masculine antique items. The only things missing here are some great club chairs and some cigars. Men could sit around and spend the afternoon while the women shop.
- Σ **826, French Connection Antiques** - An antiques store featuring primarily furniture.
- Σ **827, Lauree's** - This corner shop features primarily dresses and ladies apparel.
- Σ **901, Gathering Gems** - The store is a hodgepodge of older items and some antiques.
- Σ **910, Old Mill House Antiques Mall** - The merchant looked at us when we entered and did not speak. We found the shop to be a bit cluttered and needing merchandising to make it look more appealing for shoppers.

1100 – 1500 Blocks North Second Street

Vacant buildings, vacant lots and a train track separate the 900 block from the 1100 block thus dividing Frenchtown into two distinct areas. This empty area needs to be revitalized and animated if Frenchtown is to become a dynamic shopping and dining district.

- Σ **1101, Lil' Shoppe of Treasures** - This store features antique clothing, jewelry and accessories.

The following shops were closed when RTM toured Frenchtown.

- Σ **1409, Vivian's Vineyards**
- Σ **1410, Nooks and Crannies**
- Σ **1417, Mattie's Heritage Antiques**
- Σ **1513, Frenchtown Antiques Mall**

Other Saint Charles Area Shopping

The Saint Charles CVB Visitor Guide does a great job of promoting the historic district shopping. However, it has little to no mention of the other shopping in the immediate vicinity. This is an area for improvement as we found some other unique shopping spots. We also found some shopping areas that while not unique, provide the necessary items that travelers may need while on the road.

- Σ **Bass Pro Shops** - See our comments under attractions as this mega shopping superstore for sportsmen is a perfect match for Saint Charles. It is conveniently located, open most days of the year and has a loyal following nationwide. This is truly “shopper-tainment” as there is always something going on to entertain visitors.
- Σ **West Marine** - This is a sporting shop for the boating enthusiast and it is conveniently located in the parking lot directly across from Bass Pro Shops. A great location and a perfect product match.
- Σ **Retail Shopping Malls** – We visited a number of large strip malls typical of what we find in most communities. While these do not necessarily offer unique items for the travelers, they do provide important service items and conveniences for travelers that may have forgotten something.

Dining & Nightlife

When visiting an area, we always look for the unique dining experiences that would appeal to travelers. When in Maine most folks look for lobster, pineapples in Hawaii and TexMex in the southwest. During reconnaissance, we asked local people on the street, at attractions, and other encounter points where to find good local food. The dining spots mentioned most often when we requested recommendations were restaurants offering home cooking or chain restaurants.

It is impossible for our team to experience every restaurant in the area. We try to dine at those advertising the most or who are most visible to the traveling public. Also, the ones for which we receive the most recommendations from local residents and front line employees in the travel industry. Our goal is to locate those establishments visited most by travelers to the area.

In Saint Charles, the most frequently recommended restaurants are (in rank order):

- Σ Lewis and Clark
- Σ Trailhead Brewing Company
- Σ Ameristar Casino Restaurants

Other recommended restaurants were:

- Σ Mother-in-Law's House
- Σ Wine Garden
- Σ Lloyd and Harry's
- Σ Tony's
- Σ Magpie's

North Main Street

This section of North Main Street can be considered the nightlife hub for Saint Charles. We were told that on many nights it becomes a rowdy area with revelers spilling into the streets. All of the restaurants in this area would do well to improve their curb appeal.

- Σ **101, Soup-R-Subs** - A small restaurant featuring sandwiches, soups and salads. A good quick alternative for travelers wanting a quick bite.
- Σ **132, Tony's on Main Street** - Here's another restaurant advertising "American cuisine" and yet we saw stacked chairs when looking through the window. The Word cuisine implies very fine dining and this looks

like

a good local dining spot.

- Σ **140, Oliver's** - This is a very attractive small restaurant and we were surprised that it was not packed on Saturday night. This appears to be one of the finer dining restaurants in the area.

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- Σ **143, St. Louis Bread Company** - This type of upscale deli featuring homemade local breads has become increasingly popular. We dropped in on a Saturday to grab a quick lunch and gave up after a lengthy wait. It appeared that the staff was very disorganized and not handling the rush efficiently.

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- Σ **201, R. T. Weilers** - Don't judge a book by its cover. On a warm Saturday this looked more like a saloon than a nice place to have lunch. We entered just as they were opening and a friendly server made a great recommendation and we enjoyed a delightful lunch. The restaurant is themed on dogs and thus the name.
- Σ **204, Riverside Restaurant and Bar** - This looks like a typical bar and restaurant as we noticed no unusual or unique features.
- Σ **208, Lloyd and Harry's Bar and Grill** – This place was packed on a Saturday night and we enjoyed an appetizer at the bar. The restaurant is much larger than it appears from the street.
- Σ **212, Stevie Ray's Bar and Grill** - The typical neighborhood bar. The Main Street merchants map and directory says that this spot features “American cuisine” and we suggest other wording as cuisine sounds too sophisticated and may discourage some visitors.
- Σ **221, Rumble's Pub** - This place has an authentic English pub atmosphere and features live music. We enjoyed a delicious steak and convivial atmosphere but often found ourselves yelling over the loud music to make conversation.
- Σ **305, Baha Rock Club** - The exterior of this nightclub looks like a party bar in a college town. We encourage nighttime entertainment that appeals to all age groups but we also encourage peaceful cohabitation of all business types. It would definitely benefit the neighborhood if this bar improved its curb appeal so that it doesn't detract from the historic quality of the neighborhood.
- Σ **308, Big A's on the Riverfront** - The Main Street map and directory says that this place offers “American Cuisine”. This appears to be a fun bar offering typical bar food and it is a stretch to call it “cuisine”. A visitor using the map and directory to find true cuisine could feel deceived and leave frustrated.
- Σ **311, Mexico on Main** - A fun dining alternative. Mexican food is definitely popular now and is one of the most numerous restaurants in most communities. Visitors will not likely come to Saint Charles for Mexican food but while in the area they may stop and enjoy this restaurant.
- Σ **340, Talayna's** - A classic downtown pizza and sub shop.

South Main Street

There is no area of South Main Street that could be considered a dining district. The restaurants here are scattered among various retail shops and many are located in former houses.

- Σ **130, Tuner's Bar and Grill** - This small restaurant and bar features blues music.

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- Σ **217, Lewis & Clark's American Restaurant and Public House** - This is by far the number one recommended restaurant in Saint Charles. When we asked locals where to eat they almost always mentioned this first. We enjoyed a very good lunch here and found the service to be friendly and efficient. It was always crowded whenever we walked past. There are no signature (original) dishes and an interesting comment came from a young girl with her mother I surveyed: "They don't have one photo of Lewis and Clark in the restaurant." Good point.
- Σ **325, Hamilton House** - This appears to be a banqueting house for private events. It is very attractive and we saw a wedding taking place there on a Saturday. If it is strictly a private events venue then it should not be listed under dining in the visitor guide. It should be listed as a banquet or special events site.
- Σ **426, Randall's** - Once inside the door, the utilitarian atmosphere does not match the attractive streetscape outside. Other than a few movie posters, there's really nothing attractive about this place. We ordered at the counter and had a good sandwich.
- Σ **500, Mother-In-Law House** - This stood out to us for featuring "Missouri area American Cuisine". The entrance is on a side street and the restaurant is deceptively large. The atmosphere is a bit dated and could be more appealing with a few of fresh touches while maintaining the historic atmosphere.
- Σ **501, Little Hills Winery** - This place was always busy when we walked past with folks enjoying indoor and outdoor dining. The downtown winery is right on trend for baby boomers.
- Σ **515, The Chowda House** - When we asked for recommendations for dining, one merchant told us that this was out of business. We noticed people there so we stepped inside and found it to be open. Based on the name we were expecting chowder but we found pasta and sandwiches.
- Σ **524, The Bella Garden Café** - This little cafe is located downstairs and is accessed through a side garden. Diners can eat inside or outside in the shaded garden.
- Σ **903, Magpie Café** - A cute little cafe with outside dining and a small indoor dining room. Light fare is offered here with soups and sandwiches.
- Σ **912, Old Mill Stream Inn** - This restaurant is accessed through the shaded patio where diners enjoy the sound of the babbling stream. It is situated below the street and reminds us of a European café. The menu primarily focuses on light fare and an extensive selection of beers. We walked through the inside and found it to resemble a college style bar.

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- Σ **921, Trailhead Brewing Company** - This large restaurant is located on a street corner in a former gristmill. Microbreweries are very popular and we noticed this place stays pretty busy. There is a small patio below the street and multiple dining areas inside the building.

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- Σ **1200, Maryland Yards at the Waterworks** - This restaurant and bar is located in a former waterworks building and is easy to pass by on this section of Main Street. It has entrées, pastas, pizzas and salads and a typical bar atmosphere.
- Σ **1219, Saint Charles Vintage House Restaurant and Wine Garden** - This restaurant is located in a residential area just across from the Maryland Yards at the Waterworks. It's amazing how different the atmosphere is on the opposite sides of the street. We stopped in here late on a summer evening and found folks dining under the trees in wonderful atmosphere.
- Σ **1260, Ameristar Casino Dining** - This large Casino has a number of unique restaurants including 47 Port Street Grill, Amerisports Bar, The Bottleneck Blues Bar, Falcon Diner, Pearls Oyster Bar and the Landmark Buffet. Casinos are always known for offering quality food at fair prices and we found these restaurants to be quite busy when we were there.

Frenchtown

- Σ **1312, Frenchtown Deli and Catering Company** - This is a good spot for barbecue, soups and sandwiches but it is easy to miss as it is set back from the street.
- Σ **1409, Vivian's Vineyards** – Closed when we were there.
- Σ **111 Transit Street, Beef Eaters Pub and Grill** - The Saint Charles Visitors Guide says this is Saint Charles' best-kept secret and we believe it. It was never recommended to us and the visitor guide does not mention that it is located in the Sundermeyer RV Park. Transit Street is easy to miss and we encourage better advertising and signage if the public is to find this restaurant.

Saint Charles Area

We found a number of good restaurants in the greater Saint Charles area, however, when we asked locals where to dine, they only recommended restaurants in the historic district. If we asked for restaurants along the interstate they only recommended chain restaurants. When we pressed them for local restaurants that were not in the historic district the locals drew a blank. Efforts must be made to raise local awareness of the unique local dining throughout Saint Charles.

- Σ **Fratelli's Restaurant** - We enjoyed a delightful meal and really friendly service at this locally owned restaurant that we understand is a favorite with the local folks. We found it in a relatively new strip mall on Zumbahl Road. This type of location is typically where chain restaurants are

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found. This should definitely be recommended to locals and visitors alike.

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- Σ **Wiliker's** - The parking lot at this restaurant was always packed when we drove by so we had to see what was drawing the crowds. Inside we found a huge wait staff that stayed busy working among the tables. They were very efficient. TVs were mounted everywhere and a packed dining room was enjoying classic American food.
- Σ **Grappa Grill** - We stopped in here on a weekday afternoon and found the place to be a bit messy. The restaurant was not busy at all. We ate on the patio where many tables were pushed together from a large group that had recently left. The food was good and the atmosphere was pleasant.
- Σ **Lyon's Frozen Custard** - While driving down Elm Street, we noticed this classic custard shop that reminded us of the 1950s. We enjoyed a delicious cone as an afternoon snack.
- Σ **Miss Aimee B's** - The visitor guide describes this as a home-style cafe with a charming 1865 Victorian atmosphere. We drove past it twice as it is located on First Capitol Drive. It is located in a large house set back from the street in a grove of trees and has ineffective signage. We drove in the driveway and as we were about to park we noticed an event taking place in a tent. We did not enter due to the event.
- Σ **Concetta's Italian Restaurant** - This local Italian restaurant is located on Fifth Street in downtown Saint Charles. It was very crowded and when we stepped in, we noticed a menu featuring all of the Italian standards.

Lodging

When conducting reconnaissance in an area, the team always looks for lodging that would most likely appeal to the vast majority of the traveling public. Therefore, the Reconnaissance Team selects its lodging for the reconnaissance using the marketing materials provided by the local tourism promotion agency, the state, and brochures found along the way in racks. Once in the area, the Reconnaissance Team looks at all available lodging properties to determine the range of lodging options available in the area. The team also looks to see if the national chain properties are well maintained and that locally owned properties are adequately advertised and represented correctly in promotional materials. The Reconnaissance Team makes an effort to stay in a range of lodging properties typical of the area to ensure our understanding of the experience from the visitor perspective.

Overall we found small residential inns in the historic area of Saint Charles. Boone's Lick Trail Inn is the largest with nine rooms in two historic buildings. The other inns have one to three rooms and are located in residential neighborhoods. We were very surprised in that we did not find more inns along Main Street. There is definitely an opportunity to have more "inn-style" lodging on the second-floor of buildings above the shops. There could be one central check in location with lodging rooms scattered throughout the historic district. This is the model used in Williamsburg and Shaker Village in Kentucky. Saint Charles would do well to develop a reputation as an inn destination as is the case in Charleston and Savannah. A small 20-40 room inn with fine dining should do well in Saint Charles if it was located in close proximity to the city and county government offices, court house, law offices, hospital and Quilogy. This would allow the inn to provide convenient upscale lodging for business travelers while also accommodating leisure visitors. Saint Charles could easily become a weekend escape for St. Louis residents.

Saint Charles also has a number of chain affiliated lodging properties that are primarily located along the interstate highway corridor. A new chain hotel is being developed on South Main Street between the historic district and the Ameristar Casino. We noted that this hotel (Country Inn and Suites) is being built to fit in with the historic buildings in the area. This hotel will capitalize on the demand for "inn-style" lodging with updated luxury amenities. Baby boomers tell us that they prefer to have comfort and convenience over charm and thus are skeptical when considering inns. Therefore, bed and breakfast inns must strive to provide a unique charming atmosphere with high-quality amenities and privacy as found in upscale lodging.

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During the course of this study the RTM team stayed at the following lodging properties: Hampton Inn, Embassy Suites, Comfort Inn and Suites and Boone's Lick Trail Inn.

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Saint Charles has a number of limited service lodging properties along the interstate. A large new Embassy Suites Hotel attached to the Saint Charles Convention Center is due to open soon. This property will be the “new kid on the block” and thus draw some business from other properties, but it will definitely be the highest priced lodging in the area. We therefore see it as filling an unmet need in the area and hopefully opening a new market segment rather than dividing an existing one.

Please refer to the Lodging Survey section of this report for a complete analysis of the lodging product in the Saint Charles area including a break down of the lodging by age, room count and type.

Unique (Non Chain) lodging

- Σ **Koeller House** - A small bungalow style house located on the street corner, has one guest room. We noted a fence with faded silk flowers in window boxes and a swimming pool.
- Σ **Boone’s Lick Trail Inn** – Two historic buildings with nine rooms in the historic district make this the nicest inn in Saint Charles. It is located on South Main Street and is affiliated with Select Registry (an international group of inns that must pass rigorous inspections). The property is well maintained with attractive landscaping and is authentically furnished with period antiques. The age of the buildings limits the inn in its ability to provide some of the luxuries that Baby Boomers prefer such as oversized bathrooms.
- Σ **Geery’s Bed & Breakfast** - We located this inn on Fifth Street and found a “For-Sale” sign in front. Inns are an important part of the tourism equation for Saint Charles and the city must be aware that many inns could close or sell in the coming years thus changing the tourism dynamic in Saint Charles. This situation must be monitored by the CVB and Saint Charles should develop a reputation as an inn destination.
- Σ **Old Elm Tree Inn** - We drove out Elm Street from the historic district to locate this suburban home that has three guest rooms with private baths. It is very attractively maintained and very residential in appearance.
- Σ **Mueller House** - This is one of the three inns on Fifth Street and it has two bedrooms for guests. The house has patriotic bunting and a “support our troops” sign. It looks very homey.
- Σ **Victorian Memories** - We located this Fourth Street inn by the street address but did not see a sign in front. There is a gazebo and it is very Victorian in appearance.

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- Σ **Lady B's Bed and Breakfast** - This redbrick house on North Benton Street features three guest rooms. We located it easily but found the exterior to be in need of attention. Travelers today are very demanding and curb appeal is critical.