

WINTER 2026

GLADSTONE

JCOM 471: PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIC PLANNING
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

Re-Discover Gladstone: Internal and External Tourism Strategies to Rejuvenate a Historic Community

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Acknowledgments

Students acknowledge and thank the City of Gladstone for making this project possible and the following people for their assistance and contributions towards the completion of this report.

Jacque Betz, City Administrator, City of Gladstone

Jon Legarza, Principal, Healthy Sustainable Communities

This report represents original student work and recommendations prepared by students in the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program for the City of Gladstone. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from the University of Oregon.

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About SCI

The Sustainable Cities Institute (SCI) is an applied think tank focusing on sustainability and cities through applied research, teaching, and community partnerships. We work across disciplines that match the complexity of cities to address sustainability challenges, from regional planning to building design and from enhancing engagement of diverse communities to understanding the impacts on municipal budgets from disruptive technologies and many issues in between.

SCI focuses on sustainability-based research and teaching opportunities through two primary efforts:

1. Our Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP), a massively scaled university-community partnership program that matches the resources of the University with one Oregon community each year to help advance that community's sustainability goals; and

2. Our Urbanism Next Center, which focuses on how autonomous vehicles, e-commerce, and the sharing economy will impact the form and function of cities.

In all cases, we share our expertise and experiences with scholars, policymakers, community leaders, and project partners. We further extend our impact via an annual Expert-in-Residence Program, SCI China visiting scholars program, study abroad course on redesigning cities for people on bicycle, and through our co-leadership of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), which is transferring SCYP to universities and communities across the globe. Our work connects student passion, faculty experience, and community needs to produce innovative, tangible solutions for the creation of a sustainable society.

About SCYP

The Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is a yearlong partnership between SCI and a partner in Oregon, in which students and faculty in courses from across the university collaborate with a public entity on sustainability and livability projects. SCYP faculty and students work in collaboration with staff from the partner agency through a variety of studio projects and service-learning courses to provide students with real-world projects to investigate. Students bring energy, enthusiasm, and innovative approaches

to difficult, persistent problems. SCYP's primary value derives from collaborations that result in on-the-ground impact and expanded conversations for a community ready to transition to a more sustainable and livable future.

Community partnerships are possible in part due to support from U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, as well as former Congressman Peter DeFazio, who secured federal funding for SCYP through Congressionally Directed Spending.

About the City of Gladstone

Nestled at the confluence of the Clackamas and Willamette Rivers, the City of Gladstone combines small-town charm with the advantages of its metropolitan proximity to Portland. Home to just under 12,000 residents, Gladstone offers welcoming neighborhoods, vibrant parks and river access, and a growing local business base.

*Image Credit:
The City of Gladstone*



Gladstone provides an abundance of opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts, featuring parks, bike trails, community gardens, sports fields, and a boat ramp for river recreation. Annual community events such as the Easter Egg Hunt, ice cream socials, and hot dog feeds,

bring neighbors together and celebrate Gladstone's active civic spirit. With a proud past and a bright future, Gladstone provides an ideal setting to celebrate community heritage and envision a vibrant, connected downtown.

Course Participants

UNDERGRADUATE PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS

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Course Description

JCOM 471: PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIC PLANNING

This course is open to public relations majors only and focuses on campaign planning, administration, crisis communication, and issues management, encompassing research, writing objectives and tactics, evaluation methods, and constructing budgets and timelines.

Executive Summary

In Winter 2026, the City of Gladstone partnered with the University of Oregon's Public Relations (PR) Strategic Planning course through the Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) to explore strategies aimed at strengthening the city's identity, increasing tourism, and enhancing community engagement.

Gladstone strives to better celebrate its local community while also attracting visitors from surrounding areas. Students addressed these goals by researching the local and surrounding communities to develop a SWOT analysis to guide the development of targeted campaign strategies.

Initial research identified several key strengths, including Gladstone's access to high-quality parks, proximity to the Clackamas and Willamette Rivers, strong community organizations, and historical significance. However, challenges such as low external visibility, limited downtown business activity, minimal online presence, and a perception as a pass-through community were also identified. Opportunities exist to develop a distinct identity, leveraging community events, increasing digital engagement, and capitalizing on growing demand for local and experience-based activities.

In response, student groups developed a range of tourism and community engagement strategies. Tourism-focused campaigns emphasized creating accessible, experience-driven events such as drive-in movies, car shows, street fairs, and a signature 5k race to attract visitors from nearby communities including Portland, Oregon City, West Linn, and Milwaukie. These strategies aim to position Gladstone as an affordable

and appealing day-trip destination for potential visitors in surrounding cities, while increasing general brand recognition for the city.

Community engagement strategies focused on reconnecting residents with local businesses and public spaces. Initiatives such as tailgates tied to high school football games, block parties on Portland Avenue, seasonal events, and interactive materials like passports and scavenger hunts for downtown businesses were designed to increase awareness, foot traffic, and local economic support. Across all campaigns, students stressed the importance of consistent programming, strategic communication, and stronger use of social media to improve visibility and engagement.

A key finding across all groups was the importance of targeting two primary publics: families with school-aged children and empty nester adults aged 40-60. These groups were consistently identified as the most likely to engage with both tourism and community-based initiatives. Overall, the recommendations presented in this report provide a balanced approach to increasing tourism while strengthening community identity, offering realistic and scalable strategies that align with Gladstone's long-term goals.

Introduction

Gladstone, Oregon, is a small community surrounded by the natural beauty of the Clackamas and Willamette Rivers. Its access to natural spaces is complemented by its proximity to the urban center of Portland. Gladstone boasts a population of 12,000 with a strong school system, well-kept parks, and many active local organizations.

Long before it became a city, Gladstone was an important gathering place for Indigenous peoples. The Chinook-speaking Clackamas lived closely with the rivers, and depended on them for fishing, transportation and everyday life for thousands of years. Their deep connection to the land remains an important part of Gladstone's story today, despite a history of disease and displacement.

Gladstone began to take shape in 1882 when Harvey Cross purchased land and imagined turning it into a town. Cross named the town after British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone and gave the city an unusual street system: north and south streets were to be named after American colleges, while east and west streets honored English universities. This is one of the many small details that gives the city the personality it has today.

In 1894, Gladstone became a cultural hotspot when the Chautauqua movement arrived. Each summer, thousands of visitors would come by train and riverboat to attend lectures, concerts, and performances at Chautauqua Park. At its peak, as many as 50,000 people gathered under the trees, turning Gladstone into one of the region's most vibrant destinations. The historic Pow-Wow Tree remains a living reminder of this era.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The PR Strategic Planning class at the University of Oregon requires students to perform primary and secondary research that informs effective decision making and program design to help solve real-world public relations challenges. It allows students to apply their learning from previous courses while delving into the world of client relations and management.

The City of Gladstone, in partnership with the Sustainable City Year Program, was paired with this class of future communication professionals in the winter of 2026. Gladstone would like to strengthen the city's identity to better celebrate their local community while both increasing and enhancing tourism experiences. This duality of interests allowed student groups to focus on re-engaging local residents and businesses within Gladstone or look outward and create concepts for ways to drive non-residents into the city.

Initial Research

SWOT (STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS) ANALYSIS

The following SWOT analysis is a compilation of students' research findings when researching Gladstone. These concepts served as a jumping-off point for each group to determine the community identity they would help curate through their campaign strategy.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
- High quality parks and outdoor recreation - Access to the Clackamas and Willamette Rivers - Recent infrastructure development - Established local events - Existing digital platforms - Historical value - Affordable cost of living - Convenient location - Strong connections to automotive community - City leadership is open to new ideas and strategies	- Limited businesses downtown - Lack of spaces for nightlife - Underutilized public spaces - Lack of public transportation - Seasonal activities and tourism - Stagnating population - Aging population - Low external visibility - Limited strategic communication efforts - Weak online presence - Small geographic size - Low visibility of main street - Resource constraints - Reputation challenges
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
- A clean slate for creating campaigns, messaging, and identity - Collaboration with other towns to gain stronger connections and exposure - Developing identity through signature events - Increase in demand for local and community experiences - Partnerships with local businesses - Tourism tax - Social media growth potential - Increased interest in outdoor recreation - Gaining "Affiliated Main Street" status would give the city access to more funding opportunities	- Lack of awareness regarding Gladstone's offerings - Overshadowed by surrounding cities - Grant and federal funding going to competitors - Struggling economy - Pass through community - Unpredictable Oregon seasonal weather - Exposure to Portland-area challenges "Don't Portland my Gladstone" mindset - Mixed reputation among surrounding cities

COMPARABLE CAMPAIGNS

Milwaukie, Oregon

Milwaukie is proud of its town and identity. The city prioritizes events for residents by hosting events like First Friday; a monthly celebration with local food, vendors, and artists. Every Sunday, the city hosts a farmers' market with over 70 vendors and live music.

The city also has a mascot named Millie T. Goose, who attends local events and is frequently featured on Milwaukie's social media pages. Milwaukie has 3,500 followers on Instagram and 7,200 on Facebook. Milwaukie achieves better metrics on Instagram compared to other neighboring communities, with 50-200 likes per post. They feature more community members and events in their posts.

Milwaukie's model of one weekly event and one monthly event allows for a steady increase in attendance. These events are also focused on local community members and vendors. Community members feel encouraged by the opportunity to share their businesses at the farmers' market, and many vendors and performers help to increase event attendance by bringing friends and family. Finally, having a local mascot adds charm and uniqueness to the town and events as it creates a solid form of publicity and consistency.

Grand Haven, Michigan

With a population of about 11,000, Grand Haven is similar in size to Gladstone. It is a lakefront town that focuses on revamping its industrial waterfront to be a day-trip destination. The city established parks and boardwalks for public use and started consistent programming such as concerts, festivals, and fountain shows for locals and visitors to attend.

They also created a lively downtown area that is walkable and connected to the waterfront with accessible wayfinding for visitors. Grand Haven also implemented seasonal events in this area, establishing it as a center for the town's culture.

New Hope, Pennsylvania and Lambertville, New Jersey

New Hope, PA (population 2,600) and Lambertville, NJ (population 4,000) are riverfront cities on the Delaware River that collaborate on engagement and tourism. They emphasize walkable and historic downtown areas that are lined with small businesses, boutiques, galleries, and restaurants.

Both cities established riverfront trail systems and public spaces with the opportunity to host farmers' markets and outdoor events to attract both residents and tourists. They lean into joint branding to uplift each other's tourism strategies, attract visitors, and increase engagement in both areas.

McMinnville, Oregon

McMinnville emphasizes community pride through events that highlight local businesses. The city supports over 500 local businesses with a strong concentration in retail, hospitality, and agriculture-related enterprises.

One exemplar event is their “Taste of Mac” campaign. This spotlights local eateries, wineries, and stores via multimedia storytelling to drive resident patronage. Additionally, the city hosts

events such as local farmers’ markets and the Wine Walk to activate downtown businesses, blending community gatherings with economic support.

Gladstone could adapt this commerce integration to enhance parks and neighborhood focus with targeted business promotion.

Gladstone Tourism Strategies

GATHER IN GLADSTONE

Strategic Summary

The Gather in Gladstone Tourism Strategy aims to help the City of Gladstone establish a distinct identity and attract visitors from neighboring communities. Located just 12 miles south of Portland along the Willamette and Clackamas Rivers, Gladstone offers visitors scenic parks, local history, community events, and a growing automotive culture. However, the city has historically been overlooked in favor of larger surrounding cities like Lake Oswego and Oregon City.

This campaign is grounded in the rise of the experience economy. People across all demographics are increasingly prioritizing activities, events, and shared memories over material goods or services. Gladstone is positioned to capitalize on this shift by offering accessible, affordable, and meaningful day-trip experiences to nearby communities.

The campaign targets two key publics: families with children aged 7-14 from Milwaukie and Oregon City, and empty nesters aged 40-60 from West Linn and Lake Oswego. Strategies include launching a dedicated event Instagram page, hosting monthly drive-in movies and seasonal car shows, building media relationships to generate positive press coverage, and leveraging platforms like Nextdoor to reach older audiences. A high school social media intern program will keep communications costs low while creating community investment in the campaign.

With an upfront cost of approximately \$12,500 and \$800 in recurring expenses, the campaign is designed to be sustainable and supported by sponsors. Success will be measured

through social media engagement, event attendance, brand recognition surveys, and earned media coverage, with evaluation checkpoints in 2026 and a final assessment at the end of 2027.

Primary Strategy

The primary strategy proposed by this group is to host a drive-in movie. On the second Friday of each month, the city will host a drive-in movie in the gravel lot across the street from Meldrum Park. At each event, the city can create a rotating line-up of local vendors for food, drinks, and other goods. Movie night will be sponsored by a local auto dealer to help with the initial upfront cost. At the beginning of the evening, a "Thank you to our sponsors" is shown on the TV screen and an announcer will give a verbal acknowledgement. The charge will be \$25/car. Movies can be seasonally themed and will be family-friendly but cater to slightly varying audiences to ensure there is something for everyone.

Additionally, providing early-bird incentives for families who purchase event tickets more than a week in advance will help increase attendance and provide a more accurate sense of event turnout. Incentives specific to the Gladstone drive-in movie could be in the form of a ticket discount, snack voucher, or a fast pass sending patrons to the front of any line. These incentives can be either specific to the event, or redeemable at other small business partnerships in Gladstone depending on existing city needs and partnerships.

Targeted ticket promotion using advertisements will also be a useful tool in reaching out-of-town families to attend Gladstone events. Students recommend running Facebook and Instagram ads



FIG. 1

Student mockup of a social media post before the movie event.

beginning on Thursday and Friday before the event as a reminder. Such ad campaigns are specifically important leading up to larger events like the drive-in movies. Conversions can be tracked through Meta, and budgeting can be modified depending on effectiveness and engagement.

In order to bring larger audiences to Gladstone drive-in movie nights, students recommend promoting a “Bring a Neighbor” campaign. This incentive will encourage local families to bring friends from neighboring towns to the drive in.

By sharing tickets and/or website QR codes, participants will receive either a discount to attend the event or food and drink vouchers to be used while visiting the drive-in. This could also be a “shared perk” that families can use with the out-of-town friends they have referred. Many families may stay after the movie to get a meal in town or explore Gladstone before returning home to their neighboring zip code.

**FIG. 2**

Student mockup of a social media post after the movie event.

Secondary Strategy

As part of the campaign, the city will host seasonal community car shows that feature a mix of vintage vehicles and everyday cars decorated to match the theme of the event. These shows will take place several times throughout the year, with themes such as Halloween, summer, and holidays. While vintage cars will be invited to participate, community members will also be encouraged to bring their own vehicles and decorate them to match the seasonal theme.

For example, cars could feature Halloween decorations, Christmas lights, or other creative displays. This approach allows both car enthusiasts and local families to participate, making the event more

interactive and welcoming. Local vendors and food trucks will be invited to create a lively community atmosphere, and informal awards such as “Best Decorated Car” or “People’s Choice” will be given to encourage participation.

Alongside major heritage events, Gladstone will host a Heritage Market featuring local artisans, antique vendors, and craft makers. Booths will be set up near the main event area, which is on Portland Avenue, so visitors can browse handmade goods, antiques, and local products while attending the event. The market will help create a larger cultural gathering and encourage visitors to spend more time exploring Gladstone while supporting local businesses.

To reach nearby residents who may be interested in heritage events, the campaign will use the Nextdoor platform to promote upcoming Gladstone events. Event announcements will be posted in neighborhoods located in surrounding communities to ensure that residents outside of Gladstone are aware of upcoming car shows, heritage markets, and other cultural gatherings.

Each post will include the event date, location, and highlights. Posts will be shared two to three weeks before each event, with a reminder during the week of the event to encourage attendance. Because Nextdoor is commonly used by homeowners and long-term residents, it provides a valuable way to reach the

campaign's target audience of adults ages 50–65. After each event, photo recap posts will be shared on Nextdoor featuring highlights from the event, including classic cars, vendor booths, and visitors enjoying the atmosphere.

These posts will thank attendees and vendors while promoting upcoming events in Gladstone. Sharing photos from successful events will help build interest and encourage residents in neighboring communities to attend future events.

 Gladstone Oregon

Dress Up Your Car at Gladstone Deck the Cars Show

Looking for something fun to look forward to this December?

Come to Gladstone's Annual Holiday Car Show on December 20th at 7 p.m. at Gladstone High School! Cars will be decked out in holiday decorations and you're invited to come see them, show off your own, or just enjoy a festive evening out.

No long drives, no big plans needed. Just good people, great cars, and a little holiday magic close to home.

RSVP here so we know to save you a spot: [RSVP LINK] 🚗🌟

See you there!

FIG. 3

Example post for the Nextdoor platform.



MEET GLADSTONE

Highlighted Opportunity: A Clean Slate

While distinction and individuality have historically been an obstacle for Gladstone, students viewed this as a potential opportunity. Because the city lacks a clearly defined identity compared to surrounding communities, it has the ability to shape how it is perceived by both residents and visitors.

This creates a unique position where Gladstone in its current form is not tied to a single reputation or expectation, allowing for flexibility in messaging, branding, and overall direction. Rather than needing to rework an existing identity, the city can build from the ground up to highlight its strengths.

Taking advantage of this opportunity is important for improving visibility and increasing tourism, as a more clearly defined identity will help attract new publics while strengthening community pride. The following campaign focuses on using strategic communication and consistent messaging to begin establishing that identity.

Strategic Summary

Gladstone faces challenges attracting tourists because it lacks a distinct identity compared to nearby Portland Metro towns. Weak branding and underdeveloped downtown spaces have led to underutilized tourism infrastructure. Despite this, Gladstone has strong assets including its parks, rivers, and community events. These assets can serve as a foundation for tourism growth if leveraged through a targeted strategy. The central goal is to position Gladstone as a family friendly escape within the region. This can be done by sharpening its brand and highlighting “escape the city” messaging. Improving communication

channels, expanding social media presence, and increasing event visibility are key strategies to sharpening Gladstone’s brand.

These efforts will increase awareness, engagement, and attendance, ultimately establishing Gladstone as a vibrant small-town destination. This campaign depends on consistent social media and influencer partnerships, as well as new off-season event promotions. In turn, tourism and visitation will grow, supporting the local economy and small businesses. Community engagement, identity, and long-term perception and growth are also expected to improve through this effort.

Primary Strategy

The primary goal of the Meet Gladstone campaign is to solidify Gladstone’s identity as a community with a vibrant downtown and main street by strengthening messaging and communication channels.

To solidify the city’s presence online, students proposed posting plan and schedule for uploading content to social media channels. This would allow for posting consistency and would open social media channels to be used for more than just city-wide updates. From local business highlights to upcoming events, Gladstone could use this to promote what they have to offer to surrounding communities.

Additionally, students suggest enabling more engagement features to strengthen the city’s online presence. This would not have to be a high effort task, as the account could block specific words and language that would be potential issues. This would assist in online growth, giving online viewers an additional way of engaging with the city and the content.



FIG. 4

Sample content that could be added to social media channels promoting current city events.

FIG. 5

Example post for the Student mockups of social media content to promote the fall festival.



Secondary Strategy

This group also created an event as the first item to be highlighted through social channels. The event is a fall festival the week before Halloween that includes vendors and children's activities before shifting into a more adult-focused Halloween bar crawl.

To promote this event, the city could use its own social media platforms while also collaborating with local tourism accounts and influencers in the area.

Targeted influencers would review a small city-themed care package in exchange for their attendance and positive review of the event. Ideally, influencers would film their positive experiences both at the event and in the local community. To support this strategy, students created a media list highlighting specific micro-influencers to reach out to (see FIG. 7).



FIG. 6

Example post for the student mockups of social media content to promote the Halloween bar crawl.

ACCOUNT	KEY FOCUS
@eatinginpdx <i>157K followers</i>	- Portland food, activities, and local spots. - Strong engagement around restaurants and events.
@foodiesnitch <i>79.8K followers</i>	Restaurants and local getaways around Portland.
@workout.to.eatout_pdx <i>16.8K followers</i>	Food + activities around Portland; promotes local experiences.
@snittybipkins <i>24.1K followers</i>	Portland lifestyle, books, and sustainable living.
@asmallcloset <i>68K followers</i>	Fashion, lifestyle, and Portland culture content.
@gabigrl_prostrongwoman <i>98.6K followers</i>	Fitness creator based in Portland with a local following.
@michelevenlee <i>102K followers</i>	Known for weekly “things to do in Portland” videos.
@bradleyemmens <i>46.8K followers</i>	Lifestyle and fashion creator with a Portland audience.

FIG. 7

Curated Media List of Micro-Influencers.

A SIMPLE SATURDAY IN GLADSTONE

Identified Threat: Viewed as a “Pass-Through” Community

Gladstone is frequently perceived as a pass-through community with many individuals traveling through the city regularly without stopping or engaging with what it has to offer. The perception is largely influenced by its proximity to larger and more recognizable cities, which often draw attention away from smaller communities in the area.

While many people are familiar with Gladstone’s location, there is limited awareness of the experiences, businesses, and recreational opportunities within the city itself. This creates a disconnect between visibility and visitation, where people may know of Gladstone but have little reason to spend time there.

Addressing this perception is important in shifting how the city is viewed by surrounding communities. By creating simple, structured, and accessible experiences, Gladstone can encourage visitors to stop, explore, and engage with the community rather than just passing through it. The following campaign focuses on reducing barriers to visitation and positioning Gladstone as an easy and worthwhile day trip destination.

Strategic Summary

Despite its natural assets including access to both the Willamette and Clackamas Rivers, a historic downtown along Portland Avenue and an abundance of parks, Gladstone is frequently overlooked, commonly perceived as a pass-through community overshadowed by neighboring cities with stronger tourism.

The Simple Saturday in Gladstone Campaign was developed to address this challenge. Following direct conversation with a Gladstone city representative, the

campaign focuses on attracting outside visitors from surrounding communities including Portland, Oregon City, West Linn, and Milwaukie. This effort is supported by external research that reveals a post-pandemic preference for affordable day trips, rising interest in outdoor recreation among older adults, and growing demand for authentic, community-driven experiences. The campaign has two key goals: increasing the number of weekend visitors to Gladstone from neighboring cities and improving Gladstone’s reputation as a weekend destination.

The campaign targets two key publics. The primary public is empty nesters age 50–60 seeking relaxed, low-effort weekend activities that offer reconnection and escape close to home. The secondary public is young working families with children ages 2–14, looking for affordable, kid-friendly day trips that bring the family together without significant planning or expense.

The campaign is built around two strategies. The first strategy creates fixed itineraries for each public to increase awareness and lower the barrier for first-time visitors in the form of a printed day trip brochure for empty nesters and the Gladstone Explorer Passport for families- a stamp collection scavenger hunt featuring Gladstone, a rock mascot hidden at participating downtown businesses. The second strategy cultivates Gladstone’s reputation by introducing new weekend events including monthly Saturday trivia nights for empty nesters and guided summer kayak floats along the Willamette River for families.

The total estimated budget across all four tactics ranges from \$1,360 to \$5,075, leveraging local business partnerships

and volunteer support to keep costs low. Evaluation will be conducted across five phases using surveys, tactic-specific tracking metrics, and qualitative community feedback.

The Simple Saturday in Gladstone Campaign is realistic, community-driven, and built on the simple truth that Gladstone doesn't need to compete with Portland. It just needs the right people to discover what makes it worth the drive.

Primary Strategy

The primary strategy is based around creating materials to guide exploration of the city. For older demographics, this looks like a brochure, highlighting specific locations in Gladstone. For younger audiences, this is gamified, becoming a scavenger hunt and featuring a new city mascot.

The printed brochure could have a planned itinerary for a day trip in Gladstone that highlights local businesses such as restaurants, galleries, breweries, etc. and local activities such as a picnic at High Rocks Park or scenic walk along the Willamette River. The brochure would be available in neighboring towns (West Linn, Oregon City, Milwaukie) at high traffic areas for empty nesters including community centers, restaurants, athletic clubs, local businesses, grocery stores, public libraries, and places of worship. There would also be a digital brochure available to be posted and promoted by neighboring towns on Facebook and any applicable social media accounts. Students recommended including the digital brochure in email newsletters from neighboring towns to their residents.

The family-friendly activity passport encourages exploration for kids and families at destinations, activities, and restaurants around Gladstone. Included stops would outline an ideal day trip in Gladstone, centered around making lasting memories as a family.

Gladstone could partner with local businesses, especially in the downtown area, to hide a cardboard cutout of “Glad Gladstone,” a rock-shaped mascot for the town. Children and their families would visit and try to spot Glad Gladstone, earning a stamp or sticker in their passport from each participating business or destination.

Once all of the stickers/stamps are collected, the passport can be turned in at the Gladstone Public Library for a small prize (candy, stickers, Gladstone branded shirt, and other promotional materials). The city could consider partnering with local businesses featured on the passport to give tourists a small discount for visiting as an extra incentive for families. A printed version of the passport is preferred for tangible learning and fun for kids. However, Gladstone could consider a digital version that is interactive for ease of access on a phone or tablet.

Day Trip

Gladstone Itinerary



Morning
08:30 – 11:00
Brunch at Riverside Café
Enjoy a leisurely riverside brunch with scenic views of the Clackamas River.

Late Morning
11:30 – 13:00
Walk the Gladstone River Trail
Take a peaceful nature walk along the river with lush greenery and tranquil views.

Afternoon
13:30 – 16:00
Stonebridge Brewery
Enjoy a guided tasting flight of local craft beers in a welcoming brewpub setting.

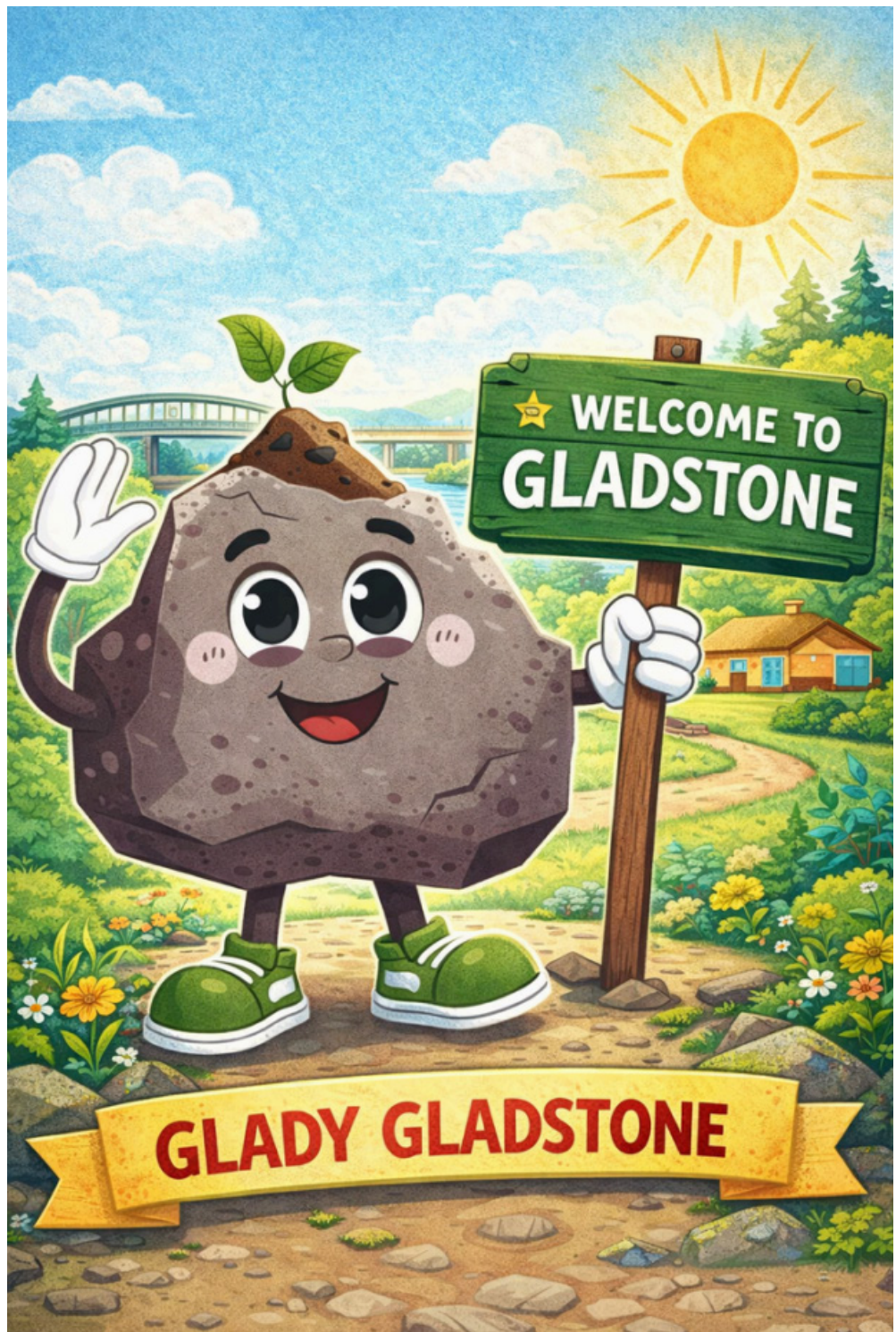
Evening
17:30 – 19:30
Dinner at River's Edge
Relax with a delicious dinner and glass of wine as the sun sets over the water.

FIG. 8

Students created an outlined day trip for the tourist audience aged 50-65 looking for ways to enjoy the City of Gladstone.

FIG. 9

Students created a new mascot for the city, going by the name "Glady Gladstone".



**FIG. 10**

Students mocked up a printed version of their city scavenger hunt passport.



FIG. 11

Students mocked up a printed version of their city scavenger hunt passport.

Printed passports and promotions for the passport could be placed in high traffic areas in neighboring towns for the secondary public to access, targeting mostly guardians and parents who tend to make decisions for family activities. Areas would include after school activity centers for extracurriculars (YMCA, art studios, sports centers, etc.), fitness and wellness studios, and local family restaurants and community centers. Promotion on Facebook groups in neighboring towns would also help to bring awareness to the passport activity in Gladstone. Consider partnering with middle and elementary schools in neighboring towns to distribute and promote the passport via elementary and middle school drop off areas, morning school announcements and parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings.

Secondary Strategy

A secondary strategy in the Simple Saturday in Gladstone campaign was creating low-effort activities for all ages to enjoy. By designing activities that are low-effort and low-budget for participants and the city alike, it is easier to build consistency. Some example activities include trivia nights or kayak floats, where there is little to no setup required, and people can participate in whatever way they feel comfortable.

Trivia night allows visitors to explore breweries and local restaurants in Gladstone. This event will occur weekly and rotate between different locations, allowing various local businesses the opportunity to host and gain exposure. The first trivia night should begin at Arlington Tap House located just off

Portland Avenue to allow natural foot traffic in Gladstone's downtown. Physical trivia sheets can be printed and made available upon arrival. Each hosting business can put their own touch on how they run trivia with add-ons such as tastings, decade nights, etc. Trivia can also be themed by creating questions that relate to a certain topic or genre. Gladstone locals and other nearby communities will be able to find out about trivia through social media and flyers posted around community centers.

Gladstone has two great rivers to attract both residents and other nearby communities. The Clackamas River and the Willamette both run through

Gladstone, providing a nice place for families to come during the warm days of summer. West Linn, Oregon City, and Gladstone each have locations where families can kayak and explore. Beginning and ending at Charles Ames Memorial City Park in Gladstone allows families to easily explore Gladstone and the nearby Arlington Food Trucks. This summer event will be shared physically by posting flyers in elementary/middle schools, after-school care, restaurants, and marketed digitally on social media. Collaboration with local kayak companies that are interested in promoting their brand is a strong opportunity for this event.

FIG. 12

Sample poster for Gladstone trivia night event.





FIG. 13

Sample poster for Gladstone kayak event.

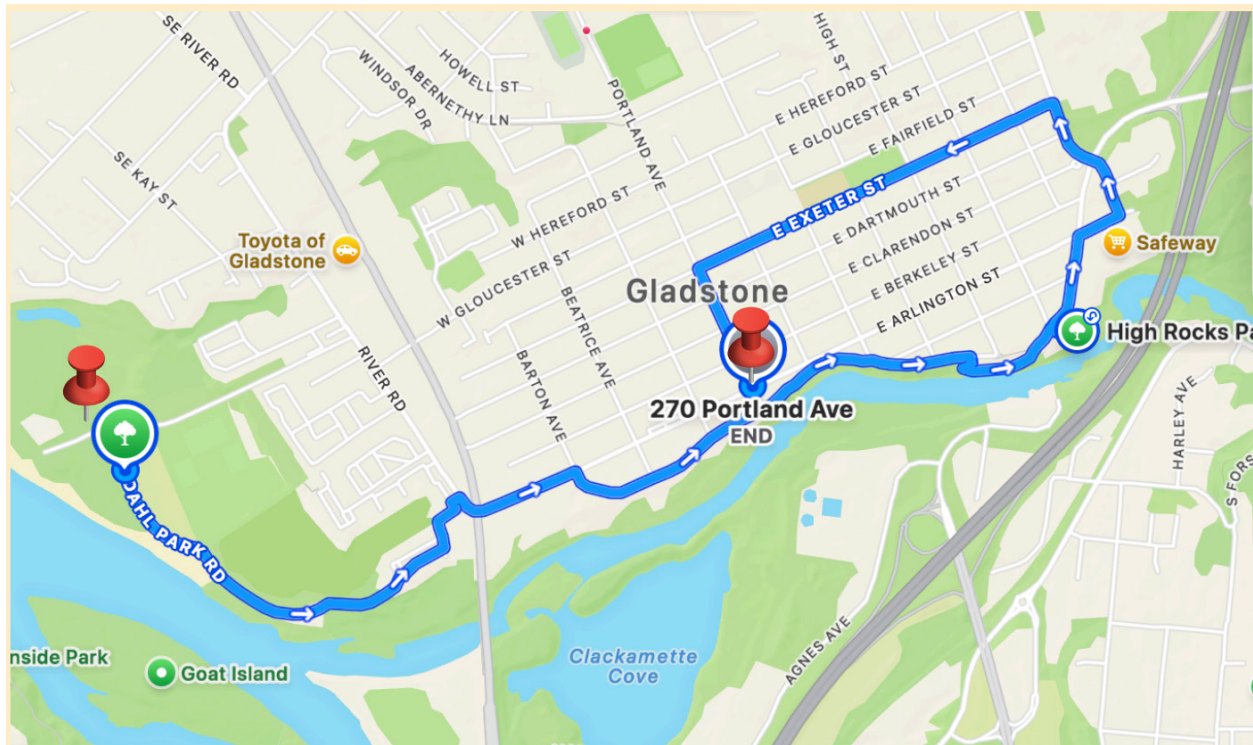


FIG. 14

Students identified a potential 5k route through the city that could be used for the event.

THE GLADSTONE RIVER RUN CAMPAIGN

Highlighted Strength: High Quality Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Students identified Gladstone's access to high quality parks and outdoor recreation as one of its strongest existing assets. With direct access to both the Willamette and Clackamas Rivers, as well as multiple parks and natural spaces, the city offers a variety of opportunities for outdoor activity and exploration.

Despite their strength, these assets are not always fully utilized to promote the city externally and attract visitors. While nearby communities offer similar outdoor amenities, Gladstone has the opportunity to better highlight and activate its own spaces in a way that draws attention and creates engagement.

By building a strategy around outdoor recreation, the city can take advantage of an existing strength while creating a

clear reason for visitors to visit Gladstone. The following campaign focuses on using a signature event to showcase these natural features and position the city as an accessible outdoor destination.

Strategic Summary

This tourism strategy aims to strengthen visitor engagement and position Gladstone as a distinctive and welcoming destination. By highlighting the city's natural amenities, community events and the local business district along Portland Avenue, the plan seeks to attract and retain more visitors while supporting local economic development and small businesses. Gladstone has a significant opportunity to reshape its identity and strengthen its position as an engaging and affordable destination in the region by improving accessibility, increasing digital visibility and promoting specific yearly local events and businesses.

The main opportunity within this campaign is to boost awareness of the city and build its reputation as both a day trip and weekend trip destination. By reaching audiences in the cities of West Linn, Oregon City, and other nearby areas through the promotion of the annual 5k “Summer Sendoff” event, Gladstone can position itself as a destination for young families and young adults looking for an outdoor recreation destination.

Primary Strategy

The Gladstone River Run Campaign group focused on creating an outdoor event with plans to effectively elevate and replicate in future years. Their goal is to attract young families and young adults from neighboring cities to Gladstone by hosting a scenic 5k race that highlights the community, outdoor environment, and active lifestyle the city offers.

The event will create a fun, welcoming atmosphere that encourages visitors to explore Gladstone and consider returning for future events and activities.

The campaign uses Facebook ads to target local runners and community members in the Portland Metro area, West Linn, Oregon City, and Clackamas County.

Additionally, students suggest creating flyers with QR codes linking to the race website and signup.

These materials could be posted in community spaces such as YMCAs and libraries in the area. See Appendix A for additional examples of promotional materials for the Gladstone River Run campaign.

After the first successful year, the intention is to expand the Gladstone Summer Sendoff into a weekend-long community event that attracts visitors from neighboring cities and encourages them to stay in Gladstone for multiple activities. The event would grow beyond the race to include additional entertainment, local vendors, and community experiences that highlight the city’s culture and local businesses. One type of additional entertainment that could be successful is a live performance on Portland Avenue during the race weekend that features at least one local band. There is also the future possibility to add a second race, located around Labor Day weekend.



FIG. 15
Students created an
informational poster for
the 5k run.

Gladstone Community Engagement Strategies

RE-DISCOVER GLADSTONE

Identified Threat: Lack of Awareness of What Gladstone Offers

A primary challenge identified by students is the lack of awareness surrounding what Gladstone currently offers. While the city has a strong foundation of local businesses, community spaces, and events, many residents are not fully aware of these opportunities or do not regularly engage with them. This lack of awareness contributes to residents leaving the city for dining, entertainment, and activities. As a result, local businesses receive less support and opportunities for community engagement are reduced.

Improving awareness is an important step in strengthening the connection between residents and their community. By encouraging residents to rediscover local businesses, events, and spaces, Gladstone can increase engagement while supporting its local economy. The following campaign focuses on promoting what already exists within the city and creating more opportunities for resident engagement.

Strategic Summary

The purpose of this plan is to define strategies and tactics that strengthen community engagement, visibility, and local economic support in Gladstone. This plan focuses on reconnecting residents with their community through a “rediscovery” approach that highlights local businesses, community spaces, and opportunities for involvement. Gladstone aims to encourage residents to engage more actively with the city, support small businesses, and build a stronger sense of community identity.

Currently, Gladstone faces challenges related to limited community awareness and engagement. Many residents travel into Portland for shopping, dining, and activities, which reduces visibility and support for local businesses. In addition, there is limited promotion of community resources, events, and local opportunities that could help residents feel more connected to the city. Without consistent communication and community-centered initiatives, many residents may overlook the value and experiences available within Gladstone itself.

Student research indicates that Gladstone’s primary challenge is not a lack of resources, but rather a lack of awareness and engagement surrounding what already exists in the community. Local businesses, parks, and civic organizations provide a strong foundation for building a more connected city, but these assets are often under-promoted. By improving communication efforts and creating opportunities for residents to rediscover their local community, Gladstone has the opportunity to strengthen relationships between residents, families, and businesses.

Based on this research, students identified two key publics. The primary public includes parents whose children are currently in high school or who have recently graduated. This group is at a transitional stage where family routines are changing, and they may have more time and interest in reconnecting with their local community. Encouraging this group to rediscover local businesses, events, and community spaces can help strengthen long-term engagement.

The secondary public consists of local business owners who play a critical role in shaping the city's identity and economic vitality. Supporting these businesses through increased visibility and community partnerships will help strengthen Gladstone's local economy and overall sense of place.

To address these publics, students developed two main goals. For the primary public, the goal is to increase community awareness and encourage residents to rediscover what Gladstone has to offer by promoting local businesses, community events, and gathering spaces. This will be achieved through targeted communication strategies that highlight the convenience, value, and sense of community found within the city. For the secondary public, the goal is to strengthen collaboration between the city and local businesses by creating opportunities for promotion, partnership, and participation in community initiatives. This includes highlighting local business stories, supporting events that bring residents into the community, and encouraging businesses to participate in rediscovery-focused campaigns.

Primary Strategy

The primary strategy for improving public perception of the downtown area is to promote a tailgate event at Arlington Tap House food truck pod and surrounding restaurants before a football game at Gladstone High School. The event will be promoted through flyers and coupons distributed at the high school with football game tickets, at the stadium, and along the route to the taphouse.

Promotional flyers would act as discount coupons for Portland Avenue businesses, valid for the game day and immediate weekend. They will also include a QR code that brings viewers to the Visit Gladstone Instagram page with a digital version of the same information.

Incorporating a tailgate at this time will attract the primary audience (parents of high school students) while engaging the secondary audience (small businesses). This will establish the Arlington Tap House as a destination for community and nightlife while also driving traffic towards Portland Avenue and downtown. Coupons for the tailgate are good for the weekend of the game to capitalize interest and foot traffic directly generated from local high school football. The goal is to get people excited about extending their night out and spending more money in the community with their coupons. Flyers can be available physically at the games and online on the Visit Gladstone Instagram. They will be used to promote Arlington Tap House for tailgates before every football game.

**FIG. 16**

Students developed multiple examples of promotional materials to promote the tailgate event.



FIG. 17

Students developed multiple examples of promotional materials to promote the tailgate event.

Secondary Strategy

For the second strategy, students recommend hosting a block party event on Portland Avenue, featuring vendors, music, food, and a giveaway raffle. By doing so, residents of Portland Avenue will engage with their community in a shared space that hasn't previously been the focus of events. This will achieve objectives of increasing foot traffic to the downtown area, supporting local businesses, and establishing Portland Avenue as a notable leisure area within Gladstone.

Crucially, the event will close vehicle access to areas of Portland Avenue, allowing residents to freely visit businesses along the event space and create space for streetside vendors. This may help shift the perception of this area from a car-dominated commercial district to a lively community hub.

The "Rock the Block" Party would be held on September 18, 2027, which falls on a Saturday. This time was chosen so as not to conflict with existing Gladstone events and provides for an event outside of the typical peak summer season.

The inclusion of a raffle would encourage residents to attend, and allows the city to tie-in supporting efforts, such as the GladPass, a passport-styled coupon booklet, which would improve local business sales and drive community engagement to these establishments. This event will feature local businesses along Portland Avenue as well as vendor stalls. The city can charge a small fee (\$20-\$50) per stall to recoup planning costs or fund the raffle. Vendors that are Gladstone local businesses would get free or discounted rates, which would further incentivize local business participation in the event.

To help promote the "Rock the Block" party, the GladPass, could be distributed at various events in the lead-up to the party. Residents can use the GladPass at participating local businesses to receive one-time discounts. Additionally, the GladPass would function as additional raffle entries in the block party event. While each person would be able to have a free entry into the event, residents who visit more local businesses would have higher odds of winning. This encourages residents to visit participating establishments and explore their community.

In addition to its promotional capability for the block party, the GladPass has the opportunity to directly promote the Visit Gladstone Instagram page. Offering additional discounts or content around local businesses on this page might help to create a more close-knit community.

Participating businesses could receive extra passes for distribution, materials to stamp/mark discounts being redeemed, and could track the number of sales achieved to help measure the success of the event. Portland Avenue-based businesses could feature more prominently, but the GladPass would be open to all businesses within Gladstone.

What does the GladPass include?

- Feature businesses in and around Portland Avenue, furthering residents' awareness of the area.
- Increase foot traffic to local businesses and result in increased sales.
- Incentivize businesses to partner with city government and engage in community outreach.
- Promote other rediscovery efforts present within this campaign.

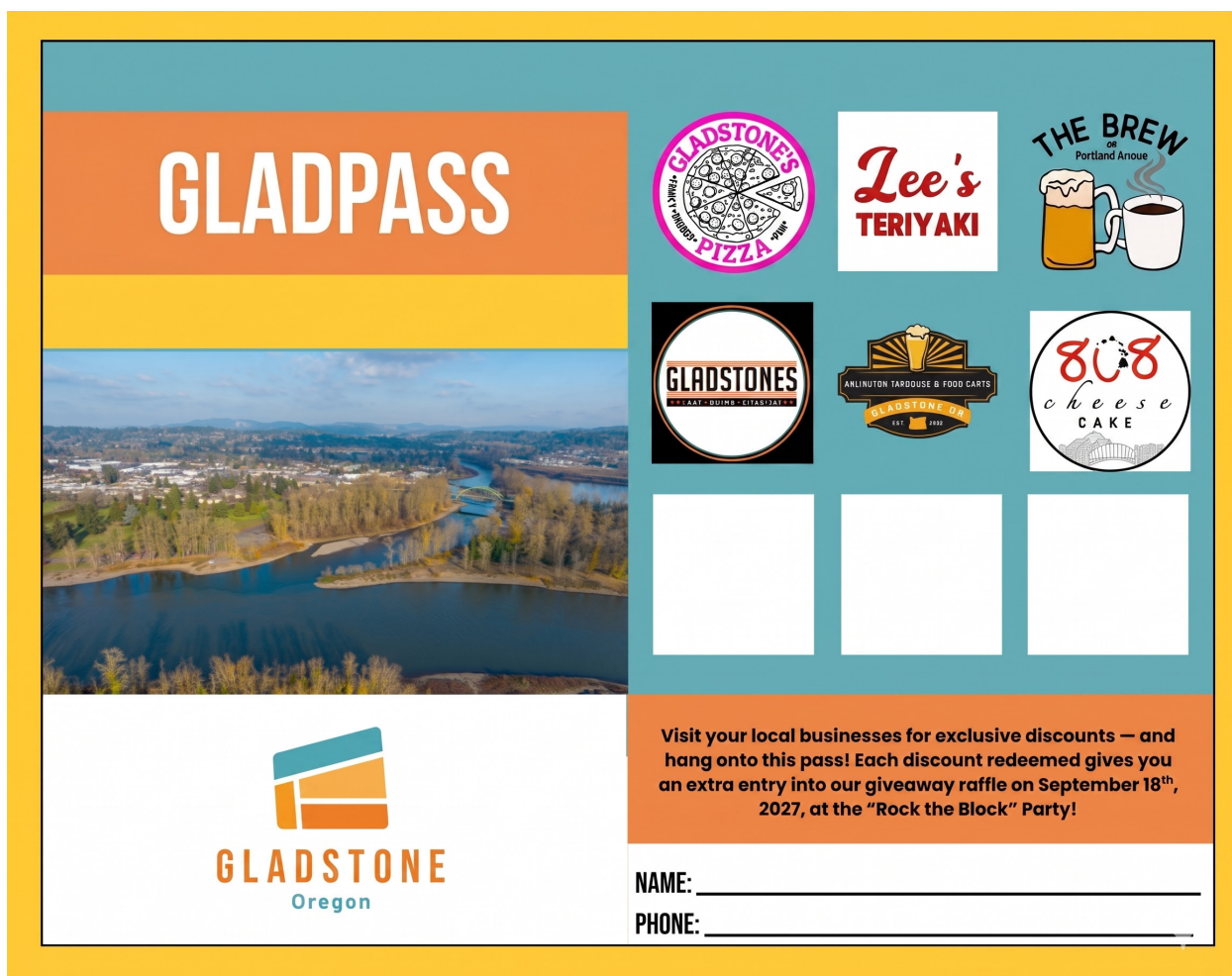


FIG. 18

Sample student mock-up of the GladPass, a passport-styled coupon booklet.

GLAD IN EVERY SEASON

Highlighted Strength: Increased Demand for Local and Community Experiences

There is an increased demand for local and community-based experiences, particularly as individuals look for more accessible and meaningful ways to spend their time. This trend creates an opportunity for smaller communities like Gladstone to attract both residents and visitors through consistent and engaging local events.

Gladstone already has the foundation to support this type of engagement through its community spaces, local businesses, and existing events. However, without

consistent programming and promotion, the city is not fully capturing this demand or maintaining year-round engagement.

By building this trend, Gladstone has the opportunity to position itself as a hub for community experiences throughout the year, making residents more interested in participating in local events and the city's economy. The following campaign focuses on creating consistent, seasonal events that strengthen long-term community engagement.

Strategic Summary

The objective of this plan is to reconnect Gladstone residents with their community through strategic messaging and targeted

initiatives that increase civic engagement, elevate the city's profile, and support long-term growth. The City of Gladstone aims to foster community engagement and create a community hub along their downtown main street, Portland Avenue. Without a strong connection to Portland Avenue or events that excite and engage residents, Gladstone has limited opportunities to build community and attract the attention of visitors in neighboring towns across the greater area.

The City of Gladstone currently has a considerable opportunity to gain broader visibility and reengage their citizens in meaningful ways. With the implementation of year-round events, Gladstone could continuously garner attention and foot traffic to the city, resulting in long-term growth. Based on research, Gladstone holds two notable key publics.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data, adults between 40–60 represent the largest age segment at 29.8% of the population, making an older demographic the primary audience. Young adults between 25–35 make up an additional 27.3%; thus, making them a significant and growing secondary public worth targeting.

By initializing the "Glad in Every Season" campaign that's designed to scale over a five-year period, the City of Gladstone would add one new seasonal activation every year until Gladstone has a year-round calendar of community events anchored to Portland Avenue.

The plan is organized around three measurable goals: to increase consistency in community engagement year-round, increase attendance at community events, and grow foot traffic in key

common areas. To achieve these goals, the plan would incorporate three core initiatives: building a volunteer engagement program targeting parents of teens and young families; centralizing events and foot traffic along Portland Avenue through strategic programming and business partnerships; and modernizing Gladstone's digital presence through a revamped social media strategy and a dedicated community events calendar.

Primary Strategy

The primary strategy of this team focuses on centralization of Portland Avenue. Specific tactics that would be used to make this reality include moving large local events, such as the Spring Market, to this space. This natural uptick in foot traffic will encourage patronage to downtown businesses. To support increased foot traffic, students also designed a local scavenger hunt. This includes hiding stuffed animals for children to find in main street businesses for a small prize.



Scavenger Hunt

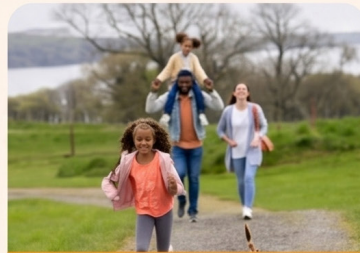
Biweekly
2 - 5pm

Stuffed Animal Search Portland Ave. Businesses



Find the hidden animal, claim your prize, and discover everything Portland Avenue has to offer!

Scan for instructions
& participating
businesses



Family Friendly!

Bring the whole family out and meet new friends



Prizes!

A lollipop and 5% discount at participating stores



Local Stores!

Support local businesses and discover new stores

FIG. 19

Students created promotional materials for a downtown business scavenger hunt.

GLADSTONE
Oregon

Spring Market

New Location!
1050 Portland Avenue

May 16, 2026
9am - 3pm

Live Music!
Enjoy local bands & a variety of genres all day

Handmade Goods!
55+ vendors featuring crafts, plants, and jewelry

Baked Treats!
Snacks from local bakeries and restaurants all day

Shop Local and Celebrate Spring! Join your fellow residents at our annual Spring Market, now downtown.

Scan for vendor list & details

Since 2018 Since 2018

FIG. 20

Students created promotional materials for a downtown spring market.

Similar to other campaign ideas, the need to enhance social media communications is central to the primary strategy. To successfully enhance social media engagement, students placed priority on short-form video content and decreasing the use of infographics.

The community calendar could be streamlined and rebuilt for more effective use from residents. Currently, the calendar is dominated by the community center, which makes it easy to miss other events. To bring visibility to other events, students recommend separating the calendar into a community events calendar and an exclusive calendar for the community center. Examples of suggested calendar changes can be found in the Appendix of this report.

Lastly, the group highlighted the focus on this work being done year-round, not just when events are coming up. This would

mean leaning on volunteer engagement and targeting parents of teens with the intention of gaining a younger volunteer base. To do this, they created an email with the purpose of informing potential volunteers of the process and events they could help with.

To support continued success of the campaign strategy, students recommend a scaled increase in activities, building on previous success each and every year. Using the tagline “Glad in Every Season”, event marketing would be able to follow similar themes every year, making it easier for city staff to maintain consistent messaging and limited time spent on developing materials. The events that students propose for each part of the year are a pumpkin race in the fall, a market and lights in the winter, a spring farmers market in the fall, and outdoor movie nights in the summer.



[Sign Up Here!](#)

Become a Gladstone Volunteer!

Do you want to get more out of your Gladstone residency? Look no further than the city's volunteer program! We are searching for residents eager to get the family involved in their community.

How It Works

 Informational Meeting The city will host an informational meeting for those interested in the program on January 12, 2027, at the Community Center.	 Expectations Events will offer a variety of volunteer opportunities, including set-up/take-down, patron relations, ticketing, and Q&A stations.
---	--

Who We Need

Bring the whole family. We're looking for Gladstone residents who want to give back alongside their kids. Whether you're a long-time local or newer to the neighborhood, this is a chance to model community pride — and actually have fun doing it. No experience needed, just enthusiasm and a few hours to spare.

Put down roots in Gladstone. New to the area or just starting to build your life here? Volunteering is one of the fastest ways to feel at home — meet neighbors, discover what makes this community tick, and be part of something that matters from day one.

FIG. 21

Sample informational email material for community volunteers.

FIG. 22

Sample informational email material for community volunteers.

Upcoming Events This Year

WINTER MARKET

Volunteers Needed: Set up/take down (vendor stalls & lights), ticketing, Q&A representatives



Winter Market & Lights

January 23 - 24



Spring Market on Portland Ave.

May 16

SPRING MARKET

Volunteers Needed: Set up/take down (vendor stalls & lights), ticketing, Q&A representatives

We cannot wait to see you all very soon!

Join Here!

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.



FIG. 23

Students designed outlines of four basic events that could be held at different points in the year.

Conclusion

The strategies presented throughout this report highlight a consistent set of themes, findings, and opportunities for the City of Gladstone. Across all campaigns, students identified Gladstone's strongest asset as its natural environment and small town-feel. These elements provide an authentic foundation that can be leveraged to strengthen both community engagement and tourism.

At the same time, Gladstone's lack of clearly defined identity creates a unique opportunity. Rather than needing to rework existing strategies, the city has the flexibility to shape its image in a way that aligns with its long-term goals.

A key takeaway across many groups is the suggestion to strengthen Gladstone's online presence. Improved social media engagement, consistent messaging, and more interactive digital platforms could be beneficial towards increasing visibility and creating stronger connections with both residents and visitors. Without this foundation, even the most well-designed events and initiatives risk going unnoticed.

Additionally, two primary publics were consistently emphasized across student findings: families with school aged children and empty nesters (age 40-60). These groups represent the most likely audiences to engage with Gladstone's offerings, whether through community events or day-trip tourism. This insight remains relatively consistent regardless of whether strategies were internally or externally focused.

Overall, these plans align closely with Gladstone's goals by balancing tourism development with local community engagement.

Appendix A

Gladstone River Run Promotions



GLADSTONE SUMMER SEND-OFF

5K

SAY FAREWELL TO SUMMER THE RIGHT WAY

\$15

All ages are welcome, so bring the whole family. Enjoy a scenic route through beautiful Gladstone, and celebrate at the finish line with a chance to win a prize.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH, 2026



**LABOR DAY WEEKEND
SIGN UP TODAY!**

 **GLADSTONE**
Oregon

gladstonesummersendoff.com

Promotional Message: Join the Gladstone Summer Send-Off 5K and celebrate the end of summer with a scenic run through Gladstone. Walk, jog, or run with family and friends this Labor Day weekend and enjoy a fun community event for all ages!” 🏃‍♀️☀️🌲



SIGN UP

ABOUT

VOLUNTEER

MAP

Gladstone

Summer Send-off 5K

SIGN UP NOW



Appendix B

Community Event Calendar



Point Person for
Events

Details

Calendar Type Key



⌚ TIME
Community Center Events

⌚ TIME
Library Events

⌚ TIME
Downtown Events

⌚ TIME
Seasonal Events

Key Things to Look For:

- Winter Seasonal Event
- Stuffed Animal Hunt on Portland Ave. (twice!)
- Lunch open to the community at community center every Tues - Thurs (11:30am - 12:30pm)
- Community Center closed Dec. 23-25



Month

December 2027



+ Add

SUN

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

29

30

31

01

02

03

04

05

06

07

08

09

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

⌚ 9AM - 1PM
Downtown Event
Farmers
Market

⌚ 7PM - 9PM
Library Event
Toon Taboroot
Story Night

⌚ 9AM - 3PM
Community Center
Bingo

Seasonal Event
Winter Market &
Lighting Ceremony

Click Here for More Details

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

Seasonal Event
Winter Market &
Lighting Ceremony

⌚ 7PM - 9PM
Library Event
Toon Taboroot
Story Night

⌚ 9AM - 3PM
Community Center
Bingo

Seasonal Event
Winter Market &
Lighting Ceremony

Click Here for More Details

26

27

28

29

30

31

01

⌚ 9AM - 1PM
Downtown Event
Farmers
Market

⌚ 7PM - 9PM
Library Event
Toon Taboroot
Story Night

⌚ 9AM - 3PM
Community Center
Bingo

Seasonal Event
Winter Market &
Lighting Ceremony

Click Here for More Details

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