

WINTER 2026

GLADSTONE

JCOM 472: PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGNS
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

Discovering Gladstone: Strategic PR Campaign

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Acknowledgments

The University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication PR Campaigns students would like to thank the City of Gladstone for the opportunity to collaborate on this campaign. This project allowed students to explore opportunities to strengthen tourism awareness in Gladstone and highlight the city's unique outdoor recreation assets. Students appreciate the opportunity to work with the City of Gladstone and contribute strategic recommendations to enhance long-term visibility, tourism, and growth.

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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.

Contents

4	About SCI
4	About SCYP
5	About the City of Gladstone
6	Course Participants
7	Course Description
8	Executive Summary
9	Situational Analysis
10	SWOT Analysis
11	Competitor Analysis
12	Driving Visitor Discovery
12	Research
14	Target Publics
16	Discover Gladstone Campaign
24	Key Messages
24	Timeline & Media Roadmap
26	Budget
28	Evaluation
29	Sources

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



Image Credit: The City of Gladstone

JCOM 472: PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGNS

Public Relations Campaigns (JCOM 472) is a capstone course for public relations majors to include professional portfolio presentations and review. Course objectives include applying theory, skills, and a team-based approach to researching, planning, presenting, and implementing a campaign for a client.

Executive Summary

The student team developed a strategic public relations campaign to strengthen Gladstone’s positioning and increase awareness among regional and young travelers, the key audiences for this campaign. The campaign highlights Gladstone’s natural outdoor assets while addressing the current perception challenges that limit broader recognition.

By emphasizing strategic storytelling, earned media outreach, and community engagement, the campaign aims to elevate awareness and encourage greater participation and visitation.

Students developed tactics to increase tourism awareness and engagement. These include regional media outreach supported by a media kit targeting travel and outdoor journalists, a social media content strategy aimed at younger travelers, and outdoor recreation events that highlight Gladstone’s natural assets. Additional initiatives include the “First Jump of Summer” event at High Rocks and the “Fuel Up Gladstone” concept, which transforms an unused gas station into a community gathering space with a local coffee shop and thrift outlet.

Together, these experiences create physical anchors that encourage visitors to spend time in Gladstone and support local businesses.

Gladstone should implement the campaign’s media roadmap by building a strong foundation through professional photography, consistent social media channels, a regional media outreach. As momentum grows, the city can promote seasonal events, outdoor recreation, and local businesses through earned media and digital storytelling. By highlighting its rivers, outdoor recreation areas, and community experiences, Gladstone can strengthen its tourism identity and position itself as an outdoor destination just minutes from Portland.

Situational Analysis

Gladstone is a small city located just south of Portland at the confluence of the Clackamas River and the Willamette River. Despite strong natural assets and proximity to a major city, Gladstone is often perceived as a pass-through residential community rather than a destination.

The city lacks a strong tourism identity and a consistent earned media presence. To increase tourism, students identified that Gladstone needs to focus on upgrading “Software” through earned media to change the narrative and “Hardware” by creating the physical anchors and events that give travelers a reason to stop.

Gladstone competes with several nearby cities that have stronger tourism branding and more established reputations as visitor destinations. These include Oregon City, which attracts visitors through its historic tourism appeal; Lake Oswego, known for its affluent boutique feel; West Linn, recognized for its scenic suburban outdoor access; Portland, a major cultural and food destination; and Milwaukie, an emerging lifestyle destination with a growing café and restaurant scene and a scenic riverfront.

In comparison, Gladstone has not yet developed a clearly defined tourism identity. However, if positioned correctly as “Portland’s closest outdoor recreational fun,” Gladstone has the opportunity to differentiate itself by owning the space of accessible, river-based adventure located just minutes from the city. By highlighting its proximity to Portland and its unique access to both the Clackamas and Willamette rivers, Gladstone can position itself as a convenient outdoor recreation destination for residents and visitors in the greater Portland area.

Together, these nearby cities demonstrate how strong branding, distinct amenities, and clear visitor experiences can shape regional tourism perceptions. This highlights the opportunity that Gladstone has to differentiate itself through accessible river-based outdoor recreation just minutes from Portland.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Clackamas River, riverfront areas, salmon fishing, kayaking, floating, and outdoor recreation are strong, authentic draws for tourists seeking nature experiences near Portland. ▪ Located close to Portland and neighboring cities, Gladstone is easily accessible for day trips and weekend visits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gladstone is often overshadowed by nearby cities such as Oregon City and Milwaukie and lacks a strong, recognizable tourism identity. ▪ Current social media platforms have limited engagement and reach. ▪ Gladstone is primarily described as a place to live, not a place to visit, making it difficult for AI tools to recommend it as a destination. ▪ Gladstone currently does not appear consistently in AI-generated recommendations compared to neighboring towns.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growing reliance on AI-powered search tools creates an opportunity to optimize Gladstone’s content. ▪ Targeting platforms AI frequently cites (Travel Oregon, blogs, Reddit, social media, regional publications) can significantly increase awareness. ▪ Partnering with local businesses and encouraging them to participate in tourism can amplify Gladstone’s visibility without major financial investment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nearby towns with stronger tourism, branding, historic identities, or established downtowns compete for visitors. ▪ Nearby cities with clearer tourism messaging dominate AI recommendations and travel searches.

Competitor Analysis

One of Gladstone's strongest regional competitors is Oregon City, a well-known destination for both history and outdoor recreation. The city's identity is strongly connected to its role as the end of the Oregon Trail, which shapes much of its tourism appeal.

Landmarks such as the Oregon City Municipal Elevator, one of the only outdoor municipal elevators in the United States, serve as unique attractions that reinforce the city's historic identity.

In addition to the historic appeal, Oregon City has developed a popular downtown area that attracts both residents and visitors. Corner 14 is a popular food truck pod and gathering space, creating a social environment where people can spend time and meet with friends. Nearby breweries, restaurants, and bars support a growing nightlife scene that attracts younger audiences, especially in the evenings and on weekends. These spaces help maintain consistent visitor traffic throughout the year.

The city also benefits from access to the Willamette River and nearby outdoor recreation. The public boat docks and river access points attract seasonal visitors interested in boating, fishing, and other water activities. These amenities allow Oregon City to attract both outdoor recreation enthusiasts and visitors looking for a casual day trip.

While Oregon City has built a strong destination identity through its historic branding, active downtown spaces, and river recreation, Gladstone has an opportunity to stand out in the regional tourism landscape. By positioning itself as Portland's closest riverside recreation

destination, Gladstone can highlight its natural assets, relaxed atmosphere, and proximity to the city while offering visitors an easy outdoor escape just minutes from Portland.

Milwaukie is another regional competitor that sits north of Gladstone. The town's popularity has increased over the past few years, with known Portland businesses setting up second locations in Milwaukie. It is similar to Gladstone in that it is a quieter town with less of a buzz than Oregon City, but still has pockets that bring in visitors.

About a year ago, Milwaukie renovated what was an old fire station into a modern brewery and artesian coffee shop. The site is successful because it features established Portland businesses staking claim outside of Portland. Milwaukie also has a stable main street that offers eclectic book stores and wellness facilities.

Like Oregon City and Gladstone, Milwaukie also has access to the waterfront and a view of Lake Oswego across the river. Milwaukie continues to grow its identity and appeal to younger audiences. Since the town is still early and its urban development is continuing to trend, Gladstone has the position to match Milwaukee, where they're at and rely on their unique recreation spaces.

Driving Visitor Discovery

Gladstone’s audience includes Oregon-based residents and Portland-area travelers looking for short, outdoor-focused trips, many of whom are Gen Z and Millennial travelers. This group relies heavily on digital tools, social media, and AI-powered search platforms when deciding where to go.

Rather than searching for Gladstone by name, they tend to look for things like outdoor activities near Portland or river access, making clear and consistent online messaging especially important.

Gladstone offers access to both the Clackamas River and the Willamette River, along with parks, trails, and a strong sense of community. However, nearby cities often stand out more because they are better known for specific events, activities, or

experiences. Primary research showed that potential visitors are open to discovering Gladstone, but want a clear reason to choose it over surrounding cities. Key stakeholders—including the City of Gladstone, local businesses, event organizers, and parks and recreation partners—are looking for ways to highlight unique experiences or events that set the city apart. Without clear communication and promotion, even strong assets can go unnoticed.

Research

PRIMARY RESEARCH

To better understand the opportunities and challenges surrounding tourism in Gladstone, students conducted several forms of primary research. This included interviews with relevant sources, firsthand site visits, and an on-the-ground audit of the city’s assets and areas for improvement. These insights helped guide the strategic direction of the campaign and ensured that recommendations were grounded in real observations.

Students completed interviews with individuals primarily in the Portland regional area. The interviews helped students to better understand how people currently discover and research travel destinations. Students learned that travelers increasingly rely on a

combination of sources when planning trips, including AI-powered search tools, travel publications, online guides, and social media platforms. This research reinforced the importance of a strong earned media strategy and the value of pitching stories to regional and travel publications. Interviews also provided insight into how Portland metropolitan area residents currently perceive Gladstone. While many participants were aware of the city’s location, several said that they were unfamiliar with specific assets or reasons to visit.

The student team also conducted firsthand research through a site visit to Gladstone. Experiencing the town in person allowed students to better understand its assets and areas for improvement. Students explored key

areas such as Portland Avenue, the Clackamas River, and local parks to assess the types of experiences visitors could enjoy. This visit helped students to identify several strengths that could be utilized in a campaign to increase tourism, including Gladstone's proximity to outdoor recreation, a tight-knit community, and the city officials' willingness to pursue innovative tourism initiatives.

During this visit, students also conducted an observational audit of Gladstone's public spaces and visitor experience opportunities. While the town has notable strengths, students also identified areas for improvement that could increase tourism. These included limited beautification areas (especially on Portland Avenue), a lack of a clearly defined main street gathering space, a small number of shops, and limited community engagement in public spaces. Recognizing these gaps allowed students to consider how a campaign could highlight existing strengths (Meldrum Bar Park, High Rocks, river access points) while also encouraging greater activation of underutilized spaces (the abandoned gas station).

SECONDARY RESEARCH

Students also explored how artificial intelligence-powered search engines are changing the way that people find places to travel. Because tools such as AI search platforms are increasingly being used to plan trips and find recommendations, students sought to understand how such systems influence awareness and visibility of regional destinations such as Gladstone. Teams conducted AI-based searches focused on how people in the Portland regional area might look for nearby daytrips and outdoor activities. This allowed students to analyze the types

of locations that appear in AI-generated search results. Several of these searches were conducted across ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft CoPilot, and Claude.

Additionally, students examined the actual sources that AI tools pull from when generating travel recommendations including travel publications, tourism websites, and blog content. Through this research, students identified the types of content that AI engines rely on when answering questions related to their campaign. This helped to inform understanding of how Gladstone can improve its visibility online through earned media placements, online content that is easy for AI to read and distribute, and stronger representation in regional travel publications. Student campaign designers also used AI questions to identify common prompts and keywords travelers may use when searching for regional destinations, such as "daytrips close to Portland" and "small towns to visit in Oregon".

AI searches helped to gain insight into how Gladstone currently appears (or doesn't appear) in its recommendations to users. Gladstone was not featured in AI-generated lists of nearby destinations, which emphasized an opportunity to improve awareness of the city. Students also asked AI why Gladstone might not be appearing in results and what factors influence its recommendations. The response revealed that Gladstone was not prominent in AI search results due to a lack of digital content, few mentions in travel publications, and a minimal amount of published content associated with searchable travel keywords.

Target Publics

PRIMARY TARGET AUDIENCE

When exploring the primary audience of regional travelers ages 35-55, the campaign designers ideated ways to attract families and middle-aged people looking to escape their typical daily routines and explore a new location.

Both groups may be looking for different activities, such as kid-friendly swimming spots, local breweries, or live music.

This age group is typically the primary decision-makers when picking a spot to visit with their family, friends, or solo. These people turn to Google to research, and students found that when they are looking for locations and nearby towns to visit, Gladstone does not appear among the search results. Students suggest that the mechanism for attracting the primary audience to Gladstone is through updating news and media outlets with high-quality photos and summer events by utilizing Gladstone's outdoor parks, which can be enjoyed by all ages.

Primary Target Audience Personas

To deepen understanding of the primary target audience, students utilized generative AI to develop specific personas and then conducted research on them. The two personas that encompass the primary audience, regional travelers ages 35-55 are David, a 40-year-old project manager at a Portland-based technology firm, and the Chen-Miller family (Parents: Sarah and Marcus, 41; Kids: Leo, 6, and Mia, 4).

Through their research, students found that regional travelers in this age group are using generative AI more frequently to find desirable travel destinations. Based on this, students used AI personas to generate sample search questions that they would be most likely to use

when looking for a new destination. The questions were then used in a generative AI search to identify which towns and cities would be recommended to the personas when looking for their ideal regional destination.

By developing the personas, students identified that Gladstone does not appear in the search queries from the primary audience and that there is a lack of branding and press coverage highlighting the town as a desirable location.

SECONDARY TARGET AUDIENCE

The secondary audience for this campaign consists of younger regional travelers aged 22 to 30 who are seeking affordable, social outdoor experiences near Portland. This group often looks for destinations that offer a combination of recreation, casual dining, and visually appealing environments that can be shared on social media. Because many individuals in this age range are early in their careers or recently out of college, they tend to prioritize low-cost, spontaneous, and accessible activities.

Younger travelers in this demographic frequently discover new locations through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and community recommendation pages. Destinations that feel unique, relaxed, and visually interesting are more likely to gain traction within this group. For Gladstone, highlighting its river access, swimming areas, outdoor recreation opportunities, and local businesses provides a strong opportunity to appeal to this audience. By emphasizing experiences that are social, affordable, and easy to access from Portland, Gladstone can position itself as an appealing weekend destination for younger visitors.

Secondary Target Audience Personas

To better understand how younger travelers may interact with Gladstone, two representative personas were developed. Olivia is 27 and works full-time as a nurse in Portland. After long workweeks, she looks for relaxing weekend destinations that feel unique and visually interesting but do not require extensive travel. Olivia enjoys aesthetic coffee shops, vintage thrifting, and small-town environments that feel authentic and welcoming. She frequently discovers new places through Instagram and TikTok, and destinations that appear photogenic or culturally interesting are more likely to capture her attention.

A second persona represents a small group of friends in their early twenties, including Sebastian, Logan, and Jake. This group typically seeks affordable outdoor activities they can enjoy together for an entire afternoon or day. They enjoy swimming, spending time near water, exploring outdoor areas, and finding casual places to eat afterward.

Rather than planning longer trips to the Oregon Coast or Mount Hood, they prefer destinations close to Portland that still feel like a break from the city.

To better understand how these audiences discover new destinations, sample search questions were developed based on how travelers typically plan weekend activities. Searches such as “unique day trips near Portland” or “swim spots near Portland” reflect the types of experiences these audiences are seeking. In many of these results, Gladstone does not appear as a recommended destination. This lack of visibility is a missed opportunity, as the city’s rivers, parks, and outdoor recreation opportunities closely align with what these travelers are seeking.

These personas highlight how younger audiences are motivated by accessibility, social experiences, and visually appealing destinations. Understanding these preferences helps guide communication strategies that can increase Gladstone’s visibility among younger visitors.

Discover Gladstone Campaign

Gladstone has the potential to jump to the top of its surrounding competitors and showcase its diverse outdoor spaces and main street. By executing a 3-year PR plan highlighting recreational activities and renovations of current buildings, Gladstone can become a regional destination for diverse travelers.

GOAL STATEMENT

Increase awareness and visitation of Gladstone, among regional travelers and younger audiences as an accessible, outdoor-friendly destination by highlighting its outdoor recreational areas and local experiences.

OBJECTIVES AND TACTICS

Primary Audience

Objective 1:

Increase visits to Gladstone's outdoor recreation areas and local events (river access points, trails, parks) by 15–20% year over year.

Strategy:

Improve the city of Gladstone's external communication platforms.

Tactic 1:

- Establish biweekly outdoor events and services in Meldrum Bar Park. This includes a rental service for water equipment located directly on the river, and a built-out calendar for events like music in the park, and a farmers market featuring local and regional vendors. This tactic gives people a reason to visit Gladstone, whether they are interested in water activities, live music, or fresh regional produce. Students also created mock social media to advertise these events across multiple platforms and gain more coverage for these events.

Tactic 2:

- Contact a photographer to capture high-quality images to gain traction on Google images/hiking apps (All Trails) to build desirability in visiting outdoor areas. Students identified professional photography as something Gladstone is currently lacking, as well as something the city needs if they want to increase its media presence. Including high-quality photography of Gladstone's outdoor areas in pitches to journalists from the media increases the city's chances of getting covered by a relevant journalist. This will also help with suggested social media posts and as a way to help our regional audiences understand Gladstone better.

These tactics combine hardware and software to position Gladstone as an accessible outdoor destination. The suggested events and services in Meldrum Bar Park optimize already existing outdoor recreation areas, but they provide new reasons for the primary audience to visit Gladstone.

Gladstone, they are met with outdated photos that do not frame the city as an outdoor destination or a “hidden gem.” These photos and campaigns will last long beyond the time frame of this campaign and have the potential to shape into monthly or even weekly events that draw in more than just targeted regional crowds.

The photography tactic helps with getting press written about the events and the city in general, because without them, when target audiences look into

FIG. 1
Poster mockup to promote outdoor events to primary publics.

RIVER RENTALS
GLACKAMAS RIVER GLADSTONE OR

RENTALS ON THE
RIVER
RENTALS INCLUDE
Paddle boards, Kayaks, River tubes
Life jackets included. All skill levels welcome. Fun encouraged.

Meldrum Bar Park

Open daily 10am to 6pm

20% OFF FAMILY DISCOUNT EVERY SATURDAY

Book now at <https://www.ci.gladstone.or.us/riverrentals>



FIG. 2

Poster mockup to promote biweekly events in Meldrum Bar Park.



FIG. 3

Poster mockup to promote biweekly events in Meldrum Bar Park.

Objective 2:

Increase positive awareness of Gladstone as a premier outdoor recreation destination by 20% by January 2027 through an increase in regional travel publications.

Strategy:

Drive earned regional media coverage through an established “Discover Gladstone” media kit.

Tactic 1:

- Create a comprehensive media list that identifies Portland and Oregon-based journalists who regularly cover outdoor recreation, travel, and regional “hidden gem” destinations. The list will include reporters and editors from outlets such as Travel Oregon, Portland Monthly, and The Oregonian, along with other regional lifestyle and travel publications.

Tactic 2:

- Develop a comprehensive Discover Gladstone media kit to be distributed to regional travel reporters and editors. The media kit will include high-quality professional photography, suggested itineraries, key information about Gladstone’s outdoor opportunities, and story angles that highlight the city as a convenient and scenic outdoor destination near Portland. The media kit will be regularly shared with journalists at outlets such as Travel Oregon, OregonLive, The Oregonian, and other regional travel publications. By providing ready-to-use content and visuals, the media kit will make it easier for reporters to write about Gladstone and increase the likelihood of earned media coverage.

These tactics allow the campaign to position Gladstone authentically by highlighting the assets that the city already has. By focusing storytelling on Gladstone’s access to the Clackamas River, nearby outdoor recreation, and its small-town character within the Portland metro region, the campaign emphasizes experiences that exist year-round and are appealing to regional travelers.

The purpose of the media kit is to make it easier for reporters to write about the town by providing ready-to-use resources such as high-quality photography, suggested itineraries, and clear story angles that highlight Gladstone’s strengths. This concept will be expanded upon throughout the campaign and afterwards, with updated media kits distributed regularly to journalists that include new story angles, seasonal features, and invitations for reporters to visit Gladstone and experience the town firsthand.

JOURNALIST	PUBLICATION	EMAIL	BEAT
Rebecca Jacobson	Portland Monthly	Rjacobson@pdxmonthly.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributing Editor Covers “Get Out” PNW Travel, local culture
Jamie Hale	The Oregonian/ Oregon Live	Jhale@oregonian.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel/ Outdoors Host of Peak Northwest
Jen Anderson	Travel Oregon	Jena@traveloregon.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content and Community Manager Regional Travel, Family-friendly activities
Matt Wastradowski	Freelance/ Moon Guides	Wastro@gmail.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Author of Moon Oregon Contributor to Travel Oregon and Portland Monthly
Audrey Van Buskirk	Willamette Weekly	Audreyvanbuskirk@gmail.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventure and local recommendations Lead writer for summer and outdoor guides

FIG. 4
Media List with prospective journalists.

Secondary Audience

Objective 1:

Increase social media presence among young travelers ages 22-30 by 30% by January 2027.

Strategy:

Develop a content calendar for the City of Gladstone’s Instagram and design a new brand kit for future posts.

Tactics:

- Establish a content calendar for the City of Gladstone’s Instagram by identifying five categories: city events, city announcements, state and federal holidays, restaurant features, and business features.
- Identify a posting frequency around every 2 to 3 days and utilize a scheduling tool such as Meta or Instagram’s in-app post scheduler.
- Create a brand kit and post template that features easy-to-read fonts and simple graphics.

Objective 2:

Increase visits to downtown Gladstone by 15% by April 2027 by building a community destination featuring a unique local coffee and a thrifting outpost.

Strategy:

Develop the unused gas station on Portland avenue into a coffee cafe and second hand clothing store.

Tactics:

- Another opportunity to attract visitors to Gladstone is the creation of a unique destination in the downtown area along Portland Avenue. This concept focuses on renovating the currently unused gas station into a small community hub that combines a locally operated coffee shop with a curated thrift retail space. The goal is to increase visits to downtown Gladstone by 15 percent by April 2027 while creating an environment that encourages visitors to spend time in the area rather than simply passing through.
- Repurposing the vintage gas station allows the space to keep its rustic character while introducing a use that reflects the personality of the community. The design would preserve elements of the original structure and aesthetic, creating a distinctive location that feels authentic to Gladstone. A mix of coffee, vintage retail, and casual gathering space would appeal to both residents and visitors, particularly younger audiences interested in unique small businesses and local experiences.
- To help bring this idea to life, the city could promote the opportunity through social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Nextdoor, encouraging local entrepreneurs to get involved in the project. Sharing the renovation process along the way could also help build excitement within the community. As well as updates showing the progress of the building, the design of the space, and the small businesses involved would create anticipation leading up to the grand opening. Highlighting the transformation of the vintage gas station into a coffee and thrift destination would help position the space as a unique and welcoming stop in downtown Gladstone.

Objective 3:

Position the high rocks as a summer swimming destination by creating social media posts that highlight its swimming, cliff jumping, and outdoor recreational activities by Summer 2027..

Strategy:

Host a summer kickoff event at one of Gladstone's river access spots.

Tactics:

- The purpose of the Summer Kickoff at High Rocks is to increase exposure and awareness to one of Gladstone's outdoor hidden gems, while attracting new visitors. Young travelers heavily rely on social media to plan their trips and discover new destinations, so establishing a strong online presence will help attract the target audience. By strengthening the digital visibility and highlighting more of Gladstone's outdoor spaces, the city will naturally reach younger travelers and encourage them to explore more of the town on their own outside of events.
- Many travelers are unaware of Gladstone's beautiful outdoor attractions. Summer Kickoff at High Rocks aims to make the area more well-known by creating a diverse experience for all attendees. By combining outdoor activities, entertainment, and local food trucks, the event will encourage visitors to enjoy Gladstone and view the High Rocks as a new place they'll want to revisit regularly.
- This event is also a chance to measure visitor interest via QR code to determine the potential of making it an annual event. Tracking attendance and participation will help the city assess both community and visitor interest, while deciding to keep the event as a summer tradition and/or host more events. Increased participation will also support local businesses by bringing in new customers to nearby/partnering food vendors and local establishments.

Key Messages

Gladstone’s messaging emphasizes how close and accessible the city is to nearby communities, particularly the Portland metro area. Rather than positioning Gladstone as a distant destination, the message highlights how easy it is to reach, making it a convenient and realistic option for a day trip or short outdoor adventure. By referencing Portland Avenue, the messaging creates a sense

of familiarity and reminds audiences that Gladstone is part of existing routes and helps reframe Gladstone from a place people simply drive past into a destination worth stopping for. Ultimately, the message communicates that a new outdoor experience is closer than previously realized, encouraging visitors to see Gladstone as an easy and appealing escape nearby.

Timeline & Media Roadmap

The 2027 media roadmap outlines a phased communication strategy designed to gradually build awareness of Gladstone as an outdoor recreation destination near Portland. The roadmap is divided into four phases that align with the calendar year, allowing the campaign to establish foundational assets, build momentum through media and social engagement, maximize visibility during peak travel months, and sustain awareness through continued storytelling.

The first quarter focuses on establishing the foundation for the campaign. During this phase, the campaign invests in professional photography to elevate Gladstone’s visual identity and provide high-quality imagery for use across social media, the city website, and earned media outreach.

events such as the gas station renovation project and community activities like Movie in the Park are promoted to regional audiences. These events serve as key story angles for media outreach and provide opportunities to showcase Gladstone as an active and welcoming destination.

In the second quarter, the campaign begins building momentum by actively promoting upcoming events and community experiences. With the foundational visuals and digital platforms established, the campaign shifts toward increasing visibility through earned media outreach, website content, and social media engagement. During this phase,

The third quarter represents the campaign’s peak visibility period. Because summer is naturally a high-travel season, communication efforts will focus heavily on promoting major outdoor activities and community events taking place in Gladstone.

The final quarter focuses on sustaining the momentum built earlier in the campaign while reflecting on the year's activities. During this phase, content will highlight seasonal experiences and recap key moments from community events throughout the year. Communication efforts may include website updates,

social media recap posts, and newsletters that showcase Gladstone's events and tourism experiences. These materials help reinforce the city's identity as a year-round destination while maintaining audience engagement beyond the peak travel season.

MONTHLY CONTENT CALENDAR



FIG. 5
Content Calendar and Media Roadmap.

Budget

The proposed budget for the Gladstone tourism campaign supports a combination of infrastructure improvements, community programming, and promotional content designed to increase awareness and visitation to the city.

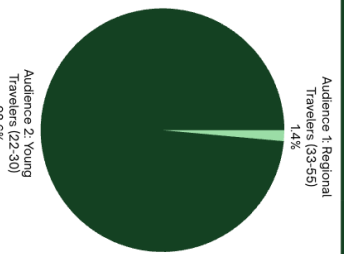
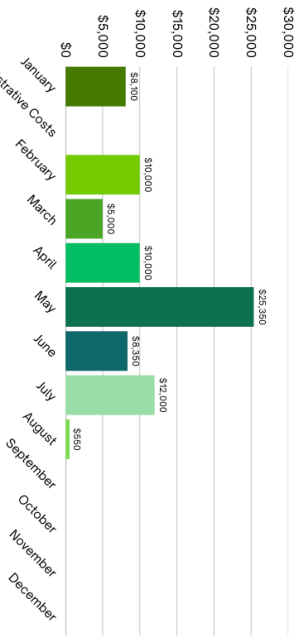
The campaign focuses on reaching two primary audiences: regional travelers aged 33–55 and younger travelers aged 22–30. The total estimated campaign budget is \$79,350. Funding is allocated across campaign tactics, including event ideas, content creation, promotional materials, and the renovation of gathering spaces designed to support tourism-related activities. While both audiences are central to the campaign strategy, the difference in budget allocation reflects the costs associated with the gas station renovation and community events, which require larger financial investments.

BUDGET ALLOCATION BY AUDIENCE

- Audience 1: Regional Travelers (33–55)
 - > \$1,150
- Audience 2: Young Travelers (22–30)
 - > \$78,200

Young travelers account for 98.6% of the campaign budget, while regional travelers account for 1.4%. Campaign spending occurs primarily between January and August, with the largest investment during the renovation and event-activation period. No spending is allocated between September and December, as this period focuses on maintaining awareness rather than major campaign investments.

Budget Tracker



Categories	Total
Audience 1: Regional Travelers (33-55)	\$1,150
Audience 2: Young Travelers (22-30)	\$78,200

Item	Categories	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Social Media	Audience 2: Young Tra...	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Posters & Flyers	Audience 1: Regional Tr...	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Media Kit	Audience 1: Regional Tr...	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Photographer/Videogr apher	Audience 1: Regional Tr...	\$100	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$350	\$350	\$0	\$350	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,150
Gas Station Renovation	Audience 2: Young Tra...	\$8,000	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$25,000	\$8,000	\$12,000	\$200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$78,200
Local Bands	Audience 2: Young Tra...	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$400	\$400	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$800
Movie In the Park	Audience 2: Young Tra...	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$100	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$100
Equipment Rental Booth	Audience 1: Regional Tr...	\$400	\$450	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,050

FIG. 6
Budget Tracker.

Evaluation

The campaign's success will be measured through five key metrics: tracking hotel occupancy, the use of QR codes for event check-ins, earned media coverage, hashtag and geotag engagement, and the impact of downtown visitation and local business sales.

Gladstone has two hotels, and while attracting visitors is important, the main goal is to get them to stay overnight or the whole weekend. With features like Music in the Park, the Summer Kickoff at High Rocks, and the new coffee and thrift shop, Gladstone is creating the perfect itinerary that will make people want to stay longer, with hotel occupancy rates serving as a way to measure success.

QR code check-ins will help the city measure how well events are doing by tracking interest, attendance, and participation. This data will show the city what residents and visitors like and will help decide what events to plan and keep for the future.

Earned media is another important measure, including unpaid publicity and brand awareness from news coverage, word of mouth, and social media. Gladstone can strengthen this by boosting newsletters, news stories, social media content, and community events, which will prompt visitors to share their experiences through Google reviews, Yelp, Reddit, and travel groups.

When visitors talk about Gladstone online, AI search engines are more likely to suggest the city when people search for outdoor towns in Oregon. Right now, Gladstone isn't showing up in any AI travel recommendations, so it's important to get the city more exposure. Monitoring geotags and hashtags on Instagram and TikTok will help the city see if social media is reaching the targeted audiences without having to pay for ads. Visitors who have positive experiences are more likely to share their photos and videos, tag locations, and use event hashtags, which increases visibility.

Monitoring Portland Avenue's visitation through local business sales and the new gas station redevelopment will help decide whether the coffee and thrift shop idea is actually increasing foot traffic, benefiting not only itself but also the surrounding businesses along Main Street.

Sources

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