

APPENDIX G: ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES

APPENDIX G Trail Town Success Story

The Story of Gilbert WV

Gilbert is a small town in the southwest quadrant of West Virginia with a total land mass of 1.1 square miles. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, of the 417 people residing in Gilbert, 11.7% of the families and 15.5% of the population lived below the poverty line. There were just 16 lodging rooms, a small restaurant, a gas station, and not much else. Even the local grocery store was struggling to keep its doors open. This is not the case today.

In October of 2000, the Hatfield & McCoy Browning Fork Trailhead opened in Gilbert WV and now provides access to over 100 miles of OHV trails connecting Gilbert WV to Man WV which (as a crow flies) are less than 15 miles apart. In the Spring of 2001, an ordinance was passed in the City of Gilbert declaring itself off-road vehicle (OHV) friendly, allowing both ATV's and dirt bikes to travel into town on major thoroughfares including Hwy 52. Allowing OHV's into Gilbert has become a huge economic boom for the community.

Gilbert WV had been declining in population for years yet in the 2010 census they actually experienced a 10% increase. More importantly, they also experienced a tremendous growth in both tax revenue and infrastructure due primarily (if not exclusively) to the establishment of the Hatfield & McCoy ATV Trailhead within their community.



Downtown Gilbert WV

GILBERT WV TODAY

Within eight years of the trailhead opening, Gilbert WV boasted over 130 lodging rooms and more being built, numerous restaurants, a cinema, a grocery store, four pharmacies, an ambulance service with a fleet of 14 ambulances that service a regional area, two car washes, a large campground, and two auto repair & ATV shops.



Thousands of riders are coming to the area and staying on average 3 to 5 days.



New businesses have opened creating much needed jobs in the area.

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RESTAURANTS



A few of the restaurants that have opened in Gilbert WV since it became ATV friendly which includes two pizza places, Hardee's, Happy Days Diner, Wally's Restaurant, Morning Side Coffee House and a few others.



There are also two car washes within a few blocks of each other!

LODGING FACILITIES ARE OPENING UP EVERYWHERE!



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Many are converted homes and businesses...



For a while, even the back room of the local firehouse and up second floor of a number of the downtown businesses were renting out space for overnight visitors.

Over 130 rooms to rent in a community of 450!



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Soon after the ATV trailhead opened, Twin Hollow Campground was built offering:



- 46 campsites
 - 9 full hook-up sites with water, septic, electricity (20/30/50 amp) and concrete patios.
 - 13 sites w' water & electricity (20/30/50 amp)
 - 24 primitive site



- 8 custom log cabins



The cabins are 16 x 24 with full kitchen and bath that sleeps 4 to 6 people, 6' deck in front, and charcoal grills.



There are also six (6) private shower house/ restrooms combination units next door to the office and camp store.



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How can a community of 400 residents sustain so many businesses?

They can't!

But the thousands of visitors that come to Gilbert WV
each year to ride the trails can and do!



The Tri-Cities Area of Harlan County has the potential to see this kind of economic growth in their communities by establishing themselves as a Trail Town and expanding their network of interconnecting trails and amenities to encourage multiple night stays.