

# Western Wheel

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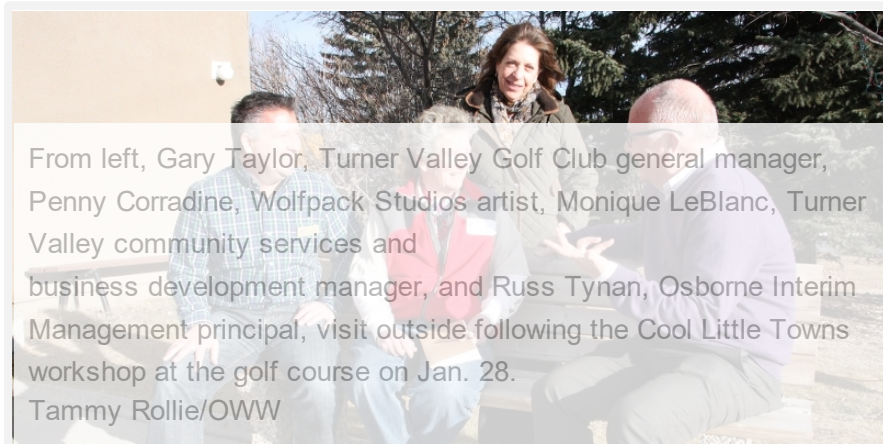
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## Driving tours aim to drive tourism

*Foothills: Cool Little Towns planning new initiative for 2016 season*

Wednesday, Feb 03, 2016 06:00 am **By: Tammy Rollie**

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Hot spots and hidden gems are expected to gain more attention than ever in the Foothills this summer through the creation of themed road trips.

Foothills communities involved with the Cool Little Towns initiative are working with Calgary consulting company Osborne Interim Management to get feedback from tourism-driven businesses, chambers of commerce and

local municipalities on how to attract more visitors to the region with themed driving tours this summer.

“It’s something that I’ve actually pushed for in the past, because I feel that we will be able to attract more visitors by packaging our many events and attractions together in order to collaborate and plan our marketing,” said Monique LeBlanc, Turner Valley community services and business development manager. “Ultimately we’re hoping that this will increase exposure to our businesses and province with additional economic opportunities and by working with the region we can expand or reach our message to a larger audience more affordably.”

Cool Little Towns is a regional partnership lead by Okotoks and also includes Nanton, High River, the MD of Foothills, Bragg Creek, Black Diamond and Turner Valley developed in 2009 to promote the region and deliver tourism experiences the municipalities couldn’t have accomplished individually.

This second phase of the themed driving routes is possible through a \$70,000 grant from Alberta Culture and Tourism, which funds the workshops, development of three themed touring routes based on the workshops’ outcomes and to pilot and launch the routes as day trips and weekend getaways from Calgary.

The first phase in 2014 entailed detailed tourism asset mapping and identifying enhancements.

LeBlanc said since its inception, Cool Little Towns has provided Turner Valley with an additional marketing tool to promote the many activities and attractions.

This is the next step.

“What we heard from the merchants is they seems to be in support of the marketing that has been going on with Cool Little Towns to date,” she said. “Right now it’s just being able to create awareness about the many activities going on in the region. That’s why we did this public engagement piece. We very much wanted to engage those that are delivering the service directly to the visitors that we are ensuring we are following the right path and their recommendations.”

LeBlanc said the Cool Little Towns initiatives are in line with the Town of Turner Valley’s plans to expand tourism in the region, while working with its neighbours.

As Osborne Interim Management collects input at each workshop, principal Russ Tynan said it’s important to understand each community’s sensitivities, opportunities and gems while getting a better sense of how to better promote the region and drive visitation.

“As we develop tours we need to know the demand generator from a tourism perspective,” he said.

The company received feedback from Turner Valley businesses and Town staff during a session at the Turner Valley Golf Club on Jan. 28.

All participants receive a special invitation and the workshops are not open to the public.

Sue Silvester, Anchor D Guiding & Outfitting office administrator, said she is excited about the Cool Little Towns plan for Foothills driving tours.

“It’s a really good idea,” she said. “It’s just going to bring more attention to the town and we will hopefully get some more tourism going and get everybody working together. It’s going to give us some new opportunities so we are looking forward to participating.”

Silvester said she likes the idea of themed tours because many tourists have specific reasons for visiting a community and if a tour fits that need they are more likely to discover places they didn’t realize existed.

She said it would be good for more people to discover Turner Valley.

“They will realize it’s a really good place to spend some of their vacation time and just enjoy the atmosphere we have in these towns,” she said, adding that was how she discovered what Turner Valley had to offer.

After spending a vacation at Anchor D, it wasn’t long before she applied for a job at the outfitting company and moved to Turner Valley.

“I just hope that it does bring more people in and there’s more opportunities for us to network with the other businesses in the area,” she said.

The workshops began in January and will continue into February. Input from the six workshops will be combined to develop a plan for at least three driving themes, which will be revealed this spring.

To learn more about Cool Little Towns go to [coollittletowns.com](http://coollittletowns.com)

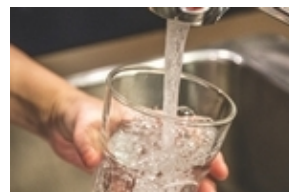


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