



Westport Mayor
Michael Bruce

Shutter Plug

Michael Bruce—MBA, MPA, logging-industry veteran, and Westport mayor since 2003—talks about the city's \$150,000 advertising campaign and the role his amateur photographs play in luring tourists to town.

Q & A

You're a pretty educated guy for a logger. I knew you were going to say that. I came from a family of five kids, and I was the only one who went to college.

Does anything you learned from your 25 years in that industry apply to your current role as mayor? I've worked with so many different people from so many walks of life, I guess it's easy for me to communicate with other people and understand their perspective. I mean, I don't blow up any stumps here in town.

That'd be one way to deliver a stump speech! Some people would like to blow me up.

Not many ... you ran on a pro-tourism platform and were re-elected to a third term with more than 73 percent of the vote. We're a community of 2,099. Tourism is a big part of our business during summertime because we have charter boat fishing. We had a sizable fleet, but we went from 300 to 30 boats because there's not as many salmon out there anymore.

Q & A

How did that impact Westport's economy? It affects your storefronts, your restaurants, your gas sales—everything that tourists do and spend money on.

One way Westport made up for the loss of its fishing charter fleet was to focus on boat-building. We have one of the top yacht-production facilities in the world. Johnny Carson bought his here, the president of Amway bought two of them, and the owner of the Ravens football team just had one launched here a week ago. What sustains the City of Westport is our industry that works all year long. Our tourism is a big piece, but if we derived our full year's economy from tourism, it wouldn't work.

This year, you've budgeted \$150,000 for advertising. Isn't that a lot for a small city? You have to spend money to make money. When we had 300 boats lined up out here and people wanting to get on 'em, you didn't have to advertise.

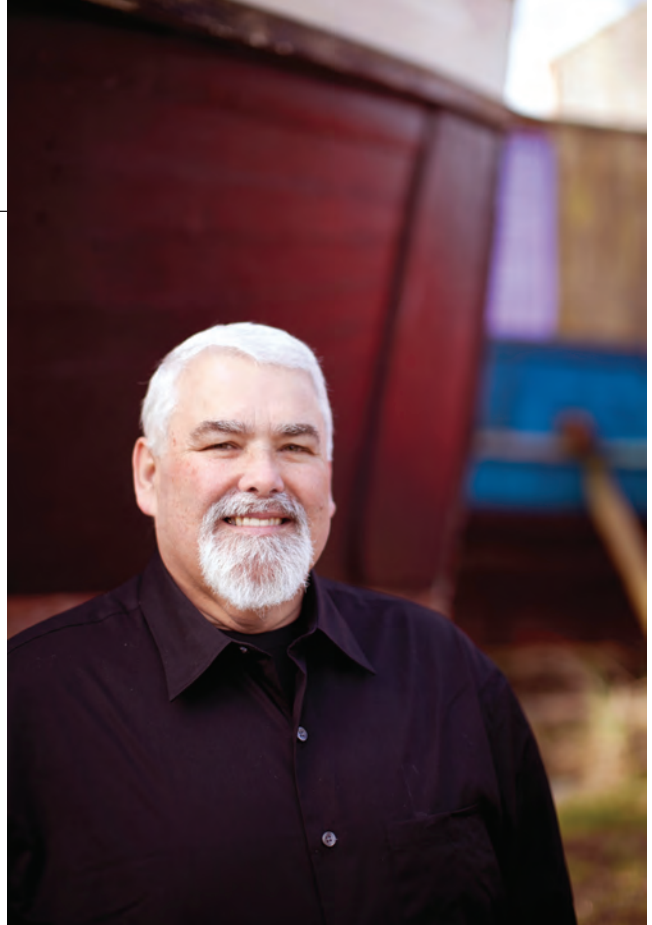
What's the latest campaign? We just made a new commercial that cost us an extra \$30,000. It was done by Howell at the Moon in Wenatchee. We hired them after seeing what they did for Leavenworth with their Woody the Nutcracker commercial that went viral on YouTube.

What did they come up with for Westport? It's 30 seconds long, and it shows a lot of different activities like surfing and boating and trail-walking shot from a high angle so people look like ants or bugs. They call it the New York style because it's like you're looking down from a skyscraper.

How do you know you'll get a good return on that investment? Look at our track record of increased tourism revenue: we keep going up a little each year. As the economy went south during the recession, Westport was one of the only places in Grays Harbor showing an increase in motel and hotel taxes.

Let's talk about tourism infrastructure. This spring, Westport will break ground on a \$700,000 outdoor pavilion for its marina district. The whole idea with the pavilion was to focus on the shoulder season. It'll be a pavilion with roll-up doors where you can hold a farmers market and music and art festivals and car shows. We're using our hotel/motel tax reserve to fund the project, but it will pay for itself as people come during the shoulder season and pay hotel/motel tax.

What could the state be doing better to help communities like yours attract tourists? Washington state needs to realize that to get visitors you have to blow your horn, not




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close down the tourism office. All of our communities can't afford to put advertising in airline magazines. We need to have a larger focus to get people from outside the state.

You apprenticed with the Northwest photographer Lee Mann. How does that factor into your tourism strategy for Westport? I never leave home without my camera, and it doesn't matter if it's Westport or Port Angeles or Sequim—wherever I go, I'll post my photos on Facebook for my 2,000-plus fans to see.

Why cross-promote other communities? We're not out here on an island. When we advertise for Westport, we're really advertising for Grays Harbor. That's just the way it is.

But it works for Westport. I met this guy on Facebook who said he was planning to vacation in Seaside, Oregon, but after looking at my photos he decided that he was going to Westport this year. It's an indirect way of advertising your town. And that's what makes me smile. 

By the Numbers

Cityvision looks at how Westport mixes seasonal tourism with year-round seafaring industry.

ALL POPULATION DATA FROM THE 2010 U.S. CENSUS, UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED

Population

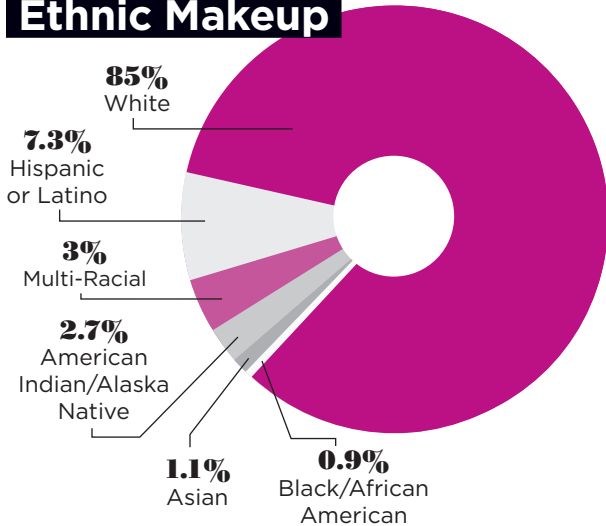


Sleepovers

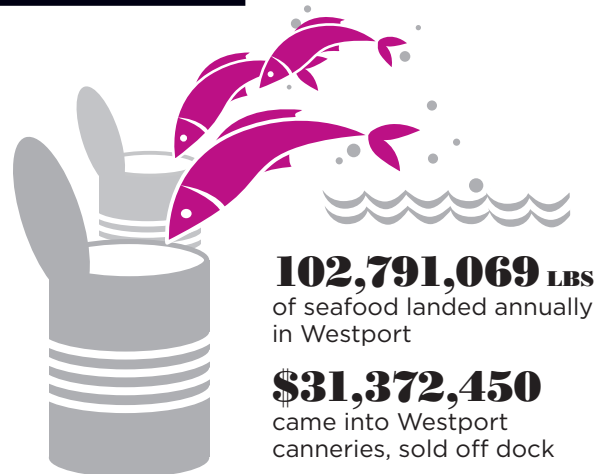


SOURCE: CITY OF WESTPORT

Ethnic Makeup



Fish Scales

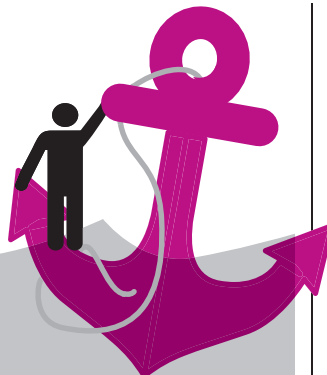


SOURCE: NOAA, 2005-9 AVERAGE

Fleet Facts

70% of marina boaters are commercial

30% are sports/pleasure



SOURCE: PORT OF GRAYS HARBOR

A Rising Tide

12 tall ships at Rusty Scuppers Pirate Daze

10% of general fund comes from tourism



SOURCE: CITY OF WESTPORT