

# Travelers Rest Takes the Spotlight

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Community marketing of Traveler's Rest helps bolster community pride and establish a strong sense of place in this quaint South Carolina town. Traveler's Rest, South Carolina historically served as a "resting stopover" for weary travelers, with some staying for months to wait out harsh winters. Nestled at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains and situated between Highways 276 and 25, Traveler's Rest is an ideal place to take a break and regroup before continuing a journey. Due to recent attention as an emerging, eclectic, American small town, Traveler's Rest, locally known as just TR, has now become a destination to travel to rather than a place to travel through. Structural and economic redevelopment along critical corridors such as Main Street serve as an impetus for heightened attraction and the recent rebranding effort calls attention to what is special about TR.

The economic redevelopment of TR has had a notable difference in the feel, culture, and branding of the community. Local artisan businesses, eateries, shops, seasonal festivals, and outdoor gatherings make it an ideal place to visit. In the past few years, economic redevelopment has built upon community assets like the swamp rabbit trail and nearby outdoor recreation opportunities and a plethora of new small businesses have been cropping up. Recent rebranding efforts are a communication tool conveying and building off of TR's innate community assets and qualities as well as feelings associated with a "TRek" to "TR."

Signs around town now sport the slogan "Get in your element" or "It starts with TR," that add value to the intrinsic properties of Traveler's Rest. These blue and yellow signs, though simple, have a profound impact in establishing a sense of place. Visitors know when they enter TR, and these signs also expound on TR's assets.

For example, banners on light posts along the Swamp Rabbit Trail highlight the "TR" in "TRadition" or "TRails," building off of the experiences that TR has to offer. Branding can play a role in defining a community's character. This in turn helps establish a unified identity and a strong sense of community pride. These signs help increase awareness about why TR is unique, and help foster a sense of place within the community. They also brighten up the downtown area along Main Street. New signage and taglines did not cause Traveler's Rest to suddenly acquire a new identity, rather, they put a name to an already established sense of identity and built off of existing community assets.

As a Furman student, I frequently visit TR and always have an enjoyable experience. Sometimes I use the Swamp Rabbit Trail to bike to my favorite coffee shop, other times I simply go to the grocery store. However, the logos and rebranding of TR has definitely instilled a strong sense of pride and place within me for TR. It has so many unique experiences to offer, and I'm excited whenever I drive past those blue and yellow street signs and into downtown. The rebranding signage reminds me of what I love about TR. Branding does help establish a community's character as it puts a word, for example, to a preexisting yet unspoken identity. I feel like I belong when I visit TR, and community rebranding encourages others, like myself, to visit and stay to experience why Traveler's Rest is a unique community. This rebranding in Traveler's Rest helps relay to visitors that it is a unique destination rather than simply a place to pass through.

