

Visit Grand Junction
Advisory Board of Directors Meeting
April 14, 2026, 3 p.m. – 5 p.m.

The meeting was held at Residence Inn by Marriott, 767 Horizon Drive, Grand Junction, CO.

Presiding: Pat Nichols-Perrin, Chair

Visit Grand Junction Advisory Board Members Present: Manon Desrosiers, Theresa Horvat, Brenda Greene, Julie Shafer, Christina Schultz, Dora Fang, Tevfik Demirciftci

Visit Grand Junction Advisory Board Members Absent: Elizabeth Fortushniak

Grand Junction City Council Present: Laurel Cole, Mayor Pro Tem

Visit Grand Junction Staff Present: Elizabeth Fogarty, Director; Kim Machado, Administrative Specialist

The meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m. by Chair Pat Nichols-Perrin.

Minutes from the March 10, 2026, advisory board meeting: Theresa Horvat motioned to approve the minutes as written; Manon Desrosiers seconded. Motion passed.

Community Updates and Q&A – Colorado National Monument

Nathan Souder, Superintendent of the Colorado National Monument (CNM), provided updates on CNM's operations, programs, volunteer efforts, resource management, public safety, and 2025 visitor statistics. He reported that CNM continues to operate with 40 to 50 employees, including Youth Conservation Corps staff, and approximately 150 volunteers. Nathan discussed ongoing maintenance needs, proposed wilderness areas, additional CNM-managed sites, staffing, and 2025 visitor trends. He noted that overall visitation was slightly down, bus and bicycle activity decreased, and tent camping increased at the campgrounds. He also covered campground reservation changes, budget considerations, law enforcement activity, resource protection and management, educational programs, archeological site monitoring, and special use permits. Nathan also reported that CNM received national recognition for its suicide prevention and resiliency efforts and showed a video highlighting that work.

Advisory Board members asked questions regarding visitation trends, entrance fee operations, staffing, volunteer programs, resource protection, and visitor management. Elizabeth Fogarty highlighted Visit Grand Junction's proactive resource management efforts, including the rebranded "Leave No Trace" messaging featured on the inside cover of the Official Grand Junction Visitor Guide and incorporated throughout visitor education and destination stewardship messaging on all marketing platforms.

Elizabeth thanked Nathan for the ongoing partnership between Visit Grand Junction and CNM and asked whether there were areas where Visit Grand Junction could improve or further assist the CNM. Nathan responded, "You have a very professional organization. The more exposure I get from others, the more I appreciate what you're doing. Thank you."

Visit Grand Junction Updates

Elizabeth shared an update on Grand Junction's lodging tax collections and key hotel performance metrics for February 2026's business activity.

For February 2026's business, Grand Junction's lodging tax collections were 7.3% above February 2025. To provide a fair year-over-year comparison, the prior-year comparison was adjusted to remove the vendor's fee deduction previously allowed in 2025, which was eliminated by a 2026 Grand Junction tax code change. Year-to-date lodging tax collections through February 2026's business are 4.2% above the same two-month period in 2025 using the same adjusted comparison. Hotel occupancy was 53.6%, average daily rate (ADR) was \$93.35, and revenue per available room (RevPAR) was \$50.01.

Notable hotel metrics include:

- February 2026 occupancy of 53.6% was 6.9% above February 2025, and outpaced Colorado (including and excluding ski towns) and the U.S. It was the highest recorded occupancy for any month of February in Grand

Junction's history. This marks the tenth consecutive month that Grand Junction has paced ahead of Colorado (including and excluding ski resorts) and the U.S. in occupancy.

- February 2026 ADR of \$93.35 was 4.4% above February 2025, and outpaced Colorado (including and excluding ski towns) and the U.S. It was the highest recorded ADR for any month of February in Grand Junction's history. This marks the seventh month that Grand Junction has paced ahead of Colorado (including and excluding ski resorts) and the U.S. in ADR.
- February 2026 RevPAR of \$50.01 was 11.6% above February 2025, and outpaced Colorado (including and excluding ski towns) and the U.S. It was the highest recorded RevPAR for any month of February in Grand Junction's history. This marks the tenth consecutive month that Grand Junction has paced ahead of Colorado (including and excluding ski resorts) and the U.S. in RevPAR.

Elizabeth noted that compared to peer cities with similar population and visitation levels, Grand Junction continues to experience a shortage of over 2,000 hotel rooms. The continuous increase in monthly occupancy will eventually level off due to this shortage.

Other updates included:

- Elizabeth highlighted Grand Junction's second major feature in *The New York Times*, following its inclusion in "52 Places to Go in 2023" and the recent "36 Hours in Grand Junction, Colorado" article. She explained that these national PR placements reflect Visit Grand Junction's long-term media strategy, relationship-building with journalists, and the growing strength of Grand Junction's destination brand. Elizabeth also noted the article's 146 million readership, links to VisitGrandJunction.com, and positive feedback from an eNewsletter reader who praised Visit Grand Junction's marketing, community engagement, and authentic brand identity.
- The draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Grand Junction, the Grand Junction Regional Air Service Alliance, and the Grand Junction Sports Commission is complete. The MOU includes data-sharing provisions with the airport and will be considered by City Council at an upcoming regular meeting.
- The City of Grand Junction Boards and Commissions Volunteer Appreciation Banquet will be held on April 27, 2026, at 5 p.m. at the Grand Junction Convention Center.
- A recap of the Grand Junction Area Tourism Membership Program was provided, including the program's purpose and the City Council resolution that formally established it in 2022. Agreements and annual dues invoices have been sent to businesses and events that previously expressed interest in becoming members. To date, 38 have enrolled. Participation reflects continued interest from businesses outside city limits that recognize the value of Visit Grand Junction's marketing efforts.
- A snapshot of recent community meetings and events that Elizabeth has attended include: City leadership training; Destination Think! X 2026 Membership Collective; tour of Colterris Collections; Fire Chief Pete Skeris Badge Pinning Ceremony; Western Colorado Art Center Strategic Planning Retreat, Art Center Listening Session, and Art Center Board meetings; Mesa County Leadership Academy; State of the City Presentation by City Manager Mike Bennett; CMU Hospitality Management Advisory Board Meeting; guest speaker for CMU Outdoor Recreation Class; and guest speaker at the Grand Junction Newcomers Club meeting, which was attended by 93 people—many of whom have stopped by the Grand Junction Visitor Center since the presentation.
- National data and trends related to the experience economy were presented, including declining alcohol consumption and challenges facing the Colorado and California wine industries. Visit Grand Junction continues to respond by positioning wine and craft beverage experiences as part of a broader, experience-driven strategy that also highlights food, wellness, events, outdoor recreation, and other destination experiences.
- Recent media coverage of the Grand Junction area included a 9News travel segment ("Family-Friendly Colorado Spring Break Ideas"); National Geographic ("How to See the Southwest's Best Red Rock Formations – Without the Crowds"); GoRVing ("Centennial State Road Trip: A Four Region RV Adventure Through Colorado"); AFAR ("How to Avoid the Crowds in Colorado's Ski Towns – From Aspen to Quiet Mountain Resorts"); Untethered & Wanderwise ("Why Grand Junction Should Be Your Next Adventure Hidden Gem Destination"); 5280 Magazine ("The 5280 Guide to Traveling Solo"); and CraftBeer.com ("Grand Junction: The Intersection of Adventure and Beer").

There being no further business, Christina Schultz motioned to adjourn; Theresa Horvat seconded. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.