

Visit Grand Junction  
Advisory Board of Directors Meeting  
September 8, 2026, 3 p.m. – 5 p.m.

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

**Presiding:** Pat Nichols-Perrin, Chair

**Visit Grand Junction Advisory Board Members Present:** Manon Desrosiers, Theresa Horvat, Christina Schultz, Brenda Greene

**Visit Grand Junction Advisory Board Members Absent:** Dora Fang, Tevfik Demirciftci, Julie Shafer, Elizabeth Fortushniak

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

**Guest:** Candace Carnahan, President and CEO, Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce

**Community Updates and Q&A – Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce**

Prior to the business portion of the meeting, Candace Carnahan, President and CEO of the Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce, provided an overview of the Chamber's current work. She reviewed challenges facing local employers, such as the availability of skilled workers, business competitiveness, inflation, healthcare costs, and housing affordability. She also outlined the Chamber's 2026 priorities, including business advocacy, talent development, responsiveness to economic and industry changes, and support for companies adopting new technologies and operating practices.

Candace highlighted efforts to connect employers, workforce partners, and emerging professionals. For example, West Slope Works created 20 work-based learning programs and provided on-the-job training opportunities for more than 65 participants, with more than half securing full-time employment in their respective industries after completing their training. She also discussed Elevate Mesa County, a new 10-week mentorship initiative that pairs young professionals with local business and community leaders.

Candace thanked the Board for the opportunity to present. Elizabeth Fogarty expressed appreciation for the presentation and asked how Visit Grand Junction could further support the Chamber. Candace said continued collaboration and information sharing are valuable.

Following the Chamber update, the business portion of the meeting was called to order at 3:45 p.m. by Chair Pat Nichols-Perrin.

Minutes from the August 11, 2026, advisory board meeting: Brenda Greene motioned to approve the minutes as written; Theresa Horvat seconded. The motion passed.

The Board recorded a welcome message for the Colorado Municipal Clerks Association conference being held in Grand Junction in October 2027. The recording will be incorporated into a video showcasing Grand Junction.

**Visit Grand Junction Updates**

Elizabeth reviewed Grand Junction's lodging tax collections and key hotel performance metrics for July 2026 business activity.

For July 2026 business, Grand Junction's lodging tax collections were 0.3% below July 2025. Year-to-date (YTD) collections through July 2026 were 1.8% above the same seven-month period in 2025. Hotel occupancy was 73.6%, average daily rate (ADR) was \$122.75, and revenue per available room (RevPAR) was \$90.33. Compared with July 2025, July 2026 hotel occupancy pacing was 5.2% below, ADR was 5.0% above, and RevPAR was 0.4% below. July's hotel occupancy softened, reflecting several factors, including exceptionally strong performance in July 2025, impacts from the Snyder Fire and related public land closures, events held in July 2025 that did not return in 2026, and Grand Junction's limited hotel inventory.

Notable hotel metrics include:

- Despite year-over-year declines in occupancy and RevPAR, Grand Junction remained ahead of Colorado, including and excluding ski resorts, and the U.S. in 12-month rolling occupancy, ADR, and RevPAR pacing.
- July 2026 ADR of \$122.75 was the highest July ADR on record. YTD July 2026 ADR of \$113.31 was also the highest on record.
- July 2026 RevPAR of \$90.33 was the third-highest July RevPAR on record, behind 2021 and 2025. YTD July 2026 RevPAR of \$74.70 was the highest on record.

#### **Other Updates**

- As a follow-up to suggestions from Advisory Board members during the August 11 meeting, staff researched hotel inventory and development activity in Minot, North Dakota, and Idaho Falls, Idaho, as additional comparisons. Minot has approximately 3,100 hotel rooms and a 75-room hotel in the final planning stage. Idaho Falls has approximately 3,000 rooms, with an additional 388 rooms under construction, proposed, or in the final planning stage. Although reliable visitation data are not currently available for either community, the level of hotel development activity in these markets further highlights the need for additional lodging inventory in Grand Junction. Elizabeth also reported that she, Grand Junction Economic Partnership Executive Director Curtis Englehart, and City Manager Mike Bennett met with a prospective hotel developer during a recent site visit. The developer expressed interest in Grand Junction and may return for another visit.
- Community meetings and activities Elizabeth recently attended included the Do Colorado Right Coalition; Grand Valley River Corridor Initiative; Colorado Tourism Office Marketing Committee; Grand Junction Regional Airport; Colorado Association of Destination Marketing Organizations (CADMO); Dinosaur Diamond Scenic and Historic Byway Committee; Destination Think X! Collective Roundtable; City budget planning; groundbreakings for the Colorado Mesa University football complex and Liberty Apartments; Fallen Firefighters Memorial; City Council budget workshop; art and event pop-ups meeting; and a 1:1 interview for the True West outdoor recreation strategy.
- Recent media coverage of Grand Junction included a 9NEWS broadcast and online segment featuring travel blogger Abigail Bliss discussing Grand Junction-area destinations; Colorado Meetings + Events (“Western Slope Wonders”); Travel + Leisure (“11 Best Desert Towns in the U.S. for Striking Scenery, Art, and Wellness” and “One of Colorado’s Best Parks Is 30 Minutes from Grand Junction – With Spires, Red Rock Canyons, and a ‘Tour of the Moon’”); Pride Journeys (“Fall Finds Its Wild Side in Grand Junction, Colorado”); and Travel Boulder (“Ready, Set, Road Trip”).

There being no further business, Christina Schultz motioned to adjourn; Brenda Greene seconded. The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.