

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS ANNUAL RETREAT

April 7 – 8, 2015

Two Rivers Winery and Chateau  
2087 Broadway  
Grand Junction, CO

PRESIDING: Brad Taylor, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Don Bramer, Susie Kiger, Sharon Woelfle, Billie Witham, Kate Graham, Per Nilsson, Kevin Reimer, Glen Gallegos

STAFF PRESENT: Debbie Kovalik, Barbara Bowman, Mistalynn Meyeraan, Holly Prickett, Kim Machado, Kristin Lynch, Erin Chapman, Kristin Winn, Kathy Plunk, Kerry Graves

Guests: Karin Mast and Carrie Barker – Miles Media; Linda Hill, Jill Coyle, and Derek Hartman – Hill Aevium; Doug Price – Visit Colorado Springs; Elizabeth Tice and Rich Englehart – City of Grand Junction (Lunch only)

**Tuesday, April 7, 2015**

The meeting began at 8:30 a.m. Brad welcomed everyone and covered the agenda.

**Contractor Presentations:**

Ore Communications: On behalf of Gaylene Ore, who was not able to attend the Retreat, Mistalynn Meyeraan recapped the public relations highlights for 2014 and shared their strategies for 2015 as outlined in the 2015 Marketing Plan. These are:

- Conduct pro-active outreach to targeted journalists and outlets. This includes tailored pitching; releases; press trips; and in-market media blitzes.
- Enhance digital integration throughout the PR tactics. From story pitches to how we define media materials, from press visits to in-market media weeks, we will deliver our message in a way that is highly engaging and shareable.

Hill Aevium: Linda Hill, Jill Coyle, and Derek Hartman shared their strategic priorities and creative for 2015, which mirrors the GJVCB's Strategic Plan. Under each priority, the following goals and objective were outlined:

***#1 – Increase the positive economic impact of visitor spending and report on return on investment.***

- Build awareness and desire to visit or book for group business
- Increase visitor spending
- Determine economic impact of tourism for Grand Junction
- Maximize Marketing ROI
- Research to include visitor impact study and tourism economic impact study
  - Determine why people are coming here and measure their satisfaction and loyalty
  - Collect data through survey links that hoteliers can email to their guests; GJVCB interns and volunteers to go out to all areas (attractions, airport, convenience stores on Horizon Drive, etc.)
  - Utilize local partnerships and GJVCB oversight to accomplish this

- Targeted audiences are primarily Front Range Colorado residents, 30 – 54 years of age, skew is Female, HHI - \$75k +, active/adventurers, wine lovers, family, and couples

Challenges include competitive budgets (i.e. resorts) and lack of awareness. Opportunities include new markets and product infrastructure for example, Salt Lake City, religious marketing, and medical tourism.

Targeted mediums of media for 2015 include TV, billboard, group specific, Pandora radio, magazine and print, and online. Total projected impressions: 13,414,735.

The creative brief/inspiration focus includes:

1. Dramatically Different – *the grandeur of Colorado’s Wine Country is dramatically different from anything else in Colorado. The Bookcliffs and arches of the Colorado National Monument provide breathtaking backdrop for high desert scenery, colorful sunsets, and beautiful vineyards.*
2. Bold Contrasts – *From the old-growth forests and lakes of Grand Mesa to the lunar landscapes of the Bookcliffs to the lush orchards and vineyards that line the Grand Valley, Colorado’s Wine Country is a land of seeming contradictions and wonderful surprises. Grand Junction is an experience created by the convergence of two great rivers, a dramatically different landscape and bold contrasts. It is the place where the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers come together, but also where the desert meets the mountains.*

The decision was made to evolve the logo. Examples of the new logo were shared with the board and staff.



The campaign theme for this year is that Grand Junction is dramatically different, incorporating the key insight: *You can find the great Colorado lifestyle at any destination in the state. But, with vibrant green vineyards nestled in a red desert valley, the grandeur of Colorado’s Wine Country is dramatically different from the rest of Colorado.*

Examples of the print, TV, radio, billboard, and online banner ads were shared with the board and staff.

For the next 3 -5 years, the campaign will evolve with the hopes of including more family-related content, new photos and videos, the airport, and increasing the sense of arrival (i.e. sign welcoming visitors to Colorado’s Wine Country).

Instead of focusing on marketing to retirees, the decision was made to market to the groups that we have more potential for (i.e. Female and couples markets ages 30 – 54). Retirees are already coming to Grand Junction, however, some ads such as Encompass will target that group.

Miles Media: Carrie Barker provided a summary of 2014 which was focused on asset and content development. Highlights include:

- Personalized content – customized content based on the location of the user
- 24 new articles
- Search engine optimization
- 10% increase for terms ranked on page one of a search result
- 15% increase for total organic keywords
- 31 terms yielded higher search results, including terms like: *“Fruita mountain biking”*, *“Colorado wineries”*, *“wineries in Colorado”*, *“wine country”*, and *“hiking in Colorado”*
- Improving the calendar function
- Mobile friendly Enewsletters – 40% of all 2014 emails were opened on a phone compared to 2013, open rates soared resulting in a 39% increase in email-driven website traffic.
- Received the 2014 Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association Adrian award - bronze for our welcome email program, competing against Disney, Las Vegas, etc.
- Received recognition from the Web Marketing Association 2015 Internet Advertising Competition for the best travel online newsletter campaign

Karin Mast provided an overview of the asset and content delivery for 2015. The website will be rebuilt to ensure we have the best digital tool to support future marketing needs and traveler expectations. She shared the proposed redesign, homepage, and things to do landing page for both mobile and desktop views.



They will review Google analytics, current best practices, current design trends, and GJVCB stakeholder needs when developing the redesign. The navigation structure will include expansion of niche audience sites such as weddings and groups. The visibility of the Events section will be improved and the lodging properties will continue to be given priority.

Search engine optimization will continue to be monitored and maintained, in addition to growing organic traffic. Enewsletters will target the top performing deployments from previous years and will include specialty one-off promotions. New audiences will be identified from organic traffic sources to build

content that matches with advertising campaigns. They will work closely with Hill Aevium to influence engagement beyond the click. Search engine marketing will target seasonal traffic in April through September and will ensure the information is easy to find on the first page.

For the next 3 – 5 years, technology will be based on constant connectivity with everything. According to research 90% of all media interactions are screen based. By 2018, it is expected that over 18 billion devices will be connected to the internet. This includes TV's, automobiles, kitchen appliances, wearables (i.e. watches), and even beauty mirrors. 90% of travelers take their smart phones with them on vacation to take photos and videos, share their experience through social media, and search for local activities.

The goal will be to connect to people with personalized content through online videos, search engine changes, and social media. Clickbait is a popular tactic that marketers are using to capture the attention of the consumer and drive them to their website through sensationalized headlines – aimed to provide just enough information to make the reader curious to click through the content.

State of the City Update: Rich Englehart, Grand Junction City Manager, shared with the board the policy direction for the City. The areas of emphasis for City Council and Community are public safety, infrastructure, and economic development. Growth in sales tax for 2015 is projected at 3%. The Council was engaged in balancing the capital fund in which some projects were put out until 2016 and some were moved back in. Using a series of options for both capital and operations, the Council had the opportunity to make final adjustments with the amounts delivered over and above the minimum reserves. The budget continues to carry forward work that has begun this year and will go throughout 2015 in order to maximize the Council's Economic Development Plan.

Rich gave an overview of the 2015 budget. The City's total spending budget for 2015 is \$143 million, which is a 4.4% increase from 2014. Some of the capital projects include the North Avenue Streetscape, Las Colonias Park Amphitheatre and first phase development, Leach Creek Flood Control Dam, and water and sewer systems.

Elizabeth Tice, Management and Legislative Liaison for the City of Grand Junction, share with the board the City's Economic Development (ED) Plan which was adopted by the Grand Junction City Council in May of 2014. Identified roles include assessing and reporting on our local economy; investments in infrastructure that fosters industry and commerce; keeping costs transparent, predictable and as low as possible to support existing business; and marketing the strengths of our community. Elizabeth said that tourism is part of this plan since what brings people here to visit can also bring them here to create businesses. Through a RFP process, the City solicited a professional marketing and branding expert to work with the Economic Development partners on brand development and a collaborative marketing plan. The goals include developing a cohesive budget that highlights and coordinates the strengths of all of the community assets; a marketing plan that coordinates our messaging and efforts, and focuses on our competitive advantages; and strategies for implementation and prioritized investments that allow all partners to make investments in economic development. The ED marketing team consists of representatives from the City and County, Chamber of Commerce, Business Incubator, Colorado Mesa University, and Grand Junction Economic Partnership. The ED team selected the marketing firm North Star, from Nashville, TN to assist in the development of the branding and economic development marketing plan and strategies.

She said that an area of weakness is broadband infrastructure and explained why increased data transfer rates are essential for businesses to operate. Currently the City is asking voters to restore municipal authority to improve broadband in the area.

She also explained details of the Commercial Catalyst Pilot Program for North Avenue which promotes revitalization. It includes a matching grant program up to \$10,000 to leverage private investment in commercial buildings. Elizabeth also covered the Foreign Trade Zone that the City is looking as a potential

economic development opportunity. This will benefit existing businesses with special customs treatment with duty deferral, duty elimination, and duty reduction.

Rich added that this ED plan is not a change from what the GJVCB has done. He further said that although he cannot elaborate or share right now, there are a few things on the horizon including how we look at supporting Two Rivers Convention Center, the Vendor's Fee, and lodging tax that he feels will free up some of the challenges the GJVCB has faced.

Brad thanked both Rich and Elizabeth for their presentations.

### **Doug Price – Economics Study Presentation**

Doug Price, President and CEO from the Colorado Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau, presented a destination marketing funding analysis based on a recent study of Colorado Springs, CO and the Pikes Peak Regions. They commissioned the analysis to develop new tourism as well as provide evidence of low tax rate throughout the area. The goal was to get local businesses on board then take it to elected officials to show why an increase in funding for destination marketing is needed. The study covered the impacts of destination marketing which includes building transport networks, attracting strategic events, raising the destination profile, and raising the quality of life. He shared recent US Census data which supports the fact that as more and more people traveled to the area, employment increased 9.8% in hospitality and tourism related jobs, while all other primary employment decreased 0.8%.

The annual economic impact of tourism in the Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak Regions is \$1.35 billion which equates to \$43 per second. Doug then shared the benefits of tourism dollars in the area including, road construction and maintenance, public safety, park maintenance, airport usage and service, and strong property values. Funding for the Colorado Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau (CSCVB) is from a lodging and automobile rental tax (LART), membership dues, advertising sales, and grants. 82% of the overall revenue is from the LART. The lodging tax is 2%. The rental car tax is 1% and is collected only in Colorado Springs. Many cities within the Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak regions are marketed by the CSCVB. The overall budget is \$3.36 million. Eight employees are in the group sales area alone with 4 employees in the marketing and public relations department.

The study addressed why tourism promotion is vital to the destination's economy and covered the optimal level of funding (including scenarios and mechanisms), and the expected outcomes of higher funding. They brought in the Director of Tourism Economics from Oxford Economics who addressed three key points from the study: 1) Pikes Peak should be marketed as a region; 2) The LART is too low which is equivalent to a discount for visitors; and 3) 1,400+ new jobs would be added if funding for marketing the area was increased. Other outcomes from increased funding include:

- increase in visitor spending
- increase in tourism-sector jobs
- increase for the general fund revenue
- increase in purchases at other local businesses
- lessen the tax burden for local households

Recent investments in tourism in the Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak areas have totaled \$640,700,000. Doug emphasized that the "If you build it, they will come" philosophy does not apply to the travel industry. Marketing is essential for sustained success. An increase in funding for destination marketing would be used for TV ads, print ads in national publications, marketing in the shoulder seasons, and expanding the international reach.

The study included stakeholder interviews to support the analysis. Next steps include industry and community conversations, plan development, public votes, and funding solutions, which will ultimately result in sustained vitality.

Doug facilitated a group exercise on how the board and staff members rate Grand Junction against competing destinations and determine the areas unique strengths. The destinations Grand Junction was compared with were Moab, Glenwood Springs, Durango, and Estes Park. All four groups determined that Grand Junction rated higher than these destinations based on the unique strengths of access, affordability, climate and Two Rivers Convention Center.

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### **Wednesday, April 8, 2015**

The board members shared their key points from the discussions of the previous day. These include:

- Getting the message out that Grand Junction is different from other destinations
- How we can increase ADR (average daily rate) and OCC % (occupancy)
- Findings from the group exercise show that there is a challenge with the image/perception of the area
- Similar to the Colorado Springs CVB, market the region/county – not just Grand Junction. It's time to work together with other tourism-related agencies (i.e. tourism boards, wineries, etc.).
- There is a need to educate community leaders that tourism is an important part of Economic Development. Tourism is people who visit here and then want to move here, which is economic development.
- If money was no option, build a state of the art visitor center that tells the history of Grand Junction and include Fruita and Palisade.
- Create hotel and tour packages, increasing rates each year

### Outreach

Brad mentioned that outreach to our regional marketing partners is needed to move forward. In addition, communication with elected officials is key to helping them understand the real value of tourism. The regional marketing partners and elected officials were identified and assignments were made on which board member(s) would meet with each of them. Brad set a deadline of 60 days to complete the outreach assignments and the board members were to report back at the June 9<sup>th</sup> board meeting. Additional outreach was identified and includes area legislators, City of Grand Junction administration staff members, Downtown Development Authority, the Grand Junction Regional Airport, and package opportunities with area attractions.

Per Nilsson suggested that each board member have a common message when explaining the value of tourism to their assigned individuals. The GJVCB marketing staff will create a toolkit that includes video snippets from our annual meeting video, talking points/fact sheet, and suggested social media posts on the GJVCB's website. The theme will be "Tourism Matters" and will roll out in conjunction with National Tourism Week. Staff will also encourage industry partners to participate in the campaign. A National Travel and Tourism Week Proclamation will be drafted and read at the May 6, 2015 regular Grand Junction City Council meeting.

### Medical Tourism

Debbie Kovalik mentioned that there is a great opportunity with medical tourism in our area. There is a new software program that tracks data on all procedures performed at hospitals and includes ratings of doctors as well as affordability levels. When people request information on a particular surgeon, the information is sent to them along with a link to a hotel reservation system that lists hotels in the area where the hospital is located, should they need to book lodging. The Aurora CVB has experienced much success with this since Aurora ranks in the top ten cities for healthcare. There is more to learn but this will be on our radar.

The retreat ended at 11:30 a.m.