

TOURISM RED DEER

SIX MONTH STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW – JULY 1, 2017

Tourism Red Deer is responsible for leading the community's tourism marketing and development. Our goal is to increase visitor spending across all industry sectors (lodging, food services, attractions, tours, events, retail and supporting services), resulting in sustainable economic growth and higher quality of life for our community. Below is a brief summary of the activities undertaken in the first six months of 2017.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY # 1 - TELL THE BRAND (RED DEER) STORY

- Invest in online marketing and growing social media interaction
- Invest in our media relations program with regular newsletters and hosted media visits
- Enhance visitor services to attend local events with our mobile booth
- Leverage partnership with Travel Alberta funding resources

Online Marketing

VisitRedDeer.com is the hub for all online marketing activity and our major marketing investment to meet our consumer and industry needs. We deliver an active social media strategy using sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram which are now predominant amongst all age groups as methods of networking, marketing and communication.

- Obtained Google grant for search marketing in May. This past month our traffic is up 20% compared to last year and up 46% compared to last month.
- 45,323 unique visitors year to date
- Social Media
 - 11,000 Facebook likes
 - 4,400 Twitter followers
- Average reach of 3,159 per post in 2017, compared to an average of 1,423 per post in 2016. On average, we received 133 engagements per post in 2017, compared to an average of 48 per post in 2016.
- Reach 2017 = 508,612 , 2016 = 263,253

Media Relations

Our objective is to increase media knowledge and awareness of our region, increase the number of articles in all forms produced by media as a quantitative measure of our success and to have this activity influence our social media and online programs.

Regular news releases and story ideas are sent to our growing database of writers. We invite writers to Bring The Story Alive and also respond to writers requests – from supplying content and images to hosting their travel. Stories this year were Foody Revolution, Everything New, Let's Do Lunch, Are We There Yet, Sports Central.

Hosted 6 writers so far this year

- 3 writers participated in winter activities and included Dinner Theatre at Black Knight Inn, Canyon Ski Resort , Skating at Bower Ponds and Heritage Ranch.
- 3 Food Writers including Tracy Hyatt from AMA - tweets, blog and 2 pages in Fall issue of West World magazine, upcoming issue in Globe and Mail and just recently hosted Julie Van Rosendaal a well known food blogger from Calgary , food editor on CBC Radio One, Parents Canada and contributing food editor for Western Living Magazine.
- Red Deer was featured on Expedia's Most Breathtaking Places list that generated a wonderful opportunity to be featured on Global and CTV in both Edmonton and Calgary along with the major newspapers in both markets.
- We also participate with Travel Alberta media writer's events in Edmonton and Calgary as well as attend the Canadian Travel Media Writers Association annual conference. After 3 years of inviting the Alberta branch to host their meeting in Red Deer – TMAC are planning their retreat here this winter!

Visitor Services

Tourism Red Deer operates a busy year round Visitor Information Centre located on Hwy 2

- Obtained \$5,000 VIC grant to redesign outside map to be installed in July
- Obtained \$10,000 VIC grant to implement a Visitor Survey
- Obtained \$3,500 summer student grant
- Applied to AB Transportation for building operational costs support during the highway construction - funding declined
- Visitor to the Centre down slightly by 1,342 for a six month total of 25,102
- Mobile booth at Let's Talk Red Deer in April and at Spring Showcase (Edmonton)

Visitor Experience Guides

- Produced the Summer Guide in a more convenient 4 x 9 size that reduced the advertising costs to partners by 32%
- New maps and mini maps have been produced that feature our attractions
- Partnered with the Red Deer Advocate – taking our guide content and repurposed for their Insider Guide that was distributed to every household in Red Deer on June 16th

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2 GROW THE DESTINATION EXPERIENCE

- Development of experiences and packages promoted through social media and online
- Support meeting and event acquisition through coordinated partner representation and site tours
- Implementation of key strategies from Central Alberta Destination Management Plan

New Experiences and packages

- 1,800 referrals year to date to partners thru stories and articles. Top recipients of referral clicks:
 - RedDeer Museum
 - The Vat
 - Heritage Ranch
 - The Hideout
 - Ross Street Patio
 - Waskasoo Park

- Created press release for new Artist workshop at Discovery Wildlife Park

Meetings and Event Support

We have a responsibility to assist meeting and event planners providing venue information, accommodation and other services to help facilitate successful meetings or events in Red Deer.

- Canadian Danish Museum – Welcome packages for National Conference
- Harley Davison Owners Group Rally – Welcome packages and assistance for weekend rally in July 2018
- Spousal programs for Potato Growers Association and Alberta Fire Chiefs
- Space selection for Provincial Marking Program that could see the Department of Education bring up to 700 markers to Red Deer over 5 times a year – starting in 2019
- Accommodations booking for Over 55 Hockey Tournament in 2018 – that will see over 28 teams from across the province play and stay in Red Deer. Tourism Red Deer will assist in both blocking and team placement for this small non profit organization.
- Support numerous smaller requests for conference packages, restaurant selection and small meeting space requests that are processed on a regular base.

Tourism Red Deer has submitted our recommendations and offer of assistance to the City to take forward an enhanced sports and event acquisition program and how the community can best work together in developing a plan that would build on the legacy of the Games that included:

- Recommendation #1: Establish a Sports Leadership Agency for Amateur Sport
- Recommendation #2: Develop selection criteria for Manufactured Events
- Recommendation # 3: Develop Events Locally
- Recommendation # 4: Development of a Sports and Events Tourism Strategy

Central Alberta Tourism Alliance

The Central Alberta Tourism Alliance is a collaborative group of 11 communities that came together to foster the growth of tourism and provide economic development in our region. Our goal is to build upon the Destination Management Plan created In 2015 with the Steering Committee continuing to meet monthly to implement the plans 10 key strategies and over 120 actionable recommendations.

- VisitCentralAlberta.com was launched to create a visual database / website that will start to position the regional story and help regional operators to connect
- Obtained a \$50,000 grant through CARES to complete an Accommodation Study that will examine both fixed and non fixed roof accommodation opportunities throughout Central Alberta. Expected to take 12 months to complete.
- Developed a regional customer service training program that launched this spring / summer providing Customer Service Workshops for supervisors and front line staff.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY # 3 LEAD A STRONG DESTINATION TEAM

- Assisting industry to increase skills and expertise through workshops and coaching
- Align with key industry sector groups through joint initiatives

Industry Training and Development

- Facilitated workshops in customer service for both front line staff and supervisors

- Expanded our Red Deer Experience Tours to focus on experiences and offered 5 separate tours covering Agr / Culinary, Family Fun, Arts & Culture, and expanded to include the West Country and a Central Alberta Regional Tour. 55 industry partners participated.
- Hosted social media strategy and media relations workshops
- Celebrated the successes of our industry through the Red Deer Experience Awards which recognized individuals and businesses that have provided an outstanding experience at an outdoor luncheon. Approx 150 nominations received.
- Facilitated formation of Women in Tourism – networking program

Community / Industry Initiatives

- Kerry Wood Nature Centre – active on Board of Directors
- Centrefest – active on Board of Directors
- Forth Junction Rail Society – provided input and support for funding applications
- Hotels Red Deer – prepared for audit and trustee transition
- Norwegian Laft House – presentation at AGM
- Central Alberta Regional Trails (CART)
- Central Alberta Golf Consortium – provided application for TA cooperative funding
- Provided tourism orientation to new marketing staff at Westerner and Holiday Inn

STRATEGIC PRIORITY # 4 – BUILD A VIABLE ORGANIZATION

- Strengthen communications with regular updates and bulletins
- Raise tourism identity and advocacy voice within the community
- **Board Activity**
- Redesigned Bylaws and submitted to Alberta Societies
- Hosted AGM and networking wine and cheese
- Hosted hotel sector discussion

The actions that we taken over the past 6 months include more regular communication with our industry partners and include planned sector conversations with the Board of Directors and industry partners.