



TOURISM FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Created: January 2018
Revised: April 2018

The Purpose

The Tourism Advisory Commission completed a developmental work session to evaluate the current standing strategic plan. Completed by the Tourism Advisory Commission, Sports and Tourism Department, with facilitation from Bailey Strategic Innovation Group, the work session enabled the Tourism Advisory Commission to identify both internal and external influences affecting the current strategy in place.

This process served as a precursor to the strategic plan and offered insight into the vision, such as exploring new initiatives, making decisions about new policies, identifying possible areas for change, or refining and redirecting efforts. The work session is a reflection of time spent at events, communications with visitors, residents and stakeholders, goals for upcoming years, and weaknesses identified as opportunities for growth and change.

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Tourism Strategic Plan

Tourism is one of Arizona's largest export industries. 43 million domestic and international overnight visitors chose to experience Arizona in 2016. These visitors generated over \$21 billion in spending. That breaks down to an estimated \$58 million dollars a day or \$40,000 every minute.

Visitor spending in Arizona led to \$3 billion dollars in tax revenue. These taxes reduce the annual tax burden for every Arizona household by almost \$1,200. Tax dollars generated by visitation in Arizona go directly to essential services for residents such as public safety, health services and education.

The City of Surprise has positioned itself to participate in this important economic driver with the creation of the new Department of Sports and Tourism and the continuing growth of the Tourism Advisory Commission.

Additional commitments within the community include Major League Baseball Spring Training, the Tennis and Racquet Complex, and many other facilities within our area.

With the creation of the second iteration of the Tourism Five Year Strategic Plan – 2018-2023, it will continue to provide guidance and direction for future efforts and funds aimed to increase tourism related spending within the City of Surprise, as well as measurements of its success.

With a renewed emphasis on tourism and a focus on the business development strategy needed to succeed in the highly competitive marketplace, the City of Surprise has identified key objectives:

- Increase total tourism related revenue
- Increase total number of room nights / length of stay
- Increase destination awareness

The City of Surprise also recognizes that what is attractive to tourists can also be a benefit to residents, thus providing a quality of life and business development component to the strategy.

Formation of the Strategic Plan

This is the second strategic plan for the City of Surprise Tourism Commission since the group was established in Spring 2009, and with the recent creation of the new Sports & Tourism Department in conjunction with the completion of the first strategic plan, the committee identified the opportunity to evaluate the outcomes of the “Tourism Five Year Strategic Plan” and begin laying the ground work for next steps in the development of becoming a more robust tourism destination.

The planning process began with the review of the previous plan’s various initiatives, challenges and goals and a new discovery and collaboration session. The four new focus areas were identified by reviewing the previous strategic plan and establishing the areas of critical growth needed for the City of Surprise to continue to expand into a year round tourism destination.

The steps of creating the strategic plan

1. Evaluate the current strategic plan and analysis
2. Identify the Focus Areas
 - a. Outlining the top priorities for each focus area.
3. Define the Focus Areas
 - a. Within the definitions identifying the key stakeholders and beneficiaries.
4. Create goals for each Focus Area
 - a. Identifying activities and action plans that would drive success for each focus area.

The City of Surprise Tourism Advisory Commission

Statement of Purpose

With the consistent growth of the City of Surprise, the Tourism Advisory Commission will increase prospective awareness of Surprise tourism and enhance the quality of life for residents through increased tourism based development and partnership opportunities, showcasing Surprise as an intentional tourist destination.

Focus Areas

Through a process of discovery and collaboration, the Tourism Advisory Commission identified 4 key focus areas for this strategic plan.

Events & Entertainment Marketing Partnership & Facility Development Funding

Focus Area 1: Events & Entertainment

Definition

Events are special activities (sporting events, tournaments, festivals, arts & culture events etc.) that attract visitors from outside the city limits and support the economic vitality of the community. Utilize existing facilities to enhance entertainment opportunities within the City of Surprise.

Goals:

- 1.1 Utilize the Tourism Fund to partner with an event management contractor to create an annual magnet event to attract tourist attendance in excess over 10% each year.

Action Items:

- a. Create an RFP process to attract professional event partners to hold events in Surprise.
 - i. Identify guidelines and criteria for the RFP.
 - ii. Establish a budget amount that can be used from the Tourism Fund to attract a magnet event each year.
 - iii. Establish a marketing budget to promote the RFP opportunity.

- 1.2 Create and update infrastructure for outside/third party events in order to add three new event/entertainment opportunities to build and promote year-round tourism activity.

Action Items:

- b. Update the current Tourism Fund application for third party events.
- c. Update current Sports & Tourism facility use fee structure and streamline facility use agreement process.
 - i. Work with PD/Fire to establish guidelines.
 - ii. Work with Finance and Council to update fees for tourism events.
 - iii. Develop an approved vendor list to help the third parties be successful (security companies, tenting/stage, etc.).
 - iv. Work with current and new hotel properties as well as local businesses to create competitive bid packages for events.
- d. Create an evaluation process for third party event bids and funding requests

1.3 Increase overall attendance to spring training, current sports tournaments and events by 5% each year.

Action Items:

- e. Develop master tracking system to accurately account for tourism related event participation and attendance.
- f. Develop specific event based strategies to increase attendance.
- g. Develop funding priorities to help increase exposure of current events.

1.4 Increase tourism related room nights by 5% each year.

Action Items:

- h. Work with hotel partners to develop a tracking mechanism for tourism related hotel stays.
 - i. Create statistical reporting standards and requirements for hotels to report impacts from tourism related efforts.
- i. Evaluate current facility capacity between Sports & Tourism, CRS, Rangers/Royals and OUAZ.
- j. Look at ways to improve and enhance current facilities to increase event and entertainment opportunities.
- k. Develop a tourism survey strategy for all event participants, visitors and spectators designed to find ways to extend their average stay in Surprise.

Focus Area 2: Marketing

Definition

Strategically market Surprise as an intentional sports and tourist destination.

Goals:

2.1 Achieve / become recognizable nationally through one or more destination publications by 2020.

Action Items:

- a. Research publications and apply for tourism related awards and recognition.

2.2 Assist to increase the departments advertising/marketing reach by 20% by 2021.

Action Items:

- b. Provide resources to expand the departments marketing reach.
- c. Assist in the implementation of the departments marketing plan.

2.3 Increase strategic collaboration with key partners to expand our ability to identify and target demographics for tourism.

2.4 Identify possible other partners within the city (businesses, professional groups, etc) to invest in the board activities to assist in tourism board reach.

2.5 Assist in the acquisition of data to provide information for informed decision making for marketing and advertising.

Action Items:

- d. Work with other cities/partners/boards to establish what markets we want to advertise to (geographical, special interest, partner connections, etc.).
- e. Pool resources with partners for marketing research.

- 2.6 Create and expand Tourism Brand and assets by 50% to attract target tourism demographics by 2020
Action Items:
- f. Support branding, advertising, and marketing materials to expand exposure of tourism assets in Surprise in line with the marketing strategy of the department of Sports and Tourism.
 - g. Assist in maximizing multimedia channels to position the Surprise tourism story and value proposition to expose prospective tourists and event planners to our marketing messages.
 - h. Assist in creating, identifying, and supporting marketing leads to help position a national consistent tourism brand.
- 2.7 Develop a comprehensive tourism advertising and communications plan to promote tourism board events and initiatives.
Action Items:
- i. Create an annual tourism board event and activity calendar.
 - j. Produce an annual marketing plan based on board initiatives, goals, and event plans.
- 2.8 Create benchmarks, measurements, and criteria for tourism board resource allocation.
Action Items:
- k. Create an evaluation mechanism for tourism board fund spending, DMO approval, projects, and time and resource allocation.
 - l. Align evaluation mechanism with tourism board goals and initiatives.

Focus Area 3: Partnership & Facility Development

Definition

Cultivate partnerships that enhance tourism events and/or lead to the development of permanent facilities or destination attractions that will increase visitors, room nights and enhance quality of life for Surprise residents.

Goals:

- 3.1 Assist in the planning/strategy execution to establish public-private partnerships to develop two new permanent facilities/attractions by 2023.
Action Items:
- a. Continue to work with our current partners to find creative ways to utilize/expand facilities and enhance tourism.
 - i. Texas Rangers and Kansas City Royals
 - ii. Ottawa University
 - iii. Dysart Unified School District
 - iv. United States Tennis Association
 - b. Work with land owners and developers to support tourism and entertainment development in Surprise.
 - c. Identify and attend sports and/or tourism related trade shows and conferences to establish best practices for the Tourism Board.
- 3.2 Work with the Economic Development department to attract a resort to Surprise by 2023.
Action Items:
- d. Provide potential resources to fund a resort feasibility study.
 - e. Assist in researching resort groups and target partners that would potentially locate to Surprise.

Focus Area 4: Funding

Definition

Maximize the current Tourism Funds to enhance or add tourism driven events and opportunities. Develop new creative revenue sources for future planning, enabling Surprise to grow as a future tourist destination.

Goals:

4.1 Strategically utilize a minimum of 50% of the Tourism Fund each year.

Action Items:

- a. Create guidelines and criteria for using Tourism Fund annually:
 - i. Events
 - ii. Marketing
 - iii. Studies

4.2 Double Tourism Fund operating budget by 2023.

Action Items:

- b. Increase operating budget by increasing hotel nights/transient lodging tax.
 - i. Assist in the development of partnerships to entice event/tournament participants and fans to increase their average hotel stays.
 - ii. Work with local/regional partners to market tourism amenities in the area.
- c. Research and initiate other possible sources for creating revenue for Tourism in Surprise.
 - i. Grants: Private and Public grant processes
 - ii. Philanthropic Opportunities
- d. Develop entrepreneurial strategies to generate additional revenue.