

## VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY ACTION PLAN



VISIT CEDAR CITY · BRIAN HEAD

2019-2030

## Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan

The purpose of this document is to introduce and describe the VISIT CEDAR CITY ·BRIAN HEAD Initiatives to improve the visitor economy of Iron County. These initiatives will be implemented and executed over the next 5-10 years.

The term ‘visitor economy’ refers to the production of goods and services for consumption by visitors, which includes the industries that directly serve visitors, such as hotels, transport providers, tour companies and attractions, as well as intermediaries and those involved indirectly, such as retail and food production. This recognizes that visitor activity does not occur in isolation and contributes to investment and jobs across a range of industry sectors.

Our vision and goal is that Iron County will have a diverse range of outstanding experiences that attracts more visitors and increases jobs and investment in the county.

### What success looks like

	2017	2030
Visitor Spending	\$112,000,000	\$179,000,000
Employment	2,372 jobs	3,800

### Priorities

#### Strategy at a Glance

- More Private Sector Investment
- Product Development featuring Iron County’s unique qualities and experiences
- Improved Branding & Marketing
- Better Tourism Infrastructure
- Broader Transportation Opportunities
- Skilled and Capable Industry
- Effective Coordination
- Sustainable Future

## Private Sector Development-Improved offerings

The Tourism Bureau will work in concert with the local community and private investors to encourage the development of visitor attractions, retail and accommodations to deliver quality visitor experiences.

- ❖ Create a cooperative effort between Economic Development and local Chambers of Commerce to improve the retail market and encourage more boutique retail in pedestrian friendly areas by supporting retail studies, educational conferences, and development initiatives.
- ❖ Provide potential and existing owners with marketing ideas and invest in sound, updated demographic information (Roger Brooks International Consulting/Secret Shopping, VISA Vue, Smith Travel Report, Arts & Economic Prosperity Study)
- ❖ Develop a business portal on VisitCedarCity.com website that provides local businesses with resources to improve their “visitor experience” including updated demographic info, travel trends, best practices, city ordinances, etc.
- ❖ Encourage and support plans to improve community core village and downtown areas in Brian Head, Cedar City and Parowan.

## Product Development featuring Iron County’s Unique Qualities and Experiences

### Arts and Culture

Leveraging the county’s \$4.75 million dollar investment in the Beverly Center for the Arts and the Cedar City Heritage Center, the Iron County Arts and Cultural Initiative is to provide communities opportunities to strengthen their arts and cultural assets and utilize their full potential as a visitor attraction.

- ❖ Complete arts and culture assessment of Iron County (Cedar City Arts Council, NACo Placemaking) and create marketing opportunities to promote these assets (Art tours, public art, events, etc.)
- ❖ Partner with Frontier Homestead, SUMA, Heritage Center and local galleries to offer local and regional artists an outlet for their work
- ❖ Support the NACo Placemaking Plan for the Center Street Cultural Corridor. Assist in finding resources and funding.
- ❖ Encourage a friendly and supportive business environment for the arts as an economic engine.
- ❖ Create an arts and culture grant program utilizing TRT and Restaurant Tax revenues.
- ❖ Encourage the development of the Beverley Center of the Arts to become a year-round programmable space. Assist in finding resources and funding.
- ❖ Support the annual Arts & Economic Prosperity Study.

### Dark Skies

Dark skies are a natural resource that is rapidly disappearing from the nighttime landscape all over the earth. Cedar Breaks National Monument’s International Dark Sky designation creates another unique tourism opportunity for Iron County. The Dark Sky initiative strives to make Iron County a dark sky destination.

- ❖ Promote Iron County as destination for those seeking night sky viewing opportunities.
- ❖ Create a night sky program/experience that can be utilized 365 days of the year so visitors don't have to depend upon the observatory or star party to enjoy our dark skies. ( make it a full time attraction)
- ❖ Identify inefficient lighting on County Visitor Center, and update as needed to become an example of a "Dark Sky" sensitive building. Become Dark Sky compliant
- ❖ Encourage local municipalities to utilize dark sky principles in city codes and ordinances and provide resources to the communities.
- ❖ Partner with Southern Utah University's observatory and Cedar Breaks/Brian Head Star Parties to preserve and promote dark sky opportunities and assist in moving observatory to close proximity of Cedar Breaks.

### **Off-Season Development**

The Tourism Bureau will build partnerships with public and private entities such as Cedar City Corporation, Parowan, Brian Head (through their event coordinators), Chambers of Commerce/Downtown Committees, Service Clubs Frontier Homestead State Park, the Utah Shakespeare Festival, Southwest Wildlife Foundation and Cedar Breaks National Monument to create more off-season events, races and attractions with an particular emphasis on creating and recruiting offerings for the months of November, December, January and February.

- ❖ Encourage the development of the Beverley Center of the Arts as a year-round programmable space, including extending the seasons for the Utah Shakespeare Festival. Assist in finding resources and funding.
- ❖ Encourage local service clubs, chambers of commerce and downtown committees to each develop an off-season event. Provide resources and funding through the Iron County Co-op Marketing Fund and the Iron County Restaurant Tax Fund.
- ❖ Assist Cedar Breaks in the construction of new Visitor /Educational Center so at least a portion of Cedar Breaks is open year-round for visitation, recreation and events.
- ❖ Tourism Bureau will be responsible for the development of one off-season event that utilizes many of the unique city amenities and services(TBD-Fire & Ice Festival )

### **History, Heritage and Community Character**

The Heritage and History Initiative provides a flexible framework that puts the traditional assets of our communities, such as unique architecture and local/artisan producers, to work as a catalyst for economic growth and community pride.

- ❖ Partner with communities to preserve each communities unique characteristics through designated historic districts, historic preservation programs, local, state and national historic status designations.
- ❖ Encourage city design guidelines that protect and celebrate community history, particularly the architecture style popular of Cedar City's heyday of being the "Gateway to the Parks" when the Utah Parks Company was in full operation ( circa 1920's to 1950's) often referred to as *PARKitecture*
- ❖ Utilize promotional opportunities to tell Iron County's unique story through self-guided tours, maps, apps and artificial intelligence (AI).
- ❖ Develop and promote historical, farm, and artisan tours
- ❖ Support local farms, artisans and craft makers in developing Iron County specific products and promoting them in Tourism marketing materials, gift shops and Utah's Own.

- ❖ Partner with Frontier Homestead State Park to cross-promote historic services and opportunities.
- ❖ Promote signature heritage events through the Iron County Co-op Marketing Fund, elevate their presence in all marketing materials and campaigns: Livestock Festival, Paiute Restoration POW Wow, Iron County Fair and Iron Mission Days

### **National Park Connection**

This initiative seeks to elevate Cedar City's designation as the "Gateway to the Parks" to being the community that truly connects national park visitors to Zion, Bryce, Grand Canyon, Cedar Breaks, Escalante Canyons and Great Basin due to our central location, access to transportation options and community character.

- ❖ Rather than promote Cedar City as a pass through or gateway to the parks(as the Gateway to the Parks slogan implies), our branding and messaging will concentrate on how we are the most "centrally located" community or the "heart of six national parks and monuments".
- ❖ Encourage city to protect and celebrate community character through historic districts, neighborhoods and to provide style guidelines with an emphasis on the architecture styles popular of Cedar City's "Gateway to the Parks" era when the Utah Parks Company was in full operation ( circa 1920's to 1950's). Often referred to as *Parkitecture- combining native wood and stone with 'native' styles to create visually appealing structures that fit naturally within the majestic landscapes.* Iron County Visitor Center, City Airport, Rock Church, Main Street Park(fence), and the Cemetery incorporate this style. Many historic homes also utilize the PArkitecture
- ❖ Protect visual resources (Red Hill) to ensure that our community's traditional landscape remains a valuable civic and economic resource
- ❖ Create a transportation hub in Cedar City for national park visitors to utilize. Tie into Zion Park Corridor Bus program starting in St George to main Zion.
- ❖ Assist Cedar City in elevating CATS to a regional transportation program linking with Parowan, Brian Head and the National Parks.

## **Better Tourism Infrastructure**

### **Signage & Wayfinding**

The wayfinding initiative is to provide vibrant, artistic, clearly branded signage along the streets of Cedar City, Parowan and Brian Head to better guide motorists and pedestrians to key attractions and services in an effort to entice longer stays and repeat visits.

- ❖ Develop a unified system of wayfinding signage, information kiosks and interpretive signs in concert with the individual cities and UDOT to direct visitors around town and remove outdated signs (sign plan)
- ❖ Highlight attractions, trails and points of interest
- ❖ Identify each City's brand on the signage.
- ❖ Develop interpretive areas
- ❖ Find sources of funding.

### **Outdoor Recreation & Trail Development**

Under the Recreation Initiative, programs will be developed to bring together a wide spectrum of recreation interests and highlight Iron County's best recreational assets, with a particular investment in the mountain bike, hiking, cycling, OHV, and the snow sports sectors.

- ❖ Work with Iron County Natural Resources to create an overall outdoor recreation plan

- ❖ Collaborate with Cedar City, Parowan and Brian Head, BLM, National Park Service and Dixie National Forest to encourage, facilitate and provide county resources when applicable for new trail development ( motorized and non-motorized).
- ❖ Promote outdoor recreation and sporting opportunities in Iron County through promotion efforts and community outreach.
- ❖ Encourage the construction of trail systems within the county with particular attention on connection trails as a priority.
- ❖ Assist when possible in building recreation infrastructure through the Iron County Restaurant Tax Fund.

### **Meetings, Conventions, Trade Shows**

Demands on current meeting space are increasing and the need for larger, programmable space is becoming more of a reality. The purpose of the meetings and conventions initiative is for Iron County to take a lead role in the expansion and development of meetings and conventions within the county.

- ❖ Assist Brian Head in the development of an indoor event center.
- ❖ Acquire a land parcel for a future Cedar City conference center that is ideal for holding meetings/conventions/events up to 1,200 people that is centrally located to lodging and dining.
- ❖ Execute a funding plan for conference center through TRT, Restaurant Tax, CIB Bonds, and naming rights (possible public/private partnership). Set aside \$500,000 long-term O & M budget requirement.
- ❖ Complete construction by 2025 coordinators, service contracts and sales team in place.

## **Broader Transportation Opportunities**

As the Millennial generation and beyond no longer drives, it's imperative to create alternative transportation options to adapt to the new generation of travelers. Investments need to accommodate public transportation systems, active transportation (non-motorized) and the advancement of autonomous vehicles.

- ❖ Create a transportation hub in Cedar City for national park visitors to utilize. Tie into Zion Park Corridor Bus program starting in St George to main Zion Canyon.
- ❖ Encourage high speed rail between Salt Lake City and Las Vegas with a tie into Cedar City.
- ❖ Assist Cedar City in elevating CATS to a regional transportation program linking with Parowan, Brian Head and the National Parks.
- ❖ Encourage communities to adapt an alternative transportation plan with pedestrian friendly infrastructure, paved trails, bike lanes and bike share programs.

## **Skilled & Capable Industry**

### **Hospitality Initiative**

The Hospitality initiative addresses a broad range of issues critical to the success of the lodging and hospitality industry by creating a unified customer service approach.

- ❖ Develop and execute a customer centric service plan with industry partners
- ❖ Update "Service Elevated" Customer Service program. Aim for a high percentage of Iron County businesses to be certified in the program.
- ❖ Recognize and provide incentives to businesses to be certified in Service Elevated.
- ❖ Organize familiarization workshops and tours for hospitality staff to promote area attractions and businesses.



## **Educated Workforce**

To facilitate better training opportunities and career pathways for workers, and businesses to have the skills and capabilities they need to succeed in a more globally competitive environment. Address employee gaps and shortages.

- ❖ Work with Southern Utah University and South West Technical College to ensure training and curriculum meet the specialized needs of the visitor economy.
- ❖ Continue to support training across the hospitality sectors utilizing resources such as “Custom Fit”
- ❖ Work with the industry to promote leadership, including professional development and networking opportunities.
- ❖ Engage Utah Tourism Industry Association in advancing their HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM CAREER FIELD pathway curriculum in Utah High Schools.

## **Effective Coordination**

### **Event Communication**

This initiative seeks to improve communication between the Visit Cedar City-Brian Head, business owners and community partners to better prepare for an influx in visitors during peak times and special events.

- ❖ Update our contact management with a CRM system (Customer Retention Management)
- ❖ Develop a comprehensive approach to marketing all of Iron County’s events utilizing CRM tools.
- ❖ Ensure we have updated and complete contact info for all Iron County lodging properties, restaurants, guides and outfitters, event coordinators and other tourism related businesses.
- ❖ Provide media distribution list for events and “best practice” template to assist event organizers to maximize their PR efforts and get more media coverage and can accomplish outreach with tourism partners
- ❖ Encourage the use of VisitCedar City.com Event Calendar as the main information resource for events in Iron County. Request cities and chambers to direct inquiries to our calendar.
- ❖ Include past occupancy information in our weekly “What’s Happening” email to help restaurants prepare for influx of visitors.

## **Improved Branding & Marketing**

The Cedar City Brian Head Tourism Bureau plays a critical role in driving promotion of the county as a leading visitor and events destination in Utah. We will develop best practices for digital and media management, research driven marketing, cooperative industry programs and strategic partnerships with key stakeholders. While there will be strong focus on new, emerging markets, the significance of traditional markets will continue to be recognized.

- ❖ Solidify Visit Cedar City-Brian Head brand identity and launch in 2019. Ensure that all marketing adheres to style guide and that co-operative promotions clearly recognize Visit Cedar City-Brian Head and utilize the correct logo and slogan.

- ❖ Provide promotional resources and funding through the Iron County Co-op Marketing Fund and the Iron County Restaurant Tax Fund.
- ❖ Continue to work with the Utah Office of Tourism on co-op opportunities through their cooperative marketing grant program, Red Emerald® destination development cafeteria program and media relations and outreach program.
- ❖ Develop a business portal on VisitCedarCity.com website that provides tourism partners and businesses with resources to improve their “visitor experience” including updated demographic info, travel trends, best practices, city ordinances, etc.
- ❖ Continue to invest in sound tracking data to ensure there is a notable return on investment for all campaigns and marketing (VISA Vue, Smith Travel Report, Arts & Economic Prosperity Study).

## Sustainable Future

### Ecotourism Initiative

Ecotourism is a form of tourism that appeals to ecologically and socially conscious individuals. It is often associated with experiences focused on volunteering, personal growth, and nature-based education; typically involving travel to destinations where flora, fauna, natural scenery and cultural heritage are the primary attractions.

- ❖ Review energy efficiency of visitor centers and county public buildings. Encourage energy efficiency programs (become the example) and utilize private partnerships with solar energy farms located in the region.
- ❖ Improve and promote public transportation to visitors
- ❖ Support and encourage water conservation & preservation efforts
- ❖ Promote sustainable agriculture and locally produced foods through support of Iron County Farmer’s Markets and Farm tours
- ❖ Encourage renewable energy sources with Tourism partners; create private partnerships with Solar Energy producers in the region.
- ❖ Create sustainable waste management & recycling programs with County Landfill
- ❖ Cultivate partnerships and action plans that protect natural resources from “over-tourism” to safeguard the visitor experience so it can be enjoyed by future generations. Kanarra Falls is an example of a successful collaboration and should be continued. Other areas of concern-Thunderbird Gardens, Spring Creek, Yankee Meadow, & Parowan Gap.

### Red Emerald® Initiative

The Red Emerald Initiative is a program developed by the Utah Office of Tourism in an effort to prioritize promotional and product development efforts toward creating Utah travel experiences that are rarified, distinctive, unique to Utah and highly coveted. The principles in the Utah Tourism Red Emerald initiative focus on attracting quality visitors, who stay longer, spend more and engage more deeply with the local community, distributing traveler visitation throughout Utah and encouraging a community-led vision for tourism development.

- ❖ Adopt the Red Emerald® Initiatives in Iron County particularly “Prioritize Quality over Quantity of Visitors”
- ❖ Continue collaboration efforts with Parks 100 group in marketing and communication plans to distribute visitors throughout the region.