



Sitka, Alaska

Brand Blueprint Manual



City & Borough of Sitka

Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce – Visit Sitka

– September, 2016



PREFACE

This Brand Blueprint Manual was developed through a collaborative process between Great Destination Strategies, LLC (GDS) and the Sitka Convention & Visitors Bureau (SCVB) and the Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce – Visit Sitka. We would like to thank the Sitka volunteers who devoted many hours to the process of making this plan a reality by participating on the Brand Committee, as well as the many business and property owners and residents who contributed their time, valuable ideas, resources, and feedback.

The recommendations made in this Plan are based on the information provided to GDS by many caring and concerned citizens, research, best practices in other locations, and the findings of previous plans and studies, as well as our experience and expertise in the field.

The effectiveness of this Branding Plan is dependent upon many factors, including time, effort, funding availability, and cooperation of those involved in its implementation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Brand Blueprint

This document describes in detail the City of Sitka “Where Art Meets Wild Alaska” brand, and describes the elements of the brand, how the brand should be managed and developed, ways in which it can be incorporated into the fabric of the community’s products and services, and how it should be communicated to specific target markets.

Who Should Use This Blueprint

This document serves as a strategic guide for the Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce – Visit Sitka, City Council and senior managers. It should be consulted when making decisions about public policy that may affect the important visitor industry, and when deciding upon new public and private developments. The Blueprint also serves as a tactical guide for the Chamber’s brand manager, and for the private sector stakeholders who will implement and develop the brand over time. Finally, this document serves as an educational resource for communicating the importance of the brand to the citizens of Sitka, and interested stakeholders.

How the Brand Blueprint is Organized

The strategy and guidelines in this manual provide the framework to consistently and accurately project Sitka’s greatest strengths, establish a clear and meaningful image, and deliver rewarding experiences for its customers. It sets the direction for the City of Sitka to be presented to residents, visitors, and other internal and external stakeholders using one look, one voice and engaging common themes, images and words. The Sitka Brand Blueprint is presented in seven sections. Each is designed to build upon and reinforce previous sections as follows:

Section 1. – An introduction to the concept of destination branding and why it is important.

Section 2. – An outline of the brand strategy and platform, describing Sitka’s Destination Promise as well as the benefits, personality, attributes, and values that sustain its special sense of place.

Section 3. – A description of how to express the brand in visual, written and verbal terms.

Section 4. – An outline how Sitka and partners should adopt, use and implement the strategy and its various elements.

Section 5. – Details the leadership and management actions necessary to activate and sustain the brand.

Section 6. – Provides a checklist of the important actions necessary to consistently orchestrate on brand experiences and delight customers.

Section 7. – Monitoring and Evaluation

Recommendations – Specific projects to be undertaken in support of the brand.



Why the Sitka Brand is Important

Billions of dollars each year are spent marketing communities for economic, residential, business and tourism development. Yet 97% of that marketing is ineffective. Why? People are exposed to 5,000 marketing messages a day – far more than the mind can absorb – so they automatically filter out generic marketing messages and those that don't cater to their individual needs or desires. The days of being “all things to all people” are over. To be successful – in business or as a community – you must differentiate yourself from everyone else. After all, there are 151 cities in Alaska and every single one is instantly accessible via the web. To draw more visitors you must find that one unique selling proposition that really sets you apart from other destinations and then build on that as a foundation. This is the art of branding.

In this new reality of shrinking federal and state funding for communities, each city must think and act like a business: Find new ways to import more cash than is exported when locally earned money is spent elsewhere. Communities have been forced to get into the branding game to be successful. Find your niche, create new business opportunities within that niche, and then promote it like crazy.

A Sitka Brand is important to the City for the following reasons:

- Provides Sitka with a fresh point of reference for identifying itself in the marketplace.
- Enables Sitka to formalize its competitive identity within the context of a brand.
- Gives Sitka a clear vision and messaging to convey to visitors, businesses and investors, and residents.
- Provides a unifying, distinctive, focused and consistent *Destination Promise™* that attracts visitors and businesses to the city:
 - Visitors/tourists need to know why Sitka is unique and worth the trip.
 - Business needs to attract skilled labor and investment dollars.
 - Residents want to tell the world of their love and pride of home.
- Brand familiarity is linked to favorability.
- Brand strength is linked to increased consumption.
- Brand knowledge reduces consumer risk and aids decision-making and preferences.

The most important criteria for a successful community brand is to consistently deliver on the *Destination Promise™*. Destinations that provide what their brand implies are successful because the brand is perceived as truthful. The closer the consumer's personal Sitka experience is to what the brand message states, the stronger the brand.

Building a strong Sitka brand will provide Sitka:

- A compelling identity and persona
- Greater synergy among the communications of all Sitka messengers
- Greater awareness, respect and relevance
- A decision-making framework for customers and clearer differentiation from other communities
- A stronger connection with residents, customers and partners
- A unifying umbrella for marketing partners and Sitka based brands
- Economic and social value for Sitka as the brand creates loyalty and purchasing preferences

The Sitka Brand Blueprint provides that framework and guidelines that, when fully implemented, will lead to greater marketing efficiencies and impacts.

Critical success factors for a destination brand

If a destination doesn't establish its own brand, it's likely that competitors and the media will establish one for it. The destinations that are most successful in developing and managing their brands are those that take control of their brand message, and understand and adhere to a set of critical success principles. These include:

1. **Build the brand from the inside out.** The success of the Sitka brand begins with messengers, stakeholders and other brands and assets located here. The commitment of political, business, non-profit and community leaders will be critical.
2. **Create a symphony.** One of the most important keys to success in branding is sticking to the guidelines and maintaining consistency in all creative applications. Winning customer's hearts and minds takes an integrated, consistent and holistic approach over an extended period of time, using a wide range of communication channels and customer touch points.
3. **Achieve lots of little victories, again and again.** A brand is the result of hundreds and hundreds of influences. It is the long-term accumulation of positive messages and experiences that counts. True success will come from consistent, unified messages and experiences emanating from a range of sources hitting their mark again and again.
4. **Influence the influencers.** There have been many influences on the Sitka image that have been largely out of anyone's control. It is important for all messengers to eliminate dissonance, address misperceptions and correct misinformation, particularly misuse of the Sitka brand.
5. **Invest time.** It takes more than an ad campaign or one big hit approach. Just as Sitka's current image may have evolved over many years, attempting to re-position or clarify that image will not happen overnight.
6. **Deliver on the Promise.** Innovatively interpreting and delivering Sitka's Destination Promise™ is essential to establishing meaningful and sustainable links between the community and the hearts and minds of its best customers.
7. **Make emotional connections.** Emotions drive most, if not all buying decisions. Successful brands have a distinct personality, project strong emotional benefits and connect with customers on an emotional level.
8. **Understand that the budget must match the objectives.** A weak brand is far more expensive in the long run than the resources required to launch and maintain a strong brand. It is important for the community to work cooperatively, prioritize and act strategically to achieve goals.
9. **Orchestrate outstanding experiences.** Destinations are experiential and successfully placed brands constantly align the delivery of their core experience themes in ways that exceed the expectations of their customers.

2. THE SITKA BRAND PLATFORM

The Sitka brand summarizes the Sitka experience through the phrase, "Where Art Meets Wild Alaska." This captures Sitka's distinctive visitor offering and the spirit of Sitka from its customer's perspective. This will guide all messages and product development initiatives. The brand encapsulates the emotional accessibility, fun, relaxation and personal rewards visitors can find in Sitka.

Sitka is one of many Southeast Alaska port communities that attract thousands of vacationers from all regions of the United States and around the World. The competitive advantage of Sitka is its small town atmosphere and authentic experience prized by frequent travelers. The real town that exists year round enhances this proposition, with wide expanses of open ocean and wilderness spaces, the safe, slow-paced friendly environment and uncluttered by rows of seasonal tourist shops.

- From fishing, kayaking, boating and other water activities, to the personal rewards of wildlife viewing, nature walking, and music festivals – a week in Sitka brings enriching experiences.
- Visitors depart feeling relaxed and rejuvenated by the positive and rewarding experiences that are readily available in Sitka.
- This happens because the Sitka community cherishes its traditional way of life and the experiences it offers delight the senses through engaging, wholesome and fun escapes.

The brand development process

Over a nine-month period, the Sitka CVB, Visit Sitka and the Brand Committee spearheaded the area's branding efforts. This culminated in a May, 2015 presentation of the Sitka Brand Promise, Brand Direction, new logo and tagline when the Brand Committee solidified the direction, key marketing messages, and supporting product that will make Sitka one of the state's most desirable recreation and cultural destinations.

The Brand Committee determined that Sitka is faced with several challenges:

1. Limited accessibility
2. Airfare costs
3. Seasonality/weather
4. Ambivalence of citizens to tourism growth
5. Limited lodging beds
6. Low awareness of Sitka's assets

On the positive side, Sitka has some great assets it can build on:

1. Natural beauty (scenery, wilderness)
2. Native culture and history
3. Authenticity as an Alaska working town
4. Vibrant arts community
5. Exceptional fishing

The Brand Committee set forth the following goals for the Sitka branding effort:

1. To increase outside spending in the local economy
2. To increase jobs through business growth
3. To increase positive awareness of Sitka - everywhere
4. To maintain Sitka's authenticity
5. To develop a brand easy for businesses to implement

A solid brand is about jobs and increasing Sitka's prosperity.

Creation of the Brand Committee

Sitka stakeholders were selected from a wide array of organizations and businesses to become the local Brand Committee for this project. Included on the Brand Committee were the following people:

- Tonia Rioux – Sitka CVB
- Evy Kinnear – Fortress of the Bear
- Rachel Roy – Sitka Tribe of Alaska/Tribal Tours
- Mim McConnell – Sitka Mayor/Shelter Cove Publishing
- Roger Schmidt – Alaska Arts Southeast, dba Sitka Fine Arts Camp
- Michael Wien – Alaska Dream Cruises
- John Dunlap – Allen Marine Tours/Sitka Sound Ocean Adventures
- Ashley Eisenbeisz – Russell’s
- Mary Stensvold – Old Harbor Books
- Sarah Lawrie – Artist/Greater Sitka Arts Council
- Kathy Jones – Westmark Sitka
- Jennifer Robinson – Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce

Great Destination Strategies, LLC was retained to facilitate the process, led by John Kelsh, Bill Baker of Total Destination Marketing and Creative Director, Todd Mayfield of Axia Creative. Competitive analysis, research and feasibility work was a team effort between the Sitka Brand Committee and the GDS team.

Education and outreach – Sitkan’s weighed in on Sitka’s future

In October of 2014, John Kelsh made two public presentations in Sitka outlining the plan development process and discussing the branding principles that would be followed. GDS also developed and released an online questionnaire soliciting thoughts and opinions from residents in and outside of Sitka and the Sitka Borough. Using the questionnaire over a six week-long period 319 people weighed in on nine questions including what they thought Sitka should be known for – its brand. They also provided feedback on what they saw as major challenges and best assets.

They answered other questions including what they thought was missing from the Sitka tourism product mix that would get visitors to spend more time (and money) in the community. The poll also collected opinions about the relative importance of different tourism products and their performance. Their responses to this importance/performance analysis were very enlightening. The different origins of respondents allowed us to see the perspective of locals, and those living in nearby communities. The research poll result files have been given to Visit Sitka. The top performance gaps – where the same for residents and non-residents. Where work needs to be done in bringing tourism product up to visitor expectations were as follows:

1. Additional good food and dining experiences
2. The addition of more hotels, B&Bs and Lodges, and the upgrading of all three
3. Better presence and access to rental recreation equipment

In October, 2014, nearly 50 stakeholders were interviewed during eight group interview sessions held in Sitka. Representing many local organizations and points of view, they had an opportunity to weigh in on Sitka’s future and share their personal information and opinions.

In November, Bill Baker conducted a Brand Committee workshop during which time Brand Committee members participated in an inM depth exercise to further refine the assets and challenges in defining Sitka’s

unique selling proposition. The Committee looked at its closest competitor destinations, Sitka's unique points and its most promising target markets

Compiling and filtering what we heard

The Brand Committee spent time reading through the local feedback and applying it to the "Feasibility Testing" process. Here are the ten questions we asked for each idea that came from local and area residents:

1. Is this something the markets we are hoping to attract can't get or do closer to home?
2. Is this something the community can buy into? We're not asking for permission but want something they can take ownership of. "We're okay with it."
3. How much will it cost and when will we see a return on our investment? This applies to both public and private investment.
4. Can the private sector buy into it? Are there investment opportunities? After all, this is about tax base.
5. Does it have legs? Can we start with a small niche and add "extensions" to the brand? If we want to be a sports capital, can we start by being the soccer capital, then add softball, then disc golf...?
6. Can we make it obvious and pervasive throughout the community?
7. Do we have those who will tirelessly champion the cause?
8. How wide an audience will it attract? We want a niche, but not one that's so small the economic gain is minimal.
9. Will it extend our seasons? This is why hanging a brand on a three-day festival is rarely feasible. What about the other 362 days of the year?
10. Is it experiential? Based on activities. BMW's tag line is "The Ultimate Driving Machine." It's based on the experience – not the physical attributes of the car.

The Brand Development Team was able to narrow down the ideas to a nine leading brand direction candidates. Using the feasibility questions, each Brand Committee member scored each candidate. The cumulative point scoring prioritized the candidates as follows:

- 360 The Arts (including Culture/Cuisine)
- 298 Wilderness Adventure
- 294 Unique Sitka History
- 288 Scenic Beauty
- 282 Sophistication in the Wilderness
- 281 Diversity in the Wilderness
- 274 Ambience
- 252 Walkable Independent Downtown
- 250 Value of Sitka People/Authenticity

The GDS Team took these results and developed an “arts and wilderness” concept that would demonstrate Sitka as the most culturally rich and diverse artistic community in Alaska beautifully situated for wilderness experiences.

Target Audiences

It is essential for Sitka to be highly focused in the allocation of both its financial and staff resources, and the markets in which it leads local partners. It is also important that target markets be prioritized for the development of the Sitka brand.

Large Cruise Ship Passengers

- Size of the market: Largest in terms of absolute numbers. Smallest in terms of average spending.
- Growth potential for Sitka: Potentially large, but affecting growth is generally outside the control of Sitka. One possibility for growth is to demonstrate to the cruise lines a greater number of shorex opportunities, and a higher commission rate to the cruise lines. Currently 8% of repeat visitors came first by cruise ship. Increasing this number might be a reasonable goal.
- Match with Sitka’s tourism strengths, services and facilities: Good match with downtown retail sales and tour products designed for cruise passenger’s brief stays in Sitka. Dining on shore would be the exception rather than the rule.
- Ease and cost of accessing the market: Access is through cruise ship itinerary development and onboard sales of tours. The cost of reaching these individuals before they cruise, and diverting them to ships who visit Sitka would be costly and may have little impacts as most cruise ships already sail full. There is a possibility of encouraging more passengers to come ashore, however.
- Match with community values and vision: The community is split on whether more cruise passengers are desirable or not. An increase would not lengthen the number of months of the Sitka tourism season.

Small Cruise Ship Passengers, particularly for vessels operating out of Sitka

- Size of the market: Small. Even substantial growth of this market would yield only a small additional number of Sitka visitors. Individual visitor expenditures are unavailable, but likely a bit more than those of large cruise ship passengers, because of their higher household incomes and slightly longer stays in port.
- Growth potential for Sitka: Small overall additional numbers of visitors.
- Match with Sitka’s tourism strengths, services and facilities: Would use the same retail, dining, tour opportunities as the large cruise ship visitors. Those using a home-ported ship may add overnight stays in local hotels at the beginning and ending of their cruise.
- Ease and cost of accessing the market: Access is through cruise ship itinerary development and included local tours. The cost of reaching these individuals before they cruise would be inefficient, and would likely only extend their stays in Sitka a day or two.
- Match with community values and vision: These visitors fit the low impact community vision for visitors, but not the need for significant new spending within the community, nor the extension of the tourist season.

Yachting Enthusiasts (both private and chartered)

- Size of the market: Very small. Even substantial growth of this market would yield only a small additional number of Sitka visitors. Individual visitor expenditures are unavailable, but likely higher than those of cruise passengers, because of their higher substantially higher household incomes. Expenditures are likely to be in the art/culture category, and custom tours or guiding.

- Growth potential for Sitka: Small overall additional numbers of tours.
- Match with Sitka's tourism strengths, services and facilities: Sitka's cultural activities, art purchases, and custom tours match this market's interests. Restaurants and overnight accommodations do not rise to the level of amenities or service required by these visitors.
- Ease and cost of accessing the market: This market could be specially targeted with marketing messages in order to increase initial visitations, or to extend lengths of stay.
- Match with community values and vision: These visitors fit the low impact and high per capita expenditure profile that Sitka would welcome, but would not address a desired extension of the visitor season.

Sport Fishing Guests

- Size of the market: Large. Not only are there substantial numbers of these visitors, their lengths of stay provides a large impact on the local visitor economy. Three-quarters of air arrivals and departures fish, and two-thirds charter fish. But they also shop. Half are repeat visitors, some multiple times.
- Growth potential for Sitka: Growth is dependent upon the introduction of additional lodge investment, as well as the stability of fishing ordinances and limits on fish catch set by the State. There is some price sensitivity that affects annual bookings. Both the limited free time of anglers, and their focused interests limit the ability to expand their expenditures to other cultural activities and tours beyond those in which they current participate.
- Match with Sitka's tourism strengths, services and facilities: Existing lodge and hotel accommodation capacity is a valuable resource. High catch ratios in Sitka are a strength and a potent marketing message.
- Ease and cost of accessing the market: The private sector spends considerable funds retaining current clients and attracting new ones. The process is well understood and well executed through years of their marketing experience with this target market. Visit Sitka can support this effort with umbrella branding and awareness.
- Match with community values and vision: To the extent that these visitors are "captured" by the lodges, they are high impact for the lodge owners and suppliers, but restricts significant retail and art/cultural spending within the greater community. Any growth would occur during the current fishing seasons and not extend into spring or fall.

Independent Travelers - Music and Arts Visitors

- Size of the market: Small. Their lengths of stay vary. There are no statistics on these specific independent travelers but their length of stay should probably be considered less than that of lodged fishing guests. They attend festival and art events, dine and shop as well as take some local tours. Only some are repeat visitors.
- Growth potential for Sitka: Growth is dependent upon the introduction of new music and art related events in the shoulder seasons. Competition for accommodations during the summer fishing season restricts additional growth of this market without displacement of fishing guests. There is some price sensitivity that affects annual bookings. This target market could fairly easily be encouraged to expand their expenditures to other cultural activities and tours beyond those in which they current participate.
- Match with Sitka's tourism strengths, services and facilities: This market has a high compatibility with Sitka's tourism strengths, services and facilities, particularly in the shoulder seasons.
- Ease and cost of accessing the market: Only certain elements of the private sector spend funds attracting this market; generally, hotels, and some event and festival organizations. The Alaska market is concentrated in Anchorage, but is well distributed nationally and internationally, and expensive for media reach and frequency. Visit Sitka can support this effort with market-specific branding and awareness.

- Match with community values and vision: This market is quite compatible with community values and vision and their expenditures could be widely distributed throughout the local economy but particularly with events, guides, retail, dining and accommodations, and especially in the shoulder seasons.

Independent Travelers – Outdoor Recreation Enthusiasts

- Size of the market: Small to moderate. Their length of stays vary. There are no statistics on these specific independent travelers but their length of stays should probably be considered similar to that of lodged fishing guests. They take local tours, fish, dine and shop. Only some are repeat visitors.
- Growth potential for Sitka: Growth is dependent upon demonstrating that outdoor activities can be enjoyed in the shoulder seasons. Competition for accommodations during the summer fishing season restricts additional growth of this market without displacement of fishing guests. There is some price sensitivity with regard to accommodations. This target market, if grown, would compete for accommodation space with anglers, during the peak summer months, and their expenditures would not match that of lodged anglers.
- Match with Sitka’s tourism strengths, services and facilities: This market has a high compatibility with Sitka’s tourism strengths, services and facilities, particularly in the shoulder months.
- Ease and cost of accessing the market: Only certain elements of the private sector spend funds attracting this market, generally, hotels, and some guides and tour operators. The market is well distributed nationally and internationally, and expensive for media reach and frequency. Visit Sitka can support this effort with market-specific branding and awareness.
- Match with community values and vision: This market is quite compatible with community values and vision and their expenditures could be widely distributed throughout the local economy but particularly with guides, retail, dining and accommodations, and especially in the shoulder seasons.

Shoulder Season Conventions and Meetings

- Size of the market: Small to moderate. Their lengths of stay vary.
- Growth potential for Sitka: Growth is dependent upon demonstrating that outdoor activities and attractions can be enjoyed in the shoulder seasons. Competition for accommodations during the summer fishing season restricts additional growth of this market without displacement of fishing guests. There is definite price sensitivity with regard to accommodations. This target market, if grown in the summer, would compete for accommodation space with anglers, during the peak summer months, and their expenditures would not match that of lodged anglers.
- Match with Sitka’s tourism strengths, services and facilities: This market has a high compatibility with Sitka’s tourism strengths, services and facilities, particularly in the shoulder months.
- Ease and cost of accessing the market: Meetings and Conventions that originate in other parts of Alaska and have a statewide constituency are by far the most likely to see Sitka as competitive. Visit Sitka can support this effort with market-specific branding and awareness.
- Match with community values and vision: This market is quite compatible with community values and vision and their expenditures could be widely distributed throughout the local economy but particularly with guides, retail, dining and accommodations, and especially in the shoulder months.

Key Attributes

The following are key features and experiences that illustrate the advantages of what is distinctive about Sitka. These features should receive greatest prominence in brochures, advertising, web sites, sales materials, etc. Some may be emphasized more than others depending upon the target audience and the objectives that are being addressed. They will also influence the choice of supporting words, emotional benefits, and images.

Differentiation

- Historic Russian Capital
- Accessible wildlife (and rehabilitated wildlife – eagles, raptors, brown and black bear, fish ladder)
- Cultural fusion – Russian, Alaska Native, American, most historic city in Alaska
- Alaska’s most vibrant artists community
- Authenticity - least “touristy”, original, genuine character of the city
- Home to more historic events than any other in the State
- Rare to have more than one ship visiting the port at a time
- Most scenic and beautiful city in Alaska
- Best salmon fishing in Southeast Alaska
- Fortress of the Bear and Raptor Center
- Sheldon Jackson Museum collection of native artifacts

Experiences

- Performing and Visual Arts
- Native Alaska Culture
- Outdoor Recreation
- Heritage / History
- Nature education
- Best Salmon Fishing in SE Alaska

During the first full week of April, 2015, the Brand Development Team donated many hours of their time to meet as a group to come up with the major initiatives that will drive the brand forward.

THE SITKA BRAND PLATFORM

From its early days as a coastal port of call, Sitka has had its admirers from the Canadian and American cities to the south that booked passage on passenger ships to glimpse the vast forests and scenic fishing ports of the frontier Alaska. But Sitka already had a long and rich history of Native settlement for thousands of years, then the arrival of the Russian colonialists and finally the acquisition of the Alaska territory by the United States. And most recently, the advent of the cruise ship phenomenon introduced thousands more to what Smithsonian Magazine calls the most charismatic city in all of Alaska. It still is a remarkable place that offers the same solitude and the recreation among the jeweled islands and full wilderness of continuous forest.



Brand Personality

This articulates the feeling of the brand. If Sitka were a person, what would it be like? This should translate into the execution of all elements. Communication, advertising, marketing tools, product development and even customer service programs should be consistent with the brand's character.

- Accessible
- Adventuresome
- Casual and relaxed
- Easy-going
- Engaging
- Entertaining
- Friendly and welcoming
- Fun-loving
- Imaginative and creative
- A desire to assist others
- Confident
- Socially aware

Brand values

Brand values are the basic principles that Sitka believes in and stands for. While these are not necessarily messages to openly communicate, everything that is conveyed about Sitka should be consistent with these basic values.

To support its Destination Promise™, Sitka believes in:

- The value of building memories
- Pleasure from simple things
- A belief in the restorative properties of art and outdoors
- Healthy family relationships
- Wholesome outdoor fun
- A carefree, no hassle environment
- Welcoming and friendly
- Connecting with friends and family
- Support for a wholesome community lifestyle
- Preserving the natural environment
- Maintaining a business-friendly atmosphere



Sitka’s Destination Promise™

The most important element of our brand is the Destination Promise™. This is the beacon that will guide all that we do in regard to tourism marketing. It captures the way we want customers to think and feel about us relative to competitors.

The brand is a promise that we must make and keep in every message, every process, every organizational decision, every customer contact, and every communication.

The statement will consistently guide how we project the brand. This is for internal use only.

Destination Promise: *“While most places in Alaska are defined by big nature and frontier adventures Sitka promises a very different perspective because of its charismatic mix of friendly people, and a delightful fusion of art, culture and wilderness.”*

Brand Essence

The short hand statement of Sitka’s Brand Promise:

“Alaska’s most charismatic city”

Sitka’s Brand Credibility (Reasons to Believe)

This is the evidence that exists and should be communicated over the next several years for Sitka’s positioning. It is the reason why people will believe Sitka offers the best opportunity to see some of the essentials of Alaska and its residents. It makes the claimed benefits compelling.

- SE Alaska’s “best catch” salmon and halibut
- One of the top Native Alaska museums - Sheldon Jackson
- Original, authentic, genuine, classic character of the city
- Russia’s American territory capital
- Alaska’s most vibrant arts community
- Renown classical music festival
- Totem Park
- Most scenic and beautifully located city in Alaska
- Outstanding ocean kayaking
- Homeport and port for small/micro cruising
- Not overly commercialized
- Most historic of Alaska communities
- Home of a raptor center and bear refuge

3. EXPRESSING THE BRAND

Core Identity Themes



These are the core strengths or tenets that underpin Sitka's brand essence and are the source of your distinctive character. They set Sitka apart, and clarify and focus the way that to present Sitka, Alaska. You own and shape these themes in ways that competitors can't within the context of our brand essence: "Where Art Meets Wild Alaska."

Underpinning the brand essence are four core strengths: a sense of relaxation, personal reward, art appreciation and escape. Together they embody what visitors value and derive from their Sitka experiences. They influence the way that Sitka expresses itself and the rewards and added value that you deliver to your customers.

The following pages provide the framework to express the brand. These pages outline how the four defining strengths or themes are to be woven into your messages, processes, and experiences in order to connect with specific types of customers and move them to choose Sitka. There are subtle overlaps between the four pillars, which only serves to enhance Sitka's character and appeal.

Highlighting these four strengths does not mean to forget Sitka's other emotional benefits and personality traits. While these strengths may lead Sitka's brand communications, the other elements should influence the overall tone, style and feel of the brand and add to the experience.

The brand identity and competitive advantage is based on Sitka presenting visitors with a sense of:

- Relaxation – with family, children and friends in a casual, nature-filled atmosphere
- Personal reward – that enriches the lives of our visitors
- Appreciation of the Arts – with music, visual arts, crafts, native culture and locally sourced food
- Escape – from the everyday

Sitka has four important tourism markets that help the economic health and vitality of the City. It is most important that the brand resonate with visiting Large & Small Cruise Ship Passengers, Independent Travelers and Meeting and Convention attendees.

The fourth most important audience for the Sitka brand are outside investors who need to see the City as having a bright economic future, a viable visitor industry, and who will contribute to its further development.

Brand Alignment with Key Markets

Key messages for expressing the Sitka brand to key audiences is critical to the brand's success. Use these to communicate and deliver the brand in ways that will be most potent for specific audiences.

This customer-focused approach activates the brand platform in ways that make it most relevant and meaningful for each audience. It demonstrates how brand elements should be woven into our messages, processes, and experiences to connect with customers and move them to prefer Sitka to alternate choices.

The specific audiences are:

- Cruise Ship Passengers – large and small ships
- Independent Travelers – both art enthusiasts and fishing/outdoor recreation enthusiasts
- Meeting & Convention Attendees
- Investors

These elements will shape our approach for each key audience:

- Positioning
- Key messages

- Emotional benefits
- Attractors and experiences
- Key words

Cruise Ship Passengers

Positioning

For most ship passengers to Alaska, the port visits are a more important element of their total trip than for other regions – the Caribbean for example. Passengers are genuinely curious how authentic Alaskan’s live and work, the history and culture of first (Native) settlers, and artistic representations of historical and current lifestyles. Yet they have limited time on shore at any given port of call. Sitka offers all of these interests in an easily accessible, compact and walkable town. Sitka provides glimpses of an authentic, working way of life in a beautiful coastal setting surrounded by accessible Alaska wilderness.

Key messages

- Original, authentic, genuine, classic character of the city
- Alaska’s most historic, artistically active and culturally rich city
- Friendly and welcoming locals
- Local artists, performers, storytellers, nature guardians, outfitters, event organizers and fishermen
- Most scenic and beautiful city in Alaska
- Alaska’s best salmon and halibut fishing
- Raptor Center and Fortress of the Bear rescues
- One of the best Native Alaska artifacts museums –Sheldon Jackson
- The Russian-American Capital site

Emotional benefits

- Sharing of discovery with friends and family
- Personal reward and enrichment from catching fish, the arts, culture and history
- A sense of escape from everyday life

Examples of Experiences and Attractors

- Absorb the beauty of the ocean front coastline
- Stroll the authentic downtown
- Examine the skill and art of Native artifacts
- View and acquire regionally inspired art and craft items
- Engage in conversation with local residents
- Walk the history trail of Sitka
- Participate in music and other cultural events



Key words

- Absorbing
- Accessible
- All in one place
- Atmosphere
- Authentic
- Captivating
- Casual
- Discover
- Ease
- Enchanting
- Engaging
- Enjoyable
- Enriching
- Entertaining
- Escape
- Exciting
- Friendly
- Immerse Yourself
- invigorating
- Joy
- Laugh together
- Memorable
- Plenty to choose from
- Refreshing
- Relax
- Rewarding
- Sensory
- Share
- Together
- Treat yourself

Sample ad copy for a cruise audience advertisement:

“Consider yourself lucky (or a good planner) if your cruise itinerary includes at Sitka. Smithsonian Magazine calls us the Alaska town with charisma. Here you may be the only cruise ship in town. Friendly hard-working residents will vastly outnumber your ship’s passengers.

Hiking and kayaking doesn't seem like five o'clock traffic, and you won't wait in line to visit exquisite native artifacts at the local museum. With the Tongass Forest crowding Sitka's downtown, you can experience as much wild solitude as your soul can take.”

Sample ad copy for a cruise audience advertisement:

“Outside, you see breathtaking oceanfront scenery – a Sitka exclusive, as other ports are on the “inside passage.” Fewer tourist shops and plenty of local arts and entertainment bring Sitka's authenticity as a working town to the forefront.

In this compact, walkable community, you have enough time to savor Sitka's hidden gems: the raptor center, bear refuge, marine science center, arts colony and living cultural performances of the local Tlingit peoples.

Sitka offers a rich tapestry of Alaskan life through its fusion of nature, history, culture and the arts. Who knows, you may want to return for a longer visit.”

Independent Travelers

Positioning

Independent travelers have more time at their disposal and are looking for an in-depth experience, whether it is sport fishing, outdoor adventures, or cultural and artistic exploration. For individuals and couples wanting to spend uninterrupted time together, to share these experiences, Sitka offers the most authentic, undiluted experience of an Alaska working town in Southeast Alaska. Discoveries in the urban core are all close by, mostly within walking distance of one another, and the surrounding wilderness is easily accessible with well-marked trails. Locals are approachable and friendly. Those interested in the arts will find in it representations of the wilderness and fusion of cultures that make up Sitka's current population, while those interested in soft or hard adventure activities and nature will find accessibility to both the sea and land.

Key messages

- A relaxed, casual and friendly atmosphere located in a spectacular natural setting

- Outside coastal location unique from all major communities in Southeast Alaska
- Accessible by the Alaska state ferry system
- Unhurried access to exceptional cultural activities, historic artifacts, and storytelling
- Easy and close-up accessibility to wildlife
- Superior fishing opportunities in surrounding rivers, streams and ocean
- Close by hiking and mountain biking,
- Accessible, helpful and friendly locals

Emotional benefits

- A sense of well being from relaxation and exercise
- A connection with your significant other as well as nature
- Delight and enrichment through discovery and outdoor exploration
- Freedom from congestion
- Laid back
- Peace of mind

Examples of Experiences and Attractors

- Participate in the highest catch salmon fishing season in all of Southeast Alaska
- Examine exquisite artifacts and traditional Native arts of Alaska in the one of the most important museums
- Engage in superior bird watching and wildlife boat tours or visit the unique raptor center or bear refuge
- Hike short or long, easy or difficult trails to mountain and sea vistas
- Rent kayaks, bicycles, fly fishing equipment, all-terrain vehicles, or float planes for easy accessibility to Alaska wilderness
- See local artisans engaged in their crafts
- Receive the best value for the money among all Southeast cities

Key words

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| • Accessible | • Easy access | • Exciting |
| • All in one place | • Delicious | • Exhilarating |
| • Atmosphere | • Energizing | • Feeling calm |
| • Camaraderie | • Engaging | • Flavorful |
| • Captivating | • Enjoyable | • Forget pressures |
| • Convenient | • Enriching | • Friendship |
| • Delight | • Entertaining | • Fun |



- Ideal
- Indulge
- Inspiring
- Invigorating
- Laugh together
- Learn
- Organic
- Participate
- Pleasure / pleasurable
- Recall / reminisce
- Refreshing
- Rejuvenate
- Relax
- Revitalize
- Rewarding
- Shared
- Simple pleasures
- Slow down
- Stimulating
- Together
- Unplug / unwind
- Value for money

Sample ad copy for a general audience advertisement:

“Sitka’s rich cultural and artistic fusion in Alaska’s most enchanting setting lures northbound travelers to experience this compact and vibrant Southeast Alaska community.

Smithsonian Magazine says, ‘No other town in the forty-ninth state has Sitka’s charisma.’ If you are looking for the authentic charm of Alaska living, beat a path to Sitka.”

Sample ad copy for a general audience advertisement:

“Sitka offers some of the best of Alaska, beginning with its spectacular oceanfront setting dominated by an ancient volcano and dotted with forested islands. Sport salmon catches here are renown. The Sheldon Jackson museum possesses exquisite native cultural treasures from the Arctic to British Columbia. Sitka displays Alaska’s Russian history as well as the vibrantly alive culture of the Tlingit people who have thrived here for centuries.

Wildlife shares the urban enclave of easily walkable Sitka, and raptor and bear sanctuaries express Sitkans’ love and respect for their special place.

Not to be missed, Sitka residents deliver an essential Alaska experience in a compact bundle.”

Sample ad copy for a general audience advertisement:

“Whether you are coming to Alaska by cruise ship, or exploring on your own, your northern exposure won’t be complete without experiencing what Smithsonian Magazine calls the Alaska town with the most charisma.

The friendly residents of this former Russian Capital have artfully fused its multi-cultural history with active Native and European expressions in visual and performing arts. Tlingit tribes, Russians and Americans have all contributed to the flavor of this intimate and engaging town.”

Sample ad copy for a general audience advertisement:

“Framed by open ocean, forested islands and its sentinel volcano, Sitka is as pretty as a picture. Crowded by the Tongass rainforest, it’s easy to experience world-class sport fishing, kayaking and hiking. Sitka’s renown raptor center and newly established bear refuge demonstrate Sitkan’s respect for the wilderness they share.

Popular as a port of call for both large and small cruise ships, yachts, charter boats, Sitka is also accessible by jet air service and the state ferry system.”

Meeting & Convention Attendees

Positioning

Conference planners look for accessible destinations, good meeting facilities and equipment, value yet comfortable accommodations, and perhaps most importantly, new or exciting after hours tours, events and



other experiences that will lure members to attend. To position for meetings and conferences, Sitka will have to offer these things, especially a mix of indoor and outdoor events that will mitigate the variable weather of autumn, when rooms are most available and affordable. Sitka’s points of uniqueness available in the autumn include the raptor center, bear refuge, Native cultural performances, music, and art.

Key messages

- Original, authentic, genuine, classic character of the city
- A relaxed, casual and friendly atmosphere located in a spectacular natural setting
- Local artists, performers, storytellers, nature guardians, outfitters, event organizers
- Raptor Center and Fortress of the Bear rescues
- One of the best Native Alaska museums –Sheldon Jackson
- Value

Emotional Benefits

- Freedom from distractions of a larger city
- Tranquility in the breathtaking environment
- A sense of personal reward and enrichment from the arts
- Engagement with friendly and accommodating locals

Examples of Experiences and Attractors

- Attend a musical performance
- Watch the sunset over the open seas
- Seeing raptors and bears close up
- Purchasing Native or contemporary art
- Meeting in a refurbished Harrigan Centennial Hall
- Staying engaged with downtown Wi-Fi

Key Words

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| • Accessible | • Enjoyable | • Invigorating |
| • Affordable | • Enriching | • Laugh together |
| • All in one place | • Entertaining | • Learn |
| • Atmosphere | • Escaping | • Organic |
| • Camaraderie | • Exciting | • Refreshing |
| • Captivating | • Exclusive | • Relax |
| • Change of routine | • Exhilarating | • Reunite |
| • Convenient | • Feeling calm | • Rewarding |
| • Delight | • Forget pressures | • Safe |
| • Delicious | • Friendship | • Shared |
| • Energizing | • High spirits | • Stimulating |
| • Engaging | • Inspiring | • Together |



- Value for money

Investors

Positioning

For investors looking to locate their business, Sitka offers a vibrant business environment with good Internet connectivity, and a municipal government that welcomes new enterprises. Sitka offers an exceptional living environment for families, with the safety of a small town atmosphere, good schools, and an abundance of recreational opportunities.

Key Messages

- Tourism related commercial real estate and housing
- An attractive place to live
- Good schools and health services
- The feel of a small town
- High speed Internet connectivity
- Productive, educated labor force
- Recreational opportunities: fishing, music events and the arts
- Convenient retail and dining
- A business-friendly community
- A small town that welcomes big ideas.

Emotional Benefits

- A community that understands the value of the visitor industry
- Low stress community
- Laid back
- Friendly residents

Examples of Experiences and Attractors

- Supportive tax structure for new businesses
- Ease of permitting process for new developments
- Boat, bike, walk or jog to work
- Find readily available building sites and opportunities
- Enjoy a business-friendly community
- Accessible skilled and educated workforce
- Join a can-do community

Key Words

- Accessible
- Affordable
- Attractive
- Business friendly
- Can-do
- Collaborative
- Community
- Convenient
- Eco-friendly
- Educated workforce
- Energizing
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Family friendly
- Forward thinking
- Healthy
- Helpful
- Innovative
- Inspiring
- Live life to the full
- Personable
- Quality of life
- Rewarding
- Smart
- Successful

The Visual Identity

Brandmark inspiration

Once a successful destination brand is articulated from diligent research, understanding and deliberation, it takes flight through various visual communications such as advertising, printed collateral, merchandise, web media and signage. At the heart of these tangible assets is the brandmark, more commonly known as the logo, which incorporates a symbol, logotype, and a tagline.

The final Sitka logo has evolved from several concepts that were inspired by the textures, colors and features from Sitka's heritage and natural environment. The Sitka Raven drew its inspiration from depictions in Tlingit art, folklore and its physical presence in the local environment. Fonts were selected from hundreds considered and modified to suit the design.



GDS generated a score of probable symbolic visual graphics, internally rejecting many, and submitting nine different visuals to our national panel of 60 potential travelers for their preferences and comments. The Sitka Branding Committee chose to use the wordmark as the primary visual identifier. This is due to the strength of the wordmark on its own. The top three identities were presented to the Brand Committee, which selected the final version.

The Sitka brandmark and wordmark (logo)

The Sitka wordmark (font) hints at a Russian type style but with a distinctly modern and artful twist. In the Brand Guideline document you will see the initial concepts used to convey the brand to your major markets. You'll notice common elements and color palettes that would always be used to create continuity of the visual brand expression with everything you do.

The Sitka Tagline

The Sitka tagline "Art Meets Wild Alaska" is promissory. It sets up an expectation in the consumer's mind. This means you cannot use it until you feel you can deliver on that promise.



Verbal identities are the words and ideas that should be used to describe and verbally project the Sitka brand. It outlines the language to shape how we want customers to think and feel about Sitka.

Art Meets Wild Alaska!

Copy Style

The Sitka Destination Promise™ guides all of marketing communications. It should be reflected in the copy for brochures, web sites, advertising, media communications, and collateral materials. The words that are used reflect your personality and are guided by your positioning and values.

The focus of copy, on most occasions, should not be on conveying a “shopping list” of attributes. Copy must be written from the customer’s perspective with a focus on what matters to them and how they will feel through the use of emotional benefits. Prospective customers should be made to feel like an “insider” and a participant, not as a distant or unconnected spectator.

A foremost consideration is copy that is enticing and motivational, yet realistic and factual. Wherever possible it should describe experiences with action-oriented and evocative language. Importantly, it must make the reader feel as though they are already enjoying the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations that Sitka has to offer.

Copy should always be written in a friendly, relaxed, informative, and unpretentious manner to match your brand personality. Above all, it must be factual and open, and not contain hype.

Word Processing

The text in communications and presentations, such as letters, emails, reports, PowerPoint, and nametags, should use the Formata typeface. The format for these communications must use:

Official font: Formata Font Family

Official font size: 12 point (Body copy)

14 Point Bold (Headings)

Line Spacing: Single

Official font size for email: 12 Point Regular

Text Color: Black

4. Brand Adoption Checklist

The successful implementation of the brand strategy will require the actions of more than the Destination Marketing Organization (Visit Sitka) and its staff. It will require the long-term advocacy, actions and support of many local individuals and organizations, many of who may not readily see their link to tourism and the brand at this point.

The most successful brands are those that are highly relevant and consistent. Essential for the Sitka brand to achieve success will be the support and collaboration of the City of Sitka management and staff, community leaders, key partners, residents, media, non-profits, relevant local businesses.

The actions and checklist on the following pages will assist in gaining understanding, support, and use of the brand by these stakeholders. Each of the following entities has an important role to play in communicating, delivering and sustaining aspects of the brand and in advancing the positive role that it can play for Sitka.

The list is far from inclusive and will need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis:

- Alaska Raptor Center
- City of Sitka Municipal Government
- Community service clubs, e.g. Rotary, Lions, etc.
- Event organizers
- External travel and tourism organizations, e.g. Alaska State Tourism
- Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum
- Local and regional media (e.g. Public Radio KCAW)
- Local non-tourism businesses and organizations
- Local tourism-related organizations, associations and visitor service providers, including lodging, restaurants, attractions, and transport
- Marketing suppliers, e.g. advertising agency, designers
- Residents
- SEA Trails
- Sitka Chamber of Commerce
- Sitka Fine Arts Camp
- Sitka Jazz Festival
- Sitka Sound Science Center
- Sitka Summer Music Festival
- Southeast Alaska Tourism Council

Key overall messages to the community

Consideration should be given to including many of the following elements, as appropriate, in the messages that are conveyed to each group of stakeholders.

- We are redefining what the world thinks of Sitka through this strategy, which will result in more jobs, business opportunities, and benefits for all residents and organizations.
- The strategy was developed following extensive community consultation and research outside of Sitka to assess perceptions and attitudes toward the city.
- In a marketplace now saturated with product and destination offers, our brand strategy sets a positive direction for Sitka to enhance its reputation as an attractive place to visit.
- We would like you, as appropriate, to consistently and accurately use the brand and by working in a unified manner with Visit Sitka and its partners, improve the attractiveness and image of the city with key audiences.
- It is important that Sitka deliver on its promise, and we invite you to play your role in creatively delivering and building outstanding visitor experiences that support the brand.
- Whenever possible, introduce ways to make residents more aware of the city's experiences, positive attributes and the valuable contribution that tourism makes to the borough's well-being.
- Encourage tourism industry partners to consider each other as allies and not always competitors. This will increase the level of collaboration, joint marketing, bundling and strengthen the visitor experience.
- Ensure that all partners are familiar with what makes Sitka a more attractive and different place to visit compared to competitors and ensure that strengthening this edge is part of their ongoing joint mission with Visit Sitka.

Brand adoption actions

The nature and level of adoption of the Sitka brand by each stakeholder group will vary. The following outlines ways in which stakeholders can most effectively assist in building and supporting the brand.

Brand Knowledge. Through public relations, online activity and publications, as well as briefings and workshops, advance the understanding and support for the brand and improvement in the city's image by residents, business and community leaders. Periodic updates on the brand's progress and successes should be communicated to help maintain freshness, enthusiasm and commitment.

Brand Knowledge – Elected Representatives. Briefings and one-on-one discussions should be conducted with elected officials to aid their understanding of the Sitka brand, its rationale, benefits, and opportunities and how they can contribute toward its success. This action should be revisited when new officers are elected or appointed to ensure that all players remain in the loop. After awareness of brand importance has been established, their policy adoption and decisions should be consistent with the brand to aid its development.

Brand Knowledge – Marketing Partners and Staff. Briefings and workshops will be conducted for key marketing partners to aid their understanding of the Sitka brand, its benefits, and how they can accurately and consistently communicate the brand and align their own actions with it.

Brand Platform and Guidelines. Relevant executives and staff should be knowledgeable about the brand and its rationale, as well as the guidelines for conveying and delivering the brand. Ensure that, as appropriate, marketing communications are aligned with the brand.

Brand Thinking. The concept of building the Sitka brand must permeate the City's decision-making, planning, resource allocation, and communications as appropriate in relation to tourism and the regional image.

Co-op Marketing. Co-operative opportunities should be provided by Visit Sitka for key partners to project their individual message under the brand umbrella. This collaborative effort will strengthen the brand, foster greater unity, and provide important connections with the brand experiences. This also extends to the cross-marketing actions between partners.

Customer Service. Develop training programs with an emphasis on service excellence, including visitor's information knowledge. This is important for ensuring a high level of experience and service delivery in support of the brand.

Experience Delivery. Participating organizations must ensure that they enhance the accessibility and enjoyment of the Sitka brand experiences and products, particularly in regard to events.

Message Alignment. Monitor the designs, images, messages and subjects projected by Visit Sitka, City of Sitka, the SATC and partners (as appropriate) to ensure that they are aligned with the brand - and that they meet the highest standards possible to achieve visitor impact goals.

Placemaking. Ensure that streetscapes, gateways, squares, precincts, parks, and trails that are frequented by visitors are attractive and well signposted.

Public Endorsement. The City's individual spokespersons should make a high-levels, positive public endorsements of the brand strategy and its value to Sitka.

Publicity. Seek opportunities to communicate the brand elements, brand news, and brand opportunities to internal and external audiences through Visit Sitka and City's newsletters, media outlets etc.

Websites. Ensure that partner websites project appropriate elements of the brand identity through content, copy and design as well as the use of quality images that are consistent with the brand identity. Encourage use of links to other relevant sites within the community.

Brand Adoption Checklist

Each of the following organizations listed across the top of the matrix has a vital role to play as identified along the far left column.

	Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce-Visit Sitka	Southeast Alaska Tourism Council	City & Borough of Sitka	Event Organizers	Cultural Experience Partners	Local and Regional Media	Local Tourism Businesses	Marketing Suppliers to Sitka	Residents	Community Service Clubs
Brand Platform & Guidelines	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Brand Knowledge – Positive Knowledge and Image	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brand Knowledge – Elected Representatives			✓							
Brand Knowledge – Executives and Staff	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
Brand Thinking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Co-op Marketing	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Experience Delivery	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Message Alignment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Placemaking	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Public Endorsement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Publicity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Hospitality / Customer Service	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Websites	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓

5. Brand Leadership & Management Checklist

These checklists and rules of thumb will assist in the long-term management of the Sitka brand. These lists should be considered as reminders of the basic requirements for launching and managing the brand. They are not intended to be the definitive list of actions that need to be taken. The process of developing the brand will be ongoing and dynamic in which new initiatives and opportunities will constantly emerge and need to be considered.

Successful brands are led from the top and owned at the grassroots by stakeholders and customers. This is a critical distinction and Sitka must adopt this philosophy to be successful. This high level influence is termed **brand leadership** and provides the strategic direction, focus and prioritization for long-term results and partnerships. It also fosters and facilitates the competitive advantage that will distinguish the city.

Brand management is tactical and has a short-term role, compared to the long-term focus of brand leadership. It should not happen by accident or through ad hoc efforts. Brands bring with them the challenge of being innovative to ensure that they remain fresh and exciting. Brand management is about shaping and managing perceptions and opinions and delivering on the Destination Promise™ – and that’s not easy! Periodically, Visit Sitka (and a dedicated brand manager) may need to re-energize partners, stakeholders, and even customers. Orchestrating branded behavior takes a concerted effort to monitor, coordinate and communicate with a wide

Brand Leadership

This section outlines the key elements for successful brand leadership, starting with the Brand Implementation Committee.

Brand Implementation Committee. For at least the first year after the brand is introduced (and preferably longer), a Brand Implementation Committee representing key partners should be established. This group should raise community-wide awareness of brand related issues, build solutions where appropriate, and when necessary apply peer pressure for correct interpretation and support for the brand. It should also identify and address gaps in the delivery of the Sitka brand experience. This committee needs to be closely associated with Visit Sitka because of the need for Visit Sitka’s resources for brand implementation. The Brand Manager could chair the committee and key Visit Sitka staff should participate on the committee along with leading brand partners. This should include an influential representative from each of the leading experience attractions in Sitka.

Adoption Strategy. The success of the Sitka brand will be strongly influenced by the degree to which the Brand Adoption Checklist is fully implemented. Key organizations and individuals must understand the brand, support consistent brand messages, as well as demonstrate a clear commitment to the Sitka brand as being a high priority for the city’s economic and social development. It will be necessary to ensure that new appointees to critical positions among key stakeholders and partners are always aware of the brand and the ways in which they can help (or hinder) its development.

Brand Champions. Great brands need people who will champion their cause. They are internal and external catalysts for the vision, values, and development of the brand. The brand champions may be appointed ambassadors or spokespersons, or they may be individuals and organizations that advance the brand through their marketing, advocacy/political, funding and development support. In the case of Sitka, these should extend to individuals in positions of authority or influence who command widespread respect and are prepared to passionately champion the brand at the highest levels.

Brand Advocates. These are people who can be advocates for the brand within their own organization or sphere of influence. They may not have the same level of authority or influence within the broad community, but they can authorize the adoption and use of the brand within their own organization’s operations.

Brand Spokespersons. Assemble a group of local spokespersons that are capable of being authoritative experts on a range of subjects that support Sitka’s credentials as a leading tourist destination.

Establish a Brand Action Plan. In conjunction with the Brand Implementation Committee, follow a twelve-month plan for launching and introducing the brand and priorities for implementation. This will prove worthwhile in ensuring that implementation is attuned to Sitka’s operational realities. Establish quarterly goals to monitor progress. Involve staff, board members, residents and partners in celebrating successes and addressing shortcomings.

Strategic and Operational Mindset: Focusing available Sitka’s resources behind the Destination Promise™ and building the brand successfully may require a shift in mindset. This comment is not intended to be negative about either Visit Sitka or others. It simply means that the City must be focused like a laser beam on the brand priorities and those that make tourism destinations successful. This may involve a focus on product development for different markets, buyer behavior, distribution systems, communications and investment partnerships than those that may have been traditionally nurtured. It may also require the City or Visit Sitka to initiate cross-marketing strategies to embrace “attract and disperse” marketing principles in order to introduce visitors to aspects of the City and Borough beyond the downtown. Sitka must ensure that product development, organizational, investment and marketing decisions are driven by brand focus.

Strategic Planning. Integrate the brand strategy into the planning processes of Visit Sitka, City and key partners, including various City government departments, as appropriate. The City should not consider the brand strategy as an “add-on”. Instead, it should be included in considerations that guides the actions of every individual, division, and organizational program.

Cross-Region Partnerships. Delivering the Destination Promise™ cannot be the sole province of Visit Sitka and the City – many elements require a shared responsibility with the private sector. This calls for the engagement of community and business leaders, organizations and individuals who can orchestrate the on-brand behavior, policies, investments, and plans necessary for Sitka to consistently excel in delivering outstanding performances for visitors.

Value of tourism and events. Constantly convey the value, benefits and importance of the role that Visit Sitka plays, and the economic and social benefits arising from events and tourism to all local stakeholder groups, including residents.

Brand Management

This section provides a range of actions that are important for successful brand management.

Sitka’s Brand at a Glance. In order to ensure accurate and consistent use of the brand elements, a concise “Our Brand at a Glance” toolkit should always be available, (rather than the full brand manual), for distribution to partners to provide guidelines for aligning with the brand and using the brand identity system. This concise brand toolkit should outline the rationale for the brand, how to use the logo, tagline, exact colors, key words, and other critical brand elements.

Use Agreement. Consideration should be given to producing a “Logo Use Agreement” for all approved partners and stakeholders wishing to use the Sitka logo and tagline. (This does not include use by commercial organizations wanting to use the logo for merchandising purposes e.g. to generate income from the sales of labeled coffee cups. (See recommendation # 9).

Licensing Agreement. Consideration should also be given to developing licensing agreements with commercial or non-profit organizations wanting to use the brand graphics for merchandising. Licensing agreements may require the involvement of the City’s attorney and others who specialize in these types of agreements.

Attract and Disperse. An attract and disperse or hub and spoke strategy should be adopted to lead marketing programs with the strongest attractors e.g. charter fishing, and then disperse visitors across the city and

borough to other experiences such as the hiking trails, music and art, the raptor center an bear refuge, and others. To achieve this, stronger cross-promotion must be activated by all partners and local organizations to effectively communicate with visitors before and after they arrive in the region.

Marketing Plan. Visit Sitka will undoubtedly create an annual marketing plan to allocate resources to channels that will generate the most effective return and build brand equity for the region. A priority should be to optimize cooperative programs with key brand partners, including major event organizers. Visit Sitka should ensure that they have the brand materials so that brand messaging can be incorporated into the marketing materials produced.

Brand Launch. The successful launch of the brand is essential to its long-term viability. One of the keys to a successful rollout is to carefully plan the many actions needed to orchestrate an impactful launch. You may only get one opportunity to generate the enthusiasm, support and energy needed for success. Consequently, the launch should not be approached in an ad hoc or casual manner. It should be conducted when there are tangible examples of the strategy in use. Consider:

- The Brand Implementation Committee should be actively involved in the planning for the launch. The responsibilities for this, while led by Visit Sitka staff, should involve these committee members.
- Develop key messages to convey aspects of the brand for the launch.
- Employ a PowerPoint and possible video presentation to outline the branding process, the rationale for the brand, its benefits, the brand platform, and how individuals and organizations can be actively involved along with endorsements by key partners and stakeholders.
- Commence implementation of the adoption strategy weeks prior to the launch to ensure that opinion leaders understand the strategy and are ready to speak in support of the brand as part of the launch. It may also be necessary for them to speak in support of the brand if any negative comments are raised during the launch phase.
- Ensure that the launch event features a variety of business, government and non-profit leaders who speak positively about the brand strategy and, where appropriate, cite examples of how they will be supporting its development. Their involvement can build confidence and unity of purpose.
- Prepare a brand presentation kit for use at one-on-one presentations and the launch.
- Produce giveaways featuring the brand to give to attendees at the launch event. Giveaways could include shirts, caps, buttons, quality bumper stickers, pins, bags, mouse pads and coffee cups.
- Develop a media communications program to promote the brand strategy to local, regional and statewide media. This could include a major feature in the local newspaper that is supported by advertising by key brand partners, including event organizers.
- The launch should be synchronized, if possible, with initiatives addressing Sitka's wayfinding implementation.
- Marketing Supplier RFPs. Specialist marketing and design agencies can assist in providing independent, professional services that can creatively enhance the implementation of this strategy. Visit Sitka should initiate an RFQ/RFP process every two years to source and assess the caliber of services and agencies that the organization engages. This should apply to advertising, web design, graphic design and search engine optimization.

Organization and Personnel

Effective leadership and brand management will need to be managed by Visit Sitka personnel. This section outlines what is needed from a staffing standpoint to successfully implement and manage the brand.

Job Descriptions. Ensure that the Visit Sitka structure and all job descriptions are adjusted where necessary to accurately support communication and delivery of the brand.

The Brand Manager. A senior executive of Visit Sitka should be designated as the City's brand manager. This role requires having the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the internal and external application and delivery of the brand are aligned with the brand management strategy. Brand stewardship involves "inside out" branding by focusing on the organization's internal audiences, (partners) to influence the ways that they think and act in order to impact external audiences (end customers). The Brand Manager chairs the Brand Implementation Committee. This role should be included in a senior official's job description and performance evaluation.

Brand Identity Specialist. The responsibility for oversight of the brand identity should be allocated to a Visit Sitka staff member, ideally the Communications Manager. This position is responsible for the City's brand communications and working with partners who are integrating the brand into their own materials. This will be an extra delegation of responsibility for an already existing position. The specialist should be creative, have strong marketing and interpersonal skills and be assertive yet persuasive in dealing with partners to manage and protect the brand. This person is likely to be responsible for the brand compliance of the work by key marketing suppliers, e.g. web designer, designers and advertising.

Continuing Education. Establish a schedule of continuing education programs particularly relating to enhancing the brand management expertise of key staff and the delivery of the brand experiences (i.e. local operators, presenting new or improved facilities, product, experiences; familiarization trips to local area tourism products/sites).

Product Development / Experience Focus. Ensure that the responsibilities for facilitating product development, visitor experiences and packaging are reflected in the duties and evaluation of the City's planning, zoning and public works officials and staff.

Destination Knowledge. Ensure that all Visit Sitka staff has product knowledge of local brand experiences, customer needs and the marketing of the experiences relevant to their staff positions.

Constant Innovation. Frequently ask staff and partners for their ideas and feedback about how to better communicate and deliver on the Destination Promise™. Constantly search for new opportunities for communications, product development, cross selling, cooperative marketing, information distribution and packaging.

Performance Appraisals. The objectives and performance appraisal for key staff should include an evaluation of their performance in regard to appropriate aspects of the management, communication and delivery of the brand.

Marketing Communications

When the brand messages are consistently, correctly and creatively communicated to the right target audiences at the right time, they should trigger the desired emotions, appeal to customer logic, and enhance the brand image.

Brochures. The production of brochures is a major promotion expense. A few points to consider during brochure's planning and design phases are. Ensure that brand copy, images and designs are of the highest quality.

- The City name must be at the top of the front cover to ensure that it is clearly visible in a brochure rack.
- Include ample maps to accurately plan a visit.
- Provide descriptions of Sitka and not simply individual attractions and businesses.

- Clearly project key emotional benefits through images, copy, colors and choice of experiences.
- Ensure that in 5 to 10 seconds the cover clearly conveys what is distinctive and attractive in the city, who it appeals to and clearly demonstrates “What’s in it for me”.
- Pre-test draft copies of the brochure with prospective users.
- The brochure must be created in a format to suit the specific needs of the target audience and in a format to suit the time and place where it will be used. For instance, needs are different when planning which city to visit to when the person is actually in the community, at which point they require more detailed information on real estate, amenities, attractions and services.

Visitor Map. A new map should be designed to more closely align with the new brand and its experience themes. The map should be designed specifically for tourism purposes, and not necessarily for locals.

- The map should use to advantage the new wayfinding signage and navigation that will be implemented, clearly demonstrate the best routes (and distances) to key locations, as well as the city’s relationships with all the key attractions and activities.
- The map should be a purpose-designed ‘tourism’ map, not simply a road map. It should also highlight day trip opportunities in close proximity.
- This map should be widely available at all major tourism enterprises.

Social Media. Monitor and actively participate in a few strong social networking sites, which engage the target audiences and provide opportunities to project the brand, particularly YouTube and Facebook.

Sell the Experiences. Engaging and highly evocative images of Sitka should lead with experiences and benefits that provide a “wish I were there” feeling and be prominently featured on the Visit Sitka website home page, publications and advertising. These outstanding images and their motivational copy should lead the themes

Crisis Communications. Visit Sitka should always maintain a crisis communications plan for a wide range of contingencies that may negatively impact Sitka’s tourism and the brand. Visit Sitka’s plan should be integrated into the crisis management plans of the City and Borough, and other organizations, as appropriate.

Third Party Exposure. When represented in brochures, websites and advertising of third party organizations assurance should be received that the City will be presented according to the brand guidelines appropriate to the particular target market being addressed. Whenever possible the core messages, products and the style of the Sitka brand should be used.

Review both the commercial and non-commercial guidebooks and websites produced by third parties that include Sitka (e.g. local guide books, Cruise Line port descriptions, Lonely Planet Guides, AAA publications, etc.) Ensure that they also reflect the experiences, strengths, benefits and descriptions that conform to the brand platform. Research and contribute to these publications and websites who unofficially promote the area.

Co-op Marketing. Cooperate with the activities conducted by major events and partners. Consider how to incorporate Visit Sitka’s brand messaging into their promotions.

Research

Most market research will be undertaken by the Alaska Travel Industry Association or the State Tourism Office, but Visit Sitka should be aware of visitor needs and behavior that can provide valuable information for future strategies, resource allocation and product development.

- Demographics
- Economic impact of events
- Intention to return to Sitka and specifically for events
- Motivation for visiting
- Satisfaction with visit
- Source markets
- Sources of information
- Spending
- Travel behavior, trip planning and purchase decisions

6. Brand Experience & Product Delivery

Experiences are the drivers and motivators that underpin the Sitka brand. The tastes, behavior and needs of tourists have evolved over recent decades from simply taking photos to record the visit to now wanting more hands-on, interactive and memorable visitor experiences.

While the Visit Sitka has the responsibility of drawing visitors to Sitka, it's the responsibility of Sitka stakeholders to ensure that the Destination Promise™ of the City's brand is delivered consistently and pervasively.

There are two types of experiences that are the priorities for the City to manage and monitor. The first are the **touchpoints** that play a crucial role randomly throughout the visitor's total destination experience. While the second, **core brand experiences**, are the encounters that are essential to the experiential themes outlined in the brand platform.

Key Experience Theme Development Checklist

Key experience themes provide an important conduit for partners to play their role in delivering on the Destination Promise™. They touch customers in ways that enable them to immerse themselves in the brand to the extent that they desire. For the destination it enables prioritization of its product development, investment and partnership outreach.

The key experience themes are:

- Relaxation – with family, children and friends in a casual, nature-filled atmosphere
- Personal reward – that enriches the lives of our visitors
- Appreciation of the Arts – with music, visual arts, crafts, native culture and regional food
- Escape – from the everyday

The experiences that compliment and strengthen these key experiences are:

- Absorb the beauty of the ocean front coastline
- Stroll the authentic downtown
- Examine the skill and art of Native artifacts
- View and acquire regionally inspired art and craft items

- Engage in conversation with local residents
- Walk the history trail of Sitka
- Participate in the highest catch Salmon fishing season in all of Southeast Alaska
- Engage in superior bird watching and wildlife boat tours or visit the unique raptor center or bear refuge
- Hike short or long, easy or difficult trails to mountain and sea vistas
- Rent kayaks, bicycles, fly fishing equipment, all-terrain vehicles, or float planes for easy accessibility to Alaska wilderness
- Attend a musical performance
- See raptors and bears close-up

The following are actions that will strengthen Sitka in regard to delivery of the key experience themes.

Brand Experience Delivery

- Maintain an experience delivery focus. Conduct ongoing evaluation, brainstorming or discussions with staff, partners and residents to canvas ideas that will ensure continuous innovation and delivery of outstanding experiences and generate positive word of mouth and loyalty for the city. This should extend to ensuring that all relevant partners and sources of funding for tourism and events are aware of the need to constantly improve the competitive positioning of the city through a focus on experiential tourism.
- Encourage the creation of interactive elements to the experiences offered by all partners. The challenge is to orchestrate activities that touch the customer's sense of sight, touch, smell, hearing and taste. It should also satisfy their desire for learning, understanding and engagement.
- Encourage key attractors to participate in increased collaboration and 'bundling' of their products and experiences. Bundling refers to aligning and marketing products together to present greater richness and diversity of activities.
- Support the expansion of trails and walks.
- Encourage the introduction of new businesses and services, which provide food and drink.
- Support the development of a good trail map through the region. This trail should be integrated into brochures, web sites, maps, signage.
- Investigate infrastructure improvements that can add to visitor experiences and underpin the regional brand.

Training and Education

The delivery of great visitor experiences extends to providing great service and starts with the management and staff involved at the visitor interface – it's a culture. This culture begins with a commitment from senior management and owners and should filter through all visitor touchpoints and aim to consistently exceed customer expectations.

- Conduct front line staff training for small businesses that don't have their own programs.

- Ensure that front-line tourism and hospitality staff, as well as executives are knowledgeable about other regional attractions, services and events to aid cross-selling, visitor satisfaction and optimize visitor length of stay and spending.

Placemaking

This is the process of creating attractive streetscapes, gateways, squares, precincts, parks, public art, and trails that will attract people because they are pleasurable, enticing or interesting. The brand planning process revealed several areas in which the attractiveness of Sitka can be improved for both residents and visitors. These include:

- Support the introduction of more public art in Sitka, particularly where it supports the themes of the brand.
- Encourage the development of a compact pedestrian precinct that can function as a gathering place. This should feature restaurants with outdoor seating, coffee shops, specialty retail and entertainment that will be a gathering place for residents and generate a sense of night activity.

Pedestrian Signage and Wayfinding: Signage systems serve vital roles. They inform, guide, and motivate travelers. They are also important in shaping the identity of a place through their style, design, colors, lettering, content and placement. Good signage can contribute significantly toward the satisfaction of visitors. The current wayfinding program will contribute significantly to the presentation of Sitka. Signs play an important role in encouraging people to spend money by effectively guiding them to desired locations.

Interpretation: This practice is aimed at explaining to visitors the significance of an object, a culture or a place – thereby possibly creating an attraction. Three objectives of interpretation are to enhance visitor experiences, to improve visitor knowledge or understanding, and to assist in the protection or conservation of places or cultural resources. It is most commonly used to refer to activities such as guided tours or walks and educational presentations, and to signs, mobile apps, guidebooks and brochures. Interpretation is very common in historic sites, museums, galleries, zoos, and natural areas of significance, as well as in telling the stories of communities. At its best it involves talented storytelling and content that visitors will find memorable, stimulating and worth telling to others.

Encourage thematic interpretation throughout the region, especially for sites of significant natural flora and fauna, settlement and fishing heritage. The signage and information systems used should be uniform throughout the region.

7. Monitoring & Evaluation

With the brand now launched, it is vital to closely monitor and manage its progress and make adjustments when necessary. This is not necessarily an expensive or time-consuming exercise. While several performance measures such as visitor numbers, information requests received online, in-person or via phone, lodging tax revenue, occupancy levels, visitor spending, event attendance and advertising responses may already be monitored, there are a number of other brand health metrics that should be appraised at least once a year. Monitor the following indicators to ensure that the brand remains relevant and meaningful:

- Stay focused on the demographics, behavior and satisfaction of our target audiences.
- Keep visual identity and communications fresh and creative.
- Ensure that Sitka's positioning and Destination Promise™ remain meaningful.

- Watch overall trends that can impact customer demand and behavior, such as technological changes, air fares.
- Monitor critical touchpoints to ensure that they are fulfilling (or surpassing) customer needs and making the brand exciting.

These indicators can be used to evaluate the brand beyond normal ROI measures:

Performance Indicator	Method
<i>Brand adoption by stakeholders</i>	Review commercial, government, cultural, community and event management organizations to gauge the extent of their adoption of the brand - beyond the logo and tagline use. Consider the extent and accuracy of their adoption of brand messages, images, and the introduction of new products and experiences. Also consider their level of engagement and collaboration with the Chamber.
<i>Community brand support and city image</i>	Conduct a survey of residents, businesses, tourism, government and other interested organizations. This should include assessment of residents' overall image of Sitka. Repeat every two years.
<i>Co-operative support</i>	Track the level of participation in Chamber co-operative marketing opportunities.
<i>Customer profiles</i>	Assess shifts in customer profiles and source markets.
<i>Customer satisfaction</i>	Conduct ongoing customer surveys to monitor satisfaction with the Sitka experience and the likelihood of visitors returning. These surveys should be conducted at all major events and evaluate the behavior and spending of visitors.
<i>Brand consistency</i>	Review the appearance and content of all appropriate marketing materials that project the region to monitor message coverage including those produced outside of the area.
<i>Media coverage</i>	Monitor media coverage, particularly externally, for its use of the desired brand messages.
<i>Product / experience development</i>	Monitor the number of new tourism-related businesses, events, packages and multi-product offerings to ensure they demonstrate on-brand experiences to successfully meet customer needs.
<i>Stakeholder feedback</i>	Survey key stakeholders, partners, and city messengers to explore and monitor brand development issues.
<i>Attitudes toward the city</i>	Monitor shifts in customer/resident attitudes, perceptions, and image of the city, the benefits of tourism.



SITKA BRAND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Follow the Brand Guidelines, secure domain names and register your brand logo and tagline.

Timing: September, 2015

Who takes the lead: Visit Sitka

Approximate cost: \$2,500

Possible funding idea: Visit Sitka Budget

Rationale and/or details:

Domain Names:

With any branding project one of the first priorities is to secure the domain names that will help promote the brand. Spend some time coming up with short brand related domain names to own. All of these would point to the home page of the new tourism-based website, one of the recommendations included in this plan. Securing domain names costs between \$5 and \$7 a year and hosting each may be in the \$5 a month range, so it's not a big expense. Keep in mind that the domain name should help sell the experience – it's actually part of the marketing effort.

Brand Guidelines:

Before people start redeveloping brochures, websites, new letterhead and business cards, the top priority is to review and adopt the Sitka Brand Guidelines document

The Brand Guidelines will be the “bible” every organization (Visit Sitka, City departments, Chamber of Commerce and visitor industry private marketing) will use to create continuity with your brand direction.

The Brand Guidelines, or standards and practices manual contains graphic design standards for logo and slogan use, guidelines for website development, guidelines for the production of printed sales and marketing materials, as well as the proper use of key marketing, advertising and promotion messages.

The Brand Manager will be responsible for overseeing proper use of the graphic identity. The Brand Guidelines will provide the official guidance for how to use the brand's graphic identity.

Examples of approved logo and brand use are provided in the guide. This includes dimensions and minimum sizes, as well as fonts and colors. Logo colors must be identified as specific Pantone colors and/or as percentages of the four process colors: cyan, magenta, yellow and black (CMYK). Guidelines for reproducing the logo in black and white and in one color need to be included.

Wrong usage of the logo (in structure, color or fonts) will be spelled out. Combining the logo with other logos or branding elements should never be permitted. Web design concepts show use of the logo, color palette, and structure. RGB and HTML colors are listed.

Continuity and consistency are critical when developing a strong branding program that creates top of mind awareness of the brand. The logo and brand design should give the community an easily recognizable identity – a symbol and message that represents the community and the experiences it has to offer. Whenever the logo is used, it should bring to mind images of enjoying that community.

Repetition helps reinforce the viewer's perception, but consistency is the only way to ensure logo and brand recognition. That is why the Brand Guidelines is a detailed document, providing specific instructions on how to



use the graphics – font sizes, colors, guidelines for reproduction, guidelines for web design, PowerPoint presentations, and advertisements. Examples of logo use are provided for the town and local organizations that will utilize the logo, as well as for signage and wayfinding.

All organizations that market the community need to do so with consistency in the look and feel of their marketing. The Style Guide helps get everyone on the same page, pulling in the same direction. Visit Sitka should work with all marketing organizations that promote the community on proper use of the logo and other graphic elements to create a unified, consistent look and feel.

Trademarking/Registration:

We recommend that you register your logo and tagline. A “trademark” or “TM” is used when people have sent in an application to have something registered with the Trademark Office. It basically says “hands off – we’re applying for ownership. A “registered trademark “R” means it is registered with the federal government and the applicant owns it.

A registered US Patent Attorney can accomplish this for about \$2,500 or so depending on what all you are registering. If you wish, we can recommend a copyright attorney.

2. Design, print and distribute “The Best of Sitka” rack brochure

Timeline: February, 2016

Who takes the lead: Visit Sitka

Approximate cost: \$10,000 – split 50/50 with featured businesses

Possible funding idea: Visit Sitka Budget

Rationale and/or details:

Always promote your “anchor tenants.” These are businesses and activities that people would be see as top of the line. You cannot let politics, or membership get in the way of promoting your “best of” attractions, so if this is a problem for the Visit Sitka then another organizations should take the lead. The reasons for creating this brochure are many:

- The most asked question at any hotel, B&B or visitor information center is “where’s a good place to eat?” and visitors don’t want to be handed a list. By promoting your best restaurants, retail shops and activities, you ensure a good experience, which is often instantly noted on Facebook, in Twitter posts and in on-line reviews such as Yelp and TripAdvisor. If friends or family were visiting you, where would you take them to eat?
- Success breeds success. No successful mall was ever developed until the anchor tenants are committed. And most people go to the malls, not because there’s a Hallmark store, GNC Nutrition outlet, or a dozen cell phone dealers, but for the anchor tenants. Chances are good they’ll stop into Hallmark or a number of other smaller shops while they’re at the mall. The anchor tenants attract the shoppers to the mall, and all the other shops benefit as well. Would you go to Orlando if Disney World weren’t there? If you said no, you just insulted 171 other attractions. But they all know that Disney is the anchor tenant and does the heavy lifting in terms of promotion, and they all benefit from Disney being there. Additionally, Disney is glad Universal Studio, Wild Kingdom and the other attractions are there because, collectively, they make Orlando worth a trip from just about anywhere on earth.
- By promoting your very best restaurants, retail shops and activities, you encourage the others to raise the bar so they can be included in future “Best of” guides, which should be reexamined and

produced new each year. Note the criteria below, and encourage those not selected to work on those criteria so they too can be promoted in the guide.

- “Best of” restaurants, retail shops and activities make Sitka worth the special trip, particularly from cruise ships, neighboring communities and adjoining rural areas.
- One of your recruitment objectives is to have two or three retail, dining and activity anchor tenants. Just like malls, few destinations become successful without those anchor tenants. You need to encourage existing businesses to raise the bar, or recruit them, and then make sure you help market them.

The “Best of” guide is a 4-inch x 9-inch rack brochure that can include up to 20 businesses and activities, and is typically made up of 24 panels (12 panels per side). It should include perhaps 12 to 18 businesses and activities, plus front and back cover, a panel explaining how these were chosen, and a panel that talks about Sitka, and what the area is all about (Your brand promise).

Here are the criteria you might use to determine who should be invited as a participant:

- a. They must be open at least six days a week. The day they can be closed is Monday.
- b. They must be open until at least 8:00 pm all six nights. As an FYI, 70% of all consumer retail spending now takes place after 6:00 pm. Are you open? This is why all successful malls are typically open until 9:00 or 10:00 pm seven days a week.
- c. They must have good curb appeal. They must be inviting.
- d. They must be highly regarded by someone other than themselves. This means that they must have an 80%+ positive reviews on TripAdvisor, Yelp, Urban Spoon and/or have been written up in state or regional publications.
- e. They must be organic to the Sitka area. This means you can’t include franchises and businesses that can be found in just about every town. Why go to Sitka if I can enjoy the same shop or restaurant right at home?
- f. They do not all need to be located in downtown Sitka. While we hope they can be recruited to downtown Sitka, it’s not a requirement to be included in the guide.

These business folks are each invited to purchase a panel in the guide, making this a public-private marketing partnership. Typically each business or activity would pay in the range of \$400 for their panel. The remainder of the cost is covered by Visit Sitka. Many activities, such as recreational or historical attractions and parks have little or no marketing budgets, and their panel would be covered by the DMO or other funds.

It’s very important NOT to include businesses just to sell more panels. You should have a good balance between restaurants, retail shops, and activities: Perhaps six of each. But if you only have four restaurants that are truly outstanding (remember you MUST deliver on the promise) only promote four. The same goes with retail shops and activities.

We recommend printing at least 10,000 copies and distributing them as follows:

- Every lodge, camp or motel should put the “Best of Sitka” guide in every room or have them available at the front desk. Guests, of course, are encouraged to keep the copy they pick up. An alternative would be to hand the guest one on check-in.
- In your visitor information center, Chamber office, and at visitor information kiosks designed and installed as part of your wayfinding system. All should include brochure distribution where the “Best of Sitka” guide is included.
- One should be sent to every household in the Sitka area, in a #10 envelope (yes, snail mail) with a small card that reads, “The number one reason people travel is to visit friends and family. We

hope that you will hang onto this brochure so that when you host visitors, you will show them the very best of what Sitka has to offer. After all, every dining room table should be a concierge desk.”

- At other state visitor information centers.
- At City Hall, Centennial Hall, the library and at other public assembly spaces.

This one brochure is a good way to entice regional visitors to stop in Sitka, a great way to get camp guests to explore downtown, and a good way to educate locals about what you’ve got and where it’s located.

For each featured business, include a photo (interiors sell the experience better than exterior shots), their logo, address, phone number, website address and a description of why they are so good and are a “must visit” and “worth the drive (or ferry trip)” destination. Be specific about some feature, dish or experience that makes it special. Each would get a full panel.

The guide should also be available on the Visit Sitka website home page for viewing and for download.

The guide should be reproduced every year. Finally, the reason no lodging facilities are included is so that lodges, camps, hotels and motels will hand the brochure to visitors without fear of promoting their competitors.

3. Create a “Guide to Event Production in Sitka” brochure

Timing: March, 2016

Who takes the lead: Visit Sitka

Approximate cost: \$10,000

Possible funding idea: Visit Sitka budget

Rationale and/or details:

One of the keys to creating events is getting others to do most of the work in putting on events and activities that will draw both residents and visitors downtown where they can spend time with their friends, and importantly, spend money in the nearby restaurants, retail shops and on recreational equipment and tours. Since the goal is to create autumn activities that will draw 100 to 300+ visitors each day, it would be impossible for the Visit Sitka staff to produce every event. Instead, invite outside producers to put their events on. This is the purpose of the brochure.

This would be a tri-fold piece (11 inches x 23.5 inches that folds to 8.5 inches x 11 inches) that would include:

- WHY they should host their events in Sitka. An entire page would be dedicated to marketing Sitka as THE event destination.
- Information about hosting events in Sitka, including contact information and local resources available to them: some city departments, some private-industry like catering or food services, and transportation.
- Logistical information like power, sound, lighting, security, fencing for beer gardens, staging, etc.
- A two-page spread would include the layout of the major meeting spaces, the town parks, and what streets can be closed or how events can be physically configured.
- Costs for supporting services and event-related equipment (security, trash removal, cleanup, staging, power, sound, lighting, portable toilets, etc.) This could be an additional sheet to be included as an add-on so that prices and services can be changed as the brand evolves.

This marketing piece would be printed in full-color, include lots of photography of Sitka events, and be sent to potential event organizers, clubs and organizations after they have been contacted or approached by your event recruiter.

4. Develop free, robust Wi-Fi access in a ¼ mile radius of downtown Sitka

Timeline: March, 2017

Who takes the lead: City and Borough of Sitka

Approximate cost: \$70,000

Possible funding idea: City general funds, state grants, Sitka Chamber.

Rationale and/or details:

Think of free downtown Wi-Fi as a marketing investment, not a freebie for bored visitors. For today's traveler, the most credible information they get on an activity or destination is from their friends and family. Downtown Wi-Fi enables visitors to instantly upload "selfies" on location, showing them having a great time. These are sent to their social networks of friends, many who will in turn forward them on to others. Multiply that times hundreds and you have a huge third-party endorsement of Sitka.

Create iconic sites where kids and parents can take "selfies" and instantly transmit them to their online "tribes". There is no marketing that does a better job than third party testimony, and putting images of consumers having fun in Sitka on thousands of social media pages goes a long way to spreading the word. Make sure the iconic site (sculpture, sign, artwork, etc.) contains the Sitka name or logo. Disney has perfected this with their walking animated characters.

You can also place QR codes near event locations, monuments and interpretive signage so that visitors can download audio and video enriched interpretive content. For a destination rich in scenic vistas, history and activity, this will help tell the story of Sitka, engage the visitors and direct them to additional experiences. Envision a QR code at the new Harrigan Centennial Hall that downloads a calendar of events to your phone, or even puts the event list on your calendar. Maybe you put the "Best of Sitka" brochure on your log-in site.

An important benefit of public Wi-Fi is that all this Internet activity can be analyzed and controlled from a central location. For example, you can monitor which types of devices are most used to upload photos and text, and tweak the system to maximize their speed and efficiency. You can see which Wi-Fi access points are being used the most, and improve the photo opportunities at those that are lagging behind. You can monitor traffic highs and lows, so you know when visitors are most active downtown, and you can turn access points on and off if you want to restrict or throttle back different sections of downtown. You can even ban local businesses that are using the public Wi-Fi for private business, if it affects overall Internet speed.

In this age of central gathering spots and sidewalk cafes, having consistent, high quality broadband Internet access is very important. Particularly in a town where you are trying to attract meeting and convention attendees, having free broadband access is a huge selling point.

Consider requiring people to formally log in to use the Internet after an initial 15-minute period. They provide their name and e-mail address (no more information than that) after which they are automatically reconnected, and added to your e-newsletter database, so they will receive notices about upcoming festivals and events. They would be able to opt out later if they wish.

5. Add Sitka businesses to GPS services, web-based applications and smartphones

Timeline: February, 2016

Who takes the lead: Chamber of Commerce, or Rotary

Approximate cost: Staff time

Possible funding idea: None

Rationale and/or details:

Today's consumer relies heavily on web-based applications to find the location of retail goods and services, particularly in rural areas. The appearance of Sitka businesses on these web-based applications and GPS services improves the likelihood that they will be found and navigated to, thereby increasing the awareness of Sitka as a consumer destination.

Sitka businesses should add or update their information on a variety of applications:

NAVTEQ: mapreporter.navteq.com – This service partners with third-party companies to provide its location services for portable GPS devices made by Garmin, Lowrance and NDrive. Many in-dash navigation car systems upgrade their maps from this source. Navteq also supports web-based applications like Yahoo! Maps, Bing Maps, Nokia Maps, and Mapquest.

TELE ATLAS: mapfeedback.teleatlas.com – This company supplies map information to Tom-Tom and Apple's IOS 6 maps.

GOOGLE MAPS: google.com/placesforbusiness – Google provides maps for its own system.

Another marketing tool that Sitka businesses should take advantage of is being listed on TripAdvisor.com and Yelp.com. This can be done by either the business or a consumer. For example, businesses may want to buy a listing or page on TripAdvisor. Another way is to have consumers complete reviews of Sitka businesses on these sites. Businesses should make sure they show up when consumers look for “dining in Sitka” or “Activities in Sitka”. The DMO should monitor the sites weekly and address any negative reviews with follow up action. When a merchant or lodging facility responds to a negative review in a positive, helpful, constructive way, it shows the readers that the merchant cares and is making things better. This can go a long way to alleviate the negative effects of a bad review. Some area businesses already have a presence on these sites. The DMO should review them, make sure they are up to date and accurate, and address any concerns expressed by viewers.

6. Contract for professional video and still photography

Timeline: January, 2016

Who takes the lead: Visit Sitka

Approximate cost: \$30,000

Possible funding idea: Visit Sitka Budget

Rationale and/or details:

Before development or updating of the Visit Sitka or City websites, arrange for professional video and still photography. We are in the age of visual communications. Most Alaska communities go to local professional “beauty shot” photographers for their images, but the vast majority of these images have no people in them, much less visitors. What Sitka needs to stand apart is to have staged photography with models representing the different visitor markets. GDS had great difficulty finding photos that showed both the beauty of Sitka and the visitor activities that were spectacular as well. Your photos need to be world class – like you'd expect to see in a National Geographic publication but with tourists in the picture. For example the Sitka CVB Webpage “Wildlife” has animals in the photos, but no visitors. Were they taken by professionals in remote locations that no visitor would have a chance to duplicate? Some of the Picture Perfect Photos are fantastic (the ones with people in them!). Use photos like those.

Videos, on the other hand, need to be more artsy and don't need to be overly polished. The idea is to sell great experiences that are totally different from what the visitor can get closer to home. There are NO videos on the Sitka photo tour video gallery but the pull-down video page has four professionally produced videos. These are great. They need to fit within the framework of the Brand Guidelines – the look and feel of your brand. Photos and videos should be festive, fun, and engaging. The focus should be on people having a great time in Sitka. After all, this is about experiencing the lifestyle atmosphere that Sitka offers. Everything you film and shoot should portray that feeling.

You can reduce costs by assuring the photographer that the images will only be used by local non-profit organizations and/or the City to promote Sitka and the borough, and by including the photographer's name next to every use (in credits on video content) – photo credits. This way you create a reciprocal relationship. Consider having a page on your website dedicated to the photographer without linking to another site.

Make sure your videographer also has studio skills. You'll want to create a number of 20-second to two-minute videos, every season of the year, promoting great experiences. This means videos may need to be edited and formatted for use on YouTube, your website, and other online sites.

Develop a knock-your-socks-off B-roll library of video and perhaps 80 signature photographs, keeping mind:

- The photography and videography MUST fit within the Brand Guide requirements and recommendations.
- Always focus on people having a great time. Especially at recreational play and scheduled events. Don't show just scenery – show the visitor in action. People – not objects. The ocean is awesome, but photos of fishing, sailing, kayaking, etc. would be far more fascinating. People see themselves where they see other people. Always sell experiences, not just places, not just objects. We want to see people, not pictures of forests. For example, instead of photo of a bear, use a photo of a photographer taking a picture of a bear.

7. Contract graphic design expertise and travel writing capabilities

Timing: March, 2016

Who takes the lead: Visit Sitka

Approximate cost: TBD

Possible funding idea: Visit Sitka budget

Rationale and/or details:

Graphic Design:

The look and feel of the brand is a critical element of its long-term success. Hire the very best and then negotiate the fees with them. They will be your partner in protecting the brand, and must have a clear understanding of what branding really is. They must know how to evoke emotion and create top of mind awareness.

They will be charged with the working from the Brand Guideline document, designing marketing materials and templates for partnering organizations, posters, give-away items, video content, key marketing messages, website content, etc.

Continuity is also critical: You MUST have all of your partnership organizations on the same page, pulling in the same direction. Imagine the nightmare Coca-Cola would face if every Coca-Cola bottling plant design its own Coke logo, bottle and can design, ads, trucks, etc. It wouldn't be one of the world's top brands. In fact, it wouldn't exist as a company.

You have one chance to do this right, and so securing the best graphic design expertise you can find is essential. They do not need to be local, although if local talent is available and eager to be a part of the effort, then by all means keep the money local. You may see fit to hire someone outside the area the first year, so you end up with a toolbox full of initial design elements that can simply be refreshed locally.

Issue a Request for Qualifications and let them know they will be charged with a number of projects including:

- Brochures and printed marketing pieces
- Website page layout and design
- Logo gear and collectibles
- Pole banners
- Ads (radio, Internet, print)
- Anything and everything that graphically and verbally portrays the Sitka brand

Pick the top three firms (or people) after issuing the RFQ. Qualifications should include:

- Experience promoting communities
- Experience promoting tourism, chambers of commerce and economic development organizations
- Depth with print advertising, design and production of promotional materials
- Brand Guideline (Style Guide) creation experience
- Talent (the most critical element. Look at the work they've done: Does it make you want to go there? To buy the product they are promoting? If not, go to the next one.)
- Range of talent (an art-focused brand looks a whole lot different than someone promoting rail history, for example. Do they have range?)
- Social media expertise (setting up a YouTube channel, Facebook Fan Page, Twitter account, etc.)
- Editorial photography – the type of photos you'll use to promote your key messages. With this brand, photography, including videography, will be critically important. This team would be charged with assisting with assignment photography and the creation of a great photo library.

Travel-writing:

Graphic design is only 50% of what your creative team will need to do for you. The other 50% is the messaging: the written text. You may be better served by getting a marketing agency that has expertise in written word, graphic design, digital marketing, especially managing social media blogs, and public relations. The written word is **JUST AS IMPORTANT** as the visual graphics.

Interview your top three picks and pick the one you think is the most talented, will be timely in submitting ideas and deliverables, is affordable, is easiest to work with, and understands what branding really is. Many graphic designers and writers are defensive of their work, and you need someone (or a team) that will listen to you and do you proud.

They should be paid on a per-project basis and would bid each project with a not-to-exceed cost so that you can work with tight budget restraints. But **DO** spend the money to bring in professional graphic design and copywriting expertise. It's important in everything you do. They will be able to do projects for the Chamber, the City, and other organizations, creating continuity.

8. Enter into a public relations / marketing contract for national coverage

Timeline: February, 2017

Who takes the lead: Visit Sitka

Approximate cost: \$50,000 annually

Possible funding idea: Visit Sitka Budget

Rationale and/or details:

With the brand “Where Art Meets Wild Alaska”, Sitka is putting a stake in the ground and claiming a place on the national stage of travel destinations. Much of the preliminary work recommended in this plan has to do with upgrading and creating the products, services and experiences that will deliver on that brand promise – that Sitka is truly a special, unique place in the world, and worthy of a visit or even as a place to live and work. Delivery must be consistent and convenient.

Once you get there, you need to tell the world. That requires a sophisticated national (and perhaps international) public relations effort. Why public relations and not advertising? Because brands are about what other people think of you, not what you say about yourself. Public relations is the art of getting others to declare your charms. Third party testimony has far greater credibility than advertising. Traditionally, this happened by inviting travel writers to the destination, hoping that the subsequent magazine article would be flattering.

This method still exists of course, but the advent of the Internet, websites, social media, blogs, and photo sites like Pinterest have completely changed the public relations environment. Ninety percent of travelers search the Internet for information about potential vacation destinations and the majority of those book their trip online. Where do they go? Not to destination sites, but to third party sites like TripAdvisor and Yelp. They want to see what others are saying about you.

Today’s public relations experts understand these new media and the subtleties of shepherding and generating positive third party coverage of destinations. Find and hire a firm that has experience in this new age of destination public relations, in generating the right kind of “buzz” about Sitka, about managing Facebook sites, social blogs, creating viral coverage and addressing negative coverage. They still should be able to work with traditional travel writers in generating editorial coverage, both print and digital.

In today’s electronic environment where most people are addicted to their smartphones, consumer opinions shift quickly. This is a double-edged sword. Brands can gain notoriety quickly, but just as quickly, they can be destroyed. Professional public relations expertise can help guide you through the process, so that you don’t promise more than you can deliver at any given time.

9. Contract for the manufacturing and sale of branded logo gear

Timeline: March, 2017

Who takes the lead: Visit Sitka

Approximate cost: Self-funded (but may require some seed funds), to be contracted

Possible funding idea: private funding (business opportunity)

Rationale and/or details:

To tell the world about “Where Art Meets Wild Alaska”, develop logo gear that can be sold at local retail stores, in the visitor information center, , and other retail outlets. Using the new brand identity and tagline, create collectibles and logo gear that can be sold:

- Polo shirts (have the brand identity stitched above the breast pocket location). Don't make these billboard shirts with huge logos on them.
- Baseball caps
- Coffee mugs and/or water bottles
- Car decals
- Logos on outdoor recreational clothing and gear is a perfect fit since the goal is to make Sitka the place to recreate. Make up a list of brand-specific goods that could include the Sitka "Trademark" and would reinforce the brand.

Make sure they are colorful and something a visitor would want to wear and want to have. Think like a visitor – what you might buy and wear when you go to Yellowstone National Park or Jackson, Wyoming, for example.

Get together and think of clever and edgy slogans that would sell. Remember to sell the experience – not just the destination.

Keep the franchise agreements simple. Add a 20% mark up to the cost of production and shipping for your take, and set a maximum price that the vendor can sell the items. You don't want the items to be so expensive that no one buys them. The idea is to get them bought and worn, all over the country (and world).



10. Adjust the Visit Sitka budget to meet today's media mix.

Timeline: November, 2016

Who takes the lead: Visit Sitka

Approximate cost: None

Possible funding idea: None required

Rationale and/or details:

When it comes to tourism marketing, funding should be allocated as follows:

- 40% on digital marketing: website, social media, e-newsletter, apps, online advertising, pay per click, etc.
- 20% on advertising that will drive people to your website, which must be good enough to close the sale.
- 20% on public relations: getting articles and exposure showcasing the brand and your downtown revitalization efforts.
- 10% on printed materials (your Planner and Best Of guides).
- 10% on fishing trade shows, and other forms of advertising.

As you can see by this breakdown, the web should be the very top priority. Ninety percent of all Americans now have immediate access to the Internet via smart phones, tablets, and computers, and they have this access at home, at work, at school, and while on the road. Of this group, 94% use the web to decide where they will visit, what they might want to do this weekend, where to go eat, what to do tonight, where to live, and even where to establish a business.



Sitka needs to lead will all its most important tourism assets, regardless of whether or not they are dues paying members. You must put your best foot forward, and include all tourism assets as potential “best of class” resources to act as “anchor attractions”. Visit Sitka should be free to promote ANY tourism attraction on an equal footing. Visitors want to know what is available, unrestricted.

11. Adjust the CVB’s website content.

Timeline: November, 2016

Who takes the lead: Visit Sitka

Approximate cost: \$30,000

Possible funding idea: Visit Sitka Budget

Rationale and/or details:

Sitka needs to build a tourism-focused website that will REALLY showcase the” brand. It needs to be world-class and professionally produced. It needs to be video and staged photography based, including lots of video content and specifics: It should NOT be a website based on lists. Simple lists of restaurants, retail shops, museums, parks, and other things to do, don’t entice visitors. The website needs to be experienced-based and rich with content.

Use a website software where YOU can make the changes, in house, without the need to pay a webmaster every time you want to make changes or add to the content. You don’t want your website to be a “been there, done that” site. You should invest your money in content, not the delivery system.

Work with your graphic design firm to have common elements and a consistent look and feel among the Visit Sitka, City and Chamber websites. They do not all have to be cookie-cutter or use the same template, but they do need to have complementary and unified color schemes, fonts or graphic elements. Encourage other destination-related sites like the to integrate brand colors and fonts into their website.

Here are a few rules for your Visit Sitka website:

- a. Promote specifics not generalities. If you promote Sitka as the hub for some of the best hiking trails in the area, you MUST tell me more:
 - a. Where?
 - b. What kind of surface is the trail? What are the elevation changes? Is it handicap-accessible?
 - c. Do I need a permit? If so, where can I get one?
 - d. How far a drive is the trailhead?
 - e. Are there campsites or picnic tables along the trail?
 - f. Are there restrooms?
 - g. Where do I park, and is there a fee?
 - h. Do I share the trail with bikes or motorized vehicles?
 - i. What time of day, what time of year is best?
 - j. What precautions should I take?
 - k. What will I see? What makes this trail extra-special?

The more details you provide the more likely you are to close the sale. Don't just send them to another site and pass off the responsibility to others. Include maps whenever possible and video snippets of hikers on the trail.

- b. Avoid lists. If you want to showcase restaurants, include them by type of dining: Italian, Mexican, American, barbecue, etc. and make sure you include a photo (interior please), logo, address, meals served, hours and days they are open, and a description of why they are so great, plus include a link to their menu and website.
- c. People LOVE video content – particularly those that run from 30 seconds to no more than three minutes. It's better to have a number of shorter videos than one long one.
- d. People LOVE photography. Your site should be loaded with photography, and the photos should show people enjoying activities – not just places like parks, beauty shots without a soul in the picture. We relate to people, not just places.
- e. Organize the site by subject like it currently is formatted. In fact, consider a “pick your season” format where they choose the season, and it takes you to a page that will tell them what to expect that time of year in terms of weather, accommodations and activities. Once on that page they can then “pick your passion,” which will include the various activities available that time of year. Hiking or biking may be seasonal, but the events will be showcased in every season.
- f. Make it simple and easy to navigate.
- g. Remember that you are selling experiences first, Sitka. People are looking for reasons to believe that Sitka is the place to visit. Visitors are looking for things to do, not places to go.

12. Invite clubs to hold events in the Harrigan Centennial Hall once it is refurbished

Timing: 2017

Who takes the lead: Visit Sitka

Approximate cost: \$16,000

Possible funding idea: Visit Sitka Budget

Rationale and/or details:

To find organizations to recruit, there are comprehensive guides available in print, and it's possible they might now be in digital or database format:

- a. Associations USA. This is “a directory of contact information for national associations, foundations, and other nonprofit organizations in the United States and Canada.” It is published by Omnigraphics out of Detroit, although this publication seems to be out of date.
- b. AssociationExecs.com. A membership of over 51,000 decision-makers at 17,000+ national and state associations. A membership level that provides phone and mailing addresses is \$989.00 annually.
- c. National Directory of Nonprofit Organizations (a two-volume directory) published by the Taft Group. This is available electronically as well as in print. It includes “key contact, IRS status, and annual revenue information for more than 260,000 organizations.” You may only want one of the two volumes as both have information on the same lists. They are at Edition 30 but you may be able to find an older edition that is less expensive. Volume One is \$788.00 and volume Two is \$531.00.

Most libraries have the books on hand, so one option is to provide a donation to the library and have them give you last year's edition when the new edition comes out. You might donate \$250 dollars to the library, which would otherwise probably just recycle the old editions. If they do not purchase these guides, then simply spend the money to get these directories.

You are looking for clubs and organizations that hold periodic events, and you'll be inviting them to Sitka. The National Directory of Nonprofit Organizations can be sorted geographically and you want to invite organizations that are located within the State. So go through the books and find the clubs and associations that have a presence in your geographic market area. Then enter the information for each that might be a possible contact into your CRM software.

Clubs and organizations you hope to attract include:

- Motorcycle shows
- BMX exhibitions
- Fly fishing shows
- Hunting expos
- ATV shows
- Quilt guild shows
- Pottery shows
- Job fairs
- Bridal fairs
- Photography expos
- Arts & Crafts fairs
- Culinary education
- Brew and wine festival
- Concerts
- Home shows
- Garden Shows
- Wellness exposition
- Outfitters & clothing
- Dog shows
- Boat shows
- Spa and yoga
- Movies in the Pavilion
- Pet fair
- Halloween events
- SMERF groups

Not only are you trying to attract hobby clubs but also non-profit organizations that fight breast cancer, such as the Susan B. Komen Foundation, and thousands of other cause-oriented organizations that host fund-raising events from 10k runs, to triathlons, to walks, and all types of other events.

In almost every case they give you contact information, a phone number, address and what kind of organization they are. You want to do your marketing by phone and snail-mail. The reliance on e-mail is far too widespread, and so this is a more personalized approach. And this database is your bible in terms of reaching out to over scores of organizations.

Snail mail will get more attention than doing an e-mail campaign. A one-page letter will be critical to encourage outside organizations to host their events in Sitka. Invite them; let them know you'll roll out the red carpet for them, that you have the BEST downtown and great exhibit space, and that it's in a spectacular setting. Include an Event Guide.

You might even send them the letter, Event Guide and a poster that showcases the exhibit space and waterfront. These can be sent out in mailing tubes – you can purchase them from ULine for about \$1.50 each. People will always open a mailing tube over an envelope that might be perceived as junk mail. By showcasing a Sitka poster you'll plant the seed that there's simply no better place to celebrate their event.

As you develop the database your staff will need to make judgment calls: volunteer fire departments are often non-profits but the chance of them hosting an event in Sitka, instead of their home communities, is pretty slim. Only go after the ones where they host larger events and are willing to travel to host the event.

Once you get a club, chances are you can book their event once, and if it is successful, and you are awesome hosts, you'll get it for the same weekend, every year, for years. That's the goal of this effort: Invite them once, treat them right, and have them come back year after year.

Many of these host annual conferences, exhibitions, trade shows and consumer events. Wouldn't it be great if national sailing, kayak or dragon boat association held an annual competition in Sitka? After all, you have a fantastic setting for it.

As part of this effort, come up with ten or twenty unique event names that you can pass on to these organizations.

Especially concentrate on those within Alaska. This is your primary target area. This database is the lifeblood of your marketing effort, so take the time to build it right, and then start calling every club, association, and organization. When you do so, also ask them for referrals.

One final word: In the first two or three years of this effort, do NOT put obstacles in their way like big charges for portable toilets, staging, sound, lights, security, etc. You want to create incentives for them to host their events in Sitka. And ninety-nine percent of these organizations are going to be non-profit groups with very little budget. BUT they will do the marketing, the organizing, invite their members and others. THEN if it's successful and they agree to come back time and again, at that point it might make sense to perhaps collect fees for local services they are using. Think long term of the tax base that comes from a vibrant, and successful Autumn season, and full hotels.

13. Improve visitor access and convenience to existing outdoor recreation resources, both individually and by guiding.

Timeline: 2016, ongoing

Who takes the lead: Visit Sitka

Approximate cost: TBD

Possible funding idea: Private sector business development

Rationale and/or details:

If visitors spend enough time online searching the Visit Sitka website and its listed activities websites, they can get a pretty good idea of what rental equipment is available for them to explore the Sound and the forest on their own, or to hire guide services that provides motorized and non-motorized access to trails and lakes. This takes a lot of time and generally occurs prior to their visits. Once in the area, and wandering around the area, there is little evidence of the depth of options for renting equipment or guiding services. We recommend

consolidating this information on the DMO website and making it available at the Visit Sitka office, with the wayfinding kiosks in the wayfinding system telling visitors where to go to rent and book. Nothing is more frustrating to a visitor than to be on the edge of great recreational resources and not be able to access them conveniently. Rentals and guiding must be available during consistent hours, including booking capability during evening hours when they are gathered in downtown Sitka.

Regional locals are likely to bring their own equipment with them for these outdoor activities, but for the visitor who is unequipped, outfitting is anything but convenient at present. Elevate the presence of the companies that rent mountain bikes, ATV's, boats (currently no boats are listed), and sell packed lunches, picnic kits, water, hand warmers, hats, gloves, rain ponchos, as well as extra T-shirts, socks, walking shorts, and other items that monetizes what otherwise is a free activity.

Active outdoor pursuits are a natural for the area, and keeps people in the region and spending money. But visitors have to be made aware of the opportunities, and it has to be easy and convenient. Make sure your visitor websites do a good job of telling the recreational story. Use evocative photographs of visitors in action. Use or link to social media coverage of your outdoor resources. Add new attractions to the ones you already have, like rock climbing, or zip line challenges. Stakeholders have claimed world-class fishing. That means nothing if you don't tell visitors the how, when, where, and why of fishing.

Tell them what they want to know:

- What is the activity?
- How long will it take?
- Where do I get a license and how much will it cost?
- How do I get there, and is there a shuttle to get back?
- Where can I rent equipment?
- What times can I participate?
- What does it cost?
- What is the elevation?
- What degree of effort will it take?
- Etc.

Create a sports brochure that not only has excellent maps and describes in detail the various sports, but includes the stores that rent equipment, sell clothes, offer provisioning and transportation.

Shopping and dining is a natural fit for before and after outdoor activities. Connect the recreational sites to the downtown with adequate signage, and through packages, cross-selling and partnering, such as mountain biking and micro-brews, or fishing and coffee nudges. Make recreation one of the three day parts for a full day's activity: daytime – recreation; evening – outdoor music and dining; late night – indoor pubs.

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