

Creative Economy Solutions:

Inviting Overnight Guests to Town!



Left: Katherine Gray of Los Angeles demonstrates glassblowing at the Chico Glass Fest in October, 2008.

Right: Boyd Sugiki of Seattle, WA demonstrates to conference attendees during the California Glass Exchange Conference at CSU, Chico's studio. More than 80 conference attendees from seven states and 33 cities located more than 50 miles away came to watch local and visiting artists demonstrate glass at a dozen local studios.

More than 800 people attended the Glass Fest, held at Sierra Nevada Brewery's Hops Field.

Submitted By

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*If you want something you've never had,
you have to do something you've never done!*

~ Kimnesha Benn

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	Page 3
The Meat – Making a case for meetings and small conferences	P. 4
Repeat customers are easier and less costly to attract	P. 5
II. Setting the Stage	Page 6
California travel findings to keep in mind	P. 6
Butte County Transient Occupancy Tax Table	P. 6
Chico TOT Trends and Percentage Growth	P. 6
Butte County Revenues from Tourism: A Snapshot (Tables)	P. 7
So What Do These Numbers Mean?	P.7
Chico TOT Trend Chart	P. 7
Artoberfest: A Case Study of TOT Bottomline	P. 8
8 Steps to the Starting Line	P. 9
1. Strong Visionary and Strategic Leadership to Unite Tourism Segment	P. 9
Butte County’s Tourism Focus, Needs, Funding, Budget	PP. 10-11
2. Marketing Funds and Sustainability.	
A Model Convention & Visitor Bureau/DMO	P. 12
Funding Types	PP. 13-14
3. Evaluation of Existing Structure and Expansion of Current Function	P. 14
4. Support and Consensus Among Stakeholders	P. 15
General Plan Update 2030 (Butte County’s Tourism Vision)	P. 15
Guidelines & Procedures to Conduct Consensus Building	P. 16-19
Timeline for Proposed Consensus Building & Plan	P. 17
5. Small Starts with the Ability to Make Changes Slowly and Consistently	P. 19
6. A Strong Foundation	P. 19
7. Calculated Risk-Taking and Bold Steps to Make Things Happen	P. 19
8. An Organization Dedicated Toward Visitor & Conference Development	P. 20
III. Defining our Assets & Relationships	Page 21
Butte County Visitor Trends, Demographics & Projections	P. 21
Outdoor Recreation Activities & Sites	P. 22
Arts, Culture & Heritage Travel	P. 23-24
Calendar of Major Events	P. 25
Service Learning Opportunities	P. 25
Visitor Center Location	P. 26
Website & Online Marketing Development	P. 26
IV. Recommendations	Page 27

Introduction

Before we dig into the meat of this paper, please note this plan is divided into four sections:

I. *AN INTRODUCTION* –In this section, we talk about small conferences and meetings and their potential. This type of focus has been missing from our visitor attraction mix and is included here because Debra Lucero & Associates and our associated non-profit, Upstate Community Enhancement Foundation has now gone through the process of attracting and hosting conferences (California Glass Exchange, the 6th annual California Cultural & Heritage Tourism Symposium) and festivals (Artoberfest, the Chico Glass Fest). As a result of these undertakings, we understand the opportunities as well as the constraints Chico faces as a destination. This combined with general tourism observations gleaned from the nine years of facilitating, promoting and convening tourism players in Butte County composes the balance of the introduction.

II. *SETTING THE STAGE* – This section reviews Butte County’s as well as Chico’s economic tourism profile – in other words, the tax revenue, visitor spending, and jobs created due to tourism-related activities. It also explores eight thoughtful steps to implementation of an action plan – one that establishes a dedicated Visitor Center, as well as a Destination Marketing Organization.

III. *DEFINING OUR ASSETS & RELATIONSHIPS* – This section takes a look at our assets and relationships. When looking at a tourism mix, it is important to look beyond jurisdictional borders. It is our firm belief that Chico should take the lead in creating not only a Visitor Center but a dedicated non-profit marketing organization.

IV. *RECOMMENDATIONS*

The Meat

Festival and event activities have been Chico’s primary visitor attraction “plan” to date. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to outline creative economic development through “... good-fit tourism and conferences around Chico’s key assets (e.g. culture, arts, heritage, entertainment, recreation and education)” as outlined in the Economic Development Resolution adopted unanimously by the Chico City Council December 4, 2007; and to make recommendations that can be implemented as they relate to overall visitor development.

For the past two years, City Staff has identified economic development strategies to “... protect and enhance our community’s quality of life for present and future generations” with the goal to create a “... strong vibrant and sustainable economy.”¹

Part of our vision for visitor development is to illustrate the economic power of attracting small- to medium-size meetings and conferences (25-200 people) to Chico. Why meetings and conferences? There are a couple of good reasons.

1. Marketing to organizations, utilizing their existing social networks, company e-newsletters and association communication is more cost-effective than trying a shot-gun approach to individuals through radio, television, direct mail, internet, etc. These methods are costly and without true merit unless a very well-funded and well-directed destination marketing campaign is in place (something that is not currently available but will be addressed later in this document).

¹ City of Chico Resolution No. 135-07, Dec. 4, 2007

2. Specializing in conferences and meetings of this type is an undeveloped and under-utilized concept. While many folks think of conferences and meetings as BIG events occurring in BIG hotels and BIG resort areas; we're talking about creative folks who are looking for authentic experiences, new places and less costly travel. These folks generally fit into a category known as "Cultural Tourists" – one of the fastest growing demographics in the industry. Butte County and particularly, Chico, can offer amenities and experiences to these cultural tourists without strapping local resources.

Our target industry represents associations and companies that are part of the creative economy sector.

For-Profit, creative industry sectors include:

- Architecture
- Communications
- Design
- Merchandising
- Digital media
- Engineering
- Fashion design
- Film and video production
- Graphic arts
- Information technology
- Interior and industrial design
- Marketing
- Multimedia design
- Music production
- Photography
- Planning
- Product design
- Software development

Locally, we would be remiss in not including the heritage and cultural landscape of agriculture:

- Nut growers
- Rice growers
- Specialty crop growers and producers of olive oil and wine.

These folks usually belong to professional groups or associations and attend local, state, or national meetings.

In the non-profit sector, creative industries and individuals include:

- Artists (dance, music, theatre, literature, visual – NOTE: weavers, printmakers and glassblowers have concentrations in Chico or synergistic opportunities due to other locally based businesses or support.)²

As well as entities which preserve and showcase culture, recreation and nature assets such as:

² AVL Looms (a major manufacturer of looms for weaving) is headquartered in Chico and sells looms to weavers in more than 80 countries; Printmakers can study the extensive collection of the Janet Turner Print Museum at CSU, Chico, with 3,000 fine art prints spanning six centuries and more than 40 countries; while Glassblowers have the advantage of some of the finest artists and studios in the United States.

1. Art and history museums, associations
2. Ethnic and cultural organizations
3. Heritage sites and organizations
4. Local, state, and national parks and designated areas³
5. Wildlife and nature-based associations, events and organizations⁴

Despite not having a convention center, Chico hosts conferences today (primarily at Chico State). One of the more recent examples was the 62nd annual California Geographical Society Conference May 2-4, 2008. More than 350 people attended this conference and yet there was little if no awareness on behalf of the City of Chico, the Chico Chamber of Commerce or other entities that could have made the visitor experience more enjoyable and perhaps more memorable, which is what leads to the branding of an area or region.

Better coordination leads to a better visitor experience which equals the all-important *repeat visitor*.

This is an important point since *repeat visitors* do not cost as much to attract as a *new visitor* and can be lured through follow-up contact. Will Chico State be following up on those 350 folks who attended the geography conference? Will they invite them back for the Wildflower Bike Ride? Artoberfest? The Snow Goose Festival? A visit to The Gateway Science Museum? Not likely. That's not their mission. The question is: Whose mission is it? We hope to answer that question in this plan.

Chico can develop an awareness of our area in preparation for larger crowds and a future multi-purpose visitor and conference center. This conceptual plan is a starting point on how to assist in the development of this all-important tourism revenue stream to the City of Chico.

³ Chico is home to the 3rd largest municipal city park in the United States; Bidwell Mansion is a State Historic Park; Bidwell-Sacramento is a State Park; Oroville's Chinese Temple is a National Registered Historic Site; and Lake Oroville is a State Recreation Area.

⁴ Gray Lodge Wildlife Area is one of the State's oldest refuges;

Part I – Setting the Stage

Travel findings to keep in mind

- Total direct travel spending in California was \$96.7 billion in 2008. This represents a 0.8 percent over the preceding year in current dollars. When adjusted for inflation, travel spending decreased by 3.9 percent. Room rates, gasoline prices and airfares all contributed to the negative constant dollar growth in spending.
- The decrease in travel spending in California mirrors the pattern for the larger U.S.— a leveling of activity in the middle of the year and a steep decline in the fourth quarter. General economic conditions, high gas prices in the summer and increased airfares and reduced air capacity constrained travel activity.
- Almost 19 percent of all travel spending in the state in 2008 was attributable to international travel. Overseas arrivals at Los Angeles and San Francisco increased by 4.3 percent (3.8 million arrivals) from 2007 to 2008.¹ However, this was a smaller increase than the preceding year (7.5 percent from 2006 to 2007). International travel also decreased in the latter part of the year due to higher airfares and reduced capacity.
- In 2008, one hundred dollars (\$100) of travel spending generated \$31.41 of earnings, \$2.24 of local tax revenue, and \$3.73 of state tax revenue.
- In 2008, the amount of travel spending that supported one job in travel-related businesses was \$105,600.⁵

Butte County Transient Occupancy Tax Table

Jurisdiction	2005	2006	2007	%change 06-07
Chico (10%)	\$1.4 million	\$1.7 million	\$1.89 million	10.9%
Gridley (9%)	\$22,800	\$27,200	\$24,500	-9.9%
Oroville (9%)	\$352,000	\$336,000	\$323,000	-3.8%
Paradise (10%)	\$174,000	174,800	186,200	6.4%
Butte Co (6%)	\$41,000	\$42,200	\$37,600	-11.0%

Chico TOT Trends and Percentage Growth

- Transient Occupancy Tax (10%) Receipts for Chico in 2005: \$1.4 million (4.3% annual change)
- Transient Occupancy Tax 10%) Receipts for Chico in 2006: \$1.7 million (17.9% annual change)

⁵ Information for this page was taken from VisitCalifornia.com Dean Runyan Associates. 2007 information was not available in all instances.

- Transient Occupancy Tax (10%) Receipts for Chico in 2007: \$1.89 million (10.9% annual change)
- Transient Occupancy Tax (10%) Receipts for Chico in 2008: \$2.02 million (6.7% annual change)

Butte County Revenues from Tourism: A Snapshot

Total Direct Earnings Butte County 2005 2006

Other Travel	\$1.2 million	\$1.6 million
Accommodations & Food Service	\$36 million	\$38.4 million
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	\$15.5 million	\$16.5 million
Retail	\$8.6 million	\$8.9 million
Visitor Air Transportation	\$40,000	\$30,000

Total Direct Employment Butte County 2005 2006

Accommodations & Food Service	2,020 jobs	2,080 jobs
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	1,200 jobs	1,230 jobs
Retail	350 jobs	370 jobs
Ground Transportation	30 jobs	30 jobs
Visitor Air Transportation	10 jobs	0 jobs
Other Travel	40 jobs	50 jobs

Total Direct Tax Receipts Butte County⁶

2005	\$3.5 million	9.4% annual change
2006	\$3.7 million	5.7% annual change

So What Do These Numbers Mean?

Travel trends are predicting that visits to California gateway cities will be affected by decline in business travel and weakness in the long-haul markets. Visits to other parts of California, while still expected to decrease in 2009, will benefit in relative terms as Californians and visitors from border states will tend to keep their vacations and business travel closer to home.⁷ Chico statistics show a steep decline in TOT revenue in January and February of 2009, nearly 20% compared to 2008.⁸ According to state statistics, this

⁶ Information for this page was taken from VisitCalifornia.com Dean Runyan Associates. 2007 information was not available in all instances.

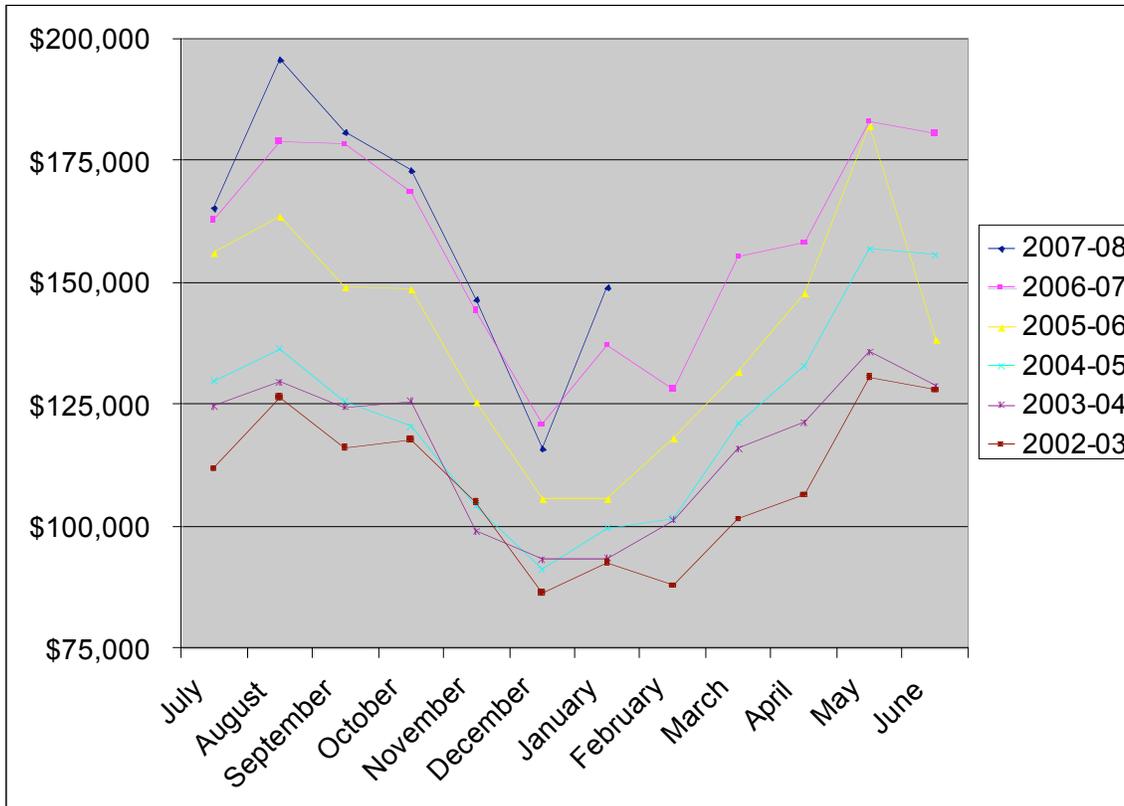
⁷ California Travel & Tourism Commission
<http://tourism.visitcalifornia.com/media/uploads/files/editor/Research/CA%20Forecast%20Dec%202008.pdf>

⁸ City of Chico, 2009

is a similar statewide trend. However, not all is doom and gloom, the downturn could help speed needed collaboration among the many tourism stakeholders, i.e., hotels, motels, B&B's, restaurants, DCBA, etc.

Historically, Chico's transient occupancy tax shows a decline in revenues beginning in October and extending through February. Efforts to bump up these numbers can come through the *Creative Economy Plan*. It's simple. Bring people to enjoy Chico in October, November, December, January, February, March and even April. Our winter weather is more mild with October and November being ideal. December and January can be cold and rainy, however, the Snow Goose Festival and the California Nut Festival (if that should continue in February) gives potential visitors a reason to come.⁹

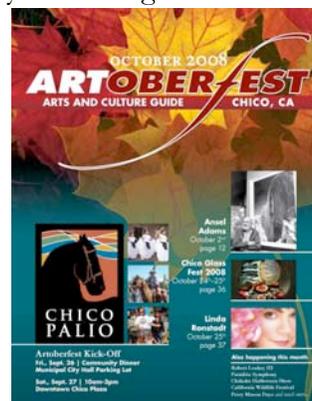
Chico's TOT Trends over the past several years are shown in this graph. Notice the dip in revenue in October through March, where it begins to climb once again.



Artoberfest: A Case Study to Improve the TOT Bottomline

ARTOBERFEST is A Month-Long Festival of Arts & Culture that features more than 130 events and performances during the Month of October. It has grown from 85 events in 2005 to 130 in just five years. In 2008, it received the Judge's Award for the Best Collaborative Marketing Campaign from the California Travel & Tourism Commission, while its kick-off celebration, Chico Palio, was awarded one of only 12 *Creating Public Value* grants awarded in 2006 by the California Arts Council.

- 2005 Oct. TOT Revenue: \$120,355
- 2006 Oct. TOT Revenue: \$148,675 -- 23% increase¹⁰
- 2007 Oct. TOT Revenue: \$168,354 -- 13% increase
- 2008 Oct. TOT Revenue: \$183,500 -- 9% increase



⁹ Graph was supplied by City of Chico staff in March 2008

¹⁰ Two new motels (Marriott & Courtyard) were added to the room inventory in 2006

8 Steps to the Starting Line

This is not a study to put on the shelf and collect dust but a blueprint on how to implement a **Creative Economy** concept. Action steps will require:

1. Strong visionary and strategic leadership to unite various visitor and conference attendee and industry segments and services.
2. Marketing funds and sustainability. Absolutely nothing will happen without funding.
3. Evaluation of existing structure and expansion of current function of various entities
4. Support and consensus among stakeholders
5. Small starts with the ability to make changes slowly and consistently
6. A strong foundation
7. Calculated risk-taking and bold steps to make things happen
8. An organization dedicated toward visitor and conference development

Let's break this down a point at a time.

1. Strong visionary and strategic leadership to unite various visitor and conference attendee services

Visionary and strategic. These words can scare a pragmatist yet they are two qualities that absolutely must be employed to go to the next level of attracting visitors to Chico. This city needs to take the lead in the tourism arena as the largest generator of transient occupancy tax in the county. Area assets like Gray Lodge Wildlife Area or Lake Oroville or Honey Run Covered Bridge are important to the overall visitor draw to Chico. We must begin to look at our area as a sum of our parts rather than dealing independent of one another.

For nearly nine years, Debra Lucero, executive director of Butte County Cultural Tourism (BCCT), has observed the way visitor attraction works in Chico and the greater Butte County area. Chambers of Commerce are primarily responsible for the all-important task of attracting visitors to their cities yet most are under-funded either due to lack of general funds or dedicated transient occupancy tax and most do not have dedicated tourism personnel. Brochures, websites and visitor packets are the usual methods for attraction with little evidence of return on investment. The best measurement tool to date is transient occupancy tax and occupancy rates as well as the side benefits of increased collaboration and efficiency and reduced duplication of effort.

Another measuring stick is statistical information on websites dedicated toward visitor development or e-newsletters that carry news of local and regional events. This is difficult to track given there is no website dedicated to planning a trip to this area or to City of Chico. Butte County has had the ExperienceButteCounty.com website since 2001 but it is not an interactive website at this point due to cost. It is maintained by Butte County Cultural Tourism and Debra Lucero & Associates. Latest statistics are as follows:

January 1, 2008 through December 31, 2008

- Hits: 602,234
- Average per Day: 1,645.45
- Page views: 345,930
- Unique Visitors: 11,029

In addition, Debra Lucero & Associates sends out *Butte Views & Beyond* e-newsletter.

National Average for Travel & Tourism e-newsletters

Open Rate: 21.5%

Click Rate: 5.7%

Bounce Rate: 13.3%

Butte Views & Beyond Average

Open Rate: 33.9%

Click Rate 12.5%

Bounce Rate: 13.1%

Debra Lucero & Associates has made 35,659 e-newsletter contacts via *Butte Views & Beyond* since its debut in April 2008. New names are gathered via Artoberfest, the California State Fair, Thursday Night Markets and other outreach opportunities such as the World Music Fest, and trade shows throughout California.

In terms of social media, Butte County is now on Twitter and so, too, is Chico. Debra Lucero & Associates has created accounts for both these jurisdictions as part of its tourism mission.

Our Tourism Focus

For the past nine years, our tourism focus has been to:

- Stay abreast of state and national trends
- View county assets as a whole, not individual jurisdictions with assets
- Act as a connector to resources, a networker among like-groups, an incubator of projects
- Work with our assets and preserve and/or help develop infrastructure to support assets
- Professional development of tourism stakeholders
- Create awareness of our area's assets

Needs We Have Faced

- More marketing dollars
- Packaging and marketing of ag, nature, culture, recreation assets (like the award-winning *Artoberfest* Campaign)
- An economic development policy that recognizes the contribution of tourism (now in place at the City of Chico level and the County level)
- Dedicated visitor center, and/or a conference center
- Dedicated marketing organization (funded with a mix of private and public funds)
- Coordinated effort between cities and even regions, i.e., Tehama, Glenn, Shasta, Yuba counties (this is needed to secure major funding from state or federal agencies, which like to see coordinated regional efforts)

Potential Funding Sources

- Matching grants, federal & state government programs
- A Tourism Business Improvement District (BID) – privately funded but collected through the TOT process
- Raising Butte County’s 6% TOT rate -- one of the lowest in the state
- Mitigate lack of TOT from county’s two casinos
- City & county TOT contributions (Note: Butte County spends ALL of its TOT plus \$15,000 to market its assets and programs. Sierra Oro Farm Trail receives \$15,000 from the county. TOT revenues in the unincorporated part of the county continue to decline. This combined with the county’s low TOT rate put it at a disadvantage for destination marketing. A more collaborative approach is desperately needed.)

For Comparison: Butte County’s Tourism Budget is \$45,000

- \$10,000 to Builder/Designer Richard Bay for California State Fair booth
- \$2,000 to Shasta-Cascade Wonderland Association for regional marketing

- \$660 annually for website hosting
- \$550 for Constant Contact e-newsletter marketing
- \$3,000 for tourism association fees & conferences
- \$750 for annual countywide meeting

This leaves \$18,040 to leverage and to cover actual administrative time, marketing, website maintenance, and any other hard costs. The funding level has forced us to be extremely creative – having to find arts grants, heritage grants, and private and public funding sources to augment the budget.

So . . . what would a **model** convention and visitor bureau look like or maybe a **destination marketing organization**?

Butte County cities continue to delegate the task to chambers of commerce without looking at the paradigm shifts that occurred throughout California in the past 25 years.

“You need to understand Convention & Visitor Bureaus have primarily left the chambers,” said Steve Hammond, president/CEO of the Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau. “It just doesn’t work. The chamber is not in the tourism business -- either No. One (tourism promotion) isn’t managed as well as it should be or even worse . . . No. 2, it’s filtered off into a quasi- tourism entity with no real identity.

“The hospitality industry has demanded that we should have our own organization,” he said.

In interviews we conducted with Convention & Visitor Bureau executives, tourism authorities and other professionals, a few tidbits emerged on desired traits and trends to establish such a center:

- Look for an organization that has demonstrated its willingness to lead a tourism effort for the community and has established itself as a responsible steward of public funds.
- Is the organization leading by example; is it hands-on?
- Does the leadership approach embrace change and nurture a culture of innovation, creativity and excellence?
- Does it have a track record of successfully implementing a measurable marketing plan?
- Does the organization have a thorough understanding of and devotion to learning about and implementing the latest tourism marketing trends?
- Does the organization have Chico and/or regional political and social experience. Savvy understanding of the nuances of local politics and culture creates an outstanding ambassador organization that is able to move in the circles of government and business.
- Is the organization able to navigate inside-the-North-State influences, but approaches marketing and visitor attraction from the perspective of an informed consumer with outside-the-North-State interests?
- Does the organization bring an embracing spirit of innovation in how to market an area with print, web, blogs, mobile, podcast, broadcast, outdoor, direct?
- Is there a respect for the vision of Chico while conveying a regional, state, national and global awareness and sensitivity – particularly important in California (we live in a destination state that attracts travelers who are quite ethnically and culturally diverse).

- Understands and respects the commercial complexities of the news business and relevant competitive market conditions.
- Has a progressive approach to information technologies and changing media behaviors, calling for cutting edge delivery of marketing and branding concepts.

2. Marketing funds and sustainability. Absolutely nothing will happen without funding.

Effective branding, advertising and marketing communications programs are powerful and can lead consumers to action. They take creativity, energetic marketing, advertising expertise and a targeted public relations approach. To generate impressive response and produce outstanding results an organization must be skilled in business-to-business communication, stakeholder development, web development and municipal/public arenas. This type of activity takes a certain funding level; particularly if a local visitor program intends to tie into the regional and state level.

There is a direct relationship between marketing and promotions campaigns and increases in occupancy. Working in conjunction with the City of Chico, the private sector might consider these options or a combination of these options:

- **Governmental Allocation**

1. Rise and fall according to vacillating political support
2. Vulnerable to budget crises
3. Often comes with strings attached
4. Typically managed by governmental employees/appointees
5. Influenced by political considerations
6. Requires intensive maintenance efforts

- **Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)**

1. Original intent by bill author: TOT was to be used for destination marketing. The bill was challenged as written and changed to give cities discretion over funds. On the average, less than 20% of TOT collected in CA goes to actual destination marketing.
2. Vulnerable to budget crises
3. Often comes with strings attached
4. Influenced by community needs considerations

- **Bureau Membership**

1. Generally supplements governmental funding
2. By itself not able to fund competitive marketing
3. Free riders benefit at cost of contributors

- **Voluntary Contribution**

1. Often inadequate for competitive marketing
2. Free riders benefit at cost of contributors

3. Contributors want the marketing to focus on their needs, not necessarily the destination's needs

- **Co-op Marketing**

1. Shared cost
2. Shared media
3. Shared message – diluted
4. Destinations communicate different messages than businesses

- **Business Improvement District**

1. Allow businesses to accomplish what they could not afford individually
2. Fund pre-determined, business-related activities and improvements that benefit participating businesses. Examples of BID's
 - Farmer's Markets
 - Installing street lighting
 - Removing graffiti
 - Improving safety/security
 - Downtown districts
 - Promoting a destination
3. Benefit Assessments (collected like TOT by hotel/motel/B&B owners in partnership with a jurisdiction and run by a non-profit board of stakeholders)

Of these, the Business Improvement District (BID) is commonly used throughout the State of California to support tourism, particularly given the uncertainty of government allocations. Additionally, there are mechanisms in place to collect the assessment (paid by hotel/motel/B&B visitors as a surcharge on an overnight bill). These funds are collected in the same way TOT is collected and usually handled by the generating jurisdiction.¹¹

(For information specific to Chico and a proposed plan, please see Attachment #6. A BID proposal was developed last year and presented to the local lodging institutions and city representatives about the Chico Tourism Business Improvement District by Debra Lucero. This type of organization can be referred to as a Destination Marketing Organization).

3. Evaluation of existing structure and expansion of current function of various entities

1. Hoteliers, rental car agencies, restaurants, and other stakeholders are doing most of the funding in today's environment and are demanding a higher level of marketing and function. Is a potential organization meeting that standard?
2. Is there an established partnership between the public and private sector -- an essential element?
3. Realize Visitor Bureaus generally are one of four types:
 - An independent, incorporated, tax-exempt organization like in Sacramento, Lodi, or Monterey
 - A division of a Chamber of Commerce (separate Board of Directors)

¹¹BID information drawn from John Poimeroo's marketing & travel research

- A division of a Chamber of Commerce (same board of directors – usually in small, rural towns like Red Bluff or Paso Robles)
- A division of city/county government with possible oversight by an economic development agency or Business Improvement District board of directors as in Redding, San Luis Obispo, San Francisco, Santa Monica

4. Support and consensus among stakeholders

This is the most important part of the process and takes time to build. With the Artoberfest campaign, we set the stage for several years prior to approaching city officials for funding. We held stakeholder meetings, cast vision, solicited input, put together a plan and then approached the city. While this is meant to primarily include stakeholders such as hotels, motels, B&B's venues, etc.; it can also include the local service industry segment like restaurants, museums, attractions, events, etc., that support visitor and conference development.

In addition to private service segments, jurisdictional authorities, i.e., cities, counties, etc. also need to collaborate and create collective vision. As part of its **General Plan Update 2030**, the County of Butte made the following statement as it relates to Economic Development and Tourism:

“Create a countywide Tourism Development Strategy that may include the following:”¹²

1. Encourage the preservation and use of historic sites as tourist destinations.
2. Celebrate Native American heritage in marketing Butte County as a tourist destination, in consultation with local tribes.
3. Promote Butte County as a destination for large events such as conferences and sporting events, and support the development of conference centers, hotels, restaurants and transit options to serve large events.
4. Promote Butte County as a destination for recreational, cultural, and amenity-based tourism by supporting the development of RV parks, agricultural tourism, performing arts centers, bird-watching, wildflower viewing areas and similar facilities.
5. Create a County-level function to increase coordination of tourism and recreation development at a range of scales, including with other counties, with the cities in Butte County, among the various sectors of Butte County tourism, and through public/private partnerships.
6. Increase the transient occupancy tax, and use the increase exclusively to fund tourism development efforts.
7. Prioritize transportation infrastructure improvements that would support tourism, such as improved roadway access to Lake Oroville.
8. Promote the development of high-quality tourist amenities, such as hotels and restaurants, in scenic areas such as the Feather River Canyon, Table Mountain and Lake Oroville.
9. Establish a visitor's center for Butte County.
10. Establish a visitor center in each County library.
11. Encourage appropriate agencies to consider recreation in determining water levels for Lake Oroville and the Afterbay.
12. Add signage on Interstate 5 encouraging travelers to visit Butte County.
13. Involve existing groups such as the Central Sacramento Valley Resource Conservation & Development Area Council and local Chambers of Commerce.¹³

¹² Butte County General Plan Update 2030 Policy Alternatives, www.buttecounty.net, p. 29, February 2009

The fact Butte County has just officially adopted this statement opens the lines of communication in a way that has never happened before. Regional collaborative tourism opportunities exist and funding is easier to get when cooperation between jurisdictions is demonstrated. State and federal agencies, as well as private foundations, can now be approached through a dedicated Destination Marketing Organization and/or Visitor Center program.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary the **definition of *consensus*** is:

1. a : general agreement b : the judgment arrived at by most or all of those concerned
2. group solidarity in sentiment and belief

Today's overwhelmed and distressed economy needs jurisdictional cooperation. Likewise, private businesses and services with common goals and mutual desires need to collaborate. Starting with the City of Chico will provide the stability the region needs to compete in the tourism market. Here are a few Guidelines and Procedures to consider in this collaborative endeavor:

Guidelines

- Trust each other. This is not a competition; everyone must not be afraid to express their ideas and opinions.
- Make sure everyone understands the topic/problem. While building a consensus make sure everyone is following, listening to, and understanding each other.
- All members should contribute their ideas and knowledge related to the subject.
- Stay on the task. Time is money. Players that will be involved don't have time to waste.
- You may disagree, that is OK and healthy. However, you must be flexible and willing to give something up to reach an agreement.
- Separate the issue from the personalities. This is not a time to disagree just because you don't like someone.
- Spend some time on this process. Being quick is not a sign of quality. The thought process needs to be drawn out some.
-

Procedure

Since tourism development is now a stated economic development strategy of the City of Chico, Debra Lucero & Associates is recommending the following process, taken from a wonderful resource, *Community Tourism Development* by the Tourism Center, University of Minnesota Extension Service.

Debra Lucero & Associates uses many of the following concepts and planning steps in the tourism and arts workshops she conducts around the state. The foundation-building efforts that went into Artoberfest are the same steps we need now to move forward collectively on overall tourism vision, process and implementation.

1. Identify tourism stakeholders and create a taskforce – one that includes funders (both private and public).

Be sure the community is invited. A community tourism planning process (much like the Artoberfest process) provides a forum for local involvement. It emphasizes the inclusion of a variety of residents to:

¹³ Butte County General Plan Update 2030 Policy Alternatives, www.buttecounty.net, p. 30-31, February 2009

- Articulate community values
- Select broad tourism goals for the community
- Generate local support for tourism development
- Help achieve tourism goals
- Help monitor and evaluate tourism’s success (this can get tricky with private funders as they obviously have more at stake than the average citizen but it can be done if properly approached from the beginning of the process).

Typically, a community planning process can take up to two years but we are confident that if UCEF is hired to implement the *overall vision* contained in this document, we can cut that timeline to one and a half years – mainly due to the many relationships already in place and thanks to Debra Lucero’s involvement with Butte County Cultural Tourism, Artoberfest, Butte County Economic Development Corporation and on many other levels within the tourism arena throughout the State of California. Implementation can start in the final six months (See timeline below).

2009 (six months)						<i>Implementation Begins 2010</i>					
<i>Community Tourism Development Process & BID Formation</i>						<i>Funds Begin to be Generated Via the Tourism BID</i>					
July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June

2. Conduct a situation analysis for Chico. This involves

- gathering information about community resources,
- current and potential target markets
- our competition
- an inventory and an objective assessment of the quantity and quality of what we have to offer
- create a profile of current visitors (something that hasn’t ever really been done. It takes the cooperation of the lodging industry but this is finally becoming possible.)
- put together a current economic profile and then project what that profile will look like – given current trends
- Ask key questions at this stage of the game to get a baseline snapshot to use later to develop marketing strategies and economic impacts may include:
 1. How big a role does tourism currently play in our local economy?
 2. How does tourism compare with other sectors of the local economy in terms of jobs, income, businesses and tax revenues
 3. Who is already visiting our community and why?
 4. How many tourists are already coming per year (fill in the blanks on all the assets and work with lodging to get an accurate picture)?
 5. What are the characteristics of tourists who are coming?
 6. What are the current and future trends in travel and tourism?
 7. Who are our “potential customers” based on these trends?

3. Identify the internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats for the community. *Internal strengths* are resources and capabilities that help achieve stated goals. *Internal weaknesses* are deficiencies in resources or capabilities that may prevent us from achieving our goals. *Opportunities* are outside factors that may be beneficial, while *threats* are uncontrollable outside factors that may cause negative effects. Assessing these elements frequently identified by the acronym SWOT, will help develop effective strategies that focus on strengths and weaknesses and opportunities while minimizing our overcoming weaknesses and threats.

4. Set Goals and Objectives such as:

- Create long-term sustainability for natural, cultural, and social resources
- Identify and create partnerships within the region
- Create job opportunities and economic benefit
- Preserve local culture and indigenous arts
- Preserve our natural lands

These are then turned into objectives, which basically explain how we'll achieve the goals. Good objectives are clear, concise, measurable and include a specific action within a set time frame.

5. Identify and examine options and alternatives

This will be done as goals and objectives are prioritized according to internal and external factors that were identified through the situation analysis. Using the goals and objectives as a guiding light, we can then generate a list of options and alternatives for tourism development, projects and strategies. This is a good time for creative thinking and brainstorming. No wrong answers.

Weigh these alternatives according to the opportunities and potential for success against stated goals. To get a clear picture, consider the resources, timelines, market trends, and community needs. In assessing each alternative, ask, "Can it be done?" "What are the consequences?"

6. Select a primary alternative

7. Develop a strategy to reach goals

The selected alternative drives the development strategies and specific actions needed to fulfill the goals and objectives.

8. Implement the plan – It's now time to follow through with planned strategies.

9. Monitor and evaluate – This will measure how well we are meeting goals, and to make adjustments. Evaluation helps identify what is working and what isn't working. It helps us identify the progress of tourism efforts. Tools to measure include:

- Advertising
- Group Sales
- Electronic Promotions
- Website Activity
- Press Releases
- Film Commission Inquiries
- Press Visits
- Press Contacts
- Regional and California Travel and Tourism Commission tie-ins and their effectiveness
- Press Coverage

- Administrative reports on office activity and leads

These guidelines and procedures can help players remember the larger goals. Chico is not competing with Oroville or Gridley or Paradise. Market share is being lost to Redding as well as to other better-funded and more cooperative rural environments. People want to come to Chico; we just don't give them a reason.

5. Small starts with the ability to make changes slowly and consistently

After nearly a decade of working with lodging, restaurants, arts, culture and heritage organizations in Butte County, one thing has become apparent; you must start small and you must go slowly. Big things take time to build. Using the Artoberfest model as an example, this award-winning campaign took many years to build.¹⁴ However, the result has been a collaborative effort like no other in our region. We are utilizing the national marketing platform of being an “arts town” to take the message to a broader state and national audience. This same marketing model can be used year-round in Chico and in our region. While most of our visitor development has been around festival draws or events, it's time to broaden the approach and begin a concerted effort to attract a variety of visitors to enjoy our natural, recreational, cultural, and heritage resources. This type of effort needs public buy-in from local officials, city and county staff members and private partners to be effective – particularly in a state the size of California. Only a regional effort with strong private and public support will see true impact. Starting in Chico with a true collaborative process is a great beginning.

6. A strong foundation

Repeated success and repeated actions, combined with continuing education on tourism trends help to build a strong foundation. So, too, does a good track record and history of success. A decade ago, newly organized value-added growers who make wine and olive oil were not well connected in Butte County. Today, we have the Sierra Oro Farm Trail, which was the result of like-minded folks seeing a need to join together for a greater cause and greater impact. As is the case with any good foundation, like-minded folks need to join together to make things happen. Tourism affects many different types of industry, i.e., restaurants, lodging, retail, attractions. These are all potential partners. Artoberfest is a good example of a collaborative approach in the arts and culture realm. This still needs to happen in the lodging industry to help fund what none of the independent parts can accomplish on their own, i.e., a Chico Tourism Business Improvement District (See Attachment #6)

7. Calculated risk-taking and bold steps to make things happen

A successful visitor center or destination marketing organization will need to be a blend of government and private support. One cannot happen without the other successfully. While this may be possible in metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco and the like; it is nearly impossible in rural counties that have no great draw – unless, of course, you live next door to Yosemite. Even those rural communities, however, cannot create strong programs without some government support. Bold steps would include assessing current visitor development activities and determine what is effective and what isn't effective and create a NEW plan. The Chico Chamber of Commerce is in the process of such a review right now. Many of the activities it pursued on behalf of tourism have been found to be ineffective or no longer useful, i.e., paper brochures that are costly and can be transformed into PDF's available on-line, kiosks in places that don't make much sense, hours of operation that make it difficult for a visitor to access information, a confusing website to visitors or meeting planners, a difficult location that isn't on the downtown square. On the other hand, trade show attendance (vital to connecting to the tourism segment and to

¹⁴ Artoberfest & its kick-off Chico Palio won the *Judge's Choice, Best Collaborative Marketing Campaign, California Travel & Tourism Commission, 2008.*

potential visitors) may be eliminated. A more concerted effort in identifying essential trade shows is necessary. The items mentioned here are key ingredients for a successful visitor attraction campaign or destination marketing organization.

8. The need for an organization dedicated toward visitor and conference development

- **One-stop shop. No Barriers.** We must work with local jurisdictions and institutions to assure information sharing, referral, and awareness.
- **User-Centered Communities.** What are these? Communities in which people can easily find the answers. We must identify and develop user-centered strategies and technologies that transform Chico and the larger Butte County region into a more cohesive and responsive visitor and conference attendee center.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration.** We must expand our partnerships beyond chambers of commerce (most often the first point of contact) and into the larger community, i.e., motels, hotels, venues and attractions. It is time to work hand-in-hand with stakeholders and other organizations that can benefit from higher visitor attraction and meeting services.
- **Outreach.** While this is meant to primarily include stakeholders such as hotels, motels, B&B's venues, etc.; it can also include the local service industry segment like restaurants, museums, attractions, events, etc., that support visitor and conference development.
- **Marketing.** We must participate in a statewide multimedia campaign to effectively brand Chico and the greater region as a destination yet to explore.
- **Accountability.** We must create outcome assessments that are meaningful, consistent, and complete so that our service strategies align with the values of the broader public community. We must ensure that our workforce embraces a culture of change, innovation, and accountability.

Defining Our Assets & Relationships

For the purposes of this study, we will explore Butte County visitor trends.

Why?

Historically, Chico has not capitalized on Butte County visitors – truly a missed opportunity as it is far less costly to market to those ALREADY coming to the region versus trying to reach a new audience. Additionally, visitors who travel three to four hours to get to Chico need 12 hours or more of activity; thus a trip to Butte Creek Canyon, Oroville Dam, the Chinese Temple, Table Mountain or Lake Oroville may be just the hook to get them to stay the night. In Butte County, nightlife activities belong to Chico. Overnight stays with the added bonus of easy-to-get-to restaurants and events are attractive to overnight guests.

Now, for a few more statistics. These really are quite interesting. According to Applied Development Economics, Inc., (ADE), which conducted a Butte County tourism analysis in 2007 for the County of Butte and Tri-Counties EDC, the attractions in Butte County are visited as much as or more so by residents than by non-residents. Butte County's population grew from 144,900 to 215,000 between 1980 and 2005. Butte County's population is expected to grow to about 287,000 by 2050, according to the California Department of Finance.

Additionally, visitor spending increased at an average annual rate of about 4 percent.

Dean Runyan and Associates, a firm that tracks visitor spending in California, estimated that in 1992, visitors spent \$125.6 million in Butte County; by 2004, spending increased to \$211.5 million. If visitor spending increases at the same rate in the future, (remember, residents visit as much as non-residents) total visitor spending in Butte County could reach approximately \$591 million by 2030. Net new spending of over \$371 million would support additional visitor restaurant, lodging, entertainment and attractions, according to Applied Development Economics.¹⁵

Interesting Demographics ...

An increasing share of Butte County's population growth will be comprised of adults over the age of 44. Recent migration studies by the CSU Center for Economic Development indicate that much of Butte County's recent growth is due to the in-migration of active adults, usually over the age of 44. If this trend continues, as the DOF expects it to, it will have an impact on the demand for certain types of housing and for recreation and entertainment services.¹⁶

So, in light of these statistics, let's take a look at visitors to Butte County. There are primarily three categories of visitors: outdoor recreation, including hunting and fishing; arts, culture and heritage; and business education and convention. According to ADE's research, one-half come for outdoor recreation (hunting and fishing); about one-fourth come for arts, culture and heritage; and one-fourth come for business, education and conventions, usually associated with CSU, Chico.

Since we have addressed the business, education and meeting and convention potential earlier, we'll focus on the other categories. The major areas for outdoor recreation are primarily in Oroville, Paradise, Gridley and Stirling City. They include the Lake Oroville State Recreation Area, the Feather River, Table Mountain, and the farm land and open space on the west side of the county that serves as a winter home for migrating birds and fowl.¹⁷

¹⁵ Figures used for future visitor spending were calculated according to dollar worth in 2004-2005, according to ADE.

¹⁶ Outdoor Recreation/Tourism Growth and Economic Impact Analysis, March 2007, Applied Development Economics, p. 11.

¹⁷ Outdoor Recreation/Tourism Growth and Economic Impact Analysis, March 2007, Applied Development Economics, p. 16

OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES & SITES

(Statistics come from 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) Not all were available by press time. A more comprehensive plan with visitor projections (based on population and current visitor attendance) would be provided as part of the community tourism planning process Debra Lucero will propose for the 2010-11 funding process by the City of Chico.

Major sites or activities that have a possibility to draw non-residents include boating, fishing, horseback riding, cycling; off-road vehicle racing, camping, wildlife viewing.

Bidwell Lower & Upper Park	Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park 97,000 with 1% as overnight campers	Boating 77,191 boats launched at Lake Oroville 4,858 boats launched at Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park. Boat launches doubled from 41,000 to 82,000 in the past 10 years.	Clay Pit State Vehicle Recreation Area Nearly 50,000 off-road vehicle enthusiasts annually to this area, located south and west of Chico	Fishing 24,000 annual fishing licenses were issued in Butte County. This number has remained stable since 1992. Less than 1% were non-residents	Feather River Falls 30,000-35,000 visitors with the most during spring run-off (6 th highest falls in the United States)	Feather River Fish Hatchery 144,487 to 219,276 annually, according to Department of Water Resources, Oroville Field Division.	Gray Lodge Wildlife Refuge 65,000 wildlife hunters and viewers each year; 50,000 to hunt and 15,000 to view
Lake Oroville SRA 872,586 visitors; 61,615 overnight stays	Llano Seco 1,505 Hunters	Oroville Dam Visitor Center 900,000 visitors annually to the tallest earthen dam at 770 feet	Table Mountain	Bald Rock	Kirshner Wildlife Foundation 34,000 attended one or more of an educational workshop; mainly off-site	Farmer's Market	Chico Creek Nature Center

Arts, Culture & Heritage Travel

Making the connection between economic development and community vitality as it pertains to cultural tourism is important. As pointed out by ADE, “First, it improves the quality of life for its residents in many ways, some of which include: opportunities for self-expression; intellectual growth; entertainment; joy; and community building. The arts add to a community’s appeal as a place to live. For this reason, the arts also add to the community’s appeal as a place to do business. A community’s investments in improving its quality of life for its residents is the most basic, the most fundamental of all economic development strategies.”¹⁸

Why Cultural Tourism?

“We need to think about cultural tourism because really there is no other kind of tourism. It's what tourism is...People don't come to America for our airports, people don't come to America for our hotels, or the recreation facilities ... They come for our culture: high culture, low culture, middle culture, right, left, real or imagined -- they come here to see America.”

Garrison Keillor

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, “Cultural heritage tourism is traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural resources. It is still one of the fastest growing tourism segments.

Cultural Tourism Trends

- Cultural tourists spend more than typical leisure traveler
- Their interests include: Historic sites/churches, museums, old homes/mansions, gardens, etc.
- Of U.S. adults, 69% travel for leisure; more than half of these include cultural activities on trips
- Almost half of cultural travelers are “enthusiasts” – choosing cultural/historical activity as primary activity¹⁹

Culinary Tourism Trend

- Culinary travel theme is very pronounced - food and wine seen as integral part of California lifestyle²⁰
- 40% of leisure travelers self-identify as traveling to learn about or enjoy unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences
- An estimated 17% of American leisure travelers have participated in one or more culinary activities while traveling over the past three years
- California and Florida dominate as locations for food related travel, with New York and Texas following²¹
- About 5% of total leisure travelers in the survey indicated that wine-related activities were a factor in choosing between destinations
- California dominates as a destination for winery travel, with New York following²²

¹⁸ Outdoor Recreation/Tourism Growth and Economic Impact Analysis, March 2007, Applied Development Economics, p. 27

¹⁹ Plogs American Travel Survey

²⁰ Smith & Company, for MeringCarson, May 2007

²¹ Online Culinary Survey of Leisure Travelers; Prepared for TIA by Edge Research, August 2006

²² Online Culinary Survey of Leisure Travelers; Prepared for TIA by Edge Research, August 2006

While our culinary food travel draw is still in its infancy, i.e., *The Sierra Oro Farm Trail*, it is an authentic experience -- one that cultural tourists will “eat up” (excuse the pun) but would-be visitors have to **know** about it and **where** Chico and Butte County are in this BIG State of California. Additionally, we have nationally and internationally known Sierra Nevada Brewery (this asset alone can be a major draw) as well as the Red Tavern, which has received numerous accolades in *Sunset Magazine*. Our foodstuff stories have yet to be told in a compelling manner – one that would draw “foodies” to our area.

Examples of Chico & Butte County’s Cultural Assets – *Remember, people who travel 3-4 hours to get to Chico need 12 hours of something to do. How about a visit to Bidwell Mansion or Downtown Chico or a trip to Lake Oroville or the Covered Bridge and then back to Chico for nightlife and good food. We just need to make Chico known and have itineraries to fit various needs.*

- 1078 Gallery
- Anthropology Museum, CSU, Chico
- Avenue 9 Gallery
- Bidwell Mansion
- Blue Room
- Chico Center for the Arts
- Chico Museum
- Chico Performances
- Chinese Temple
- Colman-Centerville Museum
- Coyote Art Gallery, Butte College
- Gateway Science Museum (Open Fall 2009)
- Gold Nugget Museum
- Humanities & Fine Arts Gallery, CSU, Chico
- Janet Turner Print Museum
- North State Symphony
- Oroville State Theatre
- Pageant Theatre
- Paradise Performing Arts Center
- Patrick Ranch
- Senator Theatre
- Sierra Nevada Big Room
- Shakespeare in the Park

Calendar of Major Events

Month	Event	Approximate Attendance	Multiple Day event
January	Snow Goose Festival	2,000	Yes
February (moves to April, 2010)	California Nut Festival		Yes
February	Rice Valley Tandem Rally		Yes
March	Chico Force Basketball		Yes
April	Wildflower Century Ride	4,000	Yes
April	Endangered Species Faire		Yes
April	Gold Nugget Days	10,000	Yes
May	Paradise Chocolate Festival	8,000	Yes
June	Patrick Ranch Museum Country Supper, Country Faire, & Threshing Bee		Yes
July	Chico Outlaws Baseball		
August	Butte County Fair	54,000	Yes
August	Chico Air Fest	10,000	No
September	World Music Festival	8,000	No
September	Chico Palio: Kick-Off for Artoberfest	4,000	No
September	Silver Dollar Fairgrounds Gold Cup		No
September	Oroville Salmon Festival		No
October	Artoberfest	130 Events in October	Yes
October	Johnny Appleseed Days	10,000	10,000
October	National Yo-Yo Contest		Yes
October	Open Studios Tour	2,000	Yes
October	Sierra Oro Farm Trail	500	Yes
November	Annual Farm City Celebration		No

Service Learning Opportunities: Chico State & Butte College

Much of the work of tourism comes down to having enough personnel to carry out social media opportunities, write press releases, update websites, send out e-newsletters, solicit group travel and meeting business – in other words -- labor costs. Additionally, having an accessible Visitor Center is all about having trained people there to answer questions, point folks in the right direction, answer inquiries, process requests, etc. For nearly a decade, Debra Lucero & Associates and the non-profit organization she runs, Upstate Community Enhancement Foundation, has trained a dozen or so interns and literally given hundreds more young people on-the-job training. Every one of her interns has found employment either in the local area, back in their hometowns or sometimes in large metropolitan areas. The real-life skills they learn through this fast-paced internship give them an advantage over a new graduate with little to no

experience. They can confidently enter the fields of event planning, recreation management, tourism and/or hospitality with a competitive advantage. Public relations interns are now beginning to seek relationships with Debra Lucero & Associates.

Visitor Center Location

It has been attempted more than once in the past to locate a visitor center in the Old Municipal Building, which has recently been renovated. In fact, the writer of this document partnered back in 2002, 2003, 2004 with CSU, Chico's Janet Turner Print Museum, the CARD center and Friends of the Arts to bring a dynamic visitor center concept to the Old Municipal Building. The idea was to create an indoor place next to the newly created outdoor Downtown Park Plaza to orient visitors and citizens alike.

Having a visitor center on the plaza creates a focal point for downtown and allows visitors immediate access to information. Parking is available directly across the street from the Plaza, which is where many visitors end up due to the beauty of the park. Having the Visitor Center at City Hall also opens up a public space to the public. It connects visitor services to the public sector as well as to the private sector. If a police substation is located within this building, it also provides longer, more secure hours of operation.

Providing space to a visitor's center can be considered as an in-kind service by the city – much appreciated by non-profit tourism partners in times of great financial stress. Providing space along with a TOT allocation will allow a young tourism program to get off its feet.

Website and Online Marketing Development

This is key to the success of any marketing plan. Several locations have ideal sites, i.e., (Monterey)

<http://www.seemonterey.com/> or (Ashland Shakespeare Festival) <http://www.orshakes.org/> These sites are expensive to produce but various firms nationwide offer various components that can be built upon. Imagine Chico's Artoberfest site that allows you to plan a trip to Chico? Or the Snow Goose Festival or the Gateway Science Museum or Chico's very own site geared toward visitor development.

Recommendations

Without a doubt, Chico has many of the necessary elements to be a more competitive player within the California tourism market. The area has natural attractions, history, culture, arts and numerous assets that make it a unique destination. The goal of this report is first; to illustrate the need for private and public sector collaboration to establish a true visitor attraction and marketing organization. Second, to put that need into the context of our local community. And third, to provide guidelines to think through the initial process based on extensive local experience.

So, in this spirit, here we go ...

Recommendation #1

Use common sense. Don't let all your hard work NOT pay great dividends. The "Creative Economy Plan" is a place to start within the city. Think of it like a primer on tourism but specific to Chico and to Butte County. It is not written from an outside consultant's viewpoint but from actual experience in attracting visitors, understanding our local business community, putting on events and conferences and utilizing creative methods to minimize costs, i.e., student help, and leverage limited funds with grant writing and in-kind donations.

Recommendation #2

Go with known factors. Hire a company that has relationship not only within Chico but within the county that has proven results. This will make the process of collaboration a whole lot easier and end with better results.

Recommendation #3

Don't start over. Leverage this opportunity by creating a bigger, grander vision of Chico as a destination. Invest in opportunities that have proven to have the greatest social and economic return. If you've invested in programs and/or companies that have worked for you in the past and provide measurable results, continue to invest in these folks. It's good business. It's sustainable. It's local.