

**Carson City
Agenda Report**

Date Submitted: September 28, 2011

Agenda Date Requested: October 6, 2011
Time Requested: 60 minutes

To: Mayor and Supervisors

From: City Manager

Subject Title: Presentation of the Carson City Convention and Visitors Bureau Strategic Plan.

Staff Summary: CCCVB Staff and Consultants will present their Strategic Plan

Type of Action Requested: (check one)

Resolution

Ordinance

Formal Action/Motion

Other (Specify) Presentation Only

Does This Action Require A Business Impact Statement: Yes No

Recommended Board Action: None

Explanation for Recommended Board Action: Presentation only - no action required

Applicable Statute, Code, Policy, Rule or Regulation: None

Fiscal Impact: None

Explanation of Impact: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

Alternatives: None

Supporting Material: CCCVB Tourism Strategic Plan

Prepared By: Lawrence A. Werner, P.E., P.L.S.

Reviewed By:

[Signature]
(Department Head)

Date: _____

[Signature]
(City Manager)

Date: 9/28/11

[Signature]
(District Attorney)

Date: 9/28/11

[Signature]
(Finance Director)

Date: 9/28/11

Board Action Taken:

Motion: _____

1) _____

Aye/Nay

2) _____

(Vote Recorded By)

Carson City Convention & Visitors Bureau

Strategic Tourism Plan

Final Plan



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Project Overview

Introduction

Carson City has a long, rich history in Nevada. The city serves as the capital of the 36th state, and has been attracting visitors for decades. Historically the region has served as a small market gaming destination alternative to the bigger Reno area and more well known Lake Tahoe market. Additionally the region boasts a wealth of state and local area history that has also been a draw for visitors.

More recently Carson City has faced significant challenges from increased competition as well as a down economy. This coupled with new lodging properties, the advent of the V&T Railroad, and the increase in sports tourism has served for a significant change in the market dynamics of the area. In an effort to maximize its position as a tourism destination, the Carson City Convention and Visitors Bureau (CCCVB) has retained the Strategic Marketing Group (SMG) to review its current programs and develop a Tourism Strategic Plan to help guide its efforts in a comprehensive and systematic way. The ultimate purpose of the plan and the process of developing the plan is to assess the changes in the marketplace and better match the bureau’s resources to best take advantage of those changes.

Project Objective

To assist the Carson City Convention & Visitors Bureau by developing a Tourism Strategic Plan to focus the tourism industry’s efforts in order to improve the overall competitiveness of the destination.

Methodology

In considering the development of a Tourism Strategic Plan, SMG identified a three phased process necessary vital for its successful development.

Methodology



Phase 1 - Information Collection

SMG collected all relevant primary and secondary information from key persons related to the bureau and the local tourism industry. It incorporated the following into the overall information collection efforts:

- Carson City Convention and Visitors Bureau board retreat
- Meetings with key lodging industry representatives
- Interviewed key tourism industry stakeholders
- Interviewed bureau staff
- Reviewed the CCCVB and V&T Railroad marketing budgets
- Interviewed tourism industry representatives outside of Carson City
- Reviewed CCCVB marketing materials
- Scheduled site inspections of the historical district as well as selected recreation facilities

Phase 2 - Information Analysis & Synthesis

SMG reviewed and analyzed all the collected information, synthesizing it into a cohesive Tourism Strategic Plan.

Phase 3 - Develop the Three Year Tourism Strategic Plan

In this phase SMG further refined the above mentioned information and developed a three year Tourism Strategic Plan that outlines how the CCCVB and the local tourism industry can better guide their tourism efforts to increase the overall competitiveness of the destination.

Tourism Strategic Plan Format

The plan includes a project overview and nine separate sections, listed below, structured to go from broader issues to specific implementation steps.

Project Overview

Part 1: Situation Analysis

Part 2: Carson City Market Overview

Part 3: Carson City Tourism Product Overview

Part 4: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Part 5: Competitive Analysis

Part 6: Strategic Goals and Objectives

Part 7: Core Strategies

Part 8: Implementation Steps

Part 9: Key Factors for Success

Part 1: Situation Analysis

Within the travel and tourism industry, significant changes have occurred as a result of the economic downturn, causing a significant economic impact on travel to Nevada. Overall travel spending has fallen from \$56.1 billion in 2006 to \$54.1 billion in 2008. Below is a summary of the key tourism, economic and demographic trends that will help to provide a comprehensive context for the development of Carson City's strategic direction.

A. Tourism in Nevada

Each year, millions of visitors travel to Nevada to experience its wide variety of attractions and scenic landscapes and experience its unique culture. According to the state of Nevada, \$46.6 billion was generated by direct travel spending in 2010, which was a reduction of 12% since 2008. To put this figure in perspective, the tourism industry in Nevada accounts for approximately 12% of the Gross State Product and 24% of all state and local taxes generated in the state.

Additionally, tourism in Nevada generates approximately 427,000 jobs (down from 2008 levels) and approximately \$2.4 million in state and local tax revenue (also down from 2008 levels). As such, it is clear tourism is of significant importance to local communities throughout the state of Nevada and that the industry has experienced significant challenges. A summary of Nevada tourism impact can be found below in Table 1.

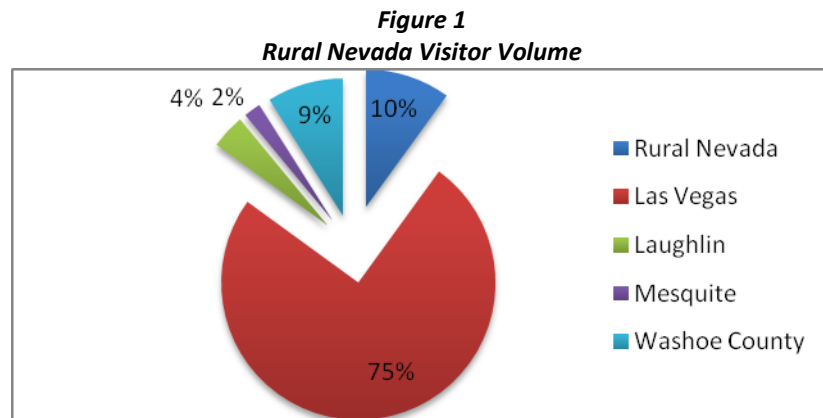
Table 1
State of Nevada Tourism Impacts 2008-2010

Tourism Impact	2010	2009	2008
Total overall travel spending	\$46.6B	\$45.4B	\$52.8B
Jobs created by travel spending	427,000	436,000	480,000
State and local taxes generated by tourism	\$2.4B	\$2.4B	\$2.7B
Earnings generated by the tourism industry	\$18.3B	\$18.4B	\$20.3B

Source: Nevada Commission on Tourism

While there can be no doubt about the ability of Nevada's major destinations, such as Las Vegas, Reno and Lake Tahoe, to attract visitors from both instate and outside of the state, smaller rural destinations face more difficulty. However, with the Nevada Commission on Tourism's focus on rural tourism, it has

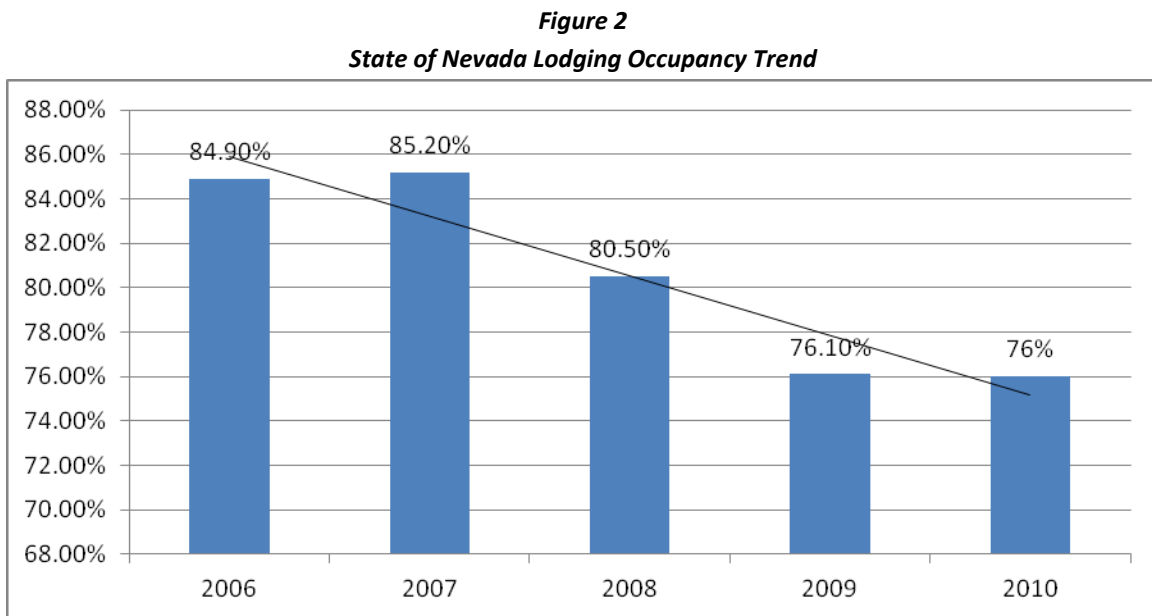
become a niche travel experience within the state. According to the Commission, it is estimated that approximately 10% of visitor volume in Nevada is within rural areas, as illustrated on the following page.



Source: Nevada Commission on Tourism based on fourth quarter 2009 estimates.

With regards to lodging, rural counties generate approximately 2.5 million room nights which is 5% of the state of Nevada total.

In terms of occupancy trends, overall demand for overnight lodging has decreased from 84.9% occupancy rate in 2006 to 76% in 2010, a drop of 8.9 percentage points.



Source: Nevada Commission on Tourism

B. Nevada and California Economic Trends

Overall the state of Nevada has experienced significant challenges with one of the country's highest unemployment rates.

Table 2
Nevada Economic Indicators

Economic Indicators	2006		2010		Change	
	NV	US	NV	US	NV	US
Per Capita Income	\$39,015	\$36,629	\$40,936	\$40,166	\$1,921	\$3,537
Median Household Income	\$52,282	\$48,201	\$56,432	\$52,029	\$4,150	\$3,828
Gross Domestic Product	\$101,126	\$11,218,788	\$103,192	\$11,523,677	\$2,066	\$304,889
Employed Persons	1,241	144,427	1,638.00	181,755.00	397	37,328
Unemployment Rate	4.20%	4.60%	14.90%	9.70%	11%	5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S Bureau of Economic Analysis, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

In addition, the state of California provides a significant volume of visitors to Nevada. Below is a summary of economic trends for California.

Table 3
California Economic Indicators

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
GDP (% Change)	2.5%	2.9	-1%	-2.4%	3%
Unemployment % (California)	4.9%	5.4%	7.2%	11.6%	11.9%
Unemployment % (United States)	4.6%	4.6%	5.8%	10.2%	9.7%
Personal Income Growth (Real)	4.7%	3.1%	2%	1.4%	3.2
Consumer Price Index	3.9%	3.3%	3.4%	-3%	2.5%

Source: State of California, Department of Finance



Plan Insight

It is anticipated that while Carson City has excellent proximity to consumer markets in Northern Nevada, the greater Bay Area and Central California, the destination is feeling and will continue to feel the negative impact of the economic situation that currently exists within the state of California and Nevada.

Part 2: Carson City Market Overview

A. The Overall Impact of Tourism

While there have been no definitive studies on the size and impact of tourism on Carson City, SMG has developed some very rough estimates based on the existing share of available hotel/motel rooms available in Carson City as a share of the state of Nevada total. Based on the assumption that Carson City has .77% (1,505) of the available rooms in Nevada (194,424) it is estimated the size of the tourism industry in Carson City is as follows:

Table 4
Estimated Economic Impact of Tourism in Carson City¹

Estimated Economic Impact	
Estimated travel spending	356,000,000
Tourism related jobs	3,287
Local taxes generated in the city and county	\$1.8M

Source: SMG, Estimated based on share of Carson City hotel inventory as compared with state of Nevada total

B. Carson City Lodging Industry

The Carson City lodging industry is comprised 23 properties with a total of 1,505 rooms.

Table 5
Carson City Lodging Industry

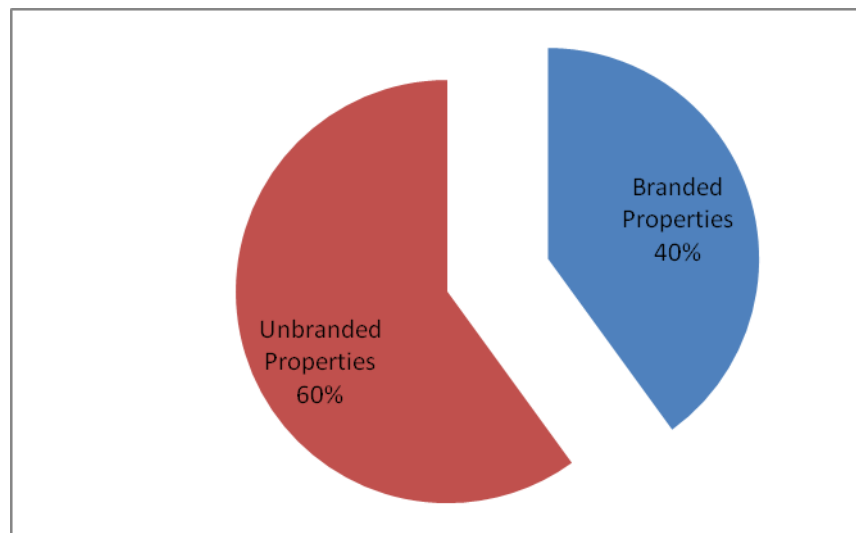
¹ Note this is an estimate only. SMG recommends a formal economic impact study be completed to determine more accurate impacts.

Rooms			
Bed & Breakfast		Motels	
Bliss Bungalow	5	Round House Inn	39
Total B&B	5	Carson Hot Springs Resort	6
		Silver Queen Inn	34
Hotels		Quality Inn	67
Holiday Inn	88	Americas Best Value Inn	58
Hardman House	62	Carson City Inn	61
Courtyard by Marriott	100	Days Inn	61
Hampton Inn	85	Pioneer Motel	35
Plaza Hotel	168	Frontier Motel	51
Best Western	93	Super 8	53
Gold Dust West	148	Nugget Inn	102
City Center	80	Mill House Inn	24
Total Hotels	824	Motel 6	82
		Nugget Motel	62
		Desert Hills Motel	33
		Total	768

Source: CCCVB

In terms of the mix between branded chain motels versus non-branded hotels, approximately 40% of lodging properties are branded with the remaining 50% unbranded or independent.

Figure 3
Property Mix by Size of Property

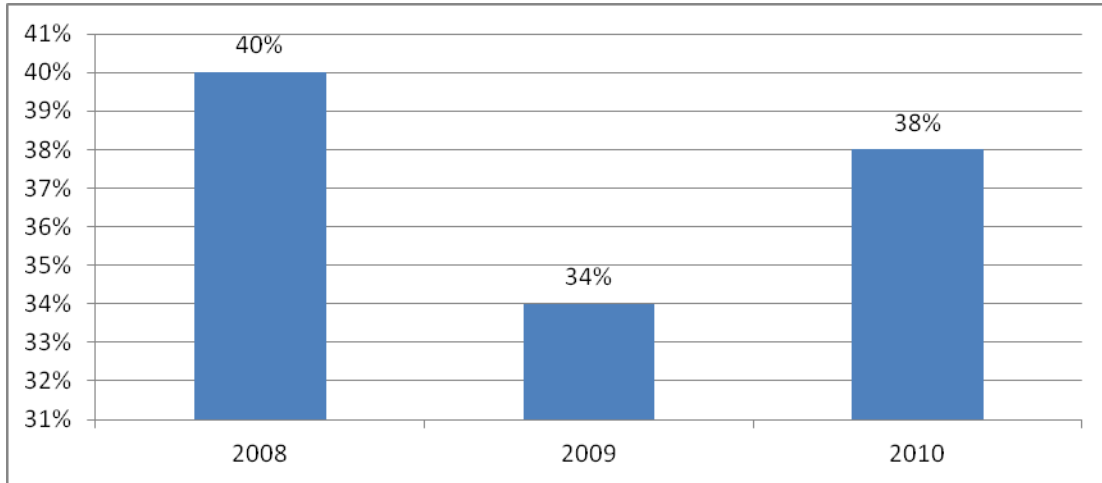


Source: Carson City Convention & Visitors Bureau

The implication of branded versus unbranded lodging units is significant because branded chains typically have distribution systems that allow them to access a much larger customer base. As such, Carson City does benefit from national distribution through local property affiliations with branded lodging companies. That said, overall lodging trends for Carson City have been challenging, with occupancy averaging between 36-40% over the last several years.

Figure 4

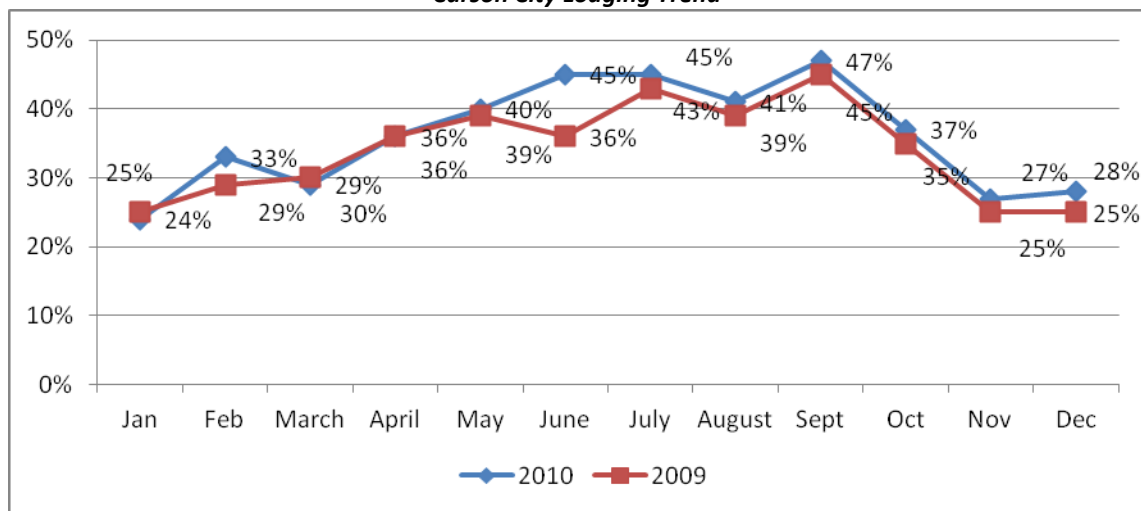
Carson City Occupancy Trend



Source: Carson City Convention & Visitors Bureau

It should be noted that the highest demand for lodging is between May and October.

**Figure 5
Carson City Lodging Trend**



Source: Carson City Convention & Visitors Bureau



Plan Insight

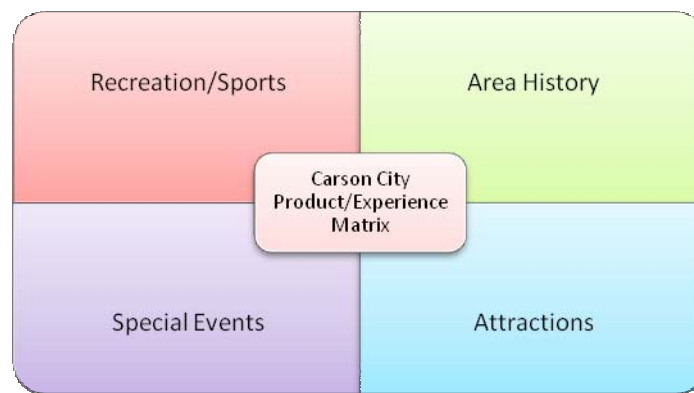
- Overall overnight demand for Nevada has consistently decreased since 2007.
- Both California and Nevada economic trends have been challenging and will continue to be so in the near term.
- Overall overnight demand (as measured by occupancy rates) has fluctuated between 34-40% over the past several years, though occupancy has increased in 2011 over 2010.

- Overall lodging demand is highest between May and October.
- Branded lodging properties account for 40% of the room inventory in Carson City. Recent additions have increased room inventory by 17%.

Part 3: Carson City Tourism Product Analysis

As the capital of Nevada, Carson City is one of the most historical areas in the state, with a noteworthy past that stretches back to the Comstock Era. Despite this, Carson City has for the most part evolved more as a place to live and do business as opposed to a tourism destination. In addition, Carson City has faced the challenge of location, as it is situated between bigger Reno and more picturesque Lake Tahoe. As such the area has always had to work harder to attract visitation, building upon its endemic features, including its crossroad location, area history, availability of gaming and its role as the capital of Nevada. Subsequently the area has built on those core resources with the addition of new attractions, facilities, special events, recreation and cultural activities. The product/experience matrix below provides a visual overview of the key elements of the tourism experience in Carson City.

Carson City Product/Experience Matrix



The Carson City product/experience mix is built around its core assets and activities which motivate people to visit the area. In the case of Carson City, the area’s location as the capital of the state and its history has long been at the core of the visitor experience and its most significant revenue driver. It should be noted that the newest attraction to the destination is the addition of the V&T Railroad connecting Carson City with Virginia City.

Table 6
Carson City Product/Experiences

Attractions	History	Sports	Special Events
V&T Railroad	Historical Downtown	Golf	Cultural Events
Capital Building	V&T Railroad	Area Parks	Sports Events
Casinos	Museums	Sports Facilities	Entertainment Events
Museums	Historical Markers		
	Kit Carson Trail		

In defining the Carson City experience, it is important to understand the key tourism components that define a tourism area as identified below.

Table 7
Carson City Tourism Elements

Tourism Element	Characteristic	Comment
Natural Resources	Natural assets unique to the region	The area has incredible views of the Sierra but these views are available throughout the region.
Infrastructure	Air access, roads, utilities, etc. All elements that help support the visitor's experience	Area serves as a transportation crossroads, with commercial air access via Reno-Tahoe International Airport, north-south access via Highway 395, and east-west access via Highway 50 though over significant mountain passes.
Hospitality	Human elements that interact and serve the visitor	Area has local community with a history of supporting gaming and tourism industry
Visitor Services	Hotels, F&B and retail services designed to assist the tourist	Area has a variety of lodging (with new branded properties) as well as restaurants and to a lesser degree shopping.
Attractions	Natural and built facilities, events and local residents that provide visitors with experiences	State capital is still an attraction. Area has developed V&T Railroad though not completed as a visitor experience. Museums and historical elements serve as key attractions and most recently recreation facilities have become increasingly important.
Organizational	Organization and processes that work to attract visitors to the destination using a variety of promotions	Carson City Convention & Visitors Bureau provides a wide range of promotional programs.

Part 4: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats

In order to build a sustainable competitive advantage, it is important to review the strengths and weaknesses of the Carson City as well as the opportunities and threats that will impact its future success.

Figure 6
Carson City SWOT Analysis



Strengths

- ✓ Capital city – Carson City is the capital city of Nevada and is the center of government business for the state, it also brings historical significance.
- ✓ Area history – Carson City has significant area history from the Comstock era.
- ✓ Central location – Carson City is centrally located on Highway 395 (north and south) and highway 50 (east and west) which provide ample access for visitors.
- ✓ Outdoor activities – The area provides easy access to a variety of outdoor activities (bicycling, fishing).
- ✓ Sports facilities – Carson City has a variety of sports facilities for both youth and adult tournaments.

Weaknesses

- ✓ Special events facilities – Limited special events facilities.
- ✓ Condition of sports facilities – Potential over use of sports facilities.
- ✓ Unclear identify and perception – There is a belief that the consumers have an unclear perception of Carson City which also creates a vague value proposition of why people should consider visiting the area.

- ✓ Lack of community buy-in – The Carson City local community buy-in is not as strong as it should be.

Opportunities

- ✓ Special events – Opportunity exists to develop and promote a range of special events that appeal to a unique niche and provide specific reasons to visit the area.
- ✓ Sports tournaments – Carson City has a great roster and approach to attract sports tournaments and can build on those efforts. Potential a new indoor facility will be built and would allow for winter season tournament programming.
- ✓ Downtown – The downtown area has a unique opportunity once the bypass road between Lake Tahoe and Reno is complete provide an enjoyable place to walk, shop and dine with significantly reduced traffic.
- ✓ V&T Railroad – Currently the V&T Railroad provides operations to Virginia City. Many consider the attraction not as complete as it needs to be in order to truly be a signature destination attraction. As that investment continues the V&T provides a great opportunity to attract visitors as well as provide an activity for those that have come to the area for other reasons.

Threats

- ✓ Competition – Carson City faces stiff competition from other areas throughout the area as well as from other destinations that compete for the northern and central California market.
- ✓ The economic environment – The national and state economy presents a significant challenge for tourism in general and Carson City specifically. In the short and medium term, economic issues will continue to be a concern.
- ✓ Lack of unity – One of the biggest threats to the destination is a lack of unity within the tourism industry. This lack of unity provides challenges to everyone within the industry and stymies overall efforts.



Plan Insight

It is absolutely critical to maximize Carson City's strengths and minimize its weaknesses. The area's assets provide a visitor experience to build upon and create additional interest and demand for the destination.

Part 5: Competitive Analysis

The current level of competition within the tourism industry has never been so intense. For the purpose of this plan SMG has identified those destinations that would be more direct competitors, namely those destinations having similar experiences that also attract from Carson City's core markets.

Competitive Set

Reno Sparks

www.visitrenotahoe.com

Strengths

- Special events
- Sports facilities
- Arts & culture
- Convention center
- Shopping
- Airport access
- Sports (Reno Aces)
- University
- Downtown water park

Competitive Focus: Reno Tahoe USA... Far from expected

Weaknesses

- Perception downtown area is dirty
- Tourist locations are spread out
- Area is perceived as "old"
- Heavy gaming orientation
- Perception of safety (big city)

South Lake Tahoe

www.tahoessouth.com

Strengths

- Natural resource of the Lake/scenic beauty
- Recreation culture
- Special events
- Entertainment/nightlife

Weaknesses

- Congestion
 - Tired buildings and infrastructure
 - Weather can be challenging in shoulder seasons
- Competitive Focus: Get your vacation on**

Carson Valley

www.visitcarsonvalley.org

Strengths

- Special Events (Candy Dance, Cowboy Poetry)
- Recreation (golf, bike path)
- Scenery (similar to Carson City)
- Agriculture (Basque heritage)

Weaknesses

- Spread out
- Limited lodging
- Sports facilities

Competitive focus: The Magical Carson Valley-Northern Nevada's Hidden Jewel

Virginia City

www.virginiacity-nv.org

Strengths

- Name recognition
- Special events
- Old historic downtown
- Volunteers
- History (mining, architecture)

Weaknesses

- Limited promotion budget
- Seasonal destination
- Unique character
- Over-reliance on Bonanza TV show
- Inconsistent restaurant quality

Competitive Focus: Step back in Time

Highway 49er Chain

www.Highway49.org

Strengths

- Downtown experiences
- Wine industry
- Recreation
- History
- Local character
- Favorable weather

Weaknesses

- Local area is spread out
- Access

Competitive Focus: The Motherlode Highway



Plan Insight

Carson City competitive set destinations all have clear branding positions. Additionally all have various strengths and weaknesses that differentiate them from each other.

Part 6: Strategic Goals and Objectives

Strategic Goal:

Short Term:

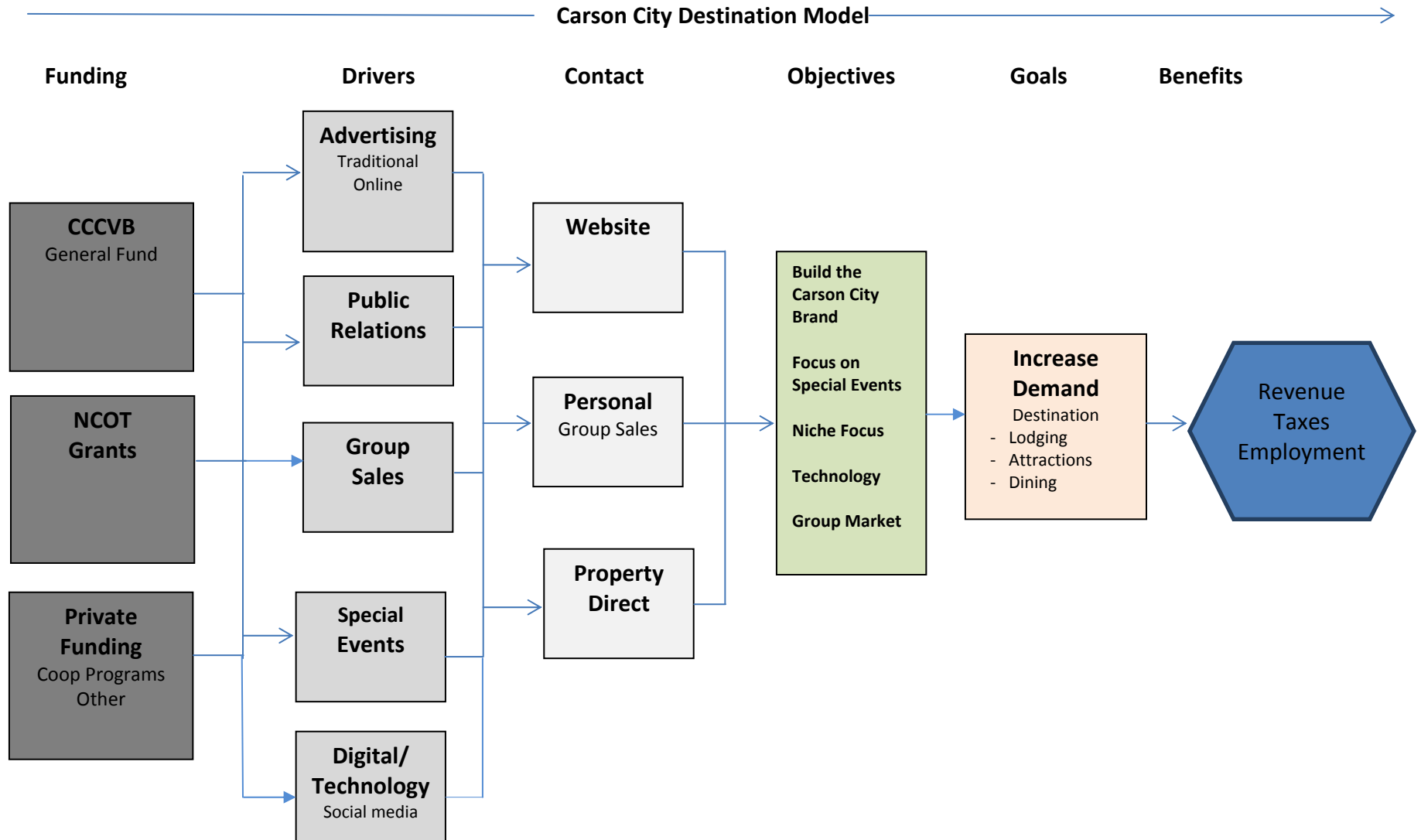
- Increase overnight visitors in an effort to increase room nights, revenues, taxes and employment within Carson City.

Long Term:

1. Continued support of development of new and improving existing tourism related facilities.
2. Support the completion of the V&T Railroad as a regional/national tourism attraction.
3. Support the maintenance of existing and development of new sports facilities in an effort to enhance sports tourism.
4. Support the continued development of Carson City as a tourism hub for visitors to stay overnight taking advantage of the areas central highway location and price value.

Objectives:

1. Continue to build the Carson City brand and value proposition in an effort increase awareness and interest in visiting the destination.
2. Increase focus on special events as a primary reason to visit Carson City during the shoulder seasons.
3. Focus bureau strategies to attract both FIT (Free Individual Traveler) as well as groups via tour wholesalers.
4. Focus bureau efforts on increasing demand for targeted shoulder seasons.



Part 7: Core Strategies

Core strategies are developed by understanding the current market conditions and looking at potential solutions or responses to the conditions. A summary of the current situation includes the following:

Situation Summary

- The country, the state and Carson City have faced perhaps the most challenging overall economic conditions ever. Since 2008 there has been slow economic growth coupled with high unemployment which has impacted consumer spending.
- Visitation to Nevada as a whole has decreased since 2007 and continues face challenges.
- Demand for Carson City as measured by occupancy rate has also seen decreases. The area experiences low overall occupancy rates that have significant seasonality.
- ✓ Carson City has a variety of strengths including its history, its central location, the availability of outdoor recreation, its sports facilities and its role as the capital city of Nevada.
- ✓ The competition for Carson City is challenging with major destinations like Reno and Lake Tahoe located in close proximity. In addition, other regional destinations have become increasingly competitive.

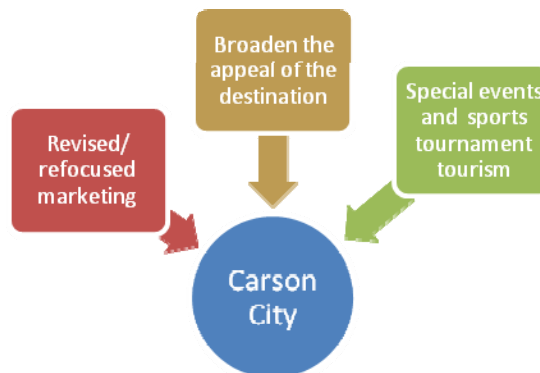
Strategy Overview

Based on the current situation facing Carson City it is clear that a change in strategy is needed to more effectively deal with current and perceived short term market challenges. In the more immediate short term it is recommended that Carson City broaden the appeal of the destination, increase its focus on special events and sports tourism and strengthen its current marketing efforts to reflect these changes.

Short Term Strategy Changes

The following strategy elements are designed to improve the effectiveness of the bureau in its role of promoting Carson City as a visitor destination.

Short Term Strategy Elements



1. Broaden the appeal. In recent years the addition of the V&T Railroad has been the primary focus of the bureau. It should be noted that the CCCVB has been contracted to specifically promote the V&T under a separate contract and funding. There is a strong perception that the bureau has focused a disproportionate amount of time in those promotional efforts.

To be as competitive as possible it is important for the CCCVB to clearly shift its strategy to promote a range of reasons to visit the area including sports tourism, special events, recreation, area history and culture in addition to the V&T.

2. Special events and sports tournament tourism- Special events provide a specific reason for a target segment to visit the area and can help drive overnight stays. As such the CCCVB needs to be a catalyst to more formally organize and promote Carson City to target segments in order to increase overnight visitation. In addition, the area needs to work together to take advantage and leverage current and future sports tournament tourism efforts.
3. Strengthened/refocused marketing elements - The bureau can be more effective by revising its marketing efforts to support the following:
 - a. Strengthened branding efforts
 - b. Increased use of technology in marketing programs
 - c. Development of a special events promotional strategy
 - d. Promote Carson City as an alternative lodging location for major regional special events
 - e. Focus on both leisure and group segments

Medium and Long Term

Over a longer term Carson City should look to complement its short term strategies with more medium and longer term strategies that will ultimately help Carson City move toward becoming a more well-rounded tourism destination.

1. Take advantage of the bypass - As the bypass continues to become more of a reality it could offer Carson City a unique opportunity to improve its downtown experience. As traffic conditions improve it will change the nature of the downtown experience and provide an improved sense of place for locals and visitors alike.
2. Conference and meetings – Currently there is interest in converting the old Kmart building into an events center that can also handle meetings and conferences if this does occur it should be able to address the areas need. If not in order to grow the meetings and conferences market over the long term, the bureau and local lodging industry should consider the potential feasibility and development of meetings and conference facilities. Current meeting facilities are limited and Carson City is not seen as a well defined meeting location for target meetings and conferences. The CCCVB should undertake feasibility steps including both competitive analysis and supply and demand market analysis.
3. Increased Funding – Once the bureau has implemented the short term strategies and has realized success it will be critical for the bureau and the lodging industry to review the potential for increased funding to ensure the destination remain as competitive as possible.

Short and Medium Term Strategies

Short Term Strategies



- Broaden the appeal of the destination
- Special events and sports tournament tourism
- Revised and refocused marketing efforts

Medium Term Strategies



- Take advantage of the bypass
- Conference and meetings
- Increased funding

Part 8: Implementation

Core Strategy 1: Broaden the appeal of Carson City

Effectively broaden the appeal and promotion of Carson City beyond current and 'traditional' reasons to visit.

Comments:

Integral to drawing increased visitation to Carson City is the need to broaden the appeal of the destination. Over the past several years the perception of the bureau is that significant bureau resources (both human and financial) have gone to promote the V&T Railroad. This perception is a result of the CCCVB acting as the promotional and ticket selling organization for the V&T, for which it was paid.

That said the bureau has an excellent opportunity to attract overnight visitors by broadening the appeal of the destination building upon past efforts. The bureau should additionally focus on attracting visitors by more clearly communicating the activities including history, events, sports and recreation, gaming and the areas proximity to Lake Tahoe and Reno and offering a less congested experience.

Action Steps

Strategy: Broaden the appeal of the destination

1. Review the existing communication strategy to better broaden the appeal of Carson City.
 - Effectively promote sports tourism, history, the V&T and area arts and culture presenting a more comprehensive view of the destination.
2. Review existing Carson City branding.
 - Review and or use develop/new Carson City tag line that effectively positions the destination against its competitors..
3. Revise photography.
 - Integrate new photography that captures people engaged in activities available in Carson City in addition to existing history and architectural photography.
4. Effectively promote special events that support the attraction of target segments.
 - See following section
5. Identify potential partners to support co-branded marketing, special events and promotions.
 - Identify specific cooperative opportunities to extend the brand and appeal of the destination.



Plan Insight

Carson City needs to effectively broaden its appeal to attract visitors for a variety of reasons. By attracting a wider variety of visitors the area will benefit by increasing demand for lodging, attractions and retail.

Core Strategy 2: Special Events

Improve the value proposition for consumers to consider visiting Carson City by developing and promoting special events.

Comments:

Special events are an important strategy for Carson City, as they can help drive overnight visits as well as create value by offering unique events that help further brand the destination.

Event Objectives:

1. Develop and implement events that will increase overnight visitation to the area in an effort to increase revenues, taxes and employment.
2. Develop and implement special events that help to create awareness for and position Carson City as a destination to visit.

Key to reinvigorating special events as a reason to visit is the formation of a special events advisory committee to support those efforts. That committee, along with the bureau, needs to review the existing events and identify if current events support the above objectives, and develop a special events action plan designed to meet those objectives.

Additionally it is important for the advisory committee to share ideas, potential new opportunities and bring the tourism community together in an effort to maximize the area’s resources.

Action Steps

Strategy: Special Events

1. Development of a special events advisory committee.
 - Include a cross section of the community.
 - Develop ongoing advisory committee operations and management, including the election of a chairman.
2. Review existing events schedule.
 - Review the existing schedule in an effort to understand the types of events and their timing.
 - Identify potential target areas of opportunity.
3. Review special event facilities.
 - Develop inventory of existing and needed special event locations.
 - Identify any obstacles or challenges for facility usage.
4. Develop special events plan.
 - Goals and objectives, targets
 - Event strategies
 - Action steps
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Measurement
5. Identify ways to integrate existing special events.
 - Bundle existing events into a season or schedule to create more of a reason to visit and generate overnight visitors.
 - Build on existing events that attract overnight visitors including adult and youth sports tournaments.
6. CCCVB should solicit targeted event promoters who can bring their self-contained events to Carson City.
7. CCCVB should effectively promote the special events strategy using all available promotion mechanisms in order to target and attract overnight visitors to the area.
8. CCCVB should develop a “seasonal” approach to promotion of special events. i.e. Carson City “Summer Season of Events” promoting the synergy and excitement of a number of related events.
9. Explore potential to generate room nights by attracting visitors who are in the region to attend events in Reno & Lake Tahoe.
 - Utilize social media and public relations to position Carson City as an alternative offering great value, easy proximity and access to events within the region.
10. Explore the potential of implementing and area wide cooperative event with Virginia City or Carson Valley.



Plan Insight

Special events can play an important role in providing visitors a specific reason to visit the area. Despite area facility limitations it is incumbent upon the destination to be creative in developing locations for events as well as the types of events and the promotions of those events.

Core Strategy 3: Sports Tournament Tourism

Support and expand marketing efforts to expand the appeal of Carson City as a sports tournament tourism destination.

Comments:

Carson City has experienced significant success as a sports tournament destination. The existing parks and recreation strategy of utilizing tournaments as an economic development tool dovetails with the primary bureau goal to increase overnight visitation.

By working cooperatively with the parks and recreation department as well as a cross section of the community Carson City can optimize its existing facilities to support increased tournaments as well as support efforts t for new tournaments.

Additionally the parks and recreation department has indicated they are working on the development of an indoor facility that would provide additional cold season opportunity for sports tournament tourism thus expanding the potential for increased overnight visitor demand.

Action Steps

Strategy: Sports Tournament Tourism

1. Utilize the newly formed special events committee as a support for Sports Tournament Tourism development.
2. Work with the park and recreation department to effectively promote Carson City through existing Bureau marketing channels.
3. Work with the park and recreation department to support the development of indoor facilities that will enable Carson City to attract tournaments during the fall and winter season.
4. Cross Marketing Opportunities
 - Key opportunities existing to extend the stay of tournament attendees as well as increase spending in lodging, dining attractions and retail. Strategies should be developed to further those efforts. (i.e., Coupon book, promotional information etc.)



Plan Insight

Sports tournaments can offer an important and specific reason for visiting Carson City. The CCCVB has a variety of communication channels that can be used to help facilitate that message as well as be a catalyst to work with the parks and recreation department and the broader community to increase event attendee spending.

Core Strategy 4: Strengthened Marketing

The bureau should strengthen its marketing efforts in several key areas in an effort to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Comments:

In an effort to be as competitive as possible it is incumbent upon the bureau to continue to refine its marketing efforts. Currently the bureau has a variety of marketing and sales programs designed to promote Carson City. The programs include advertising, website, public relations and group sales.

The bureau should strengthen its marketing programs with efforts designed to better target and communicate the price value of the destination.

Action Steps

Strategy: Strengthened Marketing

1. Strengthened branding efforts.
 - Implement a process to develop a branding tagline for Carson City (See comp set destination taglines)
 - Integrate the new tagline into existing new Bureau promotional efforts.
2. Refine group marketing efforts.
 - Identify key tour wholesalers in an effort sell Carson City as a group market.
 - Invite lodging partners to work with the bureau on integrating themselves into wholesale programs.
3. Technology marketing efforts
 - Increase use of technology marketing in reaching target segments
4. Alternative lodging location for major regional special events.
 - CCCVB should identify major regional events in both Reno and Lake Tahoe and position Carson City as an alternative lodging location.
 - Develop promotional messages targeting event attendees and positioning Carson City as a better value with less hassle.
5. Develop an annual marketing action plan that includes the upcoming year’s goals, objectives, action steps, measurements and implementation timeline.



Plan Insight

Carson City should continue to innovate its marketing efforts in order to make the destination’s marketing programs more competitive.

Core Strategy 5: Take advantage of the bypass

The freeway bypass around Carson City is nearly complete it could present a unique opportunity to improve the visitor experience.

Comments:

As the bypass becomes closer to completion it will continue to change the downtown experience. The continued reduction in traffic will improve the overall visitor experience along with the desirability of the area.

Downtown and the experiences business there can provide are important tourism experiences in many destinations. While the Carson City downtown is challenging because the road currently splits the area, it can still provide a unique opportunity to provide Carson City with a unique and authentic visitor experience.

Action Steps

Strategy: Take advantage of the bypass

1. Sign Strategy

- Work with Carson City and Nevada Department of Transportation to develop a sign strategy that clearly educates driving traffic of the downtown area and positions the area as a desirable place to stop.

2. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to educate local tourism related business on how to effectively market their business given the changes the bypass will bring.



Plan Insight

Carson City should take advantage of the bypass by investing in the downtown, which will have positive impacts on both the visitor and local experience and help further define the destination’s value proposition.

**Core Strategy 6: Meetings/
Conferences /Events Facilities**

Additional meetings and conference facilities may provide a significant opportunity for increased visitation to Carson City.

Comments:

Currently there are six properties with Carson City that can accommodate primarily smaller groups.

As the economy improves the bureau , the city and the local lodging community should consider the developing a feasibility study to determine the potential demand for a facility that can host meetings and conferences and well as serve as a location to support local events (see Event Strategy).

Action Steps

Strategy: Meetings/ Conferences/Events Facilities

- 1. Facility Feasibility
 - CCCVB should work with local lodging properties to develop a feasibility study to assess the potential demand for a conference and event facility.



Plan Insight

Meetings and conference facilities can be very challenging to operate. As such it is important for the destination to develop a feasibility study. If such facilities are considered worthwhile then the bureau should develop a clear marketing and sales strategy/approach to maximize the facility.

Core Strategy 7: Increased Funding

Tourism funding is a key component to increase marketing efforts for the bureau. Additional funding will allow the destination to be more competitive.

Comments:

There is no doubt that funding is the fuel that generates tourism marketing and promotions. As such it is critical for every tourism promotion organization to look to increase future funding levels.

Funding has become a more competitive issue given that many destinations in California that compete with Carson City for the northern California tourism market have significantly increased their tourism budgets with the addition of Tourism Business Improvement District funding (TBIDs)². This added funding has significantly increased the competitiveness of many destinations. As such, it is prudent to look ahead at potential funding mechanisms.

Action Steps

Strategy: Increased Funding

1. Increase Funding Strategy
 - Work with the Carson City lodging industry and the Carson City local government to review the potential for increased revenues.
2. Develop a funding strategy plan
 - Identify how potential new funding sources would be used to increase tourism demand.
3. Cooperative programs
 - The bureau should review cooperative advertising opportunities that further stretch and leverage their budget with local lodging and attractions. (ex. Carson City advertising section)



Plan Insight

It is incumbent upon the bureau, the city and the lodging industry to work together to develop funding scenarios that will help ensure the destination remain competitive.

² TBIDs are self -assessments by the lodging industry to be used for tourism promotions.

Core Strategy 8: Organizational Changes

Create organizational and internal mechanisms and systems in order to ensure continued long-term support for CCCVB's marketing programs.

Comments:

Organizational issues are integral to the success of the Carson City Convention & Visitors Bureau as well as the community as a whole. It is important to note that as the Bureau develops its marketing plan and strategy it has the necessary organizational support to implement defined programs to increase tourism revenues.

Action Steps

Strategy: Organizational Changes

1. The organization does not operate under bylaws but instead under the NRS Statute for Fair and Recreation Boards.
 - Develop a consistent strategy to continually bring new board members on to the board thus ensuring a continual transition to new members with a mix of those that have been on the board for several years.
2. Review involvement with V&T Railroad with the goal of reducing involvement.
 - The board needs to review its involvement as the marketing arm for the V&T. While the organization was provided a marketing contract this involvement takes away from the bureau's primary mission to promote Carson City as a destination.
3. Periodic vendor review.
 - The board needs to initiate periodic reviews of its vendors. While this is not to say current vendors are not providing the needed levels of expertise and service the board as a matter of good management should undertake a periodic review of its vendors.
4. Formation of advisory committees
 - As a means to engage the tourism industry and to promote a unified effort the board should form advisory committees to provide input in specific marketing areas. Currently the board has already formed a special event committee and others like a marketing should be considered.
4. Annual Review & Planning
 - The board should have an annual meeting dedicated to reviewing the prior years activities and for developing strategies for the upcoming year.
 - It is critical to have a cohesive vision of future bureau direction and activities.
 - Review bureau organizational structure to be sure structure aligns with strategic goals and strategy.
 - Review Bureau creative message for alignment with bureau goals and strategy.
5. Board/Staff Cohesiveness
 - The board and staff must work cohesively together in an effort to maximize tourism effort. Staff should proactively seek out input from board members in an effort to better anticipate and help shape new ideas within the context of the overall bureau work program.

Core Strategy 9: Measurement

Develop measurement systems that effectively measure the impact of bureau programs.

Comment:

It is critical for the bureau to effectively measure and communicate the results of bureau programs. As such, there is a need to review existing programs as well as develop systems to effectively measure all bureau promotional efforts.

It should be noted that not all of the marketing efforts can have a designated return on investment such as brand advertising and public relations that are designed to build brand awareness. Building brand awareness is just as critical to long-term success as specific marketing efforts designed to drive a particular response that can be tracked.

Action Steps

Strategy: Measurement

1. Measure the effectiveness and return on investment of all marketing programs in order to improve marketing efficiencies and to maximize limited resources. Use comprehensive research to determine if efforts are increasing awareness and interest in Carson City and creating positive brand associations.
 - Use website measurement software to measure website performance and ROI by tracking monthly user sessions, click-through rates to specific pages and lodging properties, top exit and entry pages, paths through the site and bounce rates in order to continually improve the site's usefulness and efficiency for target market segments.
2. Implement annual or every other year advertising conversion study to determine the effectiveness of the website as a conversion tool.
3. Social Media Measurement
 - Ongoing social media measurements on Facebook and Twitter including 3 of friends and followers.
4. Encourage each lodging property in the TBID to set up the capability to measure leads that originate from the bureau website.
5. Special Event Measurement
 - The bureau should implement periodic special event research in an effort to understand event attendee motivations, behaviors and travel spending.

Part 9: Key Factors for Success

The following key factors for success are critical for the bureau to achieve its strategic direction and further enhance the success of the destination.

Success Factors:

- **Communication**
Always focus on improved communication between the board, the staff, the tourism industry along with the broader local community and local government.
- **Work Together**
Recently there has been concern and challenge from within the lodging industry to making changes in the bureau's marketing efforts. It is imperative that both the bureau and the lodging industry work together to further their common interests, that clear communication between the organizations is essential. It is absolutely critical for the benefit of the destination these two organizations work together in a very competitive marketplace.
- **Community**
Critical to the destination's success is to continue to work to involve the community in tourism efforts. Be it in volunteering or participating in special events or providing general support for tourism as an economic component of Carson City, it's important that the local community support CCCVB's efforts.
- **Political Support**
Carson City should continue to maintain political support for the bureau and for tourism as an important part of the local economy.
- **Culture of Innovation**
The bureau must continue to innovate and change to meet the changing dynamics of the industry in an order to increase the destination competitiveness.

Appendix

Interviews

Linda Barnett, Hampton Inn

Terrie McNutt, Marriott

Jonathan Boulware, Gold Dust

Chris Frizzell, City Center

Debra Lang, Holiday Inn Express

Candace Duncan, Carson City Convention & Visitors Bureau

John Shelton, Brewery Arts Center

Peter Barton, Nevada State Museum

Ronni Hannaman, Carson City Chamber of Commerce

Stan Jones, Downtown Business Association

Star Anderson, Nugget Casino

Bob Hadfield, Nevada Commission to Reconstruct the V&T Railway

Steve Neighbors, City Center Projects

Joel Dunn, Carson City Parks and Recreation