



2022 Strategic Plan Overview

For Stakeholders

Year 3 of 2020-2024 Five Year Business Plan/5 Year MRDT Term

Prepared by

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As of December 2021

Tourism Fernie Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles & Governance

VISION STATEMENT

Fernie is a vibrant and sustainable tourism destination built on respect, collaboration and authenticity.

MISSION STATEMENT

Sustainably increase visitation & revenue for stakeholders through tourism marketing and management.

TOURISM FERNIE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Industry led / government supported** – we are led by members of Fernie’s tourism industry who solicit government support for tourism as an economic engine for Fernie
- **Market & data focused** – we prioritize market needs and trends, along with data and market research in the belief this will be best for our stakeholders and Fernie’s long term sustainability
- **Sustainable** –we respect the community’s social, economic and environmental values
- **Fair and transparent** – we have fair processes that are open to scrutiny and we explain the rationale for our decisions to interested stakeholders
- **Inclusive** – we seek input and work together with members, stakeholders, and other organizations
- **Innovative** – we aim to consistently create solutions that are ahead of the marketplace and the competition
- **Accountable** – we are fiscally responsible, measure results, adjust to changing market conditions, and account to stakeholders

GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Tourism Fernie is an industry-led, membership-based non-profit society and is the Eligible Entity for the local MRDT. Tourism Fernie has formally existed since 2007 and is responsible for the management, administration, and governance of the entire MRDT funds and the Tourism Fernie overall strategic plan and budget. Tourism Fernie is a Community Destination Marketing/Management Organization (CDMO).

Tourism Fernie is governed by a Board of Directors representing industry stakeholders. Each Board Member sits for two-year terms with the ability to be re-elected for up to 4 terms:

- 5 MRDT Accommodators with 4 or more units
- 4 Directors at Large (Members not under above category)
- Municipal and Chamber Liaisons to the Board (Non-Voting)

Tourism Fernie Committees consist of 1-2 Board Members plus additional members and non-members of Tourism Fernie. Committee's primary focus on providing recommendations to Board and staff that help inform strategic decision-making and planning.

- Tourism Master Plan Implementation Committee
- Marketing
- Finance
- Governance/Nominations/AGM

AGM - March 2022
Annual Strategic Planning
Session – Early Fall 2022

Tourism Fernie currently participates in the following external committees:

- Tourism Master Plan Champion Group
- Municipal RMI RDS
- Local Ski Shuttle Task Force

Current Board of Directors (renewed each AGM)

Andrew Hayden, Chair	Fernie Distillers	Voting
Caitlin Bates, Vice Chair	Island Lake Lodge	Voting
Mark Ormandy, Treasurer	Fernie Alpine Resort	Voting
Jason Burt, Secretary	Snow Valley Lodging	Voting
Luke Swansburg	Lizard Creek Lodge	Voting
Chris Mullin	Fernie Central Reservations	Voting
Mark Hall	Gearhub	Voting
Sydney Salvador	The Chopstick Truck	Voting
Steven Szelei	Parastone Developments	Voting

LIAISONS to the Board:

VACANT since Jan 2021*	City of Fernie, Councillor/Mayor	Non-Voting
Brad Parsell	Fernie Chamber of Commerce, ED	Non-Voting

* City of Fernie ceased all community NGO liaison roles in Jan 2021.

Tourism Fernie Staff

Jikke Gyorki, Executive Officer	Christine Grimble, Media & Projects Manager
Brona Kekenakova, Marketing Manager	Rebecca Hall, Admin & Marketing Coordinator
Vince Mo, Social Media Coordinator & Photographer	

KEY LEARNINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. 2020 and 2021 were COVID-19 pandemic years that required a full pivot of Tourism Fernie's tactical initiatives compared to pre-COVID years. Adjustments in markets, messaging, methods, timing, advocacy and the key need to focus on local tourism.
2. Fernie's 2020 MRDT numbers were higher than expected and Fernie was one of the top destinations in BC to see the lowest decrease in 2020 MRDT/Room Revenues (25% down from 2019, some were down as much as 80%).
3. Continue to benefit (trends emphasized due to pandemic) from being:
 - a. A unique mountain town in the Rockies with vast open spaces and diversity of outdoor experiences year-round
 - b. An authentic town and not a mass tourist destination
 - c. Exceptional scenery
 - d. Unique historic, cultural assets and opportunities
 - e. Proximity to core drive markets
4. Impacts of new variants of concern....
5. Impacts of further weather events/climate change.
6. Competition is strong, may be time to do something more out-of-the-box / innovative within marketing.
7. Tourism Fernie memberships saw a small decrease due to COVID impacts on businesses, many are returning, also seeing new businesses join. Did see a few memberships not renewed due to their position on COVID and government restrictions, which Tourism Fernie followed.
8. Destination BC has been exemplary in its support of industry and DMOs. Co-op marketing funds, programs and requirements were indicative of what industry needed during challenging times.
9. Supporting our industry through COVID took a bigger community leadership role than expected due to the lack of leadership from the municipality. Working with the Chamber was essential and positive especially with a Chamber ED who is tourism experienced.
10. The importance of destination management/development efforts continue to become more and more evident. There is a diversity of funding opportunities, but they are limited to one-off projects/development leaving a need/gap for funds to support on-going infrastructure/amenity management. We continue to have discussions with various levels of government and Ministry contacts on this.
11. The Board of Directors updated Tourism Fernie's Vision Statement to be in line with the Vision from the community Tourism Master Plan – *"Fernie is a vibrant and sustainable tourism destination built on respect, collaboration and authenticity."*
12. Advocacy efforts on a regional/provincial level for tourism focus on our connections / memberships with Chamber, TIABC, BCDMOA, BCHA, TIAC, MLAs and MPs. However, there are times when we must take on a lead role (ie letter to Premier June 2020 re: Alberta and restrictions)
13. Tourism Fernie's Board/Chair are best to further relations with Mayor & Council, vs staff who focus on plan execution with municipal staff. Staff should not be stuck in political conversations and debates were possible.
14. Labour shortage is a key issue shared more broadly than Fernie or tourism itself. It effects business ability to sell by limiting opportunities for consumers to buy (reduced hours, service levels, product offerings). It also effects customer service levels. Tourism Fernie will continue to collaborate with the Chamber on this issue.
15. More data and market research are needed and desired to aid in short and long-term planning.
16. Availability of places to live for seasonal employees has become a bigger challenge than in past due to COVID and limited local efforts. Tourism Fernie has and continues to be willing to be at the table as a partner when requested. This topic is led by the City, Chamber and bigger employers.
17. On November 14 & 15, 2021 – extreme rains hit BC and Fernie. A portion of Fernie's critical trail system was damaged, a key recreational corridor Coal Creek Road was damaged at multiple locations (bridge lost, road washed away) impacting access for all recreational/tourism use (winter included), another key corridor Morrissey Road was also damaged and eliminated access for one of Fernie Catskiing operations and the Fernie Snowmobile Assn and others. This weather event and the impacts may steer support and resources for recovery.

BRAND POSITIONING

Our brand voice will communicate a variety of messages that will change dependent on the target market we are speaking to. In all instances however, the following key messages should be central to the communication:



Safe wide-open spaces: Fernie's vast landscape, mountain environment and small population make for a safe outdoor focused destination during a pandemic such as COVID-19.

Cool, small-town charm: Fernie's funky main street with its turn-of-the-century brick buildings framed by post card-perfect mountains provides this rugged and unpolished little town with a unique charm.

Mountain culture: From the pick-up trucks and mountain bikes that travel its streets, to the ski bums and guide shops that line them, Fernie's distinct mountain culture is evident at almost every turn.

Stunning scenery: Fernie is a magnificent outdoor setting from which to experience the beauty and majesty of the Canadian Rocky Mountains.

Authentic and real: Fernie is a casual, comfortable, and laid-back place where a local community still thrives. A community first, destination second, Fernie is not a packaged experience for the mass tourist.

Adventurous and outdoorsy: Fernie is a place where adventure seekers, mountain enthusiasts, and outdoor recreationalists of all kinds come to experience the stunning natural surroundings and range of outdoor activities.

Down-to-earth: Fernie's people are humble, honest, natural, and welcoming with a resiliency that stems from their hard-working roots.

Enduring history: Fernie has a rich history that is alive and thriving to this day.

Community-minded: Fernie's people work together for the betterment of their town, its residents and its visitors. They take pride in their community and welcome visitors who share their values.

Euphoric: Fernie is an escape from the hurried pace of everyday life. It provides euphoric experiences to its visitors and residents through unique moments of anticipation, achievement and the beauty of its natural surroundings.

TARGET MARKETS

Tourism Fernie's marketing initiatives will target audiences that are expected to provide the best return on investment considering continued recovery from COVID-19 and the opportunities it has provided given the type of destination Fernie is. Long-haul and overseas markets are starting to return in 2022.

Based on industry research, trends and stakeholder input target markets are focused primarily on high-yield markets, defined as higher-income/spenders, and longer stay travelers with an emphasis on times of the year when there are accommodation vacancies.

Primary Traveller Profiles (based on [Destination Canada EQ](#)):

- Free Spirit Travellers
- Authentic Experiencer Travellers
- Rejuvenators/No Hassle Travellers
- Gentle Explorer Travellers

Primary Geographic Markets:

- Canadian: AB, BC, ON, SK, MB, QU
- USA: WA, MT, ID, CA, plus destination ski markets
- Overseas: UK, AUS/NZ, GER

Tourism Fernie supports quality media and travel trade initiatives in above and in other markets in partnership with key members and stakeholders such as RCR/ILL/KRT/DBC/DC.

In consultation with local accommodators pre-COVID, the following 13 target audiences were identified as important and/or high value, not necessarily in order:

- Long Haul/International, including travel trade (US, Aus, UK) – mostly destination ski focused
- Alberta / Drive market (prairies, NWUS)
- Long stay markets
- Zoomers – 45+ age group (includes Active Baby Boomers)
- Outdoor Adventure Seekers (all seasons: ski, bike, hike, fish, sled, soft nature)
- Sightseeing – Mountain Towns/Culture/Heritage, Historic Downtown, Resorts & the Canadian Rockies
- Destination Weddings
- Family & Couple Vacations
- Culture – Art Walk, Heritage Walk, Learning Experiences, New walking tours
- Craft F&B – Beer, Spirits, Chocolate, Coffee, Market and more
- Group, Sport & Corporate Events/Competitions
- Wellness & Spa
- Girl's Trips / Guy's Trips
- LGBTQ
- Tourism Events, Animation & Festivals (as allowed post-pandemic)

Fernie is primarily a regional drive market which is very beneficial to our industry and recovery as this market that will still be able to travel and more quickly. Past surveys have indicated that our non-winter visitors are from:

- 14% BC
- 58% AB
- 13% Other Canada (SK, MB & ON primarily)
- 8% USA
- 7% International Overseas

During a typical winter ski season there is an increase in USA and International visitors, however regional/Canadian traffic still dominates at 70%. Since March 2020 the market has been 100% domestic, due to the travel restrictions. Starting late 2021 long haul markets are starting to return however it will still take another 12+ months for overseas markets to fully recover.

Leisure Visitor Origins (pre-covid)

(Tourism Fernie Surveys)

Summer Season:

12% BC
40% AB
11% SK/MB
8% ON & Other CAN
22% USA/MEX
7% UK/AUS/EUR

Winter Season:

8% BC
40% AB
9% SK/MB
10% ON & Other
6% USA
22% UK/AUS/NZ
5% EUR

Lodging Revenue (pre-covid)

- in order of lowest to highest months

November

May

April

October

June

September

July

August

December

January

March

February

During the pandemic while travel was taking place travelers were looking for the below opportunities. As travel recovers these are still top of mind for travellers.

- Safe destinations and amenities/lodging/activities
- Uncrowded places
- Small towns / small tourism / road tripping
- Nature and the outdoors
- Quality experiences with family and friends away from the city
- Health and wellness

Fernie continues to be well positioned as a destination to meet these needs. Evidence of the visitation during the pandemic showed there was pent up demand and the desire to travel was high, this continues to be the case as more start to travel. There is also significant competition for tourism given the recovery of all destinations. In light of this Tourism Fernie must execute inspiring campaigns and maintain brand position. We must continue to work with local industry and stakeholders to support and manage the destination and address the challenges related to recovery and the longer lasting impacts of COVID such as staff shortages and housing availability.

Other Considerations:

- When will health restrictions fully end?
- When will events return to their past glory?
- Availability and quality of Fernie experiences – what businesses will have limited capacity/hours, cancelled events continue or how long till they can return properly
- Will demand be greater in 2022 than 2019 as a result of shifting travel trends? Are we prepared? Can we handle it? Would we limit marketing and put more focus on destination management?

We forecast that health restrictions (masks, gatherings) will end once majority of kids aged 5-11 are vaccinated and after winter flu season. Timing expected for this is March 2021.

2022 Goals & Strategies

Recover Fernie's 2022 accommodation revenues, year-round, to 2019 levels.

- Execute effective and inspiring marketing campaigns for all four seasons with a focus on high-yield markets, content creation initiatives and innovation considering competition.
- Increase the acquisition and use of data to enhance marketing effectiveness and decision-making internally and for stakeholders.
- Maintain ability to adapt and be nimble to changes in market trends and external influences.
- Further develop media and influencer marketing initiatives and partnerships with an emphasis on quality vs quantity.
- Continue to support and evolve co-op marketing programs and campaigns with members and industry partners with an emphasis on quality and value vs quantity.
- Continue to provide target markets and visitors with quality information and tools to encourage longer stays and increased spending.

Support and execute destination management and development priorities that support tourism sector recovery, growth and sustainability.

- Continue to lead, partner and track implementation of the Tourism Master Plan and its Actions
- Increase and enhance communications within the community about tourism and the importance of tourism.
- Continue to communicate key information to members and the local tourism sector.
- Continue to execute and partner on local industry support initiatives.
- Continue to support advocacy efforts in partnership with stakeholders

Long-term sustainability of tourism in Fernie

- Continue to build stronger and more tangible stakeholder relations and partnerships
- Review current 5 Year Plan (2020-2024) and develop recommendations on adjustments and next 5 Year Plan (2025-2029) as part of MRDT renewal process.

Measurables/Outcomes:

- Positive results of 3% stakeholder survey (conduct survey in March/pre-AGM)
- Development of quality strategic plans, budgets and financial reports, annual reports
- Recovery accommodation revenues to 2019 levels
- Further implementation of Tourism Master Plan action items
- Strong stakeholder relations and MOUs for collaborative initiatives and efforts
- Marketing initiative metrics and results
- Evidence of resource allocations in content and storytelling marketing initiatives (vs just traditional)
- Evidence of collection, distribution and usage of tourism/marketing metrics and research
- Evidence of stakeholder collaboration in tourism marketing, projects and programs

2022 Approved Budget – as of December 2021

MRDT 3% (TEP & Fees included*)	745,000
Membership Fees	24,000
TF & DBC Co-op Marketing	165,000
Transportation (Local shuttle advertising program)	17,000
Grant Projects (Destn Mgnt)	298,400
<i>Reserve (unrestricted)</i>	<u>See below</u>
TOTAL REVENUES	1,249,400
Administration (includes MRDT /Prov Event Fees to Province)	143,394
Industry & Destn Mgnt/Devel Initiatives	441,844
Marketing Initiatives	716,162
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,301,400
Planned Over Spending (from reserve)	(52,000)

* MRDT Fees - Monthly deduction from total MRDT collected to cover Ministry of Finance administration fees. TEP: Mandated contribution to the Destination BC provincial Tourism Events Program fund as a 3% MRDT community. [Read more about TEP](#)