



# *Five Year Strategic Business Plan 2025-2029*

*April 2024*

*by*

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*Developed as part of:*

*3% MRDT 5-Year Renewal Submission as Required by the Province of BC*

*Approved by Destination BC in May 2024  
Approved by the Ministry of Finance in July 2024*

# Tourism Fernie's Vision, Mission & Guiding Principles

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## VISION STATEMENT

Fernie aspires to be a vibrant and sustainable tourism destination built on respect, collaboration and authenticity.

## MISSION STATEMENT

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

## TOURISM FERNIE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Industry led / government supported** – we are led by stakeholders of Fernie's tourism industry and effectively manage legislated hotel tax revenues under the BC Provincial Government MRDT Program which supports tourism as Fernie's key economic engine.
- **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 prioritize tourism's long-term continuation and respect the community's social, economic and environmental values to help inform our decisions.
- **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.

## Strategic Context

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Fernie has a long-standing and resilient tourism industry that heavily relies on its natural attractions and quaint appeal for its leisure tourism visitation while benefiting from regular corporate and sport competition travelers.

2023 was Fernie's strongest year to date for lodging revenues thanks primarily to continued recovery from COVID19 travel impacts, strong brand and destination awareness and interest, increase in ADR, TC Energy pipeline project, and a full year of capturing VRBO's MRDT.

The lodging room units available have increased, but only specific to short-term rentals via AirBnB and VRBO. There are however new accommodation developments starting in 2024-2025 including a condo-hotel (Basecamp) expected to open in 2026 with 80 condo style units, as well as the expansion of the Best Western. This could equate to at least \$8 million in additional lodging revenues and \$200,000 in additional MRDT annually based on the size of the property, estimated ADR and occupancy.

The following two pages highlight lodging statistics which articulate revenues, nightly rates, occupancy, and comparisons in both traditional and STRs around Fernie. It should be noted, see next page, that the months representing the highest lodging revenues do not align with the highest lodging occupancy. This brings up a few observations:

- If a month is high in revenue but lower in the order of occupancy, then that month's nightly rates are high (higher yield).
- These same months provide opportunity to further increase occupancy when nightly rates are high therefore generating more return and MRDT for the community and industry.
- On the opposite side if a month's occupancy is high, but the revenues are lower than there is an opportunity to increase nightly rates given demand is high. This would generate more return and MRDT for the community and industry.

There is industry optimism and expectation in the continued growth of the tourism industry in Fernie. Years 2022 and 2023 did see many rooms booked by TC Energy pipeline project (May-Sept), but tourism and travel demand is expected to replace those bookings looking forward. Summer travel (May-Sept) growth is expected to add substantially to future revenue growth.

Optimism for the future does come with concerns about weather and climate impacts, and the continued need for infrastructure investment and upgrades. See the key learnings and detailed SWOT analysis starting on page 6.



*Tourism Fernie AGM April 2023*

**2023 Fernie’s Approximate Lodging Units including Short-Term Rentals:**

~ 1,100 – mix of hotel rooms, condos, chalets, townhomes and others.

Of all accommodation units (traditional and STRs):

- There are approximately 350<sup>1</sup> accommodation units at Fernie Alpine Resort including STRs (A unit can be a hotel room, condo, suite, townhome or private home/chalet).
  - a. Approximately 9% of the units are STRs in residential zones.
  - b. 91% are within commercial accommodation zones.
  
- In the City of Fernie there are approximately 730\* accommodation units including STRs (A unit can be a hotel room, condo, suite, townhome, tiny home, chalet or B&B).
  - a. Approximately 16% of the units are STRs in residential zones.
  - b. 84% are within commercial accommodation zones.

**2023 Fernie Traditional Accommodations (Source: STAR Report\*) – Currency CAD**

Avg Daily Room Rate (ADR**)	\$164	(up 7%)
Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR**)	\$114	(up 18%)
Occupancy **	69.6%	(up 11%)

**Comparable 2023 Data:**

Kootenay Rockies:	ADR \$166 / RevPAR \$ 90 / Occupancy 53%
Kelowna:	ADR \$183 / RevPAR \$114 / Occupancy 60%
British Columbia:	ADR \$236 / RevPAR \$165 / Occupancy 69%
Whistler:	ADR \$411 / RevPAR \$288 / Occupancy 66%

\* Approximately 35%-40% of local accommodators currently provide data in the STAR Report. Tourism Fernie is working to increase that count to better reflect local numbers given the diversity of lodging options and rates.

\*\* **ADR** is the average price for a hotel room/condo unit per night over a given period of time at a specific property or region.

\*\***RevPAR** is a hotel’s ‘gold standard’ performance metric, is shows the revenues generated per room regardless of if the rooms are occupied or not. RevPAR = Room Revenue/Total Rooms Available for a given period of time (ie a month or year).

\*\***Occupancy** is the % of room nights booked of the number available.

**Lodging Revenue (MRDT)\***

- avg. highest to lowest months -

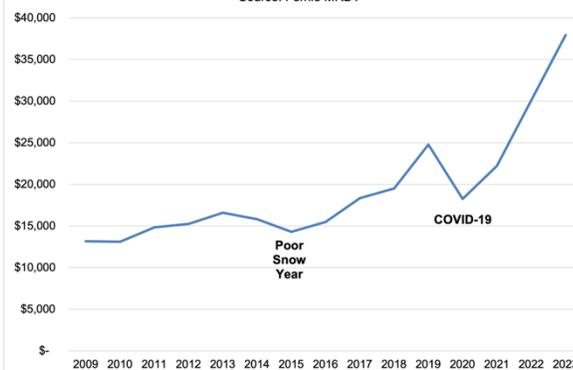
- February
- March
- December
- January
- August
- September
- July
- June
- October
- November
- May
- April

**Lodging Occupancy (STAR Report)\***

- July
- August
- September
- August
- June
- February
- March
- January
- December
- May
- November
- April

\* Note: These orders based on last couple of years data, post-Covid and with TC Energy

**Fernie Accommodation Revenues - (\$000)**  
Source: Fernie MRDT



**OTA PARTNER INSIGHTS FOR 2023**

- ADR \$275 CAD
- 37% Increase in nights booked
- 30% Increase in booking revenues
- 36% Increase in # of people booked
- 42% Couples | 34% Families

<sup>1</sup> Data source: KeyData Dashboard - <https://www.keydatadashboard.com/> & Tourism Fernie traditional accommodator counts.

**Short Term Rentals (STRs) in Fernie AirBnB & VRBO (Source: [Key Data](#))**

Tourism Fernie purchases data from Key Data to understand the short-term rental market locally.

Key Data ‘scrapes’ data from AirBnB and VRBO. It is less accurate than above STAR Report source, but covers STRs which the STAR Report does not.

Key Data provided Tourism Fernie with raw data detailing just over 700 STR listings in the Fernie area including Fernie Alpine Resort. In review this does not correlate to the number of ‘places’ listed. In a deep dive into the 700+ listings many were non-existent or were duplicates. After full review and the elimination of non-existent and duplicate\* listings, the ending number of STR ‘units’ in the Fernie and Fernie Alpine Resort area was just over 460.

\* Duplicate listings were due to either the same ‘unit’ being listed on both AirBnB and VRBO, and/or, many larger units have multiple listings as they can be reserved in sections (townhouse split into two private sections, two bedroom condo splitting into a 1 bedroom with a lock-off unit, etc).

~ 460 STR units, of these 460 units:

- ~ 68% are 2-bedrooms or more. 78% are condos, townhomes or private homes.
- ~ 354 are traditional commercial accommodator units or are units in accommodation zoned areas.
  - Consists of long-standing accommodators such as Fernie Lodging Company, Snow Valley Lodging, Stanford Resort Hotel and Fernie Central Reservations using AirBnB and VRBO as a sales channel
  - Also consists of units in properly zoned accommodation areas such as Silver Rock, Fernie 901, Riverside, Fernie Alpine Resort area.
- ~ 106 STR units are residents offering STRs in and around town within their dwelling/primary residence, assume bylaws being followed.
  - No details on whether they are licensed or permitted by local government.
  - Neighbourhoods include Annex, Ridgemoor, Main Town, Airport, Alpine Trails, Cokato, Dicken Rd, etc

**NOTE:**

- AirBnB & VRBO generated \$338,000 in OAP/STR MRDT in 2023. Based on the above information and analysis 76% of the OAP MRDT is from traditional accommodation units in accommodation zones and should be categorized under traditional MRDT collections.
- Dollars below are in US.

**Fernie STRs in 2023 (AirBnB only):**

*ADR \$217 USD / RevPar \$63 USD / Occupancy 29%*

**Comparable 2023 Data:**

**Golden STRs:**

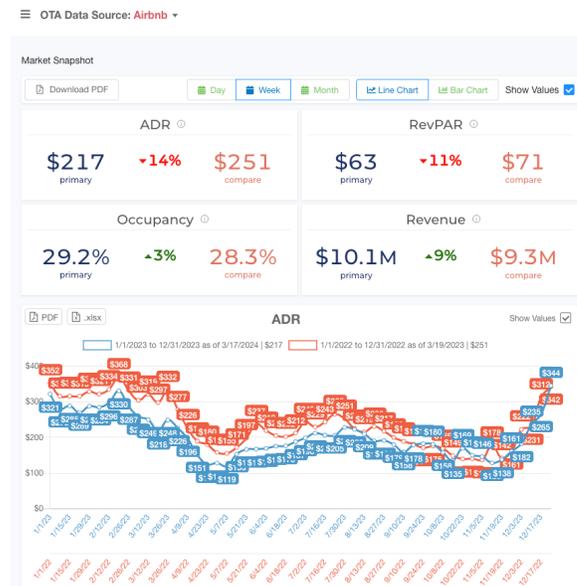
*ADR \$241 USD / RevPar \$78 USD / Occupancy 32%*

**Revelstoke STRs:**

*ADR \$234 USD / RevPar \$69 USD / Occupancy 29%*

**Kimberley STRs:**

*ADR \$204 USD / RevPar \$62 USD / Occupancy 30%*



Sample dashboard from Key Data

## Key Learnings

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1. The 3% MRDT Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys are very positive and continue to provide important information that informs our future plans and decision-making. However, feedback from some respondents speak to challenges (housing, cost of living) that cannot be solved by DMOs or MRDT, but are associated with the tourism industry, which speaks to our role to partner with the community on supporting ideas and solutions. Tourism Fernie participates in the Housing Solutions Working Group meetings.
2. Member and stakeholder relations, communications and collaboration continue to be more important to our organization and industry.
3. We have an opportunity to further engage with our accommodation sector to support and educate on ADR and RevPAR growth overall and occupancy growth overall but especially during high yield months.
4. Climate and weather challenges are a real concern to the community and industry and requires industry learning and engagement to address. Opportunity for 'summer' growth in the shoulder seasons.
5. The importance of the Tourism Master Plan, and the RDEK Sustainable Tourism Strategy, and its continued evolution and implementation with partners continues to be key to this year and beyond.
6. Tourism Fernie continues to be poised for supporting, developing, and leading destination management and development projects with on-going success in grant acquisition.
7. Tourism Fernie won the Community Project Award in spring 2023 from the BC Economic Development Assn Summit Conference, for its Sustainable Tourism Initiative and AmbassadorWILD Program. Tourism Fernie was also a finalist of 18 nominations for the national Sustainable Tourism Award at the Canadian Tourism Congress event in Ottawa. Though we did not win the high level of exposure and recognition was evident. These accomplishments continue to show Tourism Fernie is on the right path with its sustainable tourism, destination management and destination development work.
8. Competition is strong, so marketing needs to continue to be strategic, effective and innovative.
9. Content and visual marketing, along with media and both consumer and travel trade events are playing a key role in all our marketing initiatives and spending.
10. We are seeing the return and strong demand from long-haul markets since pandemic.
11. Data continues to be needed and to stay on top of relevant travel trends. But data is highly challenging and costly to acquire. Tourism Fernie continues to have challenges with accommodators participating in the STAR report. MRDT as a monthly reconciled data source continues to be inaccurate and a challenge when comparing month-over-month, season-over-season. DMOs need better MRDT data! Deposit details aren't 100% accurate. The data is with Ministry of Finance, but not accessible.
12. Need to advocate for increased RMI funding to rural resort communities and more CDMO involvement in the RMI program.
13. Need to advocate to the province and BC Transit for local transportation needs, as this area is not seeing the level of support of other rural areas.
14. As a Resort Municipality, Short-Term Rentals are important to the local tourism economy and many local residents. Local bylaws are in place which, for the most part, support a balance between tourism, community & housing needs.
15. Shoulder seasons are shrinking but still lots of opportunity. November is not the weakest month of the year anymore. We can build on demand as data clarifies needs and opportunities.

# MRDT Stakeholder Survey Highlights 2023 (from 2023 Annual Report)

Tourism Fernie 2023 Annual Report

## 2023 MRDT Stakeholder Survey of 2022 Programs

Tourism Fernie's Annual MRDT Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey, a requirement of the Province of BC, was sent to 151 stakeholders in Tourism Fernie's Industry database. The purpose of the survey is to 1. Assess the level of awareness of Tourism Fernie's activities, 2. Assess the level of satisfaction with the use of MRDT funds. The survey, managed by The Web Advisors, took place in spring of 2023 after the Annual General Meeting and had a 36% response rate. Key results, insights and observations are detailed below.



## Key Insights & Observations for Tourism Fernie from Survey Results

- Support for Tourism Fernie's current sustainability initiatives and importance of continuing and growing organization's role and initiatives in sustainability, responsible travel and behaviour, conservation and communications.
- Continue and grow support for tourism infrastructure and amenities projects that support visitation and the visitor experience (trails, river, parking, trailheads etc).
- Expand support for tourism events, festivals, sporting events and animation initiatives that support visitation and the visitor experience.
- Growing marketing and support for arts, culture, heritage, LGTBQ, inclusive, film tourism & experiences.
- Helping to identify and develop options for things to do when the weather is an issue (cold, heat, rain, smoke, lack of snow, etc).
- Continue to support access and transportation initiatives, travel media and travel trade with long-haul market development.
- Fernie needs a big new attraction.
- More business/marketing learning programs like the ULearning initiative
- Cohesive community brand development. Importance of Fernie's authenticity and story. Importance of working together.
- Continuing to grow shoulder season business.
- Growth in accommodation business wasn't standard across other tourism businesses. TC Energy filled many rooms but many workers couldn't and didn't shop, dine and do activities like many visitors do, so some local businesses didn't meet their financial goals for the year.

## A Few Final Comments from Stakeholders about Tourism Fernie

- "Thanks for all you do."
- "Fantastic group of people to work with."
- "Keep up the great work Tourism Fernie"
- "Great work, and thank you for the survey."
- "It may be time to examine tourism's impacts on the community and environment. Ever-increasing tourism numbers are not sustainable without the infrastructure in place to handle it."
- "In my opinion, optically, it seemed like TF was supporting the pipeline project here and the strain it's putting on everything. I was confused by this, its hurt tourism, I expected more of a fight to push them to stay somewhere else. Just my thoughts. Maybe TF did, but optically it seemed like they were happy and trying to convince me that I should be happy. The pipeline project is hurting my business."

## SWOT Analysis

Strengths of Fernie's Tourism Industry	Weaknesses Affecting Fernie's Tourism Industry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rocky Mountains, Elk River, natural attractions, scenic appeal, small mountain town appeal.</li> <li>• 100+ years of welcoming visitors.</li> <li>• Great community, people, stories, and hospitality.</li> <li>• Historic Downtown, authentic real community &amp; unique independent experiences and small businesses.</li> <li>• Long-standing / successful core business experiences, summer, and winter.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fernie Alpine Resort – Winter &amp; Summer</li> <li>○ Island Lake Lodge – Catskiing &amp; Summer</li> <li>○ Fernie Wilderness Adventure – Catskiing &amp; Fly Fishing</li> <li>○ Canyon Raft/Tunnl49 – Rafting, SUP</li> <li>○ Fly Fishing Operators (ER Guiding, Kootenay, FWA, etc)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The amount of snow, quality of snow, terrain.</li> <li>• Trails &amp; Winter Grooming – quality, quantity, diversity, summer, winter, non-motorized. Hiking, mountain biking, fat biking, Nordic, snowshoeing.</li> <li>• Strong corporate travel business demand (TECK, CP, TC construction, etc).</li> <li>• Snowmobiling &amp; Fernie Snowmobile Assn.</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial, supportive, and collaborative industry.</li> <li>• 3% MRDT = \$1 million in revenue from travelers to support local industry. RMI = \$400k from Province funds via City.</li> <li>• Sophisticated, professional, and highly regarded Tourism Fernie Society and team.</li> <li>• Tourism Fernie's growing plan and efforts in destination management and development in partnership with key stakeholders such as RDEK, landowners and the City of Fernie.</li> <li>• Awards received on various initiatives.</li> <li>• Diversity of experiences – adventure, sport, well-being, culture, heritage. Fernie's history and art scene.</li> <li>• Community support for tourism as key economic driver, with a sustainability lens.</li> <li>• Proximity to Calgary, Kalispell, Cranbrook Airport.</li> <li>• Along Highway 3.</li> <li>• Easier, safer and more reliable highway vs Highway 1 into BC from rest of Canada.</li> <li>• Tourism projects in development – new Montane campground, Best Western expansion and Basecamp.</li> <li>• Housing/rental projects happening with construction starting in 2024.</li> <li>• Not a mass tourist destination, Fernie is a unique experience a real community. Off-the-beaten path.</li> <li>• AmbassadorWILD Program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much of the leisure visitation is dependent on the conditions of the outdoor experiences. Poor snow, extreme temperatures, air quality etc. can impact tourism revenues/spending/positive experience.</li> <li>• Limited indoor experiences, especially when weather is poor for guests.</li> <li>• No big non-winter/year-round attraction that's weather resilient. No conference facility/limited meeting facilities.</li> <li>• Seasonality/demand of tourism not even, not enough rooms during peak demand, too many during quiet times. Same for restaurant seats, parking.</li> <li>• Ground and air transportation options extremely limited.</li> <li>• Challenges in data collection and access to support tourism advocacy, understanding, support and growth.</li> <li>• Overall coordination, management and funds to maintain all trails and lack of a bigger trails master plan – all season activities.</li> <li>• Limited and old venues for events, sports, weddings and functions. Old City infrastructure (water/sewer).</li> <li>• Lack of City \$\$/capacity. Need for more funds and efficiency for infrastructure/venues, growth, amenities, supporting local events.</li> <li>• Challenges with municipal process and processing times for permits, approvals related to businesses, housing, renovations, investment, etc.</li> <li>• Current limited housing/rental supply causing increased cost of living and a challenge to front line industry workers needing a place to live.</li> <li>• Lack of investment and upgrades in Fernie Alpine Resort in a competitive marketplace – winter and summer product and experiences, infrastructure, guest experience(s) at the base, dining, retail, activities, services, etc.</li> <li>• Limited business hours for visitors (retail, attractions, cafés). Limited dining in peak season.</li> <li>• Need for better customer service.</li> <li>• Extensive private land surrounding Fernie thus vulnerability of long-term access to the lands for tourism and recreation.</li> <li>• Limited capacity of local groups, organizations and volunteers to build and grow events, competitions, tournaments and festivals.</li> <li>• Limited/lack of infrastructure and amenities – Elk River, trailheads, parking, signage, toilets, garbage, etc.</li> <li>• Not a mass tourist destination – limited infrastructure, amenities, services, etc.</li> <li>• Product, service and experience limitation due to membership requirements.</li> </ul>

Opportunities of Fernie’s Tourism Industry	Threats of Fernie’s Tourism Industry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community’s <u>desire</u> to work on addressing the weaknesses. Find the money and build the capacity.</li> <li>• There are more people that can become a visitor to Fernie. Continue and expand upon building the product, infrastructure, and awareness.</li> <li>• Currency exchange rates (US, Euro, UK).</li> <li>• Growing occupancy in high yield months, ADR and RevPar overall.</li> <li>• New investment and development – Basecamp, Best Western expansion, Montane campground.</li> <li>• Advocating the Province of BC to charge MRDT on campgrounds and RV resorts.</li> <li>• City of Fernie OCP process.</li> <li>• New housing, infrastructure needs and projects</li> <li>• Travel is a priority for people across the globe. Lots of market-share to capture.</li> <li>• Fernie is the type of destination many are looking for: clean, safe, beautiful, outdoors, small mountain town, community, authentic, fun, quaint etc.</li> <li>• Further leveraging our sustainability efforts, GreenStep potential benefits.</li> <li>• Destination Weddings – based on venue capacity.</li> <li>• Events, festivals, competitions, and meetings – based on venue capacity – existing and future.</li> <li>• Boutique wellness tourism.</li> <li>• Accommodators wanting to do packaging and selling of FAR lift tickets.</li> <li>• Return and continued growth of long-haul markets.</li> <li>• Tourism Fernie’s growing plan and efforts in destination management and development in partnership with key stakeholders such as RDEK, landowners and the City of Fernie.</li> <li>• Technology and AI.</li> <li>• More and better data will help industry long-term growth and sustainability.</li> <li>• Further increase communications to industry / visitors on important content/updates.</li> <li>• Increase in importance of tourism to local economy, what is future of coal in the valley.</li> <li>• A new industry or economic entity needs to be fostered now to eventually replace the economic engine of coal mining in the Elk Valley. Tourism based industry is big part of that solution.</li> <li>• Creative public and private partnerships to address opportunities with infrastructure.</li> <li>• More local education on the benefits and values of tourism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current local/national/global economics – cost of living, affordability, discretionary spending. Impacts tourism staffing if limited housing options. Impacts visitation if travelers limit spending.</li> <li>• Weather/climate negative impacts to stays, the experience and the product. Need to plan, mitigate, diversify industry.</li> <li>• Many competing destinations are further investing in experiences, attractions.</li> <li>• Lack of local and regional transportation jeopardizes much of the industry including international visitors as it is a barrier to access.</li> <li>• Future of TECK/Glencore in the Valley, decrease in coal prices, jobs, home values, business revenues, corporate room nights.</li> <li>• Media and government communications during provincial/national weather/other big issues affecting travel. Those that are not an issue locally yet their communications then become the issue to travelers.</li> <li>• Future of air travel, sustainability trends, climate change, ability to adapt.</li> <li>• Future of labour shortages, stopped being an issue this winter 23-24 season. What will summer and beyond look like?</li> <li>• Will housing/rental developments keep pace of demand?</li> <li>• Multiple users/demands and industry on the land base, private landowners. Complexity to collaborate and work through continually.</li> <li>• Invasive species to our waterways. Selenium challenges.</li> <li>• Limited base area, experience and chairlift investment at Fernie Alpine Resort.</li> <li>• Municipal process for permits and approvals is slow and cumbersome which has and can turn away investment and limit positive change and growth.</li> <li>• Strong corporate travel business demand (TECK, CP, TC construction, etc) can push leisure tourism business down due to lack of accommodation availability and different ways of spending in the community.</li> <li>• Local pricing competition that erodes overall revenue generation for the industry, ie with ADR between properties and also compared to STRs.</li> <li>• Will new Federal budget discourage investment?</li> </ul>

Copies of Tourism Master Plan and past Annual Reports can be found here:

<http://tourismfernie.com/stakeholders/resources>

## Five-Year Goals, Objectives, Targets & Strategies – 2025-2029

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### **Tourism Fernie Goal:**

Grow and strengthen Fernie’s year-round tourism industry and economy.

### **Tourism Fernie Objectives:**

Planning and executing effective and innovative marketing.

Expanding and enhancing destination management and development efforts.

Supporting industry resilience, sustainability, and success.

Continuing to grow and strengthen Tourism Fernie.

### **Tourism Fernie’s Desired Outcomes / Targets over the 5 Years:**

Increase ADR and RevPar by 25% (~ 6% per year)

Double MRDT revenues for April, May, October & November

Increase June & September MRDT revenues by 35%

Increase peak visitation period MRDT revenues by 30%

At least six new tourism amenities/infrastructure improvements

Visitor [Net Promoter Score](#) of over 85 (Pre-COVID was 73)

Increase organization’s ‘very satisfied’ rate by stakeholders to 80% (was 69%, was 92% ‘satisfied’ & ‘very satisfied’)

Digital Marketing Channels 50% Growth

### **Tourism Fernie’s Strategies & Actions:**

#### **Planning and executing effective and innovative marketing.**

- Campaigns and initiatives that target a diversity of high-value, high-yield visitors year-round, with emphasis on softer times of the year.
- Continuing to develop and publish on-brand, results-oriented and trend-relevant inspiring, entertaining, and informative content.
- Collection and utilization of data and research to support marketing decisions and report on results.
- Hosting, supporting, and partnering with travel trade and travel media.
- Leveraging, collaborating, and partnering to maximize effectiveness, efficiency, and innovation.
- Showcase the diversity, uniqueness, and authenticity of Fernie.

### **Expanding and enhancing destination management and development efforts.**

- Continue to partner, support and lead infrastructure, access and amenity development and improvements (Elk River, trails, natural attractions, staging areas, gathering hubs, etc).
- Continue to manage, enhance, grow and potentially franchise the AmbassadorWILD Program™
- Partner and lead the evolution and management of the Visitor Centre as a key future attraction and gathering hub.
- Lead and partner to enhance/expand/develop transportation services and partnerships and future role of BC Transit to improve local and area ground transportation that supports visitors and tourism employees.
- Support and build on tourism events and animation opportunities to build overnight visitation and the visitor experience.
- Advocate and help spearhead the development of a broader trails master plan in the area (winter, summer, non-motorized and motorized)
- Continue to partner with and advocate for industry needs of the Resort Municipality Initiative.
- Continue to evolve and support, and further collaborate with industry stakeholders, on important tourism & product enhancements and development, including winter recreation access and grooming, visitor information and communications, programming and tours, technology and more.

### **Supporting industry resilience, sustainability, and success.**

- Continue to partner and collaborate with industry, local government (regional and municipal), and the Fernie Chamber of Commerce on business needs, concerns and topics related to amenities, infrastructure, learning, staff housing, labour, climate planning and impacts, communications, etc.
- Expand on tourism and accommodation data collection and utilization to support decision-making and industry growth and sustainability.
- Continue to support the industry and the visitor in effective communications, support and engagement during issues impacting visitation (weather, emergencies, wildfires, smoke, other).
- Celebrate the hard work of our industry and stakeholders through industry events, communications, recognition, and awards.

### **Continuing to grow and strengthen Tourism Fernie.**

- Leverage and increase Tourism Fernie's revenues, positive reputation, capacity, partnerships, and expertise.
- Regular engagement with stakeholders (MRDT Survey, Industry Events, Corporate Newsletters, Meetings).
- Work with Board and membership to determine potential evolution to a stakeholder vs membership model for Tourism Fernie.

## Sources of Funding & Budget Allocations

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### Planned Annual Sources of Funding

\$1,600,000	3% MRDT by 2029 (Forecast a 6% growth annually)
\$ 150,000	Co-op, Membership & Sales Initiatives
<u>\$ 525,000</u>	Grants & Other Partnership Funding
\$2,275,000	

### Approximate budget % allocations:

45%	Marketing & Communications
10%	Administration
45%	Destination Management & Development, including Visitor Services, Events & Animation
0%	Capital Projects & Affordable Housing*

\* MRDT funds will not be used for capital or affordable housing projects.

The Tourism Fernie Board of Directors, with support from the accommodators, will not use MRDT for affordable housing initiatives. However, Tourism Fernie does participate in the monthly Fernie Housing Solutions Group meetings to support tourism workforce housing information, data, grant applications and projects led by the Fernie Chamber of Commerce. The Group was originally created by the Mayor of Fernie in Fall 2022.

Any funding efforts in a capital nature would be required to come from the public and private sector and grants. Tourism Fernie can lead and execute destination capital/infrastructure projects with outside funding from other partners. The RDEK Sustainable Tourism Projects are an example of this.

Tourism Fernie also partners with the Fernie Chamber of Commerce on their Work In Fernie initiative to support tourism workforce attraction. The Fernie Chamber of Commerce takes the lead on housing and labour challenges affecting the business community. As such Tourism Fernie works closely with the Chamber on these challenges as they relate to tourism.

It is also noted that MRDT can't be used to replace existing sources of tourism funding. [View MRDT Guidelines.](#)

## Brand Positioning

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Our brand voice to visitors 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:



**Laid-back, small-town appeal:** Fernie is a casual and comfortable place where a local community still thrives. A community first, destination second, Fernie is not a packaged nor polished experience for the mass tourist.

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

**Fascinating and enduring history:** Fernie has a rich history that is alive and thriving to this day. Historic Downtown is Fernie's funky main street with its turn-of-the-century brick buildings framed by post card-perfect mountains.

**Authentic and real:** Fernie's people are humble, honest, and welcoming with a resiliency that stems from their hard-working roots.

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

**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.

**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 making for a safe and inspiring destination.

**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

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Tourism Fernie’s marketing initiatives will continue to target audiences that provide the best return on investment. Fernie is primarily a drive market destination for outdoor adventurers, sightseers and those seeking to explore mountain town culture. Long-haul and overseas markets come primarily for skiing, as part of a bigger summer road trip in the Rockies, or due to large events or competitions.

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

- Cultural Explorers
- Free Spirit Travelers
- Authentic Experiencer Travelers
- Rejuvenators/No Hassle Travelers
- Gentle Explorer Travelers

PRIZM [AB & BC Market Segmentation](#) for Fernie (Based on [Environics Analytics](#))

- Country & Western
- Modern Suburbia
- The A-List
- Happy Medium
- Country Traditions
- Agri-Biz
- Family Mode
- Multicultural-ish
- Kick-Back Country

Primary Geographic Markets:

- Alberta, British Columbia, Prairies, Northwest USA

Secondary Geographic Markets:

- Long-Haul Markets:
  - Eastern Canada
  - USA – CA, OR, CO, NY, IL
  - Overseas: UK, AUS/NZ, Germany
  - Mexico

Leisure Visitor Origins*	
- avg. highest to lowest volume -	
Alberta	50%-60%
British Columbia	15%-20%
Sask/Manitoba	11%-15%
ON & Other CAN	5%-15%
USA/MEX	5%-15%
Overseas	5%-15%

\* Long-haul markets are still rebounding

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

Local stakeholder insight into areas of focus are, but not in order:

- Long Haul/International/Long-Stay/High Yield, including travel trade
- Sightseeing – Mountain Towns/Culture/Heritage, Historic Downtown, the Canadian Rockies
- Tourism Events, Animation & Festivals.
- Groups & Sport Competitions/Tournaments.
- Active Zoomers & Travelling Boomers – 50+ age group
- Families, Couples, Girls and Guy’s Vacations
- Outdoor Adventure Seekers (all seasons: ski, bike, hike, fish, sled, soft nature, nordic)
- Destination Weddings
- Arts & Culture – Art Walk, Heritage Walk, Learning Experiences, Markets
- LGBTQ2
- Wellness & Spa
- Craft F&B – Craft Beer, Spirits, Chocolate, Coffee, Markets and more

## Governance, Management and Administration

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### Tourism Fernie:

- is an industry-led, non-profit society (S-52945) formally established in 2007 along with the implementation of the hotel tax (now labelled MRDT).
- is the Eligible Entity for the local 3% MRDT (funds go directly to Tourism Fernie from Province, less fees, and, provincial tourism event program participation).
  - MRDT is the *Municipal & Regional District Tax*, a legislated provincial tax similar to the PST, but restricted to accommodations under 27-night stays. The tax is collected from all travelers staying at the accommodations. The accommodators collect the tax and submit to the Ministry of Finance monthly. There are rules on how the MRDT is spent – [view current guidelines](#).
- became the Eligible Entity for the MRDT on February 1, 2017. Prior to that the MRDT funds were transferred to Tourism Fernie via the Regional District of East Kootenay (less a nominal admin fee).
- increased its MRDT from 2% to 3% on January 1, 2020.
- is a Community Destination Marketing/Management Organization (CDMO).
- 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 governed by a volunteer Board of Directors representing industry stakeholders. Each voting 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)

### 2023-2024 Board of Directors (as of April 2023 AGM and until April 2024 AGM)

Reto Barrington, Chair	Fernie RV Resort	MRDT Accom 4+ units
Jeremiah Pauw, Vice Chair	Fernie Fox Hotel	MRDT Accom 4+ units
Mark Ormandy, Treasurer	Slopeside Lodge & Fernie Alpine Resort	MRDT Accom 4+ units
Jon Ward, Secretary	Red Tree Lodge	MRDT Accom 4+ units
Sadie Howse	Raging Elk Adventure Lodging	MRDT Accom 4+ units
Andrew Hayden	Fernie Distillers	Director at Large/Non-Accom
Sydney Salvador	The Chopstick Truck	Director at Large/Non-Accom
Alan Young	Re/Max Elk Valley Realty	Director at Large/Non-Accom
Dave Hozjan	Elk River Mountain Homes	Director at Large/Non-Accom

Next AGM is April 4, 2024 at the Best Western PLUS Fernie Mountain Lodge visit [TourismFernieAGM.com](https://www.tourismfernie.com/AGM)

### Liaisons to the Board:

City of Fernie, Councilor/Mayor	Unassigned Currently	Non-Voting
Fernie Chamber of Commerce	Wendy McDougall	Non-Voting

### Tourism Fernie Staff

Jikke Gyorki	Executive Officer
Christine Grimble	Media/Travel Trade/Projects Manager
Brona Kekenakova	Marketing Manager
Corien Sieders	Destination Management & Development Manager (NEW)
Emily Williams	Social Media, Content & Digital Marketing Coordinator
Rebecca Hall	Admin & Marketing Coordinator