



*Five Year 2025-2029
Strategic Business Plan
DRAFT*

March 2024

Prepared by

Jikke Gyorki, Executive Officer, Tourism Fernie Society

Prepared for

Stakeholder for Input as part of the MRDT Renewal Process Required by the Province

Final Plan Submission Deadline to the Province is May 1, 2024

Tourism Fernie's Vision, Mission & Guiding Principles

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

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 early 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:

~ 1,200 – mix of hotel rooms, condos, chalets, townhomes and others.

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)*

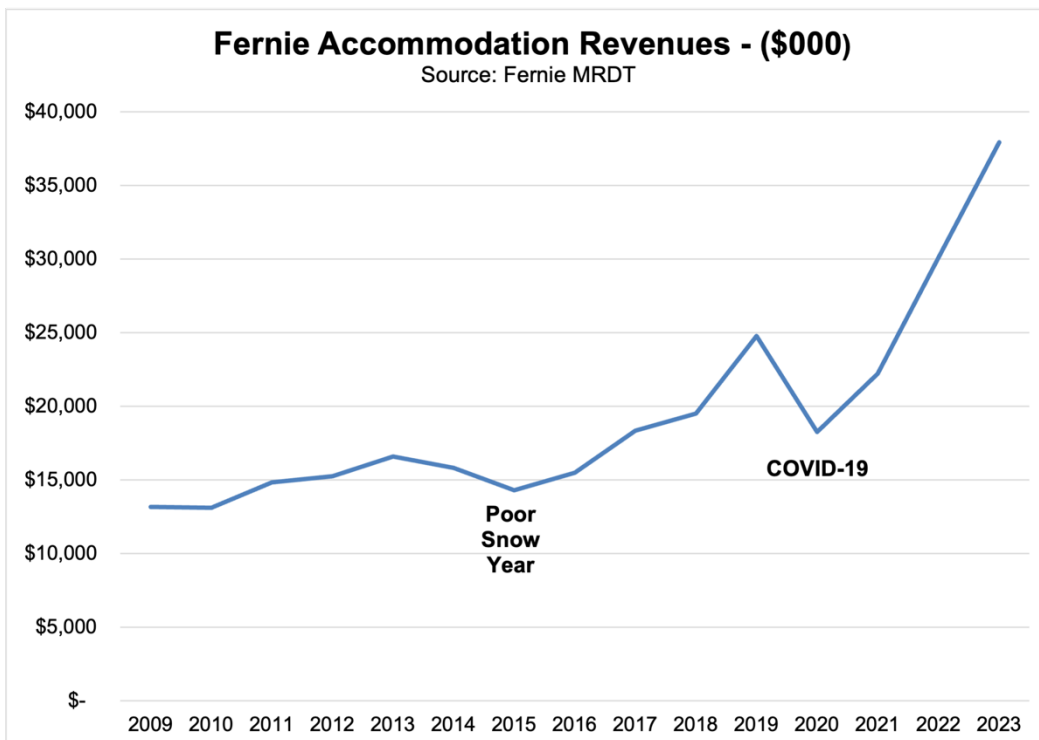
- avg. highest to lowest months -

- 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



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:

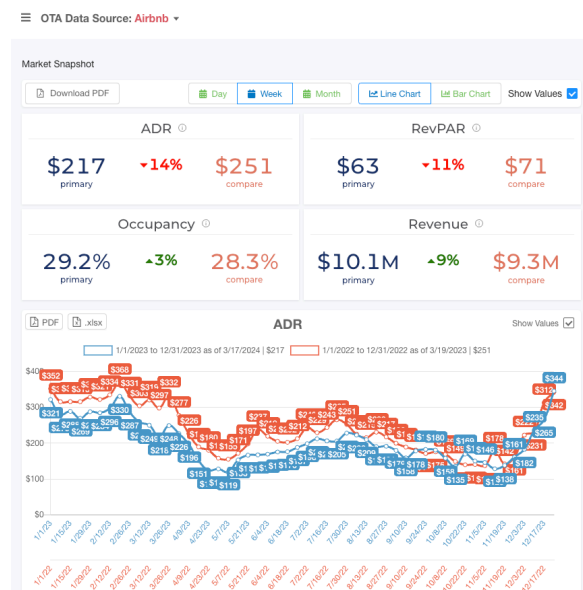
ADR \$241 USD / RevPar \$78 USD / Occupancy 32%

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

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.

SWOT Analysis

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

Opportunities of Fernie’s Tourism Industry	Threats of Fernie’s Tourism Industry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community’s <u>desire</u> to work on addressing the weaknesses. Find the money and build the capacity. • There are more people that can become a visitor to Fernie. Continue and expand upon building the product, infrastructure, and awareness. • Currency exchange rates (US, Euro, UK). • Growing occupancy in high yield months, ADR and RevPar overall. • New investment and development – Basecamp, Best Western expansion, Montane campground. • Advocating the Province of BC to charge MRDT on campgrounds and RV resorts. • City of Fernie OCP process. • New housing, infrastructure needs and projects • Travel is a priority for people across the globe. Lots of market-share to capture. • Fernie is the type of destination many are looking for: clean, safe, beautiful, outdoors, small mountain town, community, authentic, fun, quaint etc. • Further leveraging our sustainability efforts, GreenStep potential benefits. • Destination Weddings – based on venue capacity. • Events, festivals, competitions, and meetings – based on venue capacity. • Boutique wellness tourism. • Return and continued growth of long-haul markets. • 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. • Technology and AI. • More and better data will help industry long-term growth and sustainability. • Further increase communications to industry / visitors on important content/updates. • Increase in importance of tourism to local economy, what is future of coal in the valley. • 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. • Creative public and private partnerships to address opportunities with infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current local/national/global economics – cost of living, affordability, discretionary spending. Impacts tourism staffing if limited housing options. Impacts visitation if travelers limit spending. • Weather/climate negative impacts to stays, the experience and the product. Need to plan, mitigate, diversify industry. • Lack of local and regional transportation jeopardizes much of the industry including international visitors as it is a barrier to access. • Future of TECK/Glencore in the Valley, decrease in coal prices, jobs, home values, business revenues, corporate room nights. • 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. • Future of air travel, sustainability trends, climate change, ability to adapt. • Future of labour shortages, stopped being an issue this winter 23-24 season. What will summer and beyond look like? • Will housing/rental developments keep pace of demand? • Multiple users/demands and industry on the land base, private landowners. Complexity to collaborate and work through continually. • Invasive species to our waterways. Selenium challenges. • Limited base area, experience and chairlift investment at Fernie Alpine Resort. • Municipal process for permits and approvals is slow and cumbersome which has and can turn away investment and limit positive change and growth. • 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. • Local pricing competition that erodes overall revenue generation for the industry, ie with ADR between properties and also compared to STRs.

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

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

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* - No funding except in staff support, research and advocacy efforts.

* MRDT funds cannot be used for capital or affordable housing projects without full industry planning, engagement and support, along with full support and approval by the Province of BC. Also, MRDT can't be used to replace existing sources of tourism funding. [View MRDT Guidelines](#). 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.

Brand Positioning

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

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

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

2025 Tactical Plan with Performance Measures

As part of the five-year MRDT renewal process, and as required by the Province of BC, below represents Tourism Fernie's proposed 2025 plan covering the first year of the next five-year MRDT term (2025-2029). An updated and more detailed 2025 strategic plan, also required by the Province, will be submitted after Board approval by November 30, 2024.

In relation to the Five-Year Strategic Business Plan and the planned annual sources of funding and budget allocations the 2025 draft plan consists of the below budget and eight project plans covering the major categories.

Draft 2025 Strategic Plan Budget:

Estimated Revenues

\$1,272,000	3% MRDT
\$ 150,000	Co-op, Partnerships & Sales Initiatives
<u>\$ 525,000</u>	Grants & Other Partnership Funding
\$1,947,000	

Estimated Expenses

\$ 840,000	Marketing
\$ 849,000	Destination Management & Development, including Visitor Services, Events & Animation
<u>\$ 198,000</u>	Administration
\$1,947,000	

Specific to Marketing and Destination Management & Development initiatives the following eight categories provide an overview of objectives, tactics, budget and measurables:

1. Marketing – Advertising, Promotions & Campaigns
2. Marketing – Asset, Content, Digital & Collateral Initiatives
3. Marketing – Co-op, Partnership, Media & Travel Trade Initiatives
4. Destination Management/Development – Industry Support, Advocacy, Research, Data, Communications, Training & Education
5. Destination Management/Development – Visitor Transportation
6. Destination Management/Development – Sustainable Tourism, RDEK Area A Initiatives & AmbassadorWILD, & Multi-Use Trails Master Planning
7. Visitor Services – Visitor Centre, Product Experience Development & Communications
8. Meetings, Conventions, Events & Sports

PROJECT PLAN 1 – Marketing – Advertising, Promotions & Campaigns

Description

Planning and executing a diversity of initiatives and campaigns for the purpose (outcomes) of driving overnight visitation to Fernie, expanding awareness of Fernie as a travel destination, extending length of stay, and encouraging local spending. Decisions on target markets, timing, budget, messaging, and tactics to use are based on the five-year plan, the annual needs, priorities, and gaps of the destination and stakeholders, and the opportunities available. Majority of these initiatives are on behalf of the whole destination vs in co-op with local businesses/members.

Emphasis on quieter times of the year and shoulder seasons will drive stays and support ADR growth. Initiatives in winter and summer focus more on maintaining visitation levels, filling gaps in availability, extending stays and spending, while communicating responsible travel behaviours. A new influencer effecting annual tactical decisions will be the role AI will play in consumer travel and marketing.

Tactics include:

- Print & Radio Advertising & Promotional Campaigns
- Display, OOH & TV Advertising & Promotional Campaigns
- Digital Advertising Campaigns (Search Engine, Email Marketing, etc)
- Social Media Paid Advertising & Remarketing Campaigns

Implementation will primarily be executed by Tourism Fernie's marketing staff with agency support from The Web Advisors, Junction Media, and Vickery Hill. Timeframes of initiatives are varied and throughout the year depending on the time of year, season, experiences available, booking windows, travel planning windows, availability of experiences and lodging, important content, new content and more.

Quantifiable objectives and outputs will include the number of unique campaigns, markets targeted, geographic regions targets, content diversity, seasonal variation, quality of content implemented, reach and frequency, experiences incorporated and offers promoted.

Evaluation mechanisms, outputs and metrics to track will include number of placements, views, readership, audience reached, impressions, clicks, actions taken, traffic to website/content/Apps, attendance, leads to stakeholders and more. Industry feedback including the annual MRDT Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey

Sources of Funding:

- MRDT
- Discounts, savings from content buys and long-standing relationships with suppliers.

Estimated Budget: \$340,000 including staff wages & benefits to execute.

PROJECT PLAN 2 – Marketing - Content, Digital, Asset & Collateral Initiatives

Description

The development, management and distribution of content, whether physical or digital, continues to play a critical role in reaching, attracting, informing, and educating visitors. It also plays a key role in inspiring future visitation, and ensuring target markets are accurately informed about destination situations and status in times of external factors effecting or potentially effecting visitation (weather, wildfire, travel restrictions, road conditions, etc). Content changes with the seasons, activities, priorities for communications, trends in the marketplace and as opportunities arise to achieve our objectives.

Distribution plans for various initiatives are determined by target markets, supporting advertising and promotional initiatives, destination needs, costs and ROI. Further integration of responsible travel and stewardship information will be integrated, including AmbassadorWILD programming. A new influencer effecting annual tactical decisions will be the role AI will play in consumer travel and marketing.

Tactics include:

- Print Materials (all with digital versions)
 - Travel Guides, Maps, Activity Brochures, Things to Do Flyers, Upcoming Events, Festival & Entertainment Posters, Trail Info Sheets, Consumer Show Collateral, Visitor Shuttle Collateral, and more. This content will be key to support future AI travel searches online. As such production of the content for print will also be produced in formats for AI.
- Videography & Photography
 - Photo and video content shoots with local professionals capturing a diversity of content: year-round activities and attractions, events, sites, lodging, dining, art, history, culture, local craft food & drink, community, locals and visitors, and scenics. Future asset development in the areas of diversity and inclusion. Assets are used to support all marketing initiatives including galleries, destination videos, stories, campaigns, collateral, websites and more. This content will also be key to support future AI travel searches.
 - [This is Fernie! Vlog Series](#)
 - Content supporting responsible travel & recreation, river safety and etiquette, community respect and stewardship and more.
 - Partnering with Destination BC on their BC Content Hub & DAM System Program to effectively manage and share content.
- Websites, Apps & Social Media Channels
 - Critical information, promotional and communication channels for achieving goals and objectives for Tourism Fernie. The Tourism Fernie website alone features over 2,000 pages promoting Fernie, local businesses and attractions, stories and offers, and sees over 30,000 visitors a month. The current website will be rebuilt in 2024-2025 with innovation, trends, AI and branding a key element. Apps will continue to address unique opportunities and needs that support visitors in Fernie. Tourism Fernie's social media channels are managed in-house with a focus on quality, fun and diverse content that helps promote the destination and tell Fernie's authentic stories.
 - tourismfernie.com
 - [Iconic Fernie App](#)
 - New Visitor Shuttle App – In production in 2024
 - instagram.com/tourismfernie
 - facebook.com/tourismfernie
 - youtube.com/tourismfernie
 - tiktok.com/@fernie.bc
 - Instagram.com/fernieweddings
- Re-Branding/Brand Refresh

- As part of the website project, Tourism Fernie will undertake a re-branding process that will engage the stakeholders and community.

Implementation will primarily be executed by Tourism Fernie’s marketing team with outside agency support from The Web Advisors, Junction Media, Vickery Hill and/or others as determined by RFQ processes. Timeframes of initiatives are varied and throughout the year depending on the time of year, season, content needs, weather, availability of businesses, experiences, models, and other supports, and any other priorities. Much of this content development partners with locals, stakeholders and businesses.

Quantifiable objectives and outputs will include the number of unique content pieces, distribution details - numbers and locations, digital metrics – views/shares etc, website and channel statistics, content diversity, seasonal variation, quality of content implemented, types of content, leads to members/stakeholders, reactions to content and others. Industry feedback including the annual MRDT Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey

Sources of Funding:

- MRDT
- Local member/businesses collaborating on specific initiatives.
- Discounts, savings from content buys and long-standing relationships with suppliers.

Estimated Budget: \$250,000 including staff wages & benefits to execute.

PROJECT PLAN 3 – Marketing – Co-op, Partnership, Media & Travel Trade Initiatives

Many of Tourism Fernie’s marketing initiatives are most effective in partnership with stakeholders including travel media and travel trade. There are many opportunities for mutual gain and leveraging of marketing dollars that provide a greater impact and result than if done alone, if it could even be done alone. Destination BC provides a co-op marketing program that Tourism Fernie has participated in since its inception. Many businesses want to attend consumer shows under the Fernie destination brand. They also want to jointly produce imagery and content that supports destination marketing and the business. Travel media and travel trade provide access to specific markets that are difficult to achieve in general marketing initiatives and can target more sales-oriented results. The primary outcomes for these initiatives focus on driving overnight visitation from a diversity of target markets and geographical areas, as well as promoting awareness of all the things visitors can do while in Fernie in efforts to extend stays and spending.

Tactics:

- Destination BC Co-op Marketing Program
 - This program has supported our tourism marketing efforts in arts, heritage & culture, fishing, wellness, soft adventure, craft food & drink, mountain biking, Nordic skiing, Aboriginal tourism, paddling tourism, golf, snowmobiling and more. Examples of websites Fernie leads or partners with are:
 - MyKootenays.ca
 - elkvalleyculture.com
 - letsridebc.com
 - kootenayXC.com
 - kootenaydirt.com
 - paddlebc.ca
 - Ktunaxa Homelands – new website to come in 2024-2025, also part of MyKootenays.ca
 - fishingbc.com
 - bcaletrail.ca

- wellnesstravelbc.com
- [Highway 3 Tourism Alliance](#)
- Locally Tourism Fernie partners with various members such as Fernie Alpine Resort, Island Lake Lodge and a variety of small businesses on attending consumer shows such as the Toronto Ski & Snowboard Show, Australia Ski Expo's, Calgary Outdoor Adventure & Bike Show, and Calgary Wedding Shows.
- As part of the destination experience, in-destination promotional opportunities and visitor services, Tourism Fernie works with local stakeholders on the branding and advertising program with the visitor shuttle.
- Tourism Fernie supports long-haul destination ski marketing and sales initiatives and campaigns in UK, Australia, Europe, Ontario and Quebec, primarily in partnership with Fernie Alpine Resort and the travel trade. This includes attending key events such as Mountain Travel Symposium.
- Working with travel media and influencers continues to be a highly effective avenue to reach key markets in an 'earned media' way with great ROI and many times also results in assets Tourism Fernie can use in its general marketing. Many of these are in partnership with Kootenay Rockies Tourism, Destination BC, our BC Co-op Partners, and local businesses. Tourism Fernie also attends Travel Media events such as NW Travel & Words Conference.

Implementation of these initiatives are all in partnership, however Tourism Fernie's marketing team leads a diversity of the efforts. Those that are not led by Tourism Fernie, do ensure effective inclusion of Tourism Fernie in development and execution to ensure our partnership needs and deliverables are met.

Timeframes of initiatives are varied and throughout the year depending on the time of year, season, experiences available, booking windows, travel planning windows, availability of experiences and lodging, weather, market trends, new opportunities and more.

Quantifiable objectives, performance measures and outputs will include the number of unique initiatives and campaigns, markets targeted, geographic areas targeted, content diversity, seasonal variation, quality of content implemented, campaign metrics, leads to businesses, experiences incorporated, traffic to website/content, offers promoted and sales generated where applicable/trackable. Industry feedback including the annual MRDT Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey

Sources of Funding:

- MRDT
- All the partners collaborating on specific initiatives. Some in-kind, some contribute funds to Tourism Fernie to lead and manage, others Tourism Fernie contributes funds to or towards bigger campaigns.
- Discounts, savings from collaborative buys and leveraging, and long-standing relationships with suppliers.

Estimated Budget: \$250,000 including staff wages & benefits to execute.

PROJECT PLAN 4 – Destination Management/Development – Industry Support, Advocacy, Research, Data, Communications, Training & Education

A diversity of projects and initiatives that support the local tourism industry, destination development, decision-making and overall sustainability, and growth of the sector. Guided by the [Tourism Master Plan](#) launched in 2020 and the needs of the sector through engagement and Board direction, initiatives involve a variety of partnerships with organizations such as the Fernie Chamber of Commerce, local NGOs, local governments and Destination BC and Kootenay Rockies Tourism. Tourism Fernie's sees destination management and development as an opportunity for strategic growth in the community by identifying high quality programs that can attract private and public funding to enhance the tourism experience. This will provide a stream of recurring investment back to the community to drive business success and sustainability.

Tactics:

- Industry Support - Tourism business learning opportunities and programs, initiatives and partnerships to help support tourism business challenges (ie workforce recruitment, ADR & RevPar growth, seasonal tourism), local tourism events, Tourism Week and annual conference, corporate memberships in local NGOs that support tourism experiences, staff professional development, key stakeholder meetings to support learning about the importance of tourism.
- Data Acquisition & Distribution– STAR accommodation reporting, Key Data STR reporting, visitor surveying, market research, Check-in Canada consumer data reporting, destination development project research and studies, updating the Value of Tourism study with Destination BC.
- Industry Advocacy – Working with the City of Fernie to support and represent industry stakeholder interests and needs within the RMI Program. Memberships in tourism advocacy organizations, attending industry conferences and key events and webinars, meetings with industry stakeholders, leaders and officials, developing position statements and supporting documents, industry communications and public relations, destination development & management project planning and studies.

Implementation of many of these initiatives are led by Tourism Fernie's leadership and destination management team with key support and partnerships with local stakeholders and government, Destination BC and Kootenay Rockies Tourism.

Timeframes of initiatives are throughout the year with some based on the timing of industry events and needs. For example, conferences are at specific times of the year. Tourism Fernie's annual conference and AGM is in early Spring, etc.

Quantifiable objectives, performance measures and outputs will include the number of unique initiatives and events undertaken and their participation. Conferences and meetings attended. Industry feedback including the annual MRDT Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey.

Sources of Funding:

- MRDT
- Grants, Sponsorships, Partnerships & Contributions.
- Local member/businesses/stakeholders collaborating on or buying into specific initiatives.
- Discounts, savings from partnerships with organizations such as Kootenay Rockies Tourism and Destination BC and long-standing relationships with suppliers.

Estimated Budget: \$135,000 including staff wages & benefits to execute.

PROJECT PLAN 5 – Destination Management/Development – Visitor Transportation

As a rural and resort destination visitor transportation is critical to ensure visitor support, satisfaction, and growth. As with any ground transportation, passengers cannot and do not pay the level of fares to cover the true cost of operating a transportation program. Without visitor transportation, visitation would decrease due to the reliance of it, especially during winter ski season. This includes a local ski shuttle transporting visitors between town – shopping/restaurants, accommodators, and the resort. It also includes working with long-haul travel trade to support packaging and transfers from airports. Tourism Fernie has also been testing a local summer program for visitors, to enhance the summer experience (driver = tour guide), reduce drinking and driving in the evening and to ultimately reduce emissions by pulling more cars off the road. This year will include a new shuttle App to support rider convenience, shuttle location tracking, information sharing and revenue generation.

Tactics:

- Ski season local shuttle program – Operates daily from early December to mid-April, day and evening service between town and resort.
- Ski season airport transfer program with travel trade – partnership with local transportation company to ensure long-haul market needs are met.
- Summer shuttle pilot program
- Formal launch of the shuttle App
- Long-term planning for enhanced transportation services and systems with local government, stakeholders and BC Transit.

Implementation of these initiatives are led by Tourism Fernie’s leadership and destination management team with support and partnerships with local stakeholders.

Timeframes of initiatives are specific to winter ski season and peak summer season.

Quantifiable objectives, performance measures and outputs will include ridership, rider feedback, operator feedback, revenue generation, budget vs actual, local industry feedback including the annual MRDT Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey.

Sources of Funding:

- Shuttle partners & sponsors – Fernie Alpine Resort, City of Fernie (RMI), local businesses, corporations (TC Energy funds), grants and other.
- Rider fares and shuttle advertising program revenues.
- MRDT – supports portion of driver wages only.

Estimated Budget: \$160,000 including driver wages, and Tourism Fernie staff wages & benefits to manage the program.

PROJECT PLAN 6 – Destination Management/Development – Sustainable Tourism, RDEK Area A Initiatives & AmbassadorWILD Program, Multi-Use Trails Master Planning

As a result of the Tourism Master Plan and further local rural engagement on tourism and recreation in 2021 arose the Sustainable Tourism, RDEK Area A Initiatives & AmbassadorWILD Program. 2025 will be its fourth year in action with the objective to maintain the initiatives and program for the long-term. The overall objectives are to ensure natural attractions/assets, the visitor experience and amenities, and resident quality of life remain intact and improve for today and future generations. Focus areas or initiatives depend on current funding and priorities, but all focus on destination management and development including responsible visitor behaviours and safety through signage, improving amenities such as visitor gathering hubs and staging areas – river access points, trailheads, parking lots, working with key partners such as Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK), Wildsafe BC, AdventureSmart, Local trail groups, Search & Rescue, Elk River Alliance, Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC, local government, Invasive Species Council and others, supporting long-term planning and decision-making through data collection – capacity, wildlife, utilization of staging areas, and more.

The AmbassadorWILD™ Program was invented and developed by Tourism Fernie in 2021-2022 to specifically address local needs and industry opportunities and challenges. As a rural community far away from city centres and provincial government supports, there is a limited amount of resources and support for area front country and backcountry natural attractions, amenities and locations. With the increase in both local and visitor use, challenges needed to be addressed to meet the above objectives. This Program focuses on addressing the challenges seasonally.

Year-Round trail systems and access for front country and back country tourism and recreation is critical to Fernie's, the Elk Valley's and BC's tourism economy. In 2024, discussions began with stakeholders on the needs for a broader and new trails master plan for the valley and specific to certain quadrants. Tourism Fernie is planning to assist this need with stakeholder support starting in 2024 and continuing into 2025 and beyond.

Tactics:

- Elk River access points – continued improvements to amenities, data collection, site maintenance
- Coal Creek Drainage Tourism & Recreation – Year-round mixed tourism and recreation use growth, supporting various uses and their sustainability.
- Heiko's Trail and Access - continued improvements to signage/amenities, data collection for future quality decision-making (use counts, wildlife tracking)
- Silver Springs - continued improvements to signage/amenities, data collection for future quality decision-making (use counts)
- AmbassadorWILD™ Program – Visitor responsible/sustainable travel, behaviour and safety education and programming, data collection and visitor surveying, site visits to collect data, do light duty maintenance, and support light amenity improvement projects. Intentions include expanding the program, providing a package and toolkit for other communities to buy-into the program within their destination, developing a donation program to encourage revenue generation to support and evolve the program, creating educational & interpretive tours, and a volunteer program to support the paid staff team with various projects.
- Multi-Use Trails Master Planning – Working with diversity of partners such as local trail groups and landowners to support long-term planning of local area trails and amenities that tourism and local recreation greatly benefit from.
- Winter Grooming Program - Working with diversity of partners such as local trail groups and landowners to support the sustainability of Fernie's NGO trail grooming program in winter season.

Implementation of a majority of these initiatives are led by Tourism Fernie's leadership and destination management team but with key partners heavily involved to drive effectiveness, success, implementation and long-term sustainability.

Timeframes of initiatives are year-round with planning and coordinating and can be more seasonal depending on implementation and construction.

Quantifiable objectives, performance measures and outputs will include the number of unique initiatives and projects planned and executed, partners involved, funding secured, budgets vs actual, feedback from industry and users, data collected, amenities/experiences developed, number of site visits, and more. Additional industry feedback including the annual MRDT Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey.

Sources of Funding:

- Infrastructure Grants, Sponsorships, Partnerships & Contributions, and Donations
- MRDT – supports portion of staff/AmbassadorWILD wages and benefits specific to industry, destination development, destination management and visitor research, advocacy, grant writing, grant management, responsible travel initiatives, visitor surveying and communications.

Estimated Budget: \$250,000 including staff/AmbassadorWILD wages & benefits to execute.

PROJECT PLAN 7 – Visitor Services – Visitor Centre, Product Experience Development & Communications

With Tourism Fernie's evolving role in destination management and development, visitor experiences, communications and the visitor centre are becoming a larger part of Tourism Fernie's mix of projects and initiatives. Playing a bigger role in the visitor's on-the-ground information and experience increases and enhances positive word-of-mouth, return visitation, length of stay, visitor spending and ensuring visitors are being respectful within the community, on the land and on the waterways.

Tourism Fernie has been working with the Fernie Chamber of Commerce, current managers of the Visitor Centre, and the City of Fernie, VIC building owners and VIC funding partner, to develop a new vision for the Visitor Centre and the opportunities the Centre and the building present for the future of tourism in Fernie, with Tourism Fernie involved. Tourism Fernie has based its offices out of the VIC building since 2018. In 2024, discussions and planning continue about the future of the Visitor Centre and Tourism Fernie role, in the meantime Tourism Fernie continues to partner with the Chamber to enhance the current space, VIC experience and visitor communications.

Tactics:

- Further plan and define Tourism Fernie's role with the Visitor Centre (VIC) and building with the key stakeholders.
- Work with the Fernie Chamber to expand on the visitor experience within the VIC based on leveraging grant funding. Examples include:
 - ammonite fossil interpretive display, and planned 'Dino Trail' Self Drive Tour incorporating Sparwood and Cranbrook.
 - new visitor brochure racking systems, and integration of digital information sharing, including role of AI.
 - retail/merchandise enhancements
 - creating a more welcoming, lounge area with supporting basic level F&B items
 - integrating the AmbassadorWILD visitor educational programming and potential tours

- enhancing the destination brand and messaging more consistently into the VIC
- maximizing the summer visitor shuttle pilot program which features a stop at the VIC
- expanding the hours of the VIC
- Transitioning Tourism Fernie's X social media channel (formerly known as Twitter) as a Visitor Services and communication channel (vs travel promotional channel), to support in-destination communications, information sharing, answering visitor questions, providing updates weather, roads, emergencies etc.
- work with the Chamber and the City on improvements to landscaping/attractions around the outside of the VIC, including sitting area, signage and 'instagramable photo opportunities'.
- Work with stakeholders to research and identify building/VIC expansion, space use and renovation opportunities, including architectural design concepts.

Implementation of many of these initiatives would be led by Tourism Fernie's leadership and destination management team but with on-going partnership and support from the Fernie Chamber of Commerce and the City of Fernie.

Timeframes of initiatives are year-round with planning and coordinating and can be more seasonal depending on implementation and activation.

Quantifiable objectives, performance measures and outputs will include the number of unique initiatives and projects planned and executed, partner support and approvals, partners involved, funding secured, budgets vs actual, feedback from visitors and industry, data collected, amenities/experiences developed, number of VIC visits, and more. Additional industry feedback including the annual MRDT Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey.

Sources of Funding:

- Partnerships & Contributions, Sales, Grants, Donations & Sponsorships.
- MRDT – non-capital expenses related to visitor services/centre, product experiences, visitor communications and programming.

Estimated Budget: \$154,000 including staff wages & benefits to execute.

PROJECT PLAN 8 – Events, Festivals, Animation, Sport Competitions, Meetings & Conventions (EFASMC)

In support of Tourism Fernie’s goals and strategies, and its evolving role in destination management and development, supporting EFASMC are also becoming a larger part of Tourism Fernie’s mix of projects and initiatives. Playing a bigger role in EFASMC supports driving overnight visitation, increasing length of stay and visitor spending, enhancing the visitor experience, and better supporting the numerous community organizations that dedicate a lot of resources into organizing EFASMC that benefit tourism businesses and the visitor experience.

Tourism Fernie has been working with stakeholders on a Tourism Events & Animation Strategy which will be completed in 2024. This strategy was an action item from the Tourism Master Plan to help focus limited resources in strategic ways. This strategy will help outline opportunities and challenges, including short and long-term objectives, and a collaborative and complimentary support and funding model between the MRDT and the City of Fernie’s RMI funding for tourism events and animation.

Tactics:

- Implementation of the Tourism Events & Animation Strategy
- Supporting or sponsoring key EFASMC that clearly drive overnight visitation and can either maintain visitation numbers and/or have the capacity to increase visitation when there is availability.
- Supporting/sponsoring animation activities that enhance the visitor experience during peak season.
- Research, identify a volunteer coordination and appreciation system for EFASMC.
- Research, identify turn key EFASMC Tourism Fernie, with local stakeholder support, can bid on.
- Research, identify potential needs for a crowd experience and management system for EFASMC.
- Research, identify a EFASMC community planning calendar system.
- Conduct research study on the feasibility of a convention centre in Fernie.
- Work with EFASMC organizers to apply for Tourism Events Program funding to recoup the portion of Fernie’s collected MRDT the province takes for the overall provincial program.
- Research opportunities to partner, integrate or support increased First Nations, diversity, equity and inclusion with EFASMC.

Implementation of these initiatives would be led by Tourism Fernie’s leadership and destination management team with on-going partnership, support from EFASMC organizers and partners.

Timeframes of initiatives are year-round with planning and coordinating and would be more time specific and seasonal depending on EFASMC dates and schedules.

Quantifiable objectives, performance measures and outputs will include the number of unique EFASMC supported, systems researched/developed, partners involved, feedback from EFASMC organizers and partners, feedback from visitors and industry, data collected, number of EFASMC attendees, and more. Additional industry feedback including the annual MRDT Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey.

Sources of Funding:

- MRDT
- Partnerships & Contributions, Sales, Grants, Donations & Sponsorships.

Estimated Budget: \$150,000 including staff wages & benefits to execute.