

# **BELLINGHAM TOURISM COMMISSION**

## **STRATEGIC & OPERATIONAL PLAN**

**January 2008- December 2009**

(Strategic Plan - italicized and Operational Plan - regular type)

### **Goal 1: Develop Bellingham as a Destination Community.**

**A. Emphasize Bellingham's outdoor activities by encouraging development of key community assets that function as point destinations including the waterfront; trails and parks; recreational/sporting/outdoor educational facilities and opportunities; as well as the use of the community as a base for exploration of Whatcom County, the North Cascades, and the San Juan Islands.**

- Support Waterfront Redevelopment and advocate for tourism issues
  - Through the Bellingham/Whatcom County Tourism (Tourism Bureau), work to strongly encourage members of the tourism industry to mention or graphically portray the Bellingham waterfront as one of our defining characteristics.
  - With regards to the former Georgia Pacific site and other waterfront lands, support City and Port studies, plans, or efforts to augment public access to the waterfront and/or add tourism, retail, and lodging facilities, through testimony and letters.

**B. Support the development and viability of cultural facilities in Bellingham.**

- Work to help make Bellingham's major cultural facilities point destinations.
- Work to help make Bellingham's Arts District a point destination.
- Advocate for the development of museums, visual and performing arts facilities, and galleries that directly contribute to developing Bellingham as a point destination.

**C. Support the revitalization of Bellingham's downtown as a point destination and continue to support development and enhancement of other identifiable districts.**

**D. Encourage the continued use and commitment of the destination branding program:**

- Encourage the Tourism Bureau to serve as a source of information about the successful and effective use of the regional destination brand and identified destination community themes, and to share information about those successful uses with the Commission and members of the tourism industry.
- Require the use of the adopted destination community brand and COB logo in advertising and promotion done by organizations receiving lodging tax funding.

**GOAL II: Support Special Events that Feature Community Attributes and Assets (e.g. museums, theaters, and sporting facilities).**

**A. Encourage the continuance of current and the development of new fairs, festivals, and events that feature community attributes and assets and that bring overnight visitors to the community with an emphasis on those which occur in the fall, winter, and spring. Events scheduled from Sunday through Thursday are encouraged year-round.**

- Convey to City Council the economic value of special events.
- Encourage the permitting of major events that reflect community values and standards.
- Continue to require a follow-up/annual report from each “special event” as a requirement to receive funding consideration the following year. This report should present information that explains how well the “special event” actually met the prioritized goals described in the Strategic Plan.

**B. Strongly encourage the use of marketing support resources provided by the Tourism Bureau to help events better reach potential tourists and give the events a higher likelihood of success, especially in their early years.**

- Require grant recipients to consult with the Tourism Bureau on their marketing efforts.
- Encourage grant recipients to participate in Tourism Bureau cooperative marketing opportunities.

- Encourage and support innovative and/or cooperative marketing techniques that highlight Bellingham as a regional tourist destination.

**C. Because of its potential for tourism, support and participate in efforts that take advantage of and position the region for the Winter Olympic games in Vancouver B.C. occurring in 2010.**

- Participate in and support the Tourism Bureau's 2010 Committee.

**GOAL III: Develop Visitor Orientation Services and Visitor Infrastructure.**

**A. Encourage coordinated transportation and trail linkages including streetscapes and signage and help raise awareness of the need for better signage throughout the community.**

- Encourage the City Council to expand the successful downtown way finding system to become a citywide program.

**B. Encourage the development and publication of materials (such as maps and guides) and the development and installation of tools that facilitate tourists' explorations of Bellingham.**

- Require the Tourism Bureau to maintain the Meeting & Facilities Guide.

**C. Encourage a current knowledge on the part of all tourism service providers of all events, facilities, and services in the greater Bellingham area.**

- Encourage the Tourism Bureau to create and distribute calendars, resource sheets, maps and other tools that educate industry members on regional tourism resources and events.

**GOAL IV: Maintain the Tourism Commission as an Effective Organization.**

**A. Implement the Strategic Plan by biennially revising and implementing the Operational Plan.**

- Review the Strategic and Operational Plans annually to determine if the then-current scope of work encompasses the goals of the Plans.

**B. Clearly communicate the goals of the Commission to the tourism industry and civic leaders in Bellingham.**

- Mail (or e-mail) a copy of the Strategic Plan and the Operational Plans to Tourism Industry managers/leaders in Whatcom County.

**C. Provide members of the tourism industry opportunities to present ideas to the Tourism Commission**

- Place the Strategic Plan and the Operational Plans on the Bellingham Tourism Commission's page of the City of Bellingham's website and provide an email address for submission of ideas and comments.

**D. Help the Mayor and City Council develop and maintain a Tourism Commission comprised of diversely skilled and informed individuals who are committed to achieving the goals of the Commission.**

- Provide the Mayor and City Council with recommendations for Commission appointments when vacancies occur. The Commission will determine who will be recommended by discussing qualifications of possible appointees and voting on the slate.

**E. Encourage professional development opportunities for Commission members.**

**GOAL V: Direct a community grants program that utilizes hotel / motel taxes strategically to help promote economic development through key community events and organizations that generate increased tourism in Bellingham.**

- Develop a marketing strategy to inform the public of this opportunity.
- Support organizations whose activities contribute to Bellingham's image as a point destination for outdoor activities or culture and which have at least moderate potential for drawing overnight visitors.
- Require grant recipients to incorporate the Bellingham tourism brand marketing in their own marketing materials; have them get counsel from the Tourism Bureau on how to do this, ideas and images to stress, etc.
- Direct the Tourism Bureau to give the counsel described above.
- Encourage new off-season tourist activities through the grant application process.

**GOAL VI: The Commission shall advocate for the protection and enhancement of tourism assets in various planning documents that address issues within the Bellingham city limits (e.g. master plans, neighborhood plans, economic development plans, shoreline plans).**

- The Commission shall receive drafts of relevant planning documents to review for tourism issues and shall invite these policymakers to attend meetings to explain tourism-related elements of these plans.
- The Commission shall testify at hearings and write letters advocating for tourism needs as they relate to these plans.
- The Commission shall distribute copies of its adopted Strategic Plan goals to various organizations within the city limits with a cover letter asking that these goals be considered in the context of planning decisions.

**GOAL VII: Assure that the best interests of Bellingham's tourism industry are represented in the consideration of any legislation that could directly or indirectly affect that industry.**

- Provide an opportunity at monthly meetings for Commission members to provide information and insight regarding current legislative issues affecting the industry.
- Communicate the issues to interested parties via trade and community organizations represented on the Commission (i.e. Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau).