

# **SNOHOMISH COUNTY STRATEGIC TOURISM PLAN 2018 – 2022 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



# FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Executive Summary of the Snohomish County Strategic Tourism Plan 2018 – 2022.

As you will note, a lot of research, strategic thinking, time and effort has been invested to update this report and help Snohomish County continue to build its extremely important travel and tourism industry as a tool for economic development and job creation, and equally important to enhance the quality of life for our residents.

I would like to thank the many individuals and organizations that have contributed to this effort, including the Strategic Tourism Plan Steering Committee, the Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau, and the numerous public and private sector stakeholders that joined forces to provide input during the many project activities, conversations, workshops and visioning sessions.

Based on the strength of vision and consensus that this project has created, we should all be proud and grateful.

Although this important project is complete, I would like to encourage all travel and tourism professionals, government officials and employees, board and committee members to continue building on this success and work in collaboration and cooperation to help achieve the vision that has been set.

Snohomish County tourism delivers extraordinary experiences for visitors and residents, and has great potential for enhancing its position, products, services and marketing. Working together will make this a reality.

Best regards,

Tom Teigen, Director  
Snohomish County Parks,  
Recreation & Tourism

# INTRODUCTION

In late 2016, Snohomish County initiated a project to update its 2010 Snohomish County Strategic Tourism Plan and provide a guiding document for the county to make continued and future strategic investments in assets, infrastructure and services that support and enhance the county's visitor industry.

The updated plan was to build on the goals and accomplishments of the 2010 plan and work, to build on the strengths of the county's tourism experiences, assets and destinations while incorporating new activities, sectors and approaches that are emerging as important growth areas for county tourism.



To produce this plan, the county engaged a partnership of two consulting firms: Resonance Consultancy LLLP (New York and Vancouver) and Berk Consulting (Seattle) to undertake a series of research activities, industry engagement, visioning workshop and report writing to assist the county with the updated plan.

This Executive Summary presents the highlights from the Snohomish County Strategic Tourism Plan 2018 – 2022, including an overview of the 29 strategic recommendations associated with destination marketing and promotion, as well as destination product development that will carry Snohomish County tourism into the next decade.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Strategic Tourism Plan for 2018 – 2022 sets a new standard for the tourism industry in Snohomish County, Washington.

First, it celebrates the impact that tourism has in the county from overnight visitors and day-trippers, generating approximately \$1 billion of spending, creating 20,000 direct and indirect jobs, and \$100 million of state and local revenue. Next, it sets a clear course for future growth, building on a strong regional economy and significant potential for building new tourism product and attracting new tourism demand. Finally, it bridges the gap between various government agencies and offices, boards and committees, cities and towns, and tourism businesses around the County to deliver a collaborative call to action, bringing these groups and individuals together under one set of guiding principles, one set of realistic goals, one brand, one clear strategy and one collective vision for Snohomish County tourism.



## VISION FOR SNOHOMISH COUNTY TOURISM

There has been a lot of thought given to creating a vision statement for Snohomish County tourism that incorporates its many positive attributes, qualities and characteristics, including but not limited to:

- The county's Pacific Northwest beauty and scenery from seashore to mountains.
- A wide range of amazing outdoor recreational activities and experiences for visitors and residents.
- The many trails and communities forming connected regions that showcase the natural environment, people and places.
- The diverse offering of historic, cultural, and artistic activities, plus engaging events / festivals for visitors and residents to enjoy.
- Friendly, caring, small town hospitality that welcomes and serves a diverse group of guests, including overnight visitors and day-trippers.
- The collaborative spirit of public and private sector tourism stakeholders, and federally recognized tribes, which have come together to create products and services that are exceptional, high quality and high value.
- A tourism marketing and promotional effort growing in sophistication and skill that tells inspiring stories about Snohomish County experiences, places and people.

At the end of the day, the Vision Statement tried to capture it all...

VISION STATEMENT:

SNOHOMISH COUNTY IS A SCENIC AND CULTURALLY RICH DESTINATION WHERE GENUINE HOSPITALITY IS FOSTERED THROUGH PUBLIC / PRIVATE COLLABORATION THAT INSPIRES PEOPLE TO EXPLORE THE OUTDOORS FROM SALISH SEA TO THE CASCADE MOUNTAINS AND ENGAGE IN OUTDOOR RECREATION, ARTS AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

Tourism is a vital function of economic development. Economic development doesn't create jobs – rather, its function is to create conditions where jobs and business thrive in healthy communities. With the Vision set, this Strategic Tourism Plan sets forth a series of Guiding Principles that serve as a foundation for the Strategies, Plans and Programs that follow, and which allow all tourism stakeholders (government officials and staff, private sector leaders, tourism organizations and agencies, business owners and residents) to know how to organize tourism for economic development growth in the county, the economy, the industry, its visitors and the quality of life for residents.

- The tourism sector will continue to contribute significantly to Snohomish County's economic development effort for a diverse, strong and growing economy that supports direct and indirect jobs, investment and government revenue.
- The tourism sector will seek to enhance the quality of life for Snohomish County residents and diminish any negative impact that tourism-related activities and traffic may have on natural resources, everyday life and enjoyment.
- Snohomish County will achieve tourism growth by concentrating efforts on those products and markets where it is a competitive advantage, including promotion of the diverse range of rural, nature-based, urban, recreation / adventure, indigenous tourism experiences, as well as organized sports and conference opportunities available in Snohomish County.
- Destination development activities will focus attention and resources in those areas of the county that combine attractive product / service opportunities for visitors and economic development opportunities for residents.
- Snohomish County will manage its professional, creative and competitively funded tourism marketing agency to promote the destination to a regional, national and international market of interested overnight visitors and day-trippers.
- Snohomish County will promote and facilitate regional collaboration and partnerships between the county, cities, towns and community organizations, federal recognized tribes (Tulalip Tribes of Washington, Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians), as well as industry sectors and tourism businesses, to ensure they are able to capture, sustain and support Snohomish County's competitive advantage.
- Snohomish County will seek to become a premier destination for environmentally and fiscally sustainable recreation and tourism.
- Snohomish County will strive to be a business-friendly jurisdiction in which to operate a tourism business.



Although the Guiding Principles are hard to gauge, the Goals are more tangible. Snohomish County tourism stakeholders should be able to look at the results and instantly know if the goals for this update have been met. In this regard, the Goals for this Plan are focused on economic metrics, tourism industry and hospitality metrics, funding levels, well known marketing impact measures, organization measures and social media / resident awareness metrics.

## BRAND

Another key consideration for this Strategic Tourism Plan is the current Snohomish County tourism brand – Open Up – that was formally rolled out in 2013.

Research conducted for the branding revealed that Snohomish County's greatest asset is its access to the outdoors. The three descriptors that were most often given for the area included 'beautiful', 'recreation', and 'proximity to Seattle', which paint a clear picture of Snohomish County's benefit.

Further, the county's location between Seattle and Canada along I-5 offers visitors a quick escape route to the great outdoors and a chance to explore the natural beauty of Washington State. Because our current visitors and targeted visitors (see Trending Markets) are pursuers of active lifestyles, it's fitting that Snohomish County offers a diverse number of accessible recreational pursuits from beginner to advanced and works with communities to help them learn about, service and capture revenues from these targeted visitor markets. Truly, all of Snohomish County's primary experiences – outdoor adventure, recreation, aviation, shopping, business and event-based visitation, gaming, and sports, fit under the umbrella idea of getting outside.

## TRENDING MARKETS

Looking to the future, global and national travel tourism trends suggest that Snohomish County has a competitive advantage to attract a number of growing visitor markets, so this plan suggests a number of marketing and promotional activities to expand Snohomish County's tourism brand to target these visitors. The plan also suggests strategies for destination and product development needed to support the experiences these visitors come to Snohomish County to enjoy.



## MILLENNIALS

Millennial travel spending has grown 30% since 2007, and Millennials now account for 20% of all travel spending around the globe. Millennials are far more interested in international travel than non-Millennials, and they are also more interested in urban destinations than resorts or countryside vacations. As they are marrying and having children later in life, Millennials are more likely to travel for leisure in an organized group, with extended family or with friends.

### Opportunities addressed in this Plan

U.S. Millennials will soon eclipse Baby Boomers in terms of total tourism-related spending and will be the largest demographic cohort. Snohomish County should evaluate its attractions and product offerings to identify resonant product and programming for this demographic and adjust its marketing positioning accordingly.

## MULTI-GENERATIONAL TRAVEL

Fewer adults are traveling with children. In 2012, 26% of domestic leisure travelers travelled with children under the age of 18 (408.5 million trips), compared with 2008, when 31% of adults travelled with children (466.2 million trips). However, 40% of families went on a multigenerational vacation in the past year.

Today's seniors are living longer, healthier and more mobile lives and are eager to make up for lost time and long distances away from their beloved grandchildren. In fact, grandparents travel almost 25% more than the average leisure traveler.

### Opportunities addressed in this Plan

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, products, services and marketing to target and attract the multi-generational travel market.

### **ACTIVE ADVENTURERS**

The value of the global outbound adventure travel sector was more than \$345 billion in 2012, while growth in adventure travel has accelerated at a 65% yearly rate since 2009. More importantly, nearly 54% of travelers are planning an adventure activity on their next trip. Adventure travel includes two of three criteria: first, connection with nature; second, interaction with culture; and third, a physical activity. Soft adventure options include hiking, kayaking, rafting, snorkeling, volunteer tourism and archeological expeditions, while hard adventure options include caving, climbing, heli-skiing, kite surfing, trekking and paragliding.

#### **Opportunities addressed in this Plan**

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, products, services and marketing to target and attract the active adventure travel market.

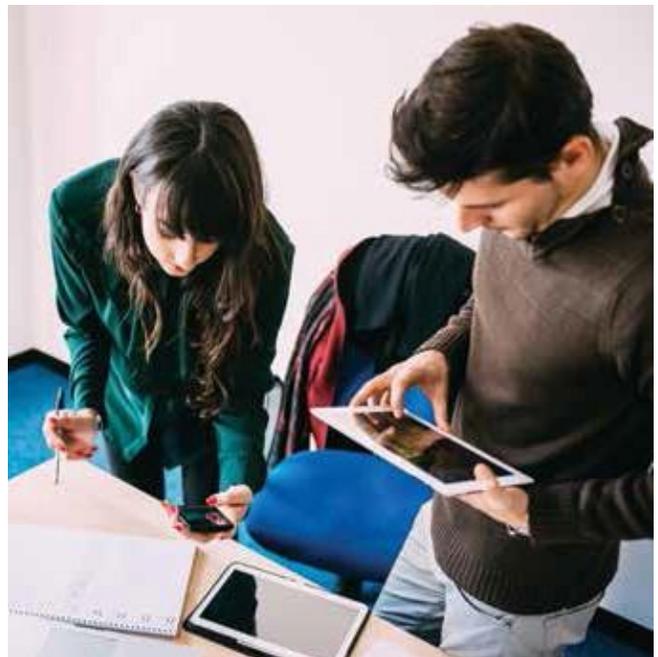


### **BLEISURE (BUSINESS-LEISURE)**

According to a U.S. report published by Orbitz in 2012, 72% of business travelers said they take extended executive trips that have a leisure component. Another study by Egencia reports that 54% of 18 – 30 year olds bring a significant other on a business trip, versus 36% of 31 – 45 year olds and 16% of 46 – 65 year olds.

#### **Opportunities addressed in this Plan**

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, products, services and marketing to target and attract the bleisure market.





### **SHOPPING TOURISM**

Tourists spend approximately one-third of their total tourism expenditures on retail purchases, including add-on opportunities of the attraction / destination, general shopping experiences, and to experience local culture. Historic market towns and neighborhoods tend to attract boutique and independent shops, while larger cities tend to attract major chains.

#### **Opportunities addressed in this Plan**

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, retail strategy, operations and marketing to target and attract shopping visitors.



### **ATHLETIC EVENTS**

Major “spectator sports” and “participatory sports” events tend to shape the future of a place – it’s about legacy. Sports can also deliver significant one-time visitation or a continuing stream of visitors and revenue from visiting amateur, collegiate and professional leagues and associations.

#### **Opportunities addressed in this Plan**

Snohomish County must be prepared with infrastructure, product, services and marketing to target and attract the sports (spectator and participatory) visitor.

### **WALK 'N ROLL**

Walking is one of the most popular vacation activities of U.S. travelers, with the popularity of bike share programs growing throughout the country. Cycling is growing the fastest with young consumers – 4.36 million young adults (18 – 24) participated in cycling in 2012 versus 2.8 million in 2008.

#### **Opportunities addressed in this Plan**

Trails and pathway development should be considered a key priority not only for the benefit of Snohomish County residents, but also as a major tourism development opportunity.



### **COLLABORATIVE CONSUMPTION**

The growth of consumer sharing applications such as Airbnb and Uber has been exponential in the last few years. Airbnb has grown from 50,000 listings in 2003; Airbnb booked 4 million stays worldwide in 2012 and more than 11 million stays in 2013.

#### **Opportunities addressed in this Plan**

Rather than view the growth of Airbnb as a threat, Snohomish County should identify opportunities to engage this audience as part of the destination's tourism industry.



## COLLECTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE ACTION

In undertaking this update of the Strategic Tourism Plan for Snohomish County, a vast number of industry stakeholders were engaged and participated in the many research activities, surveys, workshops and visioning exercises that served to inform the strategies and plans that have been set forth.

Individual perceptions and opinions were well expressed, plus organizational responsibilities and authorities were clearly articulated. The overriding message to the project Steering Committee and senior management from these stakeholders was that it's time for individuals and various departments, agencies, organizations, boards and committees, and destinations working in isolation and individual silos, to join forces to achieve travel and tourism's greatest potential benefit for the economy and residents of Snohomish County.

To aid in this effort, the Strategic Tourism Plan will serve as the guiding document for a number of organizations, their tourism-related activities and funding, including, but not limited to:

- Snohomish County Executive and Council
- Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT)
- Snohomish County Tourism Bureau (SCTB) and Board of Directors
- Snohomish County Sports Commission and Board of Directors
- The County and City Lodging Tax Advisory Committees (LTACs)
- The Tourism Promotion Area (TPA) Board
- Towns, Cities and Communities



## ENHANCED INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION

The Strategic Tourism Plan that follows recommends new connectivity and alignment between the Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) focus on destination and product development and the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau (SCTB) focus on destination marketing, promotion and visitor services.

It is also suggested in the 2018 – 2022 Plan that these departments be co-located as soon as possible, allowing Snohomish County to build capacity, shape planning, communicate and sell visitor assets and experiences. In addition, the agencies will have greater ability to coalesce the many partners working together on large- and small-scale planning efforts. So too, by adding key staff in the areas of communications and destination development, the agencies will be better positioned to capitalize on the grass-roots efforts of regional work groups for greater impact and productivity.



## RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

While the county's tourism brand will expand and build out marketing messages for our target markets, a large focus for the county remains on the development needed to deliver rural tourism product. Organizing efforts, planning for infrastructure and coordinating implementation is needed to attract new businesses to provide services and amenities in rural areas of the county. These places specialize in farm-based experiences, local culinary and craft products – the natural companions to adventure and outdoor activities, including bicycling, hiking, rafting, climbing, birding, horse riding and much more. While these areas face challenges in infrastructure for lodging, accessibility, marketing and social media, they provide the unique competitive advantage for capturing target market visitors needed to grow tourism in the county overall. These activities can also expand visitation by adding days of exploration, building affinities with visitors and generating repeat visits.



This Strategic Tourism Plan is deeply invested in opening doors to economic and tourism development by connecting these remote and rural communities to their larger urban counterparts in Snohomish County. The Plan's special focus on streamlining destination product development, with marketing and promotion, will expand local resources and attract much needed small businesses to these areas.

## REGIONAL DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Smaller than a state and obviously larger than a city, Snohomish County is spread over a vast 2,196 square miles. With 19 cities and towns spread along the coastline, scattered across rich agricultural land or offering edgy urban streetscapes, the sheer size and scale of the county is difficult for visitors to fully embrace.

A major lesson learned from the 2010 Strategic Plan was that focusing visitor attention towards regional destinations could not be successful without establishing a supply-side network to connect these place-based assets. As a result, the SCTB and SCPRT undertook a series of pilot programs for regional destination development focused on two river valleys in east and north county.

Through this process, the cities and towns in the valleys collectively created a vision with action plans, while industry experts addressed product development needs. The process was comprehensive and took a number of months to complete.

This updated plan builds on lessons learned and foundations set by the pilot program by expanding the approach throughout the county. Taking cues from award-winning state-level programs, the Plan invests organizational resources from the Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) and the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau (SCTB), and applies them to developing, organizing and connecting the grass-roots efforts of cities and towns on a regional basis. Through regional facilitation, visioning, planning and workshops, outcomes of this approach will continue to help the tourism industry address regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to their visitor markets; and provide greater ability for SCPRT and the SCTB to promote and support environmentally and fiscally sustainable visitor programming in these regions.



## THE STRATEGIC TOURISM PLAN

The Strategic Tourism Plan is oriented around two major areas of work and responsibility:

1. Destination Marketing, Promotion and Visitor Services undertaken by the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau (SCTB); and
2. Destination and Product Development, undertaken by the Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT).

Destination Marketing, Promotion and Visitor Services focuses on the strategies, plans and performance measures associated with building tourism demand through efficient marketing in all its guises led by the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau.

Destination and Product Development focuses on the strategies, plans and performance measures associated with building capacity, stakeholder coordination and engagement needed to support environmentally and fiscally sustainable tourism experiences (supply). This includes a joint focus on facilitating and convening planning for infrastructure, product and operations of the destination led by the Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

Regional destination identity, product, infrastructure planning and development will be connected as much as possible between the two organizations to grow and coordinate tourism efforts and investment for the industry at large. These strategies, plans and performance measures are discussed in the third part of the Strategic Plan.

The final section of the Plan – Implementation Framework, Protocol and Funding – updates the framework for how tourism is structured in Snohomish County, how the organizations that are involved in the industry relate to each other and how funding should be organized to achieve the collective vision.

Each item presented in the Strategic Tourism Plan includes:

- Rationale for the issue or opportunity;
- Strategy(ies) to address the issue or opportunity;
- Plans to carry out the strategy;
- Responsibility(ies) for implementation; and
- Performance Measures and Assessment to gauge the work.



## DESTINATION MARKETING & PROMOTION: THE SNOHOMISH COUNTY TOURISM BUREAU

The following Strategies, Plans and Performance Measurements are associated with Destination Marketing and Promotion. Although most of these activities are to be carried out by the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau (SCTB), there are some oversight responsibilities to be carried out by the SCTB Board of Directors, as well as the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee, the County Executive and the Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.



### **STRATEGY FOR MARKETING, PROMOTION AND ADVERTISING**

The Snohomish County Tourism Bureau should continue to deliver exceptional tourism marketing strategies, programs and campaigns using an assortment of marketing channels and platforms.

### **STRATEGY FOR BRANDING**

The Snohomish County Tourism Bureau should continue to roll out implementation and extension of the Snohomish County tourism brand.

### **STRATEGY FOR TOURISM RESEARCH**

The Snohomish County Tourism Bureau should collect, purchase, maintain and communicate basic and detailed tourism statistics, research and information (nationally, statewide and countywide) on a regular basis to monitor, identify opportunities / threats and educate / inform industry stakeholders on recent trends, current results and the future business outlook.

### **STRATEGY FOR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT**

The Snohomish County Tourism Bureau should continue to build and enhance its digital marketing, promotions and communications resources and delivery by investing in in-house technology, personnel and activities that are leading edge or by commissioning and managing an outside vendor(s) that can deliver a customized solution that achieves the county's digital goals and objectives.

**STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The Snohomish County Tourism Bureau should continue to expand its use of Public Relations and Communications tools to position Snohomish County as a desirable travel destination.

**STRATEGY FOR MEETINGS, CONVENTIONS, GROUPS AND PACKAGED SALES**

The Meetings, Groups & Packaged Travel sales group of the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau should continue to establish and develop Snohomish County as a premier destination (regional, state, national and international) for conventions, events and groups by conducting targeted sales efforts, providing quality servicing of event organizers and their events, and delivery of high quality travel and tourism products and services.

**STRATEGY FOR SPORTS EVENTS MARKETING AND SALES**

The Snohomish County Sports Commission, sports division of the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau, should continue to establish and develop Snohomish County as a premier destination (regional, state, national and international) for amateur, collegiate and professional sports events and tournaments by conducting targeted sales efforts, providing quality servicing of event organizers and their events, and delivery of high quality travel and tourism products and services.

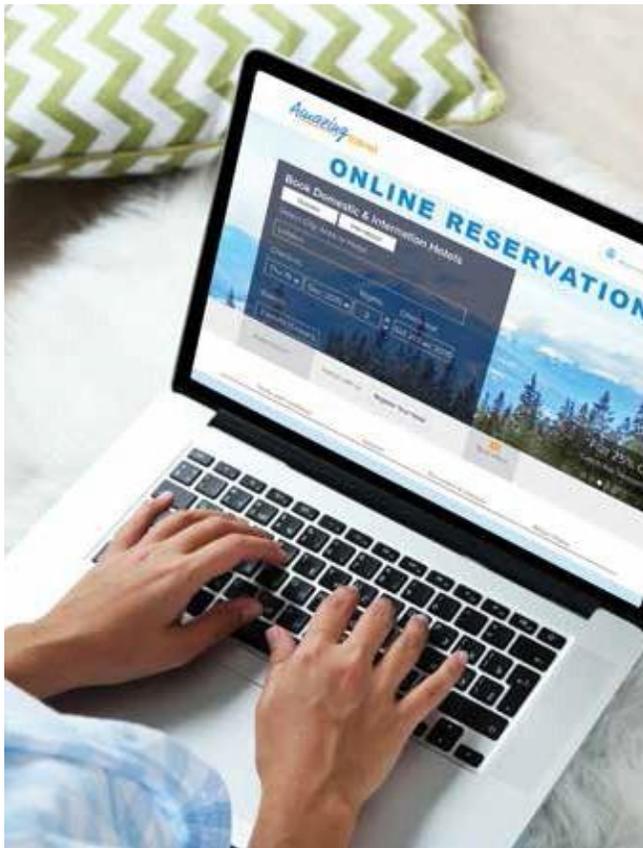


**STRATEGY FOR VISITOR SERVICES**

Snohomish County should seek to balance physical visitor information centers (permanent, mobile and special event) and their associated staffing and volunteers, and hard copy requirements, with the developing trend toward greater online and mobile phone technologies, applications and delivery of visitor information.

**STRATEGY FOR COLLATERAL MATERIALS**

The Snohomish County Tourism Bureau should continue to produce a series of visitor guides, maps, itineraries and other marketing collateral to inspire and guide existing and potential visitors to Snohomish County.



**STRATEGY FOR STATE WIDE COOPERATION**

The Snohomish County Tourism Bureau should create and maintain strong working relationships with state-wide partners, including but not limited to Visit Seattle, Visit Bellevue Washington, Explore Kirkland, Explore Bothell and Visit Woodinville to explore, create and implement cooperative marketing programs for visitors seeking a range of experiences beyond county or city limits.

**STRATEGY FOR INDUSTRY EDUCATION**

The Snohomish County Tourism Bureau should continue to organize, facilitate and deliver professional development services with support from Snohomish County Parks, Recreation and Tourism, associated with travel and tourism marketing and promotion, PR and communications and digital / social media engagement, as well as quality customer service programs to county-wide travel and tourism operators, government agencies and organizations.

## DESTINATION & PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT: SNOHOMISH COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION AND TOURISM

The following Strategies, Plans and Performance Measurements are associated with Destination Management, including but not limited to destination and product development. In general, these activities are to be carried out by the Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism in cooperation with the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau, other County officials and agencies, plus industry stakeholders countywide.



### **STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DESTINATION PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, MARKETING AND PROMOTION**

Snohomish County (with support from the SCTB and SCPRT) should organize, coordinate and facilitate tourism product development, planning and marketing with establishments, cities, towns and regions to promote and deliver an exceptional collection of visitor experiences.

### **STRATEGY FOR REGIONAL BIKE TRAIL NETWORK, FACILITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE, AMENITIES AND TRANSPORT**

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism should update its 2012 Regional Trail Planning and Management Guidelines for Snohomish County to assess additional needs, establish an inventory of future municipal plans, organize funding and identify stakeholders to direct the plan.

### **STRATEGY FOR TRAILS AND TRAIL TOWN DEVELOPMENT**

Snohomish County should develop a collection of environmentally and fiscally sustainable trails (water, hiking, biking, equestrian and motorized) that offers outdoor opportunities to both residents and visitors, and provides economic benefits to the many partners committed to delivering an exemplary trail experience.

### **STRATEGY FOR VISITOR CAPACITY PLANNING, TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION**

The Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism should join forces with the County Department of Public Works, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), US Department of Transportation and other highway, roads and transportation related organizations and agencies to advocate for a Visitor Transportation Strategy that identifies issues and opportunities for improving visitor-related transportation in Snohomish County.

Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism should engage with U.S. Forest Service and other County, State and Federal officials as they research and study possible improvements along the Mountain Loop Highway.

### **STRATEGY FOR MOBILE CONNECTIVITY AND OPEN DATA**

The Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism should work with the County Department of Information Technology Systems (DIS) to advocate for internet and wireless service providers to install fiber in rural areas of Snohomish County that are frequented by high numbers of visitors or where tourism operators are located, yet do not have existing or adequate internet or cell phone coverage, and create strategies and plans to provide coverage. The department should also examine ways to make use of open data to better monitor usage of park assets.

### **STRATEGY FOR WAYFINDING**

Snohomish County should continue to work with regional partners, federal, state, county and local officials to establish and implement consistent, coordinated and effective wayfinding systems (physical and online) that makes it easier for visitors to find their way around Snohomish County and to / from their specific visitor destinations.

### **STRATEGY FOR LODGING AND FACILITY OPTIONS**

The county should organize research and analysis to provide empirical evidence necessary to properly frame the situation regarding boutique / luxury / upscale / high-end and small / historic towns, rural and remote area lodging options and develop a Snohomish County Lodging Strategy, if necessary, to address the situation.

### **STRATEGY FOR AVIATION DISTRICT AND COMMERCIAL AIR SERVICE**

The county should promote and celebrate the hugely successful Boeing Tour, and leverage the draw, attention and traffic of the Boeing Tour and commercial service at Paine Field to expand and enhance the traffic received by the other aviation and military history attractions in the area and around the county.



### **STRATEGY FOR EVENTS AND FESTIVALS**

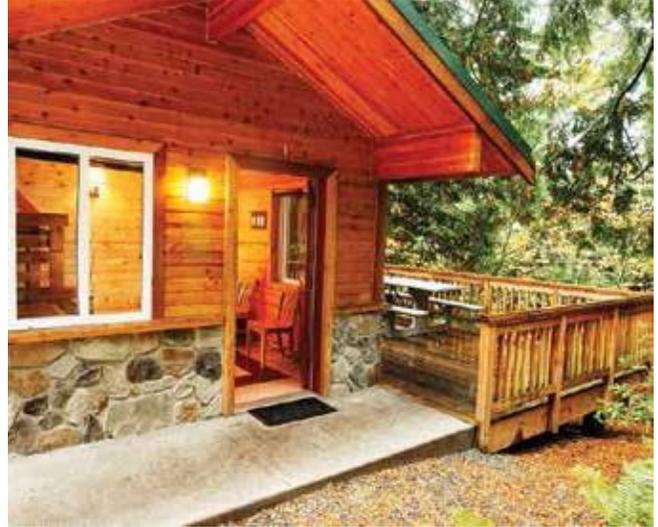
The county should work with cities, towns, industry stakeholders and grant making organizations (small fund) to create an Events & Festivals Strategy to set forth the vision, goals, strategy and plans for creating, incubating and facilitating visitor-related events and festivals in Snohomish County that targets seasonal markets and increases economic contribution from visitors and enhances the quality of life for residents.

### **STRATEGY FOR SEASONALITY**

Snohomish County should increase the priority, consideration and funding given to off-season tourism marketing, promotions and communications, as well as group meetings and sporting event sales efforts, and destination development activities such as infrastructure development, product development and events and festivals to help reduce seasonality issues.

### **STRATEGY FOR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS / GAPS**

The county should identify tourism infrastructure gaps and work with stakeholders to agree on a prioritized portfolio of proposals for presentation and advocacy to county, state, federal and local officials.



## IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK, PROTOCOL AND FUNDING

The update of the Strategic Tourism Plan provides an opportunity for Snohomish County to not only update the strategies, plans and performance measures, but also to update the framework, protocol and funding for county tourism.

### STRATEGY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND ALIGNMENT

The Snohomish County Tourism Bureau (SCTB) and Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) should perform a full organizational assessment to identify, align and cross-connect resources for staff, leadership, development, industry education, advocacy, planning and travel marketing to help reduce redundant efforts and streamline service delivery.

### STRATEGY FOR SNOHOMISH COUNTY TOURISM BUREAU (SCTB)

Snohomish County should contract (3 – 5 year) and fully fund the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau to deliver the full set of destination marketing and promotion activities set forth in this Strategic Tourism Plan.



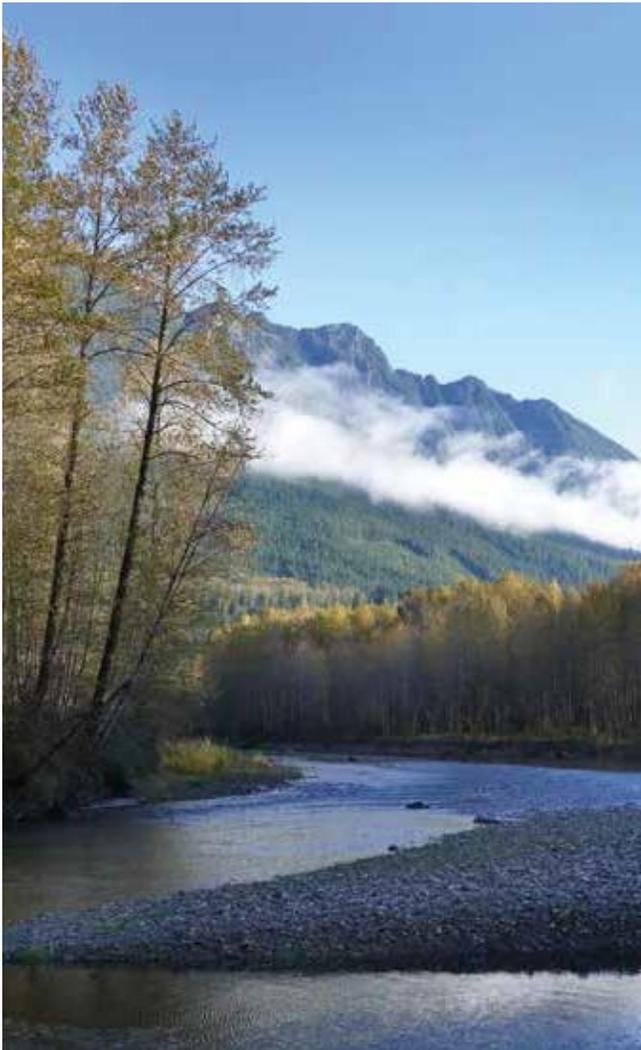
### STRATEGY FOR SNOHOMISH COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION AND TOURISM

The newly organized Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism should draw together resources from a host of sources for expertise and funding essential for environmentally and fiscally sustainable tourism programs. Coordinated engagement should produce benefits to all sectors, communities and stakeholders and can be measured by the ability to:

- Effectively implement the new Strategic Tourism Plan with the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau.
- Implement regional initiatives to integrate tourism experiences and assets to increase spending, length of visitor stay and repeat visits.
- Increase the quality, focus and delivery of tourism marketing to meet changing demographics.
- Refine and capitalize on partnership with entities that support long-term tourism development initiatives for the county.
- Pursue projects of merit that greatly influence visitor perception of Snohomish County as a leading outdoor adventure and recreation destination.
- Leverage outside funding resources to offset costs and increase support for new and emerging projects.
- Develop and expand public-private opportunities to help businesses provide amenities visitors require.
- Share recreational property management resources to support needed infrastructure, capacity-building and increased public access needed for recreation and tourism.
- Provide industry training and facilitation for regional recreation corridor creation.

### **STRATEGY FOR ANNUAL ACTION PLANS**

The 2018 – 2022 Strategic Tourism Plan should provide strategic recommendations for Snohomish County officials and agencies to guide tourism in the county over the next 5 years, while allowing each of the major organizations (County Executive; County Council; Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism; and Snohomish County Tourism Bureau) the flexibility to create and implement annual operating plans based on performance-to-date, available resources and changing conditions.



### **STRATEGY FOR LODGING TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LTAC)**

The County LTAC should commit its mission to the implementation of the Snohomish County Strategic Tourism Plan and establish a strategy applying the undesignated fund balance to furthering Strategic Tourism Plan activities.

Designated Funds in Small and Large Fund monies may include:

- Acquisition, construction, improvement or operation of convention center facilities, stadium facilities, or performance and/or visual arts center facilities, or payment of general obligation or revenue bonds used for these purposes;
- Advertising, publicizing, or distributing information for the purpose of attracting visitors and encouraging tourist expansion; and
- Maintaining required fund reserves established by the county LTAC.

### **STRATEGY FOR TOURISM PROMOTION AREA (TPA) BOARD**

The TPA Board should commit its mission to the implementation of the Snohomish County Strategic Tourism Plan. The Board should also establish a strategy for how much surplus the TPA Fund should maintain and how surplus funds are used.

### **STRATEGY FOR LODGING TAX PROGRAM / PROJECT FUNDING**

Snohomish County should examine and assist in coordinating the broad collection of LTACs to better understand and address the shared priorities between communities, their regions and the county.

## HARMONIZED FUNDING

There are three major sources of funds in Snohomish County that impact the activities, programs and efforts that are undertaken to benefit this single tourism industry, each regulated, managed and administered by individual legislation, boards and agents, and which in total collect more than \$6.5 million in county and local revenues each year.

In all cases, there is unobligated fund balance not yet allocated to tourism activities.

Although the Strategic Tourism Plan is not in a position to re-engineer the legislation, structure or management of these funds, it does make several recommendations to harmonize individual funds so they can be put to better use to build and promote the industry they were designated to assist.

Beyond these fund-specific recommendations, the administrators for these tourism-generated and tourism-dedicated funds should also commit their missions and harmonized funding to the implementation of the Snohomish County Strategic Tourism Plan.

## MAKING IT WORK

By now it should be clear that there are a lot of moving parts associated with developing, marketing and promotion of tourism in Snohomish County. So, to make the effort more transparent and manageable, the Strategic Tourism Plan has introduced a series of checkpoints that will guide the planning and implementation.

For the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau (SCTB), they will start each year by hosting a Tourism Marketing Research Forum, to share and collect the latest tourism marketing research with and from stakeholders from around the county. This research plus the SCTB's annual report from the previous year will be used to create an Annual Tourism Marketing Plan that details the projects, programs, resources and funding that will be deployed for the coming year to implement its destination marketing and promotion responsibilities from the Strategic Tourism Plan.

At the same time, the Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) will produce its annual operating plan to detail its projects, programs, resources and funding that will be deployed for the coming year to implement its destination and product development responsibilities from the Strategic Tourism Plan.



# RESONANCE

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