



# City of Fort Bragg

416 N Franklin Street  
Fort Bragg, CA 95437  
Phone: (707) 961-2823  
Fax: (707) 961-2802

## Meeting Agenda

### Visit Fort Bragg

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Monday, June 15, 2026

3:30 PM

Town Hall, 363 N. Main Street  
and Via Video Conference

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#### SPECIAL MEETING

#### MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

#### ROLL CALL

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS PLEASE TAKE NOTICE

*Committee Members are reminded that pursuant to the Council policy regarding use of electronic devices during public meetings adopted on November 28, 2022, all cell phones are to be turned off and there shall be no electronic communications during the meeting. All e-communications such as texts or emails from members of the public received during a meeting are to be forwarded to the City Clerk after the meeting is adjourned.*

#### ZOOM WEBINAR INVITATION

*This meeting is being presented in a hybrid format, both in person at Town Hall and via Zoom.*

*You are invited to a Zoom webinar.*

*When: Jun 15, 2026 03:30 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)*

*Topic: Special Visit Fort Bragg Committee Meeting*

*Join from PC, Mac, iPad, or Android:*

*<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84622692468>*

*And Telephone (\*6 mute/unmute, \*9 raise hand)*

*+1 669 444 9171 US*

*Webinar ID: 846 2269 2468*

*To speak during public comment portions of the agenda via zoom, please join the meeting and use the raise hand feature when the Chair or Acting Chair calls for public comment on the item you wish to address. Written public comments may be submitted to [sremington@fortbraggca.gov](mailto:sremington@fortbraggca.gov)*

#### 1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

#### 2. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

#### 3. CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

- 3A. [26-285](#) Discussion about Visit Fort Bragg Future Structure, Funding, and Strategic Direction and Make Recommendation to the City Council

Attachments: [06152026 Staff Report VFB Strategic Direction](#)

[Att 1 - VFB Strategic Marketing Plan](#)

[Att 2 - VFB Bylaws 2022](#)

**4. MATTERS FROM COMMITTEE / STAFF**

**ADJOURNMENT**

STATE OF CALIFORNIA     )  
  )ss.  
COUNTY OF MENDOCINO    )

I declare, under penalty of perjury, that I am employed by the City of Fort Bragg and that I caused this agenda to be posted in the City Hall notice case on June 12, 2026.

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Anna Leach  
Recreation Coordinator

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- *Such documents are also available on the City of Fort Bragg’s website at <http://city.fortbragg.com> subject to staff’s ability to post the documents before the meeting*

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# City of Fort Bragg

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## Text File

File Number: 26-285

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**Agenda Date:** 6/15/2026

**Version:** 1

**Status:** Business

**In Control:** Visit Fort Bragg

**File Type:** Staff Report

**Agenda Number:** 3A.

Discussion about Visit Fort Bragg Future Structure, Funding, and Strategic Direction and Make Recommendation to the City Council



## VISIT FORT BRAGG STAFF REPORT

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**TO:** Visit Fort Bragg Committee **DATE:** June 15, 2026

**DEPARTMENT:** City Manager's Office

**PREPARED BY:** Isaac Whippy, City Manager

**PRESENTER:** Isaac Whippy, City Manager

**AGENDA TITLE:** Future Structure, Funding, and Strategic Direction of Visit Fort Bragg

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### RECOMMENDATION

Receive the staff report, discuss the future direction of tourism in Fort Bragg, and provide recommendations to the City Council regarding:

1. The long-term vision, goals, and priorities for tourism in Fort Bragg;
2. The role of Visit Fort Bragg in supporting tourism, destination management, visitor experience, events, and economic development initiatives;
3. Opportunities to strengthen marketing, visitor experiences, community partnerships, and year-round visitation;
4. Potential organizational and governance models to support tourism efforts moving forward; and
5. Future performance measures and funding priorities to ensure tourism investments are aligned with community goals and measurable economic outcomes.

Vision → Strategy → Role of VFB → Structure/Funding → Accountability

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### BACKGROUND

The purpose of this special committee session is to facilitate a discussion regarding the future of tourism in Fort Bragg and the role Visit Fort Bragg should play moving forward. Tourism remains one of the most important sectors of the local economy. The Committee is being asked to evaluate whether the current tourism structure, funding priorities, and performance measures remain aligned with the City's long-term goals and opportunities. The Committee's discussion and recommendations will help inform future City Council policy and budget decisions regarding tourism, destination management, marketing, visitor experience, and economic development.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3A

Tourism is one of the most important economic drivers in the City of Fort Bragg and generates significant benefits for local businesses, employees, and municipal services. As of June 30, 2025, Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue exceeded approximately \$3.2 million annually, making TOT the largest single revenue source within the City's General Fund. These revenues support a wide range of municipal services, including public safety, parks, recreation, infrastructure, economic development initiatives, and quality-of-life improvements.

Because tourism-generated revenues play such a significant role in the City's financial sustainability, the manner in which tourism resources are invested and managed has important long-term implications for the community.

### **Measure AA and Measure AB (2016)**

In November 2016, Fort Bragg voters approved Measure AA and Measure AB. Measure AA increased the City's Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) rate from 10% to 12%. Measure AB was an advisory measure expressing voter preferences regarding the use of the additional revenues generated by Measure AA.

The advisory allocation approved by voters included:

- 50% toward promotions, events, and marketing for Fort Bragg;
- 25% toward Coastal Trail maintenance and security;
- 12.5% toward supporting establishment of the Noyo Center for Marine Science as a visitor attraction; and
- 12.5% toward special projects that support tourism and benefit the community, including improvements to local athletic fields and related community-serving amenities.

While Measure AB was advisory and not legally binding, it provided important insight into community priorities regarding tourism-generated revenues and demonstrated strong public support for investing in tourism, visitor amenities, and community assets.

### **Measure U (2024)**

In November 2024, Fort Bragg voters approved Measure U, increasing the City's Transient Occupancy Tax rate from 12% to 14%. Measure U is projected to generate approximately \$400,000 in additional annual revenue for the City.

Combined with continued growth in tourism activity, Measure U provides additional opportunities for the City to evaluate how tourism-generated revenues can best support:

- Economic development;
- Destination marketing;
- Visitor experience improvements;
- Community events;
- Tourism-related infrastructure;
- Public safety services; and
- Community quality-of-life investments.

Nearly ten years have passed since the approval of Measure AA and Measure AB.

During that time:

- Tourism has evolved significantly;
- Digital marketing has transformed destination promotion;
- Visitor expectations have changed;
- Event-based tourism has expanded;
- Communities have increasingly adopted destination management strategies; and
- Competition among destinations has intensified.

At the same time, TOT has grown into the City's largest General Fund revenue source. As the City looks toward the next decade, an important policy question emerges:

How should Fort Bragg invest tourism-generated revenues to maximize economic benefit, support local businesses, enhance visitor experiences, and strengthen the community?

The purpose of this study session is to begin that conversation and explore whether the City's current tourism structure remains the best model for the future

## **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

### **Visit Fort Bragg Committee**

Visit Fort Bragg currently operates as an advisory committee of the City of Fort Bragg and provides recommendations to the City Manager and City Council regarding tourism-related programs, marketing initiatives, events, visitor attraction efforts, and funding priorities.

The Committee is comprised of:

- Two City Council Members
- Business representatives
- Tourism stakeholders
- Community members

The Committee provides recommendations to the City Manager and City Council regarding tourism-related programs, marketing, events, and funding priorities.

### **Current Tourism Investment Model (1% of TOT):**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Annual Budget</b>
Marketing Contract (Idea Cooperative)	\$180,000
Events – Shoulder season Programming	\$100,000
Fireworks – 4 <sup>th</sup> July Celebration	\$35,000
City Staff Time	\$30,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$345,000</b>

## **THE IDEA COOPERATIVE**

The City currently contracts with The Idea Cooperative to serve as Fort Bragg's tourism marketing agency. Under this model, the majority of tourism funding is dedicated to outsourced destination marketing and promotional services.

Services provided by The Idea Cooperative generally include:

- Destination branding and messaging
- Advertising campaigns
- Digital marketing
- Website management and content
- Social media support
- Public relations and media outreach
- Visitor attraction campaigns
- Marketing strategy and implementation

This model has allowed the City to access professional marketing expertise without maintaining dedicated tourism staff. It has also provided continuity in destination branding and promotion.

As part of this discussion, the Committee may wish to evaluate whether the current consultant-based model remains aligned with the City's future tourism goals and priorities, or whether a greater emphasis should be placed on areas such as event development, visitor experience improvements, downtown activation, business engagement, community partnerships, and destination management.

The question is not whether marketing remains important, it clearly does. Rather, the question is whether the current balance of tourism investments is achieving the outcomes the community and lodging establishment would like to see and whether alternative models could provide greater capacity, stronger partnerships, and increased economic impact.

## **VISIT MENDOCINO COUNTY (VMC)**

As part of this discussion, it is important to understand the role of Visit Mendocino County (VMC). VMC serves as the countywide destination marketing organization responsible for promoting Mendocino County as a visitor destination.

Responsibilities generally include:

- Destination marketing
- Advertising campaigns
- Public relations
- Travel media outreach
- Visitor information

- Tourism research
- Brand development
- Industry partnerships

VMC receives funding primarily through the Mendocino County Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID/BID). The BID is funded through assessments paid by lodging establishments throughout Mendocino County and is specifically intended to support tourism promotion and visitor attraction.

As a result, Fort Bragg lodging operators currently contribute to:

1. The City's Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) 14%; and
2. The Mendocino County Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID/BID) 1%.

Today, Visit Fort Bragg and Visit Mendocino County generally operate as separate organizations with different governance structures and funding sources, although both share the common objective of increasing visitation and supporting the local visitor economy.

## **THE EVOLUTION OF TOURISM**

Historically, tourism organizations focused primarily on destination marketing.

Success was often measured by:

- Advertising impressions
- Website visits
- Click-through rates
- Social media reach

While these metrics remain valuable, many communities have shifted toward destination management models that focus on broader economic and community outcomes.

Success is increasingly measured through:

- Event attendance
- Downtown foot traffic
- Hotel occupancy data
- Sales tax generation
- TOT growth
- Business participation
- Visitor satisfaction
- Repeat visitation

The goal is not simply to attract visitors, but to create experiences that support local businesses and strengthen the overall economy.

## **COMPARABLE TOURISM MODELS**

Several successful California destinations operate through independent destination marketing organizations rather than advisory committee structures.

### **1. Sonoma Valley**

Tourism efforts are managed through a destination marketing organization supported by tourism-related revenues and industry partnerships.

Focus areas include:

- Marketing
- Visitor services
- Event development
- Destination stewardship
- Industry engagement

### **2. Monterey County**

See Monterey operates as the county's official destination marketing organization and is governed by tourism and hospitality stakeholders.

Responsibilities include:

- Marketing
- Visitor attraction
- Conference and group sales
- Tourism development
- Research and analytics

### **3. Carmel-by-the-Sea**

Tourism promotion is coordinated through a dedicated tourism organization focused on destination branding, public relations, digital marketing, and visitor attraction.

### **4. Napa Valley**

Visit Napa Valley operates as an independent nonprofit destination marketing organization funded through tourism assessment revenues.

Responsibilities include:

- Marketing
- Visitor services
- Tourism development
- Strategic planning
- Industry partnerships

## **Common Characteristics**

These organizations generally share:

- Dedicated executive leadership
- Professional staff
- Industry participation
- Consolidated tourism funding
- Event development capacity
- Visitor experience initiatives
- Performance accountability

**HOW DOES FORT BRAGG COMPARE?**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Governance</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Funding Model</b>
Sonoma Valley	DMO Board	Executive Director	Tourism Assessments
Monterey County	DMO Board	Executive Director	Industry Funding
Carmel	Tourism Organization	Professional Staff	Tourism Revenues
Napa Valley	Independent Nonprofit	Executive Director	Assessment District
Fort Bragg (Current)	Advisory Committee	Staff/Consultant-Based	Approx. \$315,000

The Committee may wish to consider whether Fort Bragg's current structure remains the most effective model for the future?

**STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES**

Based on tourism research, stakeholder input, and the attached Strategic Marketing Plan, several opportunities exist to strengthen Fort Bragg's visitor economy and maximize the return on tourism investments.

**1. Increase Shoulder Season Tourism & Overnight Stays**

Fort Bragg's greatest opportunity may not be increasing peak-season visitation, but rather growing visitation during traditionally slower periods when additional visitors provide the greatest economic benefit to local businesses and lodging providers.

Potential opportunities include:

- Expanding existing shoulder-season events such as Timber & Tides Music Festival, Fort Bragg Blues Festival, Magic Market, Tacos & Brews, Oktoberfest, and cycling events.
- Developing new seasonal events and recurring activations that drive overnight stays.
- Creating lodging and experience packages that combine accommodations with attractions, dining, recreation, and local experiences.
- Expanding culinary, arts, cultural, harbor, and outdoor recreation programming.

- Increasing winter and holiday-related activities that encourage year-round visitation.

The goal is to generate additional overnight stays, increase occupancy during slower periods, and create reasons for visitors to return throughout the year.

## **2. Improve the Visitor Experience**

As the Committee has considered recently on marketing that not only attracts visitors, but the visitor experience ultimately determines whether they return and recommend Fort Bragg to others.

Potential investments include:

- Wayfinding and visitor signage.
- Digital visitor guides and trip-planning resources.
- Downtown and Noyo Harbor connectivity.
- Public art, murals, and photo opportunities.
- Visitor information and welcome initiatives.
- Coastal access improvements and visitor amenities.
- Enhancements that encourage longer stays and greater visitor engagement.

The objective is to ensure Fort Bragg is not only a destination people discover, but one they remember and return to.

## **3. Strengthen Partnerships & Destination Development**

Tourism success depends on collaboration among public agencies, businesses, lodging providers, nonprofits, event organizers, and regional tourism partners.

Potential opportunities include:

- Expanded collaboration with Visit Mendocino County.
- Stronger partnerships with lodging providers and hospitality businesses.
- Coordination with the Chamber of Commerce and downtown businesses.
- Joint marketing and promotional efforts.
- Development of visitor packages and experiences.
- Greater participation from local stakeholders in tourism initiatives.

The goal is to align resources and reduce duplication while maximizing the economic impact of tourism investments.

## **4. Increase Economic Impact & Accountability**

As tourism-generated revenues continue to grow, there is an opportunity to place greater emphasis on measurable outcomes and return on investment.

Potential performance measures include:

- Hotel occupancy and overnight stays.
- Event attendance.
- Sales tax and TOT growth.
- Business participation.
- Visitor satisfaction.
- Website conversions and visitor engagement.
- Tourism-related economic impact.

The objective is to ensure tourism investments are producing measurable benefits for local businesses, residents, and the community as a whole.

## **5. Leverage Data-Driven Tourism Strategies**

Modern destination organizations increasingly rely on visitor data, market research, occupancy trends, and performance analytics to guide investment decisions.

Potential opportunities include:

- Better understanding visitor travel patterns and feeder markets.
- Identifying high-value visitor segments.
- Tracking campaign performance and conversion rates.
- Measuring event and tourism-related economic impacts.
- Using data to guide future tourism investments and strategic priorities.

A data-driven approach can help ensure tourism resources are invested where they generate the greatest benefit for Fort Bragg and the Mendocino Coast.

## **6. Modern Destination Marketing & Storytelling**

Visitor travel planning has changed significantly over the last decade. Today's travelers increasingly discover destinations through social media, digital content, travel influencers, online trip-planning platforms, and peer recommendations rather than traditional advertising alone.

Fort Bragg is uniquely positioned to benefit from visual storytelling due to its coastal scenery, redwood forests, historic attractions, harbor district, outdoor recreation opportunities, and authentic small-town character.

Potential opportunities include:

- Partnerships with travel influencers and content creators.
- Familiarization tours for travel writers and media outlets.
- Enhanced social media storytelling and video content.
- Development of curated itineraries and trip-planning resources.

- Partnerships with platforms such as Roadtrippers and similar travel discovery services.
- User-generated content campaigns highlighting visitor experiences.
- Promotion of seasonal experiences and hidden gems throughout the community.

The goal is to expand Fort Bragg's reach, increase destination awareness, and inspire future visitation through authentic storytelling and modern marketing channels.

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Potential Channels</b>
Bay Area Weekend Travelers	Instagram, Meta, Roadtrippers
Sacramento Families	Google Search, YouTube, Family Travel Blogs
Outdoor Recreation Visitors	Roadtrippers, AllTrails, MTB networks
Couples Getaways	Influencers, PR, travel magazines
Retirees	Email marketing, travel publications
International Visitors	VMC partnerships, PR, travel trade

**OPTION 1 – EXISTING MODEL**

Under the current model, Visit Fort Bragg functions as an advisory committee to the City Manager and City Council. The Committee provides recommendations regarding tourism marketing, events, and funding priorities. The City contracts with The Idea Cooperative to provide destination marketing, advertising, branding, and promotional services.

**City Council**

**City Manager**

**Visit Fort Bragg Committee (Advisory Committee)**

- Recommends Tourism Priorities
- Reviews Marketing Initiatives
- Advises on Event Funding
- Makes Recommendations to Council

**Marketing Consultant (The Idea Cooperative)**

- Tourism Marketing
- Advertising
- Promotion
- Branding

Primary Focus: Marketing & Promotion  
 Annual Budget: Approximately \$315,000  
 Leadership Model: Advisory Committee + City Staff + Consultant

Primary Strength: Local control and established structure

Primary Limitation: Limited capacity to implement tourism initiatives beyond marketing

Advantages

- Familiar governance structure
- Local control
- Minimal organizational changes

Challenges

- Limited implementation capacity
- Heavy reliance on marketing
- Limited staffing resources
- Less focus on destination management

**OPTION 2 – CITY-LED DESTINATION MANAGEMENT MODEL**

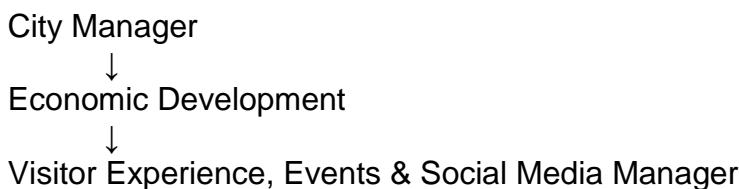
Under this model, tourism efforts would be more closely integrated with the City's Economic Development Program and supported by a dedicated Visitor Experience, Events & Social Media Manager. The idea is not to eliminate marketing, but to rebalance our investment so that more resources are focused on creating and enhancing the experiences that bring people to Fort Bragg in the first place.

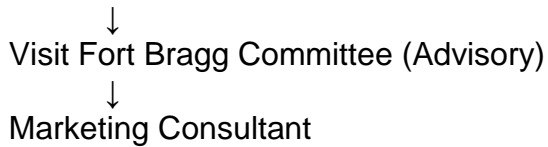
Marketing services would continue through a contracted consultant, but under a more focused scope centered on branding, advertising, digital campaigns, and destination promotion. At the same time, the City would build internal capacity to better coordinate events, support local businesses, strengthen social media and storytelling efforts, and improve the overall visitor experience.

This model recognizes that tourism is about more than attracting visitors—it is about giving them reasons to come, encouraging them to stay longer, and creating experiences that make them want to return. Greater emphasis would be placed on event development, downtown activation, visitor experience improvements, and partnerships with organizations such as Visit Mendocino County, the Fort Bragg Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, lodging providers, nonprofits, and community event organizers.

A dedicated staff member could help bring these efforts together by serving as a central point of coordination, identifying opportunities to expand existing events, attract new events during the shoulder season, support local event organizers, and strengthen collaboration among community partners.

**Structure**





The goal of this model is to maintain strong destination marketing while placing greater focus on visitor experience, events, community partnerships, and measurable economic outcomes. Success would be evaluated not only by impressions and clicks, but by event attendance, business participation, foot traffic, overnight stays, visitor satisfaction, and the overall economic impact generated for the Fort Bragg community.

### **Example Budget**

Marketing: \$90,000  
Events: \$100,000  
Personnel: \$95,000  
Fireworks: \$35,000

### **Advantages**

- Greater implementation capacity
- Strong local control and accountability
- Increased focus on events and visitor experience
- Stronger partnerships with community organizations and businesses
- Better alignment with economic development goals
- More direct engagement through social media and local storytelling

### **Challenges**

- Additional City staffing responsibilities
- Increased operational involvement by the City
- Reduced reliance on outsourced marketing may require a transition period
- Success depends on strong coordination among community partners

The goal of this model is to maintain effective destination marketing while placing greater emphasis on visitor experience, event development, community partnerships, and measurable economic outcomes. Success would be evaluated not only by impressions and clicks, but by event attendance, business participation, foot traffic, overnight stays, visitor satisfaction, and the overall economic impact generated for the Fort Bragg community.

## **OPTION 3 – FORT BRAGG DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION (DMO)**

Create a new independent Destination Marketing Organization that combines tourism resources, funding, and expertise into a single professionally managed organization focused on destination marketing, tourism development, visitor experience, event programming, and economic impact.

This option is not a merger with Visit Mendocino County and does not transfer authority to VMC. Rather, it contemplates creation of a new organization with strong local representation and participation from tourism stakeholders.

### Potential Participants

- City of Fort Bragg
- Visit Fort Bragg
- Visit Mendocino County
- Lodging industry representatives
- Business representatives
- Event organizers
- Tourism stakeholders

### Potential Funding Sources

- Visit Fort Bragg funding
- Visit Mendocino County partnerships
- BID-supported initiatives
- Lodging participation
- Sponsorships
- Grants
- Event revenues
- Private partnerships

### Potential Annual Resources



### Potential Structure

DMO Board of Directors  
↓  
Executive Director  
↓  
Marketing & Communications  
Destination Development  
Events & Partnerships  
Visitor Experience  
Research & Analytics

Potential uses of the fund would be:

**Allocation Summary — Reference Guide**

#	Initiative	Share	Est. Budget
01	Locally Based Nonprofit DMO Structure	10%	~\$68,000
02	Destination Data & Insights (Pre-Campaign)	5%	~\$34,000
03	Website Conversion & User Experience	TBD	via reserve
04	Comprehensive Marketing Plan & Paid Media	30%	~\$204,000
05	Expanded VMC Strategic Partnership	5%	~\$34,000
06	TOT Investment Alignment	0%	no direct cost
07	Visitor Experience Improvement Program	10%	~\$68,000
08	Visitor Email Database & Trade Show Program	6%	~\$41,000
09	Lodging Partnerships & Off-Season Packages	8%	~\$54,000
10	Signature Events & Activation Strategies	8%	~\$54,000
11	PR & Earned Media Program	5%	~\$34,000
12	Content Engine	2%	~\$12,000
13	Reporting, Accountability & ROI Tracking	2%	~\$12,000
+	Flexible Reserve & Website Implementation	9%	~\$61,000

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Strategic Direction**

1. What should be the primary role of Visit Fort Bragg over the next 5-10 years?
2. What are the most important outcomes the Committee would like tourism efforts to achieve?
  - Increased overnight stays
  - Stronger shoulder-season visitation
  - Higher TOT and sales tax revenues
  - More events
  - Improved visitor experiences
  - Greater support for local businesses

3. What opportunities exist to strengthen year-round visitation and increase economic activity?

### **Marketing & Visitor Experience**

4. Is the current marketing strategy aligned with the City's goals and priorities?
5. What visitor markets should Fort Bragg focus on (Bay Area, Sacramento, families, outdoor recreation, couples, international visitors, etc.)?
6. What marketing approaches provide the greatest return on investment?
  - Digital advertising
  - Social media
  - Influencers and content creators
  - Public relations and earned media
  - Roadtrippers and trip-planning platforms
  - Event promotion
  - Partnerships with VMC
7. What visitor experience improvements, events or partnerships should be prioritized?

### **Organizational Structure**

8. Is tourism primarily a marketing function, an economic development strategy, or a combination of both?
9. Which organizational model best positions Fort Bragg for long-term success?
10. How should tourism investments be balanced between marketing, events, visitor experience, destination development, and partnerships?
11. What recommendation should the Committee forward to the City Council?

For nearly a decade, tourism investments supported by Measure AA/AB have helped promote Fort Bragg and support the visitor economy. As tourism continues to evolve, the Committee has an opportunity to evaluate whether the current structure remains the best model for the future or whether alternative approaches could provide greater capacity, stronger partnerships, enhanced visitor experiences, and increased economic impact.

**The purpose of this study session is not to select a preferred option, but to begin a strategic discussion regarding how tourism resources can best be utilized to support local businesses, strengthen the economy, improve visitor experiences, and position Fort Bragg for long-term success.**

### **STRATEGIC PLAN/CONSISTENCY**

This discussion supports several City Strategic Plan goals, including:

- Economic Development – Supporting local businesses, tourism, and job creation.

- Downtown Revitalization – Increasing visitation, activity, and business engagement.
- Fiscal Sustainability – Maximizing the effectiveness of tourism-generated revenues.
- Community Vitality – Supporting events, recreation, and quality-of-life improvements.
- Partnerships & Collaboration – Strengthening coordination among tourism stakeholders and community partners.

Tourism is both an economic development and quality-of-life strategy that supports residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

No fiscal action is requested at this time. Current tourism-related funding totals approximately \$345,000 annually and includes marketing, events, and community celebrations. As of June 30, 2025, Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenues exceeded \$3.2 million, making TOT the City's largest General Fund revenue source. In 2024, voters approved Measure U, increasing the TOT rate from 12% to 14%, which is projected to generate approximately \$400,000 in additional annual revenue.

This discussion provides an opportunity to evaluate whether current tourism investments are aligned with community priorities and whether alternative organizational models could improve economic outcomes and return on investment.

Any future funding or organizational changes would be subject to City Council approval through the annual budget process.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Visit Fort Bragg By-Laws
- Strategic Marketing Plan + Budget Allocation Proposal

## VISIT FORT BRAGG

# Strategic Marketing Plan & Budget Allocation

*A unified annual plan translating Visit Fort Bragg's thirteen strategic initiatives into specific actions, budget allocations, and measurable outcomes.*

## Budget Overview

Funding Source	Annual Amount
City of Fort Bragg — current marketing investment	\$380,000
Visit Mendocino County — proposed partnership contribution	\$300,000
<b>Total working budget</b>	<b>~\$680,000</b>

*Percentages throughout this plan reflect shares of the combined ~\$680,000 annual working budget. Dollar figures are modeled estimates rounded for planning purposes; final amounts are set through the annual budget process.*

## Allocation Summary — Reference Guide

#	Initiative	Share	Est. Budget
01	Locally Based Nonprofit DMO Structure	10%	~\$68,000
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	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>~\$680,000</b>
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## 01 Establish a Locally Based Nonprofit DMO Structure

**Budget Allocation: 10%** | ~\$68,000

Fort Bragg would benefit from moving toward a locally based nonprofit DMO structure for Visit Fort Bragg, providing more strategic control, transparency, accountability, and continuity than the current contractor model. With the existing Visit Fort Bragg committee positioned to serve as the founding board, much of the groundwork is already in place. A local DMO structure gives the City, lodging community, tourism stakeholders, and marketing professionals a clearer framework for setting priorities, measuring outcomes, and directing funds toward the highest-value opportunities.

- Transition the existing Visit Fort Bragg committee into the formal nonprofit board, preserving institutional knowledge and accelerating the launch timeline
- Fund a paid part-time destination coordinator plus administration, insurance, and legal costs
- Adopt bylaws, a conflict-of-interest policy, and an annual independent audit commitment (supports Initiative 13)
- Provide the City, lodging community, and tourism stakeholders a clear framework for setting priorities and directing funds

**Milestone:** *Formalized entity operational within 4–6 months*

## 02 Utilize Modern Destination Data & Insights (Pre-Campaign)

**Budget Allocation: 5%** | ~\$34,000

Before launching campaigns, the comprehensive marketing plan must be grounded in actual visitor behavior rather than guesswork. Fort Bragg has a meaningful cost advantage here: occupancy and booking data can be sourced directly from participating local lodging properties, supplemented by modern geolocation tools that reveal where visitors actually come from. Together these sources accurately identify the most valuable feeder markets, ensuring targeted campaigns are built on facts instead of assumptions.

- Source occupancy, ADR, and booking-window data directly from participating Fort Bragg lodging properties at low or no cost
- Layer in one geolocation platform (Datafy or Placer.ai) to identify true feeder markets from actual visitor movement
- Run one visitor intercept survey wave (QR-code based) covering peak and shoulder seasons
- Build campaigns on facts instead of assumptions: every paid dollar in Initiative 04 targets a proven market

**Deliverable:** *Feeder market report and seasonal demand baseline before major campaign launch*

### 03 Maximize Website Conversion & User Experience

**Budget Allocation:** Budget TBD | funded via flexible reserve

As investment drives more targeted traffic to Fort Bragg, the website must be primed to capture that interest and convert it into booked overnight stays. The current digital hub provides a strong foundation, so this initiative focuses on a light conversion audit and targeted refinements rather than a rebuild. Budget is intentionally held as TBD and drawn from the flexible reserve, scaled to what the audit actually finds.

- The current site provides a strong foundation; a light conversion audit will identify targeted refinements only
- Any implementation work is funded from the flexible reserve and scaled to audit findings
- Priority additions regardless of audit outcome: lead magnets, trip-planning tools, and email capture supporting Initiative 08
- Confirm analytics and event tracking so campaign performance flows cleanly into Initiative 13 reporting

*KPI: Lodging referral clicks and email capture rate, measured monthly*

### 04 Redesign the Comprehensive Marketing Plan & Paid Media

**Budget Allocation:** 30% | ~\$204,000

Fort Bragg needs a complete destination marketing plan that goes beyond basic advertising and incorporates advanced, modern strategies: targeted digital campaigns, retargeting, direct push to proven feeder markets, and rigorous results tracking. As the single largest allocation in this plan, it is built specifically around Fort Bragg's highest-opportunity visitor segments, with clear objectives, performance metrics, and shoulder-season timing that prioritizes demand when it carries the most value.

- Google Performance Max and paid search targeting proven feeder markets (Sacramento, Bay Area, Central Valley)
- Meta and YouTube campaigns weighted toward shoulder season with October–April flighting
- Retargeting pool built from website traffic and email engagement
- Reserve 10–15% of this line for channel testing: CTV, streaming audio, travel endemic sites
- Every campaign tagged and tracked to feed Initiative 13 reporting

*Role: The engine of the plan — the single largest investment, aimed directly at overnight stays*

### 05 Expanded Strategic Partnership with Visit Mendocino County

**Budget Allocation:** 5% | ~\$34,000

VMC has broader countywide reach and established vendor relationships, while VFB has the ability to be more locally focused and nimble. This initiative proposes elevating that natural fit into a formalized,

funded partnership: a multi-year cooperative agreement in which VMC contributes approximately \$300,000 toward Fort Bragg-focused marketing, managed within this unified plan. The result is stronger Fort Bragg exposure, better advertising rates at scale, and no wasted spend on overlapping campaigns.

- Formalize an expanded multi-year cooperative agreement in which VMC contributes approximately \$300,000 toward Fort Bragg-focused marketing, managed within this unified plan
- This budget line funds joint media buys, coordinated vendor negotiation, and shared campaign management
- Align feeder-market calendars across both organizations to eliminate duplicated spend
- Secure named Fort Bragg placement within VMC's countywide PR, content, and media distribution
- Leverage VMC's established vendor relationships for stronger advertising rates at scale

*Structure: Multi-year agreement to support planning continuity for both organizations*

## 06 Align TOT Investment with Peer Benchmarks & Measurable Return

**Budget Allocation: 0%** | no direct budget — advocacy workstream

Fort Bragg's lodging tax has generated substantial revenue for the City, which has thoughtfully directed those funds across a range of community priorities. Because tourism remains one of Fort Bragg's most important economic drivers, it is worth a structured look at whether the portion reinvested into destination marketing is sized to protect and grow that revenue base long term. The intent is not simply to advocate for more funding, but to propose a defined, formula-based TOT allocation paired with the governance and accountability framework in this plan, giving VFB a real planning horizon and the City clear visibility into what the investment produces.

- Staff time covered under Initiative 01; no separate spend category
- The supporting report Investing in Fort Bragg's Future: Visit Fort Bragg carries the benchmark data and modeled funding scenarios
- Pursue a defined, formula-based TOT allocation paired with the governance and accountability framework in Initiatives 01 and 13

*Milestone: Multi-year services agreement presented to City Council*

## 07 Create a Visitor Experience Improvement Program

**Budget Allocation: 10%** | ~\$68,000

Marketing should not only drive awareness; it should improve the visitor experience once people arrive. This initiative funds a pipeline of high-impact visitor engagement projects, from public art and photo-op installations to wayfinding and coastal trail enhancements, prioritized through the visitor engagement matrix that scores each proposal on strategic fit, visitor impact, feasibility, and budget tier. The highest-scoring projects move first.

- Fund the highest-scoring projects from the visitor engagement matrix first: Vehicle-Friendly Coastal Access Signage (12.00), Sunset Spotting Stations (12.00), Photo Backdrops & Step-In Murals (11.67), Little Mini Mural Project (11.50)
- Sequence by matrix score, balancing one larger capital project with smaller quick wins each year
- Maintain the scoring matrix (strategic fit, visitor impact, feasibility, budget tier) as the standing intake and prioritization tool for new ideas
- Marketing should not only drive awareness; it should improve the experience once visitors arrive

*Framework: Objective matrix scoring keeps project selection transparent*

## 08 Build a Visitor Email Database & Regional Trade Show Program

**Budget Allocation: 6%** | ~\$41,000

A qualified visitor email database is one of the highest-ROI opportunities available to VFB, powering direct campaigns, seasonal promotions, event marketing, lodging packages, and return visitation. This initiative pairs database building with a regional trade show program: booth presence at consumer travel and outdoor shows in key drive markets generates direct Fort Bragg exposure while collecting qualified emails at the source. Combined with VMC subscriber access and website capture, the program targets an aggressive but achievable first-year list.

- Establish a booth presence at 2–3 consumer travel and outdoor shows in Sacramento and Bay Area markets (within roughly a four-hour drive of Fort Bragg) for direct exposure and email capture
- Email platform with automation: welcome series, seasonal sends, re-engagement flows
- Additional acquisition via website lead magnets, contests, event signups, and lodging partner check-in capture
- Negotiate segmented access to VMC's existing qualified subscriber base

*Year 1 target: 15,000–20,000 qualified subscribers*

## 09 Develop Lodging Partnerships & Off-Season Packages

**Budget Allocation: 8%** | ~\$54,000

Generating demand during the summer peak offers very low marginal value; the town is likely already full. The true economic value of a DMO is its ability to flatten the seasonality curve and fill the troughs, and compelling off-season packages are where VFB will prove its worth to the lodging community. To build partner confidence, VFB fully funds the first year of promotion and documents the results, transitioning to shared investment only after the ROI case has been demonstrated to lodging partners.

- Build 3–4 packaged offers combining lodging with Skunk Train, harbor and dining, redwoods, or wellness experiences
- Dedicated paid and email promotion flighted October–April only, where new demand carries the highest marginal value

- Phased co-op model: VFB fully funds Year 1 promotion, documents the ROI for lodging partners, then ramps up partner cost-sharing once results demonstrate the value to their businesses
- Flatten the seasonality curve: this is where the DMO proves its worth to the lodging community

*KPI: Package bookings and shoulder-season occupancy lift vs. market baseline*

## 10 Create Signature Events & Activation Strategies

**Budget Allocation: 8%** | ~\$54,000

Fort Bragg should focus on events and activations specifically designed to generate lodging demand, from seasonal festivals and craft beverage events to coastal trail programming and smaller recurring experiences that give visitors a reason to plan a trip. Every event funded through this line is evaluated on its ability to drive overnight stays, extend length of stay, support local businesses, and strengthen the Fort Bragg brand.

- Anchor support for shoulder-season events designed specifically to generate lodging demand
- Smaller recurring activations (coastal trail programming, downtown events) on a quarterly cadence
- Evaluation gate: every funded event must project measurable overnight stays, extended length of stay, and local business impact
- Event proposals scored through the same matrix framework used in Initiative 07

*Standard: Events earn funding by filling rooms, not just drawing crowds*

## 11 Develop a Stronger PR & Earned Media Program

**Budget Allocation: 5%** | ~\$34,000

Fort Bragg has tremendous story potential, but it needs a more intentional PR strategy: pitching travel writers, hosting familiarization trips, working with influencers, and building media itineraries around the coast, Noyo Harbor, food, outdoor recreation, redwoods, and off-season escapes. This is also a natural area for shared resources; a joint PR manager or agency arrangement with VMC presents one coordinated voice for the Mendocino coast while stretching both organizations' budgets.

- Pursue a shared PR manager or agency arrangement with VMC, splitting costs and presenting one coordinated voice for the Mendocino coast
- Host 2–3 familiarization trips annually for travel writers and regional influencers
- Story angles: Noyo Harbor's working waterfront, the current wave of private investment, off-season coastal escapes, redwoods and rail
- Unified pitch calendar across VFB and VMC to maximize reach without duplication

*Efficiency: Shared staffing model stretches both organizations' PR dollars*

## 12 Strengthen the Content Engine

**Budget Allocation: 2%** | ~\$12,000

Fort Bragg needs a steady supply of strong photo, video, social, blog, itinerary, and email content, and this initiative delivers it through a deliberately lean, community-powered model. User-generated content contests, with prizes sponsored by local businesses, become the primary asset pipeline, keeping costs low while producing authentic imagery that polished campaigns cannot replicate. Every asset is then repurposed across the website, social media, email, PR, paid ads, lodging partners, and VMC channels.

- User-generated content photo and video contests as the primary asset pipeline, with prizes sponsored by local businesses
- Modest professional budget reserved for gap-filling shoots (off-season conditions, specific campaign needs)
- Refresh and expand the itinerary library: 48 Hours in Fort Bragg, dog-friendly, family, romantic coastal getaways
- Repurposing workflow: every asset deployed across web, social, email, paid, PR, and VMC channels

**Approach:** *Community-powered creative keeps costs low and authenticity high*

### 13 Improve Reporting, Accountability & ROI Tracking

**Budget Allocation: 2%** | ~\$12,000

VFB should adopt a transparent reporting model with clear KPIs spanning website traffic, email growth, campaign conversions, lodging partner participation, PR placements, package bookings, and estimated lodging impact. The Visit Sonoma Tourism Stats website offers a strong reference model. The goal is simple: make it easy for the City, committee, lodging community, and stakeholders to understand what is working and where funds are producing the most value.

- Build a public-facing performance dashboard modeled on Visit Sonoma’s research page, using low-cost tools
- Quarterly stakeholder reports: TOT trends, occupancy, campaign performance, email growth, PR placements, package bookings
- Annual report to City Council aligned with the accountability measures in the supporting investment brief
- Make it easy for the City, committee, lodging community, and stakeholders to see what is working

**Standard:** *Full transparency on where funds produce the most value*

### + Flexible Reserve & Website Implementation

**Budget Allocation: 9%** | ~\$61,000

The flexible reserve gives the program agility without compromising the discipline of the core allocations. It serves two purposes: funding website refinements at whatever scale the Initiative 03 audit

recommends, and providing contingency capacity for opportunistic media buys, event co-sponsorships, and mid-year pivots as market conditions change. Every reserve expenditure is reported with the same transparency as the core budget lines.

- Funds website refinements identified by the Initiative 03 conversion audit
- Contingency for opportunistic media buys, event co-sponsorships, and mid-year pivots as conditions change
- Unspent reserve rolls into the following year's paid media or visitor experience lines
- Gives the program agility without compromising the discipline of the core allocations

**Principle:** *Planned flexibility, with full transparency on every reserve expenditure*

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*Initiative 03 (Website) is funded from the flexible reserve as scoped by the conversion audit. Initiative 06 (TOT Alignment) carries no direct budget; supporting analysis is available in Investing in Fort Bragg's Future: Visit Fort Bragg.*

## **Visit Fort Bragg Committee Protocols**

Created January 17, 2018

Amended November 19, 2019

Reviewed December 8, 2022

### **I. Purpose**

The purpose of these protocols is to provide rules and procedures for conducting all Visit Fort Bragg Committee meetings, operations and performance of duties. Visit Fort Bragg is an advisory committee to the City of Fort Bragg; the project manager and VFB are supervised by City staff from the Community Development Department.

The purpose of the Visit Fort Bragg (VFB) Committee is to promote Fort Bragg, California as a travel and retail destination for the expressed purpose of increasing spending within the city, generating additional tax revenues from increased travel and retail spending and sustaining and expanding tourism and retail income and employment within Fort Bragg.

### **II. Members**

- a. The VFB shall be composed of up to 9 members—7 from the community and 2 councilmembers.
- b. Members should represent a cross section of the Fort Bragg tourism sector. Ideally (but not mandatory) the Committee would be comprised of a cross-section of the sectors below. Achieving a diversity of interests should be considered when reviewing applications for membership.
  - i. Lodging with representation from both large and small establishments; branded and not branded
  - ii. Retail
  - iii. Dining
  - iv. Recreation/Attraction
  - v. Art/Culture
  - vi. Other
- c. Members are not required to reside in Fort Bragg city limits.
- d. Members may be nominated by City representatives and committee members. Members may be recommended to the committee by community members.
- e. Potential members are required to complete the current VFB Committee Membership Interest form.
- f. Members are required to complete the current VFB Committee Member Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form. The purpose of this form is to provide full transparency about committee members' interest and affiliations. The forms will be reviewed by City staff.
- g. New members must be approved by the City Council representatives on the Visit Fort Bragg Committee.
- h. If committee membership is full, the committee may consider rotating members or increasing membership.

**III. Sub-Committees**

All VFB committee members will be encouraged to join a subcommittee or ad hoc committee. This is not mandatory.

Members of sub-committees are not limited to VFB committee members. Sub-committees can include community members or any other person outside the VFB committee. Examples of sub-committees could include Special Events, Marketing, Website, etc.

**IV. Meetings**

- a. All regular meetings shall be scheduled, agenzed, conducted and posted in accordance with the City’s public meeting noticing procedures and sent to all committee members.
- b. VFB will hold bi-monthly meetings, unless rescheduled. Each meeting will be on a regular schedule at a date and time convenient to the majority of members unless otherwise noted.
- c. The regular meeting place of VFB shall be at the City of Fort Bragg Town Hall located at 363 N. Main Street or other public place as agreed.
- d. A special meeting of the VFB may be called by the Project Manager or by a majority vote of the members or by City staff.
- e. Each member of the VFB is expected to attend all regular meetings. If any member misses three consecutive meetings, that member may be eligible for removal from office with a majority vote of the Committee.

**V. Financial**

- a. The committee may recommend expenditures to the project manager and to City staff for consideration and discussion.

**VI. Voting**

- a. Voting will be subject to Brown Act voting procedures.

**VII. Amendments**

- a. These protocols may be amended at any time by a majority vote of the committee.