



VISIT FORT BRAGG STAFF REPORT

TO: Visit Fort Bragg Committee **DATE:** August 11, 2026

DEPARTMENT: City Manager's Office

PREPARED BY: Isaac Whippy, City Manager

PRESENTER: Isaac Whippy, City Manager & Cristal Munoz, Senior Administrative

AGENDA TITLE: Visit Fort Bragg Strategic Direction Survey Results and Recommendations to the City Council

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Visit Fort Bragg Committee:

1. Receive and discuss the results of the Visit Fort Bragg Strategic Direction Survey;
 2. Confirm the strategic priorities identified through the Committee's study session and survey, including:
 - Increasing overnight stays and shoulder-season visitation;
 - Modernizing destination marketing;
 - Expanding events and experiences that generate economic activity;
 - Improving the visitor experience;
 - Strengthening local and regional partnerships; and
 - Establishing measurable outcomes for tourism investments; and
 3. Recommend these strategic priorities to the City Council as the framework for the future direction of Visit Fort Bragg and further evaluation of its organizational structure, marketing scope, funding, and implementation.
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BACKGROUND

The Visit Fort Bragg Committee recently held a study session to discuss the future direction of tourism in Fort Bragg, including the City's marketing strategy, events, visitor experience, partnerships, tourism investments, and organizational structure.

The Committee considered three potential organizational models:

- **Existing Advisory Model** – Continue the current Visit Fort Bragg Committee and contracted marketing structure.

- **City-Led Destination Management Model** – Build greater internal capacity focused on visitor experience, events, social media, partnerships, and economic development while maintaining a more targeted marketing contract.
- **Independent Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)** – Explore creation of an independent tourism organization with professional leadership, dedicated governance, and potentially expanded public and private funding.

Rather than selecting an organizational model during the study session, the Committee expressed interest in first establishing the strategic goals and outcomes it would like Fort Bragg's tourism investments to achieve.

Following the study session, Committee members completed a Strategic Direction Survey. Seven Committee members participated. The results are included as an attachment to this report.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

(i) Strategic Direction

The survey demonstrates considerable alignment around the outcomes the Committee would like tourism investments to achieve.

When asked about the primary role of Visit Fort Bragg over the next five to ten years, 57% identified economic development driver as the primary role. Other responses emphasized a combination of marketing, events, visitor experience, and oversight.

The highest-rated tourism investment outcomes were:

- **More overnight stays – 100% High Priority**
- **Increased TOT revenue – 86% High Priority**
- **Stronger shoulder-season visitation – 83% High Priority**
- **Increased sales tax revenue – 71% High Priority**
- **Improved visitor experience – 67% High Priority**

These results suggest an interest in viewing tourism as more than a marketing function and connecting future tourism investments more directly to economic outcomes.

(ii) Marketing, Events & Visitor Experience

The Committee also expressed interest in modernizing Fort Bragg's marketing approach. Social media storytelling and influencer partnerships received the greatest support, followed by paid digital advertising and event promotion. Travel platforms such as Roadtrippers and Google Travel, along with public relations and earned media, also received support.

Committee members emphasized targeted marketing during off-peak periods, telling Fort Bragg's story, and continuing to promote **Fort Bragg as a distinct destination**.

Events were also identified as an important opportunity. Shoulder-season events received the greatest support for future event funding, followed by new event concepts. Committee comments suggested developing distinctive events that can build a following, generate overnight stays, and create activity during traditionally slower periods.

Visitor experience priorities included wayfinding, coastal access, downtown/Noyo Harbor connectivity, digital visitor information, and public art.

The Committee also identified opportunities to strengthen partnerships with Visit Mendocino County, the Fort Bragg Chamber of Commerce, lodging establishments, Skunk Train, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, Noyo Harbor, local businesses, event organizers, and other regional partners.

(iii) Proposed Strategic Framework

Based on the study session and survey results, staff has summarized the Committee's direction into five strategic priorities:

1. DRIVE YEAR-ROUND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Increase overnight stays, shoulder-season visitation, visitor spending, TOT, and sales tax revenues.

2. MODERNIZE DESTINATION MARKETING

Use targeted digital advertising, social media storytelling, influencers, event promotion, travel platforms, public relations, and other strategies to reach clearly defined visitor markets.

3. CREATE REASONS TO VISIT

Develop and support distinctive events, experiences, and activities—particularly during shoulder seasons—that encourage overnight visitation and repeat trips.

4. IMPROVE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Prioritize wayfinding, coastal access, downtown/Noyo Harbor connectivity, visitor information, and other improvements that enhance the overall Fort Bragg experience.

5. BUILD STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS

Leverage relationships with Visit Mendocino County, the Chamber of Commerce, lodging providers, attractions, local businesses, event organizers, and other stakeholders to maximize tourism resources and economic impact.

(iv) Organizational Structure

The survey did not establish a clear consensus regarding the preferred organizational model. Three Committee members selected an independent DMO, two selected the existing advisory model, one selected the City-led destination management model, and

one selected another approach with two Committee not yet filled the survey as we write this report. The results indicate interest in continuing to explore alternative models, particularly an independent DMO, but do not provide a clear majority recommendation.

Staff therefore recommends that the Committee first confirm the strategic framework and recommend it to the City Council. The organizational structure, funding model, staffing, and future marketing scope can then be evaluated based on which approach is best positioned to accomplish the established strategic goals.

NEXT STEPS

If confirmed by the Committee, the strategic framework would be forwarded to the City Council for consideration. Staff would recommend that the City Council consider the Committee's priorities and provide direction regarding further evaluation of:

- The future scope and performance expectations for destination marketing – Idea Cooperative;
- Event and shoulder-season tourism strategies;
- Visitor experience investments;
- Local and regional partnerships;
- Tourism performance measures; and
- The appropriate organizational and funding model for Visit Fort Bragg.

FISCAL IMPACT

No additional appropriation is requested. Any future changes to tourism funding, staffing, contracts, or organizational structure would be subject to City Council consideration and approval.

ATTACHMENTS

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