

# Promotion of Tourism and Visitorship

## General Background:

Tourism has been a significant issue throughout Colorado recently. The 2001-03 economic downturn and ensuing budget crises have prompted state and municipal governments to seek additional revenue sources. Coupled with that is the realization that Colorado's relative popularity as a tourism destination has declined in recent years, suggesting that stimulating tourism might well be good for the economy. The Colorado Visitors Study, 2002, conducted by the Colorado Tourism Office, (Final Report, April 2003, attachment 1) reports that Colorado welcomes 26.2 million domestic U.S. visitors on overnight trips in 2002, 22.1 million of whom were on leisure trips. This placed Colorado 21<sup>st</sup> among the fifty states as a tourism destination.

Promotion of tourism is key to securing some of the economic benefits of visitor travel. The 2002 Colorado Visitors Study demonstrated that promotion brought an additional \$522 million to the Colorado economy, expenditures that would not have been made otherwise. This translates into \$205 in visitor spending per dollar spent by the Colorado Tourism Office on tourism promotion. The additional visitor spending yielded \$32.4 million in taxes, \$16.3 million of which were in local taxes. Taking the cost of promotion into consideration, tourism advertising returned \$12.74 in taxes to state and local treasuries for every dollar invested.

## Review of Issue in Longmont:

In Longmont, there has been little concerted effort to promote local tourism, i.e. to market Longmont as either a destination or as an ideal pass-through route to the mountains. In previous years community discussions about marketing Longmont tourism yielded few results beyond the establishment of a small information kiosk at the Longmont Dairy on Hwy. 66, just west of Main. Currently, that kiosk contains mostly materials marketing destinations outside of Longmont and offers very few marketing materials about sites and activities in Longmont itself.

In early 2003, a local group led by representatives from the Marriott Hotel and the Times-Call met to discuss promoting tourism in Longmont. The group developed a preliminary plan and endorsed the creation of a local lodging tax to help fund tourism promotion. (The idea of a local lodging tax had already been raised at the 2003 City Council Retreat, but it was not linked to Tourism funding at that point.) In the summer of 2003, the Longmont City Council declined to consider the lodging tax concept at the time due to the lack of a solid business plan for the use of the tax funds and the lack of consensus/support for a lodging tax among the hotel/motel industry leaders in Longmont. The local tourism group also approached the Longmont Chamber of Commerce, seeking funds to further develop their program. Though no funds were forthcoming from the Chamber, the Chamber did convene a meeting on September 11, 2003, to which representatives of the area businesses, hotels and inns, arts agencies and city government were invited.

The September 11th meeting at the Chamber consisted of a brain-storming session, in which small breakout groups proposed and then presented ideas for promoting tourism in Longmont. Ideas ranged from building new facilities that might make Longmont a more attractive destination to coordinated marketing of what Longmont already has to offer. Discussion also posed the question of whether Longmont should be marketed as a destination or as a pass-through location en route to other destinations.

The meeting concluded with a promise that the Chamber would compile notes from the discussions and distribute them to participants, and then follow-up by forming a new steering committee to consider the issue further. Meeting notes were distributed to participants in the subsequent weeks (attachment 2).

### **Current Status:**

As of this writing, there has been limited progress. Doug Cole of the Longmont Chamber of Commerce reported in mid-December 2003 that the Chamber has formed a steering committee to continue working on promoting tourism. Led by Chamber member Nelson Miner, the committee is scheduled to meet at the end of January 2004. Tourism promotion of Longmont is currently being conducted on an ad hoc basis, with each individual business or organization undertaking its own marketing, independent of any coordinated effort.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Is the potential economic impact of increased visitorship to Longmont significant enough to justify further exploration of the issue?
2. What should be the role of city government in encouraging the exploration of this issue? Should it be a purely private initiative? A public initiative? Or a private-public collaboration?
3. What is the appropriate role for city government to play in helping to fund a tourism initiative once it is developed?
4. If the current initiative proves unsuccessful, should City government take any action in the next year to encourage different approaches on this issue?

Attachments: Colorado Visitors Study, 2002  
Chamber of Commerce Meeting on Tourism, September 11, 2003, Notes