



Tourism Commission Agenda

Thursday, May 8, 2025, 6:00 PM
Harrigan Centennial Hall, 330 Harbor Drive

Members: Devon Calvin, Ian Dempster, Vaughn Hazel
Bethany Lowrance, Carol Bryant-Martin, Alana Peterson, Jeremy Plank
Rachel Roy (ex officio), Amy Ainslie (ex officio)

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Finalization of 2025 TBMP Guidelines

B. Review and recommendation of the Visit Sitka 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan (2025-2027)

C. E-Bike Public Meeting

VI. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items ON or OFF the agenda – not to exceed 3 minutes)*

VII. ADJOURNMENT



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Meeting Minutes Tourism Commission

Officers: Chair Jeremy Plank; Vice Chair Ian Dempster; and Secretary Carol Bryant-Martin

Members: Devon Calvin; Vaughn Hazel; Bethany Lowrance; Alana Peterson; and Rachel Roy, Visit Sitka (Ex Officio)

Staff Liaison: Amy Ainslie, P&CD Director (Ex Officio); and Jessica Earnshaw, Deputy Municipal Clerk

Assembly Liaison: Chris Ystad

April 10, 2025

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Jeremy Plank called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Carol Bryant-Martin; Devon Calvin; Vaughn Hazel; Bethany Lowrance; Alana Peterson; Jeremy Plank; and Ian Dempster Riley; and Rachel Roy (Ex Officio - Via Zoom).

Absent: None

Staff: Amy Ainslie, P&CD Director.

Public: Mary Beth Melson; Lonneke de Weerd; Anastasia der Hende; Jana Feller; Kres Kolsteeg; Julia Kokendy; Amy Kramer Johnson; and Anne Marie LaPolma.

Secretary Bryant-Martin called roll. She confirmed quorum was present.

III. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

No agenda changes were made.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M-Lowrance/S-Vaughn moved to approve the minutes dated March 10, 2025. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. TBMP Draft Guidelines

Commission members reviewed the TBMP draft guidelines. The members discussed revising text to include tour operator guidelines for local recreation areas on days when Sandy Beach is heavily utilized by the public. Alana Peterson suggested changing language for the visitor agreement to visitor pledge. She volunteered to revise the language of the text to highlight a more regenerative exchange versus a visitor centric tone throughout the document.

B. TBMP Community Meeting

The Commissioners members agreed to host a TBMP meeting on April 30, 2025 from 6 to 9 p.m. to invite members of the public to review the draft document, fill out a survey, and provide feedback for language revisions. Plank and Ainslie discussed compiling a presentation and an agenda for the public forum. Ainslie would promote the TBMP meeting via radio, newspaper, social media, and online ahead of the event.

C. Downtown Street Closure & Pedestrian Safety Stations

Ainslie reported that she met with Assembly members, city administrators, and local merchants to discuss mitigation measures for downtown traffic. Lincoln Street will remain open during the month of May to gauge traffic flow and assess pedestrian safety. The city planned to hire crossing guard employees to monitor pedestrians and jaywalking at Harrigan Centennial Hall, and key intersections with heavy foot traffic, which include Lincoln/Cathedral Way; and Harbor Drive/Katlian Street. Crossing guards would manage pedestrians with stop signs and whistles. In addition, the commission members discussed possibly adding pedestrian directions (namely the previously used spraypainted bird footprints) along the SMC sidewalk between the Sitka National Historical Park and the Alaska Raptor Center.

D. Harbor Drive Barricade Options

The Commission members discussed strategies to help deter visitors from jaywalking downtown, placements of barricades on Harbor Drive, and associated impacts on parking spaces with the loss of seven parking spaces. Commission members agreed that a barricade option that could preserve parking spaces and accommodate signage for welcome and traffic safety messaging was preferred.

E. Temporary Restrooms

Commission members discussed possible locations for temporary restrooms. Roy stated that merchants appreciated temporary restrooms located downtown. In addition, Visit Sitka created restroom maps. The commissioners agreed that temporary restrooms are an important service and need. Ainslie indicated that she will discuss concerns about bathrooms and locations with the administrator.

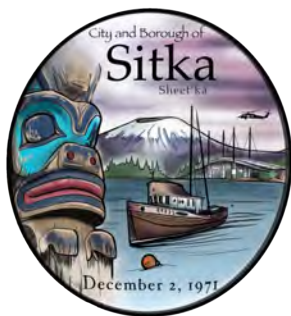
V. PERSONS TO BE HEARD (*For items ON or OFF the agenda and not to exceed 3 minutes*)

Chair Plank recognized members of the public to speak. Ann Palmer addressed wildlife concerns. Mary Beth Nelson spoke about traffic issues.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Chair Plank asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 p.m. Bethany Lowrance moved; Alana Peterson seconded; and the motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Minutes By: Carol Bryant-Martin, Secretary



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Chair Plank and Tourism Commission Members

From: Amy Ainslie, Planning & Community Development Director *AA*

Date: May 2, 2025

Subject: New Business Items for May 8, 2025

Item A: Finalization of 2025 TBMP Guidelines

- Review of the comments received on the draft guidelines, and latest version that incorporates (as many as possible) suggestions received
- Opportunity for final edits
- **Action: "I move to approve the 2025 TBMP Guidelines"**
- Resources: Draft TBMP Guidelines (5.1.25)
Summary of TBMP Public Comments

Item B: Review and recommendation of the Visit Sitka 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan (2025-2027)

- Review of the final draft of the Strategic Marketing Plan
- Opportunity for final feedback
- Guidance on strategic marketing plan from Visit Sitka contract:
 - "The goals should be to effectively increase the number of revenue generating functions, increase the number of independent travelers visiting, increase the number of convention center reservations and support the growth of tourism in Sitka. Emphasis should be placed on targeted marketing to maximize the return on investment, to sell destination strengths and reach specific high-growth visitor audiences. The marketing plan shall be consistent with the policy that the primary role of the Convention and Visitors Services Contract is to promote travel to Sitka through marketing and development, focusing on convention sales, tourism marketing and services, with an emphasis on shoulder and winter seasons. The plan will be continually evaluated for success and updated and revised as necessary, and work to have visitor industry stakeholder input into the marketing plan."
- **Action: "I move to recommend adoption of the Visit Sitka 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan."**
- Resource: Visit Sitka 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan (2025-2027)

Item C: E-Bike Public Meeting

- Planning for the May 20th public meeting (6-9 PM, Harrigan Centennial Hall)
- Decision Points:
 - Facilitation – opening & closing remarks
 - Means of feedback: stations, posters & sticky notes, survey (paper and/or digital), open mic, etc.
 - Commissioner roles/assignments
 - Materials needed

Sitka's Draft Tourism Best Practices (TBMP) Program

PARTNER HANDBOOK AND PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR SITKA'S VISITOR INDUSTRY

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Sitka's Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) Program

Introduction

Sitka and Baranof Island, Alaska is Lingít Aaní, ancestral homeland of the Tlingít people who have been practicing their culture and way of life on these lands and waters for over 10,000 years. Gunałchéesh to the Tlingít people for their stewardship of this land since time immemorial.

The Sitka Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) program was developed through a collaborative process that included community input and is modeled after the TBMP program first established in Juneau, 25 years ago. Ketchikan and Skagway have also modeled their TBMPs after Juneau's program. The Sitka TBMP is a voluntary compliance program for partners and organizations in the City and Borough of Sitka. Our TBMP is intended to be a living document that strives to establish guidelines that represent a holistic approach to tourism that proactively works to improve ecosystems, elevate local economies, and promote meaningful and responsible visitor experience.

These guidelines do not replace applicable city, state, or federal regulations.

As Sitka's visitor industry has grown, so have concerns about impacts to the community. Organizations are invited to sign-on to participate as Partners of the TBMP. By actively participating in this voluntary program, Partners demonstrate their commitment to address key community concerns.

Partners agree to implement (to the best of their ability) appropriate best practices, including but not limited to the guidelines of the TBMP, in their own policies, standard operating procedures, and training of their staff.

Partners also agree to address issues or concerns raised by other partners, community partners and/or the City and Borough and other governmental agencies within a timely manner.

Partners comprise anyone signing on to the program including tour and attractions operators, retail businesses serving visitor clientele, restaurants, shuttle, van and taxi operators, guides and outfitters, other businesses or organizations with tourism-related activities, cruise ship docking facilities, and cruise lines.

For its inaugural year, Sitka's TBMP program will be administered by the Sitka Dock Company who has agreed to host a community feedback line (both telephone and email), and provide staff to monitor the line and ensure feedback is responded to in a timely manner. The City & Borough of Sitka (CBS) Tourism Commission reviewed the draft guidelines, sought additional public feedback, and finalized these guidelines for use in the 2025 visitor season.

TBMP participating partners and organizations who successfully complete implementation and training requirements will be listed on the TBMP website (when operational) and included in brochures and other promotional materials. Decals will be issued to partners for placement on tour vehicles and storefronts. Partners may include the TBMP logo in their own promotion.

General Agreements for All TBMP Partners

Sitka TBMP partners strive to provide a positive experience for our visitors while providing practical and innovative steps to ensure tourism can have a positive impact on both the community and the environment. Partners, organizations and individuals who wish to be recognized as TBMP compliant will abide by the agreements and standards set forth in the handbook and/or posted on a Sitka TBMP website.

Sitka TBMP Partners Shared Vision & Purpose

Vision: "To authentically share our ways of life with the world."

Purpose: "To celebrate and strengthen our ways of life through the cultivation of a regenerative visitor economy that will benefit our whole community."

Visitor Pledge

Partners agree to share, and encourage their guests to take, this visitor pledge:

I recognize that I am a guest of this Indigenous place, whose people have stewarded these lands and waters for over ten thousand years.

As a guest, I will:

- *Honor the vibrant and diverse cultures, values and traditions of this place.*
- *Respect all living beings, their homes, and the environments that support them. If I choose to hunt, fish or gather, I will only take what I can use.*
- *Agree to be properly prepared, appreciative and open to the unique rhythms of nature and weather, understanding that all things are interconnected.*
- *Support Alaskans in maintaining their ways of life by connecting with and purchasing from local artists, producers and businesses.*

General Practices: Partners agree to observe the following practices:

- Conduct business in a legal and ethical manner and not engage in business practices that could be damaging to others, the community, or the environment.
- Emulate the highest standard of customer service.
- Take responsibility to ensure that visitors and community members are treated with courtesy and respect, in such a way as to leave a positive impression on them.
- Accurately describe our products and services to address any safety, health related, legal or physical restrictions that customers should be aware of and to provide complete information on pricing, duration and location of tours and activities.
- Recognize it is in all our best interests to serve the needs and desires of the customer; and if our product is not appropriate, direct them to the service that best meets their needs.
- Strive to be good ambassadors of the community with accurate knowledge of the

history, culture, and locations of public amenities such as post office, bus stops, museums, restrooms, and government buildings.

Training: Partners agree to train all employees on the TBMP program and guidelines along with its standard employee training. Employees of participating partners will be required to sign a “**TBMP Employee Partnership Agreement**” certifying that the employee has read, understands and agrees to abide by the Tourism Best Management Practices guidelines applicable to his/her job description. Employees should be able to model the TBMP values in a way that sets the tone for all visitor engagement throughout their time in our community. This could be achieved by posting the visitor pledge in public view, or seeking other creative and meaningful ways to incorporate the components of the TBMP into the visitor experience.

Cultural Protocols: All partners agree to take steps to ensure accuracy and respect regarding interpretation of Alaska Native culture and other cultural groups, such as our Filipino community by participating in a scheduled training class. This includes fact-based research from recognized sources for tour interpretation and disclosure of the origin of items in the sale of retail products. Partners acknowledge, honor, and will strive to emulate the following Guiding Cultural Values:

Our Land: We honor our land and oceans by utilizing them for food, medicines, and not over extracting. High respect and value are placed on stewarding our land, oceans, and culture. We add to the balance of the environment by problem-solving rather than adding to the current problems.

Our Strength, Leadership: We lead by example. We foster an attitude of willingness to adapt to changing times while maintaining our ancient values. We are open to new methods while still upholding to the values that have seen us through both challenging and prosperous times.

Our Past, Present, Future: Indigenous knowledge is considered a deep well. We continue to draw from our elder’s experience and wisdom all the while maintaining an insatiable curiosity about new ways to improve and strengthen our communities. We invest in education because our future lies with our children.

Balance, Reciprocity, Respect: Respect and care for all people and all things. We take the time to care, listen, practice patience, and hold each other up. We honor and share our cultural lifestyle, knowing that it promotes healing and well-being for our communities.

Contact Name: Partners agree to provide the TBMP hotline administrator with a contact name, telephone number, and email address.

Work Sessions: Partners agree to participate in periodic work sessions to discuss progress made in attaining program goals.

Community Meetings: Beginning in 2026, all TBMP partners agree to send a representative to an annual preseason community meeting to:

- Identify problem areas where traffic and pedestrian congestion creates conflicts.
- Identify areas of concern to residents.
- Formulate strategies to mitigate or avoid conflicts in these areas and measure the effectiveness of the mitigation strategies.
- Review and address feedback from the community/public that was received throughout the prior year.

Partners also agree to attend a postseason community meeting beginning in 2025 to review the summer and note opportunities for improvement.

Response to TBMP Hotline: Partners agree to respond within 3 business days to calls and emails received via the Tourism Best Management Practices Hotline. Partners will provide the TBMP Hotline Administrator with a summary of their response. Callers will be asked to communicate as much information as possible, including name of participant business and/or staff member, description of the aircraft, watercraft, or vehicle, vehicle number if applicable, and date and approximate time of observation. Callers will also be asked to leave a name, phone number, and/or email address so the partners may respond. Callers are also encouraged to provide positive feedback via the hotline to recognize partners who are making a difference by following the guidelines and operating their business in a courteous and neighborhood-friendly manner.

Self-monitoring: All partners agree to improve their self-monitoring efforts through collaboration and encourage other partners who may not be observing the TBMP guidelines to improve their own compliance. These actions honor the spirit of TBMP and ultimately help all companies reduce tourism impacts in the community.

Ongoing Training of Employees: Partners agree to provide periodic training and coaching for their employees, to reinforce compliance with the guidelines that pertain to their operations.

Litter and Recycling: All TBMP partners are expected to be familiar with and comply with the anti-litter ordinance detailed in Sitka's General Code, Chapter 9.10. Partners are strongly encouraged to commit to a recycling program which is effective for their individual size and type of business. The City and Borough of Sitka and commercial property owners are asked to ensure there are adequate receptacles throughout the community for proper disposal of smoking material and trash.

Cleaning and Sanitation Protocols: All TBMP partners agree to maintain and update as needed, procedures for staff and guests to maintain infection control and mitigate the potential transmission of highly contagious viral diseases such as Norovirus Gastroenteritis and COVID-19 coronavirus. Partners will train staff and monitor policy implementation and agree to comply with all applicable local, state and federal regulations.

Wildlife Protocols: All partners agree to:

- Dispose of and secure trash in a manner which does not attract wildlife.
- Report bear sightings to the police department.
- Not to feed or bait* wildlife of any form and comply with the Sitka General Code Chapter 8.10.050 Fighting or Baiting of Animals.
- To be familiar with and adhere to Department of Fish and Game guidelines and procedures.
- To be observant and watch for signs of distress as recommended by Alaska Department of Fish and Game guidelines on wildlife harassment.

Alaska's Smoke Free Workplace Laws: All partners comply with state laws pertaining to smoking in and around the workplace.

Accessibility: To better serve the number of visitors arriving in Sitka each year with limited mobility and/or visual or hearing impairments, TBMP partners agree to establish “best practice” objectives to provide these visitors with a quality experience. SAIL (SE Alaska Independent Living) provides the following suggestions:

- Consider how best to make accommodation for customers with limited mobility and/or a visual or hearing impairment, as appropriate to their operation.
- Include accessibility information in tour/activity descriptions and have it readily available for those seeking details (i.e. how many steps? How long a walk? Are necessary service companions given complimentary space?).
- Train all employees in accessibility awareness, with focus on how best to accommodate requests for various types of assistance (mobility, hearing, visual, etc.), how to provide good customer service to those with disabilities or impairments, and when to seek additional help in doing so.
- Ensure clearances for wheelchairs or walkers.

Privacy and Security: Partners will train staff to ensure that customer data including but not limited to personal identification, credit/debit card numbers and security codes and other sensitive materials are handled with care to minimize potential identity theft and to safeguard privacy.

Emergency Procedures: Partners will ensure staff are trained to aid customers in the event of an emergency and understand policies and procedures.

TBMP Program Contacts- TBD— Add contacts

Transportation and Vehicles

Commercial passenger vehicles are required to comply with Sitka Municipal Code ordinances, Alaska State Administrative Statutes and US DOT regulations that pertain to the operation of commercial vehicles on public roadways. For purposes of this program, vehicles include motor coaches, buses, mini-buses, limos, vans, trolleys, taxis, motorcycles, airporters. Residents should remember that tour vehicles are sometimes used for non-tour activities, including charters, government service contracts, school field trips and charity work. While this program focuses on tour activities, operators agree to conduct all activities in a courteous manner and to emphasize these guidelines during pre-season training.

School Zone Safety Protocols: All companies agree to pay special attention to watching for children, when approaching crosswalks, encountering stopped school buses and observing school zone speed limits.

Downtown Traffic/Staging: All companies utilizing staging areas should be aware of times when congestion into and out of these lots will be at peak level. Dispatchers and drivers will assist in promoting efficient traffic flow in the area by managing vehicle movements in a courteous manner and by yielding to other vehicles and users as necessary.

Traffic Flow: Drivers agree not to impede normal traffic flow by slowing down or stopping for sightseeing opportunities except in designated turnouts and will not pull over on bike lanes or walking paths or on the shoulder of roads. Drivers will be especially attentive to not slow down or stop when transiting intersections.

Empty Tour Vehicles: Drivers agree to not park in designated loading zones unless they are loading or unloading guests on tour.

Vehicle fluids and Emissions: Drivers of ALL VEHICLES agree to monitor any engine oil and/or fluid leaks and excess emissions/ black smoke when operating throughout the road system. This includes monitoring at all staging/loading zones, docks and attractions, as well as venues. Should any vehicle exhibit a leak of a substantial nature or visible emissions in excess, the operator should be prepared to immediately pull the vehicle from service until repaired. Any vehicle exhibiting signs of a mechanical failure should pull over immediately at the next safe location for repairs. This is to ensure vehicle failures do not block public rights-of-way. Vehicles should be appropriately maintained to limit excess noise or emissions.

Engine Idling: Drivers of ALL VEHICLES agree to turn engines off at every reasonable opportunity when loading and unloading passengers and/or when staging in the various loading zones, staging areas and tour venues throughout Sitka. Vehicles should not sit with engines idling while actively loading, unloading, or waiting for passengers to arrive. Engines should be started only when the vehicle is ready to move, and thereafter, only when the vehicle is in motion or in traffic. Exceptions include safety related issues, including vehicles that may need to idle in order to defog windshields and windows, situations where vehicles

with air brakes may need to idle to build air pressure or when weather requires engines to remain on for guest comfort.

Noise Abatement: Drivers of ALL VEHICLES agree to NOT use Compression Braking (commonly known as Jake Braking, Engine Braking, etc.) in the City and Borough of Sitka, except in emergency situations. Bells and Public Address (PA) systems should not be utilized in any tours unless the noise is restricted to the cabin of the vehicle.

Transiting Residential Neighborhoods: Drivers agree to avoid transiting residential neighborhoods within the City and Borough of Sitka unless conducting a specific pick-up or drop-off in the immediate vicinity, including Katlian and Jeff Davis Streets. Drivers of vehicles with capacities for 35 or more guest agree to not utilize Jeff Davis Street.

ADA Zones Not for Staging: Drivers utilizing equipment with a wheelchair lift will use the designated ADA zones only for active loading and unloading and not for staging of vehicles.

Safety Backing: All motor coaches, buses, mini-buses and vans will take special care when backing out of loading/unloading zones. When preparing to back, drivers should be aware of the backup beepers and the sound they make and should strive to spend as little time as possible in reverse. Drivers should only shift into reverse when they are ready to commence backing to minimize beeper sounds.

Safety on Roadways: Drivers will take caution when encountering pedestrians, cyclists, and animals on narrow roadways, bike lanes, intersections, roundabouts, and school zones throughout the city and companies will take this into consideration during their driver training programs. Drivers should strive to operate in a manner which exhibits common courtesy throughout their daily travels such as paying attention to biker hand signals, slowing down and giving at least three feet of space to pedestrians. Extra caution should be exercised when approaching crosswalks, and drivers must yield to pedestrians at crosswalks. All drivers should be trained on the changing/reduced speed limits throughout the downtown and highway areas. Operators are required to use headsets or Boom mics and NOT hand held microphones. By law and in the interest of safety, all operators agree to abide by Sitka's **no cell phone** policy when their drivers are operating a vehicle except in the case of an emergency. Particular care shall be taken at areas frequented by children and families such as the Crescent Harbor Playground, the Sitka Public Library, and nearby crosswalks used to access these locations.

Resource Scheduling: Operators agree to assign vehicles to scheduled tours and transfers in a manner which efficiently maximizes the use of all vehicles on duty. The number of vehicles and type of equipment will be assigned to a tour or transfer based on capacity needs on a given day. Operators will collaborate with partners/vendors to find opportunities to minimize the number of vehicles on the road whenever possible.

Training of Schedulers: Operators will train all schedulers to take advantage of synergies that are present in the Sitka tourism transportation industry. Schedulers should strive to better serve their constituents and community stakeholders by minimizing vehicles on the road whenever possible.

Crossing Guards: Crossing Guards may be positioned in strategic locations in order to promote safety and facilitate vehicle and pedestrian movement throughout the downtown corridor. TBMP members should be mindful of their presence and obey their instructions.

Identifiers for All Shuttle and Tour Vehicles: Operators agree to ensure all vehicles are easily identifiable with the company name and vehicle number on both sides and on the rear that are clearly visible from a reasonable distance and even while the vehicle is moving.

Local Recreation Areas: On days when there is heavy public use and parking availability is limited, drivers agree not to use popular local recreational areas such as Sandy Beach or the Halibut Point Recreation area as tour destinations.

As always, Operators are responsible for abiding by Alaska State Statutes governing operation of vehicles on state roadways including but not limited to stopping, standing or parking on highways, unlawful obstruction or blocking traffic, and pedestrians on highways.

Flightseeing (Fixed Wing, Floatplanes & Helicopter):

Flightseeing operations are subject to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations and operational requirements. Mt. Edgecumbe landing trips are also subject to US Forest Service permit requirements. Although the following guidelines are designed to minimize noise, safety and flight operations take precedence over noise abatement procedures. Operators will conduct pre-season training in a manner which emphasizes these guidelines.

Routes and Aircraft Identifiers: Operators agree to provide the following to TBMP administrator who will make the information available to interested partners of the public:

- Established flight routes
- Common factors influencing route choice, such as weather, turbulence and traffic.
- Aircraft colors or other distinguishing characteristics useful in identifying individual operators.

Seaplane Floats: Commercial use is permitted from the seaplane float. Operations for commercial use of seaplane float is managed and regulated by the Sitka Harbor Department

Altitude: Operators follow voluntarily agreed upon routes for tour flights and maintain minimum altitudes of 1,500 feet for helicopters operating above residential areas, except during takeoff, landing or when deviations are required by weather or traffic.

Fly Neighborly: Helicopter operators agree to conduct flightseeing tours in accordance with the Helicopter Association International (HAI) Fly Neighborly Program. The Fly Neighborly Program is a voluntary noise reduction program designed to be implemented worldwide by local helicopter operators, large and small. Additional information on this program can be viewed on the HAI website— www.rotor.com

Operating Times: Operators agree not to schedule flightseeing tour departures before 7:30 a.m. or after 7:00 p.m. and to complete all tour flights by 8:00 p.m. Operators agree to minimize tour support operations out-side of these hours. Operators agree to take the same care to minimize their impacts during non-tour flight operations.

Wildlife Viewing: Operators conducting air tours within the Sitka area agree to minimize impacts to backcountry users and wildlife. Operators will not circle, hover, harass or decrease altitude for wildlife viewing. Flightseeing operators also agree to avoid key mountain goat kidding areas.

Walking, Hiking, Bicycling, and Zipline Tours

Commercial use of public trails may be permitted on some municipal, State Parks, National Forest, and National Park lands. All commercial use of public land requires permitting from the managing government/agency.

Permitted use: Commercial operators are responsible for understanding public land ownership and obtaining permits from each agency. Operators agree to follow group size regulations and avoid crowding on trails.

Identifiers for Tour Guides: All operators agree to ensure tour guides are easily identifiable and that company names are visible on guides' attire and company vehicles.

Peer enforcement: All operators agree to report unpermitted commercial use to the appropriate public land manager. A list of permitted operators is available from each agency.

Trail Conditions & Maintenance: Operators agree to report trail conditions and trail abuse to appropriate regulatory agencies. Operators agree to educate guides on basics of trail maintenance standards to adequately detect emerging issues of erosion and damage. Operators using public trails are encouraged to annually donate the dollar equivalent of at least one employee's daily wage to support a trail maintenance project led by the managing agency or Sitka Trail Works.

Noise Abatement: All tour operators agree to monitor the volume and use of their microphones and outside speakers in a manner which reduces their impact on others.

Resource Protection: Operators agree to protect the environment by ensuring clients do not litter, walk off trail, cut switchbacks, or otherwise damage vegetation and soils adjacent to trails. Operators agree to train guides in Leave No Trace principles and encourage an ethic of care for the land.

State Highways (Halibut Point Rd and Sawmill Creek Rd): Cycling guides agree to instruct clients to use bike lanes and ride single file to the right side of the right lane. A guide will always be in the lead to make sure that clients descend hills at a safe speed. Efforts will be made to keep groups as close together as safely possible.

Bikes and E-bikes: Operators agree to provide each bike rider with a card listing safety precautions and biking rules of the road, including hand signals for bikers and emphasizing State of Alaska traffic laws that require bicyclists to yield to pedestrians. Operators agree to install bells on e-bikes to alert pedestrians and pets of their approach. Bike and E-bike rental companies agree to provide their customers with the Biking Guide produced by Visit Sitka. Operators will encourage riders to use the bike lanes and travel on the right-hand side of the road. Operators will encourage bikers to wear helmets and other safety gear, such as bright colors or reflective clothing.

Safety on Roadways: Drivers will take caution when encountering pedestrians, cyclists, and animals on narrow roadways, bike lanes and school zones throughout the city and companies will take this into consideration during their driver training programs. Drivers should strive to operate in a manner which exhibits common courtesy throughout their daily travels, such as paying attention to biker hand signals, slowing down and giving at least three feet of space to pedestrians.

Trailhead Parking: Operators agree to use all trailhead parking in a courteous and responsible manner and to pay special attention to independent users.

Yield to Other Users: Guides agree to instruct clients to yield to all other users on commercially used trails.

Sitka National Historical Park: In order to keep the Park safe for all users, riding bikes or e-bikes on trails within Sitka National Park is expressly prohibited by Park rules.

Cruise Ships

Emission Standards: All cruise vessels agree to comply with the Marine Vessel Visible Emissions Standards (18 AAC 50-.070) and take all available and reasonable steps to minimize stack effluents on approach to, departure from and while in port in Sitka.

Oil Spills: All cruise vessels, operators and dock attendants for lightering vessels, and cruise docking/berthing operators agree to take all necessary precautions to prevent discharge of hazardous substances, including oil, into water. Any release of hazardous substances into water must be immediately reported to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation by contacting the DEC Response Team Office at 1-800-478-9300, or by reporting it online at reportspills.alaska.gov.

Southeast Alaska Voluntary Waterway Guide: All Cruise ships agree to follow the guidelines included in the Marine Safety Task Force's [Southeast Alaska Voluntary Waterway Guide](#).

P.A. Announcements, Signals and Outdoor Entertainment: Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska (CLAA), Cruise Line Industry Association-Alaska (CLIA Alaska) and individual cruise lines will work to minimize vessel announcements, whistle signals, and outdoor entertainment (movies and use of music, bands or DJ) while docked or anchored within the City of Sitka. Cruise ships are also asked to monitor their outside speakers, announcements and entertainment on approach to and departure from Sitka. Cruise Line Agencies and cruise lines will ensure that shipboard staff understand the importance of this specific guideline. Certain signals and announcements are necessary and required by the US Coast Guard or are necessary for safety reasons.

Courteous use of vessel floats: Cruise ship tender operators agree to use the designated floats at Crescent Harbor or at the O'Connell Bridge Dock in a safe and responsible manner. Tender operators also agree to minimize their wake on approach to and in the harbors, and to operate in a manner which exhibits common courtesy to all others.

Port No Wake Zone: Cruise ships and their lightering tenders over 23 feet in length are required to comply with No Wake requirements in 33 CFR Alaska; navigation. Operators are responsible for their wakes.

Marine Tour Operators, Fishing Charters, Water Taxis, Kayak, and Jet Ski Tours

Marine tour operators and charter/sportfishing operators will take all available and reasonable steps to minimize impacts to coastal residents and other vessel operators. Vessel operators will strive to minimize the impacts of their wake on other watercraft, docks and beaches throughout Sitka area coastal waterways, including popular crabbing and recreational boating grounds.

Rules of the Road: Marine tour operators agree to adhere to all applicable USCG rules of the road during operation.

Noise Abatement: Marine tour operators agree to monitor the volume and use of their

onboard PA systems and outside speakers in a manner which reduces the impact on residents and recreational boaters.

Marine Mammal Viewing: Marine Operators will follow all applicable federal regulations regarding marine mammal viewing and actively participate in Whale Sense, who establishes guidelines surrounding the viewing of marine mammals. To that regard, each operator will ensure the following:

- Become a member of the Whale Sense organization
- Ensure all licensed operators have conducted the required annual training as part of the whale sense program.
- Ensure all standard operating procedures are in line with the guidelines and regulations established by whale sense.

Whale Sense website: <https://whalesense.org/>

Alaska Humpback Whale Approach Regulations: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2016-09-08/pdf/2016-21278.pdf>

Port No Wake Zone: Marine sightseeing/tour vessels and charter fishing boats over 23 feet in length are required to comply with 33 CFR Alaska; navigation. Operators are responsible for their wakes.

Vessel Engine Idling: All marine vessel operators (including charter fishing captains) agree to minimize engine idling at every reasonable opportunity. This includes loading and unloading of passengers and/or when standing-by in vessel loading zones. In the interest of reducing emissions, whenever it is deemed safe and prudent by vessel captains, engines should be turned off. Engines should not be started until the vessel is ready to get underway.

Downtown & Retail Partners

All partners agree to comply with City of Sika Municipal Code Chapter 14.20 and 14.30 regarding commercial sign and advertising devices and obstruction of sidewalks, as applicable.

Buildings and Grounds: Merchants will be responsible for keeping their locations neat and welcoming, to include monitoring sidewalks immediately in front of their establishment, sweeping as needed and picking up and properly disposing of litter. Merchants will not place their business' accumulated daily refuse into street-side, public refuse containers.

Seasonal merchants: In order to promote safety and a welcoming feel to downtown during the winter months are asked to utilize ways to brighten up their storefronts in the off season when the business is shut down and refrain from covering windows with brown paper. Consider keeping display windows lit (preferably with LED or other energy-efficient lighting).

Sales Tactics: Merchants and their employees agree to:

- Cooperate with municipal employees including but not limited to police, downtown ambassadors, crossing guards, public works, planning department and revenue staff.
- Refrain from handing out flyers or leaflets outside of their place of business and not engaging in sidewalk hawking or any other disruptive or aggressive physical behavior in order to lure potential customers.
- Refrain from displaying misleading signage or advertising and agree not to post stickers or signage in their windows indicating “cruise ship preferred or guaranteed shopping venue.”
- Refrain from reproducing and displaying logos for any cruise line without the line’s express written permission.
- Refrain from using false advertising (going out of business, closing soon, etc.) as a sales tactic.

Appendices- Resources **TBD** —add relevant resources, contacts and toolkits.

SUMMARY OF TBMP PUBLIC COMMENTS

General Comments & Questions

- What are ways to incentivize program participation and increase compliance?
 - Consequences for violating guidelines? Don't get a permit to operate the following year (depending on severity of violation). Without more definitive consequences, program won't have teeth
- TBMP training should be provided early in the season
- Transportation operators have a provision to have vehicle identification – could extend more broadly, especially with bikes/e-bikes.
- Can the merchant's association be a part of the TBMP?
- How are we tracking the complaints or comments?
- Can people submit compliments, and how can we encourage that?
- Should provisions for marijuana businesses be included in the future?
- Is hygiene/sanitation covered? Measures to avoid spread of illness. Clarify that bleach and DCCED food safety & sanitation protocols are the only ones that can kill things like norovirus

Miscellaneous Suggestions

- More public surveillance cameras
- Waste management - new trashcans
- Take control of Castle Hill (to provide more amenities like restrooms)
- CBS should publish an update (maybe on website) of tourism goals accomplished such as the MOU
- More signage needed directing people to crosswalks when coming out of the Sitka National Historical Park

Introduction

Incorporated Suggestion:

- Add outfitters to list of example TBMP partners

General Agreements

Suggestion (Unincorporated):

- The Visitor Pledge could include background information about Sitka and the history. Effectiveness of honoring culture is difficult without a resource that provides more information/history. Visitor Pledge could be printed on business cards with a website/QR code that provides that information.

Transportation and Vehicles

Incorporated Suggestions:

- Add Sitka Public Library and Harbor Drive/Maksoutoff crosswalk to areas that drivers should exercise extra caution. Library programming (especially Preschool Storytime) serve families and especially those with young children.
- “Safety on Roadways” section:
 - Add some of the “safety on roadway” provisions from Walk/Hike/Bike section to this one
 - “Extra caution when approaching crosswalks” should be changed to “Drivers shall yield to pedestrians at crosswalks
 - After, “Drivers will take caution when encountering pedestrians, cyclists, & animal roadways”, also add “and at traffic intersections and roundabouts.”

Comments (Unincorporated):

- All topics/guidelines in this section should be required
- Like the provisions about use of Jeff Davis Street, limiting idling, and scheduling bus trips to spread out peak times

Flightseeing

Questions/Comments/Suggestions (Unincorporated):

- Are helicopter tours actually a potential in Sitka?
 - Should get clarity and make it explicit in this document
 - There should be no provisions for helicopter flightseeing – shouldn’t be allowed and specified as unacceptable.
 - Remove references to helicopters since there are no current operators. If someone does want to start one, there should be community input about allowing this use prior to permitting.
 - Remove “Fly Neighborly” references – there are no helicopter charters in Sitka

Walking, Hiking, Biking, Zipline Tours

Incorporated Suggestions:

- Sitka Trail Works, Contributions to Trail Maintenance Projects
 - With organizational capacity (currently have a strong volunteer base) & taking on former USFS trail maintenance employees, funding is a more urgent need than volunteer hours
 - Change “encourage operators to pay an employee to volunteer for a day to do a trail maintenance project”, to perhaps donate funding, ideally equivalent to one paid employee day, to trail maintenance project.

- Sitka Trail Works, Bikes & E-bikes
 - Current guideline is to give safety information/rules of the road, and install a bell to alert pedestrians of approach.
 - AK State traffic law requires bicyclists to yield to pedestrians, not just alert upon passing. Modify language to make clear that riders should proactively yield to pedestrians, and also use bell to alert.
- Provision for e-bike rental companies to provide customers with a map of allowable places to go/not go
- Amend language under Resource Protection to read, “Operators will not allow clients to litter, walk off-trail, cut switchbacks, etc.”

Comment/Suggestions (Unincorporated)

- Consider making some parts of the cross trail not recommended for bike renters/bike tours
- E-bikes should be prohibited on all trails unless allowed in CBS commercial recreational land use plan, or Forest Service guidelines. I don’t think e-bikes should be allowed on the separated path along SMC – they go too fast.
- E-bikes are motor vehicles and belong on street, not pedestrian paths and trails. Should be a city ordinance.

Cruise Ships

Incorporated Suggestion:

- Include reference to ADEC if you see an oil spill
 - DEC Response Officer: 1-800-478-9300
 - Report online: reportspills.alaska.gov

Marine Operators

Incorporated Suggestion

- Jet skis should be added to this section (added to title – no other specific provisions)

Downtown and Retail

None.



Visit **Sitka**

**3 Year Strategic
Marketing Plan**
2025 - 2027

Prepared for the City of Sitka by The Greater Sitka Chamber of
Commerce as Visit Sitka, in partnership with Element Agency.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a vital part of Sitka's economy, supporting local businesses, jobs, and community well-being. Visit Sitka is the Destination Marketing Organization for the City and Borough of Sitka. Since 2015, the Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce been the contractor, leading efforts to promote Sitka as a travel destination through Visit Sitka, representing over 200 businesses locally and regionally.

The 2025-27 Strategic Marketing Plan builds on past successes and looks ahead to sustaining a strong visitor economy and marketing program. With a focus on independent and year-round travel, cultural tourism, and visitor education, Visit Sitka aims to enhance economic opportunities while ensuring tourism continues to align with community values. By fostering meaningful visitor experiences, strengthening partnerships, and sharing Sitka's unique story, this plan supports a balanced and thriving tourism industry for years to come.



Guiding Pillars for Growth

This plan is guided by four foundational pillars, shaping the next three year's strategic priorities and actions:

Meetings & Events:

Promoting Sitka as a premier destination for meetings, conventions, and retreats, focusing on year-round events to enhance economic impact and address seasonal imbalances.

Regenerative Tourism & Visitor Education:

Establishing Sitka as a leader in regenerative tourism by creating visitor experiences and educational tools that actively benefit the local environment, culture, and community.

Cultural Tourism:

Amplifying Tlingit voices and cultural heritage through co-created initiatives that honor Sitka's identity and offer visitors meaningful, authentic experiences.

Year-Round Independent Travel:

Expanding year-round visitation to stabilize Sitka's economy, relieve summer infrastructure strain, and provide a consistent stream of revenue for local businesses.

Informing the Plan

This plan was developed with input from local stakeholders, industry research, and workshops designed to align Visit Sitka's vision with community priorities. The planning process included:

MARKET RESEARCH & INDUSTRY REPORTS:

Informed by insights from Southeast Alaska's State of the Economy Report and industry trends from leading tourism authorities like the Alaska Travel Industry Association and Destination International, the plan reflects Sitka's positioning within a highly competitive market.

ECONOMIC IMPACT DATA:

With tourism representing one of Sitka's top economic sectors generating \$42M annually in wages and supporting 898 local jobs, there is a clear economic imperative to sustain and grow this industry.

COMMUNITY & STAFF WORKSHOPS (NOV. 13 & 14, 2024):

On November 13th, a community workshop was held to gather local business owners, leaders, and community members to discuss priorities and challenges for Sitka's visitor economy. The following day, Visit Sitka's internal team met to brainstorm goals, identify community aspirations, and develop a vision for the future of Sitka's independent tourism.

MARKETING PLAN PRESENTATION (APRIL 9, 2025):

The Visit Sitka 3-Year Marketing Plan was presented on April 9th at the Great Sitka Chamber of Commerce's Spring Speaker Series. The presentation was well attended. This event allowed partners and community members to learn more about the plan, gather partnership buy-in, and receive final input or feedback.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK GATHERING (JAN - APRIL 2025):

The plan was shared broadly in the community, CBS, and with the Tourism Commission, and was open for feedback from the public. The plan will be formally approved on May 8th.



Approach

This 3-year plan takes a solution-first approach to address critical challenges impacting Sitka's tourism industry, our community, and long-term growth. Each year of the plan builds on the success of the previous year, from laying the groundwork for new initiatives (Year 1: Build), to scaling visibility and impact (Year 2: Share), to solidifying Sitka's role as a leader in regenerative tourism (Year 3: Sustain). Key points this plan addresses are the following:

COMMUNITY ALIGNMENT:

Through community workshops, public presentations on regenerative tourism, and ongoing feedback channels like the Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) initiative, Visit Sitka will ensure that residents, businesses, and visitors are working toward shared goals.

PROMOTING YEAR-ROUND TRAVEL:

This plan places heavy emphasis on promoting fall, winter, and spring travel through seasonal campaigns, partner-driven promotions, and the development of new planning tools (e.g., an interactive itinerary builder, transportation guide, and event calendar). This strategy directly supports local businesses by increasing year-round revenue opportunities.

STRENGTHENING INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESSIBILITY:

The plan highlights specific initiatives to improve visitor navigation, enhance accessibility, and make Sitka more pedestrian-friendly.

LEADING WITH REGENERATIVE TOURISM:

Sitka has the opportunity to become a leader in regenerative tourism. This model extends beyond sustainability, asking visitors to actively contribute to Sitka's natural and cultural environment. Tools like the Visitor Pledge, Learn Before You Land campaign, and the new Wayfinding and Transportation Enhancements project will educate visitors on their role as stewards of the land.



Our Vision for 2027

This vision was co-created by input from both the community and staff workshops

By 2027, Sitka will be a steady, year-round tourism destination, not just a summer surge, supporting local jobs, businesses, and community well-being. Visitors will arrive ready to connect, not just consume. They'll experience Sitka's culture, land, and way of life with open minds and leave with deeper respect for it. Cultural voices will guide the stories we tell, and local partnerships will drive every effort. With stronger infrastructure, expanded year-round events, and a clear commitment to regenerative tourism. This isn't just about welcoming travelers, it's about celebrating, sharing and protecting what makes Sitka, Sitka.

Visit Sitka's Definition of Regenerative Tourism

The words **"regenerative tourism"** are used frequently throughout this plan and that's intentional. Regenerative tourism principles are the guiding compass for everything Visit Sitka will be building over the next three years. Simply put, this term means tourism that gives back not just to the economy, but to the people, land, and culture that make Sitka unlike anywhere else. It is an opportunity to raise the status quo for travel in Southeast Alaska hub ports. In 2024, we established our definition of regenerative tourism which will guide us through the next three years:



"Regenerative tourism celebrates the unique cultures and traditions of the places visited. Travelers are encouraged to engage with the local community, participate in community culture, and learn about Indigenous Knowledge systems. What are the differences between sustainable and regenerative tourism? Sustainability does not challenge business as usual; it sustains it by trying not to do further damage. Regeneration, conversely, wants to move away from the logic of doing less harm and embrace that of positive impact.

It's not net zero, it's net positive."



STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS

Situational Analysis

This SWOT analysis evaluates evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats shaping Visit Sitka’s ability to achieve its goals. It offers a snapshot of the organization’s position within the visitor industry and provides actionable insights to align this marketing plan with community priorities.

As both a destination marketing organization and a community advocate, Visit Sitka works to balance the benefits of independent travel with the needs of its residents and local businesses. This analysis highlights how tourism supports Sitka’s year-round economy and bolsters local businesses while addressing areas for improvement such as infrastructure, workforce challenges, and accessibility.

By identifying opportunities to expand regenerative tourism, attract year-round visitors, and strengthen community collaboration, this analysis ensures that independent travel continues to benefit Sitka in a regenerative and meaningful way.

I. Strengths

Independent Travel and Year-Round Visitation

- Visit Sitka's focus on attracting independent travelers, who spend more and stay longer, aligns with national travel trends and supports local businesses.
- Further developing interactive tools like the Driftscape app, enhancing visitor planning and experiences.
- A growing meetings and conventions market is helping stabilize Sitka's visitor economy during the off-season, with efforts to target Alaska-based corporations and regional organizations.
- Thriving year-round arts community with visitor-friendly events happening throughout the year.

Year-Round Economic Contribution

- Visitors to Sitka contribute to a resilient local economy, with the visitor industry generating \$42 million in annual wages and supporting 898 jobs, making it Sitka's third-largest employment sector.*
- 79% of meetings and convention attendees come during non-peak seasons, providing significant year-round economic benefits.**

Support for Local Businesses

- Visit Sitka serves as a key partner for local businesses, providing robust collateral, including digital tools, print publications, and on-the-ground visitor information that directly drives traffic to partner businesses.

Leadership and Statewide Partners

- Visit Sitka has hosted major gatherings like the Southeast Conference Annual Meeting and the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) Annual Conference, bringing statewide industry leaders to Sitka and strengthening its role as a hub for impactful collaboration.
- By hosting the Heritage & Cultural Tourism Conference, Visit Sitka has positioned itself as a collaborator with cultural organizations. These events emphasize the importance of culture-driven tourism as a cornerstone of the community's future visitor economy.

High Business Climate Confidence

- Local businesses express strong optimism about Sitka's business climate, with 80% citing positive views of tourism's role in their growth.*

Existing Momentum in Regenerative Tourism

- Visit Sitka has begun laying a foundation for regenerative tourism through initiatives like visitor education, messaging on appropriate trail usage and respecting nature, and incorporating cultural elements throughout our collateral.

**SEDA's State of Sitka's Economy 2024*

***Visit Sitka's FY25 Work Plan Metrics*

II. Weaknesses

Infrastructure Strain

- Strained public infrastructure during peak seasons, including transportation, housing, and public restrooms, limits capacity for both residents and visitors.
- Housing shortages negatively impact workforce recruitment and retention, and create challenges for seasonal workers essential to visitor operations.

Workforce Gaps

- Declining population and a lack of affordable childcare limit workforce retention and recruitment, impacting visitor-facing services and business operations.
- Significant segment of our employable population has aged out of the workforce.
- Difficulty attracting workforce-aged residents hinders the industry's ability to meet growing demands, particularly during the peak visitor season.

Public Perception and Community Tensions

- Misunderstandings that Visit Sitka's primary goal is to develop Sitka's independent travel market create public tension and hinder community alignment.
- Resistance to perceived over-tourism and its impact on infrastructure threatens to overshadow industry efforts to balance growth and sustain a strong economy.

Limited Meetings and Conventions Infrastructure

- While Sitka is growing as a destination for conventions and events, facilities, such as hotels, and logistical support, such as technical services, remain underdeveloped compared to competitors like Anchorage, Juneau, and Ketchikan.
- Limited transportation options and a lack of bundled packages for corporate events reduce the community's competitiveness in the conventions market.

Transportation and Accessibility

- Limited transportation and taxi options within Sitka make it difficult for visitors to navigate easily, impacting overall satisfaction.
- Accessibility issues, including inadequate crosswalks and pedestrian safety concerns, present challenges for visitors and residents alike, requiring investment and coordination between city, state, and federal entities.

Seasonal Economic Imbalance

- Despite progress in building year-round visitation, the heavy reliance on summer tourism creates seasonal economic fluctuations.
- Businesses with seasonal schedules leave gaps in a cohesive downtown shopping experience for year-round visitors.

III. Opportunities

Amplifying Tlingit Voices

- Lead with Tlingit voices through cultural messaging in collateral, welcome letters and videos (e.g., bilingual Tlingit and English videos), and partnerships with Indigenous organizations.
- Integrate Tlingit-led initiatives into visitor experiences, promoting cultural respect and authenticity as key to Sitka's identity.

Regenerative Tourism Initiatives

- Launch a visitor pledge program and produce a cultural welcome video to embed sustainability and cultural respect into visitor experiences.
- Expand educational tools to guide visitors in protecting Sitka's natural environment and respecting its community values.

Support for Local Businesses

- Expand collaborative efforts with partner businesses to co-create itineraries, bundled packages, and event promotions tailored to independent travelers and corporate retreats.
- Host regular roundtables for local business owners to discuss challenges, share solutions, and foster partnerships that strengthen Sitka's visitor economy.
- Continued community partnerships, such as the Sitka Chamber's Emerging Leaders Program, to promote young entrepreneurship, supporting the next generation of business owners and innovators in Sitka.

Year-Round Visitors

- Market year-round activities such as community events, guided hunting trips, wellness retreats, and outdoor recreation to attract independent travelers, including in-state visitors.
- Promote conventions and meetings during the fall and spring seasons, showcasing Sitka's milder weather and unique setting as an ideal escape when much of the state experiences colder conditions.
- Expand digital marketing efforts, SEO strategies, and partnerships with statewide DMOs, like Travel Alaska, to enhance visibility for year-round visitors and strengthen Sitka's competitive position.

Meetings and Conventions Growth

- Target Alaska-based trade organizations and regional groups for small-to-medium-sized meetings and retreats, expanding year-round visitation opportunities.
- Attract in-state trade associations, government meetings, and C-suite retreats.

Community Engagement and Advocacy

- Leverage Visit Sitka's position as a community mouthpiece to advocate for housing, childcare, and transportation investments, supporting both the local economy and workforce development.

IV. Threats

Community Concerns About Tourism

- Ongoing public concerns about tourism's strain on infrastructure, particularly cruise-related impacts, could lead to restrictive policies, limiting industry opportunities and undermining efforts to balance community and visitor needs.
- Lack of understanding of direct community benefits from tourism could reduce industry buy-in, and create friction between residents and industry stakeholders.

Economic Uncertainty

- Rising travel costs, global inflation, and economic instability may reduce visitation, particularly among budget-conscious travelers, impacting local businesses that rely on consistent visitor spending.
- The high cost of visiting Sitka, including limited and expensive flight options, can make the destination less competitive, especially for in-state travelers and independent tourists.

Infrastructure and Accessibility Challenges

- Insufficient housing availability for visitors, particularly in peak-season months, may discourage extended stays or result in reduced bookings.
- Limited flights, ferry instability, and transportation bottlenecks during peak periods deter visitors and limit growth in independent travel and conventions.
- Seasonal closures of businesses, restaurants, attractions, and transportation options during October–April reduce Sitka's appeal to year-round travelers and event planners.

Market Competition

- Competing destinations like Juneau and Ketchikan continue to invest in infrastructure and marketing, and well-established winter destinations such as Anchorage and Fairbanks make it harder for Sitka to stand out.
- International tourism destinations are rapidly recovering and growing, requiring Sitka to differentiate itself.

Environmental Risks and Natural Disruptions

- Erratic weather patterns, including heavy rains or unpredictable storms, can limit access to outdoor activities and disrupt planned events. The visitor industry should prepare tourists for what to do in the event of a natural disaster in Sitka, like a landslide, earthquake, or tsunami.
- Global natural disasters and environmental challenges in other regions may impact broader travel patterns and reduce discretionary spending on long-haul trips to Sitka.

Workforce and Business Sustainability

- Workforce shortages, driven by declining population, lack of housing, and insufficient childcare, could lead to reduced visitor services and negative guest experiences, impacting Sitka's reputation as a welcoming destination.
- Limited availability of local services, such as transportation, mechanics, and event staffing, may hinder Sitka's ability to expand year-round offerings and host larger conventions or events.



While Sitka has significant strengths, such as its appeal to independent travelers and growing year-round visitation, challenges like infrastructure limitations, high travel costs, and seasonal business fluctuations are opportunities for improvement.

STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS

Competitive Analysis

This analysis evaluates Sitka's position

within Alaska's tourism landscape, comparing its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities against key competitors like Juneau, Ketchikan, and Skagway. It also draws inspiration from global leaders like New Zealand and Iceland, who are leading the way in sustainable and regenerative tourism models. This analysis highlights how Sitka can carve out a leadership role in regenerative travel, expand cultural tourism promotion, and position itself as a year-round, community-driven destination.

Visit Sitka positions its marketing as a destination where natural beauty, cultural heritage, and outdoor adventure blend together. While other Alaska destinations like Juneau, Ketchikan, and Skagway emphasize sustainable tourism practices through programs like the Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP), Sitka has the opportunity to lead with regenerative tourism principles. This approach prioritizes not just responsible tourism but tourism that actively benefits the local environment, culture, and community.

Alaska DMO Competitive Landscape

JUNEAU

Positioning: Alaska’s capital and one of the most-visited cruise destinations in the state.

Strengths: The State Capitol, glacier access (Mendenhall Glacier), and political travel make Juneau a highly visible destination.

Weaknesses: High cruise tourism during peak cruise season leads to crowding, making it hard for visitors to feel a sense of discovery or personal connection.

Opportunities for Sitka: Highlight Sitka’s shoulder season experience as an alternative to visiting Juneau’s crowded cruise environment during the summer.

Sustainability Efforts: Juneau’s TBMP program addresses community concerns about tourism, setting the stage for best practices in sustainable tourism management.

Regenerative Tourism Efforts: While Juneau emphasizes responsible tourism, explicit regenerative tourism initiatives are less prominent, giving Sitka an opportunity to lead in this space.

KETCHIKAN

Positioning: Known as the “Salmon Capital of the World” with strong ties to its Indigenous arts.

Strengths: Totem Heritage Center, strong salmon fishing tourism, and a vibrant art scene.

Weaknesses: Heavy cruise ship reliance creates a transient experience, with many visitors staying for only a few hours.

Opportunities for Sitka: Position Sitka as a more immersive destination where visitors stay longer and connect more deeply with local culture and community.

Sustainability Efforts: Ketchikan participates in the TBMP program, promoting responsible tourism and supporting community well-being.

Regenerative Tourism Efforts: Ketchikan is currently developing a Destination Stewardship Roadmap, signaling a shift toward year-round tourism and sustainable practices. Sitka can position itself as more advanced by moving beyond sustainability and into regenerative tourism.

SKAGWAY

Positioning: Iconic Gold Rush town known for its historic charm.

Strengths: Home to the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, which draws large numbers of visitors focused on Gold Rush history.

Weaknesses: Relies heavily on cruise ships, limiting its ability to drive independent travelers or year-round tourism and has little to no infrastructure during shoulder season.

Opportunities for Sitka: Highlight Sitka’s diversity of adventure offerings, from kayaking to wildlife tours, as a broader, year-round alternative to Skagway’s seasonal appeal.

Sustainability Efforts: Skagway follows the TBMP model to manage visitor impact and align with community needs.

Regenerative Tourism Efforts: Initiatives like the “Made in Skagway” program promote local artisans and small business growth, offering Sitka a model for developing local economies through regenerative tourism.

Global Inspiration

NEW ZEALAND

Positioning: “100% Pure New Zealand” is one of the world’s most iconic destination brands, linking nature, Māori culture, and adventure.

Core Message: New Zealand invites visitors to experience its pristine landscapes and deep-rooted Indigenous Māori culture.

Sustainability Initiatives: New Zealand’s Tourism Sustainability Commitment encourages every tourism business to be carbon neutral by 2025.

Regenerative Tourism Efforts: Beyond sustainability, New Zealand is redefining its tourism model to leave places better than visitors found them. From reforestation efforts to conservation-focused itineraries, regenerative tourism is a core part of their strategy.

Lessons for Sitka: Build a brand that centers around environmental stewardship and Indigenous storytelling. Promote hands-on visitor participation in regenerative activities, like habitat restoration and trail preservation.

ICELAND

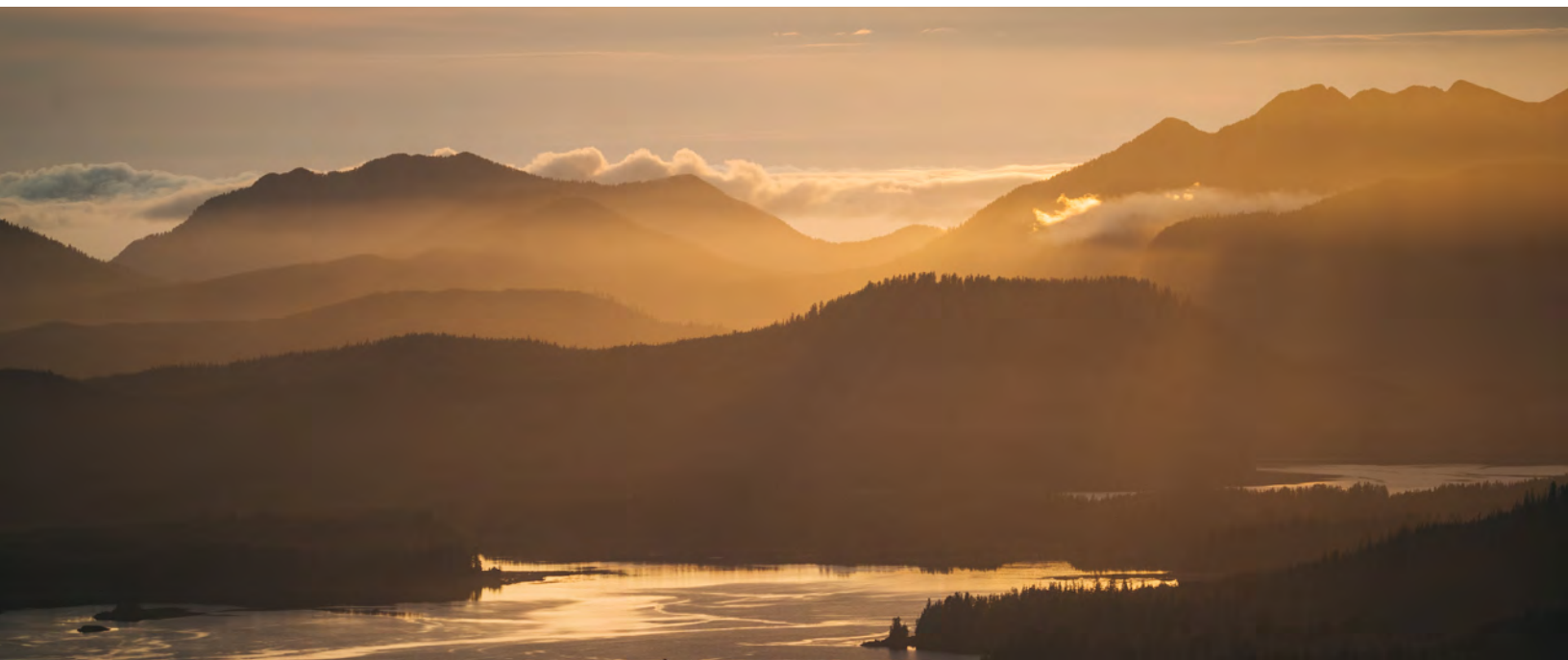
Positioning: Famous for geothermal landscapes, waterfalls, and adventure travel.

Core Message: Iceland’s “Inspired by Iceland” campaign uses humor and stunning visuals to set the destination apart.

Sustainability Initiatives: Iceland manages over-tourism by limiting access to sensitive sites and encouraging year-round travel.

Regenerative Tourism Efforts: Iceland promotes responsible tourism through visitor pledges and sustainable site management. They encourage visitors to engage in low-impact activities and practice “leave no trace” principles.

Lessons for Sitka: Implement a Visitor Pledge like Iceland, promoting Sitka as a mindful, respectful travel destination. Use humor or storytelling to make the pledge relatable and memorable. Highlight how visiting Sitka during off-peak times benefits the community, wildlife, and visitor experience.



Key Differentiators for Sitka

REGENERATIVE TOURISM LEADERSHIP

Unlike other Alaska destinations focused on sustainable tourism, Sitka can lead in regenerative tourism. This approach means leaving Sitka better than visitors found it, from trail restoration opportunities to community-led initiatives. Visitors can be part of the solution, contributing to projects that improve community well-being and environmental health.

AUTHENTIC CULTURAL STORYTELLING

While destinations like Ketchikan and Juneau have strong Indigenous narratives, Sitka can stand out by ensuring Tlingit voices are at the heart of the visitor experience. Initiative opportunities include Tlingit-led tours, a Tlingit Heritage Information Hub, and the Tlingit/English Driftscape Tour that position Sitka as a leader in Indigenous tourism storytelling.

TRANQUILITY AND PERSONAL CONNECTION

In the off-season, Sitka can offer an escape from the crowds. It's a more intimate, slower-paced experience where visitors can immerse themselves in the landscape and local way of life. This appeals to travelers looking for space to reflect and explore.



IMMERSIVE VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Sitka's focus on interactive, immersive experiences (like the Airport Cultural Installation) introduces visitors to Tlingit culture from the moment they arrive. This model of cultural immersion from arrival to departure is a differentiator, as visitors leave Sitka with a sense of connection and understanding.

SEASONAL TOURISM DIVERSIFICATION

By promoting seasonal adventure sweepstakes, wellness retreats, and off-season travel incentives, Sitka can drive tourism from October to April, a significant opportunity for revenue growth.

Opportunities for Visit Sitka

POSITION REGENERATIVE TOURISM AS CORE TO THE BRAND

While Juneau, Ketchikan, and Skagway focus on tourism management, Sitka leads communities in Alaska to embrace and define regenerative tourism. Highlight visitor participation in stewardship activities and the impact of responsible tourism choices.

YEAR-ROUND MARKETING AND EVENTS

Drive in-state travel by promoting fishing derbies, sporting events, and wildlife-related tours during shoulder season. Create dedicated trip-planning tools for Alaska residents seeking quick, local getaways.

LEAN INTO SMALL-GROUP, INTIMATE EXPERIENCES

Highlight small-group eco-tours, private, locally-enhanced tours, and immersive experiences that cater to travelers seeking a deeper connection with nature and culture.

EMBED TLINGÍT VOICES IN MARKETING

Develop a stronger connection between Visit Sitka's storytelling and the voices of local Indigenous artists and guides. Social media content, newsletters, and PR campaigns should prioritize their perspectives.

DIFFERENTIATE THROUGH WELLNESS & RETREATS

Build on the wellness travel trend by positioning Sitka as a place for mindfulness retreats, adventure therapy, and wellness-driven group events.



Target Audiences & Personas

Visit Sitka's marketing efforts target independent travelers. These are visitors who plan their own trips, seek meaningful experiences, and often stay longer and spend more locally. Many of them want more than just beautiful views; they want stories, connection, and purpose woven into their trips. To meet this demand, Visit Sitka's marketing is focused on engaging seven key traveler types. Each type is driven by unique motivations, preferences, and challenges, which this strategy addresses to inspire deeper engagement, year-round visitation, and longer stays.



1. Adventure Seekers

These are visitors who are motivated by outdoor experiences. When choosing a destination they look for activities like kayaking, hiking, snorkeling, and exploring remote trails. Adventure Seekers tend to be couples, solo travelers, or groups of friends looking to plan an annual trip.

Why they come to Sitka: To experience nature, away from crowds and to challenge themselves.

What they need from Visit Sitka: Itineraries, booking tools, and trusted guides to make adventure feel accessible, safe, and spontaneous.

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS:

Storytelling Campaigns: Share "Day in the Life" content with local guides, showing the wild side of Sitka's adventure landscape.

Insider Access: Showcase "hidden gem" locations encouraging longer stays.

Exclusive Micro-Adventures: Partner with local guides to create small-group experiences like remote hikes or private kayak excursions.

Example Persona: Chris and Laura

A couple in their early 30s from Sedona who like to escape the heat and find a change of scenery once or twice a year. They enjoy physical challenges outside and always share their adventures on social media. With limited time to plan detailed itineraries, they can become overwhelmed by choices. They rely on social media and blog posts when planning their trip.

2. Eco-Conscious Travelers

These are sustainability-minded visitors who make their travel decisions based on a location's nature, wellness, and responsible tourism practices. This group includes solo travelers, couples, and families who value destinations that reflect their environmental and ethical values.

Why they come to Sitka: To immerse themselves in pristine natural environments while supporting destinations that align with their travel values.

What they need from Visit Sitka: Transparency on sustainability initiatives, guides for responsible travel, and insight into how they can support the local community while visiting.

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS:

Regenerative Travel Messaging: Highlight Sitka's Visitor Pledge, which encourages eco-conscious travel choices.

Wildlife Stewardship Campaigns: Emphasize responsible wildlife viewing tips and Tlingit values of respect for the land.

Family-friendly Itineraries: Share family-friendly itineraries with clear age recommendations and safety tips for activities.

Example Persona: The Thompson Family
Parents in their early 40s with two kids aged 8 and 12 from Vancouver, they plan their vacations around the school year, selecting locations that encourage curiosity and hands-on learning. They prefer staying at locally-owned accommodations, looking for cultural experiences, and are willing to pay more for experiences that leave a positive impact on the community, like partaking in ocean clean up cruises or going to local events. They look for opportunities to balance educational activities with meaningful experiences in nature, relying on Google searches, word of mouth recommendations, and social media when planning their trip.

3. Cultural Enthusiasts

Passionate travelers who crave depth and discovery, with a desire to engage with art, history, and the living culture of a place. They want to connect with local stories, learn about Tlingit heritage, and explore Sitka's creative and historical sites.

Why they come to Sitka: To experience culture, art, and history through guided tours, hands-on workshops, and independent activities.

What they need from Visit Sitka: Personal access to cultural experiences, artist-led workshops, and curated itineraries that center local stories.

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS:

Host a Year of Indigenous Travel Writers:

Partner with cultural travel writers who will spotlight Sitka's rich heritage in blogs, media features, and travel guides.

Interactive Storytelling: Promote the Tlingit/English Driftscape Tour through the Sitka National Historic Park.

Artist Showcase: Promote opportunities at Sheldon Jackson Museum and other locations to meet local artists and attend art markets or workshops.

Example Persona: Joan

Joan is a 68-year-old retired teacher from the Midwest who travels to learn about the history, art, and culture of each destination. She spends her evenings researching tours and loves museum exhibits, cultural performances, and guided historical tours. She loves traveling solo and looks for destinations with accessible walking paths, easy-grade hikes and prefers to stay at a centrally located hotel. Joan loves destinations where culture is central to the visitor experience and prefers trips that are immersive and educational. She relies on visitor guides and brochures, travel review sites, email newsletters, and destination websites to plan her trips.

4. Wildlife Lovers

Nature lovers and wildlife enthusiasts planning trips where they can spot wildlife. They usually come fully prepared, making the most of each day on tours, sightseeing independently, and connecting with locals on where they might spot birds, whales, otters or any other of Sitka's wide array of wildlife.

Why they come to Sitka: To witness wildlife in its natural habitat and take home photos.

What they need from Visit Sitka: Access to wildlife tours, ethical viewing guidelines, and information on the best times to visit for peak animal activity.

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS:

Wildlife Viewing Resources: Create guides for responsible wildlife viewing, supported by local tour operators.

Story-driven Itineraries: Promote trip plans that align with peak wildlife viewing windows.

Wildlife Content Campaigns: Use video content to showcase real-time wildlife sightings to inspire last-minute bookings.

Example Persona: Leo and Burt

Leo and Burt are a 50-year-old couple and recent empty-nesters. Leo, a wildlife photographer, plans at least one of their annual trips around peak wildlife viewing windows. He and Burt book tours with guides who understand animal behavior and environmental ethics. They go all out when researching a location and will spend more to have a more immersive experience. They love staying at remote lodges where they can experience a bit of luxury between wildlife viewing. Leo shares his photography on social media, tagging destinations and operators, which increases exposure for local tourism businesses. They rely on wildlife forums, travel review sites, destination websites, social media, and travel blogs when planning their trip.

5. Convention & Meeting Planners

Event planners, business leaders, and association executives looking for a unique location for conferences, retreats, and workshops.

Why they come to Sitka: For fresh inspiration, natural surroundings, and the appeal of "off-the-beaten-path" meeting destinations.

What they need from Visit Sitka: Planning resources, flexible packages, and an easy way to book venues, activities, and accommodations.

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS:

Event Packages: Develop ready-to-book packages for corporate retreats, wellness summits, and board meetings.

FAM Week for Planners: Invite planners to experience Sitka firsthand, building relationships that drive future bookings.

Online Booking Tools: Refresh the Meetings & Conventions Planner and add easy-to-use event planning guides on the website.

Example Persona: Sarah

Sarah is a 36-year-old corporate event planner from Seattle whose business contracts with numerous Alaska organizations. She has a well established client roster and has fallen into a pattern of booking the same locations year after year. To shake things up, she's looking for unique destinations with reliable event infrastructure, modern meeting spaces, and memorable experiences. She prefers destinations with pre-built packages and easy booking options. She relies on industry relationships and word-of-mouth when selecting a new location.

6. Wellness & Retreat Planners

Event organizers, wellness leaders, and instructors looking for serene, nature-inspired destinations to host wellness retreats and workshops. These planners seek peaceful environments that offer access to natural beauty, mindful experiences, and wellness-focused amenities.

Why they come to Sitka: The ability to market Sitka as a peaceful, off-the-grid escape with opportunities to blend luxury, relaxation and natural-immersive experiences.

What they need from Visit Sitka: Direct connections to local service providers, ready-to-use retreat packages, wellness guides, and itineraries that inspire wellness-focused visits.

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS:

Customizable Retreat Packages: Offer flexible retreat packages that combine lodging, meeting spaces, wellness activities, and transportation.

Visual Storytelling: Create video content and promotional materials showcasing wellness experiences like yoga on the beach, meditation in the forest, and ocean-inspired mindfulness activities.

Local Partner Network: Build a directory of local wellness providers who can offer unique add-ons like forest bathing, guided meditation, and cold dipping.

Planning Tools: Develop a "Host Your Retreat in Sitka" page on the website with itineraries, planning guides, and testimonial stories from previous wellness retreat organizers.

Showcase Venues: Highlight lodging options that support wellness retreats, such as boutique lodges, inns, and unique accommodations that offer seclusion and serenity.

Example Persona: Chloe

Chloe is a 30-year-old yoga instructor with a major social media following and loyal community of yoga students. They are looking to host their third annual nature and yoga retreat. Chloe wants a destination that feels remote, peaceful, and naturally beautiful, a place their students will view as a “bucket list experience.” When planning this retreat Chloe looks for destinations with accommodations for 10-20 people, wellness-focused dining options, and natural environments that foster relaxation and reflection. They need planning tools like customizable retreat packages, venue recommendations, and assistance from local wellness providers for additional activities. Chloe relies on social media, destination websites, travel blogs and word-of-mouth recommendations when planning this event.



7. Year-round, In-State Travelers

Independent travelers from Alaska seeking weekend getaways, extended stays, or seasonal trips for activities like hunting, fishing, community events, and family visits.

Why they come to Sitka: To visit family, participate in seasonal hunting and fishing opportunities, attend community or sporting events, or enjoy a quick weekend escape without leaving the state.

What they need from Visit Sitka: Up-to-date information on permits, and regulations, transportation planning tools for ferries, flights, and gear transport, access to lodging deals and year-round promotions, and a public events calendar.

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS:

Seasonal Promotions & Package Deals: Launch year-round deals for Alaskan residents, like "Alaska Resident Rates" on lodging, discounted ferry or flight packages, or bundled travel packages for hunting and fishing trips.

Community Event Marketing: Promote major local events (like fishing derbies, sporting events, or cultural festivals) as reasons to visit Sitka.

Local Influencer Partnerships: Partner with well-known Alaska hunters, fishers, and outdoor enthusiasts to share their Sitka travel experiences and promote off-season trips to their followers.

Community Storytelling Content: Highlight locals sharing their favorite reasons to visit Sitka year-round. Use blog content, video testimonials, and photo features to inspire in-state travelers.

Example Persona: Kevin

Kevin is a 29-year-old commercial fisherman from Juneau who visits Sitka every late fall or early winter for an annual deer hunting trip. He travels with friends, books last-minute lodging, and relies on ferry schedules to bring his car over. Kevin will stay in Sitka for up to two weeks depending. Kevin likes to "keep it simple," although his group will eat out most nights they are in town. He prioritizes destinations where he can hunt, fish, and enjoy time with his friends. He relies on his local friends for information, but frequently checks social media for information

MARKETING PLAN

Objectives

Visit Sitka's three-year marketing objectives are rooted in strengthening community collaboration, balancing the independent traveler season, and building a model of regenerative tourism in Sitka. This plan follows a phased approach:

Year 1 (Build) focusing on creating foundational assets and community alignment;

Year 2 (Share) scaling visibility and launching campaigns across marketing channels; and

Year 3 (Sustain) positioning Sitka as a leader in cultural tourism, regenerative travel, and event planning.

Each year builds on the success of the prior year, making each effort more impactful. The final year will culminate in a Three-Year Impact & Insights Report, which will be used to inform future strategies and communicate successes to stakeholders and community partners.

YEAR 1

Build (2025)



Establish the foundations for campaigns and initiatives by creating new marketing tools, resources, and community partnerships that will drive future campaigns. This includes developing new visitor experiences, creating internal alignment on marketing pillars, and enhancing resources for visitor planning.

Cultural Tourism:

Establish key cultural storytelling tools that amplify Tlingit voices, including the launch of a Welcome Video, Cultural Heritage Hub, and a refreshed Visitor Guide that reflects local voices and year-round travel.

Regenerative Tourism & Visitor Education:

Introduce tools that promote responsible visitor behavior, including the Visitor Pledge and a Learn Before You Land Campaign.

Meetings & Events:

Rebrand and reposition Harrigan Centennial Hall as a premier venue for meetings and retreats. Introduce flexible event packages and update the Meetings & Conventions Planner Toolkit to simplify event planning.

Year-Round Travel:

Launch visitor-facing resources, such as the Insider Scoop page, a Quarterly Visitor Newsletter, and a new Transportation Guide to streamline travel planning for independent travelers.

Why It Matters: Year 1 builds the foundation for growth, setting up the tools, marketing assets, and alignment needed for broader storytelling, visitor education, and meeting promotion in Years 2 and 3.

YEAR 2

Share (2026)

Leverage the tools and resources built in Year 1 to increase engagement, grow brand awareness, and drive deeper visitor connections. By launching immersive experiences and promotional campaigns, Sitka will increase visibility and work to generate more year-round travel.

Cultural Tourism:

Launch interactive and immersive cultural experiences, including the Tlingít/English Driftscape Tour and the Airport Cultural Installation, ensuring visitors engage with Sitka's cultural identity the moment they arrive.

Regenerative Tourism & Visitor Education:

Scale visitor education and community collaboration by launching the Tourism Best Practices Management (TBMP) system and expanding wayfinding to include interpretive signage.

Meetings & Events:

Convert interest into bookings by hosting a FAM (Familiarization) Week for event planners and promoting updated planning tools, including an enhanced Meetings & Conventions Planner and a redesigned Meetings & Events website page.

Year-Round Travel:

Launch campaigns that inspire year-round travel, such as the Seasonal Adventure Sweepstakes, Itinerary Builder, and enhanced distribution of the Transportation Guide. These efforts make trip planning more seamless and compelling.

Why It Matters: Year 2 is about momentum and visibility. With the core tools in place, the focus shifts to sharing, showcasing, and scaling.

YEAR 3

Sustain (2027)

Expand and sustain growth by amplifying success stories, scaling engagement, and solidifying Sitka's position as a leader in cultural, regenerative, and event-driven tourism. With two years of learning and execution complete, Year 3 is an opportunity to analyze progress and define what comes next.

Cultural Tourism:

Scale storytelling and public relations efforts with a "Year of Indigenous Travel Writers" campaign. Embed cultural voices in all marketing content and elevate Sitka's visibility in travel media prompting cultural tourism.

Regenerative Tourism & Visitor Education:

Measure and report on the outcomes of the Visitor Pledge, Tourism Best Practices Management (TBMP), and the success of the Crossing Guard Program. Launch a Community Events Calendar to support local celebrations and inspire extended stays.

Meetings & Events:

Promote Sitka as a wellness retreat destination, supporting bookings for year-round wellness retreats. Leverage Sitka's natural assets and wellness offerings to attract new event types.

Year-Round Travel:

Support downtown beautification efforts with public art, benches, and community spaces that improve the visitor experience. Launch a Community Events Calendar that inspires independent travelers to visit during unique festivals, celebrations, and seasonal events.

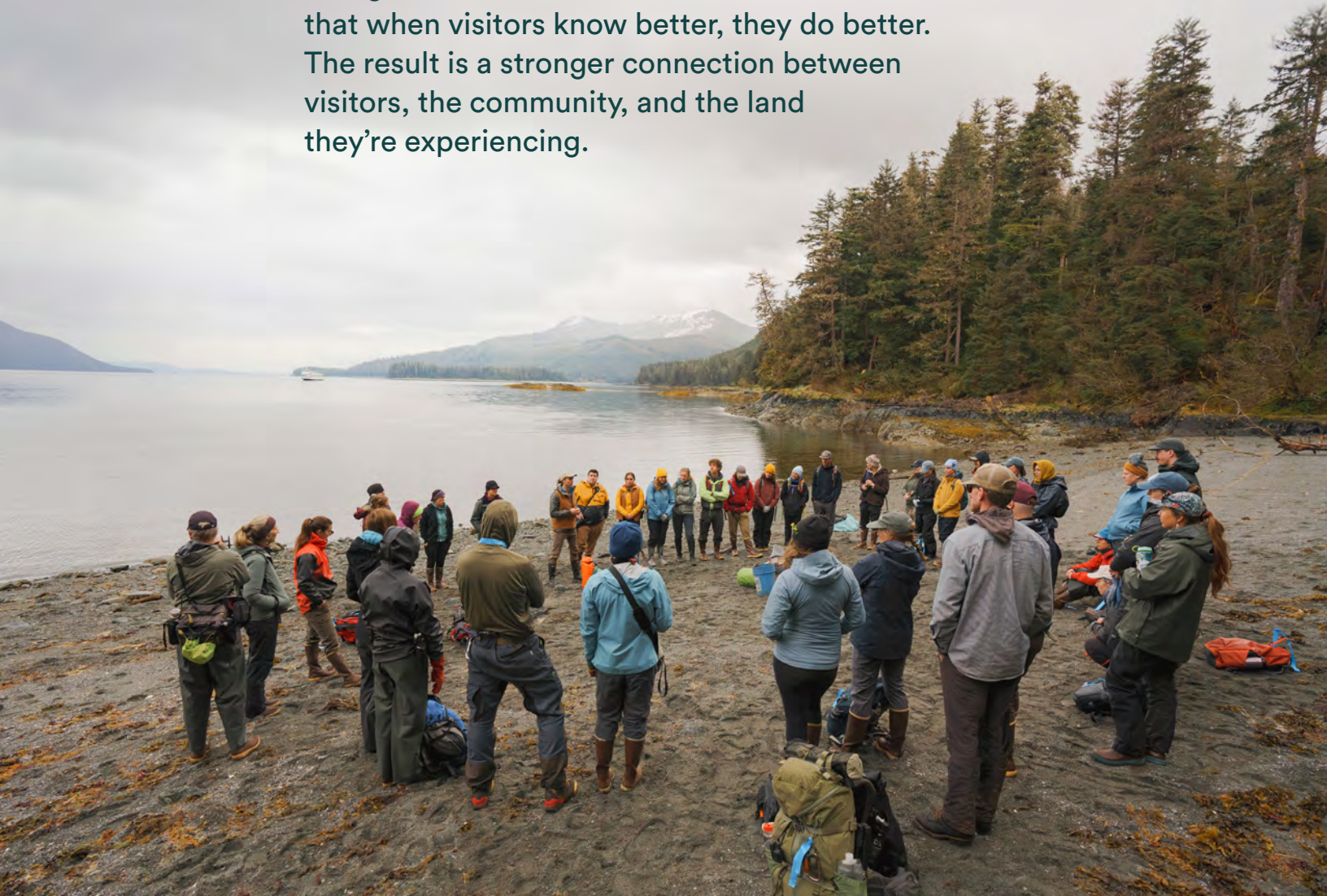
Why It Matters: Year 3 is about industry sustainability. By the end of 2027, Sitka will have aimed to increase year-round travel, created more regenerative visitor experiences, and positioned itself as a culturally rich destination. The year will close with a Three-Year Impact & Insights Report, which will measure the impact of marketing initiatives and inform the next strategic plan.

STRATEGIES BY PILLAR



Regenerative Tourism & Visitor Education

Regenerative tourism isn't just about doing less harm, it's about actively creating positive change. For Sitka, this means centering cultural experiences, supporting local well-being, and stewarding our natural environment. Visit Sitka's strategy is to educate visitors before they arrive, inspire them to travel responsibly while they're here, and leave them with a deeper connection to the community. By embedding regenerative principles into every touchpoint from pre-arrival campaigns to in-destination initiatives and expanded wayfinding, Sitka positions itself as a leader in thoughtful tourism. Each initiative builds on the belief that when visitors know better, they do better. The result is a stronger connection between visitors, the community, and the land they're experiencing.



1. Learn Before You Land Campaign

ONGOING YEAR 1 - YEAR 3 (2025-27)

The Learn Before You Land campaign is a pre-arrival educational effort designed to encourage responsible tourism and prepare visitors for a meaningful experience in Sitka. By utilizing email, social media, and website content, Visit Sitka will educate travelers on Sitka’s culture, regenerative tourism principles, and the community's expectations for respectful visits. This campaign will also promote the Visitor Pledge, inviting visitors to commit to regenerative practices before arrival.

ACTION ITEMS:

Content Development: Develop key messaging and content for marketing channels.

Email Marketing: Launch a pre-arrival email series for travelers who book through partner operators or request visitor guides.

Social Media Campaign: Schedule biweekly or weekly posts with pre-arrival tips, emphasizing respect, sustainability, and environmental stewardship.

QR Code Integration: Add QR codes to signage or collateral, linking to the Visit Sitka regenerative tourism page on the website. Encourage partner businesses to share resources with their clients before their visit.

KPIs:

Page Views: Track page views for the regenerative tourism web page.

Email Engagement: Monitor open rates, click-through rates (CTR), and email sign-ups.

Social Media Engagement: Measure likes, shares, comments, and link clicks on social content promoting responsible tourism.

Pledge Completions: Track how many visitors sign the Visitor Pledge.

2. Visitor Pledge

YEAR 1 (2025)

The Visitor Pledge invites visitors to make a formal commitment to travel responsibly in Sitka. The pledge will be interactive, allowing visitors to sign digitally or in person at arrival points like the Visitor Information Center, Harrigan Centennial Hall, and at the Sitka Airport.

ACTION ITEMS:	<p>Interactive Pledge Creation: Design an online, interactive pledge form hosted on the Visit Sitka website, engaging with local partners to determine pledge's content.</p> <p>Signage at Entry Points: Place pledge signage at the Visitor Information Center, Harrigan Hall, and Sitka Airport with QR codes for immediate access.</p> <p>Digital Campaign: Promote the pledge in social media posts, newsletters, and pre-arrival emails as part of the Learn Before You Land campaign.</p> <p>Pledge Visibility: Include the pledge somewhere in the airport cultural installation, ensuring visibility upon arrival.</p>
KPIs:	<p>Engagement: Monitor click-through rates (CTR) for pledge links shared via email and social media.</p> <p>Pledge Impact: Survey residents and businesses to assess the perceived impact of the Visitor Pledge on visitor behavior.</p> <p>Pledge Completion Rate: Achieve a 20% sign-up rate among visitors to the Visitor Information Center and Sitka Airport within the first year of launch.</p> <p>Digital Pledge Sign-ups: Secure 500 digital pledge sign-ups via the Visit Sitka website within the first 6 months.</p>

3. Tourism Best Practice Management (TBMP) Initiative

YEAR 2 (2026)

The Tourism Best Practice Management (TBMP) initiative will create a feedback system for residents and businesses to address tourism-related concerns. Modeled after Juneau's TBMP, this initiative establishes a mechanism for gathering and addressing community input, tracking visitor impacts, and promoting proactive responses to community concerns; such as overcrowding and environmental impacts.

ACTION ITEMS:

Feedback System Development: Design a system for residents and businesses to submit tourism-related concerns online.

Data Dashboard: Create an internal dashboard to track, analyze, and categorize community feedback.

Stakeholder Engagement: Schedule an annual public meeting to review feedback, suggest best practice updates, and gain community buy-in.

Education & Training: Conduct workshops to educate partner businesses on TBMP guidelines. These can be paired with future regenerative tourism community presentations or workshops.

KPIs:

Resolution Rate: Track the percentage of issues resolved.

Community Sentiment: Measure changes in resident satisfaction and trust regarding tourism impacts.

Feedback Submission Rate: Receive an average of 10 feedback submissions per month through the TBMP system.

Issue Resolution Time: Resolve 75% of submitted issues within 14 days.

Community Satisfaction Score: Increase community satisfaction with tourism management by 15% (measured through annual surveys) by the end of Year 3.

4. Workforce Recruitment Campaign

ONGOING YEAR 1 - YEAR 3 (2025-27)

The Workforce Recruitment Campaign will position Sitka as a desirable place to work by promoting employment opportunities in the community. Visit Sitka will highlight the community's lifestyle benefits while also educating potential workers on the realities of moving to Sitka.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Campaign Development:** Develop key messages, content, and resources.
- Advertising:** Launch the campaign across all digital marketing channels including social media, newsletter, and blog.
- Job Portal Creation:** Add a "Work in Sitka" page to the Visit Sitka website with job listings, company profiles, and lifestyle content.
- Partner Promotions:** Partner with partner businesses to promote available job opportunities and amplify hiring messages.

KPIs:

- Content Engagement:** Measure video views, social shares, and click-through rates (CTR) from job ads.
- Job Portal Traffic:** Monitor page views and job clicks on the "Work in Sitka" website page.

5. Emerging Leaders Program Support

YEAR 1 (2025)

Partner with the Sitka Chamber's Emerging Leaders Program to inspire and support the next generation of tourism entrepreneurs. Visit Sitka will take part in the annual summit hosting a roundtable or workshop where 10 new business ideas will be generated by the participants. This could also include establishing a mentorship program where young entrepreneurs are paired with current tourism business owners to receive real-life information and advice for creating a successful business.

ACTION ITEMS: **New Business Workshop:** Host a 2-3 hour workshop with Emerging Leader participants to generate 10 new business ideas for Sitka.

Mentor Program: Match aspiring entrepreneurs with seasoned tourism business owners for one-on-one mentorship

KPIs: **Participant Engagement:** Measure attendance and participation at the workshop and mentor program.

New Business Launches: Count the number of new businesses launched as a result of this program.



6. Wayfinding & Transportation Enhancements

YEAR 1 - YEAR 2 (2025-26)

Expand Phase II of the Wayfinding and Transportation Enhancements project. This initiative improves visitor navigation through Sitka with better signage, pedestrian-friendly design, and enhanced transportation information. An emphasis will be placed on crosswalk accessibility and pedestrian safety through advocacy to city, state, and federal entities.

ACTION ITEMS:

Signage Design & Installation: Replace generic directional signs with beautifully designed wayfinding icons and interpretive signs to grab visitors' attention and display key information.

Pedestrian Accessibility: Partner with the City & Borough of Sitka to work on installing crosswalk improvements and safety upgrades for safe street crossings.

KPIs:

Signage Installations: Number of signs installed, including interpretive signs and wayfinding signs.

Pedestrian Incident Reduction: Achieve a 10% reduction in reported pedestrian incidents in designated areas within two years of implementation.

Positive Feedback on Wayfinding: Receive an average rating of 4 out of 5 stars in visitor surveys regarding the clarity and usefulness of new wayfinding signage.

7. Community Presentation & Workshop on Regenerative Tourism

YEAR 1 (2025)

Host a Community Presentation and Workshop on Regenerative Tourism to educate Sitka’s residents, businesses, and tourism operators on regenerative tourism principles. Opportunity to partner with groups like Spruce Root and the Southeast Sustainable Southeast Partnership to develop workshop content and collaborate on future regenerative tourism initiatives in Sitka and across Southeast.

- ACTION ITEMS:**
- Plan Community Presentation:** Develop content, deck and handout with resources for the presentation. Send out invitations and present in a comfortable, beautiful space to ensure engagement and impact.
 - Workshop Design:** Work with partners to design workshop content and training materials.
 - Event Promotion:** Use email, social media, and partner outreach to encourage attendance at the workshop and community presentation.
 - Content Development:** Record and edit the workshop into an online video for ongoing reference. Include workshop content on Visit Sitka’s website.

- KPIs:**
- Attendance:** Number of community members, partners, and partner businesses in attendance for both the presentation and workshops.
 - Video Views:** Total video views after online distribution.
 - Resident Perception:** Measure changes in community perceptions of tourism’s impact post-workshop.

8. Local Influencer Campaign

YEAR 1 - YEAR 2 (2025-26)

A Local Influencer Campaign will harness the creativity and unique perspectives of Sitka’s community photographers, videographers, and storytellers to create authentic visual content for Visit Sitka. This initiative builds a deeper connection with the local community by incentivizing participation through tiered rewards from local businesses. By tapping into the talents of local creators, Visit Sitka can generate a diverse range of high-quality, user-generated content that showcases Sitka’s year-round appeal while supporting local businesses.

The campaign could be structured in the following format:

PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

Open to all Sitka residents, including amateur and professional photographers, videographers, and content creators.

Participants submit content in exchange for tiered rewards, based on the quality, quantity, and format of their contributions.

Content should align with Visit Sitka’s strategic pillars, such as cultural tourism, regenerative travel, meetings and events, and year-round visitation.

TIERED REWARDS PROGRAM

Entry Tier: Submit 5 high-res photos to earn small rewards, such as free coffee at a local café.

Mid Tier: Submit 10 high-res photos or a 30-second Instagram reel to earn medium rewards, like a free lunch or dinner at a participating restaurant.

Premium Tier: Submit 20 high-res photos or a 1-minute professional video to earn higher-value rewards, such as gift cards for local experiences (e.g., guided tours, wellness services).

CONTENT SPECIFICATIONS

Images: High resolution, royalty-free usage, showcasing specific themes (e.g., wildlife, cultural landmarks, seasonal landscapes).

Videos: Instagram-ready reels or longer format footage for website use, featuring storytelling elements or action shots of local activities.

8. Local Influencer Campaign (cont.)

YEAR 1 - YEAR 2 (2025-26)

COLLABORATION
WITH LOCAL
BUSINESSES

Partner with local cafes, restaurants, and tour operators to provide tiered rewards in exchange for increased visibility through campaign promotions.

Spotlight participating businesses in campaign materials to encourage cross-promotion and drive engagement.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Campaign Launch:** Announce the campaign via Visit Sitka’s website, newsletters, and social media.
- Submission Process:** Create an easy-to-use submission portal on the Visit Sitka Website where participants can upload their photo/video and select their preferred reward tier.
- Content Review and Distribution:** Review submissions for quality and alignment with Visit Sitka’s brand and messaging, and feature selected content on Visit Sitka’s social media, blog, and collateral materials, crediting creators as appropriate.
- Reward Distribution:** Coordinate with participating businesses to deliver rewards promptly.

KPIs:

- Content Creation:** Number of photos, videos, and reels submitted.
- Local Engagement:** Number of participants and repeat submissions.
- Social Media Impact:** Increased follower engagement through the use of locally created content (likes, shares, comments).
- Business Collaboration:** Number of local businesses participating as reward partners.
- Campaign Reach:** Total impressions and shares of campaign announcements and featured content.
- Visitor Perception:** Positive feedback from visitors who engage with locally sourced content on Visit Sitka’s channels.

9. Partnership Program (Local Campaign)

YEAR 3 (2027)

Continue efforts to increase Visit Sitka's Partnership Program. In addition to what Visit Sitka is already doing, more (or different) incentives could be offered to entice new businesses to join.

ACTION ITEMS:

Evaluate existing Program: Conduct two surveys, one from existing partners to get feedback on what partnership perks they enjoy and what they think is missing, and one from non-partner local businesses to see what perks would make them want to sign up. Use email, social media, partner outreach, and partner outreach to spread the word about the surveys to garner as much information as possible.

Membership Reworking: Reworking: Use the survey feedback to inform Partnership Program (fees, perks, events, etc.) and redesign the Program as needed.

KPIs:

Completed Surveys: Number of surveys submitted.

Memberships: Number of renewed partnerships and number of new partners.



STRATEGIES BY PILLAR



Cultural Tourism

Sitka's cultural tourism strategy is rooted in the celebration and amplification of Tlingit voices, stories, and experiences. As a community-driven destination, Sitka offers visitors an opportunity to engage with living culture in meaningful ways. By leading with Tlingit perspectives, Visit Sitka aims to establish a sense of place to foster respect, and curiosity, and deepen visitor engagement. This approach is a commitment to cultural visibility, collaboration with local partners, and shared storytelling. By co-creating experiences with artists, tour operators, and organizations, supporting the local economy while strengthening community ties.



1. Welcome Video

YEAR 1 - YEAR 2 (2025-26)

Create a bilingual (Tlingít and English) Welcome Video that introduces and educates visitors about Sitka’s cultural values, regenerative tourism principles, and community ethos. This video will highlight the importance of respect for Tlingít heritage, as well as the role of responsible tourism in preserving Sitka’s cultural and natural beauty. Visit Sitka will partner with the Sheet’ká Kwaán Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) to co-develop the script, identify speakers who will appear in the video, and ensure cultural authenticity. The video will be displayed at key visitor entry points like the Sitka Airport, Harrigan Centennial Hall, and Visitor Information Center, and on the website and social media. It can also be used as an introduction for industry conventions and meetings held in Sitka, helping to position Visit Sitka as a leader in cultural tourism and regenerative tourism education.

ACTION ITEMS: **Script Development:** Collaborate with STA to develop a culturally authentic script, select speakers, and align on key messaging.

Video Production: Film interviews, scenic Sitka landscapes, and cultural sites, incorporating bilingual narration and subtitles.

Launch & Promotion: Showcase the video at Sitka Airport, Harrigan Centennial Hall, and Visitor Center. Share shorter versions on social media, websites, and at industry conventions.

KPIs: **Viewership:** Approximate physical exposure using foot traffic counts at the airport, Visitor Center, and Harrigan Hall.

Event Impact: Track post-event attendee feedback to measure cultural understanding and impressions.

Video Completion Rate: Achieve a 70% completion rate for the Welcome Video on the Visit Sitka website.

Social Media Video Reach: Reach 50,000 unique users on social media with the Welcome Video within the first month of release.

QR Code Engagement: 1,000 scans of the QR code.

2. Airport Installation

YEAR 1 - YEAR 2 (2025-26)

Collaborate with the City & Borough of Sitka’s airport design contractor to design a cultural installation at the Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport Terminal. This installation will complement the Welcome Video by providing a physical, immersive experience that educates visitors and reinforces Tlingít visibility at a key entry point to Sitka. The project will be co-created with a local Tlingít artist.

POTENTIAL INSTALLATIONS:

Wall Mural: A large mural designed to serve as a focal point at the airport’s entrance or a prominent wall within the terminal.

Interpretive Signage and Wayfinding: Replace standard airport directional signs with Tlingít-inspired wayfinding art. Incorporating bilingual captions on signage in both Tlingít and English.

Rotating Art Display & Artist Showcase: A gallery-style art display located within the airport to showcase the works of local Indigenous artists.

ACTION ITEMS:

Installation Selection & Ideation: Select an installation concept(s) and begin planning with airport officials to confirm site placement, compliance, and safety requirements.

Design: Select an artist to commission or partner with to conceptualize design and schedule installation.

Production & Installation: Installing the piece, testing any interactive features, and hosting a celebratory luncheon or local feature on the completion of the installation.

KPIs:

Project Completion: Installation fully completed and operational by Summer of 2026.

Artist Engagement: 1-2 local Tlingít artists commissioned to design and contribute to the installation.

Visitor Interaction: Number of QR code scans or interactions with any digital elements.

Art Display Rotation: 1-2 rotating art exhibits annually showcasing works from local Indigenous artists.

Media Mentions & PR: Earned media coverage through at least 1-2 local, regional, or national press mentions following the installation’s launch.

Launch Event Attendance: Minimum of 15 attendees (community members, Elders, artists, and media) at the unveiling celebration event.

Social Media Engagement: Social shares, mentions, and tags from visitors interacting with the installation.

Community Buy-in: Positive community feedback collected via word of mouth or in-person feedback.

3. Launch Tlingít/English Driftscape Tour

YEAR 1 (2025)

Launch a self-guided Tlingít/English cultural tour on the Driftscape app. Ensure visitors can access the tour via QR codes, app downloads, or direct links from Visit Sitka’s website and social channels. To ensure accessibility, physical signs with QR codes will be installed at key visitor entry points, including Harrigan Centennial Hall, the Visitor Information Center, and the Cruise Ship Terminal.

ACTION ITEMS:

Signage & Installation: Design signs to be displayed at key entry points with messaging and information about the tour. Visit Sitka staff to work with locations to install signage.

Digital Promotion: Add links to the Driftscape tour on the Visit Sitka website, social media platforms, and email newsletters.

KPIs:

Tour Participation: Track the number of app downloads and completed tours on Driftscape.

User Feedback: Collect visitor feedback via in-app surveys to measure tour satisfaction and gather suggestions for improvement.

QR Code Interactions: Monitor scans of QR codes placed at Harrigan Centennial Hall, Visitor Information Center, and the Cruise Terminal.

Website Traffic: Track links on the website.

4. Host a Year of Indigenous Travel Writers

YEAR 2 - YEAR 3 (2026-27)

Host a year of Indigenous travel writers, journalists, and cultural bloggers to experience and report on Sitka’s cultural tourism. Writers will participate in Tlingít-led tours, meet with local artists, and engage in hands-on cultural experiences. These stories would aim to inspire visitors to seek out deeper, more authentic experiences and generate positive press, creating opportunities for Sitka’s cultural tourism sector to grow.

ACTION ITEMS:	Writer Outreach: Identify and recruit 3-5 Indigenous writers, journalists, or bloggers.
	Itinerary Curation: Design 2-day custom itineraries that include Tlingít-led tours, visits to local art studios, and exclusive cultural experiences. Work with Visit Sitka partners to develop these.
	Media Amplification: Amplify published stories through Visit Sitka’s blog, social media, newsletters, and PR channels. Cross-promote coverage with media partners.
KPIs:	Media Placements: Track the number of earned media placements in statewide, national, and travel outlets.
	Content Reach: Measure total impressions and engagement on articles and social media content.

5. Tlingít Heritage Information Hub on Website

YEAR 1 (2025)

The Tlingít Heritage Information Hub will serve as a centralized digital resource on the Visit Sitka website, showcasing Tlingít culture, traditions, and community-led experiences. Launched in Year 1, the hub will provide visitors with accessible and authentic educational content, reinforcing Sitka's commitment to amplifying Indigenous voices. By highlighting Tlingít-led tours, workshops, and cultural events, the hub will set the tone for cultural respect and education throughout the visitor journey. Designed to work within the existing website infrastructure, it will align with regenerative tourism principles while connecting travelers with Tlingít history, language, and traditions.

KEY FEATURES COULD INCLUDE:

Tlingít-Led Experience:

Highlight guided tours, workshops, and cultural events led by Tlingít Elders, artists, and organizations like the Sheet'ká Kwaán Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA), Shee Atiká, and Sealaska.

Educational Resources:

Include articles, videos, and FAQs on Tlingít history, clan systems, totem pole meanings, and traditional practices. Offer a glossary of Tlingít words and phrases with audio clips for correct pronunciation.

Cultural Etiquette Guidance:

Provide downloadable guides and practical tips for visitors to engage respectfully with Tlingít culture and community.

ACTION ITEMS:

Content Development: Partner with Tlingít cultural leaders to co-create authentic and accurate content.

Web Design: Develop the website page with SEO-optimized content.

Promotion: Launch a 3-4 month campaign to promote the Hub through Visit Sitka's social media, newsletter, and paid ads.

KPIs:

Event Participation: Measure visitor attendance at events or workshops promoted through the hub.

Community Feedback: Gather feedback from Tlingít leaders and partners on the hub's effectiveness and representation.

Newsletter Sign-Ups: Track email subscriptions generated from hub promotions.

Visitor Sentiment: Use surveys and visitor feedback to assess the hub's impact on cultural understanding and engagement.

Hub Page Views: Achieve 10,000 page views on the Tlingít Heritage Information Hub within the first year.

Click-Through Rate to Tlingít Experiences: Generate a 5% click-through rate from the hub to Tlingít-led tour booking pages.

Average Time on Page: 2 minutes average time spent on the hub page.

6. Cultural Voices in Marketing Content

ONGOING YEAR 2 - YEAR 3 (2026-2027)

Embed cultural voices across all of Visit Sitka's marketing channels, including social media, website, blogs, newsletters, and PR. By prioritizing cultural storytelling, Visit Sitka will establish a strong sense of place and reinforce Sitka's identity as a community-driven, culturally rich destination.

- ACTION ITEMS:**
- Content Strategy & Messaging:** Develop a strategy that positions Tlingít voices as a key pillar of Visit Sitka's brand.
 - Content Calendar Integration:** Build a content calendar that features cultural tourism opportunities, partner spotlights, artist features, and partner content.
 - Partnership Development:** Collaborate with partners, and local artists to co-create content. Creating opportunities for cross-promotion and shared storytelling.

- KPIs:**
- Social Media Engagement:** Track likes, shares, comments, and post saves for all cultural storytelling content.
 - Blog Traffic:** Track total visits to cultural storytelling blog posts and key landing pages.
 - Newsletter Performance:** Monitor open rates, click-through rates (CTR), and subscriber growth for newsletters featuring Tlingít storytelling.
 - PR Coverage:** Track the number of media placements, press mentions, and earned media related to cultural tourism.
 - Collaborative Content:** Track the number of co-branded features and cross-promotional content pieces with partners.
 - Visitor Feedback:** Monitor sentiment from visitor reviews and social media comments.

STRATEGIES BY PILLAR



Meetings & Events

Sitka has the opportunity to position itself as a top destination for meetings, events, retreats, and conventions. By branding Harrigan Centennial Hall, offering curated event packages, and hosting familiarization (FAM) weeks for planners, Visit Sitka will showcase the community as an ideal year-round event destination. This strategy prioritizes collaboration with local businesses to create all-inclusive experiences that set Sitka apart from competitors like Juneau and Anchorage. By driving year-round visitation and securing new event bookings, these efforts support local businesses, and generate revenue.



1. Harrigan Centennial Hall Branding & Marketing

YEAR 1 (2025)

Branding Harrigan Centennial Hall to position it as a premier venue for trade events, conventions, and meetings. This effort includes new messaging, marketing collateral, a promotional video, and venue rental packages that highlight its capacity and location. The brand will position Sitka as a competitive option for small-to-medium-sized meetings and events.

- ACTION ITEMS:**
- Brand Development:** Refresh branding, visual identity, and messaging for Harrigan Centennial Hall. This includes developing a website for information to be featured on.
 - Content Creation:** Produce a promotional video, updated photography, and digital assets for use on the new website, social media, and resource materials.
 - Venue Packages:** Help create flexible rental packages tailored to corporate retreats, wellness retreats, and small-to-medium-sized conventions.
 - Digital Launch:** Announce the rebrand via social media, email newsletters, and local media.

- KPIs:**
- Booking Conversions:** Count new event bookings and deposits secured.
 - Website Engagement:** Measure visits and click-throughs to the new website.
 - Brand Awareness:** Track mentions and impressions from PR, earned media, and partner referrals.
 - Qualified Booking Inquiries:** Increase qualified booking inquiries for Harrigan Centennial Hall by 25% year-over-year.
 - Conversion Rate:** Convert 10% of qualified inquiries into confirmed bookings.

2. Themed Packages for Meetings & Events

YEAR 1 (2025)

Develop multi-day, all-inclusive retreat packages for corporate, executive, and wellness retreats with partner businesses. Packages will feature activities like cultural tours, wellness experiences, local dining, and guided outdoor recreation. These packages will simplify event planning for decision-makers and event organizers, offering a "one-stop shop" for booking retreats in Sitka.

ACTION ITEMS:

Package Development: Collaborate with local businesses, wellness providers, and tour operators to create themed packages (e.g., Wellness Retreats, Adventure Retreats, Corporate Retreats).

Pricing Strategy: Develop tiered pricing options to meet the budgets of small, medium, and large groups.

Marketing Launch: Promote packages through Visit Sitka's website, email marketing, and paid media targeting event planners and corporate HR departments.

Content Integration: Add package offerings to the Harrigan Centennial Hall website and promote through their marketing channels.

KPIs:

Package Bookings: Count the number of packages booked annually.

Lead Conversions: Measure how many leads from Visit Sitka or Harrigan Centennial Hall inquiries convert to bookings.

Revenue Impact: Track revenue increases for partner businesses and partners included in packages.

Digital Engagement: Monitor website clicks and downloads of package details or itineraries.

3. Update Meetings & Conventions Planner and Website

YEAR 2 (2026)

Refresh and modernize Visit Sitka’s Meetings & Conventions Planner and website page to reflect Harrigan Centennial Hall’s packages and local event planner offerings from partner businesses. The updated tools will highlight the benefits of choosing Sitka, offer visually compelling content, and provide downloadable, ready-to-use planning resources.

- ACTION ITEMS:**

 - Content & Design Refresh:** Redesign the Meetings & Conventions Planner with updated content and new photography.
 - Website Update:** Revamp the Meetings & Events landing page to be more visually engaging, accessible, and conversion-focused. Include clearer calls-to-action (CTAs) for booking inquiries and downloadable resources.
 - SEO Optimization:** Optimize website content with target keywords like "corporate retreats Alaska" and "Alaska meeting venues" to increase visibility on search engines.
 - Promotional Rollout:** Launch a promotional campaign to announce the updated Meetings & Conventions Planner and website, utilizing social media, email marketing, and partner channels.
- KPIs:**

 - Website Traffic:** Track page visits to the Meetings & Conventions page and clicks to the planner download link.
 - Planner Downloads:** Count the number of digital planner downloads from the website.
 - Partner Engagement:** Measure the number of local partners who contribute to new planning resources or provide updates for the planner.

4. Host a FAM Week for Planners

YEAR 2 (2026)

Host a Familiarization (FAM) Week for key event planners and decision-makers from Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. This event will showcase Harrigan Centennial Hall and showcase newly developed themed packages for meetings & events created with Visit Sitka partner businesses. The goal is to develop relationships with meeting planners and drive future bookings for retreats, events, conventions, and meetings.

ACTION ITEMS:

Planner Outreach: Identify and invite meeting planners from key markets (corporate, nonprofit, and association planners).

Experience Design: Curate an itinerary that includes tours of Harrigan Centennial Hall, accommodations, local dining experiences, and cultural tours.

Content Creation: Capture photos and video content during the FAM trip to use in future marketing materials.

Post-Event Follow-Up: Conduct follow-up calls with attendees to convert interest into bookings.

KPIs:

Attendance: Number of event planners and decision-makers who attend the FAM Week.

Post-FAM Inquiries: Track new booking inquiries that result from FAM participation.

Content Performance: Measure performance of FAM-related social media and PR coverage.

Lead Conversion: Number of meetings or events booked as a direct result of FAM participation.

5. Targeted Meetings & Conventions Marketing

YEAR 2 - YEAR 3 (2026-27)

Launch a targeted marketing campaign that positions Sitka as an ideal location for regional meetings, trade shows, and corporate retreats. The campaign will emphasize Sitka’s natural beauty, cultural experiences, and unique offerings for year-round events. Key messaging will highlight Harrigan Centennial Hall, planning packages, and toolkit.

ACTION ITEMS:	Campaign Development: Create ad copy, creative assets, and videos promoting Sitka as a meeting and retreat destination.
	Digital Advertising: Launch paid digital advertising campaigns on platforms like Google Ads, LinkedIn, and industry event websites.
	SEO Optimization: Optimize website content to rank for key phrases like "corporate retreats in Alaska" and "meetings in Southeast Alaska."
	Trade Shows & Partnerships: Attend trade shows and regional business conferences to promote Sitka as a destination for small-to-medium-sized meetings.
KPIs:	Lead Generation: Track the number of new booking inquiries for meetings and events on the Harrigan Centennial Hall website.
	Website Traffic: Measure visits to the "Meetings & Conventions" landing page on the Visit Sitka website.
	Lead Conversion: Count the number of event inquiries converted into confirmed bookings.
	Impressions & Clicks: Monitor ad performance (impressions, clicks, and conversions) on social media and e-newsletters.

6. Promote Wellness & Retreats

YEAR 3 (2027)

Under the Meetings & Events pillar, wellness retreats represent a unique opportunity to attract mid-sized groups and corporate teams seeking restorative, nature-driven experiences. By leveraging both local influencers and regional/national wellness creators, Visit Sitka can showcase Sitka as an ideal setting for group wellness retreats, combining the tranquility of nature, immersive cultural experiences, and modern meeting spaces.

LOCAL INFLUENCERS:

Including photographers, yoga instructors, and wellness advocates can capture content over time, ensuring a variety of seasonal imagery and overcoming challenges like inconsistent weather. Their familiarity with Sitka allows for authentic storytelling and behind-the-scenes looks at wellness offerings.

NON-LOCAL INFLUENCERS:

Bring a broader reach and can position Sitka as a hidden gem for wellness retreats. Hosted experiences with curated itineraries will showcase Sitka's stunning natural landscapes, modern meeting venues, and team-building activities like kayaking or mindfulness hikes. Utilize the overarching influencer strategy, but pay special attention to engage with influencers that fall within the wellness industry, and work with partners that do the same.

ACTION ITEMS:

Wellness Package Development: Collaborate with wellness-oriented businesses to develop retreat packages for small to mid-sized groups.

Content Development: Produce video, blog content, and itineraries highlighting Sitka as a wellness retreat destination.

Digital Campaign Launch: Launch a social media campaign targeting the wellness travel segment.

Event Support: Support local wellness retreat organizers by promoting their events via Visit Sitka's blog, email newsletters, and social media.

KPIs:

Booking Conversions: Number of retreat bookings directly linked to Visit Sitka promotions.

Content Engagement: Track total video views, blog visits, and clicks on wellness retreat itineraries.

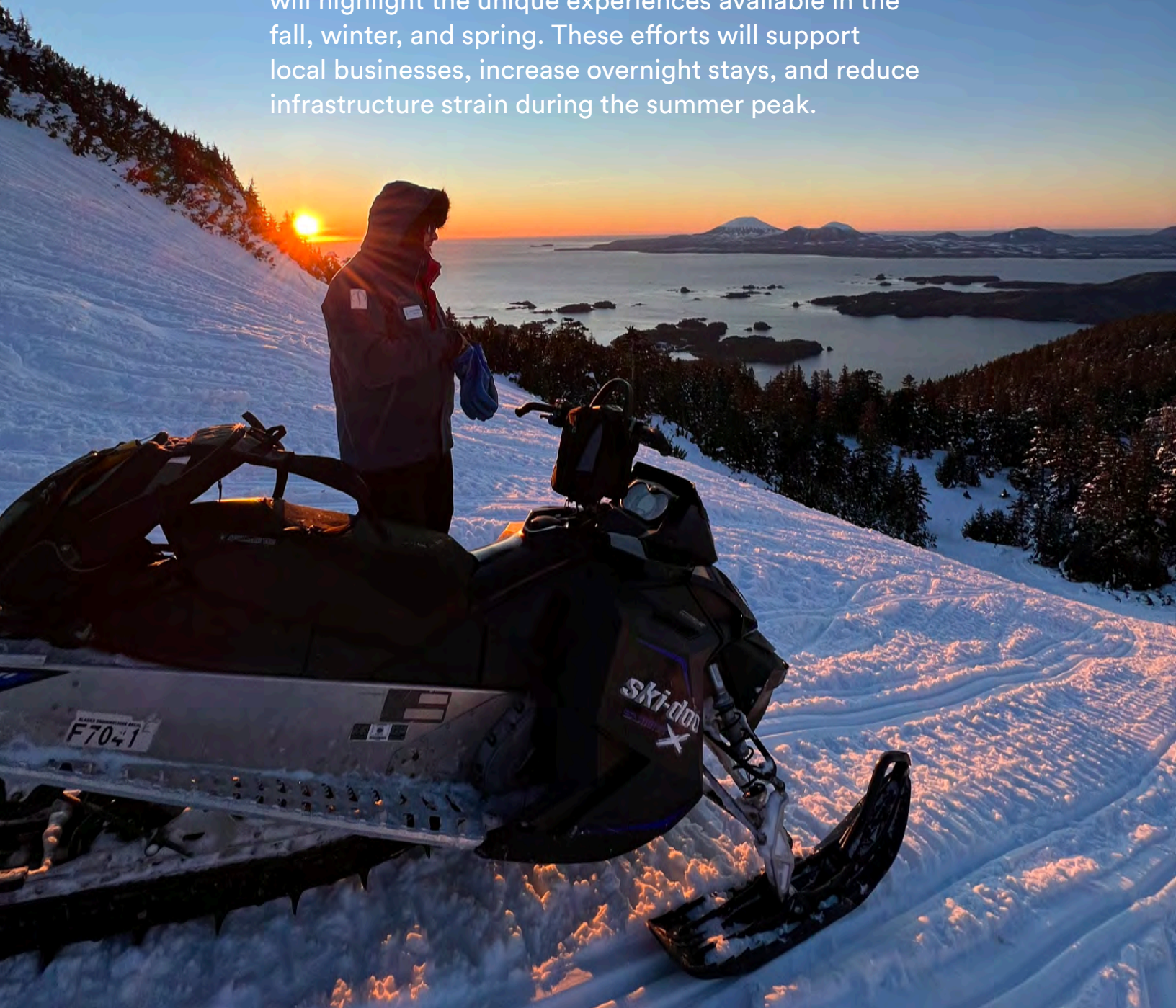
SEO Rankings: Measure SEO improvements for keywords like "Alaska wellness retreat" and "Sitka wellness retreat."

STRATEGIES BY PILLAR



Year-Round Travel

By promoting year-round travel, supporting local beautification efforts, and enhancing planning resources, this strategy aims to attract independent travelers during Sitka's quieter months. Initiatives like interactive planning tools, sweepstakes, and curated local insights will highlight the unique experiences available in the fall, winter, and spring. These efforts will support local businesses, increase overnight stays, and reduce infrastructure strain during the summer peak.



1. Visit Sitka Participation in National Campaigns

YEAR 1 (2025)

Participate in high-visibility national campaigns like America 250, leveraging these opportunities to elevate Sitka's presence on a national stage. These campaigns will amplify Sitka's message, increase brand visibility, and generate national media coverage.

ACTION ITEMS:

Campaign Participation: Align Visit Sitka's messaging with America 250 and other national tourism initiatives.

PR Strategy: Pitch Sitka-specific angles to media partners and pitch story ideas to travel journalists.

Content Creation: Develop visuals, blog content, and social media posts promoting Sitka's participation in the campaign.

KPIs:

Media Mentions: Track the number of mentions or features of Sitka linked to national campaigns.

Visitor Engagement: Measure website traffic and referral traffic linked to national campaign mentions.

PR Value: Measure the earned media value (EMV) of national press mentions.

2. Quarterly Visitor Newsletter

YEAR 1 - YEAR 3 (2025-27)

Launch a quarterly visitor-facing newsletter to keep potential travelers engaged year- round. This email newsletter will feature travel planning tips, partner promotions, and seasonal updates to drive interest in year-round travel.

- ACTION ITEMS:**
- Content Development:** Develop a quarterly content plan featuring seasonal travel tips, upcoming events, and partner promotions.
- Newsletter Design:** Create a visually appealing email template optimized for desktop and mobile devices.
- Email List Growth:** Promote newsletter sign-ups via website pop-ups, social media, and partner businesses.

- KPIs:**
- Click-Through Rates (CTR):** Track the number of clicks to featured promotions or blog posts.
- List Growth:** Monitor email list growth over time.
- Newsletter Open Rate:** Maintain an average newsletter open rate of 20%.
- Click-Through Rate to Seasonal Content:** Achieve a 3% click-through rate to website pages featuring fall/winter/spring activities.

3. Insider Scoop Website Page

YEAR 1 - YEAR 2 (2025-26)

Launch an "Insider Scoop" page on the Visit Sitka website that features local recommendations for restaurants, activities, and "hidden gems." This page will be populated with input from Sitka residents, local business owners, and partner businesses, offering a trusted, local perspective for visitors.

ACTION ITEMS:

Content Curation: Collect and organize recommendations from local businesses, residents, and partners.

Web Design: Create a visually engaging, SEO-friendly landing page for the Insider Scoop.

Promotion: Drive traffic to the page through social media and email newsletters.

KPIs:

Page Views: Track visits to the Insider Scoop page on the website.

Engagement: Measure time spent on the page and click-throughs to partner listings.

User Contributions: Track the number of local submissions and recommendations featured on the page.

4. Year-Round Visitor Guide Strategy

YEAR 1 (2025)

The Visit Sitka Official Visitors’ Guide has been a vital resource for travelers, but as the destination evolves, so should the guide. Over the next three years, the Visitor Guide will be reimagined to better reflect Visit Sitka’s strategic marketing pillars. This evolution will ensure the guide showcases Sitka as a destination for independent travelers seeking meaningful, year-round experiences, as well as corporate retreats and wellness travelers, and event or convention planners. Year 1 (2025) will focus on rethinking the narrative and design approach, spotlighting local voices, and emphasizing regenerative tourism themes.

ACTION ITEMS:

Visioning Workshop: Host an internal content visioning workshop to identify the core themes, stories, and layout for the reimagined guide.

Content Development: Craft new copy and design visually engaging layouts that emphasize off-season experiences, independent travel, and cultural tourism.

Print & Distribution: Print and distribute physical guides for use at key entry points (airports, visitor centers) and send them to member businesses and industry events.

KPIs:

Digital Downloads: Track total downloads and views of the online Visitor Guide.

Print Distribution: Measure the number of guides distributed at airports, visitor centers, member businesses, and industry events.

Guide Requests: Track total Visitor Guide requests annually.

Story Impact: Monitor feedback from partners, members, and travelers on the quality and relevance of storytelling content.

5. Transportation Guide

YEAR 1 - YEAR 2 (2025-26)

Create a Transportation Guide for Sitka to educate visitors on all available transportation options, from motorized services like rental cars and driving tours to non-motorized options like bike rentals and pedestrian-friendly routes. This guide will support Visit Sitka's goal to enhance accessibility, reduce visitor confusion, and promote sustainable travel behaviors. By providing clear, visually appealing information, this guide will make it easier for visitors to navigate Sitka while supporting regenerative tourism principles. The guide will be available as a physical handout at key entry points (like the Sitka Airport and Visitor Center) and as a downloadable, mobile-friendly digital version on the Visit Sitka website.

ACTION ITEMS:

Content Development: Develop comprehensive transportation content, including car rental services, shuttle options, e-bike rentals, public transit, crosswalk safety tips, and pedestrian-friendly routes.

Design & Production: Create a visually appealing and easy-to-read transportation guide that aligns with Visit Sitka's brand aesthetic and messaging.

Digital Integration: Launch a downloadable, mobile-friendly version of the guide on the Visit Sitka website. Add QR codes at key entry points, like the Visitor Center and Airport, for easy access.

Print & Distribution: Print signs to direct visitors to the digital guide and post at key entry points, partner businesses, and major transportation hubs like the Sitka Airport, Visitor Information Center, and cruise ship terminal.

KPIs:

Digital Downloads: Track total downloads of the digital Transportation Guide from the Visit Sitka website.

User Engagement: Monitor feedback from visitors on guide usefulness via website feedback, visitor reviews, and post-visit surveys.

Website Traffic: Track website visits and time spent on the Transportation Guide landing page.

Community Feedback: Measure support from local businesses and community partners for the guide's content and usefulness.

6. Seasonal Adventure Sweepstakes

YEAR 2 (2026)

Visit Sitka will launch a Seasonal Adventure Sweepstakes to drive interest and visitation during Sitka’s quieter shoulder seasons—fall, spring, and winter. These seasons offer unique opportunities to experience Sitka’s stunning landscapes, seasonal wildlife activity, and rich cultural offerings without the summer crowds. The campaign will spotlight immersive year-round experiences, such as wildlife viewing during the spring herring spawn or fall eagle migrations, guided cultural tours, and wellness- focused retreats. By partnering with local businesses to offer accommodations, dining, and tours as part of the prize, the sweepstakes will inspire travel during these key periods, generate leads, and deepen engagement with Visit Sitka’s platforms.

Suggested Prize Package could be similar to:

- A 3-night stay at a local lodge or inn.
- Guided wildlife experiences such as spring herring spawn viewing or fall eagle migrations.
- Access to cultural tours or shows, art workshops, or other hands-on experiences tailored to the season.
- Dining vouchers for partner restaurants.

Suggested Entry Qualifications could be:

- Signing up for Visit Sitka’s Quarterly Newsletter (primary entry).
- Engaging with Visit Sitka’s social media posts (e.g., liking, commenting, sharing, or tagging friends).
- Downloading the Driftscape App to explore Sitka’s self-guided tours and experiences.
- Creating a custom itinerary using the new Interactive Itinerary Builder (bonus entry).
- Completing the Visitor Pledge for responsible travel, encouraging regenerative tourism principles (bonus entry).

6. Seasonal Adventure Sweepstakes (cont.)

YEAR 2 (2026)

ACTION ITEMS: **Campaign Development:** Design a landing page for sweepstakes entry and capture visitor data for future email marketing.

Content Creation: Produce campaign visuals and promotional content for social media, email, and paid ads.

Promotion: Launch the campaign across Visit Sitka’s website, social media platforms, and email newsletters. Run paid ads targeting independent travelers and shoulder-season explorers. Partner with influencers or travel bloggers to share their experiences of Sitka during these quieter seasons.

Partner Involvement: Partner with local businesses to offer accommodations, tours, and dining experiences as part of the prize package. Offer a paid plan where partner businesses could pay X amount of dollars to be included in an entry method. E.g. Follow “X” partner business for an extra sweepstakes entry.

KPIs: **Website Engagement:** Landing page visits, click-through rates to linked tools, and time spent on the page.

Social Media Metrics: Campaign engagement (likes, shares, comments, and tags) and total reach.

Itinerary Builder Usage: Number of custom itineraries created during the campaign.

Visitor Pledge Participation: Number of Visitor Pledges completed as part of entry.

Overall Participation: Total entries, including bonus entries from all channels.

Newsletter Sign-up Goal: Acquire 2,000 new newsletter subscribers through the sweepstakes.

Shoulder Season Booking Increase: Drive a 5% increase in bookings with partner businesses during the shoulder season (Oct-Apr) as a direct result of the sweepstakes, measured by partner surveys.

7. Interactive Itinerary Builder Tool

YEAR 2 (2026)

Enhance the Visit Sitka website with a dynamic and user-friendly itinerary builder that allows travelers to customize their trip based on specific interests, such as adventure, wellness, eco-conscious travel, or cultural tourism. This tool will offer curated recommendations for local businesses, tours, events, and accommodations, encouraging longer stays and deeper engagement with Sitka's offerings, while helping to promote Visit Sitka's partners.

ACTION ITEMS:

Tool Development:

Visit Sitka should collaborate with a web developer to create an intuitive, quiz-based tool with AI-driven recommendations for itineraries tailored to user preferences.

Integrate an interactive map feature where users can visualize their itinerary by location (e.g., trails, cultural spots, restaurants, and lodging).

Include options for 1-day, 3-day, or week-long visits to accommodate travelers with different lengths of stay.

Business and Experience Integration:

Work with partner businesses to showcase local tours, restaurants, cultural activities, and accommodations. Allow these businesses to submit customizable experiences or packages directly into the tool.

Highlight seasonal offerings (e.g., Spring herring spawn viewing, winter wellness retreats, or summer kayaking adventures) to align with marketing goals.

Include “insider tips” from local guides, artisans, and residents to personalize the recommendations further.

Promotion and Launch Strategy:

Develop a “Plan Your Sitka Adventure” campaign to promote the tool across multiple channels:

Social Media: Short videos, user testimonials, and sneak peeks of the tool in action.

Email Newsletters: Target past visitors and interested travelers with personalized invites to try the itinerary builder.

7. Interactive Itinerary Builder Tool (cont.)

YEAR 2 (2026)

ACTION ITEMS (CONT.):

Influencer Partnerships: Work with travel influencers to test and showcase the tool, sharing their custom itineraries and experiences.

Visit Sitka Website: Feature the itinerary builder prominently on the homepage with a call-to-action for trip planning.

User Experience Enhancement:

Add a "Save and Share" feature, allowing visitors to email their itinerary, share it with their group, or print a clean, easy-to-follow version for offline use.

Offer a follow-up email with links to book tours, accommodations, and local experiences directly.

Community Involvement:

Host workshops for local businesses to ensure their listings are up-to-date, accurate, and compelling. Encourage bundled packages or limited-time offers exclusive to itinerary users.

KPIs:

Business Engagement Metrics: Number of partner businesses listed in the tool and packages submitted. Click-through rates to business pages and partner booking platforms.

Conversion Metrics: Track the percentage of users who proceed to bookings for tours, accommodations, or event tickets after completing the itinerary. Monitor direct feedback through a post-itinerary survey or review prompt to evaluate user satisfaction and potential improvements.

Social Engagement Metrics: Monitor social media engagement from campaign launches (e.g., shares of personalized itineraries or campaign videos).

Itinerary Completion Rate: Achieve a 40% completion rate for users starting an itinerary.

Referral Traffic to Partners: Drive a 10% increase in referral traffic to partner websites from the itinerary builder.

8. Downtown Beautification Support

YEAR 3 (2027)

Support downtown beautification efforts in collaboration with the City & Borough of Sitka. Efforts may include adding planters, public art, benches, and wayfinding signage to create a more welcoming experience for visitors, and supporting infrastructure development such as the Lincoln Street Project. These initiatives encourage foot traffic, drive exploration of local businesses, and enhance Sitka’s sense of place.

- ACTION ITEMS:**
- Project Planning:** Work with city officials to identify priority areas for beautification.
 - Partner Engagement:** Collaborate with partner businesses and the newly-formed Downtown Business Association to co-sponsor planters, benches, and art installations.
 - Public Art Installation:** Partner with local artists to install new public art as part of the beautification effort.

- KPIs:**
- Community Participation:** Track the number of local businesses and partners involved.
 - Installations Completed:** Measure the number of new planters, benches, and public art pieces installed.

9. Community Events Calendar

YEAR 3 (2027)

Launch a public-facing events calendar to feature community events, seasonal celebrations, and cultural festivals year-round. This initiative will increase visitor engagement, inspire trip planning, and drive traffic to local events.

ACTION ITEMS:

Content Collection: Work with partner businesses and local event organizers to collect event details.

Website Integration: Add an interactive events calendar to the Visit Sitka website.

Promotion: Promote events via social media and newsletters to drive attendance and encourage year-round travel.

KPIs:

Event Listings: Number of events added to the calendar each year.

Page Views: Measure visits to the events calendar page.

Event Attendance: Track attendance at featured events to assess Visit Sitka's impact.

Channel Enhancements

Social media and the website are Visit Sitka's most influential marketing channels, playing a central role in shaping the visitor experience. They are the two key platforms for inspiration, trip planning, and brand storytelling.

Given their impact, these platforms require focused attention and ongoing improvement. The recommendations in this section aim to enhance engagement, streamline visitor planning, and increase independent bookings. From boosting ads to launching an interactive itinerary builder, these enhancements will ensure Sitka's most visible marketing assets remain effective, user-friendly, and aligned with the strategic goals of balanced, year-round visitation and deeper community connection.

Social Media

Visit Sitka's social media channels (Facebook and Instagram) have been successful with hardly any ad spend or additional promotional budget. The large organic reach and engagements seen on both platforms is a testament to the brand and its content resonating with the right target audience. However, large DMO accounts have budgets for Meta ads and boosting, content creation, specific campaigns, and influencer marketing to stand out and maximize their city's reach to the general public. Visit Sitka should be doing this as well, as it is one of Alaska's premier destinations.

With over 70,000 followers on Facebook and nearly 18,000 on Instagram, Visit Sitka's social media presence is significant. Coincidentally, many people (especially those that are independent travelers) use Facebook and Instagram as a planning tool for their trips and vacations - something that Visit Sitka can take advantage of with opportunities for social media enhancements by utilizing the following opportunities for social media enhancements.

Meta Ads and Boosting:

Ideally, every Facebook and Instagram post is boosted, for either engagements or page visits/likes. Even a small budget of \$15 per post can reach an additional 130-370 accounts, while boosting already higher performing posts by \$50 can reach an additional 460-1,300 accounts (the organic metrics on these posts are already performing above average, so an extra boost of budget can take these posts into viral-territory). In addition to boosting, Visit Sitka should run ads for Profile Likes and Visits, to grow the following on both Facebook and Instagram. These ads should be run weekly or bi-weekly. When Visit Sitka has specific campaigns that are running (read more in the subsection below), ads should be run to promote these to whichever audience the campaign is targeting. These ads will be placed in more than just the newsfeed, as they can show up in Messenger, Marketplace, Instagram, and Meta Audience Network to reach as many users as possible.

**Implement in Phase 1, with adjustments made in Phases 2 and 3 depending on results*

Content Creation:

Photoshoots where images and video are captured should be conducted bi-annually, if not quarterly. Separate from the Visitor Guide photoshoot, these photoshoots are to create content specifically for social media and the blog (since Visit Sitka sometimes cross-posts content). Reels should be planned and scripted to avoid missing content once photoshoots have ended. Assets should be captured around Sitka and places the DMO would like to feature, like seasons (i.e. Spring = Herring, Fall = Colors on Harbor Mountain), Partner businesses to highlight, different activities available depending on the time of year, wildlife, photos to match pre-planned blog posts, etc.

***PHASE 1:** Plan one additional photoshoot besides the Visitor Guide shoot to highlight at least 1x activity and 2x partner businesses.

PHASE 2: Increase planning to 2-3 photoshoots beyond Visitor Guide shoot.

PHASE 3: Evaluate if photoshoots should be bi-annual or quarterly, depending on how much content is needed.

Tik Tok:

While Visit Sitka has a TikTok account, it has not been active in recent years. A decent percentage of TikTok users plan trips based on recommendations on the app, so this is another tool in Visit Sitka's social media efforts that should be utilized. Due to the uncertain future of TikTok in the US, too much time and energy should not be focused here. However, it's still important to be active enough to increase the reach of the Visit Sitka brand, so it is recommended to post bi-weekly or weekly on this platform.

Specific Campaigns Suggestions:

These are based on the major campaigns outlined in the Strategies section of this document:

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (LOCAL CAMPAIGN):

Share a Partnership survey so local businesses (active partners and non-partners both) can provide Visit Sitka feedback on improving the Program in hopes of getting more Partners. The survey links can be shared in Facebook posts and Stories.

CULTURAL VOICES:

Highlight cultural storytelling and Tlingit voices on Facebook and Instagram to showcase Sitka as a unique community-driven and culturally-rich travel destination. These highlights can be reels, carousel posts, static posts, and stories sharing Indigenous-owned Partner businesses, Native artists features, cultural tourism opportunities, and local partners who represent or are active in the Sitka Native community.

LEARN BEFORE YOU LAND:

Educate social media users on responsible tourism and how to have a meaningful experience before they visit Sitka. This pre-arrival educational effort will utilize reels, carousel posts, static posts, and Stories to highlight Sitka's culture, regenerative tourism principles, and the community's expectations for respectful visits. To ensure content doesn't come across as "preachy," messaging on social media should be shared in a fun and engaging way (stickers, polls, etc. on stories; past visitor testimonials on how they enjoyed their trip to Sitka; humorous "Do's and Don't's" graphics) to ensure high engagement and information retention.

Website

The following are a list of website recommendations that Visit Sitka should consider implementing to better align the existing website with the goals of this marketing plan.

Interactive Itinerary Builder:

Visit Sitka will introduce a quiz-based Interactive Itinerary Builder that allows visitors to personalize their trips based on specific interests such as adventure, wellness, cultural tourism, or eco-conscious travel. The tool will feature customizable itineraries for 1-day, 3-day, and week-long visits, complete with integrated maps showing attractions, accommodations, and local dining. Partner businesses will be highlighted, with options for bundled experiences and seasonal offerings. Travelers will also be able to save, print, and share their itineraries, creating a seamless planning process that encourages longer stays and deeper engagement.

Cultural Heritage Hub:

Develop a Tlingit Cultural Heritage Hub to serve as a central resource for Sitka's cultural experiences. This dedicated page will feature Tlingit-led tours, immersive storytelling workshops, cultural itineraries, and profiles of local Indigenous artists and artisans. Visitors will have access to educational resources, such as the Welcome Video and links to the Tlingit/English Driftscape Tour, reinforcing cultural visibility and respect.

Regenerative Tourism Page:

Continue to develop the Regenerative Tourism page with comprehensive information that educates visitors on sustainable and responsible travel practices. This page will include the Visitor Pledge, "Learn Before You Land" campaign content, and actionable tips on minimizing environmental impact. Blog posts, videos, and visuals will share real-life examples of Sitka's regenerative efforts, such as forest preservation projects and responsible fishing initiatives.

Enhanced Meetings & Events section:

Update the Meetings & Events section to highlight Sitka's diverse range of venues and flexible options for corporate retreats, wellness events, and mid-sized conventions. This expanded resource will feature all available meeting spaces, including Harrigan Centennial Hall, lodges, cultural centers, and unique outdoor venues, ensuring planners can find the right fit for their event. A downloadable Meetings Toolkit with venue details, sample itineraries, and planning tips will simplify the process for organizers, while success stories and testimonials from past events will showcase Sitka as a seamless and inspiring destination for gatherings.

Insider Scoop Page & Newsletter Integration:

Launch an "Insider Scoop" page featuring curated local tips, hidden gems, and seasonal recommendations shared by Sitka residents, business owners, and guides. To create exclusivity and encourage newsletter sign-ups, highlight that full access to Insider Scoops—including "locals-only" tips and early updates on seasonal experiences—will be available exclusively in Visit Sitka's Quarterly Visitor Newsletter. This approach ensures the most unique insights remain special while building an engaged audience and inspiring deeper trip planning.

Personalized Visitor Dashboard:

Introduce a Personalized Visitor Dashboard where users can save itineraries, event plans, and travel resources. Travelers will be able to create accounts to access their saved guides, view signed Visitor Pledges, and receive itinerary reminders or seasonal event updates.

Website (cont.)

User-Generated Content Integration:

Incorporate photos from the Visit Sitka annual photo contest into a “Share Your Sitka” gallery where visitors can submit their photos, itineraries, and personal stories. Featuring user-generated content will build community engagement and provide authentic inspiration for future travelers. Submissions can also be integrated into Visit Sitka’s social media and blog content.

Live Events Calendar Integration:

Enhance the Community Events Calendar with interactive filters for event types (e.g., cultural, wellness, outdoor). Users will have the option to add events to their personal calendars or sign up for email reminders, ensuring visitors can plan their trips around seasonal festivals and celebrations. Create a form where community members can submit their own events for approval to be added to the calendar.

Blog

See full blog strategy in the 2023 Digital Communications Roadmap.

Content Strategy:

Develop articles aligned with the four strategic marketing pillars, focusing on unique local experiences and cultural insights to attract independent travelers.

Visual Enhancement:

Update the blog template to be more visually engaging, incorporating high-quality images and videos to captivate readers.

Newsletter

Quarterly Visitor Newsletter:

Establish a quarterly newsletter under the Visit Sitka brand, featuring seasonal travel tips, upcoming events, and partner promotions to maintain engagement with potential visitors year-round. See year-round strategy section for further detail.

Collateral

Visitor Guide Evolution:

Over the next three years, reimagine the Visitor Guide to reflect Visit Sitka’s strategic marketing pillars, emphasizing year-round independent travel, wellness retreats, and cultural tourism. See year-round strategy section for further detail.

Transportation Guide:

Develop a collateral piece educating visitors on rental and bus services, road rules, and non-motorized transportation options to enhance visitor mobility and safety. See year-round strategy section for further details.

Existing Collateral Continued Renewal:

Continue updating and publishing Pocket Guide, Attractions Map, Hiking Guide, Biking Map, and the Alaska’s Inside Passage Map.



Action Plan

	Strategy	Strategy Title	Time of Execution	Partners
Regenerative Tourism	1.1	Learn Before You Land	Ongoing (2025-2027)	Marketing contractors, local businesses, tour operators
	1.2	Visitor Pledge	Year 1 (2025)	Sustainable Southeast Partnership, STA, City of Sitka
	1.3	Learn Before You Land	Year 2 (2026)	City of Sitka, Tourism Task Force
	1.4	Visitor Pledge	Ongoing (2025-2027)	Partner employers, Chamber of Commerce
	1.5	Learn Before You Land	Year 1 (2025)	Sitka Chamber of Commerce, local mentors
	1.6	Visitor Pledge	Year 1–2 (2025–2026)	City of Sitka, DOT, design contractors
	1.7	Learn Before You Land	Year 1 (2025)	Sustainable Southeast Partnership, Spruce Root, partner organizations
	1.8	Visitor Pledge	Year 1–2 (2025–2026)	Local creatives, partner businesses
	1.9	Learn Before You Land	Year 3 (2027)	Partner businesses, Chamber of Commerce
Cultural Tourism	2.1	Welcome Video	Year 1–2 (2025–2026)	STA, local creatives
	2.2	Airport Cultural Installation	Year 1–2 (2025–2026)	STA, City & Borough of Sitka, local artists
	2.3	Launch Tlingít/English Driftscape Tour	Year 1 (2025)	STA, Driftscape
	2.4	Year of Indigenous Travel Writers	Year 2–3 (2026–2027)	Tlingít-led businesses, Indigenous writers
	2.5	Tlingít Heritage Info Hub	Year 1 (2025)	STA, Shee Atiká, Sealaska, Tlingít educators
	2.6	Cultural Voices in Marketing Content	Ongoing (2026–2027)	STA, local artists, tour operators

Meeting & Events	3.1	Harrigan Centennial Hall Branding & Marketing	Year 1 (2025)	Harrigan Hall, design/branding contractors
	3.2	Themed Packages for Meetings & Events	Year 1 (2025)	Local businesses, wellness providers, tour operators
	3.3	Update Meetings & Conventions Planner & Website	Year 2 (2026)	Event planners, partner businesses
	3.4	Host a FAM Week for Planners	Year 2 (2026)	Partner businesses, event planners
	3.5	Targeted Meetings & Conventions Marketing	Year 2–3 (2026–2027)	Marketing contractors
	3.6	Promote Wellness Retreats	Year 3 (2027)	Local & national influencers, wellness providers
Year-Round Travel	4.1	National Campaign Participation	Year 1 (2025)	National campaign partners, media
	4.2	Quarterly Visitor Newsletter	Ongoing (2025–2027)	
	4.3	Insider Scoop Webpage	Year 1–2 (2025–2026)	Local businesses, community contributors
	4.4	Year-Round Visitor Guide Strategy	Year 1 (2025)	Marketing contractor
	4.5	Transportation Guide	Year 1–2 (2025–2026)	Transportation providers, City of Sitka
	4.6	Seasonal Adventure Sweepstakes	Year 2 (2026)	Partner businesses, influencers
	4.7	Interactive Itinerary Builder Tool	Year 2 (2026)	Web developers, local businesses
	4.8	Downtown Beautification Support	Year 3 (2027)	City of Sitka, Downtown Business Association, artists
	4.9	Community Events Calendar	Year 3 (2027)	Event organizers, local partners
	4.10	Promote Sitka's Signature Events	Year 2–3 (2026–2027)	Arts Council, event organizers, media partners

