MISSION: To bring conventions and leisure visitors to Denver for the economic benefit of the City, the community and our partners.

VISIT DENVER is a non-profit trade association, contracted by the City & County of Denver to act as the City’s official marketing agency.

In 2020, the Bureau wound up with a budget of $13 million, down from $41.4 million in 2019, a reduction of nearly 69%. Normally, funding comes from a dedicated portion of the Denver Lodger’s Tax and from advertising, private fundraising and partnership fees. In 2020, all partnership fees were waived, and many private-dollar fundraising efforts such as the Fall/Winter Official Visitors Guide to Denver & Colorado were suspended.

In addition, VISIT DENVER contracts with the City & County of Denver to administer marketing funds from the Tourism Improvement District (TID), which began collecting funds on January 1, 2018. These funds are tied first to paying bonds for the expansion of the Colorado Convention Center and therefore, the marketing component was essentially eliminated in 2020.
Scottish poet Robert Burns could have been thinking about 2020 when he wrote:

“The best laid schemes of Mice and Men often go awry...”

CHAIRMAN & PRESIDENT REPORT

2020 was on track to be a record-breaking tourism year, a continuation of the success that VISIT DENVER had achieved in sales, marketing, partnership and administration. On top of that, the City and our partners were planning billions of dollars of investment in transportation, venues, hotels, restaurants and cultural attractions across Denver’s diverse neighborhoods.

Instead, the city – indeed the entire globe – has been humbled by the smallest forces of nature.

The Leisure & Hospitality sector accounts for a whopping 39% of jobs lost to the pandemic – the largest number of workers hurt in any industry by far – according to a Department of Labor National Jobs Report.

No one in the industry who experienced 2020 will ever forget it; not the pain and suffering that came with COVID-19; the protests that led to historic discussions on race equality; and the ways the industry came together in the spirit of collaboration that this time required.

There are at this moment, 20 new hotels scheduled to open in the Denver metro area in 2021 with 2,653 new hotel rooms. There are amazing new projects underway such as the expansion of the Colorado Convention Center, the new National Western Center, the opening of Meow Wolf, the Denver Art Museum expansion, 39 new gates at Denver International Airport, a revitalized 16th Street Mall and so much more.

With vaccines already being distributed, we aren’t being overly optimistic when we say that it’s time to enact Henry David Thoreau’s quote, “Never look back unless you are planning to go that way.”

Of course, the purpose of an annual report IS to look backwards. And there is much to be proud of in a review of 2020. The work of VISIT DENVER never stopped for a moment. In this report, learn of the many programs VISIT DENVER ran to mitigate the economic chaos of the pandemic, keep businesses going, evaluate our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, to keep the inspiration for travel alive and help our more than 1,300 partners.

Of course, there are devastating numbers that are part of 2020’s history and need to be reported. But there are positive numbers too, such as the $71 million of rebooked conventions and $354 million of new convention business booked in 2020, the half-million visits to the website from the recovery ad campaign and the return of the Mile High Tree!

This annual report is different this year, which we hope will make it easier to read and absorb. You’ll see the numbers and hear the stories that break our hearts, and the ones that fill them up.

We would be remiss not to thank Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock, Colorado Governor Jared Polis, the Denver City Council, our Board of Directors and our 1,300 partners for all they have done in this historic year. Thank you!

GREG LEONARD
General Manager, Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center Hotel
2020 VISIT DENVER Board Chair

RICHARD W. SCHARF
President & CEO, VISIT DENVER
We have never, ever seen a collapse of business fundamentals like we have experienced in the last nine months globally in the hotel industry. It has never, ever happened. 9/11 wasn’t even close.

Darren Powderly, co-founder of online real estate investment market CrowdStreet. Denver Post, December 27, 2020
FEBRUARY 29
American Physical Society cancels their 2020 Denver convention.

MARCH 5
First COVID case in Colorado.

MARCH 10
Governor Polis declares a State of Emergency.

March 11
VISIT DENVER holds the Denver & Colorado Tourism Hall of Fame dinner with 450 attendees; this will be one of the last large meetings staged in Colorado in 2020.

MARCH 12
Mayor Hancock declares a State of Emergency.

MARCH 13
All Denver venues closed, including the Colorado Convention Center.

MARCH 14
All downhill skiing in Colorado is suspended.

MARCH 16
All bars and restaurants in Colorado are closed for dine-in service.

APRIL 1
VISIT DENVER launches Virtually Denver to promote the online and virtual offerings of dozens of partners.

APRIL 2
Outdoor Retailer cancels 2020 summer convention.

APRIL 6
State announces plan to convert the Colorado Convention Center into an Alternate Care Site, a potential overflow hospital, essentially canceling all conventions for what would become the remainder of the year.

APRIL 7
The Brown Palace Hotel voluntarily closes for the first time in 128 years.

APRIL 10
Red Rocks Amphitheatre 2020 summer concert season is canceled.

APRIL 30
380,000 Coloradans have applied for unemployment benefits.

MAY 2
Mayor Hancock orders face masks to be worn in Denver in public places.

MAY 4
July 4th celebrations are canceled, including Independence Eve at Civic Center Park.

MAY 9
DENVER Center for Performing Arts cancels 2020 season.

MAY 19
Bars in Colorado can open for in-person service for up to 50 people.

MAY 24
Restaurants can start re-opening for dine-in service.

JUNE 11
The Brown Palace Hotel reopens.

JUNE 12
Red Rocks Amphitheatre reopens.

JUNE 29
VISIT DENVER launches “You Deserve Some Denver” recovery marketing campaign.

JULY 4
July 4th celebrations are canceled, including Independence Eve at Civic Center Park.

JULY 15
Governor Polis orders masks to be worn in all public places.

JULY 20
Outdoor Retailer cancels 2020 summer convention.

JULY 27
Bars in Colorado can open for dine-in service.

SEPTEMBER 24
Governor Polis orders face masks to be worn in Denver in public places.

OCTOBER 27
Governor Polis orders face masks to be worn in Denver in public places.

OCTOBER 28
Public and private gatherings in Denver limited to no more than 10 people from two households.

NOVEMBER 6
“Home by 10 p.m.” order issued, Denver residents are encouraged to be home by 10 p.m.

NOVEMBER 20
Denver drops to Level Red: all indoor dining is closed, last call for alcohol at 8 p.m., gatherings limited to members of the same household.

DECEMBER 1
Third wave of COVID proves to be the deadliest. One quarter of Colorado’s 4,000 COVID deaths occur in a three-week period between late November and early December.

DECEMBER 28
65,282 frontline Colorado healthcare workers and those in greatest need have received the COVID-19 vaccine.

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

CASE GROWTH IN 2020

COVID-19

- 500
- 1000
- 1500
- 2000
- 2500
- 3000
- 3500
- 4000
- 4500
- 5000
- 5500
- 6000
- 6500

VISIT DENVER begins working with the City to develop and launch the State’s 5 Star Certification program for a potential 7,000 businesses to apply.
VISIT DENVER’S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

2020 will also be remembered for the historic protests and marches around the country and the world, all of which shined a long-needed spotlight on racial injustice and systemic racism.

VISIT DENVER responded by creating a new board-led committee on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) to ensure that we are doing everything we can to support fairness and equal opportunity across our operations. We are reviewing all practices, enhancing community affiliations and strengthening our already-strong track record of representing the city’s vibrant diversity within our marketing efforts.

For more information contact Rachel Benedick, executive vice president, Sales & Services at rbenedick@visitdenver.com.
Every single operation of VISIT DENVER was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Ironically, despite the drop in business, we had to work twice as hard with a quarter of the resources in order to help our clients cancel (and hopefully rebook) their Denver meetings, launch thoughtful and well-timed consumer promotions, develop new assistance programs for our partners and advocate for our industry. All of this was done while keeping the health and well-being of our staff in mind as we transitioned to working in this new environment.

The issue of diversity in the hospitality industry became of extreme importance in 2020 following the demonstrations over the death of George Floyd, and that too became a priority with our board of directors and across our entire operation.

Here are some of the programs we instituted this year.
When restaurants shuttered for in-person dining, we quickly created an entirely new program, To Go Denver, which included a website for restaurants offering meals to go. Nearly 1,000 restaurants participated. The site was promoted through social media and gained 226,000 page-views, while local news stories about it earned $2.2 million in equivalent advertising revenue.

With local attractions and cultural institutions closed, the team built Virtually Denver to promote online experiences and generate excitement for special exhibitions and cultural partners. The site had more than 100 online and virtual events, and earned more than $2 million in media value.

LOCAL RESPONSE TO COVID CLOSURES

In less than two weeks in March 2020, Denver went from its first COVID case to the closure of all restaurants, bars and public facilities. VISIT DENVER jumped into action in a new world, where information was key and supporting the needs of our partners was critical.
We created the “Clean & Safe Resource Guide to Denver,” a COVID information web page letting visitors and clients know up-to-the-minute information about closures, openings, restrictions and ideas about how to remain safe in Denver. The page quickly became one of the most visited on the website.

As a sponsor, we partnered with the Colorado Restaurant Response, which delivered 300,000 meals to those in need and put restaurant staff back to work. We also helped them raise $600,000 for local musicians and restaurant staff as a result of the Governor’s Colorado Gives Back virtual concert headlined by Denver’s The Lumineers.
To boost resident morale, we partnered with local muralist Pat Milbery and created a “Love This City” campaign and trivia contest, using prizes purchased from local partners. The challenge asked a series of Denver trivia questions over a period of seven weeks, with weekly giveaways, culminating in a pair of grand prize packages. More than 20,000 locals entered the contest.

Beginning in December, we worked alongside our board members and the City to develop the State's 5 Star Certification program, which launched in January 2021, that could potentially help more than 7,000 businesses.
On February 29, 2020, the American Physical Society canceled their annual convention, despite the fact that many of their delegates had already arrived. This became the first of many cancellations among both citywide and single-hotel meetings that would ultimately lead to more than $1 billion in lost future business in 2020 and 2021.

On April 6, 2020, the Colorado Convention Center was converted to an Alternative Care Site for COVID patients who might have overwhelmed the capacity of existing medical facilities in Denver, just as they had in China, Italy, Spain and across the globe. With strict state meeting mandates in place, this ended any remaining hope for meetings in the facility for 2020 and into the new year.

Thus, began the long effort to work with our clients on their cancellations and hopefully find new available dates to rebook this business, as well as essentially retooling the entire sales process.

CANCELLATIONS & REBOOKINGS

- Because conventions are booked from two to 10 years into the future, almost every convention group booked in Denver for 2020 already had a commitment for 2021 and the next few years. In 2020, 450,000 convention delegates were unable to experience Denver for a meeting that was booked by VISIT DENVER.

- The challenge was to find open dates in Denver that matched the next open dates for the convention group. This created a puzzle with hundreds of moving pieces, all in a period of great uncertainty.

Despite the challenges, VISIT DENVER was able to REBOOK $71 MILLION OF BUSINESS lost in 2020.

REVAMPING SALES

- Future convention sales efforts continued throughout 2020, but in a new, virtual world with no industry meetings, no trade shows, no face-to-face meetings, no sales events and few site tours.

- VISIT DENVER created an entirely new sales program concentrated on strategic account contacts, long-term relationships and generating leads for future business.

- This included Mile High Mondays, a series of more than two dozen emails sent to clients that showcased various aspects of the city in whimsical illustrations.
Virtual site visits, as well as a "We Miss You" video, were posted on a new web page to keep Denver top of mind for meeting planners. VISIT DENVER convention sales staff attended virtual trade show conferences and hundreds of Zoom meetings with clients.

Sales efforts resulted in $354 MILLION OF NEW MEETING business booked for Denver.

These sales efforts resulted in $354 million of new meeting business booked for Denver during the worst convention sales environment that has ever existed. A total of 1,640 leads for single hotel conventions were also distributed.
COLORADO CONVENTION CENTER EXPANSION
Throughout the pandemic, the expansion of the Colorado Convention Center was able to stay on track with a new design team and definite plans for a June 2021 construction start date with a late 2023 opening. The sales team worked closely with the City’s team of Rider Levett Bucknall as project manager, Hensel Phelps as contractor and TVS Design as architect. The 80,000-square-foot, column-free ballroom/multifunctional space with pre-function and outdoor terrace space will have 150-mile views of the Rocky Mountains.

WORLD CUP 2026
The efforts to secure Denver’s spot as a host city for the 2026 FIFA World Cup slowed down a bit, but never stopped. The team presented more bid materials to decision-makers remotely in July, provided updates to the local bid committee and worked on communications strategies in anticipation of FIFA site visits and their host city selection before the end of 2021.
At the start of 2020, VISIT DENVER was conducting tourism marketing along a typical pattern that included a traditional Winter campaign, a first quarter Denver Restaurant Week campaign and the continuation of the TID-funded “Reclaim the Weekend” campaign. These efforts concentrated on drive and regional markets, promoting each weekend as another opportunity for Denver hotel stays.

Then on March 5, 2020, Colorado identified its first COVID patient and the world changed. Within two weeks, all Denver restaurants, bars and museums were closed, and public events were canceled. VISIT DENVER quickly suspended all advertising, including the spring/summer campaign, typically the largest of the year.

But just as quickly, the team sprang into action in an unprecedented fashion; first with a series of local programs designed to support partners on the verge of closing, before returning to the market with recovery advertising efforts designed to safely and smartly invite visitors back to the city.

Summer Recovery Marketing

- When it appeared that Denver and Colorado were positioned to welcome back some safe tourism from travelers seeking an outdoor destination that could offer socially distanced, urban and cultural attractions, a new recovery campaign was created. “You Deserve Some Denver” launched for the spring/summer time period and drove traffic, including in regional markets and select long-haul markets like Chicago, to a dedicated landing page.

- The new campaign featured people following local and state guidelines by wearing masks and practicing social distancing, while continuing to promote Denver’s brand as an outdoor city that offered the combination of culture, dining, shopping and adventure – a perfect urban road trip destination for drive and short flight destinations.

- This campaign of digital ads, TV ads, website ads and social media posts resulted in 120 million ad impressions and 525,000 website visits from July through the end of October.
FALL PROGRAMS

- Any type of large public gathering event had to be re-examined in 2020. So, Denver Arts Week in November had to forgo signature features like First Friday Arts Walk and Night at the Museums, and became Denver Arts Week(end) (November 6-8). The effort still managed to feature more than 200 events, many of them in-person, and also promoted the virtual Denver Film Fest. Denver Arts Week gained $3.5 million of local, regional and national media coverage of Denver’s arts scene.

- A first-ever fall Denver Restaurant Week was held November 13-22 to help struggling restaurants with an emphasis not just on indoor dining, which was suspended in the middle of the program, but on takeout and delivery meals as well. More than 180 restaurants participated.

MILE HIGH HOLIDAYS

- The holiday season offered another window of opportunity for safe, local tourism promotions, and Mile High Holidays 2020 created a bright spot of cheer. November 2020 brought the second lighting of the Mile High Tree, presented by Modelo® to the 16th Street Mall, where nearly 30,000 people safely viewed onsite and another 60,000 viewed from a distance. In addition, the campaign promoted Christkindl Market in Civic Center Park as well as lighting festivals in Cherry Creek North, Denver Zoo, Denver Botanic Gardens, Larimer Square, Union Station and many other places through New Year’s Eve, while encouraging safe, socially distanced, mask-wearing locals to “make a night of it” with overnight stays in Denver hotels.

- The Mile High Holidays campaign was supported by CARES Act funding in partnership with the City, allowing the promotions to extend even further.
ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

• Ski Targeting: Beginning in early November, a new “ski targeting” campaign was launched to target visitors planning Colorado ski vacations, and encourage them to extend their trip and spend additional nights in Denver. The effort was made possible by innovative digital advertising technology and ran both domestically as well as in Mexico, which has a concentration of affluent customers with a strong interest in Colorado ski vacations, as well as direct flight access from Denver International Airport.

• Expedia Co-op: With hotels struggling to survive the pandemic, VISIT DENVER stepped in to fully fund a co-operative advertising program on Expedia for all lodging partners, which normally costs hotels thousands of dollars to participate. The program included a Denver landing page with links to deals from hotel partners and ran from July 1 – December 30, 2020. During that time, the co-op generated nearly 103,000 room nights and more than $13 million in revenue for our partners.
INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

• The catastrophic collapse of international tourism in the world in 2020 hit the U.S. especially hard, causing a loss of $155 billion in economic activity, which translates to $425 million a day. Denver and Denver International Airport mirrored the country as a whole. International visitation dropped from a record 580,000 in 2019 to 115,900 in 2020, a decline of 80%. However, Denver is expected to retain most of its direct international flights, including direct service to Tokyo, London, Frankfurt, Zürich and a total of 13 international destinations.

• International tourism promotion moved to online tradeshow meetings. However, VISIT DENVER had representation at all these shows, continuing the long work and reputation that Denver has established as an international tourism gateway to America.
Founded in 1909, VISIT DENVER is a public/private trade association with 1,300 private members and a contract with the City & County of Denver to act as its official marketing arm. Both the public and private sectors suffered catastrophic losses in 2020 due to the pandemic. VISIT DENVER was quick to react.

**HALL OF FAME DINNER**

- VISIT DENVER’s Hall of Fame Dinner went ahead as scheduled on March 11, and ironically became one of the last large gatherings to be held in Colorado in 2020. 450 guests attended to see long-time board member and former publisher of the Denver Business Journal Scott Bemis, Westword editor Patricia Calhoun, 35-year VISIT DENVER public relations director Rich Grant, and restaurateurs Denise and Kevin Taylor inducted into the Denver & Colorado Tourism Hall of Fame.

- More than $40,000 was raised for tourism scholarships at the Hall of Fame Dinner, raising the total that has been awarded since inception to $1.2 million. The work of this Foundation has become more important than ever since it will be more difficult in these troubled times for students to continue their higher education in tourism and hospitality.
• Once the scope of the pandemic was clear, and as VISIT DENVER understood the struggles that partners were experiencing, all partnership dues were suspended for one full year. This allowed partners to still take advantage of all benefits while also seeing that VISIT DENVER was in their corner.

• As the world moved to socially distanced Zoom meetings and events, VISIT DENVER joined in creating free workshops, webinars and regular meetings such as the Marketing Advisory Committee (MAC), Industry Updates, social media roundtables, virtual meeting management and more. Nearly 1,500 partners attended these meetings.

• In August, VISIT DENVER created a hybrid Board Retreat with 53 board members attending in person and 14 online. The meeting demonstrated the great challenges of meeting in person in 2020, where 8,094 square feet of space was needed for those attending in person, all meals had to be served individually to each participant, and everyone had to wear a mask the entire time. However, it also helped board members understand the situation and create a strategy for tourism industry recovery and new priorities for VISIT DENVER in these unusual times.

• In November, the Bureau's annual meeting went online and was free for everyone to view live or watch later at their convenience. Nearly 500 partners saw videos about the Year in Review, Hospitality Heroes and a tribute to Jayne Buck, VISIT DENVER's recently retired, 21-year veteran, Vice President of Tourism.
Throughout 2020, VISIT DENVER continued to closely monitor and stay engaged on local, state and federal pandemic guidance and policies impacting our industry and community. The Clean & Safe Resource Guide was created and updated frequently with useful information for our partners, visitors, planners and residents.

VISIT DENVER had a seat at the table with elected officials, decision makers and broad stakeholders advocating for our partners and industry through every step of the pandemic and recovery efforts. These include:

- At the local level, we have been an active member of the Long-Term Recovery Committee to ensure that recovery of the tourism industry is directly tied to the overall economic recovery of our community.
- At the state level, we worked closely with the Governor’s team and public health officials and advocated for policies and resources to help our industry recover.
- At the national level, we engaged our Colorado delegation members regarding federal recovery programs and financial resources for our industry.

While the priority focus in 2020 was on pandemic response and recovery, we also championed for the redevelopment of the 16th Street Mall and VISIT DENVER’s Board of Directors voted to support local ballot measures impacting sustainability efforts and homelessness solutions.

In addition, a Quarterly Policy Perspectives e-newsletter was sent to partners, highlighting policies at all levels that directly impact our industry, as well as a new bi-weekly Travel Trends e-newsletter with key industry data. Both newsletters consistently received high open rates.

2020 AFFILIATIONS

- Amp the Cause
- Asian Chamber of Commerce
- Biennial of the Americas
- The Center on Colfax
- CherryArts
- City Club of Denver
- Civic Center Conservancy
- Colfax Marathon Partnership
- Colorado Association of Destination Marketing Organization
- Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce
- Colorado Business Committee for the Arts
- Colorado Competitive Council
- Colorado Concern
- Colorado Hotel and Lodging Association/Metro Denver Loading Council
- Colorado Restaurant Association
- Colorado Ski Country USA
- Colorado Society of Association Executives
- Colorado Sports Hall of Fame
- Colorado Tourism Office
- Colorado Women’s Chamber of Commerce
- Denver Architecture Foundation
- Denver Department of Housing Stability
- Denver Film Society
- Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
- Denver Police Foundation
- Denver Rescue Mission
- Denver Theatre District
- Destination Colorado
- Downtown Denver Partnership
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Colorado Holiday Commission
- EAT Denver
- Girl Scouts of America
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Denver
- I Have a Dream Foundation
- Inner-Neighborhood Cooperation
- Japan America Society of Colorado
- Kiwanis Club of Denver
- Meetings Industry Council
- Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation
- Metro Mayors Caucus
- Mizel Institute
- National Western Center
- NEWSED
- Rocky Mountain Business Travel Association
- Rocky Mountain Chapter of ASAE, IAEE, MPI, PCMA, SGMP
- Rocky Mountain Indian Chamber of Commerce
- Rocky Mountain International
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President, A. B. Hirschfeld & Sons

**Jeffery Hochstadt**  
Chief Strategy & Development Officer, Western Union

### 2021 COMMUNITY BOARD MEMBERS

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**Adam Schlegel**  
CEO, Cumulus Etc.

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**Joan Tezak**  
Executive Director, Colorado Society of Association Executives

**Lee Gash-Maxey**  
Executive Director, Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce

**Debra Johnson**  
Chief Executive Officer & General Manager, Regional Transportation District

**Deborah Jordy**  
Executive Director, Scientific and Cultural Facilities District

**Amie Mayhew**  
President & CEO, Colorado Ski and Cultural Facilities District

**Melanie Mills**  
President & CEO, Colorado Ski Country USA

**Sonja Riggs, CAE**  
President & CEO, Colorado Restaurant Association

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EMPLOYEE TYPE

2019

2020

% CHANGE
FULL TIME (FTE)
66
48
-27.3%
PART TIME
10
0
-100%
TOTALS
76
48
-36.8%

VISIT DENVER EMPLOYEE DIRECTORY

VISIT DENVER HEADCOUNTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYEE TYPE</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>% CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FULL TIME (FTE)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>-27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART TIME</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>-36.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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