



Visit Denver Board Retreat
Devil's Thumb Ranch | Aug. 21–22, 2025

Thursday – August 21, 2025
Morning Session

**Macroeconomic Forces, Travel Trends &
Implications for Denver**

9:15 – 10:15 AM
High Lonesome Barn

In this dynamic and fast-paced session, Chuck will present the latest insights from Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics Company, offering a comprehensive macroeconomic forecast that highlights the key forces shaping the future of travel and tourism. Through an in-depth analysis of both U.S. and international travel trends, attendees will gain a clear understanding of the economic drivers, evolving visitor behaviors, and shifting expectations influencing destinations across the globe. With a focused lens on Denver, Chuck will examine the specific opportunities and challenges facing our market, providing practical and strategic insights to help local stakeholders navigate an ever-changing environment.

Chuck Davison
Vice President of Attribution Solutions
Tourism Economics

Chuck Davison serves as Vice President of Attribution Solutions at Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics Company, a role he began in 2024. He brings over three decades of leadership experience across the travel, tourism, and technology sectors, with a strong focus on data-driven strategies that drive organizational growth and performance. From 2015 to 2024, he was President & CEO of Visit SLO CAL, where he transformed a fragmented region into an award-winning destination development brand. His previous roles include Vice President and General Manager at Expedia, Inc., and Executive Director of an international non-profit. Chuck holds a degree in business administration and is the immediate past chair of the California Travel Association.



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A View from Washington: A New Administration, Congress & The Historic Opportunity to Showcase America's Greatness

**10:15 – 11:00 AM
High Lonesome Barn**

This timely and insightful session will explore the intersection of policy, politics, and opportunity in the evolving travel landscape. With Washington, D.C.'s political climate influencing the future of the travel industry, Erik Hansen, Senior Vice President of Government Relations, will offer an on-the-ground perspective on current legislative dynamics—including how industry leaders are working with Congress and the Trump Administration to modernize, secure, and streamline the travel experience for both domestic and international visitors.

The session will provide a high-level economic snapshot of travel volume and spending for 2025, while also spotlighting historic global-scale events on the horizon, including *America250* and the *2026 FIFA World Cup*, and their potential to transform U.S. destinations. Board members will gain insider insights into key advocacy efforts, challenges such as funding cuts, and pivotal policy areas including air travel infrastructure and visa reform.

Erik Hansen

Senior Vice President of Government Relations

U.S. Travel Association

Erik Hansen is Senior Vice President of Government Relations at the U.S. Travel Association, where he leads policy development and advocacy efforts on behalf of the travel industry. His work focuses on federal legislation and regulations related to transportation, infrastructure, sustainability, and international travel. He also serves as a lead advisor for the association's Future of Travel Mobility Conference, which brings together industry and government leaders to shape the future of traveler experience. Erik previously held roles on Capitol Hill and in the private sector, including with the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Prudential Financial.



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Headquarter Hotel Feasibility Study

11:15 AM – 12:15 PM
High Lonesome Barn

As Denver continues to grow as a top-tier convention destination, the need for increased hotel inventory adjacent to the Colorado Convention Center has become critical. This session will offer a first look at findings from a feasibility study evaluating the development of a new headquarter hotel. With in-depth analysis spanning market demand, stakeholder engagement, and competitive benchmarking, the study provides a strategic blueprint to enhance Denver's capacity to attract larger, more lucrative conventions.

Dan Fenton

Managing Director, Global Tourism & Destination Advisory

JLL

Dan Fenton, Executive Vice President at JLL, is a national expert in tourism strategy, destination planning, and convention center development. He advises cities across the U.S. on leveraging hospitality assets for long-term economic impact. A former CEO of Team San Jose, Dan brings a rare blend of operational know-how and visionary planning to help communities align tourism with growth.

Scott Beck, JLL

Consultant, Global Tourism & Destination Advisory

JLL

Scott Beck, Managing Director of Tourism and Destination Advisory at JLL, is a seasoned leader in destination marketing and visitor economy strategy. He supports cities in transforming their tourism infrastructure to meet evolving traveler expectations. Previously, Scott served as CEO of Visit Salt Lake and Destination Toronto, bringing decades of frontline experience in positioning urban destinations for success.



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Thursday – August 21, 2025 Afternoon Session

**Residents Perceptions on Tourism & The Future
of Downtown: 2025 Survey Insights**

**1:15 - 2:15 PM
High Lonesome Barn**

In any successful destination, it is important for the DMO to understand how its work impacts residents as well as visitors. RRC Associates is a nationally recognized leader in tourism and urban research. Since 2022, the firm has conducted surveys of residents to gauge sentiment toward Denver's quality of life, tourism, major events, and the state of downtown. CEO Sean Maher will present the results of the recently completed 2025 research, providing the Board with insights on how Denverites feel about how visitors, special events, and the downtown experience are affecting life in the city.

Table -top Brainstorm Session: Following Sean's presentation, and after learning what Denver residents really think about tourism, we'll discuss and brainstorm how Visit Denver can best advocate for the industry in today's climate—and how we can all participate in bold, new strategies for shaping public perception and strengthening civic pride.

Sean Maher
CEO
RRC Associates

Sean Maher is CEO of RRC Associates, where he oversees client relations, project management, and strategic planning. RRC works nationwide in the sectors of tourism, community planning, and urban district management. Prior to RRC, Sean served for 11 years as CEO of the Downtown Boulder Partnership (DBP), overseeing marketing, operations, events, and recruitment for Boulder's 49-square-block downtown district. He also led economic development efforts as head of the Boulder Economic Council (BEC) and managed the Small Business Development Center. Sean previously owned multiple Ben & Jerry's stores in Boulder and Denver, as well as outdoor retail stores in Taos, New Mexico. He holds an MBA from the University of Colorado.



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America 250 – Colorado 150

2:15 – 3:15 PM

High Lonesome Barn

In 2026, Colorado will celebrate a rare and exciting milestone: 150 years of statehood and 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. As the only state with this unique overlap, we're calling it our *Sesquicentennial*. The America 250 – Colorado 150 Commission is leading the statewide effort to bring this to life through events, education, and community projects that reflect Colorado's full story—past, present, and future.

Today we're sharing a quick overview of the commemoration, ways for Denver to get involved, and a few ideas to spark collaboration. We're excited to brainstorm with you on how Denver can help lead the way in celebrating this once-in-a-generation moment.

Table -top Brainstorm Session: This interactive session will explore how Denver can take a leadership role in shaping and showcasing these historic celebrations. From adding local events to the statewide calendar and embracing co-branded visual identity, to participating in signature initiatives like a collective 14er climb or spectacular drone shows, there are countless ways to engage. Board members will participate in a dynamic brainstorm focused on how Visit Denver and its partners can leverage this moment to foster community pride, boost visitor engagement, and position the city prominently on the national stage.

Tim Wolfe

Director

Colorado Tourism Office

Tim Wolfe is Director of the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO), part of the Office of Economic Development & International Trade. He oversees \$25 million in strategic programming that drives \$28.5 billion in annual economic impact. Tim also serves on the boards of the U.S. Travel Association, the National Council of State Tourism Directors, the Western States Tourism Policy Council, the Colorado Geographic Naming Advisory Board, and Visit Denver. He Co-Chairs the *America 250 – Colorado 150 Commission*.



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With a strong background in hospitality, Tim has managed multiple AAA Four-Diamond hotels, including the Brown Palace Hotel & Spa. His leadership blends tourism growth with sustainability, ensuring Colorado's unique character is preserved.

Chris Hinds

District 10

Denver City Council

Councilman Chris Hinds represents Denver's District 10 and is a leading advocate for transportation equity and accessibility. Since surviving a life-changing crash in 2008, he has championed local, state, and national policies to improve mobility and access for people with disabilities, including authoring the Chris Hinds Act, signed into Colorado law in 2018. He regularly testifies before legislative bodies and serves as a subject matter expert on transportation, disability, and access. Chris holds a degree in computer science and an MBA in finance and strategy from Southern Methodist University.



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The AI Shift: What Happens When Consumers Stop Searching and Start Asking?

3:30 - 4:30 PM

High Lonesome Barn

The rules of search and discovery have changed, permanently. Across every sector, AI is rewriting how people find, trust, and choose what matters. Consumers are increasingly looking beyond search engines in favor of AI conversations. Whether planning a trip, buying tickets, finding the right beverage, exploring healthcare, or choosing a brand, people are turning to platforms in AI for personalized, curated answers. The result? A steep drop in traditional organic traffic and click-throughs causing organizations that rely on web traffic – basically every company – to rethink their sales and marketing funnels. AI is now a gatekeeper, tailoring results based on highly specific questions, not just simple queries. From dynamic airline pricing to Uber's real-time adjustments, every organization is now operating in a landscape where visibility, trust, and decision-making are mediated by machines. In the space of AI search there is a relatively new concept that is now prevalent in over 45% of all AI search and it's called the "zero click" search. This is a user who will never click on a link and leave the AI. They will gather all info from the AI and then move on to make a decision. By 2026 this number will climb to most likely over 60% of search on AI.

With the help of HIVE, Visit Denver's response will be significant. The team is moving fast: redefining KPIs, restructuring website architecture, creating AI-optimized content, and retraining teams across departments. These efforts aren't just about tourism, they're a blueprint for relevance in an AI-driven economy. And now, HIVE CEO, Mitch Mitchem returns to the board retreat to share what comes next. After last year's powerful session on *AI and the Human Element*, this year's experience takes the conversation to a new level. Mitch will reveal what most organizations still don't see coming, and how Denver's proactive approach positions the city to be prepared for what's ahead. Mitch will show real world examples, talk through the power of HIVE's work in new industries and more, while revealing what friction points remain across all industries.



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Mitch Mitchem
CEO
HIVE Interactive

As the CEO of HIVE Interactive, Mitch Mitchem is a systems disruptor, AI strategist, and human performance expert trusted by executives, cities, and enterprise teams navigating real-world transformation. As CEO of HIVE Interactive, Mitch leads high-stakes enablement work that integrates AI into people, processes, and strategy—without losing the human center.

With over 3,000 keynotes and executive briefings delivered worldwide, Mitch is known for making complex innovations simple, actionable, and urgent. He's trained tens of thousands across sectors—tourism, energy, finance, government, and tech—on how to eliminate workflow friction, cut decision fatigue, and unlock new levels of operational clarity.

Mitch doesn't just forecast the future—he builds the systems and trains the teams to meet it.