

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS CHAMBER 2021 Annual Report

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### **Dear Chamber Members,**

In 2021, how business is done changed dramatically. Some elements of change were incredibly positive, while other aspects continue to be challenging to overcome. The Steamboat Springs Chamber worked to quickly adapt and respond to the ever-changing needs of the business community.

Business advocacy continued to be a key component of our work. In 2021, with plans for further positive impact as the voice of the business community in policy decision forums, we adjusted our economic development, destination marketing, and community development strategies throughout the year as protocols, consumer sentiment, supply, and employee availability ebbed and flowed. Enclosed we share highlights of the Chamber's work in the past year.

Our outcomes are only possible with the ongoing partnerships of our diverse membership base, the City of Steamboat Springs, and Routt County. In addition, our organization only functions with the ongoing support of an extensive group of business professionals who volunteer their time on our Marketing Committee, Economic Development Council, Lodging Association, Young Professionals Network, and our Board of Directors.

We are proud to present our 2021 Annual Report which details the work Chamber staff, committees, and the Board of Directors engaged in this year to support businesses. Our commitment to the business community remains steadfast. Thank you for your continued commitment to the Chamber.

Kara Stoller CEO Steamboat Springs Chamber

Geoff Petis Eidt & Petis Team Colorado Group Realty 2021 Chamber Board President

#### **2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Adonna Allen Finance/Banking Alpine Bank

Rex Brice Food & Beverage Rex's Family of Restaurants

Katie Brown Past-President & Mountain Operations Steamboat Ski & Resort Corp.

Luke Brosterhous Recreation Catamount Ranch Club

Ted Carey Board Vice President & Professional Services The UPS Store

Robin Craigen Lodging Association Chair Moving Mountains

Kathy Elliott Shops & Retail Christy Sports

Soniya Fidler Executive Committee & At Large UCHealth Yampa Valley Medical Center

Sarah Fox Executive Committee & Construction Fox Construction

Maren Franciosi YPN Chair Steamboat Ski & Resort Corp.

# OUR VISION Be the leading regional business organization laying the foundation for an exceptional quality of life.

Betse Grassby Arts & Culture Steamboat Art Museum

Michele Meyer At Large Community Agriculture Alliance

Scott Marr Lodging Operations Holiday Inn Steamboat

Logan Molen Professional Services Steamboat Pilot & Today

Sarah Jones EDC Chair Steamboat Ski & Resort Corp.

**Deb Olsen Marketing Committee Chair** Ski Town Media

Geoff Petis President & At Large Colorado Group Reality

Dan Pirrallo Lodging Operations Sheraton Steamboat Resort Randy Rudasics Education Yampa Valley Entrepreneurship Center

Ulrich Salzgeber Real Estate Steamboat Board of Realtors

Liza Scudder Main Street Steamboat Overland Sheepskin Company

Mark Walker Property Management Resort Group

Adam Wilson Steamboat Mountain Village Vectra Bank

Michael Buccino Ex Officio City of Steamboat Springs

Jason Lacy Ex Officio City of Steamboat Springs

Dr. Brad Meeks Ex Officio Steamboat Springs School District

Beth Melton Ex Officio Routt County

# **CHAMPION FOR YOUR BUSINESS**



The Steamboat Springs Chamber vision is the heart of our organization's purpose. The Chamber exists to ensure Routt County continues to be an ideal place to live and work. Our efforts focus on support of businesses so they can thrive and provide meaningful employment for residents. Community development, economic development and destination marketing are our core avenues that all lead to the same goal.

Often, we hear members connecting the value of their membership directly to the list of tactical benefits that comes with memberships. Our hope is to convey our value more clearly to the business community in reiterating that our focus is to raise the tide so that all business can not only float, but thrive, and enable our community members to find success through quality employment.

# **OUR MISSION**

Our organization is dedicated to economic vitality within Routt County through business advocacy, destination marketing, and economic development.

## **TEAM VALUES**

#### INTEGRITY

Be trustworthy and trust your teammates. Communicate honestly and openly. Do what you say you are going to do.

#### INNOVATION

Leverage individuals' differences, ideas and perspectives. Start with the end in mind. Think big, unconventionally, and beyond the status quo and limitations. Spark meaningful change.

#### PASSION

Take pride in the work we do. Be fully committed to the team, organization, and community. Turn creative ideas, energy, and plans into purposeful results.

# **BUSINESS ADVOCACY**

Advancing our business advocacy efforts was a key focus area for 2021. Convening, catalyzing, and championing the business community's needs, particularly through the pandemic, moved our advocacy work forward in 2021.

The Economic Development Council's (EDC) Public Policy Committee identified, monitored, and communicated balanced assessments on critical policy issues related to economic development.

# **STATE BUSINESS ADVOCACY**

#### NATIONAL WESTERN STOCK SHOW

Joined the Association of Colorado Chambers of Commerce in communicating strong support of the continued success of the National Western Stock Show to the vital livestock exhibitors.

#### STATE HOUSE REDISTRICTING

We strongly encouraged the Colorado Independent Legislative Redistricting Commission to place Routt County, as an intact county and contiguous geographic area, with other intact counties that are mountain-resort counties to preserve whole communities of interest and whole political subdivisions.

#### PAUSE ACT

We joined Routt County and numerous additional entities in opposing the PAUSE Act.

# LOCAL BUSINESS ADVOCACY

The Steamboat Springs Chamber serves as the voice of the business community.

#### **ROUTT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH POLICIES**

Staff and Board members remained active participants in COVID-19 policy discussions throughout the year and worked to balance businesses' ability to function with community health. Early in the year, Chamber staff led the implementation of the 5 Star Program.

#### CITY OF STEAMBOAT SPRINGS PROPERTY TAX

City Council discussed a potential property tax in 2020 and 2021. To solve multiple funding challenges within the community, staff presented to Council a collaborative funding concept that included a reduced property tax amount dedicated to Howelsen Hill and sustainable funding for destination management communications and promotion. In July, the Chamber Board decided to no longer pursue this proposal due to the need for additional community discussion. The discussed property tax did not move forward to the ballot.

#### ATTAINABLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Chamber staff convened a group of community leaders to discuss housing solutions including current projects, plans, goals and potential partnerships to address the immense workforce housing needs. In addition to sharing individual project and goal updates, discussion has covered the purchase of the Brown Ranch, State support opportunities, potential short-term solutions, and policies impacting attainable and affordable housing development.

#### SHORT TERM RENTALS

We communicated support in hiring the short-term rental licensing and enforcement firm and encouraged City Council to study the issue and the impact of potential policy changes more deeply. We also asked that an economic impact study be completed prior to implementing definitive policy change.

#### **BUSINESS LICENSING**

The Economic Development Council (EDC) Public Policy Committee and staff studied the potential implementation of a Steamboat Springs business licensing program following the EDC's identification of general business licensing as a top issue impacting economic sustainability and diversification efforts in our community. The Chamber Board reviewed the analysis completed by the policy committee and communicated to the City the Chamber's strong support and encouragement for the City to implement a business licensing program.



# LOCAL BUSINESS ADVOCACY

#### **STEP UP AND SERVE SESSION**

The EDC Public Policy Committee, in partnership with the Steamboat Pilot & Today held this session to provide community members information about serving in elected and non-elected leadership positions at the local level, encouraging more people to actively engage and lead.

#### **CANDIDATES FORUM**

The EDC Public Policy Committee sponsored the Candidates Forum in partnership with the Steamboat Pilot & Today and the Board of Realtors.

#### **INDUSTRY ADVOCACY GROUPS**

The Steamboat Springs Chamber represents a diverse membership with varying needs. One of the most impactful initiatives we recently executed was the formation of our 14 industry specific advocacy groups. Staff members met individually with each group to discuss and form action plans around current issues facing these industries and to form plans around future concerns. These groups helped shape the 2022 Chamber Program of Work and advocacy focus.

#### **RECOVERY TEAM**

We continue to participate in the long-term economic recovery work now being led by the Northwest Colorado Development Council, a group of local and county governments. NWCDC received technical assistance grants for planning and project identification and prioritization in anticipation of further implementation funding down the road.

#### JOINT INFORMATION COMMITTEE (JIC)

A group of communication professionals including Marketing Director Laura Soard and Communications Coordinator Angelica Salinas advised Routt County on messaging and helped distribute communications. As a result, we frequently added business information to our member communications and website.

#### COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP GROUPS

- City of Steamboat Springs Mountain Area Master Plan Advisory Committee
- Routt County Master Plan Advisory Committee
- Routt County Peak Health Alliance Steering
  Committee
- Northwest Colorado Development Council
- Steamboat Springs School District Strategic Planning Steering Committee
- First Impressions Council
- Steamboat Mountain Village Board
- Northwest Colorado Broadband Board
- UCHealth Yampa Valley Medical Center Board
- Colorado Tourism Office Marketing Committee
- Colorado Association of Destination Marketing
  Organizations member
- Tourism Industry Association of Colorado member
- Economic Development Council of Colorado Board
- Routt Recreation & Conservation Roundtable
- Gray Wolf Restoration Focus Group
- Western Association of Chambers DEI Committee
- Boettcher Foundation Rural Collaborative
- And more

#### RESOURCES

The Chamber team continued to provide useful and relevant resources for businesses and nonprofits. These resources are shared on our website, through member emails, and in various webinars. Our team also created a toolkit to assist with the needs employees were experiencing throughout the pandemic. This toolkit provided information on unemployment insurance, food and housing assistance, utility assistance, medical information, childcare services, hospitality relief grants, and mental health services.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Our economic development department focuses on advancing activities, programs, and policies that build a more diverse economy and create a stronger, more resilient business community. Our team was able to carry out the following long-term efforts while addressing challenges in relation to COVID-19 impacts.

#### **BUSINESS EXPANSION & RETENTION**

The retention and expansion of businesses in Routt County is the cornerstone to our economic development work.

#### 25 VISITS & 2 TOURS

Insights gathered from those engagements:

**Pros:** Great place to do business because it's a great place to live.

Cons: Housing, childcare, hiring, supply chain

**Trends:** Hiring remote staff and adapting operations will continue.

#### **BUSINESS ATTRACTION**

The Chamber is our community's concierge attending to businesses looking to relocate to our community.

We sponsored Town Hall Outdoor Co. for the Rural Jump Start program to receive tax relief and a \$40,000 grant.

We cosponsored the Yampa Valley Entrepreneurship Center's annual Business Plan Competition leading to new business formation.

#### INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

Identifies and targets key primary industry sectors that are well positioned for expansion and pay above average annual wages for Routt County.

**Recreation** – We supported the formation of an informal group of outdoor gear company owners and held 6 planning meetings.

**Location Neutral Employees** – Routt County was added to the Office of Economic Development and International Trade's Location Neutral Employment Incentive program. This program provides incentives to approved companies relocating to Colorado to hire location neutral workers in approved counties such as Routt County. The goal is to spread new jobs around the state supporting local economic diversification.

**Creative Industries** – We work in partnership with local arts organizations to advance the creative industries in Routt County. In 2021, the Steamboat Springs Film Committee successfully moved to Steamboat Creates allowing for improved alignment in programing and event development, as well as location scouting and film permitting, that will better serve both local and outside film and TV production interests and ties with the Colorado Office of Film, TV and Media.

#### BROADBAND

The Chamber continues to actively engage on broadband development currently with staff serving as the President of the Northwest Colorado Broadband (NCB) Board of Directors. NCB works to bring higher speed internet at a lower cost to all of Routt County. NCB Partners include: Routt County, City of Steamboat Springs, Steamboat Springs School District, Yampa Valley Electric Association, UCHealth Yampa Valley Medical Center and the Steamboat Springs Chamber.

#### **PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT**

We are committed to supporting collaborative efforts to retain and grow business in Routt County. This year we collaborated with, co-sponsored or advocated for the following: Integrated Community, CMC's Nursing Simulation Laboratory, Town of Hayden, Steamboat Creates, West Slope Startup Week, Yampa Valley Electric Association & Luminate Broadband, Yampa Valley Entrepreneurship Center, and others.











techstars\_ Startup Week West Slope

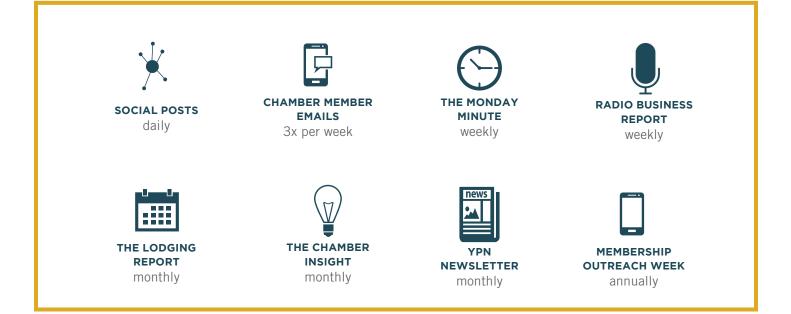
# **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

The Community Development department connects our community through programs, educational opportunities and partnerships that help make Routt County a great place to live and work.



#### COMMUNICATIONS

Our communications keep members up to date on the latest business news, events and opportunities, and the work we are doing on your behalf.



#### **TRAININGS & WEBINARS**

- Steamboat Ready
- De-escalation Training
- Tax Planning Workshop
- Employment Law
- The Future of Work
- Introduction to Census Data
- Preparing for Winter

#### YOUNG PROFESSIONALS NETWORK (YPN)

YPN is dedicated to building a better community by empowering the next generation of leaders. Through network engagement, YPN lowered membership dues in 2021 and had 47 active members. They hosted monthly happy hours to help young professionals connect. YPN's marketing and communications efforts included partnering with the Steamboat Pilot & Today on the 20 Under 40 Awards. They also hosted a booth at the Winter Expo and raised \$2,618 at the OktoberWest Beer Stroll. YPN is actively engaged in community involvement and volunteered at United Way's Day of Caring, the Community Thanksgiving Dinner, and Yampa Valley Gives Day.

# 13

# \$11,000

#### **Board Members**

#### Awarded in Scholarships

#### LEADERSHIP STEAMBOAT

The 2021 Leadership Steamboat class faced more uncertainty than any other class in the program's history. While we were able to begin the year in-person, a rise in COVID-19 cases in the winter months forced the class to a mostly virtual experience. Despite the uncertainty, the class created a successful project, Routt County Store & Share, a cooperative freezer storage that supports the needs of local agriculture producers. This project stemmed from the overwhelming need in our community to not only help producers store and distribute their products, but to also increase access to local food products. The class purchased a 40-foot commercial freestanding freezer that will provide 2,280 cubic feet of storage space. The unit will be made available to local producers as part of a cooperative. Thank you to all those who supported this effort, especially the Community Ag Alliance and Yampa Valley Electric Association.

# **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

#### THRIVE TOGETHER WOMEN'S SUMMIT

The Thrive Together Women's Summit is dedicated to the personal and professional development of the current and next generation of women leaders in our community. Coming back for its fourth consecutive year, the 2021 Thrive Together Women's Summit included two keynote speakers and eight breakout sessions in addition to nine virtual sessions for a total of 16 hours of programming and an hour and a half of networking time. This year's in-person event was held at the new Hayden Center, a regional renovation project looking to impact childcare, entrepreneurship, performing arts, community workspace and more in an area that houses a large section of the region's workforce.



# NEW RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYERS & EMPLOYEES

The Steamboat Springs Chamber is committed to providing useful and relevant resources for member businesses and nonprofits to succeed and thrive in Routt County.



#### **2021 BUSINESS RESOURCES**



COVID-19 isolation & quarantine guidelines

Vaccine information



Support resources for working families & individuals

Small business & entrepreneurial support



Work from home best practices



State funding initiative for meetings & events

Up to date demographic & community data

DYI DEI Toolkit

#### 2021 NAVIGATOR AWARDS

For the 24th year, the Steamboat Springs Chamber and the Steamboat Pilot & Today partnered to celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of local, distinguished businesses and leaders by presenting the annual Navigator Awards. Winners in each category are actively involved and committed to community projects that enrich the Routt County economy and culture, encourage and support employee retention and development, exhibit leadership and positive support among Routt County businesses, and go above and beyond the call of duty within and outside their organization.

#### **2021 NAVIGATOR AWARD WINNERS**

Business of the Year Steamboat Ski & Resort Corp.

Business Leader of the Year Mike & Kathy Diemer, Johnny B Good's Diner

Young Professional of the Year Justin Keys, The Barley

Nonprofit Leader of the Year Lisa Popovich, Main Street Steamboat Springs

# MEMBERSHIP

We are the **catalyst** for business growth. We are the **convener** of leaders and influencers. We **champion** for a thriving community.



One of our key objectives is to represent and engage our membership and the business community on economic matters that impact their business. Central to that is understanding the challenges they face. In September, the Chamber performed a membership survey that was answered by 100+ businesses in the Yampa Valley. Included are responses from small, medium, and large businesses and nonprofit organizations. Findings of note include:



#### **CHAMBER GIFT CARDS**



# \$171,705

#### PARTNERSHIPS

- Peak Health Steering Committee to address the high cost of healthcare in the Yampa Valley.
- In collaboration with Yampa Valley Entrepreneurship Center offered a four-class series. Classes included: creating a business plan, understanding financial statements, planning for a startup, and marketing.
- Worked with the United Way Financial Stability Committee to address basic financial health in the Yampa Valley. The committee offered a five-class basic financial literacy course to the public.
- In partnership with the Employers Council offered two employment law webinars



# **MEMBERSHIP**

#### MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

Our communications keep members up to date on the latest business news, events and opportunities, and the work we are doing on your behalf.





#### MEMBERSHIP WEBSITE

In 2021, we began to revitalize our membership web pages in an effort to streamline how members find the information and resources that are important in running and growing businesses.

# WHY BECOME A MEMBER?



**BUSINESS ADVOCACY** 



**COMMUNICATION & PROMOTION** 

#### ECONOMIC IMPACT

When a business is active in its local chamber, it's contributing to not only its own success, but to the success of the entire business community. Along with local groups, our board of directors, staff, and committees are working to tackle challenge in our community such as workforce housing, transportation, destination management, and workforce hiring Learn how we are working for you by reading our Annual Report and remember YOU are the Chamber



#### SHOP LOCAL STEAMBOAT

The Chamber launched a new shop local initiative in 2021. Features of this campaign include an education piece on reasons to shop local, member spotlight of the month, marketing push and Give the Gift of Steamboat for all major shopping holidays, member special offers, as well as collaboration with partners and members to spread the word on local shopping events.

#### SHOP LOCAL GOALS



Educate locals on the positive community impacts of shopping locally

Help businesses advertise who they are and what they do best

Create a year-round marketing campaign to drive traffic to local businesses



# **DESTINATION MARKETING**

Destination Marketing invites visitors to our area who stimulate and support the local economy and benefit hotels, attractions, retail, restaurants, cultural institutions, transportation providers, local agriculture, and countless other businesses.

In 2021, the Steamboat Springs Chamber Marketing Department created and executed a comprehensive, strategic marketing plan to inform, educate and inspire travelers during uncertain times. Though our approach and tactics had to evolve throughout the year, we stayed committed to our objectives of using visitation to increase tax collections and drive a strong, resilient economy. With many tools at our disposal, we were able to speak to consumers at every level of the travel sales funnel, from top tier aspirational visitors to repeat visitors, brand advocates and second homeowners.

#### PAID MEDIA CAMPAIGN

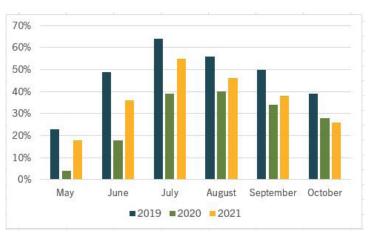
We executed a comprehensive, multi-channel campaign to inspire travel in early summer, highlight our Western Heritage, and communicate our Destination Management principles. The campaign leveraged a mix of highperforming and new media placements including digital display, digital radio, email and connected tv.

2021 continued to be a year of uncertainty in Destination Marketing. We closely watched national, state, and local trends and adjusted where needed. We observed indicators such as local lodging occupancy, community health and local staffing levels and as a result, significantly pulled back our fall campaign, delivering fewer impressions than planned.

#### SALES TAX & LODGING RESULTS MAY-OCT.

+57%	Lodging Tax increase from 2020
+25%	Sales Tax increase from 2020

#### **2021 TOTAL OCCUPANCY**



Million Impressions served





## SPECIAL EVENTS

#### **STEAMBOAT MARATHON**

In 2021 we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Steamboat Marathon, once again bringing runners through the beautiful Elk River valley into downtown Steamboat Springs. There were several pandemic-related changes this year, and we didn't host the half marathon in-person. Instead, we offered a virtual half marathon option, while full marathon and 10K runners took to the local streets. In all we had over 1600 people register for the Back To the 80s themed event.

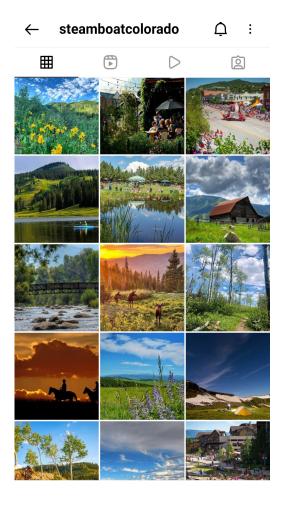
#### **4TH OF JULY PARADE**

The traditional, hometown favorite July 4 parade was back again this year after taking a detour in 2020. For the first time, the parade was held on Yampa Street to accommodate for the impacts due to the I-70 closures. In partnership with City staff and resources, our team successfully executed a wonderful parade despite the last-minute obstacles of the route change and continuing pandemic challenges.

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Social media continues to be one of the most influential parts of our overall marketing strategy. In 2021, we leveraged a combination of organic and paid social campaigns to reach targeted audiences.

We continued to share inspiring and educational content to our social audience of 101,000+.





#### **2021 STATS**



#### **WEBSITE HIGHLIGHTS**

Our website allows us to tell a year-round story through content for every season. Throughout the year we directed visitors to our Visit Responsibly pages which cover local resources, visitor expectations, current regulations, what's open and more. New, relevant content, strategic search engine optimization efforts and paid campaigns drove strong website traffic to show positive year over year growth in sessions.

Over 940,000 website

Over 2 Million page

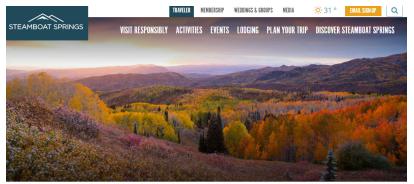
+ 180,000 over 2020

+ 375,000 over 2020

#### **EMAIL**

Our email campaigns engage with a high intent audience of past, present, and future travelers to Steamboat Springs. In 2021 we intentionally engaged with our email audience less frequently than in years past yet still grew our database by 8%. We focused content on Visit Responsibly and aspirational messaging for future travel. Emails sent in 2020 520k+

Click Through Rate  $12^{\%}$ 



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#### **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

The Marketing Department works with travel writers and influencers to generate travel stories about Steamboat Springs. This year, our PR efforts continued the strategy of promoting fall but also included topics of our Western Heritage and Visit Responsibly. We highlighted local products, water, trails and arts and culture.

#### **COVERAGE HIGHLIGHTS**

- Food + Wine Old Ski Gondolas Find New Life as Private Dining Rooms
- Lonely Planet Best Beaches in Colorado
- US News Best Small Towns to Visit in the USA
- NY Times It's Summer in the Ski Towns, 2.0
- AFAR Why Road Trips are Greener in Colorado
- Thrillist 7 Colorado Mountain Towns to Hit Before Summer's Over
- Travel + Leisure The 10 Best Small Towns in Colorado
- Modern Luxury Palate Pleasers: With a Renaissance in Dining, Steamboat Springs has Evolved into a Worthy Foodie Destination

#### **INTERACTIVE TRIP PLANNING APP**

This year we launched our new interactive trip planning app. Visitors can download our free app to their phone or use the desktop version to map out and save every trail, attraction, event, and restaurant they don't want to miss during their visit. Users can view everything at once or filter by preferred experiences in categories like Arts & Culture, Breweries, or Trails. First year engagement was beyond our expectations and we plan to expand our app offerings in 2022. Search for it in the app store under Visit Steamboat Springs.



2021 saw the evolution of several years' worth of Destination Management messaging and creative campaigns that spoke to sustainable travel and responsible visitation. We're evolving to consider every stage of the visitor experience and the impacts on the local community and employ strategies that align decision making at the intersection of economic, social and environmental impacts.

Visit Responsibly is a program the Steamboat Springs Chamber established to help educate visitors. It's a way to identify what is uniquely important to our area and provide a platform to educate and share resources. Each category identifies an area of concern, from wildfire prevention to reducing traffic and even how to properly cross Lincoln Avenue, then provides education and resources.

We continued our partnership with the Colorado Tourism Office and Leave No Trace to highlight sustainable tourism practices and launched a new Know Before You Go campaign on our website. We continued our work with Pledge for the Wild, a collection of western U.S. resort communities aimed at education and encouragement for visitors to give back to our wild places.









## **2022 GOALS**



# CHAMBER STAFF



**Kara Stoller** Chief Executive Officer



Sarah Leonard Community **Development Director** 



Laura Soard Marketing Director



**Angelica Salinas** Membership Manager



**Alexis Harman** Marketing & Administrative Coordinator



**Cecilia Morter Programs Manager** 



**John Bristol** Economic **Development Director** 



**Carol Halik Finance Manager** 



VITALITY IN THE VALLEY

# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!



















