

A DESTINATION PLAN

FOR THE WALKER BASIN CONSERVANCY



MAY 2025

Created through the Travel Nevada Destination
Development Design (3D) Project

WALKER BASIN CONSERVANCY ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the people whose guidance, enthusiasm, and expertise made this plan possible.

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Walker Basin Conservancy

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INTRODUCTION



OVERVIEW

In October 2023, the Walker Basin Conservancy—along with their partner Yerington Main Street Committee—applied to Travel Nevada’s Destination Development Design program (3D Project). Their application plan proposed a project to link communities connected by the Walker River through a unified, place-based tourism experience. They proposed that sharing the journey along the river will help this region tap growing recreation and tourism segments to spur economic development along the corridor.

The contents of this plan are the result of the four-month consultation period that Walker Basin Conservancy engaged in with Travel Nevada. During this timeframe, a Steering Committee of local stakeholders was created, a 3D Advisory Team was assembled with state and industry experts, and community meetings were held in Yerington and Hawthorne. The vision, key pillars, and goals outlined in this plan reflect the insights gained from the Steering Committee and community meetings supported by industry.



10-YEAR VISION

The Walker Basin is a place of wonder. Its natural beauty, resonant Native American heritage, and welcoming small towns invite mindful travelers to slow down and experience its arts and culture while connecting with the water and landscape. Here, visitors aren't just passing through: They become stewards, leaving the Basin better than they found it.

10-YEAR VISION



HOW THIS VISION ALIGNS WITH WALKER BASIN CONSERVANCY'S GOALS

The Walker Basin Conservancy is leading the effort to restore and maintain Walker Lake while protecting the agricultural, environmental, and recreational interests in the Walker Basin. Additionally, the Conservancy operates an Environmental and Outdoor Education Program—funded by individuals, state entities, and foundations—that fosters community pride and engages local youth through recreational activities.

In their application, Walker Basin Conservancy outlined a vision to use tourism as a catalyst to diversify the regional economy beyond the region's historically dominant industries—particularly agriculture and mining.

Tourism has long been identified as a vehicle for rural economic development. Its presence in rural communities provides the opportunity for more local small-and-medium businesses. More services means a longer stay for visitors, an increase in dollars spent and tax collected, and an overall positive impact on the local economy.

Additionally, an increase in tourism businesses means more employment opportunities for residents, which helps battle the issue of aging rural towns by enticing new residents and investors while incentivizing locals to stay or return (e.g., after seeking employment opportunities elsewhere or attending college).

The project's proposed concept aims to increase the number of visitors to the Walker Basin while minimizing the ecological impact on the remote and serene area. The balance between developing the tourism economy while preserving natural and cultural assets is known as eco-tourism—an industry niche that appeals to individuals who want to appreciate and protect the outdoors.

The project's 10-year vision carefully considers the intent expressed in the Conservancy's 3D Project application alongside various stakeholder perspectives within the Basin. The resulting plan provides a balanced approach to tourism that addresses the needs of visitors, residents, stakeholders, and the land itself.



HOW THIS VISION ALIGNS WITH TRAVEL NEVADA'S GOALS

HOW VISION ALIGNS WITH GOALS

The Nevada Division of Tourism—also known as Travel Nevada—operates within the Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs. In addition to promoting state tourism efforts, Travel Nevada works to bolster and diversify regional economies through tourism by providing rural destinations with development resources, education and training, and grant assistance to communities and their stakeholders.

The development of the Walker Basin as a unified tourism destination aligns with Travel Nevada's efforts to improve economic health in rural communities through tourism. The creation of the Walker Basin Corridor will directly benefit the communities within the basin by providing opportunities for sustainable development, preservation of local natural and cultural assets, celebration of rural life in Nevada, and economic growth through revenue generation, room tax collections, and small business creation.

Over the past decade, outdoor recreation has developed into one of the most significant tourism sectors. The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable reports that the United States' outdoor recreation economy contributed \$1.2 trillion to the US economy in 2023.

According to Nevada's Division of Outdoor Recreation, Nevada has one of the fastest growing outdoor recreation economies in the country. The Silver State is unique in the amount of land available for public use—almost 52 million acres, which accounts for 85% of state land. Due to the significant amount of wide-open, outdoor spaces, it is not surprising that outdoor recreation contributed \$8.1 billion in value-added GDP to Nevada.

This project complements Travel Nevada's efforts to showcase the varied outdoor recreation opportunities in northwestern Nevada. Travel Nevada's goal is to promote adventure and exploration in the state's rural areas—an effort best expressed in the organization's brand line: "Get a Little Out There," which was built on the concept of Outdoor Recreation Plus (the plus being Nevada's arts, culture, history, and heritage offerings that enhance and differentiate the state's outdoor experiences). Travel Nevada's commitment to promoting the state as a diverse adventure destination is also evident in its investment in Adventure Centers—one of which will be in nearby Carson City—designed to be a springboard for tourists to enjoy outdoor recreation in rural Nevada.

Finally, this project represents an important step towards responsible tourism that aligns with Travel Nevada's goals related to destination stewardship. Travel Nevada holds a strong commitment to supporting tourism destinations that wish to develop practices supporting the protection and preservation of their natural and cultural resources. Through their partnership with The Travel Foundation, Travel Nevada is developing a statewide stewardship plan under the guidance of a Steering Committee which reflects the state's rural partners, sister agencies, and stakeholders. The plan will then inform Nevada specific stewardship messaging and education, developed through Travel Nevada's partnership with Leave No Trace.



OVERARCHING GOALS

OVERARCHING GOALS

In their application, the Walker Basin Conservancy listed three proposed goals for the project, as follows:

1. Our concept will leverage the connection of the communities and economies along the Walker River for collective benefit. The Conservancy and Yerington Main Street Committee (YMSC) will establish a Basin-wide working group of at least 10 stakeholders by year two to share opportunities, unify strategies, and identify gaps in assets.
2. By the end of year two, the project will execute a unified tourism experience and marketing campaign to stimulate visitation and associated economic growth by 20% through the region by increasing overnight stays and providing collaborative support for early-stage projects.
3. Starting year two, through partner collaboration, the project will identify at least five additional funding sources to grow the impact of a Walker Basin unified tourism experience and marketing concept to increase destination program funding by 15% for long-term economic impact from tourism.

Throughout the development of this plan, Travel Nevada and the Advisory Team worked to identify metrics that align with the originally proposed goals while providing clear and realistic goalposts for project success based on industry data and expert input. Travel Nevada suggests the following overarching project goal:



This goal is a conservative goalpost for growth that pegs expansion of tourism in the Walker Basin slightly below the 8.2% CAGR that analysts project for the worldwide rural tourism market. Meeting this goal will require establishing data collection methodology to ensure accurate information as well as implementing the strategies outlined in this plan to develop tourism, draw in visitors, increase their length of stay, and enable them to contribute to the region economically.

Once the Walker Basin Tourism Coalition is established, it would be appropriate for its members to work together to set additional project goals. Goals should be SMART and measurable. Suggested goals include:

- ◆ An increase in new businesses or tourism-related employment within the Basin
- ◆ An increase in tourism experiences and assets available for visitors
- ◆ An increase in community pride as measured on a resident sentiment survey
- ◆ Improvements in the quality of tourism experiences or visitor satisfaction as measured by a visitor sentiment study
- ◆ Outcomes related to stewardship and conservation
- ◆ An increase in coordination and collaboration of project stakeholders and communities

Based on baseline data collected during FY2026, contribute to an increase in visitor spending in the Walker Basin at a compound annual growth rate of 7% between 2026 and 2036.

ACTUALIZING THE CONCEPT

The Walker Basin Corridor is a multi-county alignment of communities with many shared goals including the desire to grow their economies, create opportunities for residents, and preserve their natural and cultural resources. Stretching 97 miles, the proposed region begins at Topaz Lake and winds through Smith Valley, Yerington, Schurz, and past Walker Lake to Hawthorne. This represents a geographic and conceptual journey with much to offer for visitors who value authenticity, uncrowded scenery, and a welcoming community atmosphere.

This plan is built upon the belief that the Basin's outstanding natural landscapes and outdoor opportunities—coupled with its cultural offerings and stewardship ethos—will create a compelling new destination for visitors. As such, the Walker Basin is primed to introduce tourism as a major economic driver and source of community pride.

The region's tourism development will hinge on a strong coalition of partnerships

and the leadership of Walker Basin Conservancy. As these organizational structures develop in the early days of this plan, the region's stewardship mindset, up-and-coming heritage attractions, and nascent outdoor recreation industry will activate, attracting visitors who seek an unhurried, less crowded experience than can be found in other nearby outdoor recreation hubs. Positioning as a laid-back, unspoiled getaway destination will differentiate the Walker Basin experience from other nearby outdoor recreation or cultural destinations.

As the region begins to see early wins in tourism, opportunities for new and expanded cultural, outdoor, and conservation experiences will increasingly build the destination's reputation while encouraging small business development and economic impact.



PRIORITY VISITORS

Travel Nevada's 3D Project Advisory Team drew on a variety of sources to help clarify the category of visitor who would be the best fit for the Walker Basin. The 3D Project Visitor Study, completed in 2023, identified three key visitor segments likely to travel to Nevada and would be well-served by the experiences that Walker Basin has to offer. These visitor categories include Road Trippers, Outdoor Adventure and Nature Lovers, and Cultural Travelers. These travelers are likely to resonate with the plan's pillars of outdoor recreation, stewardship, and culture.



Data from this same survey also indicate the Walker Basin's conservation ethos will serve as a draw to the area, with 53% of respondents responding that a destination's sustainability practices are important to their travel choice. Other recent studies suggest the number of travelers looking for sustainable tourism experiences is even higher. Booking.com's 2023 Sustainable Travel Report found that 76% of respondents prefer to travel sustainably and will do so in the next 12 months. To appeal to this growing visitor segment, it will be important to highlight the Walker Basin's conservation ethos and ongoing community efforts through:

- ◆ Encouraging northern Nevada residents to explore an exciting new destination in their own backyards—and to bring their guests.
- ◆ Inspiring visitors to Reno and Lake Tahoe to enhance their stays with an entirely new experience centered on unplugging and escaping to a new place.
- ◆ Persuading travelers on the Free-Range Art Highway (U.S. Route 95) to stop in the Walker Basin and experience the region's culture and natural landscape.
- ◆ Widening the audience to include nature, outdoor, and cultural travelers, particularly in Northern California and the rest of Nevada.



In order to drive revenue increases in the region, it will be important for the Walker Basin Corridor to take steps to evolve visitation patterns and increase visitor spending. Currently, the Walker Basin is primarily a drive-through location. However, Travel Nevada believes the region has the potential to capture daytrippers with its appeal, eventually turning them into overnight or multi-day guests. High-value tourists are those that have a longer length of stay and visit rural regions, thereby expanding the impact of their tourism dollars and dispersing the impact of increased visitation over a wider area.

KEY PILLARS

This plan has been built around a three-pronged strategy to highlight the region's assets, centered around the Conservancy's regeneration of Walker Lake, and conservation of the Walker Basin's agricultural, environmental, and recreational interests. The thematic pillars of this plan—Stewardship; Outdoor Recreation; and Arts, Culture, and Heritage—work synergistically to support tourism while also building a sense of place and fostering community pride. The plan lays out a framework for tourism success based on the development of a visitor experience that celebrates the Walker River and ties outdoor recreation, arts and culture to the rural communities of Topaz, Smith Valley, Yerington, Schurz, and Hawthorne.

Throughout the planning process, the Advisory Team has been mindful of the potential drivers of tourism to the region as well as the capacity and needs of the Walker Basin Conservancy, the Basin's surrounding community, and regional entities that will be

critical partners to the growth of tourism in the Basin. The three thematic pillars are underpinned by a framework for success—supportive structures and activators—that outlines organizational and capacity-building elements that are applicable across all thematic elements.

Collaborative Structures and Activators

For tourism to grow and thrive in the Walker Basin, the area will need to develop a new tourism identity supported by collaborative infrastructure and strategies to catalyze activation. As tourism is a relatively new element for many of the area's communities, the visitor economy must grow in a careful and balanced considered way that aligns with the needs of the community.

This pillar specifically addresses the region's tourism identity, structured collaboration, and infrastructure necessary to facilitate tourism development in this beautiful and remote area.

KEY PILLARS

Pillar 1: Stewardship

By preserving and interpreting the region's natural and cultural resources, the incorporation of stewardship into this plan creates a tourism experience that is rewarding, regenerative, and directly benefits stakeholder interests. Additionally, stewardship aligns with the goals of the Walker Basin Conservancy, uplifts the priorities of Tribal partners, and ensures long-term conservation of critical natural habitats.



Pillar 2: Outdoor Recreation

From dark skies to gravel routes, wildlife viewing and more, the outdoor recreation opportunities in the Walker Basin are endless. However, these activities are currently not easily accessible to visitors. Thoughtful, incremental development of outdoor recreation experiences and infrastructure will be vital in helping visitors connect with the region while protecting the Basin's cultural and natural resources.

Pillar 3: Arts, Culture, and Heritage

The Walker Basin is an area rich in history and heritages that includes—among those like pioneer, Italian, and Mexican—Native Tribes, particularly the Northern Paiute. Indeed, this diversity is one of the Basin's most important assets, and its communities celebrate their culture and small-town traditions through community gatherings and annual festivals.

In the communities that make up the Walker Basin, visitors can sample top-notch Mexican cuisine, learn about America's military history, or immerse themselves in Tribal culture at the annual Pine Nut Festival. This plan endeavors to unify and elevate the region's sense of place, allowing visitors to participate and discover the area's unique legacy.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STEPS

To develop a strategy as balanced as possible, Travel Nevada's 3D Project Advisory Team carefully considered diverse stakeholder interests, visitor needs, and community priorities, while working to establish a symmetry between the pillars that ensures that the region will grow in appeal to visitors with varied interests. This strategy's framework—laid out in this document—provides an actionable roadmap for tourism development and is designed to be approachable and realistic for those who will be responsible for implementation in the coming years.

There is considerable synergy between the pillars, and throughout the implementation process, the Advisory Team recommends seeking opportunities to combine pillars in ways that strengthen the overall project. This may include tactics such as integrating arts and culture interpretation into outdoor recreation infrastructure, utilizing arts and culture to help convey stewardship messaging, or advancing stewardship through the promotion of responsible recreation.

Each pillar is divided into three categories: Early Wins, Next Steps, and Future Possibilities. It is important to note that many of the priorities identified in the documents are aspirational and unfunded. Their inclusion will provide industry and government with the strategic direction to seek resourcing, if required, to deliver initiatives within their areas of responsibility.



Early Wins

Early Wins are project catalysts and revenue drivers recommended as best first steps to provide momentum for the project and create immediate impact. These elements would be a good place to start when developing 3D Project funding requests or choosing where to dedicate early-stage resources, time, and personnel. Strategies and tactics in the Early Wins category are intentionally listed in the order that the Advisory Team believes would provide the most impact during the developmental stages of this plan.

Next Steps

Next Steps are the evolution of the Early Wins. These suggested actions are intended to help grow amenities and attractions, increase visitor appeal, and continue the Walker Basin's progression from an aspiring tourism region to an emerging destination for cultural, outdoor, and conservation tourists.

Future Possibilities

Future Possibilities are elements the Advisory Team feels would be beneficial to keep in mind but are not necessarily tied to a timeline—the project's early years will certainly see developments that could alter its trajectory and priorities. It is important for the stewards of this plan to remain open to emerging opportunities that are aligned with the plan and keep an eye on the adjacent possibilities that may develop over the course of implementation, leading to new and unforeseen outcomes.

PLAN FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT



COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES AND ACTIVATORS

Collaborative Structures and Activators are the elements of the plan that enable the pillars to be successful and sustainable. This category includes developing organizational structure to guide tourism development in the region and developing an identity to foster unity and growth. Building organizational capacity to advance tourism will be the first step towards success and will help set the Walker Basin on a clear course to destination development.

Early Wins

Convene a “Walker Basin Tourism Coalition”

1. Travel Nevada’s Advisory Team recommends this organization be comprised of one representative from each community—Topaz Lake, Smith Valley, Yerington, Schurz, and Hawthorne—as well as one representative for each of the pillars (Outdoor Rec, Stewardship, Arts Culture and Heritage, and a representative from the region’s Tribal Community).



2. This coalition will serve as the de facto destination management organization for the Walker Basin. One of its foundational strategies will be to form and maintain regional partnerships.
 - a. While long-term partnerships are critical for this project’s success, the coalition should also consider partners who can help achieve short-term goals, participate in ad hoc committees, or fill temporary needs. These may be large non-profit groups like the Adventure Cycling Association or Trout Unlimited. They may also include local organizations like Main Street, Chambers of Commerce, or the Mineral County Sportsmen’s Association.
 - b. Coalition members should leverage partnerships with state and federal agency partners to advance elements of the plan. These may include Nevada Division of State Parks, the Bureau of Land Management, the US Forest Service, or Travel Nevada.
 - c. The coalition should look for cross-border partnerships with stakeholders who hold a vested interest in the corridor’s development and increased visitation, such as neighboring Mono County.
3. It is important that this coalition is an egalitarian body whose primary focus and guiding interest is executing the objectives of this plan to create a unified visitor experience and driving tourism to the entire Basin. Representation must be fair and reflect the different interests that make up the tourism landscape in the Walker Basin, with each community and pillar being championed as a crucial element of the whole. Participants must feel that their input is valuable, and that the opportunity cost of time invested in the Coalition is outweighed by the realization of outcomes.
4. It is important for this body to operate on the principle of “Minimal overhead, maximum output”, meaning the coalition should minimize the time spent meeting and maximize the time spent doing to help volunteers stay fresh and feel that their inputs are meaningful.
5. The Walker Basin Tourism Coalition should join their Nevada Tourism Territory, Nevada Silver Trails, to work cooperatively and look for ways to engage with tourism partners across the larger Territory. Member organizations and regional tourism partners may also wish to join the Territory for support.

COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES AND ACTIVATORS

Create alignment around the identity of the Walker Basin.

After convening the Walker Basin Tourism Coalition, the body's first priority should be to coalesce around an identity for the entire Basin, using this plan as a guide.

1. To create focus for the Coalition, the Walker Basin identity should center on regional priorities and synergies outlined in this plan.
2. Rather than concentrating on any single community or pillar, the identity should represent a collective benefit and cohesive visitor experience across the entire corridor.
3. Develop a charter document that outlines this identity and articulates the ethos of conservation and stewardship that underpins the Basin's appeal for visitors. The charter will help the coalition avoid "mission creep" in activities not tightly tied to tourism and help members focus on the narratives, opportunities, and activities that reinforce the region's identity to visitors.
4. Develop a brand that supports the identity with the guidance of a carefully selected marketing company. that can be used in messaging about the Walker Basin Corridor experience. Note that an identity is not the same thing as a brand. The identity should spark curiosity among visitors with experiential messaging that focuses on authenticity and ethos. Avoid marketing strategies that are manufactured, "cookie-cutter," or transactional (i.e., messaging that prioritizes short-term benefits or revenue).

5. The Coalition should select a few annual events to support and position as key tourism drivers. These events should be tied closely to the Walker Basin's regional identity and present opportunities to uplift and support the Basin's primary attractions. As there are already many events in the region, selecting only a few "signature events" to highlight may prove a challenging task for the Coalition as they find their early footing. Therefore, it's best to feature events that align with the mission and vision of the Walker Basin region and this project's key pillars including outdoor recreation and culture and heritage. Potential examples include Walker Lake Days and the Pinenut Festival.

Develop welcoming infrastructure that creates a sense of arrival.

1. Letting visitors know that they have arrived in a special place will be a critical part of creating a sense of place for the Walker Basin. To establish the Basin as a distinct region, the Advisory Team recommends utilizing a "Gateway" model in Topaz, Yerington, and Hawthorne: the three communities where visitors can enter the Basin. Gateway Communities are the "front door" to public lands as well as federal or state parks and capture area culture as well as the sense of excitement and possibility for new adventures. [Utah State University Gateway and Natural Amenity Region \(GNAR\)](#) Initiative is the recommended resource for this objective as the organization "leverages research, education and capacity building to assist communities, land managers, and others" to preserve natural and cultural assets and build resilience to the region's unique challenges.

2. By using culturally inspired, community-specific public art to welcome visitors to the Basin, communities can express their unique identity, stand apart from other drive-through towns, and help visitors better understand the region's identity. Classic examples include murals and sculptures, but there are virtually no limits to how a community may creatively express itself. For guidance, check out other campaigns like the ["Oregon is Magic" mural installations](#), the [Haida House Post Project](#) or the [Enchanted Highway](#) in North Dakota for inspiration.
3. Establish a Basin-wide signage plan to help direct visitors and identify attractions along the Corridor. This signage will both engage travelers and reinforce the experience as a journey.
4. Create insignia that aligns with the previously established regional identity. In addition to featuring this insignia on signage and other products, create opportunities for local businesses to display the insignia to demonstrate support for the Corridor and connect with visitors. A good source for guidance is the [AIANTA Pacific Northwest Trail insignia design competition](#).



COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES AND ACTIVATORS

Partner with Travel Nevada on a lodging supply/demand study

This study will not only help clarify lodging needs and development opportunities in the Walker Basin, it will also serve as an important data resource when interfacing with lawmakers and guiding lodging tax policy development to create a sustainable, long-term funding source for tourism development.

Conduct strategic community communication and public relations

1. Create outreach messaging around the concept of tourism development in the Walker Basin to educate residents and local government about the goals of the project and advocate for support.
2. Utilize existing channels or, where needed, establish new channels to communicate with residents across the Basin. This provides a familiar information pathway for sharing positive impacts.

Next Steps

Identify sources of capital to support ongoing tourism development beyond the initial infusion of funding from the 3D Project.

1. Investigate an increase in local room tax dedicated specifically to reinvestment in Walker Basin tourism to create a sustainable funding source. The data collected in the lodging needs assessment may aid in this process.

2. Work with Douglas, Lyon, and Mineral Counties to reassess distribution of existing room tax collections.
3. Identify opportunities to monetize experiences to create funding for the project. For example, could a tax on tourism experiences (guides, outfitters, bookings) be established to support ongoing tourism development?
4. Establish a cooperative funding support model that leverages contributions from participating communities to create a multiplier effect that benefits the individual communities and the region as a whole.
5. Seek project-specific grant funding to support initiatives tied to the project. This may be accomplished in partnership with other local 501c3 organizations.

Work with county and local governments to address policies that enable tourism to thrive within the region.

1. In the future, Walker Basin Tourism Coalition may wish to work with local governments and businesses to develop a Tourism Business Improvement District or Tourism Improvement District.
2. Address policies in the region that may create barriers for small business development. For example, can the counties create revolving loan programs or tax incentives to catalyze small business development?
3. Address policies and practices that support tourism efforts and improve visitor experiences such as public transportation and infrastructure.



COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES AND ACTIVATORS

Enact strategies to activate vacant buildings and repurpose them in ways that benefit residents and visitors.

1. Using [Lincoln County Authority on Tourism](#) and [Tonopah Main Street](#) as examples, consider a program to assess vacant buildings and provide the owners with a realistic view of their worth. If willing, provide owners with assistance to sell or lease the buildings.
2. Consider working with county government and code enforcement to nudge owners of vacant properties to address blight and create more welcoming spaces. This might include a tax on vacant buildings or a penalty for creating a fire hazard or blight in the community.

Encourage communities along the Walker Basin Corridor to develop their own tourism plans that complement the Walker Basin's regional plan.

1. Each community along the Walker Basin corridor has its own unique identity, culture and priorities. While the Walker Basin identity must be distinct and holistic, this project is an on-ramp for individual communities to build their tourism efforts and share their own stories with visitors.
2. Examples of this might include establishing an [agritourism](#) program that highlights the ranching heritage in Yerington or celebrates Hawthorne's military history.

Encourage development of uncommon accommodations that fill needs identified in the Early Wins Lodging survey, creating the opportunity for travel spending and lodging tax generation.

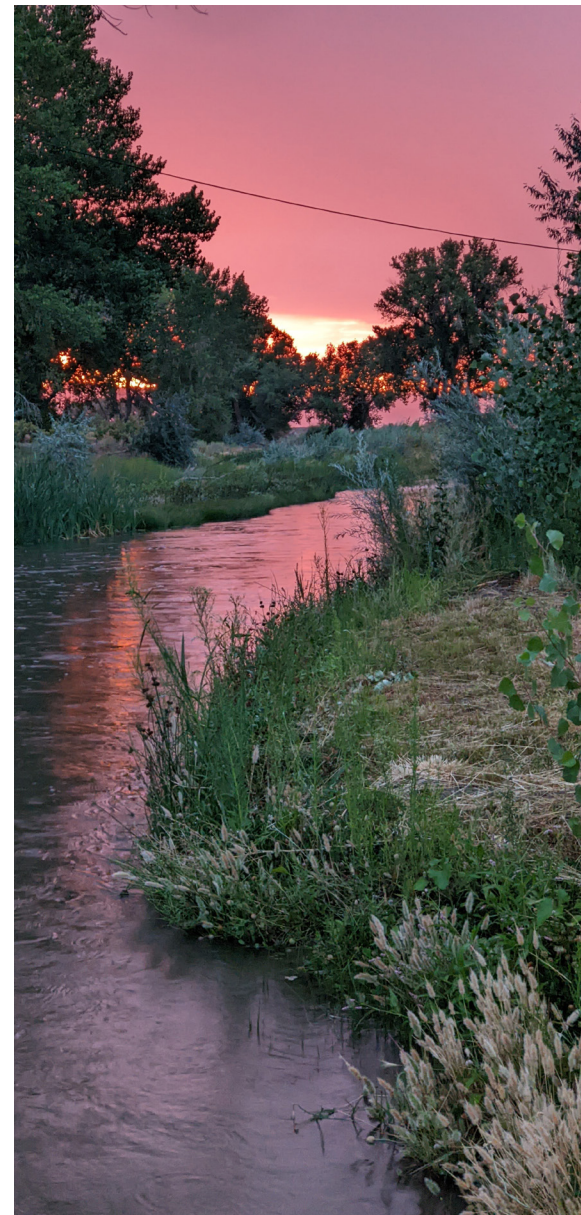
While some visitors prefer the familiarity of a hotel/motel accommodation, many have expressed a preference for "uncommon" accommodations. Examples of this could be glamping-type experiences, airstream trailers, repurposed buildings, or cabins.

Smaller accommodations are "right sized" for the destination and cater to the specific desires of the types of visitors that the Walker Basin will attract.

In some cases, it may be advantageous to enhance [lodging options](#) with other amenities that appeal to visitors, such as [bike storage or bike wash stations](#), limited meal options, or [equipment rentals](#).

Future Possibilities

- ◆ Develop plans to address resilience in the destination to help "future proof" tourism in the Walker Basin. These plans should include strategies to mitigate overtourism and protect sensitive resources, respond to environmental emergencies such as fires or floods, or manage visitation during pandemics.
- ◆ As funding becomes available, develop a revolving loan fund to support the development of small businesses in the corridor that are aligned with the plan. This could help catalyze small business development and expand the range of businesses available to provide services to residents and visitors.



PILLAR ONE: STEWARDSHIP

As a project initiated and led by a conservation organization, it follows that stewardship and conservation will take a central role in the development of tourism in the Walker Basin. This important element appeals to a growing segment of conscientious visitors who seek to travel in a way that is responsible and sustainable while minimizing negative impacts on destinations. These visitors look for ways to make meaningful contributions that leave destinations better than they found them, whether by actively participating in stewardship projects or by contributing financially to local conservation efforts.

The efforts around stewardship must go beyond environmental conservation. The sustainability and longevity of the destination depends on the protection and preservation of the region's cultural and historical resources. Whether that history is traditional place-based knowledge held by local tribes or the heritage of mining and ranching in this region, we must work to ensure that visitors both understand and appreciate what it means to live the "Walker Basin Lifestyle".

This stewardship ethos should serve as a through line across all pillars of the plan, guiding outdoor recreation and culture and heritage activities while driving identity and supportive structures.

Additionally, the stewardship pillar is a key space to consider the resilience of the Walker Basin destination. Risks for flooding, drought, extreme snow years, wildfires, extreme heat, and more should be considered in the implementation of the 3D plan and in associated planning efforts.

Early Wins

Align, define, and communicate the Stewardship and Conservation Ethos as part of the regional identity.

- ◆ Develop a "rallying cry" focused on conservation. This phrase should be memorable, evergreen, and encapsulate the ethos of the region and tie closely to the Walker Basin's identity. The Advisory panel recommends working with a conscientious marketing company to develop this important stewardship message alongside the regional identity. Provide something tangible for visitors, local organizations, businesses, and community members to identify themselves as supporters:
 - ▶ The "Keep Tahoe Blue" slogan is a conservation message ubiquitous within the region but is also found on bumpers and water bottles across the nation and world.
- ◆ Look to other destinations for inspiration around communicating with visitors: Park City, Utah's "**Mountainkind**" campaign is one example of a combined marketing + stewardship position that invites visitors to care like a local through a specific, actionable pledge.
- ◆ Implement Leave No Trace Principles. Working with Travel Nevada and Leave No Trace, take the necessary steps to achieve **Gold Standard State Park** for the Walker River State Recreation Area.



PILLAR ONE: STEWARDSHIP

Develop and communicate the “Walker Basin Code”

- ◆ Developing visitation and recreation guidelines for visitors can help them understand expectations on how to best move through the Walker Basin. This should be based on a framework that guides ethical travel practices, ensuring tourism activities are respectful, sustainable, and beneficial to both tourists and host communities. This code should encompass principles like honoring local cultures, conservation, and supporting local economies. For an example, look to Hawaii’s Pono Pledge.

Ensure consistent messaging and adherence to stewardship principles across the Basin.

- ◆ Offer training and materials for outfitters, businesses, guides, and others who interact with tourists to share stewardship messaging through Travel Nevada’s partnership with Leave No Trace.
- ◆ Provide recognition for businesses and other local partners that exemplify caring for the Walker River Basin.



Establish opportunities for visitors to take an active role in protecting Walker Basin.

- ◆ Walker Basin Conservancy and partners can cooperate to expand existing programming such as native habitat restoration, seed production, and species monitoring into engaging and uplifting voluntourism and citizen science tourism experiences that connect visitors to the region. Look to examples such as EarthWatch for ways to promote and structure this program that provide positive outcomes for both visitors and the landscape.
- ◆ Make the responsible choice the easy choice by working with partners to provide infrastructure that supports care for the Walker Basin among residents and visitors. This includes adequate and maintained waste and recycling receptacles, water bottle refilling stations to reduce single-use plastic, and “Green Dining Districts” that provide reusable containers.
- ◆ Worldwide, destinations are adopting sustainability practices that can be replicated to help protect the environment of the Walker Basin. Plastic Free Noosa, an initiative spearheaded by a community in Australia, serves as an example of a destination that is banding together to implement strategies to reduce plastic waste.



Position the Walker Basin Conservancy as a stewardship leader in the regional tourism and events scene.

- ◆ Enlist the Conservancy’s expertise in event planning and sustainability to ensure that events taking place in the Walker Basin (even if they are not tourism events, per se) are operating in a sustainable way that protects and conserves resources.
- ◆ Pursue certifications that communicate the organization’s and the destination’s commitment to responsible tourism, such as the Leave No Trace Gold Standard and Global Sustainable Tourism Council’s Industry and Destination Standards.

PILLAR ONE: STEWARDSHIP

Establish spots for “Connection and Reflection” throughout the Walker Basin.

- ◆ Cooperate with Tribal partners to identify places where visitors can feel a spiritual connection and belonging that are fostered by a connection to natural healing and the outdoors.
- ◆ Reflection spots support the concept of sense of place, which creates differentiation from other rural NV locations. They also highlight a thoughtfulness and serenity through which visitors can disconnect from hectic everyday life to experience the “Joy of Missing Out”.
- ◆ A recent article in the “Annals of Tourism Research” entitled *Designing Tourism Experiences for Inner Transformation* suggests tourism scenarios involving deep human connectivity, deep environmental connectivity, self-inquiry, and engaged contribution—or some combination of these four scenarios—can shift human consciousness. Utilize these spots as an opportunity to tie back to the ethos of care and sustainability.

Next Steps

Develop a funding mechanism for tourism to support conservation efforts.

- ◆ Consider a model where guides and outfitters stage from a hub and contribute funding through either rent or a tourism surcharge negotiated in their contract for use of the space (see page x).

- ◆ Partner with supportive local businesses to create a “round up” program whereby visitors and residents can choose to round up the amount of their purchase to the next dollar to support conservation in the Walker Basin.
- ◆ Consider the [CopenPay](#) model as a mechanism to support stewardship and responsible travel while linking visitors to local businesses and attractions.



Encourage communities, businesses, and service providers to adopt sustainable practices in their operations.

- ◆ Work to cut costs and reduce carbon emissions through an effort to localize supply chains. Begin by encouraging restaurants to source food locally whenever possible and then expand to other goods. This helps to further boost the local economy by preventing economic leakage to other areas.
- ◆ Water is at the center of this project, and its management is critical to the success of tourism in the region. Work with businesses, visitors, and locals to implement water smart practices. This could include simple measures like taking shorter showers or reducing turnover of linens in accommodations but could also involve systemic efforts through partnerships with the agriculture industry to reduce evaporation in irrigation systems and create circular water-recycling systems.
- ◆ Work with municipalities in the Basin to install dark sky compliant lighting to preserve the region's night skies, which are poised to serve as a critical tourism amenity. Review Nevada's Division of Outdoor Recreation's [Dark Skies Toolkit](#) for tips and best practices around preserving dark skies.
- ◆ Where possible, work with food service and agricultural businesses to implement composting practices to reduce green waste and help create a valuable product for local growers.

PILLAR ONE: STEWARDSHIP

- ◆ Establish a program to help businesses and communities measure and report utilization of limited resources like water and energy, as well as reduction of waste through the use of biodegradable, compostable or reusable products. Locally, a good example of this is Keep Truckee Green's Measurable Success Dashboard. Leave No Trace's Gold Standard program extends beyond state parks and has assessments for outfitters and guides, and hospitality.
- ◆ Recognize sustainable businesses in the region that meet targets.



Work with tribes, land managers, and partner organizations to conduct site stewardship activities that preserve and restore ecologically and culturally sensitive areas.

- ◆ Partner organizations may include Tread Lightly!, Nevadans for Cultural Preservation, local student groups and service clubs, Tribal partners, Leave No Trace, Nevada Division of State Parks, the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office, and more.
- ◆ Offer conservation-focused experiences that serve to educate and inspire guests by creating travel packages that include conservation and regenerative activities such as guided nature walks, wildlife monitoring, native species plantings, or participation in restoration projects.
- ◆ Partner with other Environmental Organizations to extend reach and resources. Collaborate with organizations like Forest Friends to fund and develop initiatives, such as tree planting or habitat restoration, in which both guests and local communities can participate.

Future Possibilities

- ◆ Restore Walker Lake and the Walker River to support native wildlife habitat and recreational activities including fishing and watercraft usage.
- ◆ Work with local municipalities and businesses to establish public transit routes to reduce travel impacts and mitigate increased traffic due to visitation.
- ◆ Prepare for the future by laying the groundwork for visitor volume management to prevent degradation of resources and reduced quality of life for residents due to overtourism.
- ◆ As the Walker Basin region is transformed in the coming years, take an active role in advocating for policies that uphold conservation principles and protect the region's natural character. This may include infrastructure development that supports efficient use of resources, such as water and waste management facilities, or policies that support appropriate land use planning and regulations to protect cultural and environmental resources.



PILLAR TWO: OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor recreation in Nevada contributes \$8.1 billion in value-added GDP while supporting over 50,000 jobs in the state. The outdoor recreation economy in Nevada is one of the fastest growing in the nation, increasing 12.8% year over year from 2022 to 2023. This segment represents a significant opportunity for growth and diversification in the Walker Basin region, which boasts world-class fishing, endless miles of gravel roads for exploring, unbelievably dark skies, an impressive array of wildlife, and numerous opportunities for water-based recreation.

As outdoor recreation is developed throughout the Walker Basin, consider the priority visitor who will be attracted to the region as well as the basin's current and projected residents. Ensure that infrastructure and activities are developed for visitors of all abilities to access recreation opportunities. This may include wheelchair accessible trails, interpretation for blind or hearing-impaired guests, or access to equipment and technology to improve accessibility.

Walker River State Recreation Area is a key outdoor recreation asset to the Basin. While recommendations focus on additional projects, development at the park should be integrated into tourism practices and supported by tourism partners, including the Walker Basin Tourism Coalition.

Early Wins

Undertake a feasibility study for a recreation "Hub" concept.

- ◆ A recreation hub would serve as an interpretive center and business incubator, link to Travel Nevada's Adventure Centers, and would provide a home base for guides, outfitters, and other service providers to interact with visitors looking to book guided tours or rent gear.
- ◆ Identify unused spaces that could readily support a hub. Using a Walker Basin Conservancy property could provide the Conservancy with an economic opportunity to collect a percentage of hub outfitter proceeds or to charge rent for use of the convening space. This model would provide visitors with a way to contribute to conservation efforts as they participate in guided outdoor recreation experiences.
- ◆ Existing guides and outfitters in nearby communities could be initial hub partners and move their operations into the Basin part-time before eventually expanding to offer full service.

Capitalize on the region's dark skies by implementing guided experiences.

- ◆ Thanks to the area's undeveloped landscape, stargazing is a unique experience that would require little overhead to get started, making this a great first step to provide a bookable product in the region. Look to NDOR's Dark Skies Toolkit to get started.



- ◆ Engage with the Tribes to tell their night sky stories, which provide a compelling narrative that helps visitors connect with culture and place-making.
- ◆ Identify entities in the region that may apply for the [Nevada Starry Skies Certification](#) program.

Utilize the region's existing low-traffic dirt roads to promote the destination for gravel cycling and bikepacking.

- ◆ Gravel cycling represents a fast-growing segment of cycling that is exploding in popularity and drawing large crowds to events.
- ◆ Work with local gravel enthusiasts to develop routes, maps, itineraries, or tours on existing gravel road infrastructure such as Walker River State Recreation Area to Hawthorne via Lucky Boy Pass. Routes like this create an "Always On" attraction for adventurous visitors to the region. Be sure to include routes for different levels and abilities to ensure an enjoyable (but challenging) experience for all participants.

PILLAR TWO: OUTDOOR RECREATION



- ◆ Support the development of guided experiences with an outfitter that visitors can book. Be sure to offer experiences for different levels and abilities and itineraries of variable lengths (e.g., 1-2 hours, morning/afternoon, all day, overnight, multi-day) so visitors can fit the experience into their travel plans. It may also be beneficial for the outfitter to rent necessary equipment, such as bikes, helmets, panniers, and backpacking tents.
- ◆ Federal land management agencies are looking to prioritize long distance (80-plus miles) bike packing route development as part of the BOLT (Biking on Long Trails) Act. Look for ways to capitalize on this resource, perhaps by creating a century route that traverses the Basin on existing dirt roads.
- ◆ Improve wayfinding along designated routes. Develop a signage plan to help cyclists navigate while also communicating important stewardship and interpretive information that highlights natural and cultural resources along the route.
- ◆ Partner with local and national organizations that promote gravel cycling. Examples of these include BikepackingNV, Adventure Cycling Assn., and Bikepacking.com, as well as social media groups that promote bikepacking in Nevada and the eastern Sierra.
- ◆ Connect with other Nevada gravel destinations and events to create a statewide gravel series/ championship. Existing races such as Stetina's Paydirt (Carson City), Ruby Roubaix (Elko), and the Tour De Schell (Ely) could all potentially serve as future partners in a Nevada Gravel series. Look to other successful gravel events, like UnBound and the rest of the Lifetime Gravel series, for best practices around putting on successful gravel events.
- ◆ Link the region's other attractions with bikepacking routes. This could include a bikepacking circuit that visits some of the region's ghost towns, an interpretive gravel journey through Tribal lands, or a route that takes cyclists to some of the river's best fishing holes for a "bikefishing" expedition.
- ◆ Explore opportunities for additional non-motorized connections, like a path connecting Yerington to Walker River State Recreation Area or a connection between Walker Lake and the towns of Schurz and Hawthorne.

Build excitement and access for fishing in Nevada's Walker Basin.

- ◆ Partner with fishing guides who already lead tours on other sections of the Walker River to bring their customers into Nevada. These guides may also be early partners for the recreation hub concept.

- ◆ Promote Topaz Lake fishing. When questions arise about fishing in Walker Lake, inquisitors can be directed to the year-round fishing in Topaz Lake along with messaging about the restoration efforts of Walker Lake.
- ◆ Establish recreation opportunities and services at Weber Reservoir, including fishing and paddling.

Establish opportunities for visitors and residents to participate in passive recreation along the Walker River.

- ◆ Working with local landowners, pursue the development of a recreational riverfront trail in Yerington. Consider safe walkable and bikeable connections to nearby accommodations and neighboring communities with infrastructure such as a crosswalk and pedestrian hybrid beacon or a pedestrian bridge or underpass. Transportation corridor projects have the potential to elevate grant proposals and provide matching funds to support the riverfront trail development.



PILLAR TWO: OUTDOOR RECREATION

Next Steps

Based on learnings from the feasibility study, develop the recreation Hub as an incubator for guides, outfitters, and other tourism businesses

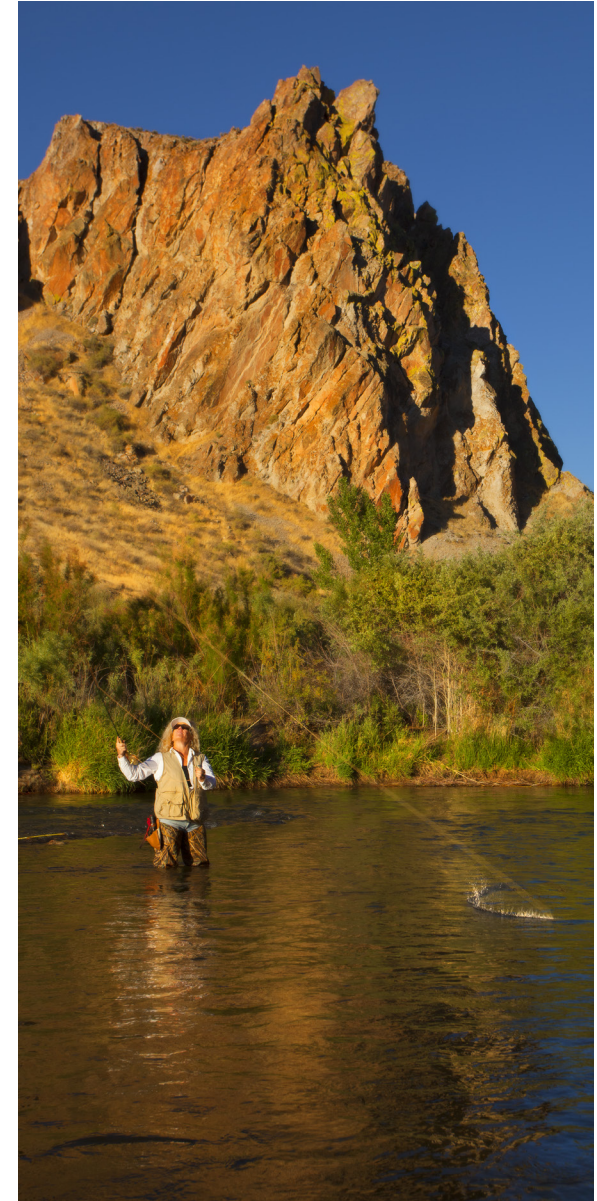
- ◆ The Hub concept fills gaps in the regional tourism ecosystem by helping guests engage with the area through interpretive and guided experiences or by providing access to the equipment and expertise needed to maximize their Walker Basin trip.
- ◆ The Hub will help provide job opportunities for start-up business or the growth of existing businesses who are willing to expand into the area. These might include Native cultural guiding experiences, gravel biking, fishing, hiking, or conservation tours, wildlife viewing or photography tours, or rockhounding experiences.

Prioritize investment in infrastructure to support outdoor recreation.

- ◆ Identify potential funding sources for outdoor infrastructure. This might include federal, state, or foundation grants like the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Recreational Trails Program, the Legacy Trails program, Nevada's OHV Grants, or grants from foundations and organizations that support outdoor recreation, conservation, or related projects. Other sources of funding could be generated by organizational investments, endowments, and large and small donations. Work with county and municipal governments to invest in local development by setting aside

funding in support of regional development. Finally, work with state and federal agencies to secure funding in support of projects related to local development, infrastructure, outdoor recreation, or transportation.

- ◆ Identify locations and create three new trailheads for non-motorized recreational use in the Basin. Focus on potential trails of easy to moderate difficulty—1-4 miles in length—with views and easy trailhead access from Walker Basin communities. Make sure to include not only the trail itself but also supportive infrastructure such as shade structures, picnic facilities, restrooms, waste receptacles, adequate parking, and signage. Be sure to adhere to all applicable laws for development.
- ◆ Improve wayfinding throughout the Basin, focusing on directional and interpretive experience on both motorized and non-motorized routes. When creating signage, consider bilingual messaging and/or using universal iconography as a standard practice to reach across language barriers. Incorporate stewardship messaging and the “Walker Basin Code” to help users understand how to have a responsible and respectful experience in the Walker Basin.
- ◆ Working together with landowners and land management agency partners, identify appropriate locations for public infrastructure including bathrooms, kiosks, shelters, picnic tables, and waste receptacles. Work cooperatively to develop plans to manage and maintain these facilities. One potential strategy involves development of MOUs for facility upkeep and maintenance.



PILLAR TWO: OUTDOOR RECREATION

- ◆ The need for shade in Nevada's desert is imperative and will continue to grow in the years to come as temperatures rise. Consider shade as key infrastructure in public gathering spaces, such as picnic areas or river and lake access points.
- ◆ Identify appropriate locations to install viewing platforms with infrastructure for birdwatching and wildlife viewing. Take into account the comfort and safety of wildlife and be sure not to impede their ingress and egress, migratory patterns, or nesting sites. Include messaging about safe wildlife interaction at these locations to help mitigate the effect of these facilities on local wildlife.
- ◆ Develop safe areas for visitors to participate in dark skies viewing/stargazing. These areas should be away from traffic and offer an unobstructed view of the night sky with as little light pollution as possible.
- ◆ Secure additional river access points to increase opportunities for river recreation with the goal of eventually connecting a trail along the length of the Walker River between Topaz and Hawthorne. These access points should offer opportunities to enjoy the river in different ways, such as floating, fishing, swimming, or kayaking.
- ◆ Explore opportunities to work with a vendor to operate self-rental kayak kiosks at Walker Lake and Weber Reservoir, similar to those found at the boat launch area at Topaz Park.
- ◆ Consider opportunities for designated non-motorized days to minimize user conflict and allow for a variety of uses. Promote these days as opportunities for serenity through kayaking, paddleboarding, swimming, birdwatching, and more.



Activate Walker Lake for recreation

- ◆ Promote the relatively uncrowded nature of the destination as a draw for the target visitor. Use this as a point of differentiation between Walker Basin and other nearby water-centered destinations.

- ◆ Promote events that celebrate the outstanding flatwater boating opportunities that exist on Walker Lake, including boating, waterskiing, jet skis, and wakeboarding. Consider where events can tie to other areas in the region, such as flatwater recreation events on both Topaz Lake and Walker Lake.

Future Possibilities

- ◆ Secure contiguous river access for a riverfront trail alignment and uninterrupted water trail opportunities.
- ◆ Consider promoting other forms of recreation that align with the region's stewardship goals: equestrian activities, hiking, or float trips—to name a few. Spread the word about the region's opportunities for passive recreation including wildlife viewing, outdoor photography and art, and mindful meditation.
- ◆ Connect to the travel/trade industry to help promote the destination and attract individual visitors as well as groups. Membership in travel/trade associations and attendance at their trade shows would connect the Basin's tourism destinations and assets to travel agents, tour operators, and receptives, and collaborations with Travel Nevada. Partners like Tourpreneur and Get Your Guide are all recommended ways to improve the visibility of the destination as well as refining travel offerings and visitor experiences to align with the market.

PILLAR THREE: ARTS, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

Artistic and cultural experiences challenge thinking while giving a place a unique sense of self. They provide opportunities for storytelling and cultivate a culture of creativity and expression. Communities that focus on regional arts, culture, and heritage make an invaluable investment in the future, not only through the obvious benefits of improving local spaces but also through preserving and expanding these experiences for future residents.

Early Wins

Work with local stakeholders and regional arts partners to develop an Arts and Culture Plan

- ◆ Identify opportunities to support local and regional artists, artisans, and makers while elevating the sense of place, defining the visitor experience, and telling the story of the destination.
- ◆ Collaborate with the community, businesses, artists, and partner organizations like the Nevada Arts Council, local Main Street organizations, and Chambers of Commerce to create a public art plan for the Walker Basin.
- ◆ The plan should aim to enhance the community's cultural identity by strategically integrating art into public spaces, fostering community engagement, and promoting civic pride.

- ◆ Identify locations where public art could be displayed, as well as procedures for procuring, installing, and maintaining the art.
- ◆ Create an inventory of existing galleries/studios where art can be viewed.
- ◆ Envision a program that uplifts and highlights regional artists and craftspeople. This might include providing studio or gallery space, arts and culture exhibitions, or co-op opportunities for artists to display and sell their work.
- ◆ Create an initial vision for how a regional Arts Council could be structured and what its roles might be. Consider the organization's mission, as well as representation/membership and funding sources. Major focus areas for the Arts Council might include public art, artist support, community art opportunities, and arts advocacy.

Utilize public art as a storytelling tool to create a unified visitor experience throughout the Walker River Corridor.

- ◆ Capitalize on the destination's location along Travel Nevada's Free Range Art Highway to appeal to road-trippers seeking art experiences.
- ◆ Work with local artists—as well as artists from outside the region—to create installations that tell important stories and strengthen residents' and visitors' understanding of the community's heritage and identity in creative and challenging ways. Ensure public art honors all stories by partnering with local organizations such as the Great Basin Native Artists Association.

- ◆ Create diverse art in various forms, styles and mediums that appeal to different audiences (i.e., not every piece will connect with every visitor; it's perfectly acceptable to have public art installations that might elicit an emotional response from some travelers and not others).
- ◆ Identify and secure funding to support public art installations and art experiences throughout the Basin. Look to organizations like Travel Nevada's sister agency, the Nevada Arts Council.



PILLAR THREE: ARTS, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

- ◆ Identify opportunities for local traditional Tribal arts and crafts to be highlighted and shared with residents and visitors. Continue to reach out to the Yerington and Walker River Paiute Tribes to find opportunities to elevate their stories and share their art.

Uplift festivals, special events, and celebrations that bring the region's history and culture to life and help tell the stories of the community in new, engaging ways.

- ◆ Festivals and events are a great way to help promote the community and give tourists a reason to visit. Identify a few key events that have a clear tie to the project to support and promote. Develop criteria to prioritize the involvement of Walker River Tourism Coalition and investment in events and festivals.
- ◆ Partner with communities and local businesses to uplift and support events that are already happening, like Walker River Days or the Pinenut Festival.

Look for creative ways to integrate arts with the other pillars of this plan.

- ◆ Outdoor art and cultural experiences
- ◆ Using art to elevate the stewardship messages of the Walker Basin Conservancy.



- ◆ Partner closely with both the Yerington Paiute Tribe and Walker River Paiute Tribe to support the development of Tribal Cultural Centers

- ▶ Develop visitor experiences that combine outdoor recreation and culture, such as tours and guided outings that explore the natural world with an indigenous perspective.
- ▶ Center the story of the tribes and indigenous traditions and knowledge.

Next Steps

With Tribal support, collaborate with members of the Yerington and Walker River Paiute Tribes to offer tours and experiences that highlight and preserve elements of their culture.

- ◆ Experiences that may appeal to visitors include native foodways and traditional cooking, traditional crafts—such as basketry or beading— traditional storytelling, interpretation of cultural sites, and opportunities that link culture to other elements of the plan—like a medicinal or therapeutic hikes.

PILLAR THREE: ARTS, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

- ◆ Enlist the support of Nevada's Indian Territory to establish relationships and provide support for the development of tribal tourism in the Basin.
- ◆ Include a land acknowledgement to recognize the Indigenous people who were the original stewards of the land and acknowledge the impacts of colonization. This can serve as a step towards reconciliation and equitable relationships while also educating visitors.

Develop an Artist in Residence program to provide a platform for artists to harness the power of the Basin to drive creativity.

- ◆ Artist in Residence programs benefit both the artist and the host organization by providing artists with time, space, and resources to create and connect while offering the host organization new perspectives, audiences, and potentially, new works of art.
- ◆ An Artist in Residence Program can potentially lead to opportunities for new exhibitions, as well as new partnerships with other arts institutions, schools, and the public. Define the goals of the program and work with selected artists for mutually beneficial outcomes.
- ◆ While many programs feature visual artists, an Artist in Residence project can also support artisans, makers, musicians, composers, and other creative fields.

- ◆ Adapt the Artist in Residence idea to include other "Experts in Residence". This could include astronomers, archaeologists, anthropologists, ecologists, and others who could share knowledge and bring value while enhancing the visitor experience.
- ◆ Silver City, a small community located between Carson City and Virginia City, hosts a vibrant Artist in Residence Program. Connect with them to learn how they implement their program, how they connect with artists, and what steps to consider in developing the program in Dayton.

Create opportunities for artists to connect with visitors.

- ◆ Explore the addition of thematic art exhibitions and juried events that connect to other elements of Walker Basin culture and identity like a film festival, plein air painting, photography event, or a student art exhibition. Artists and the community could also participate in an arts and culture event grounded in thematic elements such as conservation, wildlife, local events, or history.
- ◆ Visitors love opportunities to see artists and artisans at work. Travel Nevada recommends setting aside space in the Hub for this purpose since many visitors will travel through the space. However, there may be other locations or opportunities to partner with small businesses throughout the Basin for visitors to watch artists as they create.

- ◆ In addition to providing a workspace, establish shops in which local artists and artisans can sell their products. Visitors love to purchase locally made art as a souvenir. An artist's village, cooperative marketplace, or maker's market may be appropriate models to explore for this purpose. These could be located in one community or throughout the Basin.

Foster development of a local arts commission

- ◆ Partner with the Nevada Arts Council and regional arts and culture organizations to advance arts and culture throughout the region. Partners like the Yerington Theater for the Arts, Mineral County Council on the Arts, State Parks Cultural Arts Board, Carson Valley Arts Council, Great Basin Native Artists Association, and the Cultural Corridor 3D Project can all provide support and guidance in this endeavor.
- ◆ Explore opportunities to connect with other regional arts groups across the country to find inspiration and ideas for building arts and culture in rural communities.

Future Possibilities

- ◆ Consider utilizing space in the Hub for a rotating gallery featuring local artist's works or works inspired by the Walker Basin.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PLAN



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

There’s not a “right” way to approach this plan, but success will depend upon strong partnerships among the communities of the Walker Basin and the agencies and organizations that operate in the region. It will also require these organizations and operators to take the lead on initiatives related to their work or interests. This list is not comprehensive but provides a starting point for identifying partnerships that will fuel the growth and success of tourism in the Walker River Basin.

Lead Organization	Walker Basin Conservancy	Walker Basin Conservancy will serve as the lead entity, directing and prioritizing future efforts. The Organization will seek 3D funding and other resources to implement the elements of this plan and will be the convener of partner organizations included in this chart (or others) to help increase visitation and visitor experience throughout the Walker Basin.
DMO ORGANIZATIONS AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY	Travel Nevada, Nevada Silver Trails, Walker Basin Tourism Coalition	Travel Nevada and Nevada Silver Trails Territory provide support for tourism development in the destination. Travel Nevada provides funding for tourism development and multi-state marketing campaigns, while the Territory organization provides networking opportunities and assistance with trade events and more. Although there are currently no Destination Management Organizations within the Walker Basin, the proposed Walker Basin Tourism Coalition will eventually be able to fill the role of catalyzing visitation to the region.
TRIBES AND TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS	Walker Basin Paiute Tribe, Yerington Paiute Tribe	The Tribes of the Walker River region have incredibly rich traditions, stories, and knowledge to share. Working collaboratively with the tribes will not only help them find avenues to share their stories, but it will also create memorable experiences for visitors who have the opportunity to learn from—and engage with—the tribes’ storytelling and culture.
ARTISTS, ARTISANS, CRAFTSPEOPLE, AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS	Nevada Arts Council, local and regional creators	Art and culture organizations—including those that are local, regional, and state-operated—and individual artists will be instrumental in shaping and enriching the Walker Basin’s heritage and cultural tourism landscape. Their creativity, collaboration, and commitment to preserving and promoting local culture and craftsmanship will contribute significantly to the overall success of tourism initiatives throughout the region. These individuals and organizations can also play an instrumental role in connecting artists and artisans with the project, thereby providing creative and compelling avenues for visitors to experience the community.

OUTDOOR RECREATION	<i>Nevada State Parks, Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation, Tread Lightly, Bureau of Land Management, Mineral County Sportsmen's Association</i>	Developing and expanding opportunities for outdoor recreation throughout the Walker Basin is one of the plan's key pillars. Working with partners who are well-versed in land management, trail development, outdoor assets, and outdoor experiences will lead to thoughtful and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that tie culture, stewardship, and adventure together in new and exciting ways.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	<i>Lyon County, Mineral County, Douglas County</i>	Local governments play a multifaceted role in fostering tourism by creating a supportive policy and regulatory environment, preserving heritage, facilitating collaboration, supporting the region's cultural assets, and providing important services like parks, public safety and law enforcement. Their efforts contribute to sustainable tourism development, which benefits visitors and the local community.
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES, NONPROFITS	<i>Yerington Chamber of Commerce, Yerington Main Street, Hawthorne Main Street</i>	Community organizations serve as essential partners in implementing a tourism strategy. They elevate local culture, organize events, facilitate community engagement, and contribute to the overall sustainable development of tourism. Their involvement can help create an authentic visitor experience and benefit the local community.
EXPERIENCE PROVIDERS	<i>Artists, Authors, Artisans, Agritourism, and Outfitters, Guides and Tour Operators</i>	Experience providers allow visitors to connect to a destination and experience it in a more engaging way, whether by participating in a workshop or tour or chatting with a local guide. They also contribute to a destination's aesthetic appeal, cultural richness, and economic development, and their creativity and cultural contributions enhance visitors' overall tourism experience while supporting local quality of life.
LOCAL BUSINESSES	<i>Restaurants and Bars, Retail, Art Galleries, Service providers</i>	Local businesses are instrumental in this project by crafting desirable visitor experiences and helping meet the needs and expectations of travelers who choose to browse, shop, and dine in the Walker Basin. Additionally, local merchants can spur economic development, create jobs, and serve as gathering places for both residents and visitors.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Recreation and Stewardship Grants

- ◆ [Recreation Trails Program](#) is a Federal Highway Administration assistance program to help states provide and maintain recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail use.
- ◆ [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities.
- ◆ [Conserve Nevada](#) supports the conservation and enhancement of Nevada's natural, cultural, and recreational resources with funding awards to public and private projects that benefit all Nevadans and visitors.
- ◆ [Urban and Community Forestry Grants](#) encourage projects that plant trees and increase the benefits of tree canopy, create and support long-term and sustained urban and community forestry programs, and promote the care of trees in disadvantaged communities throughout Nevada.
- ◆ [Non-point Source Water Pollution Prevention Funding](#) improves conditions of Nevada's watersheds and protects against nonpoint source water pollution.
- ◆ [Submit A Research Grant Proposal - Leave No Trace](#) offers funding for research projects in which science will aid in understanding the issue.
- ◆ [Grant | OFF-ROAD Nevada](#) supports off-highway vehicle related projects in the state of Nevada.
- ◆ [Conservation Districts Grant Opportunities | DCNR](#) Nevada's Department of Conservation & Natural Resources list of conservation grant opportunities.

Tourism Grants

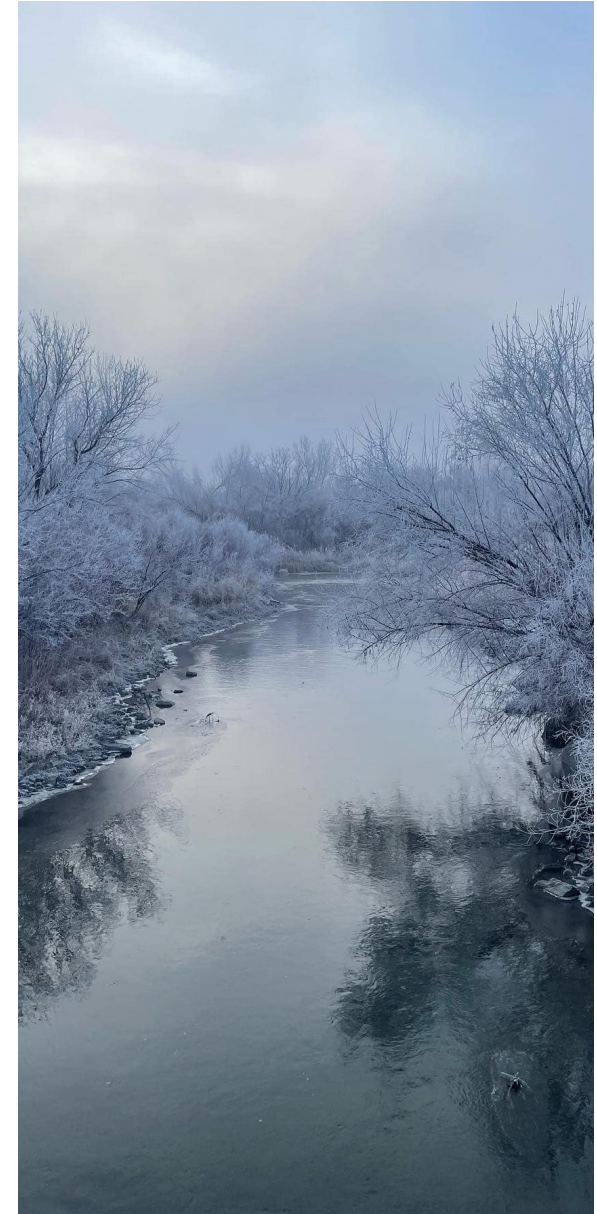
- ◆ [Grant Funds – Tourism Cares | Travel and Tourism Industry Nonprofit](#) Tourism Cares contributes nearly \$2.5 million to tourism projects and organizations around the globe that focus on sustainability, community engagement and cultural preservation.
- ◆ [Rural Marketing Grants - Travel Nevada](#) distributes \$1.5 million per year for rural destination marketing efforts. The 3D program does not fund marketing efforts as participants are encouraged to seek funding through this grant.
- ◆ [UN Tourism Small Grants Programme](#) is designed to empower rural communities with resources to implement impactful projects.

Nevada Non-Profit and Grant Support

- ◆ [Resources - The Center for Nonprofit Business](#) supports non-profit organizations under the umbrella of the Reno-Sparks Chamber of Commerce.
- ◆ [Nevada GrantLab](#) work focuses on increasing the amount of federal grants awarded in the state of Nevada.

Arts, Culture, History & Heritage Grants

- ◆ [FY26 Grant Offerings | Nevada Arts Council](#) has a diverse offering of grant programs that support arts & culture in the state of Nevada.
- ◆ [Homepage | SHPO](#) State Historic Preservation Office Grants support eight program areas that are required by the National Historic Preservation Act.



STUMBLING BLOCKS TO WATCH FOR

This plan is an ambitious attempt to transform the economic and cultural landscape in the Walker Basin through a tourism effort that helps to unify the visitor experience across the entire Basin while elevating stewardship and building community pride. There are many moving parts and myriad opportunities for success, however, a judicious approach is recommended to avoid overextending resources, burning out personnel, or making decisions in haste that could negatively impact the project in the future. Below is a list of potential pitfalls that implementers should be aware of as they move forward with project implementation:



Attempting to implement too many things at once.

- ◆ By trying to tackle too many objectives simultaneously, implementers run the risk of stretching resources too thin and diluting the whole effort. This plan is written to be approached in a stepwise fashion so as not to overwhelm staff, partners, and volunteers responsible for implementation. Be sure to choose actions to take in a sequential fashion, always being mindful of capacity and resources, but also staying open minded to adjacent possibilities that may arise during the process.

Obtaining inconsistent funding that requires projects and implementation to start and stall.

- ◆ While the 3D Project grant will catalyze initial project efforts in the first two years, it will be critical to work diligently to identify and secure sustainable sources of funding. Some strategies around this are identified in the Collaborative Structures and Activators portion of this document.

Inconsistent marketing and promotion.

- ◆ This project is rooted in storytelling and connection. It will be important to work with a skilled marketing company to develop marketing and promotional messages that promote the destination's authenticity. In addition to marketing efforts, this messaging should be carried out in-market to help reinforce the community's identity for the visitor once they arrive. Partners should be aware of the branding for the Walker Basin and should work to reinforce it in their own campaigns as appropriate.

Degradation of cultural and environmental resources due to tourism.

- ◆ Project leads and partners should maximize their efforts to protect the site from increased tourism by prioritizing conservation and stewardship messaging that communicates responsible and respectful ways to experience the history and natural beauty of the Walker Basin.
- ◆ Those implementing the project should take steps to protect the Basin by building a sense of protection and stewardship among visitors.

Lack of political and community alignment

- ◆ This plan's development will require support, commitment, and consensus among tourism, stewardship, outdoor recreation, arts, culture, and heritage organizations in each community as well as regionally throughout the Walker Basin. Continually work to educate and inform key stakeholders and build support for a broader regional tourism effort that can deliver benefits at the local level. Generate excitement around the project by showcasing early stage successes and sharing progress.
- ◆ Locals may be concerned about the potential negative impacts of tourism development. Overcoming potential resistance and gaining local support is crucial to developing this project. Engage local communities in this process and continually showcase examples of how the project is enhancing local quality of life. Care should be taken to ensure that initiatives align with local culture while inspiring acceptance.

APPENDICES



APPENDIX I

Travel Nevada

The Division of Tourism (Travel Nevada) operates within the Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (DTCA) to help achieve the Governor's strategic priority of ensuring Nevada is recognized for its world-class destinations, its innovative and business-friendly economic environment, its quality of life, and its efficiently and effectively run state government. In addition to managing state tourism efforts, the Division provides communities and businesses with tourism development resources, training, and grant assistance that help bolster local economic bases and diversify regional economies.

Funded by a percentage of the state's lodging tax, Travel Nevada's mission and vision is to effectively communicate the enriching travel experiences Nevada offers and promote statewide economic health through tourism and enhance the quality of life for all Nevadans. (something about how we achieve the above through the following goals/initiatives):

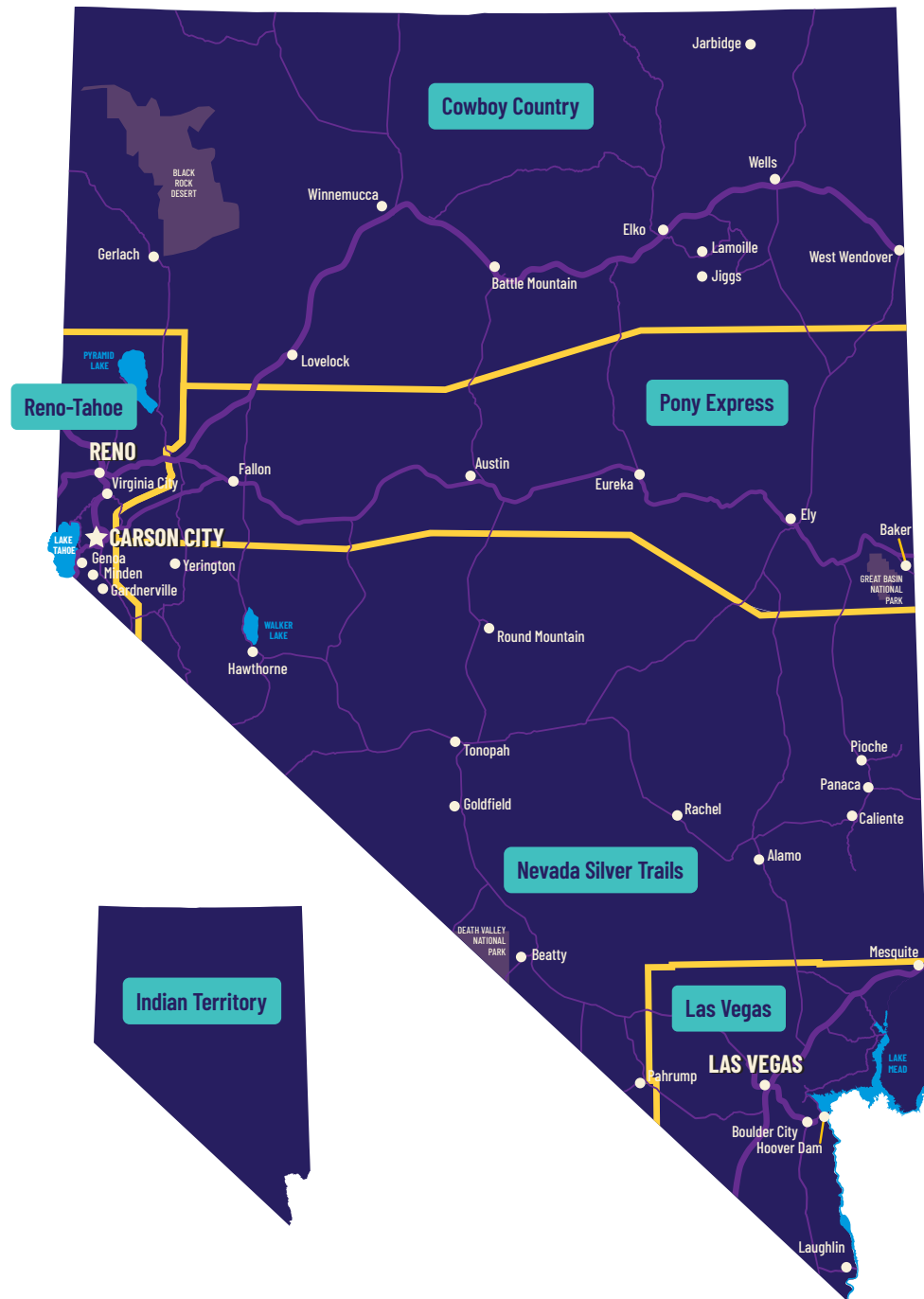
- ◆ Increase overnight stays and spending.
- ◆ Contribute to the long-term growth and sustainability of local tourism economies.
- ◆ Lead the expansion of state partnerships to benefit communities.
- ◆ Foster welcoming and accessible rural destinations.
- ◆ Establish an understanding that local tourism products and services are a fundamental and important part of local economies.
- ◆ Affect awareness and perception of Nevada as a globally recognized brand.



APPENDIX II

Nevada's Tourism Territories

The Nevada Commission on Tourism was created in 1983 at the proposal of Governor Richard H. Bryan with the intent of diversifying the state's gaming-based economy. The general goal was to create a more stable economic base in local communities in terms of economic development and to position Nevada as a business and leisure destination. As such, rural counties were divided into territories with the purpose of tourism promotion. Today the state's Territories offer support, education, and shared resources for destinations and tourism owners/operators.



APPENDIX III

Destination Development

The 3D Project, Travel Nevada's Destination Development Design program is a long-range, tourism-focused community and economic development program designed to foster intentional and strategic development in Nevada's rural communities. Through the destination development process, communities examine the qualities of their destination that contribute to the visitor experience and build a plan that capitalizes on strengths while addressing barriers and gaps. Identifying the key strategies necessary to enhance the visitor experience will inspire community investment and lead to improved quality of life for residents. The development of the 3D Project marked a significant evolution of Travel Nevada as it expands beyond its marketing legislation to the inclusion of destination development. This shift can be seen through adoption of a new identification, no longer a DMO (Destination Marketing Organization) but a DDMO (Destination *Development* and Marketing Organization).

The projects goals are to:

- ◆ **IMPROVE** quality of life for Nevadans through community-focused tourism development and placemaking/keeping efforts that convey authentic experiences that reflect local culture and values;
- ◆ **INCREASE** revenue and job opportunities for rural communities through increased visitor spend as a result of extended length of stay due to increased bookable product, enhanced tourism assets, and robust destination infrastructure;
- ◆ **EMPOWER** local communities to advocate for and adopt policies and practices to ensure the sustainability of their tourism economy, minimizing negative impacts on environmental and cultural resources through destination care and stewardship strategies and messaging;
- ◆ **EXPAND** state partnerships to benefit Nevada residents through increased capacity, technical expertise, and availability of resources;
- ◆ **BUILD** the adaptive capacity of rural Nevada communities through long-term tourism planning, to include hazard mitigation and crisis management strategies, economic diversification, infrastructure improvements, and workforce development;
- ◆ **FOSTER** a welcoming culture towards all residents and visitors by centering accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion in infrastructure, marketing, and in-market messaging statewide.
- ◆ **ESTABLISH** an understanding of the ways in which local tourism products and services are fundamental to a vibrant quality of life for all Nevadans, ensuring mutual benefits for visitors and residents;
- ◆ **ENCOURAGE** visitation through positive awareness and perception of Nevada as a globally recognized brand amongst global travel trade professionals and travelers



APPENDIX IV

Tourism Means More

Tourism can support local communities and their economy through direct and indirect spend pathways. Direct spend is categorized as dollars spent on accommodation, attractions and experiences, and transportation. Indirect revenue widens the scope to include ancillary spend at gas stations, grocery stores, and dining establishments. In Nevada, tourism spend means more through the collection of lodging tax. In 2024, over 52 million travelers visited Nevada and generated \$12.5 billion in lodging tax revenue in fiscal year 2023. Revenue generated by lodging tax not only supports the tourism industry as well as the state's school systems, transportation, infrastructure and more. To learn more about the benefits of tourism to the state of Nevada, and therefore your destination, visit [Tourism Means More - Travel Nevada](#). For a more in-depth breakdown of lodging tax allocation, see Travel Nevada's [Tourism Ecosystem](#) report.

Travel Trade Industry

As the Basin begins to develop into a destination with small-medium tourism enterprises (attractions, activities, and accommodations) the next step is connecting said businesses to the travel trade industry. The travel trade industry encompasses the network of industry professionals which sell and promote travel related products, this includes travel agents, online travel agencies (OTA), tour operators, and receptive operators. In order to promote and sell the new businesses and products that are a result of the 3D Project, these businesses must ensure their reservation systems are digital, in order to connect to the greater web of the industry, both domestic and international. This makes the product bookable on a larger scale, increasing the businesses' chance to connect to a wider audience through by connecting the product to tour search engines/booking platforms like Get Your Guide or OTA's such as Expedia and Booking.com. Once this level has been reached your product can be sourced by travel agents and tour operators globally and relationship building can occur by attending tradeshow. To learn more about how to engage with the travel trade industry, please visit [travelnevada.biz](#) and/or reach out to Travel Nevada's trade team members.



Created through the Travel Nevada Destination
Development Demonstration (3D) Project

May 2025

