

# GEORGETOWN, TX



## TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN SEPTEMBER 2019



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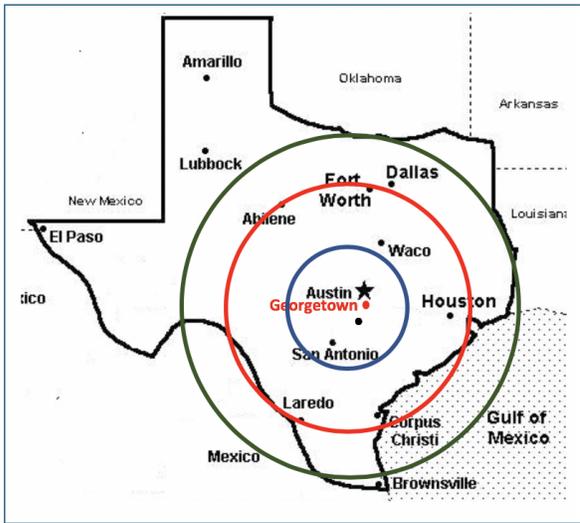
# DESTINATION OVERVIEW

According to the City's Economic Development Department, Georgetown, Texas is experiencing tremendous growth in both the residential and commercial sectors. The U.S. Census Bureau has ranked Georgetown in the top ten fastest-growing cities in the U.S. in each of the past five years. In 2019, the estimated population for Georgetown was 67,431 within the city limits, and 93,961 in the city limits + ETJ (Extra-territorial Jurisdiction). It has been designated by *Reader's Digest* as one of the "Top 15 Cities to Move to In the United States." The City enjoys a strong and stable economic base, making Georgetown a leader in the Austin metropolitan area that is known for its educated and motivated workforce, low taxes, and exceptional quality-of-life.

Accredited by Main Street America, Georgetown is noted for its historic downtown square, which has been designated as "The Most Beautiful Town Square in Texas." The City is home to more than 180 structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as an extensive parks and recreation system with more than 30 parks and 9 miles of hike and bike trails; one trail connects the downtown square to Lake Georgetown. The City's newest park is the 525-acre Garey Park located along the South Fork of the South San Gabriel River.

Georgetown is easily accessible via Interstate 35 and Toll 130 and is located within a few hours driving distance from several major travel-source markets including Austin, Waco, San Antonio, Ft. Worth, Dallas, Houston, and Abilene. Secondary potential source markets such as Corpus Christi and Laredo are within a four-hour driving distance.

Georgetown has several successful, family-friendly events and festivals; it is particularly noted for its annual Red Poppy Festival and Christmas Stroll. The City also boasts an active visual and performing arts community and is a Texas designated cultural district. It is home to Southwestern University and Sun City Texas, a major retirement community destination. The Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center represented a major addition to the City's tourism product upon opening in July of 2016, offering 222 sleeping rooms and 26,672 square feet of meeting space.



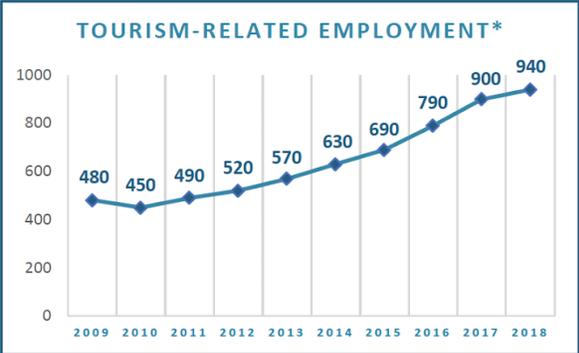
Georgetown is uniquely positioned to draw potential visitors from major populations centers within a 300-mile radius.

< 100 miles Austin: 28 miles  
Waco: 74 miles

101 – 200 miles San Antonio: 121 miles  
Ft. Worth: 162 miles  
Dallas: 168 miles  
Houston: 176 miles  
Abilene: 197 miles

201 – 300 miles Corpus Christi: 226 miles  
Laredo: 281 miles

# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM ON GEORGETOWN



\* Source: *The Economic Impact of Travel on Texas Report (2018)* for Travel Texas, Office of the Governor, Economic Development & Tourism; by Dean Runyan Associates, Portland, OR. <http://www.travelstats.com/dashboard>

\*\* Source: Georgetown Convention and Visitors Bureau, August 2019



## STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS

The following reflects feedback from stakeholder surveys and stakeholder meetings conducted April 2–5, 2019.

### Strengths

- Strong Brand  
“Most Beautiful Town Square in Texas”
- Downtown Square  
(mentioned most often by respondents)
- Authenticity/character of architecture  
(particularly downtown)
- Diversity of retail/dining/arts in downtown
- Downtown walkability
- Free Parking
- “Small-town” atmosphere with  
many modern amenities
- Excellent conference facility (Sheraton)
- Proximity to Austin
- Strong support of City leadership for tourism
- Strong, growing arts community and offerings/  
attractive and diverse public art
- Attractive and convenient downtown Visitors  
Center staffed with knowledgeable personnel
- Easy access from other areas in Texas  
via interstate
- Southwestern University campus
- Partnership with “Daytripper” and  
creative branding of Georgetown  
as a day-trip destination
- Parks, trails system, quality of athletic fields
- Inner Space Caverns attracts thousands  
of visitors
- Sun City  
(growing retirement community population)

### Weaknesses

- Lack of knowledge about Georgetown  
as a destination in general market region  
(150–200 miles)
- Lack of knowledge on the part of  
community about the work of the CVB
- Lack of comprehensive long-term marketing plan
- Traffic issues  
(as the city has grown, traffic has also increased)
- Nothing on the interstate informing drivers of  
Georgetown’s offerings/encouraging them to exit
- Hospitality training needed in visitor-contact  
points other than the downtown Visitors Center
- Perceived lack of upscale restaurants
- Perceived lack of variety of things to do  
in Georgetown
- Limited hours of operation of  
downtown merchants
- Blue Hole Park has lost some of its appeal due  
to overuse, type of use

### Opportunities

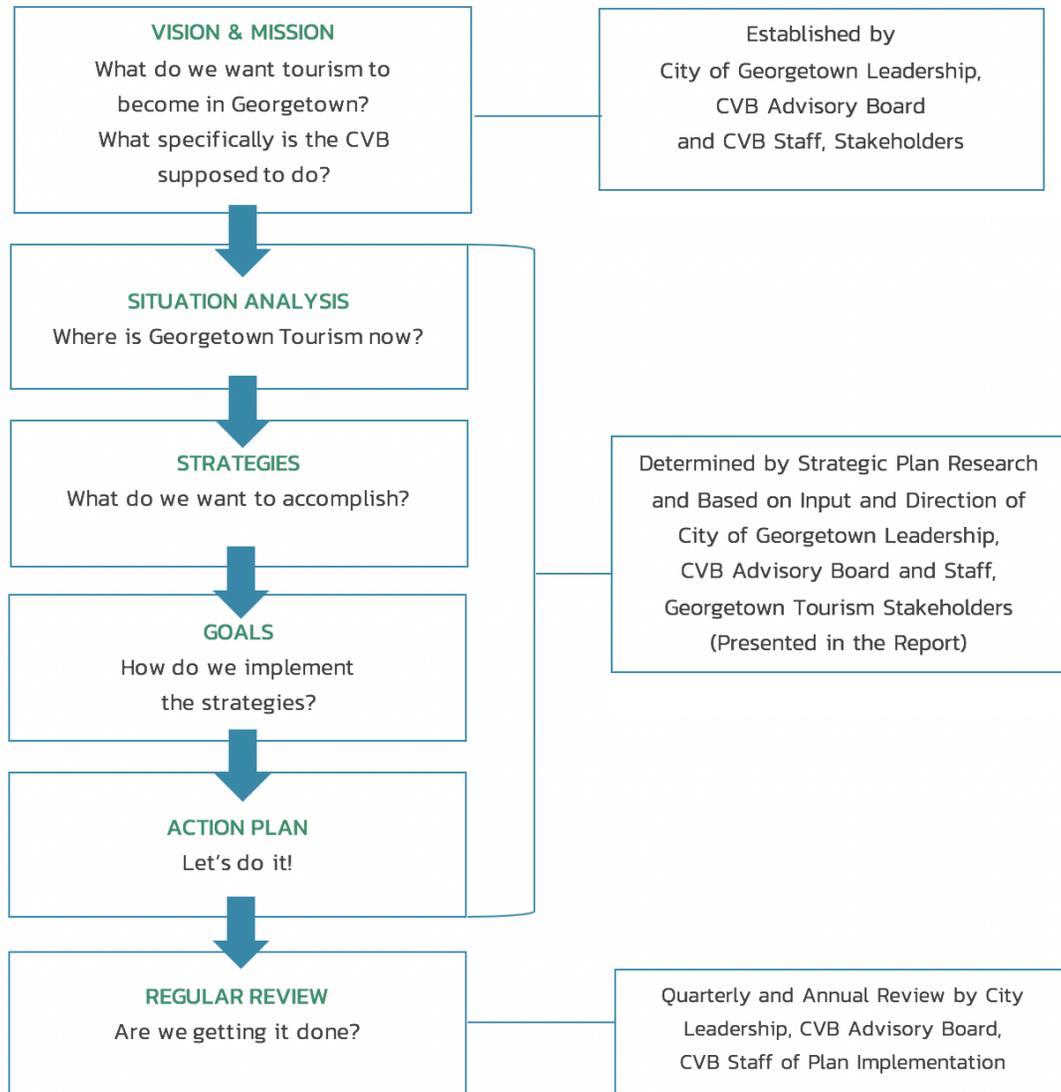
- Georgetown becoming the hub of a tourism region/  
collaboration with nearby communities
- Overall growth and development of Garey Park
- Additional development of wineries, breweries, and  
driving trails connecting these attractions
- Development of an interstate visitor center
- Development of additional hotels
- Attracting more conferences/meetings
- Attracting amateur sporting events

### Threats

- Development of the Kalahari water park/resort/  
convention facility in nearby Round Rock, TX
- Maintaining small town charm as the City grows  
commercially
- Round Rock, TX already established as an amateur  
sports destination
- Growing perception by some that Georgetown is  
becoming primarily a retirement community



## STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS



By its very nature, a strategic plan is meant to be broad in scope and succinct in its primary points. These form the primary goals and strategies outlined in this plan and which are outlined in the Strategic Plan Snapshot.

It is important to note that these are recommendations – the extent to which they may be adopted and the timeframe for their implementation is fully and completely at the discretion of the leadership of the City of Georgetown, the CVB Advisory board, and the staff.

The leadership of the organization will need to assign priorities to those recommendations it chooses to adopt. Some adopted recommendations can be implemented quickly, while others may require more time. In other words, these recommendations should be looked at as a “moving target” – one that will require frequent re-visiting and re-evaluation by leadership.



## STRATEGIC PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

### Analysis of Current CVB Program of Work

Research for these recommendations developed after an analysis of the CVB's printed materials – including the Visitor Guide, maps, shopping and dining guides, and other collateral. In addition, the CVB's Media/Marketing Plan, website and all social network platforms were reviewed and analyzed.

Georgetown's marketing materials are very good, reflect a positive image for the destination, provide valuable information, and create a desire on the part of potential visitors to travel to the destination.

The "VisitGeorgetown.com" website is exceptionally well-done: graphically attractive, easy to navigate; visitor-focused and visitor-friendly; provides valuable and up-to-date destination information; and integrates well with Georgetown tourism's brand positioning. Georgetown tourism's current social media platforms are very well-done and kept current.

Georgetown's branding as "The Most Beautiful Town Square in Texas" is appropriate and communicates a strong unique positioning for the destination. Georgetown tourism's "Daytripper" marketing message is exceptionally effective and is utilized well in marketing materials and activities.

*Research demonstrated that the CVB is currently doing many things very, very well. As a result, in some instances there are no recommendations for change in the current activity of the Georgetown CVB. It should be understood that this is in fact a positive and that sometimes the most effective strategy is to continue an already successful course of action.*

### Georgetown Tourism Growth Philosophy

The consensus results of the Stakeholder Surveys, the narratives of five community meetings, meetings with City leadership, and meetings with the CVB leadership and staff define Georgetown's tourism growth philosophy and priorities which inform the strategies addressed in this plan:

1. Tourism is an important economic development activity for Georgetown and should be supported.
2. Tourism growth is a community desire and should be planned in a way that is steady and managed, but that also takes advantage of unique windows of opportunity that may occur.
3. As tourism grows, care should be taken to protect the city's natural, historic and cultural resources and the quality of life enjoyed by Georgetown's citizens.



## STRATEGIC PLAN SNAPSHOT

Strategy	Key Actions
1. Have a clearly defined and broadly accepted vision for the destination and the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a Destination Vision and a CVB Vision, both of which should align with the City's Vision and Core Values and the currently established CVB Mission Statement</li></ul>
2. Enhance the quality of visitors' experience by ensuring easy access to helpful resources and easy travel throughout Georgetown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop, build, and operate a new state-of-the-art Visitors Center in downtown Georgetown</li><li>• Improve and expand visitor wayfinding signage</li><li>• Enhance the <i>VisitGeorgetown.com</i> website to include additional visitor planning tools</li><li>• Continue production and expand the distribution of visitor guides and maps</li><li>• Fully implement a hospitality training program to visitor contact points throughout the city</li><li>• Investigate the development and operation of a Visitors Center on Interstate 35</li></ul>
3. Expand marketing and advertising programs to increase the awareness of Georgetown as a travel destination to consumers in the City's primary feeder market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct additional CVB budget resources to marketing and advertising</li><li>• Maintain a consistent visitor-directed marketing message and utilize it across all of Georgetown's marketing/advertising channels</li><li>• Focus marketing/advertising efforts to markets within 300 miles of Georgetown and specifically target/message both day trip and overnight visitors</li><li>• Expand digital and print advertising, marketing and communications with travel consumers and potential visitors</li></ul>
4. Increase the economic impact of travel in Georgetown through targeted sales activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue current and implement new sales activities directed to attracting meetings and conferences to Georgetown</li><li>• Investigate the potential ROI of new sales programs directed to the consumer market and implement appropriate sales activities</li></ul>
5. Through public relations activities, increase Georgetown's visibility and attractiveness as a travel destination to consumers through public relations activities and earned media on all platforms; Increase the knowledge of citizens and stakeholders regarding the Georgetown CVB's program of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to utilize the services of the CVB's contracted PR agency to increase exposure of Georgetown to the public and the travel media through qualified writers/press, bloggers, influencers, and over expanded social media platforms</li><li>• Create communication platforms and opportunities to disseminate information on CVB's activities to City leadership, citizens, and stakeholders</li></ul>
6. Staff the CVB in a manner that allows it to effectively accomplish its program of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add staff as expanded program demands and budget allow</li></ul>



## STRATEGY 1: VISION

Have a clearly defined and broadly accepted vision for the destination and the organization.

A strategic plan must be based on an organization's mission, vision, and core values. Together, they guide strategy development, help communicate the organization's purpose to stakeholders, and inform of the goals and objectives which are established to determine whether the strategy is on track.

While the CVB's already established mission statement describes and defines its purpose and overall intention, a destination and CVB vision statement would look forward and describe what both hope to ultimately achieve. They are meant to be inspirational, aspirational and challenging.

The destination and CVB visions must align with the City of Georgetown's Vision Statement and Core Values, as well as with Georgetown CVB's Mission Statement.

### City of Georgetown Vision Statement

Georgetown: A caring community honoring our past and innovating for the future.

### City of Georgetown Core Values

The City of Georgetown is a customer-focused organization, which supports the core values of trust, professionalism, teamwork, communication, and work/life balance in order to provide outstanding service.

### Georgetown CVB Mission Statement

The mission of the Georgetown Convention and Visitors Bureau is to increase the economic impact on Georgetown by promoting the community as a tourist and meeting destination.

**GOAL 1.1** Develop a Destination Vision and a CVB Vision, both of which align with the current CVB Mission Statement and the City's Vision and Core Values.

**OBJECTIVE** Build a consensus vision for the destination and the CVB as an organization.

### ACTION PLAN

Involve City leadership, the CVB Advisory Board, and CVB Staff in the creation of a vision for the destination and the CVB; schedule and hold workshops/meetings for discussion, development and adoption of vision statements.



## BEST PRACTICES: DESTINATION AND CVB VISION STATEMENTS

“Your vision is your dream. It’s what your organization or destination believes are ideal: that is, how things would look if the issue important to you were completely, perfectly addressed. There are certain characteristics that most vision statements have in common. In general, vision statements should be (1) understood and shared by members of the group; (2) inspiring and uplifting to everyone involved in your effort; and (3) easy to communicate – they are generally short.”

*Adapted from “Proclaiming Your Dream: Developing Vision and Mission Statements”,  
The Community Toolbox, Center for Community Health and Development, University of Kansas.*

### EXAMPLES OF GOOD DESTINATION VISION STATEMENTS

Asheville/Buncombe County will retain its unique, authentic and environmental charm while welcoming global visitors searching for personal enrichment and memorable experiences. – <i>Asheville, NC</i>
Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak region will be the leading U.S. destination for experiential travel, inspired by the majesty of Pikes Peak; iconic, accessible natural wonders; and the Olympic spirit. – <i>Colorado Springs, CO</i>
Winston–Salem/Forsyth County is a premiere visitor and convention destination that offers vibrant arts and cultural experiences in an innovative business environment. – <i>Winston–Salem, NC</i>
Burnsville will be a vibrant destination of choice featuring unique and quality experiences through a mix of attractions, culture, recreation, shopping and dining. – <i>Burnsville, MN</i>
Irving will continue to be a uniquely vibrant destination attracting visitors of all kinds for unforgettable experiences. – <i>Irving, TX</i>
Mansfield and Richland County will be widely acknowledged as one of the most extraordinary and distinctive destinations in Ohio. – <i>Mansfield, OH</i>
Nashville will continue to be a premier domestic and international entertainment Destination for travelers who seek leisure and convention experiences. – <i>Nashville, TN</i>

### EXAMPLES OF GOOD CVB VISION STATEMENTS

Johnston County Visitors Bureau is the recognized and influential community tourism leader through its successful, productive and technology-savvy marketing, development and advocacy partnerships. – <i>Johnston County, NC VB</i>
To be the recognized catalyst to make Norfolk a dynamic travel destination. – <i>Norfolk, VA CVB</i>
The Bismarck–Mandan Convention & Visitors Bureau is an engaged community brand marketing leader through its effective research, promotion and sales strategies, on-demand visitor services and productive industry and community partnerships. – <i>Bismarck, ND CVB</i>
The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau will serve as a leader in tourism economic development through creative marketing, as well as active community and product development support. – <i>Chapel Hill, NC CVB</i>
With Visit Phoenix’s efforts, Greater Phoenix will achieve a healthy and sustainable visitor industry for the enjoyment of the visitor and the benefit of the local community. – <i>Phoenix, AZ CVB</i>
The Costa Mesa Conference and Visitor Bureau is the engaged destination marketing leader, supporting and selling the city’s distinct visitor brand experiences and advocating community tourism benefits. – <i>Costa Mesa, CA CVB</i>



## STRATEGY 2: VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND SERVICES

Enhance the quality of visitors' experience by ensuring easy access to helpful resources and easy travel throughout Georgetown.

**GOAL 2.1** Develop, build, and operate a new state-of-the-art Visitors Center in downtown Georgetown.

**OBJECTIVE** Keep the Visitors Center in downtown Georgetown.

### ACTION PLAN

With the historic square being the focal point of Georgetown's tourism product, it naturally follows that the square would generally be the first destination/contact point for visitors. Having the Visitors Center located on or near the square makes it convenient for visitors to obtain information on the destination and receive advice on planning their visit. This service not only enhances the visitor experience; it also has the potential to encourage visitors to extend their stay and/or increase their spending in the city. In addition, having the Center located on the square is perceived as a valuable benefit by the downtown attractions, retailers and restaurateurs.

It is recommended that the primary Visitors Center remain on or near the square in downtown.

**OBJECTIVE** Have a downtown Visitors Center that is specifically designed for that purpose, is larger than the current facility and that is attractive, interactive, provides appropriate visitor services, includes ample public restrooms, has ample and convenient parking, and includes expanded office space for CVB staff.

### ACTION PLAN

As soon as possible, establish and implement a plan and 2-year timeline for the design and construction of a new Visitors Center.

Utilize the input of the CVB staff and visitor center best practices in the planning and design of the new Visitors Center.

During the design and construction phase of the new Visitors Center, maintain operations of the Visitors Center/CVB offices in their current location.

Once the new Visitors Center is built and occupied by the CVB, dispose of the current location in a manner determined by the City leadership.



## Best Practices: Visitor Centers

### Reference Websites

12 Things Successful Visitor Centres Do Differently  
<https://tourismeschool.com/blog/12-things-successful-visitor-centres-do-differently/>

Asheville, NC Visitor Center  
<https://www.exploreasheville.com/iconic-asheville/about-asheville/visitor-information/>

Apple Park Visitor Center  
<https://www.apple.com/retail/appleparkvisitorcenter/>

Golden, CO Visitor Center  
<https://www.visitgolden.com/your-visit/golden-visitors-center/>

Austin, TX Visitor Center  
<https://www.austintexas.org/plan-a-trip/visitor-center/>

Franklin, TN Visitor Center  
<https://visitfranklin.com/see-and-do/visitor-center>

University of Rhode Island Visitor Center  
<https://dbvw.com/news/first-impression-uri-unveils-new-welcome-center/>

### Interior Design Best Practice Examples



Columbus, GA



Macon, GA



Knoxville, TN



Florence, AL



Ft. Wayne, IN



Presidio, CA



**GOAL 2.2** Enhance the *VisitGeorgetown.com* website to include additional visitor planning tools.

### **BACKGROUND**

A strong online presence has become the primary tool for destinations to attract, inform, and ultimately convert interest into actual travel. Travelers now use the Internet as the primary research tool for planning virtually all elements of their vacation plans, including itinerary planning, lodging, shopping, dining and more. Georgetown tourism has an excellent website that is graphically appealing, visitor-friendly, easy to navigate, informative, and contains up-to-date editorial and promotional content.

**OBJECTIVE** Add visitor service/sales functions to the Georgetown CVB website.

### **ACTION PLAN**

As budget allows, develop and add the following to the CVB website:

**Itinerary/Trip Planner** – Useful tool that makes it easy for users to decide on their activities and save plans to an itinerary.

**Lodging Booking Engine** – Can be accomplished through third-party provider; encourages and captures bookings for Georgetown properties.

**Blog** – Encourages visitor engagement and serves as unbiased endorsement (must be monitored by CVB staff.)

**Storefront** – Make available for purchase promotional items, local products, tickets to attractions and/or events.

**GOAL 2.3** Improve and expand visitor signage.

**OBJECTIVE** Capture the interest of drivers from Interstate 35 and Tollway 130 with highway signage.

### **ACTION PLAN**

Consider adding to the CVB advertising plan the purchase of additional billboards along both highways, including around/near the Kalahari exit in Round Rock, TX.

There is currently no interstate highway signage along I-35 that informs travelers of Georgetown's charming town square or other points of interest. As a result, travelers have no reason to exit the interstate and Georgetown loses an opportunity for additional visitors. (Long-term efforts by the City and CVB on this issue have proven successful, with the recent announcement that I-35 signage for Georgetown has been approved by TxDOT. The City and CVB should continue their work with TxDOT to ensure that this signage is installed.)



**OBJECTIVE** Improve visitor wayfinding signage.

**ACTION PLAN**

Georgetown currently has wayfinding signage that is easy to follow and provides helpful information. It is primarily concentrated in the downtown core. To make wayfinding signage more visible and to carry and convey the City's brand, consider re-painting signs with the CVB's brand colors and include the "Most Beautiful Town Square in Texas" logo.

As budget allows, extend wayfinding signage beyond the downtown core into areas such as the commercial districts along Interstate 35, the Sun City area, and to and from the more rural areas of the city such as Lake Georgetown and Garey Park.

In addition, it is recommended that wayfinding signage be added to the hike/bike trail between the Sheraton Hotel and downtown.

**OBJECTIVE** Equip visitor contact personnel and interested citizens to assist visitors to Georgetown.

**ACTION PLAN**

The CVB has developed a hospitality training program that equips front-line personnel in visitor contact points (hotel front desks, attractions/points of interest, downtown merchants and restaurants, convenience stores, etc.) with customer service skills and knowledge of the Georgetown tourism product. The program should continue to be fully implemented.

**OBJECTIVE** Create and distribute the appropriate visitor publications and provide helpful visitor information at various visitor touchpoints.

**ACTION PLAN**

Continue the annual production and publication of the Georgetown Visitors Guide; continue to include a digital version of the Visitors Guide on the visitor website *VisitGeorgetown.com*.

Distribute the Visitors Guide to as many visitor contact points in the city as possible, i.e. hotel front desks, Chamber and Economic Development offices, government offices, attractions/points of interest, downtown merchants and restaurants, convenience stores, etc.

Develop and produce a map of Georgetown on tear-off pads and make available free-of-charge at visitor contact points (see Best Practices Examples on next page).





## STRATEGY 3: MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

Expand marketing and advertising programs to increase the awareness of Georgetown as a travel destination to consumers in the City's primary feeder markets.

Georgetown is a unique and very desirable destination for visitors, particularly from the City's primary market areas (see map page 3). The CVB currently has a good marketing and advertising plan based on, and in appropriate relation to, its overall budget. To reach more of the City's potential market, it is recommended that additional resources be dedicated to an expanded program of advertising and marketing.

**GOAL 3.1** Direct additional CVB budget resources to marketing and advertising.

**OBJECTIVE** As is currently being done by the CVB, continue to ensure that current advertising expenditures are resulting in a positive Return on Investment (ROI).

### ACTION PLAN

Continue the CVB's excellent procedure of reviewing statistics (i.e., Google Analytics, response rates on Daytripper referrals, inquiry rates for both Printed and digital advertising) to evaluate the effectiveness of all current print and digital media advertising purchases. Adjust and/or eliminate advertising placements with a less than desired ROI and redirect those funds to other/new marketing/advertising initiatives.

**OBJECTIVE** As possible, increase the amount designated for marketing and advertising within the CVB budget.

### ACTION PLAN

As HOT collections continue to grow (and as the budget of the CVB increases accordingly), under the leadership and approval of the City management team and the CVB Advisory Board, allocate more funds within future CVB budgets to marketing/advertising.

**OBJECTIVE** Leverage marketing/advertising funds with local, regional and state partners that would yield the greatest ROI for Georgetown Tourism.

### ACTION PLAN

Research and participate in select co-op marketing/advertising/PR opportunities with the state's tourism department (Travel Texas) and participate in selected programs ([www.gov.texas.gov/travel-texas/page/co-op-opportunities](http://www.gov.texas.gov/travel-texas/page/co-op-opportunities)).

Advertise in the *Austin Visitors Guide*. Research other available co-op marketing/advertising opportunities with the Austin/Travis County CVB.

Investigate the development of co-op marketing/advertising partnerships with the tourism offices in Bastrop, Burnet, Lee, and Milam Counties, creating a "Circle Austin" program, joint interest trails program, or hub-and-spoke regional tours program with Georgetown as the base for overnight stays.



**GOAL 3.2** Maintain a consistent visitor-directed marketing message and utilize it across all of Georgetown’s marketing/advertising channels.

**OBJECTIVE** Continue to utilize and feature Georgetown’s strongest competitive points and brand identity.

**ACTION PLAN**

Georgetown has exceptionally strong brand messages that highlight its competitive points of differentiation. As a result, the CVB should maintain and continue to utilize the “Most Beautiful Town Square in Texas ” unique brand positioning, logotype and brand colors in all marketing, advertising, and promotion.

In addition, the CVB should continue the strong partnership with and use of the “Daytripper” brand in those markets identified as a primary source for both day trip and overnight visitors.

As it currently does, future advertising/marketing messages should highlight the City’s unique points of differentiation through images, graphics and copy in all media, advertising design and placement, and promotion:

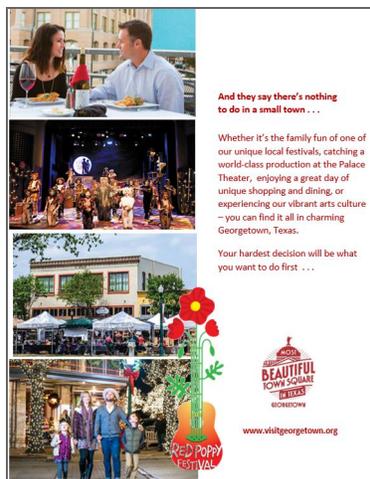
- |                 |                                    |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Downtown Square | Small-Town Charm/Slower Pace       |
| Historic Assets | Natural and Scenic Beauty          |
| Arts/Culture    | Parks & Recreational Opportunities |
| Family-Friendly | Welcoming People                   |

**Messaging Examples**

(Thematic conceptual examples only; actual messaging, design, implementation and execution would be the work of appropriate advertising and design professionals under the direction of Georgetown CVB)



History



Small Town Charm/Events



Adventure/Recreation



**Best Practices Example: Elk Grove, CA “Small Town Charm” Promotional Video**

[spot.tv/ad/wdlb/city-of-elk-grove-small-town-charm#](https://spot.tv/ad/wdlb/city-of-elk-grove-small-town-charm#)



**GOAL 3.3** Focus marketing/advertising efforts to markets within 300 miles of Georgetown and specifically target/message both day trip and overnight visitors.

**OBJECTIVE** Establish priority markets for potential leisure and conference/meetings and further refine those markets for day trip visitors or overnight visitors.



### **ACTION PLAN**

Develop specific targeted messaging and expand the annual advertising plan to include additional advertising placements and/or media platforms that will reach Georgetown's highest potential markets for both day trips and overnight visitation in specific market segments.

#### **Leisure**

##### **Day Trip**

Austin, College Station, Round Rock, Temple,  
Waco & other communities in a 100 – 150-mile radius

##### **Mix of Day Trip and Overnight**

College Station, Waco, San Antonio  
& other communities in a 100 – 150-mile radius

##### **Overnight**

Dallas, Ft. Worth, Houston  
and other communities in a 100–300-mile radius

#### **Meetings/Conferences**

##### **Overnight**

Primary Markets:  
Austin, College Station,  
Waco, San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, Ft. Worth

SMERF/Wedding Markets

Secondary Markets:  
Organizations & Business  
Located Elsewhere in Texas



**OBJECTIVE** Establish specific marketing/advertising strategies, including platforms, message, creative and placement that will best reach each of Georgetown's identified target market segments.

**ACTION PLAN**

Georgetown appears to be well represented in statewide platforms such as the *Texas State Travel Guide*, *TX Highways Magazine*, and the *Texas Events Calendar*.

Utilizing non-occupancy tax funds, advertising in consumer publications in the Austin market should be added to the advertising plan.

The Houston market appears to have two placements (*Houston House and Home*, *Houstonia*); additional placements in this market should be considered.

Other regional potential markets such as San Antonio, Dallas, and Ft. Worth are not represented in the advertising plan and with additional/reallocated advertising funds should be included in an expanded advertising plan.

Include advertising placements in support of sales programs as outlined in the Sales Strategy of the plan.

**GOAL 3.4** Expand digital advertising, marketing and communications with travel consumers and potential visitors.

**OBJECTIVE** Utilize digital technology and platforms to convey the Georgetown brand and marketing message.

**ACTION PLAN**

Print and digital marketing are well suited to reach different demographic groups and help cast a wider geographic net toward a specific kind of customer. In addition, it is very cost effective, particularly in contrast to broadcast (television/radio) advertising. While print advertising is certainly not dead, the trend in destination marketing is towards digital.

The CVB is properly utilizing digital advertising and should continue its current digital advertising efforts and, as budget allows, expand them.



## STRATEGY 4: SALES

Increase the economic impact of travel in Georgetown through targeted sales activities.

**GOAL 4.1** Continue current and implement new sales activities directed to attracting meetings and conferences.



### BACKGROUND

The meetings/conference market plays a very important role in the economic impact of travel to Georgetown.

Since the opening of the Sheraton Austin Georgetown Hotel and Conference Center three years ago, Georgetown has enjoyed strong growth in the meetings/conference market. The excellent facility has 26,672 square feet of meeting space and 222 guest rooms. It has received high ratings

from meeting/conference planners and attendees and has had good success, particularly in attracting Austin-based associations and businesses as well as local social events.

The CVB addresses this vital market through a dedicated salesperson, participation in meeting planner events and trade shows, advertising on meeting planner-directed digital and print platforms, and by working cooperatively with the sales personnel and programs of the Sheraton.

A potential threat to the success of this market in Georgetown is the development and impending opening of the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in nearby Round Rock, Texas. With 200,000 square feet of meeting space, proximity to Austin, and added entertainment/recreational offerings, it has the potential to have a major impact on Georgetown's meeting/conference marketing efforts.

**OBJECTIVE** Maximize meeting/conference sales efforts through continued partnership with the Sheraton Austin Georgetown.

### ACTION PLAN

The CVB currently has an excellent relationship with the Sheraton Austin Georgetown and coordinates marketing and sales efforts and activities with the hotel's Marketing and Sales staff. This cooperative partnership should continue.

Through this partnership, the CVB can and should utilize and coordinate their sales programs in conjunction with the hotel's affiliation with the national Marriott marketing, sales, and referral programs.



**OBJECTIVE** Through affiliation with professional associations/organizations and participation at the trade shows/professional events of those organizations, sell Georgetown as a location for meetings and conferences.

**ACTION PLAN**

The Georgetown CVB should maintain its current memberships in the following:

Texas Society of Association Executives (TSAE)  
Meeting Professionals International (MPI), Texas Hill County Chapter  
Dallas-Ft. Worth Association Executives (DFWAE)

In addition, the Georgetown CVB should consider adding memberships in the following:

Houston Society of Association Executives (HSAE)  
San Antonio Chapter of TSAE (TSAESA)  
Christian Meetings & Conventions Association (CMCA)

CVB participation should continue in the following meeting planner shows/marketplaces:

HSAE Meetings  
TSAE Annual Conference  
Destination Texas Trade Show  
Southwest Showcase  
Connect Texas Trade Show  
Connect Trade Show

**OBJECTIVE** Make meeting planners aware of Georgetown as a potential meeting site through advertising.

**ACTION**

The CVB currently advertises on several TSAE digital and print platforms, and should continue to do so:

TSAE Membership Directory  
TSAE Association Leadership Magazine  
TSAE Buyers Guide  
TSAE Online/Digital Ads  
Connect Texas

Going forward, the CVB should consider adding meeting planner directed digital and print advertising in the following:

MPI Texas Hill County Chapter Monthly Newsletter  
MPI Texas Hill County Chapter Website Home Page  
CMCA Good Newsletter



**OBJECTIVE** Develop advertising messaging and sales efforts that will most effectively compete with the development and opening of the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Round Rock, TX.

**ACTION PLAN**

Develop and utilize competitive messaging in relation to the Kalahari Resort, i.e. quality of meeting and sleeping room facilities; proven track record of meeting services and history of successful meetings; ease of access from interstate; ample and free parking; closeness of sleeping rooms to meeting space; attraction of small-town charm, etc.

**OBJECTIVE** Provide meeting planners with useful tools and resources to plan a meeting/conference in Georgetown.

**ACTION PLAN**

Maintain and enhance the current “Meeting Planners” page on the Georgetown CVB Website.

Develop a list of CVB services available to meeting planners, i.e. distribution of city-wide event RFPs, site inspections for hotels/meeting venues/special event venues, spouse program planning assistance, promotional items, registration volunteers, etc. Include this listing on the “Meeting Planners” page of the CVB website.



**Best Practice Examples: Meeting Planner Services Web Pages**

**Franklin, TN**

Very similar city to Georgetown: historic downtown, close to major destination city (Nashville), similar size conference facilities  
[visitfranklin.com/meetings/10-reasons-to-host-your-meeting-in-franklin](http://visitfranklin.com/meetings/10-reasons-to-host-your-meeting-in-franklin)



**Albany, GA**

Also very similar to Georgetown  
[www.visitalbanyga.com/meetings-and-groups](http://www.visitalbanyga.com/meetings-and-groups)



**Austin, TX**

Nearest major competitive city for this market (until the opening of Kalahari Resort in Round Rock, TX)  
[www.meet.austintexas.org](http://www.meet.austintexas.org)



**Knoxville, TN**

Midsized city with excellent menu of meeting services  
[www.visitknoxville.com/meetings/](http://www.visitknoxville.com/meetings/)



**GOAL 4.2** Conduct select sales activities directed to Leisure (Consumer) Travelers.

**BACKGROUND**

By far, the most effective method of reaching large numbers of leisure travelers is through digital and print advertising and the Internet. Much of the Georgetown CVB's sales effort toward the leisure market is correctly focused on these platforms.

Georgetown is obviously a drive-market for visitors. Many, if not most, automobile travelers depend on information available on their mobile devices. Georgetown's web-based information is mobile and tablet friendly.

In terms of sales, many CVBs employ two other methods of developing the leisure market: travel show representation and penetration into the AAA market.

As a rule, consumer travel shows are not always effective for destination marketing organizations in that the audiences at such shows is usually quite large and diverse. With Georgetown's strong attraction as a day trip destination, an exception might be travel shows in the feeder markets of Austin, San Antonio, and Houston.

While not as influential as they once were, AAA offices and their travel counselors do still have some influence on their membership. These offices also plan and operate group tours.

**OBJECTIVE** Attract leisure visitors to Georgetown through selected consumer travel and/or recreational shows in primary feeder markets.

**ACTION PLAN**

Research (market, audience, projected attendance, cost and schedule) of upcoming travel and/or outdoor-based shows in Austin, San Antonio, Houston and Waco; consider attending/participating in selected travel and/or recreational shows as part of a cooperative effort with other area destinations/CVBs ("Circle Austin"); register for those shows that demonstrate the highest potential; after attending the selected shows, evaluate their effectiveness and ROI.

**OBJECTIVE** On a limited basis, utilize AAA offices to increase leisure visitation.

**ACTION PLAN**

Research and identify individual AAA offices in Austin, San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, Ft. Worth, and Waco; prepare informational packets on Georgetown and distribute to those AAA offices (via mail or in-person calls when possible.)

Research advertising in the regional edition of the *AAA TourBook®* (annual publication) and the AAA Texas publication *Texas Journey® Magazine*.



## STRATEGY 5: PUBLIC RELATIONS/COMMUNICATIONS

Through public relations activities, increase Georgetown’s visibility and attractiveness as a travel destination to consumers and earned media on all platforms; Increase the knowledge of citizens and stakeholders regarding the Georgetown CVB’s program of work.

**GOAL 5.1** Continue to utilize the services of the CVB’s contracted public relations agency to increase exposure of Georgetown to the public and travel media through qualified writers/press, bloggers, influencers, and throughout social media platforms.

### BACKGROUND

The CVB has a very successful relationship with a contracted outside agency which does an excellent job of handling the CVB’s public relations programs. It is recommended that this relationship/contractual arrangement continue.

**OBJECTIVE** Working with the PR agency, engage in an expanded general media relations program to generate earned media in strategically targeted outlets.

### ACTION PLAN

Create customized pitches aimed at editors, journalists, bloggers, influencers and others, particularly in Georgetown’s identified source market areas (Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Waco) as well as other regional areas.

Create, distribute and pitch story ideas and press releases to qualified media outlets; focus on both existing and emerging story lines – including small town uniqueness, unusual shopping or dining outlets, special events, outdoor and waterway recreation, history, etc.

Expand the “Media Room” page on the Georgetown CVB website to provide story ideas and outlines, copies of press releases, a library of high-resolution photography and video, and Georgetown media contact staff information.

**OBJECTIVE** Increase Georgetown’s visibility and attractiveness as a travel destination through digital platforms.

### ACTION PLAN

The Georgetown CVB does an excellent job of utilizing various social media platforms to promote the destination and should maintain and regularly update their existing social media platforms:

**Facebook** ([www.facebook.com/VisitGeorgetownTX/](http://www.facebook.com/VisitGeorgetownTX/))

**Twitter** ([www.twitter.com/visitgeorgetown](http://www.twitter.com/visitgeorgetown))

**Instagram** ([www.instagram.com/visitgeorgetowntx/](http://www.instagram.com/visitgeorgetowntx/))

**YouTube** ([www.youtube.com/channel/UC4quWsnal45b77MDLkQq\\_FA](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4quWsnal45b77MDLkQq_FA))

To take advantage of other popular and free social platforms, Georgetown CVB should create and maintain a presence on **LinkedIn** ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com))



## Best Practices: CVBs Ramp Up Marketing, Social Media Strategies

Maria Lenhart, *Meetings Today Magazine*

Given how social media and mobile technology are playing an ever-increasing role in site selection and the way visitors are accessing destination information, it's little wonder that CVBs/DMOs are stepping up their approach to digital marketing. Mobile apps, Twitter command centers, meetings microsites and partnerships with local bloggers are all important tools that destination marketers are using to boost a city's appeal and improve visitor engagement.

Taking this approach is absolutely necessary in today's environment, according to Katie Cook, director of digital marketing for Visit Austin. "CVBs should continue to watch trends on how people are communicating and looking for information so that they enhance the overall destination experience," she said. "As visitors and meeting attendees get more and more social media savvy, they are expecting CVBs to be present and responsive on these networks."

DMOs are empowering association planners to promote their meetings by giving them landing pages, microsites and digitized content they can use. Pinterest and Instagram are being used for this as well—and the majority of DMOs are building Pinterest and Instagram sites for their destinations. Destinations and planners alike are concerned with attracting younger people, so they need to be in those channels.

Here's a sampling of creative ways some CVBs are using digital tools to enhance their meetings and tourism appeal.

**Austin, TX:** At the Austin CVB, a multi-pronged social media program includes meetings-specific accounts on Facebook and Twitter as well as a blog and a presence on Instagram, Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo and Pinterest. "We also started a program called True Austin that allows some of our local bloggers and influencers to answer visitor questions on social media and email," Cook said. "Visitors and meeting planners want to know what the locals recommend and love the personalized service."

**Chicago, IL:** For large meetings and shows, Choose Chicago will set up a command center on Twitter where attendees can get answers to questions and assistance with problems. "For instance, anyone having an issue at the airport can get help immediately from someone who's monitoring the tweets coming in," said Rose Horcher, vice president of client services. "At a recent meeting, we used it to retrieve a laptop left at the hotel."

**Indianapolis, IN:** Visit Indy is using Twitter to build excitement and answer questions from attendees before they arrive in Indianapolis. About two weeks prior to a meeting, Visit Indy starts communicating with attendees via the organization's event hashtag, said spokesperson Lisa Wallace. "We can discuss anything from transportation options to where to get a cup of the best local coffee," she said.

**Louisville, KY:** Louisville CVB enables planners to tap into prepared content on restaurants and attractions that they can post on Facebook, Twitter and other platforms, said Gathan Borden, director of brand marketing. "All the planner has to do is insert their meeting hashtag, plug in their group name and they have a full-on social media plan," he said. "They can pick up whatever they want, including Tweets and Facebook posts we've created, and share it with their attendees."

**Nashville, TN:** The Nashville CVB's "Live Music Guide" enables visitors to access information about where and when artists are appearing at various spots around the city. "Music is our brand and our product—it was important for us to have an app that really addresses this," said Deana Ivey, chief marketing officer for the CVB. "Meeting planners ask about it and we promote it at the registration desk. It's very handy for people to use when they want to go out after functions. It has augmented reality, so when you step outside the hotel or convention center, you'll see what's happening within a few blocks of where you are."

**Valley Forge, PA:** "The old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words no longer applies to modern digital marketing," said Edward Harris, vice president of marketing and communications for Valley Forge Tourism and Convention Board (VFTCB). To that end, the VFTCB launched the cutting-edge Montco360.net, offering more than 30 interactive virtual tours of the most popular attractions and event venues in Montgomery County, all filmed with drones.

**Vancouver, BC:** Tourism Vancouver encourages local bloggers to post content on the bureau's Inside Vancouver website. "It's very personalized information that gives the viewpoint of those who live here, whether it's about where to take a bike ride or where to get a great glass of wine," said Dave Gazley, vice president of meeting and convention sales. "People are looking for authentic experiences."



**OBJECTIVE** Utilize digital influencers as part of Georgetown’s digital public relations activities.

**ACTION PLAN**

Research, identify and utilize qualified macro and micro influencers whose blog/vlog areas of interest match Georgetown’s travel product and who have a quantified and large base of followers matching Georgetown’s target market demographics.

**OBJECTIVE** Communicate regularly with travel consumers and potential visitors.

**ACTION PLAN**

Continue the production and distribution of the Georgetown consumer-targeted travel e-newsletter.

Expand the editorial content of the e-newsletter (which is currently primarily event-focused) to include information on local attractions, feature stories, itinerary suggestions, etc.

**Best Practices Examples: Consumer E-Newsletters from Texas CVBs**



**GOAL 5.2** Create communication platforms and opportunities to disseminate information on the CVB's activities to City leadership, citizens, and stakeholders.

**BACKGROUND**

The Georgetown CVB is a well-functioning agency that successfully fulfills its mission. However, from the information gathered in stakeholder meetings and surveys, as well as conversations with City and CVB leadership, there is little knowledge among citizens and stakeholders about the work of the CVB and the economic impact of tourism in the community.

**OBJECTIVE** Grow awareness among Georgetown's citizens, leaders, media, and local tourism stakeholders about the economic impact of tourism in Georgetown and the work of the CVB/Tourism Office.

**ACTION PLAN**

Create and distribute to stakeholders, City leadership, citizens, and local media a regular e-newsletter that includes information and graphics on CVB activities, sales programs, economic impact information, stakeholder news, new product, special events, relevant information from regional/state tourism entities, feature stories, letter from Tourism Director, etc.

**Best Practices Example: Beaumont, TX CVB Industry/Local E-Newsletter**





**OBJECTIVE** Involve and encourage dialogue with local stakeholders.

**ACTION PLAN**

Plan and conduct quarterly Georgetown Tourism “Connect” Meetings. These meetings could potentially be combined with planned hotel/lodging meetings. Utilize “Connect” meetings to discuss/communicate Georgetown CVB and City of Georgetown activities/programs; receive input from stakeholders; provide a forum for the exchange of information between Georgetown tourism stakeholders, organizations and event planners; and build cohesive support for the CVB and the development and promotion of tourism.

**OBJECTIVE** “Get the word out” about tourism and the CVB to local citizens and groups.

**ACTION PLAN**

Develop a list of possible Georgetown Tourism/CVB speaking topics (Impact/Importance of Tourism in Georgetown, Economic Impact of Tourism in Georgetown, The Work/Programs of the CVB, The Tourism Strategic Plan, New Tourism Developments in Georgetown, etc.)

Develop a “CVB/Tourism Speakers Bureau” made up of speakers from the leadership of the City, CVB Advisory Board and staff members, and interested stakeholders.

Contact local business, civic, social, and educational groups (which are often searching for meeting/luncheon/event speakers); speak/present as often and to as many groups as possible.

**OBJECTIVE** Utilize the annual National Travel & Tourism Week (NTTW) as a promotional vehicle to inform Georgetown citizens about the impact of tourism in the city and the work of the CVB.

**ACTION PLAN**

Use the U.S. Travel website ([www.ustravel.org](http://www.ustravel.org)) to determine the dates for NTTW (Georgetown’s observance of Travel & Tourism Week may have to be adjusted to another date as NTTW often falls very close to the annual Red Poppy Festival).

Plan and conduct Georgetown’s Travel and Tourism week activities and promotions such as media events; visitor recognition/visitor events; government events; travel and hospitality employee events, etc.

Utilize and customize activities detailed in the free toolkit available at [www.ustravel.org/toolkit/national-travel-and-tourism-week](http://www.ustravel.org/toolkit/national-travel-and-tourism-week)



## STRATEGY 6: STAFFING

Staff the CVB in a manner that allows it to effectively and efficiently accomplish its program of work.

The Georgetown CVB is well-managed, staffed with talented professionals, and does a very good job of accomplishing its mission.

The goals, strategies, and action plans outlined in these recommendations are numerous and form an aggressive and wide-ranging program of work. Even with phased implementation, they will add a substantial amount to the current staff's responsibilities and scope of work.

**GOAL 6.1** Add staff as expanded program demands and budget allows.

**OBJECTIVE** As the program of work is implemented and revenues grow due to increased tourism to Georgetown, add appropriate specialized staff over time.

### ACTION PLAN

With the guidance of the CVB Manager, determine the need for and develop new job responsibilities as needed.

Due to the time demands of maintaining and updating the CVB website, as well as the addition of recommended functionality, the CVB should investigate the possibility of contracting with an outside vendor for the ongoing development and management of the website.

The CVB is heavily involved in special event/festival production (in particular the Red Poppy Festival) which is extremely time-consuming for staff. Consideration should be given to adding an Event Coordinator position to the CVB staff. The addition of this position would free other staff members to perform their primary duties of promoting and marketing the destination and serving visitors.

As the emphasis on and scope of responsibility increases in the area of sales, consideration may need to be given to adding sales assistance and/or meeting services staff.

