

# **Visit Vacaville | *Small. In a Big Way.***

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## Organizational Strategy Design

Final

**2019**

*Making Vacaville more competitive.*



*"Ideas and solutions for your competitive world"*

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## Overview

### Introduction

Visit Vacaville is the destination marketing organization (DMO) for the City of Vacaville. The organization is charged with generating economic benefits for Vacaville through marketing the area as a must visit destination. The area offers a variety of activities and attractions including shopping, culinary and agricultural and special events

To that end Visit Vacaville is seeking to develop an organizational strategy that serves as a blueprint for the organization to achieve critical goals related to tourism and other issues.

### Why a Strategy?

Why an organizational strategy? It's a great question, but in our experience, it's not about the plan, it's about the *thought process* that goes into the plan and the thinking that is needed to remain competitive in a rapidly changing environment.

The possession of tourism assets does not automatically guarantee your organizations success.

To that end, we try and help our clients answer some straightforward questions to improve the organization's effectiveness.

1. Given the changing marketplace and the assets of the destination, where does the organization want to be one year from now, two years from now, three years from now, and can you get there?
2. Do the DMO and its stakeholders have a **change strategy** to implement the strategic plan? It's not enough to have a strategic plan an organization must have a strategy that embraces change and allows staff to implement the strategic plan best.

At SMG Consulting, we see organizational strategy design and thinking as transformative for the stakeholders, the staff and the industry as a whole. SMG will guide your destination to develop a core opportunistic strategy designed to take advantage of existing programs as well as look at new programs. **The goal is to align opportunities with the changing market conditions which in turn drive strategies and plans.**

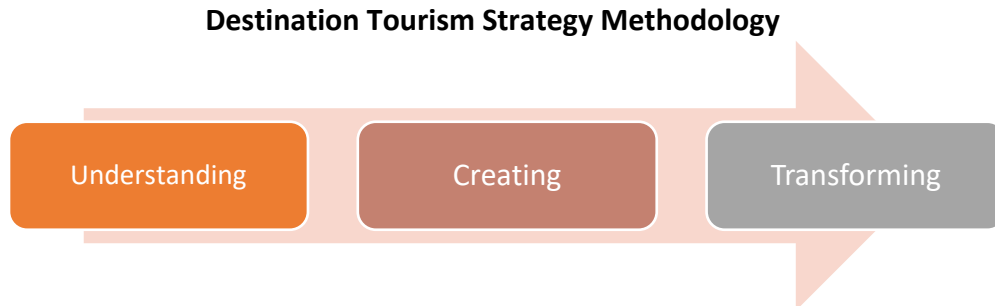


### **Our Philosophy**

At SMG Consulting we believe the long-term success of a strategic plan is based on a simple premise - **it takes both the client and the stakeholders to develop a plan that works**. We do **not** come to a destination and tell clients and stakeholders what to do. Instead, we act as a guide and resource working with the entire destination to develop a great strategy. Yes, we push and pull and cajole, but mostly we try and provide you with insight and knowledge acquired through our many successful projects.

## Scope of Work

The scope of work includes the following phases.



### Phase 1 – Understanding

We look to understand all aspects of the destination, especially what makes the destination different in feel and culture. To that end we have relied on both primary and secondary research including the following:

A. Secondary Research

- Visit Vacaville Website
- Visit Vacaville Visitor Guide
- Visit Vacaville
- Smith Travel Reports
- Previous Visit Vacaville Strategic Plan

B. Primary Research

In addition to the secondary research reviewed above SMG Consulting conducted a series workshops that included input from a variety of stakeholder groups including lodging, recreation, environmental, business, arts and culture and food/dining in an effort to understand the culture and values of the destination.

### Phase 2 – Creating

With the above information we developed an understanding of Vacaville as a community and a destination, we then focused on a process to design and create what we believe are the necessary strategies to improve the competitiveness of the destination over the short and medium term 0-5 years.

### Phase 3 – Transforming

Once the strategies were identified and created to improve Vacaville's competitiveness, we developed the necessary steps to transform those strategies into real changes that benefit the destination.

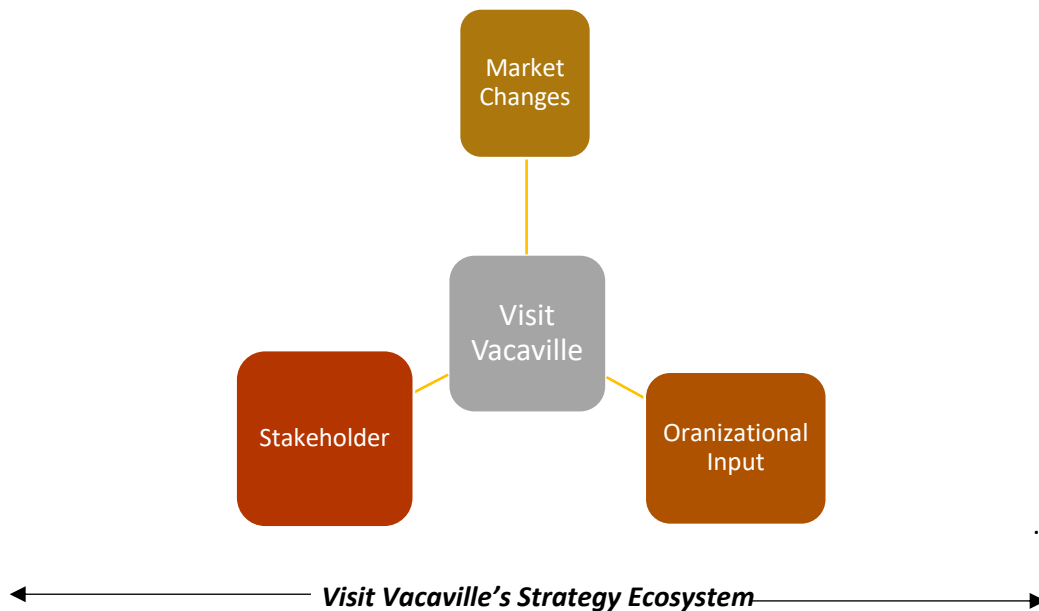
## Methodology

The proposed strategy development process is a comprehensive approach that will help make implementation of Visit Vacaville's strategy efforts more effective.

### Overview

The strategy development process that was used approach is a process that helps to ensure buy-in and support from the broader community as well as the tourism industry.

#### *SMG Consulting 3-Point Strategy Development and Strategy Planning Approach*



The SMG approach captures the key elements necessary to develop a successful organizational/destination strategy.

- The first dimension is a **macro dimension** that includes a review of the dynamic change elements in which Visit Vacaville currently works. Here we ask about what significant changes in the marketplace are occurring that the destination needs to take advantage of or be wary of.
- The second dimension is an **organizational viewpoint** which includes perspective and insight from the board and staff regarding past successes and failures, as well as ideas as to where strategic opportunities may exist, and resources should be focused.
- The third dimension includes a **stakeholder industry viewpoint** which provides perspective and insight from a variety of stakeholders within Vacaville.

## Destination Tourism Strategy Report Format

The Organizational Strategy Design is designed to take the reader from a broad understanding of Tourism within the County all the way through specific actions steps that will transform Vacaville into a more competitive destination for the near and mid-term. This broad to narrow report flow is designed to provide the reader with a backdrop and context with which to understand the macro environment in which Visit Vacaville exists through the specific action steps to maximize its competitive position.

### **Understanding**

Part 1: Overview of Solano County

Part 2: Vacaville Tourism Overview

Part 3: Destination Assets, Liabilities and Opportunities

Part 4: Social + Cultural Trends

### **Creating**

Part 5: Strategy Development

### **Direction**

Part 6: Vision, Mission and Brand Promise

### **Transforming**

Part 7: Implementation

## Special Thanks

Special thanks to the staff of Visit Vacaville for their support in providing information, data, setting up meetings as well as place hold meetings. Additionally, their insight and perspective were invaluable and complimentary to the broader community perspectives we learned.

## **Executive Summary (Setting the Stage)**

Vacaville is a remarkable little destination located in Solano County. The destination, long known for the Nut Tree and the Factory Outlet has been defined by that shorthand and in some ways has limited the many experiences that residents have locally enjoyed and that many visitors and potential visitors either do not know about or may only be partially aware.

The development of the Vacaville Destination Strategy is designed to consider where Vacaville is today and to transition the destination to a more competitive place. This transition needs to occur in a way that encompasses four key elements: to optimize the economic impact of visitors, to support and empower the local tourism industry, to be a voice for the value of tourism in Vacaville, and to respect and champion the local culture and natural resources of the area.

### **Optimizing the Impact of Visitors**

This element is important to the city and residents of Vacaville as tourism is one of the major revenue generators through sales and the Transient Occupancy Tax collection.

### **Empower the Local Tourism Industry**

Competitive destinations enjoy the support of the tourism industry and residents. It is important for everyone to see themselves as part of the industry. The alignment of community values with the tourism industry needs is critical to present an authentic experience that reinforces why Vacaville is different from everywhere else.

Additionally, it is important for Visit Vacaville to empower both the industry and the community with its technology and information that it gains from the programs and research it implements. It's a two-way street, new ideas flowing from the community up and from Visit Vacaville down. It's only through this empowered and collaborative approach that Vacaville can truly be as innovative and effective as it can possibly be.

### **Being a Voice for Tourism**

There is no one better to be the voice of tourism than Visit Vacaville and the industry. Many people don't have an understanding or may not care for tourism. Some may see tourism only in a negative light. But it's important not only to reach out with the information and benefits of tourism but to continue to encourage them to participate in all the offerings that Vacaville has to offer. Who wouldn't want to share the fun?

### **Champion Local Culture, Agriculture and the Natural Resources**

Perhaps one of the most important roles Visit Vacaville can play is championing the local culture, agriculture and the natural resources. It is these elements that serve to define what makes this place different and in doing so increases the competitiveness of the destination. It's also important to be sensitive to the negative sides of tourism that can impact the resources: the overcrowding and protection of the natural resources, not just the rock but the estuary, the beach, the trails and everything that gives residents and visitors that unique outdoor setting. Championing also means managing and protecting these precious resources because they are truly what makes Vacaville unique.



As Vacaville evolves, the goal of this strategy is to make the destination more competitive. That does not mean to do or to offer the same things as everybody else. For Vacaville to succeed, it must be different and unique, quirky and fun. It must follow its own path and tap deep into its culture and bring that forward by telling an interesting and compelling story to potential visitors—one that is authentic and genuine to all of Vacaville.

To get there, Vacaville is going to have to understand and celebrate its differences and not wish they had things other destinations might have. It's a different way of seeing a destination but one the visitor will appreciate.

## Part 1: Overview of Solano County Tourism (Understanding)

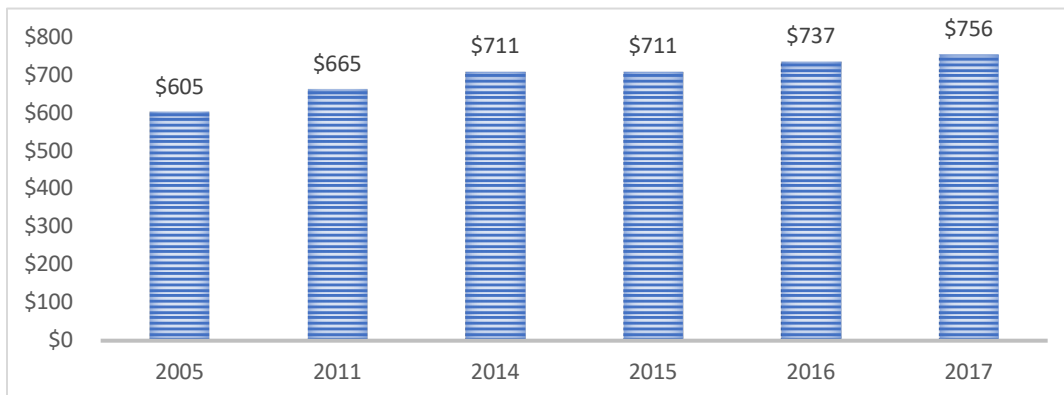
The following section is designed to provide a current understanding of the tourism economy in Vacaville. Understanding the context of where the destination is currently operating provides the basis for looking forward and improving the competitiveness of the destination. This section provides an overview of Solano County tourism trends and more specifically Vacaville. Additionally, the section provides an overview of the Visit Vacaville tourism promotion efforts and a summary of destination assets, liabilities and potential opportunities to increase the competitiveness of the destination.

### I. Tourism Overview

#### Solano County Tourism Overview

The Solano County generates approximately \$756M in destination tourism spending. The county has averaged 2.4% annual growth in spending between 2000 and 2017 which is the most recent data available. This growth has been fueled by the addition of increasing regional population, wine and agricultural tourism as well as a variety of visitor offerings that have seen the county increase its tourism-related revenues.

**Figure 1: Visitor Spending**



Source: Dean Runyan and Associates

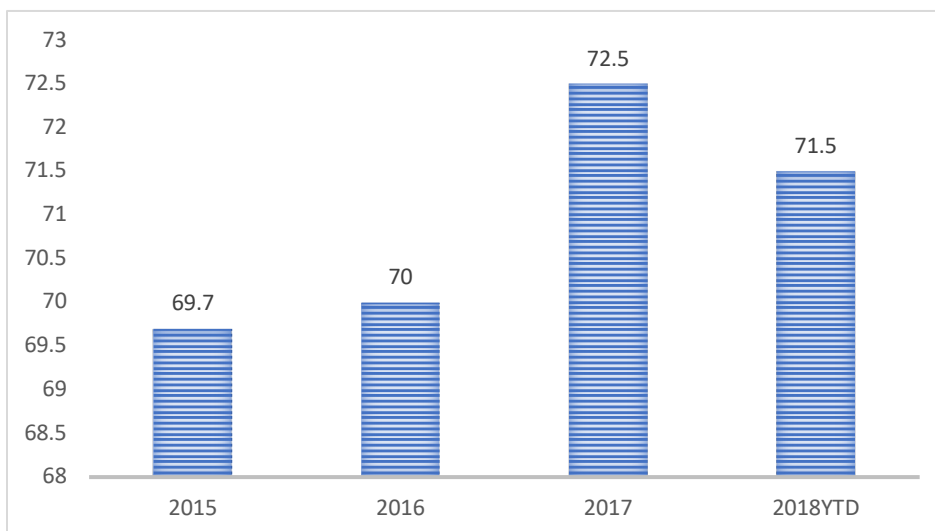
Within the county there are a number of tourism destinations including Vallejo, Fairfield as well as Vacaville. Over the past decade, a number of destinations have implemented Tourism Business Improvement TBID Districts. Those destinations that have TBID funding include Fairfield and Vacaville. Each of these areas look to attract visitors to their own destination utilizing their own marketing and promotions funding.

## Part 2: Vacaville Tourism Overview (Understanding)

Vacaville, located just thirty-five minutes from Sacramento, is one of the destinations within the County. The destination offers a range of one of the area's major Factory Outlet Malls, an up and coming downtown, outdoor activities access to real agricultural farms well as a unique and community culture to compliment the visitor experience. Vacaville has approximately 1,000 hotel-motel rooms most of which are branded flag hotels.

In terms of overall occupancy, the destination has seen occupancy increase from 69.7% to 72.5% between 2016 and 2017.

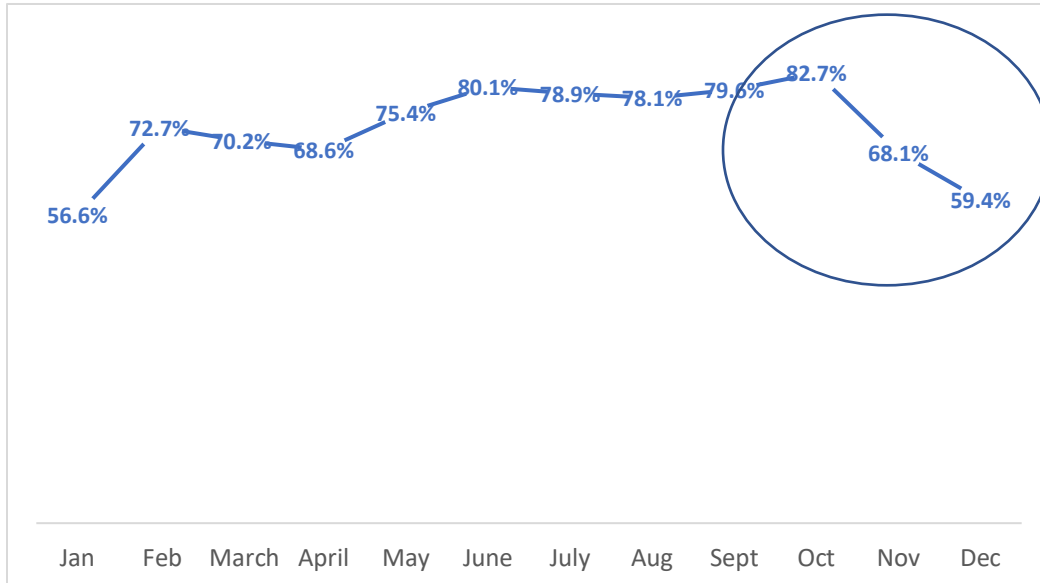
**Figure 2: Vacaville Annual Occupancy Trend**



Source: Smith Travel Research

In terms of seasonality occupancy, Vacaville's strongest quarter is the summer quarter (Average 78%) followed closely by spring (Average 75%) and fall (Average 70%). The winter quarter has the lowest months of demand (Average 66%) The figure below illustrates the typical demand pattern as measured by occupancy rates. Clearly, there is an opportunity to grow during all parts of the year.






**Figure 3: Vacaville Seasonality 2017**



Source: Smith Travel Research

### **Visit Vacaville Promotion**

The Visit Vacaville organization is charged with the promotion of Vacaville as a tourism destination. The organization is funded by a lodging industry Tourism Business Improvement District assessment. The organization provides a full range of Destination Marketing Organization marketing programs designed to create awareness for the destination and attract visitation to Vacaville including the following:

-  Website/Internet
-  Public relations/ Content development
-  Social media
-  Search engine optimization
-  Special events promotions

Additionally, the organization has industry input via its 13-member voting plus 3 ex-officio member advisory board including hotels, Attractions, public sector organizations and an at-large positions, which provides input on the implementation of organization programs.

## Part 3: Destination Assets, Liabilities, and Opportunities (Understanding)

SMG Consulting engaged with a cross-section of community members in an effort to understand the values, character, and culture of Vacaville residents. It is these elements and how local residents define themselves that allows the destination to define its core assets. While often times assets are thought of in terms of a destination's attributes, i.e. bike trails, hiking trails, etc., it is really the local community's culture and values that help to define it and differentiate from other destinations.

### Vacaville Assets

The process identified four core assets.

- **Friendly Community/Small Town Feel/Safe**  
Perhaps one of the most constantly mentioned values of the community is its friendliness, small town feel and safety. Vacaville residents are friendly and welcoming to visitors. They recognize the importance of tourism to their local economy and way of life, and as such, they welcome those who visit.
- **Outdoor Recreation**  
Vacaville has a variety of outdoor recreation. Land-based recreation helps to define the local residents' passions. Be it hiking, biking the availability of open space the local community places high importance on the availability of these activities.
- **Family Orientation**  
Local residents have a strong family orientation and support a variety of program and events that reinforce that notion.
- **Agritourism and countryside**  
One of Vacaville's key assets is the adjacent location of its agricultural area Pleasant Valley. The area is a bucolic drive on two lane roads the Vacaville's historic agricultural region.
- **Shopping**  
Vacaville is known primarily for its factory outlet stores, one of the major locations in the Greater Northern California area. Every day these stores hosts tens of thousands of shoppers and provide visitors with an important activity.
- **Downtown**  
The Vacaville downtown is an emerging opportunity to present an entirely different side of Vacaville to visitors. The old downtown area is in transition which will see new housing, dining and shopping and more importantly will be a catalyst for local culture to be on display and experienced.

## **Vacaville Liabilities**

Along with its core assets, Vacaville also has liabilities that over time can limit its ability to maximize its tourism experience.

- **Signage and wayfinding**

One area that could be improved is the signage on Interstate 50. There could be improved signage that focuses on the downtown etc. Additionally, the wayfinding in town is lacking but is currently being addressed by the City of Vacaville.

- **Mindset**

Often familiarity can breed passivity or an attitude of that's the way it is. A key step to improving the competitiveness of Vacaville is to reimagine the destination's assets in a more competitive way and effectively communicate the appropriate message. To that end, one area that is of critical importance is the mindset of the local community. In many of the meetings, those participating talked about the lack of real change to address the changing community dynamics that you would find with a city of 100,000 people. New ideas, special events, art and culture need to be more inclusive and attract a wider swath of the community and visitors.

- **Community Vibe**

In today's tourism world many destinations have very similar attributes for people to enjoy including shopping, dining, activities. What often sets a destination apart is the feel and sense of place a destination has. There is a need to bring more of that to the surface in an effort for visitors to better connect with the destination.

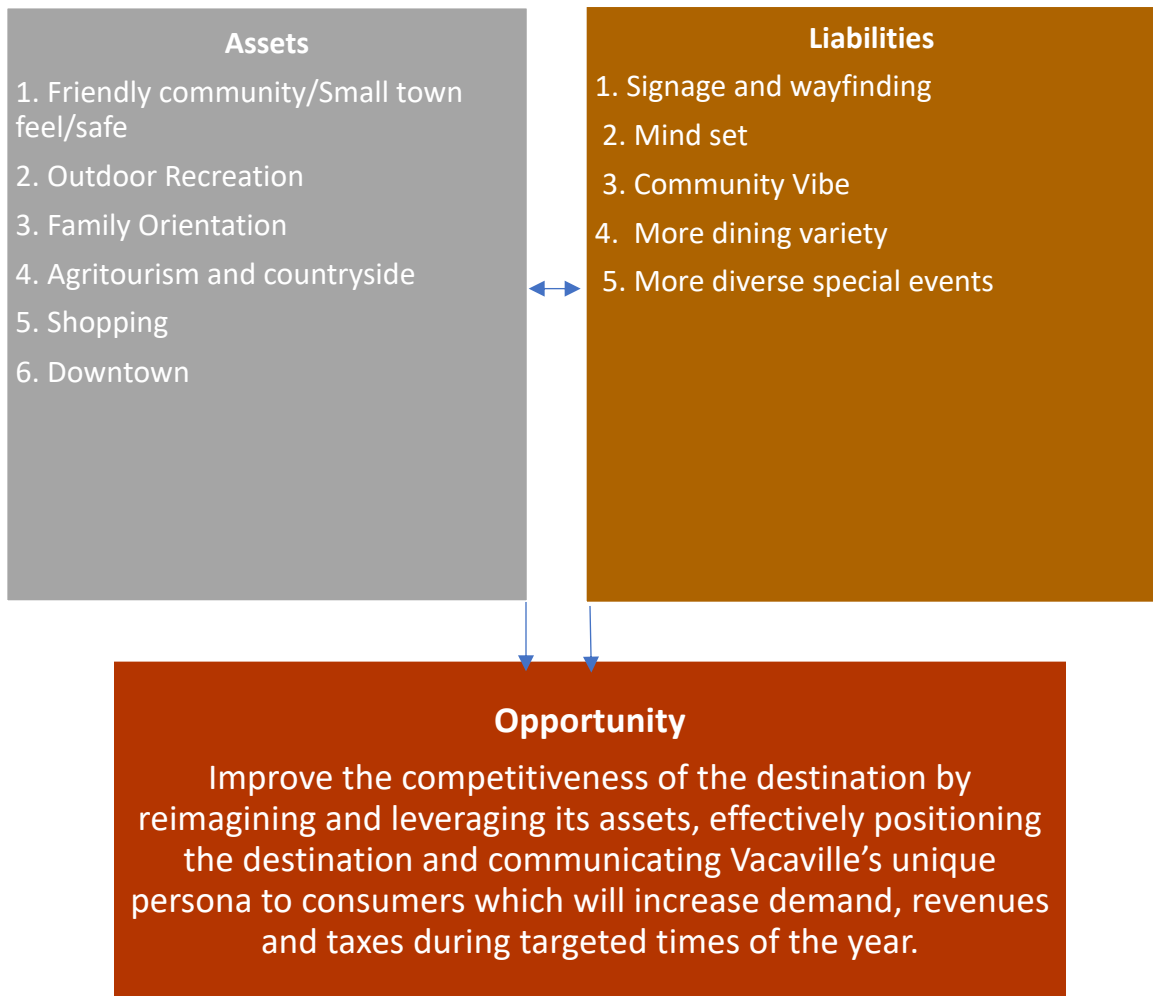
- **More dining variety**

As the downtown continues to emerge it is hoped that more upscale dining will also be included as a compliment to the other dining options available in Vacaville. Given the destinations proximity to farms and the Solano County wine industry a greater variety dining is hopeful to emerge, and in doing so it would add another dimension to the destination.

- **More diverse special events**

Another area that needs to be considered is greater diversity of special events that program beyond just families. The area needs to encourage the development of a wider variety of events everything from a Reggae festival to different foods etc. that will attract a broader and more diverse visitor base.

### Vacaville Assets and Liabilities -Summary



## Part 4: Social + Cultural Trends – Lots of Change

The following are consumer lifestyle trends that will impact tourism and have the potential for opportunity with Visit Vacaville has identified as important to take advantage of in order to increase awareness and demand for the destination.

### Consumer Lifestyle Trends

- **People are seeking a deeper connection to travel brands and destinations**  
Travelers today are looking to align with brands and destinations that have similar values and beliefs. How can Vacaville align with consumers?
- **“Welltality” is the new hospitality**  
Destinations and hotels are adding on wellness features to accommodate changing consumer tastes.
- **Multi-generational aspirational travel**  
Families today are looking for vacations that are transformative for the entire family.
- **A shorter travel planning timeframe**  
Mobile technology is shifting the traveler’s timeframe, allowing them to be more open to same day/next day last-minute offers. There is an opportunity for destinations and local attractions to leverage this segment.
- **Book anywhere**  
Thanks to flexible mobile technology, booking transactions for travel can now be made just about anywhere.

### Destination Trends

- **“Bleisure” – Business travel as a lifestyle<sup>1</sup>**  
Today’s business travelers are using their business travel to add leisure days onto their trip.
- **Rise of the boutique destination**  
Visitors are looking for emphasis on local unique experiences. Destinations need to focus on what truly differentiates them, and not what they think consumers want them to be.

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<sup>1</sup> Skift Travel, “2015 Trend: Business Travelers Adopt New Rules for Travel”, <http://skift.com/2015/02/11/2015-trend-business-travelers-adopt-new-rules-for-travel>



- **Curated experiences**

Destinations have the opportunity to curate experiences for travelers, allowing them to meet locals, connect to local and cultural activities, and experience local dining and restaurants, all based on their individual tastes and interests.

- **Destination celebrations**

As Boomers age and think about life celebrations (birthdays, anniversaries), more and more of those are taking place in-destination.

- **Increasing focus on millennial travel**

With the aging of the Boomer generation, more focus is on Gen X and Millennials. Many destinations are making that transition with messaging, themes, and communication channels.

### **Marketing and Communications Trends**

- **Visual imagery is becoming more important in tourism marketing**

As social media has become augmented with visual apps like Instagram and Snapchat, destinations are looking to more fully integrate this visual format into their marketing efforts. Likewise, visitors are using this format more and more to share their vacation experiences.

- **Traveler flexibility and control – research everything**

With the continued growth of online and mobile resources, consumers looking for flexibility and control of their vacation decisions have the ability to research everything and often do it not only in pre-trip planning but once a trip is underway.

- **Greater degree of personalization**

Facilitated by increased data mining capabilities, marketing efforts will lead to customization for each consumer. DMOs will focus more and more on customized targeting.

## Part 5: Strategy Development (Creating)

The development of a destination strategy for Vacaville is based on two important elements: reevaluating its current mix of community values and assets and successfully positioning the destination in terms of those assets.

### Asset Re-Evaluation

For years Vacaville has been known primarily for its factory outlet stores and this shorthand has defined the destination for decades. While no one can dispute their importance and the role they have played in visitation there is so much more to Vacaville. Rethinking Vacaville's assets along the lines Shopping + Downtown + Agriculture+ Community and this provides a much more expanded portfolio of assets to present to consumers.

#### Primary Asset

Factory Outlet Stores

#### New Assets

Downtown  
Agriculture  
Community

#### Total Assets

Factory Outlet Stores  
Downtown  
Agriculture  
Community

By viewing Vacaville's assets in this way one can a more balanced and complete set of attributes with which to communicate to potential visitors. Viewed in this way it, in fact, make the destination more competitive both from a local value and cultural perspective and destination attribute perspective. Stakeholders need to consider expanding their view of Vacaville beyond the more historical Factory Outlet stores and see how a broader view can make the destination more competitive.

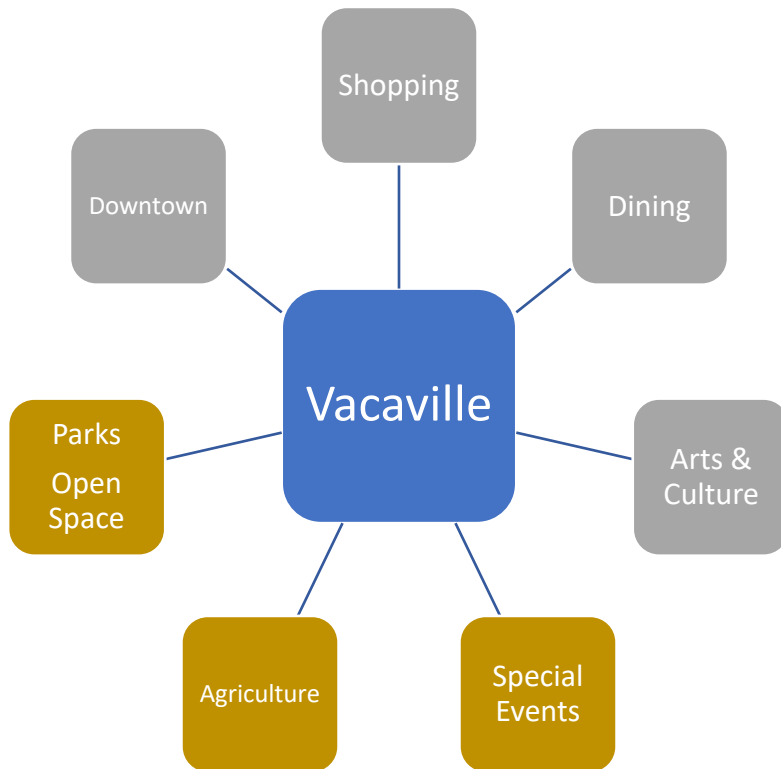
### I. Asset Repositioning

The second component in the strategy development is repositioning Vacaville in a way that accentuates the differences from other destinations. It's important for stakeholders to think in strategic terms about the differences that make the destination unique and give it a different character everything from its recreation offerings to its lack of chain restaurants to its friendly culture. Positioning lines like the following give stakeholder a different way to think about Vacaville.

**Vacaville: Where urban meets the outdoors**

This positioning, using the Vacaville’s unique connection of its urban location and attributes with its rural farm agriculture connected by the downtown. This kind of thinking can be integrated into creative advertising and messaging campaigns that must communicate that Vacaville is a different kind of place.

**Vacaville  
Mini-Urban Hub Positioning  
“Where Urban Meets Outdoor”**



Vacaville has many of the elements of an Urban Center but is more manageable (less crowded) and affordable. It’s also unique, unlike full urban centers it’s has agriculture as part of its soul and unlike fully rural locations it has great shopping, an emerging downtown, dining and arts & culture scene. A positioning the destination can grow into. Its defendable and positioned correctly will improve the competitiveness of the destination.

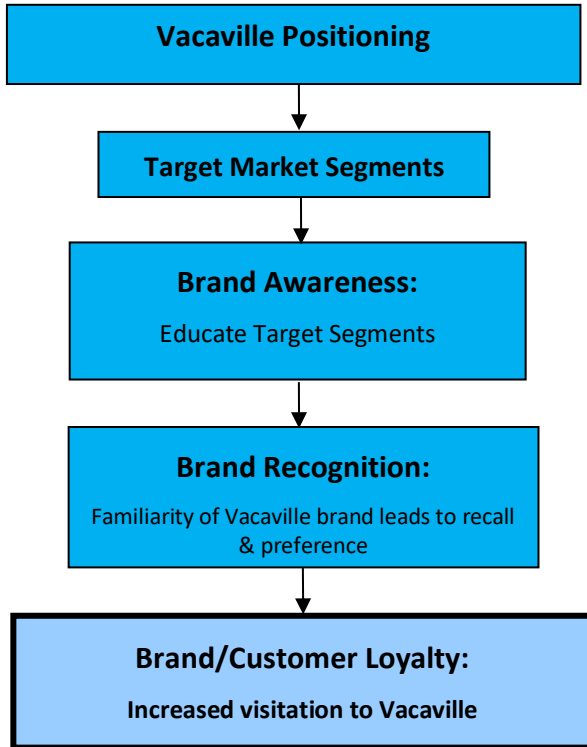
Located in a highly competitive Northern California market, **Vacaville can leverage this positioning and differentiation into its branding and communication as it increases awareness of the destination** among its identified target segments.

The communication of a differentiated Vacaville positioning not only serves to unify all of the

assets/attributes of the destination under one identity, but it also works to unify the tourism community and encourage it to provide the highest quality standards and customer service that will further strengthen the customer experience.

**Building a broader and more differentiated positioning of Vacaville and Customer Loyalty:**

By broadening and differentiating the Vacaville positioning, it can motivate a buying decision that is both emotionally and functionally driven and **is positively reinforced when the experience meets the expectation**. As such, Vacaville's lodging properties, attractions, and all visitor-oriented businesses should strive to consistently offer exceptional customer service beginning with the information gathering process through to the actual visitor experience. The continual and dedicated commitment by each community member, tourism agency, and business to provide a positive overall experience will help to build brand awareness, reinforce positive brand associations, and generate customer (brand) loyalty among target segments.



**Above all, a highly loyal customer base can be expected to generate repeat visitations and revenue flow.**

It is critical that the key points of differentiation that help to build the Vacaville brand be interwoven and communicated throughout all aspects of tourism marketing efforts over the long-term.

## II. Marketing Strategy Integration

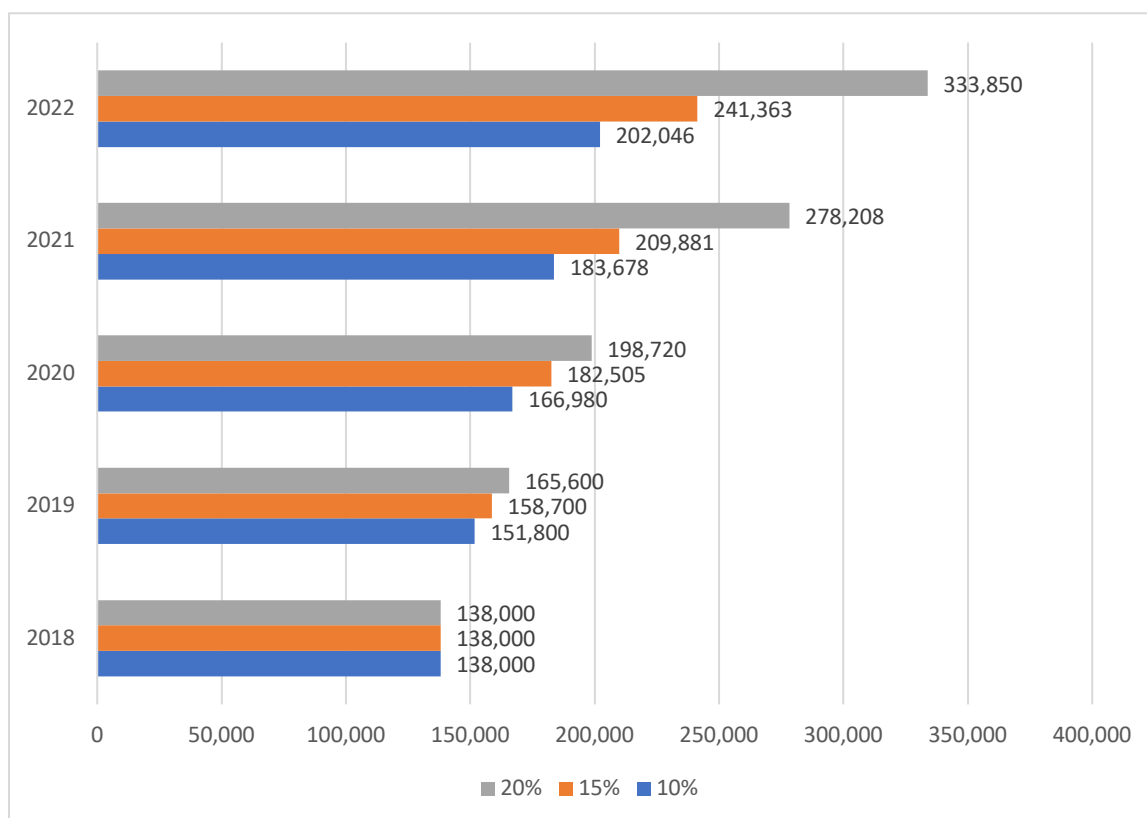
The final element is to integrate this new way of thinking into Vacaville's marketing strategy. Given the prominent role that the internet plays in travel planning, Vacaville's marketing efforts should continue to drive potential visitors to its website. At the core of the strategy are two basic principles:

- The **best organization to create awareness and brand positioning** and influence visitors to choose Vacaville is the Destination Marketing Organization.
- The **best organization to book a room or make a sale** is a lodging property or an online travel agency (OTA).

### How the strategy works (see the model on following page)

- Marketing programs (traditional advertising, digital advertising, content development) are executed to attract target market segments and to increase the existing database for future tourism marketing efforts. Once the target segment is attracted, they either show interest (go to the visitor bureau website) or not.
- Once they go to the website, at some point, they may click on a lodging property or attraction. They may book directly, or they may book through an online travel agency or some other channel. This sequence of events may happen all at once or over a period of time.
- Based upon their experience, new visitors either become repeat visitors going back to the lodging property/attraction directly or back to VCB's website to choose another lodging property or attraction, or they fall out of the entire system.
- The DMO can measure its effectiveness and accountability at several points.
  - First, it will be able to measure **how many visits are generated overall** by its marketing efforts.
  - Second, it can **develop online surveys to determine how people got to the website** their, influence to take a vacation and the return on investment (ROI).
  - Third, it can measure **how many visitors (leads) it provides to its members**.
- Current unique visitors to the website are approximately 175,000 annually. The chart below projects unique visitor growth at 100% in 2016 and 50% annually afterward, which should be achievable given the available budget.

Figure 17: Visit Vacaville Unique Visitors to Website | Projections



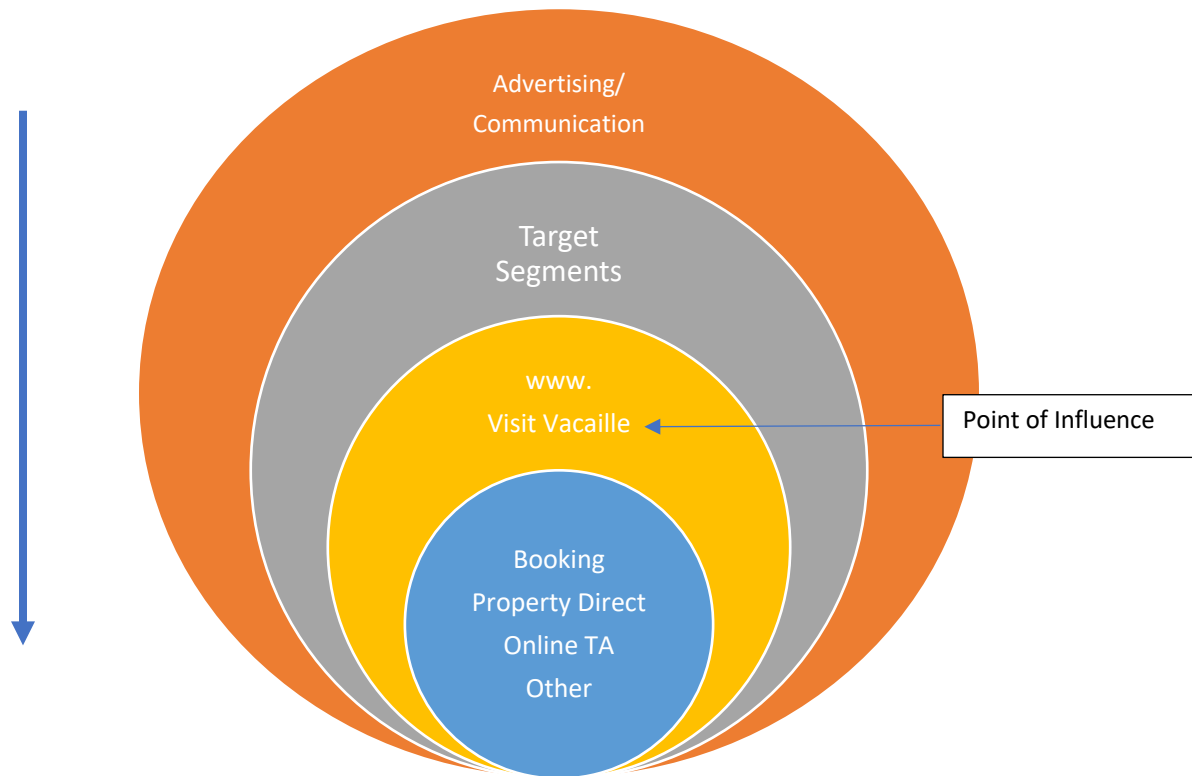
Source: Google Analytics. SMG Estimates

In the figure above, assuming a range of growth rates between 10% and 20% annual growth rate of website visitor annually over the next five years there would be an incremental increase of website visitors and assuming 10% are influenced to visit, it would mean potential lodging revenue between \$2.8M and \$4.7M generated just through the Vacaville tourism marketing efforts. These can be tracked through the website. This does not include consumers that might have been influenced to visit but did not use the Vacaville website.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
10% Growth	\$1,978,920	\$2,176,812	\$2,394,493	\$2,633,943	\$2,897,340
15% Growth	\$1,978,920	\$2,275,758	\$2,617,122	\$3,009,694	\$3,461,145
20% Growth	\$1,978,920	\$2,374,704	\$2,849,645	\$3,989,503	\$4,787,409

Source: SMG Consulting Estimates

-----Competitive Strategy-----



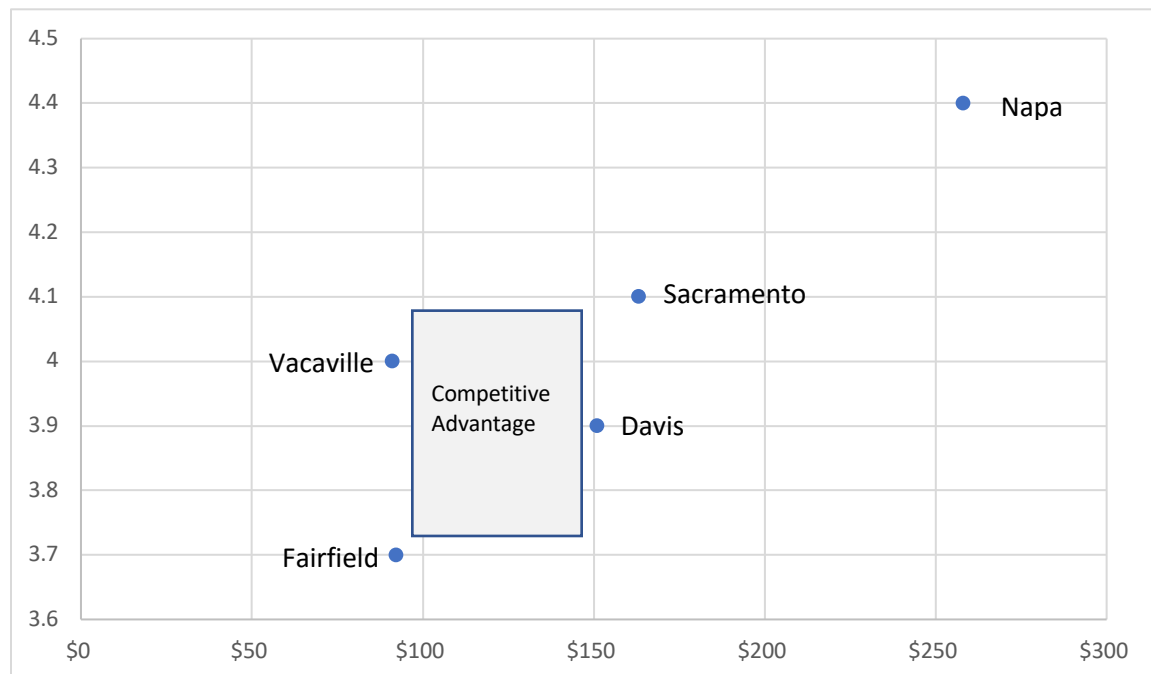
Vacaville must concentrate its efforts on **repositioning the destination and creating awareness and driving potential visitors to its website** in order to educate potential visitors on the difference of the destination to encourage them to visit the area. In doing so, it is important to remember two key priorities:

- Tourism promotion efforts must concentrate on **the marketing elements that individual organizations/businesses cannot do (or do as well) for themselves**
- Stakeholders **must work together in a very competitive market**

### Visitor Benefits

Properly promoted, Vacaville's product attributes and price/value translate into a variety of visitor benefits. The core strategy is to fully exploit the price value advantage Vacaville has with regard to its other competitors. The chart below illustrates this price advantage. The chart compares the price for one night's lodging in the five destinations as was found on Trip Advisor. The chart also illustrates the average rating for the hotels in each destination as assigned by users in TripAdvisor. **As can be seen, Vacaville, while rated slightly lower on quality, 4.0 vs 4.4 for Napa and higher rating than Davis 3.9 and slight lower than Sacramento holds a significant price advantage over each of those destinations.** This sustainable pricing, when combined with the recommended repositioning of Vacaville, can present to the consumer a clear choice of similar activities in a unique destination that can be enjoyed by someone staying in Vacaville at significant cost savings. This is the clear sustainable advantage of the Vacaville market.

Figure: Vacaville Lodging Pricing and Rating vs. Comp Set



Source: Trip Advisor Prices and property ratings for January 19, SMG Consulting

The key toward leveraging this advantage is to not only communicate the pricing, Vacaville's sustainable competitive but also its experiences.



## Part 6: Vision, Mission and Brand Promise (Direction)

This section focuses on implementing specific steps in an effort to drive the new strategy and transform the destination into a more competitive position which in turn increases revenues, employment, and taxes for the City of Vacaville.

### Tourism Vision

Vacaville will be widely known and respected as the perfect place for people of all ages and backgrounds to meet for business and leisure.

### Tourism Mission

The mission of Visit Vacaville is to develop Vacaville as a desired destination for visitors through aggressive marketing of its diverse assets and advocating for the enhancement of Vacaville as a more attractive destination.

### Brand Promise

*Situated at the gateways to the fabled California wine Country and the state capital of California, Vacaville is an accessible, friendly proud and patriotic community featuring quality premium outlets shopping and the legendary Nut Tree, which is recognized as the spot California cuisine was born.*

*Offering a variety of popular family and upscale dining options, this progressive city showcases a restored historic downtown and a burgeoning biotechnology industry.*

*Hosting many fun signature events such as the Creek Walk Concert Series and Vacaville Fiesta Day, the community enjoys a relaxed outdoor lifestyle and simple joys of spending time with family and friends.*

### Overall Strategic Goal

**Increase tourism spending in Vacaville** over the next five years by effectively positioning Vacaville in a unique way that takes advantage of its urban amenities and rural access. This strategic goal also seeks to leverage and optimizes Vacaville's assets including not only its location, superior price value, recreation, and history. By doing so, this will contribute to economic prosperity and increased employment development for Vacaville while working to retain its local culture.

## Part 7: Implementation (Transforming)

The key to implementing any strategy element is the actual execution of specific action steps, and to that end, it will be imperative for Visit Vacaville to integrate implementation steps into their work plan.

The following “Strategic Framework” was identified to provide Visit Vacaville and the tourism industry important direction to implementing the competitive strategy.



This framework leverages the opportunities available to Vacaville in a way that increases the destination’s competitive advantage by building on its strength and further differentiating Vacaville as a unique place within the Northern California market. These implementation steps enable the destination to maximize its competitive opportunity.

## **I. Destination and Product Development**

The following strategies and implementation steps are designed to support the community and visitor experience in a way that leverages Vacaville's physical attributes to provide a unique recreational and eclectic community visitor experience.

### **A. Signage**

There is a need to improve Highway access signage to communicate that there is a downtown in Vacaville.

#### Strategy:

The City of Vacaville should work with Cal Trans to modify Highway 80 signs to better communicate the downtown area. Thus, providing visitors and potential visitors with more knowledge of what is available in Vacaville beyond retail hopping.

#### Action Steps:

1. Visit Vacaville should continue to work with The City of Vacaville to develop and communicate a comprehensive recommendation for sign changes to Cal Trans.
2. The City of Vacaville should solicit appropriate local, regional and state politicians to support those efforts.

#### Measurement

1. Development and communication of recommendations to Cal Trans that feature the downtown in Vacaville.
2. Engagement and cooperation with all political levels and cooperation with Cal Trans.
3. Actual implementation of new and revised signs.

### **B. Art & Culture**

In an effort to emphasize Vacaville's unique and historic culture, it's important for Vacaville to develop an arts and culture strategy. The community has an excellent start with some basic programs but there is a need for public art that expresses the local culture and vibe of Vacaville residents.

#### Strategy:

It to capture the local community culture and character through arts and culture program. This element implemented strategically can support local and visitor interest in making the destination more unique and interesting which in turn makes the destination more competitive.

#### Action Steps:

1. Visit Vacaville should continue to support the new Vacaville Arts & Culture Alliance as a way to integrate art and culture with the organization.
2. Visit Vacaville and the Alliance should take the lead in developing potential sustainable funding sources to support arts and culture in the community.

3. Visit Vacaville in conjunction with the arts & culture alliance should consider taking the lead in developing an arts and culture strategy (similar to its agritourism strategy) that builds on existing efforts.

Measurement

1. The development of sustainable funding sources.
2. The continual addition of new community arts programs that help bring out the local culture and eclectic nature of the community.

**C. Lodging**

There are several key issues related to the lodging industry that are of interest to the industry itself as well as the broader tourism industry. Of key concern to the industry is increasing weekend occupancy and the potential of new lodging inventory introduced into the Vacaville market.

Strategy:

1. The issue of building demand is complicated and interrelated with other issues. The best approach is continued support of Visit Vacaville in their marketing efforts designed to position the destination to leisure travelers.
2. A second is how to enable the lodging industry to more aggressively take advantage of the “Bliesure” visitors, one who visits from business reasons but can also stay an extra day for leisure reasons.
3. Visit Vacaville should continue to support efforts by the City of Vacaville to attract quality developers for potential new lodging properties that can broaden the appeal of consumers given the proposed repositioning of the destination.

Action Steps:

1. Make available accurate information regarding tourism levels and vacation rental performance on a regular basis. Develop a measurement system with the lodging industry that measures weekend occupancy.
2. Make available information that potential developers might find helpful in understanding the Visit Vacaville market to aid them in their decision-making process.
4. Make available appropriate photos, video, etc. to the lodging industry to assist them in better selling their property by taking advantage of the new repositioning.

Measurement:

1. More specifically developed marketing tools are available for the lodging industry to see add on days.
2. Developers are using destination information to inform their decision of investing in Vacaville.

3. The local lodging industry develops targeted weekend occupancy reporting to assist Visit Vacaville in understanding their efforts to grow weekend demand.

#### **D. Environment**

The environment is one of the key cornerstones of what defines Vacaville and its tie to agriculture both historically and today. As such the need to continually educate visitors about how to protect this valuable resource is essential.

##### Strategy:

1. Integrate the environment and its protection into Vacaville's communication strategy as a way to further differentiate the destination.

##### Action Steps:

1. Be a nexus point between tourism and the environmental aspects of the Vacaville helping to educate the industry how to minimize the environmental footprint.
2. Provide space in Visit Vacaville website and communication channels to educate visitors on how they can be a part of protecting and enjoying Vacaville.
3. Support those entities that are implementing environmental programs designed to minimize the impact of visitors.
4. Be aware of overtourism (too much tourism) and its impact on the local community and avoid this issue becoming apolitical one.

##### Measurement:

1. Expanded exposure to visitors about the estuary and its need for protection.
2. Strengthened position and visitor perceptions of Vacaville as a destination that cares about and protects the environment and communicates it effectively to consumers.

#### **E. Recreation**

Recreation is an integral part of Vacaville's key activities. The land-based recreation helps to define the destination as one that is active and that cares about the environment as these recreation activities are based on natural resources. Simply put, the recreation offerings combined with other elements of the community and the positive pricing differential fully differentiate the destination.

##### Strategy:

1. Utilize recreation activities as a way to communicate the story of Vacaville. Tell the story behind the activity in the personality of those who engage in the activity and the joy the activity brings.

##### Action Steps:

1. Consider helping to form along with the City of Vacaville a recreation advisory group as a way to keep in touch with those in private and public sector recreation.

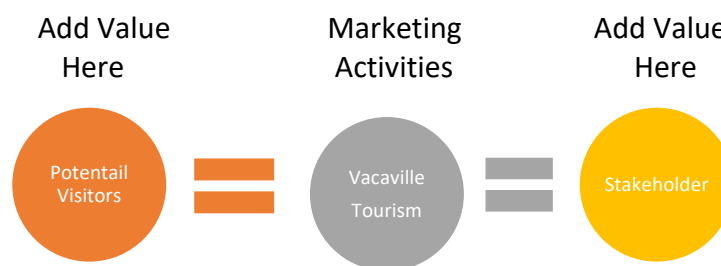
2. Utilize this group to act as an advisory group to Visit Vacaville using their input to understand the recreation trends and insight of users better. This can be used to tell the recreation story.
3. Be a nexus point between tourism and the recreation community and other parts of the tourism industry including the protection of natural resources.
4. Continue to feature in more detail including video, photo and the written word 'recreation' in all of the communications about Vacaville recreation.
5. Continue to support and develop new special events that emphasize recreation and sports activities year-round in Vacaville.

**Measurement:**

1. Expanded exposure to visitors the varied recreation choices. Identify and track visitors who visit recreation web pages.
2. Strengthened position and visitor perceptions of Vacaville as having a variety of recreation activities that compliment other activities within Vacaville.

## II. Marketing and Promotion

One of the key elements for marketing success is to consider Visit Vacaville promotional and marketing efforts not as a series of activities but rather to view their efforts as a comprehensive marketing platform. The platform contains three distinct components: potential visitors that Visit Vacaville would like to reach and influence to visit, Visit Vacaville promotional activities and community stakeholders. Viewed as an integrated platform, it is the goal of Visit Vacaville to add value to the whole platform and to add value to both potential visitors and stakeholders. Adding value for potential visitor means delivering appropriate and well-executed visitor information, booking capabilities, etc. Adding value to stakeholders means increasing the amount of travel spending by visitors. In this way, the DMO is an indispensable platform serving both visitors and stakeholders and in doing so becomes an integral part of the destination's revenue, employment, and tax generating assets.



### A. Positioning

#### Strategy:

Positioning the destination to potential visitors is essential to maximize the area's competitive advantage. Communicating how potential visitors see the destination creates the ability to differentiate Vacaville from its competitors, creating interest and potentially influencing them to visit. Simply promoting recreation does not effectively create a sustainable and defensible difference. But by capturing the eclectic feel of the destination and the local culture, combined with these assets, does create a sustainable and defensible way to present the destination as an authentic experience that is unique within the county.

#### Action Steps:

1. Work to position Vacaville as a "mini urban hub" a different kind of place from other destinations within the region. Leverage Vacaville's elements and the community as a point of differentiation.
2. Emphasize the differences including the unique mix of urban and rural experiences.

#### Measurement:

1. Implement periodic advertising and perception tracking studies to understand how potential visitors see the destination and what their changes of perception are over time.

## **B. Branding**

### Strategy:

Continue to develop the Vacaville brand as a way to distinguish the destination but also work to define the brand by positioning the destination identified previously.

### Action Steps:

1. Continue to emphasize the brand identity for Vacaville to all target segments and in all marketing channels.
2. Leverage the diversity of content (recreation, community) within the destination to communicate the difference of Vacaville.
3. Solidify the brand and Vacaville as the unique destination within the region.
4. Look to leverage the brand wherever possible including signage, special events etc.
5. Take a long-term view and develop branding campaigns over a 3-5-year time frame. Ask where the campaign can go in the future. How will it evolve? What are the opportunities?

### Measurement:

1. Measure the existing brand to assess if the brand resonates with key target markets. How do potential visitors see the brand? Does it connect?

## **C. Story Telling**

### Strategy:

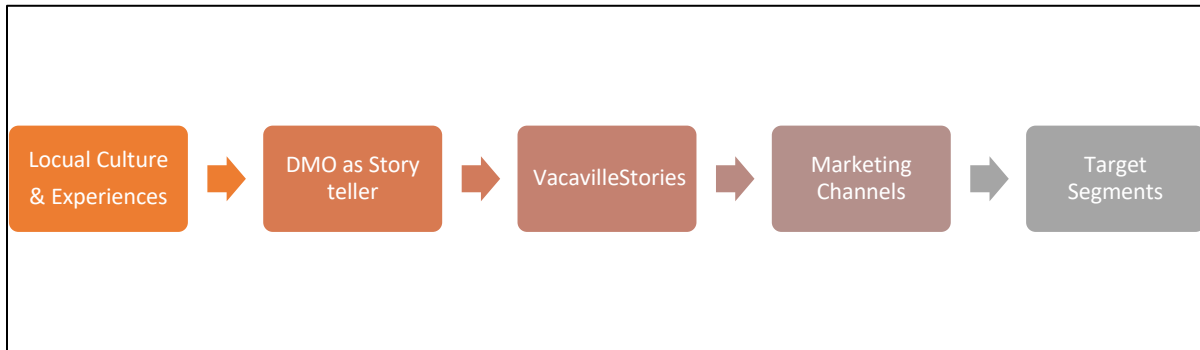
In today's world, consumers have much greater control over what information they receive and more importantly what they pay attention to. As such, it will be critical for Vacaville continue to dig deep into the destination and local culture to develop stories that emphasize the uniqueness of the destination and create interest with potential visitors.

### Action Steps:

1. Continue to integrate the destination storyteller model to develop stories, video, written and photographed around a wide range of topics to be found in Vacaville (See Next Page)



**Vacaville Story Teller Model**



Source: SMG Consulting

2. Communicate destination content from the perspective of a storyteller bringing out the rich uniqueness of the destination and the community.
3. Augment existing video library to include destination stories from a wide range of elements including specific recreational activities, dining, history, local culture. All should be designed to reinforce the unique destination positioning.

Measurement:

1. Periodically survey the organization's database to determine if consumers are understanding and getting the stories and perceptions of the destination.

**D. Tourism Research**

Strategy:

Visit Vacaville should be an integral player in collecting and disseminating research and data related to the industry. Visit Vacaville should understand what the data is saying and how it impacts their tourism strategy and how local tourism stakeholders can take advantage of emerging trends as well as adjust to threats and challenges.

Action Steps:

1. Continue to support and secure pertinent research and data collection at the county level and in turn communicate important information to local tourism stakeholders.
2. Develop a Vacaville Information dashboard that quickly communicates vital tourism related statistics. (See next page.)

### Dashboard Data Elements

Dashboard Indicator	Collection Period	Collection area	Comments	Source
<b>Regional Performance</b>				
Taxable sales	Quarterly	County-wide	Lags 6-12 Months	State Board of Equalization
Travel spending	Annual	County-wide	Lags a year in the collection	Visit California
Travel Industry Employment	Annual	County-wide	Lags a year in the collection	Visit California
Travel Industry taxes generated	Annual	County-wide	Lags a year in the collection	Visit California
<b>Lodging Performance</b>				
Transient occupancy tax collections	Monthly	City-wide	Lags 60 Days	Vacaville/STAR
Occupancy Rate	Monthly	City-wide		Vacaville/STAR
Average Daily Rate	Monthly	City Wide		Vacaville/STAR
RevPAR	Monthly	City-Wide		Vacaville/STAR
<b>DMO Performance</b>				
<b>Site Performance</b>	Monthly	DMO		Visit Vacaville
Unique Visitors	Monthly	DMO		Visit Vacaville
Time on site	Monthly	DMO		Visit Vacaville
Bounce Rate	Monthly	DMO		Visit Vacaville
<b>Data Base</b>				
Email address capture	Monthly	DMO		Visit Vacaville
<b>Social Media</b>				
New Facebook fans	Monthly	DMO		Visit Vacaville
New Twitter followers	Monthly	DMO		Visit Vacaville
<b>Public Relations</b>				
Ad equivalency	Seasonally	DMO		Visit Vacaville
Number of editors visited	Seasonally	DMO		Visit Vacaville
Number of feature articles	Seasonally	DMO		Visit Vacaville
<b>Sales</b>				
Leads generated	Seasonally	DMO		Visit Vacaville
<b>Advertising</b>				
Leads generated	Seasonally	DMO		Visit Vacaville
<b>Visitor Center</b>				
Number of visitors	Monthly	DMO		Visit Vacaville

3. Conduct research as need to identify issues and opportunities.

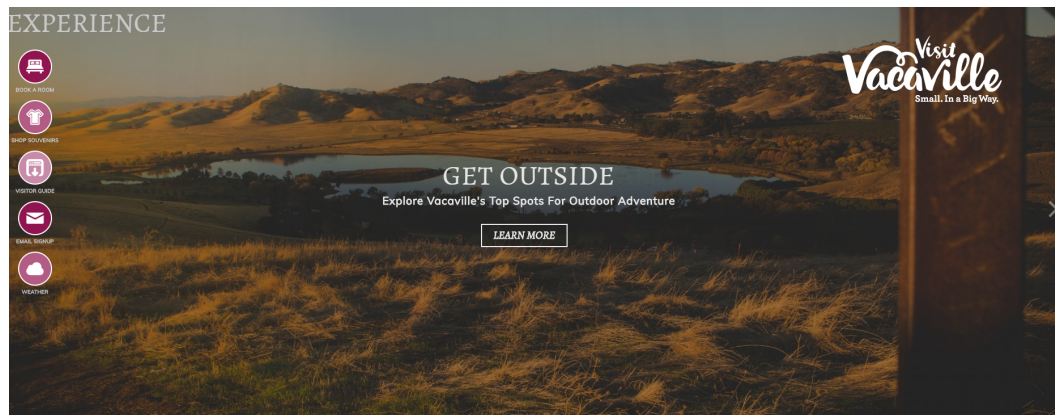
#### Measurement:

1. Research is integrated into new marketing initiatives and plans. It is used to evolve tourism related strategies.
2. The Tourism community feels informed on current trends and topics.

## E. Website

### Strategy:

With the majority of travelers using the Internet for vacation planning and with limited marketing funds, **it is critical that the website continually reflect the newest information. The website is a key element in adding value for potential visitors.** The website will strengthen and reinforce the Vacaville brand and, above all, assist potential visitors with information gathering and vacation planning.



In order to optimize its efficiency for visitors and the tourism organizations and businesses, the new website **should be viewed as a central marketing element and not just an addition to existing marketing efforts.**

Not only will this help the potential visitor, but the tourism industry will be able to track the performance of the site with a full suite of analytics in order to gauge its success and identify needed areas of improvement.

This measurement provides a means so that continual changes and improvements can be made thus increasing the organization's efficiency.

### Action Steps:

1. Visit Vacaville should continue to build and enhance its digital marketing, promotions, and communications platforms by continually investing in technology that enables the organization to achieve its digital goals and objectives.
2. **Continue to invest in developing ongoing content for the website and other channels.** This should include photography, video, and written content. Work with LOCAL and other partners to leverage assets.
3. **Continue to implement an SEO (search engine optimization) strategy** for Vacaville that will facilitate organic positioning on search engines with tactics such as adding keywords in the descriptive copy of every page to ensure the **site includes the most popular words used by visitors searching for Vacaville or related words.**
4. **Use website measurements and input from visitor surveys** to identify issues and make improvements to the website on an ongoing basis.

Measurement:

1. Monitor and evaluate Google Analytics with regard to standard measurement, i.e. time on site, bounce rate, click patterns, etc.
2. Periodic survey of website visitors as to likes, dislikes, user experience, etc.

## **F. Content Development and Communications**

### **External Communication**

Strategy:

Content development is a critically important component within the tourism strategy **to help build awareness and shape the perception that Vacaville is a unique and interesting place to visit.**

Effective content development can also educate potential visitors about the eclectic feel and vibe of the destination as well as educate them on all of the related activities.



Action Steps:

1. Shape stories based on the vibe of Vacaville combined with its diversity of recreation and activities and price advantage. Activities could include the following:
  - Unique things to do in Vacaville
  - Area history and things to see
  - Agriculture, food and wine in Vacaville
  - Recreation in Vacaville
  - Bicycle rides in Vacaville
  - Vacaville special events
  - Other

Measurement

1. Measure content efforts via generated coverage and ad equivalency. It should be noted that in conjunction with advertising and other marketing activities, content development is vital for building brand awareness, but is often hard to measure and attribute to specific content development efforts.

**G: In Market Communication**

Strategy:

Equally important, to external communication and the shaping of the Vacaville message, is internal communication to keep stakeholders and residents informed on tourism-related activities and the importance tourism does play in the local quality of life. As such part of the destination strategy is to implement and augment existing internal communications.

Action Steps:

1. Continue an ongoing communication program with the local tourism officials in order to keep them informed about tourism efforts. These efforts can include the following:
  - Monthly email to key politicians and stakeholders
  - An annual report summarizing tourism activities
2. Educate the local community about how tourism can help preserve their quality of life while generating revenues for city/community services through stories in local newspapers or town hall meetings. Story ideas could include the following:
  - The value of tourism to the city budget
  - Tourism business and employment
3. Work with local news media to educate the community about Vacaville promotion efforts and their results.

Measurement:

1. Continue to gauge local resident perceptions and attitudes toward tourism and its related issues including vacation rentals, crowding, etc.

**H. Visitor Services/Information**

Strategy:

Visitor information consists of two primary components. The first is **information that is used to attract potential visitors to Vacaville**. The second component is **information used to assist visitors once they arrive**. Both information components are critical in defining the visitor experience and have the potential to impact both first-time and repeat visitations.

**Action Steps:**

1. Promote the Vacaville website as the primary visitor information tool. Continue to include the new Visit Vacaville website address in every marketing initiative and encourage regional tourism-related businesses and tourism officials to include in their marketing materials.
2. Continue distributing the Visitor Guide both outside and inside the city/county.
3. Create a visitor information system by providing a signage link similar to the one at the right. Have the link prominently displayed at the Visitor Center and areas that come in contact with visitors, so visitors clearly can understand these locations are for official visitor information.
4. Improve directional signage for people coming off the Highway that can easily direct them to the visitor center.
5. Look to develop a visitor information Center down in the wharf area in an effort to reach a high concentration of visitors. This in an effort to educate visitors on the option in Vacaville to extend their stay and /or plan a future trip.



**Measurement:**

1. Increased visitors to the visitor center.
2. Increased traffic to the Vacaville website.

**I. Special Events**

**Strategy:**

Utilize special events as a way to broaden the appeal and increase incremental visitation to Vacaville. Create events that are different but reflect the values of Vacaville, use these events to attract new visitors and show them

The interesting aspects of Vacaville.

Special events are an important strategy for Vacaville, as they can work to solidify the positioning of the destination, broaden the appeal of the destination and attract new visitors to the area.

**Action Steps:**

1. Develop and implement events that will work to broaden the current Vacaville positioning of family and recreation. Use events
2. Develop and implement special events that help to create awareness for and position Vacaville as a destination to visit.

3. Review the existing roster of events and determine which ones fulfill the needs from a tourism perspective. Identify new potential events that solidify the destination's eclectic and recreational positioning.
4. Key to using special events as a tool to broaden the appeal of Vacaville as a reason to visit is the formation of a special events advisory committee to support those efforts. That committee, along with Visit Vacaville should review the existing events and identify if current events support the above objectives and develop a special events action plan designed to meet those objectives. Additionally, it is important for the advisory committee to share ideas, potential new opportunities and bring the tourism community together in an effort to maximize the area's revenues.

**Measurement:**

1. Development of a roster of events that drives overnight visitation and supports the destination positioning beyond the existing events.

### **III. Leadership and Alliances**

#### Strategy:

An additional element that can improve Vacaville's competitiveness is the support of alliances and partnerships that further leverage its resources. Currently, the staff is already participating with some of these organizations, but it's important to review how each alliance further leverages the organization's goals to increase awareness and influence visitation to Vacaville.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. **Strategic Alliances** – To fully leverage Vacaville's resources, it makes sense to continue existing alliances as well as develop new ones where appropriate to develop strategic partnerships where mutual objectives can be identified.

##### **Visit California**

Visit California's focus on increasing international business is a key opportunity for Vacaville to leverage their resources in order to create more awareness and visitation to the area in the international marketplace.

##### **Central Valley Tourism Association**

This organization includes DMOs from around the Central Coast and is designed to attract visitors to the entire region, with a focus on international visitation.

2. **Partnerships** – Given the need to grow targeted tourism visitation to Vacaville, it's important for the organization to support partnerships in order to provide a positive experience for visitors.

##### **Lodging Industry**

As the primary funding source for Visit Vacaville, it's important to have an excellent relationship with the lodging industry. This should include soliciting their input, assisting them in taking advantage of marketing opportunities, and educating them about the need to change to meet today's and the future visitor needs.

##### **Vacaville Arts and Cultural Alliance**

Reach out to those who support arts and culture in Vacaville. Continue to build on the partnership with these efforts within the city and support community arts efforts.

##### **Recreation**

Reach out to those in the recreation industry. Continue to build on the partnership with these businesses and continue to promote them as an integral part of the Vacaville experience.



**Solano County Economic Development Corporation, City of Vacaville Economic Development Advisory Committee**

As tourism is an increasingly integrated part of economic development a continued relationship with both the City of Vacaville and Solano County economic development offices and important relationships for visit Vacaville to be a part of.

**Pleasant Valley Agriculture Association**

As agriculture continues to be an important part of what defines Vacaville the Pleasant Valley Agriculture Association is an important relationship to mutually support each other goals.

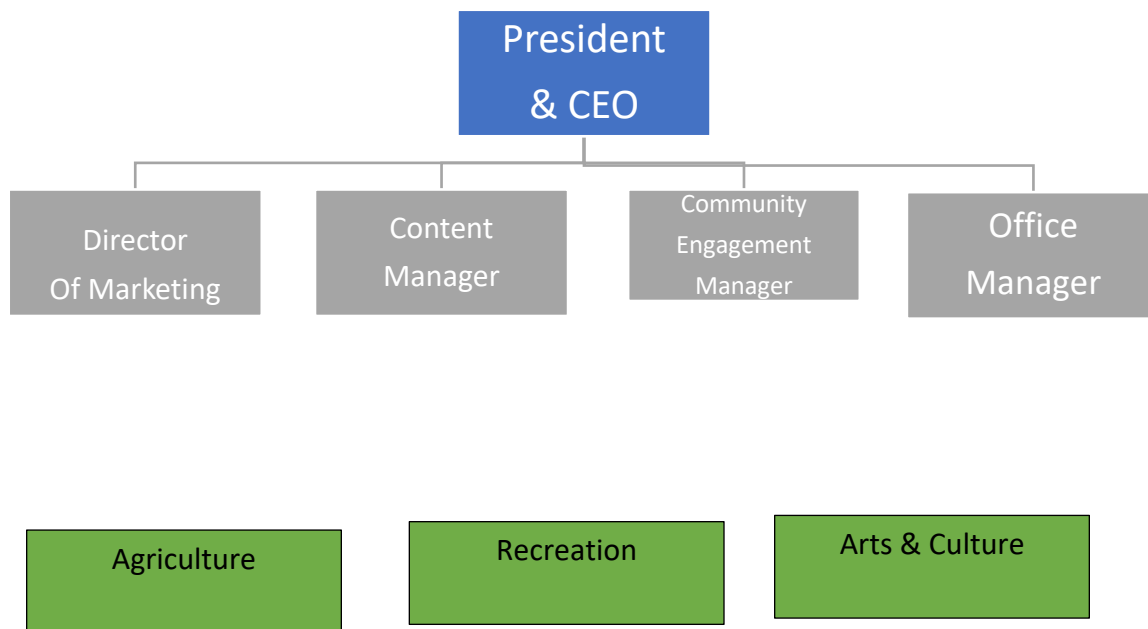
Measurement:

1. Integration of all of the groups and organizations into Visit Vacaville marketing efforts.

## IV. Organization

### Structure

Currently, tourism promotion efforts are being implemented by the Visit Vacaville staff, including a President & CEO, a Director of Marketing, a Content Manager, a Community engagement Manager and an Office Manager. These individuals are supported by a combination of task-specific vendors including advertising, digital service, public relations, etc.



In addition to the professional staff the organization is supported by several important advisory committees.

The core staff can be supplemented by these advisory committee's that can provide a good cross-section of input to the tourism staff.

### Strategy:

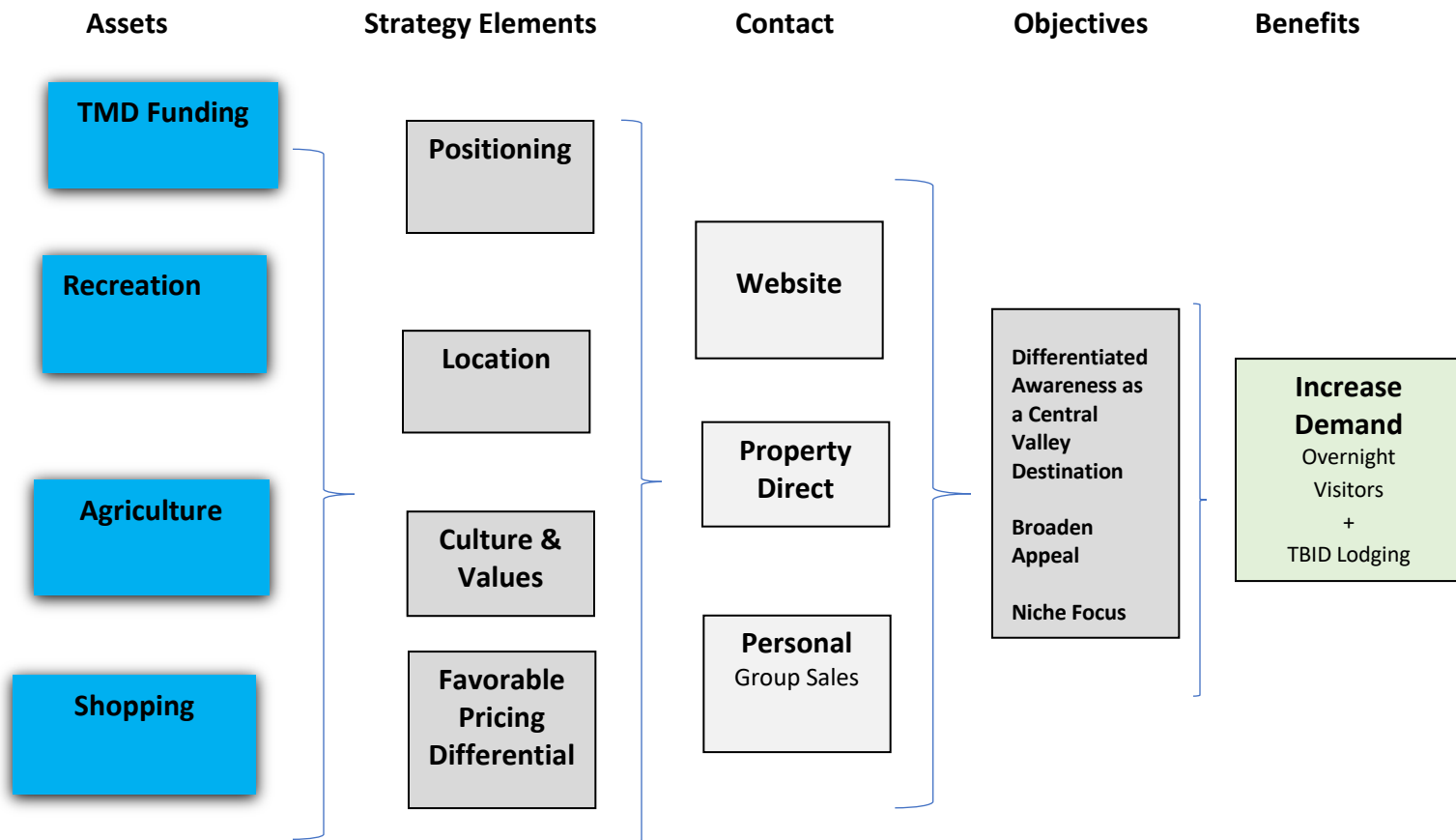
The strategy is to match the internal capabilities with the changing needs as dictated by a changing tourism marketplace. As changes occur in the marketplace, Visit Vacaville will need to adjust its internal capabilities with a combination of staff and vendors.

Action Steps:

1. Additionally, it is recommended that Visit Vacaville develop a special events committee that not only reviews event proposals but also takes on a more strategic role in working with Visit Vacaville to develop a comprehensive special event strategy that identifies potential future events that support the positioning of the destination and drive overnight visitors at specific times of the year.



## Visit Vacaville Strategy Blueprint



SMG Consulting is a tourism and recreation industry consulting firm specializing in marketing, strategy, economic analysis and organizational development.



[www.smgonline.net](http://www.smgonline.net)