



**Strategic Tourism Marketing Plan**  
**Friday July 14th, 2023**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Strategic Tourism Marketing Plan prepared for the City of Benicia outlines a long-term strategy for evolving Benicia's Tourism, Brand, and Marketing. As a beautiful, charming California main street, Benicia's organic assets and engaged community are the driving force behind its intrigue as a destination.

Benicia's geographical proximity to Napa Valley and San Francisco and its day-trip drive radius from dozens of Bay Area towns and cities ensure that it is poised to be a compelling visitor destination for years to come. Benicia's deep California history, artist community, extensive waterfront, and relaxing, laid-back atmosphere are foundational elements bolstering its position as an excellent day trip and weekend destination.

The plan begins by assessing Benicia's current assets through Tourism, Brand, and Marketing pillars and analyzing the findings with focus areas in California and Bay Area tourism.

Based on our research, we developed visitor profiles to understand the target audience, their preferences, and their behavior, enabling the development of tailored experiences and marketing efforts to attract and cater to the visitor segments effectively. The visitor profiles include The Outdoorsy Day-Tripper, The Fun-Loving Family, The Savvy Staycationer, The Food-Obsessed Weekender, and The Curious Creative.

With these visitor profiles in mind, we developed a graded scorecard to assess areas of focus and improvement for Benicia to enhance the overall visitor experience and destination competitiveness. The scorecard offers insight into Benicia's Tourism, Brand, and Marketing gaps, leveraging each targeted visitor's "must-haves." As a result, a tailored "Strategic Tourism Blueprint" showcases the recommended strategies, investments, and focus areas for Benicia to evolve into a must-visit destination. The recommendations are paired with aspirational examples to provide inspiration and evidence of the value of pursuing similar solutions.

Following the tourism blueprint, the plan offers an updated approach to the Benicia brand and the marketing tactics to drive the storytelling of the people, the place, and the experiences. Together, these three pillars are essential building blocks to a cohesive visitor experience of Benicia.

The plan concludes with an implementation and investment roadmap for actualizing the outlined recommendations. This roadmap includes the restructuring of the Tourism Sub-Committee to become a more unified force for strategic tourism in Benicia. Furthermore, it lays out a phased approach to budget and funding initiatives to serve as a catalyst for near and long-term investment and growth into Benicia's tourism.

Benicia is a true gem in Northern California, with fascinating history, culture, and spirit. These are qualities that can not be replicated or manufactured. With a proper long-term plan and focused stewardship, these qualities will become the bedrock for Benicia's place as a burgeoning tourism destination.

## GOALS + OBJECTIVES

**Objective:** Tourism is a primary component of the City's Economic Development Strategy. Thriving tourism is a critical source for the businesses, organizations and stakeholders in Benicia. The city will use the tourism strategy to embrace the ethos of Benicia and drive its evolution into a must-visit destination.

### Goals:

- Increase day trips to the city
- Increase overall sales-tax collections from retail and restaurants
- Increase utilization of tourism assets
- Increase community pride in Benicia's assets

**Strategy:** The approach to the tourism strategic plan is focused on three core elements: Tourism, Brand, and Marketing to achieve the established goals.

*Tourism* represents the foundation of the city's greatest assets that instill community pride, while *brand* is the visual and personified representation of the place that community members and visitors alike feel connection. *Marketing* is the storyteller of the brand: communicating the stories of people, places and experiences.

The three elements are intimately tied together as essential building blocks to a cohesive experience of Benicia.

**Tourism** | Identify what makes a place special - the sights, the sounds, the people, the beauty and in turn use these natural gifts to foster meaningful growth. With the evolving shifts in the economy, we can no longer rely on a traditional use of space, but create purposeful places that are dynamic, enriching and unique.

**Brand** | The brand's purpose, vision and objectives must align with the environment. The brand experience fosters an emotional connection with the visitor, leaving lasting memories and a desire to return again and again.

**Marketing** | A place is made special by the moments created and memories remembered. Telling the stories of a place, its people and experience drives discovery and community engagement.

## **MARKET ANALYSIS**

There is much that can be done to build the tourism appeal of Benicia. While Benicia has plentiful assets the overall collection of the three core elements: tourism, brand and marketing are disjointed, leaving a gap of opportunity to improve the overall brand package.

As a historic and central market in California history, it is important that Benicia's value proposition within the California tourism context is clearly established.

### **California Market Positioning | The 2023 California Visitor's Guide**

California Tourism issued the California Visitor's Guide for 2023 at the start of the year, outlining its recommendations and key trends. The information below is a snapshot of how Benicia can align with the greater state as the city implements its own tourism strategy:

- "All-Access Family Getaways," a mom-led article celebrating how today's families come in all shapes, sizes and capabilities.
  - Highlighted cities: Santa Rosa, San Luis Obispo, South Lake Tahoe, Carmel, Carlsbad
- "33 Amazing (and Free!) Things to Do," a six-page feature revealing zero-cost activities across the state – such as stargazing at Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles, or an up-close encounter with elephant seals along the Central Coast.
  - Highlighted cities: Pacific Grove, Marin, San Simeon, Bakersfield, Truckee, Chico, Davis, Stockton
- "Gold Country" Feature, deep dive into quaint and charming towns and attractions in Gold Country.
  - Highlighted Cities: Auburn, Sacramento, Nevada City
- "Suisun Valley Wine Country & Agri-Tourism Experiences" Mankas Corner and Fairfield are profiled in detail as a place to savor beverages from artisan winemakers and craft breweries.
  - Highlighted Cities: Auburn, Sacramento, Nevada City
- "North Coast" Feature Highlight locales along California's North Coast
  - Highlighted Cities: Mendocino, Ukiah, Fort Bragg, Philo, Little River

- “Truly Unique Tours” | This section provides themed itineraries for tourists to discover unique tours in unexpected locales:
  - Paso Robles Distillery Trail
  - Sacramento’s Fried Chicken Trail
  - Oakland’s Vegan Trail
  - Redding’s Waterfall Trail

## Benicia Market Positioning



*“East Bay meets Napa, Sac meets the City. Meet me in Benicia.”*

Nestled in the heart of Northern California, the town of Benicia serves as an inviting destination that benefits from its strategic location. Positioned as the halfway point between Sacramento and San Francisco, as well as the East Bay and Napa, Benicia offers a convenient stop for travelers exploring the region. With its picturesque waterfront, rich history, vibrant arts scene, and a charming small-town atmosphere, Benicia welcomes visitors seeking a delightful respite and serves as a gateway to the diverse attractions and destinations that surround it.

## KEY VISITOR PROFILES

- **The Outdoorsy Day-Tripper**

The Day-Tripper is trying to get out of the city and slow down, always with an eye towards nature.

- Age: 25-65
- Where they live: Sausalito, Berkeley, Sonoma, San Francisco, The Peninsula
- How far they will travel: 1-1.5 hours
- What they value: Scenery, access, discovery, outdoor daytime activities such as music, food and beverage tastings.
- Must Haves: Hiking and biking trails, bikeable downtowns, destination-worthy coffee, breakfast, lunch, beautiful scenery, outdoor meeting points for cyclists, patios, day-time events



*“There is nothing like it in Solano County. The water, history, 1st Street and the Benicia State Park -- is optimal for trails, open space and cyclists.”*

**THE OUTDOORSY DAY TRIPPER**

Touchpoint	Decision Making: <i>Word of Mouth, Outdoors Forum, Reddit</i>	Coffee & Breakfast	Cultural Activity	Waterfront Activity	Lunch & A Beer
Choices	Sausalito Sonoma Cycle HWY 1 Mt Tam Point Reyes	One House Bakery States Coffee Juice House	Museum Arts Benicia Armory Capitol	Bike Ride Stroll Games in park	Lucca Mare island Bruehol Sailor Jack's
Feeling	Anticipation	Excitement Discovery	Curiosity	Yearning Questioning	Ease Relaxation
Thinking	"I've never biked or hiked near Benicia, worth checking it out."	"Cute! There's so much to choose from here."	"Lots of quaint little tours, mostly indoors. Not sure what to expect."	"Wow this waterfront is beautiful! I wish there were more amenities."	"Lots of great casual places for a beer and bite."
Insight	Good word-of-mouth recommendations in a trusted community go a long way.	Benicia is filled with intriguing "trendy" coffee shops, many of which have good food options.	While there are a few historical activities to choose from, none are well-known outside of Benicia	While the shore is pristine, there are limited ways to engage with the waterfront if you don't bring activities yourself.	Big groups of athletic people (ie. of cyclists) can easily find outdoor places to eat and get a beer, and not feel bad for being sweaty.

● **The Fun-Loving Family**

The Fun-Loving Family is always looking for a way to get out on the weekends and find activities for parents and kids alike.

Age: 30-50 with children ranging from 2-12

Where they live: Santa Rosa, Sacramento, San Rafael, Oakland

How far they will travel: 1-2 hours

What they value: Family fun, casualness, ease, history & learning

Must Haves: Casual outdoor dining, daytime family-friendly activities such as "Books and Blankets," safe-walkable downtown, parks and picnic areas



*"I feel that a boutique for kids and a home store would complement the young families attracted to Benicia."*

**THE FUN-LOVING FAMILY**

Touchpoint	Decision Making: <i>Word of Mouth, Event Aggregators</i>	Coffee & Breakfast	Family-Friendly Activity	Family-Friendly Activity	Lunch	Family-Friendly Activity	Snack
Choices	Napa Sausalito Sonoma Healdsburg Tiburon Mill Valley San Rafael	One House States Coffee	Museum Capitol	Park hangout Stroll Swim	Lucca Sprangle's Sailor Jack's The Workshop	Recycle from prior ideas, or event when scheduled	Double Rainbow Cafe Juice House Dianne's Fox & Fawn
Feeling	Anticipation	Excitement Ease	Hopefulness	Relaxation	Uncertainty	Out of ideas	Satisfaction
Thinking	"Seems like a family-oriented place!")	"Cute! There's so much to choose from here."	"There are a few historical visits, I hope my kids don't get bored."	"Wow this waterfront is beautiful! I wish there were more built-in activities"	"There are many options, but few check all the boxes"	"With our kids' short attention spans, I feel like we've run out of things to do"	"Some ice cream is the perfect end to the visit"
Insight	It's clear that Benicia has family friendly activities, but does it have enough other amenities to "fill in the blanks?"	Benicia is filled with great coffee shops for parents that have space and options for the kiddos.	Benicia's deep history has options that could be hit-or-miss, depending on the child.	While the shore is pristine, there's limited ways to engage with the waterfront if you don't bring activities yourself.	Among the many restaurants, food that pleases many palates, is easy to get to, and makes it easy for parents is harder to find than you'd think.	With a lack of evergreen family-friendly infrastructure, families might run out of ideas unless they've brought their own fun.	A few great shops to grab a kid-friendly snack is enough to keep a family going for another 30-60 minutes.

● **The Savvy Staycationer**

The Staycationer lives in Benicia and wants to relax and experience right in their backyard.

Age: 30-70

Where they live: Benicia, Vallejo

How far they will travel: 15-20 minutes

What they value: Community, low-key fun, relaxation

Must Haves: Variety of shopping and dining options, wellness retreat, spa sessions, local specials for boutique hotels, treat yourself moments



*"This is a place to disconnect, reconnect, and relax."*

**THE SAVVY STAYCATIONER**

Touchpoint	Decision Making: <i>Desire to Stay Local</i>	Coffee & Breakfast	Shopping	Lunch	Outdoor Activity	Happy Hour	Dinner
Choices	Benicia Vallejo Martinez Crockett	One House States Coffee Juice House	Collective Sweetness and Light Sendsips Daughter of Luna Sparkly Rags Antiques	One House Lucca Mare Island Workshop Aung MayLika Chico's Sailor Jack's	Waterfront walk Hike	The Chill Lucca Loft	Bella Siena
Feeling	Excitement	Excitement Familiarity	Discovery Hopefulness	Familiarity	Uncertainty	Wishing for more	Wishing for more
Thinking	"Time to re-discover our beloved little town"	"We're lucky to have great options here"	"Let's see what's opened, what's closed and who we'll bump into"	"It's been a while since we've come here, and it's still good!"	"It's beautiful but lacking in activity on the waterfront"	"There really could be more options for a wine or craft cocktail in the evening"	"I don't necessarily want Bella Siena again, should we eat at home?"
Insight	There's always a positive outlook when familiarity meets discovery for locals.	The neighborhood coffee shop is quintessential to the community, and Benicia has plenty.	With its smattering of shops, Benicia offers places to pop into, but not necessarily something for everyone.	With so many lunch spots, locals are bound to have their favorites. However, how often is there a new place to try?	Locals looking for activity are best off timing their "staycation" day with an event or festival.	While there's ample craft beer, other types of happy hour beverages can be harder to find.	Local consensus seems to be that Bella Siena is the main "upscale" restaurant for dinner in Benicia

● **The Food-Obsessed Weekender**

The Weekender is always searching for a new place to explore that ticks all the boxes.

Age: 26-60

Where they live: San Francisco, Oakland, Petaluma, Marin, San Jose

Budget consciousness: Low - willing to spend for an experience

How far they will travel: Up to 3 hours for a weekend trip

What they value: Discovery, novel experiences, storytelling

Must haves: Destination-worthy restaurants and bars, walkable downtowns, charming accommodations, events/festivals, picnic areas



*"Benicia has great potential to be a small, little foodie town. People want to be treated well, respected, and don't want to be gouged like in Napa and Carmel."*



**THE FOOD OBSESSED WEEKENDER**

Touchpoint	Decision Making: <i>Yelp, Local Media, Word of Mouth</i>	Coffee & Breakfast	Shopping	Lunch	Wine Tasting	Dinner & Night Cap	Stay
Choices	Benicia Port Costa Berkeley Sonoma Walnut Creek Livermore Tiburon Mill Valley San Rafael	One House States Coffee Juice House	Collective Sweetness and Light Sendsips Daughter of Luna Sparkly Rags Pink Arrows Fox & Fawn	One House Lucca Mare Island Workshop Aung MayLika Chico's Sailor Jack's	Caymus The Chill Loft	Bella Siena  Rellik Lucca Cullens	Shorelight Inn The Inn at Benicia Bay Airbnb
Feeling	Anticipation	Excitement Familiarity	Short Lived Discovery	Uncertainty	Disappointment	Frustration	Wistfulness
Thinking	"Not a ton of info, but let's check it out!"	"Cute! There's so much to choose from here"	"Couple of real gems here... but we reached the end already!"	"I can't really discern which spot will be really good!"	"We're so close to Napa...yet there's barely a wine presence."	"The only rec we've gotten is Bella Siena, and it's packed... and I'm tired of Italian food"	"Wish we could stay at the Shorelight but it was full... next time."
Insight	The process of deciding on Benicia as a destination is fairly random.	Benicia is filled with intriguing "trendy" coffee shops, many of which have good food options	A handful of stores, mainly for young or older women offer an hour or two of casual shopping on foot	There are lots of choices, but none are vouched for with write ups or reviews, and a few look pretty run down from the street	A focus on contemporary wine offerings (ie biodynamic, natural, etc.) is confusing due to Napa's proximity	Memorable dinner spots for food-forward tourists are hard to come by in Benicia.	Quaint local stays are limited to a few rooms in just a couple of inns, and subject to availability.

\*Note: The Food-Obsessed Weekender is likely to stay 24-48 hours, so their journey repeats the following day.

● **The Curious Creative**

The Curious Creative travels through the lens of culture – be it historical, artistic, oddball or otherwise. They are driven by the unique cultural experiences that create a sense of place in the towns or cities they visit. You’ll find them in San Francisco at City Lights Bookstore and Vesuvio, or in Palm Springs at Pioneertown.

Age: 25-75

Where they live: Berkeley, Ukiah, Marin, San Francisco, Point Reyes

How far they will travel: 1-3 hours

What they value: Uniqueness, history, creativity, arts, new experiences

Must Haves: Quirky Lodging, Cultural and Historical Tours, “Hidden Gem” Food and beverage spots, vintage shopping, art and music driven festivals



*“Benicia is a special place in so many ways it’s a unique magnet for art. But we need to move the art out of the galleries and into the streets. There’s so much to learn and see.”*

**THE CURIOUS CREATIVE**




Touchpoint	Decision Making: <i>Arts Forum, Atlas Obscura, Reddit</i>	Lunch	Cultural Activity	Waterfront Activity	Cultural Activity	Coffee & Snack
Choices	Point Reyes Berkeley Oakland	One House Lucca Aung MayLika Sailor Jack’s Union Hotel	The Arsenal Arts Benicia Glass Studios Antiquing	Stroll	Capitol Fischer Hanlon House Riddell-Fish House	One House Bakery Fox & Fawn States Coffee Juice House
Feeling	Excitement	Seeking the Unexpected	Curiosity Effort	Brief Reprieve	Discovery Inspiration	Satisfaction
Thinking	“Benicia’s art community is legendary”	“Where’s the cool, quirky place where local artists meet? Where would Hemingway go?”	“Seems like there’s a few things to see here... but I need to choose my own adventure.”	“Wow this waterfront is beautiful! I wish there were more amenities”	“I love all of the history here, these old homes are amazing.”	“Great choices to end my day here.”
Insight	One niche interest group can be the catalyst for a whole visit.	Quirky, design-oriented places where you can meet an eclectic group of people.	The geographical smattering of arts and culture activities puts a lot of onus on the visitor to plan their trip themselves.	While the shore is pristine, there’s limited ways to engage with the waterfront if you don’t bring activities yourself.	The curated historical tours and buildings offer multiple options for history buffs.	The strong coffee and snack options are open in the afternoon, which is a boon for a PM pick-me-up.

**SCORECARDS**

















To take a deeper look into Benicia’s Tourism Offerings, Brand Position, and Strategic Marketing to date, we have gathered a simple grading system to assess and recommend next steps related to each activity and focus area. The intention of this system is to showcase a holistic “snapshot” of the current state of Benicia’s tourism position as a starting point to implement the Strategic Tourism Marketing Plan.

**SCORECARD KEY**

The Scorecard is a three-level grading system, visualized as a green, amber and red square.

Grade	Description	Key
Well-represented	These elements do not require much additional investment or evolution, and are in a stable and healthy place.	
Partially-represented	These have strong foundational elements in place today, but require additional strategic investment, evolution or enhancement.	
Under-represented	These elements do not yet exist in a meaningful or sustainable way, or should be considered for significant improvement.	

**TOURISM SCORECARD**

Wayfinding (outside of Benicia)		Waterfront Activities (picnics, volleyball)	
Wayfinding (within Benicia)		Watersports (rentals, clubs, lessons)	
Placemaking (signage)		Accommodations	
Music, Arts, Cultural & Historical Activities		Retail Variety	
Festivals		Public Transportation	
Full year of Events & Activations		Waterway Transportation	
Food & Beverage Focused Tourism		Parking (non event days)	
Family Friendly		Real Estate Assets (Strategic Use)	

**BRAND SCORECARD**

Clear Brand Strategy and Direction	Dark Red
Compelling Brand Message	Yellow
Distinctive & Relevant Logo	Dark Red
Clear Brand Collateral	Yellow
Widely Understood Brand Positioning	Yellow
Identified Target Guest	Dark Red

**MARKETING SCORECARD**

Quality tourism website	Light Green
Updated singular events calendar	Dark Red
Strategic Instagram presence	Yellow
Strategic Facebook presence	Dark Red
Strategic TikTok presence	Yellow
Well-placed Advertisements	Dark Red
Strategic Media Placements	Dark Red

## STRATEGIC DESTINATION BLUEPRINT

The scorecard assessment identifies Benicia’s opportunities within the three core elements: Tourism, Brand, and Marketing. Below is a blueprint of strategic recommendations for each of the elements to support the evolution of Benicia into a must-visit destination.

## TOURISM BLUEPRINT

### DISCOVERY OF PLACE

- **Creative + Strategic Placemaking**
  - **Threshold Signage** | Welcome and exit signage are key threshold moments for travelers that impart a lasting impression as a positive bookend to a visitor’s experience.
    - Refresh threshold signage to embody the ethos and artistry of Benicia. Priority: Highway I-780 “Welcome to Historic Benicia” Wooden Sign, “Welcome to Benicia a California Main Street City”
  - **Anticipatory Wayfinding** | City signage that anticipates needs for discovery and clear wayfinding removes friction from a visitor’s experience.
    - Apply for county or state grants to refresh the signage to properly represent the city’s current offerings.
  - **Commercial Signage** | Public and private commercial signage is a reflection of the City. Signage that is weathered or dated detracts from placemaking efforts.
    - Implement updated signage guidelines that reflect the identity of Benicia. This is an integral part of Benicia’s brand coming to life in a tangible and visible way throughout the community. Brand-aligned business signage creates a cohesive look and feel for visitors through these highly visible intangibles.
    - Offer commercial signage grants to encourage private businesses to update their signage to the approved guidelines.
    - Identify a preferred signage vendor to recommend to city businesses
  - **Community Placemaking** | Community wayfinding initiative that is creative and represents Benicia’s ethos can spark discovery, offer clever wayfinding and instill local pride.
    - Embrace the Benicia artist community to develop a creative wayfinding to instill magical moments where there is usually the ordinary: painted picket fences, glass art and more.

- Example: Prince Edward County’s [“Barn Trail Quilts”](#)
  - Example: Cambria’s [“Pickets for Peace”](#)
  - Example: [Public Art Glass](#)
- **Streetscape Lighting** | Thoughtfully selected lighting is essential for safety as well as design.
    - Commit and implement lighting guidelines to ensure a combination of cohesive design and proper function in primary public spaces. City lighting can offer wayfinding, a sense of warmth and can be creatively displayed.
    - Example: LED and string lights on 1st Street should be a consistent temperature and brightness.
- **Getting To and Around Benicia**
    - **Maximize Entry Points** | Benicia’s current status as a “hidden gem” makes it a destination that needs to be planned more than a spur-of-the-moment trip. Since Benicia’s downtown is not directly on a main throughway, visitors are unlikely to find themselves on 1st Street serendipitously. A waterway entrance would increase access options and variety.
      - **Ferry** | A seasonal or special-event Benicia ferry has the potential to increase Benicia visitors and through-traffic significantly. Larkspur and Vallejo ferry terminals see traffic with connections to Sports Stadiums, San Francisco, Oakland and Marin. This would be key for highly-attended festivals and help mitigate car traffic and parking congestion.
        - **Vallejo Ferry Shuttle** | Implement a direct and frequent 10-minute shuttle from Vallejo Ferry Terminal to downtown Benicia. Advertisements for this shuttle can be posted on the Vallejo Ferry and Ferry buildings.
      - **Water Taxi** | San Francisco Water Taxi Services offer hop-on-hop-off service to five stops around the Embarcadero area, including the ballpark. This kind of functional and fun mode of transportation makes use of Benicia’s vast waterfront and dispersed points of interest.
      - **Cruise Ship Destination** | As a waterfront destination, Benicia has the opportunity to capitalize on its assets by connecting with cruise companies that bring a target audience of explorers, interested in history, to this California Main Street.

- Example: [Cruise ship American Jazz brings luxury travel to Sacramento River](#) | “American Cruise Lines offers an eight-day trip between Sacramento and San Francisco, with stops in Stockton, Vallejo, and Napa. This is the first time in decades that a ship of this size has offered such cruises in the area.”
  - **Shared Ride Promos** | Identify a time to test out a tourism marketing promo such as using Lyft or Uber to create a promo code if you use the ferry system to connect Benicia to the Vallejo ferry drop-off.
- **Improve In-Town Transit** | Transit that connects key areas of interest will broaden visitors’ view of what’s possible in Benicia.
  - **Connector Shuttles** | A system of shuttles connecting key areas including: 1st Street, The Arsenal, Benicia History Museum, as well as trailheads in Lynch Canyon and Hiddenbrook would make Benicia feel more connected without a car. The shuttle should accommodate bicycles.
  - **Make Getting Around Fun** | Bicycling, scootering and other fun methods of transit can bring a sense of independence, exploration and playfulness to visiting Benicia.

## HOSPITALITY

- **Accommodating Overnight Guests** | Benicia today has a limited number of hotels, inns and Airbnbs. To accommodate visitor trips and dwell time there should be a strategic increase of room keys and compelling stay options for overnight visitors.
  - Develop diversity of accommodation type with mid and higher end hotels, independent options and quality home and guest house rentals.
  - Invest in multi-use accommodations with event spaces, amenities, and all-day food and beverage offerings will drive more tourism to Benicia.



*“Heard from friends: people looking to visit Napa stay in Benicia, since there are no Airbnbs allowed in Napa. I’ve found Benicia is a hub for Bottle Rock.”*

**Current Benicia Accommodations**

Type	Keys	Avg. Price
<b>Chain Hotel</b>	Total: 145	
Best Western	96	\$165/night
Holiday Inn Express	49	\$165/night
<b>Boutique Inn</b>	Total: 25	
Inn at Benicia Bay	7	\$180/night
Shorelight Inn	6	\$180/night
Union Hotel	12	\$180/night
<b>Airbnb</b>	Total: ~30	
Entire Home (4+ guests)	12	Varies
Guest Room	18	Varies

**Comparison: Sausalito Accommodations**

Type	Keys	Avg. Price
<b>Boutique Inn</b>	Total: 52	
Hotel Sausalito	14	\$237/night
Gables Inn	15	\$225/night
Water's Edge Hotel	23	\$332/night

- **Eat + Drink**

Burgeoning small cities are an appealing choice for entrepreneurs and up and coming talent, providing a lower barrier to entry vis-a-vis cost, competition and quality of life. Benicia has the foundation to welcome hopeful entrepreneurs that want to be part of the evolution of the city.

Benicia currently boasts a number of food and beverage options, spanning breakfast, lunch, dinner, coffee, snacks & treats, and bars. With more than 60\* food and beverage options in



Benicia proper, there is no lack of sheer places to eat or drink. However, by category, Benicia is missing key types of food & beverage offerings to satisfy the must-haves for our target visitors. These findings focus on walkable options from the downtown 1st Street area.

\*Based on desktop research, for additional data, see chart in appendix

- **F&B Opportunities**

- Breakfast Gap: Benicia needs a more high volume destination-driving brunch location with beautiful views and a varied beverage program from coffee to cocktails. This location can offer a place to host large events.
  - Example: [Bull Valley RoadHouse, Port Costa](#)
  - Example: [Little Saint, Healdsburg, CA](#)
- Lunch Gap: Benicia needs more quality on-the-go, picnic options like deli sandwiches, fresh casual seafood plates, and savory pastries.
  - Example: [Palm City, San Francisco, CA](#)
  - Example: [Fish, Sausalito, CA](#)
- Dinner Gap: Benicia needs 1-2 more destination-driving upscale, contemporary dining options with a modern wine selection and carefully crafted cocktails.
  - [Bell's, Los Alamos, CA](#)
  - [Fern Bar, Sebastopol, CA](#)
- Beverage Gap: Benicia needs an elevated, craft cocktail bar and lounge that is design-forward, offering an exceptional experience.
  - Example: [Gun Club, Geyserville, CA](#)
  - Example: [Lo & Behold, Healdsburg, CA](#)
- **Leverage Wine Adjacency** | The 2022 opening of [Caymus-Suisun Winery](#) showcases significant promise to become a world-renowned wine region. Take advantage of the proximity to this up and coming wine community by driving more connectivity.
  - Identify opportunities to bring satellite or pop-up tasting rooms to Benicia that will offer more exposure for regional vintners and entice wine curious tourists.
  - Cross-collaborate with the nearby wineries to market Benicia as an extension of their wine tasting for additional activities from the waterfront to dining.
  - Create a transportation option between Caymus winery and downtown Benicia

## EXPERIENCES



*“We party hard in Benicia. Events really fuel the businesses.”*

- **Holistic Events Planning** | A significant part of Benicia’s culture is rooted in community gatherings through small to large-scale events. Throughout the year, locals and tourists can experience a variety of events that cater to various groups and cultural assets. Benicia’s current events calendar does an excellent job of bringing people together for a common purpose all throughout the year
  - **Centralize Events Communication** | The communications and marketing of the city-hosted and public events are varied across digital and physical platforms that creates a challenge in consistency and accuracy of information.
    - To improve awareness and investment of the events programming, the city should centralize and systemize the gathering of events information to create a cohesive marketing front. Consider utilizing the Tourism Committee and appointed marketing agency to support in streamlining the systems.
    - Events calendars are kept in multiple locations (City of Benicia, Visit Benicia, Benicia Magazine, Benicia Main Street, Benicia Happenings), understanding the full picture of what’s going on in Benicia is challenging to go.
  - **Prioritize Category-Based Tentpole Events** | The ultimate purpose of events is to instill community pride and connection, while driving visitor trips, dwell time and dollars.
    - In order to maximize the impact and ROI of Benicia events, consider prioritizing select tentpole activations and break down into quarterly focus points. This will offer high quality experiences, improve community communication and ensure that multiple activities are not occurring simultaneously.
    - Focus tentpole investment into the brand pillars that are representative of the asset categories of Benicia to promote broad reach and engage community involvement.
    - Examples + Inspiration:

- **Arts & Culture:** Holiday Parades and Festivals, Art Scavenger Hunt, Theatre Productions in the Park, Film Fest, Jazz Fest, Benicia Classic Car Show, PorchFest
- **Water:** Benicia Waterfront Festival, Dragon Boat Races, RedBull-Style Stunt Festival, Marina Sailboat Races
- **Eat + Drink:** Outstanding in The Field, Wine & Chocolate Walk, Dine Downtown Benicia, St. Patrick's Day Beer Crawl
- **Outdoors:** Dog Festival, Benicia Seasonal Races, Benicia Coffee & Cyclist Meetup
- **Retail:** Peddler's Fair, Handmade Festival, Flower Festival, Retail + Art Open Doors
- **History:** Where's Jack London?, Haunted Walks, Night at the Museum, Red Fair, Gold Rush Fair
- **Target Visitor Influx** | There are numerous full-day and partial-day events and activities planned throughout the year. Each month on the events calendar boasts some type of events of varying size. However, there are gaps in the event calendar where strategic placement would potentially drive visitor traffic during opportune times of year.
  - Schedule events to coincide with the need for a boost in tourism. For example, host more tentpole and smaller activities during the summer months, when visitor dollars are critical as locals are on vacation.
  - Inspire "Winter Wanderers" during the slower event months of January and February.
  - Keep autumn event momentum going in November linking together Halloween and the December holiday season.
- **Strategic Partnerships** | Gaining partner and sponsor buy-in from local businesses, investors and other sources will ensure quality events that do not financially tax the City or individual community stakeholders beyond what is reasonable.
  - Creating opportunities for sponsorship takes time to develop and begins with identifying the value the city can offer to the partner to ensure alignment: new business, brand visibility, networking, partnership, target audience

- Seek out value-aligned partnerships that can include short and long-lead connections to establish a relationship early to drive future opportunities such as: The America’s Cup x San Francisco, Bottle Rock x Napa Valley, Historical and Art Societies (DeYoung and Smithsonian).
- **Curated Retail** | Benicia’s business owners play a vital role in tourism that provides a unique and distinctive experience, contributes to the local economy, fosters community engagement, preserves heritage, and acts as ambassadors for the city, enhancing the overall tourism appeal and sustainability.
  - **Encourage Experiences** | Retail is no longer a singular place of transaction, but rather a place to connect with a brand through experiences that the guest simply cannot get online. Encourage local business owners to activate their spaces indoor or outdoor by hosting creative salon gatherings, special events targeting specific audiences or learning/workshop activities that can be admired by passersby.
  - **Consistency of Hours** | Consistency in retail hours is crucial for small businesses as it establishes customer expectations, allowing them to plan visits and access products or services conveniently. It enhances the overall customer experience, fosters loyalty, and differentiate themselves from competitors, attracting customers who value reliable and accessible services.
- **Waterfront Activities** | Benicia’s waterfront is unmatched, with access points throughout the city. However, ease of access for visitors without their own equipment or ample pre-planning is limited.
  - **Increase Public Access to Water Activities** | For a daytime visitor to Benicia, quick and simple access to a variety of water or waterfront activities will create a better connection to Benicia's iconic waterfront.
    - **Sauna + Plunge** | Popular temporary sauna company [“Good Hot”](#) brings saunas to the waterfront for an adventurous day of sweating and plunging.
    - **Kayak, Paddleboard and Canoe Rentals** | Simple, cost effective and low-barrier water activities launching from a variety of entry points into the waterfront can be a significant draw for visitors.
  - **Welcome Water Sports Community** | For adventurers, finding easy access to a water sports community and activities on a day trip will drive interest. Consider more drop-in water sports, free lessons, inexpensive rentals and competitions.

- Makeshift races can become crowd-drawing hometown events for the whole family, and are relatively inexpensive to produce
  - “Float Your Fanny Down the Ganny” in Port Hope ON, where makeshift rafts race to the finish line.
- Free Sailboat Rides will connect the boating community with curious visitors, for a low-lift marina-based activity that’s unique to Benicia.
- Add signage and wayfinding to clearly establish the various entry points into the water across Benicia to kayakers, paddlers and other water sports enthusiasts.

## STRATEGIC REAL ESTATE ASSETS



“Every fundraiser is hosted at the clocktower. We need somewhere else to go”

Benicia is rich with existing and potential real estate assets, and using them to their full potential is essential. Better defining use cases and potential for strategic revenue generation through real estate assets and investment will become a pillar of tourism and brand communication in Benicia. Benicia should partner to invest in high-potential existing assets.

The focus should be matching needs with use cases and gaps observed within Benicia’s overall offering. Prioritize retail real estate turnover to recognize gaps and opportunities to develop and improve the curation of the food and beverage. Foster relationships between private the city, developers, and potential operators to identify gaps in the hospitality offerings within Benicia.

Additionally, utilizing the following real estate assets as a catalyst for high revenue driving tourism opportunities will build a foundation for an ongoing investment and returns cycle:

- **The Arsenal** | This is one of the most high-potential Tourism areas of Benicia, but lacks infrastructure and “pull factors” for tourism. Given that it is a distance from Benicia’s downtown, success with The Arsenal will mean creating connectivity and a community of tourism assets that will afford visitors at least an hour or two of time in the area.
  - **Activate** | The Arsenal is primed for new types of businesses and activities, from a coffee shop or quick lunch spot, to an area for an outdoor art market or stage. Start small and grow.

- Example: [The Barlow, Sebastopol \(est. 2013\)](#). The Barlow is a 12-acre Bay Area outdoor market district in Sebastopol, California featuring local food, wine, beer, spirits and crafts made onsite by Sonoma County artisans. Stroll the industrial-chic, dog-friendly campus and savor the organic edible landscaping — a nod to the rich agricultural history of The Barlow.
- **Brand** | Like First Street or Main Street, add legitimacy by giving the Arsenal its own brand and personality to use throughout the “district”
- **Connect** | Once the Arsenal has more daily and weekly activations and offerings, create better connectivity through transit, bike shares and signage.
- **Benicia Train Depot** | The most iconic and prominent building in Benicia is the Old Train Station, which, if invested in, would become a cornerstone of Benicia’s tourism; it’s “Postcard Moment.”
  - **Repurpose** | The best use of this space would be an all-day revenue-driving space for gathering, with private and public amenities. Think: event space, ice cream shop, picnic provisions and more.
  - **Invest** | To change the usage and infrastructure if this space is a colossal undertaking, but not one to be discounted. Finding partners for both development and city permitting is key.
  - **Centralize** | This building will become the central hub for happenings in Benicia — a flexible series of spaces where all trips to Benicia start and many special events in Benicia are held. This space will be equally enticing for the local community and for visitors.
- **Benicia Majestic Theater** | This stunning, historic building on the main drag could be a jewel of Benicia’s culture, offering the venue for screenings, a film festival and performances.
  - **Example:** [The New Parkway, Oakland, CA](#). This cult-favorite theater hosts live orchestra screenings of silent films, open mics, and trivia. Its food offering includes multiple popcorn types, local beers and sodas, and food delivered to your seat.
  - **Example:** [Beloit International Film Festival, Beloit, WI](#). With a population of only 7,800, Beloit welcomes more than 50,000 attendees to its annual film festival, boasting 10 days of programming and 40 corporate sponsors.

- **Event Space Investment** | Event spaces in Benicia lean historical and classical, without access to more modern, clean aesthetic options. Consider investing in a more contemporary style of event space overlooking the water for weddings, large parties and conferences.

## BRAND BLUEPRINT

The current brand does not resonate strongly with stakeholders, and needs to evolve before it can communicate Benicia's unique promise to visitors.



*"We are much more than "a great day by the bay." We are the heart between San Francisco and Wine Country with so much to offer"*



*"Does not capture our identity or the true reflection of who we are."*

- **Target Audience** | The Outdoorsy Day-Tripper, The Fun-Loving Family, The Savvy Staycationer, The Food-Obsessed Weekender, The Curious Creative
  - Residents of Benicia
  - Residents of The Bay Area
  - California Tourists
  - National Travelers
- **Strategic Positioning** | Identifying and highlighting unique selling propositions, attributes, or benefits that set the brand apart from competitors. This could include factors such as product features, quality, price, convenience, customer service, or emotional appeal.
  - Sample positioning: A timeless small-town with centuries of history that offers a reprieve from the modern hustle and bustle.
- **Brand Promise** | Articulating a clear and compelling brand promise that communicates what customers can expect from the brand. The brand promise should be authentic, relevant, and resonate with the target audience's desires and aspirations.
  - Sample Promise: Benicia embodies effortless charm and an easygoing lifestyle, where kindness and relaxation are part of our DNA.
- **Brand Personality** | Defining the personality, tone, and style of the brand helps shape the brand's identity and how it is perceived by customers. The brand personality should align with the target audience's values and preferences.

- **Sample Personality:** Benicia is your favorite neighbor. Always welcoming but never boastful. We always show you a great time, especially if you can appreciate the small joys of life. We will make you feel like you've always been here, and you'll be a friend whenever you decide to return.
- **Visual Direction | Distinctive + Relevant Logo**
  - The Benicia Tourism logo has character, but the glass-making history is lost to the average visitor, and does not become clear upon visiting. Benicia overall has too many disparate logos that do not reference one another – neither in color palette nor design.
- **Competitive Analysis | Conducting competitive brand analysis helps inform Benicia's brand positioning strategy and ensures it stands out in the market. Benicia's existing competitive challenge is its "reputation by association" with Vallejo and Martinez, further underlining the need to carve out Benicia as a singular destination.**
  - Example: Cambria, California: "Let's Meet in the Moment.."
  - Example: Tiburon, California: "Change The Way You Bay."
  - Example: Carmel, California: "Where Everyday Is a Work of Art."
- **Communications Strategy | Developing a comprehensive communication plan to effectively deliver the brand's positioning message to the target audience through various marketing channels and touchpoints. Consistent messaging and storytelling are critical for reinforcing the brand positioning strategy.**
  - **Messaging Framework |** The current tagline " A Great Day by The Bay" is too broad and generic for the Bay Area. Consider repositioning the brand for a more compelling message to highlight the unique elements that make Benicia stand out.
    - Other iterations of current brand messaging:
      - A Great Day By The Bay
      - Where it's always a Great Day by the Bay!
      - Discover the Bay Area's hidden gem on the waterfront
      - Waterfront breezes. One-of-a-kind shopping and dining. Art, culture, and history at every turn.
      - Benicia is the compass rose of the Bay Area, centrally-located between San Francisco, Wine Country, Silicon Valley, and Sacramento.
      - Getting To Benicia: No matter where you are in the Bay Area, Benicia offers unbeatable day trips, less than an hour away.
    - What we heard from Benicians:
      - "Does not capture our identity or the true reflection of who we are"
      - "The Straits aren't really the Bay. It's misleading..."



- “We are much more than that today. We are the heart between San Francisco and Wine Country with so much to offer”
  - “A poor descriptor.”
  - “Effective in the past but is now a little 'worn' and can use a refresh.”
- **New Messaging Possibilities** | While a full brand refresh is recommended, shifting the current messaging towards a more uniquely Benician storyline could sound like the following:
- Incorporating our values:
    - Easygoing lifestyle
    - Neighborliness
    - Cultural curiosity
  - Incorporating our promise:
    - A gateway to serenity
    - A place to disconnect and reconnect
    - A place to be charmed by the past and the present



*“Benicia puts community and kids first. It’s not pleasantville, it’s not dated, there is still tech and fresh ideas.”*

## MARKETING BLUEPRINT

Benicia’s Marketing Blueprint lays out the strategic steps to communicate the established tourism assets and brand to the public. Our existing Marketing assets provide the foundation for improved marketing channels, content, tactics and management. This Blueprint is intended to be used as a directive for the Benicia Economic Development Board, the Tourism Subcommittee, and the contracted marketing partner to execute this plan.

Marketing is the storytelling arm of tourism and brand. The website should be the brand anchor, while the social channels amplify the stories: Facebook: Use for news and announcement, white Instagram and Tiktok provide color, connection, and dynamic storytelling.

- Tell the stories of Benicia as a compelling, must-visit destination experience that reflects the unique environment, culture and character of the city.
- An impactful social media presence can convert audience interest to tourist trips and dwell time in Benicia.

- A significant digital reach of Benicia can offer connection and opportunity to build partnerships, drive business interest and foster community.
- **Visit Benicia Website** | Benicia hosts multiple websites that include information regarding tourism marketing: [City of Benicia](#), [Benicia Main Street](#), [Benicia Chamber of Commerce](#), [Benicia Magazine](#) to name a few. The challenge is the lack of focused energy in a singular source for up to date information about the community, attractions, accommodations, restaurants, and other tourism assets. The VisitBenicia website should be the primary source of information for tourists, serving as an umbrella to link out to any additional professional Benicia websites that provide added value.
  - **Brand Refresh** | Invest time and resources to create interesting, quality content that reflect the current brand ethos. Visitors determine within a few seconds whether they will explore and engage with your site.
    - Engage marketing partner performs consistent website refresh and monthly marketing audits to ensure an accuracy of information, engaging video and photography.
  - **About** | **As the core brand anchor, the website should be a primary source of information about** Benicia. This extends from facts, geography, history and stories. The current site lacks significant understanding of Benicia and/or is buried from visitor access. Consider amplifying this section and identify opportunities throughout the site to have consistent messaging to reiterate who Benicia is.
  - **Events** | Redesign events page for improved readability and user experience. The current page is busy and cluttered by the weekly frequency of the Farmer’s Market. Ensure that every visitor-facing event is featured, and this is the common events resource throughout Benicia’s channels.
    - Consider putting an abridged embedded visual of large events on the home page, so no clickthrough is required
  - **Photography** | Improve photography quality, in the following “hero” photos on the home page: “Events” “Restaurants” and diversify the photos in “Plan Your Day” “Waterfront” and “Parks and Attractions” as they are all the same man and child. Consider adding drone-shot videos to show the beauty of Benicia and a birds-eye view of Main Street, The Arsenal and The Waterfront + Marina
  - **Printable Guides** | Utilize the marketing and tourism committee to design and produce printable guides for visitors to view/download. Consider a homepage pop-up that will capture email addresses to access and download the guide.

- **Suggested Itineraries** | Inspired by California Tourism’s 2023 guide, create sample itineraries for each of the Target Visitor Groups. These should be well-designed and enticing for visitors, offering a shortcut to planning their time in Benicia
- **Updating and Management** | Benicia’s web content partner should set up a standard cadence for updating information, including sending queries for current information from appropriate parties. This would include a questionnaire or request for: new store and restaurant openings, closures, events, operating hours, locations and other informational changes. The suggested cadence is monthly. At this time, the partner will also check for outdated or broken links. For example: remove Twitter icon link as this is no longer applicable.
- **Umbrella Website** | Offer Links to key city websites if the visitor is seeking specific information regarding municipal affairs and Chamber of Commerce, etc.
  - **City of Benicia** | Include a link to VisitBenicia website to drive locals and visitors to this tourism site to get the latest about Benicia tourism.
- **SEOs** | Initiate a Web site search optimization program to ensure Benicia’s site shows up when people are searching for something to do in the Bay Area and California at large.
- **Social** | Benicia’s existing social media platforms are a solid foundation for its evolved social media campaigns. The evolution will include creating a more streamlined voice and persona for Benicia’s social channels, and strategically sunsetting any channels not used.
  - **Instagram** | This should be used as the primary channel for visitor and local engagement and visual “owned” marketing platform. Building on its current momentum.
    - Current Benicia Instagram channels
      - [Visit Benicia](#) | A well-managed and consistent channel that does a good job of introducing viewers to Benicia locals, businesses and events. This channel should remain the primary tourism marketing social profile. This channel should confirm a consistent brand voice and look + feel (ie photo and video style, as well as font and color palette for informational or overlaid posts). This is currently an underutilized channel to truly showcase Benicia as a must-visit destination.
        - Current
          - 3200 followers
          - Posted multiple times per week

- Reels and Static grid posts
  - Follower /Growth % | Consistent engagement on the platform is needed to drive growth including liking, following, commenting. Partner with the community members to create content and perform brand collaborations to maximize reach.
  - Engagement | Create compelling and regularly schedule content for the current and target audience to maximize reach and engagement. Hybrid use of video and static imagery and stories are essential to engagement
  - Bio | The bio is an extension of your website. Consider using LinkTree to adopt a dropdown menu of option that can guide the visitor to the website for addition information including: tourism guides and itineraries, event listings, recent press and more
- [Benicia Main Street](#) | This is the most followed channel in terms of Benicia happenings, but posts infrequently. This channel is currently targeted at locals with posts calling for volunteers or donations. To continue to ensure this is a compelling platform for visitors, collaborate with Visit Benicia and brand experts to ensure brand consistency (colors, fonts, content) when posting about events, happenings and festivals.
  - Current
    - 3800 followers
    - Posted weekly or less
    - Mostly static grid, a few recent reels
- [City of Benicia](#) | This channel’s current use case is a municipal informational channel for locals. This channel is not recommended to “double dip” too much with events and happenings postings, unless co-posted as a collaboration.
  - 1100 followers
  - Posts weekly
  - Mainly Static grid with a few reels
- **Facebook** | Facebook is an auxiliary channel for visitors, since this group represents an impermanent community. However, keeping the existing Facebook communities

live with regular cross-posting will have a broad reach, given that Facebook is the most followed social channel for Benicia overall.

- [Visit Benicia](#) | Cross-promoted with Benicia Main Street, this page should continue to be a key informational source for events and happenings.
  - Current
    - 7000 followers
    - Largely co-posted with Instagram
    - Low engagement through comments or posting
- [City of Benicia](#) | Largely locals focused, this Facebook should share Visit Benicia campaigns to foster community awareness and support.
  - Current
    - 6200 followers
    - Largely municipal affairs and notices
- [Benicia Main Street](#) | Partnered with Visit Benicia, this page should continue to be a key informational source for events and happenings. Continuing to create event pages for big events is a positive way to establish details and remind members of event dates.
  - Current:
    - 6600 followers
    - Weekly posts are largely event-focused, co-posted from Instagram.
    - Houses actual event pages on Facebook (ie Torchlight Parade Event)
- [Benicia Happenings](#) (Private) | The largest Facebook community in Benicia, this private group is not ideal as a visitor-facing channel. However, cross-posting into this group could encourage word-of-mouth tourism trips for visitors.
  - Current: 11,000 followers
- **Tiktok**
  - [Visit Benicia](#) | The existing TikTok page is under-utilized, but has high quality existing videos. A regularly posted cadence (weekly) cross-posted to Instagram will drive followers and viewership. Future TikTok stories should leverage any updated Benicia branding, improve photography quality, and utilize a larger variety of music.
- **E-Blast** | An effective email strategy for city tourism involves several key elements:

- Segment the email list based on factors such as demographics, interests, and past engagement allows for personalized and targeted messaging.
- Craft compelling subject lines and email content that highlights unique attractions, upcoming events, and special offers can capture the recipient's attention and generate interest.
- Include visually appealing images and user-friendly design helps enhance the overall email experience.
- Incorporate a clear call-to-action and providing easy ways to engage with the city's tourism offerings, such as booking accommodations or exploring itineraries, can drive conversions.
- Analyzing email metrics like open rates, click-through rates, and conversions allows for continuous optimization and refinement of the email strategy to maximize its effectiveness.
- **Marketing Materials**
  - **Brand Consistency** | Ensure Brand visual and messaging are cohesive across all printed and digital materials. Update and distribute style guide to all primary partners who participate in the creation of collateral.
  - **Digital** | Print marketing materials may be supplemented by or integrated with digital platforms such as QR codes, augmented reality experiences, or mobile apps to provide enhanced and interactive visitor experiences. Consider connecting back to the city's key digital platforms for readers to gain real-time news.
  - **Materials** | Short list of some of the most important print marketing materials for a city:
    - **Visitor Brochure:** A comprehensive brochure that highlights key attractions, landmarks, activities, and amenities in the city. It provides visitors with an overview of what the city has to offer and serves as a handy reference guide.
    - **Map and Guide:** A map and guide combination that includes a detailed map of the city along with information on popular tourist spots, transportation options, dining options, and other relevant details. This helps visitors navigate the city and make informed decisions about their itinerary.

- **Event Calendar:** A printed calendar featuring upcoming events, festivals, concerts, and other special occasions in the city. This allows visitors to plan their trip around specific events and provides a snapshot of the city's vibrant cultural scene.
  - **Rack Cards:** Eye-catching, compact cards that highlight specific attractions, tours, or experiences in the city. These cards are often displayed in racks at hotels, visitor centers, and other high-traffic locations to grab attention and generate interest. Consider exploring regional partners and areas in which you can promote Benicia to a new audience.
  - **Postcards:** Branded postcards featuring iconic images of the city can serve as souvenirs for visitors to send to friends and family. They also help promote the city by showcasing its beauty and unique features. Think: Benicia Train Depot
  - **Event Flyers:** Vibrant and visually appealing flyers that provide detailed information about upcoming events, including dates, times, locations, and ticketing details. These can be distributed at local businesses, visitor centers, and event venues to attract both local and visiting audiences.
  - **Benicia Magazine:** The magazine featuring articles, stories, and photography that showcase the city's culture, history, attractions, and local experiences. This publication provides an immersive and engaging representation of the city and can be distributed at hotels, airports, and other tourist hotspots.
- **Advertising** | Targeted advertising spend will ensure that Benicia becomes part of the consideration set for visitors who are unlikely to engage with Benicia through typical marketing, social or other channels. Certain types of tourism advertisements are becoming increasingly common to spark inspiration for curious potential visitors.
    - **Marketing Agency Partner** | It is essential in the interview process for Benicia's marketing agency to complete a thorough review of the tourism budget. It is important to allocate a portion of the tourism budget specifically to marketing and advertising tactics outside of the agency fee.
    - **Visit California Tourism Visitor Guide** | This annual California-focused digital and print guide regularly profiles businesses, cities and guides of all sizes throughout

California. It also accepts co-partnerships and multiple types of advertisement.  
[Submit Content - exposure on a global scale.](#)

- **Budget Conscious Advertising Strategy** | The best digital advertising strategies for small city tourism often involve a combination of targeted social media campaigns, search engine marketing, and location-based mobile advertising to reach and engage potential visitors with tailored messaging and compelling visuals. Identify the advertising budget up-front and partner with the appointed marketing agency to create a hybrid strategy of organic and paid advertising to maximize the dollars and reach.
- **Out-of-home Ads** | Types of OOH ads include billboards, bus shelters, wallscapes, and posters and can be effective for building brand awareness. This advertising strategy can convert travelers without knowledge of Benicia into potential visitors. The guaranteed exposure of well-placed large scale advertising ensures that it is seen by many potential visitors without a decision being made on their part (ie. reading a story, clicking through a link). These are larger investments, meaning that it is critically important that the ad is designed and written by a professional agency.
  - Example: Tiburon ads on MTA buses in San Francisco
  - Example: San Francisco's ["Always Iconic" Billboards](#)
  - Example: [SF MOMA Visual Billboards](#)
- **Public Relations** | An effective PR strategy is an ongoing effort that requires consistent engagement, building relationships with the media, and adapting to changing trends and opportunities in the travel and tourism industry. Placement in strategic media channels (local, statewide and national) will ensure reach to groups of potential visitors outside of Benicia's immediate local visitors. Seeking quality and aligned placement is more important than quantity of mentions (ie. Benicia is mentioned briefly once in the California Visitor's Guide, which feels inconsequential). The selected marketing partner should have close relationships with local publications, such as Benicia Magazine for storytelling awareness and potential for cross collaboration. This can include amplification of Benicia Magazine stories into larger regional, state or national stories.
  - **Objective:** To enhance the visibility and reputation of Benicia as a desirable travel destination, showcasing its unique attractions, rich history, vibrant arts scene, and charming small-town atmosphere.
  - **Media Target Snapshot:**
    - Local: Benicia Herald, Vallejo Times-Herald, KQED News, Patch Benicia



- Regional: San Francisco Chronicle, Bay Area News Group, Sacramento Bee, SFGate.
- National: Travel + Leisure, Conde Nast Traveler, National Geographic Travel, USA Today Travel.
- **Press Releases and Media Pitches:**
  - Craft compelling press releases and media pitches highlighting Benicia's top attractions, events, festivals, and community initiatives and people. Emphasize the town's character, historical significance, arts and culture scene, scenic waterfront, and diverse culinary offerings.
- **Media Familiarization Tours and Press Visits:**
  - Invite journalists and influencers from targeted media outlets for curated tours of Benicia. Showcase its key attractions, local businesses, and experiences, allowing them to immerse themselves in the town's unique charm and capture engaging stories.
- **Storytelling and Visual Content:**
  - Develop captivating storytelling content, including articles, blog posts, and social media campaigns, that showcase Benicia's distinct offerings and highlight the experiences and stories of local residents, business owners, and visitors. Utilize high-quality visuals, such as photographs and videos, to showcase the town's scenic beauty and cultural richness. Tap into Benicia Magazine as a great opportunity to collaborate on the authentic people stories that are the background to the city's character.
- **Collaborations and Partnerships:**
  - Collaborate with local businesses, tourism organizations, and influential individuals to amplify the reach and impact of the PR efforts. Forge partnerships with travel bloggers, influencers, and content creators to generate authentic and engaging content about Benicia, reaching wider audiences through their online platforms.
- **Crisis Management and Reputation Building:**
  - Proactively manage and respond to any potential negative publicity or crises promptly and transparently. Establish a strong online presence, monitor social media channels, and engage with the community to build a positive reputation for Benicia as a welcoming and inclusive destination.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- Regularly monitor media coverage, social media mentions, and website analytics to assess the effectiveness of the PR strategy. Analyze the impact of media placements, track key performance indicators, and gather feedback to refine and improve future PR initiatives.
- **Identifying Marketing Partner (Agency or individuals)** | Successful execution of this Plan relies on the strength and vision of the selected agency. This agency will be responsible for translating all elements of this plan into actionable Marketing initiatives that leverage deep understanding of Benicia’s assets and the most appropriate channels for maximal reach. The selected partner should possess the following capabilities:
  - **Primary Aptitudes**
    - Media relations & strong pitching capabilities
    - Strong social media expertise (Instagram stories, Instagram Reels, TikTok, Facebook)
    - Brand visual and tonal identity
    - Marketing whitespace mapping
    - Photography and video production access
  - **Discovery**
    - Willingness to research, interview and otherwise deeply get to know Benicia, its assets and its community.
    - Spend time in Benicia to accurately capture videos, photos and stories that will appropriately translate the Strategic Plan.
    - Seek to understand Benicia’s tourism “competitors” and the success of their marketing efforts.
  - **Market Knowledge**
    - Understand contemporary tourism strategy and campaign trends, including but not limited to styles of marketing and advertising relevant to Benicia.
    - Understand relevant Tourism campaigns ie. State of California to leverage and amplify Benicia’s reach.
    - Possess existing relationships with media outlets and publications relevant to Benicia’s Tourism Strategy.
  - **Brand Knowledge**
    - Fully understand Benicia’s brand pillars and positioning in order to create consistent and on-brand content.
    - Establish a unique and consistent brand voice, tone and visual identity in all marketing channels.

- **Execution Quality**
  - Ensure that brand engagement or editorial calendars align with the Tentpole Activations in each category, and are strategically planned to drive attendance.
  - Establish detailed KPIs and success metrics and report monthly to Benicia Tourism.
  - Commit to crafting quality storytelling in all marketing channels that are unique to Benicia.

## IMPLEMENTATION + INVESTMENT

- **Organizational Model**



*“It’s challenging in Benicia to get things done. There’s so much talk before anything can happen.”*

The utilization of the tourism subcommittee is essential to support and guide the execution of the Tourism Marketing Plan. It is important to establish clear goals and responsibilities, provide effective communication channels, and foster a supportive and inclusive environment. Regular meetings and brainstorming sessions can help generate innovative ideas, while assigning specific tasks and empowering members with relevant resources and information will maximize their contributions.

We propose updates to the operations and management model to instill a consistent and effective committee structure:

- **Extend Invites** | Consider inviting a representative from the appointed marketing agency to attend meetings to report on marketing plans and gather community input. Additionally, directly invite business owners/community stakeholders that would add value to the itinerary. For example: engage with retail owners ahead of Q4 to collaborate on cohesive events and activations to enhance holiday shopping.
- **Agenda Items** | Address specific agenda items, allowing members to share their ideas, concerns, and suggestions. Utilize the Tourism Marketing Plan elements: Tourism, Brand, Marketing as categories of discussion with specific topics below each one to keep strategy top of mind. This could involve topics such as upcoming events, promotional campaigns, budget allocation, community engagement, or any other pertinent matters.

- **Mobilize + Socialize** | Rally the committee around quarterly strategic priorities to socialize the key tourism priorities. Encourage the committee to socialize the cohesive message and priorities within the community to gain support towards the aligned goals.
- **Example Agenda Framework**
  - Call To Order
  - Pledge Of Allegiance
  - Roll Call
  - Reference to the Fundamental Rights of the Public
  - Opportunity for Public Comment
  - Approval of Minutes
  - Agenda | Tourism Marketing Plan
    - Tourism
    - Brand
    - Marketing | Campaign Review, Update Events Calendar
    - Additional Community Updates
  - Next Meeting Date and Adjournment
- **Key Partners: Public-Private Partnerships + Funding**



*“It’s very difficult to start a business. There’s too much paperwork, it makes it hard for businesses to want to open there, discouraging. [The City should] make it very business friendly.”*

Following are possible options for generating needed funds to implement tourism, brand and marketing programs for Benicia. Further exploration and discussion would be needed with a specialized consultant to provide the city with the best alternative.

- **Small Business Friendly** | Be an ally for small businesses to open more efficiently and effectively. Take a phased approach of auditing the programs and business opportunities to identify areas for improvement.

**Phase I** | Focus on support for existing local businesses and their potential development within Benicia.

- **Fee Audit** | Perform an audit of historical city fees for feasibility, cost and need for both city and businesses. This can include certain fees with annual percentage increases that may no longer be viable for new businesses to manage.

- Real Estate Opportunities | Regularly communicate viable real estate spaces for businesses to explore opportunities for scalability, improved location or layout design.
- Quarterly Small Business Seminars | Launch small business seminars with experts consultants that can offer external expertise to owners seeking guidance and consulting across a variety of topics including lease negotiations, permitting, outfitting a space.

**Phase II** | Explore external partners and businesses that would add value to Benicia, while supporting the existing and local businesses.

- Identify gaps in business desired or needed by the community such as deli, grocer, music venue, children’s store, etc. Determine if there is an opportunity for a local entrepreneur to fill this gap or explore recruiting external partners to provide new value to the community.
- Pursue further connectivity between city, developers and business owners to enhance the local economy with improved efficiencies across business licensing, permitting, funding, consulting and more.
- Take the opportunity to create public-private partnerships that enhance long term environmental sustainability. For example, organizations like [Landify](#) provide development solutions by upcycling and reusing insert soil for building projects.

- **Examples of Funding Programs + Initiatives**

- **First Year Free** | This program is inspired by San Francisco’s program of the same name, wherein new San Francisco-based businesses projecting income below a particular threshold are eligible to have all of their City fees waived. The program waives the cost of initial registration fees, initial license fees, first-year permit, and other applicable fees for qualifying businesses. There is no extra paperwork to apply – enrollment is automatic when you register as a new business or new location with the City.
- **City Incentive Program** | This program aims to incentivize business improvement and evolution for existing businesses within Benicia. This application-based waives annual fees that businesses anticipate to pay.
  - Open submission with detailed criteria for qualified businesses to meet

- The selected businesses are given a waiver on all annual fees that will ultimately reinvest in Benicia
  - Example: Given to five businesses in hospitality industry
- **Stakeholder Funding** | Identify and Select key city stakeholder corporations to partner in a funding program targeted to improving Benicia
  - Utilize the public-private partnership to use private funds for public gain.
  - Coordinate a detailed application program with select criteria to support Benicia tourism strategy plan
    - Example: waterfront beautification, public art, lighting, festivals

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### Short Term Priorities (Month 0-18)

#### Tourism:

- Eat + Drink
  - Leverage wine adjacency: activate satellite pop up tasting rooms and events
  - Foster ongoing relationship development between City, developers and entrepreneurs
- Events
  - Centralize events communication & calendar
  - Establish tentpole events
- Retail
  - Establish expectations of pro-visitor open hours
- Waterfront
  - Clearly establish and denote entry points to waterfront throughout city
  - Engage boating community with low-lift water sport activations
- Real Estate Assets
  - Arsenal: Plan evolution & overarching brand for the Arsenal area
  - Benicia Train Depot: Start discussions for evolution and investment planning
  - Majestic Theatre: Plan evolution & overarching brand
- General
  - Socialize the tourism strategy with community and city stakeholders
  - Incentivize local business evolution and improvement through initiatives and programs
  - Invest in strategic placemaking and wayfinding

#### Brand:

- Re-establish Benicia's brand pillars through a detailed brand exercise
- Work to roll out brand updates across channels

#### Marketing:

- Hire and onboard skilled marketing partner agency
- Improve Visit Benicia's website
- Create consistent and on-brand editorial content for social media
- Create near-term advertising and PR plan

#### Organizational Structure

- Update Tourism Committee organizational format

#### Phase I Budget: \$70-\$80K

- Focusing on the basics to ensure we are leveraging the appropriate channels and building a strong foundation to build on for the future.

#### **Mid-Term Priorities (Year 1.5 - 5)**

#### Tourism:

- Getting In and Around Benicia
  - Shared ride promos, connector shuttles, bike shares and scooters
- Accommodating overnight guests
  - Development of additional hotels
- Eat + Drink
  - Ongoing relationship development between City, developers and entrepreneurs
- Events
  - Audit and consolidate events calendar to identify gaps
  - Develop sponsor partnerships
- Real Estate Assets
  - The Arsenal: Activate new businesses and offerings
  - Train Depot: Repurpose concept
  - Majestic Theatre: Activate location

#### Brand:

- Continued evolution and rollout of brand

#### Marketing:

- Launch out-of-home campaign
- Invest in additional advertising and PR campaigns

#### Phased Budget: \$90k - \$200k

- Significant community and partner engagement with marketing dollars spent in maximizing reach, utilizing new channels and areas of differentiation against comparators.

### Longer-Term Priorities (Year 5 - 10)

#### Tourism:

- Accommodations: Overnight guests | Development of additional hotels
- Eat + Drink
  - Ongoing relationship development between City, developers and entrepreneurs
  - Create Suisun Valley wine connections and cross-collaboration
- Events:
  - Develop sponsor partnerships
  - Implement seasonal ferry, water taxis and cruise ship destinations
- Real Estate Assets
  - Connect Arsenal through public transit
  - Train Depot: Develop visitor hub and centralize tourism efforts

#### Brand

- Continued evolution

#### Marketing:

- Phase 2 Launch: out-of-home campaign
- Invest in additional advertising and PR campaigns

#### Phased Budget: \$250k - \$400k

- Significant infrastructure and marketing investments for national partnerships to build reputation as a major destination.

**MEASUREMENT** | Established success metrics are essential for tourism as they provide a quantifiable means of evaluating performance, informing decision-making, identifying areas for improvement, benchmarking against industry standards, and promoting accountability. By utilizing appropriate success metrics, destinations can strive for continuous improvement and effectively address the diverse needs and expectations of visitors, residents, and other stakeholders.

- **Visitor Arrival Metrics:** These metrics focus on tracking the number of visitors to a destination. These metrics provide insights into the overall tourism volume and trends.
  - Key metrics include: total visitor arrivals, domestic versus international visitor breakdown, and visitor demographics. Placer AI is an industry tool to provide location intelligence and foot traffic insights.



- **Economic Metrics:** Economic metrics assess the financial impact of tourism on a destination's economy. These metrics help gauge the economic benefits and contributions of tourism to the local economy.
  - Key metrics include: total tourism expenditure, tourism-related revenue, job creation, and contributions to GDP.
  
- **Revenue Metrics:** Revenue metrics measure the financial performance of tourism businesses and attractions within a destination.
  - Key metrics include: average spending per visitor, average room rate, revenue per available room (RevPAR) for accommodations, and revenue generated by specific sectors such as restaurants, retail, and attractions.
  
- **Destination Competitiveness Metrics:** These metrics evaluate a destination's competitive position in the tourism market.
  - Key metrics include: market share, visitor repeat rates, tourism seasonality, and comparisons with competitor destinations in terms of pricing, product offerings, and marketing efforts.
  
- **Brand Marketing Metrics:** These metrics focus on measuring the visibility and recognition of a brand.
  - Key metrics include: website visitors, total search impressions, total page views, page view growth, social media followers/growth %, impressions, engagement, public relations earned media value, impressions, media mentions, tone and sentiment.

**Fig. 1**

Type	Yelp	Cuisine Type	To-Go / Counter	Casual	Upscale
Breakfast / Brunch	5 stars = 0 4.5 stars = 8 4 stars = 6 3.5 stars = 5	Bakery / Cafe Brunch Pub Creole / Cajun	~8	~10	0
Lunch	5 star = 0 4.5 star = 9 4 star = 9 3.5 star = 4	Italian Hawaiian Burmese Deli / Sandwich Mexican Creole / Cajun Bakery American Thai Pizza	~10	~10	0
Dinner	5 star = 0 4.5 star = 7 4 star = 6 3.5 star = 6	Italian Hawaiian Burmese Mexican American Pub Thai Japanese Pizza Chinese	~3	~16	1
Beverage	5 star = 0 4.5 star = 3 4 star = 6 3.5 star = 1	Wine Beer Craft Cocktail	~0	~10	0