



February 5, 2021

Ashland City Council
20 East Main St
Ashland, Oregon 97520

Dear Mayor Akins and Ashland City Council,

On behalf of the Oregon Destination Association (ODA) and our local and regional Destination Marketing and Management Organizations (DMOs) from across Oregon, it is my privilege to attest to the vital role Travel Ashland serves in helping to sustain the local economy and the residents of Ashland.

DMOs like Travel Ashland are the boots-on-the-ground organizations providing tourism promotion, destination management and stakeholder business support for decades. Travel Ashland's work is leveraged widely by industry partners, generating visitation and fueling local tax revenues which directly reduce the tax burden on local residents. Continuing to invest in Travel Ashland has never been more critical as you look for partners invested to help recover from the devastation of wildfires and COVID-19.

Just to touch on a few key programs that demonstrate the effectiveness Travel Ashland, and how your Travel Ashland DMO sets a standard of program excellence:

- Travel Ashland promotes Ashland as a unique travel destination promoting outdoors, culinary, wine and culture targeting the outdoor traveler in key markets such as the greater Bay Area, Redding, Sacramento, LA, Seattle, Portland and Eugene. Telling the story of Ashland to new audiences to drive off-season travel, thereby dispersing the impacts of visitation.
- Travel Ashland has expanded its digital platforms including social media channels and audiences. Hosts travel writers, influencers and the tourism industry through FAM trips and itineraries that result in features, stories, articles and blog posts reaching new and expanded audiences.
- Conducts cutting edge research and demographic analysis of new and potential visitors to Ashland resulting in actionable, accountable information to help define the strategic direction.
- Continues its mission to educate, promote, assess, listen to, support and move forward with the goal of optimizing visitation, when it is safe to do so. This is a collective effort through growing valuable partnerships and diversifying our visitor base.
- Travel Ashland serves as the gateway to Ashland, Southern Oregon, and the Pacific Northwest with approximately 60% of visitors continuing to arrive to Oregon through our corridor. Remaining open, accessible and free of charge to the public year-round (outside of COVID restrictions), providing an authentic message and superior travel experience.

Pent-up demand for travel post-COVID will be strongest in leisure and drive markets. Ashland is ideally positioned to benefit as a desirable destination offering an abundance of activities and open spaces.

Travel Ashland is dedicated to positioning the destination to its fullest potential, and the funding partnership with the City of Ashland is critical to this vision. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alana Hughson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Alana Hughson
Managing Director



REGIONAL SOLUTIONS OFFICE
GOVERNOR KATE BROWN

February 3, 2021

Mayor Akins &
Ashland City Council
Ashland, OR 97520
c/o Ashland Chamber of Commerce
Submitted electronically

Dear Mayor Akins & Members of the Ashland City Council:

With admiration for the Ashland Chamber of Commerce team, I write in support of their request for continued support from the City. The Southern Oregon Regional Solutions (RS) Team, with the support of the Office of the Governor, aligns state agency and other resources to address local needs and regional economic development priorities. The RS team works closely with local and regional partners and, indeed, could not do its work without them. The Ashland Chamber of Commerce is one of the most progressive, innovative, and collaborative local organizations I have the pleasure to work with.

In recent years, unfortunately, much of the regional work to support businesses and economic activity in the Rogue Valley has related to the threats posed by COVID-19 and wildfire. Travel Ashland has been a leader in the state and nation, I believe, in educating small businesses and others about operating in the face of wildfire smoke. I have shared the resources developed by the chamber with many other communities in the region and with my colleagues around the state. When the Western Governor's Association held a conference on rural economic development last year and were looking for speakers on wildfire and economic development, I suggested Sandra Slattery. The excellent work of Travel Ashland has not only made significant positive impacts for tourism businesses and organizations in Ashland but reaches far beyond those boundaries to impact the entire region. I encourage your support of their program and continued funding.

Over the past year, I have convened a Regional Economic Recovery Team to address COVID-19 and impacts on businesses. The Ashland Chamber has been a regular and important contributor to these discussions, raising questions about guidelines, providing feedback on proposed programs to support small businesses, and acting as an intermediary between Main Street businesses and the Governor's Office as we all struggle to balance the goals of protecting public health and limiting the resulting economic fallout. When Business Oregon has sought partners to support women-owned businesses, the chamber responded with a program to help main street businesses capture more sales through an on-line marketplace.

Thank you for your kind attention and continued support of economic development in Ashland, the Rogue Valley, and the State of Oregon.

Sincerely,



Alex Campbell

Regional Solutions Coordinator
Office of Governor Kate Brown

February 4, 2021

City of Ashland Council
20 East Main Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520

RE: Regional support for Ashland Chamber, Travel Ashland grant

Dear Mayor Akins and Councilors:

Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc. (SORED) is the economic development agency serving Jackson and Josephine Counties in Southern Oregon, representing a population base of about 300,000 citizens. We are pleased to offer this letter of support to the Ashland Chamber underscoring the critical partnership we share.

The role of the Ashland Chamber is much broader than is often realized, encompassing tourism, business development, and various placemaking initiatives. Our partnership with the Ashland Chamber is critical in the ongoing implementation for the One Rogue Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which was funded in part by the City of Ashland.

- **INITIATIVE 1. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT** Ensure thoughtful, sustainable, and equitable economic growth by strategically promoting the region as a destination for business expansion and relocation.
- **INITIATIVE 4. TOURISM** Support the organizations and places that strengthen the tourism and experiential environment in Southern Oregon.
- **INITIATIVE 5. PLACEMAKING** Nurture an environment that preserves Southern Oregon's quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors.

In this particular time of economic disruption, we have greatly appreciated the role of the Ashland Chamber as a member of the SOREDI Board of Directors and the Governor's Regional Economic Recovery Team to understand our business community's needs. Further, we have solidified our partnership with the Chamber and the City of Ashland by passing through funds from an Economic Development Administration grant received by SOREDI. The grant funding will help establish a diversified strategy for several cities who are particularly reliant upon tourism venues and the retail and hospitality sector. We rely on the strength and professionalism of the Ashland Chamber to complete this work over the next 18-months.

SORED is committed to extensive partnerships throughout our region and we look forward to the long-term gains we will reap in our ongoing collaboration with all 15 jurisdictions, Chambers, and multiple other community partners. **We urge your support of the Ashland Chamber's prospective tourism grant for Travel Ashland.** Thank you.

Sincerely,



Colleen Padilla, Executive Director

May 2020

SUSTAINING UNDERWRITER
Jackson County
Josephine County
City of Grants Pass
City of Medford

EXECUTIVE UNDERWRITER
AllCare Health
Asante
Avista Utilities
Banner Bank
Brophy Schmor, LLP
Cow Creek Band of Umpqua
Tribe of Indians
First Interstate Bank
Harry & David Operations
Hunter Communications
Lithia Motors Inc.
Moss Adams, LLP
PacifiCorp
Peoples Bank
Regence BlueCross BlueShield
Rogue Credit Union
TribalOne
US Bank
Zeal

UNDERWRITER
Amy's Kitchen
Ausland Group
Boise Cascade, LLC
Breeze Capital Management LLC /
Standard Financial
Britt Music and Arts Festival
Carestream
Cascade Wood Products
Coldwell Banker Commercial NW
Cummins, Inc.
Cutler Investment Group
Dutch Bros
Erickson, Inc.
Evergreen Federal Bank
Fire Mountain Gems & Beads
Jackson County Fire District 3
JB Steel, Inc.
KDRV
KeyBank
Knife River Corporation
KOGAP Enterprises, Inc.
KTVL
Lava Lanes
Linde Group
MasterBrand Cabinets, Inc.
Medford Fabrication
Met One Instruments
Morgan Lodging, LLC
Murphy Company
Naumes, Inc.
Navigator's Hospitality, LLC
Neuman Hotel Group
OMEP - Oregon Manufacturing
Extension Partnership, Inc.
Oregon Pacific Bank
Oregon Pacific Financial Advisors, Inc.
Oregon Tech
ORW - Ogden, Roemer, Wilkerson
Pacific Retirement Services
Plexis Healthcare
Providence Medford Medical Center
Rogue Community College
Rogue Disposal & Recycling
Rogue Workforce Partnership
S & B James Construction
South Ashland Business Park, LLC
Southern Oregon Education
Service District
Southern Oregon Sanitation
Southern Oregon University
Space, LLC
Spectrum Business
Tekmanagement
Timber Products Co
Umpqua Bank
Valley Immediate Care
ZCS Engineering & Architecture



February 8, 2021

City of Ashland
Mayor Julie Akins
51 Winburn Way
Ashland, OR 97520

Dear Mayor Akins and Council,

I'm writing in support of Travel Ashland and its importance to the Southern Oregon visitor economy. For many years Travel Ashland has been a pivotal partner for Southern Oregon and most recently Katharine Cato serves in our leadership as President of the board.

As the regional tourism office our work is to support the cities and tourism related businesses within Southern Oregon. The last year has been tumultuous to our industry and as the City Council reviews the budget and contract for Travel Ashland we hope you'll fully support their continued efforts. It is not an appropriate time to cut funding and shift priorities. Tourism will be the catalyst for change in our region as we come up out of COVID-19 restrictions. There is no industry that can lift the City of Ashland better than the tourism industry and I implore you to fund this important work.

We understand the strains that our cities are facing throughout the pandemic. It is our job to remind cities that tourism was strong before this happened and we will bounce back. However, funding needs to stay in place and we ask the council to consider tourism as the best economic driver available to all our regional cities. For every \$1 dollar invested in Oregon for tourism it comes back 8 times in visitor spending. Show me any industry that can get a return on their investment like that.

Tourism took a hit, but we're a hearty group of passionate people who love our cities and where we live. To share a metaphor, consider tourism a bicycle. Funding is air in the tires. Yes we can still roll down the road with flat tires, but with funding (air) we can roll so much farther.

All the best,

Brad Niva
Executive Director
Travel Southern Oregon
Brad@SouthernOregon.org
541-287-3047



February 4, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association, I wanted to extend my recommendation for Travel Ashland to receive city grant funding for their continued work in marketing Ashland as a destination for tourists.

With the closure of Shakespeare and continued wildfire smoke, Travel Ashland has done a phenomenal job pivoting their outreach to the new Ashland visitor. This has been demonstrated in the Outdoor Recreation Committee I had the pleasure of serving on this past Spring. Guided by Katharine Cato, the committee helped generate ideas on what is needed to cater to the outdoor tourism market that Ashland is positioned well to attract. Katharine and Travel Ashland's foresight towards the need to diversify Ashland's tourism economy can be credited in keeping the flow of tourism strong in Ashland, even during a pandemic year. Evidence of outcomes from this committee can be seen in the new signs hanging downtown, highlighting outdoor adventures such as skiing, paddle boarding, and trail running, and helping tie the town into our outdoor surroundings.

Additionally, Travel Ashland has supported many projects that RVMBA has been working on in the community. These projects will support locals and tourists alike, and are fundamental towards growing Ashland as a Mountain Bike destination. Support from our local DMO goes far in helping us secure grant funding and backing for these community projects.

Travel Ashland has been put in an almost impossible scenario. How can tourism-based cities responsibly draw tourists to keep the economy afloat, when restrictions and regulations to keep COVID-19 from spreading continue to shift and fluctuate with case rates? Travel Ashland has done a phenomenal job navigating these challenges while supporting local groups such as RVMBA. It is for those reasons RVMBA offers our recommendation for Travel Ashland to receive full grant funding for the new year.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of RVMBA,

Casey Botts
Treasurer, Rogue Valley Mountain Bike Association

February, 2021

To whom it may concern,

I am beyond pleased to write this letter of support for Travel Ashland as they seek grant funding.

I am Daniel Perry, owner of BookStayHop, Vacation Reservation Management in Ashland.

We are the largest provider of vacation homes, cottages, and cabins, in Southern Oregon. In addition to many properties in downtown Ashland, we manage the Cabins at Hyatt Lake, GreenSprings Inn, Blue Moon House, Anne Hathaway House, Paschal Winery, Rellik Winery and the famed Nunan Mansion. We offer guests over a hundred properties to choose from and a top rated experience with more than five thousand near perfect five star reviews. We are also AirBnB's and VRBO/HomeAway's largest and most reviewed partner in Southern Oregon.

It's a well-known fact that for every dollar spent in lodging, guests will spend two more dollars in food, wine, shopping and entertainment (theater and outdoor activities). In lodging alone, our guests spent \$2.8m in 2020 and are estimated to spend more than \$4.5m in 2021. This would equate to total spending of more than \$12m in Southern Oregon... most of this in Ashland!

We are in huge support of Travel Ashland's efforts to promote Southern Oregon. ***Simply put, we would not exist in Southern Oregon, without their initial and continued support.***

All of our guests receive Travel Ashland's literature and links. Through their efforts we partner our guests with local food (restaurants, grocery, and farmers markets), wineries and wine tours, theater and music, local shopping, and outdoor activities including hiking, biking, fishing, rafting... and so much more!

Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber of Commerce have proven to be the very best of partners in our goal to share Southern Oregon with travelers... local, out of state, and internationally.

Thank you for your time in reading our letter of support. Please feel free to contact me should you wish to have further conversation.

Gratefully,

-Daniel Perry
Owner

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Daniel Perry
BookStayHop LLC.
Vacation Reservation Management

1875 Highway 99 North, Suite D
Ashland, OR 97520

+1 877.411.5545 - Office

+1 541.227.4999 - Mobile

daniel@bookstayhop.com

www.bookstayhop.com



EVERYDAY INDULGENCE

February 8, 2021

To: Ashland City Council

Regarding: Letter of support for Travel Ashland

I am writing on behalf of Branson's Chocolates and as the Ashland Chamber Board President. Travel Ashland as our Destination Marketing Organization and all the work they do has my full support. Especially in the trying times of the last several years with the devastating wildfires and smoke to COVID-19. The efforts of Travel Ashland to bring in a more diverse visitor to Ashland is so invaluable. To have visitors that are interested in more than just the theatre will help strengthen Ashland as a community in whole. The challenges that we have faced this last year and more to come as we adjust our businesses to the ever-changing way of doing business means we need the efforts of Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber as much as ever.

The funds collected from the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) provides a grant to Travel Ashland every year to help in the efforts of promoting Ashland to areas more than 50 miles away. The Ashland Chamber and Travel Ashland put an in-depth report together every year detailing their efforts in promoting Ashland. The new visitor study that is being done will show us and Travel Ashland who the new visitors are. Knowing who the visitors are and why they are visiting will help in the marketing efforts.

Looking forward to recovery from this past year Ashland will need more than ever the work that Travel Ashland does to bring the diversified visitors back. The visitor that wants to take advantage of all that Ashland has to offer. And the only way that the visitors will know about Ashland is if Travel Ashland is able to continue with its market plans.

Owning a business that caters to the tourist in many ways, from my retail store itself to the many wholesale customers that cater to the visitors I fully support the marketing efforts of Travel Ashland to bring a more diversified visitor. A visitor that wants to come to town several times a year for all the different amenities Ashland has to offer. For skiing during the winter and the Lighting of the Lights, to Shakespeare, the wineries, and trails during the summer and fall. These same marketing efforts also makes Ashland a draw for Southern Oregon University students and families.

The more we all work together the stronger we all become is something I was raised with and still believe in today. Saying that I believe that we all should support the efforts of Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber of Commerce with the grant of the TOT funds to help keep the diversified visitor coming.

Thank you for your time,

Deena Branson
owner/confectioner
Branson's Chocolates
Ashland Chamber Board President



February 8, 2021

To Whom it May Concern:

As Travel Ashland's research partner, we at Destination Analysts support Travel Ashland in the organization's application to the City Council for a renewal of grant funding. Destination Analysts is a full-service market research company that provides the greater travel, tourism and hospitality industry with a breadth of actionable insights. Our more than 200 clients, both nationwide and globally, seek our unique and deeply thoughtful analysis, our storytelling of data, high quality findings, and progressive and open approach to research methodologies.

I first connected with Travel Ashland during the 2019 Oregon Destination Association (ODA) Annual Conference in Bend. ODA brings together a statewide network of local and regional destination marketing organizations (DMO) through a shared vision to support the vitality of Oregon's travel industry. Its existence as an association is a testament to the importance of destination marketing organizations, which promote destinations and its tourism-related businesses, ultimately attracting visitors and driving significant economic impact for their respective communities. Travel Ashland's participation in ODA demonstrates the commitment to establish Ashland as a premier travel destination.

With our nearly two decades of experience conducting research on behalf of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry, we know that DMOs are instrumental in supporting the destinations and local businesses that they represent. From Destination Analysts' [DMO Website Importance Study](#), a cooperative research study of 60+ official DMO websites, it is clear that DMOs are an important and valuable resource to many audiences. The vast majority of DMO website users surveyed agreed that it was important that the organization provided the information that they did. Potential visitors turn to DMOs specifically to gather trip information and official DMO websites are also a valuable service for local businesses and residents. While local businesses seek information on tourism promotion and advocacy, residents specifically look for ideas on things to do as well as activities for visiting family and friends—information that largely encourages economic activity.

Like many of our other DMO clients, lodging taxes are pivotal to Travel Ashland's operations and capacities to attract visitors, boost occupancy and continue owned and earned media efforts. Reinvesting lodging taxes to provide Travel Ashland with resources to continue marketing and promoting the city will not only generate economic impact, but also support the city's future as leisure travel destination. And research is critical to making data-driven decisions that will market the city. The current Visitor Research and Analysis that Destination Analysts is conducting on behalf of Travel Ashland will yield actionable and strategic insights to identify new audiences and potential visitors, benchmark current perceptions of Ashland as a leisure travel destination and serve as a foundation for future rebranding efforts.

Destination Analysts is thrilled to be Travel Ashland's research partner and honored to be a part of this exciting milestone for your community.

Cheers to a promising future for Ashland!

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in dark purple ink that reads "Kimberly Vince Cruz". The script is fluid and cursive.

Kimberly Vince-Cruz

Vice President

Destination Analysts



IRVINE & ROBERTS
VINEYARDS

February 4, 2021

Dear Mayor Akins and Ashland City Councilors,

I am writing today to share my extreme gratitude for the work Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber provide our winery and the city as a whole. Last year we faced what will likely go down as one of the most challenging years on record. Yet, an entirely new tourist visited our city and showed us that the multidimensional city we have always known Ashland could be, was finally realized and fully embraced by a new demographic – the next generation of tourist that Ashland needs. This would have never been possible without the foundation that Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber have consistently built and continue to work on to keep Ashland relevant and inviting.

In spite of the challenges, 2020 has a good news story. Irvine & Roberts Vineyards saw a year over year increase in total traffic in 2020. During a worldwide pandemic, it was a monumental surprise to see so many visitors and that didn't stop at Irvine & Roberts. We send our guests to Ashland restaurants, shops and natural attractions every day. Previously, our guest demographic had roughly been two thirds GenX and Baby Boomers, one third Millennials. That was completely flipped in 2020 with two thirds of our guests being the millennial generation, which included many young families. For years, the wine industry has known it needed to tap into the next generation of wine consumers, and that opportunity came shining through in 2020. That is no different for any tourism based industry. I firmly believe the work that Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber have done to promote all aspects this city offers paid off beyond our wildest dreams. Tourists came to Ashland seeking the outdoors, hiking and biking trails, parks, art, culinary, wine, and the small town charm that has always made Ashland special. We have a brand new audience that experienced Ashland in 2020, and they will not only return, they will share the story of Ashland with many more visitors to come. The bottom line is that how people find us is they find Ashland first, and that credit can go to Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber.



IRVINE & ROBERTS
VINEYARDS

One specific example of the work that Travel Ashland beautifully facilitated was an incredible 5 day trip for a group of Los Angeles based food, travel and wine writers in October of 2019. They were absolutely blown away by the culture, culinary and wine scene the City of Ashland had to offer, and we have been very happy to see numerous articles since in magazines such as Food, Wine and Travel Magazine. Irvine & Roberts Vineyards was even featured on the cover of the Oregon Wine Press this past December as a result of this trip. I am certain we will continue to see more press coming from this one trip, as relationships have now been built with an entirely new group of writers.

While OSF plays a major role in marketing and tourism for Ashland, we were put to the test this past year to see what this little city could do without that assistance. Never having this unprecedented time before, this is where the work that Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber could finally be quantified. Without the OSF tourist, we were left to prove we could be a multidimensional tourist destination. I think we hit it out of the park. Last year showed me the promise that Ashland has and our future is dependent on Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber continuing their work to keep us relevant and exciting to every tourist possible. We are reaching the next generation of tourist, and this work is vital to every businesses in our city. Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber perfectly cross promoted a number of Ashland businesses. Their forethought and efforts brought significant results to the citizens of Ashland.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration. There are many more stories I would be so happy to share. Should you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to contact me directly.

With gratitude,

Dionne Irvine
Irvine & Roberts Vineyards
541.301.8874



February 5, 2021

Ashland City Mayor and Council
20 E Main Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520

Dear Mayor and City Council:

For over 15 years I have served on the Advisory Committee for Travel Ashland and for two of those years I served as the chair of the committee. I am proud of what this committee has accomplished during this time. One of the biggest accomplishments is the growth of hotel occupancy. This did not come easy but was accomplished through collaboration of our advisory committee and the Travel Ashland staff. I could reference many accomplishments during this time but want to focus on the creation of the three pillars that promote Ashland so wonderfully. They are Culinary, Outdoors and Culture. When we identified and started promoting the three pillars, we quickly realized that so many of our guests did not come just for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival but came for the award-winning culinary scene and the beautiful outdoors of Southern Oregon. We quickly saw the buzz and started creating and enhancing city wide festivals to promote the culinary and the outdoors along with amazing campaigns to educate people about Ashland. Yes, the Culture pillar is important but as we wanted to diversify our travelers, we saw success in the promotion of the other pillars.

I want to point out that during the last 5+ years not including the year of 2020, it is not a secret that the attendance at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival saw year over year declines. The wonderful fact during these same 5+ years, is the occupancy of the hotels did not decline thus supporting the decision to diversify our travelers to Ashland. This is a huge accomplishment and there are lots of factors to take into consideration, but I believe that the creation and identifying the 3 pillars promoting Ashland brought huge success for our community.

I totally understand the situation that most individuals, businesses', and communities are in when it comes to shortfalls of revenues due to the pandemic which has caused major shortfalls of our budgets. We are all having to make changes and adjustments, however cutting funds from Travel Ashland is not your answer. The hospitality industry will soon be stronger than ever before and promoting Ashland will never be more important. I encourage you to keep the budget of the Chamber and Travel Ashland the same so we can continue to promote this wonderful community that we live and work in. I am happy to answer any questions that you have. Feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Don Anway
COO, Neuman Hotel Group

212 East Main Street, Ashland, Oregon 97520
NeumanHotelGroup.com

To Whom It May Concern,

I would like to take a brief moment to express how instrumental the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, and Travel Ashland are to the town, via the eyes of a young, second generation, business owner. Having grown up here, I find this town special, so much so, that having left and explored the world, I decided to return, start my own family, and join the family business

I feel the impact that the Chamber has as a whole, might at times, go unnoticed by those not looking closely, but is never unfelt. Their continued efforts to draw in eager explorers has made an indelible impact for the better upon our community.

We collect thousands and thousands in Meals Tax and TOT for the City from all the meals and stays we provide. In a time when the City is so hamstrung for funding, this is an organization that funnels those taxes directly back to the City and the community as a whole.

This last year was a perfect storm of circumstances that left us without our usual tourist draw. The business community was rocked to the core. We saw businesses close, some temporarily, and some for good. When the City of Ashland was silent during shutdowns and outbreaks, the Chamber has been alongside us, providing information, resources, and guidance the whole time. It was a lone bright spot in all of this. I have seen nothing but hard work and dedication this year from Travel Ashland and the Chamber to support not just the local economy, but the community as a whole.

The outreach they do has continued to have an impact, even in these tough times. With the loss of the “usual” tourist, we saw countless people stop last summer for their first visit to Ashland. I was so thrilled to hear again and again, “Wow, it’s so magical here. We had read that it would be a perfect place to stop and explore.” This has been a long time goal of Travel Ashland, to focus on the pillars of what make Ashland special. Their efforts are part of the reason many of us still stand, doors open and serving our community.

I was thrilled to see them roll out new programs like the Shop Local push they instigated last December. While not usually a retail spot, we saw a significant boost this last December. Again, it might have been unnoticed to everyone else, but made an impact for us.

Last week, I sent out close to 15,000 emails in an effort for them to help better understand and serve those that do love to visit the region. This is the sort of information that doesn’t just prop up the business community, but the town as a whole. It is this sort of hard work that happens behind the scenes that makes those positive changes to our community that most might not be aware of.

20 years in the hospitality business means countless stays and hundreds of thousands of guests. The funny thing, and my favorite piece among all, is when we see that initial draw, as sparked by the Chamber and Travel Ashland, brighten into a visit and ultimately lead that person to choose Ashland as their forever home. It might seem counter intuitive, but I love it when my long time guest doesn’t stay with me, but instead becomes my neighbor.

All these pieces come together, to not only provide the support for the vibrant community that we love, but also support many of the things we might take for granted as Ashlanders. I look forward to working with the Chamber and Travel Ashland for many years to come. Thank you so much for your time.

Regards,

Drew Gibbs

Owner/Operator

Winchester Inn / RedTail Inn / Alchemy Restaurant / Smithfields Restaurant

To Whom It May Concern,

As a business owner in Ashland for the past 13 years, I have benefitted greatly from the programs, services, and advertising the Chamber of Commerce and Travel Ashland have produced. While a lot of my customers are local Ashland residents, many, mostly during the summer months, are tourists that have come to Ashland as their travel destination. Having served as a member of the VCB for a couple years, I know the things that Travel Ashland does are for the benefit of our town and our businesses. For a long time, Ashland has been on the map because of OSF, but Travel Ashland promotes what *Ashland* has to offer. Without an organized effort to do so, we are just another town on I-5 with gas stations at each exit.

While there would still be some that come to Ashland regularly, hampering the efforts of Travel Ashland means that fewer tourists overall will be staying in Ashland TOT-generating hotels, B&Bs, VRBOs; dining at our many meals tax-generating restaurants and cafes; shopping in our locally-owned and operated retail stores. Involvement in Travel Ashland seems imperative for the City of Ashland. More tourists directly equates to more local tax revenues. I stand firmly behind what the Chamber and Travel Ashland and ask that the City of Ashland continues to support Travel Ashland, for the sake of businesses and our town.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dustin Way, Owner
Rogue Valley Roasting Company
917 E Main St.
Ashland, OR 97520

February 5, 2021

My name is Graham Sheldon, and I am the owner of Ashland Creek Inn. I have owned this hotel since 2000. During that time I have worked with the Ashland Chamber as well as Travel Ashland. I have also served on Travel Ashland's advisory board. I am writing to express my support for continued funding for this worthy organization.

Of course, most people know that Ashland has had to work through life without OSF in 2020. What most don't know is that work had begun to decouple Ashland from OSF as a brand years prior to that. Travel Ashland lead that effort many years ago after correctly recognizing that the future of Ashland tourism could not remain firmly linked to OSF. The focus on outdoor activities, our culinary scene and the burgeoning wineries is the outcome of this and has served us well this year.

Travel Ashland is responsible for marketing all of Ashland. And they do an amazing job of it. Not only do they sponsor many local events such as the 4th of July, and holiday celebrations, but they must also keep an eye towards our shifting demographic of visitors. With massive changes like the one seen last year, having an understanding of this dynamic is very important.

I urge you to continue funding these organizations. Both are critical to the ongoing success of my business as well as many others in town, both large and small. They are always eager to support us and help remove barriers to our success. And finally, they are always careful that they use the TOT money in ways that honor all of the requirements of the state law – for example, attracting visitors from more than 50 miles away. I feel it is important that the city correctly applies the state law when allocating funds from TOT.

Thank you,

Graham Sheldon



RVML COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER MEDIA EXCHANGE - EVENTS METAPHYSICAL LIBRARY

February 6, 2021

Staff

Nikki Clifton
Event Coordinator
Dillon Garrison
PR & Social Media Manager
David Gordon
Website Manager
Jordan Pease
Executive Director
Tim Powell
IT Manager
Brad Ratcliff
Media Exchange Manager
Jessica Roady
Accounting
Christina Stewart
Library Manager

Advisory Council

Jeb Barton, MA
Kathleen Brown, MBA
Shaktari Belew
Donna Corso
Jack Follett
Maureen Hicks, PhD
Katrina Hill
Lucia Hodges
Chuck Laursen, MA
Gerry Lehrburger, MD
Lori Lorenz, MA
Joseph McCormick, MA
Hearne Moore, RN
Rod Newton
Adam Reed

To Whom it May Concern-

As a community member and business owner here in Ashland for nearly 20 years, I'm writing to express my perspective to the City Council about the work of the Ashland Chamber of Commerce and their Travel Ashland program. I suspect that most of the issues brought before the Council involve making tough decisions and sacrifices. I realize that there are many matters of concern for the Council, and appeasing all parties is not realistic in most instances. I also understand that certain funding is earmarked for specific uses.

Personally, I endeavor to consider things on a hierarchy and seek to identify root causes to focus on; A strategy that then ideally can address meta causes and fix their resultant problems, possibly several at once. I know that matters like homelessness and development growth are very contentious in our community, and although I'm not particularly educated about the nuances and exact challenges there, it occurs to me that the meta issue of creating and sustaining a robust economy of a community is foundational to effectively resourcing solutions to those and other more ordinary matters that communities face.

Obviously, the challenges that the current pandemic brings are unprecedented and have had a major deleterious impact on nearly everything in our community, with our vital tourist economy at the epicenter. In my view, the Chamber's staff are very community-minded folks, with a long-demonstrated history of creative problem solving and results-oriented approaches. I urge the Council to make funding to the Chamber and Travel Ashland a priority to enable them to continue to support the healthy economy here that underpins so many of the aspects making our community robust and strong.

Thank you for valuing the community's input on these matters.

Sincerely,

-Jordan Pease

Director, RVML Community Resource Center

RVML Community Resource Center is a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization EIN # 56-2403599

1757 Ashland St., Ashland, Oregon 97520 (541) 552-9119 Email: office@rvml.org www.rvml.org



February 7, 2021

Dear Council Members,

With COVID-19 and last year's wildfires upending the way we conduct business in the Rogue Valley, it is more important than ever to recognize and support the efforts of Travel Ashland, the officially designated DMO that has worked tirelessly to ensure the survival of our local economy. The pandemic we face has been extra impactful in cities like Ashland, where the health of local tourism can make or break businesses of nearly all types. Travel Ashland's promotional efforts are important in any year, but they have been—and continue to be—critical in a year that has seen a devastating reduction in tourism.

Despite the enormous strain of the pandemic and its impact on tourism, Travel Ashland has managed to balance its excellent promotional work with the need to inform travelers about what is closed and what is open, local and statewide regulations pertaining to COVID-19, and how to safely enjoy the plethora of activities Ashland and the Rogue Valley still have to offer. Like Ashland's business community, Travel Ashland has met this challenge head-on, but their vital work must continue during and long after the pandemic's passing.

Even without the pandemic and September's devastating wildfires, Ashland has been changing at a rapid pace. To ensure Travel Ashland has the support it needs to help bolster our economy and keep up with the changing ways we live and communicate, Hearsay is offering unequivocal support for its continued funding. Ashland has an opportunity to thrive in a post-pandemic world. But to realize that future, it is imperative that we show the same support for Travel Ashland that they have shown Ashland business owners for years.

Respectfully,

Julie Gurwell

Julie Gurwell

Owner, Hearsay Restaurant, Lounge & Garden

To Ashland Mayor and City Council:

I am writing in support of the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, and Travel Ashland. I am the new owner of a longstanding business in town, The Web-sters. We have had a long and valuable relationship with the Chamber, but perhaps never more important than in this moment.

Local retail businesses are the heart of our small town community. They add color and flavor to the tourist experience that we all rely on. The business community of specifically downtown Ashland cannot survive without tourism, as we have learned to our detriment this past year. Local businesses need support, and that is what the Chamber and Travel Ashland provide.

With OSF currently closed, we need to market Ashland to new potential visitors. Our town and area have so much to offer, and we can't afford to lose all tourism because we are known exclusively as a theater town. We need a funded organization to take on the work of promoting our outdoor adventures, our small and safe B&B's, our fantastic culinary and wine scene (with outdoor seating), and our small businesses. Travel Ashland has and continues to fill that important role.

As a business owner, I am so grateful for the support the Chamber provided through 2020, and their efforts to create engaging, creative, and SAFE ways to experience our town. We need more of that, not less, as we enter this new year. We need to get the word out on a local, regional, and statewide level that Ashland is still here, and a great place to visit even without OSF. We are relying on Travel Ashland to do this important work, and I entreat you to grant them the funds to do so.

Thank you for your time,

Laurel McKee

The Websters
11 N Main St
Ashland OR 97520

February 5, 2021

To: Ashland City Council

RE: City Grant for Travel Ashland

Dear Council,

As a past member of the Ashland Chamber of Commerce Visitor and Convention Bureau, current Ashland Chamber board member and past president of the Chamber I am asking for your consideration and support in funding the Travel Ashland (Visitor and Convention Bureau) grant for the next budget cycle.

I first became involved with the Ashland VCB over 20 years ago while working at the Schneider Museum of Art (SMA). The VCB was a great connecting point for the museum in coordination with our exhibition promotion and programs and served as a hub for us to work collaboratively with other businesses and non-profits. It's impressive to note the extensive list of Industry and Local partnerships maintained by Travel Ashland as can be seen on pages 8 and 9 of the City Grant Report. These connections helped the SMA expand our regional outreach and to bring visitors to Ashland.

Over the years I've witnessed and participated in Travel Ashland's development of new programs to encourage tourism during the shoulder seasons of OSF and to focus on our many resources. These programs include the Festival of Lights, the Ashland Culinary and Chocolate Festivals, and more recently the expansion of outdoor recreation opportunities such as running, biking, white water pursuits and a focus on our ever increasing wine industry.

The City Grant program is funded by the money collected through the Transient Occupancy Tax and is targeted to be used for tourism promotion. Each year Travel Ashland provides the City Council with a thoroughly documented report on its efforts for that budget cycle. The extensive impact Travel Ashland has on our region is well documented in that report. They have been doing a fantastic job of this for the past 38 years and have received regional and national recognition for their efforts.

In conclusion, it doesn't seem logical not to support a program that has worked so well for our businesses and community. Now more than ever our city should be supporting Travel Ashland to assist in the promotion of tourism in our town. Ashland has a very well run program that should be praised and encouraged to continue the good work that they do and supported with funding through the City Grant. Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mary Gardiner
Ashland Chamber Board Member
Southern Oregon University (retired)



February 8, 2021

To: The members of the Ashland City Council

RE: Mt. Ashland offers full support for Travel Ashland

Dear Friends,

Mt. Ashland has seen tremendous growth in visitation this ski season. We attribute this to a variety of factors including:

- Emerging trends in modern lifestyle and tourist experience demand;
- Pent-up demand during the pandemic for guests to engage in some form of recreation;
- Ashland's charm and appeal, which in addition to low crowding, make this place an ideal place to visit; and
- Most importantly, the tireless work done by the folks at Travel Ashland to promote our community's assets.

Re-investing in Ashland's tourism sector is essential as we adapt to a changing economy. We need our partner Travel Ashland to continue promoting our community's unique assets as the City of Ashland transitions away from our traditional reliance on the theater sector to provide the livelihoods of so many of our community's residents.

Travel Ashland has been surveying groups of visitors recently. The information that is being gathered now is a big part of setting our community on a trajectory that will fuel this economy for decades to come. Please support the work of the volunteer Travel Ashland committee members and Travel Ashland staff who have spent months preparing for and implementing this important data-gathering effort.

Now more than at any point in recent memory, the unified efforts being undertaken by Ashland's outdoor, retail, restaurant, lodging, and other industry leaders must be wholly supported and encouraged by the Ashland City Council. We have the success of our community at the forefront of our minds as we adapt to a rapidly changing world.

More than one in five guests at Mt. Ashland visits from more than 50 miles away. Our partners at Travel Ashland have had a big part in luring these important guests to Ashland and the ski area. In many seasons, these guests make the difference between profitability or losing money for a ski season. We cannot afford to lose these guests. We must continually adapt to a changing visitor demographic to succeed and remain a sustainable community resource.

We are not sure what a post-pandemic Ashland will look like. Nor are we sure what a post-Shakespeare Ashland will look like. Nor are we sure what an annual smoky summer Ashland will look like. We do know that working together, we have an opportunity to mold our community into something that will gainfully employ many more

LOCAL MOUNTAIN FUN
— SINCE 1964 —

Ashland residents in living-wage positions. A more diverse economy will enable Ashland to remain resilient and attractive for many years to come.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "H Towle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Hiram Towle

General Manager, Mt. Ashland Ski Area

Chair, Travel Ashland committee



Dear Members of the Ashland City Council,

I own Momentum River Expeditions, a local rafting and outdoor adventure company. I am writing in support of Travel Ashland. Travel Ashland is critical to bringing together the many diverse constituencies, businesses, and local groups that are involved in the Ashland tourism economy.

Tourism is a key part of Ashland's economy. And tourist economies bring a special vibrancy and energy to a town. In Ashland's case that includes a vibrant art scene, amazing wineries, and a food scene that rivals many large cities. This vibrancy, along with the outdoor access, is the reason many have chosen to live here - including myself.

Ashland's tourism economy has traditionally revolved around the Shakespeare Festival. And Shakespeare should always be a key part of our tourism economy – it has brought so much to our town. But Travel Ashland recognizes that a diverse tourism economy will benefit everyone. And they have been amazing at continuing to support our traditional tourist draws while also helping to grow our newer outdoor tourism economy.

I believe in environmental stewardship through advocacy by experience. That getting people outside creates advocates that will love and want to protect our wild places and environment. And outdoor tourism is key to getting a wide range of people outside. Traditional tourism can be a big part of creating a sustainable local economy – when combined with outdoor tourism it can be doubly effective. It is an economy that can provide sustainable jobs as well as educate people about the value of our natural environment. Travel Ashland has done an incredible job facilitating the growth of our outdoor tourism economy.

Travel Ashland has also been instrumental in facilitating and strengthening the connections between tourism based businesses and their employees with local, regional, and federal elected officials. Their long-standing relationships are critical to creating strong and nimble public/private partnerships. Partnerships that are key to collectively responding to the big issues we are facing.

I have worked with many organizations that help to bring groups together, bridge the private/public divide, strengthen local economies, and advocate for healthier and more vibrant communities. And Travel Ashland is among the very best and most effective. An organized, energized, smart, and well-connected DMO is critical to a healthy tourism economy. Travel Ashland is very much all of those things and its funding is critical to the future of the Ashland tourism economy and to the businesses and families that rely on it.

Sincerely,

Pete Wallstrom



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

February 8, 2021

To: Mayor Julie Akins and the
City Council of Ashland, Oregon

Dear Mayor Akins and City Council,

As an active ex-officio member of the Chamber Board for the past five years, I have had the opportunity to hear first-hand monthly reports on the efforts of Travel Ashland to promote tourism. Not only have I been impressed with the results of those efforts, but I value the innovation in their programs and well as their regular adjustments to marketplace challenges.

The work of Travel Ashland and the Chamber is critically important to SOU in creating a healthy economy and supporting the many amenities of Ashland. This helps promote Ashland to parents and potential students as well as our community of faculty and staff. The visitor brochures, maps and relocation guides showcase our community and entice not only visitors but potential students and business investment.

Successful destinations reinvest in tourism. Travel Ashland has a unique role in promoting our beautiful location, aligning with industry partners regionally and statewide. Ashland's image in the press is enhanced through stories that help shine the light on our community and therefore Southern Oregon University.

SOU partners with the Chamber and Travel Ashland on community events, educational workshops, economic conferences, and community forums on topics of critical interest such as fire prevention and education, water supply, food and beverage industry education and innovation, technology, and traded sector support.

Our university has partnered for a number of years with the Chamber and Travel Ashland in the creation of the Say Hey event on the SOU campus working with the Black Student Union and community members to support our mission of inclusivity and equity.

SOU partners with the Chamber in economic development strategic initiatives fostering resiliency for Ashland and the region. The university participates on the Health and

Churchill Hall, Room 117 • 1250 Siskiyou Boulevard • Ashland, Oregon 97520

(541) 552-6111 • inside.sou.edu • presidentsoffice@sou.edu

Wellbeing Committee addressing the Ashland workforce as well as the new Emergency Preparedness Task Force.

I deeply value our partnerships and programs with the Chamber and Travel Ashland. I consider them part of our extended internal team, supporting the growth and sustainability of SOU. In these very challenging times we are experiencing in higher education, I rely on Travel Ashland and the Chamber not only to promote Ashland but to partner with us in countless endeavors that support SOU and the broader community.

I encourage your continued funding of Travel Ashland. We need to invest back into the industry and the professionals who are leading this effort. We need them to thrive for all of us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Schott".

President, Linda Schott
Southern Oregon University

PAM MARSH
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 5
SOUTHERN JACKSON COUNTY



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 5, 2021

Ashland City Council
20 East Main Street
Ashland, OR 97520

Re: Travel Ashland Grant Report & Ashland Chamber COVID Response

To: Mayor Akins & Members of Ashland City Council,

I am writing to express my wholehearted appreciation for the work of Ashland Chamber of Commerce, and to encourage your continued and robust support of the organization.

Both during my time on the Council, and over the past four years as a state representative for Ashland, I have had an opportunity to collaborate with the Chamber and to observe the value that having a strong coordinated voice brings to our City. Travel Ashland promotes our community with nonpareil skill and professionalism, supporting the tourism industry that is core to so many of our businesses. As a result, we've seen consistent growth in the nontraditional tourist months, as well as a growing diversity in the travelers attracted to the city.

The Ashland Chamber has a remarkable ability to reach and engage various sectors in a broad, thoughtful and inclusive way. To have a Chamber that sees parades and celebrations as part of its mission illustrates the organization's commitment to the notion of **building community**. Look behind the curtain, and it is clear that collaboration between the City and the Chamber has fueled much of the social, economic and cultural programming that citizens now take for granted.

I am particularly grateful for the role that our Chamber played has played during this difficult year to foster resilience, respond to the public health crisis and help our business community navigate COVID restrictions. Over and over again the Chamber stepped up to ensure that even our smallest businesses understood funding opportunities and new ways to market products. This was illustrated by the Chamber's pursuit of grant funding to develop a shopping website with a focus on women- and minority-owned business. It is this kind of caring, forward-thinking innovation that helps to keeps Ashland vibrant – its people *and* economy – and that makes our Chamber both unique and indispensable.

Thank you for utilizing your role on City Council to help ensure that the Ashland Chamber can continue its work making Ashland a wonderful place to live, work, recreate, shop and travel.

Best regards,

Representative Pam Marsh, House District 05

February 8, 2021

Anne Robison
The Crown Jewel
Chamber of Commerce Board
Travel Ashland Committee Member

Dear City Council Members,

Please continue to fully fund Travel Ashland and the Ashland Chamber. Since becoming more involved with both organizations, I cannot tell you how impressed I am over and over with their professionalism, positivity, resourcefulness, helpfulness, and incredible productivity. And as a small business owner, I am grateful for the level of help they have always offered, and especially offered, this past year during the pandemic crisis.

First of all, take the time to truly learn what the Chamber and Travel Ashland do. From organizing SmokeWise conferences for the region to selling gift certificates to support Ashland businesses, from blowing up the blogosphere over our phenomenal local chefs to putting out amazing publications and throwing fun city wide events - the list of things accomplished is truly astonishing. This is a staff of 3-4 people we're talking about? These women are rock stars for our community.

Second of all, this is a tourist town and a small business town. It's smart to diversify and explore bringing mid-size and larger employers to the area, and we absolutely need to do that and should do that. But when so much of our economy is tourism-based, we can't make that change over night. And nor can we cut the vital programs that keep our businesses afloat. Most importantly, there is huge room for expansion on the numbers and kind of tourists that can be attracted here. I'm so excited about the diversity of visitor we could expand into, and these could have the potential to really revitalize our businesses and town. And Travel Ashland and the Chamber are the flexible, experienced, nimble organizations to keep working on that. No one else could or would. It's not going to happen without a savvy marketing organization.

Lastly, let me be specific about the ways these groups have helped me and my business. They have kept me informed about all the new rules for operating a store in Oregon during covid, rules that have changed multiple times. They got free PPE for us. They have run a very successful Shop Local campaign the last 2-3 years during the holidays that has noticeably helped my sales. They have begun to successfully coordinate with OSF again, really begin to form a mutually beneficial partnership, and help keep me informed of what the festival is doing so I can make plans for my business. They educated me on what I needed to do to keep the air in my store clean during wildfire smoke. They bring shoppers to town in the off season with events like Culinary Month and the iron chef competition. They listen to me and other retailers about what we care about and need - they don't make assumptions about it. They found key grant money to support the Shop Ashland website idea when I came to them with it, and they were full-on partners in the project. In short, they listen to what is needed and pivot to make it

happen if they can. They are never afraid to take on new challenges or add new projects if it will help small businesses.

Finally, let me say that I've worked at big companies, small arts organizations, and glimpsed just a little the workings of other small towns in the area. You need to know we are sitting on pure gold here. When others spend their time complaining, or blaming others, or sitting back and doing the same old thing year after year, or simply wasting money being totally dysfunctional, our Chamber and Travel Ashland remain positive and highly productive in a way that benefits our whole town. I count myself truly lucky to know these women.

Thank you so much for listening. Please feel free to ask me any questions you wish about these organizations. My email is anne@thecrownjewel.net, or text at 541-552-1375.

Yours,

Anne

JEFF GOLDEN
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 3



OREGON STATE SENATE

February 2, 2021

Mayor Akins and members of the Council,

Let me ask for a moment of your time to express my appreciation for Travel Ashland and its farsighted approach to improving our community's economy and job opportunities. To be accurate, their perspective extends well beyond the borders of the Ashland community to partnerships and synergies with effective organizations in the Rogue Valley, the state of Oregon and even the broader Northwest. In my short time in the legislature, I've come to understand how much more effective and sustainable that collaborative ethic is than the zero-sum game mindset that drives some of the initiatives and programs that ask for state dollars. Collaboration delivers taxpayers more bang for their buck, and in my experience Travel Ashland scores high on this metric.

I'm painfully aware of how tough your budget deliberations will be this year. As a member of the legislature's Joint Ways and Means Committee, I'll have a similar challenge in months to come. My hope is that, fully mindful of Travel Ashland's contributions to our economic well-being, you can give full consideration to meaningful support of their programs.

With thanks for your service to my home community,

Senator Jeff Golden
Oregon District 3

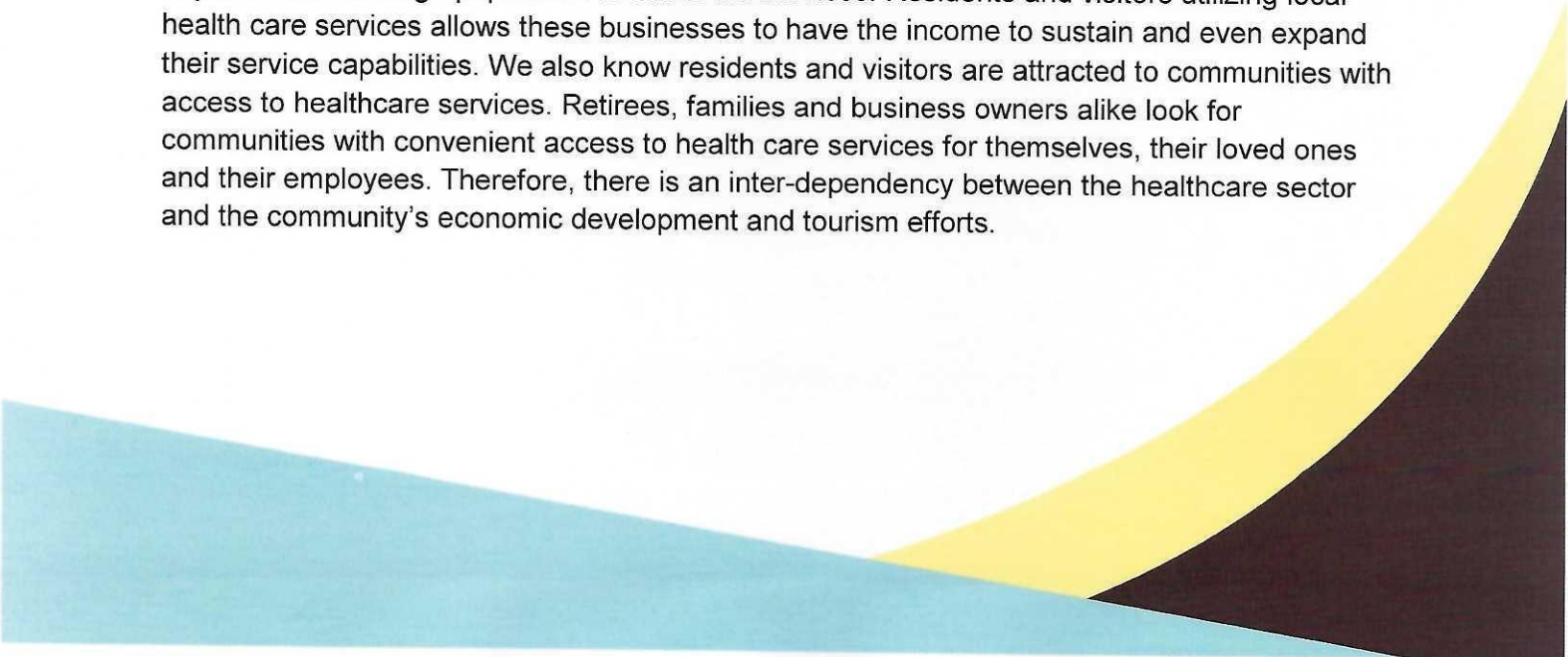
February 4, 2021

Ashland Mayor and City Council

Ashland's economy is dependent on having a vibrant and diverse population and business community. By extension, the success of our business community relies on our community's effectiveness to attract and retain residents, visitors and businesses from a variety of different industry sectors. As the former CEO for Asante Ashland Community Hospital, I know firsthand the impact the Ashland Chamber of Commerce's economic development and tourism efforts had on the hospital. The Chamber's efforts impacted the hospital's ability to attract and retain health care professionals as well as assist in the growth and development of health care services to support our community.

In the healthcare industry, there is significant national competition for physicians, nurses and other health care professionals who are currently in high demand and limited supply. Therefore, our ability to compete for these health care professionals to staff our local hospital and health care facilities relies on having an attractive community for these professionals to live, work and recreate. In rural communities like Ashland, we are competing with metropolitan areas that offer convenient access to shopping, restaurants, arts and entertainment, and a variety of goods and services. Thus, Ashland's ability to sustain our businesses in these sectors helps us compete more effectively for healthcare professionals who desire access to these services. I can affirm Ashland's tourist like environment has been a competitive advantage in the recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals. I would often hear potential candidates talk about their excitement to reside in a community they vacationed in previously or desired to visit.

Furthermore, the sustainability and growth of healthcare services to serve the community is dependent on enough population to utilize the services. Residents and visitors utilizing local health care services allows these businesses to have the income to sustain and even expand their service capabilities. We also know residents and visitors are attracted to communities with access to healthcare services. Retirees, families and business owners alike look for communities with convenient access to health care services for themselves, their loved ones and their employees. Therefore, there is an inter-dependency between the healthcare sector and the community's economic development and tourism efforts.



The Ashland Chamber of Commerce understands this inter-dependency. This organization has been a strong partner to area businesses, like the hospital, helping to create tools and resources to support business growth. Events, advertising and promotion efforts, literature and support materials, and other Chamber developed and sponsored resources, all play an important role in growing our resident and visitor base which in turn helps propel our community's economic flywheel.

I urge the Ashland City Council to continue their partnership with the Ashland Chamber of Commerce and support the funding for Travel Ashland. The city's vitality is dependent on partnerships with proven outcomes as has been demonstrated by the historical partnership between the City of Ashland and the Chamber of Commerce. This successful arrangement is even more critical as the community continues to progress through the pandemic and needs creative solutions to retain and attract residents and visitors. Now is not the time to lose ground on our community's pandemic response, supported and often times facilitated by the Ashland Chamber of Commerce. As a member of the Chamber Board, I can attest to the professional, forward thinking and successful efforts of Travel Ashland to promote not only tourism but our entire community. Please support their efforts and, in turn, all of us working to improve the economy.

Respectfully-



Sheila Clough
Business Leader
csbclough@frontier.com



February 7th, 2021

To the Mayor and City Council
City of Ashland, Oregon

Re: Funding for Travel Ashland

Those of us who live in Ashland recognize that tourism is our primary industry. It supports most of the things that we appreciate about our city: theater, arts, restaurants, and unique retail. Our tourism was already experiencing the impact of wildfire smoke when we were hit with Covid-19 and a wildfire here at home.

In the past year we have seen locations downtown where stores or restaurants have gone out of business. Many business owners and cultural organizations are barely hanging on. We can only hope that a post-Covid time will bring a resurgence of our tourism economy.

Critical to that regeneration is the outreach and marketing of our community.
That is what Travel Ashland does for us.

While the city has a wide variety of demands for its limited budget, we believe nothing could be more important to make our community economically sustainable than to financially support Travel Ashland.

Thank you.
Kathryn & Barry Thalden

February 8, 2021

Ashland City Council
20 East Main St.
Ashland, OR 97520

Dear Ashland City Council,

On behalf of the Oregon Tourism Commission (dba Travel Oregon) it is a pleasure to provide a letter in support of Travel Ashland, a destination marketing organization (DMO). Travel Oregon's vision is a better life for all Oregonians through, strong, sustainable local economies that welcome a diversity of explorers. This includes enhancing economies throughout the state to help communities better leverage the state's multi-billion tourism industry. DMOs (or visitor bureaus) like Travel Ashland have served destinations for decades and are foundational to local tourism promotion. Together, with regional and state partners, DMOs help drive visitation, creating positive economic impacts for local communities. In destinations like Ashland, increased visitation correlates directly to increased lodging occupancy, fueling the tax revenue that is then collected and reinvested.

In 2019, visitors to Southern Oregon spent \$1.1 billion and more than 12,510 Oregonians were directly employed in the tourism industry. In Jackson County alone, visitors to the area generated more than \$626 million in economic impact for local communities, and 5,790 employment opportunities for local residents. DMOs drive brand awareness through sales and marketing efforts that inspire and drive travel, leading to more local job opportunities. As civic-oriented non-profits, DMOs like Travel Ashland work to reinvest back into their community's economies. For example, the work that Travel Ashland is currently leading on a Visitor Research and Analysis study to analyze the new and potential visitors of Ashland is critical in order to develop a revised strategic direction and a rebrand of Ashland in 2021.

The pandemic has heavily impacted the travel and tourism economy across the state. In the Southern Oregon region, 2020 direct visitor spending was down 43% year over year and the number of jobs generated by travel spending was down 19%. As vaccines become available, the ability for Oregon communities and local businesses to market themselves through their DMO will be critical for recovery. It is imperative that Travel Ashland be able to work in partnership with Travel Southern Oregon and Travel Oregon to strategically leverage recovery efforts, in turn maximizing the economic benefits for the Ashland community.

Continuing to invest in Travel Ashland will generate sustainable economic benefits for the local community by strengthening the local tourism industry while also enhancing local livability. Thank you for this opportunity to share our support for Travel Ashland. We appreciate everything you do for the Ashland community. It is an exceptional place to live and visit. Please don't hesitate to contact me if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Todd Davidson
CEO, Travel Oregon