Mountains Matter: World Café Summary

Background

The Pikes Peak Region is known for its high quality of life, natural beauty, and plentiful outdoor recreation. In recent years, the question of how to improve upon and better market the region’s natural opportunities for tourists and citizens alike has gained considerable attention.

In response, the Colorado College Innovation Institute, Springs Insight Exchange, and El Pomar Foundation’s Pikes Peak Heritage Series program partnered to create the Pikes Peak Outdoors Leisure & Recreation Survey to measure specific aspects of the outdoors important to residents of the Pikes Peak Region. Between July and September 2016, more than 200 individuals provided qualitative and quantitative data on recreational participation, regional assets, and opportunities for investment.

On September 8, the survey results were presented at “Mountains Matter to Millennials,” a public session focused on outdoor recreation, quality of life, and the role these assets play in attracting young professionals to the region. Using the survey results as a foundation for discussion, more than 100 attendees discussed outdoor recreation’s opportunities and challenges in the Pikes Peak Region. Moving forward, the results from this survey and discussion are intended to continue driving conversations between business, nonprofit, and government leaders around strategic investments in our region’s outdoor sector.

Key Findings

- Millennials are in search of a “champion” for outdoor industry and recreation in Colorado Springs
  - Ideas include a “go-to” website and/or app in the region for information about outdoor recreation businesses, trails/open space, volunteer opportunities
- There are opportunities to partner with business community and the city for branding/visibility
  - Potential partners include: craft brewers, hotel concierges, Convention and Visitor’s Bureau
  - The region could host statewide or national conferences on various outdoor industry sectors
- The region’s governments and businesses should capitalize on new technology and media platforms to market the region’s outdoor assets
- Taxes and fees for parks/open space are acceptable if supported with clear evidence of benefits
- There is a demand for formal university programs around outdoor recreation and for paid internship opportunities
Specific Topics

Engagement and Volunteering
- City/county can target social media outreach to millennials and facilitate accessible/interesting meetings with small businesses
- Build a community calendar or website for everything outdoors
  - Friends/stewardship groups
  - Outdoor businesses
  - Trail, park, climbing spot information
- Hook millennial volunteers with short, outdoor service coupled with social component (beer/food/music)
- Outdoor service opportunities should form creative partnerships to attract millennials in the region
  - Ex: Beer sampling and trail service; concerts and clean-up; gear expos with Olympic athletes

Improving Amenities and Removing Barriers to Participation
- Complete Legacy Loop, trails along waterways, and overpasses/underpasses
- Invest in additional parking/shuttles for popular and less popular trailheads/parks
- Highlight less used “hidden gems” and climbing scene
- Coordinate discount months or beginners’ fairs among outdoor rec businesses
- City government/business partnerships for clinics and workshops

Attracting/Retaining Millennials
- Focus on affordability, business opportunity, and culture
  - Highlight diversity, urban scene, art, and entrepreneurship
- Downtown revitalization
  - Promote public markets and co-working type spaces
  - Attract grocery store
  - Develop mixed-use properties and corporate headquarters
- Highlight unique experiences and neighborhoods
  - Garden of the Gods
  - Old Colorado City
  - Craft brewer and café scene
  - Ivywild and Lincoln schools
- Create a conversation with college students about what Colorado Springs needs in order for them to stay after they graduate

Marketing/Branding
- Frame “Olympic City USA” around outdoor recreation/training opportunities
- Capitalize on new technology and media platforms to market the region’s assets
  - Google Earth backpack, virtual reality 360, destination cataloguing
- Focus on outdoor amenities to draw people rather than restaurants and hotels directly
- Develop an outdoor tourism partnership/promotion with local government
- Work with City Council, CVB, Colorado state government to brand region as hub of outdoor and small business innovation
- Measure and celebrate impact of outdoor industry on the local economy
- Build partnerships and outreach to military community
Funding/Sustainability

- Need education on current funding and quality marketing for new ballot measures
- Pursue tourist taxes or non-resident fees for access to local trails
- Develop robust programs with school districts for “outdoor industry” internships and volunteer opportunities

About the Heritage Series

_El Pomar Foundation launched the [Pikes Peak Heritage Series](#) in 2015 to increase knowledge of and interest in an important part of the region’s economy and quality of life. Using its convening power, the Foundation seeks to bring together key organizations, stakeholders and leaders to discuss how the region can best promote and protect recreation and tourism in a diverse economy with high quality of life._

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