



Image: Kane Scheidegger

## RIDGWAY, COLORADO

**MISSION:** Promote business and community growth and development in the Town of Ridgway and the surrounding area.



Image: Elizabeth Riley



Image: Kane Scheidegger



Image: Kane Scheidegger

## FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

### RIDGWAY AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce (RACC) Board of Directors is pleased to share this 2020 annual report. It was a challenging year for our entire community, but we are proud of our continued progress.

Starting in March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically impacted the Chamber's budget, operations and events. For nearly two months, LOT tax funds were close to zero due to a statewide "Stay at Home" order. Once visitors began to return, LOT tax funds recovered, but all events and Visitor Center operations were postponed. Based on the unknowns of the pandemic in the spring, the Chamber made drastic budget cuts. All marketing efforts were put on hold and our minimal staffing time was redirected to communicating COVID-19 updates and business resources. Chamber projects came back online in July. With the unknowns of the pandemic, we focused our resources on projects that could be reevaluated monthly so we could be more adaptive to COVID-19 impacts.

Our major priority for 2020 was RidgwayColorado.com content creation, site optimization and improvements to the user experience. The site remains the #1 Google search result for "Ridgway, Colorado". New content and attention to Google Analytics has led to huge strides in website performance.

In 2020, the RACC was the lead on a \$10,000 Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) grant, as well as being awarded 50 hours of CTO technical assistance. We completed the grant work in partnership with the Ouray Tourism Office (OTO) to support our off-peak season marketing strategy. The OTO dissolved in April 2020, but most grant work was completed before this event occurred. In the fall, the Chamber was awarded CTO technical assistance hours to support COVID-19 recovery work. The additional hours led to the creation of off-peak season digital content.

We are furthering the support of off-peak season marketing through the support of a CTO Winter Marketing Co-op program. The Chamber invested \$1,250 into a digital marketing campaign, and received a CTO \$2,000 match.

The Colorado Creative Corridor initiative continued in 2020, in partnership with the Town of Ridgway, through a \$25,000 state grant shared with four other communities. The Creative Corridor continues to provide unique visibility, which includes the creation of a new promotional video filmed in September.

In 2020, the Ridgway and Ouray Visitor's Guide was distributed locally and across the state. After the dissolution of the OTO, the RACC created a Ridgway-centric guide for 2021. The new guide is now complete, and will be distributed locally and across the Western Slope.

The Chamber continues to be staffed by an exceptional group of local professionals. Meanwhile, all financial operations and reporting are managed locally by Middleton Accounting.

We look forward to continued progress and partnership in 2021, all in an effort to support our local businesses and the community as a whole.

*- Jim Patterson*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



### TIM PATTERSON, PRESIDENT

Tim Patterson has made Ridgway home since 1998. Owner and founder of RIGS Fly Shop & Guide Service, a Ridgway-based business since 2001, Tim has a firsthand perspective on the town's evolving business community. He holds a degree in recreation management from Prescott College, and previously served on Ridgway Town Council, Planning & Zoning Committee, as well as on prior tenures with the Ridgway Chamber.



### JASON BOJAR, VICE PRESIDENT

Dr. Jason Bojar has been a resident and business owner in Ridgway for the last 13 years. He and his wife, Dr. Jessica Balbo, own and operate Balance Natural Medicine, an integrative medical clinic with offices in Ridgway and Telluride-Mountain Village. Jason appreciates the opportunity to serve as the Vice President on the Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce board and his role in supporting local business vitality.



### ASHLEY PERKINS, SECRETARY

Ashley Perkins grew up in upstate New York, and has lived in southwest Colorado for the past 12 years. She currently works as a customer service representative at Alpine Bank in Ridgway. Ashley joined the RACC Board in order to support and participate in the Ridgway community in a new way. She hopes that her involvement can have a positive impact for both the chamber and local business establishments as well.



### DANIEL RICHARDS, AT-LARGE MEMBER

Daniel Richards is the owner of Colorado Boy Pub & Brewery and lives in Ridgway with his wife, Tracey, and kids, Tyler and Ashleigh. Daniel also owns a secondary brewery, the Colorado Boy Depot, in the industrial park in Ridgway, and along with his twin brother, Dennis, owns and operates the Colorado Boy Southwest Pub restaurant in Ouray. Daniel is an avid supporter of local events and collaborations that help the business community thrive.



### KANE SCHEIDEGGER, AT-LARGE MEMBER

Born and raised in Ridgway, Kane Scheidegger graduated from art school in 2005. He shoots large-format, panoramic images of the San Juan Mountains and ski descents in the winter available at Kane Gallery. He loves the outdoors and everything that comes with it, and he hopes to bring nature into homes through his larger-than-life prints. Kane previously sat on Ridgway's streetscape planning committee, and feels he can offer some great creativity to the Chamber to help it reach its goals.



### ADAM DUBROFF, AT-LARGE MEMBER

Adam Dubroff and his wife, Karen, have lived in Ridgway since 2000. They have enjoyed raising their son, Jacob, here, and he will graduate soon from Ridgway High School. Adam is the managing partner of the Ridgway Lodge and Star Saloon, and worked previously for the Telluride Ski Resort in diverse capacities over 10 years. He is president of the Ridgway Booster Club, and the Ridgway High School basketball team coach.

Thank you to Amanda Swain of Ridgway Adventure Sports for serving on the RACC Board from May 2018 to August 2020, including time as the Board Treasurer.

## STAFF & CONSULTANT TEAM

Over the past four years, the Chamber has developed an exceptional team of staff and contract partners. This group of Ridgway-based professionals are now leading the Chamber's program implementation.



### HILARY LEWKOWITZ, MARKETING & MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

Hilary brings nearly two decades of work in conservation and sustainable tourism development throughout Colorado, the western U.S. and around the world. She is the owner of Mountain Roots Consulting, which focuses on supporting sustainable communities through development strategy, marketing and program management. Hilary now leads the implementation of the Chamber's marketing strategy and activities, which includes new grant initiatives to boost economic activity in the off-peak tourism season.



### TANYA ISHIKAWA, CONTENT & STORYTELLING CONSULTANT

Tanya has spent her career writing and editing through various platforms, starting as a public relations professional in Tokyo, Japan. Since 2014, she has been living and working in Ouray County, where she is enjoying a wide range of freelance assignments for magazines, specialty publications, books, websites, videos, and other media based in the area and across Colorado. Her Chamber projects include the Annual Report, Visitor's Guide, website content, and news releases.



### JOSH GOWANS, WEBSITE & TECHNOLOGY PARTNER

Josh is founder of Peak Media Company, a marketing and technology consultancy based in Ridgway and specializing in open-source applications, website design, management and optimization, and CRM (Customer Relationship Management) solutions. Josh manages all aspects of the Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce's website, from design to system administration and CRM development. He's particularly focused on optimizing the site's content and deploying a CRM for membership, event and contribution management.



### NICOLE GREENE, MEDIA & DESIGN PARTNER

Nicole is a graphic and web designer who loves to work with clients in a collective and creative process to help them to grow and thrive. Her boutique design firm is Sprout Design Studio, founded in 2006 and working with entities in the San Juan Mountains, throughout the United States, as well as internationally. Sprout grows ideas into successful brand identities with brilliant strategies and stunning results by giving businesses an integrated look and feel as well as building platforms that connect brands to their target audiences.



### JANE PULLIAM, ACCOUNTANT

Jane has worked for Middleton Accounting for 14 years as a client accountant for a variety of businesses in the Ridgway/Montrose area. She has been working for the Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce for the last four years, helping provide financial statements and daily bookkeeping. Jane has lived in Ridgway for 22 years and owned Drakes Restaurant with her husband, Drake, for 13 years, which helps her understand the workings of a business and taking care of the bookkeeping.



### JEANNE ROBERTSON, VISITOR SERVICES & VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Jeanne lived in Boulder in the '70s and '80s, when she would come to the San Juans to camp and hike. She fell in love with the area and decided to live here someday. In 2001, she and her husband bought land on Log Hill Mesa, and in 2005, built their house. Jeanne has worked at the Ridgway Visitor Center for three seasons, and just loves talking to guests and turning them on to our beautiful paradise. At the end of 2019, she agreed to add the role of Membership Coordinator to her duties. She will be reaching out to all business owners with the intent to listen to membership needs and requests, so please feel free to contact her any time.

# RIDGWAYCOLORADO.COM



RidgwayColorado.com continues to be the #1 Google search result for keyword "Ridgway Colorado".

In partnership with Josh Gowans of Peak Media and RACC staff, we continue to improve the site navigation, search engine optimization, site content, and business promotion. In 2020, the primary focus areas for **RidgwayColorado.com** improvements include: content production, ongoing site optimization, and underlying systems improvements for the User Interface and User Experience.

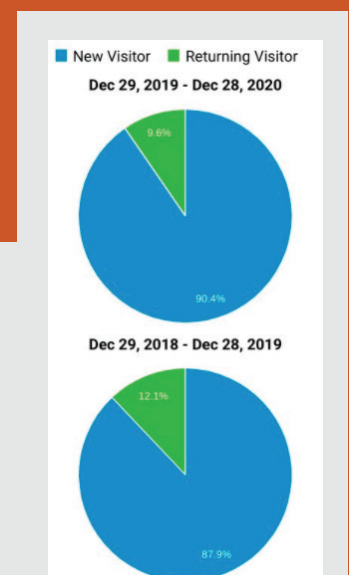
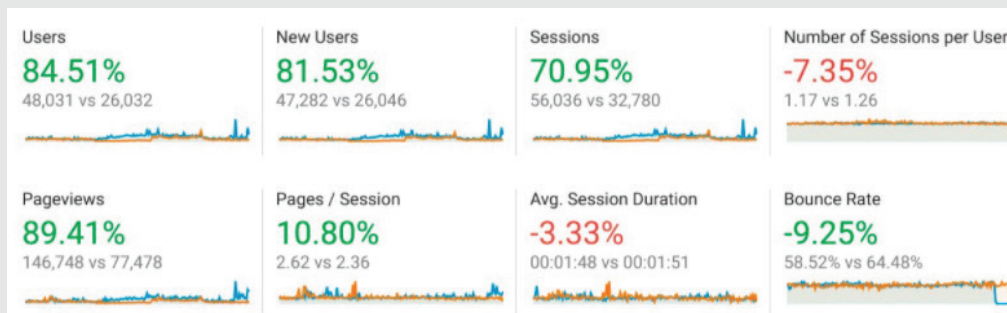
In general, performance metrics for RidgwayColorado.com are positive. Currently, the site ranks for 3,979 keywords, representing a 19% increase compared to 2019. Of the current keywords, the site gained 37 keywords that rank on the first page of SERPs (Search Engine Results Page) and 155 on the second page. Most of the recent gain in keywords occurred in the second half of 2020, which is consistent with our content production efforts. Compared to 2019, this year has seen an increase in traffic resulting from organic search and referral traffic. The increase from referral sources is likely due to increased participation with other content sources such as colorado.com.

The top 10 most active pages on the site, compared to the previous year, are listed in the table. The audience comparison to the right reinforces the point that the site is seeing growth in its first time visitor segment year over year.

Top 10 Most Active Web Pages	Unique Pageviews		
	2020	2019	% Change
Ridgwaycolorado.com (homepage)	20,557	12,951	58.73%
/movies/true-grit	6,971	0	
/businesses/accommodations	3,562	2,303	54.67%
/covid-19-general-response	4,092	0	
/things-to-do	3,773	2,120	77.97%
/businesses/dining	2,724	1,967	38.49%
/things-to-do/outdoor-adventure	2,533	1,311	93.21%
/things-to-do/health-wellness/hot-springs	2,213	230	862.17%
/things-to-do/history-heritage/true-grit	2,505	544	360.48%
/plan-your-trip	1,919	1,057	81.55%

## + AUDIENCE METRICS

The metrics reflect the total traffic to the site for 2020. Of particular interest are the increases in "New Users" and in "Sessions". While the number of sessions per user has declined, both the number of pages viewed per session and the "New Users" has increased. We can interpret this to mean that the site is attracting more first-time visitors that are reviewing more content on the site.





# RIDGWAYCOLORADO.COM

RidgwayColorado.com remains a critical and powerful asset to promote our business and nonprofit community.

## SUMMARY OF WEBSITE IMPROVEMENTS



### CONTENT PRODUCTION & ONGOING OPTIMIZATION

Chamber staff undertook periodic reviews of keyword rankings to identify target topics on which to focus. In addition to general improvements to content and design on various pages, we focused on developing new content and website sections:

**New itinerary section and pages**

**Enhancing the individual pages related to movies**

**Revising and enhancing pages associated with hot springs**

**New Colorado Creative Corridor page**

**Integration of new Chamber themes into business categorization and promotion**

To accommodate an increase in content production, we consolidated and better organized the site's overall navigation while maintaining a focus on "things to do" and "business listings". In addition, we've worked to better cross reference related content by increasing the number of in-content links to key pages, by exposing all businesses online while still prioritizing member pages, and by leveraging new capabilities associated with dynamic content display. The latter is well developed but is continuing to be applied to various pages on the site as we phase out an older, deprecated module that provides related content functionality.

The five marketing themes developed in 2017 (Outdoor Adventure, Arts & Entertainment, Health & Wellness, History & Heritage, Culinary Experiences) continue to be useful for visitor searches. In 2020, RACC staff created four **new marketing themes** with logos and promotional text: Shopping, Accommodations, Travel Services, and Professional Services. These new themes not only help visitors find information on more business categories on the website and across all marketing platforms, but also increase visibility for Chamber members with less tourism-based products and services.



### SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS FOR USER INTERFACE AND USER EXPERIENCE

From a User Interface (UI) standpoint, our objective has been to streamline the overall design and display of content, focusing on: driving traffic to the site via targeted content optimization; presenting related members and businesses on key content; and providing ancillary information to retain users on the site and optimize for longer-tail keywords.

In 2020, the site underwent full adoption of a modern, lightweight "page builder" that affords staff more efficient and powerful content production and page design. Likewise, the newer platform includes a powerful way to manage and display dynamic content, resulting in more efficient development and easier content cross referencing.

Regarding overall User Experience (UX), the new page builder provides a mobile first design approach and provides overall better performance. While the system is lightweight and fast, and the underlying infrastructure has been upgraded, there are opportunities to improve site speed. With the increased content development, which includes additional media, some improved caching or adoption of Content Delivery Network (CDN) may be warranted. This will be further investigated in 2021.

Finally, in the fall of 2020, the site adopted the latest Google Analytics platform (GA4), as well as developed custom events via Google Tag Manager that allow for more targeted tracking, such as email and phone clicks, outbound click tracking, etc. These will provide a richer picture of how users interact with the site in next year's report.





## RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL



For several years, the Chamber has been on a path to educate visitors on how best to enjoy our local resources. The pandemic and related visitor trends reinforced the need for us to support the community by promoting awareness of responsible, sustainable tourism practices. Our communications and marketing strategies are increasingly incorporating messages about ways to visit the Ridgway area that reinforce low impact travel that provides benefit to our community. From hiring knowledgeable, local guides to Leave No Trace principles, we provide several useful tips alongside information about our local businesses and attractions. The 2021 Ridgway Visitor's Guide had an introductory page on responsible travel, and the website also has a [page devoted to responsible travel recommendations](#).

### Please Visit Safely & Responsibly

**Responsible and business take great pride in our community and surrounding open spaces. We invite travelers to visit the Ridgway area, while considering ways to minimize your impacts and maximize local benefits. Traveling responsibly means educating yourself on outdoor recreation best practices, local ethics and community expectations.**

**Know Before You Go**  
Be prepared and be informed about your destination. Good preparation includes bringing along gear to keep you safe and reduce your impact, such as reusable water bottles to stay hydrated in our dry climate and avoid plastic waste.

**Stick to the Trail**  
Whether you are on foot or in a motorized vehicle, stay on the trails and roads. Colorado's high alpine environment takes hundreds of years to regenerate, so even the smallest amount of impact can take a lifetime to recover.

**Trash the Trash**  
If you pack it in, pack it out. Pick up after yourself and your dog to leave a place better than you found it. Put litter, even nut shells, fruit peels and other food waste in your nearest waste/recycling bin.

**Leave It as You Find It**  
Camp in designated areas only. That beautiful wilderness resource is not the perfect spot for you to park a vehicle or tent.

**Be Cautious with Fire**  
Colorado's low humidity has perks, but can create dry, dangerous conditions. Keep campfires small and manageable to avoid sparking wildfires. Be sure to check local restrictions before traveling here.

**More Information:**  
• [www.colorado.gov/articles/how-to-travel-colorado](http://www.colorado.gov/articles/how-to-travel-colorado)  
• [leavenotrace.org](http://leavenotrace.org)

**Keep Wildlife Wild**  
Colorado is home to tens of thousands of furry, scaly and feathered creatures. To keep them – and you – safe, remember to leash your dogs, pack out waste and don't feed wildlife.

**Share Our Parks & Trails**  
Chances are you're not out in nature to people watch, so try out the lesser-known paths and spots. Minimize noise, such as music or cell phones, to keep the peaceful atmosphere and increase your chances of seeing wildlife.

**Be Prepared for Adventure**  
The San Juan Mountains are a rugged and steep mountain range rising to just over 14,000 feet. These beautiful public lands offer a wide range of adventures year round. If you are interested in exploring the San Juans, be prepared for challenging terrain that sometimes requires technical expertise and knowledge of the area.

- **Do Your Research** Come prepared by doing research online to find maps, rules and height guidance from public agencies and your gear rental vehicles. It takes local expertise when you get into backcountry camping or other local gear items.
- **We're Kudos** We highly recommend working with our local guide services if you do not have technical expertise. The Ridgway area is home to experts who can help you achieve your goals for all types of adventures, including hiking, OHV camping, fishing, biking, skiing, and other recreation.
- **Take a Course** Are you new to the backcountry? The San Juan Mountains offer a wide array of outdoor recreation opportunities, but these mountains are unique terrain. Take a course in backcountry hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, ski climbing, and other valuable outdoor skills.

**Lighting Shows on the Red Mountains - Kane Scheidegger**

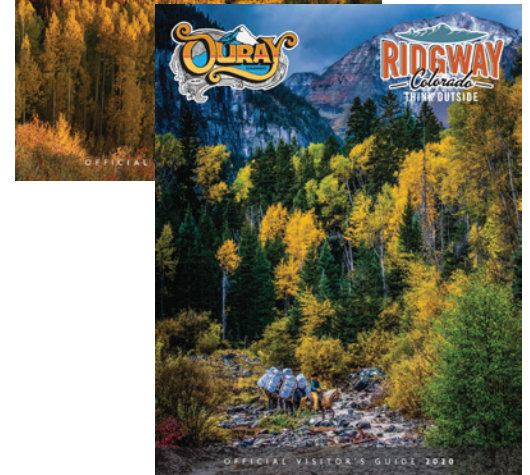



## RIDGWAY VISITOR'S GUIDE

Print and digital copies of the 2020 Ridgway Visitor's Guide began distribution in January 2020. Under the editorial leadership of our Communications Consultant Tanya Ishikawa, the Ridgway Chamber refreshed guide content under the Ouray County-wide narrative, organized by Ridgway's five marketing themes. An estimated 100,000 copies of the Visitor's Guide were distributed in 2020. Plus, the digital version became a gateway on RidgwayColorado.com for website visitors to sign up for visitor e-newsletters, increasing the RACC's direct marketing opportunities for our members.

The City of Ouray decided to take over operation of its tourism activities, and neither the city nor the reorganized Ouray Chamber Resort Association planned to continue collaboration with Ridgway on a combined Visitor's Guide. As a result, RACC staff was able to focus the **2021 Visitor's Guide** solely on Ridgway area businesses and attractions while highlighting Chamber members. Business listings blended into main content pages, including new sections based on our four new marketing themes: shopping, accommodations, travel services, and professional services.

The welcome letter in the 2021 Guide was written by Ridgway Town Manager Preston Neill. As noted above, page 5 of the Guide offered safe and responsible travel tips and similar messages are woven throughout the guide. Photos in the guide were the best yet with many contributions from three talented local photographers: RACC Board Member Kane Scheidegger, Colorado Creative Corridor project photographer Elizabeth Riley, and Ridgway High School student Cutler Connaughton.



# VISITOR CENTER

## AND HERITAGE PARK RE-DESIGN PROJECT



In partnership with the Town of Ridgway, the Chamber is excited to kick-off the Heritage Park and Ridgway Visitor Center Redesign Subcommittee in 2021.

Due to the impacts of COVID-19, both the Chamber and Town of Ridgway had to postpone planned redesign projects. However, the RACC supported the Town's successful implementation of two Colorado Main Street mini grants and an AARP grant that totaled \$15,000. Grant projects include: Heritage Park picnic tables, landscape leveling and gravel, a new irrigation system, and a new outdoor visitor guide dispenser. Additionally, the Chamber donated a shed to the Ouray County Ranch History Museum that needed to be moved in order to finish the graveled area.

The Chamber was planning on creating promotional signage for the southside exterior of the Ridgway Visitor Center. After we made drastic budget cuts, our staff was able to utilize limited funds to create temporary signage that hangs in the Ridgway Visitor Center southside windows. The signage featured the five Chamber themes along with four new themes: shopping, accommodations, travel services, and professional services. Sign content included a QR code and website url to [RidgwayColorado.com/plan-your-trip](https://RidgwayColorado.com/plan-your-trip).

In partnership with the Town of Ridgway, we are excited to kick-off the Heritage Park and Ridgway Visitor Center Redesign Subcommittee. The subcommittee is being formed in response to a November 2020 Town Council meeting that identified the need to take further concrete steps towards revamping Heritage Park and the Ridgway Visitor Center. Subcommittee members will include: Town Council, RACC staff and Board Members, businesses, nonprofits, and community members. The purpose of the subcommittee is to prioritize next steps for this space, provide budget recommendations, and give direction towards the vision of the visitor center building. Meetings will be held from February to April of 2021.

## RIDGWAY VISITOR CENTER OPERATIONS

The Ridgway Visitor Center was closed in 2020, due to impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. The center is staffed by volunteers, and the majority of volunteers did not feel comfortable with the potential COVID-19 exposure from visitors. The safety of volunteers and visitors to Ridgway is the number-one priority of the RACC Board of Directors, who unanimously voted at their May 18, 2020 meeting to close the Visitor Center for the year.

In November 2020, the RACC successfully negotiated with the Town of Ridgway on a new lease agreement for the Ridgway Visitor Center. The new lease agreement came as a response to the planned exit of the Railroad Museum at the end of the year. We are excited for the new responsibility of being the primary lessee of the Ridgway Visitor Center.

In a typical year, more than 800 monthly visitors come into the Ridgway Visitor Center from May to October. We are deeply grateful to the wonderful volunteers who generously give their time to provide valuable information and a warm welcome to our visitors. The Board and staff look forward to finding innovative ways to reopen for summer 2021, while keeping the safety of our volunteers as the primary focus.



# ONLINE + PRINT MEDIA

## ONLINE AND PRINT PROMOTION AND MARKETING



The number of Ridgway's Instagram followers grew by 33% in 2020.

The Chamber coordinated co-op ads with local businesses in the **2020 San Juan Skyway magazine**, distributed throughout Colorado.

The **weekly community e-blast** continues to be sent out to 1,920 contacts. The visitor e-newsletter was sent out two times this year, and delivered to 6,610 contacts across Colorado and the U.S.

The Chamber is continuing to develop its online presence on **Facebook and Instagram**. Since January 2020, our Instagram followers increased from 1,460 to 2,179 (up 33%). In 2020, our Facebook followers increased from 1,939 to 2,158 (up 11%).

The RACC is working in partnership with the City of Ouray and Visit Montrose on a **new digital marketing campaign to support regional tourism** efforts and emphasize responsible travel. Deliverables include: new landing with regional travel opportunities, winter itineraries, and social media campaigns.

RACC staff updated and converted the **True Grit Walking Tour** brochure into a digital copy available on the **website**. The history of the iconic movie's filming in Ridgway continues to be a major tourist draw, and the walking tour offers a self-guided option for visitors.

The Chamber joined a statewide **Shop Local campaign**, providing strong online exposure for local businesses and nonprofits from December 2020 through March 2021. Winter shop local information and deals are accessible through RidgwayColorado.com and **SBDC website**, as well as weekly social media posts and a new section in the community e-blast.

The Chamber continued to garner newspaper articles in 2020, including The Watch, Montrose Mirror, and Ouray County Plaindealer. Coverage ranged from off-peak season marketing and related grants, responsible travel initiatives, the visitor center closure, and new Board Member Adam Dubroff.

## PROMOTION AND MARKETING

- + CHAMBER VISITOR E-NEWSLETTER
- + REGIONAL TOURISM CAMPAIGN
- + DIGITAL TRUE GRIT WALKING TOUR BROCHURE
- + SHOP LOCAL CAMPAIGN
- + NEW CONTENT ON COLORADO.COM
- + CTO WINTER CO-OP MARKETING PROGRAM



## STATEWIDE PROMOTION & OFF-SEASON MARKETING STRATEGY

In 2020, the Chamber was directly involved with \$35,000 in CTO grant funding and 50 hours of CTO technical assistance. These funds continue to support a more sustainable year-round visitation model.

In 2020, the Chamber was directly involved with \$35,000 of Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) grant funding and matching funds for the Colorado Creative Corridor and off-peak season marketing. Additionally, the Chamber was awarded 50 hours of CTO technical assistance towards winter marketing efforts.

Due to the impacts of COVID-19 on the state budget, the CTO did not offer small marketing matching grant awards in 2020. In lieu of this loss of grant funding, the RACC is further supporting off-peak season marketing through investment in a new CTO Winter Marketing Co-op program. The Chamber invested \$1,250 into a digital marketing campaign, along with receiving \$2,000 in matching funds from the CTO. The digital campaigns will run through the winter of 2021. These marketing initiatives are important for promoting a more sustainable model of year-round visitation and consistent economic opportunities for our local businesses.

### OFF-PEAK SEASON MARKETING GRANT

We completed \$10,000 of CTO grant work in partnership with the Ouray Tourism Office to support our off-peak season marketing strategy. The grant also includes a 25% match (\$2,500), split equally by the RACC and OTO, so total funding for the project was \$12,500. The grant was awarded in the fall of 2019, with work beginning in December 2019. The Ouray Tourism Office dissolved in April 2020, but most grant work was completed before then.

### CTO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AWARD

In the fall, the Chamber was awarded 50 hours of CTO technical assistance to support COVID-19 recovery work. The additional hours led to the creation of off-peak season digital content that was added to the website, social media and email campaigns. Content focused on promoting Ridgway as a winter destination. Five articles were created in total, representing all five of the Chamber's marketing themes. An example of the winter marketing content can be found [here](#).

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2019 GRANT IMPLEMENTATION

Grant implementation began in December 2019, and included:

- Sponsored article on Colorado.com, "7 Must-dos for Your Winter Getaway in Ouray & Ridgway".
- Advertisements on Colorado.com that showcase Ridgway as a year-round destination and are based on the five marketing themes. Advertisements will run until they receive 100K impressions. Clicking on the advertisement (and links in the article mentioned above) takes readers to [RidgwayColorado.com/plan-your-trip](https://RidgwayColorado.com/plan-your-trip) to enter their contact information to receive a digital copy of the Visitor's Guide.
- Instagram Takeover on Visit Colorado's (157K followers) account from 12/20/19 to 12/26/19: 15 posts, 23,301 total engagement, 23,189 total likes, 112 comments.
- Colorado.com January and March custom in-state emails to approximately 15,000 contacts.
- Featured section in December 2020 custom in-state email.
- Winter **Colo-Road Trip 3-day itinerary** featuring Ridgway, Ouray and Montrose.
- **Responsible Travel** landing page on RidgwayColorado.com.

# COLORADO CREATIVE CORRIDOR

## ITINERARY DEVELOPMENT & STATEWIDE PROMOTION



For the third consecutive year, the Ridgway Chamber teamed up with the Town of Ridgway and Ridgway Creative District to support the Colorado Creative Corridor project. Over the past three years, a majority of this work has been funded through a Colorado Tourism Office \$25,000 Marketing Matching Grant. The Colorado Creative Corridor is a 331-mile route that links the mountain towns of Carbondale, Crested Butte, Paonia, Ridgway, and Salida. Ridgway works with the four partner communities to promote visitor experiences, which include event programming and activities.

In January 2020, the Chamber provided \$2,500 (Town supported \$2,500) in matching funds in order for Ridgway to be included in this important project. For 2021, we reduced our matching funds to \$1,250 due to the unknown impacts of COVID-19 on winter LOT funds, while the Town continued to support at a \$2,500 match. One of the primary goals for marketing the Creative Corridor is to leverage this platform to market all Ridgway area businesses and nonprofits, especially during the off-peak season. We are excited for this project to continue to bring value to the business and creative economy for years to come, and look forward to this continuing to be an important example of the positive impact of Chamber/Town collaboration.

### CTO GRANT

For the fourth consecutive year we have a \$25,000 CTO grant confirmed to support the Creative Corridor. This important initiative will continue to support year-round tourism and economic opportunities in Ridgway.

### MARKETING SUCCESSES RELATED TO THE COLORADO CREATIVE CORRIDOR PROMOTION OF RIDGWAY IN 2020:

**Brand Channel Website:** [click here to view](#)

13,643 pageviews, 1,284 clicks to partner websites.

**Colorado.com advertising:** 824,887 impressions, 2,820 total clicks.

**In-state email campaign to 17,000 in-state subscribers:** 2,240 opens, 146 clicks, click-through rate of 6.52%. Successful production of a 90-second video highlighting creative businesses in Ridgway. The video will launch in the spring of 2021.

**Instagram sponsored posts:** 174K reach and more than 360K impressions.



In addition to the grant work amongst the five communities, the RACC invested its own staff time and funding to further invest in the Creative Corridor. In 2020, we completed:

- Colorado Creative Corridor featured section on RidgwayColorado.com homepage.
- Colorado Creative Corridor [featured article](#) and [itinerary](#) pages.
- The RACC and Creative District invested in a photographer during the video shoot. The Chamber now has 300+ high-quality images of downtown Ridgway and local artists.





## MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

The Chamber Board and staff are excited to serve the business and nonprofit members of the Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce.

### CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

The Chamber Board and staff are excited to serve the business and nonprofit members of the Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is dedicated to providing value to our local business and nonprofit community by continuing to invest in marketing assets, as well as state and regional partnerships. Our core marketing assets include: the RidgwayColorado.com website, Ridgway Visitor's Guide, social media, Ridgway Visitor Center, print/digital advertising, along with key partners that amplify our marketing efforts.

We continue to strive to bring additional visibility and credibility to our community's businesses and nonprofits. We believe that being a Chamber member increases positive perceptions about the business among consumers and other business owners. We also assist in boosting our members' visibility in the community, increasing their networking opportunities, acquiring more potential customer referrals, having a voice in local government, and providing a way to advertise member promotions and events through our digital assets and local print media.

### SHOP LOCAL CAMPAIGN & COVID-19 SUPPORT

When the pandemic hit in early spring, the Chamber made drastic budget cuts. We dedicated our minimal staffing time towards communicating COVID-19 updates and resources to our business and nonprofit community. In anticipation of a slow winter due to COVID-19, the Chamber launched a Shop Local campaign to drive economic opportunities from December 2020 to March 2021. So far, we have accomplished the following: a new banner in Hartwell Park encouraging drive-thru traffic to stop and spend money; weekly social media and e-blasts featuring member specials; shop local landing page on chamber's website; and inclusion in the **SBDC statewide shop local campaign**.

### COLORADO TOURISM OFFICE PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The RACC continues to seek out state grant funded opportunities to help promote Ridgway as a year-round destination. In 2020, the RACC directly received \$12,000 in CTO funding, plus 50 hours of technical assistance support. CTO funding was used to support our off-peak season marketing strategy, with the goal of driving more economic opportunities during our slower seasons of October to May. Our partnership with the CTO allows the RACC to market Ridgway and our businesses on CTO-owned platforms, and vastly increase our digital marketing efforts. Projects supported by CTO funding in 2020:

- [RidgwayColorado.com Responsible Travel landing page](#)
- [Colo-Road Trips winter itinerary](#)
- [Colorado.com sponsored article on winter travel to Ouray County](#)
- [Visit Colorado Instagram Takeover](#)

### MEMBER OF THE MONTH

In 2020, we continued the Member of the Month program to highlight chamber members across several marketing channels. Each month, one business or nonprofit is selected and promoted through:

- A news post on the chamber's website
- A news release sent to the chamber's media list
- Announcements in weekly e-blasts during the month
- A social media post on Facebook

At the end of each month, we provide members with a report of statistics on audience reached and links or attachments with all the coverage. Over the past year, the Member of the Month program was viewed in Chamber e-blasts more than 30,000 times, reached roughly 8,484 Facebook users, was picked up monthly by local news publications, and had 1,606 page views on RidgwayColorado.com.

## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



# Membership Benefits

		BRONZE	SILVER	GOLD
	<b>ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP INVESTMENT*</b>	<b>\$125</b>	<b>\$195</b>	<b>\$250</b>
WEBSITE	Unique business listing page with custom images, unlimited hyperlinks, including to website, Facebook, as well as unlimited text and tagging to site content related to your business.	✓	✓	✓
	Priority order appearance in website articles in which your business is tagged. May be listed in up to two business categories on website, when applicable.		✓	✓
	Featured business (large primary image) in your business category (Ex. Accommodations or Dining).			✓
VISITORS GUIDE	Business listing within the annual Ridgway Visitor Guide, with 35,000 print copies distributed and 100,000 print/online readers expected.	✓	✓	✓
	Ability to list your business or organization in up to two categories in business grid, when applicable			✓
	Discounted pricing on print ads in the annual Ridgway Visitor Guide, and digital targeted advertisement — a value of between \$185-\$1,200		✓	✓
VISITORS CENTER	Brochure rack space for business materials	✓	✓	✓
	Logo or image display during large screen TV video loop		✓	✓
	Video content displayed during large screen TV video loop			✓
E-BLASTS	Priority in business promotion in the Chamber's quarterly visitor e-newsletter to 6,000+ inboxes	✓	✓	✓
	Two weekly newsletter ads per year	✓		
	Unlimited newsletter ads per year		✓	✓
FACEBOOK	Two ad requests per year on RACC page with 2,100+ followers (non-boosted)	✓	✓	✓
	One boosted ad request per year on RACC page with 2,100+ followers (\$10 Value)		✓	
	Two boosted ad requests per year on RACC and One Ridgway pages with 1,900+ followers (\$20 Value)			✓
MARKETING	Special event marketing including ribbon-cutting ceremonies		✓	✓
	Discounted co-op advertising opportunities in publications such as Colorado Life, San Juan Skyways, The Montrose Press (as available)	✓	✓	✓
	Priority in business promotion on Visit Colorado social media campaigns (150K followers) and Colorado.com (1.5 million unique visits per year), the #1 google search listing for "Colorado Vacations".	✓	✓	✓
<b>FRIENDS OF THE CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP - \$75:</b> A membership for our individual, non-business RACC backers. All funds from this level of membership go to projects such as beautification and gardening at the Ridgway Visitors Center and the Ridgway Youth Apprenticeship program.				

**NOTES:**

\* A Bronze level 501(c)3 nonprofit receives Silver level benefits and Silver level nonprofits receive Gold level benefits.

*Thank you for your support!*

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Also, find Member Benefits at <https://ridgwaycolorado.com/about/member-benefits> and online, easy-and-secure enrollment at <https://ridgwaycolorado.com/about/become-a-member>

# FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

## HOW WE MANAGE OUR RESOURCES



The Lodging Tax receipts from 2019 to 2020 remained flat due to the impacts of COVID-19.

The Chamber managed a 2020 Lodging Tax budget of \$63,516. This Town-approved budget was based on projections from 2019 Lodging Tax receipts. The 2020 budget was difficult to predict due to the impacts of COVID-19 on travel. For nearly two months, LOT tax funds were close to zero due to a statewide “Stay at Home” order. Based on the unknowns of the pandemic in the spring, the Chamber made drastic budget cuts. All marketing efforts were put on hold from mid-March until the end of June. With the unknowns of the pandemic, we were very conservative with our budget, which left us with a larger reserve at the end of the year.

We will be carrying over \$14,673 from 2020, which will be reflected in the 2021 budget request to the Town of Ridgway in February. Carrying over a healthy fund balance each calendar year is critical for the Chamber’s financial sustainability. The vast majority of Lodging Tax receipts are not received until the latter half of each year so this funding is necessary to make it through the January-June period.

*Lodging Tax receipts are used exclusively for Ridgway marketing and promotion activities.*

Since 2018, we have outsourced all of our accounting and financial reporting to Ridgway-based Middleton Accounting. We have received exceptional service from Middleton Accounting, and their partnership continues to support the organization’s financial management and reporting structures.

The accompanying financial report comes directly from QuickBooks, and reflects a detailed P&L statement for the Lodging Tax (i.e. marketing) budget for 2020.

Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce	
Profit & Loss for Lodging Tax Class	
January through December 2020	
Jan - Dec 20	
3:49 PM	
01/25/21	
Accrual Basis	
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Lodging Tax Income	63,830.58
Total Income	63,830.58
Gross Profit	63,830.58
Expense	
Advertising and Promotion	
Creative District Corridor	2,807.00
Online Media and Advertising	6,295.00
Print Media and Advertising	3,480.66
Visitor's Guide Fulfillment, P	5,833.50
Website Upgrades and Operations	6,113.91
Total Advertising and Promotion	24,530.07
Payroll Expenses	
Hourly Wages	45.00
Payroll Taxes	3.44
Staff	38.75
Payroll Expenses - Other	0.27
Total Payroll Expenses	87.46
Postage	100.15
Professional Fees	
Accounting Fees	1,000.00
Total Professional Fees	1,000.00
Subcontractors	20,197.00
Visitor Center Operations	
Electric	327.37
Natural Gas	242.88
Sales Tax License	25.00
Telephone and Internet	1,323.23
Volunteer Expense	100.00
Visitor Center Operations - Other	190.00
Total Visitor Center Operations	2,208.48
Visitor Center Redesign	9.50
Visitor Center Upgrades/Merch	1,024.51
Total Expense	49,157.17
Net Ordinary Income	14,673.41
Net Income	14,673.41





## 2021 PLANS

The Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce will continue to build upon the successes of the past four years. For 2021, we have a number of exciting projects on the horizon, as we hope to begin recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

For several years, the Chamber has been on a path to educate visitors on how best to enjoy our local resources. The pandemic and related visitor trends reinforced the need for us to support the community by promoting awareness of responsible, sustainable tourism practices. For 2021, we will increase these communications and marketing strategies to reinforce low-impact travel that provides benefit to our community. Part of this strategy includes the continuation of strategically marketing Ridgway as a year-round destination. The goal of this strategy is to foster tourism-driven economic opportunities in the slower months, and lessen outdoor recreation impacts in the summer. We will continue to engage with the Colorado Tourism Office and regional partners to further amplify and support these efforts.

The annual Visitor's Guide will be updated at the end of the year, keeping a similar layout, activity themes and Ridgway-centric focus, while adding new business and event information. Responsible travel messaging will be further developed and weaved into the narrative.

In partnership with the Town of Ridgway, we are excited to kick-off the Heritage Park and Ridgway Visitor Center Redesign Subcommittee. We look forward to identifying next steps for this space and the vision of the visitor center building. With our new lease of the Ridgway Visitor Center, we are excited to improve this space in a way that aligns with the subcommittee, and provides an enjoyable space for our volunteers and visitors.

We thank all of our members, the Town of Ridgway, our staff, contractors, volunteers, partners, and the local business community at large for your continued support and partnership. We look forward to a fruitful and productive 2021.



Image: Kane Scheidegger