

To: Town of Ridgway
From: Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce
Subject: Bi-Annual Lodging Tax Report
Date: July 2, 2020

Dear Ridgway Town Council,

The Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce is pleased to share our bi-annual report with the Town of Ridgway.

Included with this report is the Chamber's Lodging Tax P&L statement. As a reminder, RACC's QuickBooks structures are organized around the Town approved marketing plan and managed by Middleton Accounting. These actuals are a direct pull from QuickBooks and reflect a continued diversification of investments designed to advance our local business community.

The RACC's 2020 budget was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic during the spring, with continued losses expected through the end of the year. From mid-March to June, the Chamber cut staff time, closed the Visitor Center for the remainder of 2020, and shifted marketing priorities to support the Town and local businesses. The Chamber has worked closely with Town staff throughout this process to provide COVID-19 resources to the local business and disseminate information to the broader community. Prior to COVID-19, the RACC started work on the \$10,000 Colorado Tourism Office grant to continue promoting off-peak season tourism-driven economic opportunities. Marketing efforts are now resuming while setting visitor expectations for COVID-19 best practices.

We continue to see progress being made as a result of the organizational infrastructure investments made over the last three years, especially through RidgwayColorado.com and the exceptional group of contractors engaged with the organization.

We look forward to hearing any questions or comments you have regarding this report and continuing to partner with the Town of Ridgway to advance the interests of local businesses and the community as a whole.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hilary Lewkowitz".

Hilary Lewkowitz
Marketing Director
Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce

Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce
150 Racecourse Road
PO BOX 544, Ridgway, CO 81432
970-626-5181
RidgwayColorado.com

COVID-19 Impacts and Chamber Response

The RACC's 2020 budget was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic during the spring, with continued losses expected through the end of the year. On March 20th, Ouray County enacted a countywide ban on all lodging and short-term rentals. The Chamber receives approximately 90% of our annual budget from these LOT Funds. As such, revenue from mid-March to June was severely diminished. The impacts to summer travel are yet to be determined, making budgetary decisions conservative.

The RACC Board met virtually on March 23rd to discuss drastic budget cuts needed to stay afloat. Many projects are on-hold until we have a clear picture of summer LOT Funds. These projects include: major website upgrades, Visitor Center temporary signage project, youth programming, and Visitor Center operations. The budget is re-evaluated monthly based on LOT funds received, and some projects may come back online in 2020.

From mid-March to June, the Chamber cut staff time and shifted marketing priorities to support the Town and local businesses. The Chamber has worked closely with Town staff throughout this process. The following actions were taken:

- Created and maintained a webpage providing information on COVID-19 resources, updates and business adaptations. The webpage was linked from a homepage alert.
- Created and maintained a webpage providing information on local food and drink retail establishments. The webpage was linked from a homepage alert.
- Provided resources and information to our local business community via website, social media and email campaigns.
- Marketed and promoted open businesses to our local community via social media, website and email campaigns.
- Additional support to Town of Ridgway by participating in regional and countywide meetings related to COVID-19 response and economic recovery.

As of June 11th, the RACC resumed marketing Ridgway as a travel destination in a limited manner that is aligned with state and local COVID-19 orders. In order to set visitor expectations, the Chamber updated the COVID-19 resource webpage to include traveler best practices along with county and town guidelines. The updated webpage (<https://ridgwaycolorado.com/covid-19-general-response>) is linked from a homepage alert.

More details about COVID-19 impacts and the Chamber response can be found throughout the remainder of this report.

Staffing

The Chamber continues to utilize local expertise to fill staffing needs, while the board stays actively involved with oversight and some organizational duties. Due to the impacts of COVID-19 on Lodging Tax funds, the Chamber had to make drastic cuts to the 2020 budget. Budget cuts will continue to affect staff capacity and project scope through the remainder of 2020.

Marketing and Membership Director, Hilary Lewkowitz, leads the organization on marketing-related initiatives. Duties include: staff management, working with the board to identify marketing goals, guiding

the direction for all marketing-related projects, partnerships, state grants, regional partnerships, administrative duties and liaising with town staff.

Tanya Ishikawa continues to play an integral role with the organization. Tanya supports several communications projects, including: lead editor on the annual Visitors Guide, managing the Chamber's Facebook account, website content, business promotion, and other special projects.

Jeanne Robertson is the Visitor Services and Membership Coordinator, which includes her role as Ridgway Visitor Center and Volunteer Coordinator. A majority of Jeanne's work is on hold due to the impacts of COVID-19 on the budget and Visitor Center closure.

Our exceptional group of local consulting partners and staff includes:

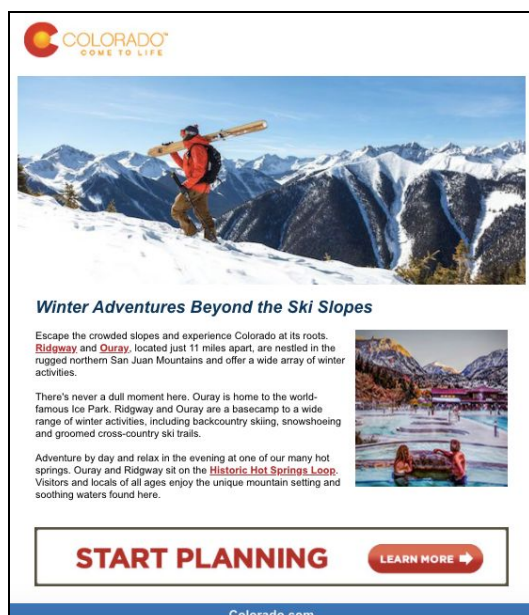
- *Marketing Director* – Hilary Lewkowitz
- *Online Content and Storytelling Consultant* – Tanya Ishikawa
- *Visitor Services and Membership Coordinator* – Jeanne Robertson
- *Accounting* – Middleton Accounting (Jane Pulliam)
- *Website and Technology Partner* -- Peak Media (Josh Gowans)
- *Media and Design Partner* – Sprout Design Studio (Nicole Green)

Board of Directors

As of April 2020, the board filled all positions. Newly elected board members include Ashley Perkins, Alpine Bank, and Adam Dubroff, Ridgway Lodge and Suites. The board elected new officers during their annual retreat in January. Board member details:

- *President* – Tim Patterson (RIGS)
- *Vice President* – Jason Bojar (Balance Natural Medicine)
- *Secretary* – Ashley Perkins (Alpine Bank)
- *Treasurer* – Amanda Swain (Ridgway Adventure Sports)
- *At Large*
 - Daniel Richards (Colorado Boy)
 - Kane Scheidegger (Kane Scheidegger Gallery)
 - Adam Dubroff (Ridgway Lodge and Suites)

2020 Colorado Tourism Office Grant: \$10,000 Off Peak Season Marketing (partnership with OTO)



The graphic features the Colorado Tourism Office logo at the top left, with the tagline "COLORADO COME TO LIFE". Below the logo is a large photograph of a person in winter gear carrying skis up a snowy mountain slope. Underneath the photo is the heading "Winter Adventures Beyond the Ski Slopes". The text describes the area around Ridgway and Ouray, highlighting winter activities like backcountry skiing and snowshoeing, as well as hot springs. At the bottom, there are two buttons: "START PLANNING" and "LEARN MORE" with a right-pointing arrow. The Colorado.com website address is at the very bottom.

In the Fall of 2019, the RACC was awarded their second Small Marketing Match Grant for \$10,000 from the CTO, which is based on a 25% match (\$2,500). This is a continued partnership with the Ouray Tourism Office (OTO), with the \$2,500 match split equally between the two organizations. RACC and OTO collaborated on the grant in an effort to increase countywide off-peak season visitation and visitor-driven economic opportunities. Grant implementation began in December 2019. In March 2020, the City of Ouray did not renew their contract with the Ouray Tourism Office. This new development means that the City of Ouray is now responsible for continuing all OTO partnerships with the

RACC. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the CTO extended grant implementation work until November 2020. This extension allows for some implementation funds to be shifted to Winter 2020-2021 marketing.

Grant implementation began in December and was led by Marketing Director, Hilary Lewkowitz. Grant implementation work includes:

- Sponsored article on Colorado.com, CTO's website for marketing Colorado: <https://www.colorado.com/articles/7-must-dos-your-winter-getaway-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://www.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 - 12/26/19: 15 posts, 23,301 total engagement, 23,189 total likes, 112 comments
- Colorado Tourism Office January and March custom in-state emails to approximately 15,000 contacts (January email pictured above). Featured advertisement focuses on off-peak season tourism opportunities in Ridgway and Ouray.

Below is a press release that details the grant opportunity:

State grants fund winter tourism and creative corridor marketing

The Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce and its partners were awarded marketing grants totaling \$35,000 from the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) over the last month. One grant for \$10,000 will fund a Ouray County Off-Peak Season Marketing Campaign, implemented in collaboration with the Ouray Tourism Office, while the other will fund marketing of the Colorado Creative Corridor by Ridgway and four other towns along a travel route featuring state-certified Creative Districts.

"Winter (post holidays) is one of the slowest times of year for our business community and often a challenging time to keep the doors open and retain employees. Encouraging stronger visitation over the winter months helps businesses rely on more consistent volume, which in turn allows for better planning and employee retention year round," explained Tim Patterson of RIGS Fly Shop & Guide Service, who is also the chamber's board president.

"Visitors and residents in Ridgway benefit from the proximity, access and affordability of our region's pre-existing winter activities, coupled with our town's incredibly scenic location. Ridgway is already viewed as a great place to get away from the typical tourist-town feel and have a more authentic experience, even and especially over the winter months," Patterson said.

Nordic and backcountry skiing, soaking in hot springs, and ice climbing are well-known winter activities in the area, but visitors can also participate in indoor bouldering, adaptive outdoor recreation programs, and a range of wellness activities like yoga, pilates, and massages. Many local art galleries, music and theater venues, local eateries, and pubs are also open in January, February and March. San Juan Skijoring, a sport where a horseback rider pulls a skier or snowboarder along a course, is also an increasingly popular spectator event at the Ouray County Fairgrounds.

A wide selection of snowshoe, ski and fat bike destinations are available at the edge of Ridgway and Ouray as well as within an hour's drive up Red Mountain Pass, Dallas Divide and several Ouray County roads. Ouray has its own ski and snowboard slope with a free tow rope, Lee's Ski Hill, plus sledding at Vinegar Hill and ice skating at Rotary Park.

The Colorado Creative Corridor is another year-round opportunity to visit the Ridgway Creative District, and the town and chamber were awarded state funding to market the initiative for a third year. The \$25,000 grant is shared by Ridgway, Paonia, Crested Butte, Carbondale, and Salida. Together, these five towns offer a collective experience of unique arts and cultural event programming and activities, alongside mountain town eclecticism, majestic vistas and outdoor recreation.

"We are excited to be directly involved in \$35,000 of CTO grant funding for 2020. The Colorado Creative Corridor and off-peak season marketing grants are important for promoting a more sustainable model of year-round visitation and consistent economic opportunities for our local businesses," said Hilary Lewkowitz, the chamber's marketing director.

Colorado Creative Corridor

In 2018, Ridgway joined four other Colorado communities in the establishment of the "Colorado Creative Corridor." This project is continuing in 2020, with another \$25,000 grant from the Colorado Tourism Office. RACC provided \$2,500 in match funding for this effort, and the Town of Ridgway also provided \$2,500. The partners are: Tourism Council of Carbondale; Carbondale Creative District; Salida Creative District; Chaffee County Visitors Bureau; Crested Butte Creative District; Gunnison-Crested Butte Tourism Association; Delta County Tourism Council; North Fork Creative Coalition; Ridgway Creative District; and the Ridgway Chamber.

2020 grant funding will continue on the success built over the past two years. The primary deliverable for this year's grant funding is the creation of a marketing video that will feature the Ridgway area and local creative businesses. The RACC is working closely with the Town of Ridgway staff on this project. Pre-production is underway with the goal of filming by September. The video will be finalized by November and ready for digital distribution at that time.

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.

Online Media Assets: Website, Digital Newsletters & Social Media

RidgwayColorado.com remains the #1 Google search result for keyword "Ridgway Colorado" as well as other high value keywords. Site optimization is an ongoing effort, we are working with Peak Media to continue to improve site features, functions and ease of use. We will continue to invest in additional content and our staff/contractors to monitor the site and keep membership content fresh and up to date. We are actively leveraging the "Five Themes" branding (detailed below) within the website, online itineraries and quarterly visitor newsletter.

A digital copy of the annual Visitor Guide is available as gated content at <https://ridgwaycolorado.com/plan-your-trip>. This strategy, implemented in 2019, allows the RACC to continue to build out our lead database. This webpage is the landing page for any digital advertisements outside of RidgwayColorado.com (e.g., Colorado.com advertisements land on this page). All email leads are automatically added to our CRM system and sent the weekly e-blast and/or quarterly visitor news (based on user preferences).

The weekly community e-blast continues to be sent out to 1,920 contacts. Newsletter content includes: business promotion, special events and Chamber news. In addition, we launched our first-ever quarterly visitor newsletter in 2019. This newsletter is delivered to our Go-Colorado leads plus website sign-ups. The purpose of this newsletter is to send promotional emails to targeted email leads by leveraging the five marketing themes and promoting Ridgway as a year-round destination. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the Chamber has not sent out a quarterly visitor newsletter in 2020. This newsletter will resume in the Fall.

The RACC Instagram account, @RidgwayColorado, continues to be presented as a visitor-facing platform to promote Ridgway tourism assets and local businesses to potential visitors. This strategy is in-line with communities throughout Colorado. The RACC Instagram account has 1,745 followers. Facebook continues to be a platform that we promote and communicate to our local community with 2,033 followers.

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. Deliverables include: new landing page on RidgwayColorado.com, itineraries and social media campaign.

Visitors Guide

In July, we will begin the process of planning the 2021 Visitor Guide with the hopes of partnering with the City of Ouray, who took over all OTO duties. Design elements will be a single cover with “Ridgway and Ouray” and combined content. The plan is to continue our partnership with BCI Media (formerly Ballantine Communications), which has produced and distributed the Visitor Guide since 2017. We will use our staff and contractors on content design, led by contractor, Tanya Ishikawa.

Golf Tournament

Due to the impacts of COVID-19 on budget and event planning, the Chamber has not made a decision on whether they will host the annual golf tournament. A decision will be made at the July 13th Board Meeting.

Marketing Themes

The Chamber is actively using the five themes as the foundation of all marketing initiatives. As we have shared in previous reports, these themes are designed to capture the unique attractions of the Ridgway area and our goal has been to develop these themes and inline with marketing best practices, use them consistently across our media, including website, visitors guide, print ads, social media and visitor center. These are now being adopted across all of our platform in conjunction with the themes:



Four new themes were recently created to more effectively market our local business communities: Travel Services, Accommodations, Professional Services and Shopping. The new logos were added to signage at the Visitor Center (see Visitor Center update), with the goal of adding to digital assets as well.



Print Media

The Chamber coordinated co-op ads with local businesses in the 2020 San Juan Skyways publication. The San Juan Skyway is distributed throughout Colorado and is considered to be a marketing asset for local businesses as well as the Chamber. The San Juan Skyway magazine is available in a magazine dispenser located outside the Ridgway Visitor Center.

Visitor Center

The RACC Board voted on May 18th to close the Ridgway Visitor Center for the remainder of 2020 based on the combined knowledge that a majority of our volunteers do not feel safe returning this summer, along with the stringent guidelines provided by the Colorado Tourism Office that detailed procedures to minimize risk of COVID-19 transmission. The board was not confident that we could provide a safe space for our volunteers and visitors into the foreseeable future, as safety is our number one priority for reopening. Ridgway Visitor Center Press Release:

<https://ridgwaycolorado.com/news-events/ridgway-visitor-center-closed-for-2020>

With the closure of the Visitor Center, the RACC is investing in Visitor Center space improvements in order to provide access to the 2020 Ouray and Ridgway Visitor guide and other planning materials to visitors that stop by. This includes the creation of two window signs with a QR code that will send mobile phone users to: <https://ridgwaycolorado.com/plan-your-trip>. This webpage is a launching point to explore Ridgway area assets in a virtual format. See below images for more detail. The RACC assisted the Town of Ridgway staff in utilizing Colorado Main Street grant funding to install a free visitor guide dispenser as well as other outside improvements. We look forward to further collaboration with the Town to improve this space.



THINK OUTSIDE

Make Ridgway your basecamp - Explore a diversity of things to do



Outdoor Adventure

Ridgway's amazing landscapes have all the elements for great outdoor recreation on dirt, rock, water, snow, and air. Activities include:

- Biking
- Running
- Camping
- Climbing
- Wildlife viewing
- Fishing
- Goating
- Stand-up paddleboarding
- Boating
- Shakeboarding
- Hot air ballooning
- Horseback riding
- Sheeping
- Hunting
- Cross country skiing
- Snowshoeing
- Backcountry alpine skiing
- Snowmobiling



Arts & Entertainment

Ridgway's vibrant, creative community thrives in our inspiring setting, with a wide range of artistic and entertainment options. Ridgway is a Certified Creative District and sits along the Salado Creative Corridor.

Venues and events include:

- Art galleries and shows
- Public sculptures
- Outdoor and indoor concerts
- Outdoor and indoor movies
- Alley poetry and art
- Festivals
- Plays and musicals
- Comedy shows
- Poetry readings
- Sculpture contests
- Film and art contests
- Dance classes
- Art classes
- Writing classes
- Theater classes
- Little free libraries



History & Heritage

A collection of artifacts and sites awaits discovery by strolling around Ridgway or taking scenic drives into the mountains. Historical points of interest include:

- Ridgway Railroad Museum
- Ouray County Ranch History Museum
- True Grit Film Tour (downtown)
- True Grit Film location on Owl Creek Pass
- Ouray County History Museum
- Newly restored Ouray County Courthouse
- Ridgway Old West Feed
- Ouray County Rodeo
- Antique stores
- Mining structures
- Ghost towns



Health & Wellness

Known for our sunny skies and healing waters, Ridgway is the place to revitalize your body and soul and rejuvenate your mind.

Local wellness services and venues include:

- Hot springs
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Massage
- Hot tubs and pools
- Saunas and steam rooms
- Chiropractic sessions
- Hyperbaric oxygen therapy
- Fitness classes
- Running races
- Naturopathy



Culinary Experiences

Ridgway delivers amazing culinary selection with markets and restaurants specializing in local, organic, gourmet, and international foods and beverages. Ridgway's businesses offer:

- European fare
- American cuisine
- South American dishes
- Mexican meals
- Asian menus
- Freshly baked breads and pastries
- Vegan and vegetarian options
- Locally roasted coffee and espresso
- Friday Farmers Market
- Coco Farm Stand
- Local breads and microbrews
- Fishin' Fast West
- Ed Caban
- Locally made chocolate
- Teas and fresh squeezed juices
- Annual Ranch Tour and Dinner

PLEASE VISIT: RIDGWAYCOLORADO.COM/PLAN-YOUR-TRIP



THINK OUTSIDE

Enjoy Ridgway hospitality year-round - Our community welcomes you



Professional Services

Small-town charm and attention to customer satisfaction are the hallmarks of Ridgway's service businesses. Local professionals ready to serve you include:

- Banking
- Real estate
- Photography
- Event planning
- Computer repair
- Coworking space
- Child care
- Hair styling and salon
- Beauty
- Medical
- Physical therapy
- Veterinary
- Office supply and printing
- Graphic design and printing
- Landscaping
- Legal
- Screen printing
- U.S. Postal Service



Accommodations

A stay in Ridgway provides great memories in unique settings from wilderness gateways to deluxe spa suites and family-friendly lodging. Local overnight options include:

- Bed and breakfasts
- Inns
- Resorts
- RV campgrounds
- Short-term rentals
- Tent camping
- Cabins
- Ranches
- Mountain huts
- Tiny houses
- Tipis
- Turts



Travel Services

Ridgway's reputation as a premier outdoor recreation destination means we have key amenities for adventurers. Businesses and community resources to keep you going include:

- Gas stations
- Vehicle repair
- Bike repair and parts
- Public restrooms
- Picnic areas
- Transportation
- Concierge
- Scenic tours
- Recreation guiding
- Outfitters
- Water sports rentals
- Churches that welcome visitors



Shopping

Whether shopping for fun or function, you can find a variety of products at Ridgway's eclectic collection of stores. The range of products found here include:

- Antiques
- Clothing and fashion
- Gifts
- Groceries
- Pharmaceuticals
- Hardware
- Secondhand goods
- Home furnishings
- Jewelry and art
- Outdoor gear
- Beer, liquor and wine
- Tobacco and pipes
- Cannabis
- Body care
- Flowers

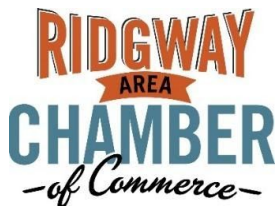
PLEASE VISIT: RIDGWAYCOLORADO.COM/PLAN-YOUR-TRIP



Youth Apprenticeship Program & Career Experience Fair

Due to the impacts of COVID-19 on budget and event planning, the Chamber canceled 2020 programs.

We sincerely thank the Council and all of the Town staff for their support and partnership.



2:45 PM

06/30/20

Accrual Basis

Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce
Profit & Loss for Lodging Tax Class
January through June 2020

	<u>Jan - Jun 20</u>
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Lodging Tax Income	12,459.01
Total Income	<u>12,459.01</u>
Gross Profit	12,459.01
Expense	
Advertising and Promotion	
Creative District Corridor	2,500.00
Online Media and Advertising,	2,125.50
Print Media and Advertising	1,916.25
Visitor's Guide Fullfillment, P	3,943.00
Website Upgrades and Operations	2,278.41
Total Advertising and Promotion	<u>12,763.16</u>
Membership Expense	
Membership Services	38.00
Total Membership Expense	38.00
Postage	44.15
Subcontractors	5,909.00
Visitor Center Operations	
Electric	116.82
Natural Gas	211.72
Telephone and Internet	531.01
Total Visitor Center Operations	<u>859.55</u>
Visitor Center Redesign	9.50
Total Expense	<u>19,623.36</u>
Net Ordinary Income	<u>-7,164.35</u>
Net Income	<u><u>-7,164.35</u></u>