

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



Image: Latitude Studio

RIDGWAY, COLORADO

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



Image: Markus Van Meter

The Chamber supports local businesses and events like San Juan Skijoring.



In partnership with the Town, the RACC received a grant to redesign the Visitor Center and Heritage Park.



Youth programs are supported to link our local businesses with young talent.



Image: Latitude Studio

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

RIDGWAY AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Ridgway Chamber Board of Directors is pleased to share this 2019 annual report. We are proud of the progress that continues to be made in support of our local business community.

We have continued the investments in RidgwayColorado.com that we began in 2017. The site remains the #1 Google search result for “Ridgway, Colorado” and the #1 resource for travel and business information for the Ridgway area. We continue to invest in the website, including an email lead capturing platform and database upgrades to improve digital communications.

In 2019, the Chamber was the lead on two successful grants totalling \$25,000. We completed \$10,000 of grant work in partnership with the Ouray Tourism Office to support our off-peak season marketing strategy. This is a continuation of our strategy to promote local businesses during the slowest time of the year. In the spring of 2019, the Chamber secured a \$15,000 grant from the Colorado Tourism Office to reimagine and redesign the Ridgway Visitor Center and Heritage Park. The new master plan was approved by Ridgway Town Council in July.

We are pleased to announce that we were awarded a \$10,000 Colorado Tourism Office grant to continue promoting off-peak season, tourism-driven economic opportunities during 2020. This is the second year of CTO grant funding for this initiative.

The Colorado Creative Corridor initiative continued in 2019, in partnership with the Town of Ridgway through a \$25,000 state grant shared with four other communities. The Creative Corridor provides unique visibility to Ridgway through state-promoted itineraries, featured articles on Colorado.com, and inclusion on marketing materials distributed across the state. We are promoting not only the creative side of Ridgway's economy, but also our five recently established marketing themes: Outdoor Adventure, History & Heritage, Health & Wellness, Culinary Experiences, and Arts & Entertainment.

In 2019, we distributed the first Ridgway and Ouray Visitor's Guide that combined narratives and was the next step above the Ouray/Ridgway flip-book. This significantly improved the presentation to readers and boosted visibility for our businesses. The 2020 Visitor's Guide is now complete and follows the same structure. The Visitor's Guide is distributed across the county and state, with 100,000 copies printed every year.

The Chamber continues to be staffed by an exceptional group of local professionals and leaders. Meanwhile, all financial operations and reporting are managed locally by Middleton Accounting and our financial reporting is aligned to the town-approved lodging tax budget.

Outside of our lodging tax-funded projects, we continue to support initiatives designed to better connect our youth with our business community. In 2019, we successfully ran the Youth Ambassador program and Youth Apprenticeship initiative, along with supporting the Career & Volunteer Opportunity Fair. We recognize that local business success is predicated on local talent, and our first priority talent pipeline should be our local students.

We look forward to continued progress and partnership in 2020, 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 12 years. He and his wife, Dr. Jessica Balbo, own and operate [Balance Natural Medicine](#), an integrative medical clinic with offices in Ridgway and Telluride. 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.



AMANDA F. SWAIN, TREASURER

Amanda F. Swain is co-owner of [Ridgway Adventure Sports \(RAS\)](#). Before opening RAS, Amanda lived in San Francisco where she started and managed a real estate brokerage and development company. She loves to combine her passion for the outdoors with her sales and business management experience. When not at RAS, Amanda is with her fiancée, Andy, and dog, Oliver – hiking, biking, skiing, and traveling.



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. A graduate of the University of Colorado, Daniel's initial career was with IBM running the company's perimeter IT infrastructure. In 2012, he started Echo Brewing Company in Frederick, Colo. with his twin brother, Dennis, and continues to run that company along with the Colorado Boy.



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, so 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.

2019 RACC VOLUNTEERS

Annabel Clarke
Bonnie Tasch
Carole Turner
Christine Wilson McGrady
Diane Hooper
Irene Smith

Jim Pettingell
Joni Jacob
Karl Schaefer
Lois Love
Lysa Riggs
Mary Peck

Rick Gregory
Sally Kornberg
Suzi Goller
Tanya Ishikawa
Vonnice Kuijvenhoven

TRUE GRIT TOUR GUIDES

Ninah Hunter
Jim & Karla Waltz
Ed Bovy
John Mitchell
Jim Pettingell

STAFF & CONSULTANT TEAM



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. For the past five years, 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 21 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 & MEMBERSHIP 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.

In October 2018, we were excited to welcome Ridgway High School junior Emma Wallin as our 2019 Youth Ambassador, selected by a committee based on an interview and application process. Emma spent the year representing the chamber at school events and representing youth in chamber events and publications such as the Visitor's Guide. She volunteered at the Ridgway Chamber Golf Open in September, where she also received a scholarship of \$500.

2019 Ridgway Chamber
Youth Ambassador

EMMA
WALLIN





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

In partnership with Josh Gowans of Peak Media and supported by Online Content Editor Tanya Ishikawa and Chamber Staff, we continue to improve the site navigation, search engine optimization, site content, and member services. In 2019, the Chamber focused on improving our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, email lead generation, and automating member services. In an effort to better capture email leads, we updated <https://ridgwaycolorado.com/plan-your-trip> so the online version of the Visitor’s Guide can only be accessed by entering contact information. This webpage is the landing page for digital marketing campaigns outside of RidgwayColorado.com, such as Colorado.com advertisements, articles and itineraries. All email leads receive a digital copy of the Visitor’s Guide, are automatically added to our CRM system, and receive the weekly e-blast and/or quarterly visitor news (based on user preferences).

In an effort to improve our CRM database, we created the “Stay Updated” webpage for contacts to update their email preferences and contact information. Other CRM database updates include database list growth and clean-up. Prior to 2019, email contacts were stored under an email platform that was not connected with our CRM system. As a result, we were losing valuable data and list growth. Peak Media and Chamber Staff worked together to transition all contacts into our CRM system in a more organized manner to improve email campaigns and outreach. After completing CRM system updates, we redesigned and relaunched the weekly e-blast within our CRM system in an effort to better serve businesses and the greater community. In addition, we launched our inaugural quarterly visitor e-newsletter in November, sending it to 5,500 contacts. This e-newsletter is organized around the five marketing themes and promoting Ridgway as a year-round destination.

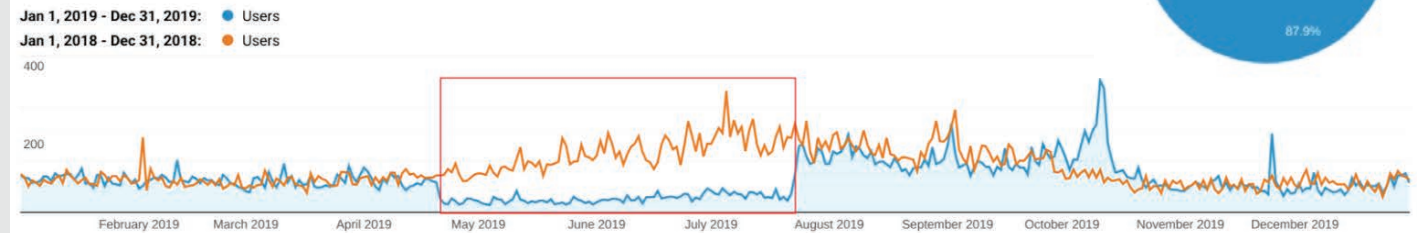
With leadership from Peak Media, we are using our CRM system to better manage Chamber membership. We have automated the membership renewal process, member outreach, and a new e-blast content submission function. Ultimately we believe this is an important tool for us to leverage in a variety of ways, allowing us to better serve our members and function at a higher level, even with our relatively limited staffing capacity.

RidgwayColorado.com continues to be the #1 Google search result for keyword “Ridgway Colorado” as well as other high value keywords. Site optimization is an ongoing effort, so the Chamber continues to invest in additional content and monitoring the site to keep membership content fresh and up to date.

+

AUDIENCE METRICS

In terms of total unique sessions and visitors to the chamber website, we estimate that the numbers reflected in 2019 are roughly the same as in 2018, when the site experienced its largest gains. We use the term ‘estimate’, because for a short period of time, a misconfiguration in the cookies provided by Google Analytics resulted in a sustained under-reporting of traffic to the site (as evidenced in the red box on the graphic below). Comparison of the periods both immediately prior and immediately after demonstrate consistent numbers as experienced in 2018.



We can interpret these analytics, in absolute terms, to mean that the site will attract approximately 45,000 unique sessions per year, or roughly 3,750 per month in its current state of operation.



RIDGWAYCOLORADO.COM

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE METRICS

We view RidgwayColorado.com as our most powerful asset to support the Ridgway business community and we are excited by the continued progress.



OTHER METRICS

- The number of sessions per user increased more than 3% in 2019 over 2018. This means that users are returning to the site more consistently (i.e. they're demonstrating more interest in the site). This is likewise demonstrated by a 1.8% increase in returning visitors to the site in 2019 over the previous year.
- The number of visitors to the site using mobile devices increased by 11.5% in 2019 from 2018. This means that the mobile optimization of the site is increasingly important. In response, the chamber is reworking some of its content, improving page speeds, deploying native AMP (Accelerated Mobile Pages) support, and implementing structured data – all back-of-site operations that are ideal for content optimization, and specifically, for mobile search performance.
- While 'organic searches' (directly typing in the website address) remain the top acquisition channel, they declined a small amount in 2019, with the traffic shifting to 'direct acquisition'. This is likely a result of the use of the CRM for email combined with recipient imports (by sending out communications, RACC provides direct links back to the site, i.e. direct traffic).
- The vast majority of site visitors continue to be based in the United States, with a majority in both years originating in Colorado. One interpretation might be that a significant majority of visitors are actually native to Colorado (particularly the Front Range) and are planning a trip "into the mountains". Of some interest is the fact that the site has seen percentage increases in other states, specifically Texas and California.
- Regarding overall site optimization, the chamber site is competitive on the first page of Search Engine Results Pages (SERPS) and continues to gain in both topics (keywords) and backlinks, both significant ranking factors.



KEYWORD GROWTH

Topic keywords have climbed from 2,688 in 2018 to 3,343 in 2019, an increase of more than 23%. While most of these have been added beyond the first page of SERPs, the trend in keyword growth on page one of SERPs is unmistakable and consistent. The graph below demonstrates growth in keyword positions 1-3 and in positions 4-10 (both page one of SERPs).

A similar gain in backlink profiles has also been realized, netting gains of more than 20% from the previous year. Unlike keywords, backlinks come and go more frequently. Nonetheless, both the number of backlinks from unique domains as well as the strength of domain profiles continues to improve.

The net result, with respect to the chamber site, is a stronger domain with content that ranks better.

The Ridgway Chamber website has become a significant asset to Ridgway and continues to improve in its position and relevance for online visitors. We do have room for growth and improvement that will result in higher search volumes and therefore in likely conversions to visitors to Ridgway. The Chamber plans on prioritizing website updates in 2020, in an effort to continue to position the website as the top source for Ridgway businesses and area assets.





FIVE MARKETING THEMES

Arts & Entertainment
Culinary Experiences
Health & Wellness

History & Heritage
Outdoor Adventure



The Chamber continues to utilize the five activity themes and related icons to better communicate and market our area's assets to visitors. The organization of our promotional and informational content by the five themes simplifies finding businesses, amenities and activities. The five themes and related icons are in line with marketing best practices, and continue to be used consistently across our media, including print ads, the Visitor's Guide, social media, digital marketing, and the new Heritage Park and Visitor Center Master Plan.



Arts & Entertainment



Culinary Experiences



Health & Wellness



History & Heritage



Outdoor Adventure

RIDGWAY VISITOR'S GUIDE

Print and digital copies of the 2020 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, all organized by Ridgway's five marketing themes. The introduction of combined content from Ouray and Ridgway in the 2019 Visitor's Guide was positively received by visitors, who agreed it was a more user-friendly way to learn about local tourism offerings.

As a result of our continued cooperation with Ouray Tourism Office (OTO), 100,000 copies of the Visitor's Guide were distributed in 2019 and will be again in 2020. Plus, the digital version became a gateway on RidgwayColorado.com for website visitors to sign up for visitor e-newsletters, increasing RACC's direct marketing opportunities for our members.

The 2020 guide featured local photographer Emily Sellers as the Welcome Letter writer. Not only did Sellers provide a valuable perspective on local assets with her photographer's sensibility, she also offered tips on photographing our landscapes and donated several high quality photos for use in the guide's pages.



VISITOR CENTER

AND HERITAGE PARK RE-DESIGN PROJECT



In partnership with the Town of Ridgway, the Chamber received a \$15,000 grant (with a \$3,650 match by RACC) to create a strategic plan to redesign the Visitor Center and surrounding Heritage Park.



This area is considered the gateway to the region, and is the first point of contact for visitors entering Ridgway from the directions of Montrose or Ouray. As the Railroad Museum started its transition to a new location, we have seen the numbers of visitors at the center drop from approximately 6,000 in 2017 to 4,500 in 2018. Grant funding was used to hire a consulting firm to help redesign the space to meet off-peak season needs, drive visitors to explore tourism assets, adapt to the digital world of travel, and better represent Ridgway's community character. This project is an exciting and significant opportunity for both the business community and the community at large.

Grant activities took place between February and July 2019, starting with a public RFP process that selected DHM Design as the lead consulting firm. The first community input meeting was held in March in order to gather ideas on vision for the redesigned space. DHM Design created a first draft of the strategic plan with input from the Town, Chamber and a community meeting. A second community input meeting was held in April to assess the first draft of the strategic plan, and the feedback was used to create a second draft. A public comment period on the draft plan was implemented on May 24-30, and the final plan was released on June 14. The "Strategic Master Plan for Ridgway Visitor Center and Heritage Park" was adopted by Ridgway Town Council on July 10.

RIDGWAY VISITOR CENTER OPERATIONS

More than 800 monthly visitors typically come into the Ridgway Visitor Center from May 1 to Oct. 15. The center and its volunteer staff remained a high priority in 2019, even as plans for a redesigned center were in the works. We are deeply grateful to the wonderful volunteers who generously give their time to provide valuable information and a warm welcome to our visitors. In the fall of 2019, we thanked our volunteers with the second annual appreciation dinner.

One of the top reasons for visitors to stop by the Visitor Center is to explore the history of the *True Grit* filming in Ouray County. The True Grit Walking Tour starts out from the Visitor Center every Friday that it is open, and its popularity is a testament to the many fans of Westerns and John Wayne. Other top reasons for a Visitor Center stop are to get advice on hiking and biking trails, scenic drives and restaurants, as well as pick up maps and brochures and check out the displays in the Ridgway Railroad Museum.

ONLINE + PRINT MEDIA

PROMOTION THROUGH WEB AND MEDIA



Getting our
message out
to the world.

The Chamber coordinated co-op ads with local businesses in the 2019 San Juan Skyways publication.

In 2019, we received weekly leads from Go-Colorado.com and our own lead generation program. As of December, we have 5,500 contacts for our visitor e-newsletter and 2,000 contacts for our weekly community e-blast.

The Chamber is continuing to develop its online presence on Facebook and Instagram. In February, we revamped our Instagram strategy to utilize high quality images to promote Ridgway tourism assets and local businesses to potential visitors. Since February, our Instagram account has tripled to 1,460 followers. Facebook continues to be a platform we promote to communicate with our local community with 1,939 followers.

Through our grant partnership with the Colorado Tourism Office, we continue to utilize promotional opportunities on Colorado.com.

The number of article placements for the Chamber was higher than ever in 2019, including: The Watch, Montrose Mirror, and Ouray County Plaindealer. Coverage ranged from youth programs like the apprenticeship initiative to the Member of the Month announcements and off-peak season marketing efforts. Some article highlights include:

CLICK ON
HEADLINES
TO VIEW
ARTICLES



Grant funds Ridgway Chamber's winter marketing efforts

Lacy reflects on chamber transformation as he steps down

Ridgway Chamber Open fundraiser Sept. 14

Eatery 66 Selected as June 2019 Ridgway Chamber Business of the Month

2019 ADVERTISING

+ **SAN JUAN SKYWAYS**

+ **COLORADO.COM**

+ **GO-COLORADO.COM**

+ **CHAMBER E-BLAST**

+ **SOCIAL MEDIA**
Facebook, Instagram & Twitter

+ **TRAVEL ARTICLES**
Mentions in various local, state and national
magazines and newspapers





STATEWIDE PROMOTION & OFF-SEASON MARKETING STRATEGY

We are pleased to announce that we received \$35,000 in grant funding for the second year in 2019, to support 2020 off-peak season marketing efforts and the Colorado Creative Corridor.

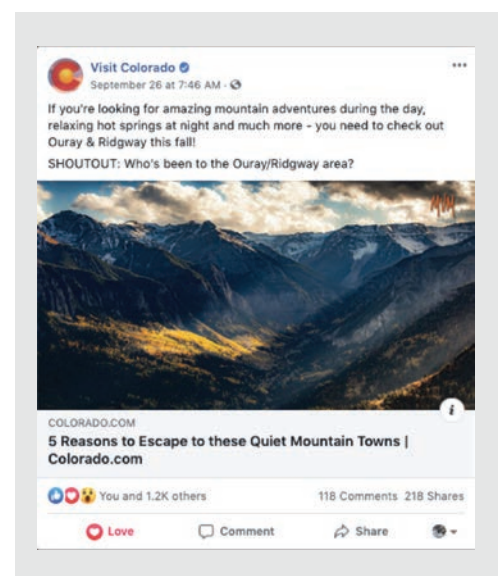
In 2019, the Chamber was directly involved with \$35,000 of Colorado Tourism Office grant funding for the Colorado Creative Corridor and off-peak season marketing. These marketing initiatives are important for promoting a more sustainable model of year-round visitation and consistent economic opportunities for our local businesses.

OFF-PEAK SEASON MARKETING GRANT

Throughout the year, the Ridgway Chamber, together with the Ouray Tourism Office (OTO), completed grant work from the \$10,000 Small Marketing Match Grant from the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO), which is based on a 25% match (\$2,500) split equally by RACC and OTO. This grant was awarded in the fall of 2018, with work beginning in January 2019. Led by the efforts of Marketing Director Hilary Lewkowitz, the Chamber and OTO are collaborating on the grant in an effort to increase countywide, off-peak season visitation and visitor-driven economic opportunities. Both organizations recognize that summer tourism visitation is close to maximum capacity, while businesses struggle to keep a consistent cash flow during the off-peak seasons October through April. We created a series of itineraries and narratives that highlight our local businesses and off-peak season attractions for key target markets. Based on grant requirements, these 2019 marketing efforts began in February and ended by October. The CTO marketing grant is the beginning of a new and ongoing strategy to focus marketing efforts specifically on the off-peak season.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2019 GRANT IMPLEMENTATION

- Sponsored article on Colorado.com, CTO's website for marketing Colorado out-of-state and internationally with one million unique visitors per year: ["5 Reasons to Escape to These Quiet Mountain Towns"](#).
- 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 100,000 impressions. Clicking on the advertisement (and links in the article mentioned above) takes readers to RidgwayColorado.com/plan-your-trip.
- Instagram Takeover on Visit Colorado's (144,000 followers) account from April 19-25. Over a seven-day period, 22 images were shared on their account and covered the five marketing themes focusing on late spring tourism assets.
- Colorado Tourism Office September out-of-state newsletter featured advertisement to 296,000 inboxes. The featured advertisement focuses on off-peak season tourism opportunities in Ridgway and Ouray.
- Visit Colorado Facebook (770,000 followers) sponsored post to promote fall experiences in Ridgway and Ouray.
- Colo-Road Trip Fall and Winter Itineraries:
 - [Fall Colors, Hot Springs & Quiet Mountain Towns](#)
 - [Winter Adventures Beyond the Ski Slopes in Ridgway and Ouray](#)



COLORADO CREATIVE CORRIDOR

ITINERARY DEVELOPMENT & STATEWIDE PROMOTION



For the second 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 two 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 2019, the Chamber provided \$2,500 (plus the Town supported \$2,500) in matching funds in order for Ridgway to be included in this important project, which brings additional visitors to the area during all times of the year. Not only do they come to the area, but with the help of the itineraries, they are more likely to visit a variety of businesses and “creatives” in the area, bringing income during months that have historically been slower economically. 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

We are very excited to have a \$25,000 CTO grant confirmed to support the Corridor initiative again in 2020. For 2020, we will be splitting the \$5,000 community match requirement with the Town of Ridgway. We believe it is important for this to continue to be a joint effort between us and the Town's Creative District.

2019 CREATIVE CORRIDOR MARKETING SUCCESSES

Brand Channel Website: [click here to view](#)
14,156 Page Views

Brochures: available in print and digital copies
Distributed 5,000+ print copies along the Corridor as well as at 10 Colorado Welcome Centers



Media Mentions: 3 placements in statewide media

- Field Guide YouTube video, sponsored by CTO
- "Take an art-themed trip through Colorado's Creative Corridor" in Colorado County Life, print & web
- "Ride your bike on these Colorado railroad routes without fear of being run over by a train" in The Know, Denver Post, web

Print Ads: 4 placements in targeted media

- 5280 magazine (August): 85,000 Copies Distributed
- Colorado Country Life: 675,000 Readers
- Love, Colorado, Winter 2018/2019: 171,000 Subscribers
- Summer in Aspen: 17,500 Copies Distributed



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

Over the last three years, the Chamber has focused on laying the foundation for a service organization that can bring bottom-line value to the local business community by investing in core assets like the RidgwayColorado.com website, Visitor Center, Visitor's Guide, and advertising, along with local, regional and state partnerships.

For 2020, we will continue to invest in digital and print advertising to better market Ridgway and direct more visitors to our member businesses and our website, RidgwayColorado.com, the #1 Google search result for "Ridgway Colorado." We look forward to leveraging this to the benefit of our membership by being the #1 resource for travel and business information for the Ridgway area.

We strive to bring additional visibility and credibility to our community's businesses. 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 their promotions and events through our digital assets and local print media.

COLORADO TOURISM OFFICE PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Since 2018, the RACC has been directly awarded \$20,000 in grant funding from the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) to help promote Ridgway as a year-round destination. This strategic partnership allows the RACC to market Ridgway and our businesses on CTO-owned platforms, and vastly increase our digital marketing efforts.

- Visit Colorado Facebook sponsored post
- Visit Colorado Instagram Takeover
- Colorado.com sponsored articles
- Colo-Road Trips
- Colorado Creative Corridor

WEEKLY E-BLAST REDESIGN AND EMAIL MARKETING UPDATES

The Ridgway Chamber's weekly "Specials & Events" e-blast is received by 2,000 targeted recipients. In 2019, we performed an overhaul of our database of contacts and e-blast format. Prior to 2019, email contacts were stored under an email platform that was not connected with our CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system. As a result, we were losing valuable data and list growth. Peak Media and Chamber Staff worked together to transition all contacts into our CRM system in a more organized manner to streamline email campaigns and outreach. After completing system updates, we redesigned and relaunched the weekly e-blast within our system in an effort to better serve businesses and the greater community. The e-blast now contains the following sections: Member of the Month, RACC News and Updates, Business Specials, Upcoming Events, Ridgway in the Media, and Save the Date. With our new system, members can now log in to their online account to submit events and specials.

We launched our inaugural quarterly visitor e-newsletter in November 2019, reaching more than 5,500 contacts across the state and country. Quarterly, we will feature members from each of our five marketing themes. Since 2017, the Chamber has been building a database of email leads from a partnership with Go-Colorado.com along with CTO partnership and our new email lead capturing platform on RidgwayColorado.com.

MEMBER OF THE MONTH

In 2019, we launched 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 first nine months of the program, the Member of the Month program reached roughly 6,100 Facebook users, received more than 1,000 likes on Instagram, was picked up monthly by local news publications, and viewed by nearly 12,000 visitors on RidgwayColorado.com.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



Membership Benefits

	BRONZE	SILVER	GOLD
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP INVESTMENT *	\$125	\$195	\$250
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			
Grid listing within the annual Ridgway/Ouray Visitors Guide, with 100,000+ distribution (\$75 value)▼	✓	✓	✓
Ability to list your business or organization in up to three categories in business grid, when applicable			✓
Discounted pricing on ads within the annual Ridgway/Ouray Visitors Guide, a value of between \$185-\$1,200 depending on ad purchase		✓	✓
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 5,500+ inboxes	✓	✓	✓
Two weekly newsletter ads per year	✓		
Unlimited newsletter ads per year		✓	✓
FACEBOOK			
Two ad requests per year on RACC and One Ridgway pages with 1,900+ followers (non-boosted)	✓	✓	✓
One boosted ad request per year on RACC and One Ridgway pages with 1,900+ 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".	✓	✓	✓

FRIENDS OF THE CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP - \$75: 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.

▼ Grid listings are an optional benefit that requires the member contact the publisher during the ad securement phase. RACC covers the expense for member listings, so long as the member is active by Nov 15th before the publishing year.

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>

RIDGWAY CHAMBER OPEN & YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM



The Ridgway Chamber Golf Open provided another great day on the golf course and a fantastic lunch donated by local restaurants on Sept. 14, while raising funds for the Ridgway Youth Apprenticeship Program. The tournament at the Divide Ranch and Club supports the Chamber's efforts to connect Ridgway students to local businesses for multi-week apprenticeships in summer 2020. RiverSage, a local real estate developer, was the platinum sponsor.

During the Golf Open, the three apprentices from summer 2019 were recognized and awarded scholarships. Ridgway High School students Kelli Donovan, Ashley Medina and Zach Sauer were the program's first apprentices, who completed career development experiences at Lucky Find Consignments, Cowgirl Creations Floral and Gifts, and RIGS Fly Shop & Guide Service, respectively.

Golf packages were won by the team with the best gross score, The Old Farts, and the team with the best net score, Flora Davita, with both teams also getting their team names engraved on two trophies donated by Billings Artworks. Players were also awarded for longest drives, getting closest to the pin, an honesty award for the lowest score, and other golf-related games.

The greater the player fees and sponsorships at the annual golf tournament, the more impact it can have on the community, with benefits spread from the youth to families and businesses. To thrive in a rapidly changing economy, our young people need meaningful, workforce experiences. Similarly, businesses need fresh ideas and perspectives to compete. Apprenticeships can be effective strategies for local businesses to advance the future of not only our youth, but of their business as well.

Lodging Tax dollars were not allocated to the golf tournament and all apprenticeship funding comes entirely from the profits of the tournament.

CAREER & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY FAIR

RIDGWAY SECONDARY SCHOOL

An event created by the Ridgway Chamber in 2017, to introduce youth to volunteering with local nonprofits, expanded this year to inform students of local jobs. The Career & Volunteer Opportunity Fair took place at Ridgway High School in May 2019, bringing nearly 20 nonprofit and business representatives to share information with students. The Chamber plans to continue the event in 2020, as a valuable way to connect youth to professional and community service experiences that not only boost resumes and college applications but provide important skills and knowledge as well.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

HOW WE MANAGE OUR RESOURCES



We are happy to report a 20 percent increase in Lodging Tax receipts from 2018 to 2019: \$53,799 in 2018 to \$64,717 in 2019. We look forward to continued progress in 2020.

The Chamber managed a 2019 Lodging Tax budget of \$69,500. This Town-approved budget reflected a projection of \$56,000 in 2019 Lodging Tax receipts combined with a surplus fund balance of \$13,500 from 2018.

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 and so this funding is necessary to make it through the January-June period.

We will be carrying over \$11,516 in surplus funding to 2019, which will be reflected in the 2020 budget request to the Town of Ridgway in February.

Please note that not all of the activities reflected in this annual report are supported by Lodging Tax receipts, including the golf tournament, Career Fair, and Youth Ambassador and Apprenticeship programs. 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 has led to dramatic improvements in 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 2019.

Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce Profit & Loss for Lodging Tax Class January through December 2019

	Jan - Dec 19
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Lodging Tax Income	64,333.16
Total Income	64,333.16
Gross Profit	64,333.16
Expense	
Advertising and Promotion	
Creative District Corridor	2,694.75
Online Media and Advertising,	4,768.12
Print Media and Advertising	2,961.59
Visitor's Guide Fulfillment, P	6,070.25
Website Upgrades and Operations	5,067.90
Advertising and Promotion - Other	85.50
Total Advertising and Promotion	21,648.11
Board of Directors Expenses	
Board of Directors Insurance	998.00
Total Board of Directors Expenses	998.00
Subcontractors	23,857.10
Visitor Center Operations	
Electric	297.27
Natural Gas	346.40
Repairs and Maintenance	812.57
Sales Tax License	25.00
Telephone and Internet	988.80
Trash	65.39
Volunteer Expense	51.09
Total Visitor Center Operations	2,586.52
Visitor Center Redesign	3,726.45
Total Expense	52,816.18
Net Ordinary Income	11,516.98
Net Income	11,516.98



2020 AND BEYOND...

The Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce will continue to build upon the successes of the past three years. In 2020, we will prioritize investments into [RidgwayColorado.com](https://www.RidgwayColorado.com), the number one source for information on Ridgway activities and businesses.

The Chamber will continue to further develop its off-peak season marketing strategy in collaboration with the Ouray Tourism Office. The Visitor's Guide will be updated at the end of the year, keeping a similar layout, activity themes and countywide focus, while adding new business and event information.

We expect to see more results from leveraging our advertising and promotional opportunities through initiatives like the Colorado Creative Corridor and increased opportunities with the Colorado Tourism Office's platforms, like Colorado.com. We plan to take the first steps in implementing the new Heritage Park and Visitor Center Master Plan. Plus, we will remain focused on finding more partners for our local business community, from statewide media and tourism contacts to local youth who will become key assets for our future economic success.

We thank all of our members, the Town of Ridgway, our staff, contractors, volunteers, the Ouray Tourism Office, and the local business community at large for your continued support and partnership. We look forward to a fruitful and productive 2020.



Image: Alyssa Feldman