



November 9, 2021: Agenda # 20

Management Update: Eco-Tourism

Cross-Functional Team Report





Goal 1: Create an Environment Conducive to Strong, Sustainable Economic Development

- 1.2 Enhance visitor revenue opportunities
 - Develop eco-tourism strategy
 - Catalyze eco-tourism as an economic driver focused on El Paso's unique and authentic urban desert identity

Contents

- Team Members
- Why Eco-Tourism?
- Groundwork To Now:
Recapping Efforts
 - City of El Paso Investment
 - Marketing Efforts
- Path Forward



Team Members

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Destination El Paso

- Bryan Crowe
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City of El Paso Economic Development

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A person is seen from behind, climbing a large, layered rock face. The climber is shirtless and wearing a harness and climbing shoes. The rock face is composed of large, rectangular blocks of light-colored rock. The background is a dark, overcast sky. The overall scene is a dramatic, outdoor climbing activity.

What is Eco-Tourism?

Environmentally responsible travel to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and accompanying cultural features, both past and present) that promote conservation, have a low visitor-impact and provide for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local people.

An eco-tourist is an individual seeking to visit and experience a scenic or remote natural area. Eco-tourism provides increases in lodging, employment, and cultural awareness.

-The World Conservation Union (IUCN)

Why Eco-Tourism: A Market Share We Can Capture

- Nationally, outdoor recreation economy annually generates **\$887 Billion** in consumer spending annually and **\$59.2 Billion** in State and Local tax revenue
- Nationally, outdoor recreation employed 5.2 million people in 2019: equal to all the country's hospitals and 2X employed in agriculture
- Nationally, participation in outdoor recreation nationally grew from 151.8 million people in 2018 to 160.7 million in 2020. Most relevant for El Paso, in 2020:
 - Bike sales increased by 121%
 - Camping increased 28%
 - Hiking increased 16%



A mountain biker wearing a green helmet and a grey long-sleeved shirt is riding a blue mountain bike on a rocky trail. The background shows a vast, scenic mountain landscape with green and brown hills under a clear sky. The biker is leaning forward, focused on the trail ahead.

The El Paso Market: What Eco-Tourists are Primarily Seeking

-
- Rock Climbing
 - Hiking
 - Mountain/Trail Cycling



What We Know About Eco-Tourists

- Spend time (more than 24 hrs.) and money in a destination for leisure, business, health, etc.
- Prefer responsible travel to natural areas, conserving the environment.
- Are in search of bucket list-worthy, eco-adventures
- Look for highly authentic local experiences
- Are more likely to visit heritage/cultural assets while visiting



Groundwork to Now: Recapping Efforts

Accreditations for major partners ensuring high standards related to parks, open space and tourism:

- Parks & Recreation
 - CAPRA Accreditation
- Destination El Paso
 - DMAP Certification, CTE, TDM

Groundwork to Now: Recapping Efforts

City of El Paso Investment

- 25% increase in City of El Paso Parks & Recreation inventory realized:
 - 2012 QOL funds
 - CDBG
 - Parkland Dedication Ordinance
- 5 trailheads added or improved and now and 19 miles of trails
- Conservation easements



Groundwork to Now: Recapping Efforts City of El Paso Investment

- 25 open spaces added
- Open Space Advisory Board created to provide community input on assets
- New tourist-friendly trail signage being developed



Groundwork to Now: Recapping Efforts City of El Paso Investment



- Dedicated section of Visit El Paso App for outdoor spaces and eco-tourism attractions
- Dedication section on VisitElPaso.com for eco-tourism activities, listicles for top outdoor adventures and interactive maps via Google Trekker
- Consistent social media messaging in promotion of assets

Groundwork to Now: Recapping Efforts City of El Paso Investment

- Developed new standards for signage on trails and open spaces with specific branding
- Creating consistency and user-friendly messaging for experienced hikers and novices
 - Promoting safety
 - Respecting fragility of the environment



New Trail Signs & Standards



LOGO



Full color logo.



One color versions when used on light background.



One color versions when used on dark background.

COLORS



PMS 2945U



PMS 129U



PMS 7499U



PMS 1795U

FONTS

TITLING GOTHIC FB NORMAL (BLACK)

TITLING GOTHIC NORMAL (BOLD)

New Trail Signs & Standards



Marketing Efforts:

2021 Visitors Guide

Cover



Featured Article

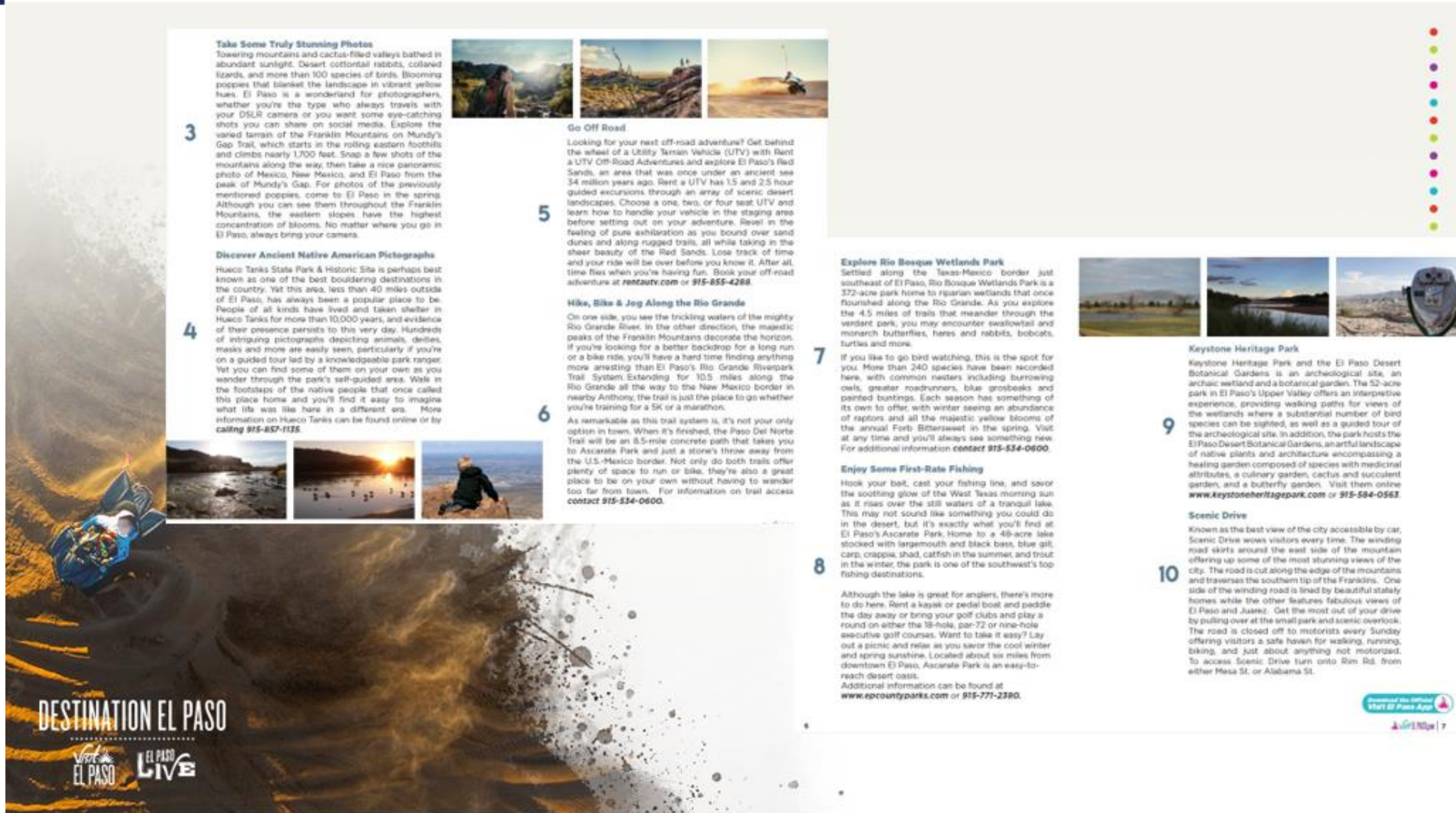


1

Enjoy the View from the Aztec Caves
Nestled on the rugged western slope of the Franklin Mountains, the Aztec Caves are both a living piece of history and a spectacular reward at the end of a short hike. Start your journey at the trailhead of the Aztec Cave Trail in Franklin Mountains State Park, a less than 3/4-mile hike that ascends more than 400 feet past lechugillas, ocotillos, yuccas and prickly pear cactuses. If you have hiking poles, they'll be a big help here. Reach the end of the path and step inside the caves and you'll notice walls stained by smoke, marks of those who came before. Savor some time in the shade as you take in the spectacular view of miles of Chihuahuan Desert terrain, a view that has delighted countless generations through the ages. Contact the park at **915-444-9100** for more information or to secure your pass.

2

Climb to the Peak of the Franklin Mountains
Standing at 7,192 feet above sea level, the imposing North Franklin Mountain is almost always in view no matter where you are in El Paso. Not only can you look upon it in admiration, you can also climb to the very top. To get there, travel up Mundy's Gap Trail on the eastern slopes of the mountain until you reach the North Franklin Mountain Peak Trail. Follow the path along the mountain's eastern slope, twisting and turning over red volcanic rocks along the way. Follow the trail all the way to the summit that affords a nearly 360-degree view of El Paso, as well as New Mexico and the Mexico border. On a clear day, you may even see New Mexico's Organ Mountains. All told, this hike is nearly 13 miles round trip, so make sure to bring plenty of water and a sturdy pair of shoes.



3

Take Some Truly Stunning Photos

Towering mountains and cactus-filled valleys bathed in abundant sunlight. Desert cottontail rabbits, collared lizards, and more than 100 species of birds. Blooming poppies that blanket the landscape in vibrant yellow hues. El Paso is a wonderland for photographers, whether you're the type who always travels with your DSLR camera or you want some eye-catching shots you can share on social media. Explore the varied terrain of the Franklin Mountains on Mundy's Gap Trail, which starts in the rolling eastern foothills and climbs nearly 1,700 feet. Snap a few shots of the mountains along the way, then take a nice panoramic photo of Mexico, New Mexico, and El Paso from the peak of Mundy's Gap. For photos of the previously mentioned poppies, come to El Paso in the spring. Although you can see them throughout the Franklin Mountains, the eastern slopes have the highest concentration of blooms. No matter where you go in El Paso, always bring your camera.



Go Off Road

Looking for your next off-road adventure? Get behind the wheel of a Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) with Rent a UTV Off-Road Adventures and explore El Paso's Red Sands, an area that was once under an ancient sea 34 million years ago. Rent a UTV has 1.5 and 2.5 hour guided excursions through an array of scenic desert landscapes. Choose a one, two, or four seat UTV and learn how to handle your vehicle in the staging area before setting out on your adventure. Revel in the feeling of pure exhilaration as you bound over sand dunes and along rugged trails, all while taking in the sheer beauty of the Red Sands. Lose track of time and your ride will be over before you know it. After all, time flies when you're having fun. Book your off-road adventure at rentautv.com or 915-855-4288.

5

4

Discover Ancient Native American Pictographs

Hueco Tanks State Park & Historic Site is perhaps best known as one of the best bouldering destinations in the country. Yet this area, less than 40 miles outside of El Paso, has always been a popular place to be. People of all kinds have lived and taken shelter in Hueco Tanks for more than 10,000 years, and evidence of their presence persists to this very day. Hundreds of intriguing pictographs depicting animals, deities, masks and more are easily seen, particularly if you're on a guided tour led by a knowledgeable park ranger. Yet you can find some of them on your own as you wander through the park's self-guided area. Walk in the footsteps of the native people that once called this place home and you'll find it easy to imagine what life was like here in a different era. More information on Hueco Tanks can be found online or by calling 915-857-1175.



6

Hike, Bike & Jog Along the Rio Grande

On one side, you see the trickling waters of the mighty Rio Grande River. In the other direction, the majestic peaks of the Franklin Mountains decorate the horizon. If you're looking for a better backdrop for a long run or a bike ride, you'll have a hard time finding anything more arresting than El Paso's Rio Grande Riverpark Trail System. Extending for 10.5 miles along the Rio Grande all the way to the New Mexico border in nearby Anthony, the trail is just the place to go whether you're training for a 5K or a marathon.

As remarkable as this trail system is, it's not your only option in town. When it's finished, the Paso Del Norte Trail will be an 8.5-mile concrete path that takes you to Ascarate Park and just a stone's throw away from the U.S.-Mexico border. Not only do both trails offer plenty of space to run or bike, they're also a great place to be on your own without having to wander too far from town. For information on trail access contact 915-534-0600.

7

Explore Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

Settled along the Texas-Mexico border just southeast of El Paso, Rio Bosque Wetlands Park is a 372-acre park home to riparian wetlands that once flourished along the Rio Grande. As you explore the 4.5 miles of trails that meander through the wetland park, you may encounter swallowtail and monarch butterflies, herons and rabbits, bobcats, turtles and more.

If you like to go bird watching, this is the spot for you. More than 240 species have been recorded here, with common nesters including burrowing owls, greater roadrunners, blue grosbeaks and painted buntings. Each season has something of its own to offer, with winter seeing an abundance of sparrows and all the majestic yellow blooms of the arrival Forb Bismarck in the spring. Visit at any time and you'll always see something new. For additional information contact 915-534-0600.



Keystone Heritage Park

Keystone Heritage Park and the El Paso Desert Botanical Gardens is an archeological site, an archaic wetland and a botanical garden. The 52-acre park in El Paso's Upper Valley offers an interpretive experience, providing walking paths for views of the wetlands where a substantial number of bird species can be sighted, as well as a guided tour of the archeological site. In addition, the park hosts the El Paso Desert Botanical Gardens, an artful landscape of native plants and architecture encompassing a healing garden composed of species with medicinal attributes, a culinary garden, cactus and succulent garden, and a butterfly garden. Visit them online www.keystoneheritagepark.com or 915-584-0563.

9

8

Enjoy Some First-Rate Fishing

Hook your bait, cast your fishing line, and savor the soothing glow of the West Texas morning sun as it rises over the still waters of a tranquil lake. This may not sound like something you could do in the desert, but it's exactly what you'll find at El Paso's Ascarate Park. Home to a 48-acre lake stocked with largemouth and black bass, blue gill, carp, crappie, shad, catfish in the summer, and trout in the winter, the park is one of the southwest's top fishing destinations.

Although the lake is great for anglers, there's more to do here. Rent a kayak or pedal boat and paddle the day away or bring your golf clubs and play a round on either the 18-hole, par-72 or nine-hole executive golf courses. Want to take it easy? Lay out a picnic and relax as you savor the cool winter and spring sunshine. Located about six miles from downtown El Paso, Ascarate Park is an easy-to-reach desert oasis. Additional information can be found at www.epcountyparks.com or 915-771-2380.

10

Scenic Drive

Known as the best view of the city accessible by car, Scenic Drive wows visitors every time. The winding road skirts around the east side of the mountain offering up some of the most stunning views of the city. The road is cut along the edge of the mountains and traverses the southern tip of the Franklin. One side of the winding road is lined by beautiful stately homes while the other features fabulous views of El Paso and Juarez. Get the most out of your drive by pulling over at the small park and scenic overlook. The road is closed off to motorists every Sunday offering visitors a safe haven for walking, running, biking, and just about anything not motorized. To access Scenic Drive turn onto Rim Rd. from either Mesa St. or Alabama St.



DESTINATION EL PASO

Visit EL PASO LIVE

Download the Official Visit El Paso App



Print Publications:

November, Meetings Today



November, Smart Meetings



Print Publications:

November, TX Parks and Wildlife



January 2021, TX Parks and Wildlife Magazine



November, Authentic Texas



Out of Home - Billboard

November 2020- November 2021, Interstate-20 Billboard



Digital Campaign

September, Social Placement



Visit EL PASO TEXAS **7 El Paso Outdoor Tips**

This winter, head down to the Sun City for 300+ days of sun and warmth!

[Learn More](#)

Sponsored By Visit El Paso

Visit EL PASO TEXAS **Your Road Trip Basecamp**

El Paso is the perfect basecamp for all of your outdoor adventures and art escapes. The closest major city to Big Bend national park and Marfa. Stay with us and explore the West Texas.

[Learn More](#)

Sponsored By Visit El Paso

Visit EL PASO TEXAS **El Paso is the Journey**

Carlsbad Caverns, the mountains of Ruidoso, natural hot springs, and more surround the city of El Paso. Travellers make El Paso their central hub for the experiences in the region. For those who explore, El Paso is waiting.

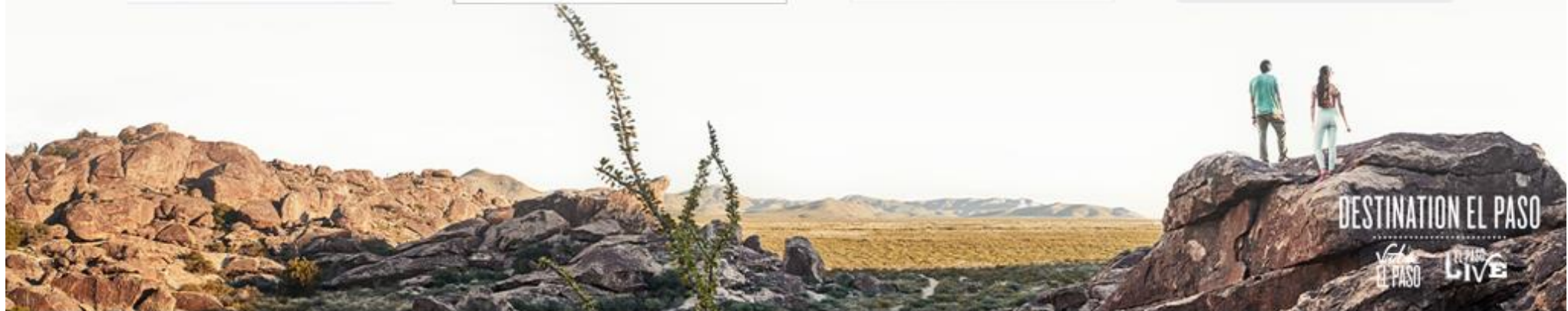
[Learn More](#)

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Digital Campaign

February, Social Placement

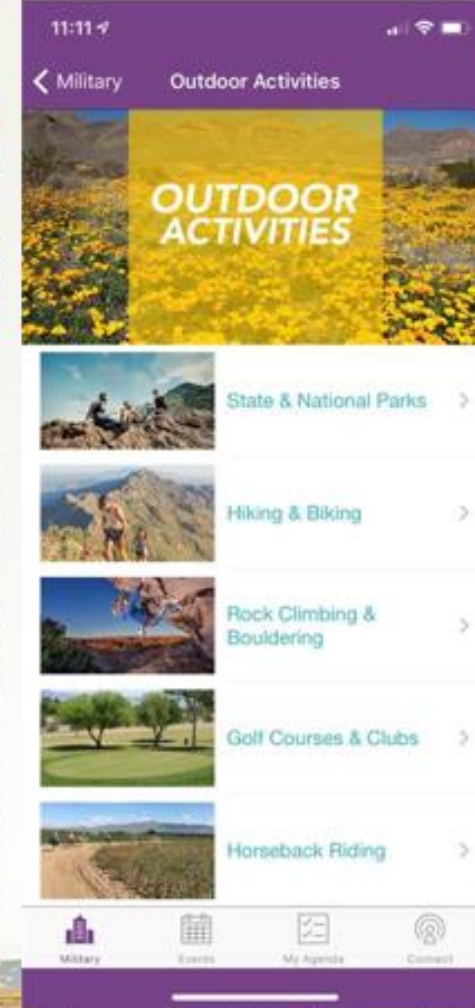


Digital Campaign

March, Social and Digital Placement



Visit El Paso App



A photograph of three hikers sitting on a rocky mountain peak. The hiker on the left is wearing a blue tank top and dark pants, with a backpack. The hiker in the middle is wearing a dark tank top and shorts. The hiker on the right is wearing a maroon t-shirt and dark pants. They are all smiling and looking towards each other. The background shows a vast landscape with mountains and a blue sky with scattered clouds. A vertical white line is positioned to the left of the text.

Path Forward: Recommendations to Build Momentum



Path Forward:

Develop a more robust digital site/app that provided information in one place as well as a print piece

- Locations and "know before you go" facts
- Grading system for use by experienced, intermediate and novice hikers and cyclists
- Testimonials and tips by El Paso experts



Path Forward:

Continue Assessing City, State and Federal Assets to grade tourism-readiness and Plan for Success



Path Forward:

Grade sites for

- Regular hours
- Current websites and digital presence
- Tourist Friendly Signage and wayfinding
- Eco-tourist amenities (e.g., bike repair stations or equipment)



Path Forward:

Develop Trail Master Plan:

- Standards and guidelines to guide future development, particularly in Northeast, Northwest El Paso
- Alignment to ongoing projects and development
- Opportunity for robust stakeholder and community input sessions

Path Forward:

30

Market El Paso not just as an Eco-Tourism Destination but also as Hub with airport and services providing easy access to:

- Other State Parks
 - Gila National Forest
 - Ft. Davis Mountains
- Other National Parks
 - White Sands
 - Carlsbad Caverns
 - Big Bend
- Mexican sites like Copper Canyon





Path Forward:

Hire dedicated Eco-Heritage
Tourism Staffer at Destination
El Paso



Document usage and reach to more strategically:

- Determine markets and demographics for higher-yield marketing efforts
- Develop metrics to measure success

Convene regular meetings of stakeholders to include

- City, State & Federal Parks leadership & staff
- affinity groups for cyclists, hikers private-sector partners
- Private sector partners like bike shops, outfitters, etc.



- Events and tools to familiarize tourism stakeholders and operators with local assets
- El Paso Ambassador Training App
- Use 15+ years of familiarization tour success to craft Local familiarization Tours for Hoteliers, Moteliers, Air BnB superhosts etc
- National and International Fam Tours
 - Travel writers
 - Bloggers
 - Influencers
 - Outdoor enthusiasts
 - Broadcast opportunities



Path Forward: **Recommendations to Build Momentum**

More robust outreach to Hotel & Lodging Association and Tour Operators to determine their readiness for Eco-tourists:

- Regular hours or ability for by-appointment tours
- Ability to receive shipment of hiking/cycling/climbing equipment prior to arrival
- Specific messaging or marketing



Path Forward:

Capitalize on the El Paso Museum of Archaeology's unique location to become a jumping off point for tourists and locals:



- Site is adjacent to Franklin Mountain State Park, Castner Range and close to Ft. Bliss and set within Wilderness Park with beginner level trails
- Staff to be trained to provide information on sites, visitor amenities, businesses supporting hiking, cycling and more



- Site would program workshops in collaboration with Parks & Recreation & ISDs for schools, youth, families and adults on a variety of topics:
 - Hiking 101
 - Mountain Biking 101
 - Identifying Wildlife Presence & Safety
 - Respecting eco-systems



Path Forward:

- Utilize existing economic development incentives to assist with marketing outside of El Paso for assets like:
 - State Parks
 - Open Spaces
 - Trails
 - Eco-experiences within range of El Paso



Path Forward:

- Develop economic development incentives for businesses supporting outdoor recreation and eco-tourism:
 - Camp sites/ RV parks
 - Outfitters
 - Tour operators
 - Cycling/Climbing equipment rentals



Path Forward:

More robust outreach to businesses that appeal to eco-tourists desire for highly local and authentic experiences:

- Dovetail with existing Made in the 915, Buy Local initiatives:
 - Restaurants
 - Microbreweries
 - Galleries
 - Retail showcasing locally produced goods
 - Outfitters and Guides



QUESTIONS