

Minutes

Destination El Paso Advisory Board Meeting

Tuesday, April 28, 4:00 p.m.

Destination El Paso

Board Members Present	Board Members Absent	Destination EP Staff	City of El Paso	Public
Daniel J. Veale*	Genevieve Torrez	Brooke Underwood	Ignacio Troncoso	Danny Padilla
Jennifer Gonzalez*		Valerie Garcia	Ben Fyffe	
Rene Hurtado *		Chris Puga	Saul Flores	
Ken Gorski*		Daniel Arizpe		
Bernie Olivas*		Jose Gil		
Gabriel Ayub*		Tom Meehan		
Veronica Hernandez*		Alexandria Acosta		
Pifas Silva*		Diana Thornton		

I. Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 4:05 PM by Rene Hurtado.

II. Approval of Minutes

- Motion by Rene Hurtado to approve March minutes, seconded by Bernie Olivas. Motion passes.

III. Department Updates for March 2026

- **Updates: Brooke Underwood, Interim President/CEO, Destination El Paso**
- **Occupancy/Financials: Brooke Underwood, Interim President/CEO, Destination El Paso**
 - Hotel occupancy and revenue metrics show positive week-over-week growth, trending toward 2025 levels.
 - Occupancy increased by .88% week-over-week.
 - Average Daily Rate (ADR) increased by 2.9% week-over-week.
 - Total revenue increased by 3.1% week-over-week.
 - El Paso occupancy reached 69.2%, compared to 61.0% for Texas and 59.2% nationwide.
 - ADR remains slightly below the Texas average.
 - El Paso continues to lead in revenue per available room.
 - Total revenue is approximately \$1.1 million ahead of year-to-date budget.
 - Financial performance by division includes:
 - Visit El Paso approximately \$74,000 over budget.
 - El Paso Live approximately \$2.2 million over budget, contributed to increased revenue and inflation.
 - Water Parks approximately \$22,500 under budget due to off-season operations.
 - After accounting for the city subsidy, the organization is approximately \$70,350 over budget.

- **Tourism Development: Brooke Underwood, Interim President/CEO, Destination El Paso**
 - Amigo Man and the Destination Experience Specialist team completed 9 citywide activations, generating 1,273+ engagements.
 - Fort Bliss initiatives included participation in the AUSA Leadership Academy in Arlington, VA, and a Military Spouse Tour to Chamizal National Memorial with 20 attendees.
 - March 14: Spring Break Block Bash at the Downtown Visitor Center—740 attendees; entertainment, giveaways, and promotions.
 - March 14: Poppies Festival—301 attendees engaged with guides and promotions.
 - March 14–15: La Ruta Gastronómica (Chihuahua Mobile Visitor Center)—489 attendees; 186 new subscribers.
 - March 21: Downtown Market—232 attendees; outreach and newsletter engagement.
 - March 21: Upper Valley Horseback Riding Tour—8 attendees; 100+ future inquiries generated.
 - On March 21–22, the Chihuahua Mobile Visitor Center attended Expo Viaja at the Chihuahua Convention Center, engaging 333 attendees, distributing brochures and Spanish Visitor Guides, and adding 216 new newsletter subscribers through a giveaway activation.
 - On March 28, Visit El Paso, with Somos Frontera and the Rio Grande Colonias Regional Food Business Center, hosted the third Harvest to Basket Farm Tour, visiting farms in Las Cruces, Anthony, and Canutillo, where attendees learned about freeze drying and sustainable and forest farming practices.
 - Also on March 28, the Downtown Visitor Center hosted the “Turn Your Everyday Spending into Travel” workshop for about 25 attendees, featuring a session on maximizing travel budgets with points, plus refreshments, giveaways, and a raffle.
- **Advertising: Alexandria Acosta, Destination El Paso**
 - Paid social media was the top-performing channel, producing approximately 15,104 engagements.
 - Top organic content highlighted Women’s History Month, El Paso Trails, and New York Times Reporter Jazmine Ulloa posts.
 - Print advertising included placements in “El Paso Made”, Authentic Texas, MLB Yearbook, Texas Monthly and True West,
 - The Meeting Planner campaign top social media posts included Women’s History Month, El Paso Made, Mexico’s Supply Chain Summit, Convention Center offerings and Hot Cards Expo with a total of 2,788 engagements.
 - March print included Convention South, Meetings, Meetings Today, Prevue, Texas Meetings & Events, Small Market Meetings, and Sports Destination Management
 - The Mexico digital campaign Target markets included Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey. Print placements included ABZ Turístico
- **Convention & Sports Development: Valerie Garcia, Visit El Paso**
 - March 23–26: Josie Barajas attended the Corporate Express Conference (Frisco, TX), conducting 26 one-on-one planner meetings.

- March 13: Site visit for 2027 El Paso Black Expo—400 attendees projected; 120 room nights; \$126K+ impact.
- Confirmed: Latinx Art Now & SULTURA (Nov 9–21, 2026)—300 attendees; 160 room nights; \$520K+ impact.
- Confirmed: Destination Southwest Conference (Dec 6–8, 2026)—110 attendees; 199 room nights; \$90K+ impact.
- Confirmed: Most Valuable Promotions boxing event (May 31, 2026, El Paso County Coliseum)—5,500 attendees; 734+ room nights; \$1.5M+ impact; live on ESPN.
- Verbal: Don Haskins Memorial Basketball Tournament (Apr 17–19, 2026)—100+ teams; 420 room nights; \$170K+ impact.
- **Special Events/Venue and Event Management: Chris Puga, Destination El Paso**
 - Venues experienced strong attendance and multiple sellouts during March.
 - Recent sellouts include:
 - Styx with 2,300 attendees
 - Humbe with 2,400 attendees
 - During March, 18 events were held over 23 event days, drawing nearly 35,000 attendees.
- **El Paso Water Parks: Daniel Arizpe, Destination El Paso**
 - March 13: Water Parks Leadership Summit aligned priorities for the season.
 - Spring Break: Swim Safety pilot—27 participants; youth instruction and staff training.
 - Recruitment: 128 engaged at Montwood HS Expo; 120 at Canyon Hills Career Day; ongoing social media campaign.
 - Staffing: 3 lifeguard classes; 51 certified.
- **Floor open for questions/comments**
Announcement: Brooke named Interim President/CEO following Jose's departure.

*Adjourn: 5:01 pm

*The next meeting will be May 26, 2026, at 4:00 pm

Chairperson: _____

R. He

Date: _____

5-26-26