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VISIT ESTES PARK DEMONSTRATES A NEW WAY FORWARD FOR DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP AS BALLOT ISSUE 6E PASSES

Estes Valley residents voted for a historic lodging tax increase spearheaded by Visit Estes Park which will fund workforce housing and childcare options in the region while preserving funds for tourism marketing

ESTES PARK, Colo., Nov. 11, 2022 – The community of Estes Park resoundingly committed its support of the tourism industry as a major driver of sustainable economic growth this week, passing ballot issue 6E to fund the development of essential workforce housing and childcare in the Estes Valley. The investment in needed infrastructure also keeps the town's tourism marketing fund intact, and positions the local tourism marketing organization, Visit Estes Park, for continued stewardship of the iconic mountain town.

“This is such an important moment for our community, and it shows exactly what happens when business owners, political leaders and concerned residents all come together and align behind a common goal: to stand up for the workforce of Estes Park,” says Kara Franker, CEO of Visit Estes Park. “Affordable housing and childcare are foundational needs for the community to exist and to thrive, and the fact that so many people came together to support to fund those essential needs is a huge win for Estes Park.”

Following the March 2022 passage of House Bill 22-1117, which allows for the expanded use of local lodging tax revenue to address gaps in the need for workforce housing and childcare, Visit Estes Park was quick to develop a clear strategy to communicate the beneficial impacts of a lodging tax extension that would address essential needs within the community. Tourism plays an important role in Estes Park, generating 3,100 jobs and contributing \$3,270 per resident household in local tax receipts just last year; Visit Estes Park had to react quickly to find a solution that preserved the tourism promotion budget, while also making room to fund workforce housing and childcare. As a result, the team created a grassroots political campaign from scratch featuring a microsite, video PSAs, a petition and civic speaking engagements - all

done with in-house talent - to educate potential voters on how tourism can work hand-in-hand with the community to support sustainable growth.

In May, Visit Estes Park created a Task Force alongside the Larimer County Commissioners and the Town of Estes Park Trustees to mediate differing views and to develop a common and actionable consensus within the community. Instead of standing in the spotlight, Visit Estes Park moved to a behind-the-scenes role to allow town leaders to shine through the process, bringing in community experts with deep knowledge of workforce housing and childcare to help provide insight throughout the process. The moment the board voted on the ballot language, Visit Estes Park stepped back from an advocacy role, in order to adhere to fair campaign practices, while organizational partners stepped up to carry the message of advocacy through to election day.

“With the support of our board of directors and the community, we were able to not only support opening this funding avenue to support essential community needs, but to also work diligently to ensure that Visit Estes Park can continue to provide important marketing and management services to our tourism partners and guests by protecting our existing budget,” says Franker. “It’s a double win for the community and for our tourism-driven economy.”

The vote increases the current lodging tax revenue by 175 percent, ensuring that the Estes Park community can maintain and grow the benefits that tourism brings to the valley, as well as support a sustainable community ecosystem for local workers to live and prosper.

For more information on how this will impact our community and how the extension will be implemented in the future, go to visitestespark.com/tax-you-dont-pay.

About Visit Estes Park

Visit Estes Park is the official destination marketing organization for Estes Park, Colorado. A Destinations International (DI) accredited DMO, Visit Estes Park's mission is to drive sustainable year-round economic growth by encouraging visitor demand. In 2021, travelers to Estes Park spent \$504.3 Million, generating \$35 million in local and state tax revenues, reducing the tax burden for every resident household by \$3,270.

Estes Park, just 90 minutes from Denver, is the basecamp for Rocky Mountain National Park offering outdoor experiences, activities, dining, shopping and an environment that is welcoming and approachable. Known for world-class adventure, resident wildlife and scenic beauty, Estes Park is Colorado’s quintessential mountain town. To learn more, visit www.visitestespark.com.

