

Huntington **BEACH**

SURFCITYUSA.COM



ANNUAL REPORT

2012/2013





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MISSIONstatement To market and sell Huntington Beach’s Surf City USA® brand experience as the preferred, quintessential California beach destination leading to increased visitor spending and enhanced quality of life for residents.

BRANDpromise Huntington Beach is the authentic California beach getaway—accessible, safe, and fun! With its internationally recognized surfing culture and iconic pier, the city presents a progressive, spirited, and active lifestyle based on a walkable downtown entertainment zone, year-round events, and immersive nature-based and ocean activities. Huntington Beach boasts luxury resort hotels and affordable lodging, along with nearby offerings of one-of-a-kind meeting, sports, dining, and shopping venues.

Building COMMUNITY

Huntington Beach has a rich history of successfully inviting and welcoming visitors to Surf City USA. Tourism to our city generates thousands of jobs and millions in annual sales tax revenues. This would not be possible without the hard work of many past and current leaders, and dedicated staff, all striving to make lasting differences in the lives of residents and visitors alike.

2014 marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of Visit Huntington Beach (VHB), the official destination sales and marketing team for this classic California beach destination. Much has changed since 1989. To gain marketing voice in today's crowded destination marketplace, organizations like VHB must be more than savvy destination marketers.

Wisely, we must also be collaborative destination managers; helping to build community and quality of life via tourism. Whether it's fighting to preserve our beach's iconic fire pits, launching an innovative social media campaign, booking a major convention or sports competition, or landing a major film shoot, the Board and staff are fully engaged to make a difference where and when it matters.

The VHB Board of Directors and staff are proud of the many accomplishments you will find in this year's Annual Report. The highlighted successes captured here validate the organization's strong and resilient foundation, a foundation designed to deliver big wins for Huntington Beach in this post-recession era.

Enjoy the read!



Kelly Miller
CDME, President & CEO



Brett Barnes
Board Chair

Public RELATIONS



“When you’re fed up with all the glitz and glamour of Los Angeles, make the same escape as the locals — to picturesque Huntington Beach.”

—MX SYDNEY (AUSTRALIA)

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations is an important part of Visit Huntington Beach's marketing efforts. Through attendance at media receptions and events throughout the world, and hosting of familiarization tours for members of the media, Visit HB has earned a number of media placements throughout the year, giving Surf City USA an estimated ad value equivalency of over \$3.7 million and a circulation of over 578 million.

What the Media is Saying About Huntington Beach:

“Ten miles of pristine beaches, the longest stretch on the west coast, and those white cap waves, have earned Huntington Beach the nickname Surf City USA.”

—GOOD MORNING AMERICA

“Our favorite beaches range from Florida's barrier islands to Hawaii to Huntington Beach, a.k.a, Surf City USA.”

—YAHOO TRAVEL

“With some of the best breaks in the Golden State and, arguably, the country, Huntington Beach (a.k.a Surf City USA) is bona fide bliss for those who like to hang ten.”

—SPIRIT MAGAZINE, SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

Highlight: Partnering with Visit California

In early 2013, Auto Club Speedway approached Visit HB with a request to participate in an exciting media campaign backed by Visit California. NASCAR Sprint Cup Champion Jimmie Johnson was to do a day of surf, ski and speed, showcasing California's amazing amenities and their proximity to each other. Along with champion snowboarder Todd Richards, champion ski racer Daron Rahlves, surfing champion Ian Walsh, and stand up paddleboarder and big wave rider Dave Kalama, Johnson tackled the waves of Surf City USA, the slopes of Mammoth Mountain and the track at the Auto Club Speedway—all in one day.

In addition to Visit California's advertising that featured each of the three destinations, national press picked up the story with articles in such places as ESPN.com, the New York Times Wheels blog, and SurfersVillage.com. The total circulation for these media placements was over 48 million, with an ad value equivalency of over \$52,000.



Destination **SALES**



It's not hard to sell a beach, but first people have to know it exists. Visit Huntington Beach staff work domestically and abroad to increase awareness of Surf City USA as a top leisure and meetings destination.

Group Sales

The Group Sales staff is responsible for generating leads that result in booked meetings, conferences, and incentive programs in Huntington Beach. Through its sales efforts in key demographic markets, staff works to increase overnight stays in Surf City USA, which results in an increased economic impact for businesses throughout the city.

This year, Visit HB welcomed a new Vice President of Sales & Marketing, John Ehlenfeldt, CMP. Ehlenfeldt's experience enabled the Group Sales staff to increase generated leads by 71%. This year, staff generated 175 leads for meetings in Huntington Beach and confirmed a total of 10,500 booked room nights, resulting in an economic impact of over \$2.5 million for the city.

Highlight: The Grand Idea

The Grand Idea promotion incentivized meeting planners to book events in Surf City USA. Groups that signed a contract with a qualifying Huntington Beach resort hotel prior to the end of the fiscal year received a grand (\$1,000) toward their master bill. Meeting planners took to the offer, which garnered 22 incentives and resulted in 9,824 booked room nights, with an economic impact of \$2.4 million to the city.

Travel Trade

Visit HB works with international agencies to promote travel to Surf City USA from the UK, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Austria, Australia, and New Zealand. This year, staff attended domestic trade shows and events, including International Pow Wow and the California Cup, to educate travel wholesaler and receptive tour operators on our quintessential Southern California beach town.

With the aid of Visit HB's international agency in the UK, staff spent a week conducting sales calls throughout the United Kingdom, showcasing Huntington Beach products and the destination to top UK and Irish travel trade. For the first time, Visit HB also engaged representation in China via the Orange County Visitors Association's China Initiative.



FILM & SPORTS



The Film and Sports Commissions are Visit Huntington Beach's newest endeavors to increase visitation and sales within the city. Film crews and sporting events bring a significant economic impact to the city. Visit HB is eager to increase awareness of Huntington Beach as a viable location for both activities.

Film Commission

Since 2011, the Huntington Beach Film Commission has worked closely with the City to increase filming in Surf City USA. In addition to marketing efforts that attract media production crews to film here, including resources at FilmHuntingtonBeach.com, the Film Commission offers free assistance to productions working within the city.

This year, the Film Commission helped to permit 95 productions, for a 37% increase from the previous year. It also presented at the California Film Commission's Annual Breakfast, hosted a Media Alliance of Orange County event, held two successful familiarization tours for over 60 of Hollywood's top location managers, operated a booth at the AFCI Locations tradeshow, and was featured in a two-page article in the *OC Register* and *HB Wave*.

Film crews have found their experiences so successful that Huntington Beach is now on CBS' list of *Top 10 Filming Locations in Orange County*.

Highlight: *Dexter* in Huntington Beach

In March 2013, the Film Commission brought the popular series, *Dexter*, to Huntington Beach. In one of the show's most climactic scenes, a stunt car jumped from a ramp, flipped, and crashed into Huntington Lake, located in Huntington Central Park. The show's final season broke all initial records, averaging 6.4 million weekly viewers. Huntington Beach is now featured on numerous *Dexter* websites for fans seeking a "location vacation" to visit areas used for filming the series.

Sports Commission

New to Visit HB, the Sports Commission's goal is to attract new and existing sporting events to Surf City USA. The Sports Commission works with the City, facility owners, and local stakeholders to bring a positive economic and social impact to the community.

In working to establish the Sports Commission, staff attended the TEAMS National Sports Convention and the National Association of Sports Commissions Conference, in addition to creating a Sports Commission website at PlayHuntingtonBeach.com.

Huntington Beach also received a two-page spread in *Sports Destination Magazine* and a feature in *Sports Events* magazine in recognition of its status as an international surfing mecca.

The Sports Commission was able to effectively establish itself this past year and use this status to nominate the 2012 Nike US Open of Surfing for a Sports Travel Award.



MARKETING FOCUS



Marketing encompasses a range of strategies and initiatives—from social media, traditional advertising, and collateral to brand awareness campaigns and word of mouth. Visit Huntington Beach’s goals are to increase awareness of the destination, elevate perception, and encourage people to experience Huntington Beach first-hand by staying in a Surf City USA hotel and sinking their toes in the sand.

Website

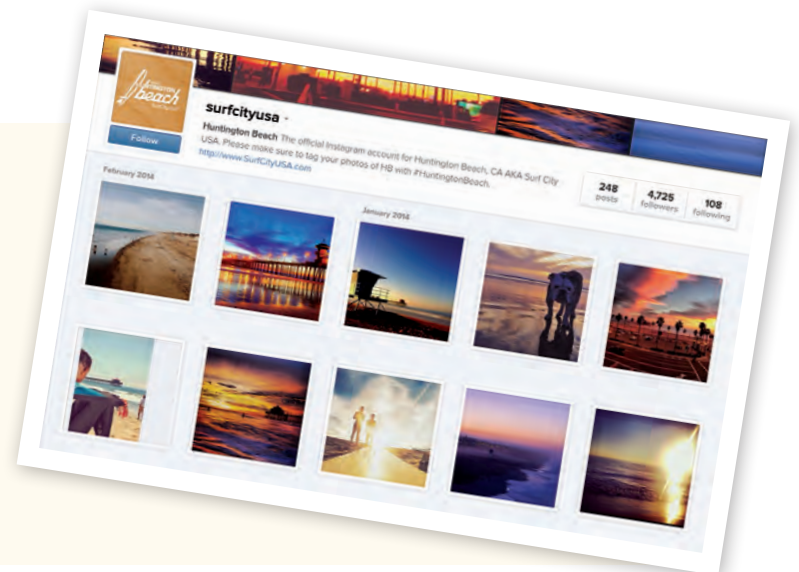
Visit HB worked with Simpleview to launch a new website at SurfCityUSA.com in October 2013. Almost a year in the making, the website features a new logo and an updated look and feel. Enhancements to the site include a live beach webcam, deals and special offers, Huntington Beach Blog, updated content, improved event calendar and photo galleries, and more.

Highlight: #SurfCitySunset

In August 2012, fans on Facebook and Instagram (pictured right) were asked to hashtag #SurfCitySunset on their Huntington Beach sunset photos. In three weeks, 100 photos had been tagged as part of the campaign. These images were shared on Instagram and Facebook and were compiled into an album on the Visit Huntington Beach Facebook page. The Facebook album received 1,179 likes, 278 shares, and 45 comments. Images from this album were shared by fans and industry partners, including Visit California. The hashtag is still active on Instagram and now has 385 posts.

Social Media

Visit HB partnered with a new social media strategist, Think! Social Media, in 2012 to improve its social media presence. Surf City USA is now active on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Yelp, TripAdvisor, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Vine, and the new Huntington Beach Blog. As a result of this partnership and an increased focus on social media, its Facebook and Twitter pages have seen a 55% increase in likes, while Instagram has received a staggering 95% increase in followers.



PRINT MARKETING

Advertising

Visit HB continues to utilize print and digital advertising (see ad samples below) as an important piece of its marketing strategy, with advertisements in such publications and websites as:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California Visitors Guide (Domestic & International) • Canadian Traveller • Coastal Living • Food & Wine • Get Away Today | ⋮ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Geographic Traveler • OC Weekly • Sunset Magazines • Travel + Leisure • Calgary Herald • Edmonton Journal | ⋮ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montreal Gazette • Toronto Star • Vancouver Sun • Collaborate • Connect • Smart Meetings | ⋮ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful Meetings • Cvent • HelmsBriscoe • TripAdvisor • Meetings Focus |
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These publications and websites allow Visit HB's message to be heard by a wide variety of audiences, from domestic to international, and from leisure to meeting planners. In addition, Visit HB continues to feature two display ads in Orange County's only California Welcome Center in Buena Park. The Welcome Center assisted over 30,000 visitors this year and is located just 15 miles from Surf City USA. Total circulation for Visit HB's advertisements this year was over 10 million.



VISITOR & PARTNER SERVICES

The goal of visitor and partner services is to provide a connection for local businesses and guests, allowing each to benefit from a visitor's time in Surf City USA. Visit Huntington Beach is excited to expand its services using the technology of its new website, including a partner newsletter and a deals and special offers webpage.

Collateral

In response to a request for help from City beach parking officials, Visit HB published a new Downtown and City Beach Tear-off Map featuring lifeguard tower locations and beach amenity listings and locations. The tear-off map is distributed at City beach parking kiosks, the Visitor Information Kiosk at Pier Plaza, the Welcome Center at the International Surfing Museum, the Visit HB office, and at Huntington Beach hotels.

Visit HB also published a new Downtown Map in Japanese, to augment its foreign language offerings and keep up with increased international visitation to Surf City USA. The Visitor Information Kiosk now distributes foreign language Downtown Maps in German, French, Japanese, and Spanish.

Visitor Information Kiosk

The Visitor Information Kiosk at Pier Plaza continues to serve visitors and locals 365 days a year. Now in its third year of operations, the kiosk served over 37,000 walk-ups in FY 2012-13, a 5% increase from the previous year. The Visitor Information Kiosk distributes all Visit HB publications, along with event flyers and a monthly event calendar, directions, recommendations, and information regarding local hotels, restaurants, and visitor activities and attractions.

Highlight: Welcome Center

In partnership with the International Surfing Museum, Visit HB launched a new Welcome Center as part of the grand re-opening of the museum. The Welcome Center provides the same information as the Visitor Information Kiosk in a walk-in setting, along with free 20-minute parking for visitors seeking information about Surf City USA. While there, visitors are encouraged to browse the International Surfing Museum and learn more about the city's surfing heritage.



Save the Southern California Beach Bonfire Rings Campaign

In 2013, a proposed policy by the Air Quality Management District (a regional government agency that oversees air quality in Southern California) threatened the future of Huntington Beach's 500 fire rings. These fire rings are the lifeblood of Surf City USA's after-sunset beach experience and provide over \$1 million in annual parking revenue to the City of Huntington Beach.

In a history-making effort, Visit HB partnered with the City of Huntington Beach on a public campaign to save the fire rings. Visit HB created the website SaveTheBonfireRings.com, dedicated Facebook and Twitter pages, and an online petition at Change.org that garnered over 14,000 signatures. Public relations strategists and industry experts helped to craft a successful strategy on both the policy and media sides, giving us a multi-pronged approach to the issue.

Media Coverage

Television, online, print and radio media all picked up the bonfire rings story. From the LA Times to the front page of the New York Times, and from KTLA to Good Morning America, Huntington Beach's name was spread throughout the nation, with over 430 million impressions via television, radio, print, and digital mediums, and an ad value equivalency of over \$1.5 million.

A Successful Campaign

With the help of passionate Huntington Beach and Southern California residents and elected leaders, we were able to save Huntington Beach's fire rings for future generations. As a result of this incident, Visit HB now monitors AQMD proposals to be sure future policies that have the potential to affect tourism in Surf City USA receive Visit HB's input.

Highlight: PRISM Award Nomination

In late 2013, Visit Huntington Beach and Cerrell Associates, Inc. were selected as finalists for a PRISM Award from the Los Angeles Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. Visit HB was selected as a finalist in two categories: Community Relations and Public Affairs. The PRISM Award recognizes outstanding programs and materials created by public relations professionals in the Greater Los Angeles area.



Media Coverage: "Keep Your Mitts Off Our Pits"



Campaign Clips Pictured Above by Number: **1** The New York Times published a bonfire article on the front page of its May 13, 2013 national edition; **2** CBS News and other Los Angeles based media covered a bonfire support rally hosted by Assemblyman Travis Allen on July 7, 2013; **3** The header image used for SaveTheBonfireRings.com, e-blasts, and printed fact sheets; **4** The Associated Press published an online story about the bonfires on May 4, 2013; the article was picked up by multiple news websites and shared around the globe.



The Visit Huntington Beach Board and staff pride themselves on being leaders in their community and in the tourism industry. Visit HB is also focused on ensuring that its financial practices and policies are second to none. Together, these two core competencies provide the perfect blend for Visit HB's current and future success.

Visit HB Staff Pictured Above, L-R: Kelly Miller, CDME, President & CEO; Nicole Ljido, Visitor Services Manager; Jim Lange, Kiosk Tourism Coordinator; Bridget Barrett, Kiosk Tourism Coordinator; John Ehlenfeldt, CMP, VP of Sales & Marketing; Madison Fisher, Director of Marketing & Communications; Rachel Volbert, Communications & Social Media Coordinator; Joseph Aranda, Office Manager; Briton Saxton, Film & Sports Commissioner; Kevin Keller, Kiosk Tourism Coordinator. Not pictured: Elsie Jean Rodriguez, National Sales Manager.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS & FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



Board of Directors Pictured above, L-R: Paul Devitt, Hyatt Regency Resort & Spa; Chris DeGuzman, Hotel Huntington Beach; Steve Dodge, Huntington Capital Corporation; Janis Mantini; Suzanne Beukema, Suzanne's Catering and Event Planning; Meg Bernardo, Association of Surfing Professionals North America; Dean Torrence, Jan and Dean Music; Mike Van Voorhis, Newport Beach Meat Company; Gordon Smith, HB Wetlands Conservancy; Brett Barnes, Duke's Huntington Beach; Barbara Delgleize, RE/MAX Select One; Jerry Wheeler, HB Chamber of Commerce; Sue Gordon, Rainbow Environmental Services; Paul Frechette, Shorebreak, a Joie de Vivre Hotel; Kiran Patel, Howard Johnson Express Inn & Suites. Not pictured: Michael Ali, Zack's; Paulette Fischer, Waterfront Beach Resort, a Hilton Hotel; Nicole Thompson, First Bank; Peter Townend, The ActivEmpire; Robert Vaughan, Best Transportation.

Revenues

Tourism Occupancy Tax	\$763,000
Hotel/Motel Business Improvement District	\$1,519,000
Website/Interest/Other	\$1,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$2,283,000

Expenses

Media Advertising	\$397,000	Local Partner/Community/Other	\$55,000
Printed Marketing Collateral	\$131,000	Familiarization Tours/Site Visits	\$28,000
Collateral Distribution	\$36,000	Film & Sports Commissions	\$23,000
Public Relations	\$246,000	Trade Shows & Travel	\$140,000
Travel Trade	\$64,000	Salaries & Benefits	\$994,000
Website	\$141,000	Administration	\$276,000
Event Hosting	\$4,000	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,535,000

New President & CEO

In September 2013, Kelly Miller, CDME, joined Visit HB as its new President & CEO, bringing 30 years' experience in all aspects of destination leadership, branding, sales, and marketing to Surf City USA.

As president and CEO of Tampa Bay & Company, Miller successfully initiated a comprehensive branding process and worked closely with the sales and marketing departments to attract more visitors. Miller also spent 12 years as executive director of the Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, where the organization earned 'CVB of the Year' from the Southeast Tourism Society in 2002 and 2006. He also worked for the Atlanta CVB for 6 years, first as its 1996 Summer Olympic Games Marketing Manager, and then as the organization's first Director of International Marketing.

Miller's term began following the retirement of Steve Bone, founding chairman and former President & CEO. During his 5 years with Visit HB, Bone guided the staff to form both a Film and Sports Commission, published the lauded *Steps Toward a Sustainable Huntington Beach* and the first-ever comprehensive Huntington Beach Dining Guide, expanded Visit HB's marketing program across the globe, established a successful group meetings sales program, and created a strong social media presence for the destination.

Awards

2013 Pinnacle Award

Visit Huntington Beach is the proud recipient of a 2013 Pinnacle Award from *Successful Meetings* magazine. Awardees are selected annually by industry meeting planners based on their successful meeting experiences. The award celebrates hospitality excellence and is given to visitors bureaus, hotels, and conference centers that set the standard for others to follow.

California Travel Association Emerging Leader Award

Briton Saxton, Film and Sports Commissioner, received California Travel Association's Emerging Leader Award, given to individuals age 30 or younger whose contributions positively support and promote travel, tourism, and hospitality.

OC Metro 40 Under 40

OC Metro selected Briton Saxton, Film and Sports Commissioner, as one of Orange County's 40 Under 40 in 2013. This award is given to the county's highest achieving young professionals, who are selected based on their drive, passion and accomplishments within their field.

Site Southern California Outstanding Leadership Award

John Ehlenfeldt, CMP, received the Outstanding Leadership Award in recognition of his efforts as Past President of the Site Southern California Chapter.

Translating our world's changing visitor trends into an effective and measurable program of work requires keen marketing eyes, a comprehensive knowledge of the Huntington Beach brand, and a passion for what we do. Read on to learn more about several upcoming key initiatives.

Marketing & Social Media

Visit HB will be redesigning collateral to better align with today's culture, energy, and vibe of Surf City USA. Staff will raise brand awareness and improve public perception by increasing Huntington Beach's presence in the social media landscape via innovative marketing campaigns that encourage users to share their Huntington Beach experiences and become a champion for our destination.

Sales

The group sales department is excited to welcome Elsie Jean Rodriguez, National Sales Manager, to the Visit HB team. Group sales staff is responsible for increasing sales efforts in key markets throughout the U.S. that will result in a 14% increase in 2014 projected booked room nights in Huntington Beach hotels.

Visitor & Partner Services

Visit HB staff is taking advantage of new technologies to improve relationships with visitor-serving businesses in Huntington Beach, including a partner e-newsletter and increased business and special offer listings on the website. Staff is also researching additional technologies and programs to improve the visitor experience in Downtown Huntington Beach.

Film Commission

The Film Commission plans to increase its outreach efforts to businesses and home owners to increase filming locations in the city. Email blasts to film industry representatives will also feature new locations, news, and the benefits of filming in Huntington Beach.

Sports Commission

The Sports Commission will be forming an oversight committee of community members, decision makers, and facility owners to review potential events. It will also increase its brand awareness via social media, an e-newsletter, and other promotional initiatives.

Highlight: 100 Years of Surfing

2014 marks the anniversary of 100 years of surfing in Huntington Beach. Visit HB is working with a committee of dedicated surfers and enthusiasts to plan a year-long celebration that includes annual events such as the US Open of Surfing, Surf City Surf Dog, and Blessing of the Waves, and special events such as Surfboards on Parade and a beach gala dinner. Visit HB will create a microsite for this historic event at 100YearsOfSurfingHB.com.



Visit Huntington Beach

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