

Resort Municipality Initiative

Annual Report 2015



Submitted by:



Prepared by:

Jon Wilsgard
Chief Administrative Officer

Since its inception the RMI program has brought significant benefit to Golden. Investment in infrastructure and enhancing and enriching visitor experiences have obviously facilitated Tourism Golden achieving objectives in increased visitation, extended length of stay and visitation extending into spring and fall months.

-Joanne Sweeting, Executive Director
Tourism Golden

1. Regional and Local Tourism Context

Understanding significant local and regional tourism influences provides context for both the local tourism economy and the overall progress of the RMI Resort Development Strategy.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL INFLUENCES

The following table provides a summary of the significant local and regional tourism influences for the report year that are not in municipal control. These influences are factors that supported and/or hindered the local tourism economy during the reporting period.

Factors Supporting Tourism	Factors Hindering Tourism
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Optimal weather throughout the summer season• Exceptional destination marketing• Growing diversity in tourism destination product• Professional grade mountain bike trail development• Alberta economic downturn presents a favourable short haul and inexpensive destination in Golden• Weak Canadian dollar• Low fuel prices• Increasing sporting events (mountain biking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor snow conditions in early winter season of 2015• Wildfires in the U.S.

2. Project Progress

2.1. Resort Municipality Initiative (RMI) Context

Golden has participated in the RMI program since 2007. The RMI program has spanned two terms: Term One: 2007 to 2011 and Term Two: 2012 to 2016. In 2015, the RMI program was extended by one year to December 31, 2017. As such, each RMI community revised their Resort Development Strategy (RDS), which identifies the community’s vision, goals, and projects in support of RMI program objectives for the 2015-2017 term.

2.2. Resort Development Strategy Vision

The vision for the development of the resort community and region (the Resort Development Strategy) represents a melding of the insight, desires, hopes, and brand positioning of Town Council and the DMO, manifested in the following statement:

Golden will inspire target visitors both Canadian and international, to visit and explore Kicking Horse Country. “Golden will be seen as an area steeped in history and tradition, set in a spectacular natural setting - a real place, exuding the spirit of discovery and exploration.”

2.3. Resort Development Strategy (RDS) Goals

The table below lists Golden’s 2015-2017 RDS goals. The table gives a high level understanding of the progress of RDS goals.

Resort Development Strategy Goals	Progress on Resort Development Strategy Goals			
	No Change	Some Progress	Extensive Progress	Goal Achieved
<p>1. Improve and Enhance the Built Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase general attractiveness of community • Establish perceptions consistent with brand positioning • Provide accessibility to community and virtual information • Focus visitors to community portals, destinations, and cultural nodes • Raise visitor confidence in way finding and directions • Establish and imprint market awareness and identity of the community 			X	
<p>2. Enhance Cultural Vibrancy and Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase general attractiveness of community • Build rationale for destination status • Establish perceptions consistent with brand positioning • Increase length and number of overnight stays • Create a compelling reason for visitation 				X
<p>3. Enhance Key Existing Tourism Product</p>			X	

<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase frequency and scope of use • Increase length and number of overnight stays • Build rationale for destination status • Expand repertoire of destination activities 				
<p>1. Establish and Annually Report on Performance Measuring</p>			<p>X</p>	

Tourism Golden’s Winter Visitor Research Study 2016 revealed that the average length of stay increased by 16%. In being asked to rate their experiences in Golden, Top Box results show 92% of respondents rated their overall experience as very good or excellent, 96% rated our recreation and adventure opportunities as very good or excellent and 67% rated local directional signage as very good or excellent; all of which reflect the positive impact of investment in tourism infrastructure that would not have been possible without the RMI program.

-Joanne Sweeting, Executive Director
Tourism Golden



2.4. Project Details

The following section describes progress on the individual projects in greater detail. The financial breakdown for the projects can be found in Appendix 1.

Project Term	Revised 2015-17 RDS	
Project Title	Corridor Enhancement	
Project description	<p>The project contemplates aesthetic improvements to the Highway One corridor from junction of Highway 1 with 95 to the western entrance. Often termed “the strip” this section of commercial establishment typifies the “anywhere USA” moniker and a focused revitalization of public space, mobility and use is planned. The project will begin with an outsourced phased capital plan to provide a backdrop of both design and scope potential, with a tactical component based upon time and funding. The remainder of the project will include the capital work component. A 4-year time frame for both planning and operational work is anticipated.</p>	
Project rationale	<p>The majority of works undertaken in the first RDS focused upon areas “off strip” in the community. With a revised focus on enticing travelers off the highway, Golden must provide a visual impact to do so. The recent improvements to the Trans Canada Highway at the community’s eastern terminus also draw attention to the core of this area. Long term anecdotal data has indicated traveler views of Golden as a strip development with little more than fuel stations and a dusty, unattractive environment surrounding it.</p> <p>This area of the highway represents the majority of accommodators in the community; it is felt that the improvements will significantly and directly impact the visitor traffic to the area. This project was rated along with the Visitor Sign Strategy by the RMI Advisory Committee as the highest priority project for the 2012-2016 RDS.</p>	
Project status	Underway	
Milestones	Actual Start Date	July 2012
	Completion Date	December 2016
	Operational Date or other Major Milestones	Phase 1 completed in 2015 Phase 2 undertaken in 2016
Project activities for the reporting year	<p>After a false start in 2014 due to a late tender and unacceptably high bids resulting in project abeyance for a year, 2015 saw the early re-tendering and implementation of Phase 1, marking a significant milestone in the largest RMI initiative for Golden to date.</p>	
Stakeholder Involvement:	<p>All stakeholders and members of the RMI Advisory Committee were kept apprised of activity during the year. A significant amount of stakeholder involvement occurred in the planning phase of the project, two years earlier.</p>	
Project outcomes to date:	<p>Phase 1 is complete and within budget. The result has been a dramatic change to sections of the Trans Canada Highway boulevards through the community.</p>	

**Communications
Activities:**

A press release was issued upon project start-up and several updates were written on social media for the community.



The importance of the Trans Canada landscaping project cannot be underestimated in enabling us to change the perception of our community from a gas stop on the highway to a destination of choice for outdoor adventure. It has also been the catalyst for collaboration between multiple agencies to create the opportunity for residents and visitors alike to connect by foot or bike from the highway to our downtown core, and for Tourism Golden to provide visitor information services along the way. We hope to see continued investment in this project in the years to come.

-Joanne Sweeting, Executive Director, Tourism Golden

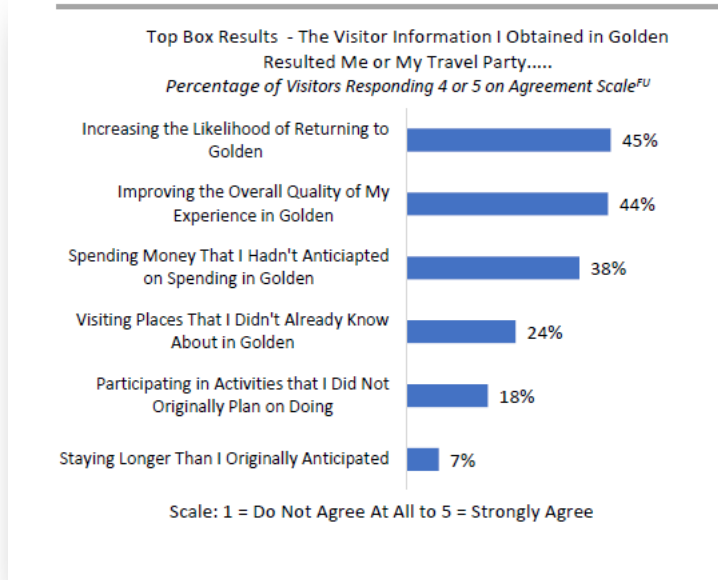
At last our community is connected! The Trans Canada Highway 1 Corridor landscaping project has given Golden BC a sense of arrival, enticing visitors to explore the town further along the safe pedestrian/cycling path, linking this major hotel district to the downtown core. Without the funding provided from the Resort Municipality Initiative neither of these projects would have been possible, we look forward to the continued support of the program and the growth of tourism in the community of Golden.

*-Ruth Hamilton, Manager
Kicking Horse Country Chamber of Commerce*

Project Term	Revised 2015-17 RDS	
Project Title	Visitor Sign Program	
Project description	This is the continuation of a 2007-2011 program designing and installation a suite of directional and interpretational thematically consistent signs throughout the community. While providing a much clearer, aesthetically pleasing, and informative focus for visitor way finding and information, the program also assists in eliminating existing clusters and sign “pollution”.	
Project rationale	<p>This continues to be clearly identified by community partners and citizens as the highest priority item for tourism infrastructure improvements. Golden’s suffers from an acute range of negative impacts surrounding signage, which continues to compromise visitor experience and create confusion, deter community efforts at beautification, lower community pride, and annoy residents.</p> <p>Coupled with a current condition of scattered, poorly designed, and inadequate public and business signs, the complete lack of consistent, informative, attractive, and simple messages that are paramount to a resort based community has been widely considered as the highest detriment to visitor satisfaction and resident pride in Golden.</p> <p>This may also be responsible for the lack of any significant movement toward beautification and architectural renewal by local business.</p>	
Project status	Underway	
Milestones	Actual Start Date	July 2012
	Completion Date	December 2016
	Operational Date or other Major Milestones	Ongoing
Project activities for the reporting year	The iconic community entrance sign continued to be tweaked in design, form, and function, with a final engineered specification arrived at year’s end. Three additional information kiosks were added around the community.	
Stakeholder Involvement:	The RMI Advisory Committee was heavily involved in final design and operational intent for the kiosks. Specifically, DMO, Chamber, and Arts Council have specific authority to access the local events panels and post events and happenings of interest to visitors.	
Project outcomes to date:	As above.	
Communications Activities:	A press release was issued upon project start-up and several updates were written on social media for the community. Minister Bond issued a tweet.	

Tourism Golden's winter visitor study indicates that in-destination visitor information services improves the quality of visitor experience, increases spend and improves the likelihood of repeat visitation by 45%.

**-Joanne Sweeting, Executive Director
Tourism Golden**



Project Term	Revised 2015-17 RDS
Project Title	Spirit Square Seating
Project description	This project will see the architectural design and construction within the Spirit Square of amphitheatre style seating integrated into the river dyke structure for audiences of summer concerts and other events.
Project rationale	<p>Since its completion, the community square has commanded significant local and visitor participation in general and for events, incrementally increasing every year. It has become clear that the square now functions as a destination component for the community and its annual events are marketed in various media.</p> <p>The 2012-2016 RDS contemplated a larger build out within the square including a permanent stage, washroom facilities, and storage for events. A series of setbacks including the need for costly deep infrastructure improvements, uncertainty over adjacent area development, and the departure of the lead architect in the project stalled it.</p> <p>The RAC has determined further development is necessary in the square to facilitate and accommodate the growing numbers of attendance at concerts and events but has opted to reduce the scope of the initiative as well as retain flexibility with the funds.</p> <p>Concerts and tourism events are now commanding up to 800 people at a time (up from 300 prior to the square being built) to witness them and there is insufficient seating to accommodate them. Moreover, the design of this seating will significantly boost the aesthetic appeal of the square as well as its utility. Adequate and appropriately placed seating will ensure the public is not intruding upon event requirements such as racer and administration space and allow for better space utilization by events.</p> <p>The town has currently submitted a grant for a substantial upgrade to the dyke system including a seawall structure for pedestrians immediately adjacent to the square. In the spirit of establishing priorities for visitor amenities in the square area overall, the RAC has proposed that if the grant is approved but there is insufficient funding for cosmetic treatments to match the square, the project funds should be allocated to such treatments. In the event the grant is unapproved or sufficient funds for cosmetic treatments are provided, the amphitheatre initiative will move forward.</p> <p>This project is dependent on third party contributions that have not been confirmed at the time of RDS submission. Approval of these contributions will impact the spirit, intent and outcomes of the project. Final project details and expenditures will be confirmed with the Province once funding is confirmed (anticipated in the first quarter of 2016). Should the project change substantially from what has been described, an amendment process will be undertaken.</p>

Project status	Pending	
Milestones	Actual Start Date	Winter, 2016
	Completion Date	December 2017
	Operational Date or other Major Milestones	Ongoing
Project activities for the reporting year	No activities were undertaken in 2015.	
Stakeholder Involvement:	None	
Project outcomes to date:	As above.	
Communications Activities:	None	



The Spirit Square and Pedestrian bridge are a great draw for our visitors. BCVC Counsellors share their pride in the community with travelers encouraging them to explore the area and the tiles and mosaics that were made to welcome people to Golden. The square is connected to the community over 10 km of trails that offer the exact kind of “hiking” that most visitors are looking with views and just enough alpine feel to satisfy the yet to be seasoned hikers.

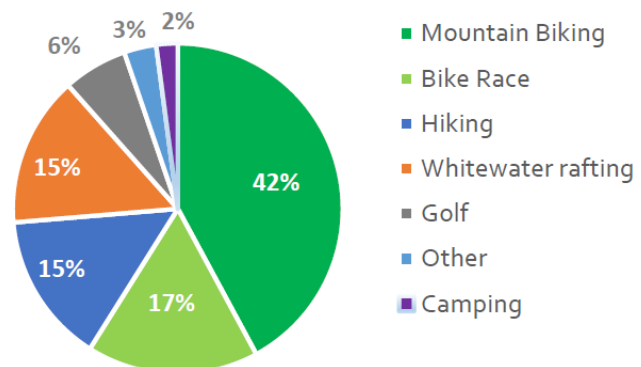
-Lynne Romano, Manager
BC Visitor Centre @ Golden

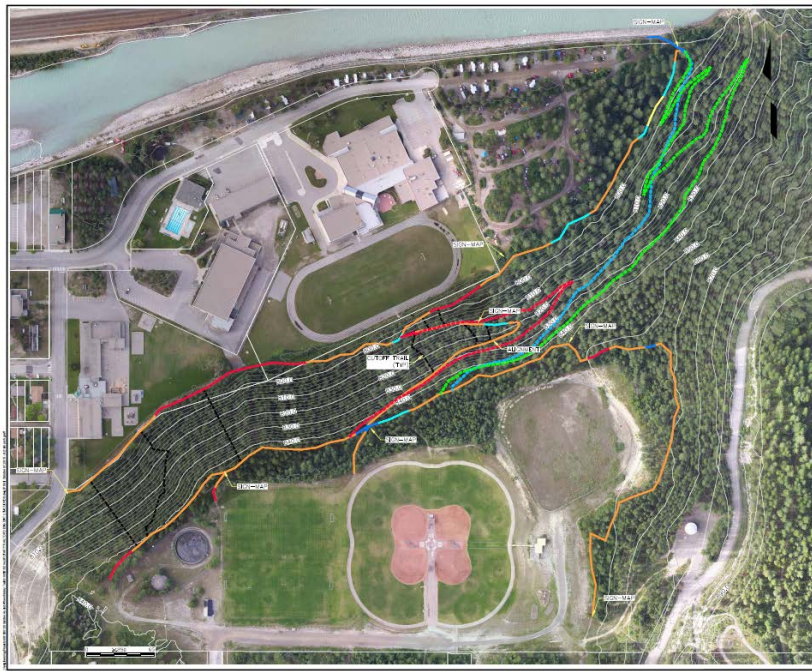
Project Term	Revised 2015-17 RDS	
Project Title	Trail Enhancements	
Project description	The project anticipates capital funding assistance to the municipality in the redesign and extension of a portion of the trail network within the town’s boundary.	
Project rationale	A portion of the ‘Rotary Trail’ network climbs a steep hillside within the community and the gradient is severe enough to prevent casual walkers from scaling it. Located directly by the campground and popular visitor walking trails on the river, redesigning the path will provide a far better and enhanced experience for visitors including an extension piece with views within the Kicking Horse Canyon.	
Project status	Underway	
Milestones	Actual Start Date	July 2015
	Completion Date	December 2016
	Operational Date or other Major Milestones	Engineered design undertaken
Project activities for the reporting year	An engineering firm was engaged to develop location options for the new trail and a preferred option was chosen between Council and the Golden Cycling Club.	
Stakeholder Involvement:	The cycling club played an integral role in helping ground-truth and approve the eventual trail location.	
Project outcomes to date:	Engineered design and location maps.	
Communications Activities:	Social media announcements and flat sheet content have been released to the community on the project.	

Tourism Golden’s Visitor Study 2015 shows mountain biking and hiking to be primary drivers of summer visitation to Golden. RMI investment in trail development, particularly connecting our extensive trail networks to downtown, and the development of Spirit Square has also enabled Tourism Golden to pitch successfully to host professional mountain biking and trail running races in Golden with great economic benefit to the community.

-Joanne Sweeting, Executive Director
Tourism Golden

Fig. 11. Outdoor Recreation Activities Reasons for Visiting Golden - Percentage of Visitors





The RMI funding has been integral to the development of recreational trails within Golden that benefit tourists and residents alike. Without RMI funding the redevelopment of the Rotary Trail from the public campground to the trail network on Mountain Shadows would not be possible. This trail is a vital link between the town core and a popular trail network. Further, the funding from RMI has strengthened the relationship between the Town of Golden and the volunteer Golden Cycling Club which manages and takes care of all trail maintenance.

From my perspective, the RMI fund is bringing together community groups while also providing infrastructure critical to our success as a destination resort community.

-Magi Scallion,
Golden Cycling Club Project Manager

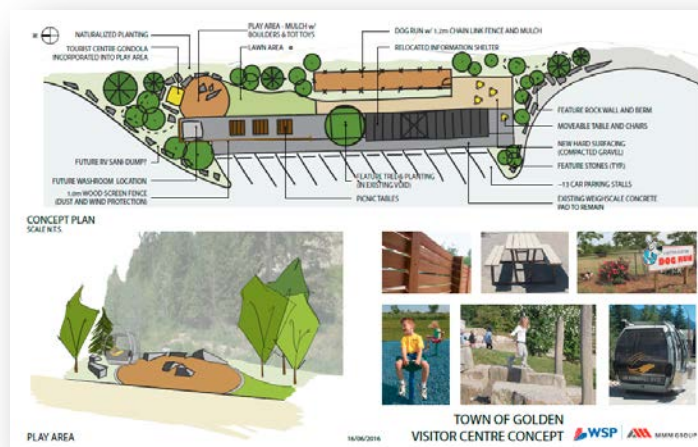



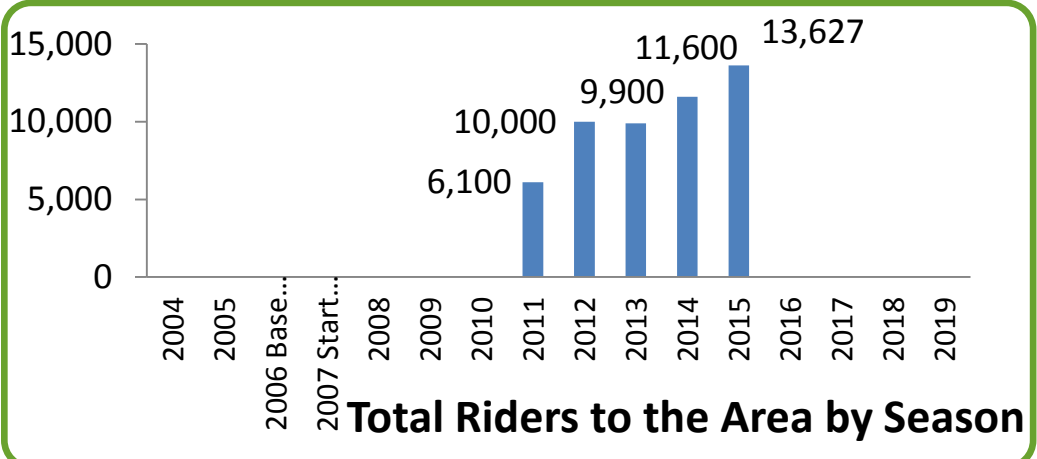
The Golden Cycling Club has accessed RMI funding for signage within the local trail networks. With over 120km of trails, having appropriate signage is a must for providing positive trail-user experiences. It is nice to see that RMI funding provides a way for the local economy to give back to the trails which are drawing so many visitors to Golden.

-Chad Gennings,
Director, Golden Cycling Club

Project Term	Revised 2015-17 RDS
Project Title	Visitor Information Infrastructure
Project description	<p>In a renewed partnership focus between Destination BC, Tourism Golden, MOTI, and the Town of Golden, a seasonal based visitor services infrastructure plant will be developed at a strategic location on the Trans Canada corridor in town, including a small kiosk and accompanying amenities.</p> <p>Anticipated specific deliverables include the planning, engineering, preparation, and installation of a seasonal staffed kiosk and extended roof structure to accommodate visitor gatherings; procurement of washroom facilities; and installation of appropriate directional and on-site signage. It may also include wi-fi infrastructure for public consumption.</p> <p>The kiosk and roof structure will be sourced and moved from the existing provincial visitor centre plaza in cooperation with Destination BC and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. The location of the install will be in the “old weigh scale site” currently under partial renovation through the RMI funded landscaping project and the pedestrian path connection project being undertaken by MOTI.</p>
Project rationale	<p>After ten years of operations, the <i>British Columbia Visitor Centre @ Golden</i>, one of 6 ‘gateway’ visitor centres throughout the province, will likely close in 2016; the result of immense societal changes to the way travelers plan and conduct their trips as a response to global technological change. Provincial and community destination marketing organizations including Destination BC and Tourism Golden have intensely analyzed global, North American, regional, and local trends in tourism visitor services and have both agreed that the current model for visitor services in Golden no longer meets the needs of the traveler or the community.</p> <p>Meaningful visitation is decreasing at the expense of that which offers little ROI such as bus tour traffic headed for other destinations. The paradigmatic shift to the internet and mobile technology by large sectors of the population is rendering the large scale visitor centre obsolete, with the majority of tourists having made their traveling routes, destinations, and activities decisions long before reaching, or in most cases passing by a visitor centre facility. To this end, it has become starkly apparent that the cost/benefit of large scale provincial visitor centres has been upended, corroborated by similar facilities across British Columbia and even North America.</p> <p>In a recent report by Tourism Golden supported by Destination BC research, a new series of tactics to approach visitor services has been proposed in Golden, which would include a continuing though diminishing financial partnership with DBC to eventually match similar funding levels of other BC communities for visitor services. The new approach is community led and industry driven, allows for more flexibility, is responsive to seasonal demands and employs multiple channels to reach a broader range of visitors. It plans to achieve these goals by providing visitor services using online, mobile and crowd-sourcing channels as well as fixed locations.</p>

	<p>Key to this new approach is the establishment of a new, seasonal site for visitor services to travelers. The most logical, intuitive and ultimately successful location is at the former site of the Trans Canada Highway weigh scales within town limits. Several years ago, the weigh scales were moved to a location west of town in order to modernize and expand the facility. The old site remains an unimproved open area, though perfect for this opportunity for the following reasons being that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It provides an ideal westbound exit and large parking area that is currently well used as a temporary rest stop for travelers, including RV's and commercial trucks; • Utility services used for the original weigh scale building are relatively accessible; • It is Crown land currently vacant and unimproved, targeted for eventual development commensurate with future Highway 1 improvements; • The municipality has made investments of over \$300,000 in landscaping the boulevard adjacent to Highway 1 and installing an interpretive kiosk; and, • The site is the western terminus of the pedestrian path currently being developed by MOTI to link to Golden's downtown area. 	
Project status	Underway	
Milestones	Actual Start Date	2016
	Completion Date	December 2017
	Operational Date or other Major Milestones	
Project activities for the reporting year	No activities for the year	
Stakeholder Involvement:	A continuing dialogue with the DMO and Destination BC began shaping the project. Council met directly with Minister Stone at UBCM who offered support for the project.	
Project outcomes to date:	Conceptual design options.	
Communications Activities:	Community updates have given only brief details of the project.	



Project Term	Revised 2015-17 RDS													
Project Title	Snowmobile Trail Grooming													
Project description	Annual contribution of funds toward the costs of grooming popular snowmobile routes in the area, totaling over 50kms.													
Project rationale	A public recreation and visitor activity anchor for Golden, snowmobiling annually generates a net increase in economic activity for the area of approximately \$900,000, as well as support for 29 jobs or \$682,000 in wages and salaries. These and other results from a comprehensive 2009 study indicate the importance of the sport to the tourism economy of Golden. Good terrain, weather, and commercial amenities are not enough however; patron loyalty is greatly affected by the quality of access to popular destinations. Effective grooming programs are critical to maintaining visitation. Contributing roughly 1/3 of a positioned annual budget set by the local club and grooming society will provide a greater professional product, increase visitation, bolster product reputation, and provide more economic benefit to the area. The project qualifies for the maximum 10% of annual RMI funding to be allocated to operations/maintenance.													
Project status	Ongoing													
Milestones	Actual Start Date	2012												
	Completion Date	To RDS completion												
	Operational Date or other Major Milestones	Seasonal												
Project activities for the reporting year	The Golden Snowmobile Trail Society again leveraged the 45k RMI contribution toward an annual grooming budget of over \$130k.													
Stakeholder Involvement:	The Golden Snowmobile Trail Society is a DMO stakeholder is directly responsible for the RMI funds use.													
Project outcomes to date:	Another successful snowmobiling year, with tangible increases in visitation over the prior season. There has been over a 90% increase in ridership in 5 years.													
	 <p>Total Riders to the Area by Season</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Total Riders</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2011</td> <td>6,100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012</td> <td>10,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013</td> <td>9,900</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2014</td> <td>11,600</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015</td> <td>13,627</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Year	Total Riders	2011	6,100	2012	10,000	2013	9,900	2014	11,600	2015	13,627
Year	Total Riders													
2011	6,100													
2012	10,000													
2013	9,900													
2014	11,600													
2015	13,627													
Communications Activities:	Community updates have given only brief details of the project.													

2.5. RMI Projects Completed – Success and Lessons Learned

Learnings emerge at all stages of project development and implementation. Reviewing successes and lessons learned provides an opportunity to profile the continued success of RDS projects and allows knowledge to be shared amongst stakeholders to add value and/or efficiency to future projects.

Project Name	Successes	Lessons Learned
Visitor Sign Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly visible and striking architecture. Wayfinding for public. Thematic motif. High degree of tourist and local approval. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of such architecture Time for design and permitting can be long. They don't drive visits, but they do add to experience.
Visitor Amenity Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple uses- washrooms for campground and general public, store, public information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build green, but avoid building to LEED.
Banners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Street animation Unique design reinforces identity of community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unique design means higher cost Cost of bracketing significant Roadway restrictions can limit size and height

The building of the Dawn Mountain Nordic Trails day lodge enabled hosting the Canadian Masters Championship in 2012 and an immediate increase of over 145% in recorded day use numbers in the following season. Since then user numbers have continued to increase by over 30%. The Tourism Golden Winter Visitor Study shows that 3% of visitors now list Nordic skiing as their primary motivation but a further 8% used the lodge and trails during their visit to Golden.

-Joanne Sweeting, Executive Director, Tourism Golden



on behalf of our 618 members, the importance of the Resort Municipalities Initiative has been critically important to our development as a club. The club has, through very strong volunteer efforts, built a state of the art Nordic Centre on crown land which has been a major attraction to skiers from all over North America. Without the financial sharing of costs, this facility would not have been built and the resulting spin off to our local tourism industry would not have had the benefit. We believe that the RMI program is very important to ensuring we have attractive amenities in our tourism sector.

-Jeff Dolinsky, President, Golden Nordic Ski Club Society

The renovation and rejuvenation of the Civic Centre was a catalyst for launching Golden as a credible wedding destination. Since then, weddings have become a key driver of visitation; cited by 8% of visitors in the Tourism Golden Summer Visitor Study 2015 as their primary reason for visitation, and which has resulted in numerous businesses in related services being launched in Golden.

-Joanne Sweeting, Executive Director, Tourism Golden

Providing the pedestrian/cycling path link to the TCH from downtown has also provided a link to the BCVC. The view point is used constantly all day long by visitors who consider themselves lucky enough to capture the view and share it with their world. The trail also offers more magnificent views along the way down the path which is maintained during the winter months. The trail has provided a safe way for travelers to get to town for events without using a vehicle. There were so many times that staff from the BCVC reported people walking on the TCH alongside semi-trucks and vehicles while trying to take pictures... I am grateful for the RMI dollars and the community planners for understanding the safety issues and having the insight to develop a trail.

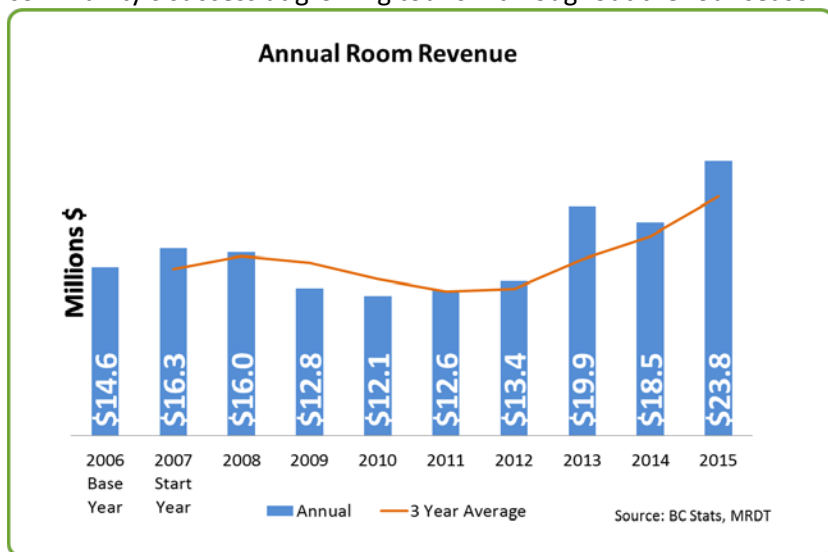
-Lynne Romano, Manager, BC Visitor Centre @ Golden

3. Economic Outcomes

The data in this section is collected by both the resort communities and the Whistler Centre for Sustainability (WCS) and are included in the Annual Program Report developed by WCS. While specific projects can impact these results, the results in this area only show trends over time and should be considered as a long-term impacts of investments in infrastructure, projects and programs.

Accommodation Sector Performance

Accommodation sector performance provides an indication of the size and health of overall tourism economy (more specifically the accommodation sector), by tracking changes in room revenue or room nights sold. Overnight visitors to the communities tend to participate in more experiences than day visitors, and the additional hours spent in the resort result in increased spending patterns and greater contributions per visitor to the local economy. Considering the variation in this indicator throughout the year provides a window into the community's success at growing tourism throughout the four seasons.



Annual room revenue was \$23.8 million in the recent reporting year, \$5.3 million more than the previous year. This results in a:

- 29% increase from the previous year.
- 64% increase compared to the base year.

Comparisons

- 28% points greater increase compared to the 36% total RM increase from the base year.

The 2014-2015 fiscal year saw the largest ever growth in MRDT revenues; increasing by 23% against the prior year.

Despite the impact of smoke from the large scale wildfires in the Okanagan, Washington and Idaho, and the beginnings of the decline in the Alberta oil industry, there was an obvious and palpable air of positivity in summer 2015; more visitors, many with licence plates from US states or from long haul markets such as Europe and China, were obvious in the downtown and key activity areas spending money, engaging with the local community and clearly enjoying their experiences in Golden as a vacation destination. Anecdotal commentary from accommodators that 2015 was a stellar year for visitation was supported by the MRDT revenues which increased by 30% for the months of June through August.

Despite the unusual snow conditions that affected most of North America in winter 2014-2015, MRDT revenues still increased by 2% against the prior winter.

Visitor Numbers

A resort communities' tourism economy is dependent on visitation. Visitor numbers provide an understanding of the health of the tourism economy, as well as the popularity the community as a tourism destination, quality of the service levels, and the perceived value of tourism offerings. Depending on the employed methodology, visitor numbers includes day visitors and overnight visitors differing from accommodation sector performance. Considering the variation in this indicator throughout the year provides a window into the community's success at growing tourism throughout four seasons.



Visitor Centre visits resulted in an average of 26.5 visitors per hour in 2015 and a total of 76,000 total visits. This results in a:

- 8% increase from the previous year.
- 63% increase compared to the base year.

Comparisons

- 73% points greater increase when compared to the RM average decrease of 10% from the base year.
- 88% points greater increase when compared to the Provincial decrease of 25% from the base year.

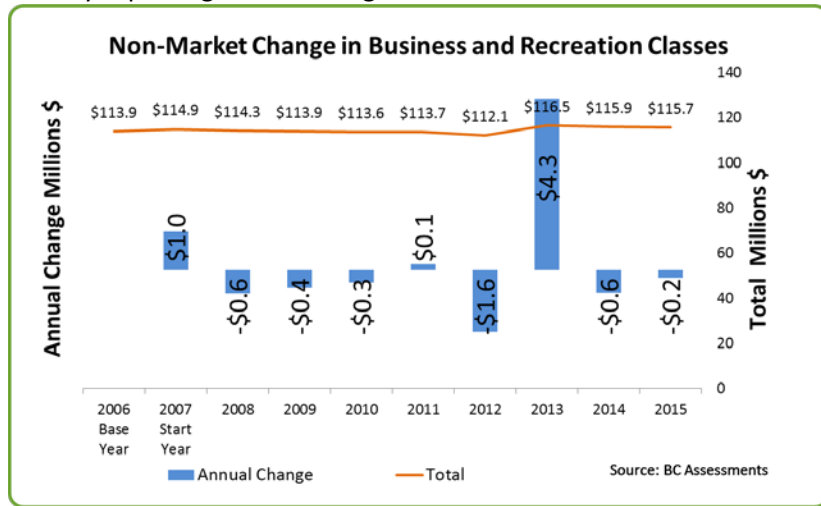
The weakening Canadian Dollar and reduced gas prices clearly provided a national, provincial and regional benefit in tourism visitation from the USA and Europe. Whilst the beginnings of the decline in the Alberta oil industry could have had a negative impact with widespread job losses, there may also have been a counter benefit, with those still in employment taking staycations rather than longer haul, exotic vacations.

Whilst these were influencing factors, the stats for Golden far outstrip provincial, national and even Global figures. Destination BC2 reports a 7.6% increase in international overnight visitation and 9.2% in overnight US visitors. This reflects statistics from Destination Canada3 for 2015 to the month of November showing growth of 9% from international markets. UNWTO recorded a 4% increase in global international arrivals in 2015.



Non-Market Change in Business and Recreation Tax Assessments

One of the desired outcomes of the RMI is to diversify the municipal tax base towards a better mix of residential and commercial taxes as well as increased investment in the community. This indicator measures progress in this area by reporting on the change in non-residential assessments.



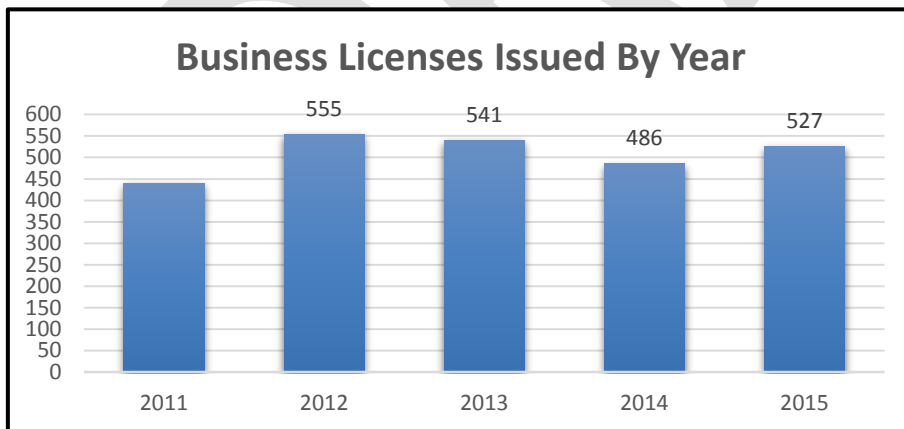
Non-market assessment in business and recreation classes totaled \$115.7 million in the most recent reporting year. This results in a:

- .2% or \$.2 million decrease from the previous year.
- 2% or \$1.8 million increase compared to the base year.

While the increase in Non-Market Change may seem modest, this represents a significant impact to a small community. The value of building permits and development in 2015 was at its highest in 10 years. Non market changes in recreation classes seldom dominate in this arena as most tourism based businesses other than traditional accommodators do not require large capital builds and most rent their needed spaces. That said, the non-market changes reflect a relative boom in new housing stock, a sizeable craft brewery building, upgrades and expansions to existing businesses, and a new early learning and child care facility.

Number of Business Licenses

The number of businesses in a community reflects economic success and potentially diversity of tourism offerings. Breaking the results out by tourism business can provide a more direct measure of tourism growth.



- Total Business Licenses issued represent an increase of 8% from the prior year. It is estimated that nearly 25% of such licenses are tourism based businesses.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

The benefits of RMI program accomplishments are not always immediately apparent, but are revealed through time. Having said this, great optimism has returned to this community as a result of the last 14 months of activity. It is clear that the accommodation sector has significantly rebounded, tourism revenues are returning to pre 2009 levels, development activity has returned with unprecedented residential and commercial sector initiatives.

Confidence in the local economy, public (RMI) and private sector new and renewal projects, exceptional marketing outputs by the DMO, and an outstanding product offering for the tourism industry in the Golden area are all contributing together once again to make Golden a growing resort destination.

In 2016 the Town looks forward to implementing Phase 2 of the Corridor Enhancement Project, building an iconic new community entrance sign, continuing its exceptional partnership with the Province (MOTI) in providing an important pedestrian link between the downtown and highway corridor, providing significant trail upgrades, and continuing to support the local snowmobile sector.



The community value of the Tourism Amenities that have been created because of the Resort Municipality Initiative, (RMI) funds cannot be understated for the Golden and Area A Community. From the development of our community Brand and signage program Kicking Horse Country, Authentic Community Adventure which has provided wayfinding for visitors and locals alike; to the

rebirth of our iconic Civic Centre, this community year after year is transformed with new and exciting amenities and beautification projects that enhance our Rural Rocky Mountain sense of place!

These nuances support the attraction of more visitors to our area as well as build a sense of community and civic pride in our residents. Without the RMI funding model in place, we as a community could not afford to update our tourism infrastructure which is a key economic driver for us.

As the Electoral Area A Director for the Columbia Shuswap Regional District, it is my hope that the RMI program will continue well into the future as Kicking Horse Country has many more projects and tourism products we support with these funds. We have proven the value of these amenities year after year with increased tourism growth.

*-Karen Cathcart, Director, Area A, Columbia Shuswap Regional District
Golden Campus Manager, College of the Rockies*

Town of Golden
2015 Actuals

	<u>2015 Actuals</u>
Opening Balance	1,298,586.09
Receipts	
Grant	
August	277,354.00
November	277,354.00
Interest	14,475.97
Total Receipts	<u><u>569,183.97</u></u>
Disbursements	
Operating	
Snowmobile Trail Grooming	45,000.00
RMI Visitor Sign - 3rd Party	596.91
Total Operating	<u>45,596.91</u>
Capital	
Visitor Sign Program	113,372.92
Corridor Enhancement	621,251.68
Trail Enhancements	
Visitor Information Infrastructure	4,735.00
Spirit Square Seating	
Total Capital	<u>739,359.60</u>
Total Disbursements	<u><u>784,956.51</u></u>
Closing	<u><u>1,082,813.55</u></u>