

# Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

**Sonoma County Tourism  
BIA Contract Presentation  
April 28, 2020**



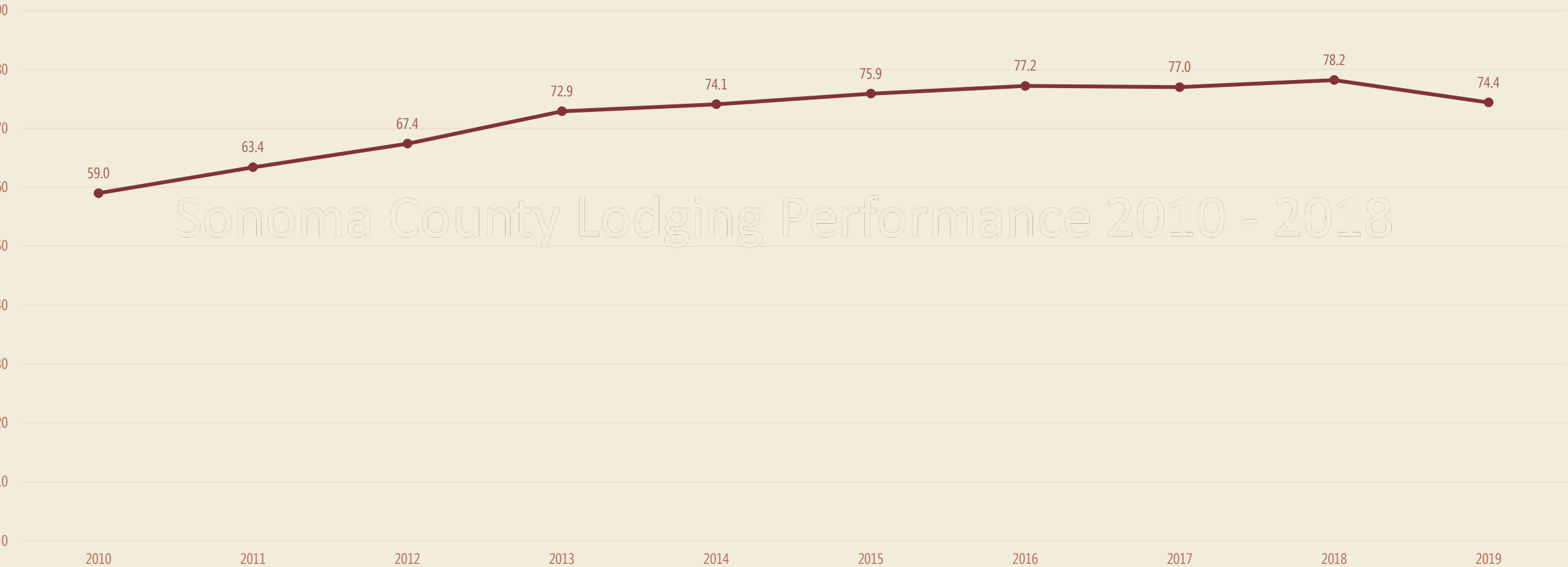


# Historical Perspective

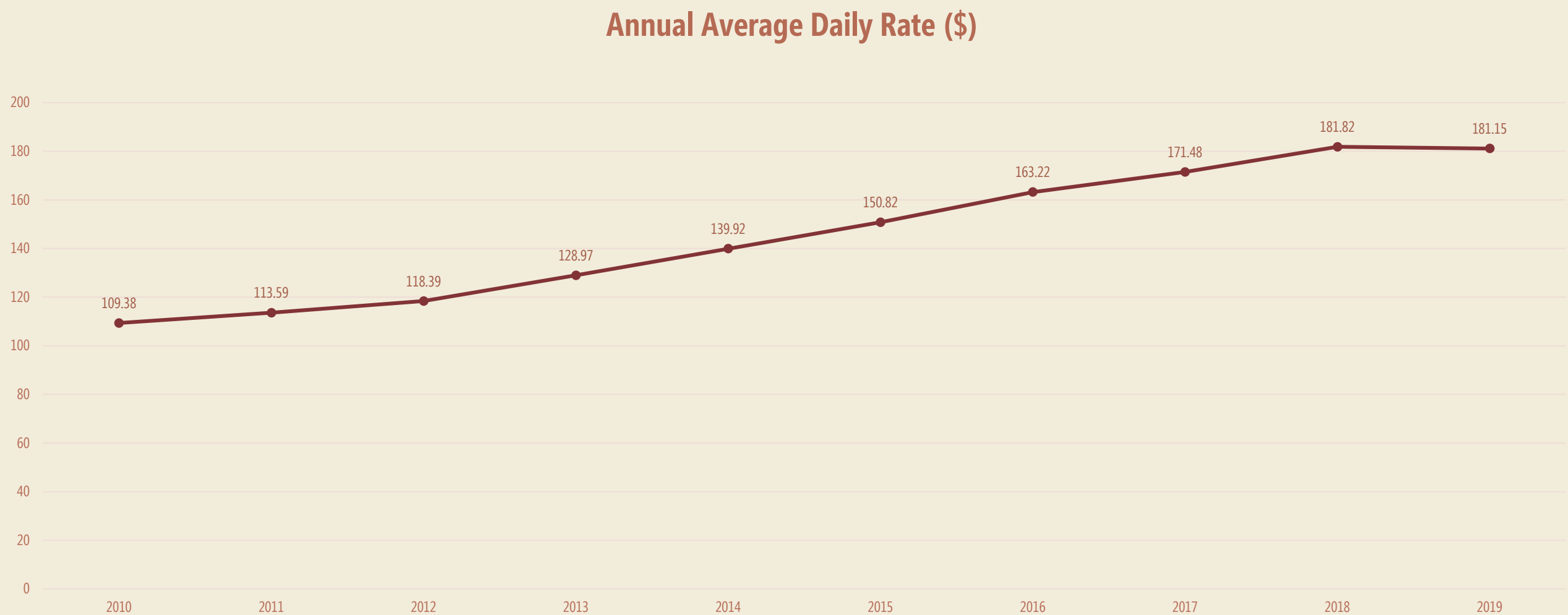


# Sonoma County Lodging Performance 2020 - 2019

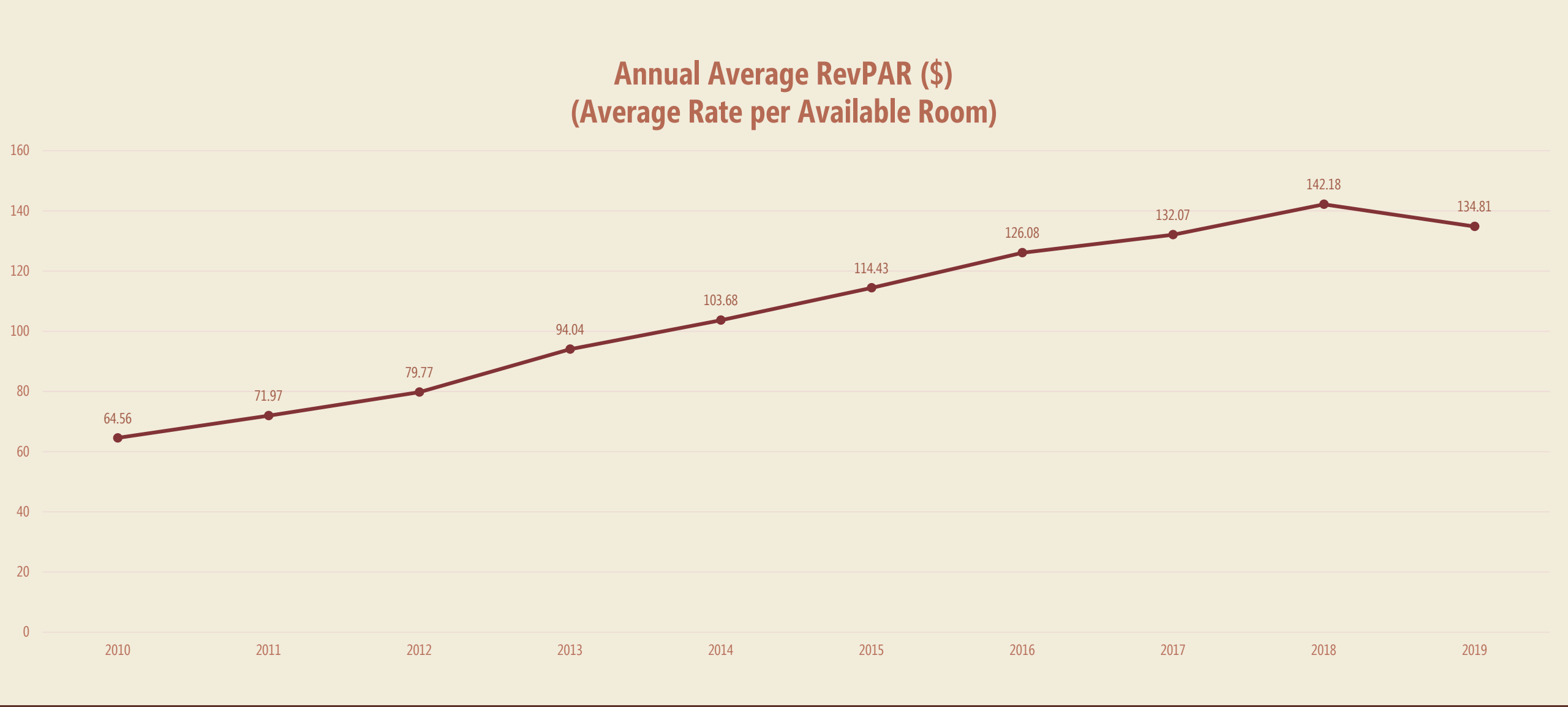
Annual Average Occupancy Rate (%)



Sonoma County Lodging Performance 2010 - 2018









# FY18-19 Report – KPI Achievement

- **Increase the number of travelers to Sonoma County, most especially overnight visitors by two percent (2%) year-over-year.**
  - As the organization's mandate is to drive the number of visitors to the destination, this is the central key performance indicator. While visitation is starting to come back, it has been a very challenging 18-months following Sonoma County's wildfires. We did, however, institute visitor research so we have a benchmark.
- **Create a dynamic research foundation that tracks and communicates industry and organizational performance.**
  - SCT has established partnerships with industry-leading research vendors to derive a full accounting of its domestic visitors and a reliable snapshot of its international visitors. Vendors include:
    - Longwoods International – Foundational visitor research
    - Dean Runyan & Associates (collaboration with Visit California) – Economic Impact Research
    - VisaVue – International inbound visitation based on use of Visa cards
    - MMGY – Visitor perception research as it related to the brand development
    - Sonoma County Economic Development Board – Moody and general industry insights



# FY18-19 Report – KPI Achievement

- **Initiate a new funding model for Sonoma County Tourism that creates opportunities for growth within both traditional (tourism industry) and non-traditional (consumer brand aligned) partnerships.**
  - SCT has begun discussions around a number of incremental funding options that can help boost funding to its sales and marketing efforts. While the funding model has not yet been fully developed we have far greater insight into the potential funding streams.
- **Expand partner marketing and business development opportunities.**
  - This has been an important component of SCT's sales and marketing programs throughout the year. Whether celebrating new flights, engaging with new group business clients or showcasing Sonoma County to the world, SCT provided business-building opportunities to partners at a greater level than before.

# FY18-19 Report – KPI Achievement

- **Boost community outreach to ensure Sonoma County Tourism is perceived as a strong community partner.**
  - Working to become a more valued and relevant member of the Sonoma County community has created numerous opportunities for the SCT team to interface with tourism industry partners as well as a variety of other business, service and educational organizations.
  - SCT worked closely with state and community leaders continuing the conversations around fire recovery and crisis management. Tourism Cares continued to make an impact at more than seven area locations.
  - SCT developed a significant Value of Tourism outreach around National Tourism Week. Including the Power of Tourism microsite, printed insert, posters, window clings and a celebratory gathering of tourism professionals.
  - SCT went on a countywide speaking circuit providing organization and program overviews to Chambers, City Councils and service organizations.

# FY18-19 Report – KPI Achievement

- **Develop a Destination Management Plan designed to identify a responsible long-term approach for creating a destination that addresses key issues and identifies innovative approaches for managing critical issues and bolstering the economy through travel and tourism activities.**
  - During this plan time period, outreach was completed to potential partner firms with a request for proposal. SCT accepted proposals from three potential vendors and worked with its Executive Committee and Board to identify a contractor. This work will begin in earnest in August 2019 and should be concluded during FY19-20.
- **Cultivate trust in Sonoma County Tourism through ensuring transparency in budgeting, openness in meetings and timely, ongoing communications.**
  - During FY18-19, SCT distributed a partner survey that showed as 71% partner satisfaction rating and a 72% net promoter score, measuring how likely our partners are to refer SCT to their peers.
  - During this past year, SCT worked with approved auditors to complete five audits, three for FY17-18 and for CY2016 and the first six months of 2017. All three financial statement audits were clean and the two travel & expense audits were completed with responses and policy changes made to address the few audit findings.



# Tourism Impact in Sonoma County

- Tourism generates \$2.1 Billion for Sonoma County<sup>1</sup>
- Tourism/hospitality supports 22,300 jobs in Sonoma County (1 in 10 jobs)
- For every \$1 spend on SCT's paid marketing: <sup>2</sup>
  - \$166 comes back to Sonoma County in visitor spending
  - \$18.13 comes back to Sonoma County in tax revenue (\$1.24 goes to SCT)
- Sonoma County's paid advertising directly influenced 3.7 million trips
- In 2018, Sonoma County welcomed 10.8 million visitors:
  - 6.0 million day
  - 4.8 million overnight
- 10% is international travel (estimate based on VisaVue data)

# Travelers to Sonoma County

- Average Party Size: 3 persons
- Average Length of the Stay: 3 days
- Gender:
  - Male 57%
  - Female 43%

<sup>1</sup> Dean Runyan Associates, 2018

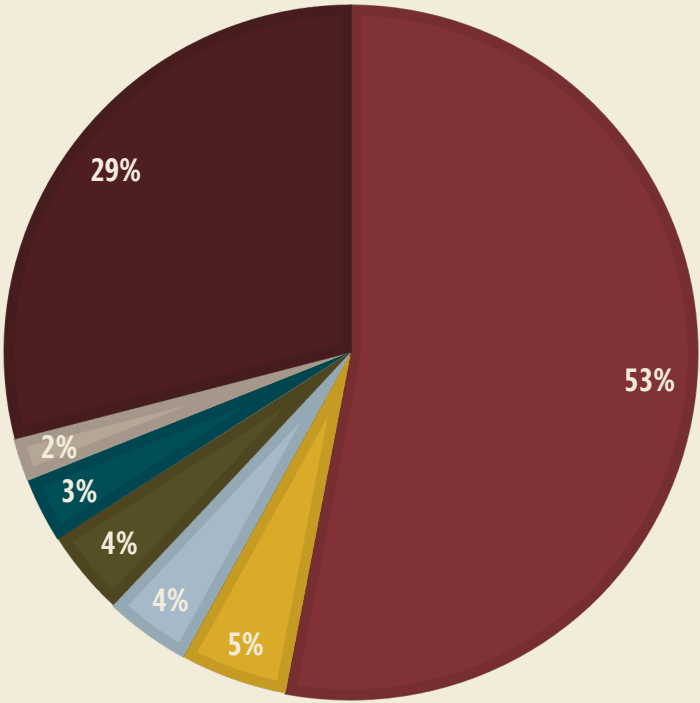
<sup>2</sup> Longwoods International, 2018



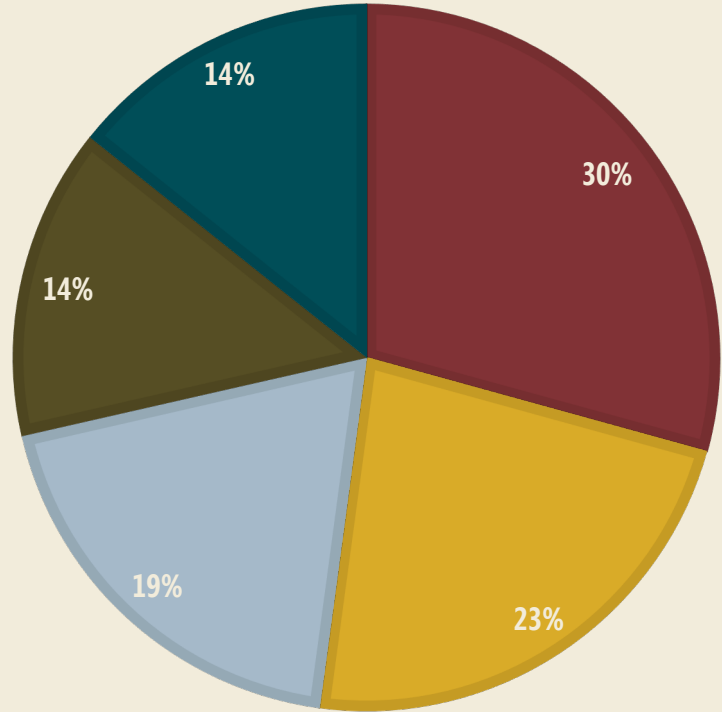
# Travelers to Sonoma County

TOP FEEDER STATES

California 53% New York 5% Florida 4% Texas 4%  
Nevada 3% Illinois 2% Other 29%



TOP ACTIVITIES



Winery 41% Shopping 32%  
Fine Dining 27% Landmark/Historic Site 20%  
Regional/State Park 20%





# FY19-21 Strategic Plan

# Mission, Vision, Evolution FY19-21 Plan

## Mission:

Promote overnight stays and encourage travel within Sonoma County.

## Vision:

A robust economy for Sonoma County businesses and residents balanced by stewardship of the region's natural, cultural and industrial assets.

## Organizational Evolution:

Move from a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) to a Destination Stewardship Organization (DSO) with the goal of ensuring all programming is in the best interest of Sonoma County. The core programming around sales & marketing remain, but activities and plans show strong leadership for the long-term sustainability of the County and its residents.



# Travel Kindly Pledge



Leave No  
Trace



Tread  
Lightly



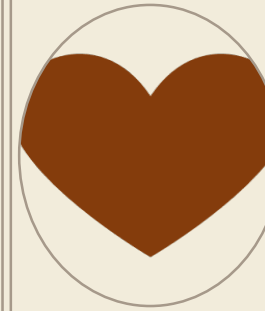
Go  
Beyond



Think  
Local



Make an  
impact



Spread  
Kindness



Plan  
Ahead



Be  
Mindful





# Core Values

**Strategic**

**Transparent**

**Collaborative**

**ServiCentric**

**Entrepreneurial**

**Trusted**

# 2019 – 2021 Priorities

01

Build Brand  
Awareness

02

Build  
Stewardship  
Platform

03

Build  
(Incremental)  
Revenue

# 2019-2021 Key Initiatives

01

**Build a  
Data-Driven  
Foundation**

02

**Drive  
Overnight  
Visitation**

03

**Spearhead  
Long-term  
Destination  
Stewardship**

04

**Enhance  
Value  
Through  
Robust  
Partnerships**

05

**Run an  
Effective  
Business**

# Overarching Key Performance Indicators

1. Increase revenue to Sonoma County by 2% (\$43.5 million) year-over-year through tourism-based activities. Funding will be realized with the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) funding stream and as identified as visitor spending in the Dean Runyan economic impact study. As a benchmark:
  - 2018 overall destination spending was \$2.175 Billion (Dean Runyan Economic Impact Survey)
  - 2018 TOT collection in the unincorporated areas was \$2,107,840
2. Initiate an incremental funding model for Sonoma County Tourism that “grows the pie” for the organization’s sales and marketing budgets.
  - Year 1 Goal: \$500,000
  - Year 2 Goal: \$1 million

# Overarching Key Performance Indicators

3. Develop and begin to implement a Destination Master Plan designed to identify a responsible long-term approach to destination planning and development.
  - Develop and implement a destination sustainability/stewardship platform that creates opportunities for visitors to embrace responsible tourism practices.
4. Create new sales, marketing and international outreach cooperative sales and marketing partnerships that provide local partners the chance to build business and enhance the Life Open Up brand through partner alignment.
5. Reconstruct the organization's financial operations including financial management, contracting, investments and accounts payable and receivables -- all within a fully transparent environment.
6. Review, and revise as needed, Sonoma County Tourism Bureau guiding ordinances and bylaws to reflect current needs and opportunities.



# July 1, 2019 – September 30, 2019

- July
  - Summer “Life Opens Up” media campaign in full swing
- August
  - Annual Meeting held Aug. 30 – focus on Sustainability, introduced Longwoods Research, Destination Master Plan
- September
  - Brand USA Travel Week – U.K. – Sonoma County one of the inaugural participants
  - New group incentive program for Helms Brisco off to a solid start. In its first month, eight (8) leads contributing over 1,000 room nights have been sent to the destination.

# Advertising – Top Placements

## Expedia – Sonoma County Hotel Booking Campaign

- Room Nights Booked: 13.7k
- Impressions: 4 million

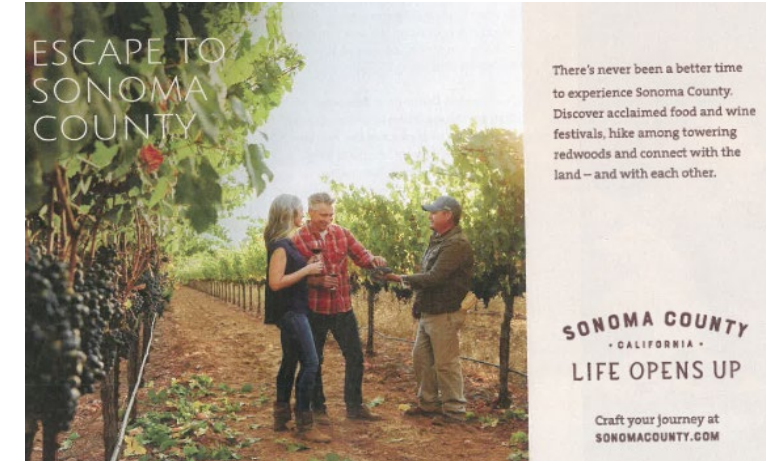
## Via/AAA Advertising - July & August e-news feature

- Clicks: 1185
- Deployment: 1,259,706
- Opened: 351,416



Even if all Sonoma County had to offer were its legendary wines, you'd have more than enough reason to visit. Consider that there are literally hundreds of gorgeous local wineries, many of them award-winning—one of them fresh off a Best in Show victory at the heated 2019 Decanter World Wine Awards.

In partnership with:  
**SONOMA COUNTY**  
• CALIFORNIA •  
**LIFE OPENS UP**



## TravelZoo – Sponsored Content

- Sponsored website story and eblasts
- Page Views, Reach, Social Actions, and Engagements passed campaign targets.
- Time on Site, Cost Per View, and CTR all above targeted goals

## Alaska Airlines In-Flight Magazine – October 2019 “Best of California” edition

- 1,019,000 travelers per month on flights to/from California
- Deployment: over 3.8 million





# Media Relations – Top Results

## ➤ Los Angeles Times

- 23,975,350 Unique Monthly Viewers
- Ongoing relationship produced coverage of Jack London State Park and Kenwood Inn & Spa.

## ➤ Lonely Planet

- 11,849,867 Unique Monthly Visitors
- Result of hosting Sarah Sekula – published a roundup of adventurous ways to explore the redwoods, from hiking, driving, to wildlife watching.

## ➤ Fodor's Travel

- 4,746,829 Unique Monthly Viewers
- As a result of SCT's ongoing relationship with writer Daniel Mangin – Sonoma County was featured in his top shopping destination picks.
- Featured in Fodor's 2 more times in Summer as a direct result of our ongoing relationships.

## ➤ Reader's Digest

- 351,405 Unique Monthly Viewers
- Outreach resulted in Jen McCafery documenting Pacific Coast Sights, highlighting Bodega Bay.

## ➤ Country Life

- 113,250 Unique Monthly Viewers
- Pitch resulted in Ferrari-Carano named a bucket list destination as one of the most beautiful gardens in the world.

## Reader's Digest



## Lonely Planet



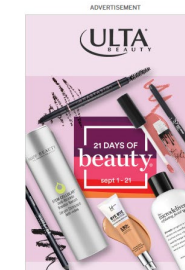
Climbing one of California's great redwoods is a feat few people attempt © Aaron Wockenfuss / Lonely Planet

## Los Angeles Times

Enjoy Broadway in Jack London State Park on a weekend trip to Sonoma



Transcendence Theatre Company in "Broadway Under the Stars" at Sonoma's Jack London State Historic Park. (Rebecca Jane Call)



## Country Life

Ferrari-Carano Vineyards & Winery – Sonoma County, California





## Group Business Development

- Destination lead volume was up 34% year on year
- Tentative room nights placed into the market during same time frame up 49% year on year
- Attended IMEX America
  - 82 onsite 1:1 appointments
  - 14,000 planners in attendance
  - 3 Partners participated



# Then Came Fall

PSPS Events

Kincade Fire



# Oct. 9 – 11 PSPS Impact Survey

- Of the businesses surveyed, only 42% remained fully functional during the outages. Twenty two percent provided guests with limited services and more than 1/3 (36%) closed altogether.
- Accommodations impacted by the outages reported an average of 42 lost room nights over the three-day period
  - 51% reporting that they also compensated inconvenienced guests at an average rate of \$2,494.
  - 73% reported then losing an average of 45 future room nights directly because of the black outs.
- Revenue losses for the other businesses also were substantial
  - Wineries and attractions reporting an average three-day loss of \$1,679
  - Restaurants \$4,700

# Oct. 9 – 11 PSPS Impact Survey

- 52% of businesses reported that they continued to pay their employees despite the reduction in services at a mean wage of \$2,525
- Major revenue losses occurred not only from reduced patronage but also from ancillary impacts
  - 41% reported revenue losses related to purchasing and/or running alternative power
  - 49% reported losses due to refrigeration related food spoilage
  - 52% reported losses due to the purchase of other supplies used to manage the black outs
- Overall economic impact \$50 – 70 million – many tourism businesses severely impacted

## SCT Crisis Management Approach

- **Marketing**

- Paused all advertising, social, SEM
- All agency meeting – 10/31
- Deployed SCT staff to take pictures/videos of destination to show unaffected areas
- Re-started social media 10/31, leveraging new photos and #GatherInSonoma
- Ad agency call – 11/1



# Kincade Fire

- **Media**

- Media calls/interviews
- Coverage tracking – domestic and international
- 324 Stories - 43% of all coverage is Only Sonoma County
- Daily calls with TRIO partners and media agency

- **Internal**

- SCT office in evacuation zone; closed all week
- Set up Command Center at DoubleTree
- Daily messages to the SCT Board
- Talking points developed for Board/staff
- VCA Crisis Task Force Call – 11/4

- **Visitors/Public**

- Determined canceled or postponed events and updated partners and website accordingly
- Provided fire update through banner on website



# Kincade Fire

## SCT Crisis Management Approach

- **Partner Outreach**
  - Daily messaging to partners
  - AVA, SCV, SCW meeting – 10/31
  - Partner toolkit developed/posted
  - Provided staff with \$100 each to spend locally – *pay it forward*





# Go-Forward Strategy

- Following Kincade Fires
  - **Gather in Sonoma County**
    - Generate visitation during the Holidays, early 2020 (November – January)
    - Tap into Sonoma County's DNA of generosity, abundance and amazing culinary offerings
    - **#GatherInSonoma**
  - Because Fall was becoming uncertain – pivot marketing to focus on Spring
  - **Sonoma County In Bloom**
    - Celebrate the regeneration, beauty and promise of Spring
    - Fully integrated marketing campaign
    - Life Opens Up – works beautifully for Spring
    - **#LifeOpensUp**



# Gather In Sonoma County Campaign #GatherInSonoma

- Timing:** Nov. 2019 – Jan. 2020
- Markets:** Bay Area/Sacramento  
LA/Orange County
- Elements:** Earned Media  
Social Media  
"Gather" Landing Page  
Content & Video  
Paid Media  
Events – Gather in SF  
Destination Partnerships  
Partner Toolkit
- Messages:** Visit Now  
Holidays in Sonoma County  
Key Moments in Time/Events  
Partner Deals





# 2020 Was Off to a Great Start!

- 2019 Wine Enthusiast Wine Region of the Year

*"... Sonoma County is renowned for producing high-quality wines of distinction. The region is also a standard-bearer for best practices beyond just wine production, as a champion of true sustainability."*

- Forbes Top 20 Travel Destinations

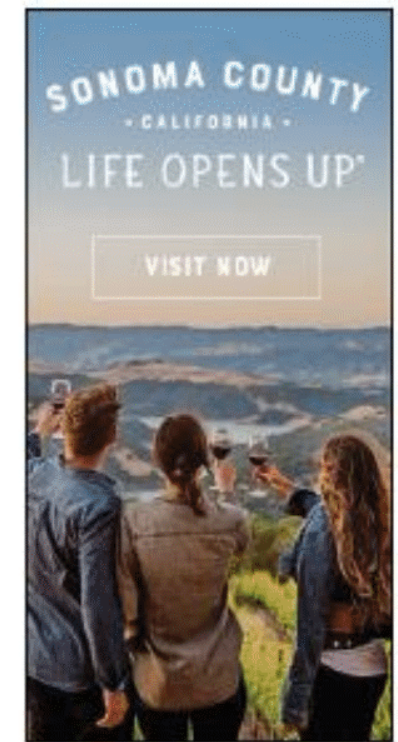
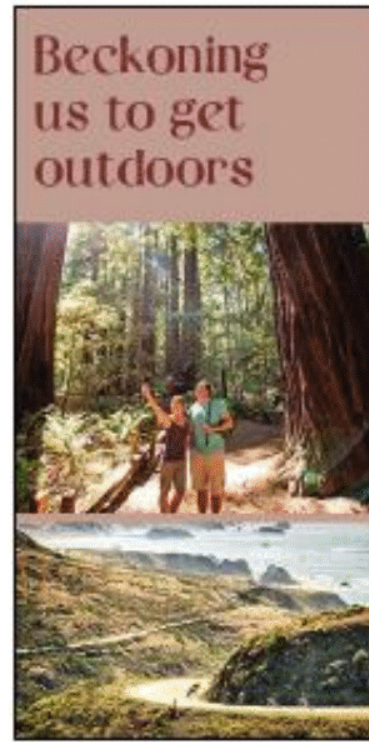
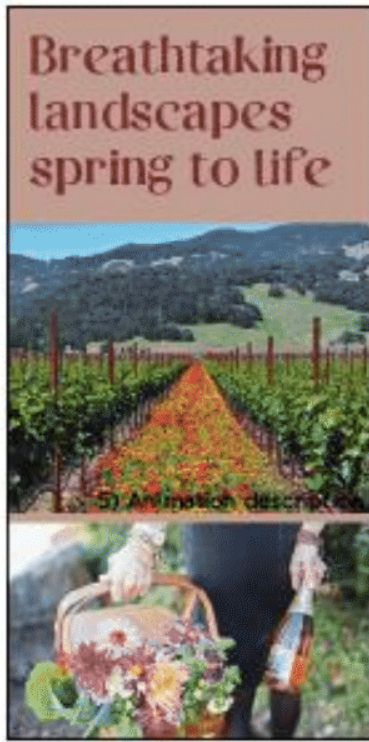
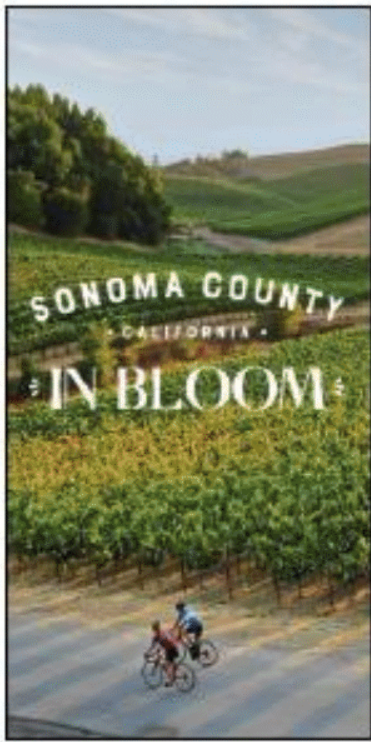
- Solid Growth in Hotel Occupancy/Revenue

- January
- February
- Beginning of March

- Start of the "In Bloom" Spring Campaign — focused on the pivot to driving Spring leisure and business travel...







# Sonoma County "In Bloom" Spring 2020



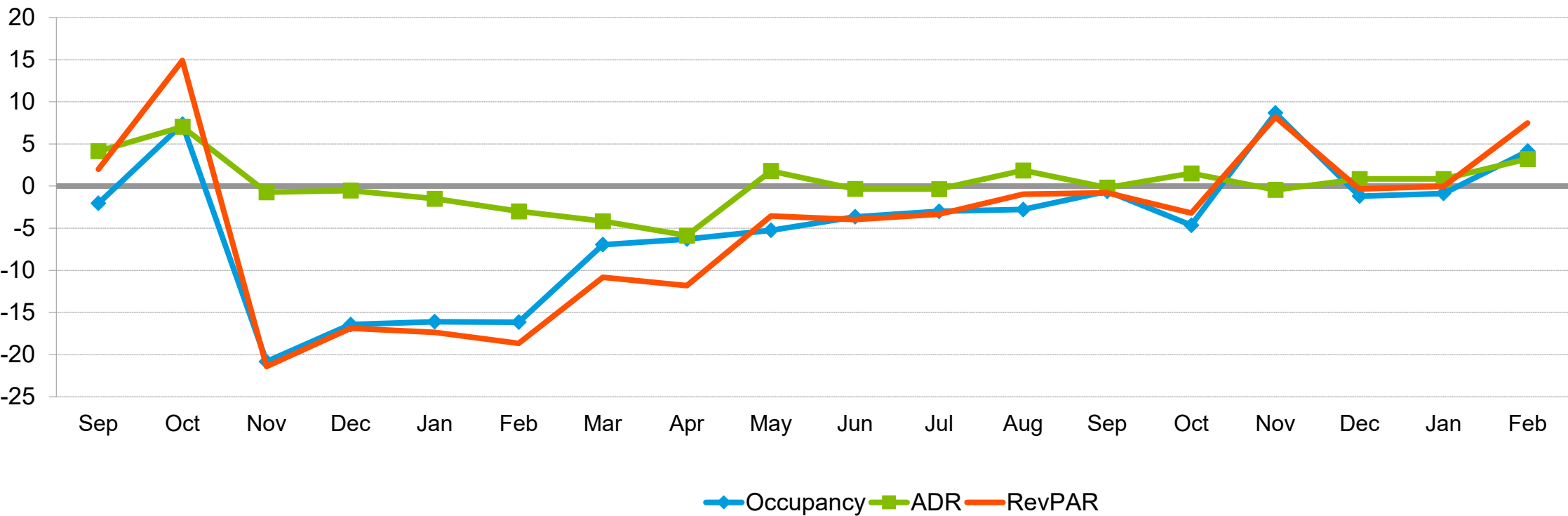
## Group Business Development Business Levels

- Destination lead volume was up 18% Year On Year
- 17,479 tentative room nights in the market between June and December
  - This does not include the room nights which will rebook from cancellations March - May



# STR Report – February 2020

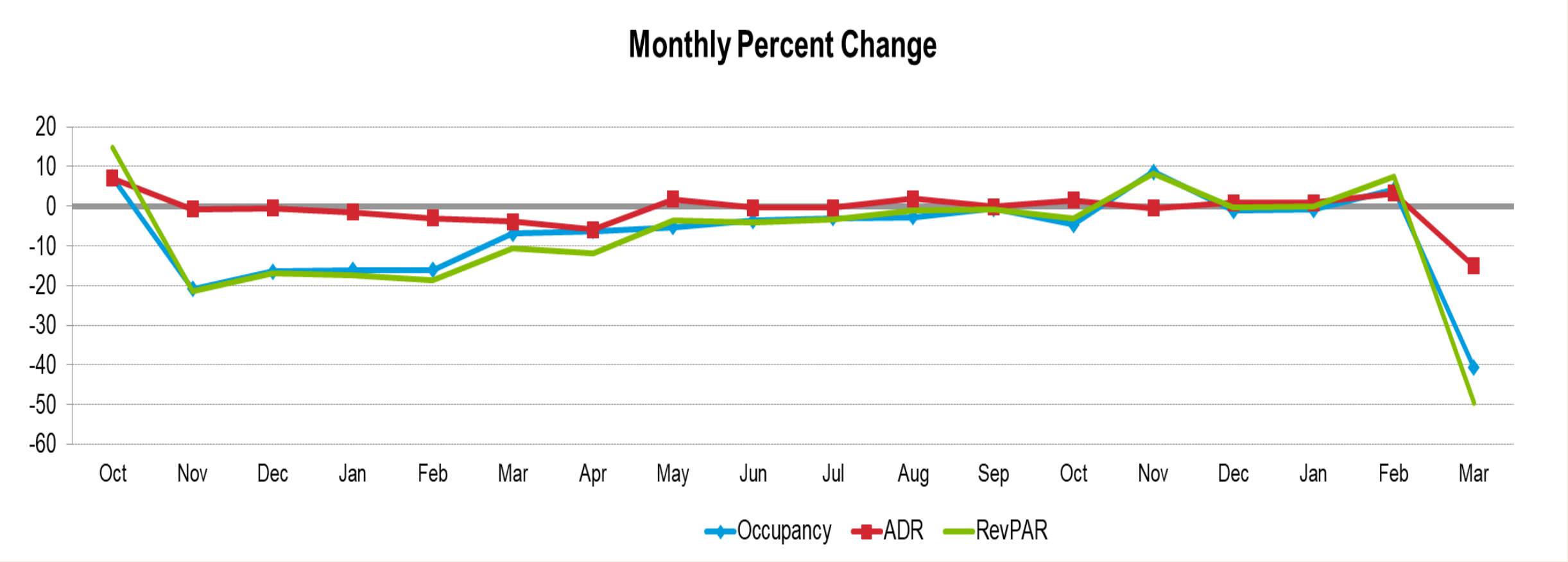
Monthly Percent Change



# Then Came COVID-19

# Sonoma County Lodging Performance – March 2020

## COVID-19 Impact



# Sonoma County Tourism - Response

- All teams reviewed programs – ended all non-mission critical
- 80% salary – ET
- Furloughed six positions
- Communicate, coordinate with key local, state and national industry groups
- Communicate with local, statewide elected officials/staffs
- Tracking local business closures, showcasing creative approaches
- Working to retain customer engagement through social posts
- Provide partner outreach 2x per week; consumer outreach 1x per week



# Sonoma County Tourism – Financial Impact

- Original Budget for TOT and BIA Revenue (July 2019 to June 2020): \$7,920,537
- Revised Budget PSPS/Kincaid Fire Impact:
  - \$7,690,641
  - Decrease of \$229,896 (3% decrease)
    - Biggest impact October to December revenue with slight decreases anticipated through the rest of the fiscal year
- Revised Budget COVID-19 Impact:
  - \$5,851,142
  - Decrease of \$2,069,395 from original budget (26% decrease)
  - Decrease of \$1,839,499 from revised budget (24% decrease)
    - Impact March to June
      - March – revenue projected down 50%
      - April – revenue projected down 90%
      - May – revenue projected down 85%
      - June – revenue projected down 60%
    - Revenue decrease projected using local information, STR reports and trends from countries that are further along in the COVID-19 timeline than the US

# Marketing & Public Relations

- Paused all promotional elements as of mid March
- Cancelled contracts with most vendors
- Revising ad agency agreement
- Limited content development and social media has shifted to inspiration and information
- During-crisis content and messaging calendar






# Social Media

Sonoma County, CA

March 18 at 11:04 AM · 🌐

One of Sonoma County's most famous residents, Luther Burbank, perhaps described Sonoma County best when he said that it is "the chosen spot of all the earth as far as nature is concerned." We understand that the thought of travel is hard to consider right now. And as we social distance and recommend the same, our social channels in the coming days will be a source of inspiration and information.

We'll post current images of Sonoma County, showcasing our amazing wineries, breweries, eateries, trails, redwood groves, and 55 miles of coastline, while also sharing ways they can be appreciated and enjoyed from near and afar for the days, weeks, and months to come.



You are commenting as a top fan!

Manage badge

📷

Write a comment...

GIF

😊

🏠

📺

👤

📁

🔔

☰

sonomacounty • Following

Goat Rock Beach

sonomacounty

You can still enjoy the calm of the ocean from the comfort of your home. Cue the sounds of waves 🌊 and whales 🐋.

Thank you 📺 @vivian.p.chen for the virtual escape.

sonomacounty • Following

Windsor Town Green

sonomacounty

Buds have burst, flowers are blooming--it's #spring in Sonoma County! Beautiful shot during early spring by @justsonomacounty.

#SonomaCounty #LifeOpensUp #windsortowngreen #CALove #calilove #VisitCalifornia #northbay #bayarea #california #spring

1d

wine\_country\_fine\_homes

Gorgeous ❤️

13h Reply

View replies (1)

❤️

💬

📍

🔖

Liked by jen\_buffo and 980 others

1 DAY AGO

www.sonomacounty.com



# "In This Together" Video

- Created in house, utilizing video messages from business and community leaders throughout Sonoma County
- Distributed online and via social
- Posted on SCT's YouTube channel
  - We encourage our partners to leverage this video in your own messaging!





# Local Marketing Support

## Restaurants

- Maintaining list of restaurants offering delivery, curbside pickup, and take out services
  - Map feature
- Restaurant sign distribution
- Supporting [#SCTakeOutEatIn](#)



We are **OPEN:**

☒ **TAKE-OUT**

☒ **ONLINE** *Orders*

☒ **CURBSIDE**

☒ **DELIVERY**



SONOMA COUNTY

#Sctakeouteatin

# Local Marketing Support

## Beverage Industry

- Maintaining list of wineries, breweries, cideries, and distilleries offering curbside pickup or delivery services
- Supporting Sonoma County Vintners' Sip from Home program
- Throughout the shelter in place, SCT partners can upload shipping deals into the extranet, so they appear as part of your online listing with us!







## Group Business Development Activities

- Hotels with upcoming groups or active RFPs have been assigned to VP/Manager for outreach to offer support and to establish a main point of contact from our team for each property
  - Support including but not limited to, planner outreach and statistical support
- Direct outreach with top planners to offer support – over 11k messages sent since shelter in place was issued
- Participation in Global Meetings Industry Day with creation of inspirational message and graphic shared on social media channels
- Managing list of hotels within the county who are willing and able to house first responders and Covid-19 patients should the need arise



# COVID-19 Recovery Strategy

- Early Stages of Development
- Research tells us travelers will:
  - Want to stay close to home ("Nearcations")
  - Seek the familiar
  - Want places that offer open space, uncrowded
  - Book vacation rentals
  - Demand health protocols
  - Find mental and physical health/wellness
  - Be in control
  - Want a value
- Virtual Town Hall TBD
- Identify protocols – ensure visitors confident





# Revised SCT FY20-21 Budget

- Transient Occupancy Tax

- Pre-COVID-19: \$2,462,358
- Post-COVID-19: \$1,620,348

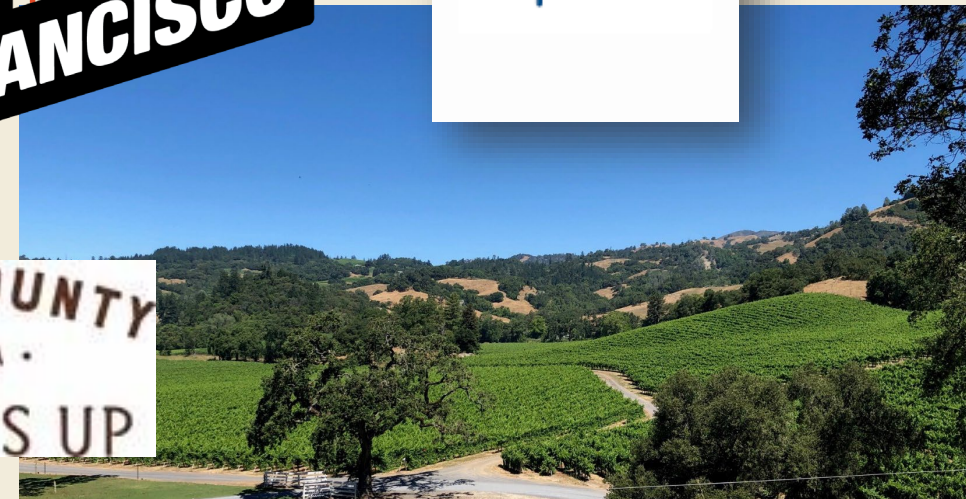
- BIA

- Pre-COVID-19: \$5,451,844
- Post-COVID-19: \$3,653,941

Post-COVID-19 Total Budget (Estimate): \$5,274,289 (33% reduction)

# We're Going to Get Lift...

- Visit California – Potentially focus on California and Western U.S.
- SF Travel
- Sonoma County is well poised to welcome travelers
  - Open space
  - Beach/coastline
  - Natural beauty
  - Value
  - Wellness
  - Sustainability
  - Wine
- *Life Opens Up* brand
  - #GatherInSonoma







**Thank you!**