



City of Valdez

212 Chenega Ave.
Valdez, AK 99686

Meeting Agenda - Final

Economic Diversification Commission

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

6:00 PM

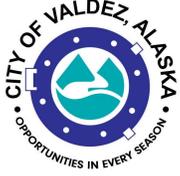
Council Chambers

Work Session Only

WORK SESSION AGENDA - 6:00 pm

[Presentation: Valdez Visitor Market Profile 2016 - Susan Bell, McDowell Group](#)

[Presentation: Northern Opportunity: Alaska's Economic Strategy - Ethan Tyler, State of Alaska, DCCED, Economic Development Division](#)



Legislation Text

File #: 17-0050, **Version:** 1

ITEM TITLE:

Presentation: Valdez Visitor Market Profile 2016 - Susan Bell, McDowell Group

SUBMITTED BY: Lisa Von Bargen, CED Director

FISCAL NOTES:

Expenditure Required: N/A

Unencumbered Balance: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

None. Work session presentation and discussion only.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

McDowell Group completed a Visitor Statistics Study for the City of Valdez in 2016. The final report was provided to the City in December. Susan Bell with McDowell Group will be in Valdez to present the findings of the study. A copy of the study and of Ms. Bell's PowerPoint Presentation is attached to this agenda statement for the work session.



Valdez Visitor Market Profile

Prepared for:
City of Valdez

December 2016



Valdez Visitor Market Profile

Prepared for:
City of Valdez

Prepared by:



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December 2016

Table of Contents

- Introduction and Methodology 1**
 - Introduction 4
 - Methodology..... 4
- Visitor Volume 7**
 - Total Visitor Volume 7
 - Visitor Volume by Mode..... 7
- Visitor Survey Results 9**
 - Trip Purpose 9
 - Lodging and Length of Stay 9
 - Activities in Valdez 10
 - Satisfaction Ratings..... 11
 - Trip Planning 13
 - Visitor Spending..... 17
 - Demographics..... 18

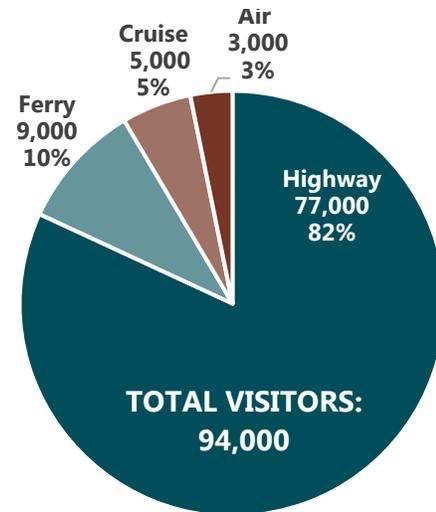
Executive Summary

The City of Valdez contracted with McDowell Group to conduct a survey with Valdez visitors over a seven-month period in 2016. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of Valdez' complex visitor markets: their activities, length of stay, satisfaction, trip planning behavior, and demographics, among other subjects. A total of 515 visitors were surveyed, including 415 in the summer months (May to September) and 100 in winter (February through April). The sample focuses on independent travelers that can be impacted by Valdez marketing efforts. The sample excludes cruise and cruise-tour passengers and people traveling only for business. The project also included an estimate of visitor volume over the 12-month period of October 2015 through September 2016 based on highway, ferry, air, and cruise traffic data. Following are key findings from the study.

Visitor Volume

- Valdez hosted an estimated 94,000 pleasure visitors between October 2015 and September 2016. Four-fifths (82 percent) of visitors exited via highway; 10 percent via ferry; and 3 percent via air. Five percent were cruise passengers who exited via motorcoach or catamaran.
- Summer visitation accounted for 92 percent of annual volume (86,500 visitors), while winter represented 8 percent (7,500 visitors).
- Visitors from outside of Alaska represented 66 percent of annual volume (62,500), while Alaska residents represented 34 percent (31,500).

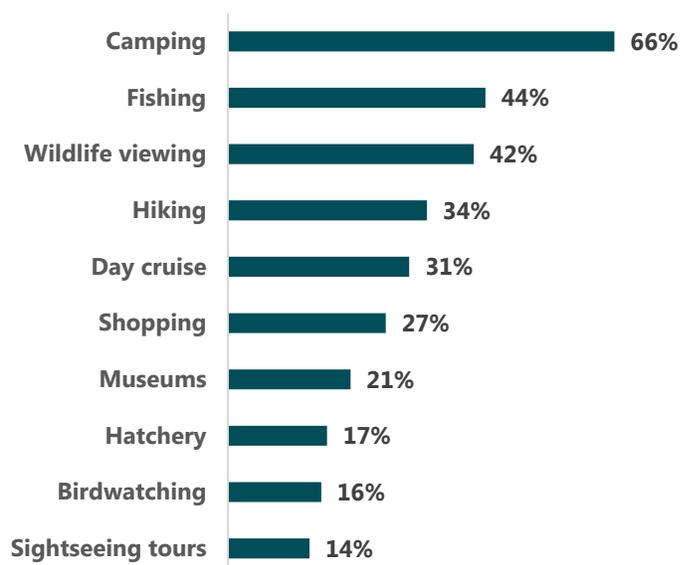
Estimated Valdez Pleasure Visitor Volume by Exit Mode, October 2015-September 2016



Visitor Activities

- Camping (including RV camping) was the number one activity reported by Valdez visitors, followed by fishing, wildlife viewing, and hiking.
- Respondents from outside Alaska were more likely to participate in wildlife viewing, day cruises, and sightseeing tours. Alaska residents were more likely to participate in camping, fishing, and biking.
- Winter visitors' top activities were ice climbing (54 percent), skiing/snowboarding (50 percent), visiting friends/relatives (26 percent), and snowmachining (21 percent).

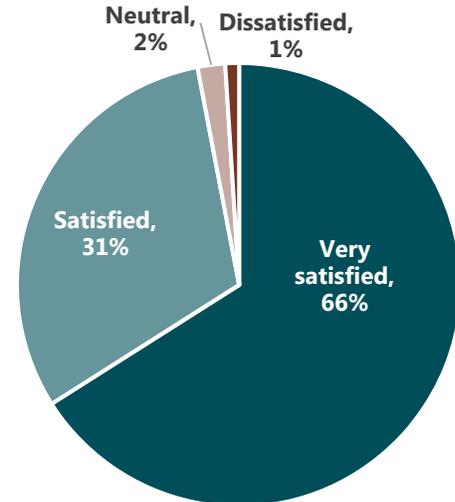
Top Ten Valdez Activities, Summer Visitors



Satisfaction with Valdez

- Summer visitors expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their overall Valdez trip, with 97 percent either very satisfied (66 percent) or satisfied (31 percent). Only 1 percent were dissatisfied, and zero were very dissatisfied.
- Alaska residents gave higher satisfaction ratings, at 83 percent very satisfied, compared to 58 percent of non-residents.
- The highest-rated categories were sightseeing, friendliness of residents, and tours/activities. The lowest-rated categories were shopping and value for the money.
- Winter visitors also gave high satisfaction ratings to their overall Valdez experience, at 71 percent very satisfied and 27 percent satisfied. Just 1 percent were dissatisfied.

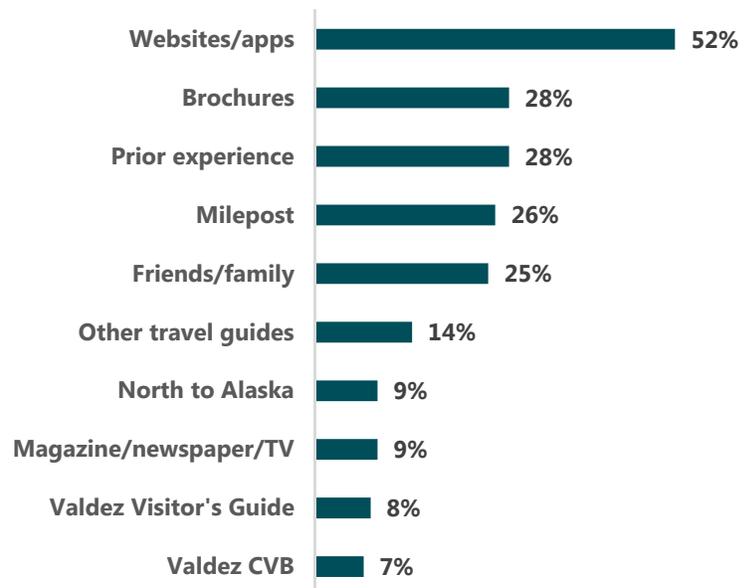
Satisfaction with Overall Valdez Trip, Summer Visitors



Valdez Trip Planning

- Just over half of summer respondents (52 percent) said they used the internet (including apps) to plan or book their Valdez trip.
- Among those who used the internet, the most popular sites for planning were Google (51 percent), ValdezAlaska.org (12 percent), AMHS (10 percent), and TripAdvisor (10 percent).
- Other popular sources of information included brochures (28 percent), prior experience (28 percent), the Milepost (26 percent), and friends/family (25 percent).
- Winter visitors were more likely to use the internet/apps to plan their trip, at 70 percent. Among these respondents, the most popular sites were Google, Facebook, and TripAdvisor.

Top Ten Sources Used to Plan Valdez Trip, Summer Visitors



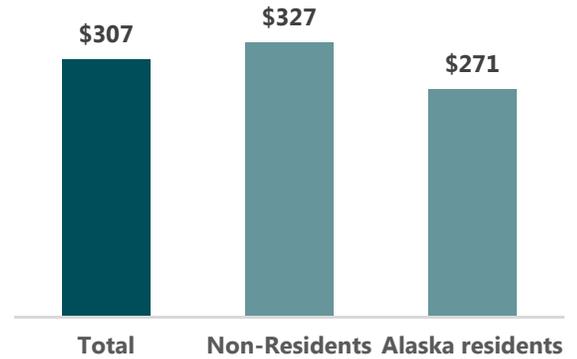
Demographics

- Just over two-thirds (69 percent) of summer visitors were from outside Alaska. Among non-Alaska visitors, the top US regions of origin were the Midwest (25 percent) and the West (20 percent). International visitors represented 29 percent of summer visitors. Winter visitors were more likely to be Alaskans at 61 percent.
- Summer visitors' average age was 52 years, compared with 35 years among winter visitors.
- Average party size was 2.6 people among both summer and winter visitors.

Visitor Spending

- Summer visitors reported spending an average of \$307 per person in Valdez. Average spending was slightly higher among visitors from outside Alaska (\$327) compared to Alaska residents (\$271).
- By category, tours/activities represented the highest average spending at \$105 per person, followed by lodging at \$78 per person and food/beverage at \$62 per person.
- Winter visitors reported spending an average of \$723 per person. In addition, heli-skiers reported an average package price of \$7,600 per person.
- Total spending by summer pleasure visitors, not including cruise passengers, is estimated at \$32 million.
- Total spending by winter pleasure visitors is estimated at \$9 million.

**Average Per-Person Spending in Valdez,
Summer Visitors**



Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

Valdez has enjoyed a long history as a popular Alaska destination. It is also one of the more complex destinations from a marketing perspective, drawing large numbers of both Alaska residents and out-of-state visitors, and attracting a wide range of markets: sportfishermen, RVs, heli-skiers, package bus tours, cruise passengers, and adventure travelers, to name a few. To better understand Valdez' visitor markets, the City of Valdez contracted with McDowell Group to conduct an intercept survey of visitors to the community in both summer and winter seasons.

Methodology

This study has two major components: a visitor survey, and an analysis of visitor volume.

Visitor Survey

The survey was conducted with 515 visitors to Valdez between February and September of 2016. (Visitation in the October to January period was determined to be negligible and not justifying the expense of surveying in those months.) The survey fielding was divided into two periods: winter (February-April) and summer (May-September). McDowell Group trained local surveyors in conducting intercept surveys.

In general, respondents were screened to identify those near the end of their Valdez trip in order to capture their full range of activities and spending. Those traveling primarily for business were also screened out of the survey in order to focus on the pleasure-oriented market, reflecting the priorities of the City of Valdez in attracting more pleasure visitors.

SUMMER SURVEY

Summer surveys were conducted with 415 visitors. The majority of surveys were conducted either at the ferry terminal or RV parks (Eagle's Rest, Bear Paw, Bayside). Additional surveys were conducted in hotels, at the harbor, and in the airport.

The summer survey sample excluded cruise passengers who transit Valdez via catamaran and motorcoach/shuttle. This market would be difficult to survey due to their short time in Valdez. Other markets not captured in the survey due to logistical reasons are those on overnight motorcoach packages.

Summer survey data was weighted by survey location, based on estimated visitor traffic volumes, described below.

Survey results are presented in terms of all respondents, Alaska residents, and non-Alaska residents, reflecting how Valdez is likely to approach marketing efforts. Sample sizes and associated margins of error are presented in the following table. For example, the maximum margin of error for results based to non-Alaska residents is ± 5.4 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

**Valdez Visitor Survey,
Summer Sample Size by Residency**

	Sample Size	Margin of Error
Non-Alaska residents	327	±5.4%
Alaska residents	88	±10.4%
Total	415	±4.8%

WINTER SURVEY

The winter survey was conducted with 100 Valdez visitors between February and April. As traffic figures show, Valdez receives comparatively few visitors in the winter months. By necessity, the sample was designed to capture visitors at high-density locations/events: Thompson Pass pullouts, the airport during heli-skiing season, and the ice climbing festival. (Note: Most of the festival respondents filled out the survey online after being emailed a link following the festival.) While the resulting survey data should not be considered generally representative of Valdez’ entire winter visitors market, it still provides valuable information on these particular visitors.

SURVEY LIMITATIONS

The Valdez Visitor Market Profile survey methodology mirrored the Alaska Visitor Statistics Program in many ways. This statewide exit survey of visitors (conducted by McDowell Group on behalf of the State of Alaska) is fielded as visitors exit Alaska via air, highway, ferry, and cruise ship. However, the methodology had to be adapted to Valdez’ unique access, markets, and attractions – particularly around Thompson Pass and the Richardson Highway. Because field staff were not able to block the highway to conduct ratios or intercept visitors as they exited, McDowell Group adapted the fielding techniques for Valdez. Surveys were conducted primarily at RV parks, augmented by fielding efforts at the harbor, airport, and several hotels. To capture visitors that traveled for winter recreation, surveys were conducted during peak months at Thompson Pass augmented by surveys conducted at the airport and with special event participants. Even with these efforts to capture a representative sample of the market, it is likely that a portion of the market that accessed Valdez by highway and stayed in hotels, private homes, and B&Bs is underrepresented.

Visitor Volume

Visitor volume was estimated based on a wide range of data sources, including:

- Alaska Marine Highway System for ferry traffic
- Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities for highway traffic
- Bureau of Transportation Statistics for Valdez Airport passenger enplanements
- Ravn Air for passenger enplanements and visitor/resident ratios
- Stan Stephens Cruises and Major Marine Tours for cruise passenger traffic
- Princess Cruises for cruise passenger day tour traffic (from Copper River Princess Lodge)

In addition, the study team contacted several hotels and RV parks to contribute to our traffic estimates. These included:

- Best Western

- Mountain Sky
- Eagles Rest RV Park
- Bear Paw RV Park
- Chena RV Park

McDowell Group thanks these agencies and operators for their contribution to the study. Additional information on how visitor volume was estimated is provided in the Visitor Volume chapter.

This chapter presents estimates for the total number of pleasure-related visitors to Valdez over the study period. Business visitors are excluded.

Total Visitor Volume

An estimated 94,000 pleasure-related visitors traveled to Valdez over the 12-month period of October 2015 through September 2016. The vast majority of visitation (92 percent) occurred in the summer months of May through September.

Visitor markets are often described in terms of the mode of transportation visitors use to exit a community. A majority of visitors (82 percent) exited Valdez via highway; 10 percent exited via ferry; and 3 percent exited via air. Five percent were cruise ship passengers who exited Valdez via catamaran or motorcoach/shuttle.

Two-thirds (66 percent) of Valdez pleasure-related visitors were from outside Alaska, while one-third (34 percent) were Alaska residents.

Valdez Pleasure Visitor Volume, By Transportation Mode and Alaska Residency, 2015-16

	Summer 2016	Winter 2015-16	Total 2015-16	% of Total
Highway	72,000	5,000	77,000	82%
Ferry	8,000	1,000	9,000	10%
Cruise	5,000	0	5,000	5%
Air	1,500	1,500	3,000	3%
Total	86,500	7,500	94,000	100%
Out-of-state residents	60,000	2,500	62,500	66%
Alaska residents	26,500	5,000	31,500	34%

Additional detail by transportation mode is provided below.

Visitor Volume by Mode

Highway

An estimated 77,000 pleasure-related visitors exited Valdez via highway, nearly all (94 percent) in the summer months of May through September. Highway traffic estimates were based on Richardson Highway (northbound) traffic data from the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and data from the Alaska Visitor Statistics Program (AVSP).

Ferry

An estimated 9,000 visitors departed Valdez by ferry during the study period, with most (87 percent) departing in the summer months. AMHS provided the number of passenger embarkations at Valdez for the October 2015

through September 2016 time period. Because AMHS has stopped requiring that passengers provide their zip code when purchasing a ticket, ratios of Valdez residents to non-residents from previous data was used, by season, to estimate visitor volume.

Air

An estimated 3,000 visitors to Valdez departed via air during the study period, about half in the summer months, and half in the winter months. These estimates were arrived at based on passenger enplanement data from the US Bureau of Transportation Statistics and Ravn Air. Estimated ratios of Valdez residents to visitors, by month, were provided by Ravn Air. Ratios were applied to enplanement data, by month, to arrive at total visitation numbers.

Cruise

An estimated 5,000 cruise passengers visited Valdez in summer 2016. Cruise passengers visit Valdez through the following means:

- Day tour participants via motorcoach/shuttle from Copper River Princess Lodge
- Pass-through travelers who arrived from Whittier via catamaran in the morning and have 1-2 hours before embarking on motorcoach headed to Copper River, and the opposite route
- Overnight travelers who arrive/depart via catamaran and motorcoach

Major Marine Tours, Stan Stephens Cruises, and Princess Cruises provided passenger counts; exact passenger numbers by transportation mode are confidential.

Visitor Survey Results

This chapter presents results of the visitor survey. Note that visitors traveling for business were screened out of the survey. Also, cruise visitors were not included in the survey sample.

Trip Purpose

- Nearly all summer respondents (98 percent) were traveling for vacation/pleasure purposes, with only 2 percent traveling to visit friends or relatives, and less than 1 percent traveling for business/pleasure.
- Winter respondents also largely traveled for vacation/pleasure purposes (93 percent). Four percent traveled for business/pleasure, and 3 percent were visiting friends/relatives.

Trip Purpose (%)

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non-Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=100
Vacation/pleasure	98	98	98	93
Visiting friends/relatives	2	2	2	3
Business/pleasure	<1	-	<1	4

Note: Visitors traveling for business only were screened out of the survey.

Lodging and Length of Stay

- Most summer respondents (82 percent) stayed in a campground or RV while in Valdez. That figure was much higher among Alaska residents (94 percent) compared to non-residents (76 percent). Non-residents showed higher usage of hotels (18 percent, compared to 3 percent of Alaska residents).
- Average length of stay in Valdez was four nights among all respondents, four nights among non-Alaska residents, and three nights among Alaska residents.
- Winter respondents were most likely to stay in a hotel (49 percent). They reported an average length of stay of six nights.

Lodging and Length of Stay (%)

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non-Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=100
Campground/RV	82	76	94	9
Hotel	14	18	3	49
Friends/family	3	4	2	22
Wilderness camping	3	3	2	11
B&B	1	1	<1	2
Lodge	<1	<1	-	14
Average # nights in Valdez	4 nights	4 nights	3 nights	6 nights

Activities in Valdez

- The most common activities among summer respondents were camping (66 percent), fishing (44 percent), wildlife viewing (42 percent), and hiking (34 percent).
- Respondents from outside Alaska were more likely to participate in wildlife viewing, day cruises, the hatchery, and sightseeing tours. Alaska residents reported higher participation in camping, fishing, biking, Old Town, and visiting friends/relatives.
- Winter respondents' most common activities were ice climbing (54 percent), skiing/snowboarding (50 percent), festival (30 percent), visiting friends/relatives (26 percent), and snowmachining (21 percent).

Visitor Activities (%)

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non- Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=100
Camping	66	58	84	16
Fishing	44	36	64	2
Unguided	37	28	57	2
Guided	11	12	9	-
Wildlife viewing	42	46	34	8
Hiking	34	31	38	17
Day cruises	31	42	9	1
Shopping	27	26	28	4
Museums	21	21	21	-
Hatchery	17	22	5	-
Birdwatching	16	19	8	2
Sightseeing tours	14	17	7	-
Biking	13	8	23	-
Old Town	11	9	16	4
Kayaking	10	9	12	-
Visiting friends/relatives	9	6	15	26
Glacier trekking	9	9	8	11
Historical/cultural attractions	8	8	9	-
Festival/special event	5	4	7	30
Oil terminal/pipeline	4	5	3	-
Flightseeing	2	2	2	1
Business	2	2	3	1
Hunting	2	1	5	1
Rafting	1	1	<1	-
Ice climbing	-	-	-	54
Skiing/snowboarding	<1	-	1	50
Unguided	<1	-	1	34
Guided	-	-	-	20
Snowmachining	-	-	-	21
Crosscountry skiing	-	-	-	10
Other	1	1	<1	8

- Winter respondents who participated in skiing or snowboarding were asked for their level of expertise. The most common level was expert/professional at 44 percent, followed by advanced at 31 percent.

Level of Skiing/Snowboarding Expertise (%)
(Base: Participated in Skiing/Snowboarding)

	WINTER n=52
Novice	6
Intermediate	19
Advanced	31
Expert/professional	44

Satisfaction Ratings

Respondents were asked to rate various aspects of their Valdez visit. Those who responded with “don’t know” or “did not use” were removed from the base.

- Summer respondents expressed a high level of satisfaction with their overall Valdez experience, with 97 percent either satisfied (31 percent) or very satisfied (66 percent). Alaska residents gave higher satisfaction ratings than non-residents (83 versus 58 percent very satisfied).
- The highest-rated satisfaction category among summer respondents was sightseeing, with 71 percent very satisfied, followed by friendliness of residents (69 percent) and tours and activities (68 percent).
- The lowest-rated categories among summer respondents were shopping (33 percent very satisfied) and value for the money (36 percent).
- Very few summer respondents gave dissatisfied ratings, ranging from zero (for sightseeing) to 6 percent (quality of restaurant food).
- Like summer respondents, winter respondents gave high overall satisfaction ratings at 71 percent very satisfied and 27 percent satisfied.
- Winter respondents gave their highest satisfaction ratings to tours/activities (65 percent very satisfied) and friendliness of residents (64 percent).

Satisfaction with Valdez Trip (%)
(Base: Excludes “don’t know” and “did not use” responses)

	Total Visitors	SUMMER Non- Residents	Alaska Residents	WINTER
Overall Valdez Experience	n=409	n=323	n=86	n=100
Very satisfied	66	58	83	71
Satisfied	31	39	15	27
Neutral	2	3	<1	1
Dissatisfied	1	1	2	1
Very dissatisfied	-	-	-	-

Satisfaction with Valdez Trip (%), Continued
(Base: Excludes “don’t know” and “did not use” responses)

	Total Visitors	SUMMER Non- Residents	Alaska Residents	WINTER
Accommodations	n=397	n=268	n=129	n=91
Very satisfied	59	51	76	37
Satisfied	35	41	23	55
Neutral	4	6	<1	4
Dissatisfied	1	1	-	3
Very dissatisfied	<1	<1	-	-
Restaurants – Food	n=269	n=186	n=83	n=84
Very satisfied	40	39	43	31
Satisfied	44	42	48	46
Neutral	10	11	9	17
Dissatisfied	4	6	<1	5
Very dissatisfied	2	2	-	1
Restaurants – Service	n=264	n=183	n=81	n=85
Very satisfied	40	40	41	38
Satisfied	44	43	47	40
Neutral	12	11	12	14
Dissatisfied	4	5	-	8
Very dissatisfied	-	-	-	-
Shopping	n=223	n=171	n=52	n=45
Very satisfied	33	29	40	24
Satisfied	47	48	45	42
Neutral	18	20	14	27
Dissatisfied	1	2	-	4
Very dissatisfied	1	1	-	2
Visitor Information Services	n=160	n=129	n=31	n=32
Very satisfied	59	56	67	31
Satisfied	32	31	33	25
Neutral	7	10	-	41
Dissatisfied	1	2	-	3
Very dissatisfied	-	-	-	-
Sightseeing	n=339	n=277	n=62	n=58
Very satisfied	71	71	72	62
Satisfied	26	26	28	34
Neutral	2	3	-	3
Dissatisfied	-	-	-	-
Very dissatisfied	-	-	-	-

Satisfaction with Valdez Trip (%), Continued
(Base: Excludes “don’t know” and “did not use” responses)

	Total Visitors	SUMMER Non- Residents	Alaska Residents	WINTER
Tours and Activities	n=245	n=171	n=88	n=48
Very satisfied	68	70	63	65
Satisfied	30	26	37	23
Neutral	3	4	<1	10
Dissatisfied	-	-	-	2
Very dissatisfied	<1	<1	-	-
Wildlife Viewing	n=330	n=262	n=68	n=50
Very satisfied	56	51	68	46
Satisfied	36	40	25	36
Neutral	7	7	8	18
Dissatisfied	1	1	-	-
Very dissatisfied	-	-	-	-
Friendliness of Residents	n=361	n=280	n=81	n=96
Very satisfied	69	66	74	64
Satisfied	28	32	21	30
Neutral	3	1	5	6
Dissatisfied	1	1	-	-
Very dissatisfied	-	-	-	-
Value for the Money	n=366	n=283	n=83	n=96
Very satisfied	36	29	50	31
Satisfied	42	46	34	51
Neutral	17	19	13	11
Dissatisfied	3	4	2	5
Very dissatisfied	1	2	-	1

Trip Planning

- About half of summer respondents said they used the internet to plan or book their Valdez trip, including 54 percent of non-Alaska residents and 48 percent of Alaska residents.
- Winter respondents were more likely to have used the internet at 70 percent.

Used Internet/Apps to Plan or Book Valdez Area Trip (%)

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non- Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=100
Used internet	52	54	48	70
Did not use internet	47	45	50	28
Don't know	1	<1	2	2

Respondents who used the internet were shown a list of websites and apps and asked which of the sites they had used to plan their trip, and which were used to book their trip.

- Among summer visitors, Google was by far the most popular website for trip planning, mentioned by half of respondents. Other sites mentioned by at least 10 percent of respondent included ValdezAlaska.org, AMHS, and TripAdvisor.
- Rates of using each site for booking purposes were much lower. The most commonly cited were Google at 22 percent, AMHS at 8 percent, and ValdezAlaska.org at 5 percent.
- Winter visitors most commonly cited Google as a planning tool (37 percent), followed by Facebook (28 percent) and TripAdvisor (15 percent).

**Websites/Apps Used to Plan or Book Valdez Area Trip (% Planned / % Booked)
(Base: Used Internet)**

	Total Visitors n=224	SUMMER Non- Residents n=159	Alaska Residents n=65	WINTER n=75
Google	51 / 22	52 / 24	50 / 17	37 / 19
ValdezAlaska.org	12 / 5	8 / 3	22 / 8	-
AMHS	10 / 8	10 / 10	11 / 2	4 / -
Trip Advisor	10 / 4	11 / 4	7 / 4	15 / 6
Travelalaska.com	9 / 3	12 / 2	<1 / 5	-
Facebook	6 / 3	8 / 4	2 / -	28 / 6
Alaska App	4 / 2	5 / 2	<1 / -	-
Instagram	3 / 1	2 / 2	7 / -	7 / -
Yelp	3 / 1	1 / -	7 / 4	4 / -
Booking.com	2 / 3	3 / 4	-	-
AAA.com	1 / 1	2 / 2	-	-
Airline websites	1 / 3	1 / 4	-	5 / 4
Hotel/lodging websites	1 / 1	<1 / <1	3 / 2	7 / 9
Travelocity	1 / 2	1 / 3	<1 / <1	3 / 4
Expedia	<1 / 1	1 / 2	- / <1	4 / 4
Kayak.com	<1 / 1	<1 / 1	- / <1	3 / 4
LonelyPlanet.com	<1 / <1	<1 / <1	-	-
AirBnB	<1 / <1	<1 / <1	<1 / -	5 / -
Hotels.com	<1 / <1	<1 / <1	-	4 / 2
HotelTonight	<1 / <1	<1 / <1	-	-
Orbitz	<1 / <1	<1 / <1	-	3 / -
Other	14 / 7	14 / 10	14 / -	24 / 19
Don't know/none	16 / 51	16 / 45	16 / 66	23 / 30

- Just 7 percent of summer respondents and 5 percent of winter respondents used a travel agent in booking their Valdez trip. (See table, next page.)

Used Travel Agent to Book Portion of Valdez Trip

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non-Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=100
Used travel agent	7	10	<1	5
Did not use travel agent	90	88	96	93
Don't know	3	2	4	2

After being asked about internet and travel agent usage, respondents were asked what additional sources they used to plan their Valdez trip, before their trip.

- The most common sources cited by summer respondents were brochures and prior experience (both at 28 percent), followed by the Milepost (26 percent), and friend/family/co-workers (25 percent).
- Non-Alaska residents were much more likely to cite brochures (38 percent versus 4 percent of residents), Milepost (34 versus 10 percent), other travel guides/books (19 versus 4 percent), and the North to Alaska guide (19 versus <1 percent), among others. Alaska residents were much more likely to cite prior experience (54 versus 15 percent). They were also twice as likely to say they didn't use any sources to plan (20 versus 10 percent).
- Winter visitors most commonly cited friends/family/co-workers (47 percent) and prior experience (32 percent).

Additional Sources Used to Plan Valdez Trip, Before Trip (Besides Internet and Travel Agent) (%)

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non-Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=100
Brochures	28	38	4	2
Prior experience	28	15	54	32
Milepost	26	34	10	2
Friends/family/co-workers	25	22	31	47
Other travel guides/books	14	19	4	3
North To Alaska guide	9	13	<1	1
Magazine/newspaper/TV	9	11	2	2
Valdez Visitor's Guide	8	10	2	-
Valdez Convention & Visitors Bureau	7	8	3	-
AAA	4	5	2	-
Tour company	3	4	<1	3
Ferry brochure/schedule	2	2	1	2
Hotel/lodge/B&B	1	1	<1	3
Other	3	4	2	9
None	13	10	20	26
Don't know	3	2	4	2

Respondents were also asked what sources of information they used while in Valdez.

- The most commonly cited sources used while in Valdez among summer visitors were brochures (33 percent), local residents (32 percent), and RV park offices (24 percent).
- Non-Alaska residents were much more likely to cite brochures (41 percent versus 16 percent of Alaska residents), the VCVB (15 versus 5 percent), and hotel/lodge/campground (14 versus 6 percent), among others.
- Alaska residents were much more likely to respond that they consulted no sources while in Valdez (33 versus 18 percent).
- Winter respondents most commonly cited local residents (44 percent) and cell phone apps (23 percent). One-third said they consulted no sources while in Valdez.

Sources of Information While in Valdez (%)

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non- Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=100
Brochures	33	41	16	7
Local residents	32	32	31	44
RV park office	24	26	20	-
Valdez Visitor's Guide	13	14	11	3
VCVB	12	15	5	2
Hotel/lodge/campground	11	14	6	8
Cell phone apps	9	9	9	23
Tour guides	7	10	-	5
Reservation office	6	6	7	-
Ferry terminal	5	7	1	3
Forest Service office	<1	<1	-	1
Other	2	1	4	4
None	23	18	33	33
Don't know	2	1	5	3

Visitor Spending

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their party's spending on their Valdez trip.

- Summer respondents reported spending an average of \$307 per person on their Valdez trip. The category accounting for the most spending was tours/activities/entertainment at \$105, followed by lodging at \$78 and food/beverage at \$62.
- Average spending was higher among non-residents at \$327, compared to \$271 among Alaska residents. Non-residents reported higher spending in every category with the exception of tours/activities/entertainment.
- Winter visitors reported a higher-per person average compared with summer visitors at \$723 per person. Food/beverage spending was the biggest category at \$214, followed by tours/activities/entertainment at \$208.
- In a separate question, heli-skiers were asked the price of their trip package. The average package price was \$7,600 per person.

Average Per-Person Spending in Valdez

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non- Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=100
Lodging	\$78	\$81	\$73	\$98
Tours/activities/ entertainment	\$105	\$101	\$112	\$208
Gifts/souvenirs/clothing	\$18	\$21	\$13	\$107
Food/beverage	\$62	\$71	\$44	\$214
Rental cars/fuel/ transportation	\$31	\$34	\$26	\$69
Festival registration (winter only)	-	-	-	\$20
Other	\$13	\$19	\$3	\$7
Total	\$307	\$327	\$271	\$723

Notes: Sample sizes differ for each category, ranging between 221 and 320 for summer and 30 and 70 for winter, depending on "don't know" responses.

Demographics

- Over two-thirds of summer respondents (69 percent) were from outside Alaska. Among winter respondents, that percentage was 39 percent.

Visitor Origin (%)

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non-Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=100
Outside Alaska	69	100	-	39
Alaska	31	-	100	61

- Alaska residents were most likely to be from Fairbanks (40 percent), followed by Anchorage/Eagle River (24 percent), and Palmer/Wasilla (19 percent).
- Winter resident respondents were most likely to be from Anchorage/Eagle River (63 percent).

Alaska Visitor Origin (%)

	SUMMER n=88	WINTER n=63
Fairbanks	40	16
Anchorage/Eagle River	24	63
Palmer/Wasilla	19	5
Delta Junction	5	-
Girdwood	4	10
Kenai/Soldotna	3	-
Juneau	3	-
Other	2	6

- Among summer respondents, 71 percent were from the US. The most common US regions of origin were the Midwest (25 percent) and the West (20 percent).
- Among international respondents (29 percent of non-Alaska visitors), the most common countries of origin were Switzerland (7 percent), Germany (6 percent), and Canada (5 percent).
- Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of winter (non-Alaska) respondents were from the US, most commonly the West (49 percent). Of the international respondents (37 percent), the most common country of origin was Switzerland (7 percent).

Outside Alaska Visitor Origin (%)

	SUMMER n=279	WINTER n=41
US	71	63
Midwestern US	25	10
Western US	20	49
Southern US	19	2
Eastern US	8	2
International	29	37
Switzerland	7	7
Germany	6	-
Canada	5	5
Australia	2	5
UK	1	5
China	1	2
Spain	1	-
Israel	1	-
France	1	-
Italy	1	-
Netherlands	1	-
New Zealand	-	2
Austria	<1	2
Brazil	-	2
Norway	-	2
Other	3	-

Respondents were asked to provide the gender and age of themselves and others in their party. The figures below represent everyone in the travel party.

- Summer visitors were fairly evenly split between males (52 percent) and females (48 percent).
- The average age of summer visitors was 52 years, including 56 years among non-Alaska visitors and 44 years among Alaska residents.

Respondents were also asked whether they had children in their household (not necessarily in their traveling party) and whether they themselves were retired or semi-retired.

- Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of summer respondents reported children in their household. This percentage was much higher among Alaska residents (52 percent, compared to 10 percent of non-Alaska residents).
- Nearly one-half (48 percent) of summer respondents were retired or semi-retired, including 10 percent of non-Alaska residents and 28 percent of Alaska residents.

Gender, Age, and Retirement Status (%)

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non- Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=104
Gender (Combined)				
Male	52	54	50	68
Female	48	46	50	32
Age (Combined)				
Under 18	9	3	19	-
18-24	3	3	3	10
25-34	11	10	14	55
35-44	12	7	19	15
45-54	12	9	16	10
55-64	23	29	14	7
65 and older	29	38	15	3
Average age	52 yrs	56 yrs	44 yrs	35 yrs
Children in household	23	10	52	12
Retired/Semi-retired	48	58	28	4

- Average party size of summer respondents was 2.6 people, including 2.4 percent among non-Alaska residents and 3.1 people among Alaska residents. Party size was defined as those with whom the respondent was sharing travel expenses.
- Respondents were also asked for their group size, which was the number of friends/relatives the respondent was traveling with, regardless of travel expenses. Average group size was 4.4 people, and was consistent among both Alaska residents and non-Alaska residents.

Party and Group Size (%)

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non- Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=104
Party Size (Sharing Expenses)				
1 person	11	10	11	26
2 people	59	70	33	41
3 people	11	5	25	12
4 people	9	6	15	9
5 people	5	3	9	5
6+ people	6	5	7	8
Average party size	2.6 people	2.4 people	3.1 people	2.6 people
Group Size				
1 person	7	7	6	15
2 people	50	61	28	36
3 people	11	5	23	13
4 people	12	11	15	10
5 people	6	4	10	4
6+ people	15	13	18	23
Average group size	4.4 people	4.4 people	4.4 people	3.8 people

- A majority of summer visitors (53 percent) had attained at least a bachelor's degree, including 24 percent who had attained a higher degree.
- Winter respondents reported a higher rate of achieving a bachelor's or higher, at 69 percent.
- Summer respondents reported an average income of \$106,000, with non-residents and residents reporting similar averages (\$104,000 and \$110,000, respectively).
- Winter respondents reported an average income of \$97,000.

Education and Household Income (%)

	Total Visitors n=415	SUMMER Non- Residents n=327	Alaska Residents n=88	WINTER n=100
Highest Education Attained				
Grade 11 or less	1	2	-	-
High school graduate/GED	18	18	20	4
Associate/technical degree	8	8	9	5
Some college	13	11	19	19
Graduated from college	29	27	33	37
Masters/Doctorate	24	28	17	32
Don't know	2	2	-	-
Declined	4	5	2	4
Household Income				
Less than \$25,000	2	2	1	9
\$25,001-\$50,000	6	7	6	16
\$50,001-\$75,000	16	16	18	14
\$75,001-\$100,000	17	16	18	16
\$100,001-\$125,000	12	10	16	9
\$125,001-\$150,000	9	8	12	3
\$150,001-\$200,000	7	6	8	4
More than \$200,000	7	6	7	13
Average income	\$106,000	\$104,000	\$110,000	\$97,000
Don't know	4	5	2	8
Declined	20	23	13	8



Valdez Visitor Market Profile 2016

Prepared for:

City of Valdez

February 1, 2017



McDowell Group

- Multidisciplinary research and consulting firm since 1972
- 17 professional staff; offices in Anchorage and Juneau
- Tourism clients include:
 - State/Federal agencies (DCCED, AMHS, Alaska Railroad, NPS)
 - DMOs and municipalities (Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka, Kodiak, Haines, Valdez, Kenai, Mat-Su)
 - Native Corporations (Huna Totem, Shee Atika, Goldbelt, Ahtna, Sealaska)
 - Cruise lines (Princess, Holland America, Royal Caribbean, small cruise lines)
 - Industry associations (ATIA, CLIA-Alaska, SEATrails, sportfishing assn.)
 - Other private companies (hotels, tours, attractions)



Presentation Outline

- Methodology
- Visitor Volume
- Activities
- Satisfaction
- Trip Planning
- Spending
- Demographics
- Questions



Methodology

- Total visitor surveys: 515
- Winter survey: 100
 - February-April
 - Sites: Thompson Pass pullouts, airport, online with festival participants
- Summer survey: 415
 - May-September
 - Sites: RV parks, AMHS terminal, hotels, harbor, airport
- Survey conducted at/near end of trip
- Business-only visitors screened out; cruise passengers not surveyed



Methodology (cont'd)

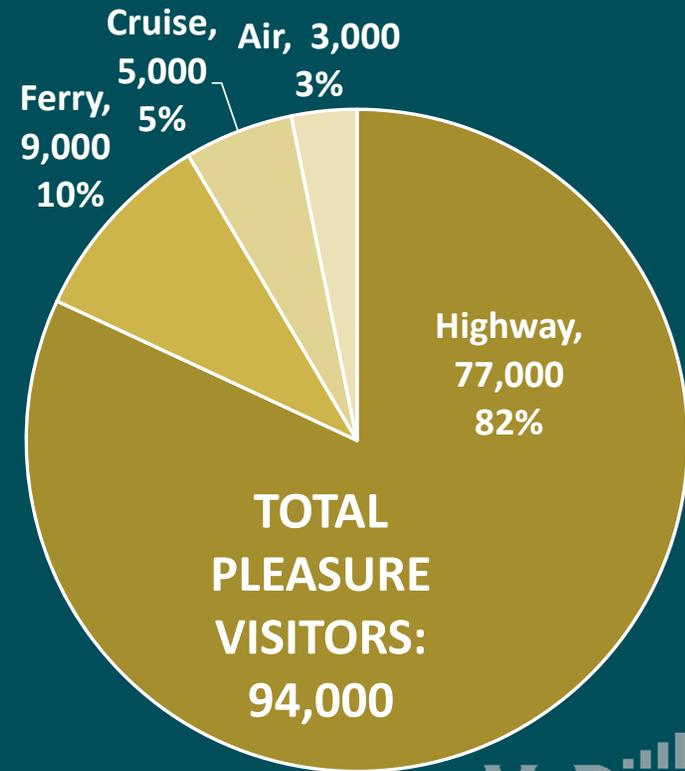
- Summer survey data presented in terms of non-Alaska residents vs. residents reflecting marketing approach
- Survey limitations
- Traffic data collection
 - AMHS passenger traffic
 - ADOTPF for highway traffic
 - Bureau of Transportation Statistics for air passenger traffic
 - Ravn Air for air passenger traffic and visitor/resident composition
 - Stan Stephens Cruises and Major Marine Tours for cruise passenger traffic
 - Princess Cruises for day tour traffic
- Interviews with Valdez hotels and RV parks

Visitor Volume



Visitor Volume, 2015-16

- Total pleasure-related visitor volume 2015-16 (October-September): 94,000
- Visitors counted on departure
- Cruise passengers include:
 - Day tour participants via bus/shuttle from Copper River Princess Lodge
 - Pass-through and overnight travelers arriving/ departing by catamaran and bus/shuttle



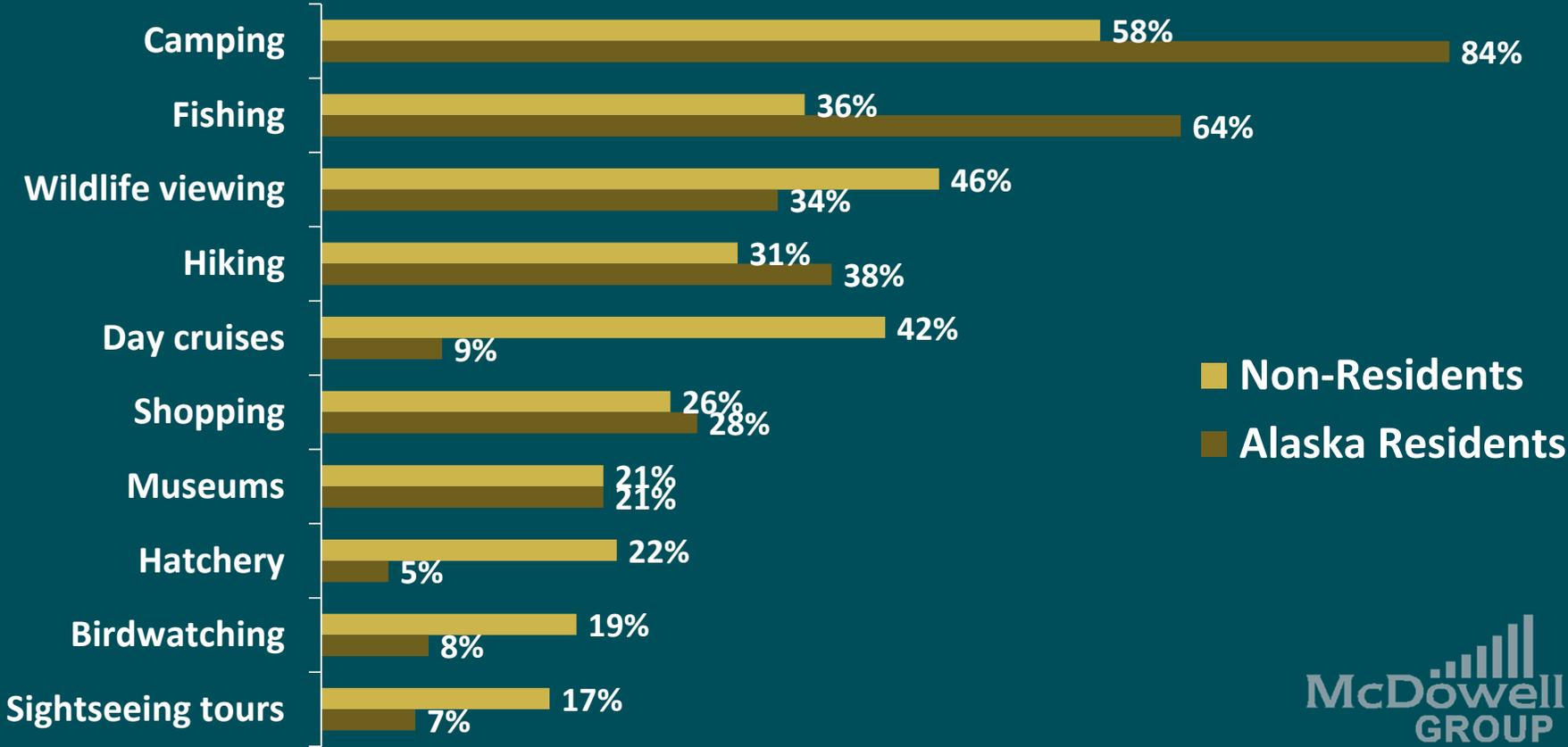
Visitor Volume, By Mode/Season

	Summer 2016	Winter 2015-16	Total 2015-16	% of Total
Highway	72,000	5,000	77,000	82%
Ferry	8,000	1,000	9,000	10%
Cruise	5,000	0	5,000	5%
Air	1,500	1,500	3,000	3%
Total	86,500	7,500	94,000	100%
Out-of-state residents	60,000	2,500	62,500	66%
Alaska residents	26,500	5,000	31,500	34%

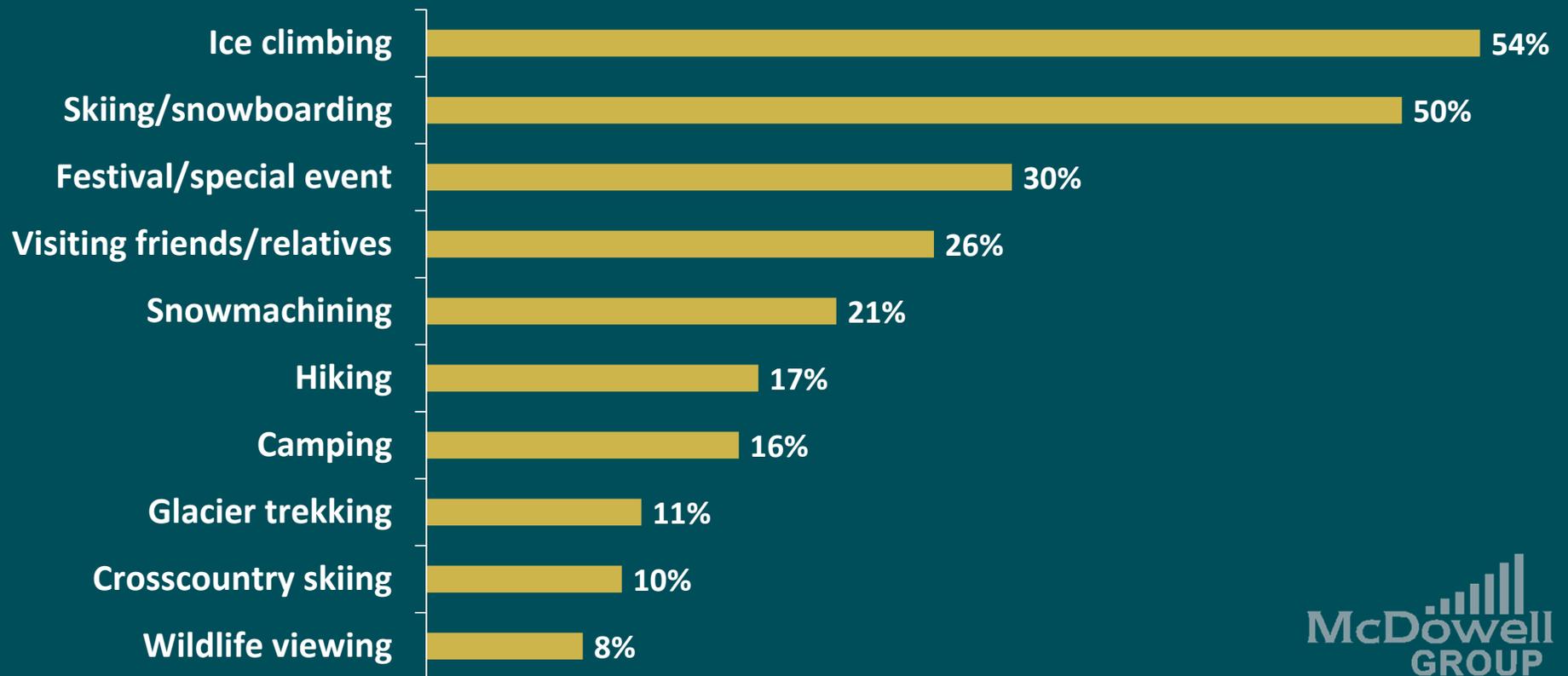
Survey Results



Summer Visitor Activities, Top 10

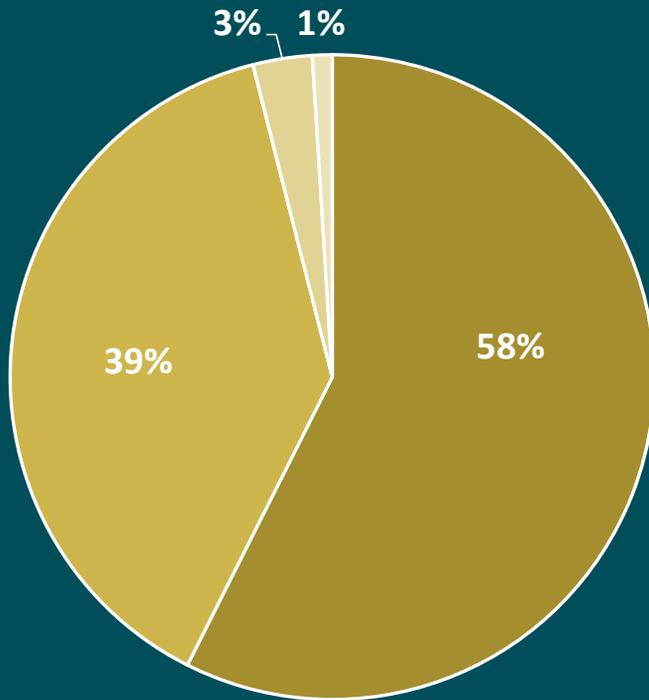


Winter Visitor Activities, Top 10

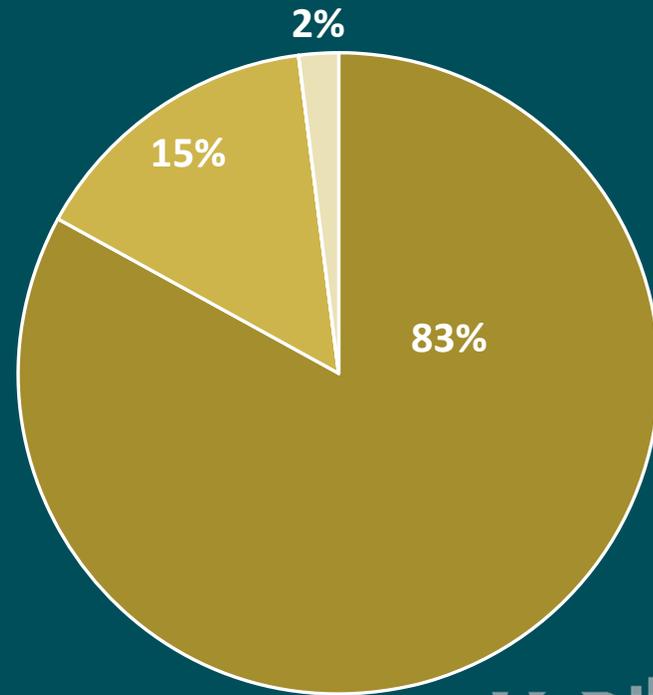


Summer Visitor Satisfaction, Overall Valdez Experience

Non-Alaska Residents



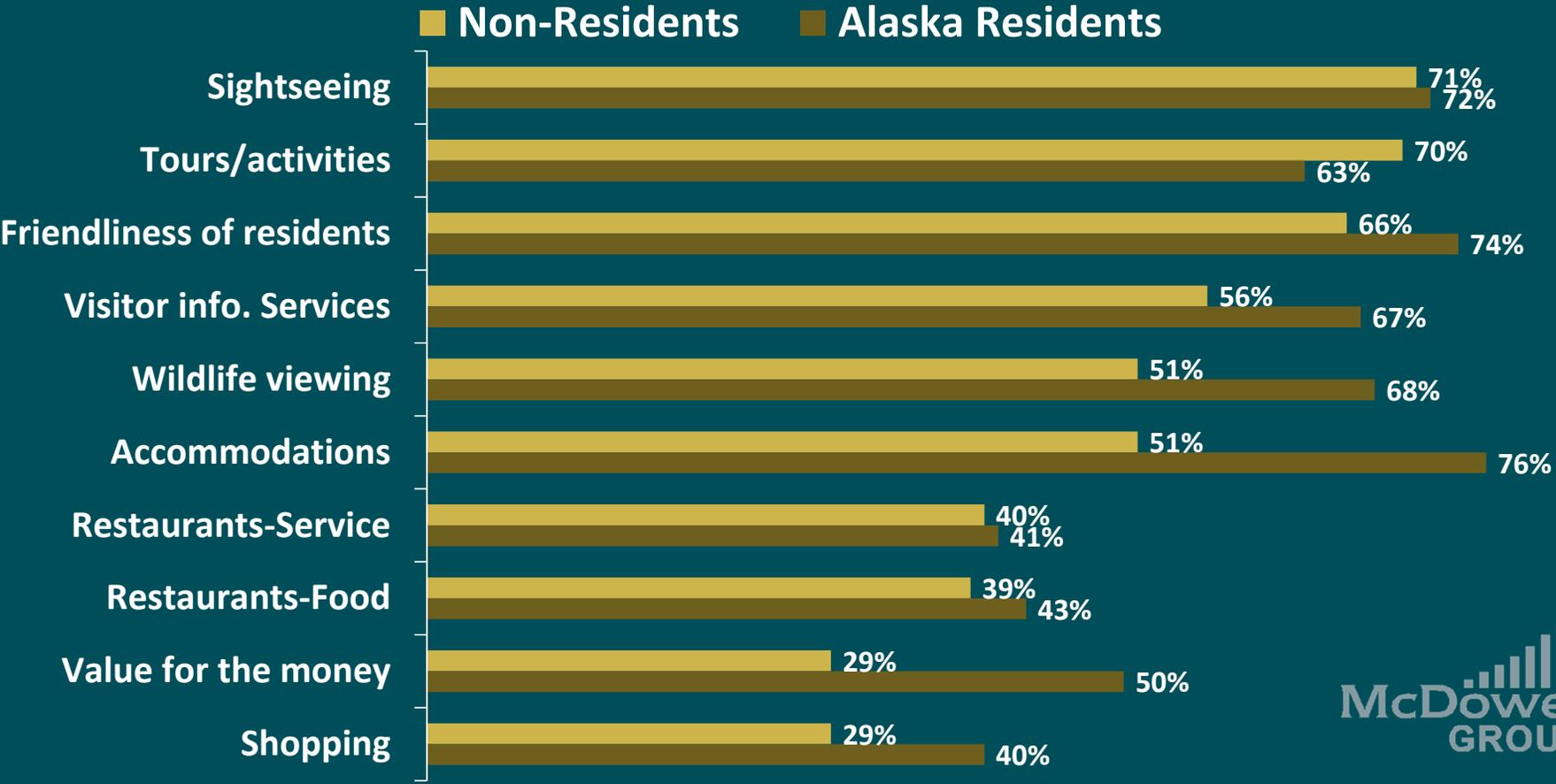
Alaska Residents



- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied

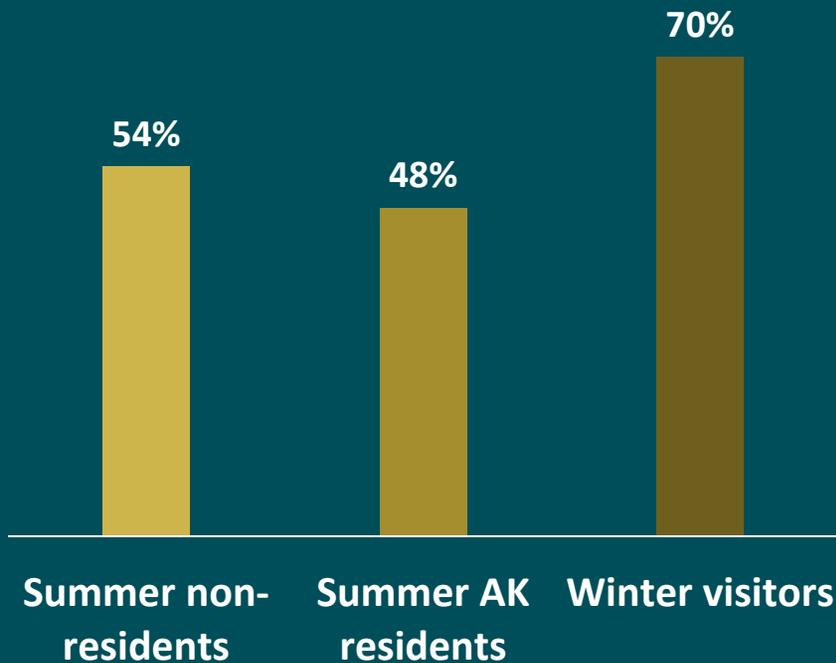


Summer Visitor Satisfaction, % Very Satisfied



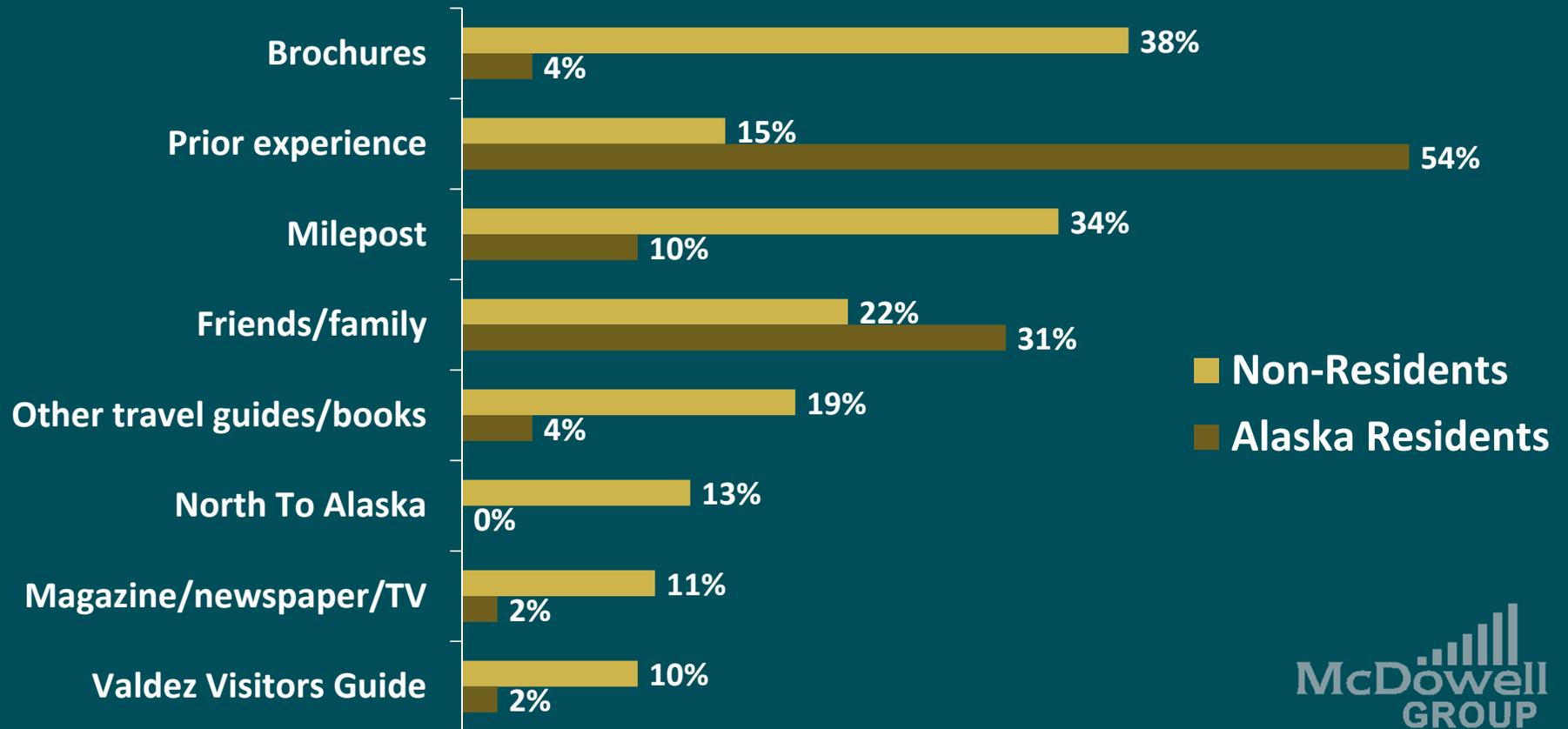
Internet Usage

% Used Internet to Plan Valdez Trip



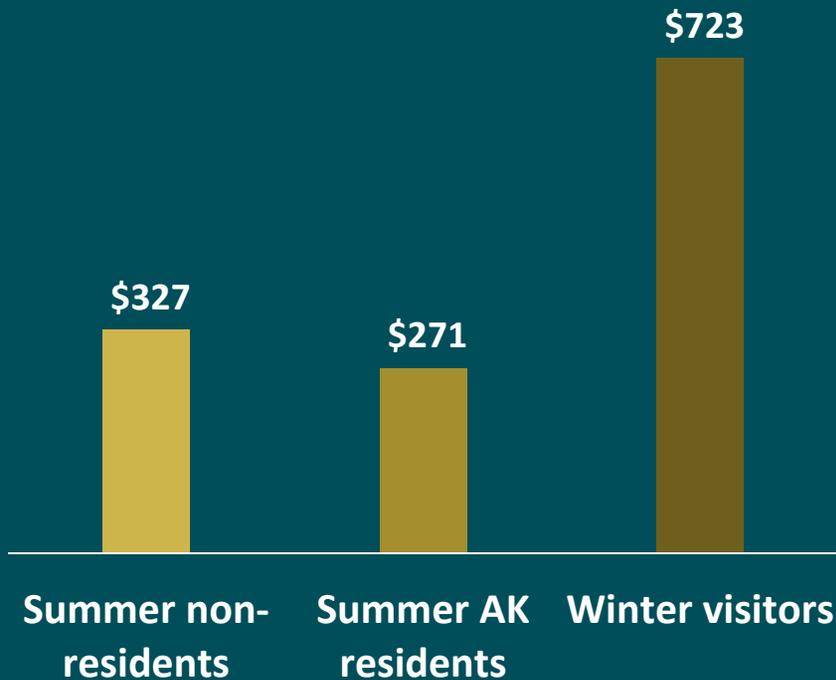
- Most commonly used sites/apps among summer visitors:
 - Google
 - ValdezAlaska.org
 - AMHS
 - TripAdvisor
 - TravelAlaska.com
- Most commonly used sites/apps among winter visitors:
 - Google
 - Facebook
 - TripAdvisor

Summer Visitor Add'l Planning Sources (most common)



Visitor Spending

Average Per-Person Spending in Valdez

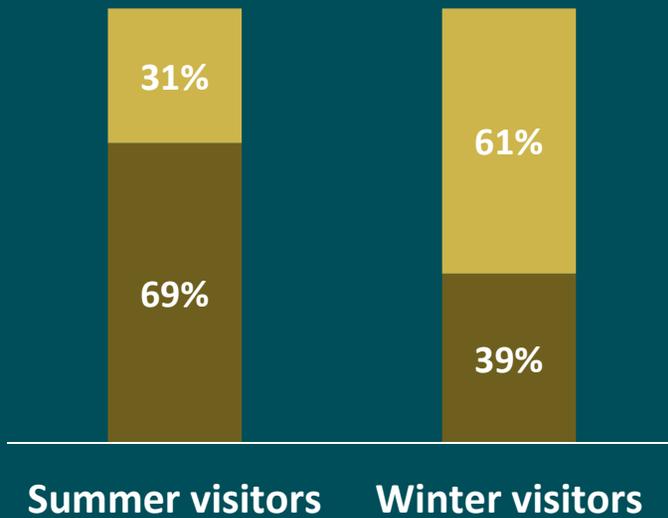


- Tours/activities
 - \$101 Non-residents
 - \$112 Alaska residents
 - \$208 Winter visitors
- Lodging
 - \$81 Non-residents
 - \$73 Alaska residents
 - \$208 Winter visitors
- Food/beverage
 - \$71 Non-residents
 - \$44 Alaska residents
 - \$214 Winter visitors

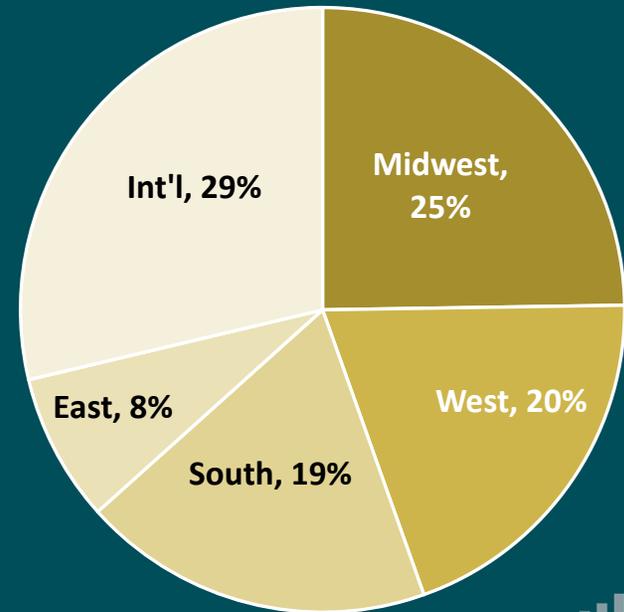
Visitor Origin

In-State vs. Outside

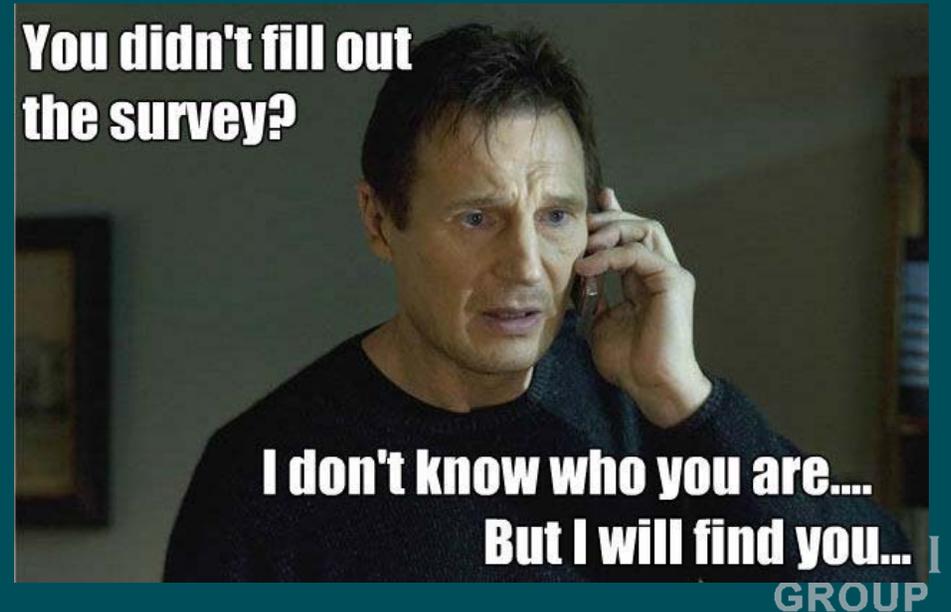
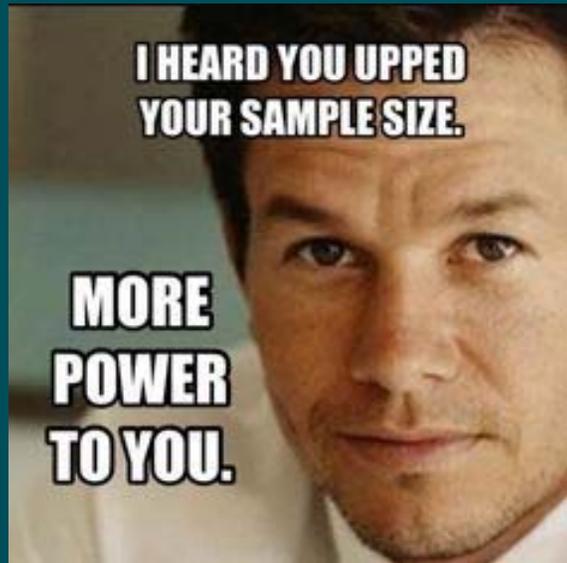
■ Outside Alaska ■ Alaska residents



Summer Visitor Origin, Outside



Questions

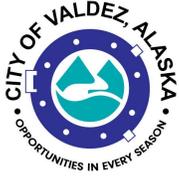




Thank you!

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Legislation Text

File #: 17-0051, **Version:** 1

ITEM TITLE:

Presentation: Northern Opportunity: Alaska's Economic Strategy - Ethan Tyler, State of Alaska, DCCED, Economic Development Division

SUBMITTED BY: Lisa Von Bargaen, CED Director

FISCAL NOTES:

Expenditure Required: N/A

Unencumbered Balance: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

None. Work session presentation and discussion only.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

The State of Alaska, Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED) is moving forward with a project to try to develop a statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Ethan Tyler, the Manager of the Economic Development Division of DCCED, has asked to meet with the ED Commission and Council regarding this statewide planning effort. Mr. Tyler is here to give a presentation on the project and obtain feedback from the community.

Attached are two items: 1) A Summary Paper titled Northern Opportunity: Alaska's Economic Strategy. Goals; and 2) the Anchorage Dispatch News Op/Ed article about this project written by Chris Hladick, Commissioner of DCCED.

Northern Opportunity: Alaska's Economic Strategy

Vision

Alaska will have a diversified and sustainable economy that grows economic wealth, which will provide benefit for the people and businesses of Alaska.

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Alaska Economic Strategy is to engage Alaskans in a dialogue about our future, which will result in the articulation of economic policies and goals for the future of our communities. These policies will promote the growth of economic opportunities to benefit Alaskans.

ALASKA

NORTHERN OPPORTUNITY

Alaska's Economic Strategy

Coordinated by the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development - Division of Economic Development with assistance from the University of Alaska Center for Economic Development

Northern Opportunity: Alaska's Economic Strategy

Introduction

In the coming decade, Alaska's success will depend on resiliency and economic diversity beyond reliance on oil and gas development. Regions across the state have developed economic plans and now they will be combined into a statewide strategy. The economic policy outcomes can:

- Maximize development of the human capital of Alaska's population.
- Secure fiscal stability of state revenues to mitigate the impacts of volatile global resource price fluctuations.
- Promote importation of private investment to Alaska.
- Leverage public financial assets to support economic growth.
- Promote the creation of wealth in Alaska.

The economic prosperity of Alaska depends on how we plan for the future. In order to achieve Alaska's vision of a sustainable economy, the following goals are offered for consideration.

GOALS

1. Business Retention, Development and Diversification – to promote activities that directly grow wealth in Alaska.

- Foster a business climate that supports retaining the businesses already operating in the state and assist them to expand and grow.
- Encourage industries such as mining, fisheries, and tourism to expand the range of business activity and increase value-added processing in Alaska.
- Advance the development of new business opportunities associated with global climate change and renewable/alternative energy use.
- Increase high-tech, knowledge-based businesses that will take advantage of AK's strategic location and research and development opportunities.
- Explore opportunities based on the opening of maritime transportation corridors.
- Encourage expansion of logistics business opportunities.
- Increase access to internet bandwidth to overcome geographical distance and increase rural community economic vitality.
- Ensure that the state's entrepreneurial sector has the technical capacity to successfully compete in the state, national, and global marketplace.
- Support the retention and expansion of small businesses in the economy.
- Expand public-private opportunities for collaboration.
- Explore opportunities associated with expanded military bases/ training in AK.
- Support entrepreneurship opportunities in Fisheries, Tourism, Mining and Forestry Products:

- Increase access to maritime industries opportunities and fish permits
- Promote investment in new fishing, tourism and Forestry products
- Assist communities to explore new tourism products
- Explore mining sector opportunities throughout AK.
- Provide information about and access to loan program

2. Infrastructure – to build and maintain transportation and communication facilities to support economic development

- Develop safe, reliable, well maintained ground and air and maritime transportation facilities in Alaska to support future economic activity.
- Develop a predictable funding mechanism for infrastructure development and maintenance.
- Optimize the financial assets of the State of Alaska so they may be used in infrastructure development.
- Improve and expand transportation to and within communities.
- Support the development of comprehensive statewide broadband infrastructure to improve individual and business communications. Expand bandwidth to rural communities.

3. *Energy – to stabilize the cost of energy in Alaska*

- Reduce energy costs with infrastructure that lowers cost and increases Regional Efficiency
- Support development of regional energy mini grids
- Support and assist with the development of sustainable renewable energy sources and generation systems.
- Explore the use of local energy sources to reduce reliance on imported fuels.
- Implement Regional Energy Plans
- Expand community efforts to conserve energy through energy audits and improved insulation materials and LED lights.

4. *Workforce Development – to expand the skills of the workforce.*

- Develop the Human Resource capital of Alaska with coordination among school districts, universities, training programs and business leaders.
- Ensure workforce development training efforts are responsive to the needs of private sector employers.
- Increase high school graduation rates
- Promote professional development that prepares residents to contribute to the economy.
- Develop a solid network between technical and vocational training organizations and workforce development efforts.
- Evaluate proposed University budget cuts for their impact on the AK economy.
- Develop future education programs to maximize Alaskan participation in issues of the arctic, global climate change, artificial intelligence and new technology, such as drones.

5. *Community Development – to provide quality of life for workers*

- Assist with affordable housing for the Alaska workforce.
- Improve access and affordability of health care.
- Provide water and sewer facilities in rural Alaska.
- Promote “quality of place” in Alaska

Opinions

Invitation to help chart course of Alaska's economy

 Author: **Chris Hladick**  Updated: 16 hours ago  Published 18 hours ago



Workers scale scaffolding at a new Hyatt hotel in Midtown Anchorage on Thursday, Sept. 8, 2016. (Loren Holmes / Alaska Dispatch News)

In the many years I've lived and worked across this great state, I've learned that no matter how disparate our interests may seem at first glance, we all share a vision for Alaska that features stability and prosperity, now and for future generations.

The real challenge is how to achieve this common vision, which is why the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development is coordinating an effort to create a

statewide comprehensive economic development strategy—identifying ways for communities to prosper, including a clear path to jobs for the next generation of Alaskans. With a coordinated approach that leverages regional efforts, we'll be better prepared to deal with future disruptions to our economic base.

[As economy loses steam, Alaska's major shippers report imports decline]

Northern Opportunity: Alaska's Economic Strategy is not just for one region, not just for a single industry, and certainly not just for state government. It's for all Alaskans.

Each one of you can be part of moving Alaska forward by sharing your ideas at NorthernOpportunity.com. Your comments will help shape the strategy, which will rely extensively on community and industry input. Alaska's economic strategy will identify opportunities to maximize Alaska's unique advantages while providing the flexibility to adapt to changing national and global economic conditions.

The process we're using is tried and true, both across the United States and regionally across Alaska. For example, successes in Southeast demonstrate how thinking local while planning regional strategies can lead to tangible transformation.

The results speak for themselves: Southeast is a leader in renewable energy—from hydropower in Gustavus and woody biomass in Ketchikan to Juneau's increased use of electric vehicles and Alaskan Brewing Co.'s "beer-powered beer."

Like many Alaska regional development organizations, Southeast Conference created a comprehensive economic development strategy that expands existing local community efforts to guide the whole region. Northern Opportunity will have a similar structure, using a foundation of regional planning efforts to implement a unified approach to economic development for the entire state.

[Three-year forecast finds the bright side in Anchorage's dim economy]

Development of Northern Opportunity is supported by a planning grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, and is being overseen by a strategy committee comprising members from the private and public sectors. We anticipate the strategy will be released for comment in early 2017, and at that time will call on you again, to review the draft and provide feedback.

We all need to think proactively to create economic vitality so every Alaskan in each of our unique communities has opportunities to prosper. Join me in building a better tomorrow for our state and future generations of Alaskans.

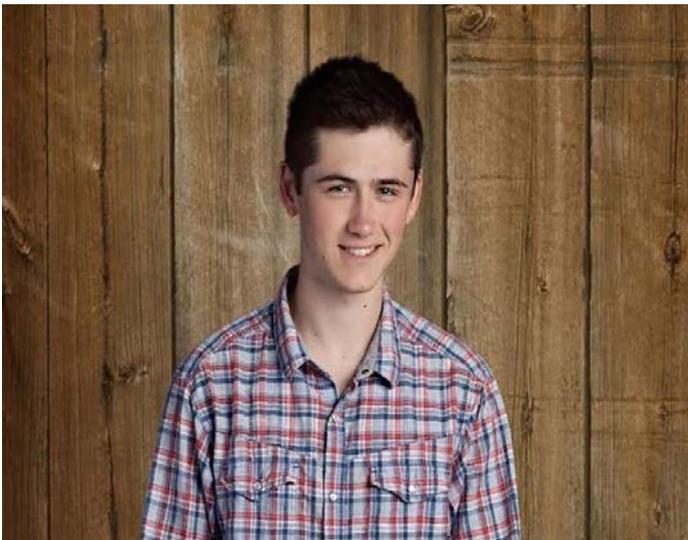
Chris Hladick is commissioner of the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

The views expressed here are the writer's and are not necessarily endorsed by Alaska Dispatch News, which welcomes a broad range of viewpoints. To submit a piece for consideration, email commentary@alaskadispatch.com. Send submissions shorter than 200 words to letters@alaskadispatch.com.

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10 Comments 

ADN recommends



Alaska-News

Documents shed new light on slain Palmer teen's final moments