

## CITY COUNCIL REPORT

**DATE:** 2/28/2020  
**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers  
**FROM:** Nora Fascenelli, Marketing and Communications Specialist  
**CC:** Jerene Watson, City Manager; Dawn Prince, Deputy City Manager;  
Leadership  
**SUBJECT:** Marketing and Communication Activities of February 18-28, 2020

This report is intended to provide an update to all City Councilmembers regarding recent marketing and communication activities.

### **DISCUSSION:**

It has been a busy two weeks for the new Marketing and Communications Specialist, Nora Fascenelli. Tuesday, February 18, 2020 was Nora's first day working for the City of Douglas. Her first few days were spent getting to know her new co-workers at City Hall. She also met with some local business owners, residents, and several city leaders. Nora attended the CCTEC Sierra Vista Familiarization Tour on Friday, Feb. 21. On Saturday, Feb. 22, Nora shadowed the Discover Douglas Tour, led by local historian and volunteer tour guide Ginny Jordan. On Sunday, Feb. 23, Nora joined Deputy City Manager Dawn Prince and local volunteer guide Ginny Jordan in escorting a travel writer from the Toronto Sun on a tour of some of the City's the top sights and points of interest.

### **Friday, February 21, 2020 -- CCTEC -- SIERRA VISTA FAMILIARIZATION VISIT**

- **SIERRA VISTA CITY HALL PRESENTATION** – Douglas City Manager Jerene Watson and Marketing and Communications Specialist Nora Fascenelli met at Sierra Vista City Hall, joining several members of CCTEC for a presentation by Economic Development Director Tony Boone. He highlighted some of Sierra Vista's key employment, recreational and tourism elements that are helping to drive expansion, attract business and encourage residents to spend their leisure time and dollars locally instead of using out-of-town venues. Sierra Vista is focusing on upgrading entertainment and leisure opportunities, residential and commercial investment, educational opportunities, work force development, and keeping local discretionary dollars in Sierra Vista.

- **ARTIFICIAL GRASS SURFACE SOCCER FIELD** - Director of Leisure and Library Services, Laura Wilson, introduced our group to Sierra Vista's newly installed artificial grass soccer fields, just east of the library and city hall. Local officials are especially happy with the precision image of Sierra Vista's new logo, which was recently installed center field. Artificial grass soccer fields offer many benefits not available with natural grass fields. The artificial surfaces tend to be about 10 degrees cooler than grass, especially during hot summer days. The synthetic soccer field is expected to boost the local economy by bringing in visiting teams from cities like Tucson and help establish Sierra Vista as a top tournament venue where out-of-town visitors will enjoy staying.
- **WATER EFFICIENT** – The artificial fields are also extremely water efficient, using minimal amounts to clean surfaces and pack underlying composite materials. Natural grass requires massive amounts of water, especially during periods of peak demand when the City's water facilities are especially stressed. The new fields can handle two adult soccer events, six youth soccer games, or a combination thereof.
- **SAFETY** -- There are no bleachers or benches on the new fields because soccer families bring their own chairs, umbrellas, shade structures, coolers, etc. Rules have been put in place prohibiting the use of stakes to secure shade structures, umbrellas, etc. to the artificial surface of the new field. Instead, Parks and Recreation provides sandbags and stabilizing tools to keep loose items from blowing away and causing injury or damage.
- **INFRASTRUCTION SOLUTIONS** -- The new fields also feature improved drainage systems that helped address flooding and other weather-related issues. In the past, flooding and runoff was problematic for local residents and they had to look for alternative venues in other cities for youth sporting events.

**SIERRA VISTA AIRPORT** -- The next destination on the Sierra Vista Fam Tour was a visit to the Sierra Vista Municipal Airport (FHU), which is one of only 18 joint-use airports in the nation. This civilian facility is completely surrounded by the Fort Huachuca Army Base. The City of Sierra Vista recently updated its 20-year Airport Master Plan, adding land use recommendations, development concepts, and proposed airfield configuration considerations. The unique characteristics of this airport could offer funding opportunities in the future for possible joint military-commercial-public projects. This general aviation facility shares runways with Libby Army Airfield. There are 62 hangars and 35 tie-downs that can be leased to private aircraft. Economic Development Director Tony Boone gave a brief history of the facility, its historic and continuing role in aviation research, testing, pilot qualification, and explained the importance of its location in a low-density population zone for flight training exercises. Sierra Vista Municipal Airport has the third longest combined civil and military runway in the nation. Commercial air service was available briefly in the past but failed because it was not profitable.

- **“THE BOWL”** -- The unique geological formation of “The Bowl” in the area of Sierra Vista and Fort Huachuca provides ideal conditions for discreet military and industrial research activities and initiatives.

**SIERRA VISTA’S RELATIONSHIP WITH MILITARY PERSONNEL** -- The City cultivates its relationship with Fort Huachuca by welcoming on post active duty military personnel, dependents and retirees who remain in or return to the area. Sierra Vista is one to the top communities for military retirees, where they can enjoy the benefits of living in a familiar area with close proximity to on post amenities for military retirees.

### **LUNCH AT LANDMARK RESTAURANT IN SIERRA VISTA**

**NATURE CONSERVANCY’S RAMSEY CANYON PRESERVE** -- Nora Fascenelli joined several others in a visit to the Nature Conservancy Ramsey Canyon Preserve after lunch. A short 15-minute drive from town, this conservationist’s paradise offers extraordinary birding opportunities because it is located directly under one of the most heavily and consistently traveled sections of the Pacific Flyway. This is a coveted destination during peak migration periods beginning in March. With only 22 parking spaces, the number of visitors is strictly limited. There is an impressive interpretive center with displays, exhibits, informational materials, a sparse gift shop, a map where visitors can place a pin marking their home location, and guest book signed by people from more than 130 countries. Naturalists, hikers, conservationists, birders, professional and amateur photographers, and creators of National Geographic, PBS, Arizona Highways, Audubon Society and other respected organizations clamor to Ramsey Canyon every year. Nora Fascenelli took away several marketing, promotional and tourism concepts for future consideration and possible use by the City of Douglas.

### **Discover Douglas Tour with Local Historian and Volunteer Tour Guide Ginny Jordan** **Saturday, February 22, 2020**

Approximately 20 tourists who are staying in an RV park in Benson came together and gathered at the Douglas Visitor’s Center, where they were greeted by local historian and volunteer tour guide Ginny Jordan. After a tour of the Visitor’s Center, they boarded a City van driven by Ginny and set out on the Discover Douglas Tour. Nora Fascenelli will eventually be taking over the Discover Douglas Tours, and drove a separate City vehicle, following the van to learn the general route of the tour. Dawn Prince and two additional guests were also passengers in the van.

### **GADSDEN HOTEL**

**Architecture** – Ginny led the tour group through the impressive lobby and public spaces of the Gadsden Hotel. She explained that the hotel was built in 1901 and made primarily of wood. It burned down in 1929 and was swiftly rebuilt using fire resistant locally quarried materials. The group was intrigued with Ginny’s stories of the stained-glass windows created by a talented designer from New York’s famous Tiffany Co. The tour guests

ascended the marble staircase. Stories about the speakeasy days of the Prohibition Era when the Gadsden Hotel's basement was the place to enjoy "off limit" alcohol, prostitution, gambling and other activities that were not permitted during the 1930s. Guests stopped into the lobby bar to see the collection of brands used by local ranchers. The group had many avid readers, and enjoyed hearing about Thornton Wilder's time at the hotel after his car broke down outside of Douglas, and his two-day stay became an 18-month residency during which the author enjoyed the freedom of anonymity and produced some of his most enduring works. We all took a ride in the 1928 Otis manually operated elevator. Guests lingered in the Gadsden Hotel Lobby Museum checking out photographs and memorabilia of old Douglas. There was great interest in who some of the more notable guests of the hotel had been, especially Emilia Ehrhart, Eleanor Roosevelt, Johnny Depp, Mae West.... The tour then took us to the Wall of Faces and the adjacent Purple Heart room. Ginny shared stories of the Obama administration's request that communities across the country find ways to remember and honor those who served during the Viet Nam years. She told guest about people in Douglas and on the other side of the border who started what was intended to be a small project, and how it grew into something much bigger. Contributions from generations of people with family stories of military service now span more than a century of history involving smelting, mining, ranching, war, and revolution.

**Four-Churches Park** – Ginny drove the group around the block and pointed out architectural and artistic elements of each of the churches of different denominations. She also pointed out the nearby areas that were home to an amazingly diverse population that included Anglos, Mexicans, Blacks, Syrians, Germans, and a bustling Jewish neighborhood. She explained how the segregation policies and laws of the 1900s played a role the day to day life of the community.

**Douglas Airport Museum** – Tour guests listened to a brief introduction by Ginny and then enjoyed the exhibits on their own.

**The Wall** – Guests took a look at the current structure as Ginny explained this is 30 feet high and only about 30 feet wide, but serves as an example of what the project is intended to be when completed.

**International Drive** – Ginny took the route along the existing border structure and explained a little about the culture on both sides and some of the leisure, dining and shopping activities in Agua Prieta.

**El Chapo Tunnel** – We made a quick stop outside location of the notorious tunnel which has become the subject matter of several movies and film projects.

**Culture** – Ginny talked about cross-border travel, tourism, dining, shopping, education, employment, families living in Douglas and Agua Prieta who are separated with other family members living on opposite sides of the border in order to stay close to one another.

**Border Wait Times** – Day visitors returning from Agua Prieta can expect wait times at the border to run about 45 to 90 minutes.

## **TRAVEL WRITER VISITS DOUGLAS**

### **Saturday and Sunday, February 22 and 23, 2020**

Toronto Sun Reporter and Sports Editor, Justin Holmes, is doing a two-page article for publication sometime in March or April. He and his wife arrived late Saturday and spent the night at The Avenue Hotel B&B.

#### **Saturday, February 22, 2020 – The Avenue Hotel B&B**

Overnight accommodations were provided compliments of the Avenue Hotel B&B, built in 1901 by the Douglas Land and Improvement Co. By the 1920s, the building had been purchased by the Bruno family and operated as the Railroad Hotel until 1973 when the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad closed. Frank Bruno took over the hotel in 1986 and was the last member of his family to own the property before it was acquired in 2007 by Robin Brekhus, the current owner and former manager of the Gadsden Hotel. The Hotel B&B has 15 rooms, including studio apartments, suites, and double and single rooms. Mr. and Mrs. Holmes were impressed with the “Old West” flavor of the lodging and appreciated the authenticity. “It certainly evokes a real sense of what life must have been like when cowboys, railroaders, miners and ranchers walked the streets of Douglas,” Holmes said. Nevertheless, the writer said he and his wife were grateful for heat, plumbing, lighting and other modern amenities.

#### **Sunday, February 23, 2020 – Custom Tour of Douglas by Ginnie Jordan**

Dawn Prince and Nora Fascenelli drove a city vehicle to the Avenue Hotel B&B to carpool with our guests from Canada for a custom tour in a city van led by volunteer historian Ginnie Jordan.

**EL CHEF RESTURANT** – Complimentary authentic southwest Arizona breakfast with owner of the Church B&B, the Toronto Sun writer and his wife, Ginny Jordan, Dawn Prince and Nora Fascenelli.

#### **ARCHITECTURAL HIGHLIGHTS TOUR**

- **Gadsden Hotel** – Built in 1901 and rebuilt in 1929 after being destroyed by fire, Tiffany-inspired leaded stained-glass windows, architectural and structural history, the grand staircase, 1928 Otis elevator and method of manual operation, locally quarried stone materials also used for the Brophy Building, notable guests including American playwright Thornton Wilder, famed aviator Amelia Earhart, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, award-winning actors John Wayne and Johnny Depp, and more.
- **Wall of Faces** – The poignant tale of how the Obama Administration’s directive for local communities to find ways to honor those who served during the Vietnam

era took on a life of its own, preserving the stories of more than a hundred years of military dedication from people living on both sides of the border.

- **Castro Park** – Also known as the only place known to have four churches of different denominations on each corner.
- Stained glass windows of churches, locally quarried stone and building materials used for many of the still-elegant buildings along 10<sup>th</sup> Street, the extra-wide streets built to accommodate turn-arounds by the 20-mule wagons of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century used in the smelter industry.

**Economic anchors** of various historical periods, including the Douglas smelting activities in operation until the 1980s, and the prosperity attributable to Phelps Dodge beginning in the 1950s.

**AVIATION MUSEUM** – Mr. Holmes time was limited, so Ginny gave an abbreviated version of her regular tour narrative and focused on colorful highlights like the women pilots who would fly in, change out of their flight suits, into gowns, head out for an evening of entertainment before taking to the skies the following day.

**“THE WALL”** – Observed the newly constructed 30-foot high structure which will be built along the U.S. – Mexico border under the Trump Administration.

**INTERNATIONAL AVENUE** - Narrated drive along International Avenue and the current border barrier; Walmart, BorderMart and other favorite cross-border shopping destinations, the former “red light district” where people could use either “Green Street” or 8<sup>th</sup> Street as their official address to avoid negative association with disreputable activity in the area.

**EL CAHPO TUNNEL** - Stopped outside the site of notorious “El Chapo’s Tunnel,” which is said to have been used for cartel drug smuggling activities. Mr. Holmes stepped out of the city vehicle to take a photograph for possible use with his article for the Toronto Sun.

**CROSS-BORDER RETAIL ACTIVITY** - Ginnie Jordan described the daily cross-border retail activity and the substantial sales tax revenue generated for the City of Douglas by scores of shoppers from Mexico who come here to buy groceries, household goods, fuel, and other items.

**ART CAR MUSEUM** – Toured and photographed the art cars on exhibit; visited the renovated rooms to be used as visitor, temporary and long-term lodging.

**POLICE STATION** – Brief history of the former Douglas Railroad Depot, which now houses Douglas Police Department office, including a compelling description of the depot’s role in the economic and military activities of the City during the 1900s.

**LUNCH** at the 333 restaurants in the Gadsden Hotel.

**DEPART DOUGLAS** - 2 pm – Ginnie Jordan drove Mr. and Mrs. Holmes back to their personal vehicle at the Avenue Hotel B&B and returned Dawn Prince and Nora

Fascenelli to the City vehicle which had been parked outside the hotel during the tour so everyone could travel together economically in the City van for the tour.

**RECOMMENDATION / CONCLUSION**

This report is for information only.

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