

Seattle Southside Tourism Meeting Speeches – 25 Minutes

Final

Slide #1 – Registration & Networking

Hilton Anne Santistevan introduces Mayor Anderson

Slide #2 – Welcome, Mayor Terry Anderson, City of SeaTac

Thank you for having me here today. It's a privilege to get to speak to you all, and especially to introduce my fellow Southside mayors. You'll be hearing from them a little bit later, but I'd like to recognize Mayor Suzette Cooke from the City of Kent, Mayor Bob Sheckler from the City of Des Moines and Mayor Jim Haggerton from the City of Tukwila. Let's give them a round of applause.

I think I speak on behalf of all of the mayors here today when I say that tourism is a vital part of our regional economy. And what's more, we have a fantastic list of attractions to be proud of and it's important that everyone here helps to spread that word. That's why we're here today.

Whether we're talking about the Highline Botanical Garden in my hometown of SeaTac; or the Hydroplane & Raceboat Museum in Kent; the marina in Des Moines; or the Museum of Flight in Tukwila—there are great places to visit in all our cities. And now of course tying much of this together is the new light rail line. I'm sure you'll agree with me that this is an incredible place to be.

With that, I hope you enjoy today's meeting. I look forward to working with everyone here to help spread the word about everything this region has to offer.

Now I'd like to introduce Katherine Kertzman (*CURTS-Min*), the Program Director for Seattle Southside Visitor Services. She's been instrumental in bringing our cities together to promote tourism and I'm grateful for her contributions. SeaTac is also excited to welcome Katherine and her team as they move into their new offices and Visitor Center which will be right across the street. Please help me welcome her to the podium.

Slide #3 – Welcome Group, Katherine Kertzman

Thank you Mayor Anderson and Anne. We are so pleased to be at the Hilton Conference Center in SeaTac today. This is a beautiful property. And, thank you for kicking off today's meeting.

As Program Director of Seattle Southside, I am pleased to welcome everyone here today for our annual community report for tourism within the cities of Tukwila, SeaTac, Kent and Des Moines. Today, we will recap how the lodging tax dollars are spent to bolster tourism and traffic for your businesses, whether you are a business related to tourism or a business that benefits from the economic impacts of tourism.

This is an important meeting for many reasons. The economic decline that we're all experiencing has been especially difficult for the tourism industry and it's made conducting business more challenging for everyone here – but there is good news—our cities and region are moving forward on many new and exciting initiatives. Seattle Southside's sales, marketing and communications team is working hard to influence the pace of economic recovery throughout our region and to stimulate future business. We want to especially thank you for your partnership, support and invaluable contributions to our collective efforts to promote Seattle Southside as a destination.

Slide #4 – Strategic Plan's Program Goals

So, let's begin. We worked with Exclaim, one of the best creative teams in the industry, to re-imagine our brand.

8 years ago the Seattle Southside program was born. The vision was to bring together our neighboring cities to spur and expand tourism in our region. So in the fall of 2009, we launched our new 5 -year strategic plan.

There are five elements to this plan:

We are protecting and nurturing the Seattle Southside brand as a destination. The brand has been redefined and refocused to more accurately represent our customers.

We are expanding corporate and community alliances that promote our combined Cities as a destination.

We are building the leisure and group market segments to create more tourism demand in our cities.

With you, we are enhancing the portfolio of products and services to maximize Seattle Southside's appeal.

We are focusing on key target markets and strategies that deliver visitors to Seattle Southside.

Today, we will focus on the steps initiated in 2009 to achieve these long range goals.

Slide #5 – Brand Rejuvenation

The first step was revitalizing our brand. For 8 years, Seattle Southside had the same logo. It served us well. It was how people came to visualize our efforts. But, after 8 years, it was outdated in a highly competitive market.

While the most visible outcome is a new logo and corporate identity, we now have something bigger – our brand positioning statement.

Slide #6 – The Practical Traveler

We are the destination for the Practical traveler. Our new identity reflects our rich legacy, vision for the future and a commitment to excellence in service. Through the work with Exclaim, we set out to put a face to the customer. Some of you were interviewed, visitors who stayed in our hotels were surveyed and even a few guests who chose to stay elsewhere were interviewed. We asked who would prefer to stay in Seattle Southside while exploring Western Washington. We wanted to present the four cities in an authentic and memorable way. The result turned out to be the kind of visitor that represents 80% of America – the Practical Traveler.

From the home base of Seattle Southside, the practical traveler is perfectly positioned to explore everything the Pacific Northwest has to offer.

Practical travelers are down to earth. They seek memorable experiences at a good value. They trust brands that are familiar to them. Knowing our core audience – strengthens our position and our ability to effectively market to this vast group of travelers.

Slide #7 – Web Site Performance

So how do we market to our practical travelers? Currently our website is our most effective marketing tool. A website is a tremendous way to display our assets. But, a website isn't valuable if it doesn't perform. After increased investment and refocusing our energies on search engine optimization and online marketing techniques, the number of website visitors has shot up, 53% in 2009 resulting in more than 132,000 unique visitors.

Hotel packages and reservations are being booked online. At the end of the year, more than 662 hotel reservations were booked through the Seattle Southside's Web site.

As a part of our 2010 marketing initiatives, a new website is currently in development which will better support our new brand position with improved functionality. Ashley will speak a little more about that later.

Slide #8 – Promotions & Partnerships

The second step focused on the alliances that we build with you – our business associates – help bring in more visitors. Fun and enjoyable packages entice people to visit our area and spend their hard earned money. We are competing for visitors and the more dynamic experiences, unique packages and promotions we offer, the more people we will attract.

The Rock 'n' Roll Marathon was an amazing opportunity. It brought in more than 20,000 runners from 50 states and 14 countries. It brought energy and athleticism, but is also brought over \$30 million to the Greater Seattle area. And, we're excited to host the 2nd Tukwila to Seattle Rock 'n' Roll Marathon this June 26th in which I am proud to announce our Southside team will be participating.

Slide #9 – Promotions & Partnerships (#2)

From running a marathon to marathon shopping, the annual Shop like a Rock Star promotion quite simply ROCKS! Originally created for the Tukwila Centennial, it was expanded this year to include all 4 cities. New stylish swag bags are filled with goodies from local businesses and distributed to hotel guests upon check-in. So far we doubled the number of packages sold over last year and there are 3 weeks left in the promotion. This is a fun way to highlight some of the best our brand has to offer. I encourage you to participate in the 2010 winter promotion.

Slide #10– Promotions and Partnerships (#3)

We couldn't do these promotions without our partners. I want to call on some of the associates within Seattle Southside that are making it possible to bring quality promotions, such as the Rock Star Pass for the Rock & Roll Marathon, the Washington State Office of Tourism – Experience More Giveaway, and the Museum of Flight Hops & Props. First, Mike Miller with the Rainforest Café,

[Mike Miller speaks regarding the Shop Like a Rockstar/ Rockstar Pass promotion]

Hi, I'm Mike Miller, manager of the Rainforest Café in Southcenter. We were involved with Seattle Southside on the Rockstar Pass and it was a huge success for us. It drove business to our restaurant for easily a month. We started seeing people come in the door with Rockstar Passes as soon they were available online, it was fantastic and it was great exposure for our restaurant.

And now, Marsha Massey with Washington State Tourism

[Marsha Massey speaks regarding Katherine as Tourism Commissioner Co-Chair and Experience More Giveaway]

Hi, I am Marsha Massey and I am the Executive Director of Washington State Tourism. Tourism in Washington is a \$14.2 billion dollar business. In 2009, we collaborated with Seattle Southside and other destination marketing organizations around our state with the "Experience More Giveaway." With 14,674 total entries as of the end of January -- this is a tremendous opportunity to gain statewide exposure. The coverage alone produced over 6 million impressions in January and we look forward to highlighting your destination when we award the South Sound Adventure Prize in April. It is so important that we all continue to work together, sharing our strengths and opportunities to grow tourism throughout the state.

And for those of you who may not be aware, Katherine Kertzman is this year's Co-Chair of the State Tourism Commission appointed by the Governor. She has been instrumental in serving on the Education and Advocacy Committee and planning the Governor's Tourism Conference this fall. I am thrilled to be working closely with her!

And finally, Meagan McGuire with the Museum of Flight.

[Meagan McGuire speaks regarding Hops & Props]

Hi, I'm Meagan McGuire and I'm the Group Sales Manager at the Museum of Flight. Seattle Southside has been an invaluable tool for The Museum of Flight, both in support of our marketing goals and in the promotion of events like Hops & Props, which took place last spring and is now sold out for the April 24th event. The Seattle Southside team is constantly sending business our way and finding new opportunities and avenues by which to help promote our events. They've proven time and again to be a true friend and valuable partner of the Museum.

KK: Thank you Mike, Marsha and Meagan for being here today and sharing your experiences.

Slide #11 – Visitor Center Services

The next element to the strategic plan is to focus on growing the leisure and group markets. Seattle Southside offers many visitor services to these segments. These services include mailed visitor packets upon request, downloadable online visitor information, in-person assistance at the Visitor Center, hotel reservations, restaurant referrals, transportation information and itinerary planning.

In 2009, requests for visitor packets increased 9%. More than 27,000 packets were mailed to people eager to learn more about Seattle Southside. Over 52,000 people downloaded information from our Website. And more than 2,000 tourists came into the visitor center.

Slide #12 – Shuttle Ridership

One of the many value added services that Seattle Southside provides is the Southside Express Shuttle which brings guests from SeaTac hotels to Westfield. In 2009, shuttle ridership was up 9 percent for a total of 18,000+ riders last year. I'd like to take this opportunity to THANK the City of SeaTac for funding 90% of this service. We worked with the City and SeaTac hoteliers to modify the schedule thereby improving ridership volumes and decreasing the cost per rider. Offering these types of enhanced guest services helps provide a superior experience – and strengthens our competitive edge.

#13 – Group Leads & Bookings

Another tactic of market growth is selling the destination at conferences and trade shows. We network with key people that bring in groups. But, more than that, we respond to RFPs. In 2009, we responded to 35 RFPs. And, we are proud of our results despite the current economic climate and a decline from our 2008 numbers. In 2009, we secured more than 17,000 room nights for just over \$2 million dollars in room revenue and \$90,000 dollars in food and beverage revenue. Although this is a decline compared to previous years there are signs indicating improvement.

Slide 14 – Marketing

Visitor services, branding, and building partnerships are only part of our strategic plan. The other is to promote, promote, promote. In 2009, we kicked off an advertising campaign to promote the Practical Traveler and Seattle Southside. This will supplement the already successful public relations initiative that has been an integral part of our success.

Slide #15 – Public Relations

Each year, we send out press releases and work closely with the media to promote the benefits of Seattle Southside. 2009 was no different. Press releases, media pitches, media tours and many, many articles added up to 116 million impressions for our region. The Des Moines 50th Anniversary event: Volun – tourism initiatives, Twilight movie premiers, Rock Star Pass and so much more. We were busy.

Over \$60,000 dollars in ad equivalencies were generated due to direct PR efforts including \$28,000 dollars from the Twilight Midnight Moon premier at Kent Station and \$16,000 dollars from the Des Moines 50th birthday festivities just to highlight a few examples.

Slide #16 – Tourism & Seattle Southside

In conjunction with Washington State Destination Marketing Organizations, yesterday many of you were in Olympia as part of the Why Tourism Matters education and advocacy campaign. This campaign was created last year by Exclaim and the Seattle CVB on behalf of the D.M.O.s in Washington State. As a part of this public education campaign, advertisements featuring local tourism ambassadors were distributed and directed towards citizens, businesses and government leaders. These tourism ambassadors represent frontline industry professionals who interact with visitors on a daily basis, display excellence in customer service and whose lives are directly impacted by tourism dollars.

With that I would like to introduce Seattle Southside's first group of tourism ambassadors and they can explain why tourism matters to them. Dan would you please start us off?

[Dan Malmanger stands and presents his stat. "Hi there, I am Dan Malmanger, founder and owner of Tours Northwest and each year, local tourism supports more than 5,350 jobs in our region and nearly \$200 million in wages."]

[Tom Dezutter stands and presents his stat. "Hi, my name is Tom Dezutter and I am the General Manager of the DoubleTree Guest Suites. Each year, hotels throughout Seattle Southside welcome 2.2 million guests."]

[Rob Gange stands and presents his stat. "Hello, I am Rob Gange, I am the amateur flair bartending world champion and I'm also the lead bartender at Acme Bowl. Each year, retail and restaurant business contribute \$388.5 million to our economies, and much of that comes from tourists."]

[Joani Roughton stands and presents her stat. Hi, I'm Joani Roughton and I'm a sales associate at the Museum of Flight and each year tourists spend \$615 million in Seattle Southside. Tourism also provides tax revenues that cities would not otherwise see. For every Southside household, tourism contributes \$400 in taxes that residents don't have to pay.]

Congratulations, you earned this recognition and represent us well!

Slide #17 – 2010

At the conclusion of the first year of our new five year plan we look forward to 2010 it will truly be a paradigm shift for our program. These initiatives are just the tip of the iceberg. If you have not yet had the opportunity to read our new Strategic Brand Document or our new Brand Style Guide I encourage you to visit our website under the "About SSVS" section. Now I would like to introduce you to the rest of the Seattle Southside team who are leading the charge on the 2010 initiatives. Kristina, Ashley and Meilee, please join me on stage. They will each provide an overview on what is to come.

(Kristina, Ashley, Meilee speak)

My name is Kristina Thorne and as the lead for guest services, I create memorable experiences for visitors through all of our interactions whether through email, on the phone or in person at the Visitor Center.

To make the visitor center experience even more enjoyable for guests and prospective groups, I am very excited to announce that we are moving into a new Visitor Center this spring. In May, we will invite all of you to see our new home, which is across the street here in SeaTac. Literally, across the street.

Tukwila has been an amazing home for us and we are thankful for your support and growth of the program. It is now time to introduce Seattle Southside as the International Gateway to the Pacific Northwest with new visibility from the Sea-Tac International Airport and Light Rail Station.

The new Visitor Center location is a chance to highlight the expanded Seattle Southside services. There will now be an opportunities to sell products such as the Tour Savor, City Pass, post cards of our region and local art. In our new home, we hope to increase our shuttle riders, length of stay and the number of return visitors.

In addition to helping tourists, I will be developing an internship and volunteer program to support our local community development. I will continue to manage the logistics for all of our meetings and events and work with our business associates (all of you) to create new marketing opportunities. These partnerships will help increase your presence to travelers through the Vacation Planner advertising, upcoming website advertising and enhanced listings, Visitor Center Video Screen, direct and electronic mail campaigns, and more.

If you are interested in getting even more involved with Seattle Southside please consider contacting me about serving on one of our upcoming advisory committees; we welcome your ideas and feedback.

[Kristina welcomes Ashley to the podium]

Hello I'm Ashley Comar and I'm in charge of marketing and public relations for Seattle Southside. We kicked the year off by building a new advertising campaign to highlight the practical traveler that visits our cities every year. The ad campaign features print and online advertisements encouraging visitors to Picture themselves here and remind them that every adventure needs a home base and that home base is Seattle Southside.

The goal of my work is to raise the visibility of Seattle Southside and to increase awareness for all of our partners. There has been plenty of activity in the past year with radio shows, social media, articles and TV coverage. 2010 is looking even busier.

With the brand rejuvenation comes a new website that will enhance the visitor experience while they research and plan their trip. Improved search functionalities, visitor profiles, a build your own itinerary tool, multiple language translation and a blog will all soon be available. The goal of the blog is to create a storytelling mechanism to highlight travel experiences and tourism opportunities around the region. There will also be a business associate section for all of you to help maximize our partnership and streamline communications.

Our vacation planner will be redesigned to reflect the practical traveler and as with the website will help to make trip planning a much smoother process. It will resemble a leisure magazine with brighter visuals, richer content, a stronger call to action and partner advertising opportunities. The planner will also be available completely online with interactive features improving the quality of the experience.

The majority of my work is destination publicity with our PR partners, GreenRubino and Frause. Generating press releases, devising creative media pitches and creating new destination fun facts fill my days. The press coverage you have seen is the result of the type of work that I do each day.

If you have a story idea, an article for the newsletter, a fun package you are offering or anything else newsworthy, please do call me. I would love to hear from you.

Meilee? [Ashley welcomes Meilee to the podium.]

It's often said "it's not what you know but who you know..." Hi, I'm Meilee and I am a connector of people. I connect meeting and event planners with venues and vendors. I connect group leaders with the right places and people to create business for our hotels, restaurants, attractions, transportation companies and retailers.

Through social media, networking, trade shows, bundled hotel packages and responding to RFP's I get in front of locals, visitors, group leaders, meeting & event planners to promote our area.

That's a big part of my life, but not my whole life. I also act a resource for our partners and work with them to develop new opportunities like the Con/FAM. The 1st ever Familiarization trip for Military Reunion Planners hosted in our area and it's done in conjunction with the Museum of Flight and Seattle Airport Marriott. Thanks to the partnerships developed via the FAM trip we have over \$20,000 worth of donated services to wine and dine these Military Reunion Planners for three days.

This *really* IS the tip of the iceberg. There are SO many exciting projects underway. I hope to see you in my inbox, online or face to face to talk more soon!

Katherine: Thank you Meilee, Ashley and Kristina. And now I would like to introduce Mayor Haggerton from Tukwila.

Slides 18 and 19 – Why Tourism Matters (Mayor Haggerton)

First let me say that the Tourism Matters campaign is absolutely incredible. I've been inspired and I think it's probably safe to say that my fellow mayors and other community leaders here today have been as well. So thank you to Katherine Kertzman and her Seattle Southside staff leading our communities in promoting Why Tourism Matters. I'd also like to recognize Seattle Southside's first Tourism Ambassadors with us here today. Tom, Dan, Joani and Rob. Please join me in a round of applause for the great example they set in the tourism industry! Those posters are fantastic. If you haven't had a chance to see them make sure to take a look before you leave.

Each of our cities has a wonderful appeal that draws people in—from outdoor activities, to shopping, to entertainment and other attractions. We in Tukwila are particularly proud of the Museum of Flight and Westfield Shopping Center.

But in order to be a competitive regional player—with places like Bellevue and Downtown Seattle—it is critical that we speak with one clear, cohesive voice.

A lot of the time I don't think everyone realizes how big the ripple effects of tourism are on an economy. It's not just the jobs that are created that make an impact—although creating good-paying jobs is by no means a small accomplishment.

Tourism also brings increased tax revenue to our cities, which reduces the amount of taxes that local citizens need to pay; tourism encourages business innovation in related industries, like in restaurants and leisure activities; it naturally spurs a diversified economy; it enhances real estate value; it encourages historic preservation; and it generates pride and enthusiasm and a healthy sense of place among local residents.

I know I'm proud to be here today and to represent the region as the Mayor of Tukwila — a rich and diverse city just like our neighbors represented by all of you here today.

Now, a bit of a surprise for you all, I'd like to present the first annual Seattle Southside Tourism Ambassador of the Year award to someone who truly exemplifies the idea of a being a tourism ambassador; [*Katherine comes on stage with the award*] someone who supports this important industry in so many vital ways. He's played an active role in supporting Why Tourism Matters in Olympia and been

an advocate for the industry during the formation of the Washington State Tourism Commission through his involvement in Washington State Hotel Lodging Association.

Congratulations Tom Dezutter [*De Zut Er*]. Let's get Tom up here to accept the award.

Tom has been the General Manager of the DoubleTree in Tukwila for 9 years and he truly is one of the great tourism ambassadors for our area. Although his official title is General Manager, he also plays the part of the undeclared marketer—very well I might add—which is largely why he's being recognized today.

In addition to his work in promoting Southside tourism, he's led DoubleTree support for causes such as the Tukwila Pantry, Teaching Kids to CARE at Tukwila Elementary, Diabetes and MS annual fundraising walks, and he also provides breakfast and lunch for those who help in the annual Tukwila Pond cleanup.

Please join me in thanking and honoring Tom for all his good work.

Thank you.

Katherine: Thank you Mayor Haggerton and congratulations Tom! We are so proud of you! Please now give a warm welcome to Mayor Sheckler from Des Moines.

Slide 20 – Giveaways (Mayor Sheckler)

Thank you Mayor Sheckler and congratulations to our winners. Now it is my pleasure to introduce Mayor Cooke from Kent.

Let me start by telling you how fortunate I feel to live in this part of the country, and in particular how proud I am of the City of Des Moines. It's a great place to live; it's a great place to work; it's a great place to play; and it's a great place to raise a family.

I recently had the privilege of being elected to serve another two-year term as mayor. And it really is an honor, because I enjoy what I do so much. I think most of us know that it's been a challenging year and the business environment is tough, but there are rays of hope. The fact that we're all here today—
together—talking about how we can plan for long-term success is one of those rays of hope. What our region has to offer visitors is another ray of hope.

As Mayors Anderson and Haggerton mentioned in their speeches, sparking the realization among visitors to our region that the Southside has a multitude of attractions is what we all need to do. That involves

continuing to support the great work of Seattle Southside and the Why Tourism Matters campaign, to showing support in other ways for our tourism industry, and of course making tourists feel welcome.

Now, without further ado, we have several giveaways this afternoon. Will the four Tourism Ambassadors please join me on the stage to help giveaway these items? [*Ambassadors join him on the stage*]. Each prize will be accompanied by a Shop Like a Rockstar bag from Seattle Southside's winter promotion.

First, we have a four-pack of tickets to a Kent Predator's game. [*Ambassador draws a card from the bowl and reads the name*] Congratulations!

Next, we have a gift certificate to Acme Bowl. [*Ambassador draws a card from the bowl and reads the name*]. Congratulations!

Next, we have a gift certificate to the Rainforest Cafe [*Ambassador draws a card from the bowl and reads the name*]. Congratulations!

Finally, we have a family four-pack of tickets to the Museum of Flight. [*Ambassador draws a card from the bowl and reads the name*]. Congratulations!

Thank you for having me here today. And thank you to our gracious sponsors who donated these items today.

Katherine: Thank you Mayor Sheckler. Now it is my please to introduce Mayor Cooke.

Closing Remarks (Mayor Cooke)

I have the honor of giving some final remarks here today. First I'd like to thank the other mayors for their support of this program and especially Katherine Kertzman and her team for building Seattle Southside as a destination. They've done a fantastic job.

What I want to leave you all with today is the notion of how important it is that we work together in telling the story of our region. I'd like for the other mayors to join me here on stage as I say a few last words about how vital the tourism industry is to all of us here today.

We all know that last year was particularly tough—for the economy in general but especially for the tourism industry. The good news is that our region actually fared better than many.

This is largely due to strong, long-term economic development planning, which has brought our region new air service out of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport; the Link light rail line; new and renovated hotel properties; the expansion of Des Moines Marina; and the fantastic ShoWare Event Center and Starfire Sports Complex. And of course the Kent Station and the wonderful shopping and amenities it brought to the area. The list goes on and on.

As we move into 2010, we need to of course continue focusing on strategic, long-term economic development planning, but we also need to passionately tell the story of the successes we've had already. The Why Tourism Matters campaign is a big start, which will provide a great deal of momentum. The challenge to all of us will be to keep that momentum going.

It is vital that we all continue to play a part in voicing to anyone who'll listen how important the tourism industry is to the economy. Each year, Southside tourists generate \$15.8 billion in spending with much of that money coming from outside the region. People come to see our museums, stay in our hotels, see plays and movies in our theaters, shop in our malls and boutiques and eat in our restaurants. We have a lot to offer.

So as you all go about your business throughout the rest of the year and into this new decade, think about ways that you can amplify the Why Tourism Matters campaign and help tell the great story about all we have to offer here in Seattle Southside.

I'd like to ask the Seattle Southside team Katherine, Ashley, Kristina and Meilee to join us on stage one more time.

On behalf of the Cities of Tukwila, SeaTac, Kent and Des Moines, we thank all of you for your partnership and invaluable contributions to our collective marketing efforts that promote our region. Please give yourselves a round of applause. Well deserved!