

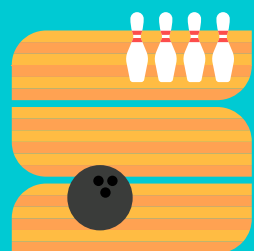
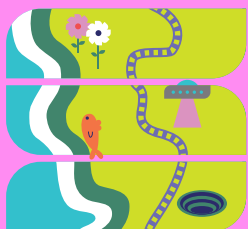
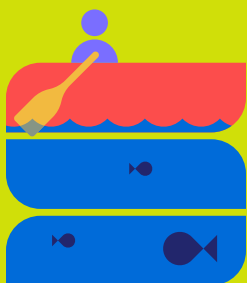
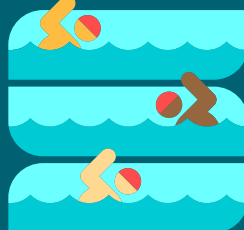
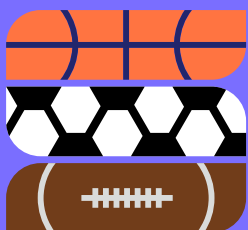
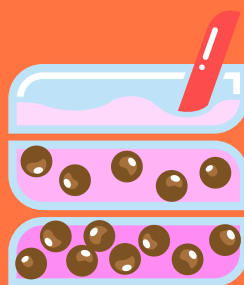
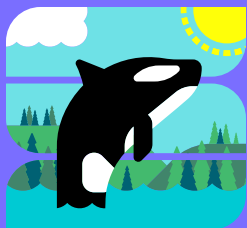
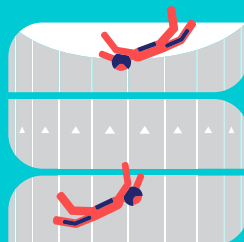


# 2024

Annual Report to  
the Community



# Curiously Wonderful Microadventures Await





## Dear Friends, Partners, and Community Members,

It is my pleasure to present Explore Seattle Southside's 2024 Annual Report—an overview of a dynamic year filled with fresh talent, innovative programs, and impactful partnerships that have continued to elevate our destination.

Last year, we welcomed three exceptional new team members: Annie Atherton as our Senior Content Writer, Karine Roettgers as Partnership Development Manager, and Valerie Skubal as Social Media Manager. Each brings a unique skill set to help us tell the story of Seattle Southside with creativity and authenticity.

Among our highlights was the successful beta launch of the SeaTac Culinary Tour, offering a curated culinary adventure through the area.



**SeaTac Culinary Tour**

Our hotel-to-mall shuttle saw remarkable use, with 25,883 passengers choosing this convenient connection. We also brought imagination to life with our Alien activation at Westfield Southcenter and community engagement through the Seattle Seawolves calendar, which introduced fans to the wonders of our region.

This year, our placemaking efforts expanded with Des Moines Marina telescope installations and a new mural plaque, adding layers of discovery and storytelling to our public spaces. In addition,



**Des Moines Marina  
Telescope**

custom Seattle Chocolate bars became a sweet way to promote local flavor, while our social media co-op provided our partners with expanded reach and visibility.

Programs like Hospitality Heroes and the Impact Group helped foster community pride and professional excellence. Our focus remains on promoting bite-sized adventures—unique experiences that both travelers and residents can enjoy, often discovered through our curated trails and blog content.

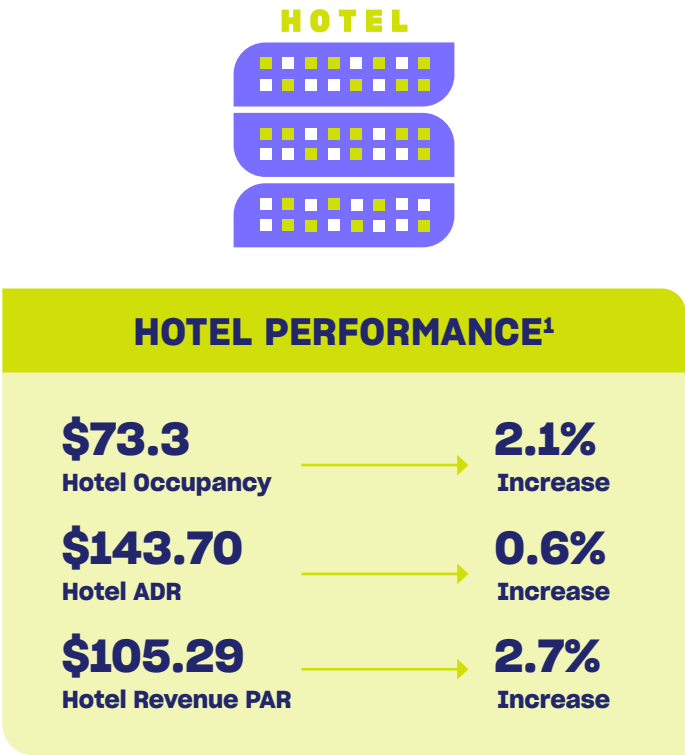
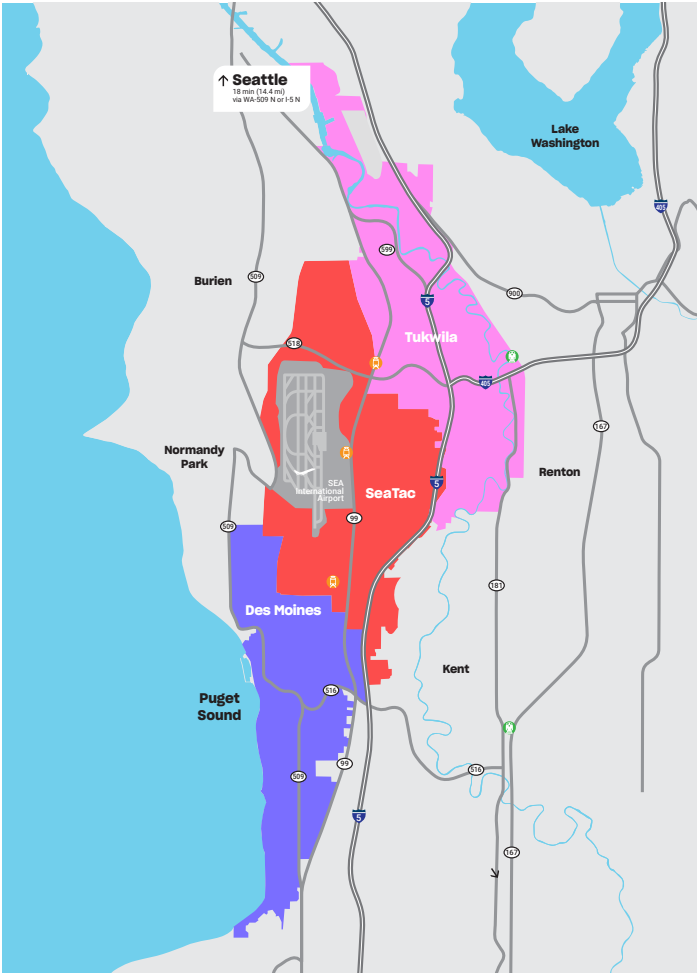
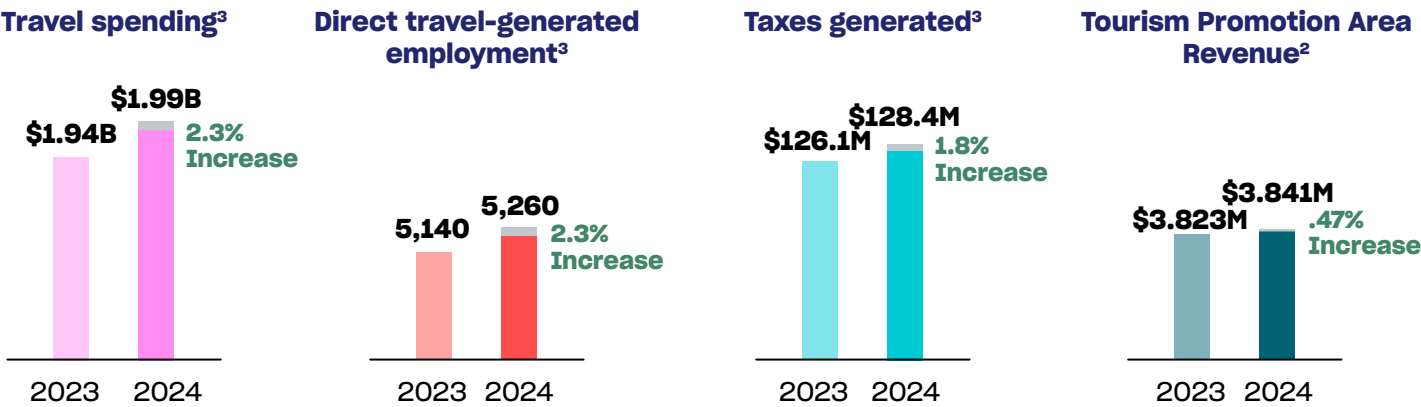
Looking ahead, we will continue to empower our ambassadors to connect with meeting planners and position Seattle Southside as a compelling destination for both leisure and business.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration. We are proud of the progress made and energized for what's next.

**Mark Everton**  
President & CEO  
Explore Seattle Southside



# Tourism Economic Impact



1 Smith Travel Research 2024 Report

2 TPA is the \$2 per occupied room night assessment of the tourism promotion area hotels with 90 or more rooms in SeaTac, Tukwila and Des Moines

3 The Economic Impact of Travel in Seattle Southside, WA / 2024p / Prepared by Dean Runyan Associates





# 2024 Business Development Team Recap: Major Accomplishments



In 2024, Explore Seattle Southside's Business Development team delivered one of its most impactful years to date, with notable wins in both the sports and meetings markets. The launch of the Seattle Southside Sports Alliance (SSSA) marked a strategic milestone—bringing together key stakeholders to collaborate on growing sports tourism in the region. The Alliance serves as an advisory body and a unified voice advocating for the development and attraction of major sporting events.

## SeaTac BMX Track



**This initiative quickly bore fruit with the successful bid for the 2025 USA BMX Gold Cup Finals & PRO Race, a nationally recognized event set for Sept. 12–14, 2025.**

Notably, this is the first time a Pro Race will be featured in this format, elevating the visibility of the event and Seattle Southside. Expected to attract between 5,000 and 10,000 attendees, the event is already fostering strong interagency collaboration between SeaTac Parks & Recreation, the City of SeaTac,

and Explore Seattle Southside—creating a new model for regional event hosting.

**The team also introduced the FIFA Ready series in collaboration with the Seattle Southside Chamber of Commerce.** This initiative included

## FIFA World Cup 2026



the development of a dedicated FIFA World Cup 2026 landing page and a quarterly webinar series to inform and connect businesses, partners, and local stakeholders. With FIFA on the horizon, this forward-thinking program laid the groundwork for long-term engagement and helped ensure Seattle Southside is aligned and prepared to participate in the global spotlight. Additionally, the team executed a regional sports FAM tour for representatives from Visit Seattle, the Seattle Sports Commission, and Snohomish County, helping to solidify Seattle Southside's place in a broader regional bid strategy for large-scale sporting events.

**From a quantitative perspective,**

**our sports team attended four appointment-based shows, held nearly 100 direct meetings with sports planners, participated in a major BMX trade mission, and sponsored a show announcing the Sports Alliance at the largest industry sports conference. In terms of results, involvement in events at Starfire Sports, Washington Premier League, and the PacNW Winter Classic generated over 3,260 hotel room nights in 2024, representing more than \$500,000 in hotel revenue. Impressively, the team shifted market share from cities like Bellevue, Renton, and Downtown Seattle to Tukwila, which saw hotel sellouts during key weekends—a dramatic increase from a prior 34% market share. ▶**

## Cydney & Maria Langbauer at Sports ETA



## SPORTS TEAM IMPACT

**>100**

**Direct Meetings with Sports Planners**

**Participated in a major BMX Trade Mission**

**Secured the 2025 USA BMX Gold Cup Finals & PRO Race**

**Event Involvement Generated Over**

**3,260**

**Hotel Room Nights**

**Launched the Seattle Southside Sports Alliance**



## 2024 Business Development Team Recap: Major Accomplishments (Cont.)

- ▶ In the meetings sector, 2024 was equally groundbreaking. Recognized nationally with three prestigious honors: the Smart Meetings Platinum Choice Award, the Northstar Meetings Group Stella Award, the WSAE Innovation Award and the Washington Society for Association Excellence Innovation Award.



**The team surpassed nearly every key performance metric, attending 22 industry sales events, granting 85 scholarships, conducting 1,305 one-on-one planner appointments (exceeding the 1,000 goal), providing 2,857 partner referrals (nearly doubling the 1,500 goal), receiving 135 RFPs onsite (goal: 120), conducting 23 site visits (goal: 10), and winning 23 RFPs (goal: 20).**

**A highlight of the year was the successful hosting of Connect PNW at Hotel Interurban, a regionally significant event that positioned Seattle Southside as a premier meetings destination.**



**Ambassadors at Connect PNW**



**MPI Cascadia**

With 100 attendees and 10 participating partner hotels, the event received strong praise for its creativity and attention to detail. Highlights included a bubble tea welcome table, an immersive welcome reception at the Museum of Flight, a morning walk at Westfield Southcenter with the Seattle Seawolves, a Microadventure Lunch & Learn featuring Highline Heritage Museum and SR3, and a post-event FAM tour showcasing area attractions and hotels. Planners experienced Seattle Southside in a new light—from hands-on rugby clinics to private chocolate

tastings—highlighting the region's ability to deliver unique, memorable group experiences.

In sum, the Business Development team elevated Seattle Southside's profile through strategic collaboration, creative event planning, and high-impact relationship building. The results exceeded internal KPIs and laid a strong foundation for expanded sports tourism, corporate meetings, and destination awareness heading into 2025 and beyond. ■



**Connect Marketplace**

### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIP

**22**  
Industry  
Sales Events



**1,305**  
One-on-one Planner  
Appointments



**2,857**  
Partner  
Referrals



**85**  
Scholarships



**135**  
RFPs Onsite



**23**  
Winning RFPs





# 2024 Marketing & Communications Team Recap: Major Accomplishments

Explore Seattle Southside's 2024 marketing strategy was a comprehensive, data-informed initiative designed to increase awareness of the region as a vibrant, adventure-filled destination and ultimately drive hotel stays. Campaigns were built around two core travel windows—peak season (May through September) and off-peak (October through April)—with an emphasis on encouraging extended peak stays and boosting off-season visitation.

We focused these efforts on key traveler personas, including Classic Fun Families, Trendsetters, Thrift Seekers, Cruisers, and Local Corporate Planners, targeting audiences aged 21+ with household incomes above \$75K. A multi-tiered geographic focus encompassed national DMAs (like Los Angeles and San Francisco), regional targets (such as Portland and Vancouver), and local audiences within the Seattle DMA.

## UFO Mall Installation



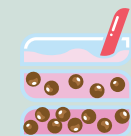
We deployed marketing across a robust mix of media channels, including Meta (Facebook and Instagram), TikTok, Pinterest,

YouTube, Google Display, LinkedIn, and strategic print placements. These activations resulted in over 55 million impressions across digital platforms.

## Saucers & Sass Event



## TARGETED CAMPAIGNS



Bubble Tea Trail



Alienvitation



Culinary Tours

Campaigns included the Evergreen effort that ran year round, Summer Local and Winter campaigns aimed at family travel and seasonal stays, and several targeted campaigns that brought local culture and niche interests to the forefront. **These included the Alienvitation campaign for sci-fi and UFO enthusiasts, the Bubble Tea Trail, which celebrated Seattle Southside's rich Asian culinary influence, and Culinary Tours, which spotlighted international**

## Influencer Bubble Tea Promotion



flavors and restaurant gems. The **Seawolves Calendar campaign** tapped into the sports community to promote things to do in the region.

Meanwhile, B2B campaigns effectively reached corporate planners to position Seattle Southside as a premier destination for meetings and small events.

**The Explore Seattle Southside website experienced substantial growth and engagement in 2024, marked by an 11% increase in total sessions and a remarkable 125% surge in Organic Engaged Sessions**—indicating more meaningful visitor interactions.

Key performance indicators like bounce rate, dwell time, and click-through rate revealed improvements in user experience, particularly on mobile, which accounted for 72% of traffic. Organic channels dominated traffic sources, with Organic Search and Organic Social each contributing 35%, boosted by influencer partnerships and user-generated ▶

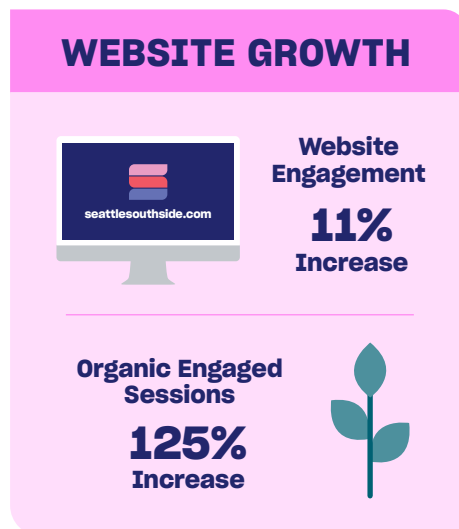
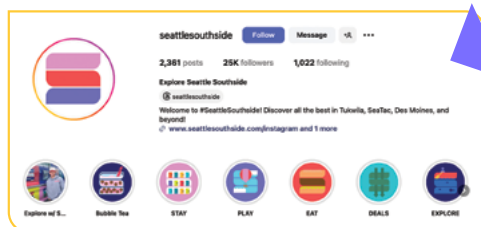


## 2024 Marketing & Communications Team Recap: Major Accomplishments (Cont.)

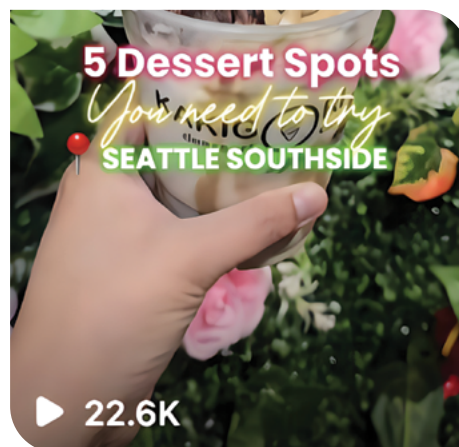
- ▶ content. High-performing pages such as “Seattle Webcams,” “Duke’s Clam Chowder Recipe,” and “Cherry Blossoms Seattle” reflected strong audience interest in local, real-time content.

Social media performance in 2024 reflected strong strategic execution. Explore Seattle Southside saw a **20% increase in total followers across all active channels**. Instagram led the way with over **7,000 new followers**, while TikTok and LinkedIn contributed nearly **2,000 additional followers**. The organization achieved a staggering **1,200% increase in impressions**, fueled by organic and paid content strategies tailored to specific platforms. In-feed engagement also surged by **64% year-over-year**, exceeding **90,000 interactions**, primarily driven by the effectiveness of Instagram Reels and short-form video content. This performance not only widened awareness but deepened engagement, validating the team’s content-first, platform-tailored approach.

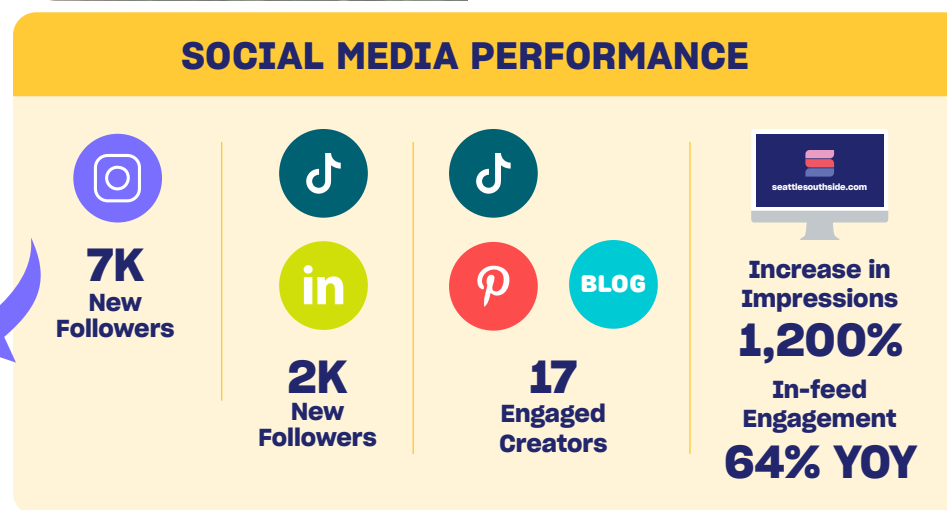
Our social media influencer and content creator program saw significant evolution, shifting into a seasonally segmented model that allowed for thematic consistency and deeper integration across campaigns. **Across Spring, Summer, and Fall/Winter campaigns, we engaged 17 creators across Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, and blog content.** The Spring campaign diversified creator profiles to include family and lifestyle perspectives.



Summer marked the first implementation of TikTok Ads, paired with collaborative posting strategies to maximize reach. Fall/Winter involved eight influencers



and leveraged paid amplification to sustain visibility through the season. Top-performing creators included Rubi Estrada, whose Summer content excelled in saves and shares; Allysa Luna and Krista Tsai in Spring with high-quality, resonant storytelling; and Rosie Tran and Shavonne Samuels in Fall/Winter, whose reels and stories garnered consistent engagement. Across all seasons, Instagram Reels—especially those highlighting food tours, multi-location itineraries, and family-friendly content—emerged as the most impactful content format. ▶





## 2024 Marketing & Communications Team Recap: Major Accomplishments (Cont.)

- ▶ Earned media and public relations efforts contributed significantly to brand visibility.

Through ongoing outreach, Explore Seattle Southside secured 13 TV/video placements and 227 articles, with 26% directly tied to proactive media outreach. Standout campaigns like Alienvitation and Bubble Tea Trail were particularly successful in drawing media attention, resulting in an estimated 8 million impressions from video segments and features. The broader media strategy yielded



### BRAND VISABILITY

Explore Seattle Southside  
secured **13** TV/video  
placements

**227** articles, with **26%**  
directly tied to proactive media  
outreach

**500M** unique monthly  
visitors (UMV) across 46 media  
outlets

Alienvitation and Bubble Tea  
Trail resulting in an estimated  
**8M** impressions from video  
segments and features



over 500 million unique monthly  
visitors (UMV) across 46 media  
outlets, including coverage in  
Seattle Times, Travel + Leisure,  
Axios Seattle, AFAR, Yahoo News,  
and Pacific NW Magazine.

These placements elevated  
Seattle Southside's regional and  
national profile and reinforced its  
standing as a go-to resource for  
destination stories.

Recognition followed these strong  
performances. The "Explore  
Curiously Wonderful Seattle  
Southside" brand campaign won the  
State of Washington Tourism's  
Outstanding Marketing Program  
award, highlighting its creative and  
economic impact. The campaign  
also earned Gold W3 Awards in  
Branded Content and Video Series  
categories for travel and lifestyle, a  
Webby People's Voice Award, and a  
Gold American Advertising Award  
for internet video campaigns. It  
received the PhotoShelter  
Storyteller Award for Most Results-  
Driven Marketing and a Bronze  
Brand Identity Award at the 2024  
Marketing Awards.

### AWARD RECOGNITION

State of WA Tourism  
Outstanding Marketing Program

Gold W3 in Branded Content

Webby People's Voice

Gold American Advertising

PhotoShelter Storyteller Award

Bronze Brand Identity Award

Puget Sound Business Journal  
Best Place to Work Second  
Year in a Row

### State of Washington Tourism Summit



Rounding out a year of excellence,  
Explore Seattle Southside was  
named a Puget Sound Business  
Journal Best Place to Work for  
the second consecutive year,  
affirming its commitment to  
innovation, collaboration, and  
organizational culture. ■





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