

VISIT MENDOCINO COUNTY

Presents:

**A Wellness Destination**



Healthcare in a rural region is not only expensive but, lack of services, providers and accessibility are just a few of the challenges. Patients have begun to seek out destinations that provide multiple solutions for their needs. “In 2016, over 11 million travelers left the shores of the US in search of different countries around the world seeking affordable healthcare. In a [recent report](#) by Visa and Oxford Economics, it was stated that this figure will grow by up to 25% every year for the next decade as the competition for health tourists between countries have becomes fiercer.”(Medical Tourism Magazine) This trend of dollars being spent outside our area coupled transportation issues such as long travel times and lack in availability in emergency transportation are causing our community to lose out on our share of the medical travel spending.

This leads us to the question: how do we compete with larger “Healthcare Destinations”? How do we draw visitation from outside of Mendocino County and have a proper level of care for our residents?

We already have some wonderful local organizations actively promoting healthcare with regard to promoting our region to medical professionals (Family Medicine Education for Mendocino County) as well as our largest local healthcare provider (Adventist Health). While we can’t compete with other larger Healthcare Destinations, we can partner with these organizations to help promote our community in its best light. Through these partnerships we can focus on what differentiates us and what we can do to keep our community close to home with accessible healthcare. We can additionally achieve our goals with our voice and our place as leaders in our community to develop our local communities, creating an attractive lifestyle attracting top talent necessary for key positions within the healthcare industry. According to the article *Moving for work? Read this first* published by Practice Link in 2017 “ “Don’t Skype the interview,” says Edie Webber, owner of Pinnacle Relocation Services. “You really have to go and visit in person.”

*That’s the only way you will pick up on what Webber calls intangibles—the feel and culture of a place and the people who live and work there. “A place should make you feel welcomed and wanted,” says Webber, and that’s especially true of your potential workplace. “You’re going to spend a lot of time here with these people, so make sure you’ll feel comfortable before you choose to relocate,” she says.*

*A visit is also the best way to learn about the community where you hope to live. “Learn about the schools, about any work opportunities for your spouse if he or she will also be looking for a position, and seek out information about any cultural or recreational activities that you and your family enjoy,” says Hinds.”* By creating these strategic partnerships and using our status as leaders in our community, we can attract the revenue of visitors along with the more affluent residents providing a boost to the languishing and slowly diminishing economic base that our county faces.

According to Adventist Health Ukiah Valley CFO, Judson Hale, each doctor hired would be paid an average of \$310,000 per year. They are looking to hire 10 doctors in the next two year for their facilities across the county. That would create an additional \$310,000 per year in local tax revenue. This doesn’t include the additional medical staff they would need to support these additional doctors.

Mendocino County offers a multitude of benefits from world-class wineries, culinary diversity, rugged coastline, outdoor activities a thriving arts & music community not to mention our pioneering, progressive spirit among our residents, Mendocino County also boasts a wide array of attractions. It holds a prime Northern California geographical location within a region of rural communities located along a major highway. Our beautiful geographical region and local character isn't all Mendocino County has to offer – one of the largest Northern California Health Providers (Adventist Health) own and operates the three hospitals and ancillary facilities in our county. This asset of Western Medicine coupled with Alternative therapies and Eastern modalities, has the potential if packaged and marketed internally and externally properly to drive visitation to our region.

Geographically located at the bottom tip of California's famed "Emerald Triangle", our county is known globally for Cannabis. While Cannabis is still a Schedule One drug by the Federal Government, CBD products are not held under that schedule. Cannabinoids (a compound found in Hemp and Cannabis) is quickly gaining favor across the county as a viable product for use in wellness related issues. Much discussion is happening regarding CBD research, FDA approvals, development of products and accepted use of CBD. It is also a less controversial product than its sister, Cannabis. Using Mendocino County's established reputation as one of the world's best Cannabis growing regions, positive strides could be made by exploring the incorporation of this product and its massive economic potential into the mix in the creations of our Wellness Destination.

Mendocino County offers two of the largest processing and by-product processing facilities in California, FlowKana and Emerald Sun. These facilities are specifically processing family owned "craft" Cannabis & CBD products from local farms. Being one of the rural Farm to Fork counties in California adding this product to our line-up allows us to offer even more "experiences" to potential visitors or residents. It also gives us room to market our region not only to Western Medical professionals, we have the ability to market our Wellness Destination to attract more Alternative and Eastern practicing professionals.

By stewarding innovative care, business development and creating collaborative strategic alliances we can promote the brand of Mendocino County to our existing community, potential professionals as well as Wellness care tourists. All of these factors would further the position of Visit Mendocino County as a leading organization in our county. We also believe this product could serve as the template for other rural areas struggling with similar challenges.

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Strategically Visit Mendocino County has already met with Adventist Health to begin conversations about a joint partnership. Our organization is planning on presenting to the Adventist Health Executive team in the coming weeks. To start the relationship moving we would begin slowly by creating a series of itineraries including countywide activities, attractions and areas that are specifically tailored to visiting/potential candidates that showcase Mendocino County. Our local Mendocino College has one of the top nursing programs in California. Further development of a relationship with the nursing department would allow VMC to promote our region to out of county students to encourage them to stay in the community.

Fostering relationships in our medical community would not be the only partnerships created. Visit Mendocino County would need to partner with other local organizations to help develop other projects locally such as walking and biking trails, community event and other projects that make our county more inviting to visitors, potential professionals and community members. Through these initiatives we would further the education of VMC and its projects community wide.

This project will of course be ongoing and will have an ever growing of list of goals and strategies.