



**Mill Valley**

**Chamber of Commerce  
and Visitor Center**

**Strategic Plan 2024-2027**

November 14, 2023 Approved

ENJOY MILL VALLEY

MILL VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & VISITOR CENTER

# Mill Valley Chamber “SWOT” Themes: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## *Strengths:*

- We create and innovate: New Events (MV Music Festival) and regular New Content (EMV Guide, EMV Blog, Friday Flash, Community Map) for local residents and visitors who are our Member targets
- We champion: Vitality (outdoor dining, affordable housing, shop local) and Equity (MVMF scholarship tickets and Marin City free chamber memberships)
- We promote: When a Chamber member creates a new event, product, idea or project that seeks to move the 94941 forward, we'll vet and get behind it in a multi-faceted way
- We coach: We regularly engage one-on-one with members to assist in optimizing their business
- We connect: 10 annual “After Hours” for Members
- We partner with stakeholders: Contracts with City (PSA) and County (Tourism Bureau)
- We communicate and advocate: Letters to City and Regular City Manager/Council Engagement
- We raise funds for the community: Enjoy Mill Valley Fund at Marin Community Foundation/Thrive Fund during Covid
- We have a strong, small team: Jim, Susan, Paula, Danna, Kathy, Adrienne and Ambassadors (Phil as Team Leader)

- We have a large, diverse Board of Directors: 16 Members across 94941 and industries
- We run an active Visitor Center: Showcase members (referrals), Mill Valley (Maps and Merchandise)
- We grow reserves and revenues every year: Membership revenues and MVMF profits
- We continue to retain 90% of our members
- Our Visitor Center is an Art destination

## **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**

### ***Weaknesses:***

- We are spread thin on staffing which limits new initiatives
- Our technology systems need better integration
- Revenue and profitability targets remain volatile until 1-2 more years of MVMF success
- We serve five distinct 94941 Districts: One size doesn't fit all and cohesion is a challenge
  - Downtown, Miller Avenue and Alto Plaza are in City limits
  - Strawberry and Tam Junction are in County limits.
- We don't have many Strawberry members, but hope to change this dynamic with new Strawberry Village ownership
- We don't have a systematic member development and touch program
- Chamber Saver Card is an underused asset and marketing tool/review/do differently?

# Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## ***Opportunities:***

- Help businesses collaborate, engage and do more together: (Linked In groups; philanthropy; use of each others space; co-op marketing;)
- Formalize programs for new 94941 businesses (“buddy” program; Welcome process; Ribbon Cutting)
- Bring new businesses and services: Identify gaps/strategic possibilities to work with commercial realtors to fill vacancies
- Expand remunerative contracts with City and Tourism Bureau (Mill Valley as “destination”)
- Explore attractive signage in town that highlights business locations
- Survey Members to learn about needs and opportunities (Focus groups in 2011)
- Partner with arts groups to activate the facades of empty spaces (EnjoyMillValley Calendar; messaging and photos) ● Foster conscious business community (ecology practices)
- Convene stakeholders to problem-solve and innovate (affordable housing)
- Expand DEI initiatives: (hard conversations; Marin City partnerships; incentives to upgrade buildings for mixed use, ADA) ● Monetize EMV Blog content and subscribers
- Showcase success in more ways: (“Business of the Month”)
- Add networking events: (Women in Business)
- Add community events: (Use of expanded Depot Plaza)

- Target remote workers to use more MV restaurants, services, retail
- Fundraise through our Enjoy Mill Valley Fund for local beautification projects.

# Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## Threats:

- Online shopping and changing retail patterns
- Risk of fire, rain and the complexities of the outdoor event business: Mill Valley Music Festival as key source of income to Chamber
- Ongoing closures and vacancies: rent pressures and high interest rates
- Challenging and expensive City process to open or renovate
- Downtown is “dead” at 7pm.
- Remote working patterns: (reduced foot traffic during summer)
- Construction and other projects we don’t control
- Competing interests between Members and Residents  
(MVLV event limitations; Amplified music on Plaza; City to address)

# Mill Valley Chamber: Vision, Mission and Objectives

**Vision:** An economically thriving, equitable and connected Mill Valley with deep ties among our citizens, businesses and organizations

**Mission:** To foster a vibrant community, we promote, inform, engage and advocate for our members. We do this by creating events and content, championing vitality and equity, coaching and connecting members to spark opportunity and innovation and continuously improving our organization.

**Objectives:** Achieve financial sustainability by 2027 with 500 business and community members, an expanded team, and net growth in reserves. Diversify revenue sources and manage risk.

# **Six Key Mill Valley Chamber of Commerce Goals: 2024-2027**

## **External/Member Goals:**

1. Engage Community to drive traffic and support to businesses
2. Champion Vitality and Equity
3. Connect and Coach members
4. Foster a Sustainable, Conscious and Mindful community

## **Internal Goals:**

5. Expand Partnerships and Organizational Capacity while building reserves
6. Grow Membership to 500 and Blog Subscribers to 10,000

# Translating External Goals into Strategies and Action

## 1. Engage MV and Regional Community to drive traffic and support to businesses

- Champion Mill Valley as a Destination
- Keep Mill Valley Music Festival “local” showcasing MV businesses, services, restaurants and sponsors while attracting a regional and diverse audience
- Find new subscribers and outlets for Enjoy Mill Valley Blog content (4,100 subscribers now; grow to 10,000)
- Partner with Members to Beta test new events that showcase our five commercial areas (MTC wants another MillerFest)
- Continue to shine a light on Members through EMV Guide & Community Map (40k reach through Marin Magazine).

## 2. Champion Vitality and Equity

- Advocate for City policies & regulations that promote business growth / Mill Valley as Destination
- Promote City DEI initiatives by expanding Chamber membership among Marin City businesses / nonprofits
- Encourage outdoor dining, affordable housing and effective signage
- Fastrack Plaza expansion project and partner with Park and Rec/Arts Commissions on new uses of the Plaza
- Bring West Marin Transit bus to downtown and MVLY and explore “The Loop” bus for Mill Valley
- Engage with Members/City to “Adopt a Median” and support other 94941-wide beautification programs
- Work with City to complete the Michael Schwab Mill Valley “Gateway” welcome sculpture on Miller Avenue



# Translating External Goals into Strategies and Action

## 3. Connect and Coach members

- Connect members who share business challenges and opportunities (industry roundtables; virtual opportunities)
- Help new members network and build community
- Throw superb Holiday Party and Annual event in various member locations
- Connect members across geographic and industry sectors to identify and strategize
- Continuously innovate monthly “After Hours” to build/diversify member attendance
- Expand “office hours” for coaching with Chamber team and member volunteers
- Explore an “Ask an Expert” program
- Cross-market learning and information opportunities with SBDC and other Chambers

## 4. Foster a Sustainable, Conscious and Mindful community

- Continue to support the broader goals of housing equity, both by supporting efforts to diversify our community and to create opportunity in a community that has limited affordability, thus increasing the number of people who can both live and work in town
- Inform and help members comply with new County/City composting rules
- Encourage and incentivize businesses to join the free Marin Green Business Program, which both saves money and supports climate goals
- Explore Intro to Mindfulness Series

# Translating External Goals into Strategies and Action

## 5. Expand partnerships / organizational capacity while building reserves

- Renew and expand City PSA Agreement in 2024 ● Deepen partnership with the Marin Convention and Tourism Bureau
- Convert to new Chamber technology platform and streamline member sales and renewal processes ● Add part-time sales and operational capacity as resources permit
- Explore creating a 501c3 for Chamber philanthropy, MVMF and expanded Blog
- Connect businesses and nonprofits for joint marketing

## 6. Grow Memberships to 500 and Community Blog Subscribers to 10,000

- Create a Membership Drive leveraging improved technology systems and augmented staff
- Beta test incentive /referral programs (eg. restaurant raffle prizes; early access to MVMF) ● Establish monthly new member targets ● Expand links and drive prospects to our website ● Continue to seek members outside of 94941 ● Grow Member readership of the “Flash” (1,000 receive now; expand and grow “open rate”)