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## ICONIC EVENTS: Why do we do this?

The Greater Zion area is on a premier stage like never before. Over the past decade, the area has blossomed into a global hub for endurance sports. In 2022, along with the St. George Marathon and the Huntsman World Senior Games, Greater Zion will host two of the most iconic and well-known endurance races in the world – the IRONMAN World Championship, which has never been held outside of Hawaii; and, for the second year in a row, the IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship will be held here.



Iconic events like these bring immediate economic impact to the area from visitors who travel here for the events. But leaders say they do much more for the community than that. Information gathered from communities who host iconic events shows there are five major benefits.

**Benefits of Iconic Events**

- Raise the profile of a community
- Reduce taxes
- Promote long-term investment
- Create jobs
- Generate enthusiasm and a sense of community

**Community Profile**

Jeff Robbins, CEO of the Utah Sports Commission said the IRONMAN World Championship “may be the biggest event in Utah since the 2002 Winter Olympics, as far as a world-wide marquee brand.” Events like these influence the worldwide perceptions, acceptance and appreciation of a community. They demonstrate the communities’ capabilities to businesses and organizations on all levels, and this “street cred” attracts business investment and enhances economic opportunities for all business sectors.



"Hosting these type of events puts us on a worldwide stage," said Patrick Manning, managing partner for the new Black Desert Resort development. "They open the eyes of successful and experienced people to the capabilities of our communities and the opportunities available here. They create credibility and attract positive attention that benefits all of the businesses here."

Josh Aikens, chief of staff at Zonos, agrees. "At Zonos, our mission is to create trust in global trade, and with a global clientele like ours, we see the benefits of having globally recognized events like the IRONMAN World Championships in our hometown where we have our global headquarters."

Over the past decade, events like IRONMAN have put us on a global stage like never before creating a persistent increase in community recognition and tourism. The IRONMAN events alone have brought more than \$120 million in direct economic impact to our businesses – all of that revenue comes here from outside the area and is injected into our local economy. In addition to the direct impact to businesses, tax revenue from visitors is infused into our communities at a significant rate.

### **Reduced Taxes**

Since the first IRONMAN event in 2010, visitor-produced tax revenue received by Washington County has increased by an average of 15% year over year. In 2021, tax revenue from visitors grew to more than \$15 million, making Washington County the second highest generator of visitor tax revenue in the state. State Tax Commission research shows the tax revenue from visitors decreases the local taxes for each of our residents by more than \$1300 per household each year. We simply wouldn't have the amenities and services we now enjoy in this area without the infusion of outside money into our local system.

### **Long-term Investment**

These visitor-generated tax revenues from iconic events are also used for long-term investment in projects that enhance our communities. Local residents enjoy the benefits of improved sporting and event venues, recreational facilities, parks and trails, transportation systems, and entertainment venues that are developed and enhanced through the visitor-based economy.

"Events like these create an elevated community experience, with improved community amenities, fueled by the economic impact of outside dollars," said Tracey Welsh, general manager of Red Mountain Resort.



Over the past decade, more than \$25 million of visitor-generated tax revenue has been invested directly into these types of projects and amenities for our local communities.

### **Jobs**

In Southwest Utah, 15.3% of the jobs are in the leisure and hospitality sector. That's a healthy and sustainable percentage for a strong and diverse economy. But those aren't the only jobs created and supported by the visitor economy. Visitor activity spurs on jobs in construction, development, healthcare, fitness, finance, law, technology, creative services, transportation, and more. Every dollar a visitor brings into the area gets spent over and over in our community supporting local business owners, employees and families. Applied Analysis research from 2019 shows nearly \$380 million in value-added economic activity is generated by providers for tourism businesses. You don't have to look too far to see how connected most of the new development in the area is to the visitor economy.

"These events bring dedicated and highly successful people to our community," said Paul Morris, vice president of administrative affairs at Dixie State University. "They bring business connections that lead to business opportunities. They expose us to new cultures and ideas and provide opportunities to learn, serve and grow. Whether people know it or not, these events positively impact every person in the community."

### **Sense of Community**

Perhaps one of the most significant benefits of events like these are the community pride and enthusiasm they help generate. As Lisa Beck, president of Harmony Public Involvement observed, "they provide opportunity for all of us as 'parts' to come together and create a better 'whole.'"

In a recent Forbes Magazine article titled "How to Build Community and Why It Matters So Much," author Tracy Brower identified one of the common characteristics found in strong communities. "Strong communities have a significant sense of purpose," she wrote. "People's roles have meaning in the bigger picture of the community and each member of the group understands how their work connects to others' and adds value to the whole. As members of community, people don't just want to lay bricks, they want to build a cathedral."

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tracybrower/2020/10/25/how-to-build-community-and-why-it-matters-so-much/?sh=6a2531ee751b>

Intermountain St. George Hospital administrator Mitch Cloward said the nature of the events changes us from the inside out. "These kinds of events inspire people to resolve to improve their health, to set personal goals and achieve them. They build on the hope we



each have within that we can become better versions of ourselves. That's how a healthy future begins and ultimately that vision carries the person who acts on it to a lifetime of achievement."

Community members who get involved with the events get inspired. They become part of something bigger than themselves and witness first-hand what it means to pull together and accomplish remarkable achievements. The feeling and connection changes them from within and provides motivation as they navigate the challenges of life.

"As a boy, I passed out water in the early days of the St. George Marathon and cheered on neighbors and friends," said Shayne Wittwer, CEO of Wittwer Hospitality. "I always knew I would run the marathon when I was old enough - and sure enough, I've run it several times, along with my wife and each of my brothers and sisters and many of their spouses."

It would be interesting to see just how many people in our community have been influenced in the same way.

Senator Mitt Romney who headed up the 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah, said for the local community, the Olympics "created bridges of understanding that had not existed before," adding, "We were a different people in the months and few years that followed the Olympic Games."

Romney said it's for that reason, more than any infrastructure needs or attention it might bring to the state, that he's pushing to get another Olympics in Utah.

Holly Mullen, who was the Editor for the Salt Lake Tribune during the Olympics agrees. "It was a really kind moment in Salt Lake City and Utah. People were really kind. I would just love to see that come back," Mullen said iconic events like these provide "a way for people to feel connected." And that's something Mullen thinks "we really could use" right now.

2022 will be a transformational year for our community as we solidify our position on the world stage. The benefit these iconic events provide goes much further than economic impact. Through them our profile as a viable business community is heightened, and our local taxes are reduced. We'll see long-term infrastructure investments stimulated by the events, and our job market will continue to expand. Perhaps the greatest benefit will be in the enthusiasm and sense of community they help generate as we showcase the character and goodness of the people who live here.

"These events are critical to our future," said Lance Brown, development officer at Dixie State University. "In some ways they are the beating heart of our community. The longer



they continue, the more tradition and vibrancy we will enjoy. They will be anchors for our economic prosperity, identity, and growth."

The spirit of the IRONMAN World Championship is rushing across the Pacific in the glow of a new sunrise. With a spirit of renewal and endurance, it breaks across a new horizon and beckons those who choose to rise. In May 2022, shine your light in the Land of Endurance.

### **About Greater Zion**

Greater Zion is a destination that offers more than 2,400 square miles of adventure and inspiration. Zion National Park, the third most visited National Park in the United States, is the premier attraction, but Zion is only the beginning. Four state parks and a multitude of year-round recreational lands set the stage for a burgeoning mountain biking scene, some of the best off-highway vehicle riding in the country, scenic and challenging play at 13 top-rated golf courses, world-class cultural performances at Tuacahn Center for the Arts and so much more. The vibrant communities of St. George, Springdale, Hurricane, Ivins and towns in between offer a wide range of lodging options, dining experiences and access to outdoor pursuits through local outfitters and tour companies. Home to the 2021 IRONMAN World Championship and 2022 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship, Greater Zion also is a world-class destination for sporting events, conferences and meetings. The Greater Zion Convention & Tourism Office is a transient-room-tax-funded entity of Washington County, Utah. For more information, please visit [GreaterZion.com](http://GreaterZion.com)