



THE PORT VALDEZ COMPANY, INC
VALDEZ, ALASKA

December 24, 2015

Lee Revis
THE VALDEZ STAR
P.O. Box 2949
Valdez, AK 99686

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Dear Lee:

Opinion Piece for Valdez Star

Welcome Home! The Benefits of a Tourism Economy for Residents and Employers

Valdez is on track to have about 10,000 visitors this year—and it's no wonder. This is a community with the amenities that many travelers love—breathtaking views, great fishing, and lots of adventure sporting opportunities.

Imagine what would happen if we could encourage each visitor to spend a modest \$100 more in Valdez. Then imagine what would happen if we could double or triple the number of visitors—and get each of those additional visitors to spend as well.

That's why The Port Valdez Co. (PVC) is collaborating with a museum design firm to develop a vision and strategy for the best use of our "Meals Hill" property. Solid Light (<https://www.solidlight-inc.com>) is a company that has, for 16 years, worked with communities and developers around the country to create museum-based "destinations" and state of the art educational and cultural experiences that anchor commercial centers involving retail and restaurants.

The PVC has made a proposal to the Community of Valdez to donate land on Meals Hill for the Valdez Museum (see Valdez Star 08.28.13), plus a world-class hotel, restaurant, hiking trails and other amenities. The proposal was submitted to the Board of Directors of the Valdez Museum and more recently we have asked for the support of the City Management and the City Council.

Whether you have a tourism economy based on golf, horse racing, Disney World, or ice climbing, the value of that tourism is extended if



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you have a vibrant commercial center where your visitors and their families can spend an extra day or two, visiting a museum, dining on local food, and enjoying a unique sense of place. In other words, recreational and commercial fishers alike may be drawn to Valdez because of our fishing opportunities, but they may stay longer (and bring more of their family) if there are other cultural opportunities and good restaurants.

But it's not just about tourism. The restaurants and attractions are also important for talent recruitment and retention, which is the job creator of the 21st Century.

In this mobile and rapidly changing economy, we know that young people with skills and education can and do move anywhere. Earlier this year, the Christian Science Monitor reported that nearly 3/4th of young college graduates decide where to locate based on quality-of-life factors and city amenities, "such as a robust restaurant scene." <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/USA-Update/2015/0512/Millennial-movers-how-young-people-choose-where-to-live>

This doesn't mean we have to compete with places like New York, Chicago, Denver or even Louisville, Kentucky. Those cities draw young people, yes. Young people also flock to cities like Iowa City, Iowa and Ann Arbor, MI, where there are both lively social offerings and affordable housing. In the 1990s, Hood River, Oregon was home to little more than 4,000 residents when it started developing an "extreme sports" reputation because of opportunities to windsurf, paraglide and mountain bike. A study by the Oregon Arts Commission, http://www.oregonartscommission.org/sites/default/files/publication_or_resource/publication_file/Economic-Impact-Of-Oregon-Arts_2001-Report.pdf, noted that these recreational opportunities were coupled with music and food festivals. All together, Hood River now draws more than 350,000 visitors a year—but it has also attracted residents. Now, the population is an estimated 7,500 people.

These young people are doctors and nurses, entrepreneurs and technology experts. In many cases, they are our own sons and daughters, weighing whether they should start the restaurant of their dreams here, or move to another city to do it. We believe that a shrewd public investment in the Valdez Museum, complemented with private investments in an entertainment center, is a key part of both maximizing our tourism economy and making the city a better place to live and work for our children!

*John Clark, President of The Port Valdez Company, <http://portvaldez.com/>
Sharon Black, Secretary/Treasurer of The Port Valdez Company*