

# OUTDOOR RETAILER

Dear Industry Member –

We want to have a frank discussion about housing at Outdoor Retailer.

We know that Outdoor Retailer has successfully grown since 1996, when we moved to Salt Lake City (SLC) for the first time. SLC has rolled out the ‘red carpet’, providing unprecedented support for the show by investing in infrastructure improvements like taxi service, building improvements/expansions, and a welcoming spirit to let all OR attendees know they are appreciated and welcome. Still, the efforts have barely matched the expansion of the show on the exhibitor and retailer attendance front, and with hotels and suitable accommodations we have overgrown the downtown area and are occupying significant rooms in areas as far away as the airport, West Valley, Sandy and Park City.

We know that what we are attempting has a high level of difficulty and is rife with potential failure; how do we fit a *Trade Show Executive Fastest 50* first-tier international tradeshow into an infrastructure that is built for roughly half the size?

## **THE ASSUMPTIONS**

The show moved to Salt Lake City in 1996; at 15,000 people, the show fit into the downtown hotels pretty well.

The feedback from our many post-show surveys and the [Collective Voice](#) project of 2012 indicated a strong affinity for Salt Lake City despite the already apparent size and fit challenges.

We have roughly 4,300 rooms in 16 downtown hotels for the shows. [Summer Market](#) has close to 28,000 attendees; [Winter Market](#) has about 22,000. Roughly 8-9% of the overall show audience is drive-in distance; the rest of attendees are either staying outside of the OR official housing room block, or in alternative housing (UofU, Host Housing, Airbnb/VRBO, etc.)

Overall costs of doing business in SLC are very good for exhibitors and most attendees, with the exception of flights from the East. Compared to other cities that have anything close to capacity to host OR Summer Market, SLC is among the most cost-effective across the board when figuring shipping/T&E/lodging/transportation costs.

Recent growth of the market (past 4 years, post-recession) has overgrown the downtown capacity by a significant number.

‘Open Market’ hotel prices are today roughly double (sometimes more) in SLC during Outdoor Retailer shows. This is easy to see simply by going to an [online booking agency](#) and entering two date windows; one inside the OR dates, and another outside. This is why being in our negotiated hotel blocks, with negotiated rates, is important. It’s a simple supply/demand equation that is normal, but can save significantly when planning to attend or exhibit at Outdoor Retailer.

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## THE STATS

It's important to understand the show trending over time to be able to understand changes in the show as it's grown, as well as changes in the active outdoor industry that OR serves. It's a dynamic, inclusive and growing marketplace, with successful integration of running, yoga, paddlesports, fitness, multisport/triathlon, lifestyle casual apparel and footwear over the years we've been in SLC. Here are some meaningful statistics to contextualize the housing challenge:

- SM06 overall attendance – 20,439 : SM13 overall attendance 27,830 (**36% increase**)
- SM06 retail buyer count – 6,143 : SM13 retail buyer count 8,205 (**33.5% increase**)
- SM06 exhibiting companies – 971 : SM13 exhibiting companies 1,197 (**23.3% increase**)
- Average personnel brought to OR by company;
  - **Exhibitors – 4.9/company**
  - **Retailers – 2.5/company**

2006 was the year that the expanded Salt Palace unveiled a new section of the building, adding over 100,000 gross square feet of exhibit space (the area where Keen, Brooks, Merrell, fly fishing and yoga brands are currently positioned at Summer Market). During this time, only one hotel (128 rooms) has been built close to downtown SLC. That's a 7,400:128 attendance growth to room growth ratio.

For Outdoor Retailer, the obvious trend over the past decade has been huge growth in the outdoor core and lifestyle categories. Entire new product categories like Running, SUP and Yoga have grown hugely, as has the buying audience in roughly similar numbers.

This is the root of our opportunity and our challenge.

## THE SITUATION / AN EVOLVING SYSTEM

We have been creating a special housing system for Outdoor Retailer to address this under-supply of downtown rooms for one main reason; we know that retailers attending the show is of primary importance, and even though some will choose to stay further out for cost savings, we want convenient downtown rooms specifically for attending retailers. We have worked to address the downtown housing in the following ways:

- 1) Negotiate effectively with hotels in SLC to garner more rooms in our blocks
- 2) Continue to find cost-effective hosted housing and alternative options for our audience
- 3) Invest in transportation solutions and communicating those more effectively
- 4) Work closely with VSL/SLC to create a more streamlined citywide experience for show attendees

Travel Planners is the service we have contracted with to handle the myriad details of deposit, date assignments of arrival/departure, hotel communications and change requests for the full audience of

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OR. Although other housing services legally operate in the area, Travel Planners is the only official partner of the show and has a relationship with us when it comes to hotels. We understand that change is always difficult and while we work to accommodate growth, Travel Planners and we are learning and working to improve the process significantly.

We do also work with a smaller, local outfit called My Host Housing that helps with arrangements for alternative housing options like the University of Utah athlete suites (only at Summer Market) and the Host Housing program that opens local apartments to show attendees.

## **THE HOUSING SYSTEM FOR WINTER MARKET 15**

We have organized the 4,300 or so downtown SLC rooms in our negotiated rate blocks by priority; 'ALUMNI' is the term we use to refer to those who, at last WINTER MARKET 2014, had rooms within our negotiated blocks in a downtown hotel. These will be the priority to first get placed (individually) back in the same hotel. Room count will also be asked as a request, but there are no guarantees on expansions for your company within the limited downtown hotels. It is possible, even likely that groups may have to stay in more than one hotel.

As a reminder, there are many hotel rooms in SLC not currently in our negotiated blocks. We carefully vet hotels and will not contract with establishments not up to our standards in facilities and/or management, and some will not agree to our terms. These hotels are available on the open market, and are available through Quikbook.com (A Travel Planners online system.)

We address these groups in priority order during the active phase of room placement for the downtown hotels only. Retailers are our priority! For outer lying hotels, alternative lodging and rooms not in our negotiated blocks, arrangements can be made anytime once the options are opened. We announce these deadlines and openings via email and also with phone calls, postings on our website and social media, and via our various media partners.

## **SO WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?**

Simply put, there are enough lodging options in the greater Salt Lake Area for the OR shows, with sufficient transportation options to have a great time and get plenty of value from the show experience both Winter and Summer. Not everyone will be able to walk across the street the way it used to be; that is a reality we left behind many years ago. From using bicycles in the closer-in area to riding Outdoor Retailer's comprehensive shuttle system, the expanded TRAX lines to saving serious dollars with further out accommodations and using Taxis, Uber or Lyft and an increasing inventory of rental cars, helping to make the show easy to access and do business with important retailers and exhibitors. It does take more careful planning in advance, and we are investing not only in the transportation and alternative housing options, but also in advanced tools for making your show experience even more powerful.

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Currently, we have placed alumni exhibitors and are accepting guarantees for those rooms. We are also gathering requests from alumni retailers, independent reps and media – please check your email for these communications. For all show participants that were not part of the 2014 Winter Market block, general housing will open shortly (Oct. 27) and once you register the quikbook.com option will be immediately available. Beginning November alternative housing options for Winter Market 2015 will be available on [our website here](#).

Lastly we want to give you a place to follow up with specific questions and comments, as we are dedicated to continually improving Outdoor Retailer, including the difficult housing situation at [orhousing@emeraldexpo.com](mailto:orhousing@emeraldexpo.com).

Media with specific questions regarding the Outdoor Retailer Show and any related issues, including housing, please contact Kate Lowery – Outdoor Retailer’s Director of Public Relations and Communications at 949-226-5779, or email [kate.lowery@emeraldexpo.com](mailto:kate.lowery@emeraldexpo.com). She will be happy to schedule a discussion with the appropriate Outdoor Retailer representative.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Haroutunian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Kenji Haroutunian  
OR Group Show Director  
Direct Line 949-226-5794