



Scott Slocum

Regional Director of Sales & Marketing, Walnut Creek Convention & Visitors Bureau

Walnut Creek? A destination for business groups, meetings, and corporate events? With San Francisco, Napa or Monterey nearby? When Scott Slocum joined the Walnut Creek Convention and Visitors Bureau (WCCVB) in 2015 as its first Regional Director of Sales and Marketing, his first job was to develop convincing answers to these tough questions. It didn't take him long.

An East Bay native, raised in Danville, Slocum understood the amenities that draw so many to make Walnut Creek their home, could have the same appeal to meeting planners looking for a unique location for their group. Drawing on his education at Cornell University and background, which includes senior sales and marketing roles at the Claremont Resort & Spa, Berkeley's Hotel Shattuck Plaza, and The Orchard Hotels on Union Square, Slocum saw a growing trend among groups to find interesting, smaller town alternatives to the same old big cities.

In Walnut Creek, groups could find a vibrant, accessible, and clean downtown filled with first-class restaurants and shopping, walkable streets, all just a BART ride away from San Francisco. The story was easy to write. Getting the story out and noticed by meeting planners across the country has taken a little more work.

Operating as a staff of one, with support from the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce and local hotels, Slocum is leading the charge to elevate Walnut Creek's visibility, promote its features and benefits, and get on meeting planners' "short lists" of locations to host events. Ultimately achieving his goal of increasing hotel occupancy rates, local business spending, and generating sales tax revenue.

To accomplish this, he's on the phone with planners across the country, online with an aggressive #meetinwalnutcreek social media hashtag, and on the road attending trade shows. Plus, he's working with local groups on events like the Forma Gym Turkey Trot, Walnut Creek on Ice, the Downtown Holiday Stroll and others to encourage participants to attend and spend the night.

Slocum says the work is starting to pay off. There are fewer "Where is Walnut Creek?" questions when he's doing his outreach and more groups filling local hotels. His ad campaign, crowning the city as the "Jewel of the East Bay," is getting recognition from the media and from travelers greeted by the slogan on a billboard at the Oakland Airport.

But the work to build the Walnut Creek meeting brand has just begun. Slocum is developing partnerships with nearby communities to co-market the region as well as identifying creative venue options to overcome the city's lack of large meeting and event spaces. And by engaging the community at large, Slocum hopes Walnut Creek residents will promote their town as a meeting destination to their employers, associations, and other groups. Because when Walnut Creek businesses win, Slocum says everyone wins. —**Rob Stankus**