

DISCOVER ALBANY

Beyond Conventional



2020 Annual Report

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General Manager, Albany Capital Center

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General Manager, Renaissance Albany

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Jill Delaney

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Tech Valley Shuttle

Matthew Cannon

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Kyle Dzembo

Tru by Hilton, Albany/Airport

Tammis Groft

Albany Institute of History & Art

Mohammed Hemmid

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Jeff Mirel

Rosenblum Companies

Linda Neil

Holiday Inn Express Wolf Road

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NYS Public Employees Federation

Ex-Officio

Daniel McCoy

Albany County Executive

Anthony Capece

Central Avenue Business Improvement District

Mark Eagan

Capital Region Chamber of Commerce

Paula Mahan

Colonie Town Supervisor

Sean M. Maguire, AICP, CECd

Colonie Economic Development

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Georgette Steffens

Downtown Business Improvement District

Sarah Reginelli

Capitalize Albany Corporation

Letter from the Chairman



As Board Chairperson for Discover Albany, I am delighted to welcome you to our Annual Celebration of Hospitality Excellence. Our team is looking ahead to the never-before-experienced landscape of conventions and tourism in this post-pandemic recovery phase.

Looking back at this past year, it is safe to say that our region, like most others, experienced hardship like never before, and the work done by the Bureau took on a new look and feel as a result. Promotional work being done here in Albany County took on a more local flavor to help New Yorkers plan their staycations and safely venture out with their families to ward off cabin fever. Our sales and services teams worked with venues and clients to create virtual and hybrid meetings and programming to keep their members and clients engaged.

As we look toward 2021, Discover Albany's Board of Directors will be working closely with the staff and leadership to make as fast and strong of a recovery as we can. Our financial stability has certainly been challenged by the events of 2020, but our physical presence within the County and our commitment to our community has continued to grow and strengthen.

I challenge each and every one of you to be more engaged with Discover Albany in 2021. Together we can maximize all that our incredible region has to offer. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve and I look forward to another successful year with my fellow board members.

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Doug McClaine'.

Doug McClaine

General Manager, Albany Capital Center

Letter from the President



Dear Friends and Partners,


I have once again enjoyed the privilege of working with our Discover Albany team, Board of Directors and many wonderful partners in 2020. While this past year took a turn that we could not have anticipated, with the dedication of our team and our partners, we persevered and are poised to begin regaining our lost ground.

If I had to pick a word to describe the team at Discover Albany during the pandemic, it would be resilient. In a year laden with fear, doubt, and frustration, this team refused to be defeated. Each day they put their all into their work – which in many ways no longer matched their job descriptions – to do what was necessary to help our partners make it through. In this report you will see the impacts of that work – from enhanced community engagement and creative virtual programming, to rebooking events and implementing new technical solutions to continue reaching audiences. This resilient team brought their “A game” to work. Every. Single. Day.

We shared some of the many historically and culturally significant programs on which our Cultural Heritage and Tourism (CHAT) partners collaborated, though in different ways than before. We partnered on a myriad of sold-out walking tours, scavenger hunts, virtual festivals, and more. Our CHAT partners received regular communication from our team about collaborations, health and safety guidance, PPE availability, and funding opportunities. No one was left alone in this.

Film Albany, our Film Commission, remained busy as the Capital Region continued to draw filmmakers but also filled a void left by major metropolitan area shutdowns. The excitement that the words, “Lights, camera, action” bring to our community cannot be measured, but the large economic impact that this business brings sure can.

With that, it is with great hope for our recovery and my confidence in our team and partners to see this through, that I present to you our 2020 Annual Report.


Jill Delaney
President/CEO, Discover Albany

Hospitality Excellence Award

PROFESSOR ANTHONY STRIANESE HOSPITALITY EXCELLENCE AWARD

"The Toby"

Albany's Hospitality Industry is an essential component of the Capital Region's economic vitality. The Professor Anthony J. Strianese Hospitality Excellence Award is the only honor developed solely to recognize excellence in travel and tourism and represents the best of Albany's hospitality culture. There are hospitality professionals around the world who were positively influenced by Professor Strianese and his 40-year career in hospitality, naming the award for Toby is a great honor to his memory.

2021 Recipient:

DOMINICK PURNOMO, FEED ALBANY



"As someone who long admired Toby's life and career I'm honored to win an award based on his legacy. Thank you for recognizing the tireless hard work of the hundreds of volunteers who have selflessly given and continue to give their service to Feed Albany over the last year. I'm humbled to accept this honor on behalf of our board and founding members, our staff and everyone in the community who has gotten us to the point we are today. Our hope is that Feed Albany will inspire others to serve our community and to spread love and hospitality."

Dominick Purnomo of FEED ALBANY

Hospitality Grants

Discover Albany announces \$44,250 in funding for the latest round of the Michele L. Vennard Hospitality Grant Program, during a presentation at the 2021 Annual Meeting at the Albany Capital Center.

The grant fund, which is managed by the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region (CFGCR), supports programs that aid in building and sustaining Albany County tourism destinations, attractions, events, and tourism-related activities. The grants encourage collaboration between nonprofit organizations, community groups, and hospitality businesses to further extend the economic impact of tourism and business.

Over the course of the past six years, the Michele L. Vennard Hospitality Grant Program has awarded \$405,150 to organizations that create programs and tourist-attracting events in our community.

2020 Grant Recipients

Albany Center Galleries, Inc.

Albany County Historical Assoc., Inc.

Albany Institute of History & Art

Albany Symphony Orchestra, Inc.

Corporation for the Museum of Political Corruption

Friends of Pruyn House

Historic Cherry Hill

Old Songs, Inc.

Park Playhouse, Inc.

Pine Hollow Arboretum

Russell Sage College

Shaker Heritage Society

Siena College

Departmental Accomplishments

The hospitality and tourism industry was hit hard by the effects of COVID-19 in 2020. Despite meeting cancellations, no events, a closed visitor center and no visitors we continued to develop community programming, promoted our partners and marketed everything that Albany County has to offer. Here is a glimpse at the successes that were achieved during a year that was one of, if not the most, difficult that our industry and organization has ever faced.

Sales & Services Department:

2020 started with a flourish: 4000+ guest rooms were utilized as Albany hosted the Eastern Synchronized Skating Sectional Championships at the Times Union Center. The event boosted year over year occupancy for January by nearly 8% and RevPar by 9%.

As January ended it was clear Albany was poised for an exceptionally strong year. Numerous city wide sporting events, large conferences and strong bookings in the 4th year of the Albany Capital Center all were elements that portended a strong Occupancy and RevPar performance for our destination in 2020. Our Sales Strategy Book, developed to launch an increased cooperative sales strategy for our Destination, was introduced at our January Board of Directors meeting as a comprehensive guide for how the Sales and Services Team planned to approach the year.

As the shut down occurred, the Sales and Services Team did three things immediately that became the focus for all of 2020:

- » The Sales Team contacted existing clients booked in Albany as well as prospective clients considering our destination. We checked in, offered guidance, and lent an ear.
- » Programmatic outreach to venues that support events which drive rooms to support and inform their operators.
- » Regular contact with Directors of Sales to facilitate information sharing, client connection and future

Departmental Accomplishments

strategy planning.

Connection with the Association Market was critical in our plan to recover once the travel restrictions were lifted.

- » Outreach to Association Executives through our Empire State Society of Association Executives membership to maintain a census of which clients were working, where they were working and how best we could provide support and service.
- » Teamed with the Albany Capital Center to host three in-person education sessions in the summer of 2020. Just under 30 planners attended including groups from Capitol Hill Management Services and Association Development Group.

As 2020 came to a close, two things became clear:

The Location of lead source will drive sales mission efforts into 2021:

1. New York
2. Maryland
3. District of Columbia
4. Massachusetts
5. Ohio

Segment Focus will inform our client outreach:

Market Segment	2019 Leads		2020 Leads
Educational	16		5
Medical & Pharmaceutical	13		10
Government, Public Administration	12		4
Athletic & Sports/Recreation	10		3

Departmental Accomplishments

Operations Department:

The year 2020 began with the closing of the Visitors Center Exhibit and the Planetarium, transitioning into the new home of the Irish American Heritage Museum. In the midst of adjusting to this, the pandemic hit causing us to close the Visitors Center completely for the remainder of the year.

Though the Visitors Center was closed, the Operations department focused on heritage tourism and programming for the summer of 2020 that was COVID-19 friendly. These projects included:

- » Guided Walking Tours that followed COVID-19 safety guidelines
- » Cultural Heritage Partnership Outreach: Zoom meetings, COVID-19 safety protocols, funding sources, virtual program collaboration, tourism outlook
- » Literary Themed Programming including virtual Turn of the Screw book club, a collaboration between the NYS Writers Institute, Historic Albany Foundation and Discover Albany with 60 attendees.
- » Partnering with the City of Albany, we were able to help support the Virtual Tulip Festival and launch the award-winning #518TulipTracker program.
- » Developed a Giving Tuesday NOW blog post to try to help heritage partners get donations when they needed it most.
- » Collaborated with the Downtown Albany BID on a series of Facebook Live tours given by Discover Albany.
- » Albany I Spy: A timed architectural hunt throughout downtown Albany. This event was held in partnership with Albany Archives, the Downtown Albany BID and Historic Albany Foundation. This was a sold out event which was COVID-19 friendly.
- » Worked with the marketing department to launch a Fun Fact Friday video series for social media.
- » Developed and launched the Discover Eliza's Albany scavenger hunt. There were over 70 participants in this event that was held over the course of two weeks.

Departmental Accomplishments

- » Worked in collaboration with the Downtown Albany BID and the Albany Center Gallery to launch the Artful Albany Podcast. The podcast includes four 30-minute episodes that give listeners a tour of the Capital Walls public art project, integrated with Albany history.
- » Participated in a Museum Association of New York (MANY) Conference Panel.
- » Airport Information Center continued operations on a reduced schedule and staff throughout 2020.
- » Virtual Visitors Center developed on albanys.org and a Live Chat function was configured to help answer travel questions about COVID-19 restrictions and protocols.

Marketing Department:

The Marketing Department at Discover Albany completely shifted tactics during the COVID-19 pandemic. Content shifted from a heavy emphasis on events happening in the area to the creation of more evergreen content focusing on activities that were COVID-19 friendly and the promotion of our partners.

Paid advertising was put on hold and the team focused on more grassroots marketing efforts targeted at those living in the Albany community encouraging them to become tourists in their own backyards.

In lieu of a new Visitors Guide we took a more COVID-19 friendly approach and accomplished something that had been on our radar for years: **The Discover Albany app**. The app gives visitors and residents a look at all our destination has to offer right at their fingertips.

Departmental Accomplishments

Marketing efforts included:

- » Held a press conference to unveil the 2020 Visitors Guide cover that was created by artist Cara Hanley
- » Developed a Coronavirus Information page on our website with an alert linking visitors directly to that page. It was kept updated with City, County and New York State information as it became available.
- » Developed a Virtual Visitors Center on the website and a live chat function so we could answer any questions.
- » Partnered with the City of Albany on the Virtual Tulip Festival and launched our #518TulipTracker campaign, which included:
 - » 6 blog posts with over 6,675 views
 - » 11 media stories
 - » 135,607 impressions across social platforms
 - » #518TulipTracker was used in 736 public posts across our social platforms
 - » More than 7030 views of the Self-Guided Tulip Driving Tour that was developed.
- » Worked with our partners to develop video content for National Travel and Tourism Week which included:
 - » 2 blog posts
 - » 7 videos
 - » 7.6K people were reached
- » Held calls with hotels from around Albany County discussing marketing initiatives and leveraging Discover Albany to help with business
- » Worked with heritage partners to develop Discover Eliza's Albany scavenger hunt which included 5 different sites and garnered
 - » 76 submissions
 - » 1 blog post
 - » 3 media stories
 - » 26,026 impressions
- » Developed the "Discover My Albany" campaign where we worked with our PR firm, Relentless Awareness to create videos with 5 Albany County residents where they showed us their top 5 favorite spots in Albany. This campaign garnered:

Departmental Accomplishments

- » 5 blog posts with 890 views
- » 5 videos
- » 2.7K people reached
- » 2.142 Link Clicks
- » 1,263 Engagements
- » 2 media stories
- » Developed and launched the Discover Albany app, which includes listings on things to do, restaurants, hotels and a function where you can create trails. The app was also built to service conferences and meetings and has the ability to house their programs and schedules.
- » 78 media stories throughout all of 2020
- » Won the Digital Media Campaign MARCOM award for our work on the #518TulipTracker campaign.

WEBSITE:

UNIQUE VISITORS: 292,937

TOTAL PAGE VIEWS: 535,738

WEBSITE TRAFFIC

ORGANIC: 183,278

OTHER: 62,024

TOP TRAFFIC SOURCES:

ORGANIC SEARCH: 183,278

DIRECT: 37,403

REFERRAL: 7,554

SOCIAL: 16,998

PAID: 46

SOCIAL MEDIA:

Discover Albany maintained a robust presence on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In 2020, we delivered 4,500,000 M impressions across platforms with 198.1K engagements. We gained 5,972 followers, a 17.8% increase from 2019. We also generated 198.1K engagements, up 19.5% from 2019. These numbers are impressive considering we surpassed 2019 without the paid social campaigns that we had done in previous years.

Departmental Accomplishments

Film Albany:

Amazon Series Modern Love

- » Mazzone's was awarded the catering contact based on our referral
- » Utilized Albany locations based on our referrals – Albany Institute of History & Art, Dove & Deer, Iron Gate Café, Shiny Rainbow Restaurant, Washington Park
- » Utilized OGS Lot 1 Commerce Plaza as well as one Parking Authority lot on Central Avenue based on our referrals
- » There were permit fees, Albany PD costs, parking lot costs and location rental fees collected
- » Assisted City Clerk's office with final permitting/insurance process
- » Managed two 1-day Amazon shutdowns with Albany PD, Mayor's Office, City Clerk, County Executive - permit refiled for following week
- » Continued to work with Modern Love and attend Technical Scout meetings regarding Albany locations
- » Coordinated with Modern Love and OGS alternate parking options for South End scene
- » Upon Film Albany's recommendation, Modern Love made a \$2,500 donation to Washington Park Conservancy
- » Assisted Film Schenectady with resources and crew services
- » Association of Film Commissioners International estimates a union TV series generates \$165,000 per day in economic impact

HBO White House Plumbers

- » Film Albany was first contacted in October 2020 regarding this limited series.
- » Film Albany has conducted 4 location site inspections, one of them with their Executive Production team.
- » HBO will be utilizing many of our downtown Albany buildings for interiors and exteriors to double as Washington, DC buildings in 2021.
- » Additional downtown Albany locations are being considered for restaurant and nightclub scenes.
- » Film Albany is currently working with this production on additional services and sleeping rooms.
- » Casting call for extras has been shared on all Film Albany social media channels.
- » 2021 filming dates are being explored.

Financial Report

2020 Financial Report

CONDENSED BALANCE SHEET (AS OF 12/31/20, UNAUDITED)

Assets

Cash & Receivables	\$1,806,612
Receivables	\$45,047
Property & Equipment	\$30,878
Other	\$197,254
TOTAL	\$2,079,791

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$87,258
Other	\$34,560
TOTAL	\$121,818

Total Liabilities and Net Assets **\$1,957,973**

2021 BUDGET

INCOME

2021 BUDGET

2020 BUDGET (UNAUDITED,REVISED)

Earned Income	54,700	33,200
Fees for Services	1,019,578	1,025,995
Grants	0	133,878
Investment	26,000	26,000
Other	100	350
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,100,378	\$1,219,423

EXPENSES

2021 BUDGET

2020 BUDGET (UNAUDITED,REVISED)

Admin Expenses	303,800	306,680
Marketing	122,100	216,317
Other	49,450	56,200
Personnel	925,028	798,804
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,400,378	\$1,378,001

Mission Statement

Discover Albany strengthens the awareness of Albany County as a convention and visitor destination, attracting individuals, families, and businesses from around the world to increase revenue and stimulate economic development and growth for the community.



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