



DISCOVER ALBANY



Beyond Conventional
Annual Report

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Albany Capital Center/ASM Global

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Letter from the Chairman



As Board Chair for Discover Albany, I am delighted to welcome you to our Annual Celebration of Hospitality Excellence and present this 2021 Annual Report. Our team has worked diligently and collaboratively to support this post-pandemic recovery phase and we see great things on the horizon.

This past year continued to pose never-before-seen challenges with many ups and downs, and as a result, the work done by the Bureau continued to look like a blend of pre-pandemic efforts with Covid-era tactics sprinkled in. The team resumed promotional work outside of our region, but still engaged the drive market with local flavor to help New Yorkers plan their staycations and safely venture out with their families. Our sales and services teams worked with re-engaged clients to reimagine their events and re-book meetings and events.

As we look toward 2022, Discover Albany's Board of Directors will be working closely with the staff and leadership to continue on our road to recovery. Our financial stability has certainly been challenged by the events of the last two years, but our physical presence within the County and our commitment to our community has continued to grow and strengthen.

I encourage each of you to be more engaged with Discover Albany in 2022. Download our Discover Albany App. Ensure your listing is up to date. Collaborate with your fellow partners. 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 handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leola Edelin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Leola Edelin

General Manager, Renaissance Albany

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 2021. While we had all hoped that 2021 would be more normal than 2020, it continued to pose challenges to our industry, but together we persevered and are regaining lost ground.

Our amazing team at Discover Albany continued to test the boundaries of what a Destination Marketing Organization is charged with doing, and together we moved into the realm of Destination Management Organization (DMO). While Destination Marketing remains a key component of Discover Albany's efforts, Destination Management brings us a step further through the coordinated and thoughtful planning of all elements that make up a tourism destination.

As the DMO, Discover Albany brings together organizations that serve all aspects of the visitor experience – including lodging providers, attractions operators, restaurants, and retailers – so that they can share insights into what makes their community stand out as a tourism, meeting, sports, convention and film destination. Through careful planning, Discover Albany works to ensure strategic, long-term success and strong economic impact for businesses in Albany County. Our thoughtful, diverse, and hard-working Board of Directors mirrors this model and helps guide our decisions – leading to a better Albany for all.

We are proud of the work we accomplished throughout 2021 despite the many challenges. Film Albany, our Film Commission, remained very busy as the Capital Region continued to draw filmmakers, and partnered with its regional counterparts to launch the Capital Region and Adirondack Film Alliance. The Albany County Sports Commission began the process of formalization, with the goal of maximizing the economic impact of sports in the County. And our Cultural Heritage and Tourism (CHAT) partners continued to drive programming that will help our partners fully recover by drawing more visitors.

Our organization is robust, we are well rounded, and we look at Albany County like a puzzle that we can help solve – selecting each piece carefully and thoughtfully to ensure the greatest experiences for clients, visitors and residents alike.

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 2021 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.

2022 Recipient:

STEPHEN SCHIFLEY, CMP, ALBANY MARRIOTT

"You can be the best salesperson, but if you don't have a great team to execute then it doesn't matter. I am lucky to work with a fantastic team at the Albany Marriott. Without their help and support, I would not be accepting this award. I am honored to be recognized as the recipient of the 2022 Hospitality Excellence Award."



— **Steve Schifley**
Albany Marriott, Director of Sales & Marketing

Hospitality Grants

Discover Albany is excited to announce funding for the latest round of Michele L. Vennard Hospitality Grant Program recipients with a presentation ceremony during the 2022 Annual Celebration of Hospitality Excellence at the Kenmore Ballroom.

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 seven years, the Michele L. Vennard Hospitality Grant Program has awarded over \$400,000 to organizations that create programs and tourist-attracting events in our community.

2021 Grant Recipients



Departmental Accomplishments

Sales & Services Department:

Discover Albany's Sales and Services team began the year meeting virtually with clients while best practices for in person meetings became more readily accepted. In the search for new business for Albany County hotels, the team logged 14,752 miles by attending tradeshow or client meetings in Nevada, Illinois, Washington DC, Massachusetts, Connecticut as well as in the virtual world. The team logged 236 appointments to tell the story of why Discover Albany is beyond conventional.

While traveling to meet clients was an important part of the sales process, there were several significant in person site tours and client meetings. Discover Albany's Sales and Services team continues to attend local networking events, participate in professional society committee work and be tapped as speakers on topics that they are expert on.

Leads by Segment

Totals:

Sports	24
Trade Association	17
Fraternal	13
Religious	1
Govt	9
Corp	1

Departmental Accomplishments

Sales & Services Cont'd:

64 Leads by Year:

2021	16
2022	27
2023	16
2024	4
2025	1

Destination Services:

While the pandemic hurt overall attendance numbers for events, the client outreach for Destination Services was strong. The department continues to promote the use of the Discover Albany App to connect visitors to the destination assets. Sports groups particularly are open to this service.

Items of particular interest for the fall groups:

- What is open
- Visitor Information Stations
(maps, visitor guides brochures)
- Sponsorship or Support Dollars
- Food Trucks

Departmental Accomplishments

Operations Department:

In 2021, Discover Albany was finally able to re-open the Visitors Center and the gift shop with limited hours. It was a welcome return to normalcy.

In addition to the re-opening of the Visitors Center, the Operations Department worked hard to host and develop the following programs and events:

- » **Albany Amour!: Historic Love Stories and Cider Pairings-** Virtual program for Valentine's Day that combined the sweet, notorious and scandalous partnership's in Albany's history, with cider pairings from Nine Pin.
- » **Politics and Prohibition-** Discover Albany and Historic Albany Foundation virtual presentation.
- » **Albany History Race: Beers Through the Years -** Scavenger hunt style program of Albany's brewing history.
- » **Books and Blooms-** Partnership with RedBookshelf, this summer reading program took place in the gardens of Albany's historic sites.
- » **Erie Eats: Beer, Bikes and Barges-** Guided bike tour exploring the history of beer brewing along the Erie Canal, in partnership with Erie Canal Museum (Syracuse) and Historic Albany Foundation.
- » **Fall Guided Tours-** General Albany, Eerie Albany and Darkside of Center Square (collaboration with Historic Albany Foundation).

Lastly, the Operations Department worked to ensure that Discover Albany's Heritage Partners were promoted and made aware of any grant and funding opportunities:

- » Heritage Tourism Partnership Meetings
- » Heritage Partnership Weekly Newsblasts including funding opportunities
- » Blogs that included the following partners: The Radix Center, Historic Cherry Hill, Irish American Heritage Museum, Albany Pro Musica, Musicians of Ma'alwyck, Underground Railroad Education Center, Schuyler Mansion, Albany Rural Cemetery, Shaker Heritage Society, Albany Center Gallery, New York State Capitol, St. Agnes Cemetery, New York State Museum, Opalka Gallery, Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany Pine Bush Preserve, Taste of Troy Food Tours, Historic Albany Foundation, NYS Writers Institute, Ten Broeck

Departmental Accomplishments

Mansion (Albany County Historical Association), The Palace, Albany Symphony, Capital Repertory Theatre, Old Songs, Inc., Playhouse Stage Company, Pine Hollow Arboretum, John Boyd Thacher State Park, USS Slater, Nature Bus (Bennett Hill Preserve, Normans Kill West Preserve, Pine Hollow Arboretum, Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail, Lawson lake County Park, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy), Huyck Preserve, Rensselaerville Library, Rensselaerville Historical Society, The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence, USS Slater, Michelangelo – A Different View, Playhouse Stage Company, Erie Canalway Trail, Empire State Trail, Mabee Farm Historic Site, Washington Park Conservancy, Pruyn House, Albany Rural Cemetery, Iroquois Indian Museum, Empire State Plaza, Crailo State Historic Site, Eerie Albany Ghost Tours, Van Schaick Mansion, Peebles Island, and the Albany Barn.

- » Travels with Darley – Provided assistance to NYS Parks in developing an Albany itinerary for a PBS episode of Travels with Darley, highlighting the Empire State Trail.
- » FAM Tour with NY By Rail- Organized a FAM Tour with NY By Rail Magazine and sent the writer to heritage partners including: Empire State Plaza Outdoor Art Collection, Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany Barn/Albany Center Gallery and the #CapitalWalls Walking Tour.
- » Black History & Culture – Page added to albany.org where content will continue to be added and updated
- » Assisted with program development and marketing for the Michelangelo – A Different View exhibit at the Albany Capital Center from July 29 to August 23, 2021 with:
 - » FAM Tour with NY BY Rail
 - » Facebook and Instagram Marketing pre-event and during
 - » Developed two Artful Albany itineraries for day trips and weekend getaways
 - » Dedicated webpage on Albany.org highlighting the event and all the amazing artful offerings there are in Albany include 9 blogs pulled onto the page

Departmental Accomplishments

Marketing Department:

The Marketing Department at Discover Albany continued to create content that was evergreen focusing on activities that were COVID-19 friendly and the promotion of our partners.

After being put on hold in 2020 paid advertising was done in 2021 on a limited budget. In addition to the paid advertising, the marketing team continued with grassroots marketing efforts targeting the local community.

In late 2021 the Discover Albany marketing team took on the task of creating the 2022 Visitors Guide in house. The Visitors Guide focused on locals throughout all of Albany County giving showing visitors their top spots to visit.

Marketing efforts included:

- » Albany County Restaurant Appreciation Month was launched in February of 2021 in partnership with: the Downtown Albany BID, Central BID, Lark St BID, Guilderland Chamber of Commerce, Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce, Colonie Chamber of Commerce and the Capital Region Chamber. This initiative encouraged people to order from Albany County restaurants and submit their receipts. All the restaurants and people that were submitted were then drawn to win a free partnership with Discover Albany and an Albany Take Out Care package.
- » Smart Meetings Co-Op ad with the Albany Capital Center and four area hotels.
- » Tri-County Tip Off Challenge with Discover Saratoga and Discover Schenectady to see which county had the best tippers.
- » A follow-up Smart Meetings Co-Op ad with the Albany Capital Center and Empire State Plaza Convention Center, highlighting the Capital Complex.
- » Started a Discover Albany TikTok account and started to create and post Instagram Reels.
- » Started a project with our marketing firm to update our photo and video assets.
- » Partnered with the City of Albany's Office of Cultural Affairs, Citizens, and the City of Albany Department of General Services on the #518TulipTracker campaign again, which included:
 - » 4 blog posts with over 1,945 views

Departmental Accomplishments

- » #518TulipTracker was used in 1,052 public posts across our social platforms
- » More than 1,898 views of the Self-Guided Tulip Driving Tour that was developed.
- » Worked with the Sales Department on a video for their bid for the 2023 Marine Corps League Convention.
- » Completed a Black History & Culture page on albany.org
- » Worked with the Freihofer's Run for Women on social content.
- » Worked with the Albany Capital Center and other community partners on their exhibit, Michelangelo — A Different View
 - » 5 videos
 - » 2.7K people reached
 - » 2.142 Link Clicks
 - » 1,263 Engagements
 - » 2 media stories
- » Full page ad in the "New York Meeting Guide" in the December issue of Small Market Meetings.
- » Created billboards to be displayed in the Albany International airport promoting the Discover Albany App.
- » Social Media ad campaign promoting our app and fall in Albany County.
- » Co-Op ad in the April and October issues of AARP.
- » Completed 3 FAM tours during the Fall with travel writers that covered numerous Albany County attractions and Discover Albany Partners.

WEBSITE:

UNIQUE VISITORS: 739,120
TOTAL PAGE VIEWS: 876,023

TOP TRAFFIC SOURCES:

ORGANIC SEARCH: 286,663
DIRECT: 50,649
SOCIAL: 16,221
REFERRAL: 9,070
EMAIL: 149

SOCIAL MEDIA:

Discover Albany maintained a robust presence on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In 2021, we delivered 5,386,938 impressions across social platforms with 203.4K engagements an increase of 3% from 2020. We also gained 4,507 followers, a 11.2% increase from 2020. These numbers are impressive considering we once again grew without using significant marketing dollars on advertising.

Departmental Accomplishments

Film Albany:

Film Albany, through local and regional cooperation, has provided a marked impact on the economic vitality to our region. The film commission of Discover Albany has solidified the destination's resume as a legitimate film production option for the Television and Motion Picture Industry. This has been accomplished by providing responsive service on inquiry from location and production professionals and collaboration with state and regional colleagues and local permitting agencies.

Film Albany Website Hits for 2021: 6,377

Inquiries/crew referrals/location recommendations for 2021: 270

In 2021, film projects that worked with Film Commissioner Debby Goedeke produced more than 10,000 guest rooms. The largest of these projects, Gilded Age, was primarily filmed in Troy but offered regionwide impact. Significant work through our regional partnerships positioned Film Albany to play a role in many 2021 productions, large and small. Those productions sometimes found locations outside the county but still fueled guest room nights and other impactful economic spend within Albany County's boundaries.

Projects of Note:

- HBO's Gilded Age Premiere Season and the White House Plumbers Mini-Series
- Showtime Series Billions and 3 Women
- Independent Film productions Oathkeepers and Resurrection showcased at 2021 Sundance Film Festival

Other studios seeking Albany locations:

- FX
- Amazon

Financial Report

2021 Financial Report

CONDENSED BALANCE SHEET (AS OF 12/31/21, UNAUDITED)

Assets

Cash & Equivalents	\$1,847,084
Receivables	\$17,581
Other	\$341,216
Total	\$2,205,881

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$145,920
Other Current Liabilities	\$52,619
Long-Term Liabilities	\$360,638
Total	\$559,177

Net Assets

Unrestricted Net Assets	\$1,778,838
Surplus/Deficit	-\$132,134
Total	\$1,646,704

Total Liabilities and Net Assets **\$2,205,881**

BUDGET VS ACTUAL

INCOME	2021 BUDGET	2021 ACTUAL (UNAUDITED)
Earned Income	\$54,700	\$45,736
Fees for Services	\$1,019,578	\$1,229,516
Grants	\$ -	\$63,044
Investments	\$26,000	\$60,426
Other	\$100	\$312
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,100,378	\$1,399,033
EXPENSES		
Admin Expenses	\$303,800	\$361,007
Marketing	\$122,100	\$307,701
Personnel	\$925,028	\$822,078
Other	\$49,450	\$40,382
Total Expenses	\$1,400,378	\$1,531,167
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	\$(300,000)	\$(132,134)

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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