



DISCOVER ALBANY



Beyond Conventional
2023
Annual Report

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Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Leola Edelin, Chair

General Manager, Renaissance Albany

Sonya del Peral, Vice Chair

Owner/Manager, Nine Pin Ciderworks, Partner

Melissa Carrier, Treasurer

Director of Sales, Total Events

Jeff Mirel

Executive Vice President, Rosenblum Companies

Jill Delaney

President/CEO, Discover Albany

Directors

Lori Anctil

The College of Saint Rose

Carm Basile

Capital District Transportation Authority

Nick Boulas

Hilton Garden Inn-Albany Med

Matt Cannon

Albany International Airport

Mike Chain

Crowne Plaza Albany - The Desmond Hotel

Kyle Dzembo

Prestige Hospitality Group

Peter Gannon

United Way of the Greater Capital Region

Trent Griffin-Braaf

Tech Valley Shuttle

Tammis Groft

Albany Institute of History & Art

Mohammed Hemmid

Hampton Inn & Suites Downtown

Kevin Johnson

Palace Theater

Shannon Licygiewicz

Albany Capital Center/ASM Global

Linda Neil

Tri City Hotels

Lucas Rogers

Albany County Executive's Office

Sherrene Zachow

Hilton Garden Inn Albany/SUNY Area

Ex-Officio

Daniel McCoy

Albany County Executive

Anthony Capece

Central Avenue Business Improvement District

Mark Eagan

Capital Region Chamber

Peter Crummey

Colonie Town Supervisor

Sean M. Maguire, AICP, CEcD

Colonie Economic Development

Hon. Kathy Sheehan

Mayor - City of Albany

Georgette Steffens

Downtown Business Improvement District

Sarah Reginelli

Capitalize Albany Corporation

Letter from the Chairwoman



As I wrap up my term as Board Chair for Discover Albany and prepare to hand the reigns to my colleague, Jeff Mirel, I am delighted to welcome you to our Annual Celebration of Hospitality Excellence and present this 2023 Annual Report. Our team has worked diligently and collaboratively to bring big impacts to Albany County, and the numbers speak for themselves.

This past year saw a recovery from the pandemic that even the experts didn't predict – Albany County tourism is back! With a full year of normal operations and sales efforts, our hotels and meeting spaces exceeded pre-pandemic numbers in terms of visitation and room rates.

As we look toward 2024, Discover Albany's Board of Directors will be working closely with the staff and leadership to continue to innovate and provide opportunities to learn and develop new skills to take us to the next level. Our financial stability remains on solid ground 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 2024. Download our newly-updated 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 have served as your chair and I look forward to another successful year with my fellow board members under Jeff's leadership.

Leola Edelin

General Manager, Renaissance Albany

Letter from the President



Dear Friends and Partners,

I continue to have such pride in our destination and the people who make it a wonderful place to live, work and play! It has been my privilege to work with our Discover Albany team, Board of Directors and many wonderful partners throughout 2023. While we still face many challenges as a destination, we also shared in many successes throughout the year and have seen a faster overall recovery in hotel occupancy and meeting bookings than even we anticipated. I am so grateful that we have come through this storm and are now once again finding success together.

As the Destination Management Organization (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, along with our thoughtful, diverse, and hard-working Board of Directors, works to ensure strategic, long-term success and strong economic impact for businesses in Albany County.

Our talented and hard-working team at Discover Albany has strived to reinvent what it means to be a DMO, learning together new and innovative ways to promote Albany County for a new era. Our team has taken part in educational programming from such organizations as Destinations International, to develop and hone our skills. In 2023, four team members earned their Professional in Destination Management Certificates, and more staff are pursuing that designation in the new year. And more opportunities to learn and grow are being pursued – stay tuned for more on those and how they'll help Albany grow to new heights.

We are proud of the work we accomplished throughout 2023 to help our partners continue attracting more visitors. We encourage you to review our report with an eye to how you might partner with us in 2024 and beyond to bring even more success to your business and our destination as a whole.

With that, it is with great pride that I present to you our 2023 Annual Report.


Jill Delaney
President/CEO, Discover Albany

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.

2024 Recipient:

MONICA LABREE

VICE PRESIDENT OF HOSPITALITY | THE CENTURY HOUSE



“I'm truly grateful for being awarded The Professor Anthony J. Strianese Hospitality Excellence Award. It's humbling to be chosen among such accomplished industry leaders and I owe this recognition to the unwavering support of my team and mentors!”

Monica LaBree

THE HONORABLE MATTHEW T. PETER
DESTINATION INNOVATOR AWARD

The Honorable Matthew T. Peter Destination Innovator Award is awarded annually to a person; and/or organization; who has made a lasting impact on Albany County as a destination. The nominee will have launched a new or revitalized program, event, or attraction; or made a significant impact on the destination's ability to serve the public; through innovation and collaboration.

2024 Recipient:

**CAPITAL DISTRICT
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**



Hospitality Grants

Discover Albany announces \$70,061 in funding for the latest round of the Michele L. Vennard Hospitality Grant Program, during a presentation at the 2024 Annual Meeting at The Hangar at 743.

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.

2024 Grant Recipients

Albany Barn Inc

Albany Center Galleries, Inc

Albany County Historical Association | Ten Broeck Mansion

Albany Institute of History & Art

Albany Voices of Pride, Inc.

Bring on the Spectrum, Inc.

Friends and Foundation of Albany Public Library

Friends of Pruyn House

Friends of the Pine Bush Community

Gov Nelson A Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Performing Arts Center

Historic Albany Foundation

Historic Cherry Hill

Musicians of Ma'alwyck

Old Songs, Inc.

Opalka Gallery

Organization of Adirondack Rowers and Scullers, Inc. dba Albany Rowing Center

Parks & Trails New York

Shaker Heritage Society

Steamer No.10 Theatre, Inc

The Pine Hollow Arboretum

Over the course of the past eleven years, the Michele L. Vennard Hospitality Grant Program has awarded 186 grants totaling \$601,411 to organizations that create programs and tourist-attracting events in our community.

Departmental Accomplishments

Sales & Services Department:

Sales Activities/Tradeshows

Sales has continued to focus on pursuing regional events that fit our destination and have key portions of their membership/constituency in our region. Events that got our focus: Empire State Society of Association Executives, MPI New England, MPI New Jersey, Destination East, Small Market Meeting Conference, Sports Events and Tourism Association, American Bus Association, and numerous local networking opportunities. The team also hosted three client focused events with the year ending Holiday Wreath Making event with key clients.

| | 2023 Leads | 2023 Lead Room Nights |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Leads | 114 | 52,436 |
| | Bookings | Room Nights |
| Bookings | 59 | 18,005 |

Visitor Activities

Discover Albany also began tracking visitor activity through the data service Zartico. The month of March received a deep dive to assess the impact of some of the largest events in our market with tremendous results. We have uncovered opportunities for additional destination services as well as sales opportunities to maximize impact to our region during a critical period for our Destination.



Departmental Accomplishments

Destination Services

Destination Services has been a critical tool for the Destination in the re-sale process. The connections to the community made by our Destination Services team lead by Debby Goedeke is critical in making the impact of Meetings and Conventions felt broadly throughout the hospitality community. The activities that make a big visual impact are Food Recovery activities and food truck events to spice up the Food and Beverage experience. Some of the other services we find bring meaning are Staffed Visitor Information Kiosks and the promotion of our Discover Albany App to put the destination at the finger tips of our visitors.



Sports Commission:

The Sports Commission for Discover Albany is at the table for planning and assisting the execution of sports events of all types. The Sports Commission lead role in Hospitality for NCAA was crucial in maximizing visitor spending in our Destination.

NCAA Attendee Profile

47% Overnight

Compared to overall 51% overnight

28% Visitors

Compared to overall 19% visitors

**54% Out of
State Visitors**

Compared to overall 37%

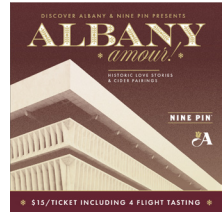
Departmental Accomplishments

Operations Department:

In 2023, Discover Albany maintained a fully staffed visitors center welcoming guests from around the world.

Programs & Events:

- **Albany Amour:** Historic love stories and cider pairings presented to Nine Pin Cider and other community service providers.
- **Tulip Festival:** Provided support to the City of Albany for the week long celebration of 75 years of the Albany Tulip Festival.
- **Beers, Bikes and Barges:** Guided bike tour, in partnership with Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse, highlighting the history of beer production along the Erie Canal. Funded by Erie Canalway National Heritage Museum's Tourism Infrastructure and Event Grant.
- **Politics and Prohibition Tour:** Juicy local gossip behind the secret speakeasies, the bootleggers who supplied them and the suspected politicians who may have had ulterior motives in keeping Albany a dry town.
- **Haunted Tours:** Eerie Albany, Capital Rep's City Séance tour and Historic Albany Foundation's Dark Side of Downtown tour partnerships.
- **Hoppin' Howl-ween:** Partnered with Nippertown to hire a total of 10 musicians over two nights (First Friday & Hounds of Halloween) for free performances outside downtown businesses along the All Hallow E'en Art Path. Supported by Capitalize Albany's Amplify Albany Grant Program.



Community Engagement Initiatives:

- **Ironweed:** 40th Anniversary celebration for the publication of William Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, Ironweed. Provided support to



Departmental Accomplishments

NYS Writers Institute, Albany Distilling Company, and Capital Repertory Theatre.

- **Revolutionary War 250:** Appointed to Albany County Legislature's USA - 250 Commission, with the goal of bringing history to life in celebration of the 250th anniversary of America's independence.
- **Visitor Readiness Program:** Presented multiple Visitor Ready and Hospitality Classes to community partners, including Historic Cherry Hill, Schenectady Community College, and the University at Albany Intensive English Language Program.
- **Halloween Festival:** Event Calendar, Times Union, Albany Broadcasting marketing package, In Our Own Voices House Ball.



Provided guide and content support for multiple tours and lectures.

- » **Eerie Albany Ghost Tours: Discover Albany-**
41 attendees
- » **Eerie Albany with Nine Pin Cider:** 60 attendees
- » **City Séance Tours:** Capital Rep - 124 attendees
- » **Dark Side of Downtown Tours:** Historic Albany
Foundation - 297 attendees
- » **Discover the All Hallow E'en Art Path Family Fun Tour:**
Discover Albany & Albany Center Gallery 16 attendees

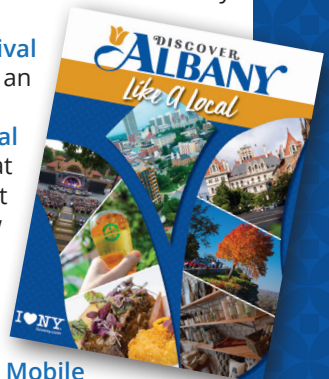
Departmental Accomplishments

Marketing Department:

The Discover Albany marketing team had another successful year of growth. From a return to marketing internationally after the pandemic to a new destination guide that highlighted the best that Albany County has to offer through the eyes of those that live and work here, it was an amazing year showing visitors why they should come to Albany.

Marketing efforts included:

- **Restaurant Appreciation Month:** Another successful Restaurant Appreciation month was celebrated with 57 submissions received and a free partnership given to Umana Yana.
- **Won Two American Advertising Awards (ADDY):** In conjunction with Relentless Awareness for the Discover My Albany series
- **Developed the All-Hallow E'en Festival website:** albanyhalloween.org and an Instagram page @albanyhalloween
- **New Discover Albany Like A Local Guide:** Released a smaller guide that enlisted the help of locals to highlight their favorite things to do in the follow areas: Arts & Culture, Shopping & Entertainment, History, Outdoor Adventures, Craft Beverage and Food.
- **New York State Best Experiences Mobile Visitors Center:** Enrolled in the New York State Best Experiences Mobile Visitors Center where our guide was distributed at 9 different expos throughout the year.
- **Brand USA Canada East Spring Multi-Channel Campaign:** The results from this campaign were as follows:
 - » Total Impressions: 5,156,496
 - » Total Clicks: 2,861
 - » Average Click Through Rate (CTR): 19%
 - » Expedia campaign attributable bookings: 345 room nights and 9 air tickets for a total of \$59,564 in gross revenue
- **#518TulipTracker:** In partnership with the City of Albany, Key Bank and the City of Albany's Department of General Services, we ran the #518TulipTracker program throughout the month of April for the fourth year with some special programming for the 75th Annual Tulip Festival:



Departmental Accomplishments

- » Bingo card leading up to Tulip Festival highlighting areas with tulips.
- » Instagram Reels for the #518TulipTracker reached 31,369 people and had 2,169 interactions.
- » The Driving Tour Map was viewed 16,784 times.
- **Sat on the planning committee for the 75th Annual Tulip Festival:** Helped to implement programming and events leading up to the 75th Annual Tulip Festival.
- **Worked with Overit and Nippertown to promote the return of First Friday:** Helped to spread the word to partners about First Friday and how they could get involved.
- **Full Page ad in the NCAA Final Four Program:** Designed a full page ad that appeared in the program for the Men's Final Four program.
- **Capital-Saratoga Region EDA Grant:** Acted as administrators for the grant.
- **Discover Albany All-Hallow E'en Festival:** Developed and implemented a marketing plan.
- **Sold ads for the 2024 Discover Albany Destination Guide:** This was done in house and hit \$52,000 in revenue.
- **Hosted Miss NY for the Halloween Festival:** In partnership with New York By Rail, we provided a Halloween themed itinerary and she provided social media marketing and a blog post shared on New York By Rail's site.
- **Completed a transfer to a new app platform:** Worked with Simpleview and Visit Widget to transfer our information to the Visit Widget platform.
- **Launched the new Albany County Craft Beverage Trail Pass:** In partnership with Albany County and its Craft Beverage producers sell tasting passes through the Bandwango platform.

WEBSITE:

SESSIONS: 719,333

TOTAL PAGE VIEWS: 1.6 M

TOP TRAFFIC SOURCES:

ORGANIC SEARCH: 441,539

DIRECT: 78,931

SOCIAL: 14,621

REFERRAL: 16,910

EMAIL: 1,664

SOCIAL MEDIA:

Discover Albany maintained a robust presence on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In 2023, we delivered 3,117,187 impressions across social platforms with 103.3K engagements. We also gained 3,097 followers, a 6.5% increase from 2022.

Departmental Accomplishments

Film Albany:

The Writer's and Actor's strike in 2023 presented significant challenges for filming projects worldwide, impacting the industry on a global scale. Despite these obstacles, Film Albany, a division of Discover Albany, demonstrated resilience and adaptability by pivoting its focus towards strategic marketing initiatives. Throughout the year, we concentrated our efforts on promoting our region, ensuring that when filming activities resumed, Albany would be positioned as an attractive destination for productions. This proactive approach not only helped mitigate the effects of the strike but also laid a solid foundation for future growth and success.

Film Albany Website Hits: 5,010

Inquiries/Crew Referrals/Location Recommendations: 246

Media Inquiries: 11

Film Albany Location Gallery: 103,985 photos viewed

Some of those strategic marketing initiatives include:

- Albany Reverse Fam Location Tour – coordinated by Empire State Development, this tour engaged 68 location managers via Zoom.
- Location Manager Networking Event – Hosted in New York City, this event saw 33 location managers in attendance, with one-third experiencing Albany for the first time. Its success led to a rebooking for 2024.
- Film Albany Location Gallery – a collaboration between the Albany Capital Center and the Albany Convention Center Authority, this initiative, in partnership with Film Albany, introduced the first-ever Film Albany gallery, setting a record for engagement.
- HGTV and a reality TV series filmed in the capital region, employing local resources and crew, resulting in more than 1,500 sleeping room nights. Notably, these productions were exempt from ongoing strikes.

As we move forward, Film Albany remains committed to supporting and promoting the local film industry, fostering opportunities for economic development and cultural enrichment in our community.

2023 Financial Report

CONDENSED BALANCE SHEET (AS OF 12/31/23, UNAUDITED)

Assets

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Cash & Receivables | \$1,954,567 |
| Receivables | \$6,855 |
| Other | \$396,647 |
| TOTAL | \$2,358,069 |

Liabilities

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Accounts Payable | \$21,870 |
| Other Current Liabilities | \$57,016 |
| Long-Term Liabilities | \$152,141 |
| TOTAL | \$231,027 |

Net Assets

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Unrestricted Net Assets | \$1,830,472 |
| Surplus/Deficit | \$296,570 |
| TOTAL | \$2,127,042 |

Total Liabilities and Net Assets **\$2,358,069**

2022 BUDGET

| INCOME | 2023 BUDGET | 2023 ACTUAL (UNAUDITED,REVISED) |
|------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Earned Income | 90,000 | 64,780 |
| Fees for Services | 1,541,270 | 1,791,079 |
| Grants | 106,820 | 97,824 |
| Investment | 15,000 | 82,874 |
| Other | 100 | 145,151 |
| TOTAL INCOME | \$1,753,190 | \$2,183,708 |
| EXPENSES | 2023 BUDGET | 2023 ACTUAL (UNAUDITED,REVISED) |
| Admin Expenses | 368,770 | 342,759 |
| Marketing | 309,120 | 328,768 |
| Personnel | 1,143,709 | 1,155,504 |
| Other | 28,250 | 60,108 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$1,849,849 | \$1,887,139 |
| SURPLUS/DEFICIT | -\$96,659 | \$296,569 |

These financial statements omit the statement of cash flows and substantially all disclosures required by U.S. GAAP. They have not been subjected to an audit or review or compilation engagement, and no assurance is provided on them.

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.



25 Quackenbush Square, Albany, NY 12207
518.434.1217 | albany.org