

*Bloomington*

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2017-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

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Visit Bloomington



## INTRODUCTION

The Convention & Visitors Bureau of Monroe County (Visit Bloomington) was incorporated as a private, not-for-profit 501C(6) corporation in 1977. Visit Bloomington receives its operating revenues from the Monroe County Innkeeper's Tax by way of a contractual agreement with the Monroe County Convention & Visitors Commission.

Visit Bloomington is the one community organization with the responsibility of promoting this industry and encouraging its technical assistance, guidance and coordination for the many local business and organization stakeholders in the tourism industry. The administration of Visit Bloomington operations is vested in the Board of Directors. The Board is comprised of representatives from the local hospitality industry and civic areas of the community. Visit Bloomington staff, managed by the Executive Director, implements the programs and policies of the Board.

## PLAN PURPOSE

Visit Bloomington's 2017-2019 Destination Strategic Plan is the second plan produced utilizing this professionally facilitated three-year formatted model. This version was updated through Board of Directors and staff workshops in late 2016 with a strategic plan facilitator.

This plan's purpose is to provide Visit Bloomington with guidance needed to effectively lead the destination's tourism industry in producing successful marketing efforts, maximizing resources and supporting responsible facility developments with the overall goal of creating long-term sustainable tourism growth for the market.



## SITUATION ANALYSIS

### Accomplishments

1. Tourism is Monroe County's fourth largest job producing industry growing by 16% in 2015 to 7,611 jobs.
2. 2015 tourism spending increased 19% to \$361 million.
3. Hotel room demand increased to record highs by more than 30,000 room nights in 2015 and over 50,000 in 2016.
4. Tourism facility and infrastructure developments are steady, highlighted by new lodging, culinary, retail, trails, Indiana University capital expansions and Interstate 69 progress.
5. Destination rebrand completed successfully and implementation on-going.
6. Continued growth in cultural special events and offerings.



### Challenges

1. Growing countywide weekday tourism, specifically Sunday-Thursday overnight lodging business.
2. Expanding the Monroe Convention Center with a countywide Food & Beverage Tax.
3. Growing concerns over public safety, panhandling and homelessness.
4. Lack of high impact family friendly attractions.
5. Lack of accessible group tournament quality sports facilities and falling behind competitors.
6. Advocating and growing public support for the tourism industry.



## DESTINATION BRAND EXPERIENCE

### Heritage

#### NATURE: *The Outdoors*

Bloomington's nature, or its inherent features, are its lakes, limestone, hills, farms, trees, and trails.

#### NURTURE: *Indiana University*

The university's presence in Bloomington leads to brand offerings like museums, concerts, academic talks, sports, and progressive politics.

### Personality

PROGRESSIVE

ACADEMIC

ACCEPTING

ELEVATED

HIP

### Offering

*Nature*

*Culture*

*Sport*

Bloomington and Monroe County deliver quality experiences to visitors through unique combinations of cultural, sports and natural offerings. From academic nurturing at Indiana University, arts in hip downtown Bloomington or the gorgeous, natural resources of the Hoosier National Forest, they are all set in a community and area with a progressive and accepting focus.







## VISIT BLOOMINGTON

### OUR MISSION FOCUS

Drive New and/or  
Current Visitor Demand

Strengthen the  
Visitor Experience

Communicate Relevancy  
and Viability

**Organization Mission** is to promote Monroe County destination brand experiences to potential travelers resulting in increased visitation and positive economic impact for the area.

**Visitor Promise** is to provide engaging on-demand information and advice on destination brand experiences.

**Partner Promise** is to lead and collaborate with the tourism industry and community facilitating opportunities in business and product development, education and advocacy.

### ORGANIZATION VALUES

- Strategic
- Innovative
- Partner-based
- Team-oriented
- Proficient
- Accountable

### TARGET MARKETS

- Convention/meeting
- Group tour
- Sports event
- Events/festivals
- Arts and culture
- Food/culinary tourism
- Outdoor recreation
- Gay/lesbian travel
- Heritage tourism
- Medical tourism
- IU students, family and alumni
- Retirement relocation

### MISSION FILTER TESTS

- Increases visitor spending with emphasis on weekday overnight stays
- Assists in realizing the destination vision
- Achieves the Visit Bloomington mission
- Reinforces the destination brand equity



## 2017-2019 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Although many external factors can have an impact, a healthy tourism destination should experience average room demand and innkeeper's tax growth of five percent annually. However, those are both simply gauges and that statement may not always hold true. The projects listed below should be completed or addressed before the end of 2019.

### Destination Marketing: Enhance Brand Awareness

1. Produce effective promotional activities targeting each of the brand personas with the following annual results –
  - a. Increases unique [www.visitbloomington.com](http://www.visitbloomington.com) visitors by 10%. \*
  - b. Increase new [www.visitbloomington.com](http://www.visitbloomington.com) visitors by 10%. \*
  - c. Increase social media engagement by 10% annually. \*
  - d. Generate 1,200 new quality subscribers for consumer e-newsletters.
  - e. Generate 24 Travel Media successes.
- \*2017 will be used as the benchmark year.*
2. Implement new Lifelong Learner/Cream & Crimson targeted marketing program specifically reaching IU alumni.
3. Continue participating in regional tourism marketing collaborations.
4. Continue with statewide economic impact coop research study and produce a new study measuring rebrand effectiveness.
5. Continue producing quality creative and collateral as needed, including the annual Visitors Guide. Produce Visitors guide at a 2:1 return on investment.
6. Continue providing the annual event development grant program and improving the process when necessary.

### Destination Sales and Services: Increase Sales Conversions

1. Generate 30 quality new meeting leads annually.
2. Generate 30 quality new sporting event leads annually.
3. Implement a new partner sales program targeting Pragmatic Planners.
4. Investigate medical tourism opportunities as hospital complex and I69 develop.





## Destination Development: Support Product Development

1. Participate in Convention Center expansion process.
2. Create trip ideas that line up with audience personas.
3. Provide a quarterly professional development, networking and training opportunity for partners.
4. Participate in and encourage area sporting event facility development strategies.
5. Investigate citywide visitor shuttle system.

## Destination Advocacy: Engage Community Audiences

1. Educate the community on the benefits of tourism, particularly related to expanding the Convention Center in 2017.
2. Build stronger relationships with other community organizations on tourism matters.
3. Produce annual community tourism report.

## Destination Resources Leadership: Ensure Financial & Administrative Effectiveness

1. Update Destination Strategic Plan at the October Board of Directors meeting.
2. Continue on-going Visit Bloomington and visitor center relocation evaluation.
3. Continue to follow our long established financial checks and balances procedures and having outside annual financial audit performed.



## CONCLUSION

This plan can be adapted at any time due to the rapidly changing tourism industry and Monroe County's evolution as a destination. Visit Bloomington will involve and keep participating stakeholders and area tourism industry partners aware of any plan changes.

It's our road map for a strong tourism industry in the future that can benefit the entire Monroe County community.

Please contact Visit Bloomington's Mike McAfee at [mike@visitbloomington.com](mailto:mike@visitbloomington.com) with any questions or comments.

