

Bloomington

2020-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

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 2020-2022 Destination Strategic Plan is the third plan produced utilizing this professionally facilitated three-year formatted model. This version was updated through Board of Directors and staff workshops in late 2019 with a strategic plan facilitator and a team of graduate students from the Kelley School of Business.

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

2017-2019 Accomplishments

1. Grew website user sessions by more than 60% (goal = 30%).
2. Grew new website users by more than 60% (goal = 30%).
3. Grew social media engagement by more than 50% (goal = 30%).
4. Grew e-mail subscribers by 7,397 (goal = 3,600).
5. Improved quality and quantity levels of our digital content.
6. Generated more than 80 travel media stories (goal = 72).
7. 2019 Bloomington Visitor Guide named best in Indiana.
8. Generated 90 sports leads (goal = 90).
9. Generated 91 convention leads (goal = 90).
10. Funding mechanism approved for expansion of the Monroe Convention Center and project planning initiated.
11. Provided quarterly professional development opportunity for partners.
12. Maintained financial transparency; no issues with annual financial audit.

Challenges *(ranked using data from stakeholder survey)*

1. Promoting Bloomington as a safe and high-quality destination.
2. Attracting and retaining a talented and passionate Visit Bloomington workforce.
3. Growing brand awareness of Bloomington as an attractive destination.
4. Recruiting and converting new convention and meetings business while maintaining current business.
5. Promoting environmentally responsible growth and sustainability.
6. Increasing tourism during weekdays.
7. Completing the Monroe Convention Center expansion in order to serve new professional visitors.
8. Creating and promoting a strong awareness about the importance of tourism for the local economy.
9. Recruiting new sporting events to increase the growth opportunities within a saturated market.
10. Developing current and new sports facilities in order to support newly recruited sporting events and visitors.

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	TARGET MARKETS	MISSION FILTER TESTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Innovative Partner-based Team-oriented Proficient Accountable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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



2020-2022 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Listed below are five broad initiatives, with corresponding goals and metrics, to ensure Bloomington's growth as a tourist destination throughout 2020-2022.

Increase Sales Conversions

1. Generate 100 quality meeting leads throughout 2020-2022.
2. Generate 100 quality sporting event leads throughout 2020-2022.

Enhance Brand Awareness

1. Maximize investment of budget in out-of-state digital advertising.
2. Grow visitbloomington.com traffic by 10% annually.
3. Improve visitbloomington.com bounce rate and grow time spent on site annually.
4. Generate 100 travel media articles throughout 2020-2022.
5. Continue providing the annual event development grant program and improving the process when necessary.
6. Grow quality and quantity of digital content, all creative and collateral.

Support Bloomington's Development

1. Advocate for and promote a high-quality and safe tourist destination.
2. Support responsible development of new tourism attractions and long-term investment.
3. Participate in convention center expansion process.
4. Continue producing the Bloomington Music Expo and Freezefest shoulder season events.
5. Recruit or produce new adventure sports and lacrosse events.
6. Provide a quarterly professional development, networking, and training opportunity for partners.





Engage Community Audiences

1. Grow community support for the Bloomington tourism industry by sharing important tourism information with the public.
2. Build stronger relationships with other community organizations on tourism matters.
3. Produce annual community tourism report.

Ensure Financial & Administrative Effectiveness

1. Continue to follow the long-established financial checks and balances procedures and maintain transparency by having an outside annual financial audit performed.
2. Continue to maintain accreditation under Destinations International.
3. Invest in tourism professional development training and opportunities for staff.
4. Continue ongoing Visit Bloomington and visitor center relocation evaluation.

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 with any questions or comments.



AUGUST 2020 - VISIT BLOOMINGTON 2020-2022 DESTINATION STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE:

Plan development timeline -

August 2019 – Started working with Indiana University Kelley School of Business students on the plan.

September-October 2019 – On-line survey (109 responses) and analysis done by students.

October 23, 2019 – Stakeholder session led by Indiana University consultants and students with 29 participants.

December 1, 2019 – Student draft completed. Delayed finalizing the plan as important Convention Center expansion (top priority in the plan) developments were taking place in late December.

February 19, 2020 – Presented to Visit Bloomington Board at first Board meeting of 2020. Final approval delayed until April Board meeting so further Convention Center expansion plans can be included.

March 2020 – Visit Bloomington closed visitor center and professional offices due to the coronavirus pandemic. Staff working remotely until further notice.

April 15, 2020 – Visit Bloomington Board of Directors and staff delayed final approval of the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan due to implications of coronavirus pandemic.

August 19, 2020 – Visit Bloomington Board of Directors approved the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan but with stipulation that plan will be updated in late 2020/early 2021 due to the impact of coronavirus.

As of August, Visit Bloomington has absorbed a 50% budget cut to FY2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Heading into fourth quarter 2020 it is still unknown if Visit Bloomington will receive any further 2020 Monroe County Innkeeper's Tax funding or what funding we can expect for FY2021.

Several of the priorities and strategic initiatives in the plan will change due to the impact of the pandemic. For example, the expansion of the Monroe Convention Center is currently a top priority in the 2020-2022 plan. The expansion will be funded by the 1% Monroe County Food & Beverage Tax. Many of the funds saved for the expansion project were used as coronavirus relief for tourism and hospitality businesses during the spring and summer of 2020. The expansion is currently on hold and most likely will not be discussed again by Monroe County and the city of Bloomington until after the pandemic has stabilized.

