



COLUMBIA SC FY 22/23

Elevating the Visitor Experience



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Letter From the CEO | 2 |
| <hr/> | |
| Who We Are | 3 |
| Tourism Life Cycle | 4 |
| Tourism Statistics | 5 |
| Ambassadors | 6 |
| Advertising Campaigns | 7 |
| Web & Social Media | 8 |
| <hr/> | |
| Media Relations | 9 |
| Columbia Metropolitan | |
| Convention & Visitors Bureau | 11 |
| ECSC Sports | 13 |
| CMCC | 15 |

A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Anyone who visits the Columbia region and takes the time to enjoy all that our region has to offer quickly becomes familiar with our Southern grit and warm hospitality. Beyond the beautiful landscapes and the world-class attractions, the people in Columbia’s hospitality industry are what truly sets us apart.

At Experience Columbia SC, we are dedicated to growing the travel and tourism industry and bringing economic value to the residents of the Columbia area. With this mission to guide us, tourism numbers are breaking records from previous years with 15.8 million visitors and \$1.7 billion in economic impact in 2022. And we have no plans of slowing down.

We continue to stay rooted in our traditions of Southern hospitality while looking ahead to the future of tourism. We are tapped in to the needs of our community and the evolution of our industry.

In Partnership,
Bill Ellen

Bill Ellen

President & CEO | Experience Columbia SC

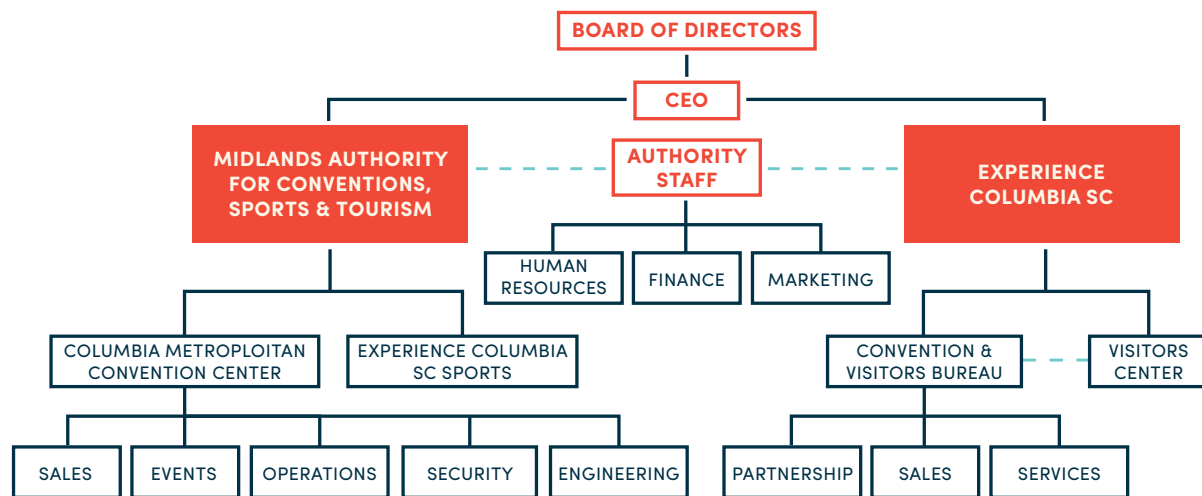




WHO WE ARE

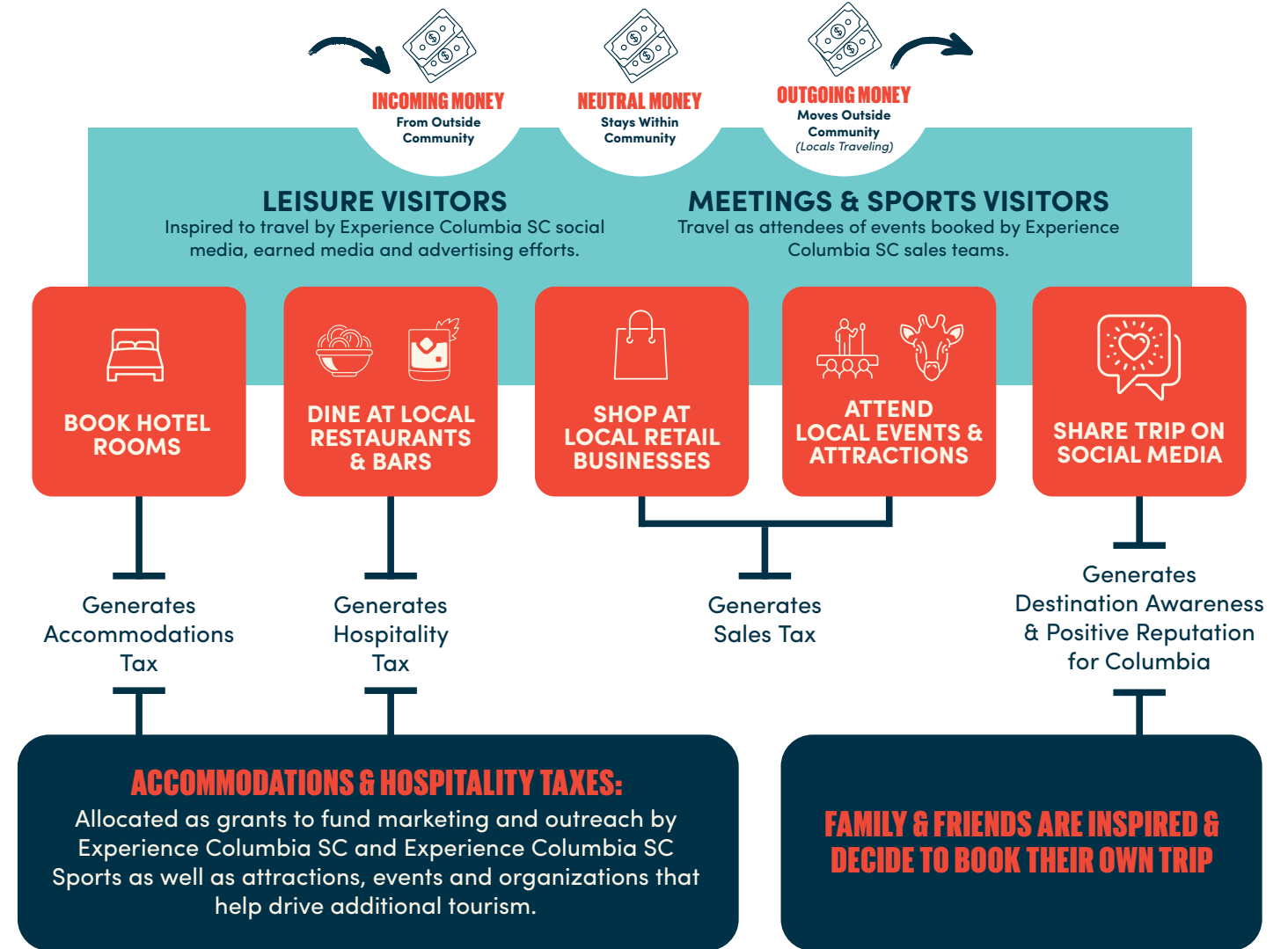
The BIGGEST CHEERLEADERS FOR HEART OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Tourism is big business in Columbia, South Carolina. Welcoming 15.8 million visitors annually to Richland County, Lexington County and the City of Columbia doesn't happen without lots of hard work and it doesn't happen overnight. We are the Experience Columbia SC and the Midlands Authority for Conventions, Sports & Tourism - sister organizations that encompass the Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Columbia Regional Visitors Center, the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center and Experience Columbia SC Sports. Together with a strong tourism brand and a vibrant hospitality community, we use sales, marketing, convention services and visitor information services to inspire, inform and educate potential visitors about holding an event or planning a trip to the Columbia region, and help them make the most of their time once they arrive.



The TOURISM LIFE CYCLE

VISITORS HELP FUEL OUR ECONOMY



MORE VISITORS MEANS...

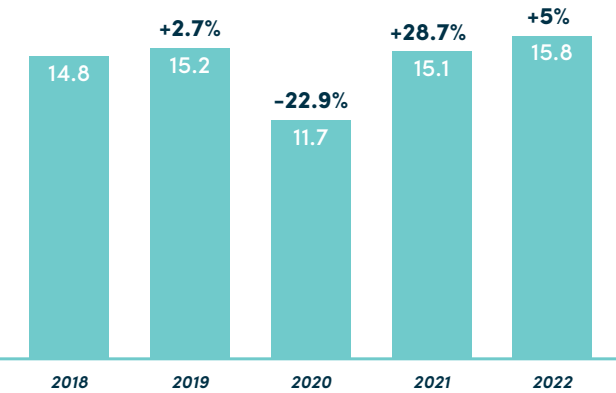
- Increased Livability**
More Things for Residents to Do
More Reasons for People to Stay or Relocate Here
- Increased Demand for Development**
Hotels
Meeting Venues
Sports Venues
- Increased Business Investment**
Restaurants & Bars
Entertainment Venues
Festivals & Events
- Attractive City to Recruit and Retain Business and Talent

TOURISM = ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Our TOURISM STATISTICS

COLUMBIA REGION VISITOR VOLUME

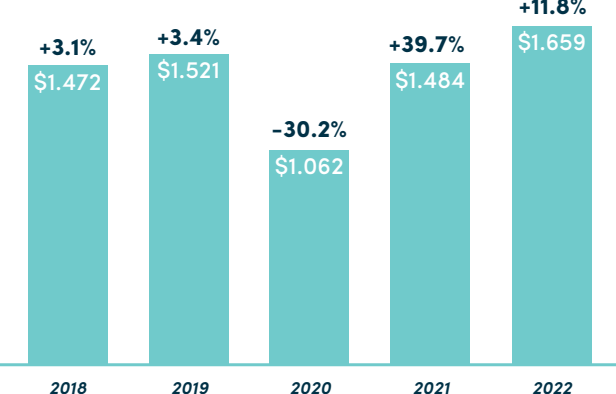
AMOUNTS IN MILLIONS



Sources: Longwoods Int'l, Tourism Economics

COLUMBIA REGION VISITOR SPENDING

AMOUNTS IN \$ BILLIONS



Sources: Longwoods Int'l, Tourism Economics

15.8 MILLION
VISITORS

\$1.7 BILLION
DIRECT VISITOR
SPENDING

\$2.6 BILLION
ECONOMIC IMPACT

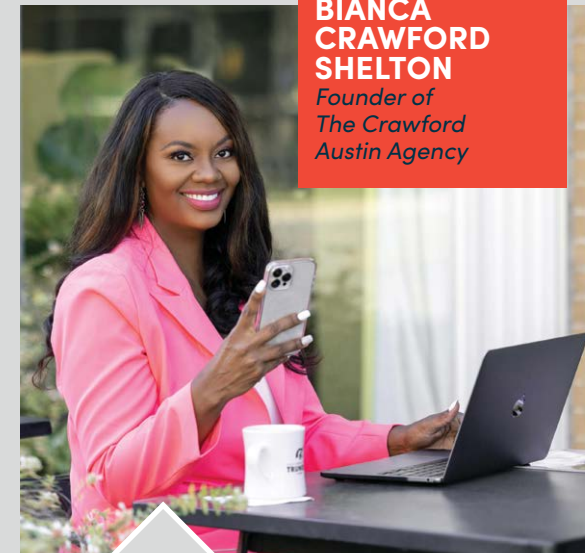
\$130 MILLION
STATE & LOCAL TAXES
GENERATED

22,300
TOTAL JOBS
GENERATED

Research reflects data from Lexington County, Richland County and the City of Columbia in 2022 gathered and reported by Tourism Economics on behalf of Experience Columbia SC.

2023 COLUMBIA SC AMBASSADORS

For the last five years our Columbia SC ambassadors have been spreading local pride and sharing their insider tips with visitors. The 2023 class of ambassadors is no different. With interests spanning history to music and kid friendly activities to the best cocktail bars, these folks are sharing the stories of Columbia SC with locals and visitors alike.



**BIANCA
CRAWFORD
SHELTON**
Founder of
The Crawford
Austin Agency

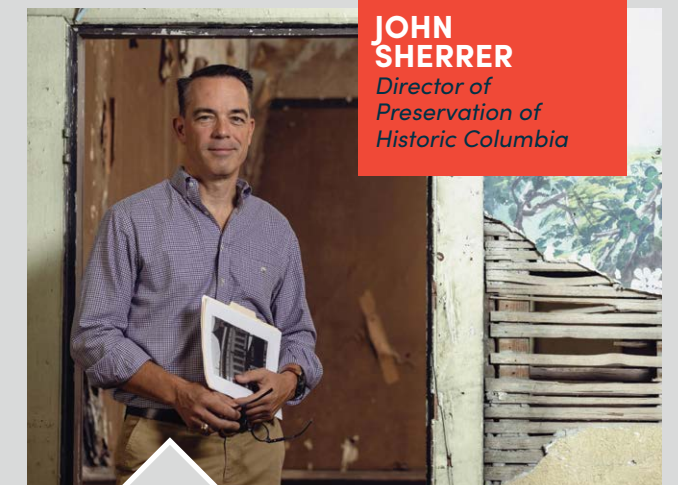


**MORHIKO
NAKAHARA**
Director & Conductor
of the South Carolina
Philharmonic Orchestra

"We have a great business community, awesome nightlife, great food and Southern hospitality. You can't beat it."



**MATTISON
HEATHERLY**
Founder & CEO
of City Social Co.



**JOHN
SHERRER**
Director of
Preservation of
Historic Columbia

"As a local historian, I am constantly intrigued by the people and events that shaped my hometown over the course of four centuries. People make the place, and today, we have generations of citizens whose inspired efforts have made Columbia a place to visit, return to, and even call your new home."

ADVERTISING STATISTICS

The numbers shown indicate results from a user seeing an Experience Columbia SC digital ad and then taking and action like searching for a hotel or flight to the region. This does not capture all hotel and flight searches to the region.

MASTERS CAMPAIGN

Through a grant from the City of Columbia, Experience Columbia SC worked alongside the hospitality community to drive more visitation to our community's hotels, restaurants, and attractions from golf fans attending The Masters golf tournament.

The campaign featured a series of digital ads and billboards encouraging fans to stay in Columbia during the tournament. These ads directed guests to a page on ExperienceColumbiaSC.com where visitors could book hotels and plan their stay.



Avg. Length of Stay
3.8 Nights

Hotels
Total Searches: 54,742

Flights
Total Searches: 3,762



Funds also helped local hospitality partners create events and promotions to welcome visitors when they arrived.

"I just wanted to send a MAJOR shout out to Kelly Barbrey and the Masters campaign she put together. She and her team not only drummed up more awareness to our city that we can embrace golf fans too but really linked up visitors with events and businesses that wouldn't normally have that opportunity. The feedback we received not only through our hotel but through visiting with people throughout the city this past week was tremendous."

David Erbacher
Hyatt Place Columbia Downtown

WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

We want the whole world to know what makes Columbia SC so great. From website content to social media to traditional advertising, we work hard on and off the clock to change perspectives and encourage travel and local pride for our region. Think of us as the biggest cheerleaders for the heart of South Carolina.

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Instagram 45,674 Followers +6.2% increase
X 67,877 Followers
LinkedIn 2,722 Followers +29% increase
Facebook 85,343 Followers +7.2% increase
TikTok 1,400 Followers +296.6% increase

ON THE WEB

2,661,117 Total Pageviews
985,568 Total Users
Top Out-of-Market Cities: Atlanta, GA
 Charlotte, NC
 Raleigh, NC

TOP 3 BLOG POSTS

#1 33,667 PAGEVIEWS
Stamp this Pimento Cheese Passport

#2 20,735 PAGEVIEWS
But First Brunch

#3 11,180 PAGEVIEWS
Date Night

WEBSITE REDESIGN

In collaboration with SimpleView, Inc. we completed a website redesign in March 2023. Our previous design served us well for six years, but the new site incorporates new design trends while staying true to the Experience Columbia SC brand.

An interactive map, new neighborhood pages and modern layout are highlights of the new design. The site has already garnered great reviews and received a dotCOMM Gold Level Award.



EXPERIENCE COLUMBIA SC

Media Relations



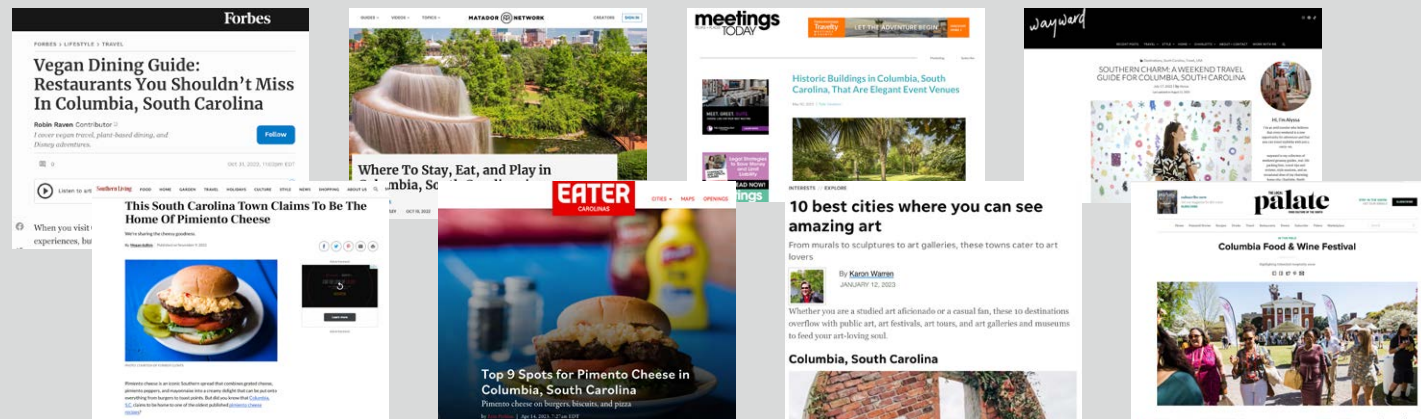
PRAISE For COLUMBIA SC

One way Experience Columbia SC strives to live out its mission is through public and media relations efforts. We promote the Columbia region by pitching story ideas and hosting media to garner regional, national and international destination coverage.

BY THE NUMBERS



FEATURED ARTICLES



Robin Raven, *Forbes Magazine* (Oct. 2022); Johnny Motley, *Matador Network* (Oct. 2022); Tyler Davidson, *Meetings Today* (May 2023); Wayward Blog (July 2022); Megan duBois, *Southern Living Magazine* (Nov. 2022); Erin Perkins, *Eater* (Apr. 2021); Karon Warren, *USA Today 10 Best* (Jan. 2022); *The Local Palate*

CAMPAIGNS

In March 2023, in collaboration with the other Cities of the SEC (the official Destination Marketing Organizations from all the cities in the Southeastern Conference), we launched a new Visit the SEC mobile passport experience. With this pass, the best fans in the country can now sign up and earn points that are redeemable for tiered prizes by checking in at the top restaurants, shopping, attractions and more in their favorite college towns.



**300 PASSES
DOWNLOADED
SINCE APRIL 2023**

“Columbia is an essential stop for understanding the history and ethos of South Carolina.... There are many draws to the town. You can find delicious Southern classics like loaded grits and barbecue, but the city also stands out for upscale dining and innovative chefs leveraging South Carolina’s unique ingredients and foodways. Columbia also has one of the Southeast’s best craft beer scenes, with local breweries like Steel Hands and Hunter-Gatherer garnering national buzz. For the outdoorsy type, Congaree National Park offers seemingly endless opportunities for kayaking, fly fishing, and hiking. Finally... the Columbia of 2022 celebrates diversity and extends its delightful Southern charm to all communities.”

Johnny Motley
Matador Network

“From the moment you step foot in this riverfront city of 137,000, you’ll find celebrations of women’s history. There’s the Architecture of Strength Monument – a faceless sculpture of a female form – in front of the State House; the Modjeska Monteith Simkins House, a house museum celebrating South Carolina’s matriarch of the Civil Rights Movement; and a mural near Woodland Park depicting Sarah Mae Flemming, whose case against a bus drive helped set a legal precedent for Rosa Parks’s historic activism.”

Perri O. Blumberg
TripAdvisor

“When you visit Columbia, South Carolina, you may expect a lot of fun experiences, but you might not expect to find a thriving vegan dining scene. However, Columbia is one of the most welcoming places to find a variety of flavorful vegan meals.”

Robin Raven
Forbes

“Whether you’re looking for rest and relaxation, to experience art and world-class cuisine, plentiful shopping, or to stay up—and out—past your usual bedtime, you’ll find all that and more just 94 miles south of Charlotte. Affectionately known as ‘Cola,’ Columbia is full to the brim with southern charm, wonder, and adventure. It’s also the perfect destination for a girl’s weekend escape.”

Asha Ellison
Q City Metro

“What I love about Columbia SC is how progressive it strikes me. Living in the South and visiting many places as a family with two dads, we’re very conscious of how we’re made to feel, both openly and subtly. Through all of our interactions, meals, and visiting different places with different things to do, we didn’t have any experiences in Columbia that made us feel out of place or unwelcome. Add to that wonderful outdoors adventures and fascinating sites and it was a total win for us.”

Rob & Chris Taylor
2 Travel Dads

THE COLUMBIA METROPOLITAN CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU



The mission of the Columbia Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau DBA Experience Columbia SC – DMO is to strengthen the area’s economy by marketing and selling the region, it’s accommodations, meeting facilities, restaurants, facilities and attractions as a premier destination for meetings, conventions, tradeshows, special events and leisure travel and by working cooperatively with the hospitality community providing informative materials and assistive services that enhance and promote the desired image of the metropolitan area. For more info visit ColumbiaSCTourism.com.

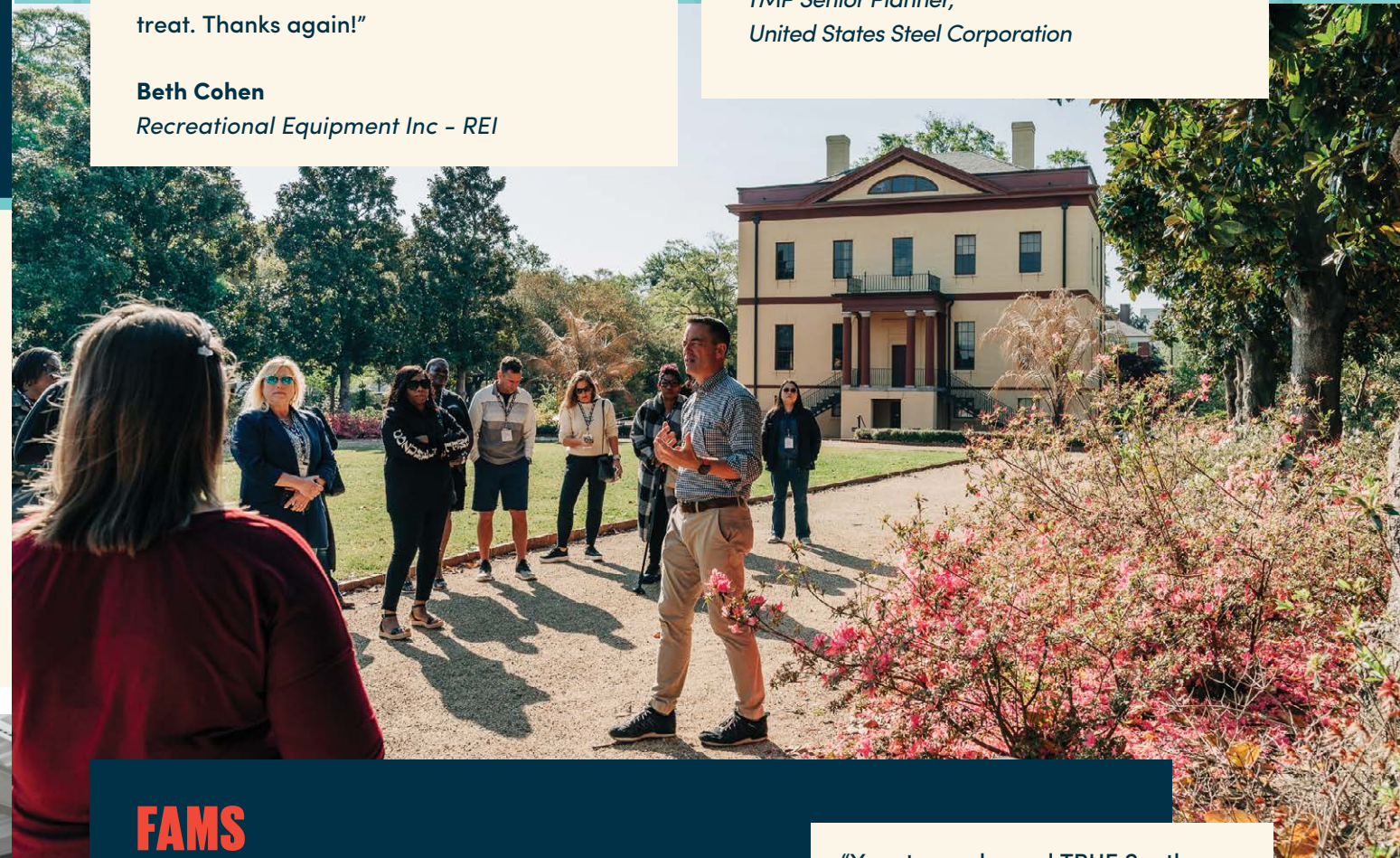


“Thank you for the gracious welcome to Columbia SC! I really appreciated your hospitality and chance to explore the city. Having never visited before, I was pleasantly surprised by the variety of great hotels and venues available and all that there is to do in town. The walkability downtown, as well as the access to the outdoors and rivers was a treat. Thanks again!”

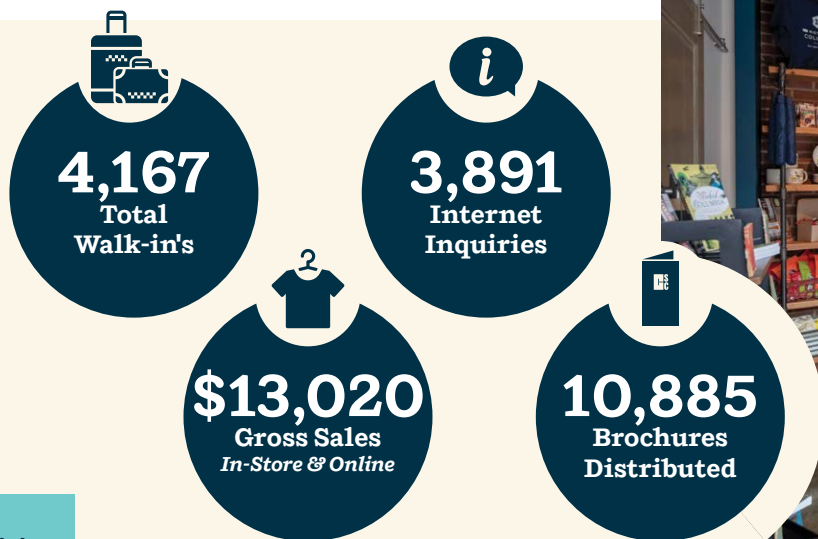
Beth Cohen
Recreational Equipment Inc - REI

“Loved the meeting facilities and outdoor spaces at Craft Brew Bars. Thanks for all the hard work and fun!”

Joseph Burke
TMP Senior Planner,
United States Steel Corporation



VISITOR'S CENTER BY-THE-NUMBERS



FAMS

In March, the CVB welcomed 15 meeting planners from across the US. Guests toured several hotels and meeting spaces, received a guided tour of the Hampton Preston Mansion from Columbia SC Ambassador John Sherrer, and continued the evening with a farm-to-table dinner by Chef Tommy at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center Garden, including a visit from Governor Henry McMaster. The whole experience was capped with an Eagles concert at Colonial Life Arena.

“Your team showed TRUE Southern Hospitality – I can’t wait to send business your way and know that my clients will enjoy Columbia!”

Lisa Heim
Global Accounts – Helms Briscoe

80%
of FAMS attendees
had never been to
Columbia SC

+10
Leads gained for future
booking consideration

EXPERIENCE COLUMBIA SC SPORTS



The mission of Experience Columbia SC Sports is to strengthen the area's economy by marketing and selling the region as a premier destination for sporting events, partnering with local sports organizations to grow and develop existing events and by recruiting new events which provide an economic benefit to the region by generating room nights, food and beverage sales and associated tax revenue. For more info visit ColumbiaSCSports.com.

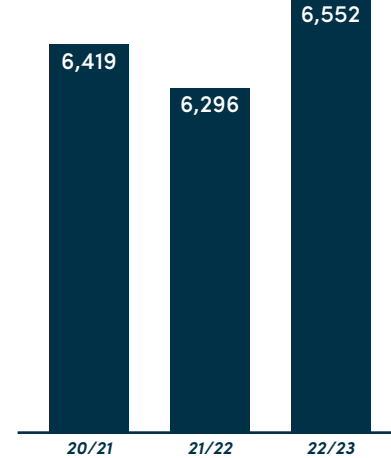


KEY EVENTS HOSTED

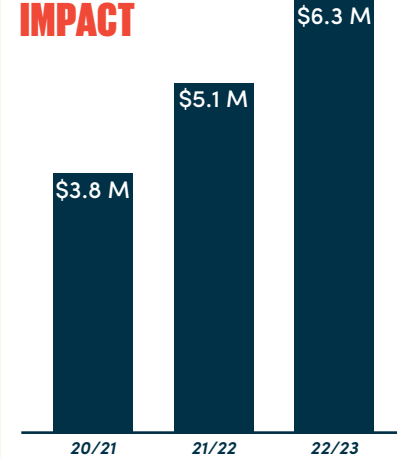
| Event Name | Location | Direct Spending |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 2022 FOM Berkeley Team Series District 3 Championship | Lake Murray | \$67,554 |
| 2023 US Quadball South Regional Championship | Fields at Saluda Shoals | \$67,852 |
| 2023 Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Spring Tennis Round Up | Richland County Tennis Center | \$89,171 |
| 2023 National Christian College Athletic Association Track & Field Championships | Columbia International University | \$176,790 |

BY-THE-NUMBERS

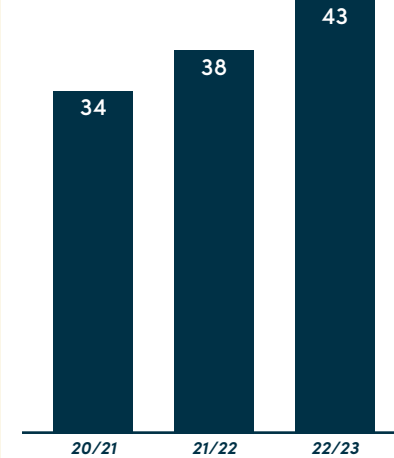
TOTAL ROOM NIGHTS BOOKED



ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT



EVENTS HOSTED



"Scott Powers of Experience Columbia has been great to work with. He has helped us with hotels, funding, and facilities in order to help us bring great sporting events to the city of Columbia. His professionalism and communication has been on point and great. We appreciate all the hard work and efforts that Scott Powers & Experience Columbia help us with in bringing these events to the state capital of South Carolina. We can not say enough about their efforts.

South Carolina AAU is very blessed and fortunate to have the support of Experience Columbia."

Jeremy Bodenaarain
South Carolina AAU Business Development Manager

"Kayak Bass Fishing has chosen Columbia as our annual season kickoff after three seasons where the event has been our most attended event. In addition to a world class fishery (Lake Murray) Experience Columbia has been instrumental in offering a comprehensive competitor experience that is second to none. From unique breweries, diverse food offerings to outdoor greens spaces we look forward to making Columbia our premiere partner for years to come."

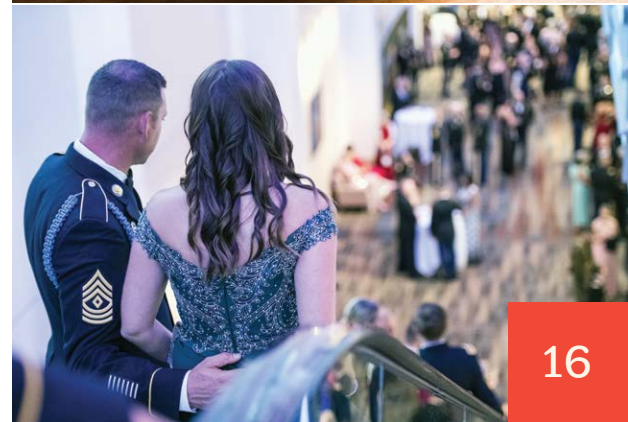
Chad Hoover
Kayak Bass Fishing President

EXPERIENCE COLUMBIA SC COLUMBIA METROPOLITAN CONVENTION CENTER

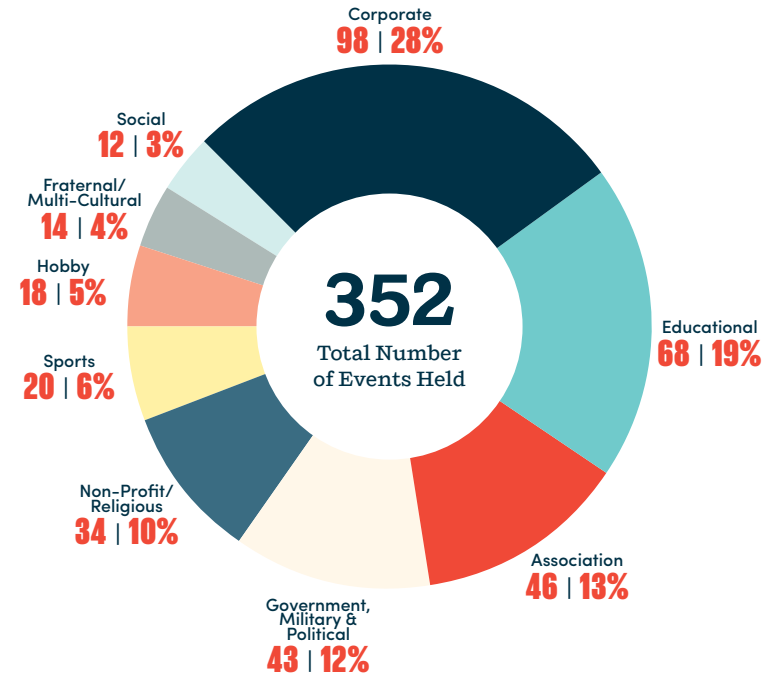
**COLUMBIA SC
METROPOLITAN
CONVENTION CENTER**



The mission of the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center is to provide a first-class venue offering superior operations management and state-of-the-art amenities for the successful coordination of meetings, convention, tradeshows, entertainment and other special events utilizing the facility; enhancing the economic viability and image of the area. For more info, visit ColumbiaConventionCenter.com



EVENT BREAKDOWN



KEY EVENTS HOSTED

Soda City Comic Con returned August 19-21 for their 7th and largest event with us yet, welcoming about 11,000 attendees across their 2 days, generating about 520 hotel room nights.

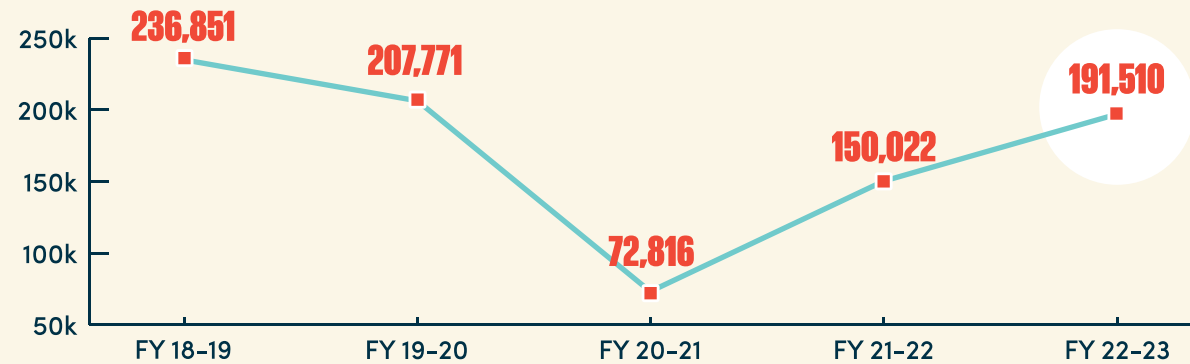
The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of SC held their first full conference with us, welcoming about 1,200 attendees, using 467 hotel room nights.

SC Bar held their 4th convention with us January 18-22, welcoming 1,100 attendees, using 430 hotel room nights. They are already rebooked to return in 2025!

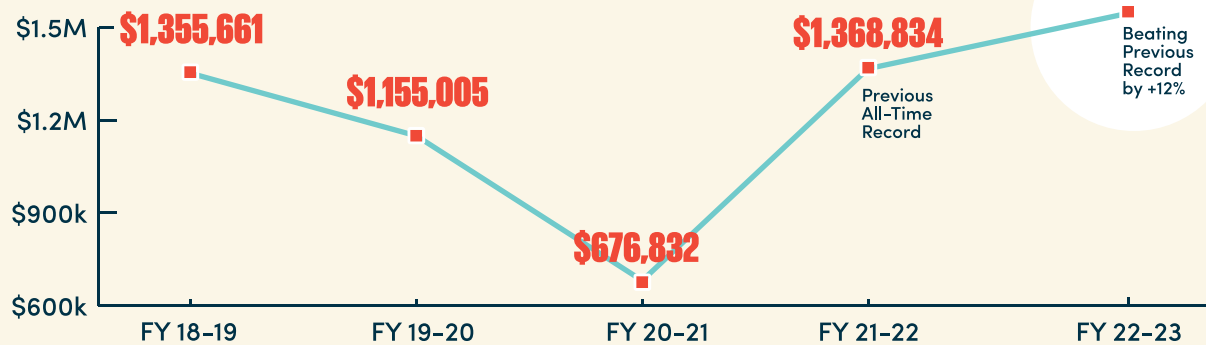
SC Pest Control Association Pest Pro Summit was with us for the 5th time February 10-14, welcoming 475 attendees, generating 475 room nights. They are already booked with us for the next 2 years.

SC Association of School Librarians returned for their 10th Annual Conference with us, welcoming 600 attendees, generating 550 hotel room nights.

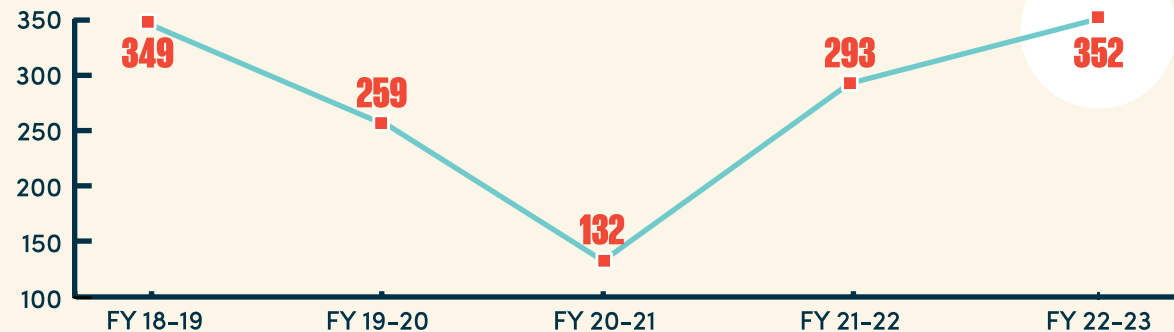
ATTENDANCE



BOOKING REVENUE



OF EVENTS HELD



 **COLUMBIA
SC**

 **EXPERIENCE
COLUMBIA SC**

 **COLUMBIA SC
SPORTS**

 **COLUMBIA SC
METROPOLITAN
CONVENTION CENTER**

 **COLUMBIA SC
VISITORS
CENTER**



ExperienceColumbiaSC.com