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2023-2025 Strategic Plan for the Board of Visit Dublin

Forward

The marketing of destinations has been occurring for centuries...but the stakes have never been higher nor the opportunity greater than right now. As we begin to claw back from a global pandemic, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) are the agencies that are best positioned to drive the nation's recovery.

Beyond recovery, however, the mandate has grown significantly larger for DMOs, as it is increasingly obvious that communities need effective marketing for more than just attracting visitors; destinations need to be marketed to attract investment, workforce, entrepreneurs and future residents. Every community is in a competition to attract the best and brightest as a way to enhance quality of life and long-range sustainability.

The realization that a DMO's role has grown stems, in part, from a 2015 study by Longwoods International that proves that tourism advertising has a marked effect on consumer interest in communities as a place to live, go to college and start a business. That means DMOs are far more than just "Heads in Beds." DMOs help plow the road for Economic Development agencies.

It is with these concepts in mind that the Board of Directors of Visit Dublin met on September 28th, 2022 to map out a strategy for the evolution of the organization and destination over the next three years. No longer content to continue with traditional destination marketing strategies, the Board has re-imagined the DMO and the role it and its professional staff will play in the years ahead.

In preparation for the Board Workshop to develop this Strategic Plan, DMOproz gathered online survey responses from over 50 community and business leaders and met face-to-face with another 15 key community stakeholders. This background intelligence (a synopsis of which can be found beginning on Page 7) was shared with the Board as it gathered to ideate how the Organization will address the opportunities before it and the community.

The Visit Dublin Strategic Plan Plan powers the ongoing work of the Organization, outlining new initiatives for the Board, designed to advance both the Organization and the Destination as we move through recovery.

The Strategic Plan for Visit Dublin can be found beginning on Page 5.

Purpose, Vision and Mission

Vision propels us forward. Mission focuses us. And Purpose is why we do it.

Vision and Mission Statements are crucial to the success of organizations as they power us forward and keep us on task. The Board of Directors of Visit Dublin took these concepts into consideration as they sought to update the Vision and Mission Statements for the destination and the organization...and develop a Statement of Purpose.



Purpose

To kick off the Strategic Planning workshop, the Visit Dublin Board considered the “why” behind the organization; why was the DMO created and why does it still exist. Among the concepts shared by Board members were phrases such as: Quality of Experience, Life and Livability, to advancing a vision and supporting business and the City. From that conversation, we offer the following draft Statement of Purpose for consideration:

**Visit Dublin enhances the Quality of Life for area residents
by attracting visitor spending, consumer interest
and entrepreneurial investment into the community.**

Vision

Likewise, the Board addressed the existing Vision Statement, determining whether it continues to be relevant and accurate as the community evolves. The Board was especially drawn to the City’s new Vision and, thus, we offer the following Draft Vision Statement for review:

Dublin will be a premier global city of choice.

Mission

The Board then turned its attention to the Mission of the Organization; the actions the DMO will take to achieve its Vision. Among the suggestions for inclusion: Communicating the new Dublin, it’s for more than just visitors and that collaboration is key to what drives Visit Dublin. The following draft Mission Statement is offered for consideration:

**Visit Dublin collaboratively advocates
for responsible and sustainable growth
that reinforces its innovative promotion of the community
to both area residents and visitors from around the world.**

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GOAL Advocate for Destination-Defining Development

Objective A

Advocate for Dublin to become a destination of choice for Sports Tournaments and Events

Suggested Tactics:

- Schedule meetings with regional sports leagues, neighborhood groups and community leaders to review findings of the Sports Facilities Feasibility Study
- Initiate conversations with area hospitality industry leaders to discuss opportunities to maximize local business with the addition / upgrade of sports facilities
- Based upon Feasibility Study findings, advocate for renovations and upgrades to existing fields and complexes

Objective B

Support efforts to enhance Dublin's capacity to host larger meetings and conferences

Suggested Tactics:

- Consider partnering with other interested parties to perform a feasibility study to determine the appropriate amount of conference space required to maximize Dublin's meetings market
- Identify the number and size of local groups that cannot hold events in Dublin due to size constraints of existing venues
- Encourage area hotel developers to include meeting space in future builds that can facilitate the staging of larger events than Dublin can presently host

GOAL Support Enhancements to the Dublin Experience

Objective A

Support the City's continuing efforts to make Dublin a community of choice

Suggested Tactics:

- Support efforts to revitalize the Metro area development off Frantz Road
- Advocate for tourism-specific recommendations in the City's new Parks & Recreation Plan
- Assist in the ideation of new events and festivals to bolster shoulder-season visitation

Objective B

Collaborate with other community development agencies to enhance workforce availability to ensure visitors receive great customer service

Suggested Tactics:

- Interface with local educational institutions to encourage further development of hospitality-as-a-career curriculum
- Work with other Central Ohio DMOs to develop a joint campaign to position hospitality jobs as an exciting and fulfilling career choice



GOAL

Enhance the Awareness, Appreciation & Support of Dublin's Tourism Economy

Objective A

Increase engagement with Community and Business Leaders

Suggested Tactics:

- Schedule more regular interactions with neighborhood and community groups to explain the role Tourism plays in advancing Dublin's Quality of Life
- Establish a Speakers Bureau of Board members that are prepared to tell the Visit Dublin story to service clubs and other community-facing organizations
- Develop a program in which Board members interface with new business owners and tenants to discuss the opportunities of affiliation with Visit Dublin

Objective B

Work with the community's Hospitality sector to identify opportunities to develop a more robust and competitive Visit Dublin budget with which to enhance the local economy

Suggested Tactics:

- Analyze opportunities to develop a special assessment district to benefit the businesses located there through enhanced marketing and programming of the district
- Identify ways in which Visit Dublin could provide a service to local business interests that would encourage corporate investment in the DMO
- Continue to build business partnerships throughout the community

Objective C

Work with local interests to refresh Dublin's brand identity

Suggested Tactics:

- Lead community discussions regarding the most appropriate ways to evolve the Irish Brand into something more representative of what the community has become
- Engage both resident and consumer research into how others perceive the Dublin brand
- Ensure that the new Brand is clear in its recognition of the community's commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Identify ways to encourage utilization of the Brand throughout the community (like the ColumbUS brand has been so successful in achieving)

Background Intelligence

Stakeholders - Online Survey

In the Year 2030

Respondents were asked to envision Dublin at the turn of the next decade. Among their responses:

The sports complex supports local, regional and national sporting events all year round.

More companies have moved into Dublin, and corporate travel has increased over pre-pandemic levels.

Even more walkable with attractions that invite people to explore the local businesses. Adequate parking to allow for this to happen.

Leisure travel to Dublin has increased significantly as a result of the Columbus Zoo becoming a year around national destination, with hotels, and a new stand alone Aquarium, modernized habitats, and more retail and dining opportunities.

The same as 2022 with a careful balance between quaint and charming and bustling and modern. Both sides of the river will exist as one rather than separate sides. More events happen year-round that allow residents and visitors to gather in one place to connect and experience.

There's an ease to visiting Dublin. It's easy to navigate, it's easy to find things to do and places to eat.

More retail and art galleries. Murals and art. Additional meeting facilities.

A robust scene that highlights a "hometown" feel for travelers that allows easy access to the multitude of tourist-worthy sites within a short travel radius (i.e. stay here, play all around Central Ohio).

Non-City organizations are hosting new annual and ongoing events in Downtown Dublin that utilize both Historic Dublin and Bridge Park. Increased sustainability efforts are underway throughout the City and there is an enhanced focus on making main attractions and events accessible to all. New fall-winter experiences and events keep weekends busy with leisure visitors year-round. Meetings would return with new facilities and experiences to fill weekdays. More diverse leadership in the City has led to more diverse businesses locating here. The culinary scene has continued to grow and thrive and Downtown Dublin has developed experiences beyond dining. The City's public art reputation has continued Downtown. Transportation options would be easily accessible and include options for hotels across the City to send visitors to Downtown and other key areas.

The Past 24 Months

Respondents were then asked to identify the events of the past 2 years (aside from COVID) that has moved the community closer to (or further from) their visions for the future. Among their responses:

Closer

New planning at the Zoo is facilitating these changes.

The rapid evolution of Bridge Park and the efforts made by the city to include more retail and events in Historic Dublin have created more hype around the city and keep the city feeling lively.

Expansion of DORA.

Current Planning by Visit Dublin for indoor sports venue and the update by the City of the Parks Master Plan.

Increased collaboration between all key City organizations. New development in Downtown Dublin on both sides of the river. New diversity and inclusion initiatives from the City. City mobility study and pilots of different opportunities.

Further From

Lack of staffing across many different sites leading to unreliable/inconsistent offerings.

Loss of full-service hotel with meeting space. The difference in budgets and staff between Historic Dublin and Bridge Park. No guidelines or infrastructure for new events in Downtown Dublin. Loss of retail in Downtown.

Corporate business has not returned to pre-Covid numbers.



What's Next

Respondents were asked their opinion on what would be the most important "next development" to make Dublin an even more attractive destination. Among their responses:

Some light installations for the heavily tree'd area behind Getaway - either holiday themed or a local artist vision. Approved picnic areas by the river for DORA. Designated Ride-Share pick up spots. Murals and live arts.

A large sports or music venue.

River Access, flower farms, you-pick farms, more tourism "bus" type excursions.

Indoor swim and court facilities for larger tournaments. More activities for teens and young adults - something other than restaurants and bars.

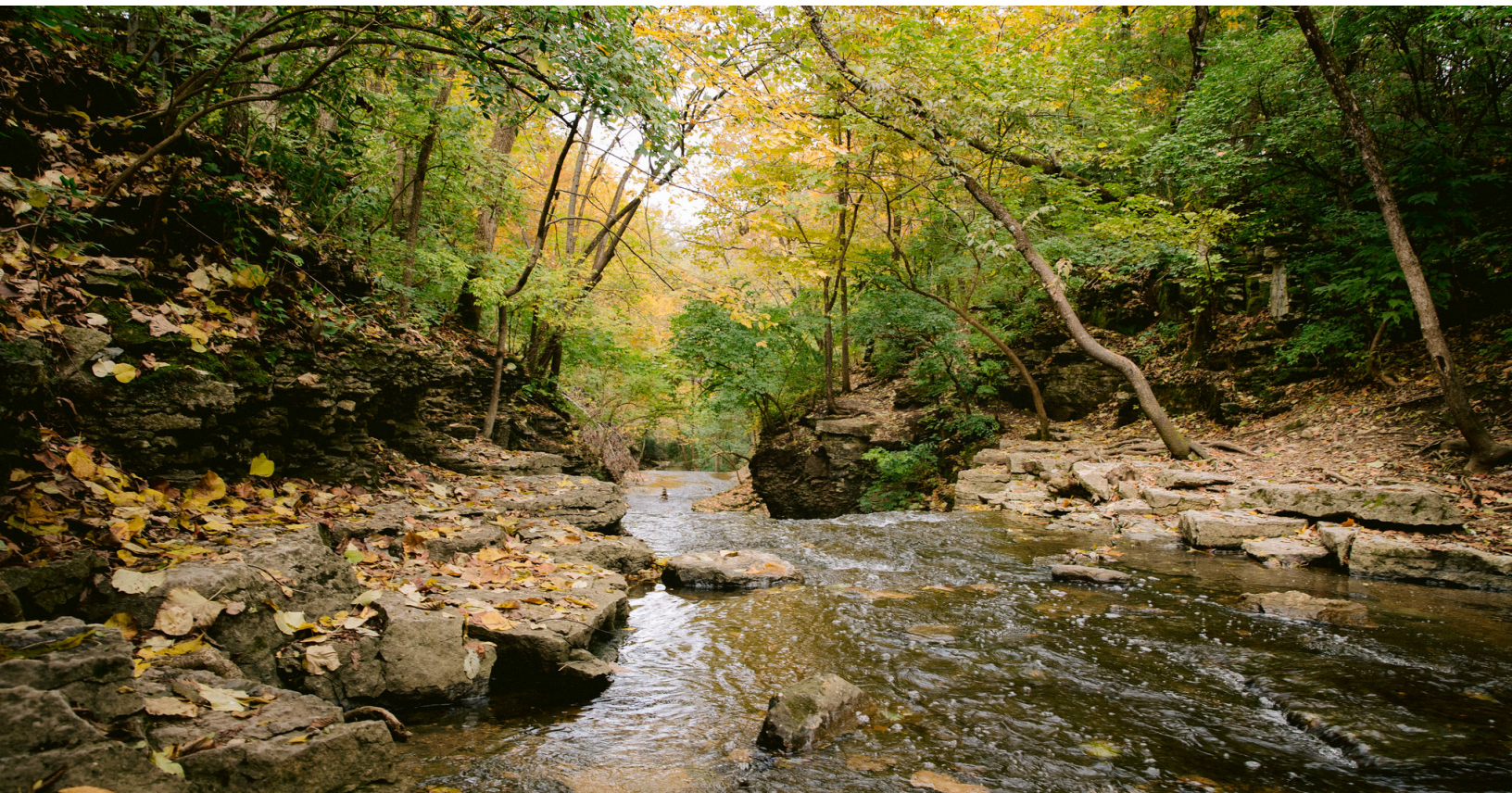
A meeting facility unlike anything else in Ohio.

Additional retail / boutique culture in downtown Dublin.

A music venue to attract local and national music from a variety of genres.

A free street fair on a weekly basis along High Street and perhaps all along the walking bridge.

Expansion at the Zoo.



Best Part About Dublin

Respondents were asked their opinion of why they loved living and/or working in Dublin. Among their responses:

It still feels like a quaint, small town where you see people you know every time you go out....the livability of the town.

Safe and clean community with great outdoor spaces. Strong sense of community pride and spirit. Lots of great dining options. A lot of the amenities you want from downtown Columbus can be found with ease in Dublin. Great schools. Top-notch City services. Green space. Community input is valued.

The city events...Dublin Irish Festival, The Memorial, the parades. The parks and green space are great.

Proximity to Columbus.

Fun vibe, manageable scale.

Nice area! Nice facilities.

Most Challenging Part of Dublin

Conversely, respondents were asked to identify their least favorite aspect of Dublin. Among their responses:

Property Taxes.

Expensive. Lack of diversity. Perceived as “stuck up.”

Parking is still a challenge. The events that the City plans is often without regard for the negative impact on the local vendors.

Closing a parking lot for an event on any day but a Sunday is idiotic. Also loud events and music is very detrimental to some of the businesses.

Increased negative PR for the city with violence, etc.

The traffic downtown/speed of cars ... Dublin police should be more visible.

The amount of construction with little warning.

We need more support for small businesses to thrive and an easier time with the Architecture Board.

You must own a car. Travel within the city is not convenient without a car.

Strengths of Visit Dublin

For those respondents indicating they had worked with Visit Dublin staff in the past 24 months, we asked what the organizations greatest strengths were. Among their responses:

Commitment and support to small business and the community. Their passion and drive to help Dublin grow.

They partner with the hospitality industry to bring business to the area. Great sales and marketing.

Having a cooperative relationship with the City of Dublin.

Very partner forward with a personal touch. The development of programs, including Partner Insights, and making sure to reach out and stay engaged. Great follow-through.

Fabulous marketing and leads to local businesses and hotels.

Strong leadership and relevancy with key stakeholders. Compelling and consistent owned channels and content. A great relationship with other City organizations that look to Visit Dublin for guidance. Very visible in the hospitality community. Strong public relations with local, regional and national media. Quickly adaptable. Experienced staff.

Challenges of Visit Dublin

For those respondents indicating they had worked with Visit Dublin staff in the past 24 months, we also asked what the organizations greatest challenges were. Among their responses:

Breaking out beyond "we are Irish and do golf." Long-term sustainability of the brand.

Staying relevant and moving forward.

Generic website.

Competitive Funding.

Lack of meeting and sporting facilities.

Stakeholders - Conversations

Primary Issues & Challenges Facing Dublin

In our conversations and Focus Groups, these were the issues most frequently identified by participants:

Housing & Workforce.

Transportation.

DEI.

The need to diversify our offerings.

Vision has stalled...developers are proposing fast buck initiatives that do not advance the destination brand.

A Private-sector Multi-Sports Complex is planned for “next door.” Do we need to do this?

City Zoning and Permitting isn't easy.

Next Up?

When asked what's next in Dublin's evolution, these were the primary suggestions:

Need to give more attention to older sections of town (especially Frantz Road).

Need more Athletic Venues. Diversification of Sports.

Need more Performing Arts Venues.

Ice Facility (in conjunction with Blue Jackets?).

More Nightlife. Live Music Venue. An Entertainment District.

More River Activation. Extension of DORA.

Meeting Space larger than The Exchange / More Full Service Hotels.

Free-standing Aquarium. Indoor Waterpark Hotel at the Zoo?

Broaden the Brand beyond Irish?

Board Responses - Online

2030

Board Members were asked to envision Dublin at the turn of the next decade. Among their responses:

Lots of sports tournaments. A new hockey complex. More collaboration exists between Experience Columbus and the Greater Columbus Sports Commission to partner on bigger events.

We have developed a draw through world-class festivals (Irish Festival and one or two more), sports facilities, and a city center full of restaurants, shopping and recreation. This visit to Dublin has been such a remarkable experience, that the visitor cannot wait to tell others. We are known as a visitor hub for Ohio.

We have an even mix of business, leisure and sports travel. And our non-tax revenue base is 50% of total.

Dublin is the center of athletic activity for youth sports in the Midwest.

We have become more welcoming to people of color and to the LGBTQ community.

Well balanced corporate and leisure demand segments, newly stabilized sports park that attracts competitions from around the region (youth and adult). Continued offerings including the Dublin Irish Festival and Memorial tournament. Expanded ability to retain overnight guests due to excellent offerings of hotels, shopping, dining and night life.

The Hospitality Industry has become an economic force in the City of Dublin and has the strong support and respect from key stakeholders and the community at large.

Last 24

Board Members were then asked to identify the events of the past 2 years (aside from COVID) that has moved the community closer to their visions for the future. Among their responses:

Bridge Park has moved us closer to having that vibrant city center -- at least from a restaurant, food and recreation stand point. We are still missing that awesome shopping experience.

Increased cooperation with Historic Dublin. New hotels have opened.

Increased engagement between Visit Dublin and local residents has raised the profile of the organization.

Feasibility of sports park being considered, newly developing riverfront activities, restaurants and unique venues offered in Bridge Street District.

The purchase of land next to Darree Field.

The decline in business travel has opened folks eyes to a new sports/community complex, the fourth leg of our revenue base.

What's Next

Board Members were asked their opinion on what would be the most important "next development" to make Dublin an even more attractive destination. Among their responses:

The athletic facility that Visit Dublin is championing is the most immediate need....plus enhancing existing athletic facilities!

Larger conference center for bigger corporate events. Higher end hotel.

Continued development of Bridge Street District and Sports complex.

The River and Riverside Park.

Continuing to develop, in a responsible manner, the Downtown Dublin product and a resurgence of the dated Metro Center area.

Better shopping in city center.

VD Strengths

We asked Board Members what the organization's greatest strengths were. Among their responses:

Our leadership. Scott Dring is a highly respected President and the Board is cohesive and engaged. Our Marketing team is also very strong with a targeted and creative social media presence.

Relationship and collaboration with City leadership, community knowledge, important constituencies and variety of experiences on the Board.

Collaboration, trust and marketing.

VD Challenges

We also asked Board Members what the organization's greatest challenges were. Among their responses:

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Dublin is woefully lacking. We need to make sure that we are creating an experience that ALL guests feel welcome.

Staffing support, diversification of income.

Current Brand doesn't link with other organizations and/or to tourism assets (like the bridge).

Outside forces that don't understand the organization. It would only take a few people to alter the current environment.