



2019 Annual Report



VisitFortWayne®
INDIANA



Danette Fitzgerald

VP Marketing and
Communications
Parkview Health

Chair, Visit Fort Wayne
Board of Directors

Visit Fort Wayne, dba the Fort Wayne/Allen County Convention and Visitors Bureau, is a community and economic development organization. We are governed by a 23-member board of civic leaders, staffed by 16 professionals, and financed by both public entities and more than 350 businesses, all working together to attract more visitors to our destination.

Our mission is to promote our city as a destination for conventions, trade shows, leisure visitors, and sports tournaments. We do this so that every business and resident can enjoy the economic and social benefits of a prosperous tourism industry.

Tourism enhances our quality of life by generating new customers for places that residents enjoy, like attractions, arenas, ballparks, malls, restaurants, and festivals. Thank you for your interest in learning more about our accomplishments and plans for the future.



2020 Board of Directors

Front row L-R: Rob Evans, Holiday Inn at Purdue Fort Wayne; Noelle Robinson, Club Soda; Melissa Schenkel, STAR Financial; Dawn Rosemond, Barnes and Thornburg; Irene Walters, Civic Leader; Russ Jehl, Fort Wayne City Council; Greta Southard, Allen County Public Library; Mike Nutter, TinCaps

Back row L-R: Kelly Updike, Embassy Theatre; John Perlich, City of Fort Wayne; Gary Shearer, Physicians Health Plan; Jim Anderson, Fort Wayne Children's Zoo; Randy Brown, Allen County War Memorial Coliseum; Mike Mushett, Turnstone; Nelson Peters, Allen County Commissioner; Bart Shaw, Grand Wayne Convention Center; Mac Parker, Olive B. Cole Foundation; Paris McFarthing, Hop River Brewing Company; Tim Hall, Don Hall's Guesthouse

Not pictured: Tim Beere, DeBrand Fine Chocolates; Joel Benz, Allen County Council; Danette Fitzgerald, Parkview Health; Lisa Starks, Barnes and Thornburg

Our Vision

Fort Wayne is recognized nationally as a welcoming visitor destination offering unique experiences in an inclusive and hospitable community.

Our Mission

Visit Fort Wayne promotes the community as an exceptional destination, and advocates for the growth and development of its visitor industry.

Our Goals

- Advocate for destination developments to enhance the visitor experience
- Increase the effectiveness and impact of Visit Fort Wayne
- Communicate the importance of the visitor economy to the community

2019 Visit Fort Wayne activities featured on the cover:

1. Travel writers and their families tour Fort Wayne
2. Grand opening of the Hampton Inn & Suites Fort Wayne Downtown
3. Opening ceremonies of the 2019 IBSA Goalball and Paralympic Qualifiers
4. Families enjoy the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo
5. The 2019 Visitors Guide
6. The Memorial Coliseum hosts the NCAA DIII Men's Basketball Championship
7. The grand opening of Promenade Park
8. The International Jugglers Association meets in Fort Wayne
9. Families enjoy downtown's murals

Who We Are

VISIT FORT WAYNE IS

- A nonprofit 501 (c) 6 organization
- Committed to marketing Fort Wayne as a premier destination for conventions, meetings, sporting events and leisure travel
- Directed by a board of 23 and staff of 16

Why It's Important

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Visitors and their spending enhances our quality of life, boosts our economy, and sustains jobs in our city and county
- Visitors infuse new money for our economy – spending \$741 million in Fort Wayne each year
- The visitor industry provides more than 14,000 jobs in our community
- Visitors save residents money. Visitors pay \$40 million in state taxes annually

What We Do

SELL FORT WAYNE

- Our destination branding positions Fort Wayne as a world-class, family-friendly leisure destination
- Our group sales efforts attract conventions, meetings and sporting events to Fort Wayne
- Our integrated marketing campaigns drive visitors to Fort Wayne through advertising, PR and social media

WELCOME AND CONNECT VISITORS

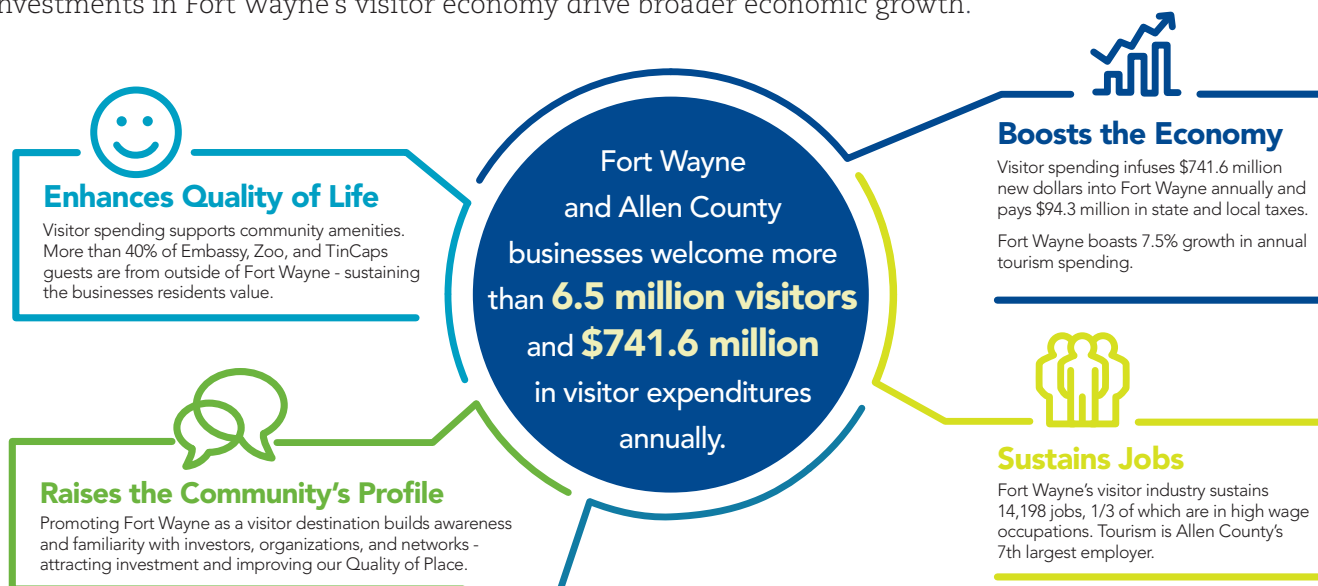
- We assist with the execution of more than 70 meetings and events each year
- Our staff runs a friendly, helpful Visitors Center
- We produce maps, guides and visitor resources to help visitors discover Fort Wayne

PRODUCE LOCAL EVENTS

We are proud to showcase our attractions and restaurants during events like *Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown* and *Savor Fort Wayne*.

THE VALUE OF TOURISM IN FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

Investments in Fort Wayne's visitor economy drive broader economic growth.



Investment in Fort Wayne's tourism marketing generates dividends by attracting groups and leisure visitors.

Tourism promotion improves our quality of life, raises the profile of our city, and attracts business decision makers and organizations – all while fundamentally benefiting economic development.

GROUP SALES DEPARTMENT

In 2019, our sales team helped book **35 future conventions and tournaments** that will bring more than **64,272 visitors** to Fort Wayne, resulting in an economic impact between **\$13 - \$13.5 million dollars**.

In 2019, Fort Wayne **hosted more than 180** conventions, conferences, meetings, sports tournaments and trade/consumer shows in **29 different venues**, bringing more than **340,000 attendees** to our community.



Key Achievements in 2019:

- The sales team attended 9 national trade shows and traveled 17,413 miles to market Fort Wayne.
- Our sales team added two sales team members.
- We helped host five large International and National Events:
 - NCAA DIII Men's Basketball Championship
 - United States Roller Hockey State Wars Championship
 - International Jugglers' Association Festival
 - International Blind Sports Federation Goalball and Judo Paralympic Qualifying Competition
 - National Association of County Agricultural Agents Annual Meeting/Professional Improvement Conference

The Visit Fort Wayne sales team looks for new events to add to the sales funnel – in order to bring new business to our community!



In 2019, our sales team **attended 9 tradeshows**, **hosted 18 site tours**, and **booked 35 future groups!** We also **serviced 71 different meetings** with event assistance, during their events in Fort Wayne.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

The Visit Fort Wayne Marketing Department produces marketing and advertising campaigns to invite leisure visitors to enjoy our city's hotels, restaurants, attractions, and entertainment venues.

In 2019, we advertised Fort Wayne getaways in **30 cities** between 50-200 miles from Fort Wayne, to encourage family travel. We produced more than **30 million exposures** using digital, TV, radio, and print advertising.

VISITFORTWAYNE.COM

Visits to Website:

1.54 Million

11% increase from 2018

Unique Users:

1.02 Million

25% increase from 2018

Pageviews:

3.1 Million

14% increase from 2018



SOCIAL MEDIA

Visit Fort Wayne used social media as one of our primary means of communicating with visitors and sharing our trip ideas with them.

- Total **social media impressions** in 2019: **16 million**
- **Average Daily Reach** on social media: **33,100 people daily**
- In 2019, **Facebook ads** resulted in **105,981 landing page views** on VisitFortWayne.com



Impressions

Facebook: 13,227,175

Instagram: 1,851,707

Twitter: 1,102,100

TOTAL: 16,180,982
in 2019

Engagements

Facebook: 392,455

Instagram: 49,643

Twitter: 40,000

TOTAL: 482,098
in 2019

Average Daily Reach

Facebook: 30,000

Instagram: 3,095

Twitter: unknown

TOTAL: 33,100 in 2019

Key Achievements in 2019:

- Launched a brand new VisitFortWayne.com with more than 100 pages of new content, improved SEO and navigation, and updated design.
- During summer months, the busiest time for family travel, we produced six million impressions from our social media channels. We also set new records with our digital marketing efforts – summer traffic to our website was up 9% over 2018.
- According to an independent study, our summer advertising campaign resulted in \$35 million in visitor spending, and returned \$219 in spending for every dollar spent.



MEDIA RELATIONS

We hosted **47 travel writers and bloggers** in Fort Wayne in 2019, resulting in **82 articles** and more than **43.7 million media impressions**. Articles appeared in:

- **USA Today**
Fort Wayne's waterfront park new draw for Indiana city full of tasty food and family fun
- **Lonely Planet**
Midwest Travel Ideas: 8 under-the-radar destinations to visit in America's Heartland
- **Cincy/Dayton Magazine**
Indiana destinations offer a mix of both new and classic
- **Northwest Indiana Times**
10 Things to Love about Fort Wayne
- **WISH-TV**
Exploring family-friendly options in Fort Wayne



COMMUNITY RELATIONS



Savor Fort Wayne

Visit Fort Wayne produced the 6th annual Savor Fort Wayne from January 9-20, 2019 - our most successful restaurant week yet. 56 participating restaurants provided residents with value-priced, three-course menus over 12 days!

We were thrilled to see **739,895 visits to SavorFortWayne.com** in just over a month's time – up 67% from 2018!



The Savor Fort Wayne STAR Rewards Cards provided a fun way to participate. 25,000 STAR Rewards Cards were distributed, and one lucky diner took home \$500 in restaurant gift cards!

"This was our 5th year doing Savor Fort Wayne! We look forward to trying places we haven't been to, so this event pushes us out of our box, so to speak!"

– Tammy C.
Enjoyed 3 Restaurants

"Thanks for having this every year."

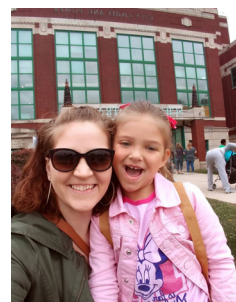
– Rebecca H.
Visited 4 Restaurants



Be A Tourist In Your Own Hometown

On Sunday, September 8, Visit Fort Wayne celebrated our 21st annual *Be A Tourist In Your Own Hometown* with 16 participating museums and attractions!

Each year participating museums and attractions open their doors for free from 12pm-5pm to Fort Wayne residents – in a celebration of Fort Wayne's amazing visitor industry. 94% of those who participate in *Be A Tourist in Your Own Hometown* plan to return to the participating attractions as a paying customer.



CONNECT Sessions:

Each year, Visit Fort Wayne hosts education and networking sessions for our tourism partners.

In 2019 we hosted six events:

- 1 **Special welcome reception** hosted during the opening ceremonies of the **2019 IBSA Goalball and Judo Paralympic Qualifying Competition** in conjunction with Turnstone at Parkview Field.
- 2 **Indiana Tourism Association's Summer Caucus Event** where Indiana legislators were invited to Fort Wayne to see Promenade Park and enjoy a night at the TinCaps.
- 3 **One-on-one sales training sessions** taught our partners how to better utilize and understand the F.O.R.T. portal.
- 4 **Hospitality Industry Luncheon** at the newly opened Hampton Inn Downtown Fort Wayne- Conner's Rooftop.
- 5 A special VIP night during the **NCAA DIII Men's Basketball Championship**.
- 6 **Tourism Input Sessions** with consultant Bill Geist, who hosted four different sessions providing community partners the opportunity to advise us on the future of the industry.



VISITORS CENTER AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS

In 2019, the Visitors Center welcomed more than **4,350 people in person** and assisted almost **17,000 more via phone and email requests**.

We distributed more than **113,000 total print pieces** from the Visitors Center.

Our Visitors Center sold more than **2,446 postcards** in 2019, in addition to a wide variety of new Fort Wayne merchandise.



Key Achievements in 2019:

- Added more locally made art pieces, merchandise and t-shirts to our Visitors Center store.
- Created dozens of specialized brochures including a mural map, free things to do, and Lincoln Highway display.
- Improved information on the F.O.R.T. Partner Portal gives partners easier access to their web traffic and brochure distribution information.



Who visits Fort Wayne?

Our Visitors Center welcomed visitors from 36 different states and 30 different countries!

ADMINISTRATION

Key Achievements in 2019:

- Secured additional funding – Our increase in the room tax rate enables us to be a more competitive destination and organization. We now have the resources to attract additional visitors from new or under-promoted markets including adaptive sports, genealogy, and regional and national conventions. Our goal is to attract a million more people to Fort Wayne over the next five years.
- Accomplished the 2014-2019 strategic plan - Highlights include improving our destination for visitors, increasing the awareness of events in our city, and attracting more sporting events including NCAA basketball championships and International Olympic qualifiers.
- Provided leadership for visitor industry – We advocated for our tourism industry partners and city's guests by seeking a better riverfront, better signage, better downtown parking, a better state tourism office, and a single database of community events.

VISITOR AND TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS

Number of Annual Visitors

Fort Wayne Visitors.....6.5 million

Visitor Expenditures

Visitor Expenditures in
Allen County\$741.6 million
Represents an annual growth of 3.6%.

Total Employment

Direct Jobs (sustained by visitors)..... 14,198
More than 1/3 of jobs were in high wage
occupations, 5.8% of all Allen County jobs.

Wages and Salaries

Direct Wages and Salaries\$376 million
Represents a 7.3% increase over previous study.

Where Visitors Come From

According to VisitFortWayne.com visits,
Visitors Center inquiries and ad responses,
visitors come to Fort Wayne from the
following states:

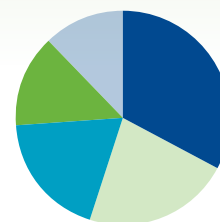
Indiana	54%
Ohio	9%
Illinois.....	8%
Michigan	7.5%
Other	21.5%

Local Taxes Generated

State Tax	\$39.6 million
Local Hospitality Taxes	\$31.9 million

Expenditures by Type

Food & Beverage.....	34%
Shopping	23%
Transportation	17%
Lodging.....	14%
Attractions/Entertainment...	12%



Statewide Annual Growth in Tourism Spending

Allen County	7.5%
Indianapolis	6.1%
Indiana	5.7%

Ranking

- Allen County ranks #4 of 92 Indiana counties in tourism spending.
- Tourism is Allen County's 7th largest employer.

Source: Rockport Analytics 2016 Economic Impact of Tourism on Allen County



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1-800-767-7752 • 260-424-3700 **VisitFortWayne.com**