

2020 HAMILTON COUNTY, INDIANA

Tourism WORKS

People | Place | Prosperity



JUST NORTH
OF INDY

hamilton
county
tourism
inc



CARMEL | FISHERS | NOBLESVILLE | WESTFIELD | ARCADIA | ATLANTA | CICERO | SHERIDAN



Letter from Tourism Commission President

Engaged people and vibrant places make a community great, and Hamilton County certainly has both.

What makes this a great place to live also makes it a desirable place to visit. That balance is an important one, and the county's volunteer and paid tourism leadership teams take this concern to heart every day.

It is a pleasure to represent and work alongside communities that create extraordinary downtowns and attractions. It's amazing to see what local leaders do when they collaborate on a vision for sports development, a White River plan or arts and entertainment districts.

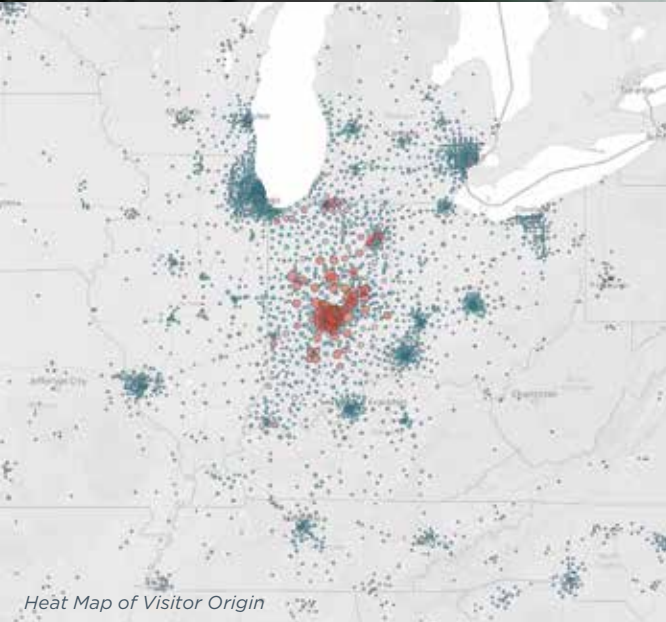
Having tourism at the table supports a well-rounded vision of the places we call home.

As a son of Hamilton County who was raised here and then came back home, I celebrate the old and the new and am energized at how we can continue to work together to create meaningful progress.

Perry Williams

President
Hamilton County Visitor and Convention Commission

Conner Prairie Treetop Outpost



Heat Map of Visitor Origin



Midtown Carmel



Grand Park



Downtown Noblesville Square

Letter from Board Chair

The role tourism plays in a community has evolved in this day of digital intelligence.

For three decades, Hamilton County Tourism, Inc. has messaged successfully to attract potential visitors.

The data and research they rely on to make smart marketing and product investment decisions are now sophisticated enough to help communities clarify where pressure points might exist, and where opportunities may arise for both visitors and residents.

To understand how big data can support decision-making, destination managers like Hamilton County Tourism must also understand the complicated lives and economies of cities and the residents who enjoy them. And they work hard to do just that.

This next decade ushers in an opportunity for community leaders, philanthropic organizations and tourism professionals to work together to solve problems and support big, bold ideas.

No one is more prepared for this challenge than our county's destination management organization, Hamilton County Tourism, Inc. It's a pleasure to work with these visionary folks to explore what's possible in the coming years.

Bob DuBois
Chair, Hamilton County Tourism, Inc. Board of Directors
President and CEO, Noblesville Chamber of Commerce

Tourism as Business

While marketing and investing in our communities to attract tourism dollars is fun and rewarding, it is also an important industry sector that is increasingly becoming a new economic catalyst for cities. Higher disposable incomes, consumer desires for increased and flexible leisure time, young generations that prioritize travel, and digital software that makes for easy travel and transportation all combine to create opportunity in this high-growth market. And Hamilton County Tourism, Inc. has established best business practices to stay informed and gain share.

Work on Hamilton County Tourism's annual business plan begins in the spring for the following year. That work continues throughout the summer months, culminating with a presentation to the Board of Directors and Tourism Commission in the Fall. By January of each year, goals are established, and work has been well under way for months. That work is not merely ideas on paper; it is a thoughtful and forecasted plan that considers a wide range of key performance indicators along with the desires of the community.

INPUT

Planning includes one-on-one conversations with community business partners, elected officials, local leaders, stakeholders and residents.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

A stakeholder team comprised of Hamilton County Council members as well as leaders from the Tourism Commission, Hamilton County Tourism staff and Board examine and prioritize tourism projects under way, emerging ideas and new potential partners. That team meets three times to refine investments for the upcoming year and finalizes plans by October.

RESEARCH

Advertising effectiveness research and analytics from the year are examined to fine-tune marketing and promotions for greater return and efficiencies.

DESIGN FORWARD

Marketing campaign schedules and media buys follow strategic messaging and creative design.

If new creative is desired, those are completed late summer, fall or winter, depending on the seasonality of the message. By early winter, tens of thousands of primary print publications are done and ready for distribution by the visitor experience team, calendars of events are planned and scheduled, and the day-to-day social and digital media buying begins.

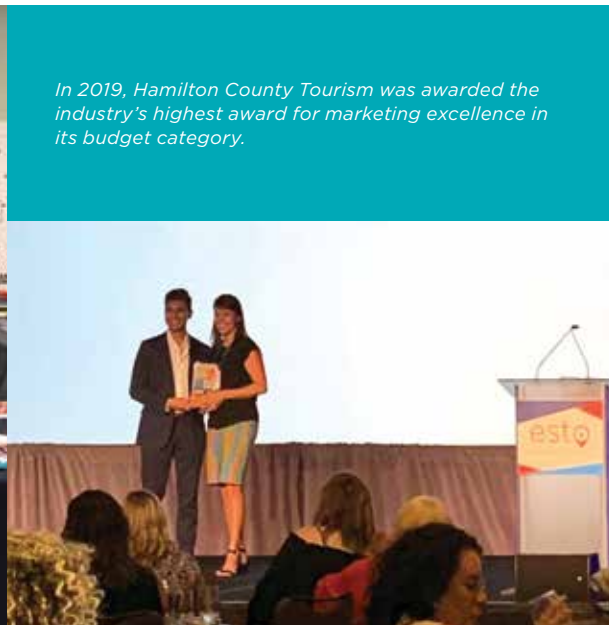
DIRECT SALES AND SERVICE

The sales and sports team begins work six months or more before the calendar year to sell groups on what a great destination Hamilton County is for their next meeting or event. An ongoing process, sometimes groups book more than a year in advance. The visitor experience team manages contractual obligations after groups book business and provides added hospitality value on arrival.

OPERATIONS

Behind the scenes, the operations division works hard to ensure tax dollars entrusted to Hamilton County Tourism are spent wisely and documented. An annual audit is required by the Indiana State Board of Accounts, and the Board takes pride in the fact that annually Hamilton County Tourism has an unqualified audit.

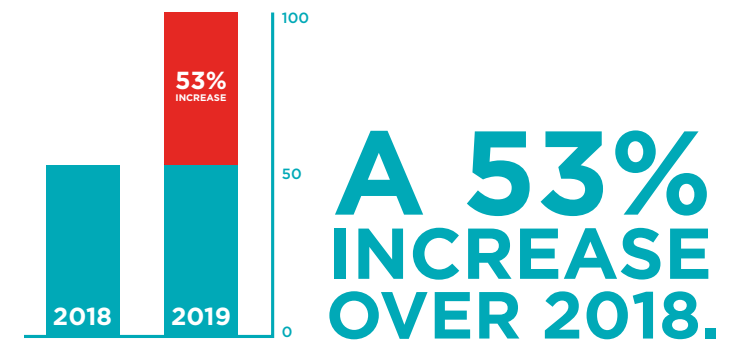
YOU CAN FIND HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM'S DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING PLANS, BUDGET, VISION 2025 PLAN AND OTHER MATERIALS ON ITS TRANSPARENCY WEBSITE: VISITHAMILTONCOUNTY.COM/INDUSTRY.



In 2019, Hamilton County Tourism was awarded the industry's highest award for marketing excellence in its budget category.



Hamilton County Tourism provided service to 121 events and meetings in 2019. A 53% increase over 2018.



Tourism as Community

Tourism means more than how many hotel rooms are sold in a year. Tourism is nothing without the community it serves. The annual Hamilton County business plan places an emphasis on local prosperity because without a strong tourism economy, Hamilton County Tourism could not give more than \$10 million back to the community for asset-based investments. Without a strong tourism economy, more than 12,000 people would not have places to work. And without a strong tourism economy, residents would pay almost \$1,000 more a year per household in taxes.

In addition to these economic benefits, tourism focuses on Hamilton County as a place where our residents call home. Hamilton County Tourism puts residents first, and the best way to understand what a community wants is to be out and about in that community.

Staff members engage with hundreds of partners annually through participation in local programs like Tenderloin Tuesdays and Pedal Perks, as well as the White River Vision Plan process where communication is critical to successful work. Annually, the team hosts more than 50 gatherings, summits and meet-ups.

Staff also does work out in the community not related to tourism—everything from park cleanups and food pantry distribution to painting buildings and more. It's a great way to get to know our neighbors and learn about concerns outside the world of tourism.

A new creative economies initiative now brings together arts leaders from throughout the county to plan more cross-community collaborations that lift varied populations through

shared arts experiences. As the only county in the state with three designated arts districts by the Indiana Arts Commission (Carmel, Fishers and Noblesville), the time is right to understand how the arts can become accessible for all residents of the county as well as visitors.

Research generated by Hamilton County Tourism and the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners identified a critical need for workforce talent attraction. A unique partnership with Hamilton County Economic Development and the workforce development folks at HC-WIN resulted in the county being designated as an Indiana 21st Century Workforce Talent Region by Gov. Eric Holcomb.

Hamilton County has long been a leader in youth competitive sports, and in 2014, the Grand Park Sports Campus raised the

county's profile even more. A Hamilton County Sports Authority plan will thoughtfully explore how this tourism subsidiary can best assist the amazing organizations that shepherd thousands of young people each year in recreational and competitive sporting opportunities.

And thoughtful conversations on topics like diversity and inclusion with partners at locally focused entities, such as the Hamilton County Community Foundation, will lead to a broader vision of how tourism can support our future community.

The time has come for tourism to use its talents to connect and communicate internally as well as externally.



Creative Economies Site Visits



Park Clean-up



2019 Best Places to Work Award



2019 Colts Training Camp at Grand Park

Hamilton County Tourism contributed time, talent and treasure to 99 organizations in 2019 through the Tourism Gives program.

HELPED
99
 ORGANIZATIONS
 IN 2019.



Environmental Future

Residents and visitors are increasingly concerned about the environment and sustainability. Through research provided by Purdue University's climatologists, the White River Vision Plan process revealed the likely potential for episodic floods and impactful droughts in the future. Led locally by Hamilton County Tourism and county and civic partners, with colleagues at the city of Indianapolis and Visit Indy, the plan examines how water retention areas can be developed, critical to both Hamilton and Marion Counties.

Environmental concerns extend beyond the local watershed. Group meeting planners worry about waste generated from special events. Golf courses want to reduce water consumption and chemical treatments. Hotels implement green practices by rewarding guests for reusing their linens and recycling.

There is no doubt tourism can have both a positive and a negative impact on Hamilton County, prompting staff leadership to dig deeper into this topic for future work. Tourism will continue exploring how to support organizations like Conner Prairie as it educates and enlightens, parks departments as they implement sustainability plans, and business partners as they reduce their footprint.

Working with leaders at 4-H and Purdue Extension programs, tourism staff hopes to help improve learning spaces at the Hamilton County Fairgrounds for future generations to lead change in wellness, environmental impact and future food production.

Through hands-on work, planning and education, tourism can join government, business and nonprofits in making a difference.

White River Bridge at Strawtown Koteewi Park



Conner Prairie River Front Plan



Flat Fork Creek



White River Vision Plan



Monon Trail



Rail Restaurant & Bar



Little Gypsy

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