

Celebrating 40 years Visit Howard County



This year, Visit Howard County is celebrating 40 years. What is new for 2022?

I anticipate 2022 to be a transformative year for the organization. In the coming months we will be revisiting our three-year strategic plan and reassess our goals using lessons learned from the pandemic.

The “By the Numbers” data shows how financially important tourism and hospitality is to Howard County. What successful activity is most striking to you?

Data driven marketing products, like the ones national and large corporations use to target consumers likely to buy their product and serve them relevant content based on their digital identity, are becoming increasingly accessible to small destination marketers. This type of technology not only allows us to target potential visitors based on geographical and spending attributes but it also lets us measure the effectiveness of a campaign based on the arrivals and spending in our destination.

Are businesses in tourism and hospitality optimistic about 2022?

Yes, our local tourism and hospitality businesses remain optimistic for 2022. These businesses have remained resilient, learned how to evolve. They have found new and different ways to capture their share of the market.

Locally, how are staffing shortages for the tourism industry being addressed?

Q&A

By the Business Monthly Staff
Amanda Hof is executive director of Visit Howard County, promoting Howard County near and far.



Staffing shortages are definitely one of the industry’s biggest challenges. Locally, we are working with both Howard and Anne Arundel County’s Workforce Development offices to connect employees to employers and promoting job fairs. This is an area I see us adding to our strategic plan for the foreseeable future.

Aside from another COVID outbreak, what is the biggest challenge facing Visit Howard County in the year ahead?

Inducing group travel will be by far one of our biggest challenges. While leisure travel and some youth tournaments and social events have returned, meetings, convention business, and large scale fundraisers have been slower to return. We are now seeing setbacks in traveler confidence which is causing group events to cancel or postpone. To plan these events inevitably results in a six-month to a year lag of getting this business back on the books.

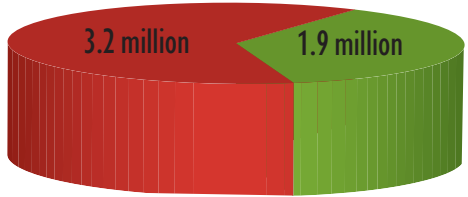
How has COVID and the pandemic changed the work of Visit Howard County and your staff?

The Visit Howard County team is no stranger to crises. Just as the organization was rebounding from the second disastrous flash flood that devastated its Ellicott City Main Street offices is when the pandemic began to take hold. With careful monitoring of early effects of the pandemic staff realized working remotely would be once again necessary and were quick to adapt. The organization also played a critical role in supporting tourism businesses throughout the response and recovery of the pandemic.

TOURISM by THE NUMBERS

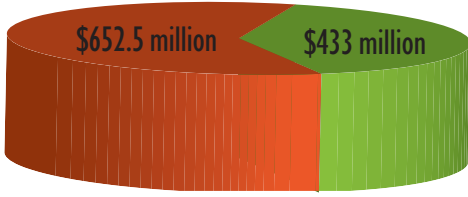
TOTAL VISITORS

1.9 million visitors spent \$433 million in 2020.
3.2 million visitors spent \$652.5 million in 2019



INDUSTRY IS STILL NOTEWORTHY

Even in the pandemic, tourism’s total impact of \$433 million to Howard County businesses along with support of 8,266 jobs, 4.9% of all state tourism jobs, was an important piece of the state economy in 2020.



RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Visit Howard County in partnership with Howard County Government, Howard County Economic Development Authority, and Howard County Chamber of Commerce provided relevant COVID-19 updates and links to the vital resources that businesses relied on to help keep their doors open.

- 110+ COVID-19 related member communications
- Partnered with Howard County Health Dept. on vaccine clinics for hospitality workers
- Partnered with Howard County Government on StayCovidSafe campaign
- Assisted in the administration of \$2.2M in HoCo Rise Business Support Grants to hotels
- Lunches to hotel staff delivered
- Made personal phone calls to hotel GMs
- Dues Forgiveness for members
- “We will be here when you’re ready” video campaign
- “Meetings Matter to Howard County” video campaign
- “Give Thanks To Employees” holiday campaign in lieu of holiday parties
- “Make Howard County your Home for the Holidays” campaign
- “Hidden Gems” video campaign
- Safely re-opened Howard County Welcome Center in time for holiday shopping season
- Calendar of Virtual Events & Activities to keep businesses engaged with consumers
- Inserted 10,000 copies of Howard County Farm and Flavor magazine into Howard County Times and Columbia Flier newspapers in lieu of Howard County Fair booth (2020)

Visit Howard County continues to provide its own updates to members with information as it pertains to Howard County’s hospitality community.

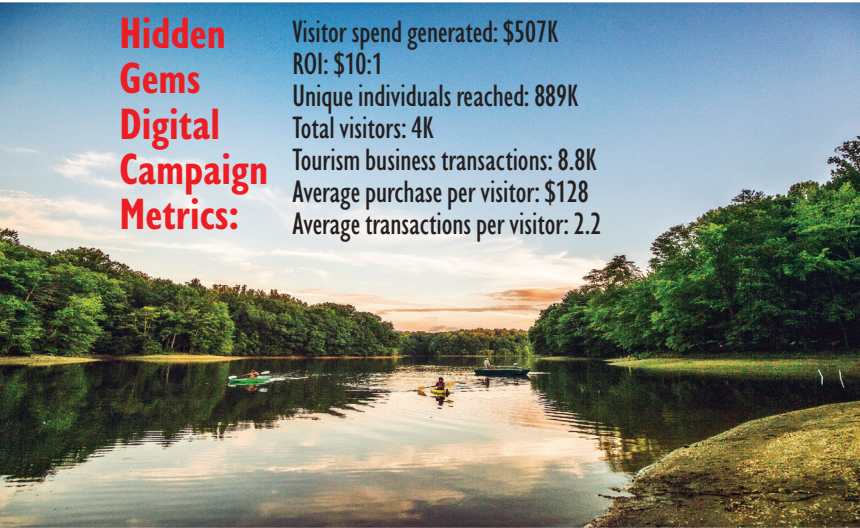
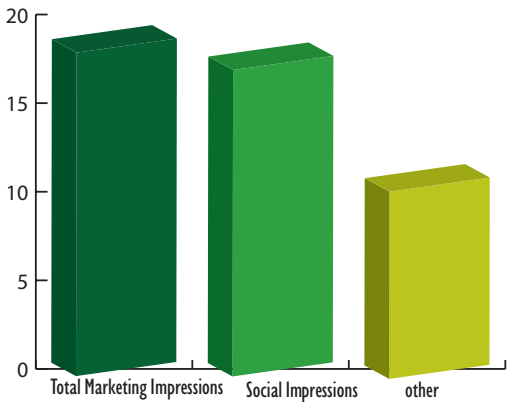
FISCAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Visitors to Howard County generated \$37.8 million in state and local taxes in 2020.

MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS

19 M Total Marketing Impressions (up 46%)
8 M social media impressions (up 37%)
11 M all other (up 378%)

- Dedicated Marketing for Historic Ellicott City via Maryland Office of Tourism Development Grant and private sector match:
- 2.9 M social media impressions
- 10.1 M all other



Hidden Gems Digital Campaign Metrics:

Visitor spend generated: \$507K
ROI: \$10:1
Unique individuals reached: 889K
Total visitors: 4K
Tourism business transactions: 8.8K
Average purchase per visitor: \$128
Average transactions per visitor: 2.2

RESTAURANT WEEKS & CRAFT BEVERAGES

Visit Howard County was the first destination to resume a restaurant week promotion during the pandemic. While other destinations remained timid to do so, Visit Howard County pivoted their program to focus on curbside and carry out. The summer and winter campaigns were very successful and helped support restaurants during their time of need.

Winter 2021:

participating restaurants: 31
marketing impressions: 1.5M
pageviews on website: 190K

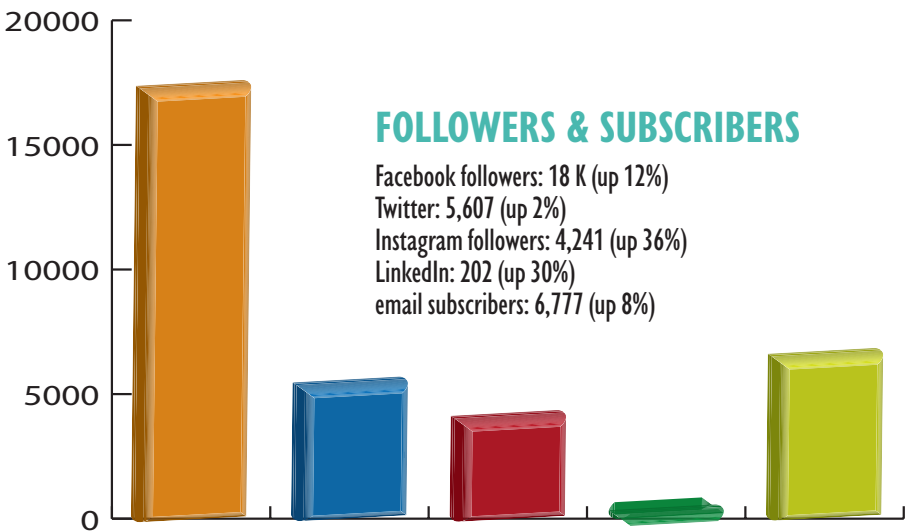
Summer 2021:

participating restaurants: 28
marketing impressions: 1.3M
pageviews on website: 101K

VISITHOWARDCOUNTY.COM WEBSITE

380 K Users (up 15%)

987 K Site Pageviews (up 12%)



FOLLOWERS & SUBSCRIBERS

Facebook followers: 18 K (up 12%)
Twitter: 5,607 (up 2%)
Instagram followers: 4,241 (up 36%)
LinkedIn: 202 (up 30%)
email subscribers: 6,777 (up 8%)

HOTEL OCCUPANCY MAKES A REBOUND

FY21 Q4 Occupancy = 71.1% vs 77.59(FY19 Q4) = 8% decrease
FY21 Q4 ADR = \$82.33 vs \$103.1 (FY19Q4) = 20% decrease

FY 22 (only comparing July/August)
Occupancy = 75.1% vs. 74.09% (FY19 Q1 July/August) = 1.5% increase
ADR = \$97.19 vs. \$97.47 (FY19 Q1 July/August) = level

References: Epsilon Data Management, Facebook Ads manager, Google Analytics, Tourism Economics CY2020

Visit Howard County 40th Anniversary Celebration

Founded in 1981, the Howard County Tourism Council, Inc. trades today as Visit Howard County and is celebrating the organization’s 40th year in 2021.

Friends and supporters and the community at large celebrated the 40th annual meeting Sept. 24 at The Mall in Columbia.

Visit Howard County is recognized by Howard County Government and the Maryland Office of Tourism Development as the official Destination Marketing Organization for Howard County.

Visit Howard County serves as the lead organization to market and develop the county as a premier leisure and business travel destination.

Visit Howard County achieves this through integrating the organization’s work with industry partners to create innovative marketing campaigns to drive economic activity through visitor

spending and serve as a credible resource for Howard County’s tourism community.

The Howard County Tourism Council, Inc. was founded by the following visionary business leaders: Bill King Sr. (Crab Shanty Restaurant), Nick Mangione (Turf Valley), Buddy Harrison (The Enchanted Forest), Tony Souza (The Hilton in Columbia) and Garth Davis (The Truckers’ Inn.)

They, along with the support of former Howard County Executive J. Hugh Nichols and Economic Development Coordinator Frank Collins, worked tirelessly to champion the economic importance of an active and engaged network of individuals within the local community with the common purpose of attracting visitors to Howard County to experience the many amenities it offers and stimulate economic growth.

Why Join Visit Howard County

For as little as \$50 a year, businesses can become members of Visit Howard County, a nonprofit that markets the efforts of its members and helps visitors and residents alike enjoy what the community has to offer.

With different levels of membership – tiered at \$50, \$500 and \$1,000 per year – businesses can choose their level of exposure.

“One hundred percent of the membership dues that are collected go directly towards our marketing efforts of members,” explained Eric Teisch, sales & membership director for Visit Howard County. “As the lead marketing organization for Howard County, we value the opportunity to support our members through print, radio, television, targeted digital, and social media marketing campaigns.”

Members’ listings, information, and events on Visit Howard County’s website are seen by more than 300,000 unique visitors each year.

“Visit Howard County bridges the hospitality and business communities together while consistently sharing important information that impacts everyone in Howard County,” said Teisch.

How do businesses join? Visit <https://www.visithowardcounty.com/about/tourism-council/membership/>

Testimonial

“Dear Eric and Amanda,
I just wanted to take a moment to express Dan’s and my gratitude for Visit Howard County featuring us in so many recent promotions. The WMAR broadcast was awesome, the Meetings Matter video gave us a prominent positioning and now we see here is a large banner at the Columbia Mall with our building and name. Thank you both so much for all you do to get the word out for our Howard County businesses, but especially for you care for us as business owners as well! This evening we started out with a bang with almost 50 guests for dinner. About 75% ordered off the restaurant week’s menu. Things are on a roll! Thanks for your partnership!”

Dan and Donna Wecker, The ElkrIDGE Furnace Inn and Garden House

Join today or learn more by contacting Membership@howardcountytourism.com

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Executive Committee

Board Members



Yolande Lacan,
Homewood Suites
Columbia
President-



Trish Hudson,
Hudson Coastal
Raw Bar & Grille
President- Elect



Barbara Nicklas,
The Mall in Columbia
Immediate Past President



Jim Starke,
Best Western Plus
Bwi Airport
Finance Chair



Martha Clark,
Clark's Elioak Farm
Nomination Chair



Chuck Chandler,
Maryland Hotel
Lodging Association
Past President



Pete Mangione,
Turf Valley Resort



Becky Mangus



Debbie Slack Katz,
Ellicott City Historic District Liaison



Mae Beale,
Community Liaison



Margaret Barry,
Lost Ark Distilling Co.



Nina Basu,
Inner Arbor Trust



Cheryl Clemens-Everidge,
Toby's Dinner Theatre



Vince Culotta,
Cured | 18th & 21st



Ian Kennedy,
Downtown Columbia Arts
and Culture Commission



Stan Martin,
Residence Inn by Marriott
Columbia/Fulton



Soo Park,
Owner JastinTech Inc.



Donna Wilner,
Historic Savage Mill



Kewei "Joe" Xu,
Owner Operator of The Wayside Inn

Ex-Officio Members



Dan Burns,
Columbia Association



The Honorable
Eric Ebersole, Maryland
House of Delegates



The Honorable
Katie Fry Hester,
Maryland Senate



Terry Hasseltine,
Maryland Sports



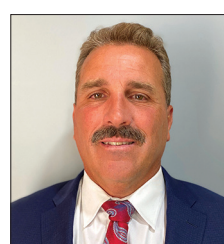
Kathy Johnson,
Howard County Economic
Development Authority



Christopher Pineda,
Ellicott City Partnership



Jennifer Jones,
Howard County
Government



Mike Milani,
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