

# VISIT HOWARD COUNTY

*Promoting Howard County near and far*





## ABOUT VISIT HOWARD COUNTY



Founded in 1981, the Howard County Tourism Council, Inc. trades as Visit Howard County.

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 is the official organization to market and develop the county as a premier leisure and business travel destination and serves Howard County's tourism industry businesses and organizations through marketing that showcases the entire county while being a credible resource and advocate.

## 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. As the official marketing organization for Howard County, we value the opportunity to support our members through aggressive marketing campaigns. Additionally, members' listings, information, and events on Visit Howard County's website are seen by more than 400,000 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.

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

## Testimonial

Visit Howard County has been essential to our success over the past 22 years. The minute I opened the gates at Clark's Elioak Farm, I joined Visit Howard County and it's the best business decision I've ever made. I have been a Board member, a Board President and worked with numerous exceptional staff throughout the years. Visit Howard County has supported and promoted Clark's Elioak Farm to visitors and travel writers through media placement and ads on websites, radio, TV, and social media. I couldn't have a better partner in my efforts to encourage visitors to our farm and other attractions throughout Howard County.

Martha Clark  
Owner Clark's Elioak Farm

## Q&A

Amanda Hof, executive director of Visit Howard County, discusses the Local HoCo campaign, how tourism unifies the local community, and what she's looking forward to in the near future.



**You have had so many wonderful upgrades and exhibits at the Welcome Center. What are you most excited about regarding accomplishments in the past year?**

Alex Sullivan, our Visitor Services & Community Engagement Manager, is doing an amazing job planning and executing exhibits and programming. The robust schedule and variety of exhibits and programs have helped cement the Welcome Center's position as an anchor in Old Ellicott City and as a cultural hub in Howard County. The exhibits have been drawing in visitors from all different parts of the state and region. Additionally, our new front lawn landscape has made our outdoor space more welcoming and enjoyable for visitors.

**Would you say that the exhibits and events this year have shown more cultural diversity than ever?**

While diversity is a requirement of all of our regular programming, we've hit our stride this past year. Our storytelling about the county has been made possible because of our incredible partnerships with local organizations such as the Savage Historical Society, the Jewish Federation of Howard County, and the Hanguk Arts Center. The Santa Heim exhibit explored Savage, Maryland's time as a Christmas village, the "Made From Scratch" exhibit explored the development of Columbia's Jewish community and its relationship with James Rouse's vision for an inclusive community. Our most recent program, the HanGuk Art Center Korean Pop-Up Museum, has been especially popular thanks to our partnership with Mi-Schill Kim, a Korean art collector and owner-operator of the former Asian Art Collective gallery, a beloved institution on Ellicott City's Main Street for over two decades. Mi-Schill's passion for sharing Korean art and culture with the world shines through in every carefully curated piece, reflecting her vision to make this artistic heritage accessible to all.

**What is coming up in the future for this year that you'd like to highlight?**

While we're on the topic of the Welcome Center, I am pleased and excited to share that we will embark on a much-needed interior renovation that will honor and restore the historical integrity of the historic Post Office building. The plans include opening up the space and improving lighting that will be more conducive to exhibits and programming. New static exhibits will showcase and orient visitors to the entire County and surrounding regions. The renovation is made possible through grants and partnerships with the Howard County Government and the Maryland Heritage Area Authority. We are additionally grateful for support from our state delegation and, specifically Delegate Courtney Watson for securing funds to spearhead the project. We anticipate the renovation to be complete in 2025.



**How is the HoCo Local campaign going after the kick off?**

We are beyond excited about the launch of Local HoCo, which was made possible with support from Howard County Executive Calvin Ball and our partners at Howard County Economic Development Authority, and the Howard County Chamber. Thus far, we have personally invited over 800 businesses to participate. The accompanying website, shop-local-hoco, where consumers can view listings of small and local businesses and be inspired to go forth and support local, reached over 900 visits in just 30 days.

**Why should small businesses participate in this campaign?**

'Shop Local' isn't just a catchphrase—it's a philosophy and a commitment to fostering economic resilience while preserving the character of our community. By choosing to participate, small and local businesses will not only help cultivate their own prosperity but also contribute to the vitality and sustainability of the local economy. Residents and visitors alike can show their support and enthusiasm for local businesses by displaying an official 'Local HoCo' bumper magnet. Bumper magnets are free at the Howard County Welcome Center while supplies last.

**In what way is Visit Howard County a unifying force in the community?**

Visit Howard County plays a significant role in unifying the community through tourism promotion of events, arts and cultural attractions, historic and urban districts and neighborhoods, a vibrant dining scene, shopping opportunities, and non-profit organizations, which fosters a shared sense of identity and pride among residents. Additionally, we have worked extensively to strengthen our relationships and collaborate with state and local leadership, stakeholders, and peer organizations such as Howard County Economic Development Authority, Howard County Chamber, and Leadership Howard County.

**What's the most popular event?**

Now in its 51st year, The Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival is one of the largest festivals of its kind, celebrating all things sheep, from hoof to handwoven. Held annually, the first full weekend in May, at the Howard County Fairgrounds, it attracts over twenty thousand visitors from all over the world who come for a wide range of activities, including sheep shearing demonstrations, wool and fiber arts workshops, and vendors selling yarn, fiber, and related crafts. The festival celebrates rural traditions, craftsmanship, and the art of wool production. It's a highly regarded event for those interested in knitting, spinning, and other fiber arts, as well as for families looking for a fun and educational experience.

# HOWARD COUNTY TOURISM BY THE NUMBERS

\$790.4 M

Visitor spending in Howard County, 2023

32%

of visitors stayed overnight



90%

of visitors were from out of state

WHERE DO VISITORS SPEND THEIR MONEY?

(Aug. 2023-July 2024)

 Retail 42%

 Food 30.9%

 Accommodations 11.8%

 Gas & Service Stations 67.2%

 Attractions 3.7%

VHC BY THE NUMBERS

48 Marketing Campaigns

23.5 M VisitHowardCounty.com website impressions

6.4 M Total Social Media Impressions

4.6 M Meta Ad Social Media Impressions

570 K Organic Social Media Impressions

6.5 K Instagram Followers

292 Linkedin Followers

30+ Media Wins as a result of Public Relations

6100+ Email Subscribers

7 Exhibits in the Howard County Welcome Center

14,260 Visitors to the Howard County Welcome Center

40,000 Visitors Guides Printed

300+ Members

WHERE ARE THEY FROM? WHAT DO THEY SPEND?

Visitor Market Area	% Visitors	Avg. Visitor Spend
Philadelphia Pa.	10.6%	\$131
New York N.Y.	8.8%	\$138
Washington D.C. (Hagerstown Md.)	8.6%	\$101
Salisbury Md.	6.0%	\$157
Harrisburg-Lancaster-Lebanon-York Pa.	4.3%	\$112
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News Va.	3.1%	\$153
Richmond-Petersburg Va.	2.6%	\$136
Baltimore Md.	2.6%	\$76
Pittsburgh Pa.	2.4%	\$149
Atlanta Ga.	2.3%	\$124



Maryland

HOWARD COUNTY

VisitHowardCounty.com @visithocomd

Sources:  
Smith travel Research  
via Zartico Dashboard  
Affinity via Zartico Dashboard

WHERE DO THEY GO?

Columbia, 43.8%

Elkridge, 20.1%

Western Howard County 10%


Greater Ellicott City 10%

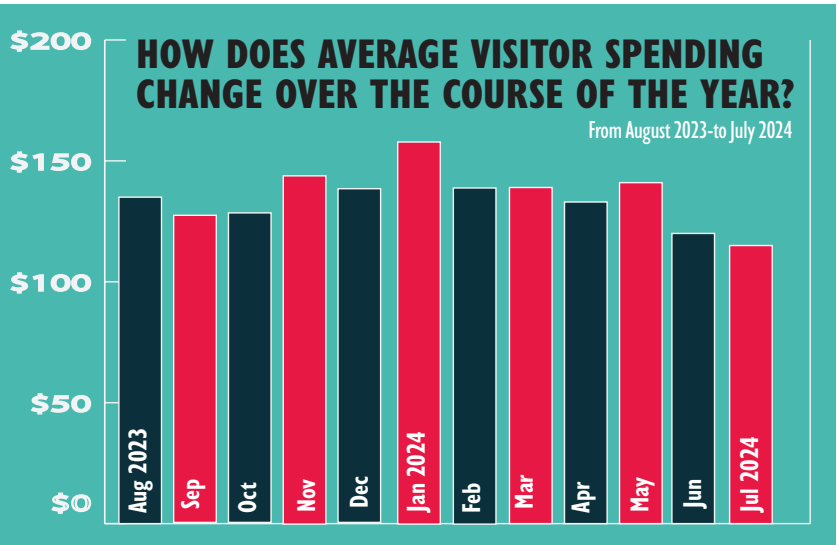
Savage, 5.5%

North Laurel 8.2%

Maplelawn (Fulton) 1.6%

Ellicott City Historical District 0.6%





HC HOTEL PERFORMANCE

Occupancy 60.5%

Revenue 70.7 M

Average Stay Value \$292

536,806 Rooms booked

July 2023-June 2024



Visit Howard County continues to provide its own updates to members with information about Howard County's hospitality community.

TOURISM ECONOMICS STUDY FINDINGS: 2023

The travel sector is an integral part of the Howard County economy. Visitors generate significant economic benefits to households, businesses, and government alike and represent a critical driver of the county's future. In 2023, visitor-supported employment reached 9,528 jobs in the county, including indirect and induced impacts.

Visitor spending grew 7% in Howard County in 2023, a year-over-year growth of more than \$52 million. Visitor spending reached \$790.4 million, surpassing pre-pandemic levels by 19%.

Visitor spending grew 7% in Howard County in 2023 to reach 119% of pre-pandemic levels.





Board members and staff from Visit Howard County took a moment for this photo after a recent meeting. Pictured are, from left: Rod Vese, Pinot's Palette - Ellicott City; Julie Eurice, Savage Mill; Phillip Dodge, Downtown Columbia Partnership; Alex Sullivan, Visit Howard County; Felix Fachine, Howard County Government; Mae Beale, Community Liaison; Vince Culotta, Partner Cured | 18th & 21st; Kaelynn Ball, Visit Howard County; Dave Simmons, Merriweather Arts and Culture Commission; Sharon Christiansen, Ellicott City Partnership; Steve Carne, Terrapin Adventures; Donna Wecker, Elkridge Furnace Inn; Amanda Hof, Visit Howard County; President: Trish Hudson, Hudson Coastal Raw Bar & Grille; Denisa Smith, Visit Howard County; President-Elect: Jayquin Bella, The DoubleTree by Hilton Columbia; Nicole Mostay, Turf Valley Resort; Eric Teisch, Visit Howard County; Yolande Lacan, Immediate Past President; Margaret Barry, Independent Consultant; Chuck Chandler, Residence Inn Maple Lawn Fulton, Past President. Not pictured: Jim Starke, BEST WESTERN PLUS BWI Airport, Treasurer-Secretary; Martha Clark, Clark's Elioak Farm, Nomination Chair; Grace Anastasiadis, Howard Community College; Nina Basu, Inner Arbor Trust; Cheryl Clemens-Everidge, Toby's Dinner Theatre; Marcus "Sankofa" Nicks, History Heals Consulting; Soo Park, JastinTech; Dan Burns, Columbia Association; state Sen. Katie Fry Hester; Terry Hasseltine, Maryland Sports; Kathy Johnson, Howard County Economic Development Authority; Mike Milani, Howard County Dept. Recreation & Parks

# 43<sup>rd</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

**Please join VISIT HOWARD COUNTY**  
for its 43rd Annual Meeting featuring networking and exciting program with special recognitions

**SEPTEMBER 20, 2024**

**11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**

**Elkridge Furnace Inn  
5745 Furnace Ave,  
Elkridge, MD 21075**

Tickets & Sponsorships:



[www.visithowardcounty.com](http://www.visithowardcounty.com)