



# ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

3

A MESSAGE FROM  
OUR PRESIDENT

4

CONVENTION SALES &  
SPORTS COMMISSION

6

CONVENTION &  
SPORTS SERVICES

8

NOTABLE EVENTS &  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

10

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS/  
VISITOR SERVICES & FILM OFFICE

12

MARKET  
RESEARCH

13

VISITOR  
SERVICES

14

VK FILM  
OFFICE



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The word “normal” is hard to define. It can be used in a way that means average or typical but in the way we will use for this report – **“it brings a sigh of relief”**. That said, I feel that I can truly say this past year felt normal in the best possible way. The Visit Knoxville team did what we do best. We welcomed familiar friends and new ones at a variety of conferences and events, including one incredible day of World’s Fair celebration.

This report provides the numbers of key activities like hotel bookings, trade shows, site visits, volunteer hours, FAMs (familiarization tours), website traffic, film productions, journalist visits, blog posts and so much more. It’s impossible to describe the amount of work that goes into this report, but I encourage you to go back and read the quarterly highlights under MEDIA on our website for more details. I should note that we achieved a great deal by restructuring roles and responsibilities within the Visit Knoxville organization, creating one of our strongest teams ever.

Speaking of structure, one of the highlights of the year was most certainly the reopening of the 4th Floor Observation Deck of the Sunsphere. Operating this historic icon as a ticketed, staffed attraction is a huge responsibility and a great honor. Guests have visited from all over the world (even Antarctica), commenting on the beauty of the area and the kindness of the community and expressing true gratitude for preserving the past.

In addition to all of this, we were privileged to help launch K-Town Connect, a group of compassionate, well-trained individuals who are already making a strong impact on our downtown community. I’m excited to see what this group will provide over the months and years to come.

We could not do any of this without the incredible support of our board and stakeholders. We will continue to market Knoxville as a nature-loving-adventure-seeking-artsy-kind-of-town to visitors, locals, meeting planners, sports events planners, journalists, and film production companies alongside all of you. And just wait, next year will be even better.

Sincerely,

*Kim Bumpas*

Kim Bumpas, CDME, CMP  
President  
Visit Knoxville





# CONVENTION SALES & SPORTS COMMISSION

The Visit Knoxville Sales Team once again met several goals in an exciting yet unique year. Detailed information is listed below. These numbers include the activities of the Convention Sales Team and the Visit Knoxville Sports Commission (VKSC).

## BOOKED EVENTS 172

Of the **172** events, **69%** were new business. **49** booked at the Knoxville Convention Center.

PRODUCED OVER \$176.4 MILLION  
OF FUTURE ECONOMIC IMPACT

## HOSTED 19 MEETING PLANNERS ON SPRING FAM TOUR

Visit Knoxville currently has three pending bookings from the FAM.

## TOTAL LEADS 427 (EXCEEDED GOAL OF 349)

Of this, **46% (196)** went to the Knoxville Convention Center.

## HOSTED 51 SITE VISITS

Among them America Outdoors, Campus Crusade for Christ, Grassroots Outdoor Alliance, Mid-Atlantic CrossFit Challenge, Perfect Game, and Odyssey of the Mind.

## EXECUTED 4 EVENT SCOUTING TRIPS

These included AAU Cross Country Nationals, USA Cycling Cyclocross Nationals, Chattanooga Jet Ski Club, and the Bassmaster Classic.

## ATTENDED 21 TRADE SHOWS

**347** appointments/meetings were conducted by Convention Sales team and Sports Commission Sales team and attending partners. Shows included Connect Marketplace, Connect Sports, IMEX, Cvent Connect, TEAMS, Sports ETA Symposium and Conference Direct. Visit Knoxville issued **21** leads resulting from show activity.



## CONDUCTED 14 SALES APPOINTMENTS IN THE GREATER NASHVILLE METRO

Notable appointments included Home Builders Association of Tennessee, Tennessee Chiropractic Association, Tennessee Municipal League, Tennessee Pharmacists Association, and Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency.

## 370 VK CONCIERGE VISITS

VK Concierge is a way for VK to engage with our hotel partners, providing updated information through personal contact with a VK staff member. Scheduled visits take place quarterly and ongoing contact is provided for additional needs and requests.





## CONVENTION & SPORTS SERVICES

The Convention and Sports Services Team is tasked with enhancing the overall planner and attendee experience with a focus on services designed to add value, maximize attendance, and retain group business. Providing planners with a high level of customer service and visitors with an enhanced experience positively influences the opportunities for repeat business and visits. The VK Convention Services Team provides services such as partner referrals, itinerary suggestions, visitor information, and off-site special event assistance for conventions, trade shows, sporting events, and festivals utilizing a consultative approach based on the unique needs, specific goals, and attendee interests of each group.

SUPPORTED  
**260**

CONVENTIONS, SPORTING  
EVENTS, FESTIVALS, & MEETINGS

PROVIDED  
**265**

### PARTNER REFERRALS

Partner Referrals are meeting planner requests for suppliers, products, vendors, and services in the community.

PARTICIPATED IN  
**17**

WEBINARS & EVENTS FOR  
CONTINUING EDUCATION



## REBRANDED THE VK VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Visit Knoxville Volunteer Program was rebranded as Team Knoxville Volunteers. A new logo, rack card, and t-shirt design were produced and distributed. The Team Knoxville email newsletter was refreshed and a presence was launched on social media, including Facebook and Instagram, to recruit new volunteers to the program and highlight the activities of existing volunteers.

TOTAL NUMBER OF  
VOLUNTEER HOURS  
**1,765**



TOTAL NUMBER OF  
INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS  
**227**

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Launched digital **Experience Knoxville Savings Pass** via Bandwango in January featuring discounts to over 30 Knoxville restaurants, shops, attractions, and breweries. The digital feature permits this asset to be promoted to convention and sports attendees prior to their stay and allows them to experience Knoxville like a local while enjoying the perks of being Knoxville's guest!



**Tennessee HOSA - Future Health Professionals** hosted their **2022 State Leadership Conference - "Shatter Your Expectations"** at the Knoxville Convention Center on March 27 - 30, 2022. The Conference brought in approximately 2,400 future health professional students as well as 134 advisors that oversaw those students.

Knoxville welcomed two CrossFit® Semifinal Events at the Knoxville Civic Coliseum, making Knoxville the first city to host back-to-back qualifying events for the CrossFit® Games. The **2022 Syndicate Crown** was held May 20 - 22 followed by the **Mid-Atlantic CrossFit® Challenge** May 27 - 29, with a total of 280 elite athletes.



Visit Knoxville partnered with USA Cycling and WATE to bring the **2022 USA Cycling Olympic Day** to Knoxville's own Safety City on Saturday, June 25, 2022. Children and families got to interact with Olympic athletes and pro racers throughout the day and had the opportunity to participate in various timed bicycle races, obstacle courses, and bike safety checks. The event was free and open to the community.



## NOTABLE EVENTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



### Reopened the Observation Deck of the Sunsphere

On February 22, 2022, Visit Knoxville reopened the 4th Floor Observation Deck as a ticketed, staffed attraction. A 1982 World's Fair timeline, gallery, memorabilia, and gift shop await visitors. Since the reopening, the staff has welcomed over **23,000** visitors (through FYE) from around the world.

### Partnered with Live Nation on Paul McCartney's "Get Back" Tour

In one of our most successful concert partnerships to date, VK teamed with Live Nation to welcome Sir Paul McCartney to Knoxville. Fans from all 50 states plus Washington D.C. and Canada enjoyed the sold-out show May 31 at Thompson Boling Arena.



## HOSTED THE 1982 WORLD'S FAIR 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



As follow up to a December press event at World's Fair Park with the world-famous Budweiser Clydesdales, VK partnered with the City of Knoxville, Knox County, and several community partners to present a full day of celebration.



The free, May 21st event included cultural exhibits and performances, technology and maker demonstrations, a Ferris wheel, live music, and more. Festivities closed with fireworks programmed to '80s music.



### Assisted with the Launch of K-Town Connect

Visit Knoxville, the City of Knoxville, Knox County, and the Downtown Knoxville Alliance partnered with Block by Block, a national company providing safety, cleaning, and hospitality services for Central Business Improvement Districts to help visitors and locals experience a friendly, clean, and safer downtown. Six ambassadors are on the street daily, with at least some part of that group out seven days a week.

### Helped Enhance the Natural Beauty of World's Fair Park

As part of the World's Fair 40th Anniversary Celebration, Visit Knoxville was pleased to facilitate and partner with the City of Knoxville and the Public Building Authority to preserve and beautify the Clinch Avenue Viaduct arches. The colors represent various themes to each individual. For some, these colors illustrate the awareness of Breast Cancer, Alzheimer's and more. For others, they are a matter of pride. The prism of color reflecting off the Sunsphere, like a rainbow, was a key factor in the design.





## MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

# VISITOR SERVICES & FILM OFFICE

As we continue to market Knoxville as a nature-loving-adventure-seeking-artsy-kinda-town to a variety of audiences, we've adapted the campaign to unique messaging - including paid placement for the 40th Anniversary of the 1982 World's Fair. In each case, our digital placement directs to [visitknoxville.com](https://visitknoxville.com).



In FYE22, we launched a reorganized website with a new look based on industry research and design trends; the first full redesign since the initial website launch in 2015. The re-design embraces the nature-loving-adventure-seeking-artsy-kinda-town branding with elements in the same spirit.

### TOTAL NUMBER OF WEBSITE VISITS

# 1,949,401

(UP 43.58% OVER FYE21)



VisitKnoxville.com Pageviews Fiscal YoY

## TOP 10 LANDING PAGES

- |                 |                        |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1. Home         | 6. Market Square       |
| 2. Things to Do | 7. Restaurants         |
| 3. Events       | 8. Events this Weekend |
| 4. Attractions  | 9. Free Things to Do   |
| 5. Artsy Town   | 10. Knox Still Rocks   |

## TOP 10 CITIES FOR WEBSITE TRAFFIC

- |              |                     |
|--------------|---------------------|
| 1. Knoxville | 6. Charlotte        |
| 2. Nashville | 7. Washington, D.C. |
| 3. Atlanta   | 8. Chattanooga      |
| 4. New York  | 9. Tri-Cities       |
| 5. Chicago   | 10. Greenville      |

## ADDITIONAL WEBSITE UPDATES

# 2,166

NEW/UPDATED CALENDAR EVENTS

# 183

NEW PARTNER LISTINGS

# 103

BLOG POSTS  
(ACCOUNTS FOR 10% OFF ALL WEBSITE TRAFFIC)

VISIT KNOXVILLE APP  
**2,592 Downloads**  
**12,309 Sessions**

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Presented the Sunsphere Sundays Concert Series in partnership with Tennessee Department of Tourist Development (TDTD). The four-part series took place in October at World's Fair Park and featured COIN, Dawes, The Lone Bellow, and St. Paul and The Broken Bones.

Partnered with TDTD on Tennessee on Me, a national campaign with Chattanooga, Memphis, Nashville, and Tri-Cities. Knoxville hotel partners and McGhee Tyson Airport took part in the promotion with Knoxville selling over **500 total packages/1,147 total room nights** (second only to Nashville) with an average length of stay of 2.3 nights.

Partnered on digital content with a variety of partners including Korn Ferry/PGA TOUR, the Tennessee Whiskey Guild, and Instagram Tennessee/Tristar Adventures.



Partnered with the University of Tennessee on a new mural by Paris Woodhull "It's Great to Be a Tennessee Vol" located just behind Gay Street on the State Street Garage.

Promoted local partners through the VK Blog written by VK staff and various partners including Legacy Parks, Knoxville History Project, The Maker City, and more.

Created or shared over **838 Instagram stories** with several series throughout the year, including helpful guides on Knoxville's Greenways, coffee scene, and murals; event promotion including Big Ears, Elf on the Shelf®, and many others; new exhibits such as the ARC at Zoo Knoxville, the McClung Museum's Shane Pickett exhibition, the East Tennessee History Center's "You Should Have Been There!" exhibit, and more.

Hosted and assisted with a record number of **50 journalists/bloggers/influencers**, including a "Big City Fun & Small Town Heart" media FAM in partnership with TDTD. Highlights include:

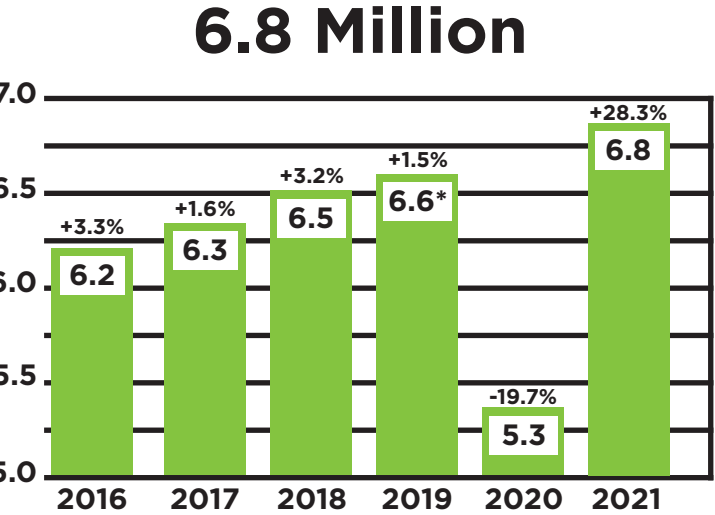
- Two articles by Pamela McKuen, syndicated on Travel Awaits, Our Community Now, Newsbreak, and Flipboard.
- A feature in Edible Nashville by Jill Melton, with March/April cover showcasing OliBea.
- An article by Mary Ann Anderson (here with TDTD FAM), whose piece was published and syndicated in 50 newspapers across the country including The Miami Herald, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, The Charlotte Observer, and many more.

Generated more than **\$1,010,436** in earned/unpaid media via PR efforts.

# MARKET RESEARCH

Visit Knoxville collects and analyzes data from sources including Longwoods International, Smith Travel Research (STR), ADARA, and Arrivalist to compile information related to Knoxville’s travel market. A quarterly Tourism Dashboard is available under Public Notices on the Media section of visitknoxville.com.

TOTAL OVERNIGHT VISITORS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2021



\* Overnight visitation has grown 10% from 2016-2021  
Based on Knoxville's share of total US volume compared against STR room nights  
Sources: Longwoods, STR, Arrivalist, Visit Knoxville

## HOTEL DATA

**TOTAL ROOM NIGHTS**  
**JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022**  
**2,305,709**  
(UP 24.3% OVER FYE21)

Occupancy Up 20%  
ADR Up 27.8%  
Room Revenues Up 57.1%

Source: STR

## BOOKING DATA

Visit Knoxville uses Adara to track hotel business generated from our digital ad placement and website visitation. Below is a summary of those findings.

### HOTEL BUSINESS GENERATED BY WEBSITE VISITORS

Bookings 28,697  
Room Nights 72,915  
Average Rate \$138.57  
Hotel Revenue \$10,103,969

### HOTEL BUSINESS GENERATED BY DIGITAL AD PLACEMENT EXPOSURE

Bookings 15,237  
Room Nights 34,940  
Average Rate \$124.92  
Hotel Revenue \$4,364,622

ADARA tracks a 60-day booking window. The booking data above is current as of 7-18-22.

## TOP 10 BOOKING MARKETS

Atlanta • Charlotte • Indianapolis • Knoxville\* • Memphis  
Nashville • New York • San Francisco • Tri-Cities • Washington, D.C.

\*The Knoxville DMA (Designated Market Area) consists of 22 counties within East Tennessee and Southeast Kentucky

# VISITOR SERVICES

The Visitor Services Team serves as the face of Knoxville, assisting both visitors and locals at the downtown Visitors Center and the Sunsphere. The Visitors Center Gift Shop features a variety of products - 80% of which is locally made by more than 70 Makers. We are committed to providing the best experience for everyone we encounter.

**VISITORS CENTER GUESTS**  
**25,000+**

- |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Tennessee      | 6. Pennsylvania |
| 2. Florida        | 7. New York     |
| 3. North Carolina | 8. Texas        |
| 4. California     | 9. Michigan     |
| 5. Illinois       | 10. Ohio        |

**SUNSPHERE GUESTS**  
**23,000+**  
(FEBRUARY 22 - JUNE 30, 2022)

- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Tennessee      | 6. Virginia   |
| 2. Florida        | 7. Illinois   |
| 3. North Carolina | 8. California |
| 4. Ohio           | 9. Michigan   |
| 5. Georgia        | 10. Indiana   |

**VISITORS GUIDES**  
**169,500+**

- |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Tennessee      | 6. Ohio         |
| 2. Florida        | 7. Pennsylvania |
| 3. Illinois       | 8. New York     |
| 4. California     | 9. Texas        |
| 5. North Carolina | 10. Georgia     |

## RETAIL SALES

**\$197,000+**

A YOY increase of **181%** - includes Visitors Center Gift Shop, Sunsphere and Online Sales



## GOTTA KNOW KNOXVILLE

Gotta Know Knoxville is a two-hour walking tour of the downtown footprint hosted by Visit Knoxville. County-wide references help guests connect to the past, engage with the present, and learn of future plans that tell the story of Knoxville. This year, VK hosted **155** GKK participants including **18** companies.





# VK FILM OFFICE

The mission of the Visit Knoxville Film Office is to successfully promote Knoxville and Knox County as a premiere location for feature films. In one of its most successful years yet, the Film Office recruited a variety of great projects to our area from across the country.

The Film Office continued to work with local production companies like Jupiter Entertainment, Lusid Media, Discovery, Tombras, Streetcar Entertainment, and many more by assisting with locations, permits, and city services for a variety of television shows, commercials, and marketing videos that air on networks such as Oxygen, Discovery ID, Food Network, and TV One.

In July, the Film Office welcomed back Sony Affirm/Pinnacle Peak for the filming of the feature film, *Nothing is Impossible*, written and produced by Tommy Blaze and starring David A.R. White (*God's Not Dead*), Nadia Bjorlin (*Days of Our Lives*), Steven Bauer (*Scarface*), and Harry Lennix (*The Blacklist*). The Film Office recruited the production and assisted with locations, crew, lodging, permits and city services, and film incentives.

In September, the VK Film Office welcomed FilmPool out of Los Angeles for the Lifetime/TV One production of the feature film, *The Stranger Next Door*, produced by Brenton Earley and starring Tim Reid (*That 70's Show*), Vicky Jeudy (*Orange is the New Black*), and Skyh Alvester Black (*Sistas*). The film wrapped in October of 2021 and aired on TV One in July of 2022. The Film Office recruited the project and assisted with locations, crew, lodging, permits, and film incentives.



Also in September, the feature film, *Homestead*, began production in Knoxville. The film was produced by Conley Entertainment and starred Leven Rambin (*Hunger Games*), Jake McLaughlin (*Quantico*), Shane West (*A Walk to Remember*), and Sohvi Rodriquez (*Animal Kingdom*). The film wrapped in October and is currently in post-production. The Film Office recruited the project and assisted with locations, crew, lodging, permits, and film incentives.

In May, the Film Office welcomed Storyboard Emerging Artists and Warner Media to Knoxville for the filming of the feature film currently titled, *The Legend of Cooperville*, produced by Jason Potash and directed by brothers, Drew and Nate Garcia and starring Amelia Rose (*Tomorrow*) and Charity Rose (*The Bay*). The film wrapped in May and will be released by Warner Media around Halloween of 2023. The Film Office recruited the project out of Los Angeles and assisted with locations, crew, lodging, permits, and film incentives.

***"I've never been more welcomed and excited to be on location filming a movie, and we have been lucky to work with Bob Raines (Executive Director of the Tennessee Entertainment Commission), Curt Willis, and our cast and local crew to highlight some of Knoxville's most iconic treasures." – Producer of The Legend of Cooperville, Jason Potash***

**Photo:** Drew and Nate Garcia, Directors of *The Legend of Cooperville*



**Photo:** Bruce McCamish





The Official Destination Marketing Organization for  
**the City of Knoxville and Knox County, Tennessee**

**#KNOXROCKS**

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