



2023-2024 SALES & MARKETING

ROAD MAP



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

**It's no secret. 2022 was Knoxville's
best year for tourism... EVER!
And 2024 is shaping up to be even better!**

This is, of course, thanks to the incredible people and places that make Knoxville an increasingly popular destination for leisure travelers, meeting planners, sports events planners, journalists, influencers, film producers and more. It is our honor and true pleasure to work with an amazing group of stakeholders, partners and community members to share with them the story of this nature-loving-adventure-seeking-artsy-kinda-town.

This year's Sales and Marketing Roadmap is a glimpse into what the year ahead holds for all of us. Our team is extremely excited about the upcoming opportunities, and we believe you will be as well. Highlights for FYE24 include hosting the 2023 Governor's Conference on Hospitality and Tourism in September and the 2024 U.S. Olympic Diving Trials in June 2024. The Visit Knoxville Film Office will also produce its first ever FILM FEST KNOX in November 2023.

We look forward to continued enhancements at the Sunsphere as we strive to create the best possible experience for guests from around the country and around the world. This signature structure is a special stop on so many of our itineraries, not only for visitors but planners, journalists and producers as well. We will also continue management of the K-Town Connect Team as they work to enhance the experience for visitors and locals throughout downtown.

To our board of directors, committee members and stakeholders – THANK YOU for your unwavering support and enthusiasm for the work we are so proud to accomplish. I say that on behalf of everyone at Visit Knoxville. You have my word that Visit Knoxville will always strive to benefit our tourism partners and the community at large.

We could not be more excited about what lies ahead for all of us!

Sincerely,



Kim Bumpas
President
Visit Knoxville



Visit Knoxville is the official Convention and Visitors Bureau for Knoxville and Knox County.

OUR MISSION: to accelerate sustainable economic growth and development by increasing visitor and convention business to our community. It is our privilege to support community initiatives encompassing art and culture, history, entertainment, and outdoor adventure to promote Knoxville regionally, nationally, and internationally to leisure travelers, conference/event planners, sports events planners, and film/television production companies.

Visit Knoxville is grateful to be governed by a highly supportive and engaged board of community leaders. These individuals willingly commit their time and talents to help us promote Knoxville and generate tourism dollars that benefit our local economy.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The Visit Knoxville Sports Commission is proud to work with an advisory council that meets twice a year to assist the team with recruitment and input on sporting events.



ADVISORY COUNCIL

TARA BROOKS
University of Tennessee
Athletics Department

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Sports Management

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University of Tennessee
Sports Management, retired

JOE MACK
Knox County Parks and Recreation

BRANDON PARKS
Vol Network / IMG College

TERRY TURNER
All Occasions Party Rentals

CONVENTION SALES & SPORTS COMMISSION

The Visit Knoxville Sales Team and Sports Commission are tasked with recruiting convention business and sporting groups to Knoxville. The overarching goal is to create the highest possible economic impact for Knoxville's meeting, convention and sports facilities, including the Knoxville Convention Center, the Knoxville Civic Auditorium & Coliseum, Chilhowee Park & Exposition Center and World's Fair Exhibition Hall. To accomplish this, the team actively promotes Knoxville to associations, organizations, trade industries and sports event organizers as the ideal destination for meetings and events.



SALES GOALS FOR CONVENTION SALES & SPORTS COMMISSION

Total Booking Goal - 180 Groups* (100 by Sports Commission)

- Knoxville Convention Center - 40 bookings
- Chilhowee Park - 4 bookings
- Knoxville Civic Auditorium & Coliseum - 6 bookings
- Hotels & Other Venues - 130 bookings

Total Lead Goal - 500 Leads* (250 by Sports Commission)

*Over 50% of all bookings and leads will be new

ADDITIONAL GOALS

- Attend 25 trade shows
- Host 1 convention sales FAM tour
- Host a minimum of 24 site visits
- Host 4 meeting sales blitzes to target markets like Indianapolis, Nashville and Washington, D.C.
- Execute 4 sport scouting trips

CONVENTION SERVICES

The Convention/Sports Services Team annually supports and services 250+ conventions, meetings, sporting events and festivals as VK books 150+ events for future years. In FYE24, Convention Services will continue to support these events through the following:

- Pre-Planning Visits
- Pre-Promotional assistance including attendance building materials, promotional videos and destination photography and copy
- Partner and service provider referrals, such as transportation, equipment, catering, event security and photography
- Recommendations for off-site venues for receptions, dinners and visitor experiences
- Visitor Information including Experience Knoxville Savings Passes, Dining and Trolley maps, local area maps, entertainment and attractions information
- Assistance with local permitting
- Resources for guest gifts and give-away items
- Tour Development
- Welcome speakers and/or letters
- Team Knoxville Volunteers



The **Team Knoxville Volunteer** program is housed within Convention Services and will continue providing a no cost, value-added service to upcoming groups and events. Team Knox Volunteers serve at information tables, conference registrations, welcome bag preparation days, sporting events and other community event needs. Team Knox is equipped annually with Knoxville knowledge through opportunities such as Gotta Know Knoxville and monthly e-newsletters. Volunteers are recognized at the annual Visitors Guide launch party.

Convention Services will continue to be a member of Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA), an organization that advocates for the role and impact event service professionals have on the success of events and of destinations, hotels and convention centers. Through education and networking, members learn skills to be more effective service managers, gain a better understanding of the breadth of their role, learn about planners' expectations and build career-long connections. Additionally, the Team will participate locally in National Celebrate Services Week July 31 - August 4 to celebrate the role of the event service professional, to advocate for the event services profession, and to provide a networking opportunity with fellow services peers.

Face-to-face interaction with meeting planners and sporting event organizers through trade show participation is an essential component to VK’s annual sales strategy. These in-person trade show events allow VK to strengthen existing relationships, identify new opportunities, and gain future business.

CONVENTION SALES*

- July 2023
Meetings Today Live! South
- August 2023
Connect Marketplace & Mega Tradeshow
- September 2023
Professional Fraternities Association
- October 2023
IMEX America
- November 2023
HPN Global Conference
- November 2023
TN Society of Association Executives
- November 2023
Connect DC
- January 2024
ESPA
- January 2024
RCMA Emerge
- February 2024
Rendezvous South
- March 2024
DI Convention Sales and Services Summit
- March 2024
Conference Direct Annual Partner Meeting
- April 2024
Connect Spring Marketplace
- May 2024
HelmsBriscoe Annual Business Conference
- May 2024
MeetingMax Unconvention

May 2024
Fraternity Executives Association

June 2024
MPI World Education Congress

SPORTS COMMISSION*

- August 2023
Connect Sports Marketplace & Mega Tradeshow
- September 2023
S.P.O.R.T.S. The Relationship Conference
- October 2023
TEAMS Conference
- October 2023
Sports ETA 4S Summit
- October 2023
AAU National Leadership Conference
- March 2024
Sports ETA Chief Executive Summit
- April 2024
Sports ETA Women’s Summit
- April 2024
Connect Sports Spring Marketplace
- April 2024
Sports ETA Symposium

*Schedules subject to change

VK CONCIERGE

The VK Concierge program gives VK staff the opportunity to engage with our hotel partners, providing updated information through personal contact. Scheduled visits take place quarterly; ongoing contact is provided for additional needs and requests.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Visit Knoxville continues to share Knoxville’s story with a diverse and ever-increasing audience of leisure travelers. Profiles include families (young to multigenerational), music lovers, food and culture aficionados, and outdoor enthusiasts seeking all levels of adventure.

Research shows that consumers are looking for music that makes them feel deeper, heavier emotions. They’re seeking greater cultural exposure to ethnic foods as well as traditional southern classics. And, in an effort to relax and detach from the world, they’re looking inward more than ever before.



The overarching marketing goal is to communicate the story of this nature-loving-adventure-seeking-artsy-kinda-town to these audiences through placement and partnerships that drive traffic to [visitknoxville.com](https://www.visitknoxville.com) and generate extended hotel stays.

Digital Ad Placement

In addition to in-state markets including Chattanooga, Memphis, Nashville and Tri-Cities, VK will continue to target the following drive markets:

- Atlanta, GA
 - Birmingham, AL
 - Charlotte, NC
 - Cincinnati, OH
- Greensboro, NC
 - Greenville, SC
 - Indianapolis, IN
 - Lexington, KY
- Louisville, KY
 - Raleigh, NC
 - Washington, D.C.
 - Illinois (statewide)

Additionally, Knoxville is included in Tennessee Department of Tourist Development marketing in Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Jackson, Little Rock, New Orleans, Orlando, St. Louis and Tampa; statewide promotion in Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio and Alabama. Test markets include Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Charleston, Denver, Evansville, Jacksonville and Minneapolis. International branding efforts include Toronto, Canada and additional markets via Brand USA.

Placement includes paid social, paid search, connected TV and programmatic video and display ads. ADARA and Arrivalist provide us with travel data to determine the effectiveness of an advertising campaign to make in-the-moment targeting adjustments to both spend and messaging.

In regards to tracking and reporting: cookie due dates extended to 2024, but data strategy preparations are being prioritized. VK is adjusting our targeting strategies by expanding into contextual placements and tapping into first party data where applicable.

Additional Marketing Tools

Visit Knoxville also manages all of VK’s social media platforms and writes and oversees the VK Blog. VK also produces the Official Knoxville Visitors Guide (225,000 printed copies plus digital), the University of Tennessee Visitor Guide, and the VK Network – a loop of partner videos running in 20+ high-traffic areas throughout Knox County.

BARXVILLE, TN

A-nature-loving-adventure-seeking-belly-scratching-kinda-town

In Spring FYE23, Visit Knoxville launched a sub-campaign building off our “artsy-kind-of-town” branding. The goal: drive awareness of Knoxville as a top dog-friendly destination for pet parents and their furbabies.

Elements of this campaign, including the :30 video, drive to visitbarxville.com on the VK website, have proven to be effective in terms of hotel bookings. The ads have paved the way for the newest asset to be officially revealed in FYE24: **Visit Barxville, A Dogumentary**.



Designed to bring awareness to Knoxville as a dog-friendly travel destination, the film tells the story of a dog on his first visit to Knoxville. It highlights numerous places and experiences – many of which can only be found in Knoxville. The film will be screened in mid-June as part of a Tennessee Department of Tourist Development partnership in Toronto.

Visit Knoxville has partnered with a number of collaborators including Director Ben Moon, an adventure, lifestyle, and portrait photographer whose vibrant images have appeared in Patagonia catalogues for the past 18 years. In recent years, he has shifted his focus to filmmaking. In 2015, he founded his production company, Moonhouse, where he brings cinematically beautiful stories to life on-screen. His short film **Denali** blew up online in 2015 – he has since become known as “the dog guy.”

This unique travel documentary is being crafted for humans and dogs to enjoy together. Special color treatment appropriate to and appealing to the canine eye and filming from a dog’s point of view are sure to engage and entertain – drawing even more visitors to Knoxville.



VISIT KNOXVILLE FILM OFFICE

The Visit Knoxville Film Office actively promotes Knoxville and Knox County as a premiere filming location. With a focus on positive exposure and healthy economic impact, the Film Office continually highlights our strong, competitive film incentives and provide top-notch assistance with locations, crews, talent, lodging, permits and city services.



The Film Office’s continued success in recruiting great film projects to Knoxville/Knox County has allowed us to currently enjoy our place on Moviemaker Magazine’s, “Best Places To Live & Work as a Filmmaker” for the third time in calendar year 2023.



Hosted by Visit Knoxville and the Visit Knoxville Film Office in partnership with Regal and The Public Cinema, **FILM FEST KNOX**, will be held November 10-12, 2023 at the Regal Riviera in downtown Knoxville.

A major component of the festival is the Feature Competition. Out of the many films screened during the festival, six of the feature films will be curated to compete against each other for the title of best feature. **FILM FEST KNOX** will also provide an exclusive opportunity for the winning filmmaker, compliments of Regal. The winner of the Feature Competition will receive an Oscar qualifying theatrical release at a Regal theatre to be determined.

FILM FEST KNOX will also be launching the “Elev8or Pitch” as part of the festival’s events. A jury of film industry professionals will evaluate team submissions of an eight minute standalone short. This short will represent a proof-of-concept for the full-length production. The top teams will have their films screened in a block during the festival. Awards for various categories will be presented on the final night of the festival.

FILM FEST KNOX’s Feature Competition and the Elev8or Pitch have been designed to support the festival’s guiding artistic mission, which is to advocate for the production and exhibition of ambitious regional American filmmaking. **FILM FEST KNOX** will be a gathering spot for directors and producers who tell stories that can’t be told in Los Angeles and New York City; films that have a particular sense of place and a localized voice. **FILM FEST KNOX** will be a celebration of contemporary regional cinema and a workshop for discovering new ways to promote and distribute it. In addition to its focus on regional work, **FILM FEST KNOX** will showcase critically acclaimed new films and film restorations from around the world. The program will range from family-friendly movies to prestige dramas, experimental work and all points in between.

For updates, visit filmfestknox.com

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS & GOALS FOR FYE24

- A feature film from producer/director Brad Hodson titled **Darling** starring Michael Rooker (**The Walking Dead, Guardians of the Galaxy**) filming in July/August
- A feature film from producer Austin Sepulveda titled **Senseless** filming in September
- A feature film from producer Brian Conley titled **Traction** filming in October
- Reach a goal of \$3 million in film production

VISITOR SERVICES

Visitor Services prioritizes guest engagement and curating specialized experiences for visitors in a variety of ways. Many visitors’ first stop is the [Knoxville Visitors Center](#), where they are equipped with resources, immersed in the local Maker community, and even catch the [WDVX Blue Plate Special](#) (a free live radio show). Our knowledgeable staff is always ready to assist with directions, recommendations and other needs. Additional areas and objectives focused on servicing our visitors at the highest level include:

Tours

[Gotta Know Knoxville](#) is a two-hour guided walking tour of Downtown Knoxville, offered twice a month (April-October). This program is free to all local hospitality personnel (hotels, restaurants, attractions, etc.) and \$20 per person for the public.

The Visitors Center is stocked with over 100 different brochures/collateral. One of the newer offerings is the [Downtown Knoxville Audio Walking Tour](#), available for purchase through the Voicemap App for \$5.99. The app uses GPS location to play the correct audio at the right time.

[Step On Tours](#) are a way for the Visitor Services Team to service motorcoaches and field trips. A guide will “step on” to privately coordinated transportation and guide a one-hour tour throughout Downtown Knoxville and The University of Tennessee (fee is \$150).

[Private Sunsphere Tours](#) Field Trips to the Observation Deck have been popular offerings since reopening in FYE22.

In FYE24, the Visitor Services Team will continue to explore new ways to bring visitors together to explore Knoxville.

Visit Knoxville Gift Shops

The Visitors Center and Sunsphere Gift Shops, open 361 days per year, are constantly inspired by the local community and now include over 80 local Makers between both locations. This coming year, we will continue to grow these relationships and introduce new products/partnerships. All items, excluding some Sunsphere exclusives, are available on our online store platform and at festivals and events throughout Knoxville. The Visitors Center also participates in First Friday, in partnership with WDVX, to offer free live music ([Taps N Tunes](#)).



In FYE24, the [online e-commerce platform](#) will be updated and reorganized to present a more cohesive look.

Visitor Information Distribution Centers

Throughout the city and county, we supply 15 Visitor Information Centers with Visitors Guides, maps and attraction brochures. These are stocked monthly to ensure up to date information and seasonal offerings.

In FYE24, the Visitors Center will continue to provide the following resources alongside recruiting new material:

- [Community Corner e-newsletter](#)
- [Online Events Calendar](#)
- [Driving and walking tour information](#)
- [Local](#) and [regional](#) maps
- Brochures and collateral on local and regional areas and attractions

THE SUNSPHERE

The [Sunsphere Observation Deck](#) continues to serve Knoxville as a well sought-after attraction. All ticket sales benefit the [Sunsphere Fund](#) created to enhance the structure and overall experience for years to come. As the fund grows, new developments are on the horizon. Many of these are beginning to take shape.

Sunsphere Visitors Center

In FYE24, Visit Knoxville in collaboration with the East Tennessee Community Design Center, The Christman Company and McCarty Holesaple McCarty will create a Visitors Center on the 3rd level of the Sunsphere tower. At the moment, this level is exposed to the elements, but with proposed architectural plans, a portion will be enclosed to provide a designated visiting space. This build-out will serve as the official entrance to the Sunsphere, where visitors can purchase tickets in person, shop Sunsphere retail and access brochures/collateral.

With this expansion on the 3rd level, plans to remodel the 4th floor Observation Deck to develop a more interactive experience are underway. The Observation Deck will continue to pay homage to the 1982 World’s Fair while bringing the experience into the future. More memorabilia, information, interactive elements and photo opportunities are being planned for FYE24.

Color Change

The theme of the 1982 World’s Fair was “Energy Turns the World.” The Sunsphere was modeled after the epitome of energy, the sun. Originally, the base was painted blue to symbolize the sky, however, the base’s current color is green.

In FYE24 Visit Knoxville intends to paint the base back to the original blue and restore its full glory.

Engagement

Social Media presence for the Sunsphere was launched on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) in FYE23. With almost 1,000 followers, special segments like Tyree Trivia, Reels, and even filming contracts allow for more exposure for the Sunsphere. In FYE24, the Visitor Services Team plans to engage in more digital partnerships/ collaborations with local businesses.

The Visitor Services Team continues to focus on guest engagement by introducing special activities and experiences for our visitors. In FYE24, the following will be introduced:

- Sunsets at the Sunsphere
- I SPY on the Observation Deck
- Special Guests
- First Friday Events





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

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