



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

EUGENE
CASCADES
AND COAST

TRAVEL LANE COUNTY



Kari Westlund
President & CEO



Dana Turell
Chair, Board of Directors

Fiscal year 2024 built upon FY23 with direct visitor spending again surpassing the \$1 billion mark. TrackTown rose to the occasion by hosting 8,000 athletes, parents, coaches, officials and volunteers over 7 days at the USATF National Junior Olympics Track & Field meet in July, the Wanda Diamond League final at the Prefontaine Classic in September and a full season of track and field and running events in the spring and early summer of 2024 that included the U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Track & Field. Local businesses rolled out the red carpet to welcome athletes, coaches, officials and fans to show that We are TrackTown USA.

Youth and collegiate sporting events, arts and cultural events, fairs and festivals, amazing food and beverage offerings and our uncrowded outdoor spaces greeted thousands of visitors who contributed to nearly 3.4 million overnight stays in the Eugene, Cascades & Coast region during 2023. The experiences provided by local businesses created memories that will last a lifetime.

Convention and meetings businesses continued to grow back from the impact of the pandemic. This increase in activity was largely shouldered by the Eugene Conference Center as we await the reopening of Valley River Inn's conference space. Lodging demand showed a nine-percentage point improvement in room demand in the second half of the fiscal year and double-digit increases in average daily rates and revenue per available room which illustrates how strong the April - June quarter was for the region.

-Kari Westlund, President & CEO

What a year! As we honor the 28-year legacy of Kari Westlund as President & CEO, we are thrilled to welcome Samara Phelps into this role. I can't wait for you to meet her! We also launched the Travel Lane County Charitable Fund and are already supporting regional projects. Going forward, we are committed to boosting winter visitor demand and are excited to welcome Big Ten visitors to experience all that Eugene, Cascades & Coast has to offer. Now is a great time to live, work and play in our great region!

-Dana Turell, Board Chair

PROMISE

The Eugene, Cascades & Coast region has Oregon's greatest variety of adventures in easy to reach, uncrowded places.

MISSION

Grow overnight visitors for a vibrant, year-round and county-wide economy.

WHY

We believe our work inspires people to experience and appreciate Lane County, creating opportunities, a sense of place and stronger communities.

VISION

Travel Lane County is a recognized leader in achieving year-round economic growth throughout the Eugene, Cascades & Coast region through innovative destination marketing, product development and exceptional visitor experiences.





INDUSTRY INDICATORS

The Oregon Department of Revenue provides countywide lodging tax summary data, enabling historical trends tracking and more confident future budget planning. Transient lodging tax receipts in the first quarter of FY24 showed an increase of 15% over the prior year. This strong first quarter performance was fueled by the USATF National Junior Olympics Track & Field meet in July and the Prefontaine Classic and UO Football games in September. County and city governments saw increases in lodging tax receipts. This continued growth in lodging tax allows Travel Lane County to maintain staffing and investment in core marketing and development programs.

The commercial lodging sector benefitted from strong leisure travel, market compression caused by participation and attendance in area sporting events and growing conventions and meetings business. Hotel demand lagged behind the Pacific Northwest and the nation during the first half of the fiscal year but rebounded during the January - June period and generally kept pace with these other regions. Average daily rates and revenue per available room placed Lane County ahead of the Pacific Northwest and the United States by a wide margin in the second half of the fiscal year.

Short-term rentals saw a huge boost in spring and early summer as the track and field and running events in the region ramped up. FY24 generated \$69 million in revenue from short-term rentals and a massive \$11 million came in June 2024. *University of Oregon graduation, the Olympic Team Trials and the Collegiate Track & Field Cross Country Hall of Fame Induction* all contributed to making June the most robust month of the year. Occupancy for the year was 53% and ranged from a winter low of 36% to a high of 78% in June.

Allianz Partners USA's 16th Annual Vacation Confidence Index found that 68% of Americans surveyed are confident they will take a vacation before the end of the year, the highest percentage since the company began collecting data in 2009. This strong travel sentiment has us excited for a robust FY25.

Hotel

Occupancy	62% (-1%)
Average Daily Rate	\$157 (+10%)
Revenue	\$174.3 Million (+4%)

Source: STR, Inc. 2023-24

Short Term Rental

Occupancy	53% (-4%)
Average Daily Rate	\$212 (-16%)
Revenue	\$69 Million (-8%)

Source: AirDNA 2023-24

*Year-over-year comparisons were heavily influenced by the World Athletic Championships in FY23



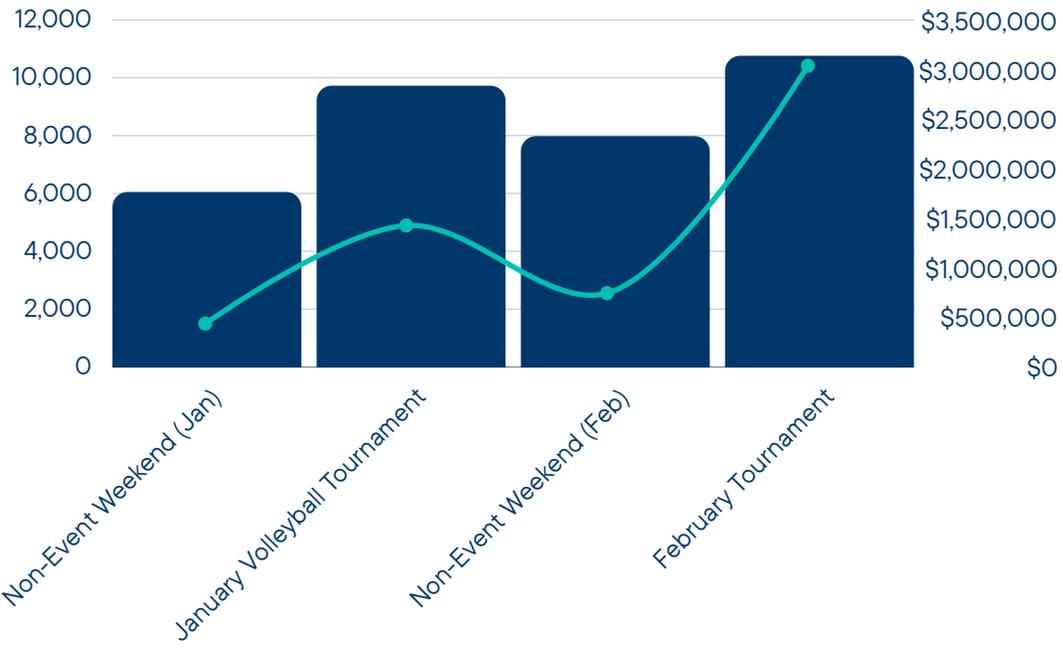


INDUSTRY INDICATORS

Lane County Room Tax Collections by Fiscal



Hotel Room Demand Hotel Revenue



Transient lodging tax receipts increased to over \$23 million in FY23 and are estimated to top \$30 million in FY24. Since 2000, lodging tax receipts have consistently grown every year other than during two recessions and the COVID-19 pandemic. Post-pandemic, hotels sought to recover revenues, rebuild demand and rehire employees at higher wage rates. Fortunately, the travel industry is resilient and Americans love to travel. Leisure travel picked up and the sports sector continued to power through. Slower to return to pre-pandemic highs are conventions and performing arts. Both sectors showed strong signs of recovery in FY24.

Increasing winter visitor demand continued to be a focus in FY24. Marketing of the performing arts was featured prominently in all channels, and conventions and sports teams worked hard to rebook key events. The effort to secure a location and develop an indoor multiuse sports facility remained a top priority and much was learned through a tour and roundtable discussion of the indoor and outdoor sports complexes in Medford, Oregon. This trip was attended by local elected officials, city and county staff, Willamalane staff, Eugene Chamber staff, Travel Lane County staff and board members, Bethel School District and neighborhood representatives. Travel Lane County looks forward to continuing to work with the community to fix the structural imbalance we have in winter and summer visitor demand.



LEISURE VISITORS

The tourism team uses a combination of paid, earned and owned media strategies to promote the Eugene, Cascades & Coast region. Paid advertising placements were optimized to send traffic to both the Explore landing page on our website, specific itineraries and stories. Additional placements targeting to local residents focused on driving interest in events by highlighting the Events This Week calendar and encouraging sign-ups for a weekly event email. Our successful short-form video campaign was expanded from high-level inspiration to include ads resulting in visits to our website.

Visitor spending and movement data from Zartico allows us to provide valuable insights to Chambers of Commerce partners in Cottage Grove, Florence and Springfield. Zartico's web contribution data helps us identify which pages on our website deliver the highest view-to-visit rates, revealing what visitors engage with before they visit our destination. Our weekly and main event calendar pages led the list of pages most visited by those who eventually traveled to the destination. Our Explore page is fourth overall, with itineraries like *Guide to Florence's Best Beaches*, *Top Things to See in TrackTown* and *Best Brunches & Breakfasts in Eugene* rounding out our top 10 most visited web pages that result in in-market visitation.

Paid placements generated over 66.8 million impressions and 314,000 clicks to our website from potential visitors in key target markets. Our consumer email lists grew to nearly 10,000 contacts. Estimated earned media impressions topped 1.7 billion in FY24, largely due to key syndicated placements from major connected media outlets such as Yahoo and MSN.

In collaboration with Travel Oregon and the Willamette Valley Visitors Association (WVVA), we helped host 16 familiarization tours (FAMs) with media and travel trade. Additional media FAMs were arranged for influential publications such as *AAA Magazine*, *Travel + Leisure*, *NW Travel & Life*, *Fox Weather* and *Vancouver Sun* (BC).

66.8 MILLION

impressions to potential visitors
in target key markets

314,000 CLICKS

to our key visitor content

1.7 BILLION

estimated earned media impressions

"If you love nature and a small town feel, Cottage Grove is a great place to explore and escape the bumper-to-bumper traffic of big city life."
-James Sinks, *1859 Magazine*

"One thing you quickly notice about Florence is the laid-back atmosphere and quietness compared to the other towns in the state. The unique blend of natural beauty, recreational opportunities and history make it a worthwhile visit."
-Neha Bhatiya, *The Travel*

GUIDE
From California to British Columbia: 10 best places for an idyllic West Coast getaway

Andrew Collins
Jan 10, 2024 • 28 min read



BUSINESS INSIDER
Slip on some wine at sustainable vineyards in Oregon's Willamette Valley.



Eugene, Oregon | Sean Fleming/PhotoStock

SHARE



CONVENTIONS & GROUPS

The Conventions team attended several regional and national tradeshows this year, including *HelmsBriscoe Annual Business Conference*, *Connect Spring Marketplace*, *ConferenceDirect*, *MPI Cascadia*, *Connect Association*, *Connect Faith* and *Smart Meetings*. During these events, we connected with hundreds of planners from across the country.

Travel Lane County strives to grow our reputation by focusing on accessibility, sustainability and inclusion. The Conventions team was thrilled to secure the *Tourism Cares Meaningful Travel Summit*, which emphasizes sustainability, for FY25. As part of the conference, Tourism Cares will provide grants to local organizations. An additional accessibility win includes *Mobility International USA*, a partner whom Travel Lane County has successfully worked with and supported for decades, being honored with the 2024 Eugene, Cascades & Coast Convention Leadership Award for their work bringing in international visitors to their conferences and workshops.

As part of the 2023-2024 Wine Country License Plate Grant, a photoshoot at King Estate Winery produced new group photo assets and pull-up banners to promote inclusive wine country experiences to convention planners.

We were honored to be selected to host the Destinations Marketing Association West – now called One West – *Education Summit* for September 2024.

Conference group sizes are increasing though planners still have extremely short booking windows. Leads from our independent/third-party planners remain strong as we see more organizations eliminate their internal event professional positions and outsource event planning.

32 CONFIRMED

events resulting in 9,820 room nights

\$5.4 MILLION

total estimated economic impact (EEI)

87

new groups worked with

30%

email newsletter open rate





SPORTS COMMISSION

Following the Track & Field Roundtable hosted in November, the Welcome to TrackTown stakeholder group was established to re-engage the community with our track and field legacy. Track & field events and the *Eugene Marathon* created an estimated economic impact of approximately \$50 million in FY24, some of which were confirmed or booked in previous years.

As a result of this effort, we achieved several key outcomes:

- **Unified Branding:** We developed a cohesive brand for street pole banners representing six major organizations and events hosted in our community this year.
- **Community Engagement:** Local businesses decorated their storefronts and staff wore Welcome to TrackTown shirts.
- **Media Outreach:** A focused media campaign highlighted our track & field legacy and informed the public about the fantastic events we hosted this summer.
- **Enhanced Participation:** Track & field events, including the *Collegiate Hall of Fame Ceremony* held at the Hult Center in June, saw increased attendance.

The Sports Commission was the first sustainability sponsor of the *Sports ETA Symposium* in Portland. Sports ETA (Sports Events and Tourism Association) is the national association for sports tourism. As a part of the program, we hosted the *ReRun 5k – Reduce, Reuse and Recycle* with partners from Willamalane Parks and Recreation District.

The region hosted several key events in our strategic sports segments, including *US Rowing Northwest Regional Masters Championships* and *Oregon Bicycle Racing Associations Road Championships*. Our team is busy preparing for the *USA BMX Lumberjack Nationals* in August.

As a leader in sports tourism, we hosted DMOs and Sports Commissions across Oregon for a half-day summit. John David, CEO of Sports ETA, presented on the State of National Sports Tourism. We had representation from all levels of tourism throughout Oregon in attendance, including at the state, regional, county and city levels.

21 CONFIRMED

events resulting in 59,548 room nights

\$36.6 MILLION

total estimated economic impact (EEI)

41%

open rate for Sports Commission e-news





STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

The Travel Lane County membership model was reconfigured in the fall of 2023 to provide a free membership option, allowing us to better highlight the region's many great tourism assets. Hospitality businesses are eligible for free associate membership and can easily partner with us through an updated online application. Members deliver great experiences, and our new membership model positions these businesses in our content so that visitors see the unforgettable opportunities that await them.

The 2024 Visitor Industry Celebration & Summit hosted nearly 300 attendees to honor award recipients and hear Travel Lane County's President & CEO Kari Westlund give her final State of the Industry address.

Travel Lane County's hearing loop program expanded to include attractions and performing arts venues during the second half of the fiscal year. This included a partnership with the Wildish Theater, Springfield Renaissance Development Corporation and the City of Springfield. The first year of the program provided hearing loop technology to 40 locations and earned Travel Lane County the Get in the Hearing Loop Award from the Hearing Loss Association of America.

Accessibility projects included supporting the placement of two all-terrain outdoor mobility chairs through David's Chair. The first was at Heceta Beach in Florence and the second was in partnership with Mt. Pisgah, McKenzie River Trust and Lane County Parks. In the works are mobility mats which will allow access to the surf and will be placed in Florence by Lane County Parks.





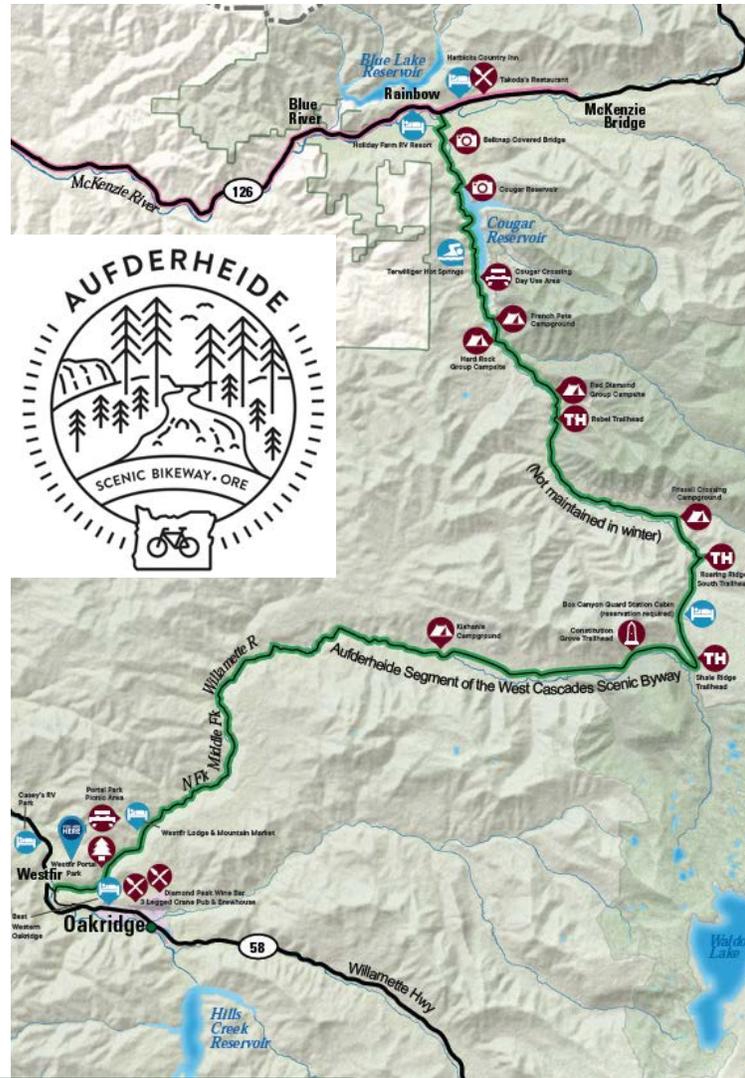
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Two long-standing cycling projects reached implementation milestones this year. The designation of the Aufderheide Drive as an Oregon Scenic Bikeway earned approval from Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) on the initial application. Public meetings in Westfir, Oakridge, and McKenzie River involved these communities in the program and the designation process. A strong proponent group provided letters of support and included a Letter of Concurrence from the Willamette National Forest.

Connect Lane, a wayfinding project that will connect communities throughout Lane County, was reenergized by Travel Lane County and remaining funds were transferred from Lane Council of Government (LCOG) to support the signing of the next two segments. With McKenzie to Oakridge and Oakridge to Cottage Grove already signed, the focus moves to implementing signs from Cottage Grove to Crewell and Creswell to Eugene. Staff mapped over 50 sign locations along these routes and are working with Lane County and other jurisdictions to have signs installed in FY25 followed by a promotional plan.

Work on assessing trail accessibility continued through a financial contribution to our partners at the Willamette Valley Visitors Association (WVVA), who were then able to assess King's Castle mountain biking trail near Rainbow. Reducing barriers for all visitors and residents who recreate outdoors by providing information on King Castle's features, amenities, conditions and sensory experiences will allow trail users to fully plan their ride. This partnership with WVVA also includes the creation of videos of mountain bikers using adaptive equipment for use in marketing channels.

In Oakridge, Travel Lane County partnered with Lane County to provide seed funds to support a local proponent group who envision an asphalt pump track development in the Oakridge Industrial Park, with the City of Oakridge providing the funds needed to complete a feasibility study. The feasibility study will be finalized in early FY25, and provided the results are positive, the proponent group will continue fundraising efforts.





INTEGRATED MARKETING

Our redesigned website ended the year positively with many of our key performance indicators showing improvement year-over-year:

- 50,995 booking searches, an increase of 224%
- 932,000 engaged sessions, an increase of 15%

Most importantly, all indicators were trending upward by the end of the fiscal year, suggesting that the new website will continue to see strong performance going into FY25.

We published or republished 624 pages and blogs this year, underscoring our commitment to being the trusted resource for information about our destination. Our daily publishing schedule ensures refreshed website content that communicates timely, relevant and accurate information about our destination, to continue to position ourselves as an authority on our destination.

Our short-form video project wrapped in the spring and allowed us to show a variety of communities, activities and seasons throughout the county. The videos had a total reach of 6.4 million and were saved and shared 20,000 times. The footage captured from these shoots will enable us to create more innovative content and keep our destination top-of-mind with potential travelers and planners.

3.6 MILLION

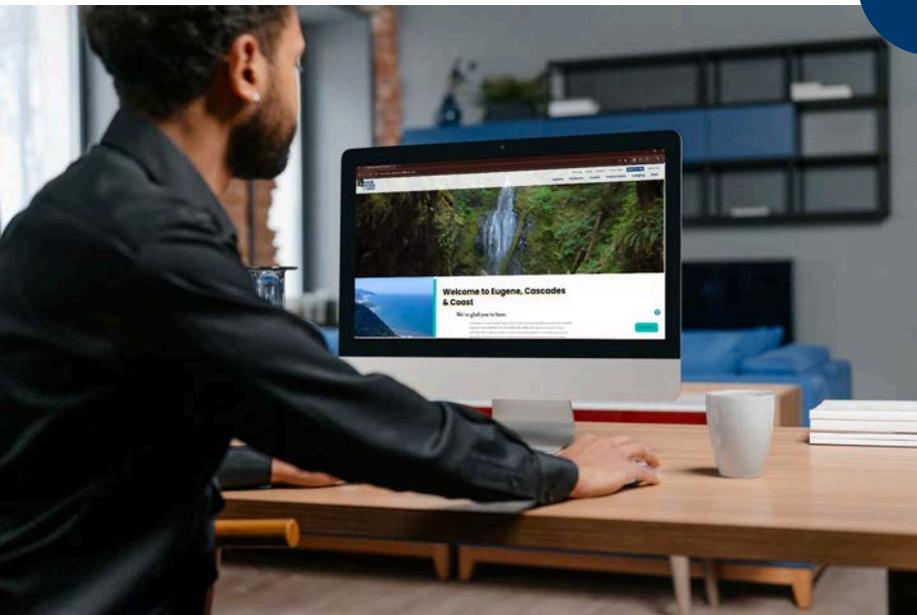
views of our short-form videos

1.1 MILLION

website users and 2.7 million pageviews

588

new photo & video assets added to media library





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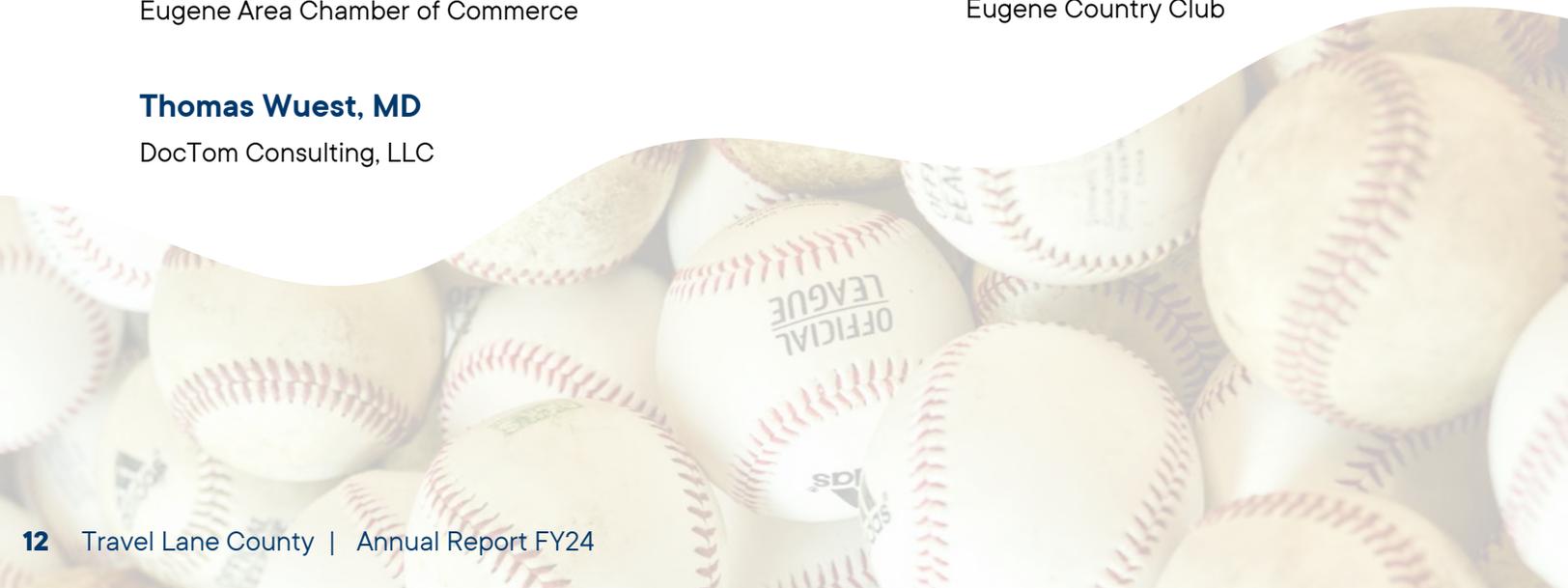
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City of Eugene

Rich Spurlin

Eugene Country Club





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Visitor Services Specialist



EUGENE CASCADES **AND** COAST

