













1. TRAVEL CHANNEL FILMING IN LAKE PARK 2. GMHO 2017 3. SUMMER FESTIVAL TICKET GIVEAWAY AT THE PUBLIC MARKET 4. NEWAUKEE NIGHT MARKET BOOTH 5. STAFF PICNIC 2017 6. CEO PAUL UPCHURCH WITH BILL DAVIDSON PRESENTING A HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTORCYCLE AT PCMA 2017

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tourism spending across the Milwaukee area grew again in 2017. Milwaukee County grew by 3.1 percent, to \$2 billion. This is the sixth consecutive year with tourism spending growth of well over 3 percent annually. The increase in spending in 2017 contributed to 32,150 full-time jobs in the tourism industry, a growth of 1 percent, with total labor income up 1.5 percent. In the Greater Milwaukee area, tourism supported nearly 51,200 full time jobs and had a total economic impact of \$3.5 billion.

With consumer and business confidence continuing to be strong, we expect 2018 to be another good year for tourism spending. Visitors are looking for unique travel experiences worthy of sharing. From endless festivals, world-class arts and culture, a thriving music scene, unique, one of a kind attractions, and diverse food and beverage venues, Milwaukee is well positioned as a top travel destination.

The world is paying attention and in 2017 Milwaukee made several media lists and rankings. Milwaukee was #2 on Conde Nast's list of cities to watch. On Expedia, Milwaukee made the list of Best US Destinations for Every Travel Style. Better Homes and Gardens named Milwaukee a top foodie city. Thrillist Travel listed Milwaukee as an Underappreciated American city you should totally move to. The word about Milwaukee is getting out and it's inspiring visits.

In the Greater Milwaukee area, our hotel partners have seen growth in demand and revenue since 2010. This trend is projected to continue in 2018 with continued growth in daily average rate and supply. In 2017, Milwaukee County hotels experienced a revenue surge of 7.3 percent and Milwaukee Downtown, 7.6 percent. In 2017, the average daily rate in Milwaukee County rose by 4.4 percent and supply by 3.9 percent. In Milwaukee Downtown, the average daily rate grew by 2.7 percent and supply by 5.1 percent.

In 2018, we expect to see continued growth in rate and a modest growth in supply. With new hotel projects underway or being

contemplated, it's important we continue to press for new demand generators like an expanded convention center.

The Wisconsin Center had a profitable year in 2017 lead by a significant growth in tax revenues. 2018 is budgeted to be an even stronger year in both operating and non-operating revenues.

In 2017, another convention center expansion study was done that concluded that **Milwaukee needed to expand its convention center to remain competitive with other Midwestern cities.** The report recommended a larger expansion than what was recommended in the previous study and concluded that such an expansion would deliver the ROI needed to support the project. The study also recommended the addition of a major convention hotel. The study concluded that both a convention center expansion and new convention hotel were needed to occur to maximize the investment. In 2018 we'll work with the community and the state to determine how this expansion could be funded.



PAUL UPCHURCH
President & CEO
VISIT Milwaukee



**OMAR SHAIKH**Chair, Board of Directors
VISIT Milwaukee

# CONVENTION SALES

This was a banner year for the convention sales team, booking one of the **highest total number of definite room nights on record**. They also had record-breaking production for Diversity & Inclusion markets, including the Church of God in Christ Women's International Convention (2018) and National Hispanic Corporate Council Annual Summit (2018). Other big wins include National Tactical Officers Conference (2019), American Association of Bovine Practitioners (2023), State Policy Network (2021), North American Fencing Cup Tournament (2019), and the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament D1 First & Second Round in the new Wisconsin Entertainment & Sports Center (2022).

Among the big 2017 conventions brought in by VISIT Milwaukee were the annual Northwestern Mutual Annual Meeting, NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament D1 First & Second Rounds, USA Gymnastics, American Foundry Association, National Congress of American Indians, Alpha Kappa Alpha, National Science Teachers Association, and the U.S. Open, which showcased Milwaukee and Southeastern Wisconsin to an international audience and had an economic impact of over \$125 million in the area.

In January, a VISIT Milwaukee delegation, led by CEO Paul Upchurch, traveled to Indianapolis to bid for the **2022 American Legion National Convention (9,000 attendees)**. The presentation included videos from Governor Walker and support from Bill Davidson. Thanks to the team's efforts, VISIT Milwaukee won that business and will welcome 9,000 attendees to the Wisconsin Center as part of the convention with an estimated economic impact of over \$15 million.



## **ROOM NIGHTS**

236,475

**DEFINITE ROOM NIGHTS** 

761,480

**TENTATIVE ROOM NIGHTS** 



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HOTEL ROOMS IN 2017

### \$192,292,564

00000

\$173,545,468 BOOKED

446

MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS BOOKED



# 545,000

VISITORS BROUGHT TO MILWAUKEE BY THE SALES TEAM

64 MEETING PLANNER SITE VISITS





### 50 CONFERENCES ATTENDED

PCMA, RCMA, CESSE, ASAE, IMEX, NASC, ABA, AMC INSTITUTE, MPI, NTA, DI, HB, CD, WSAE, USSC, AF AND MORE!



**LARGEST EVENT BOOKED IN 2017:** 

## **AMERICAN LEGION 2022**

**18,000 ROOM NIGHTS** 







# CONVENTION SERVICES

The Services team was busy welcoming over **545,000 attendees at conventions, meetings, and sporting events this year**, as well as pre-promoting major 2018 events.

The team welcomed Alpha Kappa Alpha 2017 Central Regional Conference to the Wisconsin Center in April with 2,500 attendees. In cooperation with the Wisconsin Center and the City, VISIT Milwaukee was able to turn the lights in the city green and pink to welcome them, along with special decals, ribbons, banners, and signage. The economic impact of this group was over \$2.3 million.

In late June, the services team rolled out the red carpet for **1,800 of the country's best gymnasts at the USA Gymnastics Championship**. This was a multi-year planning event led by VISIT Milwaukee to coordinate city, county and private sector businesses. Efforts included a Milwaukee street party, free sunglasses, and chalk drawings made the athletes feel welcome as they competed for berths on the US National Teams. The estimated economic impact was \$4.2 million.

Two years of relationship building and hard work paid off as the US Golf Association hosted its most prestigious tournament, the U.S. Open, for the first time ever in Wisconsin at Erin Hills. VISIT Milwaukee was involved in all planning and execution elements of the tour, including securing hotels, navigating transportation issues, coordinating meeting planner and client visits, and communicating with area partners to welcome golfers and extend business hours based on the needs of this event. The entire VISIT Milwaukee team took advantage of this unique opportunity, hosting VIPs, travel writers, and 12 national high-level meeting planners on a familiarization tour of the Milwaukee during the week-long event. The estimated economic impact for Southeastern Wisconsin was **over \$125 million** (\$65 million in Milwaukee alone).



170
VOLUNTEERS



447
EVENTS



2,406 HOURS

**VOLUNTEERED** 

**BIGGEST CONSUMER SHOW** 

# 2017 U.S. OPEN AT ERIN HILLS

**120,000** ATTENDEES





4.88 / 5 STARS

**SERVICES STAFF RATING BY CLIENTS** 



# **MARKETING**

In 2017, marketing completely revamped VISIT Milwaukee's advertising campaigns, aligning how Milwaukee is presented to leisure travelers, meeting planners, and group tour operators. The copy and photos were uniform across all three audiences and positioned beer, motorcycle, festivals, urban adventure, and locally-owned businesses as destination strengths. As a result, the meetings & convention campaign drove six times the traffic to VISIT Milwaukee's meeting web pages over the previous year, up 233 percent over goal. The leisure campaign's vacation itineraries resulted in 19,128 website referrals to partners, up 41 percent over last year, and campaign traffic was up three times over the previous year.

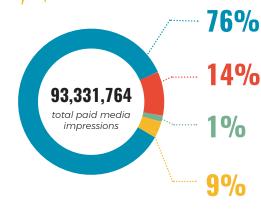
Beginning in March of 2017, VISIT Milwaukee **started the process to redesign, reimagine, and rebuild its website** to create an entirely new digital experience for Milwaukee. Using research and feedback from a wide range of users, clients, and community stakeholders, the team partnered with local agency Hanson Dodge to complete a full audit of all web content (photos, videos, articles, third-party plug ins, and more). As a result of thousands of hours of staff time, over 1,500 new pages of content were created, with an expanded photo and video library, new sections for meeting planners, sports event organizers, and leisure travelers, and new partner benefits to better drive business traffic and sales. The fully-responsive, industry-leading website launched in Q1 2018.

Visitors at General Mitchell International Airport are now greeted with refreshed welcome messages on remnant static space and digital LCD screens, thanks to a partnership with Clear Channel. This includes a huge hanging billboard in the main central terminal and digital screens being used to welcome incoming convention groups.

On the leisure side, VISIT Milwaukee's ads in Chicago garnered earned media attention as well, with Chicago Magazine doing an article about luring Chicagoans up to Milwaukee.

Finally, for the first time in VISIT Milwaukee's history, **the Official Visitors Guide was fully designed and produced in-house**. The marketing team was able to increased revenue by 32 percent over previous year while also reducing production cost. The visitors guide has increased to 100 pages and includes copy plugs of over 378 partners, a 63 percent year-over-year increase. The 2018 visitors guide has been recognized by industry leaders such as *Skift* and *Crowdriff* as an exemplary piece that sets a new standard.

1,269,615 VISITS TO VISITS TO VISITS TO VISITMILWAUKEE.ORG



LEISURE CAMPAIGN

848, 290 Web Visits 41% over goal

**MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS** 

166,427 Web Visits 233% over goal

**GROUP TOUR CAMPAIGN** 

**5,711 Web Visits** 14% over goal

**MILWAUKEE365 CAMPAIGN** 

382,965 Web Visits 5% over goal



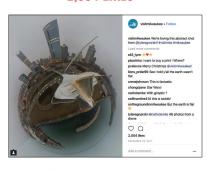
@visitmilwaukee

50,586 24,492 49,703

**4,324 LIKES** 



**2,004 LIKES** 



VISITS TO MILWAUKEE365

392,965

EVENTS ON MILWAUKEE365

3,179

ORGANIZERS ON MILWAUKEE365

2,000+

### **2017 COLLATERAL**



2017 OFFICIAL BIKERS' GUIDE

23,000 COPIES



2017/18 GROUP TOUR GUIDE

32,000 COPIES



2018 OFFICIAL VISITORS GUIDE

200,000 COPIES



2018 OFFICIAL VISITORS MAP

250,000 COPIES

### **2017 CONVENTION MARKETING CAMPAIGNS**













### MEETINGS, CONVENTIONS AND GROUPS

PRINT AND DIGITAL EXAMPLES

### **2017 LEISURE MARKETING CAMPAIGNS**



















# **COMMUNICATIONS**

The PR team had a stellar year, with **1,137 earned media placements** about Milwaukee in 2017, all directly related to the efforts of the VISIT Milwaukee Communications team. These placements spanned the globe, and resulted in over 677 million earned media impressions. Among the biggest story placements were:

### Chicago Tribune

Gallery Night & Day (September) Beer Scene (April)

### The Washington Post

You're going where? (June)

### France's **Repaire des Motards**

The city of Breweries and Distilleries and the Cradle of Harley-Davidson (September)

### Travelocity

Family friendly Milwaukee (September)

#### Trivago

Under the Gaydar (June)

#### Runner's World

Escape to Milwaukee for Great Beer (August)

#### London's The Times

Road Trip Around Lake Michigan (July)

The team hosted more travel writers in 2017 than in any other year prior, including hosting 350 female travel writer at the Women in Travel Summit as well as 150 beer writers at the Beer Bloggers Conference. The team also submitted a bid to host the Society of American Travel Writers conference in 2020 and won a bid to host the Midwest Travel Journalists Conference in 2018.

Much of the team's efforts were focused on hosting travel writers during major events around town, including Summerfest's 50th anniversary, the U.S. Open, NCAA March Madness, Gallery Night & Day, Air & Water Show, Sculpture Milwaukee, and the Milwaukee Film Festival. Of the **75 individual writers** that the team welcomed to Milwaukee, 47 of them visited between June and October. These writers represented outlets such as the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, New York Times, Washington Post, Midwest Living, Travelocity, Runner's World, U.S. News & World Reports, LA Times, Thrillist, and Trekaroo.

The Milwaukee Film Office, run by Communications Manager Margaret Casey, also **welcomed The Travel Channel** in April of 2017. They were in town to uncover buried treasure in Lake Park. In coordination with Milwaukee County Parks, Margaret was able to unlock the necessary permits for the crew to complete their hunt; however, they were unable to unearth any treasure. The full episode will air in 2018.



677,476,363

**MEDIA IMPRESSIONS** 

TRAVEL WRITER **CONFERENCES HOSTED** 

**APPEARANCES** ON TV

TRAVEL WRITERS HOSTED

LEISURE **FOCUSED STORIES** 

LOCAL CONVENTION STORIES

NATIONAL **PLACEMENTS** 

MIDWEST REGIONAL **PLACEMENTS** 

INTERNATIONAL STORIES

360



**EARNED MEDIA PLACEMENTS** 



### **2017 BIGGEST PLACEMENTS**

### CONDE NAST

### **BETTER HOMES & GARDENS**

Milwaukee named a top foodie city

### WOMEN'S HEALTH

Milwaukee named one of America's Well-thiest Cities

### **FORBES**

25 Cheapest Places to Travel this Summer

### **TRAVEL CHANNEL**

Best City Beaches

### **EXPEDIA**

Milwaukee #2 on list of Cities to Watch Milwaukee made the list of Best US Destination for Every Travel Style (category: Nightlife/Night Owls)

### THRILLIST TRAVEL

Underappreciated American cities you should totally move to

### **TRAVEL + LEISURE**

#6 Most Underrated City in America

### **TRAVEL + LEISURE**

#10 Friendliest City in America

## **GROUP TOUR**

The group tour sales team was busy in 2017, holding **281 appointments** with group tour operators or owners at **8 different trade shows**, plus hosting **31 national and international tour operators** throughout the year. They also worked with MS Hamburg cruise line to welcome over 600 German and Finnish visitors to Milwaukee at the Port of Milwaukee. New cruise lines are planning to dock at Discovery World in 2018, and VISIT Milwaukee will greet all those visitors as well. The group tour sales team also worked closely with Brand USA and Great Lakes USA to showcase Milwaukee to international tour operators during three separate FAM tours.

The team also worked with the Partnership department to host a popular and successful "China Welcome" program. The event had over 100 partners in attendance and focused on the group tour aspect of this highly coveted tourism market.





9,350

**ROOM NIGHTS IN 2017** 



\$3.3M

**ECONOMIC IMPACT** 



## EXPLORE MILWAUKEE'S BEST

6 Meetings in 2017

February 21

WISCONSIN CHEESE MART

April 27

HOT WATER/WHEREHOUSE

June 20

**FARMHOUSE PAIN & SIP** 

August 23

THIRD SPACE BREWING COMPANY

October 17

HOLIDAY INN MILWAUKEE RIVERFRONT

December 12

**POTAWATOMI HOTEL & CASINO** 

### **8 TRADESHOWS ATTENDED**

American Bus Association

**Chicago Travel & Adventure Show** 

National Tour Association St. Louis
National Tour Association San Antonio

**Select Traveler Conference** 

**International Pow Wow** 

**Midwest Marketplace** 

**Ontario Motor Coach Association** 

## **PARTNERSHIP**

The year began with the third annual Marketing Milwaukee Summit at Potawatomi Hotel & Casino. This annual event for corporate partners and their teams brought together marketing and human resource professionals for a day-long education session on how best to position Milwaukee as a place to work, live, and play. Over 150 people attended the event

With the highest partner attendance in 10 years, the **50th Anniversary Annual Meeting** set a new bar for educating our stakeholders with high quality tourism industry education. **Don Welsh, President and CEO of Destination International,** delivered a state of tourism keynote speech at the Pfister Hotel, followed by a cocktail reception packed with partner restaurants and breweries sampling their products.

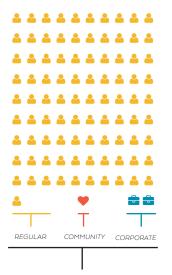
The team also created and delivered **"Tourism Insider" training** to staff at nearly 200 partners, including MATC hospitality students and UBER drivers. This new partner program certifies its attendees as a "Tourism Insider" with a program certificate and prominent lapel pin. The ambassadors are ready to answer visitors' questions and deliver knowledgeable hospitality.

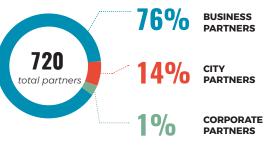
Capitalizing on the recent uptick in Chinese citizens' leisure visits to the Midwest, the partnership department worked with convention sales to host the travel marketing experts at China Ni Hao. Over 100 VISIT Milwaukee partners learned best practices in culturally sensitive hospitality for Chinese travelers.

The partnership team also brought on **Destination Kohler** and **Concordia University** as new corporate partners, and **the City of New Berlin** as a new community partner.



### **2017 PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS**







### 94 NEW PARTNERS



partnership increase over 2016

**92%**partner retention rate



PARTNERS ATTENDED VISIT MILWAUKEE EVENTS IN 2017







## **FINANCE**

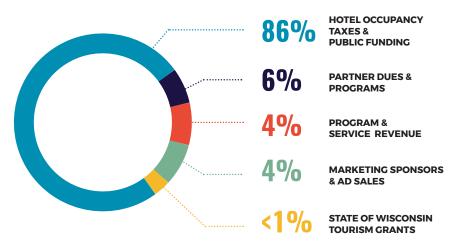
VISIT Milwaukee, a private, nonprofit corporation, was incorporated in 1967 as a 501(c)(6) tax-exempt organization. Governed by an independent board of directors, the President/CEO leads a full-time staff of 39, as well as additional part-time and seasonal staff members.

VISIT Milwaukee had **annual budgeted revenues of \$9.3 million in 2017**, of which 86 percent was derived from the occupancy tax and other public funding. Occupancy taxes in Milwaukee are comprised of a 7 percent City of Milwaukee occupancy tax and a 2.5 percent Milwaukee County occupancy tax. In 2017, total City of Milwaukee occupancy taxes were \$14.3 million, and Milwaukee County occupancy taxes were \$6.7 million. VISIT Milwaukee receives a portion of the City of Milwaukee occupancy tax only, which represented approximately 44 percent of the total city taxes collected in 2017. The remainder of the occupancy taxes are retained by the Wisconsin Center District in order to pay the bond debt on convention facilities and the Milwaukee Theatre. VISIT Milwaukee also receives a portion of the city of Wauwatosa occupancy taxes.

VISIT Milwaukee's financial operations are reviewed by a five member Audit/Finance Committee of the Board of Directors, led by the Secretary/Treasurer. In addition, VISIT Milwaukee retains an independent audit firm, Ritz Holman CPAs, to conduct an annual financial audit of the organization's financial operations and internal controls.

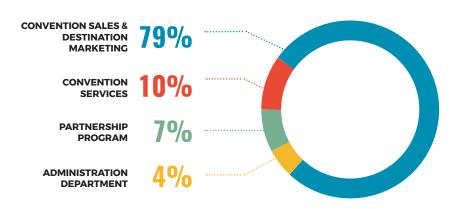


### **2017 FUNDING SOURCES**





### **2017 PROGRAM EXPENDITURES**



# AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

In 2017, VISIT Milwaukee received 10 awards and accolades for its work in the meetings, conventions, digital, sales, and PR realms. The numerous recognitions among its peers makes the organization and its staff both appreciative and proud.

### VISIT MILWAUKEE TRADESHOW BOOTH

**3RD PLACE, BEST IN SHOW** ASAE 2016

### **OFFICIAL VISITORS GUIDE 2017**

### HONORABLE MENTION DESIGN

Hermes Awards

### HONORABLE MENTION WRITING

Hermes Awards

#### **DEAR MKE INSTAGRAM**

### **HONORABLE MENTION**

PR Daily's Digital PR and Social Media Awards

### INTERNATIONAL BROCHURES

#### **PLATINUM**

Hermes Awards

### **BUSINESS CARDS**

#### **GOLD**

Hermes Awards

#### **MEET MILWAUKEE VIDEO**

### **SILVER**

Davey Awards

### **PLATINUM**

Hermes Awards

### **VISIT MILWAUKEE**

## 2017 CHAMPION OF ECONOMIC IMPACT IN SPORTS TOURISM

**USA Gymnastics** 

### MARISSA WERNER & MICHELLE HAIDER

## ROBERT L. LINDSAY MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD USA Volleyball

### MILWAUKEE, WI

### TOP FIVE BEST EMERGING DESTINATIONS

Groups Today's 2017 Readers' Choice Awards













1. ESTO 2017 2. TEAMWORKS STAFF OUTING AT FOAMATION 3. T-SHIRT PRINTING AT VISIT MILWAUKEE'S BOOTH AT THE NEWAUKEE NIGHT MARKET 4. MARKETING TO THE MEETING PLANNER 5. SENIOR STAFF 6. THE VISITOR INFORMATION DESK IN THE WISCONSIN CENTER

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### **BOARD MEMBERS**

Rafael Acevedo, Jr.\*

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Joe Bartolotta

Bartolotta Restaurant Group

Ald. Cheryl Berdan

City of Wauwatosa

**Grady L. Crosby** 

Johnson Controls, Inc.

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Harley-Davidson Museum

Mayor Kathy Ehley\*

City of Wauwatosa

**Deborah Farris** 

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Mark Flaherty\*

Jackson Street Holdings

**Jeremy Fojut** 

NEWaukee

**Tom Mallov** 

Potawatomi Hotel & Casino

**Greg Marcus\*** 

Marcus Hotels & Resorts

Paul Mathews\*

Marcus Center for the Performing Arts

**Harold Mester** 

General Mitchell International Airport Rose Murack\*

Radisson Hotel Milwaukee-West

**David Murphy** 

Marquette University

Kathleen O'Leary

Wisconsin State Fair

Tai Pauls

Milwaukee Brewers

**Marcelle Polednik** 

Milwaukee Art Museum

**Don Smiley** 

Milwaukee World Festivals, Inc.

**Howard Snyder** 

Northwest Side Community

Development Center

John Steinmiller\*

Milwaukee Bucks

**Melissa Weiss** 

City of Wauwatosa

Teig Whaley-Smith\*

Milwaukee County

**Rick Wiegand** 

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**Chuck Wikenhauser** 

Milwaukee County Zoo

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Chair

SURG Restaurant Group

Lynda Kohler\*

Treasurer/Secretary SHARP Literacy, Inc.

Paul Upchurch\*

**President & CEO** 

VISIT Milwaukee

Dana Jones\*

Assistant Secretary
VISIT Milwaukee

### RETIRED

Cecilia Gilbert

City of Milwaukee DPW

**Ralph Hollmon** 

The Milwaukee Urban League

# THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS















































