

2024 BUSINESS PLAN

# VISITOMAHA™



VISIT OMAHA - OMAHA'S TOURISM AUTHORITY - [VISITOMAHA.COM](https://www.visitomaha.com)







**OMAHA TOURISM BRINGS FAMILIES  
CLOSER TOGETHER AND HELPS  
NEIGHBORHOODS GROW.**



# VISIT OMAHA

## MISSION

To stimulate economic growth for our community by increasing visitation.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

- Successfully sell and promote our community as a desirable visitor destination.
- Influence tourism development to ensure future destination success.
- Deliver a positive and memorable customer experience.
- Collaborate and enhance relationships with local organizations, businesses and stakeholders.
- Operate as an efficient, high performing organization.

## ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Visit Omaha creates sustainable visitor demand for the community through: meeting, event, sport and leisure marketing; collaborative relationships; broad industry experience; and unprecedented product knowledge. Visit Omaha's efforts result in economic growth and job creation for our community.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**Relevance:** We are committed to being consistent, accountable, transparent, perseverant, and dedicated to excellence.

**Innovation:** We are committed to being creative, pioneering, collaborative and problem solving.

**Gratitude:** We are committed to being appreciative of both the big and small contributions that make our organization and industry valuable to our community.



# TRAVEL AND TOURISM TRENDS FOR 2024

## LEISURE TRAVEL TRENDS

Omaha's tourism industry experienced an impressive comeback during the past two years, with more people visiting Omaha and spending more money in the city than ever before. Nationally, leisure travel has spearheaded the rebound effort for the industry, leading many experts to believe recovery is "basically" complete in the U.S. Though the travel surges of 2023 are expected to level off, leisure travel is still expected to remain strong this year.

The economy and inflation continue to concern many travelers, inspiring tighter budgets for getaways. According to a recent study by Destination Analysts, tourists expect to spend an average of \$3,505 on travel in the next 12 months, the lowest amount since 2021. Trips remain a priority for households but may look different this year. Top travel trends include traveling by train and bleisure travel (a combination of business and leisure travel). Tourism Economics echoed these sentiments, predicting that 30% of all business trips will have some leisure component.

Technology is expected to make another big impact on travel with generative AI tools like ChatGPT serving as a sort of travel concierge. Expedia notes that 6% of travelers used ChatGPT to plan their vacations last year. However, this year, 40% of travelers expressed interest in using generative AI tools to help map out their perfect getaways.

## SALES FORECAST

Group business (including convention, meetings and motorcoach) is still inching toward a full recovery nationally. Industry experts predict this will happen in 2026, with factors for the lag including fewer in-person events due to economic conditions and planning constraints with groups seeking to book on short notice. However, this year still looks promising. According to American Express Global Business Travel's recent forecast, seven out of 10 planners expect 2024 participant numbers to meet or exceed 2019 figures.

BizBash recently reported major group business trends for 2024 based on information from three major hospitality brands. The common themes include: wellness and work-life balance, as travelers are looking for unique out-of-the-conference-room experiences; cultural immersion, with a premium placed on dining; sustainability, with travelers wanting to minimize their environmental footprint; event customization, as planners are looking for new ways to host meetings; and convenience-centered technology, focused around AI's potential to reinvent planning, execution and data collection.

Locally, the Visit Omaha sales team is currently outpacing their goals for 2024 and 2025. The Future Pace reporting tool utilizes historical data along with definite and tentative business to provide a booking pace for the Visit Omaha sales team. This information helps in strategizing and updating sales goals based on market conditions. The Pace Target Graph, on page 4, shows Omaha's booking pace.



# TRAVEL AND TOURISM TRENDS

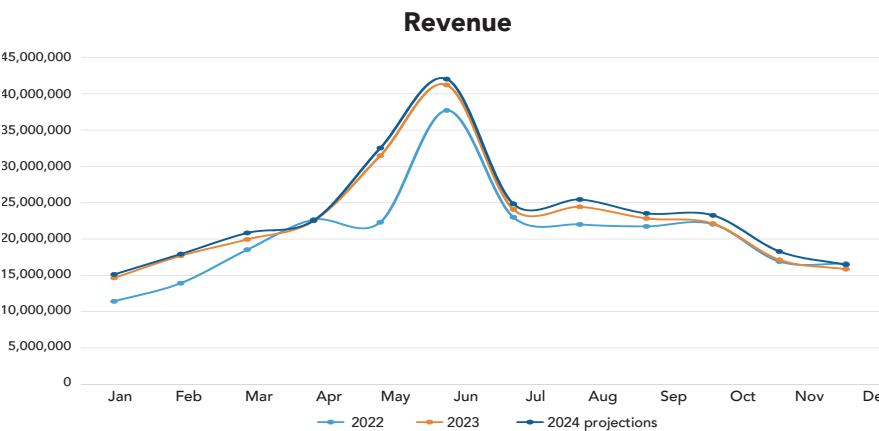
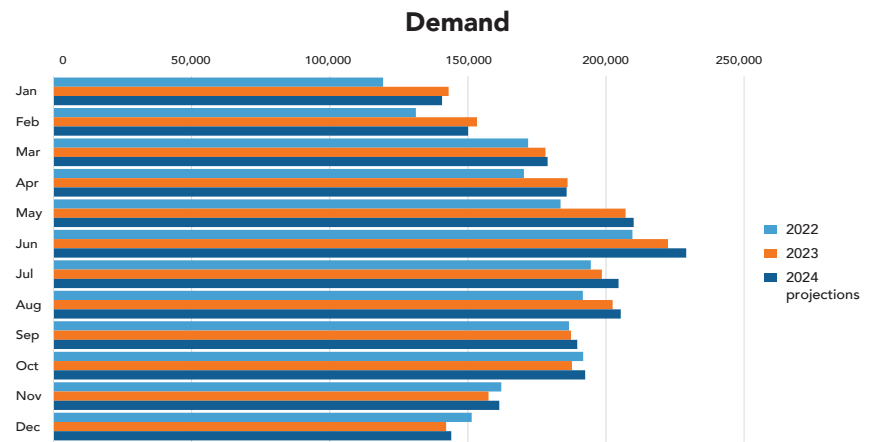
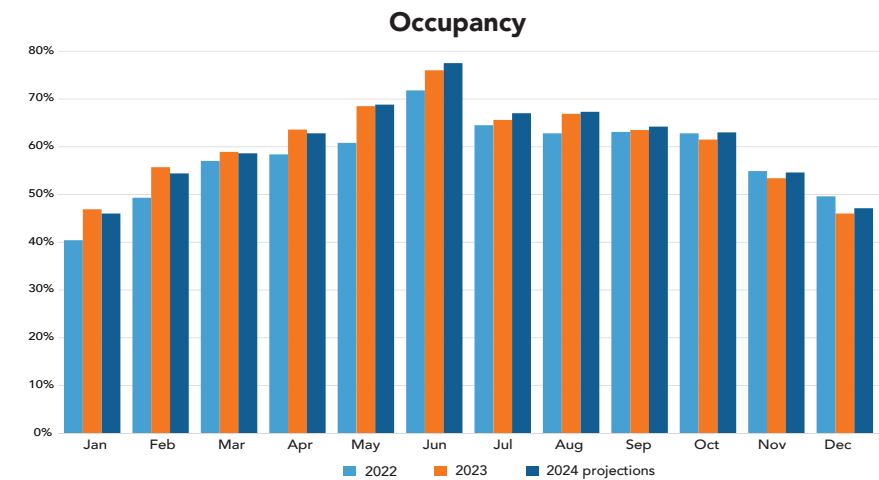
## LOCAL STR PROJECTIONS

A recent STR forecast for hotels in Douglas County predicts 2024 will outperform 2022 and 2023's impressive, record-breaking numbers. STR projections show hotel occupancy for this year will average 61%, a 1.7% increase over 2023. Once again, all key metrics are expected to increase year-over-year, including hotel revenue which is expected to reach close to \$283 million, 4.3% more than last year. Hotel demand is also expected to increase by 1.8% and reach a new record high.

*STR is a global research firm that tracks, reports, and projects hotel data.*

## STR GROWTH

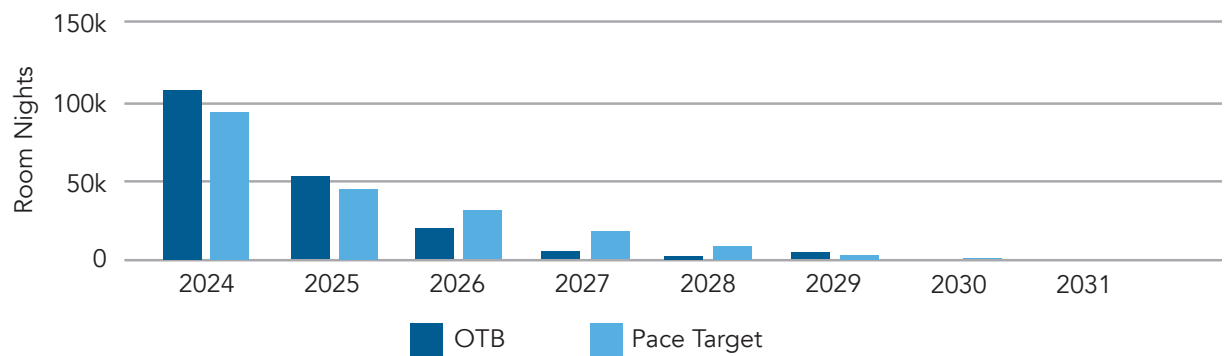
These graphs show Douglas County hotel data for 2022, 2023, and projections for 2024. The key metrics highlighted are: occupancy, the percentage of available hotel rooms sold during a specified period; demand, the number of hotel rooms sold in a specified period; and revenue, the total hotel room revenue generated from bookings.





## PACE TARGET

This graph compares definite business on the books (OTB) to pace targets, which measure where sales bookings should be at any given time to ensure the year-end goal is met.



*\*At this time only the 2024 year-end goal has been set. The goal is 124,458.*

The Pace Target chart above only includes definite business that has been secured as of January 2024, it does not include some annual events which are expected to go definite closer to their actual event dates. Those hotel room nights are considered tentative.

## CURRENT TENTATIVE ROOM NIGHTS BY YEAR

2024	30,150
2025	74,089
2026	61,025
2027	53,436
2028	18,064
2029	3,299
2030	3,299
2031	5,984

## KEY EVENTS IN TENTATIVE OR DEFINITE STATUS

- NSAA State Wrestling – definite for 2024
- NCAA Men’s College World Series – definite through 2026
- President’s Day Volleyball – tentative for 2025, 2026 and 2027
- Berkshire Hathaway – tentative for 2024 and 2025
- TripleCrown Sports – tentative for 2025
- Scooter’s Coffee – tentative for 2025 and 2026
- Home Instead – tentative for 2025 and 2026



# MEETING, SPORTS AND EVENT SALES

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Visit Omaha's sales team is responsible for bringing convention, sports, and event business to Omaha in order to increase revenue for local meeting and sports facilities, hotels, attractions, restaurants, vendors, and retail shops.

The sales team focuses on selling Omaha as a viable destination for state, regional, national, and international conventions, meetings, sporting events, and motorcoach groups.

The team's efforts contribute to the economic health of our local community by increasing business revenue and tax revenue, which in turn help provide jobs for our friends, family and neighbors.

## KEY AREAS OF WORK

- Identify and pursue citywide and single hotel meeting/event business for Omaha based on predetermined goals.
- Evaluate and review sales efforts in key markets to ensure sales team efficiencies.
- Continue to partner with national organizations, including ASAE, Association Forum, Conference Direct, CONNECT, Cvent, Helms Briscoe, Maritz Global Events, and PCMA, to increase awareness of Omaha as a Midwest meeting destination.
- Collaborate with local sports facilities, organizations and SPORTS Nebraska to attract sporting events to Omaha.
- Engage and build relationships with local board members of national organizations to gain support for Omaha as a location for that organization's annual or regional meeting.
- Ensure a professional, cohesive citywide sales effort by developing and maintaining a high level of trust and camaraderie with the local hospitality community.
- Enhance ongoing research programs to identify new meeting, sports and event business for the local community.
- Qualify, develop and generate motorcoach leads for local hotels, attractions and performing arts facilities.

## NEW INITIATIVES

- Hire a company to analyze the appeal of Omaha as a convention destination compared to our competitive set to better understand how recent development projects impact the meeting sales efforts.
- Explore hiring a dedicated salesperson in Washington, D.C., to expand our sales presence in a destination with the highest concentration of meeting planners.
- Establish a new partnership program with Northstar Meetings Group to increase awareness of Omaha in the meetings and sports market.
- Begin a new partnership with AMC Institute to increase awareness of Omaha to its membership of association management companies.
- Create a sports department within the Visit Omaha Sales division, establish key performance indicators and goals for the new department, and expand the sports team by adding a new national sales account manager, all to increase our efforts in the sports market.
- Establish booking guidelines for local, regional and national tournaments for Tranquility Park to effectively secure business for this new sports complex.
- Initiate a new sponsorship program with US Sports Congress to increase awareness of Omaha as a sports destination.
- Create a partnership program with the Military Reunion Network and host members from the organization in Omaha to increase awareness of the city as a military reunion destination.
- Host Maritz Global Event partners and the Association Forum Emerging Leaders program in Omaha to educate and inspire association meeting planners and decision makers to choose Omaha for their meetings.
- Secure a sponsorship at the CONNECT tradeshow to showcase Omaha to 50 meeting and event planners who represent a variety of market segments.

## TARGET GOALS

### Generate:

**450,000**  
Room night leads

**135,000**  
Definite room nights

**350,000**  
Attendees

**60**  
Site Visits



# MEETING, SPORTS, EVENT SERVICES AND HOUSING

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Once a meeting or event is confirmed, the Visit Omaha services team is responsible for working with organizers to coordinate details before, during and after the event to increase attendance and satisfaction. Their efforts generate business for local vendors who are hired by meeting and event planners.

The team also manages housing services, which provides clients with an easy way to manage blocks of hotel rooms.

The team quantifies success by measuring the event organizer's satisfaction, attendance, the number of referrals sent to local businesses, hotel room nights utilized, and the group's economic impact on the local community.

## KEY AREAS OF WORK

- Support the sales team's efforts throughout the sales process and establish relationships with event organizers to enhance Omaha's ability to close business.
- Provide exceptional service and support to event organizers by providing planning assistance, site visit coordination, pre-attendance promotional materials, and registration support.
- Manage the "Show Your Badge" program to provide attendee discounts that increase business referrals to local businesses and restaurants.
- Serve as the destination expert to connect meeting and event planners with local businesses, speakers and community resources in order to leverage Omaha's assets.
- Coordinate with the hospitality community to ensure a positive experience for event organizers and attendees.
- Provide housing services to event organizers who utilize a local venue and two or more hotel properties.
- Solicit and capture event organizer and attendee feedback, both formally and informally, and share the results with key industry stakeholders.

## NEW INITIATIVES

- Implement PCMA AI Certification protocols to increase efficiencies and better serve Visit Omaha clients.
- Attend PCMA EduCon to gain additional knowledge on unique design options for offsite events.
- Obtain an Event Service Professional Association certification to increase our expertise in providing services to clients.
- Enhance the citywide welcome program by adding additional signage in the Old Market area.
- Create new informational banners for hotel use during events to elevate the overall experience for meeting attendees.
- Partner with the Omaha Sports Commission to enhance the 2024 USA Triathlon athlete and fan experience in Omaha by showcasing local breweries and restaurants at the venue.
- Plan a tour of Omaha during the Society of Government Meeting Planners meeting to showcase the city as a meeting destination to attendees.
- Promote Omaha at The Church Network's Annual Meeting in 2024 to increase attendance for the 2025 event being held in Omaha.



# TARGET GOALS

20

Post-event survey testimonials

500

Leads and/or referrals

20%

Increase in the "Show Your Badge" program participants



# MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Visit Omaha marketing and communications team is responsible for persuading leisure travelers to visit the community in order to increase revenue for local attractions, restaurants, bars, hotels, retail shops and other businesses. The team: crafts and articulates the destination's brand; leads the organization's direct-to-consumer advertising and promotion efforts; and executes advertising programs to support all sales efforts. The team strategically plans and implements all advertising and promotional efforts for Visit Omaha.

The team also manages Visit Omaha's network of social media channels, the consumer and partner e-newsletters, the Omaha Visitors Guide, and the VisitOmaha.com website. The Visit Omaha communication efforts focus on securing media coverage for Omaha, which in turn raises awareness of the city regionally and nationally. Increased visitation from targeted markets, social media engagement, and number of people reached through promotional and advertising efforts are the main metrics used to gauge success.

## KEY AREAS OF WORK

- Execute a multimedia leisure advertising and promotion strategy to inspire visitation from core Midwest drive markets such as Kansas City, Des Moines, Sioux Falls, Minneapolis and Chicago, while researching and cultivating new fly markets to increase awareness of unique experiences that visitors can only enjoy in Omaha.
- Produce and maintain a high quality destination guide and an online network of platforms that provide inspirational content.
- Build upon the brand position that Omaha is the Midwest destination for memorable weekends because Omaha lets the traveler focus on creating new experiences instead of the hassles of travel.
- Enhance awareness of Omaha as a unique food destination by creating multimedia content for distribution through Visit Omaha's online social media network, through media partnerships, with paid advertising campaigns, and by managing Omaha Restaurant Week, which supports local restaurants and builds local brand advocates.
- Inspire new product development with initiatives that focus on creating unique travel-worthy experiences in neighborhoods and at existing attractions.
- Implement an ongoing local advocacy plan focused on educating residents and decision makers on how tourism brings families closer together and helps neighborhoods grow, value sentiments that research shows Omaha residents strongly embrace.
- Generate positive, inspirational and topical media coverage of Omaha as a desirable travel, meeting and sports destination by working with targeted travel writers, editors, bloggers, online media, and other influencers.
- Assist with the annual Omaha Metropolitan Area (OMA) Tourism Awards to recognize frontline staff who exemplify excellent customer service.

## NEW INITIATIVES

- Launch a year-round advertising campaign featuring six new commercials targeting sports fans, arts and music lovers, foodies, adventure seekers, history buffs, and families to increase Omaha's appeal to a variety of audiences.
- Initiate an influencer campaign to create shareable content that reaches new audiences based on traveler interests.
- Develop a holiday activation at airports in key fly markets that highlights Omaha's unique tourism assets, inspires increased visitation to Omaha, and incentivizes travel through giveaways.
- Produce new promotional videos highlighting Omaha's minority-owned businesses, LGBTQ+ community, and accessibility experiences to showcase Omaha as an inclusive visitor destination.
- Implement the #OMARinOmaha interactive experience to increase promotion, online discussion, and engagement with local attractions and drive traffic to the Omaha Visitors Center. Locals and visitors will be invited to purchase an OMAR doll from the Omaha Visitors Center and share photos with him, Flat Stanley-style, at various Omaha locations for a chance to win prizes.
- Create a more robust and inclusive content library to better illustrate Omaha as a welcoming and diverse travel destination.
- Increase excitement surrounding college sporting events in Omaha by creating a Visit Omaha media kit for teams and fans that can be distributed to alumni offices, booster clubs, and select media outlets in key team markets.
- Conduct marketing research to measure the effectiveness of Visit Omaha advertising in key target markets.
- Partner with the convention sales team to produce new promotional materials that will showcase Omaha's new development to meeting planners and sporting event organizers.

## TARGET GOALS

10%

**Increase in visitation  
from targeted markets**

20%

**Increase in overall  
website engagement rate**

25%

**Increase in GDPR  
compliant consumer  
database**

20%

**Increase in social  
media engagement**



# VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The visitor information team is responsible for welcoming visitors into the city and providing helpful, inspirational information that encourages exploration and enjoyment, which translates into increased visitor spending throughout the community.

The team is dedicated to engaging and collaborating with local tourism partners, staying informed about experiences available, and providing exceptional customer service.

With the help of experienced and dedicated volunteers, the team manages the downtown Omaha Visitors Center at 10th and Farnam, and two visitor information kiosks at the Omaha airport. Serving as the city's official resource for visitor information, each location provides personalized service, engaging visuals, area maps, brochures, special offers, and insider tips on what to see and do while visiting Omaha.

## KEY AREAS OF WORK

- Year-round operation of the Omaha Visitors Center, airport information kiosks and satellite information locations throughout Douglas County.
- Provide visitors with engaging information and excellent customer service to ensure a memorable experience, which maximizes guest satisfaction and increases visitation to, and spending with, local tourism partners.
- Collaborate with tourism partners to educate frontline staff on tourism offerings throughout the community, providing a full-city approach to visitor hospitality.
- Educate local residents on things to do with visiting friends and family, which in turn increases local awareness and appreciation of Omaha as a tourism destination.
- Develop new programs to increase traffic at the Omaha Visitors Center and increase its relevancy with visitors and local residents.
- Recruit and retain Visitors Center volunteer ambassadors, and provide continuing education opportunities through training and tours.
- Distribute Omaha promotional materials across the state in partnership with Nebraska Tourism Commission.

## NEW INITIATIVES

- Create interactive experiences at the Omaha Visitors Center to attract and engage more visitors.
- Improve the Omaha Visitors Center entrance to enhance its appeal to visitors.
- Develop educational programming for frontline hotel and restaurant staff to provide increased hospitality to visitors and showcase the value of the Omaha Visitors Center.
- Research additional high traffic venues for our mobile Visitor Information Kiosk program to expand distribution of visitor information and increase awareness of activities throughout the community.
- Explore Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to enhance the efficiency, accessibility and quality of services offered at the Visitors Center.
- Evaluate programs aimed at promoting accessibility and inclusivity to create a welcoming user experience for all travelers at the Omaha Visitors Center.



# TARGET GOALS

Assist **12,000**  
visitors at the Omaha  
Visitors Center

Recruit, train,  
& retain a staff of **50**  
volunteer Ambassadors.

**\$10,000**  
in retail sales



# ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Visit Omaha administration team develops and executes the strategic direction of the organization, manages daily operations and technology needs, ensures financial accountability and stability, leads community partnership and engagement efforts, and serves as administrator for the City of Omaha Destination Marketing Corporation (DMC). The DMC is a 501(c) 6 non-profit entity which is responsible for the management of the Strategic Marketing Fund used to incentivize meeting and event business.

## KEY AREAS OF WORK

- Achieve revenue and expense goals.
- Lead advocacy efforts to promote and educate community leaders on the value of tourism.
- Collaborate with local, state and regional organizations to increase awareness of Omaha as a tourism destination.
- Manage the Omaha Destination Marketing Corporation and the Strategic Marketing Fund to offer incentives to attract meeting and event business to our community.
- Serve as a resource to Douglas County Visitor Improvement Fund applicants.
- Maintain Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) certification to ensure Visit Omaha continues to meet and exceed industry standards.
- Ensure the organization has leading-edge technology to maximize efficiency and productivity.
- Provide staff training to increase employee performance and job satisfaction.

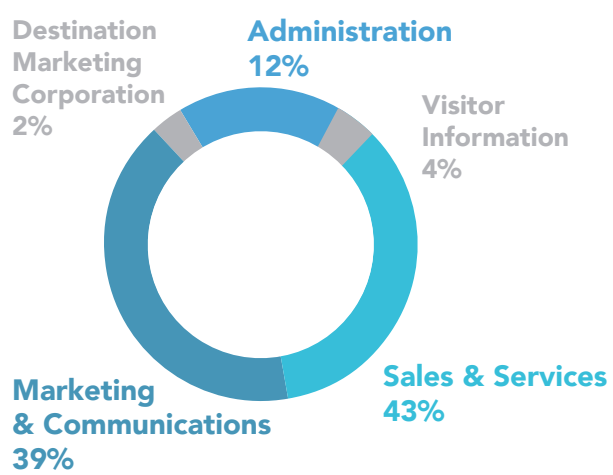
## NEW INITIATIVES

- Conduct a research-based lodging and visitor study to analyze the lodging market, discern visitor profiles and spending behaviors, pinpoint emerging markets, and identify factors that motivate visitors to choose Omaha.
- Research the benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and implement as appropriate to increase operational productivity.
- Develop a strategic plan to create bench strength within our department to ensure the future success of our organization.
- Partner with other city departments to potentially expand the use of DocuSign to create a more streamlined document signing process for staff.
- Research how to optimize current financial software programs to increase accounting efficiencies.
- Create and distribute a staff survey to measure satisfaction and effectiveness of the current hybrid work environment.

# OMAHA DESTINATION MARKETING CORPORATION

To remain competitive, Visit Omaha created the Omaha Destination Marketing Corporation (DMC), a 501(c) 6 non-profit organization. The DMC is funded through Visit Omaha’s portion of the lodging tax paid by visitors. Each year, Visit Omaha sets its operational budget after calculating how much hotel tax revenue it will receive based on visitation projections. When that revenue exceeds projections, those dollars are saved in a reserve fund. The corporation allows Visit Omaha to take those reserve funds and use them as incentives to entice meeting, sports and event groups to select Omaha. Since the majority of meeting, sports and event business is booked three to five years in advance, the corporation allows Visit Omaha to earmark these funds and hold them until it is time to pay for a specific meeting or event. The Destination Marketing Corporation Board and the Omaha City Council approve fund disbursement.

## 2024 BUDGET BY DEPARTMENT



# BUDGET

The majority of Visit Omaha’s funding comes from hotel tax paid by visitors. The state collects a 5% lodging tax on each Douglas County hotel room booked: 1% is for the state’s tourism promotion efforts; 2% goes to the county for tourism development; and the remaining 2% funds Visit Omaha’s sales and marketing efforts. In addition, the City of Omaha collects a 5.5% occupation tax on hotel rooms; the .5% goes to Visit Omaha. In 2024, the city will contribute \$2.3 million from its general fund to invest in tourism sales and promotion. Visit Omaha also brings in private revenue by selling advertising on its website, in its visitor guide, and through promotional and tradeshow partnerships with local hotels, attractions and restaurants.

## 2024 REVENUE

	Projected
Lodging Tax - County (2%)	\$5,191,563
Occupation Tax - City (.5%)	\$1,208,301
General Fund - City	\$2,300,000
Private Dollars	\$133,500
Destination Marketing Corporation	\$203,478
Reserve Account	\$1,275,287

Total revenues \$10,312,129

## 2024 EXPENSES

	%	Projected
Administration	12%	\$1,284,760
Meeting Sales & Services	43%	\$4,432,780
Marketing & Communications	39%	\$3,976,283
Visitor Information	4%	\$414,828
Destination Marketing Corporation	2%	\$203,478

Total expenses by department \$10,312,129

\*Adopted city budget



# VISIT OMAHA STAFF

## ADMINISTRATION

Deborah Ward  
*EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

Dean Miller  
*VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS*

Jodie Jordon  
*OFFICE MANAGER*

## MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Jasmyn Goodwin  
*VICE PRESIDENT OF  
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS*

Erin O'Brien  
*DIRECTOR OF MARKETING*

Megan Feeney  
*MARKETING CONTENT MANAGER*

Noelle Agenor  
*SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER*

Lynn Mace  
*MARKETING RESEARCH ANALYST*

Amy Cunningham  
*GRAPHIC DESIGNER*

## VISITOR SERVICES

Shannon Wiig  
*DIRECTOR OF VISITOR SERVICES*

Christine Eipperle  
*VISITOR SERVICES MANAGER*

## MEETING, SPORTS AND EVENT SALES

Cathy Keller  
*VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES & SERVICES*

Mark Rath, STS  
*DIRECTOR OF SPORTS*

Mattie Scheeter, CMP  
*DIRECTOR OF SALES*

Matt Heck  
*SENIOR SALES MANAGER*

Jessica Settje  
*TOURISM SALES MANAGER*

Jen Swanson  
*NATIONAL SALES ACCOUNT MANAGER*

Bryan Schlotterbeck  
*RESEARCH ANALYST*

Noah Huber  
*SALES AND MARKETING COORDINATOR - SALES*

Matt Duhs  
*SALES AND MARKETING COORDINATOR - SPORTS*

## MEETING, SPORTS AND EVENT SERVICES

Erin Brungardt  
*DIRECTOR OF CONVENTION SERVICES*

Madonna Scott  
*CONVENTION SERVICES AND HOUSING MANAGER*







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