



UNION COUNTY

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

2022 Business Plan



Mad Dogs - Uptown Marysville

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visitunioncountyohio.org

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The long-term impact of tourism on a community often begins with a visit.

"If you build a place where people want to visit, you'll build a place where people want to live. If you build a place where people want to live, you'll build a place where people have to work. If you build a place where people want to work, you'll build a place where business has to be. And, if you build a place where business has to be, you'll build a place where people have to visit."

- Maura Gast, Director, Visit Irving, Texas

Introduction

The **2022 Union County Convention & Visitors Bureau Business Plan** is a companion document to the **2020-2025 Destination Strategic Plan**.

Mission of the Union County Convention & Visitors Bureau

The Union County Convention & Visitors Bureau is an economic development leader dedicated to enhancing community vitality and quality of life through travel and tourism.

The Union County Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) is a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) responsible for economically impacting Union County by developing and incorporating a long-term tourism strategy, focusing on sales, marketing, and services. The Union County CVB works as a community partner to support and develop assets that are attractive to visitors but also support the quality of life for residents. As a not-for-profit organization, the Union County CVB (a division of the Union County Chamber of Commerce) is funded by a percentage of the hotel occupancy tax. Through travel and tourism, the Union County Convention & Visitors Bureau enhances the quality of life for a local community by:

- creating jobs, which drives income
- bringing in tax dollars for improvement of services and infrastructure
- attracting entities like restaurants, shops, festivals, cultural venues, and sporting arenas that cater to both visitors and residents



The Berry Farm

Tourism Impact

Travel Industry Impact in Union County in 2019*:

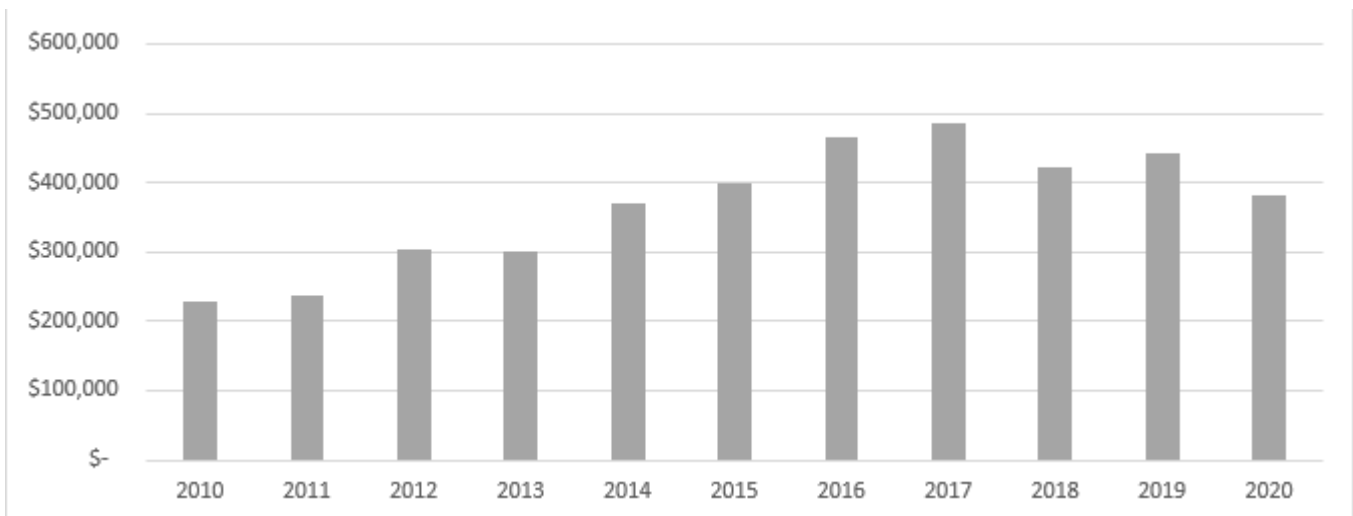
- Visitor spending \$150.4 million
- Tourism generated \$17.9 million in tax revenues
- Tourism Supported Jobs: 1,584

*Impact research was interrupted by the pandemic and will resume this year. Source: Economic Impact of Tourism in Union County, OH 2019, Tourism Economics

City & County Lodging Tax Collection History

This tax is collected when lodging accommodations are furnished to transient guests. The City of Marysville and Union County lodging tax collection history is as follows:

City of Marysville & Union County Bed Tax Collection History



Branding

Objective

Develop a destination brand that defines the unique identity and personality of Union County that is different from all competitive destinations.

- A. Select branding agency and launch initiative
- B. Complete Phase I: Explore – Learning the Stories of Union County
- C. Complete Phase II: Evaluate – Developing a Brand Strategy.
- D. Complete Phase III: Express – Bringing the Brand to Life
- E. Complete Phase IV: Engage – Direction for Our Branding Efforts

Metrics

- Completion of project (anticipated timeframe is 6-9 months)
- Launch and implementation of new brand

*Indicates a substantial initiative



Wayfinding Signage Master Plan

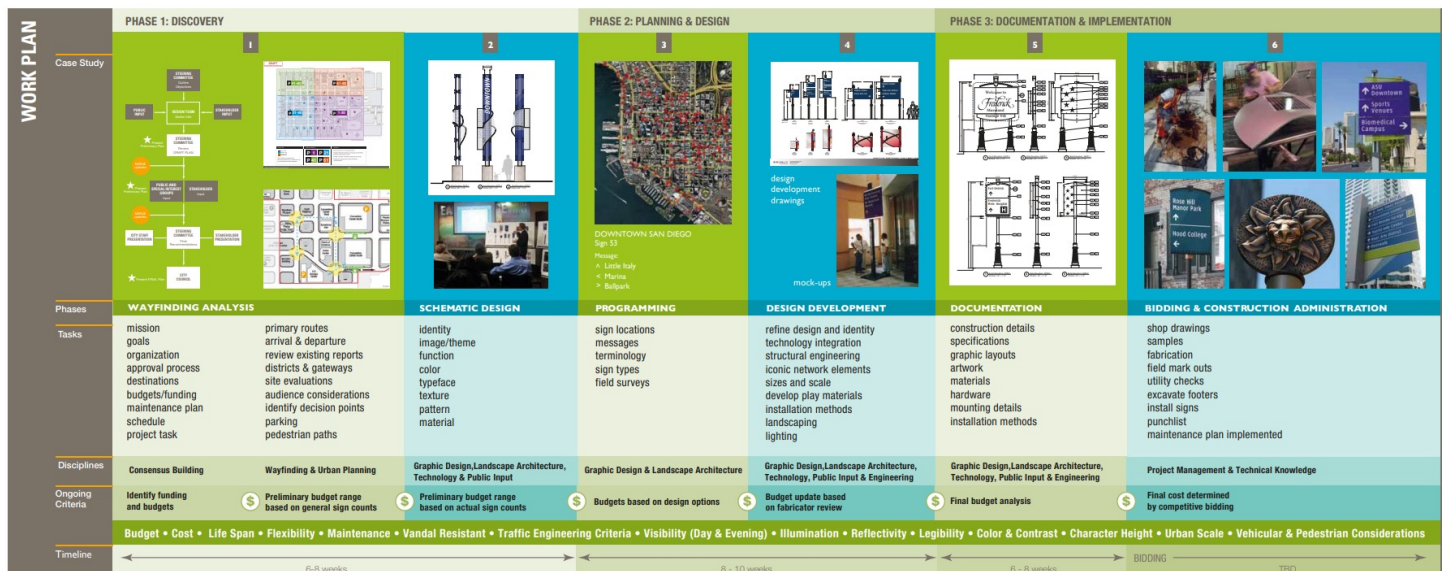
Objective:

Develop a comprehensive wayfinding signage master plan for Union County.

- A. Phase I: Discovery – Wayfinding Analysis and Schematic Design
- B. Phase II: Planning & Design
- C. Phase III: Documentation & Implementation

Metrics

- Engage wayfinding signage task force, municipal leadership, public, as well as design, fabrication, and installation experts to:
 - Complete Phase I
 - Complete Phase II
 - Complete Phase III
- *Indicates a substantial initiative



Short-term Rental Assessment

Objective:

A short-term rental (STR) is defined as a rental of a residential dwelling unit or accessory building for periods of less than 31 consecutive days. The CVB leadership will partner with the Ohio Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus (OACVB) to identify opportunities for assessment, regulation, and lodging tax compliance with STR properties in Union County.

Identify statewide short-term rental data, segmented by county, city, and legislative district, so that we may be able to:

- A. Collaborate with vacation rental managers to assure ordinance requirements are reasonable.
- B. Have a streamlined online registration and tax filing/payment process.
- C. Build a database of rental addresses and owner addresses and clearly communicate outlined requirements for STR registration and tax remittance.



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LOCATION

Nearby

CHECK IN

Add Date

CHECK OUT

Add Date

ADULTS

2



CHILDREN

0



AMENITIES

Hot tub

Pool

Wifi

Search



Sports Event Development

Objective:

Increase room night stays in Union County through sports event development.

- A. Sports Advisory Committee (SAC) to meet quarterly and help set scope of work and objectives for sports event development.
- B. Identify opportunities to track room night generation from this market.
- C. Partner with Marysville BMX to maximize hotel occupancy and economic impact with state races and all events.
- D. Present a compelling bid to host a USA BMX national event in 2023.
- E. Maintain inventory of sports venues.
- F. Grow database of existing sporting events and contacts.
- G. Grow database of prospective event opportunities.
- H. Work with SAC to identify opportunities to build sports assets.
- I. Present and market sports event development and service opportunities to organizers through an engaging presence on the website.
- J. Establish and grow relationships with sports-related partners, i.e., local schools, other athletic-related facilities, and representatives from OHSA (Ohio High School Athletic Association) to identify tournament and development opportunities for Union County.
- K. Partner with school and local organizing committee-related events whenever possible.
- L. Create opportunities to maximize economic impact from events – welcome pages, maps, welcome bags, packages, mobile visitors center, etc.
- M. Build sports event photo asset library.
- N. Support the development of new sports event venues.
- O. Identify opportunities to maximize visitation resulting from nearby regional sporting events, i.e., Annual Ohio Premier Invitational, Memorial Tournament, Arnold, etc.

Metrics

- Sports Tournament Advisory Committee meetings held
- Comprehensive inventory of all sport event-related venues
- Comprehensive list of existing sporting events
- Increase in room nights generated from the sports event market
- Number of welcome pages created for sporting events
- Website analytics from welcome pages
- Website analytics from the sports section
- Meetings conducted with sports-related partners
- Number of welcome bags, visitor guides, and collateral material distributed at events



Marysville BMX

Group Tour Market

Objective:

Increase room night production within the group tour market.

- A. Grow the group tour database.
- B. Identify prospective business opportunities through CVB participation in Ohio Has IT!
- C. Create awareness through advertising presence in the Ohio Has IT! group travel guide and editorial/image presence through sponsored content with the Group Travel Leader.
- D. Create awareness through attendance at tradeshow, namely Heartland Travel Showcase, and representation at national shows on behalf of Ohio Has IT!
- E. Send quarterly group tour e-newsletter to all contacts in database.
- F. Identify and develop new group tour product to attract broader audiences, drive overnight stays, and encourage repeat visitation.
- G. Present and market group tour development and service opportunities through an engaging presence on the website.
- H. Create at least two new sample itineraries focusing on group tour product options and themes.
- I. Continue to enhance the efficiency and quality of the group dining events on the bridge, presenting a compelling experience with minimal wear on staff.
- J. Enhance photo library with compelling images of group tour experiences in Union County.
- K. Develop, enhance, and protect group experience at partner attractions through site visits, group experience checklists, and partner agreements.
- L. Develop escort notes, fun facts, and stories to enhance the group travel experience.

Metrics

- Total number of rooms booked
- Total number of tours/buses
- Direct economic impact
- Newsletters sent
- Increased click-through by e-newsletter subscribers
- Number of new tour experiences developed
- Number of itineraries developed
- Website analytics



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Who
hs

Coffee Hall and Creamery

Meetings, Weddings & Special Events

Objective:

Increase room night production within the meetings, weddings, and special events market.

- A. Create awareness and drive business by marketing Union County as a wedding destination through digital advertising, tradeshow participation, and collateral material.
- B. Promote winter weddings to fill rooms when needed.
- C. Create meeting planner guide and customizable template for RFPs.
- D. Create presence on website to speak to the reunions market (family, military, fraternal, and high school).
- E. Build database of car and motorcycle clubs.
- F. Share printed and digital accommodations guide to venue owners to share with prospective clients.
- G. Enhance relationships with venue owners by meeting with them to discuss bookings and the opportunities to drive room nights to Union County properties.
- H. Partner with Union County Fairgrounds leadership to understand meeting and event opportunities.
- I. Build wedding, meetings, and reunion image asset library.

Metrics

- Room night generation
- Website analytics
- Number of impressions
- Number of clicks and CTR
- Reunions market presence on website
- Distribute hotel promotion sheet for venue staff distribution
- Complete meeting planner guide and RFP template
- Minimize reaction time for leads and requests for RFPs



French Hen Farm

Business Travel Market

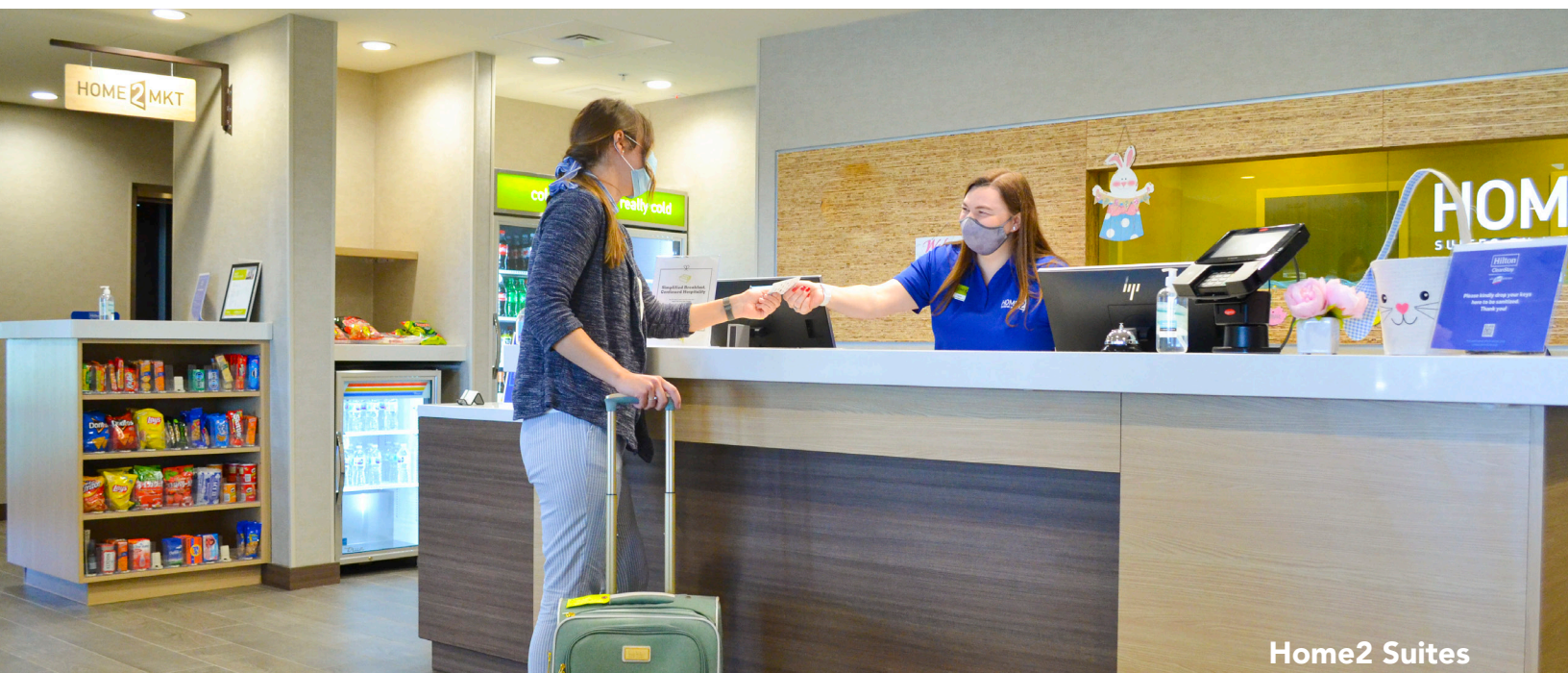
Objective:

Influence room night production within the business travel market.

- A. Grow relationships with key decision makers at Union County businesses and corporations.
- B. Develop consistent listening and communication opportunities with these stakeholders to understand the needs, challenges and/or issues related to business travel to Union County.
- C. Share feedback from decision makers with economic development team, Hospitality Advisory Committee, and board.

Metrics

- Identify and connect with travel decision influencers at key corporations in Union County
- Grow corporate database
- Website analytics
- Monitor market rebound/growth with hoteliers



Home2 Suites

Digital Marketing

Objective:

Build awareness, drive sales, and grow influence through digital marketing strategies.

Bandwango

Partner with Bandwango to utilize their experiential e-commerce platform to monetize and activate the covered bridges of Union County to lengthen stay and economic impact. Create a digital covered bridge pass featuring authentic covered bridge attractions, as well as bridge related features at restaurants, wineries, breweries and select attractions.

Digital Advertising

The CVB is increasing its level of participation in the TourismOhio co-op advertising program this year, as our investment is matched dollar-for-dollar. With this optimized approach, we'll use paid search and Facebook advertising to target markets focused on the following:

Paid Instagram	
May	Agritourism, Open Road and Dine on a Covered Bridge
June	Agritourism, Open Road, Union Station and Dine on a Covered Bridge
July	Agritourism and Open Road
Aug	Open Road
Sept	Agritourism and Open Road
Oct	Agritourism and Open Road
Nov	Holiday and Union Station
Dec	Holiday and Union Station

Paid Search	
Jan	Wedding
Feb	Wedding
March	Wedding
April	
May	Agritourism and Open Road
June	Agritourism, Open Road and Union Station
July	Agritourism and Open Road
Aug	Open Road
Sept	Agritourism and Open Road
Oct	Agritourism and Open Road
Nov	Holiday and Union Station
Dec	Holiday and Union Station

Paid Facebook	
Jan	Wedding
Feb	Wedding
March	Wedding
April	
May	Agritourism, Open Road and Dine on a Covered Bridge
June	Agritourism, Open Road, Union Station and Dine on a Covered Bridge
July	Agritourism and Open Road
Aug	Open Road
Sept	Agritourism and Open Road
Oct	Agritourism and Open Road
Nov	Holiday and Union Station
Dec	Holiday and Union Station

Metrics

- Bandwango analytics of check-in rates, participation and contact information, as well as redemption data
- Number of impressions
- Number of clicks
- Click-through rate (CTR)
- Cost per click
- Cost per thousand (CPM)



Website

Objective:

Drive and increase traffic to visitunioncountyohio.org by being the comprehensive and trusted source of destination information for visitors and residents, alike.

- A. Continue to encourage partner engagement with the Simpleview portal to allow for fresh copy, new images, and the exchange of information.
- B. Build and maintain market specific sections.
- C. Increase traffic to visitunioncountyohio.org through website link placement on partner websites.
- D. Increase online visitor guide requests and e-newsletter sign-ups.
- E. Develop and maintain a website calendar of events that exemplifies all that Union County has to offer.
- F. Craft and consistently post blog content that is strategic in nature.
- G. Curate local blogger list.
- H. Develop content around local stories, photos, and experiences.
- I. Partner with local photographers, TourismOhio, and residents to grow image and video libraries.

Metrics

- Increase site traffic
- Increase unique visitors
- Track and respond to bounce rate data
- Conversion rates (by page)
- Search engine rankings
- Visitor guide orders
- E-newsletter sign-ups
- Digital visitor guide views



Email and Social Media Marketing

Email Marketing Objective:

Inform and engage newsletter subscribers with the intent of converting readers to visitors.

- A. Send six seasonal e-newsletters (at minimum) for the leisure market.
- B. Create content plan and template to make e-newsletter production as simplified as possible.
- C. Ensure that email content and audiences parallel the advertising plan.

Metrics

- Number of e-newsletters sent
- Number of subscribers
- Average open rate
- Click through rates to website/partner websites

Social Media Marketing Objective:

Increase engagement on all Union County CVB and Union Station social media channels.

- A. Partner with Weirick Communications and Krystle Proper (volunteer) to develop content for consistent and engaging posts.
- B. Increase social media usage and followers, reach and engagement through unique content.
- C. Use social media as a marketing extension to engage visitors and others in "real time" to influence their decisions.
- D. Continue to build relationships with and engage influencers about Union County.
- E. Strategically promote posts with high engagement.

Metrics

- Reach and engagements
- Number of link clicks
- Number of social referrals to visitunioncountyohio.org
- Measured influencer engagement

Print Plan and Public Relations

Print Advertising and Collateral Objective: Implement a print media and collateral development plan to increase destination awareness.

- A. Advertise in the Ohio Travel Guide with reader response card.
- B. Send RFP and create new 2022/2023 Union County Visitors Guide.
- C. Partner with visitors guide distribution services.
- D. Create a map for frontline staff to direct guests and enhance economic impact.

Metrics

- Number of impressions
- Reader response rate/visitor guides sent
- Delivery and distribution of 2022/2023 visitor guide
- Number of maps distributed

Public Relations Objective: Create awareness for Union County as a destination and increase understanding of the role of the CVB.

- A. Partner with Weirick Communications to identify opportunities for publicity, press release development, and media coverage locally, regionally and nationally.
- B. Identify opportunities to tell our stories.
- C. Identify opportunities to submit work for recognition through state and/or national industry associations.
- D. Build and grow database of regional and national traditional and travel media contacts.
- E. Partner with TourismOhio to increase public relations opportunities.
- F. Review editorial calendars of publications and submit story ideas accordingly.
- G. Engage travel writer audience to encourage participation in Dine on a Covered Bridge events
- H. Develop a crisis communications plan.

Metrics

- Local, regional and national coverage garnered
- Number of placements secured
- Ad value equivalency achieved
- Increased presence and promotion through TourismOhio
- Awards/certificates received

Workforce and Travel Advocacy

Workforce Development Objective:
Foster a highly skilled hospitality workforce to support the needs of our partner businesses.

- A. Partner with economic development staff on workforce development initiatives.
- B. Assign an industry representative to the Talent Readiness Task Force and identify a communication plan to share findings.
- C. Research and identify resources to support employers in their search for skilled workers.
- D. Identify partnership opportunities with Tolles Career & Technical Center and Ohio Hi-Point Career Center.
- E. Provide internship and mentoring opportunities through the CVB.

Metrics

- Industry representation on Talent Readiness Task Force
- Defined partnership initiative with career centers
- Internships provided through the CVB

Travel Advocacy Objective:
Educate and inform key stakeholders about the value and impact of tourism in Union County, as well as the mission of the Union County Convention & Visitors Bureau.

- A. Continue to educate and keep township, village, city, county, and state elected officials informed about the economic impact of tourism, as well as Union County tourism trends, statistics and success stories.
 - 1. Provide quarterly updates to County Commissioners.
 - 2. Provide bi-annual updates to leadership with the City of Marysville, Village of Plain City, Village of Richwood, and townships.
- B. Identify opportunities to share the Union County CVB mission and scope of work with civic organizations.
- C. Include county, municipal leadership, stakeholders, and elected officials on leisure and tourism partner electronic communications.

Metrics

- Number of meetings attended, and presentations shared with municipal leadership
- Number of communication outreach opportunities to this same audience

Experiential & Special Events

Objective:

Create opportunities for room night generation, storytelling and growth through experiential and/or special events.

- A. Create opportunities for room night generation, storytelling, and economic impact through experiential and/or special events.
- B. Collaborate with partners to present eight new public Dine on a Covered Bridge events.
- C. Identify revenue generation and sponsorship opportunities for the Dine on a Covered Bridge events.
- D. Incorporate Dine on a Covered Bridge events into the Bandwango covered bridge pass to create awareness and drive participation.

Metrics

- Number of registrants for Dine on a Covered Bridge events
- Dine on a Covered bridge revenue generation
- Event publicity KPIs



Dine on a Covered Bridge

Union Station 1820

Objective:

To create awareness and drive economic impact by providing visitor information services and celebrating local artisan, vendors and stories.

- A. Create awareness for and grow visitation to Union Station.
- B. Achieve budgeted revenue goal.
- C. Grow local collateral presence by securing a graphic design intern.
- D. Continue to track sales and inventory data.
- E. Identify new artisans and vendors.
- F. Continue to send monthly e-newsletter.
- G. Create awareness for the Union Station Rewards Club.
- H. Continue to maintain online store.
- I. Create and implement a social media editorial calendar to enhance welcome center visibility and engagement.
- J. Connect with tourism partners to identify collaborative and cross-promotional opportunities.
- K. Identify opportunities to showcase local vendors and drive retail revenue.
- L. Benchmark DMO visitors' centers nationally to mine ideas and best practices.
- M. Develop marketing and advertising plan for Union Station 1820.

Metrics

- Revenue achieved
- Number of visitors
- Number of vendor partners
- Number of coupons distributed, redeemed, and related sales
- Number of partner brochures and referrals
- Newsletter open rate
- Number of days with in-store vendor promotions
- Welcome bags distributed
- Social media followers



Partner Outreach & Development

Objective:

Provide opportunities to grow partner businesses through education, connection, engagement, and development.

- A. Continue to identify opportunities to drive visitation and economic impact to Uptown Marysville, Uptown Plain City, and downtown Richwood.
- B. Partner with business owners and development leadership to elevate the offerings of and promotional opportunities for uptowns/downtowns.
- C. Continue to provide the opportunity for event and destination growth through the Tourism Grant Program.
- D. Host monthly Tourism Talk Partner Idea Exchange sessions, with a minimum of four educational opportunities provided annually.
- E. Increase the number of partners using and engaged with the Partner Portal.
- F. Work with partners to enhance Union County presence on Ohio.org
- G. Convene the Hospitality Advisory Committee quarterly to share insight and development opportunities.
- H. Send weekly event sheets to hotel frontline staff and additional target audiences.
- I. Get out, be visible (in van) to all parts of our county. Meet with, listen to and engage with our partners.
- J. Develop an in-county visitor guide distribution plan.
- K. Employ monthly and new weekly STR data to understand demand, occupancy, and business needs for all market segments.
- L. Work with development community to share visitor trends for asset development.
- M. Work with arts and cultural organizations to elevate the arts and cultural offerings in Union County.

Metrics

- Grant program success, based on criteria outlined in program
- Increased engagement with the partner portal
- Tourism Talk meetings hosted with attendance and educational participation tracked
- HAC meetings hosted
- Number of site visits and partner meetings
- Number of visitors guides distributed

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Mission of the Union County Convention & Visitors Bureau

The Union County Convention & Visitors Bureau is an economic development leader dedicated to enhancing community vitality and quality of life through travel and tourism.

Union County Convention & Visitors Bureau

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visitunioncountyohio.org

Union Station 1820 Welcome Center

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