



HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM

Strategic Plan 2026-2028

Board Adoption | March 6, 2026





OBJECTIVE

This 3-year Hamilton County Tourism Strategic Plan is designed to:

- Expand the visitor economy for leisure, sports and business segments
- Further enhance how HCT and stakeholders collaborate
- Align partners around a shared vision for the future

STRATEGIC PLAN ELEMENTS

VISION

Inspirational, aspirational,
clear priorities

PURPOSE

Concise statement defining
existence

GOALS

Required to achieve vision

INITIATIVES

Actions to achieve goals

TARGETS

Objective and measurable results

HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM

Strategic Plan 2026-2028

In Q3/Q4 of 2025, Hamilton County Tourism's leadership team, staff and board of directors collaborated with a wide breadth of community and industry stakeholders to develop this 3-year strategic plan for the organization. The role of the plan is to define new strategic goals, actionable initiatives and various performance targets to optimize the regional visitor economy in alignment with ongoing local developments and evolving travel industry trends.

The process to develop this strategic plan included more than 20 one-on-one interviews with key public and private sector leaders at municipal and County levels. Hamilton County Tourism also organized five focus groups with more than 50 participants, representing Hotels & Meeting Venues, Sports Tourism, Arts & Culture, Parks & Recreation, and Community Stakeholders.

All that community and industry engagement provided the necessary context and insights to ensure the initiatives in this strategic plan will capitalize on the most significant opportunities for the region during the next three years.





HAMILTON COUNTY TOURISM

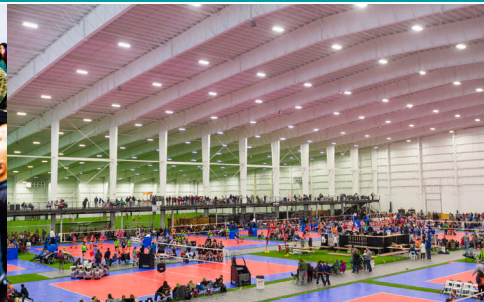
Vision Hamilton County is recognized as a year-round destination for authentic, best-in-class experiences.

Mission We drive positive impact in Hamilton County through tourism.



DESTINATION PRIORITIES

Mixed-Use Event & Conference Center	Sports Event Bid & Infrastructure	Creative & Cultural Industries	White River & Outdoor Recreation	Hamilton County Tourism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad support for a larger meetings and event venue but many questions re: funding, location, etc. • Suggested locations: CNO site, Innovation Mile, Grand Park. • Demand exists for more full-service and luxury tier hotels. • Sun-Thurs meetings business opportunity validates investment in public infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure funding to support event bids is commensurate with economic impact that sports delivers. • Need a sports event economic impact calculator. • Many other destinations are investing heavily in sports tourism facilities which could indicate increased competition. • Broad support for developing new winter sports tourism options including 4-sheet hockey rink. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a wide array of creative and cultural organizations but no central body for coordinating efforts. • Positioning a county-wide Cultural Trail system will drive visitor interest and spending. • Creative and cultural industries viewed as best option for creating a year-round visitor economy. • Improve support services for event producers to help them develop events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamilton County is not perceived as attractive for outdoor recreation by visitors to the degree it should. • Investing in the trail network unites the County as one integrated community. • More access points and low impact business development needed for White River. • Expand options for winter sports, including X-country skiing, snow boarding, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread requests for more customized, indepth data related to all visitor segments. • Support creative and cultural industries to diversify experiences, storytelling and overall destination brand. • High demand for HCT to help convene and align organizations in cities/towns to pool resources, optimize aggregate strengths, and unite communities around long-term shared purpose.





STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



TARGETS

- Web conversions
- Social engagement
- Brand sentiment
- Partner referrals
- Seasonal spend
- Seasonal hotel demand
- Number of site visits
- Number of corporate partners
- Number of group leads to hotels
- Number of seasonal events
- ROI

#1 SALES, MARKETING & SPORTS INITIATIVES	LEAD	'26	'27	'28
Package products and experiences to drive interest and spur cross-County travel.	Dir Marketing		X	
Develop guiding principles to maintain current trajectory of hosting marquee sporting events, including funding.	Dir HCSA		X	
Develop a clear and modern HCT brand platform and strategy.	EVP Dir Marketing		X	
Drive visitation through targeted 4-season campaigns, tailored content, and events to build a year-round visitor economy.	Dir Marketing Dir HCSA Dir Sales	X	X	X
Audit and optimize the marketing tech stack.	EVP	X		
Start proactive sales prospecting into new markets based on infrastructure commitments in next three years.	Dir Sales			X
Reinvigorate Hamilton County's outdoor recreation brand proposition and expand outdoor winter recreation messaging.	Dir Marketing			X



TARGETS

- Number of winter & shoulder season activations
- Number of White River & recreation activations
- Out-of-area engagement and web conversions with HamCo Hubway

#2 DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

	LEAD	'26	'27	'28
Develop winter and shoulder season festivals, events, products and packages to drive a year-round visitor economy.	CEO EVP Dir Community Engagement		X	X
Streamline BEST product development research into updated county-wide strategic plan.	CEO Dir Resources			X
Advocate for sustainable and improved recreation options along White River.	Dir Community Engagement Sustainability Sr Manager		X	
Support discussions on current large public gathering venues plus a new high-quality conference center with connected hotel.	CEO	X	X	X
Encourage development of an iconic attraction and anchor experiences that differentiate Hamilton County.	CEO EVP			X
Level up HamCo Hubway with signage and art experiences.	CEO Dir Community Engagement	X		



TARGETS

- Partner satisfaction
- Resident sentiment
- DestinationNext survey results
- Creative economy support - number served
- Number of creative economy initiatives
- Number of data sharing with external stakeholder groups
- Number of partner forum accounts
- Number of active partner forum users

#3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

	LEAD	'26	'27	'28
Design and implement a data-sharing strategy for local governments and stakeholders.	EVP	X		
Increase community awareness and support of tourism initiatives and key success indicators (economic, social, environmental) through an ongoing communications program.	CEO PR Manager Dir Community Engagement		X	
Build alliances across public/private/non-profit/philanthropic sectors (Support air service, workforce, housing conversations and shared initiatives)	CEO	X	X	X
Develop creative economy strategy with purpose of convening, growing, supporting and driving year-round visitor economy.	Dir Community Engagement	X	X	
Build a platform to create community forums to gather and distribute information on various topics to industry and community stakeholders.	PR Manager	X		



TARGETS

- Best Place to Work in Indiana designation
- Employee engagement & retention
- Number of new initiatives that result from professional development learning
- Board and leadership succession readiness
- Tax revenues
- Number of CSR programs and participants
- Number of tourism events that include a give back component

#4 BEST IN CLASS ORGANIZATION INITIATIVES	LEAD	'26	'27	'28
Update structured professional development program, including ongoing AI training.	Dir Resources Tech Manager	X	X	X
Develop succession plan for key leadership and specialized roles.	CEO Dir Resources	X		
Build a clear Corporate Social Responsibility roadmap for Hamilton County Tourism and Hamilton County Sports Authority.	Dir Community Engagement Dir Resources		X	
Establish leadership pipeline for board appointees.	CEO	X	X	
Maintain stable, long-term funding and establish a financial outlook as the County grows and evolves.	CEO VP Finance	X	X	X





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Marketing, Sales & Sports	Destination Development	Community Engagement	Best in Class Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Package products and experiences to drive interest and spur cross-County travel. (2027) Develop guiding principles to maintain current trajectory of hosting marquee sporting events, including funding. (2027) Develop a clear and modern HCT brand platform and strategy. (2027) Drive visitation through targeted 4-season campaigns, tailored content, and events to build a year-round visitor economy. (2026-28) Audit and optimize the marketing tech stack. (2026) Start proactive sales prospecting into new markets based on infrastructure commitments in next three years. (2026) Reinvigorate Hamilton County's outdoor recreation brand proposition and expand outdoor winter recreation messaging. (2027-28) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop winter and shoulder season festivals, events, products and packages to drive a year-round visitor economy. (2028) Streamline BEST product development research into updated county-wide strategic plan. (2028) Advocate for sustainable and improved recreation options along White River. (2027) Support discussions on current large public gathering venues plus a new high-quality conference center with connected hotel. (2026-28) Encourage development of an iconic attraction and anchor experiences that differentiate Hamilton County. (2028) Level up HamCo Hubway with signage and art experiences. (2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implement a data-sharing strategy for local governments and stakeholders. (2026) Increase community awareness and support of tourism initiatives and key success indicators (economic, social, environmental) through an ongoing communications program. (2027) Build alliances across public, private, non-profit and philanthropic sectors (Support air service, workforce, housing conversations and shared initiatives). (2028) Develop creative economy strategy with purpose of convening, growing, supporting and driving year-round visitor economy. (2026) Build a platform to create community forums to gather and distribute information on various topics to industry and community stakeholders. (2026) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update structured professional development program, including ongoing AI training. (2026-28) Develop succession plan for key leadership and specialized roles. (2026) Build a clear Corporate Social Responsibility roadmap for Hamilton County Tourism and Hamilton County Sports Authority. (2027) Establish leadership pipeline for board appointees. (2026-27) Maintain stable, long-term funding and establish a financial outlook as the County grows and evolves. (2026-28)



MEETINGS

“Hosting our annual trade show in Hamilton County is an all-around excellent experience for our employees, vendors, and customers. The nearby restaurants and hotels are abundant and high-quality. Also, hosting our event at Grand Park offers a venue that we are proud to partner with. The staff at Hamilton County Tourism works hard to make our event seamless and are a pleasure to work with.”

- Natalie Markle, CISCO Seeds

“Working with the sales and service team in Hamilton County is always an outstanding experience. Their deep local knowledge, responsiveness, and genuine commitment to helping us succeed made every interaction seamless and productive. Their professionalism and personalized approach truly set them apart.”

- Lisa Perius, Indiana Veterinary Medical Association





SPORTS

“Since 2022, Par 5 Group has supported LIV Golf events across the United States, and no host organization has matched the level of partnership and performance demonstrated by Hamilton County Sports Authority (HCSA). They were fully engaged from day one, set clear objectives, and delivered on every commitment. HCSA is a first-class organization – collaborative, responsive, and deeply committed to both its community and the success of every event hosted in Hamilton County.”

- Douglas K. Habgood, Par 5 Group



“Working with Hamilton County Sports Authority was a wonderful experience. From the start of planning the USA Wrestling Women’s National Duals event, during the event and then through the completion, they went above and beyond in assisting with all aspects of the process.”

- Pat Culp, Indiana State Wrestling Association





MEDIA

“Hamilton County, Indiana is a unique blend of historical depth and contemporary vibrancy, creating a destination that honors its past while embracing the present. It provides an enriching vacation experience that is ideal for families, history buffs, and solo-travelers alike.”

- Jason Gordon, Travel Writer



“Hamilton County is full of unexpected delights. To name just a few memorable moments from my visit: spotting fish from my kayak in the crystal clear White River; enjoying the lighted artwork of the Nickel Plate Trail as I walked under a crescent moon in Fishers; and the fun surprise of seeing the lifelike sculptures of everyday people throughout Carmel’s downtown.”

- Laura Stark, Rails to Trails Magazine



CONNECT WITH US!

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