



CITY OF COTTAGE GROVE
12800 Ravine Parkway South
Cottage Grove, Minnesota 55016
Council Chamber - 7:30 AM

June 4, 2024

Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Adoption of Agenda
5. Approval of Minutes
 - 5.1 02/27/2024 CGCVB Meeting Minutes
6. Presentations
 - 6.1 Local Option Sales Tax Presentation
7. Business Items
 - 7.1 2023 Annual Report
 - 7.2 2024 Quarter 1 Lodging Tax and Revenue Collection
 - 7.3 Visitor's Bureau Events Update
 - 7.4 CVB Strategic Plan Update and Recommendation
8. Workshop
9. Comments
10. Adjournment

Regular Meeting



**COTTAGE GROVE
CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU
MINUTES
CITY HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
February 26, 2024**

A meeting of the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau was held on the 27th day of February, 2024, at 7:30 a.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. by Chairman Justin Olsen. He asked everyone to stand and join him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. ROLL CALL

Alexa Anderson, Administration Specialist, called the roll:

Members Present: Justin Olsen, Chairman - Here
Sarah Grecula, Director - Here
Steve Hanson, Director - Here
Gretchen Larson, Director - Here
Laurie Levine, Director - Here
Druscilla Nute, Director - Here
Erik Olson, Director - Here

Members Absent: Tony Khambata, Vice Chairman

Staff Present: Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator
Jaime Mann, Interim Communications Manager/Assistant to the City Administrator
Alexa Anderson, Administration Specialist
Liz Dillon, Communications Specialist

Others Present: None.

3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Director Levine made a motion to approve adoption of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Grecula. Motion passed unanimously (6-to-0 vote).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1 Approval of November 28, 2023 CGCVB Meeting Minutes

Approval of the November 28, 2023 Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau Meeting Minutes.

Minutes were approved by unanimous consent (6-to-0 vote).

BUSINESS ITEMS

5.1 2023 Quarter 4 Lodging Tax

Jaime Mann, Interim Communications Manager/Assistant to the City Administrator, stated we had a great year in 2023. Quarter 4 Lodging Tax Revenue came in slightly over budget again at \$16,707, our projected Lodging Tax was \$16,587; so, we were .07 percent over our budgeted amount for revenue for Quarter 4.

Overall, in 2023, we were 5.7% over our budgeted amount and came in at just under \$100,000, at \$99,744, to a budgeted amount of about \$94,390.

Jaime stated she'd be happy to stand for any questions.

Chairman Olsen stated it's always good to start with some good news. He asked what did we attribute that to, just a little bit busier season for us with different things going on, etc.

Jaime replied if you recall, when we went back to our budgeting, we increased our Lodging Tax estimates for 2024 to 63% vs. 60%; so, I think we were a little bit under budget on the Lodging Tax side, but we came in higher on grants and the Food Truck Festival truck revenues.

5.2 Visitors Bureau Strategic Plan

Gretchen Larson, Economic Development Director, stated we had been working on an RFP for Strategic Plan for the CVB, and we issued the RFP earlier in the month and we had it out for about three weeks. We had hoped, given the discussions prior to actually issuing it, that we'd probably get four-or-five proposals. Unfortunately, we only received one, and while they're well qualified, they don't necessarily have any experience in the tourism industry.

So, we've decided to go ahead and tweak the RFP and put it back out for the next month. In your packet, we had originally said March 22 was the deadline, but we've decided to change it to March 28, just so you know the disconnect there. We might as well just give them a full month because we're not in any particular rush for the RFP to come back in, since you don't meet again until May.

This time, though, we're going to ask our partners in the Minnesota Chamber and Explore Minnesota to push it out a little harder for us, to select consultants that they may work with. We're also going to place an ad in the League of Minnesota Cities, in the Pioneer Press, and in the Minnesota Business Journal because we know consultants generally look for RFPs in legal postings. So, we're hoping with that, we'll get some more submittals that you'll be able to select from or we'll make a recommendation for.

Director Larson stated she'd be happy to answer any questions.

Chairman Olsen stated I think it's a smart decision, obviously, to extend the deadline a little bit considering that we want to make sure we do this right. Have we had any conversations with others that we work with as a City, with regard to Strategic Planning; for example, Ethical Leaders in Action, have we asked if they maybe have some contacts or know of anybody who does this sort of work in this particular niche?

Director Larson replied we've actually talked to all of our partners, so hopefully this next round will be a little more strategic with what we do and ask them to help us with it.

Chairman Olsen stated the second question I had has to do with how we're advertising; I know we do RFPs regularly, so, I'm certainly talking to the subject matter experts here as it relates to the way in which we kind of go to market with this. But because we're a Convention and Visitors Bureau, are there other avenues that we may want to explore that lean more towards sort of what we're looking for versus your standardized municipal government RFP? I saw we're advertising through the

League, we're advertising in the various newspapers. I just don't know if there are other publications or anything of that nature that we might want to take advantage of; frankly, it boils down to I don't know what I don't know. So, just curious if you're hearing from others who kind of do this sort of work that there may be potentially other avenues to try to source somebody who's going to fit our needs, and anybody who wants to answer that can answer that.

Director Larson replied we have discussed that; Alexa and I just discussed that yesterday, as a matter of fact, like let's look at everybody's who is in this business and try to figure it out. Because there are so many people who do strategic planning and they do a great job. Even the submittal we received, they're clearly qualified, but they don't have any tourism expertise. So, I think that's really the challenge is that we've got to figure out who makes the most sense to share it with, as our partners. Explore Minnesota and then the Minnesota Chamber and our Chamber of Commerce are certainly three that are very influential. But, yes, we are going to talk about who else would we send it to even though we'll issue it this week.

Chairman Olsen stated I'm just wondering, sometimes there are specialty websites and things of that nature and if those things do exist, it would be a shame if we didn't take advantage of it, so good.

Director Levine stated I'll ask one question just to clarify, so, are you looking for companies with expertise in the tourism, obviously, are you also looking for companies that are based here in Minnesota?

Director Larson replied well, yes, actually that was our original scope. We didn't really send it out of state; so, we're competing with a lot of folks, even Woodbury, who's going to set up a DMO, which is a Direct Marketing Organization. So, we want someone who has expertise in our area, if we can, but then also has that expertise in the tourism industry because we're going to just butt up right against our neighbors. We'd like to have a cooperative relationship, obviously, but they're going to do things and have budgets that far exceed ours. So, we're going to try as hard as we can.

5.3 2024 Visitors Bureau Events Plan

Liz Dillon, Communications Specialist, stated I'm happy to share the 2024 Event Schedule for Discover Cottage Grove:

- Cottage Grove Community Night at the St. Paul Saints: We have a tentative date of Saturday, June 8. This is an opportunity to get in front of a really large crowd that may not know of all the happenings in the City. Our biggest event, of course, is Strawberry Fest, which is our largest community event, and this is the one we will be promoting the most heavily.
- Strawberry Fest, June 21-23: We are excited to be back. At the fest, in the Strawberry Fields Marketplace, this has an expected attendance of 20,000-25,000 people.
- Food Truck Festival, September 14: We had a lot of success in our inaugural year. With the support of the Food Truck Committee, we are going to add more food trucks this year and are hoping to increase the perimeter of the event so folks can spread out a little bit more in the grass. Last year's attendance was about 6,000 people, and we're estimating between 8,000-10,000 attendees this year.
- Eric Dowdle Painting Unveiling: September 14, in conjunction with the Food Truck Festival, and the kickoff to the puzzle sale.
- Hometown Holiday Celebration: In 2023, we enjoyed unseasonably warm weather, which helped increase attendance. This is a free event, there were carnival games for the kids and photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus, and of course, Sparkle the Elf. With Thanksgiving falling on

the last Thursday of November, this will either be held in late November or early December, so the date is to be determined.

- CPKC Holiday Train: They release their train stops in the fall, so we will know later this year when the train will stop in Cottage Grove. Our stop is one of the most popular, expected attendance is 5,000-8,000. So, we're looking forward to welcoming the train once again.

Before we set our events for 2024, we need to replenish our giveaways. The backpacks were very popular and are showcased in this photo. We're looking to ordering more of those and other items to be decided at a later date.

Specialist Dillon stated before you is a recommendation, and I'd be happy to stand for any questions.

Director Olson stated I have a question about, chronologically here, the St. Paul Saints game. It sounds fun, I believe we did it last year; I personally didn't attend, but I heard it was a fun get together. How do we promote and advertise that within the community? Thinking CGAA baseball/softball, obviously there's a connection. How do we promote that; educate me on that and how we can grow some attendance.

Specialist Dillon said thank you for the question; I'm going to pivot to Jaime because I wasn't here last year.

Director Olson said coupled with that, do the Saints allow us so many tickets, or is it first come, first served, or how does that work?

Jaime replied this is our third year of attendance. We've had great success in the past two years attending, it's a fun event to work. I would happily invite all of you to join us at the event to work the booth that day. We are allotted some tickets with the package that we purchase; they have shifted their packages a little bit, I'm still working with them to figure out what's included for this year so we can update you once we know. They do open a ticket portal for Cottage Grove residents to purchase the tickets right through the portal as well. I don't know that they allocate a certain number to us through that portal, but as long as there are tickets available, I think our residents can purchase them.

Chairman Olsen asked to chime in a little bit on that. He stated I want to try to add a little color to the purpose behind the Saints partnership for those of you who may not be privy to why we started it, etc. And Jaime, Jennifer, whomever, feel free to chime in and correct me when I'm wrong.

Two years ago, the Saints approached us when we were brand new as a Convention and Visitors Bureau about a local partnership. Essentially, the theme was Cottage Grove Night at the Saints game. One of the reasons we chose to take advantage of that partnership and utilize the timeline that we utilized, which this year also, as you noted, includes tentatively a June date, is because we wanted to be there to feature Strawberry Fest. We made sure that we had a bunch of giveaways; in fact, I think we ran out the first year and last year, too. So, a bunch of us got together from the CVB and the City staff and dressed up in our CVB gear, and you saw the pictures. We had the CVB awning there, etc., and people were very interested. A lot of people stopped by, we had a few of us standing out in front, on the concourse, handing out gifts and talking to people about Cottage Grove. Again, the intent was this is a Convention and Visitors Bureau, we wanted visitors, and boy, did we ever get them. Because that Strawberry Fest two years ago was the largest Strawberry Fest that we, I think, had ever had. Now, the caveat to that is we'd been off for a few years because of the pandemic. So, there was probably some built-up demand, plus I think we had absolutely beautiful weather, we were very blessed that year. But we had just a massive turnout, and so we thought to ourselves, gosh, this is something we need to keep doing.

What the Saints did, Erik, is they opened up that portal for tickets, and I don't know if you remember this, but they picked a local charity, and the charity they chose was the Lions. Anybody who bought tickets through that portal got to contribute a portion of that revenue towards a charitable donation to the Lions Club; then, of course, the Lions passed that through to the CVB.

Last year, that changed. The portal last year was still open and you could still purchase tickets, and they had sort of three sections of tickets right in front of our CVB booth that they designated for Cottage Grove folks; but they didn't do the charitable donation last year, which was fine. It was a couple hundred bucks, no big deal. But they did make sure that they allocated a certain chunk of tickets, but there again, we set up, we made sure to hand out a bunch of things. We had some cool stuff last year, we had fishing lures last year that I think everybody really liked; we also used those at the Community Showcase. Again, we had just an amazing Strawberry Fest last year, it was huge. The weather again was good, but turnout was just magnificent. So, it feels like there's some really good synergy there, it feels like it's mutually beneficial, the Saints get a bunch of people at their games.

It got a little cold that night, but we still had people who went down on the field and did some kind of field event; Jaime stated it was a horse race, where they were on inflatable horses. So, the Mayor participated in that, I had a sore knee or something so I couldn't get down there at that time, but I know Commissioner Bigham also went out there. So, I think it's a fun thing to do for the City; I think people enjoy it, it's close, it's in St. Paul, so, it's not just a hideous drive. It seems to be working out well for our friends at the Strawberry Fest as well. So, I just wanted to add a little color to that and let people know why we're doing this, and the Saints have been tremendous partners, they've been really, really good. It's not a massive expense; I think the most expensive thing is the stuff we give away.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any other thoughts or questions since we're still talking about it.

Director Levine stated I had just one idea that came across my desk yesterday that I may use down the line, but as long as you were talking about looking at different giveaway items, something that was really cool is the reusable snack bags and they were logoed. And I thought how fabulous is that because every mother and parent is carrying those snack bags around for years and years and years. And, so, to have some, I have no idea on pricing or whatever, but I just thought it was a fantastic long-term giveaway to spread around our community.

Liz said thank you for the comment, yes, having something sustainable.

Chairman Olsen stated it's a great idea, it really is, and now is the time to share those because they haven't placed an order yet, so they're just brainstorming in terms of what to do. He asked if there were any other thoughts or comments at all.

Director Olson stated back to the Saints booth, of course promote Strawberry Fest, two, three weeks past the Saints game, but we might want to consider also having some literature or touting the September Food Truck Festival, as that's roughly 90 days away. And that's the same type of crowd, right, baseball, food truck, and fun.

Jaime replied yes, thank you. Last year we had huge success with having a backpack with a giveaway, so we were able to stuff flyers and the Visitors Guide into all of the backpacks to give away. So, yes, we will absolutely promote the Food Truck Festival, along with Strawberry Fest and our Visitors Guide, which we would love to include as well.

Chairman Olsen noted to Jaime that last year we gave away the backpacks, and we had different things in there. I think the comment by Director Olson was definitely relevant because I know you and I met about the Food Truck Festival here a couple weeks ago; Liz briefly mentioned we're going to do the puzzle reveal at the Food Truck Festival this year instead of Strawberry Fest. Can you maybe walk us through a little bit of how that came to be, what the vision is, etc.

Jaime stated with the puzzle, we learned that it was going to be slightly delayed for the date that we wanted to reveal it. So, if we couldn't capitalize on having it available for sale at Strawberry Fest, we wanted to go to our next biggest community event, which is our Food Truck Festival. As Liz said, we had an estimate of about 6,000 people last year at the event, so, this year, we're hoping for higher attendance with more food trucks and kind of a larger event. We're looking at other possibilities with the committee on things we can do as well; everything is to be determined right now, we just started meeting as a committee for that. So, we thought that was a great opportunity to reveal the painting and start puzzle sales. While we don't have exact timing, we'll probably start off early in the day; I know the Food Truck Festival starts at 11:00 a.m., so we'll probably start off early in the day with the painting reveal so we can sell puzzles for the entirety of the Food Truck Festival.

Chairman Olsen stated for those who aren't aware, I think that date is September 14, is that right? Jaime replied yes, Liz mentioned it in her presentation.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any other questions about the Events Plan; it certainly looks like it's going to be a lot of fun. With that, I'll entertain a motion based on the recommendation on your screen.

Recommendation: Approve budget spend of up to \$15,000 for event giveaway items to be chosen at a later date.

Director Levine made a motion to approve budget spend of up to \$15,000 for event giveaway items to be chosen at a later date. The motion was seconded by Director Hanson. The motion passed unanimously (6-to-0 vote).

5.4 2024 Visitors Guide

Chairman Olsen stated we're moving on the 2024 Visitors Guide. Jaime just mentioned that we were stuffing backpacks with the 2023 guide, so Jaime will be speaking about the 2024 Visitors Guide.

Jaime stated we have a new graphic designer on staff, Courtney, and she has created a fantastic updated 2024 Visitors Guide for you. For those of you who are fairly new to our Board, I will tell you our first Visitors Guide was in 2022; in 2023, we did a refresh, so the content remained basically the same, but we changed the cover, some of the photos, and obviously, dates of events and such inside the guide changed.

For 2024, it's a completely new, revamped Visitors Guide. Courtney was unable to be here today, but did a wonderful job, and before you is a printed copy of the draft Visitors Guide for your review. It was also sent in your packet. You can see a few of the layouts on the screen in front of you, too, so our cover features probably our most unique item in Cottage Grove, which is the treehouse, which is at Hope Glen Farm. That actually is a paid ad for us this year. We offered them the opportunity to advertise on our cover, which we haven't done previously; so, they paid for their treehouse to be featured on the front cover of the Visitors Guide. We also had additional ads throughout the guide, as you can see when you look through it; I'm not going to talk through every single ad in there, but it turned out beautifully. We are open to feedback, it has not gone to print yet as obviously its before you for the first time today. We've kind of broken the features down into five categories: Explore, Eat, Play, Events, and Extras. I'm not going to walk through everything in each category, but I'm going to point out a few new things that are in the guide this year that we haven't had previously: There is an article on Accessible Cottage Grove, which includes our accessible playground. We also partnered with Strawberry Fest to include some of the winning Top Chef contest recipes in the guide, so there are two recipes featured from the Top Chef Contest at the Strawberry Festival. We also have Top 12 Book Recommendations, which actually came from the Park Grove Library; they told us their top

checked-out books from 2023, so that's a new feature as well. Our photo contest winners are now actually called out as the Photo Contest Winners in the guide; we've previously been able to use their photos, but this is actually featuring them, and there's a call to action on that page that tells people to share their photos with us, tag us in their photos on Facebook, Instagram, any social media. So, that's kind of a quick overview of a couple new things that are listed.

We also have standard things, like our Strawberry Fest is featured, our Food Truck Festival is featured, our Events are listed. So, things to do, like the golf course and all of the great things to do in Cottage Grove, Oakwood Park, which is disk golf. There's a ton of information in the guide that you can review.

Now, onto the business side. So, in 2023, we purchased 5,000 guides. We ran out in about October; we had such great giveaways between the Saints game and Strawberry Fest that it depleted our stock of guides faster than the previous year. When I went back for a quote to reprint, it was almost as much as the initial printing of 5,000 copies, and I was only asking for about 2,000 copies. So, this year we want to increase the guides that we purchase; we are hoping for approval from you to purchase 7,000 guides for 2024. We think that amount should get us through the entire year of 2024, between Welcome Centers, the events that we go to, and people can also request these online. We have an online submission form where they can request them, and we mail them out to them as well. We also have them here at City Hall, so if people stop in, they can pick them up. I believe the Chamber has them at their office as well, so, they're available throughout Cottage Grove, including at the Ice Arena. One thing to note, we can offset a little bit of that cost with the six ads that are in there. We had \$4,450 in ad sales, including that cover ad that you see of the treehouse on the front cover.

Jaime said with that, before you is a recommendation, and I'd be happy to stand for any questions.

Chairman Olsen said thank you, Jaime, this is really neat, I really like the look of it. Before I share any comments, I'll open it up to the Board here. Any questions, thoughts, comments that you want to share with Jaime and the team.

Director Levine stated I'll just make a quick comment, this is beautiful. It's a beautiful guide, and on behalf of the Chamber, we're really excited to be a part of it this year; we hadn't in the past, and so, I was excited when Courtney reached out to ask if we wanted to be a part of it. On top of that, as much as we wanted to be a part of it, I didn't have a marketing person that was able to create the ad, so she jumped in and helped with that as well. So, I'm so impressed with everything that she did and excited to be a part of this.

Chairman Olsen stated thank you very much, and for those who aren't aware, Director Levine is also the queen of all she surveys as it relates to the Cottage Grove Area Chamber. She's changed titles several times, so I'm probably going to get it wrong, but I mean I think you're basically Chairman, C.E.O., so, you're everything, right? You do it all? Yeah, so it's great to have the Chamber in lockstep with us on this partnership.

Chairman Olsen stated before we get to the recommendation, Jaime, first of all, just my general impression: The layout of this is much better than what we've done in the past, and I know you mentioned that we have a staff person who has some expertise in here, and it really shows. Definitely a much easier to follow layout. The second thing is some of the little things that we're doing in here in terms of just font changes and what have you, they really stand out. I mean, if you didn't have a basis of comparison, you probably wouldn't notice it; but because we've seen the last couple, it does stand out and it's a nice document. I know you mentioned that we have it, I believe, out at the airport, and we have it at all of our various City facilities and lots of other places, but we also give a lot of these away, which is why you're asking for the additional 7,000 copies. Can you just briefly touch on the

partnership we have with Explore Minnesota and how that all links together with our friends at Sievers regarding the guide, please.

Jaime stated I will make one correction. We actually didn't get our bid for the airport this year, but we will be at the Mall of America. So, the airport is a lottery, so, you have to submit your name every year, and that didn't come through for us this year. We do partner with Explore Minnesota, especially on grants and advertising. So, they are a great partner with us; once to twice a year, they put out a grant opportunity for us, which helps fund some of our social media paid advertisements. We also work with them to be in six-or-seven Welcome Centers throughout the State where our guides are also distributed. So, they will contact us, asking can you send us one-or-two cases of your Visitor Guides, and we send them directly to the Welcome Centers throughout the State, which are a part of Explore Minnesota as well.

Chairman Olsen stated fantastic, thank you, and I just received a text message from our former Board Chair, former Council Member Dennis, and he loves the guide as well and is all in favor. I'm supposed to tell you guys that, so perfect.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any other questions before we get to the recommendation.

Director Nute stated I have a comment. I do like the book, it looks really nice, I like everything about it, the pictures and everything. I do think that we need a few more pictures of diversity to see what our community really, truly looks like. And, then, just a question; so, it is six ads that were sold, are all of the ads being sold at the same price, or are they at different prices depending upon where you are in the book?

Jaime replied yes, there is different pricing. I don't know it off the top of my head, but the front inside cover is a different price than a quarter-page ad. So, we have different sizes of ads that you can choose, I think starting at a quarter page, up to a full page ad, and the inside front and back cover are different prices as well. So, while I don't know the exact pricing off the top of my head, we do have a different breakdown, depending on what size they would prefer.

She stated as far as the diverse photos, we are working on building a library, being that we are still a newer CVB. We go out to every event that we can to try to take photos. So, we have made a conscious effort to try to include diversity in a lot of our photos so we can include them in publications such as this as well.

Director Nute asked is there only six ads available in each book, or that's just who wanted it this time?

Jaime replied we opened it up to everybody; we sent it out through an email database we have of businesses, so everybody is welcome to advertise. We only had six interested this year, I think last year we had eight. So, it's kind of about average for our advertisements in the guide; being it is still newer, we don't have a huge history of distribution. There are cities like Bloomington or some of the bigger tourism cities with the Mall of America and all of the things happening in Bloomington, they kind of have that history where we don't have a long-term history of how many guides are distributed.

Chairman Olsen thanked Director Nute for her comments. I talk every year about that, don't I, how important it is that we have photographs in the guide that reflect our diverse community. As our diversity continues to ramp up every ten years in the census, we see that, it becomes more and more apparent that Cottage Grove is a great place to live, work, and play for people of all backgrounds, experiences, etc. One notable item that I did not see in the guide, and I may have missed it, so if I did, I apologize, is the One Family Festival that we do in town. Is it in there, did I miss it?

Jaime replied yes, I believe it's on our calendar where we have Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter. If it's not, I will make sure it gets added on there.

Chairman Olsen stated the reason I bring it up is it kind of coincides with the comment about our diverse community, because that festival is geared towards the Hmong community, and it draws a ton of people to Kingston Park twice a year, as it happens twice a year. So, just a thought there. And I did notice in the photographs that we're making a conscious effort at showing our diverse population base, but there's always room for more, so thank you for the comment, and thank you for such a positive response to that comment.

Recommendation: Approve quote for the printing of 7,000 copies of the 2024 Visitor Guide through GDI, Inc. for \$10,566.

Director Hanson made a motion to approve quote for the printing of 7,000 copies of the 2024 Visitor Guide through GDI, Inc. for \$10,566. The motion was seconded by Director Nute. The motion passed unanimously (6-to-0 vote).

6.1 PUBLIC HEARINGS - None.

OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 CGCVB Comments

Director Levine stated I'll just add real quick to our last conversation that the Chamber of Commerce as well is working with a new Chamber Member to collect video and photography throughout all of our events as well. I'm happy to share any of that, as that might be helpful for this guide for next year. So, between the two of us, hopefully we can get some nice library of photos. Chairman Olsen stated thank you very much.

Director Olson stated I like the cadence of our events. If you look at a calendar, 12 months, the cadence to me feels right; there's not too many, there's not too few, so I think seasonality is good here. I'd like to make that comment, I think we're on the right track. Chairman Olsen stated wonderful, thank you very much, I would agree with that wholeheartedly.

Chairman Olsen said I am going to ask Jaime to step to the podium one more time because she and I had the opportunity to meet a couple weeks back about this year's Food Truck Festival, and it was shortly before that that we learned that we would be doing the painting unveiling and the Dowdle Puzzle Project at our Food Truck Festival. But I know there are some big plans in the works for the Food Truck Festival, and in my view, it would be very helpful if the members of this body could participate in the planning process. I know that everybody's busy, there's a lot going on, but could you tell us a little bit about when your team is meeting to create some of the excitement and the plans, so that if folks do want to participate in that, that they can.

Jaime stated absolutely, thank you Chairman, Members of the Board. We meet about every three weeks to plan; actually, Director Levine is on the committee for the Food Truck Festival already, but we would welcome anybody else who would like to volunteer. It's Thursdays when we typically meet, usually from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. I don't have the exact date off the top of my head of when our next meeting is, but at that time we talk through all things, vendors, food trucks, music, timing, everything that's included in the event. We are looking at potentially adding a marketplace, that's not 100% confirmed yet, whether it's this year or next year. So, we are just starting the process; if anybody would like to be a part of the planning committee, feel free to reach out to me, and I can add you to the meeting request for those meetings.

Chairman Olsen stated okay, perfect. If you don't already know, at one time I was the president of the Strawberry Fest Committee, Mayor Bailey was president before me, and the current president is Laurie Olsen. One of the things that we learned, working together as a Strawberry Fest committee, is that more hands make for lighter work, and you can certainly get a lot more things done in a very timely fashion if you have more participants. Secondly, this is going to be a big deal, arguably our second biggest event of the year, next to Strawberry Fest. If we want to make it really special, whether it's a marketplace, whether it's some different live music, different bands, etc., it's going to take us a little bit of time to put those plans together. But we need people who are willing to take on certain jobs that are going to be part of the planning committee, just like we do at Strawberry Fest. Strawberry Fest has people in charge of fundraising, people in charge of the carnival, people in charge of the parade, people in charge of all the bands, and you can't put people in charge if you don't have people. So, we would very much like it if members of the Convention and Visitors Bureau would be willing to help out in whatever capacity they can to plan and execute this event. I certainly will do what I can within the scope of my other responsibilities, but I think this is our signature event, so to speak, and we should be part of making it happen. So, I wanted Jaime to just share a little bit, and maybe Jaime what you could do is at some point send an email out to the membership, just indicating this is our schedule of planning meetings, etc. That way, if people do have an interest, they can respond back.

Chairman Olsen asked if there were any comments or questions on that at all; I see heads nodding so hopefully that means people want to help. And we're not talking about a 40-hour workweek to help plan this thing, but trust me when I tell you, the Strawberry Fest is as successful as it is because volunteers step up to help. We mentioned the marketplace; way back in the day, we used to call that the Business Expo, and I ran the Business Expo when the Mayor was president of Strawberry Fest. Then when he stepped away and I became president of the Strawberry Fest, Council Member Thiede ran the Business Expo and changed it to the Strawberry Fields Marketplace. Now, we have one of our Park and Rec Commission Members, Samantha Crabtree, running that, and she's just doing a magnificent job. So, this is one of those deals where a little sweat equity would be helpful.

Chairman Olsen stated the last thing I want to touch on, before we move on to the rest of the agenda, is for those who may not be aware, our friends at SoWashCo CARES have their Leap into Legacy event on the 29th, which is Thursday, at River Oaks. It starts at 6:00 p.m. and runs until 9:00 p.m. As the title of the event states, it's a Leap Year thing, so they only do it on Leap Years. And this is a way for them to raise funds for SoWashCo CARES, get members of the community to participate in learning more about what SoWashCo CARES is and does. They are their own entity, although they do work closely with the School District and the various cities, etc. I believe you can go onto the SoWashCo CARES website right now and still purchase event tickets. Our Cottage Grove Lions Club is an event sponsor, so, we'll have some of our Lions folks there as well. I'll certainly be there, along with Commissioner Bigham and some other folks. They also have a Silent Auction that is actually available to view and bid on right now. For more information, please reach out to SoWashCo CARES on their website, or if you want to reach out to me, I'll certainly direct you where to go. I know Director Levine, you're part of this event, too, and it's going to be a big one, it's going to be fun. So, I'm looking forward to it, Thursday night at River Oaks, 6:00 p.m.

7.2 Response to Previous CGCVB Comments - None.

8.1 Workshop - None.

9.1 Presentation - None.

10.0 ADJOURNMENT

Director Levine made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 a.m. The motion was seconded by Director Grecula. The motion passed unanimously (6-to-0 vote).

Chairman Olsen stated the meeting is adjourned, and our next meeting will be Tuesday, May 21, 2024, at 7:30 a.m., right here in the Cottage Grove City Council Chambers. Have a great day, everybody.

Respectfully submitted,

Jaime Mann, Interim Communications Manager
Assistant to the City Administrator

/jag



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau
FROM: Jaime Mann, Assistant to the City Administrator
DATE: May 31, 2024
RE: 2023 Annual Report

Background/Discussion

According to the bylaws for the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB), each year the CVB is required to submit a written Annual Report to the City Council no later than 2nd Quarter of the following year. The Annual Report provides an overview of highlights, activities, and the budget from the 2023 calendar year.

Recommendation

Receive the 2023 Cottage Grove Convention and Visitor's Bureau Annual Report.



MORE THAN YOU
Imagine

**Cottage Grove Convention
& Visitors Bureau**
2023 Annual Report

12800 Ravine Parkway South
Cottage Grove, MN 55016
651-458-2800 | [DiscoverCottageGrove.com](https://www.discovercottagegrove.com)

DISCOVER
COTTAGE GROVE




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A Message From The

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Dear Friends, Partners and Visitors,

As we reflect on the year 2023 for Discover Cottage Grove, we are filled with a sense of pride and accomplishment. The Cottage Grove Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB) has been at the forefront of promoting our vibrant community, rich in history and bursting with natural beauty. Our mission to enhance the visitor experience and support local businesses has never been more relevant.

In Cottage Grove, 2023 was a year filled with connection and celebration. In this report, we will share the highlights of our efforts to enhance tourism and support our local economy. From hosting the inaugural Discover Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival, to celebrating our community's events, the CVB continues to promote local business and events and create marketing campaigns that showcase our town's uniqueness. All of this while working with our local and state partners to ensure positive economic impact in Cottage Grove while continuously working to put Cottage Grove on the map as a must-visit destination.

Our mission remains ever critical as we review the year and plan for the future. The mission of Discover Cottage Grove is to promote Cottage Grove as a premier destination for leisure travelers, weddings, and outdoor enthusiasts, ensure Cottage Grove is a recognized and successful host city for meetings and conventions, and establishing the city as a prominent and respected venue for sporting events. Building and maintain successful partnership will be key to helping us continue to achieve our mission.

With the annual report, we would like to look back and celebrate the past years' successes along with laying the groundwork for an even brighter 2024 and beyond. Together, we are not just promoting a destination; we are nurturing a legacy for generations to come.

Thank you for discovering Cottage Grove!

Justin Olsen
Chairman of the Board
Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau





Live. Work. Play. Visit.

Nestled between Wisconsin and the Twin Cities Metro, Cottage Grove is a haven for those seeking an active lifestyle and a deep connection with nature. With its extensive network of parks and trails, it beckons residents and visitors alike to explore and unwind amidst lush greenery and scenic landscapes. From sprawling urban parks teeming with recreational facilities to winding trails that meander through picturesque woodlands and along tranquil rivers, there's something for every outdoor enthusiast to enjoy. Families gather for picnics, friends engage in friendly games, and fitness enthusiasts jog or cycle along the paths, invigorated by the fresh air and revitalizing surroundings. Amidst the hustle and bustle of city living, these green oases provide a sanctuary for rejuvenation, reflection, and connection with the natural world, embodying the perfect balance between urban excitement and natural tranquility.

Whether you're here for a long time, or just a fun time, Cottage Grove offers ample opportunities for housing, work and play. Not only are we a safe and prosperous community, we pride ourselves in being a warm and welcoming place for residents and visitors to live, work, play and visit.



MEET OUR TEAM

The Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) markets and promotes Cottage Grove as a year-round visitor destination, working in partnership with industries, corporate partners, state partners, city departments and regional destination marketing organizations. The CVB serves as the primary marketing organization responsible for the development and implementation of promotional programs to ensure positive economic impact in Cottage Grove through steady growth of the travel industry.

Mission

The CVB's mission is to promote Cottage Grove as a premier destination for leisure travelers, weddings, and outdoor enthusiasts, a recognized and successful host city for meetings and conventions, and a prominent and respected venue for sporting events. To learn more about the CVB's activities, please visit our website or sign up for our newsletter.

Board Members



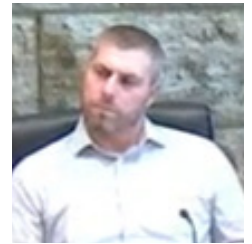
Justin Olsen
Chair



Tony Khambata
Vice Chair



Sarah Grecula
Director



Steve Hanson
Director



Gretchen Larson
Director



Laurie Levine
Director



Druscilla Nute
Director



Erik Olsen
Director

Staff Members



Jennifer Levitt
City Administrator



Jaime Mann
Assistant to the
City Administrator



Liz Dillon
Communications
Specialist



Courtney Hanna
Communications
Specialist



Key Accomplishments

VISITOR GUIDE

The 35-page guide represents the opportunities for visitors and travelers alike to discover our unique city. From lodging facilities, outdoor parks and recreation, events, meeting venues and more, there's something inside for everyone. Flipping through the pages is truly a reminder of what people who live here already know: The city is a special place to live, work and play.

By the Numbers

- This is the second annual publication for Cottage Grove.
- This guide boasts 35 pages full of amenities, activities and information about Cottage Grove.
- There are 10 total ads in this publication.
- \$5,095 in revenue was collected from advertising dollars through this publication.

In Addition to the Numbers

- This publication was created entirely in-house, providing massive cost savings to the CVB by not hiring an outside organization.
- There is a digital flipbook of the guide hosted on DiscoverCottageGrove.com which is an elevated version of the printed piece. This includes links driving traffic to local businesses and advertisers.

Where Can I Find It?

- Mall of America, MSP Airport, Welcome Centers and Visitor Centers.
- City Hall, Cottage Grove Ice Arena, and other local locations.
- To see the digital flipbook, visit our website: DiscoverCottageGrove.com/Visitors-Guide



5,000
Copies Printed



10
Paid Advertisers

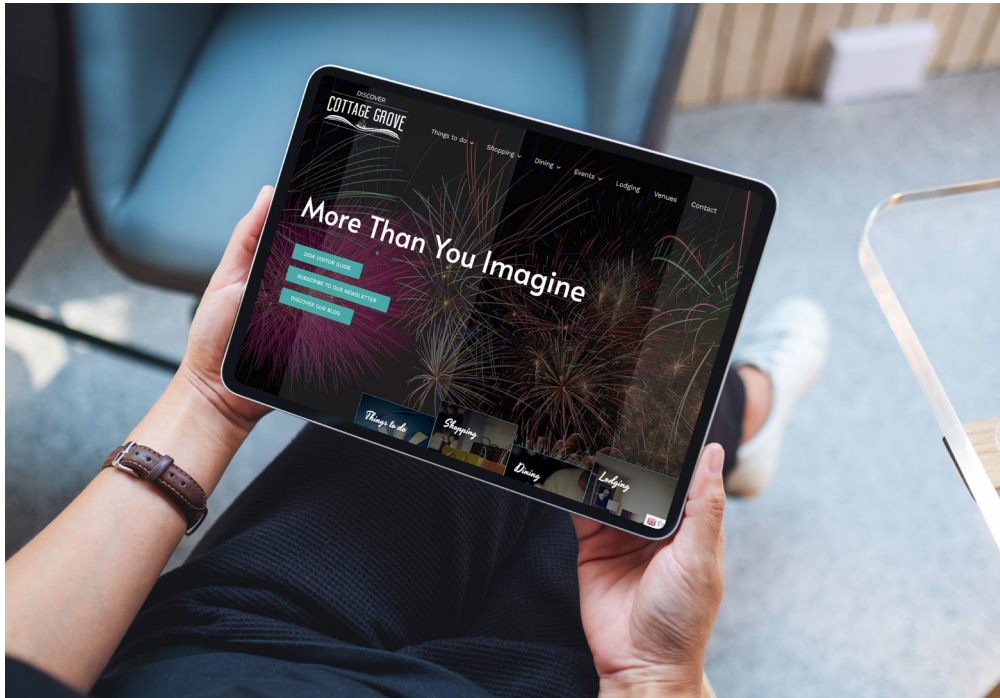


\$5,095
Revenue Collected

Key Accomplishments

WEBSITE

The CVB's most valuable marketing asset is our website, **DiscoverCottageGrove.com**. Here is where residents and visitors can access the Visitor Guide, our events calendar, and a list of suggestions for dining, lodging and more.



Users by Month

January – 1.9K
 February – 1.3K
 March – 3.3K
 April – 3.7K
 May – 6K
 June – 5.5K
 July – 2.8K
 August - September – N/A

Most Viewed Pages

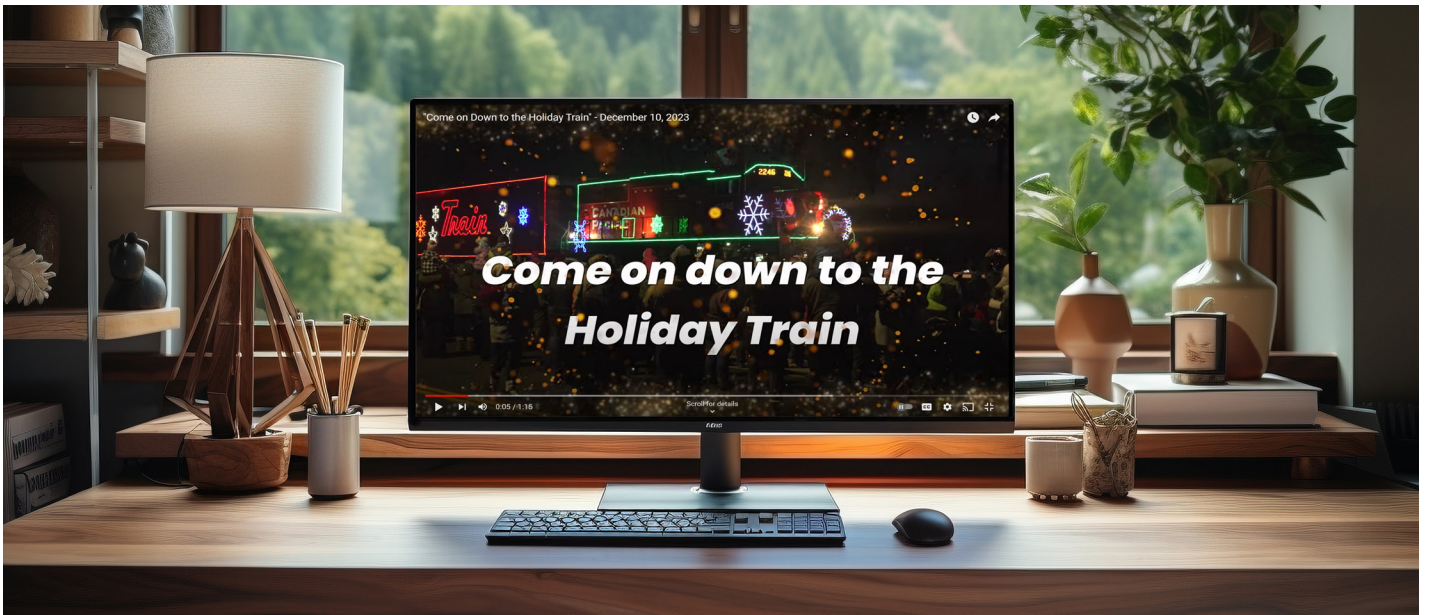
1. Homepage
2. Visitor Guide
3. One Family Fest
4. Saints Tickets Contest
5. Blizzard Bash
6. Photo Contest
7. Strawberry Fest

Session primary...Channel Group) ▾		Session source / medium ▾ ×	↓ Users	Sessions	Engaged sessions
Total Users (YOY)			42,592 100% of total	52,464 100% of total	20,279 100% of total
1	Organic Search	google / organic	16,208	21,145	11,340
2	Organic Social	sieverscreative / Social	10,858	12,412	2,780
3	Unassigned	sieverscreative / Facebook	6,589	7,621	1,677
4	Direct	(direct) / (none)	3,728	4,790	1,597
5	Organic Social	m.facebook.com / referral	2,098	2,239	456
6	Organic Social	l.facebook.com / referral	586	820	351
7	Organic Social	lm.facebook.com / referral	586	657	230
8	Organic Search	bing / organic	555	769	548
9	Organic Search	yahoo / organic	232	317	181
10	Referral	exploreminnesota.com / referral	217	275	169

Organic: Visitors landing on your website due to unpaid search results. (SEO, keywords, etc.)

Direct: Visitors who arrive at your site by typing your website URL directly into their browser's address bar.

Referral: Visitors who land on your website from sites other than the major search engines. (Facebook, Google, Private Domains, etc.)



Key Accomplishments

PHOTO & VIDEO

Working with local talent builds professional relationships within our community, all while highlighting the authentic beauty Cottage Grove has to offer, at little or no cost to us. The CVB worked with various professional photographers in the area: Isaac Pavek, Nathan Klok, Sigrid Dabelstein and others. We also partnered with South Washington County Telecommunications Commission (SWCTC) to produce seven videos that highlight the city's unique events and activities.

Key Accomplishments

SOCIAL MEDIA

Effective social media plays a key role in building our brand and bringing people to Cottage Grove. The interactive and visual nature of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all provide powerful opportunities for people to engage and experience Cottage Grove through video and photos. Giving potential visitors a first-hand look at the city's restaurants, parks, recreational opportunities, wedding venues and other offerings has been incredibly effective. We've reached thousands of people and shown them all the city has to offer.

Ad Campaigns

Not only does effective social media play a key role in building our brand, but effective social media ad campaigns reach new users, target specific audiences, increases brand visibility and, at a relatively low-cost, helps to increase sign-ups and lead generation. An advantage of marketing through social media as opposed to "traditional" print advertising is the ability to allow for consumer interaction. Not only can people click where to go, they can also "like" and "share" without any additional cost to the producer.



Boosted Ad

CPKC HOLIDAY TRAIN RETURNS TO COTTAGE GROVE
(Facebook Event)

34,331 Impressions | 1,245 Event Responses | \$600.00



Top Performing Campaign

FOOD TRUCK FESTIVAL
(Facebook Event)

29,600 Impressions



Top Performing Video

COTTAGE GROVE BIKE PARK
(YouTube Account)

2,780 Impressions

Facebook Stats

January 1 - December 31, 2023

502,000 People Reached

11,900 Engagements

33,300 Link Clicks

3,900 Followers

Instagram Stats

January 1 - December 31, 2023

47,900 People Reached

864 Followers

97 Engagements

10 Reels/Videos

216 Posts

Twitter (X) Stats

January 1 - December 31, 2023

200 Tweets

90 Followers

YouTube Stats

Come to Strawberry Fest

313 views

Come on Down to the Holiday Train

231 views

Kayak on the River

109 views

Winter Wonderland

83 views

Ice Fishing

82 views

Celebrate Halloween in CG

68 views

Cottage Grove Community Night at the St. Paul Saints

46 views



Public Relations

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Effectively marketing the city and showcasing it as a recreation, retail and meeting destination requires a multi-faceted approach. We use strategic practices to promote our community such as the visitor guide, strategic partnerships, paid media, blog posts, monthly newsletter, community engagement, sponsorships and more.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

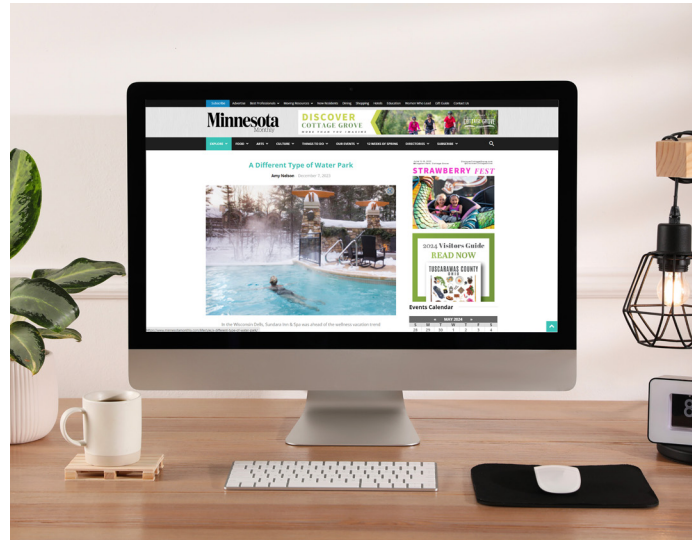
Throughout 2023, Discover Cottage Grove partnered and collaborated with top brands on unique promotions that drive awareness and demand for the destination in non-traditional tourism channels. Both Discover Cottage Grove and its partners were able to take advantage of these co-op opportunities for added reach and credibility.

Public Relations

PAID MEDIA

Minnesota Monthly – \$3,595

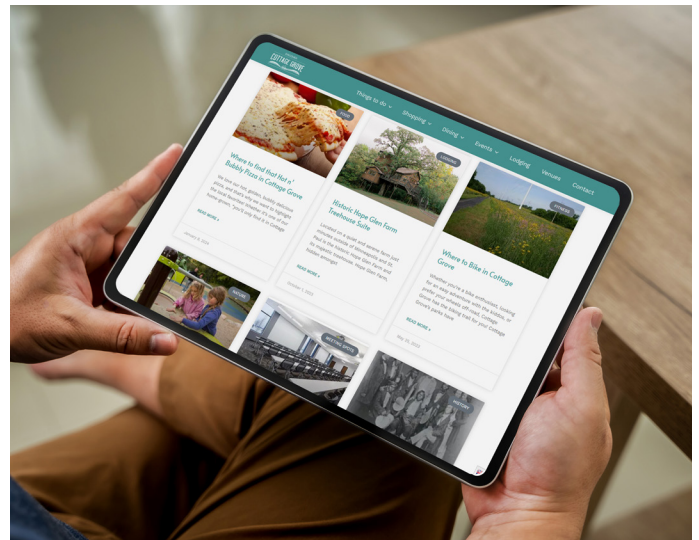
- 12 Weeks of Summer
- Run of Site Advertising
- Native Article
- E-Newsletter Sponsorship
- Sponsored Social Posts
- Destinations Itinerary
- Summer Bucket List | Cottage Grove Bike Park
- Fall Bucket List | Food Truck Festival



BLOG POSTS

Discover Cottage Grove Blog

- Discover Woodridge Park
- Where to Bike in Cottage Grove
- Historic Hope Glen Farm Treehouse Suite



E-NEWSLETTER

The Insider | Monthly Newsletter

Our monthly E-newsletter, The Insider, delivers a curated blend of local events, classes, tips, tricks, helpful links, ideas and more. Each month is full of seasonal happenings with a direct link to our Discover Cottage Grove event calendar. You can also access our social media platforms and visitor guide. Your ultimate, digital guide to Cottage Grove.



SWAG

In 2023, we handed out a few different swag items: branded beach balls, luggage tags, drawstring bags, frisbees and MN-shaped pens.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Cottage Grove Community Night at CHS Field

Discover Cottage Grove teamed up with the St. Paul Saints on June 10, 2023 to promote Cottage Grove Community Night at the St. Paul Saints game. As we passed out DCG swag in front of our colorful tent, we enjoyed talking to attendees about visiting Strawberry Festival.



Cottage Grove Strawberry Fest

We partnered with Cottage Grove Strawberry Fest to bring families together for the annual, four-day event. The festival is run completely by volunteers with no admission fee or cost to watch the main stage events. We are continuous supporters of Cottage Grove Strawberry Fest and have a DCG booth in the marketplace area.



One Family Tournament

Showing our support in our community is at the top of our priority list. In 2023, we attended the 3rd Annual Hmong Memorial Sport Fest Tournament at Kingston Park. People from all around stopped at our branded booth as we talked with them about all Cottage Grove has to offer. We also attended their event on Labor Day.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



6,000 - 7,000
Attendance



23
Food Trucks



4
Sponsors



Food Truck Festival

The inaugural Discover Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival was a huge success! Guests enjoyed a variety of food trucks, live music, a beer garden, free admission, games and more.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Revenue

Budgeted Revenue = \$94,390

Total 2023 Revenue = \$99,792

Revenue Breakdown

State Grant = \$14,000

Lodging Tax = \$71,599

Q1

- Budgeted: \$22,877
- Actual: \$18,145
- - 20.7%

Q2

- Budgeted: \$22,338
- Actual: \$24,493
- 9.6%

Q3

- Budgeted: \$32,588
- Actual: \$40,399
- 24.0%

Q4

- Budgeted: \$16,587
- Actual: \$16,707
- 0.7%

Overall

- Budgeted: \$94,390
- Actual: \$99,744
- 5.7%

Expenses

Budgeted Expenses = \$70,920

Total 2023 Expenses = \$81,884

Expenses Breakdown

Marketing Expenses

- Budgeted: \$45,874
- Actual: \$58,532

Operating Expenses

- Budgeted: \$38,696
- Actual: \$23,352

Summary

2023	Budget	Actual
Revenue	\$94,390	\$99,792
Expense	\$70,920	\$81,884

*Revenue and expense figures do not include budgeted salary and benefits expense or ARPA funds received. Those numbers offset each other in our budget.

Strategic Plan

LOOKING AHEAD

Creating new ideas is key for a visitor bureau to stay relevant, innovative, and competitive in the ever-evolving tourism industry. Fresh ideas enable visitor bureaus to adapt to changing traveler preferences, market trends, and technological advancements, ensuring they remain ahead of the curve. Introducing new concepts, experiences, and initiatives not only attracts attention but also keeps visitors engaged and excited about the destination.

Building the Strategic Plan

Discover Cottage Grove recently partnered with Chandlerthinks, a group of destination branding specialists, to create a strategic plan and comprehensive roadmap for the visitor bureau. This will provide a framework for decision-making and resource allocation, guiding the visitor bureau to achieve its mission and fulfill its mandate of promoting the destination to a wider audience. The plan is estimated to take approximately 10-13 weeks and cost approximately \$35,750. This partnership will drive future direction.

1. Revamped Website (Desktop, Tablet and Mobile)

An engaging website is paramount for a visitor bureau as it serves as the digital gateway to a destination, offering a virtual storefront for travelers seeking information and inspiration. It is a centralized hub where visitors can access resources such as accommodations, event calendars, dining options, and activity recommendations. A well-designed website with a reliable host delivers a user-friendly experience, ensuring that visitors can easily navigate your website.

2. Discover Cottage Grove, Welcome Video

A welcome video serves as a powerful tool for a visitor bureau, offering a dynamic and engaging introduction to a destination. Through captivating visuals and compelling narratives, it conveys the unique charm, attractions, and amenities of the area, enticing travelers to explore further. This video can showcase not only iconic landmarks but also hidden gems and local experiences, providing a comprehensive overview of what the destination has to offer.

3. Increased Partnerships = Increased Exposure

Local collaborations not only amplify the visibility of the event but also provide invaluable resources to attendees. By joining forces, visitor bureaus and local events can leverage each other's strengths, tapping into wider networks and attracting a more diverse audience. Moreover, such partnerships foster community engagement and economic growth, as they promote tourism, stimulate spending in local businesses, and cultivate a sense of pride in the host destination.

4. "Tour the Town" – Discover Cottage Grove Passport

We want our visitors to *Discover* Cottage Grove, and we've come up with a fun tool to get them exploring our parks, trails and open spaces. Whether we go digital (or keep it on paper), "Tour the Town" passport will be an interactive activity for people of all ages to participate in. As they embark on their journey to hit all the spots, the passport will encourage them to mark off where they've been in Cottage Grove, all while enjoying this free and adventurous activity.

5. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) are fundamental principles that must be prioritized to create welcoming and inclusive destinations for all travelers. Continuing to include all types of abilities and cultures in our photos and marketing is imperative to make sure all people can see someone who looks like them when they look at Cottage Grove. By celebrating diversity, we can attract a wider range of tourists and enhance the overall visitor experience.

6. Billboard

Billboard advertising is still one of the most effective forms of advertising. Billboards may not be your go-to option when we compare it to getting responses from email campaigns, websites, or calls. Billboards are viewed by hundreds and thousands of people daily. In fact, the same person may be seeing your billboard regularly which creates brand awareness. This prompts your potential customers to at least do their research on your brand, product, or service.





Cottage Grove Convention & Visitors Bureau

12800 Ravine Parkway South
Cottage Grove, MN 55016
651-458-2800 | DiscoverCottageGrove.com

DISCOVER
COTTAGE GROVE



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Jaime Mann, Assistant to the City Administrator

DATE: May 31, 2024

RE: 2024 Q1 Lodging Tax and Revenue Collection

Discussion

2024 Q1 Lodging Tax Collections

The 2024 budget used a 63% occupancy rate when calculating our 2024 lodging tax projections. The average of \$6,023 was used when budgeting lodging tax revenue for each month of 2024. We know that lodging numbers typically go down in the winter months in Cottage Grove and up in the warmer months so this average keeps our projections consistent throughout the year. The City of Cottage Grove has collected all but one month for one lodging facility for 1st quarter lodging tax and received the following amounts:

Lodging Tax Collections for the City of Cottage Grove

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Lodging Tax Revenue	\$ 14,257	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 14,257
Other Revenue	\$ 4,450	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,450
2024 Total Revenue	\$ 18,707	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 18,707
2024 Budgeted	\$ 23,164	\$ 29,569	\$ 28,069	\$ 18,069	\$ 98,871

In total, minus one month for one lodging facility of lodging tax collections for the 1st quarter was \$14,257. We also collected visitor guide ad placement revenue which totaled \$4,450 but was budgeted at \$5,095. Quarter one totals show a deficit of \$4,457 based on our revenue projections. As a reminder, one lodging facility does need to submit one month of lodging tax so this number will change slightly.

Recommendation:

Receive Q1 lodging tax collection information.



TO: Board of Directors, Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau

FROM: Liz Dillon, Communications Specialist
Courtney Hanna, Communications Specialist
Alexa Anderson, Administration Specialist

DATE: May 31, 2024

RE: Convention and Visitors Bureau Events Update

Background/Discussion

June 8: Cottage Grove Community Night at the St. Paul Saints Game

Details: Discover Cottage Grove (DCG) and the St. Paul Saints have partnered together to bring the community together for Cottage Grove Community Night at the St. Paul Saints. Discover Cottage Grove has been running contests for people to win tickets by signing up to receive our newsletter and submitting photos.

Discover Cottage Grove will have a booth set-up at the Saints game near the main entrance. At the booth, staff will be able to talk with people about Cottage Grove, the upcoming Strawberry Fest and handout giveaways. The game begins at 6:07 p.m.

Marketing: Social media posts, social media event creation, two contests to win tickets, City of Cottage Grove website, Discover Cottage Grove website, City of Cottage Grove Reports monthly newsletter to homes, Discover Cottage Grove monthly e-newsletter to subscribers, Explore MN events calendar, Discover Cottage Grove events calendar.

Giveaway Items: Backpacks filled with a Visitor Guide, DCG luggage tag, DCG cup, DCG pencil, Food Truck Festival information, a Strawberry Fest brochure, and a Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce brochure.

June 21-22: Strawberry Festival, Strawberry Fields Marketplace

Details: Discover Cottage Grove, along with other organizations and businesses, will be at Cottage Grove's Strawberry Festival Marketplace from 4-9 p.m. on Friday, June 21 and 10 a.m.-9 p.m. on Saturday, June 22.

Marketing: Ad placed in Minnesota Monthly magazine's May/June edition, social media posts including general event postings and individual event postings, social media event creation, information distribution at Saints game on June 8, social media ad campaign, Explore MN events calendar, Discover Cottage Grove events calendar, Cottage Grove Reports insert in May edition. **The Strawberry Fest Committee has also done their own marketing for this event.*

Giveaway Items: Backpacks filled with a Visitor Guide, a DCG cup, DCG pencil, Food Truck Festival information and answering questions about Cottage Grove. There will be luggage tags on hand to giveaway.

September 14: Cottage Grove Food Truck Festival

Details: Discover Cottage Grove will have a booth set-up at the Food Truck Festival from 11 a.m.- 7 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 14 selling puzzles and talking with people about the upcoming fall events.

Marketing: Social media posts, social media event creation, City of Cottage Grove website, Discover Cottage Grove website, City of Cottage Grove Reports monthly newsletter to homes, Discover Cottage Grove monthly e-newsletter to subscribers, Explore MN events calendar, Discover Cottage Grove events calendar.

Giveaway Items: Puzzles will be for sale at the festival. There will also be giveaways at the booth of DCG cups, DCG pencils, and DCG luggage tags, along with Visitor Guides.

September 14: Cottage Grove Puzzle Unveiling with Eric Dowdle

Details: Discover Cottage Grove will support the city in the unveiling ceremony of the Eric Dowdle painting. This event will take place from 9-10:30 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 14 at the Cottage Grove Middle School.

Marketing: Social media posts, social media event creation, City of Cottage Grove website, Discover Cottage Grove website, City of Cottage Grove Reports monthly newsletter to homes, Discover Cottage Grove monthly e-newsletter to subscribers, Explore MN events calendar, Discover Cottage Grove events calendar.

Giveaway Items: Puzzles will be for sale at the unveiling event.

Recommendation

Receive the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau events information.



TO: Chairman Olsen and CVB Board Members
Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator

FROM: Gretchen Larson, Economic Development Director

DATE: May 28, 2024

RE: CVB Strategic Plan Updates and Recommendation

Background

In early February staff issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to engage the services of a consulting firm to assist with creation of a strategic plan for the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). The deadline for submittals was February 22 and, while we had significant interest in the RFP prior to the issuance, we only received one submittal by the deadline. While the firm that submitted a proposal was highly qualified, we shared with the board that we would prefer to have at least 3-4 proposals to select from and firms to interview.

At the CVB board meeting on February 28, the board agreed with the staff recommendation to reissue a revised RFP which was sent out the week of February 26, with a deadline of March 22. In round two of the reissued RFP, we received 10 proposals. Staff coordinated with the Chairman and Vice Chair on the interview process and they agreed to have staff conduct the interviews of the top firms. The evaluation team consisted of the city administrator and staff, including the communications team and representatives from the parks department.

The top four firms recommended for interviews by the evaluation team, were Clarity of Place, Chandler Thinks, Golden Shovel, and Future IQ. The interviews took place on Monday, May 13 and after careful consideration the team at Chandler Thinks was selected as the top firm to move forward in the process. In making this recommendation to the Chairman and Vice Chair, staff noted that the evaluation team determined that Chandler Thinks was the best choice because of their extensive expertise in tourism and destination branding. In addition, the owner and business development manager are both Tourism Marketing Professionals as accredited by the Southeast Tourism Society. And, while they have not had many clients in MN, they did complete plans for Elk River and Hutchinson. The evaluation team also shared that they felt this was a strength they brought to the process because they would not be coming here with any preconceived ideas about MN or Cottage Grove.

In addition to being the best fit for the CVB, Chandler Thinks proposal was also the lowest priced proposal at \$35,750 with \$1,500 earmarked for post project consultation coaching services upon finalization of the plan.

The recommendation to proceed with the team at Chandler Thinks was sent to the Chairman and Vice Chairman for their consideration on May 14. Upon conclusion of their review, they concurred with the staff recommendation to place the proposal from the team at Chandler Thinks on the June 4 committee meeting for consideration. Staff notes that the funding for the plan is not budgeted in the CVB budget. Therefore, a recommendation is also needed to request that the City Council to authorize the funds of \$35,750 for the plan fees to be paid from the ED Trust Fund at their June 5 meeting.

Recommendation

Approve a recommendation to the City Council to engage the services of Chandler Thinks to create a strategic plan for the Cottage Grove Visitors and Convention Bureau and request that the City Council authorize the needed funds of \$35,750 to be paid from the ED Trust Fund.

Attachments

Proposal submitted by Chandler Thinks, LLC

DESTINATION BRANDING SPECIALISTS



CHANDLERTHINKS

PROPOSAL FOR

**COTTAGE GROVE CONVENTION
& VISITORS BUREAU**

**PROPOSAL
STRATEGIC PLANNING SERVICES**

provided March 27, 2024

Chandlerthinks, LLC

2929 Sidco Drive, Suite 209, Nashville, TN 37204

Federal tax ID #: 81-1141897

Steve Chandler, Owner | 615.498.8313 | steve@chandlerthinks.com

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March 27, 2024

City of Cottage Grove
Attn: Gretchen Larson
12800 Ravine Parkway South
Cottage Grove, MN 55016

RE: STRATEGIC PLANNING SERVICES

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a proposal for the upcoming Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau's Strategic Planning initiative. What follows outlines the team and the process we would follow to assess and develop the optimal direction for Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau towards the efforts of increasing visitors for sales tax and bed tax dollars as well as the strategic recommendation for allocation of those dollars. We applaud Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau's preparation for the explosive growth that is happening in the area. Tourism planning takes forethought and visioning. For this reason, it requires the experience and expertise of specialists. Developing effective tourism that reaches residents, visitors, local businesses and prospective businesses is, in fact, all we do. Chandlerthinks has provided brand direction, research, strategic planning and tourism asset development services for more than 80 communities in 28 states across the United States since 2010.

Our proposal follows, but here is the short version of why Chandlerthinks is the great choice for this project:

1. Our team understands the somewhat sensitive nuances of municipal and community projects. This complexity is often escalated when the discussion is opened to a larger group concerning how to best market the community.
2. Our process has been recognized for excellence in its ability to effectively engage community leaders and residents in the process.
3. We know tourism. Both Greg and Steve are certified Tourism Marketing Professionals, an accredited program by the Southeast Tourism Society. In fact, Steve also teaches Destination Branding as a part of the course curriculum each year.

Any questions related to this proposal should be addressed to me, personally.

Regards,



Steve Chandler, Owner/Brand Strategist



TOURISM EXPERIENCE



CHANDLERTHINKS

DESTINATION BRANDING SPECIALISTS

TOURISM EXPERIENCE

Founded in 2010 in historic Franklin, TN, Chandlerthinks is a Limited Liability Corporation and 100% owned by Steve Chandler. We are one of the nation's leading consulting firms dedicated to place branding and marketing for municipalities, communities and destinations seeking to create a strong identity and purposeful direction. We combine experience from traditional branding and advertising agencies, destination branding firms and digital marketing agencies. We have a team of highly experienced professionals that specialize in research, strategic brand positioning, place marketing, creative development and direction, design, media strategy and digital marketing. **Collectively our team members have been a part of more than 300 place marketing projects in their careers.** These are the same people that would be working on the Strategic Plan for Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Our clients are mostly municipalities, economic development agencies, and tourism marketing organizations. We are very familiar with the political nuances and process necessary to move work successfully forward. We know the appropriate parties that should be included when work needs to be reviewed, as well as when to make presentations to the larger group.

Chandlerthinks continually strives to stay on top of industry trends, and we are actively involved in the following trade organizations and associations.



For more on Chandlerthinks, please check us out at www.chandlerthinks.com, Google Chandlerthinks, or follow us on Facebook (facebook.com/chandlerthinks).

PLACE MARKETING IS WHAT WE DO - OUR SERVICES

Chandlerthinks provides a number of marketing services designed to help destinations learn what makes them appealing and unique and how to promote themselves in order to grow their local economy. Most projects are related to research, planning, branding and communications development.

Place Branding

Our primary focus is leading and managing the process of place branding for cities, communities and tourism destinations. This involves tactical research, development of a brand strategy, creation of a brand identity, and a recommended branding plan. Collectively, our team has assisted more than 200 communities with the process of developing a competitive identity for the purpose of building tourism, economic development and community momentum.

Tourism Strategic Planning

We have developed tourism strategic plans for different destinations in Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Maryland, Missouri and Texas to name a few. Sometimes a change in tourism direction is needed but should be grounded in a research-based approach and solution that can manage and satisfy expectations of boards and political influences.

Festival & Event Economic Impact Studies

We help Festival & Event organizers determine the economic impact (direct spending) an event has on the local community. This helps event organizers communicate and promote the value of the event back to local officials and other key stakeholders. It also helps in the recruitment of event sponsors the following year.

Destination Marketing Research

Chandlerthinks is a half brand development and half research company. We can develop Visitors Profiles Studies, Visitors Conversion Studies, Citizen Satisfaction Studies, Human Movement Research and other really cool relevant research that goes into the decision making of effective planning.



BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

Below are the many communities for which Chandlerthinks has provided place marketing and strategic planning services. In the thirteen years we've been in business, it's given us the opportunity to work with a lot of communities across the country - over 80 different places in 28 states.

Alamance County, NC	Fremont, NE	Monroe County, TN
Allegany County, MD	Gadsden, AL	Morrow, GA
Apex, NC	Gahanna, OH	Natchez, MS
Ascension Parish, LA	Galveston Island, TX	Northfield, IL
Bargersville, IN	Glasgow, KY	Owensboro, KY
Bowling Green, KY	Gulf County, FL	Perry, GA
Carlsbad, CA	Hartselle, AL	Polk County, TN
Cabarrus County, NC	Henderson, KY	Robertson County, TN
Carrollton, KY	Horsham, PA	Rowan County, NC
Cedarburg, WI	Hutchinson, MN	Saint Charles, MO
Clifton, TN	Independence, MO	Seguin, TX
Grenada	Irvine, CA	Shafter, CA
Columbia, TN	Jefferson, WI	Shenandoah County, VA
Columbus, GA	Katy, TX	Spartanburg, SC
Corpus Christi, TX	Kenai Peninsula, AK	Spring Hill, TN
Currituck Outer Banks, NC	La Fourche Parish, LA	St. Mary's Parish, LA
Dahlonega, GA	Lake City, SC	Stewart County, TN
Danville, KY	Livingston Parish, LA	Stillwater, OK
Decatur, GA	London, KY	Sugar Land, TX
Douglasville, GA	Longmont, CO	Sumner County, TN
Dunedin, FL	Macon, GA	Suwanee, GA
Eastern Shore, VA	Maple Valley, WA	The Kentucky Wildlands
Elk River, MN	Marshall County, KY	Unicoi County, TN
Ennis, TX	Marshall County, AL	Union County, OH
Fayette County, TN	Maryville, MO	Vicksburg, MS
Fayetteville, TN	Middleborough, MA	West Fargo, ND
Finger Lakes, NY	McMinn County, TN	
Franklin, TN	Meigs County, TN	



BRANDING EXAMPLES

Where can you lose yourself and find your soul?

Welcome to The Kentucky Wildlands, a vast unspoiled region filled with jaw-dropping natural wonders, one-of-a-kind outdoor recreational adventures and cultural experiences unlike anywhere you've ever seen.

Visit exploreKYwildlands.com for your guide to new adventure and fun.



**SEARCHING FOR TREASURE?
WE'VE GOT A TRAIL FOR THAT!**

visit MDMOUNTAINS.DE.COM for a free Destination Guide.

Venture back a few centuries to experience life in early America. From the history-defining C&O Canal and George Washington's headquarters to charming historic downtowns and a ride in a horse-drawn vintage steam-powered train, there are so many ways to step back in time in Allegany County. **THE TRAIL STARTS HERE.**

**PADDLING THROUGH TOWN?
WE'VE GOT A TRAIL FOR THAT!**

**ALLEGANY COUNTY
MOUNTAIN SIDE
OF MARYLAND**

THE TRAIL STARTS HERE

THE TRAIL STARTS HERE

BRANDING EXAMPLES

You don't have to go to distant shores
to find the peace you're longing for.
Just to Florida's quiet ones.

Gulf County
FLORIDA

visitgulf.com St. Joe Beach - Port St. Joe - Indian Pass - Cape San Blas - Wewahitchka

The Florida you've dreamed of discovering actually lies close at hand in a place where nature flourishes and abounds along beautiful uncrowded, untamed white sand beaches just waiting to be explored.

Florida's Quiet Shores

Choose Your own Adventure

- Padsling
- Off-Roading
- Camping
- Cycling
- Horseback Riding
- Matcross
- Shopping

LONDON
KENTUCKY

Adventure's Beginning!

LONDON
KENTUCKY

VisitLondonKY.com

Adventure's Beginning!
VisitLondonKY.com

ALBERTVILLE | ARAB | BOAZ | GRANT | GUNTERSVILLE

EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT A COMPETITIVE MOUNTAIN BIKER, YOU'LL FEEL LIKE YOU ARE.

LAKE GUNTERSVILLE
ALABAMA'S GREAT NATURAL ATTRACTION

VISIT ExploreLakeGuntersville.com FOR OUR NEW VACATION PLANNER.
800-582-6282

CEDARBURG
WISCONSIN

PASSAGES
OF THE
WESTERN POTOMAC
HERITAGE AREA

INDEPENDENCE
MISSOURI

PROJECT TEAM



CHANDLERTHINKS

DESTINATION BRANDING SPECIALISTS

PROJECT TEAM - DESTINATION MARKETERS

A Brief Statement About Our Team

We believe the Chandlerthinks team members are going to provide The Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau with the most experienced Tourism Strategic Planning team of any other proposer. Each member of our core team has done place marketing dozens of times (for some team members 100+). This means we are familiar with the political nuances that can positively or negatively affect the project, and our approach reflects this knowledge.

TEAM QUALIFICATIONS

Every person on your Chandlerthinks team has extensive experience in working with places, destinations and branding municipalities. If additional help is needed for extended creative services, such as video production or photography, we work with professionals who also are experienced in place marketing. Place marketing is our passion as a company, and our team delivers it well.



Steve Chandler - Owner/Brand Strategist, TMP

Steve is a recognized speaker and a leading practitioner on the topic of place branding. Steve started Chandlerthinks in 2010 to provide consulting for communities seeking to make their brand, marketing and communications stronger. Since then Steve has spoken on the topic of place marketing and place branding all over the country including at the Georgia Municipal League of Cities, the Kentucky Travel Industry Association, South Carolina Governor's Conference on Tourism, Mississippi Governor's Conference on Tourism and the annual Marketing College for the Southeast Tourism Society (for the past 7 years).

Steve has personally worked on over 150 community and destination branding projects. His experience in similar projects gives him the nuanced knowledge, skills and diplomacy needed to guide, work with and lead local stakeholders. He directs the brand strategy development, as well as brand creative direction. Some of his more recent project work can be seen in what is taking shape in communities such as: Salisbury-Rowan County, North Carolina; Jefferson, Wisconsin; Macon, Georgia; Douglasville, Georgia; Seguin, Texas; Ennis, Texas; Cedarburg, Wisconsin; Village of Northfield, Illinois; Columbus, Georgia, The KY Wildlands and many more.

Education

*Western Kentucky University, Bachelor of Science in Advertising/Minor in Marketing
Certified Tourism Marketing Professional (TMP) by the Southeast Tourism Society*



TEAM QUALIFICATIONS



Greg Fuson - Director of Research & Community Engagement, TMP, FEP

Greg has been helping clients understand their markets through the thorough use of research for more than 25 years. He has developed extensive skills in survey design and management for both quantitative and qualitative areas of research. Greg will oversee any research conducted on this project, including survey design, group questionnaires and analysis. He has been part of the Chandlerthinks team from its inception.

Greg has managed studies for a number of national-branded clients, including a stint as the director of research for the Country Music Association. But his passion is in marketing research for destinations and places, and he has worked with more than 125 communities around the country. Some of his clients within this industry include: Pigeon Forge Department of Tourism; Tennessee Department of Tourist Development; Franklin- Williamson County Convention and Visitors Bureau; Cedarburg, Wisconsin; Jefferson, Wisconsin; Stillwater, Oklahoma; Macon, Georgia; Village of Northfield, Illinois; Saint Charles, Missouri; Bowling Green, Kentucky; Columbus, Georgia; Danville, Kentucky; and Kentucky Lake, Kentucky.

Greg is also deeply involved in helping determine the economic impact of festivals and events. He leads this effort for Chandlerthinks, directing many cities towards their goal of measuring the true economic impact of a festival or event. In fact, Greg is a past Chairman of the Southeast Festivals and Events Association and speaks frequently on this topic.

Education

*Belmont University, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration/Marketing
Certified Tourism Marketing Professional (TMP) by the Southeast Tourism Society
Certified Festival & Event Professional (FEP) by the Southeast Tourism Society*

TEAM QUALIFICATIONS



Susan Ewing

Destination Project Manager

Every team has that one person that oversees the timing and attention to details for the entire project. This is Susan. She's strategic and organized. Exactly what's needed for a consulting project with deliverables and timelines that need to be met. With more than twenty years of demonstrated success in planning and implementing sound, strong and effective marketing solutions for clients, she is now leveraging her expertise to help Chandlerthinks place branding projects.

Combining relevant classic branding experience and efficiency in project management is Susan's passion. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated a strong work ethic, flexibility, and extraordinary attention to detail.

Susan is a classic brand builder out of Memphis, working at some of the regions top advertising agencies. She applies big idea thinking to on-the-floor implementation. She keeps the team focused on results.

PROJECT APPROACH & METHODOLOGY



CHANDLERTHINKS

DESTINATION BRANDING SPECIALISTS

APPROACH TO DESTINATION PLANNING

Getting started on the project.

We'll put you to work a little and ask that you provide us with some basic background information. But we make it easy. A 45-minute phone call with your project point person will begin the project work.

I. Current State of Market and Destination Marketing-Management

A. Site Visit-Fam Tour and Tourism Audit

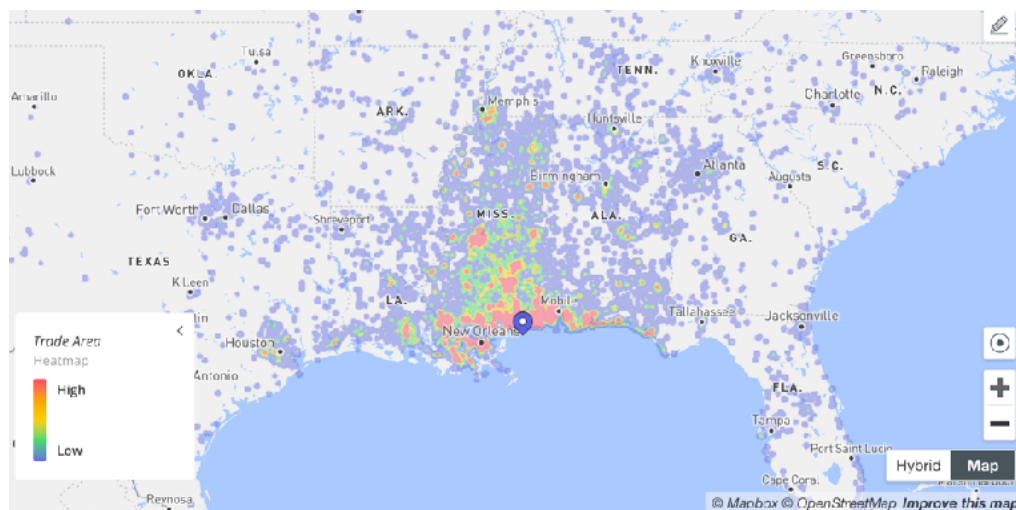
The Chandlerthinks team will use a “feet-on-the-ground” approach to gain an in-depth understanding of current and potential tourism products. The tourism audit will consist of conducting observational research by touring Cottage Grove as well as engaging front line employees (restaurant, lodging, retail, etc.).

B. Marketing Assessment and Competitive Analysis

We will take an in-depth deep dive into the current marketing and messaging you currently use as well as others in the tourism industry within the region. Our deep dive looks at the following: current advertising messaging, website analytic, available advertising tracking data, online reviews, search, and competitor marketing. We place a large degree of emphasis on the digital audit since that is the primary way visitors plan travel.

C. Visitor Segmentation

The most effective method for visitor profiling is to follow up with them and ask them directly about their experiences, as well as profiling their origin address. The theory “birds of a feather flock together” allows us to better understand socioeconomic behaviors. We use media tracking tools for capturing mobile device data from Cottage Grove visitors. Mobile device data allows us to understand where visitors place of origin, “pathway” to your destination, length of stay, in market movement, demographics and a profile of their lifestyle interests. Understanding the behaviors of visitors allows Cottage Grove tourism to make more strategic marketing decisions.



APPROACH TO DESTINATION PLANNING

D. Lodging & Attraction Survey & Analysis

In this phase, we review two sources of information. First, we will speak to those in charge of what your visitors experience...the managers of the hotels and attractions. We will hear from them on the make-up and dynamics of current business (business travelers, leisure, meetings, groups) and areas they feel could use the most improvement from marketing. Our goal is to have a minimum of 60% of your hotel and lodging partners complete the survey.

We would also want to gauge similar information from a convention sales and meeting perspective. The meeting planner segment would require cooperation with the meeting facilities.

The second source we review is Smith Travel Research STAR reports. We have budgeted for securing their annual report for your market.

E. Staff and Stakeholder Interviews

We will conduct 15 - 20 half-hour interviews with staff members and tourism stakeholders that have been selected by the staff. The staff members should include those working in providing the visitor experience, group event sales, sporting event sales, marketing/communications and finance areas. This is where selected elected leadership can be engaged in the process.

F. Stakeholder Vision Casting Groups

It is important to engage your community and hospitality stakeholders in this process. It is the time for them to provide their opinions about Cottage Grove tourism management, results and most importantly for this process, a vision of where it should be going. We recommend four groups consisting of the following: tourism board members, lodging stakeholders, and tourism attraction-restaurant-retail stakeholders.

Overall, we will be looking at the current tourism make-up and projecting what it could be in three to five years. Specific things we will be discussing:

- What drives tourism today? Who? Reason?
- What is most different today than ten years ago?
- What are the biggest changes you see coming to Cottage Grove tourism industry?
- What are the biggest competitive factors to business today? Or upcoming?
- Where are our voids? Where are we vulnerable? What should be considered?

APPROACH TO DESTINATION PLANNING

II. Cottage Grove Tourism Industry Analysis

A. Cottage Grove Tourism GAP Analysis

A GAP analysis will be conducted by identifying and reviewing the revenue generating tourism assets, measuring them against the competitive set and against identified industry benchmarks. It will be important for industry partners to cooperate in providing this data for their respective asset. A proper GAP analysis will not make decisions on the best opportunities to pursue but it will provide an indication on opportunity and where possible investment is most likely today off. This report will be visual in nature for easy review by necessary parties.

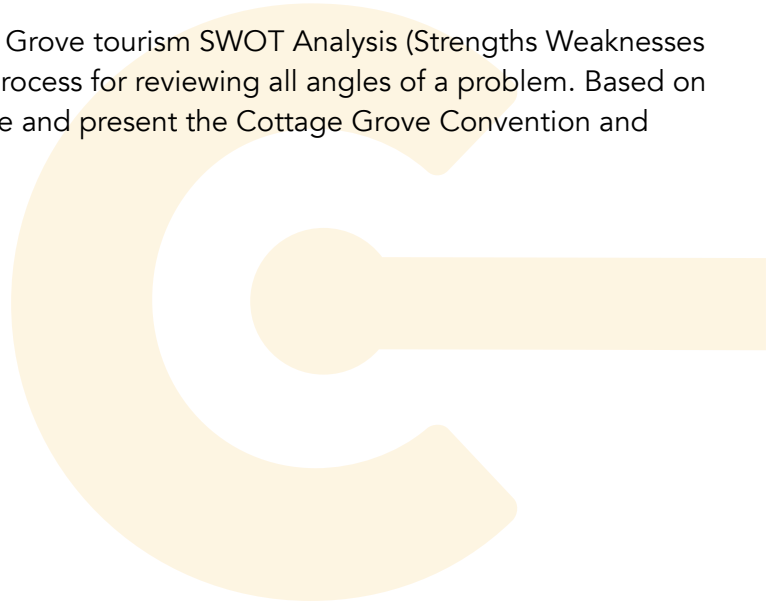
B. Annual Visitation & Overnight Stay Estimates

Visitation estimates can be determined by a combination of some of the analysis previously mentioned. We will use human movement data (Placer) to track specific visitation volume from your top visitor assets (i.e. Cottage Grove Lake, Sports Complex, etc.). We will also be able to determine overnight status using STR reports (if they are available).

III. Board/Organization SWOT, Goal Setting and Prioritization

After collecting all the information from the sessions with staff, tourism stakeholders and residents it is time to begin setting tourism goals and priorities. In this phase, the Chandlerthinks team will conduct a one-day live workshop with the CVB staff and Board of Directors to digest the data and set strategic goals and more importantly prioritize those goals.

Part of this will be a review of the Cottage Grove tourism SWOT Analysis (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats). It's a proven process for reviewing all angles of a problem. Based on the collected information, we will assemble and present the Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau SWOT for this meeting.



APPROACH TO DESTINATION PLANNING

IV. Strategic Plan Development

The Chandlerthinks team will develop a 3-5 year strategic plan that takes all of the information gathered throughout the process and specifically outline goals, priorities, responsibilities and measurement. The strategic plan will include actionable steps to achieve the goals.

A. Tourism Action Plan & Roadmap

The Cottage Grove Strategic Roadmap provides you the direction to enhance Cottage Grove's competitive positioning relative to competitive destination markets and identify growth markets while anticipating the future state of tourists' needs and possible infrastructure upgrades that may be needed. for making confident decisions for growing tourism. This is not a bowl of lofty ideas (well, we may throw in a few of those too). This is a strategic AND tactical plan that provides prioritized recommendations on where you need to begin in order to grow tourism.

Chandlerthinks will provide a bound report of the entire strategic planning process from this project. This will include one printed bound copy and one electronic copy of the final plan.



REFERENCES AND PAST EXPERIENCE



CHANDLERTHINKS

DESTINATION BRANDING SPECIALISTS

REFERENCES

Project Contact

Kellye Murphy, Tourism & Marketing Director; kmurphy@columbiatn.com
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City of Columbia
Columbia, TN 38401

Project Contact

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Somerset, KY 42501

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Moyock, NC 27958

Project Contact

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Greater St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau
St Charles, MO 63301



CASE STUDY

EXAMPLES: Tourism Strategic Plans

THE KENTUCKY WILDLANDS

A tourism strategic plan was completed May 2018 for Eastern Kentucky PRIDE towards the effort of developing a new tourism program for a 41-county region of southern and eastern Kentucky. The goal was to set forth a plan for introducing a new tourism entity into the region and properly launch its efforts for the next 5-years. Organization began immediately and marketing implementation began May 2019

“This effort never would have been successful without Chandlerthinks rolling up their sleeves and engaging our local community stakeholders”

- Tammie Nazario, Director

Marketing implementation began May 2019

2022 Visitor Conversion Study was conducted to measure baseline results

\$427,740

DIRECT TOURISM DOLLARS GENERATED

(A SMALL NUMBER BUT IT STARTED FROM ZERO)

30% conversion rate

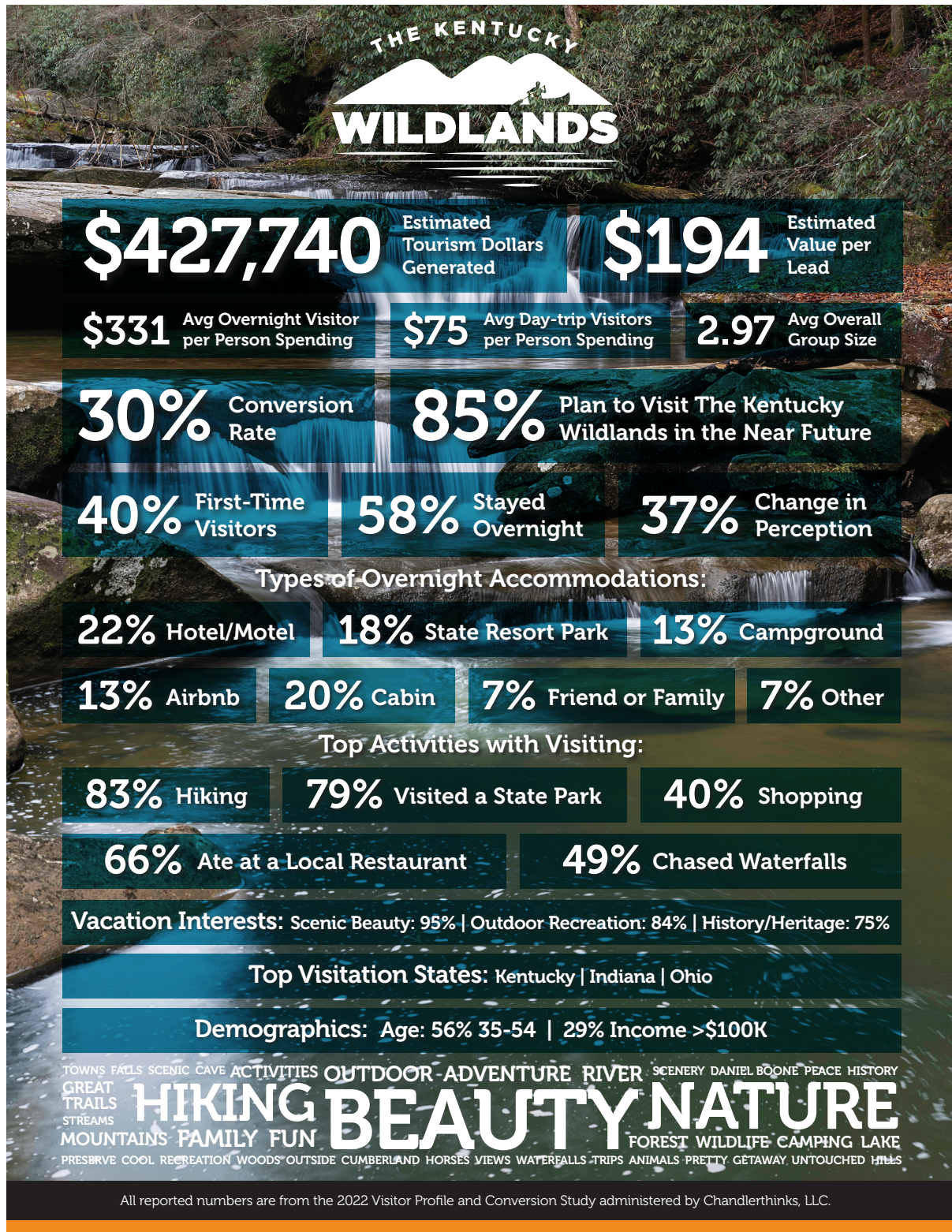
40% first time visitors to the area

Additional Details of Conversion Study on the following page



CASE STUDY

2022 Visitor Conversion Study was conducted to measure baseline results



EXAMPLES: Tourism Strategic Plans

SAINT CHARLES, MO

Tourism strategic planning project completed March 2016. Implementation began calendar year 2017 (tourism revenue numbers were slightly down 2017 vs 2016).

- 2018 tourism hotel tax revenue was \$3,555,921 up 5.0% from 2017.
- 2017 total tourism expenditures in St. Charles County were up 3%, an increase of \$24,529,039
- 2018 total tourism expenditures in St. Charles County were up 8%, an increase of \$63,270,049.

Implementation began calendar year 2017

2017 total tourism expenditures in St. Charles County were up **3%**

2018 tourism hotel tax revenue was up **5.0%** from 2017

2018 total tourism expenditures in St. Charles County were up **8%**

Source: City of Saint Charles, MO Annual Budget 2016/2018; St. Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau-Missouri Department of Tourism.

EXAMPLES: Tourism Strategic Plans

COLUMBIA & MAURY COUNTY, TN

Tourism strategic plan and branding project completed February 2017.

Implementation began May 2017.

- 2016 Direct Tourism Expenditures \$123.34 million
- 2017 Direct Tourism Expenditures \$134.09 million, an 8.72% increase from 2016

Implementation began May 2017

\$123.34 million

2016 Direct Tourism Expenditures

\$134.09 million

2017 Direct Tourism Expenditures

8.72% increase

Source: City of Columbia, TN-Tennessee Department of Tourism



PROJECT COST & TIMELINE



CHANDLERTHINKS

DESTINATION BRANDING SPECIALISTS

PROJECT TIMELINE

From beginning to end, a project with this scope should take approximately 10-13 weeks.

Phase I. 5-6 weeks

Phase II. 2-3 weeks

Phase III. 3-4 weeks

FEE PROPOSAL

The Cottage Grove Convention and Visitors Bureau Strategic Plan project price is **\$35,750**.

Travel and materials costs have been included in the above pricing.

Ongoing Coaching

There may be times after this strategic planning process when you could use the guidance and support of our expertise. Whether at 3 months, 6 months or a year into the process, we can be available to help you with any guidance and direction you may need.

We have already included up to \$1,500 of our post project consultation coaching services in this proposal. Should our services be needed beyond that, the proposed fee would be at an hourly rate of \$150 (travel not included), and an agreed upon amount can be included in an addendum to the contract.



Thank you.

