

Experience Columbus' vision is to be the leading force in creating and revealing the **best of the Columbus experience** to the world.



2016 ANNUAL
REPORT

FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



Dear Community Partners:

The past year was a game-changer for Columbus in many ways, as the city continues its rise as a destination for conventions, sporting events and leisure visitors.

Mid-year, Longwoods International, a leading destination research firm, reported that Columbus’ visitor volume grew from 37.9 million in 2014 to 39.3 million in 2015. Even better news is that most of this growth was in overnight trips during which visitors spend significantly more money. And, a study by J.D. Power ranked Columbus “Highest in Visitor Satisfaction in the Midwest.” This success is testimony to the power of our community-wide commitment to the visitor experience.

In July, the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) selected Columbus to host its 2019 Annual Meeting & Exposition. The annual conference will draw more than 5,000 attendees to the Greater Columbus Convention Center August 10-13, 2019, filling 16,800 hotel rooms and generating over \$16 million in direct visitor spending. Hosting ASAE puts Columbus on the map with key decision makers and influencers planning meetings for their national associations, which could represent an ROI of \$500 million in visitor spend for future bookings. We have already begun planning for this event and look forward to wowing attendees when they come in 2019.

This unprecedented boost in our city’s national reputation and profile provides an effective platform for Experience Columbus’ ongoing sales and marketing efforts, which we expect to have validated by the second results of the GfK national perception study that will be conducted in the summer.

In 2017, we will maintain our focus on growing the local economy and enhancing our residents’ quality of life through the travel industry. We will continue to aggressively pursue our major strategic initiatives as we work to book more large national conventions and meetings, boost our destination’s image regionally and nationally, attract more leisure visitors, and ensure that every visitor’s experience is the best that it can be.

We appreciate the continued support we receive from the City of Columbus and Franklin County and the many members and corporate partners who have stepped up to invest in our community. This is a time of great forward momentum and I, for one, am profoundly grateful and excited to be a part of it.

Straight ahead,



Brian Ross, CTA
President and CEO

A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR COLUMBUS’ ECONOMIC GROWTH: 2016-2020

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Increase the Economic Impact and Local Jobs from Travel and Tourism

Even with record gains, Columbus remains in the middle to lower tier within our competitive peer set. By engaging more business, convention, sports and leisure visitors, and getting them to stay longer and do more, we increase spending and positive ROI.

Showcase Authentic, Creative Columbus to Reveal Our Pulse

Increasing national awareness that Columbus is a vibrant city with many things to do reduces a significant barrier to the sales process (which impacts everyone who sells the city for education, talent recruitment, business relocations, etc.).

Key Focus Areas:

- 1. Growing sales and new markets
- 2. Continuing strategic development and connectivity
- 3. Telling the Columbus story through marketing
- 4. Assuring quality visitor experiences
- 5. Increasing partnership and membership



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ANNUAL IMPACT OF THE TRAVEL ECONOMY IN COLUMBUS AND FRANKLIN COUNTY

Visitors directly spend **\$6.4 billion** in Columbus annually, a **\$9.7 billion** economic impact. Tourism supports **one in every 12 jobs** in Franklin County, and visitors pay **\$1.13 billion** in local, state and federal taxes to support the arts, human services and economic development in Franklin County.



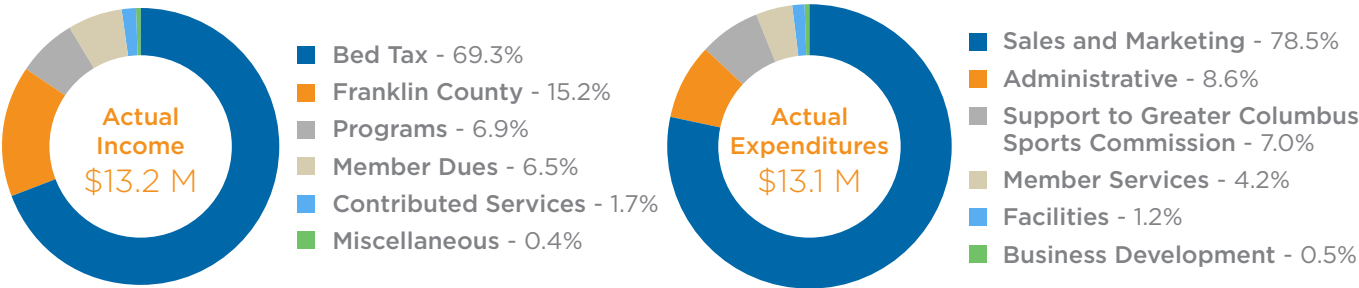
ANOTHER RECORD-BREAKING YEAR FOR BED TAX

City of Columbus bed tax generated another record amount in 2016. Up 4.3% over 2015, bed tax revenue was **\$44.5 million** in 2016 even as the \$125 million expansion and renovation of the Greater Columbus Convention Center has limited some new business bookings as meeting spaces have been temporarily unavailable over the last two years.

Bed tax funds support not only Experience Columbus and the Greater Columbus Sports Commission, but also cultural and arts programs, social services, affordable housing programs and the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority.



EXPERIENCE COLUMBUS 2016 BUDGET OVERVIEW



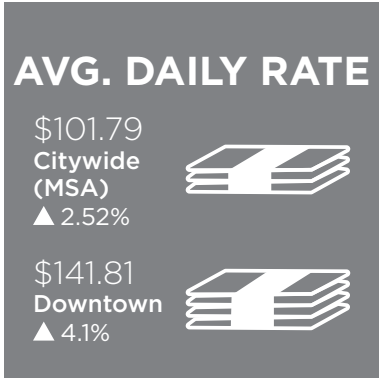
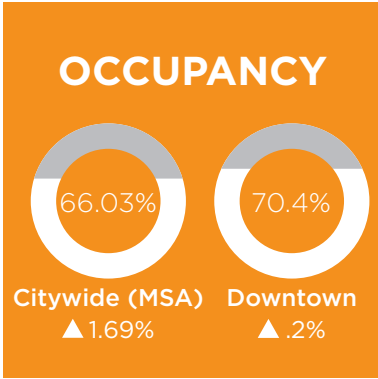
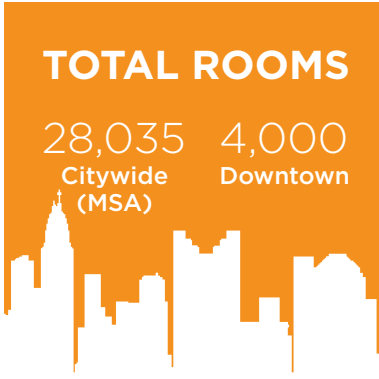
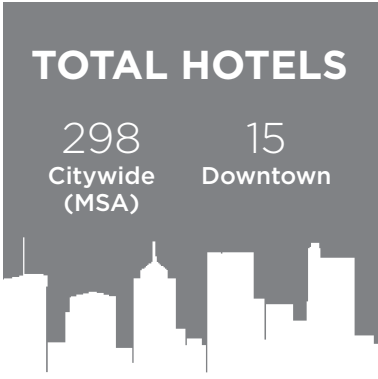
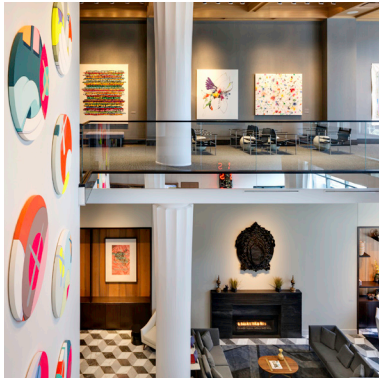
SOURCE: Tourism Economics an Oxford Economics Company, The Economic Impact of Tourism in Columbus, July 2015

MAKE IT COLUMBUS

The visitor industry is big business in Greater Columbus, and it continues to grow. In 2016, Experience Columbus and the Greater Columbus Sports Commission were responsible for booking **492,775** room nights.

Credit for that success must be shared with our partners at local businesses and organizations who worked with us to bring their meetings and conventions to Columbus. Since 2012, the Make It Columbus initiative has resulted in bookings that represent more than **365,800** hotel room nights and an estimated **\$248 million** in visitor spending.

GREATER COLUMBUS LODGING OVERVIEW



COLUMBUS AWARDED 2019 ASAE ANNUAL MEETING & EXPOSITION

Columbus is emerging as the next big destination for meetings, conventions and tradeshows, and one major proof point of our success is being awarded the 2019 American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Annual Meeting & Exposition.

The annual conference will draw over **5,000** attendees to the Greater Columbus Convention Center Aug. 10-13, 2019, filling **16,800** hotel rooms and generating over **\$16 million** in direct visitor spending.

Hosting ASAE puts Columbus on the map with key decision makers and influencers planning meetings for their national associations. Our community should be very proud of the collaborative effort put forth to win this conference. The Greater Columbus Convention Center is undergoing expansion and renovations to its meeting and exhibit space that will provide meeting planners with more flexibility.

While the immediate impact of hosting ASAE is great, the ongoing impact is even greater, because most of the attendees are final decision makers or have significant influence on the location of future meetings. **Past host cities of the ASAE Annual Meeting found that 20 percent of association executives who attend the Annual Meeting will book their own meeting in the host city in the next five years, representing \$500 million in revenue for the host city.**

This large gathering of influential meeting professionals will provide a tremendous amount of exposure to all the great assets of Columbus. This is a big win as we aggressively work to raise Columbus' profile.

COLUMBUS
PROUD HOST



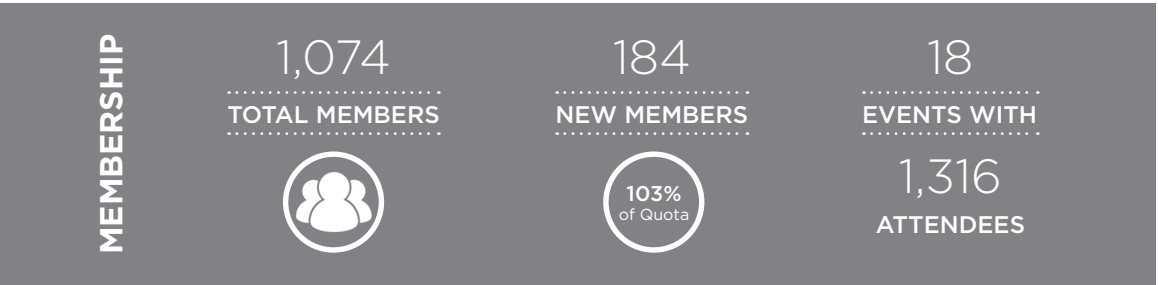
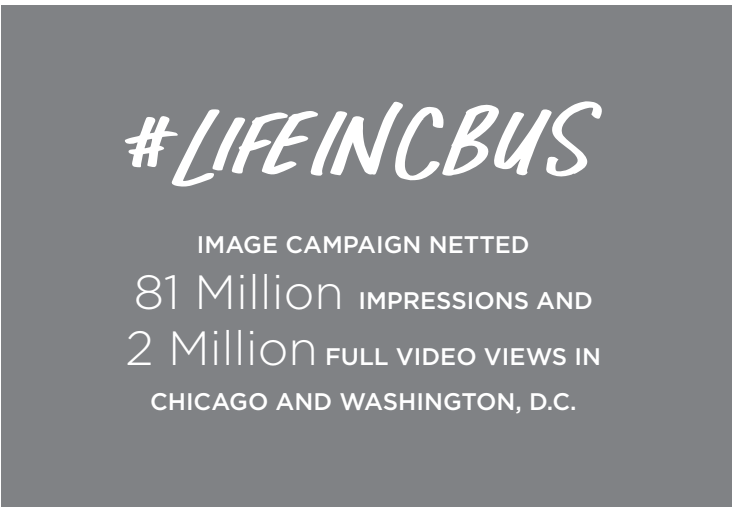
2019

GREATER COLUMBUS CONVENTION CENTER

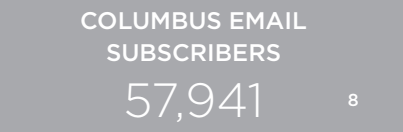
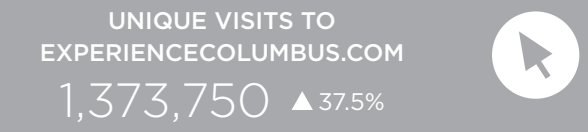
FULL RENOVATION AND EXPANSION
COMPLETE JULY 2017

- \$125 million expansion
- 1.8 million sq. ft.
- 373,000 sq. ft. of contiguous exhibit space (4th largest in competitive set)
- Show offices overlooking exhibit halls
- 74 meeting rooms – 9 new rooms with outside windows
- LEED certification
- Hotel-grade finishes throughout
- Renovation of 70,000 sq. ft. of meeting space at connected Hyatt Regency Columbus
- All new exterior signage, landscaping and streetscaping
- 4,000 downtown hotel rooms; 2,100 connected/adjacent to the Greater Columbus Convention Center

BY THE NUMBERS: 2016 PRODUCTION OVERVIEW



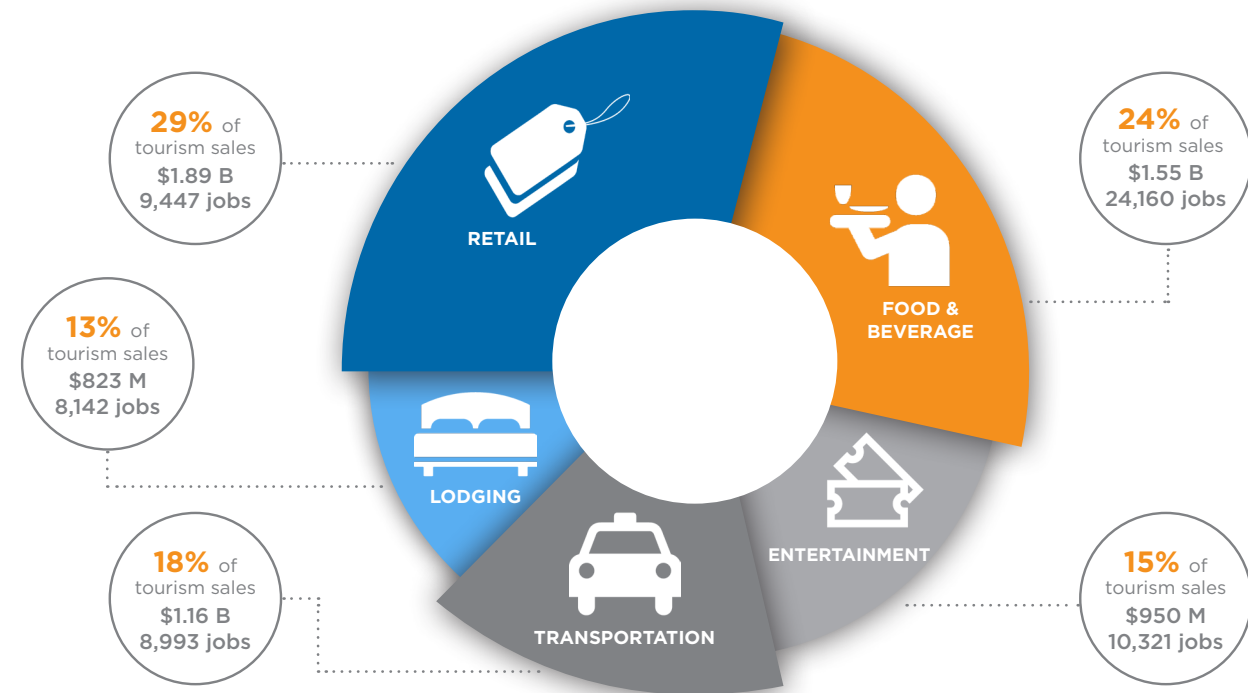
VISITORS
ENGAGE WITH
US ON:



A FOCUS ON THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE PAYS BIG DIVIDENDS

Visitors matter in Columbus, where they directly spent **\$6.4 billion** in 2015, supporting **\$9.7 billion** in overall economic impact. The tourism sector provides **75,000 jobs** in Columbus and Franklin County. **That's one out of every 12 jobs.**

And through state, local and federal tax revenue, tourism generates **\$1.13 billion** to support the arts, human services and economic development in Franklin County. All of this represents a significant return on dollars invested in attracting visitors to our city. **The top five sectors that benefit from all this visitor spending are:**



In 2015, Greater Columbus welcomed **39.3 million visitors**, and **23%** of them stayed at least one night. Visitors who stay overnight generally spend about three times more than someone who visits just for the day. Overnight stays were predominantly for leisure purposes (**86%**), and the remainder for business or a mix of business-leisure.

SOURCE: Longwoods International, Columbus 2015 Visitor Report



TRAILS ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO EXPLORE THE CITY

Food and beverage trails are growing in popularity because they provide an easy way for visitors to discover a variety of different locations. Powered by Experience Columbus and only made possible through strong strategic partnerships among the city's coffee roasters and breweries, these trails help us continue to position Columbus as a culinary destination.



COLUMBUS NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED FOR PROVIDING A SUPERIOR VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Columbus was recently ranked **"Highest in Visitor Satisfaction in the Midwest"** by J.D. Power in the 2016 Destination Experience Satisfaction StudySM. This is a nationally recognized third-party validation of the success of Columbus' ongoing dedication to providing a quality visitor experience – as exemplified through programs like *Experience Dedicated™ Destination* (EDD) and through the 2,200+ active Certified Tourism Ambassadors (CTAs) we have trained.

At Experience Columbus, we are focused on improving the visitor experience. Learn more and get involved at joinuscolumbus.com.



Columbus, OH received the highest numerical score among 8 cities in the Midwest in the J.D. Power 2016 Destination Experience Satisfaction Study, based on 26,124 total responses, measuring the experiences and perceptions of travelers who visited a top 50 U.S. destination, surveyed February-July 2016. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com.



MOST POPULAR CONTENT OF 2016

Merging the blog into the website was a major focus upon creation of the new site, so that visitors have an easier time accessing the additional written and visual content. Under the new system, we have seen an increase in the time spent on the site as well as the number of pages viewed per session.



NEW EXPERIENCECOLUMBUS.COM AMONG “THE 25 BEST TOURISM WEBSITES IN THE WORLD IN 2016”

The completely re-concepted, re-architected and largely rewritten experiencecolumbus.com launched in 2016 to great result and acclaim. The site continues to exceed expectations with visitation up **37.5%** to date over last year, and **51.45%** since the launch of the new site on March 23, 2016.

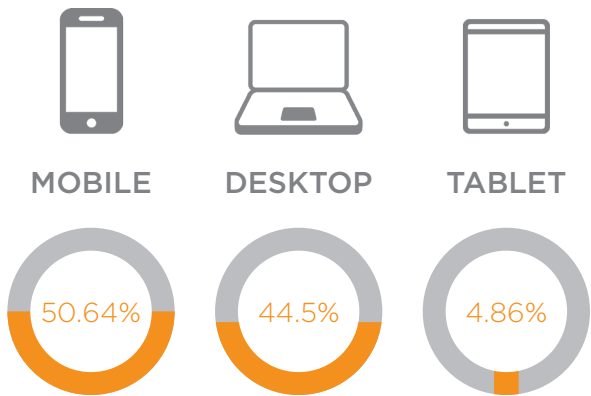
In its article “The 25 Best Tourism Websites in the World in 2016,” *Skift* says, “The most modern tourism bureau websites today emphasize neighborhood storytelling, more nuanced content for different consumer profiles, mobile-first modular design, and full-width photos and videos with a strong human voice.” Author Greg Oates praises experiencecolumbus.com specifically as:

“Great on mobile and super fast, Columbus, Ohio’s tourism site highlights the city’s neighborhoods, festivals and events, and trendy food and beverage scene with a Millennial fetish for anything local and artisanal.”

TOP VISITS TO EXPERIENCECOLUMBUS.COM

Metro	# of Sessions	% of Traffic
COLUMBUS	524,278	52%
DETROIT	73,567	7%
CLEVELAND	70,162	7%
CINCINNATI	36,393	4%
PITTSBURGH	22,353	2%
PHILADELPHIA	21,025	2%
CHICAGO	20,527	2%
NEW YORK	20,279	2%
DAYTON	18,966	2%
BOSTON	16,496	2%

USAGE BY DEVICE



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