



Deja Vu Art and Fine Craft show at The Commons



Aviation Day at Columbus Municipal Airport



Eric Marvin accepts the President's Award for the AJGA Tournament Sponsor of the Year



Activites at the kick-off ceremony for the USSSA Fast-Pitch softball nationals at Lincoln Park



GRANTS & PARTNERSHIPS

The Visitors Center partners with event organizers throughout the community to grow the tourism industry in Bartholomew County. In addition to participating in community development discussions and event planning, VCI leverages public dollars with private investment in programs that attract visitors and promote long-term economic growth. In 2016, VCI provided nearly \$107,000 in support to the following programs:

\$500	Advocates for Children/Night of a Thousand Jacks
\$5,000	AJGA Golf Tournament
\$5,000	Bakalar Air Museum/Aviation Day
\$1,000	Bartholomew County School Foundation/Public Art Project
\$3,500	Boy Scouts of America/Wine-A-Ree
\$500	CIAA Most Chaotic Tuesday Exhibit
\$500	CIAA Redeveloping Columbus Exhibit
\$500	Columbus Animal Care/Moonlight Loop
\$7,500	Columbus Area Arts Council/Live on the Plaza
\$3,000	Columbus ArtFest
\$7,500	Columbus Craft Beer Fest
\$5,000	Columbus Park Foundation/Bike Share
\$9,425	Columbus Scottish Festival
\$500	Déjà Vu Fine Arts & Crafts Show
\$500	Foundation for Youth/Columbus Challenge Triathlon
\$500	Foundation For Youth/Great Girls Wonderful Women Luncheon
\$2,000	Heritage Fund/Friends of First Christian Church Architecture
\$3,000	Heritage of Hope/Hope Heritage Days
\$27,884	Heritage of Hope/Hope Visitor Information Center
\$500	Hope Ride
\$3,500	Indiana Soccer State Cup Finals
\$3,500	Indiana University Invitational Golf
\$500	IUPUC/Bicycle Boogie
\$500	Ivy Tech/Run for the Ivy
\$9,000	Lincoln Central Neighborhood Family Center/YES Film Festival
\$500	Midwest Open Tennis - Nationals
\$500	Midwest Open Tennis - Regionals
\$2,000	Mill Race Center/SEEK Conference
\$1,500	USA BMX Pro Am
\$500	Yellow Trail Museum/Christmas of Yesteryear
\$1,000	7v7 ELITE Football

VISITORS CENTER STAFF

- Jan Banister, Retail Manager
- James Beshear, Driver
- Bonnie Boatwright, Guest Services Specialist
- Pat Bridgetts, Guest Services Specialist
- Jane Cashen, Guest Services Specialist
- Robin Gray, Operations Manager
- Sonya Greathouse, Guest Services Specialist
- Danny Green, Driver
- William Grider, Driver
- Becky Harper, Director of Sales & Hospitality
- Erin Hawkins, Director of Marketing
- Cecilia Hiatt, Driver
- Derek Johnson, Driver
- Ishmel Johnson-Bey, Driver
- Judie Lahr, Guest Services Specialist
- Eric Marvin, Director of Sports Tourism
- Don Nissen, Director of Information Resources
- Karen Niverson, Executive Director
- Joyce Orwin, Volunteer & Tour Program Manager
- Lisa Westmark, Visitor Experience Manager

2016 VCI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Justin Booth
- Chad Cockerham
- Michael Dean
- Kelsey DeClue
- Kim DeClue
- Alan Degner
- Lynne Hyatt
- Jenny Kim
- Amit Patel
- Beth Booth Poor
- Diane Robbins
- Lisa Shafran
- Brenda Vogel
- Cindy Waddle





VISITORS CENTER, INC. ROLES AND PROGRAMS

Visitors Center, Inc. (VCI) serves as the destination marketing organization for Bartholomew County. We are a community and economic development organization tasked with developing and promoting tourism. We conduct marketing and sales programs to attract visitors to our destination and serve as a resource for visitors and local industry partners.

We are pleased to be part of a broad community network that works to grow and diversify our local economy through the development and promotion of a strong tourism industry.

2016 VISITORS CENTER HIGHLIGHTS

The spotlight shined on our community in 2016: PBS aired a documentary on Eero Saarinen in which Columbus was prominently featured; an all-star cast and crew were in town for six weeks producing a feature film which debuted at the Sundance Film Festival and is currently on the film festival circuit; and our native son, Mike Pence, became the 48th Vice President of the United States. New events, including the Columbus Craft Beer Fest and Exhibit Columbus Symposium, introduced new visitors to our area.

The Visitors Center leveraged all of this attention with enhanced visitor services and an aggressive array of paid and earned media programs. A new Visitors Center website, launched in October, improved mobile responsiveness. The Visitors Center also provided web development services to Hope’s Bicentennial Legacy Project, The Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Columbus Parks Foundation ColumBIKE Bike Share Program. Updates were made to the video screening room to utilize new technology and accommodate Gallery 506, the new art gallery established in the Visitors Center, and walking tours were reintroduced into the weekly schedule.

ADVERTISING & PROMOTION

Marketing efforts included paid advertising, digital marketing, and media relations activities. The Visitors Center maintains a website and social media platforms on behalf of the community and develops and executes an annual advertising program for Columbus/Bartholomew County. Visitors Center staff members attend media events, host media visits, and facilitate video shoots. In 2016, VCI launched a new website and implemented a new approach to social media that exponentially increased engagement.

- » Website: 184,272 unique visitors, up 18% over 2015
- » Social Media: 1,092,356 people reached
- » Advertising Schedule: Print, Digital Media, Public TV & Radio – 70 million total reach
- » Indiana Office of Tourism Columbus Co-op:
  - » Columbus online ads were served 21 million times with 101,520 click-throughs.
  - » 10 weeks of TV ads generated 5,638,527 impressions.
  - » 8 weeks of radio ads generated 6,104,390 impressions.
  - » Columbus outdoor advertising was viewed by 32,881,268 individuals.
  - » Pandora ads reached 1,915,500 listeners.
- » Earned Media: Columbus was mentioned in 329 stories in several national outlets, including the New York Times, NPR, Curbed, and more. Overall media reach was 343,507,291. VCI placed 11 stories and contributed to an additional 29 stories.

VISITORS CENTER & GIFT SHOP

The Visitors Center Gift Shop saw an increase in sales of 28% in 2016 over 2015. Importantly, awareness and accessibility of hospitality resources and continuous hospitality training and improvement have culminated in a welcoming environment.

We had an outstanding year with our Chihuly Workshop partnership and have created a Chihuly Shop-Within-A-Shop to support our Studio Editions in Glass and Limited Edition Lithographs.

December 2016 brought our teamwork with The Downtown Merchants Association to a crescendo, with “A Not So Silent Night,” an evening of holiday shopping, music, and “Where’s The Elf?” scavenger hunt.

Gallery 506 hosted multiple opening receptions in 2016, including the critically acclaimed and nationally attended “David Lee Csicsko: The Columbus Connection” reception, and the “Jeff Hagen: Postcards from the Road” exhibit. We are very excited about the upcoming shows we have planned for Gallery 506 in 2017!

The Visitors Center also serves the local community by providing meeting and event space at little or no cost. In 2016, the Visitors Center hosted 160 meetings or events.

TOURS & GUEST SERVICES

VCI’s most renowned programs are the architecture and Miller House & Garden tours. The organization conducted 770 driving tours, and walking tours were reintroduced on Wednesdays and Saturdays in 2016. The Volunteer and Tour Program Manager directs our team of volunteer tour guides and maintains a fleet of vehicles used to conduct our tours.

» Public Tour Attendance:	
Architecture .....	3,104
Miller House .....	4,177
Walking tours.....	392
» Visitors Center:	
Traffic .....	20,729
Video viewings.....	13,590
» Volunteers:	
Team Members .....	40
Hours worked.....	2,446

A guest satisfaction survey for the Architecture Tour was implemented to garner visitor feedback (see below). Surveys distributed to 1,039 people had an overall response rate of over 62 percent. The results confirmed anecdotal information and provided some new insights.

New audio/visual equipment in the gallery features advanced streaming technology for screening tour videos and projecting special presentations. The new room layout provides added flexibility for presentations, gallery receptions, and special events.

New tour booking software came on line in February 2016, allowing us to provide improved customer service for our tour guests. The report functions, along with Trip Advisor and Google Analytics integrations, have improved our data collection and increased the number of visitor reviews.

SPORTS TOURISM

2016 was a stellar year in sports tourism. Visitor volume increased by 46%, and the overall economic impact of the sports sector increased by \$2 million. New volunteer recruitment software was implemented to facilitate events like the AJGA Golf Tournament, USSSA National Tournament, and the Columbus Challenge. An Event Enhancement Program, launched in 2016, provides additional dollars for new or growing sports events.

Sports Tourism Director Eric Marvin is a leader in his field. He received the “Volunteers of the Year” award from AJGA for the 2016 Otter Creek Junior Championship from among 116 national events, as well as the Indiana Soccer “President’s Award” for efforts related to the 2016 Indiana Soccer State Cup Finals.

- » Sporting Events - 90 hosted, an increase of 13 events over 2015
- » Visitors - 146,932, an increase of 46% over 2015
- » Direct Visitor Spending - \$10,088,592
- » Total Economic Impact - \$16,000,000

GROUP SALES & SERVICE

The Visitors Center markets Columbus to motor coach tours, architecture schools, and other groups. Becky Harper, Director of Sales and Hospitality, creates itineraries designed to address specific group interests and maximize overnight stays. She also works with groups hosting conferences, meetings, and events in Bartholomew County. In 2016, 79 groups were hosted. Notable among them were Santa Fe Museum of International Folk Art, American Institute of Architects, International Cessna Association, and First Annual Gospel Music Association Conference.

Additionally, the filming of Columbus the movie consumed 935 guest rooms at two properties, creating an economic impact of \$131,199.

New software has improved the Customer Relationship Management process and tracking.

Private group tour attendance in 2016 was 2,278, a 24% increase over 2015.

Special event attendance increased 58% to 20,686 in 2016.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

An independent audit of the 2016 financial statements was conducted by Blue & Co., LLC.

The financial statements reported total revenue of \$1,710,693. Innkeeper’s Tax accounted for \$1,200,000 of the total. The remainder of the revenue was generated through gift shop sales, tour sales, and donations. Total revenue also included \$86,000 of in-kind rent provided by the Bartholomew County Public Library for the Visitors Center facility.

Expenses in 2016 totaled \$1,838,588. The Audited Statement of Activities listed expenses in the following categories: promotion (\$956,762), hosting (\$420,483), tours (\$291,399), and administration \$169,944.

LOCAL TOURISM INDUSTRY STATISTICS

Smith Travel Research indicated no increase in the number of lodging rooms sold in Bartholomew County from 2015 to 2016; however, total hotel sales revenue increased over \$1 million due to the average daily rate for rooms sold, which increased \$4.30 in 2016.

The CERTEC economic impact study, released in 2015, indicated visitors spend approximately \$257 million each year in the local economy, which supports 4,426 jobs in our hospitality industry. A new CERTEC study has been commissioned in 2017 to provide current industry impact.

SURVEY SAYS!

WAS YOUR GUIDE WELCOMING AND ENGAGING?



YES, ABSOLUTELY! WE HAD A GREAT TIME!

SURVEY SAYS :	
STRONGLY AGREE	88.0%
MOSTLY AGREE	9.0%
MOSTLY NEUTRAL	0.3%
MOSTLY DISAGREE	0.0%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.0%
NO ANSWER	2.0%

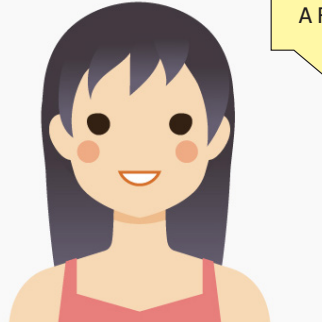
WHAT BRINGS YOU TO COLUMBUS?



A FUN DAY OF SEEING ALL THE SITES, OF COURSE!

SURVEY SAYS :	
LEISURE/SIGHTSEEING	90%
VISITING FAMILY/FRIENDS	25%
STUDYING ARCHITECTURE	15%
BUSINESS/PROFESSIONAL	8%
OTHER	8%
JUST PASSING THROUGH	4%

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT COLUMBUS?



A FRIEND SAID IT WAS A MUST-SEE, SO I HAD TO SEE FOR MYSELF!

SURVEY SAYS :	
FAMILY/FRIENDS	55%
INTERNET	17%
TRAVEL GUIDE/BROCHURE	11%
MAGAZINES/NEWSPAPER	6%
NO RESPONSE	10%