



WASHTENAW 2030

Destination Master Plan

WHAT IS A DESTINATION MASTER PLAN?

A Destination Master Plan focuses on enhancing and optimizing infrastructure, facilities, services, attractions, communications and events to improve the visitor experience and elevate quality of life for community members.

January 29, 2020

Why the Washtenaw 2030 Destination Master Plan Now?

- Leverage the local tourism industry more strategically to support equitable economic development for all of Washtenaw County
- Disperse visitors geographically and seasonally to more places year-round
- Increase visitor spending per person across the County
- Address challenges regarding transportation and workforce development
- Address lack of infrastructure for meetings and events
- Address need for more regional collaboration between the public and private sectors
- Show how more high-value visitors County-wide means more opportunities for more residents and local small businesses



For more information, please contact:

Destination Ann Arbor
Mary Kerr, President & CEO
734.995.7281
annarbor.org
washtenaw2030.org

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INTRODUCTION

APRIL
2019

FEBRUARY
2020



Situation Review
Community Engagement

Visioning Workshop

Final Report

Washtenaw County attracts almost four million day and overnight visitors annually – roughly 10 times the entire resident population. As such, the local visitor industry plays a vital role in the economic sustainability of the region. That visitor volume encompasses the leisure, business, meetings, sports, cultural, academic, and VFR (visiting friends & relatives) markets, among others, which together contribute more than \$1 billion in overall economic impact in the County every year.

The University of Michigan is the biggest magnet for visitation throughout the area, and Ann Arbor continually ranks as one of the best small towns to live, work and play in America. Traditionally, the city and university together have been the primary identity for the County as a whole from a national perspective.

Washtenaw County, however, is evolving into a much more layered, expansive and diverse destination. The many different municipalities and townships across the County are investing in community development projects to elevate livability for residents and destination appeal for visitors. That's further supported by county and state investments in urban, rural and park infrastructure, which then fuels private sector investment that contributes to the overall quality of life for residents and quality of place for visitors.

Introduction

Based on those investments, there are new opportunities to leverage both the existing and future volume of visitors more strategically to benefit more of Washtenaw County.

The global visitor economy provides a connectivity pipeline that brings together different people and communities, locally and globally, who can build on their collective interests, strengths and opportunities. In the leisure, meetings and business travel segments, the ability to connect locals and visitors drives new job growth, increases the tax base, and accelerates new business and research development.

In general, the visitor economy provides more opportunities for more local people – economically, socially and culturally – in more communities, but there needs to be a comprehensive road map to guide long-term direction.

The **Washtenaw 2030 Destination Master Plan** was launched to provide that roadmap. It is a 10-year, community-driven, resident-focused strategic framework designed to align sustainable visitor growth and equitable economic development in order to support the broadest possible range of diverse communities and dynamic organizations.

There is an incredible array of inspiring destinations in Washtenaw County, each with key stakeholders who are committed to driving progress and growth in their areas. Looking ahead, it is critical that those stakeholders aren't operating in silos. Rather, together, they can steward and enhance the long-term sustainable and equitable development of the County most effectively.

The primary goal of Washtenaw 2030 is to build coalition among those private and public-sector leaders around a shared vision for the future, where everyone in the County can participate in developing that future, and benefit from it.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Washtenaw 2030 Destination Master Plan is an overarching framework that includes a vision, strategic goals and actionable initiatives for the entire region to drive broader, higher value visitation that enhances quality of life and economic development opportunities for all residents. It is essentially a platform where the visitor industry, local communities, business and academic leaders, and the public sector come together to develop forward-looking strategies to leverage the visitor economy more strategically.

The process behind producing Washtenaw 2030 began with extensive analysis of the County's visitor economy, visitor industry assets, academic culture, business environment and overall infrastructure. That provided the necessary information and context to evaluate the levels of destination strength and community alignment in Washtenaw County.

The actual insights and strategies in this Destination Master Plan were developed from a wide variety of industry and community engagement initiatives to co-create a 10-year roadmap for Washtenaw County. Participants included elected government officials, government employees, tourism and hospitality leaders throughout the region, civic organizations, and various private businesses, customers and clients.

Community Engagement

More than 300 community members took part in individual consultations and public group sessions across Washtenaw County to develop this Plan. Many professionals outside of the hospitality and tourism industry participated, including leaders in government, economic development, academia, transportation and public services. That was to ensure the Master Plan addresses all of the community member input from an overall destination standpoint.





1000+
interactions

12

focus groups with
local stakeholders

43

one-on-one
interviews

2

townhall
sessions
for all
residents

1

Visioning Workshop
with over

60

participants

500+

online resident surveys

Community Feedback

During the individual consultations and community engagement sessions throughout Washtenaw County, there were numerous themes common among many of the discussions. The most consistent feedback from community members collectively, relating to both opportunities and challenges, included:

Opportunities for Washtenaw County

Regional Experiences

- Leverage and promote unknown and emerging destination experiences across the County
- Delineate, develop and promote different types of specific experiences more intentionally across travel segments
- Collaborate with local organizations more to spur equitable destination, community and economic development
- Promote off-season travel more

Meetings & Events Sector

- Develop the meetings and events sector by tapping into local industry and academic expertise, especially in technology, medicine, advanced mobility and other priority sectors
- Develop a standalone conference center and promote existing and new meeting/event spaces more aggressively
- Collaborate with regional partners to continue to co-develop an Innovation Corridor between Ann Arbor and Detroit to attract smaller, high-value, high-tech meetings

Sports, Outdoors & Sustainability

- Develop comprehensive sports tourism facilities
- Develop sustainable tourism strategies for the long-term health of the County
- Capitalize on the growing demand for experiences related to wellness/wellbeing
- Develop a dedicated content platform to highlight investments in trail ecosystem
- Promote multi-generational/family outdoor experiences more

Community Feedback

Challenges for Washtenaw County

Transportation & Mobility

- Lack of developments in walkability and bikeability to ease congestion and foster a richer and more active visitor experience
- Lack of collaboration between public and private sectors to define and develop the future of mobility in Washtenaw County
- Need to improve wayfinding and public education about transportation options
- Not capitalizing on Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti's research and development in advanced mobility
- Lack of parking and increasing road congestion

Workforce

- Not enough investments in technology and intellectual capital to diversify economy and support local entrepreneurs
- There are lots of jobs in Ann Arbor but they're difficult for workers from other areas to access
- Need to leverage innovative programs at Eastern Michigan University and community colleges more strategically

Community Alignment

- Not enough dialogue on economic, social and environmental sustainability between the public and private sectors
- Lack of a progressive vision and spirit of collaboration among some leaders in the public and private sectors
- More can be done to tap non-profit sector to elevate more communities
- Residents don't "get" tourism and the visitor economy

INDUSTRY PROFILE

VISITOR INDUSTRY PROFILE

The visitor industry in Washtenaw County produces more than \$230 million in income and earnings, supporting 9,000 full-time equivalent jobs and more than \$1.2 billion in economic impact.

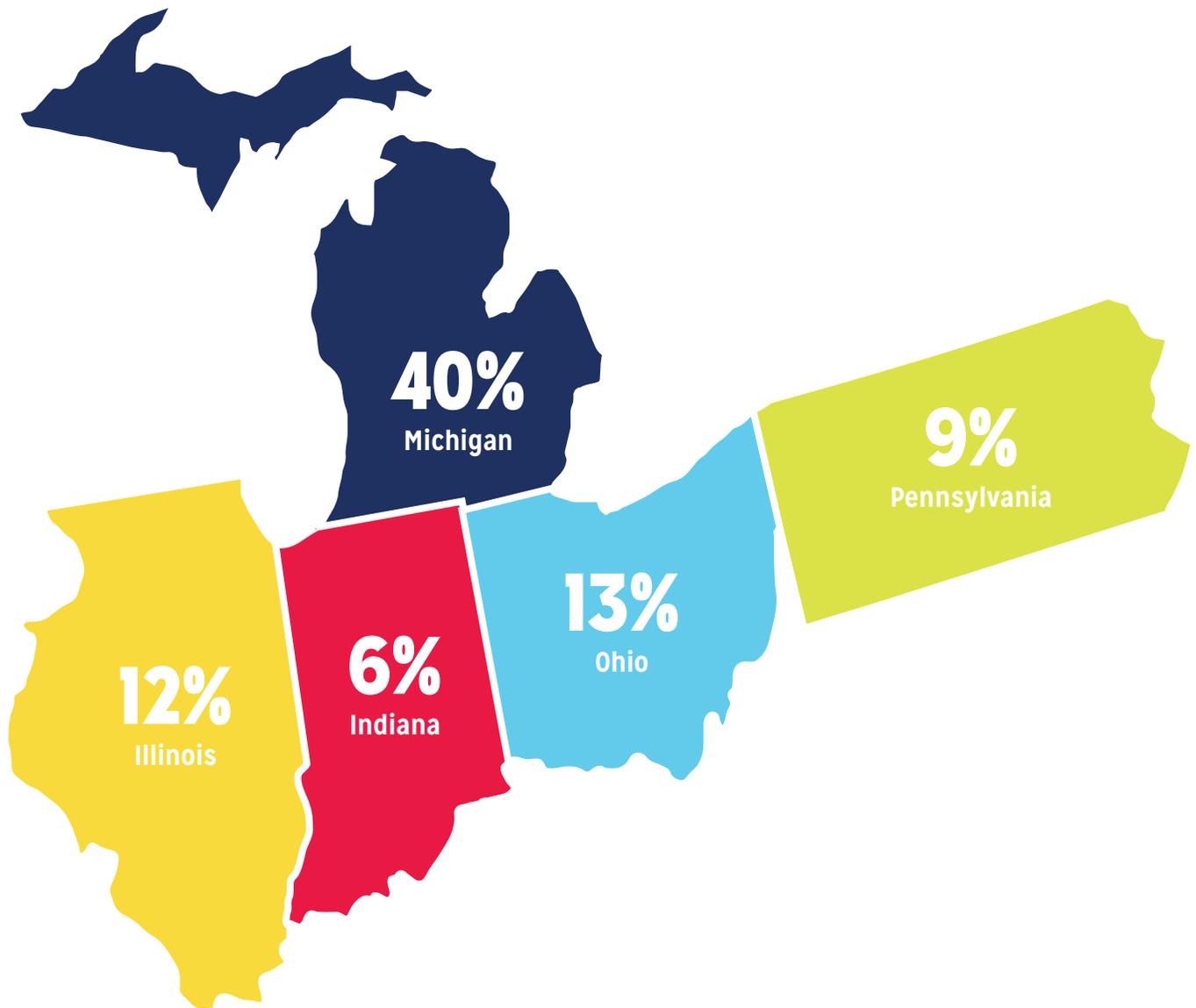
The County attracted 3.9 million visitors in 2018, reflecting a healthy growth rate over the past five years. The 2018 visitation is an 8% increase over 2016 and a 30% increase over 2014.



Most visitors (62%) are day trippers, while more than 1.5 million visitors stay at least one night in the County. Overnight visitors spend an average of three nights and \$196.41 per person per day, with the majority spent on lodging. Day trippers spend \$42.27 per person on average, with food and beverage comprising the largest percentage of purchasing.



Source Markets



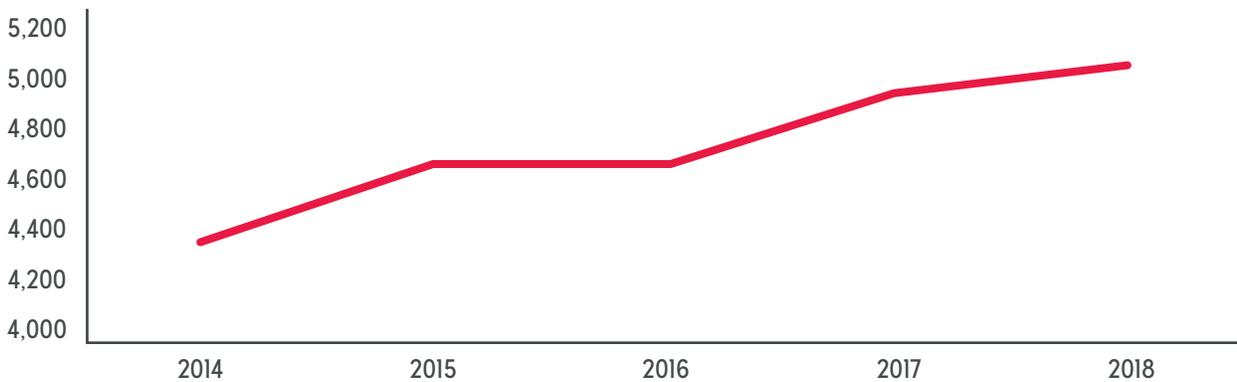
A significant portion of the visitor market comes from surrounding states. Visiting friends and relatives is an important reason to come to the region, generating 30% of visitor volume to Ann Arbor and 24% of visitors to Ypsilanti.

The universities play a critical role within the community not only as nationally and internationally recognized leading institutions of learning, but also as drivers of the local visitor economy. Of the 3.9 million visitors to the County, 59% have some sort of relationship with the University of Michigan and 25% have a relationship with Eastern Michigan University.

ACCOMMODATIONS PROFILE

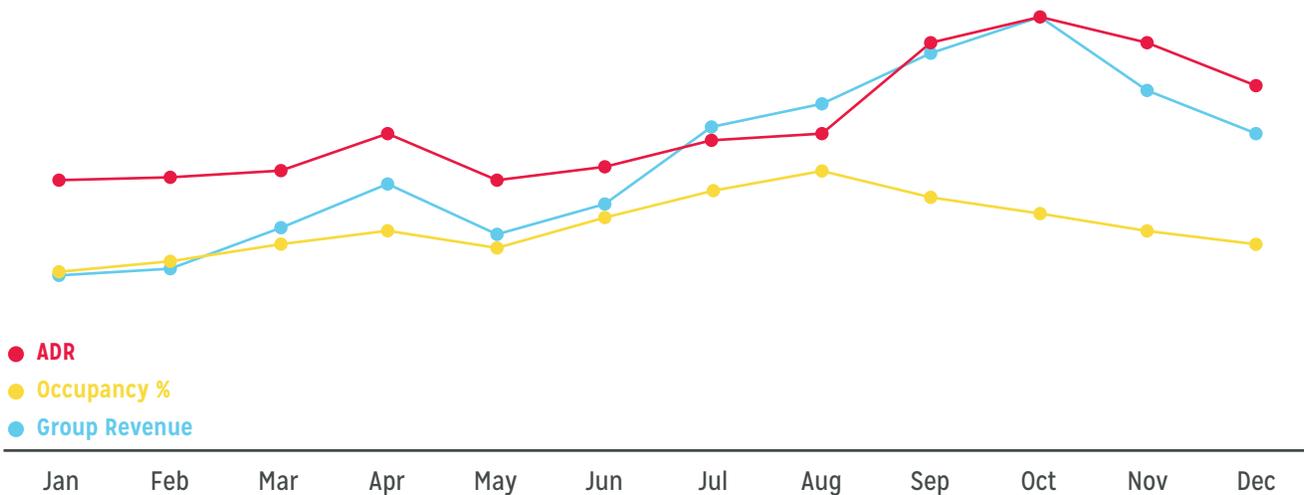
Hotel Inventory

Since 2014, hotel inventory has increased at a pace of 3.5% per year. By the end of 2018, the County offered 5,015 hotel rooms not including several construction projects that commenced in 2019. It is estimated that an additional 895 rooms will be added to the inventory once completed. Overall occupancy rates in the past five years have remained around 66%.



Vacation Rental Market

In 2018, 759 shared homes or rooms were available for rent. Occupancy throughout the year ranged from 30% to 60%, with an overall average of 40%. Average Daily Rate (ADR) for the entire market was roughly \$205 with a Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR) of roughly \$81. This resulted in additional accommodation revenue of \$1.8 million for property owners in Washtenaw County.



TRENDS

The Future of the Visitor Economy

The travel, tourism, hospitality, dining and retail sectors combined represent the world's biggest economy, surpassing manufacturing, agriculture, automotive and all other major industries.

The global visitor economy also impacts all other sectors, either directly or indirectly. That's because travel is about the free-flowing movement of knowledge, goods and services that benefit both local and visiting communities and organizations of every type.

Without travel, destinations exist in silos cut off from all of the innovation, creativity and economic activity regionally, nationally and globally. Therefore, it's important to understand the shifts reshaping the visitor industry to capitalize on those trends effectively.

The following insight shows how visitors are traveling today and what motivates them. They also illustrate how destination organizations are collaborating more intentionally with residents and stakeholders in the public and private sectors to elevate the visitor experience and enhance quality of life for local communities.

Global Visitor Economy Trends

The global visitor economy is undergoing an unprecedented transformation based on changing consumer behaviors and expectations, driven by advancing technologies and socio-economic shifts worldwide. It is imperative for destination leaders and their partners to understand the evolving macro trends in travel and tourism to elevate the visitor experience, increase visitor loyalty and spend, and drive competitive advantage for hospitality and travel providers.

The Future of Experiences

The tours and activities sector is a catalyst for some of the most significant innovations in travel, fueled by major investments and the many mergers and acquisitions in recent years. The ongoing demand for local, authentic and immersive experiences is seemingly without limits, but many consumers are not willing to commit to booking activities before the trip. That's why some of the travel industry's biggest names – TripAdvisor, Google, Booking.com, Expedia and Airbnb, to name a few – are investing heavily in selling experiences on-demand, in-destination. Others like Viator, FareHarbor, Peek, Klook and GetYourGuide are scaling exponentially, as well. The big shift is how these online platforms are making it easier for travelers to book day-of experiences via simple mobile interfaces with live, click-to-buy functionality. Today, the increasing sophistication and lower cost of ecommerce booking engines, mixed with improved live inventory technology, means that more small tour operators are able to sell travel experiences and better convert spontaneous purchase decisions in-destination.

Integrated Sustainability

In August 2019, the U.S. Geological Survey published a study titled, "It is Raining Plastic," detailing the discovery of micro-plastics in rainwater over the Rocky Mountains. In the same month at the G7 Summit, a coalition of 34 multinational companies, named "Business for Inclusive Growth," or B4IG, with more than three million employees and revenues topping \$1 trillion, launched an initiative to tackle global inequality. Today, the conversation around sustainability is much broader, encompassing economic, social and environmental impacts collectively. The United Nations World Travel Organization (UNWTO) was pushing for integrated sustainable tourism development as far back as 2005 but now the world is catching up.

Younger generations especially are increasingly focused on the severe challenges facing our planet and societies, and they are making travel decisions based on how well a destination is mitigating its negative impacts. Today, more and more companies in the global visitor economy are aligning their operations with the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which is driving engagement with consumer audiences on an entirely new level.

New Mixed Realities

Conversational commerce platforms (chat) connect travel brands and travelers with a more frictionless immediacy, which drives higher customer engagement and conversion rates. For example, chatbots like "Rose" at The Cosmopolitan in Las Vegas are delivering 30% higher in-hotel spending. Also, San Francisco Travel employs a chat platform developed by Chatfuel that helps consumers search for tours and activities with a highly personalized user experience. Likewise, voice-based chat is also growing with artificial intelligence platforms such as Amazon's Alexa changing the rules of customer and brand engagement. In effect, it's a shift from machines connecting us with our friends to becoming our friends.

Also, new augmented reality (AR) platforms such as Google Lens are creating new ways to connect brands and visitors by providing an added layer of content customized to the individual. Google is still all about search, but now travelers just need to point their phones at something, and the visual search functionality will display a wide array of information such as website links and social media commentary from friends. Looking ahead, the AR-powered "3D Internet" will change the face of experiences, entertainment, events, dining and retail in travel in the next decade.

Multi-Modal Mobility

Mobility is one of the biggest issues in modern society. Due to rising visitor and overall population volumes, many cities are developing multi-modal mobility strategies to help both visitors and locals travel and commute more easily and effectively. While there is still much more testing and research to be done, there is a growing focus on multi-modal hubs and single payment apps connecting trains, buses, cars, ebikes/scooters and other transportation options to improve efficiencies. Destination organizations are beginning to support these developments with information for visitors about how to use them.

Also, the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo and Expo 2020 Dubai will both be live test laboratories for driverless vehicles and micro-payments. These new platforms will have a profound impact on automating many touch points throughout the travel experience. Today, autonomous vehicles are no longer science fiction, with driverless shuttles and cars navigating public roads from Las Vegas to Oslo.

Destination Organization Trends

The big shift in the visitor industry today, from the perspective of destination organizations, is the evolution from destination marketing to management. This is more than a trend. It's a systematic re-evaluation of how destination organizations can have a much broader impact in their communities by leveraging the interactions between stakeholders, partners and clients within the region and around the world more intentionally.

Community-Led Destination Development

Destination organizations are partnering with community organizations more strategically to develop neighborhood experiences that appeal to both locals and visitors, and more importantly, benefit locals as much or more than visitors. This involves working with local economic development agencies to identify new opportunities where visitor engagement could potentially support operating costs and drive increased exposure. Washington D.C.'s 11th Street Bridge project and San Antonio's San Pedro Creek development are both examples where the local destination organization is helping build stronger communities by promoting these local initiatives to global visitors and outside investors. In effect, this is transformative placemaking where the purpose of the development is intended to bridge cultures and re-establish links between adjacent neighborhoods and communities.

Selling Expertise to Meeting Planners

The most progressive destination organizations worldwide are promoting their thought leaders in specific advanced industries to engage meeting organizers active in those industries. Rather than just selling a city based solely on its infrastructure, access and capacity, destination organizations are driving competitive advantage

by providing greater access to their priority sectors and clusters of knowledge capital. To accomplish that effectively, leaders in the visitor economy are developing broader networks with their local innovation economy, and they're preparing materials highlighting the strength of the individual sectors in terms of how meeting and event organizers can engage those clusters. It is imperative for destination organizations to illustrate how this empowers both the local advanced industries and outside clients for this to work effectively.

The New Ambassadors

Leading destination organizations are positioning their most creative and innovative residents as the face of the destination to promote the unique cultural DNA of their communities. For example, "makers" are independent entrepreneurs who create unique products and services that define the spirit of the neighborhoods, which has a strong attraction for visitors researching a destination. Makers deliver a hyperlocal visitor experience that helps define the destination brand for various visitor audiences by connecting locals and travelers in a more personal way, revolving around shared passions. Examples of this in action are: Melbourne, Australia's "Creative State" initiative and

ambassador platform; San Francisco’s “I am San Francisco” campaign; Singapore Tourism Board’s “Passion Made Possible” framework; and Destination Canada’s new “For Glowing Hearts” vision. All of these destinations are leveraging their most creative and innovative leaders who are delivering many types of high-impact visitor experiences, rather than just promoting the experiences themselves.

Community Alignment

For destination organizations to be effective in their elevated roles in destination management and stewardship, there must be a high degree of support from government leaders, civic organizations and community residents. This requires astute leadership to rally key stakeholders and build coalition around a shared vision for the future of the destination. Fundamental to this, destination organizations are developing comprehensive resident sentiment surveys to gauge how community support is evolving year-over-year. Once those benchmarks are established, destination leaders can design and implement community engagement strategies based on up-to-date resident feedback.

Millennials & Gen Z

Destination organizations are continually evolving how they engage younger visitors, including millennials and Gen Z, who consume content and book travel differently in a world under constant disruption. Research shows three primary themes destination leaders and travel

providers should focus on to influence the next-generation traveler. One, demand is growing for highly personalized experiences that inspire the individual traveler and show them a new perspective of the world, which also align with his or her best version of their self-identity. Travel today is about who you can be. Two, there is growing interest in spending on food, retail and experiences that contribute to the long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability of both the community and the destination. And three, it’s imperative for destination leaders and travel providers to merge the physical and digital worlds to provide visitors an additional virtual layer of customized, educational content to create more personalized travel journeys. In turn, they can share those experiences and learning with their personal and professional networks, which creates a sense of community among people with like-minded purpose, whatever that might be.

TAKEAWAYS

10 Key Takeaways

These are the primary macro themes that anchor the direction of the Washtenaw 2030 Destination Master Plan, based on all of the input collected from the many various community engagement sessions and extensive research review.

Each takeaway defines opportunities that are relevant for enhancing the regional visitor economy, improving quality of life for local residents, and expanding business development across Washtenaw County for companies of all sizes.

10 Key Takeaways

Advocate for the continued development of the Mobility Innovation Corridor between Ann Arbor and Detroit

The industry cluster of advanced mobility R&D is unmatched in Southeast Michigan, between Ann Arbor and Detroit. That wealth of knowledge can be leveraged to help redefine and rebrand the destination as a global leader in innovation that's changing the world.

Capitalize on local expertise in priority sectors to develop meetings business

Related to the above, the collective expertise in Washtenaw County in mobility, technology, health and medicine, and other advanced industries can be leveraged more intentionally to attract meetings and conferences in those industries.

Develop visitor economy with Ann Arbor as a central hub connecting many other unique communities

To drive visitor dispersal and diversify economic spend, Washtenaw County should be positioned as a network of communities connected by a major hub, which helps visitors navigate the region and understand all it has to offer beyond Ann Arbor.

Diversify the leisure tourism industry for unique consumer profiles

Ann Arbor has a strong national identity tied to higher education, research and college athletics. More can be done to elevate the exposure of niche visitor experiences across the entire County, related to segments such as culinary, arts/culture, wellness and outdoor recreation.

Develop Ypsilanti and other communities as arts, cultural and culinary hotspots

Ypsilanti's development provides a compelling visitor experience that complements Ann Arbor well, providing a multi-layered storytelling platform that will benefit the entire County. Ypsilanti has the potential to be an incubator for artists, chefs and other creatives living in towns/townships across the region.

Develop all-year outdoor recreation tourism and programming to establish the County as a leader in health, wellness, active lifestyles, and sustainability

There is a comprehensive, yet under-served, series of city, county and state park systems that should be connected and promoted to active visitors. The parks tie into many next-generation travel and social trends, including wellness and sustainability, which can be elevated with new integrated programming.

Develop sports tourism venues to capitalize on the exponential growth of amateur sport tournaments nationwide

Rolling Hills County Park and other venues in the region have the space to develop comprehensive sports facilities, but the focus should go beyond just attracting teams for practice and tournament play. The overall positioning can align with government initiatives to support community and youth development as well. This is an initiative that benefits locals more than visitors.

Build year-round demand generators for leisure travel and meetings/events to fill new hotel capacity

There has been a surge of new hotel development in recent years, requiring an increase in sales and marketing initiatives focusing on a more diverse, year-round inventory of attractions and events for both the leisure and business segments.

Enhance government and industry workforce development initiatives to attract, train and retain talent

The visitor industry can take a more proactive role in co-producing workforce development initiatives with local government and academic institutions, using both digital platforms and live community events. At the same time, the industry can work together to promote tourism as a viable and lucrative career option based on in-demand skills development.

Improve multimodal mobility and public transportation County-wide

There is a need for new transportation infrastructure in both Ann Arbor and across Washtenaw County. The lack of modern multi-modal mobility options is hindering business and workforce development, especially outside Ann Arbor. Within Ann Arbor, the visitor industry can advocate for better mobility options to decrease congestion and spur economic development for small businesses.



VISION

A destination vision is a desired future state. It is not a marketing campaign. Three unique destination signatures have emerged during the development of Washtenaw 2030:

1. **A center of innovation emanating from universities, colleges and high-tech industries**
2. **A diverse place with many desirable cultural attributes**
3. **A deep connection to sports and outdoor activities**



**A culture of innovation and
knowledge that unleashes immersive
creative experiences in active,
diverse communities.**

5 Strategic Goals

To accomplish the new vision for Washtenaw County, there are five critical, overarching strategic goals that need to be achieved in stages during the next 5-10 years. For each goal, there are a series of actionable initiatives that were determined by the many community engagement sessions with key stakeholders and residents. Those initiatives were further refined by the community feedback during the Visioning Workshop, followed by a final review of the Washtenaw 2030 Steering Committee.

The strategic goals are:

Enhanced Experiences

Elevate the quality of existing experiences, develop new visitor tours and activities, and package them more cohesively in niche segments such as history culinary, culture and adventure to drive higher visitor spend and satisfaction.

Expanded Meetings & Events

Develop new meeting, conference and event spaces to answer clear demand for more group business across Washtenaw County. At the same time, leverage key clusters in tech, medical and mobility to attract events in those sectors.

Improved Mobility & Connectivity

Better mobility means more opportunities for more residents throughout the County. There needs to be a holistic strategy for developing a multi-modal mobility ecosystem accessible for all community members.

Empowered Workforce

Talent is the competitive advantage for any destination, and Washtenaw County is a hot bed for education. The public and private sectors can collaborate more intentionally to leverage local institutions, organizations, knowledge and skills, including working to retain a greater proportion of young people after school.

Greater Regional Collaboration

Tourism, government, academic and economic development leaders have an opportunity to work together more effectively to benefit the entire County by connecting cross-sector expertise and community assets more effectively.

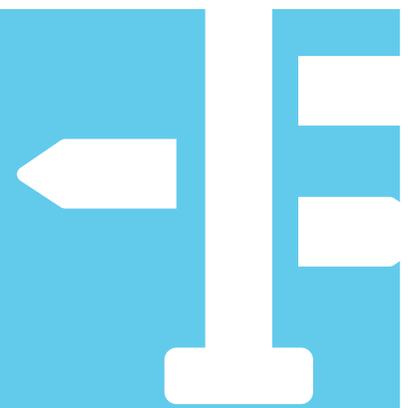
WASHTENAW 2030

Enhanced Experiences



Expanded Meetings & Events

Improved Mobility & Connectivity



Greater Regional Collaboration



Empowered Workforce



1. ENHANCED EXPERIENCES

Washtenaw County is well-situated to easily integrate urban and non-urban visitor experiences, especially with all of the developments linking the municipal, county and state park systems. To drive more interest in town and country travel, it's important to hold visitors' hands (so to speak) to guide them through the very basics of geography and logistics to easily navigate the County.

There is significant opportunity to diversify the visitor base and the destination brand by connecting and delineating all of the various travel experiences by consumer segments. Cultural, culinary, outdoor and wellness experiences should be developed and promoted more intentionally to capitalize on the demand and increase average visitor spend and length of stay.





- A** Enhance outdoor recreation experiences and accommodation options by capitalizing on the Border-to-Border and Iron Belle trails ecosystems, and develop tours/activities along the Huron River, Ford Lake, Watkins Lake County/State Park, and other waterways.

- B** Develop and integrate multi-day “mind/body” tours and itineraries, including agri-tourism, farm stays, sustainable food, historic preservation, cultural activities, wellness experiences and education, and biking/hiking.

- C** Leverage university and college events with the help of alumni, faculty and staff to promote public programming relating to cultural and culinary experiences.

- D** Promote local university/college arts talent to develop Ypsilanti and other communities as arts and culture hubs.

- E** Develop new winter sporting competitions to increase off-season travel, such as cross-country skiing, dog sledding, hockey, curling, etc.

- F** Develop culinary and cultural-themed routes that connect relevant restaurants, experiences and events County-wide.

- G** Ensure integration of visitor experiences and facilities for Broadway Park and other new developments.

ENHANCED EXPERIENCES

Case Studies



Oregon Rural Tourism Studio

Travel Oregon's innovative Rural Tourism Studio is a robust training program designed to help rural communities develop and offer high-value, authentic experiences to travelers in a sustainable, manageable way. The initiative is based on a community-based workshop series designed to create a shared vision and big-picture strategy for regional tourism. From there, the individual communities dive deeper to create new visitor experiences revolving around culinary and agritourism journeys, outdoor recreation, bicycling tourism, cultural heritage tourism, and more.



University of Wisconsin Art

Destination Madison collaborated with the University of Wisconsin to develop a platform for artists to create sculptures based on the university's beloved Bucky mascot. The university was hesitant at first to relinquish control of their iconic mascot and brand, but Destination Madison successfully advocated for the program. Local corporate organizations and stakeholders ended up sponsoring a total of 85 Bucky sculptures, which were displayed around the city for both visitors and locals to enjoy. Combined, Destination Madison raised a total of \$1.4 million, of which the organization donated \$1 million to local charities.



Charlotte Whitewater Center

The U.S. National Whitewater Center in Charlotte, N.C. is an Olympic training facility with the world's largest man-made whitewater venue. It was also designed as a recreation facility for locals and visitors, with a wide variety of experiences for all ages and athletic levels, ranging from ziplines to hiking. The Charlotte Regional Visitor's Authority is active in developing and promoting experiences at the Whitewater Center for both leisure travelers and conference groups.



LSU Culinary School Events

The Louisiana Culinary Institute (LCI) in Baton Rouge hosts a wide variety of food and beverage-themed events throughout the year, open to both locals and visitors. The cooking school uses creative event spaces like LSU AgCenter's Botanical Gardens, and it develops highly engaging event themes such as the "Annual World Hot Sauce Awards" and "Get On Board: The Latest Seafood Festival." Visit Baton Rouge works closely with LCI to help elevate the exposure of students and their talents in the local community, and it connects meeting planners with the LCI's events department.

2. EXPANDED MEETINGS & EVENTS

Whether they be centered around business, culture or sports, meetings and events play an increasingly important role in stimulating visitor demand in Washtenaw County. On the events and festivals side, the region should be further leveraging its unique characteristics and expertise to grow existing events and create or attract new ones. Through initiatives that enhance programming, structural improvements, and venue development initiatives, the County will be able to continue to grow interest and demand from the meetings and events market.

Regarding meetings and conferences, there is a high demand for modern venues and facilities that can accommodate medium-size conferences and retreats. Bringing high-value meetings in advanced industries to Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti can build local priority clusters in technology, medicine, mobility and others, providing further opportunities for students and local workforce County-wide.



A Incubate new and grow existing locally-driven celebrations and festivals with themes such as craft beverages, music, automobiles, etc.

B Work with regional governments and economic agencies to develop and promote a Mobility Innovation Corridor connecting Washtenaw County communities with Detroit.

C Implement an action plan resulting from the convention center feasibility study.

D Develop new meeting and event facilities to answer the demand for high-value conferences and other public gatherings that support equitable regional development.

E Develop a comprehensive sports tourism complex, and position the facilities as a community space for family travel and youth development.

F Develop performance venues beyond University of Michigan for concerts, theater and other cultural events, appropriate for neighborhood size.

G Develop full-service luxury/boutique hotels.

EXPANDED MEETINGS & EVENTS

Case Studies



Cleveland Health-Tech Corridor

The Cleveland Health-Tech Corridor is a collection of biomedical, healthcare and technology companies looking to take advantage of the close proximity to four world-class healthcare institutions, including the Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals, six business incubators, four academic centers, and more than 170 high-tech and health-tech companies engaged in the business of innovation. Destination Cleveland collaborates closely with the Corridor's members to attract high-value meetings and events in the health and medical sector.



Indiana Sport Campus

In Hamilton County, Indiana, the 400-acre Grand Park Sports Campus encompasses 26 baseball fields and 31 multi-purpose fields for soccer, football, and lacrosse. Indoors, it includes three full-size soccer fields, the Pacers Athletic Center for basketball/volleyball, and the Pro X Athlete Development for one-on-one athlete training. Grand Park also features an abundance of flexible meeting space and more than 10 miles of pedestrian/bicycle trails, including the largest trailhead on the Monon Corridor. More than one million visitors participate in or attend tournaments and events at the Grand Park Sports Campus on an annual basis, making the surrounding area a prime location for economic development.



InnovateABQ, Albuquerque

InnovateABQ is a 7-acre innovation district in Albuquerque connecting the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque Convention Center, three U.S. Federal Laboratories, and the local tech sector. At the center of the district, the Rainforest Building was designed for visitors to meet with representatives from the local innovation economy. Visit Albuquerque now leverages InnovateABQ to promote the city to meeting planners as a “collision space for new ideas.” And, the destination organization positions its role as a broker of innovation versus merely a broker of space, dates and rates.



Coachella, Palm Springs

The Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival (or, just Coachella) showcases popular and established musical artists as well as emerging artists and reunited groups. It is one of the largest, most famous, and most profitable music festivals in the United States and the world. Each Coachella staged from 2013 to 2015 set new records for festival attendance and gross revenues. The 2017 festival was attended by 250,000 people and grossed \$114.6 million. The Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau has successfully capitalized on Coachella to reposition the region as a modern, dynamic and creative destination for visitors of all ages.

3. IMPROVED MOBILITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Expanding public transportation and multi-modal mobility networks is critical for the future equitable growth of Washtenaw County. Mobility equals opportunity, and presently, it is often challenging and overly time-consuming for students and workforce to get where they need to go. In Ann Arbor, the congestion of both the east-west and north-south corridors is diminishing quality of life for locals of all economic classes. Furthermore, enhanced mobility and accessibility makes it easier for visitors to explore a broad footprint of the County and spend dollars in new destinations, which is a primary mandate for Washtenaw 2030.



A Improve connections along east-west connector to provide better accessibility between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.

B Enhance north-south transportation options to better connect Ann Arbor communities and university campuses.

C Develop regional passenger transportation services connecting Detroit, Ann Arbor and DTW.

D Continue to support leadership in the City of Ypsilanti as they pursue the development of an AMTRAK train platform in Depot Town.

E Improve bikeability with fully connected bike routes.

F Develop an autonomous vehicle transportation plan that connects destination assets and provides exceptional visitor experience.

G Further develop broadband (wi-fi) infrastructure County-wide.

IMPROVED MOBILITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Case Studies



Smart Columbus

Columbus, Ohio won the U.S. Department of Transportation’s \$50 million Smart City Challenge in 2016. Those funds have been invested in a new mobility ecosystem called “Smart Columbus,” providing a state-of-the-art environment for multi-modal, clean tech transportation and connected vehicles. Ultimately, it’s a test bed for how new technologies work in a real city with real people solving real problems. The Experience Columbus CVB is working with the city to provide information about how visitors can travel through the region more efficiently, as well as disperse visitor spend more broadly across the city. The organization is also helping tell the world how embracing the reinvention of transportation can accelerate human progress, with real-world examples to support that knowledge sharing.



Sun Link Streetcar, Tucson

The 3.9-mile Sun Link streetcar route in Tucson, Arizona connects the University of Arizona, Banner University Medical Center, Arizona Health Sciences Center, the 4th Avenue Business District, Downtown Tucson, Tucson Convention Center and Mercado District. Since its launch in 2014, the Sun Link streetcar has triggered over \$1 billion of private investment, which has funded new retail, office and residential development along the streetcar corridor. Ninety new restaurants, bars and cafes, and retail businesses have popped up along the route over the last three years, and there is new funding now to expand the line to the airport.



Minneapolis: Most Bikeable City

Minneapolis has more bike lanes and trails per square mile than any other major city in the country. In the past decade alone, the city has added more than 75 miles of new bike lanes and trails. For example, the Midtown Greenway is used year-round by an average of 4,100 cyclists a day. There's also the Luce Line, which extends a distance of almost 60 miles. All this infrastructure led to Minneapolis becoming the first American city to be named as one of the top 20 most bike-friendly cities in the world by Danish design firm, Copenhagenize.



Chattanooga: The “Gig” City

In 2010, Chattanooga became the first U.S. city to roll out a citywide gigabit network. In 2015, the city-owned fiber internet run by the Electric Power Board of Chattanooga reached 10-gigabit speeds. Chattanooga's access to cheap, fast internet, combined with a local government and economic push to develop smarter infrastructure, has turned this midsize city into a fast-growing destination for tech companies and startups looking for an alternative to New York City and Silicon Valley. The Chattanooga CVB continually showcases the city's level of tech innovation as a competitive differentiator to attract conferences, corporate investment and talent relocation.



4. EMPOWERED WORKFORCE

The extensive consultations held during this project revealed a critical need to identify strategies to assist in recruiting and retaining workforce talent across all sectors. For the community to benefit from the significant economic benefits of the visitor economy, greater attention must be placed on initiatives that not only bring workers into the tourism industry, but also generate long-term successful careers in industries of all types across the economic spectrum. This will require close partnership with educational, civic and government organizations.



- A** Increase job hiring hospitality events and online employment tool kits and develop community messaging to promote tourism and related fields (sports, recreation, wellness, etc.) as viable career options.

- B** Collaborate with public/private sectors to develop minority youth development programs, scholarships, mentorships and internships.

- C** Provide data identifying workforce shortages now and in the future and develop a tourism workforce development strategy.

- D** Create mobility resources with new revenue (e.g. Go Pass) to assist with employee transportation.

- E** Engage with private sector, creative enterprises and educational institutions to encourage youth to stay and grow in the County.

- F** Continue to expand CTA tourism industry education and training for individuals to enhance professional knowledge.

EMPOWERED WORKFORCE

Case Studies



Mobile Workforce Innovation

In collaboration with the City of Mobile, the University of South Alabama developed the Hospitality & Tourism Workforce Innovation Alliance (HTWIA), supported by the College of Education and Professional Studies. HTWIA is a catalyst for public-private collaboration to ensure workforce growth and sustainability for the hospitality and tourism industry with special emphasis on the Gulf Coast region. The Alliance also hosts an annual summit focusing on industry trends and technologies that will affect change in workforce competencies, talent recruitment, training and development, workforce retention and sustainability.



Charleston Heart for Hospitality

Explore Charleston has focused more intentionally in recent years on workforce needs, including recruitment, retention, housing and transportation for hospitality workers. Charleston-area tourism leaders are now developing a new industry-wide diversity initiative considered the first of its kind for a visitors bureau. The program, “Heart for Hospitality,” is a collaboration with representatives from hotels, restaurants, attractions and other tourism-related groups. The goal for Heart for Hospitality is to improve not just the recruitment of workers from underrepresented communities but also in the opportunities those workers have after they’re hired.



Local College Coding Bootcamps

Community and city colleges around the country are developing coding bootcamps to provide 1- and 2-year certificates, which are significantly less expensive than 4-year computer engineering degrees and/or private educational institutions. More startups and large corporations require that mid-level expertise, and they're willing to subsidize costs for various types of students. Central New Mexico Community College, City College of Chicago, Seattle Central College and others are expanding their curriculums to answer the demand, and many 4-year universities like UCLA are now offering extension courses, as well.



Miami Minority Training

Hospitality Employees Advancement & Training Inc. (HEAT) in Miami is a hospitality training program developed in partnership with the Overtown Community Re-development Agency, which provides education and pre-employability services, occupational skills training, and job search and placement services. The overarching vision is to reduce poverty, unemployment, and assist with job mobility for workers in underserved communities in South Florida. HEAT's mission is to provide quality training that empowers workers, strengthens their skills, increases wages, and improves work conditions and standards.

5. GREATER REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Destinations that commit to working together among industries, academia, community organizations and the public-sector create significantly more value for clients and visitors. With such a rich offering of opportunities across the region, enhancing collaboration throughout Washtenaw County is a critical strategic priority.

The following initiatives have been identified to enhance synergy across the region. Perhaps the most important priority is to ensure that the implementation of this Destination Master Plan is carried out by a wide range of organizations in the region. Future destination success will only be achieved through continued multi-stakeholder engagement in the process moving forward.



- A** Convene leaders in government, academia, arts/culture, business, tourism and non-profits on a regular basis to oversee advocacy plan implementation of Washtenaw 2030 initiatives and other large-scale developments.
- B** Inform local business leaders on ways to leverage their visitor's experiences in order to extend length of stay.
- C** Ensure the long-term success of The Arts Alliance and other cultural advocacy organizations across the County.
- D** Ensure the long-term success of the Ann Arbor Sports Commission on a regional basis.
- E** Promote existing annarbor.org County-wide event calendar to maximize alignment and opportunities between communities, including Chelsea, Dexter, Manchester, Milan and Saline.
- F** Enhance Destination Ann Arbor's online portal to include more community events, delineate visitor segments, and provide a larger platform for area influencers.
- G** Pursue the feasibility of a County-wide attraction and event pass.
- H** Increase collaboration with leading Detroit-based organizations and Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport.

GREATER REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Case Studies



Community.NewOrleans.com

New Orleans & Company has developed a robust Community section on its website specifically for residents to highlight all of the ways that the visitor economy benefits local people and organizations. The site includes a wide array of job listings and career advice, blogs posts about diversity and inclusivity, and profiles of people who have successfully entered the hospitality and tourism workforce. The Community section is a best case example of how a destination organization is positioning the industry as an attractive option for creative and ambitious people who want to make a good living and a positive impact in their neighborhoods.



Fort Worth Innovation Districts

Visit Fort Worth has made dramatic changes in how it collaborates with both the public and private sectors to help build a stronger economy across the entire city. Part of that mission includes supporting the development of three new innovation districts that are connecting clusters of aligned companies and organizations driving the future of healthcare and mobility. Visit Fort Worth is providing support to package and promote these districts, and the knowledge base in each, to meetings planners in those industries. The goal is to attract relevant conferences with the potential to drive new business and research development in Fort Worth.



Vancouver Collaboration

Tourism Vancouver is collaborating more closely with the public sector to support various City of Vancouver mandates related to environmental sustainability and social enterprise to accelerate equitable economic development. The city's green technology and social enterprise clusters are among the strongest in North America, and City Hall is interested in scaling and commercializing that knowledge globally. To do so, Tourism Vancouver is developing new destination experiences and storytelling strategies to help elevate the exposure of innovation in Vancouver among both leisure travelers and conference attendees.



San Antonio Culture Park

The San Pedro Creek Culture Park in San Antonio is a redevelopment of a historic neighborhood connecting downtown and a number of primarily Hispanic neighborhoods. The goal is to recreate the success of the city's famous River Walk, where a strategically designed waterway connects residents, visitors and locals with small businesses, cultural leaders, and many various civic organizations. Visit San Antonio is actively promoting the Culture Park and working with local artists and business owners to increase visitor dispersal and spend beyond the downtown core.



WASHTENAW 2030

Destination Master Plan