



Tourism Marketing Plan

Town of Concord, MA

FINAL DRAFT – June 22, 2023

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I. Executive Summary

Founded in 1635, Concord, MA is an historic town, known as the location of the first battle of the American Revolution, as well as for its rich literary history, having been home to some of the greatest American authors, including Louisa May Alcott, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorn. Concord is also rich in recreational sites including Walden Pond and the Minute Man National Historic Park and has a long and storied history with the transcendentalist movement, women's suffrage and female anti-slavery. It also has a number of arts, cultural, dining and shopping experiences that visitors find appealing. Located just 19 miles from Boston and 23 miles from Nashua, New Hampshire, its geographic location offers convenient access to Boston's Logan International Airport. Approximately 18,000 residents call Concord home.

With the goal of continuing to increase business from both visitors and residents, the Town has once again secured consulting services from Open the Door to provide analysis, recommend marketing and communications strategies and to develop an updated tourism marketing plan. Open the Door is a strategic planning and communications firm specializing in the hospitality industry. Based in Boston, its principal has over 35 years' experience in economic development and tourism marketing, having worked for the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority and the Massachusetts Port Authority before starting Open the Door 22 years ago. Open the Door has completed similar work for communities in Massachusetts such as: Salem, Lexington, Sturbridge, Foxborough, Gloucester, Provincetown, Greenfield, Deerfield, Shelburne Falls and others, as well as communities throughout New England.

The process to develop this plan included:

- Conducting primary research through key stakeholder interviews
- Obtaining and analyzing additional primary and secondary research
- Conducting analysis of tourism and brand positioning of comparable communities

A list of stakeholders can be found on page 14 along with detailed findings from the research.

This tourism marketing plan has been developed based on results from research. It includes strategies and tactics for implementation, focusing on those that offer the greatest opportunity to leverage resources and return on investment through joint collaborations, in-kind programs and the promotion of special events and promotions to draw visitors to Concord.

According to figures received from the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT), in calendar year 2021, domestic visitors to the Greater Merrimack Valley spent almost \$809 million. This is a 45.1% increase

over the previous year. This spending resulted in \$53.7 million in state taxes, a 20.2% increase over the previous year and \$24.6 million in local taxes, a 32.5% increase over the previous year. While 2021 figures had significant increases over 2020, they are still below 2019 numbers of \$1,079.5 million in spend, \$64.5 million in state taxes and \$32.2 million in local taxes. MOTT no longer tracks city/town economic impact figures, however, they report that Concord has always represented approximately 4.5% of Greater Merrimack Valley's numbers, or \$36,400,500 in domestic visitor spending.

With so many destinations trying to attract the same visitor that Concord is pursuing, this tourism marketing plan has been designed to differentiate Concord from other destinations. It has also been crafted to produce the maximum impact. Given limited budgets, it is important that campaigns are integrated, not only internally, but also by working in collaboration with other partners, particularly as efforts to promote Rev250 get underway for 2025. In this way, Concord will be able to leverage marketing dollars and expand programs to reach target market segments of domestic and international leisure visitors, as well as the group tour market.

Primary and secondary research continue to indicate that having an opportunity to partake in unique and varied activities, as well as satisfaction, value and price, are important elements in the decision-making process of a traveler. Particularly post-pandemic, visitors are looking for experiences that allow them to create memories, and learn about the stories that make a destination unique. Strategies to address these elements have been incorporated into this marketing plan for Concord.

In 2019, Concord created its first Tourism Benchmark Plan. As part of this plan, a number of goals were outlined. As a result of the implementation of the tourism marketing efforts, the following goals were achieved:

- The Town of Concord hired a Tourism Manager to implement the marketing plan and run the Visitor Center
- A website was developed that focuses on the variety of things to see in do in Concord for the out-of-town visitor, as well as residents
- Social media has been implemented for the Visitor Center
- Both daily bus and private tours were actively pursued
- Communications with Concord residents has been initiated about the tourism efforts of the town
- Collaborations have been built with outside tourism organizations, including Lexington, Arlington, The Greater Merrimack Valley CVB, Meet Boston, Discover New England, the Massachusetts

Office of Travel & Tourism, North of Boston CVB, See Plymouth and Freedom's Way National Heritage Area.

- Baseline numbers and tracking mechanisms were developed to measure success of programs. Measurement tools have been added to all promotional campaigns in an effort to track and analyze statistics from individual campaigns as well as collectively. These included:
 - Implementing Google Analytics to be able to measure and analyze data on web visitors. Prior to 2020, website visitation to the Town website was 5,000 annually. In 2022 there were 60,000 view on the Visit Concord website.
 - Visit Concord went from no social media presence to 600 active followers on Facebook and over 900 active followers on Instagram.
 - 2022 sales and attendance at the Visitor Center matched the 2021 numbers with attendance over 14,000 and revenue at \$43,000, far exceeding the \$18,000 from 2020.
 - Daily tours ran over 90% of the time in 2022, and both bus and private tours were very popular, exceeding past years' bookings.
 - In 2019, Visit Concord did not host any private tours. In 2021, 33 tours were hosted and in 2022, 55 private tours were hosted
 - In 2019 there were two bus tours in Concord. In 2022 that figure increased to 40, including two major tour companies.
 - In 2020, there were no partner businesses participating in programs. In 2021 there were three businesses and in 2022 there were 10 Concord Center and West Concord businesses participating in Visit Concord programs.

An additional goal included developing and implementing a plan to work with Partners (hotels, attractions, etc) to meet quarterly. These meetings now occur monthly.

An additional activity implemented included a pilot program to run a trolley to reduce congestion and move visitors around concord. Between July 2 and November 13, 2022, the Town of Concord piloted this trolley which touched eight destinations and served 700 visitors. The success of this trolley pilot program should provide the catalyst to continue the program and potentially extend it to neighboring towns. With the Revolutionary 250 celebration planning underway for 2025, this is a meaningful transportation solution that will benefit local residents as well as visitors to Concord's historical landmarks for many years.

Goals:

Moving forward, this tourism marketing plan has been designed to increase local, regional, national and international awareness about visiting Concord, which will ultimately lead to increased visitation from domestic and international markets. This will be done by accomplishing the following goals:

- Enhance website to include more in-depth recommendations with niche, sub-categories on dining, stay, things to do, etc., for both visitors and residents
- Implement an integrated social media strategy that builds and engages followers, and posts content that aligns with the website's branding and messaging
- Increase visitors to the Visitor Center, currently at 14,000, by 10%
- Enhance communications with Concord residents about the value and importance of tourism efforts of the town
- Expand upon collaborations with outside tourism organizations (i.e. Lexington, Arlington, Salem, Plymouth, etc.)
- Continue to expand activities through shoulder seasons of late fall and early spring.
- Continue to track numbers and include ways to measure success of programs going forward. These include:
 - Tracking Google Analytics to measure and analyze data on web visitors
 - Tracking the number of inquiries received through phone, mail and email
 - Tracking the number of followers on the @VisitConcordMA Instagram and @ConcordVisitorCenter on Facebook
 - Tracking the number of partners participating in programs
 - Tracking the amount of revenue generated through partnership programs
 - Track the amount of media coverage generated (number of articles, value of coverage)
 - Tracking the number of educational trips taking place in Concord, including number of participants, number of partner businesses included, media coverage and/or business generated from hosted buyer/writer
 - Including measurement tools in all promotional campaigns to be able to track and analyze statistics from the individual campaigns, as well as collectively
 - Working with Partners (hotels, attractions, etc.) to meet monthly, in person
 - Developing cumulative baseline visitor numbers with partners to be measured quarterly
 - Tracking and analyzing social media analytics
 - Implement Annual Consumer Survey:
 - Analyze Survey Data, modifying surveys and measuring results
 - Track the number of businesses who sent out the survey

- Track the number of emails that the Town sends the survey to
- Track the number of surveys that were sent out
- Track the number of surveys that were completed
- Develop funding mechanisms to support:
 - Additional staff to assist in the marketing activities of Visit Concord
 - The Trolley, connecting the attractions easily for visitors

Strategic Priorities:

In order to accomplish the goals outlined in this plan, the following strategic priorities continue to be identified as areas of focus:

- Promote and market Concord’s assets, programs and services
- Expand community engagement and partnerships
- Increase media relations opportunities
- Expand upon story ideas and suggested itineraries that will attract various audiences to Concord
- Enhance the visitor website and increase visibility through marketing, media relations and social media
- Create a consistent social media presence that supports tourism marketing efforts
- Provide exceptional visitor services
- Increase partnership dollars to be able to expand marketing effort
- Target the small group market
- Prepare Concord’s tourism community for the activities of Rev 250

It is important throughout this process to stay true to Concord’s social core and its history, but evolve in ways that respect the past while opening doors to future possibilities. However, in order to elevate the activities of Visit Concord, additional staff is needed. These strategies and tactics cannot be implemented successfully without additional assistance.

II. Research & Market Analysis

In order to better understand our visitor, develop initiatives and programs that will influence their travel decisions, evaluate competitive positioning and track results and performance, especially after the pandemic and its effect on the travel industry, primary research has been conducted through key stakeholder interviews, and additional primary and secondary research has been collected and analyzed.

An essential element in our approach is the regular assessment of external factors, such as the economy and how it is affecting the travel and tourism industry for both domestic and international visitation; the price of gas as that affects our drive markets; the growth of the sharing economy and how that affects the business to our local hotels; and how our competition is marketing and promoting their destinations as that can have an effect on our visitor numbers as well. In addition, we will continue to implement and analyze research and data in order to better understand our visitor, to develop initiatives and programs to influence their travel decisions, evaluate our competitive positioning and track our results & performance more effectively.

a. Market Analysis: US Overview

According to the United States Travel Association (USTA), direct spending on leisure travel by domestic and international visitors totaled nearly \$792 billion in 2021. This has increased from \$762 billion in 2019 when the first benchmark report was completed for Concord. USTA continues to report that the top leisure activities for travelers are:

Top Activities for Domestic Travelers	Top Activities for International Travelers
Visiting Relatives	Shopping
Visiting Friends	Sightseeing
Shopping	Fine Dining
Fine Dining	National Parks/Monuments
Rural Sightseeing	Amusement/Theme Parks

Nightclubs, bars, concerts, museums, and restaurants were in-demand activities in 2022. Pacaso surveyed 1,000 people and found that 87% preferred traveling domestically over going abroad in 2022, showcasing that domestic travel in the US is still very popular, despite international borders opening up after the pandemic. Expedia reported that nearly 8 in 10 travelers will take at least one leisure trip in the next 12 months, and more than half (54%) will take at least 2 leisure trips based on 2022 data. In addition, Expedia also found that travelers spend almost half their travel budget on their hotel and flight.

The American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) recently reported that Americans are already spending far more on travel than other large discretionary purchases this year. 47% of respondents ranked a vacation as

their top discretionary spend. In addition, the study found the number of Americans who intend to spend more on travel has increased by 17% since late 2022, with Millennials and Gen-Z leading the way at 22% more likely than the average American to spend more on travel this year.

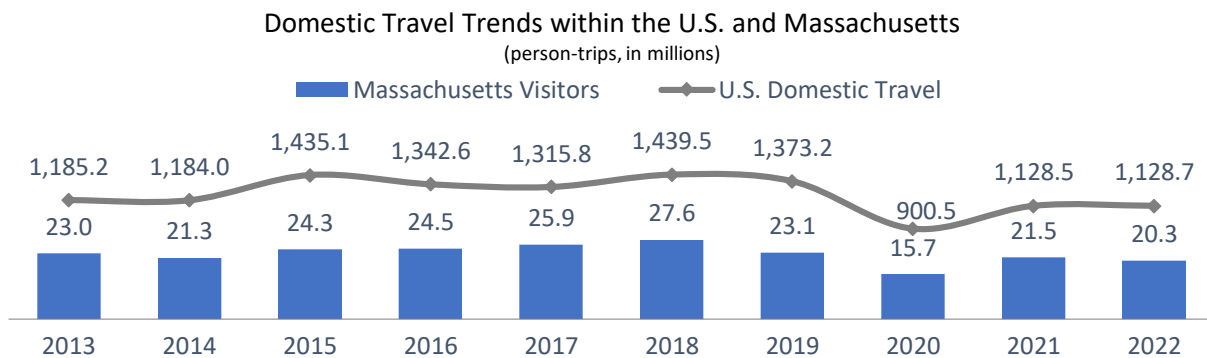
While travel is returning to pre-pandemic levels, one of the biggest issues that every destination and travel company is experiencing at the moment is staffing to support this increased travel demand. Many hotels, restaurants, shops and attractions have had to modify their hours, or number of customers they can serve due to the current difficulty in hiring staff. This is contributing to rising travel costs. In addition, there are increased costs for the travel industry due to inflation and supply chain issues. While it’s not negatively affecting travel numbers at the moment, this may change and should be looked at regularly.

Approximately 29 million international travelers visited the United States in 2021, compared to 79 million in 2019. Half of the international travelers came from Mexico, with Canada and overseas making up the second half. In 2022, U.S. Travel claimed that overseas travelers spent about \$3,700 on their trips and stayed an average of 17 nights.

In a recent study by Destination Analysts, 80% of global travelers indicated that they were likely to travel internationally, up 6 points over 2022. In addition, 48% of international travelers indicated that travel is essential, a high priority on where they choose to spend their money. While international visitation to the United States hasn’t recovered to post-pandemic levels, it is well on its way.

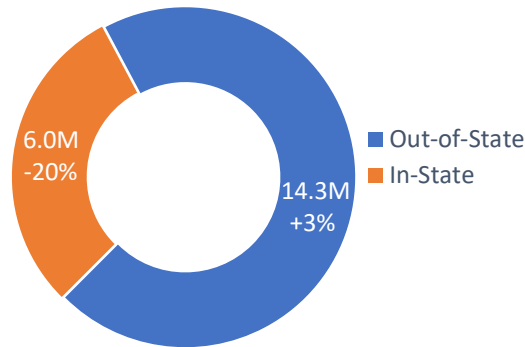
b. Market Analysis: Regional Overview

According to the Massachusetts Office of Tourism and Travel (MOTT), Massachusetts visitor volume dropped to 20.3 million in calendar year 2022, a decrease of 5% from the previous year. During the same period, domestic travel within the United States remained at the same level as the prior year.

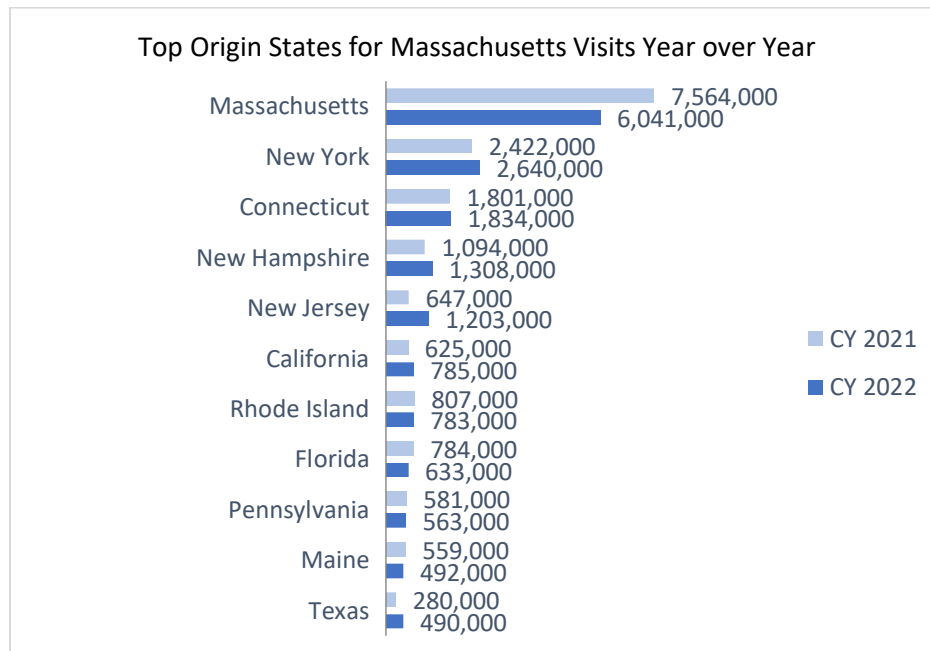


In calendar year 2022, approximately 6 million of the Massachusetts visitors lived within the state, which was down from 7.6 million in calendar year 2021, keeping in mind that in 2021, in-state travel remained high because people stayed close to home during the pandemic.

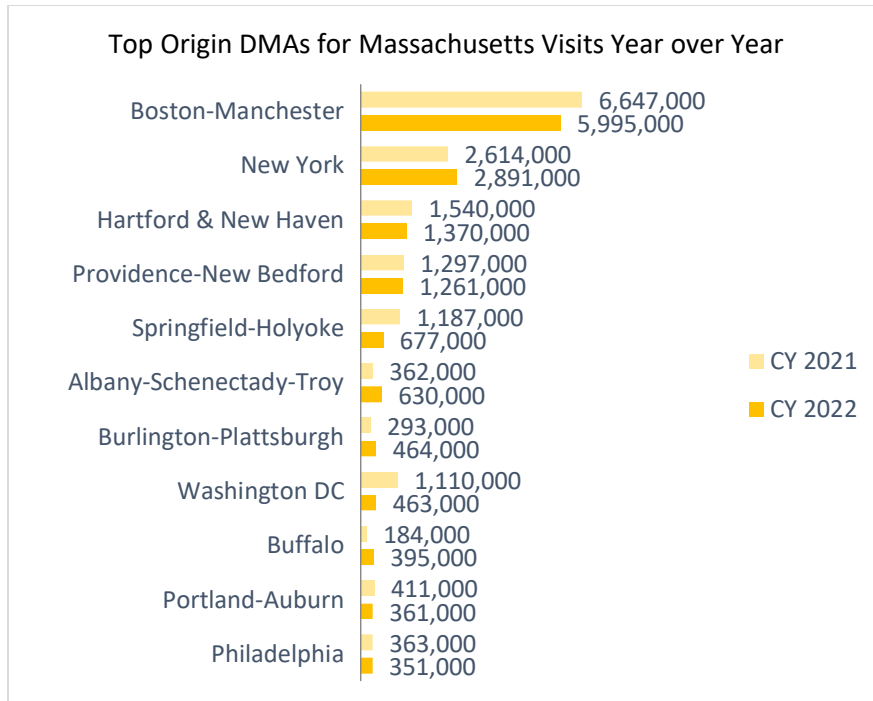
Massachusetts In-State vs Out-of-State Visitors



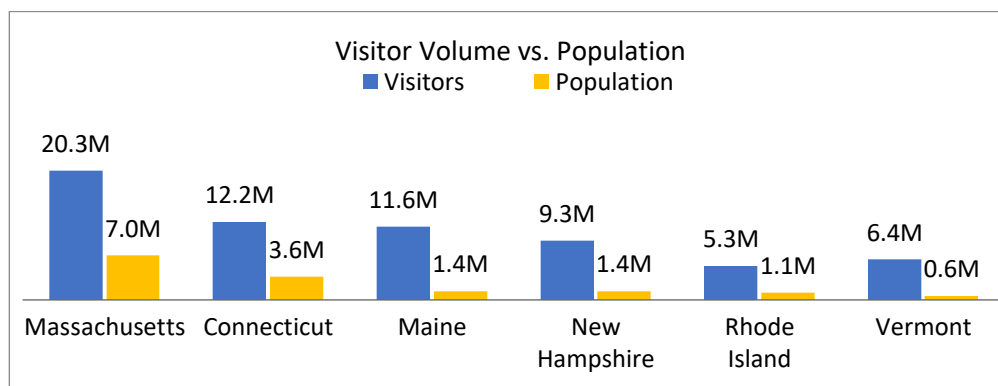
Despite in-state travel declines, out of-state visitation from New York, Connecticut, New Hampshire and New Jersey increased. Overall, out-of-state travel to Massachusetts was up 3% year-over-year. The majority of visitors to Massachusetts were from New England and mid-Atlantic states (NY, NJ, and PA). The largest number of visitors to Massachusetts came from the Commonwealth, followed by coming from New York.



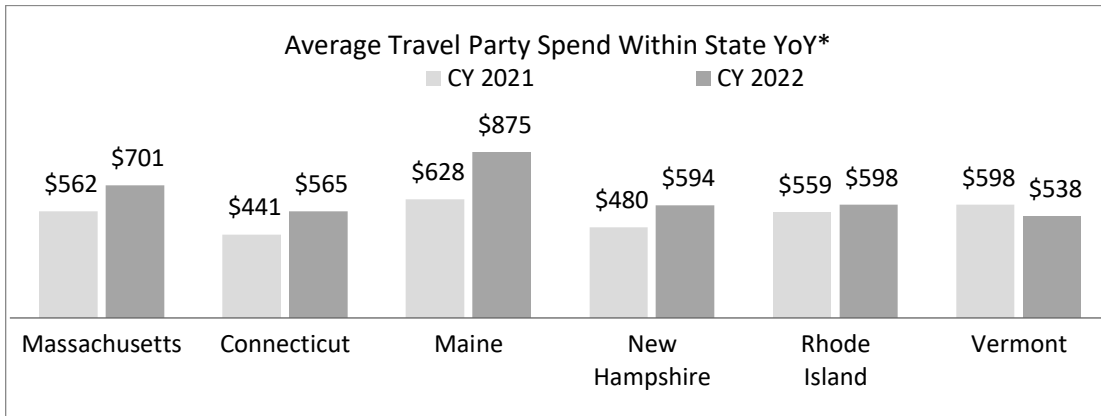
The top origin DMAs for Massachusetts visitors were the Boston/Manchester market, followed by New York, Hartford/New Haven and Providence/New Bedford.



Tourism continues to generate revenue for Massachusetts. The ratio of visitors an area receives relative to its resident population can be used to help gauge tourism’s relevance and function as an early indicator of over tourism. As the ratio rises, increased focus should be placed on growing responsible travel. With 2.9 visitors per resident, Massachusetts has the lowest ratio within its competitive region.



States, cities and local areas benefit financially from the tourism industry. Tourism not only generates revenue directly for industry businesses that employ residents, but it also produces revenue in the form of taxes (i.e. sales, lodging) that contribute to government coffers. In calendar year 2022, spend within Massachusetts was on average, \$701, a 25% increase compared to the previous year. It is also the second highest spend after Maine, which has fewer low-spending day trip visitors than Massachusetts.



State hotel room occupancy tax collections totaled \$124.2 million and local option room occupancy tax collections totaled \$108.8 million in 2021. \$6.89 million of the state taxes collected was divided among the 16 Regional Tourist Councils (RTCs) in 2021 for marketing efforts.

In calendar year 2021, domestic visitors to the Greater Merrimack Valley spent almost \$809 million. This is a 45.1% increase over the previous year. This spending resulted in \$53.7 million in state taxes, a 20.2% increase over the previous year and \$24.6 million in local taxes, a 32.5% increase over the previous year which was \$44.7 million state taxes and \$18.6 million in local taxes. While 2021 figures had significant increases over 2020, they are still below 2019 numbers of \$1,079.5 million in spend, \$64.5 million in state taxes and \$32.2 million in local taxes. MOITT no longer tracks city/town economic impact figures; however, they report that Concord has always represented approximately 4.5% of Greater Merrimack Valley’s numbers, or \$36,400,500 in visitor expenditures.

	2021					2020					2019				
	Expenditures (\$ Millions)	Employment (Thousands)	Payroll (\$ Million)	State Tax Receipts (\$ Millions)	Local Tax Receipts (\$ Millions)	Expenditures (\$ Millions)	Employment (Thousands)	Payroll (\$ Million)	State Tax Receipts (\$ Millions)	Local Tax Receipts (\$ Millions)	Expenditures (\$ Millions)	Employment (Thousands)	Payroll (\$ Million)	State Tax Receipts (\$ Millions)	Local Tax Receipts (\$ Millions)
Greater Merrimack Valley	808.9	6.5	278.2	53.7	24.6	557.6	6.4	261.1	44.7	18.6	1,079.5	8.8	349.5	64.5	32.2
	45.1%	2.0%	6.6%	20.2%	32.5%	-48.3%	-27.3%	-25.3%	-30.8%	-42.4%					
Statewide	\$15,653.7	102.2	\$4,428.4	\$782.6	\$473.0	\$9,308.7	93.6	\$3,952.4	\$531.3	\$292.4	\$20,887.1	130.5	\$5,157.7	\$866.2	\$551.7
	68.2%	9.2%	12.0%	47.3%	61.8%	-55.4%	-28.3%	-23.4%	-38.7%	-47.0%					

According to the 2023 Regional Tourism Market Analysis which was created in collaboration with the towns of Arlington and Lexington, direct tourism spending accounts for 33% of Concord’s total annual sales of commodities and total tourism output, which includes indirect and induced impacts in addition to direct impacts accounts for 53% of Concord’s total annual sale of commodities.

A review of hotel occupancy, average rate and hotel RevPAR shows that by the end of 2022, the Merrimack Valley region had an occupancy of 67.4%, a 21.9% increase from the previous year, with the average daily rate (ADR) of \$138.39 and revenue per available room (RevPAR) of \$93.31.

		Year to Date - December 2022 vs December 2021												
		Occ %		ADR		RevPAR		Percent Change from YTD 2021						
		2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	Occ	ADR	RevPAR	Room Rev	Room Avail	Room Sold	
United States		62.7	57.5	148.83	124.96	93.27	71.88	8.9	19.1	29.8	32.2	1.9	11.0	
Massachusetts		63.8	51.7	210.63	167.40	134.39	86.62	23.3	25.8	55.1	61.2	3.9	28.1	
Grtr Merrimack+		67.4	55.3	138.39	105.36	93.31	58.27	21.9	31.4	60.1	55.9	-2.6	18.7	

The same time period in Lexington/Concord showed an occupancy of 62.7% %, a 12.8% increase from the previous, with the ADR of \$144.82, and RevPAR of \$90.85.

		Year to Date - December 2022 vs December 2021												
		Occ %		ADR		RevPAR		Percent Change from YTD 2021						
		2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	Occ	ADR	RevPAR	Room Rev	Room Avail	Room Sold	
Danvers+		61.4	44.8	129.27	112.75	79.32	50.46	37.1	14.7	57.2	57.2	0.0	37.1	
Peabody+		67.2	52.4	146.22	123.54	98.32	64.74	28.3	18.4	51.9	51.9	0.0	28.3	
Andover+		68.1	55.4	133.53	110.99	90.94	61.48	22.9	20.3	47.9	47.9	0.0	22.9	
Burlington+		67.4	50.8	163.74	122.45	110.37	62.22	32.7	33.7	77.4	77.4	0.0	32.7	
Woburn+		70.5	54.2	136.77	102.82	96.48	55.70	30.2	33.0	73.2	81.4	4.7	36.4	
Lexington/Concord+		62.7	55.6	144.82	108.02	90.85	60.09	12.8	34.1	51.2	31.3	-13.2	-2.1	
Lowell/Tewksbury/Billerica/Chelmsford+		65.9	60.9	117.21	93.24	77.22	56.80	8.1	25.7	35.9	38.3	1.7	10.0	

c. Market Analysis: Concord Overview

Concord is located northwest of the city of Boston, just 19 miles away, and only 23 miles from Nashua, New Hampshire. Its geographic location offers convenient access to Boston’s Logan International Airport. Concord was incorporated in 1635 and is well known as being the birthplace of the American Revolution and has many historic sites including Minuteman National Historical Park, North Bridge (site of “the shot heard round the world”), as well as the first four miles of the Battle Road.

Concord also has a rich literary history, having been home to some of the greatest American authors, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Louisa May Alcott. Concord is also home to Walden Pond (which is operated by the Department of Conservation & Recreation – DCR), a part of the Walden Pond State Reservation. The reservation was deemed a National Historic Landmark in 1962 due to its connection to writer Henry David Thoreau and offers many trails as well as a popular swimming spot in the summer months. The town offers a large number of competitive advantages because of its rich historic and literary history, as well as its recreation, arts and cultural options, including The Concord Museum, The Alcott House, Thoreau Farm, Walden Woods, Robbin’s House, the Old Manse, Umbrella Arts Center, as well as the cultural districts of West Concord and Downtown Concord.

Concord is also rich in history when it comes to the indigenous people, transcendental movement, women’s suffrage and female anti-slavery. While it is important to promote the American History and Literary History that Concord is known for, it’s also important that these other stories of Concord are communicated to potential visitors to expand the reach of the destination to new and diverse audiences who might be looking for more than American or literary history in a visit.

As a result of these wide offerings, Concord features a variety of activities for leisure travelers who are visiting friends and family, seeking quick getaways or vacations closer to home, or who are looking to immerse themselves in American history, literary history, recreation, culinary adventures and more. In addition, with activities such as Revolution 250 celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War in 2025 and Mass400, celebrating the 400th anniversary of a number of communities throughout Massachusetts between 2020 and 2030, there are opportunities to elevate the many stories of Concord to national markets over the coming years. These rich assets will allow us to promote the variety of things to see and do in Concord.

In 2021, 6.69 million visitors spent an estimated \$721 million while visiting National Park Service lands in Massachusetts, with 983,000 of those park visitors spending an estimated \$64 million while visiting Minute Man National Historical Park. These expenditures supported a total of 810 jobs, \$38.7 million in labor income, \$60.4 million in value added, and \$97.7 million in economic output in local gateway economies surrounding Minute Man National Historical Park. The Park is receiving \$27 million to restore and update trails and homes with a projected finish date of 2025, in time for the 250th anniversary of the start of the Revolutionary War. The following chart shows the breakdown of visitation by month, the highest of those being April through October. While 2023 still lags behind pre-pandemic levels, the numbers are continuing to increase.

Year	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
2023	36,603	27,225	59,824	119,871									63,828
2022	39,089	27,284	56,277	106,650	94,679	103,930	102,688	97,265	92,746	130,209	59,838	49,688	960,343
2021	57,006	27,448	82,587	100,080	105,973	93,232	95,283	95,998	87,980	118,292	63,345	55,977	983,201
2020	38,780	26,938	68,669	115,572	121,245	110,248	102,913	111,437	109,793	128,383	90,548	59,447	1,083,973
2019	37,648	27,742	50,337	124,123	120,867	110,580	117,180	106,075	93,288	122,114	55,468	51,904	1,017,326
2018	37,794	26,962	44,396	111,836	131,786	120,228	119,375	102,563	102,682	99,906	63,568	53,707	1,014,803

Stakeholder Interviews:

As part of the process to develop this plan, a list of key stakeholders (business leaders, attractions, community advocates, public sector officials) was created and stakeholder interviews were conducted with approximately 20 people. In these confidential interviews, respondents were asked to discuss what is working, not working, what needs to be done to continue to attract visitors to Concord and what obstacles are standing in the way.

In addition to the Concord Town Staff, MOTT, Meet Boston and GMVCVB staff, the following agreed to provide input. Additional

businesses were contacted without response:

- *Concord Business Partnership*: Jennifer Clark
- *Concord Museum*: Barbara Evangelista
- *Old Manse*: Catherine Shortliffe, Steve Schroth
- *Minute Man National Park*: Simone Montelone
- *Orchard House*: Jan Turnquist
- *Revolutionary Concord*: Marie Foley
- *Discover Concord*: Jennifer Schunemann
- *Concord Rotary Club*: Sharon Spaulding
- *Thoreau Farm*: Rebecca Migdal
- *Colonial Inn*: Connie Pion
- *Umbrella Arts Center*: Stewart Ikeda
- *Concord Players*: Andrea Ressler
- *Emerson House*: Marie Gordenier
- *Concord Conservatory*: Kate Yoder, Sue Seger

Throughout the interviews, many of the stakeholder responses were consistent. In 2019, the general feedback was that Concord needed to have better collaboration and communication both internally and externally. In 2023, it was felt that this issue has been successfully addressed. Concord has excellent assets, and the addition of a dedicated tourism manager has really helped to promote the Town well to targeted audiences. The activities of the office, such as the operations of the Visitor Center, the development of collateral, website, itineraries, the monthly Tourism Huddles, and other activities have been well received and serve to bring the community together, fostering collaboration, providing opportunity for alignment and ensuring collaboration and communication.

The Tourism Huddle calls started during the pandemic. The majority of stakeholders find them very valuable. Now that everyone is back to business, stakeholders have recommended hosting them at a different venue monthly. In this way, the stakeholders will learn about each other's properties, and this will help in cross promotion of the businesses.

Stakeholders recognized that communication of all of the activities taking place in town has improved over the past few years as well. However, a need for an online community calendar was mentioned a few times. Living Concord has a community calendar that targets residents, and West Concord has a website and calendar that locals use as well. Visit Concord lists events on the website that are designed to appeal to a visitor, and not necessarily to a resident. However, a monthly upcoming events newsletter could be created and sent to Concord and West Concord businesses to educate them on what's happening in town in terms of events that would appeal to visitors, and let them know when bus tours will be taking place so they can modify their hours and staffing if needed. This is something that Destination Salem produces and this piece has been successful to better educate the industry and residents and help with the education and cross promotion of activities.

The focus on Concord's role in the American Revolution continues to be important, but stakeholders were pleased that Concord's other unique assets – literary history, the story of the indigenous people, recreation, arts & culture, and other activities, are also being packaged and promoted to visitors. They would like to see these efforts expanded to include the other stories of Concord.

As we head towards 2025, stakeholders would also like to see more collaboration with Lexington, Lincoln and surrounding communities as they recognize that the visitor doesn't know where one town stops, and another starts. Itineraries should be developed to connect the different communities and allow for collaboration that will help to leverage resources and expand reach.

There is also growing concern that the town will not have appropriate infrastructure to support the influx of visitors – from restaurants to restrooms and again, it is imperative that this issue is addressed and resolved prior to 2025.

The pilot trolley was highly praised by almost all who were interviewed, and they all hope that there is a way to find funding to continue operating it as well as to expand its routes. This shuttle not only makes Concord more convenient for visitors to get around, but it also helps to alleviate traffic, which is an issue with the residents.

There continues to be concern that the shops are not open when visitors are through sightseeing. Stakeholders would like shops to be open later so that visitors can still have an opportunity to spend their money before heading to dinner. As audience is built, it is recommended to have standard late-night hours on Thursday and potentially Friday, so that visitors and residents can visit the attractions then shop in the store before enjoying an evening meal. Consistent hours will also help to build visitation.

In addition, there continues to be an ongoing concern that appeared in the majority of interviews, both in 2019 and recently, about the lack of cell phone service in Concord. The concern ranged from visitors being unable to access information on attractions, shops, restaurants, for example, to it being a public safety issue. As Concord heads into the 250th anniversary of the Revolution in 2025, it is imperative that this issue is addressed and resolved.

Additional issues raised were over the issue of buses and how many just drive by and don't stop, or stop just to use rest rooms. A better way to engage the tour companies needs to be developed in order to get them to stop and allow the travelers spend money in town and not just use the town resources.

There was a general sentiment that the residents of Concord do not understand the value of tourism, rather, they just see what it *costs* the town. It's felt that a community relations campaign might help educate residents on the value of tourism and how the visitors relieve some of the tax burden on residents. They felt it was important to explain the benefits of tourism, not just the cost. This should be a focus through 2024 in anticipation of the influx of visitors in 2025.

There was a general feeling that the hiring of the economic development position will help with making the town a little more business friendly, aid in getting permits, and attract new businesses prior to the 250th. And while there is a committee working on the 250th activities, many felt that there needs to be better communication of the plans.

It was also felt that tourism marketing efforts have reached capacity because all of these activities are implemented by one person. In order to continue to grow, additional staffing is needed.

d. Market Analysis: Comparable Analysis

There are a number of destinations that are similar to Concord's key tourism locations within the region. While any region in the nation effectively acts as competition, this review has been limited to the destinations listed below that have been identified in research as being comparable and having a similar visitor base.

In an effort to continue to grow market share, Concord will continue to monitor these destinations and analyze their messaging targeting visitors. This is a constantly changing scene and in order to remain competitive Concord must continue to seek out new ways to differentiate and showcase the positive attributes of the town, as well as the value.

- Sturbridge, Massachusetts: <https://experiencesturbridge.com/>

In 2020, Sturbridge developed a tourism marketing plan, a new brand and a website. Experience Sturbridge was created and allows the town to position the experience depending on the audience. For example, *Experience Sturbridge Like A Local* allows them to highlight all of the hidden gems in town that visitors might like to experience. *Experience Sturbridge Like A Foodie* allows them to showcase all of the great restaurants in the area. *Experience Sturbridge Like a Bride* helps them to position the town as a wedding destination. Over the past few years, Sturbridge has implemented both a summer and a fall advertising campaign in regional publications to drive hotel business and they have an active presence on Facebook and Instagram with @ExperienceSturbridge.



The tourism website for Sturbridge, Massachusetts is separate from the town website. The town website has an abundance of information on the town, with access to visitor information.

The Experience Sturbridge website has distinct branding with the use of yellow and dark blue for the main color scheme. The new brand is placed in the top left of the website, with rotating photos of the town, allowing visitors to discover the area as a local, a brewer, bride, traveler, hiker, or historian. The top menu across the site allows the user to request a guide, which is 40 pages long and includes information on Good Eats, Shops & Services, Weddings & Events, Accommodations, Breweries & Wineries, Trails Map & Information, The Great Outdoors, Workshops, Orchards & More, Arts & Entertainment, Historical Attractions, and Calendar of Events. Among the information on places and attractions, there are also ads for local businesses. For more information and brochures from regional partners, visitors can contact the with Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator.

Other tabs include Visit, Itineraries, Weddings, Events, About, Contact, and links to their Facebook and Instagram page. Under the Visit tab, there is a drop down with Accommodations, Dining, Attractions, Outdoors, Shopping, and Spa and Wellness. The Accommodations page gives a full selection of lodging options in Sturbridge with images of the places, and when choosing one, contact and address information of the accommodation is provided, along with nearby attraction recommendations. The Dining page is broken up by cuisines, such as Asian or Italian food, along with seafood, café and sweet categories. The

Attractions page is filled with images of different activities in Sturbridge, set up similarly to the Outdoors, Shopping, and Spa and Wellness page, with numerous options available.

The Itineraries page includes seven suggested itineraries based upon the season and what the traveler might be looking for, such as a winter wonderland weekend in Sturbridge or a summer week in Sturbridge. Options for those looking to get married in Sturbridge can be found under the Wedding tab, and Events happening in the next two months are listed under the Events tab. At the bottom of the homepage, the upcoming Events in Town reappear.

The same tabs that are at the top of the webpage appear again in the middle of the homepage, however, when you click on these tabs, they offer quick facts on those aspects of the town. There is also a newsletter for visitors to sign up for at the bottom of the site, although to date, a newsletter has not been sent. Overall, the tourism website is incredibly easy to navigate and well designed.

- Lexington, MA: <https://www.tourlexington.us>
In 2020, the Town of Lexington developed a marketing plan and created a new brand, *Make history in Lexington*. Lexington is also active on Facebook @VisitLexington and on Instagram @VisitLexingtonMA.



The tourism website for Lexington, Massachusetts was also updated recently with a new URL and new content. A stand-alone site that links from the Town of Lexington site, TourLexington.us has clear, basic branding and is easy to navigate. The color scheme is mainly blue and white, and the logo features the town seal located in the upper left-hand corner of the site. There are five tabs across the top: Home, Attractions, Events, Directions, and Business Directory: Shop, Dine and Stay. Links highlighted at the bottom of the home page include Liberty Ride Trolley Tour, Visitors Center, Battle Green Guides, and Historic Sites. Under the Attractions tab, visitors can find a list of historic sites and tours, other attractions and a link to a map of Lexington center and the Visitor's Guide. A single page and a two-page map are available to download. The Visitor's Guide is two pages, featuring a small map of the Lexington Battle Green with a list of spots for a self-guided walking tour, reasons to linger in Lexington, historic attractions, and a map and list of Lexington Shops and Attractions. Hard copies of the guide are available at the Lexington Visitors Center.

The Events page is empty, only including a photo of the town. The Shop, Dine and Stay page leads to a separate website (<https://shoplexingtonfirst.com/business-directory/>) for a business directory. The Directions page notes that Lexington is easily accessible; about 18 miles from Boston’s Logan Airport, located at the intersection of I-95 and Route 2, a short bus ride from the Alewife MBTA subway stop, and on the Minuteman Bikeway, which starts at the Alewife MBTA subway stop. This page also has the visitor center address and a link to information for tour buses.

The site is straightforward and does not reflect the vibrancy of the destination.

- Gloucester, MA: <https://discovergloucester.com/>

Discover Gloucester, Gloucester’s official website for tourism, is separate from the city’s website. The branding for DiscoverGloucester.com is straight forward, with blue and white as the main theme. The photos they use through the homepage match the theme, with oceanic photos being their main focus. There are six tabs that run along the main menu: play, stay, dine, events, blog, and contact. They also bring attention to their social media accounts, specifically Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, @DiscoverGloucester.



The Play tab has a drop-down menu with categories of activities and sights to see. This includes beaches & lighthouses, whale watching, schooners, museums, arts, sports & recreation, shopping & services, and festivals. The Stay tab includes Hotels & Motels, Inns & B&Bs, Vacation Rentals, Cottages & Efficiencies, Campgrounds & RV. While the Dining tab includes Restaurants & Bars, Breakfast & Coffee Shops, Sandwiches & Pizza, Ice Cream & Sweets. Each of these pages are set up the same way in a list format, each activity or sight including a photo, a small piece of information, and a Learn More button which leads to a full page on the place itself, including a map and contact information. The Events tab is organized by month with the time, location, and an image on each event. Their blog tab includes fun articles on topics like *Best Burgers in Gloucester* and *Top Spots for a Bike Tour Around Gloucester*. Each blog has a photo and a short description.

The homepage of the website includes a picture of a Gloucester beach with a snapshot of information on the area. Beneath that are three of the most recent news/blog posts. This is followed by seven blocks on some of the categories that can be found in the main menu. These include: Whale Watching, Tours, Dine, Shopping & Services, Beaches & Lighthouses, Plan Your Wedding, and Plan Your Trip. The Plan Your Trip page

provides information on how to get to Gloucester, how to get around, visitor resources, and an interactive trip planner.

Beneath the blocks, there's place to subscribe to their newsletter and download their Visitor's Guide. The visitors guide is 84 pages and includes business advertisements, dining, shopping, and more. Following the information on the Visitor's Guide, there's another section on news and the events calendar. At the bottom of the homepage, there are the logos of the associations and organizations that Discover Gloucester is a member of. Beneath this information is the Instagram feed, the newsletter, and a list of quick links that match main menu tabs, as well as Become A Partner, About Discover Gloucester, Blog, and Contributions.

The site overall is bright and inviting, matching the vibrancy of Gloucester.

- Salem, Massachusetts: <https://www.salem.org>; <https://www.salem.com>
Destination Salem, the official tourism organization of Salem, Massachusetts. It was created in its current version in 2007 and has worked to build and expand upon their tourism marketing efforts since then. They are very active on Facebook and Instagram @DiscoverSalem and have strong ties with their business community. Their brand and tagline *Salem. Still Making History* has been used for several years. The logo includes an icon which could be perceived as a witches hat or a sail on a boat and is very effective in addressing the message of Salem as a historic, witch and maritime destination.



Destination Salem has its own stand-alone website that links from the City site. The City uses Salem.com and Destination Salem uses Salem.org. The City of Salem adopted the same logo and tagline that was developed by Destination Salem. The color scheme is similar to the Destination Salem site and the Experience Salem page on the city site links to various tourist attractions from around the city as well as links to the Salem's dedicated tourism websites, Salem.org and HauntedHappenings.org.

Destination Salem's site, Salem.org, uses fun and modern fonts and images with a green, blue and white color scheme. The website is visually appealing and engaging, making it easy to navigate and provides visitors with information on planning their trip to Salem. The homepage has three main sections: About Salem, Come Visit Us, What's Happening, and then #DestSalem where a collection of photos live that people post from their trips to Salem.

Under About Salem, there are ten tabs on History, Blog, Notable Locals, 10 Free Things To Do, FAQs, LGBTQ, Business Index, Marijuana Guidelines, Education & Community, and Native History & Indigenous Acknowledgement. The Blog tab is very useful and has the most recently published blog posts on the front page on topics varying from festivals to holidays. *10 Free Things To Do* is exactly how it sounds, providing travel ideas for visitors, and the FAQs tab which provides answers to basic questions on Salem, like “Where do I park?”

At the top right of the webpage, there is a drop-down menu of thirteen tabs with Free Guide at the bottom of the menu. Here users can enter their name, email, zip code, and the year and month they plan on visiting Salem to receive a free download of the Salem Visitor’s Guide and Map. The guide is 72 pages and includes information accommodations, activities, visitor and travel information, map and directions, transportation, parking, dining, shopping, and weddings and special events. Local ads are also interspersed between the visitor information. The walking map is one page and marks locations for accommodations, museums & attractions, trolley & walking tours, harbor tours, psychics, cinema & theatre, restaurants & bars, delis, pizza & sandwiches, brewery, sweets & treats, gifts & souvenirs, clothing, witch & occult shops, wedding & special events, transportation, and education/spiritual growth. The Food and Drink page links to directories of local businesses. The Things To Do tab includes the sub-tabs on harbor tours, outdoors, museums and attractions, tours, and spiritual growth.

Hauntedhappenings.org is dedicated to information surrounding Salem’s celebration of Halloween and fall in New England. The homepage has information on events, transportation, accommodations, dining, family fun, and a link to the Haunted Happenings Instagram page. The tabs at the top of the page are Free Guide, Blog, Contact, and Event Calendar. There is also a menu on the right side of the page with link to Things to Do, Places to Eat, Places to Shop, Places to Stay, Facts & Fun, Free Guide, Maps & Info, and Plan & Share.

On the Free Guide page, visitors can enter the name, email, and address to sign up for the e-mail list. The Official Haunted Happenings Guide is 74 pages long. Information is provided on Welcome to Salem, Calendar, Do, Eat, Shop, Stay, Getting Here, Visitor Information, and Acknowledgements.

- Plymouth, Massachusetts: <https://www.plymouth-ma.gov>; <https://www.seeplymouth.com>
See Plymouth is one of the 16 Regional Tourist Councils and as such have a much larger budget than many of these other destinations. They implement advertising campaigns on a regular basis and are active on social media @SeePlymouth.

The Town of Plymouth website is very succinct. The color scheme is blue and white and the logo is in the upper left-hand corner of the page. The logo features the town seal with *Town of Plymouth Massachusetts* written on top.



The dedicated website for the marketing organization Destination Plymouth County is SeePlymouth.com. The homepage has a picture slideshow at the top of the page. Below the slideshow there are snapshots of information on what Plymouth County Has to Offer, and Talk to the Rock. Below that are YouTube videos on Plymouth and a selection of tabs on Things to Do, which includes History, Museums & Monuments, Art, Theatre & Music, Events, Outdoors & Adventure, Tours, and Special Interests.

There is also an option to download a dining shopping & activities guide, a vacation planner, and a map. To download these guides, users must enter their email and zip code. The dining shopping & activities guide has information on historical sites in Plymouth, an events calendar, activities, beaches & parks, arts, concerts, free things to do, maps, shopping, and dining. The Plymouth County Vacation Planner has information on Welcome to Plymouth County, The Story of Plymouth Rock, Plymouth County Map, Day Trip – The Cape and Islands, Getting Around the County, Day Trip – Southeastern MA, Plan Your Stay/Plan Your Wedding, Calendar of Events, and Partner Directory/Index.

Below that is an option to download the new Destination Plymouth app and an imbedded Expedia widget that allows people to search flights and hotels with their preferences. Below that is Lodging information with options on Bed & Breakfast, Book Your Trip, Campgrounds, Guest Houses & Rentals, and Lodging Specials. There is also a Dining tab on Wineries, Breweries, and Taverns, Bakeries, Culinary Tours & Tastings, and Restaurants. Following a Shopping tab with recommendations on Farmer's Markets & Open-Air Farm Stands, Gifts & Specialty Shops, Malls & Plazas, and Markets & Open-Air Marketplaces. At the bottom of the webpage is a News sections with articles on Plymouth, the SeePlymouth Instagram, and Groups & Weddings guides.

- Concord, Massachusetts: <https://visitconcord.org/>

In 2019, the Town of Concord created a Tourism Benchmark Plan. From this plan came the creation of a Tourism Marketing position and the implementation of a number of tourism marketing strategies including the creation of the brand Visit Concord, the development of a tourism website, social media on @VisitConcordMA on Instagram and @ConcordVisitorCenter on Facebook among other activities.



The town of Concord's main website, ConcordMA.gov, links to the tourism site, VisitConcord.org through its Visitor tab. The Visit Concord page has background information on Concord, photos, events, and helpful information on visiting Concord, utilizing a clean font and a color palette of maroon, red, gold, and white. There are also several colorful pictures throughout the site that make it engaging for visitors. The top of the homepage reads *Visit Concord Massachusetts* with a video reel of attractions and events in the town.

There are ten tabs at the top of the page above the reel: Stay, Eat, Shop, Visit, Groups, Events, Itineraries, About, Blog, and Contact Us. The Stay, Eat, and Shop tabs offer short blurbs on the topics and then every place in town that visitors could stay, eat, and shop in Concord. The Visit Concord tab includes a drop down, allowing visitors to just look at Outdoor Recreation, Walking Tours, Maps & Guides, and more. For those traveling in groups to Concord can locate the Groups tab at the top where there are specific time and price breakdowns of bus tours, and walking tours, with a reservation form at the bottom. There is also a parking map for bus tours. The Events tab includes a calendar of upcoming events. The Itinerary tab offer four different in-depth suggested itineraries depending on the visitor's interest, from the Revolutionary War to Literary to the Great Outdoors, with information on each activity and its corresponding website. There is also an About section and a Blog where visitors can read more about the town.

Below the main homepage reel is an About Concord section, followed by six blocks that lead to various pages on Staying in Concord, Museums & Historic Sites in Concord, Restaurants in Concord, Music, Theatre & Arts, Outdoor Recreation, Group Bus Tours, Group Walking Tours, and Shopping in

Concord. There is a carousel of tabs after on the Revolutionary War, the Great Outdoors, and more suggested itineraries.

At the bottom of the home page there are the most recent Events, and a map of Concord, along with some information on the social media accounts, address, and hours of the Concord Visitor Center. There is also a spot to enter an email and sign up for their newsletter. Downloadable guides and a visitor map can be found under the Visit tab.

The use of photography, video, color, and web design makes the website look professional and trustworthy, but also inviting to users. Helpful tabs are placed at the top and bottom of the homepage for their convenience.

e. Travel Trends:

Generational Habits: Post-pandemic, the four generations (Baby Boomers Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z) have grown much more similar than one would expect, while generations still maintain certain differences, they share many beliefs in terms of traveling in this post-pandemic world. The most significant is their collective desire to travel. Destination Analysts states that over half of American travelers say that travel is a priority in their budget in the near term. This metric is also increasing, hitting a six-month high after a downward trend in the last half of 2022. In other words, there are no signs of travel among Americans slowing down. In comparison to pre-pandemic traveling trends where budgeting and affordability were a priority among all generations, splurging is now the norm. Booking.com conducted a survey on luxury travel and found that nearly half (49%) of its respondents selected that they are likely to spend more on their next trip to make up for lost time and 43% of respondents are willing to go all out when it comes to costs. In addition, Hotels.com stated that searches for three-star and under hotels were down more than 10%. Americans are not only splurging on vacations, but they are making time for it, with half of American travelers reporting taking two weeks or more for their leisure travel. The tourism industry can expect more Americans spending money and time on their vacations, along with the increased use of online platforms to book trips.

- Baby Boomer Generation: Ages 59 – 77, there are about 73 million baby boomers in the United States. A Virtuoso study on the travel habits of different generations found that baby boomers prefer to travel in small, private groups. Cruises are among their most popular choices. Expedia reported that they are the highest-spending generation in the industry, traveling 27 days per year, and are often influenced by budget and ads with informative content. They choose vacations that are sight-seeing related, relaxing, and involve visiting family. Most would think that Baby Boomers avoid technology

when planning their vacations, however, they are utilizing online platforms like Expedia to book their vacations as frequently as their generational counterparts.

- Generation X: Ages 43 – 58, 65 million Gen Xers exist in the US, and are the least to vacation from any other generation. Travel Pulse found that Gen Xers prioritize a work-life balance but travel less than other generations due to hectic schedules. They prioritize smart luxury when planning a vacation, meaning that they don't mind spending money on a vacation that they believe will be authentic. Generation X also tends to allow their children to inform their travel decisions. They seek out reviews and advice from their social circle, whereas Millennials and Gen Zers are more likely to look to social media. Expedia reported that 70% of Gen X seek out trips that involve museums, historical sites, and arts and culture.
- Millennials (or Generation Y): Ages 27 – 42, there are over 72 million Millennials in the US. Millennials are traveling almost as frequently as Baby Boomers with 18% of Millennials have taken three or more domestic flight in the past year. Virtuoso stated that Millennials tend to be interested in exploring other cultures when traveling, and they place sustainability as a guidepost for their traveling decisions. For example, Pinterest released their *Pinterest Predicts Trends Report* and reported that sustainable travel will be making a comeback in the form of train travel for Millennials and Gen Zers. When traveling, they seek out an authentic experience in order to feel like a local. They do spend less, despite how important they view traveling, because of rising costs of living and student debt, spending about a third less, on average, per trip than Boomers, as reported by Insure My Trip.
- Generation Z: Ages 10 – 26, there are 68 million Gen Z's in the US. This youngest generation of American travelers are interested in traveling internationally, being near the ocean, and using social media to influence vacation spots. Similar to Millennials, social media is an inspirational outlet for picking where and when to travel for Gen Z's. Gen Z is also finding their travel destinations based on the destinations featured in popular films and shows. They enjoy unique and interactive experience and are more likely to stay in accommodations that aren't hotels, like rental spaces or hostels or camping. Despite their young age and limited finances, the younger travelers in particular intend to splurge. An Expedia study found that 80% of survey respondents between the ages of 18 and 34 are willing to pay to upgrade their experience. American Express reported that 84% of Gen Z's and Millennials surveyed would rather take a dream vacation than purchase a new luxury item, and 79% agree that travel is an important budget priority.

Social Media & Technology: With the speed at which AI is entering every industry and expanding social media platforms, it is no surprise that technology plays a leading role in how people plan and run their vacations, especially after the pandemic. Technology provides travelers with the convenience of online

booking, social media-provided destination inspiration and the ability to turn to the internet with their questions. For example, as group travel increases, people are turning to the internet to find guides for their groups. Forbes states that this has caused a rise in custom searching for guides with new platforms like GetYourGuide, IndyGuide, and Kimkim take away the mediator and directly connect travelers with local guides and experiences. This is just one instance of how businesses are leveraging the internet to provide digital assets that can benefit and engage travelers.

Online travel agencies have only grown in popularity with no sign of slowing down. The industry is expected to grow to \$865.5 billion by the end of 2023 and \$1,060.01 billion by 2027 according to Yahoo. Booking.com, Expedia, TripAdvisor, and Airbnb are amongst the most dominant players in the industry. With online booking platforms, travelers can customize their itineraries and manage their trip from start to finish. Adobe reported that, 52% of travelers used a mobile device to find information about hotels, restaurants, tours, and activities in their chosen destination, and over 90% of travelers will do their research online. However, the majority of those users will turn to the desktop site in hopes for a better deal, while mobile is most often for last-minute bookings. It is vital that hotels and travel-related brands in Concord optimize their sites for mobile because 66% of millennials are booking their trips with their phones, as well as the quality of their website. Hotels that have high-quality photos on their website see a 15% increase in conversion rates, and TripAdvisor has stated that the number of photos a hotel has on its TripAdvisor profile has the most impact on bookings.

According to Forbes, companies like Welcome are utilizing AI to curate real-time recommendations based on user's personality and interests, prioritizing local businesses that capture culture and spirit. Expedia is allowing travelers to book online with them through AI-powered chatbots. These intelligent AI-assistants can be found on social media sites like Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, booking accommodations for the traveler through simple questions. Its customer services skills are being brought face-to-face as well in hotels like the Hilton where AI robot *Connie* offers tourist information to those who speak with it.

Younger travelers are turning to social media more than ever for destination inspiration and travel decisions. CNBC reported that 60% of Gen Z and 40% of Millennials use social media for travel purposes and the TikTok hashtag *travel* has 74.4 billion views alone. Travelers are not only going to social media for travel decisions, but to post about their vacation. Passport Photo Online conducted a study last year and found that 60% of vacationers post photos on social media while away and that number rises to 97% for Millennials. Millennials specifically look for locations that are *Instagrammable* when picking a vacation spot.

Culinary Travel: Food is a major factor people consider when planning a vacation. Hilton ran a study and found that nearly half of the travelers surveyed will be looking for more immersive and authentic cultural experiences. Travelers are interested in food-related travel experiences, like a local restaurant scene (55%), food festivals (51%), and local food tours (46%) according to Travel Agent Central. People want to be involved in sustainable, local food experiences as well, in order to feel like they were a resident. This differs for those staying in short-term rentals like Vrbo and Airbnb, which reported its occupants to cook at home rather than eating out, in order to cut down on vacation costs.

Environmentally Friendly Traveling: Environmental sustainability while traveling has become equally important to many travelers as factors like food. YouGov Travel and Tourism practice found that 44% of consumers try to make purchases (including travel) from socially and environmentally conscious companies. This aligns with Virtuoso's survey, which found that 70% of respondents selected that sustainable travel enhanced their experience. American Express found that travelers desire sustainable choices in order to make a positive impact with their travel dollars. Gen Z and Millennials are the most focused on their carbon footprint with, 82% of Gen Z and Millennial travelers interested in a vacation that minimally impacts the environment, compared to 72% of Gen X and 64% of Boomers. Post pandemic, travelers are continually seeking increased environmentally friendly and outdoor experiences.

TV Tourism: Travelers are increasingly turning to their favorite TV shows to inspire their next trips. Historical dramas have encouraged people to book trips to Great Britain and shows set in five-star resorts by the beach give travelers that extra push to plan a vacation in Hawaii. Expedia reported that advice from friends and family on where to travel topped streaming services by only 2% as the most influential of travel inspiration. Travelers are incredibly influenced by the destinations they're seeing on their TV, with Travel & Leisure reporting that 70% of Gen Z and Millennial respondents agree that they have been inspired to travel to a destination after seeing it featured on a TV show, news source, or movie. This is especially true for younger travelers who go to social media platforms like TikTok for inspiration.

Business Travel & Workcations: Since the pandemic, the nature of work has not only changed, but the process by which companies manage their business trips. There's more of an emphasis on utilizing travel management tools, like Egencia, TripActions, and CTM, where managers can track their employees' well-being, flight durations, productivity, and cost. This allows companies to guarantee the success of a business trip and help project investments and efforts for future trips. Remote workers are not missing out on the chance to mix work and travel either. Forbes states that remote workers are likely to pack up and head somewhere new for a limited amount of time, such as a week or two, without ever telling their employer.

Then, login, get to work, and have time to explore. Vacation rentals are popular among this set of workers, however, hotels are beginning to market to remote workers as well by offering discounts on extended stays.

Wellness Trips: In comparison to previous years, there is a surge in wellness-focused trips and retreats. Hotels.com reported traveler interest in chakra sessions, food boot camps, puppy yoga, laughter therapy, and fruit harvesting as increasingly more popular than classics such as cookery courses, sports trips, and meditation sessions. During the pandemic, there was a strong focus on physical health through simple activities like hiking and walking, and mental health through therapy. USA Today states that this is still desired during vacation. Multi-active trips (a mix of biking, hiking, and other activities) are very popular, as people are looking for well-rounded itineraries that bring adventure. Travelers are looking for wellness trips that are more unique than a spa, in order to gain new experiences and stay updated on their health.

Shopping Locally: The pandemic forced millions of small businesses to close, and as a result, there was a push by consumers to shop locally and support those businesses that remained open during the pandemic. Traveling consumers are expected to continue this trend by choosing to shop locally in the areas they're staying. Travel & Leisure recently ran a survey and reported that travelers want to shop at small businesses and will spend more during a vacation if they know it supports the local community. This leads back to the rising trend of travelers wanting to feel like a local when on vacation in order to achieve a more genuine experience. Travel Agent Central did a study on this and found that 88% of respondents agreed that dining and shopping at local small businesses bring a more authentic experience. So by supporting these businesses, it creates a more purposeful trip, while also making it more authentic.

Short-Term Rentals: The companies dominating the short-term rental industry like Airbnb and Vrbo are not slowing down in growth. Millennials made up almost half of Airbnb's customers in 2022, following Baby Boomers who made up the second largest group of Airbnb customers at 18%. CNBC reported that Airbnb home rentals increased the most among travelers with children aged six and younger, because of the additional bedrooms that are offered, some even stocked with cribs.

Group Tour Market: In the group tour market, despite significant challenges over the past several years, travel demand has bounced back from pandemic lows. The National Tour Association has found that tour operators packaged-travel clients are returning in droves. The same is true for customized travel bookings, which the association says its members are seeing grow at a remarkable rate. Two-thirds of tour operators reported bookings are meeting or exceeding expectations, with 33% claiming business as stronger than expected. International travel business sentiment was nearly identical, with 30% of operators reporting bookings that were stronger than expected.

Because of the lessons learned during the pandemic, tour operators are now offering their clients more flexible itineraries to accommodate travelers differing needs. More flexibility, choice and individual experiences can be found within group itineraries.

III. Strategies & Tactics

In order to develop this tourism marketing plan for Concord, research has been implemented, results have been analyzed, and there has been a focus on understanding trends in the industry that may influence visitation to Concord. Existing and upcoming consumer needs, as well as competitive environment, have been taken into consideration. The strategies and tactics outlined in the plan have been designed to continue to emphasize the town's history, literary, culture, attractions, dining and shopping opportunities, as well as its proximity to Boston and other comparable destinations. It also includes other stories of Concord – the indigenous people, the transcendentalists, the women's suffragette movement and others in an effort to expand reach to target audiences. Consumers continue to seek local experiences and unique opportunities. As a result, strategies will continue to be developed that will help to create awareness that Concord is a vibrant community with unique stories.

In addition, strategies have been developed that allow for Concord to remain flexible and able to make directional decisions quickly if the environment and circumstances require change.

In 2019, Concord created its first Tourism Benchmark Plan. As part of this plan, a number of goals were outlined. As a result of the implementation of tourism marketing efforts, the following goals were achieved:

- Hired Tourism Manager to implement strategies
- A website was developed that focuses on the variety of things to see in do in Concord for the out-of-town visitor, as well as residents
- Social media has been implemented for the Visitor Center
- Daily tours, both bus and private, were actively pursued
- Communications with Concord residents has been initiated about the tourism efforts of the town
- Collaborations have been built with outside tourism organizations, including Lexington, Arlington, The Greater Merrimack Valley CVB, Meet Boston, Discover New England, the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism, North of Boston CVB, See Plymouth and Freedom's Way National Heritage Area.
- Baseline numbers and tracking mechanisms were developed to measure success of programs. Measurement tools have been added to all promotional campaigns in an effort to track and analyze statistics from individual campaigns as well as collectively. These included:
 - Visitors to the Visitor Center, at 12,000 in 2019 increased to 14,000 in 2022

- Implementing Google Analytics to be able to measure and analyze data on web visitors. Prior to 2020, website visitation to the Town website was 5,000 annually. In 2022 there were 60,000 view on the Visit Concord website.
- Visit Concord went from no social media presence to 600 active followers on Facebook and over 900 active followers on Instagram.
- 2022 sales and attendance at the Visitor Center matched the 2021 numbers with attendance over 14,000 and revenue at \$43,000, far exceeding the \$18,000 from 2020.
- Daily tours ran over 90% of the time in 2022, and both bus and private tours were very popular, exceeding past years' bookings.
 - In 2019, Visit Concord did not host any private tours. In 2021, 33 tours were hosted and in 2022, 55 private tours were hosted
 - In 2019 there were two bus tours in Concord. In 2022 that figure increased to 40, including two major tour companies.
- In 2020, there were no partner businesses participating in programs. In 2021 there were three businesses and in 2022 there were 10 Concord Center and West Concord businesses participating in Visit Concord programs.

An additional goal included developing and implementing a plan to work with Partners (hotels, attractions, etc.) to meet quarterly. These meetings now occur monthly.

An additional activity implemented included a pilot program to run a trolley to reduce congestion and move visitors around concord. This pilot program was funded by a FLAP grant. Between July 2 and November 13, 2022, the Town of Concord piloted this trolley which touched eight destinations – Concord's two Commuter Rail Stations, the Concord Visitor Center, The Concord Museum, Meriam's Corner (the start of Battle Road), Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House, the Old North Bridge parking lot and the Old North Bridge Visitor Center. During this 3.5-month pilot, the trolley served 700 visitors. The success of this trolley pilot program should provide the catalyst to continue the program and potentially extend it to neighboring towns. With the Revolutionary 250 celebration planning underway for 2025, this is a meaningful transportation solution that will benefit local residents as well as visitors to Concord's historical landmarks for many years.

Goals:

Moving forward, this tourism marketing plan has been designed to increase local, regional, national and international awareness about visiting Concord, which will ultimately lead to increased visitation from domestic and international markets. This will be done by accomplishing the following goals:

- Increase visitors to the Visitor Center, currently at 14,000, by 10%

- Enhance website to include more in-depth recommendations with niche, sub-categories on dining, stay, things to do, etc., for both visitors and residents
- Implement an integrated social media strategy that builds and engages followers, and posts content that aligns with the website’s branding and messaging
- Enhance communications with Concord residents about the value and importance of tourism efforts of the town
- Expand upon collaborations with outside tourism organizations (i.e. Lexington, Arlington, Salem, Plymouth, etc.)
- Continue to expand activities through shoulder seasons of late fall and early spring.
- Continue to track numbers and include ways to measure success of programs going forward. These include:
 - Tracking Google Analytics to measure and analyze data on web visitors
 - Tracking the number of inquiries received through phone, mail and email
 - Tracking the number of followers on the @VisitConcordMA Instagram and @ConcordVisitorCenter on Facebook
 - Tracking the number of partners participating in programs
 - Tracking the amount of revenue generated through partnership programs
 - Track the amount of media coverage generated (number of articles, value of coverage)
 - Tracking the number of educational trips taking place in Concord, including number of participants, number of partner businesses included, media coverage and/or business generated from hosted buyer/writer
 - Including measurement tools in all promotional campaigns to be able to track and analyze statistics from the individual campaigns, as well as collectively
 - Working with Partners (hotels, attractions, etc.) to meet monthly, in person
 - Developing cumulative baseline visitor numbers with partners to be measured quarterly
 - Tracking and analyzing social media analytics
 - Implement Annual Consumer Survey:
 - Analyze Survey Data, modifying surveys and measuring results
 - Track the number of businesses who sent out the survey
 - Track the number of emails that the Town sends the survey to
 - Track the number of surveys that were sent out
 - Track the number of surveys that were completed
 - Develop funding mechanisms to support:
 - Additional staff to assist in the marketing activities of Visit Concord

- The Trolley, connecting the attractions easily for visitors

Strategies:

In order to achieve the goals outlined above, the following strategies and tactics should continue to be implemented and expanded upon, with the results from the previous year's programs being evaluated on an annual basis to ensure that they are the most effective strategies to generate the greatest return on investment.

Strategies have been designed to position Concord as a quality, year-round destination, promoting the multitude of available offerings to potential visitors, positioning Concord as one of Massachusetts' best destinations for domestic and international families, couples who are seeking an authentic New England experience, History - American, Literary, Transcendentalist, Suffragette and more, recreation, culture and entertainment, fine dining, unique shopping and more.

a. Leisure Visitor Market

The main market segment to be targeted for the Concord tourism efforts will continue to be the domestic leisure visitor market. However, Concord is well known internationally for its role in American history as well as its literary history. As opportunities arise to target the international market they should be assessed and taken advantage of as appropriate.

Concord is well known for revolutionary and literary history – but it's a destination with deep roots in a number of other areas, from the women's suffragette movement to the transcendentalist movement and so much more. It is imperative that the destination continue developing and telling its stories in order to attract a wider and more diverse audience who also may prove to be a repeat audience once they learn of what else the town has to offer beyond American and Literary history.

There are a number of strategies and tactics that can be used to target the leisure visitor market. They include:

Communications:

Communications plays an important role in the marketing of Concord to visitors. In order to increase awareness, an integrated communications campaign that enhances the Town image, promotes the Town's assets and positions Concord as a great place to visit, should be expanded upon.

There are a number of communications tools that can continue to be utilized to communicate messaging to target audiences. They include, but are not limited to: website, social media platforms, newsletters as well as

media releases. All outreach platforms should be utilized while consideration should be given to new channels that may arise.

- Media Relations:

One of the most cost-effective ways to market a destination is through an integrated media relations strategy. Moving forward, Concord will continue to pursue travel and lifestyle editors and reporters to secure print, online and broadcast coverage for the tourism activities that are happening in town. In addition, the Town will work closely with the Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau, Meet Boston and MOTT to support their media relations programs that benefit Concord.

Additional components of the media relations strategy include the following:

- Maintain Updated Targeted Media List:

A list of targeted media outlets will be created and updated on a regular basis. This list will be segmented based upon topics within the media relations plan. Media should include, but not be limited to: print, television, radio, online, bloggers and influencers.

- Media Releases:

Consumer and trade media should be targeted with media releases. They should be sent out monthly or as necessary to coincide with key milestones. They should be distributed by email and sent directly to a database of all media contacts. All releases should also be uploaded to the Concord website and made accessible for all to read. Key stories will be further distributed when there is opportunity for greater coverage.

- Editorial Calendar:

An editorial calendar is used to ensure key information is distributed to media. This will result in regular coverage in targeted news outlets. It should be updated every six months to promote the positive stories of Concord. The Editorial Calendar should focus on Concord's assets and story ideas to ensure that visitors and residents are receiving regular updates on what is happening in Town.

Story ideas to pitch the media might include detailing the *Stories of Concord* – not only the stories of the American Revolution and the stories of the literary greats, but all of the other stories that make Concord the unique destination that it is, amplifying the narratives beyond the Revolutionary War, including how Concord has attracted the change makers and thought leaders through time and how

all of their stories are intertwined. The podcast series that is currently being developed should be promoted to the media, as well as all of the itineraries, packages and other content being created to promote the destination.

- Educational Trips:

Qualified media will continue to be invited to participate in educational (fam) trips.

In addition, an annual educational trip that invites all of the local people who help to sell and promote Concord should be implemented. It would include hotel sales & marketing staff from surrounding towns, visitor center staff, staff at the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTI), Meet Boston, Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMVCVB), local receptive operators, destination management companies and other organizations that help sell Concord.

- E-Newsletters:

Newsletters serve the purpose of informing potential visitors and media about all that is happening in Concord. Newsletters should be sent monthly to people who have signed up on the website as well as at the Visitor Center. In addition, the newsletter should be sent to businesses to send to their databases, as well as to Town staff and all stakeholders so that they are informed of all tourism activities taking place in Concord and how they are being promoted to visitors.

A second newsletter should be created that includes a monthly calendar of events that gets sent to stakeholders and town officials in order for them to better understand what is happening in the community and how they might be able to cross promote activities or better allocate staffing resources.

Content Development:

One of the most cost-effective ways to promote Concord is through continuing to develop comprehensive content that is of interest to potential visitors. In order to expand awareness, a new series of itineraries and themed months will be developed in collaboration with businesses in Concord, as well as other regional partners. Topics for itineraries will be listed on the website and promoted to the media. The itineraries could be one big overall itinerary or individual itineraries that could be combined with others depending upon the trip experience that a visitor is seeking. They could be 1, 3 or half day itineraries and they could be seasonal, weekend or weekday specific.

Topics for itineraries could include:

- The Other Stories of Concord
 - Transcendentalist Movement
 - Suffragette Movement
 - The Indigenous People of Concord
 - Other stories that may be of interest to different audiences
- Buy local
- Recreation & soft adventure (bike trails, hiking)
- Arts & Culture
- The Changemakers of Concord
- Experience Concord's Literary History Like a Writer – incorporate writer in residence program at the Library, visit Thoreau Birth House, etc.
- Get emersed in Agritourism/Conservation/Farming – volunteer at Gaining Ground, experience Walden Pond, dine on Farm to Fork Culinary Experiences, etc.
- Events (seasonally and/or by theme)
- Schools Out (for February, April and summer vacations)

Itineraries can be leveraged with other regions to create longer stays in the area or act as a stand-alone option for visitors. These can serve as an important tool as Concord works towards Rev 2025, just 18 months away.

In addition, Concord will look to develop and promote themed months that will lead to the creation of product and packages. Packages allow the opportunity to control, to a degree, how the town is promoted. It is also a great way to get multiple partners to work together to help drive revenue in a traceable way.

Topics for themed months/product/packages might include:

- Itineraries outlined above
- Value Promotions – i.e. 40 under \$40
- 50 ideas for those over 50 (or 50 ideas for those under 50)
- Off Season
- Rev250 – outline 250 activities leading up to 250th that people can partake in
- Locally made and produced items – art and/or food

Concord will work with the private sector to curate content that is relevant to target audiences. Content should be provided 18 – 24 months out in order to maximize exposure to all audiences, including the group tour market as they plan their itineraries that far out and are currently working on 2025 and beyond.

Podcast Series:

In collaboration with Freedom’s Way, this regional effort of 10 – 20 podcasts will focus on making the invisible, visible. The series will tie into the activities of Revolution 250 with the goal of getting the voices and the stories out there. This podcast series is funded by the Concord Cultural District.

Website:

The website needs to continue to be appealing to visitors and provide useful information in a way that they want to view it. Additional content should be added on a regular basis so that visitors continue to return to learn more. It should be updated regularly reflect seasonal promotions and special events.

Salem and Plymouth’s Visitors’ sites are very interactive and user-friendly, providing colorful photos of the town and recommendations on dining, shopping, monuments, and much more. It is important that Concord watches these sites as technology develops in order to compete and maintain up to date information for travelers. For example, Plymouth and Salem have apps for travelers that may be more convenient for those who prefer to use mobile when planning a trip, especially with more than half of millennials in 2023 using their phones to book and plan their trips.

Concord’s visitor web site does a great job at its visual appeal and providing information on popular topics like dining and stay options. However, Salem and Plymouth’s breakdowns of these topics are much more organized, offering not only dining recommendations, but options within sub-categories like wineries, taverns, culinary tours, bakeries, breweries and more, while the Visit Concord site only has five restaurant recommendations. Creating sub-categories under these frequented topics could increase engagement of the website, along with the other spots in Concord that are not yet highlighted. The website should include every type of eatery, shop, and lodging available that might appeal to a visitor, allowing travelers to narrow down their search if they’re specifically looking for a Bed & Breakfast, for example, when traveling. Not having those options could deter travelers if they have something specific in mind that is not offered as an option on the website. The objective should be to continue to make it easier for visitors to find what they are looking for and make it easier for them to find something new that will entice them to Concord.

Social Media:

Social media continues to be an important way for people to receive news and information on destinations. It's important to actively engage in social media to increase awareness for Concord among visitors and residents. The social media pages for Visit Concord should stay up to date with news from around Concord, promote businesses, social events and other activities that help to position Concord as a great destination to explore. The tone should be upbeat and ensure positive and encouraging messaging as it pertains to both stakeholders and people not from the area. If possible, the Facebook page handle should be changed to match Instagram @VisitConcorMA.

Creating content that is consistent in branding is important when posting about the same topics frequently. All events-related posts should use the same font, colors, and template for continuity. The account should direct its followers to different shops and restaurants in Concord, while also posting about new content on the website onto their Instagram to encourage followers to use their site. The VisitConcordMA Instagram should also be collaborating with the TownofConcordMA's Instagram, reposting some of the content that Visit Concord is uploading and following the account. In addition, hashtags should be created and promoted for use among stakeholders, residents and visitors. Hashtags serve as *file cabinets* and are searchable, so if someone is looking for festivals, dining options, recreation options or other activities, the hashtags may be where they look for more information. Hashtags might include #Rev250, #VisitMA, #ConcordMA, #VisitConcordMA, #ConcordStories, and others.

In addition to planned posts, the sites should be monitored closely in order to respond to any comments, concerns and questions, as well as to stay informed about potential problems that might require attention.

Memberships:

Concord will maintain memberships with a number of industry organizations that will help expand the reach of marketing efforts to new audiences. They include:

- Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Meet Boston (formerly Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau)
- See Plymouth
- North of Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau

Tradeshows:

Attending tradeshows can be a very expensive proposition. Partnering the Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau will allow for increased participation in tradeshows. The one show that Concord should definitely find a way to have a presence at is the Discover New England Summit which brings in domestic and international receptive operators, tour operators and media.

In addition, working with the private sector, a comprehensive tradeshow and marketplace list will be developed that identifies tradeshows that partners are attending. These will include shows that drive visitors to the region. This list will provide an opportunity for Concord to leverage resources and expand exposure for the town among target audiences, while allowing for partnering between the private and public sector.

Advertising:

The advertising strategy incorporates understanding the travel trends and research outlined earlier in the document, highlighting the creation of packages and incentives that will entice visitors to stay; developing messages to interest regional travel; and offering a message that highlights but the known and sometimes unknown offerings in Concord. While advertising is very expensive, a campaign that incorporates leveraging partnership dollars should be explored to reduce the costs for all involved while still generating exposure for the destination.

This co-operative ad campaign will be proposed to partner businesses. If they are interested in participating, the focus will be on the experience of the destination, not just the individual advertisers. The co-op ad will promote a link to the new website where only those who financially support the placement will be listed, so that they can track a return on investment.

Collateral & Photography:

Collateral continues to be needed to help promote Concord to target audiences. The map has been expanded and translated and a group tour flyer has been created for distribution as well.

In this Instagram world that we live in, having good photography for promotional use is key. The most effective way to build a photo library is to hire a professional photographer. While it is an investment, it is one that can bear fruit over time given the multiple ways that images can be used. Photos should be all seasons and have people in them. Additional ideas to build a photo library include:

- Open Call for Submissions to “Capture Concord”:

One option is to reach out to the community in a contest format to take photographs of the Town, based upon a creative brief. The community could be rewarded with an exhibition of the photos, payment could be offered for use of selected photography, and/or a way could be found to offer the artist credit. Explicit clearance for photographic use will need to be obtained, as well as permissions to feature people in the photographs.

- Request for photos:

The Town could request that the community submit photos via the website that would become property of the Town for promotional purposes.

- Create Hashtags:

Concord should create a hashtag for social media that when used, gives the town permission to use the uploaded photo for promotional purposes. For example, the Concord Instagram description can include copy such as: “Use the hashtag #CaptureConcord to give us permission to feature your photo”

Events:

Events attract visitors to a destination. However, creating and producing events is very time consuming, particularly for a small staff. Therefore, Concord will support existing events through communications efforts, brainstorm with partners about new events and helping to market and promote events, but will not be involved in producing events.

Events will be used as a hook in marketing and communications channels in order to attract new audiences in Concord. Events such as the West Concord Porch Fest, a Film Festival or events taking place in the National Park will be incorporated into suggested itineraries, media pitches, and social media efforts where possible to ensure that audiences outside of the greater Concord area are made aware of all that is happening in the Town.

Visitor Center:

The Town of Concord runs the Visitor Center which is open daily from mid-April until the end of October. The Visitor Center provides visitor guides, maps and brochures of local businesses, as well as offers both daily walking tours and step-on guides for group/bus tours. Extended hours through weekends in November and December, on Veterans Day and on the day after Thanksgiving have been put into place. By having a more consistent schedule, visitors will be encouraged to experience Concord in the off-season and help generate economic impact for a longer period driven by visitors.

Partnerships:

Partnerships play an important role in leveraging resources to expand reach and messaging for Concord.

- **Comparable Destinations:**

Concord will continue to work with comparable destinations such as Plymouth, Salem and Lexington to develop itineraries that enhance the visitor experience and expand their stay. These destinations have a similar visitor profile, but they are getting visitors that may not be visiting Concord, and vice versa, so collaboration would aid in leveraging brands, budgets and increasing business.

Concord will also work with Lexington and other communities to collaborate on programming activities such as Rev 250 and Patriot's Day – sharing knowledge and resources for parades and other activities, as well as collaborating with journalists, suggested itineraries, and general promotion of the area depending upon the theme, particularly when it comes to revolutionary history. Concord & Lexington are synonymous with the American Revolution and visitors expect the whole experience, so it only makes sense to work with Lexington to provide the visitor with what they're seeking. The Liberty Ride is a popular attraction run by the Town of Lexington. It tours the sites of the American Revolution in both Lexington and Concord. Moving forward, discussions with Lexington on ways to collaborate with the Liberty Ride will be explored.

- **Revolution250:**

Revolution 250 is a consortium of organizations working together to commemorate the 250th anniversaries of the events that led up to the American Revolution. With over 30 institutional members, they operate under the fiscal sponsorship of the Massachusetts Historical Society. While there is a committee working on the Rev250 activities for Concord, it's important that their programs and activities are communicated in a timely manner so that they can be included in ongoing tourism promotions. Visit Concord will work with the local Rev250 committee to market and promote the activities that they develop.

- **Concord Tourism, Cultural, Historic, Dining & Shopping Community:**

Collaboration is important among the tourism, cultural, historic, dining and shopping community in Concord. Concord will continue to convene monthly meetings in order to foster collaboration on programs and communication about activities taking place and will start to hold these meetings at the various attractions and businesses. In this way, the businesses will learn what others have to offer and will be able to better cross promote.

- **Other Tourism Organizations:**

Concord will continue to partner with the Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism, Meet Boston and Discover New England. We will send them information on programs and events so that they can promote them on our behalf. We'll include events in their online calendar listings and work with them to support educational trips for journalists. We will look to advertise in their collateral where appropriate and will make sure that they have our collateral for distribution where possible. We will also work with them on content development, when appropriate.

Surveys:

A visitor survey will be utilized to better understand audience needs. It will provide benchmarks, help to measure ROI and provide important input and insight that can be used to determine strategy and direction.

The visitor survey will allow Concord to:

- Understand how Concord appears to a non-resident
- Gauge what visitors like the most/least about the Town
- Learn what drew visitors to Concord
- Learn how visitors got their information
- Gather information on demographics
- Gather feedback on attractions, events and businesses

This survey will be conducted annually and create a baseline for activities that can be measured against future years

Measurement Tools:

The key measure of success will be through the implementation of the plan and subsequent results. To be successful, this plan requires engagement with all stakeholders for input, feedback, consultation, implementation and review. Measurement tools will continue to be attached to activities where possible. In addition, new ways should be sought out to measure success in order to ensure that Concord is generating the greatest return on investment possible from the programs.

The measurement tools outlined below are both short and long term, so that programs can be measured for their effectiveness on a weekly or monthly basis (such as website analytics, partnership programs, media coverage) and on an annual basis. In this way we have an ongoing understanding of our successes and are able to identify where programs need to be modified in order to become more effective. These analytics allow us to be nimble and change direction when needed.

The success of the initiatives will be measured by:

- Tracking industry trends
- Tracking Google Analytics to be able to measure and analyze statistical data on web visitors
- Tracking the number of inquiries received through phone, mail and email
- Tracking the number of partners participating in programs
- Tracking the amount revenue generated through partnership programs
- Tracking the number of educational trips taking place in Concord, including number of participants, media coverage and or business generated
- Tracking the amount of media coverage received
- Including measurement tools in all promotional campaigns to be able to track and analyze statistics from the individual campaigns, as well as collectively
- Working with Partners (hotels, attractions, etc) to meet quarterly and to develop cumulative baseline visitor numbers to be measured quarterly
- Tracking and analyzing social media analytics
- Consumer Survey:
 - Analyzing Survey Data, modifying surveys and measuring results
 - Tracking the number of businesses who sent out the survey
 - Tracking the number of emails that the Town has to send the survey to
 - Tracking the number of surveys that were sent out
 - Tracking the number of surveys that were completed

b. Group Market:

In order to maximize the lucrative group tour market, Concord will implement a number of strategies and tactics to increase the length of stay of current group tours and attract new tours that will spend more money and stay longer in Concord. As a destination, Concord is aware of the infrastructure limitations of the Town and are tailoring growth to smaller group markets.

Working closely with the Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau, Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism, Discover New England and Meet Boston, Concord will pursue smaller group tours, corporate meetings, weddings and other small events that fit better for Concord businesses.

This is an important market segment for Concord. However, it is important to educate the tour companies on the variety of things to see and do in Concord. It is not about increasing the number of buses to the Town, which would make congestion worse, but rather, helping the existing tours maximize their experience while they're in Concord so they stay longer and spend more.

Additional tactics include:

Communications:

- **Create Targeted Media & Tour Operator list:**
A list of preferred group tour media outlets, as well as group tour operators, wedding planners, corporate and event planners, will be created.
- **Media Releases:**
Group tour trade media will be targeted with media releases, as well corporate market media. They should be sent out quarterly or as necessary to coincide with key milestones. They should be distributed by email and sent directly to a database of all group media contacts. All releases should also be uploaded to the Concord website and made accessible for all to read.
- **Group Market E-Newsletters:**
Newsletters serve the purpose of informing media, tour operators and corporate and event planners about all that is happening in Concord. A group newsletter should be sent out quarterly highlighting product, new programs and itineraries and news.

Content Development:

In order to have programs and content to promote to the group market segment, a series of leisure group itineraries will be developed in collaboration with businesses in Concord, as well as other regional partners. This will help expand awareness. Itineraries can be leveraged with other regions to create longer stays in the area or act as a stand-alone option for the group tour market.

Website:

The website should be updated with a section for groups – tours, weddings as well as corporate meetings and events. These special areas should be updated on a regular basis and provide all of the information needed to plan a successful group visit/event.

Collateral:

Concord has a profile sheet that outlines opportunities and important information for leisure groups visiting. A similar profile sheet should be created for weddings and corporate events. These profile sheets can be distributed via email, sales calls, at trade shows and downloaded from the website.

Sales:

The various tour companies (those currently sending business to Concord and others sending business to the region) will be contacted and educated on what there is to see and do in Concord and how they can enhance their itineraries for their customers.

Working with hotel partners, as well as GMVCVB, Meet Boston, Discover New England and MOTT, educational (fam) trips will be implemented, targeting leisure group tour operators and corporate planners.

Concord will also look to partner with local businesses who are members of Meeting Professionals International (MPI), Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), Student Youth Travel Association (SYTA), American Bus Association (ABA), National Tour Association (NTA), etc. to host educational evenings for local members of those groups so that they can be better educated on what Concord has to offer for group business.

A customer advisory group will be created to solicit input from the various bus tour companies to help make the experience in Concord better for the leisure group visitor. This group will also be used to discuss the potential of charging a service fee for the buses, as well as the best way to enforce tour guide regulations.

Tradeshows:

Partnering with local businesses who are members of Meeting Professionals International (MPI), Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), Student Youth Tour Association (SYTA), American Bus Association (ABA), National Tour Association (NTA), etc., as well as the Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau and surrounding communities such as Salem, Plymouth, Lexington and others, will allow for increased participation in tradeshows.

The comprehensive tradeshow and marketplace list that is created with the private sector will help to identify tradeshows that partners are attending. This list will provide an opportunity for Concord to leverage resources and expand exposure for the Town among tour operators, while allowing for partnering between the private and public sector.

Surveys:

A group tour operator survey and a corporate meeting planner survey will be utilized to better understand audience needs. It will provide benchmarks, help to measure ROI and provide important input and insight that can be used to determine strategy and direction.

The surveys will allow Concord to:

- Understand how Concord appears to the group market
- Gauge what is most/least appealing about the Town to group visitors
- Gather information on demographics
- Gather feedback on attractions, events and businesses
- Gather ideas for product development

This survey will be conducted annually and create a baseline for activities that can be measured against future years.

Measurement Tools:

The key measure of success for the group market will be through the implementation of the plan and subsequent results. Measurement tools should be attached to activities where possible. In addition, new ways should be sought out to measure success in order to ensure that Concord is generating the greatest return on investment possible from the group tour programs.

The success of the group initiatives will be measured by:

- Tracking industry trends
- Tracking Google Analytics to be able to measure and analyze statistical data on traffic to the group tour section of the website
- Tracking the number of group inquiries received through phone, mail and email
- Tracking the number of partners participating in group programs
- Tracking the number of group educational trips taking place in Concord, including number of participants and business generated
- Including measurement tools in all promotional campaigns to be able to track and analyze statistics from the individual group tour campaigns, as well as collectively
- Tracking the number of leads generated from tradeshow attendance
- Analyzing Survey Data, modifying surveys and measuring results

c. Community Relations Campaign:

Throughout the key stakeholder interviews, it became clear that there are a number of activities and events happening in the community but not everyone was aware of everything going on. It also became clear that the perception is that tourism is expensive for the destination, but residents are not necessarily aware of the value that tourism brings to the destination.

Residents need to be reminded that direct tourism spending accounts for 33% of Concord's total annual sales of commodities and total tourism output accounts for 53% of Concord's total annual sales of commodities. Residents alone can't support all of the businesses in the community, but visitors can help to do that. This makes for a more vibrant community for residents as there are more people to support businesses, thereby attracting more businesses to town.

In an effort to keep stakeholders, including industry partners, community partners and legislative leaders informed about activities, upcoming events, industry partner news, marketing strategies, initiatives and opportunities as well as industry trends and research, a Community Relations Campaign will be implemented.

Travel and tourism enhances the quality of life for a community by providing jobs, bringing in tax dollars for improvement of services and infrastructure, and attracting shops, restaurants as well as events catering to visitors and locals alike. Outreach strategies will include regular e-blast newsletters, media releases and networking events. Resident programs beyond complimentary walking tours on the anniversary of the Visitor Center will be created. These may include value-add during certain time periods for residents, or exclusive opportunities available only to residents.

A program leading up to Rev250 will be developed with other partners where community forums will be held, outlining the value of tourism and what residents can expect through 2025.

Additional efforts to engage and educate residents on the value of tourism in Concord should include:

- Media relations efforts such as articles in local news outlets and op-ed pieces that would highlight the money that the visitor industry brings to Concord, the number of jobs, and what it would mean for taxes if the visitor numbers were reduced.
- Testimonials from businesses on the importance of tourism, highlighting that residents alone couldn't spend enough to support each business in Concord. Testimonials could be in the form of videos as well as quotes that could be used in ads, social media, on the website and in other communications materials.
- Utilizing Facebook Live events to educate and engage residents.

- Develop Advisory Group of advocates for tourism who have the ability to attend and participate in meetings, events and various activities in the town and speak positively on behalf of the tourism industry. They would be provided with facts and figures on the importance of the visitor industry in Concord and the benefits residents derive from it.
- Host an industry forum to educate the staff of all of the attractions, hotels, restaurants, and other businesses to provide the same facts and figures so that they can also speak positively on behalf of the tourism industry.
- Implement a community service program where these newly educated *ambassadors* (advocates and industry staff) volunteer at various community events under the umbrella of Visit Concord, which will not only help improve image of the visitor industry, but can also be used in media relations efforts, as well as on social media.

Concord is a dynamic town with a vast array of experiences that keep visitor numbers increasing, but visitors and residents often view the town through a very different lens. While visitors enjoy the exciting feeling of traveling to a new place for the first time, residents often forget about what is easily available for them to access.

By helping those residents who enjoy great dining and shopping experiences see Concord through the *fresh eyes* of a visitor, it will enable them to (re)discover their own backyard as well as become knowledgeable hosts for friends and relatives who come to visit. It will allow them to become more connected with the tourism industry and generate a sense of pride for their town, and remind them of why many of them chose to move to Concord in the first place.

Social media would play an important role in these marketing efforts.

- Short videos can be produced on the various businesses, which can be shared on social media and the website
- #TourismTuesday could be created include video of businesses, as well as an Instagram Stories take-over, which could then be saved as highlights. These stories would showcase the businesses, highlighting the stories of their businesses. By having these unique perspectives posted to the @visitconcord page, businesses will likely tag their business in the story and they'll repost that story to their story. All of their followers will see the @visitconcord page and will likely like it as well. This is important because it opens up Concord to all of followers of each business. Every time there is a story posted, Visit Concord has the ability to increase followers by however many followers the business has.

d. Infrastructure Needs:

As Visit Concord moves forward, thoughtfully attracting target audiences by telling the wide variety of stories that make up the Town, there are a number of infrastructure needs that will benefit the tourism marketing efforts if implemented:

Transportation:

In 2022, Concord piloted a trolley program to move people around the various sites. By all accounts this was successful, not only for getting visitors to various attractions, but also for alleviating traffic for both visitors and residents. Moving forward, funding for the Trolley should be continued (or found through grants and/or private sector support). This is especially important as we move towards 2025 and finding ways to manage the increase in visitors interested in the 250th celebration.

Dining & Restroom Options:

Additional needs to address the increase in visitors include the need to provide more dining and restroom facilities. In 2023, Concord will pilot a program that will include an outdoor dining pavilion with all of the amenities needed (tables, tent, trash facilities, portable restrooms). If this pilot program is successful, it should be expanded and promoted to visitors to the town. Food truck options should be considered in an effort to address how to feed the larger audiences and visitors should be encouraged to extend their stay with this additional dining option. This is especially important as the town moves towards the activities of 2025.

Staffing:

In order to be successful, all of the strategies and tactics outlined in this plan cannot be implemented by one person. It is imperative that an additional dedicated tourism staff person be hired, not only to implement programs, but also to be able to measure and track their success. In this way, Visit Concord will be able to show the value of their efforts to the Town and community.