



GROUP SALES & SERVICE

VCI markets Columbus to motor coach tours, architecture schools, and other groups. The Director of Sales and Hospitality creates itineraries designed to address specific group interests and maximize overnight stays. She also works with groups hosting conferences, meetings, and events in Bartholomew County. In 2015, 79 groups were hosted. Notable among them were GTO National Convention, Lions Club State Convention, Indiana League of City Clerks and Treasurers Southern District Fall Meeting, and the SEEK Conference.

The Director of Sales and Hospitality attended the American Bus Association and select travel tradeshows. She participated in trade associations, including Meeting Professionals International, Society of Government Meeting Planners, and Indiana Foodway Alliance in order to build relationships in target markets.

- » Private Group Tour Attendance - 1,835
- » Special Event Attendance - 13,105

PARTNERSHIPS & GRANTS

VCI works with organizations throughout the community to grow the tourism industry in Bartholomew County. In addition to participating in community development discussions and event planning, VCI leverages public dollars with private investment in programs that attract visitors and promote long-term growth for the local economy. VCI supported 27 programs in 2015 as detailed below.

\$500	Advocates for Children / Night of a 1000 Jacks
\$500	Columbus Parks and Recreation / Rugby Tournament
\$500	Déjà Vu Fine Arts & Crafts Show
\$500	Foundation for Youth Triathlon
\$500	Hope Ride
\$500	IUPUC / Bicycle Boogie
\$500	Ivy Tech / Run for the Ivy
\$500	Midwest Open Tennis
\$500	Reframe Columbus / CIAA
\$500	Sustainable Cycling Team
\$500	Velocity BMX Racing
\$500	Yellow Trail Museum / Christmas of Yesteryear
\$1,500	AJGA Golf Tournament
\$1,750	Boy Scouts of America / Wine-A-Ree
\$2,300	ArtFest
\$2,500	Bakalar Air Museum / Aviation Day
\$3,000	Columbus Area Arts Council / Rock the Park
\$3,000	Columbus Parks Foundation / Yoga in the Park
\$3,000	Turning Point/Girlfriend Ride
\$4,700	Mill Race Center / SEEK Conference
\$7,500	Columbus Area Arts Council / Live on the Plaza
\$7,500	Columbus Scottish Festival
\$8,300	Lincoln Central Neighborhood Family Center / YES Film Festival
\$9,000	Heritage Fund / Engage Columbus
\$10,000	Columbus Parks Foundation / Hamilton Center
\$27,500	Heritage of Hope / Hope Visitors Center
\$35,000	Heritage Fund / Landmark Columbus

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

An independent audit of the 2015 financial statements was conducted by Blue & Co., LLC.

The financial statements reported total revenue of \$1,688,906. Innkeepers Tax accounted for \$1,200,000 of the total. The remainder of the revenue was generated through gift shop sales, tour sales, and donations. Total revenue also included \$86,000 of in-kind rent provided by the Bartholomew County Public Library for the Visitors Center facility.

Expenses in 2015 totaled \$1,626,596. The Audited Statement of Activities listed expenses in the following categories: promotion \$865,906, hosting \$313,393, bus tours \$266,965, administration \$180,596.

VCI STAFF

Jan Banister, Retail Manager
 James Beshear, Driver
 Pat Bridgetts, Guest Service Specialist
 Wendy Elwood, Financial Coordinator
 Robin Gray, Operations Manager
 Sonya Greathouse, Guest Service Specialist
 Danny Green, Driver
 William Grider, Driver
 Becky Harper, Director of Sales & Hospitality

Erin Hawkins, Director of Marketing
 Derek Johnson, Driver
 Ishmal Johnson-Bey, Driver
 Judie Lahr, Guest Service Specialist
 Eric Marvin, Director of Sports Tourism
 Don Nissen, Director of Infor. Resources
 Karen Niverson, Executive Director
 Joyce Orwin, Volunteer & Tour Manager
 Nancy Solomon, Driver

2015 VCI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Justin Booth	Jason Hatton	Beth Booth Poor
Chad Cockerham	Jason Hester	Pica Saddler
Michael Dean	Lynne Hyatt	Lisa Shafran
Kim DeClue	Mark Jones	Karen Shrode
Alan Degner	Marsha Kanable	Brenda Vogel
Spencer Dell	Jenny Kim	Cindy Waddle
Cindy Frey	Tony Moravec	Celeste Yonushonis
Denise Glesing	Amit Patel	

VISITORS CENTER, INC. | 2015 ANNUAL REPORT



Welcome to Columbus / Bartholomew County, Indiana

VISITORS CENTER, INC. ROLES AND PROGRAMS

Visitors Center, Inc. (VCI) serves as the destination marketing organization for Bartholomew County. In that capacity, the organization conducts a broad range of programs designed to attract visitors to the area and grow tourism across all sectors of the industry. Major areas of programming include advertising and promotion, Visitors Center and tour operations, sports tourism, group sales and service, and partnerships and grants. Additionally, the organization tracks industry statistics and tourism trends at the local, state, and national levels.

It is pleasure and an honor to serve the residents of Bartholomew County and to work with community partners to grow and diversify our local economy through the development and promotion of a strong tourism industry.

LOCAL TOURISM INDUSTRY STATISTICS

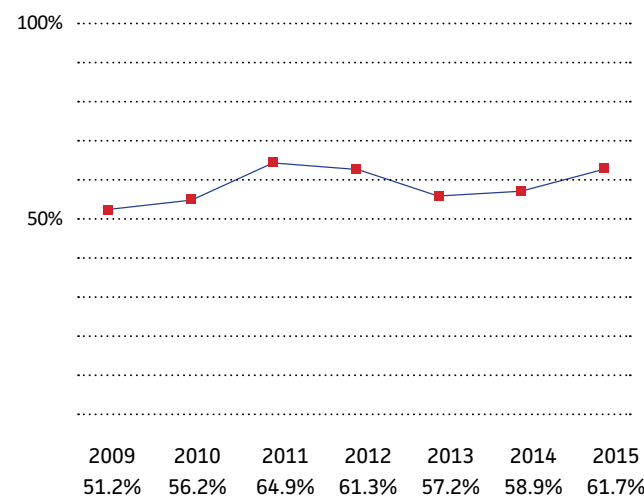
The tourism industry in Bartholomew County was strong in 2015. Rooms sold totaled 347,501, an increase of 4.5% over 2014. The average daily rate for rooms sold during the year was \$89.67, up from \$85.58 the year prior. The total hotel sales revenue generated in 2015 was \$31,161,285.*

The estimated direct visitor spending in Bartholomew County was \$256,728,353. Thirty three percent of those dollars was spent on shopping. Thirty two percent of visitor spending supported local food and beverage establishments. The remaining 35% was spent on lodging, activities, attractions, and transportation. Research indicates that visitor spending supports approximately 4,426 jobs in Bartholomew County.**

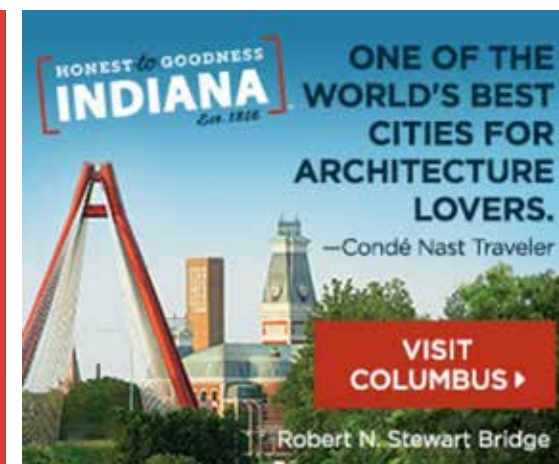
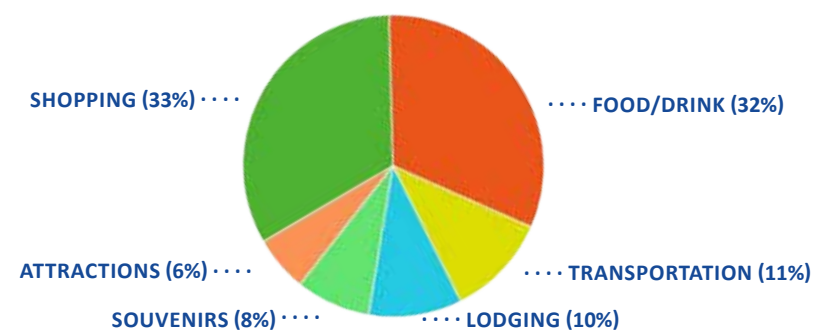
* Smith Travel Research Trend Report

** Certec Economic Impact Study of 2014, released in 2015

BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY LODGING OCCUPANCY PERCENTAGES



ANNUAL VISITOR SPENDING \$256,728,353



VISITORS CENTER PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

2015 was a year of change at the Visitors Center. A new Executive Director was named in April, and in September a new Retail Manager joined the staff. The Visitors Center was named Sports Commission of the Year by the Independent Sports Association of America. Crèche the Halls, a new holiday tour of the Miller House, was introduced (above left), while VCI also introduced a new community video to replace the one from 2007. Record numbers visited www.columbus.in.us, and VCI embarked on a new advertising co-op with the Indiana Office of Tourism (above right), designed to leverage local dollars with state funds to significantly increase the marketing reach.

ADVERTISING & PROMOTION

Advertising and promotion is a significant portion of the VCI annual program. These efforts include paid advertising, digital marketing, and public and media relations activities. VCI maintains a website and social media platforms on behalf of the community, and develops and executes an annual advertising program for Columbus/Bartholomew County. VCI staff attends media events, hosts media visits, and facilitates video shoots. In 2015 VCI hosted the film crew for the Saarinen documentary on the PBS American Master Series. VCI also worked with the Indiana Office of Tourism to produce a video for a Columbus TV spot to be aired in the Chicago and Indianapolis markets. Results of advertising and promotion efforts are outlined below.

- » Website: 156,495 Unique Visitors
- » Fulfillment: 7,813 Distributed Pieces
- » Welcome Bags: 5,178
- » Social Media: 35,000 Interactions
- » Advertising Schedule: Print, Digital Media, Public TV & Radio - 20 million Total Reach
- » Earned Media: Columbus/Bartholomew County featured in 19 publications, including *Fortune Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Midwest Living*, 10 digital outlets, including *Huffington Post*, 3 TV programs, and 2 radio stations.
- » Indiana Office of Tourism Campaign Co-op:
 - » Columbus Online Ads (see samples above right and below) - served 13 million times with a 55,000 click-through rate
 - » 10 weeks of TV-generated Ads - 55% ad recall among viewers in target markets
 - » 8 weeks of Radio Ads - across multiple genres
 - » Indiana AAA Home & Away Print - 219,000 readers reached with average age of 53 and household income above \$67,000

VISITORS CENTER & TOUR OPERATIONS

The Visitors Center welcomes thousands of visitors annually, taking the role of "face of the community" seriously. Staff and volunteers receive hospitality training and information about area architecture and attractions.

The gift shop offers unique items that reflect the community's love of quality and design. This operation generates revenue to subsidize VCI's operations.

The Visitors Center also serves the local community by providing meeting and event space at little or no cost, with 38 local organizations utilizing the facility in 2015.

VCI's most renowned programs are the architecture and Miller House tours. The organization conducts nearly 1,000 public tours annually. The Volunteer and Tour Program Manager directs a team of volunteers and maintains a fleet of vehicles to conduct the tours. The Miller House holiday tour was introduced in 2015, receiving great reviews.

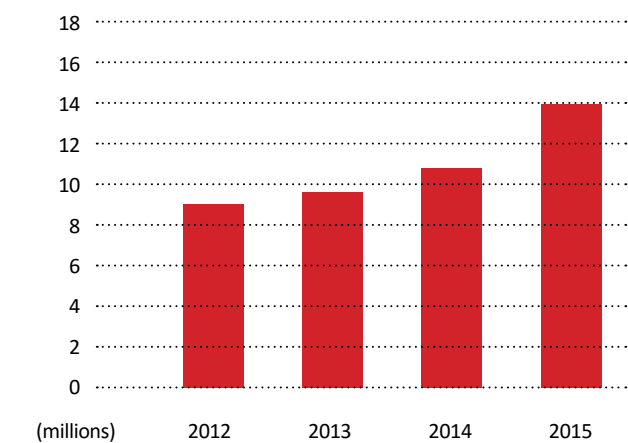
Public Tours:	Architecture – 3,285 / Miller House - 4,029
Visitors Center:	Traffic - 20,823 / Video - 12,714
Volunteers:	Hours - 3,455

SPORTS TOURISM

Sports tourism continues to make a significant impact on the local economy. In order to maintain a position in this competitive market, VCI works with local facilities and tournament organizers to bring the most lucrative events to Bartholomew County. In 2015 the Director of Sports Tourism attended S.P.O.R.T.S. conference, USSSA National Convention, and ISA/SSUSA National Convention to market Bartholomew County as a premier sports destination to event organizers across the nation. Research on sport tourism spending, and the resulting economic impact, was conducted by Dr. Ryan Brewer of IUPUI. The study revealed the following industry statistics.

- » Sporting Events - 77 hosted
- » Visitors - 1 million
- » Direct Visitor Spending - \$8.8 million
- » Total Economic Impact - \$14 million, up 22% from 2014
- » Diamond Sports - 66% of sports visitors
- » Field Sports - 12% of sports visitors
- » Other Sports - 24% of sports visitors

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY SPORTS TOURISM EVENTS



SPORTS IN BARTHOLOMEW CO.

