



# **Tourism Benchmark Plan**

## **Town of Concord, MA**

October 22, 2019

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## I. Executive Summary

Founded in 1635, Concord, MA is an historic town 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. Home to approximately 18,000 residents, Concord is known as the location of the first battle of the American Revolution. Concord is also known for its rich literary history, having been home to some of the greatest American authors – Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Louisa May Alcott. In addition, Concord is rich in recreational sites including Walden Pond and the Minute Man National Historic Park, and has a number of arts, cultural, dining and shopping experiences that visitors find appealing.

With the goal of increasing business from both visitors and residents, the Town secured consulting services from Open the Door to recommend marketing and communications strategies for the town, provide analysis and develop a tourism benchmark plan. Open the Door is a strategic planning and communications firm specializing in the hospitality industry. Based in Boston, its principal has over 30 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 18 years ago. Open the Door has completed similar work for communities in Massachusetts such as: Salem, 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 complete list of stakeholders can be found on page 11 along with detailed findings from the research. This tourism benchmark plan has been developed based on the research results. 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 to draw visitors to Concord.

According to the United States Travel Association (USTA), in calendar year 2018, domestic and international visitors to the Greater Merrimack Valley spent over \$1.3 billion, resulting in \$73.9 million state taxes and \$35.5 million in local taxes. Of this total amount, visitors to Concord spent \$52.4 million, resulting in \$2.97

million in state taxes and \$1.4 million in local taxes. Of this \$1.4 million, in Fiscal Year 2016, Concord received \$334,372 in local hotel taxes. This number increased to \$865,598 in Fiscal Year 2019 and it is anticipated that it will continue to rise with increased focus on attracting visitors to Concord.

This tourism benchmark plan has been designed to produce maximum impact as there are many destinations that trying to attract the same visitor that Concord is pursuing. Given limited budgets, it is important that campaigns are integrated, not only internally, but also by working in concert with other partners. 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 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. These elements have been incorporated into this marketing strategy for Concord.

#### Goals:

This tourism benchmark plan is 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:

- Develop a website that focus' on the variety of things to see in do in Concord for the out of town visitor, as well as residents
- Implement a social media strategy that builds and engages followers
- Enhance communications with Concord residents about the tourism efforts of the town
- Increase visitors to the Visitor Center, currently at 12,000, by 10%
- Build collaborations with outside tourism organizations (i.e. Lexington, Salem, Plymouth)
- Work with the Concord business and visitor community to develop a pilot program to expand activities through shoulder seasons of late fall and early spring.
- Develop baseline numbers and tracking mechanisms to measure success of programs going forward.

These include:

- Implementing Google Analytics to be able to measure and analyze 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
- 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
- Work with Partners (hotels, attractions, etc.) to meet quarterly and develop cumulative baseline visitor numbers to be measured quarterly
- Tracking and analyzing social media analytics
- Implement Annual 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 has to send the survey to
  - Track the number of surveys that were sent out
  - Track the number of surveys that were completed

#### Strategic Priorities:

To accomplish the goals outlined in this plan, the following strategic priorities have been identified as areas of focus:

- Promote and market Concord's assets, programs and services
- Expand community engagement and partnerships
- Increase media relations opportunities
- Develop story ideas and suggested itineraries that will attract various audiences to Concord
- Create a 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

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.

## II. Research & Market Analysis

Primary research has been conducted through key stakeholder interviews, and additional primary and secondary research have been analyzed in order to better understand our visitor, to develop initiatives and programs to more effectively influence their travel decisions, evaluate competitive positioning and track results and performance.

An essential element in our approach will be 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 visitation. In addition, we will implement and analyze research and data in order to better understand our visitor, to develop initiatives and programs to more effectively influence their travel decisions, evaluate our competitive positioning and track our results & performance.

### *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 \$762 billion in 2018. The top leisure activities for travelers are:

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

Domestic travelers completed 1.8 billion person trips for leisure purposes in 2018, and the average American took about four leisure trips in the same calendar year. Four out of five domestic trips that Americans take are for leisure purposes and an Expedia survey found that the length of a long weekend is the ideal trip length for Americans.

Approximately 80 million international travelers visited the United States in 2018, with half of those visitors coming from overseas. Over half of the visitors came from Canada, Mexico, and the United Kingdom. According to the Department of Commerce, international visitor arrivals have increased 3.5% in comparison to last year, and spending by those same visitors has increased 1.7% over the same time period. On average, overseas travelers spend \$4,200 and stay for eighteen nights in the United States.

*b. Market Analysis: Regional Overview*

According to the Massachusetts Office of Tourism and Travel (MOTT), the state of Massachusetts saw nearly 27.6 million domestic visitors in 2018, up 2% over 2017; and 1.826 million international visitors, up 5.5% over 2017.

The majority of visitors to Massachusetts come from the New England region as well as the Mid-Atlantic states of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. These visitors account for 76.3% of all domestic travelers. The largest number of visitors to Massachusetts came from the Commonwealth, around thirty percent, followed by thirteen percent of visitors coming from New York.

The principal mode of domestic transportation to Massachusetts is automobile, with 73.8% accessing the Bay State in their vehicles. Just fewer than 14% of visitors accessed the state via plane, with the remainder of visitors traveling via bus, train, boat, etc. Nearly 80% of all person trips in FY2018 included an overnight stay, with the average overnight stay being 3.5 nights. Visiting friends and relatives is the dominant reason for domestic trips, accounting for 46.3% of the trips.

Domestic Visitor Origin: Top 10 States, FY 2018		
State	Person Trips to Massachusetts	Share of all Person Trips
Massachusetts	7,877,500	30.6%
New York	3,432,000	13.4%
Connecticut	2,358,500	9.2%
New Hampshire	1,505,000	5.9%
Rhode Island	1,095,500	4.3%
California	561,000	2.2%
Florida	678,000	2.6%
New Jersey	1,130,500	4.4%
Maine	855,000	3.3%
Vermont	634,000	2.5%
Pennsylvania	740,000	2.9%
All Other States	4,854,625	18.9%
All New England States	14,325,500	55.7%
All Mid Atlantic States	5,302,500	20.6%

Source: TNS, Travels America, FY2018

The majority of international travelers to Massachusetts come from Canada, the United Kingdom, and China. Visitors from these three countries make up 49% of all international visitors to Massachusetts. The international terminal at Logan International Airport (BOS) is also undergoing renovations to expand the terminal, which will allow for more arrivals and departures every day.

Direct expenditures from domestic and international visitors to the state totaled \$22.9 billion in calendar year 2017. This represents a nearly five percent increase from the year prior, and a 17.8% increase from 2013. Domestic visitors contributed \$18.7 billion of that spending, while international visitors made up the remaining \$4.1 billion. Domestic and international visitors tend to spend their money in different areas, with domestic visitors spending more on transportation and international visitors spending more on lodging and retail. Lodging represents a significant percentage of spending for both groups, but international visitors tend to stay for longer durations, which leads to higher spending in that industry.

It's important to remember that while direct expenditures are important, there is a multiplier effect through indirect (Massachusetts' travel related purchase goods and services in MA) and induced (employees of travel related businesses spend part of their income in Massachusetts) spending. In 2017, the total impact of all travel spending was \$35.9 billion (\$22,289.9 billion direct/\$12,996.3 billion indirect). This was a 4.2% change over 2016.

State hotel room occupancy tax collections totaled \$263.4 million and local option room occupancy tax collections totaled \$212.5 million in 2018. The \$10 million of the state money goes back into tourism - \$4 million to the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism and \$6 million divided by the 16 Regional Tourist Councils (RTCs). Our local RTC receives approximately \$300,000 from this tourism fund. The rest of the collections go into the general fund.

In calendar year 2018, domestic and international visitors to the Greater Merrimack Valley spent over \$1.3 billion. \$1.13 billion was spent by domestic visitors and \$182 million was spent by international visitors. This spending resulted in \$73.9 million state taxes and \$35.5 million in local taxes. Of this total amount, visitors to Concord spent \$52.4 million, resulting in \$2.97 million in state taxes and \$1.4 million in local taxes.

<b>Calendar Year 2018 Economic Impact Data (USTA)</b>						
		<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>Payroll</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>State Taxes</b>	<b>Local Taxes</b>
<b>Merrimack Valley</b>						
	Domestic	\$1,132,010,118	\$322,293,774	8,935	\$65,979,654	\$31,507,675
	International	\$182,007,375	\$40,518,470	1,185	\$7,899,110	\$3,996,156
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,314,017,493</b>	<b>\$362,812,244</b>	<b>10,120</b>	<b>\$73,878,764</b>	<b>\$35,503,831</b>
<b>Concord</b>						
	Domestic	\$47,143,434.80	\$13,422,172.91	372	\$2,747,773.59	\$1,312,161.44
	International	\$5,315,321.64	\$1,183,296.55	35	\$230,684.67	\$116,703.26
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$52,458,756.44</b>	<b>\$14,605,469.46</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>\$2,978,458.26</b>	<b>\$1,428,864.71</b>

Concord ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in the list of top ten cities and towns in Merrimack Valley in terms of visitor expenditures in 2018.

Top Ten Cities/Towns in Merrimack Valley - Economic Impact Data (USTA)					
	Expenditures	Payroll	Employment	State Taxes	Local Taxes
<b>Merrimack Valley</b>	<b>\$1,314,017,493</b>	<b>\$362,812,244</b>	<b>10,120</b>	<b>\$73,878,764</b>	<b>\$35,503,831</b>
Burlington	\$341,756,433.26	\$92,052,378.99	2,580	\$18,657,268.70	\$9,013,895.47
Woburn	\$290,962,869.35	\$80,979,728.02	2,255	\$16,512,940.57	\$7,922,405.49
Lexington	\$111,542,490.41	\$31,100,382.57	866	\$6,342,961.88	\$3,042,087.84
Billerica	\$100,653,707.43	\$28,059,861.38	781	\$5,723,470.52	\$2,745,004.44
Tewksbury	\$97,589,595.28	\$27,608,437.24	766	\$5,645,799.40	\$2,699,567.10
Bedford	\$83,106,613.91	\$22,907,066.04	639	\$4,663,098.10	\$2,241,749.99
Westford	\$77,829,851.19	\$21,767,600.50	606	\$4,442,537.08	\$2,129,229.81
Chelmsford	\$68,306,241.18	\$18,957,494.70	528	\$3,863,800.17	\$1,854,817.69
<b>Concord</b>	<b>\$52,458,756.44</b>	<b>\$14,605,469.46</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>\$2,978,458.26</b>	<b>\$1,428,864.71</b>
Lowell	\$40,855,865.61	\$11,174,166.85	312	\$2,267,815.12	\$1,092,349.35

A review of hotel occupancy, average rate and hotel RevPAR shows that in the first seven months of 2019, the Merrimack Valley region had an occupancy of 69.7%, average daily rate (ADR) of \$168.85 and revenue per available room (RevPAR) of \$117.66. The same time period in Lexington/Concord showed an occupancy of 65.3%, ADR of \$136.08 and RevPAR of \$88.92, all relatively flat over the previous year at the same time.

Hotel taxes collected by Concord have increased from \$334,372 in Fiscal Year 2016 to \$865,598 in Fiscal Year 2019. While the 2020 figure is budgeted to be \$800,000 it is anticipated that this number will continue to grow with the increased focus on attracting visitors to Concord.



c. Market Analysis: Concord Overview

Concord finds itself situated northwest of the city of Boston, 19 miles from Boston 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), the Minute Man statue, 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), which is 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.

As a result, Concord features a variety of offerings 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 or recreation. In addition, with activities such as Revolution 250 celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolutionary War in 2025 and Mass400, celebrating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a number of communities throughout Massachusetts between 2020 and 2030, there will be opportunities to elevate the story 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 2018, 9.6 million visitors spent an estimated \$832 million while visiting National Park Service lands in Massachusetts, with over one million of those park visitors spending an estimated \$59.9 million while visiting Minute Man National Historical Park. These expenditures supported a total of 790 jobs, \$33.2 million in labor income, \$54.5 million in value added, and \$85.8 million in economic output in local gateway economies surrounding Minute Man National Historical Park. The following chart shows the breakdown of visitation by month, the highest of those being April through October.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
<b>2018</b>	37,794	26,962	44,396	111,836	131,786	120,228	119,375	102,563	102,682	99,906	63,568	53,707
<b>2017</b>	38,154	27,798	55,602	115,676	115,750	105,565	115,421	109,433	110,322	111,346	64,126	54,728
<b>2016</b>	32,131	25,936	52,962	117,218	119,345	111,312	117,687	104,008	121,273	120,040	66,140	61,362
<b>2015</b>	26,071	12,826	35,230	119,078	99,873	103,075	117,712	119,052	94,710	112,950	63,310	60,443
<b>2014</b>	44,869	24,849	48,324	115,009	120,625	109,810	130,329	126,175	111,862	106,814	65,108	52,775
<b>2013</b>	44,871	22,123	43,760	112,456	116,922	121,330	104,270	110,331	90,244	62,653	65,674	53,260

### 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 35 people. In these confidential interviews, respondents were asked to discuss what is working, not working, what needs to be done to attract visitors to Concord and what obstacles are standing in the way.

In addition to Concord Town Staff, following agreed to provide input. Additional businesses were contacted without response.

- Concord Business Partnership: Kate Carr
- Concord Cheese Shop: Peter Lovis
- Concord Museum: Carol Thistle
- Concord Public Information Officer: Erin Stevens
- Concord Rotary Club: Sharon Spaulding
- Concord Select Board: Michael Lawson
- Concord Community Advocate: Helen Brady
- Concord's Colonial Inn: Lisa LaCoste
- Café Nero: Jay Gentile
- Discover Concord: Jennifer Schunemann
- Friend Block – Linear Retail: Greg Droc
- Hawthorne Inn: Toni Vicente
- Minute Man National Park: Phil Lupsiewicz
- Old Manse: Sara Zarelli
- Orchard House: Jan Turnquist
- Robbins House: Rob Munro
- Umbrella Arts Center – Jerry Wedge
- Walden Pond: Jennifer Ingram
- Walden Woods: Kathi Anderson

Throughout the interviews, many of the responses were consistent. In general, it was felt that Concord has excellent assets, they are just not being communicated and promoted. There was a general feeling that there are multiple people and businesses trying to fill a void - creating collateral, calendar listings, itineraries, etc. There was a general feeling of relief that the Town had hired a dedicated tourism position so that this person

could pull together all of the various entities and efforts and foster collaboration throughout the community, particularly between the businesses and the cultural community.

While everyone felt that there was a lot going on in town, they also felt that the communication of all of the activities was missing, and that the communication not only needed to be among Concord residents but sent to surrounding communities, nationally and internationally where appropriate. They felt that this position would be the disseminator of the information as it pertains to the promotion of tourism activities and driving visitors to Concord.

It was felt that the mix of shops and restaurants in town created a good visitor experience, however, they needed to be open later (particularly the shops) so that when visitors were through sightseeing they would still have an opportunity to spend their money before heading to dinner. Currently, most of the shops close at 5pm. As audience is built, it is recommended to have standard late night hours on Thursday and perhaps Friday so visitors and residents can visit the attractions then shop in the stores before enjoying an evening meal.

It was felt that the promotional focus has been primarily on Concord's role in the American Revolution, but that not enough promotion has been made about all of the other activities available in the town. Stakeholders would like a focus to be made on not only promoting Concord for its American History, but also for its literary history, recreation, arts & culture and other activities. The town needs to find unique ways to package and promote all that Concord has to offer.

Several stakeholders suggested a collaboration between Concord and places such as Lexington, Salem and Plymouth. They felt that these destinations are getting like-minded visitors and Concord should work with them to promote the region for a full visitor experience not only to consumers, but to tour operators and bus companies as well.

Another issue mentioned repeatedly was the lack of cell phone service in the downtown area. If visitors are expected to download an app to pay for parking meters, or want to access visitor information on their phone, they need internet access.

The biggest issue mentioned by almost all stakeholders was the lack of parking and traffic patterns downtown. There needs to be designated parking and good signage/wayfinding to enhance the visitor experience, with a request for there to be better walking access connecting the town since parking was such an issue.

d. *Market Analysis: Comparable Analysis*

There are a number of destinations that are similar to our key tourism locations within the region. Although we acknowledge that any region in the nation effectively acts as competition, we have limited our review to the destinations listed below that have been identified in our research as being comparable and having a similar visitor base.

In an effort to continue to grow our market share, we will continue to monitor these destinations and analyze their messaging targeting visitors. We understand that this is a constantly changing scene and that in order to remain competitive we must continue to seek out new ways to differentiate ourselves and showcase our positive attributes as well as our value. We will also work to collaborate with these destinations, when appropriate, to leverage resources, expand reach and provide the visitor with a full and vibrant experience.

- Sturbridge, Massachusetts: <https://www.sturbridge.gov/for-visitors>

The tourism website for Sturbridge, Massachusetts is part of the town website. It has distinct branding with the use of yellow and dark green for the main color scheme. The town seal is used as the logo and is placed on the upper left hand corner of the website. The town slogan is *New England's Crossroads*. The background image is of two horses pulling a carriage, but it is mostly blocked by the text boxes on each page.

The website is home to a significant amount of information, all of which is relatively easy to find with the tabs across the top of the page and the additional tabs on the left and right hand side of the home page. There are six tabs listed across the top of the page: Home, About, Government, For Business, For Visitors, and Town Meeting. Tabs along the right side of the homepage are: Administrator's Blog, Public Library, Sturbridge Schools, Directions, Subscribe to News, and Contact Us. Tabs along the left side of the homepage are; Board & Committee Vacancies, Charter & Bylaws, FAQs, Forms & Documents, GIS/Maps, Job Opportunities, Minutes & Agendas, Pag Bills, RFP's & RFQ's, and Town Meeting. In the center of the homepage, there are quick links to news, meeting, twitter, and public access.

There are two ways to access visitor information. One option is to go to the *About* tab on the top of the page, where there is a link to the *links for visitors* page. The other option is to click the *For Visitors* tab at the top of the page. Both options will take users to a page that gives visitors an overview of shopping, eating, staying and playing in Sturbridge. Tabs included on the page are: @VisitSturbridge (Twitter page), A list of hotels, restaurants shops and more!, Discover Central Massachusetts, Mass Office of Travel and Tourism, Monthly Event Newsletters, Sturbridge Farmers Market, Trail Guide, and Visitor Guide 2019. There are also links to Frequently Asked Questions, News & Announcements, Interactive Map of Local

Businesses, For Visitors Calendar, and a preview of the VisitSturbridge Twitter page. Also linked on the visitor page is the Old Sturbridge Village website, [www.osv.org](http://www.osv.org).

The monthly events newsletter is a simple list with links to upcoming events and recurring events. The webpage also includes a link to the Sturbridge Tourist Association page. The Sturbridge Tourist Association is a five member board appointed by the Town Administrator that acts as the fiduciary for a portion of the hotel/motel tax revenue collected in the Town of Sturbridge. They provide grants through an application process for events and oversee the implementation of their marketing programs which has been contracted to the Discover Central Massachusetts Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The STA produces a Sturbridge Visitor Guide that is 36 pages long and includes information on Good Eats, Shops & Services, Weddings & Events, Accommodations, Breweries & Wineries, Trails Map & Information, The Great Outdoors, 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 Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator.

Economic Development information can be found on the Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator page under the Government tab. Tabs listed on this page are Business Breakfasts, Business Classes, Business Directory, Business Newsletters, Event Newsletters, Guides and Resources, Permitting Guidebook – 2018, Reports, Site Finder, Sturbridge Business Programs, Sturbridge Tourist Association, Tax Incentives, and Why Sturbridge? Additional information includes staff contacts, address, phone, hours of operation, Sturbridge Business Listserve sign up, For Business Calendar, Business Newsletter links, and Agenda links.

Sturbridge is in the process of creating a new brand that will be used to promote tourism and will have a three year marketing plan completed for implementation by June 30, 2020.

- Lexington, MA: <https://www.tourlexington.us>

The tourism website for Lexington, Massachusetts is a stand-alone site that links from the Town of Lexington site. It has clear, basic branding and is easy to navigate. The color scheme is mainly blue and white and the logo features the town seal and is located in the upper left hand corner of the site. There are seven tabs across the top: Home, Attractions, Events, Eat, Stay, Shop and Directions. Links highlighted at the bottom of the home page include Liberty Ride Trolley Tour, Historic Sites & Maps, Free Battle Green Tours, and Lexington Visitors Center.

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. It features 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. The guide is difficult to read once downloaded as one page is upside down. Hard copies of the guide are available at the Lexington Visitors Center.

The events page on the site lists upcoming local events and a link to sign up for an emailed events calendar. The Eat, Stay and Shop pages all include 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 visitors center address and a link to information for tour buses.

Economic Development information can be found on the town website (<https://www.lexingtonma.gov/>) by clicking the Departments tab and then selecting Economic Development. The Economic Development page has a center section with information on the Hartwell Zoning Initiative, a sign up to the monthly newsletter, links for *Doing Business Here*, links to *Town Information*, contact information, and the Lexington Economic Development Twitter handle, @BusinessLex. There are 12 tabs on the left side of the page: A Resource Guide for Businesses, Business Directory, Business Districts, Comprehensive Plans, Directions and Getting Around Lexington, Economic Development Advisory Committee, Get to Know Lexington, Hartwell Zoning Initiative, Local Business Profiles, Minuteman Bike Share, Parking in Lexington Center, Subscribe to our Email List. On the right hand side of the page, there are quick links recent to News & Announcements.

Lexington is in the process of building a new Visitor Center which will be completed in 2020. They are in the process of developing a marketing plan in order to have tourism well positioned when the visitor center opens. They have a very strong volunteer Tourism Committee that recommends activities to the Economic Development Department of the Town, as they oversee tourism efforts with a staff person who spends 60% of her time on Tourism.

- Salem, Massachusetts: <https://www.salem.org>; <https://www.salem.com>  
Destination Salem, the official tourism organization of Salem, Massachusetts, 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 to

promote the city. 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 color mostly teal, blue and white color scheme. The website is easy to navigate and provides visitors with information on planning their trip to Salem. The homepage has four main sections; Make Your Own Magic, Find What Fits Your Stay, What's going on this month, and Find out what's happening.

Under Make Your Own Magic, visitors can select from a variety of icons that describe who they are to receive personalized recommendations. Icons to select from include, foodie, engaged, modern witch, literature nut, shopper, maritime fan, history buff, family, art appreciator, LGBTQ+, student/teacher, beer/wine lover, group leader, and Halloween enthusiast. Once a user selects their icons, they are linked to a page with ideas on what to do in Salem and the option to save them to an itinerary. The Find What Fits Your Stay section has links to history, shops, tours, dining, weddings, modern witch, art and outdoors. What's going on this month features calendar listings for local events and Find out what's happening has links to the Salem blog, Instagram, and 10 free things to do.

On the top of the webpage, there are six tabs: Free Guide, Do, Eat, Stay, Learn and Plan. Users can enter their name, email and post code to receive a free download of the Salem Visitor's Guide and the Downtown Salem Walking Map on the *Free Guide* page. The guide is sixty-three pages and includes information on Visitor & Travel Information, Calendar of Events, Accommodations, Activities, Shopping, Wedding & Special Events, and Directions and Parking. 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 Eat and Stay pages link to directories of local businesses. The Do tab includes the sub-tabs events calendar, museum and attractions, tours, psychics, entertainment, shop, outdoors, education and spiritual growth, festivals, 10 free things. The Learn tab has the sub-tabs Salem's History, Salem Witch Trials, Notable Locals, Tours, Blog, FAQs. Underneath Plan there are the sub-tabs Itinerary, Map of Salem, Free Guide, Parking Map and Directions, Public Transportation, Seasonal Hours, Group Tour, LGBTQ, Weddings and Special Events, and Marijuana Guidelines.

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 80 pages long. Information is provided on Welcome to Salem, Calendar, Do, Eat, Shop, Stay, Getting Here, Visitor Information, and Acknowledgements.

The Haunted Happenings Magazine website provides more information on Halloween activities around Salem. The homepage has quick links to Sites & Attractions, Walking Tours, Psychic Fairs, and Trolley & Boat Tours. There is also sections to join the mailing list, view the Instagram page, navigate to Salem, and plan your visit. Tabs at the top of the page are Home, What to do?, Directions, Advertise, Other, and Calendar.

- Plymouth, Massachusetts: <https://www.plymouth-ma/gov>; <https://www.seeplymouth.com>

The town of Plymouth, Massachusetts 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 website features three tabs on the top bar: Discover Plymouth, Departments, and Boards & Committees. There is a box with quick links on the left side of the page. These links include Beach Info, Employment Opportunities, FAQs, Online Payments, Property Value Search, Services A-Z, Contact Us, E-Subscribe, Forms & Documents, Open Checkbook, and Public Records Requests. In the middle of the homepage there is a box highlighting Town News, Meetings, Quick Links, and Social Media.

Visitor Information can be found on the Discover Plymouth Page. Here, there are links to the Chamber of Commerce, Destination Plymouth, E-Subscribe, Events Calendar, Live Government Access TV, Memorial Hall, PACTV, and The Plymouth Bay Cultural District.

The dedicated website for Destination Plymouth County, SeePlymouth.com, is home to tourist information on visiting Plymouth. The homepage has a picture slideshow at the top of the page. Below the slideshow there is information on: Where Will Your Visit Begin?, Upcoming Events, Plymouth 400,

A.D. Makepeace Company, Wareham, Fuller Craft Museum, Pilgrim Hall Museum, Business Services, Lodging Specials, and Plymouth County.

The tabs across the top of the website are: Visitor Info, Things to Do, Lodging, Dining, Shopping, Group Info, and Weddings. Under Visitor Info, user can request a Plymouth County Vacation Planner and additional information on attractions, hotels, bed and breakfasts, campgrounds/rentals, wine/beer tastings and tours, shopping, dining, outdoor/water activities, spas/beauty services, and arts and culture. 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.

Information pages under the Things to Do tab include: beer/wine/spirits, farms & farmers' markets, Plymouth bay cultural district, seasonal activities & events, history, museums & monuments, cranberry growing & harvesting, golf & sports, art, theatre & music, outdoor adventure, science & nature, wellness & spas, tours, beaches, parks, and gardens and special interests. The Lodging page has additional information on hotels and motels, bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, guest houses & rentals, marinas, and lodging specials. Tabs on the Dining page are bakeries & dessert, bars & pubs, beer, wine & spirits, casual dining, culinary tours & tastings, fine dining, markets, waterfront & water view dining, catering and lodging specials. The Shopping page has a directory of Plymouth businesses. Group Info has links to more information on new in 2019, group-friendly festivals and events, group-friendly lodging, sample itineraries & profile sheets, group-friendly dining, group-friendly attractions, performance venues, guided group tours & step-on guides, and transportation & receptive services.

The Economic Development information can be found on the Town of Plymouth website under Departments. In the center of the page there is contact information listed for the Economic Development Administrative Assistant. Tabs on the left hand side of the page are 2019 Special Events Calendar, Banner Policy, Specification & Permit, Destination Plymouth, Grant Application 2019, Guide to Local Business Permitting, Pilgrim Path a Walk Through History Map, Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce, Plymouth Film Location Request Form, Plymouth Regional Economic Development Foundation, Special Event Permit, Special Event Permit Timeline & Requirements, Town Hall Common Rules & Application, Town Square a Walk Through History Map, and Visitor Services Board. Below the

tabs is a link to Frequently Asked Questions. The right side of the page has a link to News and the Economic Development & Tourism Calendar.

- **Concord, Massachusetts:** <https://www.ConcordMA.gov> The Town of Concord, Massachusetts website provides users with a lot of information which is all organized into various sections. The main colors used are dark red, off white, and blue. The logo is located in the upper left hand corner of the site and features the town seal.

There are five tabs across the top of the page; Government, Services, Resident, Businesses, and How Do I... There are also quick links along the left hand side of the page which include Home, Contact Us, Notify Me, Minutes & Agendas, Report and Issue, and Bids & Proposals. In the center of the page there are icons with links to Online Payments, Job Opportunities, GIS & Maps, Volunteer, and Important Documents. Below the icons are three boxes, News Flash, Calendar and Twitter Feed. The bottom of the page has contact information, FAQs, and quick links to Schools in Concord, Elections and Voting, Social Services Resource Guide, Volunteer for a Board/Committee and Sign Up for Emergency Alerts – Code Red.

Information for visitors can be found by clicking the Visitor Center link under the services tab. The Visitor Center page has background information on Concord, scrolling photos, and a video of 2019 Patriots' Day highlights. There are five tabs on the left side of the page, Tours, Visitor Guides & Maps, 2019 Visitor Center Sponsors, Directions and Transportation, and House of Operation & Contact Information.

The Visitor Guides page has three sections, Free Visitor Guides and Documents, Free Trail Maps, and Visitor Guides and Documents for Sale. Under Free Visitor Guides and Documents there are links to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Map 2018, Concord Center Historic Sites Map, Sleepy Hollow Grave Map 2018, and Walden Pond State Reservation Trail Map. Under Free Trail Maps there is a link to “see all of our Town’s trail maps” but the link is broken. Under Visitor Guides and Documents for Sale there is a link to “Documents available with Town Clerk” but it is also broken.

There are two tabs on the on the page as well, Visitor center Town Map and Historical Points of Interest. The Visitor Center Town Map is two pages and includes locations in Concord Center, Downtown Concord Center, Thoreau Depot, Walden Pond, West Concord Center and Nine Acre Corner. Listed sections on the map are Concord Center – Food and Beverage, Concord Center – Retail, Concord Center – Entertainment, Concord Center – Lodging, Historical Points of Interest, Thoreau Depot – Retail,

Thoreau Depot – Food and Beverage, Walden Pond Area – Historic and Points of Interest, West Concord – Food and Beverage, West Concord – Retail, West Concord – Lodging, and West Concord – Schools.

*Recommendation:*

Given the fact that many of these comparable destinations have extensive websites that provide detailed information for visitors, it is important that Concord develop a website that is attractive to visitors and provides useful information in a way that they want to view it. The site should highlight staying, shopping, dining and various recreational, historic and cultural activities. It should provide suggested itineraries and recommendations for activities that would appeal to different audiences. It should also include an up-to-date calendar of events. Without a fully functional, user-friendly visitor website, the marketing and promotional will not be as effective as they could be. The Salem.org or SeePlymouth.com websites should be used as models as these are the most thorough tourism website in this list of comparable destinations.

In addition, the website should include an option for people to sign up for a monthly newsletters. The monthly newsletters should promote the variety of things to see and do in Concord, as well as upcoming events and activities. A collateral piece should be developed for distribution through website requests, as well as at the visitor center and at tradeshow and other outlets.

A comprehensive social media plan should also be integrated into the marketing activities. It should be engaging and drive viewers to seek more information on Concord. Of all of the comparable destinations, Salem has the best social media presence and should be used as a model.

*e. Travel Trends:*

Generational Habits: Travel and saving money for travelling is something that is important to all generations, but there are differences across these generations when it comes to their traveling tendencies. A recent Expedia study found that 57% of Americans are currently saving money for travel, and that this percentage is even higher among Millennials, coming in at 65%. Travelers determine the destinations for their travel in a variety of ways, largely depending on the age of the traveler. For example, individuals in *Generation Z* (age 24 and under) are over three times more likely to consider the opinions of their friends and relatives via social media than *Baby Boomers* (ages 55 – 75) when they are choosing their next destination. At the same time, Baby Boomers are much more likely to use offline media sources (such as TV or printed newspapers) than those in *Generation Z* to determine their next journey.

- Baby Boomer Generation: Ages 55 – 75, there are 76 million Baby Boomers in the United States. According to the AARP, Baby Boomers are likely to travel for weeklong periods or longer, and their top motive while traveling is to spend time with their friends and family. They tend to spend the most out of all age groups when they travel. Cost of travel and their individual health are reported as their biggest impediments to their travel. To the contrary of their younger counterparts, Boomers do not feel the need to be in touch with their work while they are traveling.
- Generation X: Ages 40 – 54, there are 82 million Gen Xers. Those who identify as a member of Generation X are the least likely to travel out of any age group. When they do travel, they like to find good deals on products, but are willing to spend money on their accommodations. Their travel itineraries largely follow school calendars. GenXers enjoy romantic getaways, but cite cost and work responsibilities as their largest barriers to travel.
- Millennials (or Generation Y): Ages 29 – 39, Millennials are broken down into two groups – Gen Y1 (ages 25 – 29) and Gen Y2 (ages 29 – 39). There are 31 million in Y1 and 42 million in Y2, but they've been broken into segments since they're at different points in their lives. The Gen Y1 group is just starting out where Y2 is more established, has been working for a few years, may own a house and have a family. But for both groups, convenience is an especially important aspect of travel for millennials. When booking their travel, which half of them prefer to do online, they are likely to book all of it in the same place. They are likely to select all-inclusive vacations where they do not have to plan anything for themselves, and they also try not to spend as much money on their travel. This generation is of specific target by companies and advertisements because they have self-reported that they are most influenced by these advertisements according to Expedia. It is also of specific target because it is the largest generation in history. Lastly, they list cost of travel and work responsibilities as their biggest restraint on travel.
- Generation Z: Ages 4 – 24, there are 74 million Gen Zs. The youngest generation of American travelers are the most adventurous age group while traveling. They are the most likely to select alternative accommodations for their trips, such as home shares or campsites. Similarly, to millennials, they rely heavily on the Internet for travel planning, and are likely to plan their trips on the internet soon before they travel, often under a month before. Convenience remains important, as 87% say that they prefer to book their entire vacation in one place on the Internet.

While there are differences in generational specific trends, there are some trends that are relatively consistent across generations. One is that all generations of Americans are placing more value on experiences as opposed to specific products or things, with 74% of Americans feeling this way.

Social Media & Technology: In our ever-expanding technological world, social media and technology continue to have their roles expand in the travel industry. Many travelers use the Internet to research destinations or learn more about places their friends and family have visited. The American magazine *Entrepreneur* found that a staggering 89% of millennials plan their own personal travel activities based on material they see posted online by their friends. This number becomes even more astounding because 97% of millennials document their travels online and on social media, with 40% of them saying that *Instagrammability* (how likely it is that they can post pictures of their trip on Instagram) is a determinant in choosing their next destination. Forbes called *Insta-holidays* one of the four biggest travel trends of 2019.

It is clear that technology provides individuals a gateway to the world in which they can explore possibilities and find their next destination. Both individual applications as well as products are incredibly important in this process.

Individual experiences are becoming increasingly important, with travelers document these experiences on social media, the five most popular of which in the United States are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and Snapchat according to Statista. Although they can document these experiences through traditional *posts*, one change across a few of these platforms has been the rise of stories.

The specific components of a *story* depend on the application, but generally speaking it is a collection of photos or videos (typically taken on a mobile device) that users can create which only lasts for 24 hours. Stories, which are posted by individuals, are viewed in sequential order, and provide users with a mechanism to detail events throughout their day for other social media users. It is a current and active way to share information with friends, and according to Sprout Social, total stories across WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, and Messenger number around one billion daily.

An emerging trend that is taking place on these social media platforms is the rise of influencers and influencer marketing. An influencer is someone who affects the purchasing decisions of others based on their status, and these influencers have built a reputation for expertise on a certain topic. This occurs across many social media platforms, but is most frequently seen on Instagram. According to the Digital Marketing Institute, 70% of teens trust influencers more than traditional celebrities. They also found that influencer marketing is the fastest growing online customer acquisition method. The number of users on Instagram is rapidly growing (and has been for several years), thus making the platform an important marketing tool.

Videos are also an important tool. According to Hyperfine, video in an email leads to a 200% increase in click through rates, and including a video on a landing page increases conversion by 80%. Invisia states that 90% of users say that watching a video is a helpful step in their decision process. These statistics refer to the more

traditional forms of video, but several social media sites now offer live streaming video features to reach viewers in the moment. These include Facebook Live, Periscope, YouTube Connect, and Instagram Live stories.

Another popular and growing tool is virtual and augmented reality. Virtual Reality (VR) works through the use of a headset, which places the user in a certain situation or location. It allows the user to *experience* this situation, and *test drive* their vacation. Augmented Reality (AR) goes hand in hand with virtual reality, but it includes the use of additional visual, auditory, etc. effects to enhance the viewer experience. In other words, it adds more to the experience than just the virtual reality.

Given that many travel decisions are made by recommendations and suggestions on social media platforms, it is imperative that Concord have Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts that are active, engaging and encourage people to visit Concord. Eventually Pinterest could be added to the marketing channels as this is a great place to post suggested itineraries, themed travel ideas and other content that appeals to different groups of travelers. Once a video library is created, YouTube can also be introduced into the mix, and events in Concord should have a SnapChat filter.

Online and mobile bookings are on the rise. When individuals decide on destinations, one of the ways that they go about scheduling their trips is through online booking. This can be done as easily as reaching into your pocket and booking a trip on your smartphone. According to Medium, 57% of all travel reservations, that be lodging, flights, or other activities, are booked online. Even higher percentages do the initial researching and planning for said reservations on their mobile devices. When planning these trips, almost half of all travelers are using search engines such as Google as their initial starting points according to Emarketer. The younger generations are the most likely to use these search engines, but their use spans across all generations.

This is a trend that has been rapidly growing over the past several years, as have many others that involve technology. This includes but is not limited to the Internet of Things (IoT). This term is used to refer to everyday objects that have been fitted with internet connection, which allows them to communicate and interact with each other. This has been used in the travel industry to enable more personalization within hotels, flights and other aspects of the travel experience. These can be as simple as changing the room temperature or turning on the TV, but they are aspects that simplify the experience for the average traveler.

Culinary Travel: Other than pictures of themselves or the scenery that they witness, food is a very popular subject of photography for travelers. Destination Analysts report that 50.7% of millennials won't visit a

destination that lacks good restaurants and 62% said that unique, special or interesting culinary travel experiences are very important. In addition, 95% of all travelers said that they engage in a unique and memorable food and beverage experience while traveling. Food continues to be an important part of the travel experience.

Environmental and Social Consciousness: According to *The State of the American Traveler*, 50% of American leisure travelers expect that climate change will impact their travels at some point in the next five years. This reflects a broader concern among travelers, who are becoming more environmentally conscious regarding both their travel and activities while traveling. 86% of global travelers recently told a Booking.com survey that they would be willing to spend time on activities that would offset the environmental impact of their stay. According to Edelman, the American public relations and consulting firm, travelers want their trips to have a purpose, and they want to make a difference in the locations that they are visiting. This idea can present itself in different forms, such as participating in a volunteer vacation or simply supporting a specific entity because the consumer knows that their money will support a specific cause. This reflects a greater trend in travel for many Americans, which is that they want their travel to have a purpose and that social issues are important in choosing a travel destination. For example, Elle found that nearly 20% of individuals will look to travel to a Pride celebration in 2019.

Women's Trips: As women's movements grow around the globe, so do several important travel trends involving women. Solo travel is an emerging trend for both men and women, but is more popular among women, with 73% of travel agents say that women are more likely to travel on their own than men according to the Gusty Traveler. Tour operators are starting to catch onto the trend, both taking away fees for solo travelers and creating tours specifically for them. *Girlfriend Getaways* are also a popular phenomenon, as 39% of women are looking to partake in a trip with their female friends in the next three years if not this year.

Women also play an important role in decision making. As has been the case for several years, research indicates that women plan the vast majority of vacations in the United States. In a recent survey conducted by Meredith Travel Marketing, 13,000 female travelers were surveyed and 96% said that they are final decision makers on location and 94% plan what to do and where to eat when they arrive.

Experiential Travel: An added emphasis on experiences over products is increasingly important to all generations of travelers, but is especially important to millennials and Generation Z. According to Medium, 67% of travelers would rather spend more money on activities or a unique travel experience than on nicer lodging accommodations. According to Smarter Travel, an additional 70% think that trips involving new experiences are more important than simply seeing all of the sights. For some this involves getting off the

beaten path and trying to connect with local populations, but for others it means taking part in more activities while at their destination.

Movie Tourism: Movie Tourism is a rapidly growing trend, in which the destination a visitor chooses is directly motivated and inspired by the movies. According to Champion Traveler, on average, a popular movie increases tourism to the featured location by 31% and this tourism spike can last between three and four years for popular films. According to a TripAdvisor study, one in five global travelers visited a destination because they saw it on a TV show or movie.

Recreational Travel: Although younger generations tend to mix work in on with their pleasure vacations, there are still many who have a fine boundary between the two. As mentioned, this tends to be the older generations, but these are the groups that have more time and often do more traveling. WEX found that almost one third of leisure travelers spent between five and ten thousand dollars on their leisure trips in 2018, and they expect this number to stay consistent based on the fact that the number of trips Americans take is expected to stay at a similar level.

Year Round Travel: Summer travel is often equated with long lines, large crowds, and crying children. Smarter Travel reports that 61% of people find these aspects of travel to be negative ones, and this leads tourists to look to different times of the year to travel. These times of the year (such as the fall and winter seasons) are increasingly popular times for travel among the older generations, who are not held down by jobs or children in school. Over tourism continues to plague many popular tourist destinations around the globe, and travelers looking to avoid this often consider traveling during the “offseason”. Offseason travel also opens up new travel experiences to visitors, such as touring European Christmas markets.

Cultural Travel: Similarly, to the millennial mentality of valuing experiences over products, visitors are looking to experience more cultural aspects of their destinations. According to the Huffington Post, 78% of millennials said that they wanted to learn something new while they are on the road, and just under half said that they would select a certain destination in order to experience cultural aspects. The same survey found that millennials are twice as likely to seek out an experience where they can explore a new culture to find an experience centered on partying or shopping.

Historical and Heritage Travel: Historical as well as heritage travel remain very popular among global travelers. According to Trip Advisor, historic and heritage experiences saw an increase of 125% in bookings in 2017. This was the fastest growing experience category in their survey. Historical landmarks remain the

most booked sites by travelers. Adventures Student Travel found that this type of travel is especially important to the student and group tour industry, who want to learn more about the roots of their nation.

Agritourism: In the United States, more than 23,000 small farms are making extra money from alternative attractions on their land. These attractions can include but are not limited to hosting entertainment/special events, accommodations, and educational activities. Business Wire predicts that the global agritourism market will grow at a compound annual growth rate of 18% during 2019-2023, which amounts to \$54 billion dollars.

Wellness Travel: Another growing trend in the travel industry is wellness travel. Wellness travel can consist of planning a vacation around fitness and exercise or specifically choosing a hotel with a holistic spa experience. Wellness tourism grew into a \$639 billion market in 2017, and is only growing larger. The Global Wellness Institute projects that wellness tourism will grow twice as fast as general tourism, and will grow almost 43% from 2017-2022. These types of travelers often lead active and healthy lifestyles at home, and look for ways to continue this while exploring the world.

Short-Term Rentals: The short-term rental market, consisting of companies such as Airbnb, VRBO, and Homeaway, continues to explode in growth. This comes as the youngest generation of travelers (Generation Z) look to alternative accommodations while on the road. These short-term rentals serve as an alternative to hotels, and Morgan Stanley found that 49% of Airbnb users used it as an alternative to a traditional hotel. The same study by Morgan Stanley found that 93% of users were satisfied with their service, and that 53% of users were using Airbnb because of the prices.

Group Tour Market: Group travel has been and continues to be an important part of the travel sector. Group tour coordinators have increased their catering towards individual travelers, creating groups specifically for solo travelers as well as getting rid of fees that had been applied to these travelers in the past. Experiential tours remain popular, as travelers, particularly millennials, look to engage more deeply with the cultures of the countries that they are visiting. The family traveler is a growing segment of the group tour sector. A recent AAA Travel survey found that nearly one third of all Americans are planning on taking a family vacation in 2019, a slightly higher number than last year. Two thirds of these travelers will take a vacation during the summer months, and just under half made plans to travel this past spring.

Business Leisure (Bleisure) Travel: Business leisure travel (or *Bleisure*), is a rising trend in the travel industry. According to Avis Car Rental, 87% of business travelers are likely to mix business and leisure on the same trip. This can consist of adding on a few days to a business trip or bringing the family along on a business trip and spending time with them in between meetings. The distinction between business and leisure is blurry, as

individuals continue to mix the two. This type of travel is not as popular among those in the older generations, who tend to disconnect from work while they are on vacation. This concept is more popular among Millennials, with 53% reporting that they have mixed business with pleasure in the past and that 46% plan to do it again in the future.

Meetings Market: The U.S. Travel Association reports that of the 463.6 million person trips that U.S. residents logged for business in 2018, 38% of those trips were for meetings and events. They also report that spending on meetings, events, and incentive programs accounted for \$135.9 billion in spending. Direct spending on business in 2018 totaled \$327.3 billion. Convene's 2018 Annual Meetings Market Survey, produced by Professional Convention Management Association, reports that 33% of meeting planners expect to plan more meetings in 2019, with only 4% expecting to plan fewer. The average booking window for large meetings is about 2.3 years, while it is about ten months for small meetings.

### III. Strategies & Tactics

In order to develop this tourism benchmark plan, 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 emphasize the town's history, literary, culture, attractions, dining and shopping opportunities, as well as its proximity to Boston and other comparable destinations. Consumers continue to seek local experiences and unique opportunities. As a result, strategies will seek 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 change.

#### Goals:

In order to increase local, regional, national and international awareness of Concord as a visitor destination, ultimately leading to increased visitation from domestic and international markets, the following goals have been identified:

- Develop a website that focus' on the variety of things to see in do in Concord for the out of town visitor, as well as residents
- Implement a social media strategy that builds and engages followers
- Enhance communications with Concord residents about the tourism efforts of the town
- Increase visitors to the Visitor Center, currently at 12,000, by 10%
- Build collaborations with outside tourism organizations (i.e. Lexington, Salem, Plymouth)
- Work with the Concord business and visitor community to develop a pilot program to expand activities through shoulder seasons of late fall and early spring.
- Develop baseline numbers and tracking mechanisms to measure success of programs going forward.

These include:

- Implementing Google Analytics to be able to measure and analyze 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
- 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
- Work 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
- Implement Annual 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 has to send the survey to
  - Track the number of surveys that were sent out
  - Track the number of surveys that were completed

#### Strategies:

In order to achieve the goals outlined above, the following strategies and tactics should be implemented, 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, American history, literary history, recreation, culture and entertainment, fine dining, unique shopping and more.

While there are many strategies to be implemented, in the first year, efforts should include a focus on:

- Developing a user-friendly visitor website
- Creating an integrated and engaging social media presence
- Establishing a digital footprint on travel sites
- Participating in advertising opportunities where appropriate
- Establishing a communications plan to gather and distribute information among:
  - Stakeholders, fostering more collaboration

- Residents, educating them on the value of the tourism efforts and encouraging them to become ambassadors
  - The media, tour operators, and other buyers of information to ensure that they are informed of all that is happening in Concord
- Producing a collateral piece that can be used for distribution at the visitor center, for phone/email/web fulfillment, at tradeshow and through distribution with CTM and at visitor centers on Route 128 and elsewhere
- Integrate tourism, retail, historic and cultural businesses and activities, whenever possible

*a. Leisure Visitor Market*

The main market segment to be targeted for the Concord tourism efforts will initially 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 when appropriate.

There are a number of strategies and tactics that can be used to target the leisure visitors 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 implemented.

There are a number of communications tools that can 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 aggressively 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, Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism, Discover New England and the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau 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 preferred media outlets will be created. This list will be segmented based upon topics within the media relations plan and should be updated on a regular basis. 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.

- Educational Trips:

Qualified media will 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 (MOTT), Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau (GBCVB), 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 out quarterly to start, increasing to monthly once there is enough content to support them. The newsletter should be sent to the 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.

*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 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:

- Buy local
- Recreation & soft adventure (bike trails, hiking)
- Arts & Culture
- American History
- Revolutionary History – East to West and West to East
- Literary History
- Agritourism/Conservation/Farming
- 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.

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
- Women’s History Month – March – particularly with the 2020 anniversary for the suffrage movement
- Black History Month – February – incorporating the Robbins House
- Locally made and produced items – art and/or food

*Website:*

It is important to have a dedicated website for visitors that is also mobile friendly. The flexibility of a website makes it an ideal outlet for communicating messaging. All promotions will drive people to the site for more information. In this way, we will be able to measure the success of programs through analytics.

The website needs to be appealing to visitors and provide useful information in a way that they want to view it. It should be clean and easy to navigate. A dedicated site allows for communicating the messaging of Concord as a visitor destination. It should be updated to reflect seasonal promotions and special events. Sites such as Salem.org should be used as a model – it is easy to navigate, outlines all of the offerings available to a visitor and allows for trip planning. The site should highlight staying, shopping, dining and various recreational, historic and cultural activities. It should provide suggested itineraries and recommendations for activities that would appeal to different audiences. It should be updated regularly to reflect seasonal promotions and special events.

The objective should be 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. Without a fully functional, user-friendly visitor website, the marketing and promotional will not be as effective as they could be. The development of this website should be a priority in the first year. Google Analytics should be incorporated into the website in order to benchmark advances and success of marketing and communications programs going forward.

The new website can also provide a revenue generating opportunity for the town. Event and partner information will be provided on the site in an effort to increase the number of unique visitors to the site and increase the number of total visitors, page views and length of session per visit. Partner business who participate in co-operative advertising programs or advertise in the visitors guide or map could have an enhanced listing with a photo on the website.

*Social Media:*

Social media continues to be an important way for people to receive news and information. A recent survey by Manifest showed that nearly one-third of Americans interact with social media content over 10 times a day via liking, posting or sharing content. There are more than 2.7 billion social media users worldwide, representing around 35% of the worldwide population.

The Town needs to engage in social media to increase awareness for Concord among visitors and residents. The social media pages for 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. All of the Concord social media pages should be linked to the website for easy visitor access. In addition, the messaging and branding across all platforms should remain consistent, i.e. the tone on each platform should match, the information should be the same, etc. That is not to say that the posts should be the same – the audiences on each platform consume information differently so while an event or activity may be promoted across all platforms, the photography and copy writing should be tailored to the appropriate outlet.

In addition, a three monthly rolling content calendar should be created. This calendar will be updated on a regular basis and will outline what the posts will focus on. For example, Concord may consider talking about a cultural attraction on Monday's, a historical fact on Tuesday, an upcoming event on Wednesday, a restaurant on Thursday and a shop on Friday. There will be times where there will be “breaking news” or something that needs to be swapped out for something already in the calendar, but by having a rolling calendar of posts the messaging will remain consistent and timely. The goal should be to generate engaging content that users will want to “like”, comment on, share, retweet and/or favorite to more widely disseminate information about Concord. Analytics should be studied on a regular basis to see what the audience is responding to and posts should be modified to grow engagement.

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.

- Facebook:

Facebook is a good platform to share posts, images and events. Posting should be frequent, with at least 3 posts a week. Topics can include: updates, events, new businesses, community photos, advisories, holidays, local business specials, fun facts and town anniversaries, among others. The goal is to use the page as a resource for visitors and residents alike. Although there is no character limit for Facebook posts, they should be kept short in order to hold people's attention.

- Twitter:

Twitter is a good platform for short updates, advisories, events and community photos. There is a character limit of 280 characters per post, meaning the messaging has to be short and impactful. Twitter messaging moves much faster than Facebook so it is beneficial to share more often on Twitter. Posting can be as frequent as necessary. The goal of Twitter is for it to be a quick and easy resource for residents to know what is happening in Concord in a timely manner.

- Instagram:

Instagram is an image-sharing platform that can be used as a marketing platform and a source for community engagement. This is where the best images that portray Concord as an ideal place to visit should be shared. Shared photos can include the Concord community, event photos, photos of residents, local businesses, and scenic shots from around town. Instagram can also be used to follow and engage with the profiles of local businesses and community organizations. Photos should be posted at least 2 – 3 times per week.

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.

- Pinterest:

Pinterest pages can be set up by theme to give potential visitors an idea of things to see and do while they're in Concord – pages would include American History, Literary, Recreation, Arts & Culture, Shopping & Dining. Once established, they can be expanded to include niche themes such as: Solo Travel, Agritourism, Girls Getaways, and more.

#### *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. A pilot program to run extended hours through weekends in November and December, on Veterans Day and on the day after Thanksgiving has 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.

#### *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
- Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau

### *Tradeshows:*

Partnering the Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau and surrounding communities such as Salem, Plymouth, Lexington and others, will allow for increased participation in tradeshows. At a minimum, Concord should participate in the Discover New England Summit which brings in domestic and international receptive operators, tour operators and media.

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.

Advertising will focus on promoting Concord as a destination of unique and unexpected experiences, a perfect blend of the historic and modern, underscored with value added offers. Concord will target affluent consumers in Massachusetts and New England households with a household income of more than \$75,000, as well as visitors from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Advertising will target both the local and overnight visitor and focus on the woman decision maker as research shows that they often make the final decision.

Media that will be considered for advertising include:

- Yankee Magazine
- Boston Magazine
- Facebook & Instagram paid media
- WBZ Traffic
- Greater Merrimack Valley CVB publications and co-ops

We will also work to make sure that sites such as TripAdvisor, Google Travel and others have current information and are promoting the messaging that we want them to.

We will look to cross market with Lexington, Plymouth and Salem and offer them complimentary advertising in our visitor collateral piece in return for an ad in theirs.

A 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:*

New collateral is needed to help promote Concord to target audiences. The collateral piece produced by the Town that currently exists is a map. However, there is also a magazine that is being produced by the private sector that promotes Concord's offerings to residents and visitors.

A collateral piece needs to be developed for distribution at the Visitor Center, as well as through fulfillment requests, CTM, and also to be used at tradeshow. It could be a map and brochure as one piece or two separate pieces, but producing these pieces develops a revenue stream for the tourism programs and also gives the visitor information that they are seeking.

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:

- College Student Project:

With all of the colleges and universities so close to Concord, it is possible that the Town could work with a student or students to create Concord brand photographs. Community models, locations, permissions and someone to produce and art direct the photography would be needed.

- Open Call for Submissions to "Capture Concord":

Another 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 – such as something to celebrate the anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment in 2020 - or take advantage of other events taking place (such as National Synchronized Skating, the Martinez Classic, etc.).

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 potential Film Festival in the Downtown Cultural District 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.

#### *Partnerships:*

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

- Comparable Destinations:

Concord will look 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 work with Lexington to collaborate on programming activities such as 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 250<sup>th</sup> 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. Concord has requested designation from Rev250 to be included in their efforts and this partnership should be maximized leading up to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026.

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

Collaboration is important among the tourism, cultural, historic, dining and shopping community in Concord. We will convene a meeting among partners quarterly – October, January, March and June – in order to foster collaboration on programs and communication about activities taking place.

- Other Tourism Organizations:

Concord will continue to partner with the Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism, the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau 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 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 programs.

The measurement tools outlined below are designed to be 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 will have an ongoing understanding of our successes and will be able to identify where programs need to be modified in order to become more effective. These analytics will allow us to be nimble and change direction when needed.

The success of the initiatives will be measured by:

- Tracking industry trends
- Implementing 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
- Work 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

- 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 Tour Market:*

The Group Tour Market is an important market for Concord, however, currently there are three daily bus tours that stop in Concord (Grayline Tours, Brush Hill Tours and Lamoille Valley Tours). They are stopping at the North Bridge, may stay for lunch at the Colonial Inn but then leave town. 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 them to maximize their experience while they're in Concord so they stay longer and spend more. The Town will work on getting a second parking spot for buses as currently there is only one.

In order to maximize this lucrative market, Concord will implement a number of strategies and tactics to increase the length of stay of current tours and attract new tours that will spend more money and stay longer in Concord.

Working closely with the Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau, Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism, Discover New England and the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau, Concord will aggressively pursue group tour operators.

Additional tactics include:

*Communications:*

- Create Targeted Media & Tour Operator list:  
A list of preferred group tour media outlets, as well as group tour operators, will be created.
- Media Releases:  
Group tour trade media should be targeted with media releases. 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 tour media contacts, as well as group tour operators. All releases should also be uploaded to the Concord website and made accessible for all to read.
- Group Tour E-Newsletters:  
Newsletters serve the purpose of informing media and tour operators all that is happening in Concord. A group tour 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 tour market, a series of 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.

Topics for itineraries could include:

- Recreation & soft adventure (bike trails, hiking)
- Arts & Culture
- American History
- Revolutionary History – East to West and West to East
- Literary History
- Agritourism/Conservation/Farming
- Events (seasonally and/or by theme)
- Themed months and programming– i.e. Women’s History Month (March); Black History Month (February)

*Website:*

It is important to have a dedicated website that is also mobile friendly. The flexibility of a website makes it an ideal outlet for communicating messaging to all audiences. All promotions will drive people to the site for more information. In this way, we will be able to measure the success of programs through analytics.

The website needs to be appealing and provide useful information in a way that customers want to view it. It should be clean and easy to navigate. A dedicated site allows for communicating the messaging of Concord as a visitor destination. It should be updated to reflect seasonal promotions and special events. In addition to highlighting staying, shopping, dining and various recreational, historic and cultural activities, it should provide suggested itineraries and recommendations for activities for the group tour market. It should be updated regularly to reflect seasonal promotions and special events.

The new website can also provide a revenue generating opportunity for the town. Event and partner information will be provided on the site in an effort to increase the number of unique visitors to the site and increase the number of total visitors, page views and length of session per visit. Partner business who participate in co-operative advertising programs or advertise in the visitors guide or map could have an enhanced listing with a photo on the website.

*Social Media:*

Social media continues to be an important way for people to receive news and information on what's happening in Concord. The Town needs to engage in social media to increase awareness for Concord among visitors. While there isn't a direct group tour component to social media, all of the outlets provide an opportunity for potential visitors (whether they are individual travelers or part of a group tour) to learn more about what Concord has to offer.

*Collateral:*

A profile sheet will be developed that outlines opportunities and suggested itineraries (such as Revolutionary Concord, the Authors of Concord, etc.) and will be distributed via email, sales calls and at trade shows.

*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.

Educational (fam) trips will be implemented, targeting group tour operators.

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.

Eventually, a customer advisory group will be created to solicit input from the various tour companies to help make the experience in Concord better for the visitor.

*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:

- American Bus Association
- Student Youth Travel Association

#### *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.

Concord should look to participate in American Bus Association and Student Youth Travel Association in the first year. If budget is an issue, switching off every other year would be an option. In addition, there are some group tour operators who participate in the Discover New England Summit so that show should be attended as it hits the domestic and international leisure markets, as well as the group tour market.

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 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 group tour operator survey will allow Concord to:

- Understand how Concord appears to the group tour market
- Gauge what is most/least appealing about the Town to the group tour 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 tour 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 tour initiatives will be measured by:

- Tracking industry trends
- Implementing 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 tour inquiries received through phone, mail and email
- Tracking the number of partners participating in group tour programs
- Tracking the number of group tour 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 things happening in the community but not everyone was aware of everything going on.

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

It's important to let the business community, residents and legislative leaders know that 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 and networking events. We will work to establish key partnerships within Concord that will aid in leveraging marketing dollars and growing visitation. Our approach will be to maximize and leverage resources by working with as many diverse partners as possible. We will ensure that wherever possible, we will integrate Concord tourism programs with other key stakeholder programs.

In addition, a new economic vitality committee is being formed by the Town and the Tourism Manager will serve as the staff liaison.