

Report and Recommendations Related to the Creation of a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Lee's Summit, MO

August 2022

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Executive Summary of Report and Recommendations

- Lee's Summit currently has a strong tourism product and has exceptional potential for growth.
- Tourism is an important economic development activity for Lee's Summit.
- The vision of the community, tourism stakeholders, and government officials is that tourism in Lee's Summit grows in a way that is steady and managed, but that also takes advantage of unique windows of opportunity that may occur. As tourism grows, care should be taken to protect the City's natural, historic, and cultural resources and the quality of life enjoyed by Lee's Summit's residents.
- There is strong support for the creation of an agency/organization/group to specifically carry out the program of work of tourism promotion for Lee's Summit.
- It is recommended that an independent 501(C)(6) Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) be established for Lee's Summit.
- It is recommended that the DMO be governed by a board made up of representatives from city government, lodging, Downtown Lee's Summit, arts/culture, history, sports/recreation, chamber of commerce, economic development office, and transportation.
- Funding for the organization should come primarily as a dedicated portion of lodging tax collections and supplemented with other sources like budget allocation from the City and fundraising such as grants, special event production, advertising sales, etc.
- It is specifically recommended that a Lee's Summit DMO not be a paid membership organization.
- Given that this will be a start-up venture, strong consideration should be given to finding and hiring an executive director that has experience in DMO management and destination marketing.
- Once the agency is established, a top priority should be the development and adoption of both a destination and an agency strategic plan.
- The DMO program of work, in order of their priority should be:
 1. **Tourism Research**
(Collecting, analyzing, and distributing statistical information on tourism/hospitality in Lee's Summit from local, state, regional and national sources)
 2. **Tourism Marketing and Advertising**
(Website, print ads, broadcast ads, Internet and social media promotion)

3. Public Relations

(Creating and distributing media releases, working with local/area media outlets to create interest in/information on Lee's Summit tourism, working with travel writers on the creation and publication of travel articles, creation and development of a media library, creation and distribution of a communications platform for local community and stakeholders)

4. Visitor Services

(Visitor/Information Center, trip/travel planning in person, phone, and/or internet)

5. Sales

(Programs & activities designed to book tourism businesses such as group travel, meetings/conferences, consumer travel, sports events, etc. through sales calls/sales missions, marketplace attendance, travel shows, etc.)

6. Stakeholder Services

(Providing assistance to and meeting specific requests for assistance from local hospitality/tourism-related businesses/organizations)

7. Product Development

(Attracting and/or assisting in the recruitment/development of new tourism-related businesses, attractions, lodging, dining facilities, etc.)

8. Local Tourism Grants

(Providing financial assistance to qualified local tourism-related events and businesses through an organized grant request/approval system)

9. Festival/Special Event Assistance

(Providing assistance to local festival/event planners in the planning and promotion of their events)

10. Hospitality Training for Tourism-Related Businesses

(Development of training programs to acquaint front line personnel in tourism-related businesses, lodging, restaurants, and other visitor-contact businesses with the Lee's Summit tourism product and to equip them to provide quality assistance to visitors)

Situation Analysis

Lee's Summit, Missouri, is a city located within Jackson County (primarily) and Cass County. As of the 2020 census, its population was 101,108, making it the sixth-largest city in both the state and in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area. It is a part of the greater Kansas City metroplex.

The City is easily accessible by a number of major highways, including I-470 (an Interstate 70 spur), US-40, US-50, MO-150, MO-291, and MO-350. In addition, the City is serviced by Amtrak and by the Lee's Summit Municipal Airport.

The City has a number of tourism attractors, including Downtown Lee's Summit, city parks, excellent outdoor recreation opportunities, a thriving and growing arts and culture community, and several historic points of interest. In addition, the City has a good mix of dining and retail establishments, including both specialty and branded chain businesses. Because of its location in the metroplex, it stands to benefit from the approximately 25 million visitors¹ to Kansas City annually.

Lee's Summit has eight hotels and two bed & breakfast establishments in the City², as well as a hotel and conference center located in Unity Village. All of the hotels with the exception of the Unity Village property are considered "limited service" in that they do not feature on-site restaurants.

The City levies a tax on certain gross receipts of hotel, motel, and similar places of business equal to 5% of gross daily rental receipts derived from transient guests for sleeping accommodations.

Between the years of 2015 and 2021, the lodging tax generated the following income for the City³:

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
\$401,459	\$440,886	\$443,399	\$533,038	\$570,499	\$440,201 ⁴	\$428,047 ⁴

The proceeds of the lodging tax are used to promote the general economic welfare of the City including attraction and retention of business and industry to the community and the promotion and provision of facilities for tourism, conventions, and visitors.

¹ Source: Kansas City CVB

² For the convenience of visitors planning their travel to the area, the *Lee's Summit Visitors Guide* lists two other nearby hotels that are not located in Lee's Summit.

³ City of Lee's Summit Business and Industry Fund Disbursement Project City Council Presentation – Final Report, May 4, 2022

⁴ Reductions in lodging tax collections due to stay-at-home orders and substantial reduction in US travel due to COVID-19.

Current Tourism Promotion Activities for Lee’s Summit

There is no official agency tasked with promoting and developing tourism for Lee’s Summit. Special tourism and community marketing projects have been undertaken by the Lee’s Summit Chamber of Commerce and funded by the City as follows³:

	FY20	FY21
Chamber – Community Marketing	\$157,500	\$117,255
Chamber – Tourism	\$51,000	\$38,000

In 2022, City Council appropriated \$70,000 as an interim marketing fund to promote tourism activities.

The City has a good visitor website (lstourism.com) and maintains a current social media presence through Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. The City also has good collateral material such as an online Visitors Guide and other tourism-related digital and print publications.

³ City of Lee’s Summit Business and Industry Fund Disbursement Project City Council Presentation – Final Report, May 4, 2022

Tourism-Related Data/Visitor Profile

State-wide and Kansas City tourism-related and Visitor Profile data are included as an appendix to this report.

SWOT Analysis

As part of this project and through stakeholder surveys and meetings, a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) Analysis was developed of tourism assets in Lee's Summit and the possible future work of a DMO. While there was some variation based on the individual participants in the study, the general consensus revealed the following in terms of tourism and tourism promotion for the City.

Strengths

- Historic downtown
- The City's parks and recreational opportunities
- Proximity to Kansas City
- Arts and cultural offerings and activities
- Special events/festivals
- Historical points of interest
- Excellent sports facilities
- Good transportation infrastructure including roads, Amtrak, and the Lee's Summit Municipal Airport
- Strong commitment to and support of increasing tourism
- The friendliness of the people within the community

Weaknesses

- Lack of knowledge about Lee's Summit on the part of potential visitors
- No group/agency specifically charged with tourism development/marketing
- Limited hotel capacity
- Limited meeting/conference spaces
- No visitor center for assisting visitors and distributing information to tourists
- Lack of knowledge about Lee's Summit's tourism assets on the part of residents

Opportunities

- Establish Lee's Summit as a desirable destination through marketing, PR, and sales programs
- Increase visitation from residents of the greater Metro Kansas City market
- Capture/coordinate visitation from major events and meetings held in Kansas City, such as the 2023 NFL Draft and the 2024 World Cup
- Establish a partnership with VisitKC
- Attract and service more amateur sports events
- Attract and retain more business travel
- Attract a greater variety of higher-end dining
- Growth as a retirement and/or relocation destination

Threats

- Competition from other destinations (including Kansas City) with established DMOs and strong marketing budgets promoting themselves to potential visitors
- Not having a dedicated agency for tourism promotion and development
- Losing business/professional travelers to higher-end lodging in nearby communities

Project Background

The City of Lee's Summit leadership felt it important to undertake a study regarding the establishment/creation of a destination marketing organization for Lee's Summit. To that end, Lee's Summit contracted North Star Place Branding + Marketing and their Tourism Strategic Planning Director/Project Manager, John Whisenant, CDME, (the Consultant) to lead the planning process and to produce a report with recommendations.

Methodology

Ms. Cheryl Nash, the City of Lee's Summit's primary project contact, provided the Consultant with relevant information and data which the Consultant used to become familiar with the destination, its demographics, and its travel and tourism assets. The Consultant also availed himself of accessible information on the area via the Internet, the Lee's Summit visitor website, printed materials, and other resources.

Telephone conversations were conducted between the Consultant and Ms. Nash for the purpose of providing the Consultant with further background information on the destination as well as to make use of Ms. Nash's knowledge, experience, and personal insights.

An analysis was completed by the Consultant of existing Lee's Summit marketing materials, branding, logos, and messaging as well as a review of the online Lee's Summit Visitor Guide, maps, shopping and dining guides, and other collateral. An analysis of the visitor website and social networking platforms was conducted.

From this background research, the Consultant developed a Lee's Summit Pre-Stakeholder Meeting Questionnaire, which was sent to individuals in Lee's Summit who would be participating in the planning/discussion meetings.

The Consultant traveled to Lee's Summit March 14-16, 2022. Their activities while in Lee's Summit included:

- Conducting a "secret shopper" tour of Lee's Summit and the surrounding area to evaluate tourism assets, wayfinding, visitor services, and other tourism-related entities and activities
- Meeting individually with several key tourism stakeholders, government leaders, and others
- Facilitating three stakeholder/community meetings (70 stakeholders invited, 38 stakeholders in attendance)
- Facilitating one project team evaluation meeting

The Consultant utilized all relevant background information and research, the results of the stakeholder/community and leadership meetings, and their own experience and knowledge of best practices in the areas of destination marketing and management, organizational structure, and programming in the development of these recommendations.

Stakeholder Surveys and Meetings

Three stakeholder meetings were conducted as part of the project. These meetings (which typically lasted two hours each) included individuals from both the public and private sector with an interest in the development of tourism in Lee's Summit.

Stakeholder surveys were developed and distributed prior to the meetings. These surveys were used as a general outline of discussion for the stakeholder meetings and, along with the discussions held in the stakeholder meetings, served as the Tourism Vision Survey. These surveys were collected following each meeting for later study by the Consultant in preparing this report.

The surveys and stakeholder meetings reflected a variety of different opinions and responses, often based on the participants' specific areas of interest or responsibility. A consensus was drawn from a study of the surveys and of the notes taken at the stakeholder meetings.

Both the written surveys and the narrative of the stakeholder meetings demonstrated a genuine passion for tourism and desire to provide quality visitor services and to develop and execute effective marketing and sales programs to grow the economic impact of tourism in the community. Participants in all stakeholder meetings were enthusiastic about and supportive of tourism in Lee's Summit and want to see tourism grow in the community.

Of particular note in the stakeholder surveys was the unanimous support expressed in Question #4: "Do you feel there is a need for an agency/organization/group (either currently existing or created) to specifically carry out the program of work of tourism promotion for Lee's Summit?"

The variance in number of responses to survey questions is due to the fact that not all participants answered all of the questions.

Lee's Summit Stakeholder Survey Results

1. What stakeholder group do you most closely identify with?

General Public	1	
Hospitality/Tourism Related Business	6	
Other Business and/or Industry	1	
Government	5	
Non-Profit Organization	9	
Education	1	
Other	4	Economic Development Council (2) Board of Aeronautical Commissioners (1) Salon & Day Spa (1)

2. If you are directly involved in the hospitality/tourism industry in Lee's Summit, what is/are your area(s) of focus?

Lodging	3	
Attraction	4	
Historic Site	3	
Dining	5	
Shopping/Retail	6	
Outdoor Rec./Adventure Tourism	2	
Arts/Culture	9	
Festivals/Special Events	5	
Other		Economic Development Lee's Summit Municipal Airport Conferences Help promote all of these industries as this is the Chamber

3. How important do you think tourism is to the overall economy of Lee's Summit?

None at all	0
Somewhat Important	1
Important	11
Very Important	12

4. Do you feel there is a need for an agency/organization/group (either currently existing or created) to specifically carry out the program of work of tourism promotion for Lee's Summit?

Yes	24
No	0

5. If your answer to Question #4 was "NO," why do you NOT feel there needs to be an agency/organization/group to carry out the program of work of tourism promotion for Lee's Summit?

Responses	0
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6. If your answer to Question #4 was "YES," what type of organizational structure do you feel would be best suited for Lee's Summit and why?

A newly created DMO	22
Chamber of Commerce	2
Economic Development Agency	0
City Government Department	8
Other	3
	Outside marketing group (1)
	Joint Chamber/Economic Development (1)
	Combine newly created DMO & Chamber of Commerce (1)

Comments to Question #6

"It should be a single purpose & focus agency: focused on the task at hand—other organizations have different focus."

[As City Dept] "Currently because of staffing issues and start-up."

"Bandwidth and resources are already maxed out for the LSEDC and the Chamber of Commerce. The DMO would need to create its own bandwidth capacity and resources."

"While the Chamber and EDC are strong supporters of business, tourism is a more broad topic — including lakes & parks, historic attractions, etc. They should be part of a visitors bureau."

"An independent organization but one that works in close concert with existing organizations."

"Chamber and EDC are member organizations and work for the members. A DMO needs to work for the community."

"Need a separate and purpose-driven organization."

"Fresh look at tourism, skills and knowledge to market tourism, can set benchmarks & goals."

"I think it [a newly created DMO] best fits our current set up of our downtown area. I find our consumers are more willing to walk and explore. They would most definitely seek this out."

"Marketing and this type of development takes dedicated time. It shouldn't be someone's side hobby."

"Each PSA has a specific mission; tourism should not be a secondary directive."

"The City needs a strong communication of what's happening in LS events, attractions, etc. They would need to be creating events for people to want to come & make this a destination (daily email - app)."

"Downtown Mainstreet"

"People [would be] invested in making this work."

"I'm 50/50 on having a separate organization. I think it could be helpful but I also think we have a lot of foundational work to do to get ready."

"It can be completely autonomous and make the best decisions based on its mission and goals."

[Joint Chamber/Economic Development] "Already exists. Familiar with City & development. Not reinventing—a lot of foundational work to do to get ready."

"It [a DMO] would allow for revenue to remain in the City and bring outside money to the City."

[As part of Chamber] "All resources and needs for tourism the Chamber can cover and support."

"This [newly created DMO] would place the promotion of tourism in the hands of an independent group not tied to business or government."

"A DMO would have the sole purpose of promoting Lee's Summit tourism rather than being a division of another department."

7. What do you think would be the best source of funding for this agency/organization/group?

Dedicated portion of Lodging Tax Collections	21
Allocation from City Government Budget	20
Paid Membership	6
Fundraising (grants, special events, advertising sales, etc.)	19
All of the above	5

Comments to Question 7:

"More bed tax % should go to DMO as opposed to other organizations."

"Funding structure should be well rounded and come from several sources."

8. Please rank in order of importance the following possible deliverables for an agency charged with promoting tourism to Lee's Summit (#1 being most important):

In Order of Priority	Cumulative Ranking Total
1. Tourism Marketing & Advertising	49
2. Public Relations	76
3. Visitor Services	96
4. Tourism Research	99
5. Sales	102
6. Stakeholder Services	111
7. Product Development	115
8. Local Tourism Grants	117
9. Festival/Special Event Assistance	127
10. Hospitality Training for Tourism-Related Businesses	165

Comments to Question 8:

"We have a large park — we need to have large festivals. We should have national festivals. Need to get beyond downtown days & Oktoberfest."

"This [Festival/Special Event Assistance] is an easy way."

9. What measurable performance outcomes/results would define success for an agency charged with promoting tourism for Lee's Summit?

Short/Mid Term

Specific and Measurable Statistics

Identifiable Branding

Website and Marketing Materials

Ad spend \$50K year

Increase in # of visitors

Increase attendance at local arts events, festivals, and other tourism related activities by 20%

Long Term

Development of Attractions

Ad spend \$100k year

Increase attendance at local arts events, festivals, and other tourism related activities by 50%

10. Other general comments/suggestions/thoughts:

"We need to determine as a city what our product is that we have to offer."

"Lee's Summit Municipal Airport has realized an amazing expansion, planned 20 years ago! Extended runways and services resulted in greater regional airport activity."

"I think there are two hotels in L.S. I would stay in. They all need to be remodeled and cleaned."

"We have 5 high schools. On any given weekend we have thousands of high school kids here from all over for sports and other events. We need to get them to get to L.S. businesses. Also high school reunions. There's no one putting info together for class reunions."

"Here are my top attractions to promote/what makes a valuable visit: (1) Downtown L.S. — historic shopping, walkable, vibrant, small town, best in metro and beyond; (2) Outdoor activities — hiking, parks, boating, scenery, nature, variety, birdwatching; (3) Sports—soccer, softball, cycling, running, high schools; (4) Dining — wide variety of eating, from diners to date night; (5) History — pioneers, civil war, railroads, architecture, transportation, US 50, music."

"Know what the objective is, set the goal, and work backward to today."

"We have a strong collective foundation. We are just people or an entity that can help move many of our stakeholders and assets into action."

"I also think that some of our stakeholders [need] to think differently and out of the box." [Listed as needs] "(1) Amphitheater—need concerts (2) High-end restaurants (3) Family entertainment (4) Youth Sports Tournaments—baseball, college sports, basketball."

"There's a need for understanding where visitors are coming from. Who is staying in our hotels and why? Is there value in promoting day trippers in Metro? Need a greater understanding of how to reach youth sports leagues."

Overview of Creation of a DMO for Lee’s Summit

Destination Marketing/Management Organizations (DMOs) have many names – convention and visitor bureaus, travel bureaus, visitors' bureaus, welcome centers, tourism bureaus, travel and tourism bureaus, information centers and more. Regardless of the name, these institutions offer services to the traveling public, local stakeholders and governments, professional travel planners, travel journalists, and others. DMOs are increasingly acknowledged as significant drivers of economic development for a destination.

Tourism generally has a “ripple effect” in that each tourism dollar in the community turns over several times through both direct and indirect revenues. Direct revenue is simply the total of all the money spent in a destination by tourists. Indirect (or “multiplier”) revenues refers to the chain of expenditure–income–expenditure reactions throughout the local economy.

Of particular interest to local government is that both direct and indirect tourism-related expenditures provide opportunities for additional sales tax revenue.

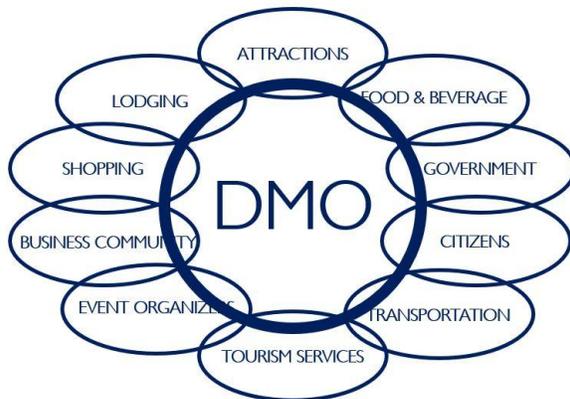
Direct Expenditures Example with Sales Tax Collection Touchpoints



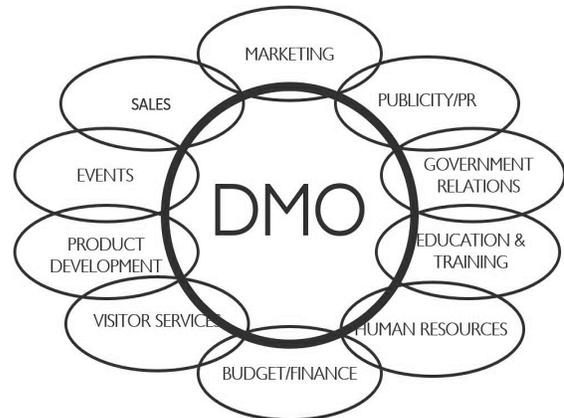
Indirect Expenditures Example with Sales Tax Collection Touchpoints



PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER



THE PROGRAM OF WORK



Primary DMO Organizational Models

The DMO as a Government Agency

In this model, the DMO is a department within local (city or county) government. The agency reports directly to the political leadership (mayor, legislative body) or to a local government manager/administrator. They often work with an appointed oversight or advisory committee made up of government representatives and tourism stakeholders.

Generally speaking, the top administrative position(s) serve(s) in an appointed capacity and other staff members fall under whatever level of civil service protection the local government entity may practice.

Advantages:

- Direct accountability to the funding source
- Direct line of administrative supervision (agency head reports to one person)
- Utilizes administrative, personnel, and accounting systems already in place in local government
- Interaction and coordination with other departments; tourism development is perceived as an "equal interest" among the local government programs of work
- Some cost savings (office space rental, administrative costs, etc.)
- Agency is perceived as "neutral"—not favoring any one stakeholder interest
- Overall long-term organizational stability
- Personnel benefits (insurance, retirement, vacation/PTO, etc.) on a par with local government employees

Disadvantages:

- Possibility of political influence on program of work and/or staffing decisions
- Possible lack of flexibility in purchasing, contracting, travel, sponsorships/client entertainment, etc. as well as in negotiation/acceptance of in-kind/comp goods and services between DMO and potential partners
- If not involved in an advisory/oversight capacity, stakeholders may feel excluded from decision-making process
- Possible conflicts in creative/messaging and advertising agency selection/services
- DMO and local government have different constituent groups: citizens (City) vs. visitors/tourism industry/stakeholders (DMO)
- Possibility of difficulty/restrictions with/on regional tourism promotion partnerships

The DMO as a Chamber of Commerce or Other Economic Development Agency Function

The program of work of tourist development for a community often has its foundation as a function, division, or department of a chamber of commerce or other economic development agency (EDA). In the past, this was particularly true for start-up and/or small destinations, where the community had neither the resources nor staff to operate a separate tourism program.

In some cases, larger and more well-established destinations continue to successfully operate their tourism programming through a chamber or EDA. In these cases, the chamber/EDA usually acts on a contractual basis to perform the program of work of tourism development for the community, with funding for the program coming from local government lodging tax collections. In some cases, the chamber makes a financial commitment to the program, most often through personnel and/or physical office costs. Some chambers charge and receive a management fee for performing this function for a community.

Advantages:

- If the chamber/EDA has good standing/reputation in the community, that good standing lends credibility to the DMO and the program of work of tourism development.
- Chambers of commerce/EDAs generally represent a very broad cross-section of a community's business, government, and civic leadership, and those resources, skills, and influence in the community can be made available to assist and enhance the work of the DMO.
- There is often a cost savings for both the chamber/EDA and the DMO through the sharing of administrative, personnel, and operating expenses.

Disadvantages:

- Chambers of commerce/EDAs and DMO have somewhat different missions and objectives
- Chamber/EDA boards of directors are not always experienced in tourism development or tourism marketing
- If the chamber/EDA does not have a good standing/reputation in a community, that lack of good standing can be detrimental to the program of work of tourism development
- The placement of the DMO within a chamber can lead to feelings of favoritism, exclusion, or preferential treatment towards chamber/EDA members over non-members

The DMO as an Independent Agency

In this model, DMOs are free-standing, independent agencies, most often not-for-profit 501(C)(6) organizations, with their own governing board of directors who hire the executive director, establish and govern the policies and procedures of the organization, and who give overall direction to the DMO's program of work. Over the last several years, the paradigm in the destination management/marketing industry has strongly shifted to this type of organization.

There are two primary types of these agencies: non-membership and membership based. Non-membership independent DMOs provide full tourism development programs and activities to all tourism stakeholders in the community. Membership-based independent DMOs (often referred to as "pay-to-play" agencies) provide limited programs and activities to all stakeholders in the community while providing a much higher level of service and benefit to members. The paradigm in the DMO industry over the past 10–20 years has been steadily shifting away from membership-based agencies, although there are several examples of this type of organizational structure in larger cities and destinations.

Advantages:

- Independent DMOs tend to be less bureaucratic in structure and are free to operate more on a business model
- Independent DMO board of directors tend to be individuals who have experience in the tourism industry and who have a vested interest in seeing the work of the agency being successful
- DMO administrative staff have direct accountability to a board of directors and to the agenda and program of work established by the board
- Salary and benefit programs in independent DMOs tend to be closer to market equivalency, making it easier to attract and retain experienced and qualified professionals
- Since they are not government agencies, independent DMOs have the freedom to develop non-lodging tax generated revenue streams

Disadvantages:

- Local government may feel a sense of diminished control of a program of work they are largely responsible for funding (this can be effectively dealt with by ensuring that local government has representation on the DMO's board of directors)
- If non-tax revenues become an overly important source of DMO funding, a larger portion of management and time resources may have to be directed to that function rather than to the primary function of marketing the destination

- If a membership based DMO model is used, there is an inherent structural bias towards marketing and promoting members over non-members, often leading to dissatisfaction among non-members
- Membership-based DMOs often have to allocate personnel resources to a Membership Director/Manager, whose responsibility is to recruit and retain members and to provide member services rather than marketing the destination
- If a Destination Management Company (DMC) model is used, some financial resources that would have been spent marketing the destination have to be reallocated to management fees
- In some cases, DMCs appear to be less responsive to the needs of smaller, less influential stakeholders in the community

DMO Organizational Structures and Brand Messaging in Lee's Summit's Competitive Set

As part of the research process for this report/recommendations, a review was made of organizational structures for DMOs in destinations in Lee's Summit's competitive set.

It should be noted that in some instances, cities fund not only the DMO but also other tourism-related programs, facilities, events, and/or attractions.



Independence, MO | VisitIndependence.com

- CVB is a City Department, falling under Parks, Recreation, and Tourism
- Number of Staff: 4
- Governed by seven-person Tourism Commission
- Funded by lodging tax
- Annual budget: \$786,000

Brand Tagline: "A Great American Story"

Brand Key Message: "Find Your Independence",
"Your next adventure awaits in Independence, MO"

Competitive Marketing Strategy Analysis:

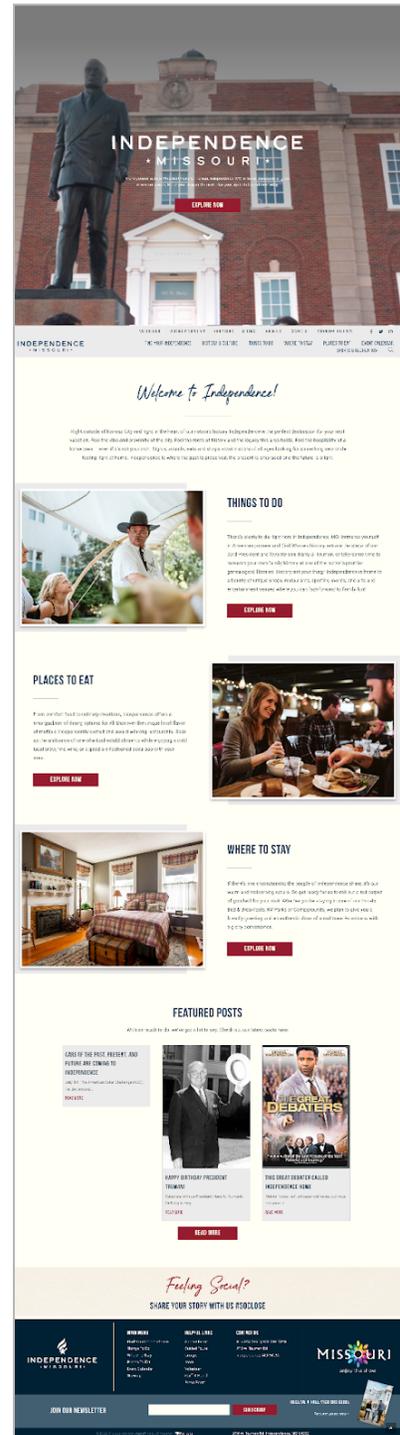
Like Lee's Summit, Independence positions itself as a part of Greater Kansas City and promotes the KC "big city" activities and offerings (including KC Chiefs and Royals professional teams/stadiums) alongside its easily recognized point of differentiation of history, President Truman, and a genuine "Americana" experience.

Obviously has a much greater name recognition than Lee's Summit.

Destination has more lodging options than Lee's Summit in terms of both number of properties and levels of service. Has a competitive advantage over Lee's Summit in its meeting facilities and promotes itself to meeting/conference planners.

Destination has an active and aggressive group tour marketing and sales program.

A primary competitive destination for Lee's Summit.





Kansas City
THE NEW MIDWEST

Kansas City, MO | www.VisitKC.com

- 501(C)(6) organization
- Number of Staff: 45+
- Governed by board of 30 civic and business leaders
- Funded by lodging tax and private funding from more than 800 member businesses in the region
- Annual budget: \$11 million

Brand Tagline: "The New Midwest"

Brand Key Message: "City of Fountains", "The adventure never ends. Start exploring and make the most of your time in one of America's most surprising destinations.", #HowWeDoKC

Competitive Marketing Strategy Analysis:

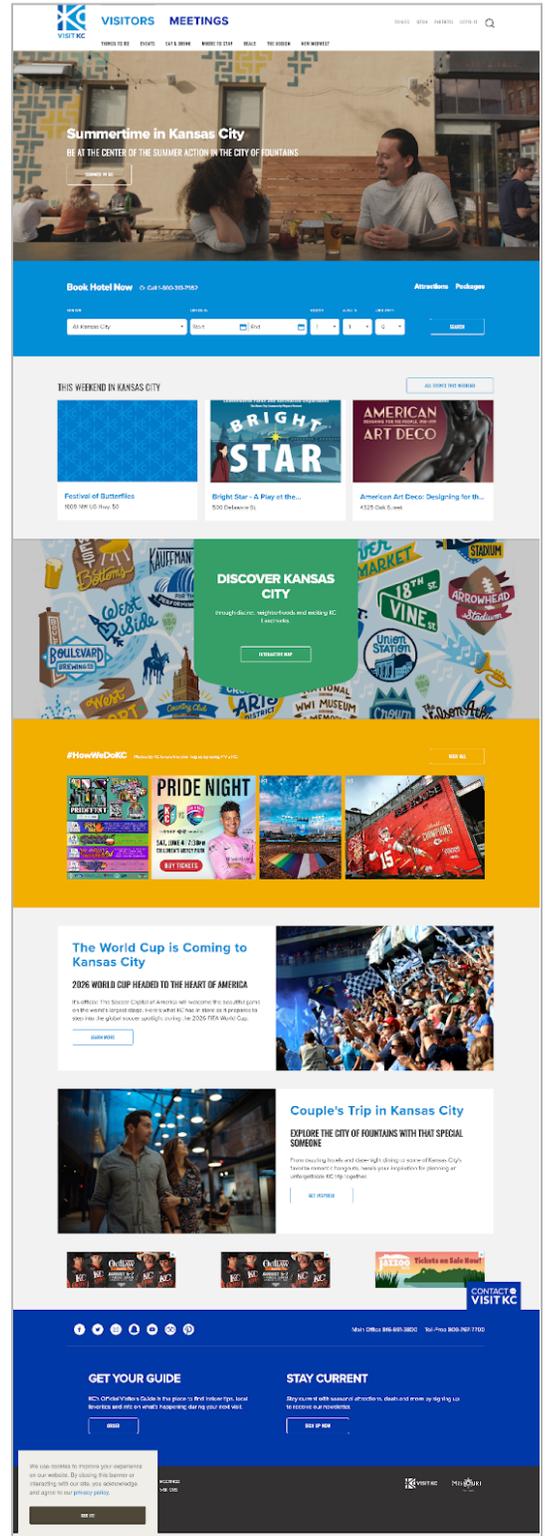
Third most visited destination in MO (25.2 million visitors annually.)

Substantial number of attractions, major league sports, very wide variety and level of dining and shopping opportunities, substantial cultural offerings, and is an attractor for major events with national and international standing.

Has approximately 17,000 hotel rooms from 4/5-Star to budget/limited service.

Major meetings/conventions/conferences destination, including the 800,000 square feet Convention Center. Well-established group tour destination.

Given Kansas City, MO's substantial travel-related assets, established name recognition, and VisitKC's budget, staff, and sales programs, Lee's Summit should not consider Kansas City, MO so much as "competition" but rather as "co-opetition" – that is to say that Lee's Summit can feed off both Kansas City's draw and marketing to attract tourists to Lee's Summit as well as attract Kansas City's residents to the destination.





Kansas City, KS | www.VisitKansasCityKS.com

- 501(C)(6) organization
- Number of Staff: 7
- Governed by a board of 12 business, civic, and community leaders
- Funded by lodging tax
- Annual budget: approx. \$1 million

Brand Tagline: NA

Brand Key Message: “Located in the heart of America”, “astounding ethnic and culturally diverse city infused with flavors, traditions and languages that make KCK a true melting pot.”

Competitive Marketing Strategy Analysis:

Smaller tourism competitor for its sister city in MO. Destination does specifically and intentionally promote itself, but also feeds off the visitation coming into Kansas City, MO.

Promotes its nightlife, eclectic cultural, dining, and shopping opportunities, as well as both its ethnic diversity and midwestern, more rural roots. Has a slots-based casino which is a regional draw.

In terms of both the types of visitors marketed to, the DMO's smaller budget and staff, and its location on the western side of the Greater Kansas City metropolitan area, Kansas City KS should be considered a secondary competitor for Lee's Summit in terms of tourists, while at the same time a possible source market for day visitation from Kansas City, KS residents.

A secondary competitive destination for Lee's Summit.



UNMISTAKABLY LAWRENCE

Lawrence, KS | www.ExploreLawrence.com

- 501(C)(6) organization
- Number of Staff: 3
- Governed by seven-person board comprised of representatives from lodging, City Commission, cultural industry, local university/educational institutions, sports/recreation industry, and service/event management industry
- Funded by lodging tax
- Annual budget: \$815,000

Brand Tagline: "Unmistakably Lawrence"

Brand Key Message: "Quirky? Different? Unexpected? Yes! But more importantly, we invite you to define your own version of a city that offers an escape from the ordinary."

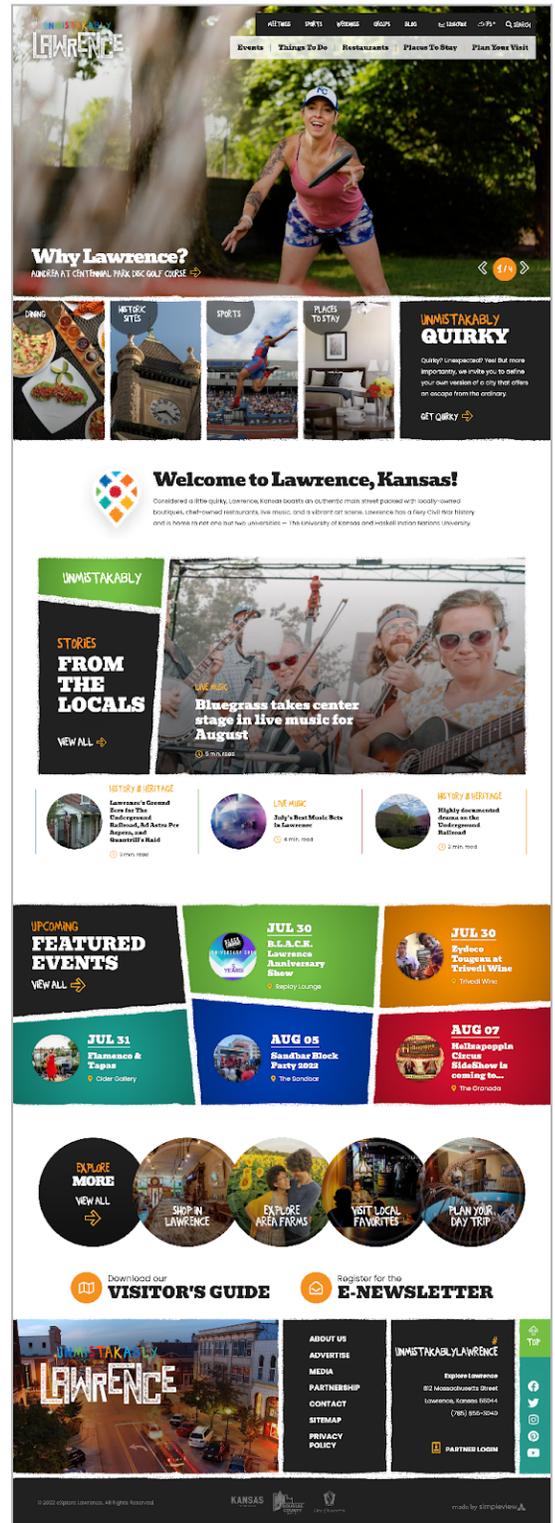
Competitive Marketing Strategy Analysis:

Due to its location west of Greater Kansas City Metro (and Lee's Summit), Lawrence is more applicable to this study as a destination with somewhat similar assets (historic downtown, historical points of interest, shopping and dining opportunities, lodging, etc.) rather than a direct competitor for travelers. One notable exception is that Lawrence aggressively markets itself to the amateur sports market which could be in direct competition with Lee's Summit.

Lawrence has 23 hotels, primarily business/leisure limited service properties.

Major benefit to the destination is that it is the home of the University of Kansas, which is a driver for visitation for students/student families, meetings/conferences, and collegiate/amateur sports events.

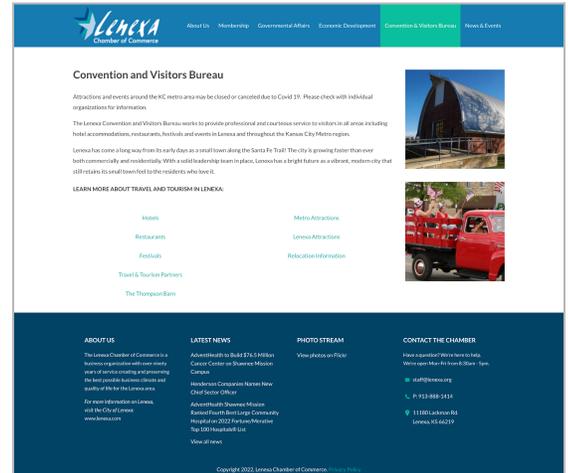
A secondary competitive destination for Lee's Summit





Lenexa, KS | Lenexa.org/Convention-And-Visitors-Bureau

- Function of the Lenexa, KS Chamber of Commerce
 - Has one person on Chamber staff that serves as Director of CVB
 - Chamber staff of 7 provide support services to tourism
 - Reports to Chamber Board of Directors
 - Funded by lodging tax
 - Annual budget: \$2 million+ [increased from \$931,144 (2021)]
- NOTE:** This total amount also funds a number of activities outside of tourism.



Brand Tagline: Known as “City of Festivals”
Brand Key Message: “The Lenexa Chamber of Commerce is a business organization with over ninety years of service creating and preserving the best possible business climate and quality of life for the Lenexa area.”

Competitive Marketing Strategy Analysis:
 Lenexa very much markets itself as a subset of the the Greater Kansas City Metro. The destination has limited local attractors and (correctly) incorporates the tourism assets of the region. A primary marketing message is the number and type of festivals held in the destination.

The city has 13 hotels, primarily business and limited-service properties.

While well-funded, the tourism-related program does not seem overly aggressive. There is no market-focused travel website; limited tourism-related information is offered as a subset of the chamber's website.

A secondary (or perhaps even third-level) competitor for Lee's Summit.



Leavenworth, KS | www.VisitLeavenworthKS.com/Visitors

- Department of the City of Leavenworth (Prior to 2015 was independent agency, was then brought into city government)
- Number of Staff: 2
- Governed by City Commission
- Funded by lodging tax
- Annual budget: \$381,000

Brand Tagline: "First City of Kansas"

Brand Key Message: Messaging focuses on the history of the city

Competitive Marketing Strategy Analysis:

Leavenworth is also a part of the Greater Kansas City Metro, located just NW of the city.

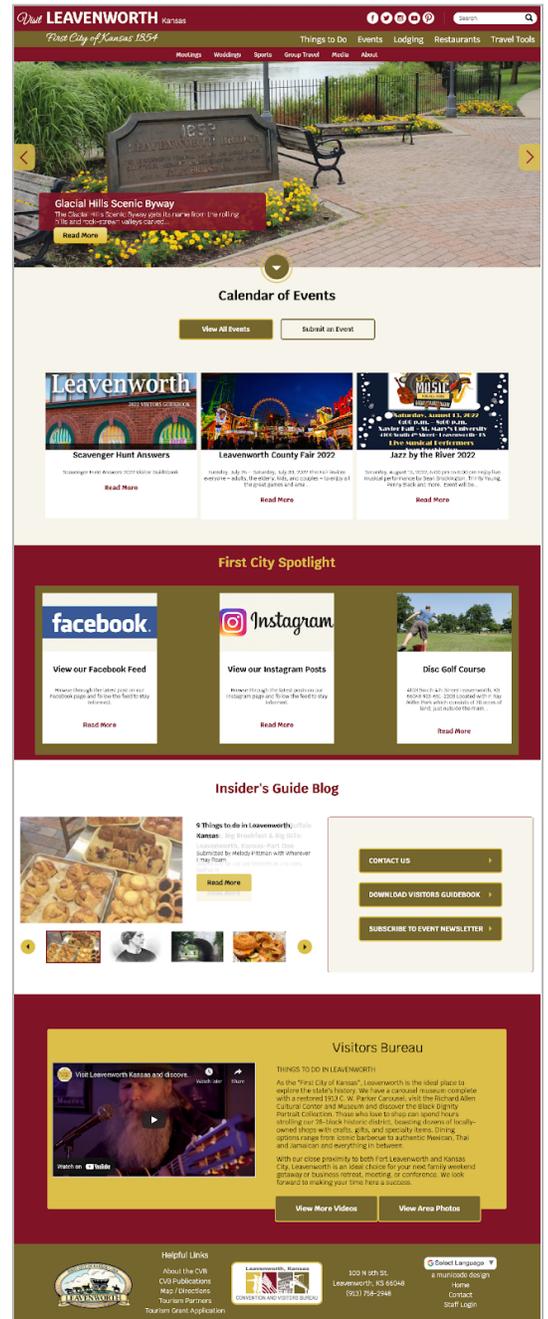
The destination enjoys a good level of name recognition, primarily due to Fort Leavenworth. The destination's attractors are primarily historic innature, including its historic downtown area. Its marketing position does not necessarily emphasize the attractors of nearby Kansas City Metro.

In addition to leisure travelers, the DMO markets to small meetings/conferences (although the amount of meeting space is somewhat limited), group tours, weddings and family reunions.

Leavenworth does not have a large lodging inventory, with a total of eight limited service properties and motels. It has similar dining and shopping opportunities to Lee's Summit.

Of note is the DMO's very good social marketing program.

A secondary competitor for Lee's Summit.





Olathe, KS | Olathe.org/Convention-Visitors-Bureau/

- Function of Olathe Chamber of Commerce
- Number of Staff: 3
- Total chamber staff of 18 that provides services to tourism
- Governed by Chamber Board of Directors
- Funded by lodging tax
- Annual budget: \$950,000 (funds both economic development and tourism)

Brand Tagline: "One Vision. One Voice."

Brand Key Message: "There's a little something for everyone", "Endless fun"

Competitive Marketing Strategy Analysis:

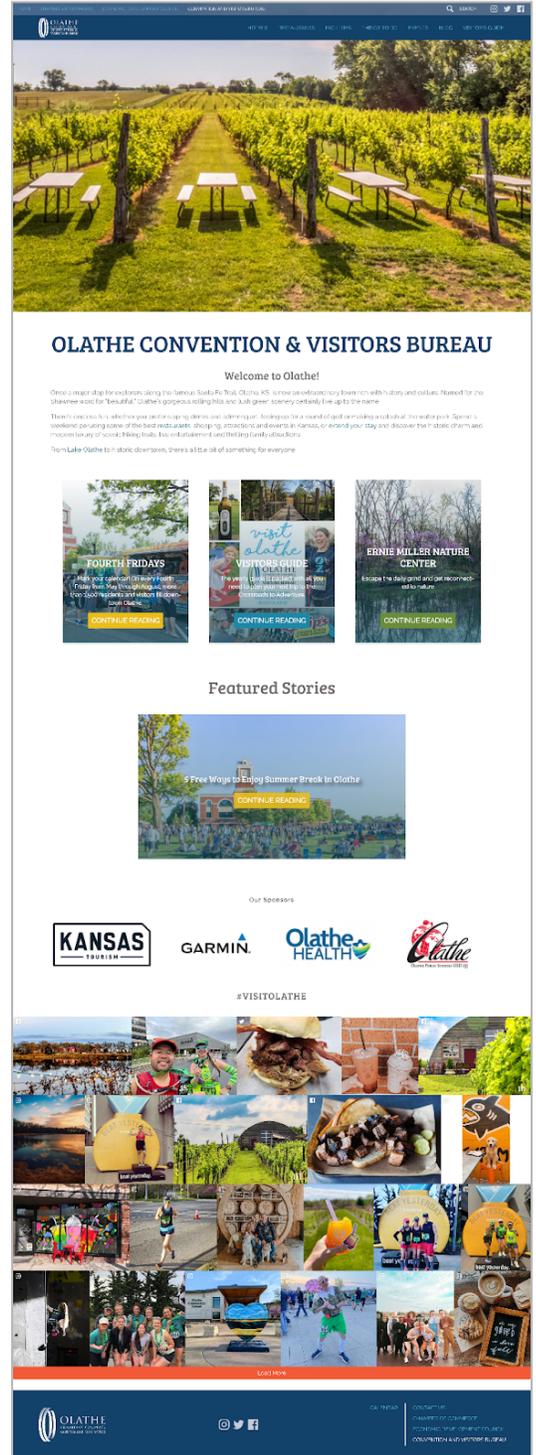
Olathe, located southwest of Overland Park, positions itself as part of the Greater Kansas City, and promotes the Kansas City travel product in its marketing programs.

In terms of local attractors, Olathe highlights its historic assets, shopping, dining, some arts and its outdoor recreation/parks.

The destination has ample hotel inventory with 17 properties, most of which are business-class, limited service. Of note is that the community also has several higher-end, fuller service properties.

The destination has entered the mid-size meeting/conference market with the addition of the relatively new and well-done Olathe Conference Center with 24,000 square feet of meeting space which can accommodate groups up to 1,000.

Especially when aligned with nearby Overland Park, its proximity to Lee's Summit, and in consideration of its meeting facilities and its overall marketing budget, Olathe is a primary competitor for Lee's Summit.





Overland Park, KS | www.VisitOverlandPark.com

- 501(C)(6) agency
- Could not find staffing or governance information
- Funded by lodging tax
- Annual budget: \$2.2 million

Brand Tagline: NA

Brand Key Message: "America's largest inhabited park"
"We are your gateway to the ultimate Kansas City experience."

Competitive Marketing Strategy Analysis:

Also a part of the Greater Kansas City Metro, Overland Park is a strong destination in and of itself.

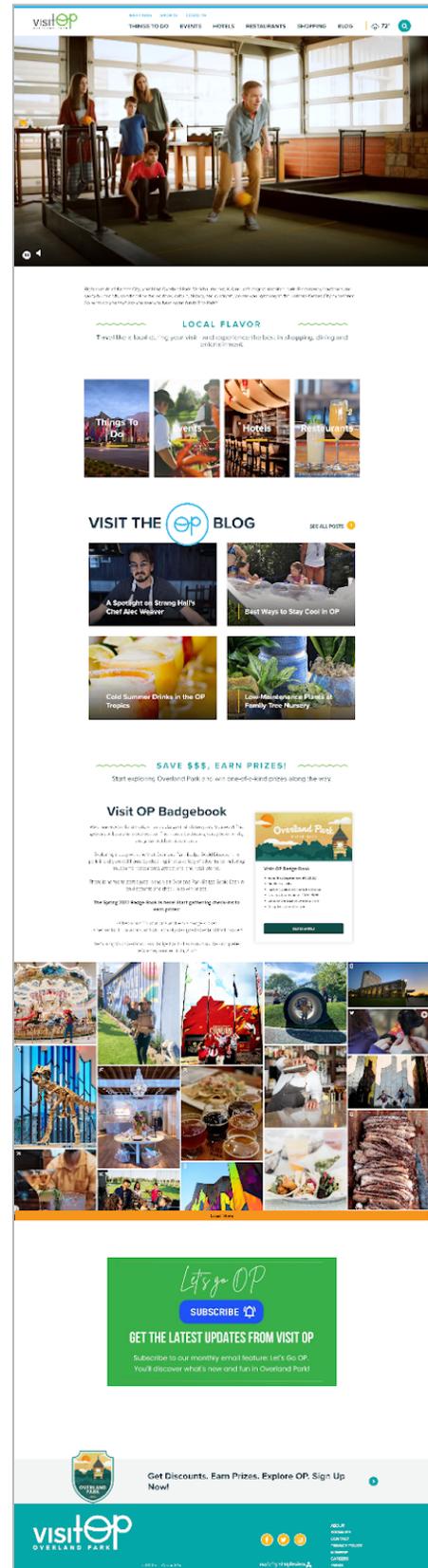
While it certainly links itself to Kansas City and its many attractors, Overland Park has an abundance of strong attractors including an active and busy downtown, major arts and cultural offerings, excellent museums, and the unique Overland Park Arboretum and Botanical Gardens. The city also hosts a number of festivals/events each year.

The destination has a very strong meetings/conventions draw. Its convention center offers 98,500 square feet of meeting space and 60,000 square feet of exhibition space.

In addition, the destination has a very successful amateur sports marketing program which utilizes the community's excellent facilities to attract regional and national events.

The destination has 37 properties, including business-class, limited service, and high end full-service properties.

A primary competitor for Lee's Summit.



Recommendations on Creating a DMO for Lee's Summit

The following factors were involved in making the recommendations regarding the creation of a DMO for Lee's Summit:

1. The Consultant's 30+ years of experience, education, and knowledge of DMO organizational structures, functions, and operations including his certification as a Certified Destination Management Executive by Destinations International (formally International Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus) as well as his first-hand experience in working with DMOs across the country.
2. An analysis of Lee's Summit's specific and unique tourism-related strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
3. An analysis of the tourism-related agencies and programs of Lee's Summit's competitive set
4. The consensus opinion of the participating stakeholder community

North Star recommends that the Lee's Summit DMO be established as a 501(C)(6) agency.

In the opinion of the Consultant, a stand-alone 501(C)(6) agency is the best choice for Lee's Summit for several reasons:

- It would have a specific and stand-alone mission and purpose that would inform and direct their program of work rather than being a subdivision of another agency/group
- It would operate on a business model
- It would have flexibility in the ability to react quickly to changing conditions, new opportunities, and market trends and would allow for greater freedom in creative marketing, advertising, and public relations programs
- It would report to a board of directors with experience in the tourism industry and who would have a vested interest in seeing the work of the Lee's Summit DMO be successful
- It would have the ability to develop and execute non-lodging tax revenue streams
- Independent DMOs tend to find it easier to attract and retain experienced and qualified professionals
- Stand-alone DMOs are by far the most utilized and most successful organizational structures in the destination industry.
- Given the consensus opinion expressed in the project's research, a stand-alone DMO would appear to have the strongest support of the stakeholder community

Organizational Recommendations and Considerations

North Star recommends that the DMO be governed by a board made up of representatives from city government, lodging, Downtown Lee's Summit, arts/culture, history, sports/recreation, chamber of commerce, economic development office, and transportation.

North Star specifically recommends that a Lee's Summit DMO not be a paid membership organization.

As the creation of a DMO for Lee's Summit would be considered a "start-up", several considerations come into play. Recommended steps in creation of Lee's Summit DMO:

- Establishment of the Agency by the City, including budget commitment
- Creation of the Board of Directors
- Application for and securing of 501(C)(6) status as well as any necessary business licenses
- Establishment of secure and fully audited financial operations (banking, checking, accounting/booking procedures and records, budgeting, etc.)
- Development and adoption of a tourism strategic plan for both the destination and a strategic program plan for the DMO
- Recruitment and hiring of staff
- Securing of physical office space and necessary office/business service

Funding and Budget

More often than not, the primary funding for DMOs is derived from a lodging tax that a hotel guest pays on lodging in the community. Because bureau funding is directly linked to how many hotel rooms there are in a community and their occupancy rate, budget sizes vary greatly.

Other funding mechanisms include:

- Budget allocation from local government (other than lodging tax)
- Paid membership
- Fundraising through grants, special event production, advertising sales, etc.
- Some destinations have additional sources of revenue from meals tax, transportation, attraction taxes, or special tourism zone fees added to lodging taxes

North Star recommends that funding for the Lee's Summit DMO should come primarily as a dedicated portion of lodging tax collections and supplemented with other sources such as additional budget allocations and fundraising through grants, special event production, advertising sales, etc.

An additional funding consideration might be that any future percentage increase in lodging taxes be fully dedicated to funding the DMO.

There are a number of benefits to establishing a dedicated percentage of the lodging tax for DMO funding:

- Allows for better budget planning
- Insures a steady revenue stream for the DMO
- Creates an incentive factor for DMO funding (the better the work of the DMO, the greater the increase in lodging taxes collected, resulting in a larger dollar amount going to the DMO)

The budget request for the creation/initial operation of a Lee's Summit DMO is difficult to determine until the agency is actually established and a strategic plan is developed by the board of directors.

The three primary factors within the strategic plan that will impact the possible budget for the DMO are:

Staffing (Number/type of personnel, salaries, benefits)

Overhead (Office space, visitor center space, equipment, utilities, etc.)

Marketing Plan

Relative funding levels of competitive set DMOs (allows Lee's Summit to adequately compete with other destinations)

A general (but not ironclad) rule of thumb is that no more than 60% of a DMO's budget be spent on personnel and overhead, with at least 40% going towards tourism promotion, marketing, and advertising. Obviously, the less spent on overhead, the more can be allocated to tourism development activities.

In the Consultant's opinion, a minimum ballpark figure for initial funding of the DMO would fall in the \$300,000 to \$350,000 range. This would allow adequate resources for start-up and ongoing expenses such as personnel and overhead while retaining adequate initial funding for the agency's primary function of tourism marketing and promotion.

The budget allocation could (and should) increase in future years as the DMO demonstrates success through increases in lodging tax collections. Especially given the budgets of Lee's Summit's competitive set, a budget of \$400,000 – \$500,000 for a Lee's Summit DMO funding would not be inappropriate.

The Primary Roles of a DMO for Lee's Summit

THE FUNDAMENTAL MISSION OF A DMO FOR LEE'S SUMMIT WOULD BE THE PROMOTION OF VISITOR TRAVEL WITH THE MEASURABLE EFFECT OF GENERATING INCREASED REVENUE FOR THE DESTINATION AND STAKEHOLDERS. IN ADDITION, IT WOULD HAVE A DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY TO GROW TAX COLLECTIONS FOR THE DESTINATION THROUGH INCREASED SALES AND LODGING TAXES.

Specifically, the Lee's Summit DMO would have the following roles:

- Provide leadership in growing the beneficial economic impact of tourism
- Provide leadership in the marketing of the destination and the generation of sales
- Serve as the focal point for the coordination of tourism activities
- Provide services that enhance the quality of the visitor experience
- Serve as a catalyst and facilitator for tourism infrastructure and destination development
- Serve as chief liaison with all levels of government regarding tourism
- Coordinate the collection and dissemination of relevant tourism information and research
- Support the development and delivery of tourism/hospitality education and training programs

The Primary Functions of a DMO for Lee's Summit

These primary functions of a Lee's Summit DMO should inform the establishment of goals, strategies, and action items within the strategic plan to be developed and implemented by the DMO board of directors.

Progress in each of these primary function areas and the completion of the action items within the strategic plan would form the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the DMO. It is important to note that the full implementation of these items will be a "work in progress;" the strategic plan and its resulting KPIs will require development over time.

- **Marketing, Promotion, and Sales:** The development of destination image and the communication of that image to target markets and converting potential visitors into actual visitors. Marketing and promotion initiatives are typically achieved through advertising and production and distribution of promotional and collateral material. Promotion activities include social network/digital platforms, travel media relations, and general media relations/releases. Sales activities include travel trade association marketplaces, direct marketing to travel planners, and the planning and executing of travel planner familiarization tours.

- **Research and Planning:** Data gathering and evaluation on both existing and potential target markets, tourism infrastructure, economic impact, and business trends.
- **Product Development:** Growing, expanding, and assisting current destination offerings and providing leadership in the development of new attractors and services.
- **Community Relations:** Act as the primary tourism advocate, resource, and leader in the community; develop and operate partnerships with government, business, and others; lead community and local tourism industry to embrace and adopt tourism development goals.
- **Visitor Relations:** Through training and partnerships with the local tourism and hospitality stakeholders, the development and implementation of programs and services that enhance the visitor experience. Create, develop, and operate a Lee's Summit Visitor Information Center.

KPIs typically used by DMOs and which might be adopted by Lee's Summit could include:

Increase in hotel occupancy rates & lodging tax collections

Digital Analytics: increase in website visitation, followings on social network platforms, increase in number and frequency of posts and/or the creation of social media

Increase in requests for information/visitor guides over internet, phone, mail

Creation and implementation of both a strategic plan and marketing plan, including the gathering and analysis of appropriate research

Creation and operation of Visitor Center

Increase in paid advertising

Increase in non-paid media, including number of articles, hosting of travel writers, etc.

Increase in the number of group tour arrivals

As the City, board, and staff undertake these actions, some additional considerations might include:

Executive Director: Given that this will be a start-up venture, strong consideration should be given to finding and hiring an executive director with experience in DMO management and destination marketing.

Office Space as Visitor Center: One of the identified weaknesses for the destination is that there is no visitor center for assisting visitors and distributing tourism information (most destinations operate a visitor center including all of Lee's Summit competitive set DMOs).

In seeking and securing physical office space for the Lee's Summit DMO, consideration might be given to finding a location that could serve as both the agency's administrative offices as well as a visitor center.

Partnerships: In its initial stages, it might be beneficial to develop partnerships with the City, other established agencies, and local businesses to help offset some of the costs related to start-up operations. These could include office space, business services, design services, digital marketing/website design and maintenance, etc. This would help tremendously in not only establishing the organization but also in allowing for maximum utilization of budgeted funds for marketing. As the agency becomes more established, operationally functional, and financially secure, these functions could and should become internal to the organization.

Additional Supporting Research

North Star Secret Shopper's Report

A "Secret Shopping" exercise was completed on-site by the Consultant March 14 – 16. The purpose of this tour was two-fold: (1) to familiarize the Consultant with the City, its geography, facilities, tourism assets, ease of wayfinding and drivability, and the hospitality and helpfulness of visitor-contact personnel; and (2) to look at the destination through a "visitor's eyes" — to discover what someone not familiar with the area would think and experience as they traveled through the City.

It is important to note that these observations form a "snapshot" of the destination rather than an exhaustive, in-depth study, they are the first subjective impressions that a visitor might have. In addition, while some of the observations made during this tour were not necessarily positive, they should not be taken critically; as they are simply the honest narratives of what this one visitor experienced on one particular day and are presented here as an opportunity for evaluation and improvement.

The project included in-person visits to Lee's Summit attractions/points of interest, parks, six hotels, seven visitor contact points (convenience stores, gas stations, etc.), and a number of downtown merchants and restaurants to analyze the general quality of the visitor experience, customer service, wayfinding, and the knowledge of frontline personnel.

The secret shopper's first impression of the City was very positive. An initial drive around Downtown Lee's Summit left a very positive impression. The architecture of the buildings were attractive, unique, and well-maintained. There were not many vacant storefronts.

The secret shopper was very impressed with the amount of free parking available downtown and had no difficulty in finding a parking space. The secret shopper walked through downtown, visiting several shops and restaurants. In each, they would ask for visitor information. For the most part, staff in the shops and restaurants were pleasant and visitor friendly. When asked questions about the destination, front line personnel either provided the information themselves or would ask another employee for assistance. Only one restaurant employee, while pleasant, was not helpful; in her defense, the restaurant was busy and seemed somewhat understaffed.

After checking into their hotel, the secret shopper returned to Downtown Lee's Summit for dinner and to observe evening activity. There were not many people downtown the night they were there (a Tuesday evening). The restaurant they dined at was fairly busy. It did appear that many shops were not open for evening shoppers.

On the multiple occasions that the secret shopper found themselves in the downtown area during their visit, they were very impressed with the amount and quality of public art and sculpture.

Over the next two days, the secret shopper made driving and walking tours of the City which included area attractions, residential neighborhoods, parks, area hotels, the Unity Village campus, commercial retail areas outside of downtown, and area visitor contact points such as convenience stores. The historic neighborhoods near Downtown Lee's Summit were quite attractive and unique.

Visits were made to the Blue Springs Lake, Legacy Park, and Lake Jacomo. The secret shopper found all of the parks to be attractive, well-maintained, and fairly busy with visitors. They were very impressed with the number and quality of athletic facilities at Legacy Park.

Drive-by visits were also made to Frontier Justice, the historic Train Depot, and Longview Mansion and the Lee's Summit History Museum (both of which were not open to the public the day the secret shopper visited.) A drive-by visit was also made to nearby Powell Gardens.

The secret shopper's visit to Unity Village included a driving tour and brief walking tour around the campus and included the Café and Bookstore as well as the hotel and conference center facilities. They found the staff to be friendly, helpful, and informative.

A driving tour around the community included visits to several commercial/retail districts and centers outside of the downtown area. The secret shopper found the variety of shopping and dining options to be good; all the areas appeared to be quite busy with customers. They found driving to and around these areas to be relatively easy.

In addition, the secret shopper made stops at several area hotels: America's Best Value Inn and Suites, Best Western Plus, Comfort Inn and Suites, Hampton Inn, Holiday Inn Express and Suites, and the Fairfield Inn (where they were staying). Visits with front desk personnel in each of the hotels were, for the most part, positive. The secret shopper would ask various questions about things to do in the area, suggestions for dining or shopping, and/or directions. With only one exception, front desk personnel were friendly and willing to assist. The secret shopper found the greatest difficulty for them was in giving directions, where it appeared that having a visitor's map of the area would have been helpful.

During the driving portion of the tour, the secret shopper made stops at seven non-downtown convenience stores to assess the helpfulness/knowledge of personnel in these potential visitor-contact points. Again, they would ask questions about things to do, directions, etc. As a group, they seemed to have very limited knowledge of the area's points of interest. Two individuals helped as best they could given that there were other customers waiting to be served; two had no actual knowledge of the area; and one suggested that the secret shopper should travel on to "the City" [Kansas City] because, as far as he knew, "there's nothing to do around here."

The secret shopper did not find it difficult to navigate their way through the area as they drove. The secret shopper did observe that some wayfinding signage outside of the downtown core might have been helpful.

In summary, from a visitor's perspective, the secret shopper found Lee's Summit to be a charming, enjoyable destination and that the actual experience of being in the community meshed well with the brand promise of "Yours Truly."

Consumer Awareness and Perception Study

The Consumer Awareness and Perception Study (CAP Study) was conducted through an online survey using paid research panels in potential visitor markets for Lee's Summit. North Star had previously conducted a CAP Study on behalf of the City in 2012, as part of the BrandPrint initiative. The purpose of repeating this study was to provide updated insights into consumer opinions of Lee's Summit and visitor behavior while in the destination.

Between May and June of 2022, North Star collected 311 survey responses primarily in the Kansas City, MO-KS metropolitan area and the St. Louis, MO metropolitan area. The survey methodology diverged from that used in 2012 in a few ways:

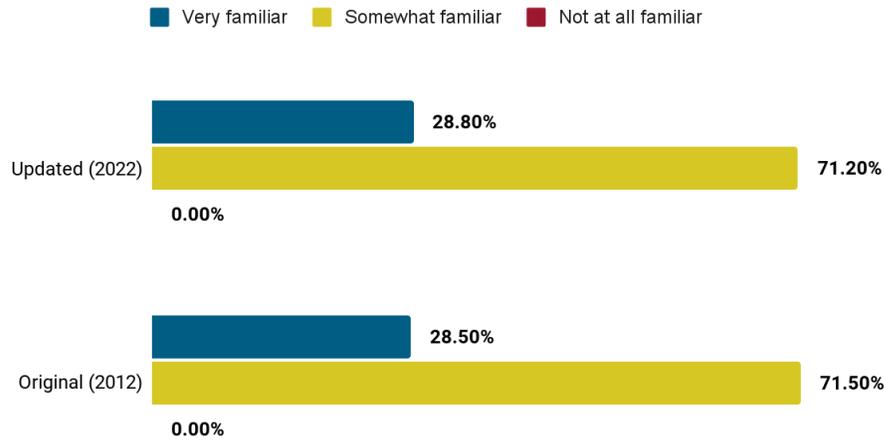
- The survey instrument was updated to better reflect the current situation in Lee's Summit.
- Current and former residents of competitor communities—Blue Springs, Liberty, Overland Park, and Olathe—were not allowed to participate in the survey to eliminate biased responses.
- The potential visitor markets targeted for this study were expanded from just the Kansas City metro to include St. Louis and other places in Missouri.
- To correspond with the expansion of potential visitor markets, an additional 100 responses were collected.

As the study consisted of over 30 questions, North Star created an Appendix to this report to show the 2022 CAP Study results in greater detail. This report contains a summary of the insights gleaned from the charts contained in the Appendix.

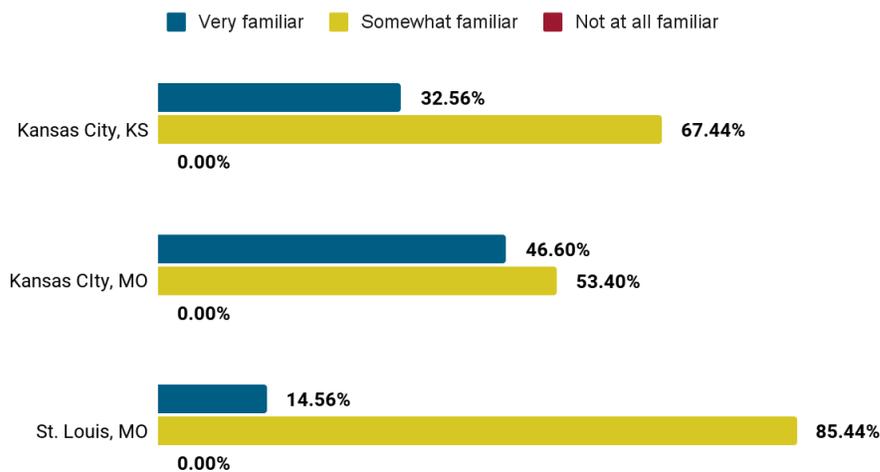
The following analysis presents the most relevant results, often through additional demographic filters such as visitor market, age, and previous visitation of the destination. Additionally, some comparisons between the 2012 and 2022 study were possible. Please note that all figures shown in the following pages are within a margin of error of ± 5.51 with 95% confidence.

Familiarity with the Destination

To establish a baseline of understanding and screen for knowledgeable respondents, the CAP Study began with a measurement of familiarity with Lee’s Summit and its competitors. A total of 28.75% of respondents indicated that they were “Very Familiar” with Lee’s Summit, which trailed both Liberty (29.39% “Very Familiar”) and Overland Park (34.82% “Very Familiar”). Compared to familiarity levels from 2012, the updated figures were nearly identical:

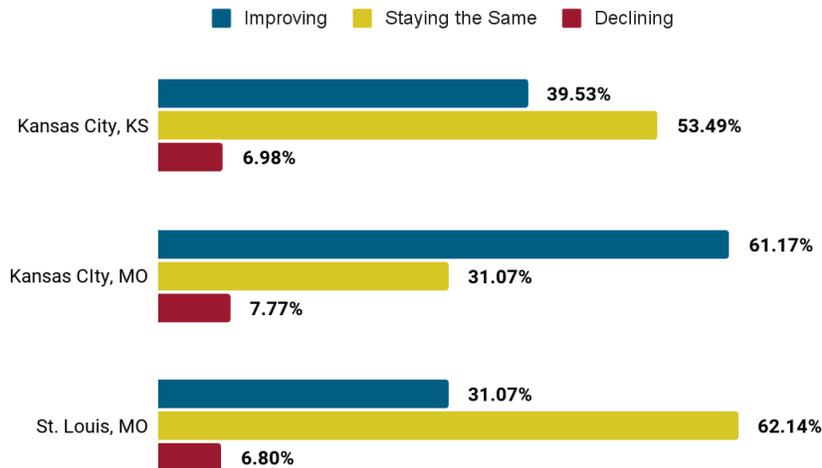


However, the inclusion of visitor markets beyond the Kansas City metro had a significant effect on these figures. Respondents in the Kansas City metro reported more familiarity with Lee’s Summit than those in the St. Louis metro. Furthermore, nearly half of respondents on the Missouri side of Kansas City said they were “Very Familiar” with Lee’s Summit:

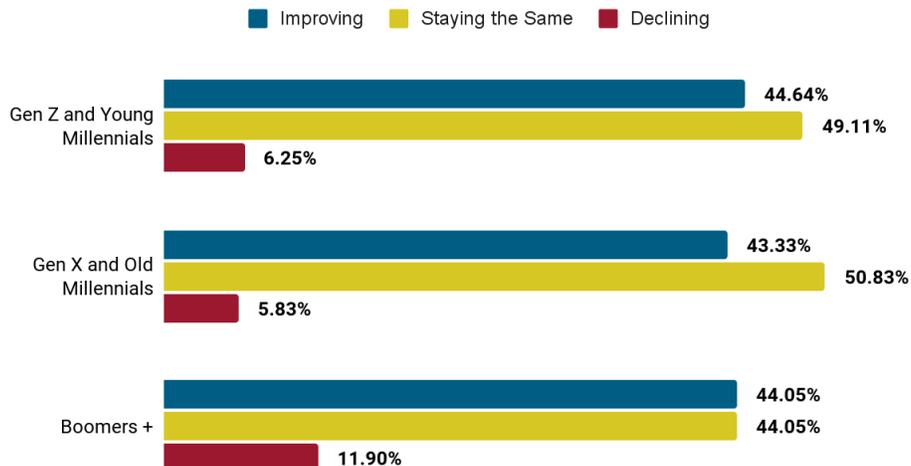


Perceptions of the Destination

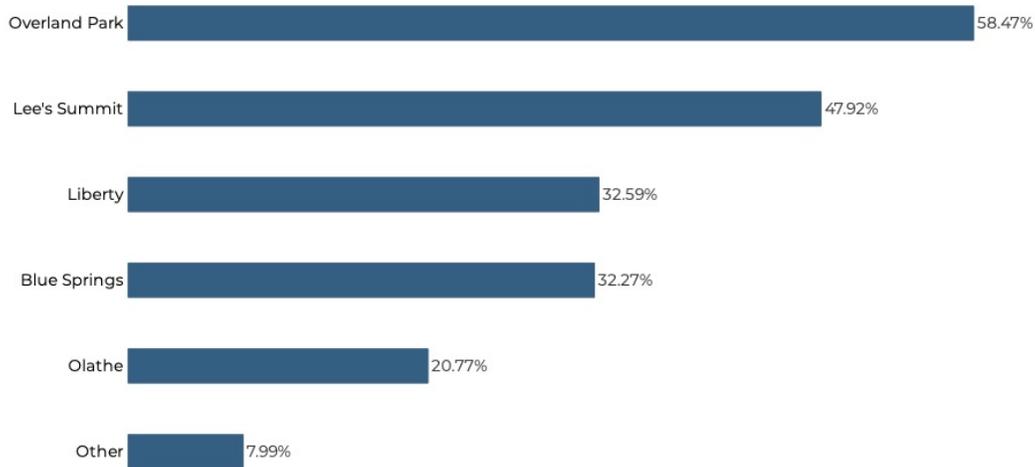
As is the case in most destination research, familiarity with a place tends to color people’s perceptions about that place. North Star asked CAP Study respondents to rate whether Lee’s Summit and its competitors were improving, staying the same, or declining. Respondents were not prompted to think about these cities as “destinations” but rather in more general terms. Lee’s Summit had the second-highest percentage of “Improving” ratings behind Overland Park (50.48% for Overland Park to 44.51% for Lee’s Summit); the City also had the second-lowest percentage of “Declining” ratings behind Blue Springs (6.71% for Blue Springs to 7.67% for Lee’s Summit). Considered by visitor market, nearly two-thirds of respondents in the Missouri side of Kansas City—those most familiar with the City— thought that Lee’s Summit was “Improving”:



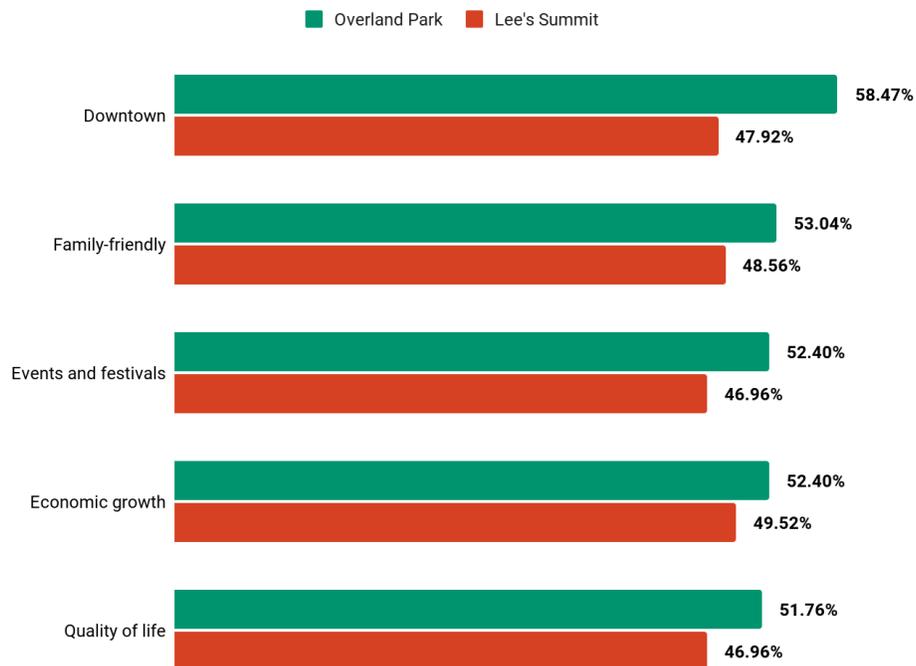
Moreover, the sentiment was highly consistent across age demographics:



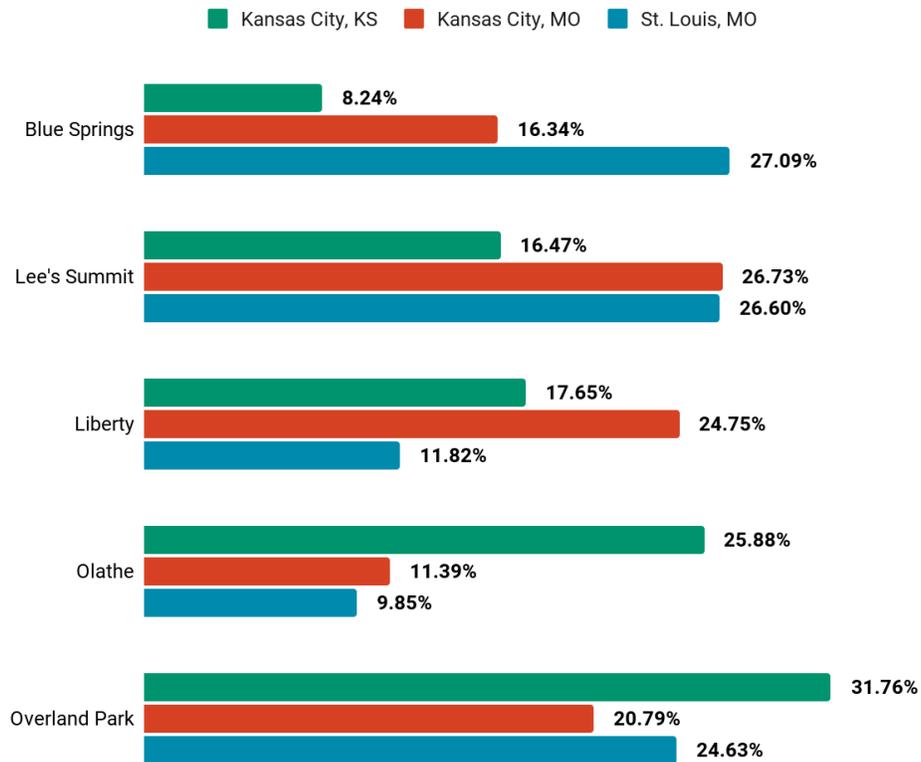
The next section of the CAP Study presented respondents with the opportunity to identify which communities among Lee’s Summit and four of its competitors stood out in various categories and scenarios. As was asked in 2012, North Star posed the question, “Which of the following cities do you think has the most interesting, attractive, and inviting downtown area?” In 2012, Lee’s Summit trailed Overland Park by an even 5%—a gap that widened by a few percentage points in this updated study:



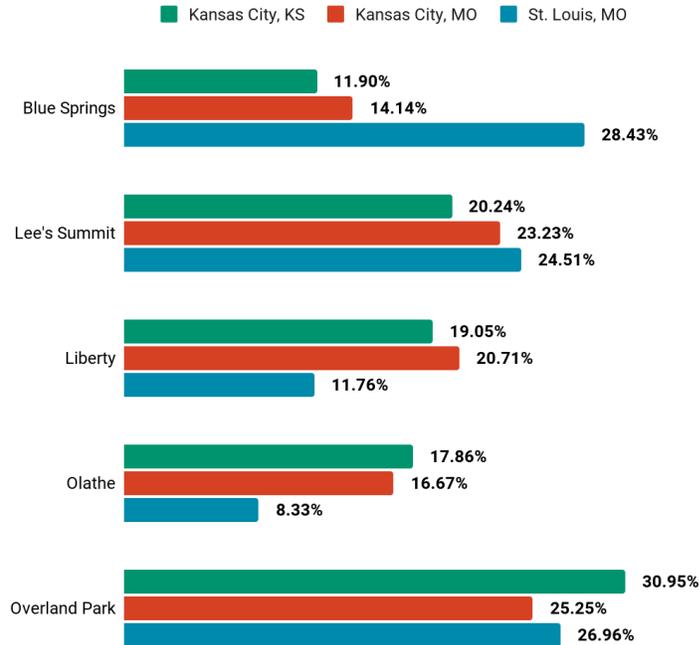
The rest of the questions painted a similar picture. In the five categories below, Lee’s Summit did not trail any of its peers on the Missouri side of the metro, only Overland Park, KS. Additionally, the gap between top-rated Overland Park and Lee’s Summit was smaller than that between Lee’s Summit and the third-highest rated community.



More to the point, North Star asked the survey panel which of the five cities they would choose for a one-day trip as well as for an overnight stay or weekend getaway. Results mirrored those described earlier, with Lee’s Summit being the top choice on the Missouri side and second only to Overland Park, KS. Analysis of responses by visitor market showed that results were highly influenced by geography. For a one-day trip, Kansas residents indicated that they would much prefer staying on their side of the state line, with a plurality choosing Overland Park or Olathe:

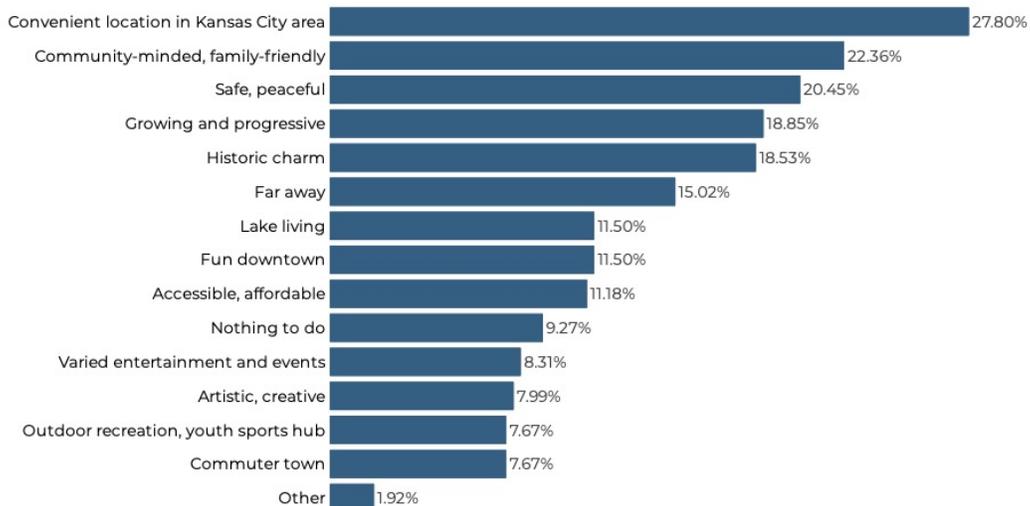


For an overnight trip or weekend getaway, Lee’s Summit lost some ground to Overland Park, but the outsized preference of Kansas residents to stay in their state waned slightly:

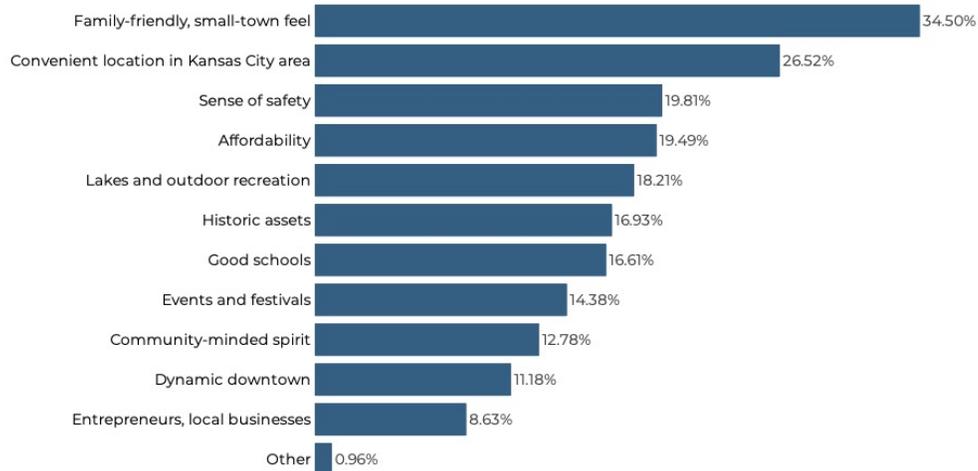


Respondents were also asked to think about the most salient characteristics of Lee’s Summit, specifically. Though North Star asked these questions in 2012, the answer choices for the updated study changed significantly to better reflect the City today.

First, North Star asked the panel to select the most apt descriptors for Lee’s Summit. Like in 2012, the descriptors “community-minded, family-friendly” and “growing and progressive” were again among the top vote-getters, but more respondents thought Lee’s Summit’s “convenient location in the Kansas City area” was a defining trait.



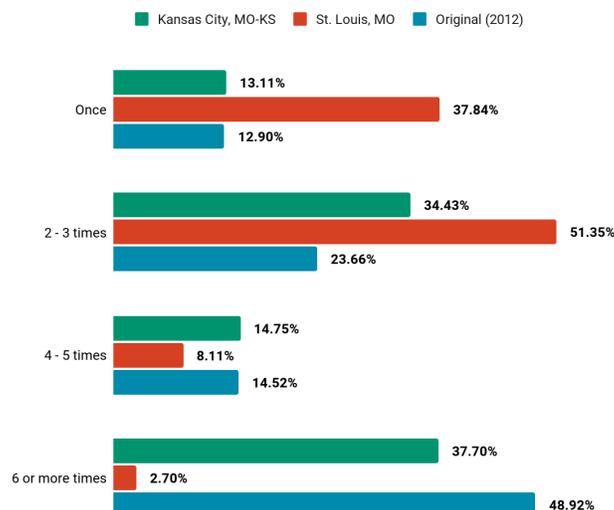
Lastly, respondents were asked to identify things that are essential to the City. Once again, results remained close to those from a decade ago: Lee’s Summit’s “family-friendly, small-town atmosphere” and safety are still considered key to the destination’s success today.



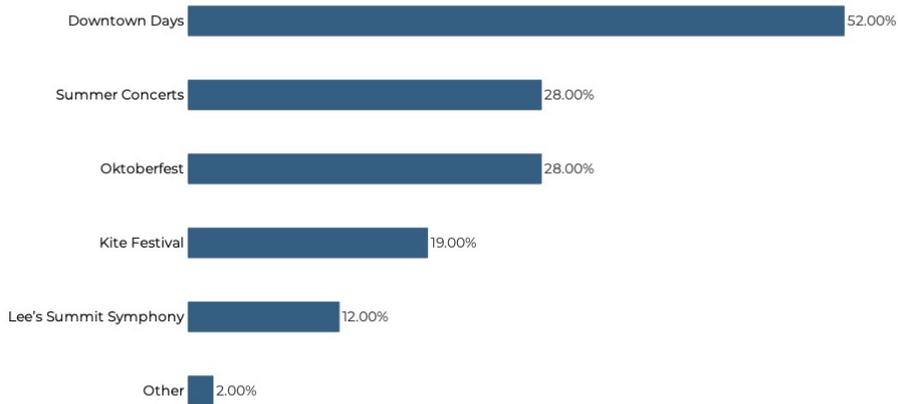
Experiences in the Destination

The CAP Study sample for 2022 included 61.39% of respondents who have visited Lee’s Summit in the past 3 years. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted visitation patterns during the 3-year period specified, and its effects appear evident in the results of this updated study. To start, an even 93% of respondents in 2012 reported having visited Lee’s Summit. Controlling for the additional visitor market in the updated study does not mitigate the decrease in reported visitation: 122 visitors came from the Kansas City, MO-KS market (30 from Kansas, specifically) while 37 came from the St. Louis market. The total of 194 visitors (out of 316 respondents) is just over the 186 visitors (out of 200 respondents) from 2012.

Likewise, frequency of visitation was slightly higher in the 2012 sample, when nearly half of all visitors reported going to Lee’s Summit 6 or more times in 3 years. Updated totals from only the Kansas City market visitors resemble but do not match 2012 patterns:



Nevertheless, reasons for visitation remained consistent between the two studies. Respondents cited visiting family and friends and shopping as top travel motivators (just as they did years ago), and shopping and dining continue to be the top activities associated with the destination. A notable addition to the tourism landscape in Lee’s Summit appear to be the local events: 101 respondents indicated that they had attended at least one of the City’s trademark celebrations or performances, with a majority attending Downtown Days.



As is generally the case, the key to Lee’s Summit’s success as a municipality and a destination lies in getting people to experience it at least once. North Star asked visitors and non-visitors alike to rate Lee’s Summit on a variety of factors, and ratings from visitors were consistently and significantly above those of non-visitors in the updated study. The highest-ranking traits for Lee’s Summit are shown below:



It is worth a final note that nearly a third or more of the non-visitor respondent group identified events and festivals as well as recommendations by family and friends as the most salient opportunities to persuade them to visit Lee's Summit. In conjunction with this information, the greater sample agreed that recommendations from family and friends carry the most weight when making travel decisions. Over the course of our research across the country, North Star has found the importance of peer-to-peer recommendations to be paramount in the development and success of any destination. This is why we encourage Lee's Summit to begin marketing the destination to its own residents first, so that they will advocate on behalf of their community through their established networks of family and friends.

Conclusion

With ten years between them, the CAP Studies from 2012 and 2022 paint a similar picture of Lee's Summit's reputation and potential as a destination in the Kansas City area. Lee's Summit has what the big city can't have: an inviting and family-friendly appeal couples with its own selection of shops, restaurants, and events to draw the crowds. While the City certainly benefits from being in a large metropolitan area, it is closer to the relaxation of lake living than to the hustle of the urban lifestyle.

For these reasons, on the Missouri side of the metro, Lee's Summit stands out as a place to visit for one or multiple days. Lee's Summit has grown and developed almost in tandem with Overland Park; as its counterpart on the Kansas side of the metro, Overland Park is a clear and direct competitor with Lee's Summit for regional tourism in every aspect.

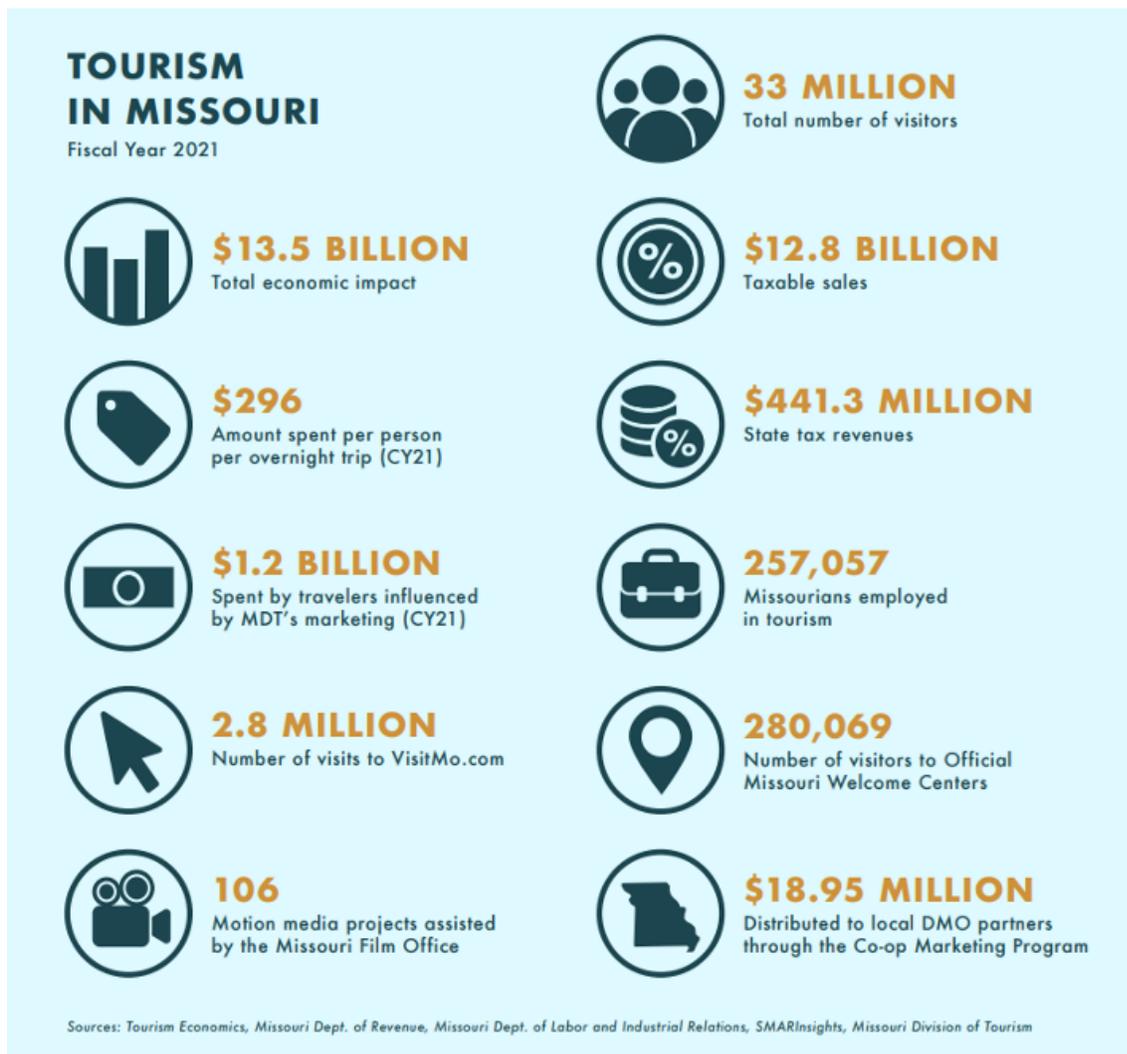
Although the past few years have not provided the ideal conditions for travel, Lee's Summit remains top-of-mind for many in the region: it is easily accessible and offers entertainment and unique experiences that bring visitors back again and again. Leaning on good word-of-mouth from residents and prior visitors would be a worthy focus as travel in the Kansas City area reaches its potential.

Travel-Related Data/Visitor Profile

Other than lodging tax collections, tourism-related data specific to Lee’s Summit is difficult to ascertain. This is due to the fact that tourism-related economic impact figures collected by the Missouri State Division of Tourism are reported on a state-wide and county basis rather than for individual cities. That being said, this state-wide data, as well as overall Missouri travel patterns, activities, expenditures, and visitor profile can help inform research related to Lee’s Summit.

Some larger cities, including Kansas City, MO, independently undertake tourism-related research. While the Kansas City travel product is quite different from Lee’s Summit, it does help inform the economic impact and profile of visitors to the Greater Kansas City Area.

State of Missouri Economic Impact of Tourism, 2021



State of Missouri Visitor Patterns and Profile Data

Source: Omnitrak Group's "TravelTrakAmerica" for the Missouri Division of Tourism, 2022.

Age & Marital Status

Nearly one-fourth of Missouri visitors were aged 55 – 64 years old (24%), while 20% fell into the 25 – 34 years old age range.

Average age of Missouri adult visitors was 47.3, slightly older than FY2020's average age of 45.16. • Approximately two-thirds of visitors to the Show-Me State were currently married (65%).

Education & Income

Just under half (49%) of Missouri visitors have a bachelor's or graduate degree.

The largest share (26.7%) of Missouri visitors had a household income of \$50,000 – \$74,999.

A little over one quarter (27.2%) of travelers visiting Missouri had a household income of \$100,000 or more.

Ethnicity

Most Missouri visitors identify as White (92.3%), compared to 85.9% of U.S. domestic travelers.

More than nine in ten Missouri visitors identify as non-Hispanic (97%). The portion of Missouri visitors who identified as Hispanic was smaller than that of U.S. domestic travelers (not shown) at 2.9% and 7.5%, respectively.

Trip Purpose and Travel Party Size

Leisure travel dominates Missouri's tourism industry, with 87.0% of Missouri visitors indicating leisure was one of their trip purposes. When considering all purposes, half of Missouri visitors traveled to visit friends/relatives and 29.3% reported traveling for entertainment/sightseeing.

Of those primarily traveling for business, 46.2% reported extending their stay for leisure.

Most travel parties have two or more people in them – 41% had two people traveling together and another 40% had three or more people in the travel party.

Average travel party size of Missouri visitors is 2.8.

Although 38.3% of Missouri visitors have children under 18 in their household, only 27.7% brought their children on their trip. This percentage is much less than the previous fiscal year when 35.7% of Missouri visitors reported traveling with children from their household.

Top Visitor Activities

Missouri visitors reported their top activities while visiting the state are visiting friends/relatives (34.9%), shopping (22.1%), and rural sightseeing (14.3%).

Other top activities include historic sites (11.6%), fine dining (10.1%), museums (9.2%), and theme park/amusement park/water park (7.0%).

St. Louis, Branson and Kansas City remain the top three places that travelers report visiting Missouri.

Springfield and the Lake of the Ozarks round out the top five places visited in Missouri.

Travel Activity, Accommodations, and Transportation

Nearly seven in ten visitors (67.8%) have traveled to Missouri three or more times in the last five years.

Missouri doesn't do quite as well as the national average at attracting first time out-of-state visitors – 13.8% of out-of-state visitors came to MO for the first time in FY2021 compared to 19.2% of visitors to all states being first timers. This is less than the 18.1% first time Missouri visitors attracted in FY2020.

Most visitors (89.6%) use their own vehicle as their transportation within Missouri.

Overnight visitors stayed an average of 3.3 nights in Missouri, an increase over last year's 2.76 with 71.8% staying at least 2 nights.

The proportion of nights spent in a Missouri hotel/motel and shared economy properties increased in FY21, while nights in private homes and personal second homes/condos decreased.

Travel Planning Patterns

Nearly half (47.5%) of visitors to Missouri decided to take the trip less than two weeks before the trip. The trip decision timeframe has continued to shorten over recent years.

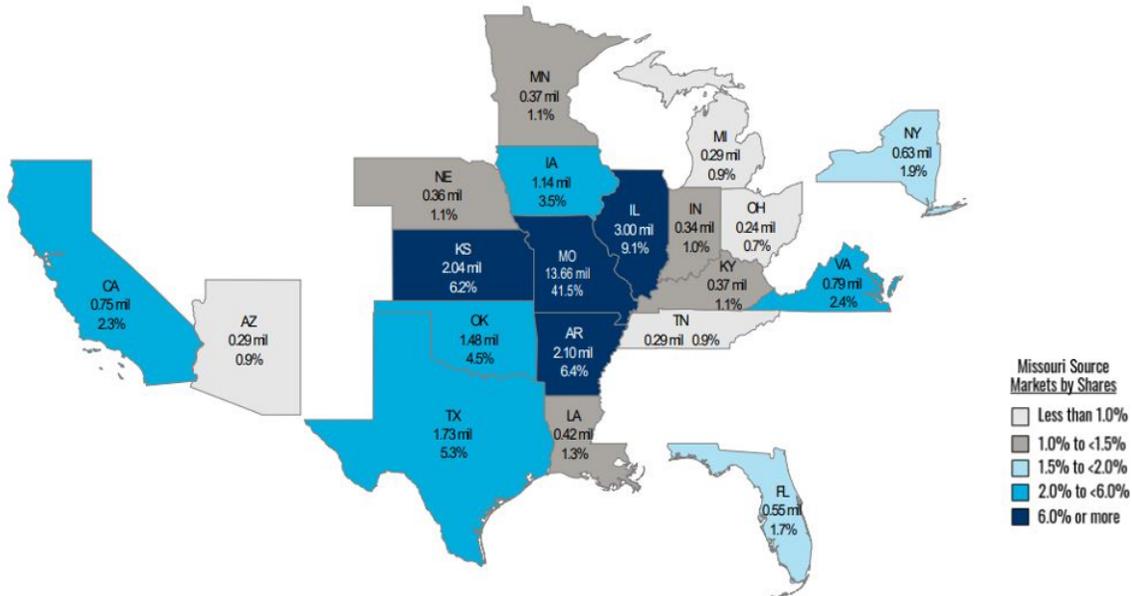
Missouri visitors use various sources to plan travel with the largest shares using their own experience (29.5%) or advice from friends/relatives (28.6%).

Search engines are the third most used planning source of information, used by 13.9% of Missouri visitors.

At the same time, one-third reported making no plans (33.8%), a larger proportion compared to 24.1% reporting the same during pre-pandemic FY 2019.

Source Markets

Missouri tourism is mostly regional with 41.5% of all visitors residing within Missouri and 32.7% living in a neighboring state.



Kansas City Data

Sources: *Tourism Economics, Longwoods International, U.S. Travel Association, for VisitKC*

Kansas City hosts 25.2 million visitors each year. Of these, 47% of visitors stay overnight.

Tourism generates \$5.6 billion in economic impact for the region annually, including indirect and induced impact. Taxes paid by visitors save the average Kansas City household \$550 in taxes annually.

More than 48,000 jobs in the region are sustained by tourism either directly or indirectly, supporting \$1.8 billion in wages.