



Annual Report | Fiscal Year 2022





Beyond Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience came to the Mid-America Center at the end of the fiscal year.

## OUR MISSION

The Council Bluffs Convention & Visitors Bureau (CBCVB) serves as a catalyst to grow Pottawattamie County’s visitor economy through collaborative sales and marketing, destination advocacy, and sustainable placemaking activities in order to enhance the region’s quality of life.

The CBCVB is funded by the City of Council Bluffs from a portion of the hotel/motel taxes generated by travelers. This support is much appreciated and allows the bureau to promote CB as a destination for visitors to enjoy the city’s hotels, restaurants, attractions, venues, and events. Visitors serve as new customers for local businesses and new taxpayers for local government benefiting all local residents.

## 2022 - 2027 CBCVB STRATEGIC PLAN

Coming through the pandemic, the Council Bluffs CVB Board of Directors decided it was time to update the organization’s strategic plan. It engaged the Institute for Decision Making at the University of Northern Iowa as its facilitator. The process solicited input through a questionnaire and interviews (both one-on-one and focus groups) from many local perspectives and partners. On May 12, the board examined all the comments and observations during a day-long session. That exercise formulated a draft plan that the board approved at its August 2022 meeting.

## GOOD THINGS COME IN TWOS...

No more so than in 2022. The Council Bluffs CVB realized several successes that arrived in twos as well as some singular achievements. Here are just a few!

The Council Bluffs CVB Board of Directors couldn’t be more pleased to receive not one but two Iowa Tourism Awards during the 2022 Iowa Tourism Conference. For the second time, the CBCVB was recognized for outstanding social media execution, and for the fourth time, the bureau received the outstanding website award. The CBCVB’s other two award nominations (outstanding community and outstanding promotional materials) both came in second place.

Speaking of UNleashCB.com, web traffic more than doubled to the site. During fiscal year 2022, unique users shot up 103 percent, and sessions soared by 107 percent. Likewise, event submissions surged by 44 percent, or 423 more events than last year, reaching an all-time high of 1,390. It’s worth reiterating that the site serves the dual audiences of visitors and residents – maximizing its value.

The year couldn’t have started on a better note than when the Iowa Tourism Office designated the CBCVB office as an official Iowa Welcome Center in January. It became one of the state’s 12 partner welcome centers. That achievement was celebrated with a ribbon cutting on May 6 during National Travel & Tourism Week.

As a fitting end, the fiscal year concluded with an exclamation point. The City of Council Bluffs collected a record high in hotel/motel taxes of nearly \$3.2 million in fiscal year 2022. That represented an increase of \$1.13 million or 55 percent year-over-year.

On a personal note, I have served on the CBCVB board since 2017 and as board president for the past two years. It’s been my pleasure to lead and collaborate with my fellow board members and the bureau staff. This list are but a few of the Council Bluffs CVB’s many accomplishments during FY 22 and recognizes the fact that this bureau hasn’t let up on its pandemic recovery efforts; rather doubling down and helping our community bounce back. I could not be more proud, and I cannot wait to see what they accomplish in the years to come.

Patricia LaBounty  
Board President



## LEADERSHIP

- Board President - Patricia LaBounty: Union Pacific Railroad Museum
- Board Vice President - Mark Shoemaker: Pottawattamie Conservation
- Board Past President - Bill Vanderpool: Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites @ Ameristar
- Bryan Biederman: First National Bank
- Matt Johnson: Barley’s Bar & Grill
- Ashley Kruse: City of Council Bluffs
- Woody Mitchell: Ameristar Casino Hotel

## TEAM

- Mark Eckman: Executive Director
- Scott Hoffman: Director of Hospitality + Community Engagement
- Emma Schwaller: Director of Content
- Kathy Rosene: Director of Sales

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(712) 256.2577  
UNLEASHCB.COM

# DIGITAL MARKETING

In 2022, the CBCVB continued to expand its marketing reach utilizing organic and paid media including Google Ads, retargeting, and social media, keeping our message pillars top of mind.

## MESSAGE PILLARS

1. Unmatched railroad history
2. Singular outdoor experiences + natural landscapes
3. Exceptional live music performances
4. One-of-a-kind public, visual, and performing arts
5. Superior sports facilities + fields
6. Unique nightlife, entertainment districts + historic neighborhoods



## IOWA TOURISM AWARDS

During the 2022 Iowa Tourism Conference held in Des Moines, the Iowa Tourism Office presented awards recognizing the work and innovation of Iowa's outstanding tourism organizations. These awards represent the highest honor given for tourism in Iowa. This year, the bureau won the outstanding website and outstanding social media execution awards!



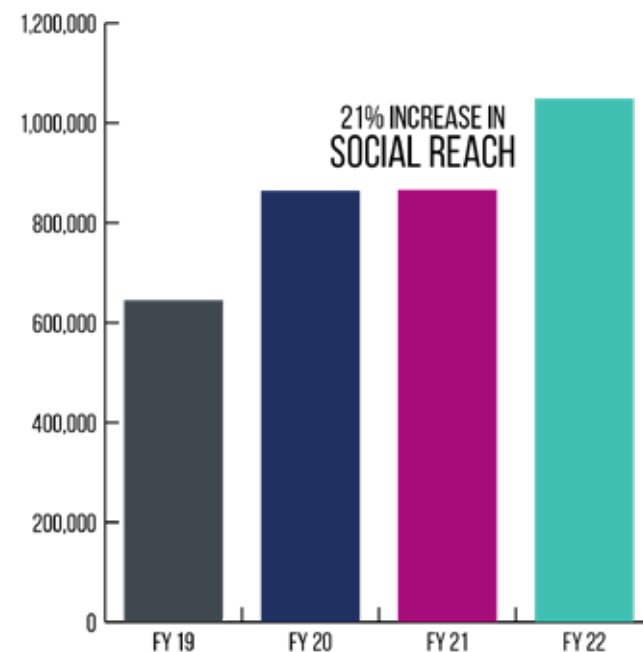
## BURGER BRACKET COMPETITION

To promote Council Bluffs restaurants, the CBCVB launched its second restaurant bracket competition for the public to nominate and vote for the best burger in CB. There were 824 votes cast, and Doozie's Doozie Burger won the crown! After the winner was announced, the CBCVB gave away 10, \$25 gift certificates to the winning restaurant to the public on social media.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

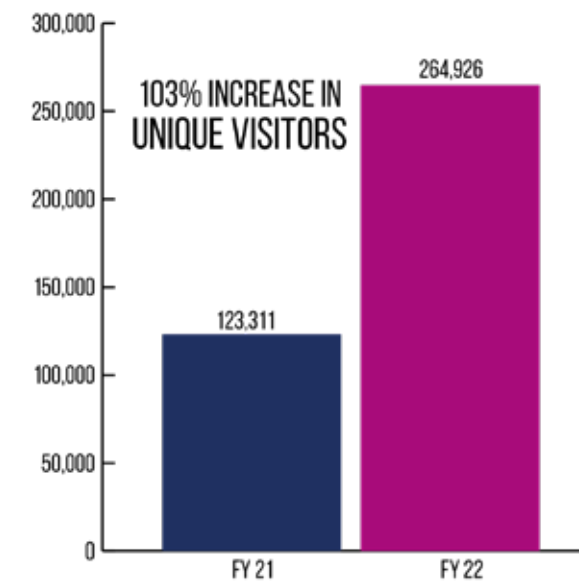
FY 2022 was a strong year on social media. The Unleash Council Bluffs pages gained 1,427 new followers and reached over 1 million users through 1,036 engaging posts across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and YouTube.

- 19,556 FOLLOWERS
- 24,328 LIKES + COMMENTS
- 17,729 PROFILE VISITS
- 1,048,868 REACH
- 1,374,700 IMPRESSIONS

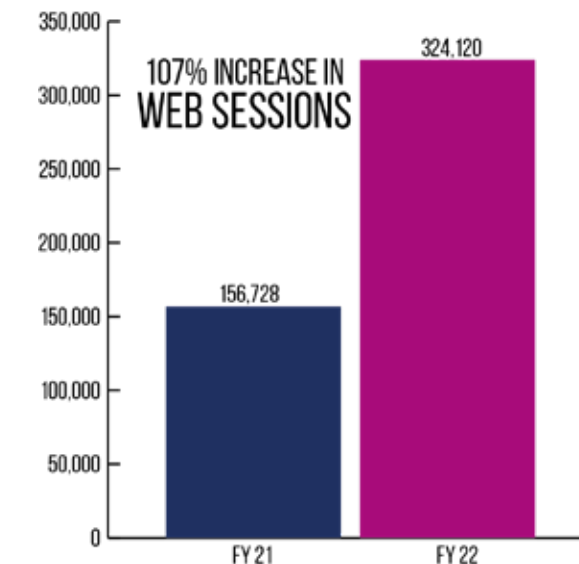


## UNLEASHCB.COM RESULTS

This was a record breaking year for UNleashCB.com. The number of blogs increased for another year, from 146 to 150. There were 1,390 events submitted to the community calendar, a 44 percent increase year over year. Web sessions increased by 107 percent, unique users by 103 percent, and page views by 86 percent. Top pages included Weekend Getaways, Events, and the 2022 Stir Concert Cove Calendar.



- 264,926 UNIQUE VISITORS (+ 103%)
- 324,591 SESSIONS (+ 107%)
- 506,958 PAGE VIEWS (+ 86%)
- 1.6 PAGES / VISIT



## WEBSITE DEVELOPMENTS

The award-winning website underwent another round of exciting developments and enhancements. These upgrades make it seamless for visitors to find the resources needed to make their day or weekend in Council Bluffs unforgettable!

[Pin to Trip](#)

The brand-new interactive trip planner allows visitors to save attractions, restaurants, hotels, events, and blogs to their own custom trip inventory.

[Add to Calendar](#)

Visitors can now download event information and seamlessly add it to their personal Outlook, Google, Mail, and Calendar app.



More filtering options have been added to the calendar of events so visitors can easily narrow their event search for when they plan to be in Council Bluffs.



New seasonal pages are available on the website. Each page pulls seasonal event information as well as seasonally appropriate eat, play, and stay listings.

## SEASONAL TRAVEL MARKETING INITIATIVES

The CBCVB continued its seasonal travel marketing initiatives to help bring overnight business back to Council Bluffs hotels. In July 2021, a brand new landing page was built to better highlight blog content and hotel packages to drive more engagement. Google Ads, Facebook ads, and retargeting were used in all initiatives to drive traffic to the getaway landing page.

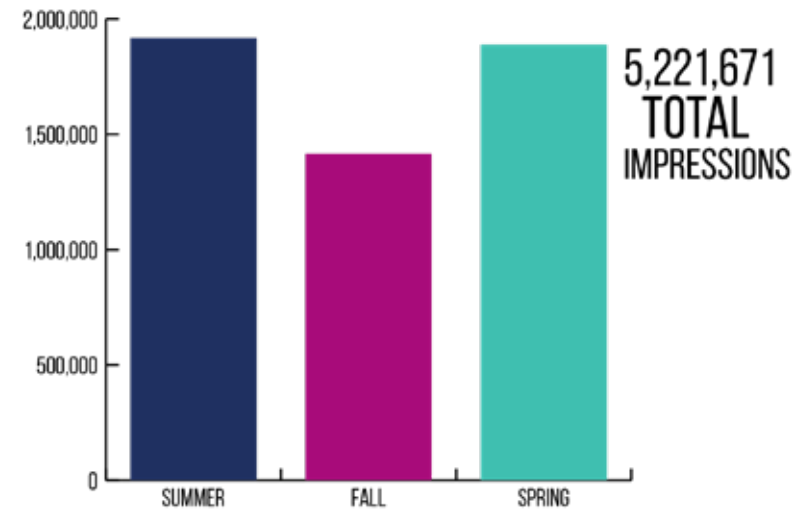
### SUMMER INITIATIVE

JULY 5 - SEPTEMBER 5, 2021

Investment	\$ 23,000
Impressions	1,917,464
Clicks	30,700
Page Views	47,124

Participating Hotels:

Country Inn & Suites, Hampton Inn @ Ameristar, Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites @ Ameristar, My Place Hotel, and Red Roof Inn



### FALL INITIATIVE

SEPTEMBER 13 - NOVEMBER 21, 2021

Investment	\$ 22,500
Impressions	1,415,249
Clicks	19,458
Page Views	47,745

Participating Hotels:

Courtyard by Marriott, Country Inn & Suites, Hampton Inn @ Ameristar, Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites @ Ameristar, My Place Hotel, and Red Roof Inn

### SPRING INITIATIVE

FEBRUARY 14 - MAY 14, 2022

Investment	\$ 25,000
Impressions	1,888,958
Clicks	20,936
Page Views	39,984

Participating Hotels:

Ameristar Casino Hotel, Country Inn & Suites, Hampton Inn @ Ameristar, Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites @ Ameristar, Microtel Inn & Suites, My Place Hotel, and Red Roof Inn

#### TARGET MARKETS:

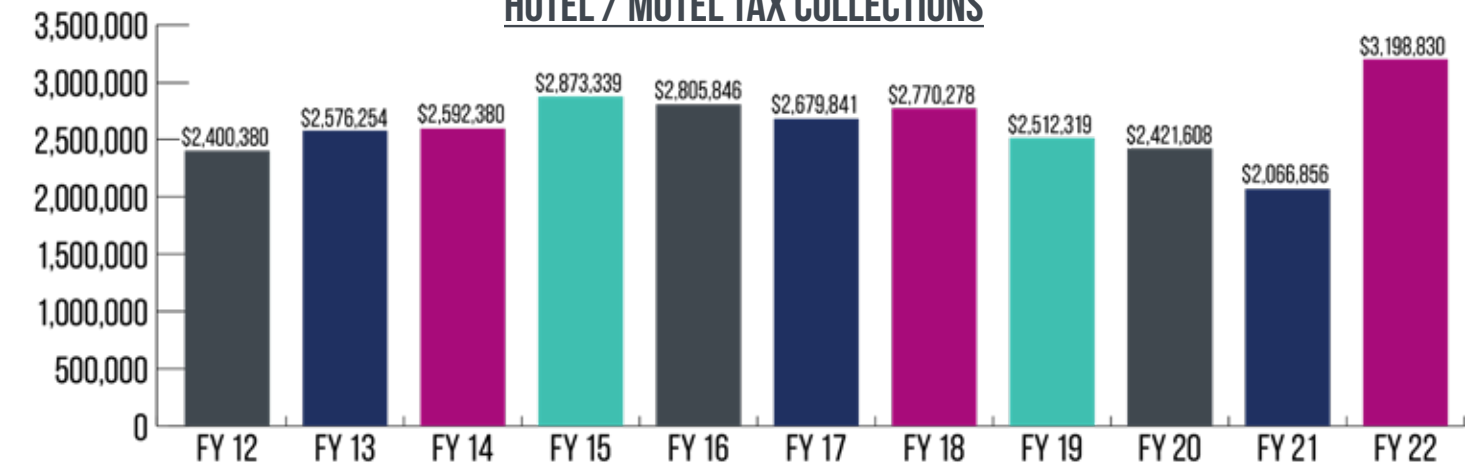


DES MOINES, IA  
SIOUX CITY, IA  
ST. JOSEPH, MO  
SIOUX FALLS/MITCHELL/YANKTON, SD  
HASTINGS/KEARNEY/GRAND ISLAND, NE



## HOTEL / MOTEL TAXES + GRANTS + COLLABORATIONS

### HOTEL / MOTEL TAX COLLECTIONS



### FY 22 HOTEL / MOTEL TAX COLLECTIONS HIT ALL-TIME HIGH

As a sign of pandemic recovery, the City of Council Bluffs collected \$3,198,618.73 in hotel/motel taxes during fiscal year 2022. This was a record high, \$1.13 million, or 55 percent more than FY 21. The previous high was FY 15, with \$2,873,339.

### GRANTS

The CBCVB secured or assisted with \$107,500 in grant funding. This included a \$50,000 pass-through grant from the Iowa West Foundation for the Adidas 3SSB Championships. Another \$50,000 from the Regional Sports Authority District grant program supported 11 tournaments. The Pottawattamie County Community Foundation's \$2,500 grant helped create ten county museum videos. Finally, the Iowa Tourism Office underwrote the CBCVB's 2022 spring travel marketing initiative with \$5,000 in funding.



### POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY MUSEUM PROJECT

The CVB collaborated with the Pottawattamie Countywide Tourism Promotion Committee, Golden Hills RC&D, and Pottawattamie County Community Foundation to produce ten videos highlighting the museums located throughout the county that didn't already have a video to help in promotional efforts. These videos are being used on multiple websites and social media channels to promote the museums and ultimately spark an interest in the viewers and bring them to visit Pottawattamie County.



### 2022 OMA TOURISM AWARDS

The Omaha Metropolitan Area (OMA) Tourism Awards recognize the best tourism businesses in Douglas, Sarpy, and Pottawattamie counties. The public nominated and voted for their favorites for the best hotel, restaurant, attraction, and retail business. The winners were as follows - Best Hotel: Courtyard by Marriott; Best Restaurant: Boxer Barbeque; Best Attraction: Union Pacific Railroad Museum; Best Retail Shop: Dusted Charm. The CBCVB presented the awards in collaboration with Visit Omaha and Sarpy County Tourism.

## SALES: MEETINGS + SPORTING EVENTS

This year brought changes to sales. Scott Hoffman made a lateral move into hospitality and community engagement to better utilize his talents. That allowed the bureau to hire Kathy Rosene as the new director of sales with her two decades of destination sales. On a parallel track, the CBCVB negotiated a partnership with the Omaha Sports Commission to leverage their expertise and connections in bringing new tournaments to CB.



The Adidas 3SSB Championships were held in CB July 16-18, 2021. Nearly 60,000 participants and spectators came here for an event that allows the nation's top college coaches to evaluate elite male basketball players from across the country as they face high-level competition. The event resulted in 713 hotel room nights over three days.



### KATHY ROSENE HIRED AS DIRECTOR OF SALES

In June 2022, Kathy Rosene joined the CBCVB team as the new director of sales. Kathy comes to the Bureau with more than 30 years of tourism and CVB experience. Her primary role is to ramp up the sales efforts of the CVB and to sell Council Bluffs as an ideal location for meetings and conventions to event planners.

### FISCAL YEAR 2022 EVENTS

DATES	EVENTS
July 16-18, 2021	Adidas 3SSB Championships
October 4-5, 2021	Iowa Museum Association Annual Conference
October 11-14, 2021	Iowa Association of Realtors Convention
October 14-17, 2021	USA Cornhole National Championship
October 21-24, 2021	Anime NebrasKon
October 22-24, 2021	Halloween Havoc Soccer Tournament
October 27-29, 2021	National Home School Volleyball Tournament
November 19-21, 2021	Mid-America Gamers Expo (MAGE)
November 25-27, 2021	Council Bluffs Kennel Club All Breed Dog Show
December 10-11, 2021	Council Bluffs Wrestling Classic
December 12, 2021	King + Queen of the MAC
February 25-27, 2022	Phil Cahoy Sr Cornhusker Classic
March 3-5, 2022	NJCAA Wrestling National Championships
March 28 - April 9, 2022	CREATE US Open Robotics Championship
April 14-16, 2022	Heartland USA Wrestling National Duals
April 22-24, 2022	Rumble on the River Soccer Tournament
May 5-8, 2022	Rural Letter Mid-State Conference
June 10-11, 2022	Abraham Lincoln's High School Class 1972 50th Reunion
June 15-26, 2022	Triple Crown SlumpBuster
June 21-22, 2022	Equitable Advisors



The Mid-America Gamers Expo (MAGE) made its debut in Council Bluffs in FY 22. The event was made possible through a collaboration between Iowa Western Community College and the Iowa West Foundation. The CBCVB provided a sponsorship and supported it with in kind marketing.

### FUTURE EVENTS WON IN FISCAL YEAR 2022

DATES	EVENTS
July 7-9, 2022	Rotary District 5650 Convention
July 18-20, 2022	NJCAA Rising All-Stars
July 28-31, 2022	5th Annual Great Plains PVA / AWBA Invitation
October 21-23, 2022	Anime NebrasKon
October 21-23, 2022	Halloween Havoc Soccer Tournament
October 27-29, 2022	National Home School Volleyball Tournament
December 9-10, 2022	Council Bluffs Wrestling Classic
December 11, 2022	King + Queen of the MAC
February 24-26, 2023	Phil Cahoy Sr Cornhusker Classic
March 3-4, 2023	NJCAA Wrestling National Championships
March 10-12, 2023	Council Bluffs + Omaha Pickleball Showcase
March 20 - April 1, 2023	CREATE US Open Robotics Championship
March 23-25, 2023	Heartland USA Wrestling National Duals
April 21-23, 2023	Rumble on the River Soccer Tournament
June 16-26, 2023	Triple Crown SlumpBuster
September 12-14, 2023	Iowa's County Conservation System Fall Conference
September 27-29, 2023	Professional Developers of Iowa Fall Conference

### OSC PARTNERSHIP

Created in 2003, the Omaha Sports Commission is dedicated to making the Omaha metro one of the premier sports destinations and has done so by hosting the US Olympic Swim Trials for 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020. In the spring of 2022, the CBCVB and OSC began discussing a collaboration that resulted in a partnership agreement for the year's second half and renewal thereafter. The goal is to identify and land new sporting events for fiscal year 2024.



# HOSPITALITY + COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



## IOWA WELCOME CENTER

On January 10, 2022, the Iowa Tourism Office announced that the CBCVB office and visitor center is now an official Iowa Welcome Center. The welcome center will serve as one of only 12 partnership Iowa Welcome Centers. "This is a huge win for Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County," said Patricia LaBounty, president of the Council Bluffs CVB Board of Directors. "Welcome centers do more than dispense brochures and maps," said LaBounty. "They prompt travelers to consider extending their stay and in doing so spend more money as a result."

To celebrate the new designation, the CBCVB held a ribbon-cutting to celebrate with the help of the Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce, the CB Ambassadors, elected officials, and other industry partners.

## WELCOME CENTER RESOURCES:



- VISITOR GUIDES
- STATE HIGHWAY MAPS
- BROCHURES
- METRO AREA RESOURCES
- TRAIL MAPS



## SCOTT'S NEW ROLE

Scott Hoffman stepped into a new role as the director of hospitality and community engagement for the Council Bluffs Convention & Visitors Bureau. In his new role, Scott will manage the bureau's new Iowa Welcome Center operations. This includes ensuring that the welcome center is fully stocked with local, state, and regional information, running the welcome center's volunteer efforts, and greeting travelers. Scott will work closely with our attractions, hoteliers, and event organizers to strengthen our local partnerships and continue to offer sales support for the bureau.

## UNLIKE ANYWHERE ELSE. ON PURPOSE.

The CBCVB supported the City's image campaign in various ways during the fiscal year. In May 2022, a new mural was designed and installed near Bayliss Park by Emspace + Lovgren. The mural promotes UNleashCB.com and provides an excellent selfie location downtown. Emma Schwaller continued to use the campaign's branding to create advertisements in the Parks & Rec Summer Fun Guide, Council Bluffs + Pottawattamie County Inspirational Guide, and Achieve Magazine.



## CBCVB SUPPORTS CB AS A BEE CITY

Prairie plants once carpeted the Iowa landscape. Now, a few have made their return to CB. In June, the grass behind the CBCVB's office was removed, and prairie starter plants were installed. While it will take a couple of years to see the plugs fully take root and bloom, it will be a transformation that will minimize mowing and better sustain bees, butterflies, and other native pollinators. What's more, the project supports the city's recent designation as a Bee City.

## DISTRIBUTION

The CBCVB works with CTM Media to distribute visitor guides and brochures in the Omaha / Council Bluffs metro hotels and attractions, and throughout the Des Moines metro.



The FY 2022 Council Bluffs CVB Annual Report was originally presented to the Council Bluffs City Council on August 22, 2022.