



FY 2024'S TOP TEN ACHIEVEMENTS

1. CB hotel/motel taxes reach record high for third year in a row at **more than \$3.466 million**.
2. Nearly **doubled grant awards** – growing from \$75,000 in FY 23 to \$145,000 in FY 24.
 - » \$70,000 grant through the **Iowa Regional Sports Authority District** program.
 - » \$40,000 **Iowa West Foundation** grant to attract and retain sporting events.
 - » \$25,000 **Union Pacific Railroad** grant to promote the 2023 Railroad Days.
 - » \$10,000 **Iowa Tourism Office** grant to support the 2024 winter travel marketing initiative.
3. **Redesigned UNleashCB.com** top-to-bottom for its first refresh since it debuted in May 2017.
4. **Increased traffic to UNleashCB.com** from nearly 14 to 8% across three metrics.
 - » 14% surge in **unique users** to 318,152.
 - » 11% jump in **sessions** to 385,956.
 - » 8% growth in **views** to 579,925.
5. **Grew website event submissions by 414 or 35%**, from 1,174 in FY 23 to 1,588 in FY 24.
6. Generated 8,590 hotel room nights, resulting in **\$877,640.30 of economic impact** from ten sporting events in FY 24. This represented 18.9% more in both than anticipated.
7. Held **two new prestigious national and international sporting events** in July 2023.
 - » **Adidas 3SSB Championships** – Girls, July 9-11, 2023, 468 hotel room nights
 - » **Yonex US Open Badminton Championships**, July 11-16, 2023, 961 hotel room nights
8. Won the right to host the **2028 Iowa League of Cities Conference** for the first time since 2018.
9. **Multiplied clicks and page views** prompted by **seasonal marketing initiatives by 24.5 and 22.8%**, respectively, YOY.
10. Nominated and earned **three more Iowa Tourism Awards**.
 - » **Outstanding Marketing Collaboration** – 2023 Omaha Metropolitan Area Tourism Awards
 - » **Outstanding Attraction** – Mt. Crescent Ski Area
 - » **Outstanding Niche Market Initiative** – 2022-23 CB Winter Travel Marketing Initiative



📍 MT. CRESCENT SKI AREA

A DECADE OF DELIVERING THE GOODS...

Dated September 8, 2014, a nondescript Internal Revenue Service letter communicated its approval of the Council Bluffs CVB's application to become a 501(c)6 private nonprofit. That signified the last step in CBCVB's journey to become a stand-alone organization. The IRS letter defines the bureau's birthday. We're now ten years old, and boy, have we come a long way.

Let's be honest. As the CBCVB set forth on its own, it was not with extravagant resources but from rather humble beginnings. (Do you remember our office on the second floor of the library?) At the start, our funding was half what CVBs in comparable communities enjoyed. The staff was a team of two, fewer than some bureaus in communities half CB's population. The situation afforded little else but the opportunity to seize the moment and get busy.

Getting busy is what the CBCVB did. In ten years, we built a four-time award-winning website, established an online community calendar, developed a robust social media following, molded CB into a four-season destination, supported the city's image campaign, purchased a highly visible office, among many notable accomplishments.

Recent years have produced some of the most extraordinary achievements. Chief among them is that hotel/motel tax collections set record highs for three consecutive years in fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024. A close second are the 13 awards earned by the CBCVB. Of those, the most gratifying remains the Iowa Tourism Awards honoring Council Bluffs as community of the year in 2017, 2020, and 2023.

Above all else, this busy decade focused on generating a substantial economic impact for local businesses, local government, and all local residents. According to Tourism Economics, that impact was \$329.62 million in visitor direct spending in 2022. Furthermore, the City of Council Bluffs hotel/motel tax collections surged from \$2.576 million to \$3.466 million between fiscal years 2013 and 2024.

As we celebrate the bureau's first decade, we mark it by changing our name. The Council Bluffs CVB will soon begin doing business as UNleash Council Bluffs. We already use it as our social media handle, and it is very similar to our website URL.

What won't change is the commitment by the CBCVB Board of Directors and staff to strive every day to deliver value to the City of Council Bluffs that exceeds, many times over, the dollars invested in us. Thank you for that investment.



Mark Shoemaker
Board President



LEADERSHIP

- Board President - Mark Shoemaker:** Pottawattamie Conservation
- Board Vice President - Ashley Kruse:** City of Council Bluffs
- Board Past President - Patricia LaBounty:** Union Pacific RR Museum
- Vanessa Dobles:** Union Pacific RR Museum
- Len Friedenbach:** Country Inn & Suites
- Arian Haddix:** Fox Creek Fundraising
- Matt Johnson:** Barley's Bar & Grill / Railway Inn
- Bill Vanderpool:** Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites @ Ameristar

TEAM

- Mark Eckman:** Executive Director
- Scott Hoffman:** Director of Hospitality
- Kathy Rosene:** Director of Sales
- Emma Schwaller:** Director of Marketing

509 23rd Avenue | Council Bluffs, Iowa
(712) 256.2577
UNLEASHCB.COM

FY 24 SOCIAL & WEB CONTENT ENTICED BOTH VISITORS & LOCALS

Social platforms and UNleashCB.com coaxed visitors with thought provoking posts and content to grow the CBCVB's following and traffic ever higher year-over-year.

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



Unleash Council Bluffs
March 4 · 🌐

On March 15, make plans to head to River's Edge Park for the first-ever Glowing Into Spring event! 🍷 Food trucks, fire pits, live music, and a hot air balloon glow night — we can't wait to see you there! Float over to our site to learn more.



UNLEASHCB.COM

Glowing Into Spring: A Free Family-Friendly Event

The City of Council Bluffs is excited to announce the first-ever "Glowing Into Spring," a free...

Boost this post to reach up to 8581 more people if you spend \$85.

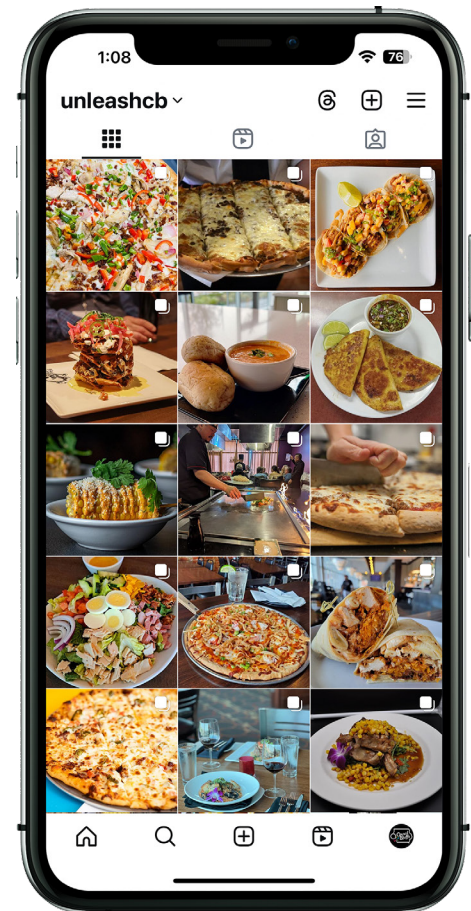
Boost post

197

14 comments 71 shares

FOODIE FEBRUARY RANG ONLINE DINNER BELL

The second annual Foodie February drove content on the bureau's social channels for the entire month, celebrating CB's culinary scene. Each week, a different theme brought local restaurants to the forefront, introducing visitors and reminding locals of the savory entrees found throughout Pottawattamie County. The month-long promotion created more than 167,000 impressions and resulted in over 6,600 engagements.



METRICS SURGE FOLLOWING UNLEASHCB.COM TOP-TO-BOTTOM REDESIGN

Originally launched in May 2017, UNLEASHCB.COM underwent its first top-to-bottom redesign aimed at optimizing the user experience. Furthermore, the three-time award-winning URL realized even higher traffic with more fresh content in the form of 414 additional events for a total of 1,588, a 35% increase. That represented all-time highs for both events and traffic. That's further evidence that the bureau built the city's and county's biggest and best community calendar.



SOCIAL METRICS REACH NEW HEIGHTS



*ORGANIC ONLY

CBCVB MADE PLAY FOR VISITORS YEAR-ROUND - ENGAGEMENT SHOT UP

Fiscal year 2023 saw the bureau's first winter travel marketing initiative, and that was repeated in fiscal year 2024. Winter tourism advertising is here to stay, with Mt. Crescent Ski Area receiving in 2024 the Iowa Tourism Award for outstanding attraction and the OMA Tourism Award for Pottawattamie County's best attraction. Even with impressions falling, the four seasonal marketing initiatives spurred more clicks and page views by 24.5 and 22.8%, respectively, than FY 23.

SUMMER INITIATIVE

JULY 1 - SEPTEMBER 4, 2023

Investment	\$25,000
Impressions	1,484,795
Clicks	27,822
Page Views	48,605

FALL INITIATIVE

SEPTEMBER 4 - NOVEMBER 19, 2023

Investment	\$25,000
Impressions	1,123,593
Clicks	17,408
Page Views	36,444

WINTER INITIATIVE

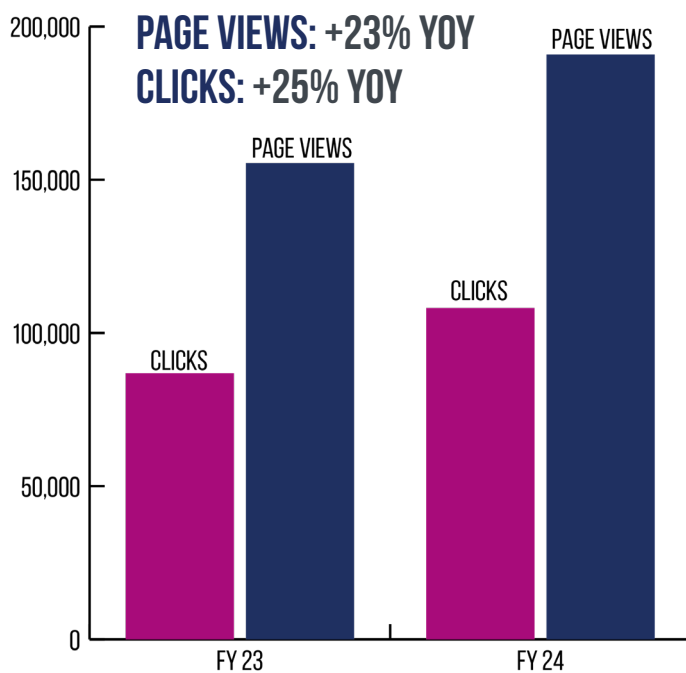
DECEMBER 1, 2023 - FEBRUARY 29, 2024

Investment	\$19,000
Impressions	1,100,908
Clicks	23,071
Page Views	42,429

SPRING INITIATIVE

MARCH 13 - JUNE 13, 2024

Investment	\$25,000
Impressions	1,367,233
Clicks	39,853
Page Views	63,428

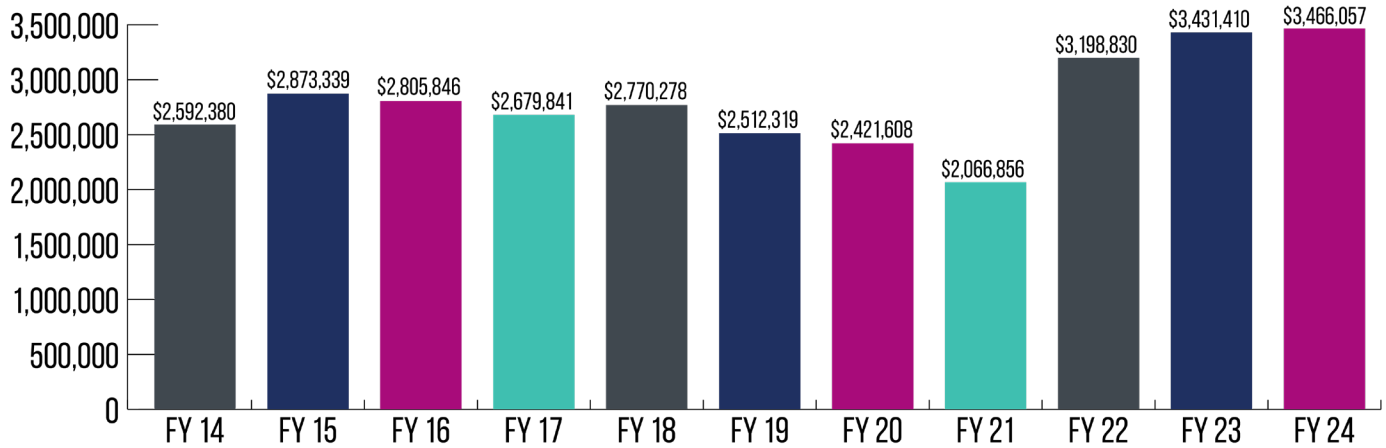


TARGET MARKETS

DES MOINES, IA
CEDAR RAPIDS, IA
WATERLOO, IA
MINNEAPOLIS, MN
KANSAS CITY, MO
ST. JOSEPH, MO
HASTINGS/KEARNEY/GRAND ISLAND, NE
SIOUX FALLS/MITCHELL/YANKTON, SD



HOTEL/MOTEL TAXES, GRANTS, & VISITOR SPENDING REMAIN STRONG

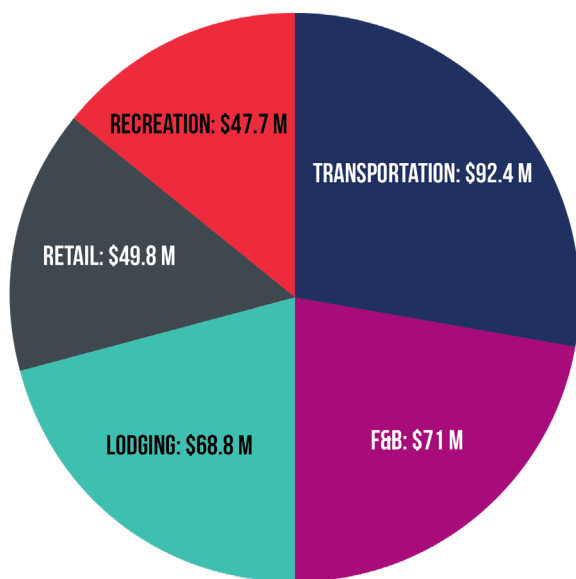


FY 24 HOTEL/MOTEL TAXES SET NEW RECORD HIGH FOR THIRD YEAR IN A ROW

The City of Council Bluffs hit a new record high in hotel/motel tax collections for the third consecutive year with \$3,466,057. Fiscal year 2024 generated \$34,647 more in taxes than the year before despite softening demand as measured by hotel occupancy.

FY 24 GRANT AWARDS NEARLY DOUBLE YEAR-OVER-YEAR

The CBCVB received \$145,000 in grant awards during FY 24 compared to \$75,000 in FY 23. The Regional Sports Authority District (RSAD) grant program approved \$70,000 to support 12 tournaments – \$20,000 more than previous years. That represents the 17th consecutive sports grant received from the State of Iowa. The Iowa West Foundation played a big part in landing the RSAD funding. The foundation green-lit a \$40,000 grant to supplement the local match. Additional event support came from a \$25,000 Union Pacific Railroad grant to help promote the 2023 Railroad Days. Furthermore, the Iowa Tourism Office underwrote the CBCVB's 2023 winter travel marketing initiative with a \$10,000 grant.



VISITOR SPENDING GREW BY 54% IN FURTHER PANDEMIC RECOVERY

According to Tourism Economics, visitor direct spending in Pottawattamie County rose by **6.8% year-over-year to \$329.62 million** in 2022. That reflected a recovery of \$115.73 million or a 54.11% increase in spending following 2020's steep decline to \$213.89 million.

Over an eight-year span, 2015-2022, travel expenditures totaled \$2.384 billion in the county as per data from the US Travel Association and Tourism Economics.

CB WINS RIGHT TO HOST 2028 IOWA LEAGUE OF CITIES CONFERENCE

The Iowa League of Cities chose Council Bluffs over Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Coralville, and Waterloo to host the 2028 Iowa League of Cities Conference. The convention draws 400-450 city elected leaders and municipal staff from across Iowa, generating approximately 800 hotel room nights. Council Bluffs last welcomed the league conference attendees in September 2014 and 2018. The successful bid keyed on the Mid-America Center's amenities, Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center, FIRST AVE, CB's housing initiative, Henry Doorly Zoo, and the potential streetcar project.



SHOEMAKER RECEIVED STATEWIDE AWARD FOR DECADES OF SERVICE

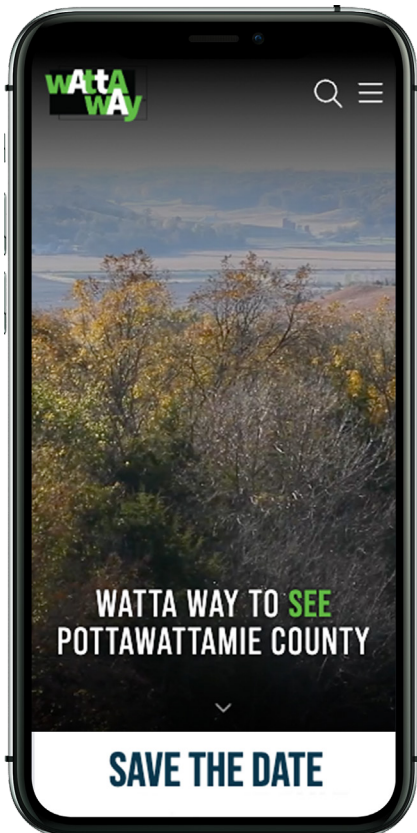
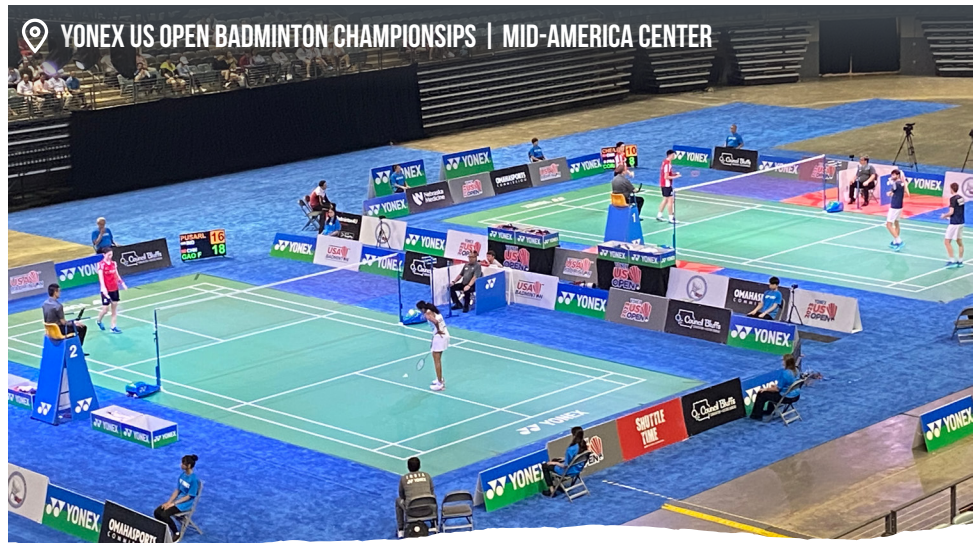
The Iowa Travel Industry Partners Foundation honored Mark Shoemaker, executive director of Pottawattamie Conservation, with the Joe Taylor Vision Award on June 11, 2024. The award commemorates its namesake, the former CEO of Visit Quad Cities for nearly 30 years, and his transformative work in destination marketing. Like Taylor, Shoemaker has led his organization for three decades and produced extraordinary achievements. Shoemaker will retire on August 30, 2024, shortly after concluding his two terms as president of the CBCVB Board of Directors.



SPORTS DREW FROM ACROSS THE US & AROUND THE WORLD

Council Bluffs hosted ten tournaments during fiscal year 2024 that generated significantly better results than expected. The events produced 8,590 hotel room nights, which resulted in \$877,640.30 in economic impact. Both the room nights and impact represented 18.9% more than anticipated.

Two were first-time events for CB: Adidas 3SSB Championships – Girls, July 9-11, 2023, with 468 hotel room nights, and Yonex US Open Badminton Championships, July 11-16, 2023, with 961 hotel room nights. The Adidas event attracted many of the best girl basketball players in the nation to compete in front of the top women’s college basketball coaches. Like other US Opens, the badminton championships draw the sport’s top athletes from around the globe and their fans, either in person or through streaming.



WATTA WAY TO SEE POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

Fiscal year 2024 was marked as particularly productive for Pottawattamie County tourism. To start, the first Pottawattamie County Museum Tour was held on July 16, 2023, and was deemed very successful, featuring museums in Avoca, Carson, Macedonia, Oakland, and Walnut. The Pottawattamie Tourism Committee secured a \$10,000 Iowa Tourism Grant to refresh its website’s design to elevate the user experience. In the process, the URL was shortened from WattaWayIA.com to simply WattaWay.com.

The county tourism committee returned as a sponsor of the 2024 Omaha Metropolitan Area Tourism Awards. Two rural nominees were voted the winners among the four Pottawattamie recipients: Unique Boutique Iowa as best retail business and Mt. Crescent Ski Area as best attraction.

Finally, the year concluded with the launch of the Western Iowa Rural Passport on June 19, 2024, with more than 50 locations participating in this inaugural staycation promotion of Pottawattamie, Mills, and Cass counties.

OMA: THREE COUNTIES, TWO STATES, ONE DESTINATION!

One of the most gratifying successes has been celebrating success itself with counterparts on the Nebraska side of the river. To a visitor, crossing a state boundary, county border, or city limit means little in the pursuit of their ultimate destination in the Omaha metropolitan area (OMA). So, why should these lines prevent tourism colleagues from coming together to applaud the good work done by attractions, hotels, restaurants, and retail businesses of the three metro counties: Pottawattamie, Douglas, and Sarpy?

Since 2017, the Council Bluffs CVB, Visit Omaha, and Sarpy County Tourism have collaborated annually in soliciting nominations and votes from locals and visitors to determine the best of those four business categories in each of the three counties.

In 2024, the Omaha Metropolitan Area Tourism Awards did just that and more. This year generated the most votes in the awards' seven-year history with 24,576, a 33% increase year-over-year. Pottawattamie County's nominations and votes set new highs: 1,952 nominations compared to 957 in 2023 (104% more) and 8,312 votes compared to 7,999 in 2023 (3.9% more).

The 2024 Pottawattamie County winners were Best Hotel: Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites @ Ameristar; Best Attraction: Mt. Crescent Ski Area; Best Restaurant: Pizza King; and Best Retail Business: Unique Boutique Iowa. The Holiday Inn Hotel and Pizza King were both second-time winners from 2021.

What's more, the OMA Tourism Awards brought home an award of its own – the Iowa Tourism Award for outstanding marketing collaboration! Joining the CBCVB staff on stage to accept the award were bureau friends Deb Ward and Jasmyn Goodwin of Visit Omaha and Fred Uhe of Sarpy County Tourism. Success is best savored in the company of colleagues who share a passion to promote the area's favorite places.



Omaha Metropolitan Area **TOURISM AWARDS**

3 COUNTIES · 2 STATES · 1 DESTINATION



A DECADE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS & ACCOLADES: 2014-2024

- **Hotel/motel taxes surpass \$3 million** and set new records three years in a row.
- Nominated and earned 13 **Iowa Tourism Awards**.
 - » **Outstanding Community** – Council Bluffs (3x)
 - » **Outstanding Website** – UNleashCB.com (4x)
 - » **Outstanding Social Media** – UNleash Council Bluffs pages (2x)
 - » **Outstanding Marketing Collaboration** – 2023 Omaha Metropolitan Area Tourism Awards
 - » **Outstanding Niche Market Initiative** – 2022-23 CB Winter Travel Marketing Initiative
 - » **Outstanding Attraction** – Mt. Crescent Ski Area
 - » **Outstanding Event** – Beyond Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience
- Purchased **509 23rd Ave.** in 2018 to serve as a **new office** home and an **Iowa Welcome Center**.
- Secured **\$525,555** in Iowa Regional Sports Authority District grants from FY 15 to FY 24.
- Propelled **growth** in website traffic on **UNleashCB.com** across three metrics by four-digit percentages from FY 15 to FY 24.
 - » **Unique users** from 24,255 to 318,152: **1,212% higher**
 - » **Sessions** from 28,793 to 385,956: **1,240% higher**
 - » **Views** from 48,265 to 579,925: **1,102% higher**
- Landed the **2025 Iowa Association of Business & Industry Conference (ABI)**, the state's largest business network. It will come to CB for the **first time** in its 120-year history.
- Launched the **Omaha Metropolitan Area Tourism Awards** with Visit Omaha and Sarpy County Tourism in 2017 to promote more bi-state, metro-wide collaboration.
- Emerged as one of Council Bluffs' **most visible advocates** touting all things CB.
 - » Invested **\$316,802** in seasonal marketing initiatives from FY 20 through FY 24.
 - » Created **19,602,233** impressions.
 - » Inspired **284,628** clicks to website.
 - » Prompted **512,012** views.
 - » Recruited and engaged **23,594** social media followers.
- Helped stimulate **travel expenditures** during 2015-2022* to soar to an eight-year total of **\$2.384 billion**, as per data from the US Travel Association and Tourism Economics.

**The most recent data available*





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 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.