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DESTINATION CLEVELAND ANNOUNCES NEW MARKETING AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE INITIATIVES AT 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

Organization reports on progress toward strategic plan goals; shares how it will measure success

Producer/Editor Note: The videos shown at today's annual meeting can be viewed [here](#).

CLEVELAND (May 3, 2023) – At an annual meeting held today, [Destination Cleveland](#) unveiled new marketing initiatives to strengthen perceptions of Cleveland and destination infrastructure projects to enhance the visitor experience. The destination marketing and management organization also shared how it will measure progress toward its 2023-2025 strategic plan goals, which are designed to help the region's travel and tourism industry surpass pre-pandemic visitation levels. More than 500 people attended the event, including a variety of tourism and hospitality businesses, community organizations and local leaders.

"After three years, travel is back. We are strong. And we are making a difference through our work with community partners," said David Gilbert, president and CEO of Destination Cleveland. "We are focused on working with residents and industry businesses to attract visitors and help them discover authentic Cleveland experiences that take them even deeper into our neighborhoods. By broadening the scope of each visitor's exploration of Cleveland and deepening their appreciation of our awesome city, our visitor economy can and will contribute to the region's short- and long-term equitable growth."

MEASURING PROGRESS: 2023-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Destination Cleveland shared its progress toward the four objectives laid out in its [2023-2025 strategic plan](#). The organization laid out the key performance indicators (KPIs) it will use to measure progress over the next three years; results will be shared each year through a report available at [DestinationCleveland.org](#). The KPIs include:

- Visitation growth at a rate that exceeds domestic growth
- Improved perceptions of Cleveland among key audiences
- Consistent resident recommendation of Cleveland as a place to visit
- Visitor experience perception and satisfaction
- Willingness of talent to relocate to Cleveland and
- Partner satisfaction and willingness to recommend working with Destination Cleveland.

NEW MARKETING INITIATIVES

To build on the Cleveland visitor brand's nearly 10 consecutive years of success, Destination Cleveland announced new marketing initiatives that highlight Clevelanders' signature passion and boldness and encourage visitors to experience the city for themselves.

- **The Land for Life video storytelling campaign:** Since introducing The Land for Life campaign last fall, filming has occurred at 10 locations and nearly 80 Clevelanders have sat on The Land Love Seat to share their story and form new friendships. Six new episodes were released today and are now available at the recently launched [ThisisCleveland.TV](#).
- **Legends of The Land podcast:** Destination Cleveland is also highlighting residents as Cleveland storytellers through its new Legends of The Land podcast, which launched at the meeting. The first three episodes are now available at [ThisisCleveland.TV](#) and on all major podcast streaming platforms, with plans for seven more episodes throughout the year.
- **Building brand loyalty:** The organization announced plans for a branded merchandise venture to expand awareness and loyalty to the popular Script Cleveland brand. Using a vending machine retail

model, the venture will start as a three-month trial at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport. The initiative will be evaluated after the trial, including scalability, to further spread the love of The Land.

- **Move to Cleveland landing page:** Destination Cleveland also shared an update on the progress of the [Cleveland Talent Alliance](#), including the [launch](#) of the new Move to Cleveland webpage. The landing page is the first phase of an ongoing effort to develop a comprehensive resource for talent attraction and retention in Cleveland.

ENHANCING THE DESTINATION THROUGH PLACE-MAKING DEVELOPMENTS

The organization announced several projects to enhance and show off community assets. A lighting project, which will help illuminate parts of Downtown Cleveland, will create an increased perception of safety, connect key corridors and encourage foot traffic and economic activity throughout the city's central core. Destination Cleveland will fund nearly half of the project and will raise the project's remaining budget from a variety of public and private sources.

Destination Cleveland also announced the Murals Across the City program, which will provide photo-ready, branded walls for residents and visitors alike to share their love of The Land through social media. The organization issued a call for local artists to help extend the Cleveland visitor brand essence into neighborhoods, enhance visitor assets and ultimately drive visitation. Interested artists, as well as building owners who would like their property to be considered for a mural installation, can learn more at [ThisisCleveland.com/murals](https://thisiscleveland.com/murals).

THE LAND OF FORWARD PROGRESS

Jon Pinney, chair of Destination Cleveland's Board of Directors, noted that local travel and tourism continues to see a return to pre-pandemic activity. He shared a key indicator of Cleveland's successful recovery is the rate at which local hotel occupancy is returning:

- At the end of 2022, hotel occupancy in Cuyahoga County was nearly 60%, a 13% increase over 2021 and a greater growth than the national occupancyⁱ.
- At the end of Q1 of 2023, occupancy at Cuyahoga County hotels was up nearly 11% year-to-date, compared to the national statistic of 6% year-to-dateⁱⁱ.

Attendees also heard from Cleveland Mayor Justin M. Bibb and Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne. Both are former members of the Destination Cleveland Board of Directors. The leaders discussed how travel and tourism contributes to Cleveland's economy, affects everyday citizens and elevates residents' quality of life.

Held at [The Madison](#) in the St. Clair Superior neighborhood, guests enjoyed live entertainment from the [Kwan Family Lion Dance](#) and [Pacific Paradise Entertainment](#) as well as a reception that included a "Taste of the Neighborhood" area featuring four nearby restaurants: [KafeLA](#), [Mango Mango](#), [The Roaming Biscuit](#) and [Yum Village](#). Destination Cleveland would like to thank presenting sponsor [Bally Sports Ohio](#) and event sponsor [United Airlines](#).

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ABOUT DESTINATION CLEVELAND: *Destination Cleveland is Cleveland's destination marketing and management organization. This private, non-profit organization's mission is to drive economic impact and stimulate community vitality for Greater Cleveland through leisure and business travel. In 2021, visitation to Cuyahoga County rebounded to 16.1 million visits, a 17% increase after the COVID-19 global pandemic reduced visitation by 30 percent in 2020. Destination Cleveland continues its work to rebuild the travel and tourism industry, with the goal of exceeding pre-pandemic success as quickly as possible. For more information, visit www.thisiscleveland.com.*

ⁱ Data sourced from December 2022 Cuyahoga County STR Report

ⁱⁱ Data sourced from March 2023 Cuyahoga County STR Report