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DESTINATION CLEVELAND REPORTS 2016 ORGANIZATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

ANNUAL MEETING PRESENTATION UNVEILS STRATEGIC PLAN, PREVIEWS NEW
INDUSTRY INITIATIVES TO FOSTER CONTINUED GROWTH

CLEVELAND (March 23, 2017) – Today, [Destination Cleveland](#), the only organization in Cuyahoga County responsible for growing the travel and tourism industry, hosted its 2017 annual meeting to announce several organizational achievements. The group also previewed key initiatives designed to leverage the momentum of a historic 2016 to continue to grow Cleveland as a national and international destination for meetings and conventions and leisure travel.

2016 ORGANIZATION SUCCESSES

Convention Sales and Services

In addition to hosting one of the largest events the Northeast Ohio region has seen in decades, Destination Cleveland's convention sales and services team continued to generate increases resulting from ongoing efforts to attract conventions and business-related events to Cleveland.

The sales team pursued 744 leads in 2016, a 17.4 percent increase over 2015. In partnership with many of the area's hotels and venues, the sales team booked more than 228,500 definite room nights, nearly 57,000 more than 2015. Approximately 2.8 percent more hotel rooms were purchased in Cleveland in 2016 versus 2015, exceeding the U.S. increase in rooms sold of 1.7 percent.

To complement the efforts of the sales team, the convention services team provided event planning expertise and support to 271 meetings and conventions, which is 50 more than 2015.

Marketing and Communications

In 2016, the marketing and communications efforts to support the Cleveland brand were heightened to both prepare the community for the Republican National Convention and use the event to further change Cleveland's narrative as a place to visit. The efforts resulted in the following:

- 4.4 million page views of Destination Cleveland's website (www.thisiscleveland.com), a 36 percent increase over 2015. The site was explored by more than one million people.
- More than 55 million people reached through paid advertising efforts;
- More than 209 million people reached through Destination Cleveland's social media efforts;
- 11.8 billion media impressions for both Destination Cleveland and the Cleveland 2016 Host Committee, compared to an average of 350-500 million impressions generated through the organization's traditional meetings and conventions, leisure and local outreach efforts.

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Destination Development and Community Affairs (DDCA)

Destination Cleveland's DDCA team continued to collaborate with community and industry stakeholders on several projects aimed at strengthening the region as a destination and enhancing the visitor experience. In conjunction with the City of Cleveland, the team completed a major phase of its Seamless Cleveland Wayfinding Masterplan with the installation of 54 pedestrian wayfinding signs in time for the Republican National Convention.

In addition, more than 1,000 frontline staff successfully completed the 2016 [CLE Travelbackers](#) training program, which was redesigned with new benefits for participants including less time away from work, lower costs and RNC-related content. Since its launch in 2013, a total of 2,600 frontline staff members have completed the [CLE Travelbackers](#) program.

Cleveland 2016 Host Committee Support

To turbocharge the effort to change Cleveland's narrative, Destination Cleveland worked in tandem with the Cleveland 2016 Host Committee to leverage the 2016 Republican National Convention to showcase Northeast Ohio as a visitor destination.

On behalf of the Host Committee, Destination Cleveland oversaw more than 10 subcommittees and partnered with more than 230 organizations to create an authentic Cleveland experience for more than 50,000 convention guests. In total, Destination Cleveland, across all departments, contributed more than 30,000 hours to the Cleveland 2016 Host Committee's efforts to host the Convention.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Also at today's meeting, David Gilbert, president and CEO of Destination Cleveland, unveiled the organization's 2017-2020 strategic plan. Developed under the guidance of Ernst & Young's Travel and Tourism consulting team, the plan outlines approaches to drive the attraction of 20 million visitors by 2020.

Designed to ensure the continued growth of Destination Cleveland's efforts and the evolution of Northeast Ohio's travel and tourism industry, the plan also challenges the organization to achieve the following goals:

- Be a purpose driven organization
- Increase volume and impact of meetings, conventions, groups and events
- Improve perception locally, regionally and beyond
- Elevate the destination and visitor experience
- Develop and leverage community support for the travel and tourism industry
- Enhance organizational design and reputation

While the tactical plan to achieve the goals is still in development, Gilbert provided a preview of three fundamental and transformative initiatives that will drive Destination Cleveland's work in the next three years:

- **DMO to DMMO:** The organization will transition from operating as a destination marketing organization (DMO), one that markets communities as destinations and measures success on visitor volume, hotel occupancy rates and number of meetings and conventions booked, to a destination marketing and management organization (DMMO), one that takes into account important issues that affect the overall growth of the travel and tourism industry and its integration into broader community planning efforts.

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- **LOCAL FLYWHEEL:** Destination Cleveland will work to leverage the success of grassroots efforts, such as the utilization of [#ThisisCLE](#), to connect locals to Destination Cleveland's mission and create a self-sustaining momentum of positive resident word of mouth.
- **TOURISM MASTER PLAN – CLEVELAND 2.0:** Destination Cleveland will spearhead a broader effort – in partnership with the community and industry stakeholder groups – to create a shared vision for the future of the travel and tourism industry.

In addition to Gilbert's presentation, Dan Walsh, founder and CEO of Citymark and chairman of Destination Cleveland's board of directors, also presented the organization's successes of 2016. Held at Severance Hall, guests were entertained by the Contemporary Youth Orchestra and enjoyed a cocktail reception following the meeting.

The organization is appreciative of the support of all its partners, particularly those that worked together to put on today's event. Destination Cleveland would like to thank [Fox Sports Net Ohio](#) for serving as the presenting sponsor of the annual meeting, and also is appreciative of the support of its event sponsors: [Advance 360](#), [Angstrom Graphics](#), [Crain's Cleveland Business](#), [Enterprise/National Rent-A-Car](#), [Fern Exposition and Event Services](#), [Microsoft](#), [Ohio Business Machines](#), [Old City Soda](#) and [Vitamix](#).

For more information about Destination Cleveland or visitor-related developments, attractions and activities, please visit [thisiscleveland.com](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and subscribe to our channels on [YouTube](#) and [Pinterest](#).

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ABOUT DESTINATION CLEVELAND: *Destination Cleveland is Cleveland's convention and visitors bureau. This private, non-profit organization's mission is to drive economic impact and stimulate community vitality for Greater Cleveland through leisure and business travel. Cleveland welcomes more than 17 million visitors annually. For more information, visit [www.thisiscleveland.com](#).*