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## **DESTINATION CLEVELAND SHARES NEW STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, INTRODUCES REFRESHED VISITOR BRAND AT 2022 ANNUAL MEETING**

*Integrated marketing campaign to attract visitors to kick-off in August*

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

**CLEVELAND** (July 11, 2022) – [Destination Cleveland](#) shared today at its annual meeting its continued efforts to rebuild the travel and tourism industry to pre-pandemic growth, including initiatives to support the needs of industry partners and collaborators. The destination marketing and management organization also unveiled its 2022-2025 strategic plan as well as a refreshed Cleveland visitor brand and a new visitor marketing campaign to the more than 400 meeting attendees.

"We made it through another year of challenge and uncertainty as only Clevelanders can – with compassion, resilience and creativity," said David Gilbert, president and CEO of Destination Cleveland. "And while the community is still facing headwinds, we used the past two years to not only help the travel and tourism industry make it through COVID but to rebuild and evolve Destination Cleveland to be a more powerful engine. We're ready to mobilize our momentum to ensure travel and tourism remains a critical instrument of attraction to Greater Cleveland."

### **TURNING THE CORNER TOGETHER: 2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Jon Pinney, the chair of Destination Cleveland's Board of Directors, noted that the organization remains optimistic that visitation to Cleveland is on pace to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2024. A key indicator of Cleveland's success is the rate at which local hotel occupancy is returning:

- At the end of 2021, hotel occupancy in Cuyahoga County was up more than 38% over 2020, outpacing the rate at which U.S occupancy returned (31%<sup>i</sup>).
- At the end of May 2022, Cuyahoga County occupancy was up more than 21% year-to-date over the same time in 2021, compared to the national statistic of 17% year-to-date<sup>ii</sup>.

"Before the pandemic, Cuyahoga County's visitation growth rate outpaced the national visitation growth rate for nine straight years. As travel returns, we're hearing anecdotally that the region's travel and tourism recovery is on-pace with or possibly even surpassing the nation's rate of recovery," said Pinney. "As we've rebuilt from the pandemic's devastation, we started from a solid base, and we're applying our learnings and coming together to propel the industry and community forward. It's time to make travel and tourism a growth industry for Cleveland again."

### **MOBILIZING MOMENTUM: 2022-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN**

As Destination Cleveland looks to the future of the organization and the industry as a whole, it shared its new strategic plan, which will guide the organization's work over the next three years. The plan development process included engagement of Destination Cleveland's Board of Directors, leadership, employees, partners and collaborators in the hospitality industry.

Along with updating its mission and vision, the organization identified four guiding principles as foundational imperatives that should be considered throughout all Destination Cleveland's activities.

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They require Destination Cleveland to apply its values internally and externally, staying focused on continuously advancing the organization's positive impact in Greater Cleveland.

- Contribute to building a strong economy.
- Apply a diversity, equity and inclusion lens to all activities.
- Utilize community engagement and collaboration to seek feedback and represent the visitor's perspective.
- Invest in enhanced organizational capabilities and capacity while ensuring fiscal responsibility.

The plan, which can be found in its entirety [here](#), also outlines four goals the organization will pursue to achieve its updated vision and pursue its mission:

- **Increase visitation and attract visitors to measurably affect economic growth**  
Attracting people to Cleveland continues to be Destination Cleveland's primary job. While the pandemic was a setback, Destination Cleveland has an even greater resolve to bring people to Cleveland to patronize businesses and attractions, which infuses dollars into the local economy and creates jobs.
- **Strengthen perceptions and the narrative of Cleveland**  
Research shows the Cleveland visitor brand has been largely successful at strengthening Cleveland's narrative and bringing millions of people to the city since 2014. To capitalize on the continued opportunity for growth, Destination Cleveland spent the last 18 months evaluating brand research, reassessing the 2014 brand architecture and evolving and refreshing the brand essence, values and promise as well as the look and feel of the Cleveland visitor brand to better reflect the diversity of the community, drive more visitation to the area and ultimately encourage visitors to consider the region as a place to live and work.
- **Amplify and enhance authentic and unique destination experiences across the region**  
To strengthen Cleveland as a diverse, equitable and inclusive place to visit, Destination Cleveland will pursue a variety of initiatives including programming that educates and engages hospitality businesses to ensure Cleveland looks, acts and feels like the diverse and inclusive destination it is. Additionally, it will collaborate to enhance the community's physical assets; current projects include development of a Civil Rights Trail, a study into how to best program and market downtown public spaces and work to bring dynamic lighting to Public Square. To facilitate visitor exploration and highlight diverse experiences, Destination Cleveland will continue to curate and launch experience [passports](#).
- **Leverage organizational expertise, capabilities and relationships to advance community priorities that align with Destination Cleveland's mission**  
Destination Cleveland can use its unique expertise, capabilities and relationships to support, advocate for, and advance community projects that are led by other organizations but align with Destination Cleveland's mission. Several initiatives are underway in this area, including ones that formalize Destination Cleveland's commitment to Harness the Power of the Visitor to help the community grow and compete in the global economy:
  - **Cleveland Talent Alliance:** Since launching in March, nearly 30 private and nonprofit sector organizations have expressed interest in being involved in the Alliance, which aims to increase consideration of Cleveland as a place to live and work. The Alliance is anchored by Greater Cleveland Partnership, TeamNEO, Engage! Cleveland, Cleveland Leadership Center and Destination Cleveland. Gilbert [introduced](#) Sara Greicius as the Alliance's first director.

- **Business Events CLE:** The Business Events CLE concept endeavors to increase consideration of Cleveland as a place to live and work by utilizing events, conferences and meetings hosted in Cleveland as a way to reach potential residents. Destination Cleveland – in tandem with Cleveland State University and more than 30 local companies, universities and civic and public entities – tested the concept at the March 2022 Women in CyberSecurity Conference (WiCyS) and received encouraging feedback. A post-event survey found that 25% of respondents would consider Cleveland if a job opportunity was presented to them and 46% would visit Cleveland for leisure after attending WiCyS. Destination Cleveland is refining the concept based on the initial learnings and expects to share more about the program in the fall.

### **THE LAND FOR LIFE: DESTINATION CLEVELAND’S REFRESHED VISITOR BRAND**

To build on the Cleveland brand’s nearly 10 consecutive years of success, Destination Cleveland unveiled a refreshed visitor brand which better reflects the community’s diversity and new amenities and experiences. The incremental changes made reinforce Cleveland’s current strengths, identify new ones and optimize how people talk about Cleveland to those who live elsewhere.

To introduce the evolved brand outside of Cleveland, Destination Cleveland will launch a boldly positive and authentic integrated marketing campaign called [The Land For Life](#). It will include paid advertising in Columbus, Cincinnati, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Washington, D.C. and Atlanta. Additional photo, video and written content will be shared through the organization’s website ([ThisIsCleveland.com](https://thisiscleveland.com)) and social media channels. Information about a [storytelling series](#) being produced as part of the brand refresh, which will be centered around Clevelanders answering questions, telling their stories and showing off their pride for The Land, will be announced in the coming weeks.

“We are confident the refreshed brand will inspire people to experience Cleveland’s unpretentious creativity, fun and determination and ultimately get visitors to consider Cleveland as a place to live and work. By highlighting residents in our new campaign, we’ll introduce potential visitors to our greatest asset – our people – before they even arrive and build pride locally as residents share their authentic experiences and views about our great city,” said Gilbert.

Held at the new [Truss Event Venue](#) in Ohio City, guests enjoyed live entertainment and a reception following the meeting. Destination Cleveland would like to thank the meeting sponsors:

- Presenting Sponsor: [Bally Sports Ohio](#)
- Neighborhood Sponsor: [KJK](#)
- Event Sponsors: [Dominion Energy Ohio](#), [Medical Mutual](#), [United Airlines](#) and [Watershed Distillery](#).

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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 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic reduced visitation by 30 percent, with 13.8 million visits occurring. Prior to the pandemic, Cleveland hosted 19.6 million visits annually, with the County experiencing annual visitation increases that surpassed the domestic travel growth rate for nine consecutive years. For more information, visit [www.thisiscleveland.com](https://www.thisiscleveland.com).

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<sup>i</sup> Data sourced from December 2021 Cuyahoga County STR Report

<sup>ii</sup> Data sourced from May 2022 Cuyahoga County STR Report