OUR MISSION

Experience Rochester MN stimulates economic growth through visitor spending with aggressive sales, marketing, partnerships and destination development strategies while facilitating the best possible visitor experience.

CONTENTS

3 State of the Industry
4 2018 Experience Rochester
   Board of Directors
5 Sales Objectives
8 Economic Impact
10 Marketing Efforts
14 Destination Development
18 Rochester Sports
20 Visitor Experience
22 Financials
23 Experience Rochester & Rochester Sports Staff

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minnesotasrochester.com

Experience Rochester MN
30 Civic Center Drive SE, Suite 200
Rochester, MN 55904
507.288.4331 * 800.634.8277
minnesotasrochester.com

Designed by Em En Design
www.emendesign.com

Photos by:
olivejuicestudios.com
AB-PHOTOGRAPHY.US
Em En Design
Ebert Media Group
Dear Community & Industry Stakeholders,

The Experience Rochester MN Board of Directors and staff are pleased to present our annual Report to the Community, which illustrates the vast dedication and extraordinary efforts of everyone who works to make Rochester an exceptional destination for visitors.

This year’s report captures a particularly exciting period of change and growth both within Experience Rochester MN (formerly the Rochester Convention & Visitors Bureau) and throughout the community’s hospitality industry. Recent major accomplishments and hospitality industry developments that are detailed within this report include: the creation and implementation of our community’s new destination brand, “Minnesota’s Rochester: America’s City of Care and Innovation (p. 10);” increased opportunities and sales tied to the 2017 Mayo Civic Center expansion (p. 6); the expansion of air service at Rochester International Airport (p. 16); and a hotel building boom (p. 15). By the end of 2020, downtown Rochester is expected to add 850 new hotel rooms, which will raise the downtown room count to more than 3,000 and the citywide room count to more than 7,000.

Experience Rochester MN has an important partnership with the City of Rochester as its official destination management organization, and we are the organizational focal point of Rochester’s hospitality industry. Together with our partners, we are poised for the many growth opportunities before us. Our team starts with our dedicated staff and Board of Directors, and includes the award-winning Rochester MN Sports (formerly the Rochester Amateur Sports Commission), Mayo Clinic, the Rochester City Council, Mayo Civic Center, the Mayo Civic Center Commission, the Destination Medical Center leaders and staff, our inspired volunteers, and our hardworking industry colleagues. All these groups, along with many others, create the focus and desire to care for our 3.3 million annual overnight visitors who spent $493 million in our community’s hotels, restaurants, shops, and other establishments in 2017, and spent $262 million in our establishments between January and May of 2018.

Our goal is to contribute to the public good, provide meaningful and positive guest experiences through Rochester’s devoted and caring people, and to position Rochester as a vibrant, world-class destination. It is only through collaboration that we can reach our true potential.

Thank you for your support and we look forward to serving you in the future.

Myron Salz
Chairman, Board of Directors

Brad M. Jones
Executive Director/CEO

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Raising Destination Awareness

Raising the Quality of Life

Attracting Strategic Events

Enhancing the Visitor Experience

Improving Transportation Networks & Infrastructure

The strategic direction of Experience Rochester MN.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Centerstone Plaza Soldiers Field

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Experience Rochester MN

Donna Drews
Mayo Civic Center

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Mayo Clinic

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Kathleen Harrington
Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce

Christian Holter
Rochester City Lines

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Kahler Hospitality Group

Andy Chafoulias
Titan Development

DIRECTORS - Ex Officio

Ed Hruska
Rochester MN Sports

Steve Rymer
City of Rochester

Paul Widman
Rochester Park & Recreation Department
The Experience Rochester MN Sales Department is responsible for business development by prospecting, qualifying, and developing relationships that ultimately lead to booking meetings, conventions, and events that provide economic impact to Rochester and revenue to the hospitality industry. Experience Rochester MN’s staff is responsible for fulfilling sales and marketing responsibilities for Mayo Civic Center. With the 2017 completion of an expansion of the Mayo Civic Center, much of 2017 and the first half of 2018 was spent focusing on new business development. Some of the market segments that the sales team targets heavily for events at the expanded Mayo Civic Center include:

- Medical/Healthcare
- Technology
- Religion
- National Associations

CONTINUED

Rochester added 123 new rooms to its hotel inventory in 2017, and 94 additional rooms were added at the new Home2 Suites in June of 2018. An 89-room Candlewood Suites will open in November, 2018, bringing the projected citywide room count at the end of 2018 to 6,013 at 56 lodging establishments.

Rochester's hotels hosted 1,237,800 overnight stays in 2017 and more than 3,340,000 overnight visitors. Between January and May of 2018, Rochester's hotels hosted 568,900 overnight stays and 1,536,030 overnight visitors.

The overall citywide average occupancy rate was 62.8% in 2017, and between January and May, 2018, it was 71.2%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOTEL ROOMS SOLD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up 3.7% in 2017 compared to 2016, and up 11.8% in Jan-May 2018 compared to Jan-May 2017.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVERAGE DAILY ROOM RATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up 2.6% in 2017 compared to 2016, and up 3.1% in Jan-May 2018 compared to Jan-May 2017. The average daily room rate at Rochester hotels in 2017 was $110.86 and from Jan-May 2018 it was $114.41.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERALL LODGING REVENUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up 2.7% in 2017 compared to 2016, and up 15.3% in Jan-May 2018 compared to Jan-May 2017.</td>
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</table>
SALES OBJECTIVES

SALES MADE IN JANUARY 2017 – JUNE 2018

During 2017, sales generated $3.6 million in future Mayo Civic Center revenue, $45 million in estimated economic impact to Rochester from Mayo Civic Center events, and an estimated $58 million in overall economic impact for future conventions, meetings, sports and events citywide. From Jan-June 2018, sales generated an estimated $1.9 million in future Mayo Civic Center revenue, $13 million in estimated economic impact to Rochester from Mayo Civic Center events, and an estimated $34 million in overall economic impact for future conventions, meetings, sports and events citywide.

*Includes repeat and new business

FUTURE MAYO CIVIC CENTER NEW BUSINESS

Leads generated in January 2017 – June 2018 (18 month period):
- 61 leads
- 40,000 attendees
- $23 million in economic impact

Future Mayo Civic Center new business confirmed bookings made in January 2017 – June 2018:
- 127 events
- 45,300 attendees
- $12 million in economic impact

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Experience Rochester hosted several site visits for groups of meeting and event planners in 2017 and 2018 in efforts to educate a broad range of prospective clients about the benefits of Rochester and Mayo Civic Center. These group visits included:
- Customer Advisory Board.

SNAPSHOT OF NEW BUSINESS

Generated from January 2017 – June 2018

New, rather than repeat, business attributable in part or full to the new convention center venues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
<th>Estimated Economic Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017 USA Wrestling U23 World Trials</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>$160,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 Medical Technology Enterprise Consortium Annual Meeting</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>$156,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 Minnesota Community Education Association Fall Conference</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>$86,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>$376,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 Women &amp; Spirituality Conference</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>$62,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 World Congress of Bronchology</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>$745,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association Annual Meeting</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>$545,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 Minnesota Recreation &amp; Park Association Annual Conference</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>$259,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 West Coast Dance Explosion</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>$95,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUREPSP Conference – Unlocking the Secrets of Brain Disease</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$19,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 HCI Group – Mayo Clinic EPIC Go Live Orientation</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>$1.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 American Society of Parasitologists Annual Meeting</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>$1.3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity Dance Competition</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>$714,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There were 297 events at Mayo Civic Center in 2017, accounting for 297,575 attendees. There were 35,722 actual room nights associated with MCC events.

**259 new leads & 261 repeat leads.
facilitate a Customer Advisory Board consisting of 11 national, regional and local event planners representing a variety of market segments in September, 2017. Event planners were guided by Experience Rochester staff on tours of the city, Mayo Civic Center, and Mayo Clinic. DMOproz consultants facilitated discussions related to industry trends, safety and security, technology, and more in an effort to elicit actionable suggestions from event planning professionals.

- **HelmBriscoe North Central Regional Meeting.** Experience Rochester’s sales team hosted 25 HelmBriscoe third-party meeting planners from MN, WI, and IA in February, 2018. The planners toured Mayo Civic Center and sampled cuisine from the center’s signature caterers, visited various hospitality businesses, and enjoyed a Historic Rochester Trolley Tour. The planners also toured Mayo Clinic and learned about the many resources and tours available to convention attendees. Feedback was positive, with planners impressed with the quality and layout of the convention center as well as how much more “walkable” our city was than they expected.

- **Health Professions Network Spring Conference.** Experience Rochester’s sales team hosted 28 medical meeting planners representing 20 different organizations to learn about their meetings and what it would take for Rochester to be selected as a meetings site. The 28 medical meeting planners, who came from all over North America, toured Mayo Clinic, the Mayo Clinic Healthy Living Program, the Wellness Lab, and more. They learned directly from Mayo Clinic representatives about how Mayo Clinic can provide resources for medical conventions and meetings, including tours, speakers, and more. The medical meetings planners also experienced what it would be like to host a meeting at Mayo Civic Center and to stay at a downtown hotel. This conference helped the Experience Rochester sales team to identify what is most important to medical meeting planners and how to capture future business with these and other medical organizations.

**Upcoming:** From Sept. 10-12, 2018, the Connect Medical Customer Advisory Board will convene in Rochester.

**TRADE SHOWS**

Our Experience Rochester sales team also showcased our caring, innovative city and the newly-expanded and modernized Mayo Civic Center at several national and local trade shows, including Destinations Showcase International, American Society of Association Executives, Connect Marketplace, IMEX America, the Religious Conference Management Association’s eMERGE, Association of Medical Society Executives, HelmBriscocoe, Chicagoland Holiday Showcase, Associations North, the Wedding Extravaganza, Unveiled, and more.

**LOST BUSINESS ANALYSIS**

Experience Rochester developed a comprehensive evaluation of lost business in 2017 for lost conventions, meetings, and sports events. The Lost Business Report detailed why the sales team lost or failed to capture proposed business. Analyzing lost business provides critical insights and trends into our sales process and how we manage client relationships for optimal success. According to an analysis of 168 lost business leads in 2017 (which represent just under 68,000 lost hotel room nights), an estimated lost $41 million in economic impact, and a lost $3.3 million in Mayo Civic Center revenue), major reasons for lost business of high-value events in 2017 were:

- **Committee/Board decision** – Based on the awareness that this is a major cause of lost business, our sales staff is charged with clearly understanding the source of the decisions and the process by which convention/meeting site decisions will be made by potential client organizations, and leveraging this knowledge with a new marketing strategy to more consciously influence potential decision makers.

- **Seeks more central Minnesota location** – Rochester occasionally loses business to more centrally located cities. We are developing strategies to counteract this objection, including making efforts to persuade Minnesota state associations to evolve their events to include sister associations in neighboring states (Wisconsin and Iowa), which would position us with a competitive advantage.

- **Transportation and parking issues** - In national markets, Rochester’s perceived transportation accessibility (how easy or difficult it is to get to our city) has drastically improved in recent years but does continue to be an objection. With state and regional groups, a perceived lack of parking availability has also been a challenge recently. Rochester International Airport continues to expand and diversify air service, and our sales team works to position Rochester as a destination conveniently served by RST as well as Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

- **Seeks more of a destination city** – We have been working to improve Rochester’s overall destination appeal, but in reality, our competitor destinations are typically far ahead of us in providing the exciting visitor attractions and entertainment amenities that enhance a city’s overall image and attract attendees. We are hopeful that our future development plans in Rochester will include careful attention to this need to develop general interest attractions and entertainment offerings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOST BUSINESS OBJECTIVES</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SALES OBJECTIVES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>LOST BUSINESS</strong></td>
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</table>
ECONOMIC IMPACT

U.S.
1 of 9 jobs depends on tourism
15.6M jobs supported by the travel industry
$1.036B traveler spending
$2.4T economic impact generated by travelers

Each household would pay $1,300 more in taxes without the tax revenue generated by travel & tourism.

Source: ustravel.org

MINNESOTA
265K full- and part-time jobs
$15B gross tourism sales
3.3M Minnesota trips
$5.4B wages of workers employed by hospitality industry

Source: ExploreMinnesota.com

ROCHESTER, MN
2nd largest industry is travel/hospitality/tourism
14,800 full-time hospitality/tourism jobs
3.34M annual overnight visitors
$493M visitor spending
$1.2B overall economic impact of visitors
TOURISM IS THE FRONT DOOR OF THE ECONOMY.
The first jobs of most workers in the U.S.—and Rochester—are in hospitality or are service related.

WHERE TOURISM DOLLARS GO

- Mayo Clinic: 69%
- Conventions/Meetings/Sports: 16%
- Leisure: 6%
- Business/Corporate: 5%
- Other: 4%

- Recreation: 17%
- Transportation: 15%
- Lodging: 28%
- Retail: 22%
- Other: 11%
- Other: 7%
MARKETING EFFORTS

MINNESOTA’S ROCHESTER: AMERICA’S CITY OF CARE AND INNOVATION

It’s an exciting and rewarding time at Experience Rochester MN, with a fresh new destination brand developed in 2017 and rolled out in early 2018! Key things to know about the new brand platform include:

• Broad scope. The new brand platform is much more than a logo or a name. It includes multiple components that work together to guide all areas of our organization. In destination marketing, a brand platform defines a city’s identity – it forms the foundation for decisions about how to position and differentiate Rochester, and guides our community’s efforts to appeal to and attract visitors, residents and workforce.

• Three collaborators. The branding project was a team effort. In addition to the establishment of Rochester’s new overall destination brand, this project also established complimentary individual identities (including new logos and/or names) for three organizations that partnered on this endeavor: Experience Rochester MN, Mayo Civic Center, and Rochester MN Sports (formerly the Rochester Amateur Sports Commission).

• Robust research. Extensive research (both qualitative and quantitative) and discovery was conducted by multiple professional services firms ( spearheaded by branding agency FUSEIDEAS) and the findings were used to develop the new brand. Input was gathered from thousands of visitors, clients, promoters, sports contacts, and community leaders and community members. Online surveys, in-person interviews and focus groups, and creative testing were just some of the research methods.

• Our city’s essence. Our new destination identity can be summarized with our positioning statement and tagline “Minnesota’s Rochester: America’s City of Care and Innovation.” The foundation for this new platform is that Rochester...
provides world-class medical and technological advances in a friendly, welcoming community. This brand describes the authentic truths of our community. A successful brand is not created or made up, but based on essential realities that are known among its audiences.

- **Not New York.** Identifying our city as “Minnesota’s Rochester” was a key recommendation after research confirmed that outside of the Upper Midwest region, people—including event planners and other critical target audiences—tend to think of Rochester, New York when “Rochester” is mentioned.

- **New names.** When the new brand was launched, our organization’s former name, Rochester Convention & Visitors Bureau, was replaced with “Experience Rochester MN.” The Rochester Amateur Sports Commission was renamed Rochester MN Sports. A recommendation to rename the Mayo Civic Center the “Rochester MN Convention and Event Center” (to eliminate some peoples’ confusion about the center being on the Mayo Clinic campus, and to more accurately reflect the type of activities that take place there) was rejected by the Rochester City Council.

- **Implementation.** A comprehensive new Strategic Marketing Plan is guiding the implementation of the new brand platform for the three participating organizations. Key strategies include:

  1. Use “Minnesota’s Rochester” instead of the usual “Rochester, Minnesota” to eliminate place-name confusion with Rochester, NY and to cause people to take notice.

  2. Tell the story of positive economic benefits/impacts of meetings, conventions & sports tourism on our community.

  3. Develop and use visitor and meeting planner personas.

  4. Pursue new types of meetings and conventions relevant to Rochester’s own story.

  5. Aggressively showcase Mayo Civic Center to selected planners.

  6. Spotlight the experience, competence, and dedication of staff.

  7. Leverage major events to maximize awareness of economic impact of tourism.

  8. Develop bold plans to address weaknesses in the destination.

  9. Focus on new feature content for web, social media, emails, and other marketing communications.

  10. Adopt and apply a more formalized brand strategy.

**CONTINUED ➤**
NEW BLOG

Experience Rochester launched a new blog in 2017 that provides visitors and prospective visitors with an upbeat snapshot of what makes Rochester great, and can also be used as a resource by hospitality industry professionals when suggesting things to do and places to go in Rochester to guests. Some of the blog posts are acquired through newly-established content agreements between Experience Rochester and two local partner organizations: Rochester Magazine and Rochester MN Moms Blog.

WEBSITE REBUILD & SEO EFFORTS

In spring of 2018, Experience Rochester’s website was redesigned and re-launched. Experience Rochester partnered with internet marketing firm Simpleview to design a new Experience Rochester website that complements Rochester’s new destination brand, allows for better display across all devices used to view it, and provides more advanced capabilities. Experience Rochester also invested in Search Engine Optimization services through Simpleview in order to better identify common search terms related to traveling to Rochester, and to ultimately direct more traffic to our website.

THREE MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTERS LAUNCHED

Three monthly e-newsletters were launched in 2017 and the first half of 2018. A hospitality partner e-newsletter is sent to local hospitality industry contacts and contains information to help hospitality professionals best serve visitors and stay up-to-date on hospitality industry developments. A sales e-newsletter is sent to approximately 2,000 clients, prospective clients, and other sales contacts, and provides a snapshot of what makes Rochester, MN a premier destination for meetings and conventions. A consumer e-newsletter is sent to approximately 4,300 travelers or prospective travelers who have expressed an interest in visiting Rochester, and encourages exploration of Rochester’s scenic beauty, relaxing pace, revitalized downtown, and stylish dining, nightlife, and shopping.

PROSPECT GENERATION EFFORTS

The marketing and sales teams have collaborated on several effective prospect generation efforts on behalf of Mayo Civic Center. A current partnership with R&G Business Development Solutions has generated dozens of actionable leads being pursued by the sales team. Another coordinated business generation effort, with the American Association of Medical Society Executives, engages a partnership with Mayo Clinic and includes trade show attendance, 1,300 medical society contacts, three e-blasts, and an event sponsorship. A Meetings Net package targeted medical, religious, and national association market segments through e-newsletters and a webinar sponsorship, and an Integrated Marketing Media prospect generation campaign included additional sales staff support for qualifying, e-postcards, a printed 8-page meeting planner, and more. A full-page ad and enhanced online presence in The Knot (wedding online and print publication) also directed leads to the Mayo Civic Center sales team. In 2018, an effort to increase entertainment at the center began with hiring Venue Coalition which promotes MCC as a venue to promoters. A promotional partnership was also initiated with a major meetings market media outlet, Connect Media, to promote Rochester to its database of planners and host a medical meetings advisory group in Rochester.

VISITOR GUIDE STUDY & NEW PUBLISHER

A survey and analysis of users of Experience Rochester’s visitor guide was conducted in 2017 by Destination Analysts, and findings will assist us in making the contents of the visitor guide more valuable to visitors. Top level findings include:

1. The top content sought in the guide was dining (by 62.7% of guide requestors), attractions (61.4%), accommodations (55.9%) and maps (51.2%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Facebook Followers</th>
<th>Twitter Followers</th>
<th>Instagram Followers</th>
<th>Pinterest Followers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>12,247</td>
<td>3,320</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>13,289</td>
<td>4,382</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>14,214</td>
<td>5,293</td>
<td>1,310</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>14,342</td>
<td>6,107</td>
<td>2,930</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experience Rochester also had 148 subscribers to its YouTube channel in 2017. Experience Rochester partners with local firm AB-PHOTOGRAPHY.US for Facebook and Instagram content.
2. Guide requestors who ended up visiting Rochester spent an average of 4.6 days and 3.9 nights in the city. Mean travel party was comprised of 2.2 people, and average daily spending was $299.04.

3. Of guide requestors who ended up visiting Rochester, 57% found the ads in the guide helpful or very helpful. 59% of guide requestors reviewed the ads before arrival and 35% of requestors reviewed the ads while on their trip in Rochester.

Experience Rochester MN also selected Twin Cities-based Greenspring Media as our new partner in publishing the annual visitor guide. Greenspring Media and several other organizations responded to an RFP for this project, and Greenspring was selected because of its extensive experience in similar projects and its ability to offer additional distribution of the guide in the Twin Cities area. Greenspring publishes many custom publications and visitor guides. Through the partnership, Greenspring will distribute the Experience Rochester visitor guide to readers of Minnesota Monthly magazine, one of its premier publications.

**VIRTUAL 360 DEGREE TOURS OF MCC**

Virtual 360 degree tours of the Mayo Civic Center’s major venues were added to the Mayo Civic Center’s website in 2018. The 360 degree tours are available for the center’s ballroom, the wave wall and pre-function areas, the auditorium, and more.

**LODGING GUIDE & MAPS**

Two of the most valuable, highly-distributed items that Experience Rochester creates are our Lodging Guide and our Maps. The Lodging Guide has an annual distribution of 120,000 by Mayo Clinic and 4,000 by our office. The guide is produced quarterly on behalf of Mayo Clinic to be sent with patient appointment guides. In addition, Experience Rochester produces more than 120,000 large format tear-off maps annually. The maps are distributed to popular visitor destinations and businesses such as hotels. The maps are a tool used by hospitality industry employees when assisting guests with wayfinding.

**MEDIA COVERAGE**

Experience Rochester’s efforts to promote Rochester as a leisure travel destination and the Upper Midwest’s premier location for conventions and meetings resulted in positive media coverage in 2017 and the first half of 2018. We earned 5.4 million media impressions in 2017. Notable media coverage included being featured as Minnesota's best “budget destination” in a feature in Budget Travel online and having Pescara restaurant featured in an article on “the most romantic restaurants in every state” in Readers Digest online.

Experience Rochester also worked with the Rochester Downtown Alliance to schedule on-air interviews about SocialICE on WCCO’s mid-morning show with Jason DeRusha. Trade publication coverage included articles about the expanded Mayo Civic Center in Small Market Meetings magazine, Exhibitor magazine online, Connect Association’s magazine, and the Professional Convention Management Association’s newsletter.

Experience Rochester and Mayo Civic Center were particularly honored to be featured in Successful Meetings magazine as a top-five destination for medical meetings and conventions, along with Cleveland, Los Angeles, Boston, and Raleigh, North Carolina.
Experience Rochester MN will formulate, recommend, and support destination development strategies to ensure Rochester continues to gain tourism market shares. Destination development strategies are designed to generate overnight visitors, increase visitor spending, and drive exposure to new markets for medical visitors, meetings and conventions visitors, sports visitors, and leisure visitors, thereby providing economic impact to local businesses and the community.

Experience Rochester’s 2018 – 2019 Destination Development priorities include:

- Develop visitor attractions, entertainment, and things to do
- Plan for the continued growth of air service at Rochester International Airport
- Further investigate a Mayo Civic Center Arena redevelopment plan
- Continued redevelopment of Graham Park
- Address downtown hotel group room block gaps
- Redevelop the Rochester riverfront
- Support the Destination Medical Center development plan
- Develop and redevelop the city’s sports tournament venues
- Address growing transportation and parking needs for visitors
- Support plans to develop Rochester’s hospitality industry workforce needs

WHAT IS A DESTINATION ORGANIZATION?

A destination organization like Experience Rochester MN is responsible for promoting a community as an attractive travel destination and enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Through the impact of travel, a destination organization strengthens the economic positions and provides opportunities for the people in their community.
• Strengthen our destination brand by expanding efforts and new product offerings in medical, health, and wellness tourism

NEW HOTELS ON THE HORIZON

Rochester is transforming into an even more exceptional destination for visitors as several new hotels are anticipated to open in the next few years. An 89-room Candlewood Suites is expected to open on South Broadway in November, 2018. By the end of 2020, Rochester’s downtown is expected to add 850 new hotel rooms, which will raise the downtown room count to over 3,000 and the citywide room count to over 7,000. Some future hotel projects include:

• Hilton Downtown Rochester. The 264-room Hilton Downtown Rochester is a new 20-story upscale hotel currently under construction at the southeast corner of South Broadway and East Center Street. It is anticipated to open in spring, 2019, and will feature two grand ballrooms, a conference center, five-star dining, a full-service luxury spa, outdoor terrace and underground parking, and retail shops. This is one of the first projects under the city of Rochester’s Destination Medical Center (DMC) initiative.

• Riverfront hotel project. A new 180-room, four-star riverfront hotel is part of the Bloom Development Group’s $300 million Bloom Riverfront Towers development plan. This one million square foot development will be located across the Zumbro River from the Olmsted County Government Center (from Second St. SE to Fourth St.) and includes hospitality and shopping, complemented with contemporary restaurants and nightlife. The plan also includes a parking garage, 130 condominiums, and a 215-unit senior community. The plan received a conditional use permit from the Rochester City Council on March 19, 2018 and final plans still need to be presented to the Council for approval.

• A Civic on First hotel project. Construction is expected to begin in summer of 2018 on a unique, extended stay 260-room hotel project with 284 parking spaces.
and retail components. The 12-story hotel will be located on the previous site of the American Legion at First Ave. NW and Civic Center Drive and is expected to open in June, 2019.

- A new Hotel Indigo in the current location of the downtown Holiday Inn on South Broadway. The 173-room Holiday Inn was recently purchased and the new owners plan an extensive renovation of the establishment into a modern, high-end boutique hotel. Renovations are expected to begin in late summer, 2018 and be complete by early 2019.

- A new hotel and mixed-use development to replace the Days Inn on the northeast corner of West Center St. and First Ave. NW. This project is in initial stages of discussion. Tentative plans call for a 16-story mixed-use building that includes a 200-room hotel, 120 apartments, 317 parking stalls and 8,000 to 10,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space. No formal applications for this project have been submitted to the city.

- A new 2nd Street Hotel across from Mayo Clinic’s Saint Marys campus. Located about a mile from the heart of downtown Rochester, this new, extended-stay 150-room hotel is planned to open in 2020 on the site where Virgil’s Auto Body is currently located.

EXPANDED AIR SERVICE AT RST & MAYO CLINIC’S ‘FLY LOCAL’ POLICY

Rochester International Airport expanded its air service options in May, 2017 and again in July, 2018. In May, 2017, the airport announced the addition of five new daily flights (to Atlanta, Chicago, and Minneapolis), for a total of 13 daily flights starting the summer of 2017. This was an increase of 65% more flights originating out of Rochester. Also, in October, 2018, Elite Airways will begin operating nonstop flights to two new destinations from RST: Phoenix, Arizona and St. Augustine, Florida. In addition to the expanded air service, in 2017 Mayo Clinic announced that most of its employees are now required to fly out of RST. Experience Rochester MN encourages other businesses to “Fly Local” as well; this has a profound impact on the vibrancy of our airport and air service expansion.

NEW HOSPITALITY DEGREE

Rochester Community and Technical College began enrolling students in a Business Management – Hospitality program in October, 2017. This program is a 2-year Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree program. This new program offers opportunities to advance the skills of our local hospitality workforce. This is
an important step toward preparing and developing our hospitality workforce for the future.

**RE-DEVELOPMENT OF GRAHAM PARK**

In June, 2018, the Olmsted County Board approved a Master Plan for Graham Park. The $54 million master plan calls for $41.5 million in capital improvements over the next 10 years and the addition of an 83,000 square foot Expo Center. This plan will profoundly improve Graham Park and provide a tremendous, worthwhile investment into our growing South Broadway corridor. Experience Rochester MN has advocated for the re-development of Graham Park for several years and is pleased that this plan is moving forward.

**DESTINATION MEDICAL CENTER**

Destination Medical Center (DMC) is the largest public-private economic initiative in Minnesota and the catalyst for growth in Rochester. DMC is creating and positioning Rochester as a global destination for health and wellness. Experience Rochester is an important stakeholder and supporter of the current priorities of the DMC Development Plan. Many of the significant Visitor Experience initiatives that Experience Rochester is leading involve strong collaboration with DMC, including: the Experience Accreditation hospitality-industry accreditation program, the MyRochesterExperience.com visitor survey, and the Certified Tourism Ambassador program.

**KEY PARTNERSHIPS**

**Brand USA & Explore Minnesota Tourism**

In 2017, Experience Rochester worked with BrandUSA and Explore Minnesota Tourism to showcase Rochester in a "Destination-at-a-Glance Road Trip" Minnesota video package which is being shared with large national and international audiences. BrandUSA, a nonprofit corporation created as a result of the Travel Promotion Act, is dedicated to marketing the United States as a premier travel destination and works to incrementally grow international visitation to the U.S., increasing America’s share of the global travel market. Experience Rochester is also active in many efforts spearheaded by the State of Minnesota marketing arm, Explore Minnesota Tourism, whose mission is to promote tourism within the state and the region.

**Rochester Downtown Alliance**

A vibrant downtown is imperative to creating destination appeal. Experience Rochester works closely with the Rochester Downtown Alliance to promote the businesses and events that take place near the city center.

**Hospitality First**

A joint committee of the Rochester Chamber of Commerce and Experience Rochester, Hospitality First consists of hospitality industry leaders throughout the Rochester area whose goal is to increase awareness of the economic impact of the industry, provide education for current and future industry professionals, and advocate for initiatives that support the industry.

Experience Rochester provides staff leadership for Hospitality First.

**Arts/Culture**

Experience Rochester offers free office and meeting space and staff resources to the Greater Rochester Arts and Cultural Trust and Rochesterfest. Brad Jones, Experience Rochester’s executive director, serves as chair of the Arts and Cultural Trust. The goals of these organizations are to celebrate Rochester, and to promote and advocate for the arts and humanities.

**Lending Local Support**

Experience Rochester supports local events that foster a vibrant, dynamic environment in Rochester. Experience Rochester lends a hand through sponsorship, in-kind support, marketing, and volunteerism to increase the number and quality of activities available to visitors during their stay and to promote the vitality of the city.

**Industry Involvement**

Experience Rochester and Rochester Sports staff hold leadership roles or are members of more than 20 national and local industry-related associations, groups, councils, commissions, and boards.
Rochester MN Sports (formerly the Rochester Amateur Sports Commission) has been administering events in Rochester since 1991. They provide leadership, guidance, and expertise in attracting and administering sporting events for the Rochester, MN area. Sports is our city’s most successful group market segment, with Rochester Sports leading the way.

SPORTS DRIVE ROCHESTER’S ECONOMY

Rochester Sports attracts and administers a range of sporting events that are a boon to local businesses. Here are some examples of the impact of some sports events:

**Soccer Events**
- Approximately $1.14M in economic impact to the city in 2017

Minnesota Youth Soccer Association’s Summer & Fall State Soccer Tournaments
- 3,400 athletes and 7,000 fans
- Will be held in Rochester for next three years

Rochester Thunder Soccer Tournament
- 1,900 athletes and 3,900 fans
- Held annually in June

**National Volleyball Center / Youth Volleyball Tournaments**
- Approximately $2.88M in economic impact to the city annually
- Host to state, regional, and national volleyball tournaments
- 10 annual youth volleyball events on various weekend: 8,050 athletes and 20,250 fans
- NJCAA National Volleyball Championship (8 teams) was held here in 2017 and the same event will be held here and expanded to 12 teams in 2018

**Youth Baseball Events**
- $2.13M in estimated economic impact in 2017
- Rochester Youth Baseball Association hosts three major annual events: 2,550 athletes and 6,500 fans
- Rochester Sports runs the annual Rundown and Firecracker baseball
events and partners with statewide baseball organizations to host state championships: 1,800 athletes and 5,200 fans

National Events & Other Notable Events Held in Rochester

- USA Baseball U-18 National team Exhibition - 2017
- USA Softball Northern National 16A Fastpitch Tournament - 2017
- MN USA Wrestling USA State Folkstyle Tournament - 2018
- MN USA Wrestling MN State Freestyle & Greco Championships - 2018
- NCAA Women’s Division III National Basketball Championship – 2018
- USA Softball Northern National 14A Fastpitch Tournament – 2018
- USA Wrestling Junior World Team Trials – 2018
- Just For Kix Nationals – 2018

### BY THE NUMBERS

- **5** full-time staff members
- **102** events in 2017
- **34,861** hotel room nights
- **$24.9M** estimated economic impact

2017 HOTEL USAGE BY SPORTS ATTENDEES*

*Based on 34,861 rooms reported

**BY THE NUMBERS**

- Basketball
- Wrestling
- Volleyball
- Baseball
- Swimming
- Hockey
- Softball
- Soccer
- Cheer/Dance
- Other

*Based on 34,861 rooms reported
Visitor Experience plays a key role in the success of Experience Rochester MN efforts by:

- Assisting visitors with free information on food/lodging, arts/culture, tours, recreation, and more.
- Serving conventions in the city by providing information, brochures, and staffing.
- Providing and updating a calendar of events on the Experience Rochester website.
- Boosting the local economy by directing visitors to local businesses.
- Part-time staff at the Visitor Information Center in the Peace Plaza.
- Administering tools to measure and monitor the overall Rochester experience.

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

Experience Rochester partners with Destination Medical Center and Mayo Clinic on a major effort to enhance visitor experiences. The Experience Accreditation program is a first-of-its-kind hospitality initiative in the state of Minnesota. Businesses earning accreditation have met standards developed by leaders from local hospitality businesses and organizations related to customer service, staff development and guest satisfaction.

As a benefit of Experience Accreditation, businesses receive increased exposure through Experience Rochester’s marketing materials. Additionally, employees of accredited businesses are invited to attend training sessions. In 2017, trainings included presentations on cultural competency and empathic communication.

VISITOR SURVEY

Third-year results of the MyRochesterExperience.com visitor survey were presented to hospitality industry partners in June, 2018. Survey results show that major strengths of our destination are:

- Our friendly, helpful people and welcoming environment
- Our ‘image clarity,’ in which an increased number of visitors agreed with the statement ‘I know what this place is about’
- High satisfaction levels with basic destination assets like safety and cleanliness.

Areas identified as most in need of improvement are related to ‘ease of getting around’ and the need for better way-finding (assistance with directions) and signage.

The MyRochesterExperience.com visitor survey was launched three years ago to help Experience Rochester and the hospitality industry prioritize initiatives and allocate resources to improve the experiences of the more than 3.3 million annual overnight visitors to Rochester. The third-year survey was completed by 3,323 visitors, 57% of whom lived 180 miles or more from Rochester, between April, 2017 and March, 2018. The survey, which takes one minute to complete, randomly selects five questions from a pool of 110 questions for each survey respondent. The survey measures visitors’ satisfaction with all aspects of their experiences in Rochester.
To request the full 21-page report on results from the MyRochesterExperience.com survey’s third year, please email info@minnesotasrochester.com or call 507-288-4331.

**TOUCHSCREEN KIOSKS**

Five self-service interactive touchscreen kiosks continue to be valuable to visitors who use them for way-finding purposes and to get area information about things to do and places to go. The kiosks are located at the DoubleTree Hotel, Marriott Hotel subway, Shops at University Square, and Rochester International Airport. In 2017 a minimally used wall-mounted kiosk was transferred to a floor-mounted location within the Mayo Civic Center to improve usability. A new software provider, Omnix, was recently contracted to revise the user-interface of the kiosks in 2018. The kiosks received 35,216 total clicks in 2017 with the most popular content being dining, things to do, and the downtown map.

**CERTIFIED TOURISM AMBASSADOR PROGRAM**

More than 1,600 hospitality industry workers in Rochester have been trained as Certified Tourism Ambassadors (CTAs), with 125 completing the program in 2017. The CTA program, a nationwide certification program for volunteers, front-line hospitality workers, and anyone involved in serving visitors, was launched in Rochester in March, 2011. Accredited and licensed through the Tourism Ambassador Institute™, the CTA™ program goes well beyond basic customer-service training. It is a lasting program that will mobilize Rochester’s front line toward the goal of turning every visitor encounter into a positive experience.

**CTA Promotional Video:** Experience Rochester worked with Knowble

Media to create a promotional video for the CTA program. The video includes footage of a CTA tour and CTA classroom session, as well as testimonials from CTAs and hospitality employers.

**2017 CTA Events:** To expose CTAs to the wonderful activities and things to do in Rochester, Experience Rochester hosted numerous CTA events in 2017. Events included: Minnesota Children’s Museum-Rochester, wine and cheese tasting at People’s Food Coop, Bleu Duck Kitchen, Prairie Walls Climbing Gym, Haunted Trolley Tour, coffee tasting at Café Steam, and an educational presentation at RCTC.

**ROCHESTER COMMUNITY HOSTS**

The Rochester Community Hosts program places volunteer hosts in the pedestrian subways and skyways Mondays through Fridays. The hosts wear bright green vests with the Rochester Community Host logo, so they are easily recognized. They answer questions, provide directional assistance, and inform and encourage visitors to get out and experience Rochester.

**Community Host Appreciation Events:** To show our thanks to our dedicated Community Host volunteers who serve our visitors daily, Experience Rochester plans quarterly appreciation events. These events give our volunteers an opportunity to network with one another as well as highlight local businesses. 2017 event locations included: Rochester Civic Theatre, Pescara, Plummer House, Pasquale’s Pizzeria, Twigs and 125 Live.
Experience Rochester MN is a not-for-profit organization that brings together local businesses and stakeholders that rely on tourism and hospitality. Begun as a committee of the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce, Experience Rochester MN (originally named the Rochester Convention & Visitors Bureau) became its own entity in 1989.

Funding for Experience Rochester MN is generated through a lodging tax collected from visitors to the city. The current lodging tax is 7%, 2% of which funds 100% of Experience Rochester’s efforts and operations. No local taxes or property taxes are used.

2018 EXPERIENCE ROCHESTER BUDGET

- $236K Visitor Experience
- $419K Admin
- $496K Rochester Sports
- $1.49M Sales & Marketing

Total $2,640,000

LODGING TAX REVENUE

Funding for most destination marketing organizations, including Experience Rochester MN, comes from a local lodging tax that is collected from visitors staying in local hotels. Below is an illustration detailing how the Rochester lodging tax is distributed.
Experience Rochester

Support Rochester!

If you work with a business, organization, or event that you wish to bring to Rochester, please let us know. Community members can serve as wonderful ambassadors for the city, helping us build positive relationships and encouraging more people to get to know our great city. Rochester is well-equipped to host local, regional, and national events, and it would be our honor and pleasure to welcome your group to our city. We appreciate your support!

Contact: Matt Esau, Director of Mayo Civic Center Sales
Experience Rochester MN
MESau@MinnesotasRochester.com

Executive/Administration

Brad Jones, Executive Director
507.288.4331
bjones@minnesotasrochester.com

Donna Zweibahmer, Finance & Administration Manager
507.424.0814
dzweibahmer@minnesotasrochester.com

Marketing Communications

Mary Gastner, Director of Marketing & Communications
507.424.0819
mgastner@minnesotasrochester.com

Megan Malugani, Communications Specialist
507.424.0809
mmalugani@minnesotasrochester.com

Visitor Experience

Keeley Hruska, Director of Visitor Experience
507.424.0810
khruska@minnesotasrochester.com

Nicole Ramaker, Visitor Experience Manager
507.288.4331
nramaker@minnesotasrochester.com

Susan Sievers, Office Receptionist
507.288.4331
ssievers@minnesotasrochester.com

Convention Sales

Chris Wagner, Director of Sales
952.944.4032
cwagner@minnesotasrochester.com

Matt Esau, Director of Mayo Civic Center Sales
507.288.4331
mesau@minnesotasrochester.com

Jay Gunnarson, Sales Manager
507.424.0818
jgunnarson@minnesotasrochester.com

Lori Odegard, Sales Manager
507.424.0817
lodegard@minnesotasrochester.com

Mary Britt, Sales Manager
507.424.0815
mbritt@minnesotasrochester.com

Bureau Services

Tracy Austin, Services Manager
507.424.0802
taustin@minnesotasrochester.com

Deanna Meyer, Database & Services Manager
507.424.0813
dmeyer@minnesotasrochester.com

Rochester MN Sports

Ed Hruska, Executive Director
507.280.4701
ehruska@rochestermnsports.org

Jay Fanta, Sales Manager
507.285.8449
jfanta@rochestermnsports.org

Linsy Hoosier, Operations Coordinator
507.285.8448
lhoosier@rochestermnsports.org

Trevor Magnuson, Operations Coordinator
507.280.4725
tmagnuson@rochestermnsports.org

Brady Turk, Operations Coordinator
507.424.0812
bturk@rochestermnsports.org
TELL US ABOUT YOUR ROCHESTER EXPERIENCE.

Take our 1-minute survey at myrochesterexperience.com.