



PRESS RELEASE

VISIT SYRACUSE

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CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP ON THE HORIZON FOR VISIT SYRACUSE

Syracuse, NY (May 18, 2017) – David Holder, president of Visit Syracuse, Inc., has been presented with a new, once in a lifetime, career opportunity and will be voluntarily stepping away from the area's destination marketing organization.

Holder, who was brought in to lead the destination marketing organization (DMO) 10 years ago, has accepted a position as Vice President-Tourism for Jones Lang Lasalle, (JLL) a global commercial real estate and investment management service. JLL has corporate offices and operations from coast to coast. Holder will remain based in Syracuse.

This news comes on the heels of Visit Syracuse, Inc. having recently announced strategic steps it has taken as an organization to increase tourism in the region. With a newly formed governing board of directors, sound financial position, and strong partnerships with major stakeholders such as Onondaga County and the business community, Visit Syracuse is in a stronger position to influence, drive and respond to tourism demand.

"This was an extremely hard decision because it's been such a privilege to be a part of Visit Syracuse, Inc.," Holder said. "Visit Syracuse has a dynamic team and now there is a board in place that is very much ingrained in the organization's mission. Our independence was a milestone, and this is a new and fresh opportunity for someone to step in and take it to a whole new level."

"David made a life decision but we're in good shape," said Visit Syracuse Board of Directors Chairman Ed Brennan. "David did an outstanding job bringing Visit Syracuse independence and can now confidently leave the team with the support it needs, including a strategy to move forward."

Brennan, who was appointed to the Visit Syracuse Board of Directors by CenterState CEO, is also the CEO of Beak & Skiff/1911, with an impressive and extensive background in tourism, both domestic and abroad. He and most of the tourism-focused Visit Syracuse board members have been in place since January 1, 2017. They have already formed a special committee to perform a national search for a new president. Holder will remain president of Visit Syracuse until mid-June 2017.

"It's going to take time to find the right candidate but in the meantime, we're happy to announce that we've asked Vice President of Brand Development Carol Eaton to step up, in an interim role to assist with the transition before, during and after we find a new president," Brennan added.

Brennan also stated that Eaton, a long time veteran of Visit Syracuse has the experience and qualifications to keep the momentum and progress going. She will work closely with both the board and the Visit Syracuse staff.

"We've been fortunate to have had David in this role for the past 10 years, and we are extremely grateful for all he's done for Visit Syracuse and this community," said Robert Simpson, president of CenterState CEO. "During this time of transition, we remain committed to supporting Visit Syracuse in our shared vision for this region, and are confident that its new board of directors, coupled with the existing talented Visit Syracuse team, are prepared to advance its mission to more effectively drive tourism opportunities for our region."

"This is a bittersweet moment for all of us," said Onondaga County Legislator Ryan McMahon. "David Holder has been an asset to this region – from his innovative ideas to his leadership, Onondaga County is in a better position to attract tourists and help to enhance the economy. We are pleased that David will still be able to call Syracuse *home*."





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Over the past decade under Holder's leadership, Visit Syracuse has achieved many accomplishments, including:

- Branded the destination under the promise of "Do Your Thing"
- Orchestrated the development of a strategic transition plan to establish a new operating model for the destination marketing organization
- Developed an innovative campaign to target business opportunity for the winter season
- Utilized creative messaging and presentation to redefine the area's convention product
- Continued to grow business and major event/meeting bookings
- Partnering with CNY Arts to provide one comprehensive events calendar
- Establishing a travel trade program to expand the potential marketplace for Syracuse
- Partnering with Advance Media New York to produce seasonal visitors guides
- Created new website and Customer Relations Management (CRM) system

Moving forward, Visit Syracuse Inc.'s new strategic direction will afford it the opportunity to focus on several new initiatives, including employment opportunities, expanded visitors center presence, reaching out to new markets and even creating a new funding model.

For more information, contact Visit Syracuse Communications Director Nikita Jankowski at 315-706-4443, njankowski@vistsyracuse.com.

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ABOUT VISIT SYRACUSE

Visit Syracuse, Inc. is Onondaga County's official marketing organization for tourism related economic development; leading the production of over \$850 million in direct visitor spending annually. The organization aims to strengthen the positive awareness of the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County as a convention and visitor destination; to increase revenues and stimulate economic development and growth for the community. If you want to know how much there is to do in Syracuse, check out visitsyracuse.com.

