



Albany

2016 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT
ALBANY COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU



ALBANY.
Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau



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2016 Board of Directors

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HOLLY BROWN, Palace Performing Arts Center
SUSAN CLEARY, Empire State Plaza Convention Center
GLENN CUNNINGHAM, Radisson Hotel Albany
MICHAEL GULOTTY, *Chair Elect*, Vista Host
DICK KOTLOW, *Treasurer*, UHY Advisors NY, Treasurer
ROBIN JACKSON, *Assistant Treasurer*, Albany Marriott
CARRIE HILLENBRANDT, CMP, BBL Hospitality Group
MICHELE VENNARD, *President/CEO, Secretary*, ACCVB

DIRECTORS

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COLIN DEMERS, The Century House
TYLER DESMOND, The Desmond Hotel and Conference Center
MICHAEL HOFFMAN, Turf Hotels
CHRISTINE QUINN, Albany County Executive's Office
JUSTIN SMITH, Prestige Hospitality Group
CONNIE STANKIVICZ, Colonie Center Mall
KATHLEEN VAN DE LOO, Association Development Group
TIM VENNARD, Mazzone Hospitality
BOB WOLFGANG, Tech Valley Security

EX-OFFICIO

DANIEL MCCOY, Albany County Executive
ANTHONY CAPECE, Central Avenue Business Improvement District
MARK EAGAN, Capital Region Chamber of Commerce
PAULA MAHAN, Colonie Town Supervisor
KATHY SHEEHAN, Mayor - City of Albany
GEORGETTE STEFFENS, Downtown Business Improvement District
SARAH REGINELLI, Capitalize Albany Corp.



Letter from the Board Chairperson

Dear Colleagues,

2016 was an outstanding year filled with unprecedented progress in the Capital Region. The construction of the new Albany Capital Center – our new 80,000 square foot convention center is on schedule and on budget. The opening and ribbon cutting took place on March 1st and this beautiful new facility will host hundreds of conventions, meetings, trade shows and other special events over the coming years. Its connectivity to both the Empire State Plaza and the Times Union Center with a newly renovated heated walkway will help draw even bigger events that utilize space in multiple venues (over 159,000 square feet available) known as the Capital Complex.

SMG, the world's largest facility management company has been contracted to manage and operate the Albany Capital Center and currently is contracted to manage the Times Union Center for Albany County. The County is spending close to \$20 million dollars on the atrium renovations, walkway enhancements and enclosure of the TU Center parking garage entrance-way at Level # 3, which serves as an entrance to access the TU Center. As SMG's Regional General Manager overseeing both of the facilities in Albany, and as the Chairman of the Board of the ACCVB for the last two years, I could not be more proud and excited to showcase these outstanding facilities to the rest of the world. Albany will soon have hundreds of people exiting the Albany Capital Center looking for places to dine, shop and be entertained.

In 2017, the Times Union Center has an excellent schedule of superstar concerts, including three sellout shows with Garth Brooks, Twenty One Pilots, Toby Mac, and many others. The MAAC Tournament will be back in 2017 as well as 2018 & 2019. News from the NCAA is expected in April, which we hope will include a return of the NCAA Men's Basketball Championship, now that we have a first class convention center connected to the TU Center.

The ACCVB continues to help service the community with grants being issued from the ACCVB Foundation to many area projects and worthy recipients. And, the ACCVB continues to work with the Mayor's Heritage Tourism Task Force to make sure the visitors coming to Albany will have access to our City's great history and historical sites they can visit while in Albany.

As our market's future continues to evolve, our long-term President & CEO – Michele Vennard will be preparing to retire. A search committee will be formed to seek a qualified and inspired candidate to fill the position once Michele steps down. I would like to encourage all of us who have worked with known Michele to let her know how much we appreciate the service she has provided to Albany over the last 25 years.



Bob Belber, ACCVB Chairman of the Board
SMG Regional General Manager – Times Union Center & Albany Capital Center



Letter from the President

Dear Friends and Partners,

2016 has turned out to be one of the busiest years I can remember in my very long tenure as your President and CEO. It is our continual goal to assure that Albany is "Visitor Ready" at all times, but the completion of the Albany Capital Center hastened that activity.

Working with colleagues from Capitalize Albany Corporation and Business Improvement Districts, a program of Hospitality Excellence was developed with its focus on Connectivity, Customer Service, Retail and Vibrancy. The Bureau is focused on the Customer Service component and made an invest with the Visitor Engagement Academy to develop a customized program especially for frontline hospitality staff. This program was announced at the well-attended Hospitality Summit in November and is now underway.

Along with promoting our history and culture rich downtown, the Bureau also began a new branding effort with Wolf Road partners. This area too has a rich history, excellent and abundant services and is extremely convenient for travelers. We look forward to growing this program in 2017.

Your Bureau remained involved with the Capital Region Taxi Task Force working with administration and public safety representatives from Albany, Schenectady, Troy, Saratoga, Rensselaer and the Town of Colonie as well as taxi companies. Legislation was passed in 2016 which provides CDTA with the authority to develop a more common and comprehensive regional operational ordinance as well as develop a new standard of performance for participating taxi companies. This work will also continue in 2017 as the Bureau also advocates for ride sharing legislation that will add to the region's transportation system.

And that's not all. So please take some time to review the achievements outlined in this report. Goals were met and often exceeded. New tactics to achieve our overall strategies were instituted. New programs such as hospitality work force development were also identified as areas for more activity as we move forward.

Thank you for being a partner. We look forward to your active participation as we move into 2017.

With best regards from the entire Bureau Team,



Michele Vennard
President/CEO

Hospitality Excellence Award

Professor Anthony Strianese Hospitality Excellence Award



In 2016, the Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors unanimously approved a change in the name of the Hospitality Excellence Award in honor of Anthony Strianese. The *Professor Anthony Strianese Hospitality Excellence Award* is already being referred to with great honor and affection as “*The Toby*.”

In the 40 years that Toby taught and led the Hotel, Culinary Arts & Tourism Department at Schenectady County Community College (SCCC), the program grew exponentially. There are now hospitality professionals all around the world influenced by Toby. His history with the Albany County CVB is equally impressive. He served four separate terms on the Board of Directors and was a force behind instituting the Hospitality Excellence Award.

Albany’s Hospitality Industry is an essential component of the Capital Region’s economic vitality. The *Professor Anthony Strianese Hospitality Excellence Award* is the only honor developed solely to recognize excellence in travel and tourism and represents the best of Albany’s hospitality culture.

2017 Recipient: Palace Theatre Performing Arts Center

Outstanding programming and community commitment are hallmarks of the Palace and its success in downtown Albany. The Palace is an arts and entertainment anchor that attracts more than 175,000 plus patrons annually. Performances attract and add to the quality of life of regional residents, attracts travelers to Albany and has a significant impact on surrounding businesses.

The venue adds to the historic significance of Albany and is also known for its excellent customer service. The bold renovation and improvement plans now underway at the Palace will provide greater entertainment variety and will assure its place as Albany’s entertainment anchor for decades to come.



Hospitality Grants

The Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau Foundation, a 501(c) (3) corporation formed in 1993, supports grants which help to build and support Albany County tourism attractions, events and other travel related activities. The grants encourage collaboration to further extend the economic impact of the program. The fund is managed by the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region and is funded by the earned income of the ACCVB, translating business success into the hospitality industry giving back to the community.

The latest round of funding brings the total to **\$212,000** awarded in support of Albany's Hospitality community. This year, the foundation awarded **\$50,500** to 18 excellent recipients.

2016 Grant Recipients:

Adirondack Rowers
Albany Center Galleries
Albany Institute of History and Art
Albany Jewish Community Center - 2017 Maccabi Games
Albany Symphony Orchestra
Capital District Gay & Lesbian Community Council
Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc.
Friends of Pruyn House
Historic Cherry Hill
Irish American Heritage Museum
Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway Coalition, Inc.
Old Songs, Inc.
Palace Performing Arts Center, Inc.
Park Playhouse, Inc.
Special Olympics of New York State
Troy Savings Bank Music Hall
Underground Railroad Project of the Capital Region



Albany Ambassadors

The Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau is proud to announce the addition of 24 Albany Ambassadors in 2016. Albany Ambassadors are local volunteer meeting planners who have embraced the Bureau's "Host it Here" slogan and were instrumental in bringing meeting, convention and event business "home" to Albany. Once again, our corps of Ambassadors represent a wide ranging variety of events, which brought **8286 delegates**, filling more than 4749 hotel room nights with estimated direct spending of **\$5.4 million**.

Ms. Jennifer Acker

IDS Project

Ms. Melissa Bergin

Section of School Librarians (SSL)

Mr. Duane Booth

Sons of the American Revolution,
Empire State Society Chapter

Mr. Tom Catino

Association of Public-Safety Communications
Officials International (APCO)

Mr. Mario Cometti

VetCon Alliance

Ms. Maureen Cox

Mohawk Hudson River Marathon
& Half Marathon

Mr. Doug Dederick

National Model Railroad Association

Ms. Jeanne Farrell

North American Feis Commission

Mr. Fausto Franco

Hispanic Regional Catholic Conference

Ms. Karen Graham

Upstate Swing Dance Championships

Mr. Tim Grover

Northeastern Section of the Geological
Society of America (NESGSA)

Ms. Rebecca Ireland-Perry

4-H

Ms. Helen Mango

Northeastern Section of the Geological
Society of America (NESGSA)

Mr. Mitchell Samet, Ph. D.

New York Association of School Psychologists

Ms. Shari Schatzman

New York State Association
for Behavior Analysis

Mr. Jerry Silber

Star Trek Association of the Northeast

Ms. Elizabeth Simcoe

Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany

Ms. Joyce Solimini

Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany

Mr. Kevin Surman

National Model Railroad Association

Ms. Sandra Surman

National Model Railroad Association

Ms. Annette Tedesco

Nor'easter Scrabble Tournament

Mr. Michael Trimarchi

Columbia Greene Community College

Ms. Sarah Williamsowski

Alpha Phi Omega / Alpha Delta Eta



2015 Albany Ambassadors



The ACCVB continues to use the Strategic initiatives developed in 2015 as our Guideline to Success. As work proceeds throughout the year, Bureau staff endeavor to keep these initiatives “top of mind.” What follows are important programs and actions that transpired throughout the year.

Initiative One

Enhance the awareness, appreciation and support of the ACCVB and the Visitor Economy throughout the county and region.

- **Develop a compelling message**

- Work with regional partners developed a **Visit The USA** (official USA Travel site) video/photo campaign.
- Invested in and developed **Albany Visitor Journey A2D (Arrival to Departure)** – a frontline training program. Launched January 2017. Program will train Albany Champions and develop ongoing awareness program. Corporate support from SEFCU. 2017 goal: 100 staff trained.
- Engaged community based working groups around the themes of the **Erie Canal Bicentennial** and **Women’s Suffrage (100th Anniversary)** to attract visitors and citizens to creative programming.
- Continued a vibrant program of rotating exhibits that highlight regional arts and culture partners. Examples include: Carriage House art exhibit and the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception anniversary exhibit.
- Earned a Marketing and Communication- **MARCOM Award** (given by local chapters of the American Marketing Association and Public Relations Society of America) for the “Hamilton in Albany” campaign.



- Program messages resulted in 23 press releases and 2 press conferences. Also, these press releases, press conferences, familiarization tours, media outreach and interviews, resulted in **82 articles** or online communications **valued at \$116,560, which reached a readership circulation of 353,811,688.**
- **Develop and communicate performance and productivity measures**
 - Reformatted **Consumer newsletter** to a content marketing model **20,000+ subscribers, increased open rate to 14%.**
 - **Developed a 2016 work plan based on the Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan.** Accomplishments tracked include a 9% overall attendance increase at heritage sites and events; analysis of an onsite visitor survey, a multi-platform program highlighting Alexander Hamilton connections in Albany resulting in 118% visitation increase at Schuyler Mansion SHS and 58% increase at the Albany Institute of History and Art. A detailed report supplied to City of Albany.
 - Developed and distributed 2016 and 2017 **marketing plans** and opportunities for partners.
 - Automated sales / service activity reports.
 - Created A Visitor Center report showing student attendance by program to better evaluate program viability.
- **Enhance communications with the Community and Government leaders**
 - Created and distributed tourism industry **fact sheets** for use throughout the community to demonstrate the economic importance of tourism.
 - Created a series of **neighborhood hotel General Manager meetings** to specifically inform partners about CVB programs and discuss issues of importance to those partners.
 - Exhibited, volunteered or attended more than **3 dozen community based events.**
 - Celebrated the **CVB's 40th Anniversary** with an Albany Top 40 Launch party / program which also included a video, book and a year-long Facebook contest.
 - Planned and supported Advocacy events: Eggs & Issues, Government Action Day both focused on the State legislature.
 - Initiated and planned 12 hotel **Directors of Sales meetings**, total attendance 540.
 - Created a new cohesive marketing opportunities package for partners, also revamped partner outreach, engagement and reporting designed to increase partner communication.



- **Tourism gives back** activity: School Supply drive for Albany PAL, partner CapCom, Holiday giving Capital Region YWCA.
- **Partner Newsletters**
 - Reformatted Partners e-newsletter to more than 800 subscribers and a 29% open rate
 - Frontline news distribution to 1,700 partners and outlets – also produced appropriate Albany Traffic advisories both with a 20.4% open rate.
- **Utilize media and technology to enhance visibility**
 - Developed parameters for **website and brand updates**, to be completed by October 2017.
 - Developed new and creative sales and service materials for meetings, conventions and group tours.
 - Invested in, developed and launched a mobile information kiosk program that will expand in 2017 to the Albany Capital Center and Times Union Center.
 - Produced a new **film related website** (www.filmalbany.com) also assisted with the Film Upstate NY web and promotion effort.
 - Automated sales/ service activity reports.
 - Produced **26 web based microsites for clients** to help build meeting awareness resulting in 24,936 total online visits.
 - Increased media outreach specifically related to the impact of the visitor economy. The Impact of Tourism Video and report was produced and widely distributed - **Albany County \$968,276,000 in 2015 a 1% increase over the previous year.**
 - Engaged in a **multi-platform social media program** exponentially increasing visits, impressions, fans, followers and inquiries (see 2016 by the numbers).
 - Created online marketing campaigns for all markets that follows targeted audiences on multiple platforms.
 - Hosted **“Tidy Up for Tourism”** to encourage partners to enhance website presence (prior to summer season). Hosted a **“Visiting with Viator”** event to advise Partners of program opportunities.
 - Concentration on **Extranet** Benefits and training.
 - Courier (Group Tour focus) Newsletter – **930 subscribers** 16% open rate.

Initiative Two

Lead the destination in preparation for the Albany Capital Center



- **Stage a countywide summit**
 - **Hospitality Summit** (a total of 3 produced) update was presented in **November**. Partners from the Albany Capital Center, Business Improvement Districts, Capitalize Albany and the CVB participated. 100+ attendees.
 - Worked with SMG marketing, ACC and Spiral Design to create the website that will highlight the original **artwork of the ACC**. Developed all website copy and worked with artist on collateral design.
 - Staged a celebration of Meetings Mean Business event that included official and ceremonial **contract signing** of future ACC business.
 - ACCVB and ACC sales staff conducted community based **joint presentations and sales calls** throughout the year providing community information on the ACC.
- **Develop an Action Plan to outline destination goals**
 - Working with the Business Improvement Districts and Capitalize Albany a plan focusing on **Connectivity, Customer Service, Retail development and Vibrancy** in Albany's downtown has been activated and will continue.
 - The CVB working with partner Studio 136 developed a **brand identification for Wolf Road** partners stressing the business and service strength of Wolf Road. Program elements will be formulated and enacted in 2017.
 - Activity continued with the Regional **Taxi Task Force** involving major municipalities, public safety CDTA and CVB. NYS Legislation was passed providing CDTA with the authority to better manage the region's taxi businesses.
 - A Hospitality Employment and **workforce development** group comprised of partners was developed to instantiate a program focused on the needs of the Hospitality industry. Hospitality has been selected as a prime industry for program development through Albany Youth & Workforce Services, NYS DOL and Capital Region workforce. The program will be more fully developed in 2017.

- **Increase new travel business to Albany County by 15%**
 - Meeting business goal was exceeded with a growth in meeting bookings of 16% and overall growth in attraction attendance of 9%.
 - **19 meeting and group tour trade shows**, sales blitzes and familiarization tours attended resulting in **463 new contacts, 22 leads, 5 bookings** (to date) and **11 group tour referrals**.
 - **Film Albany** assisted with 2 productions in 2016 generating **1000+ hotel room nights**.
 - Marketing efforts in support of increasing travel business:
 - MPI retargeting – **reach 10,000 meeting professionals**, clicked through rate 3.5%, video views more than tripled throughout the year.
 - Advance media **Social Media Optimization- 100,000 + Facebook** reach.
 - Interfuse content Activation/Lead Generation – **6,400** unique visits to Discover Albany blog on Albany.org.
- **Develop a more comprehensive calendar of events**
 - An ongoing project boosted by increased partner outreach and more listings on other regional calendars

Initiative Three

Ensure future success of the destination and ACCVB with a plan for growth and Board succession.

- Great care was taken in recruiting the 2016 class of board members, carefully reviewing business distribution and diversity, leadership and stressing active participation.
- DMOProz was engaged in 2016 to conduct an ACCVB Organization Analysis to identify strategies and initiatives that will assure future success. Report due to Partners – Spring 2017.



2016 by the Numbers

Sales Activity Report

2016 Accomplishments

	TOTAL 2016 Leads	YTD +/-	TOTAL 2016 Room Nights	YTD RN +/-	TOTAL 2016 Lead Attn	YTD RN +/-
Leads	274	+16%	117,565	+58%	230,115	+9%

	TOTAL 2016 Bookings	YTD/LY +/-	YTD Room Nights	YTD/LY +/-	YTD Attn	YTD/LY +/-
Bookings	198	+16%	49,088	+16%	142,386	-17%

- 2015 bookings include 2018 NCAA Women's Basketball among other sporting events with larger attendance, contracted room nights.

Marketing Metrics

Website/Mobile Site Views, Year End: **458,000**
 Social Media: **3.8 million impressions (+123%)**
8,371 Twitter followers (+16%)
7,614 Facebook fans (+23%)
2,787 Instagram followers (+100.2%)
 Inquiries: **18,580 plus 4,652 digital views**
 Blogs: **111 posts, 31,552 views**

- Reach: On Facebook, our reach increased 295% this year.
- Engagements: Our engagements tripled this year.
- Fan base: Followers increased an average of 42% across platforms, including a 100% increase on Instagram.

Operations Metrics

Airport Information Center
 Guests Served: **94,364**

Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center
 YTD Attendance: **13,781** including **5,257** students
 Gift Shop Net Income: **\$6,834**
 Program Net Income: **\$16,36**

Visitors Center Attendance

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL ATTENDANCE
2015	541	704	985	1,128	1,485	1,819	2,105	1,173	887	1,402	760	795	13,784
2016	682	1,013	991	902	1,674	2,103	2,037	1,320	678	1,214	770	397	13,781



Financial Report

Condensed Balance Sheet (as of 12/31/16, unaudited)

Assets

Cash and Investments	\$ 1,562,204
Receivables	74,200
Property & Equipment	21,419
Other Assets	<u>390,339</u>
Total Assets	\$ 2,048,162

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$ 32,816
Other Liabilities	<u>107,273</u>
Total Liabilities	144,089

Total Liabilities and Net Assets \$ 2,048,162

2017 Budget

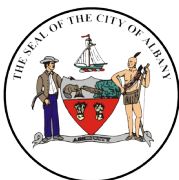
Income	2017 Budget	2016 (unaudited)
Earned Income	\$ 98,150	\$ 102,738
Fee for Services	1,625,668	1,773,594
Grants	124,000	124,196
Investments and Interest Income	18,750	31,690
Other Income	<u>650</u>	<u>746</u>
Total Income	\$ 1,867,218	\$ 2,032,964
Expenses	2017 Budget	2016 (unaudited)
Administrative Expenses	\$ 314,650	\$ 301,912
Marketing, Development & Sales	310,200	352,675
Personnel	1,144,200	1,090,993
Other Expenses	<u>91,800</u>	<u>118,793</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 1,860,850	\$ 1,864,373



Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau
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ACCVB MISSION STATEMENT

The Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau strengthens the awareness of Albany County as a convention and visitor destination, attracting individuals, families and businesses from around the world to increase revenue and stimulate economic development and growth for the community.



Daniel P. McCoy
Albany County Executive