



MERRIAM VISITORS BUREAU
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Director's Message

This annual report is typically an opportunity for us to share our industry's highlights and achievements for the year. But, in March 2020, travel came to a screeching halt due to a pandemic that gripped the world. With canceled events, lost room nights, and dozens of hospitality job losses, the hit to tourism was immense and will likely be felt for quite some time. While we quickly adjusted to working remotely and switched gears to virtual services, we always upheld our pledge to withstand the storm and help our community in any way we could.

We pivoted. We shifted plans. And then we shifted a few more times. Zoom became the new meeting platform. We kept continual watch on weekly COVID-19 trends and restrictions. We maintained regular contact with our tourism partners, keeping them informed of county mandates, case numbers, and safety protocols. We reduced spending. We increased our social presence, and changed our messaging. We even developed a new website, which was the perfect long-term project during this time.

Pre-pandemic, visitor spending in our state had been growing at an impressive pace for many years. 2020 was the first year in a long while that those numbers became dismal and concerning. However, given what we know about the spirit of travel, we knew people would return. In fact, Destination Analysts reported that 63% of Americans desperately needed a vacation after the trauma of the pandemic, and we had never felt more in agreement.

It's now early 2021—a full year of battling this pandemic, remaining attentive to our safety protocols, and upholding our dedication to service those visiting Merriam. Thankfully, vaccines are on the rise and cases are decreasing. **According to a recent Longwoods International study of American travelers, 88% now have travel plans within the next six months, the highest level in more than a year.** We are encouraged by this travel sentiment. We look forward to welcoming back our business travelers, sports teams, motor coach groups, and leisure weekenders. But, most of all, we thank you for considering our town as your destination of choice!

Karen Crane
Director

88% of American travelers now have plans to take a trip within the next six months.

HOW TRANSIENT GUEST TAX WORKS

The Transient Guest Tax is funded by visitors staying overnight in Merriam lodging properties. The revenues from the Transient Guest Tax on hotel rooms pay for the promotion of conventions and tourism, attracting people to the City of Merriam, for general economic development, and for related expenditures.

(Charter Ordinance No. 23, Section 6)

2020 MERRIAM HOTEL PERFORMANCE

MERRIAM HOTEL VISITORS GENERATED

\$285,734

CHANGE FROM 2019: -34.9%

IN TRANSIENT GUEST TAX

Things are looking up... March 2021 occupancy and revenue increased 13% over 2020

MERRIAM ROOM COUNT



107



142



85



90



OCCUPANCY

CHANGE FROM 2019: -20%



AVERAGE DAILY RATE

-18%



REVENUE

-34%

THOSE DOLLARS FUND:



52.7%

Merriam Visitors Bureau & Historic Plaza



35.7%

Special Events



5.6%

Economic Development



6%

Merriam Marketplace & Farmers' Market

TOURISM'S ECONOMIC IMPACT

Direct



Indirect



Induced



VISITOR DATA



25 MILLION
VISITORS TO KANSAS CITY

Visitors spent
\$5.6 BILLION

47% OF VISITORS
STAY OVERNIGHT

1 OUT OF 19 LOCAL JOBS
are funded by tourism spending

KANSAS

Until 2020, the tourism industry in Kansas had experienced exponential growth over the past decade. In 2019 alone, the tourism industry in Kansas generated:

36.5 MILLION
VISITORS

\$613 MILLION
IN NEW CAPITAL INVESTMENT
FOR TOURISM PROJECTS

VISITORS SPENT
\$7.3 BILLION

66,007
TOURISM JOBS IN KANSAS

15¢ OF EACH DOLLAR
IS SPENT IN A RETAIL STORE

OVERNIGHT VISITORS
REPRESENT 40%
OF ALL VISITS TO KANSAS

Highlights & Achievements

2020



TOURISM-TO-GO

For walk-in visitors, we greeted guests at the door (in masks) with Tourism-To-Go kits. These packets contained our most popular visitor takeaways, including the Merriam Visitor Guide, Kansas Travel Guide, Kansas map, and postcards.

MERRIAM HOLLY DAYS

Merriam Holly Days offered 12 days of holiday offers from local businesses. From discounts to BOGO options, shopping remained a steadfast activity of our local residents, even during the pandemic.



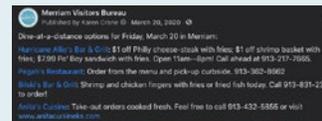
SUNSHINE SCAVENGER HUNT

Because social distancing was the "it thing" in 2020, we brought back the Sunshine Scavenger Hunt with new clues and new locations during the summer!



DINE-AT-A-DISTANCE

Merchants needed our help sharing their messaging to keep business coming through the door. Our Dine-at-a-Distance campaign helped share the daily specials of local restaurants offering curbside pickup or delivery options.



OTOCAST

Our Merriam History Tour provided the perfect virtual portal to discover Merriam's history. Using the Otocast app, users selected the Merriam History Tour 1,422 times in 2020. Our most popular site? The Shawnee Friends Mission Historic Marker.



WINNER, WINNER!

The 2020 Merriam Community & Visitor Guide took first place AGAIN at the annual Kansas Tourism Conference (which also went virtual in October). This three-peat win for best in-house visitor guide (medium budget) was a nice accolade during such a challenging year.

WE WENT VIRTUAL!

From desktop backgrounds for those popular zoom meetings to an uptick in social messaging, we traded in-office operations for at-home remoting, but kept the tourism ball rolling every single day!



Looking ahead... 2021

- ▶ Launch the new exploremerriam.com
- ▶ Rebrand email marketing newsletter
- ▶ Explore Merriam Passport – National Tourism Week
- ▶ Insta Challenge – Summer, 2021
- ▶ Recapture tour groups to Merriam

How you can help tourism in Merriam...

- ✔ Share your Merriam photos with friends and relatives; then, invite them to visit!
- ✔ Ask your company to host a meeting, training, or conference in Merriam. Our new community center has meeting space that's *Just Right!*
- ✔ Leave our hospitality partners a great review – hotels, restaurants, attractions, and local merchants depend on your 5-star recommendations!
- ✔ Share the Merriam Community & Visitor Guide with a friend or relative. We can mail one, or you can share the link online!
- ✔ Explore Merriam, shop and eat local – though you might not stay overnight, your spending still helps Merriam's economy.



Visitor Guide: 3 Years of Wins!

TIAK JUDGES' COMMENTS

"Excellent submission. Very well put together guide."

"This is a great looking piece. Good choices for typography, headlines vs. body, photo treatment and graphics."

"Excellent. Well-designed, colorful, easy-to-follow. Great work here!"

"Appealing, engaging, great story telling."