

# LITTLE ROCK CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU 2015 ANNUAL REPORT



*Little Rock*  
CONVENTION &  
VISITORS BUREAU

FEBRUARY 24, 2016

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



2015 proved to be a banner year for the Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau (LRCVB). Tax collections were at an all-time high, utilization of the convention center continued to grow, new hotels and amenities were added to the destination, and the Robinson renovation project continued to make progress and remained on-time for completion in November 2016.

A very exciting addition to the destination in 2015 was the opening of the Outlets at Little Rock, Arkansas's only outlet mall; and largest outdoor shopping center. Home to almost 75 businesses, and more development in the works, the center will be a huge draw for leisure tourism.

In 2014, LRCVB retained Crossroads Consulting to conduct a feasibility study for a potential indoor, multi-purpose, sports facility. The final study was presented in March 2015 and evaluated the overall economic potential and quality of life impact of sporting events, as well as provided an analysis for building and operating the facility. Funding for the development of such a facility remains to be explored.

Financially, LRCVB continued to experience significant revenue growth, with total tax collections up 6.57% over 2014, fueled by strong performances in both prepared food and hotel room sales.



The sales team had its strongest annual room night production since 2006, securing 137,549 convention room nights, sending 360 leads for future bookings, and confirming 253 tourism/motor coach tour bookings. Hotel occupancy in Little Rock was down slightly in 2015, as a result of hotel room inventory growing by 3.4%. The average daily rate (ADR) increased by 3.8% to \$87.51 and RevPAR increased 2.2%.

Little Rock continues to garner tremendous media coverage, and the marketing and communications department continues to build on the new destination brand strategy that was presented in 2013. The “with a southern accent” campaign is used to illustrate the true southern charm, and authenticity, of the city and its people. In addition, social media platforms continued to experience large increases. Web traffic has flattened since the redesign in 2012; however a new design focused on creating a fully responsive site for mobile devices has been contracted for 2016.

The facility operations team continued to shine in customer service scores received by client surveys. The Statehouse Convention Center experienced another year of increased events and annual attendance. The overall facility usage at the convention center was slightly higher than many recognized national averages, and in 2015 LRCVB managed facilities, combined, welcomed over 732,000 visitors.

The Travel and Tourism industry is recognized internationally as a major economic driver. As the #2 economic industry in the state of Arkansas, Little Rock not only serves as the state's capital, but as the largest hub for tourism. Pulaski County welcomes over 5.7 million visitors annually. With the exciting additions in 2015, coupled with on-going destination development and announcements for future expansion, Little Rock is most assuredly going to continue to enjoy significant growth in the travel and tourism sector!



Gretchen Hall. President & CEO, Little Rock CVB

THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM  
INDUSTRY IS RECOGNIZED  
INTERNATIONALLY AS A  
MAJOR ECONOMIC DRIVER.  
AS THE #2 ECONOMIC  
INDUSTRY IN THE STATE  
OF ARKANSAS, LITTLE  
ROCK NOT ONLY SERVES  
AS THE STATE'S CAPITAL,  
BUT THE LARGEST HUB FOR  
TOURISM.





# ORGANIZATION & LEADERSHIP



## LITTLE ROCK CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU (LRCVB)

The Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau (LRCVB) is the official destination marketing organization for the City of Little Rock, charged with marketing and selling the city as a meeting, convention and visitor destination. The LRCVB also operates the Statehouse Convention Center, Robinson Center, River Market and multiple parking facilities. The organization is divided into four primary divisions: facility operations, sales & services, marketing & communications, and finance & administration.

## LITTLE ROCK ADVERTISING & PROMOTION COMMISSION

The Little Rock Advertising & Promotion Commission is the governing body for LRCVB. It is a volunteer board consisting of seven members – two City of Little Rock elected officials, four business owners within the Little Rock hospitality industry and one at-large position.

**Capi Peck, Chair**  
**Mayor Mark Stodola**  
**Larry Carpenter**  
**City Director Gene Fortson**  
**Warren Simpson**  
**Pamela Smith**  
**Philip Tappan**

## LRCVB EXECUTIVE TEAM

**Gretchen Hall, President & CEO**  
**Jim Rice, Sr. Vice President & COO**  
**Nikki Parnell, Sr. Vice President - Finance & Administration**  
**Alan Sims, Vice President - Sales & Services**  
**John Mayner, Vice President - Marketing & Communications**

**PHYLLIS LUCAS**

NAMED  
 AR HOSPITALITY  
 ASSOCIATION'S  
 MANAGER  
 OF THE YEAR

**JOHN MAYNER**

EARNED A  
 CERTIFIED  
 DESTINATION  
 MANAGEMENT  
 EXECUTIVE (CDME)  
 DESIGNATION

**ALAN SIMS**

EARNED THE  
 TRAVEL MARKETING  
 PROFESSIONAL (TMP)  
 CERTIFICATION

## LRCVB MANAGEMENT TEAM

**Kim Berry**  
*Executive Assistant to the SVP/COO*

**James "Doc" Doolittle**  
*Senior Director of Facilities Maintenance/Engineering*

**Bobby Green**  
*Security Supervisor*

**Randy Guptill**  
*Director of Technical Services*

**Norman Hale**  
*Parking Manager*

**Ricardo Henderson**  
*Building Services Supervisor*

**Dan Limke**  
*Creative Services Manager*

**Libby Lloyd**  
*Communications Manager*

**Johnny Loney**  
*Auxiliary Services Manager*

**Diana Long**  
*Director of River Market Operations*

**Phyllis Lucas**  
*Senior Director of Event Operations*

**Ionette Neal**  
*Senior Director of Tax Revenue*

**Charlie Oppedisano**  
*Retail Sales Manager*

**Kim Sanders**  
*Human Resources Representative*

**Susan Sanders**  
*Controller*

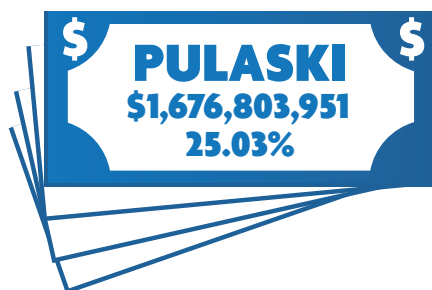
**Gwen Stallings**  
*Building Services Supervisor*

**Jennifer Willis**  
*Convention Services Manager*

# — VALUE OF TOURISM —



## 2014 TRAVEL SPENDING IN ARKANSAS COUNTIES



GARLAND	\$686,946,901	10.26%
SEBASTIAN	\$418,883,990	6.25%
WASHINGTON	\$373,114,788	5.57%
BENTON	\$319,462,363	4.77%
OTHER 70 ARKANSAS COUNTIES	\$3,223,289,029	48.12%
TOTAL	\$6,698,501,022	

Source: Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism 2014-2015 Annual Report

## 2014 ANNUAL VISITORS IN ARKANSAS COUNTIES



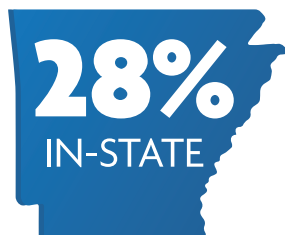
GARLAND	2,744,415	10.60%
WASHINGTON	1,556,358	6.01%
SEBASTIAN	1,401,889	5.42%
BENTON	1,388,707	5.36%
OTHER 70 ARKANSAS COUNTIES	13,087,824	50.56%
TOTAL	25,885,046	

Source: Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism 2014-2015 Annual Report



## ARKANSAS VISITOR PROFILE

PRIMARY ORIGIN MARKETS FOR OVERNIGHT LEISURE TRIPS



TEXAS	<b>12%</b>
MISSOURI	<b>7%</b>
OKLAHOMA	<b>5%</b>
TENNESSEE	<b>3%</b>
LOUISIANA	<b>3%</b>

## TOURISM IMPACT IN ARKANSAS



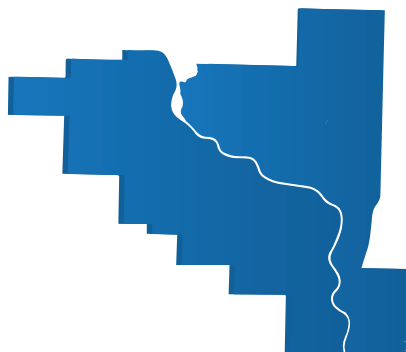
# OF VISITORS INCREASED TO ALMOST **26 MILLION**

2014 VISITORS SPENT > **\$6.6 BILLION**

AVERAGE TRIP EXPENDITURE IS **\$258 PER TRIP**

GENERATED **\$344 MILLION** IN STATE TAXES  
AND **\$126 MILLION** IN LOCAL TAXES

## TOURISM IMPACT IN PULASKI COUNTY



### TRAVEL GENERATED:

EMPLOYMENT	PAYROLL	STATE TAX	LOCAL TAX
<b>12,978 JOBS</b>	<b>\$317,664,084</b>	<b>\$63,883,740</b>	<b>\$28,586,310</b>

### PULASKI COUNTY ACCOUNTS FOR

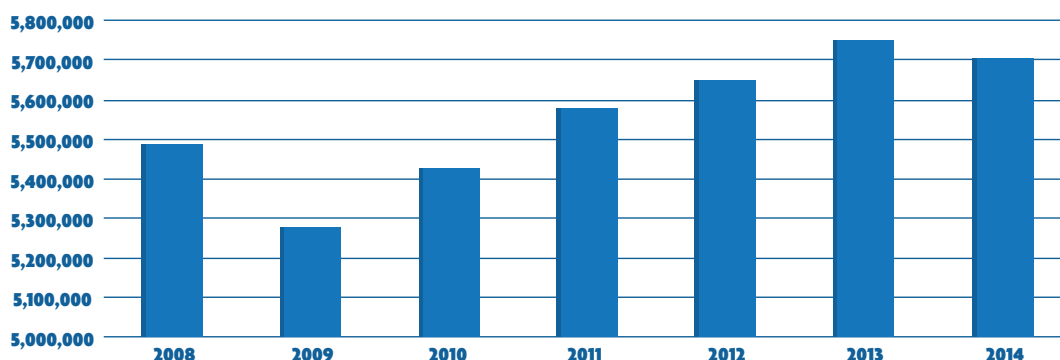
**22%** OF THE TOTAL VISITORS TO ARKANSAS

**25%** OF THE TOTAL TRAVEL EXPENDITURES IN ARKANSAS

**21%** OF THE TOTAL TRAVEL RELATED EMPLOYMENT IN ARKANSAS

Source: Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism 2014-2015 Annual Report

## ANNUAL PULASKI COUNTY VISITORS



# FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

The Tax Department of the Finance & Administration Division collects the two percent (2%) Advertising & Promotion tax, also referred to as the "A&P Tax" or the "hospitality tax". The tax is collected on gross receipts of Little Rock lodging and prepared food establishments. LRCVB collected a record \$13 million in tax revenue in 2015, indicating a very successful year for the Little Rock hospitality industry.

Over the past ten years, LRCVB has seen tax collections increase \$3.9 million or 42%. Specifically, the last five years have shown the greatest results with collections from prepared food establishments increasing by 21% to \$10.5 million in 2015 and lodging establishment collections increasing by 14% to \$2.7 million. Contributing in part to the increase in prepared food collections was the notable success of local festivals, including the Arkansas State Fair, which reported a 51% increase over the previous year.

In the last quarter of 2015, LRCVB hired an employee with 16 years of experience to begin conducting audits of both lodging and prepared food establishments. These audits allow the organization to inform permittees of any issues with the completion of their returns so future returns are completed correctly.

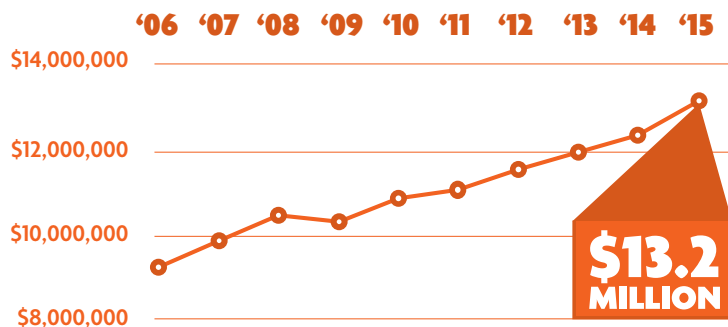
The Tax and Accounting Departments successfully streamlined and automated more processes resulting in a thorough integration of the management systems. In 2015, the Information Technology Department developed a barcoding system to be used on the monthly tax return forms. The result of these efforts was increased accuracy and efficiencies and improved customer service.

The Information Technology Department also focused much of 2015 on providing needed hardware updates in order to maintain the integrity of the organizations IT systems. The department also began planning for the needs of the Robinson Center and some large scale infrastructure projects that will begin in 2016. These projects will improve wireless connectivity and coverage, resulting in improvements to customers' experiences.

The Accounting Department improved several processes in 2015, which reduced the amount of time needed to produce monthly financial statements. A substantial amount of time was also dedicated to the oversight and execution of the financial management of the Robinson Center project. The department provides services including cash management, financial statement preparation for multiple locations, recordkeeping and reporting, budget and cost benefit analysis, as well as coordination of the external audit.

Purchasing and Human Resources are departments within Finance & Administration. Purchasing coordinates contract renewals, vendor bidding, and procurement. Human Resources is responsible for personnel and payroll administration, securing annual employee benefits and coordinating employee training. The department also serves as the primary liaison to the City of Little Rock Human Resources Department, which provides certain contracted services.

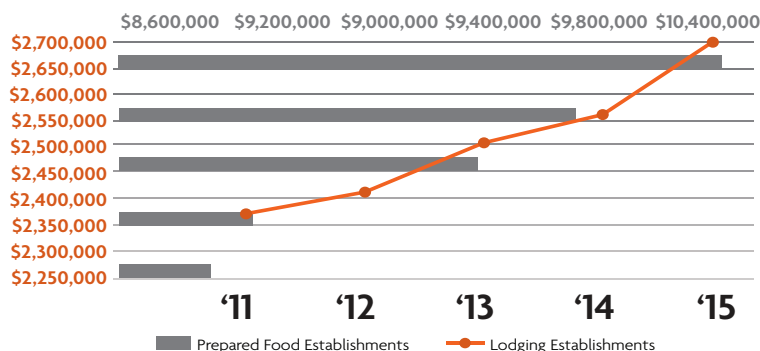
## A&P TAX COLLECTIONS 2006-2015



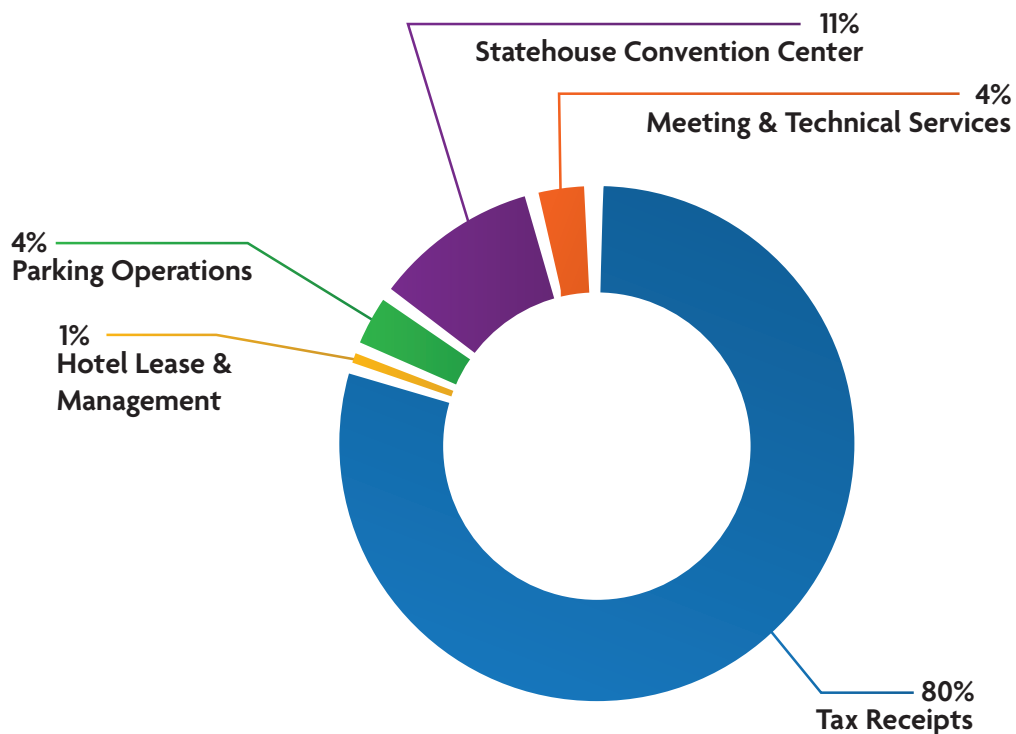
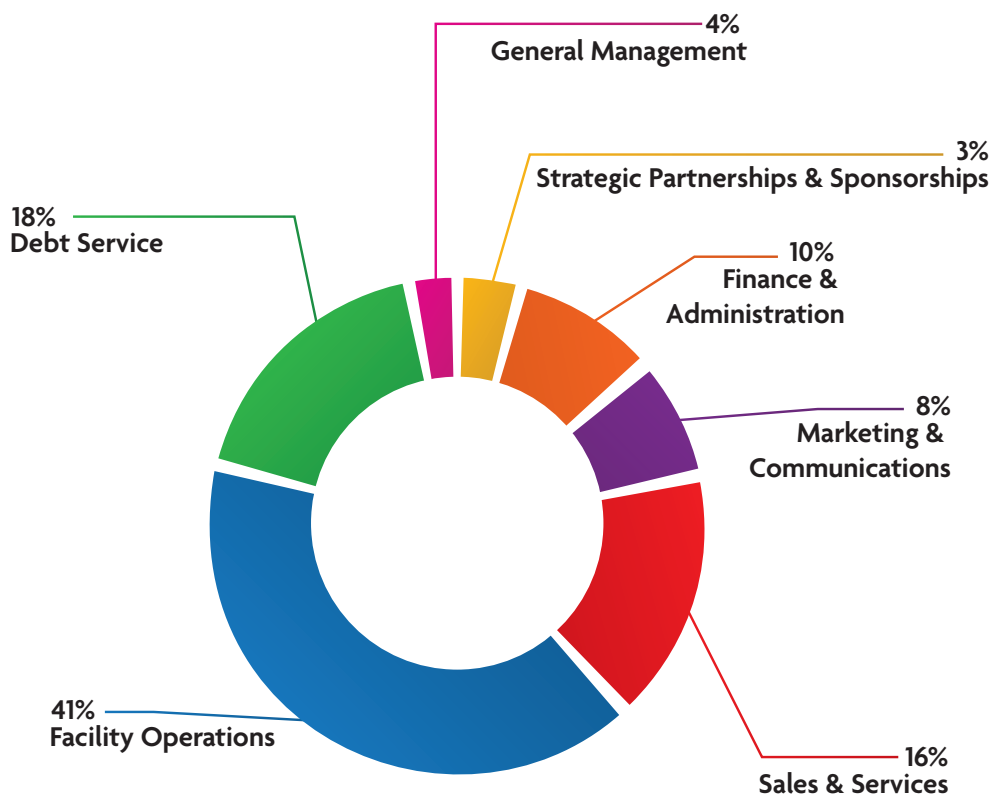
## 2015 TAX COLLECTIONS BY TYPE



## TAX REVENUE BY TYPE





**2015 TOTAL REVENUE - \$16.56 MILLION****2015 TOTAL EXPENDITURES**

# FACILITY OPERATIONS

The Facility Operations Division, under agreement with the City of Little Rock, is responsible for the operation of Statehouse Convention Center, Robinson Center, the municipal parking garage at Robinson and the parking decks at 2nd and Main Streets, as well as 2nd and River Market Avenue. In addition, under a Memorandum of Understanding with the city, LRCVB is also the management entity of the River Market. These responsibilities include Ottenheimer Market Hall, two 6,000 sq. ft. outdoor pavilions, the 7,500 seat First Security Amphitheater and all surface parking within Riverfront Park. Additionally, the division has direct operational responsibility, and serves as contract liaison, between the city-owned hotel properties (Marriott Little Rock and DoubleTree by Hilton) and the Little Rock Advertising & Promotion Commission. Lastly, the facility operations division manages the commission owned parking lot on Block 2, directly across from the Statehouse Convention Center.

## 2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

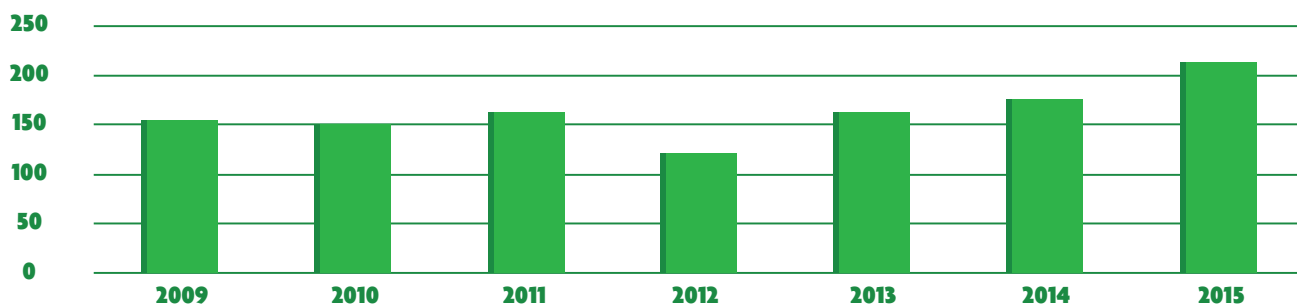
2015 was dominated by the management and oversight of the Robinson Center renovation project. Tremendous progress was made and 18 months into the project, it remains within budget and on-time for substantial completion, and occupancy, in November, 2016. Resident companies, the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra and Celebrity Attractions, are currently in their second season outside of Robinson and are anxious to return home when the new hall is completed for the 2016-2017 season. Both have been very involved in the project planning process. Statehouse Convention Center business levels continued to increase in both usage and revenue. The River Market also hosted a variety of programs, including a great Farmers' Market season, Jazz in the Park series, Movies in the Park, and many other activities. New uniforms were also developed, and purchased, in 2015. The new, brighter color, provides more visibility and aligns better with the LRCVB logo and brand initiatives. The division, as a whole, continued to receive high service scores on client surveys. In addition, numerous capital projects were completed throughout the year, including:

- Replaced chilled water system (phase I) in Statehouse Convention Center
- Completed LED lighting projects in Statehouse Convention Center Governor's Halls
- Completed LED lighting retro-fit in Statehouse Convention Center exterior entrance and Toltec Lobby
- Contracted and began major structural steel repair in the Robinson Center Parking garage
- Completed exterior painting of the Statehouse Convention Center
- In conjunction with the installation of new signage and exterior art, the parking deck located at 2nd & Main Streets was renamed Convention District Parking Deck
- Meeting room area upgrades in the hallways, including painting, wall paper and art
- Planning and purchase of new parking equipment for Robinson Center Parking garage as well as the Convention District Parking deck. Installation, first quarter, 2016
- Engineering and capital planning for 1982 escalator replacement, Statehouse Convention Center
- River Market elevator foyer floor replaced and repaired
- Structural repair of the Statehouse Convention Center air wall system

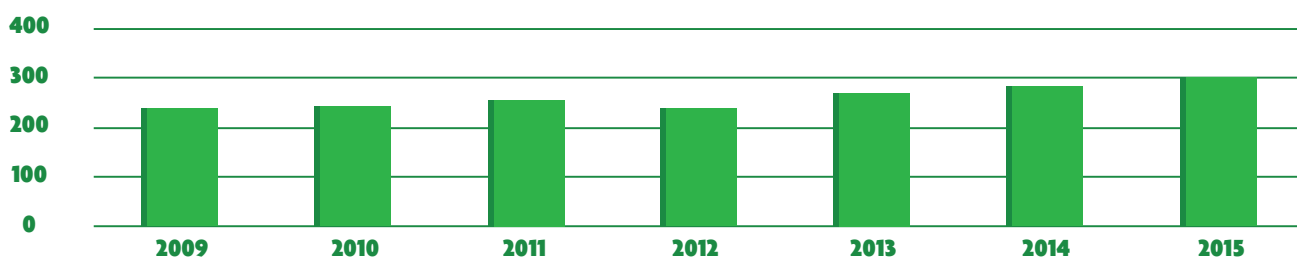




### TOTAL EVENTS STATEHOUSE CONVENTIONS CENTER



### FACILITY USER DAYS STATEHOUSE CONVENTIONS CENTER



#### RIVER MARKET 2015

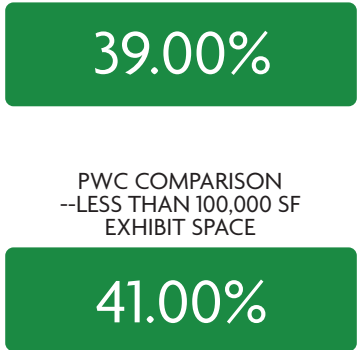
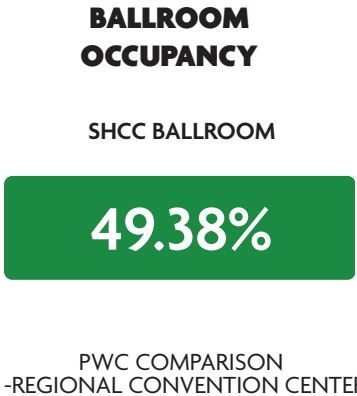
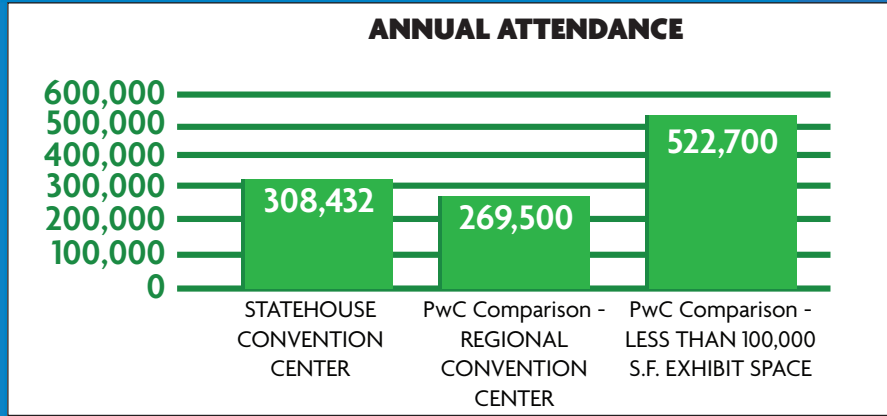
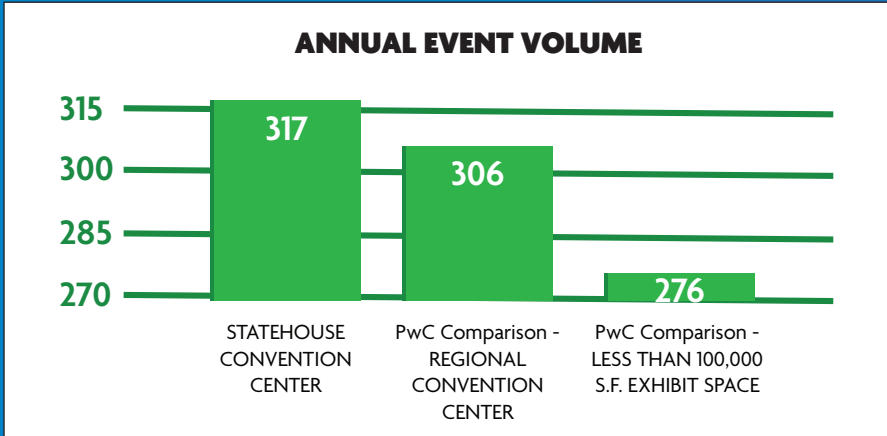
EVENT TYPE	# OF EVENTS	PATRON DAYS
Convention	4	3,600
Shows	26	269,259
Dance/Party	2	200
Banquets, Receptions & Luncheons	58	22,391
Meeting	37	3,821
Trade Show/Exhibits (including Farmers' Market)	49	105,418
Sports/Hobby	17	15,890
Rehearsal	2	3,500
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>424,079</b>

#### STATEHOUSE CONVENTION CENTER 2015

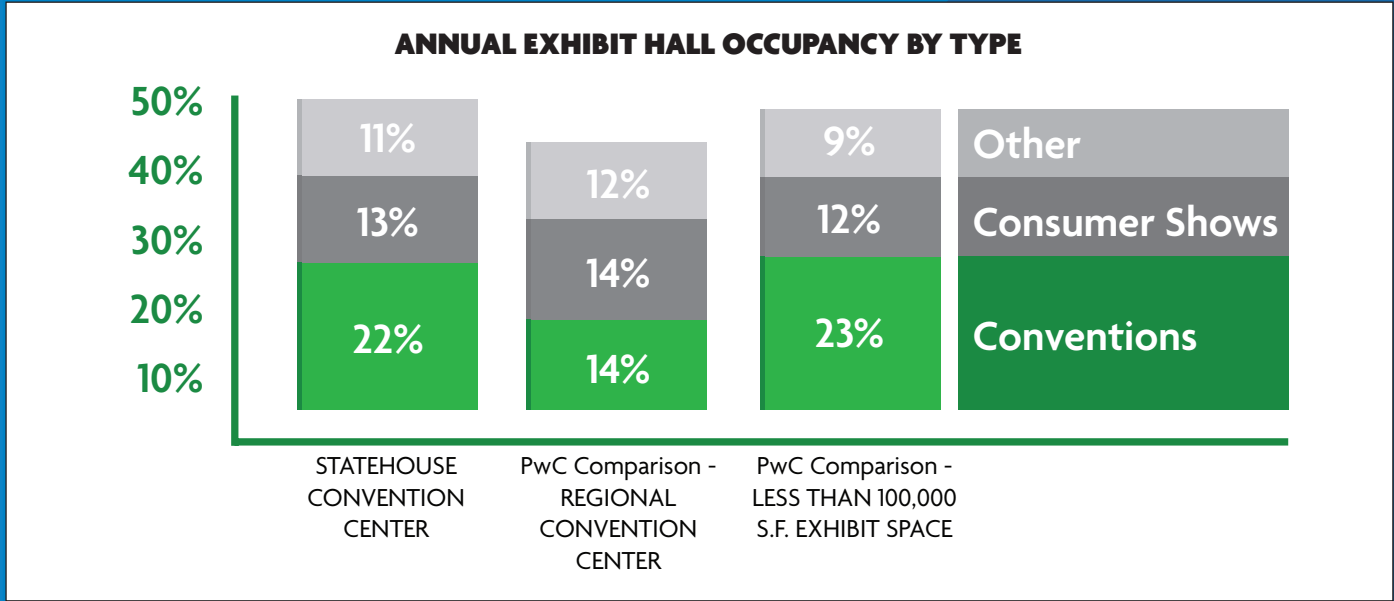
EVENT TYPE	# OF EVENTS	PATRON DAYS
Convention	60	144,260
Shows	7	3,175
Dance/Party	4	2,730
Banquets, Receptions & Luncheons	42	30,831
Meeting	58	20,407
Consumer Show	19	68,811
Sports	6	16,428
Graduation	9	12,200
Recital/Competitions	9	9,150
Exams	4	440
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>308,432</b>

CONVENTION CENTER COMPARISONS

Comparison information provided via 30th volume of PwC Convention Center Report 2014, which evaluates trends in the North American convention industry.



Figures for “All Events” represent all center events regardless of event type or space utilized (exhibit hall, ballroom, multi-purpose, etc.). Events are defined as one activity or a series of related activities. For example, either a three-day conference or single three-hour local banquet would be classified as a single event. Further, a banquet that is part of the conference would not be classified as a separate event. Event Volume = total days the facility was in use.



Occupancy is calculated as the ratio of occupied square foot days (OSFD) to available square foot days (ASFD). These two terms refer to the gross square feet of space occupied or rented during the year as a percent of the total amount of space available for rent. It has been recognized industry-wide that the “practical” maximum exhibit hall occupancy rate is approximately 70 percent and the “efficient” range is considered to be approximately 50 to 60 percent. Occupancy levels less than 50 percent generally suggest the existence of marketable opportunities or open dates, while an occupancy rate above 60 percent increases the potential for lost business or “turn-aways.”



## LRCVB STAFF

Sales Manager/  
process &  
professionalismEvent Coordinator/  
service & professionalismManager on Duty/  
responsivenessSafety and Security  
Officers  
(presence, attentive,  
knowledgeable & helpful)Overall experience  
with in-house  
Audio Visual

Staff and service scores for the 500+ annual events in LRCVB facilities. Scale of 1 to 5 (1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good, 5=excellent)

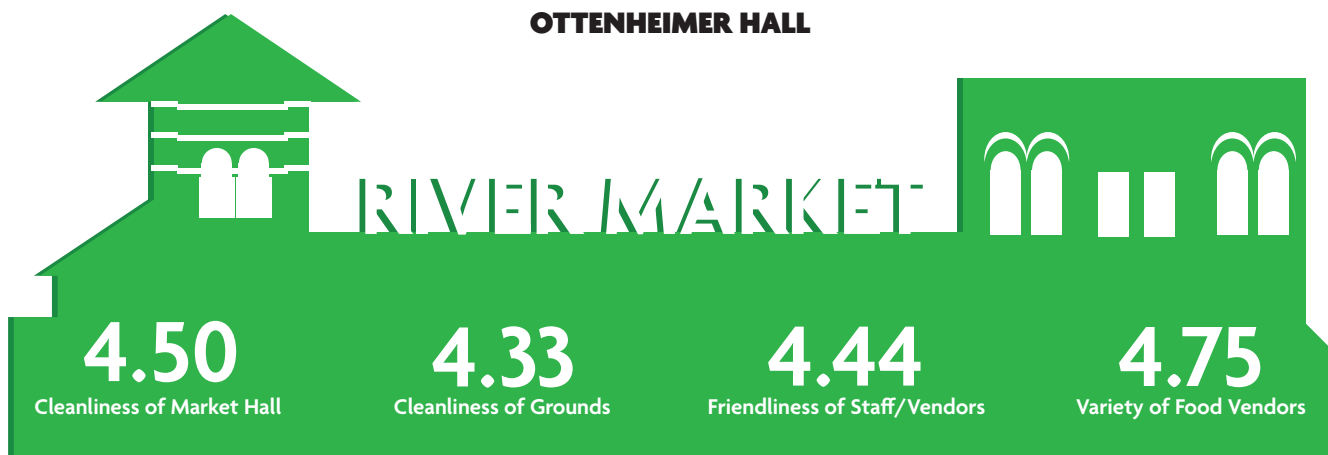
## LRCVB FACILITY OPERATIONS

CLEANLINESS  
OF FACILITYCOMFORT OF  
MEETING ROOMS  
& FACILITYACCURACY OF  
ROOM SETUPVALUE OF  
SERVICES,  
EQUIPMENT  
AND FACILITYCONDITION OF  
EQUIPMENT  
PROVIDEDOVERALL  
CONDITION  
OF FACILITYOVERALL  
SATISFACTION  
OF FACILITY

## PARKING FACILITIES



## OTTENHEIMER HALL



# ROBINSON CENTER RENOVATION



The historic restoration, renovation and expansion made great progress in 2015. With the success of a special Little Rock election on Tuesday, December 10, 2013, to dedicate the existing 2% A&P tax for the repayment of bonds to fund the Robinson Center project, the building officially closed for construction on July 1, 2014. The renovation has been called Robinson Center's "intermission", noting that the grand re-opening will be Robinson's "Second Act".

The 1939 structure is receiving major interior upgrades within the performance hall including, additional vertical volume creating a two tiered balcony, increasing lobby space, acoustical improvements, theatrical upgrades, loading dock expansion, a larger stage area, and new dressing room facilities. In addition, an enhanced and modern ballroom and conference center is being added to the north side of the building. New technology, LEED certification, mechanical systems, and parking garage entrances into the facility are also included in the project.

Major milestones for the project that were met in 2015 included the successful completion of the demolition phase, the erection of the conference center, and the placement of most glass and roof structure. In addition, the new balcony structures, box seating and multiple stairways were added. A "topping out" ceremony took place on July 1, 2015 to celebrate the progress and place the final steel beam structure.

Almost \$49 million in construction contracts have been awarded thus far and more than 960 subcontractor employees have participated in the project to date. In addition, almost 90% of total construction waste and debris has been recycled. This includes dirt, metal, brick and concrete, totaling over 11,000 tons! The facility is scheduled for substantial completion by November 2016.











**OVER 10,000 TONS**



- CONCRETE
- BRICK
- CARDBOARD
- METAL
- WOOD
- DIRT

**HAVE BEEN RECYCLED IN THE ROBINSON CENTER PROJECT**



To provide on-going project updates throughout construction, the marketing team developed a special website with renderings, construction photographs, press releases and other project information. This website will continue to be updated until the official re-opening.

Construction of the Joseph T. Robinson Memorial Auditorium began in 1937 and officially opened in December 1939. The structure was a WPA (Works Progress Administration) project, and is an excellent example of the Art Deco style architecture of the time. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2007. The facility is owned by the City of Little Rock and managed by the Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau.



[ROBINSONCENTERSECONDACT.COM](http://ROBINSONCENTERSECONDACT.COM)

# SALES & SERVICES



The mission of the Sales & Services division is to bring more visitors to the City of Little Rock, filling hotels and restaurants. Identifying new business opportunities is key to future success. Interest in Little Rock has increased over the past four years, as evidenced by the increase in bookings and new business opportunities the team has generated. To continue to be successful being creative, motivated, and strategic will be key.

## 2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

Following an outstanding sales performance in 2014, the Sales & Services Team was challenged to reach a fourth consecutive year of positive definite room night booking growth. 2015 proved to be a banner year and the accomplishments of the sales team are supported by a key measure of success; the impressive growth levels of visitor tax collection from both hotels and restaurants. The team also exceeded the number of new business leads from the prior year, achieving an average of almost one per day at 360 leads for the year. This increase in new booking opportunities was also reflected in definite room night performance which achieved 106.6% of goal, representing the highest performance numbers in nine years, at 137,549!

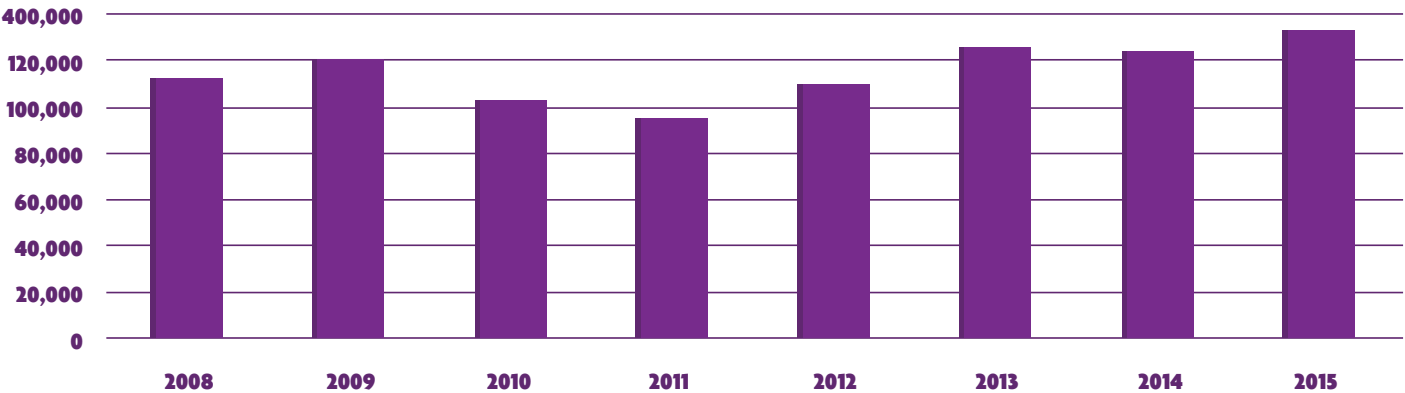
The retention of the City's most significant annual summer convention was solidified with the groundbreaking, and current construction, on the new World Headquarters of ATA International. This development confirms Little Rock as the host city of the organization's annual International Expo and World competition for the next 20 years. News of other construction impacting the meetings and conventions industry are continuing to focus attention on Little Rock. The timely development of the new Robinson Center has resulted in advance pre-opening interest and is already generating new business opportunities and definite bookings.

The sports market continues to be the single largest demand generator, producing more than 50,000 definite room nights. Unlike most meetings and conventions that require multiple hotels in close proximity and/or convention center support, sports related groups utilize all levels of hotels and restaurants throughout the city, most often in suburban areas. Although this market segment has the most potential for additional growth it will require a commitment to develop new sports facilities and the upgrade of existing facilities.

The tourism market continues to develop and evolve, leading to one of the best performing years on record. The development and industry acceptance of the Destination Marketing Association International Economic Impact Calculator has allowed us to identify the impact of emerging markets on Little Rock tourism. Benchmarks have been established to help us accurately measure the contribution and performance of group travel, festivals and events moving forward.



DEFINITE ROOM NIGHT BOOKINGS



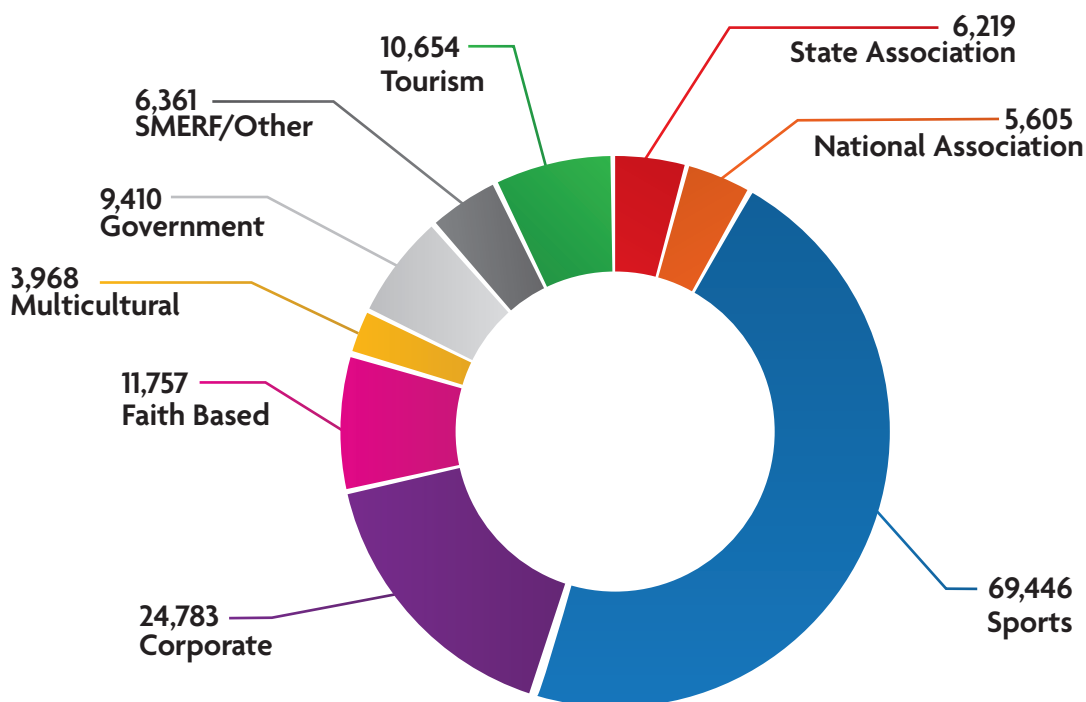
Strategic initiatives that contributed to a successful 2015:

- **FRONT-OF-MIND:** LRCVB entered into a strategic partnership with Cvent, the primary research and lead distribution tool used by independent and third party meeting planners. This partnership immediately positioned Little Rock in front of key decision influencers at the point of destination research and site selection. Front-of-mind is critical with these targeted clients who manage multiple accounts representing a significant pool of potential new business.
- **EXPERIENTIAL SELLING:** With a proven track record of success, when potential clients actually visit and experience Little Rock first hand, the odds of them selecting the city greatly increases. This past year 220 individuals experienced Little Rock as part of a site visit, or hosted meeting planner conference, including the Small Market Meetings Conference with more than 80 meeting planners. This long-range strategy of creating opportunities to expose Little Rock to new clients by hosting industry specific conventions will continue. It is a successful formula that continues to produce great results.
- **RELATIONSHIP SELLING:** After successfully hosting a regional HelmsBriscoe event in 2014 that introduced Little Rock to 75 meeting planners, who manage multiple clients and resulted in actual bookings, LRCVB significantly enhanced the Preferred Partnership in 2015. This relationship continues to pay dividends through word-of-mouth marketing, relationship development and increased performance. A similar upgraded level of partnership with ConferenceDirect is now being explored.
- **MINING FOR GOLD:** Prospecting to identify new booking opportunities continued to develop and evolve. Gone are the days of cold calling. Training was conducted utilizing online e-tools to teach more effective and efficient prospecting activities for the sales team, as well as hotel and industry partners.

THE SALES AND SERVICES  
TEAM IS EFFECTIVELY  
DISCOVERING NEW  
BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES,  
CONVERTING THEM INTO  
NEW BOOKINGS AND  
DEVELOPING THOSE INTO  
REPEAT BUSINESS  
FOR THE CITY.



## ROOM NIGHTS BY MARKET SEGMENT

LRCVB 2015 BOOKING PACE REPORT  
DECEMBER YEAR-END PERFORMANCE

YEAR	ITYFTY RM NTS	FOLLOWING YR RM NTS	2 YEAR RM NTS	3 YEAR RM NTS	4 YEAR RM NTS	5 YEAR RM NTS	6 YEAR RM NTS	7 YEAR RM NTS	TOTAL RM NTS
2011	43,204	26,071	8,885	4,514	5,143	3,452	6,994	1,639	99,902
2012	58,100	33,148	19,691	1,096	349	0	0	3,278	115,662
2013	86,151	23,857	8,129	5,234	1,382	0	2,745	0	127,498
2014	93,038	31,533	2,303	582	380	245	245	0	128,326
2015	123,820	9,838	3,891	0	0	0	0	0	137,549
5 YR AVG	80,863	24,889	8,580	2,285	1,451	739	1,997	983	121,787

(ITYFTY = In The Year For The Year)

## 2015 SITE VISITS

MONTH	SITE VISIT	ATTENDEES	TOTAL POTENTIAL RN'S	TOTAL POTENTIAL ATTENDEES
JANUARY	5	9	2,372	1,750
FEBRUARY	11	13	7,913	6,585
MARCH	21	28	2,424	1,580
APRIL	3	4	1,972	1,100
MAY	11	27	11,834	34,105
JUNE	7	13	1,139	2,930
JULY	5	12	3,991	2,975
AUGUST	7	7	2,736	1,535
SEPTEMBER	3	85	759	350
OCTOBER	11	12	9,153	7,800
NOVEMBER	4	6	700	690
DECEMBER	3	4	2,465	1,700
TOTALS	91	220	47,458	63,100



## TAP REPORT

Trends, Analysis, and Projections, known as the TAP Report, utilizes historical data to develop and apply algorithms to current booking data. This allows us to more accurately communicate, forecast, identify, compete, and close potential business to achieve definite room night booking goals.

### THE TAP REPORT

LITTLE ROCK ROOM NIGHTS	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	TOTAL
Definite Room Nights	176,543	23,449	13,399	2,019	4,629	1,884	0	424	222,347
LRCVB Pace Targets	128,999	42,481	18,591	11,141	7,172	4,151	1,584	739	214,858
Variance	47,544	(19,032)	(5,192)	(9,122)	(2,543)	(2,267)	(1,584)	(315)	7,489
LRCVB Consumption Benchmark	129,000	129,000	129,000	129,000	129,000	129,000	129,000	129,000	1,032,000
LRCVB Pace Percentage	137%	55%	72%	18%	65%	45%	0%	57%	103%
Total Demand Room Nights	348,083	148,663	65,831	60,105	31,020	13,976	3,445	1,491	672,614
Lost Room Nights	171,540	125,214	52,432	58,086	26,391	12,092	3,445	1,067	450,267
Conversion Percentage	51%	16%	20%	3%	15%	13%	0%	28%	33%
Tentative Room Nights	0	89,073	59,993	75,177	27,844	6,822	1,585	9,040	269,534

### LITTLE ROCK EVENTS

Definite Events	385	35	11	3	3	2	0	1	440
Pace Targets	390	79	27	13	10	6	0	0	525
Variance	(5)	(44)	(16)	(10)	(7)	(4)	0	1	(85)
Consumption Benchmark	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	3,120
Pace Percentage	99%	44%	41%	23%	30%	33%	0%	100%	84%
Total Demand Events	566	147	45	27	11	7	3	2	808
Lost Events	181	112	34	24	8	5	3	1	368
Conversion Percentage	68%	24%	24%	11%	27%	29%	0%	50%	54%
Tentative Events	0	138	70	52	18	4	1	0	283

## SMITH TRAVEL RESEARCH

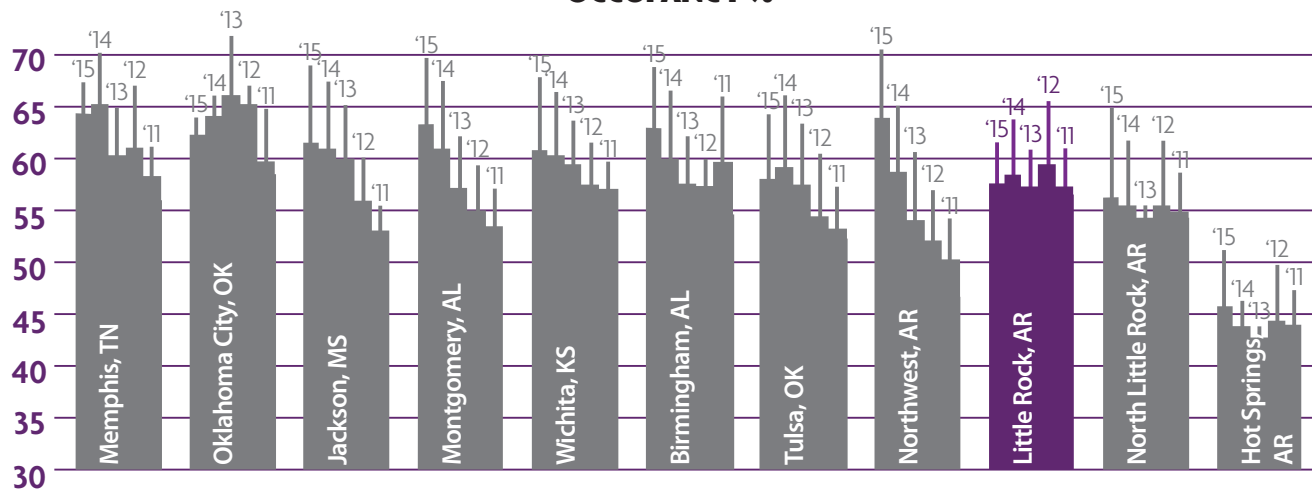
### 2015 COMPETITIVE MARKET HOTEL INFORMATION

	Occ %		ADR		RevPAR		Percent Change from YTD 2014					
	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	Occ	ADR	RevPAR	Room Rev	Room Avail	Room Sold
Memphis, TN	64.5	65.0	89.24	83.95	57.53	54.59	-0.9	6.3	5.4	7.0	1.5	0.6
Oklahoma City, OK	62.3	63.9	84.13	82.36	52.42	52.63	-2.5	2.1	-0.4	3.5	3.9	1.3
Tulsa, OK	58.4	59.0	78.64	77.35	45.91	45.66	-1.1	1.7	0.5	3.1	2.6	1.4
Wichita, KS	60.5	60.8	81.84	80.04	49.49	48.66	-0.5	2.2	1.7	6.7	4.9	4.4
Northwest AR	64.2	59.4	84.29	80.79	54.15	47.97	8.2	4.3	12.9	14.8	1.7	10.0
Birmingham, AL	63.2	60.7	83.30	80.99	52.65	49.15	4.1	2.9	7.1	6.7	-0.4	3.7
Montgomery, AL	63.8	61.1	74.25	71.39	47.41	43.63	4.5	4.0	8.7	5.5	-2.9	1.4
Little Rock, AR	57.6	58.5	87.51	84.34	50.44	49.35	-1.5	3.8	2.2	5.7	3.4	1.9
Jackson, MS	61.9	60.7	75.40	74.67	46.64	45.29	2.0	1.0	3.0	3.7	0.7	2.7
North Little Rock, AR	56.6	57.1	72.84	72.17	41.25	41.20	-0.8	0.9	0.1	1.0	0.9	0.1
Hot Springs, AR	45.9	43.0	93.80	93.12	43.08	40.01	6.9	0.7	7.7	13.0	5.0	12.2
Little Rock Downtown	71.3	68.8	126.09	123.75	89.91	85.17	3.6	1.9	5.6	10.8	5.0	8.8

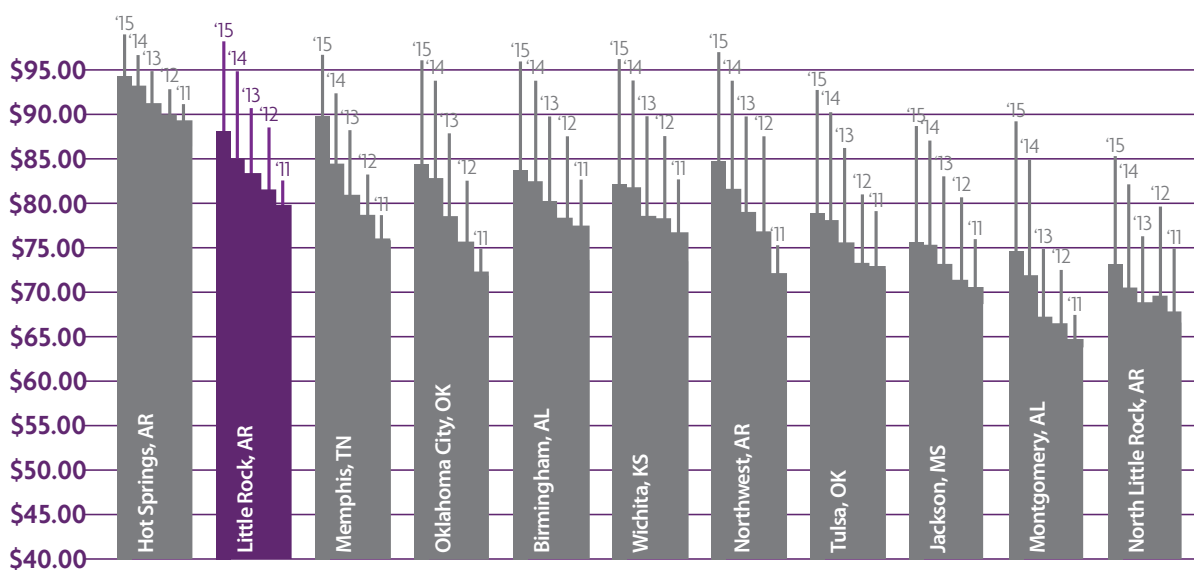
Source: Smith Travel Research



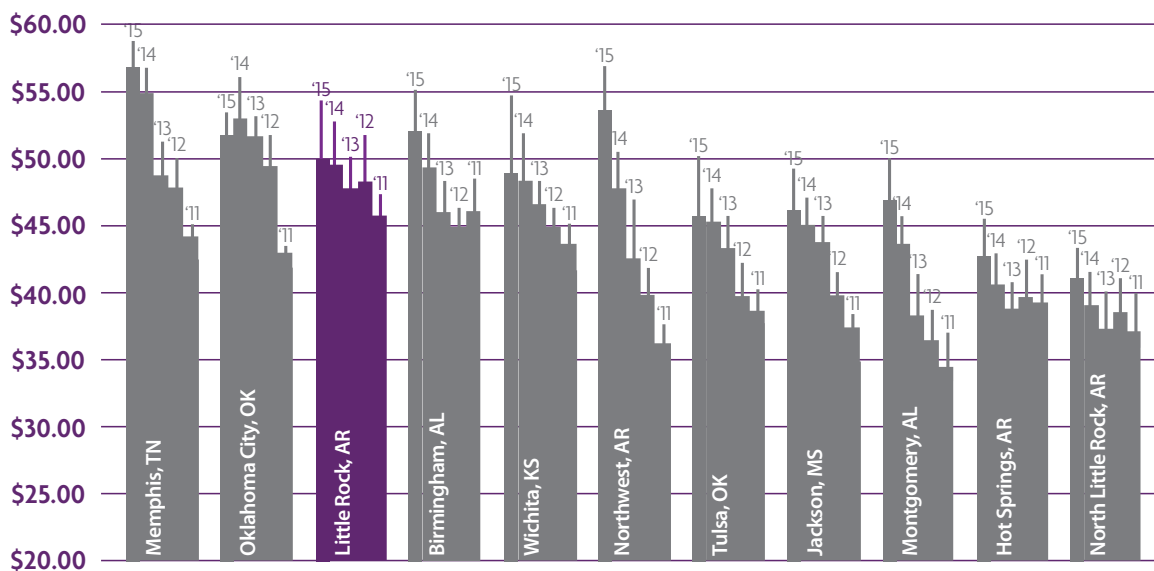
## OCCUPANCY %



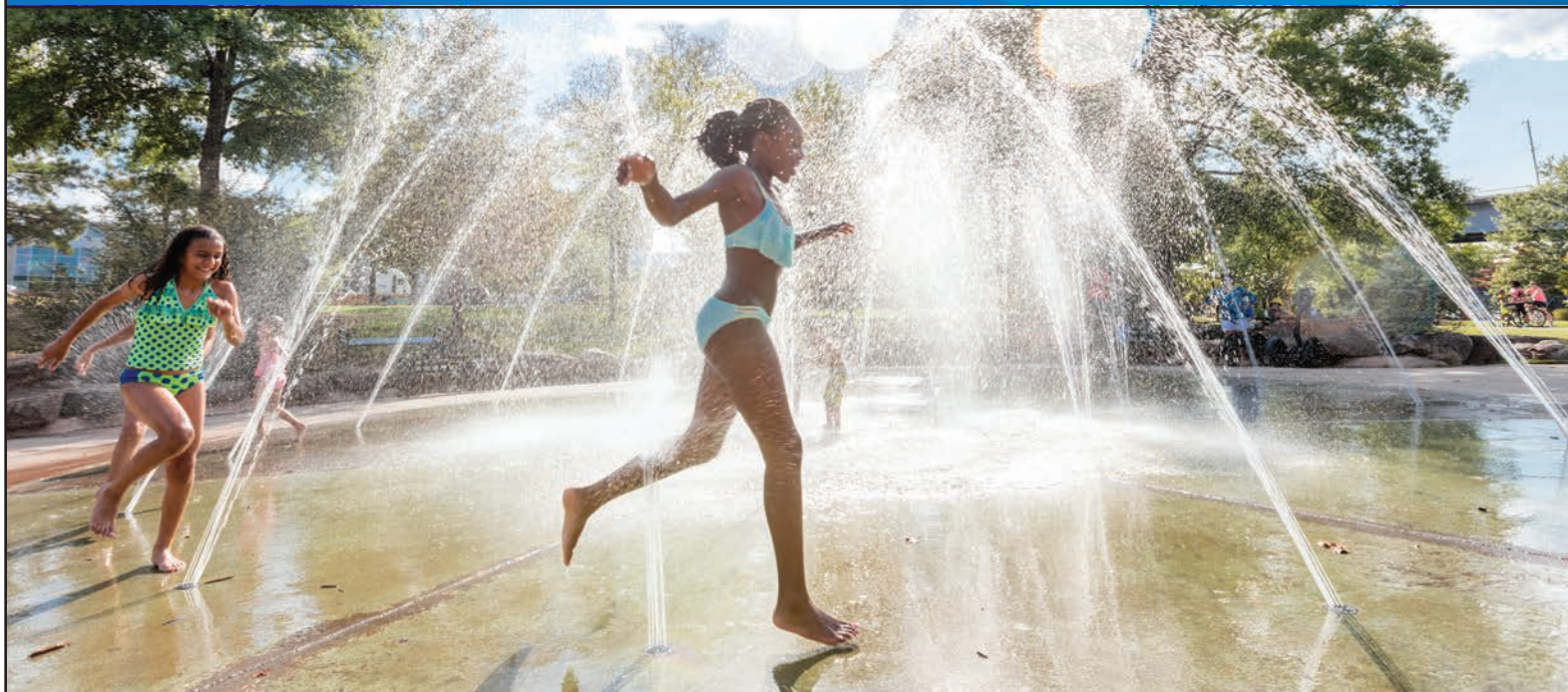
## AVERAGE DAILY RATE



## REVPAR



# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS



The Marketing & Communications Division of LRCVB is responsible for all destination and digital marketing, advertising, special event promotions and sponsorships, public relations, collateral distribution and the management of visitor information centers.

## 2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2015 the division worked to increase the city's profile and awareness as a travel destination, by promoting unique features, awards, and continued development, including the Robinson Center renovation.

In addition to maintaining existing programs, new initiatives were explored, including TV broadcast advertising in Dallas and Oklahoma markets. Numerous travel journalists were hosted, and trade publications assisted, throughout the year which resulted in beneficial media coverage for the destination. A spring photo and video shoot was also conducted in order to update photography and video libraries.

Work continued with MERJE Designs to develop a comprehensive vehicular and pedestrian directional signage system. Final designs and mapping were completed in 2015, along with bid documents for fabrication and installation. Phase 1 implementation is set for 2016.

## MEDIA ATTENTION & SIGNIFICANT ACCOLADES

Little Rock, and industry partners, were fortunate to continue earning considerable amounts of positive press and accolades. Some highlights included travel features in the following publications and outlets:

- *ConventionSouth* – Statehouse Convention Center received the Reader's Choice Award and Top New & Renovated Award
- *Facilities & Destinations* – Little Rock named a Top Travel Award
- *Hemisphere's Dossier* – special feature on Arkansas
- *VacationIdea.com* – "23 Best Things to Do in Little Rock"
- *Buzzfeed website* – "9 American Cities You Didn't Know You Needed to Visit"
- Little Rock feature in *Leisure & Hospitality* magazine
- *Liveability.com website* – "Best Breweries in Little Rock" and "99 Beers in 99 Cities List"
- Featured destination in PBS' "Antiques Roadshow" (to air in 2016)
- Featured in Fox Network's *American Idol* final season audition site
- Featured in *Le Vif/Knack* (Dutch & French publications)





# Press Tours and hosted travel journalists:

- Garden2Blog event with P. Allen Smith – hosted 40 Garden bloggers from around the country
- Hosted Andrew Nelson from *National Geographic Traveler* to promote new direct flight to New Orleans via GLO Airlines
- Hosted *TV Food Network* Personality Simon Majumdar
- Hosted Linda Jarrett from *AAA Southern Traveler*
- Hosted Reiko Yamamoto from *GlobeTrotter Travel* (one of Japan's largest travel guides)
- Hosted Bill Clevlen from "On the road with Bill"
- Assisted with *TV Food Network* events including BBQ Blitz with Eddie Jackson and local chefs Donnie Ferneau, Justin Jackson and Gwen Jones, and Guy's Grocery Games (to air in 2016)



These stories, and more, have helped raise the destination's profile regionally and nationally. In addition to the increased media attention, the city received several significant accolades from national media outlets. The most significant include:

- Ranked #3 in *USA Today's* "Most Travel-Worthy State Capitals"
- Top 10 "US Best Value Cities for Travel for 2015 and 2016" by *Trivago.com*
- "Top Ten Downtowns in the South" by *Southern Business & Development*
- *TheDailyMeal.com* – Ottenheimer Market Hall named among "Top 50 Food Halls in America"
- *HuffingtonPost.com* – "The 10 Most Affordable Places to Live in the U.S."
- One Eleven named a James Beard semifinalist in the "Best New Restaurant" category
- Little Rock Central High School ranked #3 "Best Historic Southern Attractions" by *USA Today*
- Main Street Food Truck Festival named one of the "Best Food Truck Festivals in the US" by *Vacation Idea* magazine
- Little Rock listed among "Top Ten Most Affordable Places to Live in the US" by *HuffingtonPost.com*

## WEBSITE MARKETING

The growing dependency on the internet makes the destination website the most valuable marketing asset for the overall success of destination marketing organizations. The department is constantly looking for opportunities to add enhancements and micro sites or landing pages for niche audiences. In 2015 the division managed the following websites:

- LittleRock.com
- RiverMarket.info
- LittleRockMeetings.com
- DineLR.com
- ShopTheRock.com
- RiverLightsintheRock.com
- RobinsonCenterSecondAct.com





## LITTLE ROCK.COM VISITORS

### UNITED STATES 96.9%

Arkansas	46%
Texas	16%
Tennessee	8.8%
Oklahoma	4.5%
Louisiana	3%
Missouri	2.1%

### Top MSAs

Little Rock/Pine Bluff	41%
Dallas-Fort Worth	11%
Memphis	6.1%
Nashville	3.1%
Houston	2.7%
Tulsa	2.1%
Oklahoma City	2%

### TOP 5 INTERNATIONAL COUNTRIES

Great Britain  
Canada  
Malta  
India  
Germany

followed by Brazil,  
France, Australia  
and Italy.

### MOST POPULAR SECTIONS

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**  
255,000+ VIEWS

**THINGS TO DO**  
97,000+ VIEWS

## LITTLE ROCK.COM WEBSITE STATISTICS

	2015	2014
Total Sessions	980,421	979,637
Total Page Views	2.843 million	2.921 million
New Visitors (non-repeating)	659,549	659,112
Average Time Spent	2:23 minutes	2:29 minutes
Page Viewed Per Session	2.9 pages	2.98 pages

Device breakouts: mobile: 52.9%; desktop: 37.6%; tablet: 9.51%

## RIVERMARKET.INFO WEBSITE STATISTICS

	2015	2014
Total Sessions	186,301	193,557
Total Users	140,535	144,428
Total Page Views	531,999	551,509
New Visitors (non-repeating)	73.6%	72.6%
Average Time Spent	2:16 minutes	2:17 minutes
Page Viewed Per Session	2.86 pages	2.85 pages

Device breakouts: mobile: 53.9%; desktop: 35.7%; tablet: 10.4%

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND E-NEWSLETTERS



Two monthly newsletters were created, highlighting events and activities for Little Rock and the River Market District specifically.

### FOLLOWERS

### % CHANGE OVER 2014

Little Rock Facebook	41,000	up nearly 3%
Little Rock Twitter	5,000+	up more than 28%
River Market Twitter	14,500+	up more than 40%
Little Rock Instagram	868	up more than 80%
River Market Instagram	723	up more than 85%
Little Rock Newsletter	4,520	up 1%
River Market Newsletter	2,287	up 16%

During 2015, the LRCVB conducted numerous contests across multiple social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Campaigns included a Valentine's Day Do-Over, National Travel and Tourism Week Scavenger Hunt, and the multi-phase "Summers are Better with a Southern Accent" contests.

These contests illustrated the strengths of leveraging social media to increase brand awareness and engagement with key stakeholders. Campaigns were multi-layered, engagement driven, and well supported.

The Valentine's Day Do-Over social contest was the first prominent contest of the year and was a partnership with Heritage Grille and the Little Rock Carriage Company. The prize was designed to be a make-up for a past "Valentine's Day disaster." Entrants shared a bad Valentine's Day experience from their past to be qualified for a drawing for a free dinner and carriage ride. We received 16 entries, 538 clicks and a total reach of 18,500.

In an effort to promote National Travel and Tourism Week (NTTW), a Little Rock scavenger hunt was created to drive people to local attractions and share selfies on LRCVB social media platforms to win prizes. Comprised of 104 posts on Facebook and Twitter, this campaign raised awareness for NTTW and Little Rock amenities with 713 clicks, a total reach of 76,251 and 163 comments and social shares.

The "Summers are Better with a Southern Accent" multi-phase promotion was designed to encourage Little Rock summer staycations. The LRCVB partnered with numerous restaurants, hotels and attractions to create four unique staycation packages, each segmented to attract a niche demographic including family vacationers, history and political travelers, foodie and craft beverage connoisseurs, and weekend getaway travelers. Social engagement was high with more than 1,448 clicks, 1,148 comments and shares and a total reach of 60,085.

## MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS IN 2015



### PRAYERS FOR PARIS

35,880 TOTAL REACH  
2,400 LIKES

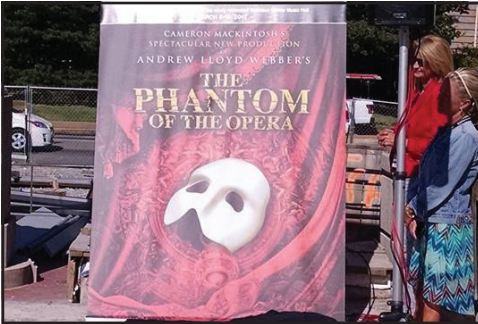
763 CLICKS  
266 SHARES



### BUZZFEED ARTICLE – 9 AMERICAN CITIES YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED TO VISIT

11,304 TOTAL REACH  
314 LIKES

1,076 CLICKS  
81 SHARES



### PHANTOM OF THE OPERA ANNOUNCES FOR GRAND RE-OPENING OF ROBINSON CENTER

72,331 TOTAL REACH  
3,889 LIKES

4,373 CLICKS  
804 SHARES



### LITTLE ROCK LOVES

92,924 TOTAL REACH  
6,948 LIKES

6,544 CLICKS  
669 SHARES



### CDI CREWS BUILDING BALCONIES – ROBINSON RENOVATION UPDATE

17,267 TOTAL REACH  
207 LIKES

1,267 CLICKS  
25 SHARES



## VISITOR INFORMATION CENTERS

The LRCVB strives to provide exceptional visitor experiences, with a focus on true hospitality, by enhancing the visitor experience through helpful destination representatives at various visitor centers. Although the number of guests that utilize Little Rock visitor centers has decreased, the LRCVB centers assisted 62,285 guests in 2015. The LRCVB staffs locations at the Bill & Hillary Clinton National Airport, Shop the Rock in the River Market District, and the Statehouse Convention Center.

The LRCVB also provides support for the visitor information center at Historic Curran Hall. Visitor Information Center representatives are true ambassadors for the destination, and in many cases the first contact, or touch point, experienced by a visitor. Nothing replaces the personal touch that a visitor representative provides to guests.



## COLLATERAL DISTRIBUTION

The LRCVB publishes a variety of collateral materials to assist visitors with their future planning, and as helpful guides, while visiting the destination. Additionally, the LRCVB distributes multiple partner and third party brochures at visitor information centers, as well as ensures coverage of Little Rock related materials in all statewide centers and local brochure racks. The LRCVB also offers direct fulfillment services from phone, email and online requests and works with the convention services team to provide collateral materials for on-site meetings and conventions.

Through all of the division's distribution efforts, almost 320,000 pieces of collateral were distributed in 2015. Distribution numbers for printed materials also continue to decrease; however they remain valuable tools for guests in the destination, and increased focus is being placed on all digital forms of collateral materials. In 2015, the department updated the following brochures:

- New Dining & Entertainment Guide
- Vogel Schwartz Sculpture Garden
- Little Rock Sculpture digital tour
- Locally Labeled Passport
- Civil Rights History Tour App rack card
- Updates to African-American History brochure and Little Rock's Top 12 brochure
- Arts & Attractions Guide







## LOCAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

LRCVB partners with The Angela Rogers Group to provide publicity and media coverage in conjunction with several LRCVB managed events, as well as large special events and activities that take place in Little Rock.

PROMOTION DESCRIPTION	TOTAL IMPRESSIONS
Farmers' Market	6,343,476
Movies in the Park	6,031,202
Jazz in the Park - April	1,903,253
American Taekwondo Association World Championships	4,140,299
Little Rock Restaurant Month	5,306,839
Jazz in the Park - September	2,152,959
Robinson Center (on-going)	6,092,511
2015 SEC Women's Basketball Tournament	5,827,045
Locally Labeled	2,017,821
Santa Welcome Event with Ringling Bros	835,956

**GRAND TOTALS: 40,651,361**



## ADVERTISING

Little Rock's "Southern Accent" campaign continued to capitalize on the brand of a new Southern style by articulating examples that showcase Little Rock as a progressive destination. The campaign featured large, colorful images of people interacting with actual Little Rock scenery, locales and events. The headlines creatively delivered on the emotion of the moment and let the audience know that Little Rock does things "with a Southern Accent." This approach effectively provided heartwarming insight into Little Rock as a city that embraces a modern, fun twist on inspired life in the South. The photography reflects the lively, lifestyle-centric Southern charm with real people and scenic shots. National accolades are often included when germane to the audience.

**GENUINE  
GOOSEBUMPS  
WITH A  
SOUTHERN  
ACCENT.**



Like the afternoon we spent watching the kids enjoy the new splash park at Riverfront Park, our summer experiences in Little Rock were priceless. Enjoying breathtaking views from Pinnacle Mountain, touring downtown by Segway, and the city's neighborhoods, barbecue joints and breweries by bike. Riding the trolley and exploring the River Market and seeing its beautiful illuminated bridges at night. These are memories of a new Southern style, and we live it all in Little Rock.

*Little Rock*  
Riverfront Park > To see more, visit [LittleRock.com](http://LittleRock.com)

**ENLIGHTENED  
CONNOISSEURS  
WITH A  
SOUTHERN  
ACCENT.**



Like adventures with appetites, we choose to dine with discerning palates. We savor farm-to-table freshness that's more like two miles away rather than 200. And sometimes the best plan for a night out on the town is to have no plan at all. Because the more we explore our own back yard, the more we appreciate the talent in place here. You can taste it all here, where many of the flavors are locally grown and owned. Light here in Little Rock.

*Little Rock*  
Choose from more than 600 restaurants > To see more, visit [LittleRock.com](http://LittleRock.com)

**FESTIVALS  
ARE BETTER  
WITH A  
SOUTHERN  
ACCENT.**



*Little Rock*  
Riverfest > To see more visit [LittleRock.com](http://LittleRock.com)

**TRADICIONES  
NAVIDEÑAS  
CON UN ACENTO  
SUREÑO.**



Al igual que los duendes en una misión, nos encanta explorar Little Rock durante la época navideña. En busca de ese regalo especial, el único en su clase, en las tiendas incomparables de la ciudad, con una deliciosa comida mientras cuidadosamente lo marcamos fuera de nuestras listas, y viendo las hermosas luces de los puentes antes de dirigimos a la calidez y comodidad del hogar. Little Rock tiene un nuevo estilo sureño que es únicamente propio, y lo podemos experimentar cada día, aquí mismo en Little Rock.

**EVENTOS NAVIDEÑOS**

<b>Desfile Navideño y las Luces en el Capitolio Estatal</b> Sábado 5 de Diciembre a las 3 pm	<b>Teatro de Arkansas Children's "El hombre de jengibre"</b> 4 al 20 de Diciembre
<b>Departamento de Ba Celebración Anual de Luces de Promenade en Canal</b> 28 de Noviembre al 31 de Diciembre	<b>Competencia No-Off Eggnog en el Museo Histórico de Arkansas</b> 11 de diciembre de 5 pm - 8 pm
<b>Nuestra América - La presencia Latina en el Arte Americano en el Centro de Artes de Arkansas</b> hasta el 17 de Enero de 2018	<b>Orquesta Sinfónica de Arkansas / Ballet Arkansas - "El cascanueces"</b> 11 al 13 de Diciembre
<b>Entrada Gratuita Martes a Sábado de 10am - 5pm Domingo de 11am - 5pm</b>	<b>Concierto Navideño de Arkansas Chamber Singers</b> "La paz de la Navidad" 11 al 13 de Diciembre
<b>Museo Esse Pulse "Oh, ¡Qué diversión una Navidad muy tradicional!"</b> 17 de Noviembre al 3 de Enero	<b>Orquesta Sinfónica de Arkansas - "Holiday Pops with the ASO"</b> 18 al 20 de Diciembre

*Little Rock*  
Gran desfile navideño de Jingle Jubilee.  
Para obtener más información, visite [HolidaysInLittleRock.com](http://HolidaysInLittleRock.com)

**EXPANDING  
HORIZONS  
WITH A  
SOUTHERN  
ACCENT.**



From the State Capitol to the Old State House, Central High School to the Little Rock Zoo, there are many incredible attractions and museums in Little Rock that appeal to a variety of ages and interests. Many are located within walking distance of our River Market entertainment district and the city's Riverfront Park, and many of them are free. When planning your next field trip, consider Little Rock.

*Little Rock*  
Old State House > To see more, visit [LittleRock.com](http://LittleRock.com)

**MEETINGS  
ARE BETTER  
WITH A  
SOUTHERN  
ACCENT.**



Like seeing the city's beautifully illuminated bridges for the first time, our meeting in Little Rock will never be forgotten. The elegant reception hosted within the Clinton Library's inspiring spaces. Exchanging smiles and greetings while the River Rail Trolley carried us to an evening's diversion, filling the Statehouse Convention Center with applause. Our meeting here felt different — and such a pleasant surprise. All centered around the personal attention and charming hospitality of Little Rock.

*Little Rock*  
Junction Bridge > To see more, go to [LittleRockMeetings.com](http://LittleRockMeetings.com)

Named a "SOUTHERN ACCENT" by "THE SOUTHERN ACCENT" MAGAZINE

Editor's Choice for "SOUTHERN ACCENT" MAGAZINE



**LOCALLY LABELED**  
WITH A SOUTHERN ACCENT.

With its culinary star on the rise, Little Rock is a food lover's paradise. From its farmers' markets and locally-owned restaurants, to its artisanal food scene with its breweries, distillery and wineries we enjoyed touring and tasting, there was something to enjoy everywhere we went. Discover the city's local flavors and find your joy in Little Rock.

**LOCALLY LABELED**  
IN GREATER LITTLE ROCK

*Little Rock*

Named one of "Five Secret Foodie Cities" - Forbes Travel Guide, 2014

Learn about our city's breweries, distillery and wineries > To see more, visit [LittleRock.com](http://LittleRock.com)

**CAPTURING HEARTS**  
WITH A SOUTHERN ACCENT.

There's nothing sweeter than a Valentine's night out and the town is celebrating a romantic occasion with their special accents. Whether it's candlelight and wine or casual fun, Little Rock is ready to make your date a delicious dining experience in Little Rock. And when it's time to enjoy time on the right, Little Rock's breweries are waiting to welcome you to stay accommodations - helping you create a memorable experience like no other. Right here in Little Rock.

Win a Valentine's Day Do-Over!  
Visit [Facebook.com/ExperienceLR](http://Facebook.com/ExperienceLR) for details.

*Little Rock*

Enjoy exploring more than 500 restaurants. To see more, visit [LittleRock.com](http://LittleRock.com)

**VACATIONS ARE BETTER**  
WITH A SOUTHERN ACCENT.

*Little Rock*

**HOLIDAY TRADITIONS**  
WITH A SOUTHERN ACCENT.

**REFUEL AND RELAX**  
WITH A SOUTHERN ACCENT.

With hundreds of miles behind you and the open road ahead, now comes the time to reward and re-energize yourself with a great meal. From upscale to down home, Little Rock restaurants provide hungry and weary travelers with some of the best and most delicious dining in the country. Sometimes the day is over, it's easy to unwind and let go, your ride with whatever cuisine you desire. With more than 500 restaurants, you can taste it all here. Where many of the best restaurants are locally owned and operated in Little Rock.

*Little Rock*

Enjoy exploring more than 500 restaurants > To see more, visit [LittleRock.com](http://LittleRock.com)

**PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT**  
WITH A SOUTHERN ACCENT.

Hear the whispers of new brave voices that changed the face of America. See history at the Mission Temple Cultural Center of minority-owned businesses that thrived during a time of inequality. Smell the aroma of Southern soul food prepared the every day in Sunday. Taste the new Southern style - you can't find it all in Little Rock.

*Little Rock*

"Testament" Monument to the Little Rock Nine > To see more, visit [LittleRock.com](http://LittleRock.com)

**MEETINGS ARE BETTER**  
WITH A SOUTHERN ACCENT.

**GRAND RE-OPENING NOVEMBER 2016**

Little Rock's 70 million renovation of the Robinson Center will provide unrivaled new meeting and special event options for groups looking for a convenient and dramatic location for their next event.

• Directly connected to the DoubleTree Little Rock, currently undergoing a multi-million dollar renovation  
• 45,000 s.f. of combined conference center space

FOR ADVANCED BOOKING CONTACT  
JENNIFER JONES AT 501-370-3258  
OR [JJONES@LITTLEROCK.COM](mailto:JJONES@LITTLEROCK.COM)

*Little Rock*



# LRCVB SIGNATURE EVENTS



LRCVB supports a variety of local festivals and events in order to enhance the economy through increased visitor travel into, and throughout, the City of Little Rock. There is an event sponsorship application used to evaluate support provided, based on specific criteria. In addition, LRCVB directly manages several signature events.

**LITTLE ROCK RESTAURANT MONTH** celebrates dining in the city each August. The month long event celebrated its sixth anniversary in 2015, and included nearly 100 participating restaurants that offered a variety of specials and deals for diners. LRCVB secured more than 25 interviews/TV segments/and media appearances, highlighting local restaurateurs. In addition, LRRM social media promotions garnered a total reach of 34,173.

**HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY MIXERS**, hosted by LRCVB, are held quarterly for area hospitality partners to discuss what's happening in Little Rock, destination development initiatives, co-op & packaging opportunities and industry news.

**NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM WEEK** is celebrated the first week of May, and is designed to promote the value of travel in the tourism industry. Each year LRCVB participates by hosting a press conference, showcasing new destination amenities and reminding the community, and hospitality industry, of the wonderful features central Arkansas has to offer. In 2015, LRCVB focused on the value of social media and created postcard signs where visitors can take a picture of themselves inside a Little Rock postcard, with an attraction in the background, and is then encouraged to share the image on social media.





**THE FARMERS' MARKET** continues to be the state's largest market, operating 26 weeks per year. Approximately 23 local farmers and 135 other crafts vendors participated in 2015. Additional programming included music vendors, appearances by the "Dean the Bean" mascot, and the market's celebration of National Farmers' Market Week which helped boost attendance. There is also a Second Saturday partnership with area organizations like the Central Arkansas Library System, Rock City Rescue, Master Gardeners, and others.

**MOVIES IN THE PARK** continues to be a family favorite, and celebrated its 11th anniversary in 2015. Movies are held each Wednesday night in June and July. The free family event provides a variety of options from animated favorites to comedy and acclaimed drama features. The series averaged approximately 1,500 viewers per show in 2015.

**JAZZ IN THE PARK** was a successful new creation in 2013 that offers free weekly concerts featuring local jazz artists performing in Riverfront Park's History Pavilion. The event has continued to grow and takes place each Wednesday evening in April & September.

Each October, LRCVB sponsors the annual **BIG BOO-SEUM BASH** hosted by the Greater Little Rock Museum and Cultural Attractions Consortium. This free event provides a safe environment for kids and families to enjoy fun Halloween activities and treats, and serves as community outreach for the Consortium. In its twentieth year, 2015 included participation of 11 attractions, including: Arkansas Arts Center Children's Theatre, Museum of Discovery, Witt Stephens, Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center, Old State House Museum, Historic Arkansas Museum, Curran Hall Visitor Information Center, Arkansas State Capitol, MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History, Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, and Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum. Turnout was tremendous, with several partner venues hosting nearly 1,000 guests.

**BIG JINGLE JUBILEE HOLIDAY PARADE** – This free community event is hosted each year by LRCVB and held the first Saturday in December, in conjunction with the lighting of the Arkansas State Capitol and fireworks display. The 2015 grand marshal was former Arkansas Razorback running back Peyton Hillis. Crowds lined the streets of downtown to see him, enjoy marching bands and a variety of floats and parade entries, and of course a special appearance by Santa and Mrs. Claus. There were 123 parade entries, including a group of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus performers. Local media publicity efforts included 17 print stories/10 radio interviews/12 television interviews/segments/live shots.





# — DESTINATION — DEVELOPMENT IN 2015



## OUTLETS OF LITTLE ROCK

Arkansas's only outlet center opened in Southwest Little Rock and is home to approximately 75 new stores. The location off Interstate 30 and Interstate 430 is the most highly traveled intersection in the state. The Outlets are next to Little Rock's Bass Pro Shops, and additional development around the Gateway Town Center continues. The Grove at Gateway Town Center is expected to enhance the area's entertainment experience with such amenities as the state's first Dave and Buster's restaurant and video arcade, and a Movie Tavern.



## NEW HOTELS

The new 116-room Homewood Suites opened in 2015 in the downtown River Market District. The extended stay property offers inviting studios, one-bedroom or two-bedroom suites, with separate living and sleeping areas, a fully equipped kitchen, comfortable bed, complimentary internet access, and a sofa bed. The property also has an outdoor swimming pool, fitness center and 1,100 sq. ft. of meeting space.

Home2 Suites by Hilton also opened in 2015. This new west Little Rock extended-stay all-suite hotel is conveniently located off I-430 and minutes from downtown. Its trendy atmosphere has 93 rooms and offers many modern conveniences such as an outdoor lounge area, conference room, and high-speed internet connections.



## PUBLIC SCULPTURE ADDITIONS

Public sculpture continued to be added throughout the destination. Riverfront Park and the Vogel Schwartz Sculpture Garden contain the largest collection of Little Rock's public sculpture, and in 2015 the park and garden added 8 new pieces and two additional pieces placed elsewhere in the city.



## CONTINUED IMPROVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS ON MAIN STREET

Little Rock's downtown renaissance continued, and the Main Street Creative Corridor was one of its shining stars. In 2015, this mixed-use residential and commercial area hosted its official grand opening, celebrating the corridor's low impact development streetscape. It received *Arkansas Business*' 2015 City of Distinction Award in the Main Street Preservation category for cities over 20,000 population. The district design continues to earn top architectural and design awards, including the 2015 AIA Florida/Caribbean Honor Award. An exciting collaboration of innovation and creativity, the Little Rock Tech Park Main Street site was approved in 2015.



## LOCALLY LABELED LAUNCH

As the local culinary landscape continues to grow, so does the craft beverage scene. In 2015, a new adult beverage tourism amenity was launched to promote the growing popularity of local breweries, wineries and the distillery. Locally Labeled in Greater Little Rock features ten venues for locals and visitors to discover ales, wines and spirits. A passport was developed to encourage people to visit the local establishments and earn a 'Drink Like a Local' tee shirt or 'Locally Labeled' sandstone coaster. More than 20 passports were redeemed in the campaign's first 90 days.



## LITTLE ROCK DOWNTOWN NAVIGATORS TOUR

In partnership with the Rock Region METRO and Downtown Little Rock Partnership's volunteer group, the Navigators, a new free walking and streetcar tour rolled out in October 2015. This guided tour features Riverfront Park and the River Market District giving tour-goers a birds-eye view of downtown attractions, restaurants and shops, enticing them to return downtown after the tour for extended experiences.



## UALR ATHLETIC PROGRAM RE-BRANDED AS LITTLE ROCK

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock's 14-sport athletic department announced a new brand and name change. The program is now known as the Little Rock Trojans. The new name clearly aligns Trojan athletics with the city of Little Rock and will help build pride among local residents that call the Little Rock metropolitan area home. The name will also provide additional exposure for the city when the athletic teams are traveling or playing on television.



## HOGA TUGBOAT JOINS THE INLAND MARITIME MUSEUM IN NORTH LITTLE ROCK

The USS Hoga (YT-146) is best known for her actions during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941 and most recognized for pushing the sinking USS Nevada to safety and preventing her from blocking the narrow channel. On November 23, 2015, the Hoga arrived at the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum in North Little Rock. She joins the USS Razorback Balao-class submarine, which conducted five combat patrols during World War II, and was one of only 12 submarines selected to be present in Tokyo Bay when the Japanese surrender was signed. The Inland Maritime Museum is the only continental US location to display active vessels from both the beginning and end of World War II.



# FUTURE OUTLOOK



Following a tremendous year in 2015, the momentum continues for the future of Little Rock. The renovation and expansion of Robinson Center is nearing an completion with the final year of construction underway. The grand re-opening is planned for November 2016 and the new facility will certainly elevate the level, and quality, of live entertainment options, as well as attract new business with the opening of the conference center.

The Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department projects scheduled for central Arkansas continue to be a topic of much discussion and planning. The reconstruction of Broadway Bridge is in process and scheduled to be completed near the re-opening of Robinson Center. The design for the replacement and expansion of I-30 continues to be explored. This project will have a tremendous impact on the downtown area for the next 50+ years and the design of the ingress/egress options are of much concern to city leadership.

Youth sporting events continue to be a large part of Little Rock's group business for hotels and tourism impact. This market segment has a lot of growth potential, as outlined in the Crossroads Consulting feasibility study, if the proper facilities are developed. Central Arkansas is lacking a large-scale, multi-purpose, indoor sports facility to recruit regional and national tournaments. Research shows that there were 70.1 million indoor sport participants in 2013. This demand represents significant potential for both recreational play and competitive level tournaments if this type of facility was available. Funding options for such a facility, as well as infrastructure upgrades to existing facilities, need to be explored.

Little Rock's revitalization is continuing into the new year, with another downtown hotel property, residential units and plans to build the official technology park all announced. In addition, more developments are underway near the Gateway Town Center and Outlets of Little Rock, with more retail, restaurants, and a Movie Tavern all in the works. The Main Street Creative Corridor celebrated its official grand opening, highlighting a four block section of low impact development streetscapes and surrounding banners. Progress is continuing with future additions of digital marquee planned as well as office and rehearsal space for the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra and Ballet Arkansas.

The city of Little Rock enacted an additional 2% tax on lodging accommodations that will go into effect January 1, 2016. A special election is set for February 9, 2016 asking the voters of Little Rock to bond the revenue generated from the additional 2% tax. If successful, the bond proceeds are to be used for improvements to the Arkansas Arts Center, MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History and MacArthur Park.

For the LRCVB, 2016 will be year one of our new multi-year strategic plan. On the sales front we will continue to leverage our relationships with third party meeting professionals and look for opportunities to identify local leadership that can assist in convention bookings. In addition, much focus will be placed on digital marketing efforts, the continued implementation of our brand strategy, citywide hospitality brand training and the implementation of a wayfaring signage program. And lastly, we will continue to provide the management and leadership to ensure that the Robinson Center grand re-opening is spectacular and offers something for the entire community over an extended two month opening period.







LIFE  
IS BETTER  
— WITH A —  
SOUTHERN  
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