



# FY2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Florida's Historic Coast  
[www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com](http://www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com)

GTM North overlook. Photo: Aerial Dad



ST. AUGUSTINE  
PONTE VEDRA  
FLORIDA'S HISTORIC COAST®





Fort Mose Jazz & Blues Series. Photo: First Coast Head Shots





Fountain of Youth cannon firing



## FY2024 Annual Report

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## Message from the **President & CEO**



**FY2024 marked a pivotal year for St. Johns County, which is also referred to in this Annual Report as “Florida’s Historic Coast.”**

For nearly 30 years, tourism has served as a catalyst for growth and prosperity throughout St. Johns County.

However, after seeing a trend in declining in FY2024 visitation compared to prior years, we intensified marketing efforts, enriched visitor experiences, and advanced initiatives targeting the higher spend, longer stay visitor. Despite the challenges posed by economic uncertainty and the election year's impact, our community and industry partners showed resilience, innovation, and a steadfast dedication to the success of our destination.

A standout achievement this past year was community collaboration. Highlights include teaming up with St. Johns County Cultural Events, Inc. to amplify and promote nationally acclaimed music tourism multi-day events such as the Sing Out Loud Festival, the Ft. Mose Jazz and Blues Festival, and other music tourism events. These year-round efforts underscore the power of unity.

Innovation also played a pivotal role in our success. Through the adoption of cutting-edge technologies which included new apps and immersive video content for optimal website

performance, the continued expansion of digital marketing efforts, and a focus on the area's diverse arts, culture, and heritage assets, we engaged global audiences and set St. Johns County apart from other Florida destinations.

Looking ahead to FY2025, we remain committed to sustainable growth through preserving our destination's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique experiences while fostering economic vitality. Tourism is a cornerstone of economic growth, job creation, and quality of life in St. Johns County.

Thank you to our elected officials, industry partners, city and county government leaders, and residents for your dedication and support. Each of you play an important and integral role in our collective success.. Together, we'll ensure Florida's Historic Coast remains a beacon of history, culture, and hospitality for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Phillips".

**Susan Phillips**  
**President & CEO**

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches  
Visitors and Convention Bureau

## Importance of **Tourism**

Travel is essential to driving economic growth and job creation in destinations and communities across America.

The United States Travel Association (USTA) reported that travel generated **\$1.3 TRILLION** in direct spending in 2022 – which produced an economic footprint of **\$2.8 TRILLION**. In 2023, travel supported over 15 million American workers and directly employed 8 million, highlighting its critical role in the national economy.

Tourism, the largest industry in Florida, has long been a major driver. In Florida, tourism remains the largest industry, driving both economic development and quality of life. In 2023, Florida welcomed a record-breaking 141 million visitors, contributing \$122 billion to the state's economy and supporting over 2 million jobs. These figures underscore the essential role tourism plays in sustaining and enhancing our communities. <sup>1</sup>

## How does tourism benefit **St. Johns County**?

Tourism generated a total economic impact of \$3.8 billion with \$2.5 billion in annual visitor spending. This spending supports 32,400 jobs and contributes \$854.2 million in wages.

**Job Creation:** Tourism is the largest private-sector employer in St. Johns County, spanning hospitality, retail, transportation, and entertainment.

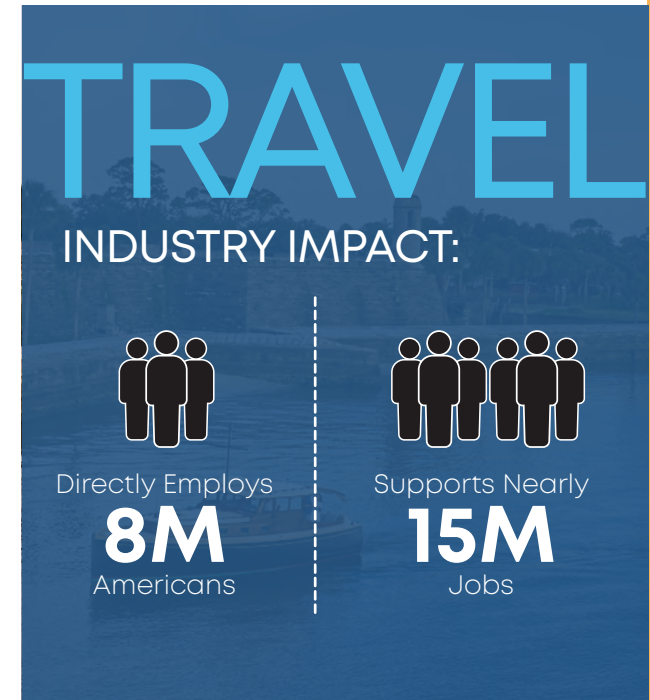
**Local Spending:** Tourism wages fuel local purchases, creating a multiplier effect that benefits businesses and services.

**Tax Revenue:** Visitors contribute through various taxes, funding essential public services and infrastructure.

**Sustained Economic Activity:** Tourist spending circulates through the economy, ensuring ongoing vitality.

**Community Development:** Revenue supports cultural events, community projects, and infrastructure improvements.

<sup>1</sup> VISIT FLORIDA® Longchamps 2022 Economic Impact Report



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## COMMITTEES AND STAFF

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OFFICERS

#### Chairman

Jason Kern  
Embassy Suites by Hilton St. Augustine

#### Vice Chairman

Craig Schoninger  
Ponte Vedra Resorts

#### Treasurer

Charles Robles  
The Collector Luxury Inn & Gardens

#### Secretary

Cindy Stavely  
St. Augustine Pirate & Treasure Museum

#### Past Chairman

Virginia Whetstone  
Whetstone Chocolates

### BOARD MEMBERS

Shannon Dearin  
Courtyard St. Augustine, I-95

Lorna MacDonald  
Raintree Restaurant

Vik Patel  
Renaissance St. Augustine Historic Downtown

Dave Chatterton  
Historic Tours of America

### GOVERNMENT LIAISONS & EX-OFFICIOS

Commissioner Henry Dean  
St. Johns County Board of  
County Commissioners

Commissioner Don Samora  
St. Augustine Beach  
City Commission

Commissioner Cynthia Garris/Melissa Wissel  
City of St. Augustine Commission

Isabelle Renault  
St. Johns County Chamber  
of Commerce

Jaime Topp  
Northeast Florida Regional Airport

Christina Parrish Stone  
St. Johns Cultural Council

Susan Phillips  
St. Johns County VCB

### VCB COMMITTEES

#### Conference Sales Committee

Heather Alexander  
Hyatt Place Vilano Beach

Stephen Baker  
Hammock Beach Resort

Joni Barkley  
Casa Monica Resort & Spa

Jeffrey Heckard  
Renaissance St. Augustine Historic District

Christian Joransen  
World Golf Villages Renaissance  
St. Augustine Resort

Michelle Kuziola  
Courtyard St. Augustine I-95  
& Fairfield Inn & Suites

Meredith Livingston  
Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa

Jennifer Moore  
Guy Harvey Resort

Chris Pranis  
Embassy Suites St. Augustine  
Beach Resort

Chris Quinlan  
Hilton St. Augustine Historic Bayfront  
Daniel Walsh  
Ponte Vedra Inn & Club and The Lodge & Club

#### Leisure Sales Committee

James Adams  
Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa

Heather Alexander  
Hyatt Place Vilano Beach

Michele Kuziola  
Courtyard St. Augustine I-95  
& Fairfield Inn & Suites

Shannon Lake  
Beacher's Lodge Oceanfront Suites

Diane Lane  
Ancient City Tours

Melissa Mezick  
Old Town Trolleys

Samantha O'Boyle  
Holiday Inn Express & Suites Vilano Beach

Laura Pazzini  
Hammock Beach Resort

Lane Schaffer  
DoubleTree by Hilton St. Augustine  
Historic District

Cindy Stavely  
St. Augustine Pirate & Treasure Museum

#### Advertising Committee

Jason Kern  
Embassy Suites by Hilton St. Augustine

Christina Parrish Stone  
St. Johns Cultural Council

Charles Robles  
The Collector Luxury Inn & Gardens

Craig Schoninger  
Ponte Vedra Resorts

Cindy Stavely  
St. Augustine Pirate & Treasure Museum

Virginia Whetstone  
Whetstone Chocolates

### VCB STAFF

Susan Phillips  
President/CEO

Christina Pulido-Lopez  
Office Manager

Erin Masters  
Website Content &  
Database Manager

Lisa Mondello  
Marketing & Database Manager

Barbara Golden  
Communications Manager

Stacey Sather  
Creative & Social Media Manager

Kaycee Sapp  
Social Media Coordinator

Jennifer Jenkins  
Director of Conference Sales

Evelyn Lopez-Kelley  
Director of Leisure Sales

John Tharpe  
Sales & Services Manager

LaNae Keating  
Sales Coordinator

Darren Goedelman  
Research Manager





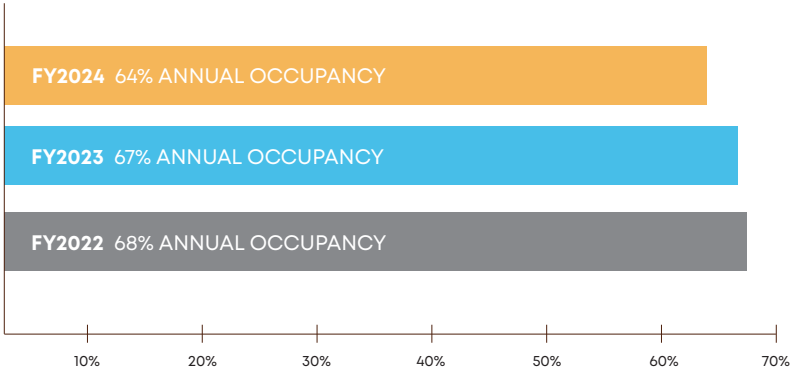


# LODGING PERFORMANCE

## FY2024 METRICS

### ANNUAL OCCUPANCY

TRADITIONAL LODGING



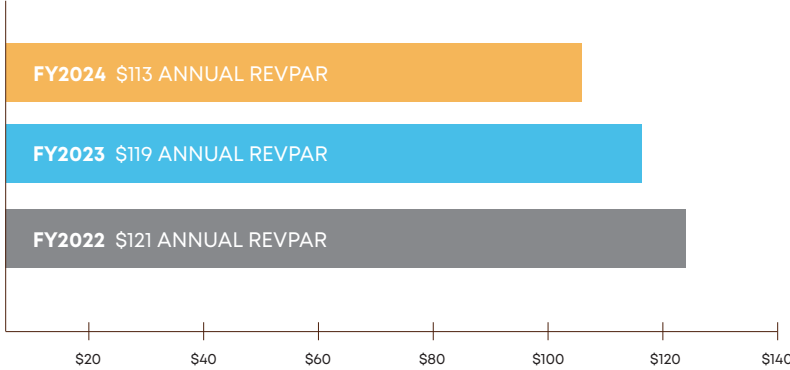
### ANNUAL ADR

TRADITIONAL LODGING



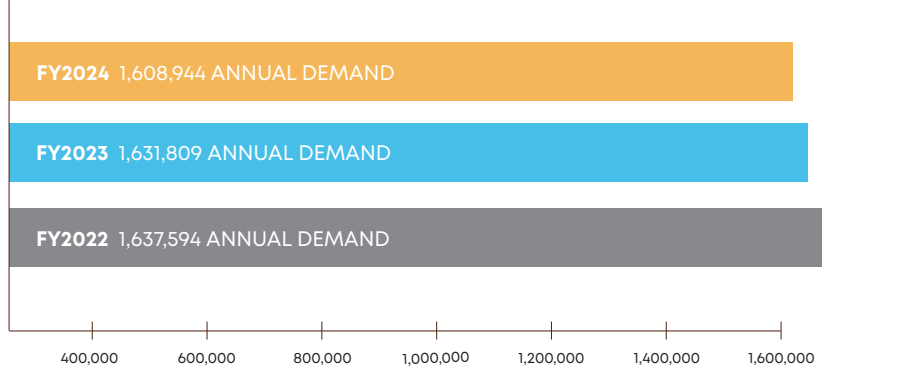
### ANNUAL REVPAR

TRADITIONAL LODGING



### ANNUAL DEMAND

TRADITIONAL LODGING



SOURCE: Smith Travel Research

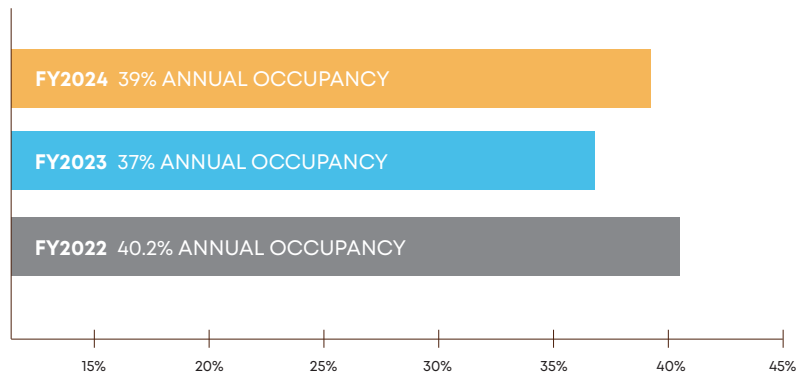


# LODGING PERFORMANCE

## FY2024 METRICS

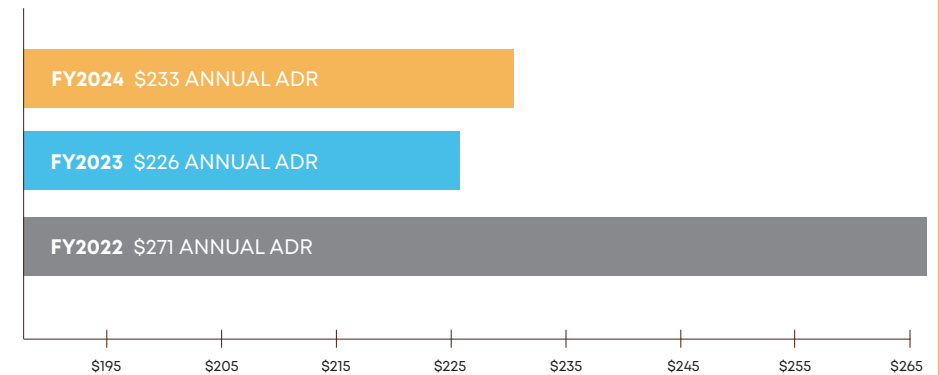
### ANNUAL OCCUPANCY

VACATION RENTALS



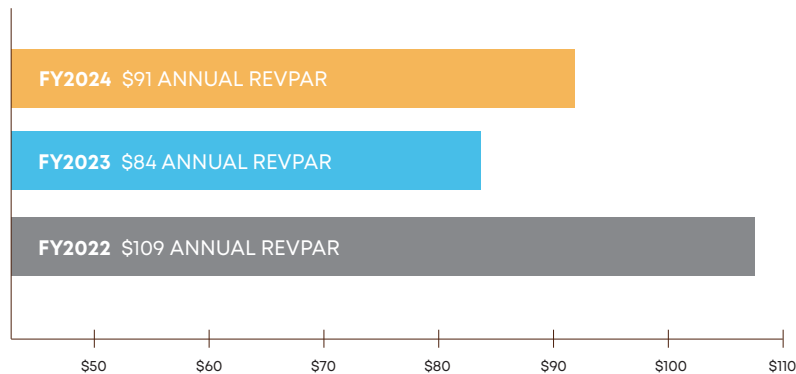
### ANNUAL ADR

VACATION RENTALS



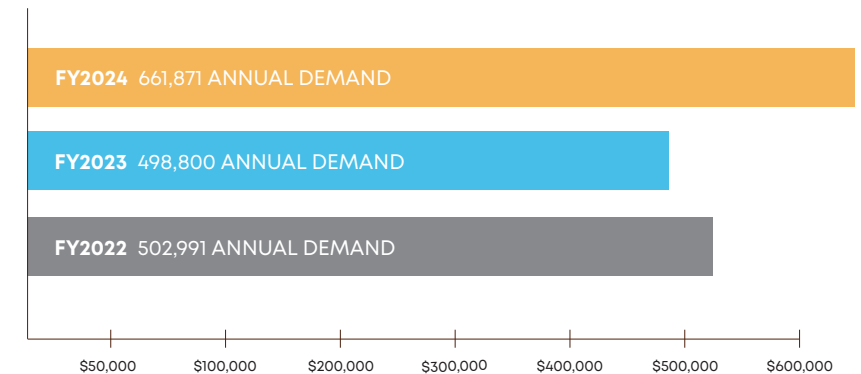
### ANNUAL REVPAR

VACATION RENTALS



### ANNUAL DEMAND

VACATION RENTALS



SOURCE: Key Data

# TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX COLLECTIONS

\$23,184,347

**FY2024 TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX COLLECTIONS**

0.0% OVER FY2023





# VCB FY2024 OPERATING BUDGET

\$5,949,111

## FY2024 SPENDING ALLOCATION

100% OF BUDGETED TOTAL • \$8,519 REMAINING

FY2024 SPENDING ALLOCATION	ACTUAL	% OF TOTAL	BUDGETED	% OF TOTAL
ADVERTISING:	\$3,673,965	62%	\$3,665,976	62%
PROMOTIONAL FUNDS:	\$55,160	1%	\$57,000	1%
WEB DEVELOPMENT & eCRM:	\$159,349	3%	\$171,285	3%
PUBLIC RELATIONS:	\$299,423	5%	\$303,814	5%
SALES:	\$279,760	5%	\$271,621	5%
FULFILLMENT & DISTRIBUTION:	\$127,983	2%	\$133,300	2%
RESEARCH/PROFESSIONAL FEES:	\$106,345	2%	\$99,315	2%
TOTAL MARKETING RELATED SPEND:	\$4,701,985	79%	\$4,702,311	79%
REMAINING OVERHEAD:	\$1,238,607	21%	\$1,246,800	21%
GRAND TOTAL:	\$5,940,592	100.0%	\$5,949,111	100.0%







# GOLF

## Tourism ROI

Aggregate direct spending by golfers on rooms, rounds, and related food, beverage and retail

**\$194,144**

### VCB INVESTMENT

IN FLORIDA'S FIRST COAST OF GOLF PROGRAMS

**\$388.00**

### VCB RETURN ON INVESTMENT

FOR EVERY DOLLAR SPENT



## THE FOLLOWING IS HOW ROI WAS CALCULATED

**Hotel \$12,035,205** | 68,748 nights @ \$178.99 ADR

**Golf \$21,682,112** | 264,416 tourist rounds @ \$82/round

**Additional Spending \$ 41,341,465** | 44,872 golfers @ \$169/day x 5.8 nights

**Total Spending \$75,328,782**

Total Value of Ad, PR, Promos \$1,555,822 | **3,736,599 Impressions**

VCB to Spending ROI = **\$388.00: \$1.00 (\$75,328,782/\$194,144)**



Media value of the FFCG advertising, PR and promotions in which Florida's Historic Coast or its properties had a significant presence was \$1,555,822 (3.8 million impressions).

### ROI/ECONOMIC IMPACT DATA SOURCES:

2017 UNF Public Opinion Research Laboratory concluded more than 28 publicly accessible golf courses tourist play, stay in St. Johns County commercial lodging

Tourist Round Data: Source - monthly rounds reported by St. Johns golf courses

Average cost per round: Source - CY2024 golf course average rates

2017 UNF Public Opinion Research Laboratory Concluded 52% of golf tourists stay in commercial lodging. 48% stay with friends/family and non-bed tax collecting accommodations

2024 ADR \$178.99: Source - St. Johns County STR report. Traditional Lodging

Average length of stay of 5.8 nights: Source - 2017 UNF Public Opinion Research Laboratory

Daily consumer spending: \$169 Source - VISIT FLORIDA 2019 Golf Visitor Profile







# PAID ADVERTISING

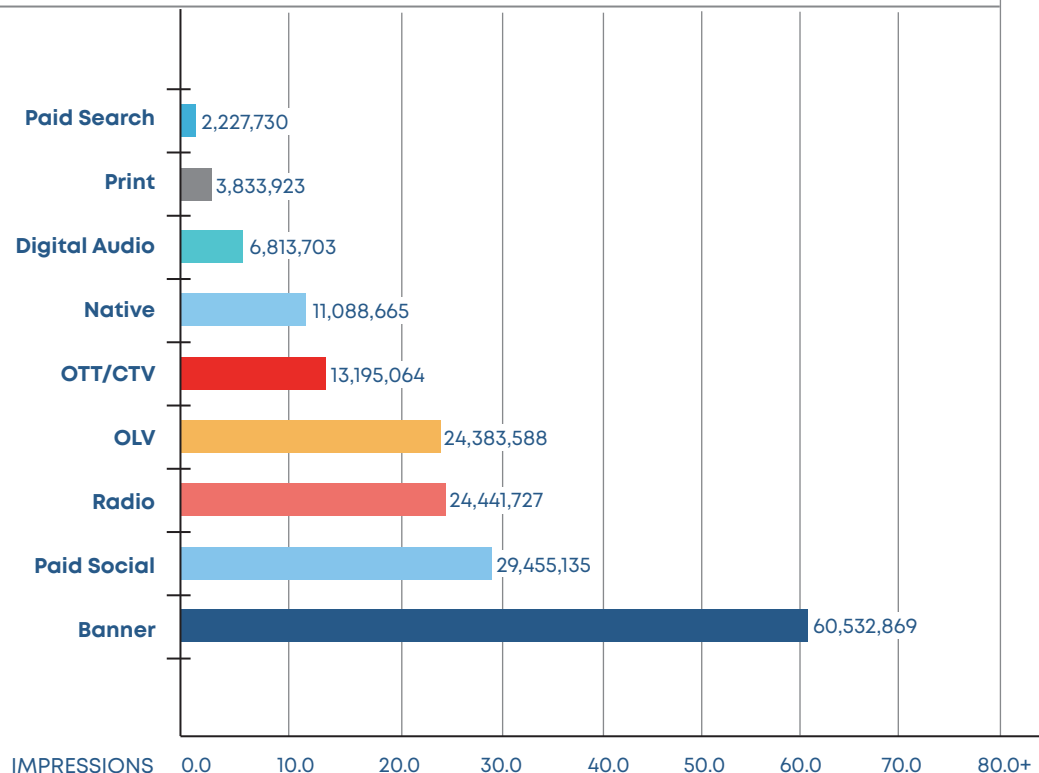
Traditional & Digital

176 MILLION  
TOTAL IMPRESSIONS

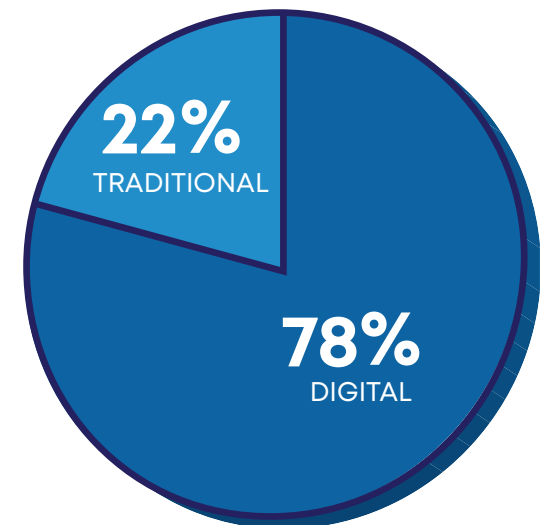
78%  
DIGITAL IMPRESSIONS

1,798,408  
CLICKS

## ADVERTISING IMPRESSIONS (in millions)

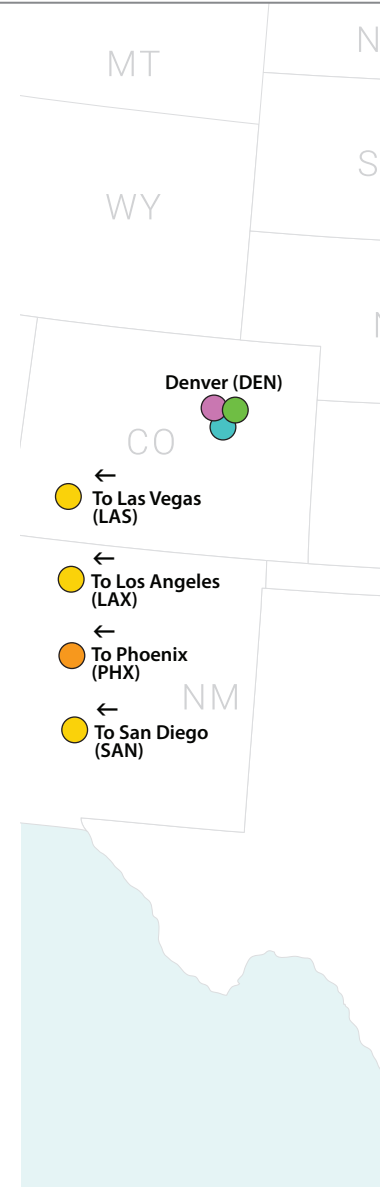


\$2.0 MILLION  
PAID ADVERTISING  
SPEND



# PAID ADVERTISING

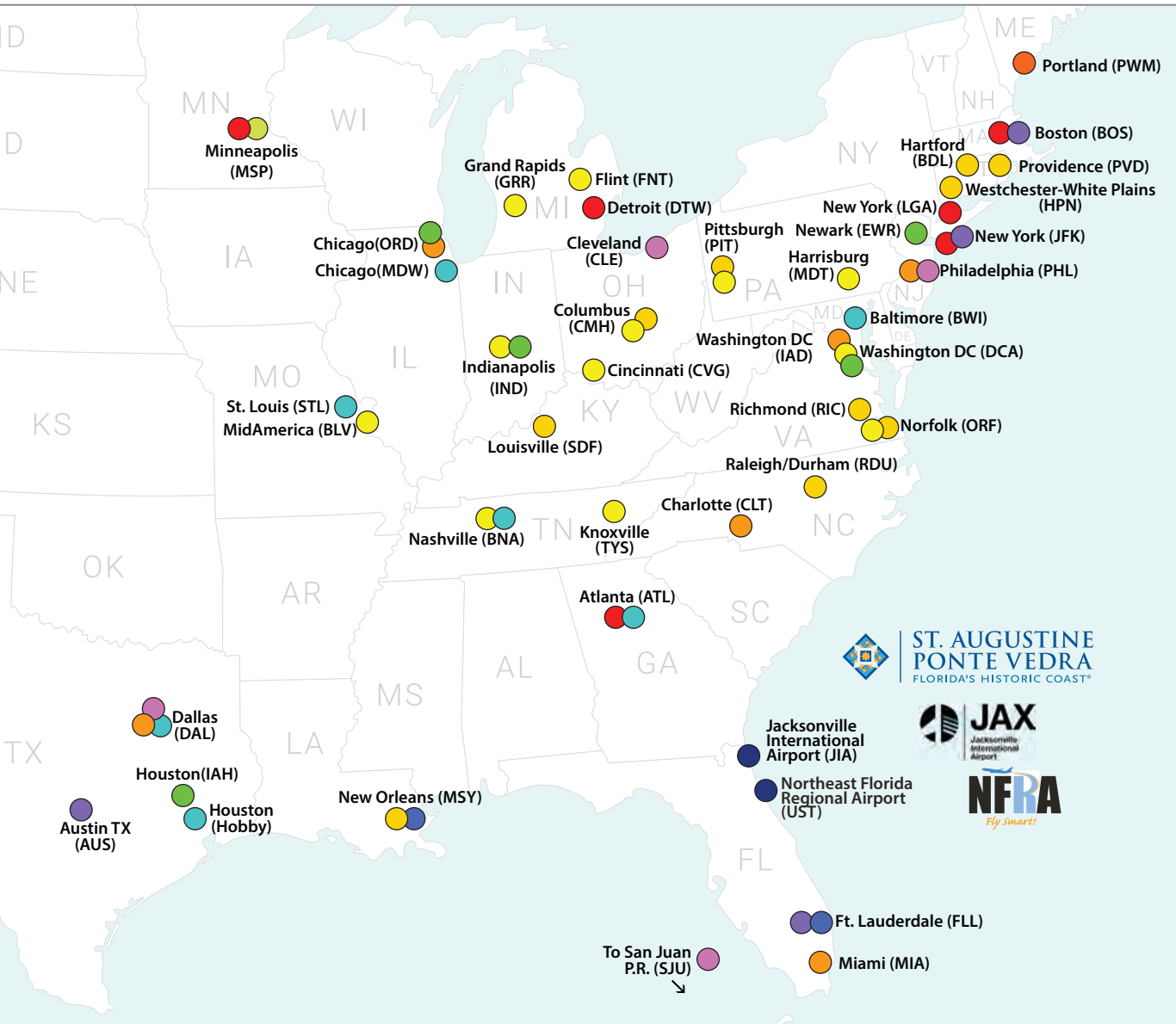
## Target Markets





## Key Drive Markets:

- Atlanta, GA
- Charleston, SC
- Charlotte, NC
- Gainesville, FL
- Miami, FL
- Orlando, FL
- Savannah, GA
- St. Petersburg, FL
- Tampa, FL
- plus additional nationwide markets based on travel search and purchase behavior







# WEBSITE/eCRM

FloridasHistoricCoast.com

3,535,698

**TOTAL WEBSITE VISITS**

+46% OVER FY2023

1,074,057

**ORGANIC VISITS**

+14% OVER FY2023

207,896

**BUSINESS REFERRALS**

+26% INCREASE OVER FY2023



**E-CRM**

224,673

**SUBSCRIBERS**

+2% INCREASE OVER FY2023



# COMMUNICATIONS

Public Relations & Social Media

153.0 BILLION

**TOTAL ANNUAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS**

+2% OVER FY2024 GOAL OF 150 BILLION

14.4 BILLION

**VCB GENERATED MEDIA COVERAGE IMPRESSIONS**

99% OF FY2024 GOAL OF 15 BILLION

3.2 BILLION

**HISPANIC MEDIA IMPRESSIONS**

+153% OVER FY2024 GOAL OF 150 MILLION (INCLUDED IN FY2024 ANNUAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS ABOVE)

## SOCIAL MEDIA



132

**JOURNALISTS/INFLUENCERS HOSTED**

+9% over FY2023 media hostings



556,984

**FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS**

99% of FY2024 goal



817,160

**YOUTUBE LIFETIME VIEWS**

+32% over FY2024 goal



76,255

**INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS**

90% of FY2024 goal



14,249

**TWITTER FOLLOWERS**

100% of FY2024 goal



1,848

**NEW LINKEDIN FOLLOWERS**

95% of FY2024 goal





# SALES

## Sales Leads and Room Nights

150,785

**ROOM NIGHTS**

+6.8% OVER FY2024 GOAL

2,516

**PROSPECTING CALLS/EMAILS**

+17.7% OVER FY2024 GOAL

464

**LEADS SOURCED**

+28.5% OVER FY2024 GOAL



### GROUP CLOSING FUND (GCF)

**\$111,703**

DEFINITE & PENDING GCF OFFERS FOR  
GROUPS STAYING IN FY2024-2030

**51,959**

ROOM NIGHTS

**\$11,822,079**

ROOM REVENUE

**\$6,382,339**

FOOD & BEVERAGE REVENUE

**\$18,204,418**

TOTAL REVENUE



## FY2024 MILESTONES

- **HOSTED 67** meeting planners, tour operators, travel agents, group leaders and brides
- **ATTENDED 50** Sales Initiatives (Industry Events)
- **APPROVED 34** Group Closing Fund proposals, with a 25% closure rate



# CO-OPERATIVE

Advertising

81

CO-OP ADVERTISING SPOTS

\$118,900

CO-OP MEDIA SPEND



# LOCAL TOURISM

## Industry Programs

328

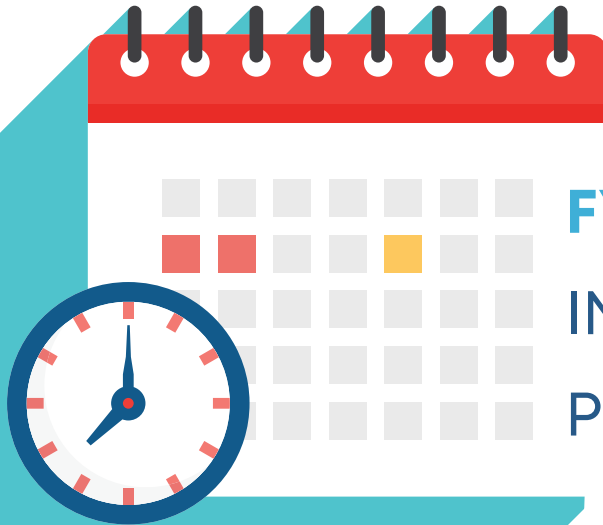
**TOTAL NUMBER  
OF TOURISM  
STAKEHOLDERS**

48

**TOTAL NUMBER  
OF  
NEW STAKEHOLDERS**

29

**TOURISM RESOURCE  
TRAINING  
ORIENTATIONS**



### FY2024 TOURISM INDUSTRY ANNUAL PROGRAMS

**May 10**

*( Renaissance Resort, World Golf Village )*  
State of Tourism Industry Meeting

**September 23**

Social Media workshop

**September 24**

*( The Assembly Room at Art 'n Motion )*  
VCB Annual Meeting

**September 25**

Co-op workshop







# TOURISM

Economic Impact in St. Johns County

\$2.5 Billion

**DIRECT SPENDING**

IN JULY 2021-JUNE 2022 ( +47.1% OVER 2017)

\$3.8 Billion

**TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT**

+58.3% OVER 2017

\$101.1 Million

**LOCAL TAXES PAID  
BY VISITORS**

+94.4% OVER 2017

32,400

**JOBS SUPPORTED  
BY TOURISM**

+11.1% OVER 2017

\$53.6 Million

**NET BENEFIT TO  
ST. JOHNS COUNTY**  
AFTER COST OF VISITOR SERVICES



**LONGER STAYS & Larger Party Sizes**

**5.5 Nights + 3.2 People**

( Up 111% over 2017 )

( +28% over 2017 )

NOTE: Previous economic data reported by TDC for 2017.





Nights of Lights, aerial view of bayfront. Photo: JWilson Aerial Photography





Mickler's Landing beach. Photo: Aerial Dad



ST. AUGUSTINE  
PONTE VEDRA  
FLORIDA'S HISTORIC COAST®