

Oakland County Tourism & Attraction

5-Year Strategic Plan



Acknowledgments

The development of this strategic plan was supported by a consultant team composed of Think Place Agency (Lead Project Manager/Tourism Development Expert), BLKDOG (Brand and Marketing Expert), and Tourism Economics (Economist), and a project steering committee representing business, government and non-profit sectors.

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Foreword

We don't always think about Oakland County as a tourist destination even though we all know and appreciate the obvious attractions in our midst from the Detroit Zoo to Cranbrook's Science Center and gardens to Meadow Brook Hall and the Zekelman Holocaust Center.

We know about the hidden gems too: the 59,000 acres of public recreation land, 1,400 lakes and vast array of dining and shopping choices from charming boutiques to sleek shopping malls and family-friendly coney islands to award-winning bistros. There is so much for visitors to explore in Oakland County and getting the word out about all of our amazing attributes is the goal behind the development of this tourism strategic plan.

After months of study and surveys, this plan helps us understand the role tourism plays in our economic development strategy. Did you know that the tourism economy generated \$4.9 billion in business sales in 2024 and supported nearly 4% of all the jobs in Oakland County? Those are significant numbers with plenty of room for growth that will boost our local economy and help our businesses succeed and thrive.

To those contemplating their next vacation destination, our welcome mat is always out for visitors looking for a day trip, a weekend of great food and exceptional shopping, a tranquil nature adventure or an enriching educational or cultural experience. And that goes for all of our homegrown tourists too. Welcome!



David Coulter
Oakland County
Executive

Executive Summary



Project Overview & How We Got Here

Direct visitor spending in Oakland County generated a total economic impact of \$4.9 billion in 2024, including indirect and induced impacts. This total economic impact sustained nearly 41,000 jobs, \$1.4 billion in income, and generated \$426 million in state and local tax revenues.

The Oakland County Department of Economic Development recognizes the important role that tourism and related business attraction and retention has on the local economy and promoting vibrant communities. In January 2025, the County embarked on its seminal strategic planning process to develop the County's first 5-year Tourism & Attraction Strategic Plan.

Over the course of the 10-month process outlined on the next page, the team aimed to:

- **Quantify** the value and impact of tourism in the County
- **Identify options for the County's tourism brand messaging**, positioning, and visual identity
- **Chart actionable strategies to attract new visitors, residents, businesses, and employees**; and extend visitor stays by enhancing experiences, products, mobility and marketing
- **Determine sustainable models** for tourism development and management



Project Timeline



Project Launch & Discovery
January-April 2025

- Review of existing background documents
- Qualitative site visit to major attractions/downtowns to assess quality of visitor experiences and accessibility to various sites
- Stakeholder engagement with a variety of industry professionals – from visitor attraction managers/operators to economic development and workforce development leaders, anchor institution representatives, etc.



Destination Diagnostic
May-June 2025

- Inventory and benchmark of tourism products and experiences across the County against shortlist of four competitive destinations
- Impact analysis of tourism and hospitality industry
- Visitor survey to develop visitor profiles and uncover visitor sentiments and general perception of the destination’s brand



Vision, Brand Concepts & Tourism Strategy
June-August 2025

- Industry stakeholder and public visioning workshops
- Development of realistic, industry-accepted performance metrics and benchmarks
- Strategic plan outline including an initial suite of strategies to enhance tourism development, management, and marketing opportunities



Brand Refinement & Strategic Plan Development
August-December 2025

- Development of three brand names and visual concepts for consideration by the County
- Engagement with steering committee and other County leaders to refine brand name and visual concepts
- Case study research to inform the development of final plan and guide strategic plan implementation efforts
- Presentation of the final strategic plan to steering committee



Implementation
2026-2031

- Development of brand style guides for refined visual concepts

Highlights from the Destination Diagnostic



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Highlights from the Destination Diagnostic

In order to build a baseline understanding of Oakland County, including its strengths, competitive advantages, and opportunities as a year-round community and tourism destination, the consultant team conducted a series of research tasks across the 'Project Launch & Discovery' and 'Destination Diagnostic' phases. This included:

- Review of existing background documents such as economic development strategies, market analysis reports, master plans/comprehensive plans, economic data, marketing materials, etc.
- Inventory and benchmark of tourism products and experiences across the County against shortlist of four competitive destinations (based on an analysis of user-generated data across sources such as Google, Tripadvisor, etc.)
- Qualitative site visit to major attractions/downtowns to assess quality of visitor experiences and accessibility to various sites
- Impact analysis of tourism and hospitality industry to demonstrate value of various sectors to the local economy
- Visitor survey to develop visitor profiles and uncover visitor sentiments on the quality of tourism products/experiences in the county (satisfaction levels), factors impacting travel decision-making, and general perception of the destination's brand
- Stakeholder engagement with a variety of industry professionals - from visitor attraction managers/operators to economic development and workforce development leaders, anchor institution representatives, and more

The following represents key takeaways from the Destination Diagnostic report.



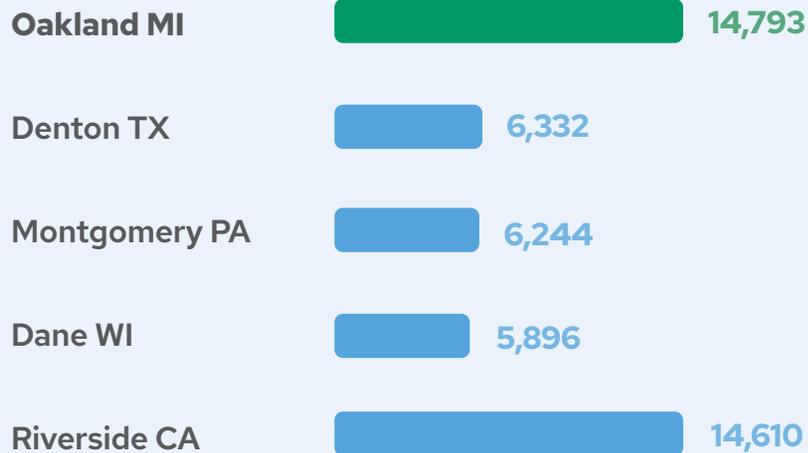
To read the full Destination Diagnostic, [click here.](#)

What Makes Oakland County A Destination & How Does It Stack Up?

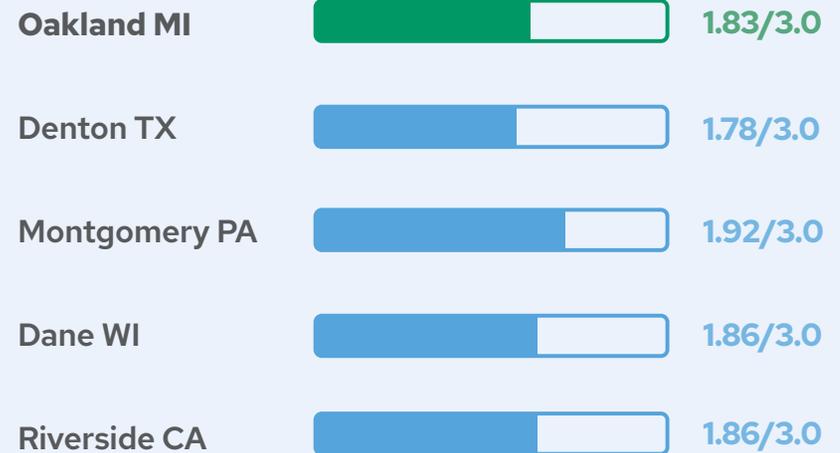
1. Oakland County is a big, price-competitive Midwestern destination.

With over 14,700 points-of-interest across categories such as 'Shopping', 'Culinary', 'Lodging', 'Education, Arts & Culture', 'The Great Outdoors', etc., the county offers the widest array of experiences for visitors compared to its Benchmark Communities* of Denton County (TX), Montgomery County (PA), Dane County (WI), and Riverside County (CA). The average mid-tier price points of the County's products and experiences also make it an ideal destination for travelers seeking lower cost experiences in a tighter economy.

Total # of Products/Experiences



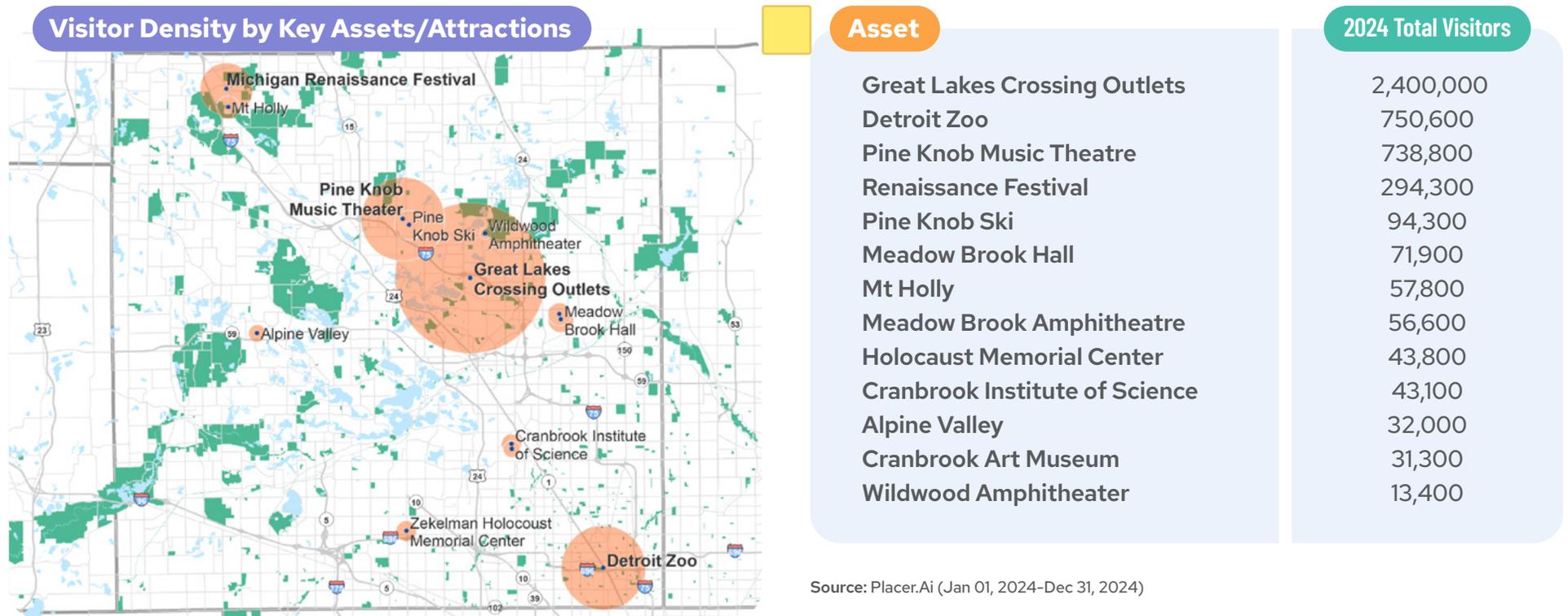
Average Price Level of Products/Experiences



Source: Think Place Agency (2025) (based on consumer review data available through Google).

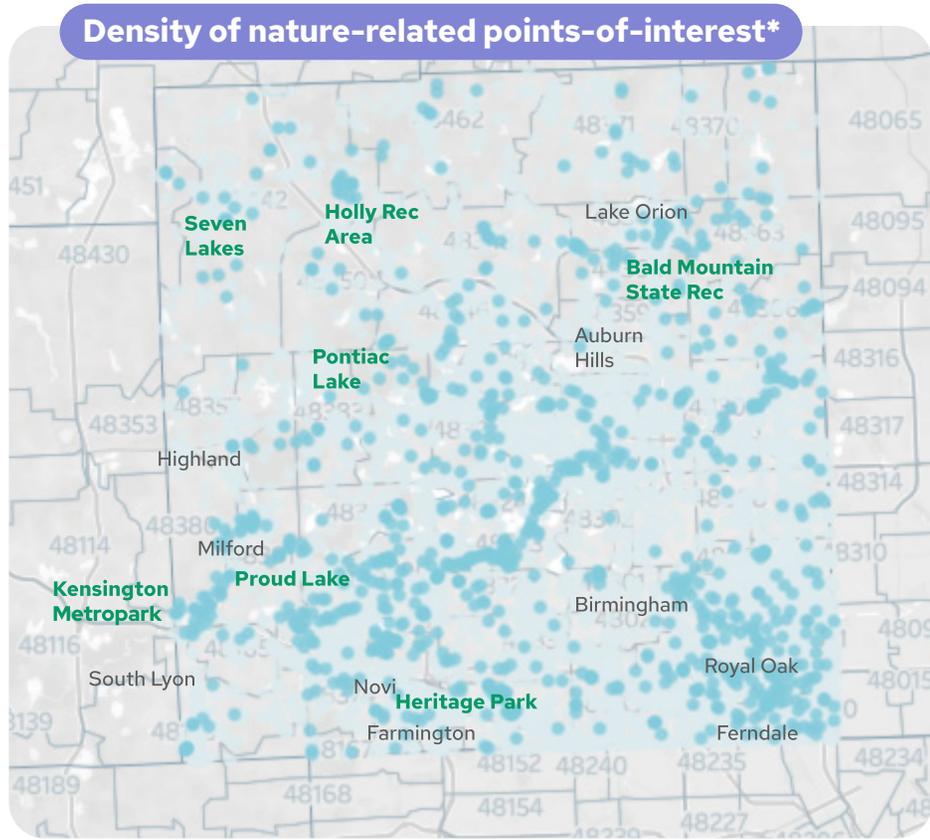
2. Oakland County is a destination that invites curiosity and supports fun family experiences.

From Great Lakes Crossing Outlets, Suburban Collection Showplace, Detroit Zoo, Pine Knob, and Renaissance Festival to Meadow Brook Hall, Zekelman Holocaust Center and Cranbrook, the county's top visited attractions and venues with over 750,000+ annual unique visits invite curiosity in culture, arts, architecture, history, and science.



3. Oakland County offers Metro Detroiters a quick escape to the great outdoors.

There are over 1,100+ points of interest in the great outdoors, giving visitors and area residents access to a range of quality outdoor recreation opportunities, including lakes, County, Metro and State Parks, golf courses, equestrian facilities, and accessible trails.



The highest-rated nature-related assets in the County each feature an average rating of at least 4.5/5.0 stars, with upwards of 1,500 reviews left by users. These traits increase their visibility to potential audiences/new visitors, and include the following:

Asset	Avg. Rating	Total # Reviews
Kensington Metropark	4.7	4,162
Holly State Recreation Area	4.6	2,986
Rochester Municipal Park	4.8	2,870
Pontiac Lake State Rec	4.5	2,283
Proud Lake State Rec	4.6	2,314
Seven Lakes State Park	4.7	2,177
Heritage Park	4.7	2,359
Bald Mountain State Recreation Area	4.6	1,856

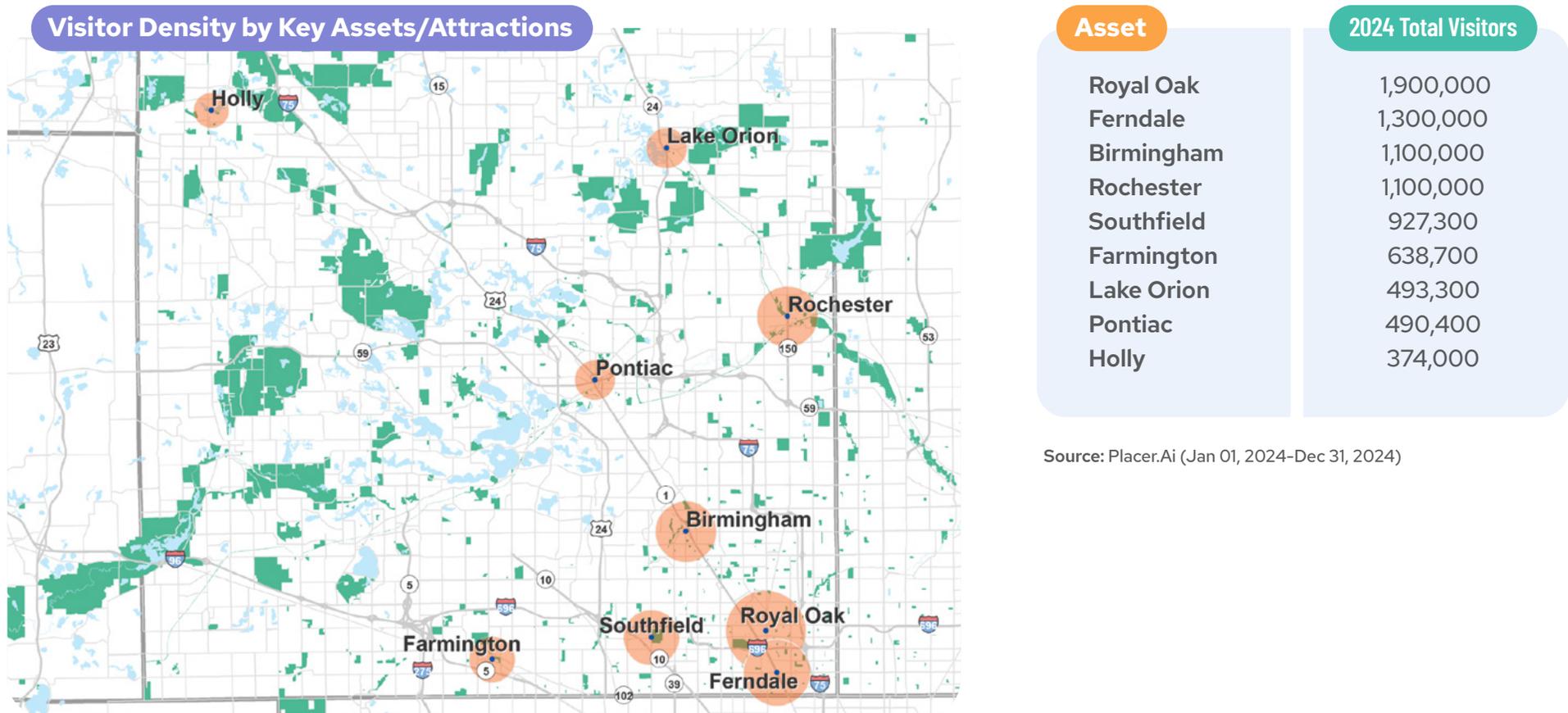
*Dark Blue POIs include beaches, parks (incl. local, state, metroparks), bird watching areas, piers, nature preserves, lakes, playgrounds, etc.

*Although not widely reviewed/highly rated, the lake assets between Pontiac and Milford suggest a strong cluster of water-based recreation activity that may be leveraged as a cohesive experience for visitors interested in the great outdoors.

Source: Think Place Agency (2025). Based on consumer review data available through Google, the widest open consumer review platform which plays a huge role in shaping any business or attraction's reputation and attracting new visitors/consumers. Google allows consumers to leave reviews from Android and iOS devices, and seamlessly integrates this data with Google Search and Google Maps, which are some of the world's leading search engine platforms.

4. Oakland County is every other metro Detroiter’s hometown — there’s a downtown or unique corridor for everyone.

The collection of diverse communities and downtowns are major hubs of shopping, dining, entertainment, and most importantly, iconic hometown events and festivals, including the Michigan State Fair and Woodward Dream Cruise, which welcome millions of visitors annually.



Tourism Readiness by Community

Community	Tourism Readiness Status	Community	Tourism Readiness Status
Auburn Hills	Ready	Lyon	High Potential
Birmingham	Ready	Madison Heights	High Potential
Farmington	Ready	Oxford	High Potential
Ferndale	Ready	Pontiac	High Potential
Lake Orion	Ready	Oak Park	High Potential
Milford	Ready	Berkley	Emerging
Novi	Ready	Beverly Hills	Emerging
Rochester	Ready	Groveland	Emerging
Royal Oak	Ready	Clawson	Emerging
Southfield	Ready	Hazel Park	Emerging
Clarkston	High Potential	Lathrup Village	Emerging
Franklin	High Potential	Leonard	Emerging
Highland	High Potential	Ortonville	Emerging
Holly	High Potential	South Lyon	Emerging

An assessment of various factors across each downtown revealed a number of ‘tourism ready’ downtowns that could be further leveraged as part of the County’s brand identity and tourism development strategies.

Amongst the key factors leading to the top 10 communities ranked as being ‘Tourism Ready’ are **a) proximity/presence of key year-round attractions such as museums, parks/lakes/trails and other outdoor sports/recreation assets, entertainment assets** (including cinemas, live music facilities); **b) availability of hotel rooms in/within close proximity of downtown** (upwards of 200 rooms), **c) popular and well-attended events/festivals** (including Woodward Dream Cruise, farmers markets, Renaissance Festival, Lunar New Year celebrations, etc.); and **d) a well-organized and well-resourced place- management entity** that is able to lead and organize year-round calendar of activities and events that drive visitor traffic as well as maintain a strong image/place brand for the community.

**Note:* Benchmark communities were selected based on known competitive destinations and other destinations catering to a similar clientele with a comparative set of tourism product offerings, the team selected a competitive set of domestic destinations with county-level tourism governance entities.

Who's Visiting Oakland County & What Are Their Perceptions?

5. Oakland County is primarily a destination for Metro Detroiters and Midwestern explorers.

99% of visitors surveyed are from the United States. Even with limited destination management and stewardship efforts in the County, visitors from within 2-2.5 hour drive of the County (largely SE Michigan, OH, IN) have left with positive overall impressions and 99% of those surveyed have indicated they would visit Oakland County again, with many citing strong family ties as being a key reason for wanting to return. They are also likely looking for more affordable experiences.

Source: Think Place Agency (2025)

100% would visit Oakland County again

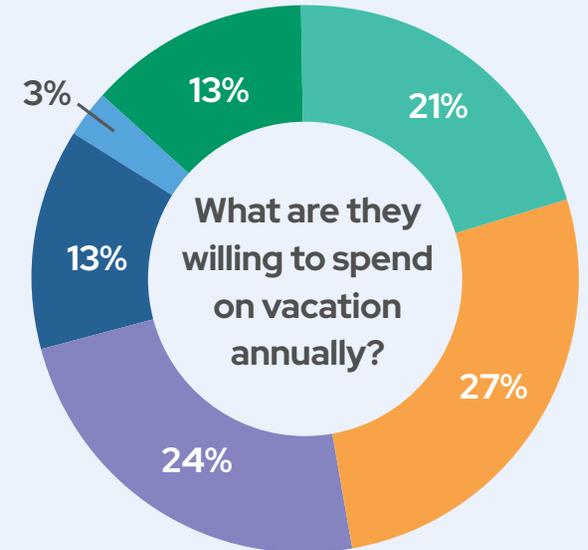
(if they've been to Oakland County before.)

On a scale of 1-10...

What is your overall impression of Oakland County as a destination? **6.2**

How likely are you to recommend Oakland County as a place to visit to friends/family? **6.3**

(0- Extremely negative, 10 - Extremely positive)



- Less than \$1,000 (21%)
- \$1,000-\$2,999 (27%)
- \$3,000-\$4,999 (24%)
- \$5,000-\$6,999 (13%)
- \$7,000-\$8,999 (3%)
- \$9,000 or more (13%)

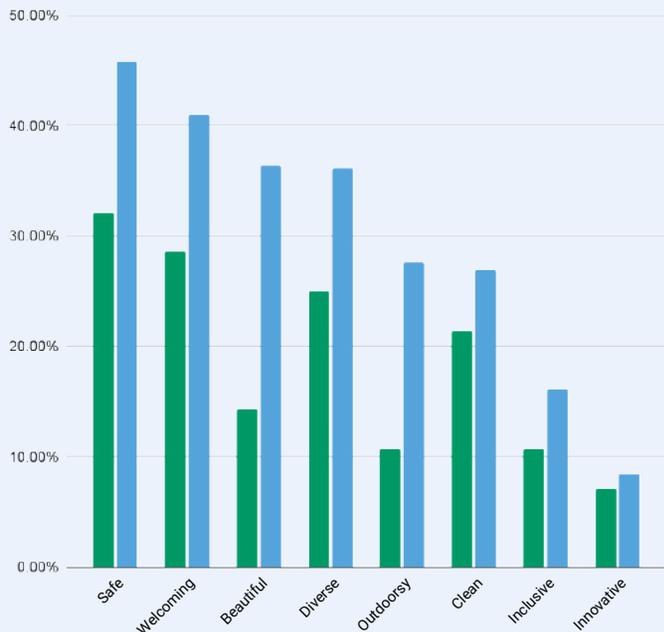
6. Oakland County has the opportunity to capture budget savvy visitors travelling in pairs or larger groups.

In particular, events and festivals are rated highly by past visitors indicating their value and the need to continue offering these free and memorable experiences across the County’s downtowns and unique corridors. Visitors from outside of Metro Detroit have also indicated the need to increase awareness and access to the County’s hidden gems – its outdoor recreation assets.

■ Out-of-Towners ■ Metro Detroiters

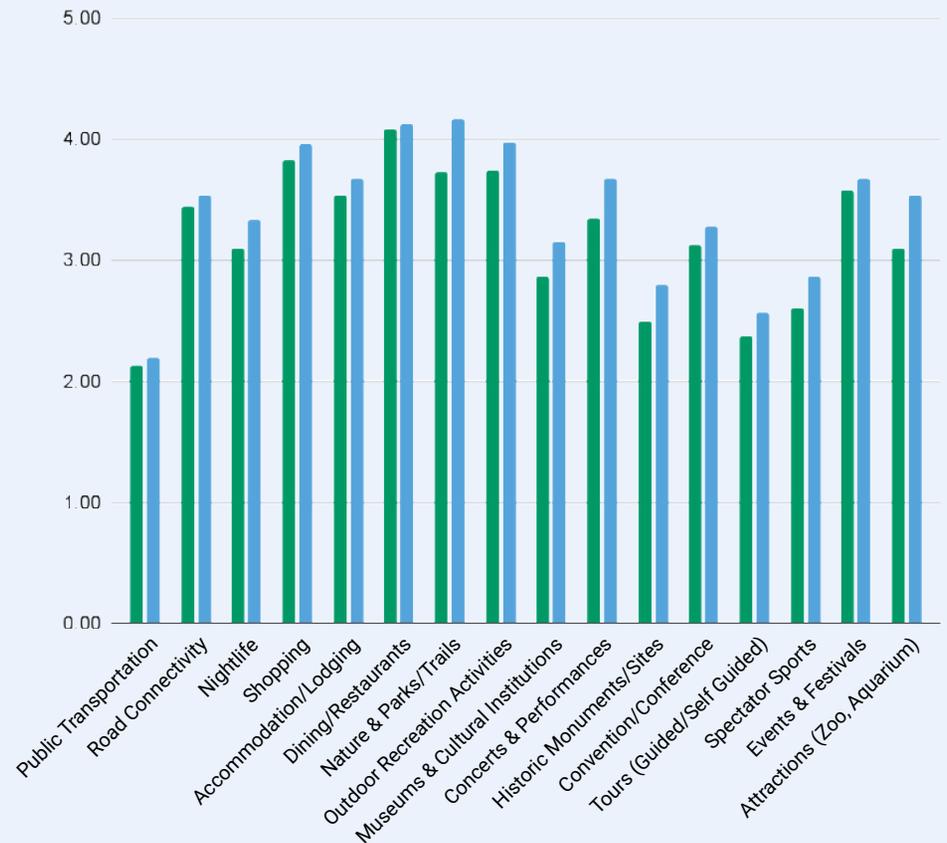
Source: Think Place Agency (2025)

Oakland County is a __ destination (fill in the blank)



79% Metro Detroiters rated Nature & Parks/Trails as ‘very good’/‘excellent’, compared with 43% of out-of-towners

How would you rate the overall quality of each of the following factors in Oakland County?



What Is the Value of Oakland County's Tourism Economy?

7. In 2024, the County attracted over 16.7 million visitors who spent \$3.3 billion, or \$9.0 million daily average spending.

Total visitor volume and spending to Oakland County expanded 0.8% and 1.3% respectively, from 2023 levels. For comparison, visitor volume is 1.6 times the population of the State of Michigan (10.1 million)

Oakland County Visitor Volumes and Spending, by segment (\$ millions, millions of visitors)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Visitors	16.3	12.6	5.0	15.9	16.6	16.7	0.8%
Day*	8.7	7.6	8.3	8.7	9.0	9.0	1.0%
Overnight*	7.3	5.0	6.7	7.1	7.4	7.4	0.4%
International	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	6.9%
Total Visitor Spending	\$2,887	\$1,780	\$2,518	\$2,979	\$3,225	\$3,268	1.3%
Day*	\$520	\$401	\$486	\$558	\$590	\$597	1.4%
Overnight*	\$2,126	\$1,323	\$1,989	\$2,279	\$2,409	\$2,429	0.8%
International	\$241	\$57	\$43	\$141	\$226	\$242	6.8%
Per Visitor Spending	\$177	\$141	\$168	\$187	\$194	\$196	0.5%
Day*	\$60	\$53	\$59	\$64	\$66	\$66	0.4%
Overnight*	\$289	\$264	\$297	\$323	\$326	\$327	0.4%
International	\$974	\$961	\$974	\$985	\$968	\$967	-0.1%

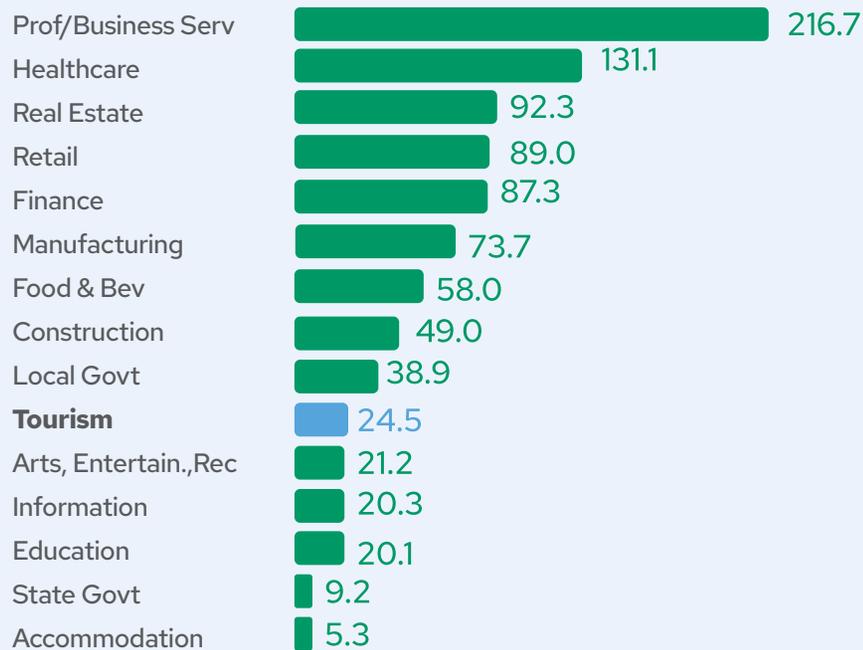
Source: Tourism Economics (*Lodging spending is calculated as an industry)

8. The tourism industry in Oakland County directly supported 24,456 local jobs.

Visitor activity supported a significant portion of direct employment in several key industries in Oakland County. Visitors sustained nearly all employment in the lodging sector, 19% of recreation employment, and 14% of food services employment. Overall, direct visitor-supported employment accounted for 2.3% of all jobs in Oakland County in 2024. When considering total jobs (including indirect and induced), this share was 3.8% of the total. For comparison, total tourism-supported jobs in benchmark destinations Dane County, WI, and Montgomery County, PA, were 4.0% and 1.8%, respectively in 2023.

Visitor Supported Employment in Oakland County

Jobs in Thousands



Source: BEA, BLS, Tourism Economics

Visitor Supported Employment in Oakland County

Jobs, direct only



Source: Tourism Economics

9. Visitor activity generated a total of \$1.4 billion in total income or the equivalent of over \$2,600 per household in Oakland County.

When taken on a per job basis, the average wage for direct tourism jobs was \$27,700 per year while the average for indirect and induced jobs was \$45,000. Overall including all jobs, the average wage for tourism-supported jobs was \$34,600 annually in 2024.

Source: Tourism Economics

Labor Income Impacts by Industry (\$millions)

	Direct Jobs	Indirect Jobs	Induced Jobs	Total
Total, ALL INDUSTRIES	\$677	\$449	\$278	\$1,404
Food & Beverage	\$237	\$20	\$18	\$274
Business Services	\$0	\$205	\$44	\$250
Lodging	\$168	\$0	\$0	\$168
Retail Trade	\$106	\$4	\$21	\$131
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	\$12	\$77	\$39	\$128
Recreation & Entertainment	\$112	\$6	\$3	\$122
Other Transport	-	\$17	\$5	\$22
Education & Healthcare	\$0	\$3	\$89	\$92
Personal Services	\$42	\$18	\$10	\$71
Communications	-	\$35	\$13	\$48
Wholesale Trade	\$0	\$26	\$14	\$41
Government	-	\$14	\$14	\$28
Construction & Utilities	-	\$18	\$5	\$23
Gasoline	-	\$0	\$1	\$1
Manufacturing	\$0	\$4	\$1	\$5
Air Transport	-	\$1	\$1	\$1
Agri, Fishing, Mining	-	\$0	\$0	\$0

10. Visitor spending, visitor supported jobs, and business sales generated nearly \$760 million in government revenues in 2024.

State and local taxes alone tallied \$426 million, enough to fund the average salaries of 6,600 public school teachers in Oakland County.

Source: Tourism Economics



Tax Impacts (\$millions)

State Taxes	277.6
Sales	152.5
Bed	32.5
Personal Income	45.2
Corporate	6.6
Social Insurance	0.0
Excise & Fees	16.1
Property	24.6
Local Taxes	148.4
Bed	10.8
Personal Income	15.1
Excise & Fees	5.9
Property	116.6
Federal Taxes	333.9
Personal Income	120.5
Corporate	32.5
Indirect Business	12.1
Social Insurance	168.7
Total Tax Revenues	759.8

Vision

Where people go to connect with their curiosities, with each other, and the Metro Detroit region.

The Oakland County Tourism & Attraction Strategic 5-Year Plan is a comprehensive and strategic framework that outlines goals, policies, and programs for the development, management, and promotion of the County as a destination over the next five years.

The Plan is guided by the vision and brand positioning of Oakland as Metro Detroit's premier hometown, where global innovation meets midwestern community charm.

Oakland County's proximity to Detroit's iconic energy and headquarters is paired with a vibrant mix of culture, outdoor adventure, and community. The County will continue to welcome international investors, fast-growing companies, and Midwestern explorers to its uniquely balanced destination: Where unique, walkable corridors and family-first downtowns, world-class education, accessible nature, and vibrant cultural and culinary diversity come together in every season.



Target Audiences

The Plan targets the following four audiences with different backgrounds but one similar drive: Exceptional quality of life as a central driving force, and the opportunities awarded to those who choose Oakland County, MI: whether for a career move, a weekend getaway, or a different pace of living.



The Ambitious & Creative Starter:

Recent grads, career starters

Young, urban resident looking for walkable downtown living experience within close proximity to innovation jobs

The Regional Explorer:

Repeat and loyal family-oriented and culture-driven Midwestern leisure travelers

Friends and families of Southeast Michigan looking for fun, family entertainment, culture and spaces to run wild

The Dreamer:

Small business owners & entrepreneurs

Small to medium-sized business owners looking for first, second, and third locations in Michigan

The Legacy Builder:

Lifelong Michigander heading into retirement years or a career pivot

Michiganders who want to remain active contributors to the businesses they have built, return to their hometown communities, and find other ways to leave behind a legacy for their families

Overview of Goals

The Plan is organized around **ten priority goals** that were identified in the Destination Diagnostic phase as being key areas to build a brand for the destination, develop cultural and outdoor recreation products/experiences, manage and build infrastructure to facilitate ease of movement of travelers across the County, leverage related assets to drive diverse business development, and sustain destination stewardship efforts.

Stewardship & Governance

01

To create a sustainable framework for destination stewardship in Oakland County

Brand & Marketing

02

To maintain and grow brand loyalty in the Metro Detroit area among residents and nearby visitors

03

To raise Oakland County's brand awareness among new regional Midwestern audiences

Products & Experiences

04

To increase connectivity to & accessibility of the great outdoor assets for new audiences

05

To nurture popular hometown events and seed new marquee events

06

To create world-class cultural and sporting venues and experiences

Place & Infrastructure

07

To build on the small-town charm and visitor readiness

08

To connect visitor experience clusters through alternative mobility options

Business & Workforce

09

To strengthen the hometown identities and better align the County's hometown brands and products with the lifestyles of the talent pool

10

To grow and diversify group travel in lifestyle and technology sectors

Strategy Overview



Strategy Overview

<p>The Strategy</p>	<p>A general action-oriented statement that may be a continuation or expansion of an existing program by Oakland County and other partners, or a newly proposed initiative.</p>
<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Each strategy will be proposed to either address or leverage findings identified in the Destination Diagnostic/SWOT analysis in the preceding section, or to meet industry standards uncovered in market research.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="487 630 1959 734">  <p>Low: Strategies that may easily be executed by existing staff at Oakland County and partner organizations based on existing roles/responsibilities. Low effort/resource strategies also do not require the reallocation of existing budgets.</p> <li data-bbox="487 760 1959 896">  <p>Medium: Strategies that may require the introduction of new roles/responsibilities to existing County staff work plans (with training involved) but that align closely with existing roles/responsibilities. Medium effort/resource strategies may require some reallocation of existing budgets or minimal effort to acquire new funds through sponsorships/grant applications, etc.</p> <li data-bbox="487 922 1959 1058">  <p>High: Strategies that may require the introduction of new roles/responsibilities to existing County staff work plans or the hiring of new staff with additional skill sets/work experience. High effort/resource strategies will likely require reallocation of existing budgets and significant effort on the part of the team to acquire new funds through sponsorships/grant applications, etc.</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p>  Immediate (12 months)  Near Term (1-3 years)  Future (4-5 years & beyond) </p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Where applicable, a strategy is accompanied by an industry case study. Each case study starts with a challenge/opportunity identified by the destination that led to the implementation or pilot of the solution. Solutions presented in each case study are intended to provide Oakland County and its partners with examples of how to be able to implement the strategy effectively.</p> <p>Note: No case study is perfect. As such, we have also included any barriers to implementation and challenges faced by case study destinations to consider in implementation.</p>

Destination Stewardship & Governance

Destination stewardship refers to the work of putting the County on the map through product development and management, and ensuring that the visitor experience is seamless, positive, and most importantly, memorable for its most loyal regional visitors who might serve as ambassadors for the County.

There are various types of destination organizations (DMOs) that lead the tourism and hospitality industry towards a collective vision for the destination. Oakland County is at a critical inflection point to evaluate its opportunity to lead destination stewardship.



Key Functions of a DMO

A destination organization, also widely known as a Destination Management Organization (DMO) or Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB), is an entity whose core mission is to promote a destination as an attractive place to visit, live, work, and invest.

As such, there are various types of work that DMOs today must undertake to lead various industries towards a collective vision for the destination.



Marketing & Promotion

Programs, initiatives, and campaigns that are primarily focused on attracting visitors by promoting unique attractions and experiences, rather than focusing on individual products or services. This work ensures the creation and maintenance of a positive image of the destination.



Management

Programs and efforts that emphasize connecting various components of a destination, or creating coalitions of organizations/interests, to create a cohesive and quality visitor experience. This work ensures industry-wide collaborations that drive competitiveness and sustainability of the destination.



Stewardship

Capital improvements, programs, and campaigns that ensure the continuous pursuit of a net positive tourism ecosystem where a positive tourism experience for visitors is balanced with that of the needs of local communities.

Destination Stewardship in Metro Detroit

In Metro Detroit, there is both a DMO (Visit Detroit) and a Convention Facility Authority (Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority (DRCFA)) leading destination marketing and stewardship efforts.

	DRCFA	Visit Detroit
	Facility-and public-sector-funded for convention center operations and upgrades	Hybrid nonprofit model—regional marketing funded by a lodging assessment and private-sector membership contributions
IRS 501(c) type	-	501(c)(6)
Entity Type & Governance	Public authority appointed by state/city/county officials	Independent nonprofit governed by a board representing lodging and private sector partners
Funding Sources	Facility revenue + state excise/room/hotel tax + bonds	2% lodging assessment on hotels/motels with 35+ rooms in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties*
What It Funds	Operations and capital projects for Huntington Place	Regional marketing, convention sales, tourism promotion
Rate Determination	Determined by public authority with state oversight	Set by hoteliers/industry, with recent cap increase to 3.5% via legislation
Main Stakeholders	N/A	Sponsors, members contributing dues

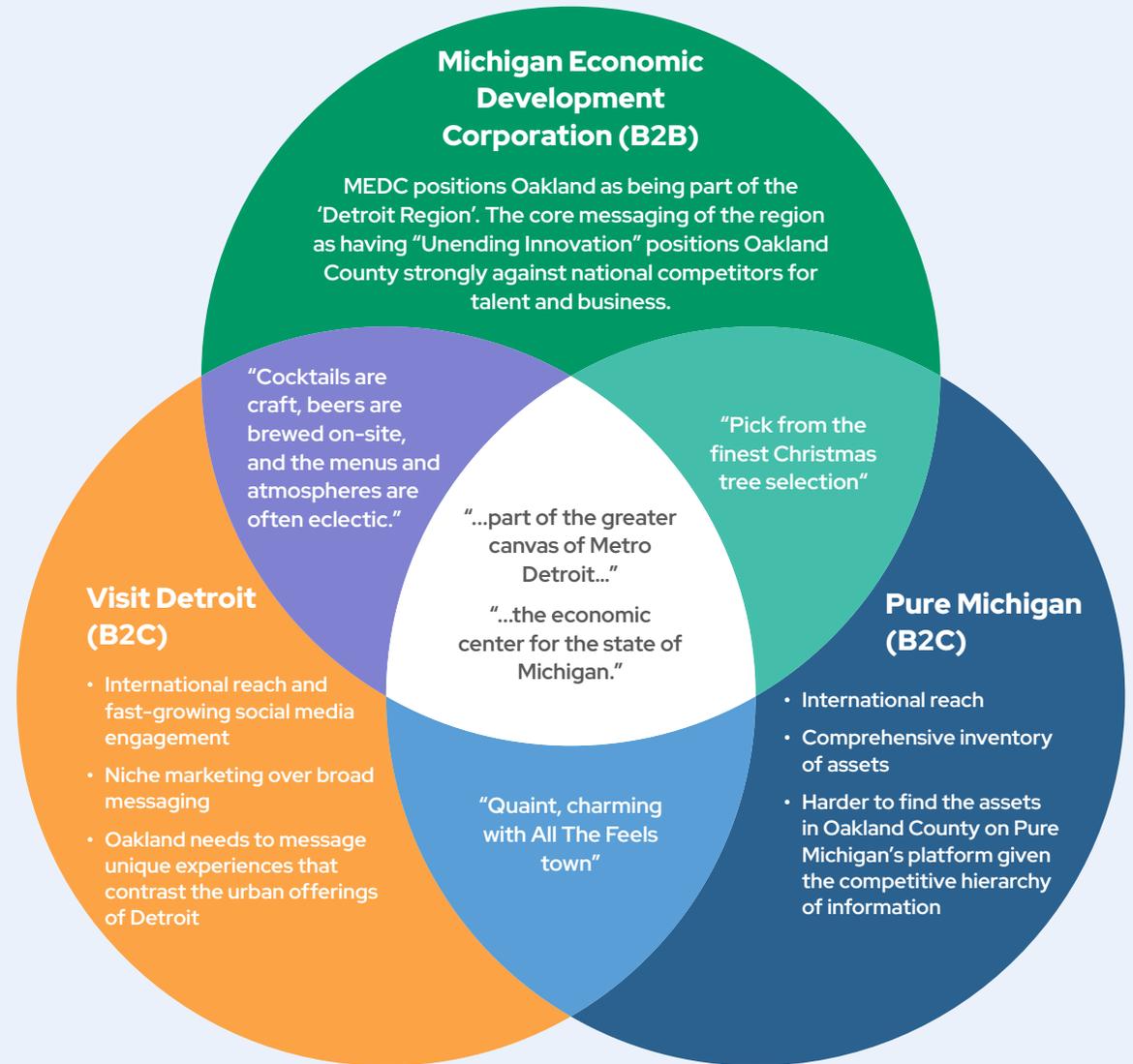
*(91% of total revenue) + membership dues (starting at \$225 per business), sponsorships, and grants (8% of total revenue)

Destination Stewardship in Metro Detroit

While Metro Detroit has a strong, existing destination marketing entity (Visit Detroit) overseeing regional marketing for the tri-county area, Oakland County will need to leverage the opportunity to enhance its own storytelling on its own channels and platforms to be amplified by Visit Detroit and other state and regional partners.

Despite the significant value of Oakland County’s tourism economy, as previously outlined, the County has not, as yet, established a sustainable and dedicated resource and team to carry out destination marketing, management, and stewardship functions. Moving forward, the County will need to put itself on the map and take ownership for stewarding the destination in partnership with Visit Detroit and state entities such as Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Pure Michigan.

The following strategies outline steps for the County to establish a destination stewardship coordinator position to finalize the County’s place brand and coordinate the roll out of the strategic plan (in the immediate term), and in the long run, establish a destination stewardship entity.



Goal #1:

To create a sustainable framework for destination stewardship in Oakland County

Hire a destination stewardship coordinator

A Destination Stewardship Coordinator is a full-time, mid-level County staff position (Principal Planner) dedicated to lead the implementation of the Plan and filling existing regional gaps in the roles of destination management and stewardship, primarily a) connecting various sectors/ stakeholders within the County to create a cohesive and quality visitor experience, b) creating a county-wide coalition of organizations/interests working towards the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination, and c) ensuring a balanced tourism experience for visitors with that of the needs of local communities (across economic, environmental, and social/ cultural perspectives).

Level of Effort/ Resource	 Medium
Phasing	 Immediate

In the near term, key roles and responsibilities of the Coordinator may include:

- Convene and collaborate with Visit Detroit, County departments (Main Street, Parks, Airport, Economic Development, Business Development, Workforce Development, Community Development, Transit, etc.), local government and organizations to implement strategies outlined in the strategic plan
- Partner closely with Visit Detroit to ensure alignment of the County’s messaging and positioning as a sub brand
- Support Visit Detroit in the promotion of the County for group travel and events; support stakeholders through lead generation and collaborative sales strategies.
- Track implementation of the strategic plan and measure impacts of strategies implemented to inform policies
- Work closely with a branding contractor to develop final County place brand, guidelines, assets, and a marketing/PR contractor to implement brand
- Grow and manage the destination stewardship budgets and lead the pursuit of grants

Required background/expertise of the Coordinator:

- Bachelor’s degree (or Master’s degree) in Tourism, Hospitality, or Recreation Management/Public Administration or Public Policy/Business Administration or Nonprofit Management/Community Development
- Minimum 3 years experience in non-profit operations/tourism/hospitality/cultural institution/chamber of commerce
- Familiarity with county or municipal government processes, budgeting, and grant management, and destination branding, storytelling, and campaign integration.
- Demonstrated success in stakeholder engagement, managing cross-sector partnerships, strategic planning, and program impact monitoring/evaluation
- Must be comfortable leading community workshops, industry training, and public forums.

Establish a destination stewardship non-profit organization

To grow and continuously evolve the work of the Destination Stewardship Coordinator, the County should also consider, in the longer term, the establishment of a 501(c)(3) and/or 501(c)(6) non-profit organization, with its own Board of Directors consisting of local stakeholders (primarily consisting of lodging owners and managers, and other private/non-profit/public stakeholders such as attraction/cultural asset managers and regional marketing partners) that would contract with the County as a destination management organization for Oakland County.

Establishing a separate 501(c)(3) and/or 501(c)(6) nonprofit entity that functions as the County’s Destination Management Organization (DMO), rather than embedding it within a County department, offers a number of strategic, financial, and operational benefits. This includes having the flexibility and ability to make faster decisions around marketing, contracts/vendor agreements, asset management (for example, mobile visitor services or welcome center) and program pivots, and the ability to develop partnerships with corporate/private entities and/or other nonprofits without being subject to government policies.

Level of Effort/Resource	 High
Phasing	 Future

	501(c)(6)	501(c)(3)
Structure Most Commonly Selected by Chambers of Commerce, Tourism Bureaus/CVBs		
Difference in Purpose	Entities that promote business interests	Entities that focus on charitable, educational, scientific or advocacy programs
Lobbying/Advocacy	Allowed and unrestricted, as long as related to mission (particularly important to advocate for State and National tourism/transportation/environment/parks/lodging policy issues)	Heavily restricted ability to advocate for policies or business interests.
Donations & Revenue Flexibility	Less restricted on activities that generate revenue or benefit private members indirectly. Therefore, if needed at a later stage, the entity can engage in membership fundraising and benefits, cooperative marketing, and sponsorships freely. No charitable donation deductibility.	Must ensure revenue generation activities align with charitable mission due to stricter IRS compliance and reporting. Ability to receive tax-deductible donations.
Grant Funding	Limited ability to raise funding through foundation and public grants if grants are only eligible to 501(c)(3)	Free access to foundation and government grants restricted to 501(c)(3)s.

In particular, being structured as a 501(c)(6) may also enable the DMO to apply to grants that may not always be available to government agencies. Finally, it is important that DMOs maintain political neutrality in order to sustain their work and ensure continuity through administrations or Commission turnovers.

In order to sustain the work of this DMO, the County should consider a sustainable funding mechanism similar to that of other counties in the region, a government-authorized lodging/accommodations tax that is collected by Oakland County and distributed to its DMO.

In addition to marketing/promotion (primarily focused on the implementation of the County’s place brand and managing that implementation with local and regional/state partners), the DMO should be responsible for executing larger and more impactful stakeholder management and destination stewardship work, as outlined in this strategic plan.

Additional functions of the organization may include:

- Lead training, workshops, and community education programs to build brand awareness and implementation
- Lead/support implementation of stewardship projects and product development as outlined in the Oakland County Tourism & Attraction 5-Year Strategic Plan
- Lead capacity-building initiatives (workshops, training, coalition-building) for industry partners.
- Drive research, storytelling, and communications around the County’s place brand

Case Studies	Destination Ann Arbor (DAA)	Experience Grand Rapids (EGR)
IRS 501(c) type	501(c)(6)	501(c)(6)
Total Annual Revenue*	\$8.0 M	\$13.2 M
Primary Funding Source	Accommodations Tax (5%) - of which 96% is passed directly to DAA.	Lodging Excise Tax (8%) - of which only 17% is earmarked for EGR.
How it’s Collected	Washtenaw County	Kent County
Public Control?	Yes (via county ordinance)	Yes (via county ordinance)
Accountability	Accountability to the County is ensured through County seat on the board of DAA and directly via a contract held by DAA with the County	Accountability to the County is ensured through County seat on the board of EGR and as determined by County’s public budget.
What It Funds	DAA funds are used for destination marketing, sales (including sports tourism), cultural support (art grants, public art, cultural events, civic infrastructure)	EGR funds are used for destination marketing, sales, facilities (Debt repayment, convention center operations, new venues, athletics venues), arts support (festivals, museums)

*Rounded - Based on 2023 Form 990 Reported Total Revenue

Among key staff roles to be funded in initial years at the DMO:

- **Executive Director**, whose core responsibilities may include fundraising and grant applications, budget compliance and reporting, staff management, stakeholder engagement, and oversight of marketing and other DMO programs
- **Marketing & Communications Manager**, whose core responsibilities may include coordination with Marketing teams at Visit Detroit, implementation of Oakland County’s place brand, advertising, social media, visitor guides, website
- **Destination Development/Visitor Experience Manager**, whose core responsibilities may include coordination with Sales teams at Visit Detroit, administration and management of key product development programs
- **Engagement and Research Manager**, whose core responsibilities may include stakeholder management and coalition-building, visitor data collection, economic impact reporting, resident sentiment
- **Visitor Services Coordinator**, whose core responsibilities may include managing welcome centers, kiosks, call/email/chat support, volunteer programs



Salary Comp

The following reflect salaries of comparative positions and titles at DMOs in the Southeast Michigan market:

DMO	Visit Detroit	Destination Ann Arbor	Experience Grand Rapids
Title(s)	Senior Director of Communications and Public Affairs	Associate Director/Director	VP, Engagement
Annual Reported Salary*	\$155,000	\$106,000- 109,000	\$140,000

*Rounded - Based on current payment schedule and/or 2023 Form 990 Report for each organization

Public-Private-Community Partnerships

To succeed, destination stewardship requires full public-private-community collaboration. The strategies outlined in this plan were crafted in consideration of possible partnerships with the following State, Regional, County, and Local stakeholders who, in one way or another were involved in the planning process and/or acknowledged by others as being critical partners, including but not limited to:

Suggested Implementation Partners

Global	Regional	County	Local
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diplomatic corps & consulates (with locations in Oakland County/Metro Detroit) • Counsel Generals of Japan, South Korea, Germany, UK, Italy, Canada, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Detroit • Southeast Michigan Council of Governments • Detroit Regional Chamber • Transit Providers (SMART, PEX, NOTA, WOTA, OPC) • Architectural associations and institutions • Cultural institutions and historical societies • Gilbert Family Foundation • Detroit Housing Network/Connect Detroit • International Chambers of Commerce - Detroit chapters • Huron-Clinton Metroparks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oakland County Executive • Oakland County Board of Commissioners • Oakland County Economic Development • Main Street Oakland County • Oakland County Workforce Development • Oakland Thrive • Oakland County Department of Public Communications • Oakland County Parks and Recreation • Oakland Transit • Oakland County Office of Sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Chambers of Commerce • Downtown Management Organizations (Principal Shopping Districts, Corridor Improvement Authorities, Downtown Development Authorities, Non-profits) • Historians and architects, architectural associations and institutions, cultural institutions and historical societies • Select international companies/employers • Individual asset operators/managers
State			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michigan Economic Development Corporation • Pure Michigan • Michigan Department of Natural Resource • Michigan Department of Transportation 			

For a full list of stakeholders engaged in the process, contact Oakland County Economic Development.

Brand & Marketing

The marketing approach combines creativity and strategy to inspire both visitors and residents to embark on unforgettable journeys. The process began with an in-depth exploration of the County's unique character, uncovering its hidden gems, culture, and stories. These insights informed the development of immersive brand concepts that highlight the destination's appeal while resonating with the aspirations of travelers, locals, and businesses, encouraging them to engage with and explore the area.



Developing the Brand Concepts

The development of Oakland County's place brand concepts is the product of a collaborative, research-driven process that drew on extensive diagnostic research, stakeholder engagement, creative exploration, and iterative refinement. At every stage, the goal was to ensure Oakland County's brand is authentic, inclusive, and future-focused.

Oakland County is where people go to connect with each other and the region: outdoors, on main streets, and at can't-miss events. The brand concepts simply act on what that research uncovered, and was built to move people, not just impress them.

During the discovery phase, site visits and stakeholder engagement uncovered the unique destinations that Oakland County has to offer. Many of its distinct characteristics have shaped brand ideas that will invite action, increase cross-visitation, and lift the whole region.

The Destination Diagnostic showed that while marquee attractions like the Detroit Zoo and Great Lakes Crossing Outlets were well-known, the County's everyday strengths (walkable downtowns, vibrant festivals, and abundant outdoor recreation) were less visible but still critical assets and experiences that past visitors and business leaders valued.

In workshops and interviews, stakeholders emphasized the importance of a brand that feels welcoming, joyful, and inclusive, and that showcases Oakland County's diversity and creativity alongside its natural assets.



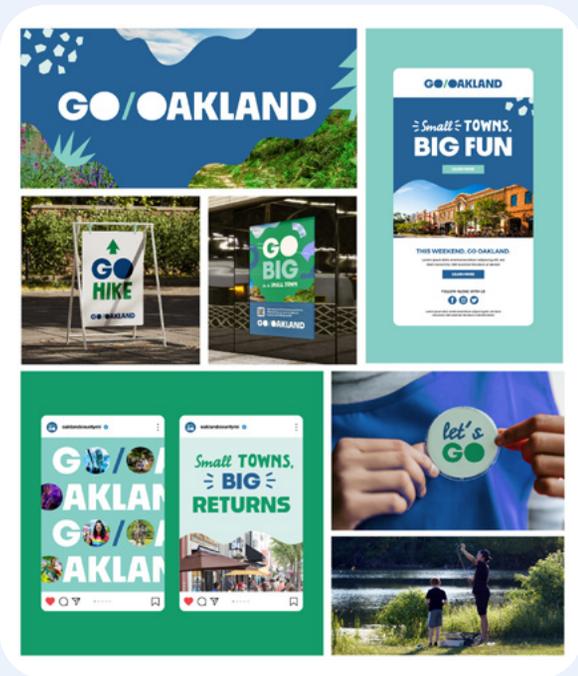
Inspiration was drawn from vibrant, people-centered storytelling and bold visuals, qualities stakeholders wanted to see reflected in the County’s identity.

From there, three creative directions were developed:

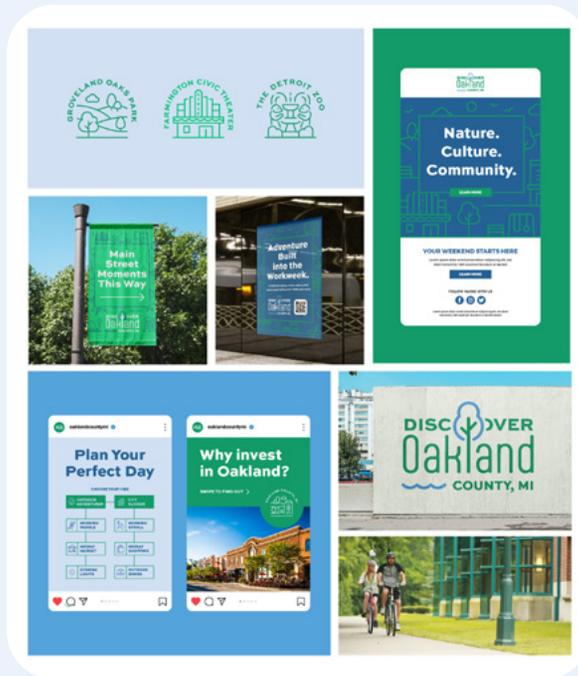
- **Go Oakland**, a bold, action-oriented concept
- **Discover Oakland County**, a more traditional approach, and
- **Your Oakland**, an emotive and personalized option.

Steering committee feedback helped to refine these concepts, over two rounds of review, into a single brand concept that balances nature with downtown vibrancy, expands colors and graphics to include nods to the County’s rich arts and culture, and offers a flexible campaign system that local communities can make their own.

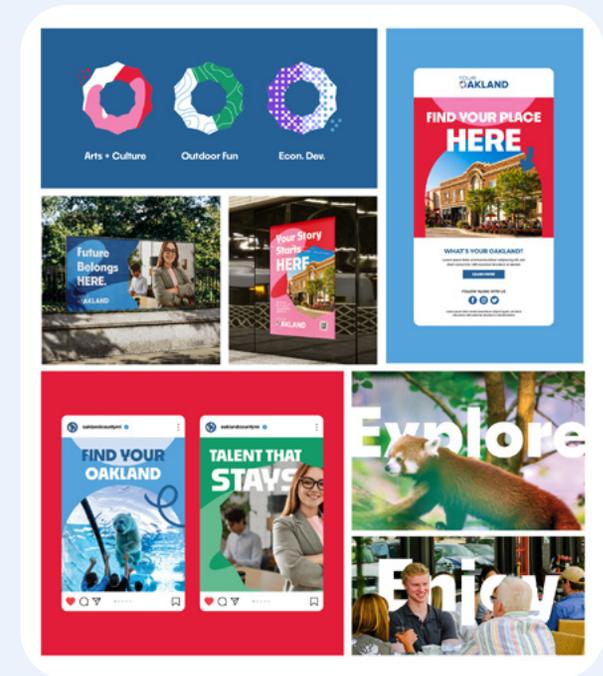
Option 1: Authentic & Adventurous



Option 2: Clean & Illustrative



Option 3: Emotive & Bold



Unifying these messages has led us to Oakland County's potential brand platform: **Go Oakland.**

A simple, energetic call to action that turns the County's offerings into a system of invitations: Go Outdoors. Go Downtown. Go Celebrate. Go Create. Go Learn. Go Taste. Go Play. For visitors, it's an invitation to explore Oakland County's mix of culture, nature, and events. For residents, it celebrates pride of place. For businesses and investors, it communicates momentum and opportunity. It flexes across leisure, homecoming, meetings, and talent narratives while still celebrating walkable, human-scaled hometowns.

Echoing the County's "destination for the curious" heritage, Go Oakland taps into actionable calls-to-action, is partner-ready, adaptable, and poised for varied placements.

Visual Concepts

While the following two concepts visually represent the single brand, Go Oakland, they take two divergent approaches.

Go Outdoors.
Go Downtown.
Go Celebrate.
Go Create.
Go Learn.
Go Taste.
Go Play.
Go Oakland.

Option 1

In Option 1, the visual concept leans into an authentic and adventurous personality. It leverages hand-drawn fonts, collage shapes (representing simplified silhouettes of Oakland County’s attractions and landmarks), and illustrated icons to create a welcoming look to reintroduce the County. The concept prioritizes photography and imagery of trailheads, taprooms, downtown festivals, and farmers markets.

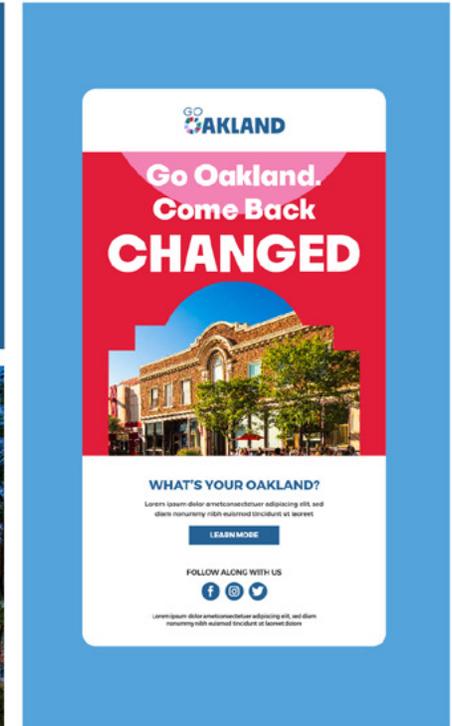


Option 2

In Option 2, the visual concept is bold, emotion-driven, and seeks to enable audiences to see the County adapt to their rhythm. It leverages bright colors, expressive typography, rich photography, and modern graphic elements. The shapes in the “O” icons are inspired by Oakland County’s landmarks (for example: the cardinal and butterfly in the Arts & Culture banner are taken from Oakland’s murals), as well as the shapes containing photography (such as the arched building shape from Downtown Farmington).



To view initial brand style guides, see the Appendix.



Goal #2:

To maintain and grow brand loyalty in the Metro Detroit area among residents and nearby visitors

Refine the brand concept and create/launch a final place brand

Although a selection of brand concepts were developed during this process, Oakland County will need to continue refining its place brand to ensure countywide buy-in from stakeholders and input from wider audiences to ensure the final brand accurately reflects the County’s unique identity and resonates with key audiences and decision makers.

This final brand process should be led by the County’s full-time, dedicated Destination Stewardship Coordinator and should include the following scope of work:

- Clarifying brand architecture in partnership with other County departments and tourism partners such as Visit Detroit
- Concept testing (through focus groups, A/B testing with target audiences previously identified)
- Touchpoint mapping to define how the brand will appear across platforms, signage, events, and partnerships
- Development of a rollout strategy to plan a phased introduction of the final brand with internal stakeholders, media, and target audiences

Level of Effort/ Resource	 Medium
Phasing	 Immediate

Establish a brand governance framework for the final place brand

Following the development of the final place brand, Oakland County will need to lead brand education and awareness with leadership of a Destination Stewardship Coordinator. In the long term, the final brand may be owned by a separate 501(c)(6) and/or 501(c)(3) non-profit destination management organization that may be funded and contracted by the County to execute destination stewardship initiatives and programs.

Key partner support and adoption of the brand will be critical to its success. To view an initial proposed brand governance framework, see Appendix - Proposed Place Brand Governance Framework.

Level of Effort/ Resource	 Medium
Phasing	 Immediate

Establish a content-sharing toolkit for consistent promotion across partner channels.

In order to empower the internal and external partners to amplify the County’s place brand while maintaining message consistency, the County should develop a simple content-sharing toolkit after the brand has been finalized for consistent promotion across partner channels. This includes:

- Developing a partner content portal with seasonal messaging, logos, and photography
- Offer monthly partner social media toolkits
- Share analytics on campaign performance to demonstrate value
- Host quarterly partner webinars or training sessions

<p>Level of Effort/Resource</p>	 <p>Medium</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	 <p>Immediate</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Sonoma County Tourism (CA)</p> <p>Sonoma County Tourism developed a campaign partner toolkit with ready-made assets (logos, photography), press releases, campaign messaging, FAQ, and webinar training so that local businesses and cities could align with campaign branding and promote through their channels. While limited to the “Wine Country for All of Us” initiative, the toolkit provides clarity on the why, what, and how of this initiative to ensure consistency across all partners.</p>



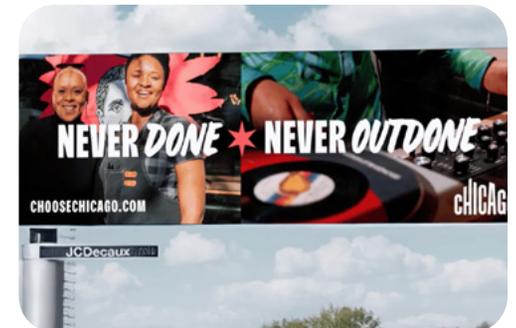
Sonoma County Tourism (CA)

Social: Use seasonal storytelling, local business spotlights, and user-generated content to encourage a sense of belonging and discovery.

Social media is often the first touchpoint for both residents and visitors when it comes to discovering “what’s happening” in a community. As such, the County’s channels should celebrate the unique mix of small businesses, events, and community experiences to encourage a sense of belonging and discovery.

- DMOs are increasingly embracing UGC and micro-influencers to provide authentic, community-driven narratives rather than polished content.
- Stakeholders consistently noted the need to promote local businesses, arts, and events more visibly, not just to attract visitors but to keep residents connected and supportive of their communities.

<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	 Low
<p>Phasing</p>	 Near Term
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Never Done. Never Outdone (Chicago, IL)</p> <p>Choose Chicago, the city’s tourism arm, launched “Never Done. Never Outdone,” a campaign aimed at inspiring visitors AND locals. The campaign began locally to build campaign engagement and civic pride, then expanded to other markets to help drive future leisure and business travel to Chicago. Showcasing the different neighborhoods, the campaign puts the city’s culture and heart at the forefront, using celebrities and local champions as guides.</p>



Choose Chicago (IL)

Paid: Reinforce brand awareness and relevance through targeted seasonal and event ads.

For audiences outside Metro Detroit, Oakland County is often not top-of-mind as a tourism destination. Paid media ensures the county is present in competitive Midwest markets where travelers are actively seeking short-haul getaways.

Utilizing existing content captured during the website creation and social media launch phases, these seasonal and marquee event ads should showcase the County’s most well-known experiences. This builds credibility by leaning on trusted events and attractions while introducing Oakland County to new audiences. Stakeholders repeatedly noted that visibility outside Metro Detroit is limited; paid media provides the consistency needed to address this gap.

Level of Effort/Resource	 Low
Phasing	 Near Term
Case Study	<p>Manistee County Tourism Authority (MI)</p> <p>Positioned between Grand Rapids and Traverse City, Manistee County leveraged geofencing to capture visitor behavior and tailor advertising. Using this data to inform paid advertising campaigns, both print and digital, allowed the Tourism Authority to tailor advertising to consumers based on their location and interests.</p>

E-mail: Keep subscribers/visitors engaged with ongoing, timely/relevant content to encourage return visits.

Industry trends highlight that segmented, mobile-first emails remain one of the highest ROI channels for DMOs. Email offers a scalable, cost-effective way to showcase seasonal events, new attractions, and curated itineraries, especially once created for other platforms (website, social media, paid ads).

By sending timely, seasonal, and interest-based content, Oakland County can extend the conversation beyond the first touchpoint and encourage trip planning, event attendance, or itinerary downloads.

Level of Effort/Resource	 Low
Phasing	 Near Term
Case Study	<p>Washington County Tourism (NY)</p> <p>Using list segmentation and location data, Washington County Tourism is able to tailor key messaging and event emails to local subscribers for better interaction and a growing sense of trust and expectation of quality, beneficial information. It has also helped to encourage ambassadorship and local pride among followers, leading to overall brand lift.</p>

Website: Build and maintain an online presence for the County’s place brand and help locals to rediscover Oakland County with trip ideas, seasonal highlights, and attractions/community assets.

The primary objective is to transform the VisitOaklandCounty.com site to utilize the County’s final place brand messaging, positioning, and creative, ensuring a centralized, authoritative voice for Oakland County tourism. Without consolidation, audiences risk confusion or diluted impact from multiple, competing public-facing sites.

The website should serve as the digital “front door” for Oakland County tourism, the go-to planning resource with trip ideas, seasonal highlights, marquee events, and curated itineraries.

There are two main options to consider:

Option 1: Utilize an open source or hybrid platform (EX: Wordpress, Craft CMS, etc. with event and directory functionality) which can be customized directly to the county’s tourism needs

Option 2: Utilize a DMO-specific platform such as Simpleview or Tempest to build out the tourism website with more robust functions such as customer relationship management (CRM), online booking, and monetization opportunities

<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> High</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Immediate</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Visit Detroit Utilizing Craft CMS, Visit Detroit receives greater flexibility over their brand/website design, content creation, and more while featuring common tourism website functionalities such as a trip planner, directory, events calendar, and more.</p> <p>Discover Saratoga (Saratoga County, NY) - Simpleview This site utilizes Simpleview’s suite of services (EX: CRM) to manage their membership, target groups/ meeting planners, populate UGC, and offer an integrated trip planner with directory listings</p>



Membership, Sponsorship, Events: Show up in high-visibility, high-loyalty locations that locals care about.

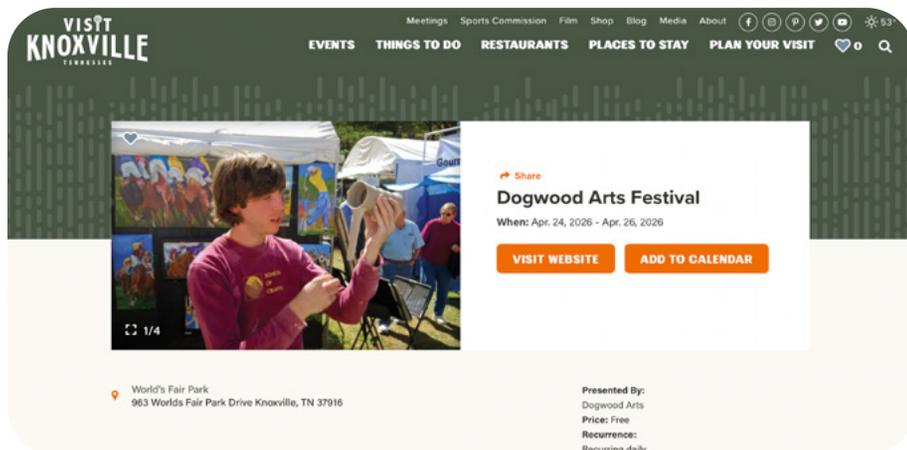
Oakland County should establish a consistent presence at signature events and beloved traditions that matter most to visitors and residents. These touchpoints demonstrate that Oakland County tourism is part of the community’s identity, not just a marketing message.

This means investing in sponsorships for events like the Woodward Dream Cruise and Rochester’s Big Bright Light Show, while also maintaining an on-the-ground presence through tabling, branded activations, and event-specific collateral.

- Multiple stakeholders stressed the importance of Oakland County being visible at community traditions and high-attendance events, not just in digital campaigns.
- Many DMOs are focusing on resident-facing activations at signature local events, recognizing that loyal residents are key tourism ambassadors.

Level of Effort/Resource	 Medium
Phasing	 Near Term
Case Study	<p>Visit Knoxville (TN)</p> <p>In its annual partnership with the Dogwood Arts Festival, Visit Knoxville stays top-of-mind among residents at this event, which has strong emotional ties to the community and its local identity. Sponsorships of and/or attendance at events like this reinforce the DMOs connection to the community, establishing positive relationships and brand recognition/awareness.</p>

Visit Knoxville (TN)



Goal #3:

To raise Oakland County's brand awareness among new regional Midwestern audiences

Social: Introduce Oakland County's experiences to new audiences, via aspirational and inspirational content.

Oakland County should begin its regional social media strategy by leveraging partnerships with trusted, established platforms such as Visit Detroit, Pure Michigan, and adjacent counties. By cross-posting content, running collaborative Instagram posts, and sharing through regional partner channels, Oakland County can amplify its message without the need for heavy upfront time investment.

- Cross-promotion is on the rise: destinations are increasingly using Instagram's collaborative post feature to share content jointly with partners, doubling reach and engagement with no additional ad spend.
- Video remains the most effective storytelling tool, making it ideal for showcasing multi-date events and seasonal highlights.

Once a strong foundation is in place, Oakland County can explore additional partnerships, including with influencers and niche, national partnerships for expanded reach and audience targeting.

Level of Effort/ Resource	 Medium
Phasing	 Immediate
Case Study	<p>Visit Cincy + Meet NKY (Cincinnati, OH and Northern KY)</p> <p>Targeting a drive market (Cleveland) and fly market (Atlanta) that reflected the region's midwestern-vibrancy-meets-southern-charm, this campaign aimed to showcase the unique local experiences, vibrant arts, accessibility, and affordability to travelers not already considering the region as a leisure destination. Influencer partner, steller, created a "social-first, creator-led campaign," reaching over 838K people with 12.2 million impressions and connecting them with an automated booking journey to guide viewers from engagement to planning and visiting.</p>

Visit Cincy (OH)



Paid: Drive awareness, then consideration, among potential regional visitors.

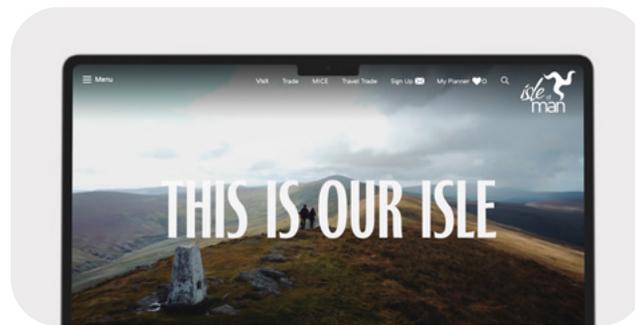
Oakland County should deploy a layered paid media strategy that first builds awareness in priority Midwest markets (Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis), then drives consideration and trip planning through targeted creative.

- Paid social and display ads to drive direct engagement around campaigns.
- Seasonal creatives for digital billboards to reinforce visibility in high-traffic corridors.
- Placements in regional travel publications and podcasts (e.g., AAA, Midwest Living).
- Print and digital buys in trusted lifestyle media (Hour Detroit) to strengthen both in-region and cross-regional recognition.
- Video ads in further-reach markets (potentially co-branded with Pure Michigan) to inspire aspirational travel.

Regional Midwest travelers represent Oakland County’s biggest growth opportunity. Paid media ensures Oakland County is visible in competitive markets and helps create a clear call-to-action.

- Midwest DMOs like Explore St. Louis and Traverse City Tourism use seasonal paid campaigns to highlight short-haul trip opportunities, often partnering with state campaigns to reduce cost and maximize reach.
- Print remains surprisingly influential in regional drive markets: AAA Living reaches millions of members in the Midwest, and Midwest Living remains one of the most trusted leisure planning magazines.

Level of Effort/Resource	 Medium
Phasing	 Near Term
Case Study	<p>Visit Isle of Man</p> <p>To boost awareness and consideration for travel to the Isle of Man, their tourism board turned to digital out-of-home (DOOH) campaigns to reach travelers in a contextually relevant state of mind. Tapping into multiple airport hubs in England, Ireland, and Scotland, each creative was personalized to a specific location. The campaign generated a boost in impressions, a 263% increase in click volume for the search term, “Isle of Man”, and improved overall reach.</p>



Visit Isle of Man (Scotland)

E-mail: Nurture out-of-county subscribers through a funnel process to create engaged subscribers, leading to visitors.

Email allows you to stay connected with people who’ve shown interest but haven’t yet visited. It offers direct access to nurture that interest. Using regional partnerships, gated content, and paid advertising, the County should focus on building subscriber lists with segmentation for key trip styles or audiences. For regional audiences, who may not visit often, repeated exposures via email keep Oakland County top of mind when planning getaways.

Starting in the near term, build basic funnels with a welcome message, visitors guide download, and evergreen content that can be utilized automatically without frequent management. As the Oakland County tourism initiative launches, leverage existing online destinations such as the Oakland County Blog through calls to action back to the county’s tourism-specific website/newsletter where users can subscribe.

In the mid term, expand into more personalization, including itinerary suggestions based on email and website interaction, seasonal pushes, and interest surveys.

Utilizing a robust CRM or email platform from the beginning will simplify the process as the program grows and expands.

**Level of Effort/
Resource**



Medium

Phasing



Near Term

Case Study

Travel Nevada (NV)

Aiming to re-engage subscribers and drive destination awareness, Travel Nevada overhauled their email marketing, including design and templates, establishing an editorial calendar, and implementing A/B testing to continually improve performance. With a refreshed look and approach, they were able to utilize nurture campaigns to convert leads into engaged followers and visitors, plus added email capture to their suite of nationwide pop-ups, advertising, and activations.



Website: Inspire awareness to become action via storytelling and planning tools, engaging content.

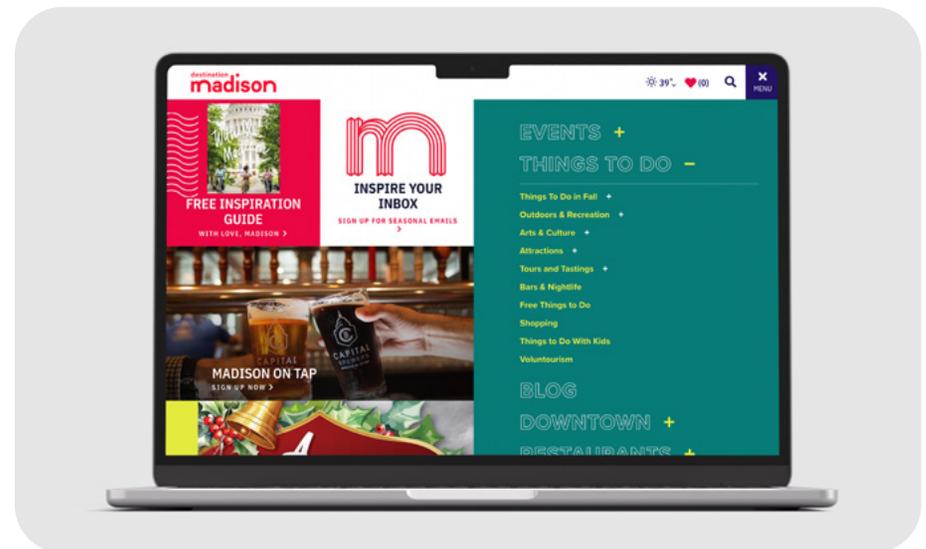
For regional audiences unfamiliar with Oakland County, the website is where initial curiosity turns into actual trip planning. With a baseline website established, Oakland County should expand its digital presence into a storytelling and trip-planning hub designed to convert regional awareness into action. This means creating audience-specific landing pages (driven by paid ads, partner referrals, and social campaigns) and building a consistent SEO-focused blog to weave in Oakland County’s unique assets. Other opportunities include: “guest blogs” on the existing Oakland County blog that are “publicly” written by the tourism organization or installing pixels on the Oakland County Blog (oaklandcountyblog.com) that tourism efforts than can then retarget through additional marketing.

- Stakeholders noted that while Oakland County has great assets, many aren’t on the radar regionally. As such, stakeholders supported more storytelling to “connect the dots” for potential visitors.
- Feedback also emphasized making Oakland County’s diverse experiences more discoverable online, suggesting blogs, itineraries, and landing pages as key tools.

Destination Madison (Dane County, WI)



Level of Effort/Resource	 Medium
Phasing	 Near Term
Case Study	<p>Destination Madison (Dane County, WI)</p> <p>Wide-ranging section featuring over 20 curated itineraries such as “Kid Friendly,” “Sunday Drive,” “Like a Local,” and “Food & Shopping” themes. This content aligns with distinct visitor interests and travel motivations, and acts as a call-to-action for their built-in Trip Builder tool, which when saved and shared adds to their email subscriber platform for ongoing engagement.</p>



Membership, Sponsorship, Events: Establish Oakland County as a valuable regional player for earned and paid partnerships.

Becoming a recognizable and respected player among Midwest destinations is key to growing Oakland County’s market share.

The County should invest in partnerships and presence at industry-facing events. This begins with hosting FAM tours (“Familiarization Tours”) and press trips to bring writers, influencers, and travel media directly into the county, and eventually participating in regional travel shows and securing speaking or panel spots at state and regional tourism summits.

Press trips and FAM tours, in particular, generate earned media value that can often exceed the impact of paid advertising, creating authentic stories in trusted outlets that resonate with travelers.

By showing up in these spaces, Oakland County not only markets itself to new audiences but also demonstrates credibility and commitment within the broader Midwest tourism ecosystem.

<p>Level of Effort/Resource</p>	 High
<p>Phasing</p>	  Near Term/Future
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Explore York (York County, PA) – Farm-to-Table Culinary Press Tour</p> <p>Explore York partnered with IFWTWA to host a Farm-to-Table Culinary Tour for regional and national journalists. The tour included immersive experiences such as stretching mozzarella while engaging directly with local chefs and producers. The press trip resulted in published features across multiple outlets, including Travel & Culture and Luxury Solo Travel, helping to position York County as a culinary destination and generating measurable earned media value.</p>



Products & Experiences

Quality and convenient visitor products and experiences are critical to creating memorable journeys and trips for tourists. This includes diversifying the mix of available hotels, restaurants, and attractions to increasing accessibility to these assets and maintaining quality tours, customer service, and experiences that help leave lasting positive impressions of Oakland County.



Goal #4:

To increase connectivity to and accessibility of great outdoor assets for new audiences

Unify outdoor recreation assets on a digital platform

The digital and mobile-friendly one-stop shop for all things outdoors in Oakland County and Metro Detroit would aggregate data across jurisdictions (municipal, county, state) and offer visitors searchable maps and user engagement tools to more easily access what's on offer/ types of experiences at each outdoor asset (e.g. itineraries) and how to best access them (e.g. passes, tickets).

<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Currently, information about parks is siloed by the management authority (i.e. County, local municipality, Metroparks, State, etc.). As such, the diverse park systems and recreation passes offered across the County can reportedly result in confusion amongst park users who are simply looking to access the outdoors. In fact, stakeholders at focus groups shared that a key challenge for Oakland County is the lack of effective communications about what's on offer in each nature-related asset or a centralized means to easily access public communications/visitor information across all outdoor recreation facilities.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> High</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Near Term</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>ExploreButteCounty.com (CA)</p> <p>The 'Outdoor' page of ExploreButteCounty features all outdoor recreation assets across the County regardless of owner/manager (local, county, state, private), and organized by the most popular types of activities - i.e. Hiking, Biking, Fishing, Boating. Each key asset is featured on its own dedicated page with an overview description, related media (videos, photos, social posts shared by other users), directions on how to get there, and in some cases, tips for responsible recreation at parks/recreation assets.</p>



Evaluate the feasibility of an on-demand parks service shuttle

An on-demand parks service shuttle should be evaluated for demand and financial feasibility during a peak season, fixed-route pilot service supported by a transportation provider. The study would evaluate limited-sized passenger vans from key pick-up points across the County (primarily at most-visited downtown locations Royal Oak, Ferndale, Birmingham, Rochester, Southfield, and hotel/shopping clusters) to top visited outdoor recreation attractions such as Kensington Metropark, Holly State Recreation Area, Bloomer Park, Pontiac Lake State Recreation Area, Bald Mountain State Recreation Area, etc.



<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>In an analysis of consumer sentiments (available through Google) across various outdoor recreation assets, the Destination Diagnostic found limited positive sentiments shared around convenience/access and public transportation at/to these assets.</p> <p>According to stakeholders, the Great Outdoors experiences in Oakland are reportedly disjointed across the County. Many had suggested that in order to get more people to go to and from outdoor recreation to agriculture assets (and downtowns), there is a need to increase alternative transportation access to and from these assets.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/Resource</p>	<p> Medium</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Future</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Lake Link Microtransit Service (Lake Tahoe, CA)</p> <p>The South Shore Transit Management Association (SSTMA) and its partners undertook several critical early actions to establish the Lake Link on-demand microtransit service, including piloting a dynamic fixed-route shuttle pilot in 2018 with Chariot, a local demand-responsive transit provider. The pilot program faced challenges with app reliability, marketing, and technology, however, it laid the ground work for SSTMA to raise funding with private partners to seed its next program, the Lake Link, a free and on-demand microtransit service for a defined service area along South Lake Tahoe (crossing State lines). The service, launched in Summer 2022 ahead of the Tahoe South Events Center opening, now features dedicated 5-12 passenger vans with ADA accessibility and space for bikes and skis operating year-round with varying operating hours based on seasonal demand. The service was also designed to connect seamlessly with other fixed-route transit services, enabling it to function as first- and last-mile feeders.</p>

Develop an outdoor recreation ambassador program

The ambassador program would train community-based volunteers (typically influential locals with large following/audiences or selected County staff) to serve as on-site guides, advocates, and educators for Oakland County’s outdoor recreation landmarks. These volunteers should be able to connect with diverse audiences (e.g. language capabilities, cultures/ethnicities, etc.) and their roles may include: a) Promoting responsible and safe behavior, b) Enhancing the visitor experience by sharing local knowledge through diverse cultures/languages, c) Reporting and supporting park management.



<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Despite reported high quality of outdoor recreation offerings in the County, the beautiful, great outdoors of Oakland remain only for those 'in the know'. While 79% Metro Detroiters surveyed rated Oakland County’s 'Nature & Parks/Trails' as 'very good'/'excellent', only 43% of out-of-towners were aware of the quality of these offerings.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> Medium</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Near Term</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Vámonos Outside (Bend, OR)</p> <p>Vámonos Outside is a nature-focused Latine/BIPOC organization established to connect local communities to the outdoors in Central Oregon. Programs spearheaded by the group includes youth and family programming that leads snowshoeing, sledding, hiking and park outings for Latino youth and families.</p> <p>Alabama State Parks Ambassador Program</p> <p>The voluntary program selects 75 participants to engage with their favorite Alabama State Parks and submit/share social media content (photos, videos) monthly on behalf of their assigned parks. Content submissions may include showcasing activities such as hiking trails, lodge views, camping, and biking, and are used across Alabama State Parks’ marketing and communication channels.</p>

Goal #5:

To nurture popular hometown events and seed new marquee events

Establish a countywide Festivals & Events fund

The fund would focus on providing financial assistance and marketing support to festivals and events that have the potential to generate off-season room nights and growing and diversifying visitor experiences across the county. Priority should also be given to festivals and events that align closely to the experience pillars of the destination - events that grow curiosity (science, international cultures, art, music), connect visitors to the great outdoors, and activate downtowns and unique corridors. Ultimately, the fund should assist in nurturing and seeding visitor-generating activities and events which, by their own merit, can grow and succeed independently following participation in the program.

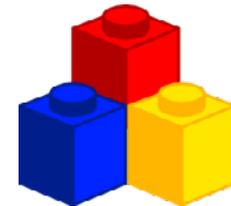
<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>According to the County’s 2025 visitor survey, beyond dining/shopping and the great outdoors, Oakland County is a stand-out destination for ‘events and festivals’. The survey revealed that 36% of out-of-towners and 58% of Metro Detroiters rated the events and festivals in the County as being very good/excellent. This is likely due to the County’s track record of hosting homegrown Michigan events year-round, and should be leveraged moving forward to celebrate more diverse cultures and invite more international communities to share in the cultural offerings.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> High</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Near Term</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Pittsburgh Festivals & Cultural Events Fund Program (PA)</p> <p>VisitPittsburgh supports the growth and expansion of leisure events through a micro grant program that offers funding of up to \$5,000 to event organizers of emerging Pittsburgh events. These funds are intended only to market and grow awareness of the event, grow the scope of the event, or increase the share of out-of-town visitors to the event - for example, through partnerships with hotels.</p> <p>VisitPittsburgh supports events for a maximum of three years, with sponsorship dollars decreasing by 50% with each subsequent year with the goal that by its final year of funding, sufficient support has been provided to allow event organizers to ‘graduate’ and seed funding from alternative sources. In addition to cash funds, VisitPittsburgh matches support through in-kind advertising dollars.</p>

Set up a multi-hometown marquee event/festival incubator program

The incubator would be designed as a sprint-style program that would offer a limited series of knowledge and training sessions to equip event organizers/planners, facility/venue managers, community-based organizations, and local businesses with essential tools and information to create and/or expand on a marquee event/festival that spans multiple locations across the County (at least two municipalities). Marquee events and festivals must have the ability to attract more than 50,000 annual participants (may be held over multiple days), and should align closely with the following themes: technology and lifestyle (wellness/sports, culinary, creative, global culture).

At the conclusion of the incubator sessions, one-on-one mentoring and support would be provided and tailored to the specific needs of each participant, and may include specific support with event management and operational needs, marketing, fundraising/ sponsorships, etc.

<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Current visitor perceptions of distance between clusters of attractions and the physical disconnect between different communities/unique corridors of the County pose critical risks to the County’s visitor economy. These perceptions will need to be overcome by strategically linking events across several locations to motivate visitors to collect stops and experiences on dedicated marquee event days of the year.</p> <p>To date, this strategy has proven viable with Woodward Dream Cruise, where multiple communities from Detroit to Pontiac participate to organize various activities at a mix of locations, resulting in widespread movement of visitors along the Woodward Avenue corridor.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> High</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Future</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Bellevue Festival & Events Incubator Program (WA)</p> <p>The newly established program is managed in partnership between the Bellevue Tourism Promotion Area, Bellevue’s Lodging & Hospitality Industry, and the City of Bellevue. The program offers expert guidance and resources to ensure long-term success and sustainability of events but also financial support in the range of \$7,500-\$50,000. The program is primarily focused on supporting events that drive tourism during need months (Jan-Apr, Nov-Dec) and has seeded the growth of several successful Bellevue events including the 2-day Northwest Chocolate Festival, the longest-running Lego fan exhibition in the world BrickCon, and bluegrass and acoustic music festival Wintergrass.</p>



Picklesburgh festival (Pittsburgh PA)

Northwest Chocolate Festival (Bellevue WA)

Brickcon Bellevue (Bellevue WA)

Goal #6:

To create world-class cultural and sporting institutions and experiences

Create a Cultural & Sporting Tourism Development program

This program would ensure continued preparedness and readiness of the County’s cultural and sporting institutions and facilities to welcome and serve out-of-towners. It would offer grants to existing non-profit organizations managing cultural and sporting tourism assets and experiences to plan and develop new/enhanced on-site visitor experiences (including multilingual tours, seasonal tournaments/exhibition/programs/festivals/events, activations to animate common spaces, interactive experiences/exhibitions), multilingual signage, other type of group-ready experiences, and staff hospitality training.



Why is this important?

Through engagement with industry stakeholders, the Destination Diagnostic uncovered ongoing challenges with consumer demand and spending that are impacting local institutions. Cultural institutions in the County, in particular, shared collectively that overall visitation to museums has declined in recent years and that attendance rates have not returned to 2019 levels (pre-COVID). Many have suggested that this is indicative of the industry nationally and will need to be mitigated as public funding for arts and culture is unlikely to grow in the coming years.

Stakeholders also shared success in driving visitor traffic through the doors of cultural institutions through pop-up events and once-in-a-lifetime experiences such as after-dark events. As such, creating resources for such attractions to diversify and grow their on-site visitor experiences will be critical to ensuring their sustainability as tourism assets.

Level of Effort/Resource

 **High**

Phasing

 **Near Term**

Case Study

New Jersey Historic Trust’s Heritage Tourism Grants

The grant program provides a 3:1 funding match of up to \$75,000 to municipalities or non-profit organizations seeking to develop interpretive signage, trainings, workshops, and other visitor-ready experiences to be hosted at historic sites.

The goal of the grant program is to enhance visitor experiences at historical sites and ensure visitor-readiness of key assets in preparation for the semiquincentennial anniversary of the Revolutionary War.

UPLIFT NC Tourism Incubator & Accelerator

UPLIFT is a 9-session program that aims to support rural NC business, site, and attraction managers to strengthen their tourism operational skills. Through the sessions, participants are equipped with tourism-specific knowledge and skills in subjects such as management, marketing, funding, and partnership building among others. In addition to the 9-session speaker and group sessions, participants receive supplementary 1-on-1 support and mentorship to address participants’ specific needs.

Curate an Oakland Architectural History trail/event

The architectural trail for Oakland County would be a new county-wide, or regional, product that celebrates the diverse architecture and urban design of Oakland County and Metro Detroit. Designed as an annual weekend trail and/or event, the County could help launch an “Open House Metro Detroit” event that would offer visitors access to hundreds of sites to visit, tour, experience talks/performances, and other special events (similar Open House New York). The product should be designed through partnerships with regional architectural and planning communities (e.g. local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, design schools, historic preservation groups).



<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Metro Detroit is rich in historic architecture and iconic landmarks, including in Oakland County. More than just sites and sights, these buildings and neighborhoods often weave stories of the region’s rich Motor City history. To complement existing attractions such as Meadow Brook Hall and the County’s countless Historic Districts, a trail product centered on historic architecture can be designed to help encourage visitors (particularly ones with a flair for history or design) to explore communities across the County and change their perception of distance within the County.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> Medium</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Immediate</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Open House New York (NY)</p> <p>Founded in 2001, Open House New York (OHNY) joined an existing international network of non-profit organizations (Open House Worldwide) advocating for public access to architecturally significant sites (private buildings, infrastructure, design studios). The weekend-long event was seeded by partnerships with architectural and planning communities (AIA New York, NYC-based architecture/ design schools, preservation groups) and primarily funded by philanthropic funding and sponsorships from architecture firms and cultural foundations. OHNY piloted its first year with volunteers from the local architectural community and with participating locations across all boroughs to motivate visitors to explore neighborhoods beyond Manhattan. OHNY’s network of partners has continued to grow as the OHNY platform has grown, offering partners and sponsors wide PR and marketing opportunities.</p> <p>Destination Madison’s Discover Frank Lloyd Wright (WI)</p> <p>In April 2025, Destination Madison unveiled the “Wright in Madison” free, digital architectural trail spotlighting Frank Lloyd Wright’s legacy in the city. The trail was developed in close collaboration with key institutional partners, including the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and Taliesin Preservation. Designed as a self-guided trail, visitors are able to sign up for free access to the digital trail (hosted on the Bandwango platform, mobile-friendly), check-in at locations on the trail, and earn points toward prizes such as Frank Lloyd Wright-themed merchandise.</p>

Expand the Detroit Culture Pass

The Detroit Culture Pass is a pilot membership program that increases universal access to arts and culture, particularly for families that typically face financial barriers to participate in the arts. The program is primarily funded by the Gilbert Family Foundation and is partnered with Detroit Housing Network, Connect Detroit, and five City of Detroit arts and cultural organizations: Charles Wright Museum of African American History, The Detroit Historical Society, The Detroit Institute of Arts, The Detroit Opera, and The Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Program participants get unlimited access to participating cultural institutions and receive transportation support to attend free special events and performances.

<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>The Metro Detroit visitor is a critical audience for Oakland County as loyal regional visitors & destination ambassadors. This visitor has likely been to Oakland County in the past, is somewhat familiar with its offerings, and is more likely to recommend Oakland County to friends and family. As such, it is important that the County finds ways to lower financial barriers for Detroit families to easily access arts and culture experiences in the County and grow their loyalty as consumers and visitors.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/Resource</p>	<p> Low</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Immediate</p>

As such, there is immense potential and need to build on the success of the program and expand the program to include other arts and culture organizations and institutions beyond the City, for example Cranbrook Institute of Arts, Meadow Brook Hall, and the Zekelman Holocaust Memorial Center.



Build on Main Street Oakland County’s digital marketing webinars and resources

Main Street Oakland County has developed a robust and comprehensive set of resources and training opportunities for its Main Street partners, including resources focused on digital marketing. To build on this training series, the County should expand the program to include branding and marketing services and training specific to cultural institutions/non-profit organizations and their unique audiences.



<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Industry stakeholders collectively shared that they have seen the power in social media, organic sharing, word-of-mouth referrals. However, not all of the County’s cultural institutions and assets have been able to leverage this channel. As such, there is a clear need to establish resources that will help ensure that individual organizations’ brand and marketing reaches young talent and diverse audiences. In particular, these resources and 1-on-1 support will be needed to address shortcomings with under-resourced cultural organizations/institutions, and newly-formed and emerging assets like the Pontiac Transportation Museum.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> Low</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Immediate</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Western Museums Association’s Digital Empowerment Project</p> <p>The Digital Empowerment project is a pilot program of the Western Museums Association, a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to serving museums, museum professionals, and related institutions. The program produced a series of ten digital media and technology modules with hands-on, step-by-step training sessions by museum technologists and featuring case studies from peer museum practitioners. Following the first year of the project, the resources and training materials were made publicly available for non-members to access.</p>

Place & Infrastructure

While a destination's utilities, roads, transit systems, and public realm aren't typically visitor magnets, they strongly influence how enjoyable, comfortable, safe, and memorable a visit can be.

These 'invisible' traits of a destination are immediately noticeable when they fail - for example, when there is no reliable internet, sewage systems to support commercial density, and smooth, safe roads.

As such, it is important that Oakland County continues to invest in enhancing infrastructure to support commercial development in its 'Emerging' cities/towns and multi-modal exploration across the County, including pedestrian enhancements and coordination with transit providers and Trail Towns.



Goal #7:

To build on small-town charm and visitor readiness

Form a “Utility Readiness Team” to build on emerging town potential

A utility-readiness team is a multi-disciplinary expert team of consultants formed by the County that would support ‘Emerging’ communities in their planning, engineering, and design needs to upgrade/replace infrastructure and utility impacting commercial density and community growth. The competitive grant and technical assistance program would be established by the County to support and match funding/resources from local governments. Teams may develop feasibility studies, conduct asset management audits (e.g., aging water/sewer systems, resilience assessments), and assist with compliance for state or federal mandates.

Why is this important?

Oakland County’s downtowns are major visitor assets as hubs of shopping, dining, lodging, entertainment, and most importantly, family-friendly events. However, not all of its downtowns are ready to support and welcome visitor volumes.

In a Downtown Assessment conducted as part of the Destination Diagnostic, the consultant team identified the following ‘Emerging’ downtowns as needing critical support to improve infrastructure and utility to be able to support increased density of businesses/commercial offerings, including lodging (whether short term rental or hotels/motels): Berkley, Beverly Hills, Groveland, Clawson, Hazel Park, Lathrup Village, Leonard, Ortonville, and South Lyon.

Level of Effort/Resource

 **Medium**

Phasing

 **Future**



Support boutique lodging development in 'High Potential' communities

Boutique lodging developments are high-risk opportunities and require both creative vision and development expertise. As such, the development program will match pre-qualified vendors (including hotel feasibility, brand and hospitality, development financing, and architecture consultants) with interested property owners/developers to take potential sites (suggested: up to 3) through concepting, feasibility, surveying, and development plans. The program would focus on sites/properties in 'High Potential' communities as outlined in the Destination Diagnostic, including Clarkston, Franklin, Highland, Holly, Lyon, Madison Heights, Oxford, Pontiac, and Oak Park (prioritizing historic and/or walkable cores). The goal of the program is two-fold: to de-risk boutique lodging development deals by ensuring developments are market-informed, and to create future forward lodging products that are differentiated from other inventory while being trend-aligned.

Opportunity Appalachia project Hotel Charles (Shelby NC)



<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>While hotel development will remain challenging in the market, Oakland County has the opportunity to fill gaps in midscale inventory with boutique lodging that aligns more closely with preferences of the traveler seeking an urban city escape or with corporate groups seeking 'retreat-like' atmospheres.</p> <p>At this time, development pipeline in the market is significant with more than 1,800 rooms under construction across Metro Detroit. However, a majority of the rooms are classified as luxury and upscale inventory, with clustering of rooms being built in the Auburn Hills/Madison Heights submarket.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> High</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Near Term</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Opportunity Appalachia (OH,KY)</p> <p>Opportunity Appalachia is a targeted technical assistance program to support downtown and rural real estate development projects. The program is an excellent regional partnership offering support to communities across two States, Ohio and Kentucky. Selected applicants receive between \$30,000-\$60,000 to be used toward technical assistance including: Development of investment prospectus, preparation of pro forma financial projections, structuring of project financing, market research, demand assessment, architectural and engineering, operations planning, and investor outreach.</p>

Establish a Creative Placemaking Program

The Creative Placemaking program would provide grant funding and technical support to place-based, community organizations to implement public realm enhancements that integrate arts & culture. The program would focus on ‘High Potential’ communities as outlined in the Destination Diagnostic, including Clarkston, Franklin, Highland, Holly, Lyon, Madison Heights, Oxford, Pontiac, and Oak Park. Public realm enhancements may include permanent infrastructure such as plazas, benches, lighting, and parklets or temporary activations/ installations beyond murals (e.g. interactive sculptures, play streets/zones, projection art, modular/mobile event structures). Projects funded by the program should also serve to increase access to neighboring/adjacent green and blue open spaces, create performance/art spaces for outdoor entertainment, and drive night-time activity.

<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>As part of the Downtown Assessment conducted, the team identified burgeoning efforts and investments by place-based management entities such as Main Street organizations and local municipalities in creative placemaking to create a sense of identity on their unique corridors. These efforts, however, are not even across the County resulting in strong place brands in some communities than others.</p> <p>As such, it is vital that the County support ‘High Potential’ and ‘Emerging’ communities in their creative placemaking efforts to not only keep up with efforts demonstrated in other parts of the County but to further increase visibility of their unique corridors to wider audiences and invite foot traffic.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> Low</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Immediate</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Cook County Arts Initiative (IL)</p> <p>The Initiative, a collaboration between the County, Arts Alliance Illinois, and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), was launched in 2025 to boost the arts and culture sector in the suburbs of Chicago. Grants of between \$50,000-\$250,000 will be distributed to nonprofit organizations leading collaborative creative placemaking projects. In addition to financial support, LISC will provide technical assistance to grantees as they work to implement their projects.</p>



Goal #8:

To connect visitor experience clusters through alternative mobility options

Expand on event-based transit opportunities

To date, transit providers in the County have operated several event-specific shuttle services in partnership with event organizers and municipalities. Given the proven success of these special event shuttles during Woodward Dream Cruise (week-long service), Ferndale Pride, Rochester Big Bright Light Show, and Arts, Beats & Eats, the County should work closely with transit providers to design, coordinate, and run other fixed route services on major holidays/weekends to connect clusters of visitor attractions. This may include a 'Cool Corridors' service route operated during a multi-downtown marquee event day or other thematic service routes ('Go Outdoors') connecting communities with outdoor recreation points-of-interest during peak summer weekends.

Why is this important?

Amongst key issues shared by stakeholders around countywide infrastructure challenges, the most frequently cited was that of public transit access and overall mobility in Oakland County - for residents, employees, as well as visitors.

In particular, the large size/geographic spread of the County and the limited use of the highway systems for transit present significant challenges with operating public transit systems efficiently. As such, it is important that the destination consider alternative mobility options, particularly to connect across visitor activity clusters.

Level of Effort/Resource

 **Medium**

Phasing

 **Near Term**



Continue to support trail planning, connectivity, and wayfinding development

Oakland County has a celebrated long-standing, strategic plan to connect local trails into a coherent regional network. In addition to the development of the County Trail Master Plan, Oakland County Planning currently assists local communities and trail groups with completing grant applications, public input workshops and surveys, trail concept design and mapping. In addition, Oakland County provides training to trail managers via partnerships with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to provide American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Bike Facility Design Training and Walkability Reviews to ensure quality trails across the County. This is a critical program and initiative of the County's that should continue to be funded to support further trail development and enhancements.

To complement these efforts, the County should also, through the same Planning program, offer guidance, training, and resources for municipalities to develop cohesive, multilingual, and unified wayfinding and signage across various trails. This may include designing a branded wayfinding system, publishing a countywide trail signage design guidelines/spec toolkit, services to translate signage across languages, use standardized icons when possible, and sponsorships for implementation of co-branded signage.

<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>The Destination Diagnostic identified that the County's Great Outdoors experiences are currently disjointed - not simply due to gaps in the trail network but also a lack of a unified wayfinding language/system across trails. In particular, this impacts new users who are unsure of where a trail leads and visitors who may be less familiar with the area.</p> <p>In order to remove psychological barriers and encourage trail use to get more people to go to and from outdoor recreation, agriculture assets, and other towns and destinations, stakeholders acknowledged an untapped opportunity in the use of the County's extensive trail networks (Rail to Trail networks). In particular, stakeholders also shared a need for accessible signage that leverage universally understood icons and concise keywords to minimize language barriers across trails and therefore support diversification of users of the County's trail network.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> Medium</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Future</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>The Intertwine Alliance (Greater Portland, OR)</p> <p>The Intertwine Alliance, a regional coalition in the Portland-Vancouver region, worked in partnership with the Portland-Vancouver regional government (Metro) and local municipalities, to convene a working group of around 20 representatives to commission a local design firm to develop the Intertwine Regional Trails Signage Guidelines.</p> <p>The regional trail signage guidelines were intended to address a key issue of inconsistent signage across jurisdictions that appeared confusing to users given varying styles, tone/language, and information. As such, the Intertwine Regional Trails Signage Guidelines established: Brand identity elements (layout, color palette, fonts, symbols, and logo treatment), Hierarchy of information and messages (Directional and distance), Map styles, and recommendations for local brand integration.</p>

Business & Workforce

As previously noted in the Destination Diagnostic summary, the visitor economy accrues benefits beyond visitor-related industries and their suppliers.

According to Destinations International’s landmark study, “Destination Promotion: An Engine of Economic Development”, the dividends of destination marketing and visitor economies extend to quality of life and overall wellbeing and sense of belonging for communities.

As such, the following recommended strategies aim to not only sustain career pathways within the tourism and hospitality industry regionally, but also grow recognition of Oakland County as a choice destination for business in Metro Detroit through increased business-related visits/travel.



Goal #9:

To strengthen hometown identities and better align the County’s hometown brands and products with the lifestyles of the talent pool

Design and conduct business leadership/investor FAM tours

FAM tours (“Familiarization Tours”) are organized visits designed to enable business leaders/decisionmakers to familiarize themselves with a destination to help inform business relocation/expansion plans. While past FAM tours led by business attraction entities and/or Chambers of Commerce may have focused on geographically-specific commercial sites and meetings/conventions facilities for business operations/ use, it is important that Oakland County revisits this strategy to design county-wide FAM tours that also showcase key quality of life assets such as the destination’s great outdoors attractions, entertainment venues, marquee community events, residential neighborhoods and education/cultural institutions. In addition, these FAM tours should also be designed in collaboration with, or in partnership with, key business leaders/companies that are already located in the County to leverage their lived experience/ perspective on the County.

Why is this important?

Oakland County has always welcomed the world’s leading innovators. The County and region are home to a robust cluster of headquarters, including the Big Three automakers and Tier 1 suppliers, making it particularly attractive to companies in the automotive and advanced manufacturing sectors. This advantage can be further leveraged through targeted tours and storytelling.

In fact, stakeholders across a variety of sectors shared in early focus groups that beyond its unparalleled access to major highways and international transport hubs that allow businesses to easily reach markets like Ann Arbor, Lansing, Detroit, Flint, Canada, Oakland County remains a choice location for some of its largest international employers (largely European and Asian) due to quality of life traits such as access to quality education, diverse housing products, and access to parks/open spaces.

Level of Effort/ Resource

 **Low**

Phasing

 **Near Term**



Goal #10:

To grow and diversify group travel in lifestyle and technology sectors

Design Oakland County's meetings venue platform

A meetings venue platform is a comprehensive digital resource for event/meeting planners to carefully evaluate potential locations for their meetings/group travel/events. The comprehensive inventory, when well designed, would also feature a central booking platform.



<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>While Visit Detroit currently offers meeting planners access to an inventory of various venues/facilities across the region, the inventory largely features traditional, 'in-the-box' venues. These venues do not sufficiently reflect the breadth of opportunities outside of Detroit that may play host to various social or special interest groups. There is also a clear opportunity for the region to further inspire meeting planners to think 'outside the box' (whether through client testimonials or stories of past unique event formats) and to create tailored venues for a variety of key industry sectors who may be looking for specialized venues outside the hotel ballroom, convention center or board room.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> Low</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Immediate</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Meetings in Madison (Destination Madison) (WI)</p> <p>Despite its attractive location for meetings and events with direct flight connections to major hubs like Dallas and D.C., Madison, WI competes frequently with neighboring destinations such as St. Paul, MN and Green Bay, WI, for event business.</p> <p>In order to differentiate itself from regional competitors, Destination Madison took a bold approach to curate collections of unique venues that are non-traditional, or 'beyond the ballroom', to encourage meeting planners to utilize the destinations' variety of venues. The digitally-curated collections feature venues with varying 'vibes': Historical & Architectural, Activity Based, Campus Connections, LGBTQ+ Friendly, and Beautiful Barns.</p> <p>For each venue in the digital inventory/collection, a comprehensive and detailed spec list and gallery of images is included to ensure that meeting planners have all the necessary information and inspiration to support decision-making.</p>

Develop an Oakland County targeted industry events incentive and services package

An events incentive and services package is a typical sales tool utilized by Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to attract and support large-scale events such as conferences, tournaments, festivals, and conventions to their destinations. These packages, which may include a mix of regulatory/permitting support, event planning support, perks and discounts for both event organizers and their attendees, and are primarily intended to reduce financial risk for event organizers and thereby increase their likelihood to choose the destination as their choice location for events. In Oakland County, it is important that any incentives and services developed be targeted to fill calendars of activities during shoulder seasons/ less competitive booking windows (Winter/Spring - Jan-April).



<p>Why is this important?</p>	<p>Visit Detroit, as the regional DMO currently offers a comprehensive suite of services and incentives to event organizers/planners. However, it must be noted that many of its perks are focused on Detroit-based businesses and intended to support attraction of events to major venues and facilities located in Detroit.</p> <p>As such, it is important for the County to develop a complementary suite of supporting services and incentives to enable Visit Detroit’s sales teams to better pitch Oakland County venues to event organizers and planners.</p> <p>In particular, industry stakeholders have shared the ambition to host a mix of both large, global format events in Oakland County, as well as smaller to mid-sized format, out-of-the-box meetings and events. More traditional industry events that were of interest amongst industry stakeholders centered around business and economic development, and auto/auto-tech/robotics. However, respondents also shared enthusiasm for more lifestyle-focused festivals/ events centering around food, hospitality, and outdoor recreation, which may better align with the attractions and assets in the County.</p>
<p>Level of Effort/ Resource</p>	<p> Medium</p>
<p>Phasing</p>	<p> Future</p>
<p>Case Study</p>	<p>Destination Ann Arbor (MI)</p> <p>Destination Ann Arbor leads its meeting sales pitch with the campaign “Make Our Towns Your Meetings Ground”, acknowledging the breadth of available venues across its regional destination beyond Ann Arbor. In addition, the destination plays heavily into its ability to host social events such as weddings by creating a suite of resources dedicated to supporting wedding planners looking for venues for weddings, engagement parties, and group dining opportunities. These include features for great outdoor assets such as farms, barns, quads, chalets and inns - i.e. venues beyond the convention centers and the ballrooms.</p>

Create a series of annual tourism ambassador initiatives

Tourism ambassador initiatives, including industry events and training programs, are educational and empowerment opportunities for the local hospitality workforce. They are intended to ensure that industry staff are not only knowledgeable about Oakland County as a destination but equipped to act as problem solvers (should challenges in the visitor experience arise) and enthusiastic promoters of the destination.

The Oakland Tourism Ambassador program should serve to build on existing industry events and initiatives spearheaded by Visit Detroit to create industry resources that shed light on opportunities specific to the County, including a centralized repository of all available and publicly accessible regional workforce training opportunities relevant to tourism and hospitality staff.



Why is this important?

Visit Detroit currently executes educational seminars for its partners/members and industry events such as its annual Hometown Tourist Day, an exhibitor fair where industry stakeholders can network with representatives from metro Detroit restaurants, attractions and hotels, and learn more about product offerings across the region on a 1-2 day gathering. However, there are a number of limitations with these types of initiatives. Chief among them, exclusivity in access to resources to members. In addition, exhibitor fairs remain passive modes of information-sharing and can seem transactional for attendees. Fairs also require significant time and resource investment for smaller vendors/operators and typically do not offer the industry workforce firsthand experience of products across the destination, limiting their ability to speak authentically and confidently to visitors about products on offer.

It is critical for the County therefore to use immersive ways to engage regional industry staff so that they can better serve as brand ambassadors for the County and its offerings and ensure that our assets don't just serve those 'in the know'.

Level of Effort/Resource



Low

Phasing



Immediate

Case Study

Memphis Rocks and Insider Tours (TN)

Welcome to Memphis, a non-profit subsidiary of Memphis Tourism, offers a number of hospitality training programs for city and Shelby County staff in the tourism industry. The organization works directly with employers, supervisors, and guest services teams to deliver hospitality service training through two key programs: Memphis Rocks and Insider Tours.

While Memphis Rocks is focused on soft skill training to improve cultural sensitivity and respect in the workplace, telephone etiquette, workplace accountability, and time management, Insider Tours is focused on creating an immersive training opportunity for staff in the tourism industry to familiarize themselves with tourism product/asset offerings in the destination. The monthly 90-minute program, in partnership with local tour providers, Backbeat Tours, takes industry staff on neighborhood tours to learn about key points of interest, amenities, and attractions.

Phased Action Plan



4

Phased Action Plan

The following chart outlines sequential steps that should be taken by Oakland County and its partners to achieve full implementation of the strategic plan successfully. Strategies are phased to build on the efforts of preceding years and will allow for trust-building amongst stakeholders, partners, and funders over time, to ensure consistent brand implementation, and to prioritize the testing/piloting of larger, more impactful programs.

Year 1 Priorities

Following the appointment of a Destination Stewardship Coordinator for Oakland County, the individual's key priorities in Year 1 should be focused on **a) continuing to engage with industry stakeholders and building on the relationships** that have been fostered through the strategic planning process, **b) facilitating further development of Oakland's place brand** for the destination (based on existing brand concept and positioning), **c) building the capacity of partners** with initial County funding, and **d) leading fundraising and the design of programs** for execution in Years 2-3.

Category

DSG - Destination Stewardship & Governance

BM - Brand & Marketing

PE - Products & Experiences

PI - Place & Infrastructure

BW - Business & Workforce



Goals



DSG

Create a sustainable framework for destination stewardship in Oakland County



BM

Maintain and grow brand loyalty in the Metro Detroit area among residents and nearby visitors



BM

Raise Oakland County's brand awareness among new regional Midwestern audiences



PE

Increase connectivity to and accessibility of great outdoor assets for new audiences



PE

Nurture popular hometown events and seed new marquee events



PE

Create world-class cultural and sporting institutions and experiences



PI

Build on small-town charm and visitor readiness



PI

Connect visitor experience clusters through alternative mobility options



BW

Strengthen hometown identities and better align the County's hometown brands and products with the lifestyles of the talent pool



BW

Grow and diversify group travel in lifestyle and technology sectors

Suggested Start Year

Strategy	Category	Goal	Effort Level	01	02	03	04	05	06
Hire a destination stewardship coordinator	DSG	01	⚠ Medium	✓					
Refine the brand concept and create/launch a final place brand	BM	02	⚠ Medium	✓					
Establish a brand governance framework for the final place brand	BM	02	⚠ Medium	✓					
Establish a content-sharing toolkit	BM	02	⚠ Medium	✓					
Website: Build and maintain an online presence for the final place brand	BM	02	⚠ High	✓					
Social: Introduce Oakland County’s experiences to new audiences, via aspirational and inspirational content	BM	03	⚠ Medium	✓					
Build on Main Street Oakland County’s digital marketing webinars and resources	PE	06	⚠ Low	✓					
Establish a Creative Placemaking Program	PI	07	⚠ Low	✓					
Design Oakland County’s meetings venue platform	BW	10	⚠ Low	✓					
Create a series of annual tourism ambassador initiatives	BW	10	⚠ Low	✓					
E-mail: Keep subscribers/visitors engaged with ongoing, timely/relevant content	BM	02	⚠ Low		✓				
Membership, Sponsorship, Events: Show up in high-visibility, high-loyalty locations that locals care about.	BM	02	⚠ Medium		✓				
Paid: Drive awareness among potential regional visitors	BM	03	⚠ Medium		✓				
E-mail: Nurture out-of-county subscribers through a funnel process	BM	03	⚠ Medium		✓				
Expand on event-based transit opportunities	PI	08	⚠ Medium		✓				
Expand the Detroit Culture Pass	PE	06	⚠ Low		✓				

Curate an Oakland Architectural History trail/event	PE	06	⚠ Medium		✓				
Develop an outdoor recreation ambassador program	PE	04	⚠ Medium		✓				
Design and conduct business leadership/investor FAM tours	BW	09	⚠ Low		✓				
Unify outdoor recreation assets on a digital platform	PE	04	⚠ High			✓			
Social: Use seasonal storytelling, local business spotlights, and user-generated content	BM	02	⚠ Low			✓			
Paid: Reinforce brand awareness and relevance through targeted seasonal and event ads.	BM	02	⚠ Low			✓			
Website: Inspire awareness to become action via storytelling and planning tools	BM	03	⚠ Medium			✓			
Membership, Sponsorship, Events: Establish Oakland County as a valuable regional player for earned and paid partnerships	BM	03	⚠ High			✓			
Establish a countywide Festivals & Events fund	PE	05	⚠ High			✓			
Support boutique lodging development in 'High Potential' communities	PI	07	⚠ High			✓			
Create a Cultural & Sporting Tourism Development program	PE	06	⚠ High				✓		
Develop an Oakland County targeted industry events incentive and services package	BW	10	⚠ Medium				✓		
Continue to support trail planning, connectivity, and wayfinding development	PI	08	⚠ Medium				✓		
Form a "Utility Readiness Team" to build on emerging town potential	PI	07	⚠ Medium					✓	
Establish a destination stewardship non-profit organization	DSG	01	⚠ High					✓	
Evaluate the feasibility of an on-demand parks service shuttle	PE	04	⚠ Medium						✓
Set up a multi-hometown marquee event/festival incubator program	PE	05	⚠ High						✓

Metrics & Benchmarking



Metrics & Benchmarking

The following metrics and data sources are initial suggestions that may be adapted/edited by the assigned Destination Stewardship Coordinator for the County. 5-year goals should be set based upon allocated resources for implementation and in collaboration with implementation leads and partners.

Category	Metric	Data Source	5-year Aspiration
BM	Emotional pull of brand concept	Brand Concept A/B Survey	
BM	Brand fit and visual appeal	Brand Concept A/B Survey	
BM	Number of active content-sharing partners	Social listening tool or manual collection	
BM	Referral traffic from partner sites	Google Analytics	
BM	Social post shares using partner toolkit content	Social listening tool or manual collection	
BM	Average partner satisfaction	Partner satisfaction/engagement survey	
BM	Engagement rate (likes, shares, comments, saves)	Built-in platform analytics (FB, TikTok)	
BM	Follower growth	Built-in platform analytics (FB, TikTok)	
BM	Partner repost/participation rate (local partners)	Social listening tool, UGC tool, or manual collection	
BM	UGC submission volume (hashtags, mentions, tags)	Social listening tool, UGC tool, or manual collection	
BM	Hashtag usage growth over time (local focused)	Social listening tool, UGC tool, or manual collection	
BM	Ad reach and frequency by media outlet	Media source reporting, Google Analytics with UTM tracking	

Category	Metric	Data Source	5-year Aspiration
BM	Ad click-through rate (digital)	Ad platform report	
BM	Estimated impressions (OOH)	Ad platform report	
BM	Media ROI metrics (cost-per-engagement)	Ad platform report	
BM	Conversions on landing pages (downloads, signups)	Google Analytics	
BM	Traffic from specific in-county ZIP codes	Google Analytics	
BM	Branded search lift/ad recall from local surveys	Specialized tracking during ad campaigns, third party market research	
BM	Open rates from in-county IP addresses/ZIP codes	Email marketing platform report	
BM	Rate of repeat opens/clicks	Email marketing platform report	
BM	Heatmap activity (most engaged topics/links)	Email marketing platform report	
BM	Open and click-through rate per segment	Email marketing platform report	
BM	Email list growth over time	Email marketing platform report	
BM	Engagement by segment	Email marketing platform report	
BM	(Based on IP address location) Pageviews and time on page	Google Analytics	
BM	(Based on IP address location) Organic traffic growth (SEO)	Google Analytics	
BM	(Based on IP address location) Bounce rate and exit rate on key pages	Google Analytics	
BM	(Based on IP address location) Social or email traffic referred to blog content	Google Analytics and UTM tracking	

Category	Metric	Data Source	5-year Aspiration
BM	Leads or email signups from activations	QR code tracking (Google Analytics)	
BM	Number of cross-promotional efforts executed	Manual tracking	
BM	UGC and PR generated from co-sponsored events	Google alerts, social listening tool, UGC tool, manual tracking	
BM	Traffic from targeted ZIP codes/DMA's	Google Analytics	
BM	Video view-through rates	Built-in platform analytics	
BM	Engagement funnel to/from paid ads: from email to page scrolls/CTA clicks	Specialized tracking during ad campaigns, third party market research	
BM	Website traffic from partner links	Google Analytics and Email marketing platform report	
BM	Regional media mentions and backlinks	Google alerts, specialized tools, or manual	
BM	Leads generated from travel shows, partnerships	Manual tracking	
PE	# of annual visitors (per outdoor recreation asset)	Placer.ai	
PE	# of annual park passes and ORV passes sold (resident vs. non-resident)	State Parks, Metroparks	
PE	# of daily park passes and ORV passes sold	State Parks, Metroparks	
PE	# of riders on service days	Selected transportation Provider	
PE	# of rides booked	Selected app developer	
PE	Total engagement/views for marketing campaign	Google Analytics 4, Meta Business Suite, HubSpot Marketing Hub or other integrated marketing campaign data dashboards	

Category	Metric	Data Source	5-year Aspiration
PE	# of ambassadors recruited	Program Administrator	
PE	# of Google reviews (per outdoor recreation asset)	Google	
PE	Average Google review rating (per outdoor recreation asset)	Google	
PE	Total Dollar Value of Funds/Technical Support provided to program participants	Annual Budget/Financial Report	
PE	Total Attendees at festivals/events and ZIP Codes of attendees	Placer.ai, Program Participants (Self-reported)	
PE	Total engagement/views for festivals/events' campaigns	Program Participants (Self-reported)	
PE	Total Value of Sponsorships Raised (\$)	Annual Budget/Financial Report	
PE	Total Matching Support from Participating Communities (\$)	Annual Budget/Financial Report	
PE	Total Dollar Value of Grants provided to program participants	Annual Budget/Financial Report	
PE	Annual attendance to attraction/asset and ZIP Codes of attendees (as reported in program survey)	Placer.ai, Program Participants (Self-reported)	
PE	Total engagement/views for new product marketing campaigns (as reported in program survey)	Program Participants (Self-reported)	
PE	Total # tickets/registrations to the event	Program Administrator	
PE	Total trail map downloads	Selected app developer	
PE	Total # of pass holders signed on	Program Administrator	
PE	Total # of visits to institutions made by pass holders	Program Administrator	
PE	Total # of views (for video training)	Google Analytics 4	

Category	Metric	Data Source	5-year Aspiration
PE	Total # of downloads (for training kits/resources)	Google Analytics 4	
PI	Total Value of Funding Raised (\$)	Program Administrator	
PI	Total Matching Support from Participating Communities (\$)	Program Participants (Self-reported)	
PI	Total # lodging rooms (midscale/upper midscale)	CoStar/STR	
PI	# of annual visitors (per downtown)	Placer.ai	
PI	# of Google reviews (per installation/project)	Google	
PI	Average Google review rating (per installation/project)	Google	
PI	# of riders on service days	Selected vendor	
PI	Total engagement/views for marketing campaign	Google Analytics	
PI	Annual # of trail users (at various trailheads)	Trail counters, Placer.ai	
PI	Demo of trail users (at various trailheads)	Annual trail survey	
BW	Total engagement/views for marketing campaign	HubSpot Marketing Hub or other integrated marketing campaign data dashboards	
BW	Annual # of FAM Tour sign-ups/participants	Program Administrator	
BW	Annual conversion rate of FAM Tour participant	Program Participants (Self-reported)	
BW	Total engagement/views on digital meetings/venues platform	Google Analytics 4	
BW	Total # of event sales leads for Oakland County venues	Program Administrator	

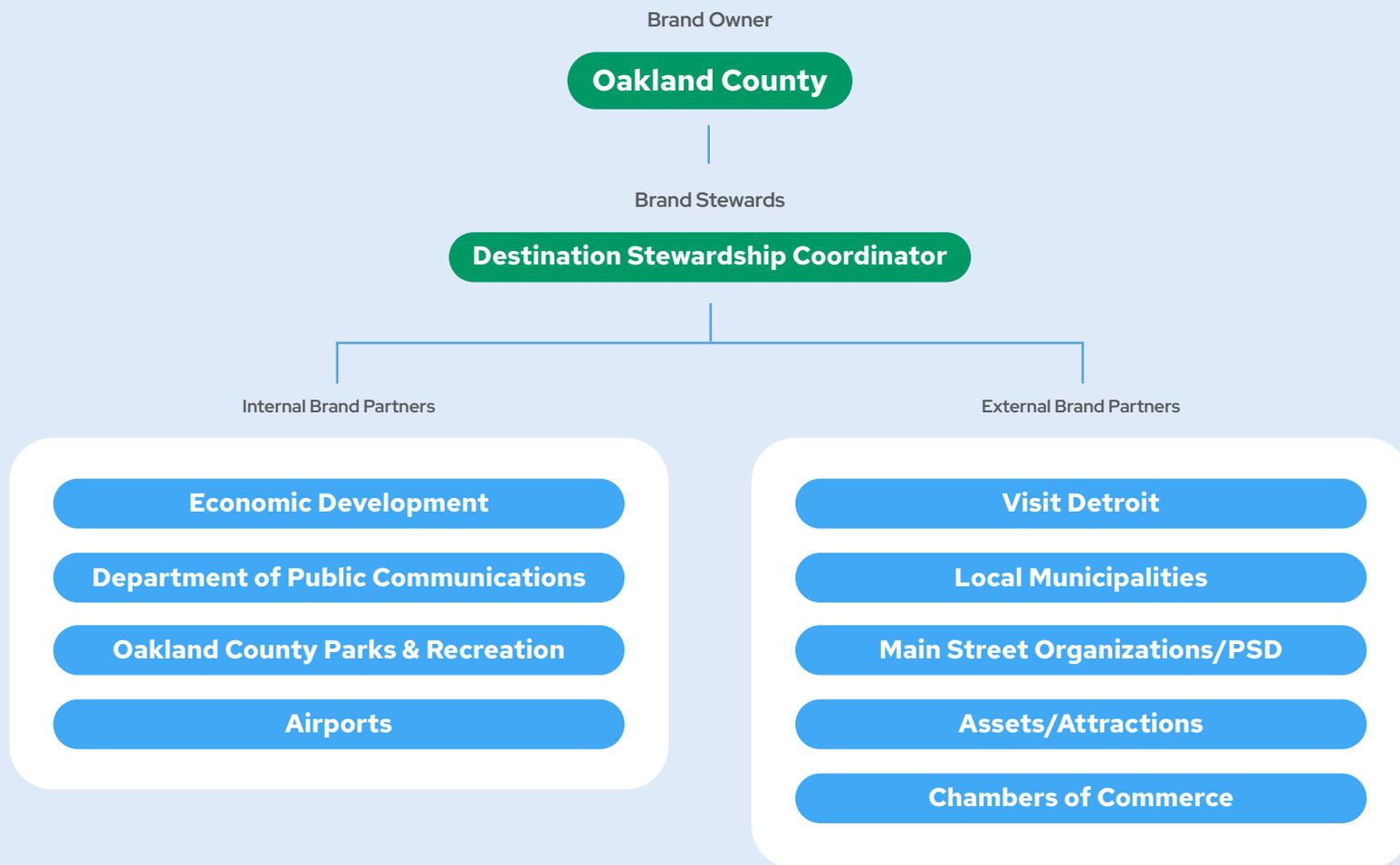
Category	Metric	Data Source	5-year Aspiration
PI	Total # attendees at supported events	Placer.ai, Program Participants (Self-reported)	
PI	# of employers (directly engaged)	Program Administrator	
PI	Annual # of Industry Staff Participants	Program Administrator	
PI	Annual # of hours of training/programming offered	Program Administrator	
DSG	# of FTE/PTE with dedicated roles/responsibilities relating to Destination Stewardship	Annual Budget/Financial Report	
DSG	Annual budget for destination stewardship programs	Annual Budget/Financial Report	
DSG	# of Industry Stakeholders Engaged/Show of Support for formation of a county Destination Management Organization	Program Administrator	



Appendix



Proposed Place Brand Governance Framework



Proposed Go Oakland Brand Platform

Go Oakland is the high-energy call to explore the best mix of outdoor adventures, bustling downtowns, and can't-miss events. From trailheads to taprooms, downtown festivals to farmers markets, this is where your weekend gets an upgrade.

Voice: The tone of voice is playful, friendly, and laid back. Proud of the incredible county and all it has to offer. Excited to welcome visitors.

The tone should be...	But not...
Welcoming	Goofy
Knowledgeable	Pretentious
Self-Made	Amateur/Unexperienced
Adventurous	Dangerous

Purpose: To highlight Oakland County's varied and vibrant offerings, from dining and entertainment to outdoor recreation, by welcoming visitors, investors, and connecting everyone to the region's culturally rich and geographically diverse cities and towns.

Values: Action, energy, discovery, rooted in nature and community, emotion-driven, community story-rich.

The Go Oakland brand targets the following audiences with four different backgrounds but one similar drive: Exceptional quality of life as a central driving force, and the opportunities awarded to those who choose to Go Oakland: whether for a career move, a weekend getaway, or a different pace of living.



Who	Persona	Description
<p>The Ambitious & Creative Starter:</p> <p>Recent grads, career starters</p>	<p>Young, urban resident looking for walkable downtown living experience within close proximity to innovation jobs</p>	<p>Geographies: Metro Detroit (Oakland County, Wayne County, Macomb County), Ann Arbor, Toledo, Lansing, Fort Wayne</p> <p>Motivators: Walkable downtowns, arts, trails, events, access to nature</p> <p>Key Channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube • Spotify ads • UGC prompts • Digital Nomad forums • College/Career fairs • DEI-oriented newsletters <p>Key KPIs: Gen Z engagement metrics, Social engagement with lifestyle and event content, downloads of weekend guides, content saves/shares from Instagram and TikTok, video views on YouTube.</p>
<p>The Regional Explorer:</p> <p>Repeat and loyal family-oriented and culture-driven Midwestern leisure travelers</p>	<p>Friends and families of Southeast Michigan looking for fun, family entertainment, culture and spaces to run wild.</p>	<p>Geographies: Metro Detroit (Oakland County, Wayne County, Macomb County), Ann Arbor, Flint, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Toledo</p> <p>Motivators: Outdoor adventure, hidden gems, weekend getaways, affordability, variety in nature and small towns, seasonal events, local dining, boutique shopping.</p> <p>Key Channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instagram, Facebook, YouTube • Google Search • Travel blogs • Outdoor apps (AllTrails) • Regional TV & Radio • TripAdvisor <p>Key KPIs: UGC posts with hashtags, social engagement, referral traffic from travel platforms.</p>

Who	Persona	Description
<p>The Dreamer: Small business owners & entrepreneurs</p>	<p>Small to medium-sized business owners looking for first, second, and third locations in Michigan</p>	<p>Geographies: Metro Detroit (Oakland County, Wayne County, Macomb County), Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids, Cleveland, Windsor CA, Toronto CA</p> <p>Motivators: Quality of life, commercial opportunity, supportive ecosystem, diversity, affordability, growth for teams and businesses.</p> <p>Key Channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and Regional Chambers + events • Business publications • LinkedIn • Economic development tie-ins <p>Key KPIs: Click-throughs to small business features, engagement with boutique lodging content, attendance at local maker events, shares of downtown itineraries</p>
<p>The Legacy Builder: Lifelong Michigander heading into retirement years or a career pivot</p>	<p>Michiganders who want to remain active contributors to the businesses they have built, return to their hometown communities, and find other ways to leave behind a legacy for their families</p>	<p>Geographies: Metro Detroit (Oakland County, Wayne County, Macomb County), Ann Arbor</p> <p>Motivators: Quality of life, meaningful experiences, accessibility, multigenerational appeal</p> <p>Key Channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touchpoints with service/hospitality • Print magazines • Local and Regional Chambers + events • Business publications • LinkedIn • Community newspapers • Facebook <p>Key KPIs: Inquiries about heritage events, visits to cultural itineraries, engagement with family-focused content on Facebook, brochure downloads</p>

Sample Go Oakland Style Guides

Following are two visual style guides developed for the proposed Go Oakland brand, including potential logo, color, and font usage, as well as implementation samples.



Option 1: Authentic + Adventurous

Primary Logo



Secondary logo



Icon



Fonts

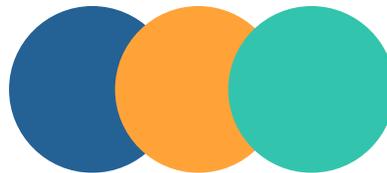
GLIMMER HOOD

Primary

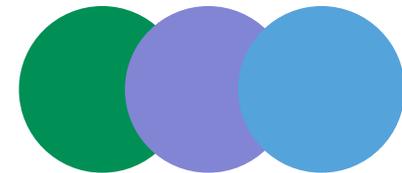
BN Grizzly

Accent

Color Palette



Primary



Accent

Option 1 Examples



Social Post



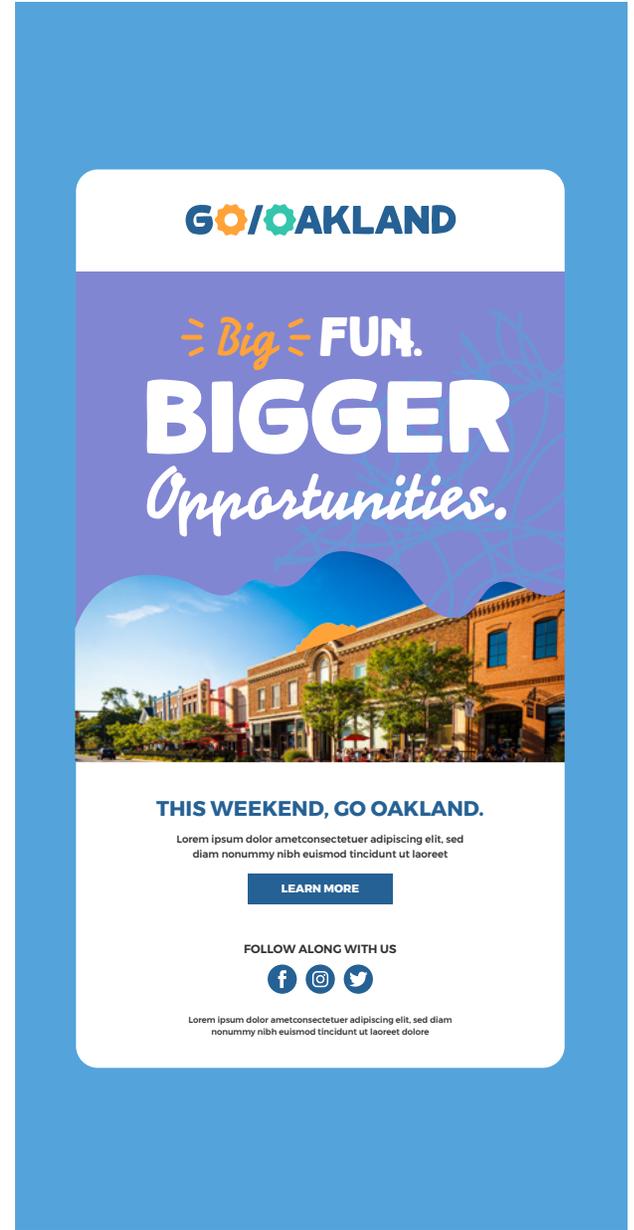
Ad



Wayfinding



Promotional



Email Marketing

Option 2: Emotive + Bold

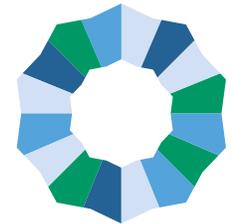
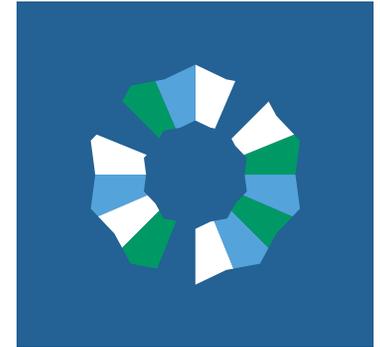
Primary Logo



Secondary logo



Icon



Fonts

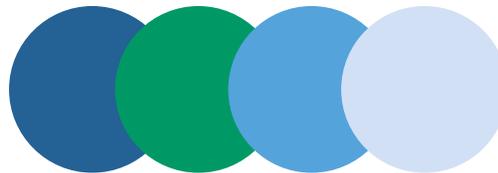
Noka Bold

Primary

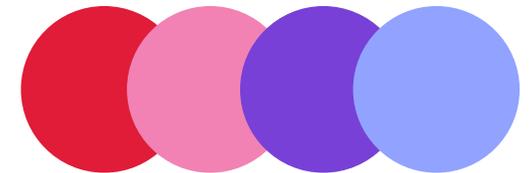
Sweet Sans Pro Light Italic

Accent

Color Palette

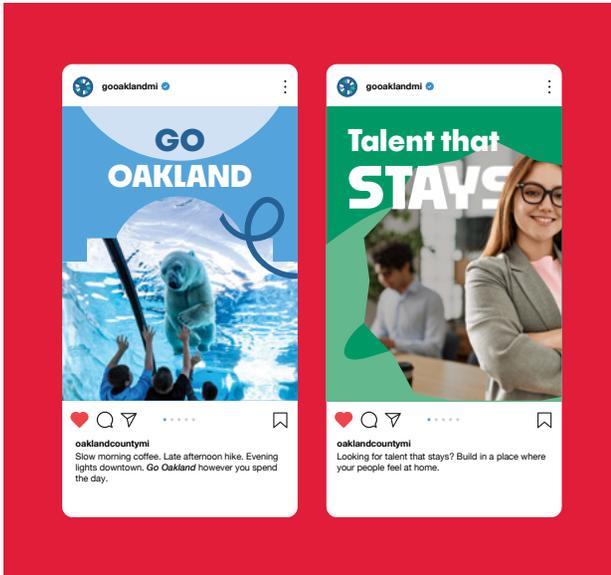


Primary



Accent

Option 2 Examples



Social Post



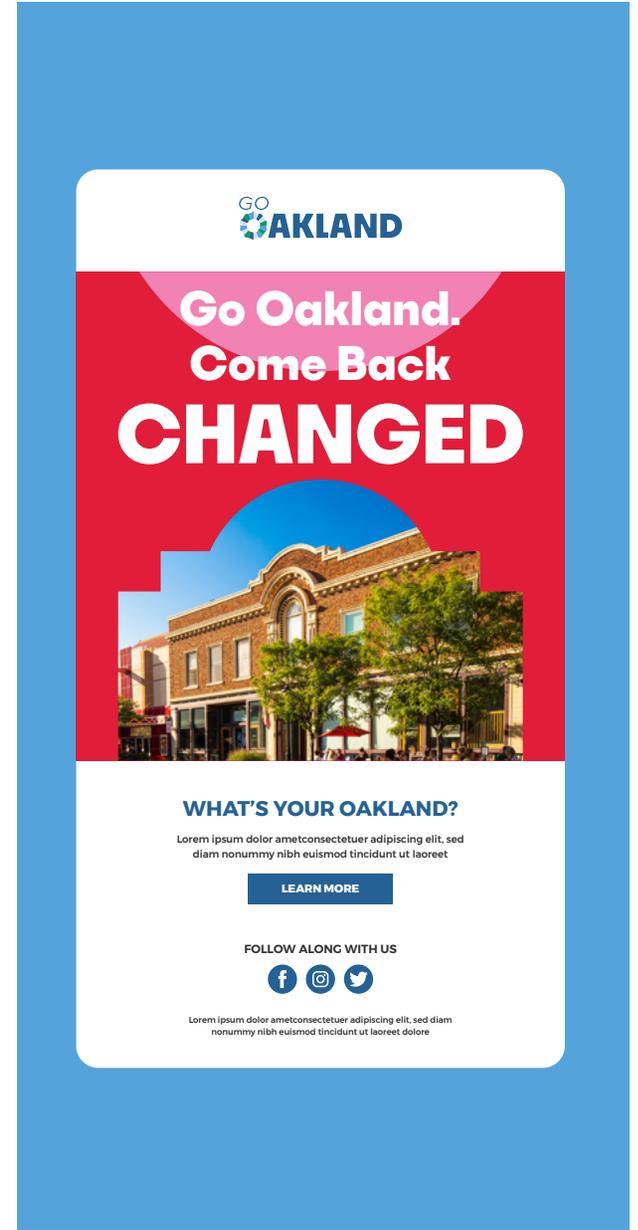
Ad



Wayfinding



Promotional



Email Marketing

To lend your
support, contact
Oakland County
Economic
Development.

planninggroup@oakgov.com



DAVID COULTER
OAKLAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE