

TOURISM REPORT LAMBTON SHORES 2012



1/29/2013

Expanded Horizons

A summary of tourism services 2012 activities and highlights by the Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce for Lambton Shores.

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TOURISM REPORT LAMBTON SHORES 2012

TOURISM - KEY ECONOMIC DRIVER FOR LAMBTON SHORES

2012 TOURISM SEASON

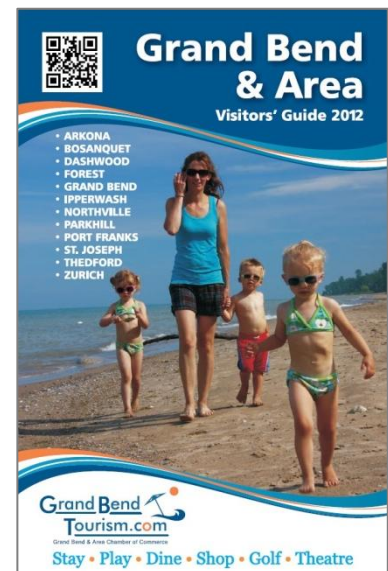
The weak economies of Ontario and Michigan continue to affect the number of and spending power of tourists to our area. Rising and fluctuating gas prices and the ongoing decline of American visitors due to cross-border concerns (passports, wait times) mean more than ever area businesses are reliant on Ontarians staying in their backyard for vacations and weekend getaways.

By tourist standards we had fabulous weather throughout the entire high season of 2012 (June through August). Although this is favourable in that it gets visitors to leave home and come to the Beach (day-trippers and overnights), it also had a negative effect on the number of shoppers frequenting outdoor restaurants, food kiosks and area retailers. Restaurants such as The Growling Gator reported lower-than-expected diners due entirely to the hot and sunny weather, while area retailers reported visitors were looking for bargains, were not making impulse buys and complaining it was too hot to walk along hot sidewalks. Main Street retailers reported lean profit-margins.

In addition, we received feedback about how Grand Bend's high cost of parking and zealous parking ticket issuance was not only detracting from the number of tourists visiting the area, but causing negative impressions of Grand Bend. Tourists trying to avoid the cost of parking or not finding parking at all end up parking on private property causing property-owner frustration and additionally when towed causing greater public relations issues.

A balance of parking cost recovery with tourist value-assessment of Grand Bend's amenities may alleviate negative perceptions of paid parking. Communications tools identifying how the parking fees were being used, especially in connection with the standards of maintaining a Blue Flag Beach and Marina might also minimize parking cost concerns. Perhaps signage explaining how the costs of parking lots, beach and main street improvements were being off-set by parking fees might help educate tourists, residents and business.

In summary, despite good weather area businesses did not experience a good year. As a Municipality, we cannot do anything about the weather – but we can affect parking fees, the amount of available parking, traffic congestion and signage.



CALCULATING THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM TO LAMBTON SHORES

The Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Sport and Culture has a variety of research tools available on its website to estimate the volume and impact of tourism in Ontario. The following quick facts will demonstrate the value tourism has in our area. (*Figures and percentages based on RTO1 inclusive for the latest year statistics available - 2010.*)

Quick Facts & Stats

Most visitors to RTO1 – and by extension Lambton Shores – are Ontarians travelling within their own backyard and they do so primarily for pleasure (44%- Visiting friends & family, 39% - Vacation/getaway, 12% - Other person, and 5% - Business).

Most visitors travel July through September (Jan-Mar: 20%, Apr-Jun: 27%, Jul-Sep: 30%, Oct-Dec: 23%).

What visitors do when they travel

- 14% - Outdoor activities (boating, fishing, golfing etc)
- 4.0% - Sports events
- 3.9% - Provincial parks
- 2.9% - Cultural performances
- 2.9% - Casinos
- 1.9% - Historic sites
- 1.9% - Festivals/fairs
- 1.6% - Museums & Art Galleries
- 1.0% - Theme parks
- 1.0% - Zoos / Aquariums / Botanical gardens

The average group size of visitors travelling together is 2.6 persons, with 82% being adults and 18% children. The age range of the largest travelling group is 45 – 54 years old (16%), followed by 25-34 years old (15%), 55 – 64 years old (14.9%), 35-44 years old (14.8%), 65+ years old (12%), 15-24 years old (11%) and under 15 years old (0.4%).

How much do visitors spend when they travel?

- Visitor spending in RTO1 totalled \$1.2 billion
- Overnight travellers (\$727,916,000) spend more than daytrippers (\$561,891,000)
- Average expenditure for an overnight guest is \$164 versus a daytripper who spends \$61
- Visitors spend the most on food & beverage (431,430,000), followed by transportation (297,313,000), retail (253,566,000), recreation & entertainment (156,587,000), accommodation (150,912,000) and culture (116,209,000).

TRIEM Calculation of Welcome Centre's Economic Impact

The Ministry has an estimator of the economic impact of tourism - Ontario's Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TRIEM) - that uses various formulas and year-over-year data reported Ontario-wide and broken down by RTO to estimate a dollar impact value based on a number the user enters.

See: www.mtr-treim.com/webtreim/en/main.aspx

The Welcome Centre handled 3,441 in-person inquiries, 4,930 emails and 3,271 phone calls for a total of 11,642 inquiries. If we assume each inquiry follows the TRIEM formula for economic impact, then the Ministry's calculation of the Welcome Centre's economic impact is \$1.2 million. *Please refer to "The Economic Impact of tourism in RTO1 in 2010" report included in Appendix.*

Economic Impact of Huron Country Playhouse

Attendance at the Huron Country Playhouse for the 13-week 2013 summer season was 57,061. The TREIM Model (Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model) estimates the annual impact of the theatre as follows

- \$14,253,617 in visitor spending to accommodation, food, retail, entertainment/attraction and transport. GDP
- \$8,382,224 to GDP.
- \$5,311,088 in labour income
- 119 Direct Jobs; 19 Indirect; 14 Induced.

Ontario Arts Council research (July 2010) indicates that 43% of Ontarians 15 years or older attended a performing arts event.

The Huron Country Playhouse completed an aggressive \$4.0 million renovation in 2011, including a brand new 300 seat auditorium (Playhouse II), new washrooms, lobby, seats for the mainstage (660), and backstage improvements to dressing rooms and grounds landscaping.

The new Huron Country Playhouse has served a multipurpose dimension by contributing to a richer social fabric. Specifically, it has:

- Promoted increased public engagement
- Created space and programs that support youth and senior engagement
- Created opportunity for programs and strategies that promote social inclusion, particularly during the spring and fall shoulder seasons (school choirs, dance competitions, music recitals, visual art exhibits, concerts, corporate events, etc.)

Additionally, the project has promoted cultural heritage within Canada by providing a voice that has:

- Promoted life-long learning about a wide range of creative pursuits
- Enhanced sustainability of arts and cultural activities
- Created a more artistically vibrant milieu at a local, provincial, and national level
- Preserved Huron County's heritage

The project has also impacted local and regional economies:

- Acted as a catalyst for broader revitalization in a rural community
- Connected culture to community economic development
- Enhanced the overall climate that fosters and sustains creativity and innovation

4) The theatre utilizes an extensive volunteer network, including 90 adults (Huron Country Playhouse Guild) and 40 youth (volunteer ushers).

THE TOURISM ENVIRONMENT

Brand Recognition

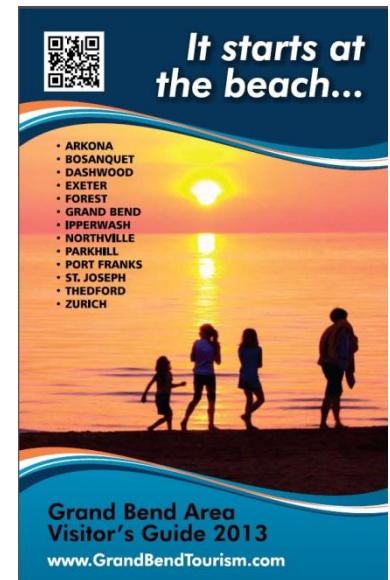
HOW WE SELL LAMBTON SHORES TO TOURISTS

Through amalgamation the relatively new political entity of Lambton Shores was created. The challenge for Lambton Shores is that it remains an unknown brand and for successful promotion of its assets to the Ontario and Michigan tourist needs to rely on the century-old, top-of-mind brand of “Grand Bend”. Understandably, the “Grand Bend” brand is not entirely palatable for businesses located in other Lambton Shores communities with equally strong local cultures.

Over time the highly successful “Grand Bend” brand may be transitioned from a place-specific to an experiential brand – such as Huron Tourism Association (HRA) has achieved with their “Ontario’s West Coast”. HTA’s messaging has been in place since 1991 and accumulatively, over the years, thousands of dollars have been spent promoting and reinforcing that brand message.

As a step in transitioning the Grand Bend brand towards a more inclusive, yet tourist-focused (read “consumer-focused”) tagline, the 2012 visitor guide listed the surrounding towns, villages and hamlets on its cover. **NEW for 2013**, the guide’s main title will change from “Grand Bend & Area Visitor’s Guide” to “*It starts at the Beach*”, with subtitling at the bottom of the page reading “Grand Bend Area Visitor’s Guide” and the list of towns, villages and hamlets front and centre again.

FIGURE 1: NEW FOR 2013 - "IT STARTS AT THE BEACH"



Tourism Research Findings

Since their inception in 2011, the Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) have spent time getting organized, recruiting staff and directors and conducting much needed tourism research with results reported throughout their regions in 2012.

Lambton Shores is geo-politically located in a challenging spot! We are at the south-west point of RTO4 (Huron County, Perth County, Waterloo Region and Wellington County / rto4.ca) and the north-east point of RTO1 (Ontario’s South West Tourism Corporation / swotc.ca).

The Chamber participated in both RTOs’ research workshops (Stratford & Wyoming-Plymton) and attended both results announcements. Although there are wording and semantic differences, the general findings of both RTOs are remarkably similar and reinforce what we locals already know – this area is a tourist mecca because we have what people want.

RTO4

People travel because of five key factors, which the RTO has dubbed “themes” and is using as the basis of their marketing strategy:

1. Heritage Towns (Amish Mennonite, Heritage Inns, Heritage Towns)
2. Theatre & Culture (Stratford, Drayton, Signature Festivals)
3. Outdoors (Beaches, Camping, Birding, Fishing, Mountain Biking, Road Cycling)

4. Motor Sports (Walton Motocross)
5. Agri-Culinary (Savour Stratford)

You'll note our area could potentially be included in a number of these themes, but due to jurisdiction we are not represented other than in Outdoors (specifically Beaches) and Theatre & Culture (specifically Drayton).

Advocacy is needed to ensure the fullness of our area's attractions and activities are included.

Arguably RTO4's key strategy is the packaging of tourism experiences and selling them online through a system that enables a tourist/consumer to book and pay for accommodation, restaurant and attractions. This has been dubbed an "experience-based", front-end website interface to a reservation system that will promote key "demand generator" experiences (see themes above). Accommodations and attractions must sign-up with the system. Accommodation providers will be in or out of the system based on set criteria and need to be deemed "product-ready" to participate.

RTO1

RTO1 identified similar key travel triggers and has a number of strategies around them including clustering product-ready providers into packages or routes or tours and identifying areas that need assistance to become product-ready. In other words, what is a GO now and where can the RTO help to build?

1. Agri-Tourism (i.e. roadside stands & markets, pick-your-own, specialty wine/cider/maple syrup/herbs, fall harvest festivals, animal feeding & petting areas)
2. Birding
3. Motorcycle
4. Coastal (ports, coasts, riverfronts)
5. Culinary
6. Recreation (golf, fishing, hiking, RVing, biking)

Again, our area offers activity levels in each of these identified tourism triggers.

MARKETING & ADVERTISING 2012

Note: The Municipalities financial support was received August 20, 2012 and therefore some of our marketing and advertising expenditures for 2012 were restricted as the money was received after publication submission deadlines.

Print Advertising

Over the years the Chamber has come to value and rely on a few key guides that are consistently accessed by area tourists and these form the core of our print advertising campaign.

Effective marketing considers not only *REACH* - the number of people in the publication's sphere of influence or confirmed subscription - but *FREQUENCY* - the number of times the target tourist is likely to see the ad. Reach and

FIGURE 2 USED IN PINERY, SUMMER FUN & TSL GUIDES



frequency together – with the right message for the right tourist – result in successful marketing campaigns.

The 2012 main campaign message invited tourists to “Be a kid again”, inviting them to Stay, Play, Dine, Shop, Golf and Theatre. Keying in on the RTO tourism research, in multi-issue publications advertising focused on event-based promotions categorized within travel trigger themes utilizing titles such as “Festivals, Heritage & Motorsports” or “Arts, Heritage & Nature” depending on the upcoming events. Collectively, the multi-issue print campaign promoted Grand Bend’s Winter Carnival, Return of the Swans, Paint Ontario, Grand Bend & Area Studio Tour, Grand Bend Farmers’ Market, Drive ‘n Jive, Harleys by the Beach, Canada Day Celebrations, Kettle & Stony Point PowWow, MOPAR Canadian National Drag Races, Aquafest, Exeter RAM Rodeo, Zurich Bean Festival, Thunder by the Beach, Field of Dreams Car Show, Thanksgiving Market & Sidewalk

Sale, Lambton Fall Colour & Craft Festival, Christmas Comes Early

A number of the print publications included online advertising as part of their package, so a single buy did double-duty.

- Blue Water Visitors Guide: 55,000 guides distributed at Ontario Travel Centres, CAA stores, hotels, tourist kiosks, sports stores, corporate lobbies, cafeterias via CTM, brochure displays in GTA & Ottawa.
- Ontario’s West Coast: 35,000 guides distributed throughout Huron County and into Grey and Bruce counties, as well as festivals and events such as the Celtic Festival (Goderich), National Motocross (Walton), annual Threshers & Hobby Show and another 50+ events.
- Sarnia & Lambton County Travel Guide
- Pinery Provincial Park Visitors Guide: Distributed at the Pinery which annually welcomes 500,000 visitors.
- Summer Fun Guide: 250,000 guides distributed along 400 & 401 highways, major Ontario attractions, title sponsor of onRoute Centres
- DayTripping: 40,000 copies per issue distributed at tourist kiosks and Ontario Travel Centres, Chamber offices, restaurants, grocery stores etc (Windsor and Sarnia along north shore of Lake Erie to Grand River, west of Hamilton to Waterloo area, Goderich and Lake Huron coast).

Visitor Guide

The Chamber manages the production and distribution of the area’s visitor’s guide. The Chamber Manager handles the research, writing, art direction, pricing, proofing, development and distribution of the ad sales package and liaises with the sales director (Neil Clifford / Chamber Board Director) , design firm – Track21 Graphics and distribution providers (Canada Post, Board Directors, Chamber Members etc).

Photographs used in the guide and for the cover are obtained through a Photo Contest. The Chamber receives over a hundred photographs annually (2012 was the second year of the contest) and the winning cover shot is

Canada Day Fireworks
July 1 / Fireworks, live music & giant children's mural!
www.canadaygrandbend.ca

Kettle & Stony Point Pow-Wow
July 14-15 / Drumming, dancing, singing, arts & crafts, and food. Everyone welcome.
www.grandbendtourism.com/pow-wow

IHRA/MOPAR Canadian National Drag Races
July 20-22 / Quarter-mile, national drag-racing championships.
www.grandbendmotorplex.com

Aquafest
August 10-12 / Art, food, music & nature.
www.grandbendaquafest.ca

16th Exeter RAM Rodeo
August 10-12 / Cowboy up & join the fun!
www.exeterrodeo.com

47th Zurich Bean Festival
August 25 / Antique car show, music, fireworks, street market & beans!
www.zurichbeanfestival.com

Go online for more information:

Grand Bend Tourism.com
Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce
Stay • Play • Dine • Shop • Golf • Live Theatre
www.grandbendtourism.com 1-888-338-2001

Christmas Comes Early
November 9-11 / Annual Christmas Open House & Shopping Extravaganza! Unique gifts to satisfy even the hardest-to-buy-for person on your list.

Grand Bend Winter Carnival
February 16-18 / Fun for the whole family spanning an entire long weekend: fireworks, parade, carriage rides, mad science, magic show, live music, outdoor & indoor sports tournaments & snow sculpture competition.

Return of the Tundra Swans
March 1-31 / 15,000 Tundra Swans migrate through Lambton Shores on their way to Arctic breeding grounds. Naturalists from Lambton Heritage Museum provide guided tours.
www.ReturnOfTheSwans.com

Paint Ontario
March 9-31 / Annual juried art show, competition & sale of 100+ representational art pieces from across Ontario. 2,000 attendees annually. Open daily 11am to 5pm.
www.PaintOntario.com

Go online for more information:

Grand Bend Tourism.com
Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce
Stay • Play • Dine • Shop • Golf • Live Theatre
www.grandbendtourism.com 1-888-338-2001

selected by the Chambers' Directors by a secret vote. The photograph with the most votes wins! The photographer of the winning photograph receives a \$100 cash prize. The 2012 winning cover photograph was taken by Vreni Beeler of Zurich.

The cost to produce the guide is around \$26k which is off-set by advertising sales.

Annually we print and distribute 30,000 visitor guides throughout Ontario at:

- Ontario Travel Centres (18)
- Local & regional tourist information centres
- Local businesses
- Email/phone/mail requests
- Conferences/events
- Summary of Distribution Locations:
 - *Ontario-Wide:* Alymer, Amherstburg, Bainsville, Bancroft, Barrie, Blyth, Bobcaygeon, Bothwell, Brantford, Burlington, Cambridge, Chatham, Chute-A-Blondeau, Clinton, Collingwood, Cornwall, Elora, Fort Erie, Fort Frances, Gananoque, Georgetown, Guelph, Hamilton, Hill Island, Kincardine, Lancaster, Leamington, Little Current, London, Midland, Milton, Minden, Minto, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Northbrook, Oshawa, Owen Sound, Port Burwell, Port Colbourne, Port Dover, Port Stanley, Prescott, Sarnia, Shakespeare, Simcoe, Sombra, Southampton, St. Jacobs, St. Mary's, St. Thomas, Stratford, Tilbury, Tillsonburg, Toronto, Walkerton, Wasaga Beach, Waterford, Wheatley, Windsor, Wingham, Woodstock
 - *Locally:* Grand Bend, Bayfield, Exeter, Parkhill, Forest, Goderich, Seaforth and to all our Chamber members, which in addition to those towns listed includes Camlachie, Ipperwash, Port Franks, Thedord, Arkona, Ailsa Craig, Hensall, Zurich, St. Joseph, Dashwood etc.

Web & Electronic

GrandBendTourism.com

Note: our Google Analytics account went off-line part-way through 2012, so the following statistics are missing several months' worth of website traffic.

- 70,836 individual visits
- 55,925 individually unique visitors
- 78% are new visitors / 22% are returning visitors
- 81% of visitors use a search engine, such as Google, to navigate to the website; 11% are referrals from non-search engine websites, 8% are direct URL (person typed our website address into their browser's address bar)
- Top keywords used to find the website are grand bend, grand bend motorplex, grand bend beach, grand bend tourism, "grandbend", grand bend winter carnival, grand bend chamber of commerce, grand bend Canada day



- Top sources of our website’s web-to-web traffic: PineryPark.on.ca, GrandBend4Sales.com, Google.ca, Wikipedia.org, Facebook, MyWebSearch, Pinedale.on.ca, Today’sParent.com, HarboursideVillage.com.
- Top website sections/pages visited: Motels/hotels, Cottages, Festivals & Events, Parks & Beaches, Campgrounds & RV Parks, Dine, Stay, Bed & Breakfast and the Contact Us webpages.

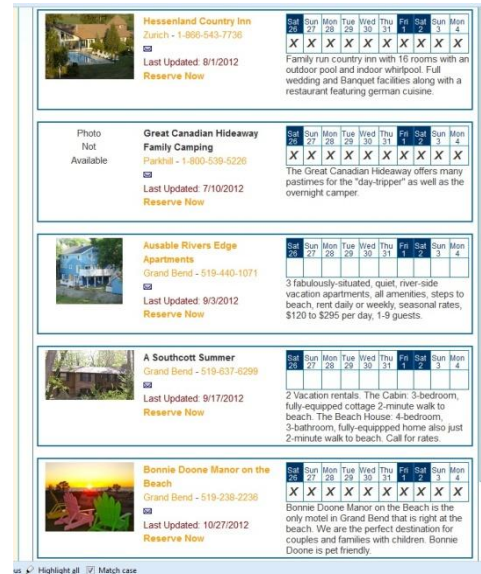
ONLINE ACCOMMODATION AVAILABILITY CHECKER

Launched June 2012, the GrandBendTourism.com website incorporates subscription software called Webervations on the STAY section page (www.grandbendtourism.com/stay) that enables online vacation planners to determine the availability of area accommodation for their desired dates.

Currently, the Availability Checker has 18 accommodation providers participating and the Chamber expects to increase that number during 2013.

The Availability Checker was used on a daily basis at the Welcome Centre by staff and tourists seeking accommodation. It vastly increased our ability to respond to accommodation inquiries received by phone, as we could easily refer the caller to the webpage and talk to them while they actually used the online tool.

A laptop computer is available to tourists at the Welcome Centre to search for accommodation (laptop donated by Barb Richman).



On-site training and reference manual were provided to the accommodation providers by Tim Dionne, one of the Chamber’s summer students, who acted as the “go-to” Webervations resource during the summer. The initial setup of each accommodation’s account and input of basic details was handled by Chamber staff, with more customized information and photographs completed by the accommodation provider with Tim’s assistance.

In the first two days of use, The Colonial Hotel received 30 reservation requests.

FIGURE 3 FLIPBOOK SCREEN-CAPTURE

A survey has been developed to obtain feedback from accommodation providers as to their perception of how easy it is to use the system and now they think it has impacted their business. The survey will be released at the end of the 2013 high-season (first week of September).

FLIPBOOK VERSION OF VISITOR GUIDE

An electronic “flipbook” version of the visitor guide was published on GrandBendTourism.com (www.grandbendtourism.com/2012-visitors-guide). This makes the guide’s content available online.



The flipbook mimics the look of a booklet on-screen and automatically flips page-to-page or responds to mouse clicks. Visitor guide advertisers can now benefit from additional “eyeballs” that view their ad online as well as in print.

INTEGRATION OF GOOGLE MAPS

One of the key challenges for a visitor to our area is finding amenities, attractions and businesses (i.e. restaurants, retailers etc). As a first-step, we published interactive Google Maps on each of the website’s key section pages (Stay, Play, Dine, Shop, Services) with every Chamber Member’s location mapped.

Sponsorship & Event Based Promotions

- Doors Open
- HTA Tourism Event & Brochure Swap

HTA Tourism Event & Brochure Swap

Huron Tourism Association (HTA) annually hosts a day-long tourism professional development and networking event, now in its 23rd year, attended by more than 125 individual registrants representing 50+ businesses from the counties of Huron, Grey, Bruce, Perth, Lambton, Wellington and Middlesex. The event offers workshops and speakers, tours, networking and ultimately the distribution of promotional materials from those 50+ tourist businesses and the collection of promotion materials from other businesses.

The Chamber distributes several hundreds of visitor guides at this event and network’s to raise awareness among tourist-based businesses of our Welcome Centre and our tourism services. This linkage ensures tourists from near but outside of our area are referred to us for assistance.

Media Relations

Hosting travel writers is probably the “biggest bang for the buck” in terms of tourism promotion, unfortunately it’s not an activity that can be planned, secured or guaranteed! We simply need to be able to take advantage of a situation and be ready to respond when the opportunity arises.

The Motorhead Traveler Television Show

Through our partnerships with TSL and HTA – both of whom are TMAC members (Travel Media Association of Canada) – we have been lucky enough to host travel writers for the last two years and in 2012 hosted *The Motorhead Traveler* (Kevin Cullen, www.waterprod.com, www.mavtv.com/shows/motorhead-traveler.html), a television program that uses motorized sports as the impetus for its world adventure travel. The program is carried by specialty networks such as MAVTV and its affiliates.

The Grand Bend episode involved RPM Magazine, Grand Bend Motorplex, Derksen Drag racing School, Grand Bend Art Centre, Rus-Ton Campground, Purdy’s at the Bend and Mayor Bill Weber.

The Chamber played host for four days to Kevin Cullen and his one-man camera crew handling on-air interviews, organizing interviews with Mayor



Bill Weber and TSL Manager Marlene Wood as well as touring Kevin around the area from the Pinery to the Motorplex to the Beach and Main Street and setting up opportunities to showcase things to do in the area, including a cultural segment with Teresa Marie at the Grand Bend Art Centre.

Video segments included drag racing (motorsports), professional chef BBQ (culinary tourism), visual art (heritage & culture), beach (coastline) and on-air interviews.

Other Media Activities

The Chamber is regularly contacted for interviews and statements on a variety of subjects. In 2012 we responded to requests for information, interviews and statements from the London Free Press, A-Channel News and Sarnia Observer.

It is important to note that we are unable to control the media's "angle" and although we consistently speak about the area as being open for business year-round, family-friendly, a Blue Flag beach with parking, washrooms, concession stand, viewing station and boardwalk – some media outlets fail to get the message.

Community Support

The Chamber's tourism services also encompass marketing and promotional support to area events, which are all planned and implemented by volunteer groups. Typically, the Chamber will list events on its website and provide the larger events with their own webpage. We also distribute event flyers, sponsorship and volunteer requests by email to our Membership contact list. Sometimes we are involved selling tickets on behalf of events, such as Homemade Jam Music Fest and Drive 'N Jive.

Support during 2012 was provided to: Grand Bend's Winter Carnival, Grand Bend Area Studio Tour, Paint Ontario, Drive 'n Jive, Homemade Jam Music Fest, Canada Day, Kettle & Stony Point PowWow, Aquafest, Zurich Bean Festival, and Exeter Rodeo.

The Chamber organizes the Thanksgiving Market & Sidewalk Sale and Christmas Comes Early. Both events are multi-town events.

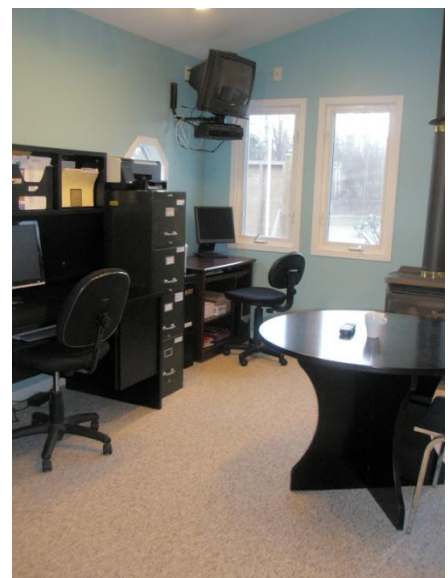
WELCOME CENTRE

Despite the time spent by tourists on the Internet pre-planning their vacations, visitors continue to request and pick-up annual visitor guides. Welcome Centre staff and volunteers continue to answer questions about attractions, special events and directions and to hand-out various local guides and promotional materials.

The Welcome Centre is open year-round. Off-season hours are Monday to Friday, Noon to 4pm. High season hours (June through Labour Day) are Monday to Sunday, 10am to 6pm.

During 2012:

- we helped 3,441 tourists find what they were looking for,
- handled 4,930 emails,
- 3,271 phone calls and

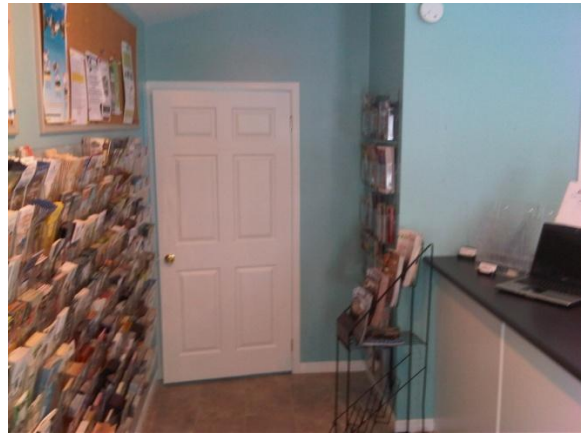


- our website handled 70,836 web visits (individual web sessions).
- staff, student and volunteer hours totalled 3,301 hours (or an average of 64 hours per week).

We're happy to report that through the donations of several Chamber Member businesses, the Welcome Centre now sports a fresh coat of paint (light aqua colour and white trim) and new carpet ready and can now show our "best face" to 2013 tourists!

Thanks go to:

- Medway Homes / Paul Pittao (Grand Bend) – for the donation of painting services
- Grand Bend Decorating & Flooring / Bernice (Grand Bend) – for the donation of carpet and its installation
- Turkheim Printing / Dan Turkheim (Zurich) – for the donation of the paint



PARTNERSHIPS

Chamber Advocacy for Lambton Shores

On January 22, 2013, the Chamber hosted a historic meeting of RTOs and DMOs, representatives from three municipalities and directors of our Board with the focus of promoting this area's assets in a holistic way:

- Bluewater (Municipality of): Mark Cassidy (Economic Development Officer)
- Huron Tourism Association (HTA): Jenna Ujiye (Tourism Marketer for Huron County)
- Lambton Shores (Municipality of): Bill Weber (Mayor), Brent Kittmer (Community Services Director)
- RTO1: Jim Hudson (CEO)
- RTO4: David Peacock (CEO), Napier Simpson (Marketing Director)
- South Huron (Municipality of): Roy Hardy (CAO)
- Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce: Glen Baillie (President / Baillie's Picture Framing), Mark Lewis (Vice President / 104.9 the Beach), Joan Karstens (Director / Brentwood on the Beach), Susan Mills (Chamber Manager)
- Tourism Sarnia Lambton (TSL): Marshall Kern (Chair), Marlene Wood (TSL Manager)

One of the greatest challenges for us in promoting this area comes to the jurisdictional boundaries that effectively cut up our assets, making it look like we have less to offer than we do. As a Chamber – and representative of local business – we know tourists flow into and through this area from gateway communities such as Forest, Exeter, Zurich and Bayfield and this is why local businesses from Goderich to Camlachie to Ailsa Craig to Hensall to Clinton to Bayfield are Chamber members. They know THE BEACH is the main draw and it spirals out in a radius from that point to them.

Four months in the making, the RTO-DMO-Chamber-Municipalities meeting focused was how we can all work together to promote this area's assets in a holistic way, ignoring the geo-political boundaries. Tourists don't know and don't care about the boundaries and we need to be more tourist-focused. No longer can Oakwood

Inn Resort, Huron Country Playhouse and Grand Bend Motorplex be stripped from the Grand Bend Area's list of amenities when tourist marketing materials highlight this area.

Originally scheduled for 1.5 hours, this meeting went on for 3 hours. It was a positive first step, but it's also clear there are differences of opinion and strategy. Perhaps a key result was the agreement and request that the Chamber identify our top 5 assets in each of the RTOs identified strategies, as well as our festivals and events, and submit this information to the RTOs.

This will be completed within the next few weeks.

Lambton County Tourism Showcase Trip to Queen's Park

An initiative of the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, we were invited to participate in a Tourism Showcase to Queen's Park in Toronto for two days – April 24 & 25, 2012. Presenting sponsors included Lambton Federation of Agriculture, LanXess Energizing Chemistry, Lambton College, The Research Park, County of Lambton, Lambton Insurance Brokers Association with supporting sponsors from Suncor Energy, Cope, Debra Taylor (CGA), SLWDB, Freedom 55 Financial, Nova Chemicals, Sarnia Lambton Home Builders' Association, Scotiabank, Sun Life Financial, Tourism Sarnia-Lambton and others. The Advocacy Trip involved a delegation of 37 representatives.

The purpose of the trip was to advocate for Lambton County, highlighting, presenting and discussing issues and concerns held by the Lambton County business community, with an emphasis on policy and regulatory issues that impact our communities. Policy briefings included agriculture, the petrochemical industry, conversion of the Lambton Generating Station, Lambton College Health & Wellness Centre, changes to Long Term Care Facilities, shared Municipal Services, Provincial Offences, the Provincial Policy Statement and the Sarnia Jail.

Our participation in the "Showcase" portion of the trip offered ministers, parliamentary assistants and other dignitaries a light lunch while they toured our booths and displays. We spoke with many ministers and assistants about Lambton Shores many natural amenities and local attractions, handed out about 100 guides and almost as many business cards.

Chamber & DMO Partnership

The Chamber's Manager represents the Municipality of Lambton Shores on the Board of Directors of Tourism Sarnia Lambton (TSL) and Huron Tourism Association (HTA). This requires attendance at monthly meetings located throughout the two counties. In effect, double-duty is in order to fully and comprehensively have this area represented adequately. On a positive note, it extends our presence and message through the activities and focus of these two organizations.

Positive results are beginning to be seen from the Chamber's years of effort. TSL and HTA staffs have networked at a number of Chamber hosted events and now have an improved understanding of each other's activities, goals and strategies. Recently, HTA and TSL have been working on a joint initiative to keep tourists travelling north and south along the Highway 21 Corridor with their *Beaches & Burgers* campaign that will be promoted in print and online. The Beaches & Burgers concept is to link the many beaches along Lake Huron's

shoreline together as a whole in the minds of tourists and identify related things to do and places to eat. The expected roll-out of this initiative is 2013.

Lambton County Community Branding Initiative

In 2012 Lambton County embarked on a *Community Branding Initiative* born from the many TSL meetings at which the Chamber stressed there was no place called “Sarnia-Lambton”, but rather a city called Sarnia located in a county called Lambton and that improved representation of Lambton County’s rural areas was needed. The TSL Board agreed that past tourist promotional materials entitled “Sarnia Lambton” did not represent the area’s amenities and attractions in a tourist-focused way, were too geographically and politically specific to resonate with tourists, and did nothing to develop brand or message awareness.

Throughout 2012, a sub-set of TSL Board Directors (including the Chamber’s Manager) and key stakeholders (Alison Mahon/Bluewater Health, Chuck Chrapko/Blue Water Bridge Authority, Cindy Buchanan/Lambton College, Don Anderson/Sarnia-Lambton Business Development Corp., Garry McDonald/Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Marlene Wood/TSL, Vicky Ducharme/Sarnia-Lambton Workforce Development, Edith Wilmot-Quigg/SLEP, Richard Poore/Victoria Theatre), spearheaded by George Mallay of Sarnia Lambton Economic Partnership (SLEP), met to discuss community branding for the county, goals and objectives, fundraising for the initiative, development of an RFP, review and select the successful branding/marketing companies and to initiate the work. The successful branding companies were Northstar (a US-based company recognized for its best-of-breed community branding projects/www.northstarideas.com) and YFactor Marketing (YFactor.com).

The *Community Branding Initiative* is now underway and as part of its role the Chamber submitted a 33-page document outlining the area’s historical, cultural, economic, tourism and chamber profiles.

Final results from the research phase should be available in the spring with expected implementation in the summer.

2013 PLANS & GOALS

Marketing & Advertising

Print Advertising

Print ads will appear in:

- Blue Water Visitors Guide
- Ontario’s West Coast – includes online presence
- Sarnia & Lambton County Travel Guide – includes online presence (note: this publication is renamed “Navigate to great times in Lambton County”; see image below)
- Drayton Festival Playbill – includes online presence
- Pinery Provincial Park Visitors Guide
- Summer Fun Guide – includes online presence
- DayTripping – includes online presence

FIGURE 5 2013 AD FOR "IT STARTS AT THE BEACH"

It starts at the beach...
and ends where you want!

- Swim • Bike • Hike
- Canoe • Camp • Golf
- Drag Race
- Shop • Tour & Taste
- Festivals & Events
- Live Theatre



Grand Bend Tourism.com
 Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce
 1-888-338-2001
 Check online for accommodation availability at:
 GrandBendTourism.com/STAY



Grand Bend
 Where the Beach takes Centre Stage

- Live Theatre
- Festivals & Events
- Tour & Taste
- Shop
- Golf
- Hike
- Swim
- Bike
- Canoe




Grand Bend Tourism.com
 Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce
 1-888-338-2001
 Check online for accommodation availability at:
 GrandBendTourism.com/STAY



FIGURE 4 TSL'S TRAVEL GUIDE COVER



navigate
 2013-2014 travel guide
 TO *great* TIMES
 in Lambton County

Point Edward, Sarnia, Grand Bend, Petrolia,
 Alvinston, Mooretown, Watford, Wyoming,
 Oil Springs, Sombra, Brigden, Forest, Arkona,
 Port Franks, Ipperwash, Florence...



LOOK inside for this symbol for deals and special programs from our advertisers

800.265.0316
 tourismarnialambton.com

2013 Visitor Guide

The 2013 visitor guide has more editorial content than ever before! The guides contents have been organized to match the RTO research results (festivals & events, heritage & culture, recreation, birding, motorsports) as well as key categories such as stay, dine and shop and “move to the lake”.

The Communities & Maps section was expanded in 2012 to include street maps of Forest, Arkona, Ipperwash, Port Franks and Theford. New for 2013, Forest has a Business Directory listing page with their BIA members mapped onto the accompanying Forest map.

The Festivals & Events section incorporates Forest’s events and now takes up three very content filled pages. Emphasis has been placed on our Blue Flag designations for Grand Bend and Port Franks; a designation that makes our marinas and beaches competitively favourable in comparison to other Ontario lakefront communities.

The Theatre section has been expanded to include highlighting not only the Huron County Playhouse, but other theatres within an easy driving distance of a beach stay, such as Petrolia’s Victoria Playhouse, Blyth Festival and Stratford Shakespeare Festival. The message is clear, you can stay at the beach and make it your “home base” while day-visiting surrounding towns.

A Golf section was added to target tourists with recreation as their key travel trigger. In future years, we hope to garner more advertisers in this section.

The Motorsports section has transitioned to a “Sports with Wheels” focus that includes the Grand Bend Motorplex but also opportunities for motorcycling and cycling.

A new section highlighting Other Attractions has been added that draws tourist attention to the Forest Kiwanis Kineto Theatre, not just the Starlite Drive-In, as well as local fitness centres (YMCA at the Legacy Centre, Grand Bend Fitness), indoor pools (Oakwood Inn Resort & Pine Dale Motor Inn), skydiving and mini-golf.

The Shop section editorial was expanded to include farm gate and culinary tourism opportunities.

The Services section highlights WIFI hotspots.

The Communities & Maps section includes “tips for travelers” – drawing tourist attention to the location of the Welcome Centre and the various costs of parking (from free to \$20).

PLAY

WHAT TO DO
Popularly known as “the Grand Bend Area”, together a number of villages and hamlets offer vacation-seekers an idyllic destination to create a fabulous, fun-filled experience. Sprinkled amongst a number of communities – Arkona, Forest, Grand Bend, Theford, Port Franks, Boanquet, Northville, Dashwood, St. Joseph, Zurich, Parkhill, Bayfield and Exeter – you’ll discover sandy beaches, outdoor activities and great attractions.

IT STARTS AT THE BEACH...
Build sandcastles or just relax on our beautiful, soft, clean sandy beaches and linger to watch a stunning sunset for which this area is famous.

Enjoy camping, boating, canoeing, fishing, swimming, hiking, biking, golfing, auto racing, bird-watching, shopping, antiquing or soak up the culture of local live theatres, art galleries and studios.

BLUE FLAG BEACH & MARINA
The Main Beach and Marina in Grand Bend and Port Franks are designated Blue Flag status. This means you can be assured of the water quality, safety (life guards) and amenities, such as clean and accessible restroom and change-room facilities, accessible panoramic viewing deck, concession stand, and no camping or driving allowed on the beach, including no access by dogs (other than the parking lot and concrete areas).

Grand Bend beach and marina and Port Franks marina have enjoyed uninterrupted Blue Flag status since 2009. Visit BlueFlag.org for more information.

Photo Credit: Carol McLeod

www.grandbendtourism.com | 1-888-326-2001

Festivals & Events

FEBRUARY
Grand Bend Winter Carnival — February 14-17, 2014, Grand Bend 519-233-2321 | grandbendcarnival@gmail.com | GrandBendWinterCarnival.com
Multi-event, family-friendly festival with a kids program (magic show, mud science, moose night), horse-drawn carriage rides, parade, outdoor and indoor sports tournaments, live music and fireworks.

MARCH
Return of the Tundra Swans — March 9-31, 2013
Featuring talks at the Landon Heritage Museum 519-243-2600 | ReturnOfTheSwans.com | heritage.museum@county-lambton.on.ca
10025 Museum Road, Box south of Grand Bend
The first stop for tundra swans heading to Canada's Arctic after leaving their Aralyland wintering grounds. See thousands of birds, geese and migrating tundra swans.

Paint Ontario — March 9-31, 2013
Lambton Heritage Museum – Gallery/Exhibition Room | 519-243-2600 | PaintOntario.com
17th Annual Art Show, Competition & Sale of more than 100 selected pieces of representational art from 300+ artists across Ontario. Daily 11am to 5pm.

Easter in the Park — March 30, 2013, Rotary Civic Square, Forest
Family-fun begins 10am; Kids “Egg Scramble” starts 10:30am.

APRIL
Pedal the Pinery — April 28, 2013
519-243-1521 | www.pinerypark.on.ca/pedal_pinery.html
Blue Walk fundraiser for park improvements. Registration 12pm.

MAY
Grand Bend Area Studio Tour – “Arts, Eats & Beets” — May 4 & 5, 2013
Grand Bend & Port Franks – Multiple locations
519-238-1472 | GrandBendStudioTour.com | gbatour@img.ca
Annual studio and gallery tour features 24+ artists working in a range of media. Saturday 10am - 5pm / Sunday 11am - 5pm.

Grand Bend Farmers’ Market — Wednesdays, May 22 to October 9, 2013
The Colonial parking lot, Grand Bend | 226-520-1144 | GrandBendFarmersMarket.ca
Open 9am to 1pm. Local, producer-based, market featuring fruit, vegetables, meats, cheeses, organic produce, baked goods, arts & crafts, jewellery, flowers, eggs & more.

Forest Farmers’ & Artisans’ Market — Fridays, May 24 to October 11
519-238-1472 | 226-520-1144 | ForestFarmersMarket@gmail.com
Open 9am to 1pm. Local producers and artisans. Seasonal products: fruits, vegetables, meats, artisanal, preserves, maple syrup, jam & jellies, baked goods, hand crafted items.

Spring Fling Day — May 24, 2013, Forest
Various events starting 10am to have to look off spring with a story time, farmers market, town BBQ, busker acts and spring fling show.

JUNE
Drive ‘N Live — June 15, 2013
Grand Bend Main Beach | 519-238-2001 | GrandBendOptimistClub.ca
Annual all-day vintage car show with end-of-day dinner and dance. Car Show from 9am; Dinner & dance start at 5:30pm.

Web & Electronic

New for 2013, we are running a Google Adwords campaign specifically to target the online accommodation seeker with the goal of driving them to the Stay page on which the Accommodation Checker widget is published.

Since the system only launched in June 2012 and we had already committed our marketing budget by that time, we were unable to promote this new feature.

The money obtained due to the fact that we are running a consolidated system under the auspices of a not-for-profit will be equally matched by the Tourism Services budget.

Expected launch for the Adwords campaign is spring 2013 and will run for the remainder of the year.

Sponsorship & Event-based Promotions

- Doors Open Sponsorship
- HTA Tourism & Brochure Swap Event

HTA TOURISM & BROCHURE SWAP EVENT

This year the event will be held in Exeter and the Chamber’s Manager – Susan Mills - will be playing Tour Guide for the Bus Tour, which will tour attendees through Exeter to Shipka to Grand Bend. The Tour will highlight Starlite Drive-In, Oakwood Inn Resort, Grand Bend Motorplex, Huron County Playhouse, Grand Bend’s Main Street (“Blue Flag status”), River Road Art Gallery & Culinary Tourism Cluster, Lambton County Heritage Museum, and Pinery Provincial Park.

TSL TOURISM & BROCHURE SWAP EVENT

NEW for TSL, Marlene Wood and team is in process of planning and implementing a similar tourism and brochure swap event as the long-term successful HTA event. We will participate in the TSL event. Date and details yet to be announced.

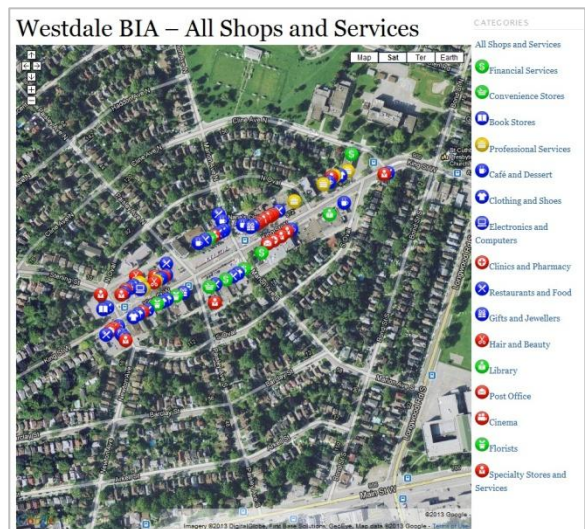
New Connections

Geo-Street Mapping Project

Way-finding has long been identified as a major obstacle for visitors to an area and this includes being able to find a restaurant or retailer or ATM of one’s choice.

The Chamber has identified “GeoStreet”, a product developed by *The Centre for Community Study Urban Research* (www.communitystudy.ca), as a cost-effective, easily implemented and customer-focused mapping plug-in that would help Lambton Shores visitors find what they’re looking for.

Hosted by the provider, the “feed” will display on both the Forest BIA’s website (shopforest.ca) and GrandBendTourism.com. Retailers, attractions, festivals and events, hiking trails, beaches etc can all be mapped as



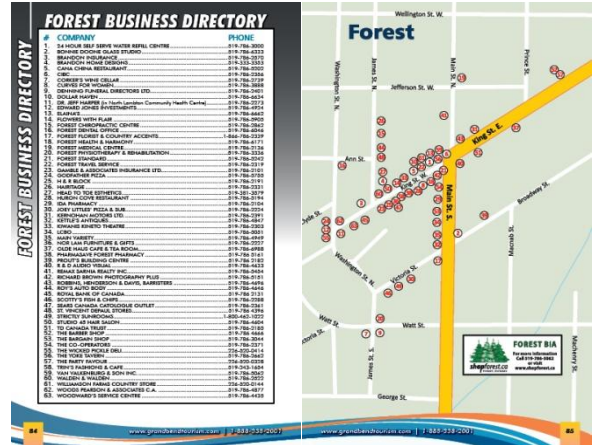
overlays to underlying Google maps. The user can turn the categories on or off as needed. The plug-in is mobile ready, so a visitor utilizing a smart-phone can get turn-by-turn directions from where they are to where they need to be.

This project is underway and is expected to launch for spring 2013. For examples, visit www.geostreet.ca/westdalebia.

Forest BIA & Chamber Working Together

The Chamber met with the Board of Directors of the Forest BIA October 24, 2012 to discuss how our two organizations might be able to work together on joint initiatives for mutual benefit and coordinate our events and efforts relative to keeping tourists circulating and spending money within Lambton Shores.

From this first and positive meeting, we agreed to two immediate opportunities with future joint retail events a possibility. In addition to the Geo-Street Mapping Project, the BIA and Chamber agreed to present the BIA Business Directory and corresponding street-level map together in the 2013 visitor's guide in the same way as the Grand Bend Business Directory and map is handled.



APPENDIX

The Economic Impact of tourism in RTO 1 in 2010

This report was generated by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism & Culture's TREIM model January 29, 2013.

Note: The Ministry of Tourism and Culture does not take any responsibility for inputs that the user has provided, nor for the interpretation of the results.

1. Introduction

This report provides an estimate of the economic impact that tourism is expected to have on Ontario's economy, in terms of Gross Domestic Product, employment and taxes generated. The analysis is based on the following information the user has provided to the MTC's Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model:

Number of Visitors for Activity (or Event) of Type Festivals/Fairs

Origin	Same Day Visits		Overnight Visits	
	Total No. of Visitors	% of Visitors' Origin	% of Visitors' Origin	Avg. Length of Stay (nights)
Ontario	8,964	66%	34%	2
Rest of Canada	117	5%	95%	6
USA	2,445	75%	25%	2
Overseas	116	30%	70%	13
Total	11,642			

Given that the detailed breakdown of spending by the above visitors on category, such as transportation, accommodation, etc. is not available from the user, the TREIM utilized the average expenditure of visitors in RTO 1 with characteristics closest to those provided by the user from Statistics Canada's 2009 Travel Survey of Residents of Canada and the International Travel Survey to generate the detailed spending as followings (in dollars):

Travel Services	\$0
Public Transportation	\$64,013
Private Transportation - Rental	\$11,417
Private Transportation - Operation	\$175,206
Local Transportation	\$6,072
Accommodation	\$120,378
Food & Beverage - At Stores	\$107,899
Food & Beverage - At Restaurants/Bars	\$316,469
Recreation & Entertainment	\$261,840
Retail - Clothing	\$104,214
Retail - Other	\$37,755
Total	\$1,205,262