

Shaping the Future: City of Lancaster's Tourism Master Plan

Engaging Our Community for a Thriving Local Economy



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Why Plan for Tourism

- Tourism Drives Local Economy
 - Visitors spend millions in Pennsylvania
 - Supports stores, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment venues
 - Creates local jobs
 - Stimulates further business investment and development
- Cultural and Community Benefits
 - Enhances cultural exchange and understanding
 - Supports the preservation of historic resources
 - Catalyzes investments in public spaces and infrastructure
 - Fosters civic pride and strengthens community identity



Pennsylvania Tourism

As a four-season destination strategically located within driving distance of multiple major U.S. population centers, **Pennsylvania's tourism industry represents one of the state's largest economic engines.** In 2022, the industry generated \$76.7 billion in economic impact, supported 486,871 jobs, contributed \$4.7 billion in state and local taxes, and attracted 192.4 million visitors.





Lancaster County and City Tourism is Big Business

9.9 Million

Visitors in 2023

\$2.6 Billion

Direct Visitor Spending

25,679

Total Jobs Supported

Source – Tourism Economics, report created for Discover Lancaster



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Why a Tourism Master Plan?

- Goal of enhancing the local economy, supporting businesses, and celebrating the city's rich cultural heritage.
- Aligns with newly adopted comprehensive plan (Our Future Lancaster)
- Aims to guide tourism development, promotion, and investment over the next decade.

Vision for our City

Lancaster City envisions a future where authentic, sustainable tourism enriches our historic community, empowers the local economy, and enhances quality of life for all residents while elevating our city's reputation as the vibrant cultural and economic heart of Pennsylvania Dutch Country.



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Our Goals

The Tourism Master Plan has three goals:

1. Set the community's tourism goals & priorities
2. Guide future destination development planning efforts and investments
3. Identify key projects and promotional outreach priorities for the Bureau of Tourism & Promotion

PROJECT FUNDED BY



Pennsylvania
Department of Community
& Economic Development



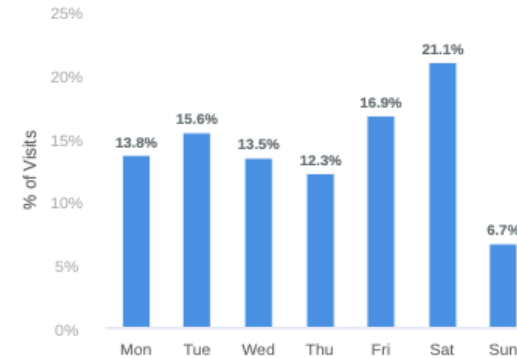
Tourism Objectives

- Generate **sustainable economic growth** through the local tourism economy
- More authentically and **consistently communicate** the community's uniquely welcoming, historic, and multi-faceted **value proposition to visitors**
- Position tourism as a catalyst for economic development, **attracting future investment and growth opportunities** to the local economy
- Strengthen the City's position as the **economic hub of Lancaster County** and the broader Dutch Country Roads region
- **Preserve and enhance the independent business ecosystem** that makes Lancaster City distinctive
- Improve quality of life for residents by **leveraging visitor revenue to enhance public services** while reducing local tax burden

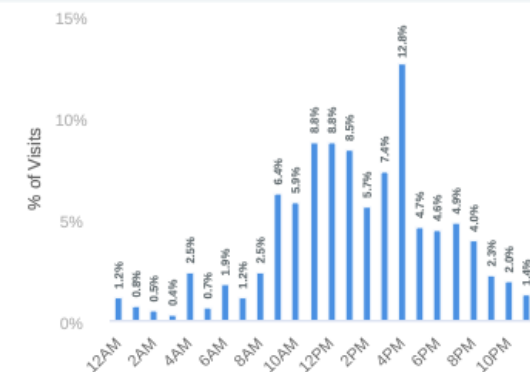
Tourism Master Plan and Data

- Tourism Master Plan
 - City's first intentional plan for tourism development.
 - 10-year timeframe.
 - Based on quantitative and qualitative data.
- Data-Informed Decision-making
 - Utilizing technology to study how visitors move around Lancaster.

Visitation Times - Day of Week
Visitation by day of week [learn more](#)

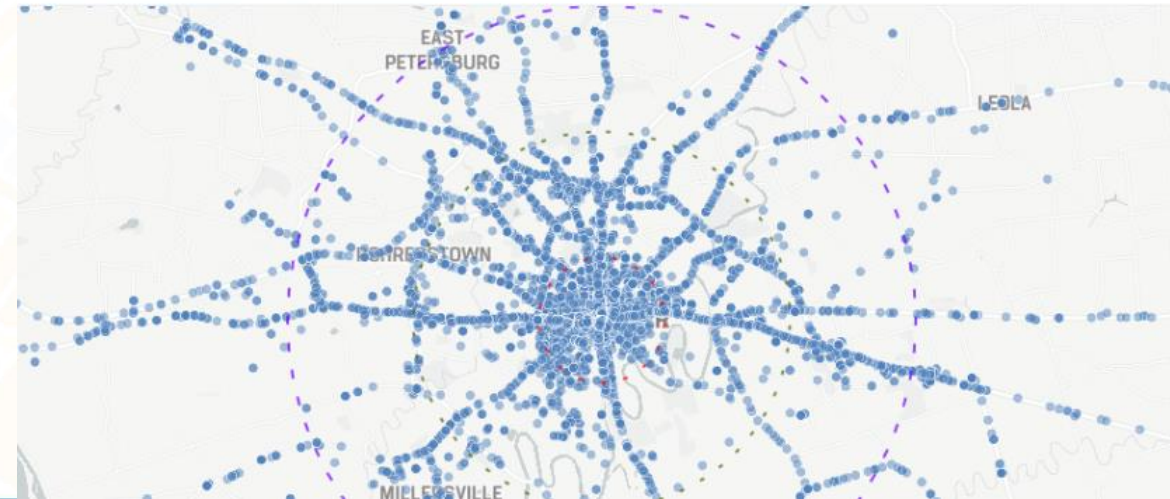


Visitation Times - Time of Day
Visitation by time of day [learn more](#)



Pathing

Where visitors were seen 30 mins before and after a visit to a location [learn more](#)



Engaging Our Community & Partners

3,000 Community Survey Responses

2 Validation Sessions (50+)

2 Business Community Sessions (30+)

14 Focus Groups

100+ One-on-One Interviews

3,500 Engaged Stakeholders



Key Insights from Our Community

Several descriptors emerged consistently across all data collection channels:

- **Diverse and Multicultural:** Residents take particular pride in Lancaster's status as one of America's most diverse cities per capita
- **Independent and Creative:** residents, non-profit leaders, and businesses all put strong emphasis on supporting local independent entrepreneurs and linked this need to the ability to maintain the city's unique character
- **Artistic and Welcoming:** There was strong and consistent recognition of both the formal arts (inclusive of performing arts) scene and the creative spirit that permeates daily life
- **Safe, Friendly, and Walkable:** Despite some noted concerns about the perception of safety, residents consistently described a safe, friendly, and welcoming community that they all said they feel comfortable exploring on foot
- **Historic and Beautiful:** the community showed deep appreciation for the way the community blends and balances its charming architectural heritage with contemporary vibrancy

Residents also expressed desire for change

They felt largely left out of the County's tourism program: Residents reported felt the County's promotional narrative and promotional strategy was mostly about the "Amish," "Rural farmland" and "buffets" and didn't adequately cover what their urban setting had to offer. They wanted to see the city invest in city-centric marketing: 90% of survey participants felt increased tourism and visitation was good for the city. Many felt the city had lots of unique assets and attractions to offer, that the city's unique urban environment was worthy of dedicated promotion, and perhaps that marketing needed to try to attract a "different type of traveler."

Increased attention on History and Heritage: Residents reported they were proud of the city's diverse history and unique heritage and the many ways it connects with the larger American Story. They expressed that they hoped this plan would help elevate these stories and connection points.

Return to the Arts: Participants were proud of the local arts scene but several expressed that this needed renewed attention

More Culinary Storytelling: Residents were incredibly proud of the local food scene. They felt the story extends well beyond their well-known markets and includes fresh local food that has evolved from a variety of global traditions.

Opportunities, a reprise!

- Independent retail
- Diverse museums
- Artist community
- Central location w/ multi-modal access
- Food scene
- Hotels and STR's
- Safe, clean, walkable

Challenges

- No clear brand identity for the City (within larger, well-established County tourism brand)
- No consistent revenue stream to support coordinated marketing efforts = limited/inconsistent reach
- Perceptions/experience around safety and parking availability
- Inconsistent business hours

Additional Opportunities

- Return of business travel and "bleisure"
- State focus on tourism and increased funding
- Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center
- 2026 = World Cup and Sesquicentennial

Planning for 2025 and Beyond

- Final Plan released in early 2025 (draft plan currently in review)
- Plan designed to be implemented over the next ten years
 - Each recommendation has a short term (1-3 years) mid-term (4-7 years) and long-term (9-10 years) target.
- Welcome Center Renovation
- Tourism rebrand for the City of Lancaster
- Continue to build coalition partnerships with Discover Lancaster, Regional DMOs, and State Office of Tourism & Promotion

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