

# Report to our community



GRAND ISLAND  
NEBRASKA

*Convention & Visitors Bureau*



# Mission: Grow the tourism economy

Dear industry and community stakeholders:

The Hall County-Grand Island Convention & Visitors Bureau (GICVB) board of directors and staff is committed to marketing our community and being a resource to the hospitality industry. We take great pride in the responsibility we have to serve those who rely on these efforts.

The GICVB is the organizational focal point for the local industry providing support and strategic direction to the industry. I hope that this report provides you with a better understanding of our efforts and how, along with our business and community partners, we provide value to Grand Island.

Through our programs of sales, services, and marketing, we hope to connect to our visitors and potential visitors in a substantial and meaningful way.

As we develop new economic and visitor experiences along with our partners in the Grow Grand Island initiative, we remain committed to our core mission to grow the tourism economy and identify Grand Island as a destination.

Brad Mellema  
Executive Director



**Brad Mellema, Executive Director**

Tricia Beem, Assistant Director  
Liz Gerberding, Convention Services  
Paul Nielsen, Marketing Manager

**Annual hotel revenue:  
\$31,000,000**

**+3.4%  
Hotel  
Revenues**

**and define Grand Island as a destination.**

# **FY 2016-2017 By the Numbers**

## **Details**

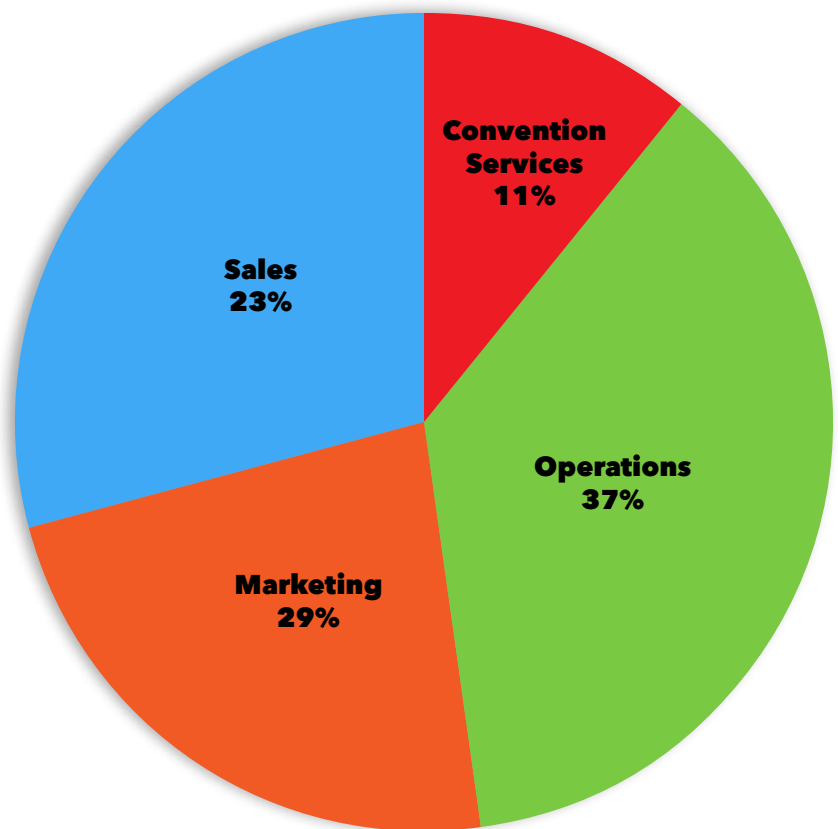
- 24 hotel properties
- 1,890 hotel rooms
- Candlewood Suites opened in early 2017 adding 88 rooms.

The GICVB is a not-for-profit organization that brings together businesses, attractions, and organizations that rely on tourism. The GICVB was founded in 1982 and operates under the authority of the Hall County Board of Supervisors. In Grand Island, the current lodging tax is 6%, 2% of which funds the entire budget of the GICVB. No local property taxes are use in our operation.

2% Visitor Promotion Fund

2% Visitor Improvement Fund

2% Heartland Events Center Marketing Fund (city)  
= 6% total lodging tax



# Marketing Grand Island

As our city enters a new era of growth, we have focused our marketing efforts into five areas. This allows us to have an identifiable brand in areas that have the largest potential effect on the tourism business sector in our community. It is important that we have a recognizable brand, even across our five segments so that the image begins to build over time with our audiences. We want people to recognize our brand.

We are highlighting people who exemplify each of our marketing focus areas at a high level. We show buildings

and facilities, but feel that people have a deeper connection to introduce potential customers to our community.

We have spent time upgrading the look of two of our most visible sales tools this past year, the Grand Island Vibe magazine as well our VisitGrandIsland.com website. They are designed to be simple and elegant providing the user with basic travel information as well as encouraging them to explore more deeply and spend more time with what makes Grand Island great.

## Market segment 1

### **Cranes, wildlife, nature**

#### The cranes are our key attraction

The sandhill crane migration is an enduring identifier for Grand Island and for Nebraska. Every year, we attract visitors from all fifty states and dozens of countries largely during the month of March to witness the event. This is important business and one that is certainly open for growth in future years. In close partnership with the Crane Trust, we have produced maps, promotional materials, and have placed print and electronic advertisements to provide a consistent message.

Media tours have been conducted each of the last three years in partnership with the Nebraska Tourism Commission and reach millions of readers through editorial content.



## Market segment 2

### **Agriculture**

#### Our roots

Agriculture is at the very heart of who we are in Grand Island. Most area jobs are either directly related to or support the agriculture industry. With the addition of the Fonner Park livestock complex that houses the Nebraska State Fair and creation of the Grand Island Livestock Complex Authority, cattle shows have become a significant part of our landscape. The livestock complex authority is charged with promoting the buildings to prospective cattle and livestock associations and sales.

It is clear that these facilities, along with events such as Husker Harvest Days, are a real identifier for Grand Island.





# and define Grand Island as a destination.



Market segment 4

## **Sports events**

### **The shooting park is a bullseye**

This market continues to grow. The Heartland Events Center has brought in a tremendous number of annual sporting events. The Veterans Athletic Complex is a great addition to our city, and the Heartland Public Shooting Park remains a regional gem that we must keep using to grow the tourism economy in Grand Island. Fonner Park draws people in to town not just during race season, but also for events like the Appaloosa and 4-H horse shows.

Market segment 5

## **Us – marketing to ourselves**

### **Creating 50,000 sales people**

Who better than Us to sell ourselves. Grand Island needs to think of itself as a great place to host events, conduct business, and entertain. To that end, we are instituting the Us Campaign to educate ourselves about some of the hidden treasures of our community. We have a lot to offer guests of all ages and interests and equipping our residents with understanding about what we offer can be a powerful marketing tool.



Market segment 3

## **Meetings and group tours**

### **A passion for hospitality**

Providing resources and information to group tours and meeting planners is a bedrock activity of your CVB. We are the local boots on the ground that meeting and group tour planners depend on to get events pulled together.

Each group has unique needs. Efficient and professional services have an impact, in partnership with local conference properties, in attracting and retaining events. Services include information packets, name tags, registration assistance, event consultation, tour assistance, site selection, lodging blocks, and event marketing.



## Personas

We market to people. Having a general idea of who these people are is a necessary place to begin when crafting a marketing plan. The following personas are the groups of people that we target with our marketing efforts the majority of the time.

“A marketing persona is a composite sketch of a key segment of your audience. For content marketing purposes, you need personas to help you deliver content that will be most relevant and useful to your audience.”

-Ardath Albee

### Baby boomers or the AAA crowd

This demographic has a lot of money and free time with which to travel. Attributes include

- If not retired, on the cusp of retirement
- Has disposable income
- Has time to travel
- Enjoys heritage/history sites (Stuhr Museum)
- Motivated by nostalgia (reads Nebraska Life, shops for antiques)



### Meeting or Show Attendees

The increasing number of livestock shows in the Fonner Park livestock buildings make this a significant demographic for us. One of our goals is to lengthen their stay. Attributes include

- Travel as a family, moms do most of the planning
- Ages range from infants to grandparents
- Busy with conference schedules, but take in the sites if they can
- Thrifty
- Tech savvy



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## Nature Enthusiasts

Serious birders travel from thousands of miles to fulfill their lists. Attributes include

- Leisure tourists
- Serious about their pursuits, carrying around either lists or cameras or spotting scopes
- Average age 55
- Likes to combine their birdwatching with other natural and cultural activities



## Regional Families

Grand Island draws people in from the surrounding counties on a regular basis. They come for entertainment, shopping, and dining. Attributes include

- Leisure tourists
- Thrifty
- Shoppers who also take in local sites
- Lives within approximately 100 miles of Grand Island
- Mother plans the trip



## Millennials

Travel is a priority for many millennials. Attributes include

- Average age 30
- Grew up with technology, lives with mobile
- Fashion aware
- Foodie
- Seeks adventure and likes to discover hidden gems, they don't need lots of details planned out ahead of time
- Motivated by meaning



# Mission: Grow the tourism economy

**Free** Special visitor guide for Grand Island, NE  
**grand island**  
 Issue 3 | Winter-Spring 2015

**FREE** Special visitor guide for Grand Island, NE  
**grand island**  
 Issue 8 | Summer-Autumn 2017

**things to**

**#HearGI**

**4-H roots deepen in Grand Island**

**Attractions**

**Cairo Roots Museum**  
 300 Astor St ( Hwy) • 308-481-4725 • [CairoRootsMuseum.org](http://CairoRootsMuseum.org)  
 Preserving the history of Cairo and northwest Hall County including the townships of Mayfield, South Loup, Cameron, and Harrison. Open Saturday 10am-Noon or by appointment.

**Fonner Park & Heartland Events Center**  
 700 E Sully Park Rd • 308-382-4515 • [HeartlandEventsCenter.com](http://HeartlandEventsCenter.com)  
 The tradition continues in Grand Island when the gates open for live thoroughbred horse racing every February through May at Fonner Park. The events center hosts concerts, monster trucks, indoor football, trade shows and just about anything else you can think of.

**Fred's Flying Circus**  
 503 E 4th St • 308-584-8800  
 Automotive sculptor Fred Schmitt has created a garden of flying cartoon cars brimming with detail next to his shop.

**The Grand Theatre**  
 316 W 3rd St • 308-381-2607 • [GrandMovieTheatre.com](http://GrandMovieTheatre.com)  
 This recently restored movie house offers an experience you won't find at any modern cinemaplex for less than half the price. Films are shown Friday-Sunday nights in this 1937 art-deco theatre which is also available for events during the week.

**Heartland Public Shooting Park**  
 678 W Hinkle Hwy • 308-385-5044 • [HeartlandPublicShootingPark.com](http://HeartlandPublicShootingPark.com)  
 This 420-acre venue boasts lighted skeet ranges, lighted trap ranges, a 10-station sporting clay range, complete rifle and pistol ranges from 25 to 600 yards and archery ranges. The park plays host to regional and national events every year, and a small RV park is available.

**The Townsley-Murdock Site**  
 Alta Rd & Guenther Rd • 800-658-3178 • [VisitGrandIsland.com](http://VisitGrandIsland.com)  
 Just west of Grand Island, you can see some of the only remaining wagon ruts or swales on the Mormon Trail. This 2.4-acre prairie has never been plowed.

**Railroad Hot Spot**  
 Downtown Grand Island • 800-658-3178 • [VisitGrandIsland.com](http://VisitGrandIsland.com)  
 An average of 140 trains pass through Grand Island every day. A train-watching park is in the works downtown and north of downtown is the restored Burlington Station which hosts events and houses the Tri-City Model Railroad Association's layout. Stahr Museum offers static train displays and an 1890s railroad town.

**Raising Nebraska**  
 501 E Fonner Park Rd • [RaisingNebraska.net](http://RaisingNebraska.net)  
 Raising Nebraska is a 25,000 square foot agriculture display detailing how our food goes from farm to fork. Its interactive displays include a walkable map, a touch screen dining table, a full size center pivot section and more. An adjacent garden is under development. Open Tuesday 9-11am, Thursday 2-4pm and by appointment.

**Byways & Sandhills**  
**Lincoln Highway Scenic & Historic Byway**  
 US Highway 30 • [LincolnHighwayScenicByway.com](http://LincolnHighwayScenicByway.com)  
 An abundance of Lincoln Highway landmarks can be found in the Grand Island area including the one-of-a-kind Seeding Mile, Kensingers Service Station, the first FCC monitoring station and more.

**Loup Rivers Scenic Byway**  
 Highway 90/11, Wood River to Hering • [LoupRiverscenicByway.com](http://LoupRiverscenicByway.com)  
 Pass through pristine rolling farmland into the scenic Loup River Basin and continue on to the supreme silence of the Sandhills. It's also home of the famous 300+ mile Junk Jaunt.

**Derr House Prairie**  
 13608 S Prairie River Dr (Hwyd River) • 402-624-4191  
 The Nature Conservancy's Derr House offers public trails through restored prairies and sponsors an annual prairie day with tours and lectures.

**Griffith Prairie & Farm**  
 Prairie River Valley • 402-624-5325 • [PrairiePains.org](http://PrairiePains.org)  
 The Griffith Prairie and Farm is headquarters for the Prairie Plains Resource Institute which maintains and restores Nebraska ecosystems. Griffith Prairie's 590 acres offers trails on open prairie, gulleys, steep cliffs, and half a mile of riverfront. An education center is being constructed on the property as well.

**Outdoor Learning Center**  
 911 E Fonner Park Rd • 308-382-4400  
 The Groundwater Guardian's learning center educates the public about water quantity and quality, groundwater stewardship, natural filtration techniques, efficient water use, and the Ogallala Aquifer. The Grand Island Library installed a similar bioswale in the summer of 2014.

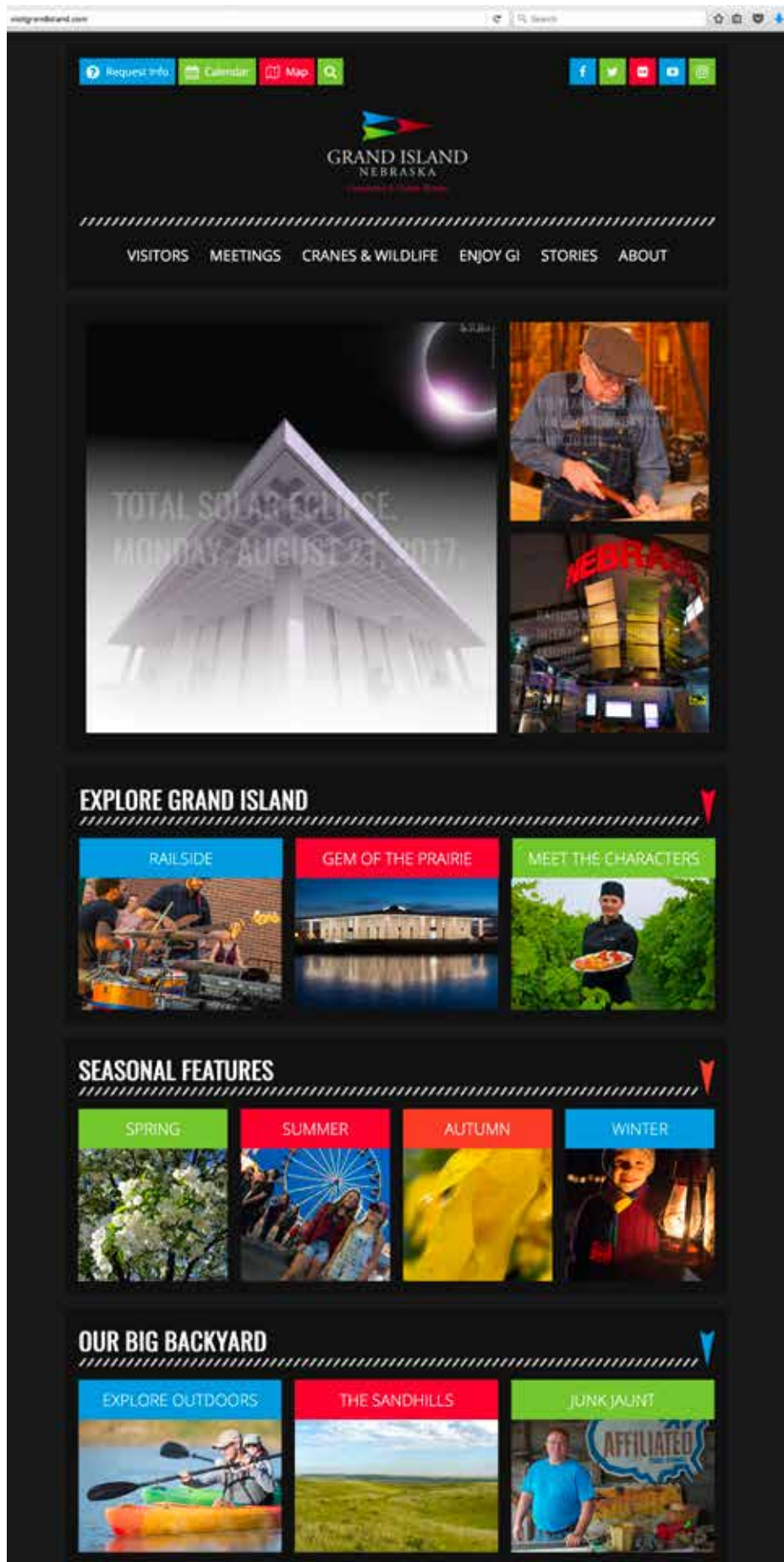
**Spring Migration**  
 Prairie River Valley • 800-658-3178 • [VisitGrandIsland.com](http://VisitGrandIsland.com)  
 National Geographic called the annual migration of the sandhill cranes one of the two greatest migrations in North America. More than 500,000 Sandhill Cranes descend on the region every spring, the largest concentration of cranes anywhere on the planet. See them up close on a guided tour through the Crane Trust Nature & Visitor Center.

VisitGrandIsland.com | 15

Printed twice annually, The Grand Island Vibe magazine is a resource for both travelers and residents. 45,000 copies are printed of each issue finding there way inti hotels, waiting rooms all around Grand Island, and as an insert in the Grand Island Independent newspaper. Many other copies are sent out of town when requested and to visitor centers around the state.



# and define Grand Island as a destination.



VisitGrandIsland.com was given a significant overhaul in the spring of 2017. Most of the work done was behind the scenes, however quite a bit of work went into updating the appearance in order to improve the experience for mobile users (which make up more than half of our visitors) and improving speed.

## 2016-17 statistics

Website statistics are for the fiscal year. While recorded accurately, they should still be read with a grain of salt.

### Overview

Visitors: 84,080  
Bounce rate: 26%  
Time on site: 3 min 37 sec

### Top ten website pages

- Calendar
- Home page
- Attractions
- Sandhill Cranes
- Eclipse
- Lodging
- Dining
- Hotels
- Visitors (defaults to Lodging)
- Activities for Children

### Hardware

Desktop: ~29,225  
Mobile: ~46,150



# Mission: Grow the tourism economy

## Visitor Improvement Fund

The visitor improvement fund is funded by a 2% occupancy tax on Hall County lodging properties. In the past year, the money collected paid \$900,000 towards the city field house and \$2,300,000 towards the Heartland Events Center. Because the field house was paid off early, a grant program was set up to put the extra funds to use around the county.

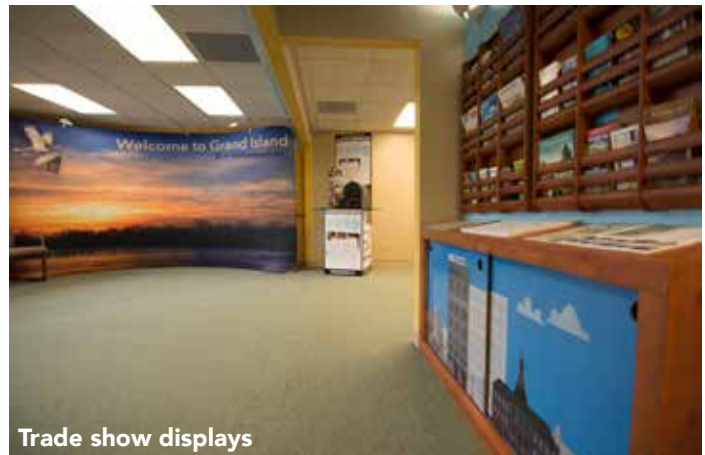
### Grant Program

The Visitor Improvement Fund grant program is administered through the Grand Island Convention and Visitors Bureau. In 2017, the fund granted **\$305,000** to local entities to create new or improve existing visitor attractions and/or facilities within Hall County. Grants were awarded for a variety of project including marketing initiatives, visitor displays at the Crane Trust, and an equine warm up arena.

These grants are funded by the same 2% occupancy tax on Hall County hotels mentioned above. Grant funding may be used to make grants for expanding and improving facilities at existing or new visitor attractions, acquiring or expanding exhibits for existing or new visitor attractions, constructing visitor attractions, or planning for or developing such expansions, improvements, or construction. Projects with potential to increase visibility of and draw overnight guests to Hall County are given priority consideration.



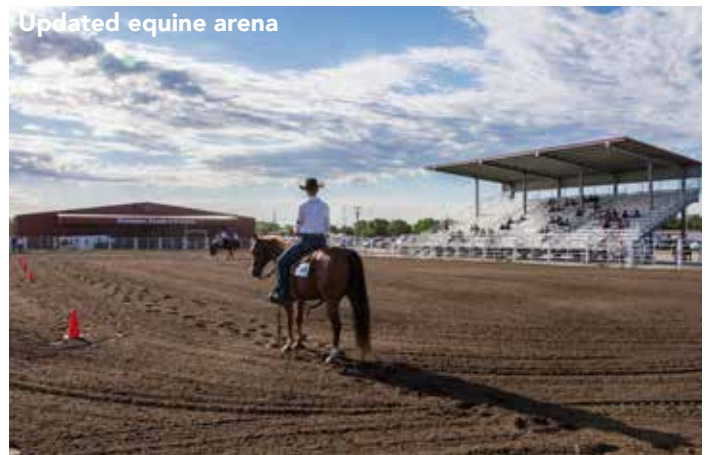
Railside banners



Trade show displays



Airport kiosk



Updated equine arena

and define Grand Island as a destination.

# Partnerships



Visit Nebraska.  
Visit Nice®







Approximately 1,825 post cards mailed in the 2016-17 fiscal year.