

WEST ALLIS TOURISM COMMISSION



2019 Tourism Budget Proposal

Background

Formed in 2016, the West Allis Tourism Commission is responsible for using the room tax revenue that it receives from the municipality for tourism promotion and tourism development in the municipality. Wisconsin law requires that certain percentages of room tax revenues, as discussed below, must be spent on tourism promotion and tourism development. For municipalities that adopted a room tax after May 13, 1994, the room tax rate may be no higher than 8%, and at least 70% of the room tax collections must be dedicated to expenditures related to tourism promotion and development. Therefore, up to 30% of room tax collections may be directed to general municipal expenditures.¹

The Tourism Commissions efforts are intended to not only utilize the room tax revenues to promote tourism in the City of West Allis, but to help the City achieve goal number 1 “Brand/Image/Destination” in the City’s 2017 – 2021 Strategic Plan, which states: The City of West Allis will become the “preferred municipality in the Milwaukee Metropolitan area, the state, and the country for visitors, residents and businesses through focused rebranding, marketing and promotion actions.” Under this goal, strategic action 1-1 states the City will “Formalize a clear image through marketing and brand development process.”

In addition, the Tourism Commission is specifically tasked with promoting the West Allis Farmers Market and West Allis Library as community destinations.

2018 Accomplishments

To support its goals, the Tourism Commission issued an RFP for a marketing agency in late 2016, and in January 2018, began working with Savage Solutions, LLC, a Milwaukee-based marketing firm, to rebrand the City. Brand concepts, including a logo, color scheme, and fonts, was proposed in June. The brand was approved by the Common Council in July, and the requested budget to launch the brand was approved by the Tourism Commission shortly thereafter.

At the time of this writing, the new brand is expected to launch in October of 2018. Savage is in the process of preparing a three year marketing plan for the City, which will include leveraging the West Allis Farmers Market as a key tourism destination and event asset.

2019 Opportunities: Leveraging the Farmers Market

The City of West Allis Five Year Strategic Plan requires a Farmers Market marketing plan that “expands the market’s role as a city wide and regional destination” (Goal 1, Strategic Action 1-5). The first phase of the three year marketing plan Savage Solutions is creating will focus on developing West Allis’ business community and commercial opportunities. Tourism will be a focus in later years of the marketing plan. That is not to say that tourism efforts will not be underway in the meantime; however, a comprehensive approach to marketing West Allis as a tourism destination will be built on the foundations of the first phase of the plan, which will first aim to build commercial opportunities in the City.

The West Allis Farmers Market was identified in Savage’s 2018 marketing research as a key point of pride for West Allis residents and a destination for visitors. In recent years, the Farmers Market has increasingly become an in-demand event venue for public events such as Curds & Kegs and the Christkindlmarkt (both hosted by Eat West Allis), and Iron Chef Milwaukee (hosted by Happy Tails Cat Rescue), among others. There is tremendous potential to not only expand attractions at the Farmers Market regular market days, but also to promote and leverage the market as a public event venue.



With the City’s new brand launching this fall and with the recent hire of a Tourism & Event Coordinator, there is strong opportunity to rebrand the market, restructure its management, and develop a firm marketing campaign that will allow the market to compete in what has become a crowded marketplace.

The West Allis Farmers Market is facing greater competition for shoppers as more neighboring communities develop their own farmers markets. New Berlin, Wauwatosa, Brookfield, Greendale, Greenfield, Oak Creek, Milwaukee Public Market, Shorewood, Riverwest, South Milwaukee, and Waukesha all boast farmers markets. Studies of farmers market shopper demographics report that shoppers travel an average of 6 – 17 miles to attend markets, meaning many choices are available for shoppers in the Milwaukee-metro area.² The City of West Allis needs to continually work to set its market apart, and promote the market heavily to continue to attract to shoppers.

It is recommended that management of the market be assigned to the Tourism and Event Coordinator. This will allow for several advantages over the current management structure:

- As the main point of contact for all City events, the T/E Coordinator will function as the first touchpoint for anyone interested in hosting events at the market, ensuring consistent customer service and clarity of process.
- As part of the Communications Department, the T/E Coordinator will be able to quickly and easily coordinate and execute promotions of Farmers Market events, while also ensuring consistent branding and messaging.
- With knowledge of the competitive market landscape, the tourism industry, and neighboring community events, the T/E Coordinator is best suited to assess current market offerings and propose/source new offerings (including vendors, amenities, etc) to keep the market fresh, engaging, and attractive to visitors.

This model has worked for Oak Creek’s successful farmers market. That city’s tourism coordinator manages the market’s events, calendar, schedules, and works with vendors and volunteers to run the weekly market days and special events. An on site market manager and volunteers are available to

assist guests. The city's health department reviews all vendors to ensure proper permitting. The market offers an array of produce and foods, as well as artisan goods, live music, seminars, and live craft demonstrations. Farmers markets, like Oak Creek's, have continued to diversify their offerings, going beyond food to create lively community gathering places. The West Allis Farmers Market has been slow to evolve with this trend, and with the new City brand and the Six Points neighborhood in redevelopment, the time is ideal for a new approach to support what has become the heart of the community.

Farmers Market 100th Anniversary

In 2019, the West Allis Farmers Market will celebrate its 100th anniversary. To support the City's Strategic Plan Goal, Savage Solutions will develop a unique Farmers Market brand that will launch around the market's 2019 opening. With this in place, promotional items, ad buys, and a 100th anniversary marketing campaign will launch to attract new visitors to the market and delight returning customers.

Promotions/activities may include:

- Farmers Market branded items including t-shirts, seed packets, kids' hats, reusable totes, etc.
- Refresh of Farmers Market Facebook page to promote vendors and activities
- Live music, crafters, and more diverse vendor offerings on market days
- Creating a kid-friendly area at the market, with coloring sheets, chalk art, nutrition information, easy crafts (possible partnership with West Allis West Milwaukee Recreation & Community Services); create Sprouts Program, providing vouchers to children to redeem for fresh vegetables at the market.
- City booth, staffed by city staff or volunteers, to connect visitors and residents with city resources, information, and to sell city-branded items
- New events, such as a farm-to-table dinner prepared by a West Allis-based chef; chef-led "market tours"; and more food tasting opportunities from vendors
- Comprehensive promotions campaign including social media, print ads, video, and radio
- Expansion of content on westallisfarmersmarket.com to include video, vendor stories, etc.

Projected Budget

2019's project budget includes potential expenditures relating to the work proposed by Savage Solutions, LLC. to promote the Farmers Market as a city tourism asset:

INCOME	
Municipal Room Tax Revenue 2018	\$200,000 Estimate
Existing Balance from 2017	\$163,000
2018 Expenditures	\$75,000 Estimate
Anticipated 2018 Carryover	\$288,000 Estimate
EXPENSES	
Marketing Services – Savage Solutions – Phase 2 3 Year Marketing Strategy	\$25,000
Marketing and Promotions (May include: photography, videography, print and digital marketing, advertising, promotional items, etc.)	\$182,925
Events	\$35,000
Wayfinding	\$150,000
Annual website hosting fees	\$1,575
FTE – Tourism & Event Coordinator	\$35,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 429,500
Balance	\$58,500

¹ Wisconsin Legislative Council Information Memorandum: 2015-17 Biennial Budget Revisions to Municipal Room Tax

²https://scholarworks.montana.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1/9902/BykerShanks_JHEN_05_2012_A1b.pdf?sequence=1