

Destination Waconia and its impact on tourism

Imagine a close friend or group of friends are visiting you from out of town; where in Waconia would you take them? How about if it's another couple or family? If you're in charge of planning the day or weekend, what kind of itinerary would you put together? Write it down. I asked this question to a group of Rotarians in a presentation last week, and received a wide array of responses with a multitude of things to do. The Waconia community has a lot to offer visitors, and impacts our local and state economy.

Impact on our state and local economy

In another presentation to the Waconia City Council this month, I presented an overview of our tourism bureau since 2020 and included stats from Explore Minnesota tourism. Tourism is critical to the state's economy, generating \$1.1 billion in state sales tax on \$16.6 billion in leisure and hospitality industry sales, and employed 276,000 workers in 2019. For every dollar spent in MN tourism, marketing returns an estimated \$180 in spending by travelers, and \$18 in local taxes. While down more than 20% from 2019 to 2020, Carver County Tourism grossed over \$174 million in sales, \$11.5 million in State sales tax and employed 3,645 people in private sector employment in 2020.

Investing and supporting in small business is a trait of a successful community

This section is a repeat of other newsletters and articles I've written, but deserves to be said again and again. Our local leisure and hospitality businesses that draw tourism (as well as retail and other businesses) offer unique and quaint experiences. The local owners pay taxes and also donate to kids' sports teams and other non-profit organizations. Let's do all we can to continuously support them not only by patronizing their businesses, but also by leaving a positive review. If there's something you love, don't forget to let the business know how much you appreciate their hospitality. And when your friends are visiting town, encourage them to do the same. Supporting small businesses allows us to continue to be a successful community.

April luncheon - Director of Explore Minnesota Tourism

At the end of the month, the recently appointed Director of Explore Minnesota Tourism, Lauren Bennett McGuinty, will be our guest presenter at the monthly luncheon. She is a leader in the hospitality industry, focused on establishing Minnesota as a top location for visitors from around the world. Waconia plays a part in Minnesota's tourism success. Recently, Lake Waconia was named the #4 of the *10 Quintessential Minnesota Lakes* by Minnesota Monthly Magazine. We're proud of this community and all it has to offer, and are honored to host Minnesota's director of tourism to speak to our chamber. We hope you'll join us on April 28!

Invite your friends to visit, take them out to explore, and enjoy your adventures in Destination Waconia!

-Christine