

Independence Tourism Commission



Transient Guest Tax Program
October 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023



INDEPENDENCE
★PARKS ★RECREATION ★TOURISM★

Mission and Membership

The Independence Tourism Commission was established by Ordinance in 1997. The Commission serves as an advocate for the tourism industry in Independence by educating residents and businesses of the economic, cultural, and historic value of tourism in Independence, promoting cooperation and communication among tourism sites, and addressing issues that affect tourism.

The Commission advises and recommends policies, procedures and programs that benefit tourism in Independence by helping to support the Tourism Division objectives and providing regular feedback to the Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department. The Transient Guest Tax (TGT) is solely dedicated to supporting the promotion, operation and development of tourism-related activities and can only be used for this purpose. The Commission also serves as the Transient Guest Sales Tax Oversight Committee.

The Tourism Commission consists of nine members appointed by the City Council. Commissioners include Chairman Sam Rushay, Lynne Baker, Mike Calvert, Jodi Krantz, Bobby McCutcheon, and John Thornton. Three individuals are scheduled to be appointed in April to fill vacant positions.



Transient Guest Tax Review

The original Transient Guest Tax was approved in 1970 when voters approved a 4% gross receipt tax for hotel stays. Voters increased the tax to 5% in 1979, and later to 6.5% in 2002.

Through February 28, 2023, the tax has generated \$1,523,103, or 77.1%, of the TGT revenue anticipated for this Fiscal Year.

Marketing and Promotions

The marketing and communications efforts for Parks, Recreation & Tourism focuses heavily on social media pages and videos to tell the stories of our community, programs, and venues.

Earned media is another key part of tracking success. Earned media is any content that was not created or paid for by the City. The department has many earned media highlights that are shared with over 200 million people with a reach of 1.26 billion people. The final piece of this report shares the most successful stories from the top-performing posts on social media.

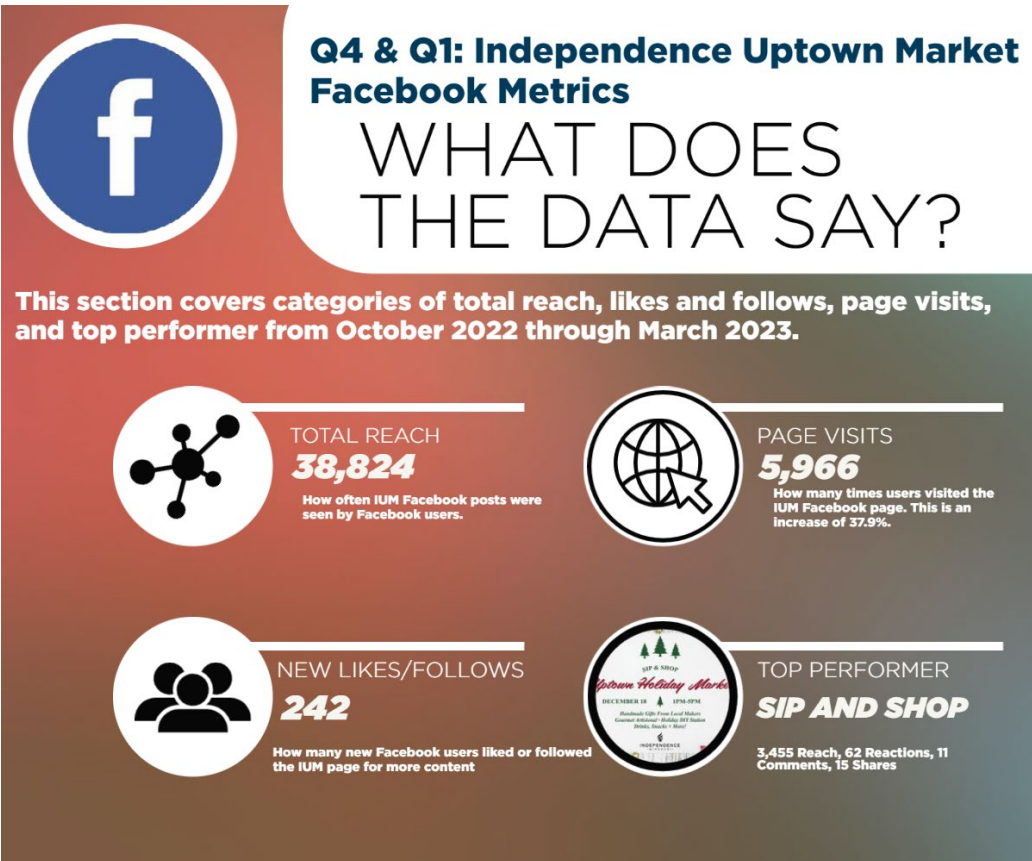
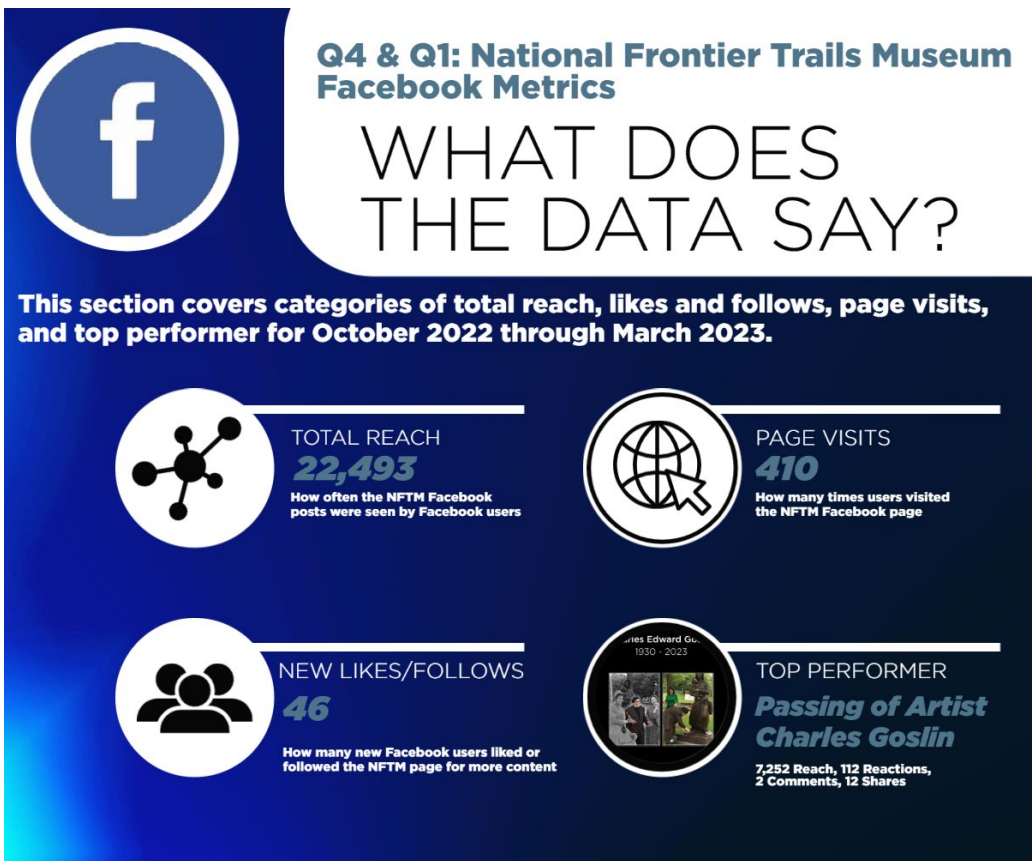
In 2022, the decision was made to bring more of the communications and marketing for tourism and attractions in-house. City staff is now responsible for ad buys, marketing strategy, content development, and daily maintenance and upkeep. A second communications staff member funded by the TGT was added in October to facilitate this change.

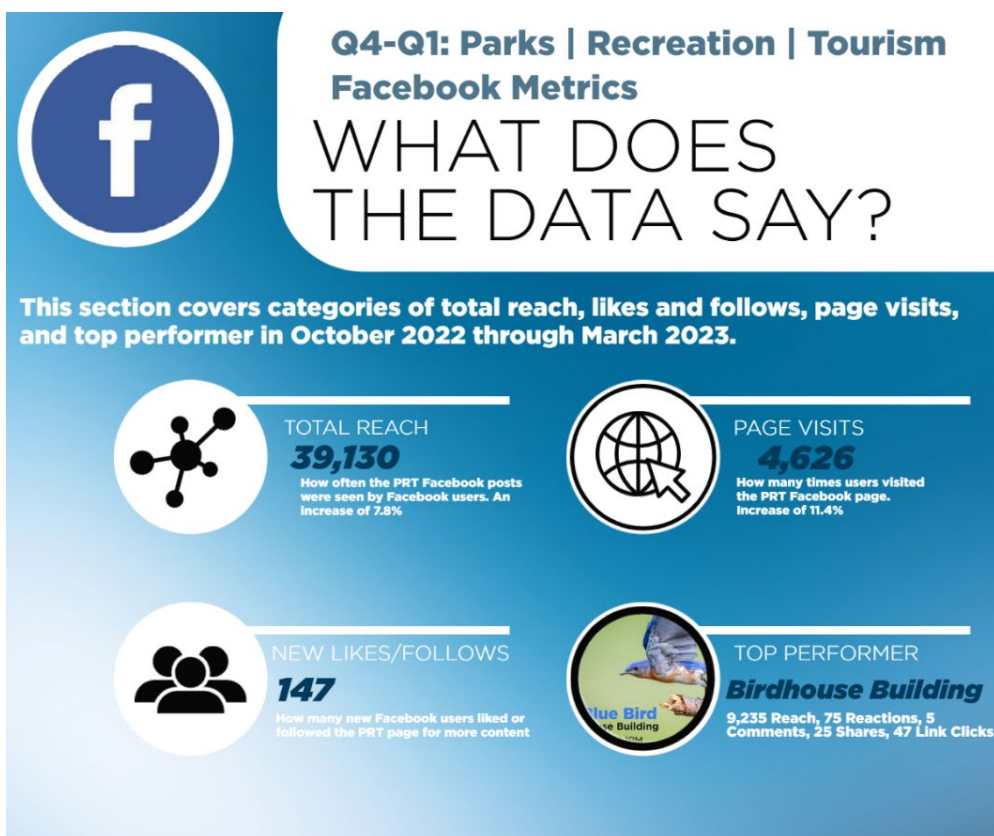
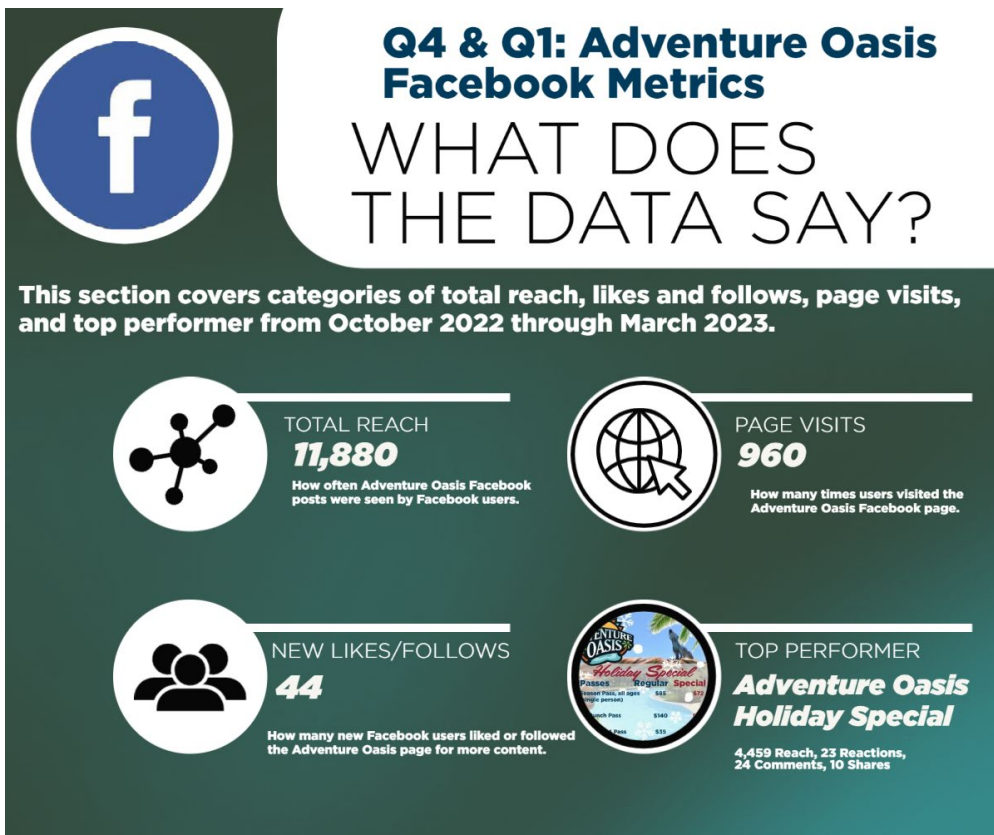
The two communications staff members funded by the Transient Guest Tax are responsible for creating a variety of pieces ranging from blog posts, calendar entries, social media graphics and videos, event promotions, and more. This work heavily overlaps with events and programs in other areas of the Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department. The Communications Team was inspired by the organic growth of 2022, and 2023 is fulfilling the goal to outperform last year.

Facebook

Facebook pages include the George Owens Nature Park, National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence Uptown Market, Adventure Oasis, Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department, and Visit Independence pages. Below are graphics for each page highlighting reach, page visits, new likes and follows, and the top performer over the six months for each Facebook page.





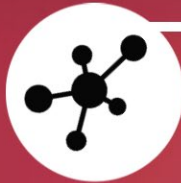




Q4 & Q1: Visit Independence Facebook Metrics

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

This section covers categories of total reach, likes and follows, page visits, and top performer from October 2022 through March of 2023.



TOTAL REACH

32,371

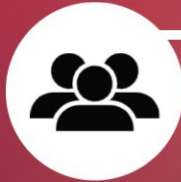
How often Visit Independence Facebook posts were seen by Facebook users



PAGE VISITS

2,085

How many times users visited the Visit Independence Facebook page. Increase of 17.9%



NEW LIKES/FOLLOWS

174

How many new Facebook users liked or followed the Visit Independence page for more content



TOP PERFORMER

Comets Ticket Giveaway

6,887 Reach, 99 Reactions, 81 Comments, 73 Shares

YouTube

Video is an important part of the communications mix, and staff is increasing production of promotional videos for a variety of events, programs, and venues within the City.

The October through March period spotlights the following videos:

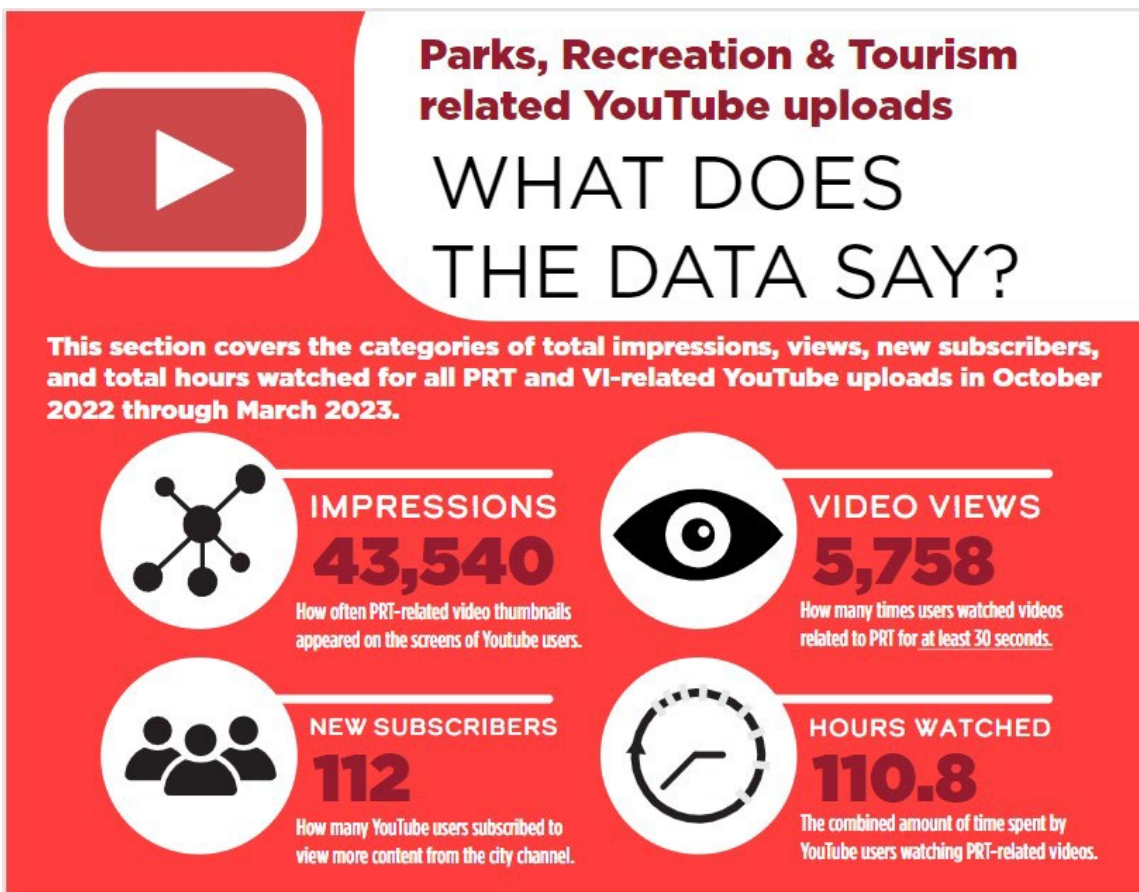
[Water in Independence, Missouri](#)

[Spirits with the Spirits | Vaile Mansion](#)

[Let's Go Chiefs!](#)

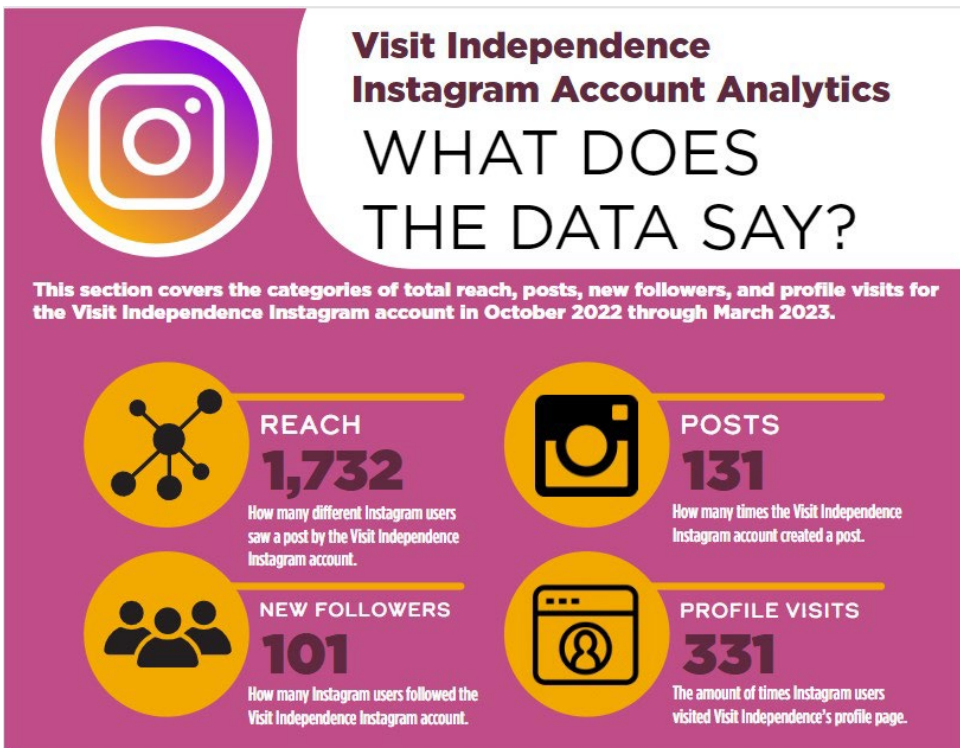
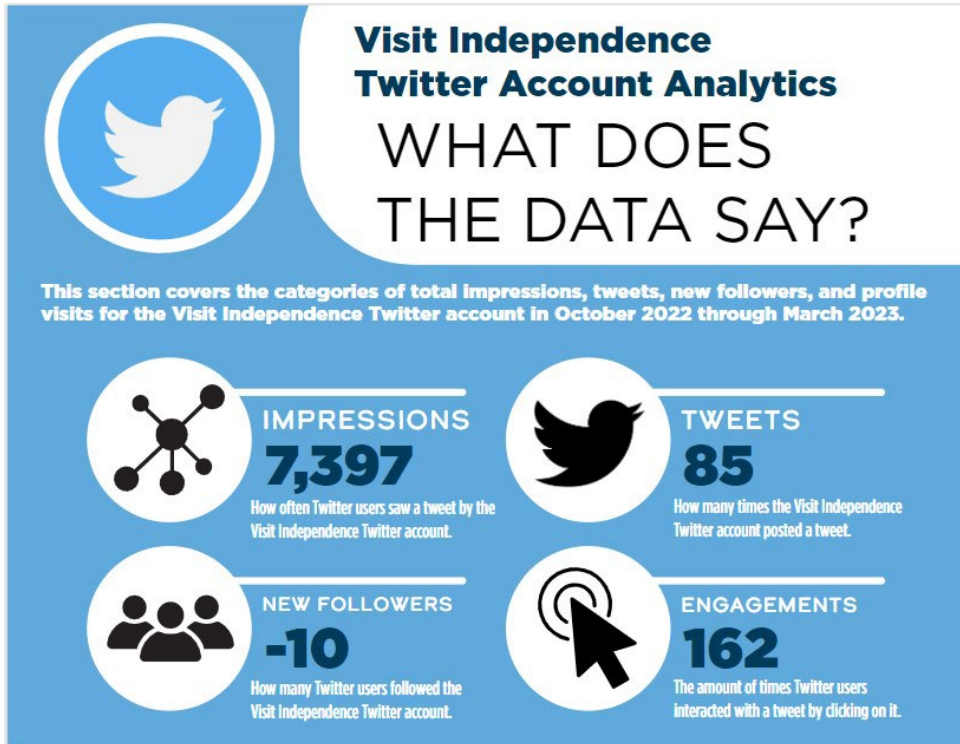
[2022 Winter Solstice Torch-Lit Hike](#)

[Gingerbread House Day](#)



Twitter and Instagram

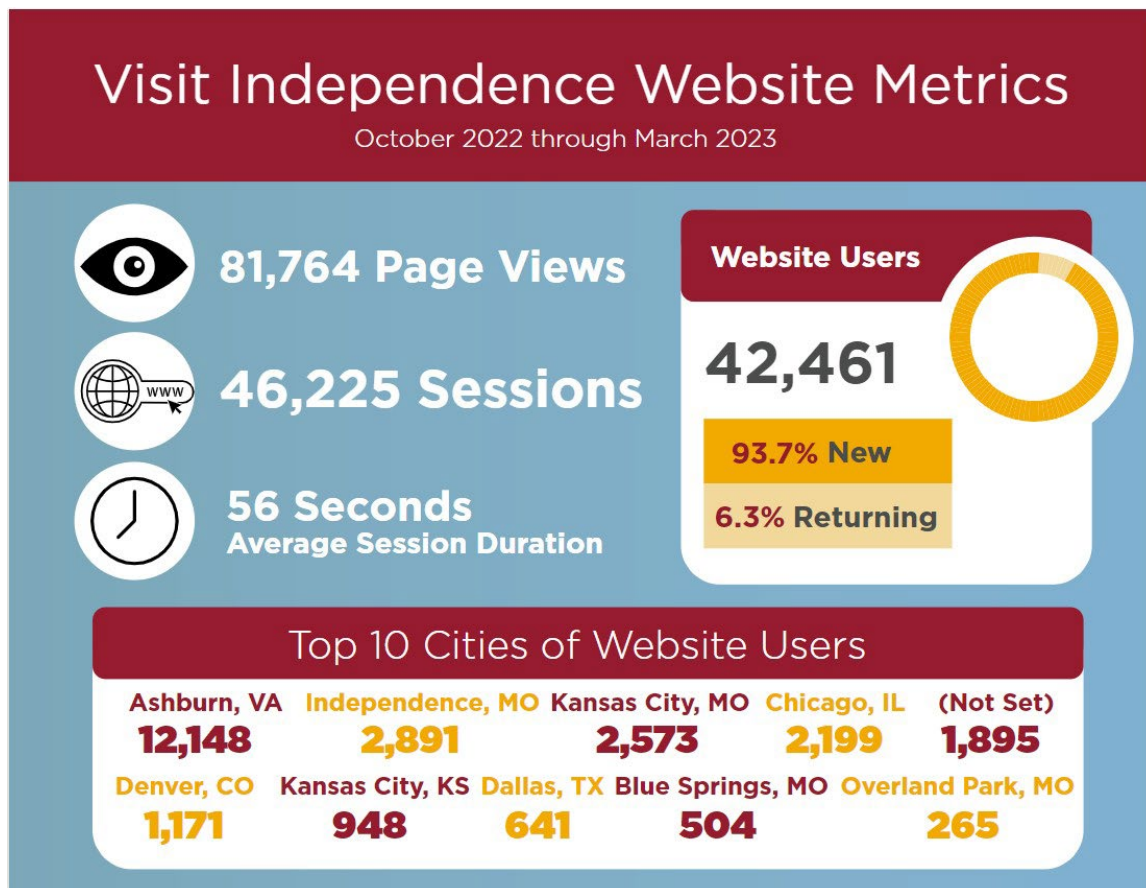
The department also maintains Visit Independence accounts on Twitter and Instagram. These posts highlight upcoming events, venues, and history for those wishing to learn more about why Independence is a place they want to visit.



Website


While the Visit Independence website focuses on visitors to our City, it also contains information relevant to our residents and those interested in the Parks, Recreation & Tourism facilities.

This website is currently under review and being updated. As the City works to unveil a new overall website in late summer, Visit Independence information will integrate better with Parks, Recreation & Tourism information for residents, visitors, and groups looking for information.



Earned Media


The City of Independence uses the Meltwater platform to assess earned media. Thus far in the first quarter of 2023, the City saw an increase in total potential news reach of 13%. This means there was increased number of unique monthly visitors to sources mentioning Parks, Recreation & Tourism-related topics.



Q4 & Q1: PRT Earned Media Analytics


WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

This section covers categories of total potential reach, mentions, and top performer by reach and top performer by reach and volume for October 2022 through March 2023.




TOTAL POTENTIAL REACH
1.26 Billion

The potential reach is the number of monthly visitors to a source.




MENTIONS
1.19 K

How many times City of Independence tourism facilities are mentioned in articles known as Media Exposure.



TOP PERFORMER BY REACH
Independence to Open Warming Site Ahead of Cold Snap

Article covers the content of Warming Site. Reach is 212 million.




TOP PERFORMER BY REACH AND VOLUME

On This Day, Passing of President Truman

Covers the story of President Truman Passing away December 26th 50 years ago. 64 million Reach.


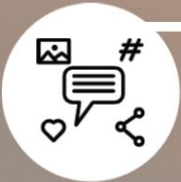
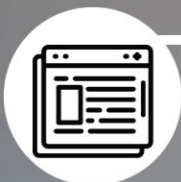
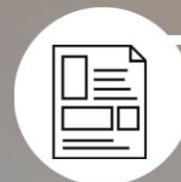
The breakdown of mentions varies across different sources from blogs, social media, news, and broadcast platforms. The majority of mentions increased greatly in December. Mentions by voice are across social media and broadcast channels. The source for top publishers varies between reach and volume. These mentions include terms such as the Kansas City Mavericks, Kansas City Comets, and President Truman. Some of the top performing terms in this period are country, family, and President.



Q4 & Q1: PRT Earned Media Metrics

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

This section covers categories of mentions by source, mentions by voice, top publisher by reach and top publisher by volume for October 2022 through March 2023.

 <p>MENTIONS BY SOURCE 1.48K Broadcast Documents Source type gages which source shares the most documents.</p>	 <p>MENTIONS BY VOICE 945 Social Media Documents How many searches from social media documents for PRT mentions.</p>
 <p>TOP PUBLISHER BY REACH 940 Million MSN.com was the top source by reach.</p>	 <p>TOP PUBLISHER BY VOLUME 82 Articles Our Sports Central was the top source by volume.</p>

Top Performance

The top three overall social media performers showcase our Facebook events and YouTube videos. The top performers for quarters four and one, October 2022 through March 2023, feature George Owens Nature Park, Independence Uptown Market, and Spirits with the Spirits YouTube video.



What's next?

The Communications team is working on a full calendar of promotions for the remainder of spring and summer. PRT staff have created a variety of new events and brought back community favorites, providing a robust list of options for families, visitors, and individuals to enjoy.

The Visitor Guide will be shared in late spring and the historic homes and the Chicago & Alton Depot re-open April first. The Visit Independence website will be updated, and staff continues to prepare content for the new website coming later this summer.

Visitor Services and Promotions

On December 31, 2022, the Attractions Division ended the lease agreement with the Independence Chamber of Commerce. Those services have been consolidated and relocated to the National Frontier Trails Museum.

Visitor information services and fulfillment are being conducted by Museum Services staff. They assist visitors with information, directions, and recommendations on where to stay and what to see and do while in Independence.

The Promotion Services staff assist tour operators with itinerary planning, hotel guest accommodations and attraction reservations. They also represent the Attractions Division at the Independence Hotel and Lodging Alliance meetings, historic society meetings, and Friends of the NFTM Board meetings. The Promotion Services Representative is actively engaging in building partner relationships with attractions throughout the greater Kansas City area.

Facility and Historic Site Operations

National Frontier Trails Museum

The National Frontier Trails Museum is open for visitors year-round. The Museum currently operates three days a week, Thursdays – Saturdays, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Staff also accommodates organized school and bus tours outside of operating hours. Nearly 1350 visitors toured the National Frontier Trails Museum from October 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023. International travelers came from Australia, Canada, France, and Poland as well as visitors from 39 states. Outside of Missouri, the top five states represented were Kansas with 78 visitors, California - 30, Iowa - 23, Texas - 20 and Colorado - 19. The average attendance during this time was 20 visitors per day.



The Local History Authors’ Non-Fiction Showcase series kicked off in February. This monthly program features a different theme and book written by a local author. The first installment focused on African American Heritage Month with the book “Born a Slave: Rediscovering Arthur Jackson’s African American Heritage” by David W. Jackson. Women’s History Month was the subject for March. Future topics include outlaws, lawmen and frontier justice, and the California gold rush.



Parks, Recreation and Tourism hired PGAV Architects to complete a Tourism and Museum Master Plan. PGAV will propose options to provide a more engaging and interactive experience for visitors at NFTM, either by renovating the current facility or moving the museum to a new location. PGAV is also examining marketing strategies to bring more visitors to Independence and encourage them to extend their time at the City’s attractions, restaurants, and lodging.

In December, January, and March PGAV staff met with key stakeholders including City officials & staff, community partners, and area agencies and businesses. Representatives from more than 35 organizations participated. PGAV explored NFTM and took a driving tour of the City to assess current attractions, signage, gateways, and available transportation options. Future meetings are planned as well as a report to the City Council with their findings and recommendations.



Historic Sites

The historic sites closed during October. They re-opened the day after Thanksgiving for holiday tours and wrapped up the tourism season on December 31st. Sites will reopen April 1st.

Volunteers from the historic sites’ groups led just over 3800 tours at the Bingham-Waggoner Estate, Chicago and Alton Depot, and the Vaile Mansion from November through December 2022. These individuals provide countless hours of dedicated service sharing their site’s unique place in the history of Independence.



In December Parks, Recreation and Tourism staff applied for Local Tourism Asset Development grants for the Bingham Waggoner Estate and the Vaile Mansion. These grants are funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), through the Missouri Economic Development Department.

Staff requested \$1,727,775 for the Bingham Waggoner Estate and \$1,300,072 for the Vaile Mansion. Both grants require a 50% match. Grant funds would be used for major structural repairs such as roofing, masonry repair, window replacement, and HVAC systems. Awards are expected to be announced in mid-April. If either site receives a grant, the funds must be spent within 3 years to be eligible for reimbursement.

Historic Site Maintenance

Park Services staff planted a redbud tree on the grounds of the Vaile Mansion in honor of late Councilmember Karen DeLuccie. A dedication service was held in early November. Councilmember DeLuccie was a strong supporter of the City’s historic sites and redbuds were her favorite tree. Be sure to visit the Vaile this spring to see it in bloom!



Park Services staff participated in holiday activities by hanging exterior lights and decorations at the Vaile Mansion and in some of the trees on the grounds.



Park Services staff met with contractors and is currently waiting for bids to repair the roof of the stable at the Bingham Waggoner Estate. In addition to facility maintenance, crews went through CDL and snowplow training for snow removal operations over the winter months.

In January Park Services crews removed the rusted, faded wayfinding signs from around the City. New signage will be considered based on the recommendation of the forthcoming Tourism and Museum Master Plan.



In Closing

It is the opinion of the Independence Tourism Commission that the activities, initiatives, and projects supported by the Transient Guest Tax are in keeping with the program's intent, and that the work of the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department continues to attract visitors to our community and preserve our City-owned historic sites.

The members of the Independence Tourism Commission express our appreciation to the Mayor and City Council for their continued support of providing the best possible historic sites, attractions, and programs for the people of Independence and our many visitors to enjoy.

