

Independence Tourism Commission



Transient Guest Tax Program
July 1 – December 31, 2023



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, Scott Forsyth, Amy Kistler, Jodi Krantz, Bobby McCutcheon, Jeff McLaughlin, and John Thornton.

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 December 31, 2023, the tax generated \$1,290,546 or 56% of the TGT revenue for Fiscal Year 2023-24.

Marketing and Promotions

The Communications Team continues to utilize social media and video to share stories about our community, program, and venues. The National Frontier Trails Museum, Visit Independence, and Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department have Facebook pages. While some have seen a slower increase than previous months, growth continues across all pages.

Earned Media, or news coverage, is essential to measuring success in growth and reach. Parks, Recreation & Tourism-related topics were mentioned 4,072 times by the media from July through December with a total reach of 1.77 billion people for the period.

Facebook

Below are graphics for the National Frontier Trails Museum, Visit Independence, and Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department pages. They highlight reach, page visits, new likes and follows, and the top performer over the six months for each page.

July through December 2023 Statistics



Profile



National Frontier Trails Museum

@National Frontier Trails Museum
indep.us/nftm

1.1K Followers 919 Interactions

Top Post



National Frontier Trails Museum

Did you catch us on FOX4 News Kansas City this morning? We are excited to continue celebrating our grand re-opening in our temporary location at the Truman Memorial Building (416 W. Maple Ave.) on the lower level. Stop by for a FREE visit. Doors open at 10 AM.

8,290 Impressions
36 interactions
9 shares

July through December 2023 Statistics



Profile



Visit Independence, MO

The buck stops here, and you should, too!

9.4K Followers, 4.3K Interactions

Top Post

Visit Independence, MO
Published by Colin Clowry · July 27, 2023

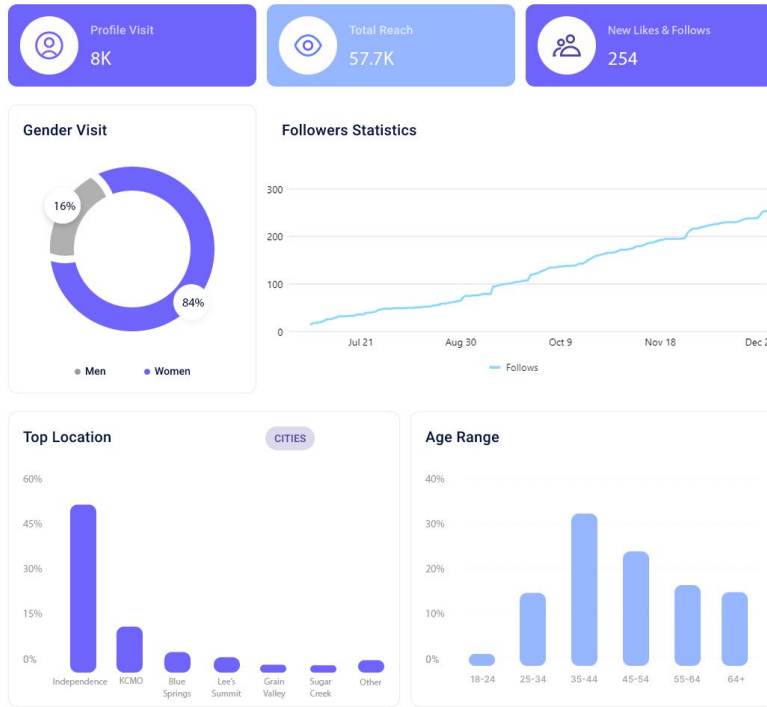
We mustache you a question -- Have you been growing your beard and mustache for the competition? Be sure to take care of your facial hair for the beard and mustache competition on Saturday, September 2, from 4:30-5:30 PM at Main Street 1849 during the SantaCalleon Festival! You won't want to miss out on the prizes from our sponsor, Gnome Master Beardmen.

BEARD & MUSTACHE COMPETITION

WANTED
LONGEST & MOST CREATIVE BEARD
LONGEST & MOST CREATIVE MUSTACHE

12,295 Impressions
51 Interactions
45 Shares

July through December 2023 Statistics



Profile



City of Independence Parks, Recreation and Tourism

Providing parks, programs, and services to the City of Independence, Missouri.

6.8K Followers, 3.2K Interactions

Top Post

TODDLER TOWN

Tuesdays & Wednesdays
October - March

10AM - 12PM

City of Independence Parks, Recreation and Tourism

14,224 Impressions
60 Interactions
74 Shares

YouTube

Video is an important part of the communications mix, and the Communications Team has increased promotional videos covering a variety of events, programs, and venues within the City. Here are videos produced from July through December:

[Your Trail Begins Here](#)

[Ghost Tours in Independence](#)

[Visit Independence](#)

[2023 Independence Square Lighting](#)

[Living Windows](#)

Here are the metrics on how they performed:

July through December 2023 Statistics (YouTube)



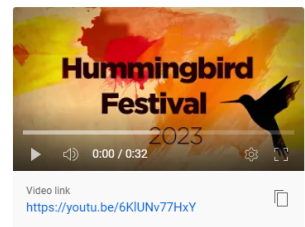
Profile



City of Independence, Missouri
The buck stops here, and you should, too!

9 Videos 1.37K Followers 15 Hours Watched

Top Video



3,208 impressions

Instagram

The Communications Team maintains and monitors accounts for Instagram under Visit Independence. The posts highlight upcoming events, venues, and history for those wishing to learn more about why Independence is a place they want to visit.

July through December 2023 Statistics (Instagram)



Profile



Visit Independence, MO

The buck stops here, and you should, too!

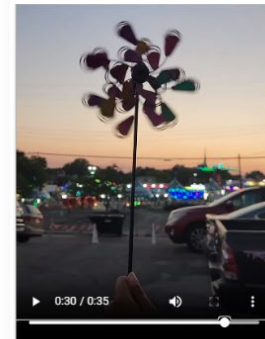
1.5K

Followers

560

Interactions

Top Post



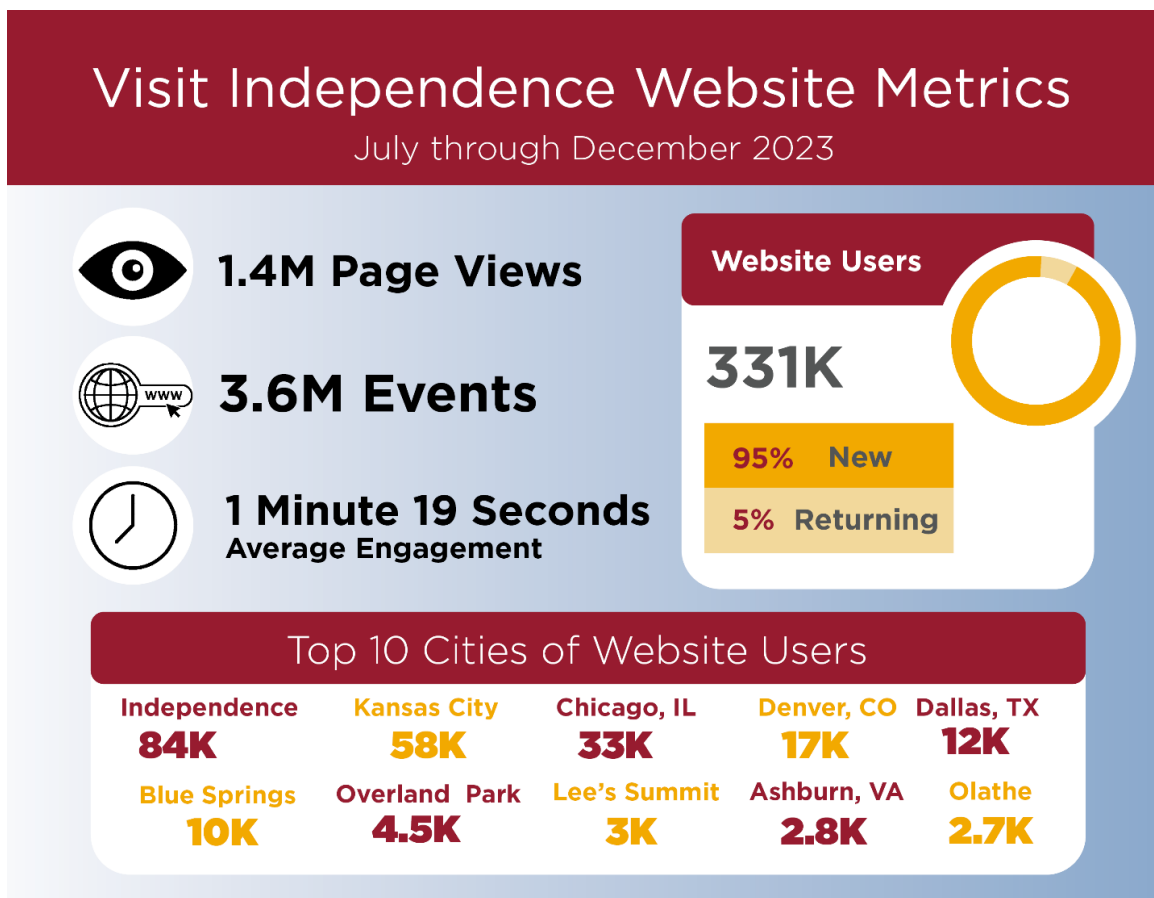
853 Impressions, 48 Interactions

Website

In October, the Visit Independence website merged into the City’s website during the launch of the City’s new site. Below are statistics of users, top cities that frequent our site, and the average time spent on our site.

Users cover how many people (the audience) visit the site with statistics of how many are return users versus new users. Average engagement tells how long users are on the site. The top cities tells where the audience is within the country.

Below is a breakdown of the numbers:

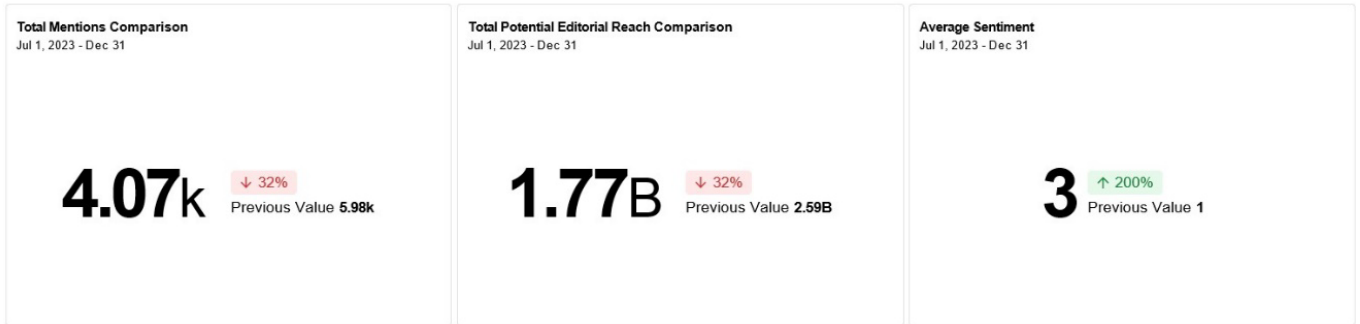


Earned Media

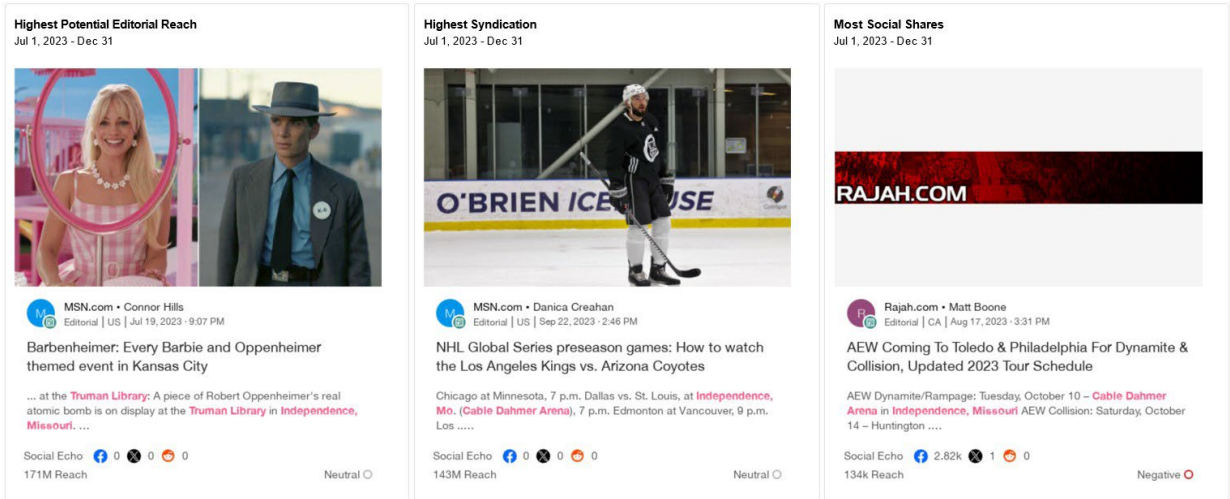
Meltwater continues to be the platform used to gather information about earned media. For July through December, unique monthly visitors continued to surpass expectations in sources mentioning Parks, Recreation & Tourism-related topics.

Below is a summary of the data for Meltwater reach, mentions, sentiment, and top performing stories for July through December of 2023.

What are the key results for the timeframe?

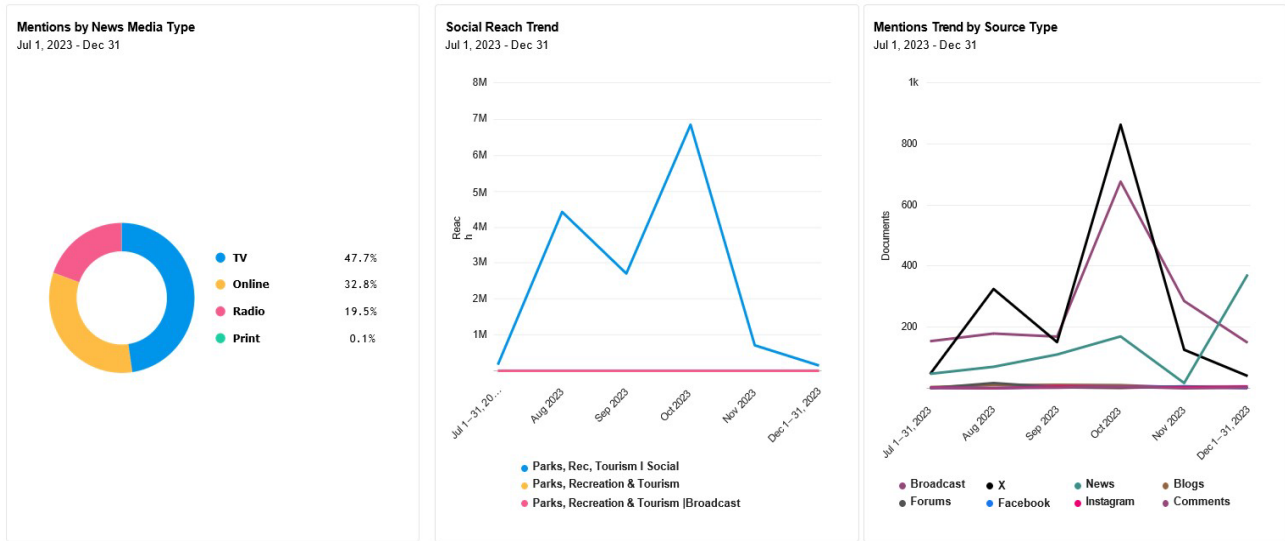


What is the top performing news content?

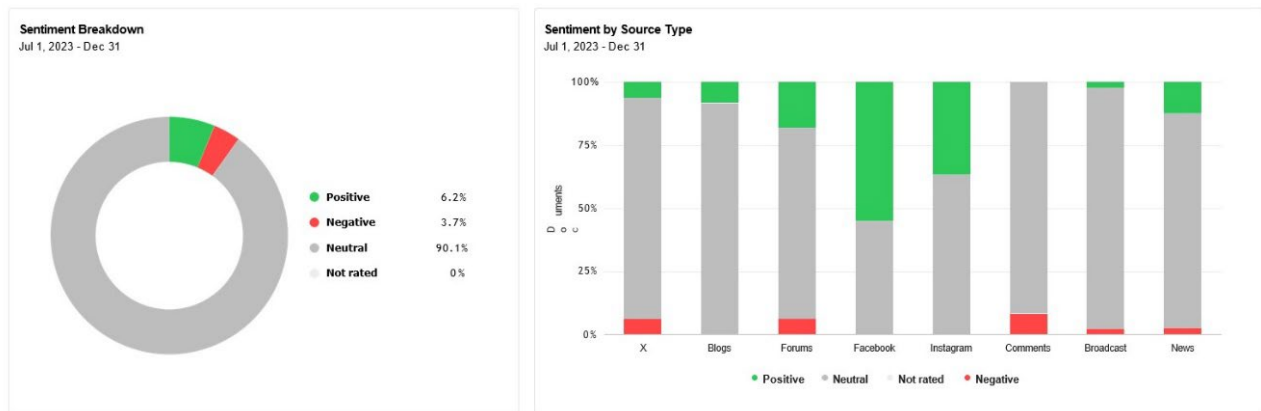


The breakdown of source varies across broadcast, social, and Parks, Recreation & Tourism. These sources breakdown further into blogs, forums, social media, news, and broadcast platforms. Included in the summary of data are how the content is viewed by the public, whether it is positive, negative, or neutral in sentiment for the content.

How does the earned media break down?



How favorable is the content?



What's next?

The Communications Team continues to work through a calendar of promotions, publications, and videos, sharing events and activities through social media, newsletters, and the website.

The Parks, Recreation & Tourism website pages are continually updated with new information about events, activities, press releases, and blog posts. Events and activities added to the website are throughout Independence, not just those created by Parks, Recreation & Tourism.

The 2024 visitor guide shipped in early March and is being distributed locally and throughout the state! This year's guide shares the stories of those who stayed in Independence rather than venturing west in the 1800s.

Digital updates to the Visitor Guide will be published in May, August, and October 2024 on the website in the visitor section.

In addition to publications, social media management and content creation, and maintaining the website, the Communications Team produces advertisements for Parks, Recreation & Tourism and the City. Advertisements are created and sent to Missouri Life, Visit KC, Greater Kansas City Attractions Association (GKCAA), Missouri Travel Guide, The Examiner, and the Missouri Spring Vacation Guide.

Visitor Services and Promotions

Promotion Services staff continues to represent the Tourism Division at partner organizational board meetings including the Friends of the National Frontier Trails Museum, Bingham Waggoner Estate, Vaile Mansion and the Independence Hotel and Lodging Alliance.

Staff was heavily involved in the redesign of the National Frontier Trails Museum page on the City's new website. Staff also assisted in the transition of the NFTM into the Truman Memorial Building by packing and moving, outfitting, redesigning, and repairing museum exhibits to fit in the new space. Inventory was tagged and priced, shelves were stocked, and new merchandise displays were set up in the gift shop.

Promotion Services staff participated in planning sessions to coordinate volunteers, vendors, and city staff for 1849 Main Street. In addition, staff designed and implemented the Outdoor Pioneer Living and Pack Your Wagon booths.

Staff filled requests for marketing and promotional items for the Palmer Center and the Independence Chamber of Commerce with fourteen items valued at \$170.

STR 1st Quarter Reports	July		August		September	
	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022
Occupancy Percentage	59.6	66.5	54.5	60.3	57.5	58.6
Average Daily Rate	\$110.55	\$101.52	\$102.35	\$93.92	\$106.04	\$94.19
Revenue Per Available Rm	\$65.91	\$67.48	\$55.75	\$56.60	\$60.95	\$55.16

STR 2nd Quarter Reports	October		November		December	
	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022
Occupancy Percentage	54.8	58.1	44.7	51.4	42.5	44.6
Average Daily Rate	\$106.23	\$97.30	\$93.29	\$94.36	\$94.88	\$91.38
Revenue Per Available Rm	\$58.17	\$56.52	\$41.74	\$48.47	\$40.28	\$40.73

*STR collects and processes performance data from hotels on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.

Historically the fall and winter months show a downturn in tourism. The visitor attendance figures reflect the reduction of visitors. It is anticipated that attendance will increase again during the regular tourism season. The Promotion Services staff continues to assist visitors with information, directions, and recommendations on where to stay and what to see and do in Independence.

Attendance FY 2023-24	1st Qtr.	2nd Qtr.
Bingham Wagoner Estate	637	1,013
Chicago Alton Depot	234	182
Vaile Mansion	1,093	2,826
National Frontier Trails Museum	Closed	508
Promotional items distributed	743	1,300

Facility and Historic Site Operations

National Frontier Trails Museum

The National Frontier Trails Museum temporarily closed July 1st. Staff carefully disassembled, cleaned, catalogued, packed, and transported artifacts and exhibits to Presidential Hall on the lower level of the Truman Memorial Building. Lighting was upgraded from fluorescent to LED for improved visibility and the walls were freshened with new paint before the exhibits were laid out.



After four very busy months, the burlap ribbon was cut to reopen the Museum on November 1st. The Museum displays exhibits and story lines from the original space, just with a fresh new look.



Larry Short (Santa Fe Trail Association), Mayor Rory Rowland, City Manager Zach Walker, Travis Boley (Oregon-California Trails Association) cutting the ribbon.

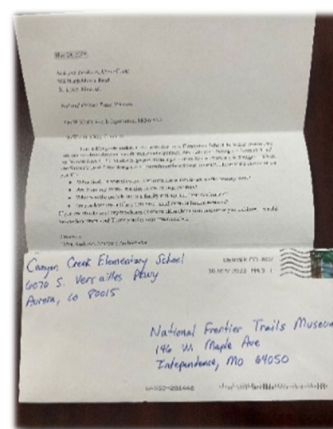
A new welcome voice-over has been edited into the introduction video, giving instructions for the new facility experience, and encouraging guests to visit the gift shop for information and resources about the many other attractions to extend their stay in Independence. Staff continues to mend and update pictures in the gallery, add new items, and promote the new location.

There is no charge to tour the museum which now offers expanded hours, opening at 10 am Monday through Saturday with closing times varying from 5 pm to 7 pm. Staff has already welcomed visitors from 24 states and 6 countries.

NFTM staff has been collaborating with teachers from 3 elementary schools outside of Missouri to create a new writing curriculum. This consists of the classes combining their study of the Westward Migration with a writing assignment.

Students write and mail in letters with their questions about the trails. NFTM staff responds back with answers. So far 20 students have sent letters and received a reply.

Museum staff is researching the new app, Clio, to see how it could work for Independence. Clio is an educational website and mobile app that guides the public to historical and cultural sites throughout the United States. It includes nature trails, walking tours, and virtual tours of museums and sites. Each entry includes a summary and information including directions and links to books, articles, videos, primary sources, and credible websites.



1849 Main Street at Santa-Cali-Gon

This annual event took place with the help of many volunteers and city staff who provided families with fun-filled, hands-on activities for all to enjoy. "Pack Your Wagon" was a new addition to Main Street this year along with traditional favorites like gold panning, pioneer crafts, selfie stations and pioneer living where kids learned to wash and hang their own laundry.

Special thanks to the Parks, Facilities and Grounds staff for the construction and removal of the sets on the street to pull the event together. Staff ensured each facade had electricity, fans, and fire extinguishers as required by City code.



Historic Sites

Maintenance staff has been working with a contractor to replace the roof on the Stable at the Bingham-Waggoner Estate. Material has been ordered. Staff also coordinated efforts with a consultant to carefully remove some bricks at Fire House #1. This was necessary for an engineer to inspect the structural integrity of the building. The same bricks were then put back into place.

A new air conditioning unit was installed at the Harry S Truman Visitors Center. This replaced a very old unit that quit functioning. Crews also painted the outside trim around all the windows. At the Bingham-Waggoner Estate, crews repaired rotted soffits and fascia.

Park maintenance crews began work at the vacated museum in preparation for the Missouri Model Railroad Museum to move in. Outside, the vertical posts were removed, the crumbling concrete patio was repaired, and new siding was installed. On the inside, the concrete floors were ground smooth and sealed, and some walls were repaired and painted.

The Missouri Model Railroad Museum held a volunteer open house February 3rd and 4th. A soft opening is scheduled for May 11, National Train Day.



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.

