

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Greetings from



Minnesota

#VisitAustinMN



Discover  
*Austin*  
Minnesota

301 North Main Street, Suite 101  
Austin, Minnesota • 507-437-4563  
[www.AustinMN.com](http://www.AustinMN.com)

# NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2020, COVID-19 had a real and devastating effect on the hospitality and tourism industry and as we rolled into 2021, travel was still VERY LIMITED. This was heartbreaking news for Discover Austin, MN, whose mission is to promote tourism for the Austin area. So, we took an optimistic approach and were determined to find an effective way to reach those desired visitors and let them know about Austin, Minnesota as a destination.



*Petunia posing in front of the Greetings sign at the Span® Museum*



*Petunia hunting pheasants with Minnesota Governor Tim Walz*



*Petunia at the Guest Ranch in Nemo, South Dakota*

After considering the usual successful methods: print ads, social media campaigns, billboards, radio spots, and TV commercials, it was decided we think outside the box. After all, 2020 was a year like no other, so maybe a 2021 marketing campaign like no other was what was needed. After much discussion, Discover Austin, MN decided to create a show stopper that would grab people's attention in a unique way. It would provide information about Austin in an easy manner giving potential tourists information on local attractions, restaurants, shops, and hotels, thus increasing the interest to make Austin a desired destination.

A VW Beetle professionally wrapped to resemble a happy pig was chosen as the show stopper. This pig can roll through parades or attend car shows and events and make other public appearances to provide great photo opportunities all while promoting the Austin community as a fun place to visit. The happy pig is not only charming but the back hatch is functional and provides ample room to store brochures, supplies, and other awesome Austin items.

Funding was provided from local and state grants. A very special thank you goes to CarNu and many other volunteers who donated professional services and/or countless hours to make this endeavor a possibility.

Now that the Pig was ready to present, we needed help from the Austin community to NAME THAT PIG! Over 500 names were submitted and "Petunia" the pink promoting pig was chosen.

**"Petunia" squealed her way throughout the Midwest attending shows, parades, events and more!**



Petunia and the Jolly Green Giant in Blue Earth, Minnesota



Petunia and the Mower County Dairy Princess



Petunia visiting the other "Hogs" at Sturgis



Petunia at the Corn Palace in South Dakota



Petunia at Deadwood, South Dakota



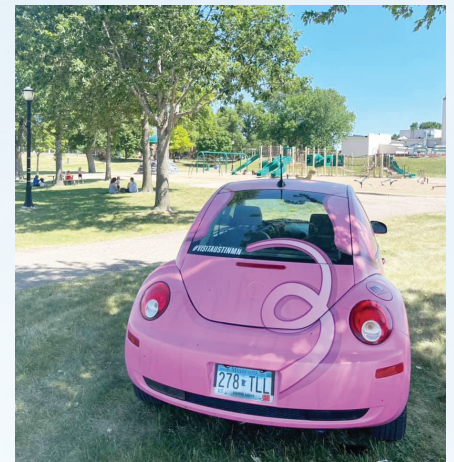
Petunia at Pinters Gardens and Pumpkins in Decorah, Iowa



Petunia at Buffalo Chip during Sturgis



Petunia at Farmfest



Petunia relaxing at a park



Petunia at Eddie Cochran Weekend in Albert Lea, MN



Petunia in the Badlands, South Dakota



Petunia posing with Princesses

We continue to get creative with marketing on a limited budget and turned to qualified travel writers to help promote Austin to their followers.

Here are some of the featured articles:



“ Visiting the Mall of America or the Twin Cities and looking for a daytrip? Or live locally and looking for something different to do with a little history thrown in? In less than two hours, you can drive to charming Austin, Minn. to check out the SPAM® Museum, Hormel Historic Home, historic Paramount Theatre, Buffy the Cow, and more. ”

<https://www.kmfiswriting.com/daytrip-from-minneapolis-explore-spam-museum-and-more-in-austin-minn/>



“ The city of Austin, MN is rich in history and culture. If you want to see the home of SPAM or get the opportunity to enjoy nature at its best, visit Austin. Along with a visit to the Historical Hormel Home, be sure to check out all the extra goodies that Austin has to offer. This town is smaller, with a population of around 25,000, so you’ll surely feel at home during your visit. ”

<https://vacationidea.com/minnesota/best-things-to-do-in-austin-mn.html>



### 7 Best Things to Do in Austin, Minnesota

By VI Staff on December 5, 2021 - Updated



“ Austin is a cute small town about 2 hours south of the Twin Cities and well worth the drive! Everything from donuts, to Spam, nature and beer! ”

<https://shrpa.com/itinerary/familydaytriptoastin/>

# We are two years into a 10 year commitment while going on a national tour in the form of a big rig traveling billboard.

Through a grant from Explore Minnesota Tourism in 2020, Discover Austin has organized a semi-trailer to be wrapped up in Austin — literally.

Pictures of Austin events and locations adorn the semi-trailer on both sides of the 53-foot trailer as well as the back.

It reaches markets we normally wouldn't be able to reach and each month Discover Austin, MN gets a report showing where the trailer has been traveling.

## In 2021 the trailer traveled to new locations throughout the US such as:

37347, Tennessee  
61348, Illinois  
53527, Wisconsin  
55120, Minnesota

52404, Iowa  
35954, Alabama  
58059, North Dakota  
59330, Montana

98409, Washington  
89445, Nevada  
95366, California  
54703, Wisconsin

64803, Missouri  
46514, Indiana  
44425, Ohio  
17362, Pennsylvania  
73090, Oklahoma  
72082, Arkansas  
49418, Michigan  
30336, Georgia  
28716, North Carolina  
32588, Florida  
42303, Kentucky  
12125, New York  
01125, Massachusetts  
05452, Vermont  
03304, New Hampshire  
80642, Colorado  
Desert Springs, Arizona  
88401, New Mexico  
Fall River South Dakota  
82930, Wyoming



# Travelers comfort levels varied all across the board in 2021.

So for National Tourism Week, Discover Austin, MN encouraged locals to be a Tourist in your hometown through your local lens.



There are many picturesque places in our community and we wanted locals to take photos of them.

**The response we received was amazing!**

**Be A Tourist in Your Own Hometown... Through Your Local Lens!**

**There are many picturesque places, people and things in Austin, Minnesota and we want to see your photos of them.**

**From May 2–July 9, 2021** Submit your photos of picturesque Austin, Minnesota to [visitors@AustinMN.com](mailto:visitors@AustinMN.com) for a chance to win prizes. Please include Name of Photographer, contact information along with the location and date of photo.

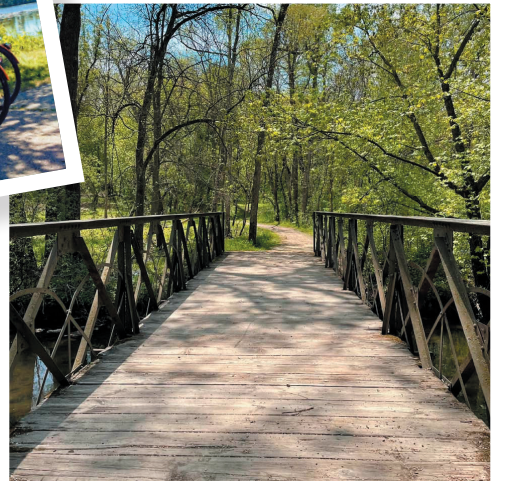
Person submitting the photo **MUST** have the rights to the photo. By submitting photos you grant permission to use your photograph(s) for promotional and marketing purposes without further consideration.

Winner will be announced on July 16, 2021

**Grand Prize:** \$150 Chamber Bucks  
**1st Place:** \$125 Chamber Bucks  
**2nd Place:** \$100 Chamber Bucks  
**3rd Place:** \$75 Chamber Bucks  
**4th Place:** \$50 Chamber Bucks  
**5th Place:** \$25 Chamber Bucks

**For questions please contact Discover Austin, MN 507-437-4563**

**Discover Austin Minnesota** 507-437-4563  
301 North Main Street, Suite 101  
Austin, Minnesota



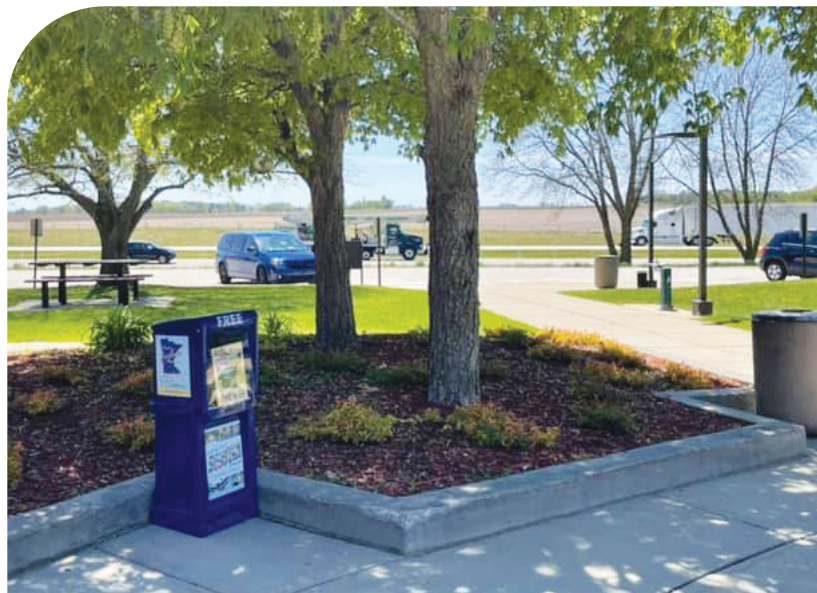
## Research was showing that in 2021 visitors interested in traveling felt more comfortable going over the road verses flying.

So Discover Austin, MN applied and was approved to be a partner with the State of Minnesota Wayside Rest Program.

This allowed us to place qualified information stands at three designated Wayside Rest Areas throughout the State of Minnesota. We were selected for the Wayside Rest Areas in Rochester I-90 Westbound, Albert Lea I-90 Eastbound and Blue Earth I-90 Eastbound.

In May, we placed the information stands at each of the locations. They were filled with our visitor guides and throughout the rest of the year, we continued to keep filling the information stands with our Austin visitor guide.

**By the end of 2021 we had distributed an additional 3,000 Austin Visitor Guides through this distribution channel.**



# 2021 VISITOR GUIDE DISTRIBUTION

The Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau 2020 Visitor Guide continued to be used into 2021 as we had many left over from 2020 due to travel restrictions from the pandemic.



However, we did give them a bit of a refreshed look by placing a bright yellow sticker over the calendar of events, encouraging people to check out our website for the most up to date calendar of events information.

Finally in August of 2021 we had used the last of our 2020/2021 visitor guides and we designed and printed a new Austin Visitor Guide.

This was a 24 page publication that welcomed visitors to experience our incredible city. It supplies an area map along with information on things to do, events, dining, camping, hotels, meeting space, attractions, where to shop, services available, local clubs and organizations, and places of worship.

For this edition we did not include any local business ads.

Emailed  
**1,095**

Mailed  
**306**

Displayed  
**13,557**

**We did this as a way to support our local business community without having an additional cost as many were still trying to recover from the pandemic.**

## Website

In 2021 we had

**43,740**

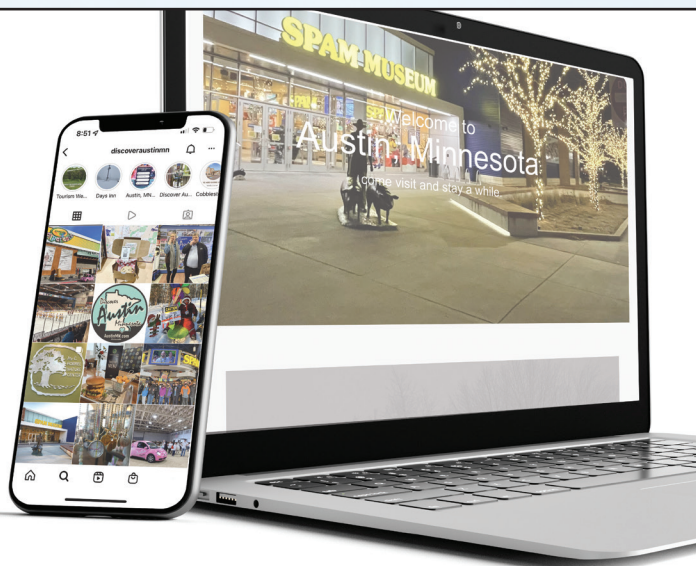
Visitors to

**AustinMN.com**

Weekly  
Newsletter  
Distribution

**1,704**

Subscriptions



## Social Media Outreach



Facebook

**3,989**

7% Increase YOY



Twitter

**547**

7% Increase YOY



Instagram

**782**

24% Increase YOY

## Tour and Travel

**58**

Groups were welcomed to Austin in 2021

**986**

travelers from Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wisconsin

## Overnight Travelers

**\$123,961.73**

Lodging Tax

12% Increase YOY  
35% Decline from Prepandemic 2019



THE PANDEMIC HAS HAD A **MAMMOTH** IMPACT ON TOURISM

**TOURISM HAS A MAMMOTH IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY**



EXPLORE **mi** MINNESOTA™

# MINNESOTA TOURISM



**NEARLY \$12B LOST SINCE 2019**

Minnesota's tourism industry has suffered **\$11,700,000,000** in travel spending losses as of Jan. 27, 2022

SOURCE: U.S. Travel Association

### DAILY IMPACT

\$32 million in average daily sales at Minnesota leisure and hospitality businesses in 2020

### RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Every \$1 invested in Minnesota tourism marketing returns an estimated:

- \$180 in spending by travelers
- \$18 in state and local taxes

### LEISURE & HOSPITALITY JOBS

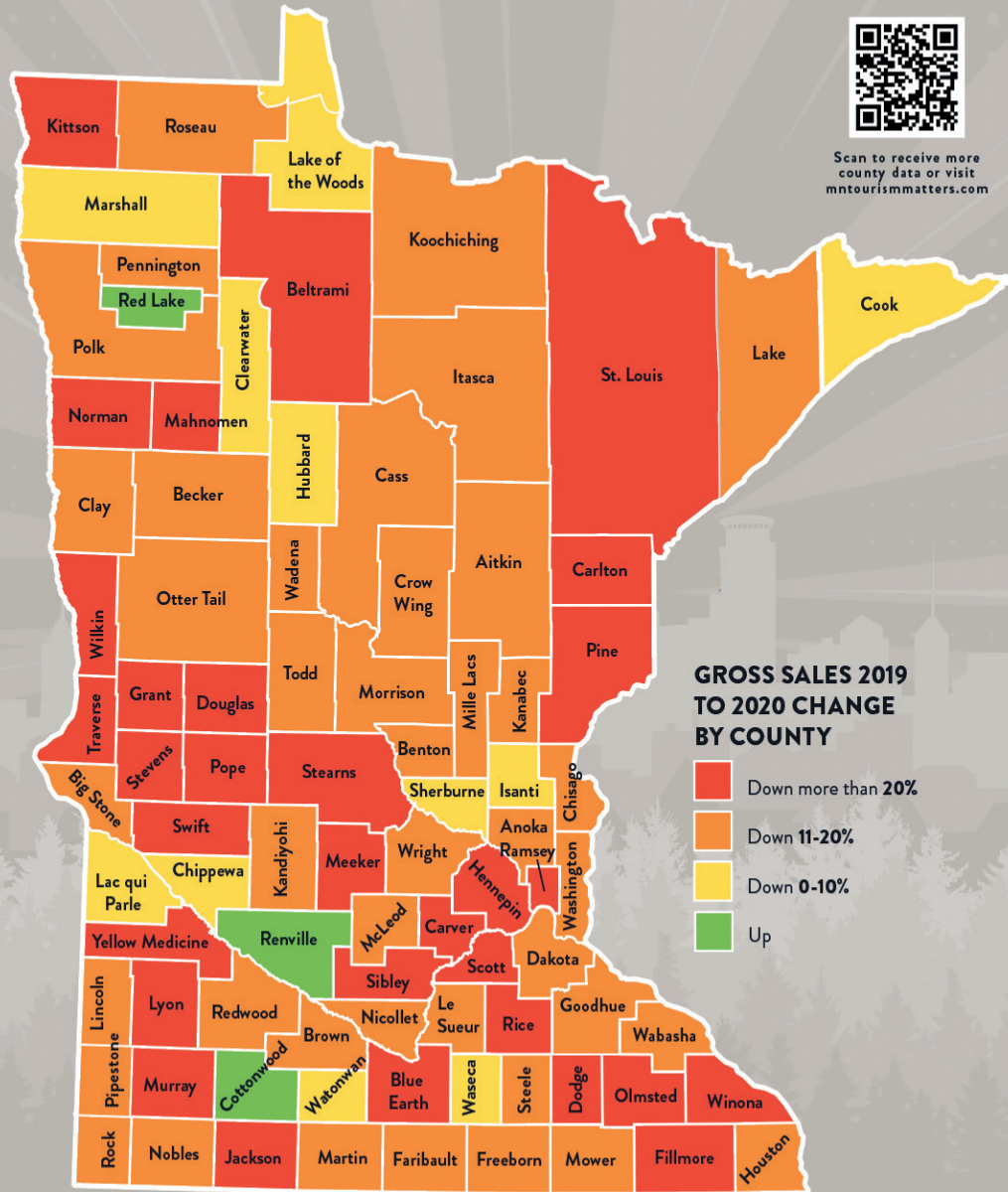
In 2020, Minnesota tourism accounted for:

- 205,000 industry jobs
- 9% of private-sector employment
- \$4.9 billion in wages

SOURCE: Minnesota Department of Revenue, SMARI 2019 Tourism Advertising ROI/Economic Impact Study, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (2020)

# MINNESOTA'S LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

ESSENTIAL TO A STRONG ECONOMY | FORTIFIED WITH CRISIS GRANTS | 100% RECOVERY STILL A STRUGGLE



## BUSINESS RECOVERY HAS BEEN UNEVEN

Minnesota businesses are recovering from pandemic impacts at different rates by sector. Generally, overnight accommodations and attraction and entertainment companies are recovering better than food and drink establishments.

As of late 2021, **ONLY 39%** of Minnesota leisure and hospitality firms surveyed by Explore Minnesota report being at or above pre-pandemic business levels.

SOURCE: Explore Minnesota Tourism, Hospitality Minnesota and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Late 2021 Survey of Minnesota Tourism and Hospitality Industry



NOTES: The Leisure and Hospitality industry consists of Accommodations; Food Services and Drinking Places; and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation.  
SOURCE: Minnesota Department of Revenue

# TOURISM'S ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MINNESOTA

**\$16.6**  
BILLION  
Leisure and  
Hospitality Industry  
Gross Sales

**\$1.1**  
BILLION  
State  
Sales Tax

**276**  
THOUSAND  
Jobs

**\$11.7**  
BILLION  
Leisure and  
Hospitality Industry  
Gross Sales

**\$731**  
MILLION  
State  
Sales Tax

**205**  
THOUSAND  
Jobs

2019

2020

## 2020 Tourism Facts by County

County	Gross Sales	State Sales Tax	Private Sector Employment
<b>TWIN CITIES METRO REGION</b>			
Anoka	\$539,768,235	\$35,605,698	10,406
Carver	\$174,113,613	\$11,531,652	3,645
Chisago	\$66,479,432	\$4,421,121	1,446
Dakota	\$811,285,372	\$51,913,874	14,977
Hennepin	\$3,211,248,593	\$200,048,831	57,764
Isanti	\$42,668,008	\$2,811,025	913
Ramsey	\$1,800,931,686	\$113,733,687	20,973
Scott	\$305,159,577	\$16,268,264	4,712
Washington	\$490,180,452	\$32,394,274	9,360
Wright	\$216,849,754	\$12,179,510	3,924
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>\$7,658,684,722</b>	<b>\$480,907,936</b>	<b>128,120</b>
<b>NORTHEAST REGION</b>			
Carlton	\$49,412,312	\$3,185,631	917
Cook	\$67,897,385	\$4,453,808	773
Itasca	\$69,954,973	\$4,358,173	1,259
Kanabec	\$14,595,215	\$984,821	274
Koochiching	\$31,056,022	\$1,968,264	528
Lake	\$37,670,370	\$2,443,071	571
Pine	\$51,230,209	\$2,816,908	815
St Louis	\$436,164,247	\$28,508,724	8,701
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>\$757,980,733</b>	<b>\$48,719,400</b>	<b>13,838</b>
<b>SOUTHERN REGION</b>			
Big Stone	\$5,016,463	\$362,626	100
Blue Earth	\$158,741,583	\$10,132,949	3,618
Brown	\$31,872,202	\$2,103,103	917
Chippewa	\$14,358,290	\$995,435	335
Cottonwood	\$11,599,201	\$733,992	282
Dodge	\$9,558,168	\$669,694	358
Faribault	\$8,485,102	\$585,713	208
Fillmore	\$17,390,336	\$1,190,301	461
Freeborn	\$40,083,695	\$2,686,098	993
Goodhue	\$84,785,859	\$4,940,172	1,670
Houston	\$12,713,533	\$797,886	318
Jackson	\$9,035,695	\$599,401	226
Lac qui Parle	\$4,609,820	\$324,798	90
Le Sueur	\$27,605,179	\$1,629,370	452
Lincoln	\$3,926,978	\$264,017	84
Lyon	\$44,896,494	\$2,872,221	897
Martin	\$36,387,066	\$2,314,048	707
Mower	\$47,266,755	\$3,086,045	980
Murray	\$5,968,552	\$412,297	128
Nicollet	\$33,334,753	\$2,171,444	796
Nobles	\$26,780,063	\$1,740,320	528
Olmsted	\$384,571,776	\$24,938,825	7,685
Pipestone	\$9,498,266	\$656,397	275
Redwood	\$21,496,482	\$1,247,554	326
Renville	\$7,825,955	\$551,424	184
Rice	\$102,478,485	\$5,935,397	1,869
Rock	\$9,016,360	\$622,818	232
Sibley	\$6,966,522	\$491,793	173
Steele	\$58,323,472	\$3,902,803	1,263
Swift	\$7,485,201	\$520,451	191
Traverse	\$1,451,149	\$98,651	36
Wabasha	\$24,284,370	\$1,510,318	511
Waseca	\$17,203,056	\$1,118,268	385
Watsonwan	\$7,211,057	\$474,558	227
Winona	\$72,981,345	\$4,398,721	1,973
Yellow Medicine	\$12,042,943	\$493,675	204
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>\$1,377,252,226</b>	<b>\$87,573,583</b>	<b>29,682</b>

County	Gross Sales	State Sales Tax	Private Sector Employment
<b>CENTRAL REGION</b>			
Aitkin	\$21,536,816	\$1,417,738	458
Benton	\$47,397,678	\$3,004,627	974
Crow Wing	\$213,038,436	\$13,082,858	3,375
Douglas	\$90,603,889	\$5,794,558	1,873
Grant	\$2,834,408	\$180,887	40
Kandiyohi	\$84,479,527	\$5,388,171	1,569
McLeod	\$41,614,612	\$2,779,672	1,030
Meeker	\$13,522,446	\$899,045	363
Mille Lacs	\$51,787,315	\$2,940,681	796
Morrison	\$41,758,596	\$2,791,877	876
Otter Tail	\$81,777,455	\$5,349,506	1,760
Pope	\$12,794,312	\$859,103	298
Sherburne	\$102,079,083	\$6,802,942	2,243
Stearns	\$265,721,570	\$17,540,667	5,711
Stevens	\$12,945,194	\$714,407	285
Todd	\$16,778,443	\$1,143,372	352
Wadena	\$18,013,366	\$1,055,130	323
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>\$1,118,683,146</b>	<b>\$71,745,241</b>	<b>22,326</b>
<b>NORTHWEST REGION</b>			
Becker	\$62,745,614	\$3,993,486	1,472
Beltrami	\$124,161,005	\$6,402,368	1,900
Cass	\$108,181,997	\$6,670,665	1,464
Clay	\$70,133,312	\$4,524,450	1,520
Clearwater	\$5,733,481	\$362,781	146
Hubbard	\$36,107,007	\$2,406,523	648
Kittson	\$1,787,887	\$110,198	47
Lake of the Woods	\$43,719,372	\$2,268,931	453
Mahnomen	\$8,268,999	\$562,632	80
Marshall	\$4,239,491	\$324,579	90
Norman	\$2,643,193	\$178,024	48
Pennington	\$25,239,790	\$1,694,078	475
Polk	\$41,443,322	\$2,534,773	846
Red Lake	\$2,738,363	\$175,462	80
Roseau	\$16,603,605	\$1,025,719	335
Wilkin	\$2,833,474	\$210,066	N/A
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>\$556,579,912</b>	<b>\$33,444,735</b>	<b>9,604</b>
<b>MINNESOTA TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,662,504,210</b>	<b>\$730,869,322</b>	<b>204,519</b>

## 2019 TO 2020 CHANGE

■ Down more than 20%
 ■ Down 11-20%
 ■ Down 0-10%
 ■ Up
  2019/2020 data not available

**EXPLORE MINNESOTA**  
MNTOURISMMATTERS.COM

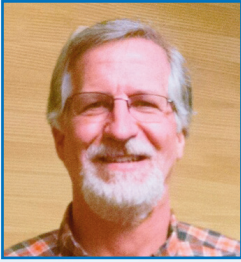
NOTES: State total does not equal the sum of counties or regions because some data is withheld to avoid disclosure of individual businesses; and some state level data is for businesses located outside of Minnesota. The Leisure and Hospitality industry consists of Accommodations; Food Services and Drinking Places; and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation.

SOURCE: Minnesota Department of Revenue, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (2020)

# MISSION STATEMENT

Discover Austin, Minnesota promotes tourism for the Austin Area to enhance the economy of the community

## 2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Mr. John Wright**  
Chair  
AM 1480 KAUS Radio



**Ms. Savile Lord**  
Vice Chair  
SPAM® Museum



**Ms. Chelsey Lustig**  
Secretary  
The Hormel Institute



**Mr. Jeff Baldus**  
Treasurer  
Austin Community Member



**Ms. Alexis Persons**  
Member at Large  
Riverland Community College



**Mr. Randy Forster**  
Member at Large  
Mower County Historical Society  
& Summerset Theatre



**Mr. Mike Ankeny**  
Member at Large  
Mower County Commissioner



**Mr. Kevin Nelson**  
Austin Park & Rec  
Representative



**Mr. Larry Powell**  
Lodging Property  
Representative  
AmericInn



**Ms. Elaine Hansen**  
Austin Area Chamber of  
Commerce Representative

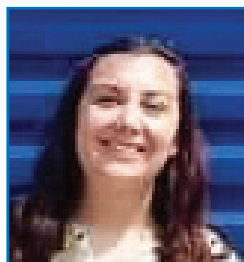


**Mr. Mike Postma**  
City Council  
Representative

## 2021 OFFICE STAFF



**Ms. Nancy Schnable**  
Executive Director  
Full-Time



**Ms. Kara Fairfield**  
Marketing Manager  
Full-Time



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