



2025

Tourism Annual Report



Mari Olson, Director of Tourism

Visit Middleton

February 2026

VISIT Middleton®

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Downtown, Middleton, 2025

DEPARTMENT PROFILE

The Tourism Department for the City of Middleton operates as both a city department and a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), under the name Visit Middleton and in accordance with the Wisconsin State Statute “66.0615” Room tax” and City of Middleton Ordinance “2.26 Tourism Commission,” with the direction and feedback of the Middleton Tourism Commission (a six-person hotel tax commission).

Visit Middleton’s directive is to market and promote the City of Middleton as a destination for leisure travelers, group and tour operators, meeting and event planners, and sports tourism, in order to support tourism efforts and assets within the city, generate overnight stays, and stimulate the local economy.

There are three full-time staff members in the department.



MARI OLSON: The **Tourism Director’s** role is to oversee department operations, staff, budget, overall marketing and sales strategic planning, and the Visit Middleton grant program, as well as the in-house ad accounts, ad design and placement, and currently, lead and write the annual visitors’ guide. The director is a liaison between the city and the Middleton Tourism Commission (MTC), attending city department head meetings and trainings; and manages all communication, agendas and records for MTC, the organization’s tax commission/advisory board.

In 2025, Olson led the department through an RFP process and organizational assessment, which concluded in December. The full report is available upon request. This report will set the department up for success as it enters 2026 to conduct a three-year strategic plan.

The director also liaisons with city/business partners, and maintains relationships, attends meetings and conferences, and sits on the boards for various county, regional and/or state tourism organizations. In 2024, the director sat on the Destination Madison Board, and rotated to the Destination Madison Foundation Board in 2025, as well as being an active member of Destinations Wisconsin, joining the

Membership Committee in 2024. In 2025, as part of the membership committee, Olson was tasked to rewrite and organize the state accreditation application for nonprofit tourism entities and add an avenue for public entities, such as Middleton, to also become accredited. The new application was accepted by the board on its first submission.



MAGGIE RADL: The **Tourism Marketing Manager’s** role is to assist in creating an annual marketing strategy and lead its execution; lead marketing initiatives in-house (Facebook and Instagram posts, online giveaways, newsletters, etc.), as well as with the marketing agency; work with a marketing agency as-needed for design and ad placements; coordinate photo/video shoots with the agency and maintain libraries; and promote the Visit Middleton brand, as well as the city’s attractions, dining, shopping and hotels to leisure visitors, bus/group tour operators, business travelers, and meetings and conference planners. The marketing manager also represents the department at Downtown Middleton Business Association meetings, works with DMBA and the Middleton Public Library to promote StoryWalks in Middleton, and crafts the majority of out-going messaging for the department via social media channels, e-newsletters, press releases, and the website.



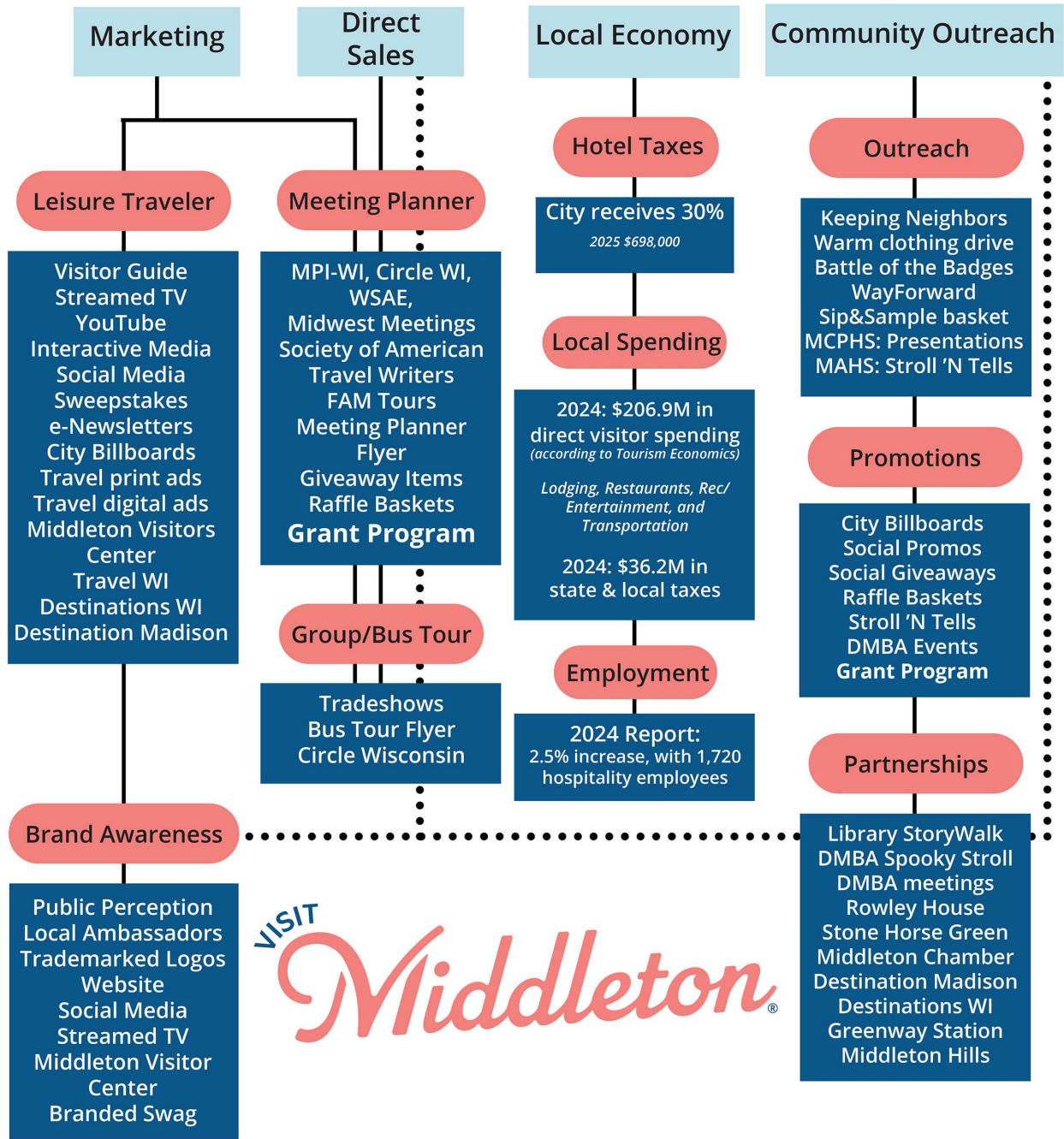
LAURA PORTZ: The **Convention and Events Services Manager’s** role is to liaison with Middleton hotel managers/sales teams, professional meeting planners and group tour operators to create a positive experience for all business taking place at Middleton hotel properties. The CESM also attends bus/group tour tradeshow on Visit Middleton’s behalf in order to meet directly with planners and entice them to bring business to Middleton. The CESM lends expertise for meeting/bus tour marketing and oversees all Middleton Visitor Center operations and visitor guide requests and distribution. They also lead Visit Middleton’s outreach program, Keeping Neighbors Warm, an annual winter clothing/coat drive which collects hundreds of items for local nonprofits. The CESM also processes the city’s event permit requests and attends the city’s License and Ordinance committee meetings.

Middleton Tourism Commission: The Department of Tourism/Visit Middleton has an advisory board in the Middleton Tourism Hotel Tax Commission (MTC), which is comprised of six community members appointed by the mayor. A hotel tax commission is mandated by the WI State Statute to act as stewards of the tax funds and to ensure they are used according to law. The state statute only requires one hotel representative on the commission, but Middleton has a municipal ordinance that additionally requires one tourism attraction representative and one restaurant industry representative, which Visit Middleton has always appreciated. The other three representatives have traditionally included a second hotel representative, a city alder and someone with meeting/event planning experience.



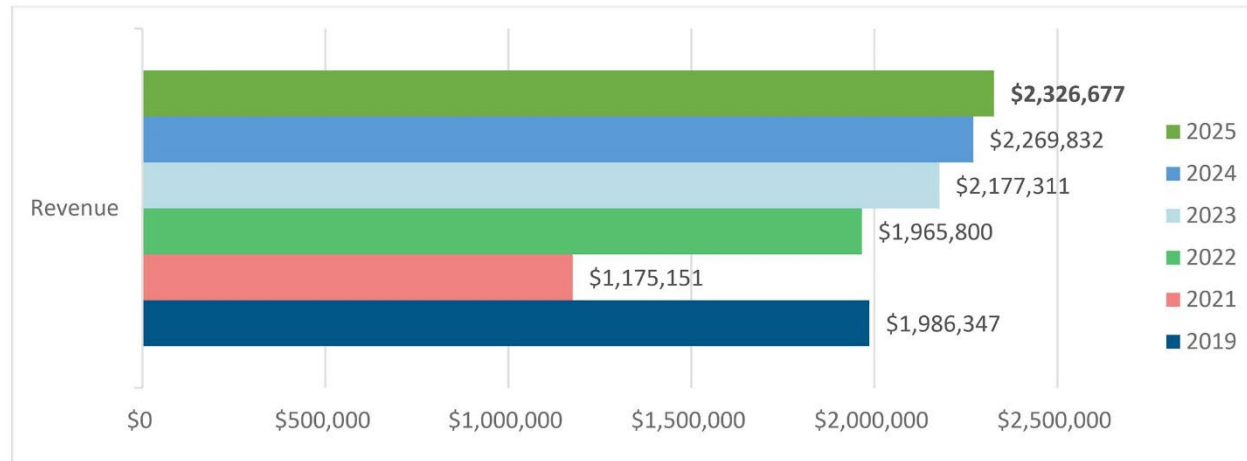
Visit Middleton

Connecting Mission Goals



Middleton Hotel Tax Revenue

Annual comparisons of Middleton’s hotel tax revenue, 2019-2025, excluding 2020.



This graph shows a comparison in annual room tax collection for Middleton (excluding 2020)

Middleton collects hotel tax revenue (set at 8%) from nine hotel properties and various short-term rentals and booking agencies (AirB&B, HomeAway, Expedia, etc.). In 2025, Middleton collected \$2,326,677.49 in total hotel tax revenue, which is 2.5% higher than in 2024. This was a modest increase but also a welcome one, considering 2025’s business forecast appeared level. The forecast for 2026 is similar to that of 2025, based on the low number of pre-booked hotel business or sports-related tournaments. Tourism partners, Destination Madison, which is paid 10% of VM’s revenue for sales and 7% for marketing, has reported that 2025-2026 had similar forecasts for most destinations.

As per law, municipalities are granted 30% of the hotel tax revenue to use however it chooses. The City of Middleton received 30%, or \$698,003.25, and Visit Middleton received 70%, coming to \$1,628,674.24. Visit Middleton subsequently paid Destination Madison 17% — \$276,874.62 — in partnership fees. This partnership is due to the state statute not recognizing city tourism departments as tourism entities, and requires a municipality to contract with a recognized entity in its city/area — hence the paid partnership with DM.

Overall, the average daily room rate for Middleton was up in 2025 by 3.5% (contrasting 2024’s, which was down 3.3%); and occupancy rate reversed in 2025 and was down by 2.8%. Anecdotally, hotel managers reported fewer overnights around May’s graduations than usual, and a continuation of lower occupancy around Badger football games than the city enjoyed prior to Madison opening several new hotels.

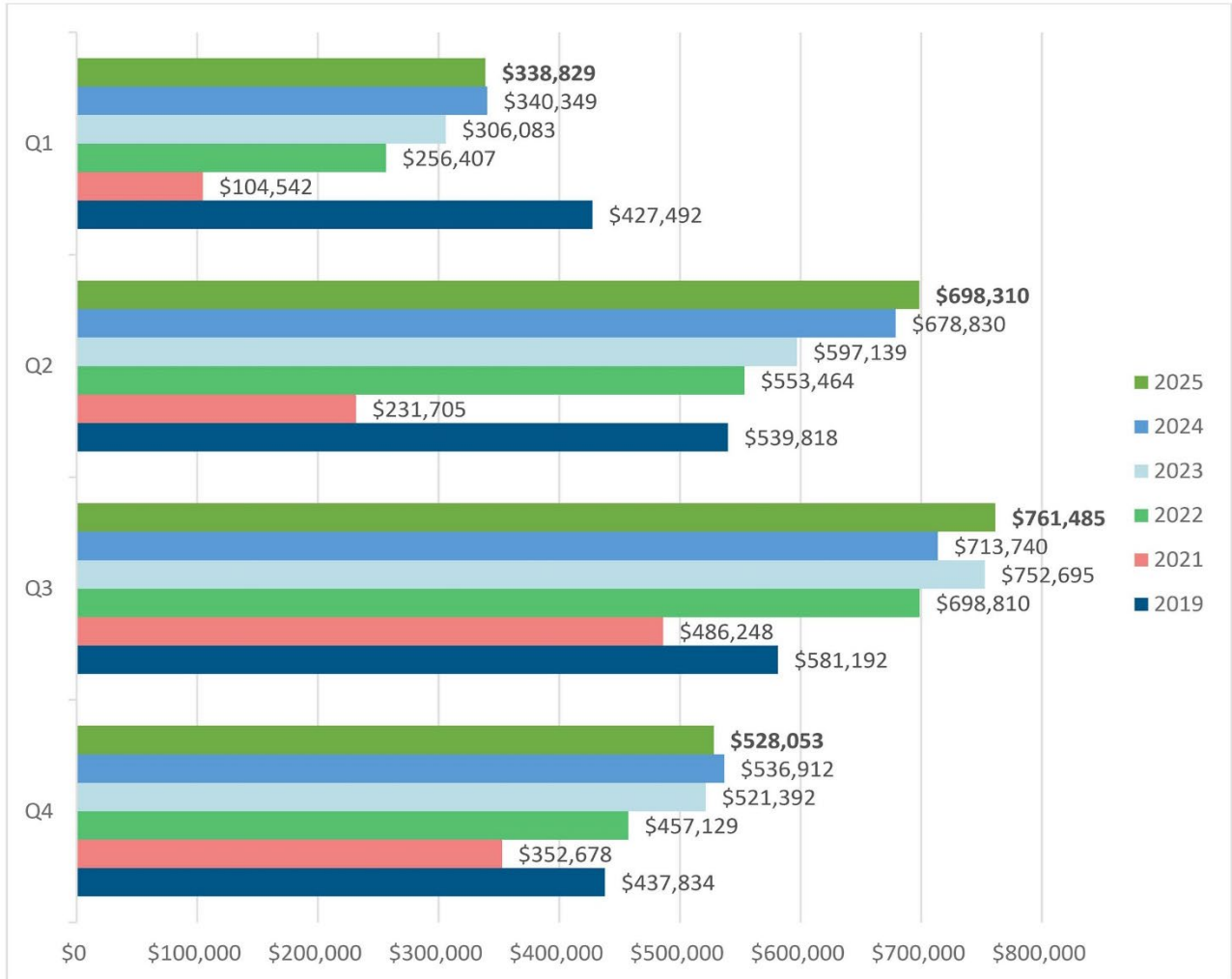
Factors that positively affected occupancy in 2025 include Epic Solutions moving its spring conference to earlier in April, opening room blocks in May for graduations. Also, Fort Randall Stadium hosted two major concerts in the summer which Middleton hotel properties benefited from in June and July.

The month with the highest occupancy was June, the month of one Fort Randall concert, and generally a high month for leisure in Middleton. Second-highest was July, again with a Fort Randall concert; and

third highest is almost a tie between August and October. August, which hosts National Mustard Day, IronMan, Epic Solutions summer conference, and Good Neighbor Festival; and October, which saw two UW football games with high turnouts – Ohio and Iowa.

Tax revenue 2019-2025 by quarter:

Quarterly comparisons over the past six years showing hotel tax revenue for the City of Middleton. Excludes 2020, due to the pandemic, 2020 is not a comparable fiscal year.



ECONOMIC IMPACT—2024

***The 2025 Tourism Economic Report will not be available until June of 2026**

According to *Tourism Economics (2024 report)*, the total direct visitor spending for the City of Middleton increased 3.2% in 2024, to \$206.9 million. This is a \$6.6 million increase from 2023’s report and marks the fourth straight year of increased spending since 2020.

The breakdown in visitor spending is: 29.2% spent on lodging; 27.6% spent on food and beverage; 20.4% spent on retail; 11.9% spent on recreation/entertainment; and 10.9% spent on transportation. These breakdowns are almost identical to 2023.

*Lodging includes the whole industry, hotels and second-home purchases

*Transportation includes air and local transportation

Middleton also reported 1,720 hospitality employees in 2024, which is a 2.5% increase from 2023, and generated \$36.2 million in state and local tax revenue.

TRADESHOWS

Visit Middleton is on its third year bringing bus tour sales in-house. In 2023, it was decided to have the convention and events manager participate in tradeshow for bus tour operators; this was decided when the former tourism partner left his position at a Middleton hotel. Since then, VM staff has tried to cultivate new partnership with hotel sales teams and is hoping to begin training one local partner in 2026.

The following are the tradeshow attended and number of meeting planner interviews conducted in 2025. *Note:* VM places requests to meet with operators/planners who come to the Midwest/Great Lakes area/Wisconsin-specifically.

Event	Year	No. of Appointments	Cost	Cost per Meet
American Bus Association	2023	13	\$3,280.16	\$252.32
	2024	16	\$3,931.22	\$245.70
	2025	12	\$3,729.90	\$310.83
Circle Wisconsin Marketplace	2023	42	\$5,422.04	\$129
	2024	37	\$5,286.76	\$142.88
	2025	28	\$5,616.77	\$200.60
Select Traveler	2024	29	\$3,055.45	\$105.36
NTA Travel Exchange	2023	11	\$3,875.67	\$352.33
	2024	8	\$3,683.06	\$460.38
	2025	13	\$4,068.19	\$312.94

When viewing the “cost per meet” metric, keep in mind, there are tradeshow with fewer meetings that might result in better future engagement. Select Traveler felt to be a great investment initially, but the Convention & Events Services Manager reported that many of the meeting planners did not express interest in Wisconsin, which is why VM has not returned.

Tracking group travel, particularly bus groups, is difficult because the bus tour operators might choose your city but never inform the tourism office. VM relies on hotels reporting bus tour business, which has yet to be consistent. The best form of feedback VM staff has had is direct contact with hotel managers

and the National Mustard Museum. The most efficient way VM can see to track these numbers, as well as other group travel (sports teams, etc.) is to call directly, but the time this involves is not currently available for staff's schedules.

If city permitting were removed from the Convention & Events Services Manager's position, that would provide time for that staff member to perform this tracking.

MARKETING REPORT

Visit Middleton spent \$418,352 on marketing, advertising, visitor guide publication, website, and public relations in 2025, including one Foodie sweepstake giveaway in fall.

About \$67,289 was spent in-house on print and digital toward meeting planner, as well as leisure. Toward the meeting planner and bus tour market, VM spent \$38,906 in house; and \$28,383 was spent targeting leisure markets (tourists, visitors, families, day-trippers) via print and online magazines and Travel Wisconsin cooperative advertising.



The remaining budget was used toward online/digital marketing campaigns via display ads, pop-up ads, banner ads, YouTube, placed commercial advertising on streamed media services, sweepstakes and smaller social giveaways—targeting the three largest designated marketing areas (DMAs), Milwaukee, Chicago and NE Iowa. DMAs are regions determined by the Nielsen company. The remaining budget was also spent on photography/video assets, media design and placement costs from Boelter+Lincoln, VM's marketing agency of record.

For meeting planners, the advertising has been targeted toward Wisconsin-based and Midwest-based planners. For group/tour operators, VM's targeted advertising has been focused on Circle Wisconsin opportunities; and leaning on the tradeshow in-person appointments conducted by the convention and events services manager.

Visit Middleton staff placed ads with the following in 2025:

MEETINGS/GROUP PLANNERS:
Wisconsin Meetings magazine
Midwest Meetings magazine
Society of American Travel Writers
Circle Wisconsin Tour Planner

Wisconsin Meeting Planners International
Wisconsin Society of Association Executives
Wisconsin Hotel & Lodging Association
Illinois Meeting
Leisure Group Travel magazine

LEISURE:

Travel Wisconsin Travel Guide
Travel Wisconsin website calendar
Experience Wisconsin
Wisconsin Broadcaster’s Association Public
Education program (featured in a commercial)

USA TODAY’S Go Escape: Midwest
Brewer’s yearbook
UW Badger football program
Midwest Living magazine
Travel Taste + Tour magazine

The following pages show examples of just some of the ads placed by Visit Middleton staff.

In 2025, Visit Middleton was featured in **Midwest Living magazine’s** fall edition about Wisconsin. A photo and blurb were in the article, as well as a half-page ad. The entire insert was a paid advertisement. See below. This placement was hyperlinked and readers could request more information/visitor guides. We have received requests every week since this ad was launched.



As temperatures drop, Wisconsin transforms with the warmth of vibrant fall foliage. Whether you’re chasing adventure or seeking a little R&R, Wisconsin delivers something for everyone, including scenic hiking trails, award-winning restaurants, one-of-a-kind festivals, and historic downtowns. Fall in Wisconsin is a vacation everyone will treasure.



High Cliff State Park, Fox Cities



Pheasant Branch Creek, Middleton



Lake Geneva



Carol Beach, Pleasant Prairie

The changing of seasons is the perfect excuse for a change of scenery. Start planning your trip today.

BELOIT

Visit Beloit for all your seasonal outdoor adventures, including golf, nature centers, water sports, and Minor League baseball. With these adventures, a memorable foodie scene, vibrant entertainment, and culturally unique arts, you'll be creating stories to remember for years to come.

visitbeilott.com

FOX CITIES

With one-of-a-kind festivals you can't find anywhere else and scenic hiking trails that wind through fall foliage, the Fox Cities are home to endless original experiences. Start planning your perfect fall getaway today!

foxcities.org

HUDSON

Discover Hudson this fall. Visit breathtaking Willow Falls, dine at award-winning restaurants, browse unique shops, and join seasonal tours. Around every corner, there's something to explore—and a special moment waiting to become your next favorite memory.

discoverhudsonwi.org

LA CROSSE

Nestled between ancient bluffs and along the Mississippi River, the La Crosse Region bursts with inspiring heights, picturesque landscapes, and over 100 miles of epic trails. With charming historic downtowns, vibrant festivals and waterway adventures, the La Crosse Region offers something for every explorer.

explorelacrosse.com

LAKE GENEVA

Fall in love with Lake Geneva—where autumn bursts with color and adventure. Cruise the lake, hike or zipline through the trees, and explore our orchards, farms, breweries, and wineries. It's always been the place for fall fun.

visitlakegeneva.com

MANITOWOC

Along Lake Michigan's beautiful shores, Manitowoc welcomes you to explore a thriving downtown, rich art and maritime history museums, and a robust live-music scene. With winding trails and friendly breweries, there's so much to discover. Plan your getaway today.

visitmanitowoc.com

MIDDLETON

Cradled between Lake Mendota and Pheasant Branch Conservancy, Middleton is a charming getaway. Enjoy shopping, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and lake life, as well as dining at more than 80 restaurants. Discover why we say it's the "middle things" that make us special.

visitmiddleton.com

PLOVER

Come over to Plover and enjoy the magic of fall, where vibrant foliage, scenic trails, and seasonal flavors create the perfect autumn escape. Enjoy outdoor adventures, harvest festivals, and local charm!

comevertoplover.com

PLEASANT PRAIRIE

Discover Pleasant Prairie's lakes and vibrant fall foliage. With trails on over 1,000 acres, endless dining options, festive events, and shopping at Pleasant Prairie Premium Outlets, there's something for everyone. Visit and see why the saying goes—it's always Pleasant in the Prairie!

visitpleasantprairie.com

Come over to PLOVER Wisconsin

DISCOVER FOX CITIES ORIGIN.COM | 920-388-4292 | HELLO@FOXCIITIESORIGIN.COM

visit manitowoc WISCONSIN

A relaxing lakeside getaway is calling your name! Waterfront dining, world-class museums, and miles of colorful hiking trails make Manitowoc a perfect fall destination.

www.VisitManitowoc.com

WILD & SCENIC

Along the banks of the wild and scenic St. Croix River, sits a historic town waiting to deliver your next Wisconsin weekend. Whatever your scene, discover it in Hudson.

Discover HUDSONWI.org

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explore LA CROSSE WISCONSIN

ELEVATED ADVENTURE

IT'S IN OUR NATURE

Nestled between ancient bluffs and along the Mississippi River, the La Crosse Region bursts with inspiring landscapes and 100 miles of epic trails. From historic downtowns and vibrant festivals to waterway adventures and authentic flavors, the La Crosse Region offers something for every explorer.

Discover Your Roadmap to Adventure Today! ExploreLaCrosse.com

BELOIT

MEMORABLE DINING SCENE FLOURISHING DOWNTOWN SEASONAL OUTDOOR ADVENTURE VIBRANT ENTERTAINMENT

Where Stories Begin

START PLANNING AT VISITBELOIT.COM

choose adventure great food family fun originality

FOX CITIES GREENE APPLETON WI

Discover the charm of 19 communities nestled along the shores of Lake Winnebago and the Fox River in Northeast Wisconsin. From state park hiking trails to waterfront bike paths, you'll find endless ways to get out and explore on a getaway to the Fox Cities. Start building your original experience today at FoxCities.org

visit MIDDLETON WISCONSIN

Fall in love with Middleton, Wis., and discover for yourself why we say it's the middle things that make our community special.

VisitMiddleton.com

LAKE GENEVA it's always been the place

visit Lake Geneva WISCONSIN

It's always Pleasant in the Prairie

Visit Pleasant PRAIRIE WISCONSIN

Your Local Guide for events, things to do, restaurants, and more!

VisitPleasantPrairie.com

(Custom ad, we created it just for this spread)

This ad was placed in **Travel Taste + Tour** magazine – a full-page advertorial.

- Middleton, WI -

It's the crisp autumn breeze carrying the last of the fall leaves to the ground while walking through Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

It's the sunset reflecting pinks and oranges on the water as you paddle your kayak back to shore.

It's the apple cider donut dunked in a latte at a bistro table downtown, while shops are opening for the day.

In Middleton, we like to say it's the middle things that make this place special — from food, cider and beer that can only be found here, to experiences that are unforgettable. Middleton, Wisconsin, is that destination; that place of respite; that slow-down, feel-good weekend getaway spot.



“
MIDDLETON
BOASTS 30 MILES
OF TRAILS, A
BEAUTIFUL GOLF
COURSE, AN
AWARD-WINNING
GERMAN-STYLE
MICRO CRAFT
BREWERY, AND
SO MUCH MORE.

The CRAFTSMAN AMERICAN INDEPENDENT

Flanked by Lake Mendota and more than 600 acres of protected prairie and wood lands in a conservancy that's trails run through the city, Middleton also boasts 30 miles of trails, a beautiful golf course, an award-winning German-style micro craft brewery (the oldest in the Midwest), and so much more.

Shop in the rejuvenated historic downtown district, or find familiar franchises at the open-air outdoor shopping center of Greenway Station. Enjoy 80 restaurants, cafes and ice cream shops that range from Wisconsin fare to international cuisine, and visit the quirky National Mustard Museum and gift shop — a mecca for lovers of mustard and interesting stories — and take some of each home with you.

Middleton also makes a great home base — stay at one of our nine beautiful hotels and venture out to area attractions — many within an hour of the city. Come “home” each night to a new, fantastic restaurant, have a glass of wine at a downtown wine bar or enjoy a local hard cider or lager, and appreciate the pace of what a leisure destination is meant to be.

After all, it's the middle things that make a getaway like Middleton memorable.



WHERE TO FIND US:
visitmiddleton.com
 Facebook @ MiddletonWI
 Instagram @ visit.middleton
 Youtube @ VisitMiddleton



Another new print ad we placed was in the October 2025 **Leisure Group Travel Magazine**. This was a full-page itinerary spread. There is a QR code and the ability to request information and we receive weekly visitor guide requests from this ad, as well. This targets motor coach and leisure group travel planners.



Residing minutes from Madison, Middleton offers the perfect blend of outdoor adventure, local flavor and small-town charm for a three-day escape. From cider doughnuts and colorful hikes through Pheasant Branch Conservancy to boutique shopping, cozy coffee shops and a quirky museum dedicated entirely to mustard, every stop adds a dash of delight.

MIDDLETON, WI

Falling for Middleton

DAY 1

Falling for Middleton is as easy as dunking an apple cider donut into a caramel latte (don't knock it until you try it). The crisp autumn air calls for a warm cup of coffee, paired with a sweet morning treat from **Clasen's European Bakery**, **Grace Coffee Co.**, or **Willy Street Co-op**. Then set off for your first adventure — a walk, hike, or bike ride through **Pheasant Branch Conservancy**, featuring 682 acres of prairie, creeks, woods, and marsh. Bird lovers are in for a treat, with sandhill cranes, teals, herons, geese, bald eagles, pelicans and more.

Lunch options near the conservancy include Wisconsin favorites at **Craftsman Table & Tap**, desserts at **Miggy's Bakes**, Mexican flavors at **Pasqual's Cantina** or **Lupe's Taqueria**, and sweet scoops at **Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream**.

Spend the afternoon exploring Middleton's 30 miles of trails, stopping at **Hidden Cave Cidery**, where Wisconsin apples are turned into small-batch hard cider. For fall fun, visit Heise Pumpkin Patch, Appleberry Farm, or Kalscheuer's Pumpkin Patch, where goats and piglets greet guests, and Enchanted Valley for its corn maze. End the day around a fire pit at **Longtable Beer Cafe**, choosing from 300-plus beers, or enjoy Italian at **Villa Dolce**, or check out one of Middleton's many Friday fish fry stops.

DAY 2

Begin with the diner experience at **Hubbard Avenue Diner** or **Prairie Café**, both offering hearty breakfasts and bakery counters. Walk it off while shopping downtown — **Journeyman Co.** for men's

clothing, **Cloth & Metal** for sustainable women's goods and jewelry, and **Little Pop Color Shop** and **Regal Find** for gifts. Don't miss the quirky **National Mustard Museum**, home to more than 6,500 mustards, Wisconsin specialties, and a tasting bar. If visiting in August, the annual National Mustard Day festival is a must.

For lunch, choose from **Sofra Family Bistro**, **Free House Pub**, **Takara 88** for sushi, or **Taza** for Mediterranean flavors. Then head to Greenway Station, a 46-acre open-air shopping district with dinner options like **Cooper's Hawk Winery & Restaurant**, **Biaggi's Ristorante**, or **Johnny's Italian Steakhouse**, each offering unique vibes and memorable meals.

DAY 3

Switch things up with Middleton fun like **X-Golf**, **Pleasant View Golf Course**, **Marshall Boats**, or **Kickback Bar**. Or use Middleton as your home base — within an hour are Cave of the Mounds, Taliesin, House on the Rock, International Crane Foundation, New Glarus, Mount Horeb, and more, with Madison's attractions nearby too. Stay at one of Middleton's nine hotels, then return for dinner at one of 80 restaurants. Sip wine at **Grape Water Wine Bar**, grab a beer at **MidTown Pub**, or a cocktail at **1847 at the Stamm House**, Middleton's longest-running tavern since 1847.

End the night with live music at **Capital Brewery's** bier garden, a German-style craft brewery known as "Middleton's Backyard," or at **Stone Horse Green**, which hosts outdoor entertainment from bands to bingo nights until the snow falls.



VISIT MIDDLETON

Laura Portz, CMP
lportz@cityofmiddleton.us
meetinmiddleton.com



A new ad placement for meeting planners was expanding into Illinois. We already advertise in Midwest Meetings magazine and Wisconsin Meetings (which is now combined with Midwest). In 2025 we added **Illinois Meeting**. We placed a half-page ad in the spring and an ad/advertorial combo in the fall.

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION



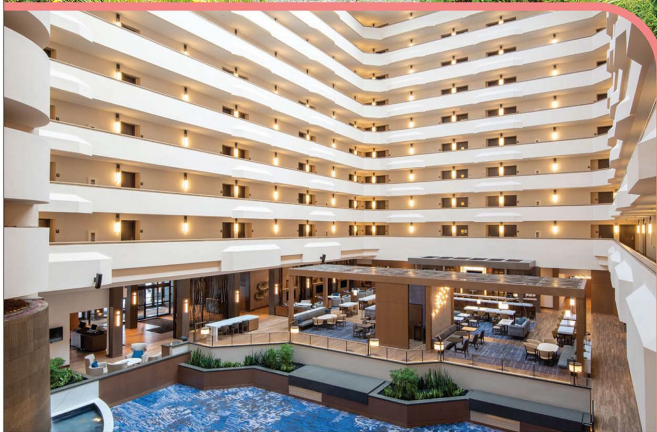
FALL IN LOVE WITH MIDDLETON, WISCONSIN

800-688-5694 | visitmiddleton.com

Middleton, Wisconsin, is the perfect fall location for your next meeting. From apple cider donuts to colorful walks through the Pheasant Branch Conservancy, Middleton is the place to set your next corporate retreat or convention. Middleton boasts more than 80 restaurants, two shopping districts, and unique locations for off-site meetings, like Capital Brewery & Bier Garten and Hidden Cave Cidery. Off-site tours to area attractions are easily booked, as well. No matter the meeting's size, Middleton's nine hotels can accommodate, especially the largest convention hotel in Dane County—the Madison Marriott West in Middleton.

Visit Middleton, the city's tourism department, offers meeting planners tools, assistance, grants/sponsorships, and more to help ensure that planners, as well as attendees, have a positive experience. Come discover why we say it's the *middle* things that make Middleton special.

PHOTOS: Visit Middleton



VISIT
Middleton

Choose **Middleton, Wisconsin**, for your next corporate retreat, convention or event. Reach out now about our grant program and meeting planner incentives.

MeetInMiddleton.com

Visit Middleton: In-House Marketing

Visit Middleton also produces its own in-house social media posts, reels, stories and campaigns, as well as e-newsletter blog posts and website content. These are shared to the same DMAs but also the Dane County area.

Marketing Activities	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Marketing sweepstakes	4	4	1	2	2	2	2	1
Social media contests (FB & IG)	0	12	1	11	10	17	8	14
Social media posts	553	600	357	464	271	375	450	488
e-newsletter distribution	24	24	19	21	20	23	25	23

In-House Social Media Giveaways-2025

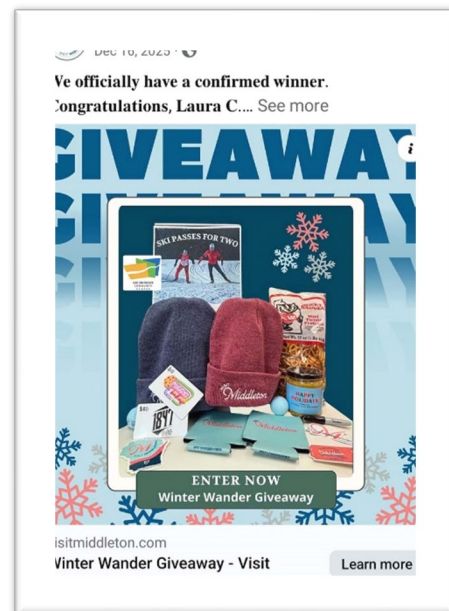
- Bockfest (Jan. 27) – FB/IG
- Pi(e) Day (March 8) – FB/IG
- Sip & Stroll (April 21) – FB
- Travel Tourism Week (May 5)—FB
- National Mustard Day (July 18) – FB/IG
- Daylight Savings (Nov. 2) – FB/IG
- Fall Flavor (Nov. 19)—FB/IG
- Winter Wander Giveaway (Dec. 16) — FB/IG



Followers

(as of Jan. 27, 2026)

- Facebook followers: 34,762
- Instagram followers: 5,076
- YouTube subscribers: 218
- Newsletter ACTIVE subscribers: 13,087
 - Average open rate: 35.8%
 - Average click-through-rate (CTR): 1.9%
- Gained 1,541 newsletter subscribers in 2025; total new subscribers for 2025: 391



Visitor Guide Distribution-2025

- 9,000 ordered (1,000 more than the previous year)
- 1,605 shipped to other visitor/travel centers
- 7,075 distributed via direct mail, hotels, National Mustard Museum, events, and visitor center
- 320 left to recycle at year-end

RESULT: 2025: distributed 8,680, or 835 more guides than 2024

Google Analytics:

Number of website visits Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2025:

Total website views: 390,082

Homepage: 107,061

Events Calendar: 11,730

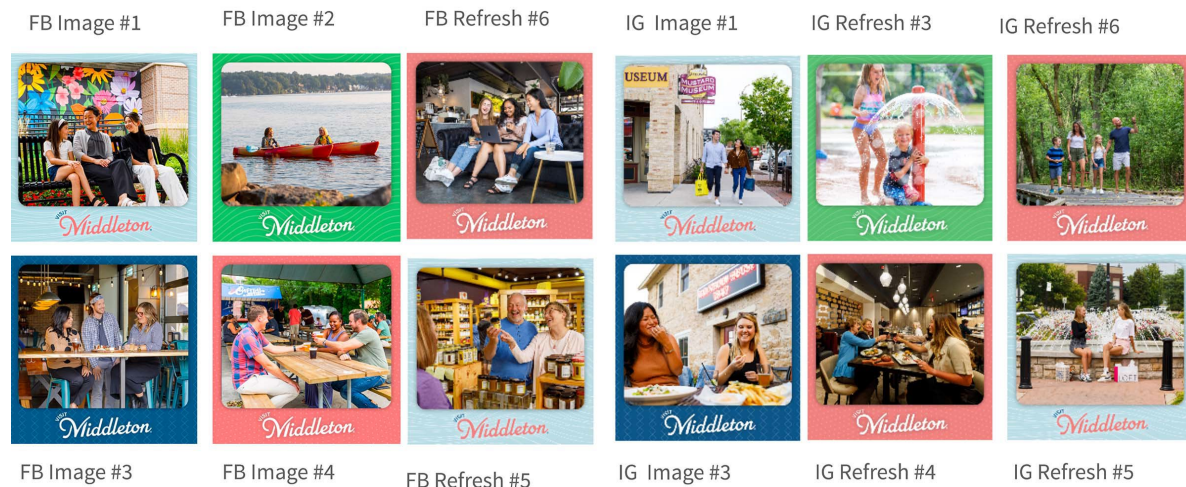
Most popular pages visited:

1. Landing page- 390,082
2. Stay – 20,060
3. Things to Do/Events – 11,730
4. Dining – 6,946
5. Event (Art Walk) – 5,257
6. Location (Tinseltown) –5,216
7. Event (Good Neighbor Festival)—4,798
8. Location (Lake View Park) – 4,437
9. Event (National Mustard Day) – 3,925

Boelter+Lincoln Marketing Report

Visit Middleton engages Boelter+Lincoln, of Milwaukee, to design digital ads, reels and commercial spots and place them in the Chicago, Milwaukee and Cedar Rapids DMAs. The following is a short overview of the annual marketing report from B+L.

Paid Social: Facebook & Instagram Creative (April 7-Sept. 28)



Vertical :15 Videos A



Vertical :15 Videos B



Paid Social: Facebook & Instagram Performance (April 7-Sept. 28)

Platform	Facebook	Instagram	Total	+/- from 2024
Impressions	5,121,981	470,526	5,592,507	-1,069,721
Clicks	133,464	6,357	139,821	-58,620
CTR%	2.61%	1.35%	2.5%	-.48%
Frequency	3.04	1.96	2.5	-.7%
Post Reactions	1,534	397	1,931	-5,081
Post Shares	43	5	48	-195

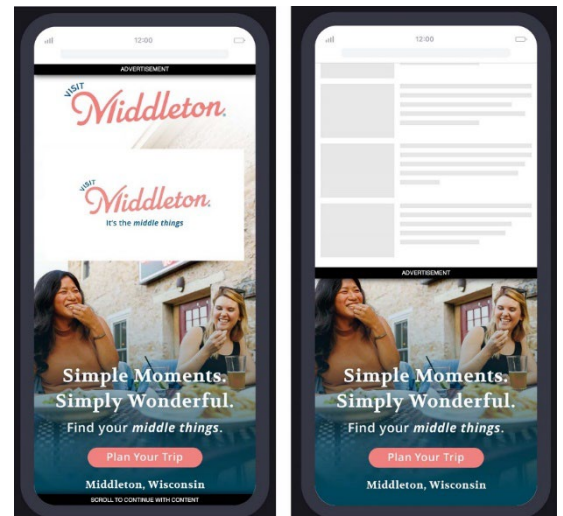
Explanation: Cost for placed ads were higher first half of year but budget could not be increased to compensate; creative didn't seem to speak to audience in the same way, perhaps because of creative chosen or perhaps because it was not able to reach as wide an audience. Changed strategies half-way through by mixing in site-link replacements, vertical video, 1x1 video, static images and copy variations and let Meta optimize performances.

High-impact Mobile Display: New to 2025

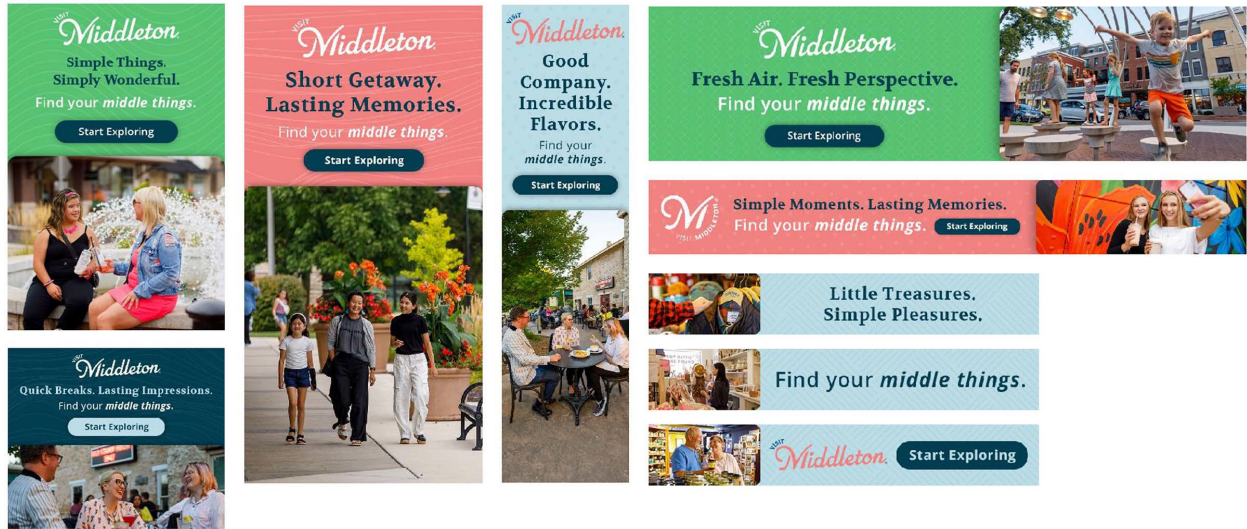
High-impact Mobile Display Performance

Location	Milwaukee	Chicago	Cedar Rapids	Total
Impressions	928,982	935,743	765,693	2,630,418
Clicks	1,809	4,039	1,183	7,031
CTR%	.19%	.43%	.15%	.27%

*More interactive display ad, did not perform at the level we hoped; 2025 is a benchmark.



Standard Display: Overall Performance



Performance:

Impressions: 3,445,614

Clicks: 2,990

CTR%: .09%

*Split budget between high-impact and standard

*Above are examples, some of these photos were swapped or replaced

Fall Foodie Sweepstakes



Lead Generation Results (Sweepstakes)

Fall Foodie	
Impressions	107,006
Clicks	6,783
CTR	6.34%
Leads	1,967
Cost per Lead	\$1.27
New e-newsletter opt-ins	1,215
Cost per Lead for newsletter opt-ins (sweepstakes)	\$2.05

Streaming Video Results



— :30 spots

Visit Middleton commissions a [15-second](#) and a [30-second commercial](#) to run on YouTube, linked to ad placements, and/or running on connected (streaming) TV.

30-second Connected TV commercial			15-second YouTube commercial		
Location	Impressions	Completions	Location	Impressions	Completions
Milwaukee	680,453	674,817	Milwaukee	1,549,376	93.6%
Chicago	701,664	696,111	Chicago	1,618,339	94.10%
Cedar Rapids	464,766	461,663	Cedar Rapids	980,520	94.91%
Total	1,846,883	1,832,591	Total	4,148,235	94.23%

*Connected TV and YouTube served 6 million completed views, 2M more than 2024

*99% of all CTV viewers and 94% of all YouTube viewers watched the entirety of the video

Google Search Results During Campaigns

Search Area	Dates	Impressions	Clicks	CTR
Chicago	April 4- Oct. 31	88,799	7,711	8.86%
Milwaukee	April 4- Oct. 31	63,376	7,139	11.26%
Cedar Rapids	April 4- Oct. 31	10,760	1,022	19.5%
	Total	162,935	15,872	9.74%

VISITOR TRACKING

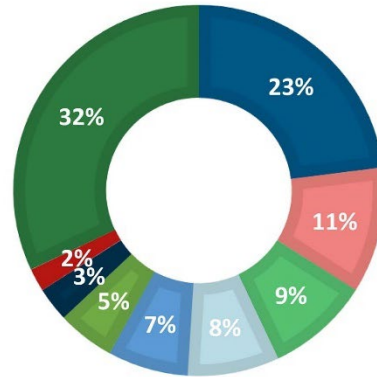
An annual investment in tracking data provided by Placer.ai provides VM a close estimate for visitor tracking within city limits.

There were about 12.4 million visitors to Middleton in 2025, excluding Madison visitors. Peak dates coincided with UW events, Bockfest, commencement, concerts at Camp Randall, Good Neighbor Festival, and Ironman.

On average, Milwaukee makes up the highest percentage of out-of-county visitors at 23% followed by Chicago at 11%; and the third-place varies from year-to-year. In 2025, Minneapolis-St. Paul came in third at 9% with Green Bay-Appleton moving up to fourth in 8%.

This data excludes Dane County residents, who are not seen as tourists.

VISITOR ORIGIN



Market	2022	2023	2024	2025
Milwaukee (targeted DMA)	21.5%	20.5%	22.3%	23%
Chicago (targeted DMA)	12.3%	11.1%	11.2%	11%
Minneapolis-St. Paul	9%	7.8%	9.25%	9%
Green Bay-Appleton	9.5%	7.9%	7.8%	8%
La Crosse- Eau Claire	7.25%	6.7%	7.3%	7%
Cedar Rapids (targeted DMA)	2.16%	1.6%	2.16%	2%

TOURISM GRANTS

Visit Middleton, through the approval of the Middleton Tourism Commission, provided **\$89,622.82** in tourism grants to conferences and events taking place in Middleton, specifically at Middleton hotel properties or with room blocks at Middleton hotels. Of this, \$50,000 was provided to the CXC Foundation toward the build of the Middleton Nordic Center, as part of a five-year grant totaling \$250,000, which meets the department’s mission of also supporting tourism development.

<i>Type of Grant</i>	<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Date of Event</i>
<i>Destination Partnership Grants / Sponsorships</i>	CXC Outdoor Center	\$50,000	Toward Middleton Nordic Center building
	WBA Awards Gala marketing sponsorship	\$1,000	May 3, 2025
	WI Track Coaches Association	\$5,000	Feb. 6-8, 2025
	Capital Brewery Bockfest marketing sponsorship	\$2,000	March 1, 2025
	WayForward-Sustainable Housing	\$1,057	Community outreach: food pantry
	VFW 2025 Convention Program ad	\$485	June 25, 2025
	Good Neighbor Festival	\$5,000	Aug. 22-24, 2025
	TeslaCon	\$2,500	Nov. 6-11, 2025
	Sports Specialist Dealer Show	\$3,000	Sept. 20-24, 2025
	Gilda’s Run/Walk sponsorship	\$1,250	Oct. 5, 2025
	WMPI October Chapter Education Event	\$1,000	Oct. 23, 2025
	Stone Horse Green: Stars Hollow Days	\$330.82	Oct. 30, 2025
	Stone Horse Green: shading structure	\$5,000	Contingent on plan following through (paid out but will be reimbursed if plan does not proceed)
<i>Tourism Marketing & Development Grants</i>	Wisconsin Library Association 2025 Annual Conference	\$5,000	Oct. 28-30, 2025
	Acres USA	\$5,000	Nov. 0-Dec. 5, 2025
<i>Sports Grant (via MASC)</i>	Mendota Yacht Club: 2025 MC Scow Association Championships	\$2,000	Sept. 28-30, 2025
TOTAL GRANT DOLLARS GIVEN		\$89,622.82	

SPECIAL EVENT PERMITS PROCESSED

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Number	39	28	6	18	33	34	32	30

CONVENTION SERVICES RENDERED

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Number	17	10	2	8	19	25	20	22

MIDDLETON VISITORS CENTER: VISITOR COUNT FOR 2025

Number of visitors by time	8:30 – 10 a.m.	10 a.m. – 2 p.m.	2 – 4:30 p.m.
	35	635	111
Total Number of Visitors	781	Total Number of Days Open (including half-days for Saturday events)	Approx. 248
Average Daily Number	3.15		

**In 2024, the Middleton Visitor Center received 787 visitors; in 2023, it was 421 visitor; and in 2022, the center received 572.*

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



WINTER CLOTHING DRIVE: Visit Middleton’s winter clothing drive, “Keeping Neighbors Warm,” brought in 939 winter outerwear items in 2025, which were donated to WayForward Resources in Middleton for distribution. Visit Middleton staff has coordinated a winter outerwear clothing drive for 10 years (for several years as Big Bundle Up) and includes the following drop-off locations: Middleton Public Library, Middleton Visitors Center, Willy Street Co-op West, and Keva Sports Center. VM’s convention and events services manager Laura Portz coordinates with the businesses, picks up the items, sorts and drops off donations weekly during the drive. In recent years, this clothing drive has largely been led by Laura Portz.

VOLUNTEERING: VM allows employees to volunteer at the charity of their choice for 8 hours a month, which can be done in a full day or two half days. Portz participated in this, volunteering at St. Vincent de Paul food pantry in November and December.

“I found this experience extremely rewarding and appreciated being able to give back to the community in a small way this holiday,” Portz said.

FOOD PANTRY: Also, in the fall, WayForward Resources made a plea for donations to its food pantry due to the huge influx of need due to the temporary federal halt of SNAP benefits. Visit Middleton donated \$1,000 to the food pantry in November, with the commission president’s approval.

ORGANIZATIONAL INVOLVEMENT: VM’s marketing manager Maggie Radl attends the Downtown Middleton Business Association meetings on the organization’s behalf to stay informed on downtown activities and events and to assist in promotional efforts. Visit Middleton has taken part in the Middleton Public Library/DMBA StoryWalks since they began in 2020, and VM staff has assisted in press releases, photos and promotion in the past. The Middleton Visitors Center also participates in DMBA’s Spooky Stroll (trick-or-treating).

VM’s director, Mari Olson, is an active associate-level member of Destinations Wisconsin, attending bi-monthly meetings on the organization’s behalf and serving on the Membership Committee. In 2025, Olson rewrote the accreditation applications for nonprofit and public tourism entities for the organization and takes part in the annual statewide tourism lobby day at the capital. She also sat on the Destination Madison Foundation Board in 2025 and the board in 2024. In 2026, she will be in an “off” year in rotation.



Visit Middleton’s mission is to promote Middleton to leisure and group/bus tour travelers, and to promote its hotels to visitors and meeting planners, all to encourage overnight stays and stimulate the local economy.

VM does appreciate that a healthy and beautiful community is more attractive and that VM, being a downtown business, is a part of this community. This is why VM has designated a small amount of hotel room tax toward community outreach, such as promoting (online digital boosting) local events; donating Middleton gift and swag baskets to nonprofit fundraisers (Battle of the Badges (see above left), and

Middleton Chamber of Commerce Sip & Sample Social (see previous page, far right); and donating Visit Middleton swag items to certain city/community events (Middleton-Cross Plains High School hospitality presentations, Middleton HR, National Mustard Museum scavenger hunt).

In 2025, Visit Middleton also had open house hours during Saturday events, outside its regular business hours, for Art Walk Middleton, Pride Day, and National Mustard Day.

VISITOR CENTER UPDATES

In 2025, Olson Toon Landscaping was hired to address the dips, slopes and sinking bricks in the visitor center's front patio. This project was complete in a day and cost \$1,885.

KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2026

No. 1: Complete a three-year Strategic Plan

No. 2: Organize a tourism commission training day/retreat.

No. 3: Reorganize/revamp the Visit Middleton grant applications/structure.

No. 4: Complete the Middleton Visitors Center project with creation of a railroad/depot/downtown history video.

No. 5: Work with the Tourism Commission and the city's operations department and sustainability coordinator on a purchase plan for a new company vehicle.

Nov. 6: Update all meeting/conventions and bus tour marketing assets.