

## THE POWER OF TRAVEL IN LASALLE COUNTY



### PANDEMIC IMPACT TO HOSPITALITY OVERVIEW

Covid-19's impact on the hospitality and tourism industry has been devastating and unprecedented. The impact is estimated to be about nine times of that from 9/11. Many of our properties were unable to host group meetings and events. Restaurants were also affected by the closing of indoor dining, stay-at-home orders and strict capacity limits. These mitigations forced the restaurant industry to pivot, when they could, to takeout and delivery. Though assisted with Federal Relief Programs to pay employees not laid off and other rent and operational grants and loans, the future of the once robust hospitality industry that employed 1 in every 10 workers in Illinois is in peril. The hospitality industry took the brunt of the damage as a business sector and needs targeted long-term support to rebuild and regain its place as an economic powerhouse for **LaSalle County**. Suburban Cook County experienced a -40% occupancy change in hotel occupancy from December 2019 to 2020, as reported by Smith Travel Research.

The Power of Travel is essential for economic recovery in **LaSalle County**. The hospitality and travel industry has been ravaged by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Prior to the pandemic year of 2020, visitor spending in **LaSalle County** topped \$210.35 million which resulted in \$17.63 million in local, county, and state tax revenue (2019). In 2020, visitor spending and tax revenues statewide were down 49%. Regaining our position in the highly competitive tourism market is paramount. The result will be a lower tax burden to **LaSalle County** residents.

We have the perfect location – home of Starved Rock State Park – for road trips, meetings, group tours and sporting events. Easy access by car. Open spaces filled with hiking, water activities and biking. We need to bring back the hospitality work force and promote our communities as destinations to meet, to play, to work and to live. In fact, we must be relentless in positioning **LaSalle County** as a destination. If we do that, then we are – in turn – relentless in protecting the livelihood of our small businesses, our local flavors, and ultimately protecting the livelihood of our economy, our communities and our families.

Locally we offer visitors the I&M Canal national heritage area, the Illinois River Road scenic byway, and Looking for Lincoln heritage sites - with a variety of boutiques and specialty shops and lodging options. Our **LaSalle County** communities are home to an amazing food scene and some of the best outdoor recreation opportunities anywhere in Illinois. We are home to an active outdoor lifestyle with miles of bike trails, hiking, and running trails – and the I&M Canal National Heritage Area. The Heritage Corridor region also boasts several colleges and universities drawing students and visitors from near and far.

[We must be bold in our thinking and in our actions as a County. Our moment is now.](#)

### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT – FEDERAL FUNDING PROVIDED TO LASALLE COUNTY

As a result of the passage of the Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) **LaSalle County** is set to receive almost \$21 million in fiscal recovery funds. Specifically, ARPA authorizes the governments to use these funds to respond to the Covid-19 health emergency or its negative impacts including, but not limited to, assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or **aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel and hospitality.**

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

Establish the Covid-19 **LaSalle County Tourism Promotion Fund** which will be used to pay for advertising and marketing to promote **LaSalle County** tourism sites, hotels, B&Bs, restaurants, pubs, and other small businesses with travel safe messages highlighting the great outdoors, active lifestyle and making memories. We must be relevant and visible. We need more promotion with greater frequency and reach.

The **LaSalle County Tourism Promotion Fund** will promote the County's assets through the following:

- **LaSalle County** brand development and marketing initiatives - 40%
- Participation in the CVB's annual regional marketing campaign (including but not limited to travel guides, digital placements, social media, and television campaign) – 30%
- Staffing/administration and agency creative development – 20%
- Participation in the Illinois Office of Tourism's print and digital coop opportunities – 10%

## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

**LaSalle County Tourism Promotion Fund** - The paid advertising campaign will be developed and launched in 2021. Campaign will include television, digital, out-of-home, content marketing, social media, and influencer activations with the message that **LaSalle County** is open for visitors, meetings and events. The campaign will target leisure travelers, as well as meeting, group tour, sports rights holders, and event planners with the goal of bringing back group and business travel to **LaSalle County**. Target leisure markets will include Chicago/Metro, Iowa/Quad Cities, Indiana/Indianapolis, Wisconsin/southern, and Michigan/southwest.

**LaSalle County Tourism Promotion Fund** will be administered by Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau (501C4), a non-profit organization, and certified by Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity/Illinois Office of Tourism.

## ARPA FUNDS REQUESTED

The Heritage Corridor CVB, representing the communities in **LaSalle County**, is requesting the following to be used per the percentages outlined above from **LaSalle County's** Federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to establish the **LaSalle County Tourism Promotion Fund**.

Total funds requested \$2.1 million to be distributed over a three-year period as outlined below:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Brand development and marketing initiatives Inc print and digital advertising	\$420,000	\$210,000	\$210,000
Regional CVB marketing campaign participation Inc travel guide, digital, video advertising	\$315,000	\$157,500	\$157,500
Campaign Development Staffing/Creative	\$210,000	\$105,000	\$105,000
IL Office of Tourism Coop Campaigns Inc ITG, digital campaigns	\$105,000	\$52,500	\$52,500
ANNUAL TOTALS	\$1,050,000	\$525,000	\$525,000

## AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

**Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau**  
Bob Navarro, President  
[navarro@hccvbil.com](mailto:navarro@hccvbil.com)

**[www.HeritageCorridorCVB.com](http://www.HeritageCorridorCVB.com)**  
815-216-9961

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