



# **Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau Formulates Master Tourism Plan**

by Submitted by Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau  
October 29 2023 7:35 AM



ALTON - What does the future of tourism look like in southwest Illinois? That's a question the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau plans to answer with a new Tourism Master Plan.



The Tourism Bureau has partnered with Whereabout, a destination futures studio based in Portland, OR, to create a Tourism Master Plan which will set a long-term vision for the future of the region and the organization.

The planning process is already underway and includes surveys designed to gather input from visitors, local residents, small business owners and tourism partners within the bureau's six county scope. It is part of the community-driven process to create the plan. The surveys are available on the Bureau's website <https://www.riversandroutes.com/destination-development/tourism-master-plan/>. The surveys opened October 5 and will close November 5.

“Our six county region includes 39 diverse communities and we want to ensure we are meeting the needs of our partners as well as inspiring people to visit our region,” Cory Jobe, President/CEO of the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau pointed out. “We want community input from our residents and business partners to help us make sure as we plan for the region's future we are supporting the businesses to better attract the tourism dollar.”

According to recent data released by the Illinois Office of Tourism, the Great Rivers & Routes region saw visitor spending soar 21 percent last year to \$820 million. Local tax revenues also increased due to visitor spending.

“The recent economic impact numbers clearly show that southwest Illinois is growing as a destination, with more people coming and enjoying the area. The Tourism Master Plan provides the opportunity for the community to help shape the growing interest in the region,” said Matthew Landkamer, Principal & Destination Strategist for Whereabout.

A tourism master plan is a document that sets a long-term vision for a destination and describes a series of strategies that the region will undertake over 10 years to make that future a reality. These strategies are accompanied by measurable indicators that provide accountability for the outcomes and allow the destination to course-correct if the strategies aren't as successful as hoped.

Development of the Tourism Master Plan will include community, stakeholder and visitor engagement through surveys, telephone interviews, video interviews with key stakeholders, and an in-market destination assessment and asset inventory. Those results will then be used in strategy development which will turn the insights into actionable strategies. A series of workshops and stakeholder and community check-ins will also be utilized in the plan development.

The end result – a Tourism Master Plan - will include the Destination Vision, Competitive Positive, Future Visitor Profiles, Objectives and Strategies.

Whereabout has worked with destination organizations across the U.S. to create destination assessments, strategic plans, stewardship plans and marketing plans. Clients include Travel Oregon, Sonoma County, CA, Brand USA, Enjoy Illinois, Paso Robles, CA, Avondale, AZ, Visit SLO CAL, CA and Park City/Summit County, UT.

### About Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau

The Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau is a certified Destination Marketing Organization serving Madison, Jersey, Calhoun, Macoupin, Montgomery and Greene counties and East St. Louis in St. Clair County. The bureau is dedicated to educating visitors about the region by providing information regarding the area's history, unique landmarks, recreational opportunities, leisure attractions, special events and scenic marvels.