

# METRO 50

BUFFALO-NIAGARA

## TOURISM FUNDING

Top 100 Largest Metros

Getting the word out about the more than \$2 Billion in tourism-related investment in our region supports the region's economic development, talent attraction and retention efforts. Erie County invests the least in tourism out of our peers, despite being a targeted growth sector for our region<sup>1</sup>. The benefits of destination promotion extend far beyond tourism dollars. Cities and states that prioritize destination marketing and coordinate these efforts with economic development initiatives have experienced significant site relocations and new investments as a direct result<sup>2</sup>. Central to our economic development efforts, Visit Buffalo Niagara (VBN) needs more funding to match the level other peer metros are investing in their destination marketing organizations.

Rank	Metro	Population
45	Richmond, VA	• 1.28M
46	New Orleans, LA	• 1.27M
47	Hartford, CT	• 1.21M
48	Salt Lake City, UT	• 1.19M
49	Birmingham, AL	• 1.14M
<b>50</b>	<b>BUFFALO</b>	<b>• 1.13M</b>
51	Rochester, NY	• 1.08M
52	Grand Rapids, MI	• 1.05M
53	Tucson, AZ	• 1.02M
54	Honolulu, HI	• 993k
55	Tulsa, OK	• 987k

Bed tax revenue in Erie County set a new record in 2018 of \$11,168,456, an increase of 4.4% over the previous year

Erie County allocates the smallest total amount from bed tax revenue to tourism promotion

Tourism employment has grown by 10 percent in five years, now supporting 33,000 jobs

VBN is funded at the lowest total level of any peer metro except for Rochester, NY

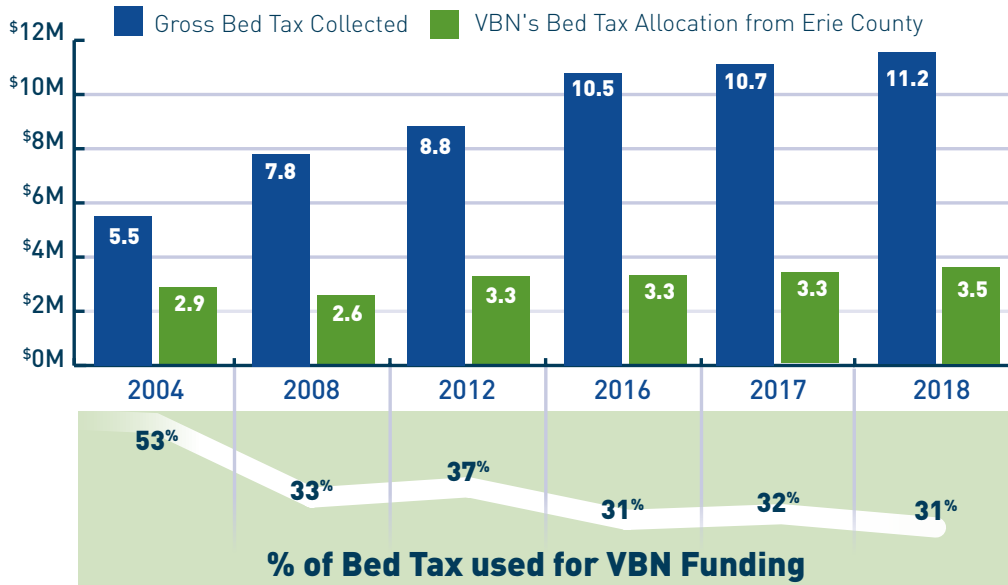
VBN receives nearly half of the bed tax funding from Erie County than the peer-metro average (46% less)<sup>3</sup>

VBN has nearly \$500K less spending power than it did in 2004, after adjusting for inflation<sup>4</sup>

In 2018, VBN generated a return of \$98.65 in contracted visitor spending from convention sales, amateur athletic events, and group tours for every \$1 it received in funding<sup>5</sup>

## AMONG OUR PEERS

**THE GROWING GAP IN TOURISM FUNDING**



The region's tourism sector is healthier than ever, generating record revenues and national attention, including a record amount of out-of-town media coverage about Buffalo, helping place more than 230 stories. With Niagara Falls as the region's anchor attraction, Buffalo has so much to offer: art and architectural treasures, a rich industrial history, a growing agritourism and local food scene, natural assets ideal for recreation, and billions in public and private investment. Now is the time for Erie County to properly invest in destination promotion to better market our unique assets and to drive visitation and economic growth.

RANK <sup>6</sup>	METRO	2017 DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION BUDGET <sup>7</sup>	2017 TOTAL HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX COLLECTED
51	ROCHESTER, NY <sup>8</sup>	3,806,795	8,161,500
50	BUFFALO, NY (ERIE COUNTY)	4,070,750	10,696,694
45	RICHMOND, VA	5,898,389	26,369,539
47	HARTFORD, CT	6,400,000	6,935,957
55	TULSA, OK	7,116,697	7,562,000
49	BIRMINGHAM, AL	7,269,230	7,269,230
53	TUCSON, AZ	9,600,000	23,499,797
52	GRAND RAPIDS, MI	10,432,000	9,250,000
48	SALT LAKE CITY, UT	19,500,000	12,569,226
54	HONOLULU, HI	33,593,468	71,621,620
46	NEW ORLEANS, LA	36,755,041	123,830,209

**#3 America's Favorite Cities**  
- Travel and Leisure, 2017

**America's Coolest Summer City**  
- London Times, 2018

**Best U.S. City to Spend a Weekend**  
- Thrillist, 2019

**WHAT THEY'RE SAYING**

**10 Best U.S. Cities to Visit in 2019**  
- Smarter Travel, 2019

**Top 10 American Cities for Family-Friendly Travel**  
- Forbes, 2019

1. BUFFALO BILLION II  
 2. DESTINATION PROMOTION: AN ENGINE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPEMENT, OXFORD ECONOMICS, NOV 2014  
 3. THE "PEER METRO AVERAGE" WAS ARRIVED AT BY AVERAGING EACH DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION'S ALLOCATION OF HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX REVENUE ACROSS THE 10 PEER METRO CITIES.  
 4. \$3,300,000 = \$2,436,050.84 IN 2004 DOLLARS, CONSUMER PRICE INDEX  
 5. FIGURE COURTESY VISIT BUFFALO NIAGARA.  
 6. U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION, THE LODGING TAX REVIEW: HOW ASSESSMENTS WORK FOR YOUR DESTINATION, JAN, 2018.  
 7. DMO BUDGETS ARE A COMBINATION OF HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX ALLOCATIONS, GRANTS, AND FUNDS RAISED BY THE ORGANIZATION ITSELF.  
 8. DATA FOR ROCHESTER, NY AND GRAND RAPIDS, MI WERE SOURCED FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE 2017 IRS FORM 990, TAX RETURN OF ORGANIZATION EXEMPT FROM INCOME TAX.