



July 24, 2026

Mayor Buffalo and City Council Members
City of Columbia
710 E. Broadway
Columbia, MO 65201

REF: Convention & Visitors Bureau Tourism Development Program Annual Update

Dear Mayor and Council,

On behalf of the Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) Advisory Board, this letter serves as the annual update on the CVB's Tourism Development Program, which is funded through a portion of the Columbia Lodging Tax. Applications for funds are submitted by for-profit and not-for-profit organizations requesting support and assistance with developing and enhancing festivals, events and attractions that will generate overnight hotel stays and contribute to Columbia's tourism economy.

The Tourism Development Program includes six funding categories: Signature Series, Festivals & Events, Sports Development, Attraction Development, Community Sponsorships, and Large Meetings & Conventions. During the FY2026 budget process, \$428,000 was appropriated to the program. To date, the CVB has received 50 funding applications and funded six competitive bid proposals, awarding a total of \$326,338 in Tourism Development funds.

This year, five Signature Series event applications were approved, with a total of \$62,500 awarded. Signature Series events are Columbia's most established festivals that generate national press coverage and have provided a significant economic impact in the community over the years. These events are the True/False Film Fest, We Always Swing Jazz Series, MU Concert Series, Show-Me State Games, and Art in the Park.

No Festivals & Events applications were received during FY2026. One Attraction Development application was approved for the Missouri Sports Park. The CVB Advisory Board authorized a total funding commitment of \$75,000, to be distributed over three years in annual installments of \$25,000, to assist with continued development of the facility and support its ability to attract tournaments and visitors to Columbia.

Three Sports Development applications were approved this year, with \$39,788 awarded to the Missouri Basketball Coaches Association Norm Stewart Classic and the Sophie Cunningham Classic, as well as the Missouri State Middle School Basketball Championships.

In addition, the CVB continued its investment in several high-profile sporting events through a competitive bid process designed to secure multi-year commitments. These events included the Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) State Wrestling, Basketball, and Cross Country State Championship, as well as the NCAA Division I Men's & Women's Cross Country National Championships. Together, these events generate thousands of overnight hotel stays and provide a significant economic benefit to Columbia. The Columbia Sports Commission reviews all Sports Development applications and competitive bids and makes funding recommendations to the CVB Advisory Board.

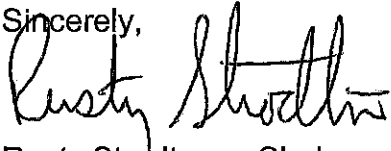
Community Sponsorship funding supports events that enhance quality of life for residents while promoting Columbia as a welcoming tourism destination. Funding levels are based on each event's anticipated tourism impact.

To date, 33 Community Sponsorship applications have been approved, totaling \$107,250. New events receiving funding this year included Taco King Taco Fest, Booneanza, Rumble of the Food Trucks and the Windjammers COMO 2026 Summer Music concert. Funding also supports Parks & Recreation community events including Fire in the Sky, Heritage Festival, Family Fun Fests, and the Gans Creek Classic.

During FY2026, \$7,000 was awarded to support two large meetings & conventions that generate significant overnight stays in Columbia: the Future Farmers of America (FFA) Annual Convention and the Law Enforcement Traffic Safety Advisory Council (LETSAC) Conference.

The Tourism Development Program continues to be an important investment in Columbia's visitor economy by supporting festivals, sporting events, meetings and conventions, and community attractions that generate overnight visitation and strengthen our local hospitality industry. The CVB Advisory Board appreciates the City Council's continued support of this program and your commitment to growing tourism in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rusty Strodtman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rusty" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Strodtman".

Rusty Strodtman, Chair
Convention & Visitors Advisory Board

cc: De'Carlon Seewood, City Manager
Sheela Amin, City Clerk
Amy Schneider, CVB Director
CVB Advisory Board Members