



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

PINE BLUFF
ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION
COMMISSION



OVERVIEW

Our mission is to strengthen the community by creating economic vitality through tourism and unique visitor experiences.

The Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission was enabled pursuant to A.C.A. § 26-75-601 – 26-75-619 and enacted in 1978 through city ordinance. The commission is the governing body for Explore Pine Bluff and is comprised of seven members: four members shall be owners or managers of the tourism industry (with at least three of whom shall be owners or managers of hotels, motels, or restaurants), and shall serve for staggered terms of four years; two members shall be members of the governing body of the city and selected by the governing body and shall serve at the will of the governing body; and one member shall be from the public at-large and shall serve for a term of four years.

All revenues received by the Advertising and Promotion Commission shall be “special revenues” and shall be deposited by the Advertising and Promotion Commission in such bank account or accounts as may be designated by the Commission.

All monies credited to the fund shall be used by the commission for advertising and promoting the city and its environs or for the construction, reconstruction, extension, equipment, improvement, maintenance, repair, and operation of a convention center or for the operation of tourism promotion facilities in the city, and facilities necessary for, supporting, or otherwise pertaining to, a convention center, for funding of the arts, for the operation of theme parks, family entertainment facilities, or other tourist-oriented facilities as determined by the advertising and promotion commission not inconsistent with Arkansas enabling statutes. Such funds shall not be used for general capital improvements within the city; for the costs associated with the general operation of the city; or for general subsidy of any civic groups or the chamber of commerce. However, said advertising and promotion commission may contract with such groups to provide to the commission actual services that are connected with tourism events or conventions. The authorization and limitations contained herein shall be reasonably construed so as to provide funds for promoting and encouraging tourism and conventions while not allowing such special revenues to be utilized for expenditures that are normally paid from general revenues of the city.

Commissioners

CITY OF PINE BLUFF

Dr. Glen Brown, Jr., Chair
Appointed 3/6/17

Lloyd Holcomb, Jr.
Appointed 1/17/19

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Berinda Eugene, Vice Chair
Cheers At The BBQ Hut
Term Expires: 5/31/23

Rosie Pettigrew
R.J's Sports Grill & Bar
Term Expires: 10/31/25

Steven King*
Subway
Term Expires: 6/1/24

Jamie McAfee*
Pine Bluff Country Club
Term Expires: 4/30/23

*Received City Council approval on 12/19/22. Will be sworn in on 1/25/23.

PUBLIC AT-LARGE

John Lawson
Express Employment
Professionals
Term Expires: 10/31/25

*All commissioner information effective through 12/31/22

Staff

Sheri Storie, Executive Director
Jimmy Cunningham, Director
of Tourism Development
Betty Brown, Administrative
Assistant

*All staff information effective through 12/31/22

VISION

Enhance Pine Bluff's position in the tourism industry by promoting and developing the city as a travel destination that provides culturally rich, diverse, and inclusive experiences.

MESSAGE FROM THE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

And just like that, it's 2023! I know I'm not alone in feeling that 2022 flew by way too fast. I read that scientists claim that Wednesday, June 29, 2022, was shorter than any other day by 1.59 milliseconds. This day was the shortest day ever recorded since atomic clocks began due to a slight "wobble" of the Earth. Maybe that's why it feels like last year went by so fast. Probably not, but the year did seem to pass by with lightning speed.

We are entering into an incredibly exciting time for tourism in Pine Bluff and Jefferson County. With the unanimous support of the Pine Bluff City Council, \$2 million has been allocated for the first project within the epicenter of the Delta Rhythm & Bayous Cultural District in downtown. Plans are officially underway to construct the Delta Blues & Fitness Park between 2nd & 3rd Avenues on State Street. This multi-purpose park will be a memorial site honoring more blues greats than any other outdoor venue in the U.S. According to the economic impact study performed by Tourism Economics (a Philadelphia-based consulting firm which is a subsidiary of Oxford Economics), Pine Bluff has the potential to attract 128,000 visitors to the district annually with \$13.6 million in non-local visitor spending. The total estimated annual economic impact for the district is \$18.2 million with approximately 250 jobs generated and \$1.9 million in total annual state and local tax revenues.



As Pine Bluff grows as a tourism destination, it is now more important than ever for us to invest time and resources to collect and analyze visitor trends and data. This will allow us to refine our marketing efforts, improve the visitor experience by aligning programming with traveler expectations, and place us on a more level playing field with state, regional, and national destinations. As always, we remain committed to providing a quality and authentic visitor experience for our guests.

As I reflect back on the last 12 months, I am filled with much gratitude. I am deeply grateful for the contributions and dedication from our small but mighty staff members, Betty Brown and Jimmy Cunningham. I am grateful for the commitment and support of so many organizations and individuals in our community who worked with our staff on innovative and collaborative approaches in regards to the future of Pine Bluff's tourism. I am also grateful for the support and affirmation we received for our vision from community residents as well as local, state, and regional leaders.

It is my honor to present to you the 2022 annual report for the Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission. Thank you for your continued support of the Pine Bluff tourism industry and we look forward to a successful year ahead.

Best regards,

Sheri Storie
Executive Director

OPERATIONS

A&P TAX COLLECTIONS

The Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission collects 2% from all prepared food sales (restaurants, food trucks, caterers, etc.) and 3% on short-term lodging rentals (hotels, motels, short-term rentals).

The number of prepared food establishments fluctuates throughout the year as businesses open and close. We collect from an average of 107 prepared food businesses.

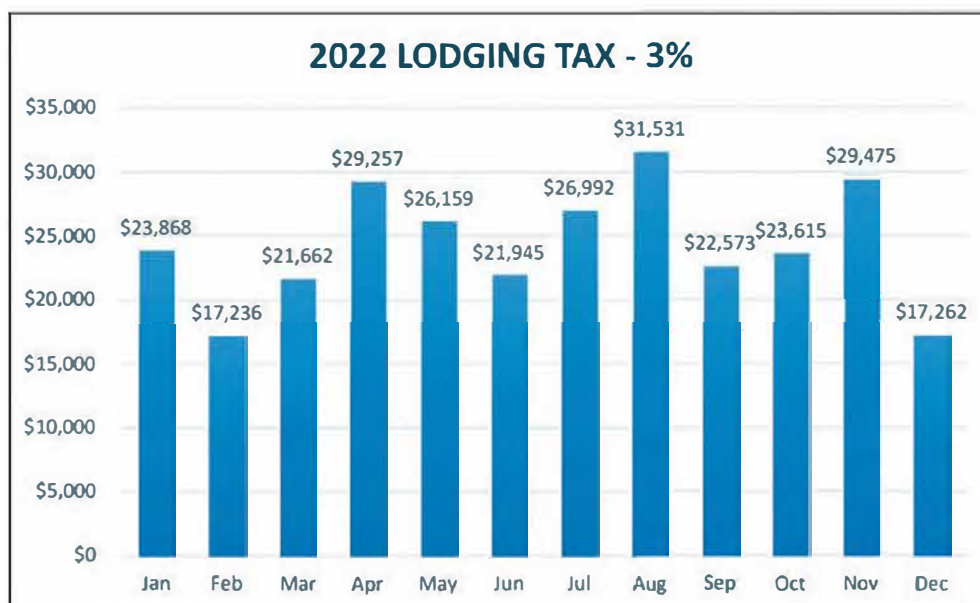
2022 Prepared Food Collections Totaled \$2,134,872*

*Includes a one-time payment of \$444,342 and should not be expected in future years.

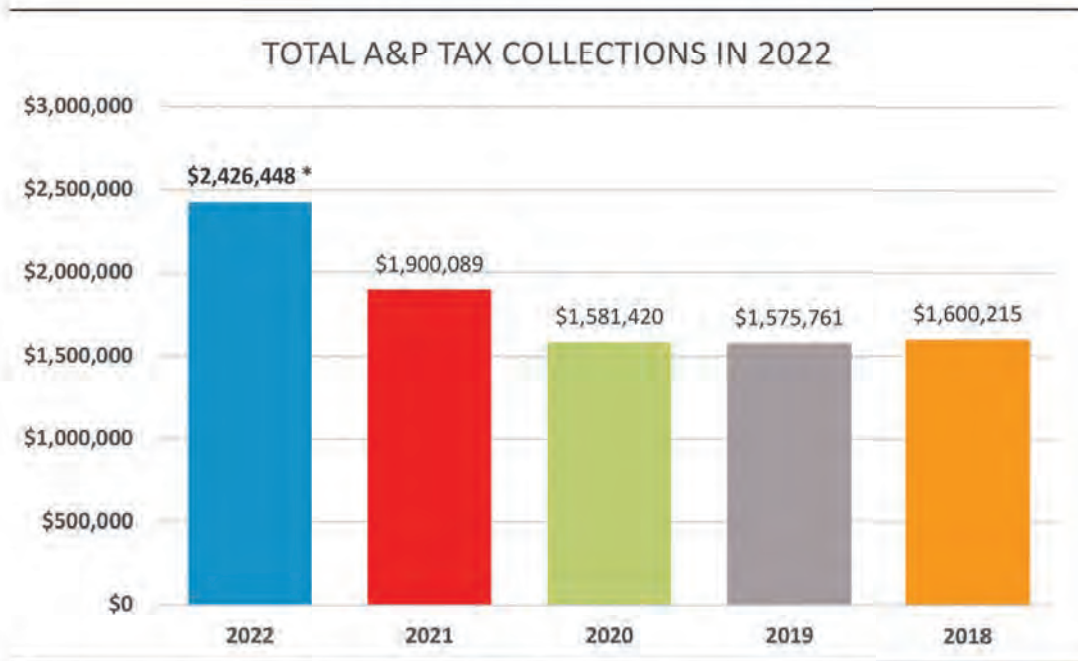


Currently we collect from 14 hotels, motels, and short-term lodging facilities in Pine Bluff.

2022 Lodging Collections Totaled \$291,575



OPERATIONS



**2022 total includes a one-time payment of \$444,342 and should not be expected in future years.*

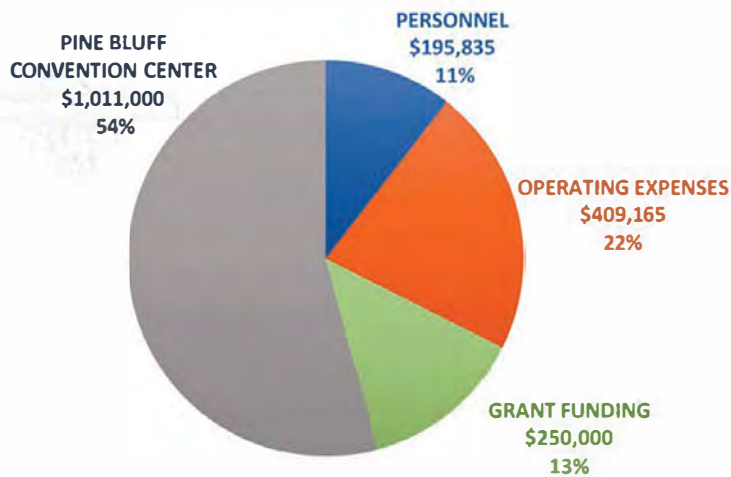
27.7% Total Increase Over 2021 Collections (including one-time payment)
4.3% Increase Over 2021 Collections (excluding one-time payment)

The 90th Arkansas General Assembly passed Act 1102 which took effect on July 22, 2015 that exempts individual businesses' tax records from being released under the Freedom of Information Act of 1967.

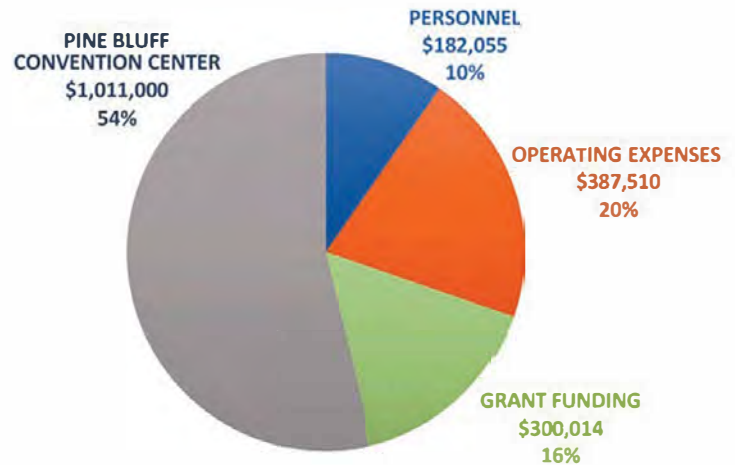
2022 BUDGET

In 2022, the A&P Commission voted to use \$216,000 from our reserves in order to fund the Pine Bluff Convention Center \$1,011,000. The commission was still able to allocate \$250,000 for year-round, advertising and publicity, and event funding grants in the 2022 budget. This allowed the commission to provide funding to numerous attractions and organizations, while still providing over \$1M to the convention center.

BUDGET



ACTUAL



Year Round Funding Recipients:	Approved Funding:	Actual Amount Utilized:
Arkansas Railroad Museum	\$15,000	\$15,000
Arts & Science Center for Southeast Arkansas	\$45,000	\$45,000
Hestand Stadium	\$35,000	\$35,000
Taylor Field	\$45,000	\$45,000
Advertising and Publicity Grant Recipients:		
Go Forward Pine Bluff	\$49,000	\$49,000
Event Funding Recipients:		
Black Pilots of America – Operation Skyhook	\$10,000	\$10,000
CASA – 5K Marathon	\$5,000	Event Canceled
Delta Rivers Nature Center	\$1,500	\$1,500
Gloves Not Guns	\$44,500	\$42,514
Unallocated Event Funds – Pick Up Truck for Grider Field Airport; Boxing Ring Rental		\$52,000



BALANCE SHEET

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2022

ASSETS

Current Assets

Cash on Hand	50.00
Cash in Bank - Relyance	1,341,250.79
Cash in Bank - Relyance-TDP	189,037.46

Total Current Assets **1,560,338.25**

Total Property and Equipment **0.00**

Total Other Assets **0.00**

TOTAL ASSETS **\$1,530,338.25**

LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE

Current Liabilities

Payroll Taxes Payable	0.02
FIT Withheld	2,351.98
FICA/MC Withheld	1,370.26
FICA/MC Match	869.57
SIT Withheld	963.04
SUTA	128.68
Accrued Compensated Absences	14,672.00

Total Current Liabilities **20,355.55**

Total Long-Term Liabilities **0.00**

Fund Balance

Fund Balance Beginning	967,971.36
Current Period Inc (Dec)	542,011.34

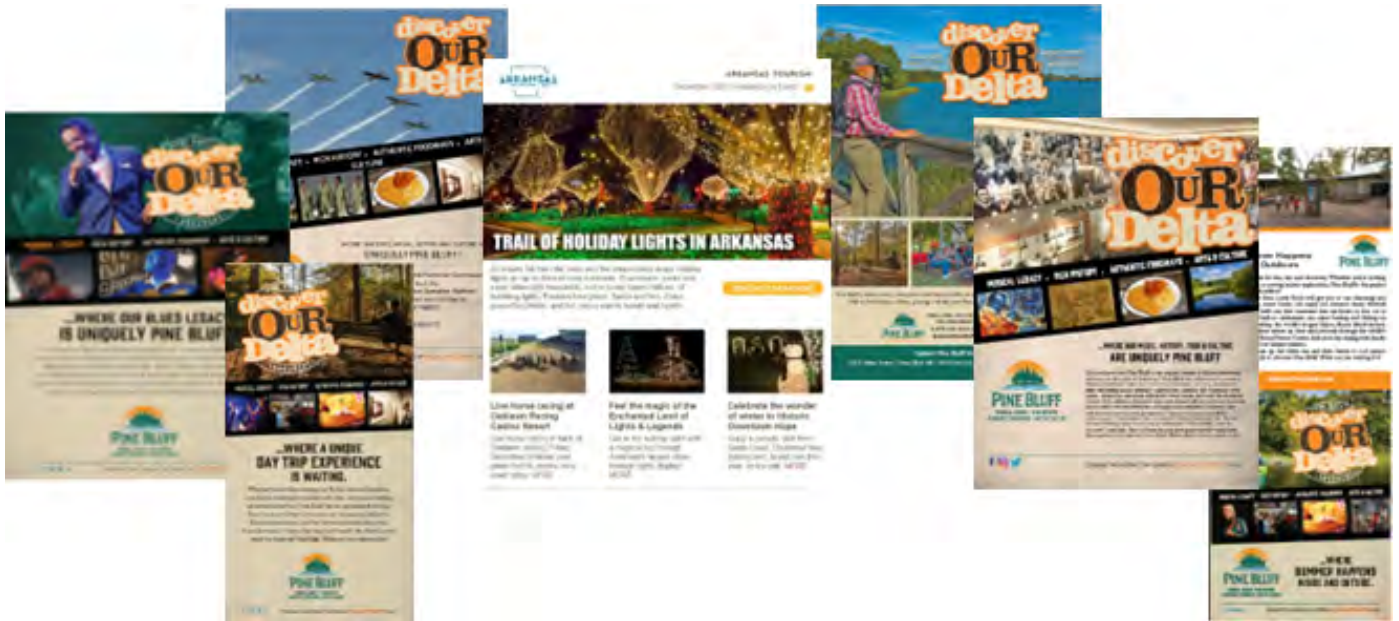
Total Fund Balance **1,509,982.70**

TOTAL LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCE **\$1,530,338.25**

MARKETING

Our "Discover Our Delta" branding and new messaging architecture has been very well received in our 2022 marketing. This focus on story, placemaking and destination marketing represents a new direction from previous marketing efforts that have been used in the past. Focusing on the unique historical and cultural assets of the area has resulted in tremendous opportunities for public awareness, positive branding and tourism development.

SAMPLING OF ADS PLACED IN 2022



1ST ANNUAL DISCOVER OUR DELTA CELEBRATION PROMOTIONAL POSTERS



MARKETING

2022 COMPARED TO 2021

PRINTED COLLATERAL

 **1,275** ↑ 35%
NUMBER OF BROCHURES
sent to welcome centers

 **1,446** ↑ 5%
NUMBER OF WELCOME
PACKETS for groups meeting
in/representing Pine Bluff

 **2,032** ↓ 46%
DIRECT MAIL PIECES SENT
(included partnership with
Land of Legends)

WEBSITE TRAFFIC OVERVIEW

 **26,755** ↑ 90%
WEBSITE VISITS/SESSIONS

 **47,910** ↑ 65%
PAGE VIEWS

 **20,747** ↑ 74%
UNIQUE VISITORS

 **7 MIN 44 SEC** ↑ 57%
AVG. SESSION DURATION

Website Traffic By Device:

 **17,086** ↑ 64%
MOBILE

 **9,232** ↑ 34%
DESKTOP

 **434** ↑ 2%
TABLET

SOCIAL CHANNELS

 **5,019** ↑ 14%
FACEBOOK FANS

 **333** ↑ 13%
INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

Top 25 Blog Views from ExplorePineBluff.com

The following list represents the top 25 topics which garnered views from Explore Pine Bluff's Blog from 2020-2022. With such an expansive range of varied interests, website visitors demonstrated a powerful interest in Pine Bluff's rich and complex history/culture. Architecture, natural assets, civil rights, music, art, invention, slavery, aviation, medicine, and a variety of other fields were just a few of the favorites included. Also noteworthy is that the largest volume of these blog articles were read during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic; accomplishing what our staff wanted in providing content about the city to the public at a time when people were not travelling but had free time because of work shutdowns.

One cannot overstate the importance of this data when considering the Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion (A&P) tourism development plan. The range of topics which are proposed to be highlighted in the Delta Rhythm & Bayou's Cultural District are largely reinforced in the list of blog articles. Given that a combination of local residents and out-of-towners chose many of the same topics in which A&P, the Pine Bluff Jefferson County National Heritage Trails Task Force, and the Delta Rhythm & Bayous Alliance are working to develop interpretive mediums around, it suggests that we are on the right track. As A&P develops more blog articles in the future, additional data will aid programming choices.

	Blog Title	Date Deployed	Views
#1	Martha Mitchell	5/27/20	1,133
#2	Jewel Bain: Home Designer	1/27/21	867
#3	PB Lynching of 1892	2/10/21	750
#4	Zenobia Perry: Composer	8/23/20	611
#5	Dexter Harding's Sawdust Bridge	7/7/21	467
#6	Hidden Figure: Dorothy Hoover	7/9/20	427
#7	WPA Slave Narratives	2/3/21	380
#8	History of UAPB	9/2/20	373
#9	Wiley Jones	8/3/20	369
#10	Short Life of Bobby Hutton	4/21/21	353
#11	Wilkerson v. State	8/25/21	327
#12	Taylor Field	7/22/20	317
#13	Karen Wolf: Soul Blues Princess	8/26/20	292
#14	Cleon Flowers	7/28/21	273
#15	Enchanted Land of Lights & Legends	11/23/22	248
#16	M.D. Jordan Merrill High School	6/23/21	246
#17	Bayou Bartholomew	7/8/20	244
#18	John Horse: Black Seminole	2/16/22	185
#19	Jim Hill: A Pine Bluff Icon	7/15/20	179
#20	DRB Cultural District	12/7/22	175
#21	Madam Hockenull (Tie)	3/15/22	167
#21	Meet John Howard: Artist (Tie)	8/23/20	164
#22	Martin Luther King, Jr. in Pine Bluff	1/13/21	162
#23	Remembering Grider Field	3/24/21	161
#24	Winona Shannon: Actress	8/4/21	148
#25	John Rust: Inventor	8/16/22	145

Preview of Tourism Development in 2023

Coming to a theater near you will be a range of tourism development initiatives in 2023 designed to heighten public awareness about the history/culture of Pine Bluff, develop increased visitation to local attractions, and further craft a brand which fosters a positive image for the city. These initiatives include:

- "A Cast of Blues" Exhibition - This exhibition includes 15 resin-cast masks of the actual faces of blues legends. It has traveled throughout the country helping to imbue the power of the Delta's blues story. The last living legend included in this collection is Bobby Rush. Mr. Rush will perform when the exhibit comes to Pine Bluff in May.



- Agritourism - The Director of Tourism Development will build a tour highlighting agriculture and farming in concert with private property owners. This tour will highlight cotton and other products from the area. It will also be accompanied by a video in development about the importance of cotton in the area.

- Planning for the 2024 Solar Eclipse - With the impending solar eclipse in 2024 and the expected large volume of visitors coming to Pine Bluff in April of 2024, A&P is leading the planning for city events which can entertain and attract more people to the area. Specific activities will be announced later in the year.



- Increasing Data Collection Capacity - In an effort to better determine methods to attract tourists to the area, A&P will be increasing its data collection capacity. Investments will be made in software which can assist in analyzing visitor information (ie. origin points, spending habits, length of stays, etc.) at sites comparable to those being developed in Pine Bluff.

- The Delta Rhythm & Bayous District Video Series - Highlighting important narratives found in the DRB Cultural District, this series of six videos (7-10 minutes each) will provide viewers with historical analysis related to Pine Bluff's contributions in civil rights, cotton development, resistance to slavery, blues, reconstruction, and cinema. The series will begin in February of 2023 and proceed monthly.



- Delta Rhythm & Bayous Cultural District - Plans will continue to develop for the district as more material is gathered for interpretation. A&P will be using a consultant to collect interviews related to Pine Bluff/Jefferson County's Chitlin', cinema, and civil rights traditions. These interviews provide the basis for murals, phone apps, and other mediums.

