

# 2023 Summer Season in Review

TOURISM INDUSTRY REVIEW

DISCOVER  
Gloucester

GREATER  
CAPE  
ANN  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# PRESENTERS

- **Tess McColgan** | Executive Director, Discover Gloucester
- **Michael DeKoster** | Board Chairperson, Discover Gloucester
- **Sam Bevins** | Director of Operations, Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce
- **Tony Sapienza** | Committee Chair, Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce  
Tourism Council
- **Nancy Gardella** | Executive Director, North of Boston Convention and Visitors  
Bureau
- **Michael Sperling** | CEO & Owner, Sperling Interactive

# AGENDA

## Quantitative Data Review

- Beaches & CATA
- Local Options Tax
- Cape Ann Accommodations
- Visitor Center

## Qualitative Data Review

- Roundtable Discussion Highlights
- Major Trends & Challenges
- North of Boston Regional Update
- Digital Marketing Impact

## Q & A



*2023 July Block Party*

# Summer '23 Quantitative Analysis

Presented by Sam Bevins | Operations, Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce

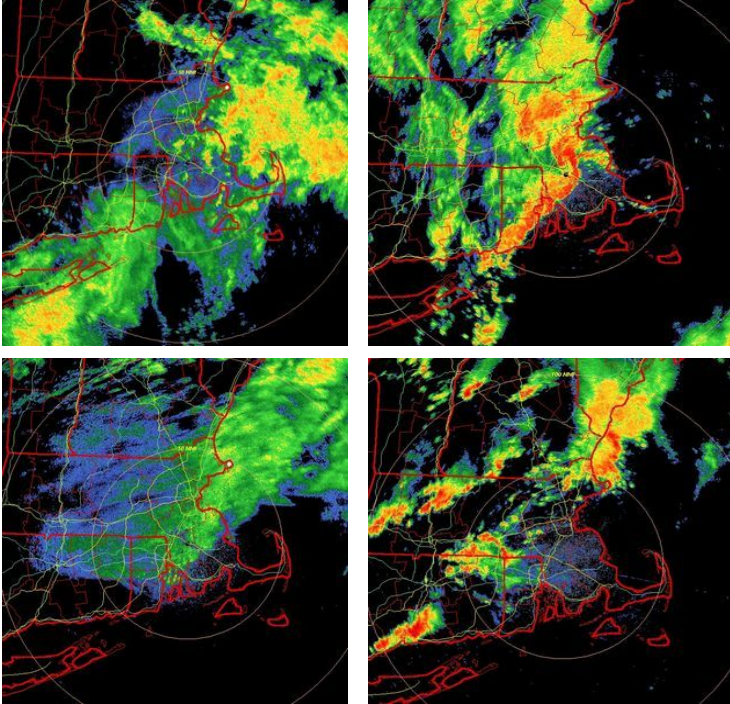
- **Objective:** Quantitative look at the Summer Season as a means to compare this year's visitation to prior years
- **Metrics**
  - Weather: 2nd wettest summer on record
  - Beach parking: slightly down
  - CATA ridership: still recovering
  - Events: good attendance
  - Local Options Tax
    - Rooms: flattening out a bit
    - Meals: similar to last year
  - Accommodations: another strong season
  - Cultural centers: getting back on track

**Season Summary - Generally good year**

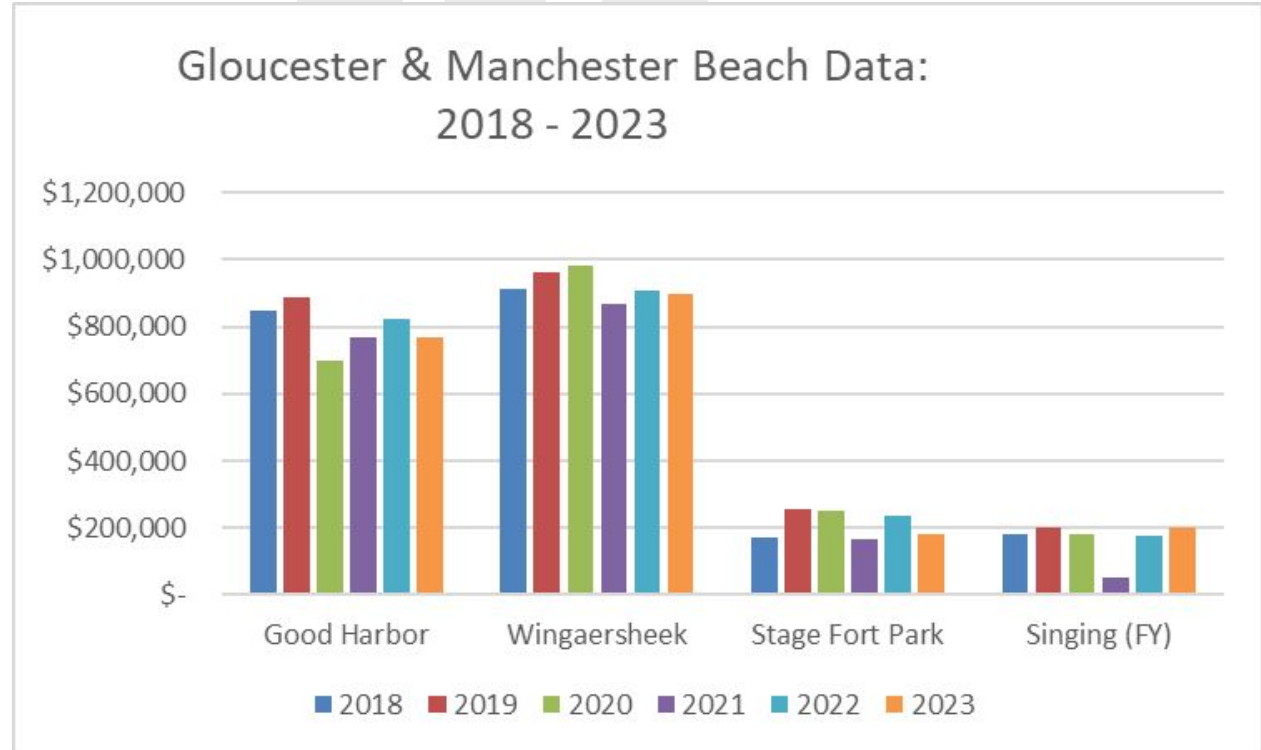


# Three Visitor Driver Metrics

1. Weather – second wettest summer
  - a. 13 of 18 weekends had rain



2. Beaches - down slightly, likely due to weather

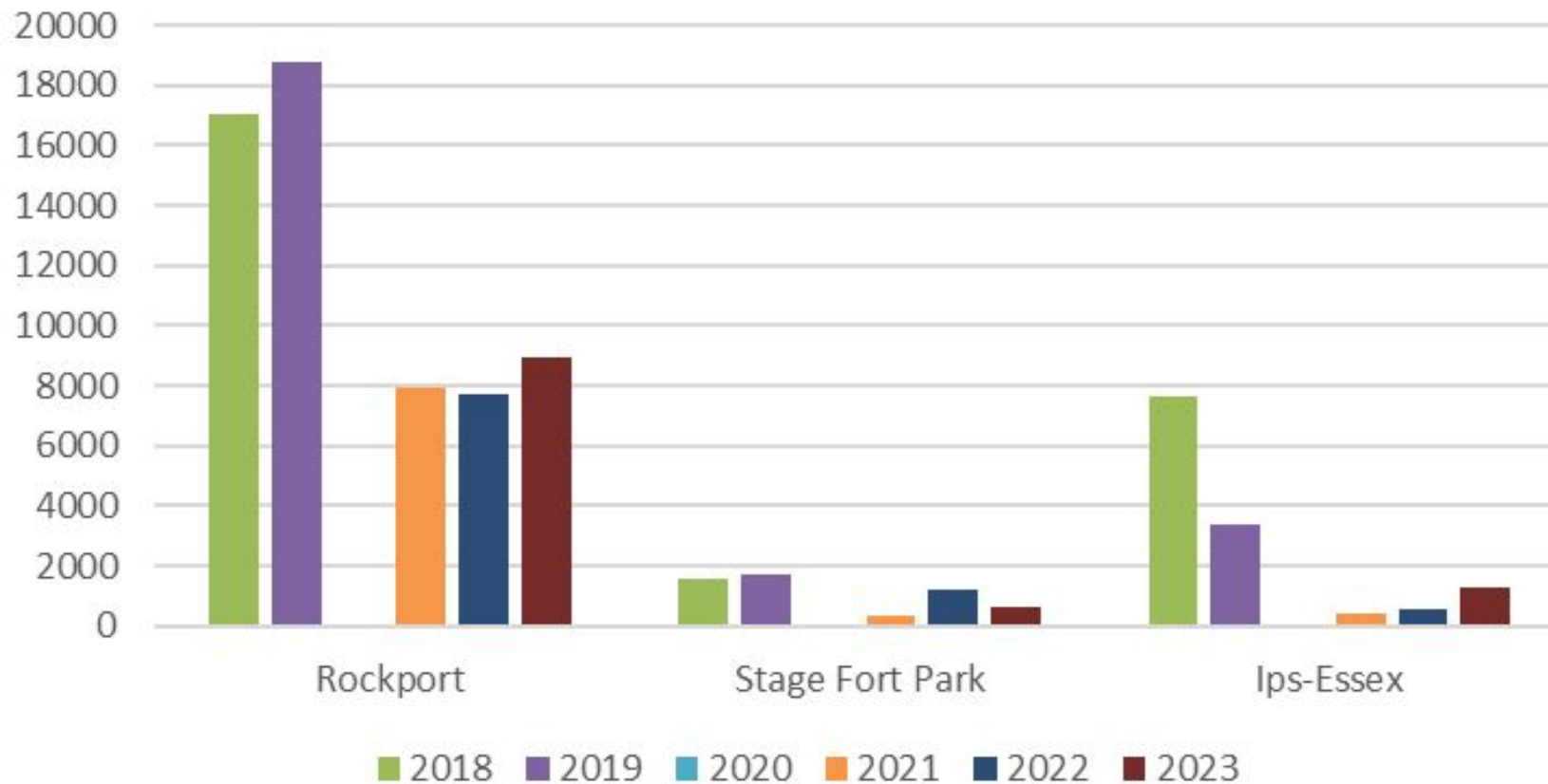


3. Events – good attendance... when the weather cooperated



# CATA Ridership

CATA Ridership: Seasonal Routes (June - Sept.)



## Key Takeaways:

- Rockport shuttle is up from 2021 & 2022
- Stage Fort Park shuttle is down from 2022
  - could be due to weather and/or improved beach parking?
- Ipswich-Essex shuttle up nearly double from 2022 to 2023

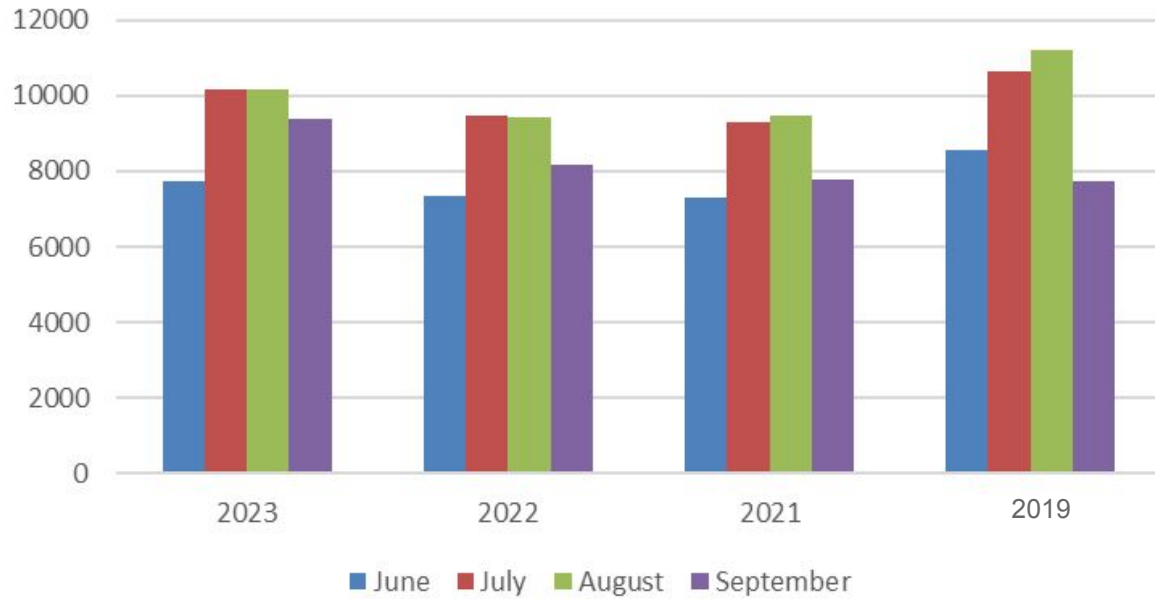
# Cape Ann Accommodations Sample

- **10 Participants: ~350 Rooms of ~ 700 total for Cape Ann**
  - Atlantis Oceanfront Inn (40), Gloucester
  - Beauport Hotel (94), Gloucester
  - Blue Shutters Inn (12), Gloucester
  - Cape Ann's Marina Resort (31), Gloucester
  - Cape Ann Motor Inn (31), Gloucester
  - Castle Manor Inn (26), Gloucester
  - Emerson Inn (35), Rockport
  - Rockport Inn and Suites (79), Rockport
  - Shea's Riverside Inn & Motel (20), Essex
  - Vista Hotel (40), Gloucester

**Important: RI&S not included in '21 & '22, Sea Lion Inn not included in '23**

# Rooms Sold by Month

Rooms Sold by Month 2019 - 2023



With Rockport Inn & Suites Data

Rooms Sold by Month 2019 - 2023

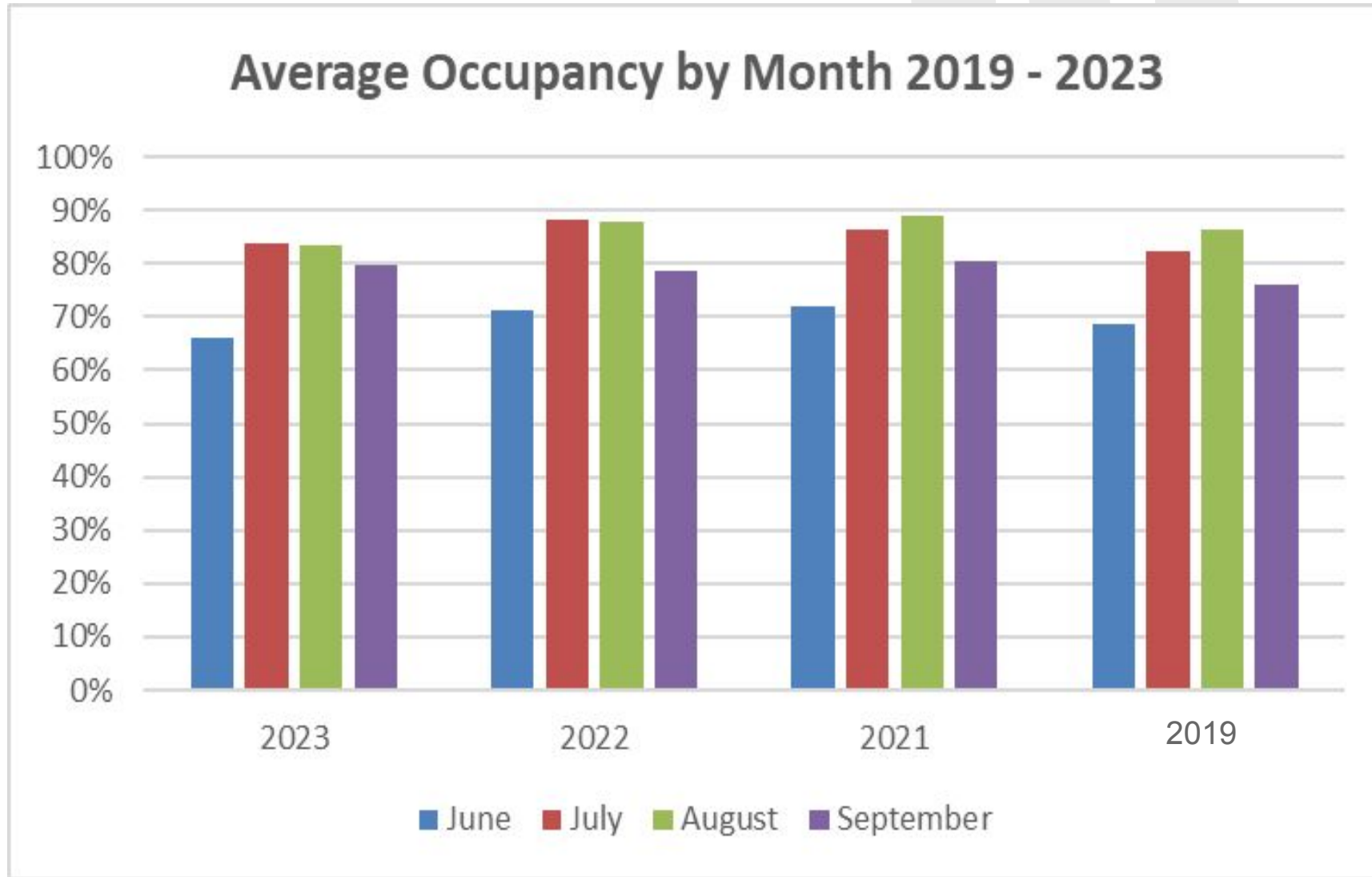


Without Rockport Inn & Suites Data

**Important: RI&S not included in '21 & '22, Sea Lion Inn not included in '23**

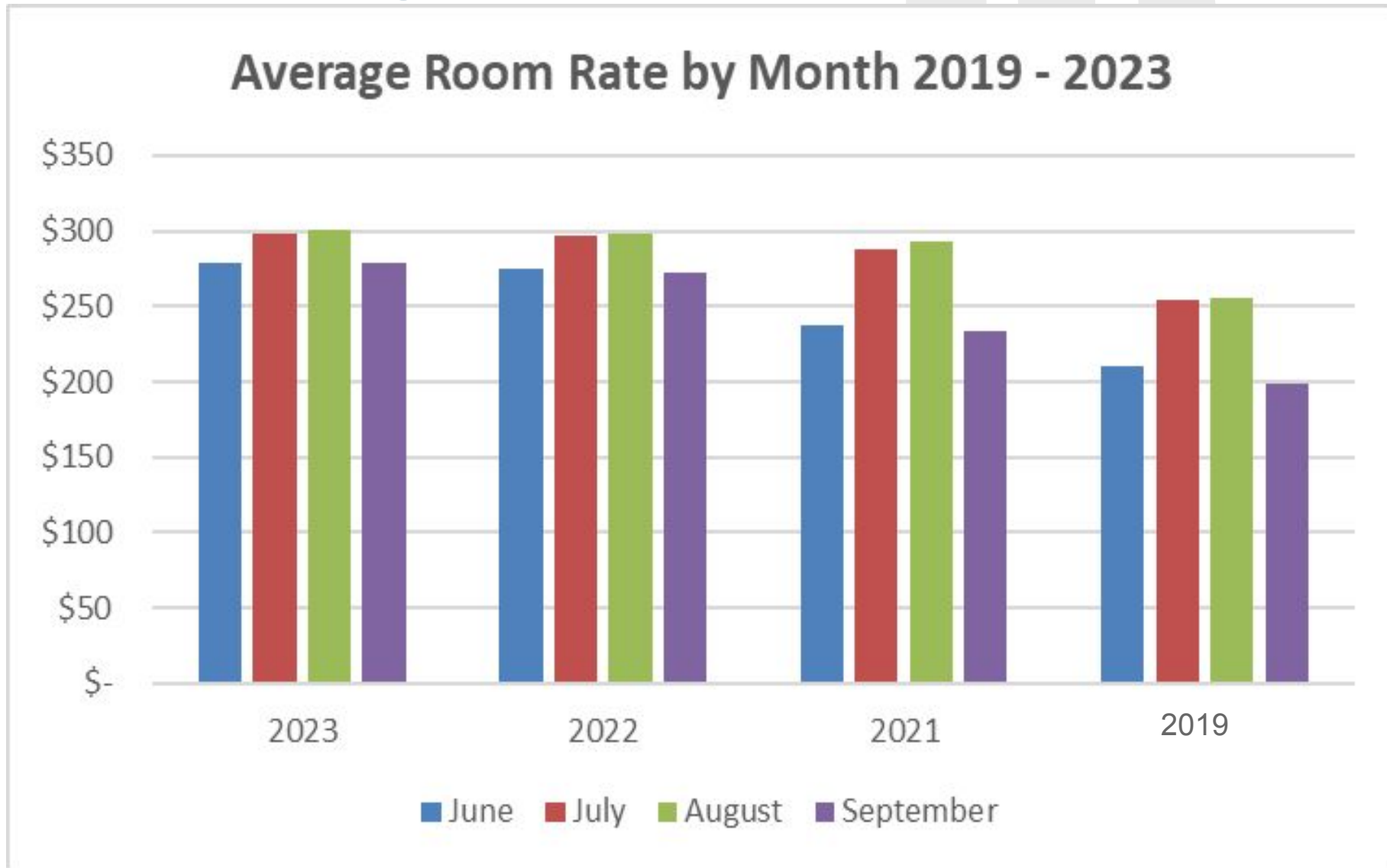


# Average Occupancy by Month



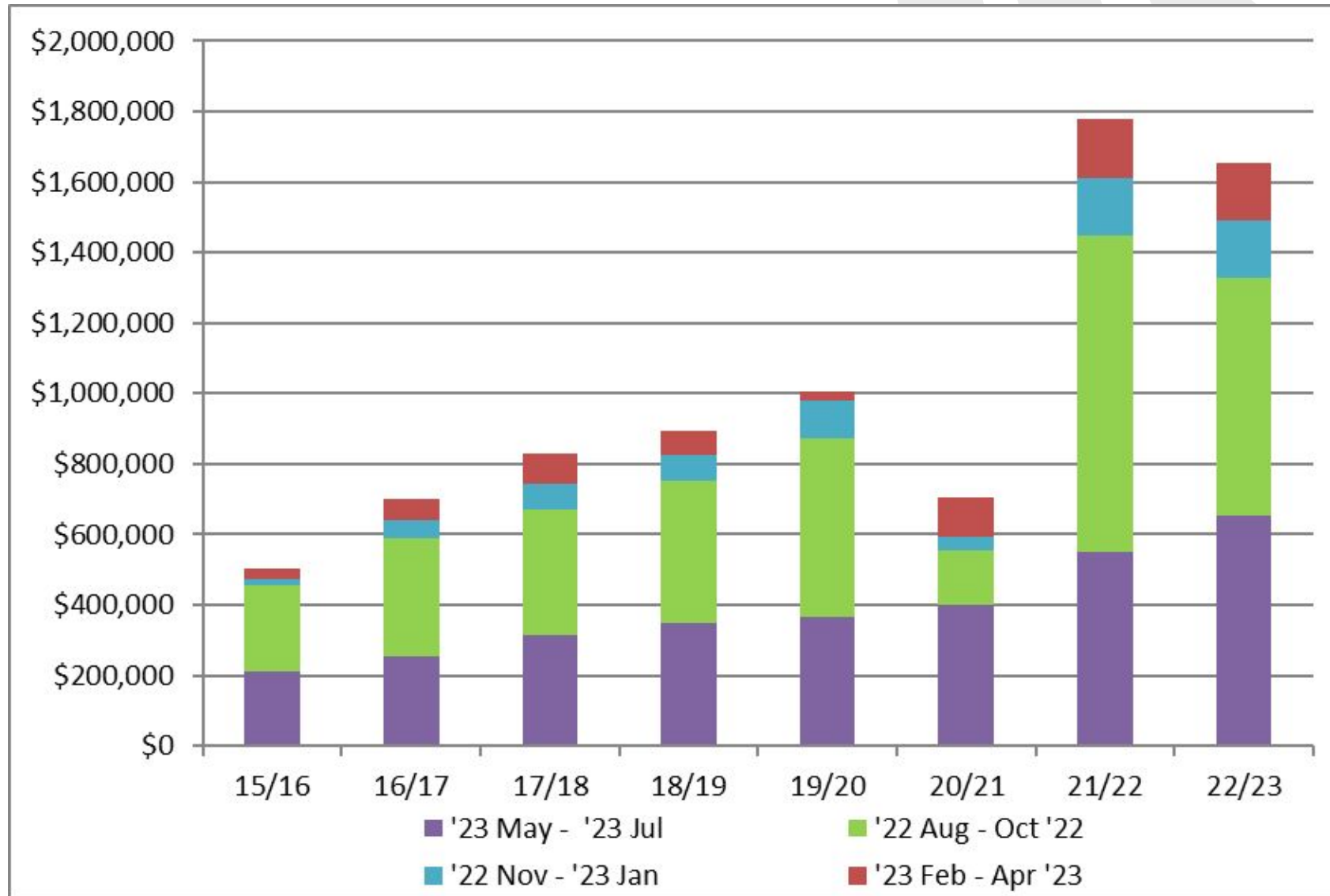
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# Average Room Rate by Month



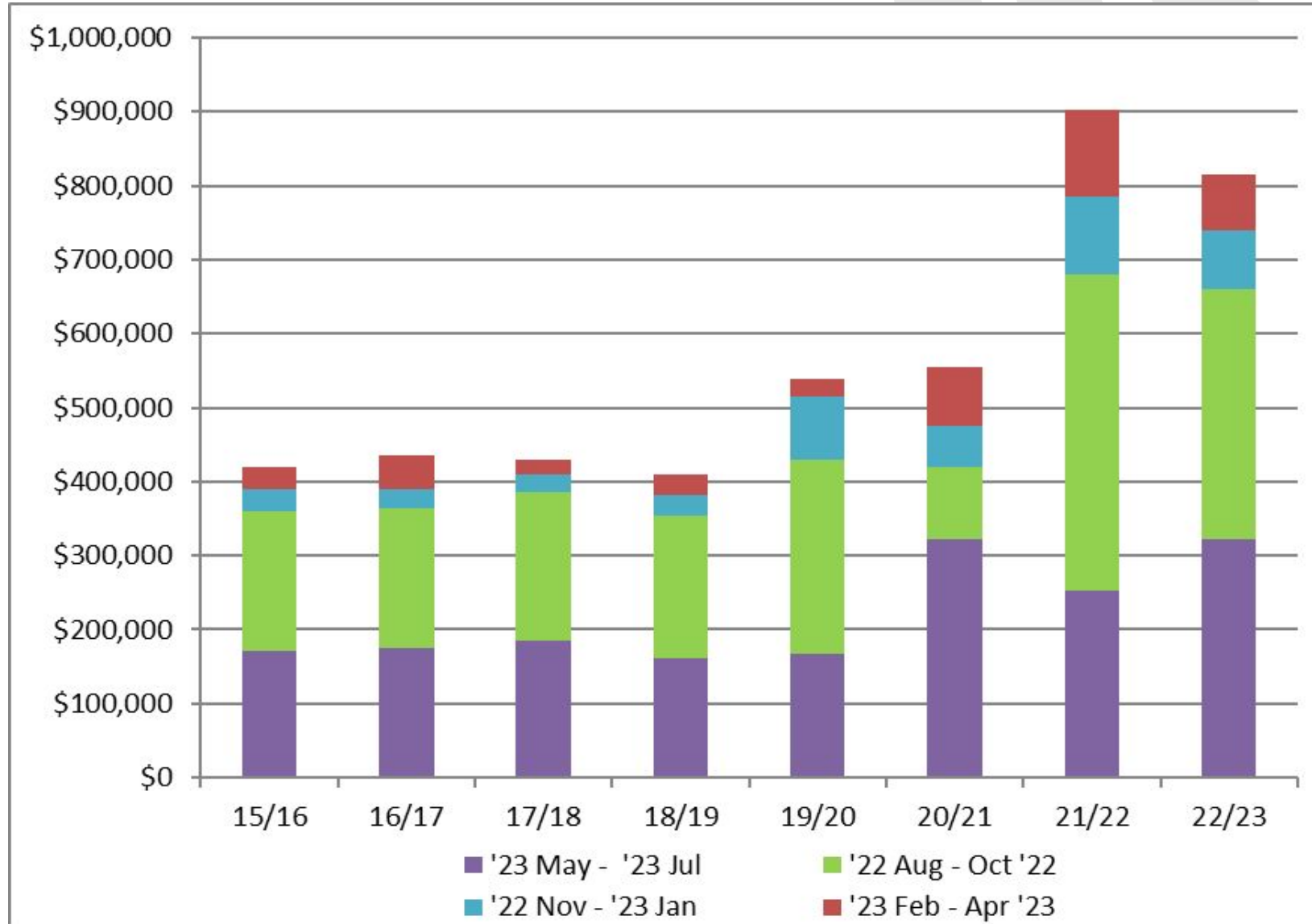
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# Local Options Tax - Rooms & Vacation Rentals: Gloucester



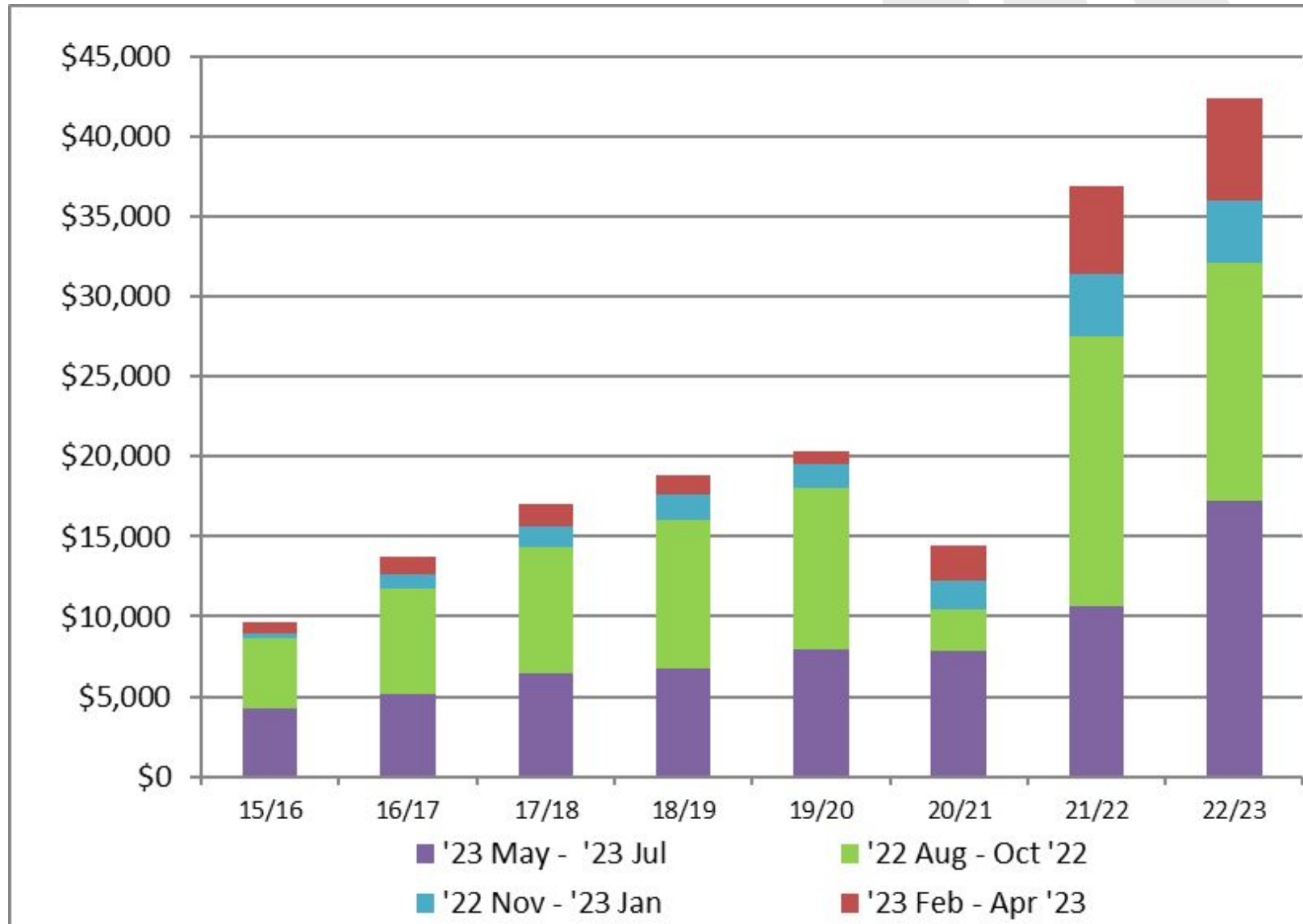
6% ea. for rooms  
and rentals

# Local Options Tax - Rooms & Vacation Rentals: Rockport



6% ea. for rooms  
and rentals

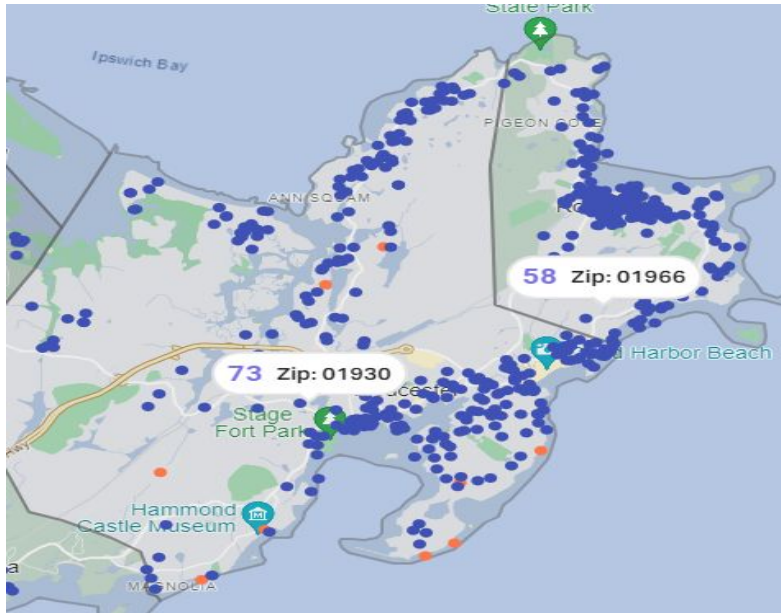
# Local Options Tax - Rooms & Vacation Rentals: Essex



6% ea. for rooms  
and rentals

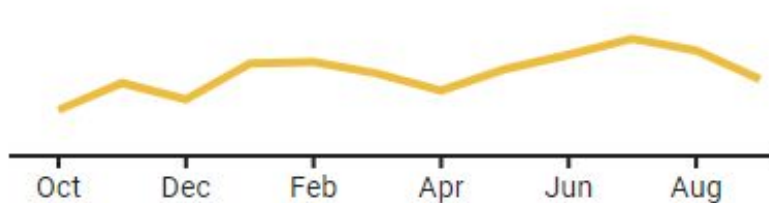


# Vacation Rentals - Gloucester



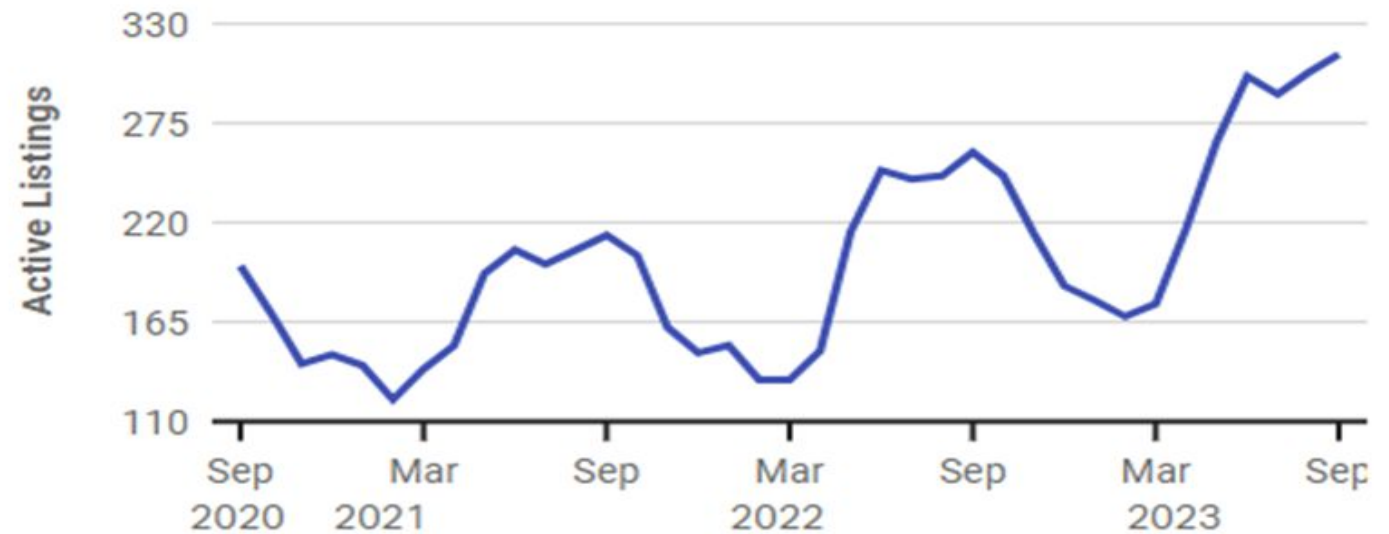
Average Daily Rate ⓘ

**\$435.4** +1% past year



Rental growth in the last 3 years

+21% past year



Occupancy Rate

**64%**

-1% past year

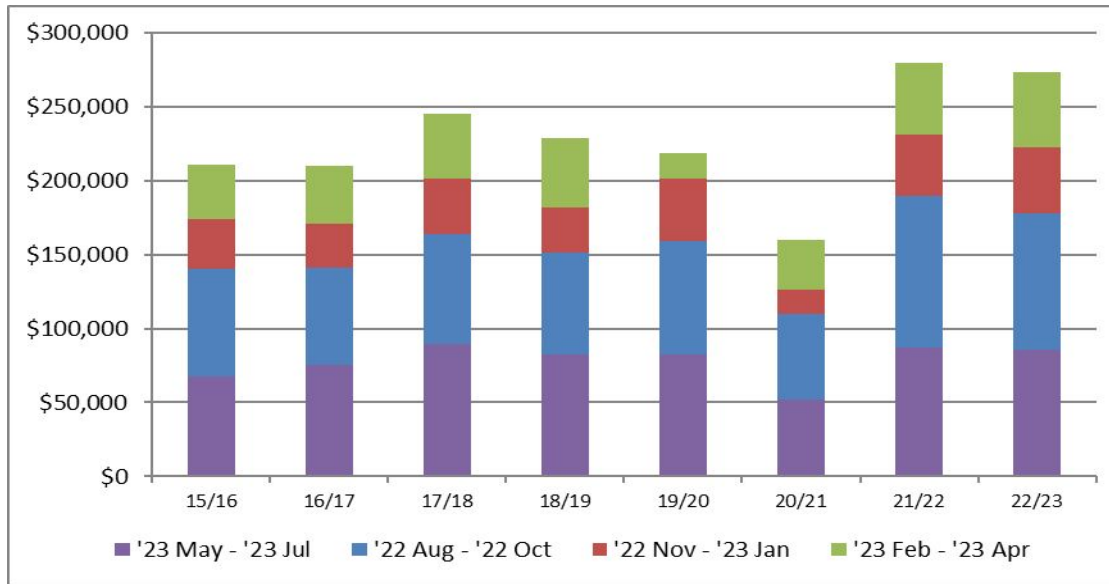


<https://www.airdna.co/market-data/app/us/massachusetts/gloucester/overview>

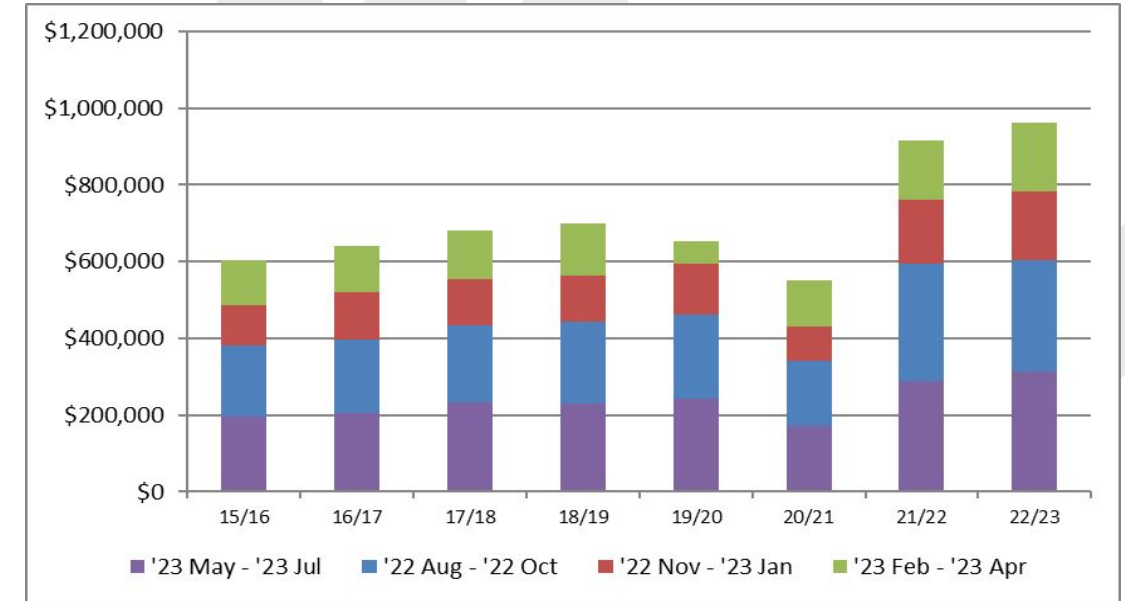
# Local Options Tax: Meals

0.75% Options Meals Tax Rate

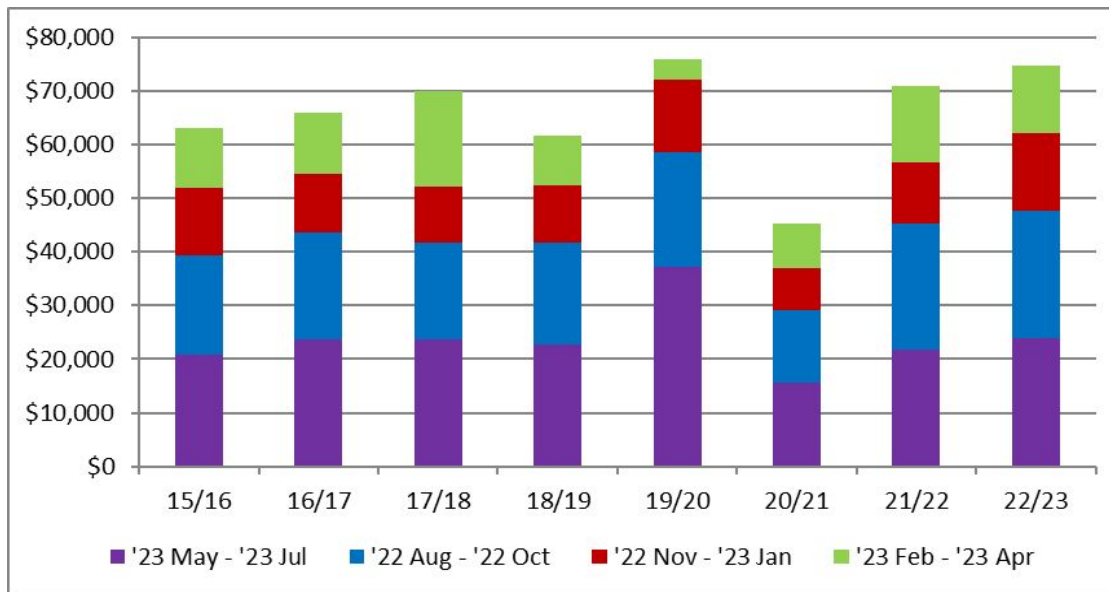
## Essex



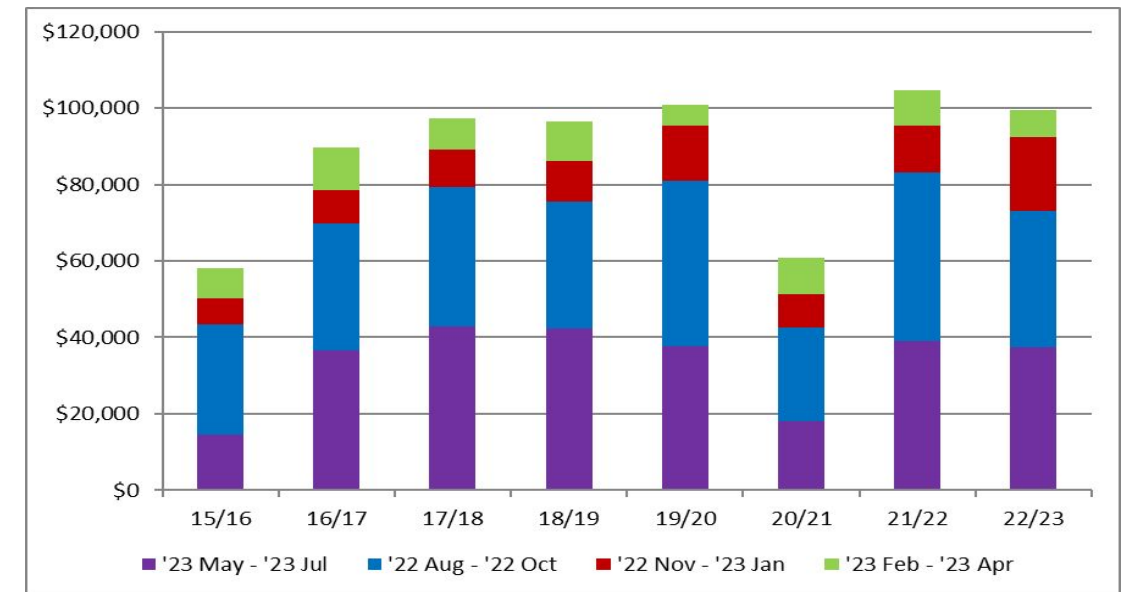
## Gloucester



## Manchester

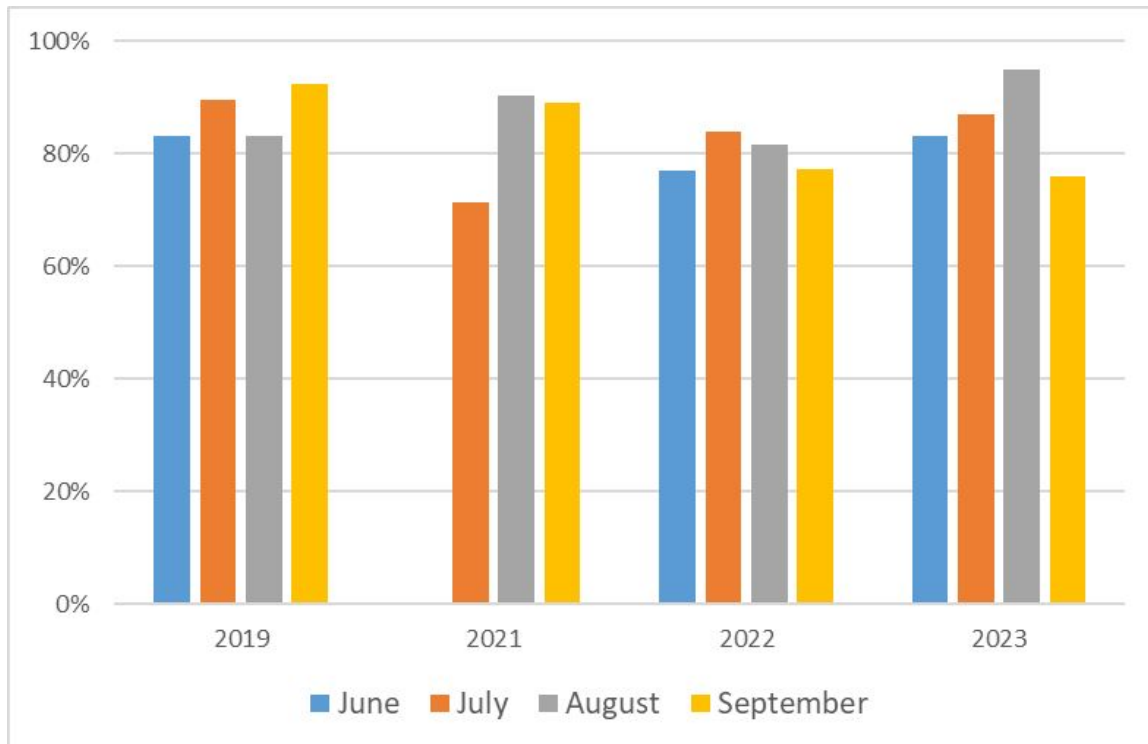


## Rockport

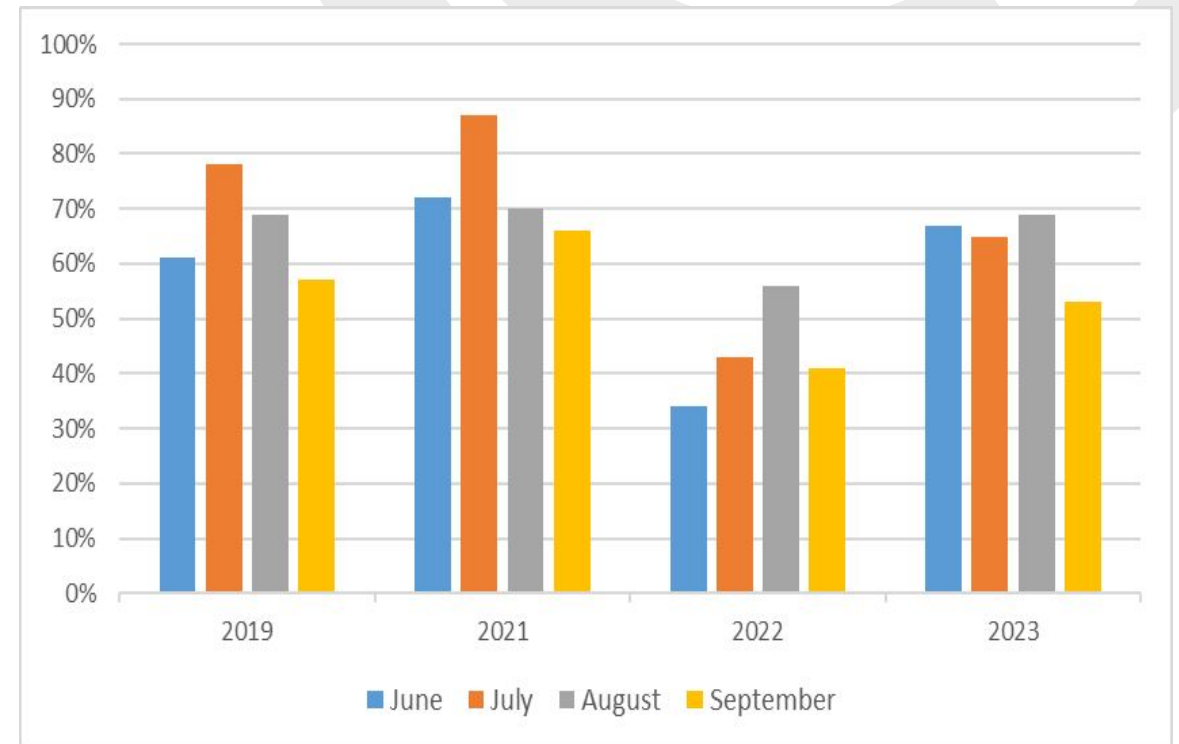


# Performance Venues - Average Occupancy

## Shalin Liu



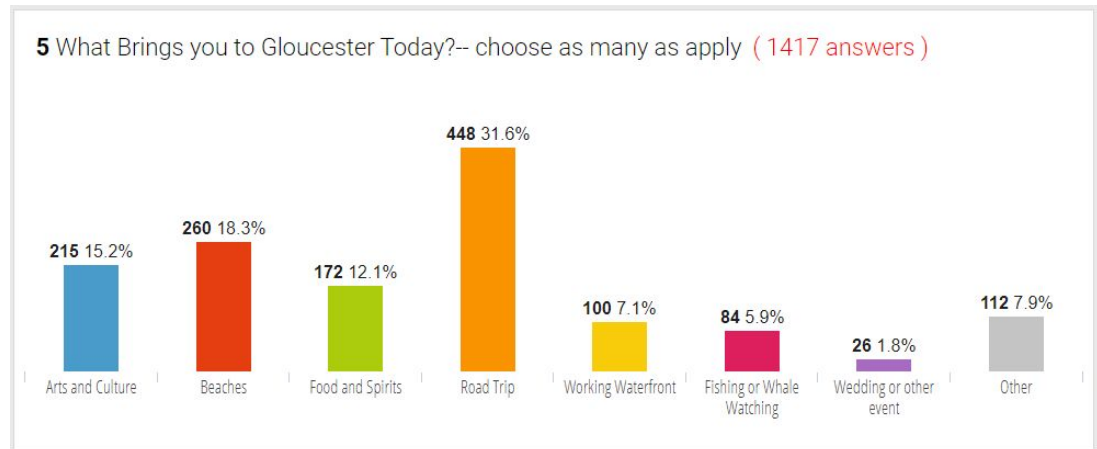
## Gloucester Stage



# Visitor Center Data

- Chamber Visitor Center Data (Gloucester)
  - Where are you from?
    - Top results:
      - New York
      - Florida
      - Pennsylvania
  - How did you hear about Cape Ann?
    - Top results:
      - Repeat visitor
      - Friends & family
      - Internet
      - TV/Movies
  - How did you get here?
    - Top result:
      - Car
  - Visitors by month:
    - June: **828**
    - July: **1,168**
    - August: **1,267**
    - September: **894**

- City of Gloucester Welcoming Center Data
  - “How long are you In Gloucester/ Cape Ann? (801 responses)
    - 31% The Day, 6.5% Overnight, 24.5% 2+ Nights
  - 22% of Visitors heard about Gloucester from Friends/ Family
  - 16% from Google/ search engine
  - 7% from a movie or book
  - 6.2% from a printed brochure
- Every State except.... (guesses?)
- International Visitors Captured



# Transient Boaters and Cruise Ship Visitation

- Cruise ships: **~2,670 Unique Visitors**
  - 18 American Cruise Lines calls with an average of 140 passengers, 8 of which were overnights
  - 1 call from Ocean Explorer: 150 passengers
  - 1 Ocean Navigator was canceled due to an onboard emergency prior to arrival
- Transient boaters: **1,485 boat reservations**
  - Up 8% from 2022





## 36 Featured Public Events

An average of four major events each Thursday, with supplemental demos, gallery openings, and workshops also offered weekly.

# Culture Splash

GLOUCESTER'S HARBORTOWN  
AND ROCKY NECK CULTURAL DISTRICTS

## 2023 SERIES IMPACT

## 12 Cultural Institutions

Hosted grant-supported events, workshops, artists, live music, tours, exhibits, makers' markets, performances, and more.

## 22 FREE Concerts & Live Performances

Over the course of the 9-week series, across both Cultural Districts.

## 2000 - 2500 "Splashers"

We estimate more than 2000 residents and visitors took part in Culture Splash events, meaning 2000-2500 individuals interacted with Gloucester's arts & cultural offerings.

## More Than 40 Local Artists

Took part in this year's series through gallery exhibits, demos, workshops, performances, and more!





# Roundtable Captains:

- **Arts & Culture Captains:** Michael DeKoster - Maritime Gloucester, Chris Griffith - Gloucester Stage, Linda Harvey - Hammond Castle Museum
- **Attractions Captains:** Heath Ellis - Schooner Thomas E. Lannon, Emily Douglass - Cape Ann Whale Watch
- **Lodging Captain:** Laura Dow - The Vista
- **Restaurant Captains:** Tobin Dominick - Mile Marker One Restaurant & Cape Ann Marina, Zach Sears - Minglewood Harborside & Serenitee Restaurant Group
- **Retail Captain:** Adam Farber - Mark Adrian Shoes





# ARTS & CULTURE ROUNDTABLE

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Presented by Arts & Culture Captains:  
Michael DeKoster | Maritime Gloucester  
Chris Griffith | Gloucester Stage  
Linda Harvey | Hammond Castle Museum



# CHALLENGES

- Parking and wayfinding posed challenges, especially on Rocky Neck.
- Slow start to the season & ongoing late ticket purchasing - likely due to weather.

# SUCCESSSES

- Collaborative efforts, such as restaurant-gallery partnerships, Culture Splash, and joint event planning significantly boosted foot traffic.
- The rise in public & private events during Gloucester's 400+ anniversary showcased the region's appeal.
- Foot traffic picked up in late summer after a wet start, and rainy days were beneficial for indoor venues.
- CAM's Edward Hopper Exhibit got Gloucester on the map to additional global audiences.

# OPPORTUNITIES

- Saturate Culture Splash Thursdays to further series success.
  - Increase in engagement suggests an opportunity to extend similar programming throughout the week.
- Ideas such as a digital interactive Arts Map, "Artober," gallery pop ups, etc. present exciting new collaboration avenues.
- Cross-promotion efforts, utilizing digital toolkits, and creative marketing approaches.
- New inspiration for collaborations between Galleries & Cultural Institutions.



# ATTRACTIONS ROUNDTABLE

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Presented by Attractions Captains:  
**Emily Douglass | Cape Ann Whale Watch**  
**Heath Ellis | Schooner Thomas E. Lannon**



# CHALLENGES

- Water-dependent attractions had challenges tied to rainy weather.
- Indoor attractions saw an increase in business as a result of the wet weather.
- A trend in last-minute bookings and rescheduling for all attractions around public and private events – likely due to ongoing forecasted rain.
- Group tour operators have a hard time finding lunch spots and bathrooms.

# SUCCESSSES

- Some seeing more international markets this summer than in the past couple of years.
- Many attractions reported a stronger season than 2022, or similar business performance.
- Continued increase in private and corporate events, especially weddings.
- Implementation of online booking options were helpful for some.
- A couple of attractions noted seeing more Salem in October crossover visitation than ever before.

# OPPORTUNITTIES

- **Continued and expanded regional marketing: Salem increasing day visitors for Cape Ann attractions businesses.**
- **Collaborating on directing overflow when trips are booked; or on rainy days when indoor attractions are full.**
- **Continue targeting tour groups, corporate groups, and private event bookings.**
- **Implementing digital solutions to streamline booking processes and improve customer engagement.**

# LODGING ROUNDTABLE

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Presented by Lodging Captain:  
Laura Dow | The Vista

# CHALLENGES

- Hiring and retaining staff was a challenge for many.
- Wet weather impacted bookings and resulted in last-minute reservations.
- Parking and transportation for staff and visitors posed challenges.
- Wedding business is nice, but quick turnover of one-night guests is often a challenge.

# SUCCESSSES

- Many establishments experienced strong bookings, often full or near full occupancy, and later into the year.
- October looking exceptionally full for many.
- Despite unfavorable weather, many businesses thrived with successful strategies.
- Some increased direct bookings through tailored incentives.

# OPPORTUNITIES

- Exploring offerings like wedding extender specials can reduce the strain of quick turnover and enable longer bookings.
- Rainy day resources can elevate the guest experience when weather is unpredictable.
- Opportunities exist in exploring innovative staffing solutions like internships and incentivizing longer tenure.
- Utilize existing transportation options, and identify creative additions that can enhance the overall visitor experience.



A close-up photograph of a white plate featuring a cooked lobster. The lobster is split open, revealing the white meat. It is garnished with two lemon wedges and some green onions. The background is blurred, showing a blue object and a white plate with a fork.

# RESTAURANTS ROUNDTABLE

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Presented by Restaurants Captains:  
Tobin Dominick | Mile Marker One Restaurant & The Hotel at Cape Ann Marina  
Zach Sears | Minglewood Harborside

# CHALLENGES

- Navigating downtown parking system & construction were pain points for some customers.
- Staffing challenges both in the front of house (FOH) and back of house (BOH).
- Need for restaurant input when planning major events, especially downtown.
- Permitting and liquor licensing processes can be difficult to navigate.

# SUCCESSSES

- In most cases, business was as good as last year, or comparable. Several restaurants had record-breaking days in 2023.
- Good weather days enables outdoor dining for many, and opportunities for more “cheeks in seats.”
- Some restaurants adopted technology, enhanced venues, or shifted business models to improve customer experience and increase growth potential.
  - ie., reservation systems, deck covering installation so outdoor seating isn’t as weather dependent, lunchtime menu changes, hours changes

# OPPORTUNITIES

- Shared challenges such as parking and public bathrooms provide opportunities for collective action and advocacy.
- Advocate with legislators for support of programs like the J1 Exchange year-round to secure stable staffing.
- Identifying potential growth areas such as catering to boaters, hosting more private events, or seeking group bookings.
- Responding to trends in customer preferences, such as live music, trivia nights, special menus, special cocktails, or being strategic about opening hours and taking reservations.



# RETAIL ROUNDTABLE

Presented by Retail Captain:  
Adam Farber | Mark Adrian Shoes



# CHALLENGES

- Main Street construction impacted business flow significantly.
- Rainy weather patterns posed challenges for consistent business operations.
- Downtown events are sometimes helpful in driving new business, but often make business operations and staffing harder.
- Ongoing need for more hands-on support of downtown merchants collectively.
- Difficult to keep up with digital & social media marketing while running a small business.

# SUCCESSSES

- Despite challenging weather conditions, many retailers had a fruitful summer.
- Cultural events like CAM's Edward Hopper exhibit significantly boosted visitation and business.
- Soft season campaigns and initiatives (like Swing Into Spring, Winter Lights, Gloucester's So Salty) helped drum up business during otherwise slower times of year, and expand "busy" season on Cape Ann.
- Steering Committee for a downtown management organization is in place and working with a knowledgeable consultant to identify options for more hands-on support for downtown businesses.

# OPPORTUNITTIES

- **Leveraging bad weather through cross-promotion with lodging & attractions businesses as an opportunity for increased retail activity.**
- **Create a pool of social media and digital marketing experts to assist small businesses.**
- **Reevaluate and enhance the impact of existing downtown events, and imagine what new events could benefit downtown businesses.**
- **Establish a dedicated communication channel for retailers to address downtown issues collectively.**

# **North of Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau**

**Regional Update from Executive Director  
Nancy Gardella**

# **The Impact of Digital Marketing**

**with Michael Sperling of  
Sperling Interactive**

# Why Digital?

We like digital because it is less expensive than traditional advertising opportunities and it is much more highly targeted.

It is also much easier to track the impact of digital versus traditional.

# Website Traffic

260K visitors to the website over the past year

176K visitors to the website via paid and organic search  
40K direct

4M views on our display ads In the past year

38K video views (started October)

## Top States

- Massachusetts
- New York
- Virginia
- Connecticut
- Florida
- Georgia
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- North Carolina
- Michigan



# How are we attracting users to the website?

## Search Engine Optimization

- Onsite Optimization
- Offsite Optimization
- Content

## Paid Search

## Display Ads

## Display Remarketing

## Paid Social

## Paid Pre-roll Video

# Campaigns We Have Run

- Evergreen Campaign
- Fall Campaign
- Gloucester 400 +
- Seafood Trail (current)





# Q&A





**THANK YOU!**

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