



2017

Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau

Annual Report



It's a great day in Abilene!

In 2017, the Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau hit the ground running! Leaving no stone unturned, we showcased not only is Abilene a great place to live, it is also a great place to visit.

The Abilene CVB's role is to market the community and provide services to tourists and groups visiting and convening in Abilene.

The Abilene CVB fulfills this charge in a variety of ways:

- Responding to inquiries from visitors to group tour operators and news outlets;
- Assisting writers with stories;
- Pitching stories ideas to writers;
- Writing press releases and newsletters;
- Hosting travel writers and bloggers;
- Designing and purchasing advertising;
- Utilizing social media to share Abilene with the world;
- Developing itineraries for groups;
- Recruiting new groups and meetings; and
- Managing a state-designated Travel Information Center.

Tourism and promotion, as an economic development tool, helps increase visitation, which leads to increased sales. Increased sales not only benefit our businesses and attractions, but also our community.

According to the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, visitor spending in 2015 (most recent data) accounted for more than \$20 million in Dickinson County.

Abilene has a long withstanding reputation as a tourism community. I'm very proud of the work we completed in 2017 and even more excited about our future!

#AbileneProud

Julie Roller,
Director



"The proudest thing I can claim is that I am from Abilene."

*Dwight D. Eisenhower
June 22, 1945*

CVB STAFF:

Julie Roller,
Director

Courtney Flora,
Tourism Assistant

TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTER:

Sondra Messenger,
Manager

Julie Patton

Anna Stewart

Edna Swanson

CVB ADVISORY BOARD

Deb Sanders, Chair,
Windmill Inn Bed &
Breakfast

Allison Blake, Abilene
Area Chamber of
Commerce

Mukul Ghosh Hajra,
Holiday Inn Express

Mary Jane Oard,
Abilene & Smoky
Valley Railroad

Sharon Petersen,
Cypress Bridge

Kimmy Phillips,
Last Chance Graphics

William Synder,
Eisenhower
Presidential Library,
Museum & Boyhood
Home

PROMOTION

In 2017, the Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau utilized a printed visitors guide and its distribution, radio, newspaper, magazine, billboards, social media and earned media to promote Abilene.



Top 10 Press Mentions

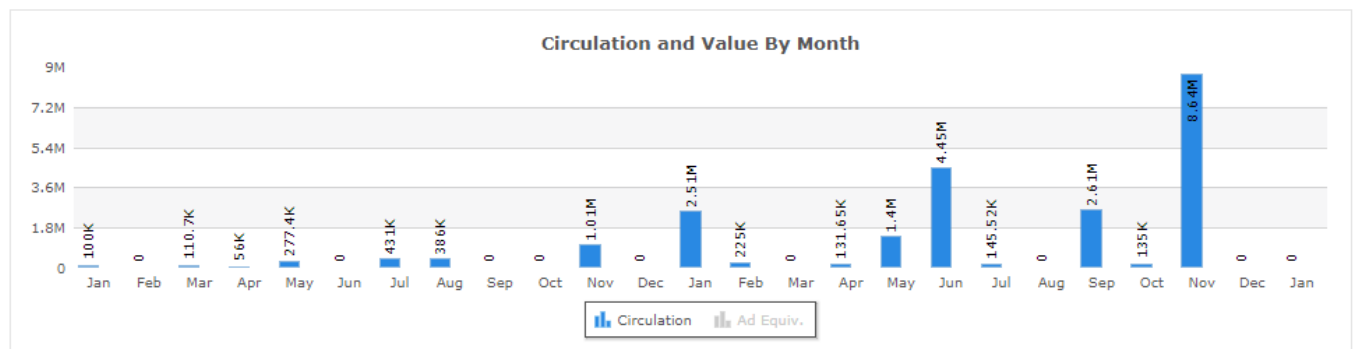
1. Best Small Town to Visit – *Smithsonian Magazine*
2. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood Home - Best Kansas Attraction – *USA Today*
3. #3 True Western Town – *True West Magazine*
4. America's Undiscovered Heartland: 5 Cultural Gems Along I-70 – *San Diego Union-Tribune*
5. The Most Adorable Small Town in Every State – *MSN.com*
6. #1 Best Local Eats – *KANSAS! Magazine*
7. 36 Hours in Abilene – *KANSAS! Magazine*
8. The Dish on Kansas' Food Scene – *MidwestLiving*
9. 20 Top Things to Do in Kansas – *MidwestLiving*
10. Midwestern Getaways Your Southern Girlfriends Will Love – *SouthernLiving*

Additional Mentions

1. Red Steagall – Somewhere West of Wall Street - *RFDTV*
2. Hickok! – starring Luke Hemsworth, Trace Adkins, Kris Kristofferson & Bruce Dern
3. Episode 3010: Trails and Quilts – *Sunflower Journeys*

Press Mentions Tracked by Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism

Articles

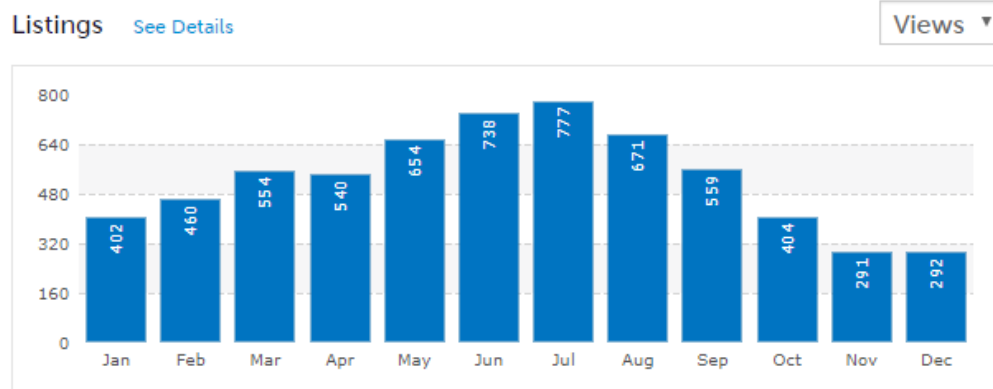


The chart above shows Abilene's increased press mentions from January 2016-December 2017. As shown, Abilene has a more vibrant presence in the press compared to one year ago.

Listings

The Abilene CVB maintains business and attraction listings on the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism's website: TravelKS.com.

In 2017, these listings were viewed 6,342 times.



Abilene Visitors Guide

The Abilene CVB printed 50,000 copies of its Visitors Guide. The Abilene CVB received more than 600 brochure and visitor guide requests with 70% of all requests coming from out-of-state.

Moreover, the Abilene CVB utilized distribution services to place these brochures in 191 hotels, restaurants, gas stations and other locations along I-70, as well as 71 different communities and attractions in Kansas.



The 2017 visitors guide was completed by former director, Glenda Purkis, and printed in 2017.

MEMBERSHIPS

Travel Industry Association of Kansas

Kansas I-70 Association

Flint Hills Tourism Coalition

North Central Kansas Tourism Coalition

Tour Kansas

Kansas Cattle Towns Coalition

PRESENTATIONS & INTERVIEWS:

North American Ag Marketing Officials

Fort Riley

Abilene Rotary Club

Abilene Optimist Club

Abilene Lions Club

Abilene Kiwanis Club

Frontier Estates

1350 KMAN

1560 KABI

100.9 KCLY

Our Town

Newsletter

The Abilene CVB sends a weekly e-newsletter, the *Abilene Tourism Advocate*, which is distributed to approximately 8,000 unique email addresses. There is no cost for inclusion in this newsletter.

The newsletter celebrates Abilene and provides information about accolades, attractions, upcoming events, a special #ThrowbackThursday section, reviews and more!

- Total Editions Sent: 58
- Total Individual Emails Sent: 320,896
- Total Emails Opened: 60,881 (20.58%)*
- Total Link Clicks: 4,939

Advertising Value

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, estimates one e-blast is valued at \$200 per week, with event-specific emails valued at \$200 per 1,000 email addresses or \$1,600.00.

**Industry standards:*

Government agency/services – 23.1%

Travel/tourism – 11.56%





USA TODAY'S
**BEST
KANSAS
ATTRACTION**

Eisenhower Presidential Library,
Museum & Boyhood Home

It's official! Abilene's Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood Home was named **Best Kansas Attraction** by USA TODAY. Thank you to everyone for voting for Ike!

The top 10 winners in the Best Kansas Attraction category are as follows:

1. Eisenhower Presidential Library & Boyhood Home - Abilene
2. Deanna Rose Children's Farmstead - Overland Park
3. Boot Hill Museum - Dodge City
4. Fort Larned National Historic Site - Larned
5. Sedgwick County Zoo - Wichita
6. Strataca - Hutchinson
7. OZ Museum - Wamego
8. Cosmosphere - Hutchinson
9. The Flint Hills
10. Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve - Strong City

[LEARN MORE](#)

Social Media

Social media is not only affordable and immediate, it also allows for interaction with visitors. The Abilene CVB predominately utilizes Facebook and Instagram to tell its story. The CVB also maintains Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest accounts.

The Abilene CVB has significantly increased its social media presence. Visit Abilene, the Abilene CVB Facebook Page ended the year with **more than 10,000 page likes**.

Who follows us?

Top cities:

- Abilene, KS
- Salina, KS
- Wichita, KS
- Manhattan, KS
- Topeka, KS
- Kansas City, MO
- Junction City, KS
- Chicago, IL
- Dallas, TX
- Oklahoma City, OK

Top countries:

- United States of America
- France
- Germany
- Japan
- United Kingdom
- Mexico
- Canada
- Indonesia
- Italy
- India

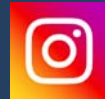
Audience demographic

The majority of the Abilene CVB Facebook Page audience is over 45 years old. This audience is more apt to have time and disposable income to travel. Moreover, majority of the audience is female. According to Forbes.com, 80% of women make all travel decisions.

FOLLOW US!



@VisitAbilene



@AbileneKS



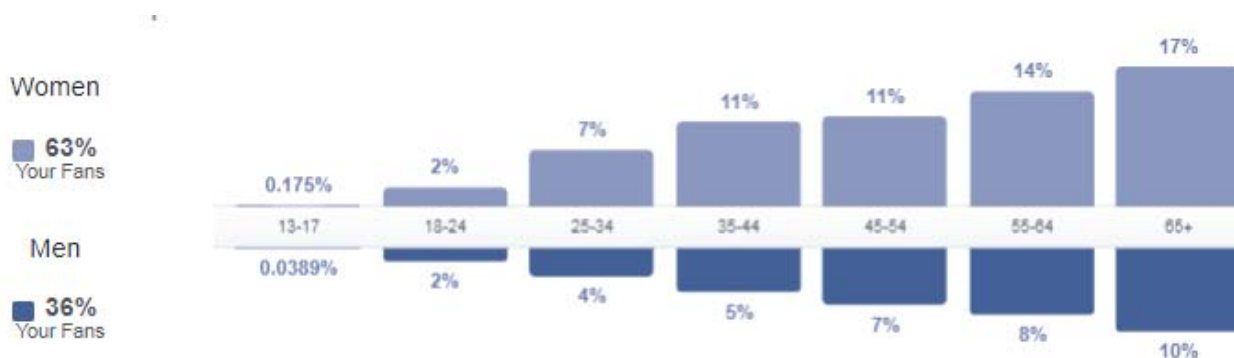
@VisitAbilene



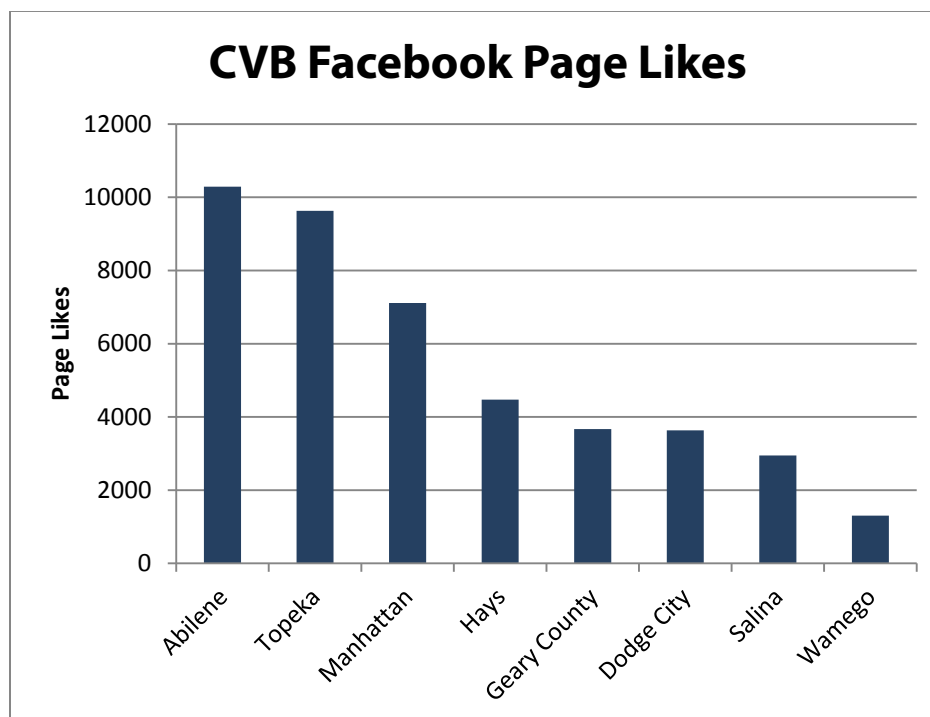
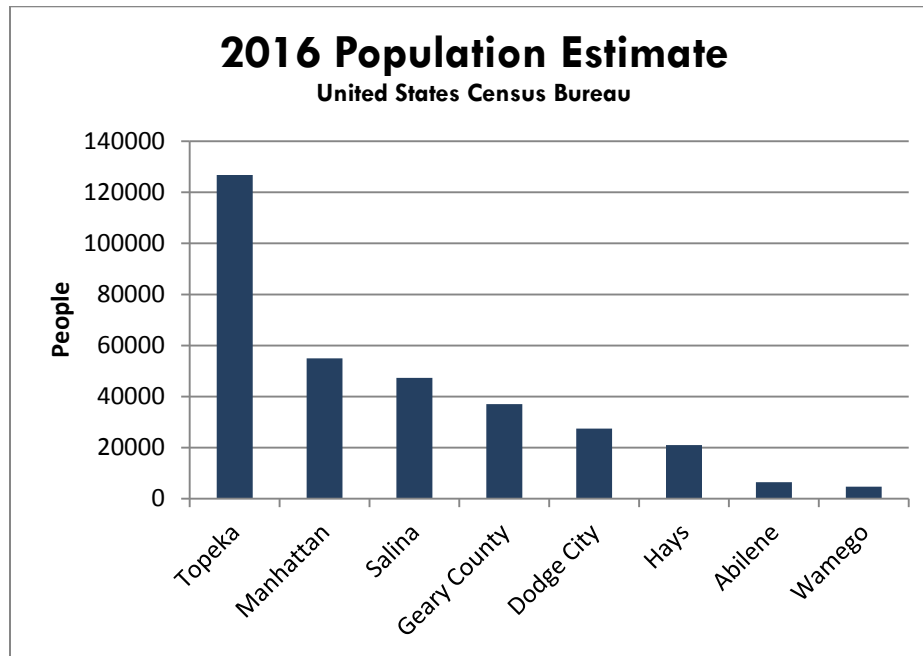
@VisitAbileneKansas

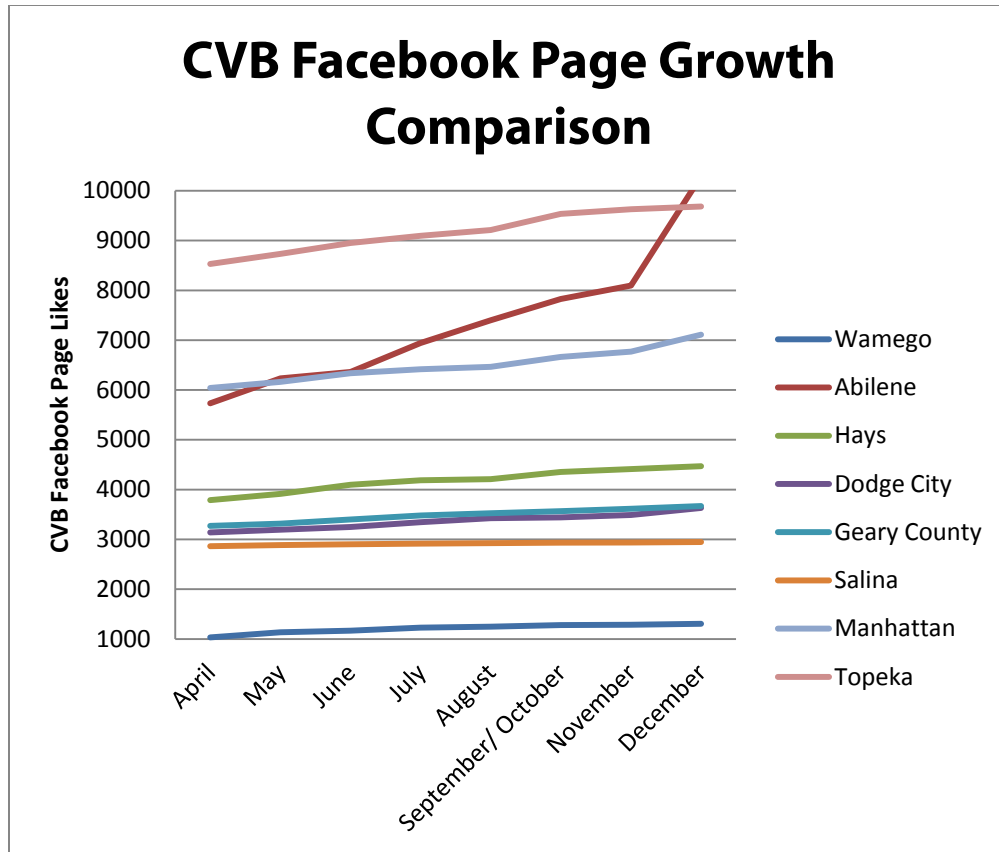


@VisitAbilene



Comparison





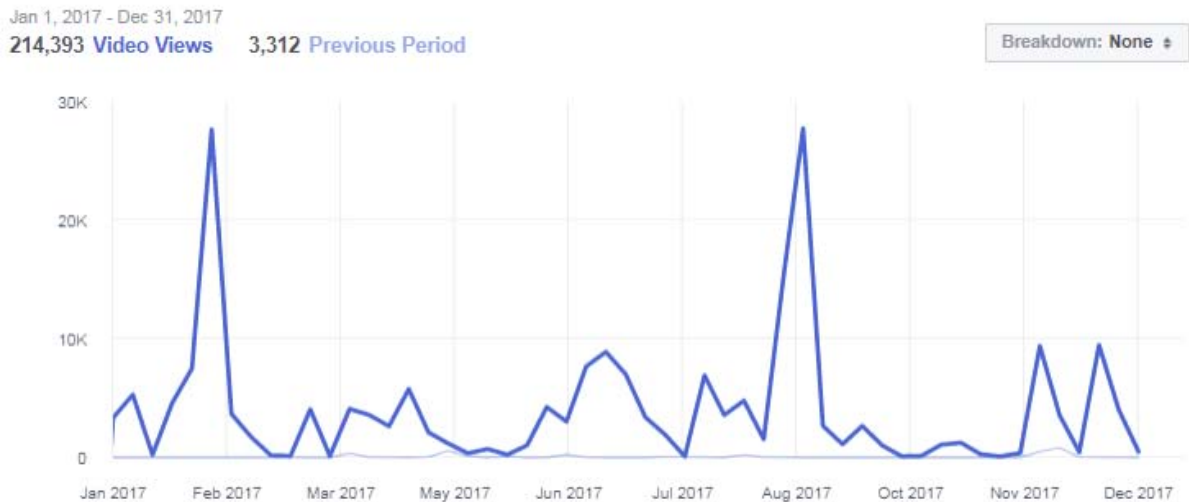
Advertising Value

At a *minimum* of \$.02 per page like, each Facebook post has an advertising equivalent of \$200.

Facebook Live

Facebook Live, the live video-sharing feature on Facebook, was utilized to share Abilene with viewers around the world.

Thirty eight videos were filmed, shared and collectively viewed 214,393 times.



Videos included:

- Night of Christmas Magic
- Holiday Homes Tour
- Halloween snow
- Oktoberfest
- Fall Reitz & Rust Vintage Market
- Fort Riley Fall Apple Day Festival
- Kansas State Fair
- Trails, Rails & Tales
- Nolan Sump as Abilene's Joseph McCoy
- Chisholm Trail 150th Parade
- Showdown at the Alamo
- Vintage Base Ball game
- Central Kansas Free Fair Parade
- Wild Bill Hickok Rodeo
- National Cowboy Poetry Rodeo sneak peek at Holm, Auto
- Travel talk with Midwest Travel Bloggers
- Fourth of July fireworks
- Fourth of July band concert
- Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad
- Wild Bill Gunfighters at Old Abilene Town
- Air Race Classic with Merrill Eisenhower Atwater.
- Symphony at Sunset
- Carriage ride through Abilene
- Chisholm Trail proclamation
- National Greyhound Association Spring Meet
- Spring Reitz & Rust Vintage Market
- Eisenhower Easter Egg Roll
- Eisenhower Marathon
- Ike & McCarthy book talk
- Abilene High School Wrestling Team recognition at State Capitol
- Travel Talk: Rawhide Portable Corral – Symphony in the Flint Hills
- Travel Talk: Seelye Mansion
- Travel Talk: Dickinson County Heritage Center
- Travel Talk: Abilene's Victorian Inn Bed & Breakfast
- Travel Talk: Antique shopping in Abilene
- Travel Talk: Eisenhower Presidential Library
- Travel Talk: Great Plains Theatre
- Travel Talk: Engle House Bed & Breakfast

Instagram

The Abilene CVB maintains the AbileneKS Instagram account, using a variety of hashtags, including: #AbileneKS, #AbileneProud and #ILikeAbilene. AbileneKS has 568 followers on Instagram, which is an increase of 64% from year-end 2016.

Hosted Travel Writers and Bloggers

The Abilene CVB explored new ways to tell Abilene's story to new audiences. By hosting travel writers and bloggers, Abilene received positive press and attention at a cost more reasonable than traditional advertising.

Hosted bloggers and travel writers:

- Ron Stern, *Global Gumshoe- social media posts*
- Nancy Stern, *The Travel Writers Wife* – published in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*



- Sara Broers, *Travel With Sara* – blog, social media posts and published in the *Winter Texan*
- Lisa Dunham Trudell, *The Walking Tourists*- blog and social media posts
- Sharmin Chadwick Meadows, *Discover Finer Living* – coming soon: blog and social media posts.

Presence

In 2017, the Abilene CVB created a new display and hosted booths promoting Abilene and everything there is to see and do in Abilene at the following events:

- **Fort Riley’s “What’s Outside of the Gate”** (April 7, 2017 – Fort Riley)
- **Eisenhower Marathon** (April 8, 2017 – Abilene)
- **Reitz & Rust Vintage Market** (April 22, 2017 & September 30, 2017 - Abilene)
- **Trails, Rails & Tales** (September 2-3, 2017 – Abilene)
- **Kansas State Fair** (September 8-16, 2017 – Hutchinson)
- **Fort Riley Fall Apple Day Festival** (September 19, 2017 – Fort Riley)



More than 320,000 people attend the 2017 Kansas State Fair. Abilene is one of the longest standing community booths at the fair.

Moreover, through membership in Tour Kansas and the Kansas I-70 Association, Abilene had a presence at: Tour Kansas Group Travel Showcase in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, RV shows in Colorado Springs & Denver, as well as the Denver Travel & Adventure Show.

Hosted Events



City of Abilene National Travel & Tourism Week proclamation signing.

The Abilene CVB also celebrated National Travel & Tourism Week in a variety of ways:

- Coordinating proclamations celebrating the economic impact of tourism:

- **City of Abilene** – 20 attendees present for proclamation signing
- **Dickinson County** – 3 attendees present for proclamation signing
- Hosting a “Tourism After Hours” celebration at the Eisenhower Presidential Library – 75 attendees
- Purchasing an ad featuring the “faces of travel” in the Abilene Reflector-Chronicle
- Presenting 2017 tourism awards to the following recipients:
 - **Outstanding Event or Attraction** – Reitz & Rust Outdoor Market
 - **Standout Marketing Effort** – Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood Home
 - **Tourism Champion** – Jeffcoat Memorial Foundation
 - **Social Media “Fan Favorite”** – Great Plains Theatre



Jennifer Reitz, owner, Reitz & Rust Outdoor Market

Sponsorships and Support

Recognizing the impact special events have on Abilene’s lodging industry, the Abilene CVB offered support for the following events:

- National Greyhound Association Spring Meet luncheon
- Air Race Classic
- National Cowboy Poetry Rodeo
- Wild Steer CASI Chili Cook-off
- Trails, Rails & Tales
- Holiday Homes Tour / Night of Christmas Magic

In addition, the Abilene CVB has access to the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism’s event economic impact calculator. The calculator can assist events with helpful data.

VISITATION

Attraction/Event	2017	2016 to 2017
Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood Home	217,208	↑
Great Plains Theatre	25,000	unchanged
Seelye Mansion	12,800	↑
Central Kansas Free Fair / Wild Bill Hickok Rodeo – Paid grandstand admissions	11,987	unavailable
Dickinson County Heritage Center	11,257	↑
Trails, Rails & Tales	10,500	↑
Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad	9,579	↑
Greyhound Hall of Fame	7,481	↓
Reitz & Rust Outdoor Vintage Market	7,400	↑
Abilene Travel Information Center	4,626	↑
Homes for the Holidays Tour	486	↑
Eisenhower Marathon	400	↓
TOTAL	318,724	↑

Note: All data is self-reported.

Civic Center Rentals

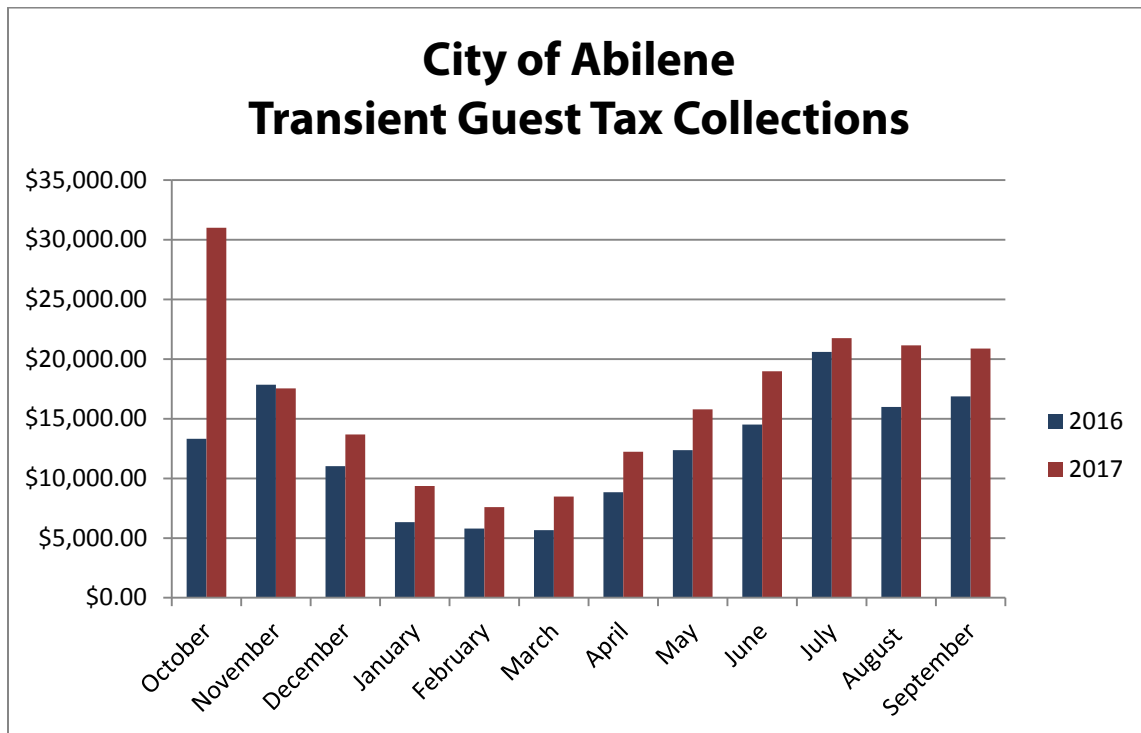
The Abilene CVB manages Civic Center rentals. The space hosted nearly 100 events including weddings and receptions, conferences, auctions and parties. The events also generated more than \$8,000 in Civic Center rental revenue.

SALES

Transient Guest Tax Collections

Guests staying at Abilene's Holiday Inn Express, Super 8, Budge Lodge Inn, Diamond Motel, Abilene's Victorian Inn Bed & Breakfast and Engle House Bed & Breakfast pay an additional 8% Transient Guest Tax (TGT).

In 2017, the City of Abilene received \$198,457.28 from TGT. The 2017 TGT collections increased 24.82% from 2016. These collections account for nearly **\$2.5 million in room sales**.



The Kansas Department of Revenue collects TGT monthly and remits to the City of Abilene quarterly. Ex) collections from October-December are received by the City of Abilene in January.

Additional Lodging Data

Each month the Abilene CVB receives an occupancy report from STR, Inc. This reported indicated the following:

Occupancy

- 2016 – 58.7%
- 2017 – 62.6%

Average Daily Rate (ADR)

- 2016 – \$92.50
- 2017 – \$94.52

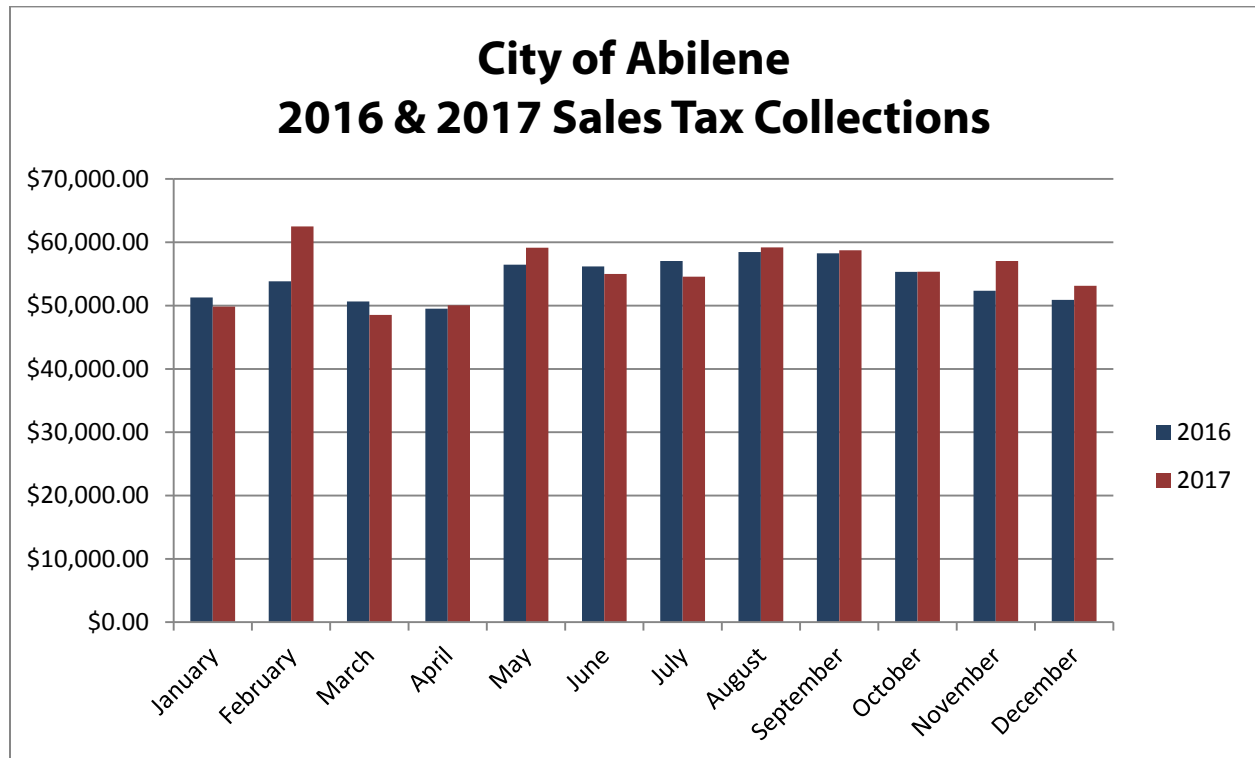
Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)

- 2016 – \$54.14
- 2017 – \$59.16

***Data aggregated from the following properties:** Courtyard - Junction City, Holiday Inn Express & Suites - Salina, Holiday Inn - Salina, Holiday Inn Express - Abilene and Super 8 – Abilene.

Sales Tax Collections

The City of Abilene's sales tax collections increased almost \$13,000 from 2016. Collections account for **\$132,623,600 in sales in 2017.**



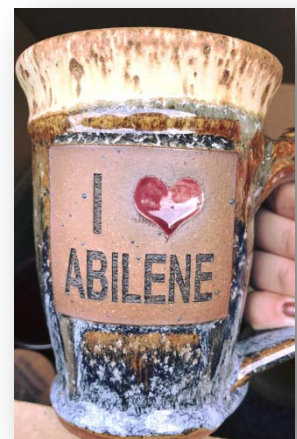
Note: Sales tax collections based on .5% City of Abilene General Fund Sales Tax.

Travel Information Center

The Abilene CVB Travel Information Center purchased new merchandise in 2017. Sales for the year were \$7,748.01, which is a 253% increase from 2016.

New merchandise included:

- Abilene branded t-shirts, mugs and pint glasses
- Kansas brooches
- Kansas Guidebook 2 for Explorers



Handcrafted, made in Kansas, mugs available in the Abilene CVB Gift Shop.

2017 Financial Statement

INCOME – TOURISM & CONVENTION FUND	2017 ACTUAL
Transient Guest Tax	\$198,457.28
Civic Center Rental/Deposit	\$8,282.31
Interest Income	\$7.56
CVB Trolley Fares	\$0.00
Sale of Merchandise	\$7,748.01
Misc. Revenue	\$3,622.41
Arts Festival	\$0.00
Refund Received	\$160.29
Reimbursed - Billboards	\$9,048.00
Reimbursed - Other	\$8,839.80
Gifts & Donations	\$0.00
Transfer from Other Funds	\$25,000.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$261,165.66
EXPENSES – TOURISM & CONVENTION FUND	2017 ACTUAL
Capital Outlay / Special Projects	\$9,513.24
Salaries & Benefits	\$125,594.61
Physical /Drug Screening/Background Check	\$134.00
Printing & Advertising	\$13,798.16
Travel-Schools & Training	\$909.04
Arts Festival Expenses	\$0.00
Promotion, Ads & Marketing	\$34,111.94
Postage & Meter Rental	\$1,134.81
Sales Tax Expense	\$622.77
Rent-Contracts-Maintenance Agree	\$484.55
Office Supplies	\$3,208.11
Telephone/Internet	\$3,133.75
Laundry & Cleaning	\$0.00
Dues-Subscriptions-Publications	\$2,559.63
Travel Information Center	\$1,180.15
Gift Shop Expense	\$3,312.87
Sign Advertising	\$24,316.08
Office Equipment	\$1,874.38
Tourism Admin Expenses (Trolley)	\$123.00
Service & Supplies (Trolley)	\$108.21
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$226,119.30
2017 END OF YEAR	\$35,046.36

Note: The Tourism Assistant position was vacant from September 15-December 4, 2017.