

# Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce

1716 W. Lake Shore Drive  
P.O. Box 746, Ashland, WI 54806  
715-682-2500  
info@visitashland.com  
www.visitashland.com



Come and join us!

Enclosed please find a membership packet for 2023. The cooperative support of our members has made our past success possible. Investing in the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce means you understand the importance of supporting an organization that works solely to make your business more profitable, both for you and your community.

What does the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce do?

*We sell Ashland ...* in so many ways. We target a diverse market segment of travelers and niche sports enthusiasts through multiple marketing promotions, events and programs.

Well, we made it through another year of COVID. It's hard to gage some of the data we like to share, because the numbers and behaviors are still somewhat skewed from the last 1.5 to 2 years. We can tell you for sure that tourism continues to thrive in this region. In our tracking of entry from Arrivalist, (Arrivalist tracks and measures a sample of actual arrivals to your destination to provide insights including which origin markets visitors arrive from and to which events, hotels and attractions they visit while there.) we do know in Ashland County that we have seen just a small drop in travelers; however, our sales tax reports show an increase in sales tax. This is most likely from higher Average Daily Rates at Hotels or ADR. Our top 3 Designated Marketing Areas (DMA) are: 1) In-Wisconsin. 2) Minnesota, and 3) Michigan & Illinois tied. We look at specific markets for our ad placements for example, the Twin Cities market is extremely expensive, so we target Rochester, Mankato, Brainerd Lakes, Edina, and Apple Valley. The age demographic for our visitors is very evenly split at 25% between the top four age groups from 25 years through 65 years and Gender is tallied at 49.4% male and 50.6% female. We were so impressed to see several new businesses over the last year, and some expansions. There is excitement in the air in the business community. Even among the recovery from the pandemic, and the high inflation rates, businesses are still hiring, expanding, and customers are spending money. Ashland's economy differs from many of the communities in the bay and area. Ashland's inventory includes Energy, Materials, Industrials, Government, Consumer Discretionary, Consumer Staples, Healthcare, Financials, Real Estate, Information Technology & Education. Ashland's economy continues to weather the storms because of our economic make-up and we will continue to sustain through thick and thin. One of our major priorities is connecting resources to those who need help with financing, housing, employment, and travel. It's exciting and we love sharing what we have with others.

Thank you for your support these last few years, especially the bigger businesses supporting the smaller businesses and shopping local for so many items. I think the cliché, "We are all in this together", does ring true especially in the rural areas, and we have witnessed first hand the camaraderie, support and kindness throughout our community. Recently, we held a Christmas decorating contest on Main Street. 20 businesses entered, and the downtown is so festive and feels so welcoming even during the dark afternoons and evenings. There is a spirit and attitude of "can do" and we very much appreciate our residents that support the small businesses in our community. We need each other!

The Ashland Chamber has an aggressive marketing plan for the first two quarters. Large amounts of snowfall in just our area would be very welcoming!! Fortunately, there are so many activities that can take place with little to no snow! Waterfalls, Ice-Fishing, Murals, Leisure travel, Hiking, Cross-Country Skiing, Fat-Tire Biking, Snowshoeing & Birdwatching. The ideas are endless and there is plenty of room to play outdoors – Take a look at our website [www.visitashland.com](http://www.visitashland.com) and click "videos" in the search. We are running many of those commercials right now.

## **Promotions and Promotional Material**

The Ashland County Visitor Guide acts as the fulfillment piece for our marketing and we contract with 5-Star Marketing, a brochure distribution company, to place brochures in several WI and MN markets in all four seasons. In addition, we will partner with Bayfield & Madeline Island to have a large presence in the Beloit Welcome Center. Along with the visitor guide, we also print the Ashland Mural Walk brochures, and the Ashland Shopping & Dining Guide. ALL retail businesses with a storefront are listed in the shopping and dining guide, however, Chamber Members are given the opportunity to have a description of their business in the guide.

We currently administer 9 websites and a Facebook Page – www.visitashland.com is our main website and the County’s website is www.travelashlandcounty.com. WhistleStop, Apostle Islands Inland, Chequamegon Bay Birding & Nature Festival, Ashland Bay Days, Chick-uamegon and Muralbrick Road correspond with our Chamber and County sites.

Along with promoting the abundance of outdoor activities and events, the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce continues to promote and invest in the sustainability of our historic downtown. We create events throughout the year that invite both tourists and locals to visit Historic Main Street and see the many stores, restaurants, museum, and beautiful murals, that are primarily located in the 8-block Main Street Business District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. **Did you know? We have over 30 retailers in our historic district! That doesn’t include Food & Beverage.** That number is so impressive to see in a small rural downtown.

Ashland is becoming more and more of a destination because of the promotions, events, recreational opportunities, tourism businesses and the recognition of being the Historic Mural Capital of Wisconsin. Our location on Lake Superior and Chequamegon Bay lend itself to partnering with our neighbors Washburn, Bayfield, and Madeline Island. The Chequamegon Bay Chambers meet regularly and work together to promote the bay to travelers in our areas.

Thank you for partnering with us through your membership, volunteerism, sponsorship, and investment in Ashland .....*The Heart of Chequamegon Bay.* We know you have already found yourself *next to the water!*

Please know that our priority is to sell Ashland and we will fervently continue to sell Ashland!!

Thank you for your continued support of the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce

*Help Promote our Artesian Wells and cut down on plastic bottles!! We have been promoting the clean, cold, crisp, clear artesian well water for several years and highlight our water in both the visitor guide and our television commercials.*

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce offers so much to our members. Please review the many chamber benefits listed below. The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce is a full-time, fully-staffed Chamber. The Board of Directors is dedicated to keeping you informed on programs and issues that are important to your business, community, and the region.

**The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce Mission Statement:**  
**“We Sell Ashland”**

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce exists to identify, highlight and promote Ashland and the surrounding area. We accomplish this through:

**Sponsoring** special events and promotions designed to emphasize the diverse recreational, educational and tourism opportunities in our area.

**Supporting** a solid diversified economic base – one that ensures a healthy business climate and a prosperous, progressive community.

**Collaborating** with public and private sectors aimed at improving the quality of life in the Ashland area.

**Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce Benefits**

**Business After Hours (Will re-start in 2023)**

A great way to showcase your business for any reason. Use this venue as a way to thank the business community, introduce new management, or promote a new business. The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce is a partner with you in this event to create awareness of your business to our membership.

**Business Retention and Expansion**

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce is committed to growing the Ashland economy and consistently looks for programs that will help grow and sustain our economic condition. The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce focuses on promoting the Ashland area in the fields of marketing, financial opportunities, and expansion of our business community. The Chamber Revolving Loan Fund differs from current programs available through the Ashland Area Development Corporation. Loans are available from \$5,000-\$15,000 and job quality is considered equal to job creation, meaning an independent business owner equates to one job created.

### **Chamber Dollars**

#### **Service, professional, retail, food, beverage, lodging ... it doesn't matter.**

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce distributes over \$67,000 a year in Chamber Dollars. Chamber Dollars are spent at member businesses and redeemable for full value from the Chamber. This is an excellent way to **promote local spending**. Your name will appear on the Gift Certificate List, which is enclosed with each Chamber Dollar sale. **Chamber Dollars promote local spending!!**

### **Weekly E-Blasts...and more if needed to communicate with our Chamber Member Businesses.**

Weekly E-Blasts highlights topics most pertinent to our Chamber and its members. A great place to send in **FREE** news tidbits about your business under "Business News." (Some restrictions apply.)

### **Website Listing**

As a membership benefit, all members receive a **FREE** listing and to their website on the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce website. Our website allows you the opportunity to have up to 4 images on your page and to have a map available to your business through Google maps. Websites, Facebook accounts and e-mail addresses are highlighted, allowing visitors to link directly to your site. We also highlight the Business of the Week on our website and our Facebook page in conjunction with the radio promotion. **Our website is another great way to promote our area and another excellent, efficient way to promote your business:** [www.visitashland.com](http://www.visitashland.com) ( Please make sure to check-out our new website remodel).

### **Newsletter Advertising Opportunities**

For only \$75 and 475 copies, a Chamber member can place an advertising insert in our monthly newsletter. This is a great economical way to reach potential customers. (Some restrictions apply, March 2023).

### **Bulk Mailing Permit**

Direct mail to potential customers is one of the best forms of advertising. The Chamber has a bulk mailing permit, which is available to our members for use **FREE** on large mailings of 200 or more. Using the permit can save up to .18 per piece. Please call our office for more information.

### **Mailing Lists**

Our membership list is available **ONLY** to members at no cost. (Mailing labels are available at a charge of \$15.)

### **Display your Brochures**

Promote your business by displaying your brochures in our reception area racks.

### **The Chamber Map**

City of Ashland maps are available at the Chamber office free of charge to members.

### **Visitor Guide**

Ashland County Area Activity & Visitor Guides are available free of charge. Ask about advertising opportunities in the visitor guide. 35,000 copies are printed and the guide is the main fulfillment piece for the Ashland County marketing Campaign.

### **The Experience/Ashland Shopping & Dining Guide**

Retail storefront and dining members receive a **FREE** listing and description in the area Shopping & Dining Guide, which is distributed throughout the community, in locations such as the hospital and clinics, as well as to the many visitors who travel to our area. Another **FREE** advertising opportunity for your business.

### **Business Directory**

The Chamber Business Directory lists **all** Chamber Member businesses with a description, another **FREE** advertising opportunity.

### **Wedding Planner Brochure**

A brochure listing Chamber Member business to help couples make plans for their wedding. This is also a great piece to promote larger meeting spaces and businesses that cater food and beverage.

### **Business Recruitment Tours**

We offer personal tours for business recruitment. Whether a new physician or C.E.O. of a company, we will take the potential candidate on a guided tour through the area and familiarize them with our community with excitement and professionalism.

### **Business Referral System**

Chamber staff gives referrals to Chamber businesses in response to the thousands of telephones, personal, and written inquiries each year.

### **Weekly Business Spotlight – “Business of the Week”**

A 30-second commercial spot is created by Heartland Communications Group and played throughout the week. Businesses are drawn from our pool of members. This is an excellent way of creating awareness for our business and is heard throughout the region. An excellent value of over \$200.00 for **FREE**. The Ashland Chamber partners with Heartland Communications to feature 52 businesses throughout the year.

### **Ribbon Cuttings/Grand Openings/Ambassadors**

New and existing businesses receive ribbon-cutting photo opportunities and community-wide exposure for grand openings, groundbreaking ceremonies or special anniversaries. Ambassadors get a chance to see new businesses. Businesses get the chance to receive great **FREE** publicity for new things happening in their business.

### **Relocation Packets**

Relocation packets include specific information about the community and Chamber members.

### **Ashland County Affiliation**

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce is the administrator for the Ashland County tourism budget. The website [www.travelashlandcounty.com](http://www.travelashlandcounty.com) is provided by the county and accessed by thousands of interested persons. You can order a free copy of the very popular Ashland *County Sportsman’s Map or the new Ashland County Inland Lake Map* at [www.visitashland.com](http://www.visitashland.com) or [www.travelashlandcounty.com](http://www.travelashlandcounty.com).

### **Northwest Wisconsin Regional ITBEC**

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce continues to partner with the Northwest Wisconsin division of the state’s International Trade, Business and Economic Development Council (ITBEC) to promote tourism opportunities within our region. We market to all segments from silent to motorized sports and with a focus on the many trail systems throughout northwest Wisconsin. Check out the website at [www.northwestwisconsin.com](http://www.northwestwisconsin.com).

### **Board Representation**

Mary McPhetridge was appointed in 2021 to a 2<sup>nd</sup> term on the **Governor’s Council on Tourism**. In addition, Mary is the Past President of the **Wisconsin Downtown Action Council**. A Statewide Wisconsin Downtown Advocacy Organization. She also sits on the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Chambers of Commerce Executives advisory board.

### **Harbor Towns**

Wisconsin Harbor Towns Association is a partnership of 18 Wisconsin Great Lakes harbor communities, formed to enhance their image and develop economic impact by promoting tourism through water-based, land and cruise ship recreation to the Wisconsin Harbor Towns. Harbor Towns was recently awarded the prestigious State of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Trailblazers award in the "Outstanding Partnership Initiative" category. Check out the website at [www.wisconsinharbortowns.net](http://www.wisconsinharbortowns.net).

### **Co-op Advertising**

You are entitled to participate in the State of Wisconsin Department of Tourism co-op advertising programs. The Department has negotiated special discounts with media in the Midwest. Some examples include Pioneer Press, Midwest Living, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Chicago Tribune, Madison Newspapers, and Minneapolis Star Tribune.

Your investment helps the Chamber support a variety of Chamber-sponsored functions and events in the community. The Chamber also works with other local organizations on community issues and acts as the destination and tourism liaison for Ashland and the surrounding area. Our office receives hundreds of phone calls pertaining to area information and destination services. **Chamber members are always promoted and referred over non-members.**

As you can see, there are many great benefits that come with your membership.

Our membership dues **continue** to remain among the **lowest** in the region. We will continue to support and promote our Chamber members statewide, regionally, countywide and locally.

If you have any questions about our dues, the direction of the Chamber, or any of our programs and projects, please feel free to give us a call. We hope you will see that membership in the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce is an excellent investment in your business and your community. We welcome you!

**Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce staff:**

Executive Director – Mary McPhetridge  
Office Manager – JoAnn Erickson  
Customer Service Specialist – Heidi Hicks  
Customer Service Specialist – Kate Richmond

**Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors:**

**Executive Board Members:**

John Beirl, Northern State Bank, President  
Rick Forsythe, Northern Clearing  
Laurie Gregor – Choice Title

**At-Large Members:**

Paul Bretting, C.G. Bretting Manufacturing  
Todd Chingo, AmericInn Conference Center  
Lisa Gervais, Cobblestone Inn & Suites  
Mari Kay-Nabozny, Northwest Workforce Investment Board  
Bill Kacvinsky, Ashland Construction  
Tim King, Quality Inn  
Wendy Phillips, Best Western/Hotel Chequamegon

**Ex Officio Members:**

Brant Kucera, City of Ashland  
Carver Harries, Ashland Area Development Corporation

**Annual & Special events promoted, sponsored and/or coordinated  
By the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce:**

- *Memorial Medical Center WhistleStop Marathon & Half-Marathon*
- *Memorial Medical Center Cruisin' the Corridor*
- *Apostle Islands Inline Marathon, ALMT Half-Marathon*
- *Ashland Field Day Golf Outing*
- *Northern Wisconsin's Largest House to House Garage Sale*
- *Chequamegon Bay Birding & Nature Festival*
- *Ashland Bay Days Festival*
- *Customer Appreciation Day*
- *Garland City of the North Christmas Parade*
- *4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade*
- *Girls' Night Out*
- *Witches' Night Out*
- *Ashland Easter Egg Hunt*
- *Book Across the Bay*
- *Chamber Night at ABC Raceway*
- *3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays*
- *Trolley Tours*
- *Ashland Wine Walk & Shop*
- *No Snow Snowman & Scarecrow Contests*
- *Ashland Mural Fest & Car Show*
- *Chick-uamegon Women's 1-mile/5K/10K*
- *Shop Small Win Big Promotion*
- *25 Days of Ashland Christmas – Facebook Promotion*
- *Christmas Parade and other Christmas Promotions*