

Kent County Lodging Excise Tax (Visitors Tax) Questions and Answers

What is the Kent County Visitors Tax?

Under Michigan Public Act 23 of 1974, as amended, Kent County has the authority to levy up to an 8 percent assessment on overnight lodging for guests who stay less than 30 consecutive days. Kent County currently levies a 5 percent assessment which has been in place since 1975.

Who pays the Visitors Tax?

Only guests who pay for overnight lodging pay this assessment. Based upon 2022 data provided by Experience Grand Rapids, 87 percent of overnight visitors to Kent County come from outside the broader Grand Rapids-Kalamazoo-Battle Creek region. An even higher proportion comes from outside Kent County.

Do I pay the Visitors Tax if I don't use overnight lodging?

No. The only individuals who pay the assessment are those who book a room in Kent County and stay for less than 30 days.

Do I pay the assessment if I use an Airbnb rental?

Not directly. Kent County has an agreement with Airbnb to share revenue from rentals in the County.

How can revenue generated by the Kent County Visitors Tax be used?

Revenue from a Visitors Tax can only be allocated for the following uses:

- Acquisition, construction, improvement, enlargement, repair, or maintenance of “convention and entertainment facilities” defined as:
 - Convention Halls
 - Auditoriums

- Stadiums
 - Music Halls
 - Arenas
 - Meeting Rooms
 - Exhibit Areas
 - Sports Complexes
 - Aquariums
 - Related Public Areas
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- Administration/enforcement
 - Promotion and encouragement of tourist and convention business
 - Construction of a museum within the City of Grand Rapids
 - Payment of rent to an authority for convention and entertainment facilities or (in the City of Grand Rapids) a museum

How is Kent County currently using revenue from the Kent County Visitors Tax?

The two largest expenditures from the fund is for bond payments for the DeVos Place Convention Center, which will expire in 2031, and funding for Experience Grand Rapids, the entity that promotes regional tourism within Kent County. The County also uses a portion of the revenue for events that attract visitors, such as ArtPrize and Grand Rapids Festival of the Arts. Historically, the fund has been used to construct the DeVos Performance Hall, renovate the Civic Auditorium, construct the current Grand Rapids Public Museum building, and build new exhibits at the John Ball Zoo.

Who decides how revenue from the Kent County Visitors Tax is allocated?

The Kent County Board of Commissioners has the sole authority to allocate revenue from the assessment.

What am I voting for in the August primary ballot?

In the August primary ballot, voters are deciding whether to grant Kent County the authority to raise the assessment on overnight visitors to 8 percent. Michigan law requires majority approval of voters for any increase in lodging tax exceeding 5 percent.

How will the language appear on the August primary ballot?

The ballot title and language will be as follows:

KENT COUNTY SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT FACILITIES PROPOSAL

SHALL KENT COUNTY INCREASE THE RATE AT WHICH THE EXCISE TAX IS LEVIED ON ALL PERSONS ENGAGED IN THE BUSINESS OF PROVIDING ROOMS FOR LODGING PURPOSES TO GUESTS STAYING LESS THAN 30 CONSECUTIVE DAYS UNDER PUBLIC ACT 263 OF 1974 AS AMENDED FROM 5% TO 8% OF THE TOTAL CHARGE FOR ACCOMMODATIONS TO BE USED FOR ALLOWABLE USES INCLUDING FINANCING OF THE ACQUISITION, CONSTRUCTION, IMPROVEMENT, ENLARGEMENT, REPAIR, OR MAINTENANCE OF STADIUMS, ARENAS, SPORTS COMPLEXES, AND AQUARIUMS STARTING JANUARY 1, 2025 AND TERMINATING ON THE SAME DAY AS THE COUNTY ORDINANCE ENACTED UNDER PUBLIC ACT 263 OF 1974 AS AMENDED.

Am I voting to fund any project, event, or program?

No. The Kent County Board of Commissioners has the sole decision-making authority on how funding is allocated. However, revenue generated from the assessment must adhere to the guidelines outlined in Public Act 23 of 1974, as amended. Nonetheless, the additional revenue could bolster various convention and entertainment venues, including the Acrisure Amphitheater, a soccer stadium currently under development, and a potential aquarium.

When does the assessment end?

The end date for the Kent County Visitors Tax is established by County ordinance. The current ordinance continues the assessment until December 31, 2042. However, the Kent County Board of Commissioners can decide, at its discretion, to extend the expiration date.