US 250 RETAIL CORRIDOR

Greater Sandusky Partnership
Policy Center

VISITATION REPORT

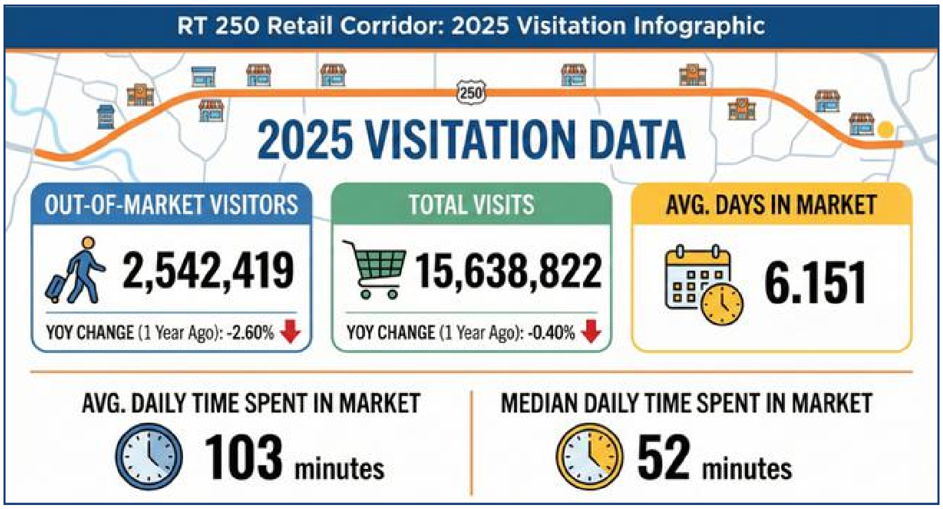
2025 Visitation, Customer Profile & Trade Area Analysis

(419) 625-6421
info@greatersandusky.com
www.greatersandusky.com

US 250 Retail Corridor

2025 Visitation, Customer Profile & Trade Area Analysis

Prepared by Greater Sandusky Partnership I Jeff Kerr, Director of Planning & Policy
Data: Placer.ai I Experian Mosaic I ODOT



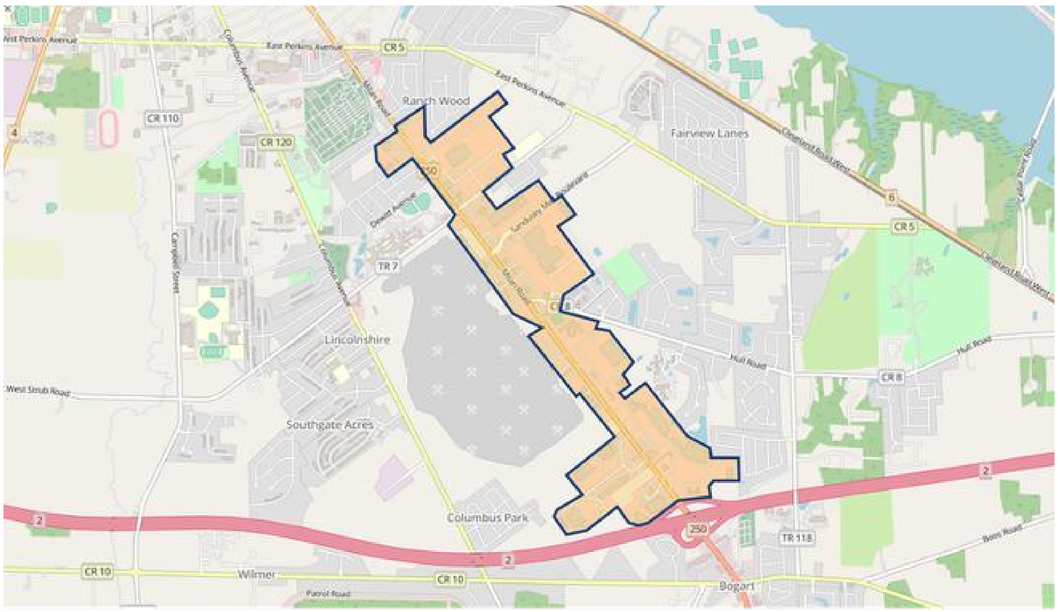
The US 250 retail corridor in Sandusky, Ohio, is the regional retail anchor for a multi-county trade area covering Erie, Huron, Sandusky, Ottawa, and Lorain counties. Across 2.1 miles of Milan Road between Oakland Avenue and State Route 2, the corridor generated 15.6 million visits in 2025 from 2.54 million unique visitors, who returned on average 6.15 times during the year.

This study uses Placer.ai mobile device data, Experian Mosaic household segmentation, and peer corridor comparisons to describe who comes to US 250, when they come, how long they stay, and where they come from. The findings support operational decisions for corridor businesses, investment decisions for property owners and developers, and policy decisions for city and county officials responsible for planning around one of the region's most concentrated retail assets.

The 2025 picture is one of stability. Visits have held above 15 million for five consecutive years, through a national retail contraction that has closed more than 9,000 stores elsewhere and dropped national shopping-center foot traffic 8 to 10 percent against 2019. Against that backdrop, US 250 is up 7 percent since 2019. That performance is what makes the corridor worth studying in detail.

1. The Study Area: Where US 250 Sits

The corridor runs 2.1 miles along Milan Road, from Oakland Avenue on the north to State Route 2 on the south. Inside those two miles sit Sandusky Mall, Walmart, Meijer, Target, Sam's Club, Menards, Park Place, Crossings of Sandusky, and the dining anchors that make up the region's concentrated retail core. South of Route 2, commercial development continues to develop toward Kalahari Resorts and the Ohio Turnpike, but that southern stretch is primarily lodging and sits outside this study's area.



The study boundary captures the retail core where tenant mix and traffic patterns are most intense. The corridor sits at the intersection of two major routes, which makes it accessible from across the five-county region. Norwalk, Fremont, Port Clinton, and Bellevue residents reach it within 30 to 40 minutes on rural highways.

A Regional Anchor, Not a Local Strip

Most neighborhood retail captures 80 to 90 percent of traffic from within 3 miles. Strip centers draw 5 to 7 miles. US 250 operates on a different scale. In 2025, 14 percent of visits originated within 3 miles, 26 percent within 3 to 10 miles, and nearly 30 percent from 10 to 30 miles away. Almost one quarter of all visits came from more than 50 miles.

That distribution is unusual. It reflects the corridor's function as the retail access point for a large, dispersed, rural-to-semi-rural trade area that lacks a comparable alternative within 40 minutes. When customers in Norwalk, Fremont, or Port Clinton need selection, US 250 is their nearest option.

Distance from Corridor	% of 2025 Visits	Behavior Pattern
0-3 Miles (immediate)	**14.1%**	*Local convenience*
3-10 Miles (local)	**26.3%**	*Regular shopping*
10-30 miles (regional)	**29.6%**	*Monthly destination visit*
30-50 miles	**6.0%**	*Occasional*
50+ Miles	**24.0%**	*Mixed regional + out-of-market*

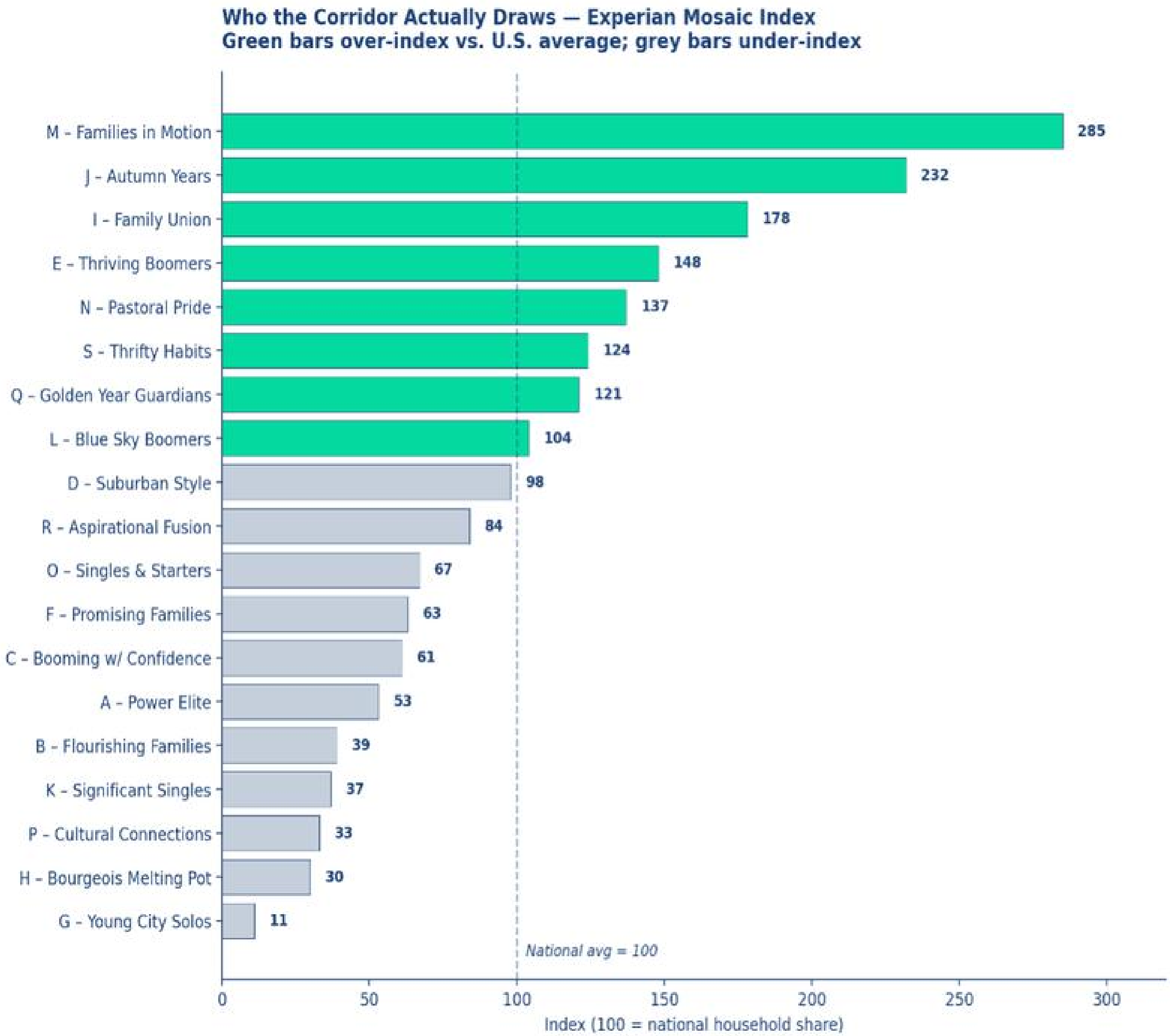
Source: Placer.ai trade area analysis, 2025.

Visitors come back. The 2.54 million unique visitors made 15.6 million visits, an average of 6.15 trips per visitor per year. That is roughly one visit every two months. It is a regional-customer frequency pattern, consistent with an anchor retail district that people build into their monthly routine, and inconsistent with a tourism pattern where the typical visit is one-and-done. Tourism adds a summer bump. The corridor's base is regional.

2. Who Your Customer Is | Experian Mosaic Household Profile

Knowing where customers come from is useful. Knowing who they are is more useful. The Experian Mosaic segmentation system classifies every U.S. household into one of 19 groups based on income, age, life stage, and geography. Placer.ai overlays Mosaic against the devices observed at a geofenced location, producing a household-weighted profile of who actually walks the corridor, as distinct from who lives in the broader trade area.

The chart below shows how each Mosaic group's share of the corridor's visitor base compares to its national share of U.S. households. An index of 100 means that group walks the corridor at the national average rate. 200 means twice as likely as would be predicted from national demographics. 50 means half.



Source: Placer.ai x Experian Mosaic Group segmentation, out-of-market visitors, 2025. Index 100 = national household share.

Who Over-Indexes

The corridor's visitor base concentrates in eight over-indexed Mosaic groups. They share a pattern: middle-income, middle-to-older-age, rural or small-town residence. None of the over-indexed groups are young urban, affluent-coastal, or trendy professional segments. The top six groups account for roughly 60 percent of all visitors.

Group	Who They Are	Share	Index
M Families in Motion	*Working-class families with young children in smaller communities*	7.6%	**285**
J Autumn Years	*Established and mature couples in older homes*	**17.5%**	**232**
I Family Union	*Middle-income blue-collar families in smaller cities*	**11.9%**	**178**
E Thriving Boomers	*Upper-middle-class boomer couples in suburban towns*	8.9%	**148**
N Pastoral Pride	*Lower-middle-class rural and small-town households*	4.5%	**137**
Q Golden Year Guardians	*Retirees in settled homes and communities*	**9.6%**	**121**

Source: Placer.ai, Experian Mosaic Group segmentation, 2025.

What it Means for Assortment & Marketing

The customer is middle-income, older, small-town or rural, family-centered. Merchandising, pricing, and media decisions that fit this profile will out-perform those imported from affluent suburban or urban markets:

- Value over aspiration. Groups I, M, N, Q, and S skew price-conscious. Premium and luxury assortment faces headwinds a generic trade-area analysis would not predict.
- The customer is established, not transient. Group J (17.5%, index 232) and Group Q (9.6%, index 121) are rooted-in-place households. Long-tenure loyalty programs, print and radio media, and referral-driven marketing work disproportionately well for this profile.
- Working-class family volume is real. Group M at index 285 is the most over-represented segment on the corridor. This is the customer who drives in for a weekend run to Meijer, Target, and Walmart because their hometown does not have the selection.
- Affluent urban assumptions will miss. Group G (Young City Solos) indexes at 11. A tenant importing merchandising decisions from Cleveland's western suburbs or Columbus will over-invest in premium SKUs that underperform here.

3. When They Come

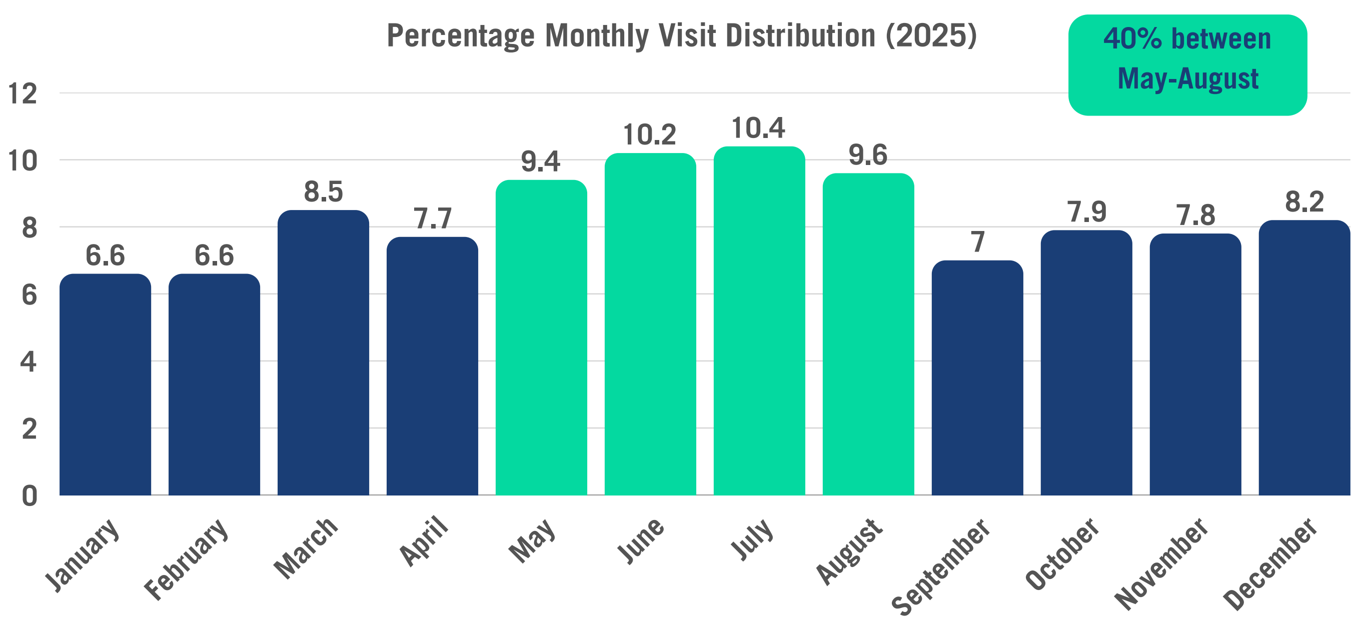
Seasonal, Weekly, and Daily Patterns

The corridor's traffic concentrates in predictable patterns that have direct implications for staffing, inventory, marketing, and operating hours. Three patterns matter.

Google Street View US 250

By Season

May, June, July, and August together hold 40 percent of annual traffic. June and July each account for more than 10 percent individually. January and February each run at 6.6 percent. The gap between peak month and trough month is roughly 58 percent.



Source: Placer.ai monthly visitation, 2025. Teal = summer peak months.

Summer Doesn’t Add Weekends. It Turns Every Weekday Into One.

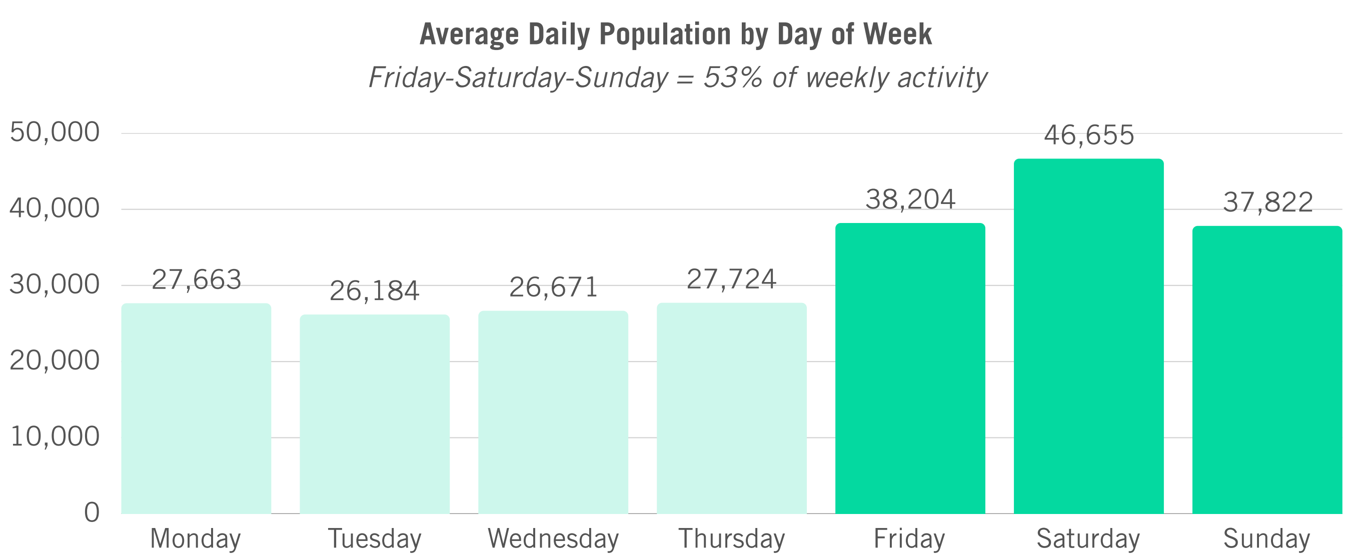
The common assumption is that the summer surge comes from weekends. The data shows the opposite. Summer's gain is a weekday story. Weekends are already strong year-round.

WEEKDAY SUMMER SURGE	WEEKEND SUMMER SURGE
+51%	**+13%**
+11,037 visits per day	**+5,119 visits per day**
21,587 → 32,624	38,843 → 43,962

Source: Placer.ai temporal patterns, 2025. Weekday = Monday–Thursday; Weekend = Friday–Sunday.

In off-peak months, the corridor runs on standard retail rhythm: weekday traffic averages 21,600 per day, weekend traffic 38,800. In peak summer, weekday traffic jumps 51 percent to 32,600. Weekend traffic grows 13 percent to 44,000. In July, a Tuesday performs like a March Saturday. A store that staffs summer Tuesdays at spring-Tuesday levels is leaving significant revenue at the door.

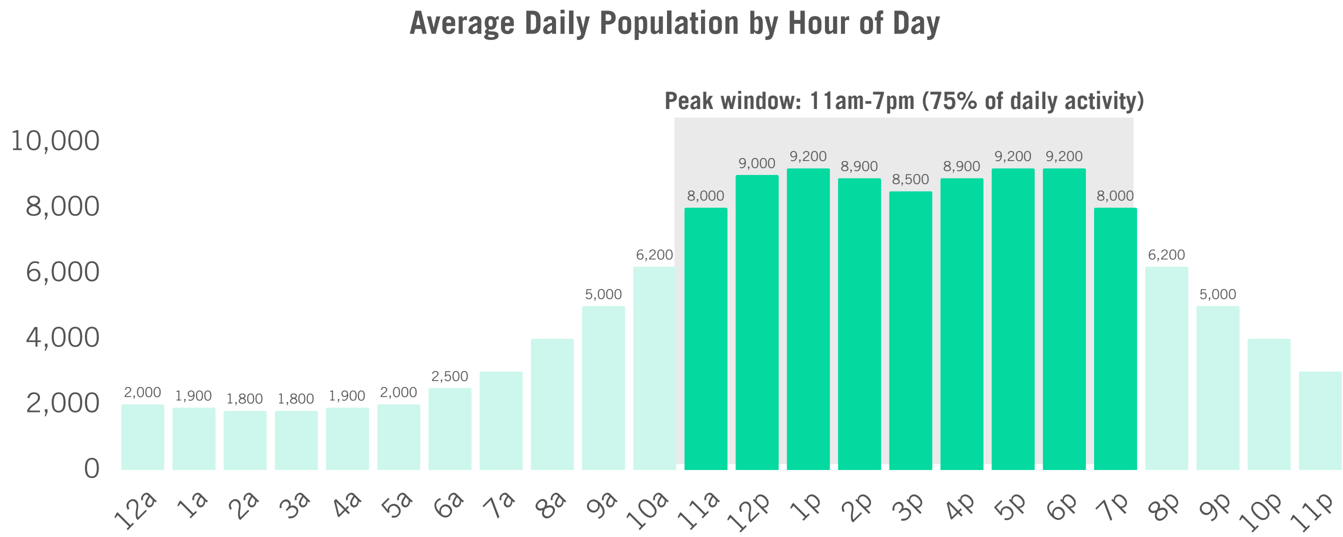
By Day of the Week



Source: Placer.ai daily activity, 2025 annual average.

Monday through Thursday all run between 26,000 and 28,000 average daily population. Friday jumps to 38,200, Saturday peaks at 46,655, Sunday runs at 37,800. For operational planning, the week is not five plus two. It is four plus three. Friday–Saturday–Sunday accounts for 53 percent of weekly activity.

By Hour of the Day

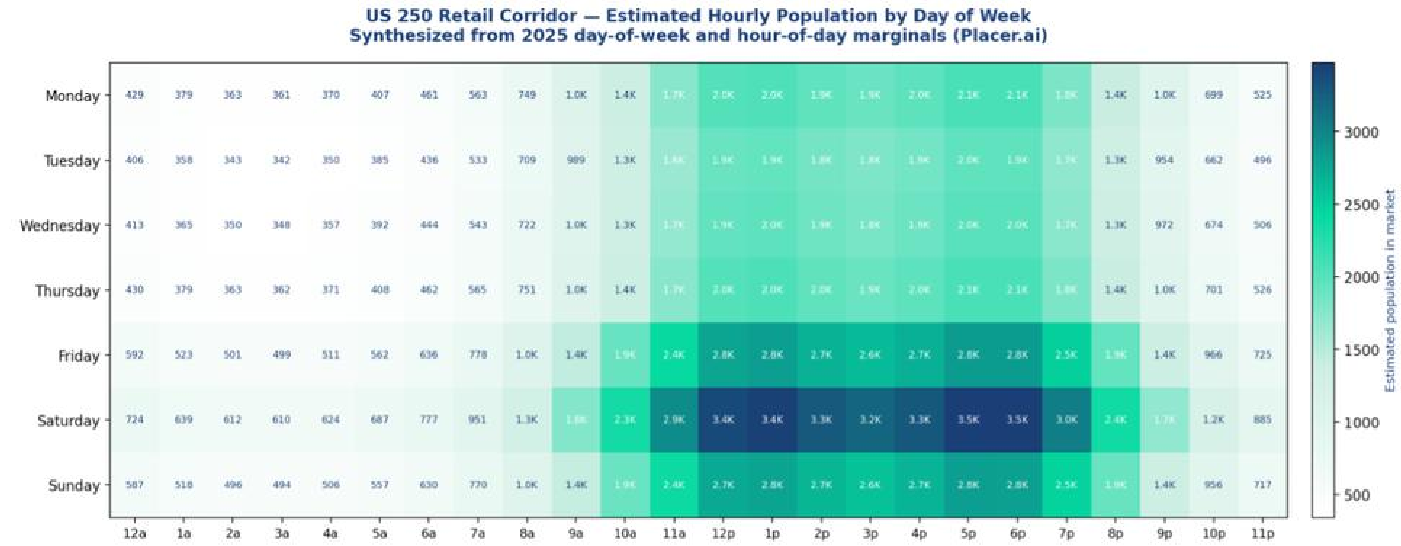


Source: Placer.ai hourly activity, 2025 annual average.

The corridor is essentially closed before 9 AM. Activity stays below 4,800 until 9 AM, crosses 7,900 by 11 AM, and holds between 7,900 and 9,400 from 11 AM through 7 PM. After 7 PM, it declines quickly: 4,600 by 9 PM, 2,400 by 11 PM. The peak window, 11 AM to 7 PM, contains 75 percent of daily corridor activity in just eight hours. Two peaks are visible within that window: a lunch peak at 1 PM and an after-work peak at 5 PM, both at roughly 9,300 population.

Day and Hour Together

Combining day-of-week and hour-of-day produces the operational map. Saturday afternoon and evening are the peak zone, with seven consecutive hours above 3,200 hourly population. Friday evening performs like weekend evening, not weekday evening. Tuesday is the weakest day in the peak window, and Tuesday mornings are the single softest operational slot excluding overnight hours.

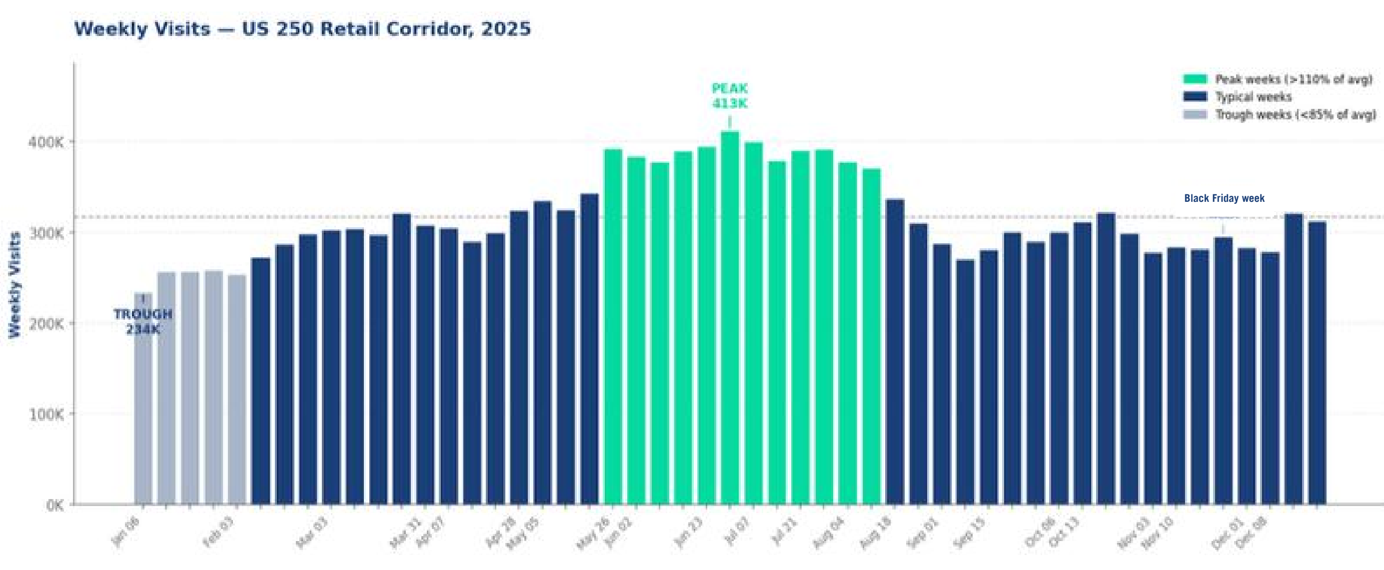


Source: Synthesized from Placer.ai day-of-week and hour-of-day marginals, 2025. Cell values are approximate; see methodology.

4. By the Week

Weekly Volume, Peaks, and Troughs Across the Year

Monthly averages smooth over what retailers actually feel on the floor. The weekly view is sharper. Across the 52 full weeks of 2025, the corridor's busiest week generated 412,520 visits and the slowest week generated 234,036, a peak-to-trough swing of 76 percent. The week-by-week chart below shows the actual rhythm.



Source: Placer.ai daily population data, 2025. Weeks shown are ISO calendar weeks with all seven days reporting.

The annual average is 317,400 visits per week. Peak weeks run roughly 30 percent above that. Trough weeks run roughly 25 percent below. The corridor delivers more than 178,000 additional visits in its busiest week than its slowest, a number large enough to fill a mid-sized store's entire annual customer count.

The Real Peak Window: Memorial Day Through Mid-August

The summer peak is not 'May through August' as a uniform block. It is twelve consecutive weeks running from Memorial Day weekend through mid-August, with traffic holding above 370,000 visits per week throughout. The single peak week is the week of June 30, which contains both Independence Day and the Cedar Point summer high. That week alone generated 412,520 visits, or 58,931 per day on average.

Inside the summer block, the variation is small. Weeks 22 through 33 (Memorial Day through mid-August) hold within a tight band, between 370,000 and 412,000 weekly visits. The corridor operates at near-full intensity for three solid months, then drops sharply once Cedar Point's daily schedule contracts in late August.

The Real Trough: January and Early February

The slowest weeks of the year are not December or November, despite holiday-shopping fatigue narratives. They are the first six weeks of the calendar, January 6 through mid-February. The slowest week of 2025 (January 6 through 12) saw only 234,036 visits, with daily averages running at 33,400. That is roughly 57 percent of the peak summer pace.

This trough has a structural cause. Cedar Point is closed. Sports Center activity is low. Holiday gift returns wind down by the second week of January. Consumer spending nationally pulls back through January as households recover from December obligations. The corridor follows that pattern. Operationally, January staffing should look closer to a slow-month spring weekday than to a normal weekday baseline.


Late-October Through November Are Soft but not Cold

The intuitive assumption is that Halloween and the early-November pre-holiday window deliver retail volume. The data shows the opposite. The week of November 3 through 9 averaged 277,928 weekly visits, 12 percent below the annual average. The week of November 10 through 16 was 10 percent below. The week of November 17 through 23, the run-up to Thanksgiving, was 11 percent below.

These are some of the slowest weeks of the year on US 250 outside of January. Halloween itself does not generate corridor-scale volume because Halloween shopping is concentrated in single specialty trips rather than the multi-stop pattern that defines the corridor. The pre-Thanksgiving window is similarly thin. Customers are pacing themselves for the holiday surge that has not yet started.

Black Friday Is the Single Biggest Non-Summer Day

Black Friday 2025 generated 74,661 visits in a single day. That is the largest single-day figure recorded outside the summer peak and exceeds every Saturday in the corridor's spring and fall shoulder seasons. The Thanksgiving-Black Friday block produced a four-day visit count of approximately 170,900 (Thursday through Sunday), with Friday alone accounting for 44 percent of that activity.

The week containing Black Friday (week 48, November 24 through 30) shows the operational reality clearly. Thanksgiving Day itself recorded only 12,307 visits, a near-trough. Black Friday recorded 74,661 visits, a near-peak. The Saturday and Sunday after Thanksgiving each cleared 40,000. Within four days, the corridor swings from one of its slowest days to one of its busiest, then settles back down. Holiday weekend volume is concentrated, not distributed.

Christmas Week Is Front-Loaded, Not Late

The week before Christmas (December 15 through 21) is the only December week to exceed the annual weekly average, at 321,768 visits. Saturday December 20 alone generated 62,116 visits, the year's last big day. The final shopping weekend before Christmas concentrates demand, but the days immediately before December 25 fall off sharply: December 24 sees 42,689 visits, and Christmas Day itself records 8,624, the only day of the year below 10,000. The day after Christmas recovers to 54,167, driven by returns and gift-card spending.

Operationally, this means the December retail window has two distinct phases. The pre-Christmas push runs through the third weekend of December and ends abruptly on Christmas Eve afternoon. The post-Christmas return-and-gift-card phase starts on December 26 and holds through the New Year's weekend at near-average corridor volumes. Retailers staffing the week between Christmas and New Year's at low-volume assumptions are misreading the data.

What This Means for Operating Plans

The weekly view changes the planning question from 'what month is this' to 'what week is this.' The corridor has six distinct operating modes through the year, each with different staffing, inventory, and marketing implications:

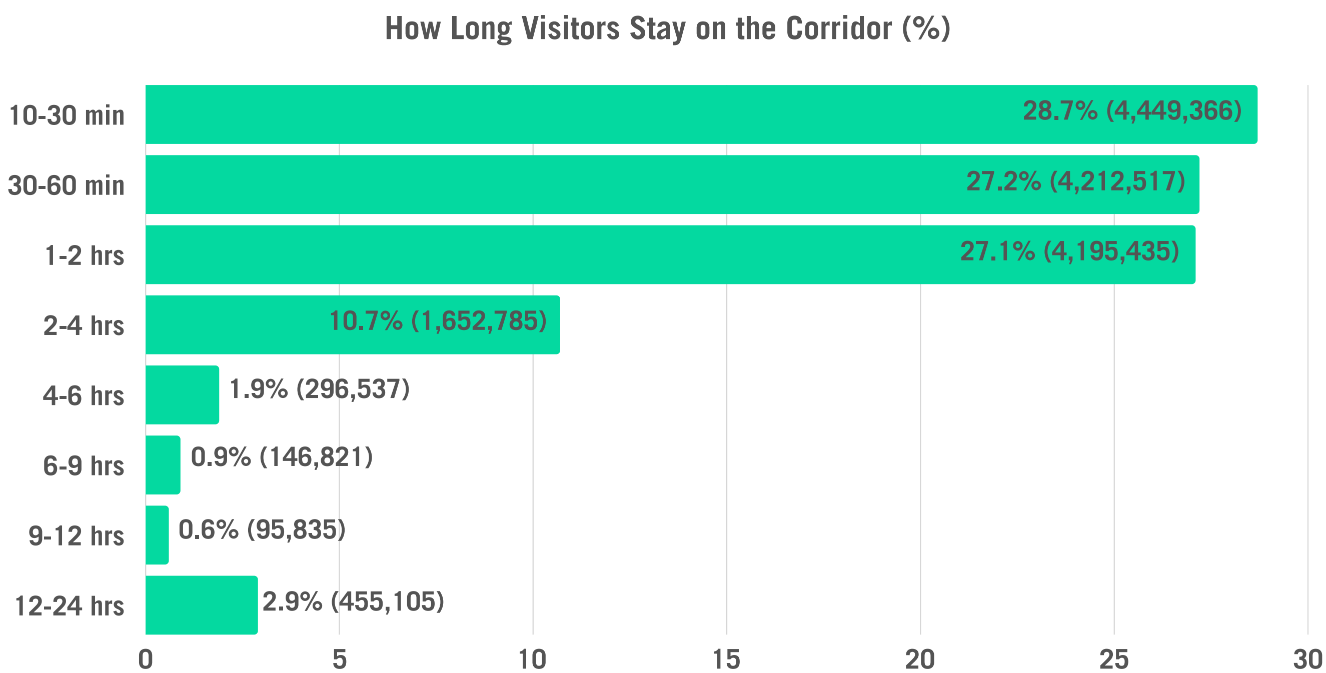
- Deep trough (early January through mid-February): 234,000–270,000 weekly visits. Lean staffing, low inventory replenishment, minimal advertising spend.
- Spring shoulder (mid-February through mid-May): 270,000–340,000 weekly visits. Standard operations, ramp-up planning for summer.
- Summer peak (Memorial Day through mid-August): 370,000–412,000 weekly visits. Maximum staffing, peak inventory, weekday treated as Saturday.
- Fall shoulder (late August through mid-October): 287,000–322,000 weekly visits. Standard operations, winding down summer staffing.
- Pre-holiday lull (early November through mid-December): 277,000–295,000 weekly visits. Below average; classic 'before the rush' pattern.
- Holiday concentrate (Black Friday week and the week before Christmas): 295,000–322,000 weekly visits, but with extreme single-day swings. Volume is concentrated in three or four days rather than spread.

The 76 percent peak-to-trough delta is large enough that a retailer running uniform staffing across the year is overstaffing January by roughly 30 percent and understaffing late June by roughly 30 percent at the same time.

5. How Long They Stay

Visit Duration and Trip Chaining

Visit duration describes customer intent. A 20-minute visit is an errand. A 45-minute visit is a single shopping trip. A 3-hour visit is multi-stop shopping and dining. Each pattern has a different commercial logic, and the mix on US 250 points to a corridor where customers arrive with a plan and use multiple businesses on the same visit.



Source: Placer.ai dwell time distribution, 2025. Total: 15.5M visits.

Three duration buckets each account for roughly 27 to 29 percent of visits: 10 to 30 minutes (quick errand), 30 to 60 minutes (focused single-store visit), and 1 to 2 hours (multi-stop trip). Together these three buckets contain 83 percent of all visits. Longer visits (2 to 4 hours) are 11 percent. The 12 to 24 hour bucket (3 percent) almost certainly reflects corridor employees being counted by the Placer.ai panel rather than customers, and is excluded from customer analysis.

Multiple Stops Per Trip

The average visit is 103 minutes (arithmetic mean). The median is 52 minutes. That gap between mean and median is the signature of a distribution where many short trips pull down the median while longer shopping trips pull up the average. In practical terms, a large share of corridor visitors are on the corridor long enough to visit more than one store.

The 1 to 2 hour bucket alone, 27 percent of visits, is the clearest signal. A customer spending 60 to 120 minutes on US 250 is rarely in one store for the full duration. The typical pattern is two or three stops: Sandusky Mall and Target, Walmart and Chick-fil-A, Meijer and a fast-casual lunch. Customers treat the corridor as a single destination, then move among adjacent tenants on the same trip.

For retailers, this matters in two ways. First, co-visitation makes adjacency valuable: a tenant next to Sandusky Mall or Walmart benefits from the cross-traffic those anchors generate. Second, corridor-wide marketing and cross-promotion work, because the customer is already accepting multi-stop behavior. The fragmented ownership of the corridor (multiple landlords, hundreds of tenants) is not how the customer experiences it. The customer experiences it as one place.

RT 250 (1995) Source: Google Earth

Rt 250 Corridor (2024) Source: Google Earth

6. Where They Come From

The Five-County Trade Area

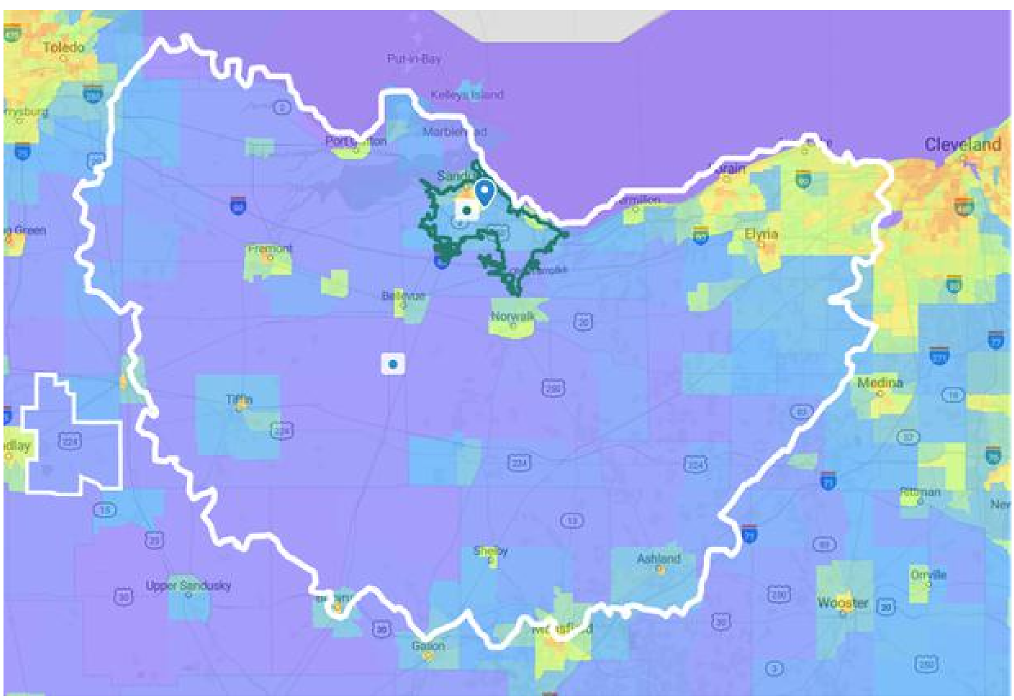
The five-county core of Erie, Huron, Sandusky, Ottawa, and Lorain accounts for 71.6 percent of all corridor visits. The home county, Erie (population 75,000), generates 42.6 percent of traffic by itself. The next four counties together add another 29 percent.

County	Population	% of Visits	Annual Visits
Erie (home)	75,000	42.6%	6,211,713
Huron	58,000	12.1%	1,768,101
Sandusky	58,000	8.1%	1,174,494
Ottawa	40,000	5.6%	818,933
Lorain	314,000	3.2%	469,489
Five-County Core	545,000	71.6%	10,442,730

Source: Placer.ai visitor origin data, 2025.

The 50-Mile Ring

Within 50 miles of the corridor live approximately 841,000 people. The 40-minute drive-time ring, which more accurately reflects actual travel on rural road networks, contains roughly 412,000 residents. That population lives across a rural to semi-rural settlement pattern with density of 200 to 300 people per square mile. Drivers pass agricultural land, small villages, and scattered residential development. They may pass a small downtown with limited retail, a Dollar General, or a county-seat grocery. They do not pass another regional retail corridor until Cleveland's western suburbs, 45+ minutes east, or Toledo's eastern suburbs, 50 minutes west.



10 & 50 mile Drive Ring with Population Heat Density. Source: Smappan.com

7. Where They Go

Visit Distribution by Destination and Category

Geography describes where customers come from. Categories and named venues describe where they actually go on the corridor and what they do once they arrive. The breakdown below uses unique-visitor data rather than visit counts, which means each customer is counted once per venue per year regardless of how many trips they made. That denominator answers a different question than total visits: not how busy is each store, but how many distinct customers from across the trade area do business there over twelve months.

Five categories tell the corridor story: shopping centers, dining, groceries and superstores, specialty retail, and lodging and entertainment. Each category serves a different customer mission, and the corridor's commercial strength rests on how the categories layer together rather than on any single anchor.

Name	Category Group	# of Visitors	% of Visitors
Sandusky Mall	Shopping Centers	1,248,850	49.1%
Park Place	Shopping Centers	800,604	31.5%
Walmart	Superstores	634,037	24.9%
Crossings of Sandusky	Shopping Centers	622,683	24.5%
Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers	Dining	525,995	20.7%
Target	Superstores	445,692	17.5%
Chick-fil-A	Dining	412,688	16.2%
Meijer	Groceries	386,600	15.2%
Texas Roadhouse	Dining	341,804	13.4%
McDonald's	Dining	306,142	12.0%
Sam's Club	Superstores	300,207	11.8%
LongHorn Steakhouse	Dining	295,227	11.6%
Mickey Mart Full Site	Shops & Services	289,550	11.4%
Culver's	Dining	248,728	9.8%
Meijer Gas Station	Shops & Services	240,238	9.4%
DICK'S Sporting Goods	Apparel	218,098	8.6%
Great Wolf Lodge Water Park	Hotels & Casinos	216,214	8.5%
T.J. Maxx	Apparel	212,808	8.4%
Chili's Grill & Bar	Dining	212,318	8.4%
Olive Garden	Dining	202,925	8.0%
Menards	Home Improvements	202,409	8.0%
Lowe's	Home Improvements	194,590	7.7%
Kohl's	Apparel	192,887	7.6%

*Source: Placer.ai unique visitor data, 2025. *Capturing 10-minute dwell time. The 10-minute dwell threshold in the underlying data means quick drive-through visits are not captured. Actual traffic at these locations might run higher than the figures shown.*

Shopping Centers: The Super-Anchors

Sandusky Mall is the dominant single venue, drawing 1.25 million unique visitors and reaching 49 percent of the corridor's out-of-market visitor base. Park Place adds another 800,000, Walmart 634,000, and Crossings of Sandusky 622,000. The four shopping centers combined account for the majority of unique corridor visitors, with significant overlap because customers routinely visit multiple centers in a single trip.

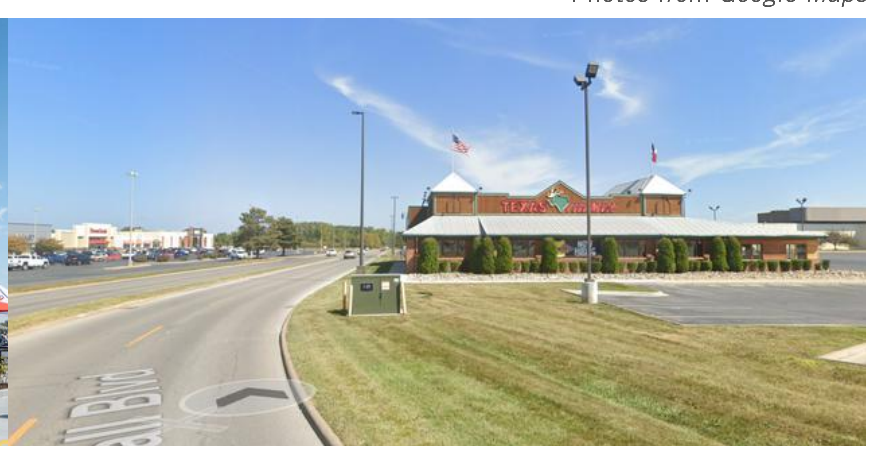
That overlap is the agglomeration effect at work. Customers who come for Sandusky Mall end up at Target. Families shopping Walmart stop for lunch at Chick-fil-A. The cross-pollination multiplies tenant performance and creates the sticky traffic pattern that makes the corridor function as a single retail destination rather than a series of independent stores. The shared customer base is the foundation that supports the rest of the tenant mix.

Photo by Sandusky Mall

Dining: High Volume Across Service Levels

The dining sector is unusually deep. Raising Cane's leads with 526,000 unique visitors. Chick-fil-A clears 412,000 even with Sundays closed. Texas Roadhouse, McDonald's, LongHorn Steakhouse, and Culver's each exceed 245,000. Five additional national chains each exceed 180,000. Few retail corridors sustain dining density at this level, because it requires the daily traffic volume that only regional infrastructure generates.

Photos from Google Maps



Name	Category Group	# of Visitors	% of Visitors
Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers	Dining	525,995	20.7%
Chick-fil-A	Dining	412,688	16.2%
Texas Roadhouse	Dining	341,804	13.4%
McDonald's	Dining	306,142	12.0%
LongHorn Steakhouse	Dining	295,227	11.6%
Culver's	Dining	248,728	9.8%
Chili's Grill & Bar	Dining	212,318	8.4%
Olive Garden	Dining	202,925	8.0%
Taco Bell	Dining	185,636	7.3%
Starbucks	Dining	182,281	7.2%
Chipotle Mexican Grill	Dining	179,056	7.0%
Applebee's	Dining	177,069	7.0%
Dunkin'	Dining	170,824	6.7%
Cracker Barrel Old Country Store	Dining	161,793	6.4%
Panda Express	Dining	161,354	6.3%
Buffalo Wild Wings	Dining	144,556	5.7%
Panera Bread	Dining	125,151	4.9%
SONIC Drive In	Dining	118,106	4.6%
Wendy's	Dining	115,732	4.6%
Steak 'n Shake	Dining	103,372	4.1%
Five Guys	Dining	101,050	4.0%
Outback Steakhouse	Dining	96,508	3.8%
Crumbl Cookies	Dining	95,682	3.8%
Bob Evans Restaurant	Dining	94,495	3.7%
Fazoli's	Dining	88,457	3.5%
Lee's Famous Recipe Chicken	Dining	88,328	3.5%
Red Lobster	Dining	64,046	2.5%
Casa Real	Dining	62,446	2.5%
Arby's	Dining	62,111	2.4%
Samurai Japanese Steak House	Dining	61,879	2.4%
U Ramen Noodle	Dining	49,054	1.9%
Jersey Mike's Subs	Dining	43,971	1.7%
Toft's on 250	Dining	41,751	1.6%
Penn Station East Coast Subs	Dining	37,313	1.5%
Mekong	Dining	31,662	1.2%

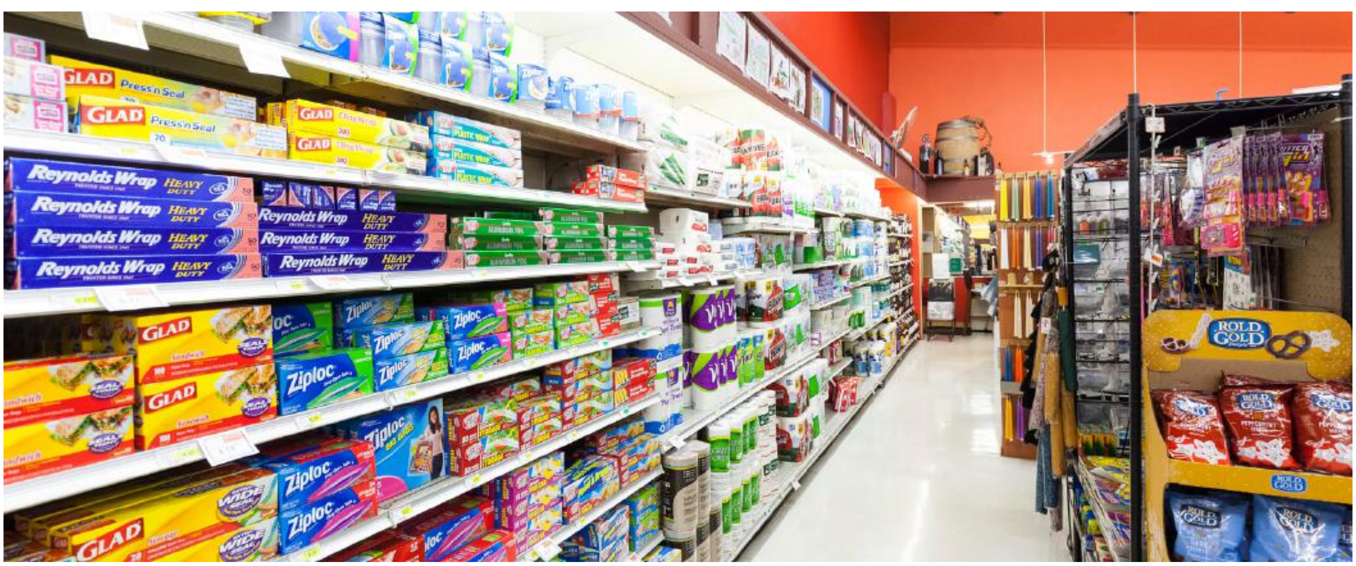
*Source: Placer.ai unique visitor data, 2025. *Capturing 10-minute dwell time. The 10-minute dwell threshold in the underlying data means quick drive-through visits are not captured. Actual traffic at these locations might run higher than the figures shown.*

The mix matters as much as the volume. High-volume quick-service alongside full-service destinations means the corridor serves both convenience-driven weekday lunch traffic and leisure-oriented weekend and tourism dining. The category benefits enormously from the summer overlay, when hotel guests and vacation rentals create concentrated demand for breakfast, lunch, and dinner that local kitchen capacity cannot absorb. In off-peak months, the same restaurants run on regional weekday lunch and weekend family-dining traffic.

Groceries and Superstores: Essential Provisioning Infrastructure

Walmart leads grocery and superstore traffic at 634,037 unique visitors. Target saw 446,000 visitors. Meijer and Sam's Club add another 687,000 between them. These anchors generate consistent traffic regardless of season or economic conditions because they fulfill basic household provisioning rather than discretionary spending. The category serves both local residents on weekly shopping trips and tourism-related provisioning: families renting vacation homes for a week stock refrigerators at Meijer, hotel guests buy snacks and drinks at Walmart, and island visitors load coolers before ferry trips.

The frequency profile for grocery-anchored visits likely runs well above the corridor average of 6.15 trips per year. A regional household making weekly grocery trips to US 250 generates 25 to 50 visits per year from that customer alone. This high-frequency traffic produces the baseline volume that lets specialty retail and dining thrive on the cross-traffic, because the steady grocery flow keeps the corridor populated through every operating mode of the year.



Specialty Retail: Apparel, Sporting Goods, and Home Goods

Specialty retail layers in distinctively. Combined home improvement (Menards plus Lowe's) clears 395,000 unique visitors. Dick's Sporting Goods, TJ Maxx, and Kohl's each exceed 190,000. Old Navy, Best Buy, Dollar Tree, JCPenney, and Petco each exceed 100,000. The category serves both local need and tourism demand: families buying swimsuits and fishing gear for Lake Erie activities, home improvement customers from a five-county region where big-box home stores are scarce, and apparel shoppers drawn by selection unavailable in smaller community retail.

Specialty retail shows a different visit pattern than groceries. Visits are less frequent, but dwell time per visit runs longer. Customers browsing HomeGoods, shopping Dick's for seasonal gear, or comparing prices at TJ Maxx spend substantial time on the corridor and frequently make impulse purchases at adjacent stores. The longer specialty-retail visits are what pull the corridor's mean dwell up to 103 minutes even though the median sits at 52 minutes for quick-errand trips.

Lodging and Entertainment: The Tourism Overlay

The lodging and entertainment category is the clearest tourism component of corridor performance. Great Wolf Lodge Water Park leads at 216,000 unique visitors. Cinemark Sandusky Mall reaches 122,000. Ghostly Manor adds another 70,000. The named hotels combined exceed 90,000.

These venues create the tourism multiplier effect. Great Wolf guests eat breakfast at nearby restaurants, shop for forgotten toiletries at Walmart, and browse Target while waiting for check-in. Hotel visitors choose Texas Roadhouse and Olive Garden over downtown Sandusky options because the corridor is closer and easier. Movie traffic generates dinner crowds at adjacent restaurants. The tourism layer adds a meaningful but bounded share of total corridor traffic, supplementing rather than driving the regional baseline.

What the Categories Add Up To

The five categories serve five distinct customer missions: shopping center destination shopping, dining as both convenience and leisure, grocery and superstore provisioning, specialty retail browsing, and tourism-overlay activity. Each category has its own seasonality, its own visit frequency, and its own dwell-time signature. Together they produce a corridor that runs at scale every operating day of the year, in every operating mode, across every customer segment.

That is the defining characteristic of regional retail infrastructure. A corridor running on shopping-center traffic alone is vulnerable to mall decline. A corridor running on tourism alone empties out from October through April. A corridor running on groceries alone has no specialty-retail tax base. US 250 carries all five categories simultaneously, which is why total visits have held above 15 million for five consecutive years through every kind of national retail headwind.

8. Trend and Stability

Seven-Year Performance Record

The corridor has held above 15 million annual visits for five consecutive years. It has done this through the pandemic, through sustained inflation, and through a national retail contraction that has removed thousands of storefronts from the U.S. market.

Year	Total Visits	Unique Visitors	YoY	Context
2025	15,638,822	2,542,419	-0.4%	Flat
2024	15,701,979	2,609,013	+0,01%	Flat
2023	15,700,295	2,675,742	+1.3%	Growth
2022	15,494,309	2,698,122	-2.6%	Normalizing
2021	15,900,700	2,804,972	+30.8%	Recovery
2020	12,151,123	1,547,403	-16.7%	Pandemic
2019	14,585,411	2,738,282	–	Baseline

Source: Placer.ai annual visitation, 2019–2025.

Total visits are up 7 percent since 2019. The pandemic-driven drop in 2020 was sharp, but 2021 recovered and overshot the 2019 baseline by 9 percent. Since then, the corridor has settled into a stability band between 15.5 and 15.9 million visits.

The Cedar Point Sports Center Factor

One data point is worth calling out. Cedar Point Sports Center joined Sports Force in 2020 and now draws almost 1,000,000 visits annually to Sandusky. A meaningful share of those youth sports tournament visits generate retail and dining demand on US 250, particularly at the quick-service anchors nearby. The timing lines up with what the data shows. The corridor did not just return to its 2019 baseline after the pandemic, it exceeded it by 7 percent and has sustained that level for five years. The Sports Center is a plausible structural driver of that uplift. It is a net-new visitor generator in Sandusky's destination portfolio, and it operates year-round rather than seasonally, adding traffic during months when Cedar Point itself is closed.

The decline in unique visitors from 2.70 million in 2022 to 2.54 million in 2025, combined with flat total visits, means the remaining visitor base is returning more often. Average frequency has risen from 5.73 in 2022 to 6.15 in 2025. The corridor has shed some casual occasional visitors while tightening its hold on the regular customer base. That is a retention pattern, not a churn pattern.

Context: The National Backdrop

Coresight Research documented more than 9,000 U.S. store closures announced in 2023 and 2024, with closures outpacing openings roughly 3 to 1. The ICSC National Footfall Index shows shopping-center traffic 8 to 10 percent below 2019 levels nationally. Bed Bath & Beyond, Tuesday Morning, Christmas Tree Shops, Party City, Big Lots, and Rite Aid all executed mass closures or full liquidations during this period.

Against that backdrop, a flat corridor is outperformance. Against 2019, US 250 is up 7 percent. Against the national footfall index, the corridor is running 15 to 17 percentage points ahead of national trend.

9. How US 250 Compares

Benchmarked Against Ohio Peer Corridors

Context adds meaning. The corridor's 15.6 million annual visits are meaningful in isolation, but they become more useful when compared to peer Ohio retail corridors serving similar market roles.

Corridor	30-mi Pop.	Annual Visits	From 30+ mi	Visits / Resident
US 250 Sandusky	179,600	15.6M	28%	87x
Avon Commons	896,446	18.5M	6%	21x
Maumee Retail Area	611,828	9.7M	16%	16x
Elyria / Midway	947,421	8.2M	11%	9x

Source: Placer.ai comparative corridor analysis, 2025.

US 250 has one-fifth the 30-mile population of Avon Commons and generates 85 percent of Avon's traffic. Twenty-eight percent of US 250 visitors travel more than 30 miles to reach the corridor. No other Ohio retail corridor in the comparison set draws from that distance.

The visits-per-local-resident metric is the most revealing number. US 250 generates 87 visits for every resident within 30 miles. Avon generates 21. Maumee generates 16. Elyria generates 9. US 250 residents visit at roughly four times the Avon rate, five times Maumee, and nearly ten times Elyria. That ratio is the mathematical signature of a regional retail anchor: a corridor that captures a high share of trade-area spending because there is no comparable alternative nearby.

10. What This Means for the Businesses

Operational Implications for Corridor Retailers

The data above describes a corridor that functions as the regional retail anchor for a multi-county trade area of roughly half a million people. For a retailer operating on US 250, that role has specific operational implications. The customer is already committed to visiting the corridor regularly. The question is how to capture the right share of that flow and make each visit more valuable.

You Are Part of a Regional Retail Destination

US 250 is the regional retail anchor for Erie, Huron, Sandusky, Ottawa, and Lorain counties. That is the functional role the corridor plays for 500,000 people. Customers drive 20 to 40 miles to reach it because there is no comparable alternative within 40 minutes in any direction. They come an average of 6.15 times a year. Traffic has held above 15 million visits for five consecutive years through a retail contraction that has closed thousands of storefronts elsewhere.

The marketing implication is direct. Campaigns designed to bring new traffic to Sandusky are competing against a flow that already exists. Campaigns designed to capture a larger share of that existing flow through visibility, signage, adjacency, and in-store conversion work against a much lower denominator.

Customers Do Multiple Stops Per Trip

The 1 to 2 hour visit bucket accounts for 27 percent of all visits. Average dwell runs 103 minutes (mean) and 52 minutes (median). A customer on the corridor for 60 to 120 minutes is rarely inside one store for that entire time. They are making two or three stops: Sandusky Mall and Target, Walmart and Chick-fil-A, Meijer and a fast-casual lunch.

That creates real value for tenants who understand it. Co-visitation means adjacency matters: a restaurant near Sandusky Mall benefits from the cross-traffic the anchor generates. Corridor-wide marketing, shared promotions, and cross-redemption offers work because the customer is already behaving multi-stop. The corridor's fragmented ownership (multiple landlords, hundreds of tenants) is not how the customer experiences it. To the customer, US 250 is one place, and the businesses inside it function as a portfolio.

Staff Summer Like Every Weekday Is a Saturday

Summer weekdays jump 51 percent against shoulder-season weekdays. A Tuesday in July performs like a Saturday in March. Stores that staff summer Tuesdays at spring-Tuesday levels are understaffed during real demand. This pattern repeats every year and is the single clearest operational signal in the data.

The corresponding principle applies in the off-season: staffing November weekdays at August levels produces empty stores and excess labor cost. Both the summer uplift and the off-season correction should be real.

Know the Peak Window

The 11 AM to 7 PM window captures 75 percent of daily corridor activity. The two demand peaks inside that window (1 PM lunch and 5 PM after-work) are functionally equal. Outside of 11 AM to 7 PM, customer presence drops sharply: activity before 9 AM is roughly half what it will be by 11 AM, and after 9 PM it falls below one-third of mid-afternoon levels.

Retailers who open before 9 AM are often doing so for industry-norm reasons, not because the customer shows up early. Extended evening hours past 8 PM similarly subsidize low customer presence. The economic window is a narrow, intense eight hours.

Know Your Customer

The Mosaic profile describes the actual visitor base: middle-income, older-skewing, small-town and rural, family-centered. Groups I, J, M, N, Q account for most of the foot traffic. These are established households running routine needs, not trendy urban segments or affluent coastal suburbs. Assortment, price architecture, and media choice that reflects the real customer will outperform decisions imported from markets with different demographics.

The 6.15 average visit frequency is also the loyalty-program number. The customer is already returning six times a year. If a loyalty mechanic can add a seventh visit, the business case is immediate. The older, established Mosaic groups that dominate the visitor base (J, Q, I, E) also skew toward sustained engagement with long-tenure retention programs. This is the right customer base for punch cards, birthday mailers, and relationship-based retention marketing.

11. What This Means for Public Investment

Implications for Community, County, and State Partners

The same evidence reads differently through a public-policy lens. City officials, county commissioners, and state partners read this data while asking a different question: what does the corridor do for the region, and what does that imply for infrastructure, zoning, and fiscal planning?

The Corridor Functions as Regional Infrastructure

Infrastructure is defined by its substitutability. Water, power, highways, and hospitals are infrastructure because their absence would create immediate consequences for the population they serve. US 250 meets that functional test for retail. Five counties with a combined population of roughly 545,000 have no comparable alternative retail destination within 40 minutes. If anchor retail on US 250 closed, that population would face meaningful degradation of retail access, and spending would leak to Cleveland, Toledo, or online channels.

The 71.6 percent regional draw is the direct measure of this role. Cedar Point Amusement Park brings an 3.5 million seasonal visitor stream during the summer. Cedar Point Sports Center/Sports Force adds roughly 1,000,000 annual visits many of those in the shoulder months. Both contribute to corridor traffic. Neither is the base. The base is 500,000 regional residents using US 250 as their regular retail hub.

The Fiscal Case

Every dollar spent on US 250 generates tax yield for Erie County, the City of Sandusky, and Perkins Township. The 71.6 percent regional draw captures retail spending that would otherwise leak out of the region. The corridor's 15.6 million visits, even at conservative per-visit spending benchmarks, represent retail activity in the nine-figure annual range. Ohio sales tax at 5.75 percent, combined with Erie County's piggyback rate of 1.0 percent, produces a tax yield that would be meaningfully impaired if corridor volume declined by 10 or 20 percent.

That is the budget-level argument for protecting corridor function. Maintenance on Route 250 itself, traffic flow at the Route 2 interchange during summer peaks, pedestrian connectivity between adjacent retailers, and corridor-scale wayfinding are not cosmetic investments. They are load-bearing infrastructure investments that directly support the fiscal yield.

What Public Policy Should Protect

The corridor's value rests on three things: the traffic flow that brings customers in, the tenant mix that gives them reasons to come, and the cross-corridor behavior that makes each visit more valuable. Public investment and zoning decisions that strengthen any of the three protect the fiscal yield. Decisions that weaken any of the three should be evaluated carefully.

Development that consumes corridor frontage without contributing to corridor function (drive-through-only formats that generate no foot traffic or dwell time) undermines the adjacency effects that benefit the rest of the corridor. Zoning decisions that allow format drift away from retail in the corridor core (residential conversion, office infill, pure logistics use) should be evaluated against the fiscal yield of sustained retail use. The data in this report establishes the baseline for those evaluations.

12. About This Data

Data Sources, Definitions, and Limitations

This report's findings rest on three primary data sources. Understanding how each one works, and where each one is limited, matters for interpreting the results.

Placer.ai

Placer.ai is the retail industry standard for measuring physical visitation. It aggregates anonymized location data from millions of mobile devices across the United States, drawing from smartphone applications whose users have granted the apps location permission. Placer establishes virtual boundaries (geofences) around specific locations or districts. When a device crosses into the geofence and remains for a minimum duration of 10 minutes, the system registers a visit.

A visit represents one individual trip to the corridor. A visitor is a unique individual device that visited at least once during the measurement period. The ratio of visits to visitors produces visit frequency. The 6.15 frequency reported throughout this report is calculated from Placer's out-of-market visitor denominator (visitors whose inferred home location is outside the immediate geofence). This is the appropriate denominator for trade area analysis. Where frequency figures from other Placer reports differ, the denominator definition should be verified before direct comparison.

Dwell time is the duration a device remains inside the geofence during a single visit. Placer reports both the arithmetic mean (103 minutes on this corridor) and median (52 minutes). The gap between mean and median reveals a long-tailed distribution consistent with a mix of quick errands and extended shopping trips.

Corridor employees working full shifts appear in Placer data as long-dwell visits. The 12 to 24 hour dwell bucket, which accounts for 3 percent of all corridor visits, almost certainly reflects employee presence rather than customer behavior. This bucket is excluded from customer-behavior analysis in this report. Total visit counts include it, consistent with Placer's standard reporting.

Placer data is a panel sample, not a census. The system infers total visits from observed device behavior using proprietary statistical weighting against population benchmarks. Precision should not be over-interpreted. A figure reported as 42.59 percent reflects model output, not measurement accurate to the hundredth of a percent. Month-over-month and year-over-year comparisons are more reliable than absolute counts, because any systematic panel biases wash out across periods.

Experian Mosaic

The Mosaic household segmentation system classifies every U.S. household into one of 19 groups (and 71 sub-types) based on income, age, life stage, ethnicity, and geography. Placer.ai licenses Mosaic data and overlays it against the visitor base observed at a given geofence. The result is a household-weighted profile of who actually visits the corridor, as distinct from who lives in the broader trade area.

That distinction matters. A trade area may be demographically diverse, but the visitor base that actually shows up at a retail corridor is typically a subset of the population, concentrated in specific household types. The Mosaic data in Section 2 describes visitors, not the region at large.

Index values in Mosaic are relative to national household share. 100 = national household share. 200 = twice the national rate. 50 = half. Index values reflect overrepresentation or underrepresentation against a national baseline, not absolute household counts.

Synthesized Day-by-Hour Heatmap

The heatmap in Section 3 is synthesized. Placer.ai provides day-of-week and hour-of-day data as two separate marginal distributions rather than a joint distribution. The 168-cell day × hour matrix was constructed by applying the aggregate hourly distribution to each day's total population, assuming the hourly shape is consistent across days of the week.

That assumption is not strictly accurate. Sunday activity starts later in the morning than weekday activity. Saturday afternoons peak more sharply than weekday afternoons. The synthesized view should be read as directionally accurate rather than cell-accurate. It reliably identifies the high-activity and low-activity windows but should not be used to predict exact hourly counts for a specific day.

Supplementary Sources

Roadway volume context comes from Ohio Department of Transportation continuous traffic monitoring stations. National retail context draws from the ICSC National Footfall Index and Coresight Research store closure tracking. County population figures come from U.S. Census Bureau 2023 estimates. Cedar Point Sports Center visitor volume is from published event and facility data.

Limitations

- 2020 data reflects pandemic distortion and should be excluded from trend baselines unless the pandemic itself is the specific question.
- Placer measures devices, not people. Party-size multipliers apply when converting to total customer counts. This report works in visits, not customers, to avoid compounding assumptions.
- Mosaic segmentation is updated on Experian's own refresh cycle and reflects household composition at the time of that refresh. Rapidly changing trade areas may lag the data.
- Corridor geofence boundaries are study-area specific. Comparisons to other Placer studies should verify that geofence definitions match.

Where this report's findings rest on assumptions rather than direct measurement, the assumption is stated so the reader can evaluate it independently.

About This Study

This analysis was prepared by the Greater Sandusky Partnership Policy Center. GSP applies public data, industry-standard methodologies, and independent analytical judgment to quantify the corridor's economic role.

The study is intended for corridor retailers and operators, property owners and developers, and civic decision-makers evaluating public investment and policy around one of the region's most important commercial assets. Every input is sourced and every methodology choice is documented.

April 2026

Jeff Kerr,
Director Planning & Policy
Greater Sandusky Partnership
jkerr@greatersandusky.com

Greater Sandusky Partnership Policy Center

About Greater Sandusky Partnership

Greater Sandusky Partnership is a regional chamber and economic development organization that works to promote, develop, and engage business, talent, and community across the Greater Sandusky Bay region. Through its integrated structure, GSP provides data-driven insights, economic analysis, and coordinated strategies that support informed decision-making and sustainable regional growth.

Board of Directors

Duff Milkie, Waste Dynamics | Chairman
Colleen Murphy Brady, Cedar Point & SIx Flags
Chris Corso, One Hospitality
Larry Fletcher, Shores & Islands Ohio
Ron Guerra, LEWCO, Inc.
Justin Harris, Firelands Health
Kula Hoty Lynch, Hoty Enterprises, Inc.
Bob Jones, Chef's Garden
Ted Kastor, Kastor Construction, LLC
Matt Kosior, American Colors
Andrew Kurtz, BGSU Firelands
Matt Maschari, Firelands Auto Group
Jason McClure, Six Flags
Bill Murray, Firelands Wealth Management
Ben Moncher, Jonatta & Herner
Jeremy Normington-Slay, Firelands Health
Swathi Ravichandran, BGSU RAAM School
Micah Roberts, Erie & Anchor
Eugene Sanders, Emmanuel Temple Pentecostal Church
Dennis Shaffer, Civista Bank
Brian Shanle, Kalahair Resorts & Conventions

Staff

Eric Wobser, Chief Executive Officer
Ryan Dillard, Chief Operating Officer
Matt Lasko, Chief Development Officer
Peyton Minich, Chief of Staff
Lee Alexakos, Director of Public Affairs
Jarvis Cole-Caston, Talent Engagement Manager
Alissa Fisher, Director of Marketing & Creative Services
Lindsey Hoke, Administration Manager
Julie Holmes, Member Services Coordinator
Jeff Kerr, Director of Planning & Policy
Braden Michel, Project Development Manager
Kelly Kresser, Administration Coordinator
Patrick Shepherd, Director of Member Services
McKenzie Spriggs, Sr. Director of Destination Management
Rachael Summerfield, Events Coordinator

www.greatersandusky.com
info@greatersandusky.com
419.625.6421
604 W Washington St, Suite 1
Sandusky, OH 44870

Greater Sandusky Partnership
Regional Growth. Vibrant Communities.

Greater Sandusky Partnership
Policy Center

250 YEARS ON ROUTE 250

The US 250 Visitation Report was prepared in honor of America's 250th birthday and as part of the Greater Sandusky Partnership's 250 Years on US Route 250 celebration