

DESTINATION MADISON WELCOMES NEW LEADER AND COMMUNITY CHAMPION

While “When long-time community champion and Destination Madison President & CEO, Deb Archer, announced her retirement in 2020, it was hard to imagine anyone could step into this role and bring a comparable level of energy, expertise and positivity to the role. But when you meet Ellie Westman Chin, the organization’s new president & CEO, you realize it is probably only a matter of time before this newcomer is able to meet Archer’s level of understanding of the community – and that she is already armed with the energy, expertise and passion for supporting and growing the Greater Madison area.

Within minutes of meeting Westman Chin, you can sense her growing passion for her new home as she is actively – as much as possible during the pandemic - exploring the city’s many assets. It’s also clear she brings much more than a tourist perspective. Westman Chin most recently served as President & CEO of Visit Franklin in Tennessee and has a long career in the tourism and hospitality industry. Westman Chin is quick to sing the praises of Madison as a new resident but also recognizes the many attributes that make Madison a top visitor spot.

Born and raised in the Chicago area, Westman Chin and her husband – who will be moving here full-time from Tennessee soon – enjoy restaurants and as many outdoor activities as they can. She also is zeroing in on the work at hand related to pandemic recovery. Having moved to Madison from Tennessee, where stay-at-home orders were lifted and communities re-opened months ahead of many other states, Westman Chin is keenly aware of the many important steps required to put a recovery plan into action.

“We (Destination Madison and partners) are working on a recovery plan as we speak,” she explained. “That plan needs to be informed by a lot of different groups and has to be reflective of consumer confidence levels.”

Based on her industry knowledge and experience, she continued, “In the tourism industry, we are seeing very positive numbers in terms of consumer confidence about travelling. What we are likely to see is an increase in leisure travel first – all of that pent up demand of people wanting to see friends and family – followed by youth sports and the travel associated with that. Next is probably going to be meeting and conventions - which we are already starting to see being rebooked for 2022.”

As for how that trend might play out in Madison, she explains, “This city has a great vibe and is a combination of a medium-sized, approachable city with all of the offerings – museums, restaurants, zoo, arboretum, etc. This plays well for Madison to get folks back here.”

When asked about her initial thoughts related to some of the larger community development projects underway to strengthen Madison as a destination, Westman Chin replied, “It’s exciting to come into a city where there are lots of conversations happening and task forces looking at various opportunities.” She continued, “I think that is just great because I’m a big believer in things being developed for both residents AND visitors. So, listening to all that great work that is being done and learning more about the next steps is exciting and I look forward to engaging and connecting with these efforts as soon as I’m able.” Westman Chin is looking forward to playing an active role with the Alliant Energy Center Redevelopment Committee and as a member of the Destination District Task Force.

So, while we express our deepest gratitude to Deb Archer for all of the years of dedication and advocacy she gave to the Greater Madison area, we welcome a new resident – and community champion – who will undoubtedly help carry on that strong legacy.