



Visit Alexandria Mercy Street Status Report

March 29, 2016

PBS' first American drama in nearly a decade, "Mercy Street", is inspired by real events of Civil War Alexandria. With the national spotlight on Alexandria's history, Visit Alexandria and its partners set out to leverage this opportunity to raise awareness about our city and invite people to visit. This report includes preliminary results of these efforts, which were nearly a year in the making.

The world premiere of Episode 1 of Mercy Street took place at the Alexandria Film Festival at AMC Hoffman theaters in Alexandria on November 5, 2015, and featured a discussion with members of the cast and creators of the program. We arranged a tour for the cast and creators to view the historic sites that inspired the series, and captured it on photo and video to promote to the press, on social media, and on our website. Our history and tour partners launched two dozen Mercy Street experiences in January 2016.

The program premiered on January 17, 2016 and drew 5.7 million viewers and exceeded initial expectations of PBS. The early digital premiere of Mercy Street is the number one rated digital premiere ever for PBS and the series' six episodes were streamed 2 million times.

On March 9, PBS announced that the show has been renewed for a second season, and Visit Alexandria plans to continue to promote Mercy Street-inspired experiences to attract visitors to our City.

Advertising

Visit Alexandria has a **5-second underwriting spot** at the beginning and end of each episode on the **national PBS broadcast**. The spot also airs at the beginning of each episode on streaming services, including PBS' website. The spot includes Visit Alexandria's logo, URL, an animated image of our cobblestone streets, and a message that Alexandria is "minutes from DC, yet a world away."

Alexandria's Mercy Street-inspired experiences were also promoted in advertising in:

- Preservation Magazine
- Washington Informer
- Pathfinders Magazine
- Virginia.org (the state's tourism website)
- A series of Facebook boosted posts, linking to original content on our ExtraAlex blog
- Google AdWords paid search campaign

- The Mercy Street ad group was 2nd best performing in January
- Our ads received over 51,000 impressions nationwide and 1,000 clicks to our site

Press

Total Mercy Street press hits (that promote travel to Alexandria): **142**

- Mercy Street press hits from July 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015: 48
- Mercy Street press hits from January 1, 2016 – March 29, 2016: 94

Top national and international press hits:

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| - Los Angeles Times | - Richmond Magazine |
| - Afar.com | - Casual Travelist |
| - AAA World Magazine | - American Roads |
| - Preservation Magazine | - Huffington Post |
| - Pittsburgh Tribune-Review | - Sawubona (South African Airways in-flight magazine) |
| - Philadelphia Sunday Sun | |

Top regional press hits:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| - Washington Post | - Washington Business Journal |
| - Washington Times | - DCist |
| - Where Magazine | - The Beacon |
| - Washingtonian | - Hollywood on the Potomac |
| - Northern Virginia Magazine | - Kojo Nnamdi Show |

These travel stories compliment hundreds of stories on the series itself.

Website (VisitAlexandriaVA.com)

Visit Alexandria created a dedicated landing page for Mercy Street: VisitAlexandriaVA.com/MercyStreet. We invite potential visitors to come to Alexandria and explore the real sites and stories that inspired the series.

- **57,545 visits to Mercy Street content** on our website and blog through end of February (70% new users)
- During premiere episode, website saw a 300% increase in visits (70% new users)
- 22% increase in visits to our overall website from outside the region during the show's run
- **154% increase in Visitors Guide requests** through the website com compared with previous year (vs. 6% increase YOY in previous 6 months)
- Average time on Mercy Street webpage: 1 minute, 50 seconds.

Visitor Center

- **266% increase in Visitor Guide requests** during show's run, with the largest increase coming on Sunday nights/Monday mornings
- 10% increase in physical visitors in January, year over year, despite being closed for 4.5 days due to snowstorm
- 27% increase in physical visitors in February, year over year
- **Key to the City Redemptions at historic sites +457%** in January 2016 versus previous year and **+1,240%** in February 2016
- Key to the City sales at Visitors Center during show's run **+375%**

Social Media

Blog:

8 Mercy Street-dedicated blog posts receiving 35,000 visits.

- "How to Watch PBS' Mercy Street Episode 1 Now"
- "The Real Mansion House from PBS' Mercy Street"
- "Medicine and Mercy in Alexandria: The Real Apothecary"
- "Alexandria Brings PBS' Mercy Street to Life"
- "Top 4 Mercy Street-inspired Experiences for African-American History in Alexandria"
- "The Real Women Who Inspired PBS' Mercy Street"
- "Take Alexandria's New Mercy Street-inspired Self-Guided Tour"
- "Video: See the Cast of PBS' Mercy Street in Alexandria"

Twitter:

From January 15-February 23 (40 day period), we live tweeted during 6 Mercy Street episode broadcasts.

1. Stats for the period:
Engagement rate: 1.8%
Link clicks: 3,200
Retweets: 1,600
Likes: 3,500
Impressions: 1.1 million
2. We gained 1 million impressions during 6 days of live tweeting. This accounts for 92% of our total impressions for this period.
3. Our engagement rate for the premiere episode was 7.7%, a big increase from our 1.8% engagement rate for this period.
4. Average engagement rate for all 6 days is 3%, a 60% increase from our daily average.

Facebook:

On Facebook, we boosted 8 Mercy Street blog posts from January 14-February 29.

1. Total reach for all posts: 1.6 million
Total impressions for all posts: 2.38 million
Number of engaged users for all posts: 70,992
Average engagement rate: 4.4%
2. Top post (by reach and engaged users): Where is the Mansion House Hospital in Alexandria, VA?
(with infographic)
Reach: 222,992
Engaged users: 10,568
Engagement rate: 4.73%

Collateral and production

Visit Alexandria also developed:

- Rack cards
- Fliers
- Posters
- King Street trolley ad
- Visitor Center display ad
- Windmasters for Market Square and the Waterfront
- Videos, including those of cast members touring Alexandria historic sites, the Alexandria premiere, and short “drop” videos from cast and producers

Historic Site Visitation

- In January Carlyle House (which was the Green Family Mansion, and has a new Mercy Street exhibit) attendance was up 66% over last year. In February, the increase was 158% over last year. Roughly 75-80% of people say that Mercy Street influenced their decision to visit.
- Athenaeum hosted Mercy Street related events, had their best February ever in terms of attendance.
- Majority of visitors to Black History Museum in February and about half at Lyceum were influenced to visit by Mercy Street.
- Approximately 2/3 of visitors to Civil War programming at Lee-Fendall House were familiar with Mercy Street

Buzz from Mercy Street fans:



Sarah L. Lawton We were already planning a DC trip this year. Alexandria being less than a half hour away, we added it to our itinerary!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Message](#) · February 23 at 8:43pm



Donna Farnan Love Alexandria and love this show!!! Will definitely do this tour!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Message](#) · February 24 at 9:48pm



Jeannie Apgar As another strong female, I am thoroughly enjoying those roles on Mercy Street. The series is enthralling !!! The Civil war era of our history is my favorite. I love all things from that time period and am drawn to return to Williamsburg over and over. I will have to add Alexandria to my next trip south !!!



Miss_Bellatrix
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That would be amazing!! **#MercyStreetPBS**



Visit Alexandria VA [@AlexandriaVA](#)

You've seen the show, now it's time to explore the city where #MercyStreetPBS was set! bit.ly/1TuHEmW