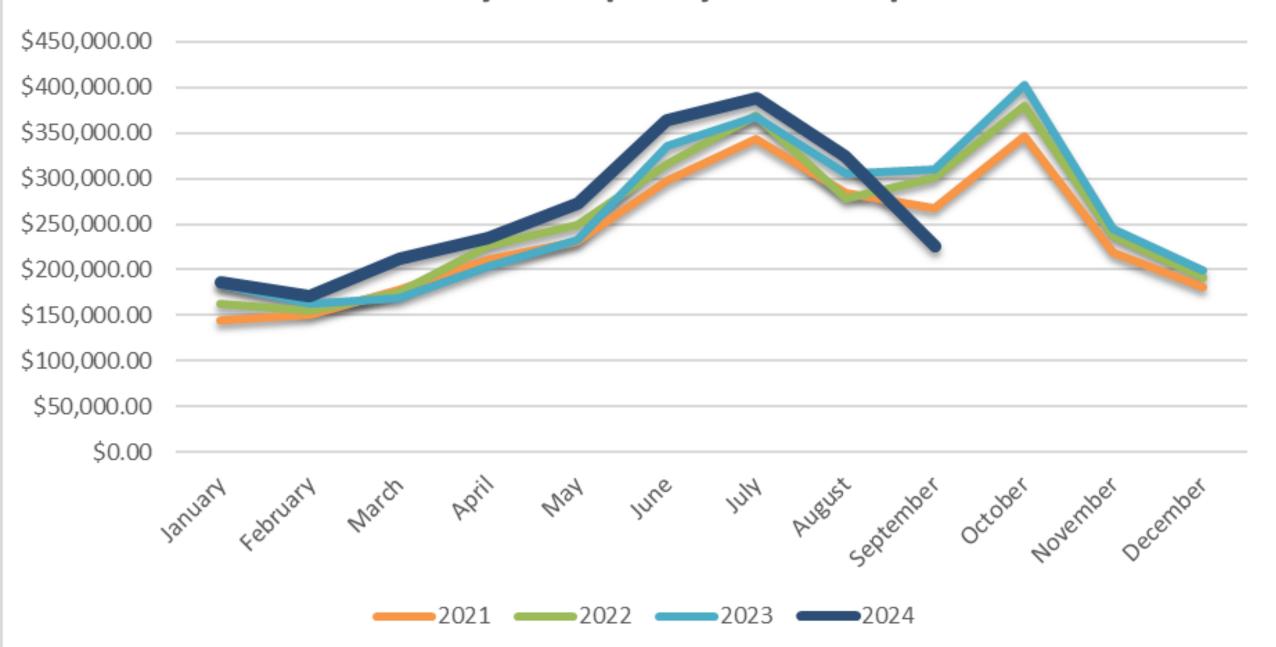




#### Fiscal Year Monthly Occupancy Tax Comparison (Gross)

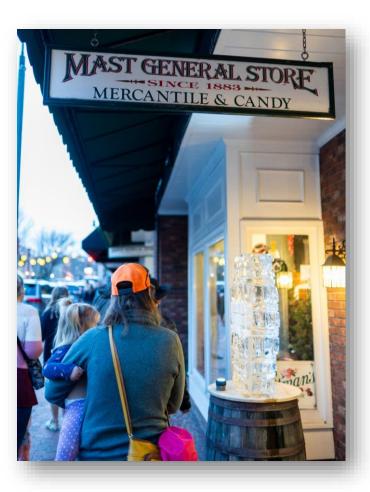
					\$ Change from Previous Year	% Change from Previous Year
_	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025		
July	\$344,159.31	\$369,695.58	\$367,752.94	\$388,684.72	\$20,931.78	5.69%
Canton	\$27,783.82	<i>\$26,879.79</i>	\$19,497.12	\$25,455.96	\$5,958.84	30.56%
Clyde	\$15,634.79	\$12,404.07	\$19,607.12	\$21,166.77	\$1,559.65	7.95%
Lake Junaluska	\$31,226.88	\$39,626.65	\$40,797.83	\$43,022.88	\$2,225.05	5.45%
Maggie Valley	\$159,871.26	\$177,268.47	\$170,417.23	\$175,808.74	\$5,391.51	3.16%
Waynesville	\$109,642.56	\$113,516.60	\$117,433.64	\$123,230.37	\$5,796.73	4.94%
August	\$283,878.91	\$278,678.56	\$305,809.64	\$323,963.71	\$18,154.07	5.94%
Canton	\$20,917.76	\$21,871.08	\$28,032.84	\$23,336.22	(\$4,696.62)	-16.75%
Clyde	\$12,035.89	\$12,041.72	\$17,010.14	\$17,041.81	\$31.67	0.19%
Lake Junaluska	\$30,705.85	\$23,659.93	\$26,325.12	\$27,008.34	\$683.22	2.60%
Maggie Valley	\$126,823.64	\$126,942.01	\$126,475.88	\$143,722.74	\$17,246.86	13.64%
Waynesville	\$93,395.57	\$94,163.82	\$107,965.66	\$112,854.60	\$4,888.94	4.53%
September	\$268,037.41	\$300,578.84	\$309,562.65	\$225,130.03	(\$84,432.62)	-27.27%
Canton	\$19,817.98	\$24,268.90	\$20,707.64	\$10,569.43	(\$10,138.21)	-48.96%
Clyde	\$11,635.76	\$19,558.11	\$16,975.34	\$11,812.43	(\$5,162.91)	-30.41%
Lake Junaluska	\$26,089.09	\$29,171.45	\$28,818.89	\$24,685.05	(\$4,133.84)	-14.34%
Maggie Valley	\$124,968.30	\$130,740.68	\$135,273.39	\$95,390.88	(\$39,882.51)	-29.48%
Waynesville	\$85,526.28	\$96,839.70	\$107,787.39	\$82,672.24	(\$25,115.15)	-23.30%
	\$2,926,679.74	\$3,043,483.81	\$3,270,866.51	\$937,778.46	(\$45,346.77)	-4.61%

## **YOY Monthly Occupancy Tax Comparison**





## Ice Festival Budget Adjustment



On 08.28.2024 the Board voted to approve a \$10,000 BA for the TDA to produce the Waynesville portion of the Ice Fest Weekend. Requesting the Board to reverse the original BA and instead vote approval to spend up to \$10,000 from the Waynesville 1% Promotion Account to produce the Ice Stroll event. This ensures the funds are all correctly allocated.

HAYWOOD COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT
FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

BE IT ORDAINED by the Members of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority that the following amendment be made to the budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund, the expenditures are to be charged as follows:

Department	Acct. No.	Current Budget	Increase (Decrease)	Amended Budget
Waynesville 1% Promotion	549918	\$134,007.02	10,000	\$144,007.02
NC Smokies Ice Fest	538100	\$40,000.00	(10,000)	\$30,000.00
TOTAL			\$0.00	



## Ice Festival Budget Adjustment - Clyde

In order to help ensure all Ice Festival Weekend events are connected, request approval to spend up to \$2000 for ice carvings for the Town of Clyde & Haywood Community College Sunday Frosty 5K.







### **3% Promo Grant Budget Amendment**

To provide funding for a county-wide 3% grant previously approved for this fiscal year.

HAYWOOD COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT
FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

BE IT ORDAINED by the Members of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority that the following amendment be made to the budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund, the expenditures are to be charged as follows:

Department	Acct. No.	Current Budget	Increase (Decrease)	Amended Budget
3% Grant Promo	568101	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00
Advertising & Marketing	537101	\$985,000.00	(\$4,000.00)	\$981,000.00
TOTAL			\$0.00	





- The marketing committee supports Haywood County Tourism Development Authority (HCTDA) in developing marketing strategies and campaigns that inspire travel to Haywood County.
- Advisory in nature. All contracts, budgets, etc. must be voted on by the Board.
- In addition to Board members, there are committee representatives from each of our communities.
- Community Committee members are marketing specialists

#### Received Two Applications recently:

- Paulina Pendarvis Lake Junaluska Marketing Director, representing Lake Junaluska
- Sarah Worrell Cataloochee Ski Area Director of Marketing & Public Relations, representing Maggie Valley

# Recommend Renewing Board Member Terms January 2025 to December 2027

- ➤ Jim Owens, has served one full, three-year term, January 2022 to December 2024.
- Angie Frisbee has served a partial term, January 2024 to December 2024.
- Chad King has served a partial term, January 2024 to December 2024.



# Video & Photography



## **Video Mood Board**



# Video & Photography

- First major comprehensive shoot since 2010.
- Will provide initial new video and photography for 3-5 years.
- Note we will still have additional photo & video expenses in future fiscal years as we seek seasonal footage to complement this new style.
- Our new Creative Agency researched, interviewed and bid three different video and photographer options.
- Marketing committee reviewed, discussed and unanimously recommends the following.

### VIDEO BID EVALUATION CRITERIA & POINT SYSTEM

CRITERIA	Weight	Max Points	NEW UNION	GREY /HANDSOME	SPOT ON
1. EXPERIENCE AND PORTFOLIO REEL	35%	35	30	35	25
2. BUDGET & COST EFFICIENCY	15%	15	15	12	5
3. TECHNICAL EXPERTISE & APPROACH	15%	15	12	14	11
4. TIMELINE/AVAILABILITY	5%	5	5	5	2
5. TOURISM EXPERIENCE	10%	10	5	10	5
6. REFERENCES	5%	5	5	5	5
7. COMMUNICATION & FLEXIBILITY	5%	5	5	5	5
8. LOCAL PRODUCTION COMPANY	10%	10	10	0	0
	100%	100	87	86	58

### PHOTOGRAPHY BID EVALUATION CRITERIA & POINT SYSTEM

CRITERIA	Weight	Max Points	GEORGE KAMPER	STEVE BEAUDET	SAM DEAN
1. EXPERIENCE AND PORTFOLIO REEL	35%	35	25	30	35
2. BUDGET & COST EFFICIENCY	15%	15	15	14	13
3. TECHNICAL EXPERTISE & APPROACH	15%	15	15	15	15
4. TIMELINE/AVAILABILITY	5%	5	5	5	5
5. TOURISM EXPERIENCE	10%	10	10	10	10
6. REFERENCES	5%	5	5	5	5
7. COMMUNICATION & FLEXIBILITY	5%	5	5	5	5
8. LOCAL PRODUCTION COMPANY	10%	10	0	0	0
	100%	100	80	84	88

# NEW UNION

\$104,945



\$30,065



Open-ended Up To: \$25,000

Request: Motion to approve the contracts as presented and to approve the Executive Director to sign the contracts and all related documents.

TOTAL \$160,000, plus \$10,000 contingency\*

\*Lodging, Props, Wardrobe, Permit Fees, Meals & Snacks, etc.

## **2025 Production Budget Amendment**

HAYWOOD COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT
FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

BE IT ORDAINED by the Members of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority that the following amendment be made to the budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Section 1. To amend the General Fund, the expenditures are to be charged as follows:

To increase available funds for the
2025 production including videography,
photography, and music up to a
maximum amount of \$170,000.

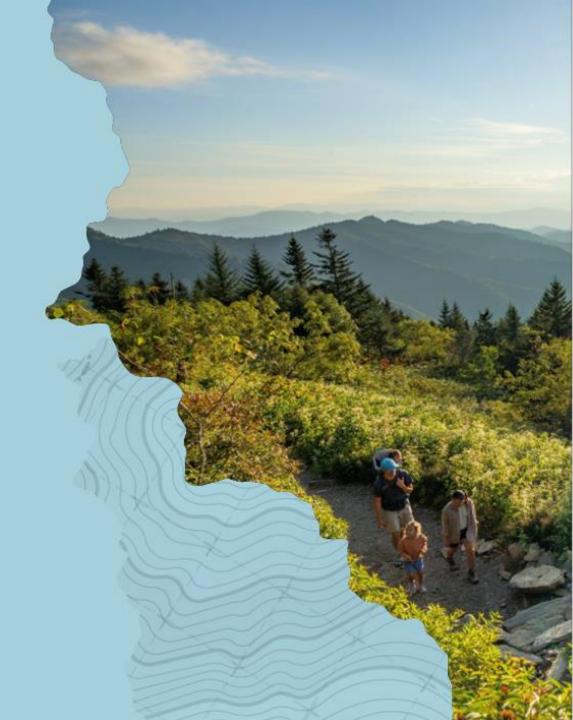
Department	Acct. No.	Current Budget	Increase (Decrease)	Amended Budget
Advertising & Marketing	537101	\$981,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$1,001,000.00
TOTAL			\$20,000.00	
This amendment will result in a r in the expenditures in the Gene	_	\$20,000.00		
To provide the additional revenu		the following reven	ues will be	
increased/(decreased) as follow			1	
increased/(decreased) as follow	Account Number	Current	Increase	Amended



# Haywood County Destination Master Plan 2026-2035

An Actionable Roadmap to Seize
Our Successful Tourism Future





**HAYWOOD COUNTY'S TOURISM FUTURE UNFOLDS** 5 1. Welcome to Haywood County 2. Master Plan Summary

#### **PLANNING BACKGROUND**

13 21 Assignment Context

**16 2.2** Planning Process

2.3 Community Engagement

2.4 Report Format

**19 2.5** Assignment Timeline

STATE OF THE **DESTINATION** 

5.0

**3.1** Destination Tourism Performance

29 3.2 Visitor Composition & Profiles

3.3 Visitor Products & Experiences

**3.4** Stewardship & Sustainability Activities

3.5 HCTDA Operations & Community Engagement

#### DESTINATION STRATEGY EXECUTION

**36 4.1** Destination Challenges

4.2 HCTDA Mission, Destination Vision, & Strategic Goal Pillars

**4.3** Strengthen Awareness and Perceptions of the Haywood County Tourism Brand

**4.4** Diversify Tourism Product Offerings and Experiences that Enhance the Destination Appeal for All

**4.5** Support and Promote Stewardship of Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

4.6 Enhance HCTDA Evolution While Cultivating Community Engagement and Collaboration

STRATEGY TIMETABLE, PERFORMANCE METRICS, **FUNDING POTENTIAL, & REFERENCES** 

**123 5.1** Pillar Strategy Implementation

**130 5.2** Master Plan Performance Metrics

**132 5.3** Funding Source Opportunities

**136 5.4** Documentation Review

## CONTENTS

## 1.2 Master Plan Summary

Built on extensive research, stakeholder input, and expert guidance, this Destination Master Plan presents a strategic approach for sustainable growth and effective tourism management in Haywood County. In response to the impacts of Hurricane Helene in Fall 2024, the plan's implementation timelines and initiatives are shifted to the following in order to address immediate recovery needs while still working to achieve our long-term objectives. The initial rollout will prioritize urgent requirements, integrating these efforts with ongoing planned initiatives. Furthermore, a new Recovery Transition Plan will facilitate a bridge between current community and tourism needs with the overarching goals of the master plan. The noted timing of the plan, 2026-2035, recognizes there will be some delay in implementation as recovery initiatives are prioritized.





# **Collaborative Approach**

A diverse 17-person Steering Committee was formed, featuring representatives from across Haywood County, encompassing key sectors such as attractions, outdoor recreation, stewardship, retail, lodging, and food & beverage. This committee, working in conjunction with HCTDA staff and the Board of Directors, collaborated closely with the advisory teams. Their collective expertise and local insights were pivotal in steering the strategic direction of the Destination Master Plan, ensuring that it aligns with regional goals and harnesses innovative, sustainable practices to enhance the Haywood County's tourism landscape.

### **Steering Committee**

#### Kelsie Baker, Chair

Co-Founder & Co-Owner Boojum Brewing & The Red Fox

#### **Dr. Shelley White**

President
Haywood Community College

#### **David Francis**

President
Haywood County Chamber of Commerce

#### **Bryant Morehead**

County Manager Haywood County

#### **Gail Mull**

Mayor Pro Tem Town of Canton

#### **Rob Hites**

Town Manager
Town of Waynesville

#### **Nick Scheuer**

Recovery and Resiliency Manager Town of Canton

#### **Sarah Worrell**

Director of Marketing & Public Relations Cataloochee Ski Area

#### **Bridget Shaughnessy**

General Manager Mast General Store

#### Vickie Best

Town Manager
Town of Maggie Valley

#### **Joy Garland**

Town Administrator Town of Clyde

#### **Ken Howle**

Executive Director
Lake Junaluska Conference
& Retreat Center

#### **Preston Jacobsen**

Executive Director Haywood Waterways Association

#### **Jeremy Boone**

General Manager Springdale Golf Resort

#### **Angie Frisbee**

General Manager Route 19 Inn

#### Steven Reinhold

Owner & Operator
The Appalachian Adventure Company

#### **Pratik Shah**

General Manager
Best Western Smoky Mountain Inn

### **Haywood County TDA**

#### Jim Owens, Chair

Mayor Pro Tem Town of Maggie Valley

#### Dr. Shelley White, Vice-Chair

President
Havwood Community College

#### Mike Huber, Treasurer

General Manager
Lake Junaluska Conference
& Retreat Center

#### **Kristian Owen**

Finance Director Haywood County

#### Jennifer Best

County Commissioner Haywood County

#### **Chuck Dickson**

Mayor Pro Tem Town of Waynesville

#### **Gail Mull**

Mayor Pro Tem Town of Canton

#### **Chad King**

Co-Owner
The Yellow House B&B

#### **Jeff Hillis**

General Partner
Buffalo Creek Vacations

#### **Jeremy Boone**

General Manager Springdale Golf Resort

#### **Natalie Hawkins**

Locations Manager Vacasa

#### **Angie Frisbee**

General Manager Route 19 Inn

#### **Scot Blair**

Co-Owner
The Scotsman Public House

#### **Kelsie Baker**

Co-Founder & Co-Owner Boojum Brewing & The Red Fox

## THANK YOU

# 2.3 Community Engagement

CAROLINA MOUNTA

**78** 

**Stakeholders** in 9 in-person focus groups, with representation from all 5 communities

4

**Specialized workshops** - public land officials, emergency response managers, outdoor recreation stakeholders workshop, TDA Marketing Committee

**130** 

Participants at two community input sessions

**4X** 

17 - person Steering Committee meetings

26

1:1 Interviews with elected officials & local leaders

# 2.3 Community Engagement

Survey Responses 96
Travel media surveys

1282
Visitor surveys
(past & potential)

329

Haywood County stakeholder surveys

In addition to input from the Steering Committee and HCTDA staff, a wide range of community engagement was sought to ensure the advisory team was exposed to a broad range of perspectives.

The process included community open houses, specialized workshops, one-on-one interviews, and an extensive new survey of both past and prospective visitors to Haywood County.



**DESTINATION STRATEGY EXECUTION** 

### Destination Strategy Execution

The Destination Strategy Execution details strategic directions for HCTDA and Haywood County, leveraging insights from the State of the Destination analysis. It features the updated Destination Vision and HCTDA Mission Statement, and defines strategic pillars with specific objectives, strategies, and tactics focused on sustainability, placemaking, and social inclusion. Following the impacts of Hurricane Helene, we are adjusting our strategy execution to address immediate recovery needs while maintaining long-term goals for sustainable growth and community resilience.



# **4.1** Destination Challenges

The State of the Destination has underscored several critical challenges and opportunities which inform our strategic focus. These challenges encompass audience engagement, seasonal dynamics, accommodation modernization, development opportunities, public lands and destination stewardship, and strategic planning and engagement.



#### Audience Engagement

Given the high satisfaction and repeat visitation rates, it's important to diversify our outreach to younger audiences and business travelers. Enhancing visitor profiling and implementing targeted marketing strategies are crucial to expanding our appeal and converting day-trippers into overnight guests.

## Development Opportunities

Significant potential exists to expand water-based activities and greenway access, particularly along the Pigeon River. These initiatives, coupled with additional indoor venues and family-friendly activities to add destination appeal, can enhance the overall visitor experience and encourage longer stays.

## Seasonal Dynamics

The County sees peak visitation during summer, fall, and on weekends, highlighting the opportunity to spread visitor demand more evenly throughout the year.

# Public Lands and Destination Stewardship

As Haywood County continues to leverage its rich natural assets, establishing robust stewardship frameworks is crucial. This includes enhancing visitor safety, promoting sustainable practices, and improving the management of natural and cultural resources to ensure long-term viability and community benefit.

## Accommodation Modernization

There's a growing disparity between the demand for modern accommodations and the availability of outdated hotel inventory. The rise of short-term rentals has reshaped lodging preferences, offering alternative options for the traveling consumer and partially contributing to low occupancy rates in traditional hotels.

# Strategic Planning and Community Engagement

Insights from LeadDO and LeadDESTINATION surveys underscore the importance of a cohesive strategic plan for the HCTDA, encompassing community engagement, enhanced funding strategies, and targeted marketing initiatives.

# **4.2** Mission, Vision, Guiding Principles, Pillars, and Strategic Goals

### Mission Statement

The Haywood County Tourism Development Authority (HCTDA) drives community and economic prosperity as a strategic leader of the destination. By fostering collaboration and destination stewardship, we strive to make Haywood County an unrivaled place to live, work, and play.

### Vision Statement

Haywood County will be renowned as the authentic destination in the Great Smoky and Blue Ridge Mountains, offering diverse, year-round experiences while preserving our natural and cultural heritage for future generations.



# **Destination Values and Guiding Principles**

The Tourism Master Plan is guided by five core principles. These principles form the foundation of our vision for a thriving visitor economy.



#### **Better Together**

A successful tourism strategy for Haywood County recognizes that tourism, by its very nature, involves the destination as a whole. Our natural environment, cultural heritage, and community character all contribute to the overall experience. To foster a thriving tourism industry, we need a collaborative effort involving government, businesses, and local residents.

#### Welcoming to All

Our future vision emphasizes creating a vibrant environment where our shared values of hospitality, inclusion, and accessibility are paramount. Drawing inspiration from the welcoming, genuine Appalachian spirit our community is known for, we endeavor to foster connections and ensure every visitor feels at home.

#### **Destination Stewardship**

We will intentionally monitor the impact of the visitor economy on the wellbeing of Haywood County's community spirit, natural spaces, and cultural heritage. Our goal is to safeguard our natural and cultural resources, and balance resident quality of life with visitor experience for generations to come.

#### **Economic Resilience**

We must mindfully steer the visitor economy to ensure sustainable growth of the industry, bolster the destination's economic resilience, and fortify tourism and outdoor recreation as pillars of year-round, multifaceted economic development.

#### Learning and Leading

The next decade of tourism in Haywood County will require a different view and approach compared to the previous ten years. In addition to promoting the destination, we must invest more resources to allow us to lead efforts for cross-county collaboration, be a resource for visitors and residents alike, protect our public lands for generations to come, and ensure the tourism industry remains a key pillar of our county's year-round economy.

#### **Pillars and Strategic Goals**

#### Pillar 1

# Strengthen Awareness and Perception of the Haywood County Tourism Brand

- •Strategic Goal: Enhance brand visibility and reputation through innovative marketing and storytelling, emphasizing Haywood County as a unique gateway to the Great Smoky and Blue Ridge Mountains.
- •Intended Outcomes: Enhanced brand perception can lead to increased visitor engagement, longer stays and repeat visits, thereby fostering a sustainable tourism economy that benefits local businesses and the entire community.
- •A strong base of high-value visitors.
- More informed and aware visitors.
- Steady, year-round income for local businesses and workforce.
- A consistent and appealing image that differentiates Haywood County.
- •Community partners and residents who may brace the Haywood County brand.

#### Pillar 2

# Diversify Tourism Product Offerings and Experiences that Enhance the Destination Appeal for All

- •Strategic Goal: Develop and promote a wider range of tourism products to enrich visitor experiences and extend stays, focusing on cultural, historical and outdoor recreational activities for all seasons.
- •Intended Outcomes: By developing unique and integrated experiences, the county can showcase its natural and cultural assets, making it more attractive to various visitor segments. This approach not only boosts visitor satisfaction but also supports local businesses and promotes economic growth through increased tourism spending.
- •Diversity in tourism product offerings and experiences.
- •Elevated quality of life for residents and a better visitor experience.
- •Improved sense of place, community spirit and civic pride.
- •Higher commercial tax assessment base and reinvestment opportunities.
- •Increased year-round revenue and income.

#### **Pillars and Strategic Goals**

#### Pillar 3

### Support and Promote Stewardship of Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

- •Strategic Goal: Advance sustainable tourism and preserve natural resources with initiatives that include educational campaigns and partnerships with local groups for conservation efforts.
- •Intended Outcomes: By prioritizing stewardship,
  Haywood County aims to preserve its natural
  resources and cultural heritage, maintain the
  destination's appeal, and foster a responsible tourism
  culture among both visitors and residents.
- •Increased participation of visitors in destination stewardship.
- •Visitors embrace our Southern Appalachian heritage and culture.
- •Greater civic pride, unity and purpose on the protection of cultural integrity.
- •Community-wide dedication to the preservation of our natural assets for generations to come.

#### Pillar 4

# Enhance HCTDA's Evolution While Cultivating Community Engagement and Collaboration

- •Strategic Goal: Strengthen the organization's leadership in tourism by improving operational effectiveness and nourishing partnerships with local communities and stakeholders.

  Prioritize community involvement to align tourism initiatives with local needs and values.
- •Intended Outcomes: By fostering strong community partnerships and exploring new funding opportunities, Haywood County can create a resilient tourism sector that adapts to changing conditions. This collaborative approach ensures that tourism development is inclusive, equitable, and beneficial for all. Collaboration will also enhance overall community well-being and support tourism initiatives.
- •Strong county-wide partnerships and advocacy for the visitor industry, which is essential to Haywood County's economic future.
- •Higher, more diversified destination marketing and management resources.
- •Increased investment and deployment of resources within Haywood County.
- •Improved resident perception of the travel industry.
- •Everyone in Haywood County will benefit from the visitor economy.

## Pillar 1

# Strengthen Awareness and Perception of the Haywood County Tourism Brand

The first pillar focuses on strengthening awareness and perceptions of Haywood County through the promotion of the new Visit Haywood brand. The strategies and initiatives detailed here work towards effectively connecting with and engaging both current and prospective visitors, ensuring that Haywood County remains a top-of-mind destination.



### Objective 1:

Launch the new Visit Haywood brand and Unfiltered campaign internally to align stakeholders.

### Objective 2:

Strengthen external awareness and perceptions of Haywood County as a place to visit.

### Objective 3:

Target high-value visitor segments.



### Objective 4:

Attract visitor segments that have flexibility and interest in traveling mid-week and/or off-season.

### Objective 5:

Understand the profiles of day trippers and identify elements that could convert them to overnight guests.

### Objective 6:

Establish stewardship messaging and promotion as part of the destination's brand voice.



### Pillar 2

# Diversify Tourism Product Offerings and Experiences that Enhance the Destination Appeal for All

The second pillar underscores the importance of continuously enhancing tourism products and experiences in Haywood County. This proactive development is vital not only to satisfy the curiosity of our many repeat visitors, who often ask, "what's new?" but also to elevate the overall appeal of the destination. Enriching our offerings improves the quality of life for residents and makes Haywood County a more vibrant place to visit. Following the impacts of Hurricane Helene, the initiatives under this pillar will be integrated with the Recovery Transition Plan to ensure that both recovery and long-term development proceed hand-in-hand.



### Objective 1:

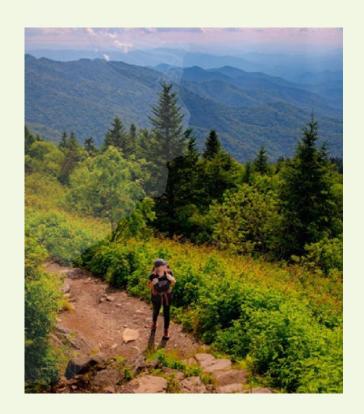
Enhance cross-county tourism by strengthening collaboration among tourism businesses to develop interconnected experiences under the "Better Together" theme.

### Objective 2:

Enhance the variety and quality of water-based experiences along the Pigeon River and other key waterways in Haywood County.

### Objective 3:

Support continued forward momentum of the Haywood County Greenway Master Plan to prioritize segments, find funding, and commence building.



### Objective 4:

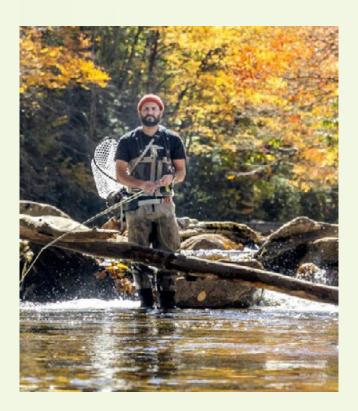
Identify additional family-friendly products that would strengthen the Haywood County experience.

### Objective 5:

Work to expand the array of indoor visitor experiences.

### Objective 6:

Stimulate initiatives to revitalize aging lodging inventories, increasing their productivity and attracting new visitor segments.



### Objective 7:

Ensure a visitor perspective is considered in the reuse planning of the Canton Mill evolution.

### Objective 8:

Advocate for outdoor recreation projects that are in line with the destination vision for sustainable growth and can have immediate return on investment.



### Pillar 3

# Support and Promote Stewardship of Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

The third pillar of our strategy emphasizes the importance of stewardship in safeguarding the natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities that define Haywood County. This pillar supports the development of robust frameworks and systems designed to ensure sustainable tourism development and growth. By fostering collaboration, amplifying monitoring, and weaving stewardship into all aspects of tourism, we aim to protect and enhance our community assets and the natural environment. Following the impacts of Hurricane Helene, and in conjunction with our Recovery Transition Plan, this pillar will guide our efforts to rebuild and strengthen these assets more resiliently and sustainably than ever before.



### Objective 1:

Establish a Destination Stewardship Committee, comprised of local stakeholders, to identify and address needs related to natural and cultural resources and outdoor recreation.

### Objective 2:

Institute a comprehensive tourism monitoring and reporting system to enhance the scope and quality of tourism impact evaluation.



### Objective 3:

Enhance visitor and asset management systems to ensure the long-term sustainability of natural and cultural resources.

### Objective 4:

Co-develop an emergency communication and response plan for tourism to ensure the safety of visitors through robust emergency preparedness and response strategies.



### Pillar 4

**Enhance HCTDA Evolution While Cultivating Community Engagement and Collaboration** 

This pillar underscores the evolution of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority (HCTDA) and its commitment to deepening community engagement and collaboration. It addresses critical issues facing the visitor economy and local community by setting prioritized initiatives and directives regarding stewardship, product development, and resident quality of life. The implementation timelines of these strategies may fluctuate, pending the immediate needs of the community as detailed in the Recovery Transition Plan.



### Objective 1:

Develop and garner support for a comprehensive, multi-year HCTDA strategy that encompasses marketing, sales, services, product development, tourism advocacy, stewardship, and resource management.

### Objective 2:

Realign the HCTDA current and proposed new personnel given its new roles and responsibilities, especially as it relates to destination development, advocacy and stewardship, and reallocated resources.

### Objective 3:

Investigate new funding opportunities related to tourism development, education and advocacy and promotional communications.



### Objective 4:

Allocate annual budget resources and set effective performance resources.

### Objective 5:

Nourish community, industry and government partnerships through a formalized community/ stakeholder relations outreach plan to demonstrate tourism benefits.

### Objective 6:

Redevelop the HCTDA Annual Report as a Report on Tourism to the Community to illustrate county and community benefits.

### Objective 7:

Evaluate the need and scope of an effective visitor experience presence.





STRATEGY TIMETABLE, PERFORMANCE METRICS, FUNDING POTENTIAL, & REFERENCES

### **5.1** Pillar Strategy Implementation

This section presents a table outlining the initial implementation of 15 objectives and 17 priority strategies set for the first three years following the adoption of the master plan. These foundational elements have been adapted in response to the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. The HCTDA Recovery Transition Plan, covering the first two years, will guide the early stages of this implementation process.



### Year 1 and 2

Objectives	<b>Priority Strategies</b>
4.3 Objective 1 Launch the new Visit Haywood brand and Unfiltered	Roll out the new brand and messaging campaign.
campaign internally to align stakeholders.	Build internal brand awareness.
4.3 Objective 3 Target high-value visitor segments.	Activate the recent visitor survey findings to increase out- reach to new/different visitor segments given restricted access due to Hurricane Helene.
4.3 Objective 6 Establish stewardship messaging and promotion as part of the destination's brand voice.	Ensure responsible travel is promoted through all marketing and communication channels.
4.5 Objective 1 Establish a Destination Stewardship Committee, comprised of local stakeholders, to identify and address needs related to natural and cultural resources and outdoor recreation.	Form a HCTDA Committee or separate council responsible for sustainability and stewardship initiatives.

### Year 1 and 2

Objectives	Priority Strategies
4.5 Objective 4 Co-develop an emergency communication and response plan for tourism to ensure the safety of visitors through robust emergency preparedness and response strategies.	Collaborate with local emergency response stakeholders to align on communication and response strategies.
4.6 Objective 1  Develop and garner support for a comprehensive, multi-year TDA strategy that encompasses marketing, sales, services, product development, tourism advocacy, stewardship, and resource management.	Prepare a TDA-directed operational plan/program of work that is aligned to your annual destination marketing and operation activities and utilizes outcomes from the Destination Master Plan.
4.6 Objective 2 Realign the TDA current and proposed new personnel given its new roles and responsibilities, especially as it relates to destination development, advocacy and stewardship and reallocated resources.	Evaluate and endorse refined organization charts with related staffing and Board committee needs.
4.6 Objective 4 Allocate annual budget resources and set effective performance resources	Prepare annual budgets related to successive TDA operational plan priority initiatives and develop an ongoing performance results dashboard.

#### Year 3

#### **Objectives**

#### 4.4 Objective 2

Enhance the variety and quality of water-based experiences along the Pigeon River and other key waterways in Haywood County.

### **Priority Strategies**

Identify other river opportunities that could hold additional recreation potential.

#### 4.6 Objective 5

Nourish community, industry and government partnerships through a formalized community/ stakeholder relations outreach plan to demonstrate tourism benefits.

Prepare an outreach plan with specified stake- holder audiences and related informative and influential key activities.

#### 4.6 Objective 6

Redevelop the TDA Annual Report as a Report on Tourism to the Community to illustrate county and community benefits.

Prepare a meaningful annual Community Report on Tourism.



### **5.2** Master Plan Performance Metrics

A variety of Destination Master Plan Implementation Indicators should be considered to track and evaluate progress on implementation efforts.



Goals	Measurement	Source
Goal 1 Enhance brand visibility and reputation through innovative marketing and storytelling, emphasizing Haywood County as a unique gateway to the Great Smokey and Blue Ridge Mountains.	Track average visitor spend Increase overnight stays in mid-week and off season	Visitor surveys Lodging data
Area of Focus Increase high value segments, build mid-week & off- season demand	Economic impact indices	Visit NC economic data
Goal 2  Develop and promote a wider range of tourism products to enrich visitor experiences and extend stays, focusing on cultural, historical, and outdoor recreational activities for all seasons.	Number of product offerings showcasing linked experiences across County	Annual product inventory
Area of Focus Expand cross county product integration, increase use and embrace of water based recreation.	Number of new places for residents and visitors to safely access the water	Product inventory

Goals	Measurement	Source
Goal 3 Advance sustainable tourism and natural resources with initiatives that include educational campaigns and partnerships with local groups for conservation efforts  Area of Focus Establish Destination Stewardship Committee and increase visitor and resident safety awareness.	Implementation of Stewardship Committee and frequency of meetings  Partnership with land management agencies and initiatives	Representation of committee and meeting tracking  Inventory partner initiatives and implementation
Goal 4 Strengthen the organization's leadership in tourism by improving operational effectiveness and nourishing stakeholders. Prioritize community involvement to align tourism initiatives with local needs and values.	Number of Master Plan tactics aligned with annual operational activities	Analysis of tactical implementation in operational plan
Area of Focus  Demonstrate integration of Master Plan in annual operations, investigate new funding opportunities	TDA funding resources	Operational plan TDA funding level and sources





Full Digital Version

## PURPOSE OF PROPOSED RECOVERY TRANSITION PLAN October 2024 – September 2026

The Haywood County Destination Master Plan remains essential, outlining long-term goals and strategies backed by extensive research, stakeholder input, and expert insights—crucial for sustainable growth and effective tourism management. However, the immediate demands of recovery from Hurricane Helene necessitate a transitional approach.

To bridge the gap between urgent recovery actions and our long-term vision, the DMP Advisory Planning Team has developed an interim framework. This framework divides the recovery process into manageable phases, allowing the TDA to prioritize immediate recovery needs while staying aligned with the Master Plan's objectives. It includes best practices for recovery management and resilience, integrating these with short-term objectives – many pulled directly from the Master Plan.

We will adapt this framework into a detailed work plan, customizing timelines and resources as needed. It's important to understand that this document serves as a dynamic, adaptable guide outlining proposed recovery actions and strategic objectives, not an exhaustive list of all activities to be undertaken over the next 24 months.

<sup>\*</sup>Priorities listed in blue italics on the following pages are directly pulled from the comprehensive master plan.

### **OVERVIEW**

#### **Organizational Actions**

**Objective**: Align internal resources and teams to support both immediate recovery efforts and longterm master plan goals.

**Priorities**: Allocate staffing and financial resources effectively; develop a comprehensive emergency response plan.

Outcomes: Maintain operational stability while laying the groundwork for sustained recovery and future organizational success.

#### **Stakeholder Engagement**

**Objective:** Maintain strong, collaborative relationships with key stakeholders during the recovery period and beyond.

**Priorities:** Engage local businesses, residents, and public agencies through regular communication and collaborative recovery and resilience planning.

Outcome: Foster a sense of shared responsibility for recovery while ensuring that stakeholder needs and concerns are addressed.

#### **Communications**

Objective: Ensure clear and consistent updates on recovery progress while building brand awareness for future tourism.

**Priorities:** Implement a communications strategy balancing recovery updates and tourism promotion.

Outcome: Maintain public trust, keep stakeholders informed, and ensure a smooth transition from recovery to future planning phases.

#### **Infrastructure and Assets**

**Objective:** Monitor the restoration of key tourism infrastructure and plan for future asset development and stewardship.

**Priorities:** Inventory critical tourism and recreational assets; assess long-term infrastructure needs in alignment with master plan goals.

Outcome: Reopen essential tourism assets while setting the foundation for sustainable growth in line with the 10-year master plan.

### **MONTHS 1 – 2: Immediate Response**

#### **Organizational Actions**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Evaluate current resource allocations and adjust roles or staffing to support immediate recovery efforts.
- Establish temporary task forces to manage urgent recoveryrelated operations.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Shift office-wide focus to ascertaining and disseminating conditions, recovery, and resources information.
- Collaborate with HCHHS to expand FEMA transitional housing options.

#### **Stakeholder Engagement**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Engage local businesses, government agencies, and residents to ensure alignment on recovery goals.
- Convene recovery-focused meeting(s) with key stakeholders to address pressing needs.
- Define any recovery milestones that may inform communications on tourism services.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Collaborate with local PIOs on visitor and partner messaging.
- Communicate closely with government officials and emergency services to ensure alignment.
- Publish webpage of recovery resources for partners on HaywoodTDA.com.

#### **Infrastructure and Assets**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Monitor the immediate restoration of critical tourism assets and infrastructure (e.g., roads, trails, attractions).
- Inventory and share information from safety appraisals of damaged sites to ensure visitor and resident safety.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Maintain an extensive Travel Alerts & Information page on VisitHaywood.com.
- Create & update webpage to share lists of open & closed local businesses.
- Create & update webpage to encourage online shopping from local small businesses.

### **MONTHS 1 – 2: Immediate Response**

#### **Communications**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Develop and disseminate public messaging regarding the county's recovery status and safety protocols.
- Maintain regular communication welcoming visitors while setting expectations.
- Promote volunteer corps and asset stewardship (clean up) activities.
- Work with key partners on all immediate response items related to communications, marketing and public relations.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Send weekly update emails to partners and visitors in the first weeks of recovery.
- Launch an immediate paid advertising response, including issuing travel alerts and then moving into general awareness messaging related to current travel information for visitors.
- Provide Visit NC advertising assets to represent Haywood County in their "Support NC's Southern Mountains" campaign.
- Launch a "Shop Local" holiday campaign to rally stakeholders to shop locally.
- Create a holiday ornament to be sold throughout Haywood County as well as online, with proceeds supporting hurricane recovery.
- Launch an Ice Fest-specific paid advertising campaign to generate awareness and drive ticket purchases for the late January event.

### **MONTHS 3 – 12: Transition Period**

### **Organizational Actions**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Implement short-term operational shifts to accommodate ongoing recovery needs and future planning.
- Identify new roles or partnerships to support extended recovery efforts and future attention to stewardship and resilience.
- Allocate annual budget resources to align with plan actions.
- Co-develop an emergency communication and response plan for tourism to ensure the safety of visitors through robust emergency preparedness and response strategies.

### Stakeholder Engagement

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Continue collaboration with local businesses and public agencies to ensure recovery efforts are on track.
- Focus on maintaining community trust through transparency and regular updates.

#### **Communications**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Leverage the new Visit
   Haywood brand identity to
   strengthen external
   perceptions.
- Target high-value visitor segments and foster inclusiveness.
- Establish tourism stewardship messaging and promotion as part of the destination's brand value.
- Develop and distribute a consumer perception survey to gauge market interest leading up to the one-year anniversary of the hurricane.

### Infrastructure and Assets

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Begin phased rebuilding of damaged assets, prioritizing long-term resilience and sustainability.
- Explore funding options for rebuilding and/or developing projects that align with sustainable development goals.

### MONTHS 12 – 18: Intermediate Planning

#### **Organizational Actions**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

 Begin re-engaging with long-term Master Plan objectives, focusing on sustainability and strategic alignment.

#### **Stakeholder Engagement**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Begin re-engaging external partners to discuss long-term goals and recovery outcomes.
- Initiate planning for collaborative projects with stakeholders, particularly in outdoor recreation and stewardship.

#### **Communications**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Build brand awareness, continue to target highvalue visitor segments and begin to reach out to new/different visitor segments. Continually welcome visitors in target markets.
- Shift messaging toward future tourism marketing and product development opportunities.

#### **Infrastructure and Assets**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

 Begin discussions on product development that aligns with the Master Plan's long-term goals for sustainable asset management.

### MONTHS 19 – 24: Moving Forward to the Future

### **Organizational Actions**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Fully transition to long-term strategic planning.
- Realign the TDA
   organization given its new
   roles and responsibilities,
   especially as it relates to
   destination development,
   advocacy and stewardship
   and related resources.
- Formulate and build support for a multiyear TDA operational plan covering marketing, sales and services, product development, tourism advocacy and stewardship, and resource development and management.

#### **Stakeholder Engagement**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Nourish community, industry and government partnerships through effective research to demonstrate tourism benefits.
- Reconnect with external partners, both local and regional, to resume longterm planning initiatives.
- Establish a Destination Stewardship Council to oversee activities that enhance community assets and promote responsible and regenerative tourism.

#### **Communications**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Continue to build brand awareness in targeted visitor markets and welcome visitors.
- Integrate long-term stewardship and resilience messaging, building excitement for future tourism growth.
- Continue transparent communications with the public and stakeholders about ongoing recovery and future opportunities.

#### **Infrastructure and Assets**

#### **PRIORITIES:**

- Shift focus to sustainable infrastructure development.
- Advocate for outdoor recreation projects that are in line with destination vision for sustainable growth and can have immediate return on investment.
- Begin implementing longterm infrastructure improvements that align with the Master Plan and sustainability priorities.



### Administrative Professionals Conference

October 28-30 | Aurora, Colorado

### **Top 3 Sessions**

- Project Scheduling (Basic & Advanced)
- Bylaws, Minutes, and Minute Taking
- Keynote: Life Lessons from Oprah, Rolling Stone, Maury, and Mom



#### **Top 3 Takeaways**

- 1. Critical path methodology helps show the minimum project duration.
- 2. If a mistake is made in wording a motion and it's already been seconded, the motion can be dismissed by the original person so it can be corrected.
- Be honest and true to yourself everything always works out.



### Visit NC In-State Media Mission

Amie attended an all-day PR Symposium in Durham led by Visit NC and DCI on 11/19 where she learned about current PR trends and ways to better our PR strategy. This event ended with a 2-hour social that drew in 40 in-state, regional and national correspondents along with well-regarded digital influencers and content creators.

Amie was able to speak and pitch Haywood County with media from the following outlets (and more!):













### **Favorite Symposium Sessions:**

- Best Practices for Itinerary Planning
- 5 Tourism Trends to Look for in 2025

All media in attendance also went home with a Waynesville Soda Jerk! ©









### **Public Relations Update**

### Southern Living®

### 10 Southern Destinations Our Editors Visited For The First Time This Year And Loved

By Tara Masso

07 Waynesville, North Carolina





I couldn't make this list without spotlighting a few of my own travel finds from 2024, so the last few are places I visited and couldn't stop talking about. Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge get a lot of attention as Great Smoky Mountain towns, but the Western North Carolina community of Waynesville, on the "other side of the Smokies" really blew me away. The downtown is super walkable, with lots of quaint shops and great restaurants, but for me, the real draw was the easy access to jump on Blue Ridge Parkway and hike in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. During my fall visit, I even had a chance to see the famous elk that were reintroduced to the area in 2001.

EXPLORE WAYNESVILLE



ride or journey by foot along the peaceful Palmetto Trail. Bookend your adventures by resting a spell in the area's charming towns of Greenwood, Abbeville, and Edgefield.

Near Tennessee's Chatanooga, visit Ruby Falls for breathtaking scenery and a marvelous underground light show that accentuates the tallest underground waterfall in the U.S. Another must-see natural wonder awaits in Williamsburg, Kentucky, where Cumberland Falls State Park features the Niagara of the South. Settle into a cozy cabin, picnic by the frosty falls, and relish s'mores beneath the stars.

Outdoor enthusiasts flock to Haywood County, North Carolina, year-round, and these months are especially stunning for the blankets of soft snow that cover the surrounding Smoky Mountains. Endearing downtown districts lined with small businesses in Maggie Valley, Canton, and Waynesville exude Southern hospitality sure to enhance your holiday sojourn.



Southern Lady

**Circulation: 120,000 | Ad Value: \$3,360** 

Southern Living (UVM: 13,944,473 | Ad Value: \$278,889)

10 Southern Destinations Our Editors Visited For The First Time This Year And Loved



### CARDINAL & PINE



Cardinal & Pine Instagram (Followers: 11,700)

### **Public Relations Update**

The Weather Channel

The Weather Channel Segment featuring our Haywood Strong
Ornament and Give the Gift of Haywood Campaign





### **Gift of Haywood Update**

### **Local Events:**

- Mistletoe Maker's Market
- Issues & Ornaments
- Balsam Range Art of Music Festival
- Kris Kringle Market
- Smoky Mountain Christmas

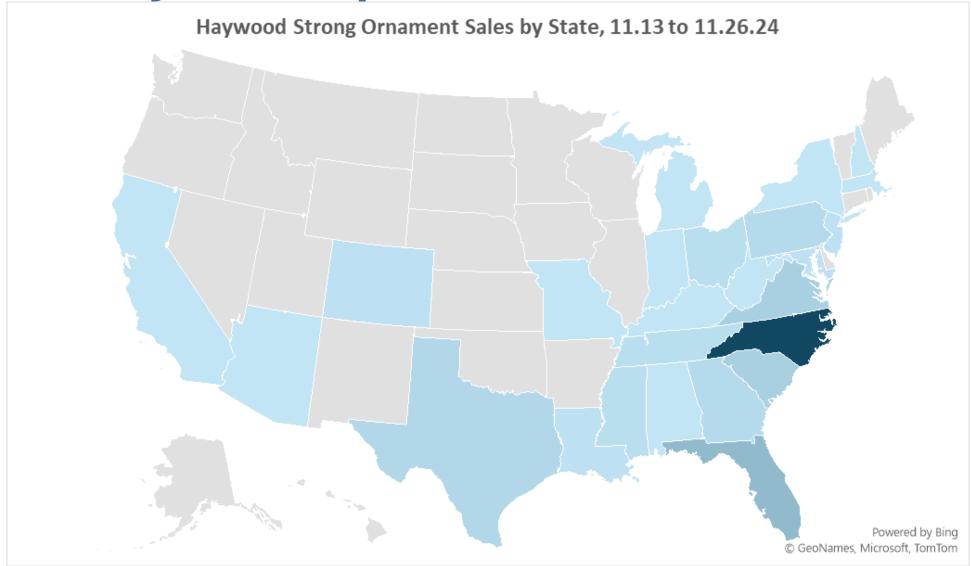








### **Gift of Haywood Update**









# **Haywood County Small Business Recovery Grant Program Update**

### Funds Raised, Effective 11.12.2024

- 126 Applications Received
- Totaling \$2.25+ million in grant requests

Source	Amount
Haywood Advancement Foundation	\$150,000
HCTDA	\$100,000
Colquitts	\$100,000
Duke Energy	\$25,000
United Way	\$15,000
NC Chamber	\$10,000
Spectrum	\$2,500
Town of Lake Santeetlah	\$2,000
Private Donations	\$700
TOTAL	\$405,200

### **Ice Fest Weekend Updates**

Brochures, billboards, ads, website content (#1 most visited page on our site), local advertising and more!

New This Year: Cool Jazz concert on Thursday featuring Grammy-Nominee and expanded Ice Stroll with live music, fire performers and more!











# Thank you, Kelsie for your dedication to the TDA Board – you've been a true gem and will be greatly missed!











### Welcome Center Hours:

Open Mon-Sat 9-5PM

Closed Christmas Day & New Years Day

### **Office Holiday Hours:**

Closed - Dec. 23- Dec 27 & Jan 1





