

# Haywood County Destination Master Plan 2026-2035

An Actionable Roadmap to Seize  
Our Successful Tourism Future

— VISIT —  
**HAYWOOD**  
WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS





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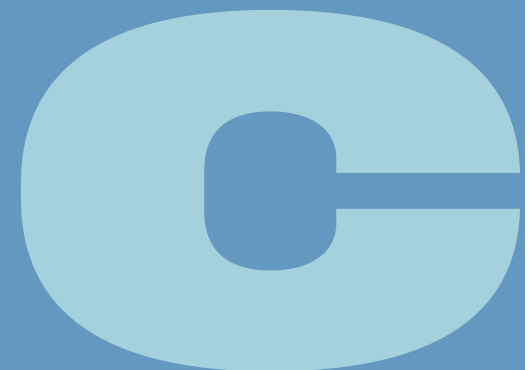
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# 1.0

— VISIT —  
**HAYWOOD**  
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**HAYWOOD COUNTY'S TOURISM  
FUTURE UNFOLDS**





# 1.1 Welcome to Haywood County

## Dear Haywood County Stakeholders,

I am pleased to introduce the Haywood County Destination Master Plan, a strategic blueprint designed to guide the future of tourism in our region. This plan, developed through extensive collaboration over the past year, aligns our community’s vision for the future with actionable strategies to enhance our status as a premier destination.

The timing of completing our master planning process coincided with the unforeseen challenges brought by Hurricane Helene, which significantly impacted our communities. The effects of the hurricane have been profound, with damage to infrastructure and alterations to the landscape that many of us call home. In response, we have prepared and are immediately initiating a Recovery Transition Plan. This plan focuses on addressing the urgent needs of our community while setting a course for recovery and resilience.

The Destination Master Plan, nearly finalized before the onset of Hurricane Helene, remains a crucial roadmap for our county’s tourism future. Although it was not initially crafted with disaster recovery in mind, its comprehensive strategies and forward-looking vision are incredibly pertinent as we consider our path to recovery. The insights and recommendations within the plan provide a framework to not only recover but also to enhance and innovate our tourism offerings, enabling us to rebuild our community stronger and better than before. This adaptability allows the plan’s ten-year vision to align with our current realities, helping to guide our recovery efforts and improve our overall resilience.

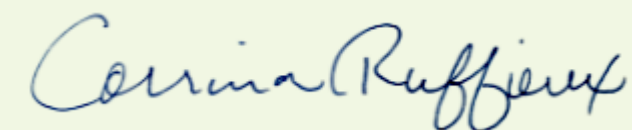
Furthermore, the interim Recovery Transition Plan will serve as a bridge between our present and our future, utilizing insights and strategies from the DMP to propel tourism and economic recovery. This strategy ensures that while we pursue long-term objectives, our immediate focus is on stabilizing and uplifting our local communities and businesses.

The development of this plan is just the beginning of our journey. As we move forward, the concept of “Better Together” has never been more relevant. The collaboration among our towns, business leaders, and stakeholders during this planning process has set a precedent for what we can achieve when we unite towards common goals.

As the Executive Director of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority, I am committed to leading the charge as we implement these plans. I am inspired by the resilience and solidarity shown by our community and am confident that together, we will navigate this recovery and emerge stronger.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement as we work towards a prosperous and enduring future for Haywood County.

**Warm Regards,**



**Corrina Ruffieux, CDME**  
Executive Director





# 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.





## Mission

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 2035

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 aim 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, multi-faceted 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.



# 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.





## Strategic Pillars and Objectives





### **Strengthen Awareness and Perception of the Haywood County Tourism Brand**

- Launch the new Visit Haywood brand and Unfiltered campaign internally to align stakeholders.
- Strengthen external awareness and perceptions of Haywood County as a place to visit.
- Target high-value visitor segments
- Attract visitor segments that have flexibility and interest in traveling mid-week and/or off-season.
- Understand the profiles of day trippers and identify elements that could convert them to overnight guests.
- Establish stewardship messaging and promotion as part of the destination's brand voice.

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

- Enhance cross-county tourism by strengthening collaboration among tourism businesses to develop interconnected experiences under the “Better Together” theme.
- Enhance the variety and quality of water-based experiences along the Pigeon River and other key waterways in Haywood County.
- Support continued forward momentum of the Haywood County Greenway Master Plan to prioritize segments, find funding, and commence building.
- Identify additional family-friendly products that would strengthen the Haywood County experience.
- Work to expand the array of indoor visitor experiences.
- Stimulate initiatives to revitalize aging lodging inventories, increasing their productivity and attracting new visitor segments.
- Ensure a visitor perspective is considered in the reuse planning of the Canton Mill evolution.
- Advocate for outdoor recreation projects that are in line with the destination vision for sustainable growth and can have immediate return on investment.

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

- Establish a Destination Stewardship Committee, comprised of local stakeholders, to identify and address needs related to natural and cultural resources and outdoor recreation.
- Institute a comprehensive tourism monitoring and reporting system to enhance the scope and quality of tourism impact evaluation.
- Enhance visitor and asset management systems to ensure the long-term sustainability of natural and cultural resources.
- Co-develop an emergency communication and response plan for tourism to ensure the safety of visitors through robust emergency preparedness and response strategies.

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

- Develop and garner support for a comprehensive, multi-year TDA strategy that encompasses marketing, sales, services, product development, tourism advocacy, stewardship, and resource management.
- 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.
- Investigate new funding opportunities related to tourism development, education and advocacy and promotional communications.
- Allocate annual budget resources and set effective performance resources.
- Nourish community, industry and government partnerships through a formalized community/stakeholder relations outreach plan to demonstrate tourism benefits.
- Redevelop the TDA Annual Report as a Report on Tourism to the Community to illustrate county and community benefits.
- Evaluate the need and scope of an effective visitor experience presence.



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**PLANNING BACKGROUND**

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# 2.1 Assignment Context

Haywood County, celebrated as the “Gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains,” encompasses five distinct mountain towns— Canton, Clyde, Lake Junaluska, Maggie Valley and Waynesville. The diverse natural recreational opportunities throughout the county combine with each town’s unique blend of culture and Appalachian heritage to offer an unrivaled visitor experience.

In response to significant tourism growth post-COVID, the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority (HCTDA) recognized the need for strategic direction to sustain and enhance this upward trajectory.

## Strategic PLANNING

To address this need, HCTDA launched two rigorous Request for Proposal (RFP) processes in 2023:

- One for Destination Branding Services.
- Another for the development of a comprehensive Destination Master Plan.

## Team COMPOSITION

The contract was awarded to a consortium of experts, led by Development Counselors International (DCI), and supported by long-standing tourism advisory firms: Nichols Tourism Group (NTG), Destination Consultancy Group (DCG), and Tourism Impact Services (TIS). This selection was based on their:

- Deep expertise in branding, tourism planning, product development, and research.
- Extensive experience across the Southeastern United States, particularly in North Carolina.
- Broad national insights with innovative approaches to destination stewardship and sustainability.



## **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

The Haywood County Tourism Development Authority extends its heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated community leaders who have contributed their time and expertise to the Steering Committee. Their invaluable guidance, leadership, and support have been instrumental in shaping the composition of the Destination Master Plan.

## 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

**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

**Sarah Worrell**  
**Director of Marketing &**  
**Public Relations**  
Cataloochee Ski Area

**Pratik Shah**  
**General Manager**  
Best Western Smoky  
Mountain Inn

**Bridget Shaughnessy**  
**General Manager**  
Mast General Store

## Haywood County Tourism Development Authority Board of Directors

**Jim Owens, Chair**  
**Mayor Pro Tem**  
Town of Maggie Valley

**Dr. Shelley White, Vice-Chair**  
**President**  
Haywood 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

## Haywood County Tourism Development Authority Staff

**Corrina Ruffieux, CDME, CDE®**  
**Executive Director**

**Ashley Rice, TMP**  
**Marketing Manager**

**Amie Newsome**  
**Social Media & Content Manager**

**Hayley Printz , PACE**  
**Administrative Assistant**

**Alycin Ray**  
**Marketing Coordinator**

## Advisory Team

**Don Anderson**  
**Executive Partner**  
Destination Consultancy Group

**Mitch Nichols**  
**President**  
Nichols Tourism Group

**Bobby Chappell**  
**President**  
Tourism Impact Services

**Dariel Curren**  
**Executive Vice President**  
Development Counselors  
International

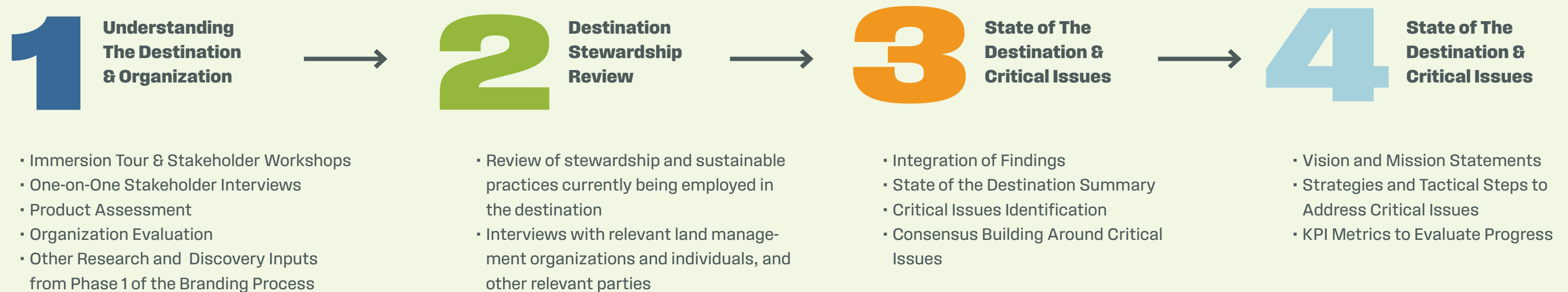


## 2.2 Planning Process

The master planning process was structured into four primary stages, aiming to develop a strategic and actionable plan to guide Haywood County's tourism from 2026 to 2035.

### Destination

#### MASTER PLANNING PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES



**This foundational work sets the stage for Haywood County to enhance its visibility and appeal as a leading outdoor and cultural destination in the region.**

## 2.3 Community Engagement

### Community ENGAGEMENT

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.**

# 2.4 Report Format

Following the Planning Background information provided in this section, the remaining report is structured as follows:

## SECTION 3

### State of the Destination Assessment

This section provides a summary of findings from an evaluation of current trends and issues affecting Haywood County’s tourism sector. It includes an overview of the destination’s performance, visitor demographics, key attractions, and sustainability efforts, leveraging insights from recent visitor surveys conducted by DCI. Additional detail in regard to these findings can be found at

<https://haywoodtda.com/tourism-brand-strategy-and-destination-master-plan>

## SECTION 4

### Destination Strategy Execution

This section outlines strategic directions for HCTDA and Haywood County based on the findings from the previous section. This includes the updated Destination Vision, HCTDA Mission Statement, and strategic Pillars developed with input from the Steering Committee. Each pillar is supported by detailed objectives, strategies, and tactics that incorporate best practices in sustainability, placemaking, and social inclusion.

## SECTION 5

### Strategy Timetable and Performance

The report concludes with a timetable for implementing the plan, metrics for evaluating its development and advocacy performance, and new funding source potential.

Presentations from committee and community sessions, where preliminary findings were discussed for feedback, are available for further review. These materials complement the report and provide a deeper understanding of the plan’s foundations and strategic directions.

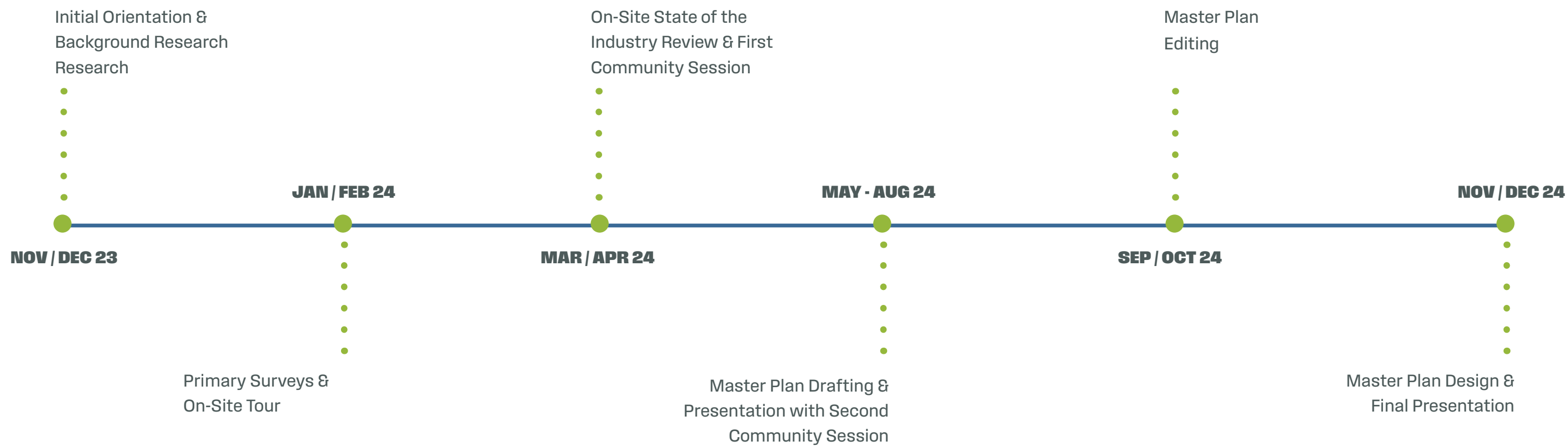


# 2.5 Assignment Timeline

The development of the Haywood County Destination Master Plan commenced in November 2023 and extended over a period of 12 months. The process included seven on-site visits, multiple meetings with HCTDA Board members, staff, the Steering Committee, and two community input sessions. Towards the end of the planning, Hurricane Helene struck in September 2024, causing significant damage throughout Haywood County. In response, a Recovery Transition Plan was outlined to meet immediate destination needs while ensuring alignment with the long-term objectives of the master plan.







3.0

STATE OF THE DESTINATION

— VISIT —  
**HAYWOOD**  
WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS





## State of the DESTINATION

Haywood County, nestled where the Great Smoky Mountains meet the Blue Ridge in Western North Carolina, offers a landscape of rugged mountains and pristine rivers, with the highest mean elevation east of the Mississippi. It is a hub for natural beauty and outdoor activities, advantageously located within a day's drive for 80% of the U.S. population. The county features the charming towns of Waynesville, Maggie Valley, Canton, Lake Junaluska, and Clyde, each contributing unique cultural and recreational experiences.





Haywood County  
is gaining popularity  
with visitiors



\$350 M

Haywood County visitor spending in 2023,  
\$960,000 a day

2131 FULL-TIME  
JOBS

Supported in Haywood County from visitor  
spending in 2023

\$11.7 M

Local taxes generated by visitor spending in 2023  
to support town and county annual budgets



**Boomers, daytrippers, weekend visitors, and summer season define visitation in Haywood County**

**TRAVELERS TEND TO PARTICIPATE IN PASSIVE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES:**

**69%**

**SCENIC DRIVES**

**34%**

**WILDLIFE  
WATCHING**

**29%**

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

**YOUNGER POTENTIAL VISITORS AND FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN ARE INTERESTED IN ARTS, CULINARY AND WATER ACTIVITIES**







**Visitors stay, play, shop & dine  
throughout the entire County**





Hotel Rooms 2023

\*10 years since most recent construction

1,806 x 47.3% = \$31M

HOTEL ROOMS

OCCUPANCY

IN REVENUE

HOTEL ROOM DISTRIBUTION:

Maggie Valley (52%), Waynesville (20%), Canton (8%), Lake Junaluska (20%)

Short Term Rentals 2023

\*81% increase in listings since 2021

1,975 x 52% = \$53M

LISTED

OCCUPANCY

IN REVENUE





# 3.1 Destination Tourism Performance

Haywood County's tourism has shown robust growth with significant visitor spending post-COVID. The region outperformed state averages, with notable resilience during the pandemic. Despite challenges in the lodging sector, where older, smaller motels/motor hotels dominate, the rise of short-term rentals has reshaped the hospitality landscape generating substantial revenue. Seasonal peaks in occupancy show potential for growth in shoulder and off-peak seasons.

## Key Insights

- Strong destination appeal post-COVID, with substantial visitor spending and economic benefits to residents.
- Short-term rentals outperform traditional transient accommodations in both occupancy and revenue.
- Potential growth opportunities in expanding visitor seasons and mid-week travel.

★ WESTERN NORTH  
★ CAROLINA MOUNTAINS ★



## 3.2 Visitor Composition and Profiles

Haywood County attracts a strong repeat visitor base, primarily independent leisure travelers and those visiting friends and family. The 2024 visitor survey highlighted strong satisfaction rates and above-state-average length of stay, underscoring the need for continual renewal of attractions. Key activities include scenic drives and outdoor experiences, with a noted potential to better engage younger visitors and expand indoor offerings.

### Key Insights

- Dominance of leisure travel with a high rate of repeat visitation.
- Opportunities to expand appeal to multigenerational demographics, small meetings markets, and mid-week travelers.
- Enhance family-friendly and indoor recreational offerings.
- Travelers widely explore Haywood County and all of its five towns, highlighting the importance of reinforcing the “Better Together” theme to encourage comprehensive exploration of the region.
- Deeper engagement with residents can help stimulate the appeal to their friends and family.





## 3.3 Visitor Products and Experiences

Haywood County offers a diverse range of visitor products and experiences. Of those, the wealth of outdoor experiences and public lands attract the most visitors. Many travelers engage with these nature-based products in passive ways, such as sightseeing and wildlife viewing. Despite the challenges posed by Hurricane Helene in Fall 2024, there remain significant opportunities to expand these outdoor experiences, especially through enhanced utilization of water-based activities along the Pigeon River. Other product themes, including the area's rich cultural heritage and family-oriented offerings, also present opportunities to deepen visitor engagement and diversify the experiences available in Haywood County.



### Key Insights

- Potential to elevate lesser recognized experiences like culture/heritage, agritourism, culinary and related events, which will broaden the attraction potential of the destination.
- Significant development opportunities exist with water-based experiences in and along the Pigeon River, Jonathan Creek and other waterways, along with Greenway development and the future evolution of the Canton/Clyde areas.
- Visitors favor passive outdoor activities like scenic drives and wildlife viewing. Activating experiences such as podcast storytelling that tells the backstory of a natural area or calling out unique vista points can enhance town connectivity and diversify the outdoor offerings in Haywood County.
- Further development and enhancements of outdoor recreation infrastructure should include specific attention to ADA-compliant design.
- More indoor products and entertainment experiences appealing to a broad range of visitors could enhance appeal throughout the year and during inclement weather days.
- Reinvestment or reuse of lodging inventories is key to increasing their appeal to today's audiences.

# 3.4 Stewardship and Sustainability Activities

Over the past two decades, sustainable destination management standards have become a trusted method for assessing stewardship and sustainability practices, helping prioritize actions for continuous improvement. As part of the planning process, the advisory team conducted an evaluation of numerous best practices, with a focus on those deemed most critical for implementation and those posing significant risk factors for the destination. Key themes included: stewardship planning, tourism asset management, community resilience, and environmental sustainability. The findings highlight both the county's strengths and areas where improvement is needed, reflecting a commitment to sustainable tourism and identifying critical areas for enhancement.

## Key Insights

- The area's strong appeal for outdoor recreation continues to attract visitors; addressing issues like visitor preparedness and parking management at high-use sites can enhance safety and visitor satisfaction.
- Establishing a stewardship council, implementing zoning regulations, and developing tourism policies offer opportunities to support sustainable growth and preserve the rural character of the destination.
- Community involvement in tourism planning is active and should remain a priority to ensure that any future development aligns with local values and needs.
- Enhancing visitor education, asset management, and sustainability monitoring will strengthen tourism management and contribute to long-term success.
- Continuous monitoring of ecosystem conservation and human-wildlife interactions, with proactive interventions as necessary, will help protect natural resources and promote biodiversity.
- Building on progress such as Waynesville's carbon neutrality goals and conservation efforts in Maggie Valley, there is potential to further develop initiatives like waste reduction and energy conservation to broaden environmental sustainability efforts.



# 3.5 HCTDA Operations and Community Engagement

The Haywood County Tourism Development Authority (HCTDA) is the official destination marketing/management organization for the county. It is governed by a 15-person Board of Directors, managed by six full-time equivalent professional staff and funded by a 4% countywide occupancy tax share on transient accommodations.

Two organization and stakeholder relations surveys were undertaken that provided the HCTDA with insights on steps to take to enhance organizational effectiveness.

Given the HCTDA's funding structure, further financial resources should be considered to ensure the opportunities outlined in the Master Plan can be effectively managed. Additionally, there is a continued need to inform and educate community stakeholders on not only the importance and value of tourism, but also on a full appreciation of the steps being undertaken to ensure long-term sustainability and stewardship.

## Key Insights

- The Master Plan will provide the HCTDA with important direction for future initiatives. The HCTDA staff and Board will need to formalize and execute an approved Operational Plan and Community Stakeholder and Resident Engagement Plan that demonstrates the activation of these initiatives.
- While there is important organizational funding in place, additional sources, especially as related to tourism development and outdoor recreation, should be identified and considered as prospective resources.
- The HCTDA should prioritize crafting new messaging to engage residents and demonstrate how they can benefit from the visitor industry.







4.0



## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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 HCTDA Mission, Destination Vision, Pillars, and Strategic Goals

A new destination vision statement and HCTDA mission statement have been crafted based on insights from the planning process and contributions from the Steering Committee. Additionally, a set of guiding principles and destination values were established to steer the implementation of the plan's initiatives.

## 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.

— VISIT —  
**HAYWOOD**  
WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS







# 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, multi-faceted 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.





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.

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.

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.

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.

Strategic Pillars and Objectives

# 4.3 Strengthen Awareness and Perceptions 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.**







## Strategy 1:

**Roll out the new brand and messaging campaign.**

### TACTIC 1

Conduct an audit of existing brand assets, including internal communications branded pieces such as email signatures, business cards, letterhead/stationery, etc., and physically branded signs and spaces. Create a timeline and plan for replacing each piece.

### TACTIC 2

Develop a key messaging guide to distribute to private sector partners and stakeholders.

### TACTIC 3

Host an internal brand launch event with relevant key stakeholders. The purpose of such an event is to both educate them on how to use the new brand and inspire/excite them on how the new/renewed brand assets will be used externally.

### TACTIC 4

Build excitement around the new brand through the creation of new merchandise.





## Strategy 2:

### Build internal brand awareness.

Arm stakeholders, partners and the private sector with tools needed to amplify the new umbrella brand, ensuring visitors are presented with a cohesive, county-wide orientation to the destination that reinforces a collective Haywood County experience.

#### TACTIC 1

Develop a digital brand toolkit that private sector partners can utilize to incorporate the new brand into their marketing and promotional efforts. The toolkit should include the brand guidelines, key messages and all logo assets for download.

#### TACTIC 2

Demonstrate how the new brand resonates across the county. Highlight how the “umbrella brand” connects all five communities and all aspects of Haywood County and educate stakeholders on how the new, cohesive brand will provide a seamless visitor experience.

#### TACTIC 3

Help the five mountain towns understand how to integrate the new brand in individual community marketing and promotion.

#### TACTIC 4

Develop a series of work sessions with community representatives to spur embracement by the private sector. Review key research findings, utilize new data and gather insights on innovative approaches to collectively reach visitors with the new messaging.











# Objective 2:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Incorporate the new Haywood County brand and messaging in all visitor engagement initiatives.**

## TACTIC 1

Integrate the updated brand identity and cohesive, umbrella key messaging across all marketing channels. Use the new messaging themes including “Your Western North Carolina Mountain Playground” and “Unfiltered and Untapped” to frame Haywood County experiences via the website, public relations, social media, digital advertising, video, and other outreach channels.





# Objective 3:

## Target high-value visitor segments.

The HCTDA has a range of data and resources that allow for a greater understanding of its visitors. These should be increasingly utilized in prioritizing outreach efforts.







## Strategy 1:

**Activate the recent visitor survey findings to increase outreach to new/different visitor segments. Focus on attracting a younger/multigenerational demographic.**

### TACTIC 1

Evaluate differences in visitor segments, such as geographic base, age characteristics or repeat visitation to more deeply investigate interests and activities to utilize in crafting messages to varying segments.

### TACTIC 2

Identify motivating experiences for the above audiences. Heavily market toward these visitor segments with new key messages via highly targeted marketing outreach channels such as paid advertising.





## Strategy 2:

**Use geo-location data to better understand spending potential and prioritize promotional efforts accordingly.**

### TACTIC 1

Identify feeder markets that hold the strongest spend potential. Consider both the source of visitors and their associated spending using the Zartico geo-location data and segment them to identify feeder markets that can provide the greatest high-value, high-spend potential.











# Objective 4:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Identify and target visitor segments like retirees, intergenerational visitors with flexible schedules, remote workers, meeting planners/delegates, etc.**

### TACTIC 1

Consider engaging lodging partners in identification. Develop a mix of outreach efforts (surveys, workshops, etc.) that can leverage insights on who is visiting mid-week.

### TACTIC 2

Analyze data from Tactic 1 to tailor marketing strategies aimed at motivating identified segments to visit during mid-week or off-season. Prioritize segments with high potential for response to HCTDA promotions, focusing on those likely to generate incremental demand. Acknowledge and strategically address segments, such as business travelers, which may have limited responsiveness to promotional efforts.





## Strategy 2:

**Consider steps that could facilitate meeting/  
conference demand interest.**

### TACTIC 1

Develop collective understanding/  
consensus of facility limitations. Work  
with venues that possess meeting space  
and realistically identify their associated  
strengths and weaknesses.

### TACTIC 2

Craft solutions that could mitigate  
challenges. Consider solutions such as  
promoting integration of group spaces,  
off-site food service options or moderate  
investments to upgrade spaces.

### TACTIC 3

Identify prioritized group targets. Based  
on results of other tactics, identify group  
meeting targets that hold the greatest  
potential and strategies to stimulate interest.











# Objective 5:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Craft messaging that speaks directly to day trippers and reinforces the activities they miss by not spending the night.**

### TACTIC 1

Use visitor profile survey findings to identify motivating experiences. The visitor profile survey identified a wide range of experiences that day visitors would like to have on a return trip. Incorporate these into messaging that reinforces why Haywood County is more than just a day trip.

### TACTIC 2

Integrate day visitor messaging in a variety of social media channels and across paid advertising efforts. Lean into digital channels to showcase why Haywood County is more than a day trip.

### TACTIC 3

Elicit real visitor experiences and use these anecdotes to provide first-person examples on social media, showcasing why Haywood County is more than just a day trip destination.





## Strategy 2:

**Develop a series of multi-day itineraries that show connectivity among the five mountain towns and demonstrate the wide array of experiences Haywood County offers.**

### TACTIC 1

Help visitors understand the multi-day opportunities by “serving up” ideas through suggested itineraries. By developing a mix of itineraries that display the many ways Haywood County can be experienced, prospective visitors will be more likely to dedicate multiple days to their trip.











# Objective 6:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Ensure responsible travel is promoted through all marketing and communication channels.**

### TACTIC 1

Dedicate resources to ensure responsible travel is a prominent theme for HCTDA. Continue to utilize resources such as Outdoor NC and Leave No Trace to craft engaging and educational content for responsible travel and outdoor recreation.





## Strategy 2:

**Promote local businesses and experiences that closely align with stewardship and sustainability principles and best practices.**

### TACTIC 1

Develop a toolkit and/or provide information to local industry stakeholders that help them adopt destination stewardship and tourism sustainable principles.

### TACTIC 2

Incentivize local stakeholders to adopt stewardship principles. Offer preferential marketing and promotion for local industry stakeholders that show significant investment and improvement in sustainable tourism outcomes.





# 4.4 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.**







## Strategy 1:

**Expand the role of the HCTDA Product Development Committee, which brings representatives from various experiences, attractions, events, and communities together on a consistent basis.**

### TACTIC 1

Redefine committee guidelines and ensure key representatives and innovative thinkers from various product areas (outdoor recreation, arts, retail, etc.) are recruited.

### TACTIC 2

Use visitor data to identify existing product connections.



## Strategy 2:

**Craft integrated experiences that embody Stewardship and the “Better Together” theme by emphasizing geographical and experiential connections across Haywood County.**

### TACTIC 1

Leverage the Product Development Committee to foster the internal adoption of the “Better Together” theme by creating experiences that showcase the synergy between different elements within the county.

### TACTIC 4

Facilitate the formation of a hospitality association encompassing lodging, restaurants, and attractions to unite operators, share insights, and collectively enhance Haywood County’s offerings.

### TACTIC 2

Promote stewardship and sustainability by encouraging the adoption of best practices into tourism operations. Elements such as environmental conservation, cultural heritage, walkability and community give-back programs have the ability to enhance the overall visitor experience and foster sustainable tourism practices.

### TACTIC 5

Initiate the development of a culinary-themed event, such as a restaurant week or similar concept, to showcase the diverse gastronomic offerings of Haywood County. Encourage collaboration among local food venues to create a unified, county-wide culinary experience.

### TACTIC 3

Explore the possibility of expanding shared transportation options across Haywood County to provide convenient, eco-friendly travel alternatives for visitors, reducing the dependency on personal vehicles.



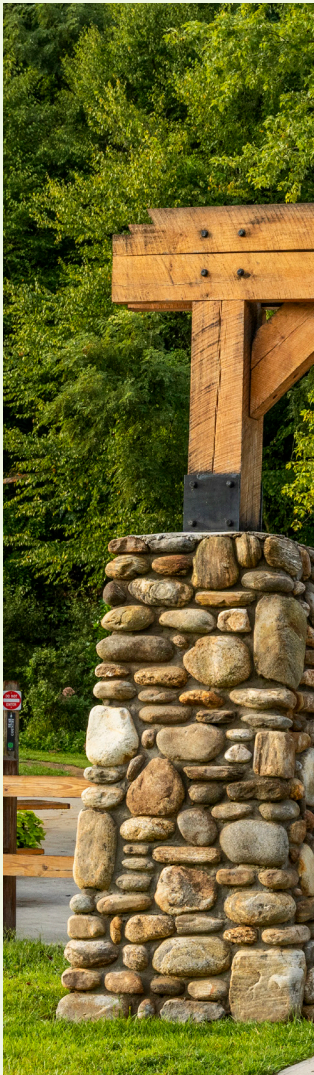






# Objective 2:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Use insights from the Pigeon River Access Evaluation to prioritize development opportunities along the waterway, adjusting for the impacts of Hurricane Helene.**

### TACTIC 1

Prioritize top opportunities from the Access Evaluation, focusing on projects that activate areas, manage crowds, or include flood mitigation.

### TACTIC 2

Identify funding sources and form partnerships aligned with flood mitigation and sustainability goals.

### TACTIC 3

Initiate construction of priority projects, starting with a pilot to gauge success and gather community feedback.





## Strategy 2:

**Identify additional recreational opportunities along Jonathan Creek, Richland Creek and other waterways, prioritizing for resident preferences.**

### TACTIC 1

Analyze potential recreational sites on Jonathan Creek and other waterways, adjusting plans based on post-Helene environmental and community needs.

### TACTIC 2

Conduct community engagement sessions to integrate resident input into water-based development plans.

### TACTIC 3

Create an integrated development plan combining community feedback with technical analysis to expand sustainable recreational opportunities and enhance resident quality of life.











# Objective 3:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Provide support to the Greenway Working Group to fund development elements that provide a vital community asset spurring sustainable economic growth.**

### TACTIC 1

Ensure the HCTDA is a prominent support voice in planning efforts by providing validated research on potential economic impact and value for tourism and identifying portions that would have the greatest power to drive interest and demonstrate early-stage success.

### TACTIC 2

Utilize findings from the Pigeon River Access Evaluation to illustrate connections between greenways and blueways that hold potential for transformational development in Haywood County.





# Objective 4:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Identify experiences with wide appeal that provide options for multigenerational families of all abilities.**

### TACTIC 1

Elevate recognition of existing family-friendly experiences like agritourism and animal outings, guided motorized tours, easy access to water-based experiences, and cultural experiences that can be experienced by visitors of all ages.

### TACTIC 2

Proactively recruit new family-oriented operators such as climbing gyms, bowling facilities, zip lining, or a children's museum that are operating in other regional destinations and demonstrate the opportunity in Haywood County.

### TACTIC 3

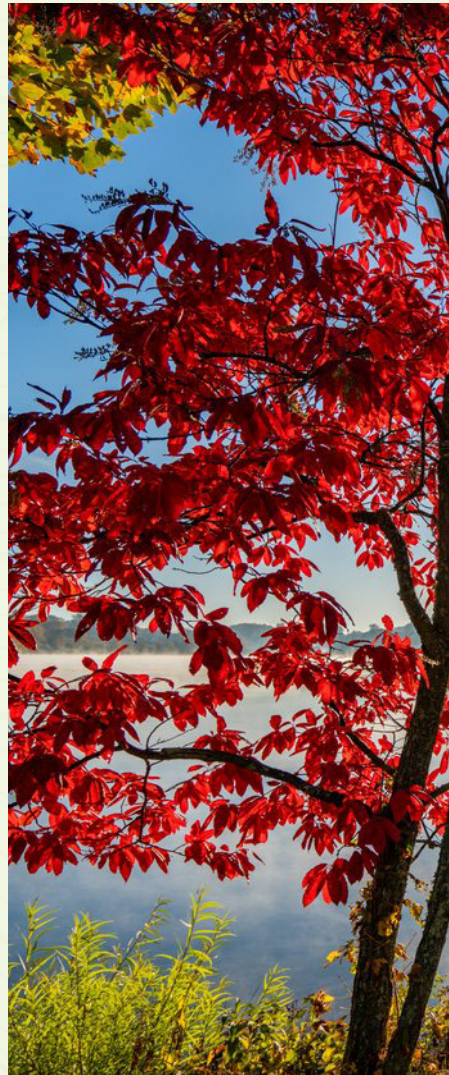
Evaluate the potential to deepen attraction of youth sporting events, expanding connections to families and enhancing facilities for county residents.





# Objective 5:

**Work to expand the array of indoor visitor experiences.**







## Strategy 1:

**Identify potential indoor products and experiences that would provide visitors opportunities during inclement weather.**

### TACTIC 1

Investigate indoor products offered by other regional destinations, such as put-put golf, art demonstration studios, bowling alleys or rock-climbing gyms.

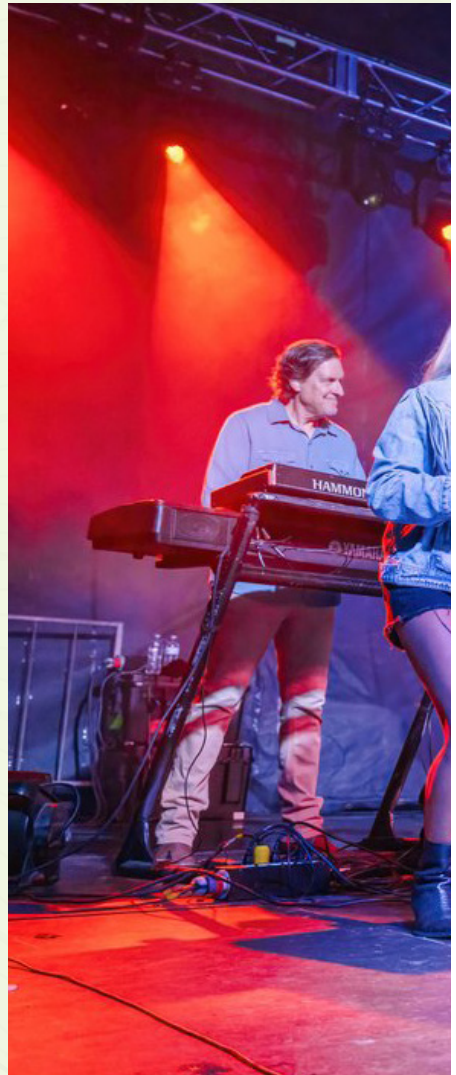
### TACTIC 2

Proactively engage with these operators and showcase the opportunities of opening facilities in Haywood County.



# Objective 6:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Consider approaches for motel/motor hotel reinvestment to align them with current visitor expectations.**

### TACTIC 1

Investigate alternatives to stimulate reinvestment (e.g., tax increment financing, tourism business improvement districts, hotel tax proceeds for use in early-stage planning and feasibility).

### TACTIC 2

Assist in the evaluation of converting properties to alternative uses such as entrepreneurial workspaces, small artisan colonies or employee housing. Determine what factors, including permitting and entitlements, would need to be considered with building conversions.

### TACTIC 3

Identify investors who can develop “homebase” models where a motor inn also updates and expands its offerings to include culinary, retail and activity experiences (e.g., Hotel Cashiers).

### TACTIC 4

Evaluate the range of properties that can host the group meeting market, identifying what enhancements would be required to increase competitiveness. Consider development of a group meetings market sales strategy that recognizes the current environment and positions the destination for future expansion in this segment.



# Objective 7:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Maintain conversations with appropriate stakeholders and provide vital resources to highlight the visitor potential of the mill site.**

### TACTIC 1

Ensure the HCTDA maintains an active dialogue with town officials. As the developers consider reuse opportunities, ensure insights from the new visitor profile survey are provided to integrate into their planning.

### TACTIC 2

The Product Development Working Group outlined in Objective 1 could be an important source of input as it includes representatives from across thematic segments who can provide ideas and concepts.





# 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.**







## Strategy 1:

**Activate existing and new products that expand outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the county in a sustainable manner.**

### TACTIC 1

Enhance visitor communications (e.g., wayfinding) that improve connections from Chestnut Mountain Nature Center to downtown Canton and other areas in Haywood County.

### TACTIC 4

Continue to monitor new trail development in Maggie Valley Sanitary District and promote as appropriate.

### TACTIC 2

Leverage the existing Forest Heritage Scenic Byway. Apply for national Scenic Byway designation through the Federal Highway Administration and open access to new funding opportunities.

### TACTIC 5

Evaluate the potential for developing a mobility hub and bus shuttle system at the I-40 exit to the national park entrance similar to other NPS units. Access should be heavily managed with an emphasis on alternative and shared transportation (e.g., open to cycling only on certain days like at Cades Cove).

### TACTIC 3

Build awareness of Raccoon Creek Bike Park and attract mountain biking events that include overnight stays, spending at local restaurants and enjoyment of local tourism attractions.

### TACTIC 6

Evaluate potential for a continuous hike along the ridgeline surrounding Haywood County and develop an ultra-endurance hiking event.



## 4.5 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.





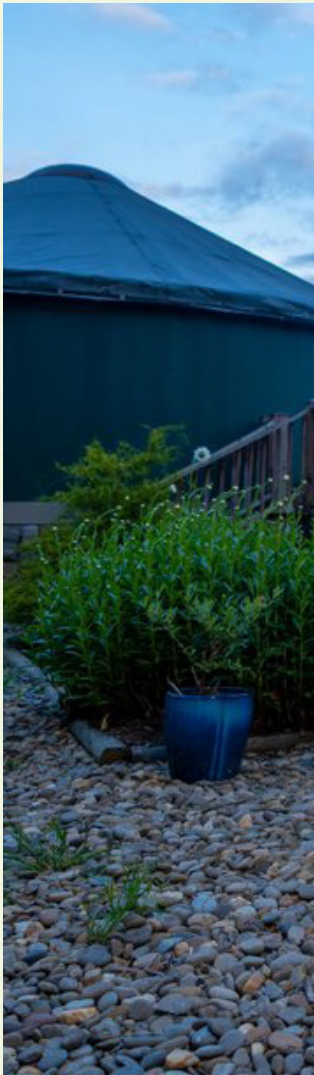






# Objective 1:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Establish a Destination Stewardship Committee to recommend initiatives that enhance community assets and promote responsible tourism.**

### TACTIC 1

Through the Haywood County TDA Board, charter a Destination Stewardship Committee with clear purpose(s), structure and reporting mechanisms to the TDA Board.

### TACTIC 2

Identify and recruit a diverse group of stakeholders, including local business owners, conservation groups, cultural heritage organizations, community organizations, public land managers, and public land partners to serve on the committee and help implement committee recommendations.

### TACTIC 3

Establish and conduct a regular meeting schedule (e.g., quarterly) with focused agendas to ensure ongoing dialogue and action.





## Strategy 2:

**Conduct a risk/resilience and destination management assessment to analyze the tourism industry's vulnerabilities and capacity to withstand various challenges as it relates to destination stewardship.**

### TACTIC 1

As a group, determine a suitable assessment approach based on the resources available. The approach could be conducting the assessment internally or engaging with external consultants.

### TACTIC 2

Once the assessment is complete, identify priorities that address key findings and implement strategies that increase resilience.







## Strategy 3:

**Develop a destination stewardship action plan using assessment findings to guide advocacy and stewardship efforts.**

### TACTIC 1

Based on the assessment findings, decide whether to create an action plan internally or engage external consultants to consolidate assessment findings, conduct additional evaluations, and shape recommendations into an actionable implementation plan.

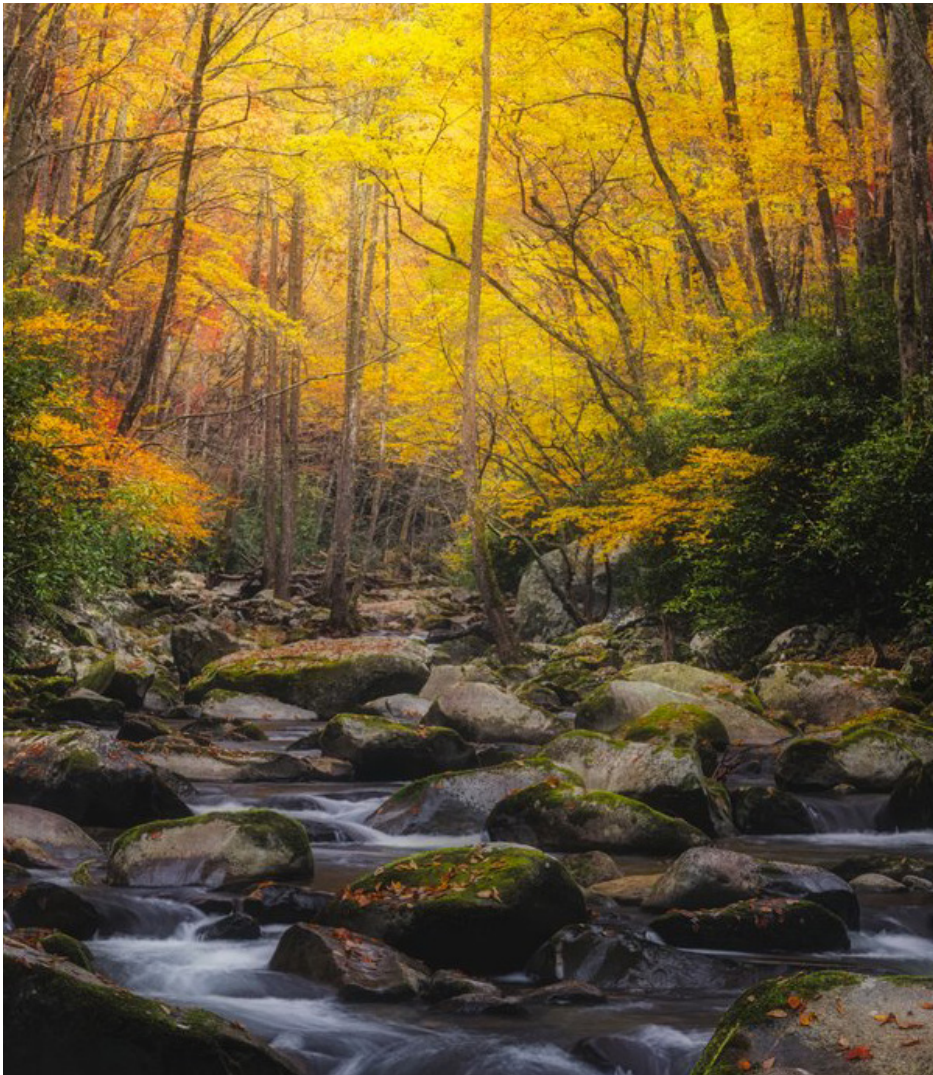
### TACTIC 3

Ensure the Destination Stewardship Committee plays a central role in crafting the action plan and implementing the recommendations.

### TACTIC 2

Use the objectives of this Pillar, the findings from the assessments, and other advocacy and stewardship resources to identify challenges, opportunities, and priorities within Haywood County.





## Strategy 4:

**Establish a stewardship fund dedicated to supporting stewardship projects and initiatives.**

### TACTIC 1

Define the purpose of the fund and clarify the specific goals and objectives to achieve in terms of stewardship and sustainability.

### TACTIC 2

Establish fund resources by allocating a portion of the lodging tax, a private sector voluntary funding campaign and/or the development of a county-wide visitor contribution program to generate funding for stewardship initiatives.

### TACTIC 3

Define clear criteria for evaluating and selecting projects and initiatives eligible for funding.









# Objective 2:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Utilize traditional and cutting-edge methodologies to collect and analyze data related to tourism activities and impacts.**

### TACTIC 1

Collect data on economic, environmental, and sociocultural indicators, expanding beyond traditional metrics. This analysis could include, but is not limited to, visitation volumes, traffic flows, search and rescue operations, data gathering and analysis from public land agencies, viewshed quality, and environmental indicators such as: water quality, water consumption, carbon emissions, trail conditions, human-wildlife interactions, and waste diversion.

### TACTIC 3

Develop a public reporting platform to share findings with stakeholders, including dashboards, trend analysis and regular reports.

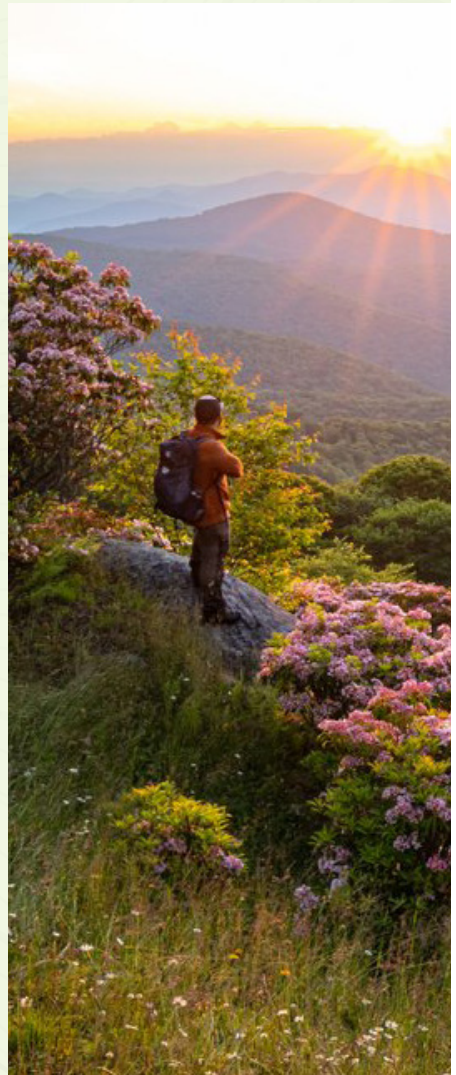
### TACTIC 2

Invest in data analysis tools and technologies to interpret and visualize the comprehensive impacts of tourism.



# Objective 3:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Engage public land managers and conservation stakeholders around the county to expand stewardship opportunities.**

### TACTIC 1

Formalize partnerships with public land managers and establish regular meetings to align on priority projects, key messaging and communication strategies.

### TACTIC 2

Communicate public land management priorities to all tourism stakeholders in the public, private, and civic sectors, ensuring they are aware of critical management and communication activities related to the county's public lands and assets.





## Strategy 2:

**Educate residents and visitors on sustainability and stewardship.**

### TACTIC 1

Develop and distribute engaging materials to educate residents and visitors on best practices for responsible outdoor recreation and public land stewardship.

### TACTIC 2

Craft outreach programs that encourage responsible behavior and highlight the importance of preserving Haywood County's natural and cultural heritage.







## Strategy 3:

**Develop a visitor management and asset stewardship approach.**

### TACTIC 1

Assess visitor flow and physical, social and ecological capacity to understand trends and impacts on public lands.

### TACTIC 2

Evaluate use and impacts on public land assets and prioritize activities that best support public land managers and ensure sustainable use and conservation.

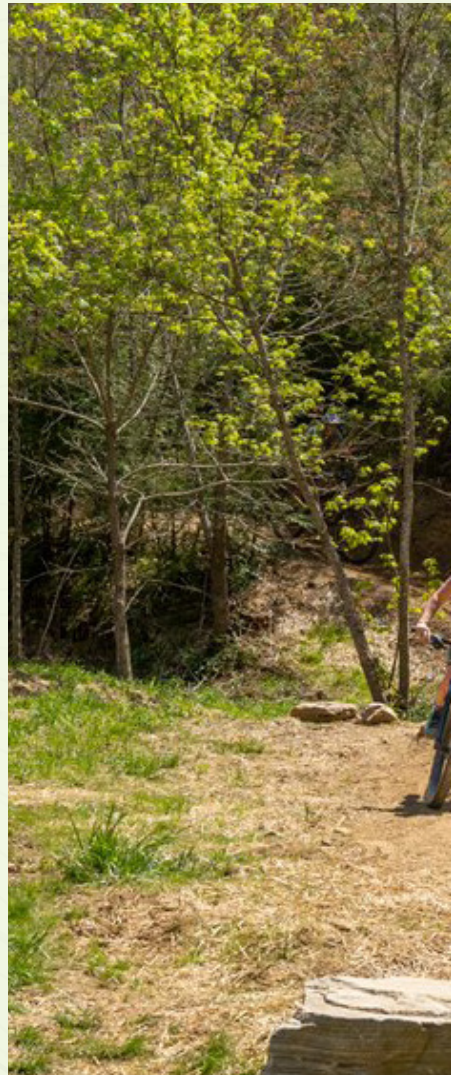
### TACTIC 3

Develop a documented approach for visitor management and asset stewardship that connects findings related to visitor flow and capacity with asset impacts.



# 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.**







## Strategy 3:

**Collaborate with public land agencies, local emergency response stakeholders, and other partners to expand communications to encourage visitor safety, reduce emergency calls and share emergency information.**

### TACTIC 1

Communicate with emergency managers and related stakeholders on a regular basis to discuss visitor safety, emergency preparedness, and related issues, and to develop appropriate communication strategies and response plans.

### TACTIC 2

Create and disseminate messaging and materials on safe recreation and emergency preparedness tailored to residents, visitors, and tourism operators.

### TACTIC 3

Develop a clear chain of command for HCTDA's coordination with local emergency services, including but not limited to distributing emergency advisories and related communications to visitors and tourism entities (e.g., severe storm warnings, landslides).



# 4.6 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.**







## Strategy 1:

**Develop an HCTDA-directed operational plan that aligns with annual destination marketing and operational activities, incorporating insights from the Destination Master Plan.**

### TACTIC 1

Secure endorsement for strategic priorities by engaging TDA staff and the Board of Directors. Prioritize key programs and projects for the next several years, covering destination promotion, development, advocacy, and resource management goals.

### TACTIC 2

Create a formal annual TDA destination marketing and business plan. This plan should target new and enhanced meeting and leisure travel segments and include detailed action plans for tourism development, advocacy, and resource management activities.



## **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.**



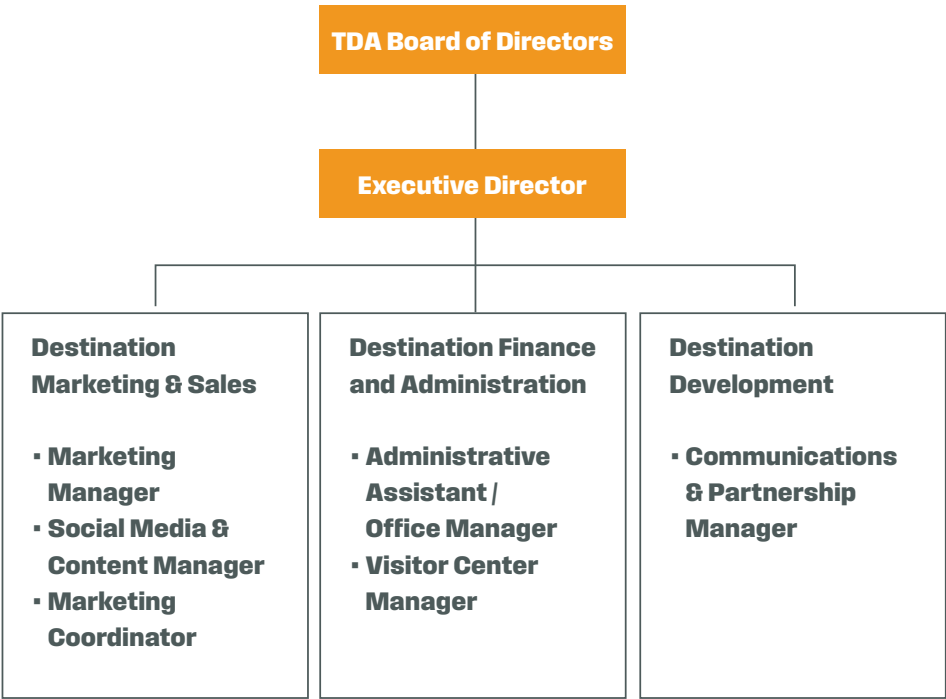
# Strategy 1:

Evaluate and endorse refined organization charts with related staffing and Board committee needs.

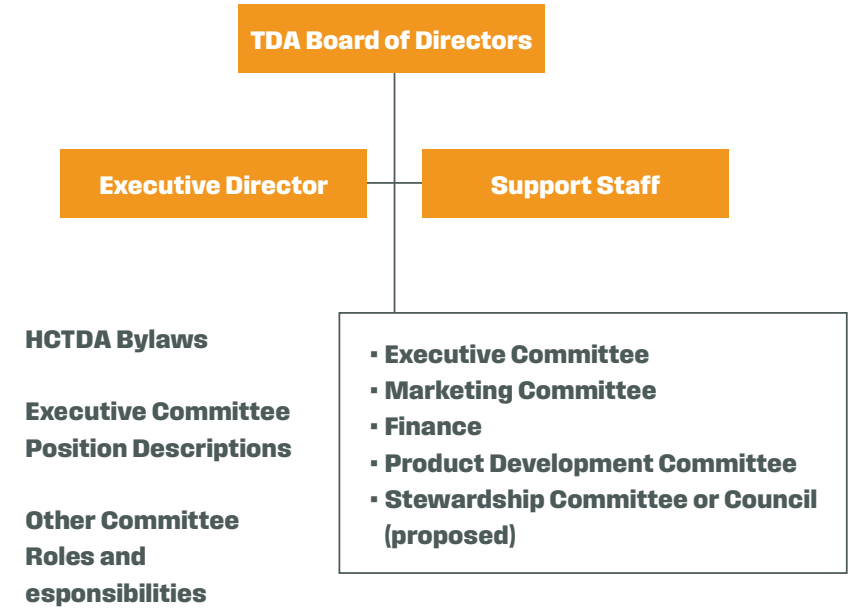
## TACTIC 1

Adjust the organization chart to align with HCTDA’s enhanced roles, focusing on tourism development, placemaking, and stakeholder communications. Introduce a new role, tentatively titled Communications & Partnership Manager, to support the Executive Director in community relations and tourism facility development. Additionally, refine Board Committee structures to ensure they provide effective advisory support to HCTDA staff. Proposed realigned organization charts are shown graphically below.

Proposed Realigned HCTDA Organization Chart



Proposed Realigned HCTDA Board of Directors Committee Organization Chart



## TACTIC 2

Draft and refine job descriptions for staff, board members committees and committee chairpersons to reflect their roles in executing the HCTDA’s priority strategies and activities, emphasizing clear expectations and accountability.





# Objective 3:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Determine available government and non-profit foundation grant funding with focus on tourism development and marketing.**

### TACTIC 1

Identify federal, state and not-for-profit foundation financial assistance programming relative to tourism with best alternatives for application in the near future.





## Strategy 2:

**Evaluate the formation of an HCTDA 501 (c) 3 charitable foundation to maximize advocacy opportunities for the organization.**

### TACTIC 1

Retain legal counsel to assess recommendations based on background information internally prepared on “cause” funding for tourism activities related to research and planning, capital development and advocacy/community engagement.







## Strategy 3:

**Identify and undertake initial approaches in forming lucrative nontax partnerships.**

### TACTIC 1

Leverage resources in destination development and communications through mutually supportive capacity-building private sector opportunities to determine best corporate and institutional entity partnerships and present with formal professional proposals.





# Objective 4:

**Allocate annual budget resources and set effective performance resources.**







## Strategy 1:

**Prepare annual budgets related to successive HCTDA operational plan priority initiatives and develop an ongoing performance results dashboard.**

### TACTIC 1

Hold regular internal meetings to discuss strategy and operational plan priorities. Allocate appropriate means to initiatives that provide optimal economic impact and effective stewardship.

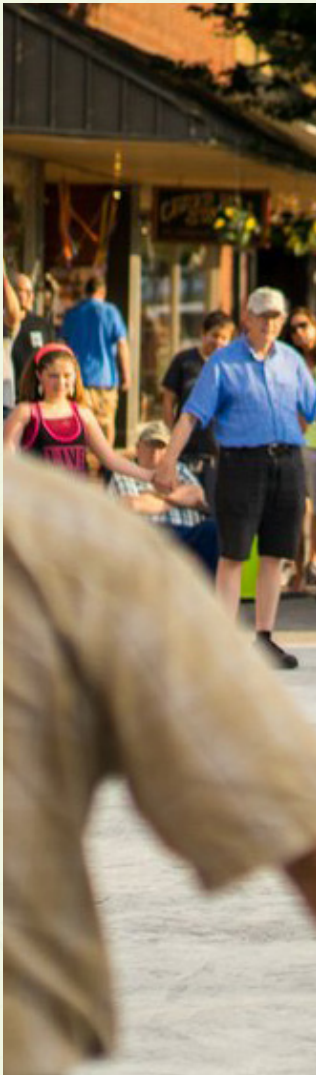
### TACTIC 2

Provide destination development and advocacy performance measurements based on benchmark results to demonstrate current success. There are a variety of suggested benchmarking metrics presented in Section 5. Report future performance outcomes on a dashboard with both destination and HCTDA metrics that are results-based, not just activity-based.



# Objective 5:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Prepare an outreach plan with specified stakeholder audiences and related informative and influential key activities.**

### TACTIC 1

Identify primary visitor industry proponents and public officials with agreement on influential messaging to support tourism benefits and the HCTDA as lead agency.

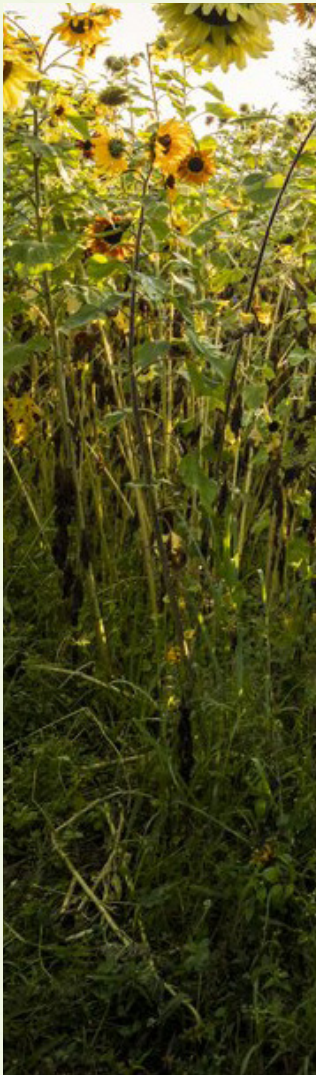
### TACTIC 2

Identify key communication program actions with expected results from their execution



# Objective 6:

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







## Strategy 1:

### Prepare a meaningful annual Community Report on Tourism.

#### TACTIC 1

Redesign the HCTDA Annual Report for community stakeholders and residents to clearly state current and strategic leadership initiatives undertaken. Include customized local tourism champion profiles and reinforce the importance of them inviting friends and relatives to experience Haywood County.

#### TACTIC 2

Communicate the importance and value of tourism to resident households in layperson terms. Be sure to report on new strategic tourism initiatives, HCTDA influential activities, and destination-enacted results and benefits to the community.





# Objective 7:

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







## Strategy 1:

**Conduct a comprehensive assessment of current and future visitor service needs to determine the most effective format for a visitor experience center in Haywood County.**

### TACTIC 1

Conduct surveys and focus groups with visitors and local stakeholders to assess their preferences for visitor service formats—permanent center, mobile units, or digital kiosks—and determine the most appealing features and necessary services for each option.

### TACTIC 2

Perform a location analysis to identify strategic spots for a permanent visitor center or digital kiosks based on visitor traffic patterns, accessibility, and visibility. Explore the feasibility of a mobile visitor center that could attend major events or rotate through high-traffic areas.

### TACTIC 3

Analyze financial and operational implications for each visitor service format, including initial investment, ongoing maintenance, staffing needs, and potential revenue streams.





## Strategy 2:

**Develop a phased implementation plan based on the assessment findings to effectively enhance the visitor experience.**

### TACTIC 1

Create a detailed plan that outlines the steps to develop the chosen visitor service format(s), including timelines, budget forecasts, and key performance indicators for monitoring progress.

### TACTIC 2

Explore partnerships with local businesses and stakeholders to enhance the visitor experience center's offerings, such as local art displays, historical exhibits, or interactive technology that showcases local attractions.

### TACTIC 3

Develop a marketing strategy to promote the new visitor service facilities, highlighting their convenience, information availability, and added value to both tourists and the local community.









5.0



**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	Priority Strategies
<b>4.3 Objective 1</b> Launch the new Visit Haywood brand and Unfiltered campaign internally to align stakeholders.	Roll out the new brand and messaging campaign.  Build internal brand awareness.
<b>4.3 Objective 3</b> 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.
<b>4.3 Objective 6</b> Establish stewardship messaging and promotion as part of the destination’s brand voice.	Ensure responsible travel is promoted through all marketing and communication channels.
<b>4.5 Objective 1</b> 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.
<b>4.5 Objective 4</b> 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.
<b>4.6 Objective 1</b> 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 operations activities and utilizes outcomes from the Destination Master Plan.
<b>4.6 Objective 2</b> 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.
<b>4.6 Objective 4</b> 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

## Priority Strategies

**4.4 Objective 2**

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

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 stakeholder 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.





HCTDA Destination Master Plan Time Schedule			
Goal Pillars & Objectives	ST	MT	LT
Launch the new Visit Haywood brand and Unfiltered campaign internally to align stakeholders.  Support Partners: VIB, COHC	■		
Strengthen external awareness and perceptions of Haywood County as a place to visit.  Support Partners: COHC	■	■	
Target high-value visitor segments.  Support Partners: COHC	■	■	■
Attract visitor segments that have flexibility and interest in traveling mid-week and/or off-season.  Support Partners: COHC			■
Understand the profiles of day trippers and identify elements that could convert them to overnight guests.  Support Partners: COHC			■
Establish stewardship messaging and promotion as part of the destination’s brand voice.  Support Partners: LMA, CE, COHC	■		

Develop a phased implementation plan based on the assessment findings to

ST: Short Term 2026 - 2028 (3 years)  
MT: Mid-Term 2029 - 2032 (4 years)  
LT: Long Term 2033 - 2035 (3 years)

Partner Key	
HCTDA	Haywood County Tourism Development Authority (staff and/or Board)
VIB	Visitor Industry Businesses
COHC	Communities of Haywood County
SG	State Government
LMA	Land Management Agencies
CE	Conservation Entities
LLE	Local Law Enforcement
HCSAR	Haywood County Search and Rescue



HCTDA Destination Master Plan Time Schedule			
Goal Pillars & Objectives	ST	MT	LT
Enhance cross-county tourism by strengthening collaboration among tourism businesses to develop interconnected experiences under the “Better Together” theme.  <b>Support Partners: VIB, LMA</b>		■	■
Enhance the variety and quality of water-based experiences along the Pigeon River and other key waterways in Haywood County.  <b>Support Partners: COHC, CE, LMA</b>		■	■
Support continued forward momentum of the Haywood County Greenway Master Plan to prioritize segments, find funding, and commence building.  <b>Support Partners: COHC, CE, LMA</b>		■	■
Identify additional family-friendly products that would strengthen the Haywood County experience.  <b>Support Partners: VIB, COHC</b>		■	■
Work to expand the array of indoor visitor experiences.  <b>Support Partners: VIB, COHC</b>		■	■
Stimulate initiatives to revitalize aging lodging inventories, increasing their productivity and attracting new visitor segments.  <b>Support Partners: VIB, COHC</b>		■	■
Ensure a visitor perspective is considered in the reuse planning of the Canton Mill evolution.  <b>Support Partners: COHC</b>		■	■
Advocate for outdoor recreation projects that are in line with the destination vision for sustainable growth and can have immediate return on investment.  <b>Support Partners: All</b>		■	■

Diversify Tourism Product Offerings and Experiences that Enhance the Destination

ST: Short Term 2026 - 2028 (3 years)  
MT: Mid-Term 2029 - 2032 (4 years)  
LT: Long Term 2033 - 2035 (3 years)

Partner Key

- HCTDA

VIB

COHC

SG

LMA

CE

LLE

HCSAR
- Haywood County Tourism Development Authority (staff and/or Board)

Visitor Industry Businesses

Communities of Haywood County

State Government

Land Management Agencies

Conservation Entities

Local Law Enforcement

Haywood County Search and Rescue





## HCTDA Destination Master Plan Time Schedule

Goal Pillars & Objectives	ST	MT	LT
<p>Establish a Destination Stewardship Committee, comprised of local stakeholders, to identify and address needs related to natural and cultural resources and outdoor recreation.</p> <p><b>Support Partners: All</b></p>	■		
<p>Institute a comprehensive tourism monitoring and reporting system to enhance the scope and quality of tourism impact evaluation.</p> <p><b>Support Partners: All</b></p>		■	■
<p>Enhance visitor and asset management systems to ensure the long-term sustainability of natural and cultural resources.</p> <p><b>Support Partners: LMA, CE</b></p>			■
<p>Co-develop an emergency communication and response plan for tourism to ensure the safety of visitors through robust emergency preparedness and response strategies.</p> <p><b>Support Partners: LLE, HCSAR</b></p>	■	■	■

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

ST: Short Term 2026 - 2028 (3 years)  
MT: Mid-Term 2029 - 2032 (4 years)  
LT: Long Term 2033 - 2035 (3 years)

### Partner Key

HCTDA	Haywood County Tourism Development Authority (staff and/or Board)
VIB	Visitor Industry Businesses
COHC	Communities of Haywood County
SG	State Government
LMA	Land Management Agencies
CE	Conservation Entities
LLE	Local Law Enforcement
HCSAR	Haywood County Search and Rescue







HCTDA Destination Master Plan Time Schedule			
Goal Pillars & Objectives	ST	MT	LT
<p>Develop and garner support for a comprehensive, multi-year TDA strategy that encompasses marketing, sales, services, product development, tourism advocacy, stewardship, and resource management.</p> <p><b>Support Partners: VIB</b></p>	■		
<p>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.</p> <p><b>Support Partners: VIB</b></p>	■	■	
<p>Investigate new funding opportunities related to tourism development, education and advocacy and promotional communications.</p> <p><b>Support Partners: SG, COHC, VIB</b></p>		■	
<p>Allocate annual budget resources and set effective performance resources.</p> <p><b>Support Partners: VIB</b></p>	■	■	■
<p>Nourish community, industry and government partnerships through a formalized community/stakeholder relations outreach plan to demonstrate tourism benefits.</p> <p><b>Support Partners: COHC, SG, VIB</b></p>		■	
<p>Redevelop the TDA Annual Report as a Report on Tourism to the Community to illustrate county and community benefits.</p> <p><b>Support Partners: SG, COHC, VIB</b></p>	■		
<p>Evaluate the need and scope of an effective visitor experience presence.</p> <p><b>Support Partners: COHC, VIB</b></p>		■	

## Enhance HCTDA Evolution While Cultivating Community Engagement and Collaboration

ST: Short Term 2026 - 2028 (3 years)  
MT: Mid-Term 2029 - 2032 (4 years)  
LT: Long Term 2033 - 2035 (3 years)

### Partner Key

HCTDA	Haywood County Tourism Development Authority (staff and/or Board)
VIB	Visitor Industry Businesses
COHC	Communities of Haywood County
SG	State Government
LMA	Land Management Agencies
CE	Conservation Entities
LLE	Local Law Enforcement
HCSAR	Haywood County Search and Rescue



# 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
<b>Goal 1</b>  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.  <b>Area of Focus</b>  Increase high value segments, build mid-week & off-season demand	Track average visitor spend Increase overnight stays in mid-week and off season          Economic impact indices	Visitor surveys Lodging data          Visit NC economic data
<b>Goal 2</b>  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.  <b>Area of Focus</b>  Expand cross county product integration, increase use and embrace of water based recreation	Number of product offerings showcasing linked experiences across County          Number of new places for residents and visitors to safely access the water	Annual product inventory          Product inventory
<b>Goal 3</b>  Advance sustainable tourism and natural resources with initiatives that include educational campaigns and partnerships with local groups for conservation efforts  <b>Area of Focus</b>  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
<b>Goal 4</b>  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.  <b>Area of Focus</b>  Demonstrate integration of Master Plan in annual operations, investigate new funding opportunities	Number of Master Plan tactics aligned with annual operational activities          TDA funding resources	Analysis of tactical implementation in operational plan          Operational plan TDA funding level and sources



# 5.3 Funding Source Opportunities

A variety of potential funding sources could be investigated to assist in the Master Plan implementation. The following lists a mix of Federal, State, Regional Non-Profit, and Local Government and Affiliated Programs funding sources that could be considered.





Federal Funding Opportunities

1. Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)
  - Grant Amount: Varies, typically \$100,000 to \$500,000, with a 20%-50% match required.
  - Summary: Supports economic development in the Appalachian region, including outdoor recreation infrastructure, tourism, workforce training, and sustainability projects.
  - Potential Projects: Recreation facilities, tourism promotion, workforce development for recreation-related jobs.
2. Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
  - Grant Amount: Up to \$5 million per project, with a 50% match required.
  - Summary: Provides matching grants to state and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities.
  - Potential Projects: Parks, trails, greenways, public land acquisition for outdoor recreation.
3. Department of Transportation (DOT) – Recreational Trails Program (RTP)
  - Grant Amount: Up to \$200,000 per project, with a 20% match required.
  - Summary: Provides funding for the development and maintenance of recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized trail uses.
  - Potential Projects: Construction and maintenance of trails, trailhead facilities, and accessibility improvements.
4. Economic Development Administration (EDA) – Economic Adjustment Assistance Strategy and Implementation Grants
  - Grant Amount: Typically, \$150,000 to \$1 million, with a 20%-50% match required.
  - Summary: Provides funding for economic adjustment and resilience strategies, including tourism and outdoor recreation.
  - Potential Projects: Outdoor recreation infrastructure, tourism development, flood mitigation infrastructure.
5. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Recreation Economy for Rural Communities
  - Grant Amount: No direct funding; offers technical assistance.
  - Summary: Provides assistance to rural communities looking to leverage outdoor recreation for economic development.
  - Potential Projects: Recreation planning, community engagement, development of outdoor recreation hubs.
6. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRiC) Program
  - Grant Amount: Up to \$50 million per project, with a cost share required.
  - Summary: Provides funding for hazard mitigation projects to reduce risks from natural disasters.
  - Potential Projects: Floodplain restoration, green infrastructure, stormwater management in recreational areas.

7. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – National Scenic Byways Program
  - Grant Amount: Typically, up to \$1 million per project, though larger projects may receive more funding.
  - Summary: Provides funding for the development, enhancement, and promotion of scenic byways across the United States.
  - Potential Projects: Development of scenic pull-offs, interpretive signage, visitor centers, and other infrastructure improvements along designated scenic byways; marketing and promotion of byways to boost tourism; preservation and conservation efforts along the byway corridor.
8. National Park Service (NPS) – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)
  - Grant Amount: No direct funding; provides technical assistance.
  - Summary: Offers support for trail development, conservation, and park improvements.
  - Potential Projects: Trail planning, community park enhancements, conservation corridor development.
9. U.S. Forest Service (USFS) – Community Forest Program
  - Grant Amount: Up to \$600,000 per project, with a 50% match required.
  - Summary: Provides funding for the acquisition of forestland for community use.
  - Potential Projects: Forestland acquisition, conservation, development of community forests for recreation.
- 10.USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
  - Grant Amount: Varies by project.
  - Summary: Provides financial and technical assistance for conservation projects, including those tied to recreation.
  - Potential Projects: Watershed protection, restoration, and conservation of natural resources for recreational uses.
11. USDA Rural Development – Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program
  - Grant Amount: Varies; matching funds required depending on project specifics.
  - Summary: Provides funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas.
  - Potential Projects: Development of community parks, recreational facilities, and infrastructure that supports tourism and outdoor recreation.





## State Funding Opportunities

### 1. North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)

- Grant Amount: Up to \$500,000 per project, with a 50% match required.
- Summary: Provides matching grants for park and recreation development.
- Potential Projects: Park improvements, land acquisition for recreation, public beach access.

### 2. Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

- Grant Amount: Typically, between \$10,000 and \$200,000 per project, with a 25% match required.
- Summary: RTP provides funding for the development, maintenance, and improvement of recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized trail uses. This program covers trail construction, land acquisition, and associated legal, environmental, and permitting costs.
- Potential Projects: Construction of new hiking or biking trails in rural or urban areas; Maintenance and rehabilitation of existing trails to improve safety and accessibility; Installation of trail signage, rest areas, and educational displays.
- Purchase of trail maintenance tools or equipment.

### 3. North Carolina Land and Water Fund (NCLWF)

- Grant Amount: Up to \$2 million per project.
- Summary: Provides grants for land conservation, water quality improvement, and natural habitat protection.
- Potential Projects: Conservation easements, watershed restoration, land acquisition for public recreation.

### 4. North Carolina Great Trails State Program (2023)

- Grant Amount: Total \$25 million available for trail projects across North Carolina.
- Summary: Supported the development of trails, greenways, and multi-use paths throughout the state.
- Potential Projects: Construction of new trails, expansion of existing trail networks.

### 5. Accessibility for Parks (AFP) Grant Program

- Grant Amount: Up to \$500,000 per project, with a minimum 1:5 match (local funds must be at least \$1 for every \$5 in grant funds).
- Summary: The AFP Grant Program provides \$12.5 million in matching grants for parks and recreation facilities specifically designed to benefit people living with disabilities in North Carolina. The program funds the construction of new facilities or adaptation of existing ones to enhance accessibility for people with various disabilities, ensuring inclusivity in outdoor recreational activities.
- Potential Projects: Construction of accessible playgrounds, ramps, and trails designed for wheelchair users; Modification of existing park facilities to comply with ADA standards, such as adding accessible restrooms and parking areas; Installation of specialized equipment in recreational areas that allow people with physical disabilities to participate in sports or outdoor activities.

### 6. Complete the Trails Program

- Grant Amount: Varies based on project needs and available funding.
- Summary: This program funds the planning, construction, promotion, and maintenance of state-designated trails in North Carolina. The goal is to complete trail segments that connect larger networks and increase access to outdoor recreation.
- Potential Projects: Development of new trail segments for the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail; Infrastructure improvements to enhance the user experience on existing state trails; Marketing and promotional campaigns to increase trail use and awareness.

### 7. NC Integrated Mobility Division

- Grant Amount: Varies depending on project scope
- Summary: The Integrated Mobility Division provides grants to support sustainable transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, as well as public transit infrastructure.
- Potential Projects: construction of pedestrian and bicycle paths, transit infrastructure improvements, connectivity enhancements between recreation and public transportation networks







**Regional Non-Profit Funding Opportunities**

- 1. Golden LEAF Foundation
  - Grant Amount: Up to \$1.5 million per project.
  - Summary: Focuses on economic development in rural North Carolina, particularly in areas impacted by job loss.
  - Potential Projects: Tourism infrastructure, outdoor recreation facilities, workforce development programs.
- 2. Dogwood Health Trust
  - Grant Amount: Varies, typically \$50,000 to \$500,000.
  - Summary: Focuses on improving health and well-being in Western North Carolina, including through recreation projects.
  - Potential Projects: Park and greenway development, health-related outdoor initiatives.
- 3. Southwestern Commission
  - Grant Amount: Up to \$50,000 for planning and technical assistance; higher for infrastructure.
  - Summary: Provides funding for regional planning and development in Southwestern North Carolina.
  - Potential Projects: Trail networks, green infrastructure, regional tourism initiatives.

**Local Government and Affiliated Programs**

- 1. County Commissioners and Departments of Economic Development
  - Summary: Local government bodies that may provide funding or support for projects related to economic development, including tourism and outdoor recreation.
  - Potential Projects: Infrastructure improvements, business development related to recreation, community planning initiatives.
- 2. Economic Development Districts
  - Summary: Regional entities that support economic development, often with a focus on creating jobs and improving infrastructure.
  - Potential Projects: Regional trail systems, tourism hubs, and public-private partnerships for recreation development.
- 3. Town Councils and Workforce Investment Boards
  - Summary: Local governance and workforce bodies that may offer funding or support for projects related to community development and workforce training.
  - Potential Projects: Workforce training programs for outdoor recreation, local park development, and community engagement in recreation planning.



# 5.4 Documentation Review

Haywood County Visitor Research, 2022	National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountain National Park, Haywood County Visitation, 2023
Haywood County Tourism Long-term Destination Plan, 2023	Profile of North Carolina Occupancy Taxes and Their Investment, 2023
Syneva Economics Evergreen Mill Closing Economic Impacts, 2023	Bureau of Economic Analysis, Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, 2020-2023
Chestnut Mountain Nature Park Master Plan	NC State Legislation (ATAX spending)
Destination Promotion: A Catalyst for Community Vitality, Destinations International, 2023-2024	State of the Destination Master Planning PowerPoint Reference Notes Files, TCDA master Planning Steering Committee and Board of Directors, 2024
Waynesville 2025 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, 2022	Various Local News Articles from The Mountaineer, Smoky Mountain News, WLOS, Citizen Times (Asheville) and Transylvania Times (Brevard), 2023-2024
Town of Maggie Valley Comprehensive Plan, 2023	Various Public, Private, and Civic Organization Website Analyses, 2024
Canton Land Use Plan, 2022	Various TCTDA Promotional Collateral Review, 2024
Haywood County Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan, 2022	
Haywood County Strategic Listening Post Exercise Final Report, 2024	
Haywood County Greenway Plan, 2023	
Haywood County TDA Annual Report, 2023	
LeadDESTINATION Development/Community Relations Survey Results, 2024	
LeadDO (Destination Organization) leadership Survey Results, 2024	
Mountain IDEAL, Sustainable Destination Management Standard, 2024	
Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, Blue Ridge Rising Action Plan, 2024	
Made x Mtns WNC, Building Outdoor Communities, 2023-24	
North Carolina Great Trails State Plan, 2022	
National Park Service, National Parks Visitor Spending Effects, 2020-23	









— VISIT —  
**HAYWOOD**  
WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS

