



GASTON COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA

GASTON COUNTY TRAVEL & TOURISM
FY 2022 DESTINATION MARKETING & BUSINESS PLAN

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL
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Glossary of Terms

B-leisure: combined business-leisure segment opportunity to influence current business travelers on destination leisure activities pre- or post- or in the future

Brand Experience: differentiated destination “buy” presence based on a county/community visitor promise and key messages, and typically expressed through brand identity creative

Business Development: sales and services programming related to leisure, business and group travel

Challenges: current top opportunity and/or problem areas to be recognized and resolved

DO: destination organization, also known as a destination marketing/management organization (DMO) and a convention & visitors bureau (CVB)

Leisure Travel: discretionary pleasure/vacation and visiting friends and relatives travel

Mission: organization primary purpose and expected results

Partner Promise: benefits value proposition to hotel assessment members and community/visitor partners

Priority Initiatives: immediate programs and/or projects to be seriously considered for execution given necessary resources in place

Strategic Goals: long-term qualitative statement to be achieved in concert with tactical and quantifiable objective statements

Strategic Results: measurable outcomes given relevant quantifiable metrics

Tourism Advisory Board: appointed volunteer body of committed proponents providing community and industry non-binding counsel on tourism/hospitality needs, issues and future directions

Tourism Product: supply parameter covering visitor facility/venue and services experiential development including programming and packaging as required

Values: organization operating norms on how things are done philosophically and through best practices usage

VFR: visiting friends and relatives market segment where persuasive communications engage current and/or past residents on the destination’s attractions, events and activities

Visitor Conversion: percentage of potential influenced visitors to arrive at a destination

Visitor Demand: measurable level of visitor volume typically by number of persons or trips and related spending

Vision: organization future aspirational role(s)

Visitor Promise: benefits value proposition to business, leisure/visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and personal travelers



Three-Year Strategic Destination Plan

FY 2022-2024

Our DO Purpose and Direction

Mission

Optimize Gaston County brand experiences to drive visitation and partner economic growth.

Destination Organization Vision 2030

Realize the destination vision through effective collaborative execution of impactful priority promotion, product development and partnership initiatives.

Destination Vision 2030

Be the Piedmont's premier outdoor recreation destination.

Our DO Culture

Values

- Collaborative
- Productive
- Civil
- Hospitable
- Adaptable
- Resourceful



Our Destination/DO Challenges

Heightened Tourism Partner Communications:

Formalized strategy to enhance ongoing dialogue and form mutually beneficial industry and community partnerships

Enhanced Destination Development Growth:

Coordinated partner-vested tourism product strategy/master plan with agreed-to activated destination vision

Increased Public Relations and Media Engagement:

Proactive tourism and DO value messaging with regular media communications programming

Destination Brand Strategy Alignment:

Consumer research results strategy to provide consistent and differentiated positioning and organization identity platform

Focused Advisory Board Leadership:

Increased influential support with agreed-to community relations and industry input roles and responsibilities

Visitor Promise

Provide on-demand destination guidance on Gaston County brand experiences.

Partner Promise

Facilitate business development opportunities and education.



Three-Year Strategic Destination Plan

Mission, Strategic Goals & Priority Initiatives

Our Mission Focus	Drive Visitor Demand	Enhance the Visitor Experience	Communicate Relevancy and Viability	
Our Strategic Goals	Targeted Destination Sales and Marketing Presence	Impactful Destination Management	Influential Destination Partnership	Effective DO Performance
Our Priority Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Digital/social media marketing program investment (FY22-FY24) ➤ Meetings and sports market pipeline update (FY22-FY24) ➤ Leisure travel focus on Outdoor recreation (FY22-FY24) ➤ Dedicated VFR and Alumni program (FY22-FY24) ➤ Expanded community tourism partnerships with municipalities (FY22-FY24) ➤ Revised segmented/measurable destination sales & marketing plan execution (FY22-FY24) ➤ Permanent virtual visitor inquiry center (FY22-24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tourism product development opportunity tracking in conjunction with county departments, community non-profits and municipalities (FY22-FY24) ➤ Community Tourism Action Plan development and execution with municipal TDAs (FY22-FY24) ➤ Themed trail creation, planning & review (FY22-FY24) ➤ Website event/content/trip itinerary updates (FY22-FY24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stakeholder communications (FY22-FY24) ➤ Proactive research-based tourism advocacy strategy (FY22-FY24) ➤ Partners in Tourism regularly scheduled events (FY22-FY24) ➤ Earned media coverage focused on destination partners (FY22-FY24) ➤ Gaston Sports Travel Alliance growth and event support (FY22-FY24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strategic plan updates aligned to annual destination marketing plan with budget allocation (FY22-FY24) ➤ Advisory Board and Travel & Tourism department professional development program (FY22-FY24) ➤ Advisory Board orientation, bylaws and policy updates (FY22-FY24) ➤ Updated results coverage and reporting (FY22-FY24)

Our 2024 Strategic Results Coverage

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| ➤ County estimated total visitor expenditures | ➤ Key destination website analytical metrics reporting | ➤ Earned travel media exposure value estimate | ➤ Lodging demand estimated growth projections |
| ➤ Leisure visitor inquiry contact database total with estimated conversion rate | ➤ Social media engagement interactions reporting | ➤ Volume of group visitor business specific to meetings/conferences, sports events and group/student tour leads with estimated occupied room nights | ➤ Stakeholder tourism/DO awareness indices |



Drive Demand, Enhance Experiences, Communicate Value

The enclosed updated FY2022 Destination Marketing and Business Plan for Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism is aligned to the strategic direction and priority initiatives from the original FY2020-FY2022 Gaston County Strategic Destination Plan schematic and rationale report document. This plan arose from Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism Staff and Advisory Board input during March 2019 and derived support from the Gaston County Board of Commissioners in an August 2019 Department Director and Advisory Board Chair presentation.

The details included in Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism's annual program of work pursue the agreed-to destination organization (DO) vision, mission and long-term goals described in the strategic plan. This 12-month implementation schedule of actions supporting priority focus areas, along with measurable objectives and trackable results to denote progress, all emanate from our ongoing three-year destination strategic plan.

Throughout 2020 and the COVID -19 pandemic an increased interest in outdoor recreation took place which is unlikely to subside anytime in the near future. Many of our hotel partners have also reported seeing an uptick in their share of room demand from the leisure traveler market. Gaston County is well-positioned for outdoor enjoyment. Whether biking, camping, boating, climbing, paddling, fishing, golf, trail use or greenway use, we have numerous natural places and experiences to offer recreation enthusiasts residing within a 300-mile radius of our destination. Target markets include metropolitan areas from Richmond, VA to Atlanta, GA along I-85 and Charleston, WV to Columbia, SC along I-77.

In these various cities, we also have an opportunity to broaden our appeal among a more diverse demographic audience, particularly in the African-American community. In the coming year we strive to be more equitable, inclusive and welcoming in our promotional messaging as so much of our advertising will hit larger than average black populations in Atlanta, Richmond, Columbia, Greensboro, Durham and Spartanburg.

Internal and external strategic partnerships with nearly two-dozen county departments and private organizations also play an important role in our brand communications. These entities are listed in the two columns below.

Internal

Cooperative Extension
Diversity, Equality, Inclusion
Economic Development
Library
Museum of Art & History
Natural Resources
Parks & Recreation

External

Belmont Abbey College
Belmont TDA
Black Folks Camp Too
Carolina Thread Trail
Catawba Riverkeeper
Gaston Aquatics
Gaston College
Gaston Eats
Gastonia Honey Hunters
Gastonia TDA
Mount Holly TDA
Municipal Parks & Recreation
NC Forestry Service
NC State Parks
NC Welcome Centers
Red Bull
US National Whitewater Center
Visit NC
Visit NC Farms



Destination Current Situation

SWOT/Future Map Analysis

Strengths

(Exploit and Invest: present advantages)

- Abundant natural resources/outdoor recreation assets
- Proximity to Charlotte uptown, CLT Airport and I-85
- 12+ unique municipalities within the county
- Convenient branded hotel offerings on I-85
- Belmont Abbey College and neighboring USNWC
- New Hilton Garden Inn conference facility
- Focused strategic plan with priority initiatives
- Healthy reserve funds
- FUSE
- College Athletics

Weaknesses

(Mitigate: present disadvantages)

- No strong group meetings presence
- Minimal inter-municipality trail connectivity
- Unclear Travel & Tourism governing structure
- Low tourism advocacy and political influence
- No financial collaboration with TDAs to date
- Low Travel & Tourism mission understanding and awareness
- In-person Visitors Center of dubious necessity

Opportunities

(Monitor and Capitalize: potential advantages)

- New sports tourism, recreation venues potential
- Carolina Thread Trail Greenways/Blueways expansion
- Increased community tourism marketing and asset development
- Higher industry value awareness
- Consistent destination brand creative and messaging
- New integrated website, social media, trip planning
- Downtown Gastonia growth
- Two new hotels now open on I-85 (Fairfield, Home2)
- Tru by Hilton under construction at Remount
- Two Kings Casino

Threats

(Prepare for Contingencies: potential disadvantages)

- Ongoing political interference
- Inconsistent tourism decision making process
- \$1 million reserves as potential target for redirection
- Funding needs requests from non-tourism interests
- COVID-19 continued impacts

Conclusions

1. Strengthening of consistent destination brand imagery and related marketing messaging
2. Execution of strategic destination plan priorities along with further engagement of county officials, advisory board and partners on tourism matters
3. Increased involvement with local TDAs and other internal/external industry partners on future tourism product development to enhance visitor experiences



Destination Sales and Marketing

The annual focus of Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism in this strategic goal attainment is to drive more visitors to the county and its communities through an overall destination marketing communications support effort and a seven-priority target market strategy approach. There are five targeted strategies for the individual/leisure travel markets and three for the group/meeting markets. The key marketing support and targeted marketing strategies with action plans follow. GGDC refers to engaging their support in maximizing the program activity.

Strategic Goal

To achieve higher destination brand awareness and conversion through targeted promotional sales and services strategies.

Target Markets

- Outdoor Recreation and Adventure Travel
- Arts, Cultural and History Tourism
- Food and Retail Shopping Tourism
- Agritourism
- Meetings and Conferences
- Sports Events
- Visiting Friends & Relatives/Alumni

Positioning Differentiators

- Proximity to CLT airport and I-85
- Adjacent to USNWC
- Crowders Mountain State Park
- Belmont Abbey College, Conference Center

Top Trends Implications

- Increased outdoor recreation market diversity
- More weekend leisure business
- VFR/regional/day visitor conversion
- Conference centers with adjoining/nearby hotels

Marketing Communications Support

The overall activity support to Gaston County destination marketing effort is detailed as follows:

Marketing Support Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2022				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Digital strategy formulation	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Visitors Guide evaluation and creative transformation	☐	☐	☒	☒	MA/MM
Destination website management and updates and blog stories	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Annual integrated leisure promotional sweepstakes	☐	☐	☐	☒	MM
PR program development; Outdoor Recreation Industry	☐	☐	☒	☒	MA/MM
Dedicated VFR & Alumni program assessment and setup	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM

Measurable Objectives

- Visitor spending increase
- Simpleview contact database growth
- Social media engagement activity
- Website engagement metrics

Key			
MA	Michael Applegate	MM	Melissa McCauley



Outdoor Recreation and Adventure Travel

(Hiking, Biking, Paddling, Climbing)

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Marketing Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2022				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Blue Ridge Outdoors, The Destination Magazine advertising	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
USNWC events and accommodations related partnership	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM/ BB
Carolina Thread Trail – Greenways & Blueways promotion	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Catawba River & South Fork River 11 Mills Blueway Trails promotion	☒	☐	☐	☒	MA/MM
Pump Track Red Bull Series marketing support	☒	☒	☒	☒	BB/MM
Crowders Mountain State Park marketing partnership	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
Website Trails itineraries, blog stories	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Digital strategy formulation	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Website user generated content (UGC)	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
EDPNC Outdoor Recreation Industry Office	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
Black Folks Camp Too	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
Outdoor Economy Conference	☐	☒	☐	☐	MA/MM/ BB
Regularly scheduled partner meetings	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM

Measurable Objectives

- Social media engagement activities
- Website engagement metrics
- Weekend hotel demand growth
- Blog stories influencer postings

Key			
MA	Michael Applegate	EC	Emily Carpenter
BB	Brandon Black	MM	Melissa McCauley



Arts, Cultural and History Tourism

(Museums, Art Galleries, Festivals, Theater)

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2022				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Gaston County Museum of Art & History, Gaston County Parks & Recreation and Gaston County Public Library promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA/MM
Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden supportive marketing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA/MM
Schiele Museum of Natural History & Planetarium supportive marketing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA/MM
Christmas Town, U.S.A. ® marketing partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA/MM
Community concerts, festivals and events promotional programming	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA/MM
AAA GO Magazine advertising	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MM
Website Trails Itineraries, blog stories	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MM
Digital strategy formulation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MM
Website user generated content (UGC)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MM
Regularly scheduled partner meetings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	EC/MM

Measurable Objectives

- Social media engagement activities
- Website engagement metrics
- Blog stories influencer postings

Key			
MA	Michael Applegate	MM	Melissa McCauley



Food and Shopping Tourism

(Food & Drink, Retail, Antiquing)

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2022				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Gaston Eats website partnership	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Website Trails Itineraries – local food & drink, shop local, special events	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
Ridgeline Craft Beverage Trail	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
VisitNC Farms App	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
The Destination Magazine advertising	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Digital strategy formulation	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Website user generated content (UGC)	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Website blog stories	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Regularly scheduled partner meetings	☒	☒	☒	☒	EC/MM
Municipal Downtowns, their unique merchants and their entertainment programming presented as individual destinations	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM

Measurable Objectives

- Social media engagement activities
- Website engagement metrics
- Blog stories influencer postings

Key			
MA	Michael Applegate	MM	Melissa McCauley



Agritourism

(Farms, Farmers Markets, Food & Drink)

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2022				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
The Destination Magazine advertising	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Website Trails Itineraries – farms, pick your own, farmers markets, local food & drink, shop local, tours & trails, special events	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
Ridgeline Craft Beverage Trail	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
VisitNC Farms App	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
Digital strategy formulation	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Website user generated content (UGC)	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Website blog stories	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Regularly scheduled partner meetings	☒	☒	☒	☒	EC/MM

Measurable Objectives

- Social media engagement activities
- Website engagement metrics
- Weekend hotel demand growth
- Blog stories influencer postings



Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR) and Alumni Travel

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2022				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Belmont Abbey Sports Network advertising and promotion	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
Gaston College Athletics advertising and promotion	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
USNWC events & accommodations related partnership	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
Where Charlotte Guestbook investment (metro hotel rooms)	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Digital strategy formulation	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Engage local residents as ambassadors for inviting out of town guests and groups	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM

Measurable Objectives

- Social media engagement activities
- Website engagement metrics
- On-campus promotion responses at Belmont Abbey and Gaston College
- Blog stories influencer postings



Meetings and Conferences

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2022				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Association Executives of NC (AENC) membership investment	☒	☒	☒	☒	BB/MA
AENC Member Directory & Resource Guide advertising	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
AENC Trade Show participation	☐	☒	☐	☐	BB/MA
Business NC advertising	☒	☐	☐	☐	MM
Ongoing Website section updates	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
Familiarization (FAM) Tours/Site Visits in partnership with AENC and Gaston County meetings facilities	☒	☐	☐	☒	BB/EC/ MA/MM
Social Media Partner/Venue/Events highlights	☒	☒	☒	☒	MM
MPI Carolinas Chapter membership & sponsorship	☒	☒	☒	☒	BB/MA
Black Folks Camp Too Consumer Show	☒	☒	☒	☒	BB/MA
Regularly scheduled partner meetings	☒	☒	☒	☒	EC/MM

Measurable Objectives

- Number of accounts/contacts in Simpleview meeting sales database
- Number of meeting sales leads
- Number of meeting sales leads turned definite
- Number of booked room nights resulting from meeting sales events
- Number of attendees on FAM tour/site visits
- Number of RFPs submitted
- Number of tradeshow appointments

Key			
MA	Michael Applegate	MM	Melissa McCauley
BB	Brandon Black	EC	Emily Carpenter



Sports Events

Marketing Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Market Penetration Strategy* and activities for this targeted market segment.

Marketing Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2022				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
NC Sports Association (NCSA, SportsNC) membership/quarterly meetings investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB/MA
Sports Events & Tourism Association (SportsETA) membership/trade show investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BB
Connect Sports Trade Show participation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BB
TEAMS Trade Show participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BB
S.P.O.R.T.S. Trade Show participation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	BB
Belmont Abbey Sports Network participation (NCAA, Conference Carolinas)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA/MM/ BB
Gaston College Athletics participation (NJCAA, Region 10)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA/MM/ BB
Ongoing Website section updates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MM/BB
Social Media Partner/Venue/Event highlights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MM/BB
Regularly scheduled partner meetings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MM/BB
GSTA Local Organizing Committee(LOC) event support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA/BB

Measurable Objectives

- Number of accounts/contacts in Simpleview sports sales database
- Number of sports sales leads
- Number of sports sales leads turned definite
- Number of booked room nights resulting from sports sales events
- Number of trade show appointments
- Number of attendees on FAM tour/site visits
- Number of RFPs submitted

Key			
MA	Michael Applegate	MM	Melissa McCauley
BB	Brandon Black		



Destination Development and Management

The annual focus of the Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism in this strategic goal attainment is to initiate a proactive effort in support of event and destination development through a project support strategy approach. The overall destination development strategy with action plan follows.

Strategic Goal

To encourage and fully support the branded development of the county’s attractions/events, amenities, hospitality services and related tourism infrastructure.

Target Projects

- Downtown Gastonia redevelopment
- Gaston Aquatics Center, Eastridge Mall redevelopment
- Belmont Trolley and Trolley Barn/Events Center
- Franklin Urban Sports & Entertainment District (FUSE)
- Hotels
- Collegiate athletic facilities
- Natural space preservation

Development Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Project Development Strategy* and activities for these targeted activities.

Development Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2022				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
County/community tourism development strategy and priorities in relation to multi-group evaluation of development opportunities	☒	☒	☒	☒	ABM/MA/EDC
Individual municipal downtown boutique business stability & growth	☒	☐	☐	☐	MA
Gastonia Conference Center lobby/visitor information redevelopment	☒	☐	☐	☐	MA/MM
Maintain awareness of project pipeline and update frequently	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/BB

Measurable Objectives

- New attractors developed and admission/guest demand
- Tourism information location in Gastonia Conference Center completion
- Travel & Tourism product development investment

Key			
MA	Michael Applegate	MM	Melissa McCauley
BB	Brandon Black	ABM	Advisory Board Members
EDC	Economic Dev. Comm.		



DO Partnership and Community Relations

The annual focus of the Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism in this strategic goal attainment is to inform and broaden the understanding and value of tourism through a prioritized target audience approach. The overall targeted stakeholder communications strategy with action plan follows.

Strategic Goal

To inform strategic partners on the importance and value of tourism and effective roles and beneficial impacts of the Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism.

Target Audiences

- County and community government officials
- Tourism/hospitality industry owners/managers
- Community associations/corporate leaders
- Media representatives
- Residents
- Public Information Officer

Communications Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following *Audience Penetration Strategy* and activities for these targeted groups.

Positioning Differentiators

- 13 distinct municipal downtowns, shops, history
- Existing municipality weekend programming
- Tourism value contribution and Travel & Tourism awareness

Top Trends Implications

- New partnerships development
- Increased community relations engagement
- Proactive destination advocacy messaging

Stakeholder Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2022				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Annual Tourism Impact Report press release and related publicity	☒	☐	☐	☐	MA/MM
Ongoing community involvement and presentations	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/BB
Formalized stakeholder/tourism advocacy strategy and plan	☒	☒	☐	☐	ABM/MA
Gaston Lifestyles Magazine tourism articles support	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
Partners in Tourism regular meetings	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM
Tourism action plan development and execution (CTAPs)	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM/ BB/EC
Virtual Visitors Center development, Website buildout of municipal sections	☒	☒	☒	☒	MA/MM

Measurable Objectives

- Community/Industry presentations made
- Media coverage value

Key			
MA	Michael Applegate	MM	Melissa McCauley
BB	Brandon Black	ABM	Advisory Board Members



DO Resources and Administration

The annual focus of the Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism in this strategic goal attainment is to operate and lead a relevant and credible destination marketing organization through a targeted-audience strategy approach. The overall targeted finance/administration strategy with action plan follows.

Strategic Goal

To operate as a fiscally responsible and talent-based organization delivering optimal performance returns.

Target Audiences

- Travel & Tourism Advisory Board members
- Professional staff
- Suppliers/Vendors

Finance/Administration Strategy Direction

The Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism will deploy the following Audience Penetration Strategy and activities for these targeted groups.

Finance/Administration Action Plan

Program Activity	FY 2022				Staff Assigned
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
County Government Travel & Tourism Department governance structure assessment	☒	☒	☒	☒	ABM/MA
Advisory Board Orientation and Policy Manual updates	☒	☒	☐	☐	ABM/MA
Strategic plan updated annually	☐	☐	☐	☒	ABM/MA
Advisory Board/staff professional development investment	☐	☐	☐	☒	ABM/MA

Measurable Objectives

- NC Travel Industry Association (NCTIA) and Travel & Tourism Advisory Board meetings
- Travel & Tourism department budget and staff increases



FY 2022 DO Governance

Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism Advisory Board Members

Jay Briody

Citizen at Large, Gastonia Township (TK)

Marty Hutchins

Citizen at Large, Gastonia Township (KJ)

Cam Carpenter

Citizen at Large, Crowders Mountain Township (BH)

Mark A. Stephens, Vice Chair

Citizen at Large, Dallas Township (TP)

Gerry Durkee

Citizen at Large, South Point Township (RW)

Pamela Goode, Chair

Citizen at Large, Riverbend Township (CB)

Tammy Fraley Wilson

Citizen at Large, Cherryville Township (AF)

Jim Hoffman

Attractions Representative (AF)

Heather Britton

Hotel/Motel Industry Representative (TP)

Richard S. Cromlish, Jr.

Economic Development Representative/Ex-Officio (TK)

Elysabeth Utick

Non-Profit Attractions Representative (KJ)

Cynthia Isenhour

Parks & Recreation Representative/Ex-Officio (BH)

Chuck Moore

County Manager/Designee/Ex-Officio (Non-Voting)

Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism Staff

Michael Applegate, CDME

Director of Travel & Tourism

Brandon Black

Business Development Manager

Emily Carpenter

Administrative Assistant

Melissa McCauley

Marketing Manager

Gaston County Department of Travel & Tourism Advisory Board Committees

Fund Balance/Budget

Research/Strategic Planning