



## 2021-2022 Strategic Plan

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NC

**FAYETTEVILLE**

AREA

CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

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## From the Chief Executive Officer

The Fayetteville Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (FACVB) exists to represent Fayetteville and Cumberland County, as the strategic marketing arm of the community, for conventions, meetings, sporting events, and leisure travel. To successfully carry out this mission, the Bureau must operate each day, under five core principles:

1. **Transparency** – the Bureau will, at all times, exist, and operate, in a transparent manner, with our core values being ones of clarity, our finances above reproach, and our dealings with partners, both internal and external, being open and honest.
2. **Visibility** – the Bureau will be visible, both in the markets, where, daily, we promote and sell Fayetteville and Cumberland County, and, in our community. The Bureau will be a leading force in helping build community pride and affecting positively our community's quality of life and understanding of the depth and expanse of the tourism product we have here in our community. Our goal is to consistently answer the often-asked question, "what is there to do in Fayetteville and Cumberland County?"
3. **Respectability** – there is, within the Team at the Bureau, the understanding that respect is earned, not freely given. Therefore, it is the objective of our CVB Team to actively seek to earn the internal and external respect of the community, our partners, and those who we ask to visit our community, whether business or leisure travelers.
4. **Partnership** – the Bureau will be an open and active partner, both within the Fayetteville and Cumberland County community and with those external meeting and sporting event planners, along with all other visitor business partners. Through partnership comes strength and positive economic growth.
5. **Leadership** – the Bureau will strive to consistently be in a leadership role within the community, providing sound advice and support to the hospitality industry as well as community leaders, both business and government.

This Strategic Plan is a roadmap for the coming year for the FACVB to successfully market Fayetteville and Cumberland County, under the Core Principles above, to our business and leisure traveler customers. It outlines how we will affect the positive growth and economic health of Fayetteville and Cumberland County. Our impact will be felt through the work we do in bringing visitors from all of our target markets to our area who in turn will bring increased revenue to businesses, throughout the area.

Our appreciation goes out to Cumberland County and its leadership, the City of Fayetteville, Hope Mills and Spring Lake and their leadership, the Tourism Development Authority, the FACVB's Board of Directors, and our area's hospitality and business community for their support. Together we will succeed in our objective of creating increased revenue through visitor spending.

Thank you for your time in reviewing the FACVB's FY'22 Strategic Plan. As always, we are open to questions and comments.

Sincerely,

Randy Fiveash  
Interim President and  
Chief Executive Officer

## Introduction

It is an understatement to say dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge for the tourism industry. In Cumberland County, the Convention & Visitors Bureau dealt with closings of stores and restaurants, limited accessibility for many of our attractions, safety concerns, staff shortages at area lodging properties and businesses including the Bureau working from home for much of the fiscal year.

When the Bureau pulled external advertising to reformulate strategy and focus messaging on community pride, the Bureau launched the “This Special Place” campaign, which was promoted through social media. Although indoor activities could not be safely promoted, the Bureau pushed the safe outdoor opportunities available, even holding a virtual picnic with local bloggers at six parks in the community. While meetings continued to cancel through early Spring 2021, sports picked up in late summer of 2020. Throughout the year, the Bureau continued to modify efforts and messaging to address concerns surrounding the pandemic.

As the Bureau moves into a new fiscal year, with this Strategic Plan we have outlined plans to continue to address the community’s recovery from COVID-19 and a strategy moving forward. A focus for the team is to build and/or maintain exceptional relationships with our clients, the hospitality industry and the community. All of the efforts point to generating demand for the destination, thereby creating value for all stakeholders.

A Destination Market Organization’s (DMO) value is much greater than just generating room nights. All members of the Bureau Team look forward to working with community partners to stimulate tourism growth to benefit Cumberland County.



## About the Bureau

The Bureau is Cumberland County's DMO responsible for travel and tourism promotion for leisure and business travel, and visitor services. It devises strategies to enhance a visitor's experience and encourage future visitation, thereby stimulating the local economy. The Bureau operates on a Fiscal Year calendar from July 1 through June 30.

The Bureau is accredited by the international, independent Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) as meeting the highest standards and best practices of destination marketing.

## Mission

To position Cumberland County as a destination for conventions, tournaments and individual travel.

## Vision

The Bureau strives to be the leading destination authority by supporting and marketing the Cumberland County visitor experience and advocating the community's tourism benefits.



## Hospitality Market Overview

Below is outlined both the impact of visitor spending on Cumberland County and information on visitors to Cumberland County. This information is from 2019 and 2018, respectively, to reflect a typical year for visitation to Cumberland County. At the bottom of the page is a comparison of Average Daily Rate (ADR), Occupancy and Revenue Per Available Room (RevPar) for June 2020 versus June 2021. This data provides a snapshot of the community's recovery from COVID-19.

### Impact of Visitor Spending

The following information was provided by "The Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties", prepared for Visit North Carolina by the U.S. Travel Association for 2019:

- Cumberland County's travel and tourism industry employs 4,820 people with a payroll totaling nearly \$116 million.
- Travel spending generates \$44.59 million in local and state taxes.
- Travel to Cumberland County is worth \$601 million to our local economy. This translates to a tax savings of \$134.14 per county resident.
- Cumberland County ranks 10th out of North Carolina's 100 counties in economic impact from tourism.

[Link to full report.](#)

### Profile of a Fayetteville, North Carolina Visitor

The following information was provided by the 2018 Study "TravelTrakAmerica, Fayetteville NC Profiles" from the OmniTrak Group, North Carolina:

- Sixty percent of travelers are in Fayetteville to visit friends and/or relatives.
- The planning horizon for Fayetteville visitors is relatively short. About 40% plan the trip within 2 weeks of departure.
- Focus on family/friends as the purpose of the trip means less lucrative tourists but suggests that promoting activities for the whole family could benefit Fayetteville.
- Roughly 1 in 25 (4%) of North Carolina visitors come to Fayetteville.
- More than 18% of Fayetteville's visitors are African American. This is 2 times higher than North Carolina Visitors overall and more than 3 times higher than all US travelers.

[Link to full report.](#)

### Multi Segment Report for Fayetteville, NC

The following information was provided by Smith Travel Report dated June 2021 and shows the ADR, Occupancy (OCC) and RevPAR by Market Comparison:

Year to Date (YTD) June 2021 vs June 2020												
State	OCC%		ADR		RevPAR		Percent Change from YTD 2020					
	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	OCC	ADR	Rev PAR	Room Rev	Room Avail	Room Sold
North Carolina	65.8%	44.7%	\$112.44	\$88.03	\$73.98	\$39.39	54.5%	27.7%	87.8%	97.5%	5.2%	54.6%
Cumberland County, NC	74.3	54.9%	\$92.20	\$74.52	\$68.48	\$40.94	35.2%	23.7%	67.2%	66.3%	-0.6%	34.4%

[Link to full report.](#)

# Challenges & Opportunities

## Challenges

The Bureau recognizes the challenges that Cumberland County's tourism community faces coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Visitors' perceptions about safety regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Lack of adequate lodging facilities near key sports and meeting facilities.
- Residents' lack of awareness of Cumberland County's tourism assets.
- Post-pandemic staffing issues causing difficulties serving clients.
- Cumberland County Welcome Center locations not easily accessible from I-95.
- The ever-evolving social media landscape.
- Negative perceptions of the Bureau by some local businesses and residents.

## Opportunities

With every challenge, there is an opportunity.

- Partner with lodging properties and attractions to better serve clients.
- Communicate the value the Bureau brings to Fayetteville and Cumberland County.
- Tap into sports experiencing growth like pickleball, disc golf, spike ball, etc.
- Consider Welcome Center location near I-95 in Cumberland County.
- Opening of TJ Robinson Life Center in Hope Mills adds another sports and entertainment complex to Cumberland County's tourism amenities.
- Improve our community involvement to obtain more sales leads, knowledge, and general information.
- Partner with other destinations on writer visits and regional story pitches.
- Initiate volunteer program for Bureau visibility at large events and provide services to clients bringing their event to Fayetteville or Cumberland County.
- Increase awareness, partnerships, and involvement in Heroes Homecoming.
- I-295 expansion into Western Fayetteville and Hope Mills will allow visitors easier access to that part of the county.
- Lack of media knowledge of Fayetteville and Cumberland County as a destination for meetings, sports or leisure travel.
- Educate local audiences about Greater Fayetteville's tourism assets. As the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market is Cumberland County's largest visitor market, this will encourage longer stays and more visitor spending.



## Team Overview

### Sales Team

The Sales Team consists of industry professionals responsible for identifying new meeting and tournament opportunities, converting those into definite bookings and delivering an exceptional experience to ensure repeat business.

### Meeting and Convention Sales

#### Meeting and Tournament Recruitment

The Sales Team offers a unique value as a free resource with unparalleled local expertise. The primary goal of the Sales Team is to bring city-wide meetings and tournaments to greater Fayetteville, generating a significant impact on the local economy through spending money at our restaurants, attractions as well as an overnight at one of our lodging properties.

### Facilities

Cumberland County is home to the four-building Crown Complex, which includes a coliseum and expo center. There are 72 hotel properties, mostly select-service properties with smaller meeting spaces, and a plethora of off-site meeting and event locations. Cumberland County has five full-service hotels, perfect for hosting a range of meetings, complete with food and beverage menus and breakout rooms as well as larger special events.

#### FY 20/21 Results

##### Meeting and Conventions

- 35 pieces of business valued at \$11,933,862 canceled due to Covid-19. Convinced 19 meeting planners to rebook business valued at \$4,956,378 or will follow up with new dates. One group alone valued at \$1,436,400, 7,250 attendees, and 7,050 room nights.
- Created 14 accounts during the pandemic valued at \$2,659,962, 1925 room nights, with 28,007 attendance.
- Generated 777 Traces in 2020-2021.





For the upcoming fiscal year, separated by market segment, the Sales Team will:

## Religious

- Attend three key tradeshows that attract conference planners from across the country. Connect Faith, Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA) and Christian Meetings & Conventions Association (CMCA).
- Network within the Cumberland County ministerial council to uncover leads and make connections at the regional and state levels.
- Conduct monthly sales blitz to increase state, local, and regional religious meetings to Cumberland County.
- Work closely with local hotels to increase site visits to the community.

## Military

- Attend the Your Military Connection conference. While military groups do not meet like they have in the past, the Bureau is seeing a small uptick in reunions as recent conflicts are ending.
- Work closely with local military organizations (Disabled Veterans, Military Retiree Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legions, and the Warrant Officers Association) to bring more military reunions and other meetings and conferences to Cumberland County.

## Associations

- Attend key regional association events, including Meeting Planners International Carolinas Chapter. This is the largest professional group in the state, and the Bureau has received business from being active with this organization in the past.
- Participate in Connect Medical Conference. This conference was attended for the first time in 2019, where the Bureau received one piece of business. This conference is a perfect fit for our community since the county has three medical centers and medical staff come here for training.
- Attend the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals. This is a new tradeshow for the Bureau. The Bureau believes it will be critical in expanding the Bureau's reach to minority meetings as meeting planners that are a part of this coalition are looking for economical venues and cities to host their meetings.
- Continue leadership role within several Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Carolinas and Society of Government Meeting Professionals to foster relationships with members and uncover opportunities to bring business to Cumberland County.

## Other Activities

- Hold monthly Sales and Marketing meetings with area hoteliers and meeting facilities to educate and tackle challenges as a group.
- Hold site visits with decision makers so they can see the benefits of meeting in Cumberland County.
- Review publications for meeting notices and/or articles and reach out to secure business.
- Retain membership in local religious organizations, and military organizations to uncover local leads and recruit business.
- Conduct six Sales Blitz with local hoteliers every other month to generate business that fits full-service as well as limited-service hotels.

## Sports Marketing

- Attend nine tradeshow to make connections and generate leads. The Director of Sports Marketing started with the Bureau in July 2020 and has attended one show to date. Sports Express in May 2021 generated seven new accounts and one new lead which could bring a 150-team basketball tournament to Cumberland County.
- Tap into niche sports markets and uncover opportunities to host these events in Cumberland County.
- Develop relationships with local sports clubs to uncover local leads and opportunities for events.
- Work closely with the Crown Complex to tap into the growing and lucrative E-Sports market.
- Work with Crown Complex, NC USA Boxing and Title Boxing to bring a 12-15 ring boxing event to the Crown Expo Center in 2022. This would bring in thousands of boxers, families, and spectators to Fayetteville.
- Continue to develop partnerships with Cumberland County sporting venues and hotels to consistent quality of service for the client

### FY 20/21 Results

#### Sports

- Secured 31 pieces of business with an estimated economic impact of \$1.4 million.
- Created 57 new accounts and completed 1,625 traces (action items) in Simpleview related to working with clients.
- Attended Sports Express Conference, which resulted in seven new accounts and one lead.



- Partner with AAU to bring two sports festivals of 6+ different sporting events to the greater Fayetteville area
- Cement a 3–5-year contract extension with the American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) to continue to hold their yearly golf tournament at Anderson Creek
- Cement a 3–5-year contract extension with the Police Activity League (PAL) program and NC USA Boxing to hold three to four tournaments a year in Fayetteville
- Continue to be a FACVB representative on the Cumberland County Parks & Recreation advisory committee to give guidance regarding the needs of sports planners

## **Facilities**

The community also offers hundreds of fields and several spectacular indoor facilities that can host nearly any type of sport. The T.J. Robinson Life Center in Hope Mills will offer 5 collegiate-sized multi-use basketball courts. Scheduled to open in late 2021.



## Tourism Marketing Team

The Tourism Marketing Team has been charged with overseeing and managing the bureau's marketing efforts to include overseeing our partner agencies' contracts both on the creative side as well as the media buying side. Ensuring best practices are followed as well as all messages follow brand standards and have a clear call to action. The team will also ensure that all advertising efforts expressed by team members are consistent with the focus and direction the FACVB is headed. Product development, grant writing as well as orchestrating the community initiative, Heroes Homecoming are also in the realm of responsibilities.

The Director of Tourism Marketing serves as the primary point of contact with events awarded Tourism Development Authority (TDA) grant dollars to ensure they are aware of requirements, provided the tools required by the Bureau, and ensures reports are shared with all stakeholders.

For the upcoming fiscal year, the Tourism Marketing Team will:

- Lead Heroes Homecoming, a county-wide initiative. By leading this effort, the Bureau brings together partners from all over the county, for one single effort, which is to honor those that have served in the military. Coordinating theme, community partners, the planned events, needed collateral, and execution of the initiative.

### FY 20/21 Results

- Developed partnerships with five wedding venues, to send their signed clients to the bureau to assist and track room night consumption.
- Converted 14 leads to 5,838 contracted room nights in the Social Market Segment.
- Secured a 5-year sponsorship for Champions in Motion, a cheerleading competition which historically brings in 2,000 room nights and 6,000 spectators.





- Amplify awareness within the community and surrounding areas as well as seek to generate more media attention to the initiative
- Oversee Request For Proposal (RFP) for a marketing agency as well as a media buying agency.
- Attend the Travel and Adventure Show in Washington, DC to promote Fayetteville as a leisure destination. The Washington, DC show is beneficial to Fayetteville, as those who are traveling I-95 to South Carolina or beyond, would travel through Cumberland County. At the show, the Bureau collects attendee contact information to add them to our e-newsletter so they can receive monthly information regarding our area.
- Manage the North Carolina Welcome Center Program as well as Call Center Visits which includes welcome center visits, National Tourism Week events, and visits to 1-800 VISIT NC call center. Specifically, the team visits the two I-95 North Carolina Welcome Centers once a quarter as well as the North Carolina Call Center once a year to ensure these locations have our printed collateral as well as our partners' materials and to ensure they are aware of new developments in Cumberland County.
- Identify and implement digital marketing opportunities to generate interest and leads.
- Establish a new client concierge program. This program aspires to be the Convention Services Division of the sales effort. The program is designed to distribute information and be a resource to convention attendees as well as tournament participants and spectators, sell Bureau merchandise, and assist in data collection (room nights consumed/hotels used) as well as provide other resources to our clients.
- Initiate a new Volunteer Program that will be used to staff information tables through the client concierge program, at community events and at Welcome Centers.
- Manage current and develop future tourism products.
- Continue to manage content associated with the Cultural Heritage Trails web pages.
- Secures grants for the promotion of the Bureau's tourism product development or new initiatives the Bureau will embark on when needed.
- Participate in community development projects that benefit tourism and the visitor, such as wayward signage creation, trail development, etc.
- Along with Communications, will gather and analyze metrics of efforts in the digital media arena to ensure our Key Performance Indicators are on track and providing the return on investment that they should be.
- Service the group tour market as needed. This includes assisting with accommodations, itineraries, and group dining options.

## Communications Team

The Communications Team includes both Communications and the Information Technology and Data Management deploying public relations tactics and executes communication strategies that position Cumberland County as a destination for meetings, tournaments, and individual travel.

The team manages a program that includes recruitment of travel writers to explore the community and develop stories, a targeted email campaign, blogging, outreach to trade and travel publications, creating and updating web content, maintaining an extensive Member/Partner database, social media, evaluating and implementing new technologies, along with gathering and developing metrics.

### FY 20/21 Results

- Obtained recognition for Dirtbag Ales as the “Nicest Place in North Carolina,” in Reader’s Digest.
- Secured coverage on Fayetteville and Cumberland County in 59 local, trade and travel publications.
- Hosted 18 travel writers, distributed 15 press releases and produced 12 blogs.
- Maintained the Member/Partner database of over 6,500 bureau accounts.
- Maintained the Calendar of Events for the community with over 1,000 events held.

The team also manages the technology the Bureau uses to efficiently conduct business. This includes the Tourism Industry Standard Database, Simpleview; the Media Monitoring & Social Listening Platform, Meltwater; the Social Media Management Platform, Sprout Social; the Industry Leading Engagement Platform, Higher Logic; Microsoft Office 365, including Teams and Dropbox.

For the upcoming fiscal year, separated by area of support the Communications Team will support:

## Meetings/Conferences and Sports Tournaments

- Identify key publications in the meetings and tournament market, including sports, religious, military, fraternal, and educational publications.
- Build relationships with editors and key staff. Review editorial calendars and submit content for upcoming stories.
- Identify longer-range upcoming meetings and tournaments with opportunities for publicity in trade publications.
- Craft story around the upcoming event and submit to appropriate publications.
- Support meetings on social media. Share on VisitFayettevilleNC.com blog.
- Identify trends in Bureau meeting recruitment and craft stories for regional publications, and how the FACVB Team worked to secure these events.
- Create microsites and web content for upcoming bookings. Take pictures at events.

## Local Audience/Stakeholders

- Develop and distribute monthly one-page report with the Bureau results. Distribute to stakeholders and local media. Publish the report on the website for public access.
- Nurture relationships with local media, including Fayetteville Business Journal, Fayetteville Observer, Fayetteville Press, Up & Coming Magazine, local TV stations, and radio.
- Write monthly newsletter for Up & Coming weekly. Educate readers on both the community assets and the Bureau efforts.
- Network with organizations and event planners. Uncover community happenings and encourage the submission of events to the Bureau’s Calendar of Events, the most-visited page on VisitFayettevilleNC.com.

## Leisure Travel and Visiting Friends & Family

- Attend the Society of American Travel Writers Convention, International Media Marketplace, and the Southern Travelers Explore conferences to build relationships and recruit travel writers for visits and stories. The team has seen great success with these three events previously.
- Distribute e-newsletter monthly, with targeted messaging to specific audiences. Track results and refine and evolve the program as needed.
- Share story ideas with media contacts quarterly. Group events and themes together for media outreach.
- Manage social media programs to attract leisure travel and educate the local audience on community amenities and offerings.

## Other Activities

- Redesign VisitFayettevilleNC.com and implement changes.
- Maintain and share weekly, monthly and yearly metrics associated with website usage, database usage, project tracking and visitor information.
- Monitor, update and maintain the Bureau's Member/Partner database, which feeds live information to VisitFayettevilleNC.com.





## Operations Team

The Operations Team manages two welcome centers. Located at the main Bureau offices at 245 Person Street and at the Fayetteville Area Transportation & Local History Museum, located at 325 Franklin Street.

Welcome centers are an important promotional tool of the Bureau. The Bureau strives to enhance the visitor's experience as well as influence the length of their stay, route selection, attractions visited and future trips, simultaneously providing an increase in economic impact.

The team provides a wealth of local expertise to everyone who comes through the doors. Often, they are providing the first impression of the community. In addition to providing information and services to locals in our community, the team provides information for North Carolina welcome centers and American Automobile Association (AAA) offices throughout the country.

The team handles human resource, finance and other needs for day-to-day Bureau operations.

For the upcoming fiscal year, the Operations Team will:

- Develop and nurture ongoing relationships with local businesses to build awareness of the Bureau and to keep visitor services current.
- Complete the interior redesign efforts of the Bureau at 245 Person Street.
- Evaluate future Welcome Center location alternatives.
- Participate in community events to increase visitor engagement and increase future visits i.e. parades, festivals, etc.
- Serve and welcome college students and military personnel at orientation sessions.
- Increase surveys collected to capture visitor interests.
- Evaluate current and future technology available to better serve our visitors.

### FY 20/21 Results

- Distributed more than 10,000 Destination Guides to visitors, NC Welcome Centers, AAA offices and other CVBs.
- Continued to offer Welcome Center services throughout the pandemic at the drive-thru at 245 Person Street and the Fayetteville Area Transportation and Local History Museum.
- Implemented redesign of the Welcome Center at 245 Person Street.





## Conclusion

Tourism is vital to the economic health of any economy, including Fayetteville and Cumberland County. In 2019, before the pandemic, domestic visitors infused \$601 million into our economy. Taxes collected totaled \$44.5 million. In fact, the taxes collected represented a \$134.14 tax savings to each county resident.

As the county, state and the nation move forward into COVID-19 recovery, the Bureau will work alongside hospitality industry partners to move tourism back to its pre-pandemic impact.

In this document, we have outlined our plans to secure more tournaments, meetings and leisure travel for Fayetteville and Cumberland County. Additionally, we will encourage the visitors that we welcome to stay longer. One of the ways we will accomplish this is by educating our residents to bring their visitors out to enjoy all that this community has to offer.

For many years, the Bureau spearheaded Heroes Homecoming, a community-wide initiative to recognize veterans around Veteran's Day. In the coming year, we will expand our involvement in community activities, and look forward to partnering with other organizations to raise the community's profile.

All of our programs will be backed by research. The Convention & Visitors Bureau will offer measurable objectives and results and be reported monthly or annually, as necessary.

The Convention & Visitors Bureau Team is proud to represent Fayetteville and Cumberland County, a community we love and call home.

As always, should you have any questions, please give any member of our team a call. We welcome the opportunity to talk with you.

## Important Links

To download a digital version of this Strategic Plan, go to [www.VisitFayettevilleNC.com/about-us/Research](http://www.VisitFayettevilleNC.com/about-us/Research)

### Bureau Website

[www.VisitFayettevilleNC.com](http://www.VisitFayettevilleNC.com)

### Organization Chart

[Link to 2021 Organization Chart.](#)

### Budget

[Link to FY 2021-2022 Budget](#)

### Marketing Program

[Link to FY 2021-2022 Marketing Program.](#)