

Strategic Plan
for a
Dynamic Tourism Economy
2024 - 2029

DistiNctly Fayetteville is a destination leadership organization tasked with marketing all of Cumberland County as a travel destination. We market the County as DistiNctly Fayetteville and are funded by the 6% lodging tax collected on paid overnight lodging in Cumberland County. We provide leadership to our travel industry partners to ensure that the visitor experience is improving and expanding. We are an economic development organization growing the travel industry in Cumberland County and we actively collaborate with regional organizations to advance the travel industry.

This strategic plan provides a road map for the Cumberland County travel industry to grow and thrive for the economic benefit of all citizens.

Plan Adopted: September 2024

DISTINCTLY
FAYETTEVILLE



strategic

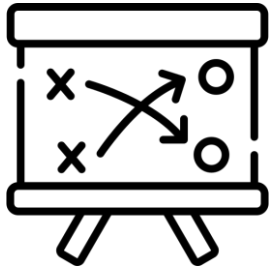
stra·te·gic

/strə'tējɪk/

adjective

adjective: strategic

Relating to the identification of long-term or overall aims and interests and the means of achieving them.



tactical

adjective

tac·ti·cal 'tak-ti-kəl

- : of or relating to small-scale actions serving a larger purpose
- : made or carried out with only a limited or immediate end in view
- : adroit in planning or maneuvering to accomplish a purpose

Vision for Cumberland County as a destination

DistiNctly Fayetteville strives to be the leading destination authority by supporting and marketing the Cumberland County branded visitor experience and advocating community tourism benefits.

DistiNctly Fayetteville Mission Statement

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

Our Core Values:

- ❖ Transparency
- ❖ Visibility
- ❖ Respectability
- ❖ Partnership
- ❖ Leadership



The following Strategic Plan for a dynamic tourism economy is research-based including input from 70 community, civic and travel industry leaders in Cumberland County who completed a strategic planning survey/SWOT analysis. The planning workshop and Strategic Plan were facilitated and developed by Berkeley Young, President of Young Strategies, Inc.

Organization Structure

DistiNctly Fayetteville is Cumberland County’s destination leadership organization focused on the dynamic growth of the travel economy to support a high-quality lifestyle. A thriving travel industry broadens and diversifies the local economy while providing experiences that appeal to residents and visitors alike.



DistiNctly Fayetteville is committed to promoting Cumberland County as a dynamic destination with the highest caliber staff providing leadership and innovation to drive:

- Increased visitation in the Shoulder and Off-season months
- Longer lengths of stay
- Increased spending per travel party
- Maintain peak demand period visitation
- Increased visitor satisfaction
- High resident standard of living

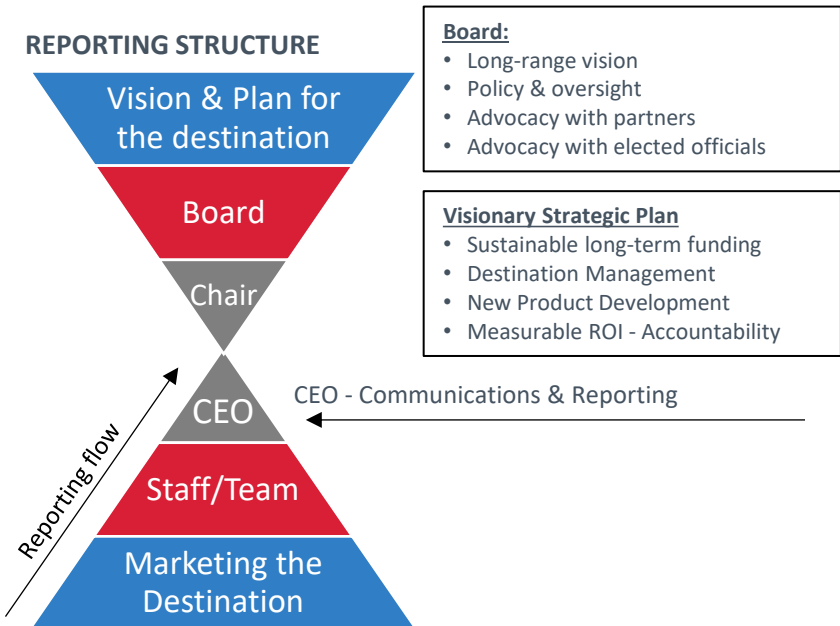
DistiNctly Fayetteville Board Focus

The DistiNctly Fayetteville Board of Directors will be engaged in two primary functions:

- 1) Providing proper oversight** related to the function and ROI of the staff’s research-based marketing of the destination.
- 2) Fulfill the vision for DistiNctly Fayetteville in 2030** in partnership with local governments. DistiNctly Fayetteville will foster, facilitate and encourage the growth and sustainability of the County’s tourism assets for the benefit of all residents and visitors.

DistiNctly Fayetteville Staff Focus

- 1) Marketing Fayetteville and all of Cumberland County to visitors.
- 2) Providing advocacy and support for travel industry partners.
- 3) Coordinating the implementation of the Board vision for the destination.



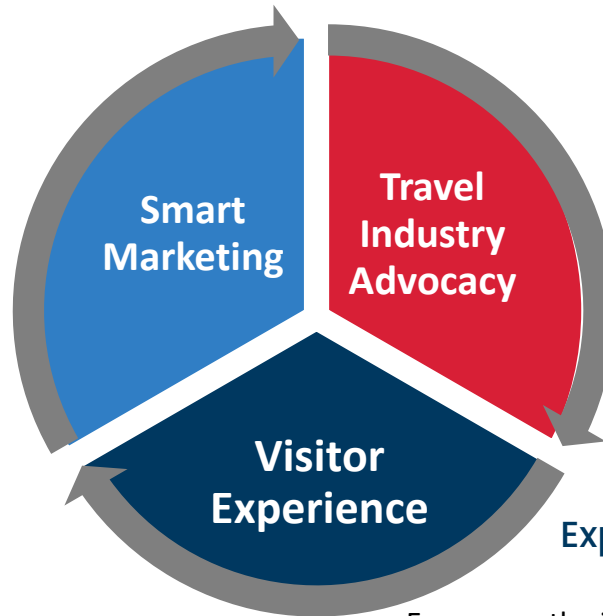
Strategic Initiatives

This Strategic Plan provides the leaders of Cumberland County and its municipalities with a road-map that DistiNctly Fayetteville and staff are following to grow the local travel economy for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

The plan demonstrates that the organization has carefully considered its options and established conscious priorities for moving the travel industry forward. Using this Strategic Plan as a guide, DistiNctly Fayetteville will develop an annual marketing / business plan that describes in tactical detail the actions needed to drive growth in overnight visitation that will lift the overall tourism economy.

Marketing Cumberland County to Visitors

Distinctly Fayetteville is a sales and marketing organization promoting all of Cumberland as a travel destination. We expand awareness of Cumberland County among potential visitors as a year-round destination through creative branding, marketing, sales and public relations.



Community Alignment & Advocacy for a Dynamic Local Travel Industry

Be a champion and provide leadership to the Cumberland County travel industry by addressing the issues that hold it back and diminish the quality of life for residents.

Expand The Visitor Experience To Drive Growth

Encourage the improvement and expansion of unique activities that provide memorable experiences for visitors and residents alike.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Annual reviews of this five-year strategic plan will take place in lieu of annual retreats. The annual review takes place with staff and Board leadership. There is no need for a retreat if the plan implementation is on track and there are no external factors that change overall strategies and goals. If significant changes are needed, the Board/staff may schedule a retreat to adjust the plan. DistiNctly Fayetteville invests in market research to guide future sales and marketing efforts and track ROI of programmatic work.



Smart Marketing – Marketing Cumberland County to Visitors

DistiNtly Fayetteville is a sales and marketing organization promoting all of Cumberland as a travel destination. We expand awareness of Cumberland County among potential visitors as a year-round destination through creative branding, marketing, sales and public relations.

Cumberland County is large and diverse in its experiences enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. DistiNtly Fayetteville will work to maintain high demand period visitation while driving growth in visitation during slow periods of the year when the occupancy in lodging dips below 60%. Fort Liberty and the military families and visitors are integral to who we are as a place and a destination. We recruit groups of all sizes to fill blocks of rooms and we drive leisure visitation to fill holidays and weekends. We also promote our year-round indoor venues to drive growth in group visitation for conferences and team sports. We partner regionally to expand awareness of DistiNtly Fayetteville to visitors and residents in North Carolina’s Sand Hills region. NOTE: Please refer to the DistiNtly Fayetteville Annual Marketing Plan for details on marketing and sales strategy.

1. **Update research and marketing strategy** continually as part of an annual plan that is supported by the local travel industry.
2. **Build brand awareness of DistiNtly Fayetteville** based on the ever-expanding visitor experience and the attractors (research identified activities that inspire visitation).
3. Drive visitor growth by **focusing on the research identified “need periods”** when hotels and rentals have vacancies.
4. The DistiNtly Fayetteville team will use multiple channels in **traditional, digital and social to connect** with new and repeat visitors.
5. The **DistiNtly Fayetteville sales team will focus on all group segments** with an emphasis on corporate & small meetings market, reunions (family & military), team & individual competition sports (indoor October – April).
6. Support the **curation of events** (sports and active lifestyle) to drive demand during low demand periods.
7. **Tracking and accountability** to demonstrate highest possible Return-on-Investment (ROI) – Lodging market segmentation research of key performance metrics (KPIs) and lodging revenue tracking/analysis.

Measurable Success:

*Annual plan with trackable ROI	*Growth in peak season visitation in summer and on holiday weekends.	
*Longer lengths of stay	*Increased visitor spending	*Increased visitor satisfaction
*Increased Oct- Mar visitation	*New travel industry businesses - lodging & retail	*Growth in lodging room demand & ADR



Travel Industry Advocacy – Community Alignment & Advocacy

Be a champion and provide leadership to the Cumberland County travel industry by addressing the issues that hold it back and diminish the quality of life for residents.

The Board of Directors at DistiNtly Fayetteville is dedicated to: fiscal management of our tax-based funding; supporting our hospitality industry businesses, workers and our staff/team; and advocating for a sustainable tourism economy. We work in partnership with local governments to support their decision-making as it affects the travel economy and destination lifestyle.

1. **DistiNtly Fayetteville**– advocating for the travel industry for the benefit of the community and quality of life
 - a) We recruit, retain and support **the highest caliber team to lead our travel industry** and market Cumberland County as a unique travel destination. We support the staff in achieving the highest standards of excellence and performance through on-going education, certifications, measurement and accountability. We maintain competitive wages/benefits and foster a creative and supportive work environment where the team thrives and produces award winning sales and marketing programs.
 - b) **We represent our businesses and residents**, we support events for the community, we instill civic pride and all of our efforts are supported through hours of volunteer service from the travel industry partners.
 - c) **Resident sentiment** and perception of the travel industry as a community shared value is critical to our long-term success.
2. **Facilitate cooperation and partnership among travel industry businesses to establish a county-wide atmosphere of collaboration.** DistiNtly Fayetteville will be tirelessly positive in supporting our travel industry businesses to achieve high success and profitability.
3. **Workforce** – The development of a qualified and abundant workforce for Cumberland County hospitality businesses is critical to future success and growth. Our travel industry businesses are understaffed and need our support. DistiNtly Fayetteville team will partner with the existing workforce initiatives to integrate hospitality issues with the workforce development programs. The top issues affecting hospitality workforce identified in research are affordable housing, training, childcare and transportation.
4. **Advocacy for travel industry issues** – We are the collective voice for the travel industry and we speak out in support of our partners in hospitality, tourism, events and recreation. Current issues to be addressed include crime, homelessness, community image (litter & graffiti).
5. **Support hospitality culture by providing leadership** to the Cumberland County travel industry through training, co-op sales/marketing programs, and maintaining a community events calendar. DistiNtly Fayetteville leadership from the Board and staff will foster job growth and new business development.

Measurable Success:

*Minimal staff turnover	*Awards & recognition for DF Programs	*Trackable ROI of DF Marketing & promotion
*Increased applicants for hospitality jobs	*Higher visitor satisfaction ratings with service	
*Part-time jobs converted to full-time jobs	*Priority list of policy initiatives	*Ample training for workforce



Expand The Visitor Experience To Drive Growth

Encourage the improvement and expansion of unique activities that provide memorable experiences for visitors and residents alike.

Cumberland County is a year-round active-lifestyle destination that allows visitors and residents to easily walk, hike, cycle and paddle throughout the area. We support and encourage the enhancement and expansion of unique activities that provide memorable experiences for our residents and visitors alike. Improvement and expansion of multi-purpose meeting/event facilities as well as outdoor and indoor recreation facilities will appeal to individuals and groups who will love coming to Cumberland County to get active. Our top priorities are sports tourism, outdoor/recreation-trails, river/lake access through rentals/outfitters & guides, etc.; signage, wayfinding; pickleball; disability access and dining. We will promote increased travel and fill all existing lodging. Overnight visitation drives 2-3 times the visitor spending generated from day-trippers.

1. **Focus on that which drives visitation**, developing and expanding upon existing experiences, while branching into new experiences that complement the brand of DistiNctly Fayetteville.
2. **Support the expansion and improvement of hiking and bicycle trails** making it easier for visitors to travel from lodging to dining, shopping and activities without a vehicle. Expanded trail systems add to Cumberland County’s appeal as an active lifestyle destination. Add bicycle lanes to roadways. A walkable/cycle-friendly community makes it easy to get outside and get active.
3. **Support outdoor outfitters and guiding companies** in providing excellent services for visitors through marketing, increasing access, and developing partnerships throughout Cumberland County to promote local businesses.
4. **Develop indoor October - March activities** to drive off-season growth. Promote and expand indoor activities such as pickleball-- a growing trend where development and expansion can benefit residents and visitors; Shooting sports; Paint ball.
5. **Support development of new activities in Fayetteville** by promoting dining, shopping and events that drive visitation.
6. **Improve the first-impression with visitors** by developing a gateways and primary artery plan focused on litter and graffiti abatement, welcoming/directional signage, landscaping and beautification.
7. **Encourage evening transportation/ridesharing** to connect hotel guests with dining and evening entertainment.

Measurable Success:

*New trails for kayaks and bikes	*New outdoor experiences	*Ride sharing and evening transportation
*New businesses - outfitters and guides	*New winter activities	*Growth in off-season visitation
*New recreation events to drive visitation	*Creation of new activity venues	*Expanded rural cellular service

**"If you build a place people want to visit,
you build a place where people want to live.**

**"If you build a place where people want to live,
you'll build a place where people want to work.**

**"If you build a place where people want to work,
you'll build a place where business has to be.**

**"And if you build a place where business has to be,
you'll build a place where people have to visit."**

—Maura Gast, Irving, TX, CVB and DMAI Chair, July 2009.