

*Johnston
County*

FY 23-24

VISITORS BUREAU

ANNUAL *report*



Find beauty everywhere...



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MESSAGE FROM DONNA



As anticipated, the mild recession we were told was coming did impact travel to some degree. It was not a terrible year for our tourism industry partners -- but hotel occupancy was down 4% with ADR up \$2. An up and down year might be the best way to describe this year for our partners. Workforce remains a challenge for all sectors of the industry, food prices and rising prices for dining out, road construction in every corner of the county, legislative issues facing our restaurants and hotels, high gas prices, and just terrible weather. There was a drought, followed by heavy rains, then a very active hurricane season. The many factors that affect travel are almost always out of our control.

I don't mean to repeat myself, but I will. Looking ahead, the most promising aspect on the horizon is the anticipated growth over the next 12-36 months. The amenities sought after by both residents and visitors, including new retail mixed-use developments, hiking and biking trails, public parks, new nightlife, and entertainment options, are aligning with the growth in our residential communities (which is not slowing down). As a destination accessible from both I-95 and I-40, we have consistently advocated the importance of "car tops" alongside "rooftops", and marketing together to attract groups, sports tournaments, and the growth of wedding venues continues to be a strong market in the county. Visitors to Johnston County contributed more than \$819,000 a day to our local economy in 2023, placing minimal demands on our county's infrastructure and services. In fact, the \$9.2 million in local tax revenue generated by visitors aids in supporting essential services for our residents.

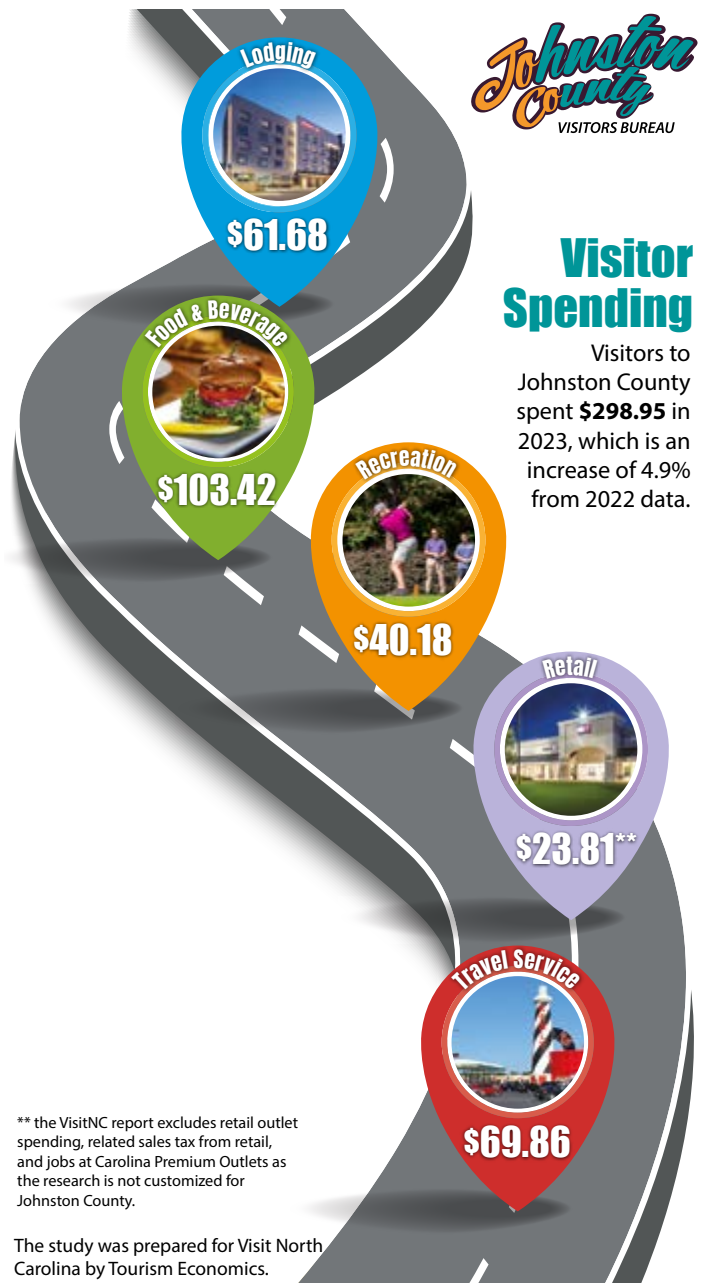
Our mission remains primarily to market the county to attract visitors, but we have added a second mission for our community leaders and residents to better understand the importance of tourism to the county and the economic impact it has for everyone. For a deeper understanding of our activities, strategies, and supported projects, we encourage you to subscribe to our "Tourism Does That?!" Newsletter and visit the website section, johnstoncountync.org/about to engage with the activities of the bureau. The future of tourism is bright in Johnston County with new hotels, Eastfield Crossing, and even more exciting developments on the horizon.

Donna



Visitor Spending

Visitors to Johnston County spent **\$298.95** in 2023, which is an increase of 4.9% from 2022 data.



** the VisitNC report excludes retail outlet spending, related sales tax from retail, and jobs at Carolina Premium Outlets as the research is not customized for Johnston County.

The study was prepared for Visit North Carolina by Tourism Economics.

OVERVIEW OF 2023 VISITOR SPENDING

Statewide, visitor spending in 2023 rose 6.9 percent to reach a record \$35.6 billion and direct tourism employment increased 4.8 percent to 227,224.

In Johnston County, visitors spent \$298.95 million in 2023, which is a 4.9% increase over 2022 spending. This places the county 28th in the state in total spending, and third in the Triangle behind Wake (\$3,288.36) and Durham (\$1,125.62), with Orange in fourth place (\$266.92).

What does \$298.95 million in visitor spending mean for Johnston County?

- Visitors to the county spend \$819,041 a day in local businesses such as hotels, retail and outlet shopping, attractions, dining, and travel services.
- \$12.4m in state tax and \$9.2m in local tax receipts which provide county services and reduce the tax burden on every household in the county by approximately \$145.00.
- Room tax collection paid by visitors is the sole source of operating funds for the Visitors Bureau’s marketing campaigns; no local county property taxes fund the bureau.
- More than 2,000 people are employed in the tourism sector, with labor income more than \$76m.

Based on tourism industry segments, visitors spent in the following categories: (millions)

Lodging	\$61.68m
Food & Beverage	\$103.42m
Recreation	\$40.18m
Retail	\$23.81m**
Transportation	\$69.86m
Total	\$298.95m

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The following is an overview of the Johnston County Visitors Bureau financial data for the FY 2023-24.

NET REVENUE

The Johnston County Visitors Bureau is funded by a county-wide 3% Room Tax paid by visitors staying in accommodations in the county, which generated **\$1,282,625.22** in gross revenues for FY 23-24.

Month-by-month Johnston County 3% **gross collections** for Comparison FY 2021 to FY 2024:

	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
July	\$59,446.47	\$113,888.13	\$105,191.80	\$120,080.28
August	\$59,624.08	\$97,158.41	\$121,420.39	\$111,679.63
September	\$52,954.70	\$84,940.43	\$86,670.76	\$98,566.07
October	\$60,262.55	\$95,970.98	\$104,807.30	\$105,815.91
November	\$59,937.52	\$97,816.54	\$119,981.42	\$95,644.65
December	\$49,468.60	\$77,551.73	\$92,862.83	\$91,208.17
January	\$50,251.91	\$90,469.68	\$82,329.53	\$85,916.80
February	\$52,995.15	\$81,157.64	\$88,936.12	\$92,085.99
March	\$80,289.83	\$105,402.17	\$120,683.31	\$127,523.67
April	\$77,827.48	\$117,545.77	\$111,728.54	\$116,328.94
May	\$97,434.79	\$112,479.35	\$114,891.96	\$120,776.52
June	\$83,109.70	\$114,175.67	\$129,710.49	\$116,998.59
TOTALS	\$783,602.78	\$1,188,556.50	\$1,279,214.45	\$1,282,625.22

JCVB financials are audited by the Johnston County Finance Department under a 3rd-party contract and a completed audit is available in December.

The Towns of Smithfield, Selma, Kenly, and Benson also have a 2% Room Tax which is dedicated to each town's individual marketing campaigns. The following collections represents the **gross dollar amounts** reported by the towns to the Tourism Authority in FY 20 through FY 23:

	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
Smithfield	\$235,251.98	\$373,147.73	\$413,628.52	\$399,292.89
Selma	\$56,276.72	\$90,653.58	\$92,135.67	\$83,198.38
Kenly	\$26,980.08	\$28,776.58	\$26,772.38	\$30,117.86
Benson	\$57,928.00	\$80,021.38	\$78,499.39	\$75,457.14

Revenues not spent on marketing programs on behalf of each town are held in Fund Balance Reserves for future marketing or tourism-related projects approved by each town's tourism committee or by Town Council's request.

The Town's have the following Fund Balance Reserves as of 6/30/24:

- Smithfield** - \$919,546.53
- Selma** - \$116,903.03
- Benson** - \$25,479.25
- Kenly** - \$25,767.98

	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	Var. 24 vs 23
REVENUE NET					
Johnston 3% Tax	1,273,239.66	1,291,239.60	1,176,003.87	791,770.76	-17,999.94
Town of Benson	73,193.41	76,144.48	77,620.75	56,129.22	-2,951.07
Town of Kenly	31,028.48	29,481.88	28,776.64	26,980.10	1,546.60
Town of Selma	80,702.41	89,371.61	87,933.99	54,588.42	-8,669.20
Town of Smithfield	387,314.12	401,219.68	361,953.32	228,956.44	-13,905.56
Misc. Revenue	2,395.60	4,377.89	4,352.00	5715.00	-1,982.29
Reimbursements	1,133.80	2,659.81	2,308.00	2,082.02	-1,526.01
Investment Income	58,304.71	6,200.53	394.15	356.48	52,104.18
Grants	805,922.78	59,294.99	8,209.59	126,950.00	746,627.79
Total Revenues	2,713,234.97	1,959,990.47	1,747,552.31	1,293,528.44	753,244.50
HR EXPENSES					
Salaries & Wages	500,925.69	399,859.73	380,066.61	363,005.82	101,065.96
Longevity Pay	6,300.00	6,000.00	5,700.00	5,300.00	300.00
Travel Per Diem	6,000.00	6,000.00	6000.00	6,000.00	-0-
Fringe Benefits	181,054.32	150,845.36	144,154.62	137,676.42	30,208.96
Total HR Expenses	694,280.01	562,705.09	535,921.23	511,982.24	131,574.92
OPERATING EXP.					
Professional fees	15,750.00	4,500.00	2,250.00	3,500.00	11,250.00
Telephone	1,068.08	7,133.13	7,526.47	7,968.47	-6,065.05
Postage	9,182.65	13,739.98	5,917.26	8,189.37	-4,557.33
Printing	32,462.32	32,978.63	20,389.25	13,189.24	-516.31
Utilities	5,759.10	5,430.53	4,430.10	4,188.08	328.57
Travel & Trade	27,515.31	20,735.85	14,831.13	4,460.15	6,779.46
Equip/Building/Main.	46,847.96	52,852.35	44,173.73	44,058.58	-6,004.39
JoCo/Coop Adv.	227,593.54	180,615.32	166,778.93	130,654.87	46,978.22
Office Supplies	14,856.46	14,159.95	9,191.67	4,162.75	696.51
Software Expense	7,865.48	2,160.99	7,155.83	8,638.16	,5704.49
Benson Marketing	70,970.49	92,417.62	38,610.74	33,160.35	-21,447.13
Kenly Marketing	20,759.57	20,101.64	41,939.34	30,842.84	657.93
Selma Marketing	92,947.00	85,748.55	49,480.68	60,769.75	7,198.45
Smithfield Marketing	173,975.06	151,211.65	149,894.76	136,552.96	22,763.41
Professional Dues	51,315.44	59,407.01	15,535.16	14,189.96	-8,091.57
Marketing Grant	14,000.00	11,000.00	5,000.00	-0-	3,000.00
Insurance & Bonds	593.00	593.00	647.00	647.00	-0-
Research	13,160.00	5,661.00	2,376.00	2,200.00	7,499.00
State Grants	82,498.10	51,866.87	9,036.52	20,873.18	30,631.23
Capital Grants	105,069.50	116,663.00	25,130.46	74,097.79	-11,593.50
Total Operating	1,014,189.06	928,977.07	620,295.03	602,342.51	85,211.99
Total HR + Operating	1,708,469.07	1,491,682.16	1,156,216.26	1,114,324.75	216,786.91
Net +/-	1,004,765.90	468,308.31	591,336.05	179,203.69	

01

ABOUT THE BUREAU

What is a Tourism Authority?

In North Carolina General Statutes, the term “authority” is used to refer to many different kinds of entities that are created by government to perform specific functions or services. Authorities are quasi-government agencies following G.S. 159 Local Government Finance rules.



A SHORT HISTORY ON THE FORMATION OF THE JOHNSTON COUNTY TOURISM AUTHORITY.

In 1987, the NC General Assembly approved HB 893 allowing Johnston County to levy a room tax. In November of that year, the Johnston County Commissioners levied a 3% county-wide occupancy tax, and the Tourism Authority was formed to promote tourism.

The legislation also established the format by which the Board of Directors was created. The Tourism Authority is a 11-member board composed of five representatives appointed by Chambers of Commerce in Benson, Clayton, Four Oaks, Kenly, Smithfield/Selma, five representatives appointed by the County Commissioners that are involved in tourism, and one ex-officio member, the County Finance Officer as the treasurer. There are Occupancy Tax Uniform Provisions established which outline how funds may be used to promote the county.

With the creation of the Tourism Authority there was a mandate in the legislation to give 50% of the tax collection for the first two years to the Johnston Community College Auditorium building fund which amounted to approximately \$235,000. In addition, the tourism authority contributed \$30,000 a year for five years to the Smithfield/Selma Chamber of Commerce Lee House Renovation project which created the Visitor Information Center for the county, and provided office space for the Visitors Bureau staff. So for the early years of the Tourism Authority funds were dedicated to development projects before a majority of funding was available for marketing.

Johnston County tourism revenue has been generated mainly by the leisure traveler passing through on I-95 and I-40 to other destinations. In the last few years, the Visitors Bureau has been dedicated to creating packages and tourism products to create reasons for visitors to choose our destinations for girlfriend shopping trips, golf vacations, and culinary trails. Current efforts continue to build awareness of Johnston County for several niche markets including the JoCo Grows Agriculture initiative, OutdoorNC and promoting recreation, seeking to bid on sports tournaments, outlets and downtown shopping, promotion for wedding venues, and marketing to heritage travelers interested in history to visit our county's museums.

MISSION, GOALS & CORE VALUES

MISSION

The mission of the Johnston County Visitors Bureau is the marketing and development of the destination's brand experiences to targeted visitor markets for economic growth and quality of place.

VISION

Johnston County Visitors Bureau is the recognized and influential community tourism leader through its successful, productive, and technology savvy marketing, development, and advocacy partnerships.

5 STRATEGIC GOALS

Strive to achieve excellence in destination marketing utilizing the highest industry standards set forth by Destinations International.

Position Johnston County as the preferred visitor, group tour, and meeting destination along the I-95 and I-40 corridors targeting select visitor markets along the East Coast and Canada.

Stress the importance of educational opportunities for the visitor industry with the purpose of encouraging quality visitor services for leisure, meeting, and group tour travelers to Johnston County.

Work cooperatively with municipalities, chambers of commerce, and visitor industry partners both locally and statewide to achieve an effective and comprehensive marketing program.

Proactively pursue economic development projects that benefit the tourism industry in Johnston County.

CORE VALUES

As the official destination marketing organization for the county of Johnston, the Tourism Authority Board adopted the following core values to guide the decisions which manage the organization. We aspire to operate at the highest level of excellence in marketing, benchmarking our performance against top performing CVBs in the United States.

- We promise to exceed expectations in the delivery of public services for our stakeholders;
- We are professionals, committed to serving with honesty and integrity;
- We are committed to solving problems;
- We are committed to achieving real results that earn the public's trust;
- We are committed to working cooperatively with the visitor industry for the overall good of the county;
- We encourage and value open and honest communication;
- We are committed to continual learning and the pursuit of excellence;
- We are committed to being active partners with all municipalities, county government, and the Chambers of Commerce;
- We are committed to being good stewards of our natural environment and the preservation of the county's cultural, agricultural, and Civil War heritage;
- We are committed to development of partnerships and alliances both in the county and statewide.

MEET THE BOARD

Meet the Johnston County Tourism Authority members who served for FY 24. Five members are appointed by County Commissioners and five from local chambers of commerce.

APPOINTED BY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

James Jenkins

Retired, Smithfield resident

Kimberly Pickett

Town Manager, Benson

W.E. "Bud" Andrews, Chairperson, Special Projects Committee

Retired, First Citizens Bank

James Lassiter

Retired, Selma resident

Mark McDonnell, Vice-Chairperson

Eastfield Development, LLC.

APPOINTED BY LOCAL CHAMBERS

Ben Cook, Chairperson

Owner, Benton Card Company

James Hoke, Secretary/Treasurer

Owner, Thrivent

Joan Pritchett

Executive Director, Four Oaks Chamber of Commerce

Maria Smith, Chairperson, Marketing Committee

Director of Events and Operations, Clayton Area Chamber of Commerce

Jeffery Hamilton

Owner, Coffee on Raiford

Chad McLamb, County Finance Officer

Ex-Officio Member

MEET THE VISITORS BUREAU STAFF

We are often asked how “many staff members do we have working at the Visitors Bureau?”. Below is a short recap of the six staff positions and each person’s responsibilities.



01

**DONNA
BAILEY-TAYLOR**

President/CEO

Directs and leads the Bureau toward its mission. Works with the JCVB Board on policy making and strategies for the organization. Serves as the key executive within Johnston County to represent the interests of the travel and tourism industry. Speaks at public events and other meetings on tourism as well as other matters pertaining to the industry and the JCVB. Participates in industry associations and travel and tourism boards. Acts as the primary spokesperson for the organization.

02

ERIC DEAN

Creative Director

Helps execute the vision of the Johnston County Visitors Bureau while supporting the needs of the marketing, sales, and services departments. Develops all creative aspects and direction of the Bureau’s marketing platforms including graphic design, advertising, print materials, social and digital campaigns, and publications. Manages all technical aspects of the Bureau’s websites, including SEO, design, layout, and functionality.

03

ANGEL PHILLIPS

Office Manager/Visitor Center Manager

Performs accounting functions in accordance with County Finance Purchasing Procedures, and assists the President/CEO with the overall financial operation of the Bureau. This position also assists in the management and operation of the administrative offices, IT duties, and oversees the operation of the Visitor Center providing visitor services for leisure and group markets.

04

ASHBY BRAME

VP of Marketing & Communication

Responsible for identifying market opportunities and developing short and long-term marketing strategies with the objective of attracting overnight business. These strategies include advertising, public relations, media trade shows/industry meetings, familiarization tours, research, and special promotions. Responsible for strategically planning, implementing, and reviewing internal and external communication programs.

05

**JENNIFER
MCGOWEN**

Digital Marketing Manager

Helps promote the vision of the Johnston County Visitors Bureau while supporting the needs of the marketing department. This position drives all digital marketing programs within all levels of the organization and engages with vendors and partners. Duties include management of social media content, website updates, publication inventory, and email marketing.

06

**KRISTIN
RADFORD**

Sales & Service Manager

Welcomes and provides relevant and helpful information about Johnston County to all Visitors to the Visitor Center, while providing superior customer service. Assist all walk-in visitors, phone call inquiries and email inquiries promptly and informatively. Manages the CRM and the Extranet for the tourism industry partners, events, and all brochure distribution in the county. Also manages leisure and group sales efforts for the county.

WHAT CAN THE OCCUPANCY TAX BE USED FOR?

Below are the General Statute Rules governing the use and collection of occupancy taxes.



In 1997, the General Assembly enacted uniform municipal and county administrative provisions for occupancy tax legislation – G.S. 153A-155 and G.S. 160A-215. These provisions provide uniformity in the areas of levy, administration, collection, repeal, and penalties. Subsequently, the House Finance Committee established the Occupancy Tax Subcommittee, which regularly reviews occupancy tax legislation and looks for the inclusion of the following uniform provisions in the bills it considers:

RATE – The county tax rate cannot exceed 6% and the city tax rate, when combined with the county rate, cannot exceed 6%.

USE – At least two-thirds of the proceeds must be used to promote travel and tourism and the remainder must be used for tourism-related expenditures, which may include beach nourishment. However, local governments in coastal counties may allocate up to 50% of occupancy tax proceeds for beach nourishment, so long as all remaining proceeds are used for tourism promotion and provided that the use of occupancy tax proceeds for beach nourishment is limited by either a statutory cap or sunset provision.

DEFINITIONS – The terms “net proceeds”, “promote travel and tourism”, “tourism-related expenditures” are defined terms:

NET PROCEEDS – Gross proceeds less the costs to the city/county of administering and collecting the tax, as determined by the finance officer, not to exceed 3% of the first \$500,000 of gross proceeds collected each year and 1% of the remaining gross receipts collected each year.

PROMOTE TRAVEL AND TOURISM – To advertise or market an area or activity, publish and distribute pamphlets and other materials, conduct market research, or engage in similar promotional activities that attract tourists or business travelers to the area; the term includes administrative expenses incurred in engaging in these activities.

TOURISM-RELATED EXPENDITURES – Expenditures that, in the judgment of the Tourism Development Authority, are designed to increase the use of lodging facilities, meeting facilities, and convention facilities in a city/county.

ADMINISTRATION – The net revenues must be administered by a local tourism promotion agency, typically referred to as a “Tourism Development Authority,” that has the authority to determine how the tax proceeds will be used, is created by a local ordinance, and at least 1/2 of the members must be currently active in the promotion of travel and tourism in the taxing district and 1/3 of the members must be affiliated with organizations that collect the tax.

COSTS OF COLLECTION – The taxing authority may retain from the revenues its actual costs of collection, not to exceed 3% of the first \$500,000 collected each year plus 1% of the remainder collected each year.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Part of destination development in the county involves the staff of the Visitors Bureau serving on area boards, volunteering, providing marketing support, and participating in special committees related to tourism. The following is a list of activities by the staff within area organizations to advance tourism in the county.

Donna Bailey-Taylor serves on several area boards and works on many tourism development projects:

Member of the **Benson Art Advisory Board**. Projects in this fiscal year included the sculpture lease program to rotate art pieces in front of the Mary Duncan Library on Main Street, completion of the Printer Street Alley project, and the selection of artist Zac Bender to paint a mural on the Lee Street Gym.

Chairperson for the **Ava Gardner Museum**, and headed the Ava 100th Centennial Planning Committee 24-month project concluding with the Ava Gardner Festival in October 2023. Projects included design work for the Show Boat Costume Exhibit, hosting James Kelly, costumier from London, England, and securing state funds for the museum to install a fire suppression system.

Serves on the board of the **Clayton Piano Festival** to assist in marketing and promotion of the local music events held throughout the county, grant writing, and for fundraising efforts.

Serves on the board of the **Friends of Bentonville Battlefield**, the support group for the state historic site which provides funding for a variety of projects needed by the staff. Donna worked with our elected officials to fund a new maintenance building, and two driving pull-offs receiving a \$700,000 state budget allocation. In addition, she serves as the NC Regional Director on the Civil War Trails board and the Marketing Subcommittee.

Served on the following committees during the year: **Ham and Yam Festival Advisory Committee**, **Elevate Benson Committee**, **Workforce Alliance Strategic Planning Committee**, and the **Johnston County Branding project committee**.

Serves on the **Johnston County Grows Agriculture Marketing Committee** and continues the work funded by the Tobacco Trust Fund Commission and the NC Specialty Crop Block grants to further the mission to market the county's agriculture partners and agritourism.

Ashby Brame serves on the **Friends of Johnston County Parks** board, which is a new grassroots community group that supports local park and trail development in the county. This year the Friends partnered again with the Johnston County Arts Council to complete two more mural projects in outdoor spaces around JoCo. Ashby sat on the project committee and helped to shepherd the project as well as promote its completion.

Ashby also serves on the **SSS Academy of Hospitality & Tourism** board, a group that works with high school students interested in pursuing a degree in hospitality. Through this board Ashby also participates in JoCo Works Pro, an annual resume and interview clinic for area high schoolers.



Beer, Wine, and Shine Trail

This self-guided beverage trail continues to draw visitors to the county interested in craft beverage tastings. This year two additional trail partners came on-board: Raleigh Brewing JoCo and Hatchet Brewing’s The Vault.

02

MARKETING
HIGHLIGHTS

TELLING OUR DESTINATION STORY

The JCVB staff does much more than putting up billboards and managing a website for promoting the county. A multi-faceted marketing plan is used to reach potential visitors for inspiring travel, providing messaging as they consider where to stop or visit in North Carolina, and showcasing our stories via many, many avenues available to us including digital, email marketing, social media and public relations. Here are some highlights of our efforts in FY 23-24.

The JCVB Staff uses a media database, **Critical Mention**, which measures the earned value of media placement.

Total Online & Print Audience: **22,222,535,290**

Total Online & Print Publicity Value:

\$21,003,139

Featured Media Outlets in FY23-24

Our State Magazine, AOL.com, Yahoo!Finance, Triangle Business Journal, News & Observer, WRAL, The Local Palate, Eater Carolinas, Yahoo!Lifestyle, Architectural Digest, MSN, InTouch Weekly, Yahoo!Canada, Travel Zoo, Charlotte Observer, Food + Wine.

Additionally Featured Partners

Bentonville Battlefield, Howell Woods, Redneck BBQ Lab, Luna Pizza, Broadslab Distillery, and the 301 Endless Yard Sale, DeWayne's, Clemmons, Iowa 80 Petro, Neuse Little Theatre.

“

The following are the top three partners by media value in 23-24.

Crawford Cookshop
\$13,445,241

Ava Gardner Museum
\$3,798,053

Old North State Food Hall
\$2,723,117

PBS North Carolina's popular travel-themed show *NC Weekend* shares must-visit places across the state with its audience every week. From 2023 to 2024 they filmed episodes at both DeWayne's and Clemmons Educational State Forest. Host Deborah Holt Noel interviewed DeWayne and Tina Lee about DeWayne's Christmas Land and Ranger Kevin Pittman about Clemmons' recreation and educational opportunities.



Southern Living Covers 301 EYS

The 301 Endless Yard Sale was highlighted in a *Southern Living* digital article titled “8 Longest Yard Sales in the South to Put in Your Calendar” by Jennifer Prince. Prince, a freelance writer from Virginia, who visited and shopped the sale during a media visit to Johnston County in 2019. She has written multiple articles for various publications about 301 and JoCo since her visit.



ONFSH Featured in The Local Palate

The Old North State Food Hall was featured in *The Local Palate's* Road Trips Issue in a round-up of “Food Halls Worth Stopping For”, by Beth D’Addono. *The Local Palate* is a popular, monthly magazine based in Charleston, SC and distributed to newsstands across the entire Southeast.



Our State Articles This Year

The January 2024 issue of *Our State* magazine featured Kenly 95 Petro’s unique way of welcoming road-weary travelers, and their many services offering respite from the journey. The February issue included a piece on Smithfield’s Neuse Little Theatre.

The JCVB works with *Our State's* editorial and advertising teams to share and promote JoCo’s stories to visitors.



Partner communications

Tourism Does That?!

12 Newsletters Sent, Open Rate 43.25%,
Click thru rate 2.97%



PUBLICITY HIGHLIGHTS

MEDIA VISITS

The Johnston County Visitors Bureau works with journalists, travel writers, photographers, and influencers throughout the year to facilitate Familiarization Trips (FAMs) to JoCo's many towns. With the help of our partners, we help the media write about and share their visits with travelers. The 23-24 FY was a great year for content creators.

Jensen Savannah Visits Multiple Partners



NC-based TikTok influencer Jensen Savannah visited JoCo to share our holiday spirit with her 300+ TikTok followers. Jensen visited the Old North State Food Hall, DeWayne's, and the Carolina Premium Outlets. This included Old North State's pop-up holiday-themed bar Blitzen's Tavern, based in the Longleaf Tavern. Jensen created video and stories for her social accounts to share with the people who follow her for travel inspiration.

Meghan Grant Covers the Holidays in Benson

The Town of Benson and the surrounding area played host to travel writer and influencer Meghan Grant over the holidays. She visited multiple downtown businesses for some holiday shopping, had breakfast at Cornerstone Café, enjoyed the beautiful Christmas displays along Main St., visited Broadslab Distillery, and had dinner at Redneck BBQ Lab. Meghan shared her experience on her Instagram and posted content on her popular, Raleigh-based travel blog called "I'm Fixin' To".

NC Tripping Visits JoCo Again (and Again)

Thanks to NC Tripping, with whom the JCVB had an on-going partnership this year. In September they visited JoCo for a fun date night, and shared it with their 203k Instagram followers and 236k TikTok followers. Framed as a convenient evening getaway from the Triangle area, NC Tripping's date night in JoCo included dinner at Crawford Cookshop and drinks at Revival 1869 in Downtown Clayton, followed by a movie under the stars at Smithfield's Neuse River Amphitheater. In FY 23-24 they also covered Meadow Lights, shopping and exploring in Downtown Benson, plus what's new along the Beer, Wine, and Shine Trail. In addition, JoCo experiences, attractions, and events frequently make it into round-up articles on NCTripping's website.

A big thank you to our awesome tourism partners who help us host media and share all that JoCo has to offer visitors!

Media Outreach

Other staff projects included the IMM Media Show in New York each January and the NC Media Mission with Visit NC held in Raleigh in 2023. In addition, Ashby Brame worked with her counterparts at Visit Raleigh and Discover Durham to organize and execute two regional media missions. The first, to Richmond, VA, took place in June of 2023 with the follow-up mission to Charleston, SC which took place April of 2024.



JCVB Blog

Telling our stories about new business openings, local chefs, artists, and festivals and events is the focus of the weekly JCVB blog. The staff utilizes the blog on social media to drive visitors to the website.

Top BLOGs of interest for our readers in FY24:

301 Endless Yard Sale Just Two Months Away - **3,989** clicks

Unique Annual Events & Festivals in JoCo - **2,744** clicks

The Entertaining History of Benton Card Company - **2,413** clicks

The Visitors Bureau Manages 5 Pages on Facebook, and supports several others:

Visit Johnston County - 23,273 followers

Visit Selma, NC - 1,808 followers

301 Endless Yard Sale - 27,642 followers

Beer, Wine and Shine Trail - 12,764 followers

JoCo Grows Agriculture - 3,210 followers

Instagram - 5,377 followers

X - 3,039 followers

Pinterest - 1,378 followers

TikTok - 303 followers

YouTube Channel - 357 subscribers



Bourbon, BBQ, & Benson Campaign

Bureau staff designed, wrote, and placed a Bourbon, BBQ, & Benson sponsored content campaign including digital articles, social posts, web banners, and emails. Advertising partnerships included *Atlanta Magazine*, *Southbound*, *The Local Palate*, and *PhillyVoice*. The campaign garnered attention and visits to the Bureau's website. In addition, business owners in Downtown Benson reported visitors coming in from Atlanta who cited the article as their reason for travel to the area.



A New Billboard Campaign for Smithfield

The town of Smithfield is enhancing its visibility with additional billboards and new vinyl designs on their billboards along I-95. The eight billboards, strategically placed to capture the attention of travelers, feature a cohesive look with visitor-centric messaging. Each design highlights key attractions and experiences in Smithfield, from its historic downtown and local eateries to the Ava Gardner Museum, and outlet shopping. The fresh, unified appearance aims to create a memorable impression, inviting passersby to explore the unique offerings of Smithfield. This initiative reflects the town's commitment to promoting tourism along the critical I-95 corridor and welcoming visitors to discover the charm and hospitality of JoCo.



Selma Runs Digital

The town of Selma utilized growing digital billboard technology to put out its message to visitors traveling east and west on Hyw 70. The digital platform allows campaigns to be changed easier and more frequently than traditional vinyl.



Are my county property taxes used for funding the bureau?

No, only visitors staying in local hotels, cabins, bed & breakfast inns, and AirBnB rental properties pay the occupancy tax that funds the bureau's budget.

JoCo included in Trail Town Guide

The Bureau has been working and growing with Outdoor NC since its inception in 2021. Offered via Visit NC, the state’s tourism office, the Outdoor NC Alliance Partner Program has evolved each year and continues to provide NC destinations with tools, guides, and opportunities to promote accessible and responsible recreation.

This year, the Bureau is participating in the new Trail Town Stewardship Program as a designated Trail Town Destination - this is an evolution of the on-going Outdoor NC Program. Through this partnership, we are committed to helping steward a more sustainable and inclusive travel and outdoor recreation industry for North Carolina and Johnston County.



SMITHFIELD AREA

[JohnstonCountyNC.org](https://www.johnstoncountync.org)
[@VisitJoCo](https://www.instagram.com/visitjoco)
[@JoCoVisitorsBureau](https://www.facebook.com/jocovisitorsbureau)

Trail Towns: Smithfield, Clayton, Four Oaks, Benson




Smithfield's location along the Neuse River, where the Piedmont gives way to the Coastal Plain, makes it an ideal location for soft adventure - visitors will find pine trees, mostly flat topography and trails accessible all four seasons. Smithfield is at the apex of multiple trail systems in Johnston County with the Neuse River Blueway, the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, which runs east-west across the county, and the East Coast Greenway, which runs north-south along US Hwy 301. In the Northwest area of Johnston County, the Clayton River Walk on the Neuse trail links to a vast trail system that stretches more than 80 miles across Raleigh and Durham. Johnston County is committed to trail development and maintaining open, natural public spaces as the region grows. Plans are in place to connect JoCo's greenways and existing trails in Benson, Four Oaks and Clayton, with Smithfield at heart of the network.

EXPLORE [Accessible Outdoor Adventures](#) [Destination Trip Tips](#) [Responsible Travel](#)

TRAILS

The Smithfield area's rural beauty and agricultural heritage create diverse trails that visitors can walk, cycle or drive to experience. Johnston County is home to many paved greenways and flat, hard-packed trails, making our recreation experiences accessible and approachable. From hiking through history at Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site to exploring JoCo's food culture along the BBQ Trail or Beer, Wine and Shine Trail. The area also offers unique habitats that make it a national destination for birding enthusiasts.

TRAIL NAME	TRAIL TOWN	ACTIVITIES
Buffalo Creek Greenway	Smithfield	
Neuse River Blueway	Clayton, Smithfield	
Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center	Four Oaks	
Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site	Four Oaks	
Clayton River Walk on the Neuse	Clayton	
Smithfield Bentonville Cycling Loop	Smithfield, Benson	
Historic Smithfield Walking Tour	Smithfield	

OFFICIAL NORTH CAROLINA

TRAIL TOWN GUIDE

Culinary travel is of great interest to media and for visitors -- and the Johnston County food scene is getting noticed with the Food Hall, Crawford's Cookshop and the very popular Redneck BBQ Lab.



PRINT & VIDEO PROJECTS

New Video Projects

The JCVB staff worked with the county to shoot footage for a Fall Family Fun video to promote agritourism in the county. Footage was shot at Sonlight Farm and Ashlan Meadow Farm. Staff worked with Jonathan Levin to create a recreation video to use across Youtube, Google Ads, and social media. Also, the staff designed and created an Advocacy video highlighting the importance of the tourism industry in JoCo and the role of the Bureau in managing and promoting tourism in the county.

Total Video Views Across Channels:

Fall Farm Fun in JoCo - **13,798**

Get Outdoors in JoCo - **1,861**

Tourism Does That - **111**

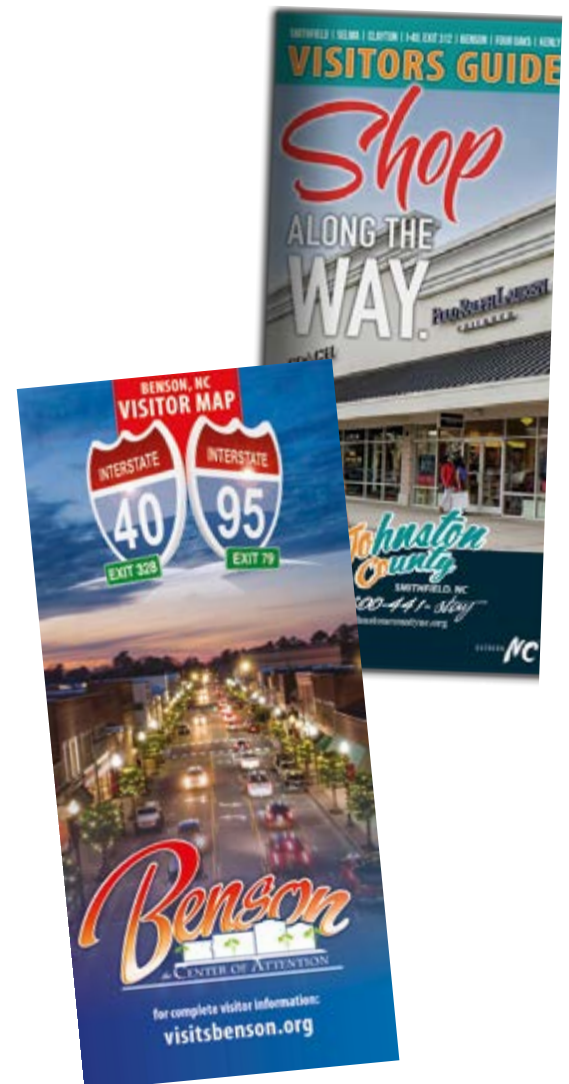


2024 Visitors Guide, Plus a new Benson Map

The JCVB works each year to inventory, design, and print a full-color, 32-page Visitors Guide. This guide is distributed to visitors throughout the year via mail, online, at tradeshow, at welcome centers, and in other ways. The cover theme changes each year and the guide works to pull visitors through to the JCVB website where they can find even more info about JoCo. Guides are distributed to more than 125 locations in the county, Visitor Centers, and NC Welcome Centers in the state and along I-95 & I-40.

This year the Elevate Benson group requested a Downtown Benson printed map piece - much like the map the Bureau designs and prints for the Town of Smithfield. These guides are paid for out of each towns' 2% occupancy tax revenues.

We also printed the You Are Here Smithfield map to distribute throughout the county to help visitors in-market and NC Welcome Center to attract visitors to stop, shop, and stay in Smithfield.





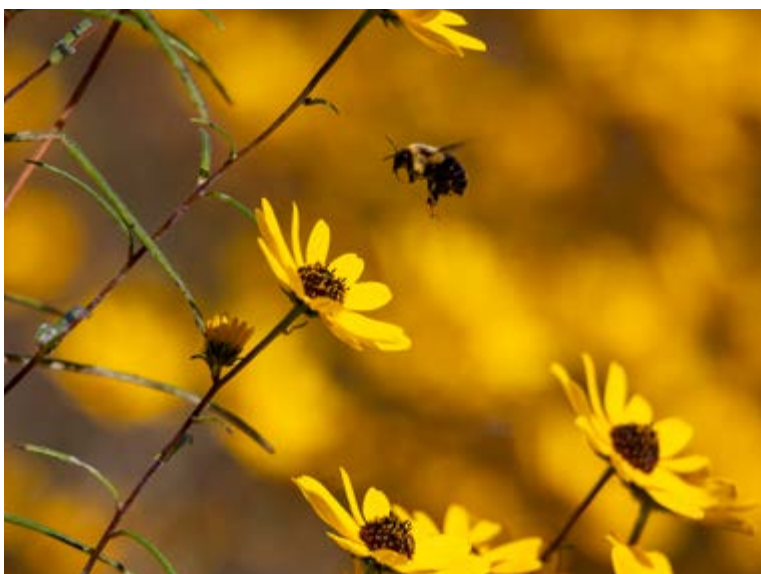
Ken Tart Photography, Benson.



Jonathan Levin Photography.

Increasing Our Image Database

Thanks to two very talented photographers, the JCVB works throughout the year to capture JoCo and our tourism partners. Photos and videos are used on social media, in print advertising, on the website, and in brochures. Staff photographer and Digital Marketing Manager Jennifer McGowen and local photographer and videographer Jonathan Levin have captured amazing images this year.



JCVB Staff Photography.

SALES MISSIONS

JCVB Attends Trade Shows with State

In February the JCVB Staff joined forces with VisitNC and other vibrant destinations from across North Carolina for the DC Travel & Adventure Show. This collaboration aims to share the charm of the Tar Heel State with leisure travelers. The JCVB staff showcased what makes JoCo a must-visit spot - from our rich heritage and scenic beauty to our emerging culinary scene. DC is a major drive market to JoCo due to I-95. Staff also attended a RetireNC show with the state through Ideal-Living's retirement show series; which presents an opportunity to connect with people in the DC, VA, and MD area looking to retire. The JCVB staff promoted JoCo's welcoming retirement communities, affordability, and quality of living. In March staff attended another Travel & Adventure Show, this time in Atlanta, also a major market for Johnston County.



Smithfield Hosts International Kukkiwon Cup Event

In September 2023 an exciting, international sporting event was held in Smithfield. The Global Open Kukkiwon Cup Taekwondo Championships is a taekwondo tournament featuring traditional Korean martial arts. Johnston County was selected to host the event which took place over the course of the an entire day across two facilities, Smithfield Selma High School and Smithfield Recreation and Aquatics Center. Thousands of national and international visitors came to compete and spectate. Events included sparring, form, martial arts weapons, and more. The tournament kicked off Saturday morning with an opening ceremony in the Smithfield Selma High School gymnasium. There was a procession into the gym by the participating athletes, representing 25 U.S. States and 30 countries from around the world. The Governor of North Carolina, Roy Cooper, was also in attendance to welcome everyone and accept an honorary black-belt from the tournament hosting organization.



National Tourism Week

The US Travel Association and destinations around the country celebrate National Tourism Week each year in May. The Bureau sets up tents at the I-95 North and South Welcome Center handing out brochures and talking to visitors traveling through NC. Tourism industry partners are invited to attend with the staff and engage and invite visitors to Johnston County.



JoCo Grows Agriculture Marketing Committee

In 2022, Johnston County Visitors Bureau JoCo was awarded a grant in the amount of \$111,900 from the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission (NCTTFC) and in 2023 a grant of \$149,315 from USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to promote Specialty Crops in Johnston County. Since then these grants have supported the JoCo Grows Agriculture Marketing Committee's efforts to market and gain awareness of the importance of agriculture in Johnston County; including both a 2022 and 2023 Strawberry Season Marketing Campaign.

JoCo Grows Fall Fun

Fall is an excellent time to be on a farm in JoCo. JoCo Grows promotional efforts for autumn kicked off big time in September thanks to a partnership with 94.7 QDR. Promotional efforts for "Fall Fun" included an on-air interview with Sonlight's April Phillips by Amanda Daughtry, as well as an in-person visit from Amanda to Ashlan Meadows to highlight everything that Boone and Emily Langley have going on this season. Additional advertising mediums included printed materials, radio ads, giveaways, digital and social marketing, public relations efforts, and in-person events.

All efforts are part of the annual joint marketing campaign to advertise on-farm activities for families, where to purchase locally grown seasonal produce, and more.

Highlights from the FY 24 program of work:

- 173 farm visits to assist with marketing efforts and technical support.
- 43 Cost Share grants awarded to farmers to conduct marketing campaigns, created websites, design logos, etc.
- Community outreach efforts, attending 12 festivals in the county.
- Two New strawberry fields for the 2024 season at Ashlan Meadows and Sonlight Farms.
- 19 Farms have hosted 62 events with People First Tourism, collaborating with artists and bringing visitors to their farms to buy specialty crops.



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

The Visitors Bureau uses Smith Travel Research CoStar data to measure the county's occupancy, ADR (Average Daily Rate), and RevPar (Revenue per available room). As the much talked about mild recession loomed over summer travel, occupancy levels were “soft”, however ADR and RevPAR remains healthy.

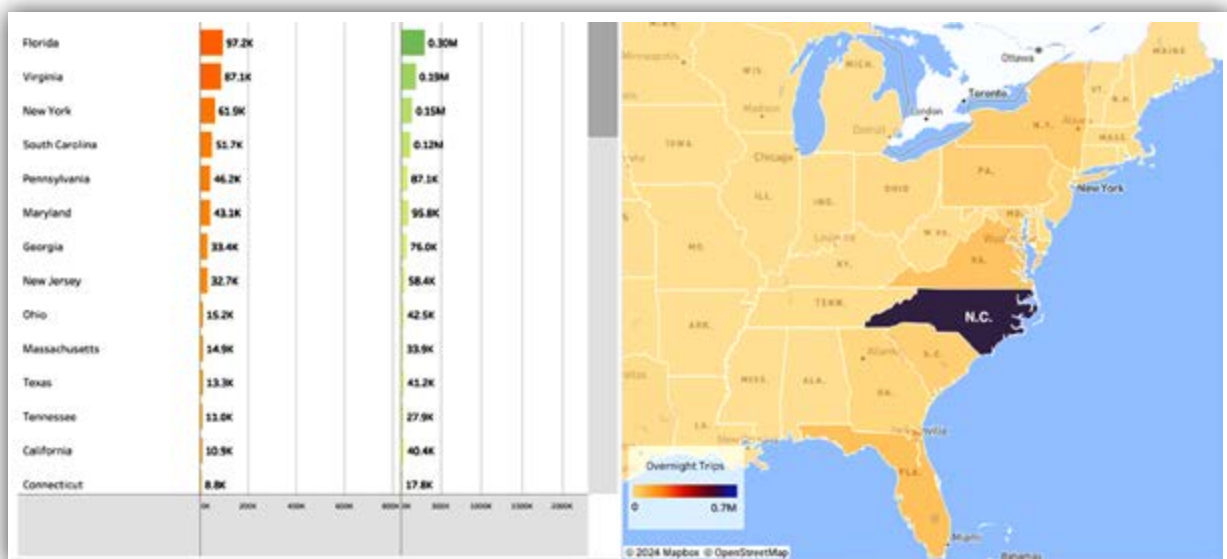
YTD Running 12 month data comparison for last two years:

	2022	2023
OCC	55.9%	57.0%
ADR	\$86.80	\$92.28
RevPAR	\$48.54	\$52.64

The Visitors Bureau utilizes a data intelligence service, Placer.ai, to better understand our visitors to the county, and adjust marketing efforts based on zip codes, top Points of Interest, and demographics of visitors to the county. What has been learned using first party data has helped the bureau adjust target audiences for digital and social marketing campaigns as well.

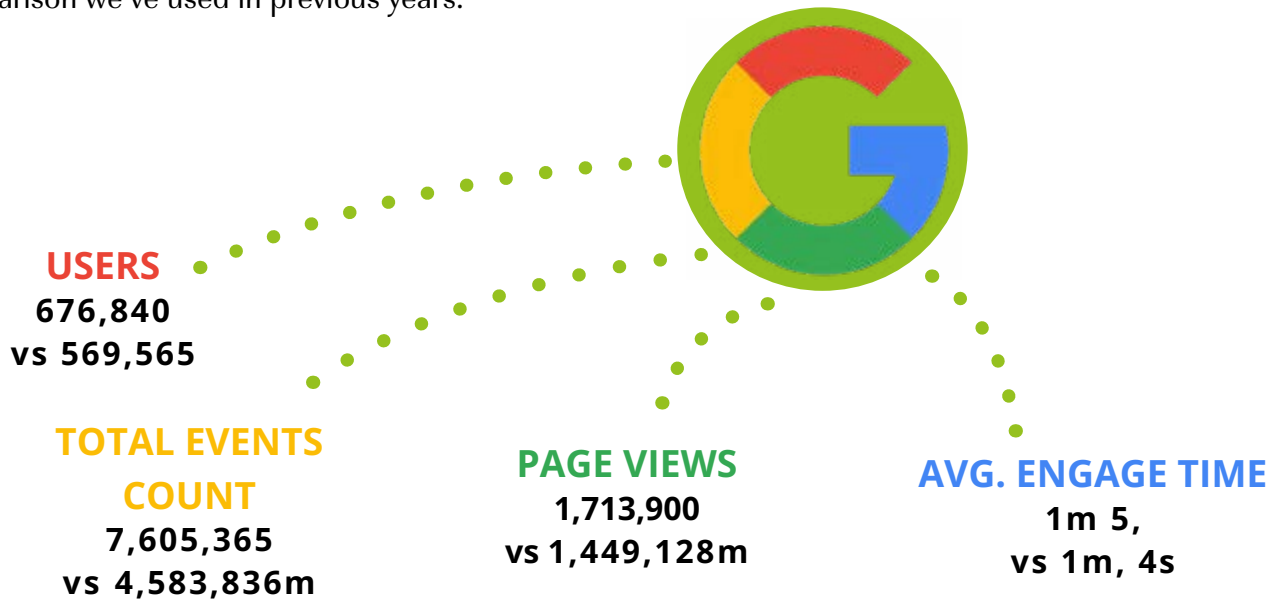
Our focus remains on markets that generate overnight visits to the county to our hotels. For tourism partners focusing on marketing to out-of-state markets, Placer.ai data indicates the following top states for overnight visitors are: (interesting to note they also align with the top Point of Interest markets for Carolina Premium Outlets.)

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. North Carolina | 6. Pennsylvania |
| 2. Florida | 7. Maryland |
| 3. Virginia | 8. Georgia |
| 4. New York | 9. New Jersey |
| 5. South Carolina | 10. Ohio |



GOOGLE ANALYTICS

In this year’s annual report we are using GA4 data for the second time. Even with almost 2 years of the “new” Google Analytics, the transition has been difficult. The Universal Analytics data model was based on sessions and page views. In contrast, the GA4 data model is based on events and active viewers. Since we used GA4 in the reporting last year, we are able to bring back the data set comparison we’ve used in previous years.



TOP 10 PAGE HITS

- JoCo Home Page - 85,410
- 301 Endless Yard Sale - 60,743
- JoCo Grows Micro-site - 51,951
- Events Main Page - 51,018
- Ava Gardner Home - 41,509
- Ham & Yam Micro-site - 38,880
- Smithfield - 36,182
- 301 EYS Vendor Maps - 26,132
- Shopping/Outlets - 26,125
- Kenly - 24,355

TOP GOOGLE AD RESULTS (CLICKS)

- Ava Gardner Performance Max - 23,294
- Smithfield Performance Max - 14,149
- Kenly Performance Max - 10,754

SESSIONS SOURCES

- Organic - 368,128
- Direct - 112,043
- Social - 109,601
- Referral - 24,669
- Cross-network - 19,488
- Paid Search - 15,793

TOP TEN STATES

- North Carolina
- Georgia
- Virginia
- Florida
- New York
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Michigan
- California
- South Carolina

03

BUREAU &
PARTNER
NEWS

BUREAU NEWS

JCVB Board Member Updates

The Johnston County Visitors Bureau welcomed several new faces to the board: Kimberly Pickett, James Lassiter, Jim Jenkins, and Jeffery Hamilton. Each brings a unique blend of experience, passion, and insight to the board, poised to make significant contributions to our mission of promoting and enhancing tourism in Johnston County. The board, officially referred to as the Tourism Authority, has 11-members composed of five representatives appointed by Chambers of Commerce in Benson, Clayton, Four Oaks, Kenly, Triangle East, five representatives appointed by the County Commissioners that are involved in tourism, and one ex-officio member, the County Finance Officer as the treasurer.

Hospitality Association Hosts Inaugural Luncheon

In July, the Hospitality Association hosted a lunch and learn format event with speaker Chris Mackey, Chief Communication Officer, NC Restaurant and Lodging Association. Chris shared with the group, information regarding the NCRLA's free training program. To help potential and current hospitality industry employers and employees, the NCRLA Foundation has contracted with NC Department of Commerce to administer a \$1.1 million hospitality workforce training program. The program provides FREE training courses, certifications, and educational resources to help attract, expand, and retain talent needed to fuel North Carolina restaurants, hotels, and other hospitality-related businesses.

JCVB Staff Participate in JoCo Works

The JCVB staff worked again this year with the organizers of JoCo Works to host the Hospitality World at the county-wide event held at Johnston Community College. This year's theme was "Take your Shot in Tourism". Students were provided information about the variety of jobs and careers they could pursue in hospitality, as well as, lists of NC-based colleges and universities with programs to help them on their way...while having a little fun playing Putt-Putt.

JCVB Wins Clayton Contribution Award

The JCVB was recently honored to receive the Downtown Clayton Contributor Award from the Downtown Development Association. The Bureau staff works throughout the year to promote Clayton, downtown, and our tourism partners. These efforts include digital, print, social, media relations, and more. The Bureau meets quarterly with DDA to keep up with all the things happening in Clayton, which helps the JCVB staff promote the town.

JCVB Hosts OutdoorNC Regional Workshop

Among other initiatives with VisitNC the JCVB has an ongoing partnership with Outdoor NC. Through OutdoorNC the JCVB works with the Leave No Trace (LNT) organization to promote responsible recreation to visitors and residents. In November, the JCVB and the Smithfield Recreation & Aquatic Center hosted a VisitNC-organized workshop, titled "Outdoor NC 2.0 Workshop". The event was an all-day seminar for regional bureaus to come and learn more about how to be an Outdoor NC partner, how to promote responsible recreation, and how to make recreation accessible for everyone. Representatives from the county's open spaces department and Bentonville Battlefield attended the workshop.

Clayton & Four Oaks Add 2% Room Tax

In 2024, the NC Legislature approved a 2% Room Tax for the towns of Four Oaks and Clayton, which is dedicated to marketing each town as a destination. At this time, Clayton’s tax has been implemented, however Four Oaks still has the option to do so.

Event Grant Program Updates

The Bureau remains committed to investing in tourism related development projects throughout the county as the destination continues to grow. This includes visitor-facing infrastructure, assets, and festivals in the county. The Bureau’s procedures to maximize the grants awarded were reviewed during the most 2024 budgeting season with some needed revisions to the guidelines. The Special Projects Committee increased the grant amount for major festivals (defined as having attendance over 10,000) to \$3,000, and for all other community events of any size the grant amount was raised to \$1,000.

Capital Grants Program

The Bureau’s Capital Grant Program was also reviewed and the timeline has shifted so that applications are accepted in March, prior to the budget approval. This allows for the Tourism Authority to review, recommend for approval, and budget for the number of projects submitted. The Capital Grants are capped at \$50,000 for any one project, and resets on a five-year cycle. The Special Projects Committee funded a total of \$218,810 in projects.

Capital Grants Awarded in 2024 were:

Johnston County Heritage Center Conservation	\$10,000.00
Johnston County Heritage Center	\$7,500.00
Town of Pine Level	\$5,000.00
Town of Archer Lodge	\$5,000.00
Clayton Chamber of Commerce	\$15,000.00
Town of Benson - Parks & Rec	\$12,500.00
Ava Gardner Museum Conservation	\$10,000.00
Ava Gardner Museum	\$50,000.00
Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site	\$50,000.00
Town of Kenly - Parks & Recreation	\$24,810.00
The Clayton Center	\$24,000.00
Clayton Rugby Football Club	\$5,000.00
Total Awarded	<u>\$218,810.00</u>

Tourism Authority Creates Tourism Culinary Scholarship at Johnston Community College

The Tourism Authority voted to create a culinary-based scholarship with the Johnston Community College Foundation for up to \$1,000 each for as many as five students enrolled in the new Culinary Degree Program. The scholarship will be offered on an annual basis in the operating budget for the Bureau.



NCTIA Annual Destination Marketing Awards

In 2023, the Bureau received one award at the annual NCTIA Educational Conference for visitors bureau from around the state. The Bureau won a Platinum Award for Community Stakeholder Communications category -- JCVB Annual Report. The Bureau printed 200 copies of the Annual Report to distribute to all elected officials in the county, towns, and state, as well as, tourism industry partners. The Annual Report is also available to download on the johnstoncountync.org website.



Bureau Staff Longevity Celebrated

As the Bureau celebrated the one-year anniversary of Jennifer McGowen joining the team this past June, of note, the Bureau has several long term anniversaries to recognize:

Kristin Radford, five years in May 2024, Eric Dean, 16 years in March 2024, Ashby Brame, 9 years in February 2024, Angel Phillips, 15 years in December 2023, and Donna Bailey-Taylor, 27 years in August 2023.

PARTNER NEWS

Bentonville Extends Trail Network

Bentonville, the NC Dept. of Cultural Resources, and the Friends of the Mountains to Sea Trail hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony to open a new mile of Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST) at Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site on September 15th. This new stretch of MST is the first footpath that the Friends of the MST has built using funds from the Complete the Trails Program, an unprecedented investment in trails by the state. Bentonville continues to work to expand their trail network and to offer historical interpretation along those trails. In addition, there is work being done at the state and county level to continue to expand Johnston County's trail network.



Broadslab Distillery Unveils New Products

Benson-based Broadslab Distillery, which has been offering 'shine products, tours, and tastings since 2015, debuted their first new product in many years: flue-cured bourbon. The bourbon has been in pre-production since 2021, with a planned line-up of similar products behind it. Jeremy and his wife Shelly are taking Broadslab in a new, exciting, and different direction. Broadslab Distillery is North Carolina's first "farm-to-bottle" distillery since prohibition and they take great pride in utilizing a true grassroots and hands-on approach to operating the distillery, hosting weddings and now offering on-site accommodations.

Ava Museum Hires New Manager

The Ava Gardner Museum board of directors hired Angelica Henry as the new Museum Manager. Long-time Executive Director, Lynell Seabold, has retired to Edenton, NC, however, she remains working with the Museum part-time as bookkeeper and grant administrator. Angelica Henry is a Florida native with a passion for preserving memories. Henry holds a Bachelors in Art History and Arts Administration from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and pursues a Masters in Library Science with a concentration in Archives and Special Collections from her alma mater.





Benson’s New Visitor Kiosks

Following the printing of the Visit Benson Map, the Elevate Benson group requested that the Town put a new kiosk at Dr. PK Vyas Community Park field house to introduce Downtown Benson to the many teams and their families traveling to Benson for tournaments. To take that idea further, the Visitors Bureau installed new large format maps in the current kiosk displays located at the Singing Grove, the Benson Dog Park, and GALOT Motorsports Park. Reaching visitors while in-market is an excellent way to share information on shopping, dining, local attractions, and events.



Changes to the BWST

The Beer, Wine, & Shine Trail saw some exciting changes this year, with Raleigh Brewing JoCo stepping in to fill the spot left by Double Barley Brewing’s closure; the space is now their main production facility as well as a tap room and restaurant. Additionally, Southern Pines’ Hatchet Brewing expanded with a new tap room location; “The Vault,” in Downtown Selma, which adds a unique craft beer and arcade experience to the trail. These updates bring fresh energy and new flavors to the trail, inviting locals and visitors to explore even more of the region’s craft beverage offerings.

Food Hall Celebrates One Year

The Old North State Food Hall celebrated its one-year anniversary, marking a successful first year as a premier culinary destination in Johnston County. Since opening, the food hall has brought together a diverse mix of vendors, offering visitors a range of flavors and experiences in one convenient location. The week-long anniversary celebration highlighted the food hall’s impact on the local community and its appeal as a stop for both travelers and locals looking to sample many, fresh culinary delights under one roof.

State to Manage TFLM

It was announced in the Spring that starting in the Fall of 2024 the Tobacco Farm Life Museum in Kenly would officially be funded and managed by the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, umbrellaed under the group of state owned museums.

2023 Angel Tree Still Going Strong

The Bureau continues to work with our industry partners to help children in need through the Johnston County Department of Social Services Angel Tree program. This year we adopted 36 children and the Visitor Center was piled high with gifts, toys, and especially bikes (a very popular holiday request).





The Johnston County Visitors Bureau is the official destination marketing organization for the county of Johnston - charged with the mission to attract and serve visitors to the county, therefore, increasing visitor spending and the vitality of the tourism industry.



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