



FY
22

ANNUAL REPORT







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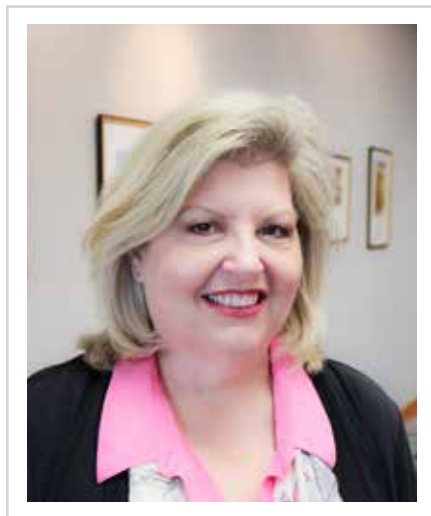
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Inside cover: Chloe Gutierrez poses in front of the recently commissioned Ava Mural and Rose Garden in downtown Smithfield.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Community Partners:

This year's Annual Report, as in past years, will include the numbers and highlights, but will provide educational content for residents and the tourism related businesses in Johnston County on how the Visitors Bureau works on behalf of the

TEAM WORK 2022 proved to be a year of much adapting and a staff reorganization with one less team member. All things are not back to normal, but the JCVB team is hard at work.

county. Being in my job for over 25 years, it occurred to me recently, that I can not assume new business owners, residents, and community leaders know who we are, what we do, and why tourism is an important economic development sector for the county. Tourism marketing campaigns launched by the Bureau invites visitors to experience our attractions, stay in our

hotels, shop and dine with our partners, explore our unique downtowns, attend our festivals, and the result is these visitors bring new revenues to the county as visitor spending.

RESEARCH More than ever in a changing world, tourism agencies are relying on research to gauge visitor sentiment for travel and what messages resonate and align with travelers. We use research to promote our tourism assets in Johnston County to the right market with the right message to attract more visitors.

In 2021, Visitors to the county spent **\$255 million**, which is a 40% increase over 2020 numbers which were ravaged by the pandemic. Last year definitely was a “recovery” year, and already 2022 business is on the rise. The looming recession and high price of gas is slightly affecting travel, however, there remains a great deal of pent-up demand to get back on the road and travel following the pandemic.

QUALITY FIRST With uncertainty on the rebounding of the budget in 2021, several projects were cut, but the quality of marketing materials, assets, and messaging remained a top priority for the Visitors Bureau.

We invite everyone to sign up for our *“Tourism Does That?!”* newsletter, which is sent out to share what’s happening with the bureau each and every month. It’s a new tool and very informative!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D'.

Donna Bailey-Taylor
President/CEO

JOHNSTON COUNTY 2021 VISITOR SPENDING

In 2021, visitors to Johnston County spent **\$255.47** million, which was an increase of 40.5% from 2020 spending. Breaking it down, that equates to visitors spending nearly **\$700,000** a day in our county on lodging, dining, attractions, recreation, retail shopping, and travel services.

The visitor spending study, commissioned by Visit NC and conducted by Tourism Economics in collaboration with the U.S. Travel Association, provides preliminary estimates of domestic and international traveler expenditures as well as employment, payroll income, and state and local tax revenues directly generated by these expenditures. The statistical model draws on detailed data from VisitNC as well as data derived from federal and state government sources, nationally known private and non-profit travel organizations, and other travel industry sources.**

The study suggested strong recovery was seen statewide compared to 2020 with visitor spending across the state up 45 percent. Each of the state's 100 counties experienced increases in spending from 2020 to 2021.

Tourism spending generated **\$11.7m** in state tax and **\$9m** in local tax receipts to the county's general fund. Taxes saved per Johnston County resident are **\$92.34**. More than 2,000 people are employed in tourism sector jobs, with an annual payroll of **\$65.9m**.

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



Prepared by the US Travel Association
and commissioned by VisitNC.



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 several years, the Visitors Bureau has been dedicated to creating packages and tourism product to create reasons for visitors to choose our destinations for girlfriend shopping trips, golf vacations, and culinary trail packages. Current efforts continue to build awareness of Johnston County for several niche markets including agritourism, recreation, sports tournaments, destination weddings, and civil war history.



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.

MISSION & VISION



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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Meet the Johnston County Tourism Authority members who served for the Fiscal Year 2021-22. Five members are appointed by County Commissioners and five from local chambers of commerce.

APPOINTED BY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Rick Childrey, Chairperson

Retired from the Smithfield/Selma Chamber of Commerce.

Paul Boucher, Marketing Committee Chairperson

Operates a family-owned travel agency, Small World Travel, in Benson.

W.E. "Bud" Andrews

Retired from First Citizens Bank, and a previous Tourism Authority board chairman.

Jeff Jennings

Works for Representative Donna White, and previously for the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission.

Mark McDonnell

Works with the Eastfield Development group which opened the Old North State Food Hall in Selma.

APPOINTED BY LOCAL CHAMBERS

Ben Cook, Vice-Chairperson

Owner of Benton Card Company and Grndhaus printing company in Benson.

Melody Worthington, Secretary/Treasurer

Community member in Kenly, previously with the Tobacco Farm Life Museum.

Randy Capps, Special Projects Chairperson

Co-owner of Johnston Now Magazine and JNow Digital Marketing.

Maria Smith

Works for the Clayton Area Chamber of Commerce as Director of Events and Operations.

Colleen Roby

Co-owner of three Simple Twist Restaurants located in Smithfield, Garner (I-40, Exit 312), and Clayton.

Chad McLamb, County Finance Officer

Ex-Officio Member of the Tourism Authority.



How many employees work at the bureau and what do they do?

The Visitors Bureau has six employees, and their short job description summaries are below.



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 design, layout, and functionality.

03

ANGEL PHILLIPS

Office 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 will also assist 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

Director of Marketing

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

05

**JENNA
ANDREASEN**

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**

Leisure 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.



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.

UPDATE: SOME CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE CAPITAL GRANTS ADMINISTERED BY THE TOURISM AUTHORITY.

The five-year reset button for all grant recipients has been extended through FY 23, to allow organizations that could not apply last year, a chance to apply in the last round. In FY 23-24, the \$50,000 cap per organization will reset for another 5 year period.

As the Tourism Authority reopened the application process for the Capital Grants program for FY 23, the application deadlines and decisions were moved up to align with the budget season. In the budget for FY 23, the Tourism Authority approved **\$123,513** in grants.

Since 1987, the Tourism Authority has invested **\$1.9 million dollars** in tourism development projects throughout the county. Below is a list of projects supported by the Tourism Authority.

Grant Recipients		Town of Kenly	
County Projects		Tobacco Farm Life Museum	\$94,337
Friends of Bentonville Battleground	\$67,000	Kenly Parks & Recreation Depart.	\$55,000
Paul A. Johnston Auditorium	\$285,000	I-95 Lighting Town of Kenly	\$16,000
Johnston County Heritage Center	\$107,500	I-95 Beautification Town of Kenly	\$5,000
Johnston County 250th Anniversary Celebration	\$30,000		
Johnston Community College Arboretum	\$17,500	Town of Clayton	
Johnston County Civil War Trail Markers	\$11,000	Clayton Chamber of Commerce	\$40,000
Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center	\$60,000	The Clayton Center	\$65,450
		Clayton Parks & Recreation Depart.	\$13,000
		US 70 Beautification Town of Clayton	\$5,000
Town of Smithfield		Town of Four Oaks	
Lee House & Tourist Information Center	\$150,000	I-95 Lighting Town of Four Oaks	\$16,000
Ava Gardner Museum	\$130,000	I-95 Beautification Town of Four Oaks	\$5,000
Smithfield Parks & Recreation/Aquatics Center	\$75,000		
DSDC - Historic Hastings House	\$25,690	Town of Archer Lodge	
Smithfield Historic Foundation	\$25,000	Archer Lodge Community Center	\$5,700
I-95 Lighting Town of Smithfield	\$16,000		
I-95 Beautification Town of Smithfield	\$5,000	Town of Wilson's Mills	
		Wilson's Mills Parks & Recreation	\$50,000
Town of Selma		Clayton Rugby Football Park	\$50,000
Selma Railroad Depot Renovation	\$50,000		
Selma Parks & Recreation Department	\$10,000	Town of Pine Level	
Town of Selma Civic Center	\$45,000	Sam Godwin Park Restoration	\$50,000
Max G. Creech Historical Museum	\$4,500		
I-95 Lighting Town of Selma	\$16,000	Town of Princeton	
		Town of Princeton Community Center	\$12,500
Town of Benson		JCVB Research Projects	
W.J. Barefoot Auditorium/Town Hall	\$67,000	Convention Center Feasibility Study	\$40,000
Benson Museum of Local History	\$50,000	Parks & Recreation Master Plan	\$50,000
Benson Parks & Recreation – Singing Grove,			
PK Vyas Park, Dog Park	\$64,500		
I-95 Lighting Town of Benson	\$16,000		
I-95 Beautification Town of Benson	\$5,000	Total Grants Awarded	\$1,905,677

FINANCIAL REVIEW



The following is an overview of the Johnston County Visitors Bureau financial data for the year 2021-22.

NET INCOME

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 **\$1,188,556** in net revenues for FY 21-22 which were greater than FY 2019, signifying the hotel industry's recovery in Johnston County.

Month-by-month Johnston County 3% gross collections for Comparison FY 2019 to FY 2022:

	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22
July	\$84,407.80	\$95,891.37	\$59,446.47	\$113,888.13
August	\$81,467.98	\$90,392.71	\$59,624.08	\$97,158.41
September	\$110,798.78	\$84,917.39	\$52,954.70	\$84,940.43
October	\$109,866.73	\$85,663.26	\$60,262.55	\$95,970.98
November	\$88,976.50	\$79,913.11	\$59,937.52	\$97,816.54
December	\$73,053.80	\$70,584.71	\$49,468.60	\$77,551.73
January	\$66,924.40	\$61,938.56	\$50,251.91	\$90,469.68
February	\$66,040.66	\$61,262.98	\$52,995.15	\$81,157.64
March	\$97,464.59	\$65,425.36	\$80,289.83	\$105,402.17
April	\$81,854.18	\$31,615.63	\$77,827.48	\$117,545.77
May	\$97,165.22	\$41,952.76	\$97,434.79	\$112,479.35
June	\$88,703.01	\$61,115.12	\$83,109.70	\$114,175.67
	\$1,055,429.09	\$830,672.96	\$783,602.78	\$1,188,556.50

JCVB 2021 financials are audited by the Johnston County Finance Department under a 3-party contract and a completed audit will be 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 2018-19 through FY 2021-22:

	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22
Smithfield	\$287,587.55	\$225,777.99	\$235,251.98	\$373,147.73
Selma	\$133,162.70	\$87,195.52	\$56,276.72	\$90,653.58
Kenly	\$35,460.96	\$27,440.85	\$26,980.08	\$28,776.58
Benson	\$63,175.31	\$54,565.30	\$57,928.00	\$80,021.38

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 President/CEO of the Visitors Bureau works directly with Town Managers and/or serves on committees established by the town to spend the 2% room tax.

The Town's have the following reserves as of 6/30/22:

Smithfield - \$604,910.58

Selma - \$171,531.37

Benson - \$65,254.92

Kenly - \$19,694.00

	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	Var. 22 vs 21
INCOME					
Johnston 3% Tax	1,169,945.48	748,522.51	910,717.82	1,052,304.93	421,422.97
Town of Benson	76,689.16	57,796.17	63,884.69	61,283.08	18,892.99
Town of Kenly	28,849.54	27,780.62	30,541.07	35,460.96	1,068.92
Town of Selma	86,502.14	55,976.47	105,516.39	129,437.82	30,525.67
Town of Smithfield	354,448.30	200,850.34	267,898.05	278,959.91	153,597.96
Misc. Revenue	4402.00	6,565.00	5,104.43	2,931.11	-2,163.00
Reimbursements	-0-	2082.02	2,269.29	3,284.72	-2,082.02
Investment Income	394.15	356.48	821.63	968.42	37.67
Grants	3,000.00	121,750.00	-0-	7,000.00	-118,750.00
Total Revenues	1,724,230.77	1,226,879.61	1,386,753.20	1,571,630.95	497,351.16
HR EXPENSES					
Salaries & Wages	380,066.61	363,005.82	389,294.44	313,600.83	17,060.79
Longevity Pay	5,700.00	5,300.00	4,500.00	3,360.00	400.00
Travel Per Diem	6000.00	6,000.00	6000.00	6,000.00	-0-
Fringe Benefits	144,154.62	137,676.42	138,302.69	104,688.30	6,478.20
Total HR Expenses	535,921.23	511,982.24	538,097.13	427,649.13	23,938.99
OPERATING EXP.					
Professional fees	2250.00	3,500.00	2,500.00	2,000.00	-1,250.00
Telephone	7,526.47	7,969.47	7,521.49	6,802.51	-443.00
Postage	5,917.26	8,189.37	8,776.17	9,178.62	-2,272.11
Printing	20,389.25	13,188.24	37,042.96	31,846.54	7,201.01
Utilities	4,430.10	4,188.08	5,144.57	5,097.51	242.02
Travel & Trade	14,831.13	4,460.15	35,332.88	44,953.30	10,370.98
Equip/Building	44,540.53	44,058.58	44,159.93	46,707.83	481.95
JoCo/Coop Adv.	166,778.93	130,654.87	228,686.85	251,835.49	36,124.06
Office Supplies	9,191.67	4,162.75	12,015.78	15,774.71	5,028.92
Software Expense	7,155.83	8,638.16	10,552.69	6,754.26	-1,482.33
Benson Marketing	38,243.97	33,160.35	24,930.71	44,879.93	5,083.62
Kenly Marketing	41,939.34	30,842.84	17,186.51	20,847.01	11,096.50
Selma Marketing	49,480.68	60,769.75	101,480.66	67,530.54	-11,289.07
Smithfield Marketing	149,894.76	136,552.96	114,219.09	246,356.76	13,341.80
Professional Dues	15,535.16	12,619.96	13,750.00	22,341.46	2915.20
Marketing Grant	5,000.00	-0-	13,750.00	17,500.00	5000.00
Insurance	647.00	647.00	647.00	672.00	-0-
5% County Fee	-0-	-0-	-0-	52,615.27	-0-
Research	2,376.00	2,200.00	5,700.00	10,000.00	176.00
State Grants	9,036.52	20,873.18	-0-	7,000.00	-11,836.66
Capital Grants	25,130.46	74,097.79	115,242.75	186,563.91	-48,967.33
Total Operating	620,295.03	602,183.86	848,656.07	1,090,257.65	18,111.17
Total HR + Oper.	1,156,216.26	1,114,166.10	1,339,431.67	1,517,906.78	42,050.16
Net +/-	568,014.51	112,713.51	47,321.53	53,724.17	455,301.00

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 service by the staff to area organizations to advance tourism in the county.

Donna Bailey-Taylor serves on the Benson Art Advisory Board. Projects in this fiscal year included the commission and installation of the Mule Sculpture by NC artist, Jonathan Bowling, and the Coffee Cup Mural by Jennifer Franks. The committee also started a sculpture lease program to rotate art pieces in front of the Mary Duncan Library on Main Street.

Donna Bailey-Taylor is Chairperson for the Ava Gardner Museum, and heads the Ava 100th Centennial Planning Committee. Projects have included the new Ava Gardner Mural and Rose Garden that was completed in May of 2022.

Donna Bailey-Taylor serves on the board of the Clayton Piano Festival to assist in marketing and promotion of the local music events and for fundraising efforts.

Donna Bailey-Taylor 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. In addition, she serves as the NC Regional Director on the Civil War Trails board.

Donna Bailey-Taylor served on the following committees during the year: Ham and Yam Festival Advisory Committee, Workforce Alliance Strategic Planning Committee, SEAS (Southeast Area Study) Transportation planning for Johnston County.

Donna Bailey-Taylor serves on the Johnston County Grows Agriculture Marketing Committee and in the past several months has written and been awarded several grants to further the mission to market the county's agriculture partners and agritourism.

Donna Bailey-Taylor donated her time to design the museum layout for the new Johnston County Heritage Museum project on Market Street in Smithfield.

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.

Ashby Brame serves on the SSS Academy of Hospitality & Tourism board, a group that works with high school students interested in pursuing a degree in hospitality.



Artist Jonathan Bowling standing next to Mim the Mule in Benson.



The Friends group held a *Walk and Talk about Trails* information session event in Clayton.

NC TOBACCO TRUST FUND GRANT

GRANT AND PROJECTS

In 2021-22, the Visitors Bureau was awarded a grant in the amount of **\$111,900** from the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission to further the marketing plan for the JoCo Grows Agriculture marketing campaigns. Initial projects have included the following:

Billboards & Signage

A series of billboards have been installed on I-95, US 70, and US Hwy 301 to market the JoCoGrows.org website.

Strawberry Season Campaign

Designed and printed 10,000 Strawberry Postcards as part of the campaign that included radio, digital and social media marketing for 8 strawberry farms in the county.

Social Media

Designed a series of social media campaigns, posts, and carousels to build up followers on Facebook and Instagram.

Cost Share Grants

Announced and mailed grant applications to local farms on the NC Farm App. Two grants of \$500 each were awarded to Smith's Nursery and Strawberry Farm and Creekside Blueberry Farm for improved signage and marketing campaigns.

NC Farms App

Increased the number of farms and partners on the app to 100.
Johnston County was named a "top 10 asset views" county every month since the data was tracked, March 2022 - September 2022.
Johnston County was named a "top 10 usage by county" March, May, and June 2022.
Total asset views from July 2021 - July 2022 was 6,040.
Total push notification opens from July 2021 - July 2022 was 3,813.
Video filmed for Poole Family Farm and Creekside Farm for marketing by the NC Farms App team.

Video Production

In addition to this large grant, the Visitors Bureau was awarded a \$3,000 grant from AgCarolina for new video projects for JoCo Grows Agriculture.



Is the bureau part of the chamber of commerce?

No, the Visitors Bureau is a quasi-government agency with oversight by the Tourism Authority.



MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS



Destination marketing involves a variety of campaigns with methods that includes outdoor advertising, digital ads, print ads, email marketing, social media, and public relations. The team at JCVB uses all these avenues to market our hotels, attractions, shopping, dining, and events. The following are some of the top success stories from FY 2022.

Top Media Placement

Our State Magazine

"Franks for the Memories"
"The Science of Smoke"
"The Seed Saver"
"Sweet & Sensitive @ JPs"

Walter Magazine, Indy Week and The Local Palate

"Crawford Cookshop"

UNC-TV (Now PBS)

From the Ava Gardner Museum
From Howell Woods

Business NC - Bentonville

"Reenactment Reimagined"

Lonely Planet

Mountain to the Sea Trail
Ava Gardner Museum
Town of Smithfield



“

The JCVB Staff uses a media database, Critical Mention, which measures the earned value of media placement. The following are the top six placements in FY 22.

Ava Gardner Museum - \$359,983
Howell Woods - \$275,156
JoCo Grows Agriculture - \$7,792
Bentonville Battlefield - \$482,617
Tobacco Farm Life Museum - \$400,346
Visitors Bureau - \$346,184

Website Improvements with Simpleview

In FY 2022, the JCVB marketing team upgraded the listings for attractions, events, and coupons with a new Listings Pro module with Simpleview, giving the website a new modern look and search features. Also, the Blog module layout was updated, so the look and functionality of the website was refreshed.



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.

JCVB Blog

Some of the top BLOGs of interest for our readers in FY 21-22 were:

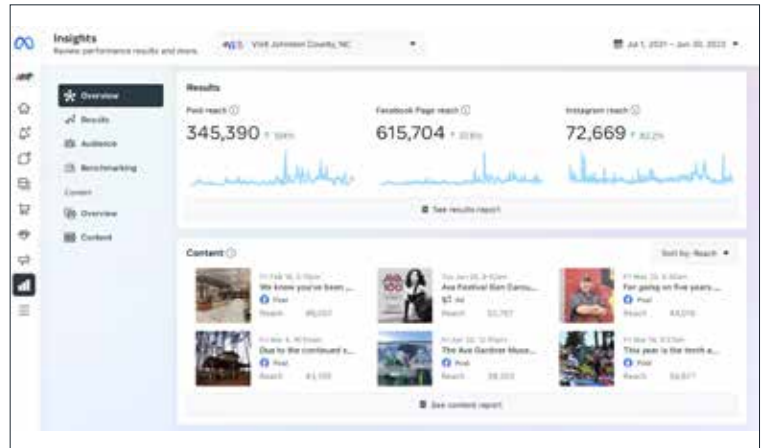
*We know you've been wanting updates on the Old North State Food Hall - **Reach 98,000***
*Going on Five Years, Redneck BBQ - **Reach 44,019***
*Due to Continued Support for TFLM - **Reach 43,153***



The Visitors Bureau Manages 5 Pages on Facebook:

Visit Johnston County - **20,382 followers**
 Visit Selma, NC - **1,098 followers**
 301 Endless Yard Sale - **24,699 followers**
 Beer, Wine and Shine Trail - **12,977 followers**
 JoCo Grows Agriculture - **1,895 followers**

Instagram - **3,828 followers**
 Twitter - **2,873 followers**
 Pinterest - **1,300 followers**
 YouTube Channel - **284 subscribers**



Through our relationships on community boards and tourism marketing committees, the pages that we provide content for and promote in the county are:

Ava Gardner
 Ava Gardner Museum
 Bentonville Battlefield
 Town of Benson
 Ham and Yam Festival
 Clayton Piano Festival
 Friends of Johnston County Parks
 Benson Museum of Local History
 Historic Downtown Smithfield, NC



NC TRAVEL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION DESTINATION MARKETING AWARDS

The Visitors Bureau won two Destination Marketing Awards in 2021:

*Platinum Award for Tourism Strong
Community Communication Plan during COVID*

*Gold Award for Digital Guides for Meetings and
Sports Venues in Johnston County.*



PUBLICITY HIGHLIGHTS MEDIA VISITS

Influencer Fam Visits

*Influencer Jason Barnett spent the day
touring businesses in Downtown Clayton,
including Blvd West Coffee Shop, pictured
at the right.*

Jason reported to the Bureau, "Clayton
was one of my favorite destinations of
the year, and it was certainly a highlight
of my North Carolina road trip".

Since posting the article in April, it has
been viewed **25,386** times.



Therese Iknoian Fam trip to Benson, Smithfield and Four Oaks - June, 2022

Travel to Blank visit to Hinnant Vineyards, Howell Woods, and the Benson area - September, 2021

NC F&B Podcast episodes: JPs Bakery, Bob Hinnant Talks Grapes, Scott Crawford opens new
Concept Restaurant in Clayton

Partner communications: 40 partner emails, and 11 *Tourism Does That?!* newsletters



Photo Shoots

Jonathan Levin: Carolina Premium Outlets, Town of Smithfield, Simple Twist food shoot, The Rudy Theater (Christmas, Easter & Country shows), Deep River Brewing, Instill Distillery

VisitNC photo shoot at Howell Woods for the Outdoor NC campaign



GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Top Feeder State: North Carolina - 66.02%

Top City in NC: Clayton - up 54.9%

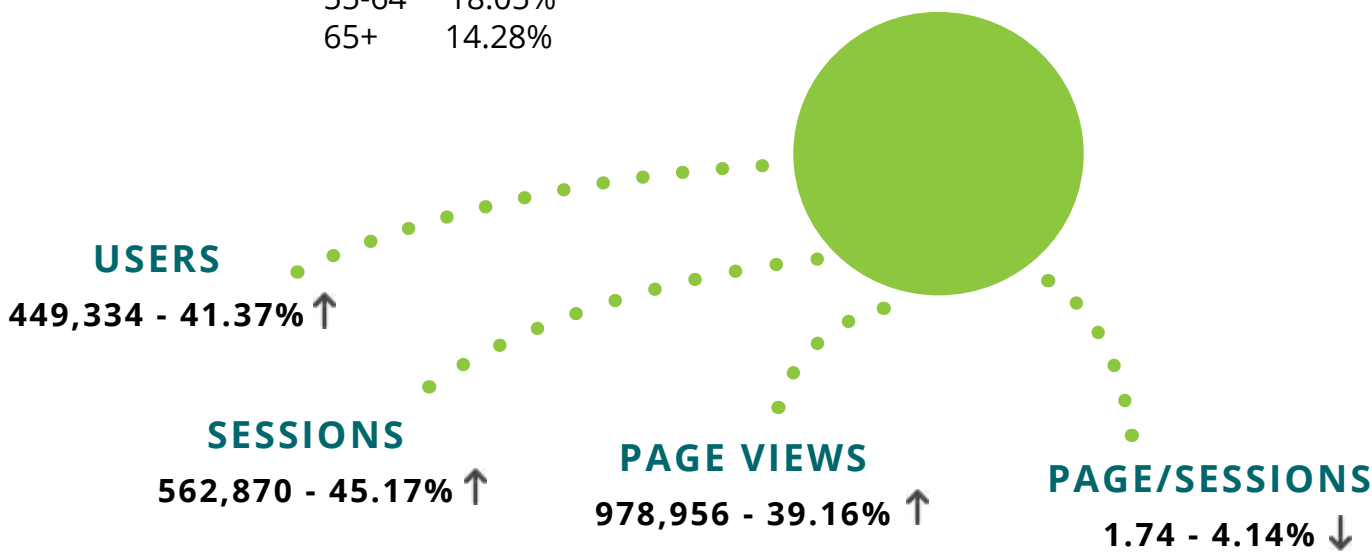
Demographics: 58.8% Female - 41.2% Male

Age breakdown:

18-24	9.63%
25-34	17.21%
35-44	20.02%
45-54	20.81%
55-64	18.05%
65+	14.28%

Top Affinity of Users:

Culinary Enthusiasts - 74,141	19.09%	↑
Lifestyles/Pet Lovers - 61,886	25.58%	↑
Shoppers/Value - 53,401	17.76%	↑
Media/TV Lovers - 50,881	37.77%	↑



SOURCES

Organic - 293,011 (68.10%) ↑
Direct - 66,402 (10.46%) ↑
Social - 61,833 (30.25%) ↑
Referral - 20,750 (26.19%) ↑
Paid Search - 16,895 (85.64%) ↑

TOP TEN STATES

North Carolina
Georgia
Virginia
New York
Florida
South Carolina
California
Pennsylvania
Tennessee

TOP 10 PAGE HITS

301 Endless Yard Sale - 132,207
Ava Gardner Museum - 26,989
Things to Do/BWST - 12,723
Things to Do/Recreation - 9,232
Shopping/Carolina Premium Outlets - 9,169
Listing/New Jumbo China - 8,511
Events/ - 6,387
Smithfield/ - 6,402
Downtown VG - 5,445
Clayton/ - 5,424

TOP GOOGLE AD RESULTS (CLICKS)

Johnston County Campaign - 11,188 (91.29%) ↑
Ava Gardner Campaign - 6,184 (387.91%) ↑

VIDEO PROJECTS HIGHLIGHTS

Total Video Views Across Channels:

Ava Gardner Festival - **49,079**

Ava Gardner Mural - **872**

Strawberry Picking - **9,700**

Blueberry Picking - **791**



Ava Gardner Mural Project



JoCo Grows Strawberries Video



Ava Gardner Museum Festival



JoCo Grows Blueberries Video

TOWN MARKETING PROJECTS

HIGHLIGHTS

Donna Bailey-Taylor works directly with the Towns that have a 2% Rooms Tax to execute the requested marketing campaigns and tourism-related projects. Below are some highlights of projects for the Towns of Smithfield, Selma, Benson, and Kenly in FY 22.

Printed **5,000 Selma Visitors Brochures** for distribution in all local businesses and the NC Welcome Centers.

Redesigned the Town of **Selma billboard campaign** with the theme of Stay, Shop, and Visit Selma, NC.

Re-printed the **Smithfield Walking Tour Brochure** which is available at the Johnston County Heritage Center and in local distribution locations in Smithfield and the NC Welcome Centers.

Designed and reprinted 10,000 **Ava Gardner Museum brochures** to announce the Ava Gardner Festival and to distribute throughout Johnston County, to inquiries, for direct mail, and for NC Welcome Centers.



Designed, printed, and mailed **5,500 Summer Event postcards** to residents and businesses in Smithfield. In addition to mailing the postcards, 2,000 additional postcards were distributed to local business to reach visitors and more residents.

The JCVB Staff designed all marketing materials for the **Smithfield Ham & Yam Festival** for Downtown Smithfield Development Corporation including banners, signs, and digital materials for marketing. In addition, marketing support was provided with Google Ads and social media promotion.



The staff worked with the **Kenly Parks & Recreation Department** to use the 2% Room Tax funds from Town reserves to make several improvements at the park. Approximately \$27,000 was used for fencing, shelters, and a disc golf course.

Travel to Blank influencers visited the Town of Benson and posted an article, "7 Dog Friendly Things to Do in Benson", that received 528 page views, 900 views on Facebook stories, and 82 likes on Instagram.



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

The Visitors Bureau uses Smith Travel Research data to measure the county's occupancy, ADR (Average Daily Rate), and RevPar (Revenue per available room). As 2021 was definitely a recovery year for the travel industry, Johnston County saw several record months.

12 month data from June 2022:

OCC	55.9%
ADR	\$86.80
REVPAR	\$48.54

The Visitors Bureau invested in a data intelligence service, Near.com, 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. Near.com estimates that they capture 10% of phones in the market segments. What has been learned in the first six months has been used with target audiences for digital and social marketing campaigns.

The segments defined by Near.com are:

Residents - Devices that live or work within Johnston County

Locals - Visitors who live within 50 miles and stay a minimum of 2 hours

In State Daytrippers - Visitors that live outside 50 miles and stay 2 hours

In State Overnight Visitors - Live in NC, are outside JoCo, and stay minimum of 2 days

Out of State Daytrippers - Visitors who live outside the state, stay 2 hours and not overnight

Out of State Overnight Visitors - Live out of NC, stay overnight for 2 days, and live in the US

International Visitors - Live outside the US and stay a minimum of 2 hours



SALES HIGHLIGHTS



The Visitors Bureau works directly with the NC Film Office providing film locations to production companies to entice film projects to the county. In July of 2021, the staff assisted with a film project seeking to use the Smith Farm in the Cleveland Community. In 2022, the film **Abandoned**, a horror movie starring Emma Roberts, Michael Shannon and John Gallagher Jr., was released.



The historic home on the Smith Farm was a focal character in the film.



In October 2021, the Visitors Bureau staff worked with **CycleNC** who brought in 827 riders, plus 40 support staff, and 100 additional participants for a total of 967 visitors to Smithfield. The group booked 100 hotel rooms in Smithfield for non-campers. The bureau provided a custom microsite with maps, coupons, community information and more to welcome the cyclists to Smithfield, as well as, coordinated entertainment and transportation for the event. Sporting events and tournaments are an important tourism market for the county. The economic impact of the Cycle NC event was **\$138,295**.

The Johnston County Visitors Bureau has partnered on a new initiative with VisitNC called **OutdoorNC**; which in turn has partnered with the national organization, **Leave No Trace**. JoCo and the state of North Carolina offers fun and unspoiled places to recreate and enjoy the outdoors, and we want to keep them that way. The dedicated JCVB website landing page for OutdoorNC had **2,894** views in FY 22.

Although several sales missions were not funded in the FY 22 budget, the staff did make visits to the **I-95 North Welcome Centers** for Christmas, and for **National Tourism Week** as outreach missions to visitors stopping at the centers.

The NC Welcome Center near Roanoke Rapids on I-95 invited the Visitors Bureau to put in a display for **Howell Woods Environment Learning Center** to promote recreation in the county. The display included a fun puzzle game for children, to match items in the case with items found at Howell Woods.



The Visitors Bureau partnered with The Rudy Theatre who provided leads from *Relocation Magazine* for a direct mail campaign. Approximately 3,000 postcards were mailed to new homeowners in Johnston County to introduce them to visitor attractions and events in the county.

Motorcoach marketing included another partnership with The Rudy Theater, providing swag and profile sheets to hand out at the NC Motor Coach conference. Additional marketing to motor coach operators included Email blasts twice a year, direct mail at the Holidays with “What’s New” and calendar strips for contacts in NC, SC, VA and GA, Southeast Tourism conference followup, and two virtual sales missions with Motor Coach companies with VisitNC.



As the marketing budget was revisited in January 2022 and increased, the bureau added back some leisure and public relations outreach missions in partnership with the VisitNC team. The staff attended the Retire NC show in Washington, DC, and added in some media calls in the Richmond area, the New York Travel Show, NY, and the Atlanta Media Mission, GA.

The JCVB team participated in a new program offered by VisitNC with **Flip.to**, a platform which connects Johnston County to user generated content and referrals on social media.

The **JoCo Hospitality Association** was relaunched in FY 22 to reengage with our industry partners, and the staff held in-person meetings in January and April.

Brochure Distribution Numbers

Visitors Guides - **29,634**

Bike Routes - **7,065**

Smithfield/Selma You Are Here Maps - **10,063**

Beer Wine and Shine Trail - **12,779**



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.



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