EUGENE

COMMUNITY TOURISM PROFILE



Community findings from the
Lane County Destination Master Plan

JLL



Community Tourism Snapshot

Eugene is Lane County's largest city, the county seat, and home to the University of Oregon. It is the primary visitor entry point for the county, anchored by the Eugene Airport (EUG), and draws visitors for sports events, UO-related travel, outdoor recreation, and arts and cultural experiences.

The JLL Demand Driver Scorecard shows Hayward Field and Autzen Stadium scoring high enough to draw visitors from well beyond the region, Eugene's strongest assets and its primary event anchors. Hayward Field's annual calendar includes the Prefontaine Classic and the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track and Field Championships, bringing elite track and field visitors to the city every year, and Autzen Stadium hosts University of Oregon football games each fall. A substantial cluster of arts, cultural, and recreation assets score high enough to pull visitors specifically to the area, though typically from a more limited geographic radius, including the University of Oregon, the Hult Center for the Performing Arts, Cuthbert Amphitheater, Matthew Knight Arena, road cycling, hiking, fishing, and several performing arts venues. Downtown Eugene and local parks function mainly as activities for visitors already present rather than motivating trips on their own.

Visitors account for 24% of all spending in Eugene. Forty-six percent of visitors travel from outside Oregon. Portland accounts for 39% of visitor origins. The largest visitor category is food and beverage at 36%, followed by outdoor recreation at 20%. Visitor spending is concentrated in food and beverage (39%), accommodations (19%), and retail (19%). Major UO athletic and academic events drive significant visitor volume, but a share of associated spending, including lodging in campus housing and on-site event catering, is captured by the university rather than flowing to local hotels and businesses, which limits economic return to the broader community.

Residents are broadly supportive of tourism, with approximately 81% rating its overall impact as positive and 73% willing to recommend Eugene as a visitor destination. Residents identify economic opportunity and job creation as the top tourism-related priority (46%), followed by better infrastructure (33%) and preservation of natural areas (30%). Stakeholder and resident input consistently pointed to a desire to diversify the visitor identity beyond sports and the UO, a gap in large-scale indoor facilities that limits winter visitation, downtown conditions including public safety perceptions and limited late-evening options as barriers to the visitor experience, and the need to ensure tourism growth supports housing affordability and workforce conditions for residents.

Strategic Opportunity

Eugene can build a year-round visitor economy by expanding local economic return from its event strengths, developing its performing arts and culture cluster as a complementary draw, addressing the seasonal concentration created by its sports-event calendar, and improving downtown conditions so that residents and visitors benefit from tourism growth.

Opportunities

1. Expand Local Economic Capture from Sports and University Visitors

Supports Lane County Destination Master Plan Priorities: Build a Year-Round, County-Wide Visitor Economy • Convert University of Oregon Visitors into Lane County Visitors

Hayward Field and Autzen Stadium are Eugene's two highest-scoring tourism assets, drawing large volumes of visitors from across the country for events including the Prefontaine Classic, national and collegiate track championships, and University of Oregon football games.

That visitor traffic is real and significant, but the share of event-related spending that reaches local businesses is lower than it could be. Lodging on campus, event catering managed by the university, and limited late-evening options in the surrounding area all reduce how much event visitors spend locally. Closing this gap does not require more visitors; it requires that existing visitors spend more broadly in the community during and around their time in Eugene.



Recommendations

- Work with the University of Oregon and event organizers to develop strategies that direct event visitors to local hotels, restaurants, and businesses before and after events, including coordinated event-week promotions and late-night business participation
- Develop visitor itineraries and communications that extend the event visit into a broader Eugene experience, connecting sports visitors to dining, arts, outdoor recreation, and other community assets
- Identify opportunities to grow the share of transient lodging tax-generating overnight stays associated with UO events to increase revenues available for visitor-serving infrastructure

2. Develop Eugene's Performing Arts and Culture Cluster as a Complementary Draw

Supports Lane County Destination Master Plan Priorities: Champion Strong Regional Branding and Marketing • Connect the Industry

The Hult Center for the Performing Arts, Cuthbert Amphitheater, McDonald Theatre, and the Shedd are regional draws for Eugene, and the city's annual calendar includes events such as the Oregon Festival of American Music, Art and the Vineyard Festival, and the Mount Pisgah Wildflower & Music Festival.

This is a strong cluster of cultural assets for a city of Eugene's size, but it is currently marketed in the shadow of the city's sports identity rather than promoted as a destination in its own right, leaving capacity underused relative to what these venues and events could draw independently.

Recommendations

- Invest in marketing that presents Eugene as an arts and culture destination in its own right, reaching audiences with interest in live performance, music, and cultural programming beyond the sports identity
- Package Eugene's performing arts venues and annual arts events, such as the Oregon Festival of American Music and Art and the Vineyard Festival, into promoted itineraries for visitors already in the area for sports or UO events
- Coordinate marketing and scheduling among Eugene's arts organizations and Travel Lane County to build a more consistent, promotable arts and culture calendar



3. Improve Downtown Conditions and Align Tourism Growth with Resident Priorities

Supports Lane County Destination Master Plan Priorities: Invest in Tourism that Supports Resident Quality of Life • Connect the Industry

Downtown Eugene is where much of the visitor experience outside of events and outdoor recreation takes place, and its current condition, including public safety perceptions, limited late-evening options, and visible signs of disinvestment, is one of the most consistently cited barriers to a strong visitor experience.

Residents are clear that tourism growth should create living-wage jobs, support housing affordability, and benefit the broader community, not just the venues and events that attract visitors in the first place. Keeping resident support high requires that investment in tourism produce visible improvements in the conditions that affect daily life.

Recommendations

- Coordinate tourism investment with downtown revitalization efforts, supporting business recruitment, public space improvements, and late-evening dining and entertainment that improve conditions for residents and visitors alike
- Prioritize tourism development strategies that create employment at livable wages, support local business ownership, and avoid placing additional pressure on the housing supply through short-term rental growth that outpaces housing development
- Use Travel Lane County's countywide brand and marketing platform to position Eugene's downtown business and arts community within a single, coordinated regional campaign rather than marketing downtown separately from the rest of the county's destinations

Seasonality Considerations

Eugene's visitor economy is heavily concentrated around a small number of major sports events at Hayward Field and Autzen Stadium, clustered mostly between April and November. Some late-fall and winter programming does exist, including cold-weather community races such as Run to Stay Warm in late November and the Frozen Trail Run Fest in December, and the Joriad North American Truffle Dog Championship in late January or early February, but these are small, niche events rather than major visitor draws, and Eugene has no winter anchor comparable in scale to its summer and fall sports calendar.

Stakeholders have identified the absence of a large-scale indoor facility as the most significant gap limiting winter visitation, since Eugene currently has no comparable indoor venue capable of hosting concerts, tournaments, or other events during the months when its outdoor and sports-event assets are least active.

Recommendations

- Pursue development of a large-scale indoor facility capable of hosting concerts, tournaments, and year-round events to reduce dependence on weather-dependent and seasonally concentrated event activity
- Use Eugene's event calendar to identify the lowest-visitation months and target marketing, programming, and arts-cluster promotion specifically at those gaps

Strategic Outlook

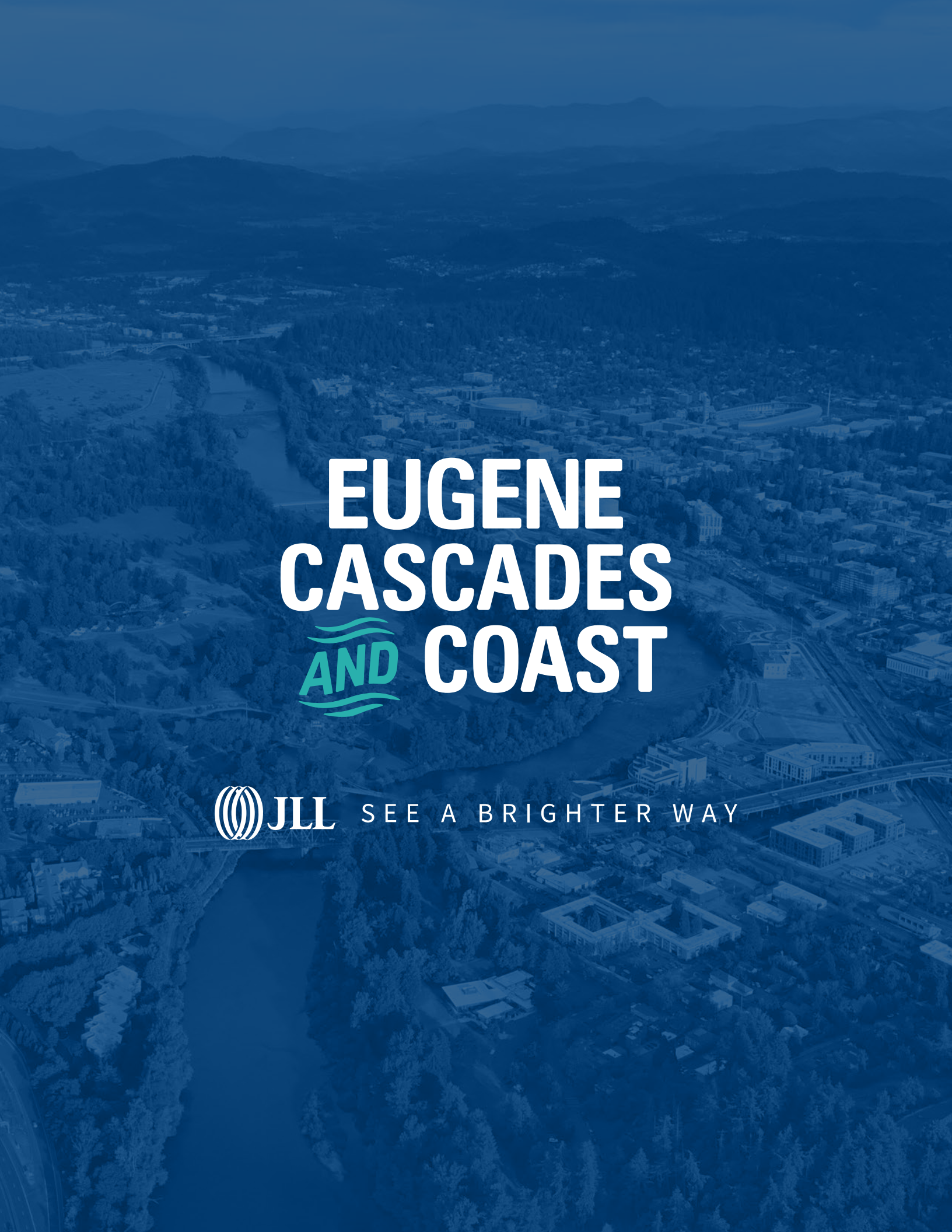
Eugene has a wide base of tourism assets, anchored by two sports venues, Hayward Field and Autzen Stadium, that function as national draws. The challenge is not generating visitation; it is ensuring that existing visitor volume produces stronger economic returns for local businesses and residents, extending that visitor activity beyond a handful of peak event weekends, and improving downtown conditions so that the visitor experience between events is competitive with what the sports venues deliver. The near-term priorities are improving local capture of spending from sports and UO-related visitors, developing Eugene's performing arts cluster as a complementary, marketable draw, addressing the seasonal concentration created by the sports-event calendar, and improving downtown conditions so that growth benefits residents as well as visitors. Resident support for tourism is solid, and residents have been direct about what they expect from it: jobs, infrastructure, natural area preservation, and growth that does not erode the community conditions that make Eugene worth visiting in the first place.

Research Basis

The analysis and recommendations in this profile are synthesized from multiple data sources gathered as part of the Lane County Destination Master Plan planning process. Zartico visitor data reflects figures as of January 2026; other sources were gathered through a research process conducted from October 2025 through July 2026. Sources were reviewed together and interpreted collectively rather than reported individually.

Zartico Visitor Snapshot (Eugene); JLL Demand Driver Scorecard; Lane County Event Matrix; Resident Survey (community-level results and open-ended responses); Community Survey Results; Stakeholder Engagement Synthesis Report; Lane County Site Visits and Meetings; Lane County Interview Notes Compilation; Lane County Thematic Analysis; Lane County Destination Master Plan.




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AND COAST
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