

# Outer Banks Long-Range Tourism Management Plan

2023–2033



“When we embarked on developing this plan, we intended to create a roadmap for the future of tourism on the Outer Banks. Very quickly it became an important community initiative, involving dozens of community leaders, hundreds of tourism-related stakeholders and thousands of residents. The LRTMP was developed with input from our community, which makes it a more vital long-range plan.”

-LEE NETTLES, Executive Director  
Outer Banks Visitors Bureau

## Creating the Plan

The future success of a destination's visitor economy – and the growth of benefits it provides for the local community – depend on the public, private and civic sectors collaborating to ensure the long-term viability of a destination. Thinking beyond the traditional models of tourism that have brought success, jobs and development to a community is essential to preserving and sustaining its values, history and natural spaces.

The Outer Banks Long-Range Tourism Management Plan (LRTMP) was published in May 2023, following an 18-month process begun by the Dare County Tourism Board and executed by the staff of the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau, a 19-member Task Force and partners at MMGY NextFactor and Tourism Economics. The comprehensive plan, which includes extensive feedback from throughout the community, provides a roadmap for the future to ensure that tourism preserves – and even benefits – the environment, culture and quality of life for residents while enhancing the visitor experience.

“We must respect the people who live here and seek to find balance between tourism interests and our way of life.”

– OBX Stakeholder

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4,538

Resident survey responses

179

DestinationNEXT stakeholder survey completions

19

Task Force members who met for four working sessions

14

In-depth one-on-one interviews

7

Focus groups

2

Resident town halls



# Outer Banks Long-Range Tourism Management Plan

## STRATEGIC GOALS

Four strategic goals emerged as recommendations to move the plan forward into the future. These strategic goals provide the framework for the actions, partnerships and investments for the long-range consideration of tourism and quality of place.



### 1

#### STRENGTHEN RESIDENT & VISITOR ENGAGEMENT

- A)** Continue to connect visitors with area non-profits to support and elevate their work.
- B)** Lead a resident engagement program.
- C)** Lead investment in the development of a voluntourism strategy.
- D)** Convene a Task Force to support the Visitors Bureau in ongoing implementation of the plan.
- E)** Hire a Community Engagement Manager to champion implementation of this plan.
- F)** Develop a visitor pledge to communicate the important values of responsible behavior to visitors.

### 2

#### ADOPT AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

- A)** Lead investment in data platforms that allow for real-time analytics and use intel for targeting and education.
- B)** Further the Outer Banks as a recognized leader in outdoor recreation and stewardship amongst established recreation communities.
- C)** Collaborate with leading environmentally-conscious partners to further sustainability benchmarks and strategy for visitors.
- D)** Advocate for a comprehensive increased investment in roads, sidewalks and clean mobility to expand options for non-vehicular transportation.
- E)** Convene a Sustainability Committee to provide ongoing input on tourism strategies that minimize environmental impacts.

Through the work of the Task Force, the core values and key differentiators of the Outer Banks were examined, while a shared vision provided an inspirational and aspirational look ahead.

## OBX *values*

**A historically significant coastal community rooted in tradition, shaped by its dynamic natural environment and celebrated for its quality experiences for locals and visitors.**



## OBX *vision*

**In 2033, the Outer Banks will be idyllic island communities where residents and visitors coexist and thrive thanks to thoughtful efforts to balance and sustain quality of life with quality of place.**



3

### SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT THAT SUPPORTS RESIDENTS & VISITORS

- A)** Partner with municipalities, counties, the region and state to ensure infrastructure and development initiatives consider sustainability, resident and visitor needs.
- B)** Partner with the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce to develop a diverse talent attraction campaign.
- C)** Continue to pursue an Event Center.
- D)** Improve accessibility for people of all age groups and abilities.
- E)** Undertake a density study as part of a capacity management plan.
- F)** Support a pedestrian safety plan to understand different mobility needs.
- G)** Advocate for initiatives that will help maintain and preserve our shorelines.

1

### COLLABORATE TO ADVOCATE FOR AN INCREASE IN RESIDENTIAL HOUSING DIVERSITY

- A)** Collaborate with Dare County and others to advocate for an increase in home ownership options for a broader base of residents with established incentives to develop alternative and more sustainable housing. Develop an awareness and advocacy strategy to educate about needs for more housing diversity.
- B)** Collaborate with Dare County and others to advocate for a balance in short- and long-term rental and homeownership opportunities.
- C)** Collaborate with Dare County and others to advocate for the development of public transportation, other mobility options and workforce accessibility.
- D)** Partner with other groups to explore public-private housing development opportunities.





## *Taking the next steps*

With a collaborative, focused and original approach to the implementation of this plan, it will result in the growth of the visitor economy and its widespread benefits for the entire region. By capitalizing on this opportunity to effectively balance the significant benefits of tourism to the Outer Banks with the needs of our residents and the realities of our natural environment, we are starting a long-term process and commitment that will benefit our region for generations to come.

**“When residents benefit from a strong visitor economy, they become empowered to build stronger, more sustainable communities. Tourism creates a bond of identity, pride, promise and purpose between people of a destination.”**

**– MMGY NextFactor**

The Dare County Tourism Board and Outer Banks Visitors Bureau are committed to these efforts and welcome your involvement and input.



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