

ROWAN COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

VISIT
ROWAN COUNTY

NORTH CAROLINA

Be an original.®



TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Build upon destination strengths, community character, strategic investments and brand expansion while driving overnight stays and serving visitor needs through:

- Develop products that support and enhance destination strengths.
- Incorporate elements that reflect a changing and evolving external environment.
- Foster new products to drive destination awareness organically and motivate incremental visitations.
- Combine word-of-mouth referral, imagery and promotion.
- Leverage in-market residents, visitors and social media fans to sell the destination and attract new visitors.
- Facilitate visitor engagement by creating original sites to organically inspire sharing through multimedia.
- Improve connectivity to outdoor assets such as agritourism sites, parks and trails.
- Create adventure and experience-based tourism activities at sites.
- Connect multiple tourism assets into key sites and create primary tourism hubs (originally called Flagships in the 2013 Rowan Tourism Master Plan).

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Purposefully invest in areas that are critical to the health of the destination, its competitiveness and quality of visit, by:

- Offer new, original experiences to differentiate Rowan County.
- Build upon existing destination assets, experiences and stories.
- Encourage multimedia sharing and viral moments.
- Complement and support the destination brand.

PROPOSED AREAS OF FOCUS

Rowan County Tourism is combining synergistic and complimentary tourism assets into two areas of focus (*tourism hubs*) utilizing a *dual track approach* with emphasis on both rural and urban tourism development. These areas of focus combine multiple attributes including but not limited to: public arts, agriculture, live music, recreation, outdoor adventure, visitor experiences and urban flare.

The areas of focus have been identified by concentrating on *assets that already have sound infrastructure, built in audiences and are strategically ready for further tourism investment and development*. Rowan County Tourism staff will direct human capital and fiscal resources combined with public/private partnerships towards the further development of two areas.

RAILWALK & DOWNTOWN SALISBURY

*Develop and expand upon the **Railwalk and Downtown's** existing and nearby assets and infrastructure to create a key tourism activity hub in Rowan County. The hub will allow visitors to identify, gather at and gain information about Rowan County by connecting them to the remarkable destination experiences, and serve as an urban launching point for rural tourism adventure. This site will need to communicate the depth and breadth of the destination through the use of social media, e-ticketing, trolleys, experiences and other activities. A tourism activity hub at the Railwalk or in Downtown Salisbury would include but not be limited to:*

- Acquisition and utilization of property in the Railwalk area and/or in Downtown Salisbury for the creation and development of new tourism product and infrastructure.
- Expansion and utilization of Railwalk Farmers Market & Pavilion and nearby, connecting properties.
- Additional space and infrastructure for events, gatherings, music, entertainment, festivals, food & beverage.
- Expanded trolley footprint through increased tours, activities and experiences.
- Public infrastructure enhancements (i.e., streetscapes, lighting, signage, alleyways, properties etc.)
- Arts & culture (i.e., public art, wall murals, Instagrammable locations, festivals, concerts, events).
- Cheerwine experience.

AGRITOURISM ADVENTURE

*Create a key **rural/outdoor destination experience** centralized in Rowan County for **agritourism and outdoor adventure** experiences, that drives visitation and expands organic marketing through encouraging multimedia sharing opportunities and digital word of mouth. The agritourism adventure activity hub would allow visitors to identify, gather at, explore, engage with and gain information about Rowan County's original experiences. Development of a key, rural and outdoor destination would include, but not be limited to:*

- Formal public/private partnership with an agritourism site that has existing infrastructure and a sound visitor base to serve as the central, rural, agritourism adventure activity hub.
- Combine dynamic recreational experiences such as high ropes course, ziplines and adventure activities with the outdoor experience and atmosphere of an agritourism location.
- Launch experiences that promote multimedia sharing as a mechanism to organically increase visitation.
- Explore accessible and multigenerational recreation opportunities at an agritourism site such as canopy walks and trail infrastructure.
- Further integrate arts and culture with agritourism adventure through new music and entertainment infrastructure and other areas such as public art and festivals that highlight agriculture.
- Seek additional food and beverage experiences that are original to Rowan County and expand agritourism businesses options through zoning changes to allow bona fide to increase tourism activities.

RATIONALE

1. Railwalk & Downtown Salisbury

- Build upon Tourism's existing investments and infrastructure of the Railwalk Farmers Market and Pavilion and past investments in Downtown Salisbury.
- Centralize multiple assets into an urban tourism activity hub increases the ability to better serve the needs of visitors.
- Building upon the existing character of the arts district will enhance the visitor experience by showcasing the established success of the arts in Salisbury and Rowan County.
- Create a centralized hub to support the brand by utilizing a dual track to emphasize urban and rural assets that visitors can find in Rowan County.
- Focus attention in a centralized area to facilitate visitor engagement through providing unique social media photo ops and purposefully placed branded backdrops.
- Create multiple new products within Rowan County and Downtown Salisbury, such as a Cheerwine experience, large Cheerwine bottle and murals that could inspire sharing and will grow the destination awareness organically.
- Develop a tourism centric hub that centralizes activities to support increased visitor spending in Downtown Salisbury and the City of Salisbury, which in turn increases the economic impact of tourism in Rowan County.

RATIONALE

2. Agritourism Adventure

- Enhance the established strengths of a rural Rowan County destination and add additional attractions to encourage more frequent and extended stays, that will result in an increase in tourism to Rowan County.
- Create additional attractions that are highly sharable, to help grow the destination awareness organically, motivate incremental visitation and create a place that builds community identity and pride.
- Facilitate visitor engagement with highly shareable moments through high ropes interactions, festivals and public art to attract individuals to book repeat stays and benefit the wealth and awareness of partnered businesses.
- Invest in adventure attractions, such as ropes courses, to expand partnered business' current audiences while also attracting additional audiences.
- Utilize a dual track to emphasize urban and rural assets while adding emphasis on adventure moments to support and establish brand identity and awareness.
- Invest in a model that favors established public/private partnerships to increase the ability for increased capital investment, visitor spending, business growth and employment opportunities to current Rowan County residents.