

Strategic Plan

2026-2031



VISIT
Frederick
CITY & COUNTY
MARYLAND

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Executive Director of Visit
Frederick

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Executive Summary

Dear Frederick Community,

Tourism in Frederick County celebrates who we are as a community as we welcome visitors from across the nation and around the world. Every guest who walks our historic streets, hikes our scenic trails, or shares a meal in one of our vibrant restaurants adds to the energy and vitality of our destination.

Tourism has become one of Frederick County’s greatest success stories. It fuels our economy, supports local businesses, and creates opportunities that enhance everyday life for residents throughout the county. It also shines a light on the people, places, and traditions that make Frederick a unique place to visit and live. It is no wonder so many visitors return again and again, and so many of us are proud to call it home.

Frederick has incredible opportunities on the horizon. To maintain our momentum and success, Visit Frederick brought the residents, stakeholders, and the tourism industry together to complete a strategic plan for 2026–2031. The goal of this plan is to articulate our shared vision for how tourism can grow responsibly and sustainably in the years ahead. The plan gives us a framework to not only attract visitors but also ensure that tourism strengthens quality of life for all in Frederick County.

Tourism succeeds when it is a partnership. That is why Visit Frederick remains committed to working alongside local leaders, community organizations, businesses, residents, and regional partners to strengthen Frederick County. Together, we will guide growth responsibly, celebrate what makes us unique, and create experiences that last a lifetime for visitors.

Frederick County has long been a place people fall in love with. We can build on this legacy with dedication, collaboration, and creativity to make certain our community remains vibrant and inspiring for all.

With gratitude,




Dave Ziedelis
Executive Director
Visit Frederick

PROCESS & ENGAGEMENT

Visit Frederick engaged Coraggio Group to assist in the development of their 5-year strategic plan. The process began in April 2025 and will conclude in October 2025. To create the most comprehensive and holistic plan possible, Coraggio approached the work in three phases: Get Clear, Get Focused, and Get Moving. They conducted research and outreach throughout the spring and summer and then made sure what they learned informed the planning and implementation processes.

GET CLEAR

From April to August 2025, Visit Frederick and Coraggio took the time to assess the current state of Frederick’s tourism economy and where residents and stakeholders want it to go in the future. Get Clear served as the research gathering and level-setting phase and included:

- Background data and research review
- Engagement
- Insight report

STAKEHOLDER AND RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

Coraggio and Visit Frederick conducted a comprehensive stakeholder outreach and data analysis process from May to July of 2025. Drawing from surveys, interviews, and workshops, the report reflects the ideas, priorities, and sentiments reported by residents, visitors, tourism partners and stakeholders, and staff. All engagements surpassed target response levels, indicating strong interest and positivity for tourism in Frederick County.

Note, the Visitor Perception study was conducted by Downs & St. Germain Research.

STAKEHOLDER/ STAFF SURVEY	RESIDENT SENTIMENT SURVEY	VISITOR PERCEPTION SURVEY	TOWN HALL LISTENING SESSIONS	1:1 INTERVIEWS
123 responses (8 staff, 13 board members)	789 responses (28 completed in Spanish)	409 responses	31 participants	11 interviewees
Partner organizations, attractions, and tourism-related businesses and organizations.	Paid media via Meta to garner responses from residents throughout Frederick County.	Primarily from Philadelphia, DC, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Lancaster market areas.	Cross-section of tourism industry reps from attractions, local government, lodging, etc.	Key stakeholders and influencers can dive deeper into strategic challenges and opportunities facing Visit Frederick.



Insight Report Findings

Coraggio synthesized and analyzed the insights gained from the surveys, interviews, and town halls and organized them into a full Insight Report that would guide discussion during the development of the strategic plan. These themes not only highlight what matters most to the Frederick County community, but they also help structure the story of where Frederick's tourism landscape is today and where it can go in the future.



01 All surveyed sectors see the value of tourism in their community, support more tourism in Frederick County, and think that Visit Frederick is doing a great job as the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO).

02 Residents have a strong sense of community pride, and visitors keep coming back – signaling that Frederick County is a special place.

03 Visit Frederick must balance promoting its vibrant, evolving urban center of the City of Frederick and its rural, small-town roots, creating challenges for a unified tourism identity.

04 There is a desire to improve tourism infrastructure and support systems (e.g., roads, parking, hotels, wayfinding, etc.), and visitors indicated that they want more things to do, suggesting a need for destination development.

05 Facilitating greater connectivity between assets and attractions could improve the average visitor length of stay and vary the visitor journey throughout Frederick County.

06 Agritourism, history, and outdoor recreation are a competitive edge for Frederick County and can disperse visitors beyond the City of Frederick.

07 There is both desire and capacity for increased meetings, conventions, and hotel options, particularly in downtown Frederick.

Get Focused

With a clear and comprehensive assessment of Frederick’s tourism economy, the foundation for the planning process was set. Coraggio joined the Visit Frederick team on August 28 – 29, 2025 and facilitated two 4-hour planning sessions with all of the the full time staff and members of the board of directors. The first session focused on performing an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) based on the Insight Report, then creating vision, mission, and values statements. The second session dove into strategic focus and identifying imperatives, objectives, and initiatives.



Across the two planning sessions, the core team drafted the elements of the strategic plan:

STRATEGIC CLARITY	STRATEGIC FOCUS & ACTION
 <p>Vision What is the ideal future state we aspire to create? What’s possible because of the work we do?</p>	 <p>Imperatives What must be accomplished over the planning horizon?</p>
 <p>Mission What is our purpose as an organization? What value do we deliver to help achieve the vision?</p>	 <p>Objectives How will we measure success?</p>
 <p>Values What are the fundamental beliefs that shape how we work together and serve our mission?</p>	 <p>Initiatives What finite duration discretionary projects or programs will we take on as we move our organization forward?</p>

The Strategic Plan

Once the planning team’s work resulted in a draft plan, the full Board of Directors was brought on to finalize it. The 2026–2031 Plan was complete.

Coraggio delivered two versions of the plan: a one-pager and this booklet. In addition, Coraggio developed a Community PR Plan to spark strategies in Visit Frederick’s community and resident engagement efforts. The last element of the process was an Implementation Playbook, which will provide guidance and expertise in how Visit Frederick can activate this plan for years to come.



VISION

Frederick County is a vibrant and welcoming community built on collaboration and stewardship, where centuries of history and a spirit of innovation create a place to fall in love with, time and time again.



MISSION

Visit Frederick strengthens economic vitality and community pride by developing and promoting tourism that enhances quality of life for residents and visitors alike.



VALUES Visit Frederick’s Values of Excellence

- We approach our work with **passion** and **positivity**.
- We use our **resourcefulness** to tackle problems bigger than ourselves.
- **Visionary thinking** shapes our future.
- We succeed through **collaboration** and **teamwork**.
- **Integrity** guides our every action.



IMPERATIVES

01

Drive visitation and visitor spending across all of Frederick County

02

Leverage and cultivate positive community sentiment toward tourism

03

Build organizational capacity to support tourism growth and management

04

Formalize our destination stewardship mindset and framework

The Strategic Focus

01 IMPERATIVE

Drive visitation and visitor spending across all of Frederick County

Tourism is a vital driver of Frederick County's economy, and growing both visitation and visitor spending in a smart, sustainable way will guarantee that benefits reach every corner of the county. By understanding who visits the county and what they seek, Visit Frederick can better tailor experiences that inspire longer stays, repeat visits, and greater exploration throughout the county. The opening of the new conference center presents an immense opportunity to position Frederick as a hub for events of all kinds, while cross-county itineraries and stronger data-driven strategies will help extend those benefits across communities. Together, these efforts will strengthen Frederick's reputation as a top destination for visitors to choose to stay, explore, and invest.

OBJECTIVES

Increase in visitor spending year over year with the following goals:

- **3%** growth in **2026 over 2025**
- **3.1%** growth in **2027 over 2026**
- **3.2%** growth in **2028 over 2027**
- **4%** growth in **2029 over 2028**
- **4.1%** growth in **2030 over 2029**

INITIATIVES

- Define the Frederick County visitor profiles and emerging markets
- Support the success of the new conference center, including developing Frederick's reputation as a place for hosting events of all kinds
- Create cross-county itineraries to facilitate connectivity among attractions, including partnerships with Main Street programs
- Improve data-driven decision-making processes: focus on promoting multi-day and off-season events as well as identify geographic areas of need

02 IMPERATIVE

Leverage and cultivate positive community sentiment towards tourism

Frederick City and County currently have above average resident pride and positive sentiment for tourism, which is when tourism thrives. Strengthening local support and awareness of tourism ensures that growth enhances quality of life, fosters belonging, and celebrates Frederick. By continuing to engage residents, Visit Frederick aims to build a shared sense of ownership and excitement. This approach will not only improve community sentiment but will also position residents as true ambassadors for Frederick County.

OBJECTIVES

Increase in visitor spending year over year with the following goals:

- Local visitation to the Frederick Visitor Center returns to **2023 levels**
- Improve resident sentiment NPS score from **37 to 50**

INITIATIVES

- Develop a unified PR strategy to communicate and celebrate Visit Frederick's wins with the community
- Create and deploy tourism ambassador program
- Instate continuous resident sentiment feedback mechanisms- town halls, event participation, surveys, etc.
- Support resident and business readiness for the new conference center
- Activate both the visitor center and conference center for local events

03 IMPERATIVE

Build organizational capacity to support tourism growth and management

As Frederick County's tourism economy continues to expand and adapt, Visit Frederick must grow and change with it. Building organizational capacity means ensuring the right structures and systems are in place to sustain long-term success. From enhancing board engagement to investing in staff development, these efforts will strengthen Visit Frederick's team, expertise, and ability to deliver results. A strong organization means stronger outcomes for partners, visitors, and residents.

OBJECTIVES

- 1-2 new staff positions defined
- Increase in board activity via improved structure, subcommittee, and workload distribution

INITIATIVES

- Activate and leverage partners to engage in content creation for tourism and community communications
- Conduct an organizational assessment of Visit Frederick, including staff and outside resources
- Support staff professional development for learning new technology and marketing best practices
- Define and maintain Visit Frederick's role in advocacy across countywide initiatives
- Develop standardized onboarding and offboarding procedures
- Reevaluate governing documents and board structure to assess needed changes to improve capacity and efficiency

04 IMPERATIVE

Formalize our destination stewardship mindset and framework

Visit Frederick leverages tourism to enhance and increase quality of life for residents in Frederick County, which is a form of destination stewardship. By formalizing an approach to stewardship, Visit Frederick will further commit to ensuring tourism growth is sustainable, inclusive, and aligned with community values. This work includes advancing sustainability efforts, strengthening partnerships, and supporting workforce and infrastructure needs that prepare Frederick for long-term prosperity and tourism balance.

OBJECTIVES

- Completed destination stewardship plan
- Increase in stakeholder awareness of destination stewardship

INITIATIVES

- Complete the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) accreditation from Destinations International
- Create a destination stewardship plan that includes a definition of both stewardship and Visit Frederick's role
- Support community capacity building efforts such as workforce, conference center success, infrastructure, economic development, etc.
- Pursue efforts in sustainability for the Frederick Visitor Center
- Promote sustainable visitation practices
- Ensure a shared understanding and buy-in for stewardship with stakeholders through communications and partnerships

Acknowledgements



The Visit Frederick team would like to sincerely thank all the following groups, partners, and participants who assisted in the development of this strategic plan. Thanks to you, this plan will enable us to do the best work possible and continue to build on the prosperity of our destination for years to come. Thank you!

- Survey respondents, stakeholders, residents, and visitors
- Listening session attendees
- Interviewees
- Our partners
- Visit Frederick Board of Directors
- Consulting partner, Coraggio Group

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