



Kerr-Tar
Regional Council
Of Governments

KERR TAR REGIONAL TOURISM PLAN

December 2025

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Executive Summary

The Kerr-Tar Region is a five county area covering Franklin, Granville, Person, Vance and Warren Counties. The region is primarily rural, offering beautiful rolling landscapes where visitors can discover outdoor recreation, lakes and rivers, agricultural activities, festivals and small towns, along with many other engaging experiences less than an hour from the triangle and its population of over 2 million residents.

The Kerr-Tar Regional Tourism Plan brought together tourism leaders from the five counties to collaborate on tourism efforts that will increase tourism for the whole region. The plan was written with the input of all five counties' tourism development authorities, planners and community members who identified what has worked in the past, what the gaps are in tourism and how to make visitors stay longer in the area.

The plan focuses on key visitor markets such as I-85 Travelers, Regional Visitors, Families with Children as well as foodies and ways to attract each market using a mix of targeted marketing and storytelling. During the process and through visioning exercises, five goals were created that aim to:

- *Establish & Strengthen Regional Tourism Products*
- *Promote Regional Tourism Image*
- *Engage & Educate Local Stakeholders*
- *Make Data-Driven Tourism Decisions*
- *Regional Networking & Collaboration.*

Each goal and its objectives, serves as a guide to grow tourism in the Kerr-Tar region, with actionable priorities organized by quarter in the first year, including examples like regional itineraries, linked trails and attractions, and coordinated marketing to get the plan underway and the counties working together on their tourism initiatives.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following individuals who have contributed their time and resources to these planning efforts.

Vance County

Pam Hester, Executive Director, Vance County Tourism Development Authority

Wykia Macon Vance County Extension Director, N.C. Cooperative Extension

Stephanie McKoy, Granville County Extension Director, N.C. Cooperative Extension

Ferdinand Rouse, Economic Development Director, Henderson-Vance County
Economic Development Commission

Granville County

Angela Allen, Tourism Director, Granville County Tourism Development Authority

Stephanie Velazquez, Economic Development Coordinator, Granville County Economic
Development

Charla Duncan, Community & Economic Development Director, Granville County

Person County

Bo Freeman, Person County Extension Director, N.C. Cooperative Extension

Brandy Lynch, Economic Development Director, Person County Economic Development

Julie Maybee, Executive Director, Person County Tourism Development Authority

Briana Whitt, Economic Development Specialist, Person County Economic
Development

Warren County

Stacy Burns, Warren County Extension Director, N.C. Cooperative Extension

Katherine Hilliard, Mayor of Macon

Cherie Nielsen Tourism Manager, Warren County Tourism Development Authority

McKinley Perkinson, Community & Economic Development Director

Michael Hawkins, Chair, Warren County Tourism Development Authority

Franklin County

Ginger Pugh, TDA Chairperson, Franklin County Tourism & Development Authority

Barbara Fiedor, Economic Development Director, Franklin County Economic Development

Alyssa Blair Zimmerman, Economic Development Specialist, Franklin County Economic Development

Charles Mitchell, Franklin County Extension Director, N.C. Cooperative Extension

Kerr-Tar Council of Governments Staff

Diane Cox, Executive Director

Desiree Brooks, Community and Economic Development Manager

Laila Abed, Regional Project Manager

Charles Robinette, Previous Planning Contractor / Food Systems Specialist

Additional Contributors

We would also like to thank Marquis Crews, Grant Manager, NCPRO; Bruce Naegelen, Community Economic Development Planner, NC Department of Commerce; and David H. McRae, ARC & SCRC Assistant Program Manager, NC Department of Commerce.

This document was developed with the support of the [UPLIFT NC Program](#), lead by Carol Kline, Director of the Hospitality and Tourism Management at Appalachian State University, Simon Jones, Founder of TourismWORKS & NatureScapes, and Jesa Valle, UPLIFT Program Coordinator & NatureScapes.

Introduction

The Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments (COG) is a voluntary association of local governments dedicated to planning, promoting, and implementing regional initiatives. The region encompasses Franklin, Granville, Person, Vance, and Warren Counties in North Carolina.

The COG and five counties identified tourism as an area of collaboration that would benefit from a regional approach to leveraging tourism for the economic betterment of the whole region and its communities. With support from UPLIFT NC, the Kerr-Tar Regional Tourism Plan was developed through a collaborative process involving county Tourism Development Authorities (TDA), economic development offices, planners, and other key stakeholders. Input from residents was gathered through a community survey and asset mapping process to ensure broad participation and local insight.

The goal of this plan is to strengthen collaboration among tourism stakeholders, create a unified and compelling regional identity, and pool resources for joint marketing efforts. Greater regional collaboration will also improve access to funding through joint applications for regional needs as well as enhance learning and networking among tourism peers in the area. These activities are all aimed at presenting a cohesive tourism experience that encourages visitors to stay longer, spend more and explore the region.

Method

In January 2025, the parties mentioned above entered into a strategic planning process for a regional tourism plan. Over the course of 10 months, the group met, facilitated by an outside consultancy* whose services were offered pro bono. The planning team participated in asset mapping, a community survey, visioning exercises, and the development of goals and objectives that fostered collaboration across county lines. Unique, regional itineraries were also developed, not only for tourists, but investors, and new families moving into the area. The following report presents the findings and recommendations; along with a suggested timeline for implementation.

**UPLIFT (www.uplifttourism.com/) Support for UPLIFT derived from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to address the impact from COVID-19 on the hospitality, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries. The UPLIFT program was funded under award 04-79-07689 from the Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.*

Key Markets

Through the planning process a number of key tourism markets were identified. These includes the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I-85 Travelers● Families● Regional Residents (within 2 hour drive)● Foodies / Craft Beverage Lovers● Outdoor Enthusiast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Lake/Boating Enthusiasts● History Buffs● Sports Tournaments● Performing Arts Enthusiasts● Special Occasions● Tour Groups
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In July and again in October 2025, an online regional planning meeting was held that included participating TDA's county planners and economic development staff for counties. They were asked to prioritize target markets and through the process identified four priorities for regional collaboration. Below is a description of the market and potential engagement activities.

I-85 Travelers

Traveler Profile

This target traveler is primarily traveling to or from destinations north of the region such as New York, New Jersey, Washington DC, Virginia or Canada. They have no defined age, gender or income level and may include families with kids, friends groups, or retired couples. Their main interest is an easily accessible place for a stopover near the highway, that could be as short as an hour to stretch the legs and break the journey, or longer periods, including an overnight. They are looking for places to eat, grab coffee or activities that are short, a little different but not too strenuous and ideally don't have to be booked in advance. If they stay the night they may look for hotels or short-term rentals that allow single-night stays. Overnights will generally be planned before taking the trip, but day stops may also be planned while on the road.

Hesitations they may have with stopping in the region include a lack of knowledge of what's available to do, limited family-friendly activities, rural stereotypes they may have and a time crunch related to getting to where they are going.

Engagement Strategy

To effectively reach travelers driving along the interstate, a coordinated mix of on-the-ground and digital marketing initiatives are needed. Physical touchpoints such as billboards and visitor guides at rest areas, as well as promotional materials like rack cards placed in gas stations, cafés, and accommodations, will serve as key entry points to capture traveler attention and motivate spontaneous exploration of the region. Even if this information does not create a visit immediately, it informs travelers about the opportunities in the area for their return or future travel planning.

Digital efforts will complement this approach by leveraging social media, influencers within the source markets (e.g. Washington DC, New York, etc.), and partnerships with short-term rentals, hotels and other businesses to extend visibility beyond the highway. Regular, coordinated posting across social platforms and the creation of authentic, locally produced video content across all counties will help position the region as an appealing stopover or short-stay destination for highway travelers. Welcome guides and digital content developed in collaboration with hospitality partners will reinforce the region's brand and provide practical information to encourage extended visits.

Regional Visitors (within a 2 hr. drive)

Traveler Profile

Regional visitors (those within a 2-hour drive of the Kerr-Tar region) include families, friend groups, singles, young professionals, and retirees looking for day trips or short overnight getaways (1-2 nights) within driving distance. These visitors are typically seeking experiences that combine relaxation and a variety of activities such as outdoor recreation, lakes and trails, local food and beverage options, unique shopping and downtowns, festivals, museums, and special events like weddings or reunions. Travel decisions are primarily made before traveling but may be close to the time of travel.

Accommodation preferences vary, with travelers choosing between interior corridor hotels and short-term rentals depending on their group size and purpose of travel. Many are motivated by curiosity and a desire for easily accessible, authentic experiences that feel different from larger, more commercial destinations.

Barriers to visitation may include limited awareness of what the region offers, varying interests among decision makers within the travel group and hesitation about visiting rural areas. Addressing these factors through clear, inspiring messaging and

accessible trip planning resources will be key to converting nearby regional visitors into the region.

Engagement Strategy

To attract travelers within a two-hour drive, a focus on building awareness and inspiring short, spontaneous trips among nearby audiences is key. Outreach could center on regional communication channels that have credibility and reach among these audiences. This includes advertising and storytelling through regional magazines and publications, local radio, social media, and regional news outlets, supported by partnerships with influencers who can showcase authentic experiences within the Kerr-Tar region.

Collaboration between counties, local businesses, and other tourism partners to pool resources to engage these channels through shared advertising and coordinated promotion of local calendars, events, and activities will extend each organizations promotional budget and build awareness in the market. The region can also leverage shared bargaining power to negotiate better rates with advertising channels, co-create content, and amplify consistent messaging across platforms.

Families (with children)

Profile

Family travel groups include parents with children under 18 and, in some cases, multi-generational travelers such as grandparents. They are typically looking for destinations that offer a balance of relaxation, entertainment, and value. This includes places that provide enough variety to keep children engaged while also having some things to do for the adults. Their trips generally range from a half-day outing to a full day or weekend getaway, and are often planned in advance while at home, with trip decisions frequently driven by the interests of children but final decisions made primarily by the wife.

Key motivators for these travelers include kid-friendly activities such as parks, trails, boating, and seasonal experiences like u-pick farms, alongside options that appeal to adults - breweries, wineries, historic sites, shopping, and arts and cultural events. Cost-effective, family-oriented dining options and convenient amenities such as public bathrooms are important decision factors. Families looking to stay overnight typically seek accommodations that provide comfort and convenience, including hotels with breakfast and pools, short-term vacation rentals (Airbnb/VRBO), or family-friendly campgrounds.

Potential barriers for this market include a perception that there may not be enough activities to keep children entertained or a general lack of awareness about what the region offers. Addressing these hesitations through clear, family-focused messaging, itineraries, and visual storytelling will be essential to position the destination as an easy, fun, and worthwhile getaway for families seeking quality time together close to home. This group is also very busy, so packaged information that's easy to understand and act on without a lot of additional research is important.

Engagement Strategy

To attract family groups, the emphasis should be on messaging that focuses on experiences that appeal to both children and adults, using a mix of traditional and digital channels, including community newsletters, school flyers, online family groups, libraries, and collaborations with local businesses and organizations that have access to this market. Within key local markets (e.g. the Triangle area), boots-on-the-ground efforts to distribute printed materials to these locations will help ensure families are aware of activities and experiences before planning their trips. Integrating these efforts with those outlined in the previous profiles along with collaboration among tourism partners to leverage outreach efforts, will ensure efficiencies with limited budgets, while maximizing reach within regional markets.

Foodie and Craft Beverage Lovers

Profile

Primarily adult visitors with disposable income traveling in couples or small groups. This traveler is primarily from the region, exploring the area on a day trip or a short 1-2 night stay. Some may also travel from further afield, mainly for other purposes, such as visiting friends/family or traveling through the region on business or leisure and looking to discover the area for a day or two. Their main interest is in exploring locally owned, unique food and beverage establishments, such as restaurants that have signature, well-known dishes or that have been highlighted as a 'must visit' in media outlets, etc. They want to stop by breweries, wineries, distilleries and coffee shops, but also explore the region's shops, natural areas for a hike, lakes and more between food and beverage spots. They take their time exploring and want space to relax with friends and family. Packages that include transportation may also be appealing. They will plan out where to stop and what to do during their day(s) before traveling.

Engagement Strategy

There are a number of targeted ways to connect with this market. Partnerships can be established with food and beverage providers in source destinations, such as the triangle, to host 'pop-up' events and other collaborations that would draw people into the region while also allowing the region to promote to the clients that visit these restaurants. FAM trips for media representing local foodie magazines and online food and beverage-related channels can also be organized to directly reach potential visitors with these interests. Cross promotion is also key, by engaging with unique local food and beverage providers across the region to cross promote each other encourages visitors to stay longer and explore more of the area. Local owners or employees of restaurant and beverage companies could also be encouraged to offer food and beverage tours of the region, hitting up local spots, as well as farms, etc., where the food comes from, for more tailored visitor experiences.

Goals & Objectives

The following goals and objectives were developed from the visioning session held with leadership stakeholders in May, the community survey, which yielded 174 total responses, the maps and plans uploaded by the leadership teams from each county, discussions held at the monthly meetings, and best practices in tourism management.

Goals: Broad, long-term statements that reflect the community's aspirations for tourism.	Objectives: Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objectives that support each goal.
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Summary of Goals:

1. Establish & Strengthen Regional Tourism Products
2. Promote Regional Tourism Image
3. Engage & Educate Local Stakeholders
4. Make Data-Driven Tourism Decisions
5. Regional Networking & Collaboration

These goals are based on a vision and actions that all five counties can work on together. Individual counties have their own tourism activities and plans, but the focus of these goals is on collaborative actions that can be jointly implemented. Working with community stakeholders across the region allows for the costs and benefits of tourism to be shared by the whole region, creating a stronger tourism economy for all.

All goals, objectives and actions agreed upon by the county representatives are listed below. A smaller set of **priority year-one actions** and then also listed separately in the following section for more immediate implementation.

Goal: Establish & Strengthen Regional Tourism Products

- **Objective:** Increase lodging options throughout the region.
 - a. Identify and engage community members who would be interested in having an Airbnb / VRBO/ Glamping / tiny home property to rent.
 - b. Organize regional/local workshops to inform and educate residents on how to become short-term rental hosts, helping to address local lodging needs. Potentially partner with a community college on workshops.

- c. Explore grants that can be managed regionally that can support the revitalization of buildings in downtowns so that they can become boutique hotels and/or rental accommodations.
 - d. Conduct workshops for community leaders on how to attract flagship hotels and restaurants. Identify resources on organizations that can help with feasibility studies, etc.
- **Objective:** Strengthen regional connectivity through trails and thematic routes.
 - a. Inventory trails (greenways, lakes, or parks) and 1-3 agritourism farms per county that can potentially be connected through trails and routes.
 - b. Gather information from all counties on major festivals and events for cross-promotion on each other's websites.
 - c. Identify other family-friendly activities beyond those mentioned above and create regional routes connecting them.
 - d. Develop a map of sites (by theme).
- **Objective:** Enhance the aesthetics and function of gateways and public spaces.
 - a. Create county lists of the most highly visited areas. Identify priorities on each list that need maintenance/beautification/improvement.
 - b. Kerr-Tar Regional Council supports grant applications for county or regional priorities identified above.
 - c. Develop a regional network to support organizations with beautification projects, community gardens, and pocket parks.
 - d. Address regional barriers for growth, such as multi-modal transportation and communication with local officials through a regional transportation strategy. Kerr-Tar Regional Council will offer support in communicating with local officials and strategizing on regional issues like transportation.
- **Objective:** Provide resources for tourism business development and retention.
 - a. Understand the needs and issues for local tourism businesses through an annual survey.
 - b. Plan webinars or in-person educational programs with community colleges, Chambers, and other relevant parties, who can support these needs across the region. By providing regional training, a cost-share can be realized by each county.
 - c. Identify residents who may wish to become local tour guides and work with them on their tours and narratives so that they might offer multi-county guided tours.
 - d. Identify grants that can support tourism business-related needs.

- **Objective:** Develop a feasibility study for regional lake development, which would consider roads and access to lakes; lodging and small meeting facilities; and food options, gift shops, rentals, and activities.
 - a. Identify resources to underwrite a study.
 - b. Draft and publish an RFP.

Goal: Promote Regional Tourism Image

- **Objective:** Develop a regional tourism brand.
 - Community leadership is encouraged to follow TDA's social media and sign up for newsletters. This will foster regional understanding of happenings in neighboring counties.
 - Conduct a brainstorming session with all five counties to come up with ideas for a slogan and brand identity that can be used regionally and highlight the commonalities between all counties.
 - Develop a regional brand and brand manual.
- **Objective:** Develop a regional guide that highlights common tourism experiences across the counties.
 - Merge existing lists to create a regional inventory of assets; compare all assets and identify commonalities.
 - Develop cross-county itineraries that focus on agritourism, family-friendly, outdoor recreation, and rural/small town escapes.
 - Promote itineraries as FAM tours or Media tours, as well as for promotion to visitors.
 - Ask residents to share their "*we are known for...*" as an authentic storytelling piece. (This might also serve as a formal way to "bring in" community members to tourism.).
 - Cost-share initiative for influencers, media, content creators, and tour operators to come visit the region.
 - Develop a guide that encompasses information on travel around the region (shared through all county websites and social channels).
- **Objective:** Initiate a three-year regional tourism promotional strategy and campaign.
 - TDAs convene to establish a plan to engage in cross-marketing, i.e., share events and other activities on each other's websites/platforms.

- Develop a regional tourism promotional strategy to increase awareness in key markets, specifically focusing on destinations with about a two-hour drive.
- Plan an annual joint promotional campaign to drive visitation to the region.
- Explore the potential of forming a 'host group,' possibly with other neighboring counties, and establish a website that consolidates information on tourism experiences and itineraries across the region.

Goal: Engage and Educate Local Stakeholders

1. **Objective:** Develop formal meetings to promote the importance of tourism and practical tourism-related topics.
 - a. Each TDA presents the Kerr Tar Regional Tourism Plan to each county's TDA Board. Keep boards engaged in updating this plan in 2-3 years.
 - b. Organize a regional summit to bring together tourism stakeholders for educational workshops. Rotate the location of the meeting annually.
 - c. Identify key topics that would be the most useful for all parties to learn about. Collaborate with organizations that can talk about each topic. (i.e., Extension office can highlight the impact of agritourism for the county).
 - d. Organize periodic training for the TDA Board that can be jointly implemented by all counties.
2. **Objective:** Build strong relationships with local leaders to support tourism.
 - a. Invite local leadership (elected officials, town/county staff, community organization leaders) to community events and FAM tours so they can see what's happening in the community.
 - b. Create fact sheets and presentations with statistics and stories on how tourism impacts the local economy. Ask local leadership to help distribute.

Goal: Make Data-Driven Tourism Decisions

1. **Objective:** Collect data at local events & tourism locations to improve visitor market intelligence.
 - a. Create short surveys that event participants and guests to lodging, restaurants, events, and sites (e.g., parks, visitor centers, etc.) can fill out for a prize. The survey would be common across the region.
 - b. Collect visitation numbers from lodging, restaurants, events, and sites (e.g., parks, visitor centers, etc.) and aggregate.
 - c. Annually summarise survey and other data findings for all counties to

make data-driven tourism decisions. These measures will improve over time.

2. Objective: Cost share on data purchases.

- a. Research and select for data such as Placer.ai or similar tourism data annually, and split the cost across counties. Look into partnering with Visit NC to use tools such as Zartico during big county-wide events.

Goal: Foster Regional Networking & Collaboration

1. Objective: Hold regular TDA/Economic Development meetups across the region.

- a. Establish a channel of communication where TDA/Economic development leads can ask questions, share information, etc., with their regional peers in real time (e.g., text group, Facebook group, etc.).
- b. Semi-annual TDA and economic development leaders (and others as appropriate from each county) meet online or in-person to update each other on activities and plans, use it as a forum to discuss issues and to strengthen relationships, and provide peer support.

2. Objective: Establish regional working committees.

- a. To implement all the joint activities proposed above (e.g., joint promotional activities or itineraries, or certain segments - farms, arts, trails, etc.), form 'regional working committees' to address priority activities.
- b. Establish a brief committee action plan for each committee. Hold regular technical meetings (online or in-person) to move the actions forward.
- c. Promote wins from each group on Kerr Tar Regional Council, as well as local newsletters and social media, to publicly celebrate but also share information about the great things happening in each county.
- d. Identify joint funding mechanisms (e.g., one organization as the fiscal agent, a separate joint account, etc.) for future work items.
- e. Report out to broader tourism partners at semi-annual TDA/Economic Development meetups.

Year 1 Priorities / Strategies

The following lists specific action priorities for initial implementation, pulled from the larger list on the previous pages.

Quarter 1

Establish & Strengthen Regional Tourism Products

- Identify and engage community members who would be interested in having an Airbnb / VRBO / Glamping / tiny home property to rent.
 - Next Steps: TDAs develop a Google Form for interested residents to sign up. This form would be distributed through TDA's email and social media networks. Other channels should also be identified for distribution.
- Explore grants that can be managed regionally that can support the revitalization of buildings in downtowns so that they can become boutique hotels and/or rental accommodations.
 - Next Steps: The Kerr Tar Regional Council will continue to search for funding resources that can be shared in their newsletter.
- Create county lists of the most highly visited areas.
 - Next Steps: TDAs will revisit the tourism asset inventory compiled through this planning process and UPLIFT as well as other sources or additions. Each county will then shortlist top highly visited areas for their counties.

Engage and Educate Local Stakeholders

- Each TDA presents the Kerr Tar Regional Tourism Plan to each county's TDA Board.
 - Next Steps: The Kerr-Tar Council of Governments will develop a summary presentation of this plan. This will be presented at their Board meeting on January 22nd 2026. The Kerr-Tar Council of Governments, along with TDA leaders will then present the plan at each county TDA Board meeting. The plan may then also be presented to other stakeholder groups, such as civic organizations, county commissioners, city councils, and the general public. A press release will be developed by the Kerr-Tar Council of Governments for promotion through its and TDA channels.

Make Data-Driven Tourism Decisions

- Create short surveys that event participants and guests to lodging, restaurants, events, and sites (e.g., parks, visitor centers, etc.) can fill out for a prize. The survey would be common across the region.
 - Next Steps: draft survey with inputs from all TDA's and economic development partners (keep it short). Make survey available to the public through an online form, QR code sticker or flyer, and paper/pdf fillable version. Create a brief plan on how each county will utilize the survey, how businesses and sites can use it and who will compile and analyse the data for the region.
- Research and select for data such as Placer.ai or similar tourism data annually and split cost across counties. Look into partnering with Visit NC to use tools such as Zartico for during big county wide events.
 - Next Steps: Meet to define specifically what everyone wants out of research, data and possible AI applications to support tourism in the region (what are the needs). Continue research into options that will fill these needs and compile this information into one document for all partners to review.

Quarter 2

Establish & Strengthen Regional Tourism Products

- Identify priorities on each list that need maintenance/beautification/improvement.
 - Next Steps: Gather information on key projects from each county that may be the focus of regional grant efforts through the Kerr Tar Regional Council
- Gather information from all counties on major festivals and events for cross-promotion on each other's websites.
 - Next Steps: Establish a regional group google document (viewer only) to consolidate, promote and share events. From this create a dynamic public facing calendar that would help identify and cross promote all events. Kerr Tar Regional Council to host information with TDA websites pointing to this resource
- Identify grants that can support tourism business-related needs.
 - Next Steps: Kerr Tar Regional Council work with TDA's to identify business needs and research grants or other programs that could support these needs.

Promote Regional Tourism Image

- Promote itineraries as FAM tours or Media tours as well as for promotion to visitors
 - Next Steps: Identify potential itineraries and story pitches that can be promoted to media and other tourism partners as a regional effort. This is initial brainstorming that will continue into Q3.

Engage and Educate Local Stakeholders

- Invite local leadership (elected officials, town/county staff, community organization leaders) to community events and FAM tours so they can see what's happening in the community.
 - Next Steps: Major events to keep in mind for presentation of the plan include the rodeo, hot sauce festival, personality festival, and the car show. Here they will also showcase 1-2 community champions per county.
- Organize a regional summit to bring together tourism stakeholders for educational workshops. Rotate location of the meeting annually.
 - Next Steps: Initiate planning for a regional tourism summit in 2027. This includes identifying where it may be held, dates and the main themes. Also who might be key speakers, such as Marlies Taylor (from Visit NC) to talk about and walk through how to utilize PlacerAI, Zartico, etc.

Make Data-Driven Tourism Decisions

- Collect visitation numbers from lodging, restaurants, events, and sites (e.g. parks, visitor centers, etc.) and aggregate.
 - Next Steps: TDAs will continue to research other ways to accurately get information about visitation to businesses and attractions. This will be put into a presentation to the board to show the cost and the ROI.

Quarter 3

Establish & Strengthen Regional Tourism Products

- Identify resources to underwrite a study.
- Understand the needs and issues for local tourism businesses through an annual survey.

Engage and Educate Local Stakeholders

- Organize a regional summit to bring together tourism stakeholders for educational workshops. Rotate location of the meeting annually.
- Organize periodic training for the TDA Board that can be jointly implemented by all counties.

Promote Regional Tourism Image

- Promote itineraries as FAM tours or Media tours as well as for promotion to visitors
- Community leadership is encouraged to follow TDA's social media and sign up for newsletters. This will foster regional understanding of happenings in neighboring counties.
- Merge existing lists to create a regional inventory of assets; compare all assets and identify commonalities.
- TDAs convene to establish a plan to engage in cross-marketing, i.e., share events and other activities on each other's websites/platforms.
- Develop cross-county itineraries that focus on agritourism, family-friendly, outdoor recreation, and rural/small town escapes.
- Conduct a brainstorming session with all five counties to come up with ideas for a slogan and brand identity that can be used regionally and highlights the commonalities between all counties.

Quarter 4

Establish & Strengthen Regional Tourism Products

- Develop a map of sites (by theme).
- Kerr-Tar Regional Council supports grant applications for county or regional priorities identified above.
- Plan webinars or in person educational programs with community colleges, Chambers, and other relevant parties, who can support these needs across the region. By providing regional training, a cost-share can be realized by each county.

Promote Regional Tourism Image

- Develop a guide that encompasses information on travel around the region (shared through all county websites and social channels).
- Develop a regional tourism promotional strategy to increase awareness in key markets, specifically focusing on destinations with about a two-hour drive.

Foster Regional Networking & Collaboration

- To implement all the joint activities proposed above (e.g., joint promotional activities or itineraries, or certain segments - farms, arts, trails, etc.), form 'regional working committees' to address priority activities.
- Establish a channel of communication where TDA/Economic development leads can ask questions, share information, etc. with their regional peers in real time (e.g. text group, facebook group, etc.).
- Semi-annual TDA and economic development leaders (and others as appropriate from each county) meet online or in-person to update each other on activities and plans, use it as a forum to discuss issues and to strengthen relationships, and provide peer support.

Appendices

Tourism Assets ([link to partial list of assets](#). Additional assets are also listed in the Community Survey Report)

Itineraries

Community Survey Report

Explore Outside

A WEEKEND OUTSIDE



DAY 1

Tar River Life

Set up camp and get settled for the evening. Tar River offers primitive sites for those looking for a peaceful, rustic camping experience.

Sunnyside on Main

Before the adventure continues, stop at Sunnyside on Main for coffee or lunch to fuel the day.

Lake Rogers Trails

Spend time fishing, paddle across tranquil water, sit on the boardwalk and watch the sunset, enjoy a picnic, let the kids play on the playground, or take a quiet walk through the woods.

Tar River Life

After exploring, come back to the campsite to unwind. Relax by the river and get ready for dinner.

Dinner

Wrap up the day with dinner at Rustic Roots restaurant in Bunn, or take a drive to explore the eateries of charming Downtown Franklin.



TAR RIVER CAMPING



SUNNYSIDE ON MAIN



LAKE ROGERS TRAILS



TAR RIVER LIFE KAYAKING



Explore Outside

A WEEKEND OUTSIDE



DAY 2

Tar River Life

Before the day's adventures begin, enjoy the calm of the river one last time before heading out.

Louisburg College- Dehart Botanical Garden

Tour the beautiful Louisburg Botanical Garden, home to 92 acres of natural beauty. Explore the residence, museum, and historic structures used for botanical collections and equipment.

Lunch in Franklin

Grab lunch at 210 Nash restaurant in Louisburg

Roberts Chapel Conservation Area

Take a trail walk along the Tar River at Roberts Chapel Conservation Area. It's a peaceful spot to connect with nature and stretch your legs.

Sunnyside's Scoops

Before heading home, stop at Sunnyside Scoops for a sweet treat — the perfect way to end your trip.



LOUISBURG BOTANICAL GARDEN



LUNCH SPOT



ROBERTS CHAPEL
CONSERVATION AREA



SUNNYSIDE SCOOPS



FAMILY FUN

CAMP TOGETHER, ADVENTURE ENDEAVOR



HYCO LAKE

Hyco Lake

Set up camp and get settled for the evening. Hyco Lake offers campsites and cottages for those looking for a peaceful, rustic camping experience.

Rox City Grill

Before your adventure starts, stop at Rox City Grill in Person Co. for breakfast.



ROX CITY GRILL



PALACE POINTE

Palace Pointe

Enjoy some classic fun in Person County! Go bowling, lace up your skates, or catch a movie all under one roof at Palace Pointe.

Cedar Creek Gallery

Enjoy a unique art experience. Craftspeople work alongside each other, fire wood and gas fired kilns, blow glass and make a living as artists onsite. Create art such as pottery, glasswork and more!



GRILL WORKS

VISITGRANVILLENC.COM | ITSBETTERINPERSON.COM

KERRTARCOG.ORG



TRAILHEAD #1

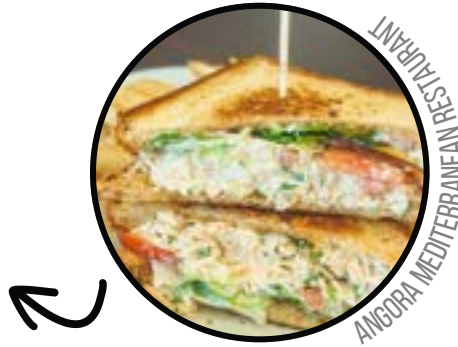
Ledge Creek Forest Conservation Area

While in Granville, explore scenic walking trails, including a peaceful loop along the preserve's namesake creek.

Dinner

End your day with dinner in Oxford.
Choices include:

- Oaks Distillery
- Tobacco Wood Brewing Company
- George's Restaurant
- Family Dinner
- House of Ribeyes



ANGORA MEDITERRANEAN RESTAURANT



HYKO LAKE

Hyko Lake

Relax at your campsite or cottage after a fun filled day!

FAMILY FUN
CAMP TOGETHER, ADVENTURE ENDEAVOR

Farmers Market Stroll

CROP TO SHOP

FULL DAY 

Kerr-Tar
Regional Council
Of Governments



BREAKFAST

Grab breakfast in Downtown Oxford.
Scan the QR code to see some options!

FARMERS MARKETS

Visit these four local farmer's markets and shop for fresh produce, handmade goods, and unique products.

- Uptown Roxboro Farmer's Market
- Oxford Farmer's Market
- Vance Co. Farmer's Market
- Franklin County Farmers Market



Lunch

Grab lunch at one of the local spots in Vance County. See QR code for more information



Seven Spring Winery

End the day with a relaxing visit to Seven Springs Winery. Sip, savor, and toast to a day well spent.

MORE INFORMATION / PRO TIP:

Bring your cooler for all the goodies you get at each market



FARMERS MARKET



STRONG ARM BAKERY



FARMERS MARKET



SEVEN SPRING WINERY

Hook, Line & Sunshine



HOTEL STAY IN HENDERSON

Hotel

Check into one of the local hotels in Henderson. Scan the QR to see your options.



Sadies Coffee



Before your adventure starts, stop at Sadie's for coffee to fuel up for the day. They also serve bagels, sandwiches and snacks!



SADIE'S COFFEE CORNER



KERR-LAKE

Kerr- Lake

Enjoy your choice of water activities at Kerr Lake. Feel free to: fish, swim, kayak, canoe, boat, and just enjoy the lake!



George's Restaurant



End the day with a visit to George's Restaurant, a family owned gem, serving all your favorites, from seafood to steak pasta and more.



GEORGE'S RESTAURANT

VISITGRANVILLENC.COM

KERRLAKE-NC.COM



Drive & Discover

DAY 1 

HISTORY, HOMETOWN PRIDE, HORSEPOWER, AND A NIGHT AT THE DRIVE-IN

Henderson Institute Historical Museum



Discover Vance County's Black history at the Henderson Institute Museum, preserving stories of resilience and education in its Library Science Building.



INSTITUTE MUSEUM

Tailgate Fun + High School Game



Join the community spirit with a lively tailgate, then cheer under the Friday night lights at a local high school football game.

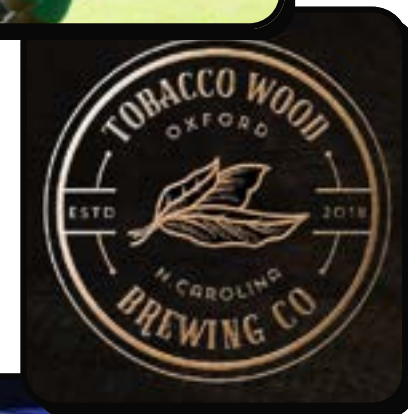


HIGH SCHOOL TAILGATE?

Tobacco Wood Brewing Co.



Raise a glass at Tobacco Wood Brewing, North Carolina's first female veteran-owned brewery, known for great food and community atmosphere.



TOBACCO WOOD

Raleigh Road Drive-In



Experience an evening at the Raleigh Road Drive-In and enjoy a movie under the stars.



DRIVE IN

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COUNTY
Granville
"Uniquely Carolina"

Drive & Discover

DAY 2 

HISTORY, HOMETOWN PRIDE, HORSEPOWER, AND A NIGHT AT THE DRIVE-IN

Show, Shine, Shag and Dine Car Show



An annual antique, classic and nostalgia drag car show. Open to all makes and models 1995 and older. Awards in 30 classes. DJ, food and miscellaneous vendors and hundreds of beautiful cars on display along eight blocks of the historic downtown business district.



CAR SHOW

Lunch in Franklinton

Enjoy your choice of lunch in the cozy town of Franklinton. Choices include:

- **Curtsey's Café** - serving sandwiches, burgers and coffee drinks
- **Toro's Taco's & Tequila** - for a variety of tasty Mexican food



CURTSEY'S



CURTSEY'S



TORO'S



TORO'S

Youngsville Museum of History

Celebrate Youngsville's heritage museum, where local history is preserved and shared from the town's earliest settlement to today.



YOUNGSVILLE MUSEUM

MORE INFORMATION / PRO TIP:

This day requires walking, be sure to dress comfortably and bring water. You may also want to carry cash for the car show.

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COUNTY
Granville
"Uniquely Carolina"

Mainstreet Hop

EXPLORE THE DOWNTOWNS OF THE KERR-TAR REGION



FULL DAY

Kerr-Tar
Regional Council
Of Governments



UPTOWN ROXBORO

Uptown Roxboro

Start the day in Uptown Roxboro with breakfast and light shopping.



Historic Oxford



Discover Oxford through a self-guided walking tour, stopping by the Angel Wings, Oxford Records, and local museums.



DOWNTOWN OXFORD



DOWNTOWN FRANKLINTON

Downtown Franklinton

Enjoy lunch in Downtown Franklinton at Owl's Roost Brewery (Open Saturdays and Sundays) before exploring the town's charm.



Historic Warrenton



Experience Historic Warrenton with a downtown walking tour, highlighting preserved architecture, shops, and cultural landmarks.



HISTORIC WARRENTON



DOWNTOWN HENDERSON

Downtown Henderson

Check out the heart of Henderson. Feel free to shop and dine. Try some yummy Caribbean food at Yikky Wingz or shop for a special woman in your life at Nella Roos.



Motors, Memories & Movies

CRUISE THE STREETS, RELIVE THE CLASSICS (ROXBORO DAY 1)

Rox N Roll Cruise-In

Join us in uptown Roxboro for an afternoon of fun for all ages. Bring out your classic cars, trucks, and motorcycles to show off and enjoy an afternoon filled with community fun, including raffles, prizes, shopping, and food.

Check into Airbnb

Time to get checked into your lodging for the night. Staying at a hotel? Airbnb? The choice is yours, check out the QR for some options to stay overnight in Roxboro.

Shop and Dine

Check out the local gems of Downtown Roxboro. Enjoy leisurely shopping, dine in and then turn in for the night to be ready for tomorrows adventure!

Hall's Way - A mini shopping mall in the heart of Roxboro. Offering a variety of shopping and dining options.

Shopping options:

- Specialty Design Company
- Southern Treasures Consignment
- An artisans emporium

Dining Options:

- Brookland Eats - Fresh ingredients from local farms, handmade southern meals
- Incurrible Cafe - Dinner Friday and Saturday evening only. Serves sandwiches, salads, soups and more.
- Depot Southern Bistro - serving classic cajun food including seafood, steak and more.



ROX N ROLL CRUISE IN

AIRBNB ROXBORO



SOUTHERN TREASURES

BROOKLAND EATS



Motors, Memories & Movies

CRUISE THE STREETS, RELIVE THE CLASSICS (HENDERSON DAY 2)

Southern Classic Car

Stop at this car dealership, which opened in 2017, featuring over 50 southern classic cars on display. You can buy, sell, trade or just learn about classic cars.

Historic Downtown Henderson

Check out Downtown Henderson. Enjoy shopping and dining before heading to the Car Show. Options include:

Shopping Options:

- **Rustic Barn Boutique** - fashionable and elegant choices for the whole family
- **Nella Roo's Boutique** - woman's apparel, baby needs and more
- **The Everything Store** - selling new and used bargains, you can find everything here

Dining Options:

- **Henderson's George Restaurant** - locally owned, family friendly, homemade meals, chicken ,steak , pasta and more.
- **Yikky Wingz** - Caribbean restaurant specializing in flavorful wings, rasta pasta and more.
- **Mezcalito** - serving authentic Mexican food, quesadillas, fajitas, and more.

Show, Shine, Shag and Dine Car Show

An annual antique, classic and nostalgia drag car show. Open to all makes and models 1995 and older. Awards in 30 classes. DJ, food and miscellaneous vendors and hundreds of beautiful cars on display along eight blocks of the historic downtown business district.



SOUTHERN CLASSIC CAR

NELLA ROOS



YIKKY WINGZ



CAR SHOW



Kerr Tar Regional Tourism Plan: Community Survey Results

Question 1: What county do you live in?

Of 162 respondents, 157 reported residing within one of the five Kerr-Tar Region counties. Granville County accounted for the largest share of respondents (61), followed by Vance County (35), Warren (31), Franklin (27), and Person (3). Five respondents reported living outside of the region.

Question 2: What county do you work in?

Of 155 respondents, 133 reported working within one of the five Kerr-Tar Region counties. Granville County accounted for the largest share of respondents (55), followed by Vance County (35), Warren (22), Franklin (17), and Person (4); 22 respondents reported working outside of the region.

Question 3: What are the key tourism attractions, assets, or events in your community?

Respondents identified more than 170 distinct tourism assets, spanning natural resources, festivals, small businesses, holiday events, agritourism enterprises, and intangible cultural assets. See Table 1 below for the full list of identified key tourism assets (please note duplicates have been removed where identified).

Identified Key Tourism Attractions, Assets, and Events	
Asset Category	List of Assets, Attractions, and Events
Agritourism	Alpaca Farm, Arena Rodeo in June, Dixon Pumpkin Patch, Farmer's Market, Harvey Hill Nursery, Hill Ridge Farm, Jason Brown Farm, Lyons Farms
Arts, Culture, & Heritage	Acorn Theatre, Agape Worship and Training Center, Big Zion A.M.E. Zion Church in Oxford, Blue Wing Church, Camp Butner Museum, Cedar Creek Gallery, Cherry Hill Concerts, Craft Fairs, Expo Center, George C. Shaw Museum, Granville County Museum, Granville Little Theatre, Haliwa-Saponi PowWow, Harris Chapel Church, Harris Museum, Heritage Quilters, Historic Architecture & Homes + Tours, Historic Grave Yards, Historic Mary Potter School Campus, JPAC Performing Arts Center, Kirby Theatre, Louisburg College, Louisburg Court House, Masonic Children's Home, McGregor Hall, O. Theatre, Person County Museum Campus, Raleigh Road Outdoor Theater, Richard Thornton Library NC State Room, Seed Bank at the Louisburg Library, Shaw Museum, The Deck Entertainment Complex, Tobacco Heritage Trail, Warren County Armory Civic Center
Atmosphere & Intangible Assets	Beautiful Old Town with a Canopy of Old Trees, Granville Health Systems, Library Programs, Local Authors like Jon Leon, Peace and Quiet, Podcast, Preservation Warrenton Inc, Quaintness, Rural Setting and Experience, Small Town Charm, Southern Cuisine
Festivals & Events	Arts & Wine Festival, Artscape Festival, BBQ in the Burg Competition, Bee Jubilee, Bluebird Festival, Butner Summer Festival, Car Show, Church Health Fairs, Craft Beer Festival, Creedmoor Music Festival, Culture Fest, Fall Festival, First Fridays in Franklinton, Flem Whitt Music Festival, Friday Nights on the Tar, Garden Expo, Granville LIVE!, Granville Wedding and Event Expo (GWEE), Groovin' at the Gazebo, Grow Together Community Event, Hawkins Loop Bird Fest, Highland Games, Honey Festival, Hot Sauce Festival, Memory Lane Cruise Ins, Music on Main,

	Nifty 90s Creedmoor Music Festival, Personality Festival, Quitting Time, Ridgeway Cantaloupe Festival, Rock Fest, Rox N Roll Cruise Ins, Roxboro Community School Sports Carnival, Shag Shine and Dine Car Show, Student Events, The Crossing, The Highland Games
Food, Beverage, & Entertainment	Bars & Restaurants, Bigfoot BBQ, Breweries, Bullpen Backyard, Palace Pointe, Rock of Ages Winery & Vineyard, Sadie's Coffee Corner, Seven Springs Farm and Vineyard, Strong Arm Bakery
Holiday Events & Attractions	4th of July Celebrations, Catfish Drop NYE, Christmas Farm, Christmas in the Park, Christmas Parades, Corn Maze, Downtown Trick or Treating, Fireworks, Granville Haunt Farm, New Year's Eve Cat Drop
Hubs	Downtown Franklinton, Downtown Louisburg, Downtown Oxford, Downtown Warrenton, NC I85 Warren Welcome Center
Natural Assets	Bird Park, Buck Springs Park, Dehart Botanical Garden, Falls Lake SP, Garden at Portridge, Gaston Lakes, Greenways, Hyco Lake, Kerr Lake, Lake Devin, Lake Gaston, Lake Holt, Lake Rogers, Lake Rogers Park, Lake Royale, Laurel Mill, Mayo Lake, Medoc Mtn State Park, Owens Park, Perry's Pond, Picture Branch Nature Preserve, Portis Gold Mine, Roxboro Rotary Centennial Park, Stovall Town Park, Tar River, Tar River Land Conservancy Area
Shopping & Retail	Boutiques, Charming Shops, GAP, Shoppes at Oxford, Shopping Centers, Small Businesses, The Thrift Store in the Old Lowe's Food Building
Sports & Outdoor Recreation	5K Walk/Run, Boating, Butner Athletic Park, Camp Oak Hill & Retreat Center, Camping, Community Playgrounds, Disc Golf Courses - Kraken, Sasquatch, Rockness Monster, Dog Park, Fishing, Fishing Tournaments, Fitness & Community Centers, Golf Courses (Private), Granville Athletic Park, Henderson Country Club, Hiking Trails, Horseback Riding Trails, Hunting, Oxford Athletic Park, Picnic Areas, Rock Athletic Complex, Roxboro Motorsports, Sports Arena, To the Bridge and Back Run

Table 1

Question 4: Please describe local tourism assets (businesses, sites, attractions , festivals, etc.) you believe are underutilized or could be better promoted?

Respondents identified more than 115 distinct local tourism assets that they considered to be underutilized or could be better promoted.

Mentioned the most often include the region's lakes & lake access points, small &/or new festivals/events, locally owned small businesses, trails & parks, agritourism sites, holiday events, and empty storefronts in downtown areas. See Table 2 below for the full list of assets identified as being underutilized (duplicates have been removed where identified).

Identified Underutilized or Underpromoted Tourism Assets	
Asset Category	List of Assets, Attractions, and Events
Agritourism	Agritourism (general), Carlee Farm, Farmers Markets, Harvey Hill Nursery, LaKay Farm, Shepherd's Gate Fiber Mill, Sunset Ridge Buffalo Farm, Two Dachshund Farm, Vineyards
Arts, Culture, & Heritage	Amphitheatres, Art Galleries, Artisan & Craft Fairs, Back to Eden Historical Site, Granville County Museum, Home/Architectural Tours, Library, Mary Potter Museum, Mayo Park Amphitheater, McGregor Hall, Person County Museum Campus, Special Events Focusing on the Arts
Atmosphere & Intangible Assets	Centralized & Accessible Database of Tourism Sites, Events Calendar, Family-Friendly Options, Genealogical Tourism, Granville County Safe Kids, Social Media, Safe Space Activities for Teens/Youth
Festivals & Events	AF Wake Events, Art & Wine Festival, Bee Jubilee, Blue Bird Festival, Butner Summer Fest, Car Show, Cedar Creek Gallery Events & Workshops, CultureFest, Fall Festival, First Fruits Farm Balloon Fest, Frankenfest, FunkyTown Festival, Garden Expo, Harvest Show, Highland Games, Hot Sauce Festival, Littleton/Lake Gaston Festival, Music on Main Street, New or Emerging Events/Festivals, Next Door Radio Music Festival, Personality Festival, Quitting' Time, Summer Movie Nights Start at Town Hall's Front Lawn, The Crossing, Way to Grow Festival

Food, Beverage, & Entertainment	210 Nash Restaurant, Bars, BBQ Chicken Restaurants, Bragging Rooster Brewery, Breweries, George's Restaurant, Hardware Cafe, Locorum Distillery, Mill Hill Brewery, Oxford Oaks, Tar Banks Brewing, Tobacco Wood Brewery
Holiday Events & Attractions	Christmas in July, Christmas Light Displays, Christmas Parade, Christmas Tree Lighting & Holiday Market, Earth Day Community Clean-Up, Easter Egg Hunt, July 4th Fireworks, Juneteenth Celebration, Veteran's Day Parade
Hubs	Downtown Areas, Historic Downtown Districts, Empty or Run-Down Buildings / Storefronts in Downtown Areas, Main Street Henderson, Old Depot in Downtown Creedmoor, Oxford's "Social District"
Lodging & Accommodations	Airbnbs, Strawberry Fields Forever Air B&B, VRBOs
Natural Assets	Buck Spring Park, County/State Parks, Hayley-Haywood Park, Kerr Lake, Lake Devin, Lake Holt, Lake Rogers, Ledge Creek Trails, Local Parks, Norris Creek, Open Spaces, Tar River
Shopping & Retail	Book Store, Buchanan's Store, Carolina Cotten Boutique, Downtown Shops, Farmer's Mercantile Store, Old Mill Print Co, Small, Locally Owned Businesses, Tar River Interiors
Sports & Outdoor Recreation	Aycock Recreation Complex, Birdwatching, Camping, Cycling Routes, Dog Parks, Hiking Trails, Historic Trails, Horseback Riding, Lake Access Points, Outdoor Camping, Ride de Vine (Bicycle Ride), Rockness Monster Disc Golf Course, Sporting Events, Tar River Land Conservancy Free Public Access Hiking Trails, The 13th Round Boxing Company, To the Bridge and Back Run, Travel Ball Baseball Tournaments, Walking Trails

Table 2

Question 5: On a scale of 1-10 where 1 is not important at all and 10 is critically important, how would you rate tourism development as part of growing the local economy?

Over three-quarters (83.6%) of the 159 respondents indicated that tourism development is very important (scored 7-10) to the local economy, with 36% respondents specifically rating it as critically important. An additional 13.8% viewed it as somewhat important (scored 4-6), while 2.5% reported that it is not important (scored 1-3). See Figure 1 for the full distribution of responses across the 1-10 rating scale.

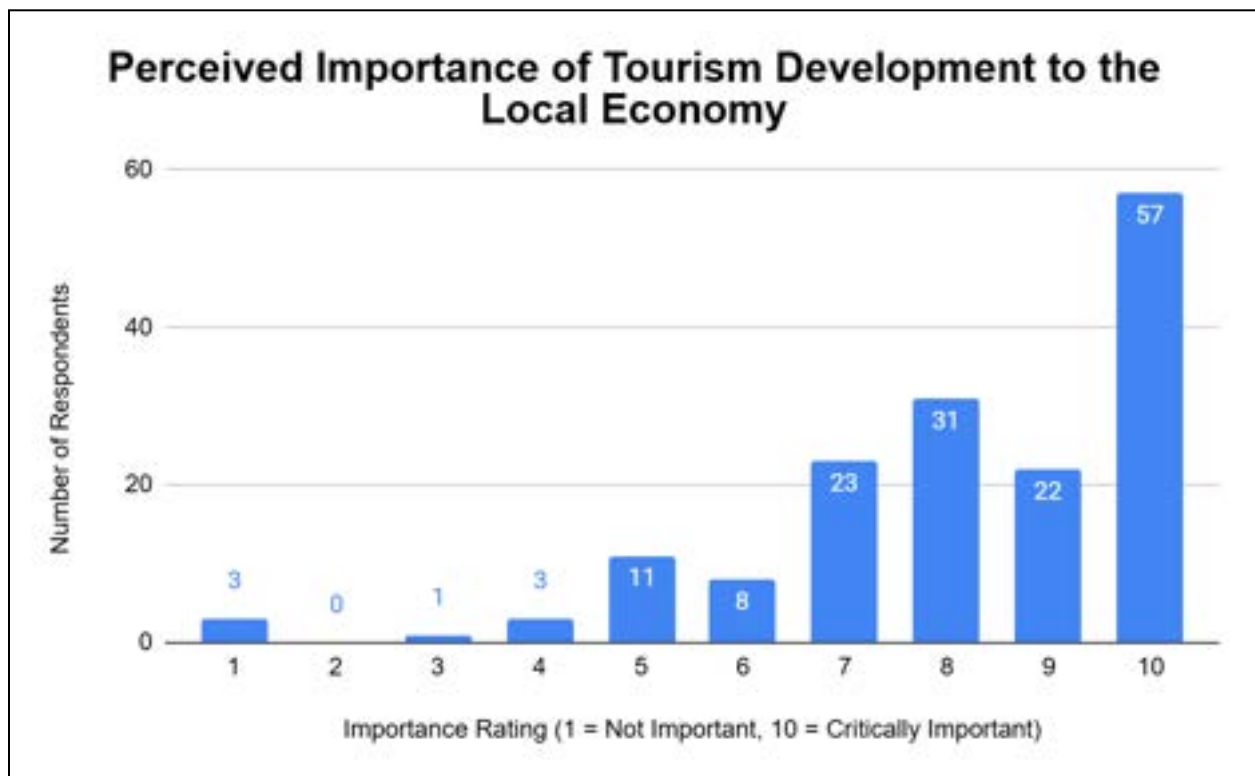


Figure 1

Question 6: **What positive impacts do you think tourism has on your community?**

Respondents identified a wide range of positive impacts associated with tourism in their communities. As shown in Table 3, the most frequently selected benefits were economic growth (82%), attraction of entrepreneurs & investment (59%), and increased local pride (58%).

With the option for 'other,' some respondents noted additional positive impacts such as increased visibility for the county & county assets, support for local businesses, artisans, & farms, and increased cross-county partnerships.

Although respondents were asked to select only three benefits, many selected more than three, so the results are presented as the percentage of total respondents (161) who selected each option. See Table 3 for the full breakdown of responses.

Perceived Positive Impacts of Tourism on the Community	
Positive Impact	Percentage of Total Respondents
Economic Growth	82%
Attraction of Entrepreneurs & Investment	59%
Increased Local Pride	58%
Cultural Exchange	34%
Preservation of Local Landmarks	33%
Increased Tax Base	27%
Improved Infrastructure & Green Space	24%
Preservation of Cultural Traditions	22%
Funding for Land Conservation	16%

Table 3

Question 7: What negative impacts do you think tourism has on your community?

Respondents identified a wide range of negative impacts associated with tourism in their communities. As shown in Table 4, the most frequently selected drawbacks were increased traffic congestion (54%), chains driving out small businesses (47%), and increased pressures on local infrastructure (32%).

With the option for 'other,' some respondents noted additional drawbacks such as a lack of overnight accommodations & event space, attracting unwanted residents, and partial accounting of local histories. Many respondents (7) used the 'other' space to note that there were no significant drawbacks to tourism in the community.

Although respondents were asked to select only three negative impacts, many selected more than three, so the results are presented as the percentage of total respondents (148) who selected each option. See Table 4 for the full breakdown of responses.

Perceived Negative Impacts of Tourism on the Community	
Negative Impact	Percentage of Total Respondents
Increased Traffic Congestion	54%
Chains Driving Out Small Independent Businesses	47%
Increased Pressure on Local Infrastructure	32%
Higher Living Costs	24%
Overcrowding at Local Attractions / Businesses	24%
Noise or Disruption	20%
Environmental Degradation	19%
Increased Crime	18%
Cultural Assets Get Watered Down for Easy Presentation	11%

Table 4

Question 8: In a few sentences, please describe your dreams for tourism in your region.

Respondents expressed a range of aspirations for the future of tourism in the Kerr-Tar region, with several consistent themes emerging. Many respondents envisioned **stronger promotion of existing assets**, including natural areas, small towns, local businesses, and cultural or historic sites. Several noted that residents themselves are often unaware of available attractions, suggesting a need for greater internal marketing and community engagement.

A portion of respondents described a desire for **balanced growth of tourism** - preserving the region's rural character, small-town charm, and cultural integrity while enabling opportunities for economic development through tourism, including downtown revitalization and expanded lodging, dining, and retail options for visitors & residents alike. A few respondents voiced **concerns about overdevelopment** and emphasized the importance of "smart growth" that protects the environment and maintains the region's authenticity.

Respondents referenced events & festivals as part of their dreams for tourism in the Kerr-Tar region. Many noted that more promotion of existing, but small events & festivals would be appropriate. Others noted a **need for more events & festivals throughout the year** - suggestions included seasonal/holiday events, arts festivals, food markets, lakefront events, and concerts. Other respondents called for **enhanced infrastructure for tourism**, including event spaces, hotels, and generally improved facilities at sites across the region.

Recurring themes also included family-friendly and youth-oriented attractions, support for local artists and entrepreneurs, and collaboration among counties to create cohesive regional tourism efforts.

Question 9: What types of training, marketing, or other programs do you think are needed to strengthen tourism in your county?

Respondents revealed a wide range of perspectives, which were then grouped into 9 thematic categories (see Table 5). The most frequent comments focused on marketing & promotion, business development, and collaboration.

Thematic Summary of Recommended Programs and Training Needs to Strengthen Tourism	
Theme & Summary of Key Insights	Representative Responses
Marketing & Promotion Respondents most consistently emphasized the need for stronger, more coordinated marketing efforts. Respondents highlighted the importance of professional marketing support, digital visibility, and cohesive branding efforts.	<i>"We need county-wide professional promotion" & "coordinated marketing campaigns"</i> <i>Create a centralized online calendar of activities, events, & businesses</i> <i>"Stronger social media support [and trainings] for marketing small businesses" & "more social media cross-pollination"</i> <i>"We need training programs that empower small business owners with digital marketing skills [and] website development"</i> <i>"...creative ideas for ways to bring visitors to experience our smaller community's charm"</i> <i>"A class or regular classes on marketing to tourists would be essential"</i> <i>"A Consumer Behavior program offering - particular to our region"</i>
Business Development & Entrepreneurship Respondents identified a need for programs supporting small business creation & growth, including access to funding, grants, and technical support.	<i>"Workshops on how to start a small business," "Entrepreneurship courses," and "Helping [businesses] find ways to collaborate or partner to attract tourists"</i> <i>Organize online resources & trainings for small businesses "i.e., video library[ies], step-by-step to-do's" and how-to videos</i> <i>"Access to funding and grants for small business owners" & "Help with taxes & finding grants"</i>

<p>Hospitality & Customer Service</p> <p>Respondents noted gaps in hospitality skills & visitor experience, highlighting a need for training across restaurants, hotels, and attractions.</p>	<p><i>“Customer service in the hospitality industry is needed” & “Customer service, especially in restaurants”</i></p> <p><i>“We need training programs in [...] customer experience best practices”</i></p> <p><i>“Hospitality training (all levels: front desk to housekeeping, food server to dishwasher)” & “Hotel hospitality”</i></p>
<p>Event Planning & Management</p> <p>Some respondents stressed the need for more support for planning, organizing, and promoting local events, including professional & digital marketing guidance for events/festivals.</p>	<p><i>“Market & keep track of ALL events & businesses, rather than a few ‘favorites’”</i></p> <p><i>“...help with event guidance and growth/planning” & training for “event planning and management”</i></p> <p><i>Training for event planners “of digital advertising” and “utiliz[ing] it to their advantage”</i></p> <p><i>Training to “strengthen committees & funding for events. Have solid marketing plans”</i></p> <p><i>“How to maximize exposure for any tourism related event”</i></p>
<p>Collaboration & Partnerships</p> <p>Some responses highlighted a feeling of fragmentation across the region, with a need for heightened regional coordination, cross-promotion, and unified planning. Others suggested specific organizations for potential partnership.</p>	<p><i>“Unity of all 5 municipalities would help” & “the towns need to come together”</i></p> <p><i>“Unite with Raleigh and Durham to extend visitors outside the Triangle area” & “Partner with travel websites”</i></p> <p><i>“Connecting with State’s tourism to increase opportunities” & “NC State Extension Services Training and education”</i></p> <p><i>“Getting people to collaborate. So many people are doing such awesome things, but sometimes they overlap, or could benefit from others spreading awareness”</i></p>
<p>Infrastructure & Product Development</p> <p>Respondents noted that marketing alone feels insufficient without a tandem effort to support & revitalize tourism attractions, amenities, and infrastructure.</p>	<p><i>“Need hotels and restaurants” & “Work with lodging facilities to find a way for them to improve amenities, safety and appearance to have the ability to have more folks lodge for overnights”</i></p> <p><i>“...there needs to be something exciting to market - attractions need to make the trip worth the while” & “[Develop] a reason for tourists to come”</i></p>

	<p><i>"Improved water and sewer infrastructure so that we can support more local businesses"</i></p> <p><i>"Renovation and revitalization of historic sites and landmarks"</i></p> <p><i>"Recruit potential businesses to set up shop in existing structures in the county"</i></p>
<p>Education & Awareness</p> <p>Many respondents wanted educational programs for residents & local leaders to better foster the understanding of tourism's value, as well as to promote broader community engagement.</p>	<p><i>"Community outreach training" & "Stress importance of tourism for locals so that they can help promote different cultures/areas"</i></p> <p><i>"Educating the residents of the importance of maintaining the historic and authentic character of the region" & "Overall historical education would be great"</i></p> <p><i>"Training for local elected officials that show impacts of tourism"</i></p> <p><i>"Over all awareness in general"</i></p>
<p>Specialized Trainings & Certifications</p> <p>Some responses highlighted specific, specialized training & certification needs to enhance tourism capacity.</p>	<p><i>"I think we need people who are trained in ecotourism [...] We have a huge agricultural and natural resource base which must be preserved at all costs"</i></p> <p><i>"...outdoor recreation certifications, tour guide trainings, museum and other cultural preservation/heritage trainings/certifications"</i></p> <p><i>"We need skilled graphic artists [and] highly skilled communicators who truly know how to tell a story"</i></p> <p><i>"Training for older folks" to get involved in tourism</i></p>
<p>Public Safety</p> <p>Respondents indicated that tourism success may be hindered by the safety & cleanliness of the destinations.</p>	<p><i>"We need to work on decreasing the crime so that people aren't afraid to come"</i></p> <p><i>"Crime Prevention and Civility initiatives"</i></p> <p><i>"Making our community safe and clean"</i></p>

Table 5

Question 10: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about tourism in your county or region?

Respondents provided open-ended feedback on tourism in the county/region. Feedback centered on four primary themes (see Table 6). In summary, respondents identified gaps in lodging, recreation infrastructure, marketing and leadership coordination, and local business offerings. Feedback also reflected differing community perspectives on the role and extent of tourism development in the region.

Thematic Summary of Additional Thoughts Related to Tourism in the Kerr-Tar Region	
Theme	Representative Responses
Lodging, Businesses, Dining, and Attractions	<p><i>"Would be nice to have a bed and breakfast for outer-towers to stay [in]."</i></p> <p><i>"The more quality hotels in the area the more visitors will be attracted to the area."</i></p> <p><i>"All towns and counties need to allow short term rentals. [It is] critical to attract tourists."</i></p> <p><i>"It would be great to have some more quality local restaurants that are sit down [and] regularly open."</i></p> <p><i>"We need nice places for overnight stays in [the region]."</i></p>
Outdoor Recreation & Infrastructure	<p><i>"Greenways and bike paths would be wonderful additions to Franklin County."</i></p> <p><i>"The speed traps going into [various towns] are detrimental to local tourism."</i></p> <p><i>"Walking and biking trails are needed."</i></p> <p><i>"Limit new building."</i></p> <p><i>"I would love to invest [in] an idea to turn Lake Holt into a White Lake type of Recreation atmosphere."</i></p> <p><i>"We have enough land to also add dog and horse friendly trails and tailor events to draw in others- lots of horses in NC"</i></p>

Marketing, Events, and Leadership	<p><i>"Need Active Planners."</i></p> <p><i>"The tourism group is doing a fantastic job."</i></p> <p><i>"Advertise more things, manufacturing, history, northern Granville county that most people do not know about."</i></p> <p><i>"I hope current leaders continue to support and encourage tourism in our county."</i></p> <p><i>"We need strong leadership and the support to back our team of leaders to move this county/city forward."</i></p> <p><i>"[We need] REGIONAL promotion of events."</i></p> <p><i>"Local independent businesses, artists, and bloggers are doing more to promote the region [...]. There's definitely opportunity for more collaboration on this point. "</i></p> <p><i>"I love the growth of the current festivals."</i></p>
Community Attitudes & Tourism Direction	<p><i>"I think the communities and county are on the right track with the possibility of implementing more suggestions gained from the study/evaluation of the county recreation and it's programs as it stands."</i></p> <p><i>"Tourism properly promoted has unlimited potential and it benefits people all over the County."</i></p> <p><i>"Granville County is a great place to call home, and we'd love to share this experience with tourists looking for a break from the big city environment."</i></p> <p><i>"We are looking forward to change in [our county]."</i></p> <p><i>"Tourism is important here and we welcome all visitors to our town and county!"</i></p> <p><i>"Tourism is not necessary in all areas of our region, nor should it be."</i></p> <p><i>"I pray this can happen. This entire area is DRIPPING with culture, history and wonderful people! Let's think OUTSIDE THE BOX."</i></p>

Table 6